

Public Hearing: YES NO

Department: Planning & Sustainability

SUBJECT:

COMMISSION DISTRICT(S): Commission District 04 Super District 06

Application of the Director of Planning & Sustainability for a text amendment to Chapter 5: Small Area Plans of the DeKalb County Comprehensive Land Use Plan to consider the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan document for inclusion.

PETITION NO: N6-2024-0868 TA-24-1247127

PROPOSED USE: Adoption of the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan for inclusion.

LOCATION: N/A

PARCEL NO. : N/A

INFO. CONTACT: Brian Brewer, Planning & Transportation Administrator, Long Range Planning

PHONE NUMBER: 404-371-2155

PURPOSE:

Application of the Director of Planning & Sustainability for a text amendment to Chapter 5: Small Area Plans of the DeKalb County Comprehensive Land Use Plan to consider the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan document for inclusion.

RECOMMENDATION:

COMMUNITY COUNCIL: (CC-4): Full cycle deferral.

PLANNING COMMISSION: Pending.

PLANNING STAFF: Approval.

STAFF ANALYSIS: The applicant is seeking to incorporate the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan document's general vision, policies, and goals as guidance for future development of the planned area. The City of Clarkston, Georgia, is home to a diversity of communities from around the globe. Designated as a refugee resettlement community and referred to as the most diverse square mile in America, individuals and families move to the Clarkston area to utilize immigrant and refugee services, relatively affordable housing, and economic opportunities in the region. These refugee and immigrant communities have unique needs, which the Global City – Memorial Drive Community Revitalization Plan seeks to address. The area also has substantial affordable housing stock in need of reinvestment and stabilization to preserve safe, affordable housing for residents for years to come. The Community Revitalization Plan offers specific guidance on how private, public, and non-profit entities may further stabilize and preserve affordable housing in the area. The Community Vision statement articulates the overall vision for the Community. The Community Priorities further define this vision with specific objectives the plan seeks to address. These priorities were developed through discussions with community stakeholders and engagement with the public and inform the plan's development. Community Vision: The Global City – Memorial Drive Community will be a diverse and welcoming community that provides access to resources, jobs, educational opportunities, and affordable, quality housing to residents of all backgrounds. The Community Priorities further define the Community Vision and provide specific objectives the plan seeks to address. These priorities were determined by community stakeholders and members' Community Priorities as follows: • Provide resources to address the diverse needs of the area's refugee and immigrant communities. • Provide and preserve safe and affordable housing opportunities for residents at all income levels. • Invest in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure to improve local connectivity and mobility. • Increase access to jobs and educational

opportunities, community resources, and amenities. • Improve public safety through equitable, community-based approaches in partnership with local law enforcement. • Maintain local buildings and infrastructure to support neighborhood health and safety. • Develop strong partnerships between local government, businesses, community organizations, and institutions *Chapter 5: Small Area Plans, of the DeKalb County 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan* recognized the need to amend the policies of the document at a more localized level through the creation of the Small Area Plans Program. Small Area Plans (SAPs) cover a smaller area than a comprehensive plan and are intended to address specific land use and development issues at a finer level of detail. These plans support the general vision, policies and goals of the community, but allow for a greater degree of detail in guiding development. They may have their own sets of specific policies to shape development, and can include elements such as design guidelines, standards for transitions in development intensities and uses, additional standards for mixed use, investments in infrastructure, connectivity, and greater opportunities for input and control from local residents and businesses. SAPs can take a variety of forms, such as Livable Center Initiatives (LCIs), Master Active Living Plans (MALPs), Corridor Plans, or TOD plans, and are the primary tool by which the county intends to shape development in Activity Centers and along Commercial Redevelopment Corridors. The GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan meets the intent of the Small Area Plans Program. For this reason, Staff recommends “Approval” of the Text Amendment to *Chapter 5: Small Area Plans of the 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan*.

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Pending.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOTE/RECOMMENDATION: (CC-4): Full Cycle Deferral 8-0-0.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

Chief Executive Officer
Michael Thurmond

Interim Director
Cedric Hudson

Planning Commission Hearing Date: Thursday, September 12, 2024
Board of Commissioners Hearing Date: Thursday, September 26, 2024

STAFF ANALYSIS

Case No.:	TA-24-1247127, 2024-0868	Agenda #: N.6	
Address:	N/A	Commission District: 04	Super District: 06
Parcel ID(s):	N/A		
Request:	Application of the Director of Planning & Sustainability for a text amendment to Chapter 5: Small Area Plans of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This application is intended to incorporate the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan document's general vision, policies, and goals as guidance for future development of the planned area.		
Property Owner(s):	N/A		
Applicant/Agent:	DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability Department Director		
Acreage:	N/A		
Existing Land Use:			
Surrounding Properties:	North: N/A East: NA South: N/A West: N/A		
Comprehensive Plan:	N/A	Consistent X	Inconsistent

Staff Recommendation: Approval.

The applicant is seeking to incorporate the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan document's general vision, policies, and goals as guidance for future development of the planned area.

The City of Clarkston, Georgia, is home to a diversity of communities from around the globe. Designated as a refugee resettlement community and referred to as the most diverse square mile in America, individuals and families move to the Clarkston area to utilize immigrant and refugee services, relatively affordable housing, and economic opportunities in the region. These refugee and immigrant communities have unique needs, which the Global City – Memorial Drive Community Revitalization Plan seeks to address.

The area also has substantial affordable housing stock in need of reinvestment and stabilization to preserve safe, affordable housing for residents for years to come. The Community Revitalization Plan offers specific guidance on how private, public, and non-profit entities may further stabilize and preserve affordable housing in the area.

The Community Vision statement articulates the overall vision for the Community. The Community Priorities further define this vision with specific objectives the plan seeks to address. These priorities were developed through discussions with community stakeholders and engagement with the public and inform the plan's development.

Community Vision: The Global City – Memorial Drive Community will be a diverse and welcoming community that provides access to resources, jobs, educational opportunities, and affordable, quality housing to residents of all backgrounds.

The Community Priorities further define the Community Vision and provide specific objectives the plan seeks to address.

These priorities were determined by community stakeholders and members' Community Priorities as follows:

- Provide resources to address the diverse needs of the area's refugee and immigrant communities.
- Provide and preserve safe and affordable housing opportunities for residents at all income levels.
- Invest in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure to improve local connectivity and mobility.
- Increase access to jobs and educational opportunities, community resources, and amenities.
- Improve public safety through equitable, community-based approaches in partnership with local law enforcement.
- Maintain local buildings and infrastructure to support neighborhood health and safety.
- Develop strong partnerships between local government, businesses, community organizations, and institutions

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opportunities for input and control from local residents and businesses. SAPs can take a variety of forms, such as Livable Center Initiatives (LCIs), Master Active Living Plans (MALPs), Corridor Plans, or TOD plans, and are the primary tool by which the county intends to shape development in Activity Centers and along Commercial Redevelopment Corridors.

The GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan meets the intent of the Small Area Plans Program. For this reason, Staff recommends “Approval” of the Text Amendment to *Chapter 5: Small Area Plans of the 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan*.

DRAFT

Global City – Memorial Drive

Community Revitalization Plan



DeKalb County
GEORGIA



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PROPERTIES

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Plan Purpose

DeKalb County is home to a diversity of communities from around the globe. Designated as a refugee resettlement community and referred to as the most diverse square mile in America, individuals and families move to the Clarkston area and DeKalb County to utilize immigrant and refugee services, relatively affordable housing, and economic opportunities in the region. This plan focuses on an area of unincorporated DeKalb County just southwest of the neighboring city of Clarkston near the Memorial Drive and North Indian Creek Drive corridors. While neighboring municipalities have planned for the influx of these diverse communities, this area of unincorporated DeKalb County is in need of a strategy to plan for these growing populations and improve resources and public infrastructure for current and future residents.

This plan provides a framework for action by identifying key areas for improvement with the goal of attracting State and Federal resources, including Low Income Housing Tax Credits and ERA2 funding, as well as specific public and private grants. Plan recommendations are guided by the Community Vision and Community Priorities which were developed through discussions with local stakeholders and engagement with the community members.

Community Vision: The Global City – Memorial Drive Community is a diverse and welcoming community that provides access to resources, jobs, educational opportunities, and affordable, quality housing to residents of all backgrounds.

The Community Priorities further define the Community Vision and provide specific objectives the plan seeks to address. These priorities were determined by community stakeholders and members

Community Priorities:

- Provide and preserve safe and affordable housing opportunities for residents at all income levels.
- Invest in pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure to improve local connectivity and mobility.
- Increase access to jobs and educational opportunities, community resources, and amenities.
- Improve public safety through equitable, community-based approaches in partnership with local law enforcement.
- Maintain local buildings and infrastructure to support neighborhood health and safety.
- Provide resources to address the diverse needs of the area's refugee and immigrant communities.
- Strengthen partnerships between local government, businesses, community organizations, and institutions.

Study Area Context

The study area is situated in north-central DeKalb County, directly east of Interstate-285 and north of Memorial Drive. The area is located just south of the City of Clarkston and Georgia State University – Perimeter College's Clarkston Campus and the Georgia Piedmont Technical College are situated in the eastern portion of the study area.

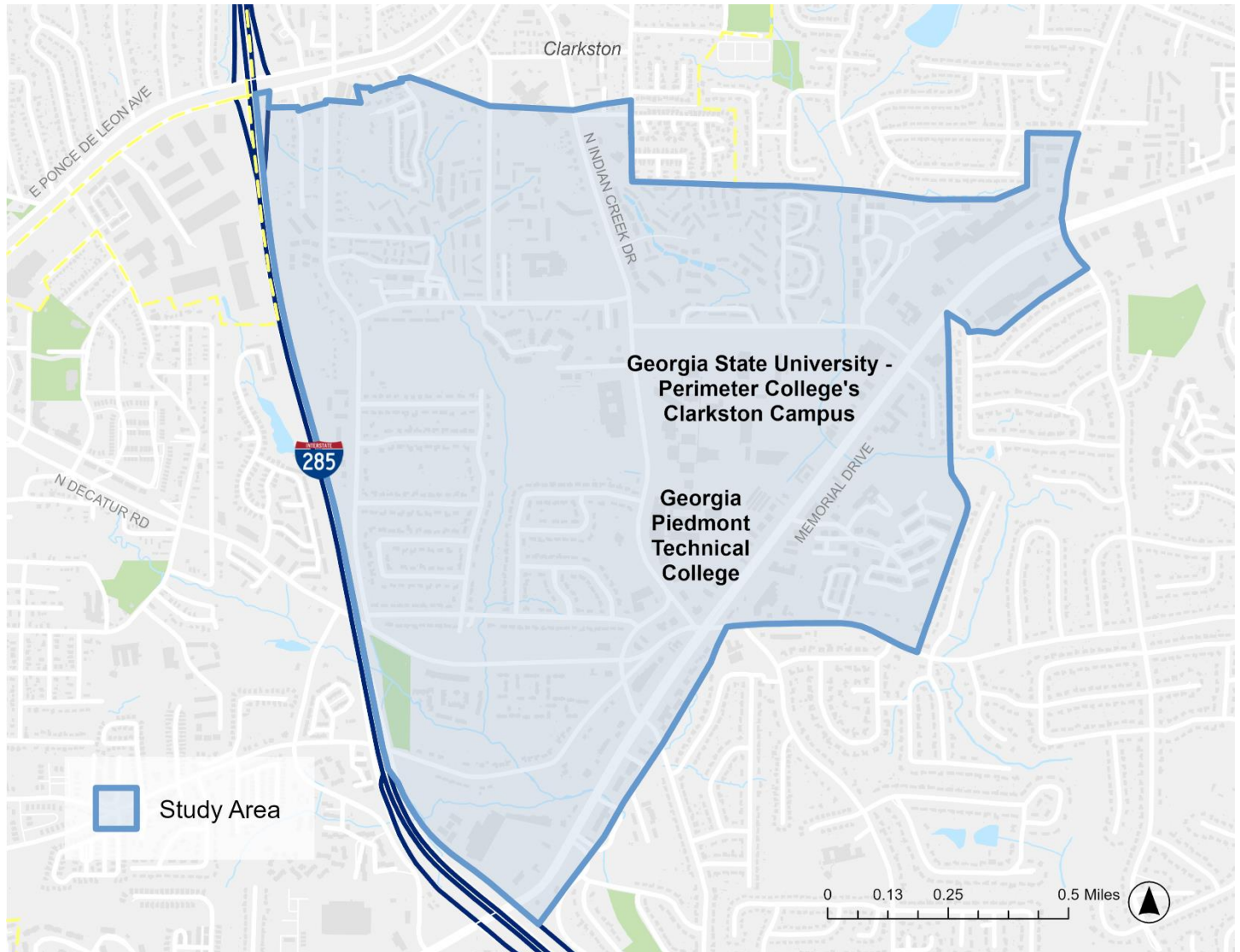


Figure 1. Study Area Context

Needs Assessment and Existing Conditions

An existing conditions and needs assessment was conducted for the Global City – Memorial Drive study area. This analysis evaluated land uses, housing, infrastructure, and the transportation network within the study area and builds upon the findings and recommendations made in the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan and Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan.

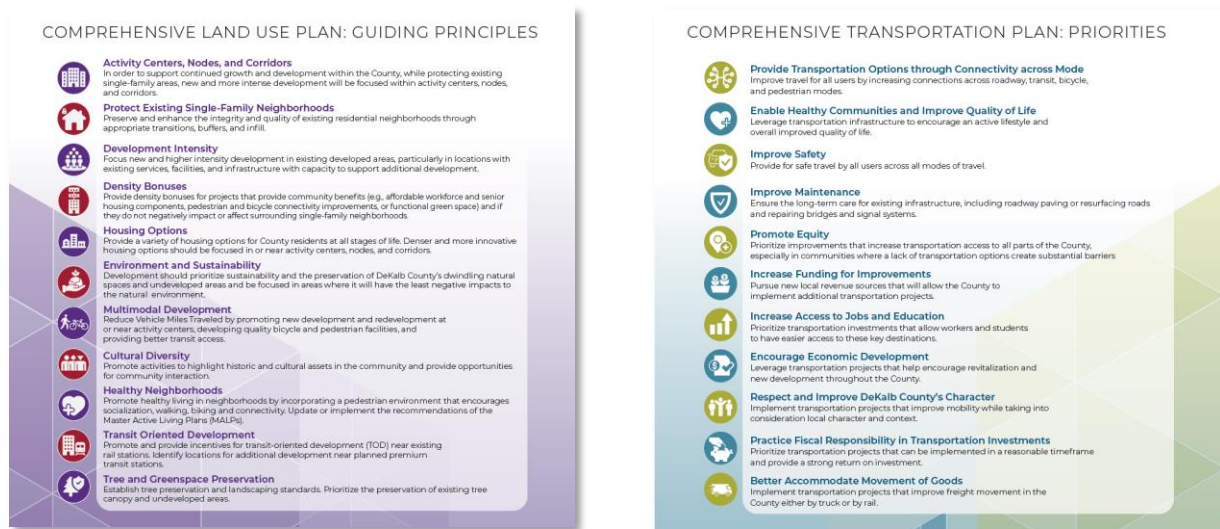
Previous Vision and Goals

The DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan and the Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan identify priorities for the county and the Memorial Drive corridor. Key takeaways from these priorities were used to inform the visions and goals of the Community Revitalization Plan and are summarized below.

Key Takeaways: DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan

The DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan identifies guiding principles and priorities for land use and transportation decisions in the county. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan's guiding principles support dense development in existing developed area, increased housing options, multi-modal and transit-oriented development, and greenspace preservation. The Comprehensive Transportation Plan's priorities include enhanced connectivity of jobs, educational opportunities, and movement of people and goods through increased transportation options.

Both the land use and transportation priorities outlined in these plans contribute to the creation of connected, sustainable, and livable places. By considering the needs of the community and promoting equitable decision-making, these priorities aim to ensure that land use and transportation decisions benefit all residents.



Key Takeaways: Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan

The Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan identified three thematic strategies to increase the revitalization of the corridor: Change the Perception, Create Demand, and Encourage Healthy Redevelopment.

These strategies aim to create positive perceptions of the corridor on Memorial Drive to generate demand for new development by implementing public sector initiatives and creating a positive regulatory environment to attract private sector investment.

STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

While there are many notable and positive things happening on the corridor, this section of Memorial Drive has a perception problem. Initiatives and activities need to take place to encourage people to rethink these perceptions and see the corridor in a different light.

STRATEGY

2

CREATE DEMAND

Because it has effectively been 30 years since there was demand for new development on the corridor, public sector initiatives will need to take place that fill in that gap and create demand where there is currently none by the private sector. By leading the way, private sector investment can follow.

STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

A positive regulatory environment can make it easier for the private sector to invest in the corridor by offsetting the risk associated with redevelopment.

Zoning and Future Land Use

Existing Zoning

The study area is home to Georgia State University – Perimeter College’s Clarkston Campus and the Georgia Piedmont Technical College.

The area is currently zoned for a mix of residential, commercial, office, and mixed-uses and features both apartments and single-family homes, restaurants, clothing stores, international grocery stores, and auto dealerships. Most existing buildings and businesses on Memorial Drive are older and in suboptimal condition.

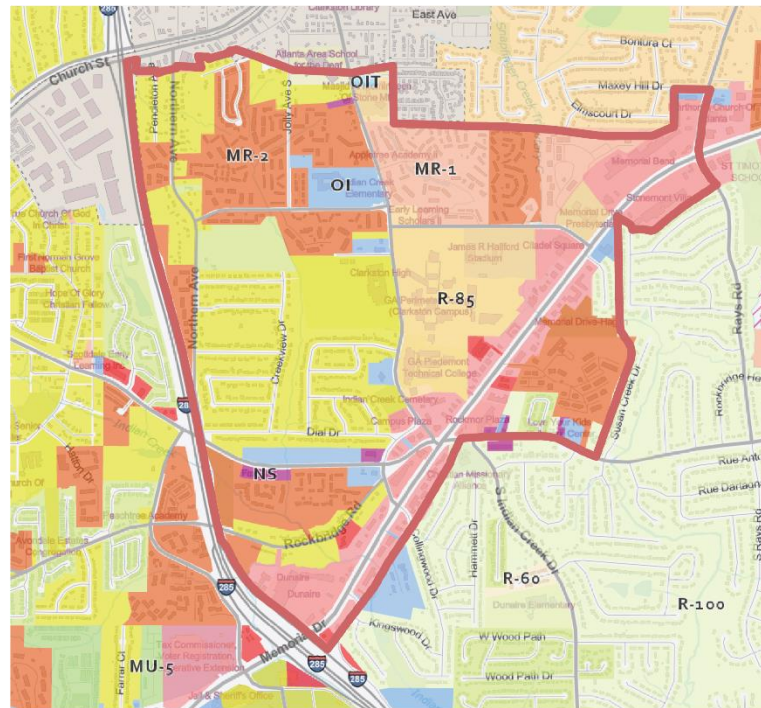


Figure 2. DeKalb County Zoning Map

Future Land Use

Future land use outlined in the DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan designates Town Center, Suburban, and Institutional Character Areas within the study area, promoting a mix of residential, commercial, and mixed-uses at varying levels of density.

The Town Center Character Area, accounting for a majority of the future land use within the study area, is an Activity Center intended to support more intense development. This designation supports a more dense, mixed-use development pattern than the existing residential zoning supports.

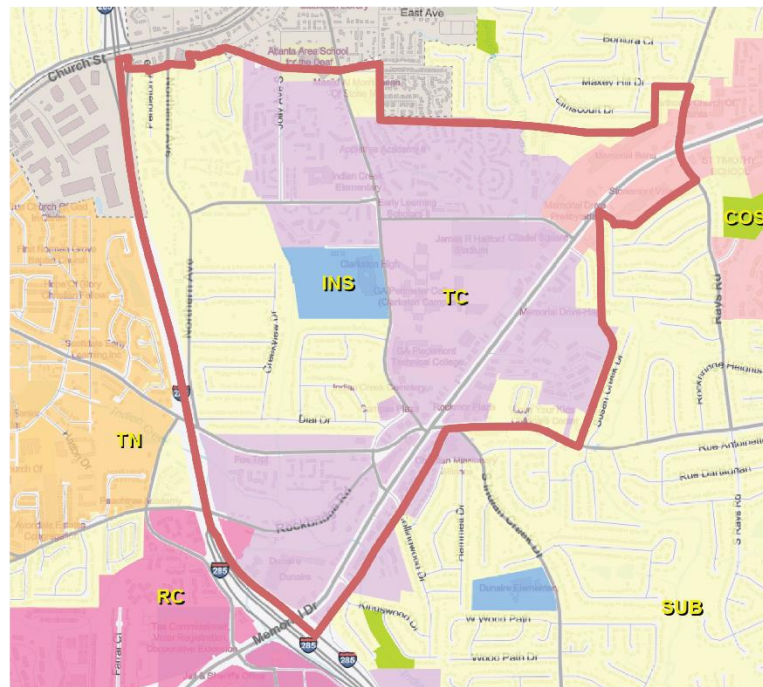


Figure 3. DeKalb County Future Land Use

Housing

Resident Demographics

Median Household Income

Household incomes in the study area are substantially lower than the median household income in DeKalb County. The median household income in Dekalb County is \$76,044, whereas median household income values for study area Census block groups ranging from **approximately \$25,000 to \$50,000**.

Resident Race & Ethnicity

The study area is home to a diverse population of individuals and families from around the globe, representing many races and ethnicities. Over half of all residents in the study area identify as Black or African American, and a quarter of residents identify as Asian. Approximately 15% of residents identify as white and Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and those identifying as two or more races make up about 5% of residents.

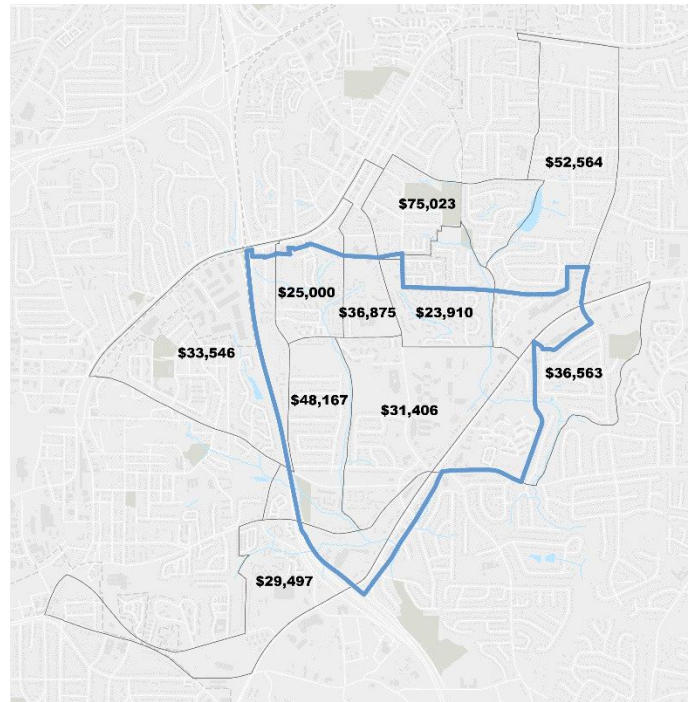


Figure 4. Median Household Income by Block Group

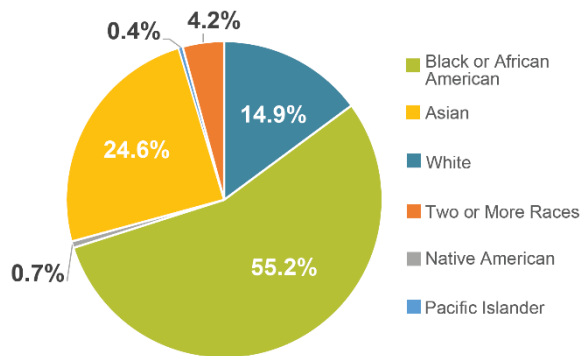


Figure 5. Resident Race in Study Area

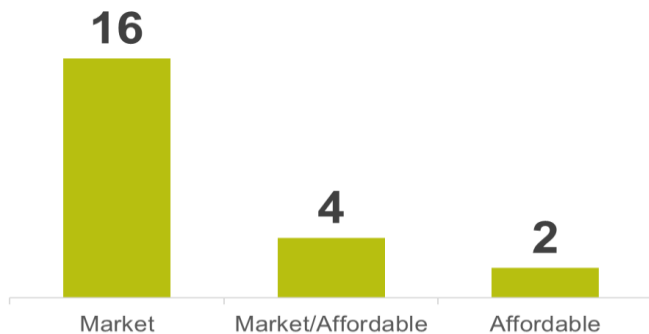


Figure 6. Market Rate and Affordable rental units.

Age of Rental Units

The multifamily housing stock in the study area is older, with an **average year built of 1972**. Only one of the 21 total multifamily complexes was constructed in the past 40 years, and only six have been renovated since 1993.

Rents

Many units in the study area are affordable, meaning they are either rent restricted to households earning below specific income levels, rent subsidized and reserved for those households with a Section 8 or other type of housing voucher, or naturally occurring affordable housing with market-rate, affordable rents.

Rents in the study area are low relative to the rest of the county, with an **average asking rent of approximately \$1,100** for rent restricted, rent stabilized, and market-rate units.

Transportation

Roadway Functional Classification

Figure 7 illustrates the roadways within and around the study area.

Interstate-285 runs along the western border of the study area, and Memorial Drive, a major arterial, runs along the southern and eastern portions of the study area.

While the study area has a good connectivity of major highways and roads, local roads are less connected.

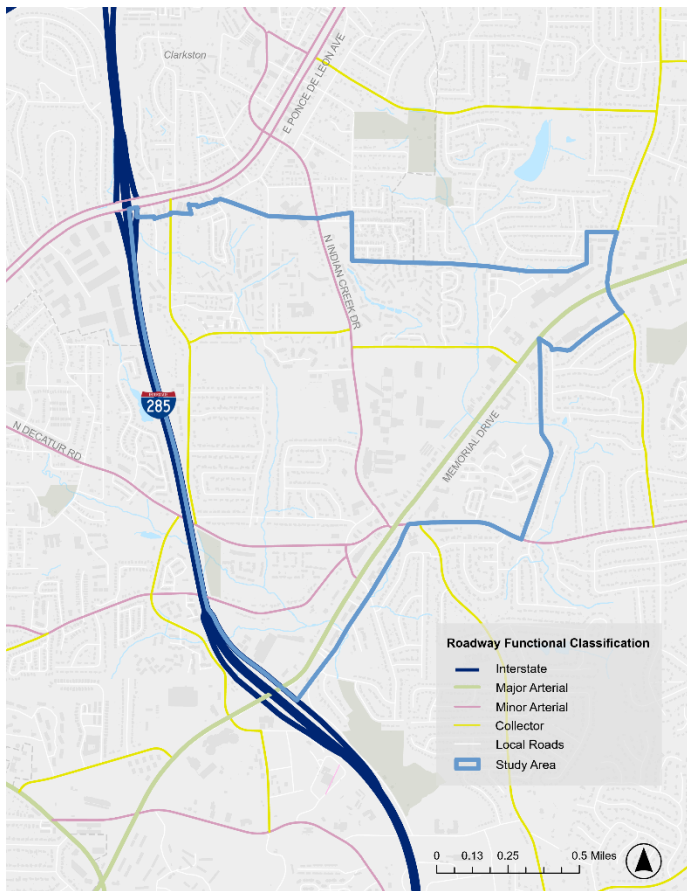


Figure 7. Roadway Functional Classification Map

Transit Network

MARTA provides transit service to the study area, and most of the study area is within a 10-minute walk to a MARTA bus stop. The following MARTA bus routes run through or along the study area:

- Route 125
- Route 117
- Route 221
- Route 121

The Xpress bus runs along Memorial Drive but does not stop in or near the study area.

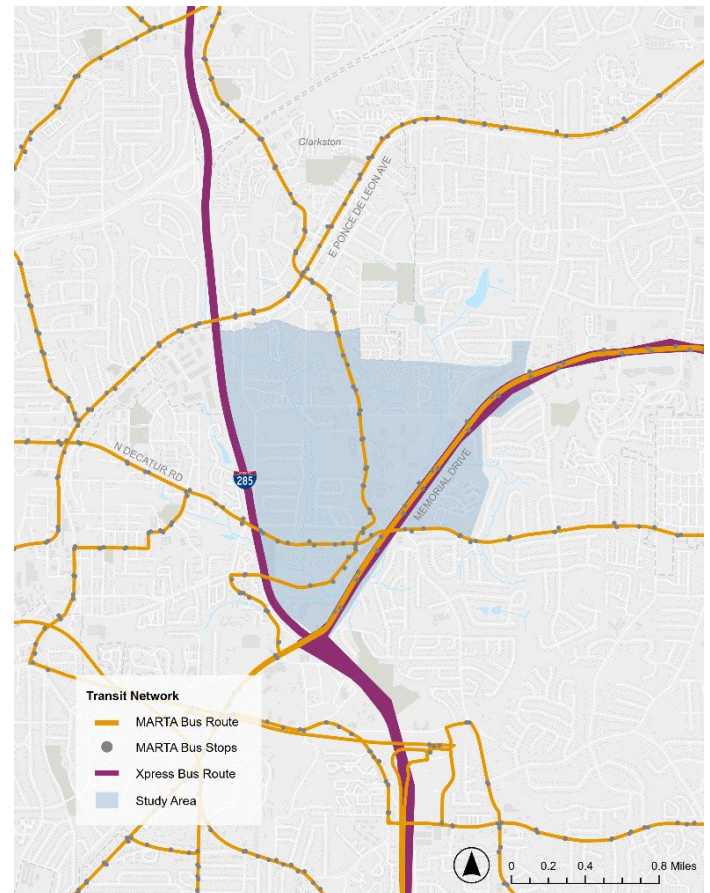


Figure 8. Transit Network Map

Trail and Sidewalk Network

The study area has a trail network at various stages of development. Figure 9 visualizes this trail network, as of 2018, that accommodates cyclists and pedestrians.

Sidewalks are present along major arterials, minor arterials, and collector roads providing connectivity throughout the study area.

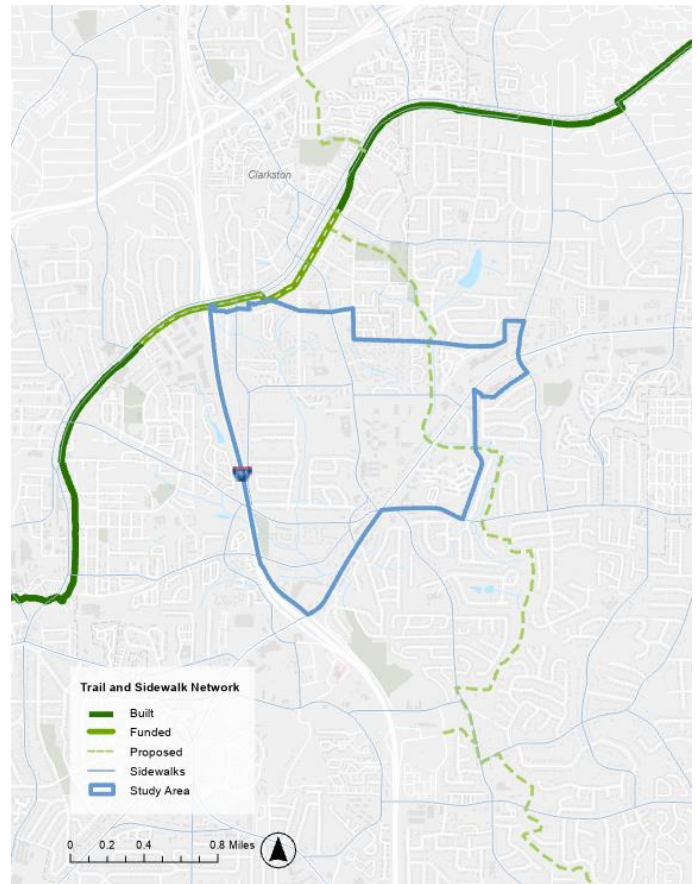


Figure 9. Trail and Sidewalk Network, DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan.

Plan Development

The Community Revitalization Plan utilized the existing conditions analysis, previous planning work, and feedback from stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities in the study and develop a series of recommendations. These include placetype recommendations that prioritize mixed-use redevelopment along Memorial Drive, entrepreneurial commercial development, greenspaces, improvements to the transportation network that increase walkability and connectivity throughout the study area and beyond, and potential partnerships that will help champion the plan to make these recommendations a reality.

The Proposed Study Area Map below illustrates preferred land use areas, potential greenspace opportunities, and key destinations referenced throughout the plan. It also identifies a potential microtransit loop and secondary transit improvements discussed in the Transportation Recommendations section.

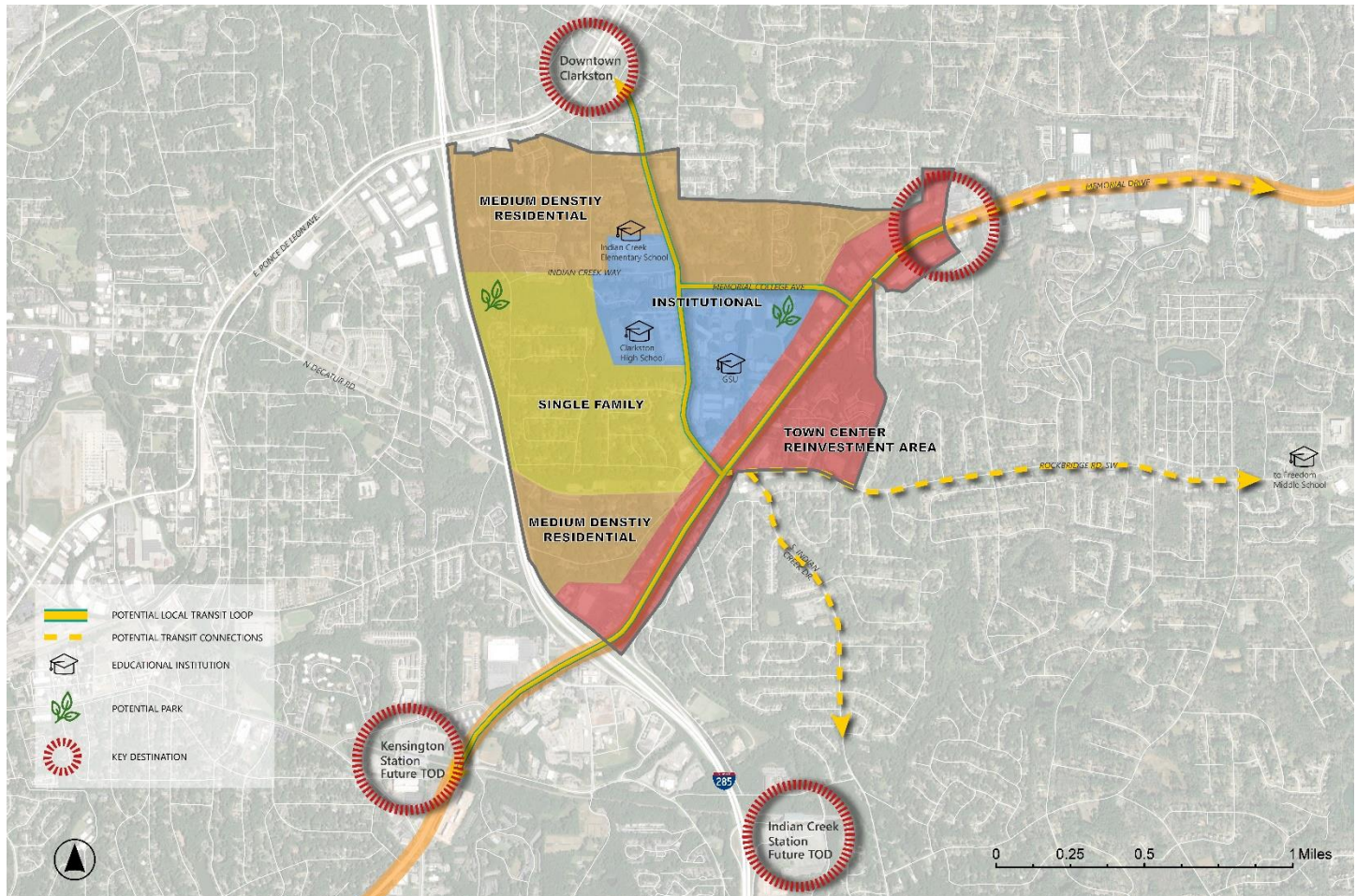


Figure 10. Proposed Study Area Map

As new investments are made in the surrounding area and transit-oriented development occurs at the nearby Kensington and Indian Creek MARTA stations, it's important to implement measures to preserve affordability before gentrification pressures build. This plan ultimately seeks to support the diverse communities within the study area and enhance opportunities for current and future residents to thrive.

Placetype Recommendations

The placetype recommendations for the study area build on the DeKalb Unified Plan's future land uses and the Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan, with additional guidance from community stakeholders. Recommended placetypes are broken down into four sub-areas: Medium Density Residential Area, Single-Family Area, Town Center Reinvestment Area, Greenspace Areas, and Institutional Areas. These placetype

recommendations are linked with plan’s housing and transportation recommendations to create a more connected and walkable community, increasing the livability for current residents.

Medium Density Residential Area

The Medium Density Residential Areas, symbolized in orange on Figure 10, represent areas currently defined predominately by mid to low-rise, multifamily housing. Many of these apartment buildings are older, and few have been recently renovated. Renovation of housing units while keeping residents in place and maintaining affordability is recommended for these reinvestment areas. The forthcoming Housing Recommendations section includes greater detail policies to help ensure rental housing in the area remains affordable and accessible to current residents.

Single-Family Area

The Single-Family Area, represented by the yellow area in the Figure 10, is characterized by low-density, single family detached housing. Maintaining this suburban placetype is recommended for the area. While home prices in this area are currently lower than the Atlanta MSA, new development nearby, including the implementation of the Indian Creek MARTA Station Transit-Oriented Development Master Plan, may create pressure on the housing market in and near the study area, causing property values and property taxes to increase. Strategies to mitigate these potential housing price increases are recommended in the forthcoming Housing Recommendations section.

Town Center Reinvestment Area

The Town Center Reinvestment Area is represented in the red on Figure 10 and runs along Memorial Drive. The area currently has a suburban development pattern, with predominately older, low rise-commercial buildings and large surface lots featuring a mix of auto shops and mechanics, international grocery stores and restaurants, and fast-food and chain restaurants.

The Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan refines the future land uses in the DeKalb Comprehensive Land Use Plan and proposes Regional Center and Town Center Character Areas along the Memorial Drive Corridor and within the study area, both of which include a greater density and intensity of uses than the corridor is currently defined by. Two areas within these Character Areas, Gateway West and Global City, each propose unique recommendations based on community input, which are summarized below.

Gateway West proposes a denser network of urban spaces achieved through incremental development, combined with public and green space development. Buildings in the Gateway West area are proposed at varying height and can support a mix of uses with the intention to act as an urban center in the region.

GATEWAY WEST



Figure 11. Gateway West images from the Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan.

The Global City area highlights the diversity of cultures in the community, calling for an urban environment supporting multi-story buildings, housing a mix of diverse restaurants and retail offerings and residential opportunities.

The plan recommends new developments be oriented toward sidewalks to activate pedestrian spaces. The plan also recommends a “Pedestrian Connections” area at a portion of North Indian Creek Drive, pictured to the right, that would re-orient the area to a more pedestrian friendly use and provide a space for residents and visitors to rest, host markets, or conduct community events.



GLOBAL CITY

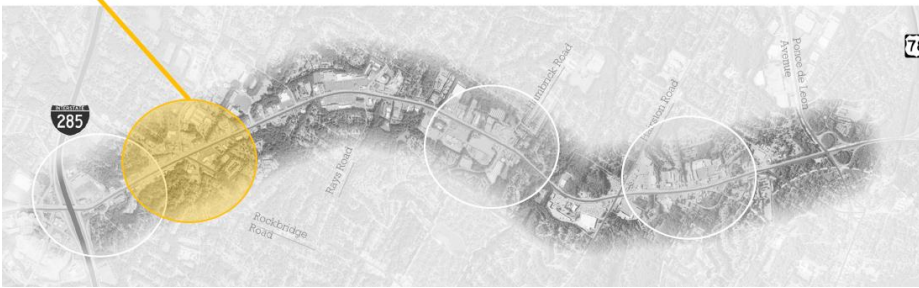


Figure 12. Global City images from the Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan.

The Town Center Reinvestment Area builds on recommendations in the Memorial Drive Revitalization Corridor Plan, calling for a greater density to align with Regional and Town Center Character Areas and buildings reoriented towards the street.

Future development in the area should include a mix of commercial and residential uses with the goal of providing additional housing units and enhanced economic opportunities for current and future residents. Many diverse communities from across the globe call the study area home, which presents unique challenges in building a thriving community. These communities need affordable spaces to exercise skills they bring to the region. The following case studies from Atlanta, Georgia and Minneapolis, Minnesota illustrate effective strategies for supporting economic development within diverse populations.

Atlanta BeltLine MarketPlace

The Atlanta BeltLine MarketPlace in Atlanta, Georgia is an initiative to aid small businesses in the Atlanta area, offering below-market rate leases to small businesses in shipping container spaces equipped with electricity and technology the businesses may need to succeed. These spaces are a lower cost option than brick and mortar spaces and can offer more flexibility to artisans and small businesses.



Figure 13. Atlanta BeltLine MarketPlace in Atlanta, Georgia.

Midtown Global Market

The Midtown Global Market in Minneapolis, Minnesota is a market dedicated to promoting economic, social and cultural assets of the state by providing spaces for diverse merchants. The market is supported by a mix of public, private, and non-profit partners, and offers leases to small businesses at below market rates. While the Midtown Global Market is conducted on a larger scale than a similar market would be in the study area, the mission to uplift culturally diverse communities would remain the same.



Figure 14. Midtown Global Market in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Greenspace Areas

Figure 10 identifies potential parks in the study area. While there are some existing parks in the surrounding area, such as Brookside Park on the westside of the study area, there are additional opportunities for community serving greenspaces. Two potential locations for new public space are proposed, with open space behind commercial properties on Memorial Drive and the James R Halford Stadium acting as an anchor for an expanded greenspace network. Leveraging the proximity to Georgia State University—Perimeter College’s Clarkston Campus, the plan envisions a walking path and playground along Snapfinger Creek, extending to Stoneview Park to provide recreation opportunities for families in the study area and further connecting the university campus to Memorial Drive.



Figure 15. Armend Park Playground and Confluence Trail, Fulton County.

Institutional Area

Elementary and higher education institutions, including GSU—Perimeter College’s Clarkston Campus, the Georgia Piedmont Technical College, and Clarkston High School, are situated in the center of the study area, visualized in blue on Figure 10. These institutions are assets to the study area and may provide opportunities for partnerships to achieve placetype and transportation recommendations throughout the plan.

The previously mentioned greenspace adjacent to GSU—Perimeter College’s Clarkston Campus and Memorial Drive is an opportunity for the college to expand its greenspace network at the Clarkston Campus and better connect with families in the surrounding area.

Housing Recommendations

Development in and near the study area, including Indian Creek MARTA Station Transit-Oriented Development and any redevelopment that occurs in the study area, may create pressure on the housing market, increasing rents and exacerbating property tax increases. The following recommendations center housing affordability to support the ability of current residents to continue living in the study area.

Multifamily Housing

Multifamily housing in the area is predominately older, with only a few buildings having been renovated since 2000. The plan recommends focusing on renovation and stabilization of these units, allowing current residents to stay in place and maintain their affordability. DeKalb County may consider offering property tax abatements to developers who build or renovate housing in the area to ensure affordability is maintained.

Beyond existing multifamily housing, DeKalb County may consider adopting an Affordable Housing Overlay District ordinance. The adoption of an Affordable Housing Overlay District could require developers to include a percentage of units with affordability requirements when building new multifamily product. Adopting the ordinance before an increase in development occurs is necessary to preserve affordability.

Single-Family Housing

Single-family housing in the study area is predominately concentrated in the Single-Family Area in Figure 10. Most single-family housing in the study area is older. Providing resources for renovation, property tax credits, and affordable homeownership opportunities for current and future residents is recommended.

In 2023, DeKalb County introduced the Equalized Homestead Option Sales Tax (EHOST) which is solely dedicated to property tax relief for county homeowners. Qualified homeowners receive an EHOST credit that reduces property tax liability. This credit helps to offset increases in property taxes.

To preserve desirability of the single family area, another approach could be partnering with the DeKalb Regional Land Bank to acquire vacant, blighted, or abandoned properties to return them to uses that benefit the community, like new affordable housing units, community public space, or other initiatives. Land banking parcels in the study area, particularly blighted properties that may contribute to public safety challenges, can aid in returning any blighted properties to productive, community- oriented uses.

Transportation Recommendations

The Transportation Recommendations aim to create a more connected community, where people are able to safely and comfortably access the goods and services they need on a daily basis. Many residents in the study area face language and cultural barriers. When making transportation improvements, entities should be mindful of these barriers, and design improvements in a way that communicates necessary information. This may be done using pictograms and/or including multiple languages in wayfinding and signage. Additionally, many residents in the study area do not drive, so walkability, bike-ability, and access to public transit should be a high priority for transportation improvements.

Circulatory Transit Network

To connect residents to services in the area and beyond, the plan recommends a circulatory micro transit network for the study area, potentially in partnership with the universities, serving as the primary transit loop in Figure 16. The loop will connect the Kensington MARTA Station, DeKalb County services at Memorial Drive I-285 Interchange, the Memorial Drive and North Indian Creek Drive Node, GSU—Perimeter College's Clarkston Campus and Georgia Piedmont Technical College, community services in south Clarkston, Memorial Drive Ministries and refugee services, and the Indian Creek MARTA station.

To supplement the proposed transit loop and provide robust connectivity, secondary transit options such as e-scooter and e-bikes could be provided. Transit improvements could also take the form of a public, on-call rideshare program that residents can access at discounted rates.

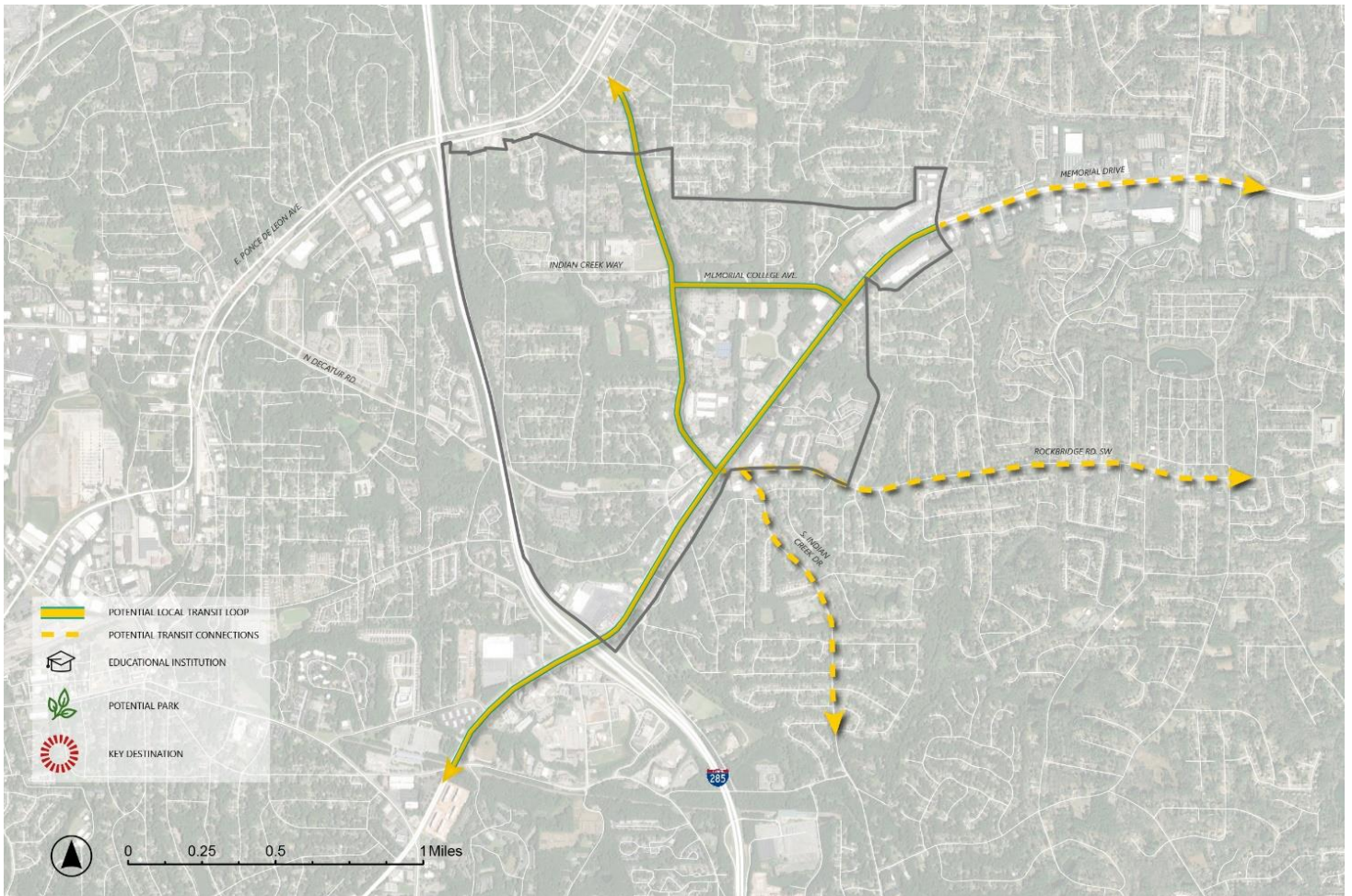


Figure 16. Proposed Circulatory Transit Network.

Enhanced Mobility on Memorial Drive and North Indian Creek Drive

North Indian Creek Drive runs through the heart of the study area, connecting residents to the Memorial Drive corridor, institutional campuses, and community services in Clarkston. While the North Indian Creek corridor currently has sidewalks on at least one side of the street, they are often narrow and close to the roadway, making them uncomfortable and potentially dangerous to use. Enhancing mobility in the corridor may come in the form of a multi-use trail, like the one pictured in Figure 17. A landscape strip and trees on either side of the path would further separate motor vehicle and pedestrian and cyclist traffic and provide shade for path users, enhancing the pedestrian and cyclist experience.



Figure 17. Winter's Chapel Path, Dunwoody, DeKalb County.

Although Memorial Drive currently has sidewalks on either side of the corridor, they are narrow, only accommodating pedestrians, and lack shade. Future enhancements to the corridor may include sidewalk widening to accommodate cyclists on a shared-use path and street trees to provide shade for pedestrians and cyclists. Opportunities to cross safely cross Memorial Drive are also limited. Future improvements to Memorial Drive should include HAWK signal crosswalks every 500 feet to allow pedestrians to safely cross the roadway and enhance connectivity to businesses on both sides of the corridor.

Sidewalk Network Improvements

While sidewalks are present along many of the main roads in the study area, they are generally on busy roads like North Indian Creek Road, are narrow and directly adjacent to the roadway, and do not have connections directly into many residential neighborhoods. The extension of sidewalks into residential areas is recommended to improve safety and accessibility.

Policies and Partnerships

The list below provides potential partners that may help to realize the recommendations provided in this plan.

- Refugee and Immigrant Services Organizations: The study area is home to many refugee and immigrant community organizations. Coordination among these organizations to further understand each community's needs will be important in implementing plan recommendations. These organizations may include:
 - Friends of Refugees
 - American Pathways
 - Women's Refugee Network
 - Congolese Community of Atlanta
 - Afghan American Alliance of Georgia
 - Syrian Community Network
 - Religious communities in the area
- Memorial Drive Business Community: Businesses along the Memorial Drive corridor and within the study area are key partners that can support local initiatives and plan implementation
- Higher Education Institutions
 - Georgia State University – Perimeter College's Clarkston Campus: Partnering with Perimeter College's Clarkston Campus and leveraging their resources may provide opportunities to increase greenspace and support implementation of a microtransit network in the study area.
 - Georgia Piedmont Technical College: Georgia Piedmont Technical College offers educational and job training opportunities for residents in the study area. The county should explore opportunities to partner with the college to expand and enhance these resources.
- Propel ATL: Propel ATL is an organization dedicated to ensuring all can ride, walk, and roll safely on Atlanta's streets. The organization offers free bike classes which may be beneficial for study area residents to learn bike safety skills and improve mobility in the area.
- DeKalb County: DeKalb County, as the local government, must play a role in providing the resources that can be leveraged to support positive change in the study area. The County can facilitate the rezoning of the study area to align with the future land use map, create an Affordable Housing Overlay District, and offer tax abatements to affordable multi-family housing developers. The following resources are those already offered by the county that may be useful in achieving the goals of this plan.
 - Equalized Homestead Option Sales Tax (EHOST) credit
 - DeKalb Regional Land Bank
 - Kensington Tax Allocation District (TAD)
 - Brownfield and Revolving Loan Fund Program
- DeKalb County School District: Partnering with the DeKalb County School District may provide an opportunity to better connect study area residents to Freedom Middle School.
- DeKalb County Community Policing Unit: Partnering with the DeKalb Community Policing Unit would allow the police department to form connections in the community and increase the sense of overall public safety in the area.

Public Involvement

Stakeholder Meeting #1

The meeting was held at Memorial Drive Ministries and began at 1:00pm on July 27, 2024.

Present at Meeting:

- Ben Parker, Zimmerman Properties
- Georgia Piedmont Technical College
- Willow Branch Apartments
- Willow Branch Apartments
- Willow Branch Apartments
- Friends of Refugees
- Friends of Refugees
- Winston Mitchell, Kimley-Horn
- Hannah Robnik, Kimley-Horn

Presentation and Stakeholder Input

The Community Revitalization Plan Stakeholder Meeting #1 began with brief introductions and moved into an overview of community revitalization plans, existing plans in the area, and a description of the study area boundary. Winston Mitchell then asked stakeholders what they imagined their community would look like 10 years from now. Stakeholders agreed that the “mosaic” of diversity and the welcoming nature of the community was important to maintain. Stakeholders hope the community will be growing and thriving in ten years. Stakeholders also wanted to see increased access to a variety of destinations through increased walkability. As development in the area increases, stakeholders mentioned managing gentrification is a future need to ensure current residents can afford to stay in the area and access growing community resources like parks and community services. Finally, the stakeholders identified increased safety and security as a goal for the community in ten years.

Winston Mitchell then presented the project timeline and existing conditions in the study area, including existing zoning and future land use, housing, transportation and existing plan goals. The meeting then moved to an open discussion on visions and goals, challenges and opportunities in the community. Feedback from participants is summarized below.

Visions and Goals:

- Increase walkability and connectivity for residents while balancing a need for security.
- Prioritize workforce and affordable housing.
- Continue to be a community where everyone feels welcome.

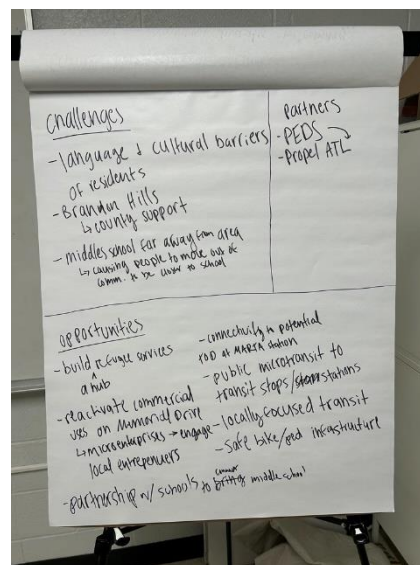
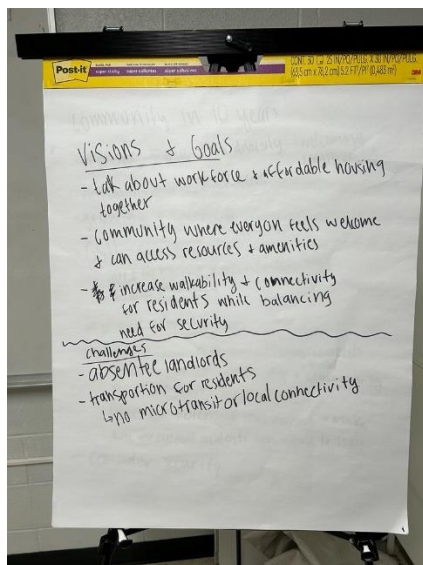
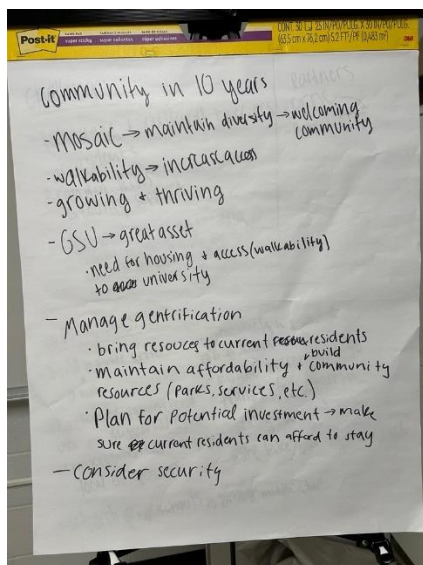
Challenges:

- Absentee landlords in the area can make improving housing units difficult.
- For many residents, transportation is an issue. While MARTA buses have routes through the study area, getting to these routes can be a challenge. Additionally, there are few micro transit options and local connectivity is lacking.
- Many residents are immigrants and/or refugees, and they face language and cultural barriers.
- The Brannon Hills complex creates safety and security concerns in the area.
- Freedom Middle School, which many children in the study area are designated to go to, is far away from the elementary and high school, which are within the study area.

Opportunities:

- Building a hub of refugee services from the existing services in the area.

- Reactivate commercial uses on Memorial Drive, engaging local entrepreneurs and providing opportunities for micro-enterprises.
- Provide local connectivity throughout the study area.
- Provide public micro transit to MARTA transit stations and bus stops.
- Provide safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Partner with schools to provide connectivity to middle school.



Stakeholder Meeting #2

The meeting was held at Georgia Piedmont Technical College at 1:00pm on Thursday, August 8, 2024.

Present at Meeting:

- Ben Parker, Zimmerman Properties
- Georgia Piedmont Technical College
- Willow Branch Apartments
- Willow Branch Apartments
- Willow Branch Apartments
- Winston Mitchell, Kimley-Horn
- Hannah Robnik, Kimley-Horn

Presentation and Stakeholder Input:

The Community Revitalization Plan Stakeholder Meeting #2 began with brief introductions and an overview of the study area and purpose. Winston Mitchell then moved to present on vision and priorities in the study area, asking for feedback from stakeholders. Stakeholders identified transit and transportation improvements and the need for safety as priorities that should be included. Mitchell then presented specific recommendations for each section of the plan, including Land Use, Housing, Transportation, and Policies and Partnerships. Stakeholders identified the need to include a guidance for lowering regulatory challenges to allow for an increase in density along Memorial Drive. Stakeholder identified needed sidewalks along North Indian Creek to Georgia Piedmont Technical College as a needed improvement and again emphasized the need to connect area residents to Freedom Middle School.

As discussion continued, stakeholders identified language and cultural barriers community members face. They proposed multi-lingual signs and pictograms for transportation sign age to overcome these barriers.

Where these interventions are insufficient, stakeholders identified educational opportunities as a potential solution.

The stakeholders identified multiple partnerships the plan should mention and the overall need for public, private and non-profit coordination, including immigrant and refugee groups, in execution of the plan. The identified organizations are listed below:

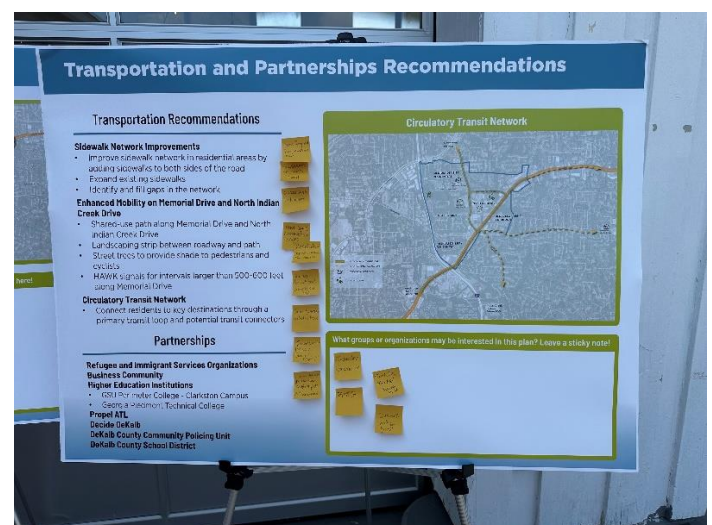
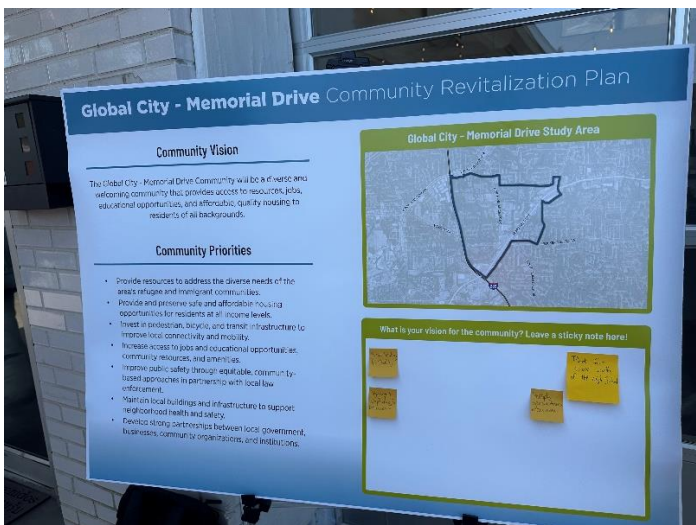
- Friends of Refugees
- American Pathways
- Women's Refugee Services
- Congolese Community of ATL
- Afghan American Alliance of Georgia
- Syrian Refugee Group
- Religious Groups
- Decide DeKalb
- Business organization for people in the Memorial Drive business communities
- Coalition of Refugee Serving Agencies

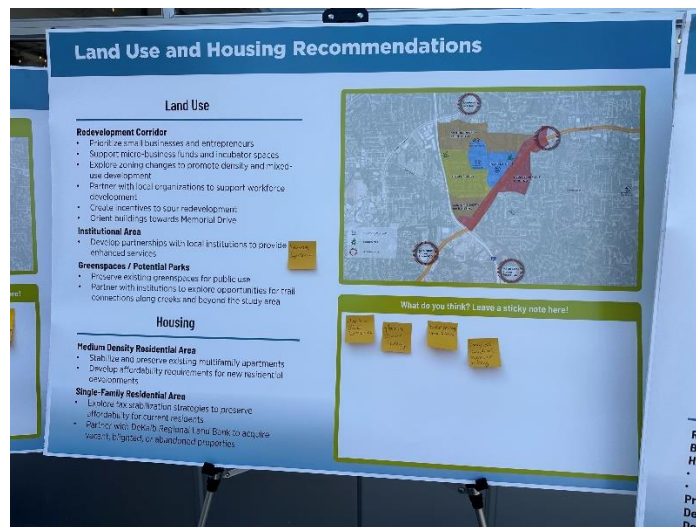
Public Meeting Pop-Up

The community pop up was held at Refuge Coffee from 10:00am – 12:00pm on August 17, 2024.

Community members needs expressed the following needs:

- Streetlights for safety
- Signage and wayfinding
- Park near the high school
- Accommodating multiple generations in one area
- More frequent bus service or extension of rail
- Maintenance of PATH trail
- Covered stops for transit
- Establish more traffic signals around school
- Make transit more accessible and greener
- Connection DeKalb Farmers Market
- Grocery store in the area
- Connect Stone Mountain PATH to Memorial Drive





Plan Implementation and Recommendations

The following recommendations are strategies that may be taken by stakeholders to begin plan adoption.

- Identify vacant, blighted, or abandoned properties to be reactivated through public and private partnerships.
- Conduct a study for multi-modal transportation enhancements to North Indian Creek Drive Memorial Drive Corridor
- Conduct a housing study that identifies challenges and needs for affordable and workforce housing in the study area and provides detailed housing recommendations.
- Coordinate with potential partners to bring plan recommendations to fruition.

Evaluation

The plan should be reevaluated every 5 years as a part of the DeKalb County's Land Use Plan Update. DeKalb County may also seek to apply for Livable Centers Initiative funds to access resources and coordinate the areas growth and development.

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA TO ADOPT THE GSU/WILLOW BRANCH COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PLAN

WHEREAS, the DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability Department has overseen the planning process and verified that the plan meets minimum standards and procedures for local comprehensive planning set by the Georgia Planning Act and;

WHEREAS, the 2050 Unified Plan includes both the comprehensive land use plan and comprehensive transportation plan, and;

WHEREAS, the comprehensive plan document was prepared according to the Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective March 1, 2014 and established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and;

WHEREAS, the stakeholder meeting was held July 27, 2024 and ‘Pop-Up’ public meeting was held August 17, 2024, and;

WHEREAS, additional public meetings was held August 29, 2024. The purpose is to inform and update the DeKalb County citizens of the procedures, format, and purpose of the GSU/Willow Branch Community Revitalization Plan and;

WHEREAS, the final document was presented to the DeKalb County Planning Commission on September 12, 2024, and;

WHEREAS, the Department of Community Affairs requires that the Board of Commissioners adopt a revitalization plan.

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that Chapter 5: Small Area Plans, of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of the 2050 Unified Plan be amended to include the GSU/Willow Branch Revitalization Plan; also known as the Global City – Memorial Drive Community Revitalization Plan and,

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the GSU/Willow Branch Community Revitalization Plan’s (also known as the Global City – Memorial Drive Community Revitalization Plan) general vision, policies, and goals as guidance for future development of the planned area.

ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, the ____ day of September, 2024.

ROBERT PATRICK
Presiding Officer
Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this ____ day of September, 2024.

ATTEST:

Michael Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia
APPROVED AS TO FORM:

BARBARA H. SANDERS, CCC
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners
and Chief Executive Officer of
DeKalb County, Georgia

VIVIANNE ERNSTES
County Attorney
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE:

CEDRIC HUDSON
Interim Planning & Sustainability Director
DeKalb County, Georgia