



**DECATUR - AVONDALE MARTA STATION STUDY  
LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE FINAL REPORT  
DECEMBER 2002**

**CITY OF DECATUR**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Livable Centers Program Goals

The Decatur Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is an exciting plan that builds upon the success of the City's on-going revitalization efforts. In February 2002, the Atlanta Regional Commission awarded a LCI grant to the City of Decatur (City) to produce a comprehensive master plan that would assist the community in reaching its goals while maintaining its leadership and small town character. The City hired Jordan, Jones & Goulding (JJG), in partner with Gibbs Planning Group, to assist with the development of the plan. The goals of the Decatur LCI are:

- To conduct a transportation enhancement study to create a circulation system that encourages pedestrians, bicyclists, and alternative modes of transportation
- To create a range of housing choices and develop more opportunities for affordable housing
- To reduce transportation demands and increase transit ridership
- To utilize and capture green space taking advantage of the natural drainage systems to create open space and passive recreational opportunities
- To create conditions to encourage pedestrian and bicycle traffic by providing streetscape facilities in and between the MARTA station, single-family neighborhoods, and schools
- To create a quality, balanced environment by establishing policies to encourage mixed-use development in and around the MARTA station, such as affordable housing, neighborhood commercial, neo-traditional residential, and interactive recreational facilities
- To encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

The Avondale MARTA station is at the heart of this study area. The City used this chance to further define the quality and character of its community while creating a new neighborhood centered around the MARTA station.

## Public Involvement

The Decatur LCI public involvement effort was geared towards providing opportunities for citizen input while generating dialogue, enthusiasm, and excitement for the future of the community. The strategy for public involvement in Decatur was rooted in the belief that, in order to empower citizens, specific and relevant information must be provided to them. This facilitated the creation of meaningful input; because citizens gained a thorough understanding of the issues, options and, consequently, the difficult choices facing them. By communicating their concerns and desires to the project team, citizens helped educate JJG staff on issues connected to the study.





Public involvement in the Decatur LCI included a kickoff meeting, three roundtable meetings, a design workshop and an open house. A supportive public awareness campaign was launched including posters, postcards and information web site. One of the driving elements of the public involvement process was the creation of a new identity for the study area. Throughout the process, participants were asked to vote on their favorite neighborhood name. The new community of Columbia Park was officially created as a result of the voting. The 5-day design workshop held in August 2002, was the cornerstone of the public involvement effort. The workshop employed a “hands-on” approach that resulted in key elements of the plan. The key elements are the Columbia Park master plan, the MARTA plaza plan, the transportation improvement plan and a green space plan. Workshop participants were charged with aiding in the implementation of the plan by becoming “plan champions.” Public meetings were well attended and provided a wealth of information to the study team.

### **Transportation Improvements**

A critical element of the LCI program is the implementation of projects that promote the livability of a community. Using a consensus approach, the community compiled a list of transportation projects that they believe will help their City achieve this goal. College Avenue is the primary thoroughfare through the area. As such, it is to receive an emphasized streetscape treatment on the southside, with wide sidewalks and a street furniture zone with street trees to serve as a buffer between the large volumes and high speed of the traffic. The second most vital street to the area will be the new Main Street that is created through the existing MARTA surface parking lot. This street will be a neighborhood commercial street with on-street parking, wide sidewalks, street trees and active commercial uses located adjacent to the sidewalks. The purpose of this street is to serve as the primary retail draw to the area; and, as such, it will be the vibrant heart of the village center. Lastly, the new neighborhood streets must incorporate significant traffic calming elements including narrow travel lanes, street trees, sidewalks, cross walks and bulb-outs to ensure that traffic moves efficiently, yet slowly, through the Columbia Park neighborhood. All of these transportation improvements together form the framework to ensure that all future development is neighborhood-oriented and accessible.

### **Next Steps**

The newly formed Columbia Park community takes implementing the plan as seriously as composing the plan itself. These newly empowered citizens understand that their competitiveness as a new urban center depends on the capacity of the community to implement the plan. The Columbia Park community is committed to assisting its local officials in establishing priorities, forming partnerships, building consensus, securing funding and continually evaluating the plan.



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# INTRODUCTION

## STUDY SCOPE

The City of Decatur undertook this Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study to build on previous successes in revitalizing the Decatur MARTA Station and an old commercial core. In many respects, this study represents the culmination of over 20 years of community effort. In comparison, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) LCI program is relatively new, but its goals and purpose, as explained below, complement the existing goals of the community.

The purpose of this study is to provide an action plan for redeveloping the Avondale MARTA Station. The boundaries of the study area are illustrated in **Figure 1-1**, and the next chapter of this report provides a summary analysis of the area. This analysis looks at the area's land use characteristics, demographics, transportation infrastructure, and urban design elements.

Following the analysis of existing conditions, this report provides a description of the public involvement process that was undertaken as part of this planning effort. The report outlines the real and perceived issues identified by the community, and it describes the products of a 1 1/2 day design workshop that was the key process in determining the overall vision for the community.

Finally, the report provides detailed recommendations as to how to make this community vision a reality. These recommendations include:

- ◆ 5-year plan of local actions and housing strategy
- ◆ 5-year list of recommended transportation improvements and housing recommendations

- ◆ Transportation Recommendations
- ◆ Land Use Recommendations
- ◆ Urban Design Guidelines for the study area
- ◆ Economic Development Recommendations.

The last section of this report includes a description of how the plan addresses the LCI goals.

## OVERVIEW OF THE LIVABLE CENTER INITIATIVE

The ARC Board adopted policies in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) proposal in May 1999, to provide funding for investment studies and transportation projects located in activity and town centers in the region. This program of studies and projects has become known

as the Livable Centers Initiative. The focus of the program is to encourage increased residential development, mixed uses and connectivity in activity and town centers. The study also defines detailed plans that support the adopted policy of the Regional Development Plan (RDP) to encourage activity and town center development.

### Livable Centers Initiative Program

The ARC Board approved an allocation of \$5 million over 5 years to fund the LCI program. The program funds studies that are awarded on a competitive basis to local governments and non-profit sponsors, such as Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), for producing plans to define future center development strategies and supporting public and private investments. The Decatur LCI Study was awarded to the City as part of the third round or third year of the 5-year program.

The ARC Board also approved an allocation of \$350 million for priority funding of projects resulting from Livable Centers Ini-

figure 1-1



tiative studies. The funds are awarded based on separate evaluation criteria and processes established by the ARC. Local implementation of LCI study recommendations, including innovative land use strategies, will be a primary factor in determining investment awards.

## Livable Centers Program Goals

The LCI program provides a source of funds for planning studies of activity and town centers in the Atlanta region. The program is intended to provide an implementation tool for policies of the RDP. In support of the RDP policies, the goals of the LCI program are listed below:

- ◆ Encourage a diversity of medium- to high-density, mixed income neighborhoods, employment, shopping and recreation choices at the activity and town center level.
- ◆ Provide access to a range of travel modes including transit, roadways, walking and biking to enable access to all uses within the study area.
- ◆ Encourage integration of uses with transportation investments to maximize the use of alternate modes.
- ◆ Through transportation investments, increase the desirability of redevelopment of land served by existing infrastructure at activity and town centers.
- ◆ Preserve the historical characteristics of activity and town centers and create a community identity.
- ◆ Develop a community-based transportation investment program at the activity and town center level that will identify capital projects can be funded in the annual Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).
- ◆ Provide transportation infrastructure incentives for jurisdictions to take local actions to implement the resulting activity or town center study goals.
- ◆ Provide for the implementation of the RDP policies, quality growth initiatives and Best Development Practices in the study area, local governments and at the regional level.
- ◆ Develop a local planning outreach process that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders particularly low income, minority and traditionally underserved populations.
- ◆ Provide planning funds for development of activity and town centers that showcase the integration of land use policy and regulation and transportation investments with urban design tools.

An evaluation of how this study addresses these goals can be found in the “Recommendations” section of this report.



## Best Land Use Management Practices

The following practices or policies outlined in ARC's Regional Development Plan are intended to be a guide for future regional growth through land use decision processes as they relate to transportation, environmental and other public investment decisions in a manner that shapes growth appropriately and protects existing stable areas of the region.

While these policies were formulated to address regional impacts, they are excellent guiding principles and are applicable to the study area. Because Decatur has several redevelopment parcels available near the Avondale MARTA Station, these policies are particularly well suited to aid in managing growth in the coming years.

- ◆ Encourage new development to be more clustered in portions of the area where such opportunities exist.
- ◆ Strengthen and enhance the residential and mixed-use character of the Town Center.
- ◆ Encourage mixed-use redevelopment of corridors where public services are currently available.
- ◆ Encourage transit oriented development.
- ◆ Support the preservation of stable, single-family neighborhoods.
- ◆ Encourage focused infill and redevelopment where acceptable to communities.
- ◆ Encourage mixed-use development.
- ◆ Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Developments.
- ◆ Protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- ◆ Align local policy and regulation to support these policies.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

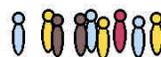
To meet these LCI goals and to develop a plan that utilizes the Best Management practices, the project was divided into three primary tasks.

**Figure 1-2** shows the project schedule. Those three tasks included:

- ◆ Public Outreach and Data Gathering
- ◆ Community Design and Analysis
- ◆ Development of Recommendations and Open House

The planning process placed a strong emphasis on public participation. Community involvement was a key element of each of the tasks listed above. Six public meetings were held throughout the formulation of the Master Plan including:

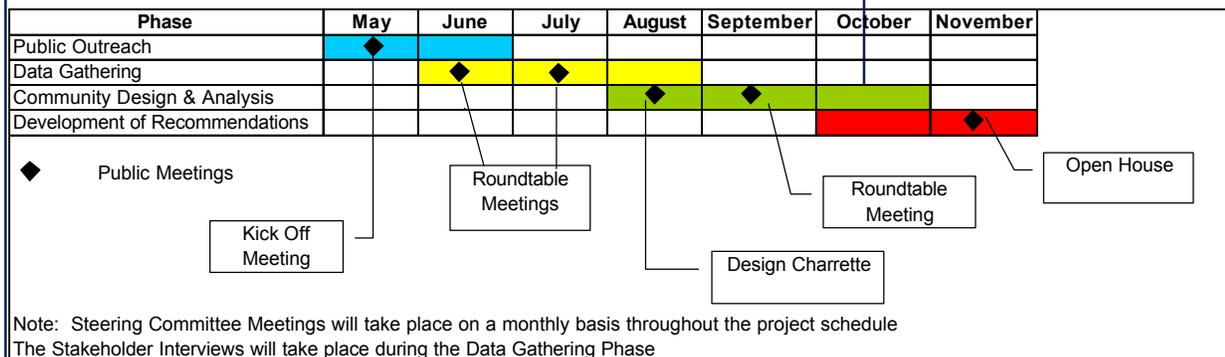
- ◆ Kickoff Meeting (May 7, 2002)



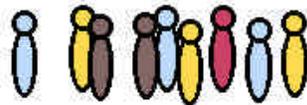
- ◆ Roundtable #1- -(June 4, 2002)
- ◆ Roundtable #2- Developer’s Panel- (July 9, 2002)
- ◆ Design Workshop (August 16 & 17, 2002)
- ◆ Roundtable #3- Questions & Answers- (September 10, 2002)
- ◆ Open House (October 29, 2002)

The “Public Involvement and Issue Identification” chapter of this report describes this effort in greater detail.

Figure 1-2







# STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

## BACKGROUND

*“The government and the market are not enough to make a civilization... There must also be a... space in which bonds of community can flourish.”*

Senator Bill Bradley

The United States is the first nation to grow at amazingly low densities across the American landscape. For the latter half of the previous century, most Americans have lived, worked and shopped in separate areas; and we have entered a new century with nearly all of our population living on the landscape we call suburbia. One of the reasons Americans chose to spread out goes back to our pioneer beginnings when everyone’s dream was a house surrounded by wide open spaces. The advent of the automobile kept us extremely mobile and allowed us to live a considerable distance from where we worked. No longer did business and industry need to locate near the railroad station. The car has become a significant part of our collective culture and individual identity. The joy of driving, however, is not what it used to be; and our inclination to spread out and to rely on the car for our mobility has left us with a number of unintended consequences.

Not only did the car allow us to work in one part of the region and live in another, it also spurred the notion of separating uses – that is separating residential properties from retail and retail from industrial and so on. Over the past 20 years, however, these places we have created have lost their appealing glow and in many ways have become their own worst enemy. Today, as the hard infrastructure itself is deteriorating, the traffic congestion, the inefficiency, and the visual blight of these places are leading to a loss of a competitive edge. However, these decaying



places are perfect candidates for redevelopment. We generally think of redevelopment as an activity that occurs in an old historic downtown. But suburban greyfield redevelopment provides a number of opportunities for the communities in which they are located. While these declining developments may, at first blush, appear to be eyesores, they represent a unique opportunity for communities wishing to protect existing greenspace and to reuse existing infrastructure. The challenge lies in transforming outdated infrastructure to meet today's needs.

People are drawn to places that make them feel good and reflect their own personal value system. That is why a “man’s home is his castle.” People arrange the interior and exterior of their homes so that they feel good, so that they feel safe, and so that their homes reflect something about them as individuals.

There is also another important factor in drawing people to a particular place and that is other people. Human beings are exceptionally social creatures who strive to connect with one another. Unfortunately, many of our outdated shopping centers miss the mark on both fronts. They have been designed primarily for the convenience of the automobile, hence they are not conducive to pedestrians, at least on the exterior. They are devoid of any character or sense of community. And, as they reach their period of decline, they attract fewer and fewer people.

To breathe economic life back into shopping corridors or dying industrial areas, communities across the country are examining ways to turn these areas into true destinations, places that encourage walking, that make transportation difficulties less onerous, places that foster a more enjoyable and convenient experience. To do that, they are looking back in history at a time when cities and towns took great pride and care of their public spaces...courthouse squares, plazas, and the town green. They are taking these simple elements and creating a town center, often out of the massive surface parking lots. They are putting the needs of people before cars by ensuring that the street and sidewalk network provide a pleasant pedestrian environment where people can actually cross the street on foot to visit another retail establishment. They are combining retail with residential uses, offices, and entertainment to create a true place, a “here here” that is no longer an anonymous strip shopping center or industrial park. And they are doing this with remarkable success. They are finding that by creating unique character and sense of place they are able to reap the benefits of greater visitation, higher rents, larger retail sales, and stronger real estate transactions.

Much of the LCI area is, in fact, light-industrial in character. Industrial properties line the streets of the LCI area, and many of these properties are becoming increasingly underutilized. In addition, there are a growing number of industrial properties being purchased as real estate invest-



ments to turn these properties into mixed-use, commercial and/or residential developments.

The industrial and institutional development within the LCI area has served the adjacent communities for years. When most of the industrial uses were built, they provided needed light-industrial opportunities to Decatur. However, time, growth, changes in tastes, buying habits, and decay have decreased some of the area’s usefulness. The area cannot continue to be the same type of industrial area that it once was. For the Decatur LCI area to continue to be viable and sustainable into the future, a new archetype must be employed. It needs to evolve and redevelop into a human scale, pedestrian-friendly destination – a place with a character all its own; a different kind of place than it was before, into the kind of place that the people of the community will want to spend their time.

The improvements that must be made within the area have to be undertaken simultaneously on multiple fronts – economic, design, community involvement, and transportation. Primarily, the corridor must be a place people want to be. People want to be in places that are attractive, active, safe, and most importantly, that have some economic purpose to exist. Creating a place that fulfills an economic purpose is what defines any place as a destination unto itself. The Decatur LCI area needs to be transformed into a true destination in order to successfully redevelop.

Transportation, economics and urban design are all critical components of the redevelopment of any area. A trend is beginning in city redevelopment that is transforming declining shopping center districts into viable town centers and declining industrial areas into vibrant “live/work” districts. Much of the infrastructure is already in place, and these sites are usually good fits based on transportation/transit accessibility, location advantages for housing, and enough space to create a truly functioning activity center.

The JJG team feels that the communities that proactively adopt a new way of thinking about how to redevelop these areas will be the frontrunners over the next decade of communities that are economically successful and are known as special and inviting destinations around the country.

## TRANSPORTATION

The transportation network serving the study area is relatively adequate in terms of serving the quantitative travel demand in the area. The area includes rail and bus transit, sidewalks, and roadway capacity – a relatively strong mix of transportation choices. The roadway network experiences some congestion during peak times; however, the peak periods are relatively short and infrequent. Bus and rail service accommo-





date accessibility to a large geographic area. Sidewalks are provided along most primary thoroughfares. There are no major problem areas related to traffic flow in the area.

The network can, however, stand to be improved greatly. Sidewalks are incomplete and uninviting, roadways do not provide connectivity through the study area, and traffic flow can be improved. The transportation-related recommendations of this study have the main purpose of supporting the study’s recommendations as they relate to land – use and development at and around the MARTA Station.

## Avondale MARTA Station

The focal point of the study area is the MARTA rail station. The station platform can be accessed from the north and south side of the track – E. College Ave. on the south and Ponce de Leon Ave. and Sycamore St. on the north. The station is somewhat disconnected and seemingly uninviting to the adjacent neighborhood. Connectivity to the station entrances is hindered by the proliferation of fences and other obstacles that force pedestrians to travel circuitous routes to and from the station.

The MARTA station is served by two parking lots with a total capacity of 1,098 spaces. One lot is located on the south side of the station and one on the north side (outside study area). The north lot is consistently filled to capacity while the south lot is usually only filled at half of its capacity – usually around 52%. Access to the south lot is provided via driveways onto E. College Ave. and Sams St.

	18-Jul Thursday	24-Jul Wednesday	30-Jul Tuesday	SPACES AVAILABLE	% Full
DFCS	184	177	149	356	52%
MARTA (north)	232	237	231	237	98%
MARTA (south)	261	240	245	505	52%

## Bus Service

The MARTA station is served by nine bus routes; 2 - Ponce De Leon, 8 - North Druid Hills, 36 - North Decatur, 75 – Tucker, 96 - Snapfinger/ Wesley Chapel, 120 - Stone Mountain, 121 - Mountain Industrial District, 122 - Dekalb College, and 125 – Chamblee. Of the nine, three access the south side of the station and therefore are within the study area; 96, 122, and 125.

## E. College Avenue

The corridor serves as the northern boundary of the study area and is approximately 0.5 miles in length. E. College Ave. is an urban minor arterial and serves as U.S. Route 278 and State Route 10. The corridor consists of two westbound lanes and two eastbound lanes between S. Columbia and Sams St.



The travel lane widths are typically 12 ft and the median/turn lane is 20 ft wide. The posted speed is 35 mph. Signals are located at the intersections of Sams Crossing/Katie Kerr, S. Columbia and Sams St. Based on Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) data, the 2000 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volume is 18,160. Parking is restricted the entire length of the corridor.

MARTA bus routes 122 and 123 serve the corridor.

The MARTA rail line, trees, utilities, steep slopes, and structures are all located very close to the roadway – usually very close to the back of curb. Widening the roadway/moving curbs would be very problematic/expensive.

Curb cuts are somewhat numerous and problematic. There are very few curb cuts on the north side of the road. The few curb cuts access parcels on the northwest corner of Sams Crossing and E. College Ave. and do not generate a large volume of traffic.

### **Commerce Dr./S. Columbia Dr.**

This corridor serves as the western boundary of the study area. It extends from its intersection with E. College Ave. on the north down to its intersection with Katie Kerr Dr. in the southwest corner of the study area – approximately 0.87 miles.

The short section of Commerce Dr. (approximately ¼ mile) in the study area consists of two northbound lanes and two southbound lanes. The length of the majority of the corridor has a consistent cross section that consists of one northbound lane and one southbound lane south of the Commerce Dr./S. Columbia Dr. intersection. Dedicated left turn lanes are provided at the signalized intersections.

The travel lanes are typically 12 ft wide. The posted speed throughout the corridor is 45 mph. Signals are located at the intersections with E. College Ave., Derrydown Way, and Katie Kerr Dr. Based on GDOT data, the 2000 AADT is 13,740. Commerce Dr./S. Columbia Dr. serves as a collector (DeKalb Transportation Plan) and is not a state route.

The corridor is served by MARTA bus route 96.

Trees, utilities, and structures are all located very close to the roadway – usually very close to the back of curb. Widening the roadway and moving the curbs would be very problematic and expensive. Residential curb cuts are numerous, serving the single-family residential uses along the entire length.



### **Arcadia Ave./Katie Kerr Dr.**

This corridor serves as the eastern and southern boundary of the study area. It extends from the intersection with E. College Ave. on the north down to where it ends at the intersection with S. Columbia Dr. in the southwest corner of the study area – approximately 1.06 miles. The corridor has a consistent cross section that consists of two northbound lanes and two southbound lanes.

The travel lanes are typically 12 ft wide. The posted speed throughout the corridor is 35 mph. Based on GDOT data, the 2000 AADT is 6,261. Arcadia Ave./Katie Kerr Dr. serves as a collector and is not a state route.

Trees, utilities, and structures are all located very close to the roadway – usually very close to the back of curb. Widening the roadway and moving the curbs would be very problematic and expensive.

### **Derrydown Way**

Derrydown Way is a local residential street traversing the study area, east to west, from S. Columbia Dr. to E. College Ave., approximately 0.58 miles. The street is predominantly lined with single-family residential. A small portion of the street has townhome-type uses.

The roadway is typically 32 ft wide. The posted speed throughout the corridor is 25 mph, but excessive speeding is a problem. Signals are located at the intersection of S. Columbia Dr.

Trees, utilities, and structures are all located very close to the roadway – usually very close to the back of curb. Widening the roadway and moving the curbs would be very problematic and expensive.

### **Other Internal Local Streets**

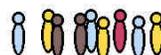
This includes Tally St., Sams St., New St., Weeks St., and Freeman St.

These streets are located within the light industrial area immediately adjacent to the southwest of the MARTA station. They generally all share the same characteristics: most do not have sidewalks, have low traffic volumes and speeds, and are between 18 to 25 ft in width.

### **Pedestrian Transportation**

The pedestrian environment throughout the study area is inadequate and does not attract “choice users.”

Sidewalks are absent throughout much of the district. Along the narrower, less-travelled, neighborhood streets this is not as much of a concern because pedestrians can share the roadways with other transporta-



tion modes. However, new developments must include sidewalks. This has been the method of development in downtown Decatur near the Square. The MARTA station property also has sidewalks, but these do not extend beyond the limits of the immediate development. As such, they do not facilitate pedestrian transportation to the rest of the district. The lack of sidewalks along major connecting streets (such as Derrydown and College Ave.) makes pedestrian travel to anywhere outside of one's immediate neighborhood difficult and dangerous.

Of the sidewalks that do exist in the immediate vicinity of the Decatur LCI area, these are generally in poor condition. Generally, there is no horizontal separation between pedestrian traffic and automobile traffic. High automobile speeds make walking along this corridor extremely uncomfortable. The lack of street trees and ill-placed utilities in the sidewalk area contribute to a hostile pedestrian environment.

Other deficits of the pedestrian environment are:

- ◆ Lack of access management creates too many conflict points between automobiles and pedestrians
- ◆ Street crossings are poorly marked or not marked at all. This creates a very dangerous and inhospitable situation.
- ◆ Large parking lots located between the sidewalk and the building entrance present barriers to pedestrians. Lack of inter-parcel access for pedestrians prevents direct access from one destination to another and requires navigating large parking lots on foot.

The following elements must be addressed to ensure pedestrian safety in the area:

- ◆ Access management to eliminate the dangerous location of and number of driveways and curb cuts into and out of properties.
- ◆ Crossings must be well marked and visible allowing a clear point of crossing for pedestrians crossing the area's streets and intersections.
- ◆ Signalization must be timed better to make vehicle travel smooth and efficient while also allowing adequate time for pedestrians to cross streets and intersections.
- ◆ Amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and street lights must be provided to make the walk along the area's corridors safe and attractive.
- ◆ Access to destinations (parking lots, interparcel access) must be better facilitated so that the most direct and conflict-free path of travel is provided for pedestrians.



## Bicycle Transportation

Bicycle transportation is unaccommodated throughout the district. There are no dedicated on-street or off-road bicycle lanes, and roadway shoulders generally are too narrow to support safe bicycle transportation. Bicycle parking facilities are absent, and roadway traffic speeds make accessing the district by bicycle inhospitable and unsafe.

Although the residential densities at this point may not warrant dedicated bicycle travel lanes, it is important to plan ahead for the growth that is planned for the area. As such, the following items must be addressed in planning for future bicycle travel.

- ◆ Adequate bike lanes for accommodating bikes and cars on the same street
- ◆ Shoulder widths wide enough to safely accommodate bike travel
- ◆ Parking facilities so that bicyclists can park their vehicles at destinations
- ◆ Calmed traffic speeds that allow for safe bike travel

## LAND USE

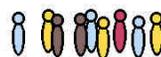
The Decatur LCI area contains little diversity in land uses with a predomination of industrial and institutional uses characterizing the area. The current land uses in the area are predominantly industrial, with some retail fronting College Ave. and institutional uses along Sams St.

The two land uses that are generally underrepresented in the district, however, are residential and open space. The latter is unusual, because the Methodist Children's Home is the largest single parcel in the district. However, it is mostly inaccessible to district residents. In addition, the creeks and naturally vegetated areas within the study area, which could serve as a major park and greenspace for the district, are essentially inaccessible due to intervening industrial uses.

## URBAN DESIGN

For any place to be successful and cohesive, it must have a strong urban design fabric. The study area is severely lacking in strong urban design characteristics. A healthy urban design environment is directly tied to the overall success of the area including the environmental, economic, transportation and social well-being of the area as a whole.

Strong urban design attracts users to the area, thereby improving the economic environment of the businesses, shops and retailers in the area. Strong urban design brings buildings close to the streets, and wide sidewalks cause passing vehicles to slow speeds and drive cautiously. Quality urban design brings people out of their homes and shops to interact with each



other on the streets, sidewalks and plazas of the area. Good urban design provides for an abundance of street trees, parks and open spaces to keep the area clean and green. All of these elements together make for a cohesive and sustainable place. Unfortunately, within this corridor, there is a severe lack of quality urban design elements. The following factors typify the area from an urban design perspective:

- ◆ Commercial uses are low-scale, single-story and aged.
- ◆ Corridors are not oriented towards pedestrians with buildings surrounded by parking lots, a crumbled or non-existent sidewalk infrastructure and virtually no greenery or open space available.
- ◆ Street trees are non-existent.
- ◆ Buildings are oriented to parking lots and provide no sidewalk/pedestrian entrances.
- ◆ Intersections are confusing and dangerous making them unattractive gateways into the neighborhoods and corridors.
- ◆ Litter and trash line the streets and properties of the corridors making for an unappealing experience.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The Decatur LCI Study Area lies on the eastern edge of the City of Decatur, with the City of Avondale Estates just to the east. Decatur's location within the metropolitan area and its reputation as a close-in small town are the principal drivers behind most of the demographic trends. In 2000, the City of Decatur had a population of 18,147, up 5% from its 1990 population. During the same period, DeKalb County grew by 24%, and the Atlanta MSA grew by 42%; the difference being Decatur is almost entirely built out. Despite this, the City accommodated over 800 new residents and added nearly 800 new housing units during the 1990s, mostly through medium density infill developments.

There is quite a disparity between the population of DeKalb County and the City of Decatur in terms of age. The greatest difference is with residents over 65, with 13% of Decatur in that group compared with DeKalb's 8%. The City also has a greater proportion of middle-aged residents (32% versus 30%) and a smaller proportion of residents 10 and under (11% compared to 14%). The high proportion of older residents results in a higher median age for the City of 36 years versus 33 for the County and 32 for the MSA.

The City of Decatur is composed of two-thirds whites and roughly one-third African Americans. All other races comprise just 2% of the population. DeKalb County, on the other hand, is 55% African American and 37% white, with other races making up roughly 8% of the population. The Hispanic population in both the Atlanta MSA and DeKalb County has grown substantially to 8% and 7% respectively.



This trend is less evident in Decatur where the Hispanic population in 2000 was less than 2%.

Perhaps the most substantial difference between the MSA, the County and the City is in terms of household types. Forty-eight percent of Decatur households are family households compared with 63% for DeKalb and 69% for the MSA. There are substantially fewer married couples with children in the City (14%) when compared to the County and MSA (19%, 26%). There is a similar trend for households headed by a single mother with children (7% City, 10% County, 8% MSA). Where Decatur has fewer married couples with children and single moms, it makes up for in its abundance of single persons living alone: 39% in the City compared with 26% in the County and 23% for the MSA.

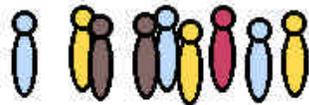
In addition to disparities in housing type are educational differences. Decatur is exceedingly well educated. Fifty-six percent of City residents have a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 36% for the County and 32% for the MSA.

The majority of City residents were employed in management/professional occupations (59%). The second most popular group was sales and office occupations with 22%. Decatur had a much higher concentration of these white-collar professionals than either the County or the MSA (82% City, 68% County, 67% MSA).

Despite the fact that City residents have more education and white-collar jobs, they are not receiving more income. Both the County and the MSA have a higher median income (\$47,000 City, \$49,000 County, \$52,000 MSA) and more households earning over \$50,000 (48.5% City, 49.2% County, 52.6% MSA). This appears to be driven by the high percentage of seniors living off retirement income.

The City of Decatur exhibits an interesting demographic mix characteristic of close-in suburbs with high percentages of singles and non-family households, well-educated, white-collar professionals and the typical Georgia small town with high populations of persons over 65. *For more information on demographic trends, see the Market Analysis included within this report.*





# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

### Methodology

JJG designed a public participation process for the Decatur LCI - Avondale MARTA Station grounded in the notion that in order to empower citizens, we must provide specific, relevant facts and information. This process provided an excellent opportunity to explore attitudes and viewpoints in-depth and gain understanding about underlying issues. It allowed community members and stakeholders an opportunity to freely state their opinions about topics that were meaningful to them. JJG enabled and prepared citizens to give significant input; because, over the course of the public participation process, they had gained a thorough understanding of the issues, options and difficult choices facing them and the study area. To ensure a high degree of public involvement, various tools were used to publicize the planning process. These included postcards, press releases, web site links, and posters around the community.

### Kickoff Meeting (55 in attendance)

The kickoff meeting was held on May 7, 2002, at the Department of Family and Children's Services on Sams St. The purpose of the meeting was to present general information about the issues facing the Atlanta region and the ARC's LCI application. Detailed information about the Decatur LCI was also provided including a discussion on the public involvement process. Following the introductions and background information, a facilitated discussion



elicited participant responses to the strengths, weaknesses, and areas of concern in the study. This exercise was presented in the form of how to create a neighborhood. The exercise kicked off by presenting the question, “Won’t you be my neighbor?” The participants were asked to consider what would it be like to live in Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood. The following were some of their responses.

- ◆ MAINSTREET
- ◆ TREES
- ◆ SIDEWALKS
- ◆ PAVILLON
- ◆ SCHOOLS
- ◆ FRIENDS
- ◆ HOUSING
- ◆ KIDS PLAYING/PLAY AREA
- ◆ DOGS
- ◆ BICYCLES
- ◆ PICNIC
- ◆ PEOPLE MERCHANTS
- ◆ RESTAURANT’ PUBS
- ◆ PARK
- ◆ AUDITORIUM
- ◆ NATURAL AREAS-BUFFERS-RIPARIAN AREAS
- ◆ CAFÉ
- ◆ BOOKSTORE
- ◆ ICE CREAM/DOUGHNUTS/BAKERY
- ◆ COFFEE SHOPS
- ◆ GALLERY-PUBLIC ART
- ◆ GARDEN/COMMUNITY TRAILS/POND
- ◆ MIXED HOUSING
- ◆ COMMON GOVERNANCE

This discussion led into another exercise that asked the participants to examine their own neighborhood. This exercise produced the positive and negative elements of the place where they live. The last exercise of the night was a discussion about change; the faces of change exercise gave participants the chance to begin dialogue on things they wanted to see change in the study area.

### **Roundtable #1 (75 in attendance)**

The first roundtable was held on June 4, 2002, at the Friends School on Sams St. Gibbs Planning Group gave a detailed presentation addressing the initial market findings and how the market analysis would play a key role when it came time to develop a master plan. Following an outline of the current land uses and regulations in the study area, the participants were asked to divide into groups to conduct a hands-on



visual preference survey. The groups were asked to look at six categories- residential, mixed use, open space, heavy commercial, streetscape, and transit and then provide feedback on what elements they liked and disliked about the examples provided. The photos illustrated single-family and multi-family home styles, retail establishments, mixed-use commercial industrial conversions, parks, sidewalks, train stations, landscaping, open space and bus stops.

Some of the results of the Visual Preference Survey:

#### STREETSCAPES

- ◆ sidewalk amenities
- ◆ safe pedestrian facilitation
- ◆ active street life
- ◆ pedestrian oriented building facades
- ◆ adequate landscaping
- ◆ bicycle-friendly streets

#### TRANSIT

- ◆ functional signage
- ◆ sensitively blended facilities
- ◆ aesthetically pleasing

#### RESIDENTIAL

- ◆ pleasing street presence
- ◆ attractive single-family housing
- ◆ appropriately scaled multi-family housing
- ◆ pedestrian-friendly access
- ◆ on-street parking
- ◆ unobtrusive parking behind

#### OPEN SPACE

- ◆ generous tree coverage
- ◆ simple and usable
- ◆ inviting passive spaces
- ◆ a place to meet your neighbor

#### MIXED USES/HEAVY COMMERCIAL

- ◆ neighborhood-oriented commercial uses
- ◆ neighborhood scale
- ◆ ample landscaping
- ◆ quality environment for work spaces
- ◆ pedestrian orientation

Participants were also asked to think of an identity for the area and create a neighborhood name. After participants submitted various names, the voting for the new neighborhood name took place during the next few months of the process. The new name was revealed at the Open House held October 29, 2002.



## Roundtable #2 (106 in attendance)

The second roundtable was held on July 9, 2002, again at the Friends School. This meeting was centered on a developers' roundtable. Several local developers representing topics such as affordable housing, neighborhood commercial, and transit-oriented development presented their thoughts and ideas on how to create a successful development and blend it into the existing environment. Information stations were set up around the room to give participants the opportunity to walk around and gather educational material about the topics and ask questions of the developers.

Many of the questions posed concerned the success and implementation of affordable housing, ARC's role in implementation funding, the relationship of high-density housing and the school system and how local government can play a significant role in attracting high quality developments. The Appendix contains the biography of the developers who participated in this event.



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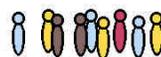
## Design Workshop Day One (August 16, 2002) (26 in attendance)

The workshop began Friday morning with a welcome from Bill Floyd, Mayor of the City of Decatur. After welcoming remarks, Ellen Keys of JJG gave a presentation highlighting current issues in the corridor. Ms. Keys also explained the purpose of the workshop and the agenda for the next 2 days. During the presentation, Ms. Keys highlighted the importance of community input and consensus to the success of any plan. After the presentation, the participants separated into two groups to tackle the first objective: Transportation. At each table, the participants were given the following transportation tasks to solve in their community:

1. *Create desire lines that identify where people want to go within the study area and outside the study area.*
2. *Identify the barriers that prevent these desired movements from happening.*
3. *Improve access to the MARTA station for pedestrians, cyclists, bus patrons and automobile commuters.*
4. *Provide for the safe facilitation of pedestrian and bicycle travel.*

Some particular transportation concerns in both groups were connectivity, pedestrian access and safety and adding more greenspace.

After a 1 1/2 hr long work session, both groups came back together for a "pin up." During this pin up, a member of each group explained the solutions that the group came up with and the reasoning that led to these solutions. The pin up gave each group an opportunity to see how



others would tackle the same situation, get ideas to make their own plans better and find flaws with their plans. A summary of each plan follows:

**Group 1** - This group based its plan on the idea of connectivity. They wanted to focus on connectivity for all types of transportation, not just the car. The result was to extend the existing grid pattern and create different levels of streets. To help create a pedestrian-friendly environment, their plan included street trees, elimination of existing curb cuts, central parking and a recreational network of parks connected by trails and bike paths.

**Group 2** - This group based its plan on creating more greenspace and determining how to link these new greenspaces. The plan proposed a new street parallel to College Ave. with traffic-calming devices such as sidewalks, trees, lower speed limits, and no on-street parking. They also incorporated the lake on the Children's Home property into the greenspace plan by creating a loop trail that connects the lake to the proposed and existing parks.

The next work session began after lunch, and the participants went back to their respective tables to tackle the next set of issues: land use. During this work session, the participants were asked to address the following land use issues:

1. *Select preferred uses for the area from those listed in the market analysis.*
2. *Identify where these uses should be located.*
3. *Determine the size and scale of all uses.*
4. *Create an open space system that connects all of the uses together.*

Some of the issues that arose during the land use session were where to place the most intense land uses and how to incorporate parking into this new plan without compromising the pedestrians.

Following the land use session, each group participated in another pin up. At this time, it became obvious both groups were heading in the same direction. The participants felt that, at this point, it would be more beneficial to combine the groups and continue working as one group for the rest of the workshop. A summary of the individual plans follows:

**Group 1** - This group's plan proposed using traffic squares, similar to those found in Savannah, to calm traffic on the main road. They also proposed the highest density in the northern portion of the study area with a green gateway on the east/west entrance. They also proposed single-family townhomes on Derrydown Way to act as a buffer between the higher density retail area and the single-family homes in the southern portion of the corridor.



**Group 2** - This group proposed a plaza area at the MARTA station and a greenbelt trail system including several pocket parks that surround the study area. They also proposed a large public parking deck just north of the MARTA station and more parking behind the stores in an alley. This plan called for the highest intensity of uses around the Plaza area.

After the land use pin up, the merged group began working on the final set of tasks: urban design. In this session, the participants were asked to build on the plan they developed in the previous two work sessions and finalize the details by completing the following tasks:

1. *Configure the uses into a building layout that is pedestrian-oriented.*
2. *Design the building facades so that they are pedestrian-oriented.*
3. *Provide dimensions for all of the sidewalks.*
4. *Identify street, sidewalk and open space landscaping opportunities.*

**Combined Group** -The combined group recommended pedestrian-oriented building forms with buildings close to the streets that frame the sidewalks. Associated parking and automobile facilities would be located to the side or rear of buildings. All buildings should have pedestrian entrances located directly adjacent to the sidewalks along the streets.

Residential buildings should have a landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and the building to provide a buffer between the public and private spaces. Non-residential uses located on the ground floor should have storefront treatment to encourage activity along the sidewalks and streets. In addition, all streets should have wide sidewalks, street trees and on-street parking to create a sense of place similar to a neighborhood or village environment.

The first day of the design workshop ended with a draft plan that built on the transportation, land use and urban design issues that the community addressed.

**Plan Summary** - At the end of the first day of the workshop, what resulted was a mixed-use neighborhood with its highest density at the Village Center core and densities that decrease when closer to the existing single-family neighborhoods. The new village is mixed use with ground floor non-residential uses permitted within buildings. All streets will have slow narrow travel lanes, street trees and sidewalks with street furniture like benches, waste receptacles and lights. The focal point of the plan is the new park/plaza and parking structure to be built on the existing MARTA surface parking lot.



## **Design Workshop Day Two (August 17, 2002) (47 in attendance)**

On Saturday morning, Ellen Keys of JJG began the day by reviewing the events of Friday and giving a brief presentation on consensus building and what it means to build partnerships in a successful development. The Appendix contains the list of partners that participants believed to be important to the success of the study area. Here are some of the highlights from the presentation.

- ◆ Community change can be pursued through a model of public participation where people are mobilized to plan, make decisions and sit in partnership with government and others to find solutions.
- ◆ The planning process can be enhanced by recognizing the role of the developer in pinpointing regulations. This is great in theory but impossible to achieve in the “real world.”
- ◆ The challenge is - How to integrate the market with the needs of the greater “public good”
- ◆ Vision, Goals, Objectives
- ◆ SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY

Patty Formosa, Gibbs Planning Group, presented the final market analysis and revealed how much retail and residential the study area could successfully support at build out. She also emphasized that projects of this nature take time, sometimes as long as 20 years, and a community must have patience and perseverance to see it through. The results of the market study are discussed in the recommendations section and more thoroughly in a separate market analysis document. Following Ms. Formosa’s presentation, Aaron Fortner of JJG revealed the conceptual master plan that was the result of all the hard work of the participants on Friday. The participants were pleased, overall, at the fruit of their efforts and suggested that we continue to work on it at the final roundtable.

## **Roundtable #3 (65 in attendance)**

The final roundtable was held on September 10, 2002, at the Friends School. The purpose of this roundtable shifted focus from the original agenda and became a question and answer session at the request of the community. A presentation was given that highlighted the draft master plan that had been revealed at the workshop. After the presentation was completed, the audience was divided into three groups. At the tables, the participants had copies of the overall master plan and the sections and were given time to examine them and ask questions or give overall comments.

The feedback received from the evening was very positive, and it appeared the community was generally pleased with the concept. A few questions were generated, and the team took the thoughts and suggestions back with them. They were addressed in the final plan.



## Open House (42 in attendance)

The Open House was held on October 29, 2002, at the Friends School. It was hosted by the City of Decatur in order to present the Master Plan. These plans were the fruition of 6 months of effort by the City, the consultant, and, most importantly, the community. The following items were on display at the open house:

- ◆ Overall Master Plan
- ◆ Urban Design Guidelines
- ◆ 5-year phases of buildout for the next 25 years

The new neighborhood name was also revealed at the Open House: COLUMBIA PARK. The name was chosen by the community after several opportunities to vote. The neighborhood vote tally can be found in the appendix.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The Decatur LCI is not yet a Livable Center by most measures. It does, however, have a wealth of potential. The site has a good existing mix of residential, retail and employment. It is well situated within the region, has the Avondale MARTA station at its edge and numerous residential neighborhoods around it. It also helps to be in Decatur, which has an excellent reputation as a great small town close to downtown Atlanta. The center has a wealth of community support, as evidenced by the outstanding turnout at the public involvement sessions. Throughout the visioning process, stakeholders handed down two resounding themes: they saw the study area as a potential center for new housing and as a future center for neighborhood services.

Presently, the study area is bounded by single-family neighborhoods to the east, west and south. Within the study area, there is a mix of single-family houses, apartments and condominiums. Most of the existing residential, however, is not oriented towards the MARTA station or is relatively isolated from other activities within the area. Building connections within the area and designing new housing with a transit and neighborhood orientation is a priority. Stakeholder input called for a mix of housing types and styles to accommodate all ages and family stages, i.e. life-cycle housing.

In 2000, there were 8,051 housing units in Decatur with 42% of them rental. The County also has 42% rental, but the MSA has just 34%. The rental vacancy rate in Decatur is very low, just 3.5% compared to the County and MSA (4.7 and 6.1%). The owner-occupied housing rate is slightly higher than regional rates; still the demand for Decatur housing appears high, driving housing prices up 26% in the last 4 years.



The market analysis completed for this study supports this vision for new, mixed-type housing. The analysis found the current market could accommodate 100 to 200 units in a first phase. The housing should include a mixture of types and prices. A second phase of 250 units could follow. Among the housing types identified as fulfilling both market realities and stakeholder desires are row houses, town homes and three- to five- story apartment buildings. Some of the housing could be developed as live/work units and some could be converted to senior housing in the future. Regardless of the mix of new units that is developed, they should enrich the street environment and contribute to a neighborhood atmosphere.

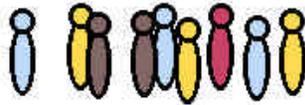
Stakeholders also would like to see the area add neighborhood services and retail. There is no desire to create another downtown Decatur; nor is there a desire to compete with downtown, which is retail-oriented towards the larger region and business services. The desire for the study area is for neighborhood services. Some of the specifically mentioned types included restaurants and bars, childcare, civic uses and personal care services such as dry cleaning and hair and nail salons. A new niche could also be created for galleries and craft stores.

The market analysis partially supports the community vision for new retail in the study area. The analysis found the study area can support up to 143,500 square ft (sq ft) of new retail. There appears to be a market for some neighborhood services including restaurants and bars, cleaners, a small grocery store, a small drug store, nail and hair salons and a video rental establishment. The market analysis did find, however, that some of the desired neighborhood services are already saturated and would be unlikely to succeed if developed within the study area. These included bookstores, specialty stores and women's apparel.

In addition to the neighborhood services, the market analysis did identify several retail opportunities that are more regional in nature. These are markets that appear untapped in and around Decatur and could succeed within the study area. The most significant is for electronics, home furnishings and office supply. The analysis found the study area could support 124,000 sq ft of this use. Other retail uses with a greater draw that could be supported on the site include a junior department store or general apparel store. The area could also support 19,500 sq ft of service retail such as a travel agency or insurance office and entertainment/ recreation space such as a gym or dance studio. *For more information on economic development issues, see the Market Analysis included within this report.*







# RECOMMENDATIONS

## A NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The Avondale MARTA station area is a perfect opportunity to create an active and thriving neighborhood center. Within the LCI area, there exists a large number of vacant buildings, industrial uses and vast parking lots. The area is characterized by monolithic uses with no open space, virtually no sidewalk environment and little or no greenspace elements offered anywhere within the study area. A true neighborhood center should not be comprised of monotonous buildings, connected by wide arterial streets with limited and segregated land uses, as is currently the situation in the study area. Rather, a successful neighborhood center is characterized by a variety of closely spaced land uses; a variety of land uses including parks, shops and residents; human-scale walkable blocks; interconnected walkable streets; and usable public spaces. The neighborhood center should be a destination, a place where people can come for a variety of different activities that are closely spaced within walking distance of one another. The roads connecting these land uses should be pedestrian friendly, and interconnected. A neighborhood center shouldn't close when it gets dark; but rather, it should contain land uses that allow for a constant presence of people, such as restaurants, grocery stores and residences. The Decatur LCI site offers enough vacant parcels or underutilized structures that the canvass can be wiped clean, and a new opportunity can be established to create a working neighborhood center around the Avondale MARTA station.

### Land Use

The Decatur LCI proposed neighborhood center master plan is made up of a mixture of commercial, residential, institutional and open space uses. New cafes, boutiques, strollable avenues, bustling parks and plazas and village-style building forms all work together to give the neighborhood center an unmistakable identity as Decatur's thriving new neighborhood commercial node.



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Beginning with the College Ave. frontage, the new neighborhood village will front the street with its largest uses. Grocery stores, restaurants, office space and, eventually, upper floors of multi-family residential will front E. College Ave. The largest sized uses face this very busy street to take advantage of the large volumes of traffic moving throughout the corridor and by the site. This also has the advantage of keeping larger-sized uses out of the middle of the adjacent neighborhood.

South of College Ave., within the area currently characterized by industrial properties, lays the true heart of the proposed Neighborhood Center. Multi-level residential developments fill the site and orient themselves to the street infrastructure. The highest priced units front the open space trail system that makes an axis through the middle of the area and that rings around the northern and western edge of the site. Small neighborhood stores anchor intersection corners within the site, providing opportunities for small neighborhood cafes and shops, leaving the vast majority of the site to the new higher density residential development.



A healthy mix of uses is encouraged in all forms. It is this mixture that allows for a true neighborhood center that offers options to its inhabitants for living, working or shopping in a pedestrian environment. Non-residential uses must be mixed to include the larger uses for regional users along E. College Ave. in addition to the smaller sized neighborhood uses within the site to serve the adjacent and newly developed neighborhood inhabitants. Residential uses must be mixed to bring a healthy balance of owner- and renter- types of units. A large majority of these new units should be owner-types of units, in addition to a minimum of 20% of all units being affordable housing-types of units. In addition, the residential uses above the commercial uses along the new Main Street must be smaller with a higher, more urban density, leaving the heart of the site to larger units with more neighborhood characteristics. Redeveloping the MARTA parking lot into the new Main Street concept can only be achieved through the creation of a parking deck facility south of Main Street. The necessary MARTA parking spaces must be accommodated, and the parking facility achieves this objective.

Equally important to the vitality of a neighborhood center are the civic and open space uses. This plan envisions a significant path and greenspace network being created utilizing floodplain properties and existing environmental resources. The greenspace system connects the entire site in addition to providing access to adjacent sites like nearby neighborhoods and the Methodist Children's Home. A vital component of this plan is the movement of the Friends School from its current site to the site adjacent to the Methodist Children's Home. By making this move, the current Friends School site can be utilized to create a larger, more developable site. In addition, the new location of the Friends School in direct proximity to the Methodist Children's Home would allow for these new neighbors to begin to share similar facilities and to work together to create a successful educational and/or recreational campus for their respective students.

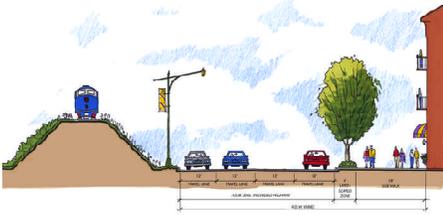
## Transportation

The network of roads for the neighborhood center is a multi-level concept, with each type of roadway serving specific purposes. The network consists of three street types: boulevard, esplanade and neighborhood. These streets carve the center into an easily accessible pattern of blocks, sidewalks and streets that can easily accommodate both vehicles and pedestrians. This infrastructure of lots, blocks and streets also makes for an environment that can accommodate the many different types of uses called for in the plan and in a way that is functional and developable over time.



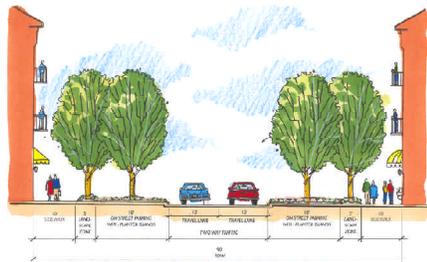
## E. College Ave.

E. College Ave. serves as the main thoroughfare through the area. This is the highest trafficked street; and, as such, it responds in its form by having the largest intensity of lanes, sidewalks and building types along it to reinforce its scale. The adjacent sidewalks on the south side of the street are wider than any other sidewalks in the area to allow pedestrian traffic to feel safe and buffered from the traffic along the street. The sidewalks' excessive width also accommodates the larger volumes of pedestrian traffic that will be associated with the larger uses adjacent to the street such as a grocery store, restaurants and shops.



## Main St.

The focal point of the entire neighborhood center is to be the newly created Main St. that bisects the current MARTA parking lot from west to east. Main St. is framed on both sides by multi-floored, mixed-use buildings with ground floor shops and retail and above-ground residences overlooking the street below. On-street parking on both sides of the Main St. helps to slow down traffic and to provide additional parking spaces for those who will want to drive and experience the new district. The sidewalks along Main St. contain benches, street lights, landscaping and additional street furniture such as water fountains and public art making the space both functional and beautiful. Main St. contains the new MARTA plaza space at the corner of Sams St. and E. College Ave. This new space is the heart of the district and will serve as the place for people to meet, recreate and simply enjoy being in this new neighborhood.



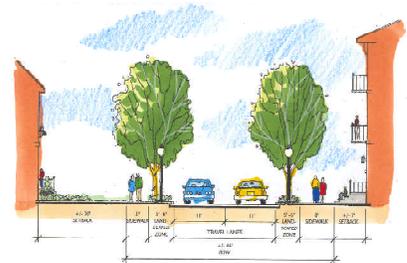
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This space is paramount to the area's transformation. Main St. is the amenity that makes the transformation of the area feasible. By creating the Main St., potential developers can begin to market the site as a prime site for high-end retail and residential units. The street also provides the additional connectivity needed through the site that allows for the vehicular and pedestrian connections to be made between, within and without the new neighborhood.



## Neighborhood Streets

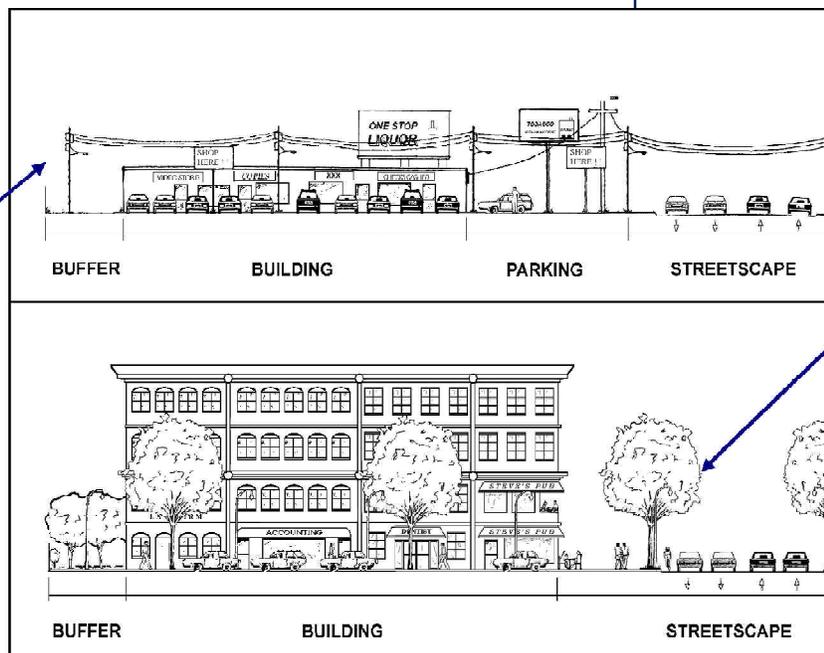
The remaining streets within the neighborhood center are neighborhood streets. These streets are slow moving with narrow travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees and sidewalks to serve as traffic calming mechanisms. These streets are already physically in place but will need improvements to accommodate the new design features. Most of these improvements will include the street trees and sidewalks along each neighborhood street. The purpose of these streets is to keep traffic moving slow and calm throughout the neighborhood and to discourage through traffic from overwhelming the neighborhood.



## URBAN DESIGN

The final pieces to creating the new neighborhood center are the essential urban design elements. A “sense of place” is what has long been missing from the current study area site, and that is what is essential for making the new district a success. The district must have distinguishing characteristics that define it. The previous site was a non-distinguishable site that could be anywhere in Atlanta, or even in America for that matter; there is no reason to believe that you are in a special place when you are here. The challenge here is to create a unique, pedestrian-friendly environment that will attract residents and shoppers to this area by offering a variety of activities. This is also an opportunity to make this area a place that stands out in the Atlanta landscape.

- Only mono-use buildings allowed
- Utilities exposed
- Parking is located to the front of buildings



- Mixed Use buildings allowed
- Utilities are hidden
- Parking is located to the side or rear of buildings



Place is created and felt when people can experience a connection with other people; when they feel that the built structures around are appropriately sized and placed in relationship to what they as human beings can see and do around them. Such places create a sense of belonging and simply by their design say loudly, “this is a place that welcomes people.”

The sense of place is very important to business districts because it attracts more shoppers, more businesses, more workers and more money. It raises property values; and, says the Urban Land Institute, it does away with the “throw-away suburb” syndrome.

The following set of guiding principles provided strong direction to the work that needed to be completed during the charrette:

### **Pleasant**

Is this a pleasurable area? A place must be enjoyable, memorable and desirable. There should never be a significant amount of space within a place that is unpleasant to anybody, whether it be in an automobile driving through, at the bus stop, on the sidewalk, walking into an office building, eating lunch in the park or looking out an apartment window to the street below. The entire experience of the place as a whole must be one that is endearing.

### **Location**

Is there a **here** here? All places have an identity, a distinction, a story to tell, a picture to take. Wonderful places are always describable, whether it be the architecture, the natural environment or the uses in the area. The most descriptive images possible are those that are positive. So to give this area a real identity, to make it a real place, deliberate attention must be paid to the details such as street trees, shop fronts, building articulation, park designs and other similar urban design elements. Generally, people tolerate bad locations but embrace great locations. By making a truly embraceable place, the entire community benefits.

### **Accessible**

Is it something that can be accessed? In other words, is it connected? Whether coming from outside of the area or from within the area, the entire place must be easy to use. It should flow from one corner of the place to the other. Streets must serve as seams that bring the entire place together and not gashes that cut insurmountable barriers through the landscape. A walk or drive from one end to the other should be fluid and smooth and unobstructed, making for a positive experience.



## Cohesive

Does it all tie together? Each part of a place must complement the other. A person must know without question when they are in the place and when they are not. If they ever have any doubt, they will turn back and not continue their progression through the place. Places act like a single body. When one part of the place gets sick, the rest will soon follow if it is not corrected. Similarly, when a place becomes healthy, the remainder of the place follows suit. By creating a unifying image and atmosphere, the entire area benefits and becomes more sustainable as a whole.

## Engaging

Does it stimulate me? A place offers its users stimulation. Through slow moving vehicular traffic, large amounts of pedestrian sidewalk traffic, gently shifting street trees, constant refractions of sunlight, outdoor vending, sidewalk cafes, park water fountains, large storefront windows with merchandising inside, friends chatting on a park bench or a car parallel parked on the street are all elements of a place that, when experienced firsthand, are highly engaging. This is an environment that draws people in. As engagement increases, so does public usage; and as public usage increases, so does the success of the place.

Complementing the streetscapes of the new district are the pedestrian-oriented building forms. All buildings are oriented to the streets and sidewalks with parking and service facilities located to the side or rear of all of the buildings. Buildings are architecturally delineated at each floor to provide an attractive, aesthetic environment to the district with nice buildings and features. Commercial uses are at the street level and have clear and large shopping windows to attract pedestrians and promote walking. Street furniture on the sidewalks includes benches, trash receptacles, street trees, banners, sandwich boards and bicycle racks to enliven the sidewalks. Entrances to all buildings are adjacent to the sidewalks and streets and are easily accessible to all pedestrians. Commercial tenants show their signage in attractive building-mounted signs and canopies that contribute to the urban feeling of the new neighborhood center.

Detailed elements of the urban design plan include:

- ◆ Uniform traffic signal mast arms
- ◆ Textured crosswalks
- ◆ Street furniture including benches, waste receptacles and bicycle racks
- ◆ Optional café patios for sidewalk dining
- ◆ Pedestrian lights spaced equidistant and centered 25-35 ft apart
- ◆ Street lights spaced equidistant and centered 50-100 ft apart
- ◆ Landscaped strip adjacent to the curb 5-6 ft in width



Phase 1 2002-2007



Phase 2 2007-2012



Phase 3 2012-2017



Phase 4 2017-2022



- ◆ Street trees including the following species: “Allee” Lacebark Elm, “Bosque” Lacebark Elm, “Highbeam” Overcup Oak, “Hightower” Willow Oak, “Forum” Tupelo Musclewood/Hornbeam, “Armstrong” Red Maple

The urban design elements are the final pieces that, when added to the land use and transportation elements, make for a complete neighborhood center. The function and form of the district are all in agreement and, together, create a workable and sustainable neighborhood center for existing and future residents.

## PHASING STRATEGY

The following is a detailed phasing strategy for achieving final implementation of the overall Master Plan for the area:

Phase 1 takes place in the first 5 years between 2002 and 2007 and includes the existing MARTA property and the property at the southern end of Sams St. This involves implementing streetscaping along the entirety of Sams St.

Essential to Phase 1 are the construction of Main St. and a new parking facility. The parking deck will replace parking spaces displaced by the construction of Main St. and MARTA plaza space and to provide additional spaces to serve the adjacent mixed-use buildings.

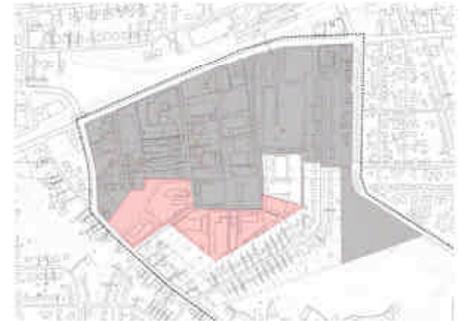
Phase 2 is the adjacent expansion of Phase 1 eastward to the edge of the study area during the 2007 to 2012 time frame. This phase creates an addition to the parking facility on the site of the existing County surface parking lot.

Phase 3 occurs between 2012 and 2017 and is only possible if the Friends School relocates from its existing site to a new site adjacent to the Methodist Children’s Home at the southeast corner of the study area. This move frees up the current Friends School site to allow a larger redevelopment site within the heart of the study area. The uses that front E. College Ave. will contain larger retail and commercial uses than the smaller commercial and predominantly residential uses that will locate in the center of the site.

Phase 4 is estimated for the years of 2017 to 2022 and involves the final development of the western frontage of E. College Ave. As with Phase 3, this phase allows for higher and more intense commercial uses fronting E. College Ave. and predominantly residential uses located in the center of the area.



Phase 5 2022-2027



The final phase of development is Phase 5 from years 2022 to 2027. It covers the southern portion of the site and completes the development of the new neighborhood center. This portion lies along the southern edge of the site and is adjacent to a single-family neighborhood. This phase includes a transitional height plane restriction to ensure that new development will not overshadow any single-family homes.

## ZONING STRATEGY

The goals and vision of this plan must have subsequent zoning in place to ensure the goals are implemented. To maximize the residential and commercial infrastructure, improve the appearance of the streets within the district, and allow for a compatible mixture of land uses; changes to current zoning are required. These changes are necessary to increase the efficiency of travel patterns as well as create a pedestrian-oriented environment in a mixed-use environment.

It should also be noted that the new regulations reflect a new approach for guiding development. They incorporate responses to new market trends that favor more choices in a village environment and a broadly inclusive process to create and implement this emerging vision. By giving development flexibility to property owners in conjunction with design requirements to address building aesthetics and form, sidewalks, parks and open space, parking and other related urban design elements; the new regulations will provide the precise tool for positive and strategic growth within the neighborhood center area.

The following are suggested zoning guidelines for achieving the desired built environment for the study area:

### Development Controls

- ◆ Maximum Building Coverage - No more than eighty-five percent (85%) of the site can be covered with impervious surfaces. The remaining fifteen percent (15%) shall be utilized for open space or public space.
- ◆ Minimum Open or Public Space. Required yards and requirements for sidewalk and supplemental zone widths which are constructed on private property may be counted towards this requirement. Such space may include planted areas, fountains, community gardens, parks, plazas, hardscape elements related to sidewalk and plazas, and similar features that are located on private property.
- ◆ Maximum building heights: Structures or portions of structures that are within 150 ft of a single-family, residentially zoned district boundary shall have a maximum height of 35 ft. Structures that are greater than 150 ft of a single-family, residentially zoned



district boundary shall have a maximum height of 50 ft. Mezzanines and lofts shall be considered a story.

- ◆ New development proposing to contain an entire block face greater than 600 ft in length shall be traversed by streets that create block faces no more than 400 ft in length. Such streets shall function as public streets and shall provide a connection to other public streets.

## Sidewalks

- ◆ Public sidewalks shall be located along all public and private streets and shall have minimum widths as specified herein. No sidewalk shall be less than 15 ft in width. Sidewalks shall consist of two zones: a street furniture and tree planting zone and a clear zone.
- ◆ Street furniture and tree planting zone requirements: The street furniture and tree planting zone shall have a minimum width of 5 ft. Said zone shall be located immediately adjacent to the curb and shall be continuous. In addition to the required planting of trees, this zone may also be used for the placement of street furniture including utility poles, waste receptacles, fire hydrants, traffic signs, newspaper vending boxes, bus shelters, bicycle racks and similar elements in a manner that does not obstruct pedestrian access or motorist visibility.
- ◆ Clear zone requirements: The clear zone shall be a minimum width of 10 ft. Said zone shall be located immediately contiguous to the street furniture and tree planting zone and shall be continuous. Said zone shall be hardscape, and shall be unobstructed for a minimum width of 10 ft and a minimum height of 8 ft.
- ◆ Street tree planting requirements: Street trees are required and shall be planted in the ground a maximum of 50 ft on center within the street furniture and tree planting zone and spaced equal distance between street lights. All newly planted trees shall be a minimum of 2 1/2 inches (in) in caliper measured 36 in above ground, shall be a minimum of 10 ft in height, shall have a minimum mature height of 40 ft, and shall be limbed up to a minimum height of 5 ft. Trees shall have a minimum planting area of 25 sq ft.
- ◆ Tree grates: Tree grates are not required. Where tree grates are required or otherwise installed, they shall be a minimum of 4 ft by 8 ft, and shall be placed within the street furniture and tree planting zone.
- ◆ Paving: All paving within the street furniture and tree planting zone shall utilize 6 in x 6 in pavers.



- ◆ No awning or canopy shall encroach more than 5 ft over the required sidewalk clear zone.
- ◆ Where property, without an intervening street within this district, abuts properties with varying sidewalk requirements, the sidewalk area within 20 ft of such properties shall taper as necessary to provide a smooth transition to the existing sidewalk requirement.
- ◆ Decorative pedestrian lights, where installed, shall be placed a maximum of 50 ft on center and spaced equal distance between required trees along all streets. Where installed, said lights shall be located within either the street furniture and tree planting zone or the supplemental zone.
- ◆ All utilities, except for street lights, must be located underground.
- ◆ Trash receptacles, where installed, shall be placed within the street furniture and tree planting zone.

## Supplemental Zones

- ◆ Supplemental zones are the areas between any building and the nearest edge of the required sidewalk.
- ◆ When sidewalk-level residential units are provided, the supplemental zone shall be landscaped with the exception of terraces, porches, stoops and walkways, which may occupy a maximum of 2/3 of the supplemental zone area.
- ◆ Terraces, porches and stoops shall have a maximum finished floor height of 24 in above finished-grade, unless existing topographical considerations render this requirement unreasonable.
- ◆ The supplemental zone shall be no more than 24 in above the adjacent public sidewalk, for a minimum linear distance of 15 ft from the nearest edge of the adjacent public sidewalk, unless existing topographical considerations render this requirement unreasonable.
- ◆ Any authorized walls surrounding landscaped and grassed areas shall not exceed a maximum height of 24 in, except retaining walls, which shall not exceed a maximum height of 36 in unless existing topography requires a retaining wall of greater height.

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## Relationship of Building to Street

- ◆ For purposes of this chapter, sidewalk level shall be defined as any floor of a building with a finished-floor elevation less than or equal to 5 ft above the adjacent sidewalk or less than or equal to 5 ft below the adjacent sidewalk.



- ◆ Building floors shall be delineated at third story above sidewalk level and lower and shall be executed through windows, belt courses, cornice lines or similar architectural detailing.
- ◆ The primary pedestrian entrance for pedestrians to access all sidewalk-level uses and business establishments with public street frontage shall face and be visible from the street, be directly accessible and visible from the sidewalk adjacent to such street and remain unlocked during business hours for non-residential uses.
- ◆ A street address number shall be located directly above the primary building entrance, shall be clearly visible from the sidewalk and shall be a minimum of 6 in in height.
- ◆ No barbed wire, razor wire, chain link fence or similar elements shall be visible from any public plaza, ground level or sidewalk level outdoor dining area or public right-of-way.
- ◆ Any drive-through windows, automatic teller machines, or gasoline pump canopies shall not be located between a building and the street.
- ◆ Loading and Building Mechanical areas: Dumpsters, loading areas and building mechanical and accessory features shall be screened so as not to be visible from any public plaza, ground-level or sidewalk-level outdoor dining area, public sidewalk or public right-of way. In addition, dumpsters and loading areas serving residential uses shall be enclosed with opaque walls 6 ft in height.
- ◆ Pedestrian bridges and tunnels are prohibited when located above or below public streets, private streets that function as public streets connecting two other public streets or other public rights-of-way.

## Curb Cuts and Parking Structures

- ◆ All sidewalk paving materials shall be continued across any intervening driveway.
- ◆ Driveway and curb cut widths shall be 24 ft for two-way entrances and 12 ft for one-way entrances.
- ◆ No circular drives shall be located between any building and any public street, with the exception of hotels.
- ◆ Parking areas or driveways, except for a driveway to reach the side yard or rear yard or an on-site parking facility, are not permitted between the sidewalk and a building.
- ◆ No more than one curb cut shall be permitted for each block face of a development, provided that properties with four block faces or more may have three curb cuts.
- ◆ Entrances to garages and carports that serve a single residential unit shall face the rear yard or side yard.



- ◆ All contiguous ground-floor residential units shall share one common drive, located in rear yards or side yards, to serve garages, carports and parking areas.
- ◆ Parking deck facades shall conceal automobiles from visibility from any public right-of-way or private drive or street that are open to the general public and shall have the appearance of a horizontal-storied building.

## Off-Street Parking Requirements

- ◆ Off-street surface parking shall be located to the side or rear of any principal structure.
- ◆ Minimum Bicycle Parking Requirements: All non-residential developments that provide automobile parking facilities shall provide bicycle/moped parking facilities at a ratio of at least 1 bicycle/moped parking space for every 20 automobile parking spaces. Multi-family developments shall provide said facilities at a ratio of at least 1 bicycle/moped parking space for every 5 multi-family units. No development, except a one or two-family development, shall have fewer than 3 bicycle/moped parking spaces nor be required to exceed a maximum of 50 spaces. Bicycle/moped spaces shall be located within the street furniture zone a maximum distance of one 100 ft of the building entrance, or shall be located at least as close as the closest automobile space, except for handicapped parking spaces. Each space shall include a metal anchor sufficient to secure the bicycle/moped frame when used in conjunction with a user-supplied lock.
- ◆ All parking lots adjacent to any required sidewalk or supplemental zone shall have a landscaped strip a minimum of width of 5 ft adjacent to said sidewalk or supplemental zone.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Many times elected officials, planning staff and citizen groups think that, once the plan is completed, their work is done. However, only in a community that takes the implementation process as seriously as it did the development of the plan truly will be successful. Implementation should be seen as an integral part of the planning process, not as an optional afterthought.



An increasingly large part of economic development is dependant upon successful plan implementation. A community's competitiveness depends on the capacity of a community to adjust to continual change and the ability of local leaders to form partnerships.

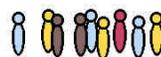
Implementation normally has to be approached through incremental phasing, involving as many groups as possible to achieve elements of the plan. This effort can create some coordination headaches, but the community buy-in and consensus is worth the effort.

A working framework of implementation is established based on priorities, commitment, and availability of funds. Flexibility is important in implementation. Just as a company must be able to adapt to the changing global economy, a community must work to update and re-evaluate existing plans and strategies for their effectiveness. Accordingly, as new plans are adopted, a continuous evaluation process must be included.

Decatur is facing a situation many communities have faced before, and many more will in the future. Once the plan is done, the next step is figuring out how to make it happen. Our recommendations for capacity building and economic development include the following:

## Partnerships

- ◆ Pursue more active support from the non-profits in the area, such as civic associations, neighborhood associations and business associations. Involve as many groups as is manageable in adoption of implementation steps for the final plan.
- ◆ The creation of a new association for the Columbia Park area could take charge of formalizing and organizing the Decatur LCI stakeholders, including citizens and business leaders who participated in the plan development process. Once this has been accomplished, this group should work on expanding outreach efforts.
- ◆ Develop an official advisory committee to oversee the development and architectural process in the study area.
- ◆ Continue dialogue among identified stakeholders, City staff and local elected officials, including DeKalb County and Avondale Estates.
- ◆ Continue the identification of creative developers and establish working relationships with them in order match the development needs with the companies.



## Funding

- ◆ Pursue the implementation monies available through the Atlanta Regional Commission LCI funding program.
- ◆ Pursue a variety of outside funding sources aside from the City itself, including federal housing assistance funding, formation of a Community Improvement District (CID), formation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, a variety of loan funds from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and grant and foundation monies.
- ◆ Review the prioritization of the general funds for the City to determine if some of those monies could help leverage additional revenue to support the implementation of the Decatur LCI Plan.
- ◆ Leverage the funds used to increase the possibility of funding for other projects.

## Implementation

- ◆ Carefully prioritize elements of the plan that will be noticed and will create buy-in immediately.
- ◆ Identify one key project to develop in the near term and develop it well. This will catapult all future development and become a showcase for the community.
- ◆ Prepare a first year action agenda of items to accomplish that year. At the close of the first year, prepare a first year status report of what has been done and what needs to be done in Year Two.
- ◆ Conduct an annexation study in cooperation with DeKalb County to determine the feasibility and need of annexing those parcels not currently located in the City.
- ◆ Build on the relationship between the Decatur Development Authority and the DeKalb Development Authority to identify and market new businesses and assist in any relocation or expansion of current businesses.
- ◆ Establish criteria through development regulations that implement mixed-use development, affordable housing requirements, façade and streetscape guidelines and open space.



- ◆ Establish benchmarks, tied to obtainable data and a clear timeline. In order for performance measurement to be successful and to produce benefit, regular and sustained measurement of progress toward specified outcomes has to happen.

Decatur is at a key point in this process – it is time to begin to shift gears from planning for the future to figuring how the future plans are going to be implemented today.

## HOW THIS PLAN ADDRESSES LCI GOALS

**Encourage a diversity of medium- to high-density, mixed-income neighborhoods, employment, and shopping and recreation choices at the activity and town center level.**

This plan calls for higher density residential development at what is to be the Village Center of the new neighborhood centered at the Avondale MARTA station parking lot on the south side of College Ave. The centerpiece and focal point of the Village Center is the public park/gathering space at the entrance to the MARTA bridge across E. College Ave. As the new neighborhood moves away from the Village Center and closer to the existing single-family neighborhoods, the residential forms become medium- to low- density in building forms. All development is permitted to have non-residential uses at the ground floor to encourage a mixed-use environment.

**Provide access to a range of travel modes including transit, roadways, walking and biking to enable access to all uses within the study area.**

As this neighborhood develops, a combination of private and public investments will create a broad network of sidewalks, bike lanes, slow moving neighborhood streets, cross walks, paths and trails and better access to the Avondale MARTA station. Some of these elements get done through private development with the guidance of zoning regulations. The remaining infrastructure is implemented through the City of Decatur public investment program targeted for this area.

**Encourage integration of uses with transportation investments to maximize the use of alternate modes.**

The key piece to integrating alternative modes of transportation with strategic investments is the parking structure proposed to be built off of a new Main St in the existing MARTA parking lot exists on the south side of E. College Ave. By building this new parking deck, the existing MARTA parking lot can be used for a mixed-use



development that takes advantage of close proximity to the MARTA station. The parking facility should offer parking spaces to MARTA users in addition to the users of new developments in the redevelopment area.

**Through transportation investments increase the desirability of redevelopment of land served by existing infrastructure at activity and town centers.**

In addition to the redevelopment of existing surface parking lots into a new mixed-use development and a parking structure, the focal point of the area will be the newly created Village Center public space. The plaza/park space creates a new entrance for the area, presence onto E. College Ave., and a new entrance to the MARTA bridge across E. College Ave. to the MARTA station. This park will serve as the amenity that spurs development of the area.

**Preserve the historical characteristics of activity and town centers and create a community identity.**

The City of Decatur has a strong community identity and historic characteristics. The goal for this plan was to create a unique identity for the project area that was separate from downtown Decatur. In the beginning of the process, it was decided to ask participants to identify a name for the area. The suggested name is Columbia Park. The master plan helps mold a new community and development center around the Avondale MARTA station.

**Develop a community-based transportation investment program at the activity and town center level that will identify capital projects, which can be funded in the annual Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).**

The public involvement process involved a diverse group of constituencies. All of them agreed on the need for increased pedestrian and bicycle safety. The project list included in this LCI Plan focuses on increasing pedestrian and bicycle priority in the study area. The largest need for funding will be the new parking deck facility built on the MARTA parking lots mentioned above. The remaining funding should be pursued to implement the streetscaping and traffic calming mechanisms called for in the plan.

**Provide transportation infrastructure incentives for jurisdictions to take local actions to implement the resulting activity or town center study goals.**

This plan identifies transportation projects that, if funded through the LCI program, will serve as incentives for future redevelopment.

**Provide for the implementation of the RDP policies, quality growth initiatives and Best Development Practices in the study area, local governments and at the regional level.**



RDP policies and Best Development Practices were guiding policies in formulating the LCI plan and are embraced by the City of Decatur Economic and Community Development Department. Both RDP and Best Development practices will be incorporated, where appropriate, into the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance. The Urban Design Guidelines contained in this report clearly reflect Best Development Practices.

**Develop a local planning outreach process that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders particularly low income, minority and traditionally underserved populations**

The City of Decatur has long been known for its outstanding citizen involvement. In this project, they have reached out beyond their normal constituency to include the citizens of Dekalb County and Avondale Estates in the process. They advertised in the paper with press releases and feature articles, maintained a web page with updates to the LCI throughout the study period and will continue to update it as development occurs. Before every meeting, an extended effort was made to inform citizens by postcards, posters and signs.

**Provide planning funds for development of activity and town centers that showcase the integration of land use policy and regulation and transportation investments with urban design tools.**

The City of Decatur will create new Zoning, Land Use and Transportation policies designed specifically to implement the recommendations of this plan. All City departments that have the responsibility for creating this new place will develop the appropriate guidelines to make the vision of this plan become reality. This will primarily be accomplished through the zoning legislation written and applied to the area that will require future development to adhere to the criteria of the new plan.



## FIVE YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

### *Residential Initiatives*

<b>Description/Action</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Adopt density bonus provisions into the new zoning districts for projects that include affordable housing units	2003	City	City
Require all residential development to have pedestrian-oriented building forms and pedestrian infrastructure through sidewalks and streetscapes	2003	City	City
Adopt new zoning provisions that allow for up to 5 floors of residential development	2003	City	City
Promote a balanced mix of owner and renter occupied units within the district.	2003	City	City
<b>General Initiatives</b>			
<b>Description/Action</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Implement parking standards that are flexible and that encourage shared parking or reduced parking	2003	City	City
Modify the City Land Use Plan to reflect the zoning changes	2003	City	City
Coordinate with Dekalb County to adopt the similar land use, zoning and architectural standards for the portion of the district within the County	2003	City	City
Work with the Methodist Childrens Home to locate YMCA athletic fields into their immediate plans	2003	City	City
Facilitate the relocation of existing industrial uses to other sites within the City or County	2003	City	City
Recruit local neighborhood-oriented commercial uses to locate within the new district	2003	City	City
Adopt a new zoning district for the study area	2003	City	City
Institute a City-based initiative to promote economic incentives for implementing the recommendations of this plan to the developmnet community	2003	City	City
Work with neighboring Agnes Scott and downtown Decatur to promote awareness and accessibility to the new district	2003	City	City
Conduct a gateway design competition to develop a gateway concept for the new district	2003	City	City
Prepare architectural/design guidelines for new developments in overlay district	2003	City	City

## Five-Year Plan for Transportation

Description	Type of Improvement	Eng. Year	Engineering Costs	Construction Year	Construction Costs	Total Project Costs*	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Local Match Source	Local Match Amount
<b>Streets and Pedestrian Projects</b>										
Construction of new Main Street through the MARTA parking lot.	1200 lf of new 40' wide street with 2 travel lanes and on-street parallel parking spaces, 15' wide sidewalk, streetscape amenities – light fixtures, street trees, benches, etc.	2003	15% of construction costs	2004			City of Decatur, MARTA	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
						\$1,620,000				\$1,863,000
			\$243,000							
East College Ave. Streetscape from S. Columbia Ave. to Arcadia Ave. – South side of road only (can connect to Avondale's – out of study area however	2,400 lf of 10' wide sidewalk, streetscape amenities - light fixtures, street trees, benches, etc.	2004	15% of construction costs	2005			City of Decatur	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
						\$850,000				\$1,000,000
			\$150,000							
S. Columbia Dr. sidewalk along east side of road, bike lanes, from E. College Ave. to Katie Kerr Dr.	4,629 lf of new 5-foot wide sidewalk, curb and gutter, and bike lanes	2003	15% of Construction Costs	2004	\$50/lf sidewalks		City of Decatur	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
			\$34,717		\$77/lf bike lanes	\$231,450				\$266,167
Derrydown Way Sidewalk and Traffic Calming measures. Sidewalks along one side of roadway.	3,000 lf of new 5' wide sidewalk	2003	15% of Construction Costs	2004	\$50/lf		City of Decatur	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
						\$150,000				\$172,500
			\$22,500							
Extend/upgrade sidewalk along Katie Kerr St. from E. College Ave. to Columbia Dr.	5,300 lf New Sidewalk  (5' wide sidewalk)	2003	15% of Construction Costs	2004	\$50/lf		City of Decatur	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
			\$936			\$6,264				\$7,200

## Five-Year Plan for Transportation

Description	Type of Improvement	Eng. Year	Engineering Costs	Construction Year	Construction Costs	Total Project Costs*	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Local Match Source	Local Match Amount
<b>Trail Projects</b>										
Katie Kerr Dr./Methodist Childrens Home Trail	0.9 mile Multi-Use Path	2006	30% of Construction Costs \$102,600	2006	\$380,000/mile	\$342,000	City	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
						\$444,600				
Columbia Dr. to Avondale MARTA Station South Entrance	0.9 mile Multi-Use Path	2006	30% of Construction Costs \$102,600	2006	\$380,000/mile	\$342,000	City	LCI, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
						\$444,600				

## PARKING

MARTA Structured Parking Facility	New Parking Deck	2004	\$686,400	2005	\$5,280,000	\$5,966,400	MARTA	LCI, MARTA, City, County, private &/or other	City, County, private &/or other	20% of construction costs, PE, ROW, and overruns
(800 Spaces)										

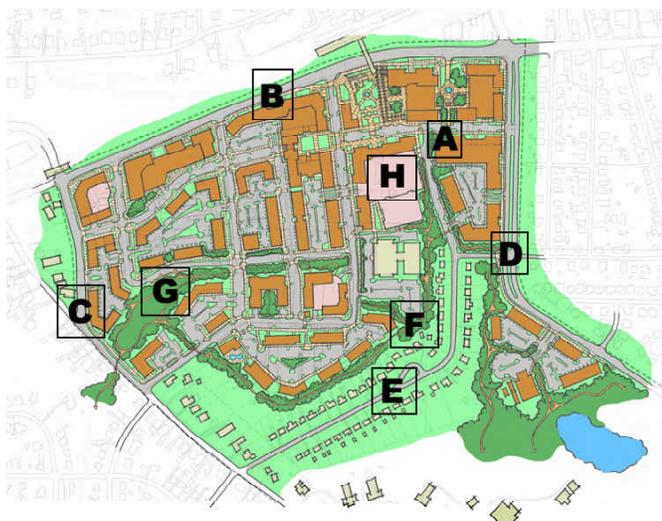
Note - Costs do not include Right of Way acquisition.

## NOTES

Sidewalk construction typically requires the installation of curb and gutter where none exists. Wider sidewalks would require higher sidewalk costs only, c&g would stay the same. C&G costs are for monolithic concrete, not granite, which would be more.

Sidewalks, streetscape, etc. on new or upgraded streets internal to study area should be provided by developers. Therefore, those type projects are not listed here. These type of requirements need to be included in the zoning ordinance and development regulations.

TOTAL PROJECT COSTS: \$10,164,467



## New Office Space Development

City of Decatur, Georgia

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Employed</u>	<u>Number of New Employees</u>	<u>Incremental Square Footage Needed to Support*</u>	<u>Incremental Additional Supportable Restaurant Space**</u>
1990	8,837			
1991	8,674	-163	-32,600	-815
1992	8,636	-38	-7,600	-190
1993	8,980	344	68,800	1,720
1994	9,260	280	56,000	1,400
1995	9,289	29	5,800	145
1996	9,522	233	46,600	1,165
1997	9,759	237	47,400	1,185
1998	9,984	225	45,000	1,125
1999	10,197	213	42,600	1,065
2000	10,361	164	32,800	820
2001	10,331	-30	-6,000	-150
October 2002	10,447	116	23,200	580
2005	11,239	792	158,308	3,958
2010	11,975	736	147,242	3,681
2015	12,701	726	145,171	3,629
2020	13,414	713	142,650	3,566
2025	14,112	698	139,679	3,492

\*This is the estimated level of new office development needed to support the projected level employment increases.

\*\* Estimates the additional square footage of restaurant space that will be supportable by the increase in office space alone. Does not include additional square footage for residential development or the synergy created by additional retail.

### Population

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>
Primary Trade Area	36,871	37,971	39,081	39,368	39,569	39,944	40,319	40,695	41,074
Secondary Trade Area	93,877	95,130	96,843	96,905	97,749	99,149	100,549	101,948	103,344
Total Trade Area	130,748	133,101	135,924	136,273	137,318	139,093	140,868	142,643	144,418
City of Decatur	17,336	17,742	18,147	18,441	19,135	20,291	21,447	22,603	23,759
DeKalb County	545,837	605,851	665,865	682,994	708,688	751,511	794,334	837,157	879,980

### Housing Units

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2025</u>
Primary Trade Area	16,462	17,316	18,170	18,437	18,939	19,441	19,943	20,445	20,947
Secondary Trade Area	38,962	40,425	41,887	42,435	42,990	44,248	45,506	46,764	48,022
Total Trade Area	55,424	57,741	60,057	60,872	61,929	63,689	65,449	67,209	68,969
City of Decatur	8,230	8,592	8,954	9,076	9,701	10,076	10,451	10,826	11,201
DeKalb County	231,520	262,598	293,675	304,798	319,520	344,021	368,522	393,023	417,524

## Employment Statistics and Projections

City of Decatur, Georgia

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Labor Force</u>	<u>Total Employed</u>	<u>Percent Unemployment</u>
1990	9,307	8,837	5.0%
1991	9,099	8,674	4.7%
1992	9,256	8,636	6.7%
1993	9,530	8,980	5.8%
1994	9,794	9,260	5.5%
1995	9,770	9,289	4.9%
1996	9,970	9,522	4.5%
1997	10,223	9,759	4.5%
1998	10,448	9,984	4.4%
1999	10,661	10,197	4.4%
2000	10,755	10,361	3.7%
2001	10,791	10,331	4.3%
October 2002	11,105	10,447	5.9%
2005	11,855	11,239	5.2%
2010	12,605	11,975	5.0%
2015	13,355	12,701	4.9%
2020	14,105	13,414	4.9%
2025	14,855	14,112	5.0%

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, U.S. Census Bureau

Projections are based upon historical data and anticipated trends and may be subject to change.





# APPENDIX





## **PARTNERS:**

### **Building Partners for a Better Community:**

- MARTA
- City- Decatur
- You, You, and You
- Local Banks
- Developers
- DFACS
- Avondale Estates
- CSX- Railroad
- Local Neighborhood Associations
- Dekalb County
- United Methodist Church Children's' Home
- Smith Ace Hardware
- Forest Hills/Belvedere Neighborhoods
- Large Educational Institutions
- Dekalb Chamber of Commerce
- ARC- Atlanta Regional Commission
- JJG- Jordan, Jones, & Goulding
- Bell South
- Friends School
- Varsity Gymnastics
- GA Power
- Southern Company
- Faith Community
- HOPE Foundation
- Garden Clubs
- Foundations
- Southface Energy Institute
- PATH
- PEDS
- Atlanta Bicycle Club
- Atlanta Track Club
- Trees Atlanta
- Hospital Authority





## NEIGHBORHOOD NAME VOTE

The winning name of the contest is:

### **COLUMBIA PARK WITH 14 VOTES**

2<sup>nd</sup> place is awarded to East Decatur with 13 votes

3<sup>rd</sup> place was Arcadia Heights with 11 votes

- Derrydown Village received 5 votes
- E. Winnona received 2 votes
- New Decatur received 0 votes
- Quaker Heights received 1 vote
- Ridgewood Village received 0 votes
- East College received 0 votes
- Devondale received 3 votes
- Avondale Heights received 10 votes
- Devonshire received 0 votes
- East College Park received 2 votes
- College Town received 0 votes
- College Place received 2 votes
- Sams Park received 4 votes
- Talley Park received 2 votes
- Talley Town received 1 vote

There were 8 write-ins and 3 of those received votes.

- College Park
- East Decatur Village
- College Park
- Columbia Heights
- Sams Crossing-1
- College Station
- Decatur Park-2
- Columbia Green





**A SPECIAL THANKS TO THE DEDICATED CITIZENS OF DECATUR FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE LCI PLAN.**

*Tony Able  
Annie Archbold  
Tim Archer  
Joe Arrington  
Elle Baerman  
Steven Barton  
C Bettis  
Chuck Bosserman  
Edward Bowen  
Fred Boykin  
Lee Beth Burge  
Robert Cain  
Bill Caskey  
Ross Cheairs  
Thurston Cook  
Bonnie Croft  
Ron Croft  
Kecia Cunningham  
Madden Degarmo  
John Economy  
Libby Egnor  
Linda Ellis  
Annette Ford  
Lindsey Forsythe  
Richard Geiger  
Sarah Gentry  
Sarah Gents  
Amy Gibbons  
Scott Gibbons  
Phillip Gittman  
Heidi Glick  
Kate Grace  
Hugh Gregory  
Zenzj Griffin  
Emily Groh  
Sue Hendrix  
Matthew Hogben  
Bob Hogan  
Linda Hogan  
Jack Honderd  
Molly T. Hottel*

*Paul Jennings  
Kristen Karably  
Mary Alice Kemp  
Ralph Kirkland  
Linda Kirkland  
Melissa Kosmin  
Cris Lake  
Leslie Lazarus  
Rob LeBeau  
Trisha Lee  
Gill Leggett  
Melanie Leggett  
Debbie Loomis  
Mike Maschmeyer  
Joan Mazzotini  
Marghe Means  
Lyn Menne  
Mark Moncrier  
Barbara Moore  
Lester Moore  
Fran Morrison  
Maria Mullins  
Pat Murphy  
RA Myers  
Ann Marie Nector  
Gardner Neely  
John Parker  
Scott Pendergrast  
Iyona Perez  
Mai Phung  
Paul A. Pierce  
David Popke  
Michele Ritan  
Hugh Saxon  
David L. Smith  
Frances Smith  
Bew Spencer  
Daniel Spieler  
Tom Stubbs  
Mary Swint*

*Scott Tenell  
Bruce Van Buren  
Sandra Varian  
Justin Vickery  
Kay Wischkaemper  
Jim Withers  
Weny Worrell  
Usi Wurtzel  
Trish Hoff  
James Alcegelin  
Jae J Pi  
Chris Parrish  
Frank Goben  
Ashley Ivester  
Melanie Hill  
Deborah Stephenson  
Anthea Purves  
Jim Watkins  
David Brown  
Bob Ewing  
Linda Skirkland  
Mike Ward  
Don Rabern  
Elizabeth Lacy  
Dan Goodman  
Andrew Beasley  
Stephen Denton  
Jack Hendered  
Bruce Jackson  
Tresha Glemister  
Michele Lindner Kueny  
Natalie Alford  
Steven Alford  
Marie Norris  
Bill Floyd  
Jim Baskett  
Peggy Merriss  
Walter Brown  
Tom Weyandt  
Don Bender*





## DEVELOPER'S PANEL BIOGRAPHIES

**Walter Brown** is the vice president of Green Street Properties where his primary focus is on green development. Walter came to Green Street from the Southface Energy Institute, an influential Atlanta based non-profit organization dedicated to energy efficiency, environmentally conscious building practices, and sustainable urban development. Walter spent three years as the Senior Program Manager at Southface, and was a key player in program development, business and government partnership development, the Sustainable Atlanta Roundtable and the annual Greenprints Sustainable Communities Conference. Prior to that, Walter worked for the State of Georgia for ten years, where he was responsible for the rehabilitation of over 5,000 homes for low to moderate-income residents. Another Atlanta native, Walter earned a BS in Community Development from Georgia State, and he has pursued extensive studies in architecture, urban studies, and business at Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia. Walter serves on the Board of Directors of the Freedom Park Conservancy, the Board of Directors of the Community Housing Resource Center, and recently served as the founding Secretary of the Atlanta Regional Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council.

**Thomas L. Weyandt, Jr.** is Director of Comprehensive Planning for the Atlanta Regional Commission where he manages planning for transportation, the environment and land use as well as demographic and economic research and the regional Commute Connections Program. Prior to joining ARC in June he was Senior Associate in the Policy Research Center (PRC) in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University and Executive Director of Research Atlanta, Inc. Tom received a B.S.F.S. from the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University and has studied in Germany and Switzerland. He has over twenty-five years of experience in urban planning and development having served as Planning Director and Commissioner of Planning and Development for the City of Atlanta and as Director of Transportation for the Atlanta Regional Commission. Tom also served as President of the Downtown Dayton (Ohio) Partnership, a public-private effort to rejuvenate an urban downtown. Tom was Director of Transportation for the Atlanta Paralympic Organizing Committee where he was responsible for the development and operation of all transportation services for the Xth Paralympic Games - the second largest sporting event in the world.

**Thurston Cooke** is a Project Manager at Progressive Redevelopment, Inc., an independent not-for-profit affordable housing developer based in Decatur, GA. Prior to joining Progressive Redevelopment, Inc., Thurston was a Vice President in the Community Development Lending Group at First Union National Bank of Georgia. Thurston earned his Masters in Business Administration, with a concentration in Real Estate, from Georgia State University in December 2000, and holds a B.A. degree in History from Davidson College. In addition to his work with Progressive Redevelopment, Inc. Thurston serves on the board of The Phoenix School in Decatur and on the Capital Campaign Committee at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church. Thurston, his wife Carla and son Davis, live in Avondale Estates.

**Jack Honderd, AIA,** is the owner of the design, build firm ArchiTech Partners, Inc. where he specializes in developing, designing, and building mixed-use projects and infill housing near MARTA stations, including Crossway Creek, Coosawatee Creek, Coosawatee-Ogeechee and most recently, Fernwood Park, all in the Brookhaven area of Atlanta. The Atlanta Regional Commission recently selected Fernwood Park as its 2001 Development for Excellence for Transit-Oriented Design. Prior to forming his own company, Jack was a commercial architect for Thompson, Hancock, Witte, Architects and Planners and the firm of Wright & Mitchell. Jack has been involved in the building industry since he was a child growing up in the contracting business. He eventually chose



architecture as a profession graduating magna cum laude with a Master's Degree in Architecture from the University of Michigan in 1982 where he received the American Institute of Architects' Student Medal for scholastic achievement. Jack currently lives in Atlanta with his wife and business partner, Elizabeth Eggers and their three children.

**Mike Maschmeyer** is President and owner of Life General Contractors and The Milestone Group where he has been engaged in the development and ownership of multifamily and single family residential properties in the Atlanta metropolitan market since 1985. Mike has been the builder/developer on more than 500 multifamily residences including apartments and town homes and has constructed more than 600 single-family residences. Many of his projects have been award-winning projects on a local and national scale receiving top awards for design and marketing. Rosewalk, a 67-unit high-density infill single-family community in Decatur won a national award for Best in American Living. Mike also won the best affordable housing for building and design for Village On the Park, a 143-unit single-family development in Cobb County. Mike is currently developing three projects in the Decatur/Avondale area, Winnona Park Place, Kensington Walk, and The Clairemont. Mike received his Bachelors Degree from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Master's of Business Administration in Urban Development and Finance from the University of Tennessee.

**Don Bender** is the owner of Neighborhood Commercial Redevelopment, a neighborhood-retail oriented development company based in Atlanta, GA. Don's developments place a heavy emphasis on small, independent businesses that are more a part of the community they are located in. Don believes in finding a commercial mix that stays away from the chain cookie cutter approach of most generic strip development corridors and instead provides a neighborhood commercial district that is more responsive to the needs of the adjacent neighborhoods. Don has been a driving force in transforming the Little Five Points and East Atlanta neighborhood commercial areas of the City of Atlanta into thriving and eclectic activity centers. In addition to his work with Neighborhood Commercial Redevelopment, Don serves as a member of the Freedom Park Conservancy and the Southstar Community Development Corporation.

