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Progress



Atlanta
Downtown
Improvement
District



City
of
Atlanta



JSA-McGill **Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study**



*Submitted:
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Preface

1.0 Inventory and Assessment

Section 1.0 summarizes the initial phase of the JSA-McGill LCI Study including documentation of existing conditions within the study area such as study area context, demographics, existing land use, character and building conditions, historic resources, existing transportation and circulation, study area issues and opportunities and potential development opportunities.

2.0 Development Plan

The Development Plan outlines the vision established by the JSA-McGill community through the public outreach process and the future land use and circulation plan for the LCI Study Area. Included in this section are area-specific design concepts and projects, detailed development plans for high-priority projects and proposed transportation improvements for the next 25 years. This section includes the Community Vision, the LCI Study Area Concept Plan (land use and circulation projects) and the Downtown Development Program, including detailed information and data on the proposed LCI development and improvement projects.

3.0 Action Plan

The Action Plan describes mechanisms for implementing the land use and transportation recommendations described in the Development Plan. Elements of this section include Strategic Recommendations (organizational framework and city initiatives), Regulatory Enhancements (zoning amendments) and the 5-Year Action Plan (projects, costs, funding), 25-Year projections of population and employment within the Study Area and descriptions of how the JSA McGill LCI Plan addresses LCI program goals.

4.0 Appendix

The final section of this report provides documentation of public outreach and participation activities and detailed market and planning data alluded to or summarized in the body of the LCI plan.

1.0 Inventory and Assessment

- 1.1 Study Area Context
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- 1.9 Issues and Opportunities
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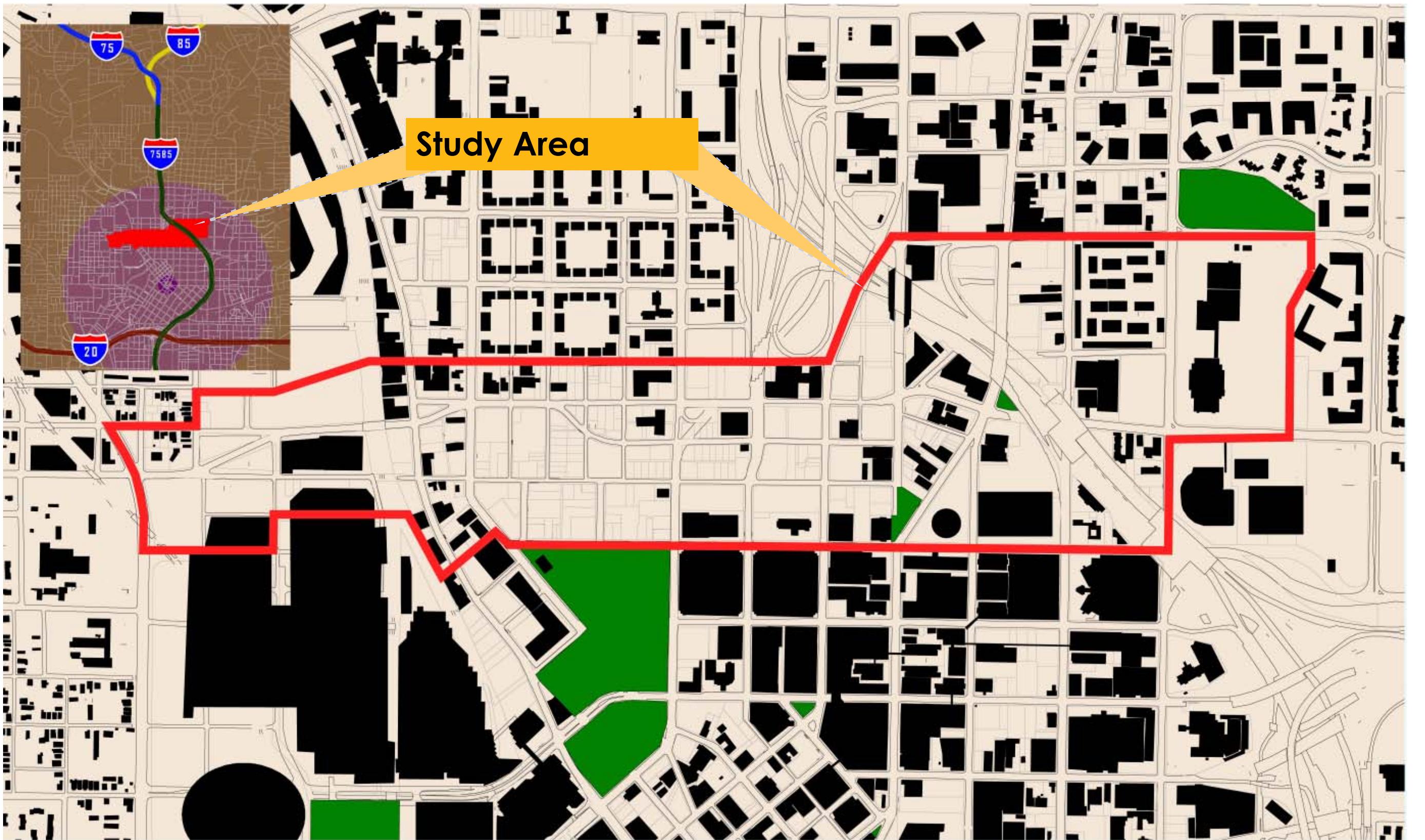
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1.1 Study Area Context

The JSA-McGill study area is located in the northern third of 'Downtown Atlanta'. It is midway between the Interstate 75/85 convergence into the Downtown Connector, and the Connector and Interstate 20 interchange (Figure 1.1). The study area is approximately two miles long, from Northside Drive on the west and extending almost to Central Park Drive on the east. At its widest, along Peachtree Street and West Peachtree Street, it is only one-third of a mile across, from Pine Street on the north to Baker Street on the south.

JSA-McGill is the common way to refer to a single east-west transportation artery that traverses a number of different streets. At Northside Drive, the JSA-McGill alignment extends **Simpson Street** until transitioning over to **Jones Street** as it crosses the northbound rail line out of Atlanta. As it intersects Marietta Street, it shifts northward again to become **Alexander Street**. Alexander Street then changes name to honor journalist **Ralph McGill Boulevard** east of Peachtree Street. JSA-McGill has for many years been identified as the main east-west connector across the northern end of Downtown Atlanta, but it is only recently that design and preliminary engineering (the JSA Concept Plan) has been undertaken to improve the alignment, standardize the right-of-way and eliminate the transition between two-way traffic and one-way pairs. The Concept Plan is the genesis of this LCI study, and discussed further in Section 2.0.

Figure 1.2 shows an aerial view of the study area with major physical landmarks identified. Each end of the corridor is anchored by significant public uses; on the west, the Georgia World Congress Center, and on the east, the Boisfeuillet Jones Atlanta Civic Center. The study area's relationship to the Central Business District can also be seen, as can the position of adjacent residential neighborhoods – Centennial Place, Herndon Homes, Vine City and portions of SoNo. At the approximate center of the area are two large districts in flux – the many surface parking lots that constitute Centennial Hill, and the site of the new Georgia Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola complex. Just as the JSA Concept Plan provides the underlying rationale for this study, the development of the Aquarium and the relocated World of Coca-Cola give it a sense of immediacy.



JSA McGill LCI Plan



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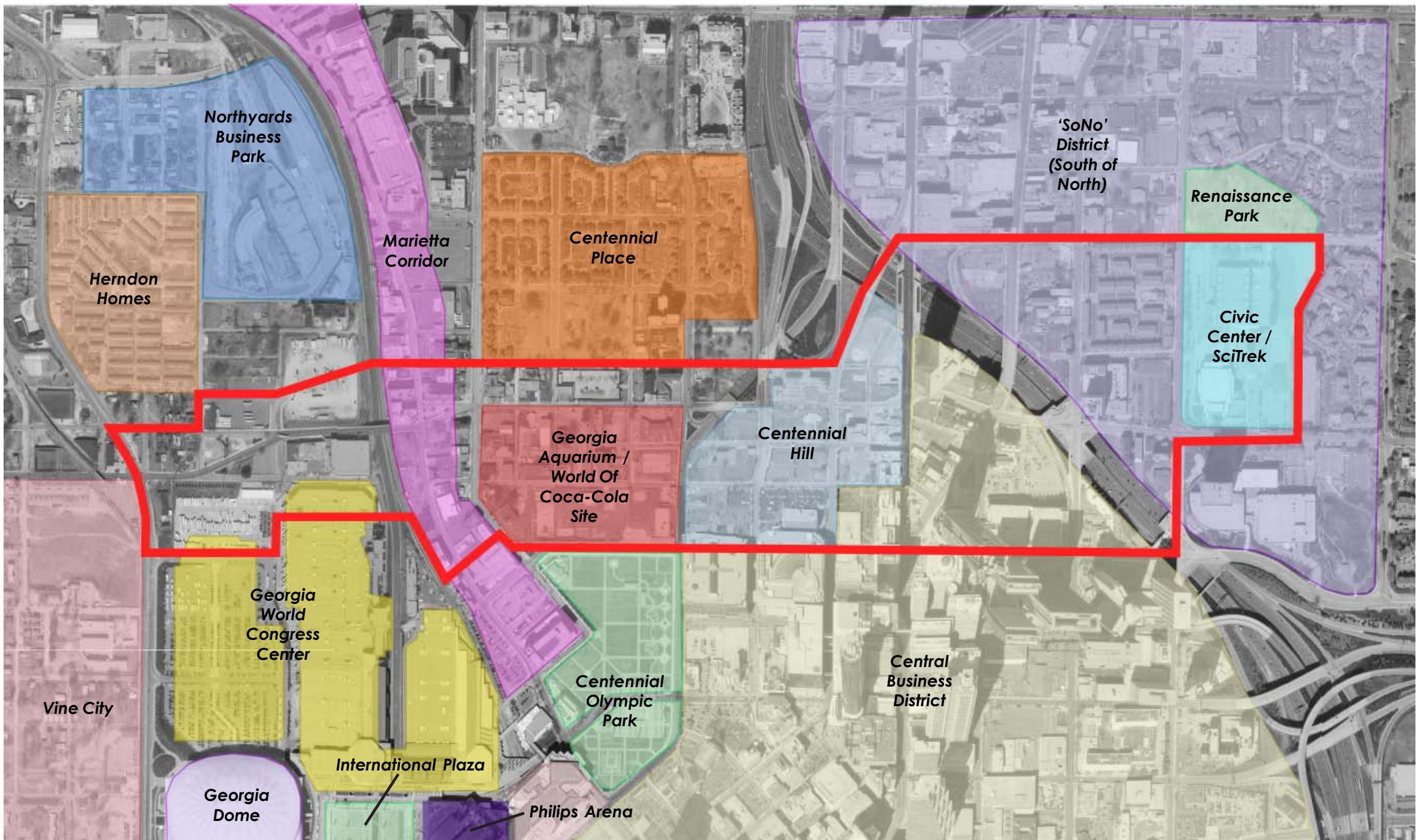
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Study Area Context
Figure 1.1





JSA McGill LCI Plan



Study Area Aerial View
Figure 1.2



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1.2 Demographics

The JSA-McGill study area has seen significant changes in its physical form, housing stock and demographic profile since 1990. Most of the change since 1990 was associated with the 1996 Olympic Games including the mixed-income redevelopment of Techwood/Clark Howell Homes to Centennial Place and the wholesale demolition of underutilized commercial property to create Centennial Olympic Park. Now, the Georgia Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola attractions on previously vacated land continue to dramatically change the landscape. On the west end of the corridor, new parking and truck marshalling space for the Georgia World Congress Center removed a large district of existing housing. And on the east, new housing has replaced either underutilized buildings or surface parking. Yet although change is clearly visible to the casual observer, it is not as easy to quantify because the size and shape of the study area does not neatly coincide with the four census tracts – 18, 19, 21 and 22 - it bridges.

Bearing in mind the relationship between study area and the Census tracts, it is useful nevertheless to note some trends occurring in the larger neighborhood between 1990 and 2000. Population has increased by 720 persons or 8.6%, despite demolition of housing units in the area. Tracts 18 and 19, both east of Williams Street, increase by over 1,000 and 1,500 persons respectively. Tracts 20 and 21, both west of Williams, lost population by 1,100 and 730 persons respectively. This locational shift in population is validated by the demolitions occurring in tracts 20 and 21, and the conversions and new construction in 18 and 19. Overall, the population increased at a greater rate than the 5.39% experienced by the city overall (Table 1.1).

| | 1990 | 2000 | % Change | Atl. 1990 | Atl. 2000 | % Change |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Persons | 7,632 | 8,352 | 8.62% | 394,017 | 416,474 | 5.39% |
| Households | 3,431 | 4,508 | 23.89% | 155,752 | 168,147 | 7.37% |
| Housing Units | 4,121 | 5,198 | 20.72% | 182,754 | 186,925 | 2.23% |
| Avg. Household Size | 2.47 | 1.83 | -35.05% | 2.53 | 2.30 | -9.99% |
| Owner Occupied | 13.03% | 19.85% | 6.83% | NA | 73,473 | NA |
| Renter Occupied | 86.97% | 80.15% | -6.83% | NA | 94,674 | NA |
| Vacant | 1.60% | 2.46% | 0.86% | 5,143 | 5,620 | 8.49% |

Table 1.1 – general demographic trends for census tracts 18, 19, 21 and 22 compared with Atlanta trends

Housing units and the total number of households also both increased at a much greater rate in the four census tracts than in the city overall. Over 1,000 housing units were added to the area, an increase of almost 24% over the decade; however, this was not a net positive gain distributed evenly throughout the tracts. Tracts 18 and 19 rocketed with almost 2,000 new units built since 1990 while tracts 21 and 22 lost over 700 units. This coincides with the population trends; the 281 units lost in Tract 21 correspond to the land clearance for Centennial Olympic Park and the Coca-Cola Olympic Village, and the 443 units lost in tract 22 parallels the Georgia World Congress Center demolitions along Northside Drive.

Moreover, redevelopment of Techwood Homes into Centennial Place added 1000 units to the housing stock of tract 19, and developments such as 450 Piedmont and Renaissance Lofts boosted housing counts in tract 18 by 802 units. This hypothetical ‘replacement’ of aged and dilapidated single-family housing by new residential mid- and high-density product is probably reflected in the housing vacancy rate as well. The tract area increased in vacant housing (straight vacancy; does not include property transitioning between occupants) by less than 1%,

well below the 8.5% increase in the city. Condemnations or abandonments may have continued in other areas of tracts 21 and 22 considering other commercial redevelopment projects like the Northyards business park; concurrent housing demolition may have limited vacancies to the marginal rate.

The jump in households was matched by the radical decline in average household size. While in the city as a whole, household size decreased by 10% over the decade, it decreased by over three times that in the tract area. The factor of three applies to the discrepancy between the tract area and the city in number of households as well. The significance of this gap is that while the larger demographic shift of families away from the city to the suburbs is balanced by a returning population of young singles, couples and empty-nesters, in the tract area this trend is highly pronounced. Again, considering the redevelopment of Techwood Homes, a sizeable population of large families – either immediate with children or extended with live-in relatives – may have been relocated to other Atlanta Housing Authority properties or neighborhoods in the city; a significant portion of the population occupying Centennial Place now are single and married students attending Georgia Tech.

The phenomenon of urban families (often poor) and the elderly, many of whom are residents of public housing, being replaced by a younger or more affluent population is partially confirmed by the shift in age that occurred in the tract area between 1990 and 2000. Decreases in population over the decade occurred in the age brackets of 17 years and below, and 70 years and above (Table 1.2, light yellow).

| | 1990 Aggregation | 1990 % Total | 2000 Aggregation | 2000 % Total | % Change 1990-2000 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Under 5 years | 833 | 10.91% | 590 | 7.06% | -3.85% |
| 5 to 9 years | 572 | 7.49% | 429 | 5.14% | -2.36% |
| 10 to 17 years | 676 | 8.86% | 430 | 5.15% | -3.71% |
| 18 to 21 years | 400 | 5.24% | 445 | 5.33% | 0.09% |
| 22 to 29 years | 1,237 | 16.21% | 1,629 | 19.50% | 3.30% |
| 30 to 39 years | 1,496 | 19.60% | 1,739 | 20.82% | 1.22% |
| 40 to 49 years | 797 | 10.44% | 1,207 | 14.45% | 4.01% |
| 50 to 59 years | 446 | 5.84% | 762 | 9.12% | 3.28% |
| 60 to 69 years | 476 | 6.24% | 551 | 6.60% | 0.36% |
| 70 to 79 years | 441 | 5.78% | 354 | 4.24% | -1.54% |
| 80 to 84 years | 144 | 1.89% | 122 | 1.46% | -0.43% |
| 85 years and over | 114 | 1.49% | 94 | 1.13% | -0.37% |
| Totals | 7,632 | 100.00% | 8,352 | 100.00% | |

Table 1.2 – trends in age for census tracts 18, 19, 21 and 22

While part of this is explained by age cohorts moving on to the next bracket or dying, the key ages of below 10 and 70-80 declined significantly indicating that families with young children and retirement-age seniors were looking for housing elsewhere. On the flipside, major increases occurred in population aged between 22 and 29, and between 40 and 60 (Table 1.2, light orange). This clearly corresponds to the notion of young singles and couples – possibly professionals – and empty-nesters replacing the very young and the old. Looking also at the shift in tenure over the decade, a decrease in area rentals is offset by an equal increase in owner-occupied housing. This supports the contention that the area has changed from low- to middle-income groups dependent on rental housing to those with higher incomes – essentially gentrification. This trend is emblematic of the demographic transformation in the entire corridor given the changes visible in the built fabric.

A look at one final demographic measure for the census tract area shows another kind of shift. While the racial makeup of the area is still majority African-American, there was a 16% drop in this racial group and a 26% increase in whites (Table 1.3). Considering that whites constituted less than one-quarter of one percent of the population in 1990, the jump to over 25% in 2000 is very significant. It shows clearly the transition from the 'sixties and 'seventies stereotypical 'inner-city' neighborhoods to the gentrified postmodern downtown of the 'nineties. It bears keeping in mind that in these census tracts, the vehicle of change was rapid and purposeful redevelopment and not a slower, more random process.

| | 1990 | 2000 | % Change |
|---|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| White | 0.16% | 26.40% | 26.24% |
| Black | 84.50% | 68.45% | -16.05% |
| American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut | 0.16% | 0.23% | 0.07% |
| Asian or Pacific Islander | 1.59% | 2.67% | 1.08% |
| Other | 0.29% | 2.25% | 1.96% |

Table 1.3 – trends in race for census tracts 18, 19, 21 and 22

Although the demographic analysis above is based on census tracts incorporating a larger area than the JSA-McGill LCI corridor, quantifying the existing development and applying a household size multiplier gives an idea of the total population and employment in 2003. The calculations for these are based on survey counts of residential units and workers within the study area. This methodology has been used to achieve a somewhat more accurate count of the existing population, since the 2000 Census does not reflect developments completed subsequently, the majority of which make up a large number of the housing units within the study area. The figure below indicates that the corridor roughly contains 2,400 residents and employs over 15,000 people. Significant employers include SunTrust, the federal government and the other office uses in the Peachtree Summit building and SunTrust Plaza. Other employers include small commercial establishments along Marietta Street and Peachtree Street in addition to the hotel and civic uses in the corridor.

| Population¹ | Housing Units | Average Household Size² | Employment in Jobs³ |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 2,404 | 1,202 | 2.0 | 15,564 |

Table 1.4 – Population and employment approximations for the JSA McGill LCI study area

¹ Assuming 100% occupancy rate

² Average Household size calculations based on Zimmerman Volk and Associates' estimation for 2003.

³ Employment calculations assume 250 SF/person for office, 350 SF/person for retail and 1000 SF/person for hotel and 250 SF/ hotel room – employment estimates per ZHA Inc.

1.3 Existing Land Use

The JSA-McGill study area is made up of about 329 parcels covering approximately 145 acres of land. It is surrounded by the Downtown hotel district, the central business district and residential neighborhoods. Figure 1.3 shows the existing land use within the study area, which were assessed through a windshield survey. The land use categories derived for this study are a compilation of the City of Atlanta's land use classification system and Fulton County's land use categorization. The calculations are based on parcel level data compiled by the City of Atlanta.

Commercial uses are subdivided into three categories based on density and building height and make up about 12% of the land use in terms of acreage. The character of commercial development changes from the low-density historic Marietta Street commercial district on the west to office towers like the SunTrust Plaza and Peachtree Summit on the eastern side of the study area. Though not a part of the study area, major office complexes like the Coca-Cola campus and the Inforum/Apparel Mart surround the JSA-McGill corridor emphasizing its proximity to the Downtown business district core.

Institutional uses dominate the corridor with the Boisfeuillet Jones Atlanta Civic Center and Georgia World Congress Center occupying about 29 acres of land. Historic churches like the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and First United Methodist Church contribute to the changing façade of Peachtree Street. The Crawford Long Hospital is another large institutional use located on the northeastern edge of the study area, at Peachtree Street and Ralph McGill Boulevard, adjacent to the Downtown Connector.

The study area has only about 0.5 acres of public open space which includes two pocket parks – Hardy Ivy Park at the intersection of Peachtree Street and West Peachtree Street and Mayor's Park at Peachtree Street and Ralph McGill Boulevard by the Downtown connector. Private plazas like the SunTrust Plaza and St. Luke's park add to the stock of open space in the study area. Private and public open spaces combined provide less than 2% of the total acreage within the study area. This lack of usable open space is somewhat compensated by two large urban parks, Centennial Olympic Park and Renaissance Park that surround the corridor. Centennial Olympic Park, a 19-acre urban civic space lies south of Baker Street providing Downtown with a large public gathering space, but few amenities for residents in the area. Renaissance Park, north of the corridor mainly serves the Central Park community as a neighborhood park and is not very accessible from much of the study area. Furthermore, these two parks anchor the east and west sides of the corridor creating a need for a large public open space in the central core of the study area.

A wide variety of residential uses are scattered throughout the study area. Downtown Atlanta has seen a trend of increasing new residential activity which is evident through the construction of two new high-rise residential towers like Centennial House and Museum Tower. Marietta Street has more historic loft housing appropriately adjoining the railroads. The eastern side of the corridor covers a small part of the Renaissance Park neighborhood and includes two residential complexes – 450 Piedmont Avenue and Renaissance Lofts.

Finally, an astounding 64 acres, nearly 43% of the study area, is either vacant or occupied by surface parking lots. About 20 acres of this vacant/surface parking land is to be occupied by the new Aquarium (presently under construction) and planned World of Coca-Cola. However there remain large concentrations of surface parking lots located between Centennial Olympic Park Drive and West Peachtree Street (in an area known as Centennial Hill) which provide the greatest development opportunities in the study area.

Table 1.5: JSA-McGill LCI Existing Land Use*

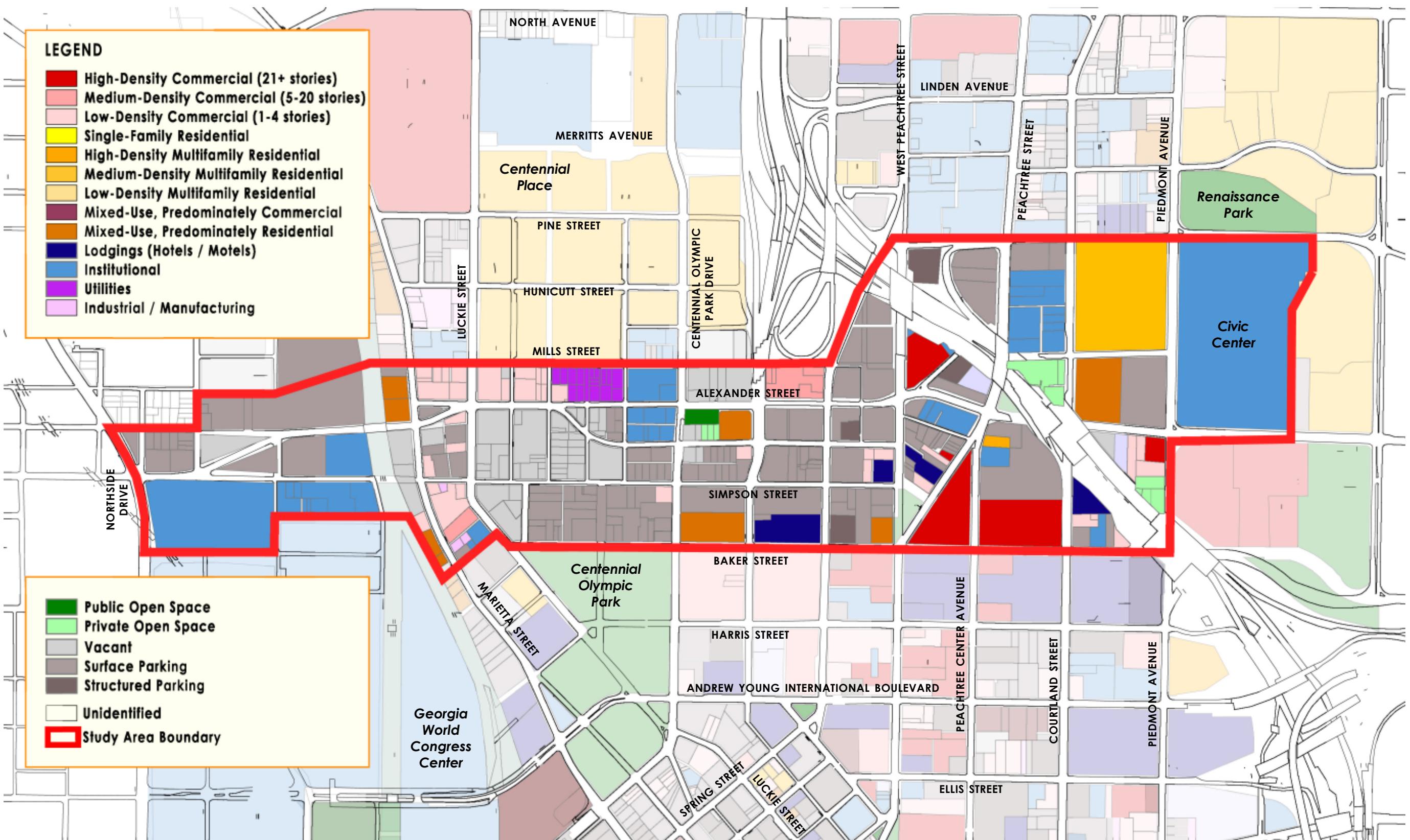
| Land Use Type | Number of Parcels* | % of Total Parcels | Acreage | % of Total Acreage |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Commercial High Density | 5 | 1.52% | 7.63 | 5.24% |
| Commercial Low Density | 37 | 11.25% | 7.64 | 5.24% |
| Commercial Medium Density | 6 | 1.82% | 2 | 1.37% |
| Industrial | 4 | 1.22% | 1.8 | 1.24% |
| Institutional | 34 | 10.33% | 37.42 | 25.69% |
| Lodging | 4 | 1.22% | 3.1 | 2.13% |
| Mixed-Use Predominately Residential | 8 | 2.43% | 6.73 | 4.62% |
| Multifamily High Density | 1 | 0.30% | 0.25 | 0.17% |
| Multifamily Medium Density | 1 | 0.30% | 8.47 | 5.81% |
| Public Open Space | 1 | 0.30% | 0.45 | 0.31% |
| Private Open Space | 11 | 3.34% | 2.23 | 1.53% |
| Parking Deck | 4 | 1.22% | 2.15 | 1.48% |
| Surface Parking Lot** | 135 | 41.03% | 50.29 | 34.52% |
| Utility | 18 | 5.47% | 1.78 | 1.22% |
| Vacant | 60 | 18.24% | 13.74 | 9.43% |
| Total | 329 | | 145.68 | |

* Based on City of Atlanta's parcel data and Fulton County Tax records

** Includes only parcels used solely for parking purposes



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Existing Land Use
Figure 1.3



1.4 Existing Building Condition and Occupancy

A windshield survey of building conditions and occupancy of both residential and non-residential buildings allows a better understanding of the overall state of repair in the study area (Figure 1.4). The survey also helps in identifying concentrations of buildings that are unoccupied or in a state of disrepair which would warrant a more detailed study of that area. The evaluation of the buildings was restricted to the exterior and assessed based on the condition of the foundation, siding, roof, windows etc. The planning team conducted the survey using four categories to define building conditions:

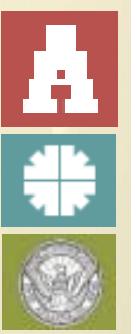
- **Very Good Condition/ Minor Defects**
Good condition, may require minor repairs
- **Good Condition / Moderate Defects**
Minor rehabilitation needed
- **Fair/ Major Defects**
Major rehabilitation needed
- **Deteriorated / Public Safety Hazard**
Extensive rehabilitation necessary, may require demolition

Over three-fourths of the buildings in the study area are found to be in **very good** condition. They include most of the institutional uses like the churches and cultural venues like the Boisfeuillet Jones Atlanta Civic Center. The corridor includes a large number of recently constructed residential towers and high-rise offices which come within this category. Buildings found to be in **good** condition are mostly smaller commercial establishments along Marietta Street, Baker Street and Peachtree Street. They require minor repairs like new windows/doors etc or exterior paint. Very few buildings are found to be in **fair** condition which would require some structural rehabilitation and renovations. Some of the historic buildings in the study area like the Medical Arts Building fall into this category. There are no **deteriorated** buildings in the study area which would require major rehab or demolition.

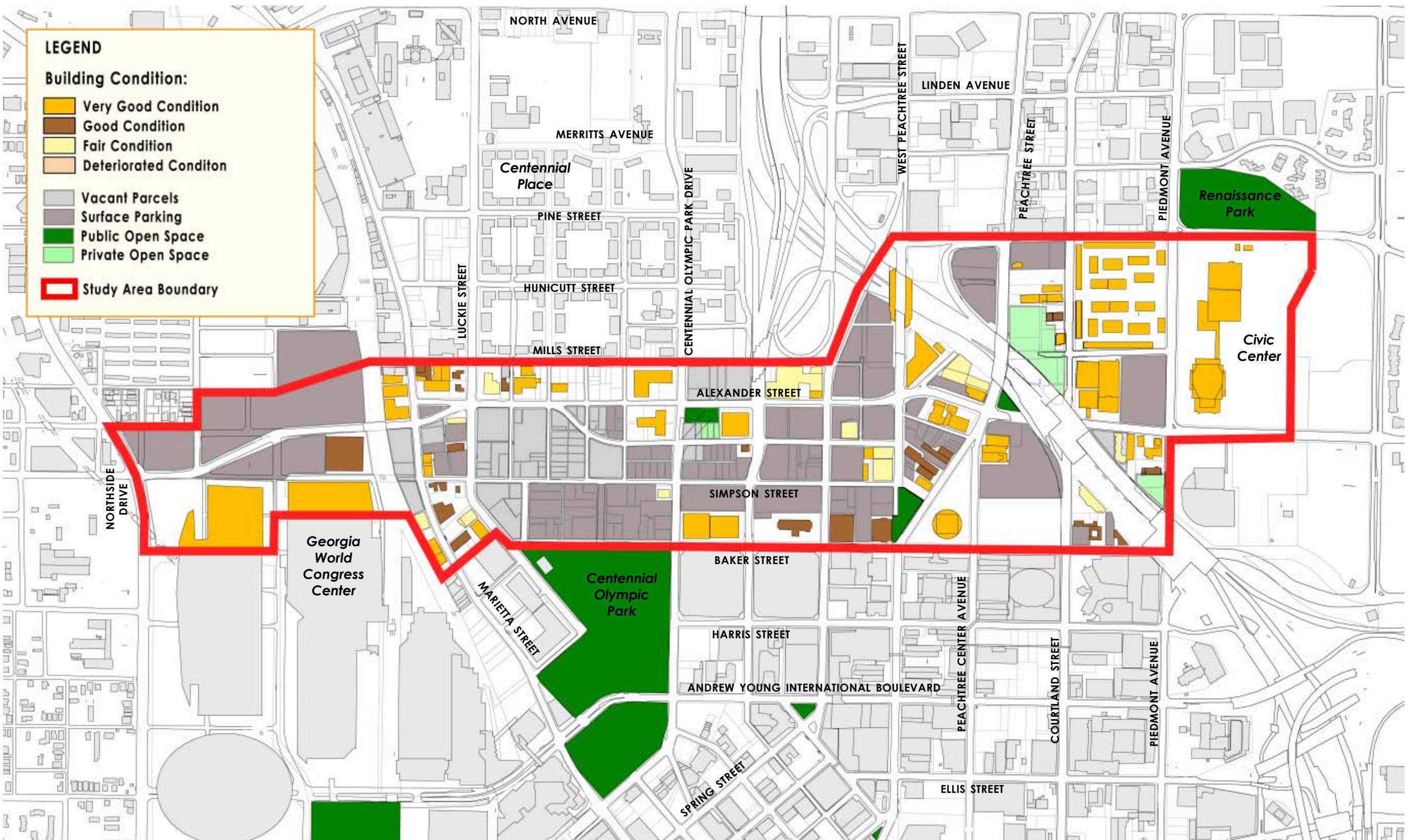
Building occupancy was also assessed based on a visual survey (Figure 1.5). The following designations describe the standards used to make the determinations:

- **OCCUPIED**
This designation is based on clear evidence of habitation by legitimate occupants, such as cars parked in the driveway/parking lot, curtains in the windows, the presence of deliveries such as mail or newspapers, retail business signs, etc.
- **PARTIALLY OCCUPIED**
This designation is used in cases of multifamily dwellings or larger office buildings. As above, it is based on evidence of habitation by legitimate occupants and uses the same criteria.
- **UNOCCUPIED**
This designation is based on clear evidence of the lack of legitimate occupants. The evidence includes an obviously unoccupied for-sale or for-rent dwelling or structure, missing or broken doors or windows, clear dilapidation, boarded openings, etc.

A majority of the buildings in the study area are occupied. The unoccupied buildings include the Boomershine building (under renovation at the time of the survey) and the Medical Arts Building. Some of the high-rise office towers like the SunTrust Plaza and Peachtree Summit were evaluated to be partially unoccupied based on office occupancy data in Downtown Atlanta (Occupancy rate less than 90%).



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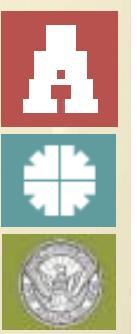
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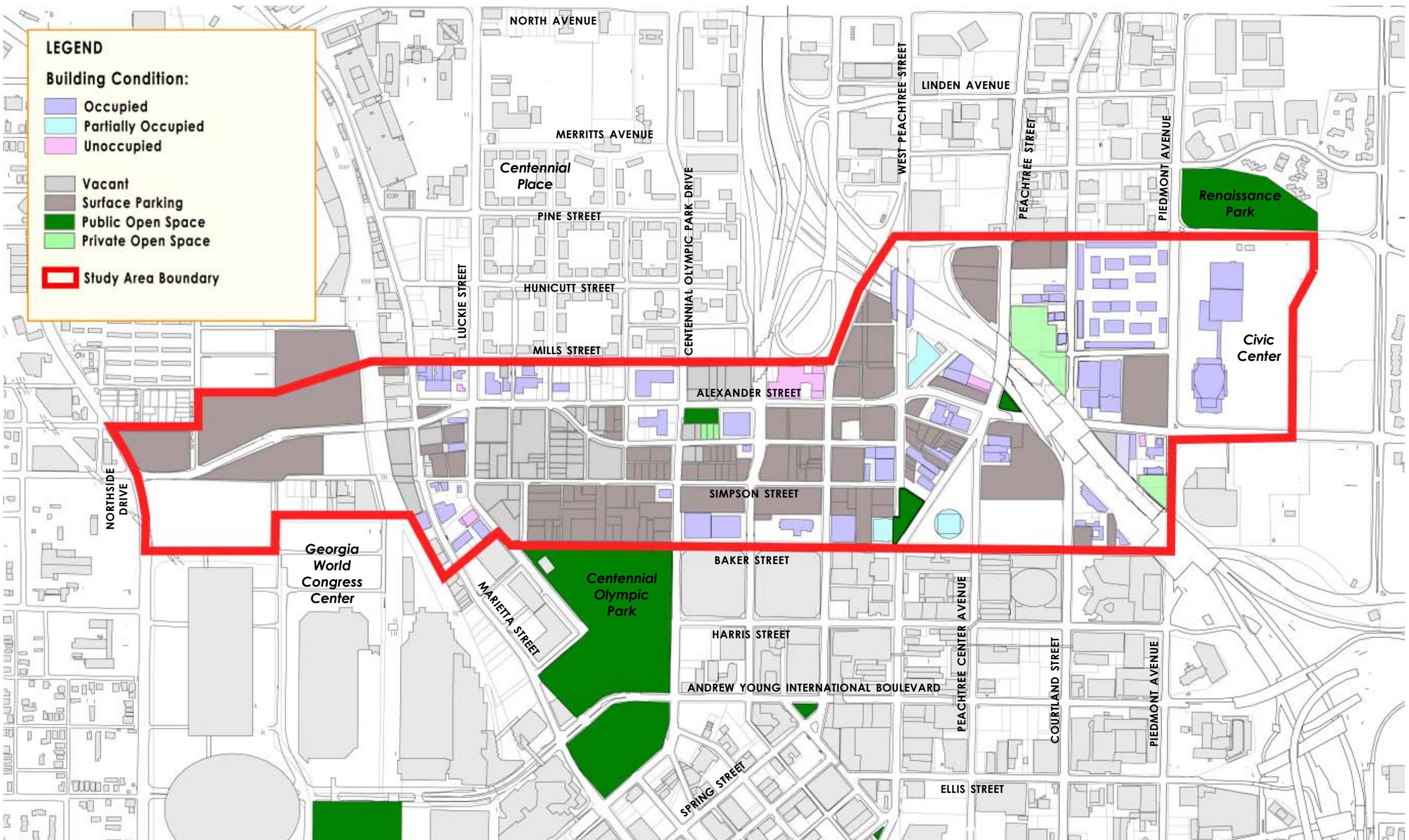
Existing Building Condition

Figure 1.4





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Existing Building Occupancy
Figure 1.5



1.5 Urban Design Framework

The preceding sections have described existing conditions in the study area based on survey and regulatory data. But beyond parcel level analysis, each area has perceptual characteristics which are more subjective and hard to quantify. These characteristics include sub-districts within the study area, connections that unify these districts and individual buildings that contribute to the overall character (Figure 1.6). For the purpose of this study the urban design framework is based on two characteristics – the elements that distinctly contribute to the urban environment and the connections that create the links between these elements.

Urban Elements:

There are several unique "Urban Elements" that contribute the overall character of the JSA-McGill corridor including historic districts/nodes, historic structures, and cultural/civic destinations. In particular, there is an historic node of development centering on the intersection of Marietta and Luckie in which some former warehouses associated with the railroads have been adaptively reused as loft residences and offices. There are also several historic structures considered as 'contributing buildings' by the Atlanta Urban Design Commission scattered throughout the corridor (although they are not numerous). In particular, a group of historic buildings including the Medical Arts Building, the Imperial Hotel, the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and First United Methodist Church create a node of historic resources on Peachtree Street where it spans the interstate. Several large and small scale civic/cultural destinations further provide a sense of character to the corridor including the Civic Center, Georgia World Congress Center, the 'Imagine It' Children's Museum etc. Taken individually, these disparate elements each lend their own defining characteristics and "sense of place." However, for the most part, they operate independently and locally in specific "nodes" or "districts" and do not add up to an overall unified sense of place for the entire corridor.

In terms of density and its corresponding impact on "urban character," the corridor is once again divided into distinct districts. Peachtree Street is characterized by high density mixed use buildings creating an urban environment. This density tapers down as the corridor transitions into the neighborhoods like Vine City on the west and Central Park on the East. These variations in densities once again add to the discontinuous character of the corridor. Thus, the study area feels more like a series of districts linked by a transportation connection.

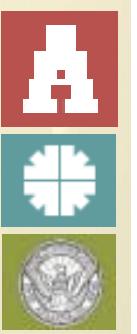
Public Environment:

The public environment includes open spaces like parks and plazas along with the connections that link these spaces. The study area is dotted with pocket plazas featuring public art and water features. Some spaces like Hardy Ivy Park and SunTrust Plaza contribute to the character of the place by acting as gateways into Downtown while others especially the Folk Art parks which span the interstate at Ralph McGill Boulevard need better maintenance. In terms of the complete corridor, these public spaces/art installations are few in number and do not create a major impact in the study area. The western side of the corridor has an opportunity for more open space or public art especially along the Marietta Street artery.

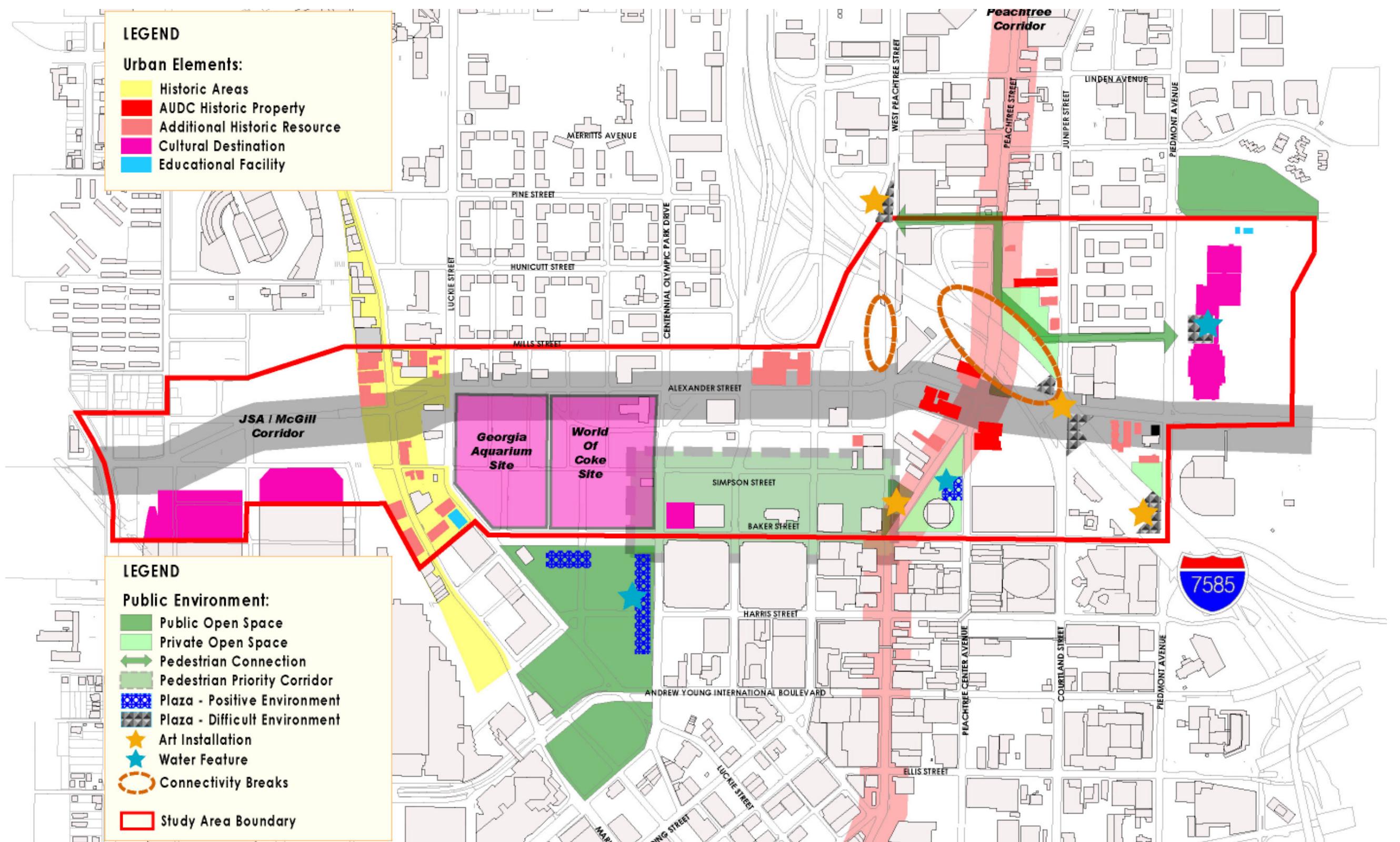
The pedestrian environment needs immediate attention. Sidewalks along most of the internal streets are in a state of disrepair, thereby discouraging pedestrian activity. This lack of connectivity is a deterrent to the usage of the large number of public transit facilities like the Civic Center MARTA station and MARTA bus routes. Topographical challenges in the corridor also add to the difficult pedestrian environment. Peachtree Street is located on a ridge and the land slopes down substantially west of Williams Street. Walkability between the MARTA station

and the Aquarium could also be impaired by substantial grade changes. The Civic Center MARTA station was located to support the Civic Center, hence this connection needs to be enhanced and improved. The hostile vehicular environment along West Peachtree Street and Spring Street, both high speed one-way roads affects the usability of the MARTA station.

Perhaps the largest physical and psychological barrier to pedestrian movement is the Interstate highway which bisects the study area. Significant attention will have to be paid to this area in order to create a walkable and livable corridor.



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1.6 Zoning Framework

The City of Atlanta regulates the development of all real property through the use of zoning, which legally controls the use, height, density, setbacks, parking, etc. Central Atlanta Progress along with the City of Atlanta is currently reviewing and updating the zoning code for Downtown Atlanta. About two-thirds of the study area is a part of this new district boundary. The following discussion describes both the current zoning and the proposed zoning.

Current Zoning:

Special Public Interest (SPI-1) District: This district governs zoning in most of the Downtown Core. With reference to the study area; the parcels east of West Peachtree Street are included in this category. The district allows a high non-residential density with a FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of 25 (which signifies that the total floor area will not exceed an amount equal to 25 times net lot area) along with a smaller percentage of residential uses (FAR of 6.4). These high densities have inflated land values and therefore indirectly discouraged development. Large surface parking lots occupy many parcels zoned SPI-1 within the study area.

SPI-13 District: This district was created in 1998 to enhance and protect Centennial Olympic Park as an Olympic legacy and maintain its character as a civic space. The intent was to create a mixed-use pedestrian-friendly district that would enhance the area around the park. SPI-13 occupies the area north of Centennial Olympic Park and bounded by West Peachtree Street on the east and the railroads on the West. Along with permitted uses, the district also has special regulations for sidewalks and parking requirements.

Central Business Support District (C-5): The intent of this zoning category is to allow for moderate-to high-intensity uses of a broad range in mixed use type development. This category allows a lower density for non-residential uses (FAR of 10) as compared to the SPI-1 district. Within the study area, the blocks between Courtland Street and Piedmont Avenue south of Currier Street are zoned C-5. Also, the area west of the railroads and south of Alexander Street is zoned under the same category.

Central Area Commercial Residential District (C-4): This district is tailored to provide moderate to high-intensity uses that support development in the Downtown core. The objective is to have a mix of high-rise residential, office and mixed use developments. Permitted uses include commercial and retail uses like banks, restaurants, dry cleaners, along with institutional, cultural and educational uses. Multifamily dwellings are permitted. The Civic Center block is the only area zoned C-4 within the study area.

Heavy Industrial District (I-2): I-2 occupies the land west of the railroads and north of Alexander Street. The parcels within this category are mostly owned by the Georgia World Congress Center and are a part of their Phase V expansion plans. Permitted uses include all commercial and industrial uses and storage facilities. Dwelling units are only permitted if they are clearly incidental to the primary use.

Proposed Zoning:

As mentioned above, a process to update the zoning code for Downtown is currently underway. This proposed zoning applies to the area east of the railroads within the study area. SPI-13 and SPI-1 have been consolidated to create a unified Downtown zoning district. SPI-1 is divided into eight subareas with regulations specific to their use and character. Figure 1.7 represents this proposed zoning.

Proposed SPI-1 District: The goal is to create a more pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use environment in Downtown with special incentives to encourage housing. The proposed code is currently under review by the City of Atlanta and interested stakeholders. It recommends an increase in the residential density while maintaining the non-residential FAR. Special incentives are provided for developing new housing and pedestrian-oriented retail. The intention of this update is to provide a 24 hour urban environment within Downtown. Peachtree Street and Marietta Street have been identified as 'Storefront Streets' where active ground floor uses are required for a depth of 20' - the elevation must be 65% clear glass, fenestration of storefront character. Along with new development controls for bulk and density, the proposed code also includes supplemental development standards which will guide the character of the built environment and public realm. The following SPI-1 subareas will govern the zoning in the study area:

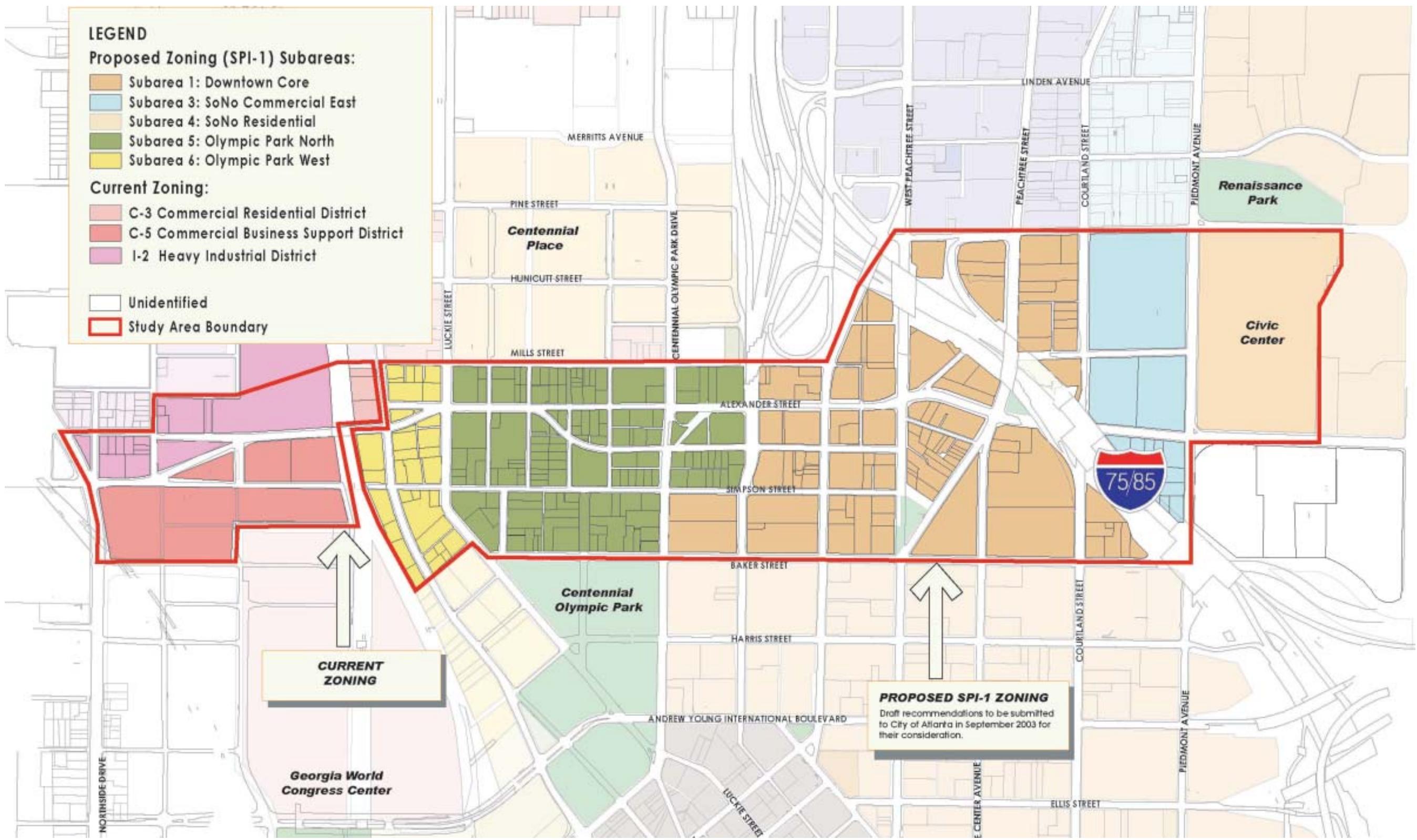
Proposed Subarea 1 – Downtown Core: This subarea allows high density commercial and residential encouraging a compatible mix of uses. Without reducing the non-residential FAR of 25, this subarea increases the residential FAR to 21.4 (when in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Bonus) with a maximum FAR of 35. With reference to the study area, parcels between Williams Street and Courtland Street are within this subarea.

Proposed Subarea 4 - SONO Residential: The Civic Center block is included within this subarea. The intent is to protect the character of the increased residential development designated in this area. With a larger FAR for residential uses (6.8) and non-residential FAR of 3.8, the district permits neighborhood oriented commercial uses that would support residential development.

Proposed Subarea 6 – Olympic Park West: This subarea is reminiscent of the original SPI-13 subarea which allows an equal mix of residential and non-residential uses. Designated for the area around Marietta Street, the zoning enhances the trend of medium density mixed-use development compatible with the historic railroad character of the street.



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Zoning Framework

Figure 1.7



1.7 Existing Transportation & Circulation

Transportation and circulation issues are of great importance to this study as the focus is directed towards pedestrian and vehicular movement on Jones-Simpson-Alexander-McGill along with connectivity around the Civic Center MARTA station. Figure 1.8 illustrates these and other transportation issues which are crucial to bringing new development into this corridor. The map analyzes three circulation aspects – the existing street hierarchy, the vehicular network and the pedestrian network.

Street Hierarchy:

The analysis of the street hierarchy is based on the street widths, sidewalk widths, existing development character and vehicular speeds. The study area has the following categories of street types:

Thoroughfares: Courtland Street, Piedmont Avenue, Centennial Olympic Park Drive, Williams Street, Spring Street and West Peachtree Street are classified as Thoroughfares. These streets carry large volumes of vehicular traffic and are directly connected to the interstate system. Thoroughfares within the study area are mostly one-way pairs that currently contribute to the smooth flow of vehicular traffic within Downtown.

Avenues: These are destination oriented ‘main streets’ heavily traveled by pedestrians. Peachtree Street, Luckie Street and Marietta Street could be categorized as Avenues within the study corridor. They generally coincide with MARTA routes and are designed for reduced speeds. Avenues are usually two lanes in each direction and may have on-street parking.

Minor Streets: Streets like Baker Street and Alexander Street (east of Centennial Olympic Park Drive) may be minor streets which complete the grid for avenues and thoroughfares. They are one lane in each direction and may have an additional on-street parking lane.

Neighborhood streets: Similar in structure to minor streets, neighborhood streets are located in residential areas. They are created to control vehicular speeds to allow smooth pedestrian movement. The grids of streets inside the Centennial Place residential area (Mills Street, Hunicutt Street, and Pine Street) are examples of residential streets.

Service Streets: Downtown has a network of alleyways connected to service entrances of buildings. These service streets are usually one lane with narrow/no sidewalks. No such service streets are within the study area.

Transit, Sidewalks and Bicycle Facilities:

The vehicular grid in the corridor is reinforced by a network of transit options. Served by trains and buses, about one-third of study area is within walking distance (i.e. approx five minute walk) of two MARTA rail stations, Civic Center and Peachtree Center. Buses running along Peachtree Street, Luckie Street, Marietta Street, Alexander Street, Centennial Olympic Park Drive etc. connect the MARTA stations to residential neighborhoods and offices. The City's 'Commuter On-street Bike Plan' identifies Luckie Street as a potential bike path connecting Georgia Tech to Downtown. The JSA-McGill corridor has also been identified for a proposed bike path connecting to the Freedom Parkway trail.

Although the corridor has a good network of streets, sidewalks in certain parts are in substandard condition. As described in the urban design section, the hilly terrain also makes

pedestrian movement difficult, which may be one of the reasons for the underutilization of the Civic Center MARTA station.

Traffic Signals:

Given Downtown's complex street grid, traffic signalization and timing are an important issue in the study area. As the area develops into a mixed-use center with new office and residential uses, a detailed traffic study will be required to maintain the vehicular flow while supporting the additional pedestrian activity within the corridor.

Parking:

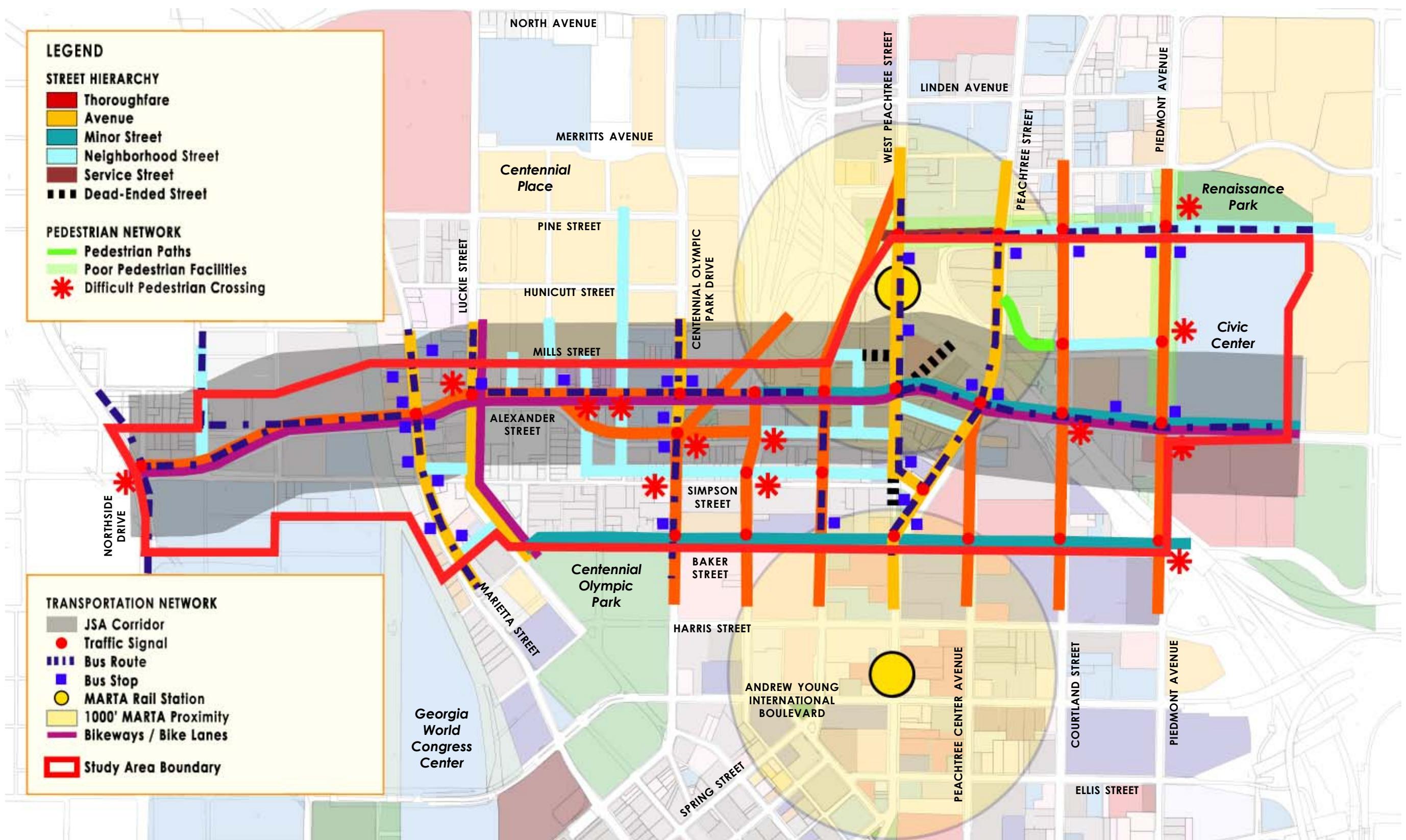
As described in the land use section, surface parking lots occupy nearly 50 acres of land within the study area. They are mainly concentrated between Centennial Olympic Park Drive and Peachtree Street. Some of these surface parking lots have proposals for new developments currently under review. Any plans for such new developments will require the construction of parking decks to accommodate parking needs. There are only two parking decks within the corridor - both along Spring Street.

Planned Transportation Improvements:

The Central Atlanta Transportation Study (CATS) identified the JSA-McGill corridor as a means of increasing east-west mobility through the northern portions of Downtown. The JSA-McGill corridor project, currently underway, is a collaborative effort between the City of Atlanta and Central Atlanta Progress. Plans involve converting the one-way sections of Alexander Street to a continuous two-way corridor, reconstructing and improving the entire transportation corridor between Northside Drive and West Peachtree Street with wider sidewalks, improved pedestrian access, enhanced transit mobility and bike lanes. Funding for the project is being provided by the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority through a state bond issue, City of Atlanta bond funds, and ADID matching funds. The more detailed preliminary engineering and construction document phase of the project will begin before the end of the year with construction slated to begin fall of 2004.



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Existing Circulation
Figure 1.8



1.8 Market Conditions

Housing Trends

Based on Zimmerman/Volk Associates' field investigation, analysis of migration and mobility data, and assessment of the assets and opportunities of Downtown Atlanta, new housing units within Downtown are likely to attract potential renters and buyers from elsewhere in the City of Atlanta; the balance of Fulton and DeKalb Counties; other counties in the Atlanta region; and several other Georgia counties. Additional significant draw areas include Miami, Jacksonville, and Tampa, Florida; New York City; Charlotte, North Carolina; Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; and Dallas and Houston, Texas. This analysis also factors in all other counties represented in City of Atlanta/Fulton County migration. Downtown Atlanta and surrounding area properties included in the survey are described in the completed market study as a part of the appendix section.

From the perspective of draw area target market propensities and compatibility, and within the context of Downtown Atlanta's new housing marketplace, the potential market for new housing units within JSA-McGill LCI Study Area could include the full range of housing types, from higher-density multi-family to lower-density single-family detached. However, it is recommended that new construction within the Study Area concentrate on the higher-density multi-family housing types that support urban redevelopment most efficiently.

For the multifamily market, younger singles and couples (childless households) have been identified as the largest general market segment (about 70%). Empty nesters and retirees are the next group most likely to locate in Downtown and comprise just under 25% of the market for housing units in Downtown. This market though, is expected to grow with the increase in the number in the 'Baby Boom' generation in the next few years. The smallest market is comprised of family-oriented households.

Based on the recommended proportions of multi-family dwelling units and net densities as outlined in the optimum market position below, the JSA-McGill LCI Study Area could support, and the market could absorb, up to 1,500 new dwelling units within the next five years. This includes about 66% of rental units and 34% of for sale multi-family.

At the forecast absorption of 360 units in one year, new residential development within the Study Area would require a capture rate of 10.4 percent of the 3,450 households, identified through target market analysis, that have the potential to rent or purchase new multi-family dwelling units within the Study Area in the year 2003—a rate that is within the target market methodology's parameters of feasibility. The preferred building types include the following:

- Loft Apartment buildings (adaptive reuse of older warehouse buildings or new construction),
- Conventional apartment buildings that would relate to the urban environment, and are often combined with non-residential uses on the ground floor.
- Mansion Apartment buildings (luxury apartments) – Three or four story flexible use buildings which could accommodate both residential and non-residential uses.

Retail Trends:

The JSA-McGill LCI Study Area's retail potential will be driven by proximate markets. These markets are employees, residents, and hotel guests within easy walking distance (one-quarter mile) to the Study Area and visitors to the new Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola projects. Given the proximity of the new Atlantic Station retail center and Downtown's small share in the retail market, a regional mall may not be market supportable. Net of the existing retail supply, proximate employees, hotel guests, residents, and attraction visitors have the potential to spend over \$100 million annually. It is important to note that a small share of this market is actually new. Therefore, most of these sales occur either elsewhere in the Downtown or outside of the Downtown currently.

To capture a proportion of these sales will require that retail be clustered to create enough critical mass to draw the market to the JSA-McGill Study Area. Eating and drinking sales make up a vast majority of the retail sales potential. Moderately priced, "family" restaurants (Macaroni Grill, TGIFridays) appear to be lacking in the Downtown. Following the principles of an agglomeration economy, restaurants and clubs thrive in proximity to each other. The most strategic location for eating and drinking establishments is Simpson Street. This street is between the attractions and many Downtown hotels. This street is convenient to the office core, where the very large employee market resides. The street is narrow, making it potentially pedestrian-oriented. This street is also of a scale where a modestly sized development can have a major impact on the street environment. Additionally, stand alone retail will have potential on Alexander Street. Alexander is slated to become a major east-west thoroughfare. Retail will be drawn to the visibility of this location. Convenience retail (food and drug) will likely develop at this location.

The retail market consultant ZHA concludes that between 75,000 and 100,000 square feet of additional retail is likely supportable in the JSA-McGill Study Area through 2010. This projection represents a capture rate between 20 and 25 percent of net sales potential. The remaining potential will be captured outside of the Study Area. The projected JSA-McGill Study Area's supportable retail sales represent 1 percent of the City's net new retail sales potential through 2010.

Office Trends:

The JSA-McGill Study Area is well positioned for office development given its (1) location within easy walking distance to the Core of Downtown Atlanta; (2) its proximity to major public attractions such as Centennial Olympic Park, the Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola; and, (3) a significant supply of developable land. There is nothing inherently wrong with the JSA-McGill Study Area as an office investment location.

The JSA-McGill Study Area's ability to attract office development will largely depend on Downtown's competitiveness as a business location. Recent trends suggest that Downtown is struggling to, or, in fact, losing its competitive position within the metropolitan office market. Therefore, it is unrealistic to assume that office uses will rapidly absorb the available land in the JSA-McGill Study Area between now and 2010.

Instead, the conclusions regarding supportable office square feet are based on an assumption that the JSA-McGill Study Area evolves into a mixed-use sub-district with significant housing and retail/entertainment land uses. As such, office is a contributing land use, but not the dominant land use in the Study Area.

If residential development is feasible, an opportunity exists for the JSA-McGill Study Area to offer a unique Downtown office product. In portions of the Study Area, the product could be moderately priced, new office space in a non-high-rise building. Loft office product would contribute to a neighborhood environment. This type of product would target the Class-B office user, priced out of Midtown and Buckhead.

ZHA concludes that 350,000 to 500,000 additional square feet of this office product is likely supportable in the JSA-McGill Study Area between now and 2010. This is net of the Park Tower at Centennial Hill project. This projection assumes significant residential development in the Study Area in the near future creating market momentum and a sense that a new neighborhood is coming on-line. This projection coupled with the Park Tower project represents seven to nine percent of the Downtown's office development potential through 2010. The product envisioned is four to eight stories and an average size of 130,000 to 300,000 square feet. Rents would be approximately \$21.00 to \$23.00 per square foot (Class-A-/B+).

1.9 Issues & Opportunities

The JSA-McGill Corridor has several active development interests and major institutions, as well as individuals involved in previous planning studies. Early in the LCI process the team recognized the need to reach out to this wide group of stakeholders and offer them a confidential platform to express their intentions, ideas, and concerns. Fourteen stakeholder interviews were thus conducted over the course of three weeks leading up to the initial public (kick-off) workshop; some additional interviews – such as the World of Coca-Cola – predated the official launch of the LCI process. Stakeholders were encouraged to speak candidly, keeping mindful of relating their experiences to issues and opportunities for the corridor.

The results of the stakeholder interviews were summarized and compiled into an Issues Matrix (Figure 1.9) divided into seven planning categories. These “Issues and Opportunities”, as summarized below, formed the initial basis for most of the plan recommendations that are described in the Development Opportunities section. Highlights of the matrix are presented below.

Land Use and Development

The opening of the new Aquarium and the World of Coca Cola are seen as opportunities to spur more development along the corridor. Stakeholders were concerned about the need for redevelopment along Luckie Street which was now directly affected by the proposed Aquarium. Some other significant prospects were identified in the corridor which are described in detail in the ‘Development Opportunities’ section. Some discussion also focused on the location of cultural venues and moving the SciTrek Museum from its current location to a site closer to the new Children’s museum. Provision for municipal parking was seen as a potential incentive for attracting new development.

Economic Development

The office market in Downtown has seen a downturn in the last few years mostly as an effect of the slow economic market. The lessening demand for Class A office space in Downtown was a concern to some property owners.

Housing

There are ongoing development plans and strong support for new housing in the Centennial Hill area. Residential developments are key to the success of Downtown as they can help in building a 24-hour active environment. Stakeholders were concerned about secured parking options for new housing.

Historic and Natural Resources

Historic buildings along Marietta Street and resources like the Medical Arts building will likely face development pressures in the near future.

Traffic & Transportation

Stakeholders reiterated the need to understand the role of Baker Street as a transportation link, pedestrian connection and on-street parking facility. Tourist and school bus movement around Downtown Atlanta also needed solutions. Stakeholders stressed the issue of Civic Center MARTA being one of the most underutilized stations in the Downtown area.

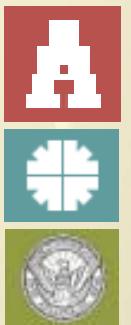
Community Facilities

The Peachtree-Pine homeless shelter was seen as a deterrent of new development. Residents along with stakeholders identified various locations, including pocket parks and plazas which have problems associated with vagrancy and homelessness. Existing cultural spaces were identified as amenities within the area. Stakeholders saw more opportunity in providing small to medium sized exhibition space at the Civic Center.

Urban Design

Challenges of maintaining the pedestrian character of JSA while efficiently moving traffic were identified in the interview process. Stakeholders identified the need for an open space to the east of the corridor and saw a park space bridging the interstate as a potential location.

| Land Use and Development | Economic Development | Housing | Historic and Natural Resources | Traffic and Transportation | Community Facilities / Social Services | Urban Design |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>There are significant development opportunities in the corridor</p> <p>Compatible development along Luckie Street is important to the Aquarium</p> <p>Municipal parking might be used as a development incentive</p> <p>The development benefits of a TAD are offset by affordability requirements</p> <p>Long-term desirability for relocating the Georgia Power substation</p> <p>Need for retail and restaurant uses to support the large number visitors that will come to the area to visit the new and existing destinations</p> <p>City is currently underway with a long range strategic plan for the future of the Civic Center complex.</p> | <p>There is little demand for Class A office space Downtown at the present time</p> <p>There is a demand for small- to medium-sized exhibition space at the Civic Center</p> <p>Unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on energy and investment of two new world class destinations in close proximity to other existing amenities - GWCC, COP, Imagine It, Civic Center and SciTrek</p> <p>Downtown wide circulator shuttle to connect destinations to one another and to MARTA rail can help promote tourism</p> | <p>There are ongoing development plans and strong support for new housing in the Centennial Hill area</p> <p>Condominium developments require secure, dedicated parking</p> <p>Additional retail in close proximity - particularly a grocery store - would assist in development of new housing</p> | <p>Marietta Street is a historic resource but will face development pressure</p> <p>The Medical Arts Building may be renovated in the future</p> | <p>Baker Street should remain open to vehicles except for special events</p> <p>Parking on Baker Street is a potential problem due to poor pedestrian visibility</p> <p>School bus staging for the Aquarium / World of Coca-Cola requires multiple solutions</p> <p>Shuttle buses from the Georgia World Congress Center to the hotel districts will use JSA as part of a loop route</p> <p>Traffic volume and speed on Williams Street is a deterrent to pedestrian activity and creating a neighborhood in Centennial Hill</p> <p>I-75/85 access and egress needs to be improved particularly at the Williams Street and Spring Street ramps.</p> <p>The Civic Center MARTA station is severely underutilized</p> <p>Pedestrian safety near tourist venues like the Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, 'Imagine It' Childrens' Museum etc. should be high priority.</p> | <p>The Peachtree-Pine homeless shelter is a serious problem for the area</p> <p>Renaissance Park is being used by the homeless as an encampment</p> <p>Location of Salvation Army Red Shield Lodge and Atlanta Union Mission within area can cause negative perception problems.</p> | <p>The pedestrian environment on JSA faces challenges especially at the World of Coca-Cola and the Georgia Power substation</p> <p>The Georgia Aquarium will tie into the city's wayfinding system</p> <p>An open space bridging over I-75/85 at Peachtree Street has been proposed as a civic improvement and a development catalyst</p> <p>Simpson Street may be the preferable pedestrian connection between Peachtree Street and the World of Coca-Cola / Aquarium complex</p> <p>Currently the Spring/Alexander/COP intersection is a huge disconnect in the pedestrian movement between Centennial Place and Downtown</p> |



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Issues Matrix
Figure 1.9

1.10 Development Opportunities

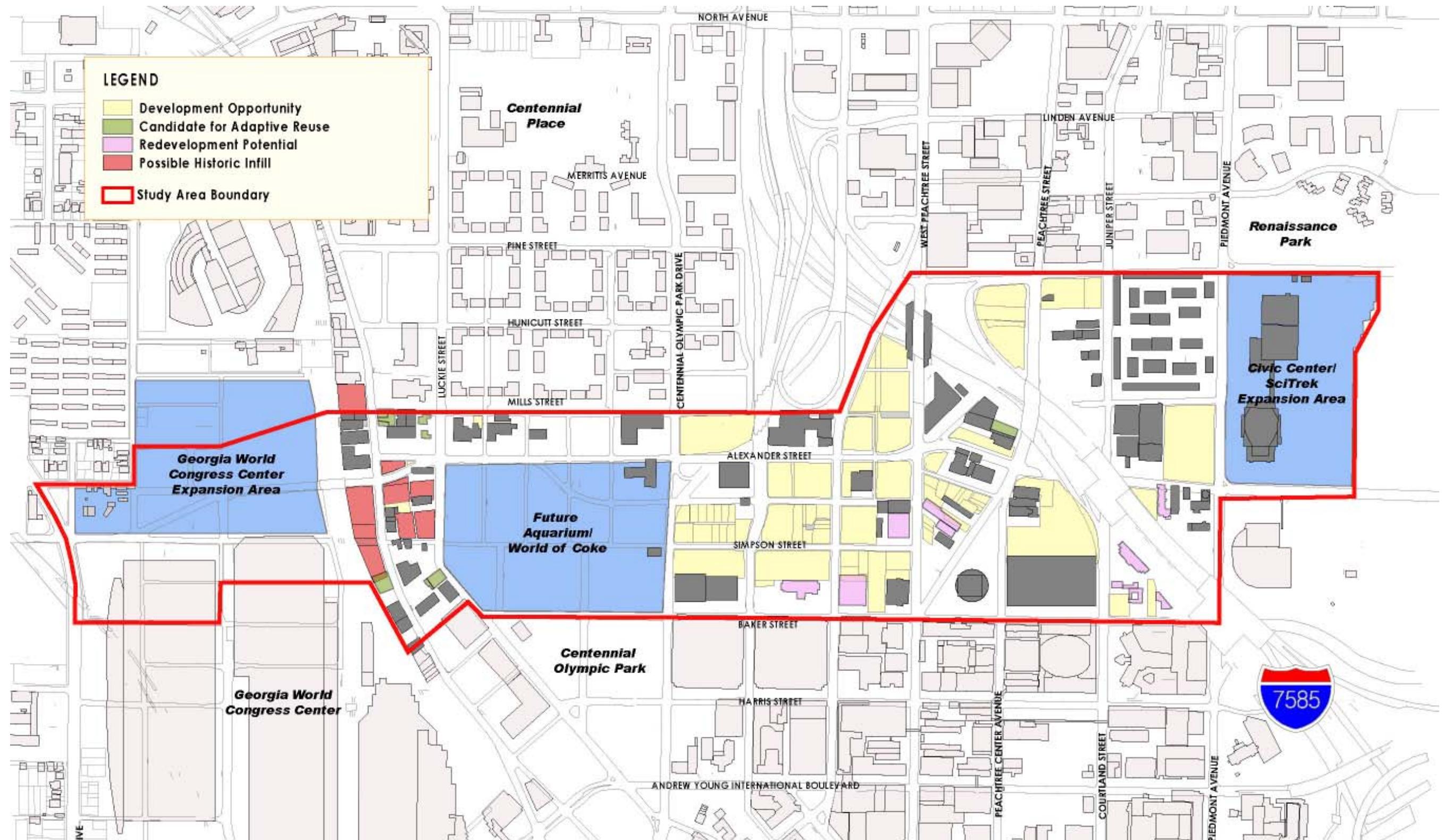
Figure 1.10 represents an assimilation of the planning team's analysis of the existing conditions in the JSA-McGill corridor. The land use, existing densities, building conditions and occupancy and the stakeholder interviews assist in understanding opportunities for new development in the corridor.

In figure 1.10 properties marked red have been identified as potential targets for historic infill. The Marietta Street artery has a stock of buildings that relate to the railroad history of the city. But intermittent vacant parcels and surface parking lots detract from the existing fabric. New development that would be compatible in terms of use and design would contribute in creating a historic mixed-use district. The map also shows properties appropriate for rehab in green color. Recent developments like the Giant Lofts and Hastings Seed Lofts have been pioneer projects for converting older buildings in the district into residential and commercial loft spaces. The local neighborhood association has also played an important role of maintaining the character of Marietta Street. Another rehab opportunity is the Medical Arts Building on Peachtree Street. Currently unoccupied, the building could add to the surrounding historic character highlighted by the Imperial hotel and two historic churches.

Land that is currently vacant or used for surface parking lots is identified as an opportunity and marked in yellow on the map. Such parcels are concentrated in the central core of the corridor between Centennial Olympic Park Drive and Courtland Street. Recent developments like Centennial House and Museum Tower have initiated a trend of high density housing on Centennial Hill. Several other projects are in various stages of planning and design which could contribute to creating a mixed-use district at Centennial Hill. The proposed Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola will also add to Centennial Olympic Park's value as a cultural venue.

The buildings marked in pink are potential redevelopment projects. They are mostly buildings that are lower in density relative to site area and/or the buildings in a state of disrepair. Within the study area, few buildings are included in this category. Some hotels like the Days Inn on Williams Street, the Best Western on West Peachtree Street and the Travelodge on Courtland could potentially be redeveloped at higher densities or for mixed use developments.

Finally large developments like the Civic Center could add density by consolidating their surface parking into decks and developing these parking lots. The Georgia World Congress Center also has plans for their Phase V project on their surface parking lots west of the railroads. The largest development that will change the character of the corridor will be the completion of the Aquarium and World of Coca Cola. These large cultural destinations are demarcated in blue in Figure 1.10.



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Development Opportunities

Figure 1.10

