DOWNTOWN FOREST PARK

LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY



Developed for the City of Forest Park and supported by Atlanta Regional Commission

Prepared by Lord Aeck Sargent, KB Advisory Group and Hummingbird

June, 2021

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The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and not necessarily of the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia or the Federal Highway Administration.

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Prepared in cooperation with the Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the Atlanta Regional Commission.

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BACKGROUND AND INTENT

1.1 Project Overview
1.2 Process
1.3 Notable Planning Efforts

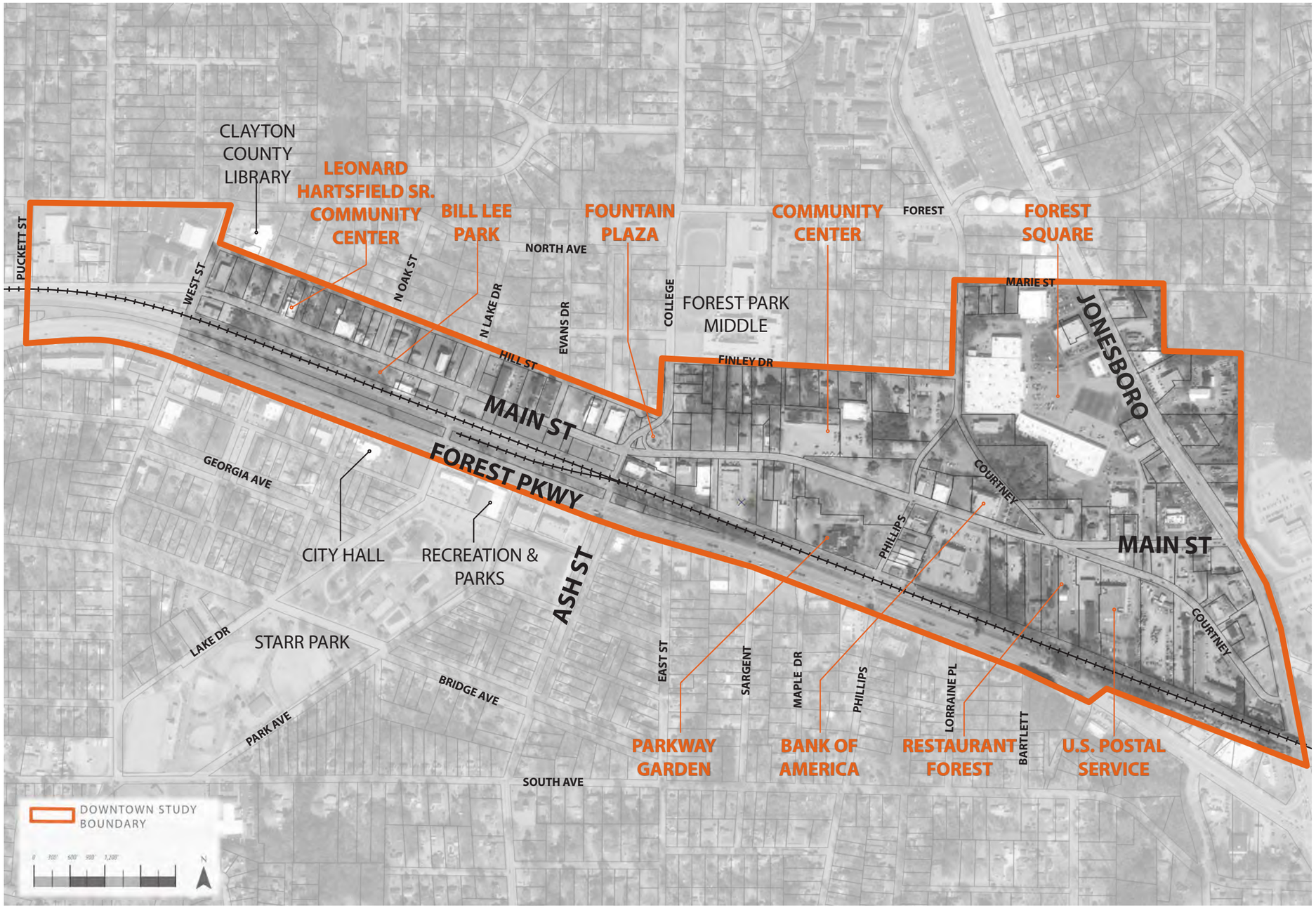
1.1
PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Forest Park was awarded a grant by Atlanta Regional Planning Commission (ARC) to update the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study for its downtown. The purpose of this study is to revisit the original LCI plan and keep it relevant to the current context, changing demographics, market conditions, and economics. The updated LCI plan embraces the passion of the people of Forest Park and the desire to create an active, inclusive, and growing downtown. The intent of the LCI study is to focus on the following outcomes:

- Inform stakeholders about the City of Forest Park's vision and goals for the downtown area.
- Develop a framework of policies and programs to help accomplish the vision.
- Develop guidance for development type, scale, and character in the study area.
- Identify key redevelopment sites and strategies to activate them.
- List and prioritize implementation strategies, specifically for public investment in the downtown area.
- Review and update zoning regulations and design guidelines in the study area with an emphasis placed on regulations that support LCI priority areas.

DOWNTOWN CONTEXT

The Downtown Forest Park LCI Area is approximately 151 acres, bounded by Forest Parkway and Norfolk Southern Railroad on the south side; West Street on the west side; Hill Street, Finley Drive, Marie Street on the north side; and Jonesboro Road on the east side. Main Street is the central spine connecting the area from West Street to Jonesboro Road. Main Street creates a central business district as all the businesses front the street with a variety of retail, office, and commercial uses.



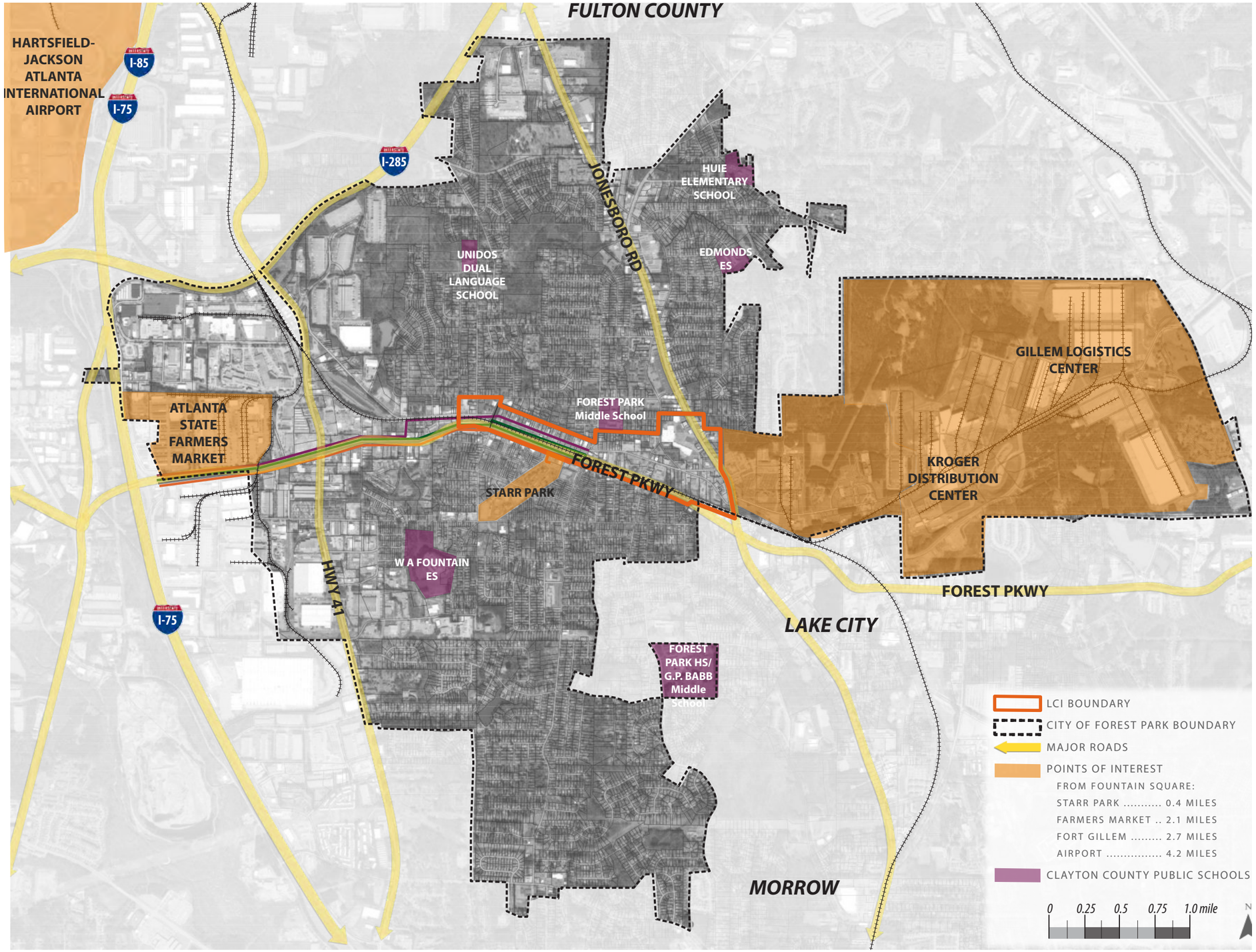
1.1

PROJECT OVERVIEW

DOWNTOWN CONTEXT

The City of Forest Park, the largest city in Clayton County, is located nine miles south of Atlanta and five miles east of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The city is bordered by I-75, I-85, and I-285 on the west side providing convenient access to Atlanta State Farmers Market and Downtown Forest Park.

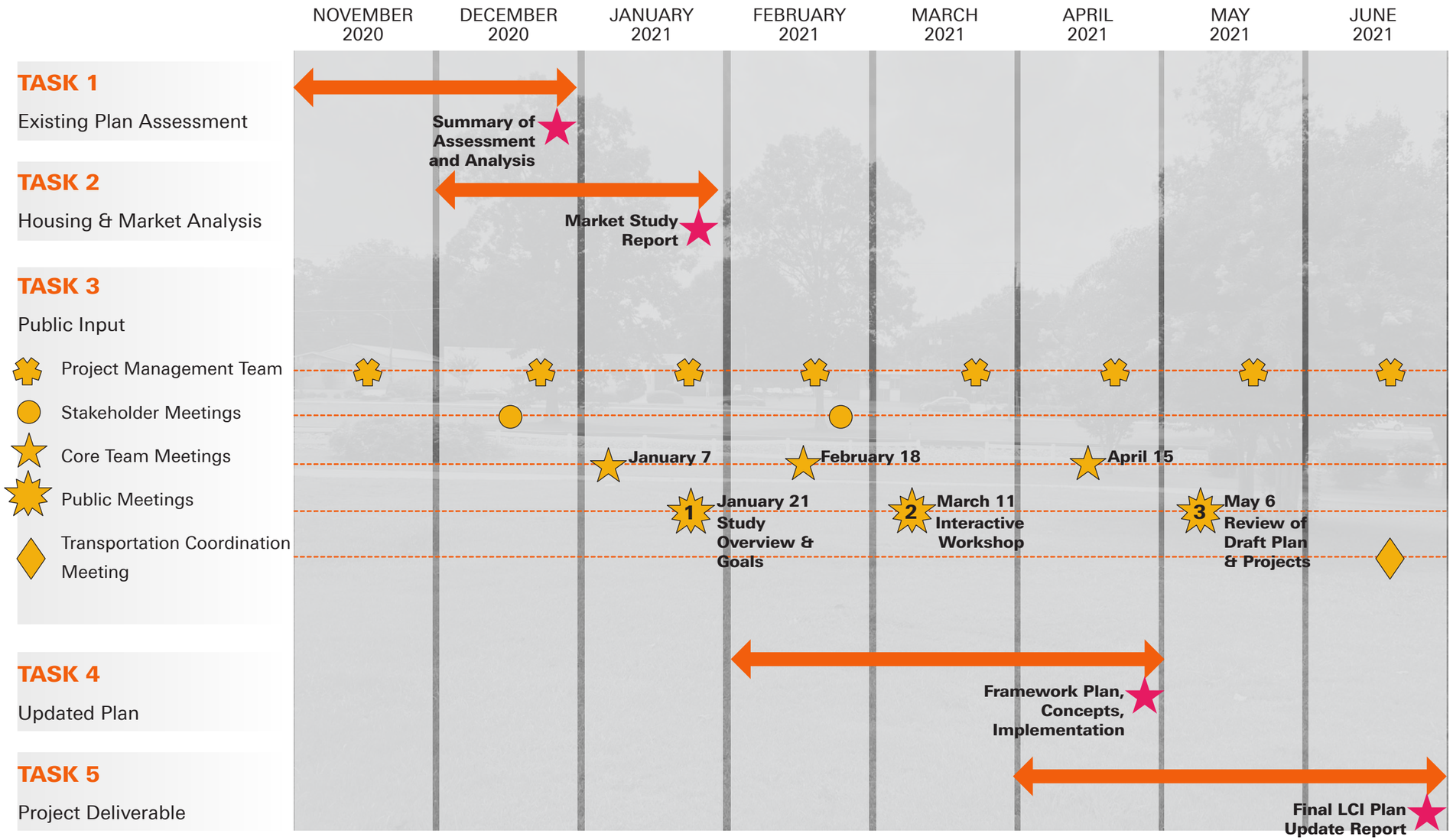
The city was originally founded in 1846 as a refueling stop on the Macon and Western Railroad. It was then incorporated as a city in 1908. The annexation of Fort Gillem Military Reservation in 1973 expanded the city limit on the east side beyond Jonesboro Road. Clayton County is included in the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area and the ten-county Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). The estimated 2019 population is over 20,000 people with a diversity of race and ethnicity.



1.2
PROCESS

The planning process began in November 2020 and was organized around five key tasks. Due to the ongoing COVID pandemic, the robust public engagement process was conducted in an almost exclusively virtual format.

In addition to the physical conditions assessment, the LCI study focused on taking a closer look at the housing and market analysis. The findings from Task 2 provided market realities - both opportunities and limitations and helped in to define a vision. The market study facilitated meaningful economic development strategies to position Downtown for the future.



1.3 NOTABLE PLANNING EFFORTS

DOWNTOWN FOREST PARK LCI PLAN, 2001

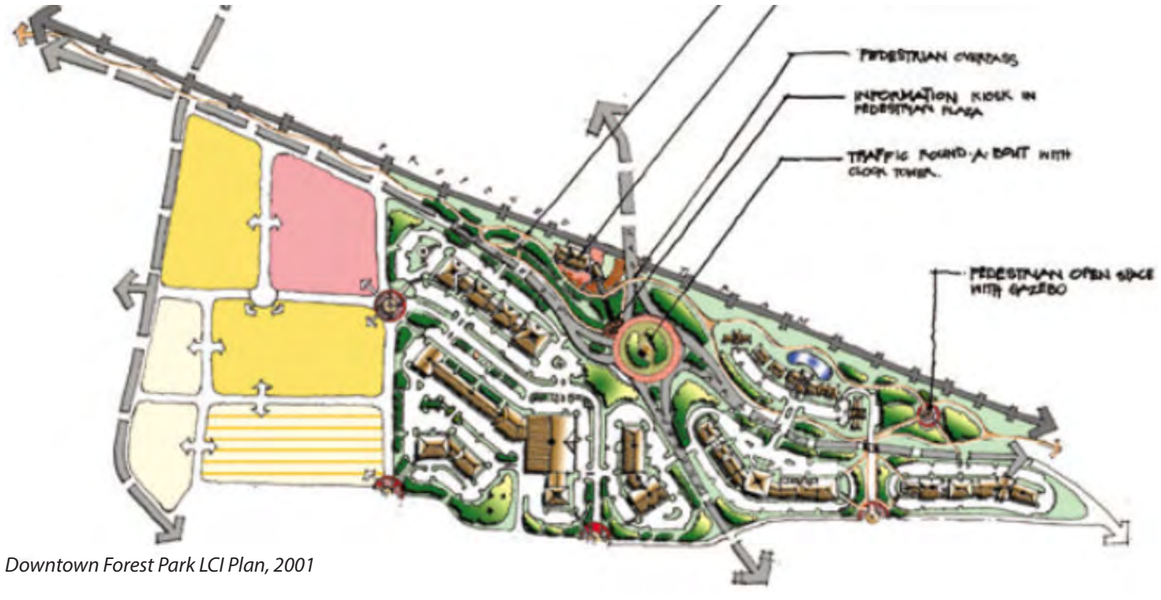
In 2001, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) provided program funding to the City of Forest Park to develop plans for enhanced transportation options and the development of activity centers. The goals of the 2001 LCI plan include promotion of medium to high density mixed-use development, transportation alternatives, promotion of infill development, preservation of the historic character of Forest Park, and encouraging connectivity through sidewalks, roadways, and bike lanes. The plan was centralized around a Commuter Rail Transit Village in the downtown Forest Park area.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE, 2018

The 2018 Forest Park Comprehensive Master Plan was updated to create a clear vision of the future of Forest Park. The plan is organized around four major themes: economic development, housing, transportation, and preserving and regenerating the natural environment. The comprehensive master plan calls out on distinct goals for the City of Forest Park to achieve it's visions. Some of these goals include mitigation of environmental impacts, providing sufficient housing and protecting existing neighborhoods, enhancing community and civic spaces, and create a unique sense of place.



Starr Park and Neighborhood Master Plan, 2019



Downtown Forest Park LCI Plan, 2001

STARR PARK AND NEIGHBORHOOD MASTER PLAN, 2019

The Starr Park and Neighborhood Master Plan developed in 2018 provided a guide for future redevelopment of Starr Park, the surrounding neighborhood, and the City of Forest Park's recreation and open space. The goals of this plan include maximizing Starr Park to engage users of all ages, provide premier recreational facilities while serving as a catalyst to the surrounding neighborhood, and serve as an economic driver of the community and downtown area.

MODEL MILE GREENWAY TRAIL, 2021

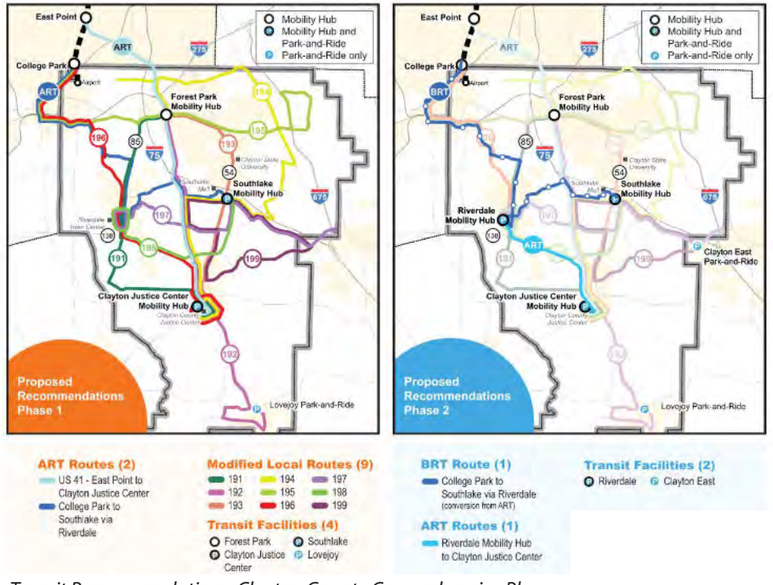
The Forest Park Model Mile Greenway Trail is one of seven Aerotropolis Atlanta locations identified by AeroATL for a multi-use trail connecting multiple communities to the Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson Airport. Forest Park was selected as one of the candidates due to the vast amount of bicycle commuters, the need for safer sidewalks, and the limited presence of existing sidewalks. The four alternative routes for the trail shown on the map will provide connectivity from the Downtown Forest Park to the Atlanta State Farmers Market, Airport, Hapeville, East Point, College Park, and many other communities.



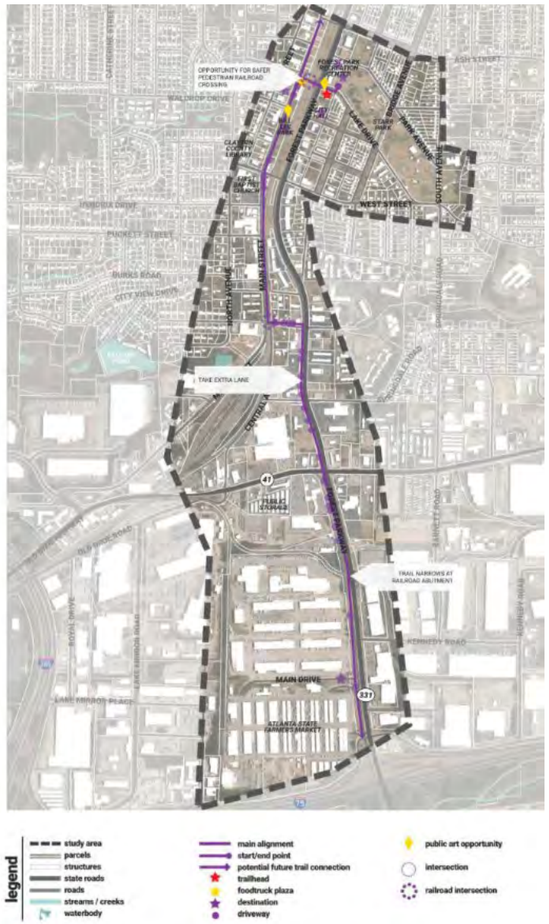
Concept design for trailhead, Model Mile Greenway Trail

CITY OF FOREST PARK ZONING UPDATE, 2021

The City of Forest Park is currently undergoing a zoning ordinance update. This update will address the changing conditions within the city and re-align the zoning ordinance with current and future community goals. Updates to the zoning ordinance will focus on creating a predictable use of adjacent properties, uniformity in lot development, prevention of adverse built conditions on adjacent properties, requirements of compatible land uses, and improved cityscape appearances. This new zoning ordinance is set for adoption in July of 2021.



Transit Recommendations, Clayton County Comprehensive Plan



Preferred trail alignment on Main Street, Model Mile Greenway Trail

CLAYTON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, 2020

Clayton County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan is a guide for the development of a multimodal transportation system that ensures safe and efficient movement of people and goods, supports mobility and accessibility, and protects historical and natural resources. Goals of the CTP include ensuring transportation systems promote and support appropriate land uses, encourage and promote safety and security, improve connectivity, promote and support economic development, and improve the quality of life for citizens.

MODEL MARTA ORDINANCE: TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) CORE-REDEVELOPMENT/NEW BUILD (TCR), 2021

Through the effort of 2040 Transforming Transit, MARTA is developing model TCR ordinance for suburban jurisdictions to transform from car-oriented development to transit-oriented mixed-use centers. The jurisdictions may voluntarily adopt the ordinance in parts or in wholesale to fit their needs in the current code. The ordinance provides 40 baseline components covering a variety of standards such as land use, density, development type, architectural standards, parking, open space, signage, to name a few. The model TCR uses "Big 5 of TOD" goals - Density/Intensity, Mixed-Use, Walkability, People-Friendly Design and Parking.

These goals also align with the LCI goals. Many parts of the TCR ordinance could be adopted by the City of Forest Park for Downtown and utilized as "smart growth principles" for any future development and redevelopment which would embrace future transit in Downtown.

APPROVED/FUNDED PROJECTS

There are a number of planning projects in and around the LCI area.

The Main Street Streetscape Improvements is a three-phased project to improve the pedestrian corridor along Main Street. The first phase was already implemented in 2010 from West Street to Ash Street featuring brick sidewalks, landscaping, bike racks, and street furniture. The next two phases will be improved utilizing similar standards. The project is funded through the Clayton County SPLOST. Phase 2 is from Ash Street to Phillip Drive and Phase 3 is from Phillip Drive to Jonesboro Road.

The City has approved a Senior Housing Project at the corner of Warren Drive and College Street in a currently vacant lot.





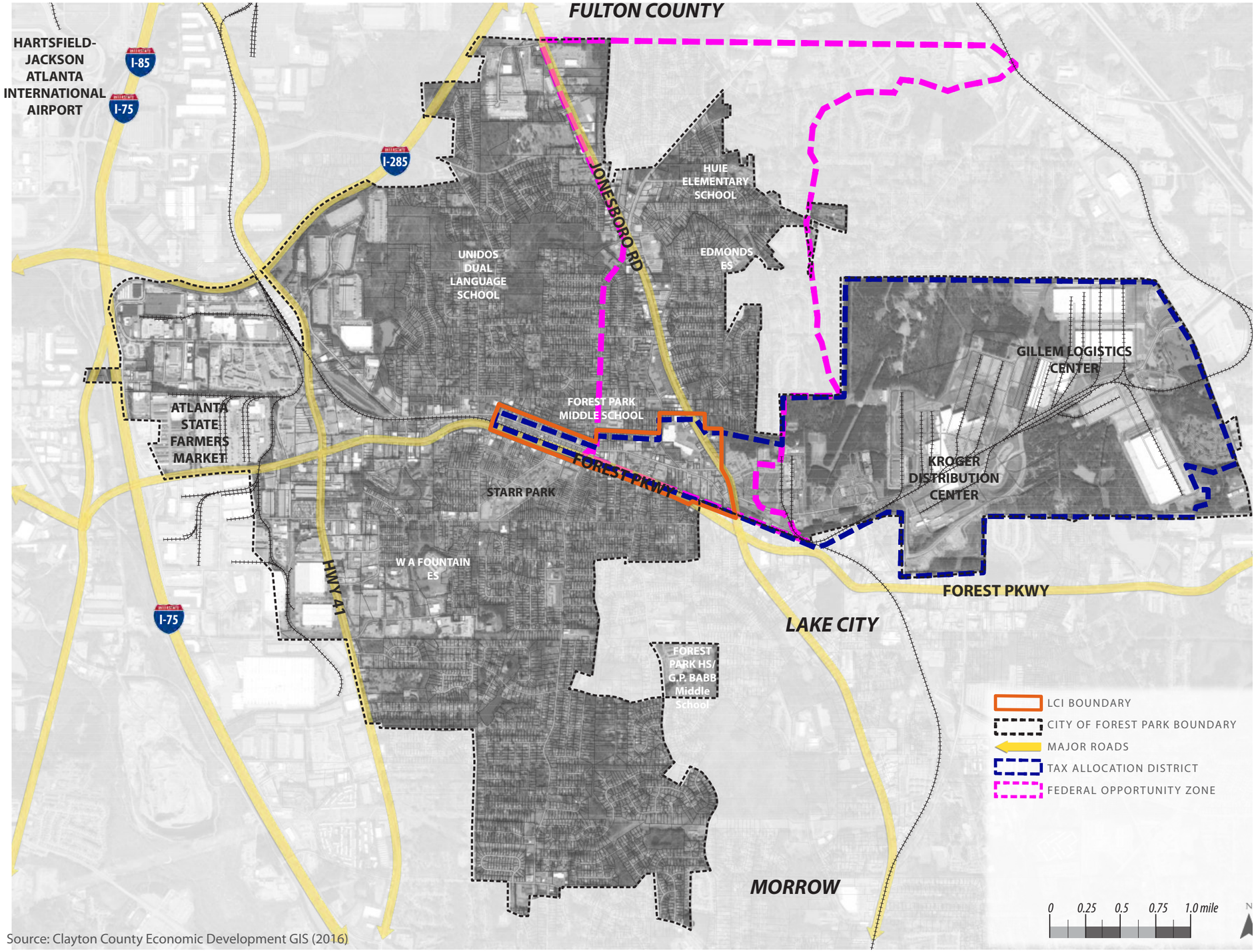
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The City of Forest Park has adopted/qualified for multiple economic development initiatives.

Forest Park TAD: The entire Downtown area falls under the active Tax Allocation District (TAD) which intends to fund public or private infrastructure projects.

Federal Opportunity Zone: The eastern part of the Downtown study area and Jonesboro Road corridor fall in the Federal Opportunity Zone. This designation by Georgia Department of Community Affairs (GA-DCA) provides aggressive tax credits to spur investments and to promote economic development in many low-income communities.

New Market Tax Credit (NMTC): The Downtown study area is also designated under the NMTC program which supports job creation and encourages small businesses to expand as a way to stimulate local economies in low-income and distressed communities.



Source: Clayton County Economic Development GIS (2016)

2

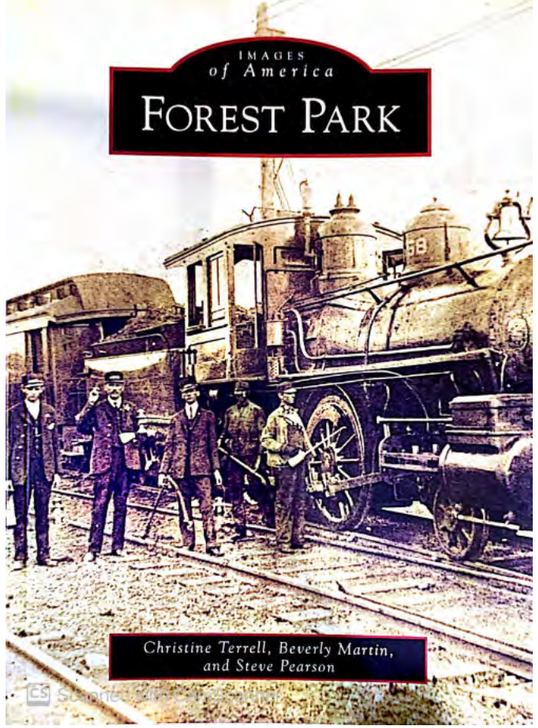
SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

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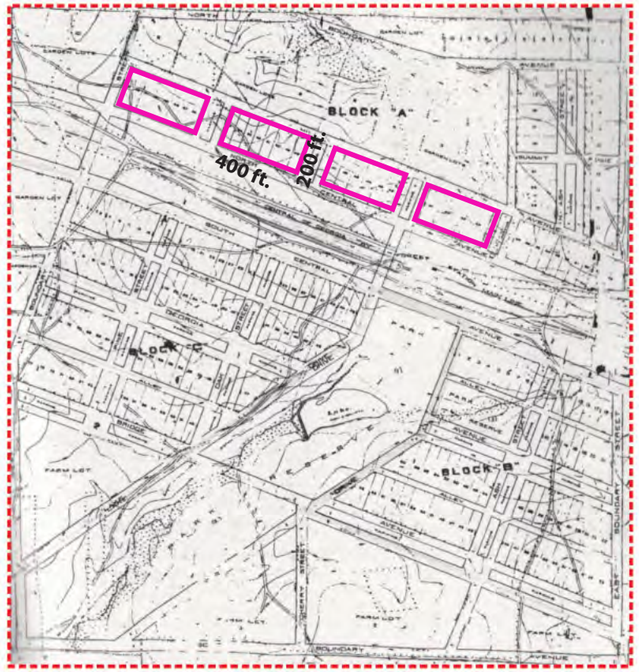
2.1
HISTORIC CONTEXT

The City was originally founded in 1846 as a refueling stop on the Macon and Western Railroad. It was then incorporated as a City in 1908. The annexation of Fort Gillem Military Reservation in 1973 expanded the City limit on the east side beyond Jonesboro Road.

The following set of graphics show a comparison between the 1904 Plat Map and the existing Downtown. They illustrate how Downtown streets, block pattern, and open spaces changed from its originally intended design.



1904 PLAT MAP



- The 1904 Plat Map of Forest Park shows that it was laid out on a 0.5 mile x 0.5 mile square block.
- The primary streets on the periphery responded to the cardinal axis and named accordingly - North Avenue, East Street, South Avenue and West Street.
- The street network was parallel to the railroad and laid out as "boulevards" with green space and squares at their intersections.
- The current Starr Park was designated as "Park Reserve" with a presence of a lake and natural stream.

Source: Christine Terrell, Beverly Martin, and Steve Pearson. *Images of America Forest Park*. 2008. Page 111.

1904 BLOCKS



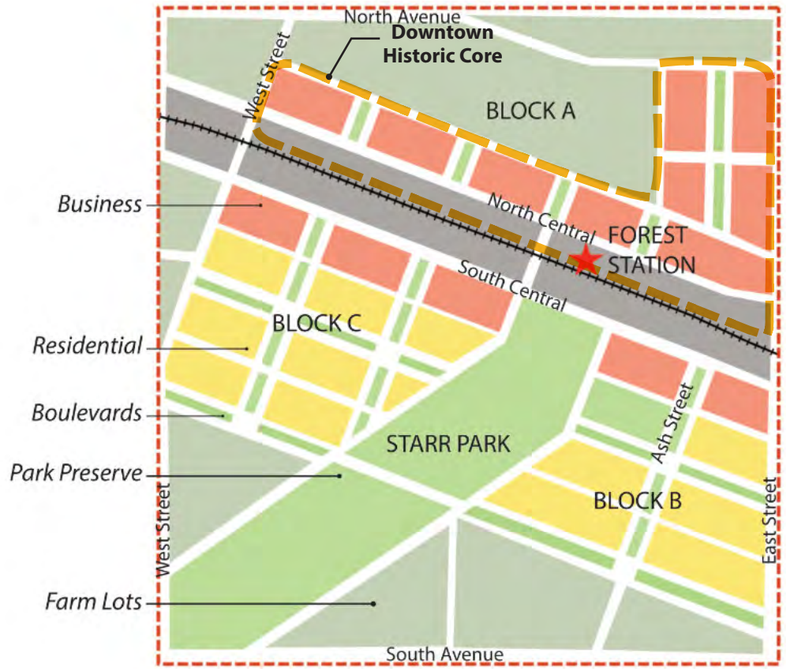
- The Forest Park historic core was divided into three blocks: Block A (with existing Downtown and Main Street area), Block B (neighborhood east of Starr Park) and Block C (neighborhood west of Starr Park).
- Forest Station was designated at the center.
- North Central was renamed to Main Street and South Central was renamed to Forest Parkway.
- The approximate block size is 400 feet x 200 feet.
- Majority of the streets and blocks, though with some reconfiguration, still exist today.

Typical Block Size Comparison with Downtown Savannah, GA



- The block size in historic core is comparable to Downtown Savannah blocks and many other traditional downtowns.
- The street grid and smaller block size create a walkable environment.
- Such block pattern with streets and alleys is adaptable for creating development pattern with medium density (10-15 units/acre) single family and multifamily housing and higher density mixed-use.

1904 PLANNED USES



- The 1904 plat map was noted with intended uses around the core such as farm lots and garden lots.
- When comparing the 1904 map with historic pictures of downtown, North Central and South Center housed retail and commercial uses.
- Residential areas were to occur in Block B and Block C around Starr Park.
- Boulevards / green space were integrated as part of the development pattern throughout downtown.

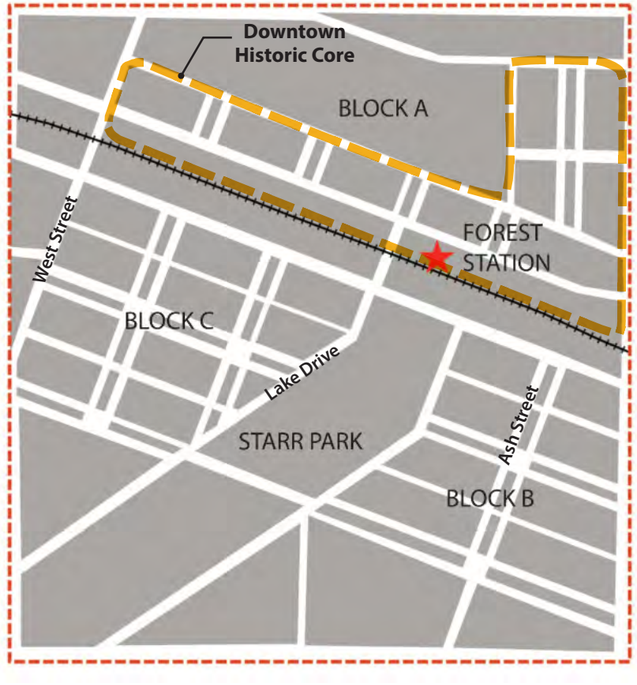
1905



The home on this postcard belonged to William Lewis Yancey and his wife, Iva Lena Puckett Yancey. He was the eighth child of James Andrus and Rebecca Yancey and was born on May 28, 1874. Iva Lena's parents were Henry Frances "Frank" and Molly Tanner Puckett. Standing on the porch from left to right are Rebecca, Winton Lewis (Woots) Yancey, Mary Jewel Yancey Barton (holding the doll), and Iva Lena Puckett Yancey holding an infant, possibly Iva Lourette, who was born on February 12, 1909. The boy on the left with the bike is "Bute" (possibly a nickname for Forrest Franklin Yancey), and the boy on the right with the bike is "Comer" (Frank "Freeney" Cor___ Yancey). The back of the card shows the names written by Beverly, the daughter of the girl with the doll, Jewel Barton. (Courtesy of Beverly Barton Collins.)

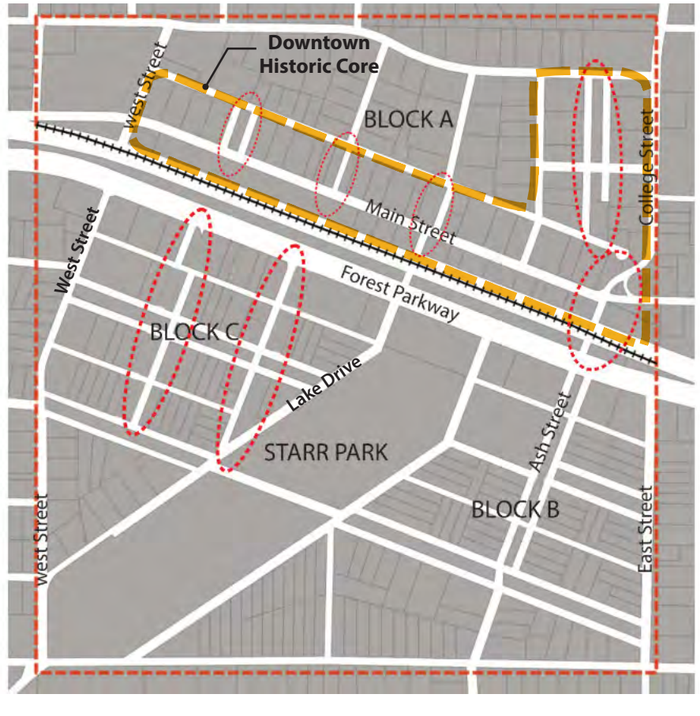


1904 PLAT MAP



- The historic downtown grid was platted as one continuous system of streets and blocks around railroad and Starr Park.
- Lake Drive and West Street were the only two connections over the railroad tracks.

EXISTING BLOCKS

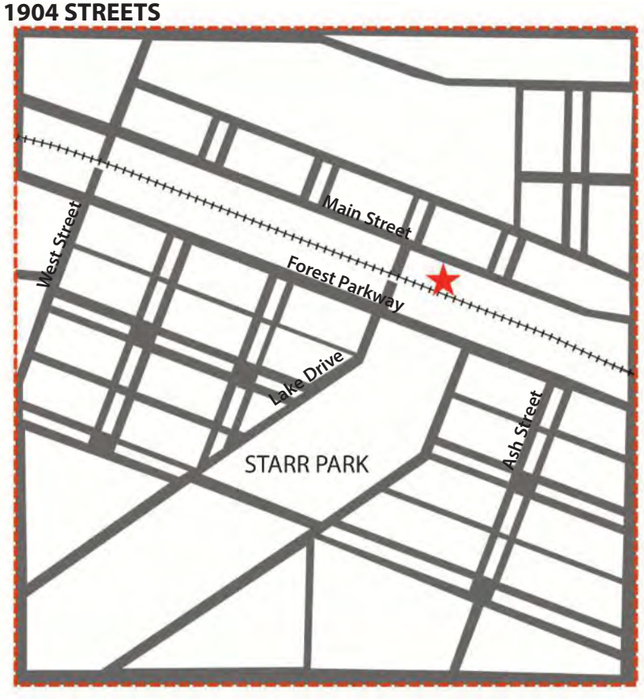


- The existing downtown feels disconnected from the Starr Park neighborhood.
- Multiple streets in Block A and Block C have been reconfigured (see the red oval highlighted areas); however the "bones" of the street grid is still largely unchanged.
- The public right-of-way of several boulevards and open spaces have been either eliminated or built-upon.



This photograph, taken between 1898 and 1903, shows Forest Park's first Masonic lodge building. A general store was located on the first floor and was originally run by Jim Crain. When Crain died in 1898, the goods in the store were bought by J. J. Evans, who operated the store until 1903. (Courtesy of the First Baptist Church of Forest Park.)

1904 STREETS



- The original street grid was well connected without any dead-end streets.
- There were two at-grade railroad crossings to connect downtown with the Starr Park neighborhood.

EXISTING STREETS



- A significant amount of land between the railroad track and Main Street is owned by Norfolk Southern.
- Many boulevards were lost and the original street grid was disrupted.
- Ash Street was extended on the north side to connect with Main Street and College Street by adding an at-grade crossing.
- A plaza (with a fountain and a clock) was built as part of the Main Street streetscape project in 2010. The street grid and the development character was significantly altered and resulted in a few dead-end streets and vacant lots.
- The widening of Forest Parkway combined with railroad right-of-way further divided downtown from Starr Park.

1945



This building is located on Main Street and has touched many lives. Although tenants have included grocery stores, upholstery shops, printers, and a hardware store, most people associate this building with the name Tomasello. Jerry and Montine Tomasello ran an accounting office in this location for over 50 years. Visiting the tax office was an enjoyable experience, even if the reason for the visits was dreaded by all. Many clients returned year after year, so not only were people able to see the Tomasellos, but they also would often run into old friends from years gone by. (Courtesy of City of Forest Park.)



1950



Carter's Cleaners and Laundry has long been a mainstay in the community. Not only have they outlasted other cleaners who couldn't meet the standards, but they are also supporters of the community, frequently sponsoring little league teams and sports programs. If it has anything to do with education, the Carters are in support of it. Their outside sign always shares recent community news or words of inspiration and always displays the word "pray" on one side of the board. (Courtesy of Mike Carter.)



EXISTING STREETS BEYOND HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

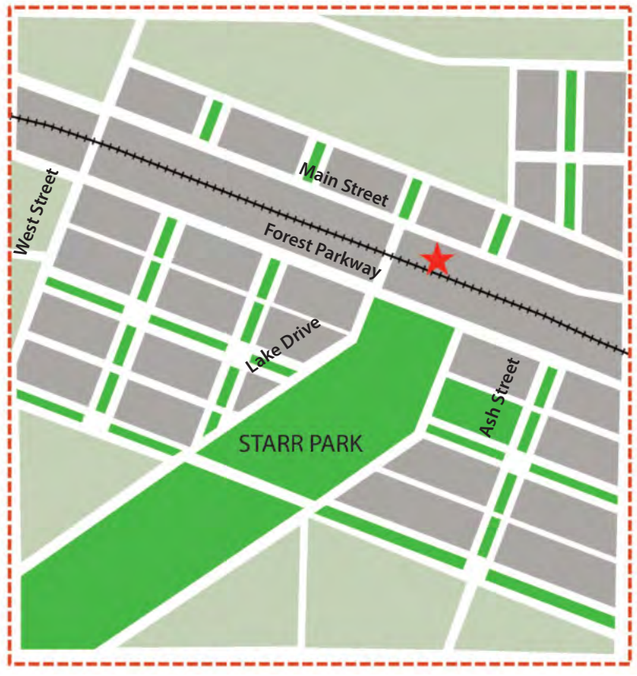


- The streets and blocks expansion of downtown on the east side is not compatible with the historic core
- Much larger "super-blocks" with odd geometry and limited pedestrian connectivity
- Automobile-oriented suburban street network



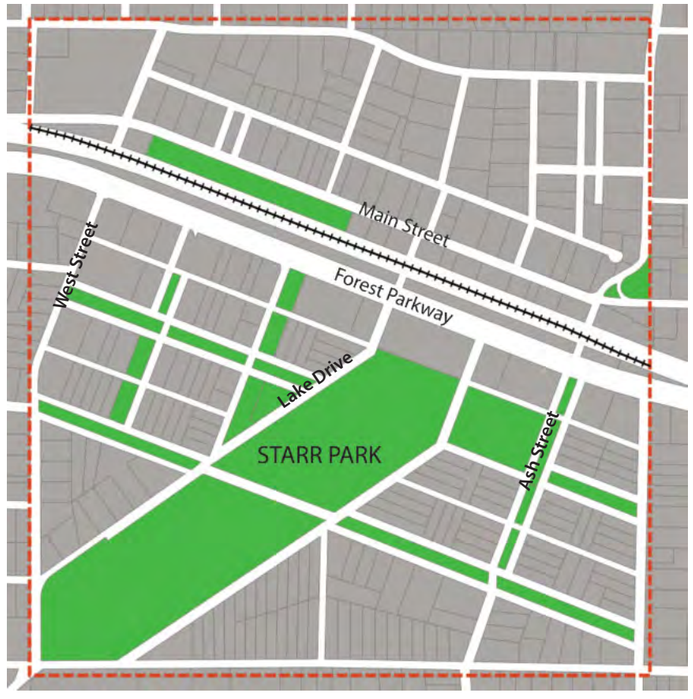
Leonard Community Center is built on an intended boulevard space

1904 GREENSPACE



- Centralized Starr Park with community amenities
- Boulevards providing green space throughout downtown
- Grid continued across railroad tracks creating a uniform and continuous atmosphere

EXISTING GREEN SPACE



- Starr Park remains to be a central green space and heart of the community
- Several boulevards around Starr Park are reconfigured but mostly exist
- Open space network is lost in the Downtown Historic Core; only remaining open spaces are Bill Lee Park (land is owned by Norfolk Southern) and the Fountain Plaza on Main Street
- Image of Leonard Community Center (see above) is an example of how boulevard space has been occupied by a building

1953



Dr. George "Doc" Christian is a man known and loved by many. His drugstore saw the soda fountain years with many of the kids around working as soda jerks, wooden phone booths in the corner of the store, and miles of parades passing by. Located across from the pediatrician's office, he helped Forest Park children overcome any illness conceivable. Today the store is owned and operated by John Chafin, who was trained well by Doc. Doc is enjoying a well-deserved retirement, living on a lake and fishing all day. (Courtesy of City of Forest Park.)

89



1966



Smith Hardware's last store was located on Main Street near Ash Street. During their years of business, the Smith boys sold a multitude of products ranging from tricycles and red wagons to cookware and, of course, hardware. Smith Hardware closed for good in October 2006 to the dismay of many. (Courtesy of City of Forest Park.)



Source: Christine Terrell, Beverly Martin, and Steve Pearson , 2008. *Images of America Forest Park*.

1993 BUILDING FOOTPRINTS



- The building footprint and its character in Downtown Historic Core and the expansion area (east of Downtown) are very different.
- The core area has smaller buildings occupying smaller parcels within the walkable blocks, whereas, the area on the east side has suburban-style buildings on irregular parcels within large super blocks.

EXISTING BUILDING FOOTPRINTS



- The historic buildings on Main Street were demolished between 1990s and 2013 in anticipation of transit extension in Downtown Forest Park. Most of those properties are currently still vacant.
- Most of those properties are owned by the City and Development Authority (DA).
- They provide development opportunities and could be catalytic in creating vibrant Main Street.

Main Street Streetscape Improvements around 2010

Demolished Buildings between late 1990s and 2013

2.2
LAY OF THE LAND

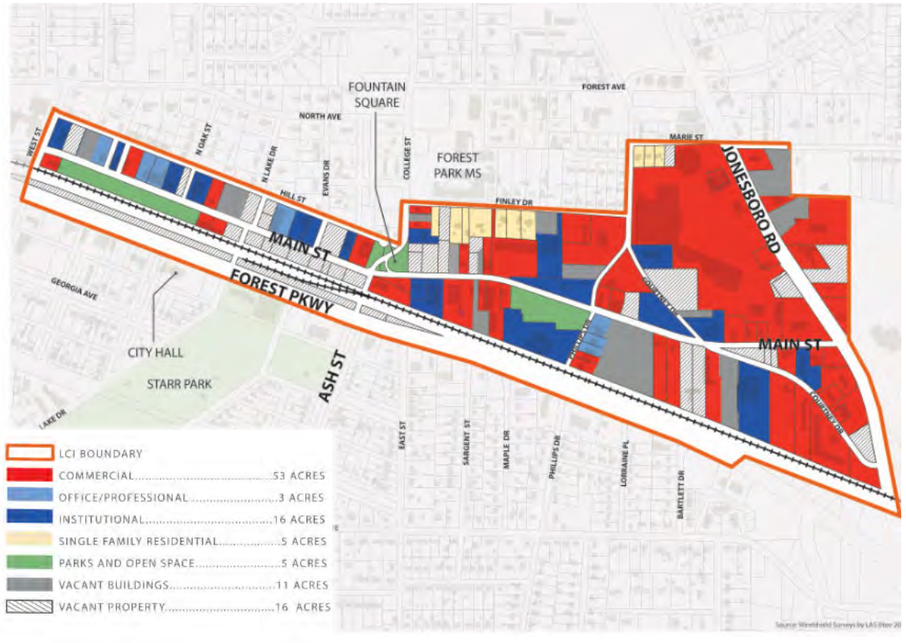
STRENGTHS

- Location and access to major interstates
- Forest Parkway and Jonesboro Road with higher traffic volume and visibility to Downtown
- Smaller blocks and walkable street grid in Downtown Core
- Close proximity to large employment centers – Airport, Downtown Atlanta, Gillem Logistic Center, Atlanta International Farmers Market

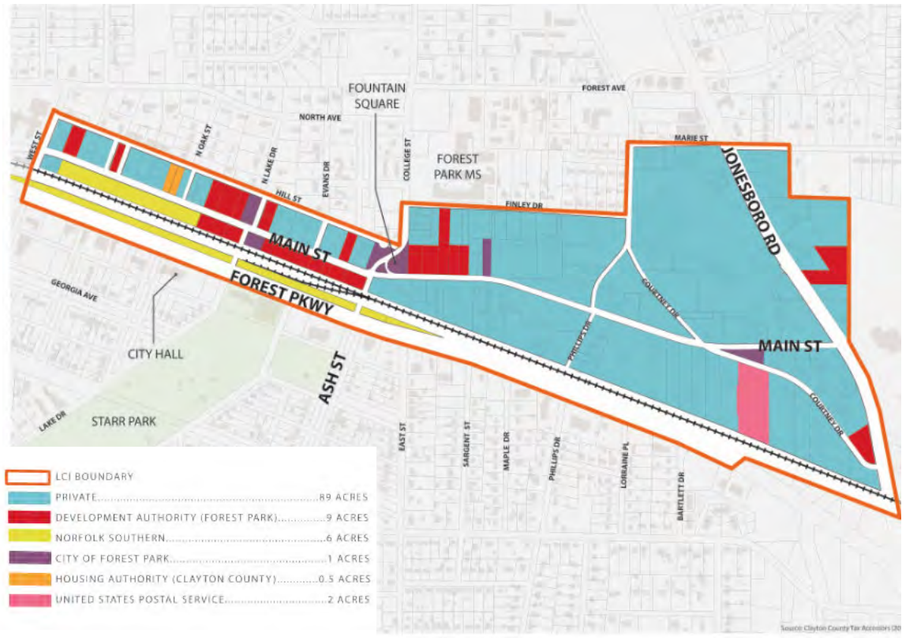
ISSUES

- Downtown Forest Park lacks vibrancy and identity
- Difficult to attract larger chain retail and grocery stores
- Deteriorated and underutilized building stock on Main Street
- Lack of consensus regarding the type of residential development in Downtown
- Need for comprehensive land use and zoning policies, and code enforcement
- Lack of sense of ownership - rental properties are not well maintained
- Lower median household income and less spending power
- Perception of crime and safety
- Development readiness and incentives for private developers
- Lack of affordable housing and jobs

EXISTING LAND USE



LAND OWNERSHIP





Chick-fil-a at the corner of Main Street and Jonesboro Road



Peoples Janitorial Supplies on Main Street



Jasper Plaza on Courtney Drive



Anne & Bill's vacant restaurant on Main Street



Forest Park community center on Main Street



Bank of America on Main Street



First Christian Church on Main Street

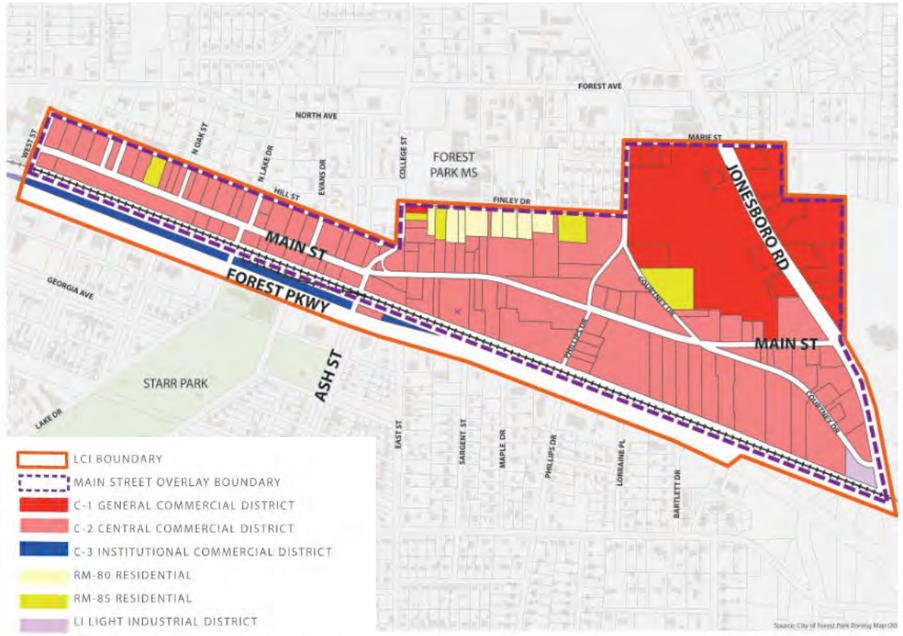


Post Office on Courtney Drive

NEEDS/OPPORTUNITIES

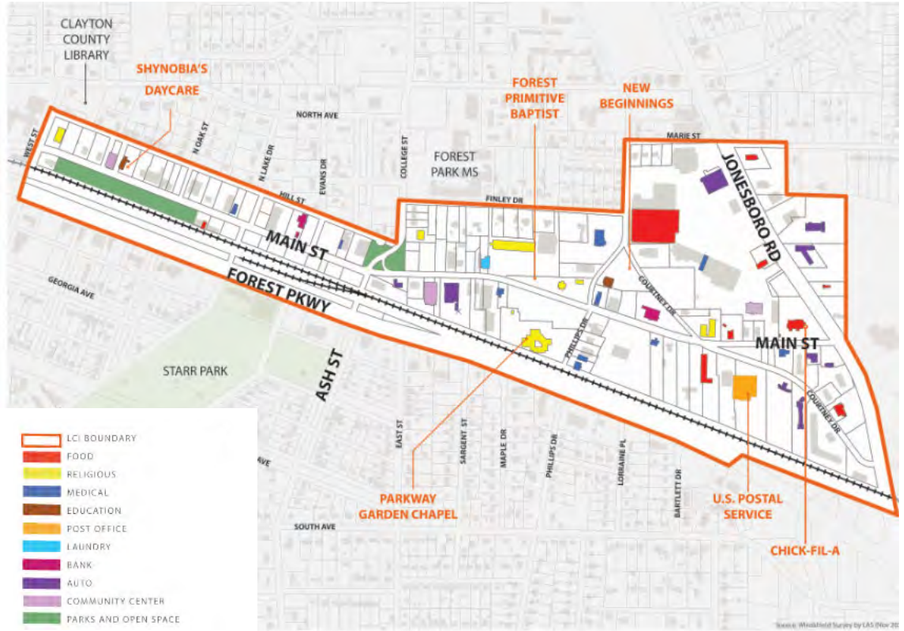
- Development growth
- Medium-higher density development such as townhomes and mixed-use to create live, work, play environment
- Appropriate development character that aligns with the scale and vision of Downtown
- Infill and adaptive re-use of existing vacant properties (old Anne & Bill's Restaurant, DA-owned vacant parcels)
- Zoning ordinance needs to support desired density and mix of uses
- Affordable housing
- Neighborhood stability and revitalization strategies
- Industrial and economic development opportunities
- Encourage development (housing and commercial) for all income levels
- Large inventory of vacant and publicly-owned properties at relatively lower price point

EXISTING ZONING



SERVICES

- Active Tax Allocation District
- Planned renovation of Forest Park Middle School – a significant asset for Downtown to attract more residents
- Opportunity to provide workforce / affordable housing to meet the potential housing demand from the employment centers
- CARES funds for economic development and facelift of Downtown businesses





Single family home on Findley Drive



Single family home on Marie Street



Vacant building adjacent to Fountain Plaza



Vacant property next to Fountain Plaza



Underutilized parking area on Lake Dr



Vacant building on Main Street

2.3
STATE OF THE BUILDINGS

STRENGTHS

- Several historic buildings exist in the Downtown historic core on Main Street

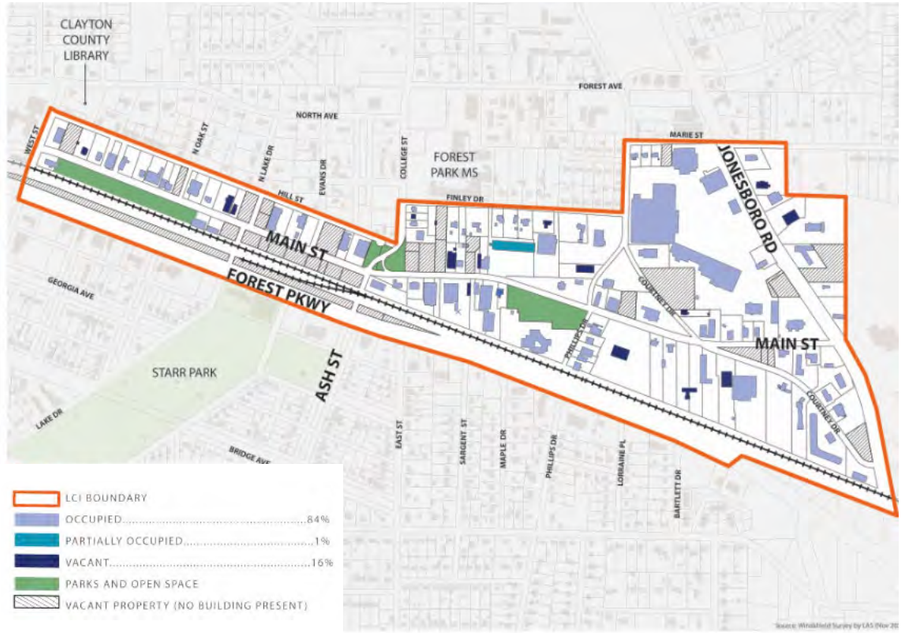
ISSUES

- About 15%-20% of the buildings are unoccupied and in substandard or dilapidated condition
- The abundance of vacant / unoccupied properties and substandard building conditions creates an uninviting environment on Main Street.

NEEDS/OPPORTUNITIES

- Create continuous building frontage and mix of uses on Main Street through development and redevelopment strategies
- Concentration of vacant properties and vacant buildings along Main Street between College Street and Phillips Drive represents potential development opportunities
- Adaptive re-use of existing buildings such as the Old Theater and several commercial buildings on Main Street

BUILDING OCCUPANCY





Carters Cleaners and Laundry on Main Street



Strip mall along Main Street



Vacant building on Main Street

BUILDING CONDITION





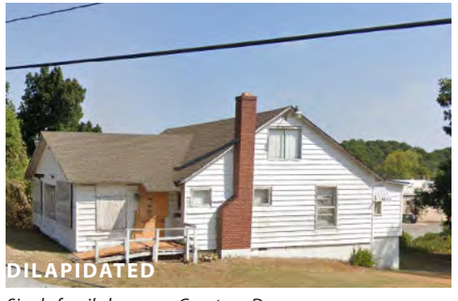
Clayton County Housing Authority on Main Street



Old theater building on Main Street



Forest Park Community Shopping Center on Main Street



Single family home on Courtney Dr

2.4
MOBILITY& OPEN SPACE

STRENGTHS

- Convenient access to I-85, I-75, and I-285
- Four at-grade crossings across railroad
- Potential bus stop in Downtown to connect to Gillem Logistic Center
- Model Mile Greenway Trail, potential alignment on Forest Parkway and Main Street
- Phase 2 and Phase 3 streetscape improvements on Main Street already funded through County SPLOST
- Heavy usage of Starr Park by the community

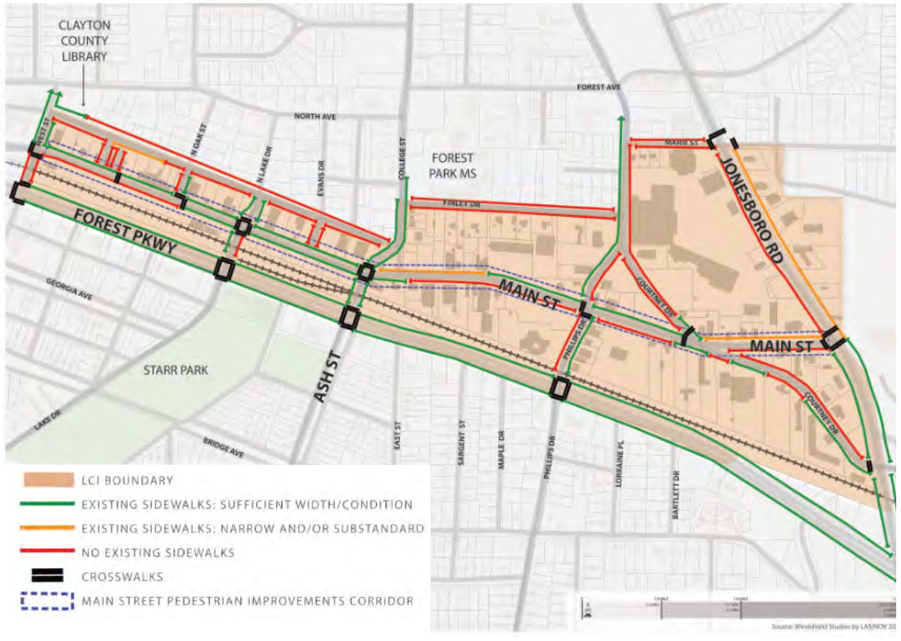
ISSUES

- Bus service is not reliable and frequent enough
- Pedestrian safety concerns on Forest Parkway to connect Downtown and Starr Park
- Railroad track is a physical barrier
- Bill Lee Park and adjacent vacant parcels are owned by Northfolk Southern Railroad
- Bill Lee Park and Fountain Plaza are the only open spaces

NEEDS/OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve pedestrian safety on Forest Parkway and mitigate the corridor's highway feel
- Improved and complete pedestrian connectivity, especially for Forest Park MS students who currently walk to school
- Diversity of open spaces and placemaking features throughout Downtown
- Improve signage and wayfinding
- Opportunity to replicate and restore the historic grid system and extend to the east side of Downtown Core

PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE



OPEN SPACE



VEHICULAR INFRASTRUCTURE





Lack of Sidewalk on Finley Drive



Lack of Sidewalk and Crosswalk on Courtney Drive



Bill Lee Park on Main Street



Cemetery on Main Street

2.5

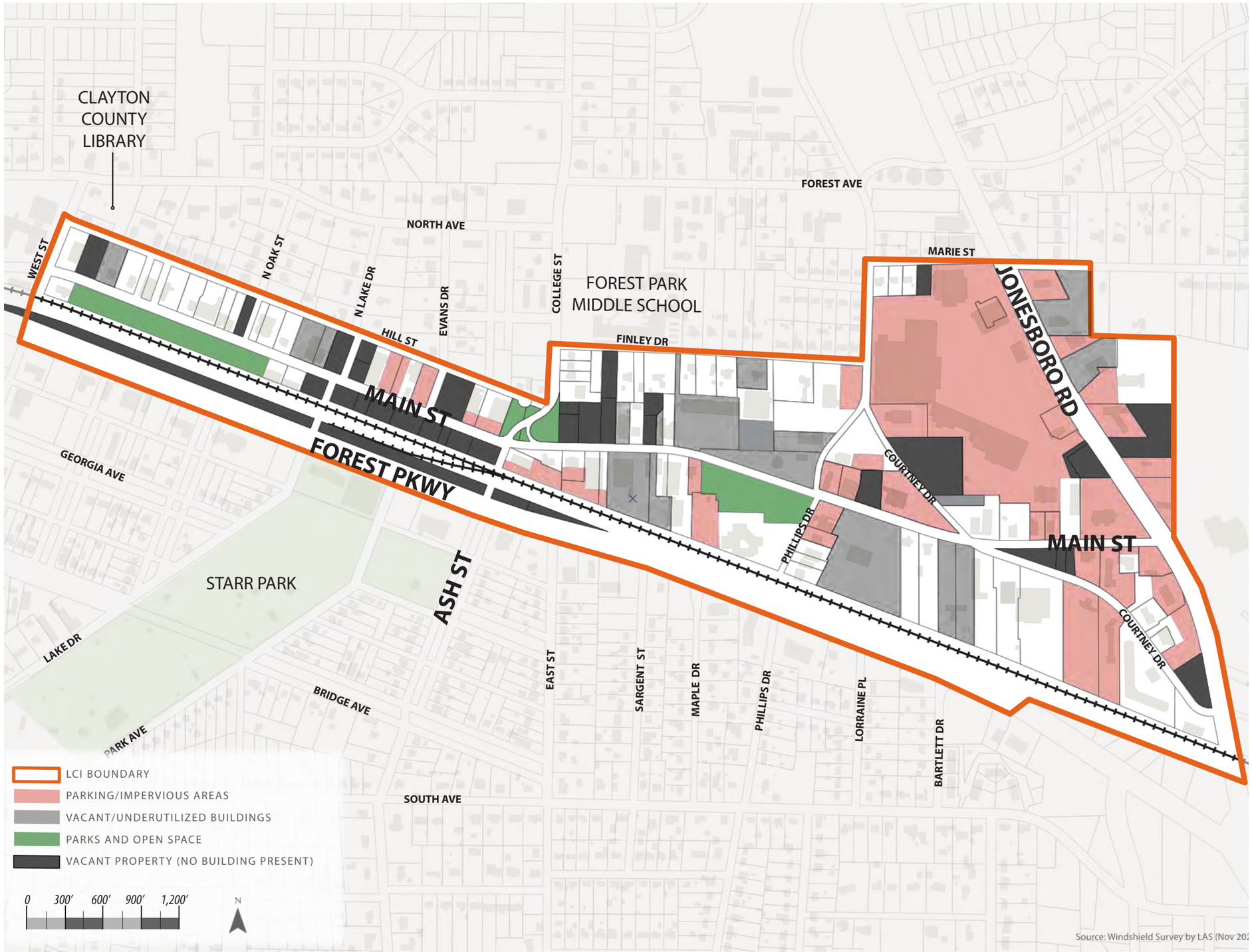
DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITIES

The potential opportunities map is created by overlapping unoccupied and underutilized buildings, vacant lots, and parking and impervious areas. Approximately 50% of the properties within the boundary qualifies for one of these three categories showing significant infill and redevelopment opportunities.

A large number of surface parking lots contribute to impervious areas within the boundary. Most notably, the developments along Jonesboro Road are large super blocks with fully paved parcels. They represent uninviting development character and unsafe pedestrian environment. The high quantity of parking and highway-style retail do not contribute in creating a walkable, vibrant downtown character.

Roughly half of all parcels in the LCI Study Area qualify as candidates for catalytic development or redevelopment based on one of three factors:

- Vacant or underutilized structures: 17 Acres
- Undeveloped properties: 16 Acres
- Parcels with substantial parking: 37 Acres



2.6
MARKET ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

SUMMERY OF ASSESSMENT

Demographics

- Slow population growth: In the past two decades, the Market Area* has added 2,209 residents, averaging roughly 110 new residents per year.
- Younger population: Generation Z makes up over a third of all residents in the Market Area.
- Modest incomes: Almost 60% of all households in the Market Area earn less than $50k annually.
- High diversity: Hispanic residents make up one-quarter of the Market Area, and Asian residents are 12%.

Employment

- Strong total numbers: The Market Area has roughly one-quarter of the total jobs that Clayton County has.
- Modest wages: Over half of Clayton County's Utility, Manufacturing, and Wholesale Trade jobs are located in the Market Area.
- Employment hub: More people come into the Market Area to work each day than residents who leave to work elsewhere.

Real Estate

- Older residential stock: Over half of homes in the Market Area were built before 1980.
- Retail vibrant, but low-rent: Vacancy in the Market Area is less than 2%, but rents lag the county by over $1 per square foot.
- Industrial thriving: Rents per square foot are over $2 greater than in the county.

**Market Area is used to understand economic and demographic context of the LCI study area, and also for the analysis of population and employment trends. The area is roughly bounded by I-285, I-75, Mt. Zion Boulevard and I-675*

Based on the inventory of current land ownership data, public entities, including the City of Forest Park, its authorities, and Clayton County, already own many key parcels in the downtown area.

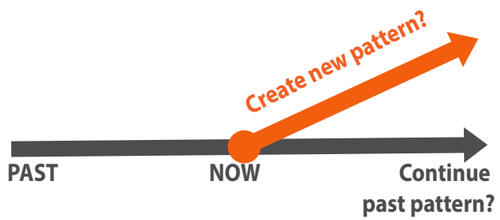
- These mostly vacant properties represent ample opportunity to catalyze downtown redevelopment
- Combined, all publicly owned properties represent an estimated $2.75 million in land value

Entity	Land Area Owned (Acres)	Value
City of Forest Park	1.1	$280,000
Clayton County Economic Development	0.9	$230,000
Clayton County Housing Authority	0.5	$117,500
Forest Park Development Authority	8.5	$2,122,500
Total	**11**	**$2,750,000**

POTENTIAL PATH FORWARD

Choices for Downtown Forest Park for Redevelopment and Economic Activities:

- Currently, annual demand for new residences and retail space in the LCI area is very low.
- A continuation of the same trend will result in a demand increase of less than one full residence annually in ten years (mathematically speaking).
- If the character of downtown Forest Park changes, with strategic intervention and investment by stakeholders, it could potentially capture a larger share of growth and market demand that is happening in the market area and Clayton County.



With a well-executed strategy, downtown Forest Park can attract more residential, retail, and office space. Success will depend upon:

- Recapturing a portion of the existing retail demand in the broader area, especially from large employers.
- Defining a place or experience that is more unique to downtown Forest Park.
- Creating additional residential rooftops to increase demand, activity, and sense-of-place.

	Annual Demand*	Notes:
Residential		
Owner Units	14	*Townhome or small-lot single family houses. Stakeholders have expressed a desire for multi-generational housing opportunities.*
Renter Units	23	*Stakeholders have expressed interest in senior-living options.*
Total Units	**37**	
Commercial		
Retail Square Footage	**3,000**	*Largely local and independent retailers and restaurants.*
Office Square Footage	**1,600**	*Consumer-facing office services, such as real estate and tax consulting.*

RAIL
CROSSING
ROAD

3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Engagement Process
3.2 Engagement Tools

3.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

In these uncertain times where a global pandemic has led us all to distance ourselves, it can be harder than ever to reach stakeholders and solicit meaningful community input. However, we are also at a unique crossroads of social engagement where equity and representation is more important than ever. With that in mind, the planning process included a variety of tools and forums to solicit input. The virtual engagement process provided multiple avenues for participation such as:

- **Project Management (PM) Team Meetings**

  The PM Team was comprised of the City of Forest Park staff members, a representative from the Atlanta Regional Commission, and the consultant team. The team met virtually every month to share updates and served as a resource team for the project.

- **Stakeholder Interviews**

  The planning team met with over a dozen stakeholders via Zoom calls early in the process. The individuals included elected officials, City staff, property & business owners, Clayton County staff, local nonprofit organization leaders, Forest Park Middle School principal, and Development Authority (DA) board members.

- **Core Team Meetings**

  Many stakeholders listed above also participated in the Core Team and served as the sounding board to validate the findings and recommendations. The Core Team met three times during the whole process after key project milestones. The team provided meaningful feedback that helped in refining the design concepts and implementation strategies.

- **Public Meetings**

  Three public meetings were hosted virtually through a collaborative process among the PM Team members.

Public Meeting 1 [Study Overview & Goals]: The focus of the first meeting was to update the community on the study process, existing conditions assessment summary, project goals, and gather input on community issues, needs, and vision. The interactive exercises used Mentimeter polling, Jamboard, and Zoom polling exercises through facilitated discussion.

Public Meeting 2 [Interactive Design Workshop]: After completion of the physical conditions assessment and market study, and having a better understanding of issues and needs through stakeholder meetings, the Planning Team put together the preliminary land use, mobility, and open space framework plans. The team also shared conceptual development plans for priority focus areas illustrating future land use, development massing/scale, and the character of buildings. The participants were asked to provide their input on the development concepts, streetscape design, and the preferred downtown character by selecting precedent images. The interactive exercises used Zoom polling for character images and Miro Board for interactive design input.

Public Meeting 3 [Virtual Open House]: The Planning Team shared the Downtown vision and goals update based on the community engagement and consensus-building process. The Planning Team presented refined concept plans for land use and development, mobility, and open space along with implementation strategies. The concepts are illustrated using photo-realistic renderings, 3D models, 2D concept diagrams, street sections, and precedent images. The interactive exercises used Zoom polling questions to prioritize design concepts.

- **Forest Park Middle School Students Involvement**

  Over 170 students participated in the virtual meeting. Through Zoom polling questions, the students selected their preferred images for open space, public art, community events, pedestrian safety, and development.

In addition to the planned virtual meetings to obtain strategic input from the stakeholder group, core team and public, the Planning Team provided plenty of other opportunities to keep the community informed about the LCI study and to share project updates throughout the process.

- Project Website: It included a detailed project schedule, project background, public meeting dates, presentations, online survey, and interactive mapping. The website provides web links to all core team and public meeting recordings for those who could not attend the live meetings.

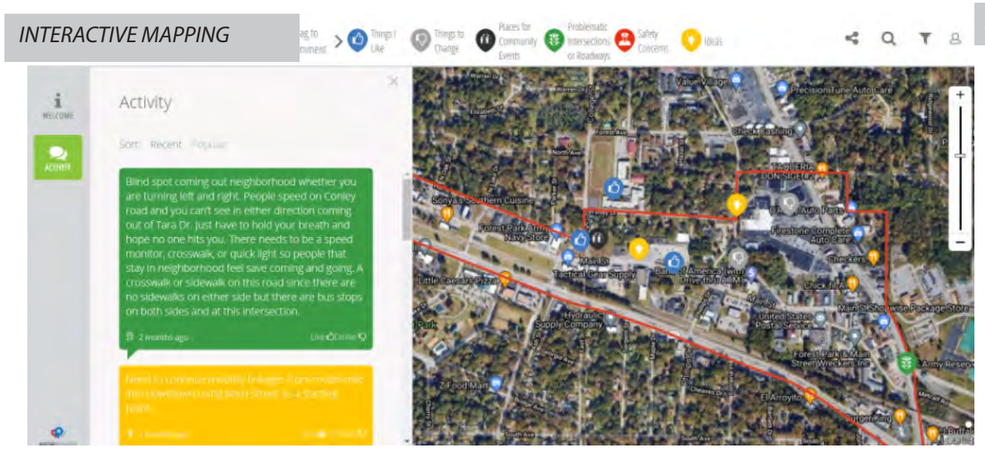
- Online Survey: A robust survey with 25 questions was launched to get input on a wide range of topics - land use, development, open space, services, ped & bike amenities, streetscape, mobility, and placemaking.

- Interactive Mapping: Through this mapping tool, the community was asked to drop pins on the Google map with specific issues/needs and ideas related to things to change, pedestrian safety, community events, and infrastructure improvements.

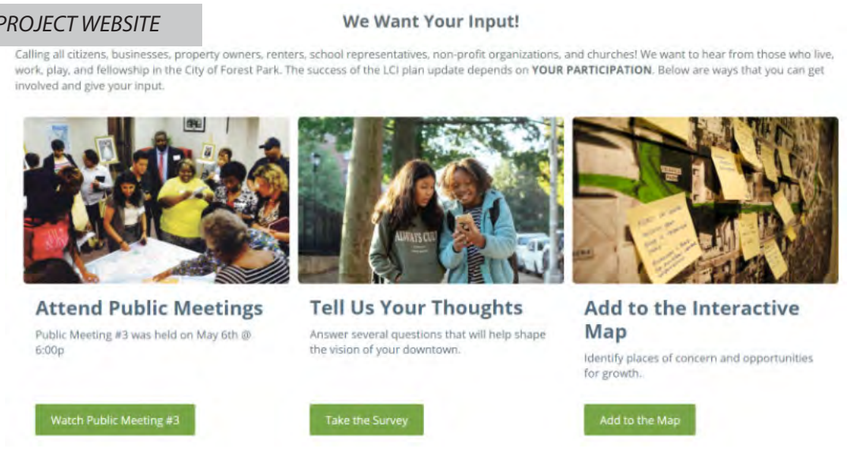
- Public Engagement Communication: The robust communication strategies included posting public meeting flyer on the City's Facebook page and also on the City's website, keeping the stakeholder group and the core team members informed about meeting updates through email blasts and direct phone calls, and updating the project website on regular basis with the most current project material. To encourage the community to attend the public meetings, printed flyers were distributed at outdoor events such as Food Giveaway sponsored by Councilman Hector Gutierrez and Spring Fest hosted by City of Forest Park, Forest Park Recreation and Leisure Department, and Nguyen & Pham LLC

The consensual results from the public engagement process are folded into the overall LCI vision and goals in section 4.1.

INTERACTIVE MAPPING



PROJECT WEBSITE



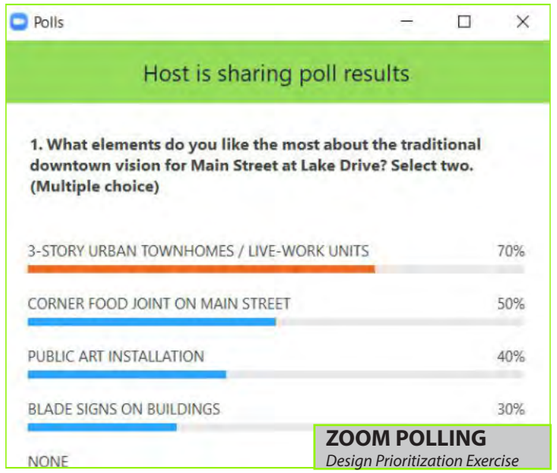
3.2
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Multiple web-based tools were utilized during the core team and public meetings on the Zoom platform depending on the type of input expected.

- Zoom Polling for consensus building, prioritization visual preference
- Mentimeter for community visioning and icebreaker exercises
- Jamboard for community visioning and facilitated discussions
- Miro Board for interactive design input exercises

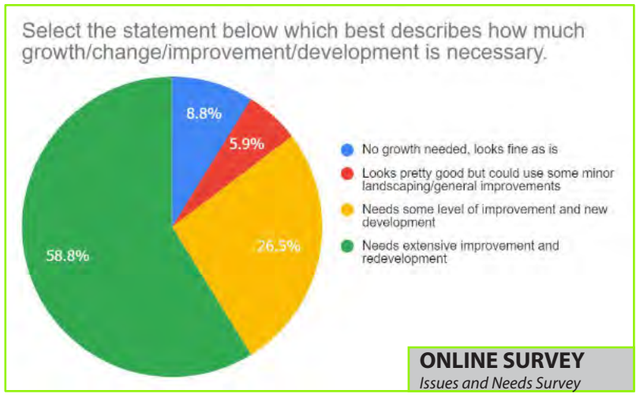


MENTIMETER POLL
Visioning Icebreaker Exercises



ZOOM POLLING
Design Prioritization Exercise





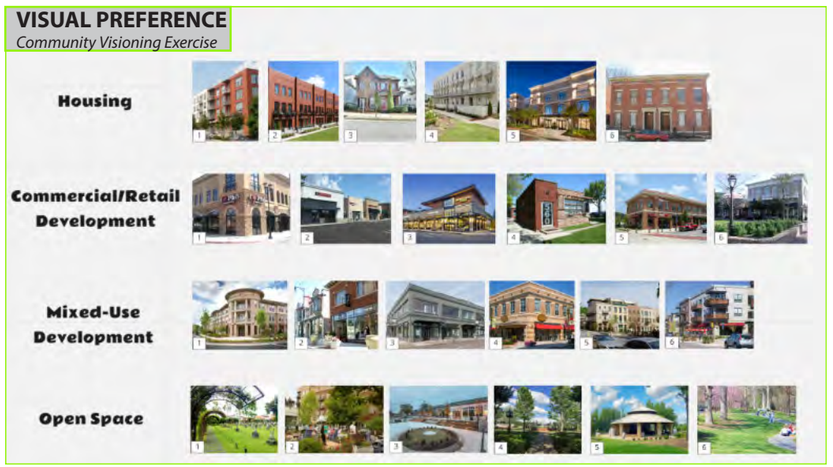
ONLINE SURVEY
Issues and Needs Survey



JAMBOARD
Community Visioning Exercise

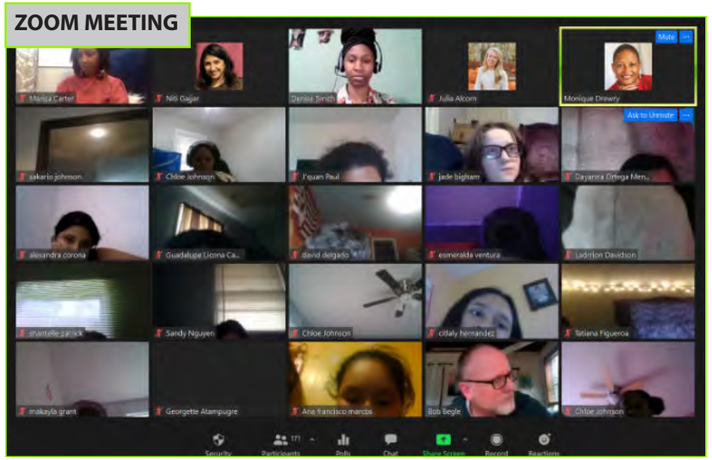


MIRO BOARD
Interactive Design Feedback



VISUAL PREFERENCE
Community Visioning Exercise

ZOOM MEETING



DOWNTOWN FOREST PARK
LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY


CARTERS
CLEANERS &
LAUNDRY
CARTER'S CLEANERS
and

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Downtown Vision and Goals
4.2 Development Framework Plan
4.3 Mobility Framework
4.4 Open Space Framework Plan
4.5 Zoning Recommendations

4.1 DOWNTOWN VISION & GOALS

The LCI update is built on the foundation of the original 2010 LCI Plan and the City's existing Comprehensive Plan Vision. The vision, goals, and objectives developed through those plans are still valid. This LCI plan refines the original vision and goals based on the community input process, ongoing planning efforts such as Model Mile Trail, City-wide Zoning Update, and several development projects in the pipeline.

The following goals were developed to guide all planning and design concepts in a cohesive manner that supports the overall vision for Downtown Forest Park. They align with the overall LCI program goals by Atlanta Regional Commission:

- Provide access to a variety of travel modes
- Encourage mixed-income residential neighborhoods, employment, shopping, and recreational options
- Develop an outreach process that promotes stakeholder involvement

The LCI recommendations are described in sections 4.2-4.5 with specific strategies and future actions for four key elements of the plan - development framework, mobility framework, open space framework, and zoning/design guidelines.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENT

"The City of Forest Park will work with our residents and business community to foster pride and develop beautiful and affordable neighborhoods, a dynamic economy, and a healthy environment for all citizens can prosper."

2010 LCI Vision, Goals and Objectives

- *Promote medium to high density, mixed-use development*
- *Provide residential opportunities for all income levels*
- *Promote infill development within the study area*
- *Uphold Regional Development Plan and Atlanta Regional Commission guidelines and policies*
- *Preserve the historical character of Forest Park and promote community identity*
- *Encourage connectivity around and to transit station via sidewalks, transit, roadways, and bike lanes*
- *Provide transportation alternatives to provide for improved health through physical activity*
- *Encourage the involvement of all residents of Forest Park*
- *Promote funding opportunities that support transportation, development, and urban design investments*

LCI UPDATE

COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER INPUT PROCESS

2021 Downtown LCI Plan Update

- **MAIN STREET**
- **DIVERSE DEVELOPMENT**
- **HISTORIC IDENTITY**
- **CONNECTED STREETS**
- **WALKABLE COMMUNITY**
- **INCLUSIVE**
- **QUALITY OF LIFE**

4.1

DOWNTOWN VISION & GOALS

MAIN STREET LINKAGE

- Enhance the character of Main Street to create an identifiable Downtown
- Encourage continuous urban building edges and storefront character to activate the street
- Incentivize the development of infill destination retail
- Incorporate signage and wayfinding to brand Downtown as a unique destination
- Incorporate public art that celebrates the history of Downtown and the City as a whole





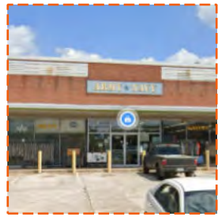




HISTORIC IDENTITY

- Promote adaptive re-use of historic buildings in the Downtown core
- Encourage façade improvements, renovation, and rehabilitation





WALKABLE COMMUNITY

- Provide sidewalks on all streets
- Incorporate the planned Model Mile multiuse path as a key Downtown amenity
- Prioritize Downtown as a pedestrian-oriented place
- Explore the feasibility of a pedestrian bridge





DIVERSE DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage multiple housing types - duplex, triplex, quadplex, townhomes, and apartment/condo
- Promote smaller infill commercial/retail uses to meet community needs
- Establish Downtown as a mixed-use environment





CONNECTED STREETS

- Provide new street connections to create walkable sized blocks (400ft-600ft)
- Provide key intersection improvements to connect Downtown to the rest of the city
- Establish a street hierarchy and design standards
- Strongly advocate for future MARTA including a transit stop in Downtown





INCLUSIVE DOWNTOWN

- Purposefully activate Downtown through programmed events
- Provide activities/events for multiple ages and cultures to reflect the diversity of the city
- Utilize community outreach and public relations to market Downtown as a destination for both locals and visitors





QUALITY OF LIFE

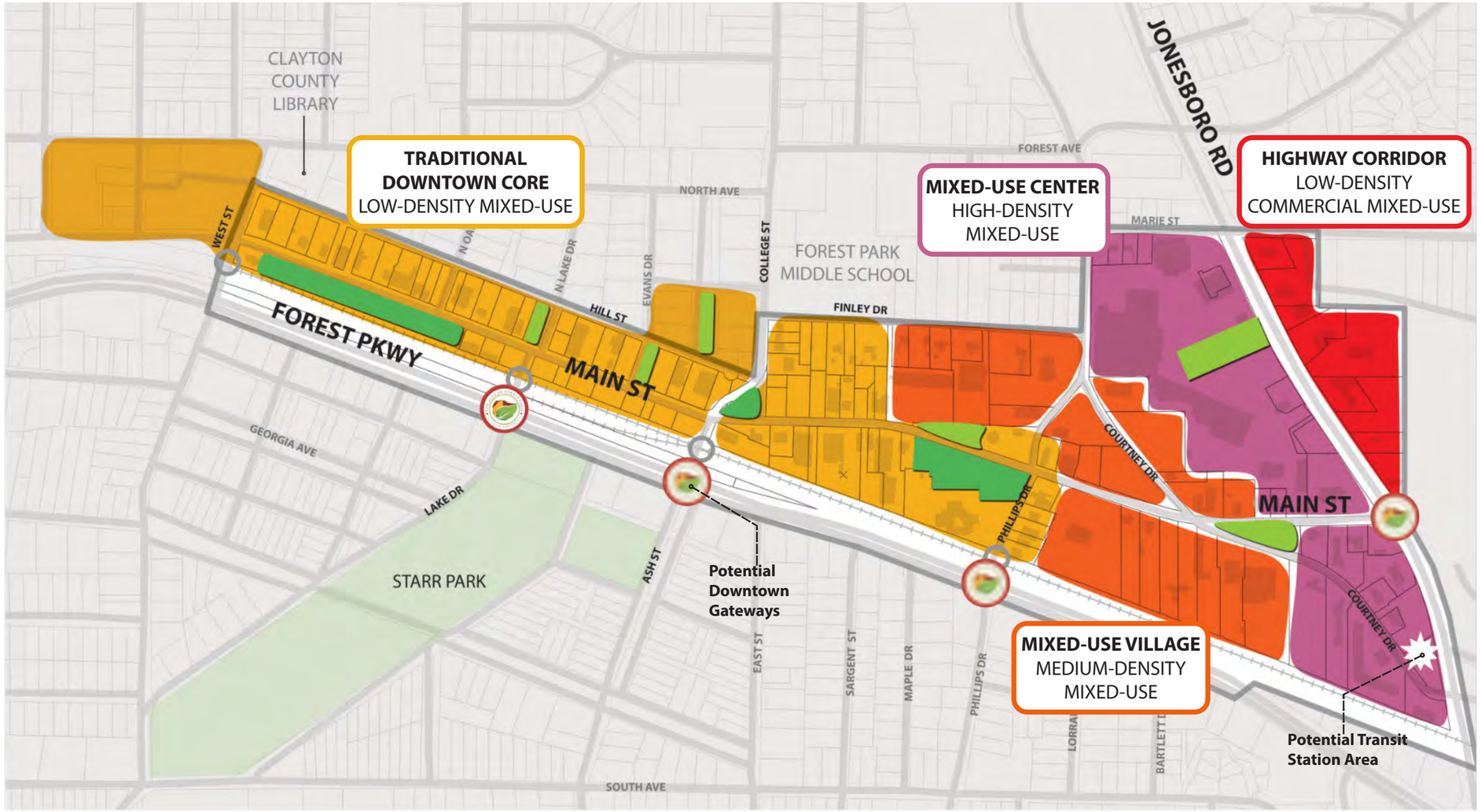
- Provide a variety of areas for programmed activities – urban plazas, small parks, outdoor dining, and multipurpose community spaces
- Create a downtown that supports health and wellness through alternative forms of mobility and physical activity





4.2
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

The Development Framework Plan is a long-term roadmap for the future land use, density, and character of Downtown Forest Park. To achieve the goals of creating a walkable and vibrant mixed-use development with a variety of shopping and housing options, the proposed framework plan responds to the historic core and the existing development pattern. The study area is divided into four development areas to illustrate the future vision: Traditional Downtown Core, Mixed-Use Village, Mixed-Use Center, and Highway Commercial. The proposed framework plan recommends the lowest density of mixed-use in Traditional Downtown Core and it gradually increases on the east side creating the highest density of development along Jonesboro Road for Mixed-Use Center. The following smart development principles could be applied as a baseline for all future buildout scenarios for Downtown.



Conceptual Development Framework Plan

Smart Development Principals for Development Framework Plan

Encouraged

- Compact and higher density development
- Narrow lot single-family, single-family attached and multifamily
- Mixed-use development
- Walkable and pedestrian-oriented streets
- Shared parking strategies
- Parking in the rear of the development
- Drive-throughs on the rear of the development

Discouraged

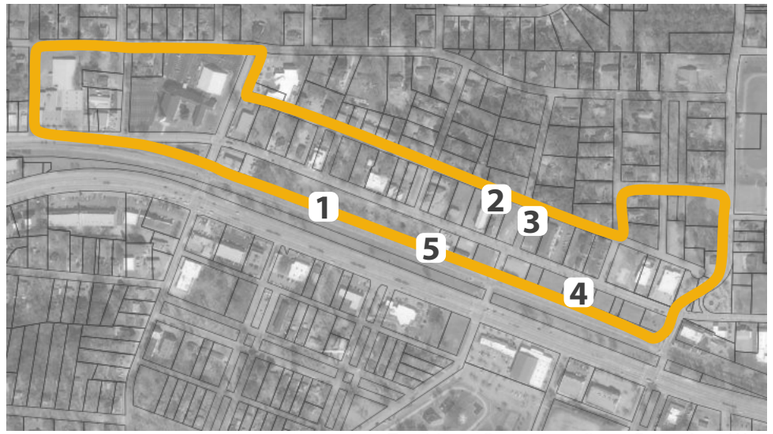
- Suburban style low-density development
- Large lot single-family homes
- Stand-alone retail/commercial with a single-tenant in future development
- Suburban streets with superblocks and no sidewalks
- Parking lots for a single tenant
- Large parking lots facing streets
- Drive-throughs visible from streets

Traditional Downtown Core

Area Challenge: There are many vacant and underutilized properties leading to a lack of vibrancy and life blight. In spite of the Main Street streetscape and Fountain Plaza, there is not much to do downtown.

Potential Strategies:

- Build on the existing and historic grid pattern and block sizes when proposing any future development
- Preserve/rehabilitate historic assets in the downtown core where feasible
- Maintain the authenticity of the Downtown core through adaptive re-use of historic structures
- Encourage property owners to maintain existing structures under the façade grant program
- Promote compact infill development with compatible uses that are in keeping with the Downtown character
- Offer a variety of housing types – duplex, triplex, quadplex, townhomes, and condominium - to create more residential density and Downtown life
- Encourage horizontal mixed-use with retail and offices and with multiple tenants
- Encourage boutique retail stores, restaurants, breweries, shared workspaces, and coffee shops with outdoor dining and neighborhood open spaces



Traditional Downtown Core - Focus Area West



Traditional Downtown Core - Focus Area East

POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION

BILL LEE PARK



COMMUNITY EVENTS



VACANT BUILDINGS



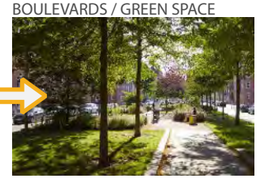
ADAPTIVE RE-USE



VACANT LAND



BOULEVARDS / GREEN SPACE



VACANT LAND



HOUSING



UNDERUTILIZED RETAIL



INCUBATOR SPACE



POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION

VACANT PARCELS



INVITING RETAIL/RESTAURANT



HISTORIC ASSETS



ADAPTIVE RE-USE



VACANT LAND



INFILL COMMERCIAL



Potential Strategies:

- Adopt shared parking strategies and access across multiple properties to reduce the number of parking lots and spaces required as well as minimize the number of curb-cuts on Main Street
- Create a continuous building edge with a mix of uses on Main Street to create vibrancy, a small-town feel, and 24-7 activities
- Focus on activating the node around the Fountain Plaza and integrate it as part of future development
- Create high intensity and community-oriented uses at the gateway nodes of downtown at the following intersections on Main Street – Lake Drive, Ash Street, Phillips Drive
- Encourage TOD standards by adopting relevant TCR Model ordinances created by MARTA that would align with the downtown vision

Future Land Use: *Low-density mixed-use with retail/ commercial, single-family attached (duplex, triplex, quadplex, townhomes, multi-family, condominium)*

Building Height: *2-3 stories*

Residential Density: *6-12 units/acre*

Commercial Size: *3,000 – 5,000 SF (integrated with other uses)*



Residential Density Example 6-8 units/acre Duplex with tuck-under parking



Residential Density Example 10 units/acre Townhomes with tuck-under parking

Traditional Downtown Core

1. Potential new duplex residential blending with neighborhood character
2. Adaptive re-use of existing theater and retail
3. New open space with public art potential
4. Townhomes/live-work housing facing the green space
5. Storefront retail creating a gateway on Main Street at Lake Drive
6. Potential new townhomes creating a continuous street frontage on Main Street
7. Potential new boulevard/green space revived based on the 1904 plat map
8. Potential new quadplexes facing green space
9. Expansion of green space and pedestrian connection to the Fountain Plaza
10. Limited vehicular access from Main Street to existing parking lots to reduce curb-cuts and improve walkability
11. Storefront retail creating a gateway on Ash Street
12. Potential pedestrian bridge over Forest Parkway and the Railroad to provide Model Mile Trail and pedestrian connection between Starr Park and Downtown

TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWN CORE - FOCUS AREA WEST





Note: Concept vision for illustration purpose only and not an actual development proposal

Traditional Downtown Core

MAIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT VISION



EXISTING MAIN STREET LOOKING EAST AT THE INTERSECTION OF LAKE DRIVE



HILL STREET REVITALIZATION VISION



EXISTING HILL STREET LOOKING WEST AT THE INTERSECTION OF LAKE DRIVE



Traditional Downtown Core

1. Potential fast-food/restaurant with outdoor dining and drive-through in rear of the building
2. Storefront retail creating Main Street frontage
3. New street connecting Main Street and Finley Drive
4. Additional parking for retail/commercial uses along the new street
5. Infill commercial with parking and green space in the rear
6. On-street parking and multi-use path on Main Street
7. New street connection between Main Street and Finley Drive
8. Neighborhood / community green space along Main Street
9. Potential new multi-family/condo development
10. Surface parking lot at the rear of residential



TRADITIONAL DOWNTOWN CORE - FOCUS AREA EAST



Note: Concept vision for illustration purpose only and not an actual development proposal

Traditional Downtown Core

MAIN STREET ACTIVE STOREFRONT VISION



EXISTING MAIN STREET LOOKING WEST NEAR CARTERS CLEANERS & LAUNDRY



MAIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT VISION



EXISTING MAIN STREET LOOKING WEST NEAR FOREST PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

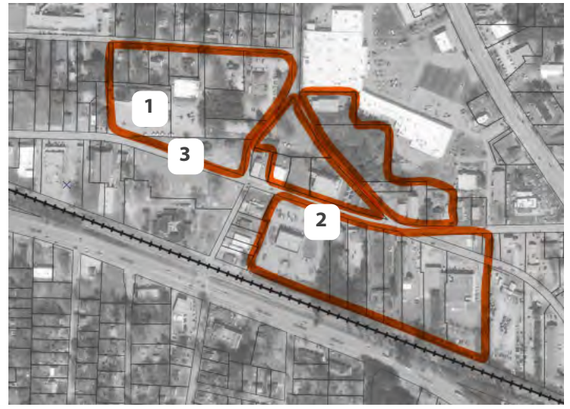


Mixed-Use Village

Area Challenge: Currently, this area mostly encompasses suburban and auto-oriented uses on irregular-sized parcels on Main Street and Courtney Drive. The street pattern creates irregular intersections and unsafe pedestrian crossings.

Potential Strategies:

- Extend the historic grid and block sizes to alter the development pattern over time
- Encourage infill development and redevelopment of underutilized properties
- Reduce the amount of auto-oriented uses and suburban-style development
- For properties with longer term redevelopment opportunities, reconfigure the parcels or future development to be perpendicular to Main Street and create a continuous building edge
- Improve walkability and connectivity by creating smaller block sizes (400 ft-600 ft) by adding new streets and inter parcel connectivity as part of future development
- Encourage medium-density residential and mixed-use development with active ground floor retail to support transit on Main Street
- Find opportunities to build workforce / affordable housing through public-private partnerships
- Support service-oriented office, retail uses, and employment opportunities such as medical offices, laundromat, banks, auto-service, and food service



POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION

VACANT BUILDINGS



OUTDOOR DINING



SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL



PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT



UNDERUTILIZED OPEN SPACE



COMMUNITY GREEN SPACE



Future Land Use: *Medium-density mixed-use with housing/ retail/commercial, townhomes/ condominium, senior housing, workforce/ affordable housing, multifamily*

Building Height: *3-4 stories*

Residential Density: *15-24 units/acre*

Commercial Size: *6,000 – 15,000 SF (integrated with other uses)*



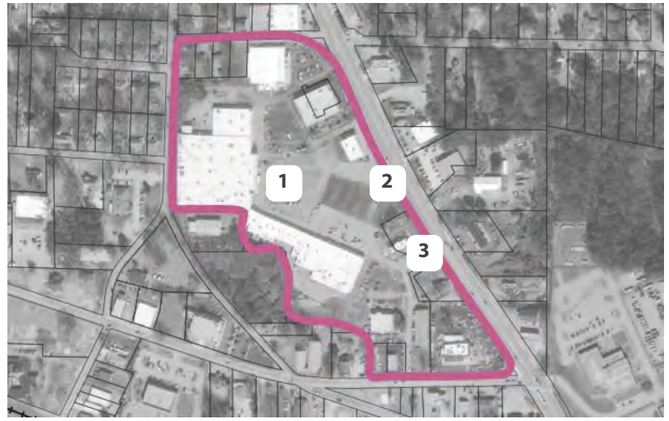
Residential Density Example 20-24 units/acre
Multifamily with surface parking

Mixed-Use Center

Area Challenge: Forest Square is an auto-centric development built in the 1960s that is outdated and does not fit with the Downtown character. It represents the largest parcel in Downtown with a large strip commercial footprint and several out-parcels along Jonesboro Road. Current market conditions and forecasted near term commercial demand do not easily support redevelopment. However, this area has the potential for longer term redevelopment that could entail higher density development to support transit

Potential Strategies:

- Subdivide the large superblock into smaller walkable blocks with new streets and extending connections to the downtown core
- Create higher density mixed-use development – potentially office/commercial uses along Jonesboro Road and residential uses on the back
- Find opportunities to create a central green space and reduce the parking requirements to encourage walking and a healthy lifestyle
- Create a gateway at the intersection of Main Street and Jonesboro Road



POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION

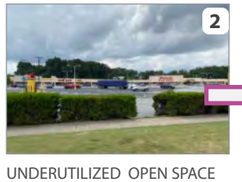
VACANT BUILDINGS



OUTDOOR DINING



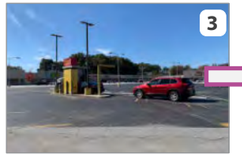
SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL



PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT



UNDERUTILIZED OPEN SPACE



COMMUNITY GREEN SPACCE



Future Land Use: *Higher-density Mixed-use, townhomes, multifamily, condominium, anchor retail center, entertainment*

Building Height: *5-6 stories*

Residential Density: *25-35 units/acre*

Commercial Size: *30,000 – 40,000 SF (integrated with other uses)*



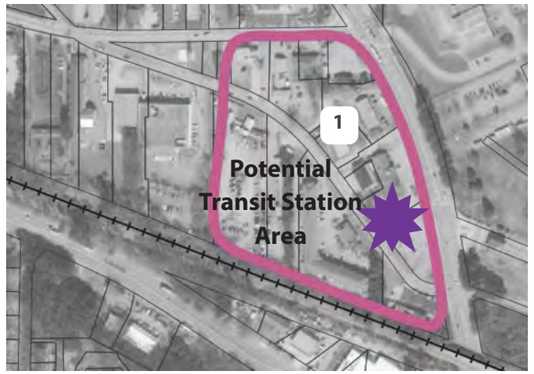
Residential Density Example 25-35 units/acre
Mixed-Use (housing over retail) with parking deck

Mixed-Use Center

Area Challenge: This area has many underutilized and vacant properties with irregular parcel configurations. The intersection of Courtney Drive and Jonesboro Road is unsafe for pedestrian and vehicular movement; however, it is a key intersection to extend future transit connectivity to Fort Gillem. The Jonesboro Road frontage and proximity to Fort Gillem make a logical case for a potential future transit station in this area.

Potential Strategies:

- Conduct a feasibility study to identify a viable site for a potential future transit station
- Replace underutilized and vacant properties with viable mixed-use development to support future transit
- Reduce vehicular and pedestrian conflicts through intersection improvements and streetscaping on Courtney Drive
- Collaborate with Clayton County and MARTA to advocate for a transit route and a station area on Main Street



POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION

UNDERUTILIZED LAND USE



MIXED-USE



Highway Commercial

Area Challenge: Currently, this area mostly has auto service shops and fast-food restaurants. Jonesboro Road disconnects this area from downtown and is unlikely to change

Potential Strategies:

- Improve connectivity between this area and downtown through intersection improvements at Marie Street on Jonesboro Road



POTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION

HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL



COMMERCIAL MIXED-USE



Future Land Use:	*Mixed-use retail/commercial, highway commercial*
Building Height:	*1-2 stories*
Residential Density:	*None*
Commercial Size:	*20,000 – 30,000 SF (integrated with other uses)*



Source: MARTA Transit-Supportive Land Use Study/VHB

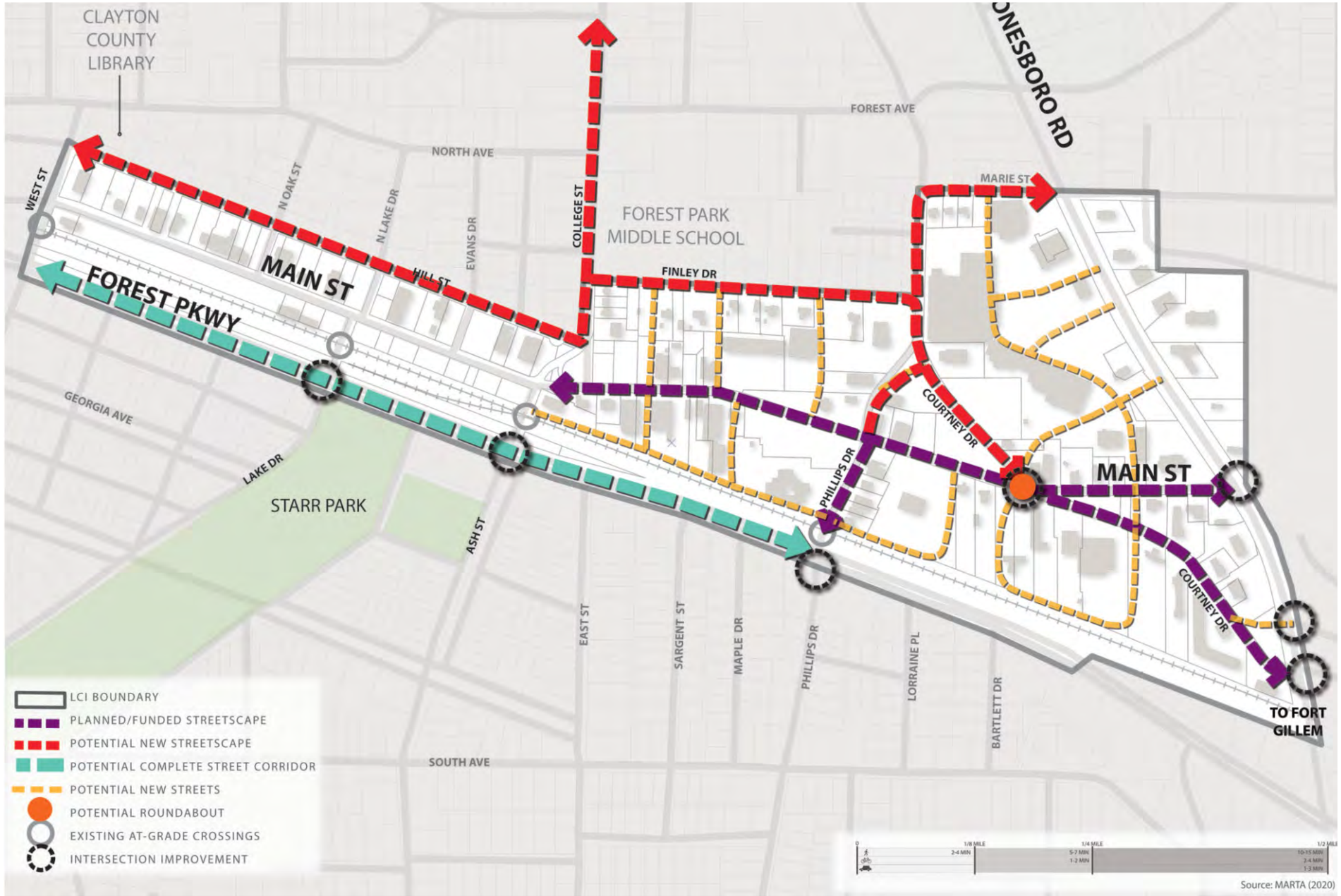
CONCEPTUAL MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT VISION FOR THE POTENTIAL TRANSIT STATION AREA



Source: MARTA Transit-Supportive Land Use Study/VHB

4.2
MOBILITY FRAMEWORK PLAN

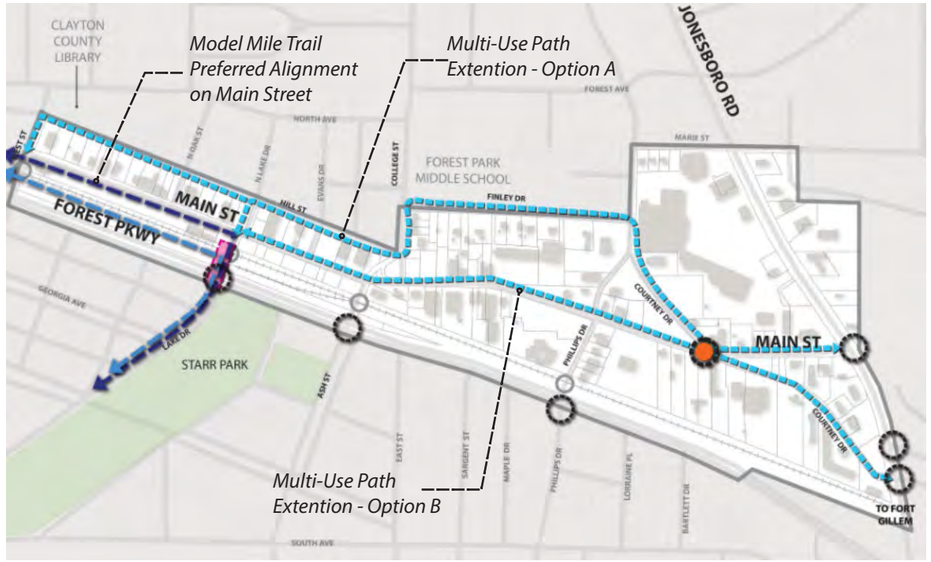
Closing the connectivity gaps, extending the street grid, and creating a walkable downtown is at the heart of creating a safe and inviting downtown. The City has already implemented phase I streetscape improvements on Main Street and has funded phase II and III for the rest of Main Street and Phillips Drive. This project will be a catalyst in enhancing the Downtown character and a step towards creating a signature street. In addition, Downtown as a whole will benefit from implementing the proposed mobility framework which will create a more walkable, connected heart of the city. The mobility framework plan provides recommendations for not only improving the vehicular infrastructure but also completing the sidewalk network, ped-bike infrastructure, intersection improvements, and a potential transit route to extend the connectivity to Fort Gillem. The framework plan provides a big picture vision for downtown and will be used as a guide for future implementation in both the short-term and the long-term, either by the City or through private investment. The streetscape design concepts set the standards for different street hierarchies to include various ped-bike amenities.



Conceptual Mobility Framework Plan

Potential Strategies:

- Assess the feasibility of "complete street" design on Main Street to incorporate on-street parking, multi-use path, sidewalk amenities, and a transit facility in Phase II and Phase III streetscape projects on Main Street (the streetscape plans are already adopted and funded by the City)
- Assess the feasibility of a new roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Courtney Drive
- Incorporate a multi-use path to extend the regional ped-bike connection from the currently planned Modal Mile Trail project
- Streetscape improvements to existing streets in the current right-of-way, where feasible – Hill Street, Finley Drive, Courtney Drive, and College Street
- Adopt Safe Route to School Program – provide safe ped-bike connections and intersections for Forest Park Middle School children and families
- Create walkable blocks (ideally between 400 ft – 600 ft) with an interconnected street grid
- Create internal service access or alleyways at the rear of lots as part of future development to limit the amount of curb cuts on Main Street
- Propose new streets along existing property lines (ideally in a vacant portion of the property) considering ownership and proposed development, where feasible
- Assess the feasibility of a new pedestrian bridge on Forest Parkway and Railroad Right-of-Way at Lake Drive along the proposed alignment of the Modal Mile Trail
- Traffic calming on Forest Parkway at Lake Drive and Ash Street for pedestrian safety by incorporating rapid rectangular flashing beacon (RRFB), refuge island and planted median
- Potential realignment of Phillips Drive and Courtney Drive to create safer perpendicular intersections



Conceptual Multi-Use Path Options



Model Mile Trail Preferred Alignment
Source: AeroATL Greenway Model Mile, Forest Park - Project Feasibility Study

Precedent Images of Mobility Improvements in Downtown



Shared bike land



Pedestrian bridge on Forest Parkway



Potential bike amenity



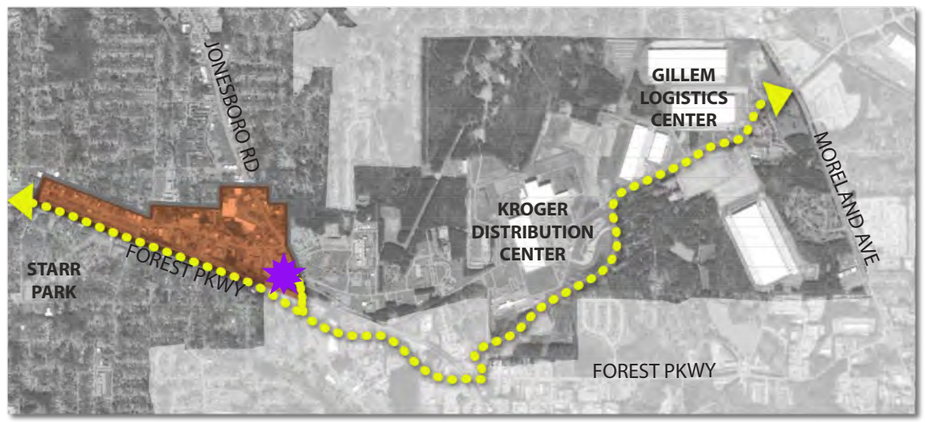
Multi-use path



Potential pedestrian safety island on Forest Parkway



Existing Bus Transit Network through Downtown



Potential Transit Connection between Downtown and Fort Gillem

Streetscape Improvement Concepts

EXISTING MAIN STREET



POTENTIAL MAIN STREET NEAR BILL LEE PARK



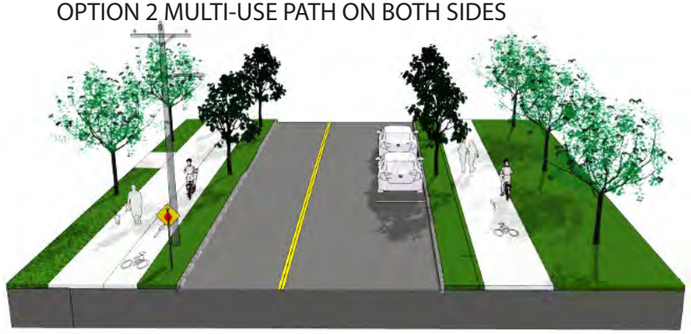
EXISTING MAIN STREET - UNIMPROVED: 60 FEET ROW



OPTION 1: SHARED BIKE LANE



OPTION 2 MULTI-USE PATH ON BOTH SIDES



OPTION 3: PARKING ON BOTH SIDES



Main Street Streetscape:

Main Street Phase II and III streetscape projects are already funded and the design has been already approved; however, the planning team explored various design options to accommodate pedestrian and bike amenities. The intent is to provide a regional bike connection through Model Mile Trail to Downtown and also connect with a potential future Transit Area on Jonesboro Road and potentially extending that connection to Gillem Logistic Center. The order of magnitude costs for the three options are listed in the Implementation section page 49.

Hill Street, Finley Drive and Courtney Drive

Hill Street is a neighborhood street abutting the residential area and it is also a service road for Downtown businesses without any pedestrian and bike amenities. Similarly, Finley Drive and Courtney Drive have inconsistent sidewalk network.

The streetscape improvements on all three streets would significantly expand walkability in Downtown and beyond. Adding a multi-use path and sidewalks would not only provide connection to Multi Model Trail but also a desirable and safe amenity for the residents and Forest Park Middle School students who walk/bike to school.

EXISTING HILL STREET
+/- 45 FEET RIGHT-OF-WAY



POTENTIAL HILL STREET



EXISTING FINLEY DRIVE
+/- 40 FEET RIGHT-OF-WAY



POTENTIAL FINLEY DRIVE / COURTNEY DRIVE



Forest Parkway Improvements



Forest Parkway is a regional road managed by Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) but at the local level it serves as a gateway into Downtown and the main connector to Starr Park. The current roadway is designed to handle a large volume of traffic with two lanes in both directions, a turn lane, and deceleration lanes (+/- 90 ft curb to curb). Even with traffic signals and pedestrian lights, it feels unsafe to cross Forest Parkway. The lack of pedestrian safety is exacerbated by the large railroad right-of-way (+/- 160 ft wide). The combined right-of-way is +/-250 ft with traffic and at-grade crossing creating an unsafe and uninviting pedestrian crossing.

Considering the community input and several precedents in Metro Atlanta, the feasibility for a pedestrian bridge could be explored at the intersection of Forest Parkway and Lake Drive. There are two potential location options illustrated in the diagram. Since Model Mile Trail crosses at the same location connecting Starr Park and Downtown, a ped-bike bridge could be a viable option at least from the usability standpoint; however, the implementation of the bridge may be contingent upon more activities in Downtown. The bridge could be a signature gateway feature for the City and Downtown.

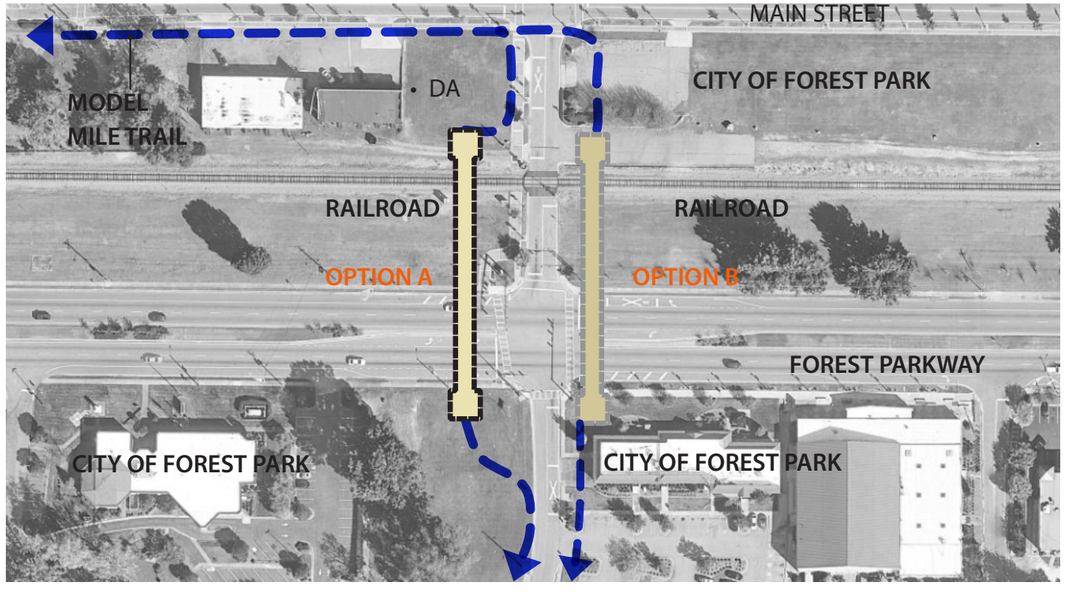
Regardless of the bridge, Forest Parkway could be improved for pedestrian safety by including refuge island and safe crossings at the intersections, wider sidewalks/multi-use path, bus shelter, and landscaping.



Note: Concept vision for illustration purpose only and not an actual development proposal



Pedestrian Bridge Example, Peachtree Corners Town Center



4.3
OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK PLAN

Due to the modest market forecast of housing and commercial demand in Downtown Forest Park, significant new development may not come to fruition in the short-term. However, Downtown includes a significant amount of vacant and city-owned properties that could be utilized as short term opportunities to improve overall quality of life using placemaking strategies and community programs. Starr Park is the heart and soul of Forest Park with great amenities and year-around community events. Downtown Forest Park could build on the success of Starr Park programs and host some events in several vacant properties until they are ripe for development. The open space framework plan illustrates potential locations for placemaking interventions and also potential new open spaces throughout Downtown.



INTEGRATED OPEN SPACE - URBAN PLAZA



ACTIVATION AND PLACEMAKING



INTEGRATED OPEN SPACE - BOULEVARD



ACTIVATION AND PLACEMAKING



ACTIVATION AND PLACEMAKING



OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENTS (TO EXISTING CEMETARY)



INTEGRATED OPEN SPACE - SMALL PARKS

Placemaking and Activation Strategies:

- Utilize city and DA-owned properties for community events and programs in the short-term
- Host festivals and events at Bill Lee Park throughout the year in addition to Starr Park
- Activate vacant sites through temporary uses such as a farmers market, pop-up stores and public art to activate Downtown
- Encourage activities for family and children - interactive public art, water features, play areas, outdoor gym, murals, sculptures, outdoor shared bookshelves
- Install public art throughout Downtown to enhance the branding of Forest Park – murals, sculptures, historic markers, painted crosswalks, streetscape banners

Integrated Open Space Strategies:

- Revive the historic notion of "boulevard open spaces", where feasible, as per the 1904 plat map, to create neighborhood parks
- Incorporate small open spaces, plazas, outdoor seating, and gathering places as part of future development
- Assess the feasibility of improving Bill Lee Park to include multipurpose open space for different age groups and activities (within the parameters of the City's existing land lease with the Railroad)
- Utilize the cemetery as a community green space by adding walking trails and benches

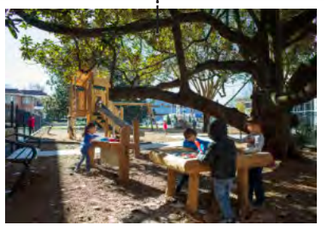
Bill Lee Park Improvements





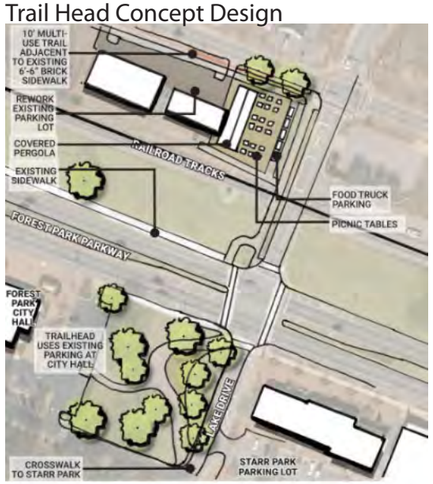




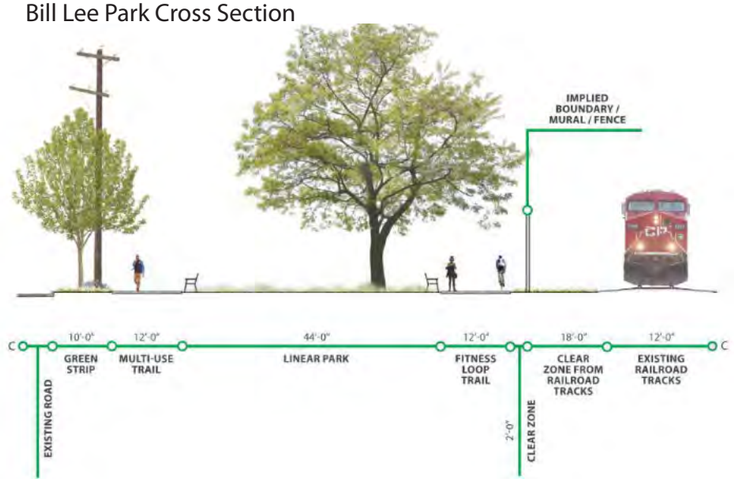


Model Mile Trail Preferred Alignment along Main Street and Bill Lee Park

Trail Head Concept Design



Bill Lee Park Cross Section



Source: AeroATL Greenway Model Mile, Forest Park - Project Feasibility Study

4.4 ZONING RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, Downtown Forest Park/the LCI study area is regulated by the Main Street Overlay District. The overlay district intends to "*inform the redevelopment of the Main Street District to ensure that new construction and renovation contributes to a sense of place, a lively pedestrian environment, and a high quality, small-town destination, consistent with the city's redevelopment plan adopted in 2008.*" In addition to creating a walkable, friendly, and inviting Main Street, the zoning regulation could be refined to support the updated vision and goals of this plan described in section 4.1. Rather than applying the district-wide regulations of "mixed-use development" to the entire downtown, the zoning guidelines could be customized to smaller development subareas (as outlined in Section 4.2) based on their current parcel configurations, development capacity, and architectural character. The Development Framework Plan for the four subareas provides a high-level outline of the future use, density, and size of development with precedent images.

The overall regulations of the current overlay district already provide a relevant framework to achieve the Downtown vision and may need some minor tweaks to differentiate the desired character for individual subareas. The zoning update could also respond to the potential future transit facility/hub Downtown and how it could support the desired density/intensity of development to make transit viable in the long term.

Development Area	Future Lane Use	Building Height	Residential Density	Commercial Size
	Future allowable uses are mostly applicable to new and infill development. The list below is generalized and represents just a few samples. Commercial uses should be integrated with other uses discouraging stand-alone and single-tenant uses as part of new development.			
Traditional Downtown Core	• Low-density mixed-use with retail/commercial and single-family attached • Retail/Commercial Services: Boutique stores, local restaurants & bars, brewery, coffee stop, flex retail, shared offices, small businesses, community/civic uses, daycare, education • Housing Types: duplex, triplex, quadplex, townhomes, live/work units • Conditional Uses: Drive-through facilities, fast-food restaurants, big-box retail, industrial/manufacturing, parking structures, religious assembly and major utilities, large parks & recreation amenities	2-3 Stories	6-12 units/acre	3,000-5,000 SF
Mixed-Use Village	• Medium-density mixed-use with retail/commercial and single-family attached and multi-family • Retail/Commercial Services: restaurants & bars, small convenience store, small businesses, artisanal manufacturing (hand tools only), community/civic uses, medical, daycare, education, laundry, banks • Housing Types: townhomes/condominium, senior housing, workforce/affordable housing, multifamily • Conditional Uses: Drive-through facilities, fast-food restaurants, big-box retail, industrial/manufacturing, parking structures, religious assembly and major utilities, large parks & recreation amenities	3-4 Stories	15-24 units/acre	6,000-15,000 SF
Mixed-Use Center	• Higher-density Mixed-use • Retail/Commercial Services: anchor retail center, entertainment, grocery store, offices, big-box and fast-food (not stand-alone), restaurants & bars, medical, daycare, education, laundry, banks, parking structures • Housing Types: townhomes, multifamily, workforce/affordable housing, condominium • Conditional Uses: Drive-through facilities, industrial/manufacturing, religious assembly and major utilities, large parks & recreation amenities	5-6 Stories	25-35 units/acre	16,000-40,000 SF
Highway Commercial	• Mixed-use retail/commercial • Retail/Commercial Services: Auto service & parts, auto-oriented uses, fast-food, drive-through facilities, industrial, strip commercial	1-2 Stories	None	20,000-30,000 SF

MARTA has already developed the Model TCR Ordinance for suburban jurisdictions and the City of Forest Park is one of the case studies to illustrate the application of the ordinance to create transit-oriented development near Downtown. If the City of Forest Park decides to adopt parts of the TCR ordinance and incorporate them in the current Overlay District Update, the following components could be adopted: (The full version of the ordinance document can be reviewed in the Appendix)

- Allowable and Conditional Uses
- Commercial Establishment Size
- Live/Work Units
- Maximum Block Length
- Interparcel Connectivity
- Drive Through Facilities on the rear of buildings
- Outdoor Dining Incentives
- Open Space Requirements
- Signage

5

IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Action Plan and Projects
5.2 Implementation Strategies

5.1

ACTION PLAN AND PROJECTS

The Action Plan organizes the list of transportation projects described in the Mobility Framework Plan into short-term (2-5 years) and long-term (6-15 years) projects. The project list is included at the end of this section and includes a wide variety of transportation, pedestrian, bike, and multi-use trail projects. The list highlights conceptual costs based on recently completed projects of similar scale and type, and current labor costs in the market. It should be noted that these are "planning-level" cost estimates and intended for budgetary purposes only. More detailed cost estimates could be generated as the implementation of individual projects is pursued.

5-year Action Plan

Typically, Atlanta Regional Commission's LCI Planning grant focuses on implementation of the transportation projects as catalysts for communities. The LCI implementation grants are federally funded; they are competitive, require a local match, and could be time-consuming. To expedite the implementation process, Downtown Forest Park should have an action plan with priority projects that could create significant impact with higher feasibility. Through the community outreach process, the planning team identified mobility projects (illustrated on the map graphic) that could be implemented in the next 3-5 years. In addition to the mobility projects, several open space and placemaking projects could be prioritized with relatively lower investments to jump start Downtown's revitalization process on the vacant properties and until the future development occurs.



Long-Term Projects

To build on the short-term projects and to expand the future mobility network, open spaces, economic development, and to fully realize the Downtown vision and goals, several long-term projects are recommended.



SHORT-TERM TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS (2-5 YEARS)

Project Number	Project Name	Location and Description	Units (LF)	Cost/Unit (LF-Linear Foot)	Construction Cost	Engineering Cost (20% of Const. Cost)	Total Project Cost
STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS / REALIGNMENT							
S1	College Street Hill Steet to Warren Drive	Multi-use path on one side (8'), sidewalk (6'), furniture zone (10'), pedestrian lights (50' o.c.) and street trees (50' o.c.), street curbing, resurface	1,500	$1,400	$2,100,000	$420,000	$2,520,000
S2	Hill Street Streetscape West Street to Parker Street	Multi-use path on one side (8'), sidewalk (6'), furniture zone (10'), pedestrian lights and street trees (50' o.c.), street curbing (50' o.c.), resurface, stormwater?	2,200	$1,400	$3,080,000	$616,000	$3,696,000
S3	Finley Drive Streetscape College Street to Courtney Drive	Multi-use path on one side (8'), sidewalk (5'), furniture zone (5'), pedestrian lights (50' o.c.) and street trees (50' o.c.), street curbing, resurface, stormwater?	1,500	$1,400	$2,100,000	$420,000	$2,520,000
S4	Model Mile Trail (AeroATL Model Mile Project Feasibility Study)	Multi-use Path from Forest Parkway to Lake Drive to Main Street to West Street	3,600	$420	$1,512,000	$302,400	$1,814,400
INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS							
C1	Feasibility Study of Pedestrian Bridge						**$200,000**
C2	Finley Drive and College Street	New crosswalk, ADA ramp, signange	1		$120,000	$24,000	$144,000
OPTIONAL STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS							
M1	Main Street Phase II and Phase III Streetscape - Option 1	On-street parking on one side, shared bike lane, multi-use path one one side, sidewalks, furniture zone	4,600	$2,000	$9,200,000	$1,840,000	$11,040,000
M2	Main Street Phase II and Phase III Streetscape - Option 2	On-street parking on one side, multi-use path on both sides, furniture zone	4,600	$1,800	$8,280,000	$1,656,000	$9,936,000
M3	Main Street Phase II and Phase III Streetscape - Option 3	On-street parking on both sides, multi-use path on one side, sidewalk, furniture zone	4,600	$1,800	$8,280,000	$1,656,000	$9,936,000
M4	Roundabout at the intersection of Main Street and Courtney Drive		1				
OPEN SPACE PROJECTS							
O1	Bill Lee Park Physical Improvements		2.4 acres		$1,500,000	$300,000	$1,800,000
O2	Programming, Events, and Public Art in Bill Lee Park						
O3	Temporary Placemaking Projects						
O4	Signage and Wayfinding						

LONG-TERM TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS (6-15 YEARS)

Project Number	Project Name	Location and Description	Units (LF)	Cost/Unit (LF-Linear Foot)	Construction Cost	Engineering Cost (20% of Const. Cost)	Total Project Cost
STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS / REALIGNMENT							
SL1	Courtney Drive at Jonesboro Road	Realignment of street to create a perpendicular intersection and align with Hood Avenue	200	$1,400	$280,000	$56,000	$336,000
SL2	Courtney Drive Streetscape Main Street to Marie Street	Sidewalk, furniture zone, pedestrian lights and street trees, street curbing, resurface, stormwater	1,500	$1,400	$2,100,000	$420,000	$2,520,000
SL3	Phillips Drive Streetscape and Realignment Main Street to Courtney Drive	Sidewalk, furniture zone, pedestrian lights and street trees, street curbing, resurface, stormwater	480	$1,400	$672,000	$134,400	$806,400
SL4	Marie Street Streetscape Courtney Drive to Jonesboro Road	Sidewalk, furniture zone, pedestrian lights and street trees, street curbing, resurface, stormwater	650	$1,400	$910,000	$182,000	$1,092,000
SL5	Forest Parkway West Street to Phillips Drive	Extension of sidewalk, bus stops, street furniture	4,000	$400	$1,600,000	$320,000	$1,920,000
INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS							
CL1	Jonesboro Road and Marie Street Intersection	New crosswalk, ADA ramp, sigange	1		$120,000	$24,000	$144,000
CL2	Forest Parkway and Lake Drive	Refuge island and gateway signage	1		$120,000	$24,000	$144,000
CL3	Forest Parkway and Ash Street	Refuge island and gateway signage	1		$450,000	$90,000	$540,000
CL4	Forest Parkway and Phillips Drive	Refuge island and gateway signage	1		$450,000	$90,000	$540,000

OPEN SPACE PROJECTS

OL1 New Open Space adjacent to Evans Drive between Main Street and Hill Street

OL2 New Open Space adjacent to Parker Street

OL3 New Open Space on Main Street near Forest Primitive Baptist Church

OL4 New Open Space at the intersection of Main St and Courtney Dr

OL5 Urban Plaza/Public Art on N Lake Drive

OL6 Enhancement to Existing Cemetery on Main St

FUTURE STUDIES

- Placemaking and Public Art Program
- Feasibility Study for Transit Station Area

5.2
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The City of Forest Park, the Downtown Development Authority, and the Development Authority have a variety of strategies at their disposal to enhance the economic vitality of the LCI Study Area and spur future growth. These mechanisms consist of both physical and organizational recommendations that must be continuously supported by staff and elected officials. Only by careful work towards a commonly shared set of goals and objectives can the benefits of the LCI planning and visioning process yield success for stakeholders.

These strategies are sorted into four categories:

- **100-day Action Plan**: intended to provide short-term, low- or no-cost actions that can be undertaken to keep LCI plan momentum moving forward, both at the staff level and with stakeholders
- **Affordable Interventions**: working with the physical assets already in place downtown, these recommendations create synergies with minimal additional capital investment
- **Funding Programs**: these are intended to provide ways to help shoulder the financial burden for needed capital improvements
- **Policies and Plans**: best practices that can help support development goals through building knowledge and relationships among public and private players alike
- **Staffing**: administrative changes or additions that help boost organizational capacity to facilitate improvement

100-day Action Plan

. The following items are suggested items that can be accomplished within the first 100 days after completing the plan:

- City Council and Planning Commission to formally update the Main Street Overlay Zoning District utilizing the recommendations provided in this LCI plan.
- City Council to formally adopt the LCI plan as a policy document.
- Begin discussions with Airport South CID, local property owners and Forest Park elected officials to ascertain interest and ability to extend CID boundaries to include LCI Study Area.
- Apply for grant funds to do a pedestrian bridge feasibility/pre-engineering study
- Establish a standing LCI Implementation Status agenda item at City Council and Planning Commission to provide routine updates.
- Conduct a public open house on or near day 100 to provide an update on LCI implementation activities (can be combined with other standing forums as needed).

Affordable Interventions

- Leverage publicly owned land and assets: Conduct a thorough review of City, County, DA, and DDA owned buildings and vacant land to determine how publicly-held land and assets might be leveraged for redevelopment. Strategically located, well-planned developments can serve as an anchor to revitalize activity in the downtown area. A particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring a consistent urban experience. At present, existing buildings are physically separated, and give a disjointed feel to downtown that prevents any kind of synergistic energy from forming. Ideally, new development occurring on parcels that are currently publicly owned should fill in the "missing teeth" along the Main Street corridor especially.

- Consider strategies for hybrid-use structures: Government and higher education facilities can provide an activity anchor in business districts, supporting local restaurants and convenience stores. When designing new public facilities, the City of Forest Park and Clayton County should consider ways to allow for private vendors to create retail or restaurant spaces. This would serve as an amenity to employees, a revenue source for local governments, and a potential boon to the after-work vitality of government-owned spaces.

- Improve transit stops: In order to ensure that transit riders have the most pleasant experience possible, the city should conduct a review of bus stops around downtown and consider working with MARTA to add benches and/or shelters. A better transit experience can help local businesses with employee recruitment and retention.

Funding Programs

- Utilize the Tax Allocation District to help pay for improvements that would facilitate development: A Tax Allocation District already exists in an area that covers downtown Forest Park. The revenue from this has been used to finance incentives and infrastructure within the Gillem Logistics Center (formerly Fort Gillem) area with great success. This same exact tool can help spur private redevelopment along Main Street as well.

- Work with local interested businesses to expand the Airport South Community Improvement District: The Airport South Community Improvement District (ASCID) collects funding for infrastructure, beautification, and security programs from member properties. Commercial properties that opt into a CID agree to pay a specified additional property tax, which goes into a pool that is typically used to leverage other sources of funding to deliver pedestrian and road upgrades, aesthetic improvements, and public safety measures. The ASCID already extends to portions of the City of Forest Park, and with an coordinated marketing campaign, could be extended into downtown.

- Work with GDOT District staff to implement upgrades to transportation infrastructure through the Quick Response program: The Georgia Department of Transportation maintains a pot of money that is intended for use in low-cost, quickly implemented projects that improve safety and mobility in an economical manner. Projects such as intersection improvements, traffic signal upgrades, and road re-stripings are typical Quick Response projects. An example of a candidate project would be the installation of signage to create safer pedestrian connections at the intersection of Lake Drive and Forest Parkway. The Quick Response program is administered through the GDOT District Staff, who have a close relationship with city and county officials in their area of responsibility.

- Utilize the Development Authority to disburse façade improvement funds for downtown structures: Development Authorities (DAs) are used in cities throughout Georgia as a mechanism to revitalize and redevelop municipal central business districts. Forest Park has already done the work necessary to get a DA running. It should make use of grant funding and bonding (if necessary) to encourage private entities to improve facades of businesses around downtown to make it a more attractive place to visit and do business and to create the impression of progress and activity.

- Use SPLOST funding to help pay for a pedestrian bridge: Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes are used in Georgia to pay for a variety of capital projects within a county or municipality. When voters approve the one percent sales tax for a particular project or projects, the revenues created from that tax can be used to pay back bonds issued to complete various capital projects in the near term. A new pedestrian bridge is an example of a type of project that could be financed though SPLOST funds. A bridge could function not only as a means for pedestrians to safely move between Starr Park and a revitalized downtown, but also as attractive structure in and of itself that creates a gateway to the area.

Policies and Plans

- Update zoning code: Revisions to the City of Forest Park's zoning code to a more modern and relevant standard streamlines the development process and requirements for using space to do business generally. This will make the city overall and downtown specifically more vibrant, as new retail and restaurant locations have a clearer and therefore

less risk-prone path to operation. This will in turn enhance the reputation of the city as a place to do business. The process of performing such an update will also help the community further organize around a set of clear ideas as to what the identity of downtown should be in terms of the built environment.

- Engage with organizations such as the Georgia Downtown Association and other third parties to gain additional insights into best practices for developing a downtown area: Members of the Georgia Downtown Association benefit from connections to experienced downtown managers, elected officials, state level staff, consultants, and legislative advocates from across the state. Such individuals possess an immense wealth of knowledge and may have ideas of practices and policies that would be applicable to revitalizing Forest Park. Other third parties such as the Urban Land Institute and the Council for Quality Growth are able to bring further expertise and contacts through their various programs as well.

- Promote town as a filming location for movie and TV productions: The filming industry for movies and television can provide tax revenue, local economic activity, and exposure for smaller downtowns such as that of Forest Park. The Georgia Department of Economic Development maintains an office of staff specifically tasked with attracting and retaining filming to Georgia communities, and they could be a key partner in this particular effort.

Staffing

- Hire Main Street Coordinator, or add similar responsibilities to existing staff roles: A Main Street Coordinator or Director would be responsible for creating and directing a Main Street program, and as such would serve as a single point of contact for efforts related to promoting downtown and managing events. As such, this staff member would be able to bring together multiple partners that could have a positive impact on downtown including the DA, the DDA, Clayton County, the Aerotropolis Alliance, and private developers and businesses.

- Ensure that the Development Authority is staffed and empowered to act: The Development Authority is tasked with undertaking projects that would have a catalytic effect on redeveloping downtown, and in particular it has the jurisdiction to dispose of city-owned assets. Ensuring that responsibilities and roles of the Development Authority are clearly delineated relative to the Downtown Development Authority (both for members of the private sector and for elected officials) will help reduce redundant efforts and help to maximize the impact of each.

- Ensure that Downtown Development Authority is fully staffed and empowered to act, especially regarding bond issuance and land transactions: The Downtown Development Authority currently lacks the institutional capacity to take advantage of all of the potential benefits that having such an organization can offer. In order to ensure that no grant opportunities are missed, a fully staffed DDA is crucial.

In addition to the verbal explanations, included below is a matrix that contains the same strategy recommendations with further detail as to implementation. The attributes of these details are:

Time frame:

- Short: within one year
- Medium: one to five years
- Long: five or more years

Responsible person or organizations

Cost of implementation (broad estimate, not intended for budgeting purposes):

- Low: less than $100,000
- Medium: $100,000 to $1,000,000
- High: $1,000,000 or more

Initiative	Type	Time Frame	Role	Cost
Sell publicly owned assets	Affordable Interventions	Short	City Manager and City Economic Development	Low
Consider strategies for hybrid-use structures	Affordable Interventions	Long	Public Works	Medium
Improve transit stops	Affordable Interventions	Short	Public Works	Short
Utilize Tax Allocation District	Funding Programs	Medium	City Economic Development and Development Authority of Clayton County	Low
Work to expand Airport South CID	Funding Programs	Medium	City Economic Development	Low
Work with GDOT District staff to implement Quick Response upgrades	Funding Programs	Medium	City Manager and Public Works	Low
Utilize the Development Authority to disburse façade improvement funds	Funding Programs	Medium	City Economic Development	Low
Use SPLOST funding to help pay for a pedestrian bridge	Funding Programs	Long	City Manager and City Council	High
Update zoning code	Policies and Plans	Medium	Planning, Building, and Zoning	Medium
Engage with organizations such as the Georgia Downtown Association and gain additional insights	Policies and Plans	Short to Medium	City Manager and City Economic Development	Low
Promote town as a filming location	Policies and Plans	Medium to Long	City Economic Development	Low
Hire Main Street Coordinator, or add similar responsibilities to existing staff roles	Staffing	Short	City Manager and City Council	Low
Ensure that Development Authority is empowered	Staffing	Short	City Manager and City Council	None
Ensure that Downtown Development Authority is empowered	Staffing	Short	City Manager and City Council	None