

PROJECT GREENSPACE

embrace your space

October 2009

Summary Report prepared by:
Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC

with:

ETC Institute

geograpIT

Malvada Consulting Group

PROS Consulting



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Community Planning Groups

- Atlanta BeltLine Inc
- Atlanta Development Authority
- Commissioner’s Council on Parks, Greenspace, and Recreation
- Freedom Park Conservancy
- Grant Park Conservancy
- Olmsted Linear Park Alliance
- Park Pride
- Path Foundation
- Piedmont Park Conservancy
- The BeltLine Partnership
- The Conservation Fund
- Trust for Public Land

Organizations

- American Golf Corporation
- Atlanta Downtown Improvement District
- Blue Heron Nature Preserve
- Buckhead Baseball Inc.
- Chastain Park Conservancy
- Chastain Pool
- Chattahoochee Nature Center
- Cabbagetown Initiative
- Garden Hills Pool
- Garden Hills Community Center
- Grant Park Conservancy
- Grant Park Pool
- Little Five Points Business Association
- Northside Youth Organization
- Trees Atlanta
- West Atlanta Watershed Alliance

Friends of Parks Groups

- Friends of Adair Park I
- Friends of Adair Park II
- Friends of Adams Park
- Friends of Anderson Park
- Friends of Ansley Park
- Friends of Ardmore Park
- Friends of Atlanta Memorial Park
- Friends of Beaverbrook Park
- Friends of Benteen Park
- Friends of Bessie Branham Park
- Friends of Bitsy Grant Tennis Center
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- Friends of Candler Park
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- Friends of Channing Valley
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- Friends of Cleopas R. Johnson Park
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- Friends of Daniel Johnson Nature Preserve
- Friends of Daniel Stanton Park
- Friends of Deerwood Park
- Friends of Dellwood Park
- Friends of East Lake
- Friends of Emma Millican Park
- Friends of Enota Place Playlot
- Friends of Eubanks Park (The Prado)
- Friends of Four Corners Park

- Friends of Frankie Allen Park
- Friends of Garden Hills Park
- Friends of Gilliam Park
- Friends of Herbert Greene
- Friends of Herbert Taylor Park
- Friends of Iverson Park
- Friends of Jacci Fuller Woodland Gardens Park
- Friends of John Howell Park
- Friends of Kirkwood Dixie
- Friends of Lenox-Wildwood Park
- Friends of Lionel Hampton
- Friends of Maddox Park
- Friends of McClatchey Park
- Friends of Melvin Drive Park
- Friends of Morningside Nature Preserve
- Friends of Orme Park
- Friends of Outdoor Activity Center
- Friends of Peachtree Hills Park
- Friends of Perkerson Park
- Friends of Renaissance Park
- Friends of Rosa L. Burney Park (Dunbar)
- Friends of Sidney Marcus Park
- Friends of South Bend Park
- Friends of Spink Collins Park
- Friends of Springdale Park
- Friends of Tanyard Creek Park
- Friends of Tanyard Creek Urban Forest
- Friends of Tuxedo Park
- Friends of Underwood Hills Park
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- Friends of Washington Park
- Friends of West Manor Park
- Friends of Whittier Mill Park
- Friends of Wilson Mill Park
- Friends of Winn Park
- Friends of Woodruff Park
- Friends of Yonah Park
- Friends of West End Park

CONSULTANT TEAM

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- PROS Consulting
- GeographicIT
- Malvada Consulting Group
- ETC Institute / Leisure Vision
- Metro Girl

Special thanks to the members of the Greenspace Advisory Task Force.

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REPORT CONTENTS

Project Greenspace is an element of the *Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan* (CDP). The CDP establishes the official vision for the future physical, social, and economic growth and development of Atlanta. Project Greenspace updates the 1993 *Parks, Open Space, and Greenways Plan*, which identified policies and actions to guide the preservation, management, and use of the City’s greenspace over a 15-year period.

Project Greenspace was led by the City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning in partnership with the Departments of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, Public Works, and Watershed Management. An Advisory Task Force comprised of key city and community leaders met regularly to provide guidance and direction to the planning process. The process included extensive community input to involve Atlantans in the development of the plan vision, goals, and recommendations.



Candle Park; Photo Source: City of Atlanta

This Summary Report provides a framework and action plan to guide the City of Atlanta in achieving a world-class greenspace system by the year 2030.

This report begins with a summary of the Greenspace Action Plan—twelve major initiatives proposed to grow, manage, and build capacity for greenspace—and is then organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Project Greenspace Purpose and Needs

Chapter 2: Existing Greenspace Assessment

Chapter 3: Future Greenspace Framework

Chapter 4: Greenspace Action Plan

A glossary defining the different types of greenspace and other terms used in this report follows Chapter 4: Greenspace Action Plan.



Coan Playground; Photo Source: City of Atlanta

Several technical reports available through the Bureau of Planning website provide more detail to supplement the information contained in this Summary Report. These reports are:

Project Greenspace Technical Report: The *Technical Report* is the full version of the Summary Report. It includes an assessment of the City’s greenspace, detailed descriptions of each of the recommended strategies and actions, and the methodology used to establish targets and goals for Atlanta’s future greenspace. In addition, Implementation (Chapter 6) describes each action needed to carry out the plan, including responsible parties, critical steps, required resources, and general timeframes.

State of Atlanta’s Greenspace Report: This report describes existing conditions and trends relative to greenspace in Atlanta, including the physical distribution and condition of the City’s greenspace, population trends, city regulations, and common themes and issues. This report found that Atlanta’s existing park system has very little parkland for its population relative to other major U.S. cities.

Community Survey Findings Report: A Community Attitude and Interest Survey was conducted via mail and phone to solicit citizen input on issues and needs related to Atlanta’s parks, greenspace, and recreation resources. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Atlanta and the seven areas into which the City was divided for planning purposes. Its findings indicate a strong demand for parks and recreational facilities and support for a greenspace bond referendum and dedicated greenspace funding source.

Benchmark Analysis Findings Report: This report compares operating metrics for Atlanta’s parks against five “benchmark” cities across the country. The results of the analysis indicate that—while spending on aquatic facilities ranks high—Atlanta ranks behind other cities in categories such as spending on maintenance and marketing the parks system.

Needs Assessment Report: This report evaluates the present and future needs of Atlanta’s residents for parks, greenspace, and recreational facilities. The Needs Assessment is based on the Community Survey, comparative benchmarking against Atlanta’s peer communities, and other analyses. The Needs Assessment addresses both residents’ expressed needs and latent needs (expressed needs that are not being met because a facility is not readily available) for 25 different types of parks and recreational facilities. Based on this evaluation, the report recommends standards for use in prioritizing park and recreation facility development.

Park Accessibility Study: Conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology Center for Geographic Information Systems (GIS), this study evaluates walking access via streets to the City of Atlanta parks. Its findings indicate that a large proportion of the City’s population do not live within easy walking distance of parks. The results of the study are incorporated into the *State of Atlanta’s Greenspace Report*.



Clear Creek; Photo Source: Piedmont Park Conservancy

The City of Atlanta must address three fundamental needs in order to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system:

Grow the Greenspace System: Atlanta needs more greenspace to serve its existing and future population.

Manage the Greenspace System: Atlanta needs to manage existing and new greenspaces to the highest standards of quality.

Build Capacity: Atlanta needs to significantly enhance resources, coordination, and partnerships inside and outside of city government and build community support for the greenspace system.

The following twelve major initiatives are proposed to grow, manage, and build capacity for greenspace. More information on these initiatives is provided in Chapter 4.

GROW THE GREENSPACE SYSTEM

1. Develop a citywide greenway network.
2. Establish new greenspaces to meet priority needs.
3. Create a citywide trail system incorporating the BeltLine Loop Trail.
4. Revise Atlanta’s development regulations to promote greenspace dedication in new developments.

MANAGE THE GREENSPACE SYSTEM

5. Implement a phased program to meet citizens’ needs for recreation facilities and programs over time.
6. Continue to improve parks maintenance and security to “best-in-class” standards.
7. Integrate stormwater and greenspace management through the use of natural, multi-functional stormwater solutions.
8. Increase Atlanta’s tree canopy to meet the goal of 40% coverage through a “Green City” initiative.

BUILD CAPACITY

9. Identify a sustainable greenspace funding program, including funding sources dedicated to growing and managing the greenspace system.
10. Increase city resources devoted to greenspace planning, design, and implementation.
11. Build public and private partnerships to grow and manage the greenspace system.
12. Initiate a communications and outreach program to inform and involve the Atlanta community in implementing Project Greenspace.

PRIORITY GREENSPACE NEEDS

Greenspaces

- A major outdoor special events venue
- Chatahoochee River Greenway (citywide park)
- Community parks in northwestern and eastern Atlanta
- Neighborhood parks or other greenspaces to serve neighborhoods more than one-half mile from publicly accessible greenspaces
- Centrally located athletic complexes
- Recreation centers in underserved areas

Greenspace Connections

- Greenways
- Multi-use trails

1

PROJECT GREENSPACE PURPOSE AND NEEDS

PURPOSE OF PROJECT GREENSPACE

Atlanta's Project Greenspace establishes a framework for a citywide system of high quality open spaces consisting of parks, **natural areas**, **civic spaces**, and connecting **greenways**, streetscapes, and trails. This system is essential to Atlanta's quality of life, economy, environment, and sense of community.

There is a broad consensus among Atlanta's residents regarding the importance of greenspace resources. As a vital and integral part of the City's fabric, **greenspace** should be accessible to all citizens, provide a focus for community life, and perform vital environmental (e.g., natural resource habitat) and social (e.g., recreation and gathering places) functions.

Greenspace is also critically important to the City's economy. For example, in the 10 years following development of Centennial Park adjacent land values soared from \$2 to nearly \$200 per square foot—close to a one hundred fold increase. These increased land values are reflected in the City's tax digest.

Project Greenspace is an initiative to develop a world-class open space system in Atlanta that connects people to parks, recreational facilities, plazas, streetscapes, greenways, and natural areas.

TERMS

Natural Areas: properties maintained in a natural condition to protect environmentally sensitive land and/or resources (e.g., wildlife habitat, forest cover, water quality, wetlands). Natural areas may be either publicly owned in fee simple or protected through a conservation easement. Significant natural areas should be surrounded by a protective buffer (a minimum width of 75-100' is recommended).

Civic Spaces: areas within the City's fabric that help to define Atlanta's community identity and visual image (e.g., plazas, squares, garden spots, and streetscapes). They provide places for public gatherings, accommodate pedestrian activity, and/or beautify the City through the provision of landscaping or public art.

Greenways: a type of greenspace connection sufficiently wide to provide multiple benefits, such as environmental resource protection (e.g., river and stream corridors, protection of water quality, stormwater management, and/or recreation such as multi-use trails). Includes greenway lands and easements acquired by the Atlanta Department of Watershed Management under the Consent Decree.

Atlanta ranks very low in the overall amount of greenspace and the percentage of public parkland relative to its population compared with other major U.S. cities. The City's population is expected to grow 62% by the year 2030. Overall population density is also expected to increase, with the greatest growth occurring in the central and eastern portions of the City. As the population increases, it is expected to become older and more diverse.¹ This growth will increase the demand for parks, recreational facilities, and other greenspace while magnifying pressures to develop remaining vacant land.

New initiatives such as the BeltLine demonstrate the continuing importance of greenspace to Atlanta's future. The BeltLine will transform a 22-mile rail corridor loop around the heart of Atlanta into a continuous trail system with over 1,200 acres of new greenspace, improvements to approximately 700 acres of existing greenspace, quality mixed-use development, and transit service. This initiative highlights the role that greenspace can play in sustaining quality of life and economic development.

While the BeltLine is an exciting, visionary project that has received national recognition, it will not by itself meet Atlanta's future greenspace needs. Project Greenspace articulates a vision, strategic framework, and action agenda to create a world-class [greenspace system](#) to serve the needs of the Atlanta community through the year 2030 and beyond.

Figure 1: Greenspace Functions and Benefits

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Preserves natural resources and native habitats
Reduces flooding by absorbing stormwater
Improves water quality by filtering pollutants
Cleans air by filtering pollution and producing oxygen
Cools the urban landscape, reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions
COMMUNITY HEALTH
Promotes recreation, exercise, and physical activity
Reduces incidence of chronic diseases such as asthma, cardiovascular disease, and obesity
Brings people into contact with nature
Provides places for people to meet others
Provides a respite from urban congestion
A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
Improves quality of life, thus attracting businesses and increasing economic activity
Generates revenues from tourism and events
Provides access to local retail areas via walking and biking
Increases property values
Lowers costs of energy, healthcare, and "gray infrastructure" (e.g., engineered stormwater systems)

¹ Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey as well as population projections developed by the City of Atlanta were used in this analysis. Additional demographic information was obtained from Claritas, Inc. See the *State of the Atlanta's Greenspace Report* for more detailed information concerning age, ethnicity, and household income.

Greenspace: outdoor spaces that provide the environmental, community, and economic benefits identified in Figure 1. Examples include parks, environmentally sensitive lands, urban greenspaces (e.g., streetscapes and plazas), and recreational facilities such as athletic fields and recreation centers.

Greenspace System: a citywide network of greenspaces and connections comprised of three general categories of resources that may sometimes overlap: parks and recreational facilities, natural resource areas, and urban greenspace.

PROJECT GREENSPACE PLANNING PROCESS

The Project Greenspace process has provided multiple opportunities for City agencies, residents, and stakeholders to articulate issues, opportunities, and needs related to Atlanta's greenspace. In addition to public input, Project Greenspace included extensive data collection, interim background reports, GIS mapping, and analysis. This combination of community input and analysis led to the development of the vision, goals, and actions described in this Summary Report.

PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

- Advisory Task Force
- Stakeholder Interviews (over 80 persons with particular interest in Atlanta's greenspace)
- Focus Group Meetings (e.g., nonprofit land conservation organizations, private recreational providers, developer interests)
- Statistically Valid Community Survey
- Public Forums (three series of public workshops conducted at different locations in the City)

PHASE...

1 Project Initiation and Community Outreach Plan

2 Data Collection/Inventory and Analysis

3 Plan Development

4 Strategic Implementation Program

5 Draft and Final Plan Preparation

KEY GREENSPACE THEMES AND ISSUES

The following common themes and issues emerged from the public input and data analysis:

1. Atlanta lacks sufficient acreage of parkland and other greenspaces.

Studies have repeatedly found the City of Atlanta to have less greenspace than other cities of comparable size and density using accepted benchmarks such as park acreage per 1,000 residents. Many citizens and stakeholders agree that Atlanta needs to increase the amount of dedicated greenspace significantly above present levels. Moreover, existing parks and other greenspaces are not equitably distributed throughout the City, are often not readily accessible to the diverse populations they serve, and are not well connected.

2. The provision of recreational facilities and programs could be improved to better meet citizens' needs.

Atlanta's population has diverse needs for recreational facilities and programs that are not being fully met by the City's existing parks. Many community parks are undersized and have overlapping service areas while other parts of the City have little access to needed recreational facilities. While the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA) has been developing new recreational facilities in various parks, recent budget cuts have impacted the Department, the supply of certain types of facilities (e.g., athletic fields) is still not adequate to meet needs, and the existing facilities could be better distributed throughout the City.

3. Maintenance and public safety in Atlanta's parks need continuing improvement.

DPRCA has made significant progress in improving park maintenance, and the [Park Opportunity Bond](#) provided significant funding to improve the condition of existing park facilities and grounds. DPRCA has also taken steps to improve park safety. However, this progress has been threatened by recent budget cuts. Citizens consistently identify park maintenance and security as top priority issues.

4. Parks are a component of a comprehensive greenspace system that provides many benefits for Atlanta's citizens.

While much previous planning focused on the City's parks, a major opportunity exists to integrate parks into a larger greenspace network providing multiple environmental, social, and economic benefits. This network could include resources that are not currently part of the park inventory (e.g., lands managed by other city departments or non-city agencies and institutions that function as greenspace) or may not typically be considered greenspace (e.g., urban [streetscapes](#), [plazas](#), and squares). Values such as high quality design, public art, and cultural heritage can be expressed in the greenspace system.

[Park Opportunity Bond](#): a fund created by the City of Atlanta in 2005 to improve the condition of existing parks and recreational facilities.

[Streetscapes](#): non-vehicular spaces within and adjacent to the rights-of-way of public roadways. They include canopy tree and landscape plantings, sidewalks, and street furniture such as benches, bike racks, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. Streetscapes vary in design and character according to their context (e.g., neighborhood, commercial district) and function.

[Plazas](#): typically associated with commercial retail and office developments or high-rise residential buildings. Plazas create space within dense developments for shade trees, sitting areas, fountains, and public art.

5. Greenspace is a major contributor to Atlanta's economy.

Based on numerous national studies, the positive economic impacts of greenspace include increased property values, economic activity, and reduced costs for energy, healthcare, and engineered infrastructure. Atlanta's New Century Economic Development Plan identifies parks and greenspace as an important component of the City's Economic Development Program.

6. Environmental resources would benefit from improved stewardship.

Protection of environmental resources and processes is an essential function performed by the greenspace system. Atlanta prides itself on being a "green city" and has regulations in place to protect environmental resources such as trees, stream corridors, and floodplains. However, human impacts on these resources have increased—and will continue to increase—as the City's population grows. Examples of these impacts include loss of tree canopy, invasive species, and stream bank erosion.

7. Roads and utilities are impacting greenspace resources.

Citizens and stakeholders identify traffic congestion and degraded air quality caused by a transportation system designed almost exclusively for cars as a major citywide issue. The water quality impacts of Atlanta's combined sewer overflow system have necessitated \$3.9 billion in engineering improvements, as well as the comparatively modest expenditure of \$25 million for greenway acquisition by the Department of Watershed Management.

8. Parks and other greenspaces could play greater roles as community gathering places.

Parks and greenspaces provide places of "coming together" for the community through special events (e.g., festivals) or other, more informal activities, such as community gardens and neighborhood gatherings. A specific need exists for an outdoor venue that can host major festivals, concerts, and other special events. Community gathering places (e.g., plazas) are also needed at smaller scales, for example in neighborhoods and commercial districts.

9. Population growth is magnifying the need to address park and greenspace issues.

Population projections by the City indicate that Atlanta's population will nearly double in size between 2000 and 2030. This growth will accentuate needs for more parks and greenspace, recreational facilities and programs, and improved environmental resource protection. Of particular concern is the trend of high-density residential developments that lack usable open space coupled with the anticipated influx of new residents who are accustomed to (and will demand) quality parks and greenspaces.

10. Development and redevelopment pressures provide the opportunity to "grow" Atlanta's greenspace.

Atlanta's existing regulations do not provide the tools needed to meet the greenspace needs of residents of new developments. However, the City has the opportunity to meet these needs through improved development regulations and processes that incentivize the dedication of usable, accessible open space. Redevelopment of brownfield and other previously developed properties provides another opportunity to create new parks and greenspace, for example by establishing greenspace as a basic infrastructure need equivalent to roads and utilities in Tax Allocation District (TAD) projects. The BeltLine is an example of how a TAD can be used to integrate new development, greenspace, and transit.

11. The city’s operational and management processes related to greenspace need to be strengthened and better coordinated.

Decisions affecting greenspace resources are made at many different levels within city government, often with limited coordination and without the benefit of a unified direction or framework for decision-making. The interdepartmental “Green Team” that meets on a regular basis to coordinate on greenspace acquisition and development issues represents a significant step in the right direction. More progress is needed to build capacity to plan, leverage, coordinate, acquire, develop, provide technical support for, and maintain the greenspace system.

12. Funding for Atlanta’s parks and greenspaces needs to be significantly increased.

Citizens and stakeholders identified increased funding as the single greatest need to address issues such as the lack of sufficient parkland and recreational facilities, maintenance needs, and staffing shortfalls. While the DPRCA was successful in securing increased departmental funding in the recent past, the level of expenditure is still well below that of other cities with successful park systems. In addition, the City’s fiscal situation has been severely impacted by the economic recession. Looking towards the future, additional resources—including a dedicated funding source or sources that are sustainable over the long term—are needed if Atlanta is to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system.



Home Park; Photo Source: Dee Merriam

COMMUNITY SURVEY

A statistically valid Community Survey was conducted (via mail and telephone) to help determine citizens' needs for future parks, other greenspace, recreation facilities, programs, and services in Atlanta. Major findings include:

82% of respondent households had visited City of Atlanta parks during the previous year.

49% of respondents indicated that there are sufficient parks and greenspaces within walking distance of their residences, **43%** that there are not sufficient greenspaces within walking distance, and **8%** were “not sure.”

81% of respondents indicated that it is very important to use greenways for environmental protection, **75%** that it is very important to use greenways for walking/biking/nature trails, and **63%** that it is very important to use greenways for playgrounds and picnic areas.

Respondents ranked walking and biking trails, small **neighborhood parks**, large **community parks**, and nature centers and trails as the most important type of **parks and recreational facilities**.

Respondents ranked special events/festivals (**64%**), adult fitness and wellness programs (**55%**), nature programs (**47%**), and education/life skills programs (**43%**) as the most important type of recreation programs.

84% of respondents would either vote in favor (**62%**) or might vote in favor (**22%**) of a bond referendum to fund the types of parks, trails, greenspace, and recreation facilities that are most important to their household. Only **3%** would vote against a referendum (**13%** were “not sure”).

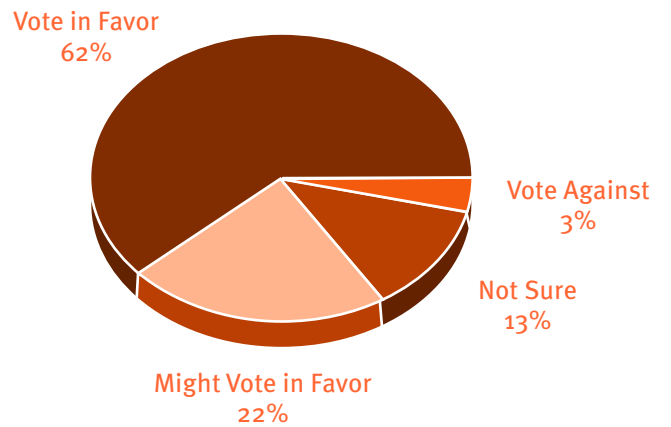
TERMS

Neighborhood Parks: serve local informal recreation needs and create a sense of neighborhood identity. Amenities may include picnic shelters, open fields, play grounds, basketball and tennis courts, or wooded natural areas. Neighborhood parks are recommended to be 5-10 acres, accessible for pedestrians and bikers, and include 1/2 mile (10 minute walk) service area.

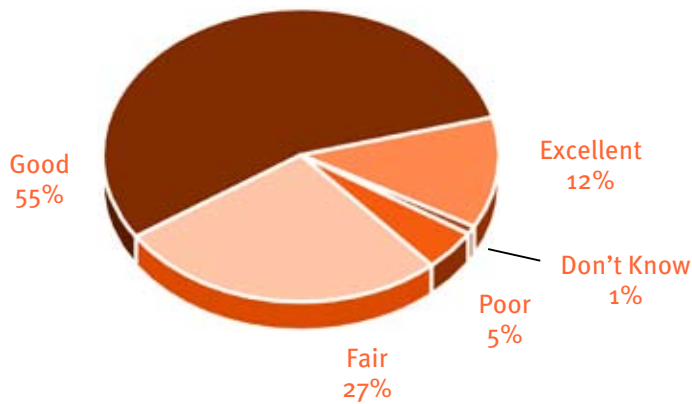
Households Visiting Parks in Previous Year



Percentage of Households that Might Vote for a Bond Referendum



Physical Conditions of Parks



Community Parks: parks that meet the community-based recreational needs of multiple neighborhoods, including athletic complexes, trails, playgrounds, etc. Community parks may also preserve unique lands, natural features, and open space. Community parks are recommended to be a minimum of 35 acres (65 acres for sites with athletic complexes) and serve a 2-mile area.

Parks and Recreational Facilities: city parkland and parks, open space, and recreational facilities owned and managed by other entities.

2

GREENSPACE PRINCIPLES AND GOALS



Centennial Olympic Park; Photo Source: Dee Merriam

The citizen mandate is clear: Atlantans want to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system. Greenspace is essential to Atlanta’s quality of life, environment, economy, and its very ability to survive and prosper in the 21st century. What is less clear is how this vision is to be achieved given the pressures of population growth, the scarcity and high cost of land in a predominantly developed city, and limited fiscal resources. Nevertheless, the potential is vast if the community and its leaders come together in a steadfast commitment to creating the greenspace system. This major challenge will not be met overnight. Rather, it will require coordinated action by many participants inside and outside of city government over a period of years.

This chapter establishes planning and design principles and greenspace goals to guide action to create the future greenspace system.

PLANNING AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Connectivity Greenspaces should be connected to each other and to people.

Equity The greenspace system should be distributed throughout Atlanta and be readily available to persons of all social and economic backgrounds and abilities.

Accessibility Greenspaces should be located within a pleasant 1/2-mile walk from home or work.

Economic Development The greenspace system should promote economic development and development should incorporate greenspaces.

Sustainability The greenspace system should integrate sustainable planning and design practices, including the conservation of resources for future generations of Atlantans.

Multi-Functionality The greenspace system should provide multiple environmental, recreation and health, community-building, and economic functions and benefits.

Stormwater management areas that conserve natural resources, encourage people to walk, provide places to meet, and reduce the costs of engineered infrastructure are an example of the multi-functionality principle at work.

Community As Atlanta’s “front yard,” the greenspace system should promote the City’s shared identity and sense of community by providing places to gather and participate in outdoor activities.

Biodiversity The greenspace system should maintain the health and diversity of natural communities within the developed fabric of the City, including a healthy and robust tree canopy.

History, Culture, and Public Art The greenspace system should incorporate history, culture, and public art and connect Atlanta’s rich heritage to the present and the future.

Public Health The greenspace system should promote the health of Atlantans, by providing attractive routes and destinations for walking and biking.

Design Excellence The greenspace system should integrate innovative design as a core value.

Image The greenspace system should contribute to Atlanta’s image as a “world-class” city.

GREENSPACE GOALS

The goals are derived from past greenspace initiatives in Atlanta, citizen input received during the planning process, and the planning and design principles. These goals address five general topics:

Greenspace System

Parks and Recreation

Natural Resources

Community

Implementation

Participants at the September 2009 Project Greenspace Open House meetings were asked to participate in an informal survey ranking the following eleven goals in order of priority. The top three goals (in order of importance) from the open house series were:

1. Establish sustainable funding sources for acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks
2. Increase greenspace acreage
3. Maintain parks and greenspaces

Greenspace System

GOAL 1: Significantly increase the acreage of greenspace and improve its distribution throughout Atlanta by meeting the following criteria:

- Protect a minimum of 20% of the City's land area as greenspace
- Provide a minimum of 10 acres of public parkland per 1,000 residents
- Provide publicly accessible greenspace within ½ mile walk of every resident

According to research by the Trust for Public Land, in 2006 parkland comprised 4.5% of Atlanta's land area and amounted to 7.9 acres per 1,000 residents. Based on more recent population estimates and parkland acreage figures, Atlanta has 7.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This compares to averages for 60 cities surveyed of 9.8% of total land area and 18.8 acres per 1,000 residents. Goal 1 establishes targets for increasing the supply of dedicated greenspace in Atlanta over time. The 20% target is to be met with greenspace permanently protected as public parks, greenways, and natural areas, etc., either through ownership by the City, other governmental entities, or nonprofit organizations, or by [conservation easement](#).

TERMS

Conservation Easement: a restriction placed on a piece of property to protect its natural resources and limit its development potential. A conservation easement limits the type or extent of development on the property while allowing the landowner to retain ownership of the land; they may or may not provide for public access. Conservation easements are either voluntarily donated or sold by the landowner to an organization (e.g., a land trust or the City).

Greenspace Connections: linear corridors that connect people to greenspaces and greenspaces to each other. Examples include: greenways, man-made corridors (e.g., rail and utility rights-of-way), trails, bike lanes, and complete streets.

Multi-Use Trails: paved pathways wide enough (12-20') to accommodate a variety of recreational activities (e.g., walking, jogging, biking, in-line skating). Multi-use trails connect neighborhoods, parks and recreation, and other destinations. Multi-use trails may be located within greenway corridors, parks, private developments, and along streets, rail lines, or within utility right-of-ways.

Complete Streets: streets designed to provide safe and attractive multi-modal access for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. The Connect Atlanta Plan recommends priorities for the development of complete street improvements.

Of the City’s overall greenspace supply, a minimum of 10 acres of public parkland—land managed for park purposes by city, county, state, or federal government—should be provided for every 1,000 residents of Atlanta. To ensure equitable access to the greenspace system, every resident should be located within a ½ mile walk of a park or other greenspace that is open to the public.

GOAL 2: Establish connections between greenspaces as part of the greenspace system, including greenway corridors, multi-use trails, and complete streets.

To function as a system and maximize its benefits for the community, Atlanta’s greenspace must be interconnected. Respondents to the Community Survey ranked walking and biking trails as their number one recreational facility need. The effectiveness and impact of Atlanta’s

greenspace system can be dramatically increased by incorporating greenways, multi-use trails and complete streets that accommodate bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists.

Healthy river and stream corridors absorb and cleanse stormwater runoff and provide natural habitat. They can also provide opportunities for walking, biking, and passive recreation through sensitive development of trails and related facilities.

There are numerous models across the country of complete streets with street trees and landscape plantings, vegetation used for stormwater treatment, and well-designed pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities. Recommended by the City’s Connect Atlanta Plan, a complete street network can link major greenspaces and extend the greenspace system into neighborhoods, office/retail areas, etc.

Figure 2: Greenspace System Targets Summary

Greenspace Type	Target	Existing Condition (2007)	Future Target	Deficit (approx)
Greenspace ²	Protect minimum of 20% of the City’s land area as greenspace	Approx. 7.5% (6,384 Acres)	20% (17,093 acres)	10,709 Acres
Publicly Accessible Parkland ³	Provide a minimum of 10 Acres/1,000 Residents	7.5 Acres/ 1,000 Residents (4,046 Acres)	10 Acres/ 1,000 Residents (7,830 Acres)	3,784 Acres
Environmentally Sensitive Land ⁴	Protect at least 75% through ownership and/or development regulations	47% (8,677 Acres)	75% (13,876 Acres)	5,199 Acres

² State of Atlanta’s Greenspace Report, GIS Data. Existing greenspaces include: city, state, and federal parks, cemeteries, golf courses, public and private schools, and consent decree greenways.

³ State of Atlanta’s Greenspace Report, GIS Data. Publicly accessible parkland includes city, state, and federal parks.

⁴ State of Atlanta’s Greenspace Report, GIS Data. Environmentally sensitive land includes permanently protected land and land protected by regulations and ordinances.

Parks and Recreation

GOAL 3: Provide the highest quality of recreational facilities and programs within the greenspace system to meet citizens' needs.

Atlantans expressed strong needs for recreational facilities and programs in the Community Survey compared to other cities in which similar surveys have been conducted. DPRCA provides a range of facilities and programs in the City's parks and is actively improving them to meet customers' needs. In addition, offerings are available to the public from providers such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, churches, private health clubs, and youth and athletic leagues. The Needs Assessment Report identifies level of service standards for recreational facilities as a guide for planning and programming to meet the needs of Atlanta's current and future population. It is not intended that all needs for recreational facilities and programs be met by the City. Rather, Project Greenspace recommends that the City continue to build and strengthen partnerships with a variety of public and private sector providers.



Tennis Courts; Photo Source: WRT

GOAL 4: Maintain parks and recreational facilities to “best-in-class” standards and ensure that parks and other greenspaces are safe and secure.

DPRCA has established more rigorous operations and maintenance standards and has made significant improvements to maintenance quality and facility conditions. Well-maintained parks are safer, and DPRCA has installed structural safety equipment (improved lighting and surveillance cameras) and taken other steps to increase safety in selected parks. However, this progress is threatened by recent budget cuts. ASAP (Act to Save Atlanta's Parks), the 2009 initiative of PARC (Parks Atlanta Rescue Coalition), calls on the City to ensure the quality of its parks by committing dedicated property tax funding to operations and maintenance. ASAP also proposes actions such as a visible security presence (e.g., “park rangers”), additional structural safety equipment, and increased activity programming to make the parks safer.



John Howell Park; Photo Source: City of Atlanta

Natural Resources

GOAL 5: Protect environmentally sensitive lands as part of the greenspace system.

- Protect at least 75% of sensitive lands via ownership and/or development regulations
- Manage sensitive lands to maintain their environmental values

Protection of environmental resources such as waterways, floodplains, and wetlands—and the essential “life-support” services they provide—is a key function performed by the greenspace system.

City regulations prohibit construction within the 100-year floodplain and (unless a variance is granted) within the 75-foot stream buffer. Other environmentally sensitive lands are preserved within parks and other protected greenspaces. However, sensitive lands that are privately owned and lack regulatory protection can be developed. Also, present regulations do not necessarily guarantee that sensitive lands will be protected in the future. Goal 5 promotes sensitive land protection using techniques such as conservation (cluster) subdivisions, conservation easements or donations, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), strengthened environmental (e.g., regulation of invasive species) and development regulations, and acquisition.

Regulatory protection or ownership alone is not sufficient to maintain environmental quality. Environmentally sensitive lands must be managed to maintain their integrity through approaches such as habitat restoration, invasive species control, and limiting the impacts of engineered infrastructure. Outreach to private landowners to encourage land preservation and provide technical support and oversight for land management is essential.

GOAL 6: Protect and restore Atlanta’s tree canopy in order to meet a target of 40% coverage.

Atlanta’s lush tree canopy contributes to quality of life, is a source of community pride and identity, and provides environmental and economic services such as air quality improvement, cooler ambient temperatures, reduction of the heat island effect, lower energy consumption, reduced stormwater runoff, and increased property values. While Atlanta has long been considered a “City in a Forest,” Trees Atlanta estimates that over 60% of the City’s tree canopy has been lost since the 1970s due to factors such as attrition and development. In 2005, the City’s tree canopy coverage was estimated at 26%, a figure that is higher than other major U.S. cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York, but falls behind Boston (29%) and Washington, DC (39%). The 2005 Atlanta Parks System Agenda set a goal to increase the City’s overall tree canopy coverage from 26% to 40%, which is consistent with targets set by other U.S. cities. While Atlanta has a strong tree protection ordinance in place that has stemmed the loss of trees, additional replanting efforts—and a commitment to improving the maintenance and care of both new trees and the existing urban forest—will be needed to realize the goal.



Street Tree Canopy; Photo Source: WRT

Community

GOAL 7: Promote the use of greenspaces as community gathering places, including a major outdoor events site.

Greenspaces provide places of “coming together” that reinforce Atlantans’ shared identity and sense of community. The Community Survey identified special events/festivals as the highest priority recreational program need. Piedmont Park, the primary current site and home of the Dogwood Festival and Atlanta Arts Festival, has reached its capacity for hosting large events. Over 13 proposals for significant events were turned down or truncated in 2006 because of the lack of a suitable site. Fort McPherson’s re-development provides an opportunity to meet this need.

In addition to one or more large outdoor event sites, there is a need for a variety of smaller scale community gathering places to accommodate local events, group and family gatherings, and informal social interaction. These functions can be accommodated in community and neighborhood parks, as well as outdoor spaces in commercial districts.



Piedmont Park; Photo Source: Piedmont Park Conservancy

GOAL 8: Integrate Atlanta’s history, cultural heritage, and the arts into the greenspace system to express community identity.

Atlanta has a rich historic and cultural heritage, a lively visual and performing arts community, and an active public art program. Examples of historic resources that could be incorporated into the greenspace system include Native American sites, frontier sites, Civil War battle sites, historic transportation corridors, and sites representing the development of the African-American community and the pivotal role Atlanta played in the Civil Rights movement. Visitors and residents alike have a great interest in Atlanta’s history, and historic resources both promote economic activity through heritage tourism and are a source of community pride and identity. The greenspace system can also incorporate the visual arts through public art installations and performing arts through performances in community gathering places.



Arthur Langford Sculpture; Photo Source: City of Atlanta

Implementation

GOAL 9: Establish sustainable sources of funding for greenspace acquisition, development, and management.

Atlanta has historically ranked low compared to other major cities in per capita expenditures on parks—a situation reflected in the relatively low amount of city parkland and magnified by recent budget cuts. Increased funding is needed to acquire the additional greenspace and develop the recreational facilities and programs needed to serve Atlanta’s growing population, as well as to maintain existing and new greenspaces to the quality standards required of a world-class system. The 2009 PARC ASAP initiative identifies dedicated funding for land acquisition, park development, and operations and maintenance as the key priority (along with improved safety) for city parks.

GOAL 10: Promote public/private partnerships to grow and manage the greenspace system.

While the City of Atlanta will take the lead in creating the greenspace system, individual system components will be established and managed through action by a wide variety of participants (governmental agencies, nonprofits, institutions, foundations, developers, landowners, etc.). Project Greenspace provides a framework for the City to work with and leverage the resources of partners such as the Atlanta Housing Authority, Atlanta Development Authority, Beltline, Inc, park conservancies, Boy’s and Girl’s Club, and YMCA. Although there are management issues to address, open space and recreational facilities on school grounds are an important community resource and could be incorporated into the greenspace system through a collaborative partnership with Atlanta Public Schools. Stormwater management and water quality initiatives provide opportunities for partnerships to achieve Project Greenspace goals such as establishing greenways along stream corridors.

GOAL 11: Promote and coordinate the dedication of greenspace within new development and redevelopment projects.

Development and redevelopment generated by the City’s population growth offer a tremendous opportunity to establish greenspace through regulations and incentives. Public open spaces (e.g., well-designed community commons and urban plazas) have been shown to improve the profitability of development projects, a “win-win” scenario that creates value for developers while providing the environmental, community, and economic benefits of greenspace. The City’s existing development regulations include provisions for dedicated open space; however, as presently constituted these provisions do not promote well-designed, functional greenspace. In addition to private developments, city-sponsored development and redevelopment projects should incorporate greenspace as a basic infrastructure need equivalent to roads and utilities.

Development regulations and incentives should be designed to implement the Project Greenspace targets of protecting 20% of the land area and providing 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Given Atlanta’s average household size of 2.3 persons, the latter target translates to .023 acres per residential unit. Provision of publicly accessible greenspace becomes increasingly critical as residential densities exceed four units per acre.

3

GREENSPACE SYSTEM CONCEPT

SYSTEM BUILDING BLOCKS

The physical expression of the greenspace system in Atlanta's landscape will be complex, encompassing elements ranging from large parks, natural areas, and greenway corridors to community gardens, urban streetscapes, and plazas. The system can broadly be characterized as consisting of greenspaces and connections. Greenspaces are outdoor spaces that provide the environmental, community, and economic benefits identified in Chapter 1. Connections are linear corridors that connect people to greenspaces and greenspaces to each other.

To provide a starting point for defining what this system might be, the Project Greenspace planning process included an inventory and analysis of existing and potential greenspace resources in the City that can be mapped at a citywide scale. These resources include:

Existing Greenspaces (Figure 3)

- Atlanta City Parks
- Other Public Parks
- Consent Decree Greenways
- Cemeteries and Golf Courses
- Institutional Open Space

Undeveloped Lands (Figure 4)

- Lands of High Environmental Value
- Lands of Low to Moderate Environmental Value

Existing and Potential Greenspace Connections (Figure 5)

- Multi-Use Trails
- Arterial Streets
- Bike Lanes
- Electric Utility Corridors

The State of the Atlanta's Greenspace Report provides a detailed analysis of these different categories of greenspace. The following provides an overview of each category.

TERMS

Citywide Parks: major park sites that draw users from around the City. Citywide parks contain a combination of passive and active recreational facilities and natural features and are often based on a specific scenic or recreational opportunity (e.g., major festival site, arts center). Citywide parks are recommended to be a minimum of 100 acres and serve the entire City.

Special Facilities Parks: park sites that contain amenities and facilities not typically associated with parks, such as historic cemeteries. They can also include stand-alone athletic complexes, recreation centers, large event venues, and community gardens. Existing special facilities include Oakland Cemetery, Roseland Cemetery, the City's emergency shelter, Adamsville Recreation Center, Avery Park, and the Inman Park Trolley Barn.

Garden Spots: very small landscaped areas (e.g., traffic islands or medians) that generally do not contain amenities. Garden spots are typically maintained as drive-by landscaped gateways to Atlanta's neighborhoods and commercial districts and contribute to the City's image. Garden spots are suitable locations for memorials, fountains, or public art. The recommended size for garden spots varies, and there is no applicable service area recommendation.

Existing Greenspaces

Atlanta City Parks

Managed by DPRCA, the city parks inventory includes seven different types of parks. [Citywide parks](#) (typically 100 acres or more in size) draw users from a wide area inside and outside city limits; examples include Chastain and Piedmont Parks. Community parks support organized programming and facilities such as recreation centers, pools, and athletic complexes that serve residents within about a 2-mile radius. The recommended minimum size is 35 acres, although only nine of the 38 existing community parks meet or exceed this standard. Serving local informal recreational needs, neighborhood parks have a recommended minimum size of 10 acres and a service area radius of ½ mile to provide walking access for nearby residents. Again, many existing neighborhood parks do not meet the minimum size standard. Moreover, approximately 59% of Atlanta’s residents do not live within a ½ mile distance of a neighborhood or other type of park via sidewalks.

Other park types in the City of Atlanta parks inventory include [special facilities parks](#), [garden spots](#), dog parks, and nature preserves. The different park types are described in detail in the Project Greenspace Technical Report. In 2007, the City’s parkland totaled 4,046 acres or about 7.5 acres per 1,000 residents.

Other Public Parks

In addition to the city parks, public parkland in Atlanta includes federal, state, and county parks. Centennial Olympic Park is a highly visible example in downtown Atlanta managed by the State of Georgia. Several National Park Service sites (Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site; Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area) are located within or just outside of Atlanta’s boundaries.

Consent Decree Greenways

Totaling approximately 700 acres, these properties include land and conservation easements along river and stream corridors acquired by the Atlanta Department of Watershed Management per the 1998 Combined Sewer Overflow Consent Decree. Together with city and other public parks located along waterways, these properties provide the beginnings of greenway corridors. Typically, up to 10% of a site may be developed for public access.

Cemeteries, Golf Courses, and Institutional Open Space

Non-city owned properties such as golf courses, cemeteries, public school sites, and institutional campuses provide both existing and potential greenspace benefits. As examples, existing outdoor spaces on campuses can function as valuable greenspace in developed parts of the City while joint planning for schools and parks could provide opportunities to utilize surplus lands for public recreation. However, permanent protection of properties such as private golf courses and institutional open spaces is not assured.

Undeveloped Lands

Undeveloped lands (see Figure 4) mapped for Project Greenspace include lands classified as having high environmental value and lands classified as having low to moderate environmental value. Such lands can function as greenspaces or greenspace connections if incorporated into the greenspace system.

Lands of High Environmental Value

Examples of lands of high environmental value include rivers and streams plus the 75-foot buffer required by city regulations; floodplains and wetlands; and steep slope areas. Based on available GIS data⁵ and excluding overlapping features, 21% of the City's land area (about 18,500 acres) is considered to be environmentally sensitive land. Of this total, 47% is permanently protected or protected by regulation (i.e., floodplain, 75'-buffer, and wetlands) and 53% is privately owned and can be developed. Permanent protection of such land provides a significant opportunity to expand the City's greenspace system.

Lands of Low to Moderate Environmental Value

Based on GIS analysis by the Georgia Institute of Technology, lands in this category have comparatively lower value than lands in the first category when measured by factors related to water quality, forest cover, and connectivity. Nevertheless, they could offer strategic opportunities to augment Atlanta's greenspace system (e.g., by filling a gap in a greenspace connection or expanding an existing park). Undeveloped lands classified as having low to moderate environmental value total approximately 1,700 acres.

⁵ Greenspace Acquisition Support System Report, Georgia Institute of Technology Center for GIS (2002) and updated analysis conducted by the Project Greenspace consultant team. The environmental characteristics of undeveloped lands are described in more detail in the State of Atlanta's Greenspace Report.

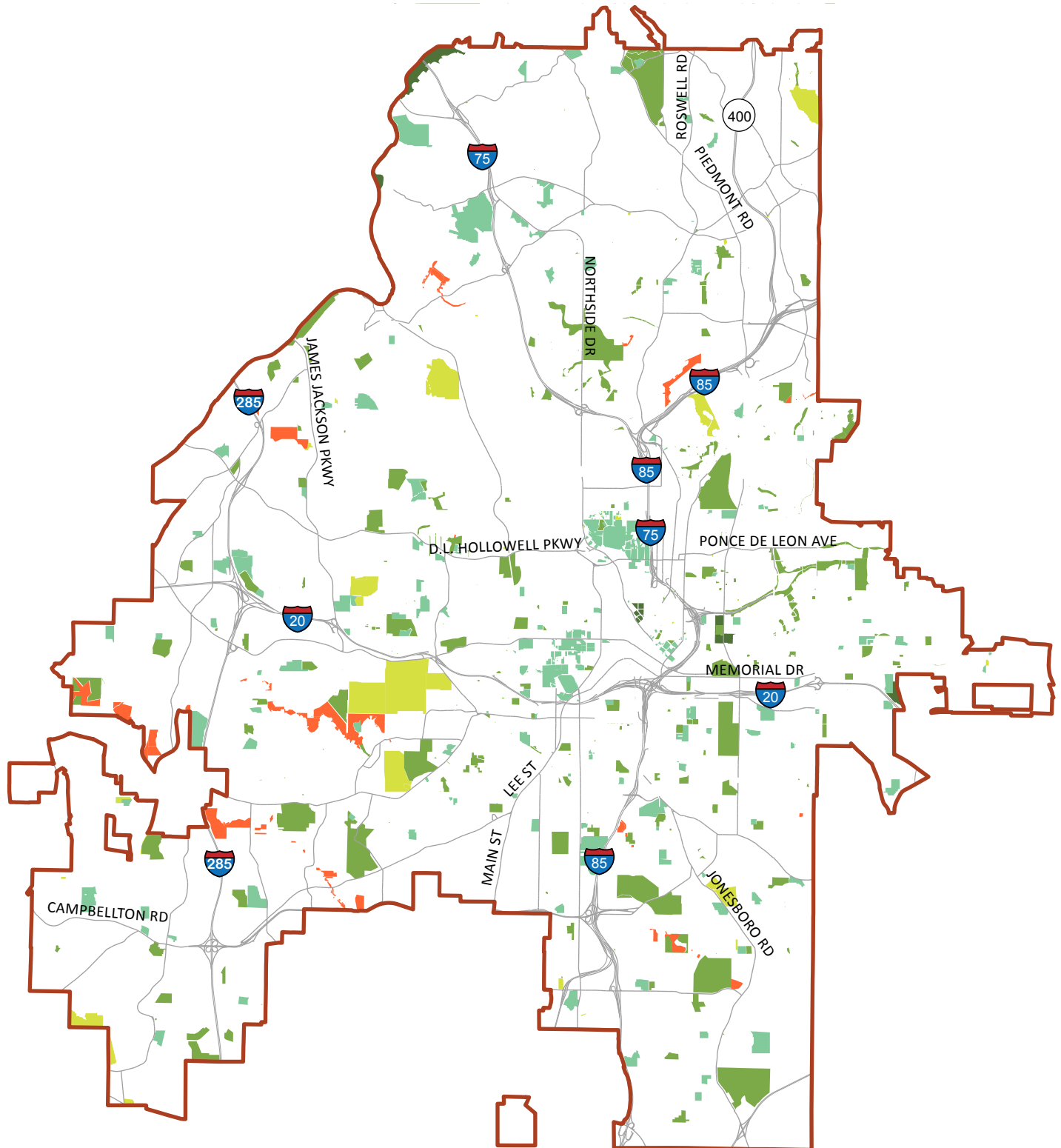
Existing and Potential Greenspace Connections

Greenspace connections are vital components of the greenspace system that can extend its effective coverage while providing opportunities for environmental protection, recreation, and transportation. Existing and potential greenspace connections shown on Figure 5 include multi-use trails, arterial streets, bike lanes, and utility corridors.

- **Multi-use trails** are designed for use by walkers, runners, and bikers. The City is developing a citywide network of multi-use trails in partnership with the PATH Foundation. Figure 5 shows trails that are either existing, under development, or planned in the future. The network includes the BeltLine Loop Trail system under development by Atlanta BeltLine Inc.
- **Arterial streets** in Atlanta are designed primarily for vehicular movement and are typically not safe or pleasant for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. However, they have the potential to function as connections within the greenspace system if provisions are made for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users, particularly if "green" features such as street tree plantings are included. The Connect Atlanta Plan recommends priority corridors for such complete street improvements.
- **Bike lanes** are a type of complete street improvement that can be provided on existing streets through pavement marking and signage. Figure 5 shows short-term and long-term priorities for development of a bike lane network throughout Atlanta. This bicycle network is based on recommendations from past corridor projects, community redevelopment plans, and neighborhood master plans. Most of the designated bike lanes are located on arterial streets.
- **Utility corridors** have the potential to be valuable connections in Atlanta's greenspace system. Several of the longest utility corridors (in particular, high-tension electric lines) cross the entire city and contain significant amounts of open space.



Chastain Path; Photo Source: PATH Foundation

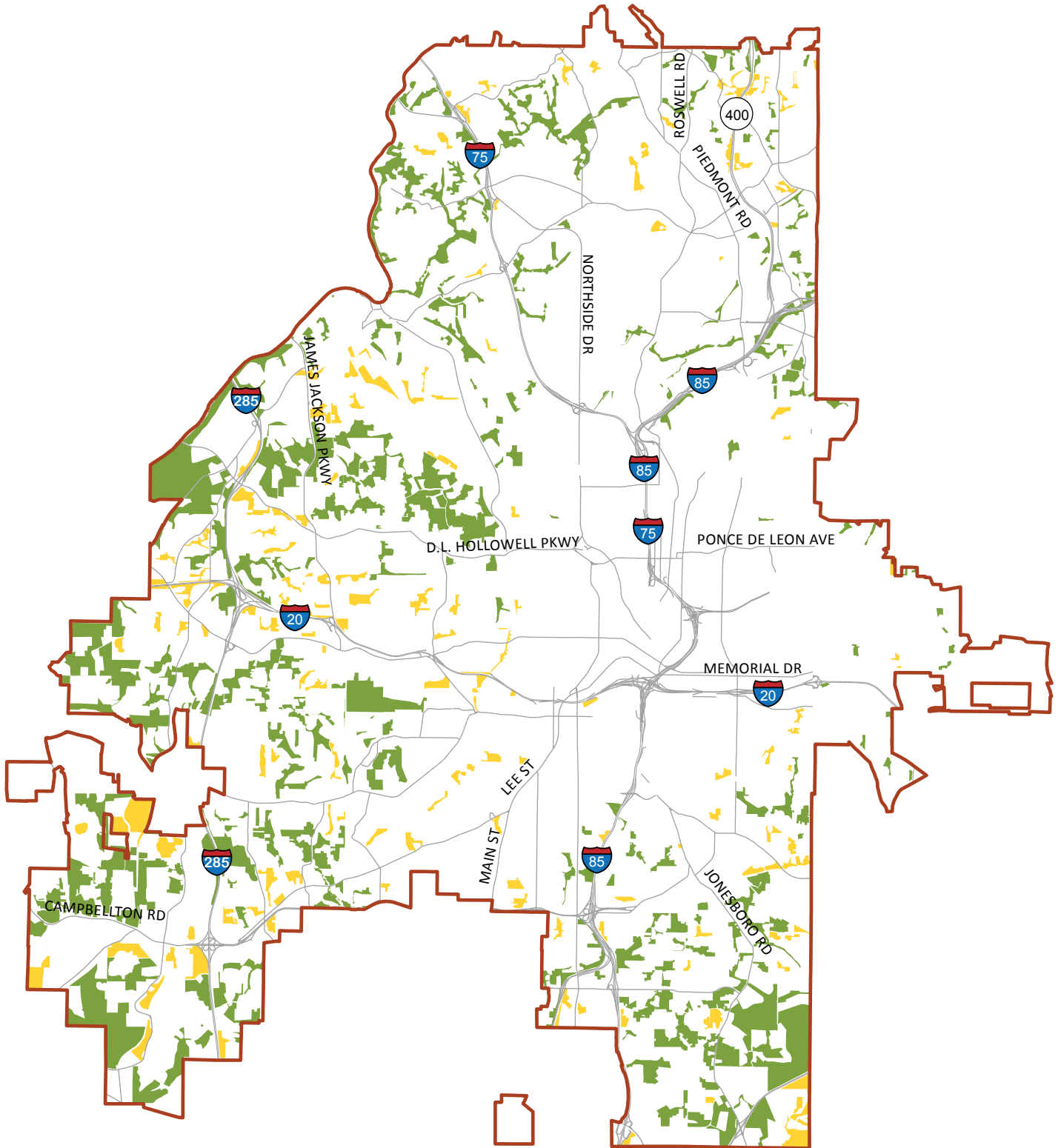


- Existing Greenspaces
- Atlanta City Parks
 - Other Public Parks
 - Cemeteries and Golf Courses
 - Institutional Open Spaces
 - Consent Decree Greenways

Data current as of 2008
Data Source: City of Atlanta

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

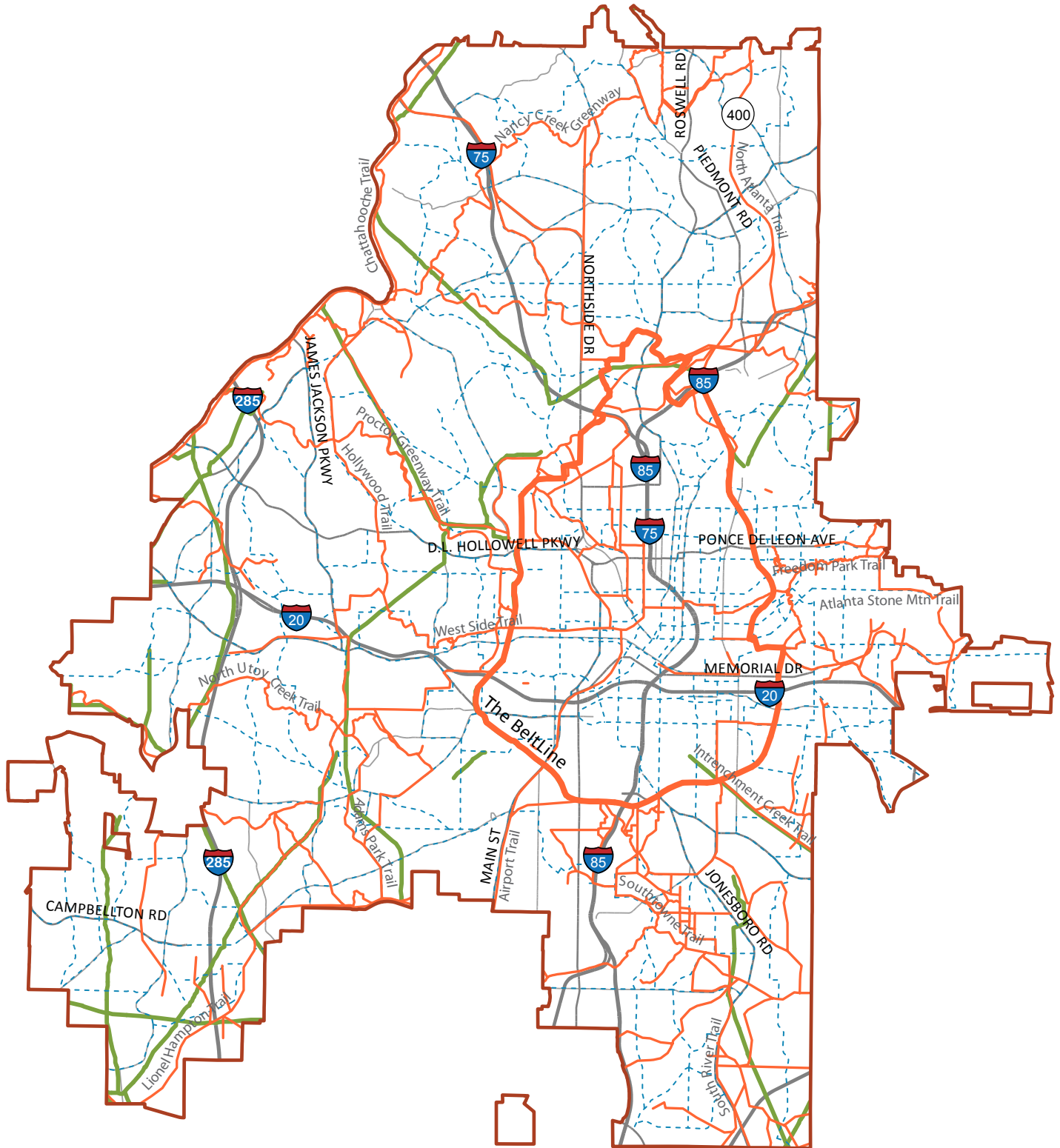
Figure 4: Undeveloped Lands



Undeveloped Lands
High Environmental Value
Low to Moderate Environmental Value

Data current as of 2008
Data Source: City of Atlanta
0 0.5 1 2 Miles

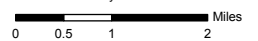




- Existing and Potential Greenspace Connections**
- Multi-Use Trails (Existing and Planned)
 - - - Bike Lanes/Arterial Streets
 - Other Arterial Streets (not classified as Bike Lanes)
 - Electric Utility Corridors

Data current as of 2008

Data Source: City of Atlanta



GREENSPACE SYSTEM CONCEPT

Analysis of the existing and potential greenspace and greenspace connections yields several key conclusions:

- The BeltLine Loop Trail and associated parkland currently under development will be a key element in the system. Not only does the BeltLine link many neighborhoods, it also has the potential to “join” Atlanta’s urban core (located primarily inside its loop) to the rest of the City.
- Atlanta’s urban core (located inside and to the east and north of the BeltLine) has comparatively dense development with “grid” street patterns and generally lacks larger greenspaces and natural features. Here the primary greenspace opportunities include small parks, public squares, and other civic spaces integrated into the urban pattern and streetscape, bikeway, and side-walk connections.
- The remainder of Atlanta has a less dense development pattern containing larger greenspaces, including most of the City’s citywide and community parks and significant natural areas. While many of these greenspaces are isolated from each other, stream corridors that generally run from the BeltLine to the periphery of the City (including the Chattahoochee River and the National Recreation Area) provide a significant opportunity for connectivity.

Figure 6 illustrates a “macro-level” concept for the greenspace system derived from the above conclusions. It superimposes the following organizing elements on the existing and potential greenspace building blocks:

- The BeltLine
- Greenways (along river and stream corridors)
- Greenspace Focus Areas (urban core and lower density area)

Early in the process, the greenspace system organization began to resemble a person’s hand, with five major waterbodies/greenways (fingers) connected to and flowing from the BeltLine Loop Trail (palm). Figure 6 illustrates this concept.

The BeltLine and greenways are envisioned as the major structural components of a citywide network of greenspaces and connections. The Greenspace Focus Areas establish two different strategic approaches to developing the greenspace system. In the Urban Core (areas such as Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead), greenspaces and greenspace connections will be “retrofitted” into the existing development pattern. In the Lower Density Area, the strategy is to acquire and preserve land focusing on greenway corridors. The BeltLine trail system forms a “seam” between these two areas.

Squares: public gathering spaces that function as a focus of community activity and civic identity. The function of squares can vary according to the context (e.g., support larger events in commercial and mixed-use areas and provide informal greenspace in residential neighborhoods). The recommended size for squares varies but is typically one city block; specific functions determine the appropriate service area.

Greenspace Focus Areas

URBAN CORE

Integrate greenspace into existing and new development (pocket parks, public squares, plazas, etc.)

Link greenspaces via greenspace connections (complete streets, streetscapes, sidewalks, bikeways, etc.)

Connect to the BeltLine

LOWER DENSITY AREA

Acquire / preserve land along greenways

Establish new parks in underserved communities

Connect to the BeltLine

THE BELTLINE

Develop a multi-use trail system that connects improved existing and new greenspaces

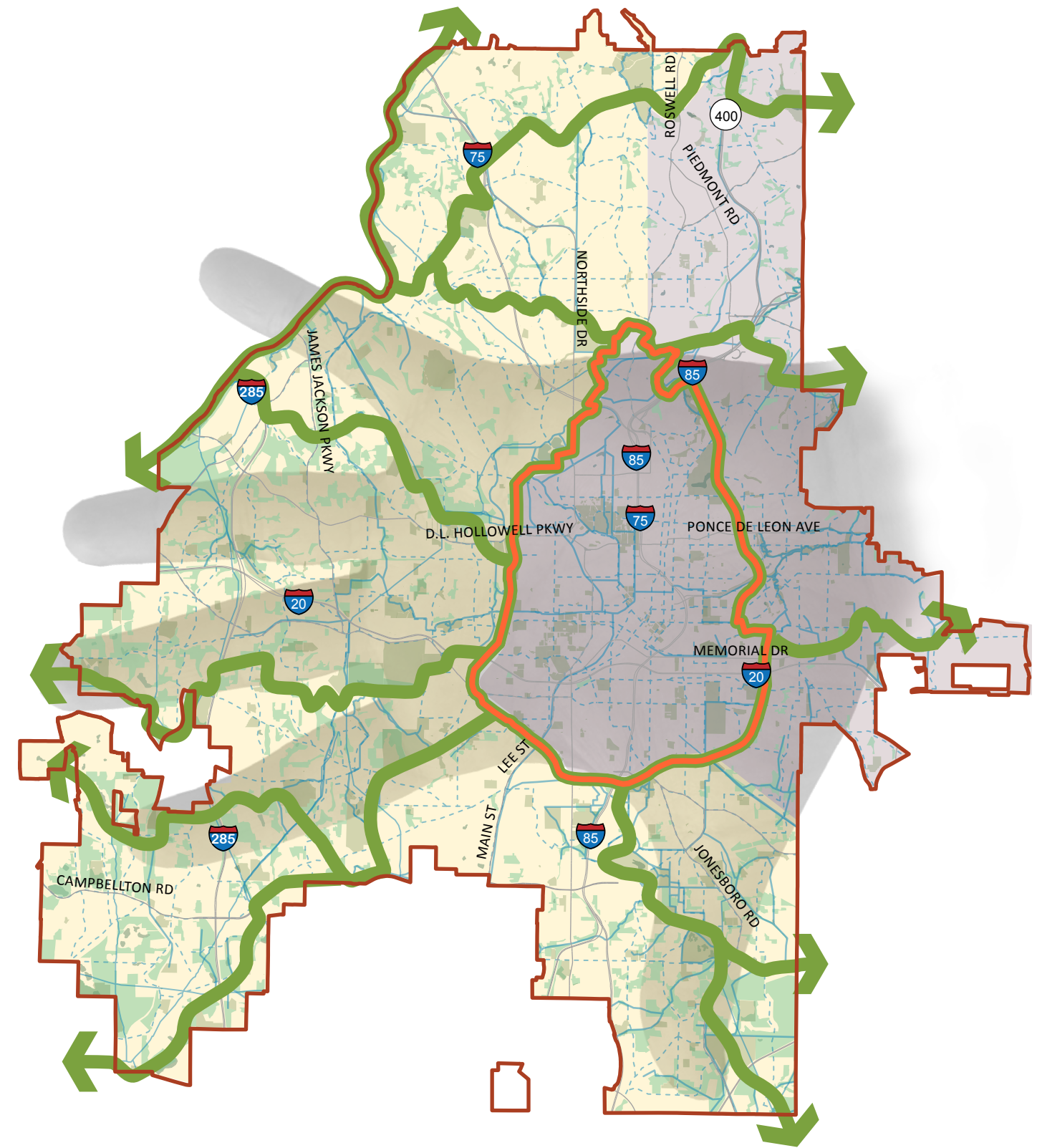
Encourage quality, mixed-use development

Provide transit service

Connect to neighborhoods and commercial centers in the Urban Core and Lower Density Area

Figure 7 through Figure 9 apply the greenspace system concept to three “subareas” of Atlanta (North, South, and West). These maps generally depict the potential future form of the greenspace system and are not intended to precisely show where specific greenspaces and connections will be located. The Project Greenspace Technical Report provides detailed criteria for locating individual greenspaces and connections.

Figure 6: Greenspace System Concept



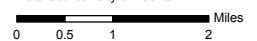
- Greenspace System**
- Proposed Greenways
 - The BeltLine
- Greenspace Focus Areas**
- Urban Core
 - Lower Density Area

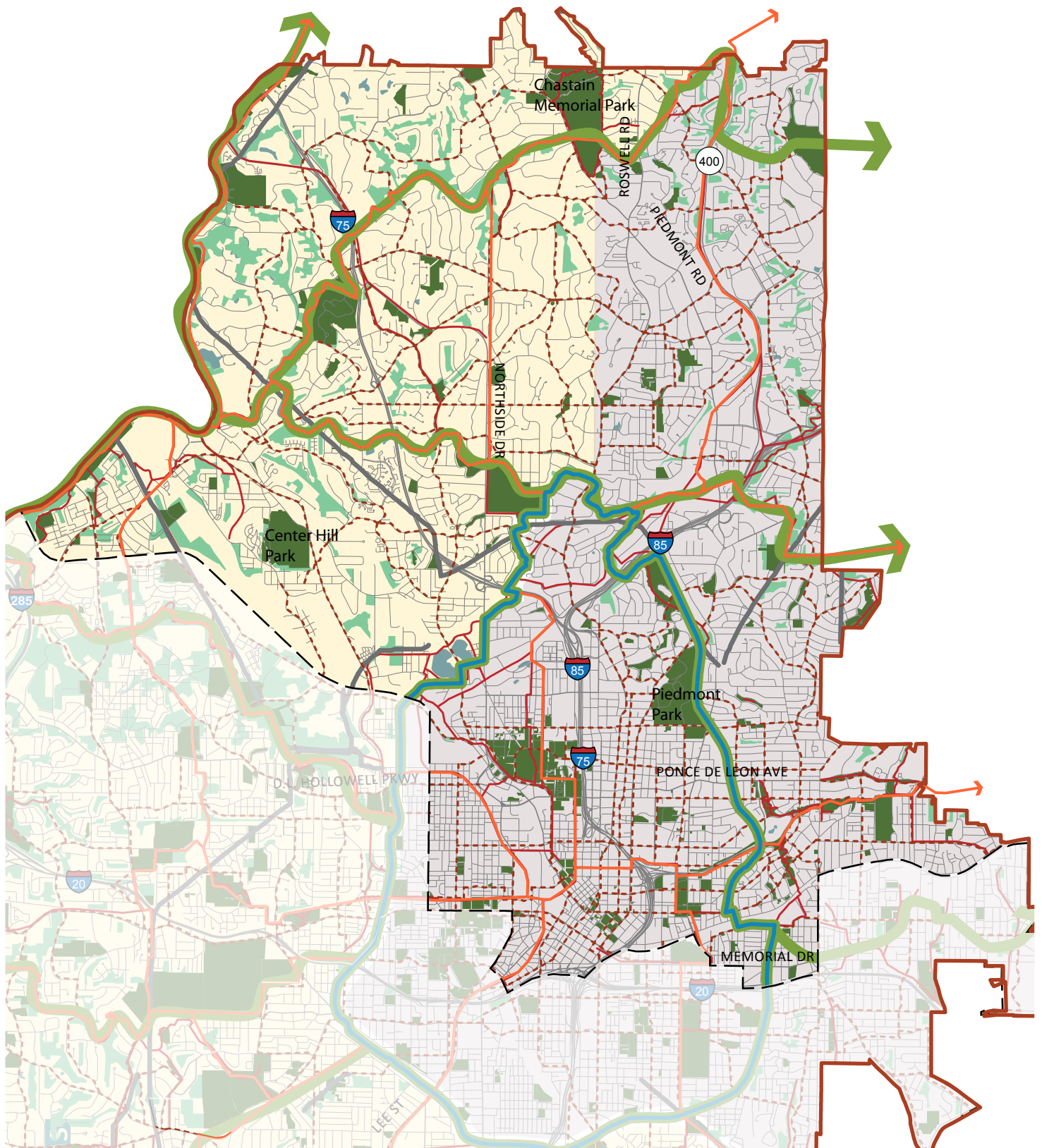
- Existing and Potential Greenspace**
- Existing Greenspace
 - Undeveloped Land

- Existing and Potential Greenspace Connections**
- Multi-Use Trails and Utility Corridors
 - Bike Lanes and Arterial Streets

Data current as of 2008

Data Source: City of Atlanta





Existing Greenspace

- Existing Greenspace
- Undeveloped Land (Potential Greenspace)

Greenspace Focus Areas

- Urban Core
- Lower Density Area
- The BeltLine

Existing and Potential Connections

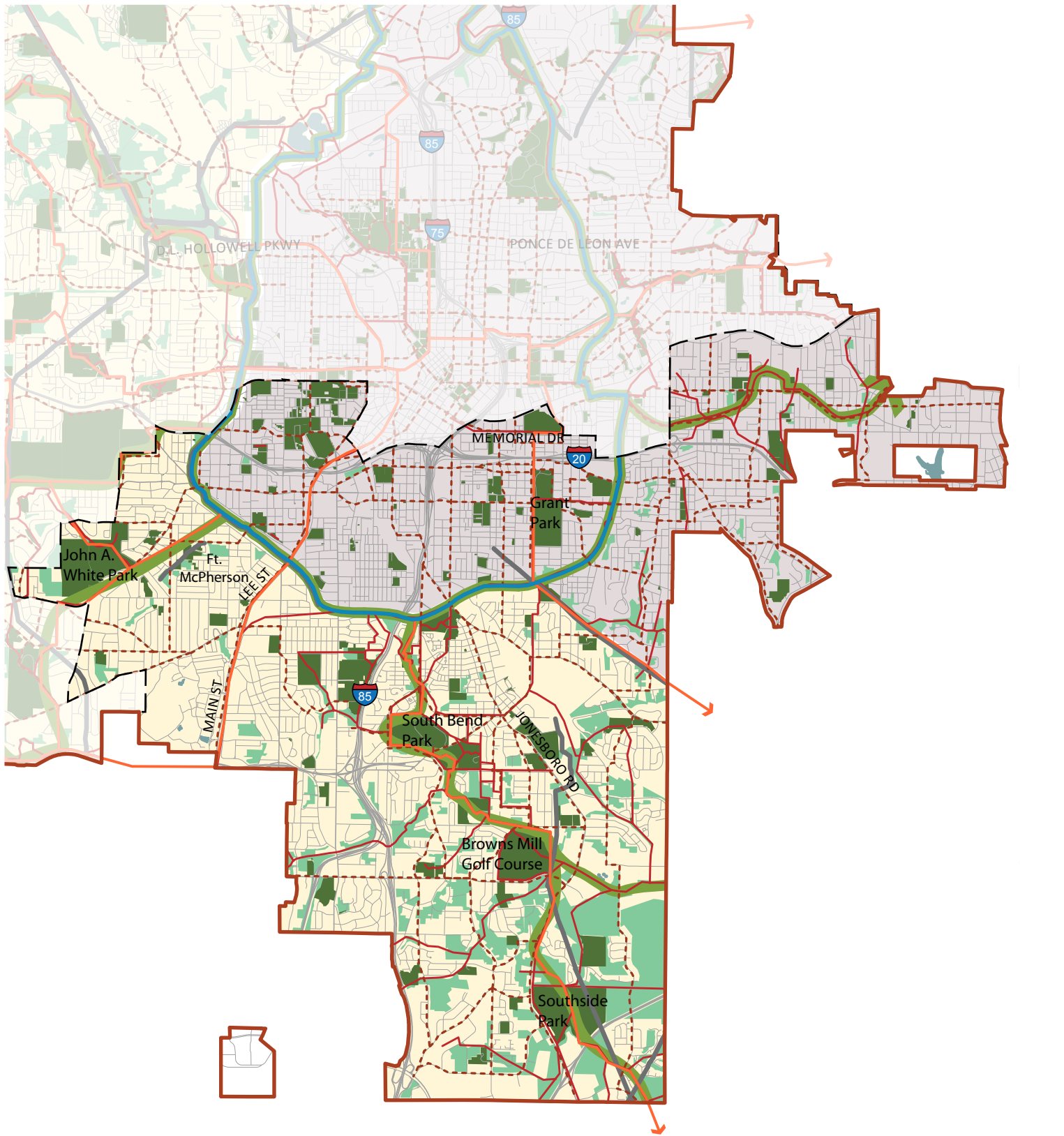
- Proposed Greenway
- Priority Multi-use Trails
- Other Multi-use Trails (Existing and Planned)
- Bike Lanes/Arterial Streets
- Other Arterial Streets (not classified as Bike Lanes)
- Electric Utility Corridors

Data Source: City of Atlanta



Data current as of 2008

Figure 8: South Subarea Greenspace System Concept



Existing Greenspace

- Existing Greenspace
- Undeveloped Land (Potential Greenspace)

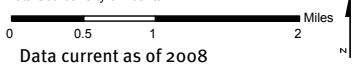
Greenspace Focus Areas

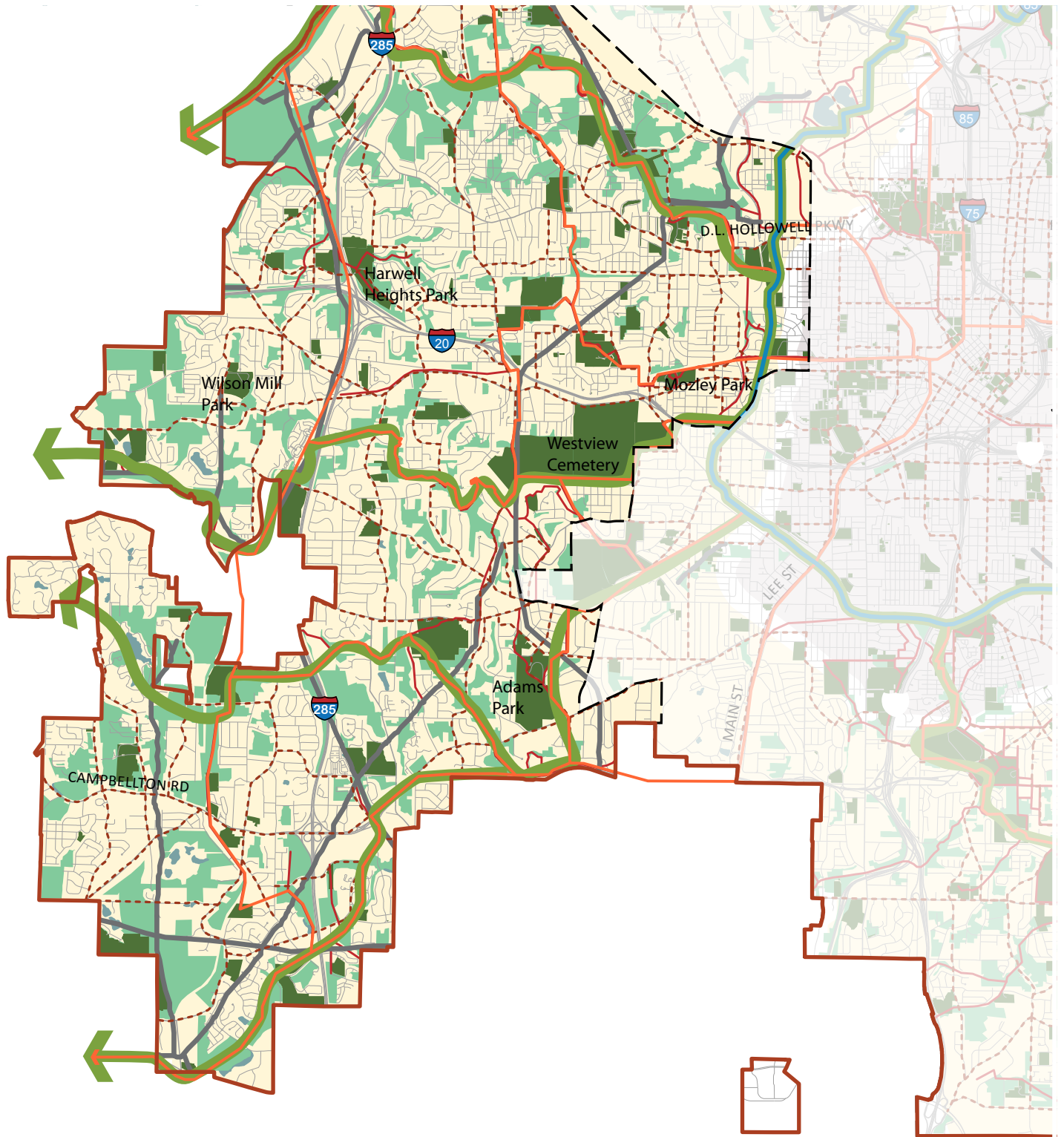
- Urban Core
- Lower Density Area
- The BeltLine

Existing and Potential Connections

- Proposed Greenway
- Priority Multi-use Trails
- Other Multi-use Trails (Existing and Planned)
- Bike Lanes/Arterial Streets
- Other Arterial Streets (not classified as Bike Lanes)
- Electric Utility Corridors

Data Source: City of Atlanta





Existing Greenspace

- Existing Greenspace
- Undeveloped Land (Potential Greenspace)

Greenspace Focus Areas

- Urban Core
- Lower Density Area
- The BeltLine

Existing and Potential Connections

- Proposed Greenway
- Priority Multi-use Trails
- Other Multi-use Trails (Existing and Planned)
- Bike Lanes/Arterial Streets
- Other Arterial Streets (not classified as Bike Lane)
- Electric Utility Corridors

Data Source: City of Atlanta
 0 0.5 1 2 Miles
 Data current as of 2008



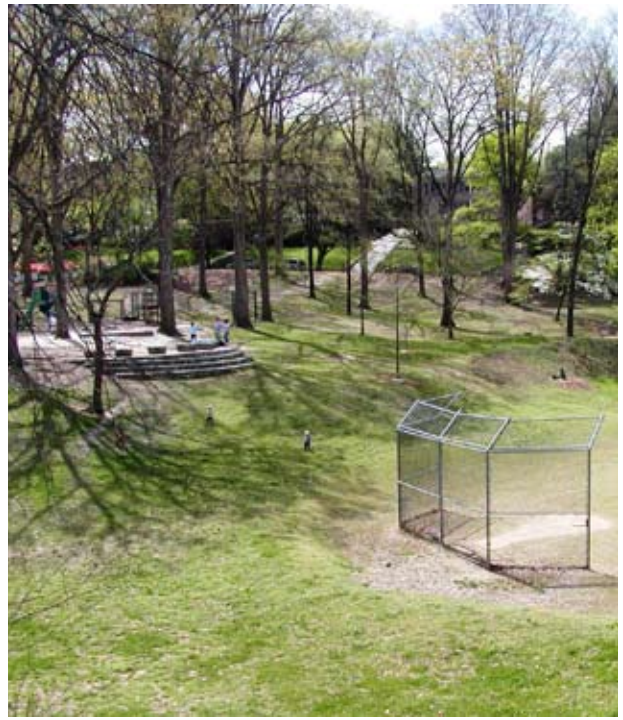
Future BeltLine Trail; Photo Source: Karen Clark, TPL



Future BeltLine Trail; Photo Source: Karen Clark, TPL



Bike Lane/Multi-use Trail; Photo Source: WRT



Winn Park Playground; Photo Source: Dee Merriam

4

ACHIEVING THE VISION: A 12-POINT PROGRAM FOR ACTION



The City of Atlanta must address 3 fundamental needs in order to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system:

Grow the Greenspace System: Atlanta needs more greenspace to serve its existing and future population.

Manage the Greenspace System: Atlanta needs to manage existing and new greenspaces to the highest standards of quality.

Build Capacity: Atlanta needs to significantly enhance resources, coordination, and partnerships inside and outside of city government and build community support for the greenspace system.

Project Greenspace is an ambitious, far-reaching initiative whose success is critical to Atlanta's future health and prosperity. The Project Greenspace Technical Report proposes numerous actions, policies, and partnerships to achieve the goals of Project Greenspace. The following summarizes these proposals in the form of **12 major initiatives** designed to grow, manage, and build capacity for greenspace.

Bridge and Gazebo; Photo Source: Piedmont Park Conservancy

GROW THE GREENSPACE SYSTEM

1. Develop a citywide greenway network.

Greenway corridors provide multiple benefits, including protecting environmentally sensitive areas, maintaining ecological functions, connecting parks and other greenspaces, and providing for recreation needs. Greenway corridors along Atlanta's rivers and streams are proposed as key connections in the greenspace system. Significant land (existing parks and Consent Decree greenway acquisitions) has already been assembled along Peachtree Creek, North Utoy Creek, and South River. Priority should be given to completing these greenways through acquisition, easements, and development dedications and providing connections to the BeltLine. Greenway priorities are illustrated in Figure 10.

Recommendations:

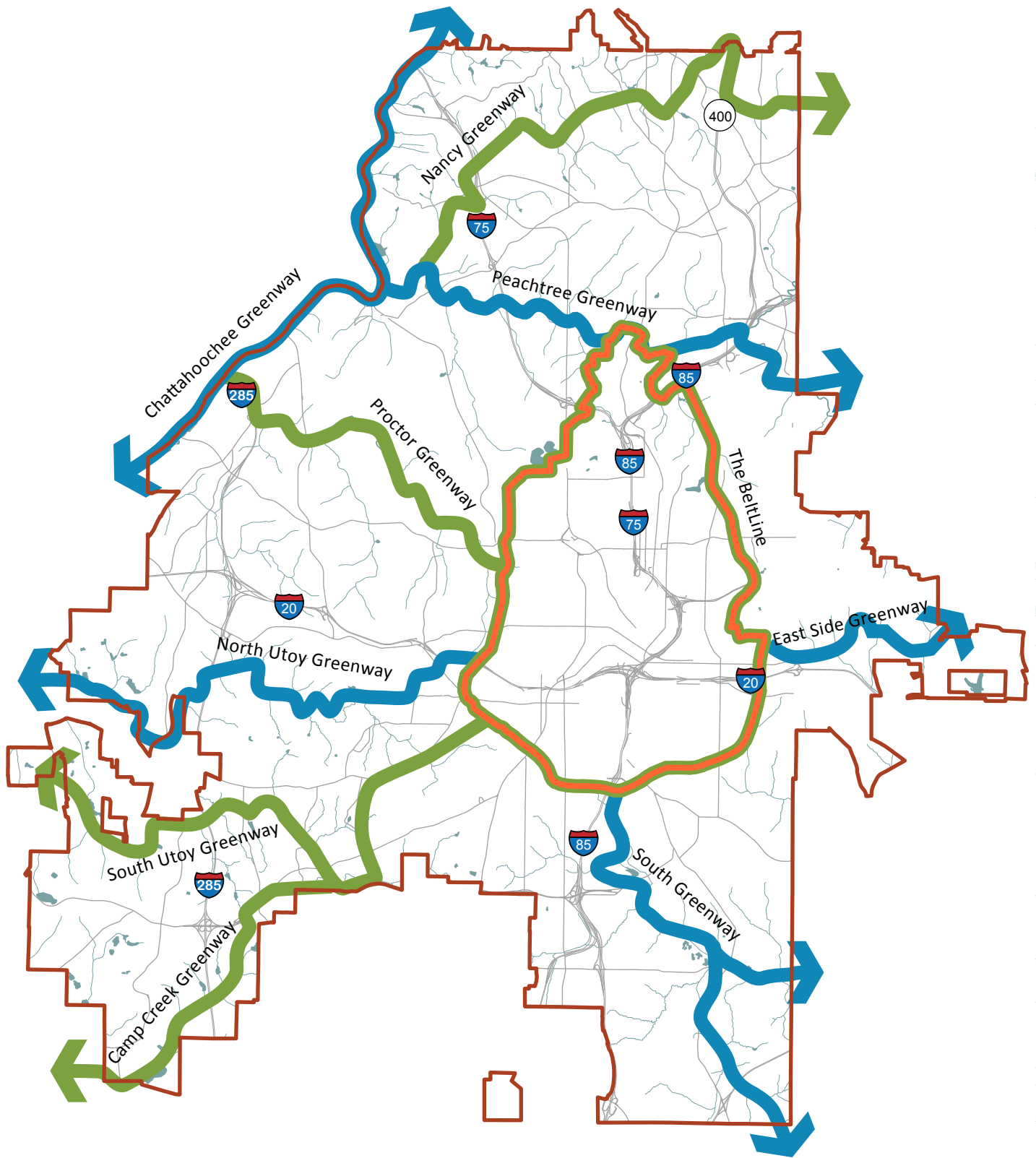
- Prepare and implement action plans for greenway corridors, focusing on the Chattahoochee River, the Peachtree Creek, North Utoy Creek, and the South Greenway as priorities.

2. Establish new greenspaces to meet priority needs.

These priorities include a major outdoor special events center, new citywide park, community parks, neighborhood parks, and athletic complexes. Large areas of Atlanta are not served by publicly accessible parks within a 1/2 mile distance. New parks should be equitably distributed and meet the recreational needs of residents. Different greenspace types, such as neighborhood parks in more suburban areas and public squares in urban areas are appropriate in different contexts. These are also specific park and facility needs. For example, the Community Survey and previous studies indicate a strong need for a special events venue to accommodate concerts and festivals that are too large for existing facilities. The redevelopment of Fort McPherson offers a prime opportunity to establish such a facility. Parks and special facility priorities are illustrated in Figure 11.

Recommendations:

- Develop a major outdoor special events venue to accommodate citywide concerts, festivals, etc.
- Develop the Chattahoochee River greenway to serve as a new citywide park.
- Establish new community parks in the northwest and along the City's eastern border in Council District 6.
- Provide new greenspaces such as neighborhood parks in areas located more than 1/2-mile from existing publicly accessible greenspaces.
- Develop centrally located athletic complexes (e.g., in the programming of future BeltLine parks).
- Locate recreation centers in underserved communities, particularly in the northern part of the City.
- Establish squares to serve densely developed areas of Atlanta (e.g., Buckhead).
- Identify priority lands and funding sources for greenspace acquisition using specific criteria identified in the Project Greenspace Technical Report.
- Pursue methods other than fee simple purchase to acquire city parkland (e.g., dedicated greenspace in city-sponsored development, acquisition of tax-delinquent properties, etc.).



- Greenway Corridor Priorities**
- Priority Greenway
 - Other Proposed Greenway
 - The BeltLine
 - Streams/Lakes

Data current as of 2008

Data Source: City of Atlanta

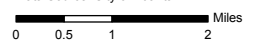
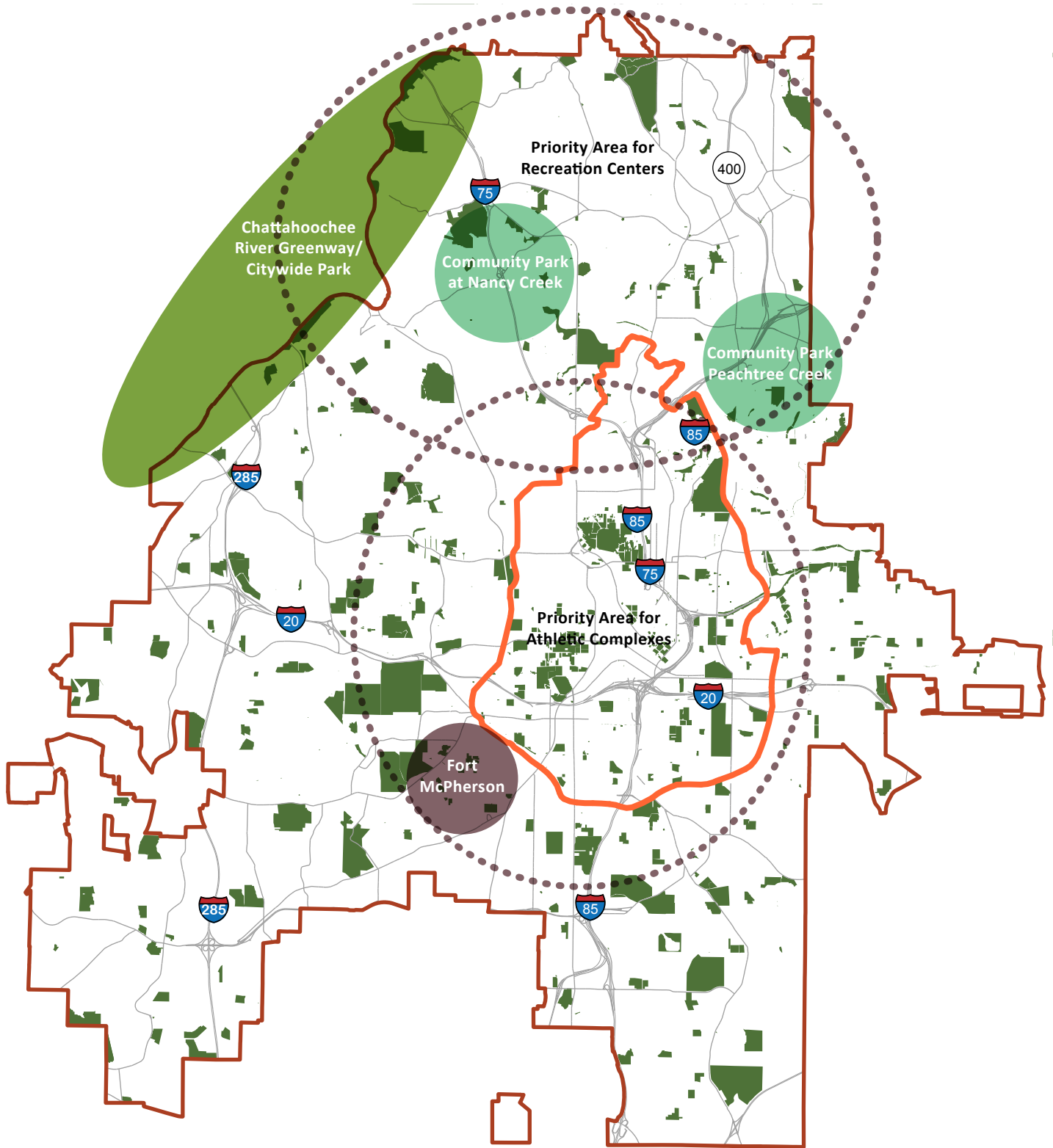







Figure 11: City Parks and Special Facility Priorities

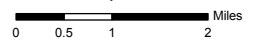


City Parks and Special Facility Priorities

-  Citywide Park Priorities
-  Community Park Priorities
-  Special Event Venue
-  The BeltLine
-  Existing Greenspace

Data current as of 2008

Data Source: City of Atlanta



3. Create a citywide trail system incorporating the BeltLine Loop Trail.

The BeltLine will establish a trail system around Downtown and Midtown Atlanta, connecting existing parks, 1,200 acres of new parkland, and neighborhoods along its length. This initiative should be completed and connected to a citywide system of multi-use trails developed through a continued partnership with the PATH Foundation (see Figure 12). In addition to trails, major arterial roads could be developed as complete streets accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists. Complete streets have the potential to connect greenspace and increase commuting and recreational options for residents.

Recommendations:

- Complete the BeltLine Loop Trail and continue to work with the PATH Foundation on the phased implementation of a citywide trail system.
- Develop off-street, multi-use trails as connections in the greenspace system.
- Establish complete streets with canopy trees with safe and attractive accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit service.
- Develop and implement complete street and other streetscape standards throughout the City (see the Connect Atlanta Plan).

4. Strengthen Atlanta's development regulations and processes to promote greenspace dedication in new developments.

Not all of the need for new greenspace can be met by fee simple acquisition. However, major opportunities exist to secure a significant amount of greenspace through development regulations and incentives such as improved open space requirements, conservation subdivisions, tax credits or density bonuses for exceeding minimum requirements, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). As a general rule, city-sponsored development projects and projects receiving public sector financial support or incentives should incorporate significant amounts of greenspace.

Recommendations:

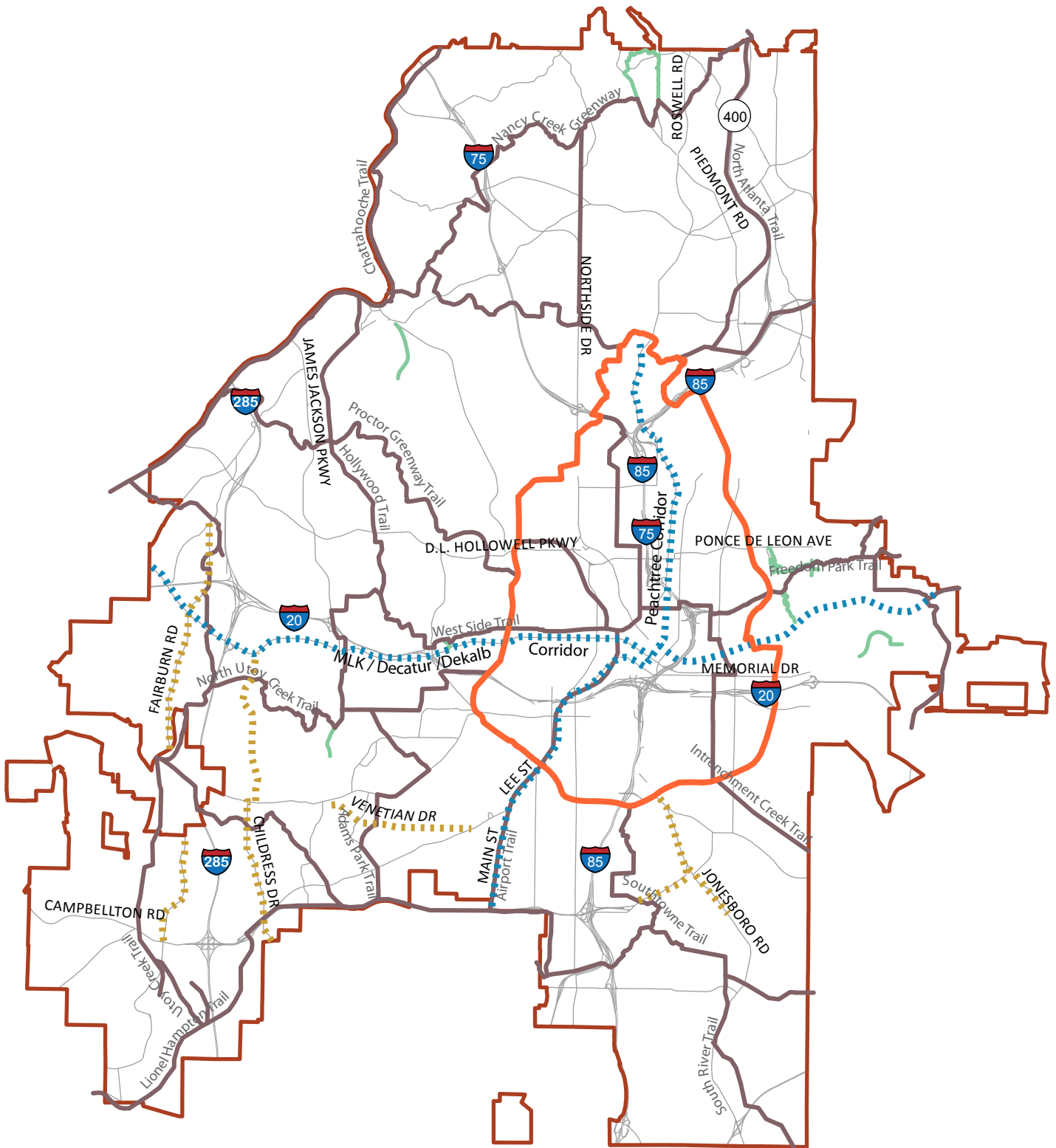
- Improve regulations and incentives that promote greenspace in new developments (e.g., strengthen existing open space requirements for new residential development, revise the Impact Fee Ordinance, and utilize the TDR Ordinance).
- Strengthen regulations to protect and maintain environmentally sensitive resources as greenspace (e.g., utilize the new conservation subdivision ordinance incentives to promote dedication of designated greenways in new developments).

TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE GREENSPACE PRESERVATION

Conservation subdivision design allows residential development on smaller lots than otherwise permitted by base zoning in exchange for setting aside a significant portion of a development as open space. This approach achieves densities similar to conventional subdivisions through use of a compact development pattern. Atlanta has adopted a conservation subdivision ordinance as a technique to protect open space and environmentally sensitive areas.

The City's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Ordinance allows an owner to sever development rights from a sending property (e.g., historic property or proposed greenspace) and to transfer the resulting development rights to a receiving property (e.g., for multi-family residential or mixed-use development). Many communities across the nation have successfully used TDR to preserve greenspace.

Figure 12: Multi-use Trail and Complete Street Priorities



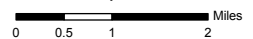
Multi-use Trails

- Proposed Multi-use Trail Priorities
- Existing Multi-use Trails
- The BeltLine

Complete Streets

- - - Project Greenspace Complete Street Priorities
- - - Connect Atlanta Plan Complete Street Priorities (South and West Atlanta)

Data current as of 2008
Data Source: City of Atlanta



MANAGE THE GREENSPACE SYSTEM

5. Implement a phased program to meet citizens' needs for recreational facilities and programs over time.

Project Greenspace establishes level of service standards for use in planning for recreational facility development (see Technical Report). Using these standards as a guide, the City should partner with other recreational providers to identify the core recreational facilities and programs it will provide and needs that can be met by others. An analysis of existing community parks and the facilities within them is proposed to determine how needs within defined service areas can most effectively be met.

Recommendations:

- Establish level of service standards to guide the overall provision of recreational facilities (e.g., walking/ biking trails, outdoor pools, playgrounds) as recommended in the Project Greenspace Technical Report.
- Conduct a comprehensive service area and distribution analysis of existing community parks to improve existing undersized parks, eliminate duplication, enhance walking access, and provide new parks in underserved areas.
- Develop and implement a recreation program management plan to meet citizens' needs for the core recreation programs provided by DPRCA.

ATLANTA PARKS ACCREDITATION

The Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) recently awarded national accreditation to the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA). Accreditation benefits both the public, because of its requirement of high levels of professional service, and the Department by requiring self-evaluation and increased efficiency.

The accreditation process requires an ongoing internal review of the DPRCA's policies and procedures. CAPRA accreditation means that park patrons will receive the highest levels of professional service and experience possible in City parks.

6. Continue to improve park maintenance and security to “best-in-class” standards.

Well-maintained parks are critical to the quality of the user experience, sense of security, and the public image of Atlanta’s parks. Project Greenspace recommends strategies to address these issues, such as increased attention to deferred maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure; development of natural and cultural resource management plans for parks and greenspaces; establishment of a Park Ranger Program in cooperation with the Atlanta Police; application of [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\)](#) principles; and involvement of neighborhood groups, businesses, and others in park maintenance, safety, and security activities.

Recommendations:

- As a priority, improve maintenance of city parks to consistently achieve a Mode II level of maintenance⁶ for developed portions of the park system as defined by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA).
- Expand the park facilities and infrastructure database to comprehensively track facility conditions, improve aging park infrastructure (e.g., restrooms, park shelters, trails, pavement, playgrounds, courts, and ball fields), and record the true costs of park maintenance activities.
- Provide ongoing training for DPRCA employees in maintenance standards and practices to address these issues.
- Improve visitor access at all facilities by following code standards, reducing broken pavement, and maintaining handicapped ramps.
- Partner with nonprofit organizations, citizens, and businesses (e.g., park conservancies, universities, “friends” groups, etc.) to help meet the maintenance needs of specific parks and greenspaces.
- Increase the safety and security of greenspaces (e.g., establish a “Park Ranger” program, coordinate with Atlanta Police to track crime incidents, and secure a police presence at “hot spots”).
- Improve security by applying Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to the design and use of parks and greenspaces.
- Involve neighborhood groups in park safety and security.

⁶ Mode II is typically associated with well-developed park areas with reasonably high visitation. Examples of Mode II standards include mowing of maintained lawn areas once a week, litter control 1–2 times a day, and consistent cleaning of hard surfaces and restrooms.

[Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\)](#): a multi-disciplinary approach to designing the physical environment that has proven to be effective in helping to deter criminal behavior. Key CPTED principles include:

- **Natural Surveillance:** Increase visibility and the ability of neighbors to observe the space (e.g., a park that fronts a street rather than being hidden behind back yards).
- **Territorial Reinforcement:** Define public and private spaces to create a sense of ownership.
- **Natural Access Control:** Limit opportunity for crime through the selective placement of entrances and exits, lighting, and landscaping to limit access or control flow.

7. Integrate stormwater and greenspace management through the use of natural, multi-functional stormwater solutions.

Effectively managing the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff is a critical environmental issue with significant cost implications. Greenspaces provide a natural, low-cost means of stormwater management. Wherever possible, they should be managed to absorb stormwater runoff and provide other benefits such as conserving natural resources and processes, providing recreational opportunities, and reducing the costs of engineered infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- Identify greenspace opportunities to achieve goals such as flood control, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, passive recreation, and connectivity.
- Adopt Stormwater Utility Fees for management in greenspace.
- Implement a sustainable building code.
- Utilize the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control and Post Development Management Ordinances to promote natural stormwater solutions (e.g., low-impact detention).
- Promote integrated stormwater management/greenspace planning (e.g., watershed management plans, greenway action plans, development and redevelopment plans).

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND WATER QUALITY

Development impacts both the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff. Numerous studies have found that in areas where the percentage of impervious surfaces (i.e., streets, parking lots, roofs) is greater, the potential for degradation of the watershed is also higher. Rainwater flows across these surfaces and can transport litter and debris to streams and lakes. Without some kind of nonpoint source pollution management, water quality becomes increasingly degraded as impervious levels exceed 8–15% of the watershed.

Effective natural resource planning, site design, and best management practices (BMPs) create a strong defense against polluted stormwater runoff. Strategies such as sensitively designed detention basins and the use of green roofs and other native vegetation can help improve stormwater management. Public education and outreach are essential.

Sources: The Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet, *Coping with Polluted Runoff*; Metropolitan Council and Barr Engineering Company, *Minnesota Urban Small Sites Best Management Practices Manual*, 2001.

TERMS

Green Roof: a building roof partially or completely covered with vegetation and soil (or a growing medium) on top of a waterproofing membrane. Benefits provided by green roofs include: moderation of the urban heat island effect, improved stormwater management, water and air purification, reduced energy consumption, and the aesthetic and psychological effects of a garden-like setting.

8. Increase Atlanta’s tree canopy to meet the goal of 40% coverage through a “Green City” initiative.

Atlanta’s tree canopy is essential to Atlanta’s environmental quality, economy, and image and identity as a city. The City has a strong tree protection ordinance whose mission is to achieve “no net loss” of tree cover and is partnering with Trees Atlanta on canopy tree plantings. However, these efforts need to be expanded if the goal of 40% tree canopy coverage is to be realized. Nonprofit institutions, corporations, property owners, and others across the Atlanta community can be recruited in this effort.

Recommendations:

- Expand existing tree planting programs through partnerships and volunteer programs.
- Implement planting and maintenance standards to ensure long-term tree survival and health (e.g., use of appropriate species, sufficient space for root zone and canopy development).
- Ensure that adequate resources are committed to tree maintenance and care, including removal of invasive species that are encroaching on the urban forest.
- Identify ways to improve the tree protection ordinance (e.g., by strengthening requirements for large developments and equitably increasing tree removal fees and fines).
- Make the tree protection ordinance easier to understand and use and increase outreach to help the public understand its importance.
- Improve information on Atlanta’s existing tree canopy, including aerial photography that can be used to track conditions over time and an inventory of canopy trees on public properties to inform maintenance and planting needs.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE URBAN TREE CANOPY

A cost/benefit analysis conducted for a Philadelphia neighborhood concluded that a net annual benefit of slightly over \$1 million and a one-time real estate benefit of \$30.7 million would result from increasing the tree canopy coverage to 30% (+62,883 trees). The annual benefit derives from monetized benefits such as improved air quality, reduced stormwater runoff, and reduced energy consumption to planting and maintenance costs. The one-time real estate benefit derives from conservatively estimating a 5% increase in property values.

Source: Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC



Tree Canopy; Photo Source: WRT

BUILD CAPACITY

9. Identify a sustainable greenspace funding program, including funding sources dedicated to growing and managing the greenspace system.

Growing and managing the greenspace system to meet the Project Greenspace targets will require significant levels of investment. Order-of-magnitude cost estimates have been developed for major actions and the Project Greenspace Technical Report identifies a variety of potential funding sources. In the past, the City has relied on a disproportionate level of general funds to fund its parks compared to “best-in-class” park systems around the country. In addition, the existing economic recession has severely impacted the City’s current budget expenditures. Looking beyond the current situation, significant portions of the costs could be funded by sources other than the City’s general fund, including dedicated (e.g., increased user fees, dedicated sales and/property tax, real estate transfer tax, etc.) and potential private or non-profit funding sources (e.g., land trusts, corporations, foundations, volunteer organizations). As an early implementation action, Atlanta should develop a funding program for priority actions such as greenspace acquisition, improvements to address park maintenance and security, and recreational facility development.

Recommendations:

- Develop a diversified package of funding sources to support greenspace acquisition, development, and maintenance.
- Consider variable pricing (in contrast to the current fixed price system) of selected programs based on income levels in different parts of Atlanta.
- Develop a formal cost recovery policy that sets standards for balancing revenue generation (e.g., vendors, permit performers, mini-events) consistent with the City’s other objectives.
- Consider redirecting user fees and other earned income from the City’s general fund to a dedicated fund (e.g., a maintenance endowment).

GREENSPACE FUNDING INITIATIVES

ASAP!—the 2009 Act to Save Atlanta’s Parks sponsored by PARC—calls for the following greenspace funding initiatives:

1. **Dedicate 1 mil of property tax for park operation and maintenance by 2012.**
2. **Establish a dedicated funding source for land acquisition and park development by 2013. Potential sources include: sales tax, real estate transfer tax, stormwater utility, and transfer of development rights.**

10. Increase city resources devoted to greenspace planning, design, and implementation.

While Atlanta's recent budget shortfall led to staff cutbacks, the success of Project Greenspace in the long term depends on building capacity and improving coordination in city government to grow and manage greenspace. This need includes staff dedicated to functions such as greenspace system planning and implementation, park master planning and design, working with partners, and public outreach. This investment can be leveraged to attract significant outside resources through avenues such as partnerships and grants.

Recommendations:

- Building on the Green Team, enhance the organizational focus and streamline city procedures related to greenspace acquisition.
- Clarify city roles and responsibilities in managing city-owned greenspaces and conservation easements held by the City.
- Address greenspace issues in all stages of the development review and approval process.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory and GIS database of greenspace resources and environmentally sensitive land with high greenspace value.

11. Build public/private partnerships to grow and manage the greenspace system.

The City has an established track record of working with partners to preserve greenspace within Atlanta. Project Greenspace provides a framework for the City to partner with and leverage the resources of other governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, institutions, foundations, developers, landowners, and citizens to create the greenspace system. For example, many such entities manage existing or potential greenspaces. According to GIS analysis, Atlanta Public Schools manage over 910 acres that could contribute to meeting community recreation and greenspace needs. The City can also work with nonprofits and private landowners to protect valuable greenspace resources through land acquisition, dedication, or easements. At the community wide level, partnerships with organizations such as PARC and Park Pride can assist in the coordination of outreach and galvanize support for the greenspace system.

Recommendations:

- Work with governmental and institutional landowners to maintain and enhance greenspace properties they manage.
- Continue to partner with land conservation and other private organizations (e.g., the Trust for Public Land, Park Pride, The Conservation Fund, etc.) to grow and manage the greenspace system.
- Work with Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) to identify opportunities that meet the goals of Project Greenspace.
- Work with private landowners to protect and enhance greenspace holdings.

12. Initiate a communications and outreach program to inform and involve the Atlanta community in implementation of Project Greenspace.

The Community Survey and other public outreach conducted for Project Greenspace indicate strong public support for greenspace. This support needs to be mobilized at all levels of the community, including citizens, neighborhoods, political leaders, businesses, and institutions, if the vision of a world-class greenspace system is to be achieved.

Recommendations:

- Increase outreach to build public and political consensus for the importance of greenspace.
- Increase resources available to market and provide the public with information on parks and greenspaces.
- Recognize grassroots interests and utilize their resources to create and manage the greenspace system.

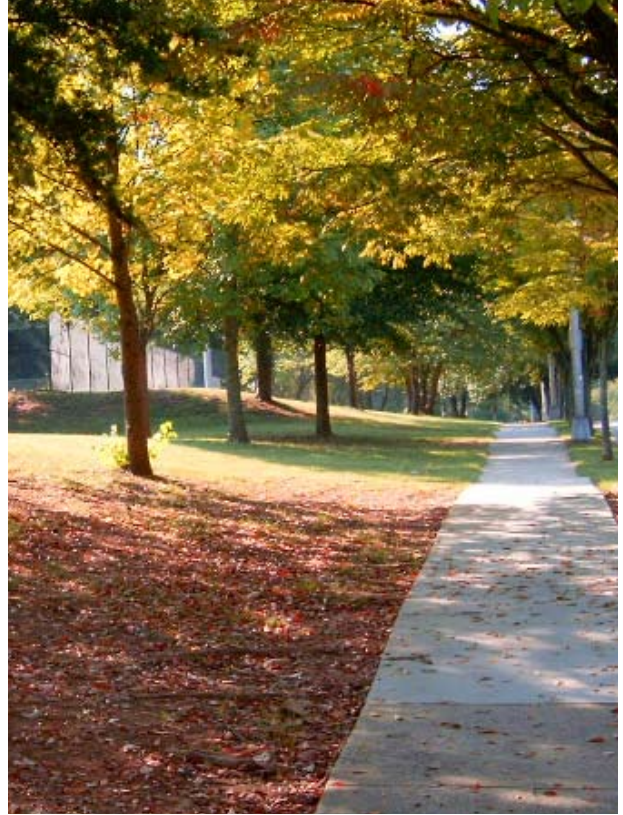
OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Project Greenspace Technical Report lays out the strategies and actions to grow, manage, and build capacity for greenspace in much more detail, including additional recommendations and actions required to implement the initiatives. Examples of other recommendations include:

- Preserve and restore historic and cultural resources through increased inventory, preservation, interpretation, and education.
- Incorporate public art into the greenspace system consistent with the City's Public Art Master Plan.
- Develop resource management plans and standards for managing natural areas within city parks.
- Incorporate "green" building and site design techniques and best practices into the design and management of greenspace (e.g., water conservation, energy conservation, use of native species, reduced waste, etc.).



View from Park; Photo Source: Piedmont Park Conservancy



Central Park; Photo Source: City of Atlanta

GLOSSARY

Civic Spaces: areas within the City’s fabric that help to define Atlanta’s community identity and visual image (e.g., squares, garden spots, and streetscapes). They provide places for public gatherings, accommodate pedestrian activity, and/or beautify the City through the provision of landscaping or public art.

Complete Streets: streets designed to provide safe and attractive multi-modal access for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. The Connect Atlanta Plan recommends priorities for the development of complete street improvements.

Conservation Easement: a restriction placed on a piece of property to protect its associated natural resources and limit its development potential. A conservation easement limits the type or extent of development on the property while allowing the landowner to retain ownership of the land; they may or may not provide for public access. Conservation easements are either voluntarily donated or sold by the landowner to an organization (e.g., a land trust or the City).

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED): a multi-disciplinary approach to designing the physical environment that has proven to be effective in helping to deter criminal behavior. Key CPTED principles include:

- **Natural Surveillance:** Increase visibility and the ability of neighbors to observe the space (e.g., a park that fronts a street rather than being hidden behind backyards).
- **Territorial Reinforcement:** Define public and private spaces to create a sense of ownership.

- **Natural Access Control:** Limit opportunity for crime through the selective placement of entrances and exits, lighting, and landscaping to limit access or control flow.

Garden Spots: very small landscaped areas (e.g., traffic islands or medians) that generally do not contain amenities. Garden spots are typically maintained as drive-by landscaped gateways to Atlanta’s neighborhoods and commercial districts and contribute to the City’s image. Garden spots are suitable locations for memorials, fountains, or public art. The recommended size for garden spots varies, and there is no applicable service area recommendation.

Green Roof: a building roof partially or completely covered with vegetation and soil (or a growing medium) on top of a waterproofing membrane. Benefits provided by green roofs include: moderation of the urban heat island effect, improved stormwater management, water and air purification, reduced energy consumption, and the aesthetic and psychological effects of a garden-like setting.

Greenspace: outdoor spaces that provide specified environmental, community, and economic benefits. Examples include parks, environmentally sensitive lands, and urban greenspace (e.g., streetscapes and plazas). Includes recreational facilities such as athletic fields and recreational centers.

Greenspace, Privately-Owned: greenspaces that are typically not owned or managed by the City or other public entity. Instead they occur within private residential, retail, office, or mixed-use development projects. Privately-owned greenspace

includes community commons and private parks (open lawns, wooded or landscape areas managed as part of a private development), plazas, and green roofs.

Greenspace, Urban: “green” elements of the City’s developed fabric that perform vital environmental, community, and economic functions and benefits. Examples include urban streetscapes, parks and plazas associated with corporate and institutional campuses, and Atlanta’s urban tree canopy.

Greenspace Connections: linear corridors that connect people to greenspaces and greenspace to each other. Examples include: greenways, man-made corridors (e.g., rail and utility rights-of-way), trails, bike lanes, and complete streets.

Greenspace System: a citywide network of greenspaces and connections comprised of three general categories of resources that may sometimes overlap: parks and recreational facilities, natural resource areas, and urban greenspace.

Greenways: a type of greenspace connection sufficiently wide to provide multiple benefits, such as environmental resource protection along river and stream corridors, stormwater management, and/or recreation (e.g., multi-use trails). Includes greenway lands and easements acquired by the Atlanta Department of Watershed Management under the Consent Decree.

Natural Areas: properties maintained in a natural condition to protect environmentally sensitive land and/or resources (e.g., wildlife habitat, forest cover, water quality, wetlands). Natural areas may be either publicly owned in fee simple or

protected through a conservation easement. Significant natural areas should be surrounded by a protective buffer (a minimum width of 100' is recommended).

Nature Preserves: areas that protect and interpret significant natural resources and may contain amenities facilitating environmental education and interpretation (e.g., nature centers, trails, and supporting facilities). The recommended size of nature preserves varies depending on the type(s) of facilities present.

Parks and Recreational Facilities: city parkland and parks, open space, and recreational facilities owned and managed by other entities.

Parks, Citywide: major park sites that draw users from around the City. Citywide parks contain a combination of passive and active recreational facilities and natural features and are often based on a specific scenic or recreational opportunity (e.g., major festival site, arts center). Citywide parks are recommended to be a minimum of 100 acres and serve the entire City.

Parks, Community: Parks that meet the community-based recreational needs of multiple neighborhoods, including athletic complexes, trails, playgrounds, etc. Community parks may also preserve unique landscapes, natural features, and open space. Community parks are recommended to be a minimum of 35 acres (65 acres for sites with athletic complexes) and serve a 2-mile area.

Parks, Neighborhood: areas that serve local informal recreation needs and create a sense of neighborhood identity. Amenities may include picnic shelters, open fields, playgrounds, basketball and tennis courts, or

wooded natural areas. Neighborhood parks are recommended to be 5–10 acres in size and be accessible for pedestrians and bikers within a ½ mile (10 minute walk) service area.

Parks, Special Facilities: park sites containing amenities and facilities not typically associated with parks (e.g., historic cemeteries). They can also include stand-alone athletic complexes, recreation centers, large event venues, and community gardens. Existing special facilities include Oakland Cemetery, Roseland Cemetery, the City's emergency shelter, Adamsville Recreation Center, Avery Park, and the Inman Park Trolley Barn.

Park Opportunity Bond: a fund created by the City of Atlanta in 2005 to improve the condition of existing parks and recreational facilities.

Plazas: outdoor spaces typically associated with commercial retail and office developments or high-rise residential buildings. Plazas create space within dense developments for shade trees, sitting areas, fountains, and public art.

Squares: public gathering spaces that function as a focus of community activity and civic identity. The function of squares can vary according to the context (e.g., support larger events in commercial and mixed-use areas and provide informal greenspace in residential neighborhoods). The recommended size for squares varies but is typically one city block; specific functions determine the appropriate service area.

Streetscapes: the non-vehicular spaces within and adjacent to the rights-of-way of public roadways. They include canopy tree and landscape plantings, sidewalks,

and street furniture such as benches, bike racks, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. Streetscapes vary in design and character according to their context (e.g., neighborhood, commercial district) and function.

Trails, Multi-Use: paved pathways wide enough (12–20') to accommodate a variety of recreational activities (e.g., walking, jogging, biking, in-line skating). Multi-use trails connect neighborhoods, parks and recreation, and other destinations. Multi-use trails may be located within greenway corridors, parks, and private developments, or along streets, rail lines, and within utility right-of-ways.

Urban Heat Island: an area where buildings, roads, and other impervious surfaces create an "island" of higher temperatures when compared with less developed surrounding areas. Heat islands can threaten public health and the environment by amplifying extreme hot weather events, increasing air-conditioning demand, and expanding ground-level ozone formation. Project ATLANTA is a multi-year project led by researchers from the Global Hydrology and Climate Center, and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center to improve air quality and reduce the heat island effect.



October 2009