

2026 NAIOP School Challenge

Case Statement

The success of City Springs Phase I transformed Sandy Springs from a suburban crossroads into a legitimate municipal core. With its performing arts center and community gathering space, the City created a central "living room" that hosts hundreds of annual events and anchors a burgeoning downtown district. For the City, this development is the cornerstone of its identity, but the vision is not yet complete. Across the street lies an approximately four-acre land assembly known as Phase II (See Exhibit 1), the critical next step in establishing Sandy Springs as a premier, walkable urban center.

Emily Chen is ten months into her role at Peachtree Urban Advisors, where she has quickly built a reputation as a high performer who is as comfortable in a community planning meeting as she is in a complex Excel waterfall. A proud graduate of Emory University, Emily still carries the momentum from her team's victory in the 2025 NAIOP School Challenge. She is eager to prove that her academic success wasn't just theory, but a blueprint for delivering real-world results in high-stakes environments.

When the City of Sandy Springs asked Peachtree Urban Advisors to conduct a feasibility study of the Phase II development plan, Emily stepped forward to lead the analysis. The City's vision is bold and civically inspired, aiming to complete the district with a specific mix of uses. The original program, which Emily must now evaluate, includes:

- Boutique Hotel: 100+ keys
- Class-A Office: ~75,000 SF
- Curated Retail & Restaurants: ~25,000 SF
- Luxury Condominiums: 150 units
- Shared Parking: ~750 spaces

As Emily dives into the current market data, she quickly recognizes the complexity of the challenge. While the placemaking vision is compelling, real estate capital markets have grown increasingly selective. Securing financing for a program of this scale and density has become exceptionally difficult.

Emily views this not as a conflict, but as a professional puzzle. She knows that for a project of this magnitude to break ground, it must be "financeable" without losing the soul of the City's aspirations. Her task is to refine the program, balancing the mix of uses to ensure it will attract an institutional capital partner while also ensuring the City Council sees a project that honors the high standard established by Phase I.

This is Emily's moment to shine: drafting a market-driven plan that honors the City's vision while also generating the returns necessary to turn the Phase II vision into reality.