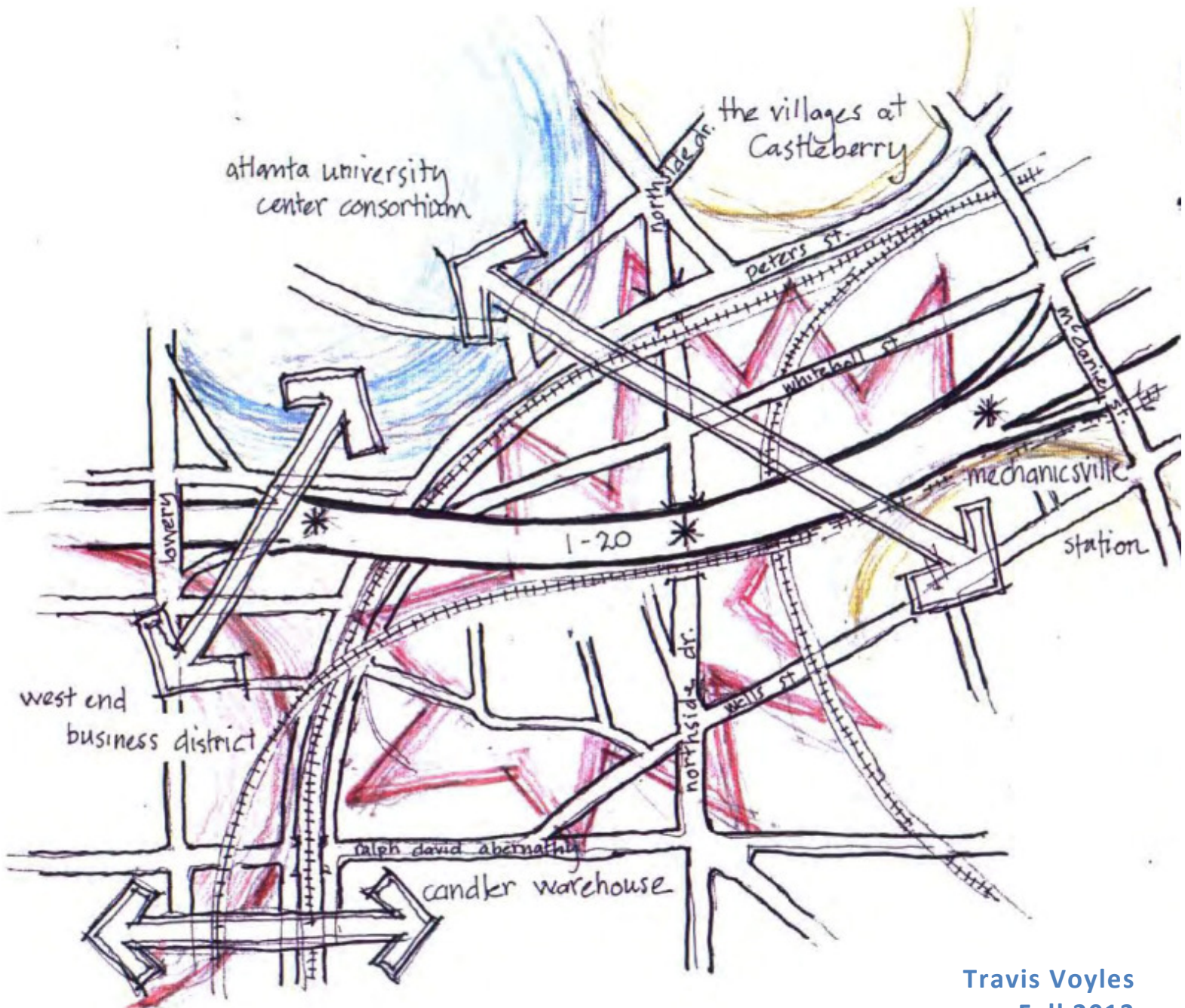


AREA ANALYSIS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

SOUTHWEST ATLANTA

Northside Drive
Metropolitan Parkway
Peters Street
Ralph David Abernathy Parkway



Northside Drive Complexity
Source: Dobbins, et. al (2012)

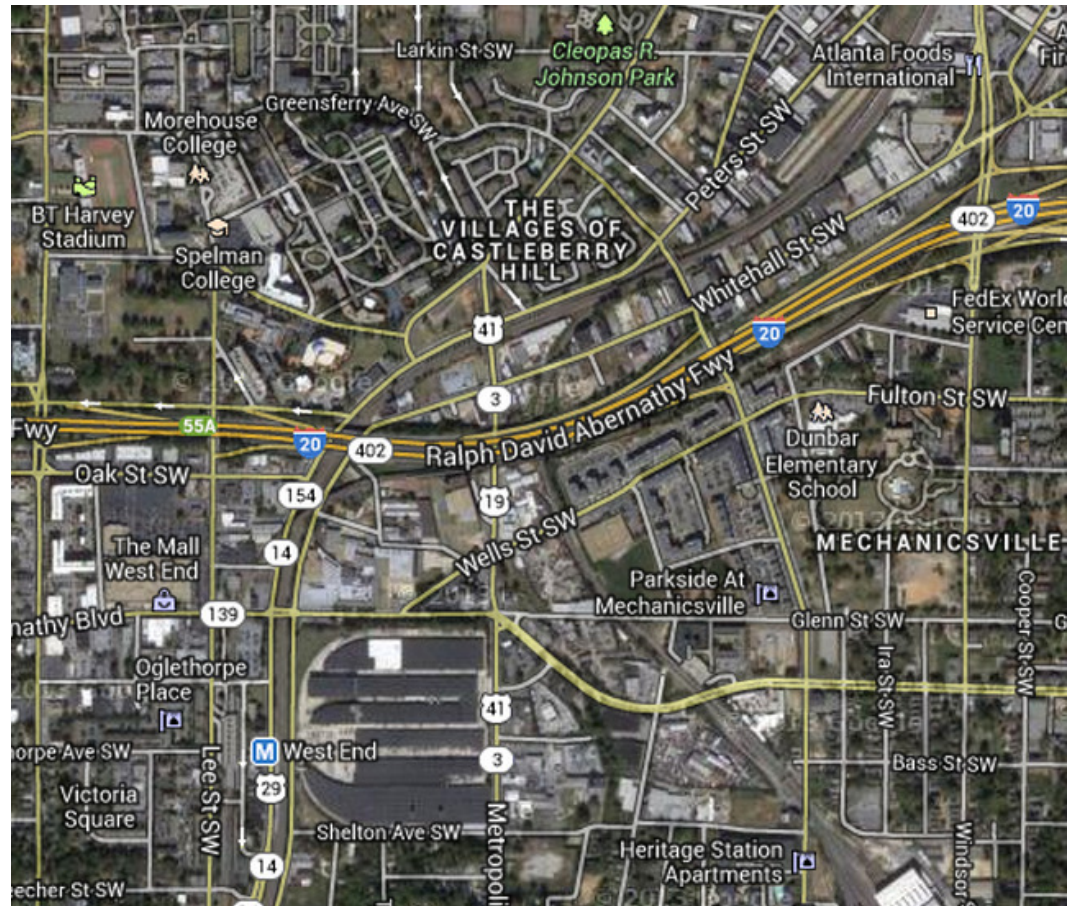
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Fall 2013
Georgia Institute of Technology
School of City and Regional Planning

AREA OF ANALYSIS

North/South Corridors: Lee Street, Peters Street, Murphy Avenue, Northside Drive, Metropolitan Parkway, and McDaniel Street, MARTA Rail (West End Station-North/South Rail Line)

West/East Corridors: Peters Street, Whitehall Street, Ralph David Abernathy Freeway/Interstate-20, Oak Street, Wells Street, Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard, Glenn Street, Shelton Avenue

Neighborhoods: Castleberry Hill (southern portion), West End (eastern portion), Mechanicsville (western portion), Adair Park (northern portion), Pittsburgh (northern portion)

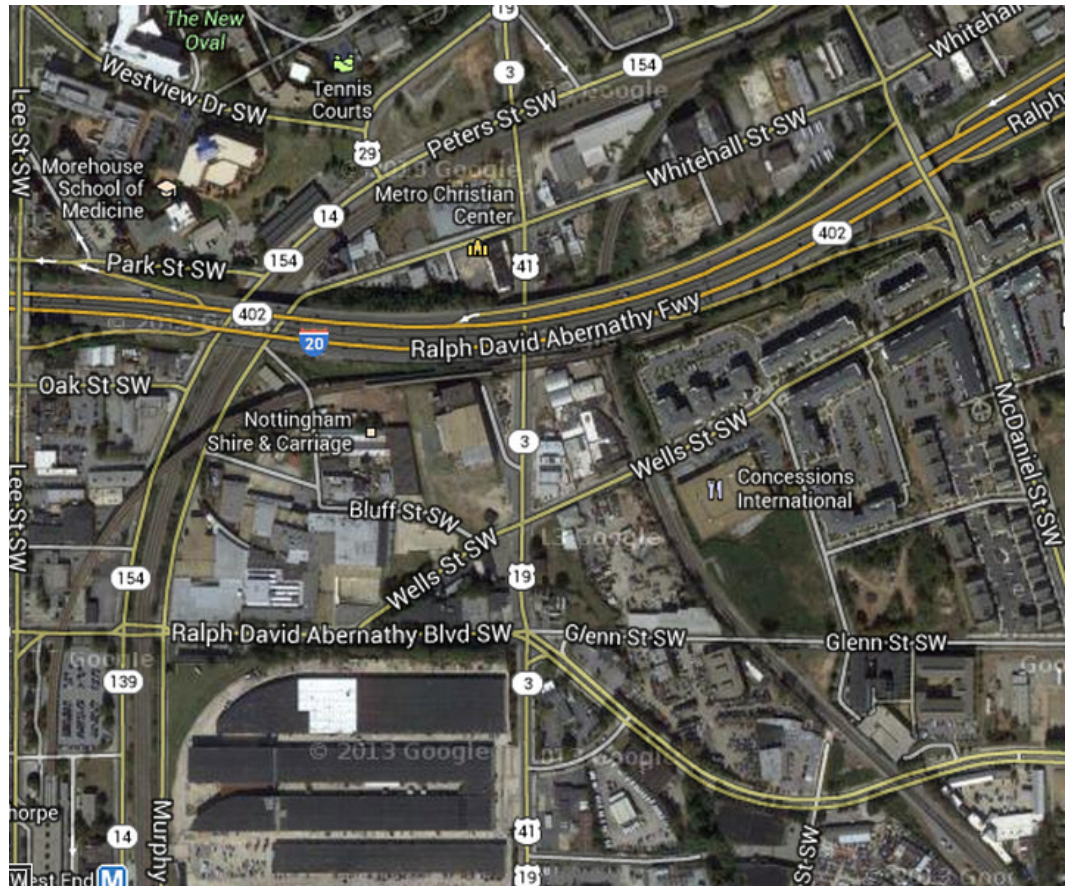


BACKGROUND

The neighborhoods of this area have a long history as Atlanta's early suburbs that back to the late 1800s. Throughout this area of southwest Atlanta railroad lines have formed much of the land use patterns that persist today. With industrial warehouses, textile mills, factories, and assembly plants lining the rail corridors in the late 19th century, residential areas soon followed.

Located to the east of the study area, West End, is the most historic neighborhood in the area. The area near the site of the present-day West End MARTA station was a bustling center of commercial activity. The northern portion of the Pittsburgh community, located towards the southeast, along with portions of Adair Park, Mechanicsville, and Castleberry Hill are all a part of this area of analysis.

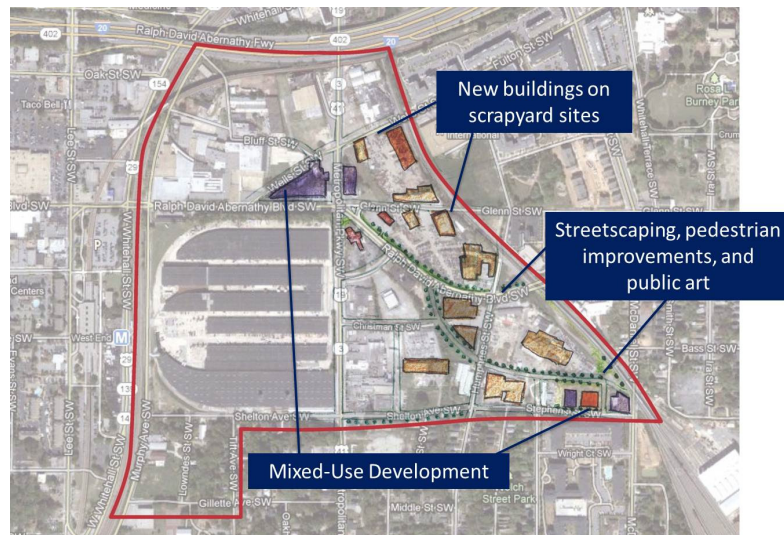
With the shift from rail to automobile and truck transportation, many of these southwest Atlanta neighborhoods suffered economic decline. The Southeast's diminished role in textile production caused many of the manufacturing businesses in the area to close and residents to move away, leaving behind the numerous vacant industrial buildings. (National Park Service, City of Atlanta).



PLANNING EFFORTS

The area of analysis consists of southwest Atlanta neighborhoods that were once booming industrial centers. The disinvestment that has occurred in these neighborhoods in recent decades has been exacerbated by the recent economic recession. Distressed conditions in employment, housing, crime, and education threaten the current and future prospects of the project area.

There have been numerous planning efforts that have focused on areas that include our current area of analysis. One recent and major planning effort was the 2013 Atlanta Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program that focused primarily on the portion of Atlanta south of our area of analysis but includes the majority of our area south of i-20. As a part of the Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program the City of Atlanta commissioned a number of other studies that provided needed support and information such as the 2012 Baseline Market



Area-Wide Brownfield Planning Program Northern Node of Analysis
Source: Leigh, et. al (2012)

and socioeconomic conditions.

One of the largest recent planning efforts to take plan in the Atlanta area, the Atlanta BeltLine, also will have a influential impact of this area with the construction of the BeltLine Trail just south of our area of analysis. The BeltLine Subarea 1 Master Plan (2010) covers much of the area around our area of analysis and calls for improved street connectivity through the Metropolitan and the nearby salvage yards, as well as a BeltLine spur to the West End MARTA Station which is located just to the west of our area of analysis.

Another recent planning effort was completed this past fall by the Georgia Tech School of City and Regional Planning studio focusing on Northside Drive as a Multimodal Developmental Corridor. This plan has specific connectivity

Condition and Site Analysis Report by the Bleakly Advisory Group and the Georgia Health Policy Center Analysis of the Area. The results of these studies assisted in the planning efforts of the Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program but will also be able to provide a general image of the conditions in our area of analysis as well. The final report consisted of area-wide and site-specific recommendations organized by three redevelopment themes: economic development, the built environment,



recommendations that have a direct impact on the area of analysis.

Many recommendations from previous plans revolve around connectivity within the area and the connections with the dissecting Interstate-20. Using these concepts, along with building upon existing infrastructure to enhance access to the BeltLine spur, are the main recommendations that can be taken from the previous plans when dealing with the infrastructure and connectivity problems that are common to this area.

More specific to actual properties in this area is the concept of better transitioning the land uses between the numerous salvage yards, abandoned building and other surrounding uses. One example of this is the plan for adapting the area containing the Atlanta Housing Authority site to become a gateway to the Pittsburgh neighborhood. The AHA site is located just to the south of our area of analysis and the Pittsburgh neighborhood is the primary neighborhood to the east of our area of analysis. This is one of many ideas that were addressed in the 2012 Plan for the Preservation of Pittsburgh and the 2009 Georgia Tech Plan for Industrial Land.

With the numerous planning efforts that have taken place over this area of Atlanta there are some discrepancies and updates that occur and call for different approaches to tackle the numerous problems. While the BeltLine Master Plan calls for several changes to the street network, the Pittsburgh Community Plan only calls for one major street addition, an addition that conflicts with a proposed street in the BeltLine Plan.

A more detailed analysis of the main planning efforts follows:

Atlanta BeltLine

The Atlanta BeltLine is a comprehensive urban redevelopment project that utilizes over 22 miles of historic rail tracks that circle the City of Atlanta, with the area of analysis located near the Southwest portion of the corridor. The BeltLine Master Plan estimated that over 1,100 acres of brownfields are located within the entire Tax Allocation District (TAD); however that number appears to be conservative. The organization conducted outreach efforts by engaging owners and leaseholders in the BeltLine redevelopment areas to discuss assessment, clean-up, and re-use strategies. They also created a brownfield component to their website in order to provide easily accessible tools for brownfield revitalization, including research and financing tools for assessment and remediation (BeltLine, 2010).

The area of analysis is located partially within Subarea 2, which is on the southwestern portion of the BeltLine. Guiding principles for the subarea include: encouraging economic development, preserving historic resources, producing a balanced transportation system, providing a balanced mix of land uses, increasing housing options, and creating public spaces. The Subarea 2 Master Plan has a greater focus on improving transportation infrastructure, development of open space, and incremental development through interim reuse of vacant and underutilized properties.

Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program

Since the area of analysis is part of a larger portion of Atlanta that includes one of the most concentrated areas of brownfields, the City of Atlanta has invested numerous planning efforts for the area. This includes the recent Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program that was financed through an U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pilot grant. For the area-wide planning efforts the City of Atlanta utilized the Georgia Institute of

Technology School of City and Regional Planning, who assembled a graduate level city and regional planning studio consisting of nine graduate students. Georgia Tech conducted background research, analyzed relevant case studies, and created a comprehensive implementation strategy for the project area. The City of Atlanta contracted Bleakly Advisory Group, the Georgia Health Policy Center, and AMEC as consultants. The information gathered by these different parties gives an accurate picture to the current conditions in not only the greater area of southwest Atlanta but also describes the conditions that are present in the area of analysis for this report (Leigh et, al 2012).

The Baseline Market Conditions and Site Analysis report prepared by the Bleakly Advisory Group is a market analysis report that analyzes several aspects of the Primary Market Area and the impact they have on the Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Program. The aspects analyzed include demographic characteristics, real estate market conditions, major developer initiatives, and future real estate demand. The report found that the area has a declining population with modest educational attainment, high housing vacancy rates with a strong proportion of renters, a small number of jobs per resident, and a supply of older industrial and retail space (Bleakly Advisory Group, 2012). However, the report found that the primary market area could see “significant growth” over the next ten years, with potential demand for new residential, commercial, office and industrial space. Finally, a comprehensive site analysis of 31 possible brownfield sites was conducted, providing detailed information for properties that have redevelopment potential. Of these 31 sites 5 were located in the area of analysis that is covered in this report.

The Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) conducted a health assessment for the City of Atlanta in order to understand the “status of human health and health determinants for communities in the (brownfield) project area” (Georgia Health Policy Center, 2012). Through collecting/analyzing data and identifying key health issues currently affecting the population, the assessment helps identify possible health links to brownfield sites. The City of Atlanta authorized 14 sites for a preliminary environmental assessment and the GHPC report limited its scope to those locations and their surrounding neighborhoods. The GHPC project team analyzed community priorities, health risk factors, health assessment data indicators, neighborhood audits, market analysis data, and data comparison/synthesis in order to provide a foundation for their results. The assessment’s results focus on all of the health priorities acknowledged during the community outreach process, with graduation rates, violence, and obesity as the three primary health concerns cited. Each brownfield site was then scored on each health determinant, social determinant of health, or health outcome.

The AMEC preliminary environmental assessment provides an environmental assessment of 14 brownfield sites (located in the area-wide planning program boundary) that were chosen by residents in a 2011 public outreach workshop (AMEC, 2012). Each property was evaluated for on-site and adjacent off-site Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs). Such RECs may include: 1) past or current suspect activities on site or 2) hydrologic proximity to sites of environmental concern. Subsequently, five tasks were completed for the area-wide planning program: research data acquisition, site and area reconnaissance, data evaluation, documentation, and qualifications. The assessment then analyzed site setting and use, surrounding land use, and conclusions for each of the 14 sites. These reports serve as environmental resources for the individual sites and the entire area-wide planning boundaries.

The implementation strategies provided in the area-wide planning program report consist of area-wide and site-specific recommendations organized by three redevelopment themes: economic development, the built

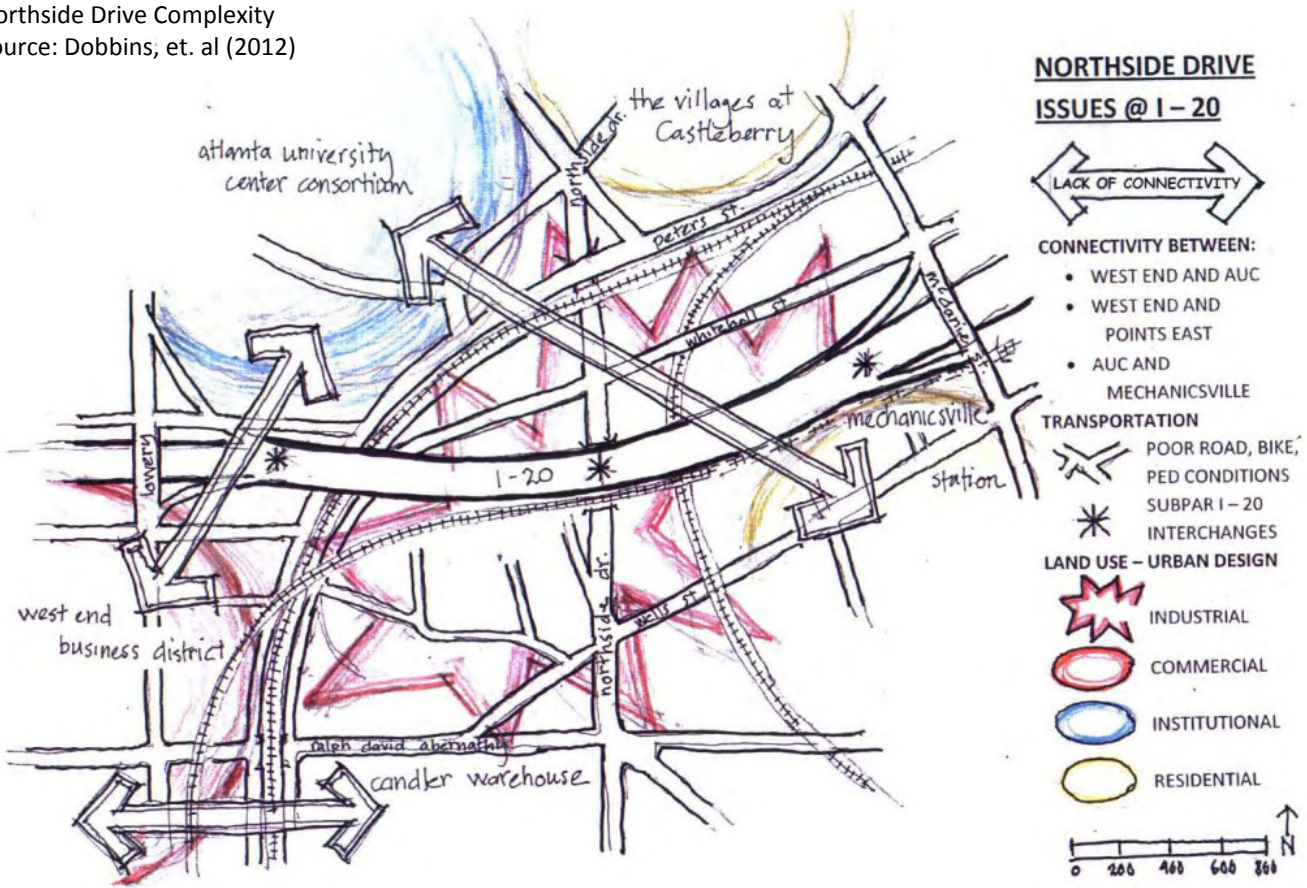
environment, and socioeconomic conditions. Brownfield reuse recommendations identify and prioritize five geographic redevelopment nodes: Murphy Triangle, the Green Enterprise District, Metropolitan Yards, Crossroads Center, and the Fort McPherson Gateway. Each node has a distinct implementation strategy that leverages the cleanup and redevelopment of priority brownfield sites to overcome site-specific and area-wide barriers to redevelopment. The area of analysis of this report falls directly in the Metropolitan Yards redevelopment node. There will also be additional recommendations from the area-wide planning program report that will address barriers that extend beyond individual sites and nodes. Some of these area-wide strategies will be concentrated in the following areas: land use and urban design; greenspace; affordable housing, vacancy, and blight; Environmental Health; and Workforce Development.

Lastly, the report recommends several benchmarks to track the success of the implementation strategy and to guide ongoing improvements to the plan. The recommendations in this report contribute to a new, area-wide approach to brownfield redevelopment. This new approach is significant because it highlights barriers and opportunities that extend beyond individual sites, promoting area-wide revitalization through the cleanup and redevelopment of targeted brownfield sites. The implementation strategy integrates reviews of local planning efforts, best practices, and goals identified by the community into a coordinated action plan, bringing together partners and resources to leverage the City's existing brownfield assessment and cleanup tools.

Northside Drive

The planning effort titled *Northside Drive as a Multimodal Developmental Corridor: Transformation from a Utilitarian Auto Route to Grand Transit Boulevard* was a studio conducted by the Georgia Tech School of City and Regional Planning in the fall of 2012. It focused on the five mile stretch of Northside Drive that stretched

Northside Drive Complexity
 Source: Dobbins, et. al (2012)



from Interstate-75 south to the West End community, located just to the west of our area of analysis. The objective of the studio was to examine the Northside Drive corridor in regards to transportation, land use, urban design, the environment, and community and economic development. By exploring ways to transform Northside Drive from its current state as a dismal, disorganized underperforming corridor, the studio resulted in many recommendations that would allow for a more efficient and livable corridor. This was the first comprehensive effort to study the Northside Drive corridor and dealt with the topics of land use and development potential, issues of social equality, and development strategies to bridge the east-west divide of the corridor (Dobbins et, al 2012).

A specific portion of the study was concentrated on the area of the corridor that straddles Interstate-20. Within this corridor there is a complicated variety of streets, ramps, rails, MARTA line, and land uses that divide the West End community from the north side of Interstate-20, which includes the Atlanta University Center and Castleberry Hills, and the Mechanicsville community, located to the east.

SOCIOECONOMIC/ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Demographics, Education, Income

The surrounding area of Atlanta is vastly different from the general demographics of the City of Atlanta as a whole. Compared to a 50/40% (black/white) divide in the City of Atlanta as a whole, this area has a 90/10% divide, making it one of the highest concentrations of black populations in the city. The educational attainment numbers also are vastly different than the City of Atlanta as a whole with only around 15-20% having a college degree or above compared to the 45% that is attributed to Atlanta as a whole. Additionally, the percent of the population that has no high school degree is around 22%, which is greater than the 14% associated with Atlanta as a whole. Finally, the median household income for the surrounding area is around \$27,000 compared to \$41,000 for the City of Atlanta. Due in large part to a lack of employment and workforce training opportunities, 36% of the population lives in poverty, and 20% of the households in the project area earn less than \$10,000 a year (Leigh et, al 2012).

Health

The Georgia Health Policy Center study identified through an area demographic analysis elevated rates of certain types of cancer, low birth-weights and preterm births, asthma, stroke, and intentional injury (2012). In a June, 2012 meeting, residents noted the most prominent concerns as low graduation rates, a high incidence of violence, and the prevalence of obesity (Georgia Health Policy Center). These concerns reflect a need for improved social determinants of health which are defined as “the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and age, as well as the systems put in place to deal with illness.” (CDC). These social determinants make up “substantial challenges which directly or indirectly influence health, including high rates of poverty, widespread vacant properties, gaps in educational attainment, a shortage of employment opportunities, and likely needs for public services to support needy families or provide job training” (Georgia Health Policy Center). Food access is also of concern and intensified by the low access to cars and other means of reliable transportation, as well as pedestrian infrastructure in need of improvement.

Housing

This area of Atlanta has been greatly affected by the housing crisis. The surrounding area that was analyzed through the Area-Wide Brownfields Planning effort found the local Census tracts experiencing a 20 percent decrease in the number of owner-occupied units from 2000 to 2010, and an increase in the overall housing vacancy rate from 10 percent to 22 percent during that same period (Neighborhood Nexus). The Baseline Market Conditions and Site Analysis report shows similar findings for the Primary Market Area, identifying it as home to 45,575 residents in 2010, a decrease of 13,079 residents (22.3%) from 2000. Many vacant homes in the area have become sites for illegal metal scrapping, which potentially feeds into the operations of the area’s salvage yards. Another factor related to the area’s high vacancy is the prevalence of blight throughout the project area, with widespread signs of dumping, vandalism, and vegetative overgrowth along pedestrian corridors. Abandoned properties, code enforcement issues, and obsolete infrastructure contribute to diminished public safety, increased criminal activity, and a hostile physical environment (Leigh et, al 2012).

Workforce

In 2010, the project area's unemployment rate was 17%, nearly double that of Fulton County (US Census Bureau, 2010). With an extraordinary 22% population loss from 2000 to 2010, the project area bears the characteristics of a shrinking city even though it is part of a major Sunbelt city, whose metropolitan region experienced population growth of 28% from 2000 to 2010 (Bleakly, 2012).

There is both a limited number of local employment opportunities and poor diversity of jobs in the area of analysis and the nearby communities. A dominant share of businesses in the project area are focused in the services and retail sectors, which correlate with low growth companies that pay lower wages and provide limited benefits and stability. The largest percentage of jobs are in services (39%) and retail trade (20%), which tend to provide low skill jobs with less stability and career development options. In order to resolve the workforce distribution concerns, there are several public and non-profit agencies offering services to train the local workforce in jobs requiring higher skills that pay higher wages. These organizations include The Center for Working Families Inc., Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, Georgia Quick Start, and Go Build Georgia (Leigh et, al 2012).

Brownfields

Numerous brownfields are scattered throughout the project area. The redevelopment of these sites is complicated by potential legal liabilities, often burdensome cleanup costs, and the need for specialized expertise to successfully navigate the remediation process. However, the cleanup and redevelopment of strategic brownfield sites is critical to the revitalization of the area. The redevelopment of key brownfield sites has the potential to create jobs in light manufacturing industries, facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities for local residents, provide access to healthy foods, reduce environmental and health hazards faced by historically disadvantaged groups, and improve the overall quality of life.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With numerous development projects already occurring or planned for the near future, this area of analysis will experience substantial change over the next few years. The important goal for the successful development of this area will hinge on the improvements in connectivity that are made alongside the development that occurs. With such substantial development energy taking place within the area and the surrounding communities in form of the BeltLine, the Atlanta University Center, and the MARTA stations, combined with the historic influence of the West End neighborhood and the industrial character of the area, this area of analysis is posed for potential economic and social growth.

BeltLine

The development of the BeltLine and the nearby associated corridor will have a tremendous influence on the area of analysis due to its close proximity and the potential connections between the BeltLine and the West End MARTA Station. This southern portion of the Westside BeltLine Trail is the next proposed for development and will be completed in the next few years according to the BeltLine proposals. There is already federal funding supporting the development and if the BeltLine's Eastside Trail is any indicator of the potential economic growth as a result of development, then the area surround this southern segment could be in for a substantial change in the coming years.

The BeltLine's Subarea 1 Master Plan has extensive plans for the area surrounding this segment of the BeltLine and has extensive street connection recommendation for the area of analysis. While not all of the recommendations are immediately feasible, an incremental approach to the changes can take place as properties are becoming developed and the area becomes less uninhabited. One crucial planning effort that needs to be ensured takes place is the BeltLine Trail Spur that extends northward from the BeltLine corridor to the West End MARTA Station. This connection is a critical component to the connectivity of the area and effectiveness of the BeltLine as a potential alternate form of transportation route. Connection routes similar to this need to be emphasized throughout this area to better encourage the current and future local populations to treat the area as a livable community and to provide connections to the surround neighborhoods.

Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program

Within the Area-Wide Brownfields Planning Program our area of analysis is considered a part of the end use concept node envisioned as Metropolitan Yards. This area is meant to build upon the established success of the Castleberry Hill neighborhood (just to the north) and The Metropolitan. By maintaining the node's current industrial character, enhancing access, and developing potential studio, loft, and mixed-use

opportunities, the strategy supports the development of Metropolitan Yards as an



Area-Wide Brownfield Planning Program Northern Node of Analysis
Source: Leigh, et. al (2012)

artist-industrial district with enhanced connectivity and greater access to retail. The introduction of street and sidewalk extensions, additions, and improvements to enhance neighborhood connectivity are thought to be the primary concern for this area. In some cases, the current right of way could be abandoned around small, oddly shaped parcels. Assembling large parcels such as the salvage yards and encouraging future development on them to be conducive to street connections is also important. Providing new open space parallel to the Norfolk Southern line will create a safer greenway for pedestrians and cyclists that will extend existing infrastructure to better connect residents to the BeltLine spur and West End MARTA station (Leigh et, al 2012). This will help transform a commonly used, but dangerous, set of pedestrian routes into a more hospitable, protected space that will be more attractive for redevelopment.



Also, a transition strategy for the salvage yards should be considered, with an eye toward more advanced industrial activity that can support additional jobs while reducing the visual blight of their operations. Should current operations cease, it could be recommended that advanced recycling processes be attracted to the sites for more intensive employment opportunities. Alternatively, a zoning change to mixed-use industrial could be considered to prevent future use of the land as scrap yards and facilitate breaking up the superblocks with street connections, while still maintaining industrial employment. In the near-term, the salvage yards should be encouraged to build warehouses that can better shield the metal from the elements and the public eye (Leigh et, al 2012).

Expanded public easements along the sidewalks bordering the salvage yards, new buildings on the salvage yard sites, and enhanced streetscaping will accommodate the storage of scrapped auto bodies and advanced metal processing activities that enhance industrial productivity and shield the surrounding environment from the visual blight and noise pollution of their activities. The consistent enforcement of current regulations is ultimately encouraged to ensure the businesses are meeting code requirements, particularly with respect to businesses' fences abutting the sidewalks.

Northside Drive

One of the main solutions put forth within the Northside Drive planning effort that has a significant effect on the area of analysis is the reorganization of Northside Drive's connections with Interstate-20 and the West End

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