



Cultivating Connections

A Housing and Economic Development Implementation Strategy
for the Mechanicsville Neighborhood of Atlanta, Georgia

Our Vision

As a group, we are guided by the collective vision of bringing new life, development, and activity to the neighborhood in an equitable manner that benefits and does not displace those who have long called Mechanicsville home.



» SCHOOL OF CITY &
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Mechanicsville residents and business owners who gave their insights



Executive Summary

The future of Mechanicsville has been laid out in several previous plans, but they have resulted in little additional development for the neighborhood. Rather than creating another plan, the goal of this document is to provide an implementation framework for community level development strategies. They are based on best practices observed in other communities, both in the City of Atlanta and around the United States as well as key input from Mechanicsville stakeholders. A key goal in crafting this document was to create a collection of practical ideas and recommendations which can be taken and applied by the Mechanicsville community, developers, and the City. These ideas are also presented as implementable actions, contained as a standalone section in Appendix C.

Our creation of this guide was driven by a collective vision. We aimed to bring new life, development, and activity to the neighborhood in an equitable manner that benefits and does not displace those who have long called Mechanicsville home.

This document consists of five separate sections focused on specific topics of interest:

- Zoning & Development
- Housing
- Economic & Workforce Development
- Transportation
- Public Safety

Each section is further broken down into existing conditions, best practices or ideas, and implementation strategies. Key summaries for each section are provided below.

Zoning & Development

The City of Atlanta utilizes a typical, if complex, zoning code to administer land use and building design standards. As with any neighborhood, Mechanicsville is governed by this code. However, most of the neighborhood lies in a Special Public Interest district which contains variations to the code specific to Mechanicsville. In addition to navigating the zoning code, developers in the City of Atlanta must follow a specific development approval process.

Key Findings:

- The City recently conducted a Zoning Code Diagnostic for The City of Atlanta, which assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the current zoning code and provided recommendations for improvement.
- Several of the suggested zoning changes would provide immediate benefit to the community by filling housing gaps and making development easier.
- Due to the unique SPI district, many of the more effective zoning changes would not apply automatically to Mechanicsville if and when legislation is updated.

- There is room for more effective community and developer engagement to ensure developments are successful for all parties.

Recommendations:

- Update the SPI alongside the general zoning code to follow the best practices provided by the Zoning Code Diagnostic through direct community lobbying of City Council.
- Create a points based bonus system to reward mindful development with density bonuses.
- Create new or enhance existing community organizations with the ability to interact directly with developers throughout the development process.

Housing

Mechanicsville is split into two distinct areas in terms of housing type. The northern portion of the neighborhood has a large amount of multi-family Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funded development. The southern portion of the neighborhood contains single-family and duplex housing. Most of the neighborhood is zoned to permit housing of some kind. Regardless, the neighborhood’s median incomes are much lower than the surrounding City, so affordable housing for Atlanta is not necessarily affordable to Mechanicsville residents.

Key Findings:

- Land is expensive in the neighborhood. Developers need incentives to be able to purchase and construct housing, particularly affordable housing.
- There is a saturation of LIHTC multi-family housing.

- The easternmost boundary of the neighborhood consists of primarily vacant parking lots, nearly half of which are municipally owned.
- There are many vacant parcels that can readily support additional single-family and small-scale multi-family residences.

Recommendations:

- Create or strengthen neighborhood foundations similar to the East Lake Foundation to coordinate neighborhood resources and support related programs.
- Offload City-owned land to keep land prices low and increase revenues.
- Work with a community land trust in acquiring properties that ensure permanent affordability, especially for single-family homes.
- Create low-income housing for extremely low-income residents (at or below 30% Area Median Income).
- Host programs to increase education and income levels so that people can afford housing at higher percentages of AMI.

Economic & Workforce Development

Mechanicsville is a historically industrial neighborhood secluded from surrounding neighborhoods by interstates and railroads. The neighborhood is a low-income community, with low educational attainment. Immediately adjacent neighborhoods are seeing rapid investment and development, a trend which is largely passing Mechanicsville by. The neighborhood is also not attracting businesses and has the characteristics of a food desert. Additionally, while Atlanta has a strong economy and low unemployment rate,

many Mechanicsville residents are not being connected to jobs.

Key Findings:

- There is a collaborative and supportive relationship between existing local business owners.
- The majority of amenities for residents and business owners are located beyond Mechanicsville boundaries.
- More reliable MARTA service would support employees commuting to and from Mechanicsville.
- Workforce development programs need supportive services, such as child care and transportation assistance, to help job retention.
- Effective workforce development agencies provide training programs for high-demand industries, then connect people to those jobs.
- Workforce development programs in Mechanicsville often suffer from a lack of community visibility.

Recommendations:

- Address the food desert using food truck and market models from best practices.
- Use existing incentives available to developers.
- Encourage small-scale manufacturing spaces so that the local economy can thrive where there is not enough foot traffic to support retail.
- Workforce development agencies should strengthen their relationship with the Mechanicsville Civic Association and NPU-V by attending meetings more frequently and providing promotional materials.
- Workforce development agencies should attend events in Mechanicsville such as the Mechanicsville Neighborhood Reunion, and

distribute promotional materials.

- Promote opportunities to increase incomes by completing training and career and technical education (CTE) programs.

Transportation

Due to the isolated nature of the neighborhood, Mechanicsville has limited transportation options compared to adjacent surrounding neighborhoods. In addition to arterial and collector streets, Mechanicsville contains two bicycle routes and four MARTA bus routes.

Key Findings:

- Mechanicsville has an estimated 12,760 parking spaces, most of which were created to serve Georgia State Stadium (formerly Turner Field) patrons.
- The two bicycle routes in Mechanicsville are on roads with the heaviest traffic counts in the neighborhood.
- No current bicycle facilities connect to key destinations in nearby Downtown Atlanta.
- The overall sense from residents is that the MARTA bus network is somewhat reliable for getting to and from the West End Transit Station.

Recommendations:

- Address the lack of bicycle connectivity to Downtown Atlanta.
- Increase the frequency of existing bus routes.
- Repair and maintain sidewalks, especially along major streets and near points of attraction like Dunbar Recreation Center.
- Determine a strategy to provide reduced transit fares for Mechanicsville residents, particularly those residing in low-income or affordable



- housing.
- Repurpose the overabundant parking supply for mixed-use and transit-oriented purposes.

Public Safety

Crime in Mechanicsville is decreasing since it peaked in 2014. Violent crimes are occurring in clusters, likely due to environmental factors associated with the area. These factors include dilapidated or vacant properties, and areas that are relatively secluded.

Key Findings:

- Improvements to the built environment can reduce crime, a concept known as crime prevention through environmental design.
- Public safety policy changes should be community driven.

Recommendations:

- Pursue grants and partnerships with outside organizations to design and fund lighting improvements and public art displays in underpasses and other neglected spaces.
- Form a Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) that pairs police with landlords or property owners to discuss potential problems before crimes occur.
- Establish a formal relationship with the Civic Association or the NAC to further explore trends in where crimes occur and their motives, and collaborate on solutions.

One of the most powerful tools for achieving both beneficial development and community improvements, including many ideas and

leverage Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs). These are pacts between community members and developers, where the developer receives community support for a project on the condition that they provide an agreed upon good or service to the community. Recommendations for creating strong future CBAs are included throughout the document.

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List of Acronyms

ADU	Accessory Dwelling Unit
AFCRA	Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority
AMI	Area Median Income
ANDP	Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership
BZA	Board of Zoning Adjustments
CBA	Community benefits agreement
CEGA	Construction Education Foundation of Georgia
CRP	Community Redevelopment Plan
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DCA	Department of Community Affairs
FAR	Floor Area Ratio
GED	General Education Development
HOPE	Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere
I-MIX	Industrial mixed-use zoning
LCI	Livable Centers Initiative
LDP	Land Development Permit
LIHTC	Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
MARTA	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
NPU-V	Neighborhood Planning Unit-V
OZD	Office of Zoning & Development
SPI	Special Public Interest
SUMMECH	Summerville Mechanicsville Community Development Corporation
SUP	Special-Use Permit
TAD	Tax allocation district
TSPLOST	Transportation special purpose local option sales tax
TOD	Transit-oriented development
ZRB	Zoning Review Board

Introduction

This document was produced by the students in the Mechanicsville Redevelopment Studio class at the Georgia Institute of Technology School of City and Regional Planning. The class is one of the semester-long “Planning Studio” courses offered by the school, which are designed to let students practice their skills in an applied setting. The course was taught by Lynn Patterson, Ph.D., a principal with Three Points Planning, LLC.

Project Purpose

Development interest in Mechanicsville is intensifying. Numerous planning initiatives have taken place in Mechanicsville in recent years, including the 2004 Community Redevelopment Plan Update, the Stadium Tax Allocation District (TAD) Redevelopment Plan (2006), the Atlanta BeltLine Sub-Area 1 Master Plan (2010), the Stadium Neighborhoods Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) (2015), and More MARTA (2018).

The LCI addressed how changes brought on by the closing of Turner Field will affect the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the development of the BeltLine Southside Trail on Mechanicsville’s southern flank, continued investment in the South Downtown neighborhood to the north of Mechanicsville, and citywide investments associated with the transportation special purpose local option sales tax (TSPLOST) program, Renew Atlanta, and the More MARTA Plan all pose unique challenges and opportunities that must be addressed.

Going into this project, the number one critique of the City’s recent initiatives that students heard from community representatives was the focus on planning and not action. This document is not intended as a plan, but as a framework for implementation. Each section includes a series of actions the community can take to address their goals. It is important to note that these are suggestions; the option to pursue any of these suggestions lies solely at the discretion of those currently involved in the Mechanicsville community.

Collective Vision

As a group, we are guided by the collective vision of bringing new life, development, and activity to the neighborhood in an equitable manner that benefits and does not displace those who have long called Mechanicsville home.

Students

Listed in alphabetical order, the students who worked on this report are Grace Barrett, Emily Baxter, James Burge, Melody Carter, Tyler Coyle, Brianna Davison, Seth Furman, Andrea Sherman, Andrew Smith, Michael Smith, and Andreas Wolfe. Full biographies of each student are available in Appendix D.



Background

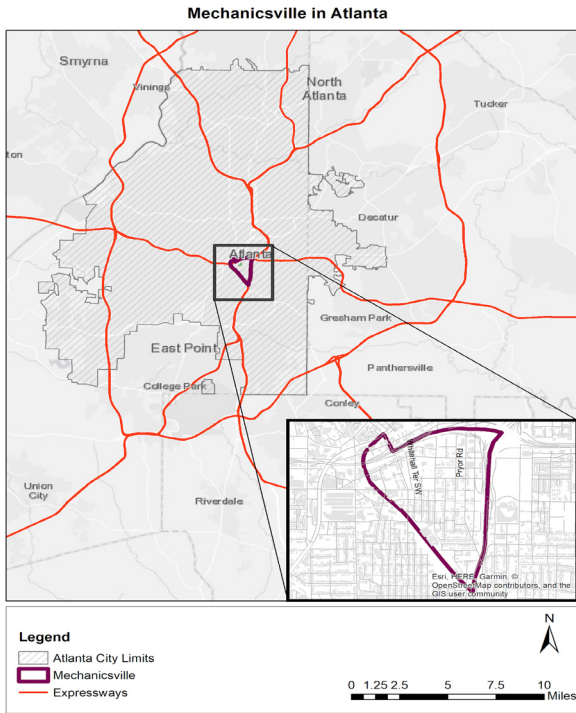


Figure 1: Mechanicsville in Context

Mechanicsville History*

Atlanta’s history began as a railroad town, and Mechanicsville was part of its industrial spine. As the city grew, Mechanicsville was settled, along with Pittsburgh, as homes for the railroad workers. Where Pittsburgh housed mainly working-class African Americans, Mechanicsville was home to a mixture of incomes and ethnicities, including a prominent Jewish minority. The area’s predominantly white high-skill railroad workers were known as mechanics, and they are the source of the neighborhood’s name. Figure

* The American Community Survey Five Year estimates (2016) is the source for all data in this overview

2, below, shows typical early Mechanicsville housing stock.

Mechanicsville was historically characterized by handsome Queen Anne and Victorian style homes that fronted most streets with and had smaller accessory units in the rear of the property. The front houses were more expensive and typically held white residents while much of the African American population resided in the rear houses.** This housing pattern lasted through much of Mechanicsville’s pre-World War II period. The spatial disparity meant that while the neighborhood was far from egalitarian, it was to some extent a racially integrated neighborhood. Pryor Street and Central Avenue supported lively retail corridors and were valuable direct connections into downtown.

Mechanicsville’s proximity to both the railroad and downtown made it one of Atlanta’s major neighborhoods, with its population peaking at over 10,000 people in 1950.***

Mechanicsville first started to economically decline during the Great Depression. Many of

** Mechanicsville.org.

*** [Total Population \[Map\]. In SocialExplorer.com. Census 1950.](http://TotalPopulation[Map].InSocialExplorer.com.Census1950)



Figure 2: Pryor Street in 1900 ([Atlanta History Center](#))

its wealthier residents, including members of its large Jewish community, moved north and east to other neighborhoods throughout the 1940s. Poorer African Americans moved into the neighborhood from the west, and many of Mechanicsville's larger houses were subdivided and rented out. Still, the neighborhood maintained its industrial base and population through the end of the pre-war era.

Directly following World War II, Mechanicsville was largely low-income. It was also well-endowed with good access to multiple job centers and vibrant retail corridors. Population density in its 1940 Census Tracts ranged from 17,850 in the West to 26,572 people per square mile in the East along present-day Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard.* The latter is a figure unmatched in Atlanta today and comparable to the modern day Capitol Hill neighborhood in Washington, DC. Starting in the post-war era, the area dealt with changes resulting from urban renewal, deindustrialization, highway development, white flight, and suburbanization.

Two major freeways were built in the mid-
* [Total Population \[Map\]. In SocialExplorer.com. Census 1950.](#)

20th century that radically altered the urban geography of Mechanicsville. Business activity and population began falling with the arrival of the highways and would continue through 1990. The concurrency between Interstates 75 and 85, commonly known as "the Downtown Connector", was built in between 1948 and 1964 and Interstate 20 was built in the 1950s. The Downtown Connector broke the previously tight connection between Mechanicsville and its eastern neighbor, Summerhill. Interstate 20 formed most of Mechanicsville's northern boundary, separating the neighborhood from Downtown and Castleberry Hill. Business activity and population began falling with the arrival of the highways and would continue through the 1990s.**

Also during this mid-20th century period, large swaths of the area were demolished under urban renewal, and the portion of the neighborhood north of present-day Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard was largely remade into public housing under the 1957 Rawson-Washington Urban Renewal Program.***

Nearly all remaining wealthy and middle-class residents left after desegregation.

The Downtown Connector was widened in the 1980s, and the neighborhood suffered from elevated crime rates while the population fell to just over 2,300 in 1990. The neighborhood that had supported 556 residential properties and
** [Darnell, Caroline. Connector or Disconnecter: Analyzing Impacts of the Interstate 75/85 Connector on Historic Neighborhoods in Atlanta, Georgia](#)
*** [Mechanicsville.org](#).

38 businesses in 1947 was reduced to just 74 residences and 16 businesses.

Recent history has brought further change to the community. Most of the public housing complexes were torn down and replaced with HOPE VI mixed-income housing. Seventy-four new affordable single-family detached houses were built in 2016, and a significant number of new apartments have risen in the neighborhood's

northwest section. Mechanicsville still lacks the commercial corridors that were part of its identity, but the neighborhood appears to have echanicsville still lacks the commercial corridors that were part of its identity, but the neighborhood appears to have stabilized its population.



Figure 3: Home of Edward Rawson on Pryor St. (Atlanta History Center)

Demographic Overview

Located in the southwestern area of the City of Atlanta and bounded by Interstate 20, the Downtown Connector, and railroad tracks, Mechanicsville has a total population of approximately 4,600 residents. Mechanicsville is mostly located within two Census Tracts, 44 and 120 (see Figure 4).

Overall, Mechanicsville is a younger community. The majority of the community's population is between 25 and 44 years old (32 percent). Approximately 26 percent of the population is over 65 years old. The area is predominantly African American, with all other races combined making up just 5.4 percent of the population. The neighborhood is less educated than Atlanta as a whole. Around 22 percent of residents have not graduated from high school (or received a G.E.D. or equivalent), compared to about 10 percent of the City of Atlanta. Attainment of advanced degrees is low, with 20 percent of residents having a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 37 percent of Atlanta. With 43 percent of residents in the two Census Tracts living below the federal poverty line, Mechanicsville has a disproportionately low-income population. Residents making under \$10,000 per year make up 28 percent of the population, while the median household income for the area is around \$19,800. For comparison, Atlanta has a median household income of \$49,398 with a poverty rate of around 24 percent.

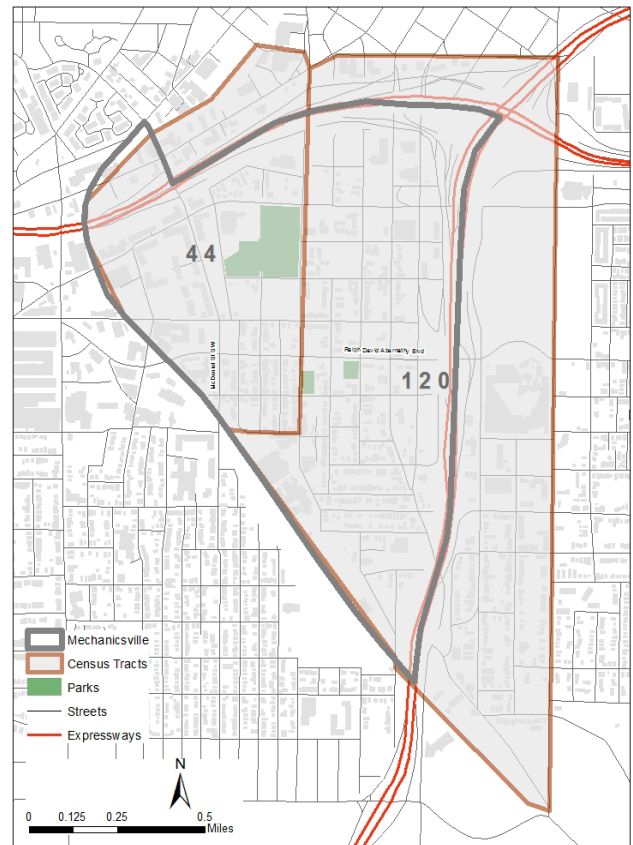


Figure 4: Census Tracts 44 & 120

Previous Planning Efforts

Stadium Neighborhoods Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)

Key Goals

The LCI analyzes land use, transportation, and the real estate market and recommends measures to reduce emissions and meet air quality requirements. The study area includes the entire Mechanicsville neighborhood as well as Pittsburgh, Peoplestown, Summerhill, and a small portion of Grant Park (See Figure 5). A large amount of development area analyzed in the LCI Study are parking lots that were originally used for Turner Field before the Braves moved out of city limits.

The LCI Study's goals for Mechanicsville are to reconnect the neighborhood to Summerhill, capitalize on Mechanicsville's industrial history, and maintain a lower density of development to conform to the neighborhood's existing structures. In addition to stormwater mitigation efforts, the plan identifies a need for more retail frontage and streetscapes that will promote pedestrian safety.

The LCI Study identifies three major corridors to spur development in Mechanicsville:

1. Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard, which stretches east and west through the middle of the neighborhood could support a neighborhood center, especially along the eastern portion near Summerhill;
2. Pryor Street, where the goal is to increase walkability and provide more feasible retail frontage by converting the corridor from a one-way to a two-way street
3. Glenn Street, where the objective is to increase pedestrian safety by improving the streetscape.

In order to address the environmental goals of the LCI Study, the easternmost parcels in Mechanicsville are targeted for stormwater mitigation projects. The study recommends green infrastructure projects along with new development in the existing parking lots. Although the intent of the LCI Study is to encourage development patterns and diverse modes of transportation that will reduce emissions and meet air quality requirements, it remains important to preserve Mechanicsville's industrial character while developing employment opportunities.

Based on interactive engagement activities, the LCI planning team identified core themes:

- Density should cluster towards the highways and the main corridors while transitioning down towards the neighborhoods,
- Capitol Avenue and Georgia Avenue should become signature corridors,
- Heritage Park should continue into the core area, green space should be a central feature, and

- Mechanicsville should connect to outside neighborhoods.

Results

As a result of the LCI Study, SUMMECH identified and acquired land for large-scale redevelopment in Mechanicsville and Summerhill. Mechanicsville has seen additional housing development in the neighborhood, and stormwater mitigation efforts, such as the permeable brick pavers, have been implemented. However, the eastern portion of the neighborhood is still stadium parking lots, and no development or stormwater retention has been implemented. In addition, there is not nearly as much commercial or infrastructure development in Mechanicsville as in Summerhill.

More MARTA Technical Analysis

Goals

MARTA serves Mechanicsville via four bus routes. These are Routes 40 (Peachtree Street), 42 (Pryor Street), 49 (McDonough Boulevard.), and 832 (Grant Park). Route 832 was launched in August 2018. There is limited east-west connectivity through the neighborhood, and the two closest rail stations are West End and Garnett, which are both outside the neighborhood’s boundaries. In order to improve neighborhood connectivity, more financial resources were necessary to support additional transit projects in Mechanicsville, and this required a ballot referendum.

Voters in the City of Atlanta passed a ½ penny sales tax in November 2016 to fund MARTA service enhancement over the next 40 years. The More MARTA initiative stems from this 2016 referendum. More MARTA has nine guiding principles as seen in Figure 6 below.

The final MARTA Board vote was held on October 4, 2018 resulting in the approval of a list of projects that will add to the existing infrastructure - most notably a light-rail system on the Atlanta BeltLine’s Southside Trail and more frequent local bus service through Mechanicsville and surrounding neighborhoods.*

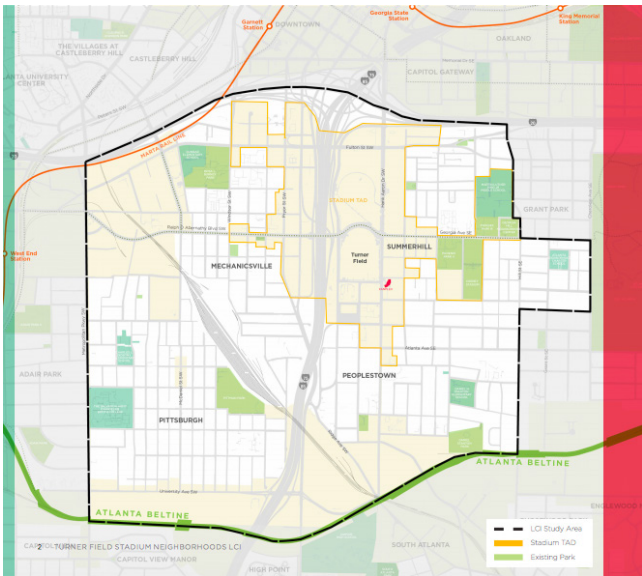


Figure 5: LCI Study Area (Turner Field Stadium Neighborhoods Livable Centers Initiative)

Results

The final list of projects reflecting the MARTA Board’s October 2018 vote is illustrated in Figure 7 on the following page.

* [More MARTA Technical Summary](#)

The projects fall within three categories including high capacity improvements, bus service improvements, and pedestrian improvements. The original project list contained an infill transit station that was proposed for the Mechanicsville neighborhood based on public input from the

More MARTA survey stating that more frequent service was needed and the neighborhood could benefit from its own rail stop.* This project was cut from the final list in May 2018 due to cost.

* [More MARTA Survey Results](#)

1. Balance the portfolio of transit projects serving short/medium/long term goals using multiple travel modes	2. Increase mobility for workers to and from major job centers	3. Enhance predictability of commuter times by utilizing dedicated lanes, HOT lanes, and other technology
4. Create layered, integrated transportation network to accomplish specific types of trips	5. Prioritize investments inside COA while laying foundation which will ultimately be integrated into regional transit networks	6. Partner with neighboring jurisdictions to leverage transit projects
7. Create last-mile connectivity using circulated buses, multi-use paths, and sidewalks	8. Enhance ease of use and transfers within the network of transit options	9. Enhance safety and access to transit centers and MARTA stations

Figure 6: More MARTA Principles ([More MARTA Technical Summary](#))

More MARTA Atlanta Program

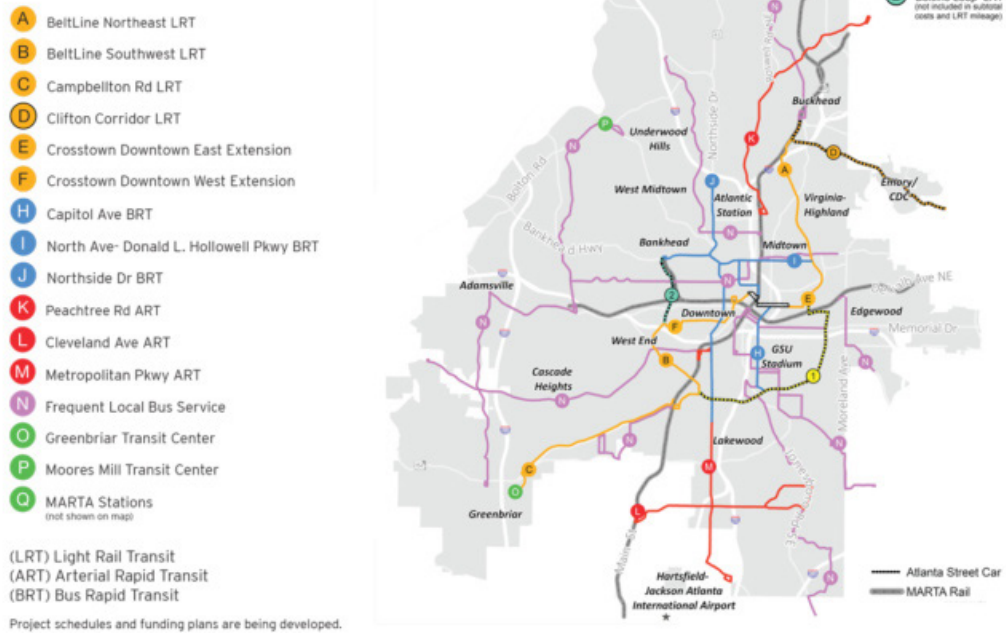


Figure 7: A general map showing the final array of More MARTA projects approved in October 2018 ([More MARTA](#))

Stadium TAD Redevelopment Plan

Key Goals

The purpose of the Stadium TAD was to fund public parking decks on Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA) land to replace surface lots near and adjacent to Turner Field (currently known as Georgia State Stadium). The TAD aimed to promote healthy neighborhoods and quality of life, expand economic opportunity, and improve infrastructure through public-private partnerships.

Results

The Stadium TAD has spent a total of \$45,084, \$2,300 of which was payments to a consultancy called Childers Associates. The remainder was payments to the Atlanta Development Authority for "program cost recovery". There is currently \$601 in the fund. Future land use is depicted in Figure 8.*

Atlanta BeltLine Tax Allocation District (TAD)

Key Goals

The Mechanicsville portion of the TAD was assigned to Subarea 1. The Beltline TAD covers the Western edge of the neighborhood, from the railroad tracks to Rosa L. Burney Park and McDaniel Street (south of the park). The plan for Subarea 1 includes the utilization of TAD funds to increase connectivity by re-stitching

* [Open Expenditures: Stadium Neighborhood TAD](#)

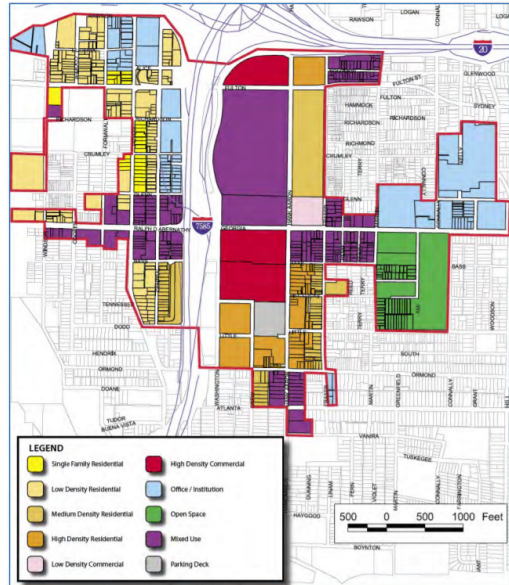


Figure 8: Future Land Use Map ([2006 Stadium Neighborhoods TAD](#))

the road grid in the industrial sections of the neighborhood to decrease superblocks. Figure 9 depicts the new proposed street network while. Figure 10 shows the TAD with portions extending into Mechanicsville’s western reach.



Proposed street network expansions, with pedestrian-only connections shown in yellow (refer to map on previous page for details)

Figure 9: BeltLine Street Grid (Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.)

historic and natural resources in Mechanicsville. The land use and development regulation goal involves creating a sustainable pattern of land uses.

Results

Several underlying principles of implementation are presented in the plan to protect the overall goals of the community. Mechanicsville should be revitalized as a liveable in-town residential community through preserving historic structures, rehabilitating existing structures, and adding infill development. Quality of life improvements, such as renovated open spaces, sidewalk improvements, and community facilities, will help make Mechanicsville a livable community. Combining public sector implementation efforts in targeted areas will help public entities achieve similar goals. Public sector resources should leverage private investment to encourage more investment. Redevelopment efforts should be large enough to create a “critical mass” of activity by strategically spreading public-private resources in pilot areas, which will spur more development in the community.

The Mechanicsville Community Redevelopment Plan Update provided priority implementation initiatives. These initiatives were based on the continuation of projects underway, utilizing limited public resources and capitalizing on the McDaniel-Glenn project. Examples of the initiatives are the continuation of SUMMECH rehab and infill projects, early land acquisition of property north of Fulton Street, build new mixed-income apartments, and develop small retail nodes. The McDaniel-Glenn development

was completed in collaboration with the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) and Columbia Residential. The housing development added 500 mixed-income apartment units to the community. SUMMECH has been one of the major stakeholders to contribute to achieving the housing goals and principles of the plan. With low-income tax credits, SUMMECH helped produce a 180-unit multi-family development across from Rosa Burney Park. The community development corporation’s infill housing initiative began the first phase by providing 16 mixed-income homes. SUMMECH also purchased garden-style apartment buildings and renovated them to maintain more units in the community.

Community Benefits Agreements

In pursuit of development and to connect the community and potential developers, Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are pacts between community members and developers, where the developer receives community support for a project on the condition that they provide an agreed upon good or service to the community*. Developers and community coalitions establish CBAs to address the needs of the community and ensure residents will share the benefits of the development. CBAs have become popular because they work to achieve mutually beneficial objectives and act as a legal mechanism for all parties to fulfill their promises. The agreements are legally enforceable contracts signed by community coalitions and developers. CBAs promote inclusiveness, transparency, efficiency, coalition building, and clarity of outcomes and goals. They decrease developers' risk while maximizing the positive impact of the development on local residents and the local economy. However, there are also some risks associated with CBAs. A poorly organized community organization may have difficulty negotiating with companies, and unbalanced deals or distrust between developers and the community could set a negative precedent for future projects. Legally binding CBAs also necessitate hiring lawyers, which could be

[* Community Benefits Agreements: Making Development Projects Accountable](#)

expensive for the community. If these barriers can be overcome, then the community and developers can maintain a constructive relationship while regularly incorporating community benefits into future projects. Examples of negotiated benefits found in other CBAs throughout the United States include living wages for workers, child care centers to serve the neighborhood, affordable housing, employment of community residents, and park construction.

Implementing a CBA with any proposed development in Mechanicsville can address concerns of displacement and gentrification. A public discourse can define the needs of the community while determining feasible ways to meet those needs. The feasibility component of constructing a CBA is key to achieving desired goals rather than creating unrealistic expectations. Determining attainable needs of the community will lead to fruitful negotiation and could make a large impact on the neighborhood. For example, if a business relocates to a property next to a vacant lot, a potential request could be for the business owner to maintain the vacant property. This action would benefit both the aesthetics of the community and the value of the business. Having a transparent conversation between neighborhood residents, local businesses, and new developers is a workable way for all

parties to work together towards revitalizing the neighborhood.

Recommendations for future CBAs will be included throughout this document and are highlighted in the Implementation Matrix in Appendix C. These recommendations are provided to help align the needs of the Mechanicsville community and developers.

Stakeholder Engagement

In planning, stakeholder engagement and input are critical to the process. Stakeholder engagement can take a variety of forms based upon the desired outcome. For this Mechanicsville implementation strategy, we gathered data from relevant stakeholders to identify needs, opportunities, and potential partners for future implementation. There are a number of individuals and organizations working in the community that are impacted by, and could impact, new plans or the implementation of already established planning objectives.

Throughout the planning process, the team divided into groups based on target categories to capture the full range of relevant community stakeholders. We identified key stakeholders and organizations with knowledge of zoning, public safety, local residents, workforce development, economic development, market rate housing, affordable housing, and transportation.

To conduct our outreach, we researched relevant organizations, found the best officials to speak with, and contacted them. To find appropriate organizations, we first discussed which entities were either physically located in Mechanicsville or were community-minded institutions that execute their mission by helping residents on the neighborhood level. After selecting the organizations, we searched their contacts pages and articles about their work for program leaders who would know the main aspects of

their respective organizational structures and practices. We contacted the organizations via email and phone to gather information on their organizational programs, strategies, resources, and role in the community. These stakeholders provided data that was then used to support our best practices and recommendations.

The team utilized multiple strategies for soliciting input. Within each topical section of the report, we discuss the specific stakeholder outcomes that shaped the team's recommendations.

Zoning & Development Process

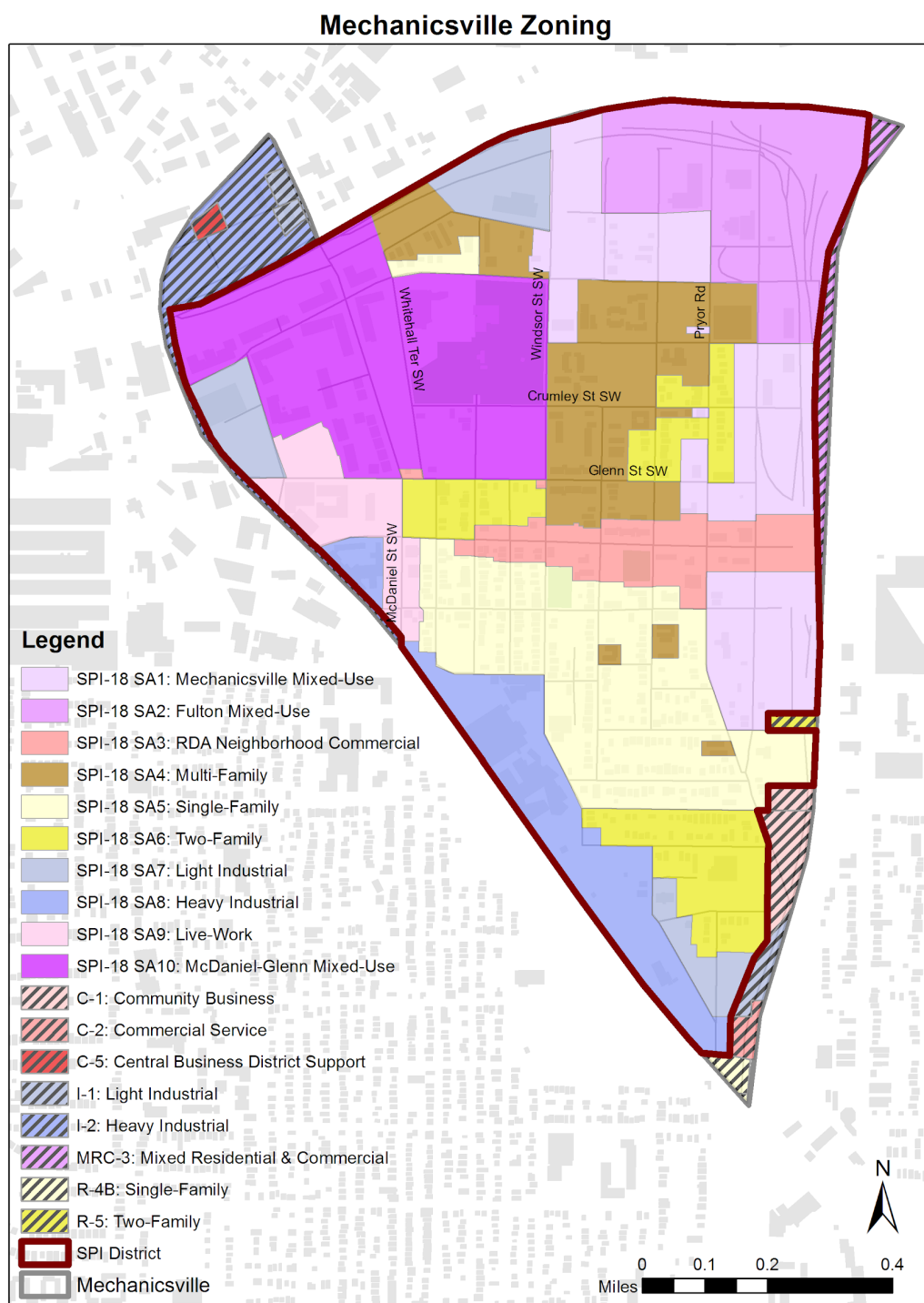


Figure 11: Zoning in Mechanicsville (City of Atlanta Office of Zoning & Development)



Introduction

This section includes a discussion of the existing conditions for zoning and development in Mechanicsville. It introduces the general zoning system in the City of Atlanta and the Special Public Interest (SPI) district which covers a large portion of the neighborhood. The section also provides an overview of the development process in the city. After that is a review of our team's discussions with stakeholders and the feedback received from those interviews. This is followed by an introduction to zoning best practices, inspired in large part by the city's 2016 Zoning Diagnostic document, and resulting recommendations for Mechanicsville. The section concludes with our suggestion on how to implement these recommendations via engagement with City Council.

Existing Conditions

Zoning

The City of Atlanta Zoning Code is part of the City's Code of Ordinances and controls how land in different areas can be used and the form of buildings developed on that land. It accomplishes this through the creation of zoning districts, such as residential or industrial, which each describes in detail how land can be developed and used. For example, the northwest corner of Mechanicsville is mostly zoned for light or heavy industrial, which limits the types of activities in the area to industrial uses.

The majority of Mechanicsville is located in a Special Public Interest (SPI) district, SPI-18, which is subdivided into 10 subareas and has specific rules and regulations on land uses not seen in other parts of the city.

The SPI subareas each include a primary use, like single-family housing, multi-family housing, or industrial. These subareas are consistent with general zoning districts throughout Atlanta and serve the same general purpose. However, each subarea has additional land use and urban design regulations not seen in the other districts. These extra regulations are intended to promote a rich mix of uses, higher density of development, and the preservation of existing neighborhood character. They do this by emphasizing good urban design principles, regulating elements like sidewalks and the relationship of buildings to the street with a level of detail not present in other districts. The SPIs are more intentional than other general zoning districts, in that they help implement an overall vision for a neighborhood rather than simply dictating what can and cannot be done in an area.

Mechanicsville was originally made up of more traditional zoning districts like the rest of the city. This changed in 2007 when City Council voted to implement the Mechanicsville SPI district, replacing the original zoning districts

in the neighborhood. To create an SPI district, a neighborhood group convinces their City Council Member that the neighborhood needs amended zoning to benefit the community. The Council Member then introduces legislation to create the SPI district and the City Council votes on it. The legislation to enact Mechanicsville's SPI district was sponsored by Council Member Cleta Winslow, who represents the neighborhood, and co-sponsored by then-Council Member Ceasar Mitchell. It was meant to help implement the recommendations from the Mechanicsville Redevelopment Plan into the zoning code. According to Nathan Brown, a planner for the City of Atlanta, the SPI Zoning has encouraged better development but not more development.

Notably, SPI-18 completely supplanted all existing zoning within its boundaries when it was enacted. Occasionally, the city makes changes to the zoning districts meant to affect areas within traditional zoning districts citywide. For example, the city may enact a change that applies just to R-5 ("Two-Family") districts, and all areas zoned R-5 will be updated with the new regulations. Since the SPIs are unique districts that use their own subareas to regulate land use rather than relying on more traditional zoning districts, they are typically not updated with this type of specific change of the zoning code. Without further SPI specific legislation, such a change would not affect the SPI's comparable Subarea 6 ("Two-Family").

In short, except for the small pockets of the neighborhood not in the SPI, Mechanicsville is mostly unaffected by changes made to the general zoning code.

Development Approval Process

Representatives from the City of Atlanta's Department of City Planning and the Zoning Review Board (ZRB) provided information about Atlanta's development permitting process. This included the different levels of approval a developer must undertake to start a development project, depending on the type and intensity of the development proposal. Developers must go through additional layers of approval if the development involves moving dirt, if the proposal requires a variance to the zoning restrictions, or if the developer needs to entirely rezone the property to implement the proposed project. The city's representatives also provided detailed descriptions of the different Quality of Life (QoL) districts in Atlanta and how the development approval requirements vary between these districts. SPIs are a type of QoL, and are thus subject to the same approval process.

Figure 12, shown below, provides a general outline of the development process. A description of each of the steps presented in the graph follows.

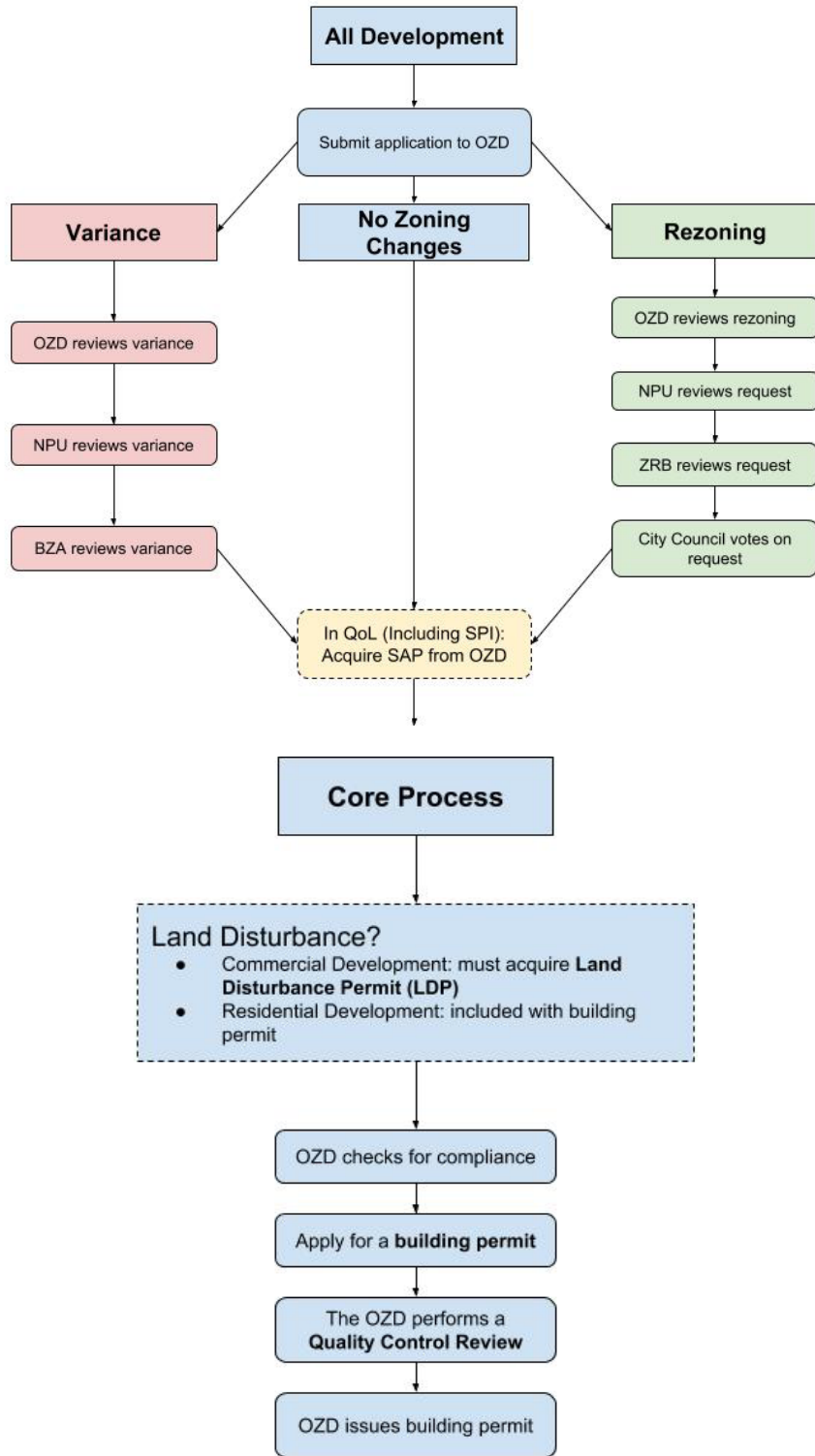


Figure 12: Development Approval Process (Michael Smith)

Standard Process:

All applications for development must follow a general development approval process. This process begins at the Office of Zoning & Development (OZD) in the City of Atlanta Department of Planning. The applicant must have site plans prepared in order to begin the application process. The OZD checks these site plans for compliance with the zoning code.

- The Office generally sends the application back to the applicant, so the applicant can correct mistakes and re-submit the document.
- For a development located within a Quality of Life (QoL) district, which includes SPI Districts, or an Overlay District, the OZD conducts a more in-depth zoning review in order to issue a Special Administrative Permit (SAP).
- For commercial and subdivision construction requiring substantial land disturbance, as determined by the plan review process with the OZD, the development requires a separate Land Development Permit (LDP).
- For single-family residential development, the LDP is included as part of the standard building permit.
- For a standard development not requiring any variances or rezoning, the applicant applies for a building permit once the project has been approved by the OZD (and if applicable a land development permit is issued).
- The OZD then performs a Quality Control Review on the project and issues a building permit.

Variance Approval Process:

- If a developer requires a variance, the application must be reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA).

- The OZD then reviews the variance, conducting a “finding of facts,” and issues a recommendation of the appropriateness of the request in the form of a staff report to the BZA.
- Subsequently, the applicant must present the variance request before the relevant Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU).
- The applicant may also need to contact the relevant neighborhood community organization. This is not a city requirement but can help streamline the NPU application process. The NPU often relies on smaller neighborhood groups for review and recommendations.
- The NPU then issues a recommendation to the BZA.
- If the BZA approves the application, the development can move forward with the standard development application process described above.

Rezoning Process:

- If a property owner or developer needs to change the zoning of a property, the rezoning application must be reviewed by the Zoning Review Board (ZRB). The process is generally the same as the request for a variance, except the ZRB handles the request instead of the BZA. The OZD staff and the NPUs both review the request and issue recommendations.
- The ZRB then issues a recommendation, and each recommendation is presented before the Atlanta City Council, first to the zoning committee and then to the whole council.
- To rezone a property, the City Council must vote to amend the zoning portion of the Code of Ordinances. Usually, the Council follows the ZRB recommendations but is not obligated to do so.



- The mayor has the power to approve or deny a rezoning request within nine days following the Council vote. However, the mayor rarely uses this power. If the mayor takes no action within the nine-day window, the rezoning becomes official “Without Signature By Operation of Law.”
- Once the process is completed, the developer proceeds with the general development application process.

Stakeholder Outcomes

The stakeholder interview process provided key information on the zoning and development process and its related hurdles:

- According to one member of the Mechanicsville Civic Association, there is an overall lack of interest from developers to build in the neighborhood.
- The Civic Association member felt that in previous cases developers tended to act more as observers of the community, rather than as active and engaged participants, and that they have a difficult time creating a relationship with the neighborhood.
- The member believed that developers should “be a neighbor” and integrate with other tenants, residents, and community members, instead of being third-parties coming into the neighborhood.
- An NPU member also expressed frustration about the state of development in the area.
- NPU and Civic Association members pointed to poor leadership from City Hall as a reason for the lack of development, particularly of publicly owned lands.
- All stakeholders interviewed believed that NPU-V needed to be more engaged in the zoning process.
- NPU-V recently formed a zoning subcommittee to

deal with zoning matters directly, but the level of engagement of the committee could be improved.

Best Practices

In 2016, the City of Atlanta released the Zoning Code Diagnostic for The City of Atlanta, a document which assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the current zoning code and provided recommendations for improvement. Inspired by national trends and best practices, these recommendations were divided into “Quick Fixes” and long-term future code changes. In 2018, the city started implementing these Quick Fixes. Some changes included in the Quick Fixes apply to the entire zoning code without references to any particular districts, and are thus applicable citywide, including Mechanicsville. Others, however, mention specific zoning districts not in the SPI and therefore would not apply to Mechanicsville as written. The team believes the zoning changes referenced below are well suited for the Mechanicsville neighborhood and could be incorporated into the neighborhood’s SPI zoning, separate from the Quick Fixes. Unless otherwise noted, all practices mentioned are informed by the Atlanta Zoning Ordinance Assessment and related implementation guides provided by the City of Atlanta’s Department of City Planning and cross-referenced with the Atlanta Code of Ordinances for applicability to Mechanicsville.*

* Atlanta Zoning Ordinance Update

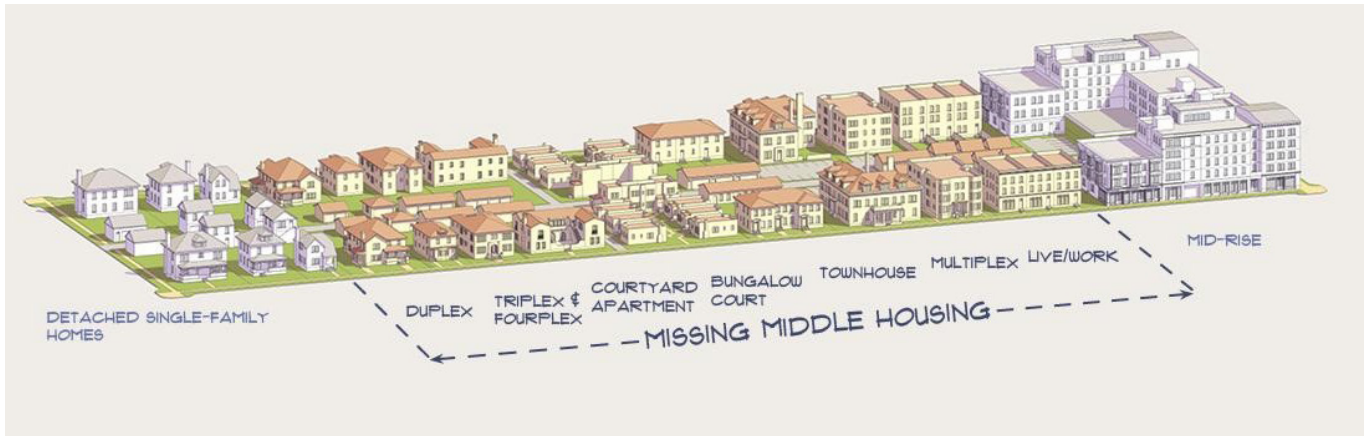


Figure 13: “Missing Middle” Housing ([Missing Middle Housing](#))

“Missing Middle” Zoning

Many American cities, including Atlanta, once developed a range of small multi-family buildings within or near single-family neighborhoods. These townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, and small multi-family buildings were not much larger than current single-family housing and allowed for a higher density of residents in neighborhoods. They are called the “missing middle” of housing because they once occupied the physical space between the peripheral single-family and centrally-located large multi-family housing more widely present in cities today. Figure 13, above, summarizes the “missing middle” concept. Figures 14 and 15 show examples of duplexes and fourplexes, respectively. While higher in density and lower in price per unit than single-family houses, missing middle housing can still be compatible with single-family uses in terms of scale and design.

Mechanicsville permits one type of missing middle housing in the form of duplexes such as the ones shown in Figure 14. These are allowed in SPI Subarea 6 (“Two-Family”), as well as all mixed-use districts and the “Live-



Figure 14: Duplex in Berkeley, California ([Missing Middle Housing](#))



Figure 15: Fourplex in Atlanta, Georgia ([Missing Middle Housing](#))

Work” district. However, any strictly residential structures containing more than two units are considered “multi-family,” which are not allowed in Subarea 5 (“Single Family”) or Subarea 6 (“Two-Family”). Multi-family buildings are instead only permitted in “Live-Work,” “Multi-Family,” “Mixed-Use,” or “Commercial” districts; although these districts allow any type of residential use, they are designed for higher density development not compatible with traditional residential neighborhood character. In effect, the current zoning discourages or prohibits small multi-family development in single- and two-family districts, the areas where they would best fit the existing character.

The city also limits the floor area ratio (FAR) allowed in these subareas to 0.50. FAR is a commonly used zoning tool which is calculated by dividing the amount of floor space in a building by the overall size of the parcel the building is located on. A building with a FAR of 1.0 could be a single story and occupy all of its lot, be two stories and occupy a half of its lot, or be four stories and occupy a quarter of its lot (see Figure 17, following page). The 0.50 FAR allowed by the city restricts developments to using, at most, half of their available space, with a smaller footprint for any additional floors added. Missing middle housing typically requires a larger FAR than is allowed in residential subareas now in order to reach the height or size needed for multiple units. By including this FAR restriction, the code effectively eliminates the construction of any buildings which are built to the full extent of their lot or to the density of units required by the missing middle housing types. The SPI already contains design guidelines that regulate the form



Figure 16: Duplexes on Ormond Street, Mechanicsville (Google Street View)

buildings must take in each of the subareas. New missing middle housing built to design requirements rather than FAR requirements could still match the character of the subareas where they are located.

The city also limits the floor area ratio (FAR) allowed in these subareas to 0.50. FAR is a commonly used zoning tool which is calculated by dividing the amount of floor space in a building by the overall size of the parcel the building is located on. A building with a FAR of 1.0 could be a single story and occupy all of its lot, be two stories and occupy a half of its lot, or be four stories and occupy a quarter of its lot (see Figure 17). The 0.50 FAR allowed by the city restricts developments to using, at most, half of their available space, with a smaller footprint for any additional floors added. Missing middle housing typically requires a larger FAR than is allowed in residential subareas now in order to reach the height or size needed for multiple units. By including this FAR restriction, the code effectively eliminates the construction of any buildings which are built to the full extent of their lot or to the density of units required by the missing middle housing types. The SPI already

contains design guidelines that regulate the form buildings must take in each of the subareas. New missing middle housing built to design requirements rather than FAR requirements could still match the character of the subareas where they are located.

By allowing a broader range of multi-family housing types in Mechanicsville’s residential districts, there could be an expansion of missing affordable and workforce housing in residential areas, built without disturbing the character of Mechanicsville’s neighborhoods.

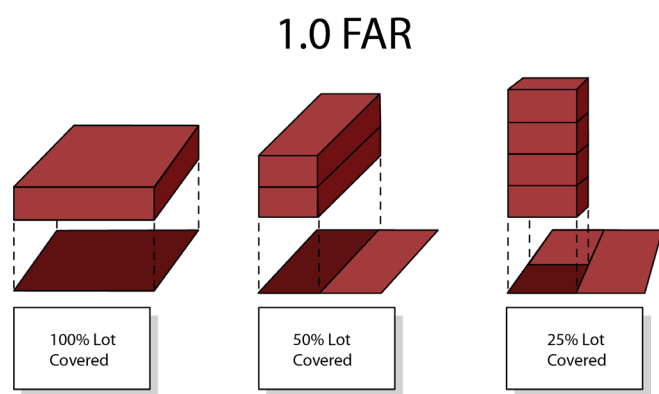


Figure 17: Floor Area Ratio, Explained ([DC Zoning Handbook](#))

Accessory Dwellings Units

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a second small dwelling on the same lot as the main dwelling. The unit can be in the basement of the main dwelling, above an attached or detached garage, or as a separate single-story structure in the rear of the lot. Figure 18 provides examples of ADUs in other Atlanta Intown Neighborhoods.

ADUs were once legal citywide in Atlanta but are now only allowed in the R-5 zoning district because it permits duplexes. In the Atlanta

zoning code, the distinction is made between a “guest house” and an ADU. The only physical difference is that an ADU has a stove and a guest house does not. The lack of a stove is meant to prevent a person from living in a guest house full-time. While ADUs were once thought of as a detractor from the quality of life in single-family neighborhoods, that thinking has shifted as the urban housing supply has become scarcer and housing affordability has become a significant issue. ADUs can be a source of more affordable and flexible housing options and can provide additional income for property owners, which is especially important in lower-income neighborhoods. The “Quick Fix” zoning diagnostic recommended allowing ADUs in all single-family residential districts, R-1 through R-5. However, as of mid-2018, that plan has been scaled back to only allowing them in R-4, R-4A, and R-5 due to feedback from the NPUs.

The Mechanicsville SPI code is not clear as to whether ADUs are allowed in the district. The closest the code comes to addressing ADUs is a provision that regulates the size and placement of accessory structures:

“Accessory structures, such as carriage houses, smokehouses, tenant and alley houses, private garages, carports, and mechanical equipment shall be located to the side and/or rear of the principal structure within the buildable area of the lot and shall not project beyond the front of the principal structure.”*

We believe that the provision for tenant and alley houses refers to ADUs, which indicates that

* [City of Atlanta Zoning Code Sec. 16-18R.025](#)

they are allowed in the district, but there are no references as to where and how they should be used. Adding clarity to the code could encourage the construction of ADUs in Mechanicsville.



Figure 18: Atlanta ADUs (Andreas Wolfe)

Encouraging Light Industry with Mixed-Use

Mechanicsville has experienced a decline of its industrial base that reflects the widespread loss of traditional industry in American cities. The neighborhood has historically been part of a hub of industry thanks to its proximity to the railroad, and the area still has a significant amount of land devoted to industrial uses. Much of that land is now underutilized, neither fulfilling its original role as an economic engine or meeting new needs such as expanded housing or commercial development. One solution, currently undergoing the legislative process for the city at-large, is the creation of a new type of zoning district called the Industrial Mixed-Use District.* This new district, called I-MIX for short, would require a minimum of any floor area (currently proposed as 30 percent in the rest of the city) of new developments to be used for light industry.

* [I-MIX Fact Sheet](#)

In return, the rest of the area is free to be used as residential or non-residential commercial space. Figure 19, below, shows an example of a similar mixed-use industrial development in Boston. For another example of an industrial mixed-use development, see the case study on Pier 70 in San Francisco on pg. 61.

I-MIX is intended to create mixed-use buildings in industrial and commercial areas that leverage the market demand for residential and commercial spaces to provide for light industrial use in new construction. This can provide employment, economic growth, and new housing on the same parcel in otherwise unused or underused areas. Note that I-MIX zoning is not an automatic change to industrial districts, but is a new zoning district itself. To take advantage of it, industrial districts must be rezoned to I-MIX.



Figure 19: SoWa Art & Design District (Andreas Wolfe)

User-friendly Language and Graphics

Zoning codes, including SPI-18, were historically written using formal and technical language in the style of a legal document. This oftentimes meant that only people with industry experience could properly read and interpret the code, which could work to favor the interests of developers over the interests of the community. Recently, there has been a movement to write new zoning codes in “plain language”, where it is written so that the general public can easily read and interpret the code while still being legally defensible.

Another way to make zoning codes more accessible is the use of graphics. Typical zoning codes include lengthy and detailed descriptions of a site’s physical attributes, but they can be difficult to visualize without long-term experience in building or construction. A clear graphic can help someone picture, for example, the functional difference between a 10-foot and 20-foot setback. Figure 20 provides an example of a good graphic because it clearly displays each of the required dimensions on the lot and shows how these dimensions affect the placement of each structure on the lot. SPI-18 does not include any user-friendly graphics and instead uses lengthy tables of permitted uses and design guidelines.

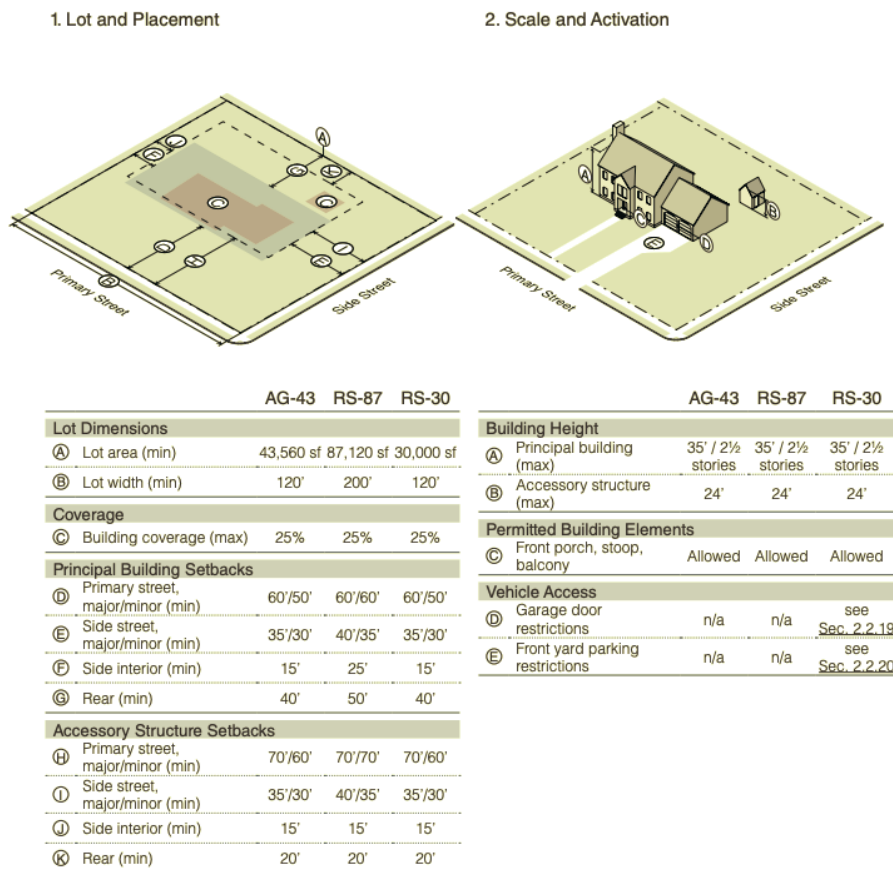


Figure 20: Graphical Depiction of Design Requirements in Roswell, Georgia ([Roswell Unified Development Code 3.2.2](#))

Developer-Neighborhood Interaction

The zoning and development process is obtuse because it has been shaped by years of legal history. Developers are normally well-versed in this process, and when dealing with large projects, major developers have the resources to learn the local context. The development process in Atlanta has multiple key touch points, where developers and community organizations have the potential to engage in a dialogue. At some of these points, developers must gain approval from community members to move forward with their projects. Atlanta's communities themselves, when participating in these touch points with developers, are often at a disadvantage in their understanding of the subject matter. Community organizations have an opportunity to change this relationship by learning more about their zoning and development process. More specifically, the organizations can build a group of community representatives with working knowledge of the local zoning and development code, which can empower communities such as Mechanicsville to engage more meaningfully with developers. This helps all parties, as communities are more likely to get beneficial development and developers can get community support.

Case Study: Emeryville, California, Points-Based Bonus System

One opportunity for a neighborhood to incentivize development is to analyze the City's Code of Ordinances relating to development

and to promote developments that are mindful and good stewards to their neighbors through a points-based approval/bonus system. In Emeryville, California, the city proposed and passed a "Community Benefits and Bonus Points" agreement to challenge and award developers in submitting projects that would help the city as a whole. Other cities that have utilized voluntary density bonus programs include San Diego, Seattle, Portland (Oregon), and Oakland.

Usually, a municipality provides density bonuses in exchange for a developer providing a certain percentage of affordable units in a project. In Emeryville, they explored other community benefits, such as when the developer constructs public open spaces, includes public improvements and utility undergrounding, creates incubator spaces for small businesses, and other community benefits. Figure 21 on the following page showcases a variety of incentive programs through zoning available for developers. For community development, it's a cake recipe of different ingredients that allows communities to see their full potential.

Implementation Strategy

The entirety of Mechanicsville's zoning is contained in the City of Atlanta's Code of Ordinances. All recommendations in this document that require a zoning change must be done through the legislative process. As it stands now, a developer seeking to implement any of the proposed changes would have to change the zoning within the SPI. In order to do this, they must go through the entire rezoning process complete with City Council review. If changes are considered by multiple developers or for multiple

Community Benefit	Maximum Points	Point Calculation	Requirements
(1) Public Open Space	50	15% of site area or 2,000 square feet, whichever is greater: 50 points	Must be in addition to what is required by Article 3 of this Chapter. Design must comply with applicable provisions of the Emeryville Design Guidelines and be approved as part of Design Review for the project. Open space must be accessible to the general public at all times. Provision must be made for ongoing operation and maintenance in perpetuity.
		10% of site area or 1,500 square feet, whichever is greater: 35 points	
		5% of site area or 1,000 square feet, whichever is greater: 20 points.	
		Contribution to Citywide Parks Fund: 10 points for every 1% of project construction valuation up to 50 points.	Contribution must be made prior to issuance of building permit.
(2) Zero Net Energy	50	100% of energy load (zero net energy): 50 points	Percent of total building energy load measured as kilowatt per square foot provided by solar panels, wind turbines, or other renewable sources.
(3) Public Improvements	50	10 points for every 1% of project construction valuation up to 50 points	Does not include improvements along project frontage that are normally required. Examples include curb, gutter, and sidewalk; pedestrian and bicycle paths; sanitary and storm sewers; and street trees, beyond what would normally be required.
(4) Utility Undergrounding	50	Contribution to Citywide Underground Utility Fund: 10 points for every 1% of project construction valuation up to 50 points	Does not include utility undergrounding that is normally required.
(5) Additional Family Friendly Units	50	5 points for each additional 5 percent of total units that have two or more bedrooms, of which at least 1 percent of total units must have three or more bedrooms.	Two- and three-bedroom units are in addition to those required by Section 9-5.2003 , and must comply with the applicable provisions of the Emeryville Design Guidelines pertaining to Family-Friendly Residential Unit Design.

Figure 21: Community Benefits and Bonus Points ([City of Emeryville, CA](#))

parcels, each development must undergo the same rezoning process independently.

Our recommended alternative is to update the SPI as a whole rather than by seeking piecemeal rezoning. The entire neighborhood could benefit from the innovations being implemented throughout the rest of the city's zoning districts. The process of updating the SPI would be as an amendment to existing legislation. Since the SPI was created directly by City Council as a response to community requests, it can be amended by direct City Council action. The community itself would be responsible for requesting these updates to the SPI legislation.

Zoning Amendments

The following recommendations would need to be implemented through the SPI amendment process described above:

“Missing Middle” Zoning

We recommend allowing a broader range of multi-family housing types in Mechanicsville's residential districts as per the Atlanta Zoning Diagnostic's citywide guidelines. First, the city's zoning code should be altered to remove the ban on multi-family housing currently found in Mechanicsville's single- and two-family districts. Second, the neighborhood should use a maximum number of units per lot instead of FAR requirements. Developments would be bound by existing design guidelines to prevent any out-of-character development, which would allow the development of triplex or fourplex buildings that look similar to pre-existing single- and two-

family housing. The result of these changes would potentially be an expansion of missing affordable and workforce housing in residential areas, built without disturbing the character of Mechanicsville's neighborhoods.

Accessory Dwelling Units

We recommend adding language to the code clarifying what constitutes an ADU and which subareas allow them. Specifically, ADUs should be explicitly allowed in Subareas 5 and 6, which roughly correspond to the R-4 and R-5 residential zoning districts. Note that it is currently illegal citywide to use either guest houses or ADUs for short-term rental arrangements like Airbnb, and a change to this law has not been recommended.

Encouraging Light Industry with Mixed-Use

The pending I-MIX legislation, as it stands now, would allow rezoning to I-MIX in light and heavy industrial districts, as well as some commercial and office districts. Should I-MIX pass in the rest of the city, it would allow for rezoning of industrial districts to I-MIX districts in the northwest corner of Mechanicsville outside of the SPI. However, the potential benefit of I-MIX zoning to the SPI is substantial thanks to the extensive presence of industrial space. To further benefit the rest of the neighborhood, we recommend allowing I-MIX style developments in Subareas 7 and 8, the two industrial subareas in the SPI.

User-Friendly Language and Graphics

We recommend re-writing and re-formatting the SPI-18 Code to incorporate user-friendly

language and graphics that demonstrate the provisions in the code.

Points-Based Bonus System

We recommend the SPI include a points-based bonus system to encourage more mindful development that supports the community. Like in the case study of Emeryville, points would be earned by providing services or public spaces to the local community, for including affordable units in new developments, or for other community beautification needs. Accrued points could then be exchanged for density bonuses, allowing developers to build taller buildings with higher floor area ratio maximums.

Community Level Changes

The following recommendations are suggestions for the reorganization of the community organizations present in Mechanicsville. The changes can be implemented without any legislative process because they do not touch the zoning code.

Developer-Neighborhood Interaction

When the community provides an approachable and informed contact for developers to communicate with, said developers are given greater access to the neighborhood decision-making process, and residents can gain more control over development outcomes. The overall result is a more friendly and productive relationship between communities and developers, which would benefit all stakeholders. For this reason, we recommend the creation of standing boards within the Mechanicsville Civic

Association and/or NPU-V that are specifically devoted to outreach and communication with developers.

CBA Subcommittee

The Partnership for Working Families recommends that neighborhoods or community groups create a similar body exclusively to help prompt and negotiate CBAs.* Such a body would have the same knowledge of relevant development processes and the power to influence developer plans, with an emphasis on gaining community benefits from larger projects.

NPU-V already has a CBA subcommittee, but the team is unaware of any actions they have taken or their organizational structure.** Creating a functioning CBA subcommittee is crucial to creating CBAs beneficial to the community. We recommend:

- The Mechanicsville Civic Association set up a CBA subcommittee, and
- NPU-V consider better utilizing their existing CBA subcommittee, or
- Roll the CBA planning role into the standing community outreach subcommittees recommended above.

* [Partnership for Working Families, Community Benefits 101](#)

** [NPU-V CBA Meeting Schedule](#)



Housing

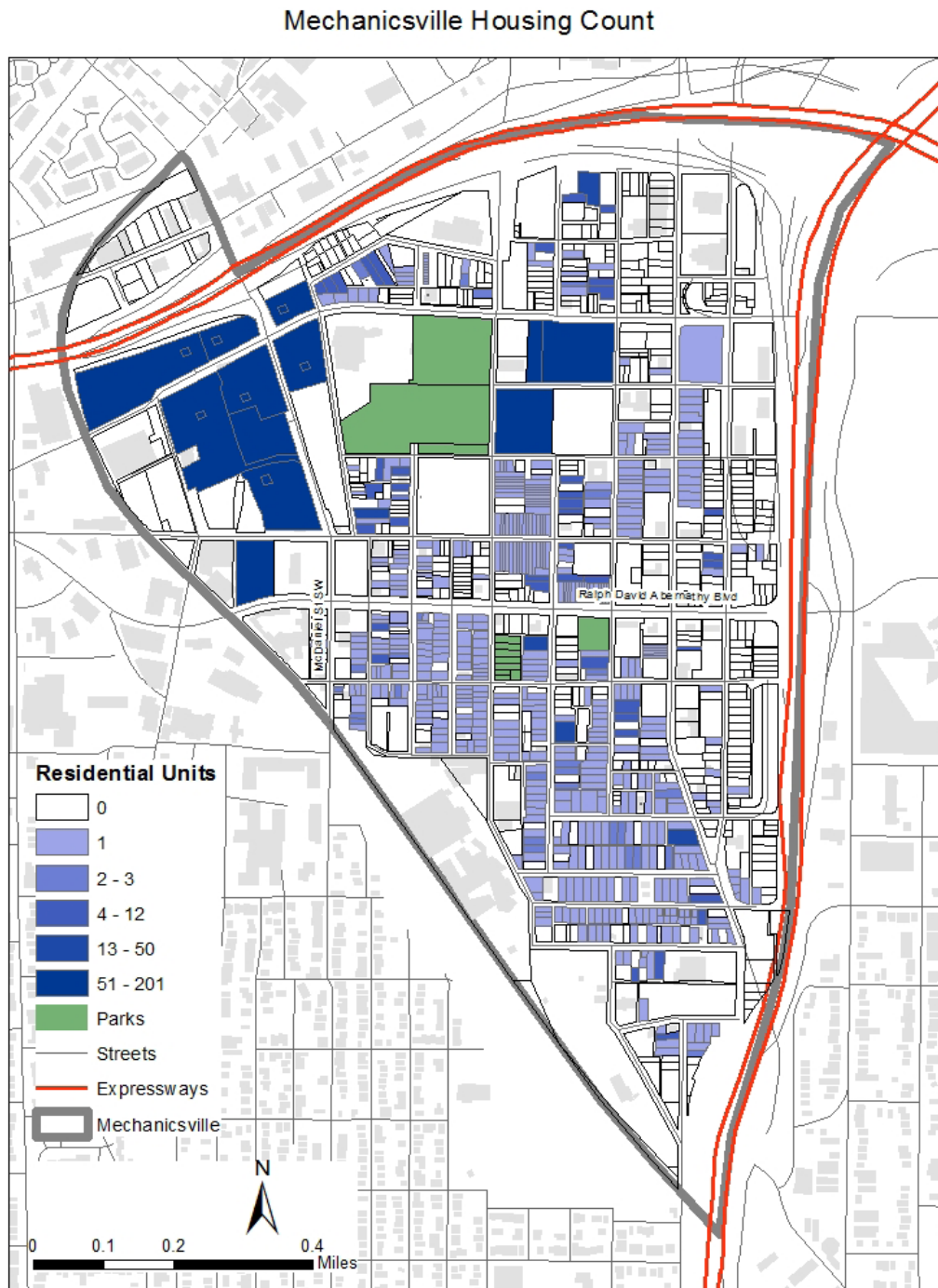


Figure 22: Housing By Units in Mechanicsville (2014 Fulton County Tax Assessor)

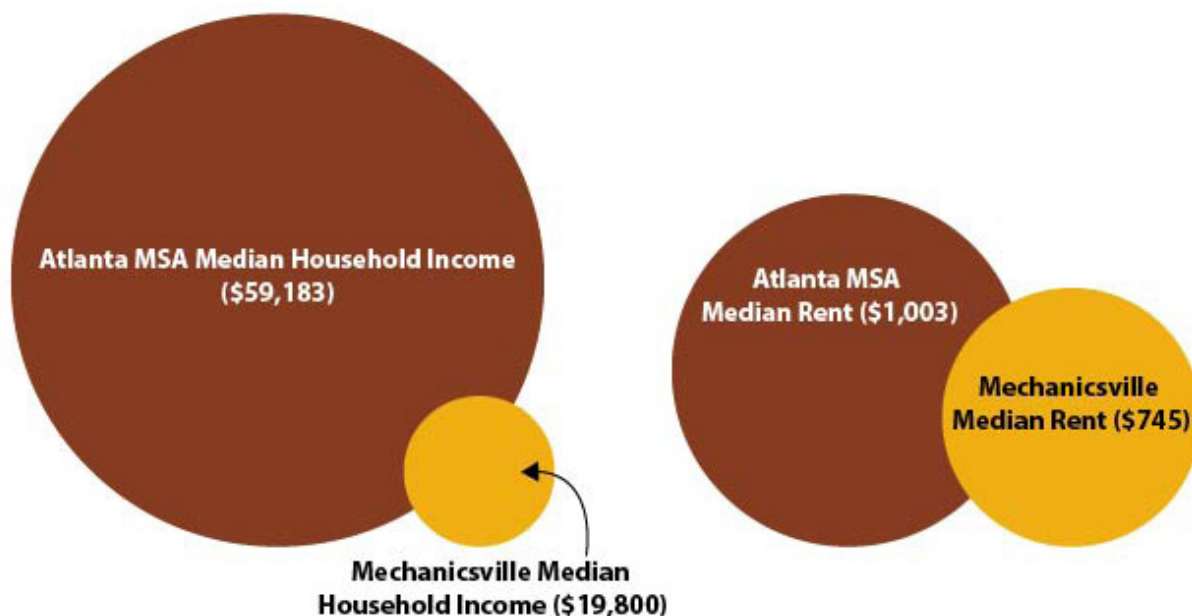


Figure 23. Mechanicsville Median Income and Rent Compared to the Atlanta MSA (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Introduction

This section provides a description and inventory of Mechanicsville’s existing housing, as well as stakeholder input regarding the neighborhood’s residential development needs. The remainder of this section discusses housing affordability and opportunity within Mechanicsville and provides recommendations for future development and concludes with housing-related goals for a CBA.

Existing Conditions

Mechanicsville contains a total of 2,293 housing units, primarily in the form of single-family housing, multi-family buildings with 8 to 14 units, and apartment buildings with over 100 units. The majority of housing stock within Mechanicsville are renter-occupied. Average rents are lower in Mechanicsville than for the City of Atlanta as a whole, but not low enough to account for the difference in incomes between

the neighborhood and City. Figure 23 shows the disproportionate difference between Atlanta and Mechanicsville incomes contrasted with the relatively similar City and neighborhood median rents.

Housing affordability is based on Area Median Income (AMI). AMI is determined from Census data for the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Sandy Springs and Roswell and encompasses 28 counties. The median income of the Atlanta MSA is \$53,843. However, the median household income for Mechanicsville is \$19,800. This means housing that is considered affordable for the MSA, and is therefore eligible for federal financing, is not necessarily affordable for residents in Mechanicsville.



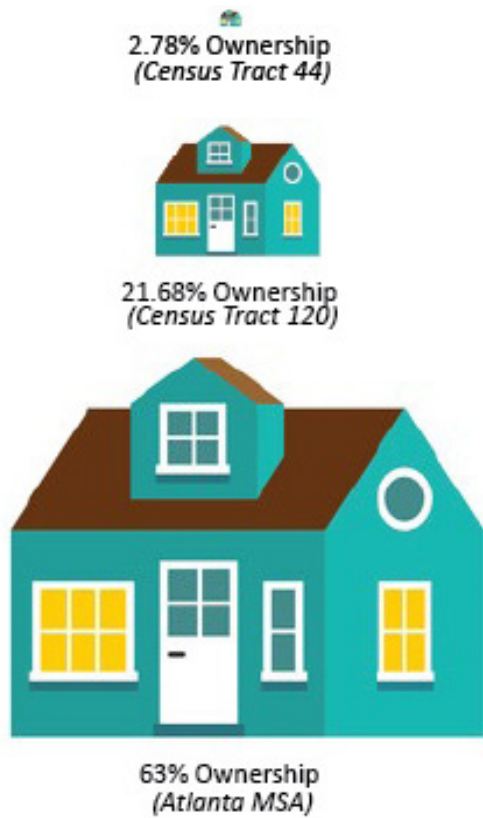


Figure 24. Ownership Rate Comparisons between Mechanicsville Census Tracts and the Atlanta MSA (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Based on the median household income in Mechanicsville, the median rent to prevent cost burdens is \$495.

The median income in the Mechanicsville area is only 11 percent of the AMI for the Atlanta MSA, and affordable housing constructed utilizing federal funding is typically set at ranges of 50 to 60 percent AMI. Another key measurement of housing affordability is cost burden: households that pay over 30 percent of their monthly income

on housing are considered cost burdened.

Statistically, Mechanicsville is different from the Atlanta MSA; however, Mechanicsville’s proportion of severely rent-burdened households is similar to the rest of Atlanta: households whose gross rent is at least 50 percent of household income in Mechanicsville is close to rates found in the Atlanta MSA. However, Mechanicsville has a very different housing composition than that found in the rest of the City. The neighborhood’s vacancy rate is nearly 18 percent in Census Tract 44 and 23 percent in Census Tract 120, compared to 10 percent in the Atlanta MSA (see Figure 4 for Census Tract boundaries). Vacant housing, not for sale or rent, is 70-75 percent in Mechanicsville but 60 percent within the Atlanta MSA. In addition, ownership rates are significantly lower than in Atlanta. See Figure 24 for a visual comparison.

Key housing statistics are presented in Figure 26. These statistics include a summary of the number of housing units by ownership/rental status, vacancy data, structure age, and resident characteristics.

The majority of Mechanicsville is zoned to permit residential development in various forms (see Figure 25). The northern portion of the neighborhood allows all types of housing including supportive housing, while the southern portion of the neighborhood allows primarily single-family housing. There are several clusters throughout the neighborhood that permit two-family housing, and isolated properties in the far northwestern and southeastern corners of Mechanicsville allow only supportive housing or

Housing Permitted by Current Zoning

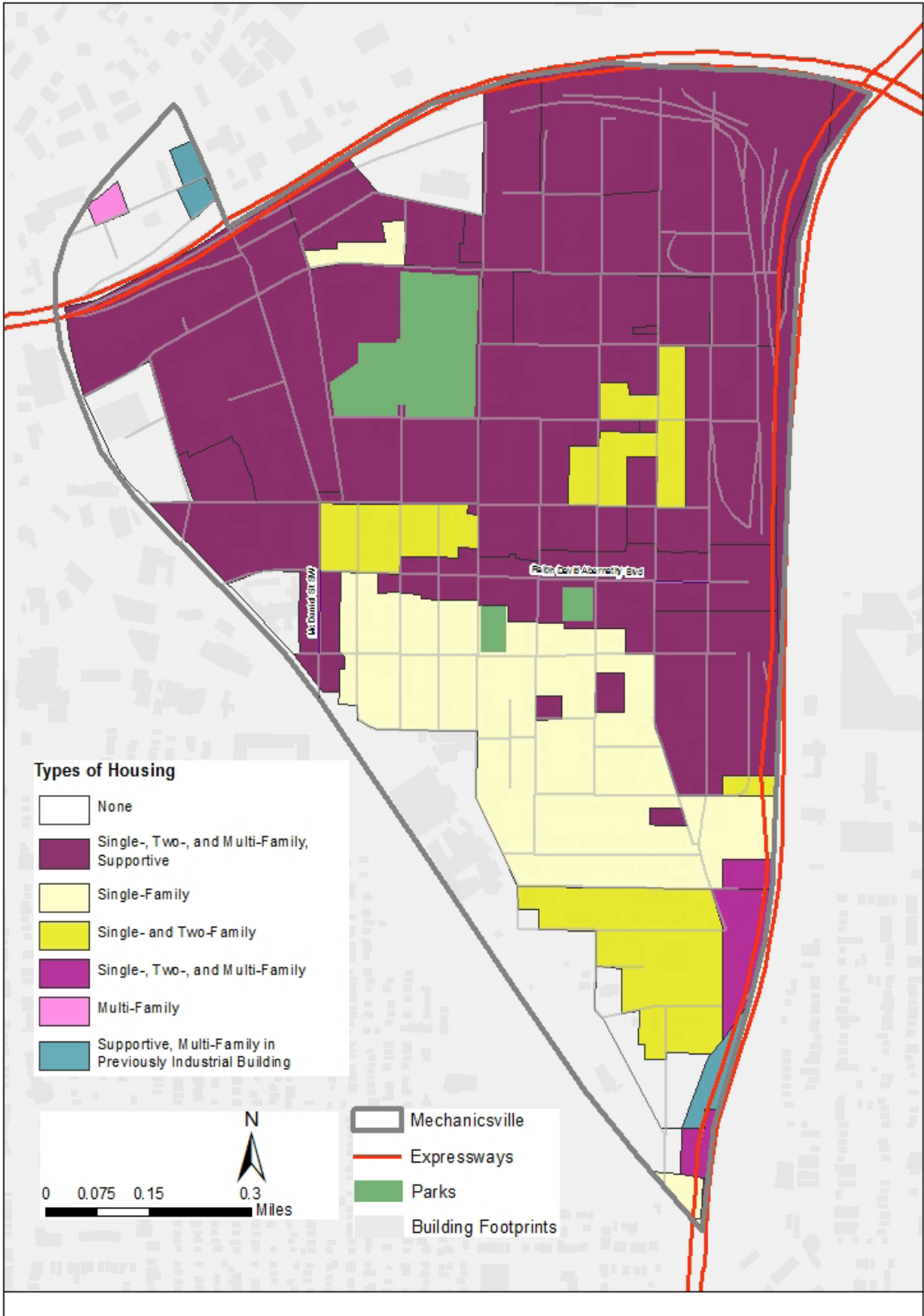


Figure 25: Housing Permitted by Current Zoning (City of Atlanta Zoning Ordinance)

	Census Tract 44:	Census Tract 120:	Atlanta MSA:
Total number of units	1080	1,213	2,219,590
Owner occupied units	3%	22%	63%
Renter occupied units	97%	78%	37%
Vacancy rate	18%	23%	10%
Vacant units for rent	25%	21%	28%
Vacant units for sale	0	8%	13%
Vacant, not for rent or sale	75%	71%	60%
Gross rent as 50% of household income in past 12 months	24%	27%	24%
Gross rent as 30-49% of household income in past 12 months	40%	30%	24%
Median gross rent in past 12 months	\$734	\$751	\$1,003
Median year structure built	2004	1984	1990

Figure 26: Key Housing Statistics for Mechanicsville Census Tracts and the Atlanta MSA (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

multi-family housing in a converted industrial building.

Affordability

There are many land-owning groups in Mechanicsville that have constructed affordable housing units within the neighborhood (see Figure 27). The majority of these units are located north of Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard, and the Atlanta Housing Authority is the primary

landowner.

Low-income housing tax credits, or LIHTC, is the main mechanism used to develop affordable housing in the United States and has provided most of the financing for affordable housing located in Mechanicsville. LIHTC provides equity to a developer that allows construction of a development at below-market rents. This is possible because there is less overall debt

Affordable Housing by Landowner

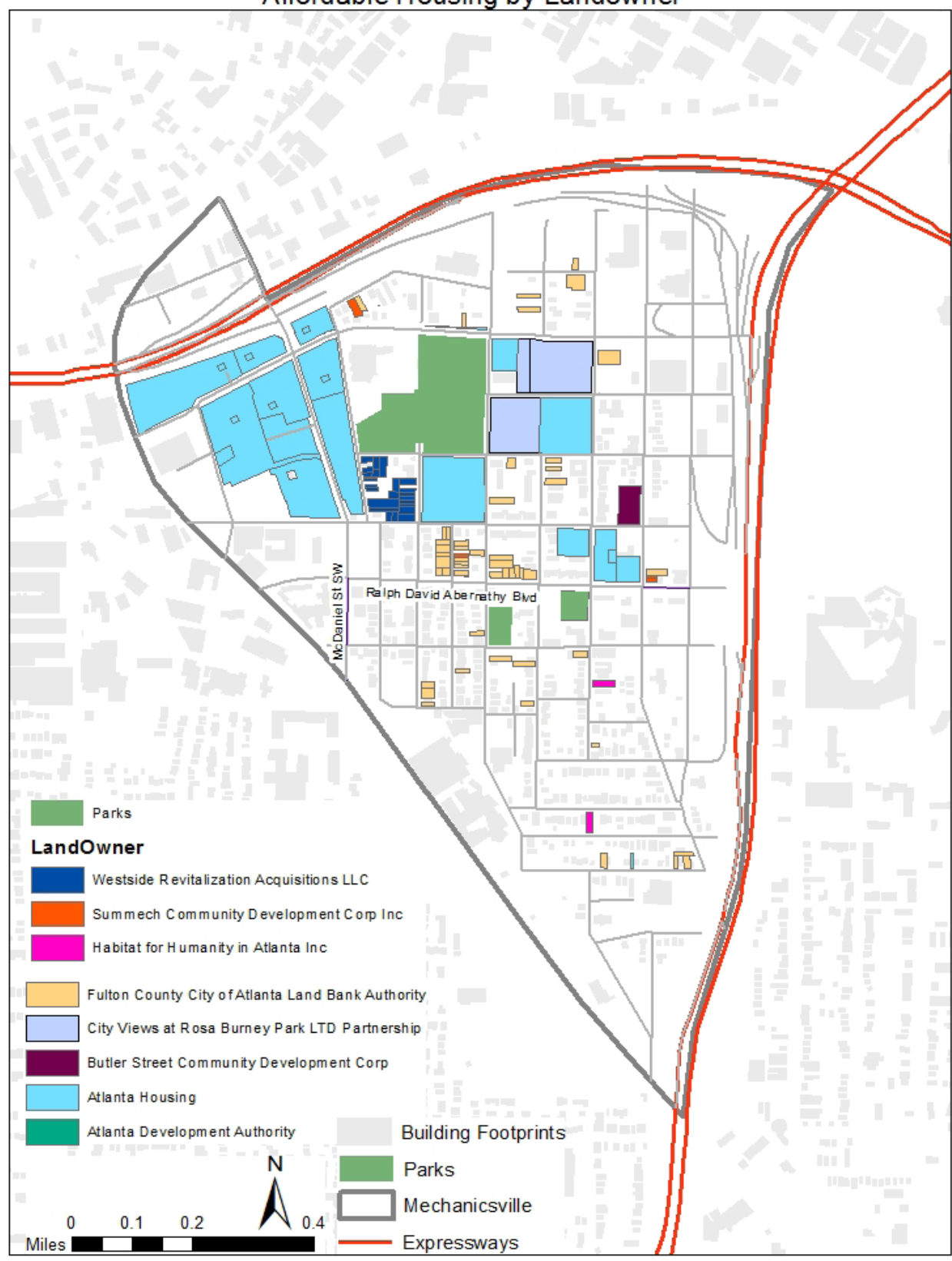


Figure 27: Affordable Housing By Landowner (2014 Fulton County Tax Parcel Data)

used to develop the project. The tax credits are granted to the developers, who syndicate them to investors. Selling tax credits to investors is how equity is created. Investors who purchase the credit receive a monetary reduction in federal tax liability in annual allotments. Four percent LIHTC can be used for new construction or rehabilitation but often times must be paired with additional subsidies. Nine percent LIHTC applies to new construction and rehabilitation and can often be used to complete a development without additional federal subsidies. LIHTC developments typically are restricted to rents at 50-60 percent AMI and must remain affordable to low-income tenants for at least 30 years.*

LIHTC Properties

Columbia at Mechanicsville, 500 McDaniel Street St SW, Atlanta, GA 30312

- Mixed-income apartments with 1, 2, and 3 bedroom

Mechanicsville Crossing, 565 Wells Street SW Atlanta, GA 30312

- 1,2 and 3 bedroom apartments

Parkside at Mechanicsville, 565 McDaniel Street SW Atlanta, GA 30312

- 2 bed, 2.5 bath townhomes

Mechanicsville Station, 520 Fulton Street SW Atlanta, GA 30312

- 1,2, and 3 bedroom apartments

Scattered Site Single-Family:

- 74 homes, 15-year affordable rental properties with the option to purchase after 15 years

SUMMECH Community Development Corporation

* New Markets Tax Credit Mapping Tool

SUMMECH is a local community development corporation that works with other organizations to build and preserve affordable housing in Mechanicsville. SUMMECH offers several programs for residents in the Mechanicsville, including homebuyer education workshops, financial fitness camps, and rental opportunities.

Columbia Residential

Columbia Residential is a real estate development and management company that focuses on affordable housing. Columbia Residential has several development focus areas including infill and sustainable development, holistic community revitalization, and mixed-income housing. Columbia Residential manages Columbia Senior Residences at Mechanicsville and Columbia at Mechanicsville.

Stakeholder Outcomes

In conversations with affordable housing developers, it became clear that the largest obstacle was the rezoning process in the City of Atlanta. The process is significantly longer than in other municipalities. An obstacle specific to Mechanicsville is the lack of large, contiguous vacant parcels. This makes it difficult to build the large-scale affordable housing developments that are most eligible for federal tax credits without knocking down buildings and assembling lots. This limits the types of funding best suited for the neighborhood and necessitates more complicated financing mechanisms and combinations of sources. Despite these obstacles, the existing LCI plan that encompasses Mechanicsville has the potential to help with funding eligibility scoring.

Additionally, it is unlikely that developers will need to seek rezoning because there are many districts that permit multi-family, affordable, and senior housing developments.

Additionally, market-rate developers shared their thoughts and perspectives on the tempo of Mechanicsville. Their summary was concise: the cost of land is the main reason why a developer would, or would not, invest in Mechanicsville. Some developers bought at an opportune time when land prices were low, others more recently had walked away because of rising speculation and the increase in land prices. Current market rents in Mechanicsville would not be economically sustainable to support the income stream needed to make a project profitable. Thus, most projects in the neighborhood are built in a partnership with a public entity (Atlanta Housing Authority, Invest Atlanta, State of Georgia, etc.) as affordable housing to subsidize the project's costs.

Individual community members provided insight into the social environment in Mechanicsville. Residents and church leadership indicated that the neighborhood crime rate was decreasing and overall safety was improving. Residents attributed this to the development of Rosa Burney Park and nearby apartments, and church leadership attributed this to a decrease in dilapidated housing stock and a resulting decrease in illegal tenants and loiterers. Both residents and church leadership also discussed Mechanicsville's sense of community and appeal for people who have moved away. There is an annual reunion for former low-income housing project residents, and neighborhood churches

derive a large portion of their membership from past residents and their descendants who have relocated to nearby neighborhoods and cities. Despite this sentiment, the neighborhood also has a large proportion of renter-occupied housing and owners who do not live in Mechanicsville. One property owner said that she owns a home on McDaniel Street and rents it to her cousin and various unrelated tenants. She plans to do so until property values increase and she can sell the parcel. She is waiting for amenities like a grocery store to increase home values.

Stakeholder feedback informed this report through consideration of existing services provided by local churches and nonprofit organizations. This report will look at maintaining and expanding current programs to support a broader base of residents within the neighborhood. Feedback will also inform development strategies and recommendations for the neighborhood. This report will provide an easy guide to layering funding mechanisms that can make affordable housing options clear and understandable for both residents and developers.



Figure 28: Purpose Built Model (Purpose Built Communities)

Best Practices

Best practices are divided into two sections: those that support an increase in affordable housing and others that support an increase in market-rate development through incentivizing investment in the neighborhood.

Affordable Housing Best Practices

Purpose Built Communities is an organization created to improve struggling neighborhoods through development and programmatic services. Purpose Built formed a model, based on the success of Villages of East Lake (see best practices in Appendix E), that the organization could implement to encourage positive change in communities across the county. There are five aspects to the Purpose Built Model, which are listed in Figure 28.

Community Quarterback

A community champion (usually a non-profit) engages residents, public and private stakeholders, and investors. The quarterback connects philanthropic groups and elected officials, addressing specific community needs and concerns.

Mixed-Income Housing

Low-income residents have affordable housing options with quality construction and safe public spaces. People with financial choice are drawn to the neighborhood because of the amenities; the diverse neighborhood encourages pride in the community.

Education Pipeline

A cradle-to-college pipeline provides early childhood education through elementary, middle, and high school education with the goal of preparing all students for graduation and a path to college. Schools co-locate and collaborate with the community, measuring success based on the achievements of cooperating partners.

Community Wellness

Wellness facilities are implemented based on the neighborhood’s specific needs and priorities and can range from access to fresh produce and nearby healthcare to banking services and job training services. The mix of facilities, programs, and services is particular to the neighborhood’s character and history.

A Defined Neighborhood

The defined neighborhood is a small and defined

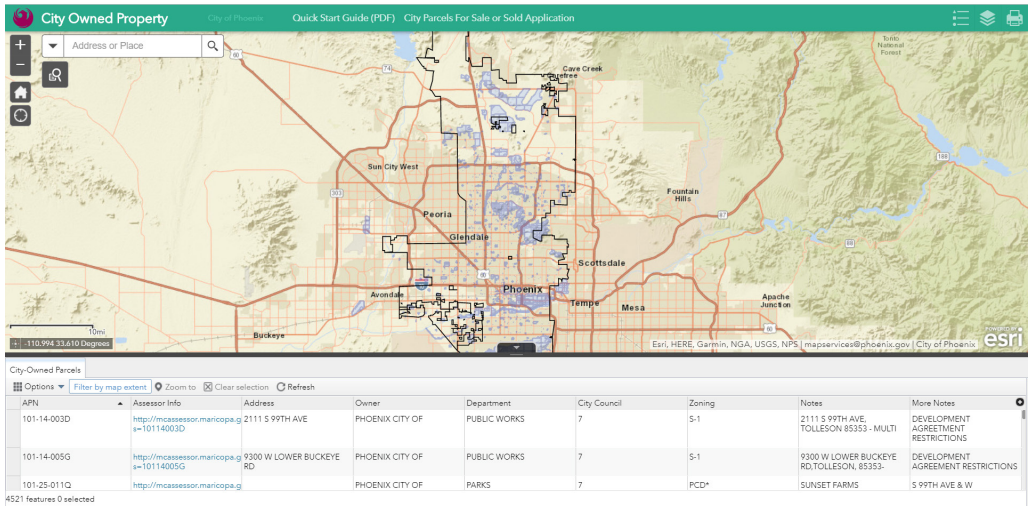


Figure 29: City Parcels For Sale, Sold and Under Review ([City of Phoenix](#))

area where mixed-income housing, cradle-to-college pipeline, and community wellness come together.

While the Purpose Built Communities model in its entirety may not be ideal for the community, the programmatic aspects and community quarterback concept are key takeaways for Mechanicsville.



Figure 30: Streamline property ([Streamline Group, LLC](#))

Market-Rate Development Incentives Best Practices

Within incentivizing market-rate investment in Mechanicsville, a city-led approach and a market-led approach will be recommended.

Unloading Underutilized City-Owned Land - City Approach

In Mechanicsville, 13 acres within the housing nodes identified below are owned by either the City of Atlanta or the Fulton County Recreation Authority. Notably, a majority of this land sits on

the east side of the neighborhood abutting the Downtown Connector as leftover parking parcels from the former Atlanta Braves' Turner Field, now the Georgia State University football facilities. This represents a tremendous opportunity for the City to offload land to responsible developers who are willing to utilize them for mindful developments. The stadium relocation, alongside the LCI published discussing this land, offers an enormous change in demand for parking in and around the area.

Housing Vacancy Nodes

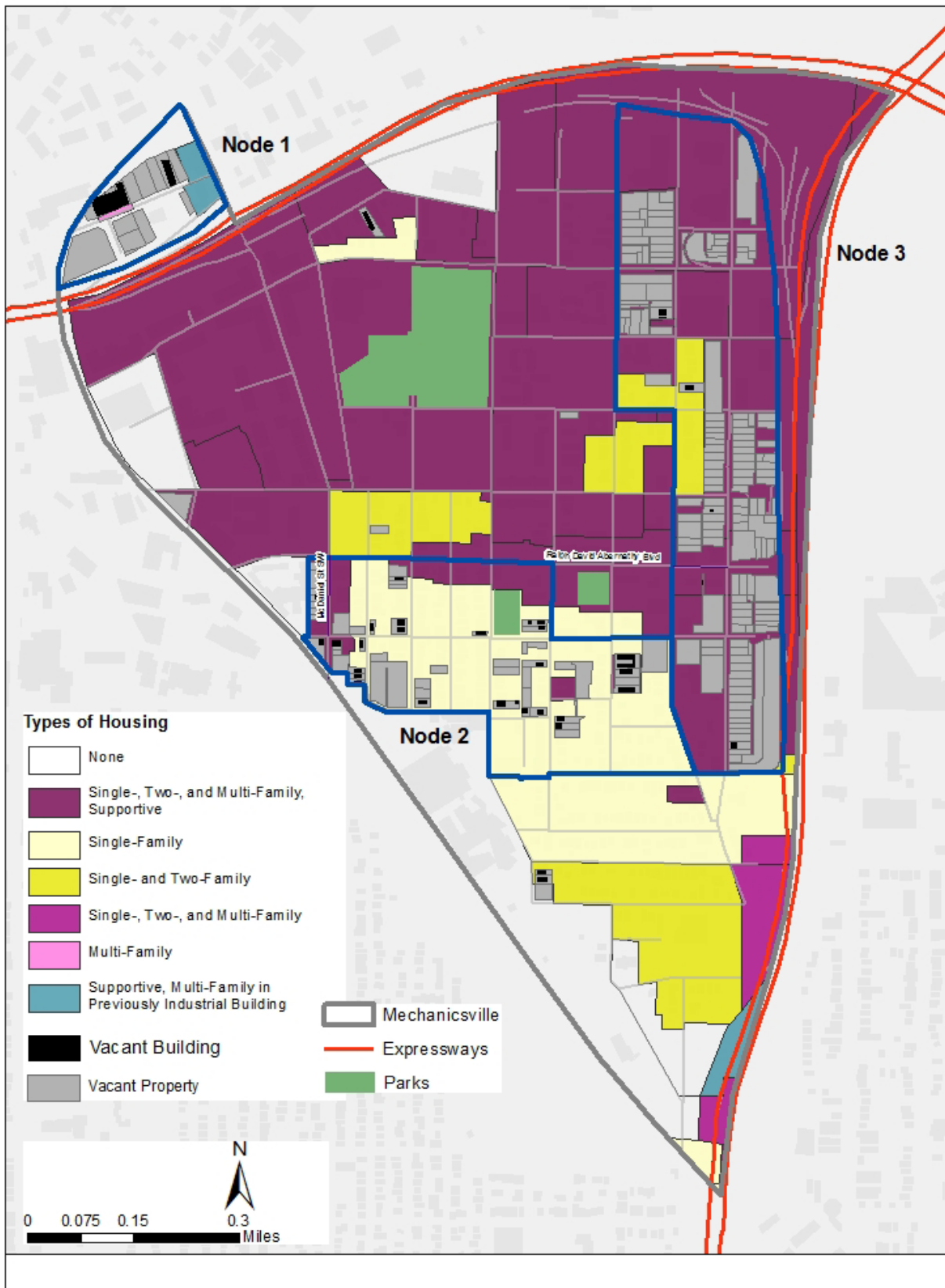


Figure 31: Housing Vacancy Nodes (City of Atlanta Office of Zoning & Development, Nodes created by Mechanicsville Studio group)

Location:	Total Parcel Acreage:	Vacant Acreage:	Percent Vacant:
Nodes 1, 2, & 3	100	44	44%
Node 1	8	6	76%
Node 2	40	8	21%
Node 3	53	28	54%

Figure 32: Vacancies within Residential Nodes (City of Atlanta Office of Zoning & Development, Nodes created by Mechanicsville Studio group)

Node 1 Description:

The boundaries of Node 1 are McDaniel Street SW to the east, Interstate 20 to the south, and the boundaries of the Mechanicsville neighborhood to the north and west. The only locations in Node 1 where housing is permitted by current zoning standards are the two parcels bordering McDaniel St SW, which currently allow multi-family development in pre-existing industrial structures. I-MIX zoning is one possibility that would allow for residential development.

Node 2 Description:

The boundaries of Node 2 are McDaniel Street SW to the west, Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard to the north until Cooper Street SW, Cooper Street SW to the east until Bass Street SW, Bass Street SW to the north until Pryor Street SW, Pryor Street SW to the east until Dodd Avenue SW, Dodd Avenue SW to the south until Windsor Street SW, Windsor Street SW to the west until Stephens Street SW, and Stephens Street SW to the south.

The majority of Node 2 permits single-

family homes as the only type of residential development. There is a cluster of parcels on McDaniel Street SW that permits all housing types (see Figure 31). Another cluster of parcels that permits all housing types is located along Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard.

Node 3 Description:

The boundaries of Node 3 are Rawson Street SW to the north, Pulliam Street SW to the east, Dodd Avenue SW to the south, and Pryor Street SW to the east until Crumley Street SW, Crumley Street SW to the south until Formwalt Street SW, and Formwalt Street SW to the east. Node 3 is mostly zoned for all types of housing, but there is a small area in the western portion of the Node that only permits single- and two-family residential development.

Of the parcels identified as vacant in Node 3, the City of Atlanta and Fulton County Recreation Authority own 13.33-acres, or 47.14 percent of the vacancies by land area in Node 3 (see Figure 31). This accounts for a quarter of all land area in Node 3. The majority of these parcels are parking lots that served Turner Field when the Braves'

Atlanta Owned Parking

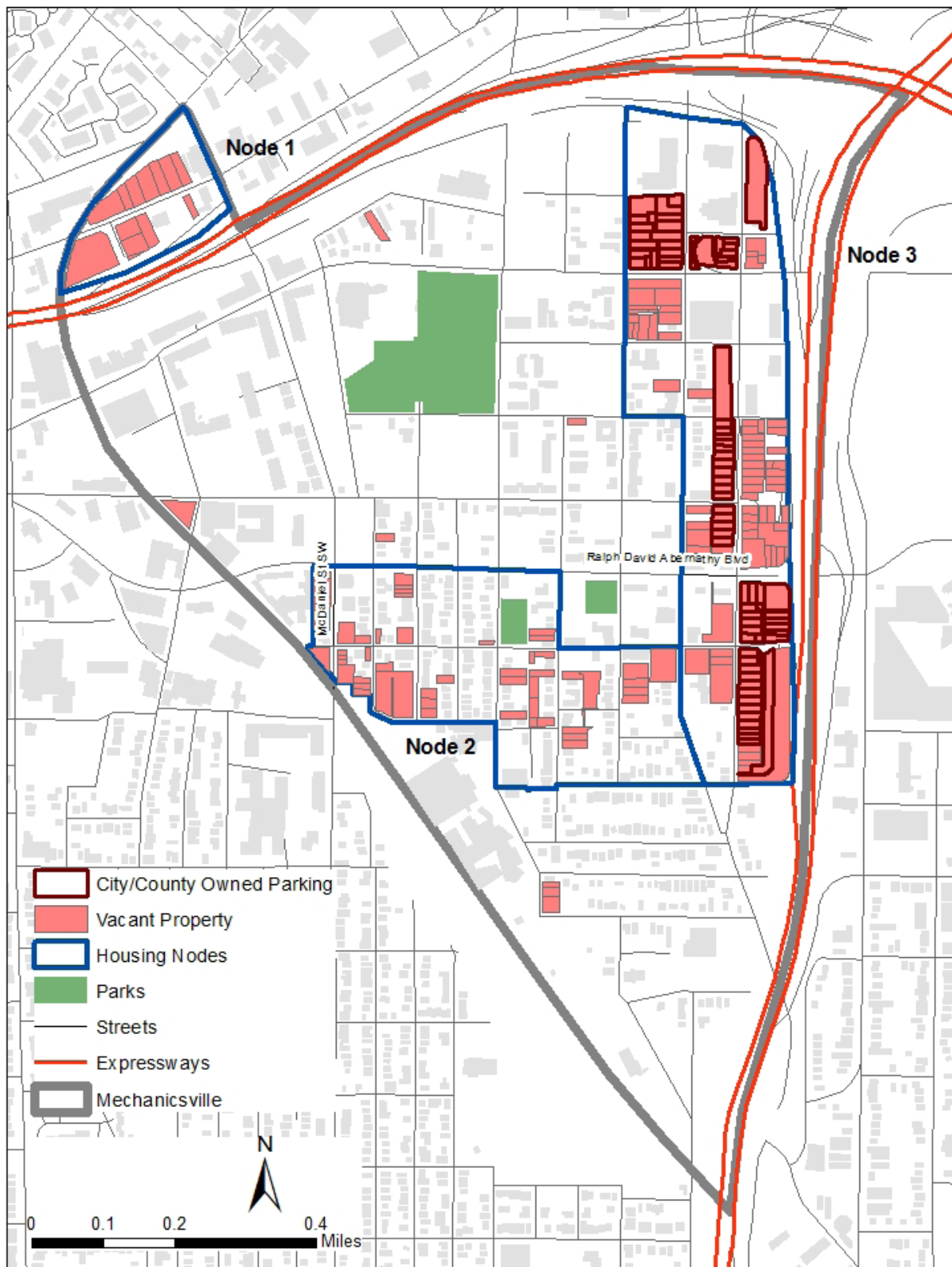


Figure 33: City/County Owned Vacancies (2014 Fulton County Tax Parcel Map, Nodes Identified by Mechanicsville Studio group)

Implementation Strategy

Implementation recommendations are based on past plans' action items, such as the Stadium Neighborhood LCI and Stadium TAD Redevelopment Plan's intent to develop Mechanicsville's eastern parking lots into housing and stormwater retention areas. Recommendations also come from housing best practices and available funding mechanisms. See Appendix C for more information about how to contact the resource organizations discussed below.

Node Recommendations

Node 1 Recommendations:

Current zoning does not allow any housing development in Node 1. In order to develop residential units in this Node, a property owner would need to rezone their parcel to I-MIX zoning. I-MIX zoning requires 30 percent of the floor area to be used as light industrial space but allows a residential component in the remainder of the building. Rezoning to I-MIX would be the most efficient way to build residential units in this Node. More information about I-MIX and the rezoning process is located in the zoning section.

Node 2 Recommendations:

Node 2 consists of mostly single-family detached homes and should remain mostly single-family residential to maintain the current fabric of this portion of the neighborhood.

There are several programs available to help homeowners improve their homes or to help first-time homebuyers that Mechanicsville

residents are able to apply for. The following lists provide program resources (funding institution is in parenthesis):

1. Mortgage Reinstatement Assistance (DCA):* Helps homeowners with delinquent mortgage payments resulting from financial hardship. The program provides a \$50,000 payment directly to the lender/sender to reinstate the loan.
2. Underwater Georgia (DCA): Homeowners who owe more than their homes are worth through a one-time principal reduction of up to \$50,000, submitted directly to the lender/servicer.
3. Home Access Program (DCA): Provides grants of up to \$10,000 to improve the accessibility of an owner-occupied home for an individual with disabilities.
4. City of Atlanta Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program: Non-profit organizations offer free or low-cost home repairs to people with disabilities and seniors that meet their requirements.
5. Hardest Hit Fund Down Payment Assistance Program (DCA): Can provide up to \$15,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance to eligible borrowers.
6. Georgia Dream Homeownership Program (DCA): Provides loans as a way to assist homebuyers in purchasing a home.
7. CHIP: Community HOME Investment Program (DCA): Owner-occupied homes are eligible for housing rehabilitation grants of up to \$300,000 through this program.

The main focus in this node should be on retention of existing residents.

* DCA is the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. See Appendix C for details and contact information



Retention of existing housing and residents should be the main focus of this node, but a high vacancy rate provides opportunities for new residential to be built in this portion of the neighborhood. There are existing incentives for single-family development, especially if these homes will be rented or sold at an affordable price. Existing incentives for single-family development include:

1. Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP) Loan Fund (ANDP):* Provides funds for nonprofit and for-profit developers that build affordable, mixed-income and properties.
2. CHIP: Community HOME Investment Program (DCA): Funds are available for new construction and rehabilitation of homes.
3. HomeFirst Supportive Housing Fund (Invest Atlanta): Funds are available for for-sale and rental single-family homes.
4. HOME Investment Partnerships Program Financing (Invest Atlanta):** The program funds costs associated with new construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of rental properties. Both for-profit and nonprofit developers are eligible for HOME funds.

Atlanta Housing offers several incentives to an owner of a rental property that chooses to rent their property to a tenant with a housing choice voucher.*** These incentives include:

1. Property Protection Program: Atlanta Housing pays up to \$2,000 per claim to property owners

* [ANDP](#)

** [Invest Atlanta](#)

*** [Atlanta Housing](#)

- for excessive tenant-related property damage.
2. Standard Leasing Incentive Fee: Atlanta Housing pays a one-time, non-refundable, monetary payment to property owners on behalf of Atlanta Housing applicants or participants experiencing a hardship.
3. Automatic Leasing Incentive Fee: Atlanta Housing pays a one-time, non-refundable, monetary payment to property owners on behalf of applicants or participants moving from a different housing authority.
4. Investor Referral Incentive: Current Housing Choice property owners receive a \$100 cash referral incentive for each newly-approved property owner they refer.

These incentives are available through Atlanta Housing and are only for single-family units:

1. New Contract Incentive: Property owners who sign a new contract to lease a single-family unit to a Housing Choice family receive a \$250 incentive.
2. Rent Boost: Single-family properties built in 2000 or later receive an automatic \$105 boost on the monthly rent offer.
3. First-time Pass Bonus: Property owners whose single-family unit passes the first inspection receive a \$250 incentive.

Node 3 Recommendations:

The eastern portion of the Node borders the Downtown Connector, so taller buildings are feasible. Building heights should decrease as development approaches Pryor Street to be in keeping with the existing character of Mechanicsville. Zoning and growth control measures can ensure that low-density residential

areas remain the predominant development pattern west of Pryor Street: these were the tools implemented on Peachtree Street in Ansley Park and Midtown Atlanta to retain a smaller scale.

Node 3 is an opportunity area for high-density residential development.

The Stadium Neighborhoods LCI plan identifies the parking lots within Node 3 as key opportunity areas for both high-density residential development and stormwater retention. Development between Pryor Street and the Downtown Connector should encompass both of these uses but in a way that is sensitive to the neighborhood context and includes a mix of uses. An example of a successful development that exemplifies what the blending of stormwater retention and housing development is the Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel project located in the Northgate neighborhood outside of Seattle. This project turned a roughly 5.5-acre parking lot into a successful water retention feature and mixed-use development.

The Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel (see Figure 34) provided a variety of social, economic, and environmental benefits to its community:

- 530 housing units
- 50,000 square feet of retail
- 50 percent increase in open space within the Northgate Urban Center
- Pedestrian connections to commercial and residential areas
- 78 percent reduction in impervious surfaces
- 40-80 percent reduction in suspended solids

from stormwater runoff

General Housing

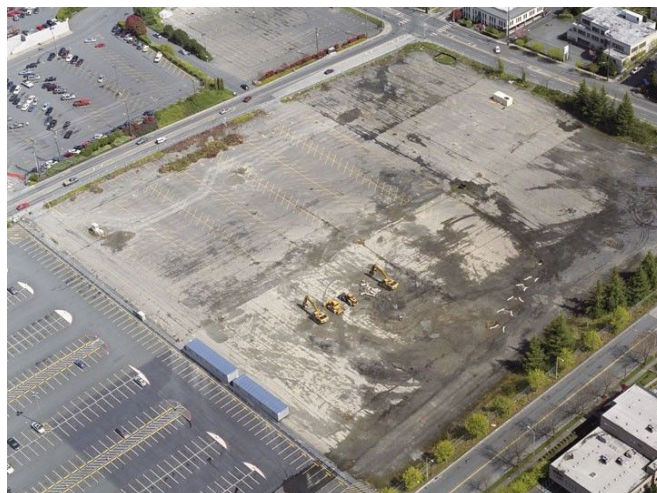


Figure 34: Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel Before and After Development ([Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel Final Report, Prepared for Seattle Public Utilities](#))

Recommendations

9 Percent LIHTC Funds: Due to the amount of tax credits in the neighborhood, Mechanicsville is unlikely to receive new 9 percent LIHTCs in the future. Developers should pursue other funding options.

Community Land Trust (CLT): Consider a partnership with the Atlanta Land Trust, a non-

profit CLT organization committed to providing paths to homeownership. The Atlanta Land Trust delivers and stewards permanently affordable housing by buying and maintaining land and selling the ground lease to a qualified home buyer. The resident owns the home, but the Land Trust retains the land, keeping purchasing costs low. Using this model, home buyers increase their purchasing power. The Atlanta Land Trust is currently focused on acquiring property in the Beltline planning area and the Westside but is continuing to identify other areas in need of housing.

Bond financing is one mechanism that can be utilized to develop multi-family housing in Node 3. Invest Atlanta offers bond financing options specifically for multi-family development. These bond options include:

Tax Exempt Bonds: This bond option serves as permanent financing for the project. Funding can be paired with 4 percent LIHTC and can be used for up to 100 percent of total development costs. Minimum of 75 units and \$5 million in development costs.

Housing Opportunity Bond Financing: Gap financing can be used towards the acquisition, construction, or renovation and can be paired with public or private financing. A land use restriction agreement will be in place for a minimum of 15 years upon financing.

Retain Affordable Single-Family Housing: Due to low homeownership rates in Mechanicsville, maintaining affordable single-family housing is imperative to maintain existing residents.

Working with the CLT and nonprofits is one avenue of maintaining affordable single-family housing.

Offload City-Owned Land: The greatest challenge for offloading land is identifying the correct Request for Proposal (RFP). Every city department with land holdings in Mechanicsville must be transparent in their available assets that could be dedicated to offloading.

A first step would be to develop a website similar to Phoenix's, that contained the following:

- Identify which lots are available
- State current fair market values for the respective lots
- Status of the available lots, such as pending sale, available, etc.
- Prospective, and current, owners of the lot

Modeling After Streamline Group, LLC: For this approach, a developer must be willing to assume the risk associated with this project. We recommend interviewing and establishing discussions with Streamline in Philadelphia to help show the potential successes, and benefits, this type of operation could bring. In addition, the City must also release information pertaining to indicators of blight that they keep record of, such as:

- Upkeep complaints
- Outstanding liens on properties due to nonpayment of property taxes

CBA Recommendations

Outside of existing financing programs and community organizations, there are several requests the neighborhood can make in the form of financial or programmatic requests as part of a CBA.

These requests can enable Mechanicsville to better utilize their existing assets, create new housing opportunities, and increase resources and income levels for extremely low-income residents.

- Establish a neighborhood foundation similar to the East Lake Foundation or the one located in Grove Park, or strengthen existing neighborhood organizations through funding and personnel to enable them to fulfill the role of Community Quarterback
- Work with a Community Land Trust, like the Atlanta Land Trust, to acquire properties that retain permanent affordability, especially single-family homes
- Create low-income housing for extremely low-income residents (at or below 30 percent AMI)
- Implement programs to increase education and income levels so that people can afford housing at higher percentages of AMI
- Mandate that new housing construction hire from the neighborhood's job training programs (see Economic & Workforce Development section of this report)

Economic & Workforce Development

Introduction

This section provides a description of Mechanicsville’s existing economic climate, existing businesses, as well as best practices and strategies for economic growth and job creation. Stakeholder input outlines the neighborhood’s needs from an economic and workforce development perspective. This section also provides recommendations for future development and concludes with economic and workforce development-related goals for a CBA.

Existing Conditions

Education

Educational attainment in Mechanicsville skews lower than the city average (see Figure 35). There are significantly larger percentages of Mechanicsville residents who lack a high school or college degree compare to Atlanta. There are notably lower percentages of Mechanicsville residents with bachelor’s and advanced degrees.

Employment

The area’s unemployment rate per the 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates was 18 percent, versus Atlanta’s overall unemployment rate of 10 percent. It is notable that the African American unemployment rate

for Mechanicsville and Atlanta were very similar at roughly 18 percent each.

Poverty

The federal poverty line in 2018 for a family of four is \$25,100, and 43 percent of Mechanicsville families earn below that level. Of the families living below the poverty level, 35 percent are female-headed households. More than half of the population under the age of 18 live in poverty. About 17 percent of 65 years and older live in poverty. Eighty-one percent of residents have incomes less than double the poverty level.

Income

Median income in Mechanicsville is \$19,745, and the average is \$30,181. Median income is the income of the middle person if everyone’s income in an area were listed from least to greatest, and the average is the total income of an area divided by the number of working people there. Both of these figures are below the Atlanta median of \$49,398 and are far below its average of \$87,784. Mechanicsville is primarily a low to low-middle income neighborhood as shown in Figure 36.

Summary

Mechanicsville is a low-income neighborhood

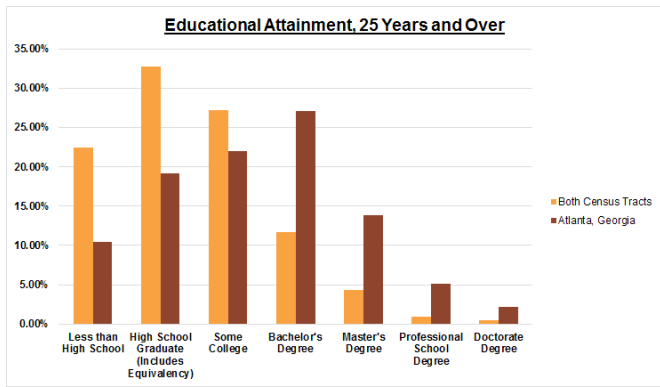


Figure 35: Educational Attainment, 25 Years and Older (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

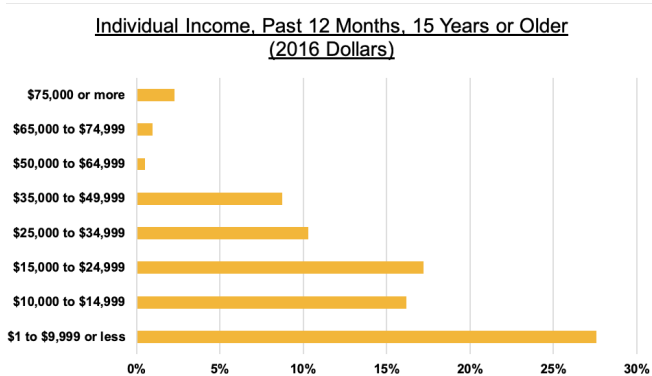


Figure 36: Individual Income, Past 12 Months, 15 Years or Older (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

with relatively low educational attainment. The locals' resultant low purchasing power makes the area unattractive to grocery stores and other retail development that the neighborhood currently lacks. Lacking a high school diploma or its equivalent is a barrier to job access and therefore financial stability for many residents. Workers who have not completed high school or attained a GED typically earn less and have fewer employment opportunities than workers who have these credentials. There is significant potential for workforce development programs to increase area income and reduce poverty through training and job placement programs

directed at these workers.

Mechanicsville has approximately 150 businesses and 1800 employees (data retrieved from ESRI Community Analyst). Figure 38 below is a list of the top five sectors that employers in Mechanicsville are part of by NAICS code. Public administration employs the most people, followed by wholesale trade. Note that these are employees that work in the Mechanicsville area, but do not necessarily live in the neighborhood.

Figure 39 contains a list of the top five sectors that residents of the Mechanicsville area work in. The residents work in a different group of sectors than those that represent the industries located in the neighborhood. The top sector could be also be referred to as the service industry, followed by various professional and management occupations.

Industry by NAICS Code	Employees	Percent of Employees	Number of Business Establishments
Public Administration	428	24%	8
Wholesale Trade	300	17%	6
Health Care & Social Assistance	227	13%	14
Professional, Scientific and Tech Services	137	8%	16
Other Services (except Public Administration)	109	6%	6

Figure 38: Mechanicsville Top Five Employer Sectors (ESRI Community Analyst)

Industry by NAICS Code	Percent of Residents Employed
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	21%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, Administrative and Waste Management Services	19%
Educational Services, Healthcare, Social Assistance	18%
Retail Trade	13%
Transportation and Warehousing, Utilities	11%

Figure 39: Residents Employment by Industry for Census Tracts 44 and 120 (2016 ACS 5-Year Data)



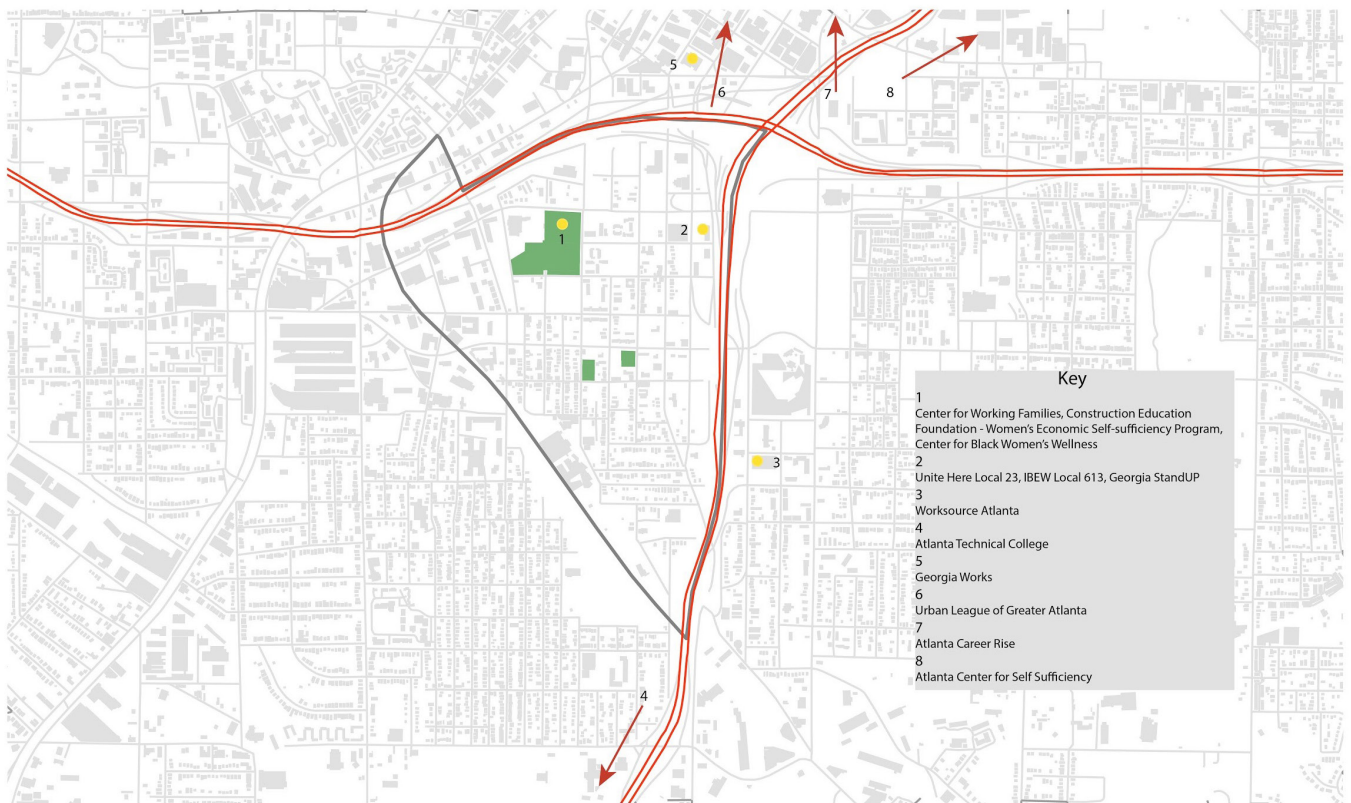


Figure 37: Workforce Development Organizations (Compiled by Mechanicsville Studio group)

Stakeholder Outcomes

Business Owners

The businesses surveyed ranged from 45 years in operation to recently opened. Many were quite small, including sole proprietorships. However, there are larger businesses in the area, such as Right at Home Health Care, which has about 150 employees. Multiple businesses shared that they chose to locate in Mechanicsville because of its location next to several highways, its proximity to Downtown, and that the vast majority of employees do not live in Mechanicsville.

Several employees travel from nearby neighborhoods, such as West End or Grant Park, where they felt there were more amenities. While most employees in the area drive to work, some mentioned that they would be more likely to take the MARTA if the bus stops were better located and service more reliable.

Business owners were asked what other businesses they would like to see that would complement their own businesses.

All expressed the need for more food options, specifically healthy and convenient options.

Input from church leadership agrees with the need for a grocery store and expressed the want for more greenspace for community use. Every business owner we spoke with had positive experiences working with other local business owners, and most of them are involved in community service and local charity efforts.

Takeaways:

- Foster already collaborative and supportive relationships between local businesses.
- More reliable MARTA service would support employees commuting into Mechanicsville.
- Local residents need workforce training programs and support in becoming entrepreneurs.
- Employees want more convenient and healthy food options.
- The majority of assets and resources available are located beyond the Mechanicsville boundaries (including local YMCA, grocery stores, and higher education development).

Workforce Development

The workforce development organizations have a critical role in local economies by providing a variety of employment services, such as job training and placement, to employers and job seekers. We gained insight into the relationships of the agencies within the Mechanicsville community and the process of creating workforce

development programs with employers.

The most successful programs offered by workforce development agencies were job training programs assisting with interview skills, digital literacy, financial literacy, and communication skills. Some workforce development organizations require completing training programs before applying to employment opportunities. The technical workforce development programs are created to meet the need for local high-demand occupations and leverage partnerships of local government, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

The top challenges for job-seekers listed by workforce development agencies were: unreliable transportation, securing child care, criminal history, and skill set mismatch.

Unreliable transportation and child care can cause unemployment due to punctuality issues. Expensive childcare costs may discourage job seekers from obtaining employment. Numerous businesses are not comfortable employing individuals with a criminal history, which limits the number of employment opportunities available. While many employment opportunities exist in high-demand industries, job seekers may not have the relevant skills. Job seekers must complete time-consuming and/or difficult tasks, such as GED testing, training programs,

certifications, and courses, to pursue higher paying jobs. While workforce development agencies are known to help those facing the challenges described, there are several organizations and churches in Mechanicsville that also provide supportive services to families and job seekers.

The stakeholders have had some contact with the Mechanicsville Civic Association and Neighborhood Planning Unit-V by attending meetings. They also revealed that the workforce development agencies struggle with making the public aware of programs. Even though there are workforce development agencies in or near Mechanicsville, residents in the neighborhood are unaware of them. With limited funding, the agencies may not have the resources for marketing and promotion. A few agencies are utilizing modern methods of reaching job seekers, such as social media.

Increasing awareness of the organizations and programming should be a priority for workforce development agencies working in Mechanicsville.

Takeaways:

- There is a skills gap between what employers need and what applicants have, which prevents people from being hired.
- Bridging the skills gap is essential for developing workforce training programs.
- It is critical for workforce development

agencies to inform job seekers on how to find jobs that match their existing skills.

The lack of awareness of workforce development agencies among the target population limits the impact they could have in Mechanicsville.

- Lack of childcare options and transportation, including poor public transit service, are the main challenges job seekers face.
- There are organizations, workforce development agencies, and churches in Mechanicsville offering supportive services to families and job seekers.

Best Practices

The best practices identified by the case studies below present both short-term and longer-term approaches to grow the neighborhood's economy. The first case study, Fulton Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market, represents an initiative occurring in adjacent neighborhoods. More long-term solutions could include a food truck or local market that is operated by a non-profit. Carver Market in South Atlanta is a brick-and-mortar storefront, run by a local non-profit, that offers bicycle delivery. It also creates jobs for local residents.

Case Study: Fulton Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market, a Partnership between University of Georgia and Fulton County, funded by CDC

The Mobile Farmer's Market* addresses the issue of food deserts and health disparities by promoting nutrition education and providing fresh produce to low-income communities in Fulton County, Georgia. The University of Georgia Extension Fulton County's Nutrition Education program created the concept in 2011. The program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is a free service to recipients. The goal is to increase awareness and consumption of local produce through hands-on education.

The Mobile Farmer's Market provides hands-on education, including nutrition education classes, healthy cooking demonstrations, and youth programming. Neighborhoods go through an application process and must qualify as a "food desert" to be granted Mobile Farmer's Market services. In order to participate, residents must live in the neighborhood being served and take the free nutrition class.

Case Study: Fresh Truck, Nonprofit, Boston, Massachusetts

In the longer term, a non-profit that provided a produce truck, charged for the produce, and accepted SNAP benefits, could be an innovative solution to providing healthy food to low-income residents. In addition to addressing the food desert, this service would be especially helpful to those who lack mobility due to not owning

* [Fulton Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market](#)



a car, child-care obligations, or disability. In the next few years, a full-service grocery store will likely be located in the neighborhood as more development occurs, but nutritional disparities may still remain without intervention.

A non-profit in Boston, Massachusetts, Fresh Truck, has implemented a social impact model, that creates revenue as well as benefits for the community, for this sort of service.* The model addresses the food desert issue in Boston, as well as the diet-related health issues that are the result. Fresh Truck's model focuses on food culture, food access, and purchasing power to create an integrated solution that provides weekly markets, pop-up events, and a "prescription model" made possible by partnerships with healthcare providers and other sponsors. The prescription model distributes gift cards that are purchased by healthcare providers and other sponsors, which families can use at weekly markets or pop-up events.

Case Study: Carver Market

In decades past, several small grocery stores served South Atlanta. But in recent years, national supermarket chains have replaced small, local grocers, and have chosen to locate in the more prosperous neighborhoods, leaving lower-income communities with very few options for buying fresh, healthy food in their neighborhood. Local grocery options are especially important for older residents and others who do not drive.

Carver Market opened in 2015 to fill that void. It was created by Focused Community Strategies (FCS), an Atlanta faith-based non-profit that
* [Fresh Truck Boston](#)

serves low-income neighborhoods.**

The market shares space with the Community Grounds Cafe and the South Atlanta Bike Shop, all of which are initiatives of FCS and employ local residents.

FCS recently received a \$40,000 grant from the Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation to allow customers to get two-for-one produce using SNAP benefits on three days of the week, rather than the previous one day a week. Carver Market provides a bike delivery service, which serves customers in a one-mile radius of the market within business hours. The market also offers cooking classes and affordable pre-packaged

** [Carver Market](#)

Case Study: Pier 70 Forest City, a Mixed-Use Industrial Development, San Francisco



Figure 40: Pier 70 Forest City ([SITE LAB](#) [Urban Studio](#))

Pier 70 Forest City is a project including several buildings in an industrial port area of San Francisco, California (See Figure 40).^{*} It is on the National Register of Historic Places and has 150 years of continuous operations in shipbuilding and repair. The area includes vacant land, blighted structures, and industrial port areas that do not allow public activity or waterfront access. These are all challenges in the redevelopment of the district. Forest City, a for-profit developer, is interested in long-term placemaking and engaged the community for six years in order to find a way to connect the history and future use of this area. Forest City's project bridges the gap between the industrial legacy of the area and incoming artists and makers. The goal is to create a vibrant and diverse community that reflects the character of the neighborhood.

There is a parallel between the Pier 70 district and Mechanicsville in that they both have an ongoing industrial heritage that is formative in the culture and landscape of the area. Forest City capitalizes on the historic heritage of this industrial port while creating a space for small-scale manufacturing. Small-scale manufacturing is the light-industrial production of goods in a space 1,000 to 5,000 square feet. It can include everything from textiles, to metalwork, to 3D printed objects, to breweries and distilleries, to the production of salsa or soap.

The planning and design strategy for this development exemplifies how a for-profit developer can integrate with the heritage and culture of a neighborhood to build something that unites the needs of existing neighborhood

^{*} [Pier 70 Forest City](#)

residents and businesses and attract future residents and businesses. One of the beneficial aspects of this development is that it will provide space for small-scale manufacturing, which we will describe further below.

Case Study: Atlanta WorkSource: TechHire Program

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training awarded a federal grant to WorkSource Atlanta to hire residents through the TechHire initiative, which expands local tech sectors by building the training to employment pipeline^{**}. The TechHire program enables employers to fill entry-level jobs by hiring job seekers who are usually overlooked by typical hiring practices and/or underrepresented in the information technology (IT) field. This program offers Mechanicsville residents the opportunity to attain a middle-skill job, which is a job that requires less than a bachelor's degree and pays more than the national median wage. All program participants complete an IT Culture Competency training program to learn about the industry and how to be successful in their career. WorkSource Atlanta offers supportive services and training options tailored to the needs of the participants.

Case Study: The Center for Working Families: Construction Ready Program

The Construction Education Foundation of Georgia (CEGA) developed a nationally recognized Construction Ready Program organized as a four-week construction training and certification program.^{***} The foundation partnered with The Center for Working Families (TCWF) to establish

^{**} [WorkSource Atlanta TechHire Program](#)

^{***} [Construction Ready Program](#)



a Construction Ready Program specifically for residents in the 30310, 30312 and 30315 zip codes. Ninety-five percent of Construction Ready graduates obtain full-time employment. The starting range of pay for graduates is between \$12 and \$15 an hour. Within the past year, 228 Construction Ready graduates placed into full-time living wage careers.

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Within the past year, 228 Construction Ready graduates placed into full-time living wage careers.

Case Study: Increasing Awareness of Workforce Development Programs for The Center of Economic Opportunities, Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development

Even a quality program will have little effect in a community if no one knows it exists, so outreach is a critical component of a successful workforce development program. Effective participant recruitment can take many forms. The Center of Economic Opportunities (CEO) finds participants by working with community organizations and collecting referrals from parole and probation officers.* Their target population of formerly incarcerated people means that the justice system is a valuable resource to connect CEO with potential participants.

The Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WTRP) leveraged different community partners in their participant recruitment strategy.** The WTRP is a partnership of Wisconsin businesses and unions that work to employ low-income, often minority, people in new jobs that offer pathways to advancement. Initially, they hired agents to recruit people they thought would be easy to reach, but this failed. The WTRP pivoted to working with organizations with longstanding contact to their target population and found more success. Today, they work with a number of community organizations, prominently with the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) of Milwaukee. The YWCA is one of Wisconsin’s designated welfare administrators and has a

* [Strategies for Wraparound Services](#)

** [Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership](#)

deep roster of potential participants. The WRTP and YWCA also opened a workforce training center together in Milwaukee.

In the wake of racial unrest in Milwaukee in 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development deployed a “mobile response” unit to a low-income section of the City. Economic frustration had been a significant driving factor behind the tensions, and the mobile center was a direct response. The roving center brought resources directly and visibly to a community that needed them and may not have been aware of their options previously. Despite the unfortunate context of the unit’s deployment, the program’s visible presence is a good example of creative thinking in participant recruitment.

Small-Scale Manufacturing As a Driver of Economic Development

There are a number of economic development benefits to encouraging small-scale manufacturing.

Small-scale manufacturing spaces can thrive in areas where there is not enough foot traffic to support retail.

Some foot traffic is created if there are on-site sales or special events like open houses where the production process is on display. The foot traffic generated by small-scale manufacturers can build over time and can eventually create a space that supports retail. The other benefit of providing spaces for small-scale manufacturing

is that it can help local entrepreneurs who may be working from home or would not be able to get their business going without a space. These makers do not need a college education and the industry is inclusive of minorities, women, and immigrants.

There are several technological shifts that have contributed to the increase of small-scale manufacturing in recent years. The main technological shift is the ability to sell products online. Also, payment processing on mobile devices has lowered the barrier to entry for credit card processing, a necessary development for small businesses in this post-cash era. Additionally, small production tools such as 3D printers, laser cutters, and the like have gone down in cost, making smaller production runs profitable.

Creating Guidelines to Utilize Existing Government Opportunities

It is critical for Mechanicsville to understand and explore already existing government programs available to invest in development. A variety of low or no-interest bond programs through the city and the state, federal opportunity zones, tax allocation district dollars, and other affordable housing programs discussed earlier.

One marquee program available for Mechanicsville is the Urban Enterprise Zone, located in the “Stadium” neighborhoods (see in Appendix C). Urban Enterprise Zones allow properties that showed significant investment to receive tax abatements over a 10-year period, if all conditions are met.

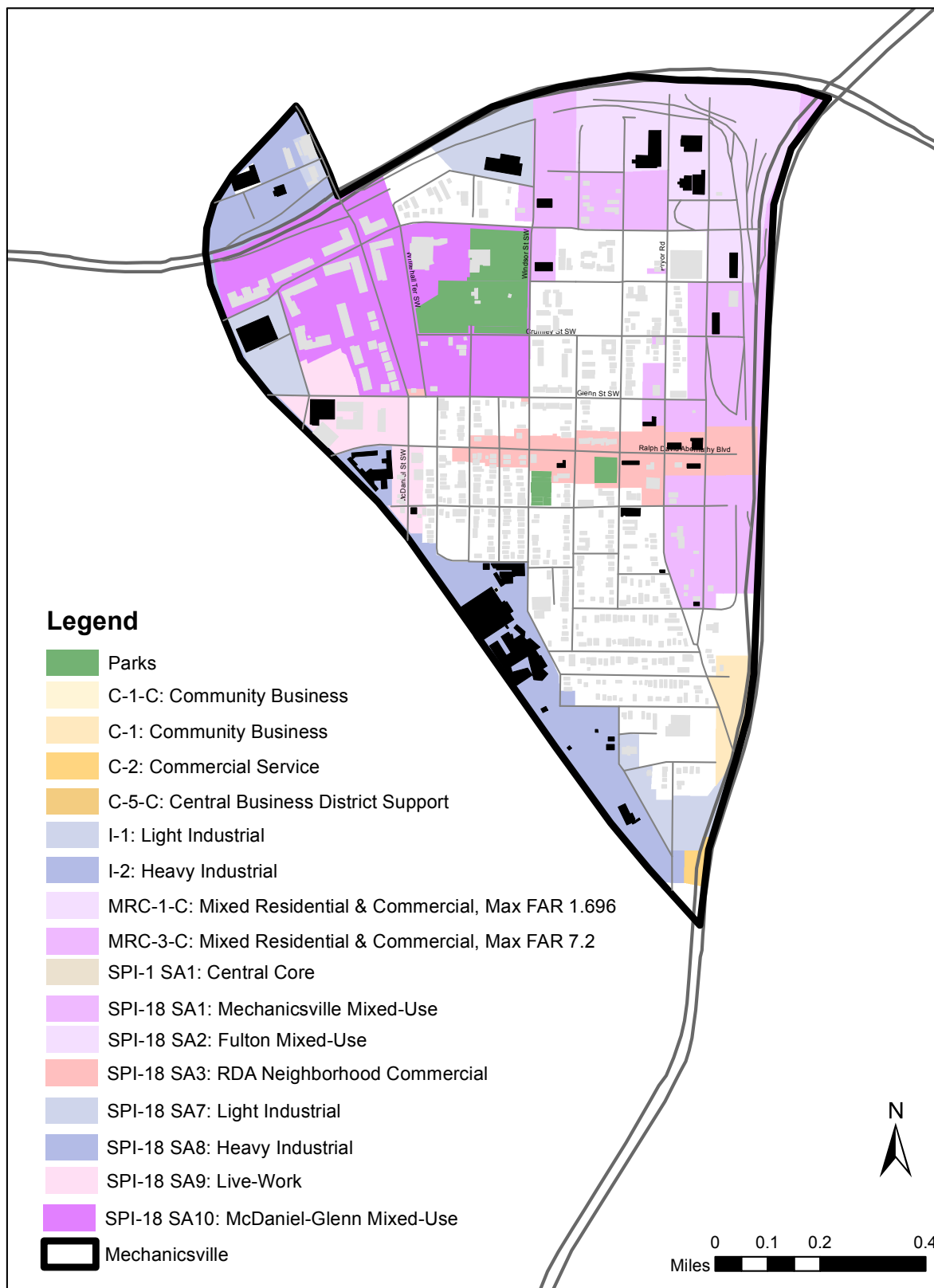


Figure 41: Map of Existing Businesses (Google Maps)

Implementation Strategy

Economic Development

Food Deserts

The Fulton Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market is a program that is being utilized by nearby neighborhoods. In order for Mechanicsville to participate, a neighborhood representative needs to fill out an application and provide a location for the truck to operate. Dunbar Recreation Center would be an ideal location for the nutrition classes and other programming. If Mechanicsville is eligible, then this program would be an easy way to implement a short-term fix for the lack of options to purchase healthy food in the area.

A non-profit produce truck model could be implemented with Focused Community Strategies or some other non-profit or government entity, or a new non-profit could be created to serve this purpose. This sort of model would help bridge the gap before new development creates the market for a full-service grocery store in the neighborhood. Even if a supermarket locates nearby, it could benefit the community to have a store devoted to serving low-income and mobility-challenged residents (with bike delivery), that also provides education such as nutrition and cooking classes.

Small-Scale Manufacturing

Some potential ways Mechanicsville could encourage small-scale manufacturing would be to alter the SPI zoning code to include I-MIX, and specifically allow and encourage 1,000 to 5,000 sq ft light-industrial spaces to be in commercial

zones. This could include a definition of "artisan manufacturing", if necessary.

Another possible strategy would be to offer a density bonus for affordable small-scale production space.

Partnerships with private, non-profit, philanthropic, educational, or workforce development programs are also important resources for creating a supportive space for makers.

From: ORDINANCE NO. BL2015-1121, Section 1. Section 17.04.060 of Nashville-Davidson County Metropolitan Zoning Code.

Manufacturing, Artisan means the shared or individual use of hand-tools, mechanical tools and electronic tools for the manufacture of finished products or parts including design, processing, fabrication, assembly, treatment, and packaging of products; as well as the incidental storage, sales and distribution of such products. Typical artisan manufacturing uses include, but are not limited to electronic goods, food and bakery products; non-alcoholic beverages; printmaking; household appliances; leather products; jewelry and clothing/apparel; metalwork; furniture; glass or ceramic production; paper manufacturing.

Another important consideration is that small-scale manufacturing uses could be allowed in spaces intended for first-floor retail in, for example, a new mixed-use development. The market may not be able to support retail right away, so allowing for small-scale manufacturing to fill those spaces could be a good way to fill them with uses that create some foot traffic and visual interest.

for Brownfield incentives. Figure 42 below shows where all of these incentives are available.

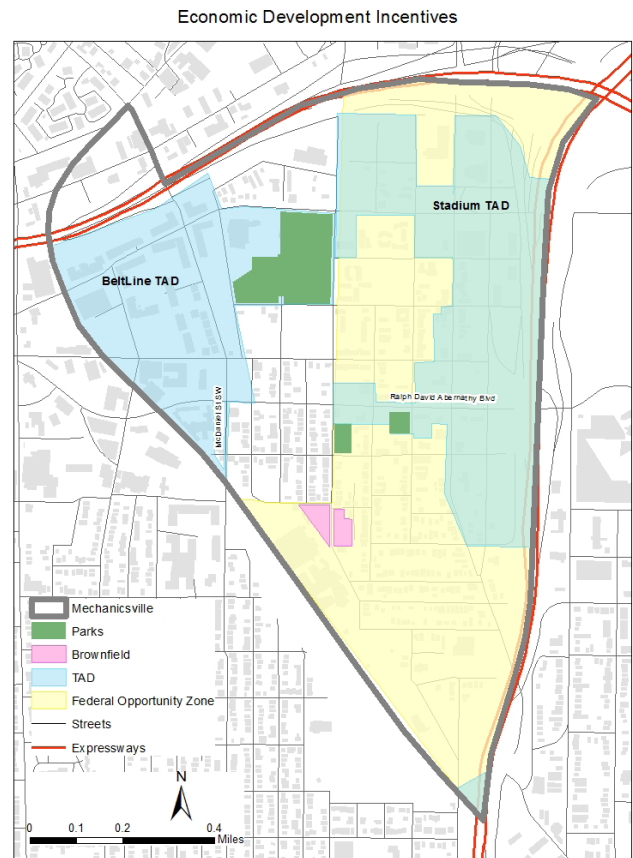


Figure 42: Economic Development Incentives (City of Atlanta, Invest Atlanta, Novogradac and Company LLP)

Incentives

Several incentives are available to entice development in Mechanicsville, and the neighborhood is conveniently located such that multiple financing programs are available to both developers and small business owners. The entire neighborhood is eligible for real estate projects to receive New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)* financing, BeltLine** and Stadium Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)*** jointly cover a large portion of Mechanicsville, the eastern Census Tract, 120, is a designated Federal Opportunity Zone****, and there are two vacant parcels eligible

* [NMTC Mapping Tool](#)
 ** [Atlanta BeltLine TAD](#)
 *** [Stadium Area TAD](#)
 **** [Federal Opportunity Zones](#)

Small Businesses

On a smaller scale, several local organizations provide flexible business loans for owners in all stages of business. A toolkit providing resources and contacts for the mentioned incentives and programs are available in the Appendix.

Tax Incentives

The **New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC)** program is a bipartisan effort to use public-private partnerships to drive investment and economic growth in low-income and severely distressed communities. Qualified Census Tracts must have at least 20 percent poverty or less than

80 percent area median income. By this metric, both Census Tracts that include Mechanicsville qualify. Investors receive a tax credit equal to 39 percent of their investment, and the credit is realized over a 7-year period. The incentive was designed to be utilized by commercial real estate developers, but mixed-use residential projects can also take advantage of it. Typical projects cost over \$5 million, create new jobs, and stimulate growth.

The **Federal Opportunity Zones** legislation is a new federal tax incentive available to investors who invest their recently realized capital gains, in the form of equity, into projects located in eligible Census Tracts. Census Tract 120 is a qualified Opportunity Zone and is eligible to receive qualified investments. This incentive is the result of a bipartisan effort to drive private equity capital into low-income and severely distressed communities. Investors can invest their capital gains into a Qualified Opportunity Fund, which then invests into projects/businesses in qualified zones. In exchange, investors receive a deferral on their capital gains tax and can receive up to a 15 percent increase in their investment basis if their investment is held for seven years. The ultimate incentive comes if investments are held for 10 years, in which case all appreciation on the investment is tax-free. Developers need to be aware of this incentive, connect with local Opportunity Fund managers, and pitch their projects for an equity investment. There are several organizations forming Opportunity Funds and preparing to make equity investments. Invest Atlanta can act as a matchmaker to put developers in contact with potential investors.

Grant Programs

Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) are a way to harness future revenues to pay for current development costs in the form of grants. The property tax revenue from parcels in the TAD are allocated only to the TAD area, instead of being distributed to the city and are used build local infrastructure, which in turn drives investment into the area. Atlanta has three focus areas to utilize this program: 1. Healthy neighborhoods and quality of life, 2. Expansion of economic opportunity, and 3. Improvement of physical infrastructure. The benefits of the program include new private capital investment, which leads to new jobs, more residential opportunities, improved pedestrian infrastructure, and ultimately new attractions for outside customers. The TAD dollars are administered and deployed by Invest Atlanta. The Stadium TAD and Beltline TAD, which each cover substantial areas of Mechanicsville are shown in the map above.

The City of Atlanta received a brownfield grant from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for properties whose redevelopment may have a potential complication due to previous industrial uses. There are two parcels in Mechanicsville that are registered brownfield sites, and the City has several programs with potential incentives for brownfield developments. Refer for the appendix for more information on any economic development incentives or grant programs.

Workforce Development

Middle-Skill Occupations

Middle-skill occupations are employment opportunities accessible to workers with a high school education but without a bachelor's degree that pay more than the national median wage. In the Southeast, 24 percent of jobs are classified as middle-skill occupations and have wages between \$32,000 and \$66,000.* While many middle-skill occupations require an associate's degree or certifications from technical and community colleges, these require less tuition, fewer credit hours, and lower student loans than degrees from 4-year colleges.

In Georgia, the top middle-skill occupations based on the number of job openings in 2014 were retail supervisors (\$35,000), maintenance and repair workers (\$35,000), bookkeeping and accounting clerks (\$35,000), truck drivers (\$39,000), and registered nurses (\$63,000).** In 2017, 43 percent of job openings in the Atlanta MSA were middle-skill occupations, the majority of which require skills related to construction, transportation, healthcare, arts, design, entertainment, sports, media, and manufacturing industries.***

In contrast to middle-skill occupations, low skill occupations are jobs that require less than a high school degree and pay at least the national median wage. Low-skill occupations in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, Georgia MSA are

* [Opportunity Occupations: Exploring Economic Opportunity for Middle Skill Workers in the Southeast](#)

** [2017 Middle-Skill Jobs](#)

*** [Opportunity Occupations Monitor](#)

carpet installers, tile and marble setters, septic tanks servicers and sewer pipe cleaners, drywall and ceiling tile installers, pipelayers, and artists. Examples of middle-skill occupations in the region are bookkeeping and accounting clerks, sales representatives, electricians, dental assistants, plumbers, food service managers, mechanics, fitness trainers, web developers, and audio and video equipment technicians.****

The TechHire and Construction Ready programs are examples of workforce development programs that help job seekers obtain middle-skill employment. Since both programs are operated by workforce development agencies, job seekers interested in the programs have access to all of the services each agency offers. WorkSource Atlanta and The Center for Working Families (TCWF) provide various supportive services, such as child care and individual case management and progression plans, to help job seekers overcome obstacles inhibiting job retention.*****

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

Education is an important workforce development strategy. When students from low-income families graduate from high school, they are less likely to pursue a college degree.*****

When they attend college, they are less likely to graduate.***** The lack of money to pay for

***** [WorkSource Atlanta](#) and [The Center for Working Families](#)

***** Opportunity Occupations: Exploring Economic Opportunity for Middle Skill Workers in the Southeast

college and the burden of family responsibilities are among the many explanations for the disparity. Even though high school graduates earn more than those who did not finish high school, high school graduates earn even more through advancing their education. Improving education in low-income communities is a long-term task. However, one strategy is to encourage and incentivize attendance in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and the completion of certificates and associate's degrees.

CTE programs, such as the programs offered by Atlanta Technical College, are effective ways to help individuals with high school diplomas or equivalent gain valuable skills so that they can enter labor markets requiring technical proficiency and increase their incomes. CTE programs match education and training to employment when engaging employers in the training process. One way Atlanta Technical College engages employers is through Georgia Quick Start. Georgia Quick Start is a free workforce incentive for new, expanding, and existing companies that designs and develops strategic workforce solutions. The partnership with Georgia QuickStart and the Technical College System of Georgia helps recruitment for businesses by holding on-campus job fairs and creating customized certifications. Atlanta Technical College has successfully connected students with jobs after graduation, which is evident based on the 2017 98 percent job placement rate.

To support CTE programs, the HOPE Career

Grant was expanded in 2018 to offer more opportunities in Georgia's fastest growing industries, which were identified by the High Demand Career Initiative. Students enrolled at Atlanta Technical College can receive free tuition through the HOPE Career Grant and select a major from the 48 key programs. Examples of the free tuition programs at Atlanta Technical College are Java Programming, Supply Chain Management, Design and Media Production, Pharmacy Technology, Bioscience Environmental Laboratory Technology, Diesel Truck Maintenance Technician, Air Conditioning Technician, Infant/Toddler Child Care Specialist, and Carpentry.

General Recommendations for Workforce Development Agencies to Increase Awareness and Outreach

- Strengthen the relationship between the Mechanicsville Civic Association, NPU-V, and workforce development agencies by attending meetings more frequently and providing promotional materials.
- Combine efforts of the workforce development agencies, churches, and other organizations to reach those facing multiple barriers preventing job retention, housing, and advancing education.
- Attend events in Mechanicsville, such as the Mechanicsville Neighborhood Reunion, and distribute materials promoting the workforce development agency.
- Collaborate with Maynard Jackson Jr. High School, which is the zoned school for students in the

Atlanta Public School System, to inform students of employment and educational opportunities, services and training programs that are available.

- Promote opportunities to increase incomes by completing training and career and technical education (CTE) programs.

CBA Recommendations

- Allocate funds from CBA pacts to sponsor GED testing for residents.
- Initiate a partnership with film and television production companies to create an internship or apprenticeship program.
- Designate funds from CBA contracts with film and television production companies to sponsor enrollment in the Georgia Film Academy.
- Create better signage and marketing tools for the organizations in the Dunbar Recreation Center.
- Form internship and apprenticeship programs with local businesses.
- Promote local women and minority-owned businesses for contracting.
- Work with unions to designate opportunities in their training programs for Mechanicsville residents.
- Establish a professional clothing closet, located in the Dunbar Recreation Center, managed by the Mechanicsville Civic Association with funding from CBA contracts or donations of gently used or newly purchased clothing items.

Transportation

Transportation

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the existing transportation infrastructure in Mechanicsville and the opportunities to improve deficiencies and weaknesses in the system. This includes transit, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, and aesthetics. The goal of this section is to suggest potential methods to work within fiscal and infrastructural constraints to improve the quality of life for existing residents and attract new residents to the neighborhood.

Existing Conditions

The Mechanicsville neighborhood is located in close proximity to Downtown Atlanta, but due to urban renewal, freeway construction, and economic changes over the course of the 20th century, Mechanicsville experienced a decline in its residential quality of life, perceived safety from criminal activity, and appeal to potential homebuyers. The neighborhood is geographically isolated by the CSX railroad to the south, southwest, and west of the neighborhood, Interstate 20 to the north and the Downtown Connector to the east.

Based on functional classifications set by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Mechanicsville has one major arterial street (Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard), three

minor arterials (Pryor Street, Central Avenue and Pulliam Street), and two major collectors (McDaniel Street and Fulton Street)*. See Figure 44 on the following page.

Mechanicsville has an estimated 12,760 parking spaces (see Figure 44). This is a large amount of parking for the neighborhood given the resident population and points of attraction in Mechanicsville.

* Roadway Functional Classification

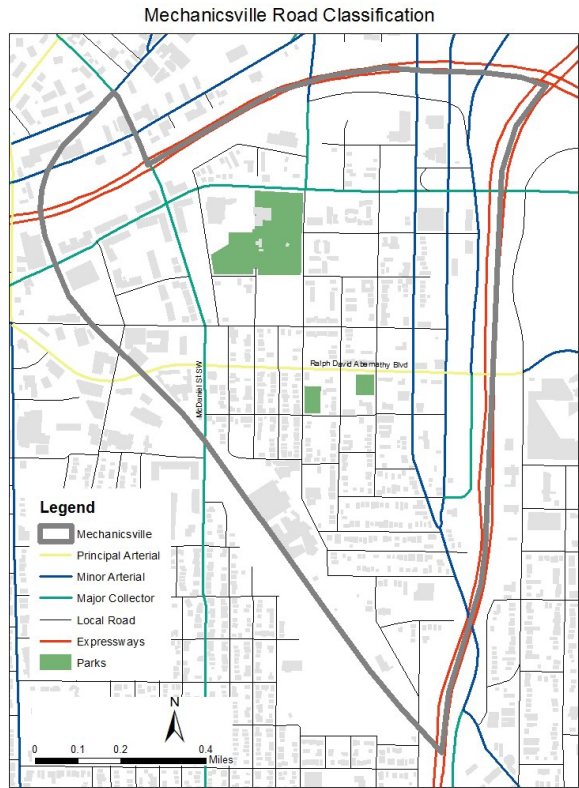


Figure 43: Functional Classification Map for Mechanicsville (ARC & GDOT)



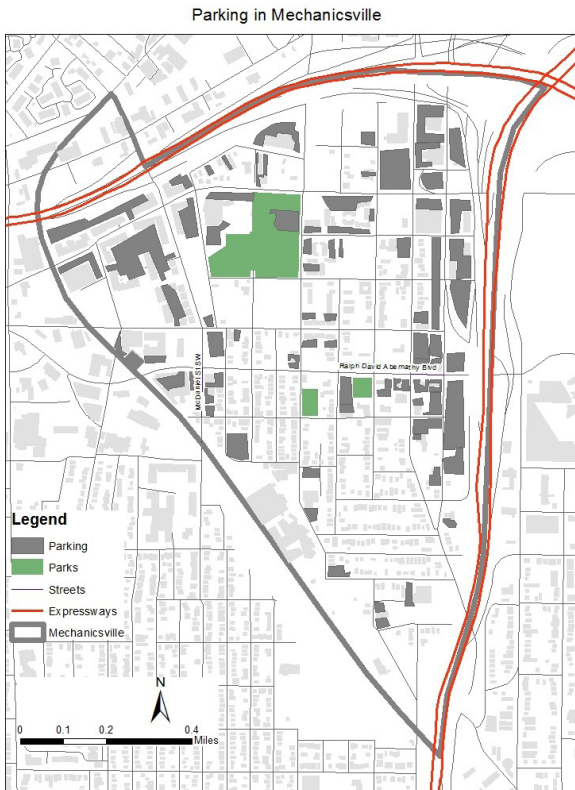


Figure 44: Parking Facilities in Mechanicsville (ESRI Aerial Imagery & Andreas Wolfe)

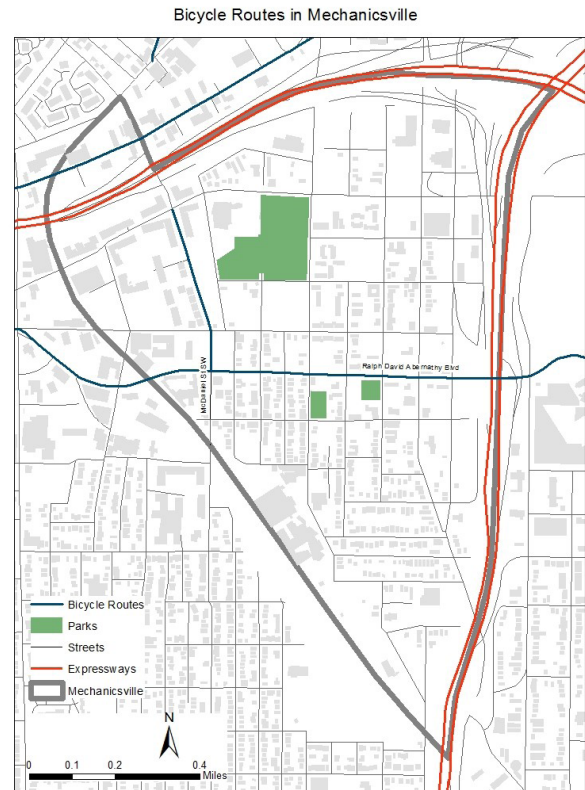


Figure 45: Existing Bicycle Facilities in Mechanicsville (ARC)

Bicycling

Currently, the only two surface streets in Mechanicsville with exclusive bicycle lanes are McDaniel Street and Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard as seen in Figure 46 on the following page. These two streets also have the heaviest volumes of traffic in the neighborhood, based on 2016 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) counts. *McDaniel Street serves roughly 7,210 vehicles daily while Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard through Mechanicsville serves an average of 10,600 vehicles daily. No current bicycle facilities connect to key destinations in Downtown Atlanta as seen in Figure 45.

The Cycle Atlanta 1.0 Study was released in 2013

* [Georgia Department of Transportation 2016 Traffic Counts](#)

and 2.0 is in the final draft phases. While 1.0 does not directly address streets in the Mechanicsville neighborhood, the draft of 2.0 does examine areas around the West End MARTA station to improve bicycle access for MARTA riders.** Figure 46 shows proposed bikeways along with existing ones and estimated cycling distance from West End and Oakland City MARTA stations. These include enhanced shared roadway features and separated bike lanes on McDaniel Street and separated bike lanes on Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard. Transit and MARTA

Transit and MARTA

Mechanicsville is a major base for transit ridership in the City of Atlanta.*** MARTA's Red and Gold heavy-rail line passes just to the west

** [Cycle Atlanta 2.0 Study](#)

*** [City of Atlanta Transportation Plan Draft](#)

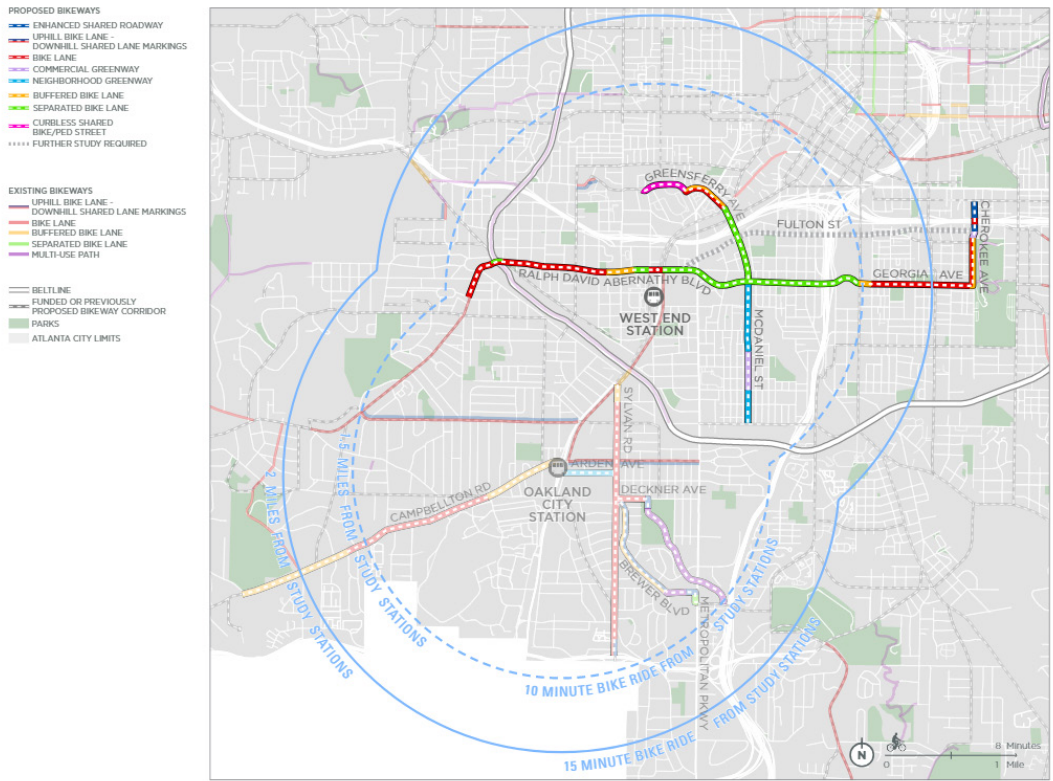


Figure 46: Map showing cycle distances from West End MARTA station (Cycle Atlanta 2.0)

of Mechanicsville, and the nearest stations are West End and Garnett. Mechanicsville is served by four bus routes: Route 40 runs along McDaniel Street, Route 42 along Pryor Street and Central Avenue, Route 49 along McDonough Boulevard, and Route 832 along Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard (See Figure 47).^{*} Route 832 is the newest of these routes and began operation in August 2018. The most popular bus stops in Mechanicsville are shown visually in Figure 47 and the top ten are listed in Figure 48.

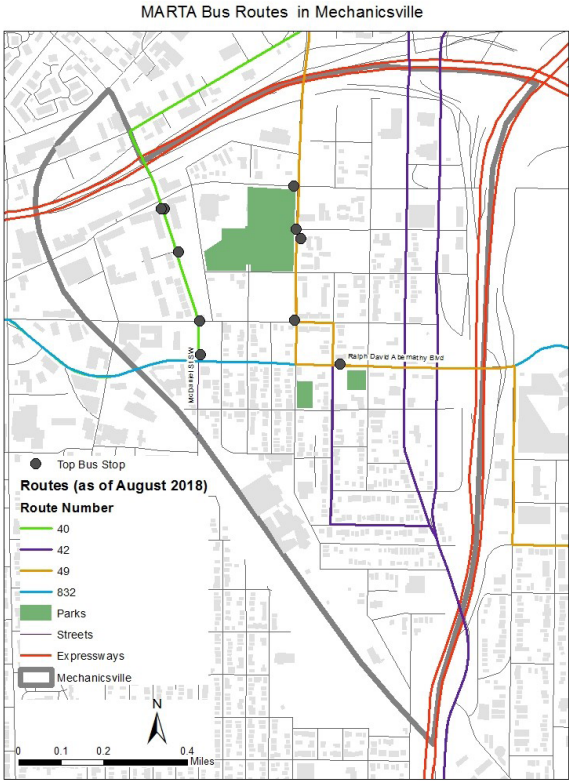


Figure 47: MARTA Bus Routes and Stops in Mechanicsville (MARTA)

^{*} [MARTA Bus Routes](#)



Stop Location	Facing Direction	Total
McDaniel St SW @ Fulton St SW	Northbound	92
Windsor St SW @ Richardson St SW	Southbound	88
Windsor St SW @ Richardson St SW	Northbound	67
McDaniel St SW @ Fulton St SW	Southbound	56
Ralph David Abernathy Blvd SW @ Cooper St SW	Westbound	51
McDaniel St SW @ Glenn St SW	Northbound	43
Windsor St SW @ Fulton St SW	Southbound	42
McDaniel St SW @ Ralph David Abernathy Blvd SW	Northbound	35
Windsor St SW @ Glenn St SW	Southbound	31
McDaniel St SW @ Columbia Senior Residences	Northbound	23

Figure 48: Most Popular MARTA Bus Stops in Mechanicsville (Dec 2017 to Apr 2018 Data on Average Daily Boarding/Unboarding Numbers, MARTA Service Planning Division)

Geography	Census Tract 44	Census Tract 120	Mechanicsville Area Average	City of Atlanta
Car, truck, or van	67.1	72.3	69.7	75.6
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	32.4	22.2	27.3	10
Walked	0	0.8	0.4	4.6
Bicycle	0	0	0	0.8
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	0	0	0	1.3

Figure 49: Mechanicsville Area Mode Share - Percent of Residents (2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Data)

Census Transportation Data

The predominant mode of transportation in Mechanicsville is the automobile (see Figure 49). The data shown in this table is derived from the 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Figure 49 shows the approximate mode share of residents in Mechanicsville. Roughly 70 percent of residents take a personal automobile to work daily, and a majority of these residents drive alone. The next highest mode share in the neighborhood is public transit with an average of 27 percent. The western areas of the neighborhood have a higher share of the population who utilize transit perhaps because of the close proximity to MARTA’s Red and Gold Lines through the West End Transit Station.

Since Mechanicsville is geographically adjacent to downtown Atlanta and other job centers in the Metro Atlanta region, a majority of Mechanicsville residents do not leave Fulton County to travel to their jobs, as revealed in Figure 50. This makes it more possible for them to commute to their jobs on MARTA.

Commute time plays a major role in shaping the quality of life. Figure 51 shows that most Mechanicsville residents spend between 10 and 45 minutes commuting between their job and residence. The mean commute time for Mechanicsville residents is 29 minutes.

Geography	Census Tract 44	Census Tract 120	City of Atlanta
Worked in county of residence	69.9	74.8	72.3
Worked outside county of residence	30.1	23.6	26.5

Figure 50: Workplace Location for Mechanicsville Census Tracts - Percent of Residents (2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Data)

Geography	Census Tract 44	Census Tract 120	City of Atlanta
Less than 10 minutes	18.6	7.2	7.8
10 - 19 minutes	24.5	14	30.2
20-29 minutes	14.4	32.8	27.9
30 - 44 minutes	22.3	25.9	20.2
45 to 59 minutes	1.4	7.2	6.8
60 or more minutes	18.7	13.1	7.1

Figure 51: Travel Time to Work - Percent of Residents (2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Data)

Stakeholder Outcomes

Transportation stakeholders discussed various modes of transportation in addition to accommodations for personal automobiles. According to the City of Atlanta’s Chief Bicycle Officer Cary Bearn, there are numerous opportunities to better connect bicyclists and pedestrians to transit. The City would like to examine how to connect pedestrians and bicyclists across interstates and railroad corridors while accommodating freight and other heavy vehicles.

Cycle Atlanta 2.0 proposes upgrades to Ralph

David Abernathy Boulevard that will transform the existing bicycle lane to a physically separated (or protected) bicycle lane. This corridor will be the key east-west artery for bicyclists in the neighborhood. McDaniel Street will serve as a north-south connector.

The key information garnered from Betty Smoot-Madison of the City of Atlanta’s Public Works department pertains to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). In collaboration with the Department of City Planning, Public Works is beginning an assessment of pavement conditions in Fall 2018 that will include sidewalk and curb ramp

conditions to identify and prioritize needed improvements. In Fiscal Year 2019, areas south of Interstate 20 (including Mechanicsville) will be examined by Fall 2019. The City evaluates facility design projects in the context of ADA, including meeting minimum design standards for lanes and buffers, crosswalk or lane striping, and curb ramps, where feasible.

MARTA provided insight on the process they use to place bus stops and establish bus routes. Routes are created by the Service Planning group and from there, bus stop planners evaluate the segments that do not have bus stops based on spacing, intersections that provide connections to another route/service, location safety, ADA conditions, whether or not stops were there in the past, and trip generator locations such as offices and retail.

Community outreach is an essential part of this process, and MARTA is required by law through Title VI to hold public hearings for all matters related to service provisions and route creation, discontinuations, and realignments. Weeks prior to public hearings, outreach staff meets with targeted community groups to gather feedback. Proposed service changes are built with input that reflects residents' priorities to help deliver a bus service that meets people's needs. The MARTA board has the final say and approves/rejects the changes.

Mechanicsville's major corridors are Pryor Road/Central Avenue traveling north-south, and Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard traveling east-west. MARTA's Service Planning Division has realigned Route 42 to maintain the entire length of Pryor

Road / Central Avenue with consideration for existing ridership on Cooper Street. Similarly, MARTA added Route 832 to serve Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard and areas east of West End Station such as Summerhill and Grant Park. Various public comments over the years have shown a need for this service. Previously this area has only been connected to Five Points Station. Current service offers new connections to West End and opportunities for east-west as well as north-south travel. This increase in bus connectivity will become more important as this area develops. A clearer picture of Route 832's effectiveness will become available once a post-service change analysis is completed for the new bus route.

Residents also provided insight into how they use the existing transportation network to make trips for shopping, recreation, education, and commuting. When asked about transportation and food access, we received mixed responses. One resident mentioned that she shopped in the West End since it felt close and offered a wide variety of options. She is satisfied with either walking, driving or taking MARTA there. Another resident said she shopped at West End as well, however, she felt that Mechanicsville offered poor services. She and her family never shopped at either the Family Dollar or the Windsor Supermarket. The overall sense was that the bus network was somewhat reliable for getting to and from the West End Transit Station, though on-time performance could stand for some improvement. The sidewalk network on Ralph David Abernathy was met with general satisfaction.

Best Practices

The team selected transportation best practices based on analysis of previous plans for Mechanicsville, such as the Turner Field LCI and the BeltLine TAD plans discussed earlier in the document and include reduced transit fares for low-income riders, aesthetics under freeways to promote safe civic centers, and spaces for Mechanicsville residents and visitors.

Reduced transit fare initiatives for low-income populations

MARTA has one of the highest fares for a major city transit system in the country at \$2.50 per ride, and MARTA currently only offers a reduced fare program to senior citizens, disabled veterans, and Medicare recipients.* MARTA does not offer reduced fare programs based on income level as do other U.S. cities such as Seattle, Portland, and Austin. Mechanicsville residents would benefit from this type of program due to high poverty levels in the neighborhood. Enacting this would likely require state legislation, lobbying efforts, and sponsorships. There are concerns about the self-sustaining business model of MARTA and how such a program would impact the transit agency's ability to break even financially on an annual basis.

Seattle was one of the first notable American transit agencies to introduce a low-income rider program. Starting in 2015, low-income residents could apply for a reduced fare program provided their income is less than double federal poverty levels.** Portland (OR)'s Tri-Met took this a

* [MARTA Fare Programs](#)

** [King County Metro ORCA Lift](#)

step further in their Honored Citizen Program, introduced in July 2018.*** The program reduces monthly passes for low-income riders from \$100 to \$28. This program ties in fare evasion by giving offenders an option to enroll in this program, if eligible. This keeps first-time evaders out of the criminal justice system and helps them find jobs and housing in the future. An arrest record may impede an individual's ability to find adequate housing due to these citations appearing on background checks.

Given MARTA's business model and the fact that they do not receive funding from the state of Georgia, we recognize the need for an innovative approach to help bridge the gap of transit affordability for low-income residents in Mechanicsville and other parts of Atlanta. This type of initiative was identified in Austin, Texas and is called the Transit Empowerment Fund.**** This is a partnership between Austin's transit agency, Capital Metro, and a nonprofit coalition called One Voice Central Texas with the intent of addressing rising fares and low-income riders. Capital Metro makes annual \$350,000 contributions, and the program is administered by a volunteer board which sells and distributes passes to nonprofits and oversees grant applications.

A similar proposal in Cincinnati, Ohio would set aside \$300,000 annually for three years to help low-income residents afford transit. The Human Services Chamber of Hamilton County (Ohio) is spearheading this initiative and estimates that 1,400 riders would benefit from this type of

*** [Tri-Met Honored Citizen Fares](#)

**** [Transit Empowerment Fund](#)



program if passed by the Cincinnati City Council. This plan seeks to create a reduced fare program for low-income residents to conduct trips with a necessary purpose, such as school, work or shopping.*

The team recommends that neighborhood nonprofits, for instance, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, and MARTA partner together to explore potential opportunities to generate ridership to benefit low-income riders who may not otherwise be able to afford typical MARTA fares. This could also be done at a smaller community scale through NPU-V, the Mechanicsville Civic Association, or both. This will fulfill stakeholder feedback on improving barriers to transit access, at least from an affordability standpoint.

Repurposing Overabundant Parking

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, empty parking spaces can diminish the affordability of a neighborhood.**

This phenomenon is often the result of minimum parking zoning ordinances, which is the case in the City of Atlanta. **Mechanicsville has an overabundance of parking, and this is further exacerbated by the departure of the Atlanta Braves to SunTrust Park in nearby Cobb County.** As a result, numerous unpaved parking sites along Pryor Street and Central Avenue, among other corridors, do not get used now as they were just three years ago. Since Georgia State bought the stadium, there is some need for parking, but the demand is lower because

* [Could this proposal help low-income Cincinnati bus riders facing potential fare increases?](#)

** [Stalled Out: How Empty Parking Spaces Diminish Neighborhood Affordability](#)

the crowds are smaller and there are only six or seven home games per year instead of the 81 per season the Braves played. Repurposing these areas for mixed-uses is the most desirable approach, as described in the Zoning and Economic Development sections of this report.

Bird/Lime Low-Income Rider Initiatives

The advent of the electronic scooter (or e-scooter) is an opportunity for Mechanicsville. Bird and Lime are e-scooter companies with operations in the City of Atlanta which offer affordable rates for low-income customers. Bird's version of this is called One Bird, and it eliminates the \$1 activation fee to unlock a scooter; however, the 15-cent per-minute rate still applies.*** The Lime equivalent is called Lime Access.**** Availability in neighborhoods such as Mechanicsville is not always guaranteed, and the advertisement of these programs may only reach those with the app installed.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding, or civic fundraising through a target community audience, on websites and platforms such as GoFundMe or Ioby, were used by communities to build bike lanes and sidewalks. The first exclusively crowdfunded bicycle lane was constructed in Memphis, Tennessee along Broad Avenue through a platform called Ioby*****. Further discussion of crowdfunding platforms can be found under the Implementation Strategy and Resources heading.

*** [Bird now offers discounts to people with low incomes](#)

**** [Lime Access](#)

***** [The Hampline](#)

Focus Areas

We have identified several nodes that have significant potential for becoming highlights of the Mechanicsville neighborhood (see Figure 52). We incorporated housing, zoning, and economic development considerations into our selection process.

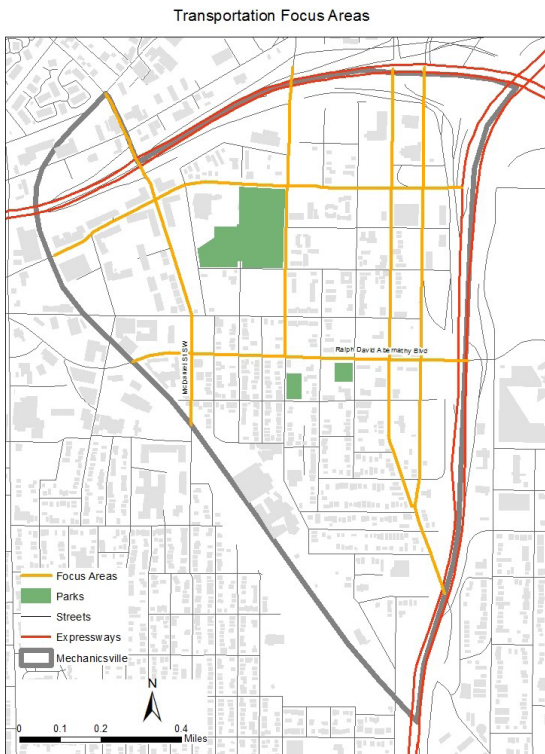


Figure 52: Transportation Focus Areas (Compiled by Mechanicsville Studio group)

Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard

As the only principal arterial in Mechanicsville, Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard currently has two travel lanes in each direction and one non-protected bicycle lane in each direction. Given that it is also a freight route, the safety of bicycling and walking on this street is of paramount concern. Protected bicycle lanes and better transit stops/signage along this road can make this corridor more appealing to anyone who uses the road. Further, connectivity to

Mechanicsville can be improved by extending the existing bike lanes eastward to connect to Summerhill and Georgia State Stadium.

From a visual perspective, landscaping and beautification can improve the existing monument near Pulliam Street and the Downtown Connector (see Figure 53) to establish a sense of neighborhood identity along one of the city's major thoroughfares.



Figure 53: Monument at Pulliam St (Emily Baxter)

Fulton Street

Fulton Street is a four-lane minor arterial that connects to Summerhill via the Columbia Mechanicsville Apartments, Dunbar Elementary School, and numerous local businesses, churches, and residences. An option for improving pedestrian and bicycle transportation through the neighborhood is exploring a road

diet option along Fulton Street that reduces the number of travel lanes to one in each direction with the addition of one bicycle lane in each direction and a center-turn lane. An example of a road diet is shown in Figure 54 below.



Figure 54: Example of a road diet or lane re-configuration to allow for bicycle lanes ([Federal Highway Administration](#))

Pryor Street/Central Avenue

Pryor Street and Central Avenue are one-way minor arterials that run south and north, respectively. Pryor Street contains three travel lanes while Central Avenue has two (see Figure 54). This uneven lane distribution between the two corridors is an opportunity presents an opportunity to include a two-way bicycle track can help improve access from the neighborhood's northern boundary to Downtown Atlanta. South of where Pryor becomes two-way, the road is

currently configured as six lanes with three lanes in each direction. The AADT traffic counts for this corridor do not show the need for this many lanes, and a road diet should be explored to allow access to points southward including Peoplestown, University Avenue and the future Atlanta BeltLine Southside trail.*

As mentioned under Best Practices, these arterials contain excessive parking facilities that prevent the corridor from realizing its true development potential and contribute to criminal activity. Repurposing parking facilities for sustainable or mixed-use developments would promote a sense of hospitality and safety for residents and visitors. Additionally, gateway enhancement should be explored through the lenses of greenspace and/or civic space at the intersections of Pryor Road and Doane Avenue and where Pryor and Central pass under Interstate 20.

Windsor Street

Windsor Street is a two-way residential street for a majority of its length which contains popular MARTA bus stops, has low traffic levels, and connects to Downtown Atlanta. These are ingredients where the road could accommodate bicycle traffic, allowing cyclists to travel to the Dunbar Recreation Center and Rosa Burney Park.

This road also needs sidewalk improvements around the Dunbar Recreation Center and Interstate 20. There are several locations in this area where utilities obstruct the width of the sidewalk so that they are not ADA compliant. We

* [GDOT 2016 Traffic Counts](#)

suggest that ADA compliance in this area should be a top priority due to the proximity to the Center. Gateway enhancement through public art, murals, and underpass beautification can change the outlook of this corridor.

McDaniel Street

McDaniel Street's existing lane configuration is similar to that of Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard with two travel lanes and one bicycle lane each direction. As a key north-south connector, it may be prudent to explore expanding existing bicycle lanes further north to connect to Whitehall Street, Northside Drive, and the Atlanta University Center (Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University & Morehouse College) along with points further south towards Pittsburgh and University Avenue.

A Renew Atlanta project will convert traffic signals at Rockwell, Mary, Gardner and Fletcher Street to four-way stop signs.* This project, though outside the boundaries of Mechanicsville, will impact the safety and viability of this corridor if bicycle and pedestrian accommodations are considered. McDaniel Street should strive for a reduced traffic flow in preference to other nearby routes such as Metropolitan Parkway or Pryor Road since it contains many residential land parcels in contrast to the latter two streets.

Implementation Strategy

In terms of implementation, there are a variety of resources available to the Mechanicsville neighborhood. These range from public funding through the City of Atlanta to private grants and

* [Renew Atlanta TSPLOST: McDaniel Street \(TCC\)](#)

foundations. One individual resource should not be exclusively relied upon by planners and developers. Grants through state and federal agencies along with nonprofit organizations should be considered.

While Central Atlanta Progress cannot be a direct funding source for projects in the heart of Mechanicsville, this community improvement district (CID) shares its southernmost boundaries with Mechanicsville and could serve as a partner in developing an official gateway for the neighborhood.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has several funding opportunities for neighborhood-level projects, including the Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG).**

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta administers numerous grants in the metro Atlanta area.*** This organization would be a potential partner for administering a program similar to Austin's Transit Empowerment Fund.

Crowdsourcing, as mentioned previously, has been used to fund bike lanes and sidewalks in communities throughout the country. Crowdsourcing platforms include Ioby, Citizeninvestor, Kickstarter, Community Funded, and Neighborly.****

Invest Atlanta announced in October 2018 the creation of a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

** [Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant \(LMIG\)](#)

*** [Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta](#)

**** [Ioby](#); [Citizeninvestor](#); [Kickstarter](#); [Community Funded](#); and [Neighborly](#)



Fund that is a first for the City of Atlanta. *The \$15 million in revolving funds will be used to provide low-interest loans to non-profit and for-profit affordable housing real estate developers. From a transportation perspective, incentivizing development near transit will improve the economic viability of inner-city neighborhoods including Mechanicsville. Developers interested in land prospects in Mechanicsville should investigate this new resource.

CBA Recommendations

The studio team has identified numerous aspects of planning and public space as fitting for CBAs to consider, and under transportation, these include:

- **benches and furniture for MARTA stops**
- **sidewalk maintenance and repairs**
- **lighting along residential streets and in front of developments**
- **reduced-rate transit passes for residents of affordable housing developments**

Examples of CBAs around the nation which included transportation improvements are located in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Portland. In 2008, the Longfellow neighborhood in Minneapolis was a site where a community group was able to negotiate livable, walkable streets (bicycle parking, multi-use paths, and parking maximums) features as part of a large-scale mixed-use development.** The Park East Redevelopment Compact in Milwaukee outlines expectations for an abandoned freeway spur

* [Invest Atlanta Announces Atlanta's First Transit-Oriented Development Fund](#)

** [Longfellow Station/Purina Site CBA](#)

near the City's downtown. The final compact stated that transit options must be expanded to residents, and tax increment financing will fund the roads, sidewalks, and other physical amenities associated with the development.***

In Portland, a mixed-use development at the site of the City's old post office is currently in the negotiating stages of a CBA in which the City is aiming for getting the developer to issue free transit passes to all residents of the facility.****

While the result is not final, the fact that the City is including transit as part of the CBA process is an impressive achievement. These are just a few angles that show transportation is becoming an important feature of CBAs.

We recommend that CBAs for future developments in the Mechanicsville neighborhood consider accommodations, for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian activity. This will complement development accessories (like bicycle parking, workout areas, etc.), the close proximity to downtown Atlanta, and help reduce congestion in the neighborhood. Using diverse funding mechanisms like TIF or TAD for transit should be a priority in drafting and executing CBAs for future Mechanicsville developments.

*** [Community Benefits Agreement Guides Development in Milwaukee's Park East Corridor](#)

**** [Community Benefit Agreements – Coming Soon To A City Near You](#)

Public Safety

Introduction

Public safety affects every aspect of a community. Nationally, crime in cities is decreasing.* In all cities, Atlanta included, there is a debate over whether this decrease in crime is truly being felt by long-term residents.** No data can justify or explain how people perceive their neighborhood. However, human interaction can. To understand this, we engaged in a robust outreach effort, summarized in the stakeholder outreach section. Overall, the Mechanicsville residents and stakeholders we interviewed felt

* [Brennan Center for Justice](#)
** [National Bureau of Economic Research](#)

safer and that quality of life in the neighborhood had improved over the years.

Existing Conditions

City of Atlanta Police Department records indicate that crime increased in Mechanicsville starting in 2011, hitting a peak in 2014 and falling back down. This applied to both crimes of a violent and non-violent nature. Violent crime is shown in Figure 55.

To test for any local effect, we compared this with crime data from Atlanta as a whole. This comparison showed the same trend occurring in

Crime Type:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Aggravated Assault:	48	54	54	60	68	110	58	55	59
Homicide:	2	3	1	1	2	4	3	3	1
Total:	50	57	55	61	68	114	61	59	60

Figure 55: Trends in Violent Crime - Mechanicsville (Atlanta Police Department)

Crime Type:	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Aggravated Assault:	2612	2611	2534	2519	2277	4473	2151	2192	2033
Homicide:	77	89	84	83	81	174	86	114	84
Manslaughter:	1	2	4	3	1	2	2	0	1
Total:	2690	2702	2622	2605	2359	4649	2239	2306	2118

Figure 56: Trends in Violent Crime – City Wide (Atlanta Police Department)



This revealed five locations in the neighborhood with slightly higher concentrations of violent crimes, each shown on the map below. It is difficult to decipher the nature or motive of these particular crimes without more in-depth knowledge. The individual points on the map tell us if a crime is happening close to the street or further into the parcel. Of the five concentrations found below, three of them occur at or in front of properties of deteriorating condition.

Total crime followed a different pattern from

violent crime. It shows a large number of incidents occurring south of Ralph David Abernathy, especially along Windsor St. and Garibaldi St. to Stephens Street.

Public safety provides a key metric that can help to prioritize local investment decisions. Built environment factors - street lighting, sidewalk conditions, and dilapidated properties can all play a role in crime occurrences. Such changes are discussed in the best practices and implementation sections below.

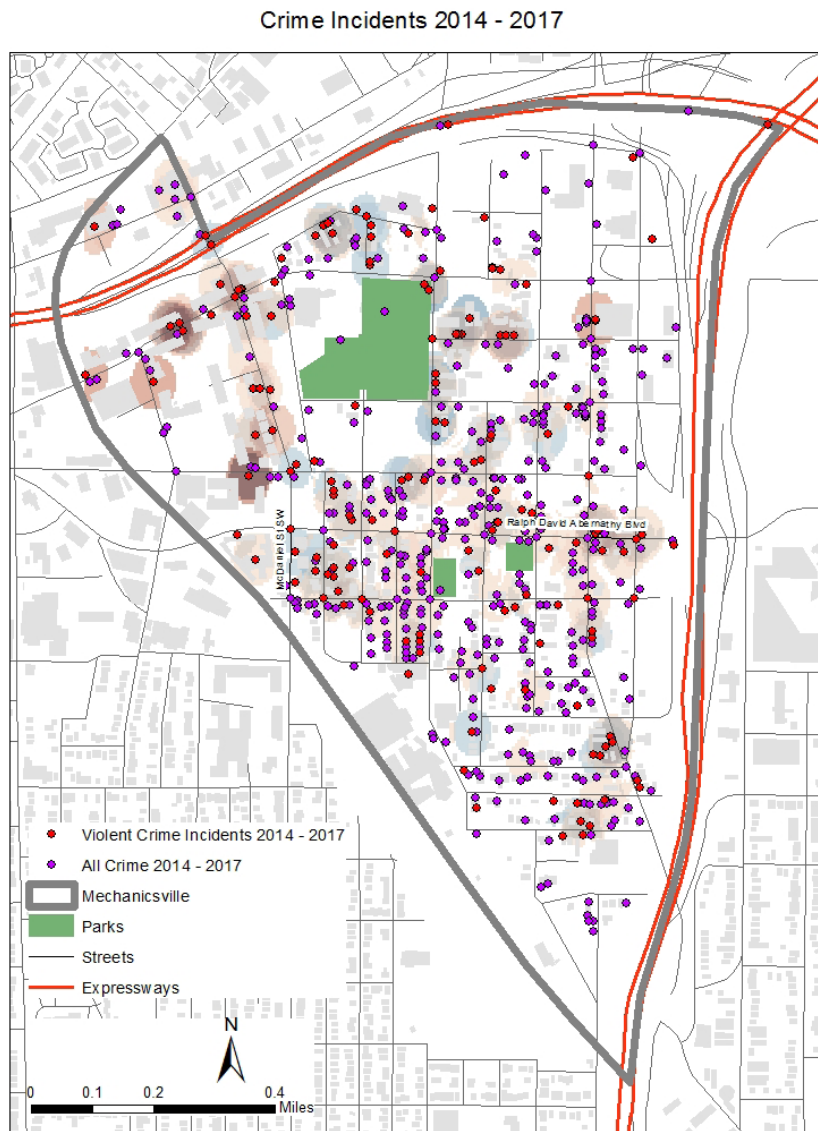


Figure 57: Spatial Distribution of Crimes in Mechanicsville (Atlanta Police Department)

Stakeholder Outcomes

Our outreach consisted of two residential survey canvassing efforts, two business survey canvassing efforts, a conversation with an on-duty police officer and one meeting with the Mechanicsville Civic Association local civic association. These are summarized below.

Residents

We spoke with four separate residents, two long-term residents, a renter who recently moved to the neighborhood and a fourth person who lived in East Point, but whose mother had lived in Mechanicsville since childhood. Overall we heard the following:

- Neighborhood safety was improving overall, largely due to the development of Rosa Burney Park and nearby apartments.
- More activity in the evenings and during community events.

Police Officer

The team sought input from an on-duty police officer stationed at Ralph David Abernathy and Windsor Street.

- Many of his responses were to neighborhood issues, such as thefts, loitering, and domestic disputes. Coordinated gang activity was not an issue.
- The officer highlighted a new community policing initiative the department created had aimed to bring officers closer to business owners. The goal is to have officers get to know the community better by having them spend more time inside businesses and talking to the owners.

Business Owners

The response of businesses owners varied widely.

Managers at the Family Dollar said that theft occurred on a daily basis and that violent crime was incredibly common.

- Complained of slow response times.
- Scared them for their own personal safety.

At the BP gas station, the women working the counter had a very positive feeling.

- Occasional problems with children shoplifting from children, but she could usually see it and talk them out of it.
- No experiences with violent crime.
- Worked at that station for 21 years and that her positive experiences were a major factor in her decision to buy a house in Mechanicsville 10 years ago.
- The manager at 656 Sports Bar & Grille stated that crime hadn't been an issue but noted that she almost always went home before the night shift. To the best of her knowledge, no serious incidents had happened at night, either.

Our outreach seemed to indicate no clear consensus on how important of a factor crime was in the lives of people in the neighborhood. However, we did hear a resounding feeling that crime was lessening. This aligns with our data findings in the years since 2014, but in the nine years since 2009, crime is at roughly the same level.

Best Practices

Crime prevention techniques are primarily design related or involve input and action from the community. All of these recommendations have the potential to be included in a CBA.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

CPTED is the basic principle that built factors influence the location and the severity of crime. The Atlanta BeltLine Incorporated (ABI) acknowledges CPTEDs as a core guiding principle for public safety improvements included in CBA's within its district. The areas of more intense crime activity displayed in the map above identify possible locations where such a design change may have a larger impact. Examples include installing murals underneath freeways or in other dark places, and public infrastructure investments such as sidewalk reconstruction or lighting installation.

Underpasses and Lighting

Figure 58 is a photograph of the Central Ave underpass underneath Fulton Street. Similar areas like this with narrow sidewalks and poor lighting are spread throughout the neighborhood. Public art, murals and streetscape improvements can make these spaces more inviting, bring people to use the space and in the process reduce crime.

Community-Driven Solutions to Public Safety

Overall, our discussions with stakeholders revealed that the police have a strong and



Figure 58: Central Avenue Underpass (Andreas Wolfe)

nuanced understanding of the neighborhood and are employing a number of community policing programs to better reach residents, especially youth. Listed below are a number of additional examples of potential community driven policing efforts.

Civilian Investigation Programs

A "civilian investigator" is a person who, with proper training, can respond to nonviolent crime scenes, such as car burglaries. A civilian investigator can provide emotional support to victims and take down essential information, such as the victims' contact information and time and date of the crime. A major benefit of these individuals is that they can be trained quicker and for less money than a sworn officer. Civilian investigators improve response times to

low-level incidents that take lower priority, while also improving community-police relations. The City of San Francisco trained and compensated 16 community investigators in 2010 amid staff shortages.*

Chief of Police George Gascón reported moderate satisfaction with the program in an interview with the Police Executive Research Forum shortly following its adoption.**

Community Partnerships with Civic Associations

A collaboration with the local civic association to further investigate the nature of existing crimes could prove extremely helpful. The police department and the civic association can work together to create a plan of action to address the higher crime parcels in the neighborhood and address other community concerns. A November 2013 Report from the Earl Warren Institute At UC Berkeley recognized community partnerships as a guiding principle of effective community policing.*** More knowledge of the nature of crimes in the community can help formulate more effective crime prevention plan for the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Advisory Committee

Another example of an effective community partnership is a neighborhood advisory committee. Such a committee can take many forms, but a model that proved successful in Anaheim California was a collaboration between the police department and landlords to inform

* [Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute](#)

** [Police Executive Research Forum](#)

*** [Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute](#)

officers of disputes or incidents that may have gone unreported.****

Implementation Strategy

CBA Recommendations

Streetscape improvements, funding for civilian investigation programs and the establishment of community partnerships are all potential aspects of a CBA. Community partnerships do not require additional funding, rather only the formal agreement that the department will work with the Mechanicsville Civic Association to further investigate crime patterns and motives within the neighborhood.

CPTED Implementation

There is a unique opportunity to improve underpasses on the north side of the neighborhood. The Windsor Street, Pryor Street, and Central Ave underpasses connect the neighborhood to Downtown and the Garnett Transit Station. The walk is short but intimidating. Partnering with an organization such as Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) can provide the resource capital needed to apply for grants and philanthropic funding to make such a project happen. CAP has experience with such proposals, such as a design for Auburn Ave., shown in Figure 59.***** Other grant opportunities are detailed further in Appendix C.

Examples of such undertakings from other cities include the Race Street Connector in Philadelphia, the Buffalo Bayou Project in Houston, and The Massachusetts DOT's Infraspaces Program.*****

**** [The United States Conference of Mayors](#)

***** [Central Atlanta Progress](#)

***** Best Practices Poster. "Transportation and



In other cities, local organizations are leading the way in funding environmental design
Public Safety”

enhancements. The Community Design Collaborative is a Philadelphia based institution that administers grants for the preliminary



Figure 59: Envisioned Underpass Improvements at Auburn Avenue and the Downtown Connector (Central Atlanta Progress)

Next Steps & Continuing the Conversation

design of public realm projects or charrettes.*

There are a number of strategies that Mechanicsville can undertake to improve conditions in each focus area, listed at length in Appendix C. While many recommendations will require a long-term commitment, there are also many opportunities for immediate impact while building relationships and momentum towards long-term goals. Community organizations can set the development agenda and broker relationships between developers, nonprofits, government agencies, and the wider community. Developers and the community in particular can work to establish mutual trust and constructive relationships through pursuing continuous communication and striving towards consistent positive outcomes. CBAs are an important mechanism for building trust and ensuring that the community benefits from the opportunities associated with modern infrastructure and development while providing developers predictable conditions of community support.

Zoning & Development

- Establish a developer outreach board within the Mechanicsville Civic Association or NPU-V to bridge the communication gap between residents and developers.
- Create a subarea in SPI-18 with the same or similar regulations as the I-MIX district to encourage light industrial with mixed use.

* [Community Design Collaborative](#)

- Establish a CBA subcommittee within the Mechanicsville Civic Association, or improve communication with the NPU-V's existing subcommittee.

Housing

- Create a new (or strengthen an existing) neighborhood foundation similar to the East Lake Foundation to coordinate neighborhood resources and support programs.
- Host programs to increase education and income levels so that people can afford housing at higher percentages of AMI.
- Use CBAs to encourage local contracting and/or hiring on local construction projects.

Economic & Workforce Development

- Address the food desert – refer to fresh produce food truck models discussed in case studies.
- Strengthen the relationship between the Mechanicsville Civic Association, NPU-V, and workforce development agencies by attending meeting more frequently and providing promotional materials.
- Attend events in Mechanicville, such as the Mechanicville Neighborhood Reunion, and distribute materials promoting the workforce development agency.



- Allocate funds from CBA pacts to sponsor GED testing for residents.

Transportation

- Determine a strategy to provide reduced transit fares for Mechanicsville residents, especially those residing in low-income/affordable housing (CBA possibility).
- Increase the frequency of existing bus routes.
- Improve multimodal connections through bicycle lanes and wide sidewalks.
- Additional CBA opportunities include benches and furniture for MARTA stops, sidewalk maintenance and repairs, and lighting along residential streets and in front of developments.

Public Safety

- Community Policing: Sit down with police department to discuss the potential for an NAC and what role the neighborhood might be able to play in accordance with community policing best practices.
- CPTED: Sit down with CAP to discuss the Auburn Avenue project and what aspects of that project might be replicable to underpasses in Mechanicsville.
- CBA requests could include streetscape improvements, funding for civilian investigation programs and the establishment of community partnerships.

These and other recommendations in this report can help Mechanicsville prosper while building and maintaining trust between developers and the community.

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

These definitions were extracted from the City of Atlanta Zoning Code and the American Planning Association's **A Planner's Dictionary**.*

Accessory Units: A separate, complete housekeeping unit with a separate entrance, kitchen, sleeping area, and full bathroom facilities, which is an attached or detached extension to an existing single-family structure.

Affordable Housing: Housing that has a sale price or rental amount that is within the means of a household that may occupy middle-, moderate-, or low-income housing.

Area Median Income: The household income for the median, or middle, household in a region.

Census Tract: A small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county in a metropolitan area or a selected nonmetropolitan county, delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting decennial census data. Census tract boundaries normally follow visible features, but may follow governmental unit boundaries and other non-visible features in some instances; they always nest within counties.

Community Benefits Agreement: a pact between community members and developers, where the developer receives community support for a project on the condition that they provide an agreed upon good or service to the community.

Cost Burden: Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): The total floor area of all buildings or structures on a zoning lot divided by the area of said lot.

Light Industry: Any operation which assembles, improves, treats, compounds, or packages goods or materials in a manner which does not create a noticeable amount of noise, dust, odor, smoke, glare or vibration outside of the building in which the activity takes place, which does not require outside storage or goods or materials, and which does not generate objectionable amounts of truck traffic.

Low-Income Household: A building containing only one (1) dwelling unit. The term is general, including such specialized forms as one-family detached, one-family semi-detached and one-family attached (row houses, townhouses, patio houses and the like). For regulatory purposes, the term is not to be construed to include

* HUD.gov

mobile homes, travel trailers, housing mounted on self-propelled or drawn vehicles, tents, or other forms of temporary or portable housing, which is controlled by special regulations.

Mixed-Use Development: The development of a tract of land or building or structure with two or more different uses such as but not limited to residential, office, retail, public, or entertainment, in a compact urban form.

Multi-family Dwelling: A building containing three or more dwelling units.

Node: An identifiable grouping of uses subsidiary and dependent upon a larger urban grouping of similar or related uses.

Poverty Level: As used by the U.S. Census, families and unrelated individuals are classified as being above or below the poverty level based on a poverty index that provides a range of income cutoffs or “poverty thresholds” varying by size of family, number of children, and age of householder. The income cutoffs are updated each year to reflect the change in the Consumer Price Index.

Road Diet: The reconfiguration of lanes on a roadway to allow for multimodal uses like bicycle lanes or cycle tracks in addition to vehicular traffic. An example would be reassigning a 4-lane road with 2 lanes each direction into a 3-lane road with 1 travel lane each direction, a center turn lane, and 1 bicycle lane each direction.

Single-Family Dwelling: A residential home with only one unit meant for one household.

Stormwater: The flow of water which results from precipitation and which occurs immediately following rainfall or a snowmelt.

Streetscape: An area that may either abut or be contained within a public or private street right-of-way or accessway that may contain sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping or trees, and similar features.

Subdivision: The division or redivision of one (1) or more parcels of land into two (2) or more building lots.

Sustainable: Community use of natural resources in a way that does not jeopardize the ability of future generations to live and prosper.

Urban Renewal: A governmental program generally aimed at the renovation of blighted urban areas, using public expenditures for replacing lesser economic uses with higher or more profitable uses.

Variance: Permission to depart from this development code when, because of special circumstances applicable to the property, strict application of the provisions of this development code deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity that is under identical zoning.

Zoning: The division of a city or county by legislative regulations into areas, or zones, which specify allowable uses for real property and size restrictions for buildings within these areas. Also, a program that implements policies of the general plan.

Appendix B: Stakeholder Questions

Zoning

City Employees & Representatives

- How does existing zoning help businesses get a foothold in the community?
- What types of policies do developers want to see in the zoning code?
- What, if anything, is missing from the current zoning code that you would like to see?
- What is a SPI district, and how does SPI-18 affect Mechanicsville?
- What can you tell us about the City's Zoning Diagnostic recommendations and the resulting zoning ordinance update changes to the zoning code?
- What is the new I-MIX district proposal, and what uses count as industrial for the sake of meeting the district's industrial use requirements?
- What is the development process, including the rezoning and variance processes, from the City's perspective?
- What is the City's current policy on ADUs?

Community Organization Members

- What are the biggest obstacles to development in Mechanicsville?
- What are the biggest successes in the NPU that can be tied to zoning?
- How do you communicate with developers/community members?
- What has been the past relationship between developers and the community?
- How can we get the community and developers to work together?
- What types of development would you like to see in Mechanicsville?
- How do you think the introduction of I-MIX zoning will impact the community?

Housing

Schools and Churches

- What community programs do you run?
- What do you see as the neighborhood's biggest assets for the families you come into contact with?
- What do you see as the neighborhood's greatest needs for the families you come into contact with?



- How would you characterize your turnover/attrition rates for students/church members?
- How has your congregation or classrooms changed over the last 5 years?

Affordable Housing Developers

- What are the biggest obstacles to developing in Mechanicsville?
- What would you need (financially, politically, socially) for development in Mechanicsville to be an easier process?
- What type of housing is in the most demand in Mechanicsville?
- What (if any) housing projects are expected in the next 12 months?
- How do you structure your development financing and occupancy balance?
- What future trends do you foresee?
- What has been your experience working with the community? What problems have you encountered?

Nonprofit Organizations

- What housing and job related programs do you run?
- What do you see as the neighborhood's greatest needs for the families you come into contact with?
- How would you characterize your turnover/attrition rates for community members?
- How has your clientele changed over the last 5 years?

Economic Development

Business Owners

- How long has your business been located in Mechanicsville?
- Why did you choose to locate in Mechanicsville?
- How many employees does your business have?
- Do you have trouble finding employees?
- Do your employees live in Mechanicsville? How do they get to work?
- Do your customers live in Mechanicsville?
- How can the City/neighborhood help support your business? Have you experienced helpful support in the past?
- What other types of businesses would you like to see that would complement your business and/or the community?
- Does your workforce development agency have an active relationship with Mechanicsville neighborhood organizations, such as Mechanicsville Civic Association, Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) - V and religious institutions?
- What employment opportunities would you like to see in Mechanicsville that are not offered?
- What other services would you provide to Mechanicsville?
-

Transportation

City of Atlanta

- What are your general thoughts on bicycle/pedestrian/transit services in south Atlanta?
- How is the Relay bike-share system performing in Mechanicsville with the 3 existing stations within the neighborhood?
- What initiatives are underway to improve bicycle connectivity within and around Mechanicsville? I know that you mentioned Cycle Atlanta 2.0 last Wednesday to help residents access West End MARTA station, but I was curious if there were others.
- What is being done to improve ADA compliance, from a bicycling standpoint, in Mechanicsville?
- Additional Comments?

MARTA

- What is the overall process that MARTA undertakes behind bus stop placement and routing? What is the role of residents' input in this process?
- Do more Mechanicsville residents use bus connections to West End or Garnett?
- How do recent bus route creations/realignments help better serve Mechanicsville?
- Have you noticed a change in ridership and embarking/disembarking patterns at stops within Mechanicsville?

Public Safety

Residents

- Do you currently live or work in Mechanicsville?
- If so, how do you get around the neighborhood?
- Is there any point when running errands or going to work that you feel more unsafe than others?

Businesses:

- Do you feel like lack of public safety is a factor that affects your business?
- If so, what is the nature of the issues that occur near or on your property?
- Do you have a good relationship with the police? Do you feel their responses are adequate?
- If the respondent, did not feel lack of public safety was a concern, asked what they liked about running a business at that location.



Appendix C: Implementation Matrix

Report Section	Recommendation	Directly Benefits
Zoning	Adopt "Missing Middle" zoning to allow a broader range of housing options	Developers
Zoning	Use maximum number of units per lot instead of FAR to allow multi-family housing while retaining the neighborhood character	Developers
Zoning	Clarify the definition of ADUs, permit in SPI-18 subareas 5 and 6	Developers
Zoning	Create a subarea in SPI-18 with the same or similar regulations as the I-MIX district to encourage light industrial with mixed use	Developers
Zoning	Re-write SPI-18 zoning ordinance using user-friendly language and graphics	Developers
Zoning	Use a points-based bonus system to encourage denser development	Developers
Zoning	Establish a developer outreach board within the Mechanicsville Civic Association or NPU-V to bridge the communication gap between residents and developers	Developers, Residents
Zoning	Establish a CBA subcommittee within the Mechanicsville Civic Association, or improve communication with the NPU-V's existing subcommittee	Developers, Residents
Housing	Create a new (or strengthen an existing) neighborhood foundation similar to the East Lake Foundation to coordinate neighborhood resources and support programs	Residents
Housing	Work with community land trust in acquiring properties that ensure permanent affordability, especially for single-family homes	Residents
Housing	Create low-income housing for extremely low income residents (at or below 30 percent AMI)	Residents
Housing	Host programs to increase education and income levels so that people can afford housing at higher percentages of AMI	Residents
Housing	Set standards for new housing construction to hire from the neighborhood's job training programs	Residents
Housing	Pursue bond financing to develop multi-family housing	Developers
Housing	Retain affordable single-family housing	Residents
Housing	Offload City-owned land to keep land prices low and increase revenues	Developers
Housing	Acquire, renovate, and develop underutilized homes	Developers
Economic Development	Allocate funds from CBA pacts to sponsor GED testing for residents.	Residents

Economic Development	Initiate a partnership with film and television production companies to create an internship or apprenticeship program	Residents
Economic Development	Create better signage and marketing tools for the organizations in the Dunbar Recreation Center	Residents
Economic Development	Form internship and apprenticeship programs with local businesses	Residents
Economic Development	Promote local women and minority-owned businesses for contracting	Residents
Economic Development	Work with unions to designate opportunities in their training programs for Mechanicsville residents	Residents
Economic Development	Establish a professional clothing closet	Residents
Economic Development	Combine efforts of the workforce development agencies, churches, and other organizations to reach those facing multiple barriers preventing job retention, housing, and advancing education	Residents
Economic Development	Attending Mechanicsville Civic Association and NPU-V meetings more frequently	Developers
Economic Development	Inform high school students of nearby employment and educational opportunities, services, and training programs	Residents
Economic Development	Promote opportunities to increase incomes by completing training and career and technical education (CTE) programs	Residents
Economic Development	Seek small business loans for neighborhood business owners	Residents
Economic Development	Utilize tax incentives like NMTC, and Federal Opportunity Zones	Developers
Economic Development	Apply to grant programs like TADs	Developers
Economic Development	Provide middle skill occupation development	Residents
Economic Development	Encourage and incentivize attendance in CTE programs	Residents
Transportation	Install benches and furniture for MARTA stops	Residents
Transportation	Facilitate sidewalk maintenance and repairs	Residents
Transportation	Improve lighting along residential streets and in front of developments	Residents, Developers
Transportation	Provide reduced-rate transit passes for residents of affordable developments	Residents, Developers
Transportation	Partner with Central Atlanta Progress to fund transportation options	Residents



Transportation	Use innovative funding mechanisms like GDOT grants, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, and crowdsourcing	Residents
Transportation	Seek loans from Invest Atlanta's TOD Fund	Residents
Public Safety	Improve streetscapes to decrease crime rates through environmental design	Residents
Public Safety	Fund civilian investigation programs to respond to non-violent crimes	Residents
Public Safety	Improve underpasses connecting Mechanicsville to other neighborhoods to provide better, safer connections	Residents
Public Safety	Seek funding sources for preliminary designs that will improve public spaces and increase perceptions of safety	Residents
Public Safety	Hire and train civilian investigators to on a short-term basis	Residents
Public Safety	Study and discuss possible implementation of Neighborhood Advisory Committee or Civic Association partnership that formally discusses neighborhood crime issues with police	Residents
	Highlighted strategies are possible through CBAs.	

Appendix D: Resources

Name of Organization /Resource	Brief Description	Address	Phone Number	Email and Website
Atlanta Emerging Markets Inc.	NMTC Financing	133 Peachtree St NE, Suite 2900, Atlanta, GA 30303	(404) 614-8336	Website
Atlanta Technical College	Workforce Development	1560 Metropolitan Parkway SW, Atlanta, GA 30310	(404) 225-4400	Website
Georgia StandUP	Workforce Development	501 Pulliam St. SW, Suite 144, Atlanta, GA 30312	(404) 581-0061	Website
Georgia Works	Workforce Development	275 Pryor Street SW, Atlanta, GA 30303	(404) 215-6680	Email Website
Invest Atlanta	Federal Opportunity Zones	133 Peachtree St NE, Suite 2900, Atlanta, GA 30303	(404) 880-4100	Website
	Small Business Loans			Website
	TAD Grant			Website
Office of Planning City of Atlanta	Brownfield Grant Program	55 Trinity Avenue, Suite 3350, Atlanta, Georgia 30303	(404) 865-8522	Email Website
The Center for Working Families	Workforce Development	477 Windsor Street, Suite 101, Atlanta, GA 30312	(404) 223-3303	Email Website
Urban League of Greater Atlanta	Workforce Development	29 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30303	(404) 659-1150	Email Website
WorkSource Atlanta	Workforce Development	818 Pollard Boulevard SW, Atlanta, GA 30315	(404) 546-3000	Website



Appendix E: Team Member Biographies



Grace Barrett

Specialization in Housing and Community Development, MCRP/MRED - [LinkedIn](#)

Grace Barrett is a candidate in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning program and the Master of Real Estate Development program. Prior to attending Georgia Tech, she received her Bachelors of Arts in Geography, with a focus in GIS, from the University of Georgia. Grace currently interns for Community Housing Capital (CHC), a community development financial institution, located in Decatur, GA. Her work includes collecting and maintaining impact data on loans made by CHC and assisting in the integration of a social impact underwriting model that will help inform future financial decisions. Her current research focuses on preservation of affordable small and medium scale multi-family and single-family residential in Atlanta, GA. In her free time, Grace enjoys running and rock climbing.



Emily Baxter

Specialization in Urban Design, MCRP - [LinkedIn](#)

Emily Baxter is a Candidate in the Georgia Tech Master of City and Regional Planning program. She received her Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning from Eastern Michigan University. She most recently interned for Manatee County, Florida's Redevelopment and Economic Opportunity Department where she created a redevelopment prioritization matrix for vacant parcels in the County's TIF district. Prior to attending Georgia Tech, she worked for several years at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, interviewing subjects for social science research studies. She has also served as an AmeriCorps member for ReBuilding Together, Montgomery County where she managed digital communications and outreach campaigns, and interned as an undergraduate for the City of Ypsilanti, Michigan in the Planning Department. Her main planning interests include urban design, economic development, Rust Belt cities, and pedestrian-oriented development.



James Burge

Specialization in Land Use & Urban Design - [LinkedIn](#)

James is a second year graduate student in the Master of City and Regional Planning program at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He is dual-specializing in Land Use and Urban Design and will graduate in May 2019. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from Tulane University, with minors in Urban Studies and Architectural Studies. Prior to starting at Georgia Tech, he had experience interning for a real estate development company and at the environmental nonprofit Southface working as a database management assistant. He recently interned at Midtown Alliance, a community improvement organization covering Midtown Atlanta, with the Urban Design department. His work involved updating, organizing and mapping land use data within the jurisdiction. He is interested in promoting dense, walkable, sustainable communities through land use regulations and urban design principles.



Melody Carter

Specialization in Economic Development - [LinkedIn](#)

Melody is a graduate student in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning program specializing in economic development and will graduate in May 2019. Before attending Georgia Tech, she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Mathematics from Emory University. Melody currently interns for Invest Atlanta, Atlanta's economic development agency, within their Investment Services department. Her work involves creating public-private partnerships to drive private capital investment into low-income and distressed communities, managing loan programs for Atlanta businesses, and managing venture capital investments for socially-minded entrepreneurs. Melody's research interests include tax incentives as an economic development tool and how they can be utilized thoughtfully while discouraging gentrification. Her current research efforts look specifically at the new Federal Opportunity Zones incentive and what it means for Atlanta's residents and stakeholders.



Tyler Coyle

Specialization in Land Use - [LinkedIn](#)

Tyler Coyle is a graduate student in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning program. He is specializing in land use and will graduate in May 2019. He has a bachelor's degree from American University, where he doubled majored in International Studies and Business Administration. He has worked at Clark Construction, coordinating small and minority-owned business contracting across multiple projects including the Washington Metro's Silver Line extension and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. He has interned with the City of Seattle's Department of Transportation and is currently interning at the Upper West Side Improvement District (UWID) in Atlanta. While there, he has evaluated parcel-level land appreciation in the district, surveyed district parking and suggested improvements, and conducted research for future district branding efforts. His long-term interests include supporting population densification through land use reform and land use and transportation interaction.





Brianna Davison

Specialization in Economic Development - [LinkedIn](#)

Brianna Davison is a student in the Master of City and Regional Planning Program at the Georgia Institute of Technology specializing in economic development. Davison earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography from Georgia State University, where she developed her interests in city development and human geography. She is a Visitor Information Specialist for the Georgia Department of Economic Development, informing travelers in the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport of tourism activities in Georgia. Additionally, Davison interns at the Atlanta Regional Commission in Community Development Group. The position involves providing technical assistance for local governments and regional partners to implement long-term plans through the Community Development Assistance Program. With her free time, she enjoys attending local food festivals and baking.



Seth Furman

Specialization in Housing & Community Development, MCRP/MRED - [LinkedIn](#)

Seth Furman is a dual-degree candidate in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning and Master of Real Estate Development programs. Originally from Ormond Beach, Florida, Seth attended the University of Miami (FL) and earned a Bachelors of Business Administration degree. Following his time in South Florida, Seth moved to Atlanta and began working for Perennial Properties, an Atlanta-based mixed-use real estate development firm that specializes in urban apartment projects with street level retail. While at Georgia Tech, Seth has interned at The Concord Group, a real estate advisory group, and is currently working for Invest Atlanta, the city's economic development agency. Seth's current research involves creating equitable communities through neighborhood partnerships, complemented with the creation of awesome buildings, all intersected in a city fabric that is just. A firm believer that health is paramount to one's life, Seth enjoys staying active through cooking, experiencing Georgia's outdoor adventures, and strolling the streets of Atlanta with his dog, Murphy Zaxby.



Andrea Sherman

Specialization in Transportation - [LinkedIn](#)

Andrea is a graduate student in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning program specializing in transportation and will graduate in May 2019. She has a Bachelor's degree from Vassar College where she double majored in urban planning and psychology. Andrea has past experience working in planning, zoning, and economic development for a local government in New York State, where she helped residents and developers through planning and zoning approval processes. She recently interned at WSP Atlanta, a transportation planning and engineering firm, where she contributed to transit projects and environmental assessments. Her primary interest includes planning for aging demographics; she is part of a research team at Georgia Tech developing a wayfinding and navigation app for older adults with mobility and/or vision limitations.



Andrew Smith

Specialization in Transportation - [LinkedIn](#)

Andrew is a graduate student in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning program specializing in transportation and will graduate in May 2019. He is originally from Valdosta, GA and he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography from the University of Georgia. Andrew's professional experience includes working with the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) based in Atlanta and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission based in Valdosta. His notable professional accomplishments include publishing a report titled Valdosta and Lowndes County Complete Streets Suitability, which received a 2017 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) and was named 2017 Outstanding Initiative by the Georgia Planning Association. He is interested in bicycle and pedestrian planning in small and medium-sized cities and is currently conducting research on how to prioritize multimodal projects for Georgia's small and medium-sized metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).



Michael Smith

Specializations in Land Use & Urban Design - [LinkedIn](#)

Michael Smith is a graduate student in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning program specializing in land use and urban design, and will graduate in December 2018. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Georgia. Michael has prior experience as a management consultant and data analyst, working with the City of Atlanta and The Home Depot. He has previously had an internship with the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute, where he worked to help develop technology sector driven economic development plans for local governments. He currently interns for the Atlanta Regional Commission, where he is creating an assessment of potential pollutant sources near local drinking water supplies.



Andreas Wolfe

Specialization in Transportation, MCRP/CEE - [LinkedIn](#)

Andreas is a dual-degree candidate in Georgia Tech's Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) and Master of Science in Civil and Environmental Engineering (MS, CEE). Before attending Georgia Tech, Andreas was a public involvement consultant for Howard Stein Hudson Associates, guiding community input on statewide transportation projects. Prior, he interned for the transportation planning firm Nelson\Nygaard, worked as the assistant to the City Traffic Engineer in the City of Somerville, MA and served as the programs manager for the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition. He is a member of Dr. Laurie Garrow's travel behavior research group in the CEE Department and is working on a Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) funded assessment of the state's 5311 rural transit program.

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Economic Development Best Practices

Case Study: Fulton Fresh Mobile Farmers Market

Partnership between University of Georgia and Fulton County, funded by CDC

Issue:

The Mobile Farmer's Market addresses the issue of food deserts and health disparities, while promoting nutrition education in low-income communities.

Background:

The University of Georgia Extension Fulton County's nutrition education program created the concept for the Mobile Farmer's Market in 2011. The goal is to increase awareness and consumption of local produce through hands-on education.

Solution:

Fulton Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market helps solve the food desert issue while providing hands-on education, including: nutrition education classes, healthy cooking demonstrations, and youth programming.

Cost:

Funded by the CDC, this initiative is free to the neighborhood residents.

Policies:

Neighborhoods are to go through an application process and must qualify as a "food desert" to be granted Mobile Farmer's Market services. To participate in the free produce program, they must be a local resident and must take the free nutrition class.



Image source: <http://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/>

Case Study: Pier 70, Forest City Mixed Use Industrial Development, Forest City, a for-profit developer

Issue:

The Pier 70 district has vacant land, blighted structures, and industrial port activity areas that don't allow public activity or waterfront access. Forest City's project bridges the gap between the industrial legacy of the area and incoming artists and makers.

Background:

Pier 70 is on the National Register of Historic Places, and it has 150 years of continuous operations in shipbuilding and repair.



Image source: <http://www.pier70sf.com/future/>
Image source: Apartmentfinder.com



Image source: <http://www.pier70sf.com/context/>

Solution:

Forest City is interested in long-term place making. There was a six year community engagement process with thousands of participants.

Cost:

Not applicable, for-profit development

Policies:

Rewrite zoning code to allow for small, 1,000 to 5,000 square foot small production manufacturing to be integrated into commercial areas.

Outcomes:

Creating a vibrant and diverse community of makers that reflects the character of the neighborhood.



Image source: <http://www.pier70sf.com/future/>



Affordable Housing Best Practices

Purpose Built Communities

Community Quarterback:

A community champion (usually a non-profit) engages residents, public and private stakeholders and investors. The quarterback connects philanthropic groups and elected officials, addressing specific community needs and concerns.

Mixed Income Housing:

Low income residents have affordable housing options with quality construction and safe public spaces. People with financial choice are drawn to the neighborhood because of the amenities; the diverse neighborhood encourages pride in the community.

Education Pipeline:

A cradle-to-college pipeline provides early childhood education through elementary, middle, and high school education with the goal of preparing all students for graduation and a path to college. Schools co-locate and collaborate with the community, measuring success based on the achievements of cooperating partners.

Community Wellness:

Wellness facilities are implemented based on the neighborhood's specific needs and priorities and can range from access to fresh produce and nearby healthcare to banking services and job training services. The mix of facilities, programs, and services is particular to the neighborhood's character and history.

A Defined Neighborhood:

The defined neighborhood is a small and defined area where mixed income housing, cradle-to-college pipeline, and community wellness come together.



Image source: Purpose Built Communities

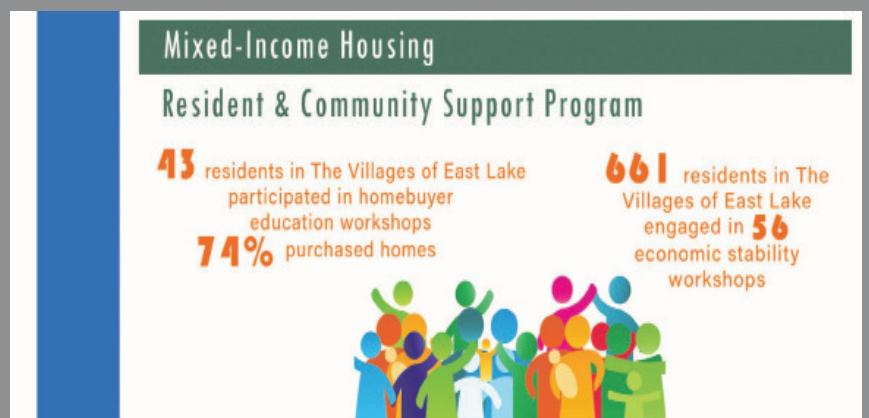


Image source: Purpose Built Communities Annual Report

Villages at East Lake

The Villages at East Lake are located in Atlanta, GA, and are comprised of 1300 residents in 542 apartments, townhomes and duplexes. \$172 million in funding financed housing, early learning center, charter school, YMCA, and public golf course.

1995, East Lake Meadows, Funding through HUD grant to Atlanta Housing Authority	2018, Villages at East Lake, Funding through the East Lake Foundation
3.5% employment	100% employment among adults receiving housing assistance
5 % fifth graders at or above state math standards	100% high school graduation rate
30% high school graduation rate	Drew Charter School: top three of APS

Program Partners:

- Charles R. Drew Charter School
 - East Lake Family YMCA
- East Lake Early Learning Academy
 - Cox Pre-K
- First Tee golf scholarships
- Sheltering Arms Center



Image source: Apartmentfinder.com

Policy Best Practices

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ)

Madison, Wisconsin adopted IZ in January 2004. The ordinance requires 15% of the dwelling units to be affordable to households at certain income levels. The program was expected to create approximately 200-300 affordable units per year, and during the first year 311 units or 15.7% of all developed units were affordable.

Preserving Affordability

Nonprofits and foundations set aside funds that are used specifically to purchase LIHTC projects that expire: The

MacArthur Foundation has set aside \$40 million to assist nonprofits in preservation and to fund at-risk properties by "qualified preservation purchasers"

State programs include:

- Task forces, such as the one created in Wisconsin, to determine how to best preserve expiring LIHTC projects.
- Lengthening the amount of time that LIHTC projects must remain affordable.
- Setting aside LIHTC to fund the preservation of expiring LIHTC projects.



Development Incentives: Let's Move Dirt

Incentivizing Smart, Affordable Development & Growth

City Approach

Unloading Underutilized City-Owned Land
Phoenix, AZ

In 2017, the city of Phoenix began offloading city-owned parcels to private developers and other interests to minimize excess land holdings.

The Arizona Republic reported initially that Phoenix had 1,400 individual properties that covered 2.3 square miles possessing a combined assessed value of more than \$150 million.

Proposed Solutions For Mechanicsville:

Entice development with lowering the biggest hurdle to build build: making the land more affordable.

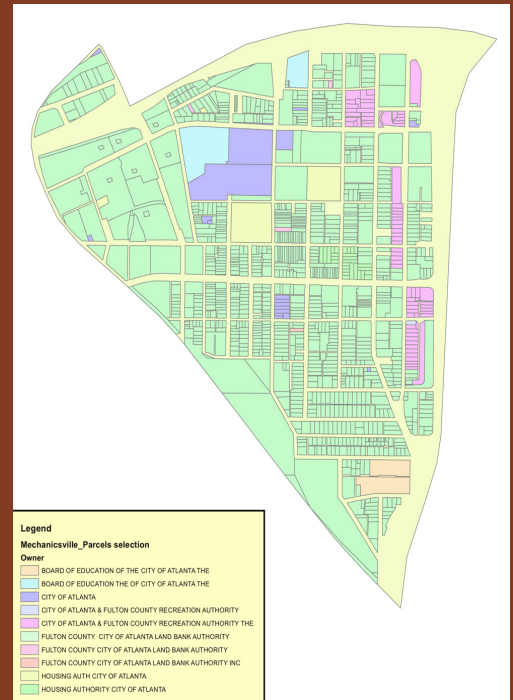
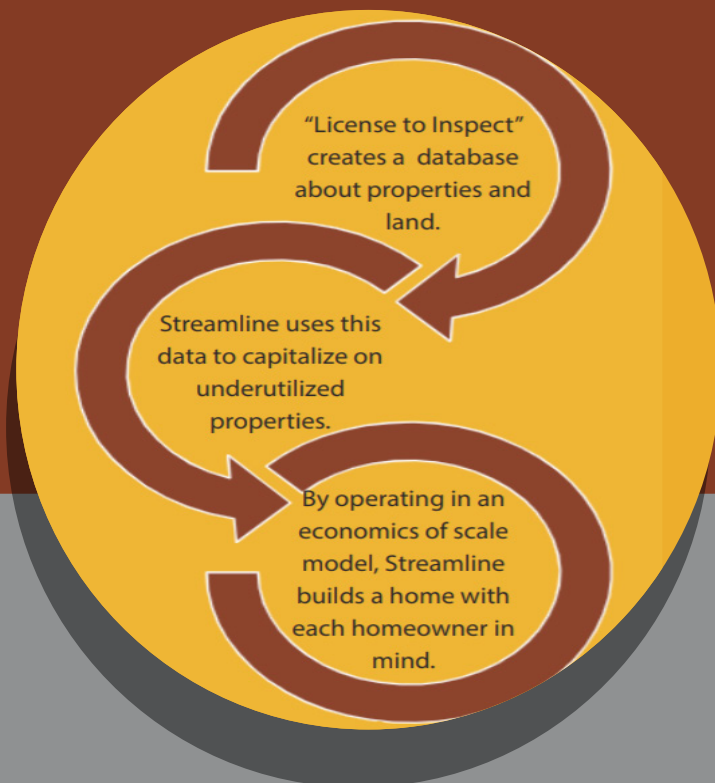


Image source: City of Atlanta, Michael Smith



Market Approach

Streamline and Prioritized Properties
Philadelphia and Pennsylvania

Streamline is a one-stop home renovating, purchasing and developing company that maximizes efficiency for homebuyers.

Operating in neighborhoods that are underutilized, Streamline applies open record data from the city of Philadelphia to find homes that are affordable, renovates them, and works with homebuyers on finishes and styles.

Proposed Solutions For Mechanicsville:

Invest in open data infrastructure that allows a developer to operate at an economies of scale capacity with an intown, high potential focus.

Policy Approach: Point-Based Bonus System, Emeryville, California

In 2015, the city of Emeryville proposed and passed a "Community Benefits and Bonus Points" agreement to challenge and award developers in submitting projects that would help the city as a whole.

Other cities that have utilized voluntary density bonus programs include San Diego, Seattle, Portland (Oregon), and Oakland.



Image source: Streamline

Community Benefits and Bonus Points Example: Emeryville, CA			
Community Benefit	Maximum Points	Point Calculation	Requirements
Additional Family Friendly Units	50	5 points for each additional 5 % of total units that have 2+ bedrooms, of which at least 1% of total units must have 3+ bedrooms.	2- and 3-bedroom units are in addition to those required by [City of Emeryville Code] Section 9-5.2003, and must comply the Emeryville Design Guidelines.

Project Profile: Emeryville Marketplace

Emeryville Marketplace
Emeryville, CA

17 Acres

Optional Pre-Review, Stage 1
Platinum, 87 points

Infill (Transit-Oriented)

LEED® for Neighborhood Development Pilot

Total Possible Points**	106*
Smart Location & Linkage	24
Neighborhood Pattern & Design	32
Green Construction & Technology	26
Innovation & Design Process	5

* Out of a possible 100 points + 6 bonus points
** Certified 40+ points, Silver 50+ points, Gold 60+ points, Platinum 80+ points

Image source: The Public Market at Emeryville

Proposed Solutions For Mechanicsville:

Reward developers for investing in Mechanicsville through a neighborhood specific points system that supports less parking, more civic spaces and more retail spaces.



Transportation and Public Safety

Reduced Transit Fare Initiatives for Low-Income Populations

ORCA LIFT Program – Seattle

Various transit agencies in the Puget Sound Region accept the One Region Card for All (ORCA) card as payment. Starting in 2015, low-income residents could apply for a reduced fare program provided their income is less than double federal poverty levels.

TriMet Honored Citizen Program – Portland

The Honored Citizen program operated by Portland's transit agency was launched in July 2018 and reduces monthly passes for low-income riders from \$100 to \$28. This program ties in fare evasion by giving offenders an option to enroll in this program, if eligible. This keeps first-time evaders out of the criminal justice system and helps them find jobs and housing in the future.



Image source: King County Metro

Transit Empowerment Fund - Austin

This is a partnership between Austin's transit agency, Capital Metro, and a nonprofit coalition called One Voice Central Texas with the intent of addressing rising fares and low-income riders. Capital Metro makes annual contributions as high as \$350,000 and the program is administered by a volunteer board that sells and distributes passes to nonprofits and administers grants.

Where and How?

MARTA has one of the highest fares for a major city transit system in the country at \$2.50 per ride, and MARTA currently only offers a reduced fare program to senior citizens, disabled veterans, and Medicare recipients. MARTA does not offer reduced fare programs based on income level in comparison to other U.S. cities such as the three above. Mechanicsville residents would benefit from this type of program due to high poverty levels in the neighborhood and its present bus routes to job and retail centers. Enacting this would likely require

Ride free after spending:	
\$1.25 Ride for 2½ hours	\$2.50 in a day ✓ Day Pass
	\$28 in a calendar month ✓ Month Pass

Your TriMet Honored Citizen fare also lets you ride C-TRAN Local/Regional and Portland Streetcar at no additional charge. If you transfer to C-TRAN Express/C-VAN or TriMet LIFT, you'll be charged the difference in price. See the full list of fares

Image source: Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (Portland, OR)

Public Safety and Aesthetics Under Freeways

Race Street Connector – Philadelphia

The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation (DRWC) sought a \$5 million grant to spruce up a series of Interstate 95 underpasses between Center City and the Delaware River. It includes multimodal improvements, public art, wayfinding and new lighting fixtures

Sabine Promenade – Houston

The Buffalo Bayou Partnership in Houston worked to revitalize land underneath a series of underpasses to improve access to Downtown, while addressing storm water issues.



Image source: Delaware River Waterfront Corp



Image source: Buffalo Bayou Partner-

Infra-Space Program, Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation funds underpass revitalizations statewide. Shown to the right is a project in Boston's South End that built an outdoor performance space, art space and a public park at a cost of \$6 million.



Image source: MassDOT

Where and How?

Mechanicsville is bounded by interstates on two sides and the railroad on a third. I-20 separates Mechanicsville from Downtown Atlanta and MARTA heavy rail at Garnett Station.

Partnering with Central Atlanta Progress (CAP)

CAP provides a forum to explore grant opportunities and organizational expertise to pursue such projects. The underpasses between Downtown and Mechanicsville fall under CAP's district.

Workforce Development Best Practices



Center for Economic Opportunities (CEO) - New York, NY

Background

The CEO began in the 1970s to address employment barriers facing the formerly incarcerated following release. The organization offers comprehensive employment services exclusively for people with criminal records and focuses on providing services for young adults (18-25 years old).



Image source: Urban Land Conservancy

Cost
\$4,263 cost per participant

Outcomes
17,000 have been employed since 1996

Issues	Proposed Solutions
Former inmates experienced significant barriers that prevent them from obtaining employment, leading to recidivism	Complete a staged process involving life skills training, short-term employment, full-time job placement, and other services

STRIVE Baltimore - Baltimore, MD: Center for Urban Families (CSUF)

Issues	Proposed Solutions
Unemployment and Underemployment major problems in low income neighborhoods and hinders stability for families	Provide pre-employment classes, job placement and retention assistance, career and family focused case management, transportation subsidies, clothing, and other services

Cost
\$,784 cost per participant

Outcomes

- Helped more than 28,000 men and women since 1999
- Total full-time job placements from 2010 through 2016
- Success in finding jobs for formerly incarcerated and less than GED participants, averaging \$10.61/hr
- Average wage for STRIVE graduates: \$12.12
- Average wage advanced skills trainees placed in construction jobs: \$15.06
- Average wage advanced skill trainee placed in healthcare jobs: \$15.13

Georgia Quick Start - Atlanta, GA, Atlanta Technical College

Background

- Partnership with the Technical System of Georgia
- Attracts new businesses to Georgia and creates job opportunities
- Area Development, a site selection named Georgia Quick Start the number one workforce development programs the country
- Industries: Food, Bioscience, Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing, Distribution, Aviation, and Automotive



Image source: Georgia Quick Start

Issues	Proposed Solutions
Companies need workers with specialized skills	Identifies needs, pairs companies with workers, trains the workers for positions, and increases likelihood of employment after training

Cost

For companies: Free; For job seekers: Free
Traditional Costs for Technical School
HOPE Career Grant: Free Tuition for 17 High Demand Careers

Outcomes

For 14 years, the program has ranked #1 by various site selector magazines
Delivered over 6,500 projects and trained over 600,000 workers
Recent clients: Starbucks, Carter's, NCR, King's Hawaiian, Caterpillar, and Mando Corporation



Zoning Best Practices

In 2016, the City of Atlanta released a zoning diagnostic, which assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the current zoning code and provides recommendations on how to improve it. Inspired by national trends and best practices, these recommendations are divided into so-called “Quick Fixes” and long-term future code changes. As of 2018, the city has begun the process of implementing these Quick Fixes. Some of these changes apply to the whole code while other only apply to certain types of zoning districts and would have to be applied separately to Mechanicsville’s Special Public Interest (SPI) Zoning Code. The Quick Fixes highlighted here could be applicable to the Mechanicsville neighborhood and therefore could be incorporated into the neighborhood’s SPI zoning. Unless otherwise noted, all practices mentioned are informed by the Atlanta Zoning Ordinance Assessment and related implementation guides found on www.zoningatl.com, and cross-referenced with the Atlanta Code of Ordinances for applicability to Mechanicsville.

Decrease Minimum Lot Size

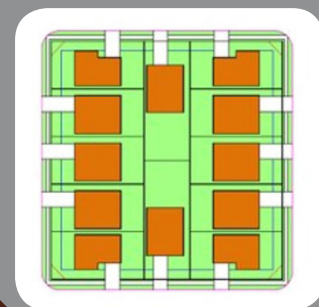
A minimum lot size is a zoning regulation that applies to lots zoned for single-family residential. It helps distinguish single-family from multifamily uses and discourages overcrowding in residential areas. However, a minimum lot size that is too large can conflict with the historical pattern of single-family development in the area and encourage suburban-style subdivision development. In urban areas with high land costs, it can discourage new single-family development altogether, or only encourage high price single-family residential development that can lead to displacement and gentrification.

In 1999, the City of Houston recognized that minimum lot sizes were having adverse effects on its housing stock, and the city reformed its minimum lot size laws. A before and after depiction of the change is depicted in the image to the left. The change led to an increase in the construction of townhouse-style developments.

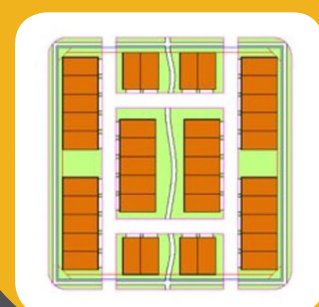
The 2016 Atlanta Zoning Code diagnostic recognized that the minimum lot size was too large in some zoning districts, particularly in districts zoned for mixed-residential uses. Constructing single-family and multi-family units in the same district requires denser development and thus smaller lot sizes, so a minimum lot size that is too high discourages the development of an adequate base of single-family housing.

Source: Barriers to Building Housing in Central City Austin

Before 1999



After 1999



Accessory Dwellings

An Accessory Dwelling Units is a second small dwelling that is either attached to or on the same lot as a single-family dwelling. In Atlanta zoning code, the distinction is made between a “guest house” and an ADU. The only physical difference between the two is that an ADU has a stove and a guest house does not. The lack of a stove is meant to prevent a person from living there full time. ADUs were once legal citywide in Atlanta but are now only allowed in certain zoning districts. While ADUs were once thought of as a net negative on the quality of life in single-family neighborhoods, that thinking has shifted as the urban housing supply has become scarcer. ADUs can be a source of more affordable and flexible housing options and can provide additional income for property owners, especially in lower-income neighborhoods.

Note: It is currently illegal to use either guest houses or ADUs for short-term rental arrangements like Airbnb, and a change to this law has not been recommended.

User-friendly Language and Graphics

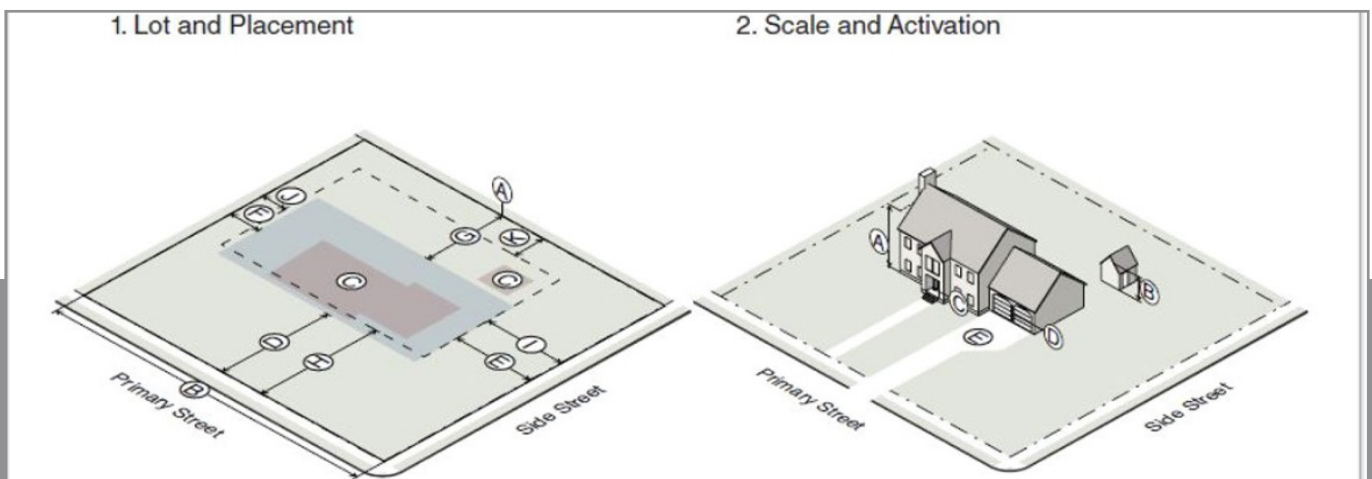


Image source: City of Roswell 2014 Unified Development Code

A zoning code should be written and presented in such a way that the general public can understand it. Past zoning codes frequently were written in “legalese”, which oftentimes meant only zoning attorney could correctly understand and interpret the code. There has been a movement to write new zoning codes in “plain language”, where it is written so that the general public can easily read and interpret the code while still being legally defensible.

Another way to make zoning codes more accessible is the use of graphics. These codes include a lot of detailed descriptions of a sites’ physical attributes, but they can be tough to picture in your head if you do not have long-term experience in building or construction. A clear graphic can help someone picture, for example, the functional difference between a 10-foot and 20-foot setback. The City of Roswell’s 2014 Unified Development Code is an example of a zoning code with both of these attributes (see image above).