

## 28 Acre Retail Site

Lanier Islands Parkway (SR 347)  
Buford, Georgia



- City of Buford
- Close proximity to Lake Lanier
- Zoned C-2
- Median break shown on DOT plans
- Potential for 5 outparcels
- All utilities available
- 1100+ feet of frontage on SR 347
- High growth / high traffic corridor



### Property Information

#### **Location:**

The subject property is situated in the southwest section of Hall County, Georgia, approximately 1 mile from the Gwinnett County line. This 28+/- acre tract is located in the high-growth corridor of Interstate 985, at exit 8, and has direct access at a median break to Lanier Islands Parkway, SR 347. With over 1100 feet of frontage on Friendship Road, this property should yield five outparcels on the front eight acres. Lanier Islands Parkway, formerly known as Friendship Road, is scheduled to be 4-laned from I-85 to McEver Road in the near future.

#### **Zoning:**

The property is located in the City of Buford.

#### **Utilities:**

Water, sewer, electricity and natural gas are available on site.

#### **Pricing:**

**\$6,000,000 (property may be subdivided)**



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## **28± ACRE SITE PROPERTY SUMMARY**

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<b>LOCATION:</b>	The subject property is located within the City of Buford, in the southwest section of Hall County, approximately 1 mile from the Gwinnett County line. This 28 +/- acre tract is situated in the high-growth corridor of Interstate 985, @ exit 8, and has over 1160 feet of frontage on GA 347, Lanier Islands Parkway. GA 347 is scheduled to be 4-laned from I-85 to McEver Road.
<b>ZONING:</b>	The 28 +/- acres are zoned C-2.
<b>UTILITIES:</b>	Water, sewer, electricity and natural gas are available on site.
<b>TOPOGRAPHY:</b>	The property is fairly level in front and then slopes to a runoff area where it then slopes up to the back of the property.
<b>'09 TRAFFIC COUNTS: (GA DOT ESTIMATES)</b>	GA 13 - 10,150 (intersection about 1200 feet) GA 347 - 13,970 (32,550 ADT projection in 2012 by DOT; see 2009 study) I-985 - 56,090 (intersection @ exit 8, about ½ mile)
<b>PRICING:</b>	\$3,000,000 for the retail property (front 8 +/- acres) \$3,000,000 for the retail, office or industrial property (back 20 +/- acres)

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<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	<b><u>1 MILE RADIUS</u></b>	<b><u>3 MILE RADIUS</u></b>	<b><u>5 MILE RADIUS</u></b>
<b>POPULATION: (2010 ESTIMATE)</b>	<b>1,979</b>	<b>21,815</b>	<b>66,177</b>
<b>POPULATION: (2015 PROJECTION)</b>	<b>2,271</b>	<b>25,128</b>	<b>76,920</b>
<b>AVG. HOUSEHOLD INCOME ('10 EST.):</b>	<b>\$59,966</b>	<b>\$81,917</b>	<b>\$84,297</b>

## **AREA INFORMATION**

This 28+/- acre parcel on GA 347, located just west of I-985 @ exit 8, is a prime commercial site and a great mixed-use property in an emerging high growth corridor. The property benefits from its close proximity to Gwinnett County and Lake Sidney Lanier. It has over 1100 feet of highway frontage and all utilities serve the site.

The triangle formed by the intersection of I-985 and I-85, and the surrounding area, is projected to contain one of the highest concentrations of retail development in the United States. At the center of the area's development boom is the 1.7 million sf Mall of Georgia. Also adding to the great economic growth in the area is the office/industrial development in North Gwinnett County that is now moving northward. National industrial developers such as Majestic, Rayco and ProLogis have already built major office/distribution developments along the GA 347 corridor. The ripple effect of this great northward retail, office/industrial migration is definitely being felt in south Hall County.

The other major factor to be considered when evaluating this site is its close proximity to Lake Sidney Lanier. Lake Lanier is the recreational playground for all of north Georgia, attracting over 8 million visitors annually and having a local economic impact estimated at more than \$6 billion. This property is strategically located with great access on GA 347, also known as Lanier Islands Parkway. Lake Lanier Islands Resort averages over 2 million visitors each year and most people traveled directly in front of this property. Lake Lanier Islands is undergoing a \$200-300 million renovation and redevelopment and it is expected that this will have a dramatic impact on the north Georgia economy, particularly in south Hall.

Understanding the rapid commercial development and the tremendous population growth that is taking place in this area, the DOT is planning to widen GA 347 from GA 211, near I-85, to Lake Lanier Islands. Directly in front of the property the road would become a 4-lane highway with a raised median, creating a major east/west connector between I-85 and I-985 and Lake Lanier Islands. The DOT design shows a full-turn median break in front of the property and the DOT has indicated this location will qualify for a traffic signal when the traffic conditions warrant, greatly adding to the value of this site for any development. In a March 2009 study the DOT projected that for this section of GA 347 the ADT in 2012 would be 32,550 and 49,850 in 2032. The right-of-way acquisition for this important \$130 million project is under way.

A great amount of activity is already taking place in the immediate area. The Publix grocery anchored Golden Park shopping center is located about ½ mile from the site. Cracker Barrel McDonald's, Wendy's, Burger King, Zaxby's and other restaurants have located in this area. Three banks have opened and several retail centers have been built. QuikTrip is scheduled to open on a nearby site in the fall of 2010. Sherwin Williams has located its regional distribution center here and four industrial parks have opened with others planned. There is a very limited amount of office space available in the area indicating a development opportunity.

Northeast Georgia Health System opened an urgent care center and a rehabilitation facility in the area. Several other doctors' offices and clinics have also opened to respond to the health needs of the area's rapidly growing population. About 8.5 miles to the east, Northeast Georgia Health System has started construction on a new hospital complex.

Well-situated within this high growth market, the 28+/- acres represents a great site for retail and office/industrial development. Due to its close proximity to major retail centers, industrial developments and Lake Lanier, with substantial frontage on a developing east/west connector and easy access to interstate highways, the exceptional value of this property is evident.



Subject





**Subject**



Holiday Rd

Holiday Rd

Stadium Ferry Rd

Buford Dam Rd NE

Jimmy Dadd Rd NE

Buford Dam Rd NE

New Bethany Rd

Holiday Rd

McEver Rd

Buford City Park

Industrial Blvd NE

Lee Ave NE

Roberts St

13

Rest Haven

Buford Hwy NE

347

Holiday Rd

Friendship Rd

23

Yacht Club Rd

Gaines Ferry Rd

Blackberry Ln

McEver Rd

Chesnut Hill Rd

Bell Dr

Atlanta Hwy

13

Freser Rd

985

Roberts Crossroads

Bennett Rd

Ridge Rd

Wade Dr

Wayne

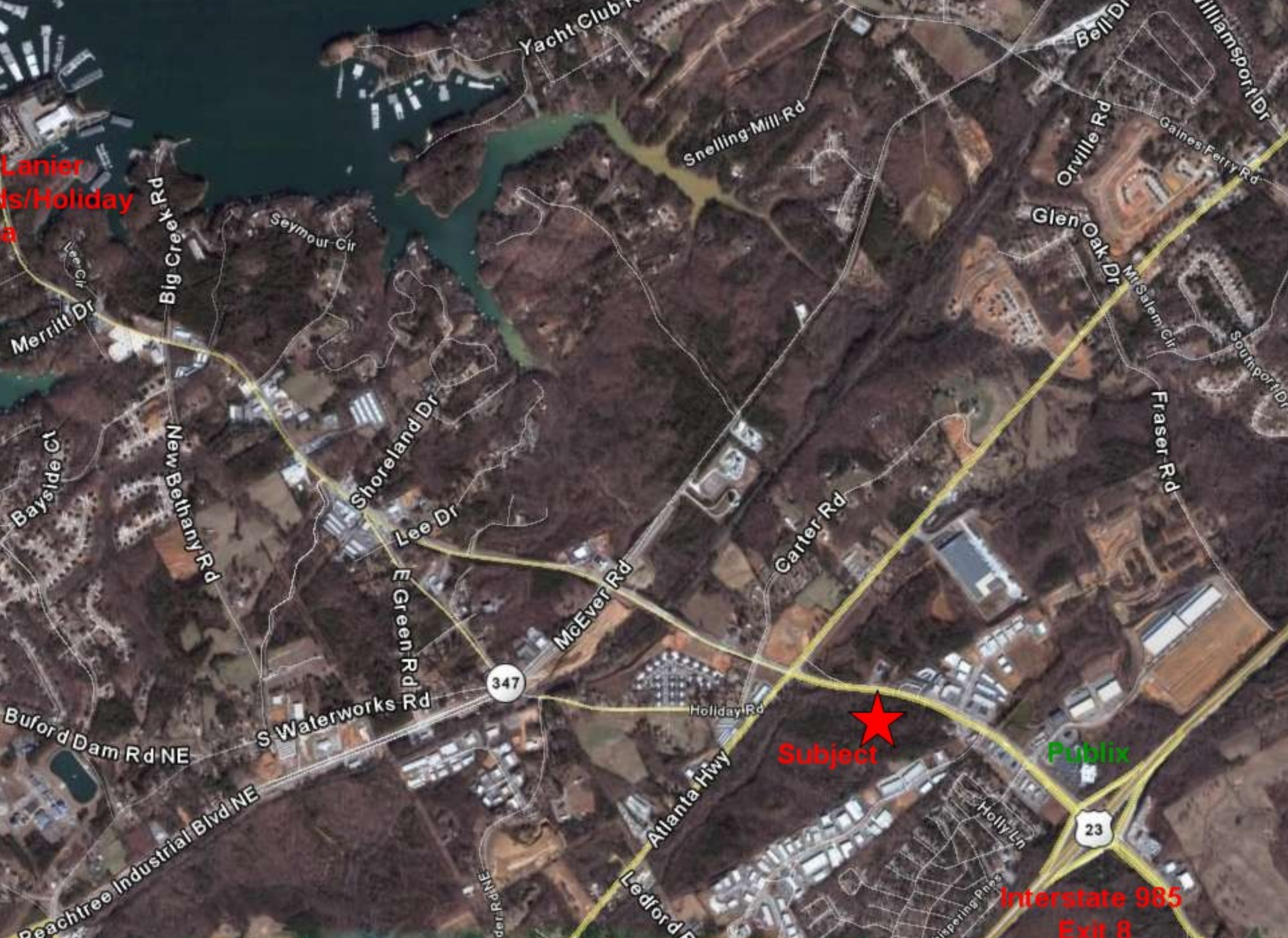
Park Rd

McEver

Nashochee Trail

River

Lake Lanier  
Islands/Holiday  
Marina



Subject

Publix

Interstate 985  
Exit 8

# LANIER ISLANDS PARKWAY (GA 347) RETAIL MAP



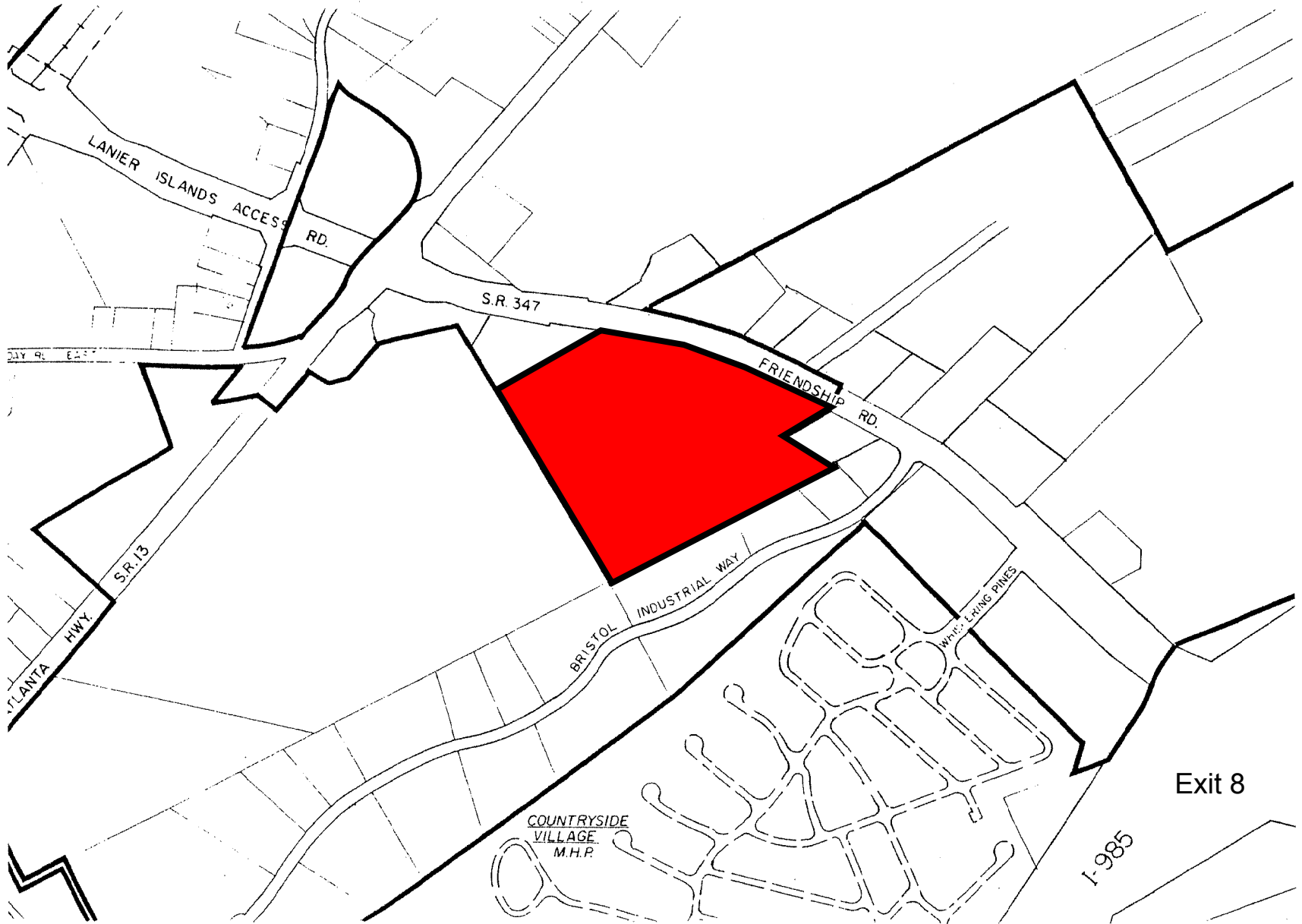
I-985 TO THE EAST AND ATLANTA HIGHWAY (GA 13) TO THE WEST

Subject



Hall





LANIER ISLANDS ACCESS RD.

S.R. 347

FRIENDSHIP RD.

ATLANTA HWY. S.R. 13

BRISTOL INDUSTRIAL WAY

WHITE LINING PINES

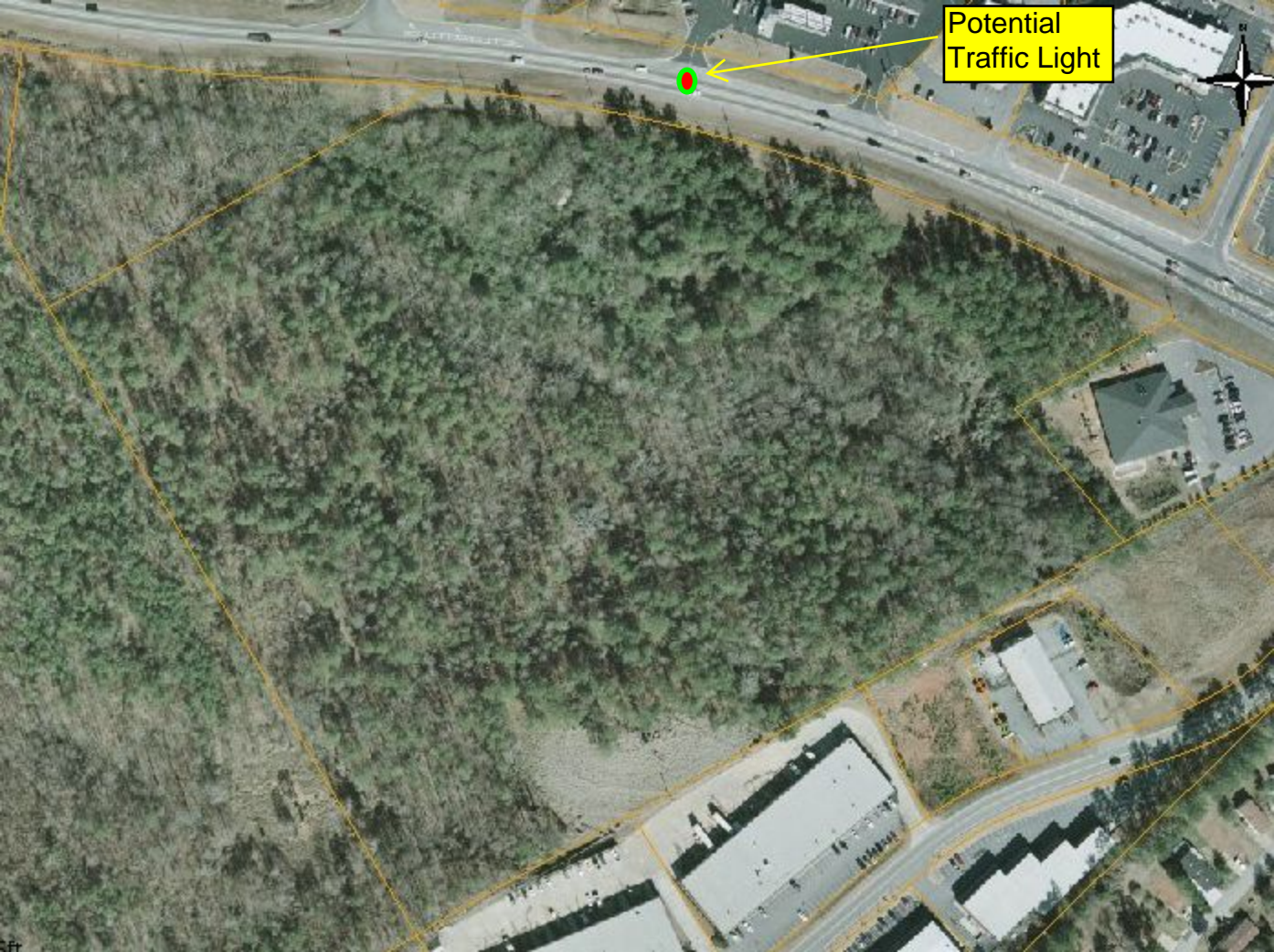
COUNTRYSIDE VILLAGE M.H.P.

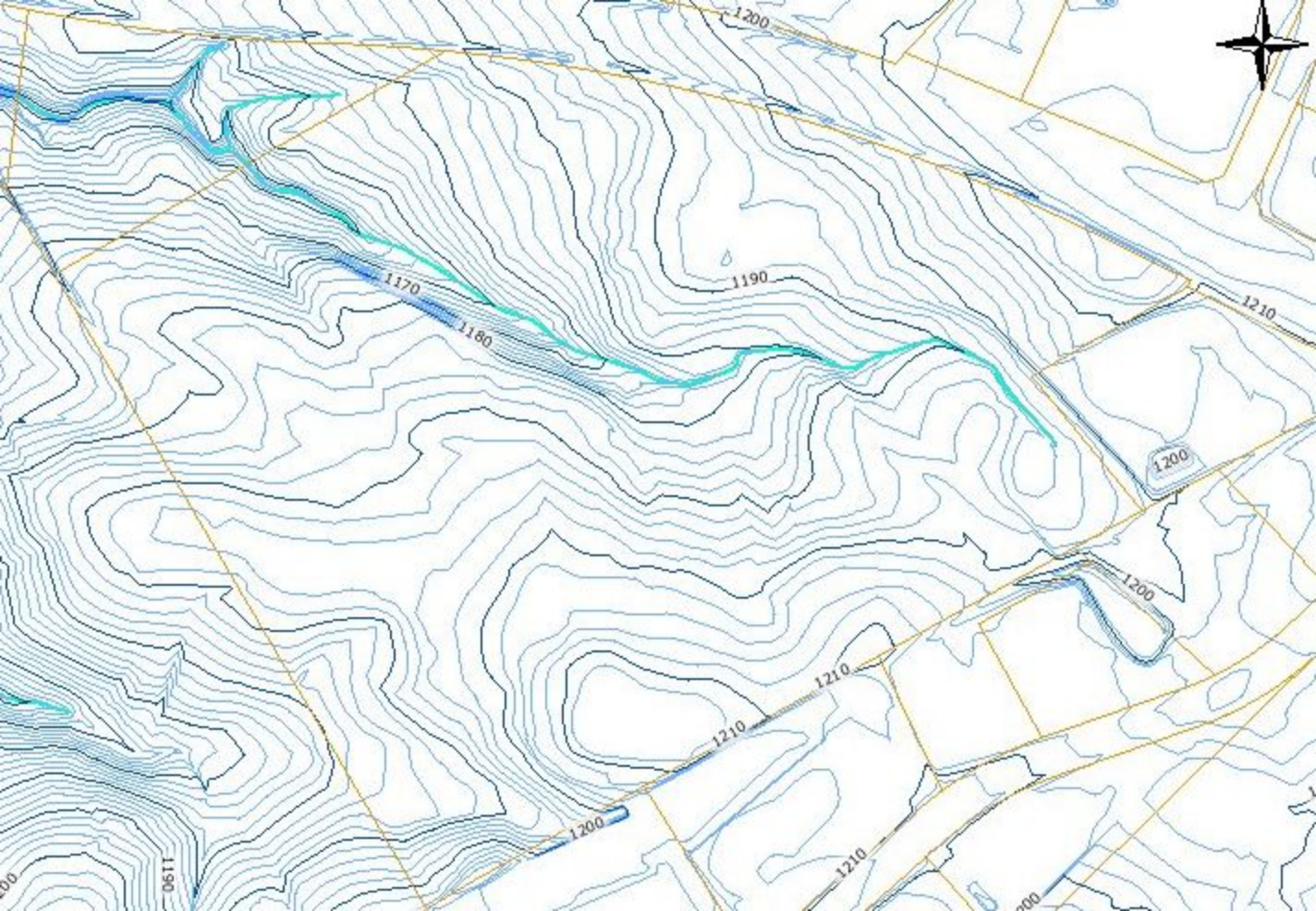
Exit 8

I-985

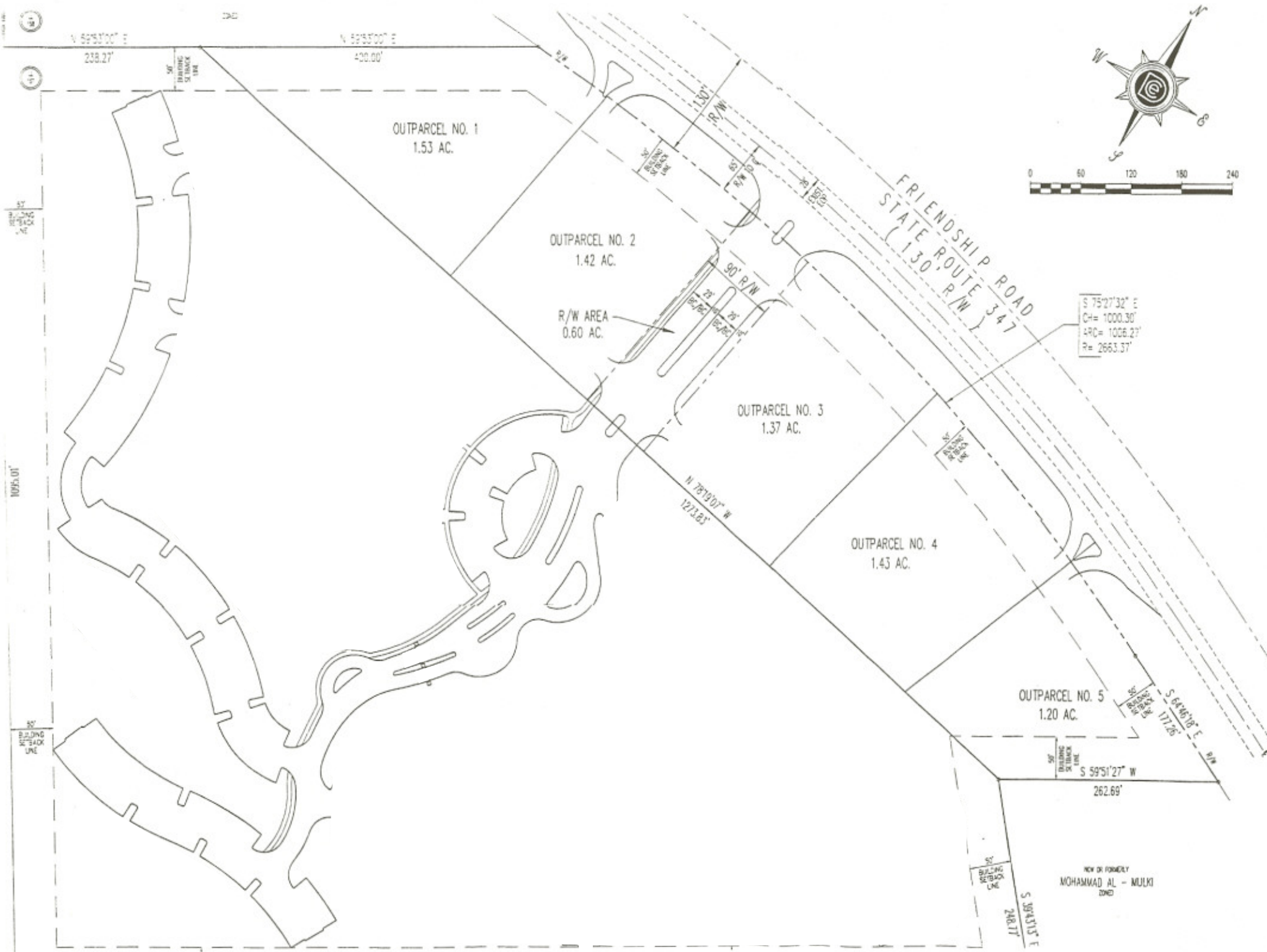


Potential  
Traffic Light









$S 75^{\circ}27'32'' E$   
 $CH = 1000.30'$   
 $\Delta RC = 1006.27'$   
 $R = 2663.37'$

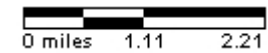
NEW OR FORMERLY  
 MOHAMMAD AL - MULKI  
 ZONE

# Area Map

Prepared For: Capital Commercial Group, LLC



LANIER ISLANDS PARKWAY  
BUFORD, GA 30515  
Coord: 34.143819, -83.959196



# Demographic Summary Report

4996 Friendship Rd, Buford, GA 30518

Building Type: Land  
 Class: -  
 RBA: -  
 Typical Floor: -

Total Available: 0 SF  
 % Leased: 0%  
 Rent/SF/Yr: -



Radius	1 Mile	3 Mile	5 Mile
<b>Population</b>			
2015 Projection	2,271	25,128	76,920
2010 Estimate	1,979	21,815	66,177
2000 Census	1,691	15,099	40,737
Growth 2010 - 2015	14.80%	15.20%	16.20%
Growth 2000 - 2010	17.00%	44.50%	62.40%
2010 Population by Hispanic Origin	176	3,143	10,589
2010 Population By Race	1,979	21,815	66,177
White	1,809 91.41%	16,956 77.73%	51,934 78.48%
Black or African American	77 3.89%	2,635 12.08%	7,201 10.88%
American Indian and Alaska Native	3 0.15%	54 0.25%	192 0.29%
Asian	23 1.16%	373 1.71%	1,170 1.77%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	3 0.15%	17 0.08%	71 0.11%
Other Race	30 1.52%	1,365 6.26%	4,242 6.41%
Two or More Races	33 1.67%	417 1.91%	1,367 2.07%
<b>Households</b>			
2015 Projection	850	8,585	25,809
2010 Estimate	745	7,512	22,369
2000 Census	651	5,415	14,148
Growth 2010 - 2015	14.10%	14.30%	15.40%
Growth 2000 - 2010	14.40%	38.70%	58.10%
Owner Occupied	671 90.07%	6,148 81.84%	17,759 79.39%
Renter Occupied	74 9.93%	1,364 18.16%	4,610 20.61%
2010 Households by HH Income	743	7,511	22,368
Income Less Than \$15,000	57 7.67%	542 7.22%	1,331 5.95%
Income: \$15,000 - \$24,999	76 10.23%	502 6.68%	1,322 5.91%
Income: \$25,000 - \$34,999	69 9.29%	474 6.31%	1,234 5.52%
Income: \$35,000 - \$49,999	147 19.78%	875 11.65%	2,565 11.47%
Income: \$50,000 - \$74,999	202 27.19%	1,736 23.11%	5,213 23.31%
Income: \$75,000 - \$99,999	104 14.00%	1,485 19.77%	4,888 21.85%
Income: \$100,000 - \$149,999	63 8.48%	1,264 16.83%	3,933 17.58%
Income: \$150,000 - \$249,999	24 3.23%	481 6.40%	1,426 6.38%
Income: \$250,000 - \$499,999	1 0.13%	129 1.72%	389 1.74%
Income: \$500,000 or more	0 0.00%	23 0.31%	67 0.30%
2010 Avg Household Income	\$59,966	\$81,917	\$84,297
2010 Med Household Income	\$52,362	\$68,698	\$72,215
2010 Per Capita Income	\$22,621	\$29,284	\$29,603



**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
STATE OF GEORGIA**

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**INTERDEPARTMENT CORRESPONDENCE**

**FILE:** STP00-2688-00(004), Hall County  
P. I. No.: 170735  
SR 347 Friendship Road

**OFFICE:** Engineering Services

**DATE:** March 18, 2009

**FROM:** Ronald E. Wishon, Acting Project Review Engineer *REW*

**TO:** Neil Kantner, P.E., District Design Engineer  
Attention: Teresa Walcott

**SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF VALUE ENGINEERING STUDY ALTERNATIVES**

Recommendations for implementation of Value Engineering Study Alternatives are indicated in the table below. Incorporate alternatives recommended for implementation to the extent reasonable in the design of the project.

ALT No.	Description	Savings PW & LCC	Implement	Comments
<b>ROADWAY (RD)</b>				
RD-8	Reduce Right of Way at SR 13 and SR 347.	Proposed= \$260,213 Actual= \$225,925	Yes	This should be done.
RD-9	Reduce ties at SR 347 and McEver Road.	\$93,467	Yes	This should be done.
RD-10	Delete the continuous right-in and right-out lane on the south side of SR 347 from Countryside Village (Sta. 21+70 LT) to Bristol Industrial Way (Sta. 29+19 LT).	\$316,569	No	Requires entering and exiting the side roads and businesses from the live right through lane. <b>High traffic volumes, 32,550 ADT (2012), 49,850 ADT (2032).</b> Proposed pavement width, including right turn lane area is needed for construction staging.

ROADWAY (RD) Continued				
RD-11	Delete the continuous right-in and right-out lane on the south side of SR 347 from Bristol Industrial Way (Sta. 29+19 LT) to the driveway at Sta. 31+71 LT.	Proposed= \$1,125,349* Actual= \$60,245*	No	<i>*Incorrect area given to VE Team. Savings only \$60,245.</i> Requires entering and exiting the side roads and businesses from the live right through lane. High traffic volumes, 32,550 ADT (2012), 49,850 ADT (2032). Proposed pavement width, including right turn lane area is needed for construction staging.
RD-12	Delete the continuous right-in and right-out lane on the north side of SR 347 from Bristol Industrial Way (Sta. 29+19 RT) to B.U. Bowman Drive (Sta. 33+98 RT).	\$284,831	No	Requires entering and exiting the side roads and businesses from the live right through lane. High traffic volumes, 32,550 ADT (2012), 49,850 ADT (2032). Proposed pavement width, including right turn lane area is needed for construction staging.
RD-13	Delete the continuous right-in and right-out lane on the north side of SR 347 from B.U. Bowman Drive (Sta. 33+98 RT) to the driveway at Sta. 42+05 RT.	\$230,172	No	Requires entering and exiting the side roads and businesses from the live right through lane. High traffic volumes, 32,550 ADT (2012), 49,850 ADT (2032). Proposed pavement width, including right turn lane area is needed for construction staging.
RD-20	Use a two-way left turn lane.	\$527,964	No	Opening day and design year traffic too high, 32,550 ADT (2012), 49,850 ADT (2032).
RD-26	Utilize existing profile grade line; construct no corrections to existing vertically.	\$248,783	No	Increased side road costs due to new ROW impacts and new construction limits. Vertical improvements are needed to provide proper drainage design. Additional redesign costs.
RD-32	Delete sidewalks on the west portion of the project.	Proposed= \$1,695,714 Actual= \$142,944	Yes	Delete the sidewalks only; do not reduce the ROW footprint. The proposed alternate eliminates the sidewalk and reduces the shoulder width from 16 to 5-feet. This does not meet clear zone and eliminates the future corridor for pedestrian traffic.

BRIDGE (BR)				
BR-1	Eliminate widening by reducing median width and no parapet construction.	\$570,656	No	BR-2 will be implemented.
BR-2	Eliminate widening by reducing median width and parapet construction.	\$475,766	Yes	This should be done. However, this option would require a design variance for the below minimum taper length shift for the westbound lanes between the bridge and the intersection of SR 347 and McEver Road.

The Office of Engineering Services concurs with the Project Manager's responses.

Approved:  Date: 3/19/09  
Gerald M. Ross, P. E., Chief Engineer

REW/DMF

Attachments

- c. Genetha Rice-Singleton
- Russell McMurry
- Robert Mahoney
- Neil Kantner
- Teressa Walcott
- Paul Liles
- Bill Ingalsbe
- Bill DuVall
- Vince Wilson
- Kim Coley
- James Magnus
- Randy Davis
- Jason Dykes
- Steve Sander
- Ken Werho
- Lisa Myers
- Douglas Fadool
- General Files



## And the winners are...

FSB scoured the country for towns that combine a great business environment with alluring leisure offerings. We looked at economic conditions such as local tax rates alongside natural beauty - and easy access to museums, hungry gamefish, and more.

### 3. Buford, Ga.

**Population:** 13,576

**Pros:** Affordable housing, scenic environment

**Con:** Aggressive competition for labor force

Safe neighborhoods, affordable real estate and a relaxed pace, along with easy access to major highways, draw Georgians to lakeside Buford, 35 miles northeast of Atlanta. Besides being home to an artist colony with 40 working painters, photographers, sculptors, and other creative types, Buford also draws entrepreneurs: about 30 new startups launch every month in this 16-square-mile city, according to Buford's occupational tax clerk.

As part of Gwinnett County, Buford is involved in the region's greater effort to develop its presence in industries such as healthcare, information technology, distribution and trade, and advanced communications. Depending on the business, owners may find tax exemptions (for instance, a 100% sales tax break for qualified manufacturing equipment), tax credits (such as the job tax credit for certain tech industries creating at least 25 jobs in a single year), and assistance in permit acquisition and hiring. Active small business organizations, such as the nonprofit [Buford Business Alliance](#), bring member owners together for networking events and to promote tourism in the area.

Besides lakeside activities such as boating and fishing, the area downtown bustles with restaurants, boutiques, and art galleries. There's also the Mall of Georgia, the largest in the Southeast, with 15 million visitors a year. *-Peter McDougall*

## Luxury at home: No. 3, Buford, Ga.

### Fast growth. A lake. (But a long drive to the airport.)

By [Renuka Rayasam](#)

March 26, 2008

(FORTUNE Small Business) -- Terri Jondahl, 48, does not take vacations. As the owner of CAB - a manufacturer and distributor of metal components that drive wind and water turbines - she logs about 200,000 miles a year to meet clients and visit overseas operations. So when Jondahl wants to relax, she heads home to Buford, Ga.

"Once I found my house on Lake Lanier three years ago," she says, "I knew I was going to be here forever."

Last September, Jondahl decided to make Buford her corporate base as well. She moved CAB from nearby Oakwood, Ga., to an office on the 38,000-acre lake.

"My employees were stoked," says Jondahl.

With its charming downtown and great fishing, Buford has drawn residents who want to enjoy Atlanta, 30 minutes away, without its headaches. Buford has also become a startup hot spot, particularly since the [Mall of Georgia](#) opened in 1999. Some 30 new businesses (from ad agencies to restaurants) launch every month in the 16-square-mile town. Buford collects a 6% sales tax and a 2.5% property tax (compared with 8% and 4.1% in Atlanta); those in the highest income tax bracket pay the 6% state rate. That beats the 9% rate in Jondahl's native California - although it [doesn't compare with 0%](#) in Texas and New Hampshire. Driving to the airport is a hassle, she admits, but takes just 45 minutes if you avoid rush hour.

CAB's creekside office will boast hiking trails and picnic tables. Soon Jondahl will be able to host clients at [Emerald Pointe](#), a new four-star resort with a golf course.

Buford's median home price is \$195,493 (compared with \$250,913 in Atlanta), so dream homes are within reach. Jondahl's pad boasts an indoor salt-water pool - a luxury to some, but a necessity for an entrepreneur who thinks staying home is the best break of all.

Find this article at:

[http://money.cnn.com/2008/03/18/smbusiness/buford\\_georgia.fsb/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2008/03/18/smbusiness/buford_georgia.fsb/index.htm)

## Major work under way at Lake Lanier Islands

By Pamela A. Keene April 2008



Lake Lanier Islands Resort is in the midst of a creating whole new look. When Virgil Williams took over the lease of the 1,100-acre property in 2005, he announced big plans for revitalization and repositioning of the popular resort.

This spring and summer, many of those plans will be coming to fruition – from the complete renovation of the Emerald Pointe Hotel and Conference Center inside and out to the demolition of PineIsle Hotel to make room for a new 350-room four-star resort.

### **Executive Villas open this spring**

New multi-unit villas at 4,500-square-feet each built from stone and timber open this May. Heavy timber construction, stone entryways, hardwood floors, and granite surfaces will be featured in each unit.

“These villas celebrate the wilderness of the natural Lake Lanier Islands landscape, yet provide the comforts of a modern resort,” said spokesperson Nikki Taylor. “These were heavily crafted in stone and timber with large expanses of glass to view the water and changing scenes of the seasons. The exteriors create the cherished character of our National Historic Park Lodges built at the turn of the 20th century.”

Each of the new villas have two floors. Some of the bottom-floor bedrooms include fireplaces, patios and are individually keyed for privacy.

On the top floor, two large individually keyed executive King suites can be opened up to make one large luxury common area just under 2,400 square feet.

“Although you are tucked away beneath the tall Georgia Pines nestled at the edge of the lake, no one will know as you stay connected with wireless internet connections, flat screen televisions and a full wet bar in some units,” she said. “Each room can be individually rented, or you can rent the entire Villa for a corporate or group function.”

The first six villas are being built adjacent to the Emerald Pointe Hotel and Conference Center and are on schedule to be completed by May 1.

### **PineIsle Golf Club up and running**

The 18-hole, par-72 course offers lake views with eight holes along the waters of Lanier. Improvements have been made to the course, including handcrafted stonework around the walkways and clubhouse, landscaping, new furniture in the clubhouse restaurant and new locker rooms.

Taylor said that people who pre-book a tee time at least 24 hours in advance will receive complimentary range balls and entrance fee into the resort.

### **Emerald Pointe Hotel gets new look**

The hotel has received a complete revitalization from the outside appearance to interior look and amenities. It will also be renamed this summer at July's grand opening.

Guest rooms have been renovated with upgraded amenities. Enlarged bathrooms are furnished with custom Italian tile, oil-rubbed bronze hardware and granite countertops. Décor in each room includes overstuffed sofas and chairs, luxurious linens with high thread counts and flat screen televisions. The hotel also offers complimentary wireless Internet in rooms and throughout the hotel.



The exterior front Porte Cochere has been redesigned. Wood shake siding and partial rooftops, copper rake flashing, oversized stone columns, wood timber trusses, and natural stone walls create a new look. The look is carried into the lobby, which also features an expanded gift shop.



An outside bar has been added to Bullfrogs Bar & Grille poolside restaurant, which also has an enlarged indoor dining area. The architecture includes stone columns, heavy timber and rustic tones for the casual restaurant.

### **Emerald Pointe Golf Course**

The Emerald Pointe Golf Course is being completely redesigned; construction has already begun on the course. Some of the new features include renovated greens with new mini-verde Bermuda, larger tee boxes, new “Billy Bunker” design, additional yardage to lengthen the course, new concrete cart paths, state-of-the-art-irrigation and a new golf cart fleet.

“The redesign of the course will create more stunning views of Lake Lanier and will return to the Golden Era of golf,” Taylor said. The course has been redesigned and revitalized by local Atlanta golf course design firm Billy Fuller Golf Design. The course is scheduled to be completed in spring of 2009.

### **Historic PineIsle Hotel coming down**

Demolition of PineIsle has begun. As the first hotel on the Islands built in 1974, PineIsle was the host to a number of major events, including a stop on the LPGA tour.

“The renowned hotel is now being bulldozed down to the foundation,” Taylor said. “Demolition will be completed in June 2008 to make way for a new 350-room four-star hotel set to be unveiled in spring of 2011.”



### **Water access to resort's amenities**

Dock space is available at Harbor Landing Boat Rentals for the boating community to come enjoy a day of golf, relax at the spa or dine at one of the resort's three restaurants – Bullfrog's Bar & Grille, Fairways at PineIsle Golf Club or Window's in the Emerald Pointe Hotel. “Call ahead to let us know you're coming and we'll send a shuttle to pick your group up and take you wherever you would like to go on the Islands,” Taylor said. “When you're ready to go back, just let one of our staff know and you'll be shuttled back to your boat.”

## LAKE LANIER RESORT BANKS ON RENOVATIONS TO DRAW VISITORS

By LEON STAFFORD

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Monday, August 25, 2008

It's summer at Lake Lanier, and despite the state's ongoing drought, there is a buzz in the air.

And a hammer's knock, a drill's whiz and a nailgun's clap.

Lake Lanier Island Resort, the sprawling 1,100-acre North Georgia vacation and convention getaway, is getting a \$200 million to \$300 million makeover that its operators hope will bring in more visitors when the work is complete in the next five to seven years. Officials want to double and maybe triple the 7,000 to 8,000 cars that pass through yearly and make the property a destination for the lucrative convention business, said Grier Todd, the resort's chief operating officer.

Long operated by the state, Lake Lanier Island Resort's rejuvenation is in the hands of Gwinnett County businessman Virgil Williams and his family. The Williams family, which agreed to lease the property in August 2005, will pay the state a percentage of proceeds from the resort's operations.

But first there is work to be done, Todd said. The family is spending \$35 million on infrastructure repairs, including work to the 30-year-old physical plant and on the area's 35-year-old roads. They are even putting in sidewalks.

"There are 1,100 acres out here, and there were no sidewalks," Todd said.

When finished, there will be roundabouts, bicycle trails, golf paths and separate golf-cart roads that are wide enough for two of the vehicles to pass comfortably.

Some changes already have been completed, Todd said. This past spring, crews completed the \$11 million remaking of Emerald Point Hotel and Conference Hotel into Legacy Lodge and Conference Center. The official relaunch of the property was held this month.

Designed to evoke comparisons to Grove Park Inn and lodges in Yellowstone National Park, the 221-room facility will help Lake Lanier grab more of the lucrative convention business that has been going to competitors like Chateau Élan and Evergreen Conference Resort at Stone Mountain Park, Todd said.

"Before the renovations, we didn't stack up as well," Todd said. "Now, I think we are in a better position. We have a newer product and the lake."

That's critical in this down economy, said Stephanie Orr, the resort's director of sales and marketing. Hotel occupancy across metro Atlanta and, indeed, the country has fallen off because there are fewer business travelers, conventioners and tourists.

Business at the lodge is off about 5.5 percent compared with last year, a figure that could be worse were it not for the renovation, Orr said. The property's competitors are down about 16 percent.

The renovated hotel, she said, is breathtaking. It has wood shake siding, floors that combine African slate and wood plank and rooms with granite counter tops and flat panel TVs.

"Emerald Point was something that was near and dear to the heart of Georgians," she said. "It was a nice hotel, but it doesn't have the feel that we have now. This is quite amazing. Everything has been redone."

The hotel is not the only building getting a new look. Each of the six legacy villas is getting \$1 million in renovations, and the area's golf courses won't be far behind. Tranquility the Spa will help complete the package in making the resort a destination, Todd said.

"We spent about a year, year and a half in the planning process," Todd said of the work. " '09, to us, is looking very strong."

The big challenge is letting people know that the drought has not affected the resort as much as people think, Todd said.

"There is still water in the lake," he said. "We've just got a lot more beach. We've been more affected by the road construction than by the lake levels."

## Commissioners approve Lake Lanier Islands Parkway road name change

By Melissa Weinman

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The Hall County Board of Commissioners on Thursday approved changing the name of Holiday and Friendship roads to Lanier Islands Parkway.

“This probably should have been done 15 years ago when they built the new road,” Commissioner Bobby Banks said.

Nobody was at the meeting to speak in opposition to the name change.

Stacey Dickson, president of the Lake Lanier Convention and Visitors Bureau, spoke in favor of changing the name of “a very confusing” road.

There are three different road signs after the Interstate 985 exit that name the road as Friendship Road, Ga. 347 and Holiday Road.

“We support first and foremost, at the convenience of the visitor, that renaming the road to point to its most desirable attraction is a sensible and logical choice,” Dickson said.

Grier Todd, CEO of Lake Lanier Islands, said he thinks changing the name of the road will help the many other businesses on the route.

“Getting more traffic on that road helps all parties involved,” Todd said. “We deal every day with the confusion of trying to get our guests on the islands.”

## DOT offers some mixed news about roads

By Jeff Gill

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TOM REED/The Times

One of the projects discussed at the Georgia Department of Transportation Forum was the widening of Friendship Road, shown here looking toward Interstate 985.

**OAKWOOD** — A bleak revenue picture, made worse by expenses piling up from bad winter weather beating the roads, cast a pall over the Georgia Department of Transportation's annual forum Thursday.

Work is moving along on some area projects, but orange barrels are becoming scarce, replaced by the engineering and land deals it takes to get projects to the asphalt stage.

Kit Dunlap, president of the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce, tried to perk up the crowd of community and civic leaders gathered for the event at Gainesville State College.

"We don't want everyone leaving here blue," she said. "We are in a part of the state ... that's going to keep growing, so that's the good part."

Steve Gooch, the state transportation board's 9th District member, started the meeting with some downcast remarks.

"We are in a meltdown revenue wise. We just don't know where the bottom is. We keep seeing motor fuel taxes drop," he said. "Hopefully, we'll see the bottom and we can start to rebound (from) these tough times."

Gooch, on the board since November, went on to say, "The biggest issue facing the DOT is funding. There's very little money left there now with the overhead ... and with all the debt service."

He talked about a bill going through the Georgia General Assembly that would allow local governments to generate roads money through a 1 cent sales tax.

"Those projects would be determined locally by the cities, counties and people of the regional commissions (that would be set up)," said Gooch, a Lumpkin County resident. "That'll be a big help, if we can that passed."

Georgia voters would need to approve a constitutional amendment to set up such a system.

"I encourage you to keep your eye on that bill and support it, if you can," Gooch said. "And make sure your businesses and the people in your community support it."

A 1 cent tax "is the best thing we've got going" for transportation improvements, he added.

"I don't think the legislature is going to approve a tax increase on motor fuel. I don't see them raising taxes anywhere else this year for transportation," Gooch said.

“The unfortunate part of this is we won’t see (the tax) until 2012, the way the bill is written today,” he added.

Dunlap told the crowd “we all need to get educated” about the tax.

“And when it’s our turn in Hall County to vote up or down, we need to educate everybody and be prepared to take on some kind of long-term funding,” she said.

Except for a few remaining “punch-list” items, Hall County’s biggest road project ever is finished. For the most part, motorists are zipping along roads around the \$75 million makeover of Interstate 985 at Mundy Mill Road and Atlanta Highway.

“I kind of miss those orange barrels. You know, when we had (them), something was happening, something was moving and there were jobs out there,” Dunlap said.

The state DOT’s most significant project this year is the completion of the final stretch of Thurmon Tanner Parkway, a \$9.1 million road connecting Plainview and Mundy Mill roads and running through the heart of Oakwood.

DOT officials estimate the work will be completed in December. When done, the four-lane parkway will run Atlanta Highway in Oakwood to Phil Niekro Boulevard in Flowery Branch.

Thanks to federal stimulus money, crews are working on concrete slab replacement on Ga. 365 in North Hall.

The only other “major” project involves a partnership with private developers and Braselton in fixing up Spout Springs at Thompson Mill roads.

Otherwise, the DOT is working on pre-construction efforts to widen:

Friendship Road from I-985 to Ga. 211/Old Winder Highway.

Lanier Islands Parkway, formerly Friendship Road, from I-985 to McEver Road.

Thompson Bridge Road from Ga. 136/Price Road to Yellow Creek Road.

Atlanta Highway from Sawnee Avenue in Buford to Lanier Islands Parkway.

Also, engineering is under way on building a new I-985 interchange connecting Martin Road in Flowery Branch to H.F. Industrial Parkway in Oakwood, crossing Thurmon Tanner Parkway.

# South Hall leading way out of recession

Real estate exec gives region's forecast at business meeting

By Jeff Gill

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**FLOWERY BRANCH** — South Hall is helping lead the region in economic recovery, Gainesville real estate executive Frank Norton Jr. told a group of business and community leaders Tuesday.

“We are seeing strong shoots of recovery throughout North Atlanta and specifically in South Hall,” he said during the South Hall Business Coalition’s meeting at the Hall County Library System’s Spout Springs branch off Spout Springs Road.

The Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce sponsors the coalition.

“We live next door to a 750,000-person gorilla called Gwinnett (County), which has an average house price higher than ours, that has other crowded conditions and problems,” Norton said. “We are that next domino.

“We have a great school system, great infrastructure, great recreational lifestyle. Ladies and gentlemen, (people) are still coming.”

Norton also predicted, as part of an hour long presentation featuring computerized charts and graphs, that Hall would reach 200,000 residents in the 2010 Census, down slightly from his 1990 estimate of 205,000.

He said that Hall County has generally prepared itself well for recovery because of its diversified industry and economy, compared to Forsyth County, where the main industry has been growth.

South Forsyth is tops in the area in emerging from the economic doldrums, followed by certain pockets of Gwinnett.

“A tie for third is three parts of counties — south Cherokee, South Hall and little bits of Barrow,” said Norton, president of the Norton Agency in Gainesville. “We have certain ingredients here that are creating this attraction and the new energy we are seeing.”

Recovery won't be immediate, however.

“We're not going to be replenishing our pool of new houses,” he said. “What that does is create price stability on all the resales. By midsummer ... we're also going to see appreciation of traditional housing because they're no longer going to compete with new housing.”

As those markets improve, “I don't see a major construction boom until 2017,” Norton said.

Norton also projected that while Hall County retailers still need to re-employ workers and rebuild inventory, plans for major shopping centers that had been shelved because of the economy's downfall are still on the drawing board.

He projected that plans for those could be resurrected in 2012 and perhaps see construction in 2013.

Meanwhile, commercial centers at Interstate 985 and Spout Springs Road in Flowery Branch and Mundy Mill Road in Oakwood will continue to intensify, Norton said.

“We are seeing the emergence of a South Hall retail component,” he said. “If we continue to capture that, then we capture that sales-tax dollar. And we also capture jobs here.”