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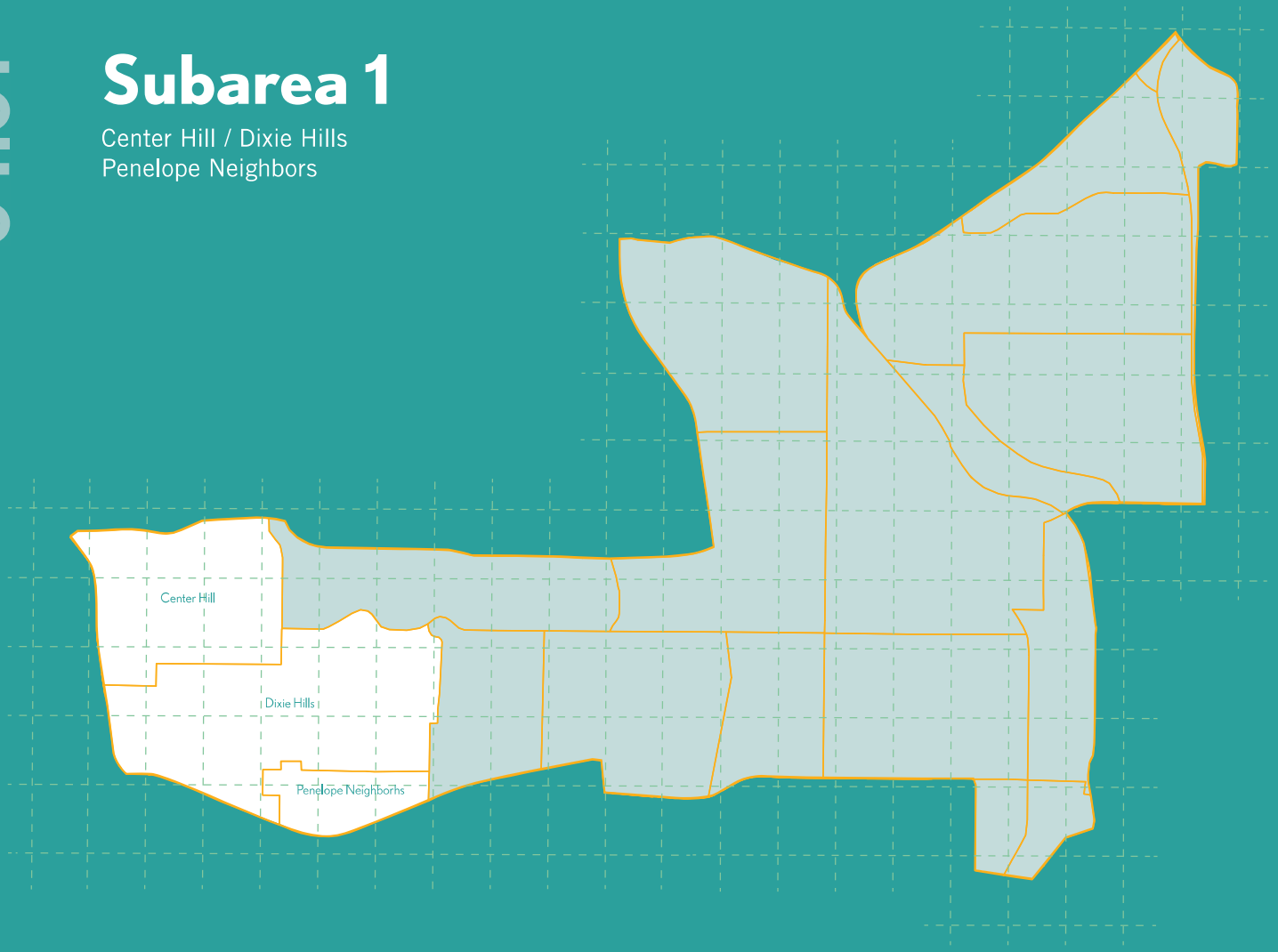
Subarea 1

Center Hill / Dixie Hills
Penelope Neighbors



"My grandmother, Ms. Kathleen Smith, was a barber and beautician in the neighborhood. She asked the men whose hair she cut to build her a house. With her husband, Reverend Charles Smith, she bought a lot on the corner of Carver Drive and Fairfield Place, in a field of pine trees and built her house in 1941. They used the pine lumber from the lot to make shiplap siding, pine floors, and framing timbers with the bark still on. She had her shop in the basement of this house.

Back in those days, people like my father were farmers and they raised their own food. My grandmother planted all type of fruit trees—plum, apples, figs—and she preserved those foods. They would give it to their neighbors."

—Hugh Watts

PAST
Historic Context.

Grove Park was developed in 1913 by Dr. Edwin Wiley Grove, a pharmaceutical magnate who also built Atkins Park near Virginia-Highland. It was originally named "Fortified Hills" as a reference to the Civil War Battle of Ezra Church Road fought only 40 years prior. Part of a wave of similar neighborhood developments around Atlanta, it was marketed to well-to-do white families seeking respite from the city. By the postwar population boom of the 1940s, Grove Park was surrounded by areas slated for "negro expansion."

As the population of Atlanta swelled, shifting color lines between black and white neighborhoods resulted in uneasy tension. Mass protests and panic around the sale of white-owned properties to black buyers in Center Hill and Grove Park climaxed in February, 1956 when a crowd of protestors gathered outside a house off Baker Road. A few days later, after a black buyer had actually moved in, his house was bombed. Days later, two sticks of dynamite blew up the cellar of another black-owned house at on the same street.

Eventually redlined for black residents, these neighborhoods were increasingly cut off from investment as white families fled for the suburbs. By the summer of 1967, the historically quiet, middle class neighborhood was at a tipping point of overcrowding and neglect. Amid a national wave of urban unrest, tensions erupted between police and residents in a Dixie Hills shopping center. The "Dixie Hills Riot" prompted the city to dedicate resources to maintain parks, schools, and repair streets.

In 1979, MARTA's West Lake transit station opened, connecting these once suburban communities to jobs and services in the urban core, but did little to stimulate investment in the Westside. By the late 1990s, the demolition of public housing projects and closing of industrial sites set up these neighborhoods to benefit from major redevelopment projects like the Proctor Creek Trail the Atlanta BeltLine. Today the advantages of compact, walkable streets and public transit are defining features for future development projects coming to this area.

Community Oral History

1957

"Verbena Street had grocery stores, five-and-dime, barber shops, Yates and Milton Drug Stores. Mom and pop shops. My mother, Lucinda Walker, had a beauty salon in the area, in her home, since 1957. We're still there. A lot of our businesses are hidden. Word of mouth has been working for me for over 37 years."

-Joann Walker Scott

1960s

"I remember the Negro League stadium was located off Tiger Flowers Drive, behind the houses back there. It consisted of billboard signs. I recall those times when, as a boy, we went back there and watched the baseball games. This was in the early '60s. It was probably demolished in the late '70s. I know my father, Clifford Watts, played in the league."

-Hugh Watts

1964

"We moved to Grove Park in 1964, when I was 15. We moved from McDaniel Street in Pittsburgh where my grandmother, aunt, uncle, and father all had homes. The whole family relocated to a block on Elmwood Road in Grove Park. In Grove Park, we had enough backyard to have a detached a garage, a barbeque pit, and a garden. And it was an integrated neighborhood.

I started at West Fulton High School in the tenth grade. They had just started integration. I remember West Fulton played the first integrated high school football game versus O'Keefe High School. We played at Grady's football stadium, even though West Fulton had its own field.

I met my wife that year. Her family was in Center Hill. I would walk over on Sunday on spend a couple hours. What was nice about the community was the commercial district was well separated from residential areas, but you could still walk everywhere."

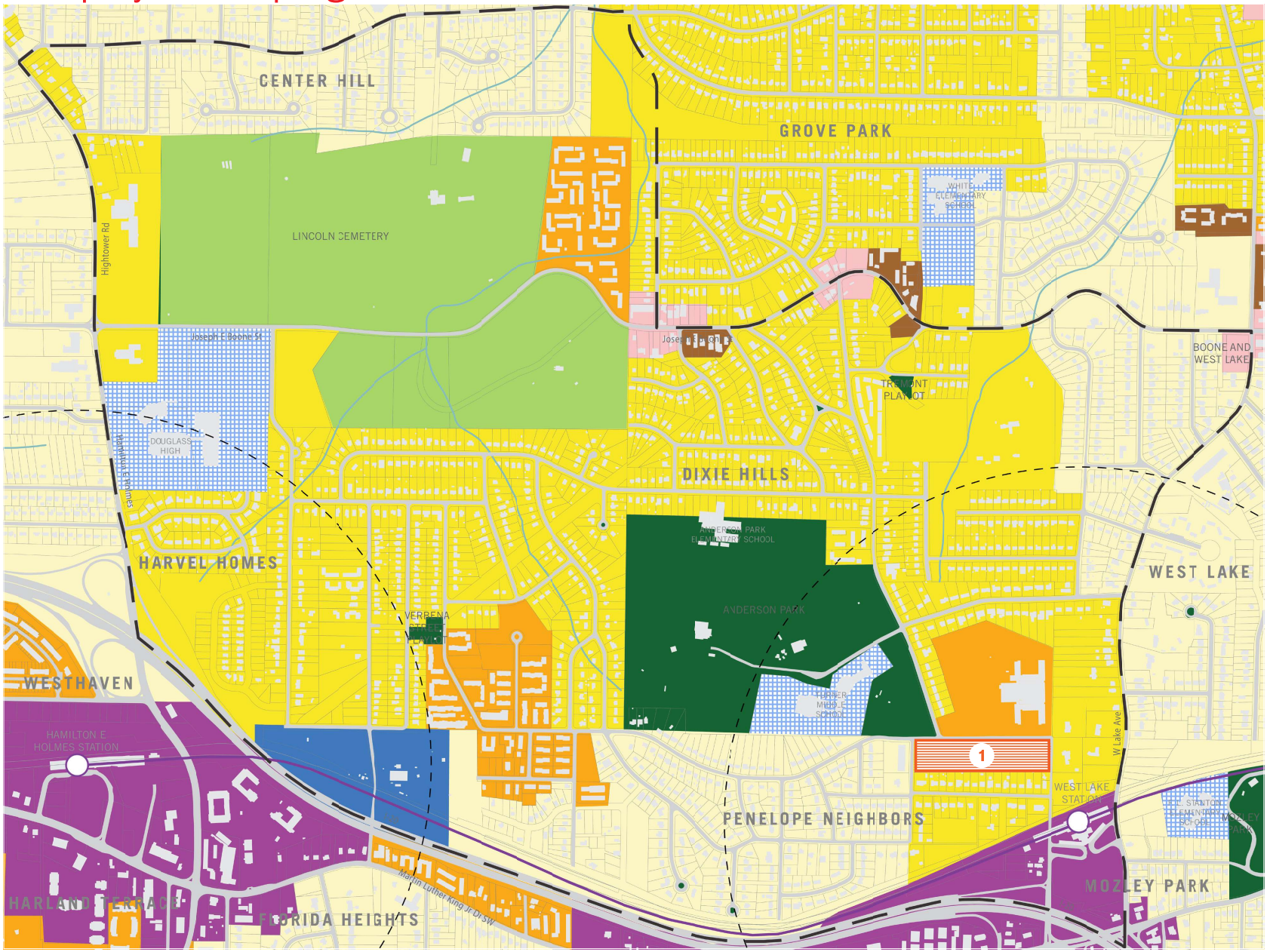
-Ellis Manns

1970s

"Remember the Lincoln Country Club? Up until the late '70s, they actually had a golf course, a real country club. The go-go club was right next to Lincoln Cemetery. The clientele was everybody, the upper crust, the whole neighborhood, people from outside the neighborhood. People had a wonderful time there. You just had to be careful after a night there, that you didn't crash into a tree driving home."

-Ernestine Nichols

add projects in progress



Existing Land Use

- Single-Family Residential
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Very High Density Residential
- Low Density Commercial
- High Density Commercial
- Office / Institutional
- Office / Insitiution / Residential
- Industrial
- Transportation / Communication
- Mixed-Use
- Open Space (public)
- Open Space (private)
- Community Facilities
- Vacant Land / No Active Use

Redevelopment Context

1. Verbena Street Apartments
2. XXXXXXX

Existing Traffic Conditions

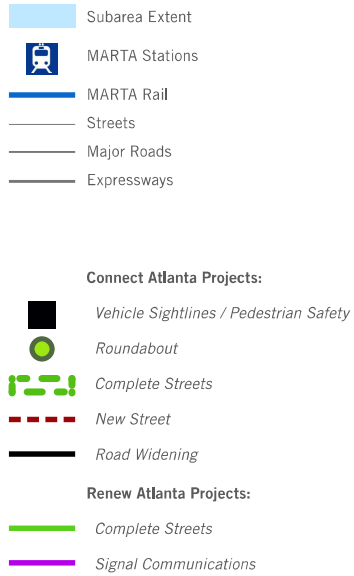
(PM Peak Level of Service, 2015)

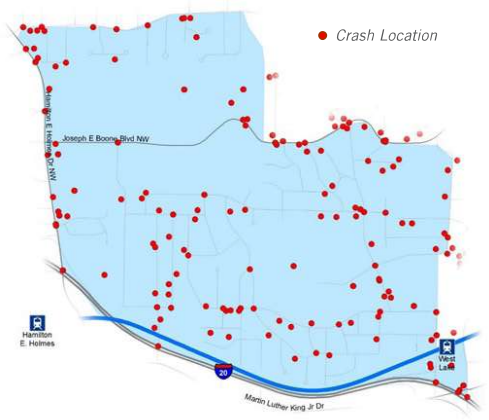
Future Traffic Conditions

(PM Peak Level of Service, 2040)

Existing + Planned Bike Facilities

Existing Circulation

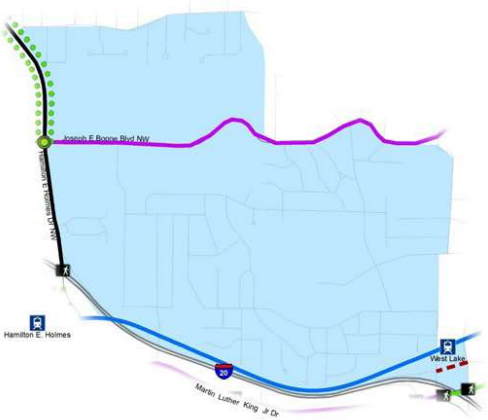




All Crashes

Pedestrian Crashes

Existing Sidewalks



Planned Projects

PRESENT

Issues and Opportunities

The following are some of the emerging themes from feedback provided by residents and stakeholders of Subarea 1 at the May 6 workshop and August 19 recap and through the online survey.

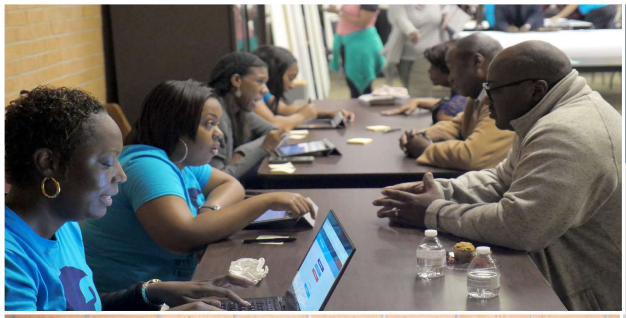
Mobility // Residents expressed a preference for walkable communities and transit options that connected to greater Atlanta. While respondents take pride in the proximity of transit, they express serious concerns about the poor sidewalk conditions that discourage walking both in the neighborhoods and to these stations. Many also call for improvements to the MARTA stations as well, as some are not well maintained.

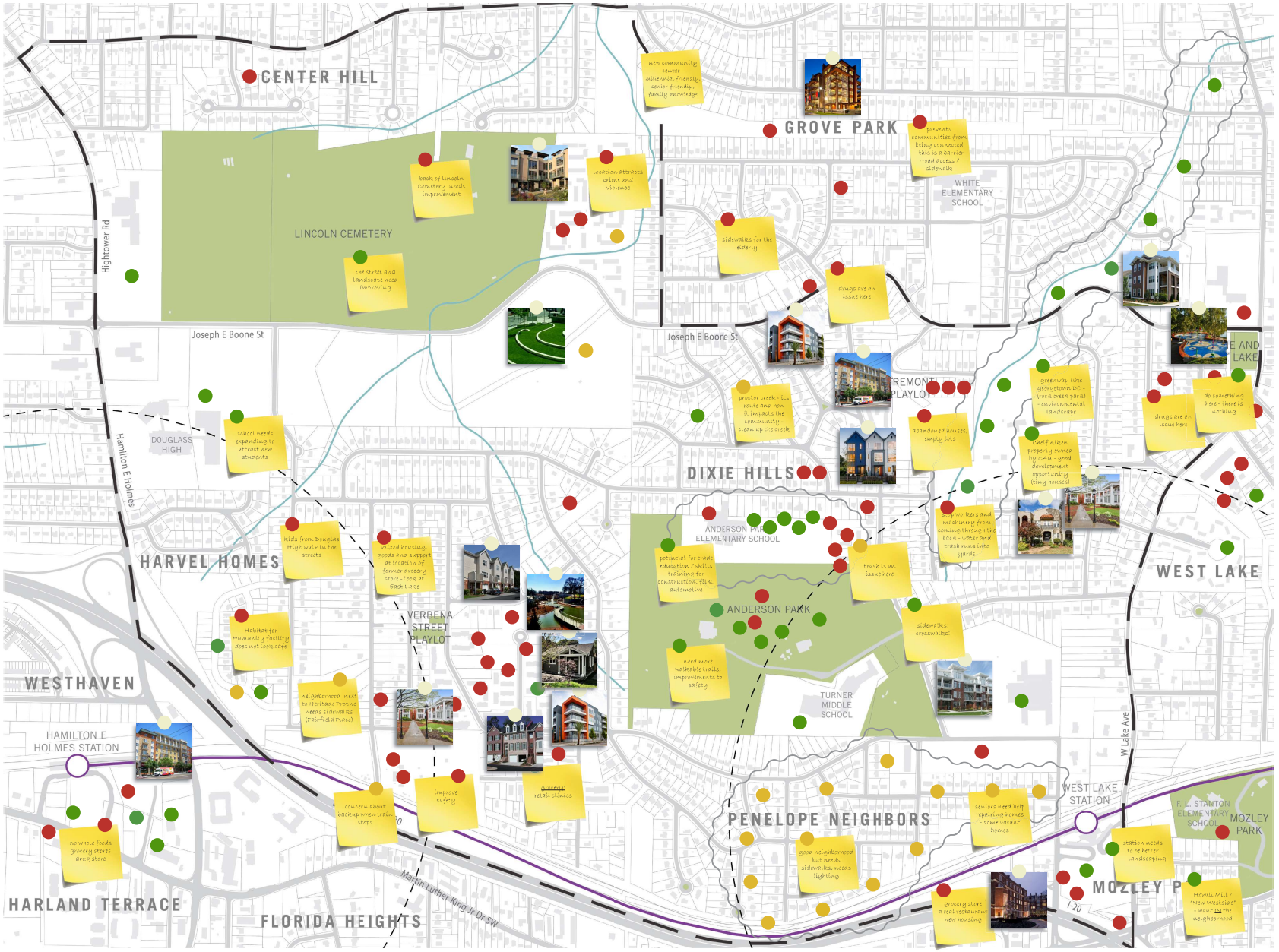
Neighborhood // Vacant and blighted lots are substantial problems that plague the area. There is presence of drugs and crime, some of which is tied to abandoned buildings. Respondents stated that their home is a refuge from these conditions. Existing residents would like to see properties developed for new owners and renters and as a means of job creation within the neighborhood. They are also concerned about maintaining high-quality local schools to attract families. Problems aside, many stakeholders expressed a sense of pride in the historic neighborhoods, black-owned small businesses, and the deep rooted sense of culture that lives here.

Land Use // Future development should focus on developing vacant properties. Residents want new residential development, but they expressed a need for commercial options close to home. They requested mixed-use commercial centers with shops and restaurants, most specifically a grocery store with healthy food options. These future developments should make affordable and sustainable housing options a major priority. Demand for senior housing was expressed as well.

Services // Sidewalk improvements and lighting were requested on many streets in order to provide a sense of safety/security. Small businesses that met daily needs close to home were a priority. Similarly, business owners were looking for small business support in order to keep their establishments on their feet.

Open Space + Environment // Open space discussions mostly centered around Proctor Creek; currently, it is plagued by flooding and stormwater issues. Residents would like to see thess issues resolved in a manner that also cleans up the creek and turns it into a rich public feature. Most anticipated a greenway that would also offer neighborhood benefits like dog parks and gathering places. Anderson Park was also a topic of discussion with stakeholders expressing support for redesign and improvement.





Issues + Opportunities

Strengths

- Anderson Park is a major open space asset but needs trails and safety improvements.
- The Chief Aiken estate is a significant historic property that could be improved with some redevelopment.
- The Proctor Creek tributary streams needs restoration and conversion into linear parks like Rock Springs in D.C.
- The Anderson Park Elementary School building is an opportunity for creative adaptive reuse.

Concerns

- Penelope Neighbors is a stable, historic neighborhood but is beginning to face decline from some vacant homes, a lack of infrastructure like sidewalks and lighting, and safety issues.
- The owners of many homes in Penelope Neighbors need assistance to deal with mounting maintenance costs driven by homeowners insurance requirements.
- The West Lake MARTA station is a mobility asset with strong TOD potential, but appears neglected.

Weaknesses

- There are many vacant and abandoned properties along the Anderson Avenue corridor that need restoration or redevelopment.
- The Hidden Village Apartments are a major blighting factor on the surrounding neighborhood and need redevelopment.

add projects / recommendations (contente to provide example)

FUTURE

Vision and Recommendations

Subarea One will be defined by its diverse, well-maintained historic neighborhoods linked together by a netwwork of high-quality natural corridors and open spaces

Subarea 1 is unlike most other parts of District 3 in that it represents different types of suburban residential development from the 1930s and 1940s through the Postwar era in one place, and almost entirely captures the story of the rise to prominence of African-American real estate entrepreneurs like Walter Aiken. This legacy is the foundation of the Subarea Vision: to renew the historic neighborhoods by preserving, strengthening and diversifying the housing stock while fully connecting them to each other and to the wealth of formal and informal open space resources. Moreover, the fact that so many of the district's environmental assets are concentrated in Subarea 1 gives greater urgency to documenting those resources - for example, the creek in Lincoln Cemetery - and exploring preservation and reclamation strategies for them in some detail.

Buildings +Districts//

As the primary "Main Street" corridor of District 3, Joseph E. Boone Boulevard plays an important role in uniting the district from west to east as well as organizing the urban form of Subarea 1. While it is an urban street east of West Lake Avenue, once it moves west it winds through a hilly Piedmont landscape that is remarkable for being only three miles from Downtown Atlanta. This rural character is contrasted and complemented by the small stretch of commercial and multifamily buildings between Anderson and New Jersey avenues, some of which are deteriorated or abandoned. Because of its design potential and the scarcity of local-serving retail in Dixie Hills, it is essential that this section of Boone be redeveloped as a mixed-use neighborhood center for the surrounding residential areas.

Anderson Avenue is also a strategically important corridor in Subarea 1. Like Boone it once had traditional houses and corner stores – some of unique and rare stone construction - that are now abandoned or demolished. The highly picturesque character of the street is obscured by its blighted conditions, but can be restored by small-scale residential infill and reuse of the remaining stone structures, especially at the critical intersection with Tiger Flowers Drive.

The other major redevelopment opportunity is the Hidden Valley apartment complex and surrounding vacant land. While the buildings are abandoned and fire-damaged, the courtyard design and small, dispersed parking lots make the project compatible in scale with nearby homes and lower its environmental footprint. The presence of its original shopping building makes the development a rare example of an intact postwar housing community which is rapidly disappearing from Atlanta's built environment. Many of the buildings are beyond repair, but careful redevelopment bending new construction and reuse could transform the project into a desirable residential destination that fuses historic narrative with mid-century design sensibilities and green building technology. Additional redevelopment of aging and abandoned properties along Fairfield Place could mimic the design approach of Hidden Valley.

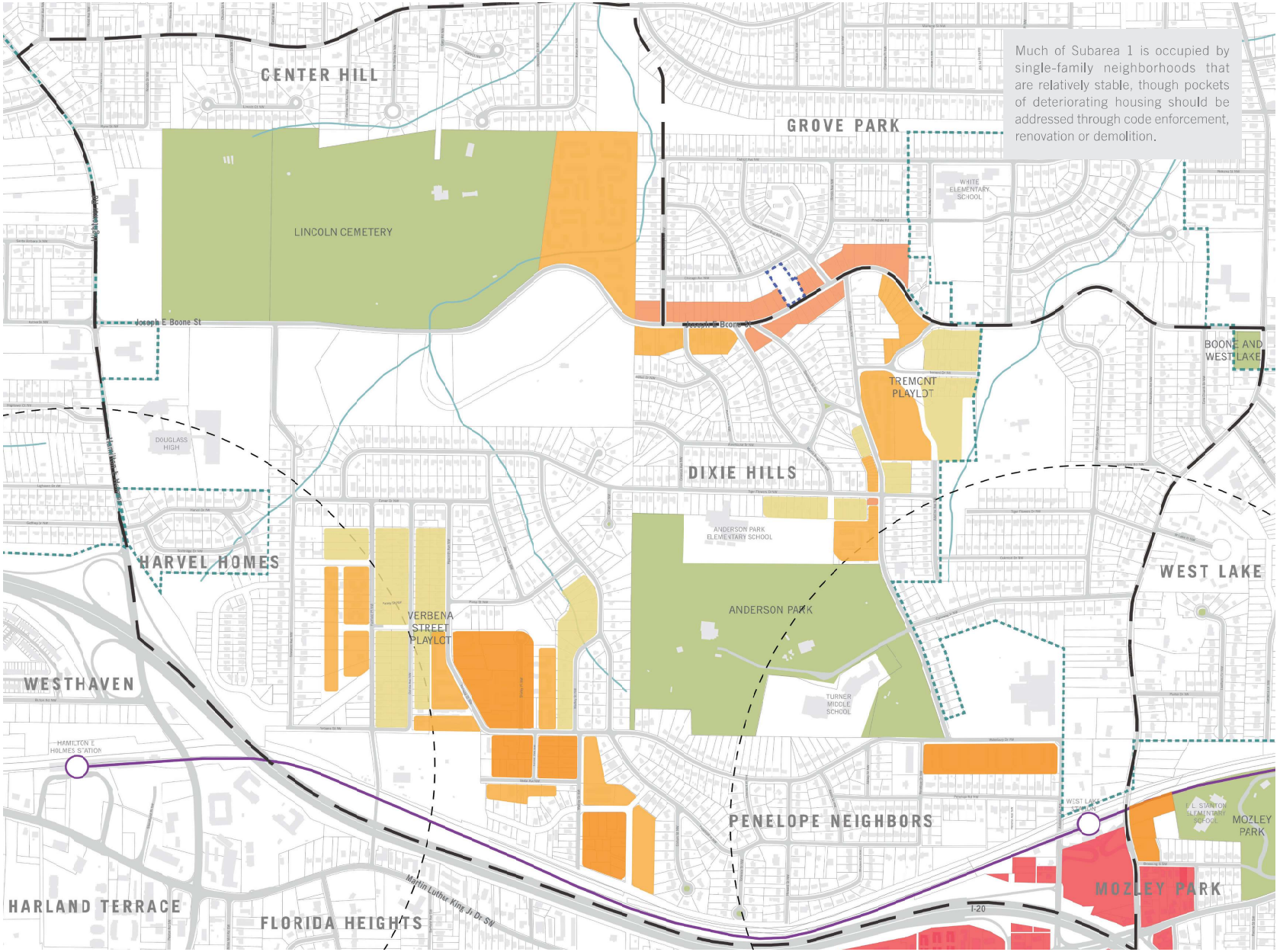
Forests+Streams //

The developers of Subarea 1 were undoubtedly influenced by the rolling countryside when they laid out the picturesque winding streets of Dixie Hills. Much of that nature is still intact, especially in the forests surrounding the Aiken Estate, Anderson Park facilities and the WGST radio transmitter. This native forest and its wetlands should be preserved and maintained as one of the Westside's most significant natural assets, with long-term reforestation of the radio transmitter property, naturalization of the Proctor Creek tributary skirting Lincoln Cemetery, and invasive species removal in select places where infestation is heavy. Anderson Park is especially critical to the conservation program of District 3 because it is such a large tract of public land with impressive tree cover. A conservation-based master plan for the park that includes the adaptive reuse of the shuttered elementary school and linkages to the Aiken Estate is essential to developing a program of improvements, identifying projects that take advantage of the momentum around Proctor Creek activism and citywide resilience.

Streets+Sidewalks//

On mobility, none of the Subarea 1 projects identified in the Connect Atlanta or Renew Atlanta plans have been completed to date, which (as is the case for most subareas) could be in response to the static growth that has defined it. However, the attention and energy focused on the district by this plan can help move key mobility projects from previous plans forward. Expanding the street network in key locations and installing new streetscapes in tandem with other open space and transportation projects will improve connectivity and reduce dependency on single occupancy vehicles. For example, installation of complete streets and new streetscapes provide a great opportunity for the city to install bike lanes, pedestrian infrastructure, permeable pavements, and green infrastructure. And adding streets in the Hidden Valley area eliminates dead-ends and provides more safe ways for residents to get around.

Finally, despite the lack of existing bicycle facilities, there are ample opportunities to bridge the gap for last mile bicycle and pedestrian connections to the H.E. Holmes and West Lake MARTA stations. Sidewalk reconstruction should be prioritized along highly utilized roads in the subarea, such as Joseph E. Boone and Anderson Road. Sidewalk connectivity and intersection density should be increased near areas of high pedestrian activity, such as MARTA Stations. The increase of intersection density will also allow for an increase in last mile connectivity.



Much of Subarea 1 is occupied by single-family neighborhoods that are relatively stable, though pockets of deteriorating housing should be addressed through code enforcement, renovation or demolition.

Land Use + Development Framework Plan

- Single-Family Stabilization / Infill
- Twin, Row + Courtyard Housing
- Multistory Multifamily
- Neighborhood Centers
- Area Activity Centers
- Regional Urban Core
- Industrial / Innovation Space
- Community Facilities
- Heritage Resources

The redevelopment areas shown in color in this diagram provide necessary room for introduction of neighborhood commercial or denser housing typologies to add capacity and variety to the dominant single-family landscape. The western end of Joseph E. Boone Parkway, for example, is a place where a limited amount of neighborhood retail historically existed, but has deteriorated or been displaced. The plan envisions the creation of a newer, stronger neighborhood center with pockets of "missing middle" housing to parallel improvements in the surrounding neighborhoods. Denser housing on strategic infill sites is also proposed for the Anderson Avenue corridor and the terrain around a redeveloped Hidden Village Apartments. Finally, a new transit-oriented development should replace the underutilized land and surface parking at the Westlake MARTA station.

js edit map + narrative based on urban ecology framework

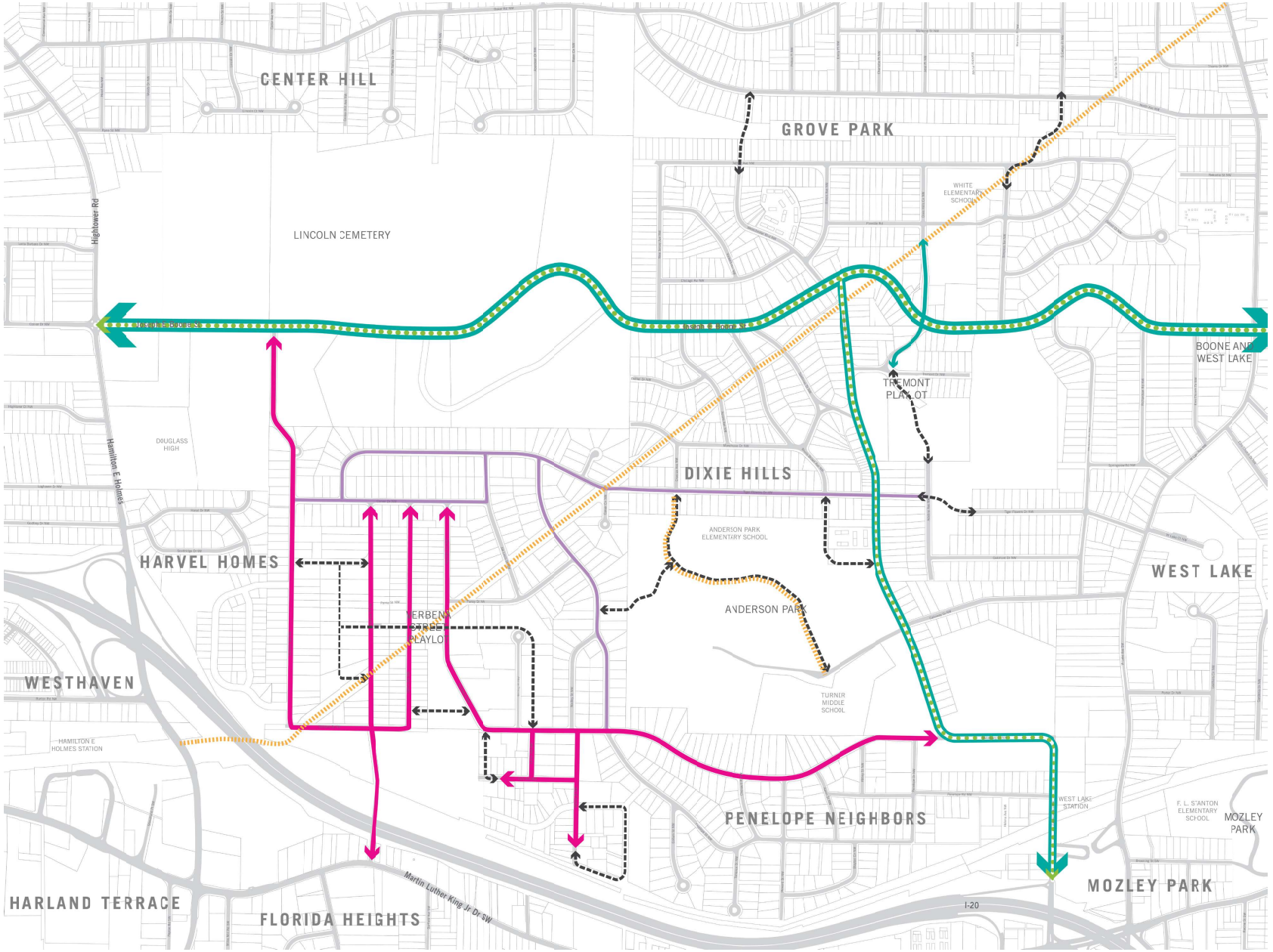
Open Space / Natural Systems Framework Plan

- Existing Park
- Park Improvements
- New Park
- Urban Agriculture
- Stormwater Control Greenspace
- Potential Industrial Landscape Area
- Community and Athletc Facilites
- Potential Multiuse Trail
- Potential BeltLine Trail

Since the first planning was conducted almost ten years ago, the disused or abandoned properties around Maddox Park and the MARTA Bankhead line have been envisioned as one of the signature transit-oriented anchors punctuating the 22-mile BeltLine corridor. There is a rare opportunity here to combine a variety of new urban housing types with mixed-use and creative commercial space, community facilities, and parks and gardens all connected by a web of trails and naturalized streams. Two mixed-use nodes are proposed for the Boone corridor – one consisting of neighborhood-scaled development at the intersection of West Lake Drive; and a highly urban concentration of mixed-use buildings at a future MARTA stop. Linking these nodes with adapted warehouses to the north are acres of new housing ranging from multistory apartments to the east, to smaller townhouses and attached dwellings to the west.

500 1000 Feet N

vhb edits + additions



Circulation Framework Plan

Street Network Improvements:
- *New Street Connection*
- *Intersection Upgrade*

Complete Streets Improvements:
- *With bike facility*
- *Without bike facility*

Dedicated Bike Facilities:
- *Existing*
- *Proposed*

Pedestrian Space Improvements:
- *New Streetscape*
- *New Multiuse Trail*
- *Improvement to Existing Sidewalk*

Rail Transit Improvements:
- *Heavy Rail Line / Station*
- *Light Rail Line / Station*

Since the first planning was conducted almost ten years ago, the disused or abandoned properties around Maddox Park and the MARTA Bankhead line have been envisioned as one of the signature transit-oriented anchors punctuating the 22-mile BeltLine corridor. There is a rare opportunity here to combine a variety of new urban housing types with mixed-use and creative commercial space, community facilities, and parks and gardens all connected by a web of trails and naturalized streams. Two mixed-use nodes are proposed

500 1000 Feet N

vhb edits + additions

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT

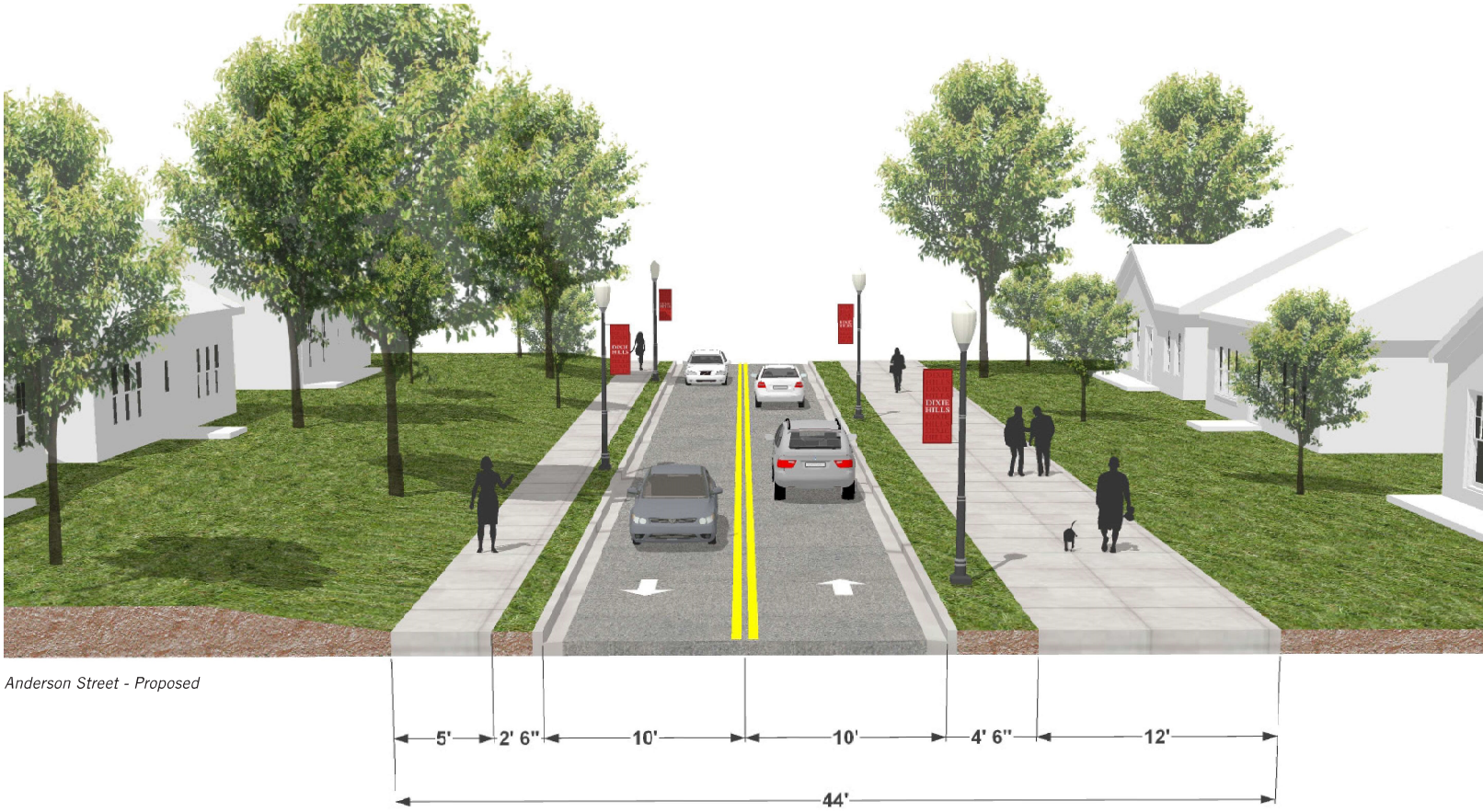
Anderson Avenue

Anderson Street - Existing

Current cross sections of Anderson Avenue have inconsistent streetscapes. Utility poles take up space that could be used for wider sidewalks or potential street trees. Also, there is a lack of pavement markings for all modes of transportation.

Key Improvements

- Wide sidewalks on both sides of the street
- Buried utilities
- Street lighting
- Planted buffer strips with street trees



Anderson Street - Proposed

CONCEPT PLAN

West Lake MARTA TOD

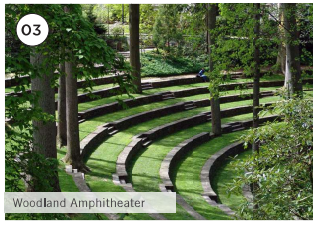
Located at the gateway to District 3 from Interstate 20, the West Lake MARTA station has the potential to be a major economic and community anchor even though it has a relatively small footprint compared to other MARTA transit-oriented developments. The convergence of three major thoroughfares gives the station a strong position in the local street network; and its proximity to Westview Cemetery – one of Atlanta's most beautiful examples of picturesque landscape architecture – only enhances its potential as a high-quality residential site.

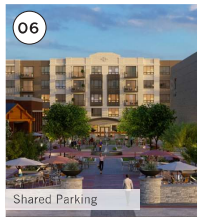
This catalyst project strategically clusters a wide variety of functions around the transit stop through the placement of a central plaza on the station's doorstep (1). Containing a redesigned bus drop-off, this plaza functions not only as a formal entry to the station, but as a forecourt to a potential community center or YMCA (2) across West Lake Avenue that would function as the gateway to the historic Westlake neighborhood. The facility could contain a variety of uses (including possible program linkages with Frank L. Stanton Elementary) and be designed with a central passage leading to the Lionel Hampton Trail and a woodland amphitheater (3) that has the effect of pulling Mozley Park closer to the station. Redevelopment of the parking lots and surrounding vacant land could include residential mixed-use (5) similar to the type being developed at other stations like Edgewood and Avondale, as well as townhouses (4) to transition to the existing single-family homes. To the west, new office / commercial mixed-use development (7) could take advantage of the easy access to the I-20 as well as a new shared parking facility (6) for MARTA riders and residents. Additional transit-accessible housing could be provided to the north in a diverse mix of senior apartments (8) and "missing middle" housing typologies (9-10).

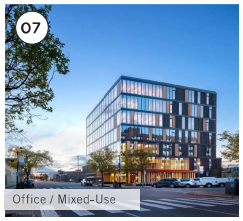
See following pages for images of comparable development character

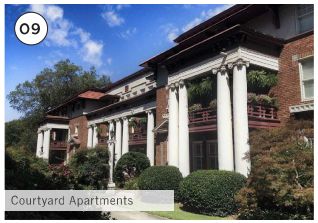
CONCEPT PLAN

West Lake MARTA TOD









Estimated Development Program:

~720-900 parking spaces (shared deck)
~300-360 apartments
90-110 in wrapped deck
210-250 in freestanding buildings
~22 townhouses
~210,000 sf office / commercial
~10,000-20,000 sf retail
~15,000 sf community