



Bankhead MARTA Station mTAP
Prepared for the Emerald Corridor Foundation
by the Urban Land Institute's
Center for Leadership
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1. mTAP Overview

Purpose of mTAP

After decades of disinvestment, Atlanta's Westside neighborhoods are on the verge of a renaissance. Much of the recent focus has been on the neighborhoods in the shadow of the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Not to be overlooked, the neighborhoods to the northwest of Vine City and English Avenue are seeing their own civic investment, albeit at a slower pace.

Less than a mile from the Bankhead MARTA Transit Station three important infrastructure projects are in the planning stages.

1. The Proctor Creek Greenway: a 7.5-mile multi-use trail and green corridor
2. Westside Reservoir Park: A 300-acre park that will include the conversion of the former Bellwood Quarry into a reservoir.
3. Atlanta Beltline: The 22-mile multi-use trail that is transforming intown neighborhoods throughout Atlanta.

One of the organizations seeking to guide the area's sustainable transformation is the Emerald Corridor Foundation, which is dedicated to community revitalization in Atlanta's Westside.

As a driving force in the thoughtful redevelopment of these neighborhoods, the Emerald Corridor Foundation has tapped the Urban Land Institute's Center for Leadership to help develop a plan for the land around the Bankhead Transit Station that

will be catalytic to community redevelopment and improve pedestrian connectivity within the area.

Process

Research

- Environmental
- Transit
- Zoning
- Vested development
- Demographics
- Previous studies
- neighborhood

Site Visits

- Pedestrian trends
- State of study area
- Site survey
- Neighborhood tours

Stakeholder Interviews

- MARTA
- City of Atlanta
- Atlanta Beltline
- Non-profits
- Board members
- Community leaders

2. Neighborhood Overview

Demographic Information

The residential neighborhoods surrounding the Bankhead MARTA Station have seen a generational shift in their make-up. While the population within a half-mile radius of the MARTA Station increased 18.77% from 2000 – 2017, the number of family households decreased 38.17% over the same time period. Worth noting is that almost all population growth happened from 2000 to 2010.

Today, 86% of the residents within this half-mile radius are over the age of 18. Two major factors contribute to the lack of families:

1. Underperforming public schools
2. Lack of affordable multifamily housing

Two school clusters serve this community. The area roughly west of Marietta Boulevard/North Avenue, is zoned for the Douglass Cluster, and east of this road is zoned for the Washington Cluster. Both clusters are chronically underperforming and receive mostly failing grades from The Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

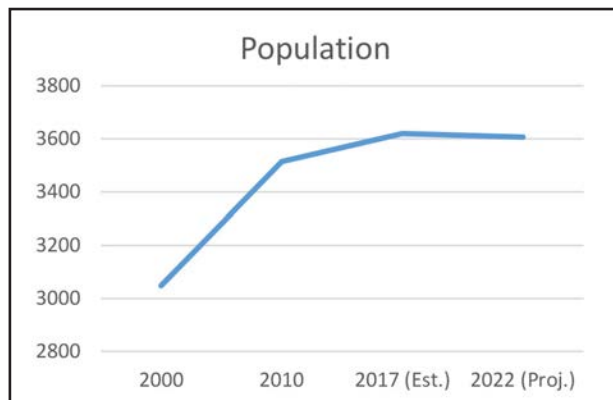
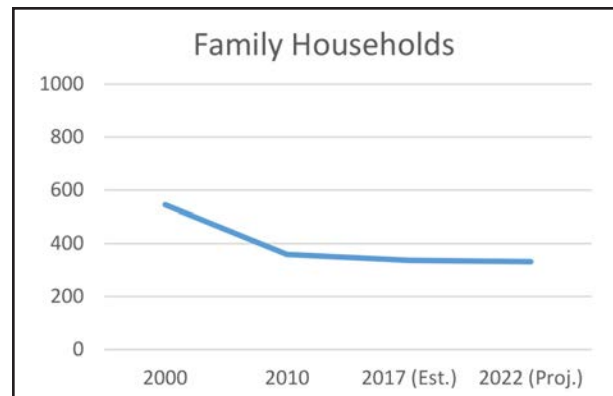
In addition, to underperforming schools, all of the neighborhood's large-scale multifamily developments have been closed, and in some cases demolished, since 2010. Of the 939 housing units within a half-mile of the MARTA Station, 526 units



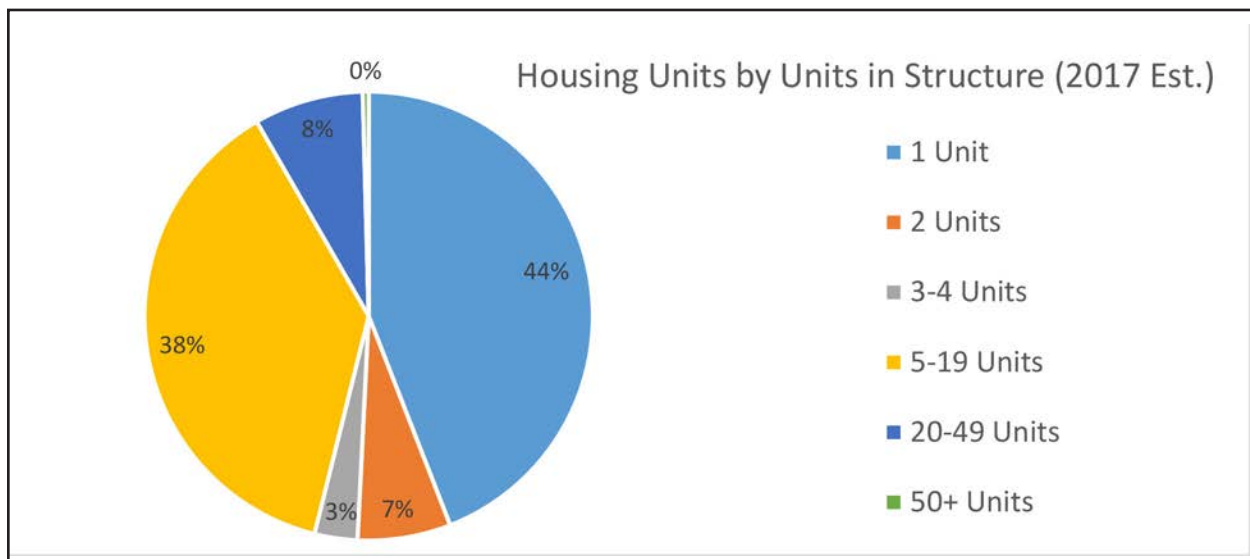
are multifamily, most of it in subdivided houses or small apartment buildings. In a neighborhood in which 83.82% of households are renters, there is a severe lack of affordable multifamily housing, especially new housing, as the median age of residential structures built in the area is 51 years.

The neighborhoods within a half-mile of the MARTA Station also are economically disadvantaged. 39.04% of adults over 25 do not have a high school diploma, 35.69% of families live below the poverty line, and 76.36% of residents over 16 are either unemployed or not in the labor force. Job opportunities are also limited, as the DFCS Service Center and the Fulton County Jail are the only large employers.

The neighborhoods surrounding the station depend heavily on MARTA for transportation. More than 40% of households do not own a car, and 53.74 percent of workers take public transportation to their jobs.



Source: Claritas



Source: Claritas

Current Development Activity

The neighborhoods near the MARTA Station are seeing very little in terms of residential development and no new commercial development. The closest multi-unit residential development underway is Columbia Residential's redevelopment of the former Herndon Homes site, which is located on the north side of the future Westside Reservoir Park approximately 2.5 miles from the MARTA Station. There has been isolated single-family development in the neighborhoods west of the MARTA Station, but it is very limited. The closest significant commercial development underway is the Stockyards project at Marietta Boulevard and Brady Avenue in West Midtown.

Despite the boom in commercial development being seen in the West Midtown and Upper Westside corridors, the Bankhead and Grove Park area's low average incomes make it unlikely that commercial development will spread into these neighborhoods. Conversely, the lack of commercial development and underperforming schools also make it unlikely that significant residential development or redevelopment will take place in the short term.

| Fast Facts | |
|--|----------|
| Population (0.5 mile radius from station) | 3,620 |
| | |
| Population by Race | % |
| White | 7.10 |
| Black or African American | 89.60 |
| Other Race | 1.33 |
| Two or More Races | 1.97 |
| | |
| Population by Sex | % |
| Male | 73.56 |
| Female | 26.44 |
| | |
| Population 18 and Over | 86.00% |
| Average Age | 35.5 |
| | |
| Educational Attainment (Age 25+) | % |
| No High School Diploma | 39.04 |
| High School Diploma | 32.15 |
| Some College | 14.51 |
| Associate Degree | 4.60 |
| Bachelor's Degree or Higher | 9.69 |
| | |
| Household Income | % |
| <\$25,000 | 50.28 |
| \$25,000 - \$49,999 | 24.79 |
| \$50,000 - \$74,999 | 10.76 |
| \$75,000 - \$99,999 | 7.79 |
| \$100,000+ | 6.30 |
| Median Household Income | \$24,853 |
| All figures 2017 estimates. Source: Claritas | |

Future Development Activity

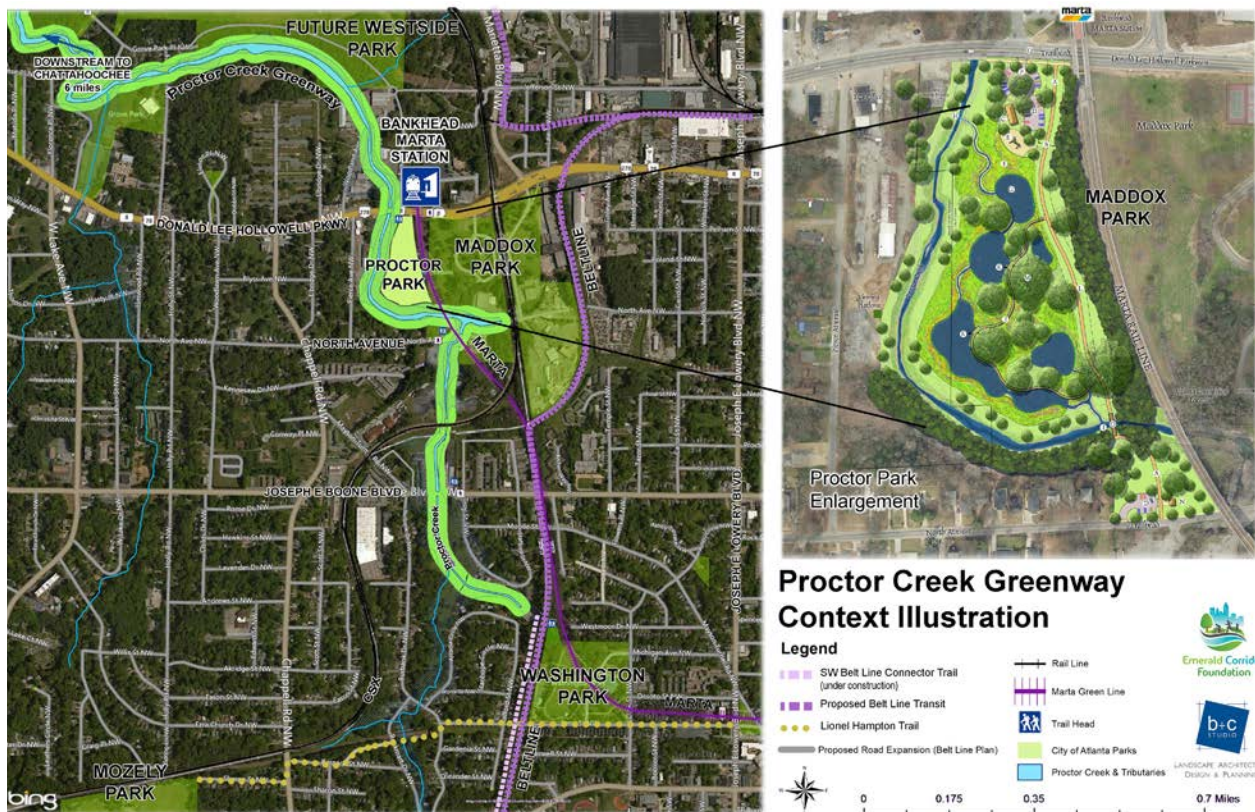
Despite short-term challenges, several civic improvement projects will very likely to spur redevelopment of these neighborhoods.

Proctor Creek Greenway

Construction will begin this year on the first segment of the Proctor Creek Greenway, a 7-mile multi-use trail following Proctor Creek from Maddox Park to the Chattahoochee River. Plans also call for 400 acres of greenspace along the trail, including the creation of Proctor Park, which will be located adjacent to Maddox Park along a flood plain of Proctor Creek.



*A rendering of the Proctor Creek Greenway.
Source: Emerald Corridor Foundation*



A map of the southern section of Proctor Creek Greenway (left) and detail of the proposed Proctor Park (right). Source: Emerald Corridor Foundation

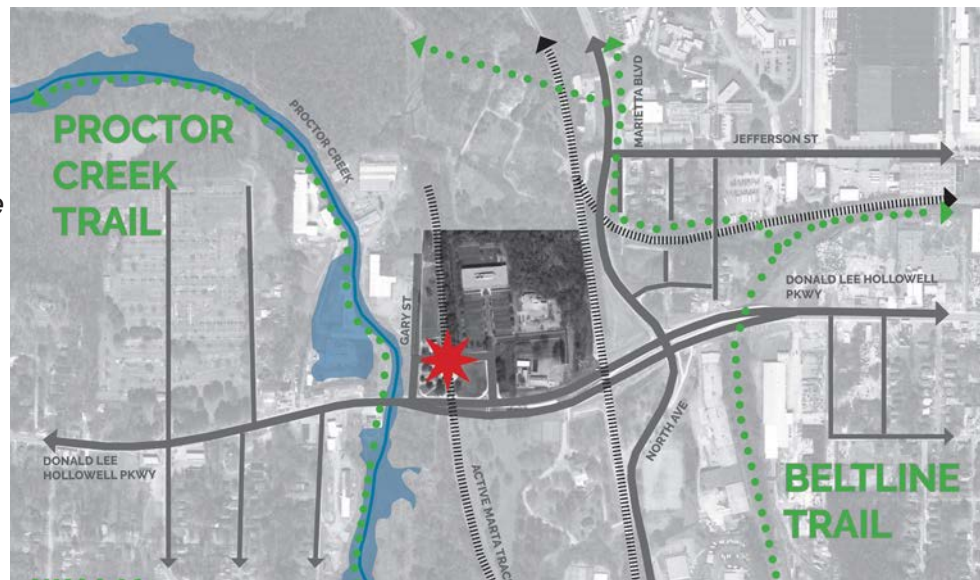
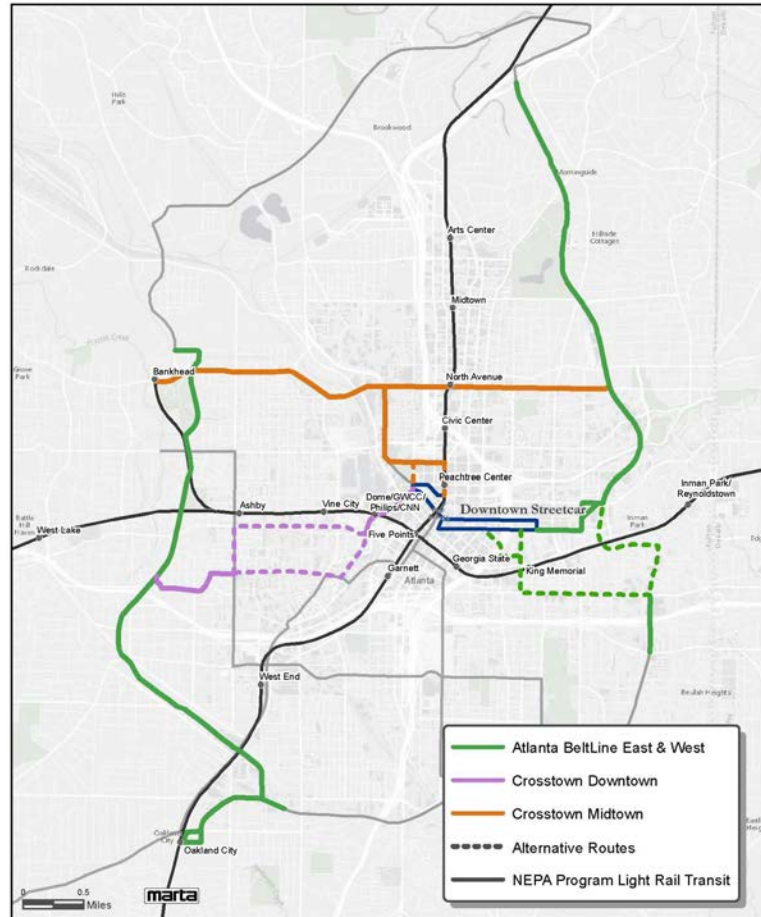
Atlanta Beltline

Current plans for the Atlanta Beltline's Westside Trail route the north section along the eastern edge of Maddox Park. The trail then turns east along Hollowell Parkway before cutting back west and following Marietta Boulevard north (See *opposite page*).

In addition, spur trails will connect the Beltline with the Proctor Creek Greenway as well as the Westside Reservoir Park. The 2013 Beltline Implementation Plan calls for the northern part of the Westside Trail to be built between 2024 and 2030.

Atlanta Streetcar

Part of the Atlanta Beltline's long-term plan for the Atlanta Streetcar calls for a light rail transit line connecting the Bankhead Station to the Beltline's Eastside Trail (See *right*). This Streetcar route, which is being called the Crosstown/Midtown Line, would also circulate through Midtown and Downtown. This project is currently in the environmental assessment phase.



Top - A map of the Atlanta Streetcar expansion. Source: Atlanta Beltline.
Bottom - Future trail connectivity to the study area.

Westside Reservoir Park

The Bankhead Station abuts what will one day be Atlanta's largest public park, the Westside Reservoir Park. Currently, construction is underway on a tunnel from the Chattahoochee River to Bellwood Quarry that will convert the quarry into a drinking water reservoir for the city.

The City plans to begin construction on the park at some point after the tunnel is complete, which is expected in 2018. It is expected to take 15 years to fully build out the park. Once that happens, it will be Atlanta's largest park — 40% larger than Piedmont park.



An aerial view of Bellwood Quarry looking east. Source: Atlanta Beltline.

3. Study Area Overview

The study area is located in Atlanta's northwest quadrant at the boundaries between the Knight Park/Howell Station, Bankhead and Grove Park neighborhoods. It comprises 15.73 acres of land bounded by Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway on the south, the CSX rail line on the east, the abandoned Loveless Avenue right-of-way on the north, and Gary Avenue on the west

The study area contains four structures:

1. Bankhead MARTA Station
2. Fulton County Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Service Center
3. Grady Asa G. Yancey Health Center
4. Northwest Early Learning Center

1. Bankhead MARTA Station

Rail Service

The Bankhead Station is the western terminus for the Green Line, which operates trains from the Bankhead Station east to the Edgewood/Candler Park Station (*see next page*). Green Line trains only have two cars per train, limiting capacity over the eight-car trains used on other lines. The reason for this is because the smaller platform of the Bankhead Station can only accommodate two

cars.

Service hours for the Green Line are limited. Trains service the full route from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., but after 9:00 p.m. the Green Line only operates from the



Top - Bankhead MARTA Station
Bottom - Map of the study area. Source: Google

Bankhead Station to the Vine City Station, where riders must transfer to the Blue Line if they wish to travel farther east.

Ridership

In the first three months of 2017, MARTA averaged 1,739 daily weekday entries. This number trends lower than the historical average of 1,907 daily entries for the 2015 fiscal year (the most recent MARTA data). Despite only operating a two-car train, the station had more average daily entries than eight other MARTA stations in 2013, demonstrating its importance to the surrounding community.

Bus Routes

The Bankhead Station serves three bus routes: Route 26 - Perry Boulevard/North Ave., Route 50 - Donald L. Hollowell Pkwy., and Route 58 - Atlanta Industrial/Hollywood Rd. (See

nex page). The station also serves as a transfer stop for west-east riders, who must transfer to Route 26 if they wish to continue travelling east past the station.

Parking

The transit station is severely parking-constrained, containing only 11 parking spaces. Many riders, however, utilize street parking on Gary Avenue and the DFCS/Grady parking adjacent to the station for additional parking.



Figure X (top) - Bankhead MARTA Station



Northwest Early Learning Center (left) and Grady Yancey Health Center (right)

2. Fulton County DFCS Service Center

The DFCS Northwest Service Center occupies a three-story, 75,200-square-foot office building that is located just north of the Bankhead MARTA Station at 1249 Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway.

The office building is owned by the Fulton County government and is leased to the Georgia Department of Human Services, which has consecutive one-year renewal options through 2025.

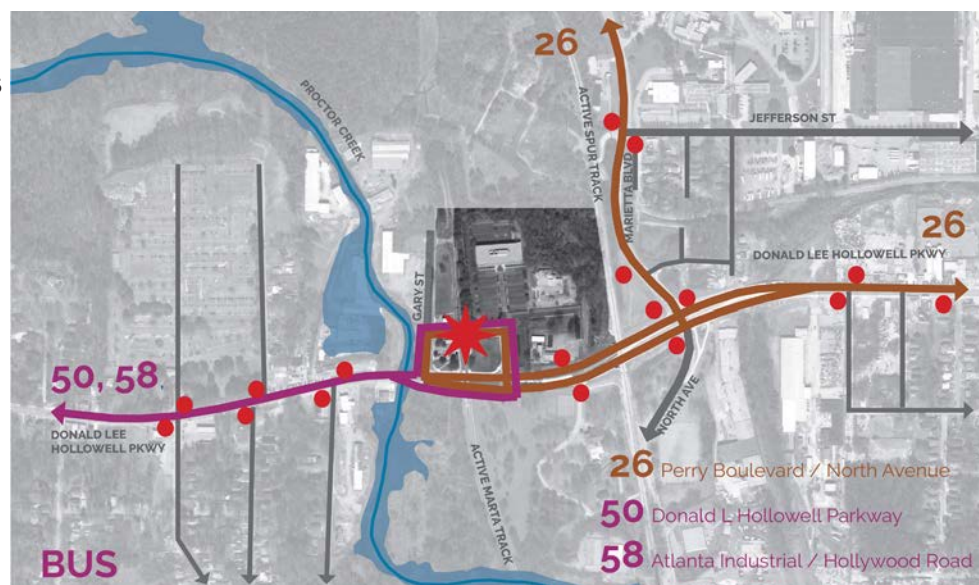
served by a surface parking lot with approximately 200 spaces.

4. Northwest Early Learning Center

Northwest Early Learning Center is a single-story child care center with an outdoor playground that is located in the southeast corner of the study area. It is owned by Word of God Ministries, a local church located approximately four miles west of the study area on Hollowell Parkway. Outside the child care center's fence is a small community garden.

3. Grady Asa G. Yancey Health Center

The health center, which provides primary care services to the community, is in a single-story, medical office building located on the east side of the study area at 1247 Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway. Ownership of the property could not be confirmed. The health center and DFCS service center are both



MARTA bus routes servicing the study area.

4. Previous Transit Station Plans

2006 Livable Centers Initiative Study

Bankhead MARTA Station Concept Plan

The Bankhead MARTA Station Concept Plan is a mixed-use, transit-oriented development located around the existing Bankhead MARTA Station. As one of MARTA's least-used stations, it is critical that the area around it is developed with active, transit-supportive land uses, including housing, retail, services, and offices. To do otherwise is to limit the long-term viability of MARTA rail transit within the Study Area.

The concept plan envisions achieving transit-supportive land use patterns by adding 28,000 sf of new office space, 40,000 sf of retail, including a neighborhood-scaled urban market of 10,000 - 15,000 sf, and 70,000 sf of "flex space" that could serve as retail, office or housing space. In addition, the Concept Plan proposes adding a significant number of owner-occupied housing units, including 17 live-work units, 39 townhomes, and 450 multi-family units. Small open spaces are provided throughout, while street-oriented buildings front them with stoops, storefronts or windows.

Buildings are envisioned between four and six stories in height. Regardless of scale, all are envisioned as high quality designs that take advantage of existing vistas both on-site and in relationship to the surrounding streets.



Figure 3.4: Bankhead MARTA Station area Concept Plan

2009 Atlanta Beltline Master Plan



Excerpted from the master plan:

It is recommended that this site be redeveloped under the high density mixed-use category to complement the area's transportation infrastructure and lack of surrounding single-family uses. In high density mixed-use developments, heights should be 10 or more stories with an urban grid system. The development should be a mix of residential with a strong office and retail component connected to transit. A ratio of 40% office/retail and 60% residential is recommended.

5. Recommendations

With so many transformative civic projects on the horizon, it is all but certain that the study area will be revitalized. It could be a generation, however, before these projects are complete.

With that in mind, recommendations for the study area are divided into two phases:

1. Short-Term Recommendations – Initiatives that can improve quality of life for current residents
2. Long-Term Recommendations – Initiatives that can help catalyze neighborhood redevelopment.

Short-Term Recommendations

1. Provide Access to Healthy, Fresh Food

Access to fresh fruits and vegetables is severely limited around the study area. The closest grocery stores are Walmart located 2.3 miles southeast of the station on Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and the Buy Low Super Market located 2.9 miles west of the station on James Jackson Parkway. Other limited food options include Family Dollar and various convenience stores.

The nonprofit community helps fill the gaps in food access. Good Samaritan Health Center, which is located a half-mile east of the station, grows fruits and vegetables on an urban farm. There are also more than 10 churches in the area that operate food pantries. Access problems still exist, however, due to limited hours of operation.

With average incomes too low to attract grocery store chains, the best short-term option to provide fresh food to the community is through pop-up markets.

A natural fit is the Fresh MARTA Market, which sets up farmers markets inside sta-

tions and accepts EBT/SNAP funds. The program, which was launched in 2015, expanded to four stations in 2016 and is considering another expansion in fall 2017. This would make an excellent and cost-effective way to address food access issues in the neighborhood.

In conversations with the Mayor's Office on Resilience and Community Farmers Markets, the latter of which operates the Fresh MARTA Market, the mTAP team was told that the Bankhead Station is being considered as a location for the next expansion of the Fresh Market.



Fresh MARTA Market. Source: AJC

2. Increase neighborhood access to Maddox Park

Located immediately south of the study area, Maddox Park is a popular community amenity. Access to the park is an issue, however, as the gates to the park's parking lot are frequently closed.

Even though the park is supposed to be open during regular city park hours (6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. daily), the mTAP team observed that the gates were closed several times during open hours. When the gates are closed, visitors park in the driveway just outside of the gates or near the athletic fields on the east side of the CSX rail line.



Maddox Park pool. Source: City of Atlanta

Working with the Department of Parks and Recreation to ensure that Maddox Park's gates are always open during regular park hours would greatly benefit the community by providing access to its outdoor recreation opportunities.

3. Create a pedestrian plaza on underutilized land next to the station.

The area around the Bankhead MARTA Station already serves as a community gathering place. Just outside of the gates of Northwest Early Learning Center are picnic tables and a community garden. The sidewalk along Stiff Street is a place where people set up tables to play cards.

The empty parcel just east of the station

would make the ideal location for a pedestrian plaza that would build up on this natural gathering spot. This plaza could be something as simple as picnic tables and shade trees or as elaborate as stone monuments, full landscaping and park benches.

Its location fronting Hollowell Parkway makes it a natural gateway to the study area, and building micro-park or plaza would create a more inviting entrance.



A rendering of a possible pedestrian plaza

4. Identify all landowners in the study area

Confirming land ownership in the study area has proven to be difficult, as Fulton County property records are not up to date for a vast majority of it.

According to property tax records, MARTA controls 12.25 acres, or 78% of the study area. Further research uncovered that MARTA actually sold a most of this land to private developer Bankhead Development, L.C. (dba Bankhead Partners) in 1994.

Thanks in part to the mTAP team bringing up the issue, MARTA has made the Fulton County Board of Assessors aware of this inaccuracy and is working with them to update their property records.

Because of these inaccurate property records, it is difficult to determine who currently owns the land that MARTA sold in 1994, or if additional sales have happened in the study area since then.

A rental agreement for the DFCS Service Center dated December 15, 2010, shows that Bankhead Partners, which developed the building in 1994, transferred ownership of the property to Fulton County at that time. Since the DFCS Service Center was developed, another building was developed that is currently occupied by Grady Hospital, but it is unknown if Bankhead Partners was responsible for it. The ownership of approximately half of the study area could not be determined by the mTAP team.



The parcel information on record with the county overlaid with a current aerial map. Source: Fulton County Board of Assessors

| Property Owner | Acreage | % of Study Area |
|------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| MARTA | 3.21 | 20.41 |
| Word of God Ministries | 1.93 | 12.25 |
| AZS Corp. | 0.59 | 3.72 |
| MARTA rail easement | 0.55 | 3.72 |
| Cemetery | 0.52 | 3.27 |
| Abandoned road right of ways | 0.46 | 2.90 |
| Fulton County | ? | ? |
| Cannot Confirm | 7.89 | 50.16 |

5. Support the creation of the Beltline Special Improvement District

House Bill 642 was introduced in the 2017 General Assembly. This bill allows for the creation of a Special Improvement District (SID), which taxes residential and commercial property to help fund transportation projects in the district.

The law stipulates qualifying projects must be “planned to impact 10,000 or

more acres and at least 10 transit miles within the area of operation.” Currently the Atlanta Beltline planning area is the only project in the state that qualifies.

This bill is in the House Governmental Affairs Committee and will be picked up during the 2018 legislative session. It is recommended that the Emerald Corridor Foundation support the passage of this bill, which will open up a new funding source for the Atlanta Beltline.



Hollowell Parkway facing east from the MARTA Station.

6. Address pedestrian connectivity issues between the study area and the surrounding neighborhood.

Pedestrian access west of the study area is limited and oftentimes unsafe. The study area contains one crosswalk over Hollowell Parkway at its intersection with Stiff Street. Pedestrians wishing to cross Hollowell Parkway elsewhere must walk either 0.3 miles east to Marietta Boulevard or 0.4 miles west to Chappell Road to find the next-closest crosswalks.

In addition, Hollowell Parkway itself is a busy U.S. highway that in 2016 saw approximately 20,000 daily car trips, approximately 1,200 of which were semi-trucks. Curb cuts along Hollowell Parkway are common, and sidewalks are often broken or nonexistent. These elements all combine to give the area around the transit station a Walk Score of 28.

In the short term, the study area’s existing crosswalk at Hollowell Parkway and Stiff Street should be upgraded from a concrete

median to a vegetated pedestrian refuge.

In addition, a second Hollowell Parkway crosswalk should be added at its intersection with Gary Street on the west side of the study area. This crosswalk also would serve as a crossing for the Proctor Creek Greenway. Since it is not a signalized intersection, a pedestrian hybrid beacon is recommended for this crosswalk.

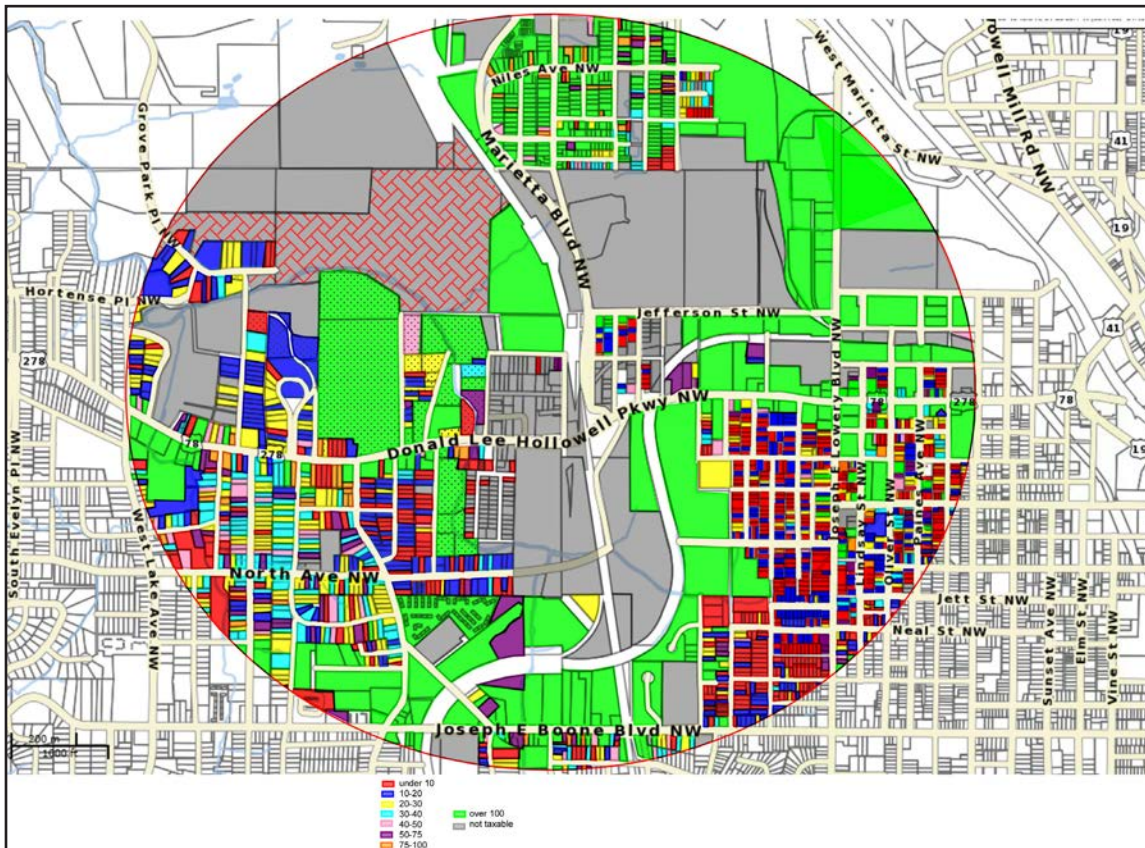
7. Fill vacant housing and provide homeowner assistance education for existing residents.

The Grove Park neighborhood to the west and southwest of the Bankhead Station struggles with low property values (See below) and vacant homes. Bringing in

developers to purchase and renovate existing homes while providing information on homeowner assistance programs for current residents would inject new life into the neighborhoods while preventing long-standing residents from being pushed out.

Emerald Corridor Foundation should educate residents and the development community on financing tool that are available to them including:

- HOME Atlanta 4.0
- Fannie Mae HFA Preferred
- Atlanta Affordable Homeownership Program
- ATL Home Renovation Advantage
- Intown Mortgage Assistance Program



A map of assessed property tax values within 1 mile of the Bankhead Station. Values are in thousands.

Long-Term Recommendations

1. Expand Bankhead Station train platform to accommodate full-length trains.

With the passage of the 2016 MARTA sales tax referendum, Atlantans showed their enthusiasm for transit. One of the projects on MARTA's list of proposed transit improvement projects for the 2016 sales tax referendum was extending the rail platform for the Bankhead Station to accommodate eight-car trains. Currently the platform can only accommodate two-car trains, so it is recommended that community stakeholders advocate for this project making the final list of projects to be funded from the sales tax referendum.

2. Protect Green Line development corridor to hedge for future MARTA expansion.

The Green Line's terminus station was Perry Homes, but the closure of the public housing community in the 1990s stopped those plans. Still, MARTA expansion is now more of a certainty than a possibility, especially in Atlanta's booming west and northwest neighborhoods, so community stakeholders should assist MARTA in preserving any land holdings for a possible future expansion of the Green Line.

3. Encourage collaboration between large landowners.

A relatively small number of landowners own much of property surrounding the study area, particularly near the future Westside Reservoir Park. These landowners can exert a large influence on the

area's future. For that reason, Emerald Corridor Foundation should continue to facilitate dialogue between these groups about how to best revitalize the area.

4. Promote efforts to improve the water quality of Proctor Creek.

Leveraging Proctor Creek as a recreational amenity will not be successful unless the creek's water quality improves. By some measures, Proctor Creek is the source of as much as 40% of the Chattahoochee River's pollution in metro Atlanta. The Emerald Corridor Foundation should partner with groups such as the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, which has active waterway restoration efforts underway at Proctor Creek, to clean up the waterway.

In addition, the group should advocate for stormwater detention ponds throughout the Proctor Creek Greenway to mitigate flooding and improve water quality. These ponds could themselves become recreational amenities, much like the one found in the Old Fourth Ward Park.



Old Fourth Ward Park. Source: Atlanta Beltline

5. Redevelop underutilized land adjacent to the MARTA station into a community-focused center that addresses the neighborhood's needs.

The study area is zoned MRC-1 with the Beltline overlay. The general intent of MRC-1 is low-density residential and commercial uses intended to serve a single neighborhood. General requirements include creating street grids less than 400 feet in length with sidewalks and on-street parking to slow the speed of traffic in the area. The addition of the Beltline overlay requires parking to be hidden from view

and active uses to be along all street fronts. With this in mind, the plan establishes a two-phase layout for the subject site.

The short-term plan creates a park adjacent to the MARTA platform. Retail is located in converted shipping containers, which can be used to provide community necessities such as fresh food options. The plan leaves in place the DFACS and Grady clinic buildings while establishing the street grid for future development.

Bankhead Station Redevelopment Phase I





The remainder of the short-term plan can be done in phases. The day care center site is redeveloped into a four-story, mixed-income wrap apartment project that would have ground floor restaurant and retail space, part of which could be used as a new day care center. This plan also

introduces townhomes on the streets near the potential south entrance of the West-side Reservoir Park, a box retail site of approximately 33,000 square feet, and a parking deck that can be utilized for office, retail and MARTA patrons.



Long-term plans would replace the Grady clinic building with a larger footprint five- to six-story office building. This building could house the relocated Grady clinic as well as the DFACS office, freeing up the existing site for additional retail or office uses.

Connectivity to Maddox Park is recommended in both scenarios by way of a planted median in the existing center divide that would help slow traffic and provide a respite for pedestrian traffic. It is anticipated that by improving the land adjacent to the station, pedestrians will feel drawn to use this signaled entry to the park as they make their way from the MARTA station.



Bankhead Station Redevelopment Phase II

