

5 How do we build TOD?

MARTA has created Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines to encourage walkable, attractive, and vibrant development around its transit stations. The Guidelines provide recommendations for land use, density, and the design of streets, public spaces, and parking and they give examples of successful development. Though many of these examples are from the Atlanta region, some station areas in our system have yet to benefit from this kind of compact, high-quality growth. The Guidelines suggest common standards and consistent policies that local communities, developers, and MARTA itself can follow to build more sustainable places around convenient transportation. This idea is even more important because our regional transit system is growing with planned services like the Atlanta BeltLine and a series of commuter rail, light rail, and rapid bus corridors.

Many different stakeholders can play a role in building TOD around our region. MARTA can participate directly with private developers to undertake projects on MARTA property. This kind of “joint development” results in new economic activity from retail concessions inside stations to large-scale mixed-use projects on MARTA land like the Lindbergh City Center. But not all TOD will occur on MARTA land. Growth in nearby communities and along adjacent streets also shapes the quality and the success of the station area. As a transit agency, MARTA does not control zoning, or local land use planning. Other public agencies, from state government to regional planning groups to counties and cities, can promote sustainable growth and high-quality communities by using a “tool box” of available strategies, including:

- station area improvements like streets, sidewalks, parks, trails, bicycle facilities and attractive lighting and signage
- the location of public buildings like schools, libraries, or agency offices next to transit stations, to make these services more accessible to the community while using public investment, that needs to be made anyway to promote TOD
- tax allocation districts, elderly and workforce housing programs, and other innovative financing mechanisms
- targeted use of existing finance programs for mixed-income, elderly, and workforce housing
- special TOD zoning codes to create walkable, enjoyable mixed-use environments with less required parking

Zoning is one of the most basic tools for creating thriving station areas. MARTA will continue to work hand-in-hand with local authorities to encourage zoning that promotes TOD, and to support TOD-friendly zoning codes that have already been adopted.

While TOD requires coordinated action, we can all be advocates for Smart Growth in our region by shopping and dining in transit-oriented developments, speaking up for good transit and good station plans in our community and neighborhood planning efforts, and supporting government efforts to use the full TOD “toolbox”.

TOD is everyone’s business, and MARTA hopes that its Guidelines will help the entire community of TOD stakeholders—transit agencies, local governments, regional planners, community groups, developers, and especially the general public—to achieve it.

For more information on the MARTA TOD Guidelines, please contact Ted Tarantino, Manager, Joint Development at 404-848-5397 or ttarantino@itsmarta.com



City of Chamblee
GEORGIA

Transit Oriented Development

1 What is Transit Oriented Development (TOD)?

What exactly do we mean by TOD? It is development that occurs within walking distance of transit and where the buildings, streets, and open spaces are designed primarily for pedestrians. While every place and every project is different, TOD usually combines the following qualities:

- It is concentrated and dense relative to its surroundings. This doesn’t mean that all TOD should be uniformly big or dense—far from it. But compared to the surrounding areas, TOD is denser for a simple reason—so that more people can take advantage of transit by living or working within walking distance of the station.
- It has a rich mix of land uses. TOD is often referred to as “place-making” or as a “transit village.” This means a mixed-use environment, where people live, work, go to school, shop, obtain services, and have fun. The full menu of activities isn’t necessarily found at every station. But a lively mix of uses makes transit more convenient and turns station areas into vibrant places.
- It has a great pedestrian environment. Transit-oriented development is pedestrian-oriented development. The streets, sidewalks, plazas, and stations are safe and active, and street-level shops make walking interesting.
- It takes a new approach to parking. TOD doesn’t mean “no cars.” Even with transit nearby, many people will come and go by automobile and need a place to park. But TOD requires less parking than non-transit locations, and uses share parking wherever possible. Lots and garages are in the background and don’t dominate the street front experience.



2 The Benefits of TOD

Transit-oriented development benefits its immediate surroundings as well as the larger community. TOD often takes the form of well-designed neighborhood or town centers—convenient and lively destinations for people who live nearby. By providing attractive, interesting places to live, work, shop, go to school, have fun, or obtain services—often within walking distance of each other—transit-oriented neighborhood and town centers help create a healthier and more enjoyable quality of life.

Transit-oriented development can help local communities grow economically. Compact, mixed use development helps strengthen and diversify the local tax base, while demands for new public services are minimized by TOD's efficient development footprint, which makes better use of infrastructure investments already made. TOD can make housing more affordable simply by reducing commuting costs—a growing share of what it costs a family to live and work in Metro Atlanta. This way, more teachers, firefighters, nurses, and other community workers can live close to their jobs.

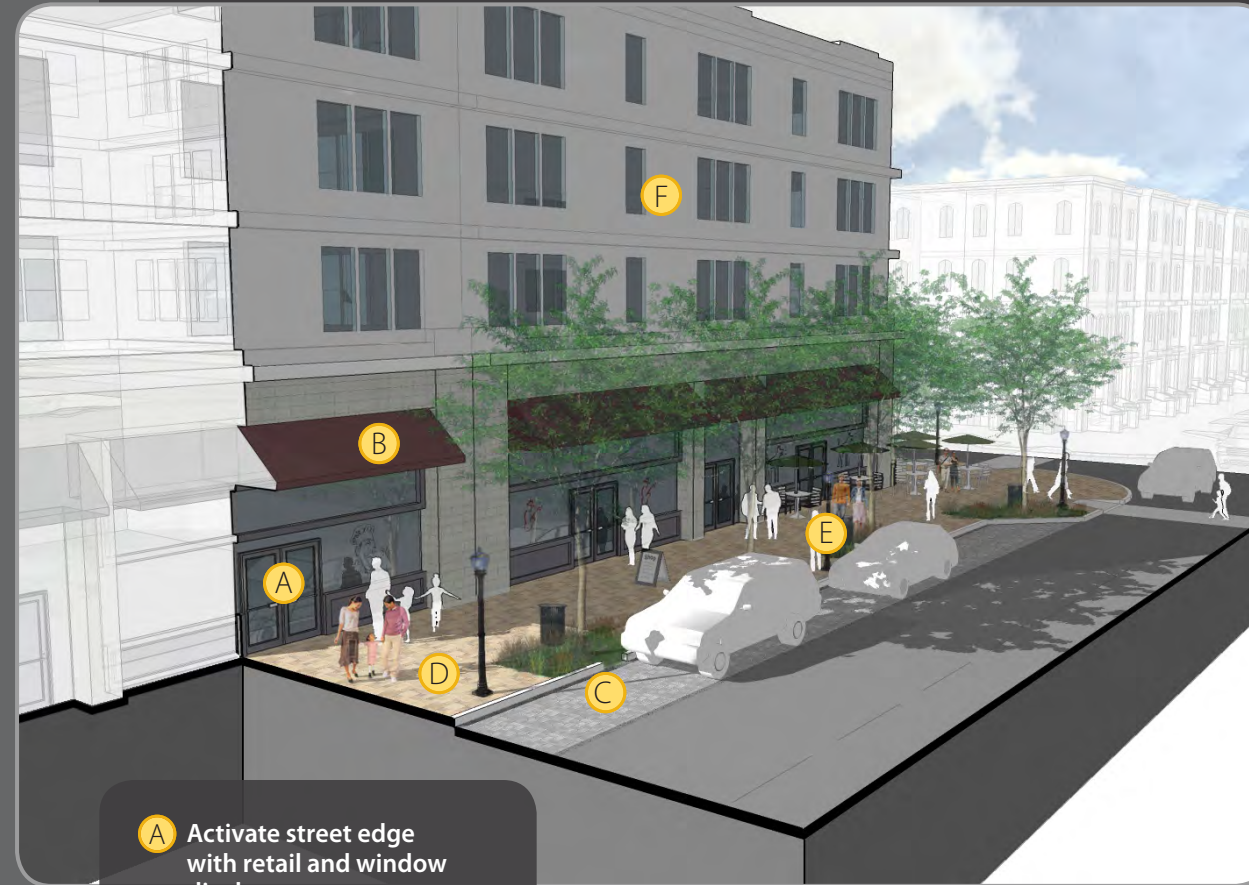
TOD can make Metro Atlanta itself more competitive with other metropolitan regions in the United States and the world. People, capital, and ideas are increasingly mobile and transferrable. It's no secret that while our region has great competitive advantages—hundreds of thousands of talented people, great universities, the world's busiest airport, great weather—perhaps our biggest disadvantage is traffic congestion, which keeps getting worse. An expanded regional transit network with development organized around it can make a big difference as we plan our future. TOD can reduce traffic congestion, preserve more open space, use less water, and improve the air we breathe. Throughout the United States, communities, regions, developers, and average citizens are coming to recognize that "Smart Growth" is the key to more sustainable development, less traffic congestion, and a better, healthier quality of life. For Metro Atlanta, Smart Growth means TOD.



3 Design Principles for TOD

Though transit stations range from downtown urban settings to smaller neighborhood centers, most successful TOD follows a few simple important planning and design principles, as illustrated in the diagram on the left:

- Building entries and doors should face the street.
- Wherever possible, buildings should feature shops, restaurants, and services like doctors' offices or dry cleaners at the street level.
- The street front should be visually interesting with retail displays, signage, awnings and windows.
- Plazas, pocket parks and outdoor seating areas should provide a variety of comfortable gathering spots.
- Sidewalks should be wide and include amenities like street furniture, pedestrian-friendly lighting, trees, and landscaping.
- Curbside parking is usually desirable, but off-street parking lots and garages should never be in front of buildings. They should be designed to avoid blank walls or dead spaces that break up the street.



A Activate street edge with retail and window displays.

B Awnings provide shade and visually frame the street.

C Furniture zones and planting areas provide pedestrian amenities.

D Use durable, porous, and easily maintained paving materials.

E Lighting should be designed for people—brightening the area at street level but not projecting into residential units above.

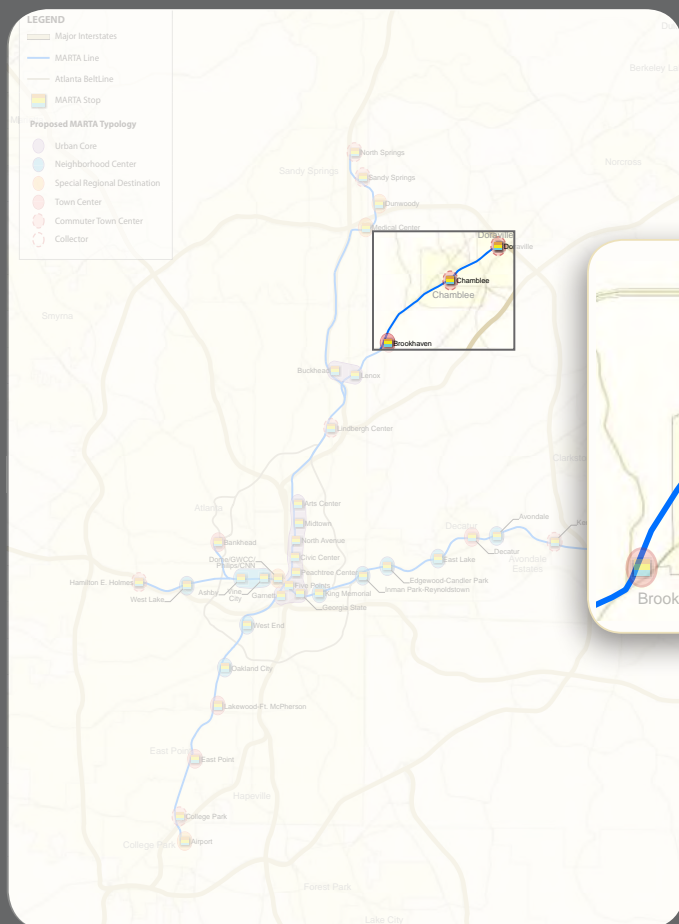
F Mixed use development provides a variety of activity and eyes on the street.

4 What Does TOD Mean for You and Your Community?

Not everyone will choose to live in a TOD setting. But having a well-designed and lively station area can be an asset for everyone in the community. TOD can draw businesses and amenities that might not otherwise be built, including new restaurants, grocery stores, doctors' offices, parks and libraries. Creating a more active transit-oriented "town center" at Chamblee Station could bring some of these desirable amenities closer to existing neighborhoods. And TOD almost always means that a community can grow with less traffic and less pollution.

Another goal of TOD is to make it easier, safer, and more convenient for transit users to get to their local station by bicycle or on foot. This may mean redesigning some stations, where appropriate, to provide better pedestrian and bicycle access. But it may also mean attracting more mixed use development along streets leading to the station to make them safer and more comfortable for walking and to help people combine everyday needs like a stop at the drug store with their walk to the station. The diagrams of the Chamblee Station area, for example, show opportunities to create a more vibrant environment that mixes housing, shops, offices, and civic uses.

City of Chamblee Station



The City of Chamblee is host to Chamblee Station, a “commuter town center” station in MARTA’s station typology. As the next-to-last stop on MARTA’s northbound Doraville route and with convenient proximity to the intersection of I-285 and I-85 N, Chamblee Station is well positioned to serve regional in-bound commuters.



The City of Chamblee, through planning, regulatory, and capital improvement initiatives, has also aggressively pursued the creation of a town center and supportive “village” districts in close proximity to the station, with the explicit goal of facilitating transit-oriented development. It is the dual roles of Chamblee Station as a commuter destination and city center that provide enormous opportunity for creating a vibrant TOD environment.

Chamblee Station:

The station is surrounded by a range of land uses. There are new mixed-use buildings and older commercial structures across Peachtree Road, and to the south of the station is DeKalb-Peachtree Airport. The north and south sides of the station, which are separated by the rail line, are at different stages of realizing the vision of recent City of Chamblee planning efforts. MARTA property north of the station consists of a narrow strip of surface parking facing Peachtree Road; a portion of this parking lot was redeveloped as the Chalfont on Peachtree Lofts, one of MARTA’s most successful joint development projects and part of a wave of new loft development near the station and the emerging city center. South of the station, a larger surface parking lot serves MARTA commuters, and is part of Chamblee’s planned International Village area.

The vision for Chamblee Station as a part of a town center concept was articulated in the 2000 Chamblee LCI plan and later revisited in a 2008 LCI update. The 2006 Chamblee Comprehensive Plan re-emphasizes the City’s goals regarding TOD. The plans have consistently addressed the MARTA station’s relationship to the rest of the proposed town center area in terms of redevelopment of key properties and improved connectivity for all modes of transportation.

2006 Chamblee Comprehensive Plan Update

- One of the primary development strategies in the Comprehensive Development Plan is the utilization of the Chamblee MARTA station as a development node.
- To create a pedestrian oriented town center with a focus on transit, a variety of strategies are deployed: encouraging a mix of uses, prioritizing connectivity, improving infrastructure, building landscape and streetscape elements, integrating focal points such as plazas and parks, and improving street-level facades.
- After completion of the 2000 LCI study, the City revised its Development Codes to establish design standards, parking requirements, and guiding principles to support TOD in this area.

2008 Chamblee LCI

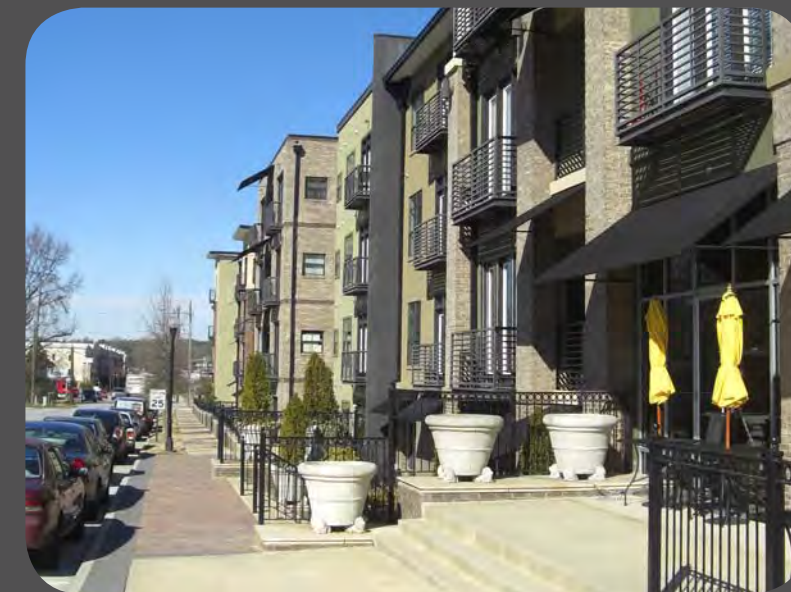
- The City of Chamblee LCI Study addressed the Chamblee MARTA Station property and surrounding areas, including several blocks adjacent to Peachtree Road north of the station and several blocks south of the station, between New Peachtree Road and Dekalb-Peachtree Airport.
- The LCI study addressed several TOD-related goals, with the primary goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly civic center for Chamblee, anchored by the MARTA station. This center would build a distinct identity for the City as it transitions out of its industrial phase.
- Strategies recommended in support of the study’s goals fall into three broad categories: MARTA site improvements; land use changes; and circulation improvements.



New townhomes near the station add needed density to the station area.



Chamblee MARTA station entrance



New development near the station with residential above ground floor retail.

Development Opportunity Diagram: Chamblee Station

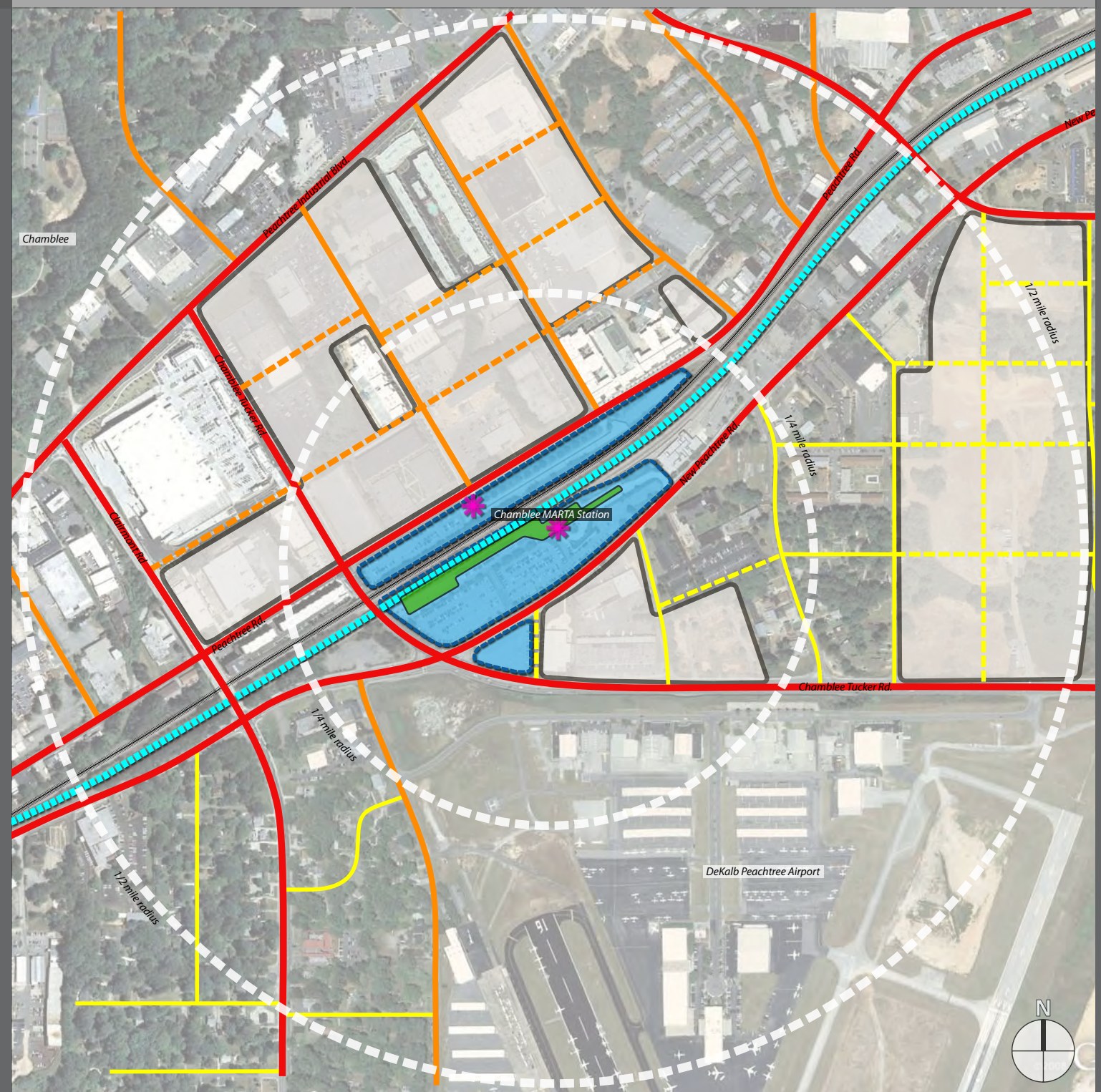


Chamblee Station:

Similar to other MARTA stations, the Chamblee Station property is split in half by the presence of the rail line. While this limits the connectivity between those parcels, the concentration of redevelopment will likely take place where new investment has already occurred along Peachtree Rd. Development is limited to the south due to the presence of the airport and associated land use restrictions.

- Development Potential
- Barriers
- Constraints
- Entrances
- MARTA Site Boundary
- Station Footprint

Connectivity and Blocks Diagram: Chamblee Station



The diagram above illustrates existing and potential street connectivity and block sizes. A finer grid could be established north of the station by introducing a series of cross streets. Additional streets will improve circulation and create more developable blocks.

- Development Potential
- Proposed Roads
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Existing Roads
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Interstate
- Entrances
- MARTA Site Boundary
- Station Footprint
- MARTA Line
- Rail Line