



Old Atlanta Prison Farm

Feasibility Analysis and Strategy

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ULI Center for Leadership 2015-2016
mini Technical Assistance Panel (mTAP)

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Executive Summary

Property Overview

+/- 300 acre Old Atlanta Prison Farm established in 1918 as the “Honor Farm”

- Rehabilitation facility built and owned by Federal government for low-risk offenders of Atlanta penitentiary nearby
- Inmates worked farming crops and raising pigs and cattle to feed local prison population
- City of Atlanta purchased from Federal government in mid-1960's – closed operations in 1995

Site characteristics

- Mostly undeveloped
- Bisected by Intrenchment Creek – much of site is part of low-lying stream bed
- Located in unincorporated Dekalb County

Size of property and location inside Perimeter → major opportunity to do something unique with scale to serve Atlanta region, however, no incentive / catalyst for investment to date

- Demographics today do not support wholesale redevelopment for public or private use
 - Low density: 1-mile total population of just 3,257
 - Low income: \$27,544 median household income
- No commercial or residential development occurring in surrounding area
- City of Atlanta owns but located outside City Limits – will not invest in public facilities that do not serve constituents
- Dekalb County not yet prepared to invest an estimated cost of \$1MM - \$2MM per acre to develop park (plus ongoing operating and programming costs)

What

- ~300 acres
- One of the largest contiguous, undeveloped tracts inside the Perimeter
- ~2x the size of Piedmont Park and approx. same size as proposed Westside Quarry Park (~350 acres)
- Owned by City of Atlanta but located in unincorporated Dekalb County

Where

- Southeast Atlanta – East side of Moreland Avenue inside I-285

Why

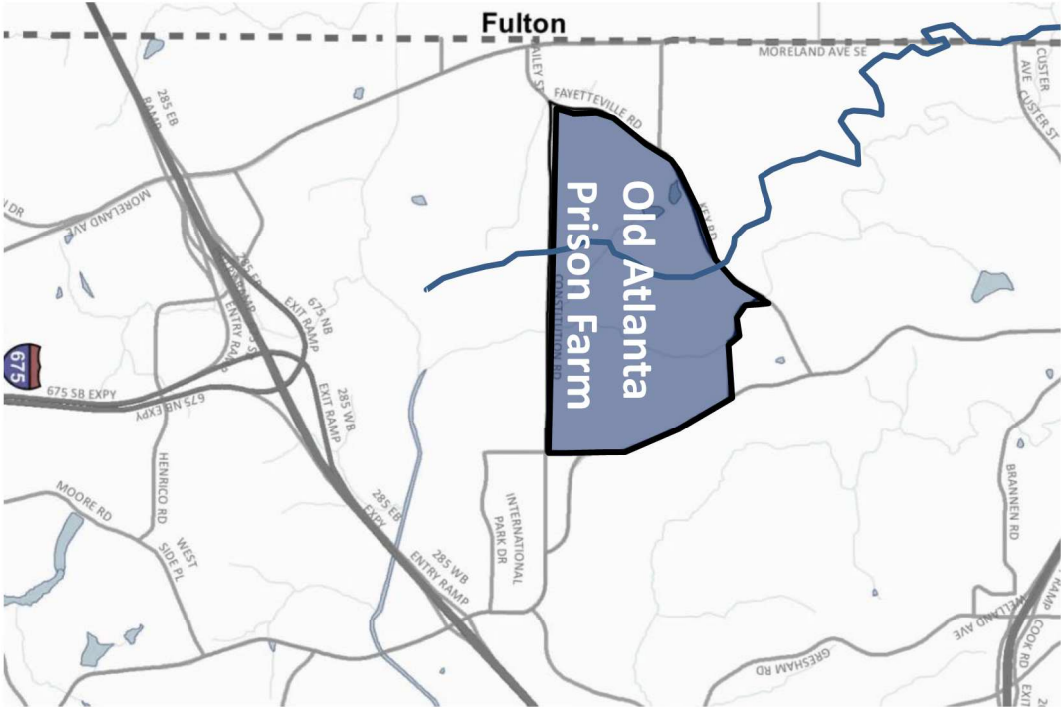
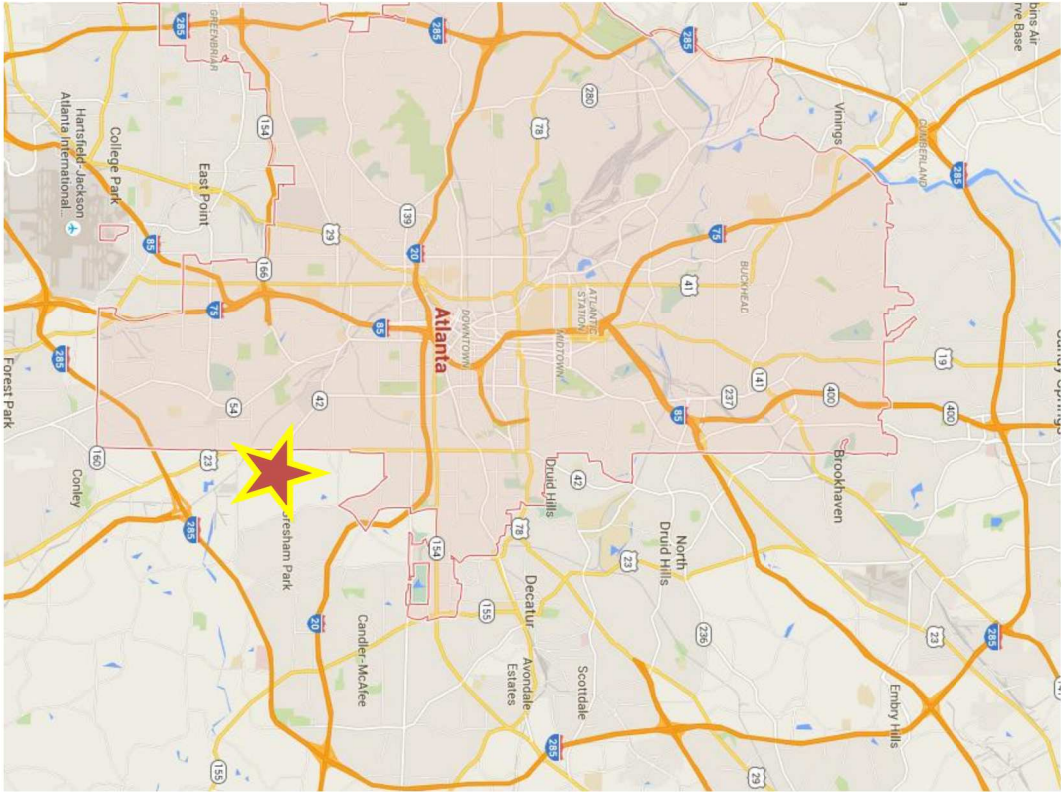
- Opportunity to preserve – with scale – in town land for future public use

Old Atlanta Prison Farm

- East side of Moreland Avenue in Dekalb County (Moreland serves as boundary for Fulton and Dekalb counties)
- ~2 miles North of I-285 access
- Surrounding uses are mostly single-family residential and industrial with some neighborhood/service retail

Executive Summary

Location Overview: Southeast Atlanta





Executive Summary

Summary of Interviews Conducted

Mayor Shirley Franklin

- DeKalb County tried to buy in early 2000's but City of Atlanta did not want to sell (viewed land as appreciating asset)
- Kasim Reed has taken an opposite stance advocating sale of city-owned real estate in certain cases
- Even when timing is right it takes time to make something happen: 2 years to vet idea of Beltline, 2 more years to develop master plan

Arthur Blank Foundation

- Explored grant investment +/- 10 years ago with land conservation initiative but redirected funds to support Beltline (and continue to direct support to Beltline)

Trust for Public Land

- TPL confidentially shared master plan developed for Arthur Blank Foundation in early 2000's (prior to APF redirecting resources to Beltline)
- Conceptual program: open greenspace, pavilions, interpretative/nature center, baseball/softball, natatorium, basketball, playground/rec center, skate park, tennis facilities, soccer fields, parking and trails

DeKalb County (Davis Fox – Kathy Gannon, District 6 Commissioner)

- Confirmed that County attempted to purchase in early 2000's but City of Atlanta did not want to sell; focused on other projects now → County already owns a lot of park land in area and does not see need for more
- Success advocating a new project here will require major grassroots effort

City of Atlanta (Amy Phuong – Parks and Recreation)

- City Parks and Rec will not invest outside City Limits
- Resources today are focused on Westside Quarry Park and expect a 15-year build out so unlikely to redirect time and money to competing project of similar scale in that timeframe

PATH Foundation

- Has vested interest in site since it would make a regional connection but resources primarily being spent on other areas like PATH 400, Beltline, etc.

Park Pride

- Optimistic about what the site could be – potential partner for re-visioning of site
- Suggests thinking out of the box for funding and resources, such as grants at the state level



Executive Summary

Objectives / Challenges / Recommendations

Objective

- Facilitate investment in Old Atlanta Prison Farm (public and/or private) to redevelop into public greenspace/regional park

Challenge

1. Promote as a Regional Amenity
2. Grow Support, Plan and Get In Line

Recommendation

1. Promote as a Regional Amenity
 - Recognize opportunity for regional amenity and benefit → expand scope and promote more broadly beyond local community
 - One of largest undeveloped greenspaces inside the perimeter
 - Connectivity to existing and proposed bike and trail networks
 - Accessibility via proximity to I-285, I-75, I-20 and Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport
2. Grow Support, Plan and Get in Line
 - Project scale will require variety of financing alternatives
 - TAD, charitable giving, public financing, federal grant, state funding, private for-profit investment
 - Old Atlanta Prison Farm must compete for resources with other public benefit initiatives in the region
 - “Get in line” → other projects (Beltline extension, Westside Quarry) are ahead but important to get in the queue
 - Interim steps:
 - Invest to develop updated conceptual site plan
 - Establish 501(c)3 and appoint governing committee to lead organized effort



CHALLENGE #1:

PROMOTE AS REGIONAL AMENITY

>> Proximity to Regional Attractors

>> Accessibility

>> Connectivity to Existing Bike and Trail Network

>> Case Studies: Socio-Economic Opportunity



Promote Regional Amenity

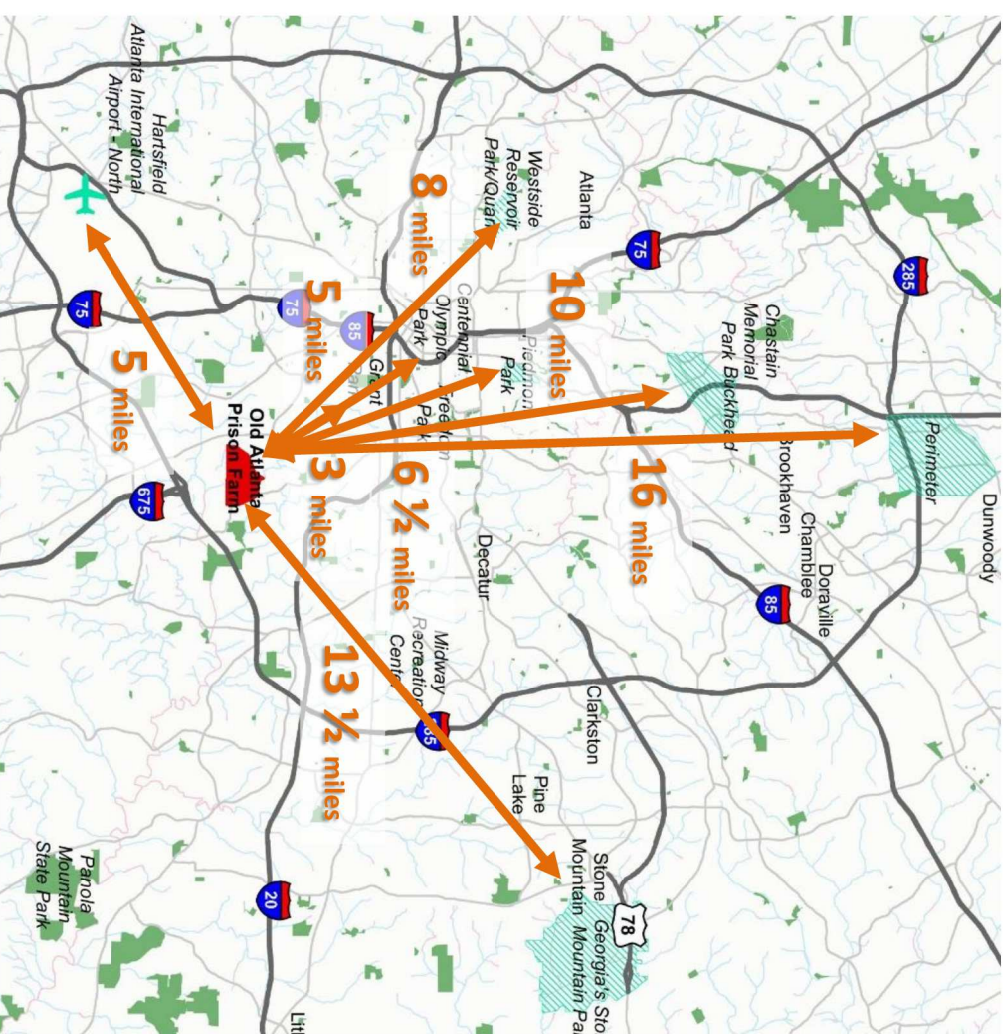
Highlight Proximity to Regional Attractors

Site sits inside the Perimeter (I-285) and is conveniently located near many of the region's attractors:

- 3 miles to Atlanta Beltline
- 5 miles to Downtown Atlanta
- 5 miles to Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- 6 ½ miles to Piedmont Park
- 8 miles to Atlanta Westside Park
- 10 miles to Buckhead
- 13 ½ miles to Stone Mountain
- 16 miles to Central Perimeter

Largest known contiguous greenspace within a 7-mile radius

- Closest in size are Westview Cemetery in West Atlanta and Panola Mountain State Park in south Dekalb County



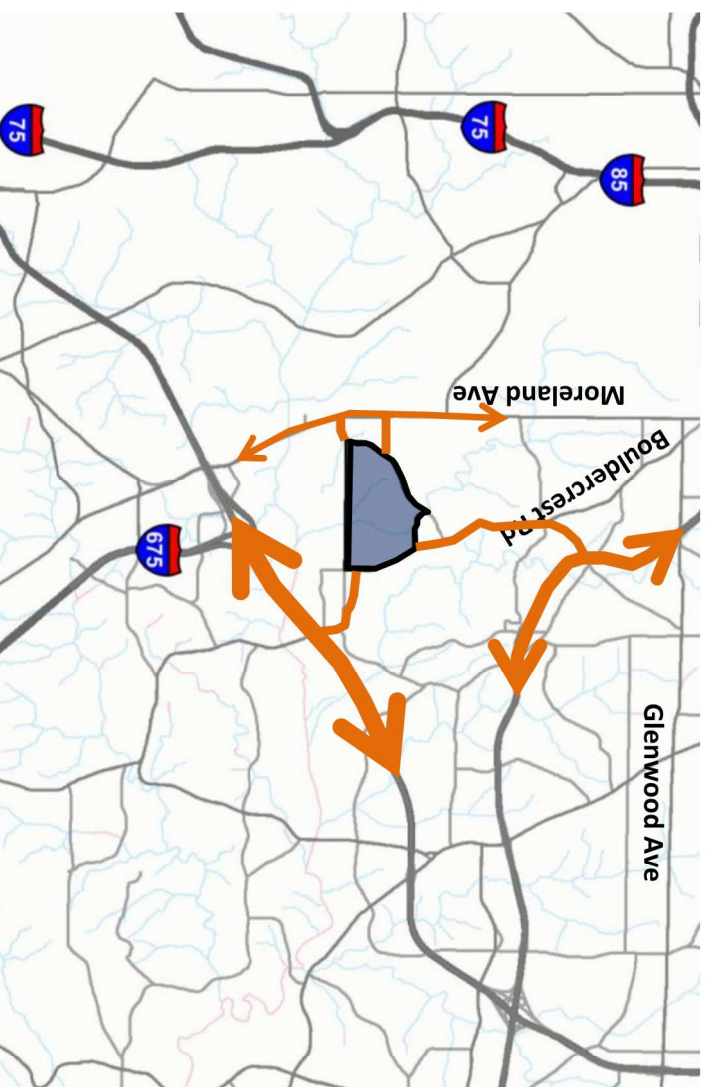


Promote Regional Amenity

Capitalize on Accessibility

- Limited visibility but excellent access conveniently located near I-285, I-675 and I-20, and approximately five miles from Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- Key access points
 - Moreland Avenue (26,200 vehicles per day) via Key Road and Bailey Street
 - I-285 (134,744 vehicles per day) via Bouldercrest Road
 - I-20 (124,000 vehicles per day) via Fayetteville Road
- Improved access to I-285 planned through interchange operational improvements at the Bouldercrest Road
 - New and improved traffic signals and communications equipment
 - Part of Dekalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (however not yet scheduled)

- More than 250,000 vehicles pass within 1 ½ miles of the site each day, giving it incredible exposure with minimal access and wayfinding signage improvements needed



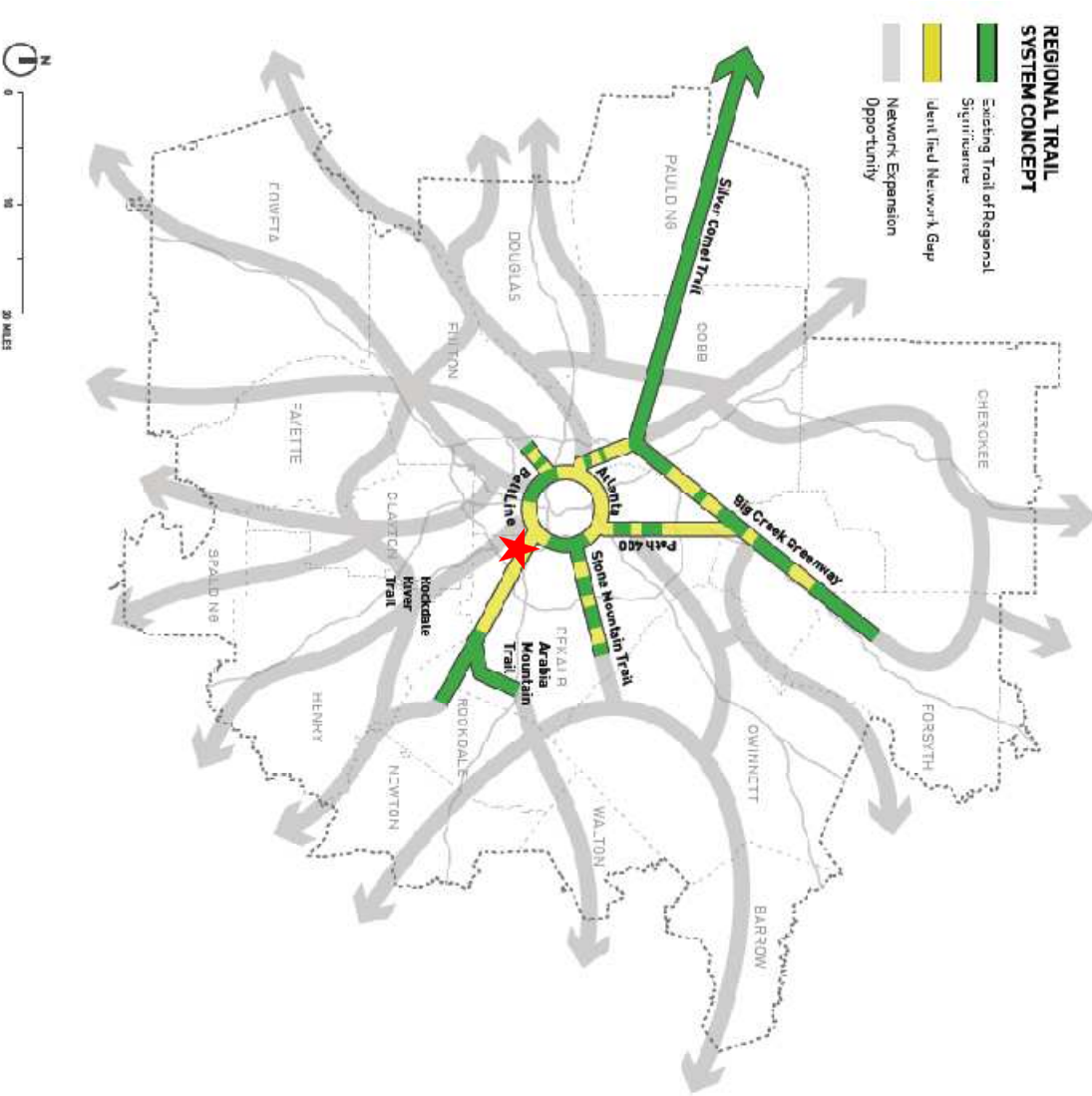


Promote Regional Amenity

Leverage Connectivity to Existing Bike and Trail Network

- Site located in path of a needed connection for the regional trails program
- Building a trail through the site would satisfy up to 30% of the distance needed to connect the Beltline to Arabia Mountain and Rockdale River trails

- High quality trail facilities are defined by a low stress experience for bicyclists and pedestrians
 - Limited number of at-grade crossings with high volume roadways
- The Atlanta Regional Commission's *2015 Walk. Bike. Thrive! Trails Plan* calls for the need to connect regionally significant trails
 - The Prison Farm is located between the Atlanta Beltline and the Arabia Mountain and Rockdale River Trails and could support the further build-out of this regional connection
- Building the trail connection from the Beltline to the Prison Farm would satisfy up to 30% of the distance needed to connect the Beltline to Arabia Mountain and Rockdale River Trails

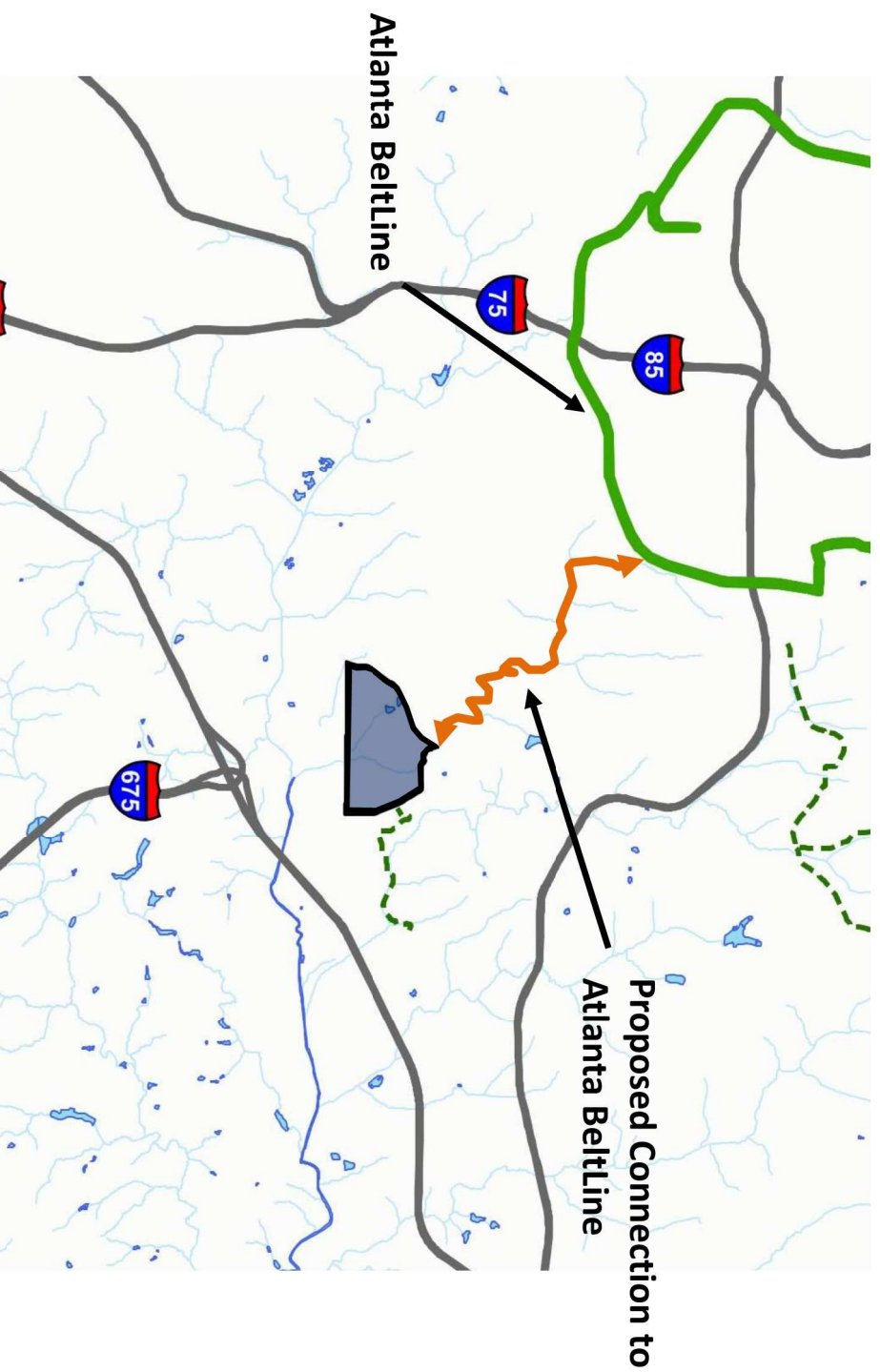




Promote Regional Amenity

Leverage Connectivity to Existing Bike and Trail Network (cont.)

- South River Trail (PATH Foundation) to the east, connecting to Gresham Park
- Proposed PATH Foundation trail along Intrenchment Creek from Prison Farm to Atlanta City Limits at Moreland Avenue (\$4.8 million, including ROW needed) (needs to be extended to Atlanta Beltline)



Old Atlanta Prison Farm

- Westside Reservoir Park (planned)
 - 351 acres in West Atlanta
 - Would be Atlanta's largest park
 - 15 years to complete
 - comprehensive 304-page master plan (excellent case study for Prison Farm)
 - Beltline connection, trails, sports fields and an amphitheater
- Kirkwood Urban Forest Community
 - Small scale example
 - Walking trails, frog pond, community garden, event pavilions
 - Managed by Kirkwood Neighborhood Association
- Other benefits
 - Study shows greenspaces around schools improve cognitive learning
 - Reduces neighborhood socioeconomic health inequalities

Promote Regional Amenity Local Case Studies - Socio-Economic Opportunity



Atlanta Beltline

Site Characteristics:

- 2.25-mile East Side trail
- \$13MM construction cost incl. \$5MM private donors

Proven Benefits:

- Attracts an average of 3,000 trail users each weekday and over 10,000 users each weekend day
- Promotes physical activity and creates better sense of community
- Generates funding to support 52 affordable housing units located along the trail
- **Generated over \$800MM private development within 0.5 miles of trail**
- Venue for public art displays and local music



Old Fourth Ward Park

Site Characteristics:

- 17-acre park in East Midtown Atlanta
- Connected to East Side trail of Beltline
- \$50MM total cost

Proven Benefits:

- **\$400MM of private development within 1 block of park since completion**



Promote Regional Amenity
Case Study Comparisons

Case Study	Catalyst for Development
Atlanta Beltline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needed transportation infrastructure• High density locations• Existing ROWs• Early political champion
Westside Reservoir Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beltline connectivity/momentum from Eastside Trail success• Need for Westside greenspace• Satisfies major need for water resources
Historic Old Fourth Ward Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solved flooding and detention needs for surrounding neighborhoods• Beltline connectivity• Early funding identified (Federal and State)• High-density location
Old Atlanta Prison Farm	TBD



CHALLENGE #2:

GROW SUPPORT, PLAN, & GET IN LINE

>> Next Steps

>> New Opportunities

>> Funding and Financing



Grow Support, Plan & Get In Line

Next Steps

Grow Support

- Promote opportunity for regional amenity
 - Meet with Stephanie Benfield – Director of the Office of Sustainability (former State Representative)
 - Meet with Thomas Farmer – Nature Conservancy
 - Meet with Mark Dinson - Georgia Power
 - Continue discussions with City of Atlanta and Dekalb County
- Build grassroots backing
 - Example: organize clean-up days and other events to get community involved / take ownership
 - Continue walking tours of the site
- Creative Approaches: Solar Farm

Plan

- Establish 501(c)3 with governing body including planning committee
 - Formalize leadership to build credibility and organized approach
- Invest in updated conceptual plan
 - Valuable marketing materials to promote opportunity with community, political and other stakeholders

Get In Line

- Beltline has created major drain on resources for this type of initiative
 - Patient advocacy → not likely to be a near-term priority but projects this big take time
 - 15 years to full buildout of Westside Reservoir Park
 - 4 years to develop Beltline master plan



- Given challenges described in this report, stakeholders must find an element to draw City of Atlanta's interest to the site

- City of Atlanta is unlikely to engage unless potential for new revenue is identified

- Solution must be consistent with long-term vision while generating near-term interest

- HB 57 (2015) allows Georgia municipalities to enter into power purchase agreements

- Mayor Kasim Reed launched the City of Atlanta's solar energy program in 2015

- Development of a community solar farm would commit City of Atlanta to active ownership in the site, preventing it from entertaining any land speculators' offers

Grow Support, Plan & Get In Line

Capitalize on New Opportunity: Solar Farm

Option 1: Lease

- City of Atlanta ground-leases acreage needed for solar farm to Georgia Power
- Georgia Power sells solar power to customers, makes lease payments to City of Atlanta
- **City of Atlanta uses portion of lease payments to fund development of additional park features**

Option 2: Power purchase agreement (PPA)

- City of Atlanta enters into 10-20 year agreement with solar farm developer (e.g., Georgia Power) to develop and operate facility
- City of Atlanta makes fixed payment for the purchase of solar electricity, which is used to secure financing for developer to build facility
- City of Atlanta gets energy cost hedge and can claim solar energy "additionality"
- **City of Atlanta uses energy savings to fund development of additional park features**





Grow Support, Plan & Get In Line

Renew Pursuit of Funding and Financing Sources

Scope and scale of 300-acre site will require (1) phasing and (2) variety of financing sources, including:

- Public/Private Partnership:
 - Arthur Blank Foundation
 - Trust for Public Land
 - City of Atlanta
 - Dekalb County
 - Private For-Profit Developers
 - Federal and State Grants
- Tax Allocation District (TAD, TIF, etc.):
 - Established for purpose of catalyzing local investment in under-improved areas
 - Offers partial public financing for redevelopment
 - Costs are financed through pledge of future incremental increases in property taxes generated by the redevelopment
 - Issuing body establishes base value (pre-redevelopment)
 - Tax revenue increases are projected based on proposed redevelopment
 - Generally 25-30 year projection
 - Present value of increases is captured as funds made available up front to facilitate the investment
 - Typical procedure:
 - Redevelopment plan created and submitted to City of Atlanta
 - City of Atlanta must adopt plan enabling legislation approving it and establish base value
 - Growth of property tax revenues resulting from increases from the initial established value over time is collected in special fund
- Charitable Funding
- Grant or Budget Dollars – Dekalb County



APPENDIX 1:

POTENTIAL PROGRAMMING

>> TPL Conceptual Plan (CONFIDENTIAL)

>> “A Space for Everyone” – Multi-use plan

>> “Big Idea” – Solar Farm

Existing Conceptual Plan*

- Completed in 2003 with support from the Trust for Public Land and EDAPW
- Demonstrates scale and diversity of the site's opportunities
- Integrates active and passive program elements, with new revenue-generating uses including festival pavilion and sports facilities – incl. baseball/softball, soccer, basketball, and natatorium
- Highlights natural water features and seeks to preserve substantial tree canopy

*NOTE: The above Conceptual Plan is intended for informational purposes only and must be held in the strictest of confidence. It may not be shared without the consent of the Trust for Public Land.





A Space for Everyone

Potential Uses for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm

- Eco-Park – Greenspace
- Creating a community & cultural amenity
- Urban farming – Community gardens – Permaculture
- Walking – hiking – bridle – bike paths
- Wildlife & bird observation stations & informational placards
- Fishing
- Preserved natural habitat
- Sports fields (soccer, cricket, track & field, basketball, skateboarding, etc.)
- Playground & Picnic areas
- Small-scale performance amphitheater for music or theater
- Historical Markers
- Graffiti art showcase



- Due to its size and diversity of terrain, the Prison Farm site can accommodate a range of potential uses.
- Stakeholders are committed to ensuring the site becomes a significant community and cultural amenity
- Stakeholders have identified the potential uses shown here
- Ongoing community and involvement needed to determine ultimate use plan



APPENDIX 2 : AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

>> Population

>> Employment

>> Income



Area Demographics

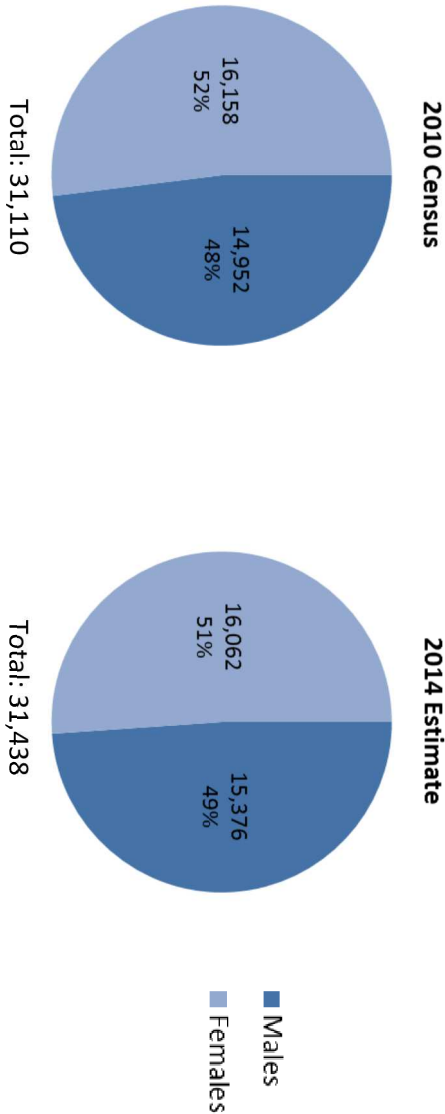
Population and Labor Force

Population (30316 ZIP)

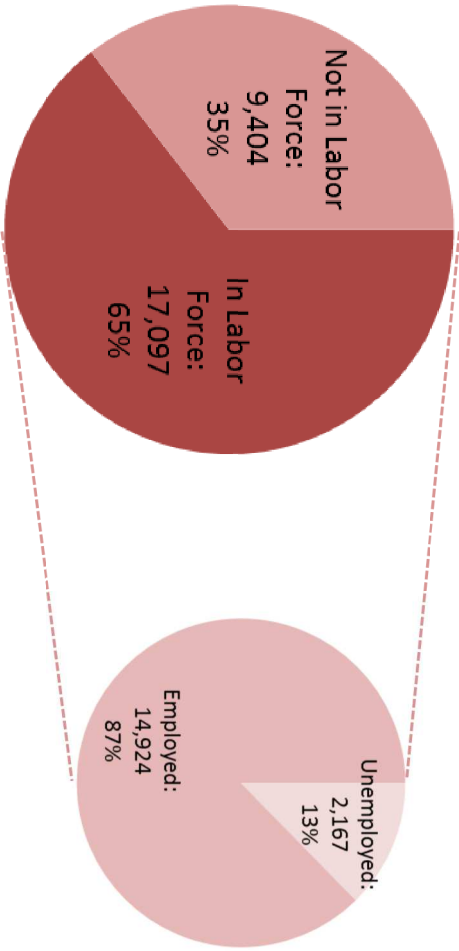
- 30316 Zip Code
- 14,000 Households
 - Current Population: 31,110 (ONLY 3,257 WITHIN A 1 MILE RADIOUS OF SITE)
 - Projected Population : 31,438
 - 0.9% Growth

Income:

- Median: \$39,053 (ONLY \$27,544 WITHIN A 1 MILE RADIOUS)



Labor Force (30316 ZIP)

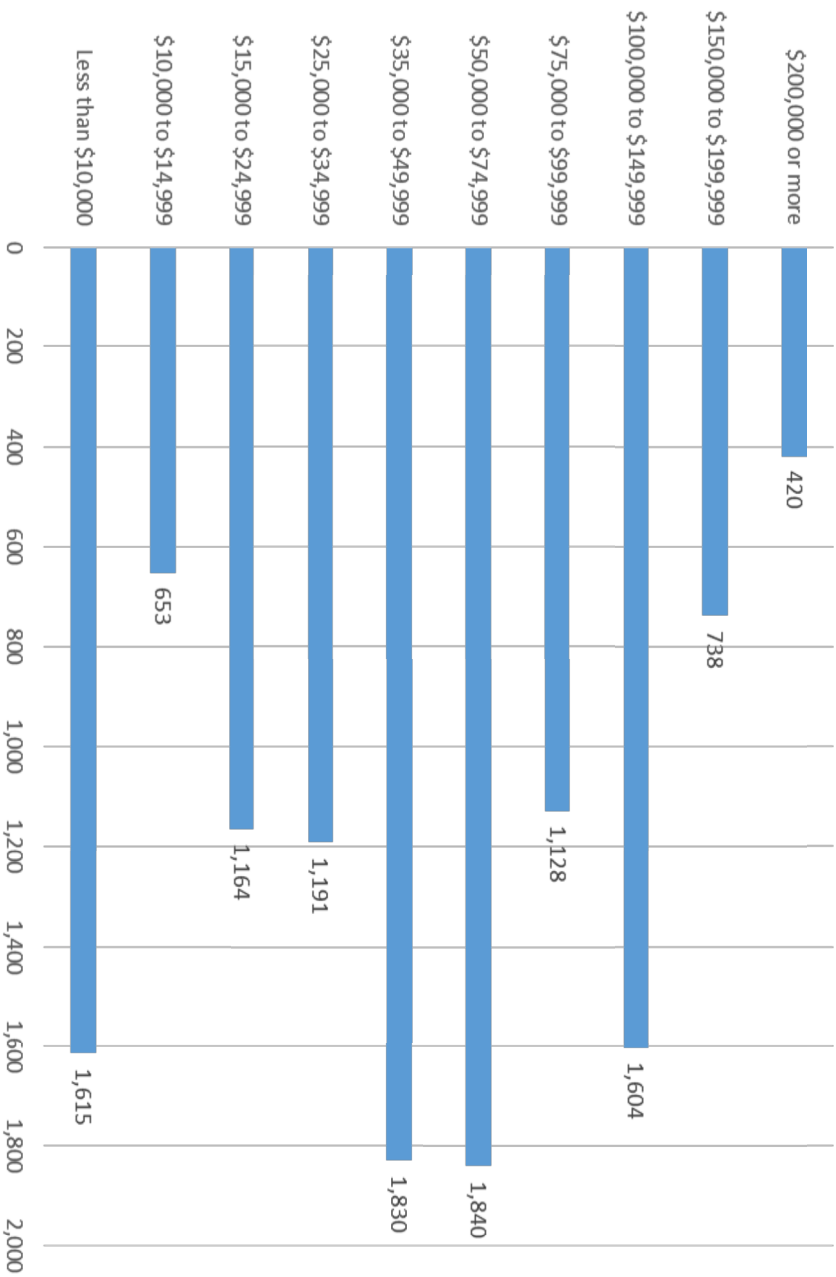




Area Demographics

Household Income

Household Income by # of Households



Total Households: 12,183

Median Household Income: \$46,977