

2.3 Development Opportunities

Northeastern Area

Over the past decade, the northeast has seen significant revitalization compared to the rest of the study area. However, based on the existing conditions analysis, it is evident that there are several more opportunities for investment. A large number of such opportunities are concentrated around the Ralph McGill/Glen Iris Drive area in Old Fourth Ward. Though the single-family sections of the neighborhood continue to improve, commercial areas adjacent to the BeltLine are struggling due to poor infrastructure and lack of connectivity. In particular, a highly underutilized 10 acre property owned by Georgia Power is currently occupied only by a single story office building. Adjacent to this property (around Dallas Street and Rankin Street) are two blocks with over 25 parcels which are either vacant or contain buildings in substandard condition. Additionally, properties north of these blocks, off North Avenue, are also underutilized or partially occupied, making this entire area a prime candidate for intensive investment. Though the City of Atlanta's sale of City Hall East will jumpstart growth, additional investment will be crucial for overall improvements in and around the Old Fourth Ward Neighborhood.

The Ponce de Leon corridor is currently in transition with some new residential developments closer to Freedom Parkway. However, a number of properties fronting the corridor are predominately low-density commercial, mostly restaurants and retail, supported by surface parking. While new higher-density development in this area is inevitable over time, it is important to recognize and maintain some of the corridor's "warehouse" character. In fact, buildings such as the Ford Factory Lofts, the historic apartments at 934 Ponce de Leon, and the commercial row at Ponce de Leon Place, add to the unique character of the corridor. Long-term transformation of the corridor, particularly through conversion of surface parking lots to structured parking, presents a good opportunity for mixed-use development at the recently constructed Midtown Place Shopping Plaza (occupied by Home Depot, Whole Foods etc.). The City of Atlanta's "Ponce de Leon Corridor Study," which is currently underway will also provide a vision for development in this area.

North of the proposed Beltline, the area around Lindbergh MARTA Station offers many redevelopment opportunities, mostly at older retail "strip" centers along Piedmont Avenue. Two projects currently under development will be vital in initiating this redevelopment – the "Lindbergh Center" at the MARTA Station (described in the Existing Land-use Section) and the "Lindbergh Plaza," a redevelopment project planned by the Sembler Company. The Lindbergh Plaza redevelopment will replace the shopping mall recently vacated by Kmart with a new mixed-use (residential and retail) development. While these new projects enhance the overall physical character in this area, they displace the few remaining shopping destinations for transit-dependent, low-income shoppers. In

fact, a large number of residents living in older apartment complexes in Lindbergh are dependent on these amenities. As the Lindbergh market matures and these older apartments are redeveloped, affordability will be an important issue for consideration.

The existing land use survey also shows substantial vacant land adjacent to Armour Yard. Though located adjacent to I-85, it suffers from inadequate accessibility and will need some infrastructure investments for its redevelopment. While this land provides prime development opportunity, any new development should buffer the Brookwood Hills neighborhood that forms the western edge of this property.

Southeastern Area

The southeast has several major development opportunities close to the BeltLine, primarily on under-utilized industrial parcels. The majority of the BeltLine study area in the southeast is in single-family neighborhoods, and these areas are some of the most desirable and fastest growing intown neighborhoods in Atlanta, making the industrial uses less viable as the areas around them are redeveloping.

The area around the Carver Homes HOPE VI site offers many unique development opportunities, and there are several projects already in the works. In particular, the intersection of University Avenue and Pryor Road becomes increasingly important as the area around it redevelops. This intersection currently has several service and convenience-type commercial buildings, such as gas stations and an old car lot, which become less desirable uses as the Carver site is built out. Due to the dramatic increase in housing in the area over the next few years, this is a prime location for a mixed-use development with ground floor retail that can serve the surrounding community. In addition, to the southwest of the Carver site (e.g., the west frontage of Pryor road, south of Joyland Center) there are several vacant and under-utilized parcels that also offer excellent opportunities for mixed-use development.

At the southern end of Chosewood Park there are several large industrial parcels along the Norfolk Southern line, including the previously mentioned GM site. Because these parcels are bounded on the south by the railroad and on the north by McDonough Blvd. (a fairly large, busy road), these underutilized sites would lend themselves to new light industrial and/or heavy commercial uses, as well as, perhaps, medium to high-density residential development.

The northern end of the Chosewood Park neighborhood is a prime location for redevelopment. The industrial parcels that run along each side of the BeltLine in this area are, for the most part, under-utilized and the buildings themselves are not in good condition. In addition, the parcels are very deep, and presently, are not being fully exploited. Furthermore, these parcels lie in the middle of a

revitalizing single-family neighborhood, and therefore, industrial uses in this location are less desirable. There are already several new housing developments under construction in this area, including the Hill Street lofts and new townhomes on Boulevard. It appears there is a burgeoning market for new housing, particularly along Englewood where the views of the downtown skyline are excellent. In addition to these industrial sites, there is a large utility easement running through several of parcels in this area that provides excellent opportunities for greenway trails and open space. These would serve to connect the Chosewood Park neighborhood to both Grant Park and the Benteen neighborhood.

At the northern end of the Ormewood Park neighborhood, there are several large industrial parcels that are good candidates for redevelopment. Located next to the new Glenwood Park development, across from Southside High School, and surrounded by a stable single-family neighborhood, the current industrial use is not ideal. In addition, the convenient access to I-20 heightens the area's potential for new mixed-use development. Because this site is bordered by the interstate on one side, a higher density of housing could be considered.

Across the interstate along Memorial Drive, there are significant quantities of industrial and commercial parcels along the BeltLine that offer excellent development opportunities. Many of the parcels are vacant and contain the shells of old warehouses. This section of the study area has a unique character that lends itself to loft conversions (both for residential and office/retail use), as well as, new construction of industrial-type mixed-use buildings. As a major commuter corridor into downtown, Memorial Drive could sustain a wide variety of commercial development, and the demand for housing in this area is rising rapidly.

Immediately north of Memorial Drive and adjacent to the CSX line is Hulsey Yard. This 60 acre site is historically important as the western-most terminus point of the first railroad in Georgia for many years. Today it is CSX's only inter-modal station in the region and for that reason is very active. Although the location and size of this site make it ideal for redevelopment, there are significant challenges relative to the relocation of the existing CSX facilities.

The final major development opportunity in the southeast is along Moreland Avenue. This major road is currently lined with out-dated strip retail such as gas stations, car lots, and fast-food restaurants. Because this is the main north-south connector between Little Five Points and the East Atlanta Village, (and ultimately to Interstate 285 to the south), this corridor is a prime redevelopment opportunity, as enunciated in the City of Atlanta's Ponce de Leon/ Moreland Avenue Corridors Study – Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and could lend itself to new commercial development as well as multi-family housing. However, the shallow lot depths and proximity to historic single-family communities on either side will present physical design challenges for anything other than very-low density development.

Southwestern Area

Compared to other parts of the BeltLine study area, the southwest has not experienced significant and sustained revitalization efforts in the past decade. Furthermore, the southwest exhibits some of the lowest incomes and housing values within the City of Atlanta. However, as the desire for intown living has continued to increase, the historic African-American neighborhoods - including West End, Oakland City, Adair Park, Capital View, Sylvan Hills and Mechanicsville - are beginning to show signs of reinvestment. Recent redevelopment plans and LCI Plans have also outlined revitalization strategies for increased density through proposed mixed-use development, new retail services, office development and a vast array of new housing products. With 35% of the southwestern land consisting of typically outdated industrial uses and another 11% in aging commercial convenience services (all in proximity to the BeltLine), numerous development opportunities are presented.

The West End LCI Plan outlined a series of recommendations to enhance the area's quality of life by creating a true mixed-use urban village. Taking advantage of underutilized parking lots and vacant land around the West End MARTA Station, this village would have immediate access to I-20. Given that it is surrounded by historic structures, cultural resources, and major colleges and universities, the LCI plan recommended that the area retains its historic character while creating opportunities for living, working, shopping, and recreating. The plan suggests densifying the MARTA station with new office development that would increase MARTA utilization as well as serve new retail services offered along Ralph David Abernathy and the Mall at West End. The Mall at West End super block/Sears site also presents a significant opportunity to build new retail with housing above within a walkable, mixed-income setting.

The industrial properties north and south of Ralph David Abernathy along Murphy Avenue are mostly underutilized or in the process of transforming into telecom centers, lofts apartments and studios. Due to their proximity to downtown, MARTA and I-20, these underutilized properties (in addition to the Candler Warehouse) are ideal for office conversions, mixed-use development, residential lofts or studios similar in character to the successful Castleberry Hill community to the north.

In addition, the industrial uses along White Street consist predominately of functioning distribution services that are immediately adjacent to the BeltLine but also adjacent to a strong residential community to the south. This heavy industrial use is no longer desired by the surrounding communities and both the Oakland City Lakewood LCI and the West End Historic LCI recommend mixed-use development in this area.

Building off of the momentum in other parts of the city (such as nearby Castleberry Hill), the Murphy Triangle area is ideally suited for adaptive reuse of many existing warehouse structures (several have an irreplaceable historic character). The underutilized and vacant lots (potentially environmentally contaminated) south of the L and N rail line (east of Lee Street, north of Dill Avenue and west of Sylvan Road) present a tremendous opportunity to create a new mixed-use neighborhood, containing light industrial operations, small-scale office space, retail services, restaurants, stores and new loft housing.

Along University Avenue to the south of the Pittsburgh community is a significant underutilized area that was once considered for the future home of a major UPS distribution operation. Unlike other industrial stretches of the BeltLine which pose unwanted conflicts with immediately adjacent neighborhoods, this location is actually somewhat buffered between University Avenue, Interstate-75/85 and the BeltLine. While the UPS distribution project has yet to materialize, a major employment generator would be a great asset to the area and has been strongly encouraged by the Pittsburgh community.

In addition, there are numerous small-scale convenience-oriented services including fast-food establishments and taverns along the north side of University Avenue that are underutilized and are in an excellent geographic location for reinvestment. However, these sites are very shallow and many present difficult grade conditions which may hamper future development.

This same underutilized commercial character extends along Metropolitan Parkway to the south and includes the Achore Center and Church – both of which present excellent residential conversion opportunities.

The retail corridor along Lee Street (just north of the Oakland City MARTA Station) contains a few vacant lots and several less than desirable salvage shops, flea markets and auto repair stores. Façade improvements on structures with historic character in tandem with redevelopment of underutilized and vacant land will drastically improve the Lee Street corridor while promoting a more pedestrian atmosphere (although once again, the shallow lots will present layout and parking issues). The single-family block bounded by Donnalley Avenue, Peeples Street, Dimmock Street and Lee Street is largely vacant and ideal for single-family infill or townhome/brownstone development.

Finally, the Oakland City MARTA Station, its underused parking lot and the immediate surrounding area present a unique opportunity for larger-scale revitalization efforts. This type of transit-oriented-development (TOD) will increase MARTA utilization through new, denser housing and storefront retail services. As outlined in the Oakland City Lakewood LCI plan, this development concept capitalizes on the economic base provided by surrounding neighborhoods and nearby Fort McPherson. The intersection of Lee Street and Campbellton Road becomes extremely important as it serves as the gateway to

the MARTA station and the TOD. The 14 acres of MARTA surface parking south of Campbellton Road coupled with the reorientation of the MARTA bus drop-off creates an opportunity for a new “transit plaza” ringed by housing above active retail and local serving office uses on the ground floor. North of Campbellton Road lies a large, mostly vacant and less than standard apartment complex. This over concentration of low-income housing in substandard conditions is currently a major drain on the area’s development potential. Its proximity to MARTA, the potential BeltLine and Oakland City Park, make these blocks ideal for new, denser mixed-income housing.

Northwestern Area

The northwest is the largest subarea of the four BeltLine study areas, and because of the diversity of land uses and the presence of active industrial areas the redevelopment scenario is unusually complex. Unlike most of the other BeltLine territory, well over three-quarters of the proposed right-of-way is still functioning as heavy freight rail operations; some of these segments are proposed for diversification into commuter and intercity passenger rail. Where changing land uses in other parts of the Beltline study area have rendered industrial and warehousing almost obsolete, in the northwest the rail-to-road site selection logic is still valid.

Understanding this concept helps shape the picture of future development opportunities. The district is thriving and is one of the few places where light industrial and warehousing uses are in the majority. There is also the idea (advanced in the 2000 Northwest Atlanta Framework Plan) of protecting and expanding the industrial base. For this reason, even though three-quarters of the Chattahoochee area could qualify for redevelopment (and thus potentially mixed-use or housing), the development opportunities map excludes properties with structures that are unoccupied or in less-than-standard condition. It is worth noting that there is a major new mixed-use residential development underway in the district – ‘M West’ by Winter Properties on Marietta Boulevard and Elaine Avenue. While this may not eventually tip the scales of land use change, it must be factored in to any open space and connectivity strategy.

Elsewhere in the northwest, development opportunities exist mainly in vacant land along Interstate 75; in underdeveloped strip commercial uses near Northside Drive and Bishop Street; in unoccupied buildings further east on Bishop in the Loring Heights neighborhood; and in infill opportunities in Blandtown. Current planning efforts including the Northside Drive Corridor Study, and the Upper Westside LCI are exploring this area for future growth and transportation improvements with the intent to reinvigorate this area into a thriving corridor. The stretch of Northside Drive intersecting the BeltLine is bracketed by new development – Atlantic Station on the south, and the Berkeley Park mixed-use project on the north. With its key position between the Berkeley Park and Loring Heights neighborhoods, this piece of Northside could hold a

mixed-use node along the BeltLine route – and so the redevelopment strategy here might be more aggressive.

Midtown West – the district centered on Howell Mill Road and 10th Street – has a different redevelopment profile than other BeltLine industrial-commercial areas even though existing uses are similar in nature, for example, to businesses along Ottley Drive in the northeast. Two factors work to bolster redevelopment pressure – the popular and expanding historic loft of Howell Yards, and the proximity to Georgia Tech and the Home Park neighborhood. In Midtown West, strip commercial uses along Northside Drive are potential redevelopment opportunities, as are some of the internal small commercial uses, the metal salvage businesses, and the vacant lots. Market pressure for higher-density mixed-use development is evidenced in Alta West. Although containing the historic Murphy Dairy (an Atlanta Preservation Center 1997 ‘Building Worth Saving’), the site was cleared for 265 units on six floors. To its credit, the Alta West project is architecturally appealing but the density and heightened expectations for economic return on surrounding properties is to be determined. In this light, the Brady Avenue MARTA bus storage yard is becoming a redevelopment opportunity in the district. Closer to Blandtown, the vacant parcels adjacent to the Van Winkle Gin also represent a good opportunity for redevelopment, although in this case the mature trees may suggest a future open space use.

South of the combined Norfolk Southern/CSX right-of-way, development opportunities increase dramatically. The Upper Marietta Artery district bleeds over to the Lowery (Ashby Street) corridor, where King Plow, Puritan Mill and the Trolley Car Barn continue the historic industrial fabric. There are additional development sites and renovation targets like the Guardian Chemical Company on Jefferson Street, possibly continuing this district to Hollowell Parkway. Residential infill sites in Howell Station also contribute to the ongoing development of this engaging intown neighborhood. Redevelopment opportunities build moving south; both sides of Hollowell Parkway are blighted, and need economic stimulus to benefit English Avenue and support the Bankhead MARTA Station.

Simpson Road is much like Hollowell Parkway; a distressed urban corridor that needs investment. Here, however, the BeltLine and the Proctor Creek MARTA line lay tangent or overlap – and thus the fundamental basis of a transit-oriented development (TOD) node is created. Redevelopment opportunities abound in this area. North of Simpson, outdated apartment complexes present potential targets – one of which (64 units, recently renovated) is currently on the market. North of the CSX line, vacant, unoccupied and outdated properties line Mayson Turner Road. These parcels are adjacent to property occupied by Bankhead Paving – a potential brownfield site that straddles Proctor Creek. East over the BeltLine, significant holdings used by the City of Atlanta for vehicle maintenance also contribute to the reserve of developable land. The City property, combined

with the Bankhead Paving parcels, surrounds Maddox Park on two sides; with this open space on the north and the BeltLine/MARTA junction to the south, these sites are strong possibilities for new medium- to high-density residential development. South of Simpson Road, vacant land could be converted to new uses including a BeltLine/MARTA transfer station and an open space link to Washington Park. Additional redevelopment opportunities lie to the west on Simpson, continuing out of the study area.

Finally, the biggest development opportunity in the northwest may be west of Marietta Boulevard to the Chattahoochee River. Most of this land is owned by Fulton County but leased to Vulcan Materials for a limestone quarry and concrete batching operation. Other parcels are Georgia Power utility easements; some are vacant warehouse facilities. One parcel is a construction materials recycling plant. This area is being redefined by the construction of West Highlands, setting the precedent for expanding residential uses in the future. The presence of the existing lush forest and the quarry call to mind adaptive reuse as urban open space, much like the pioneering example of Parc Buttes-Chaumont in Paris where a quarry was transformed into a lake; the resulting park in turn transformed the surrounding area of the 19th arrondissement into a fashionable neighborhood. Reclaiming an operating quarry is quite a long-term proposition; nevertheless this area should be opened to broad redevelopment concepts that include new neighborhoods, MARTA transit extensions and major urban parkland.