



# Stakeholder Interviews Summary

## I. Overview

Throughout the months of March and April 2022, the consultant team conducted 14 in-person and virtual interviews with 21 stakeholders, listed in Table 1. Individual and group interviews were guided by targeted questions tailored to the role of the stakeholder (i.e., city government, developer, property manager, or resident). Input gathered from these interviews will contribute to the Edge City 2.0 visioning project by shaping preliminary identification of community needs, opportunities, and potential action items, uncovering topics to bring forth to the public for feedback, and helping identify community priorities for the project.

*Table 1. Stakeholders Interviewed in Individual and Group Meetings*

	Name	Organization	Title
1	Stacy Harris	City of Dunwoody	City Council Post 4
	Joe Seconder	City of Dunwoody	City Council Post 5
2	Lynn Deutch	City of Dunwoody	Mayor
	Rob Price	City of Dunwoody	City Council Post 2
3	Catherine Lautenbacher	City of Dunwoody	City Council Post 1
4	John Heneghan	City of Dunwoody	City Council Post 7
5	Tom Lambert	City of Dunwoody	City Council Post 3
6	Bill Baker	Brookfield Properties	Senior General Manager, Retail
	Alex Antolino	Brookfield Properties	Vice President – Mixed-Use Development
	Chris Rzomp	Gensler	Planner/Architect
	Mark Erdly	Gensler	Studio Director
	Kathryn Zickert	Smith, Gambrell and Russell	Partner
7	Alan Mothner		Resident
8	Herbert Ames	Edens	Senior Vice President – Regional Lead, Southeast Region
9	John Gagnier	GID Development Group	Chief Operating Officer - Development
10	Andre Koleszar	Regency Centers	Senior Vice President and Senior Market Officer, Southeast
11	Clay Grubb	Grubb Properties	Chief Executive Officer
	Paul O'Shaughnessy	Grubb Properties	Senior Vice President - Development
12	Betsy Malcolm	Harry Norman Realtors	Realtor
13	Phil Mays	RocaPoint Partners	Principal
14	Stirling Simmons	MetLife	Associate Director – Equity Asset Management

## II. Common Themes

### Overview

Four overarching themes emerged during the stakeholder interviews. Each is explored in more detail below, but they all coalesce around a common idea: how to attract and retain a wide range of people by offering spaces and experiences that make a desirable lifestyle possible in Dunwoody. The recurring takeaways are as follows:

- **Walkable Connectivity** – All the districts of the Edge City need to be safely connected by pedestrian means, separate from the roadway system, and link to MARTA. Perimeter Center is ripe to embrace the “Beltline” culture.
- **Food & Beverage is Key** – As experienced in most of North Metro Atlanta’s reimagined or new town centers, diversity of dining experiences is critical to provide amenity to existing and new residents, businesses, and employees.
- **Profile of Multifamily Residential Has Changed** – There is a need to explore how multifamily residential (for rent and for sale) has changed in the last 15 years. Several interviewees spoke about the need to provide housing options for different income levels and generations. Many also noted the important link between dense housing and walkability.
- **Amenities are Crucial** – “Next-generation lifestyle amenities” are driving the desire for office employees to want to live in multifamily residential rental buildings that include these amenities “in-house” and have walkable connections to them in adjacent districts. People will want to live in the Edge City if it reflects their “lifestyle preferences,” which is likely why so many people say they like Avalon in Alpharetta. Companies are selecting their locations for “lifestyle” reasons.

### Walkable Connectivity

As companies relocated to or established major presence in Dunwoody, and new residential developments were built to accommodate the surge in demand, the growth in traffic has concerned many stakeholders, including most city officials. The area’s proximity to MARTA’s Red Line continues to draw development interest. Existing and planned retail, office, and restaurant options are significant, but currently the only way to feasibly navigate between them is in a private vehicle. Increasing accessibility via different transportation modes is essential. Creating walkable or bikeable links between different nodes of activity will add to the overall vibrancy of each center.

#### Examples

“It would be a win if the project helps manage traffic but keeps the activity. We need better utilization of MARTA.”

“It needs to be more people-oriented and walkable. You get what you build for. We used to build for cars, and that is why we now have a concrete jungle.”

“There’s no last mile connectivity. The mall needs to invest in pedestrian infrastructure that connects to MARTA.”

“If there’s a way to connect activity spaces, such as Dunwoody Village and Perimeter Center, with more walking and biking facilities, it would be beneficial for both.”

“The retail, office, and restaurants are there, but there’s no way for people to get between them except in their cars... Walkability will be the biggest challenge but arguable the most important.”

### **Food & Beverage is Key**

City officials mentioned the desire to make Dunwoody a place where people will “linger longer,” and a variety of restaurants, breweries, and other dining experiences is a proven way to accomplish this. The populations who are attracted to Dunwoody range from young professionals to empty nesters, but one common denominator among residents is the desire for amenities; chief among these are dining options within walking distance.

#### Examples

“People will pay to be able to walk out their front door and access places like Café Intermezzo, Alon’s Bakery, and other food and beverage spots.”

“One of the new developments with brewery/restaurants at ground level has been successful... The general trend is for malls to reinvent themselves with more open-air concepts.”

### **Profile of Multifamily Residential Has Changed**

As a result of corporate relocations to the area, demand for living space in Dunwoody among young professionals has continued to rise. Additionally, seniors and adults over 55 that are seeking a more active lifestyle are among those looking to relocate to Dunwoody. While school overcrowding was cited as a concern when considering the expansion of multifamily residential, these two populations (young professionals and adults over 55), which are driving demand for that expansion, will not exacerbate the current capacity issues. GID, the developer of the High Street entertainment district, and other developers emphasized the benefits of multifamily development, carefully considering and addressing the concerns that typically accompany such proposals. Even stakeholders who are generally against apartments recognize the need for greater density to ensure the success of restaurant and commercial spaces and contribute to the walkability of the area.

#### Examples

“High Street is going to be a lot of studio apartments. This is good because a product serving young professionals is not going to cause school overcrowding. There is also an opportunity for senior/active adult living.”

“We need multifamily density in order to make walkability happen... Dunwoody needs more rooftops to create walkability – make it easier for people to walk to their jobs.”

“Housing for empty nesters is needed. Empty nesters want to see an area that is amenity-rich... The average citizen tends to think multifamily just creates traffic and school issues, but it actually does more to promote a livable community.”

“Some of the [typical] concerns about multifamily, such as school capacity, were considered and addressed with data when the High Street development was going through the approval process with the City.”

## Amenities are Crucial

Many new and prospective residents are looking for a walkable, mixed-use district like Avalon in Alpharetta. Transformative projects, such as the long-planned mixed-use development High Street, are bringing a similar live/work/play element to Dunwoody. The High Street development is expected to generate a more active public realm, with its expansive lawn, apartments, office, retail, and restaurants.

City Council members want Dunwoody to establish a more unique identity via additions such as street art, a mix of restaurants, and shared public spaces, including a small-to-medium-sized music venue and a convention center. The lack of a vibrant arts and culture scene was mentioned as an impediment to getting people to “linger longer.” Despite this, some forms of public art have begun to appear and gained public acceptance, and the Spruill Center located near Dunwoody Village was identified by several interviewees as a major community asset. In addition, multiple individuals spoke favorably about creating a robust network of trails to connect residential developments to commercial districts and other public spaces such as parks.

As mentioned above, residents are seeking “lifestyle amenities” that contribute to a distinct community identity. Key components to building a unique local culture include public spaces, street art, community events, and opportunities for active transportation through sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and similar amenities. Multiple people interviewed expressed their belief that Perimeter Center should be Dunwoody’s effective downtown area, where the greatest concentration of commercial activity is located.

### Examples

“It would be great to have a trail system to link new residents to other Dunwoody parks. The Council is not interested in buying land in the Perimeter Center area for greenspace. It would be better to have developers provide amenities like pocket parks.”

“The workforce now has the power to live where they want to live with the shift to work-from-home. Dunwoody is uniquely positioned to link different communities with trails.”

“There needs to be an education of office developers to promote public spaces and how their developments should promote public life... It’s the amenities outside buildings that are going to attract people.”

“We need to build for people with plazas, pocket parks, placemaking, art, events, etc.”

“Greenspace is very important. We need a lot of things to draw people, including greenspace with mixed-use... It would be good to see more density on the [Perimeter Mall] site.”

“I would love to see Midtown levels of density... this should be our urban commercial district”

“Murals weren’t accepted 3 years ago but are probably okay now. Public art is new to Dunwoody and gaining momentum.”