



# URBAN ECOLOGY FRAMEWORK & TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

Council Work Session | August 2019

# PRESENTATION FLOW

The motive for a study of nature

Community input so far

Critical components

Current state

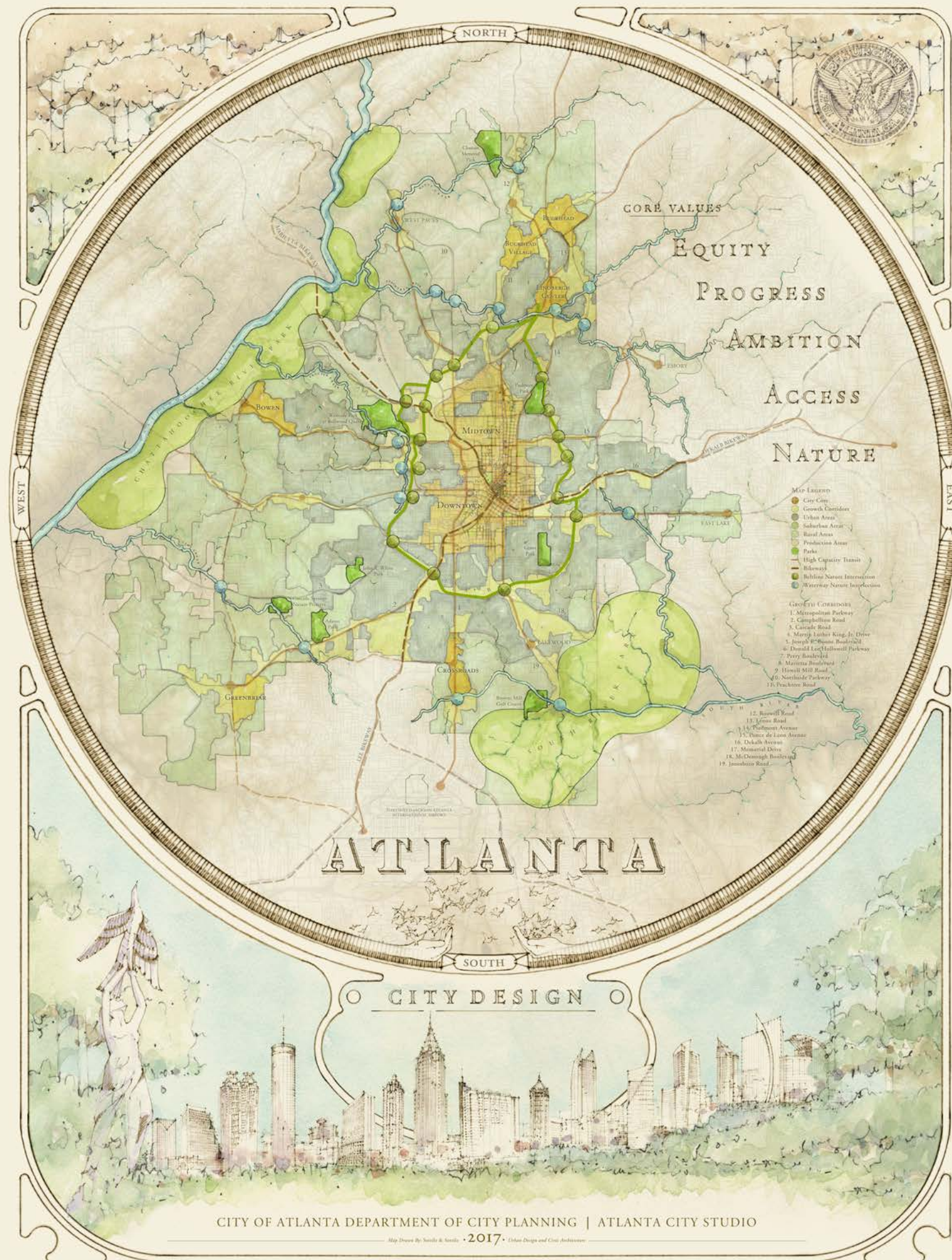
City of Atlanta Tree Ordinance background

# **BOTTOM LINE**

- **THE ORDINANCE IS NOT EFFECTIVE FOR TREE PROTECTION AS IT'S WRITTEN TODAY.**
- **THE ORDINANCE LACKS CLARITY AND LEGIBILITY FOR CONSISTENT INTERPRETATION.**
- **THE PROCESS IS UNPREDICTABLE FOR THOSE MOVING THROUGH THE PERMITTING SYSTEM.**
- **APPETITE FOR INCREASED ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY.**
- **THOUGHTFUL AND DATA DRIVEN POLICY CHANGES ARE DESIRED.**

[www.atlcitydesign.com](http://www.atlcitydesign.com)

Atlanta City Studio @ATLCityStudio #designATL



**NOT CHANGING IS NOT AN OPTION.**

**THE MOST STRATEGIC SCENARIO FOR  
GROWTH INCLUDES EVERYONE.**

# OUR APPROACH

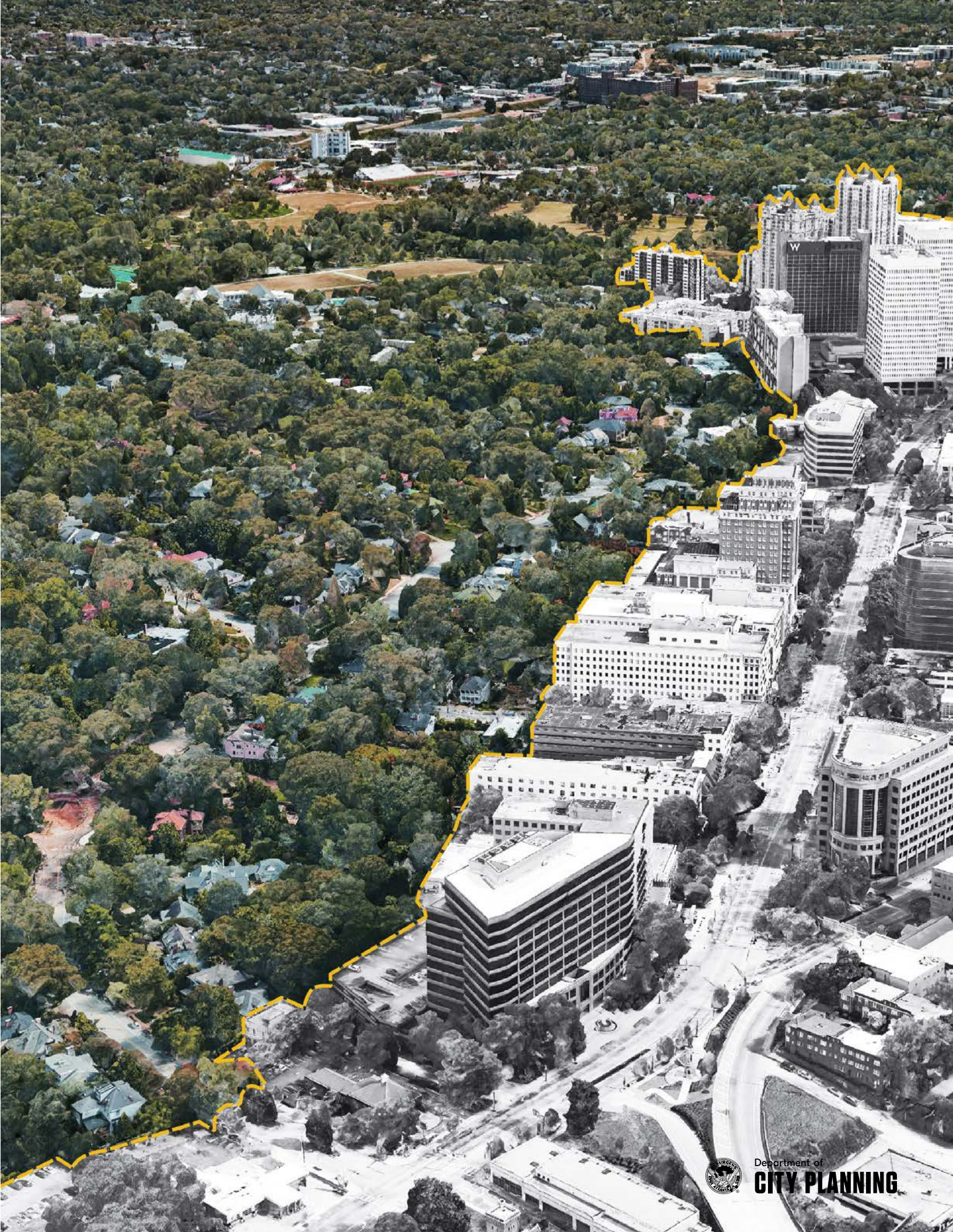
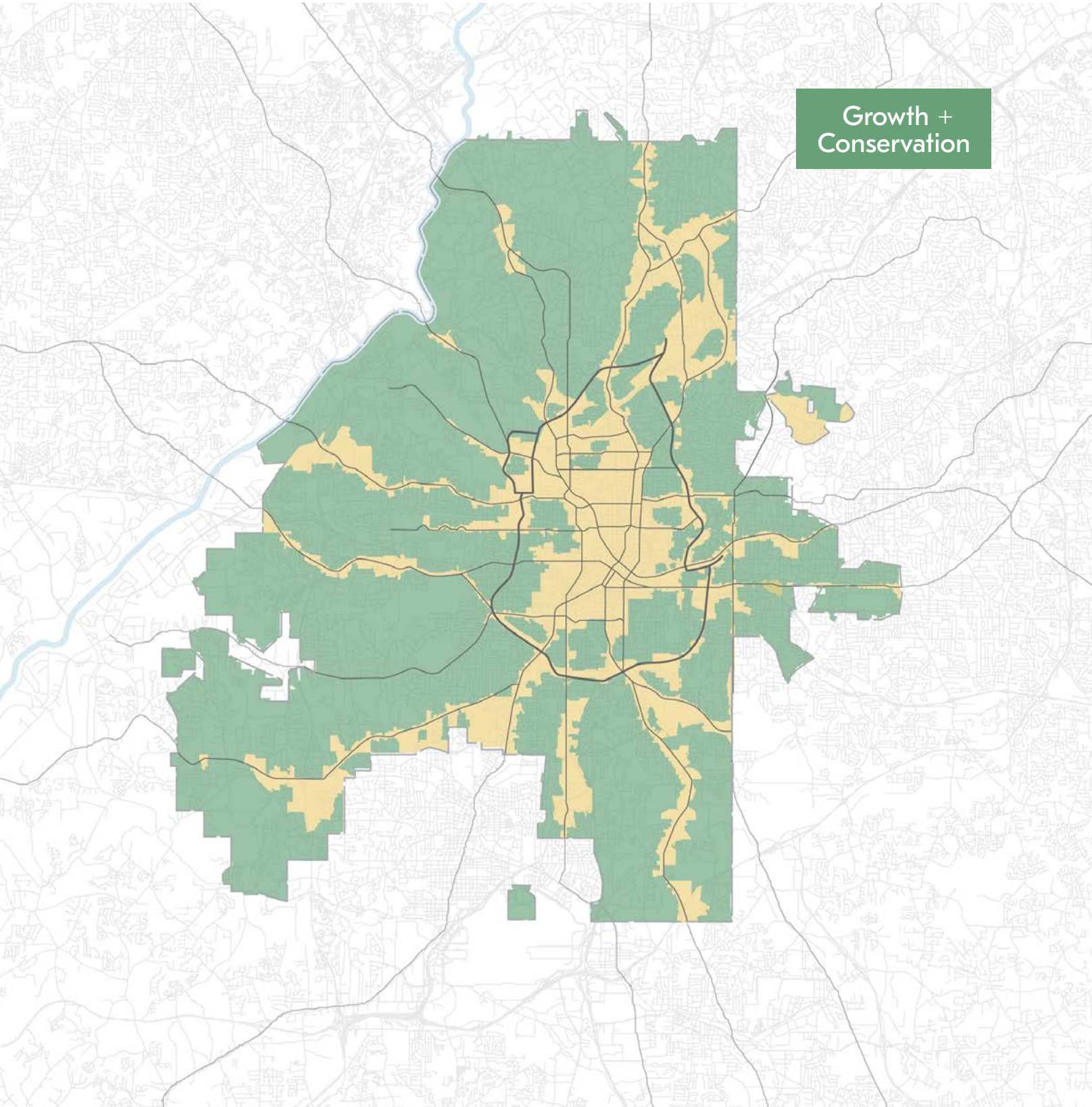
When we're at our best, Atlanta celebrates this juxtaposition of a **vibrant city** and a **verdant forest**. With our core values in mind, therefore, we'll base our approach to the design of the city on this enduring logic.

**Design for People**

**Design for Nature**

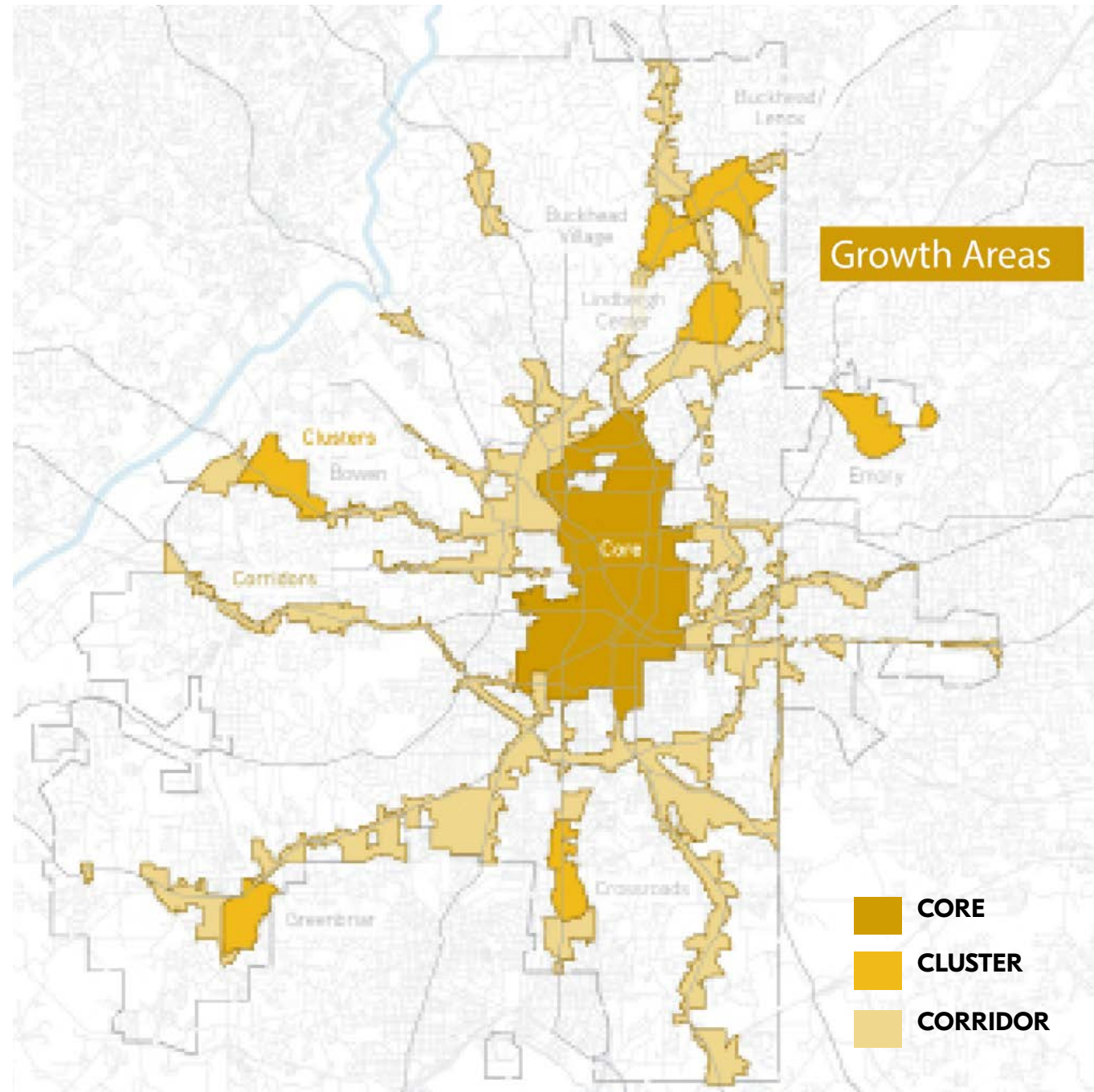
**Design for People in Nature**

**THIS IS HOW ATLANTA GROWS ANYWAY.  
WE'RE JUST GOING TO BE MORE  
INTENTIONAL ABOUT IT.**



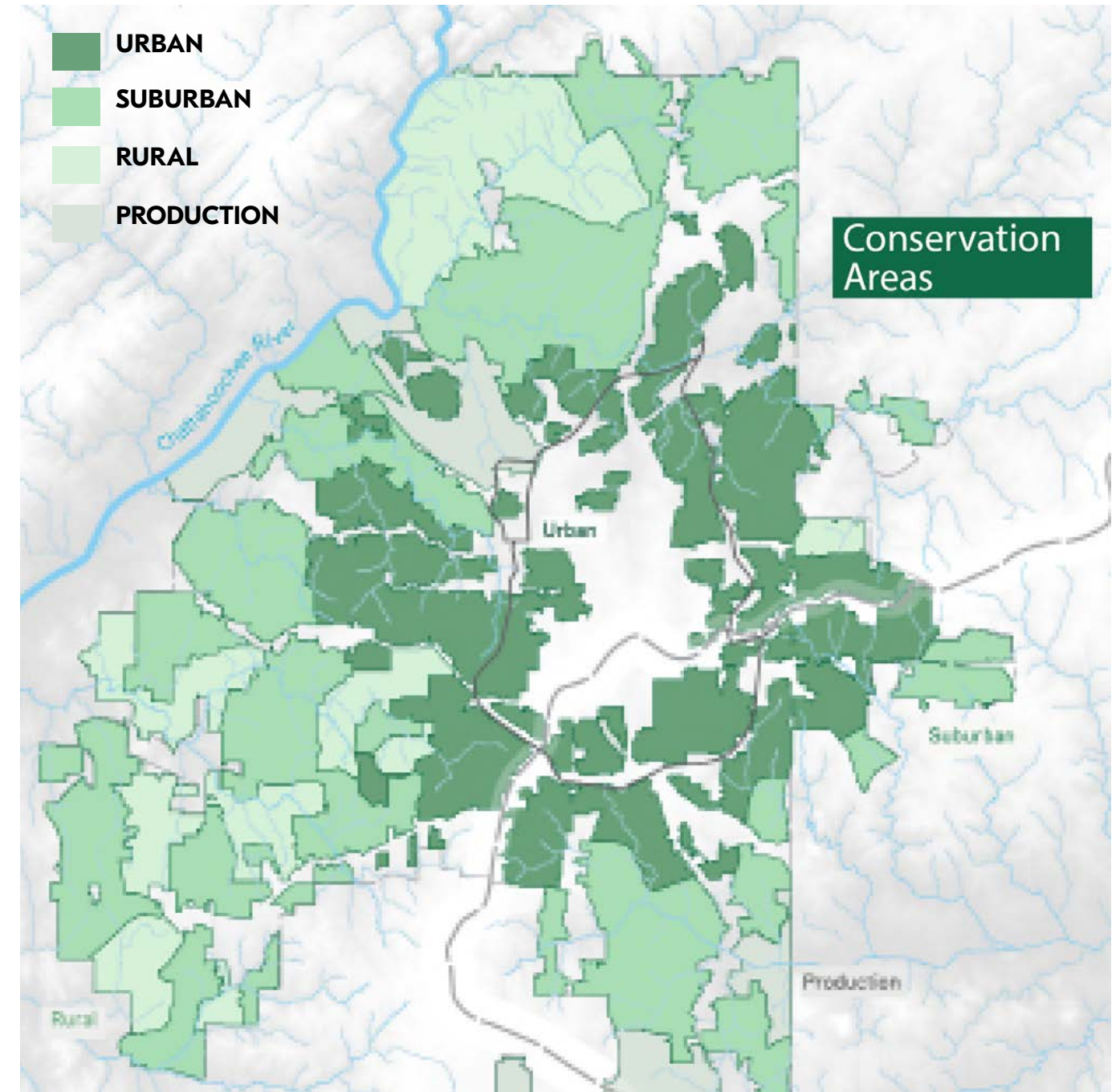
## Growth Areas

Growth will be organized into already-developed areas that are suitable to taking on growth. These growth areas represent an enormous capacity that, if properly designed, can easily accommodate Atlanta's expanding population.



## Conservation Areas

The rest of the city will be protected from overwhelming growth. These Conservation Areas represent ecological value, historic character and housing options that, if properly designed, can make living with all those new neighbors a pleasure.



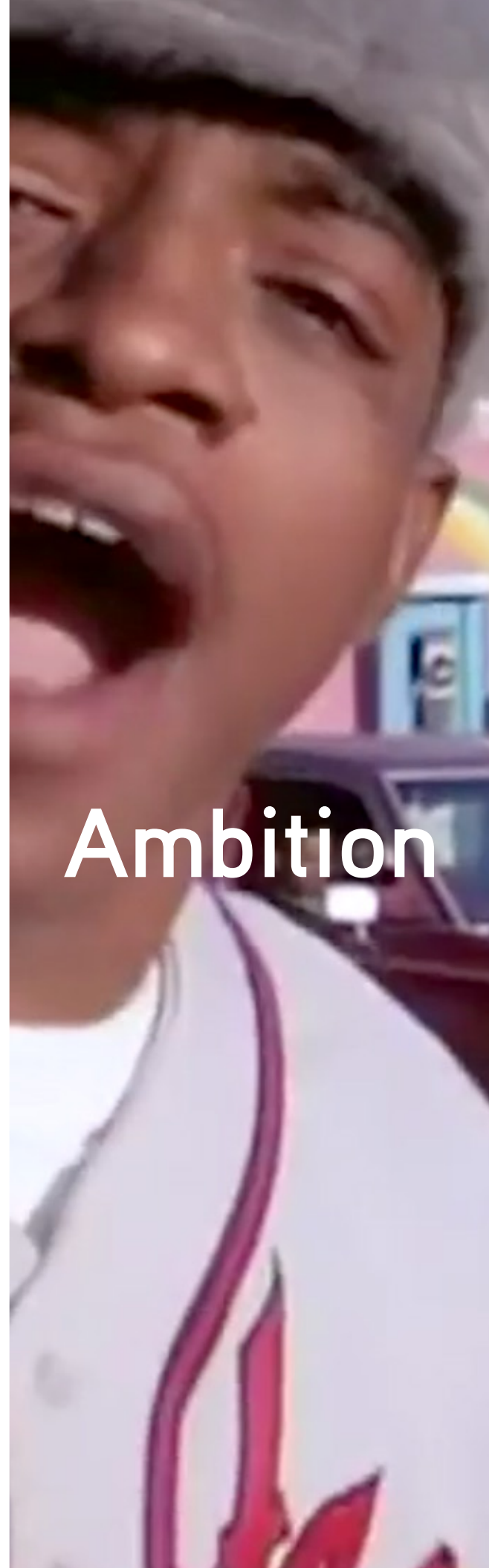




Equity



Progress



Ambition



Access



Nature

# **NATURE: URBAN ECOLOGY FRAMEWORK**

**PROTECT, RESTORE, ACCENTUATE**

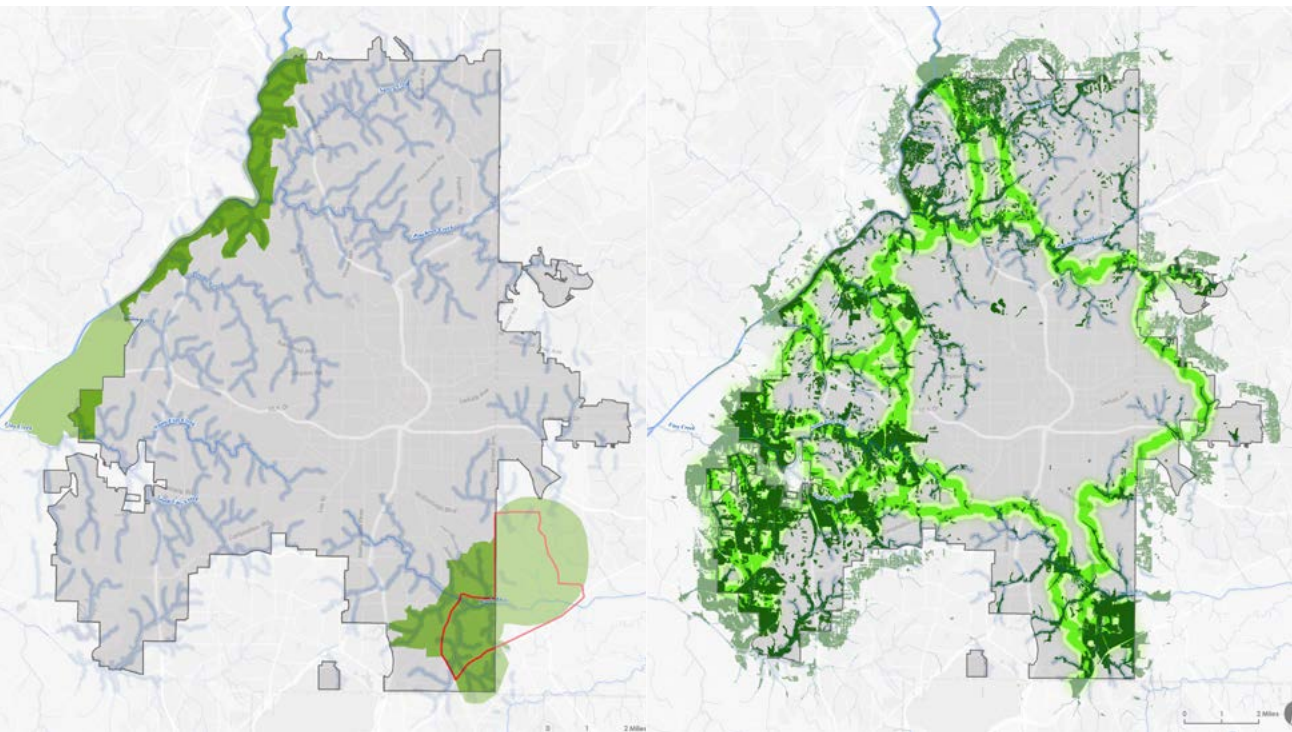
**50% TREE CANOPY**

**STRATEGIC REPLANTING**

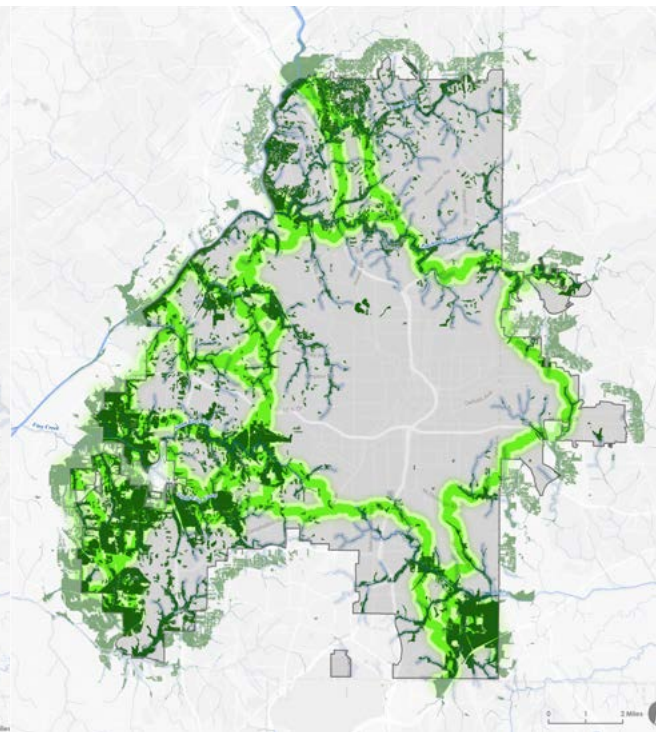
**INTERNAL COORDINATION & PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT**

**TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE REWRITE**

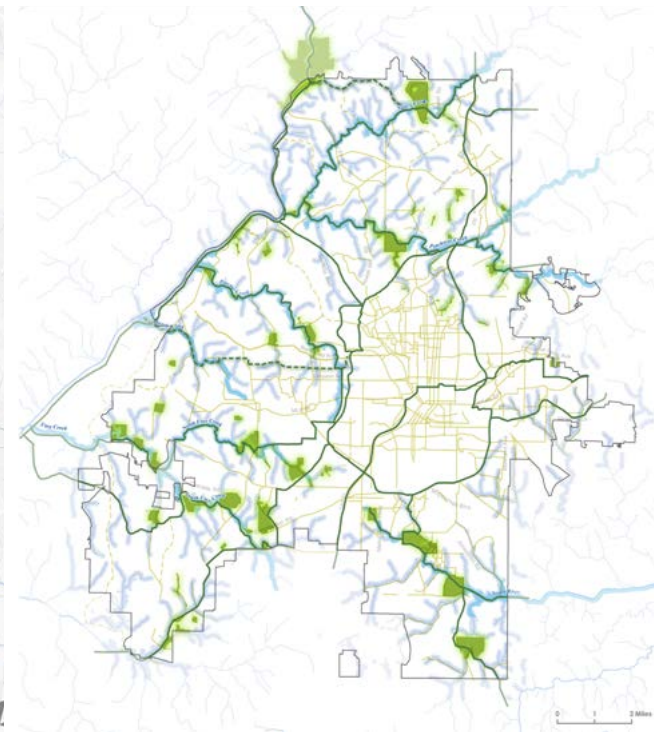
# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



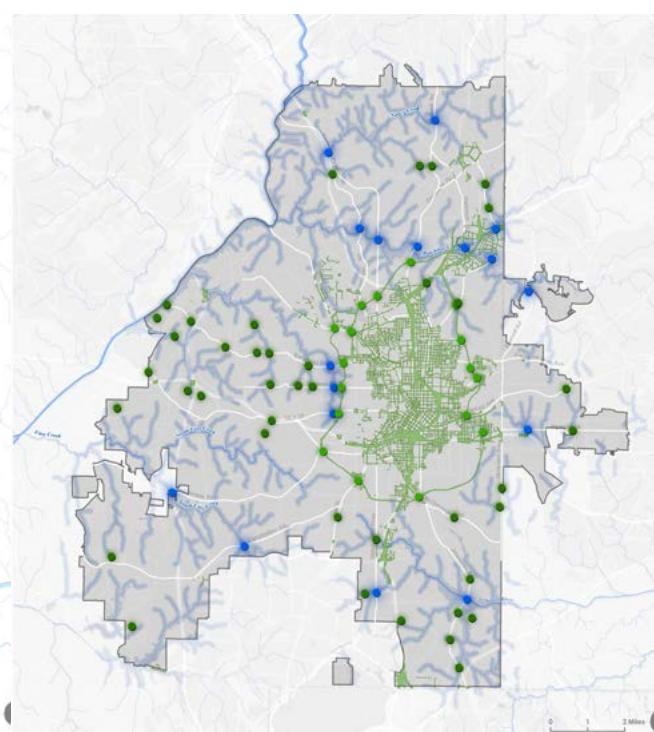
DESIGN FOR WILDNESS



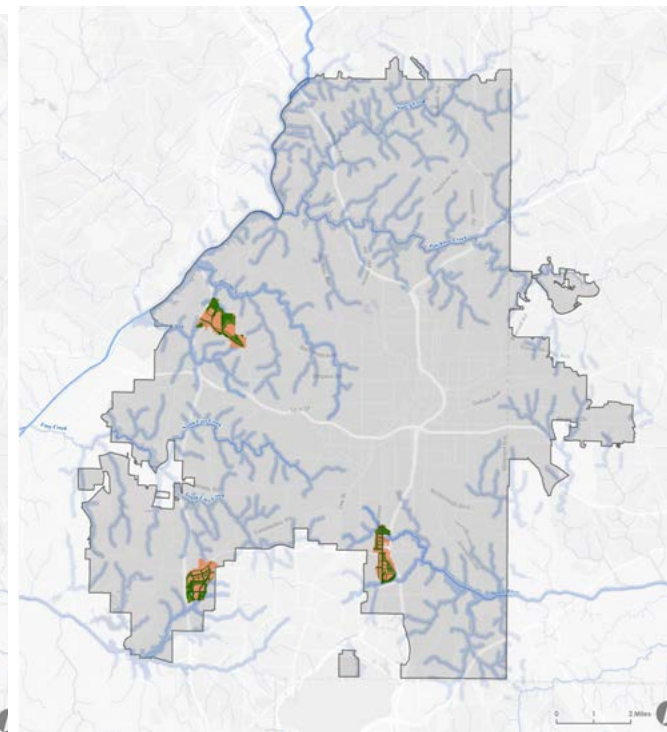
DESIGN FOR COMFORT



DESIGN FOR RETREAT  
& ADVENTURE



DESIGN FOR CONNECTIONS










DESIGN FOR LIFESTYLE

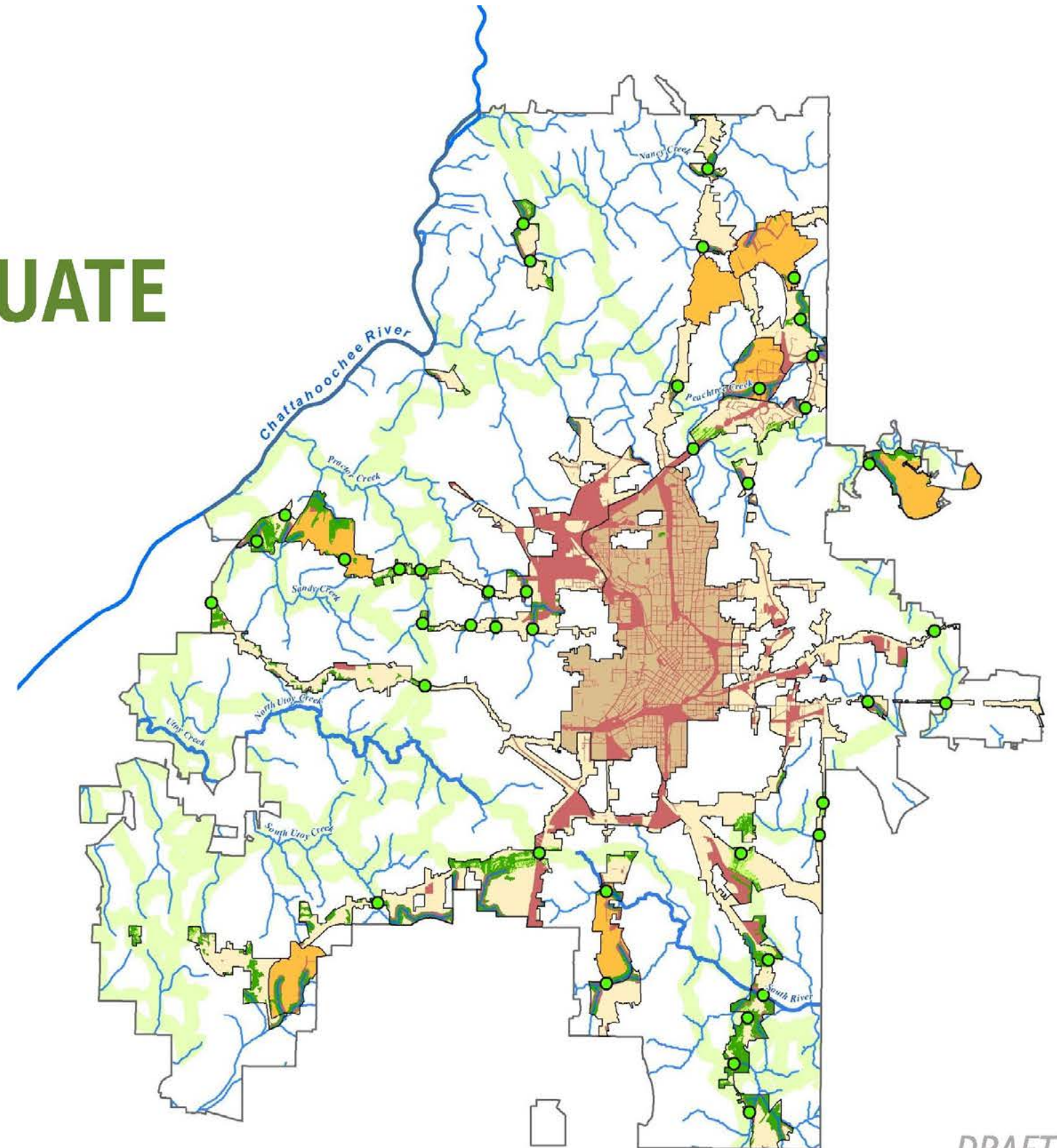


# PROTECT RESTORE ACCENTUATE

## with CITY DESIGN

Opportunities to apply ecological design and development principles, to protect, restore, build upon (see EcoClusters development principles)








-  Nature Spaces
-  High Quality Forest to Protect
-  Forest Connectivity Corridors
-  Restore Tree Canopy
-  City Design Core
-  City Design Clusters
-  City Design Growth Corridors



DRAFT

# RESTORE - TREE CANOPY

## How do we get to 50%

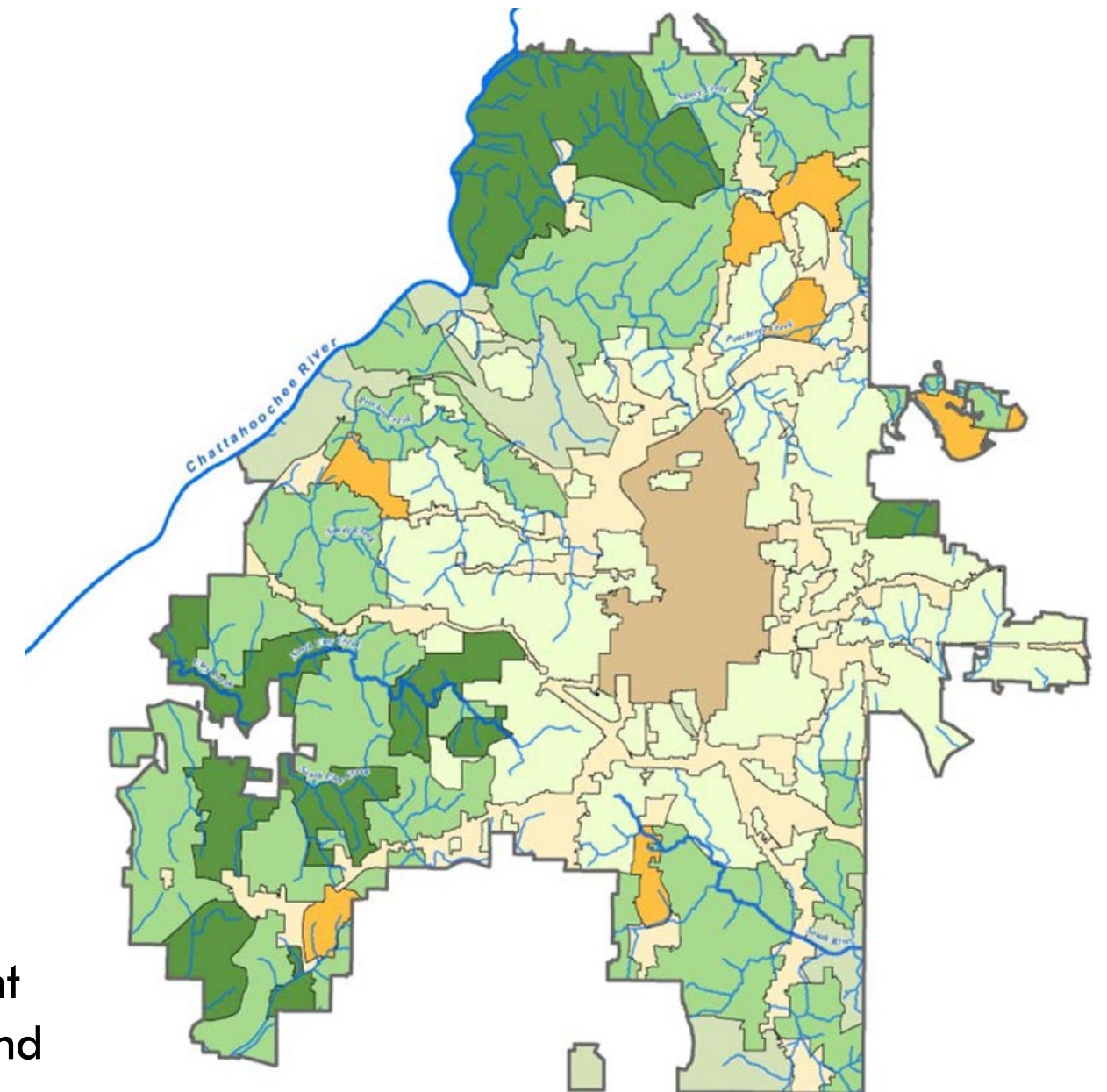
| City Design Category   | 2008  | 2014 | Change | Goal       | Change needed | Major Initiative* | Protect & Plant^ |
|--|-------|------|--------|------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
|  Core             | 7%    | 11%  | +4%    | <b>15%</b> | <b>+4%</b>    | X                 |                  |
|  Clusters         | 26.5% | 26%  | -0.5%  | <b>35%</b> | <b>+9%</b>    | X                 |                  |
|  Corridors        | 25%   | 27%  | +2%    | <b>30%</b> | <b>+3%</b>    | X                 |                  |
|  Production Areas | 28%   | 27%  | -1%    | <b>27%</b> | <b>0%</b>     |                   | X                |
|  Urban          | 48%   | 50%  | +2%    | <b>55%</b> | <b>+5%</b>    | X                 |                  |
|  Suburban       | 59%   | 58%  | -1%    | <b>60%</b> | <b>+2%</b>    |                   | X                |
|  Rural          | 70%   | 65%  | -5%    | <b>67%</b> | <b>+2%</b>    |                   | X                |

\*Major public realm tree planting of diverse tree species, soil volume, tree management and replacement initiative

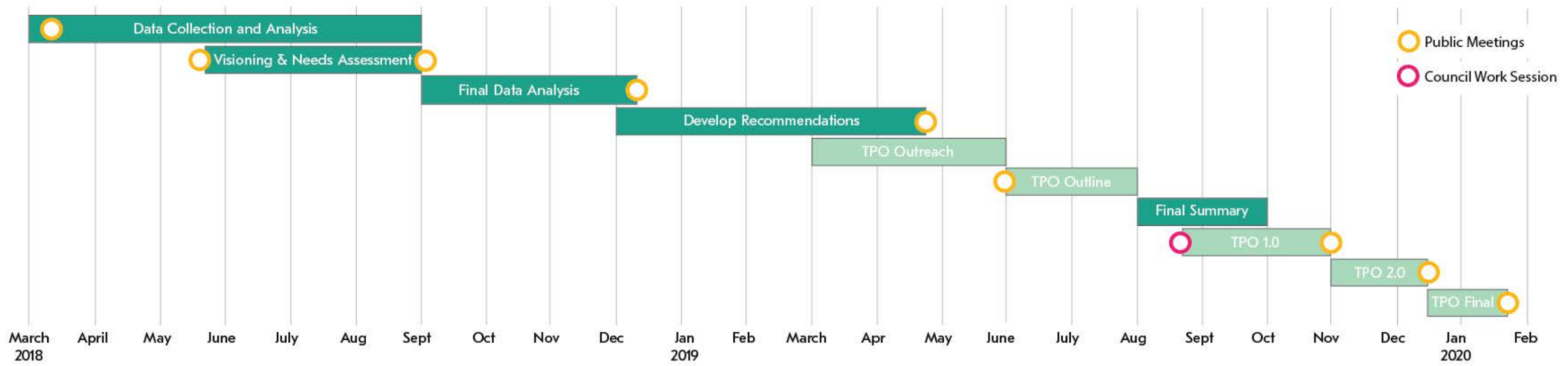
^ Protection of tree canopy and new planting of diverse species

## Key Actions

- Protection of existing tree canopy using the previously identified protection zones
- Major young forest initiative to plant 3,600 new acres of trees and manage to maturity
- Annual replacement of dead trees outside forests.
- City wide public realm tree inventory to inform new planting and management
- Assessment of tree mortality and demographics to track trajectory of forest and planted public realm trees.



## URBAN ECOLOGY FRAMEWORK AND TREE ORDINANCE REWRITE SCHEDULE

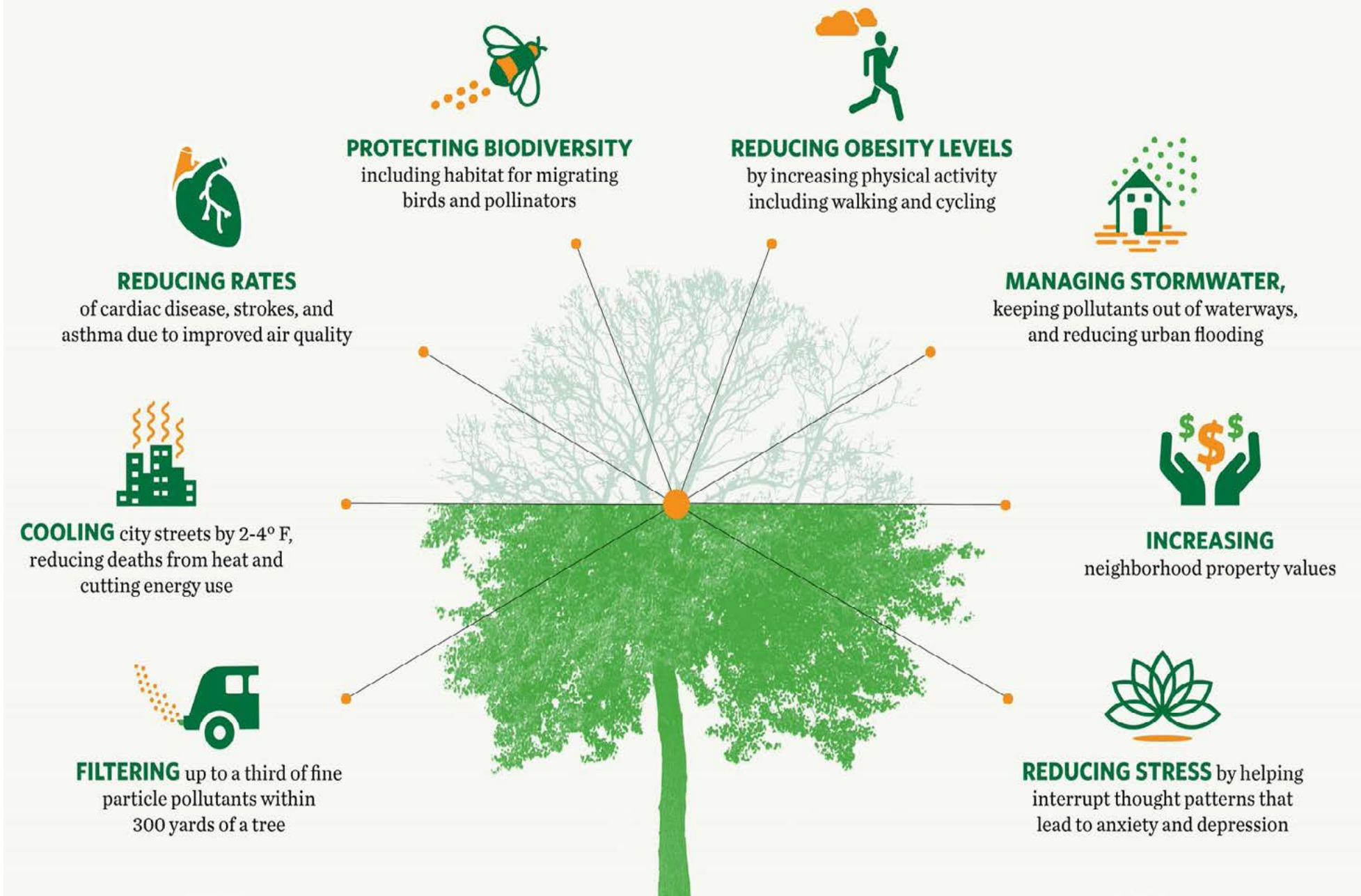




# PROTECTING OUR NATURAL IDENTITY

Rewriting the Tree Protection Ordinance

# BECAUSE...TREES MATTER





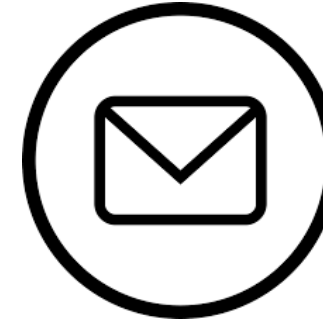
**WE MUST WORK DIFFERENTLY**

# COMMUNITY INPUT SO FAR

DCP received input from a diverse set of audiences ranging from advocacy groups (Tree Next Door, City in the Forest), environmental based non-profits (South River Watershed Alliance, Trees Atlanta), engaged residents, the Development Industry (Council for Quality Growth, Greater Home Builders Association of Atlanta), and more.



240 attendees  
4 citywide meetings



Over 150  
emails received



Over 250  
letters received

## Engaged residents

- Atlanta's tree canopy is special and a major source of pride and enjoyment
- Allow for flexibility with homeowners going through non-development processes
- Increase education and support for tree protection and maintenance

## Advocacy groups

- Support more protection and preservation of trees early in the process
- Stronger enforcement
- Plant more native trees
- Preserve and conserve land
- Ordinance needs more definition and clarity
- Build smarter, more environmentally sensitive (grading, soils, etc.)

## Development industry

- Homebuilders, homeowners, and property owners want to protect our natural environment AND have the homes the citizens of Atlanta need.
- Imperative that property owners must be able to fully utilize the "buildable area" of their lot.
- Improve the process to be more consistent and reliable
- Align standards with other ordinances and agencies
- Affordability concerns with more stringent regulation - will increase cost to build

## City agencies

- Replanting standards and processes often hinder public projects funding and schedules. Ideal to have alignment with private development standards.
- Need for better communication and coordination among city agencies, potential centralization

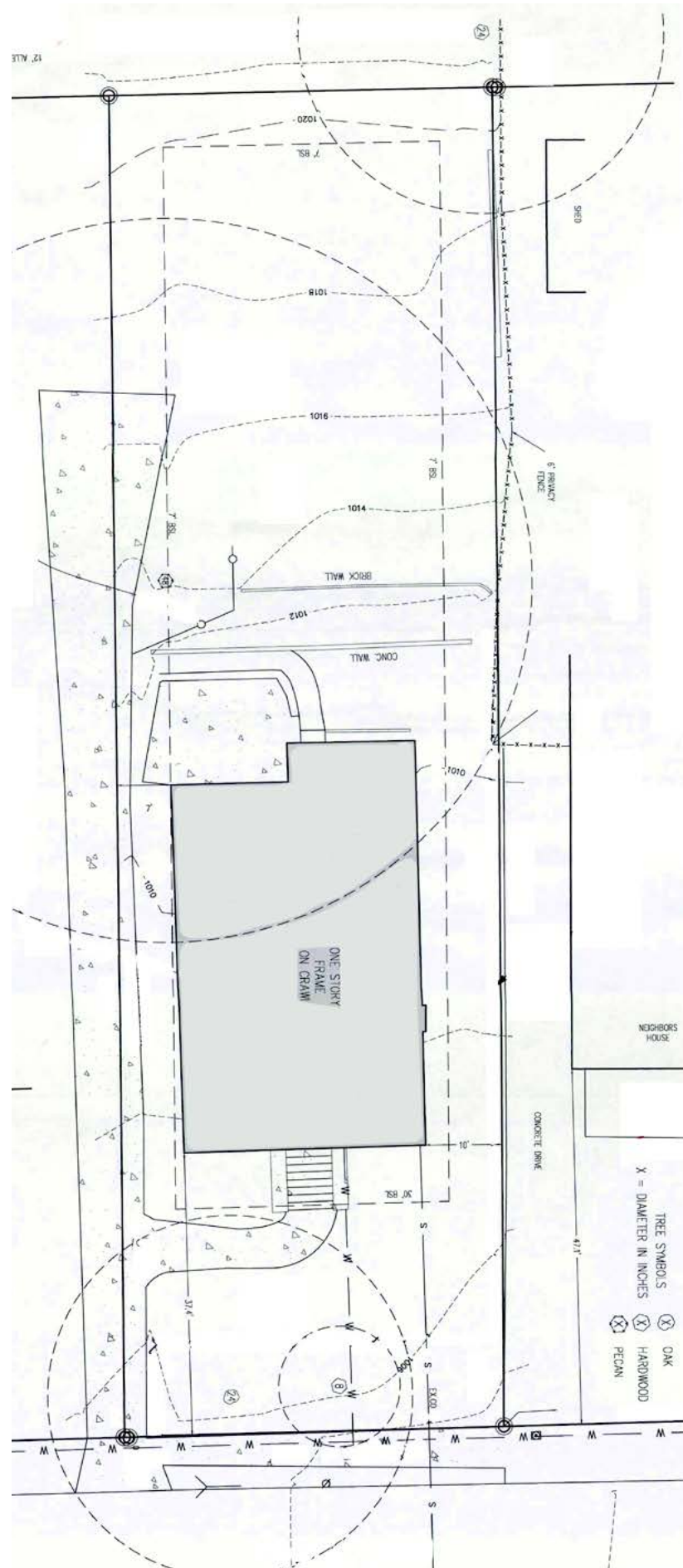
# SMALL LOT SF

Meets R-5 Zoning

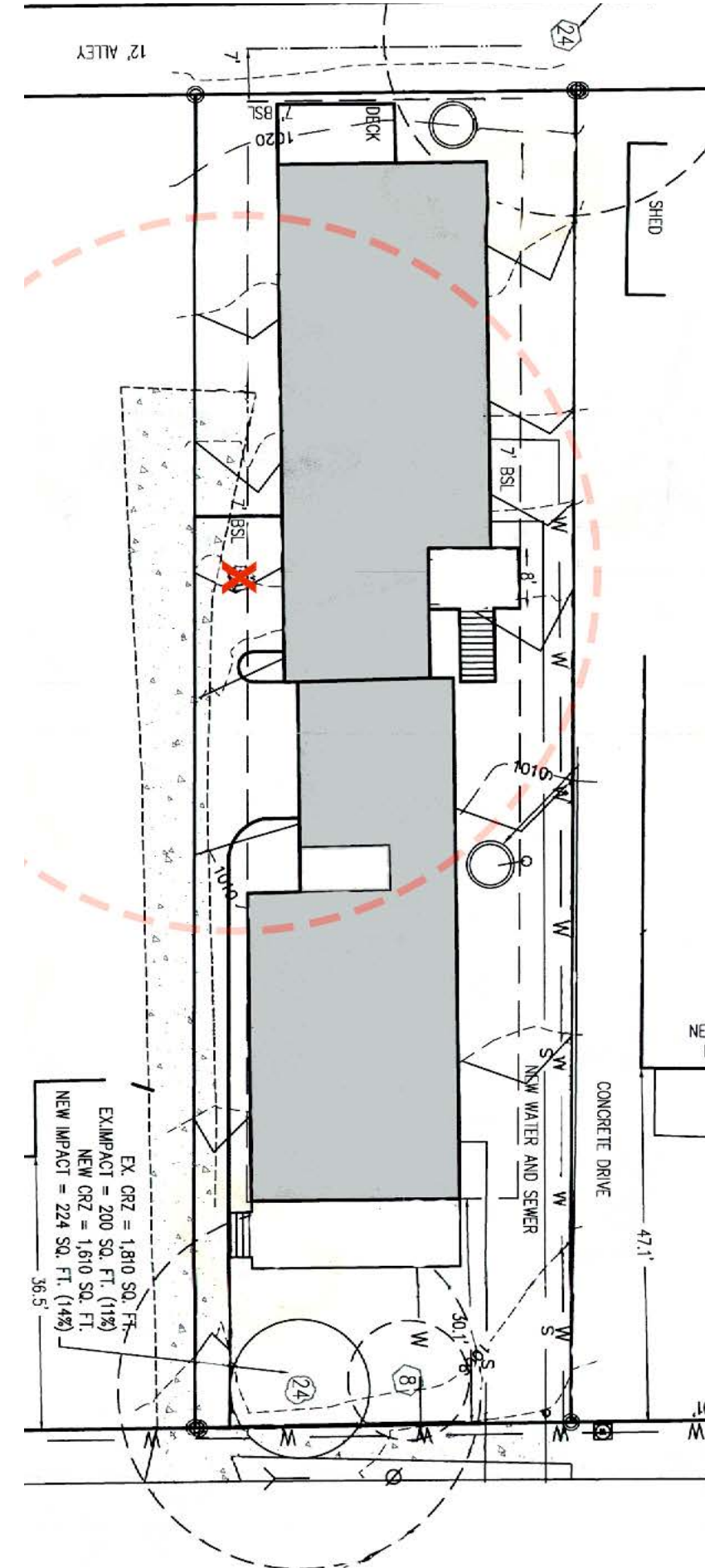
Loss of large specimen tree

\$1,365 in recompense

What can we do better?

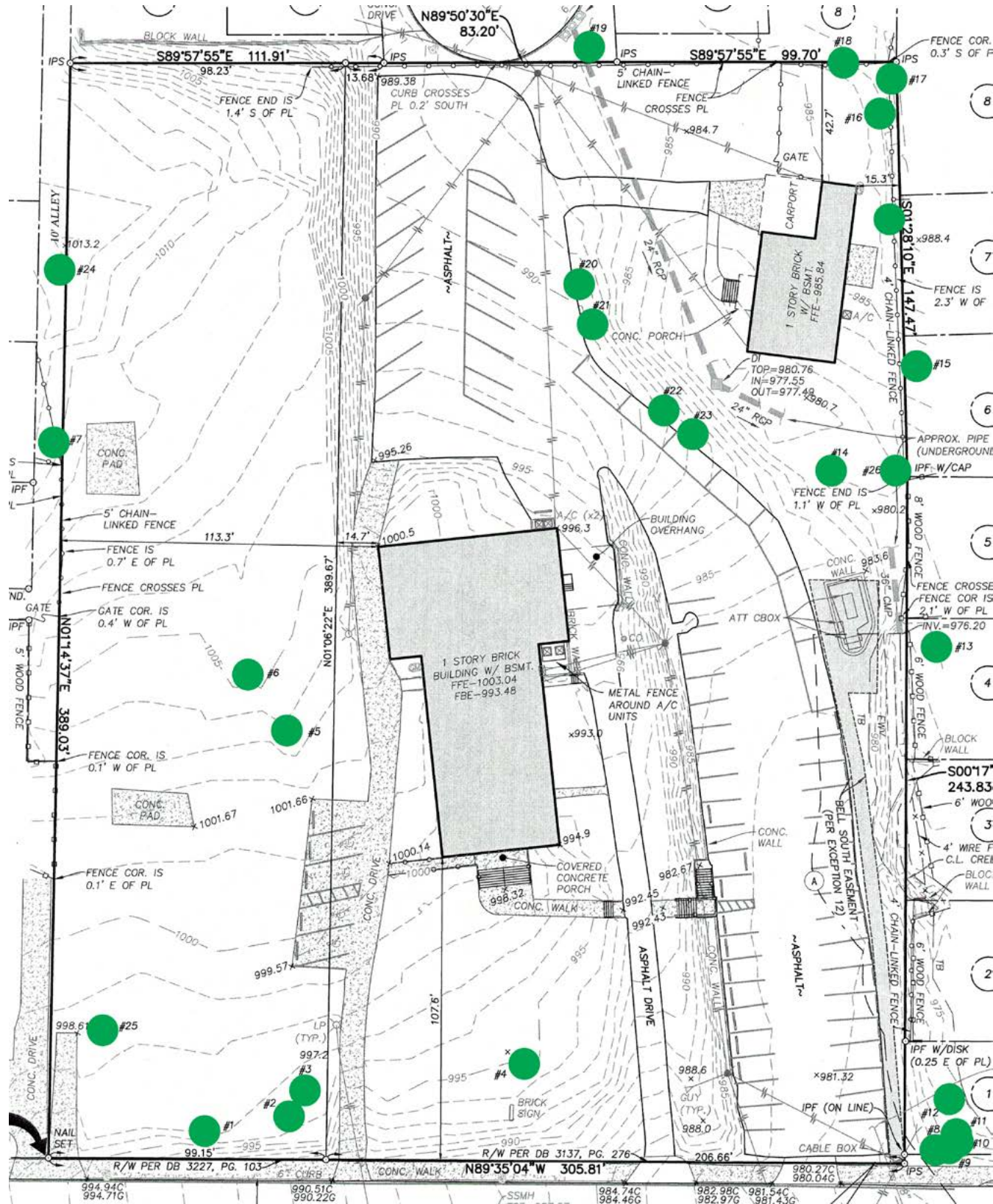


Existing conditions

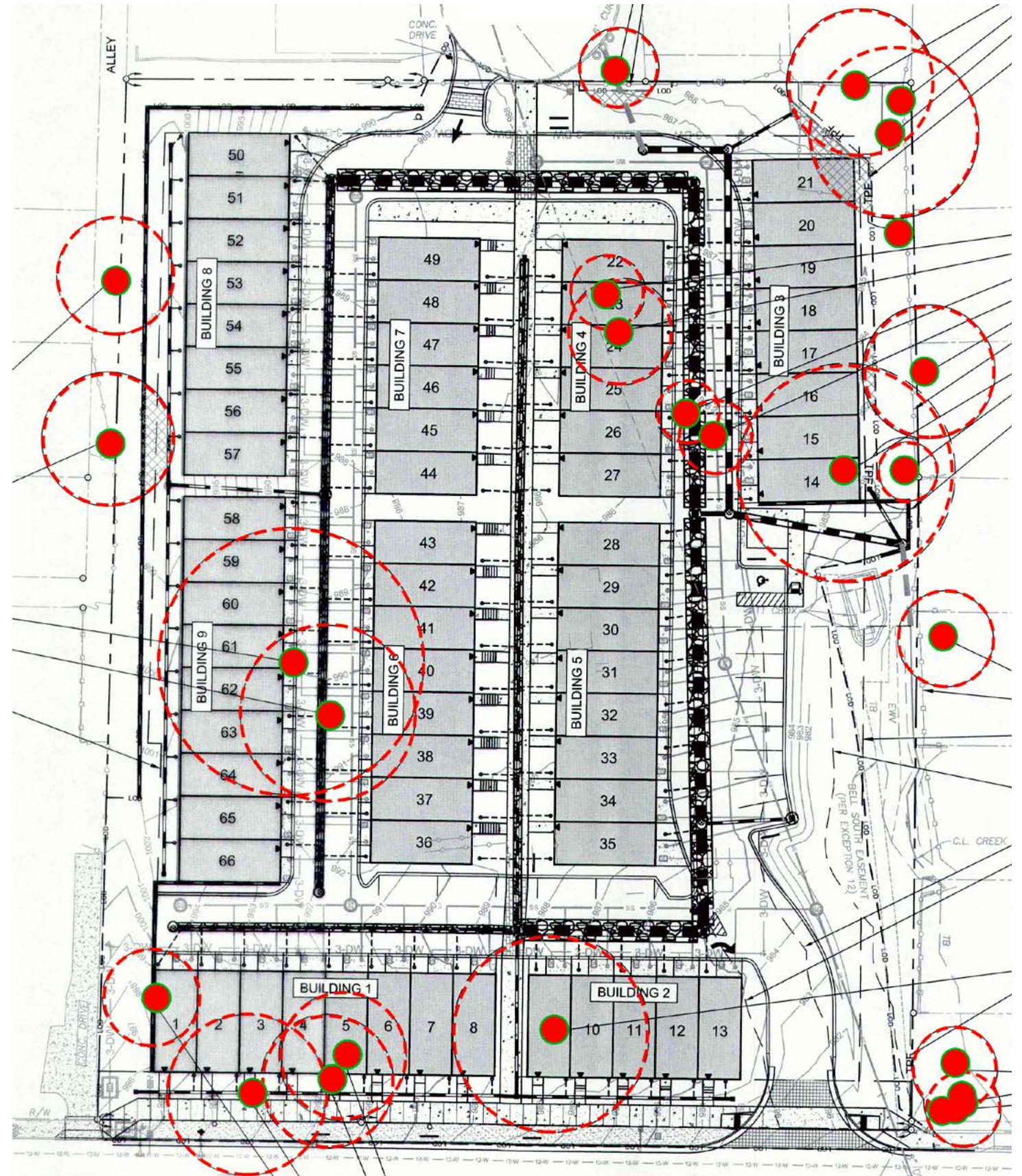


Approved in the current state

# COMMERCIAL

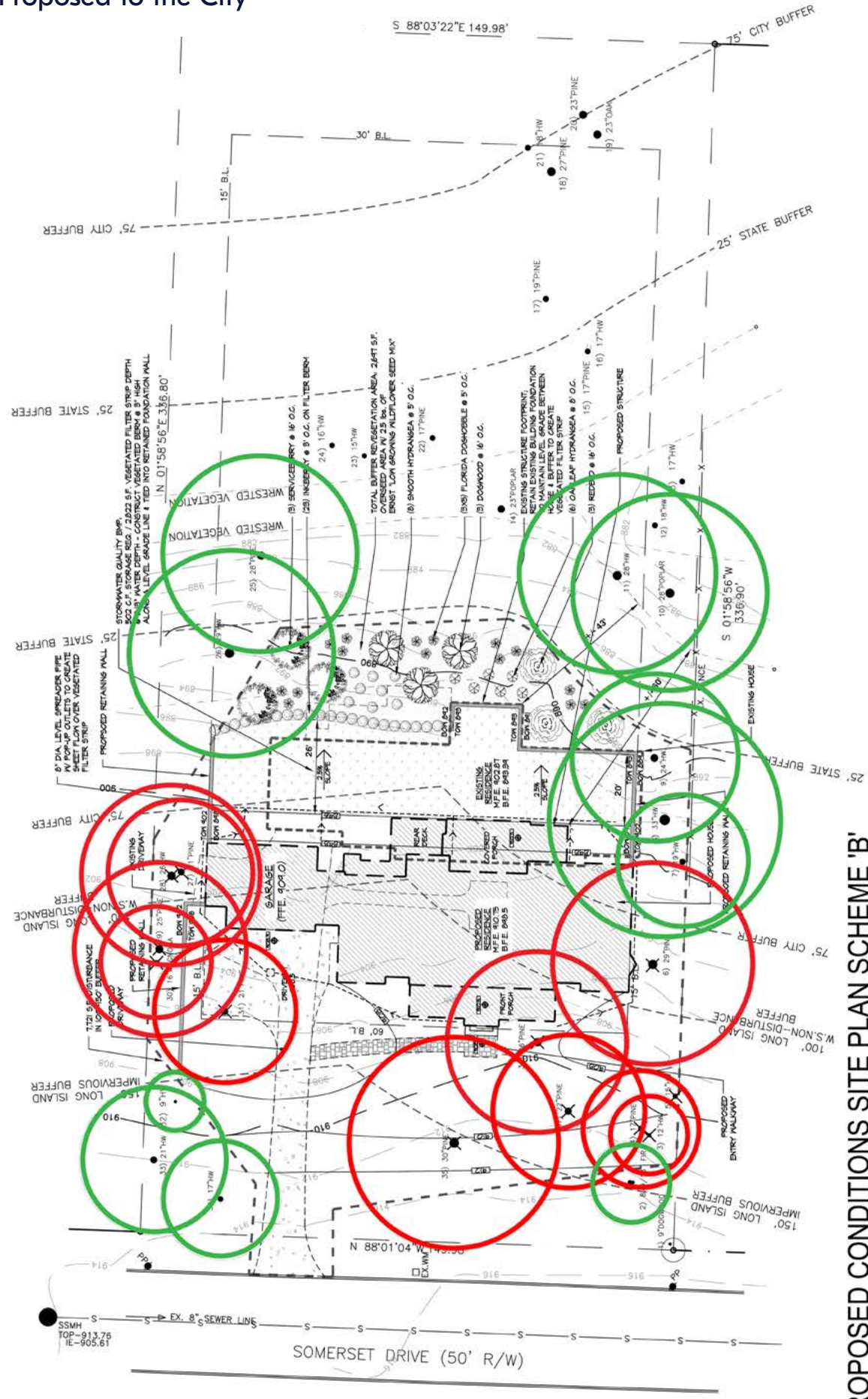


Existing conditions



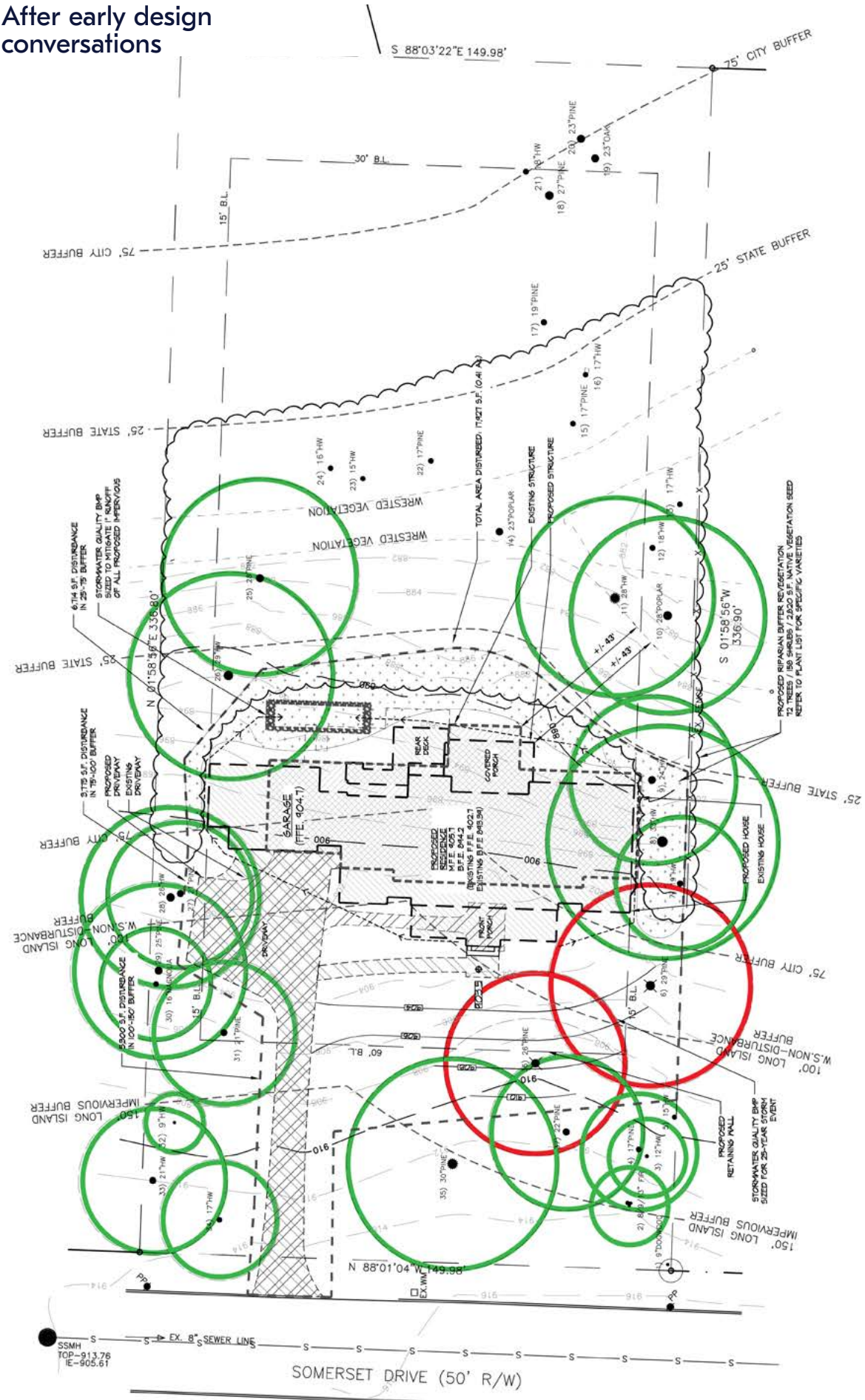
Allowed in the current state

Proposed to the City

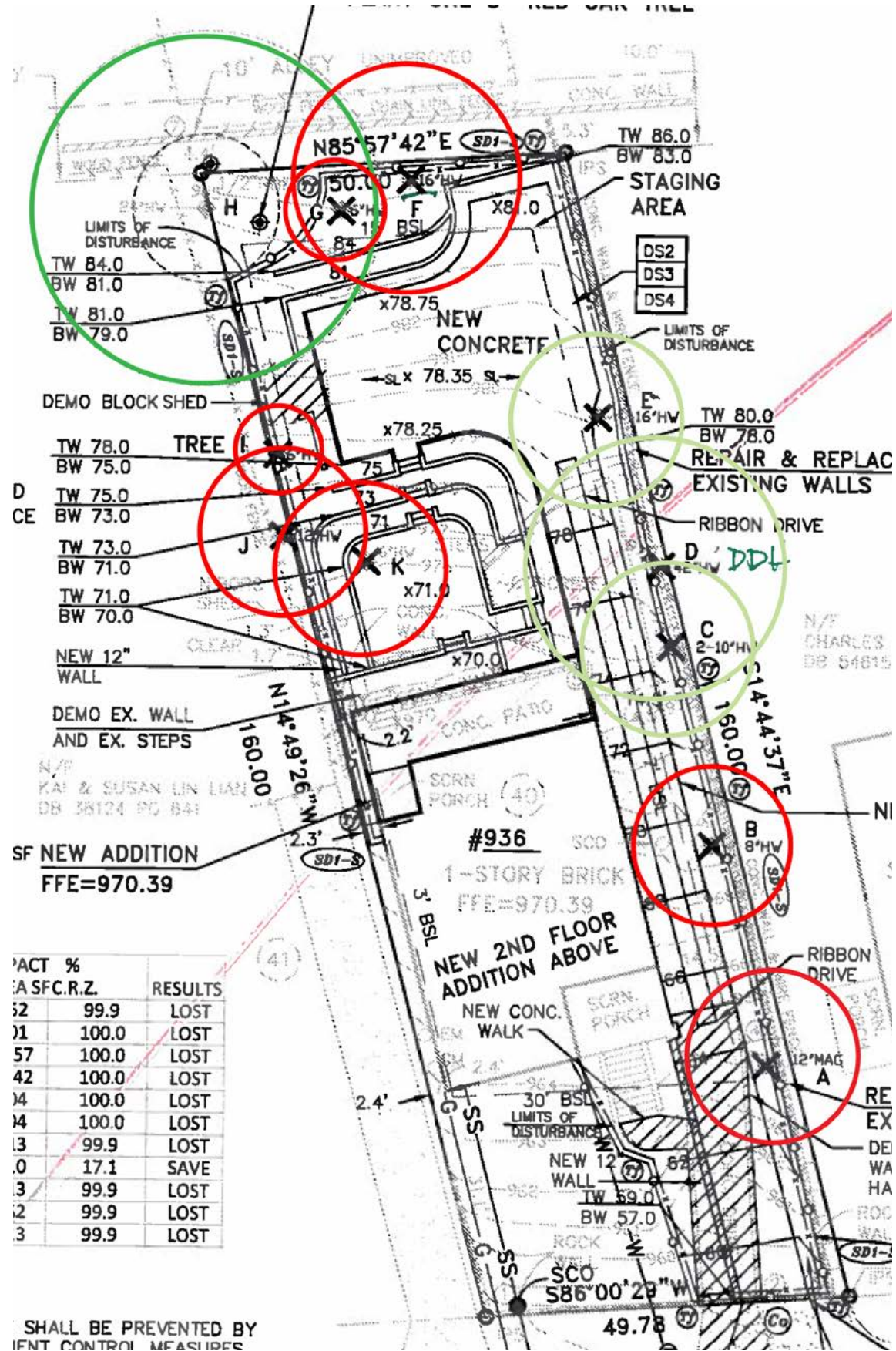


PROPOSED CONDITIONS SITE PLAN SCHEME 'B'

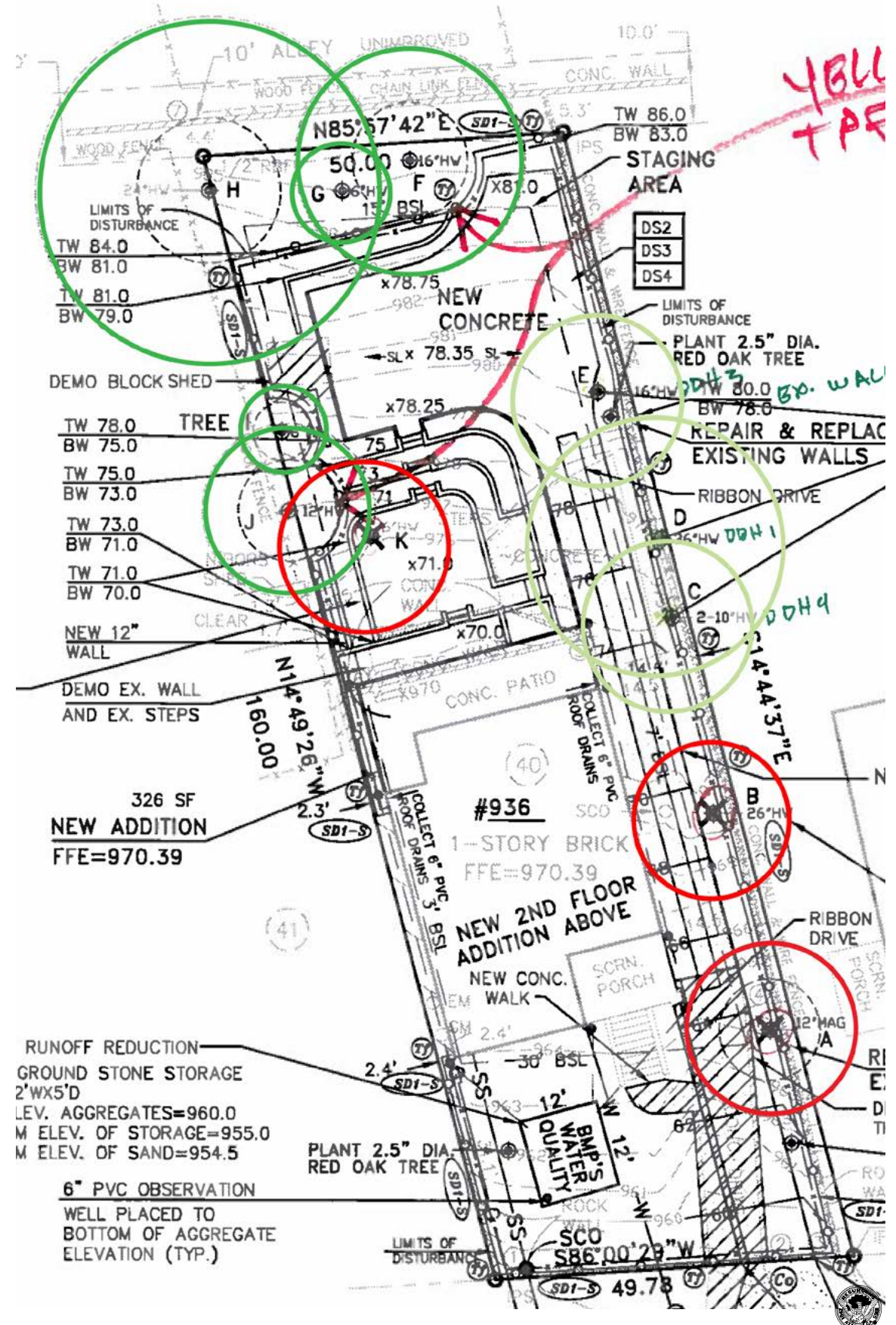
After early design conversations



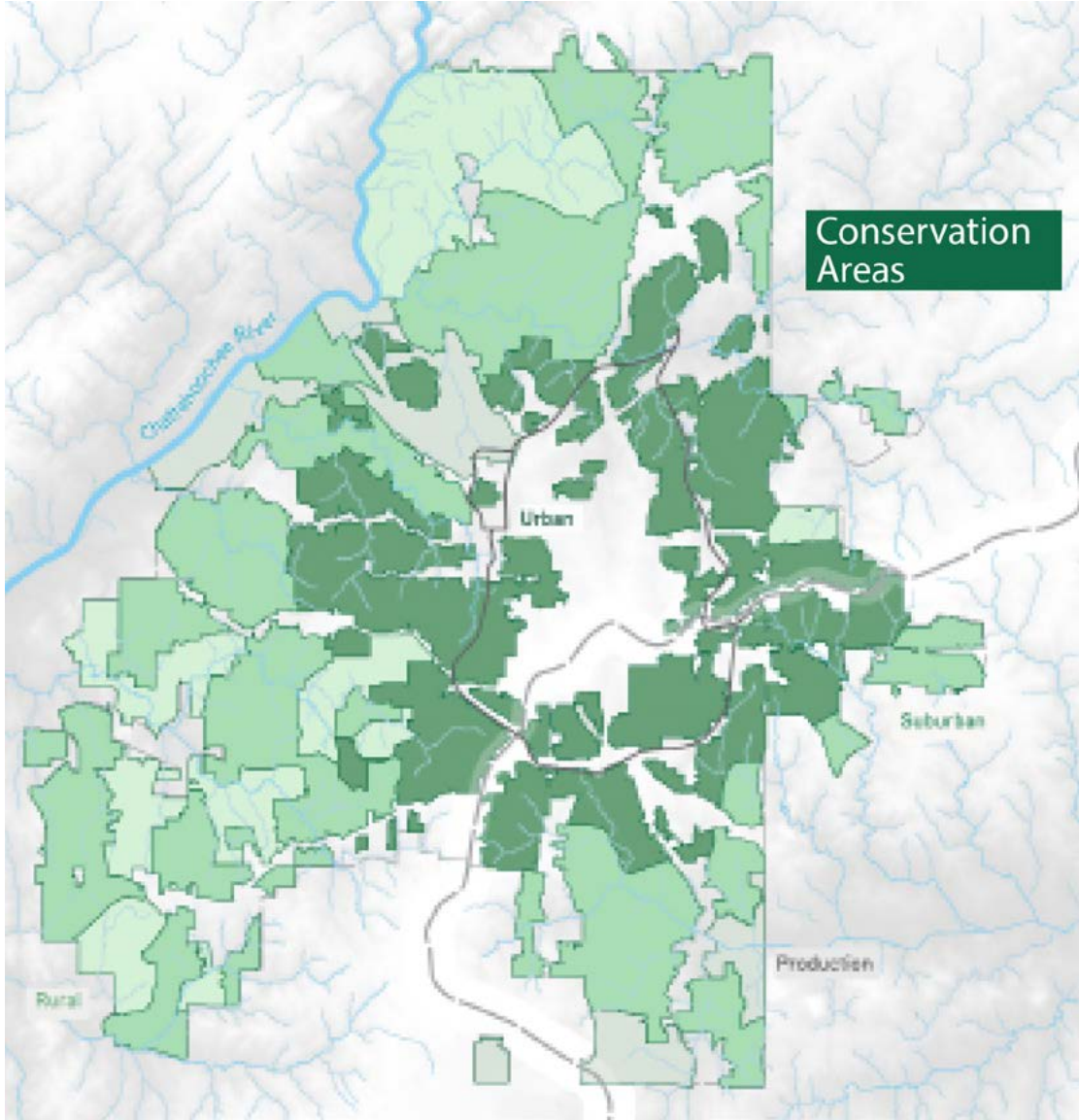
Proposed to the City



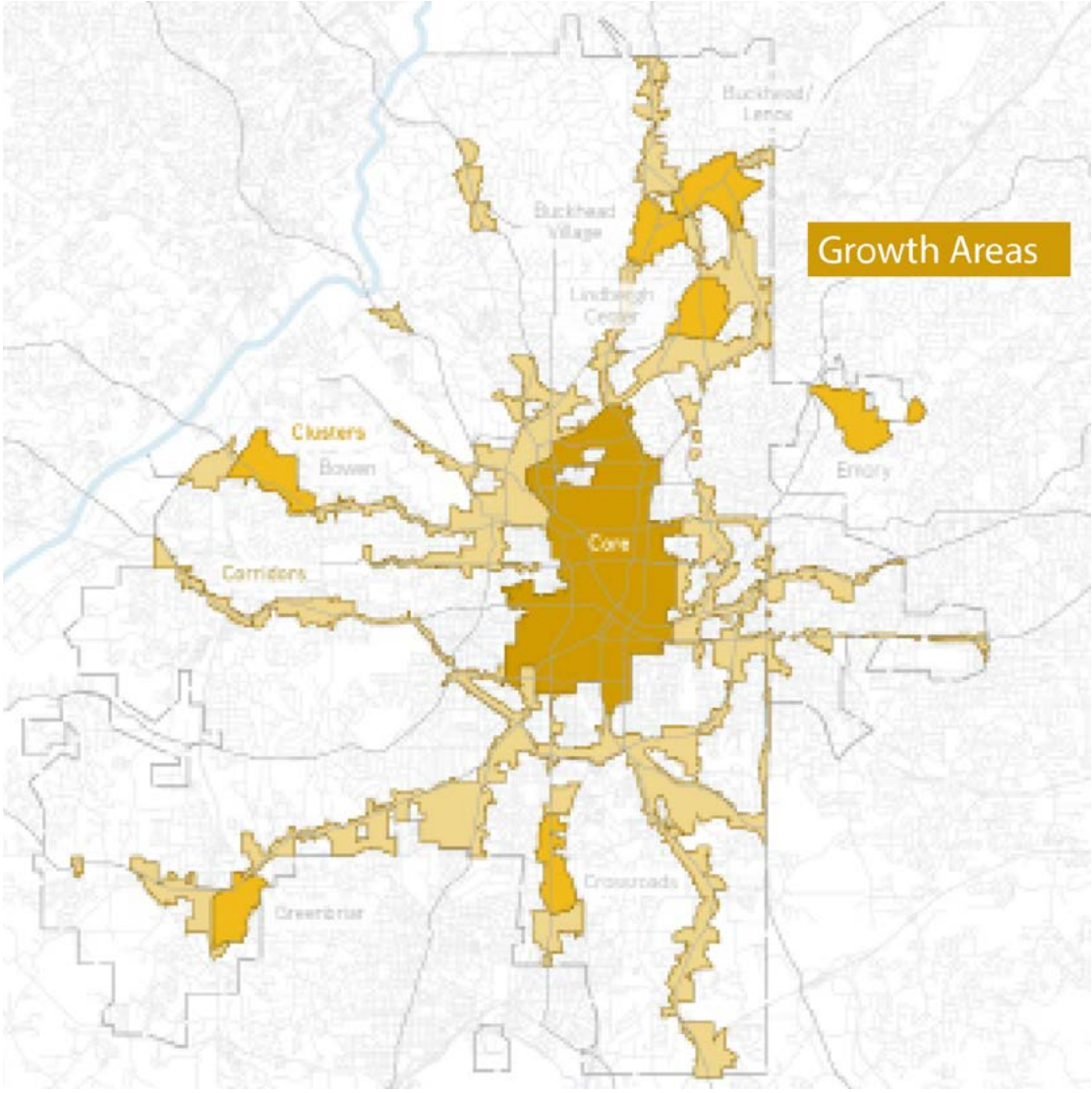
After early design  
conversations



# TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE FRAMEWORK



**CONSERVATION**



**GROWTH**

**PUBLIC & PRIVATE REALM**

# TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

## INTENT AND PURPOSE

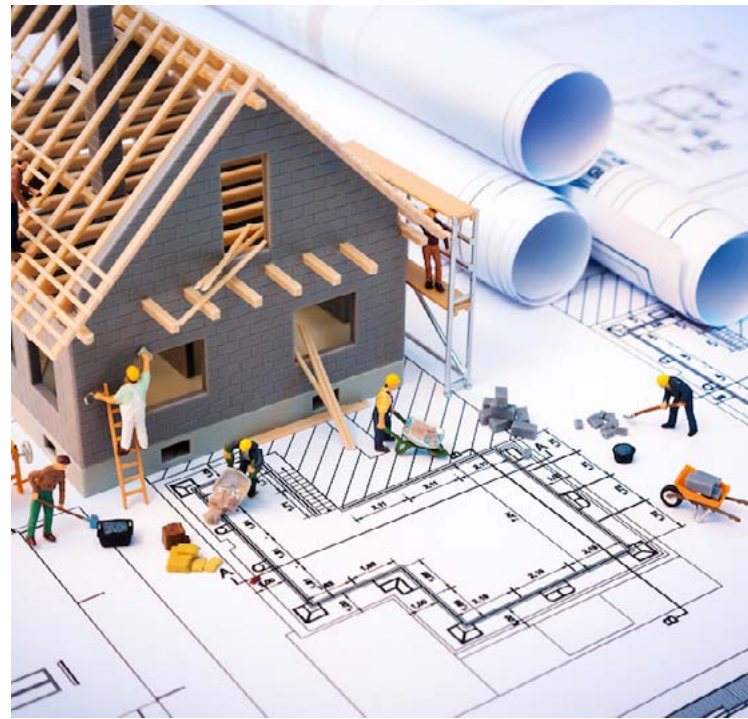
- **Protect and preserve as many trees and ecological assets and services as possible.**
- Prohibit loss of high value habitat and areas of high biodiversity
- Balance City development goals: affordability, mobility, growth
- Implement a clear and consistent process
- Ensure there are equitable distribution of benefits and costs for all residents
- Align the TPO with other environmental and development requirements adopted within the City



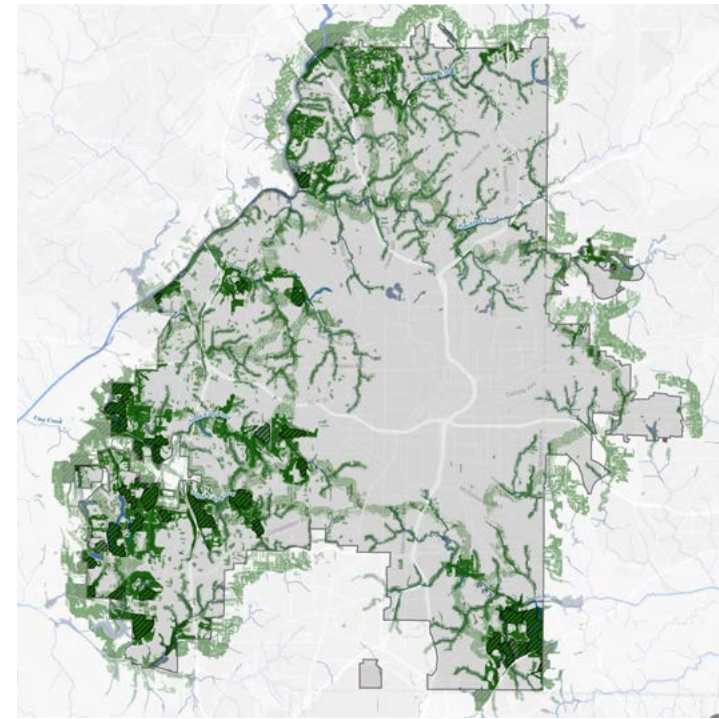
# CRITICAL COMPONENTS



Tree Assessment



Protection standards for development



Protection zones



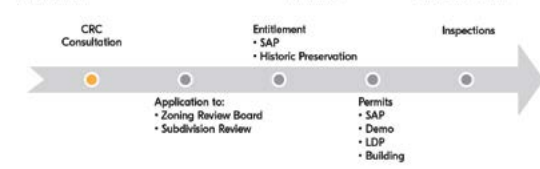
Doing everything right

### CONCEPT REVIEW COMMITTEE (CRC)

Beginning September 1, 2019, any projects desiring to submit for re-zonings or subdivisions will need to consult with the CRC prior to applying with the Department of City Planning.

**CRC OVERVIEW**  
The CRC is a pre-submission meeting program designed to assist customers in navigating the City's development processes. It will serve as an opportunity for customers to meet with representatives from the City's plan review agencies at the forefront of the project design stage to refine plans and scope in an open and organized format. The CRC will save time for both the applicant and the City, by highlighting challenges and clarifying processes ahead of submission, thereby reducing the number of follow-ups and streamlining the overall review process. The CRC is not meant to extend the timeline or apply additional regulations, rather provide technical feedback prior to beginning the entitlement and permitting process. With the adoption of Resolution 19-R-3750 by the Atlanta City Council, tree protection and site development have been identified as an immediate area of focus for the CRC.

- WBT**  
A BETTER ATLANTA  
Emphasize design and innovation in development and construction
- CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
Provide technical assistance and a roadmap of feasibility
- EFFICIENCY**  
Improve process and service improvement both externally and internally
- APPROACHABLE**  
Allowing for increased transparency and engagement with the City of Atlanta



**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**  
 Department of City Planning - Office of Buildings, Building and Life Safety Code  
 Department of City Planning - Office of Buildings, Atlanta's Division  
 Department of City Planning - Office of Zoning & Development  
 Department of City Planning - Office of Mobility Planning  
 Department of Watershed Management - Site Development  
 Department of Public Works - Streets  
 Others, as determined by project scope



Non-construction tree removal



Enforcement



Resources

Pre-submittal meeting

# PUBLIC: NATURE INTERTWINED WITH ATLANTA'S STREET EXPERIENCE

- Preserve high value areas and provide protection of existing canopy and streetscapes
- A strategic focus on increasing green experiences; less on replanting and replacement and more on ensuring the healthy, green public realm Atlanta envisions
- Align standards with private property thresholds while providing for the challenges and limited flexibility of public scopes of work

## Tree Assessment Method

ISA's guide for plant appraisal

iTree

## City Street Tree Standards

Canopy that provides benefit to public and environment using the streets as the vehicle, i.e. shade, enjoyment, heat island, emissions, traffic calming, etc.

Emphasis on ensuring the success of the tree health.

Exploring silva cells, continuous soils, etc.

## Tree Bank

Flexibility for replanting to not hinder public projects

Option for resident engagement

GROWTH  
CONSERVATION

# PRIVATE: THE NATURE OUTSIDE YOUR FRONT DOOR

- Protect and preserve all high value trees

## DEVELOPMENT

### Tree Assessment Method

ISA's guide for plant appraisal

iTree

City assistance, where needed

### Concept Review Committee

Pre-submittal meeting for certain thresholds

### Variance Review Board

if removing high value trees, seek a variance

### Replanting and maintenance

Replant lower value when removed

Bond program

### Tree Bank

Pay where protection and replanting not possible

Option for resident engagement

### Doing it right

streamlined postings, appeals and permit process

## NON-CONSTRUCTION

### Tree Assessment Method

ISA's guide for plant appraisal

iTree

City assistance, where needed

### Flexibility

Allowances to remove healthy trees

Exemptions

### Variance Review Board

if removing high value trees, seek a variance

### Replanting and maintenance

Replant any value when removed

## GROWTH

## CONSERVATION

# THE NUMBERS

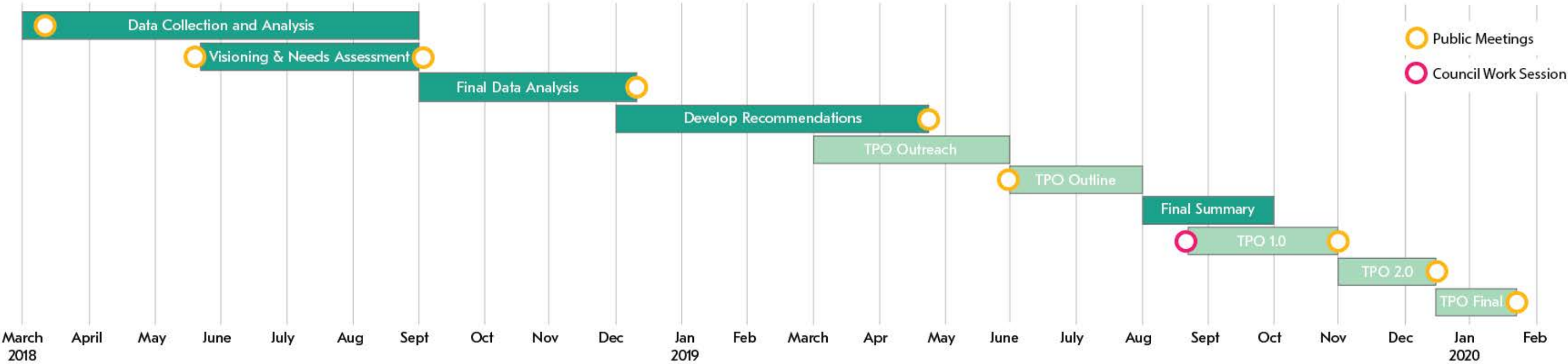
| Review category             | Trees Destroyed or Impacted |                |               | Trees Replaced |                | Replacement |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
|                             | Number                      | DBH            | DBH, unknown* | Number         | TCI            | %           |
| Landscape                   | 476                         | 8,284          | 0             | 392            | 1,390          | 82%         |
| Infrastructure              | 2,185                       | 13,078         | 0             | 855            | 2,484          | 39%         |
| Illegal Activity            | 2,268                       | 2,506          | 241           | 179            | 607            | 7%          |
| Plan Review                 | 45,645                      | 696,518        | 0             | 38,903         | 122,662        | 85%         |
| <b>Totals for FY14-FY19</b> | <b>50,574</b>               | <b>720,386</b> | <b>241</b>    | <b>40,329</b>  | <b>127,143</b> | <b>79%</b>  |

| Dead, Dying, Hazardous | Applications  | Approved      | Denied       |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
|                        | Count         | Trees         | Trees        |
| FY19                   | 5,636         | 7,702         | 1,974        |
| FY18                   | 5,336         | 7,337         | 2,068        |
|                        | <b>10,972</b> | <b>15,039</b> | <b>4,042</b> |

\*Does not include FY14-17 numbers for Dead, dying, or hazardous trees

\*Does not include applications for tree removal on public property (managed by DPR)

**URBAN ECOLOGY FRAMEWORK AND TREE ORDINANCE REWRITE SCHEDULE**



# TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE BACKGROUND

## **Established in 2001**

Associated Tree Trust Fund and Tree Conservation Commission  
Multiple efforts to update over time, resulting in minor tweaks

## Last major effort

**2006:** Atlanta Tree Ordinance Task Force changes adopted in 2006

**July 2007:** Legislation to contract with Consultant for an evaluation

**2009:** Consultant contracted by City to provide evaluation

**June 2010:** Evaluation Report produced

**2012:** Consultant contracted to rewrite ordinance

**Oct 2014:** Draft ordinance before Council and CDHS committee.

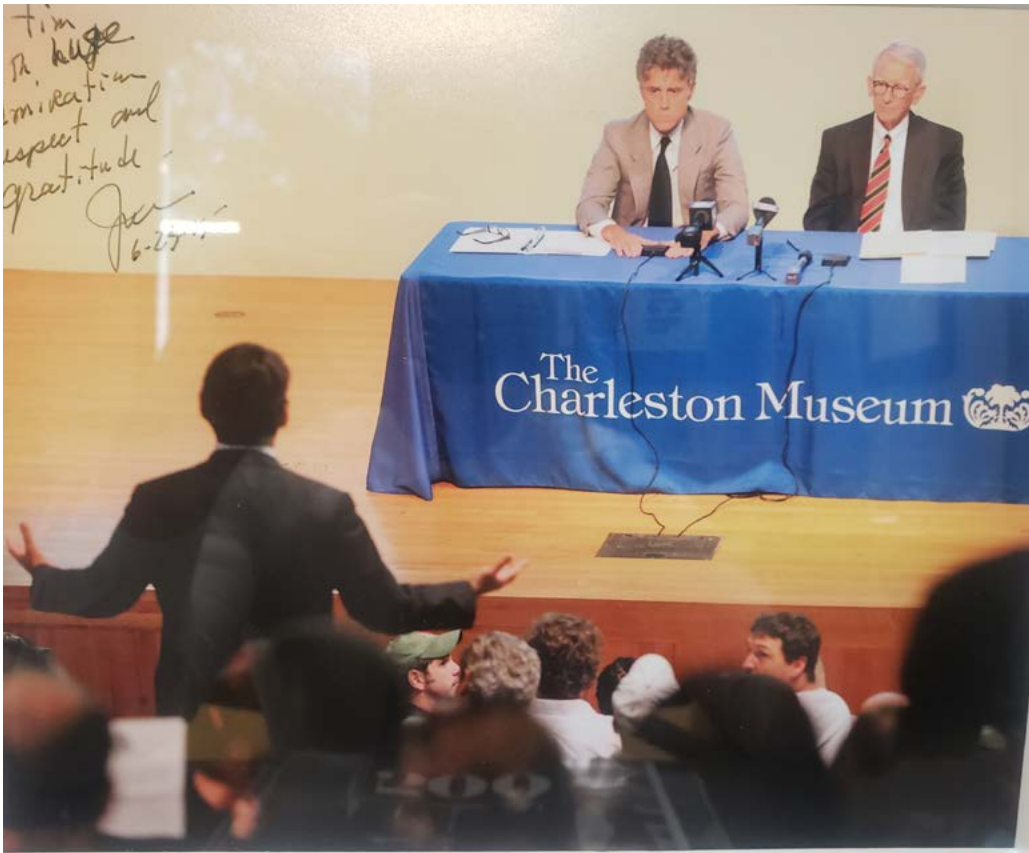
The legislation was held and later terminated.

# THIS ISN'T AN EASY PROCESS



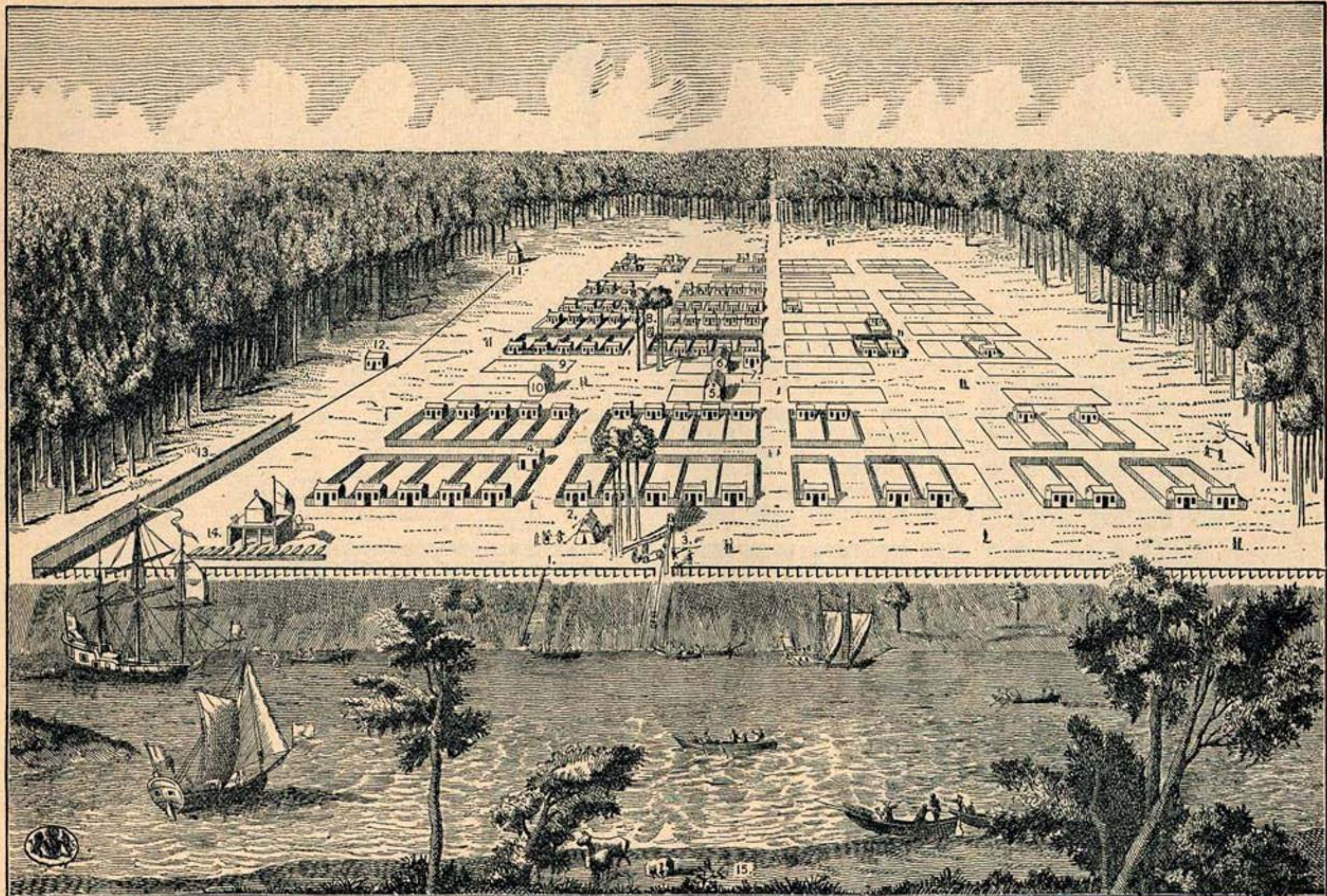
Photo by Justin Lyons / LNT

Davidson Town Planner Tim Keane addressed Tuesday's crowd at Fairview United Methodist Church in Mt. Mourne.





View of Savannah, as it stood the 29th March, A. D. 1734.



THANK YOU!



<https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/urban-ecology-framework>