State of Atlanta's Greenspace

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atlanta's project greenspace
embrace your space

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Project Greenspace is an initiative to develop a world-class greenspace system in Atlanta that connects people to parks, recreational facilities, plazas, streetscapes, greenways, and environmentally sensitive lands. The State of Atlanta's Greenspace Report describes and analyzes the existing and potential resources that will comprise this system and the factors affecting them. Together with the Needs Assessment Report, which evaluates citizens' needs for parks and recreational facilities, it provides background and context for the recommendations set forth in the Strategies and Actions Report.

This report characterizes existing conditions and trends related to Atlanta's greenspace based on data inventory and analysis; review of city plans, initiatives, and regulations; and input from stakeholders (persons involved in greenspace issues) and the public. The report is divided into the following sections following this introduction:

- Chapter 2.0 addresses Project Greenspace's planning context: past greenspace plans and initiatives in the City of Atlanta, current regulations pertaining to greenspace resources, and future population trends that will affect the provision of greenspace.
- Chapter 3.0 summarizes input received from the public and stakeholders in the form of common themes (goals) and key issues.
- Chapter 4.0 describes and analyzes the present condition of Atlanta's greenspace, including core city parks and recreational facilities; other parks and open spaces; environmentally sensitive lands; existing and potential greenspace connections; and other opportunities to create greenspace.

Considerable progress has been made in recent years to improve greenspace in the City of Atlanta. As described in Chapter 2.0, many of the recommendations of the 1993 Parks, Open Space, and Greenways Plan – the predecessor to Project Greenspace – have been implemented. The BeltLine initiative will establish a 22-mile trail loop and over 1,200 acres of new and expanded greenspace. Public outreach initiatives such as the 2005 Park System Agenda have emphasized the importance of greenspace to Atlanta's citizens. The $105 million Park Opportunity Bond approved in 2006 and increased departmental funding is enabling the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA) to upgrade existing parks, make targeted greenspace acquisitions, and improve maintenance. The results of the Project Greenspace public outreach process – including a citywide citizen survey (see Section 3.3) – indicate strong community support for greenspace.

Despite this progress, much more needs to be done to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system. This report highlights issues to be addressed, opportunities to be seized, and challenges to be met in working towards this vision. The following are key conclusions derived from the evaluation of the present state of Atlanta's greenspace:

City Parks

Atlanta's existing park system has many issues, beginning with the relatively low amount of parkland in relation to the City's population and land area compared to other major U.S. cities[1]. Other issues include:

- Existing parks tend to be undersized, stretching the City's resources and the ability of DPRCA to maintain them. For example, 29 parks currently classified as community parks do not meet accepted size thresholds for this type of park and function more as neighborhood parks.
- Different types of parks are not evenly distributed throughout the City, resulting in overlapping service areas in some locations and gaps and underserved areas in others. Analysis has shown that 59% of Atlanta's residents are not located within an easy walking distance of parks via a pedestrian-friendly street network.
- The provision of many popular recreational facilities such as multi-use trails, dog parks, and youth/teen football fields is insufficient to meet the needs of Atlanta's existing and growing population. Large athletic complexes suitable for tournament and league play are lacking within the city limits. Only three of the City's 29 recreation centers exceed the 30,000 square foot standard recommended for a full service facility and many of the smaller centers have overlapping service areas.
- The parks system lacks a venue capable of accommodating large concerts, festivals, or other events.

Greenspace System

City parks are just one component of Atlanta's greenspace. As documented in Chapter 4.0, other existing and potential components of the citywide greenspace system include:

- Governmental and institutional landholdings that function as greenspace, such as federal, state, and county parks; urban plazas and streetscapes; golf courses and cemeteries; and university, college, and school open spaces
- Natural resources, such as river and stream corridors, floodplains, and the City's tree canopy
- Cultural and historic sites
- Existing and potential greenspace connections, such as multi-use trails, greenways, utility corridors, and streetscapes

1 Comparisons are provided in the Needs Assessment Report. According to research conducted by the Trust for Public Land, in 2006 city parks comprised 4.5% of Atlanta's land area or 7.9 acres per 1,000 residents. This compares to averages for 60 major cities of 9.8% and 18.8 acres per 1,000 residents, respectively.

Greenspace resources perform multiple functions that are essential to Atlanta's quality of life, environmental health, and economy. For example, greenways along stream corridors can preserve natural resources, provide low-cost stormwater management services, filter nonpoint source pollutants, and offer opportunities for compatible outdoor recreation. In urban contexts, well-conceived streetscapes can improve the City's image, stimulate economic activity, promote environmental quality through street trees and landscaping, and function as connectors in the greenspace system. Parks, plazas, and other greenspaces also play important roles as community gathering places; the citizen survey ranked special events and festivals as the top recreation program need. Connections are critical elements that can expand the effective coverage of the greenspace system while providing opportunities for walking and biking, the highest ranked park and facility need in the citizen survey.

Thus a major opportunity and challenge for Project Greenspace is: how do we knit these disparate resources, which are managed by myriad public and private landowners, into an integrated greenspace system that maximizes their many functions and benefits for Atlantans?

Population Growth

The City projects that Atlanta's population will grow from 416,474 in 2000 to over 780,000 in 2030, magnifying the need to secure greenspace and provide additional parkland and recreational facilities to meet citizens' needs. Many new residents will move from outside of the City (where they likely had access to quality greenspaces) into high-density developments that lack usable open space. Changing demographic characteristics – including an aging population with an increasing proportion of females – will also impact needs for parks, recreational facilities, and greenspace.

Development Regulations

The projected growth in Atlanta's population is both a challenge and opportunity for creating the greenspace system. Given the relatively low amount of parkland in Atlanta compared to other cities, the challenge is to "grow" greenspace to serve an increasing population in a market characterized by high land costs and a diminishing supply of vacant land. These same development and redevelopment pressures, however, can be used as an opportunity to restructure land use patterns to create dedicated greenspace. Development regulations, processes, and incentives are key tools that can be used to achieve this goal.

The City has a basic framework of regulations in place to promote open space in developments and protect environmentally sensitive resources (see Section 2.2). However, existing regulations such as the residential open space requirements could be significantly improved and incentives provided to promote the dedication of meaningful greenspace within new developments. Greenspace targets should also be incorporated into all development projects receiving city financial assistance, including Tax Allocation District projects.

Greenspace Capacity

Building capacity to grow and manage greenspace is a basic need if Atlanta is to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system. The interdepartmental "Green Team" that deals with greenspace acquisition and development and includes partners from outside the City is a step in the right direction. However, from an organizational perspective, greenspace responsibilities are fragmented among a number of different city departments and overall coordination is limited. Looking beyond city government, there are numerous public and private sector partners that can be engaged in creating the greenspace system. Mirroring the diversity of the potential components of the greenspace system, these range from other city entities (e.g., the Atlanta Development Authority, Atlanta BeltLine Inc., Atlanta Public Schools, and the Atlanta Housing Authority) to institutions, philanthropic foundations, and nonprofit organizations (e.g., Park Pride and the PATH Foundation) to private businesses, developers, and landowners. The City has established relationships with many of these parties; existing partnerships could be enhanced and new ones created to focus on specific components or broader aspects of the greenspace system. For example, Atlanta lacks an entity charged with the mission to preserve greenspace within the City by working with private landowners. Such an entity is necessary to successfully engage private landowners who wish to protect their land and to provide technical support for howeowners' associations charged with the management of commonly owned areas.

As noted, the City has devoted higher levels of funding to parks and greenspace in recent years. However, funding levels are still relatively low compared to other cities with "best-of-class" park systems[1]. The citizen survey results indicate strong support for a bond referendum and dedicated funding source for greenspace acquisition, development, and management (see Section 3.3). It is important that any identified funding source(s) be consistent and sustainable over the long term to support the commitment needed to create and maintain a world-class greenspace system. In addition, additional staff will be needed to plan, coordinate, acquire, develop, and maintain the greenspace system.

2 According to research conducted by the Trust for Public Land, in 2005 DPRCA spent an average of $79 per resident compared to an average for 60 major city park agencies of $76 per resident. By contrast, Seattle spent $266 per resident, Minneapolis spent $151 per resident, San Francisco spent $147 per resident, and Chicago spent $136 per resident.

2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 RELATED PLANNING INITIATIVES

A number of prior plans and initiatives have addressed greenspace issues in the City of Atlanta, sponsored by the City, Park Pride, and other partners. These plans and initiatives have done an excellent job at framing greenspace issues and proposing policies and actions to address the issues, and have resulted in some significant accomplishments. Nevertheless, much additional work needs to be done to fully realize the goals of these efforts. Atlanta's Project Greenspace builds on prior planning initiatives by defining a comprehensive framework and action agenda that can be implemented to develop a world-class greenspace system for the future (see Strategies and Actions Report). The following text provides an overview of the major initiatives that are relevant to Atlanta's greenspace. It concludes with a summary of the major themes or goals that are common to the various initiatives.

2.1.1 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan (1993)

The 1993 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan was prepared by the City of Atlanta Department of Planning and Development and Department of Parks and Recreation in conjunction with the Mayor's Green Ribbon Committee, a citizen advisory group appointed by Mayor Maynard Jackson in 1990 to facilitate the parks planning process. The plan establishes planning policies intended to guide the development of park, open space, and recreational facilities over a 15-year period. As a comprehensive, citywide assessment of Atlanta's park and open space (greenspace) resources, the Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan is the predecessor to Atlanta's Project Greenspace.

The plan is divided into three major chapters:

1. Issues, Goals and Proposed Policies
2. Project Recommendations
3. Action Program

Chapter 1 identifies key issues and establishes goals and policies for the following topics:

- Open Space and Greenways
- Facilities
- Special Events
- Historic Resources
- Natural Resources
- Management and Maintenance
- Funding

The **Open Space and Greenways** policies promote development of a linked, accessible open space system with greenways as the key unifying element. The plan establishes a target of 10.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons by the year 2000 based on national standards. The **Facilities** policies are intended to ensure equitable and efficient distribution of recreational facilities throughout Atlanta to meet community needs, including coordination with Atlanta Public Schools and joint development of parks and public schools. **The Special Events** policies promote places for family and neighborhood events in neighborhood parks, community events and festivals in commercial areas, and regional special events and festivals in larger parks. The **Historic Resources** policies propose enhancement of historic resources through their incorporation into the open space and greenways system. The **Natural Resources** policies address protection of important environmental resources such as streams, floodplains, wetlands, and Atlanta's tree canopy. The **Management and Maintenance** policies propose improved, more efficient maintenance of parkland and facilities and address related issues such as park security. The **Funding** policies note that current (1993) funding levels are not sufficient to implement the plan goals and objectives, and identify possible financing alternatives to supplement the Department of Parks and Recreation's general fund allocation.

Chapter 2 makes recommendations for the following types of projects:

- Greenway Trails
- Regional Parks
- Downtown Parks and Pedestrian Corridors
- Special Event Sites
- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Historic Sites
- Facilities
- Natural Resources

The **Greenway Trail** project recommendations are based on the City of Atlanta Greenway Trail Corridor Plan, published by the PATH Foundation in 1992. Proposed **Regional Parks** include an expansion to the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area and development of Freedom Park on the former Presidential Parkway lands. The recommendations for **Downtown Parks and Pedestrian Corridors** include establishment of "refreshing" urban spaces and connecting pedestrian corridors, both in anticipation of the 1996 Olympics and to improve the future livability of the City. Proposed **Special Event Sites** include Centennial Olympic Park, a new park north of Olympic Stadium, and reuse of the Lakewood Fairgrounds. In addition, the plan proposed development of a "Cultural Ring" around Downtown and Midtown within the former Circle Line rail corridor – the precursor to the current BeltLine initiative.

The 1993 plan proposes establishment of **Community Parks** within four areas of the City identified as the most deficient in park space – Ben Hill/Greenbriar, Chattahoochee, Lindbergh, and Southeast. With respect to **Neighborhood Parks**, the plan proposes assessment of each park in terms of park safety, neighborhood use, social unity, and neighborhood identity and compatibility. Based on this

assessment, some parks will need the addition of neighborhood event facilities, others will need to be redesigned, and others will need to be relocated to more central, visible sites. The **Historic Sites** recommendations include expanding Atlanta's historic sites inventory, addressing historic sites and features in park master plans, and projects related to specific historic resources. The **Facilities** project recommendations address community centers, pools, neighborhood park facilities, Atlanta Public Schools, and greenway trails. Finally, the **Natural Resources** recommendations address parkland and citywide management issues, regulatory protection of environmentally sensitive resources, and citizen involvement.

Chapter 3 provides an action program for achieving the goals of the plan, including criteria for setting priorities, actions proposed to be completed during the first five years, and actions proposed to be completed during years five to fifteen. The plan also includes Park Design Guidelines with a particular focus on physical design techniques to improve accessibility, park security, and surrounding neighborhood stability.

A number of the recommendations of the 1993 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan have been implemented. Greenway trails that have been established as a result of the plan and related initiatives include Freedom Park Trail, Chastain Park Trail, Eastside Trolley Trail, Westside Trail, and the Lionel Hampton Trail. Parks that have been established or substantially upgraded, many with the support of non-profit organizations and citizens, include Freedom Park, Chattahoochee River Park, Piedmont Park, Centennial Park, Grant Park, Olmstead Linear Park, MLK National Historic Site, Whittier Mill Park, Southeast Recreation Center, Ben Hill Recreation Center, and John Howell Park. In addition, the "Cultural Ring" concept is being implemented in the form of the BeltLine initiative.

Other plan recommendations have been less effectively implemented. The City has not achieved the minimum target of 10.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents proposed in the plan. There is a continuing need for a major special events venue. While the funding situation has improved as a result of initiatives such as the Park Opportunity Bond, a more sustainable, dedicated funding source has not been established to meet the city's future park and greenspace needs. Other topics addressed in the plan, such as park maintenance and security, continue to be issues, although the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs has made progress in these areas.

2.1.2 Georgia Community Greenspace Program

The Georgia Greenspace Program was established by the Georgia General Assembly in 2000 to encourage eligible counties to initiate community greenspace programs. It defines greenspace as "permanently protected land and water, including agricultural and forestry land, that is in its undeveloped, natural state or that has been developed only to the extent consistent with, or is restored to be consistent with, one or more listed goals for natural resource protection or informal recreation." The Georgia Greenspace Trust Fund was established in conjunction with this program to assist local governments in carrying out strategies for acquiring and permanently protecting land. To qualify for grant funds from this source, local governments were required to set a goal of permanently protecting at least 20% of the jurisdiction as open and connected greenspace.

In 2000 Atlanta City Council adopted a Greenspace Program concept plan and application for submission to Fulton and DeKalb Counties and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The concept plan established a goal to protect a minimum of 20% of the City's land area as open greenspace that can be used for informal recreation and natural resource protection. Types of land targeted by the plan to achieve the 20% goal included floodplain and wetlands; greenways; nature preserves and other passive parks; new parkland; and priority vacant/undeveloped land. Approximately 350 acres have been acquired by the City through the Georgia Greenspace Program.

2.1.3 Parks Atlanta Rescue Coalition 9-1-1 (2001) / 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda

The Parks Atlanta Rescue Coalition 9-1-1 (9 goals, 1 visionary mayor, and 1 great city, or PARC 9-1-1) was formed in 2001 by a partnership of neighborhood, civic, and environmental organizations, led by Park Pride, to encourage Atlanta's next administration to create a world-class park system. PARC 9-1-1 asserted that "Atlanta lags behind other American cities in every measure of park acreage, and the parks we do have are unsafe and poorly maintained." It called on the next mayor to endorse a bold new vision for Atlanta's parks, including the following goals:

1. Ensure that every child in Atlanta grows up within a 10 minute walk of a park, trail or natural area;
2. Triple the park acres per resident to meet the national average;
3. Maintain all Atlanta parks to the highest standards;
4. Make all parks safe, crime-free areas;
5. Increase the number of ball fields and recreation venues for children, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities;
6. Build a new special events venue for festivals and concerts;
7. Protect new natural areas for walking and hiking trails and wildlife habitat;
8. Protect our streams and river corridors; and
9. Restore Atlanta's tree cover to 32%, the 1974 level, up from the current 23%.

Mayor Franklin and every candidate running for City Council endorsed the PARC 9-1-1 agenda and parks have been a priority of the current administration.

2002 Parks and Greenspace Task Force Report

In 2002 the Mayor appointed a Parks and Greenspace Task Force to make recommendations to improve existing parks and increase park acreage within the City. The Task Force's report, issued in November 2002, identified four major themes:

1. The City must improve the maintenance and safety of existing parks.
2. The City must dramatically increase the amount of its park space.

3. The City must provide special recreation parks and special events venues to reduce the stress on existing parks.
4. The City must improve management of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.

The 2002 report identifies a series of goals and "big ideas" to further these themes. Key proposals include doubling the acreage of parks and greenspace in the City by 2012 to a total of 6,244 acres; developing a "signature park" of over 500 acres, including a major special events venue as well as active and passive recreational facilities; improving park security and maintenance; increasing funding for parks and greenspace ($400 million over 10 years to support acquisition and development and a $15 million increase in the Parks Department budget by 2007); and enhancing partnerships to create a world-class park system.

The Task Force report recommends establishment of an independent agency, modeled after the Chicago Park District, to manage the Atlanta park system. However, this proposal met with some resistance and was not implemented. Since the Task Force report was completed, Parks Department management and operations have significantly improved and funding for parks and greenspace has increased. However, a signature park/major special events venue has not been established. While significant acquisitions have been made, the City's park system in 2007 comprised approximately 4,000 acres or approximately 500 acres short of the 2007 target set by the report.

2005 PARC 9-1-1 Update

In anticipation of the next round of city elections, Park Pride reviewed and updated PARC 9-1-1 in 2005. It found that the PARC Campaign was a tremendous success in elevating the visibility of Atlanta's parks with the civic, business, and political communities, and that significant progress had been made in subsequent years. However, the review found that most of the original nine points were unfulfilled. In response, Park Pride and its partners issued the 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda, which includes the following goals to "Make Atlanta's parks a source of national pride":

1. Identify and institute a secure, sustainable and sufficient funding source for parks, greenspace and recreation facilities;
2. Double the number of park acres and ensure that every Atlanta resident ideally lives within a 10 minute walk of a park, trail or accessible natural area;
3. Develop and enforce maintenance standards for all Atlanta parks;
4. Identify and implement significant steps needed to improve public safety in our parks;
5. Increase the number of athletic fields and recreation amenities;
6. Build a new special events venue for festivals;
7. Ensure that future land acquisition emphasizes the preservation of natural areas and the protection of our headwaters, streams and river corridors;
8. Increase Atlanta's tree cover from 26% to 40% to reduce stormwater runoff and maximize air quality benefits; and
9. Improve city, school board, and other landowners' cooperation in the programming and management of parks, greenspace and recreation facilities.

These goals constitute an affirmation and restatement of the PARC 9-1-1 nine-point program. One of the primary purposes of Atlanta's Project Greenspace is to define a specific agenda for the actions that the City will have to carry out in order to accomplish these goals.

2.1.4 Greenways Acquisition Project

The Greenways Acquisition Project was undertaken as part of settlement of an enforcement action against the City of Atlanta for violations of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Georgia Water Quality Control Act. Specifically, the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Consent Decree signed in 1998 required the City to implement a $25 million program to acquire streamside buffers in the City of Atlanta and 14 counties in Metro Atlanta through March 2007. The goal of the project is to protect water quality by maintaining the properties in a natural, undisturbed state; no more than 10% of the area of properties developed may be developed for public access or use (e.g., multi-use trails).[1]

In 2001, the City completed a Greenway Acquisition Plan to guide land acquisition and management efforts along Designated Streams (Chattahoochee River and its tributaries, South River and its tributaries). Over 1,100 acres of land have been protected through fee simple acquisition and conservation easements, including approximately 680 acres within the City of Atlanta as of August 2007. Funding for the Greenways Acquisition Project expired in March 2007 and the City has not identified a replacement source of funding to continue acquiring land for the purpose of watershed protection.

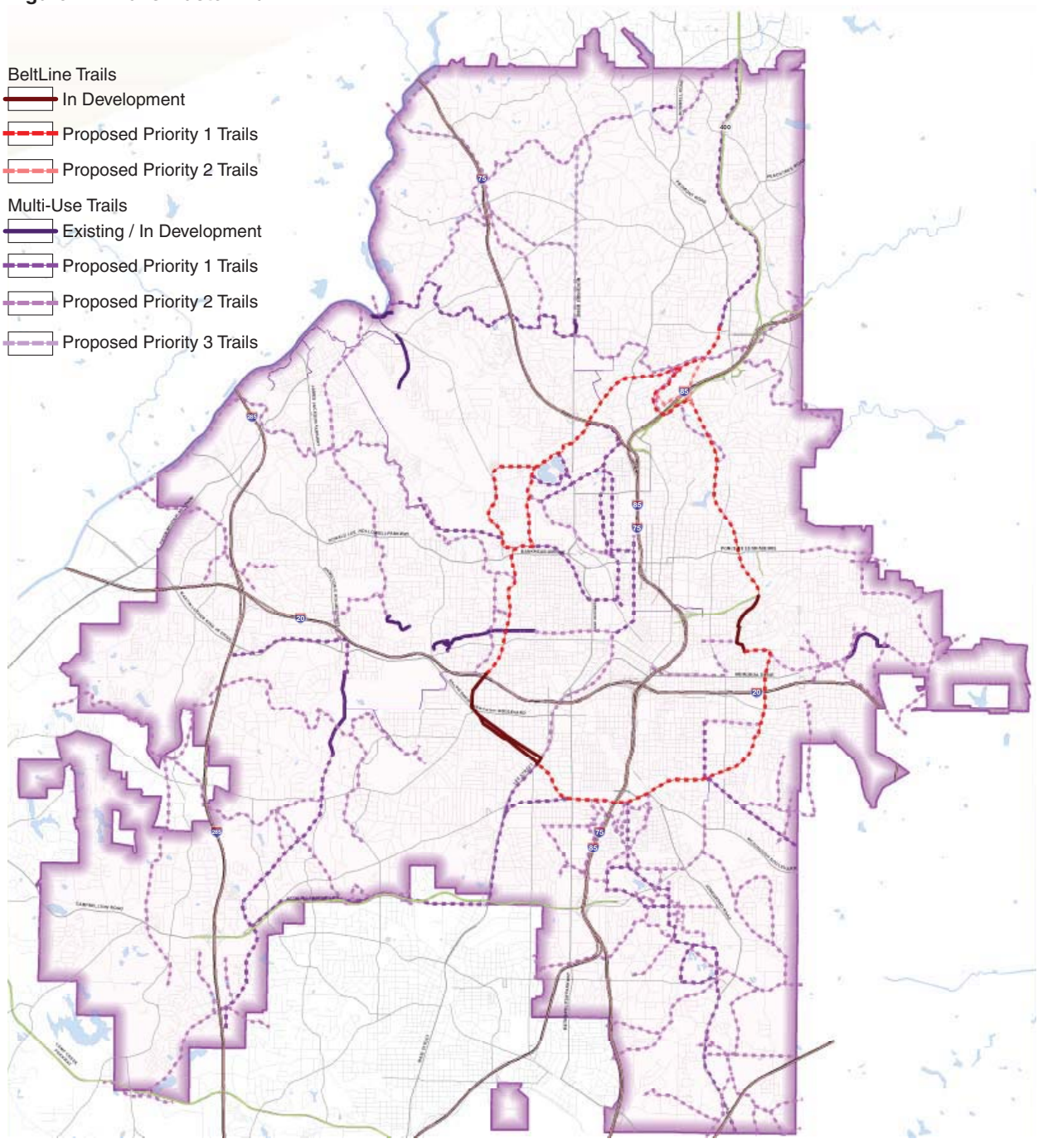
2.1.5 Trails Master Plan

The trails master plan for the City of Atlanta was prepared in conjunction with the PATH Foundation, a private non-profit organization dedicated to the design, construction, and maintenance of multi-use trails throughout the Atlanta region. The master plan is updated regularly and is part of the City's comprehensive plan, known as the Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP). Figure 2.1 shows the master plan's extent of existing and planned trails. Of the 249.43 miles shown, 14.65 miles of trails have been constructed so far, with an additional 18.75 miles in development, and 66.61 miles identified as priority 1 (includes the Beltline trail, see below). The remaining 149.42 miles of proposed trails are identified as priority 2 and priority 3 trails for development in the mid- to long-term.

Lack of the coordination needed to leverage development activity to create new trails is a significant obstacle to realizing the multi-use trail master plan. A more proactive, comprehensive approach to identifying opportunities during the conceptual stage of development projects and connecting such opportunities to long-range plans is needed. In addition to integrating trails into private development projects, other opportunities include the use of utility rights-of-way, establishment of access easements as part of construction of sewer lines, and the conversion of abandoned or underutilized

1 This requirement raises management issues regarding the role of greenway properties in a citywide greenspace system designed to provide multiple benefits (i.e., outdoor recreation/trails in addition to environmental protection).

Figure 2.1. Trails Master Plan



Data Source: City of Atlanta

roadways to trails ("roads-to trails"). A consistent point of contact to identify and coordinate these opportunities is required to create an interconnected network of trails throughout Atlanta.

2.1.6 BeltLine Initiative

The BeltLine initiative proposes to add 33 miles to the City's multi-use trail system. This includes a 22-mile loop of abandoned and underused rail corridors around the heart of Atlanta that is to be transformed into a continuous system of trails and light-rail transit surrounded by parks and pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development centers. As noted, the "Cultural Ring" proposed in the 1993 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan was the precursor to the BeltLine concept. In 1999, the current BeltLine initiative was defined in Ryan Gravel's Georgia Tech graduate thesis. In 2004, the Trust for Public Land in collaboration with Alex Garvin & Associates prepared The BeltLine Emerald Necklace: Atlanta's New Public Realm, which articulates a comprehensive vision and identifies specific greenspace opportunities along the BeltLine corridor. In 2005, EDAW prepared the BeltLine Tax Allocation District (TAD) Feasibility Study to assess the practicality of creating a TAD to help implement the BeltLine concept. The study resulted in three critical findings:

1. A BeltLine TAD could generate approximately $1.3 to $1.7 billion in bond funding;
2. These bonds could help pay for capital costs associated with the development of BeltLine parks, trails, and transit; and
3. The City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and the Atlanta Board of Education would receive significant economic benefits from new development spurred by creation of the BeltLine.

The BeltLine Partnership, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was established in July 2005 to move the project from vision to reality. Later in 2005, the Atlanta Development Authority completed the BeltLine Redevelopment Plan to provide a framework for implementing the three essential components of the BeltLine – greenspace and trails, transit, and development – and the BeltLine Tax Allocation District. A key goal of the plan is to create a readily accessible and interconnected network of parks and greenspaces. The plan proposes over 1,200 acres of new and expanded greenspace, including the primary BeltLine trail.

The BeltLine initiative is an exciting, visionary project that will make a real difference for the future of Atlanta. It will significantly increase the acreage and accessibility of parks and greenspace in the City as well as opportunities for travel by bike or foot around in-town Atlanta. However, it should be noted that the BeltLine will not by itself achieve the City's greenspace goals identified by initiatives such as the 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda. While the BeltLine will add 1,200 acres of new parkland and 33 miles to the City's multi-use trail system, it is geographically limited to a ring around Downtown and Midtown Atlanta and other parts of the City will still need parks and trails within walking distance of residential areas. Therefore, it is important that Atlanta's Project Greenspace capitalize on the positive momentum generated by the BeltLine while integrating it into a broader vision and implementation strategy to "grow" a citywide greenspace system.

2.1.7 Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Strategic Plan

In May 2004 the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA) initiated a strategic planning process to develop a departmental mission, vision, and strategies to guide policy and resource decisions over a five-year period. The resulting November 2005 document defines the following vision, mission, and strategies:

Vision

To enhance the quality of life for all through nationally acclaimed excellence in Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs.

Mission

To provide all citizens with the highest quality parks, facilities, recreational programs, and cultural experiences.

Strategies

1. Provide a park system that is safe, well maintained, abundant, accessible, and well funded.
2. Provide accessible recreation programs which afford an opportunity for after school, summer youth, teens, and senior populations to be inspired, grow, and achieve through learning and life-skill experiences.
3. Infuse diverse arts and cultural experiences into the community through advocacy, support, education, and presentation.
4. Provide state-of-the-art facilities by assessing, prioritizing, and upgrading existing capital assets.
5. Create an environment that inspires, empowers, recognizes, and values an engaged work force.

The strategies are designed to address a series of challenges identified by the plan. These challenges confirm issues identified by previous park and greenspace initiatives, for example: lack of sufficient greenspace, lack of a special events site and facilities, and the need to maintain parks and greenspace at "Best-of-Class" standards. They also include internal departmental issues, such as technology and training, and address other aspects of the departmental mission, such as developing a Community Cultural Plan, fully implementing the Public Art Program, and meeting customer demands for improvements at the Civic Center.

The plan identifies action steps to guide development and implementation of departmental work plans, as well as key success measures for use in setting targets and determining progress. The success measures address park maintenance, recreation programs, cultural affairs, and management. The plan also addresses budget and funding needs to accomplish the vision, mission, and strategies.

The Strategic Plan is a well-conceived document that lays out a reasoned approach to addressing the significant challenges facing the DPRCA. The department has made considerable progress in achieving a number of the plan's targets, for example the parks maintenance success measures. Since

preparation of the Strategic Plan, the DPRCA has developed high quality maintenance standards for the BeltLine parks and has set a goal of increasing the quantity and quality of maintenance in existing parks to the projected BeltLine Standards. Nevertheless, two key conclusions of the plan deserve special emphasis:

1. The rapid population growth in the City of Atlanta is magnifying the challenge of meeting residents' needs for parks and greenspace.
2. While the DPRCA budget has been increased and the $105 million Park Opportunity Bond is a significant achievement, additional sustainable funding is needed to meet this challenge while continuing to improve park maintenance.

2.1.8 New Century Economic Development Plan

Mayor Shirley Franklin's New Century Economic Development Plan was approved by the Atlanta Development Authority in December 2004 and updated in 2005. Created through a process involving numerous stakeholders, it establishes an economic vision, priorities, and ten initiatives or action plans to address the priorities. The vision addresses three primary components of the economy:

- Healthy Neighborhoods and Quality of Life
- Economic Opportunity
- Physical Infrastructure

The plan identifies parks and greenspace as essential to Healthy Neighborhoods and Quality of Life. Two of the ten initiatives directly address parks and greenspace:

- Champion the BeltLine, Downtown, and Brand Atlanta Campaign as major development projects
- Grow dedicated parks and greenspace

As part of the BeltLine initiative, the plan calls for finalization of plans for a continuous park, greenspace, and trail system, including land acquisition, creation of demonstration parks and trails, and development of operations and maintenance plans. The parks and greenspace initiative proposes the following action items:

- Streamline the process for land acquisition and donations
- Implement Consent Decree provisions through acquisition and maintenance of greenspace
- Partner with organizations to create a world-class park system
- Evaluate creation of an effective governance structure to improve operations and acquisitions of the City of Atlanta Parks
- Create standards for greenspace to be included in all major capital projects, both public and private
- Update the city's 1993 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan to include the community vision
- Identify potential sources of funding required to grow dedicated parks and greenspace

The plan sets a goal of adding 1,900 acres of parks and greenspace by 2009.

The New Century Economic Development Plan is notable in making a direct linkage between parks and greenspace and economic development. Parks and greenspace provide proven economic benefits, such as attracting businesses through improved quality of life, spurring economic activity associated with park and greenspace resources (e.g., tourism), increasing property values, reducing costs for engineered infrastructure, and lowering energy costs as a result of trees and other vegetation. A key question is how these benefits can be most effectively leveraged through the integration of public greenspace into city-sponsored economic development initiatives (e.g., by considering greenspace part of the basic infrastructure package in Tax Allocation District projects). This will require setting measurable benchmarks for specific types of greenspace.

2.1.9 Other Initiatives Related to Parks and Greenspace

The City and partner organizations have undertaken many plans and initiatives addressing Atlanta's park and greenspace resources. The list of planning initiatives summarized above is not meant to be all inclusive, but rather to provide an overview of the directions that have been set by comprehensive, citywide studies. Examples of other initiatives include:

- Central Atlanta Progress' Imagine Downtown Vision Plan identifies an Open Space Framework Plan for the Downtown consisting of public parks, plazas, and streetscapes.
- In addition to leading PARC 9-1-1 and the 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda, Park Pride has organized numerous friends of parks groups, sponsored an active Adopt-A-Park volunteer program, and worked with neighborhood groups to develop park master plans.
- A number of the City's Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs) have prepared park and greenspace plans addressing issues such as improvements to existing park facilities, acquisition of new parkland, and development of trails.
- Trees Atlanta, a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and improving the urban environment by conserving and planting trees, has planted thousands of trees throughout Metro Atlanta and saved hundreds of others through community partnerships and stronger tree protection ordinances.
- The Arthur M. Blank Foundation's Inspiring Spaces initiative is promoting development of a "system of great parks" in Atlanta through land acquisition and expansion of existing parks.
- The Home Depot has entered into an agreement with The Conservation Fund to offset carbon emissions created by company operations by funding the planting of thousands of trees across Metro Atlanta.

In addition to targeted plans and initiatives such as those identified above, numerous plans have addressed park and greenspace issues as part of studies of smaller geographic areas within Atlanta. These include Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Plans managed by the City, LCI Plans managed by Community Improvement Districts, redevelopment plans, corridor plans, and miscellaneous other studies. While the specific recommendations vary from plan to plan, key ideas related to parks and greenspace include:

- More parks and multi-use recreational trails
- Improved streetscapes, including gateways, squares, and plazas
- Protected natural resources and greenways
- Improved accessibility for residents to parks and greenspace
- Improved connections between greenspaces
- Emphasis on park and greenspace acquisition and development

2.1.10 Conclusions

Evaluation of the varied planning initiatives summarized above reveals several recurring ideas. They all support an overarching goal to develop a world-class greenspace system as an essential component of Atlanta's quality of life, economic vitality, and aspirations to be a leading national and international city. Several consistent themes fall under this goal, including:

Parks and Recreation

- Significantly increase the acreage of core (city) parkland. The 1993 Parks, Open Space and Greenways Plan sets a target of 10.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons. The 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda sets targets of doubling the park acreage and providing parks within a ten-minute walk of all residents.
- Develop greenways with multi-use trails to connect parks and greenspaces.
- Continue to improve park maintenance and security.
- Continue to improve recreational facilities and programs to meet citizens' needs[1].

Natural Resources

- Permanently protect and buffer environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains, wetlands, and natural habitat areas.
- Protect and restore Atlanta's tree canopy. The 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda sets a target of increasing the tree cover from 26% to 40%.

Community

- Increase the function of parks and greenspaces as public gathering spaces at the neighborhood, community, and citywide scales, including establishment of a "signature park" and major venue for special events and festivals.
- Integrate Atlanta's history, cultural heritage, and arts into the greenspace system as an expression of community identity.

1 This issue is explained more fully in the Needs Assessment Report.

Economic Development

- Reinforce the importance of greenspace to Atlanta's economy through connections between greenspace and economic development initiatives.

Implementation

- Establish a secure and sustainable source of increased funding for parks and greenspace.
- Promote public and private sector partnerships to "grow" the greenspace system (e.g., Atlanta Development Authority, Atlanta Housing Authority, and Atlanta Public Schools; colleges, universities, and other institutions; private landowners, etc.).
- Incorporate and provide measures and incentives for dedicated greenspace within development and redevelopment projects.

Intiatives proposed by Project Gerenspace to address these themes are described in detail in the Strategies and Actions Report.

2.2 REGULATORY CONTEXT

The City of Atlanta has a number of codes and regulations in place that affect greenspace. Examples are open space requirements in new development; regulations to protect environmental resources such as trees, floodplains, and wetlands; and park and recreation impact fees imposed on new development. In addition, the City has developed Quality of Life zoning districts to promote better quality development compared to conventional zoning districts. The following text provides a brief overview of existing city regulations pertaining to greenspace. It concludes with an identification of key greenspace issues associated with these regulations.

2.2.1 Open Space Requirements

The City's zoning regulations specify minimum open space requirements for new developments. Residential open space requirements (including the residential component of mixed-use developments) specify percentages of the gross land area to be maintained as open space using a "sliding scale" based on the land use intensity (Floor Area Ratio, or FAR[1]) of the proposed development. Two separate calculations are required. The Total Open Space Ratio (TOSR) includes all lot area outside of the building footprint, including vehicular areas (driveways and parking areas). The Usable Open Space Ratio (USOR) includes pedestrian amenities only, such as landscaped areas, plazas, and sidewalks, and excludes vehicular areas. Balconies and rooftop terraces can be counted towards the USOR. The TOSR and USOR requirements decrease as the development intensity increases, up to an FAR of approximately 1.2. The requirements increase for developments above an FAR of 1.2. In

1 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) refers to the total floor area of a development divided by the area of a lot. As an example, a one-story, 10,000 square-foot building on a 40,000 square foot lot would have a FAR of .25 while a four-story, 10,000 square foot building on the same lot would have a FAR of 1.0.

certain Quality of Life districts (LW and MRC), a density bonus is provided equal to two additional square feet of residential floor area for each square feet of open space provided above the minimum requirement. (See discussion of Quality of Life zoning below.)

The City's conventional commercial districts have no open space requirements. The Quality of Life Zoning Districts include public space requirements (see below).

The existing open space requirements are based on arbitrary calculations and do not include criteria to ensure that the designated area functions as meaningful open space. The allowance for balconies and rooftop terraces means that a significant portion of the requirement can be taken up by private open space above ground level. The regulations are applied on a property-by-property basis with no provision to combine or transfer open space requirements in ways that can more effectively serve the surrounding population. The resulting ground level open space often consists of "leftover" areas such as landscaped setbacks that are marginally usable.

2.2.2 Transfer of Development Rights

Chapter 28, Section 16-20.023 of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances authorizes transfer of development rights (TDR) from one property to another in order to preserve natural, environmental, historical, and cultural resources. The ordinance provides latitude in the definition of the property from which the development rights are severed (referred to as the "sending" property):

…a parcel or lot with special characteristics including but not limited to: woodland; floodplain; natural habitats; wetlands; groundwater recharge area; marsh hammocks; recreation areas or parkland, including golf course areas; or land that has unique aesthetic, architectural, or historic value that is found by the governing body to be deserving of protection from future development and which will be dedicated to that use when the development rights are severed or directly transferred to a sending property.

The property to which the development rights are transferred (referred to as the "receiving" property) must be zoned to allow multi-family residential or mixed-use with a residential component of at least 50%.

The TDR provisions have been used to preserve historic properties in the City of Atlanta but not to preserve greenspace. More comprehensive application of this tool will require identification of program criteria, definition and mapping of sending and receiving areas, and establishment of organizational capacity to manage the TDR program.

2.2.3 Vegetation

Atlanta's tree canopy is consistently identified as an important greenspace resource that is key to the City's quality of life. Chapter 158 (Vegetation) of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances addresses tree protection. This ordinance also includes minimum requirements for parking lot landscaping.

The tree protection regulations establish standards to promote the City's policy that "there shall be no net loss of trees" and that Atlanta "will continue to enjoy the benefits provided by its urban forest." To enforce these policies, a permit is required for the removal or destruction of any trees having a diameter at breast height (DBH) of six inches or greater. Applicants are required to minimize impacts on trees on the site and to plant trees to replace trees removed or destroyed. The regulations provide for "recompense" to be paid into the tree trust fund based on the differences between the number and total DBH of the trees removed or destroyed and number and total DBH of the trees replaced on the site. Section 158-34 provides for penalties for violations of the ordinance.

Section 158-30 of the ordinance requires surface parking lots with 30 or more parking spaces to have a landscaped area equal to at least ten percent of the paved area within the lot. A minimum of one tree per eight parking spaces (including existing trees that are preserved) is required within the landscaped areas. Additional standards address shrub and groundcover plantings, the size and location of landscaped areas, etc. In Quality of Life and some Special Public Interest (SPI) districts, the landscape requirements apply to all parking lots regardless of size.

Chapter 158 compares favorably with tree protection ordinances enacted in other cities in the degree of protection it provides. It has been suggested that the ordinance treats different parts of the City that may have different objectives and needs related to tree protection equally, and that more flexibility might be incorporated into the tree removal requirements based on neighborhood considerations. While the ordinance focuses on the protection and replacement of existing trees, it does not address the provision of adequate space for healthy canopy trees in streetscapes or parking lots.

2.2.4 Environmental Regulations

Greenspace includes natural resources that provide important environmental benefits and should be protected from the adverse impacts of development and other human activities. Regulations to protect environmentally sensitive resources (other than trees) are set forth in Chapter 74 (Environment) of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances.

Article II (Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control) / Article X (Post Development Stormwater Management)

Articles II and X are complementary ordinances that address development impacts on water resources during and after construction, respectively. Article II establishes standards to control erosion and sedimentation impacts caused by land-disturbing activities on surface waters and other environmental resources within the City. Applicants are required to submit soil erosion and sedimentation control plans that specify "best management practices" or measures to be used to control erosion and sedimentation pollution during all stages of the land-disturbing activity.

Article X establishes standards to protect water resources from degradation caused by post-development stormwater runoff, including increases in stormwater rates and volumes, post-construction soil

erosion and sedimentation, stream channel erosion, and nonpoint source pollution. Applicants are required to submit a stormwater management plan detailing how post-development stormwater runoff will be controlled and managed in accordance with the requirements of the ordinance. Performance criteria address water quality, stream channel protection, flood protection, structural stormwater controls, and stormwater credits for nonstructural measures.

Article X requires that new development and redevelopment maintain a peak rate of stormwater discharge not more than 70 percent of the pre-development peak discharge at all times during and after the development of the property. It encourages the use of nonstructural stormwater management and site design practices such as "the preservation of greenspace and other conservation areas to the maximum extent practicable," including the coordination of site design plans with the city's "greenspace protection plan." Provisions are included to allow on-site stormwater impacts to be addressed by an off-site or regional stormwater management facility.

Together, Articles II and X comprehensively address construction and post-construction impacts on water resources. While Article X in principle promotes nonstructural stormwater management solutions, it does not define in detail what these solutions are. In practice, detention ponds are often placed within individual lots. It would be more appropriate to encourage their placement within commonly owned lands so that the management and maintenance of the pond is assumed collectively by all the property owners in the development. The barriers to creating "low impact" solutions that facilitate ground water infiltration and create usable open play fields should be investigated and policies put in place to promote their development.

Based on the above, there is potential to further define practices that can be used to reduce development impacts and engineering costs while providing other benefits, such as greenspace preservation, recreation, and visual amenities. National examples of such innovative approaches (e.g., multi-functional, regional stormwater facilities that function as community amenities) are available as models.

Article VI (Flood Area Regulations)

The Flood Area Ordinance regulates and restricts land disturbance and construction within areas of the City subject to periodic inundation, referred to as special flood hazard areas. Special flood hazard areas include the floodway and the floodplain. The floodway is defined as the channel of the watercourse and adjacent areas that "must be reserved in order to discharge the 100-year base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation (by) more than one foot…" The floodplain is defined as the area located at or below the "base flood elevation," which has been determined to have a statistical probability of flooding once every one hundred years.

Special flood hazard areas are delineated on flood hazard boundary and flood insurance rate maps developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). However, FEMA mapping does not exist for all areas of the city subject to periodic flood inundation. For developments proposed along watercourses for which FEMA mapping does not exist, engineering studies are required to determine the area where inundation is likely to occur during the 100-year base flood. It should

be noted that the FEMA maps of special flood hazard areas date back to 1998 and do not reflect changes to the floodplain that have occurred as a result of increased development and impervious surfaces within the watershed area during the subsequent years.

No fill or other encroachments that would impede the ability to convey and discharge the water resulting from the 100-year flood are permitted within the floodway. Earth-disturbing activities within the designated floodplain must result in "no net loss" of existing flood volume or expansion of a flood hazard area as determined by engineering calculations. New construction must have a finished elevation no less than two feet higher than and be located no closer than 15 feet from the nearest base flood elevation. Repairs and improvements to existing uses within special flood hazard areas shown on the FEMA maps must be brought into compliance with the regulations if they exceed 50 percent of the fair market value of the existing use.

Atlanta's floodplain regulations prohibit new construction within the designated 100-year floodplain. However, they do not take into account flood elevation increases caused by changes such as increased impervious surfacing within the watershed or provide incentives for management techniques that promote groundwater infiltration.

Article VII (Riparian Buffer Requirements)

The Riparian Buffer Ordinance establishes requirements for the establishment, protection, and maintenance of natural vegetative buffers along the City's streams and rivers. Both perennial and intermittent streams are required to have a 75-foot buffer measured from the top of the stream bank. If a jurisdictional wetland is present, the buffer must include the wetland and extend at least 25 feet beyond the wetland edge. The ordinance includes provisions for "stream bank variances" to allow development activities within the buffer to alleviate unnecessary hardships that may result from literal enforcement of its provisions. Conditions and mitigation requirements may be imposed as part of the ordinance.

The Riparian Buffer Ordinance exceeds the state minimum buffer requirement of 25 feet and (like the Tree Protection Ordinance) compares favorably with requirements in other cities that have experienced extensive channelization or culverting of streams. While it is an important regulatory tool, regulations by themselves are not adequate to protect one of Atlanta's most important environmental resources: its network of rivers and streams. Enforcement of the ordinance provisions is important to minimize the cumulative impacts of buffer encroachments on this resource.

Article VIII (Wetland Protection Regulations)

The purpose of this article is to protect the environmental integrity of freshwater wetlands within the City of Atlanta. It does not impose any wetland protection requirements beyond the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) requirements under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Instead, it refers applicants and landowners to the USCOE for jurisdictional wetland determinations for proposed activities located within 50 feet of a wetland shown on the city's "generalized wetland map."

Land Subdivision Ordinance

The Land Subdivision Ordinance governs the subdivision of land within the City of Atlanta into one and two-family building lots. Two of the stated purposes of the ordinance are:

- To assure the provision of open space, landscaped areas and natural areas on residential building lots and to encourage the provision of both public and private common open space; and
- To minimize disturbance of natural topography, tree cover, and natural drainage ways.

Despite these stated purposes, the ordinance does little to promote open space other than calling for the dedication of land in floodplains, wetlands, stream and creek beds, and steep slope areas. Particularly noteworthy is the absence of "conservation subdivision" provisions that would preserve open space by allowing development to be concentrated on smaller lots[1]. In addition, the ordinance prohibits the creation of lots on only one side of a new street or establishment of a reserved strip of land (i.e., dedicated open space), although the Director of the Bureau of Planning may waive this requirement where the street abuts a lake, public park, or other permanent open space. By allowing parkland to abut streets on a discretionary rather than "as-of-right" basis, this requirement discourages the provision of physically and visually accessible greenspace within developments.

Another issue that affects walkability and the ability of neighborhood residents to access parks and greenspace is the lack of standards requiring a minimum degree of connectivity in subdivision street systems (as opposed to a predominance of dead end or cul-de-sac streets). Techniques such as limiting the allowable length of cul-de-sacs and the distances between intersections or requiring an analysis of destinations within 1/2 mile of project boundaries as part of the development review process would help address this issue.

Parks and Recreation Impact Fees

The City of Atlanta Impact Fee Ordinance requires new development located within identified service areas to pay impact fees proportionate to the cost of new public facilities required to serve the development. The impact fee requirements apply to transportation, parks and recreation, and public safety (fire protection, emergency medical services, and police) facilities. The requirements do not apply to water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater.

The park and recreation impact fee requirements are codified in Section 19-1010 of the ordinance. Three service areas are established: Northside, Southside, and Westside. The level of service is set at 5.75 acres per 1,000 "functional population" and a schedule provided to calculate the impact fee based on the level of service[2]. The funds received are used by the City for the acquisition and

1 The Georgia Department of Environmental Protection has required the City to adopt the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's model Conservation Subdivision Ordinance (or its equivalent) to comply with the District-wide Watershed Management Plan.

2 Functional population is defined as the effective population of the City, including residents and nonresidents, during a given period of time.

development of parks and recreational facilities in the service area within which the development is located.

The Impact Fee Ordinance needs to be reassessed in relation to the goals and targets established by Project Greenspace. The City is preparing to reevaluate and update the ordinance, providing the opportunity to more effectively focus on identified park and recreation needs. As part of the update, fees should be set to capture the impacts of residents, visitors, shoppers, and business activity generated by new developments. Linking the formula for assessing these fees to the appraised value of the land and the impacts of the development on recreational needs would help address the problem of escalating land values and construction costs that often hamper the ability of the fees to cover the full impacts generated by the project.

Timing is a critical issue for the use of impact fees. Funds from impact fees does not become available until after the development project is underway. The development typically increases land values, leaving the City with limited funds to acquire more expensive land. Establishing the institutional capacity to coordinate administration of the Impact Fee Ordinance with greenspace planning through tools such as the purchase of options or rights of first refusal would help address this issue.

Quality of Life Zoning

The City of Atlanta has developed Quality of Life Zoning Districts as an alternative to conventional zoning districts that are believed to promote automobile-oriented development, disrupt the urban fabric, create visual blight, and perpetuate a deteriorating quality of life. Five Quality of Life Districts have been established: Multi-Family Residential (MR), Mixed Residential Commercial (MRC), Neighborhood Commercial (NC), and Live Work (LW). In addition, Special Public Interest Districts (SPIs) can be used to tailor regulations to address the needs of a specific area within the City.

The Quality of Life districts incorporate the open space requirements described above, with some exceptions:

- Nonresidential developments greater than one acre in size are required to provide a minimum five percent of the lot area as "public space."
- The MR District has no TOSR requirement.
- Relocation of a portion of the minimum open space requirement to an off-site property (or into a fund to acquire designated parcels) is permitted in Quality of Life and certain SPI districts provided certain criteria are met, allowing for the creation of more functional open space than may be possible on a parcel-by-parcel basis. However, mechanisms are not in place to implement this provision.
- The MR District establishes standards to respond to parks, greenways, and existing or proposed trails located adjacent to the property.

In general, the Quality of Life districts establish stronger design standards addressing features such as streetscapes, sidewalks, and landscaping than do the conventional zoning districts, resulting in a higher quality of development.

2.2.5 Conclusions

Key conclusions derived from the review of City of Atlanta ordinances and regulations pertaining to greenspace include the following:

1. The existing minimum open space requirements are based on arbitrary calculations and provide little or no direction, criteria, or incentives for the establishment of meaningful open space. The Quality of Life Zoning Districts are a step in the right direction in that they incorporate approaches such as excluding parking areas from the calculations and allowing for the transfer of open space requirements from one property to another. However, they still do not clearly define the city's expectations and standards for open space nor are implementation mechanisms for tools such as transfer of open space requirements in place.

2. The existing Transfer of Development Rights provisions have as yet untapped potential to preserve greenspace resources through the transfer of development rights from sending to receiving properties.

3. Collectively, the city's environmental ordinances provide a good foundation for protecting environmentally sensitive resources. There are some issues associated with the specific requirements of different ordinances and the regulations do not address steep slope protection or protection of wetlands beyond federal legislation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

4. While the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control and Post Development Stormwater Management Ordinances comprehensively address construction and post-construction impacts on water resources, there is an opportunity to more strongly promote nonstructural solutions that reinforce greenspace functions and benefits while reducing the costs of engineered infrastructure.

5. The Land Subdivision Ordinance addresses greenspace preservation in a cursory fashion by calling for the dedication of land with environmentally sensitive resources. The ordinance could be strengthened through the incorporation of specific requirements for the delineation and protection of these resources. In addition, a conservation subdivision ordinance would provide an effective means to promote open space preservation, including definition of procedural steps and standards for open space dedication and management.

6. The Impact Fee Ordinance could be strengthened to more effectively capture the park and recreation needs generated by new developments.

Above and beyond the findings of the review of the separate ordinances, anecdotal evidence indicates that greenspace considerations could be more effectively integrated into Atlanta's development

approval processes, beginning with review of plans at the concept (sketch) phase and extending through formal review, approval with conditions, and monitoring to ensure that the conditions are met. A related issue is that dedicated open space is often required as a condition of Planned Unit Developments or other zoning approvals. Stronger provisions and procedures are needed to ensure that such properties are dedicated and managed as open space in compliance with the conditions of approval. Again the City needs the institutional capacity to manage tracking of greenspace commitments.

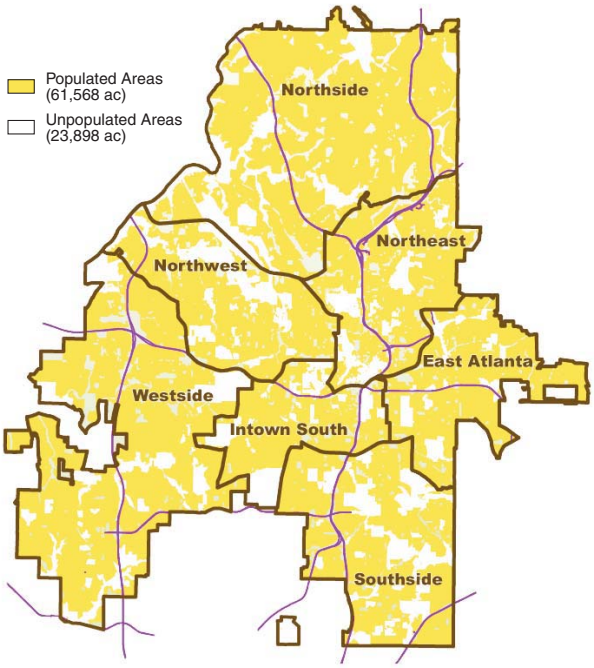
2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS

Understanding demographic characteristics and trends is critical to determining the present and future needs of Atlanta's population for parks, recreational facilities, and greenspace. The following text provides an overview of the size and geographic distribution of Atlanta's population in 2005 and 2030, including age, ethnicity, and household income. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey as well as the City of Atlanta were used in the preparation of this analysis. Additional demographic information was obtained from Claritas, Inc.

2.3.1 Population

The state capital and most populous city in the State of Georgia, Atlanta had an estimated 2005 population of 483,108. With an area of approximately 132 square miles, this represents a density of slightly more than 5.7 persons per acre of land. Populated areas within the City have been defined for use in Project Greenspace to provide a more accurate assessment of the spatial distribution of greenspace resources relative to where people actually live and work. The populated areas within the City of Atlanta are shown in Figure 2.2. Populated areas have been defined by excluding tax exempt properties (e.g. parks, schools, cemeteries, government facilities, utilities, and transportation rights-of way, etc.), as well as flood plains and private golf courses.

Figure 2.2. Populated Areas



Population by age segment demonstrates the relative youth of the City (see Figure 2.3). The largest age segment is represented by those aged 18 to 44 (47.9% of the total population), followed by those aged 45 to 64 (21.5 %), 18 and under (21%), and 65 and older (9.6%). This population composition lends itself to a wide range of recreational, educational, and entertainment options and implies relatively large demands for active recreation programs and services targeted at youth, adolescent, and adults.

Figure 2.3. 2005 Population by Age Segment

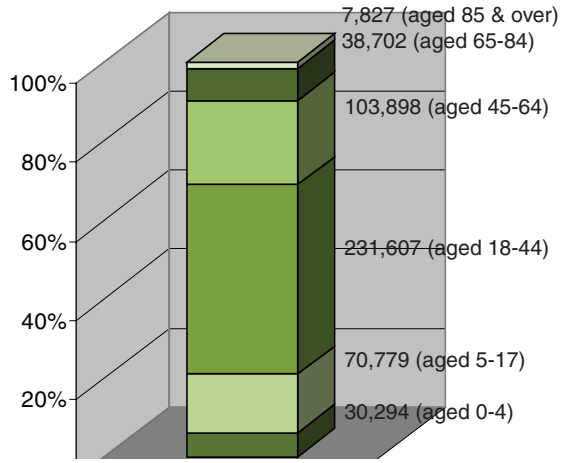
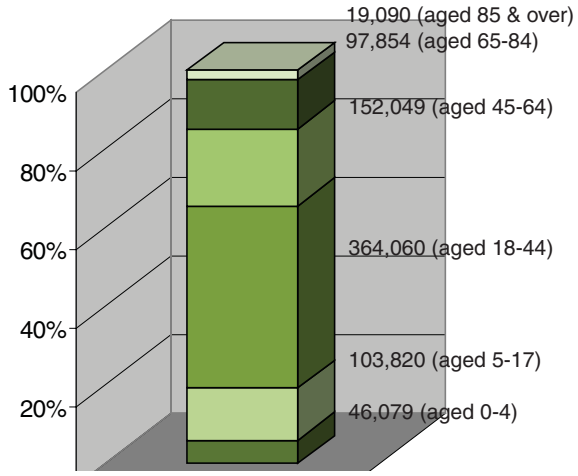


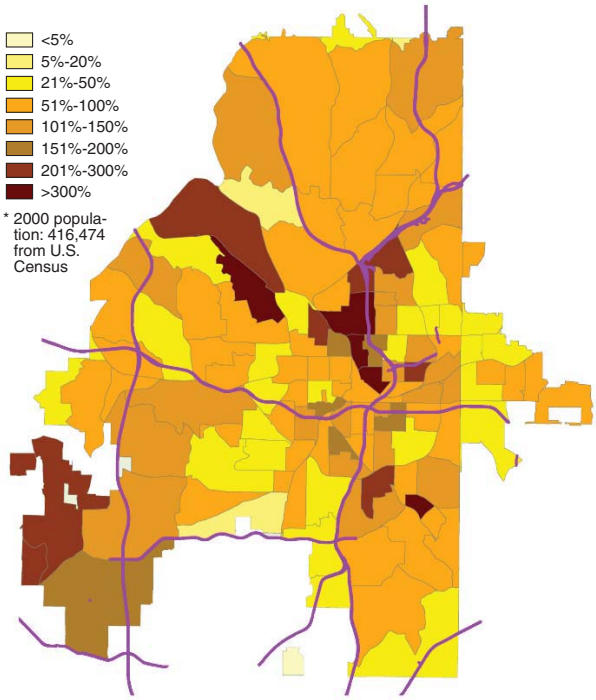
Figure 2.4. 2030 Population by Age Segment



2.3.2 Population Growth

The City of Atlanta population is projected to grow to 782,952 by 2030, an increase of 299,844 (62.1%) from the estimated 2005 population. This represents an annual increase of approximately 1.6% per year. Figure 2.5 illustrates Atlanta's population growth rate by census tract. As population increases, so too will the maturity of Atlanta's residents (see Figure 2.4). This projected population growth will magnify the mid- and long-term needs for greenspace, improved recreational facilities and programs geared to an aging population, and protection of environmental resources.

Figure 2.5. 2000* to 2030 Growth Rate



2.3.3 Gender

Overall the gender distribution in the City of Atlanta is nearly equal; females consist of slightly more than half (50.03%) of the total population. Analyzing the population by gender reveals that as the population increases in age, the female share rises dra-

Figure 2.6. City of Atlanta Population Forecasts, 2000 to 2030

Source: *The City of Atlanta, 2007*

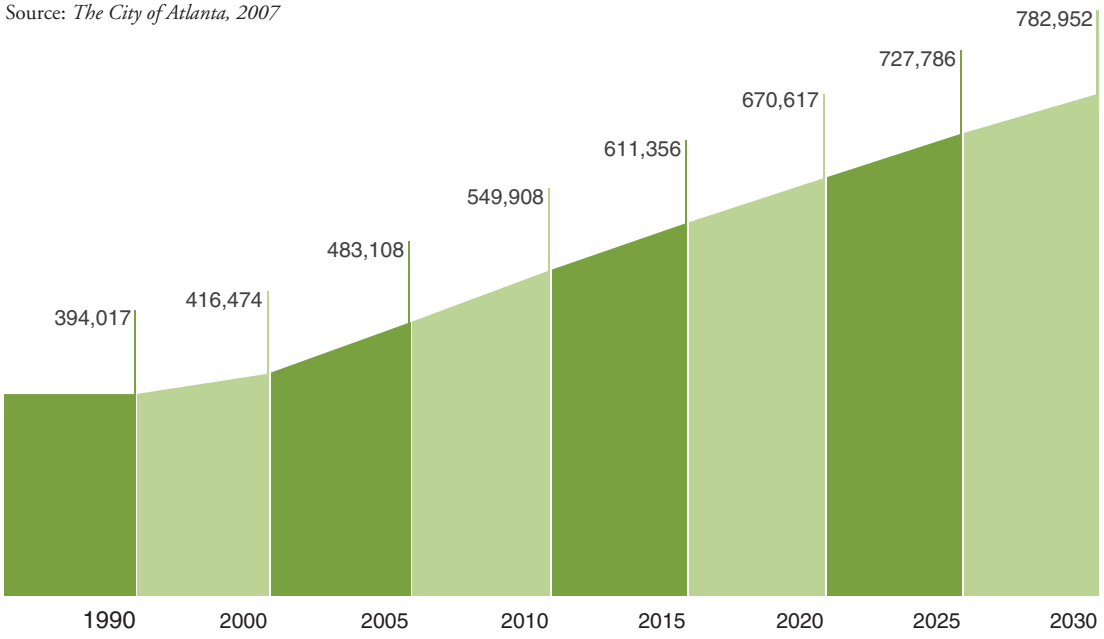


Figure 2.7. 2005 Population by Gender

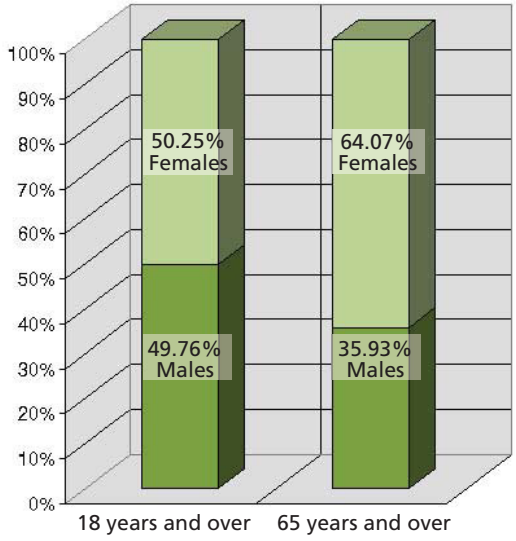
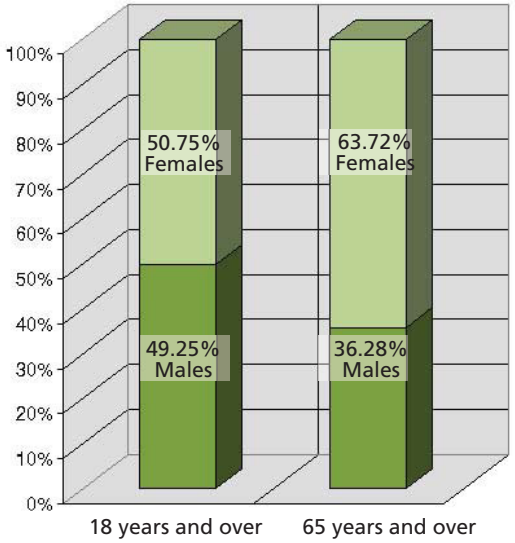


Figure 2.8. 2030 Population by Gender



matically (see Figure 2.7). The male to female ratio for those aged 18 and over is nearly even (Male – 49.8%; Female – 50.2%); for persons 65 and above there are 28% more females than males (Male – 35.9%; Female – 64.1%). A slight increase in the population of older males is projected in 2030 compared to 2005 (Figure 2.8). This finding can be partially explained by the longer lifespan typically associated with the female gender. Nevertheless, it indicates the need for senior class programming geared towards females, with one of the most popular recreational activities, other than walking, being water aerobics.

Sixty-five percent of Americans say they participate in a sport or recreation of some kind (61% of women and 69% percent of men). The top ten recreational activities for women are walking, aerobics, general exercising, biking, jogging, basketball, lifting weights, golf, swimming and tennis. The top ten recreational activities for men are golf, basketball, walking, jogging, biking, lifting weights, football, hiking, fishing and hunting. By comparison, in 1990, fishing, hunting, and golf were mentioned by men as the most frequent sport activities while women mentioned swimming, walking and golf. Based on current participation trends, men and women shared a desire for six of the top ten recreational activities; in any 90-day span, men claim to participate in their favorite activities an average of 65 times and women a total of 57 times. With more women participating in recreational activities further into adulthood, more are shifting away from the team-oriented activities that dominate the female youth recreation environment towards a more diverse selection of individual participant activities, as evident in the top ten mentioned recreational activities.

2.3.4 Race and Ethnicity

In 2005 Atlanta's black population accounted for 58.9% of the total population or 284,510 persons, followed by the white population at 36.4% or 175,618 persons and the Asian population at 2.3% or 11,240 persons (see Figure 2.9). All other races combined totaled just over three percent of the population (2.4% or 11,735 persons). Persons of any race with Hispanic or Latino origin accounted for over four percent of the population (4.5% or 21,856 persons). The 2030 projections shown in Figure 2.10 indicate a decrease in the total black population from 58.9% to 45.5% of the overall city population, accompanied by a significant increase in all other races.

Figure 2.9. 2005 Population by Race

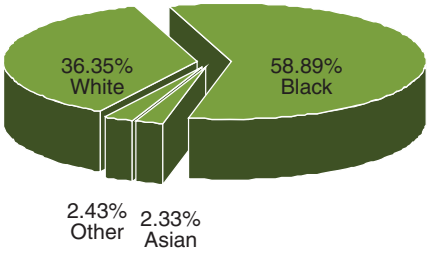
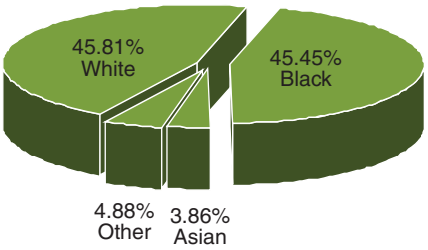


Figure 2.10. 2030 Population by Race



2.3.5 Households and Income

In 2005 there were an estimated 199,250 households in Atlanta, out of which slightly more than

21% had one or more people under the age of eighteen and approximately 22% are married-couple families. Over half of households (54.3%) were non-family households – nearly twenty percent more than the U.S. average.

The median household income (the earnings of all persons age 16 years or older living together in a housing unit) in Atlanta was $39,752. Atlanta's median household income is less than the average U.S. household income reported for 2005 of $46,242. Median Household Income ranged from less than $5,000 per year to more than $225,000 with the mean being approximately $53,000 annually. Most of the high income households are located in the extreme northern areas of the city with a few scattered toward the southwestern sections. The lower income areas are primarily in the center of the City (See Figure 2.11).

The 2030 projections shown in Figure 2.12 indicate significant increase throughout the City, with the mean increasing to approximately $92,700.

Figure 2.11. 2005 Median Household Income

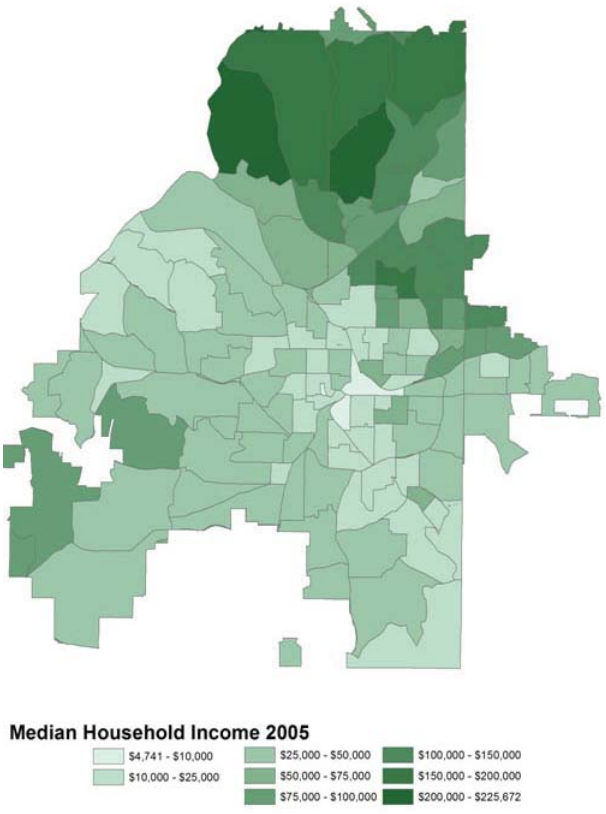
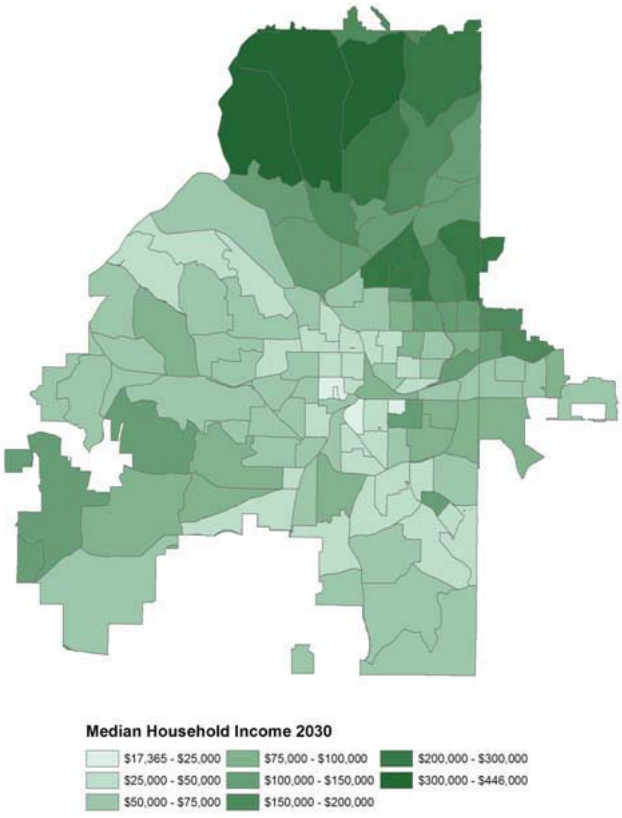


Figure 2.12. 2030 Median Household Income



2.3.6 Population Density

As shown in Figure 2.13, the 2005 U.S. Census estimates show a dispersed distribution of total population throughout Atlanta. The highest densities are found in the central and eastern portions of Atlanta and in pockets along major roads and road crossings. Densities range from 1 to 2 people per acre to 50 to 60 people per acre, with an overall mean of 8 people per acre. The 2030 Census estimates show a denser overall population distribution than in 2005. While the lower end of the density range is projected to increase only slightly from 2005, the higher end of the range is projected to increase to more than 100 people per acre in 2030. The greatest increases are projected to occur in the central and eastern portions of the city (Figure 2.14). The overall mean is projected to increase to 10 to 25 people per acre (See Figure 2.14).

2.3.7 Conclusions

Key conclusions and implications of the projected changes in Atlanta's population between 2005 and 2030 for parks, recreational facilities, and greenspace include the following:

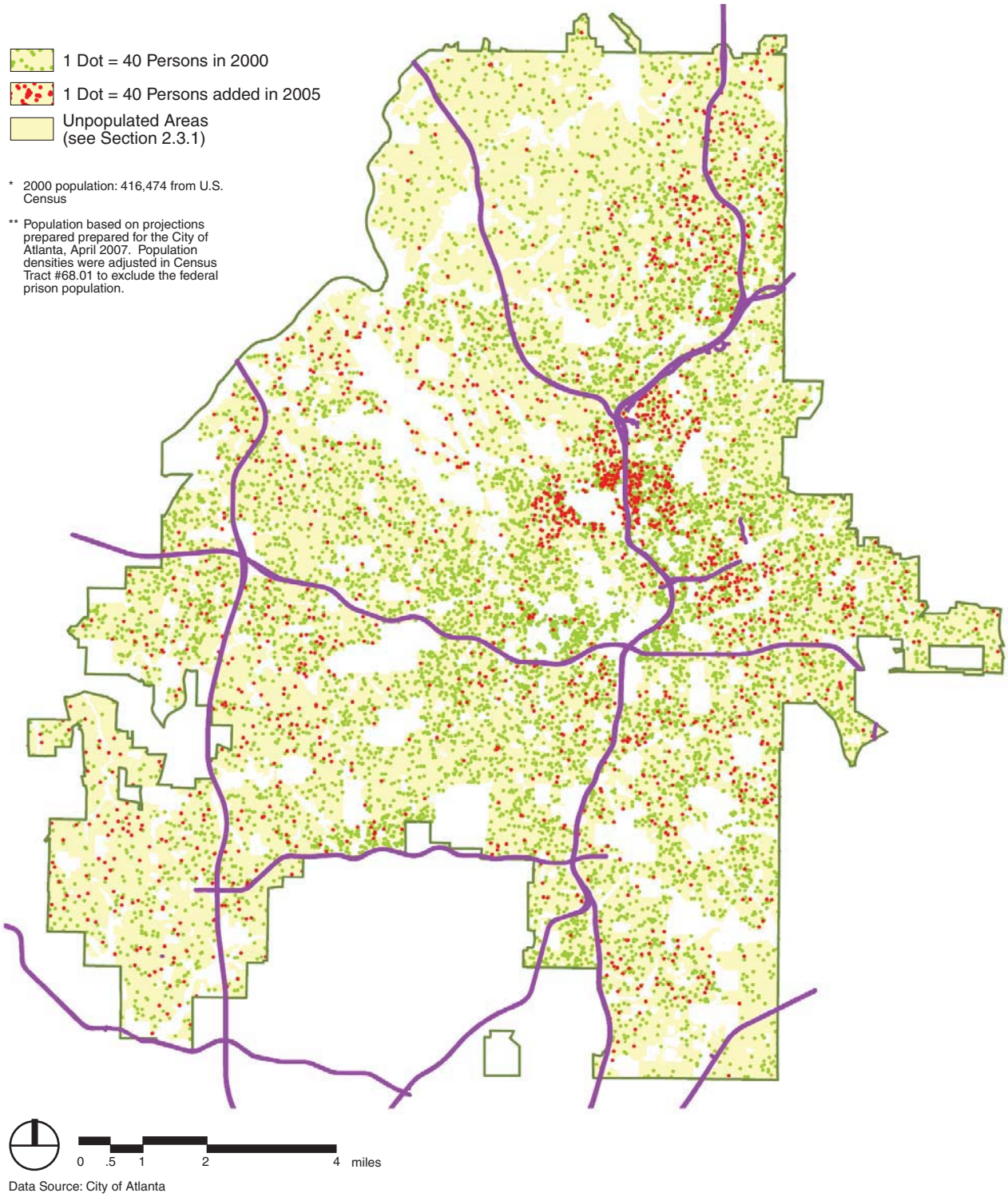
1. The projected 62% overall growth in population will increase the demand for parks, recreational facilities, and greenspace while magnifying pressures to develop Atlanta's remaining vacant lands. Increasing density has a tremendous impact on the need for greenspace. As density increases private yards no longer provide adequate space for outdoor activities and accessible common areas become incresingly necessary to fulfill this need.

2. Atlanta's population is projected to become older with an increasing proportion of females over the next 25 years. This will result in increasing demand for recreational activities and programs geared towards seniors – particularly females.

3. The City's black population in 2005 is approximately 12.5% greater than the white population. However, it is projected that the white population will slightly exceed the black population by 2030 and other ethnic groups (primarily Hispanic and Asian) will increase significantly as a proportion of the overall population. These trends will be reflected in changing preferences and needs for parks and recreational facilities.

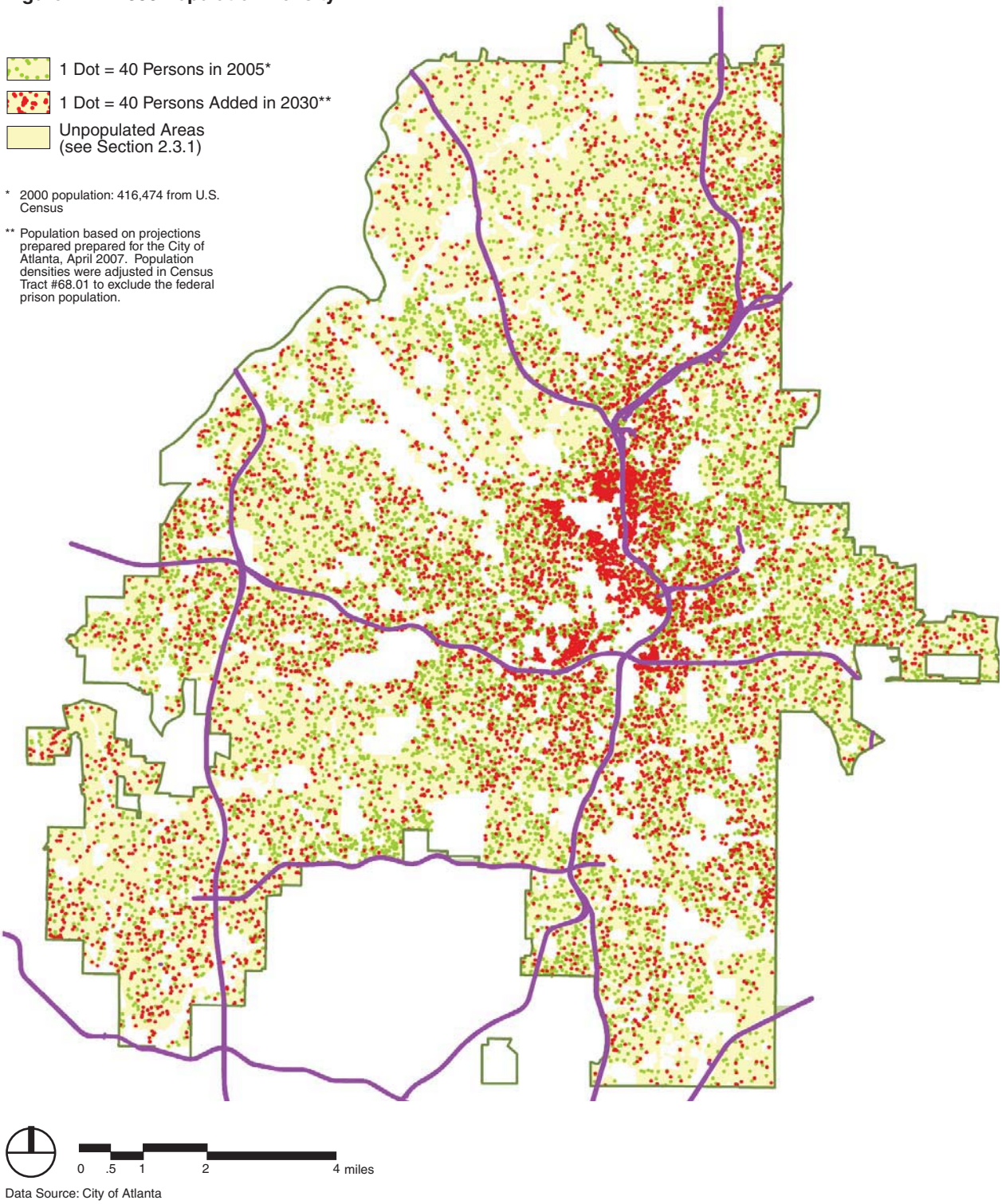
4. Atlanta presently has a less affluent population than the national average with lower income households concentrated in the central and southern parts of the City. These households tend to have a greater need for parks and recreation facilities and programs than more affluent residents of single-family neighborhoods with back yards and access to private clubs. As Atlanta's population increases over the next several decades the number and proportion of more affluent households will increase, with many living in dense multi-family or condominium developments. These new residents will likely demand access to quality nearby parks, recreational facilities, multi-use trails, streetscapes, plazas, and squares while the needs of less affluent residents will continue.

Figure 2.13. 2000 - 2005 Population Density



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 2.14. 2030 Population Density



Data Source: City of Atlanta

3.0 GREENSPACE ISSUES

An extensive, ongoing outreach process has been used to identify the greenspace issues that are considered important by the Atlanta community. This chapter summarizes the input received to date through key person interviews, focus groups, public meetings, and a citizen survey.

3.1 Key Person Interviews and Focus Groups

Interviews have been conducted with approximately 80 persons who have particular backgrounds or interests in Atlanta's greenspace. The persons interviewed reflect a wide variety of perspectives, ranging from members of City Council and city officials to representatives of environmental, recreational, economic, and development concerns. In addition, small group sessions were held with the following:

Internal (City of Atlanta) Focus Groups

- Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs staff
- Staff engaged in land management issues
- Staff engaged in development coordination issues

External Focus Groups

- Land conservation partners (private non-profit organizations)
- Private recreational providers
- Developer interests

Invaluable input has also been provided by the Project Greenspace Advisory Task Force, a committee comprised of 23 key city and citizen leaders that was formed to provide policy direction throughout the planning process.

The input received from the interview, focus group, and Task Force participants has been rich and varied. The following are common themes or issues that emerged from the discussions, informed by the background analysis conducted for the State of the City's Greenspace Report. The summary begins with a series of issues that focus primarily on existing parks, followed by broader themes related to Atlanta's greenspace.

Issue #1: Atlanta lacks sufficient acreage of parkland and other greenspaces.

Several previous studies have found the City of Atlanta to have less greenspace than other cities of comparable size and density using benchmarks such as park acreage per 1,000 residents, a widely utilized standard. Many participants affirmed the position that Atlanta needs to "grow" the amount of dedicated greenspace significantly above present levels. Moreover, existing parks and greenspaces are not equitably distributed throughout the City, are often not readily accessible to the diverse populations they serve, and lack connectivity among them. The need to establish greenway/trail connections,

thus improving the accessibility and usability of presently isolated parks and greenspaces, was a recurring theme.

Issue #2: The provision of recreational facilities and programs could be improved to better meet citizens' needs.

Atlanta's population has diverse needs for recreational facilities and programs that are not being fully met by the present parks inventory. Many community parks are undersized and have overlapping service areas while other parts of the city have little access to needed recreational facilities. While the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs (DPRCA) has been developing new recreational facilities in various parks, the supply of certain types of facilities (e.g., athletic fields) is still not adequate to meet levels of need and the existing facilities could be better distributed throughout the City. In addition to development of new facilities, opportunities to address this issue include partnerships with other public and private recreational providers.[1]

Issue #3: Maintenance of Atlanta's parks needs continuing improvement.

DPRCA has made significant progress in improving park maintenance, as evidenced by the enactment of "key success measures" that are resulting in better performance on activities such as mowing and tree removal. In addition, the Park Opportunity Bond is providing significant funding that is being used to improve the condition of existing park facilities and grounds. Nevertheless, participants identified maintenance as a priority issue that needs continuing commitment, both in existing parks and in future parks (e.g., the Beltline parks) that will be added to the system. Lack of sufficient resources (staffing and funding) and needs for consistent standards and training for park maintenance personnel were cited as key factors that need to be addressed. It should be noted that DRPCA is proactively addressing this issue through the development of high quality maintenance standards for the proposed BeltLine parks, with the goal of applying those standards to existing parks.

Issue #4: Public safety in Atlanta's parks needs continuing improvement.

According to participants, crime and the perception that parks do not provide a safe and secure environment for users affect the public image of Atlanta's park system. DPRCA is addressing this issue through the installation of improved security and sports lighting and (under a pilot program with the Atlanta Police Department) surveillance cameras in selected parks. Several persons interviewed emphasized that public safety is a function not only of law enforcement, but also of how parks are designed and maintained to create a more secure environment (referred to as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, or CPTED). For example, parks that have frontage along public streets and views from adjacent homes ("eyes on the park") are safer than ones that are hidden behind homes.

1 A Recreational Needs Assessment has been conducted for Project Greenspace to quantify the level of need and is available as a separate report.

Issue #5: Parks are a component of a comprehensive greenspace system that provides many benefits for Atlanta's citizens.

While much previous planning has focused on the City's park inventory, there is a major opportunity to integrate parks into a larger, more diverse greenspace network that provides multiple environmental, social, and economic benefits. This network could include a variety of resources, including some that may not typically be considered greenspace (e.g., streetscapes, squares, and urban plazas) or are not currently part of the park inventory (e.g., other city land or lands held by non-city agencies and institutions that function as greenspace). Values such as high quality design, public art, and cultural heritage could be expressed in the greenspace system.

Issue #6: Greenspace is a major contributor to Atlanta's economy.

Considerable national research has been conducted that demonstrates the positive economic impacts of greenspace in terms of increased property values and economic activity and reduced costs for energy, healthcare, and engineered infrastructure. As described in Section 2.1 above, Atlanta's New Century Economic Development Plan identifies parks and greenspace as an important component of the city's economic development program. Recognizing the economic benefits that will accrue to Atlanta and its citizens as a result of investing in greenspace, a number of participants asserted that the City should more aggressively promote this linkage. Greenspace benchmarks in city-sponsored development projects and periodic reports on progress are needed.

Issue #7: Environmental resources would benefit from improved stewardship.

Protection of environmental resources and processes is an essential function performed by the greenspace system. Atlanta prides itself on being a "green city" and has regulations in place to protect environmental resources such as trees, stream corridors, and floodplains (see Section 2.2). However, human impacts on these resources have increased and will continue to increase as the City grows. According to Trees Atlanta, Atlanta has lost 60% of its natural tree cover over the last 20 years and the tree protection ordinance has not reversed this trend. Canopy trees along streets and within parking lots often do not have adequate space for healthy growth. Examples of other impacts on environmental resources include invasive species and stream bank erosion, both inside and outside of city parks.

Issue #8: "Gray" infrastructure is impacting greenspace resources.

Gray infrastructure refers to conventional engineered systems such as roads and utilities. Participants identified traffic congestion and the associated air quality impacts caused by a transportation system designed primarily for cars to the exclusion of other modes (walking, biking, and transit) as a major citywide issue. The water quality impacts of Atlanta's combined sewer overflow system are well documented and are being addressed through a $3.9 billion program of engineering improvements, as well as a $25 million greenway acquisition program. Another issue is the impact of non-park related

city facilities and operations that are located in parks. These and similar issues must be addressed in Atlanta is to create a green infrastructure system that promotes sustainable approaches such as walking, biking, and transit as alternatives to the automobile and multi-functional forms of stormwater management.

Issue #9: Parks and greenspaces could play greater roles as community gathering places.

An important benefit of parks and greenspaces is the provision of places of "coming together" for the community through special events (e.g., festivals) or other, more informal activities, such as community gardens and neighborhood gatherings. As proposed in the 2005 Atlanta Park System Agenda, there is a specific need for an outdoor venue that can host major festivals, concerts, and other special events. Community gathering places are also needed at smaller scales, for example in neighborhoods and commercial districts.

Issue #10: Population growth is magnifying the need to address park and greenspace issues.

As documented in Section 2.3, projections indicate that the City's population will nearly double in size between 2000 and 2030. This growth will accentuate needs such as more parks and greenspace, improved provision of recreational facilities and programs, and improved protection of environmental resources. Of particular concern is the trend of high-density residential developments that lack usable open space. A related concern is the influx of new residents who are accustomed to and will demand quality parks and greenspaces.

Issue #11: Development and redevelopment pressures provide the opportunity to "grow" Atlanta's greenspace.

The city's existing regulations do not provide the tools needed to meet the greenspace needs generated by new developments (see discussion on open space requirements in Section 2.2). However, the City has the opportunity to meet these needs through improved development regulations and processes that promote the establishment of usable, accessible open space (conservation subdivisions, incentives for greenspace dedications, etc.). Redevelopment of brownfield and other previously developed properties provides another opportunity to create new parks and greenspace, for example by establishing greenspace as a basic infrastructure need equivalent to roads and utilities in Tax Allocation District (TAD) projects. The Beltline is an example of how a TAD can be used to promote integration of new development, greenspace/trails, and transit.

Issue #12: The city's internal operational and management processes related to greenspace need to be strengthened and better coordinated.

Decisions affecting greenspace resources are made at many different levels within city government, often with limited coordination and without the benefit of a unified direction or framework for

decision-making. The interdepartmental "Green Team" that meets on a regular basis to coordinate on greenspace acquisition and development issues represents a significant step in the right direction. However, more extensive progress is needed, as evidenced by the following examples:

- City procedures for the acquisition of greenspace properties and development of greenspace amenities such as trails need to be significantly improved and streamlined.
- The park and greenspace inventory, classification, and GIS mapping system needs to be improved and integrated into a more comprehensive, accurate inventory and reporting system for both city-owned lands and privately owned open space established by conditional zoning, conservation development, and other city-sponsored requirements or incentives.
- In conjunction with the improved inventory, tracking of potential new greenspaces needs to be improved from the initial proposal stage through acquisition and subsequent management.
- Clear criteria are needed to establish greenspace priorities and to guide evaluation of greenspace acquisition proposals from various sources, such as neighborhood plans.
- Additional dedicated staff is needed to build the City's capacity to plan, leverage, coordinate, acquire, develop, provide technical support for, and maintain the greenspace system.

Issue #13: Funding for Atlanta's parks and greenspaces needs to be significantly increased.

Participants identified increased funding as the single greatest need to address issues such as the lack of sufficient parkland and recreational facilities for Atlanta's present and future population, maintenance, and staffing shortfalls. While the DPRCA has been successful in securing increased departmental funding in recent years, the level of expenditure is still well below levels in other cities with successful park systems. The $105 million Park Opportunity Bond is another sign of progress, but additional resources – including a dedicated funding source or sources that are sustainable over the long term – are needed if Atlanta is to achieve the vision of a world-class greenspace system.

3.2 Public Meetings

In January 2007, three public forum meetings were conducted in different parts of the City to inform citizens about Project Greenspace and to receive their input regarding issues and goals for the future of Atlanta's greenspace resources. The three meeting locations were: Adamsville Recreation Center, Piedmont Park (Magnolia Hall), and Rosel Fann Recreation Center. The meetings began with a presentation of greenspace issues based on analysis of previous plans and data and input from the key person interviews and focus groups. The presentation was followed by a survey using PowerPoint slides to elicit feedback on 11 preliminary greenspace goals and 23 potential types of greenspace. Meeting attendees were also invited to submit written comments on the survey forms. Following the survey, the meetings were opened up for comments and questions on greenspace issues.

The 11 preliminary greenspace goals (see Figure 3.1) were formulated based on the review of related planning initiatives (summarized in Section 2.1 above) and the results of the key person interviews

and focus groups (summarized in Section 3.1 above). For each goal, meeting participants were asked whether they 1) disagreed with it or considered it to be not important; 2) had a neutral opinion; or 3) agreed with it or considered it to be important.

To understand how participants ranked individual goals, "weighted scores" were developed for each goal by assigning a numerical value of -1 for each "disagree" vote, 0 for each "neutral" vote, and +1 for each "agree" vote. The combined results from all three meetings are shown in Figure 3.2 with the goals listed from the highest to lowest scores received. For comparison purposes, a "perfect" score (all "agree" votes) would receive a score of 125 while a "neutral" score (all "neutral" votes) would receive a score of 0. Based on this comparison, there was strong consensus that all the goals were important, with the level of importance varying by degree.

A similar exercise was conducted for 23 potential types or conditions of greenspace illustrated through PowerPoint images (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.1. Preliminary Greenspace Goals

Parks and Recreation
1. Significantly increase the acreage of core parkland • Set a target of 10.5 acres of core parkland per 1,000 persons • Double the amount of park acreage • Ensure park access within a ½ mile street network for every resident
2. Develop greenways with multi-use trails to connect parks and greenspace
3. Continue to improve park maintenance and security
4. Continue to improve recreational facilities and programs to meet citizens' needs
Natural Resources
5. Permanently protect environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains, wetlands, and natural habitat areas
6. Protect and restore Atlanta's tree canopy—Increase tree cover to 40%
Community
7. Increase the function of parks and greenspaces as community gathering areas and establish a major venue for special events and festivals
8. Integrate Atlanta's history, cultural heritage, and arts into the greenspace system as an expression of community identity
Implementation
9. Establish a source of funding for parks and greenspace
10. Promote public / private partnerships to "grow" the greenspace system • Atlanta Public Schools • Colleges, universities, and other institutions • Private land owners
11. Promote and coordinate dedicated greenspace within development and redevelopment projects

Figure 3.2. Preliminary Greenspace Goals – Weighted Scores

Goal	Weighted Score
3: Improve park maintenance and security	118
5: Protect environmentally sensitive lands	116
6: Protect and restore tree canopy	114
2: Develop greenways and trails	112
9: Establish a source of funding	112
11: Promote greenspace within development	104
1: Increase parkland acreage	100
10: Establish public / private partnerships	100
7: Increase community gathering spaces	98
4: Improve facilities and programs	97
8: Integrate history / community identity	78

Figure 3.3. Potential Greenspace Types / Conditions

Parks and Open Spaces	
1. Regional park with major activities	5. Active recreation
2. Neighborhood park	6. Passive recreation
3. Beauty spot	7. Safety and security
4. Parks integrated with development	
Community Gathering Spaces	
8. Plazas	11. Places for neighborhood events
9. Places for special events	12. Community gardens
10. Places for regular events and street life	
Natural and Cultural Resources	
13. Stream bank protection and restoration	15. Public art
14. Forested areas	
Greenspace Connections	
16. Streetscapes	18. Stream and river corridors
17. Multi-purpose trails	19. Trails connected to your neighborhood
Gray vs. Green Infrastructure	
20. Green, attractive multi-modal streeets and boulevards	22. Stormwater management integrated with greenspace
21. Brownfield site redevelopment for parks and recreation areas	23. Stream channels integrated with greenspace

The results of the ranking of potential types or conditions of greenspace were similar to the results for preliminary greenspace goals (Figure 3.4). Comparison to a "perfect" score of 125 (all "agree" votes) and a "neutral" score of 0 (all "neutral" votes) reveals general consensus that all potential greenspace types or conditions are important, with the level of importance varying by degree.

In addition to the survey input, numerous individual comments were received related to greenspace goals and issues. These comments have been documented and will be used as Project Greenspace moves forward to develop a comprehensive strategy for creating a world-class greenspace system for the City of Atlanta.

Figure 3.4 . Potential Greenspace Types / Conditions – Weighted Scores

Greenspace Type / Condition	Weighted Score
22: Stormwater management integrated with greenspace	103
7: Security and safety	101
13: Stream bank protection and restoration	100
16: Streetscapes	100
17: Multi-purpose trails	100
2: Neighborhood park	**99**
6: Passive recreation	97
11: Places for neighborhood events	97
23: Stream channels integrated with greenspace	97
10: Places for regular events and street life	95
14: Forested areas	95
1: Regional park with major activities	**92**
4: Parks integrated with development	91
19: Trails connected to your neighborhood	91
18: Stream and river corridors	89
20: Streets and boulevards	88
5: Active recreation	87
21: Brownfield site redevelopment	86
12: Community gardens	78
9: Places for special events	76
3: Beauty spot	69
8: Plazas	69
15: Public art	64

3.3 Citizen Survey

A Community Attitude and Interest Survey was conducted during February and March of 2007 to determine the need for future parks, greenspace, recreation facilities, programs, and services within the City. Developed in consultation with city officials, the survey's questions were tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future greenspace system. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the City of Atlanta. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone. The following text summarizes the survey results. A full report is available as a separate document.

In February 2007, surveys were mailed to a random sample of 7,000 households throughout the City of Atlanta. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. About two weeks after the surveys were mailed, households were contacted by phone, either to encourage completion of the mailed survey or to administer the survey by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 1,200 completed surveys within the City of Atlanta, with a statistically valid sample from each of the 7 planning areas. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 1,219 surveys having been completed, including at least 120 in each of the 7 planning areas. The results of the random sample of 1,219 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-2.8%. The following pages summarize major survey findings.

Visitation of City Parks During the Past Year

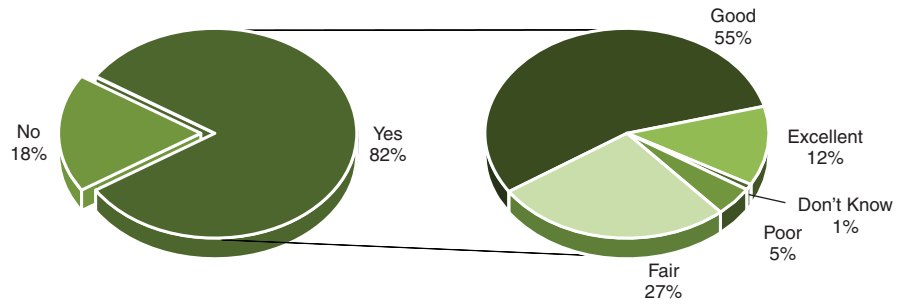
Respondents were asked if they or members of their household have visited any City of Atlanta parks during the past year. The following summarizes key findings:

- Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondent households have visited City of Atlanta parks during the past year.
- The City of Atlanta parks that have been visited the most are: Piedmont Park, Grant Park, Candler Park, Freedom Park and Chastain Park.

Physical Condition of City Parks

Respondent households that have visited City of Atlanta parks during the past year were asked to rate the physical condition of all the City parks they have visited. Of the 82% of respondent households that have visited City parks during the past year, 67% rated the parks as either excellent (12%) or good (55%). In addition, 27% rated the parks as fair and 5% rated them as poor (see Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5. Physical Condition of City Parks



Participation in City Recreation Programs

Respondents were asked if they or members of their household have participated in any recreation programs offered by the City of Atlanta during the past year. Fourteen percent (14%) of respondent households have participated in recreation programs offered by the City of Atlanta during the past year.

Quality of City Recreation Programs

Respondent households that have participated in recreation programs offered by the City of Atlanta during the past year were asked to rate the quality of the City recreation programs they have participated in. Of the 14% of respondent households that have participated in City recreation programs during the past year, 74% rated the programs as excellent (22%) or good (52%). In addition, 20% of respondents rated the programs as fair and 5% rated them as poor.

Reasons for Using Parks, Recreation Facilities, and Programs

From a list of 15 options, respondents were asked to indicate all the reasons their household uses parks, recreation facilities or programs offered by the City of Atlanta. The most frequently mentioned reasons that respondent households use City parks, recreation facilities or programs are: enjoyment of the outdoors (70%), close to our home/residence (66%), and improved physical fitness and health (39%).

Sufficient Parks and Green Space Areas Within Walking Distance

Respondents were asked if they feel there are sufficient parks and greenspace areas within walking distance of their residence. Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents feel there are sufficient parks ands greenspace areas within walking distance of their residence; 43% of respondents feel there are not sufficient parks and green space areas within walking distance of their residence, and 8% indicated "not sure".

Distance Willing to Travel to Visit Parks by Various Modes of Transportation

Respondents were asked to indicate the maximum distance they would be willing to travel to visit a park by three different modes of transportation. Fifty-six percent (56%) of respondents would drive a car 5 or more miles to visit a park; 20% would drive 3-4 miles to visit a park. Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents would walk ½ mile or more to visit a park while 58% would ride a bike ½ mile or more to visit a park.

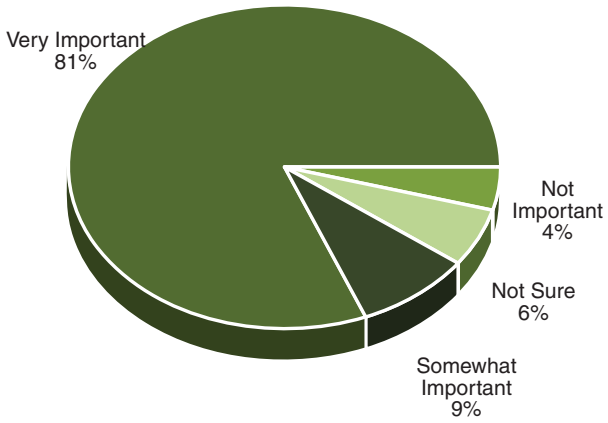
Importance of Using Greenways to Provide Various Functions

From a list of five options, respondents were asked how important they feel it is for the City of Atlanta to use greenways to provide various functions. Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents feel that it's very important to use greenways for environmental protection, 75% feel it's very important to use greenways for a connected network of walking/biking/nature trails, and 63% feel it's very important to use greenways for playgrounds and picnic areas.

Setting Aside Greenspace for High Rise Developments

Respondents were asked how important they feel it will be to set aside green space areas for high rise developments. Ninety percent (90%) of respondents indicated that it is either very important (81%) or somewhat important (9%) to set aside greenspace areas for high rise developments. In addition, only 4% of respondents felt that it is not important, and 6% indicated "not sure" (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Importance of Setting Aside Greenspace in High Rise Developments



Support for Public Art in Various Places

Respondents were asked to indicate how supportive they would be of having public art included in public plazas, parks, community gateways, and streetscapes. Between 49% and 57% of respondents were very supportive of having public art in each of these landscape elements. Over 75% of respondents were very supportive or somewhat supportive of having public art included in each element.

Importance of Having Local History and Cultural Facilities and Programs Included into Atlanta's Parks and Greenspace

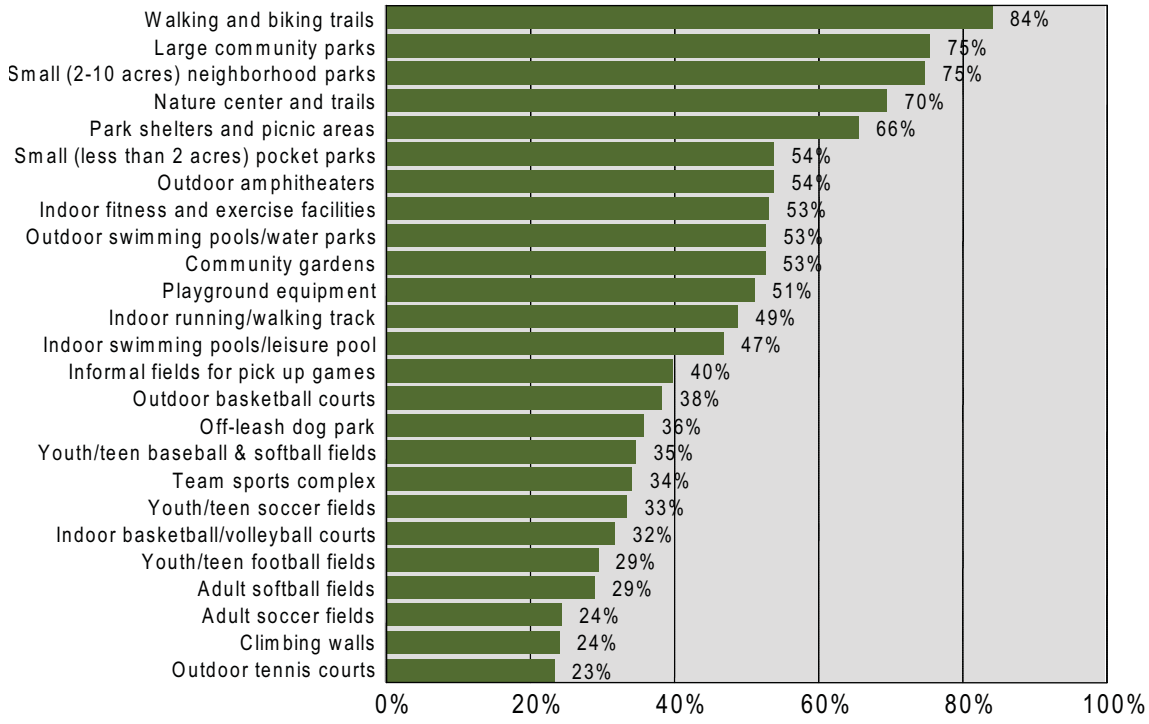
Respondents were asked to indicate how important they feel it is to have local history and cultural facilities and programs included into Atlanta's parks and greenspace. Eighty-two percent (82%) of re-

spondents felt that is either very important (52%) or somewhat important (30%) to have local history and cultural facilities and programs included into Atlanta's parks and greenspace. In addition, 10% of respondents felt that is not important, and 8% indicated "not sure".

Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities

From a list of 25 various parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones that they and members of their household have a need for. The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondent households have a need for are: walking and biking trails (84%), large community parks (75%), small neighborhood parks (75%), nature center and trails (70%), and park shelters and picnic areas (66%) (see Figure 3.7).

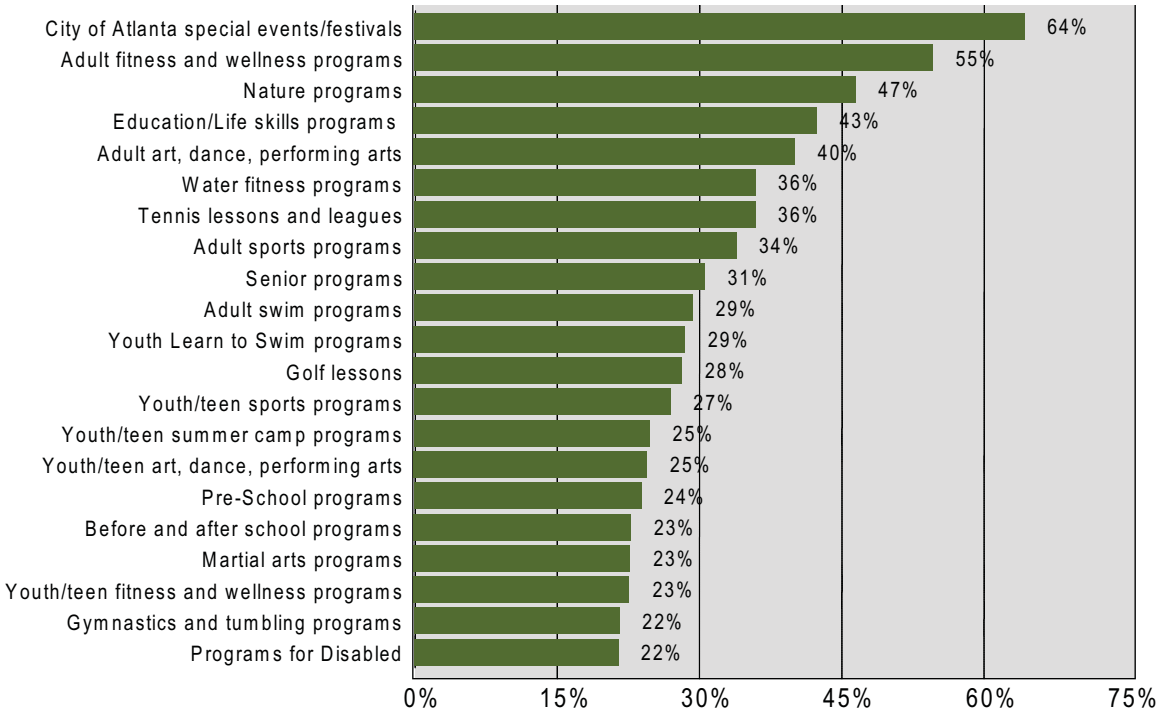
Figure 3.7. Percentage of Households That Have a Need for Various Parks and Recreation Facilities



How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities Meet Needs

From the list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondent households that have a need for facilities were asked to indicate how well these types of facilities in the City of Atlanta meet their needs. For all 25 facilities, less than 40% of respondents indicated the facility completely meets the needs of their household.

Figure 3.8. Percentage of Households That Have a Need for Various Recreation Programs



Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities

From the list of 25 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to select the four facilities that are most important to their household. Based on the sum of their top 4 choices, the facilities that respondents rated as the most important are: walking and biking trails (49%), small neighborhood parks (35%), large community parks (33%), and nature centers and trails (22%). It should also be noted that walking and biking trails had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their most needed facility.

Need for Recreation Programs

From a list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to indicate all of the ones that they and members of their household have a need for. The programs that the highest percentage of respondent households have a need for are: City of Atlanta special events/festivals (64%), adult fitness and wellness programs (55%), nature programs (47%), and education/life skills programs (43%) (see Figure 3.8).

How Well Recreation Programs Meet Needs

From the list of 21 recreation programs, respondent households that have a need for programs were asked to indicate how well these types of programs in the City of Atlanta meet their needs. For all 21

programs, less than 25% of respondents indicated the program completely meets the needs of their household.

Most Important Recreation Programs

From the list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to select the four that are most important to their household. Based on the sum of their top 4 choices, the programs that respondents rated as the most important are: City of Atlanta special events/festivals (37%), adult fitness and wellness programs (30%), and nature programs (21%). It should also be noted that City of Atlanta special events/festivals had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the most important program.

Programs Respondents Currently Participate in Most Often

From the list of 21 recreation programs, respondents were asked to select the four that their household currently participates in most often at City of Atlanta facilities. Based on the sum of their top 4 choices, City of Atlanta special events/festivals (31%) is by a wide margin the recreation program that respondent households currently participate in most often. It should also be noted that City of Atlanta special events/festivals had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the recreation program they currently participate in most often at City of Atlanta facilities.

Reasons Preventing the Use of Parks, Facilities, and Programs More Often

From a list of 17 reasons, respondents were asked to select all of the ones that prevent them and members of their household from using parks, recreation facilities, or programs of the City of Atlanta more often. The reasons preventing the highest percentage of respondents from using parks, recreation facilities and programs of the City of Atlanta more often are: "I do not know what is being offered" (46%), "too far from our residence" (31%), "security is insufficient" (30%), and "program or facility not offered" (28%).

Actions to Improve Parks, Recreation, and Green Space System

From a list of 17 actions the City of Atlanta could take to improve the parks, recreation and greenspace system, respondents were asked to rate their level of support for each action. The actions that the highest percentage of respondents are very supportive of are: develop walking/biking trails & connect to existing trails (76%), upgrade existing neighborhood and community parks (74%), fix-up/repair older park buildings and facilities (73%), and purchase land to preserve open space and greenspace (72%).

Actions Most Willing to Fund With City Tax Dollars

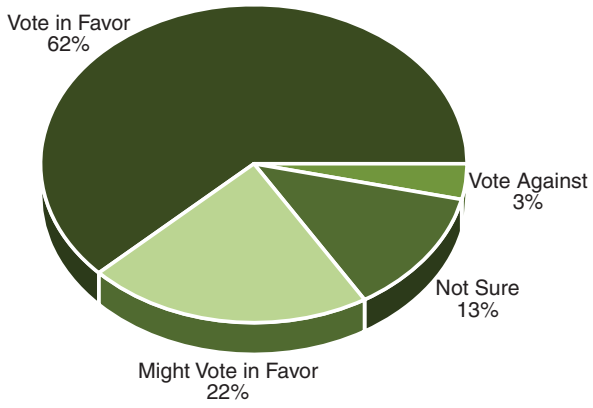
From the list of 17 actions the City of Atlanta could take to improve the parks, recreation and greenspace system, respondents were asked which four of the actions they would be most willing to fund with their city tax dollars. Based on the sum of their top 4 choices, the actions that respondents

would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars are: purchase land to preserve open space and greenspace (45%), develop walking/biking trails and connect to existing trails (38%), upgrade existing neighborhood and community parks (35%), and fix-up/repair older park buildings and facilities (34%). It should also be noted that purchasing land to preserve open/greenspace had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the action they would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars.

Voting on a Bond Referendum

Respondents were asked how they would vote if a bond referendum was held to fund the acquisition, improvement, and development of the types of parks, trails, greenspace, and recreation facilities that are most important to their household. Eighty-four percent (84%) of respondents would either vote in favor (62%) or might vote in favor (22%) of a bond referendum to fund the types of parks, trails, greenspace, and recreation facilities that are most important to their household. Only 3% of respondents would vote against the bond referendum, and 13% indicated "not sure" (see Figure 3.9).

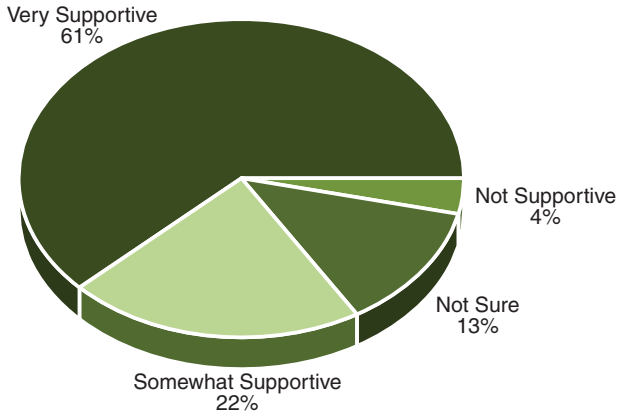
Figure 3.9. Percentage of Households that Might Vote for a Bond Referendum



Dedicated City Funding Source

Respondents were asked how supportive they would be of creating a dedicated city funding source that could only be used to fund operations and improvements to the parks, recreation, and greenway system in the City of Atlanta. Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents are either very supportive (61%) or somewhat supportive (22%) of creating a dedicated City funding source. In addition, only 4% of respondents are not supportive, and 13% indicated "not sure" (see Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10. Support for Dedicated Funding Source

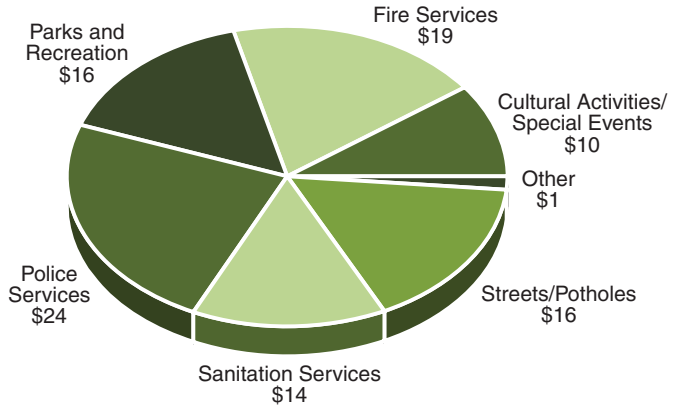


Allocation of $100 Among Various City Services

Respondents were asked how they would allocate $100 among various City services that are paid for from the City's general fund. Respondents indicated they would allocate $24 out of every $100 to police services. The remaining $76 was allocated as follows: fire services ($19), parks and recreation

($16), streets/potholes ($16), sanitation services ($14), cultural activities/special events ($10). The remaining $1 was allocated to "other" (see Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11. Allocation of $100 Among City Services



4.0 GREENSPACE SYSTEM ANALYSIS

An extensive inventory and analysis of Atlanta's greenspace has been conducted to evaluate the overall health and relationships of parks, natural areas, and other existing or potential components important to the creation of an integrated greenspace "system". An analysis of the City's parkland, summarized in Section 4.1, evaluated the various park classifications, their distribution throughout the City, and their ease of access by city residents. Section 4.2, Greenspace Analysis, examines other greenspace resources that contribute to the sustainability, interconnectedness, and recreational facility needs of Atlanta's greenspace system. Section 4.3 considers other greenspace opportunities.

4.1 Parkland Analysis

An analysis of the city's existing public parks is described in this section. Atlanta's city parks inventory and other parks and open spaces are described in greater detail below.

4.1.1 Atlanta City Parks

The extent of the City's park inventory is shown in Figure 4.1. The City categorizes its park inventory into nine separate classifications based on the types of resources and facilities present within each. The inventory presented here and througout this State of Atlanta's Greenspace report is based on the park inventory and classification system in place on February 2007. A description of each park classification is provided below. Park acreages for each category are provided in Figure 4.2. It should be noted that the classification system has been re-evaluated as part of Project Greenspace and recommendations for a revised system are provided in Section 3.2 of the Strategies and Actions Report.

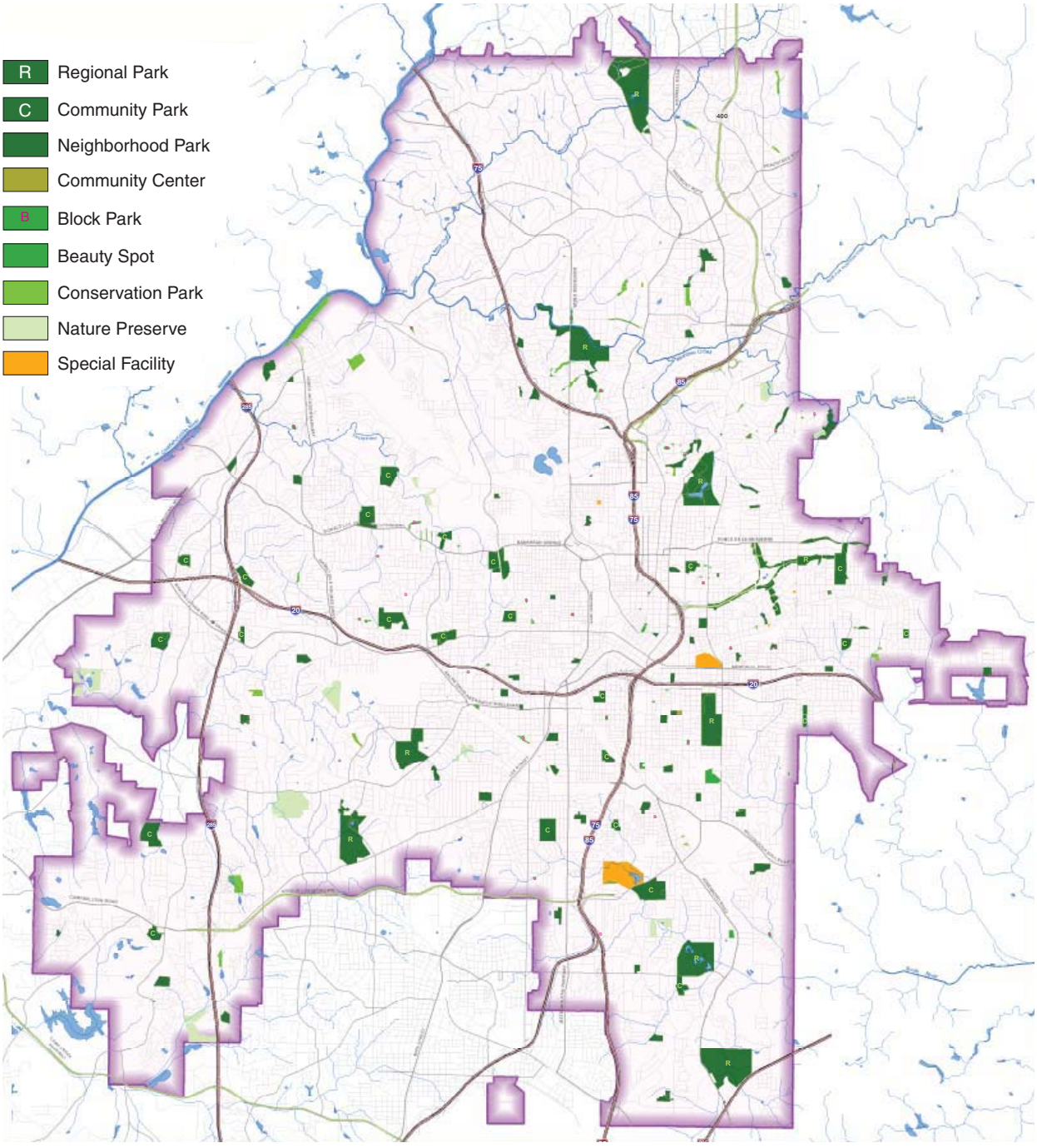
- **Regional Parks:** Regional parks are major park sites that draw a significant portion of users from both within and outside city limits. They generally contain facilities that generate revenue, like the Chastain Arts Center.

- **Community Parks:** Community parks support organized programming with staff. They typically contain such facilities as recreation centers, pools, large picnic shelters, or programmed athletic complexes. A small fee for the use of some of these facilities may be charged in order to partially offset operating costs.

- **Neighborhood Parks:** Neighborhood Parks serve local informal recreational needs. Typical amenities include picnic shelters (small to medium for family gatherings), open fields for informal sports and recreation activities, play grounds/tot lots, basketball and tennis courts, and wooded natural areas.

- **Block Parks:** Block parks are small park sites containing limited amenities such as a play grounds and tot lots.

Figure 4.1. Atlanta City Parks by Classification



Data Source: City of Atlanta

- **Garden Spots:** Garden spots are very small landscaped areas – typically traffic islands. These areas generally do not have amenities.
- **Nature Preserves:** Nature preserves are primarily natural areas with amenities that facilitate environmental interpretation.
- **Conservation Parks:** Conservation parks are areas managed for environmental protection purposes. Conservation parks are publicly accessible.
- **Special Facilities:** Special facilities are sites within the park inventory that contain facilities not typically associated with parks. The Historic Oakland Cemetery is one example of a special facility.
- **Community Centers:** Community centers are stand-alone facilities leased to a community service organization providing social services.

Figure 4.2. Existing Parks and Greenspace Acreage

Atlanta City Parks	Existing Acreage
Regional Park	1,608.76 acres
Community Park	738.96 acres
Neighborhood Park	538.98 acres
Block Park	32.02 acres
Garden Spot	44.38 acres
Nature Preserve	393.13 acres
Conservation Park	174.51 acres
Special Facility	185.81 acres
Community Center	7.36 acres
TOTAL	3,723.91 acres

4.1.2 Park Distribution

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has established service area standards for a variety of urban park types[1]. An analysis that applied these established standards was conducted to highlight the gaps in the spatial distribution of four park classifications throughout Atlanta. The park classifications analyzed include Block Parks, Neighborhood Parks, Community Parks, and Regional Parks. The results of each are described below.

Block Parks

The distribution of block parks is shown in Figure 4.3. The NRPA has determined that a suitable travel distance for parks of this type should be ¼ mile in residential areas. These are small sites that provide opportunities for playgrounds, community gardens, picnic areas, and open field areas in the developed parts of the city where larger tracks of land are difficult to assemble. They supplement neighborhood parks in these areas.

1 Mertes, James D. and James Hall, Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, National Park and Recreation Association, 1996.

Neighborhood Parks

NRPA has determined that a ½ mile travel distance is appropriate for neighborhood parks. Though the distribution of neighborhood parks is slightly greater than block parks, neighborhood parks are deficient in the northern, west-central, and southern parts of the City (see Figure 4.4). A more even distribution of neighborhood parks is desirable to ensure convenient access to this popular, heavily used park type.

Community Parks

The distribution of community parks, with a recommended two-mile service area, is shown in Figure 4.5. While the distribution of community parks appears adequate in the southern portion of the City, many of the sites designated are significantly under sized compared to NRPA standards for community parks. Furthermore, the concentration of community parks in the southern part of the city has created an extensive overlap of component facilities typically associated with community parks. The extent of this overlap is illustrated in Figure 4.6. Figure 4.5 also indicates that there is a lack of community parks in the northern part of Atlanta. It should be noted, however, that regional parks such as Chastain Park can fulfill the functions of community parks. Therefore, regional parks with a two-mile service area are also shown in Figure 4.6 to illustrate a more accurate distribution of community park functions. In general, an analysis of the size and distribution of currently designated community parks is needed to determine where parks should be expanded, consolidated, or reclassified as smaller neighborhood parks in order to better distrubute community parks and their component facilities throughout the City.

Regional Parks

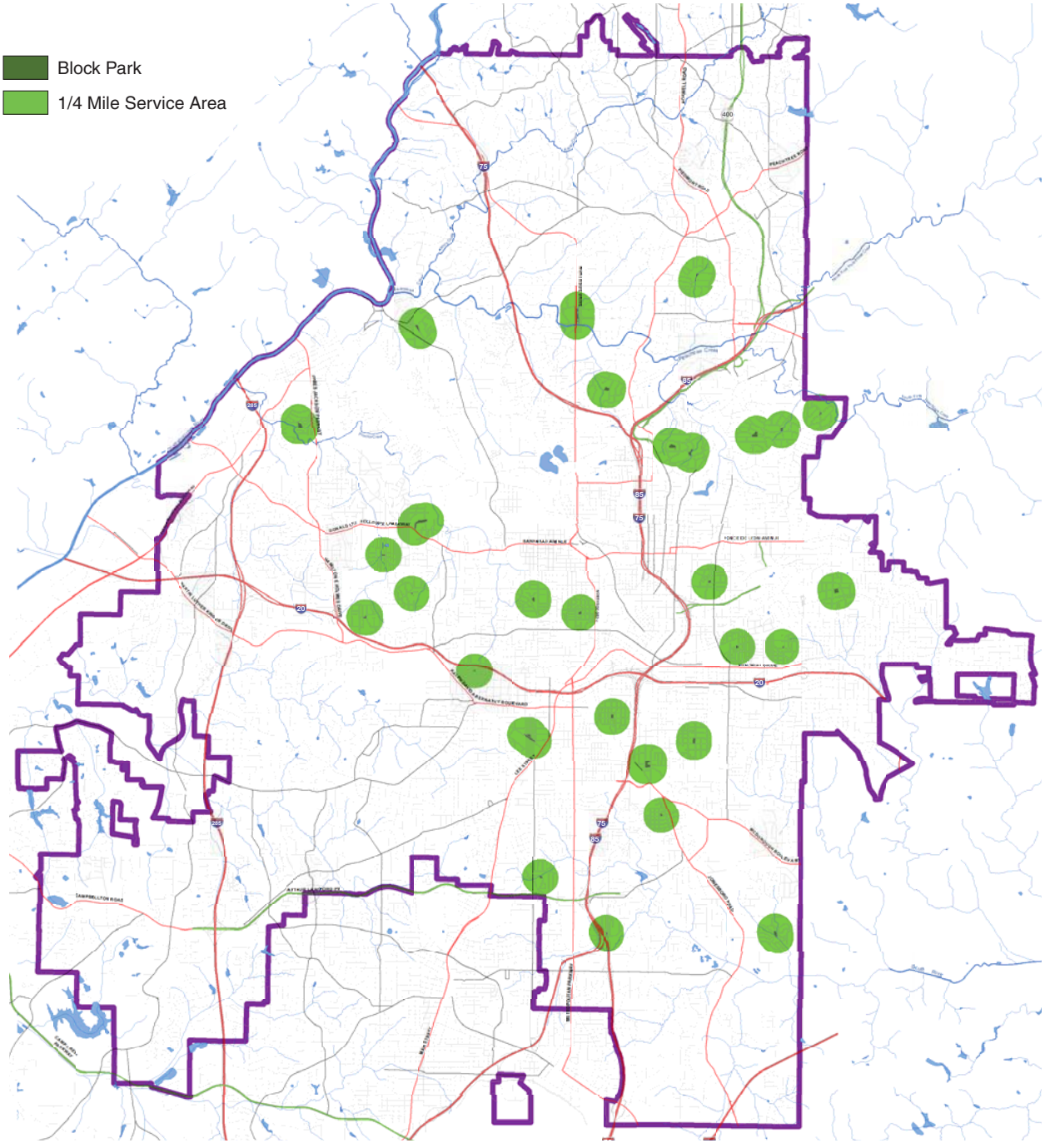
Based on a four mile service area, the distribution of regional parks appears adequate (see Figure 4.7). Most of the city's regional parks, however, are located to the east (east of Interstate 75). An additional regional park in the western part of the city near the interchange of Interstates 285 and 20 would provide a more even distribution of regional parks.

4.1.3 Park Proximity

The proximity of Atlanta's population to its city parks was analyzed to understand the portion of the population underserved by park facilities. The results of this analysis are described below.

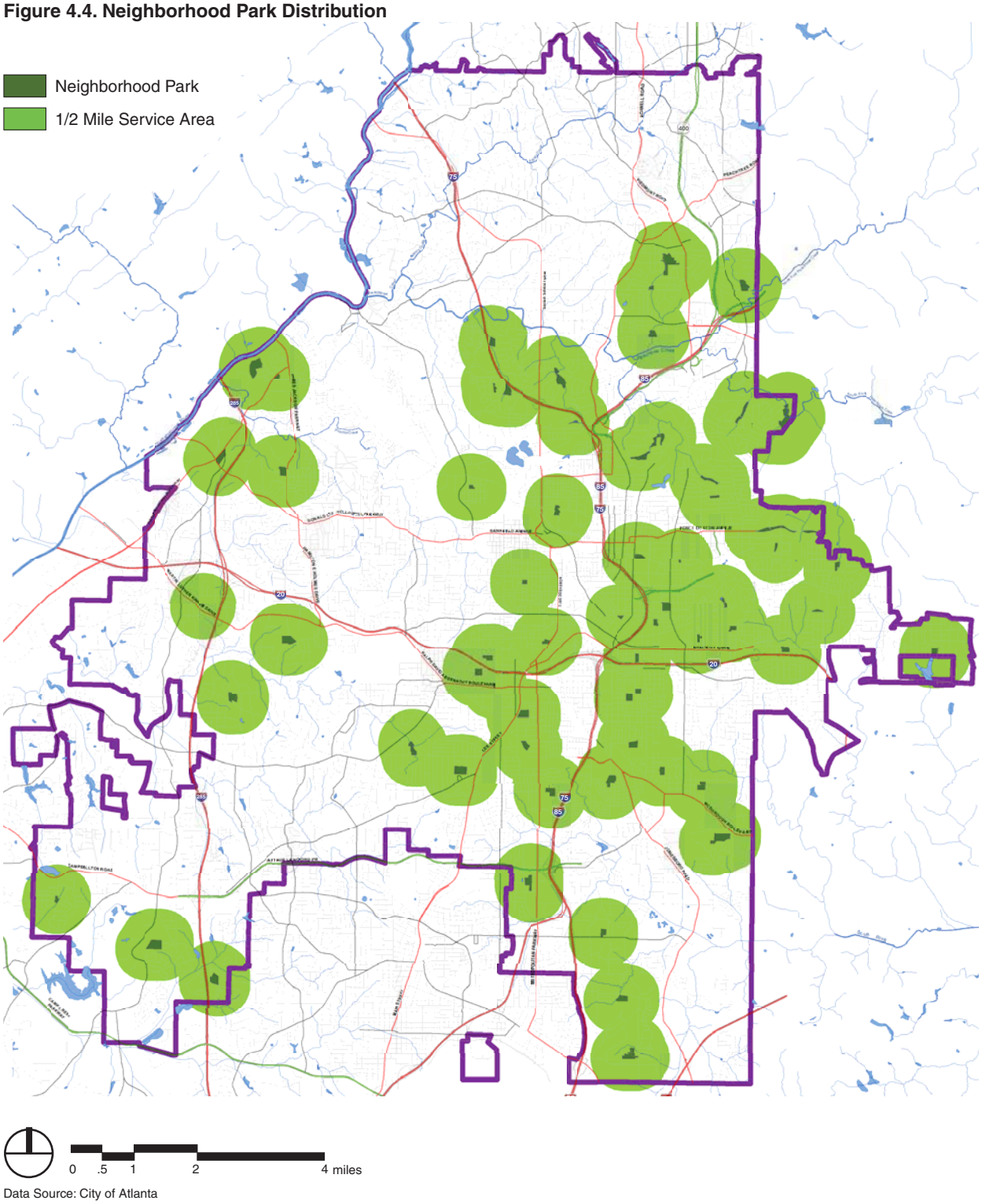
Figure 4.9 illustrates ¼ and ½ mile linear radii around all city parks with developed facilities. Correcting for unpopulated areas, population projections (see Section 2.3.1) indicate that 197,546 (41%) people lived within a ¼ mile and 358,090 (74%) people lived within a ½ mile of city parks in 2005. Projected to 2030, 317,180 (41%) people will live within a ¼ mile and 571,225 (73%) people will live within a ½ mile of city parks. Therefore, the portion of the population living farther than ½ mile from any city park in 2005 was 122,541, or 26%. That number will increase to 207,049 people or 27% of the population in 2030.

Figure 4.3. Block Park Distribution



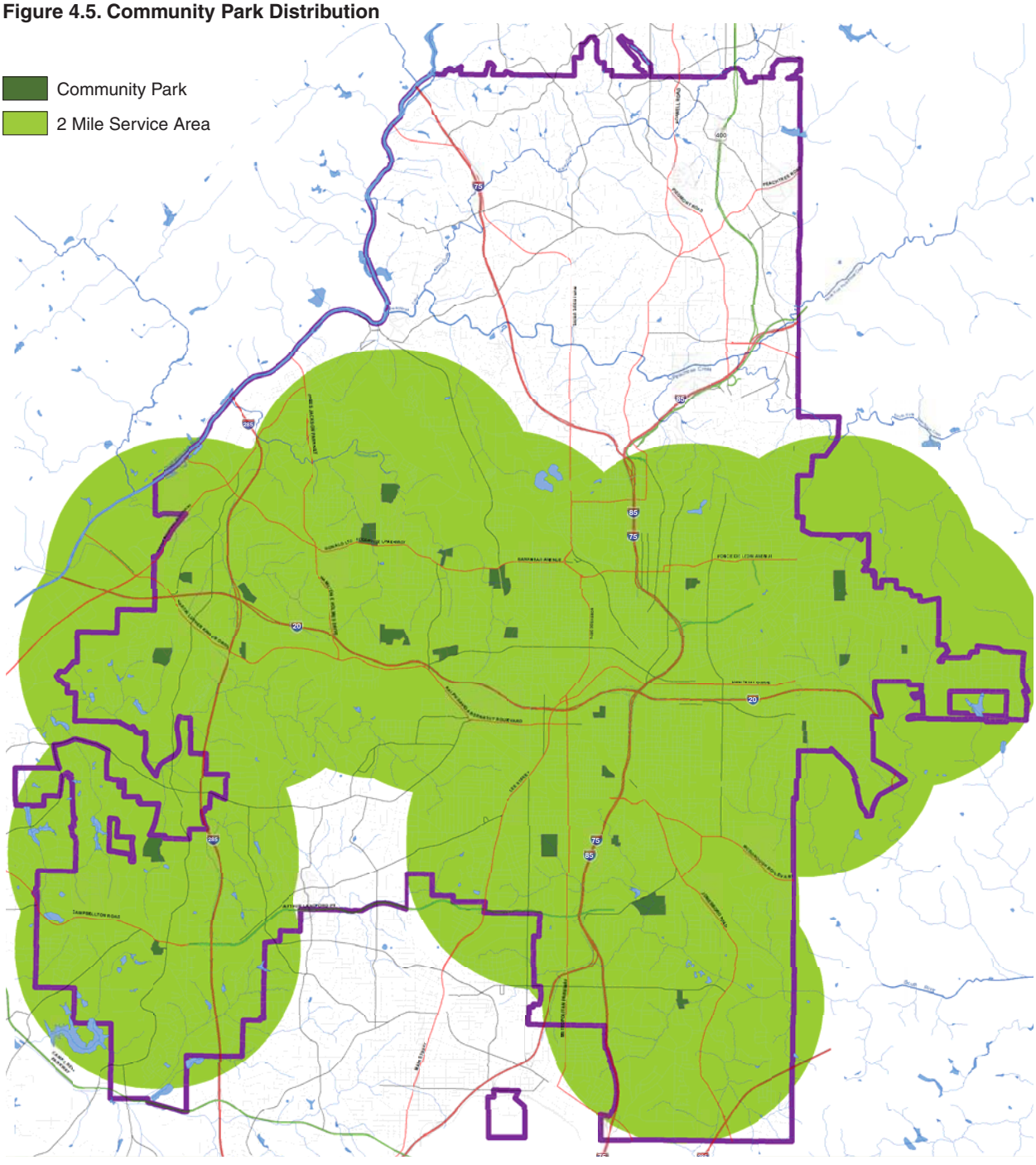
Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.4. Neighborhood Park Distribution



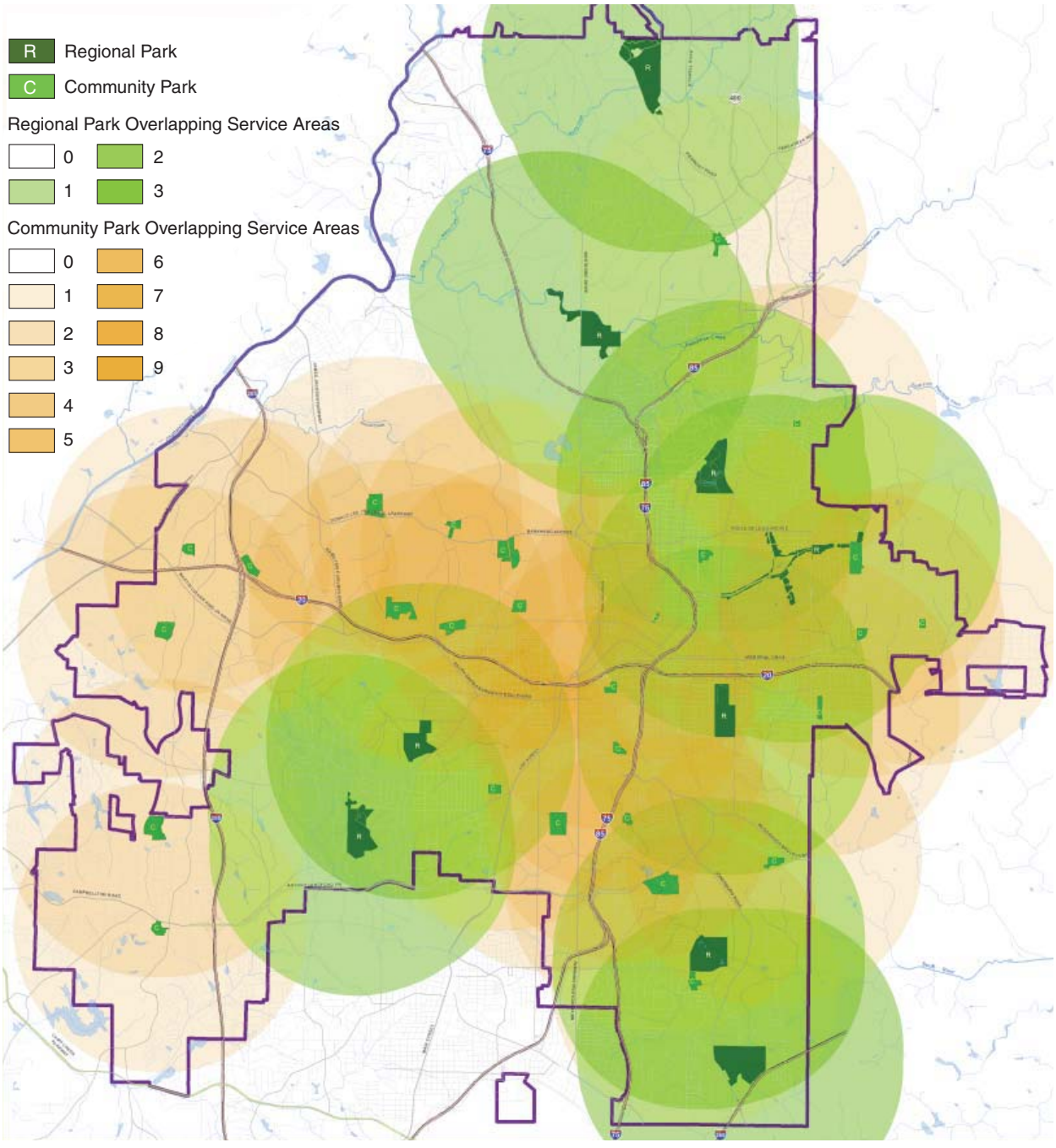
Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.5. Community Park Distribution



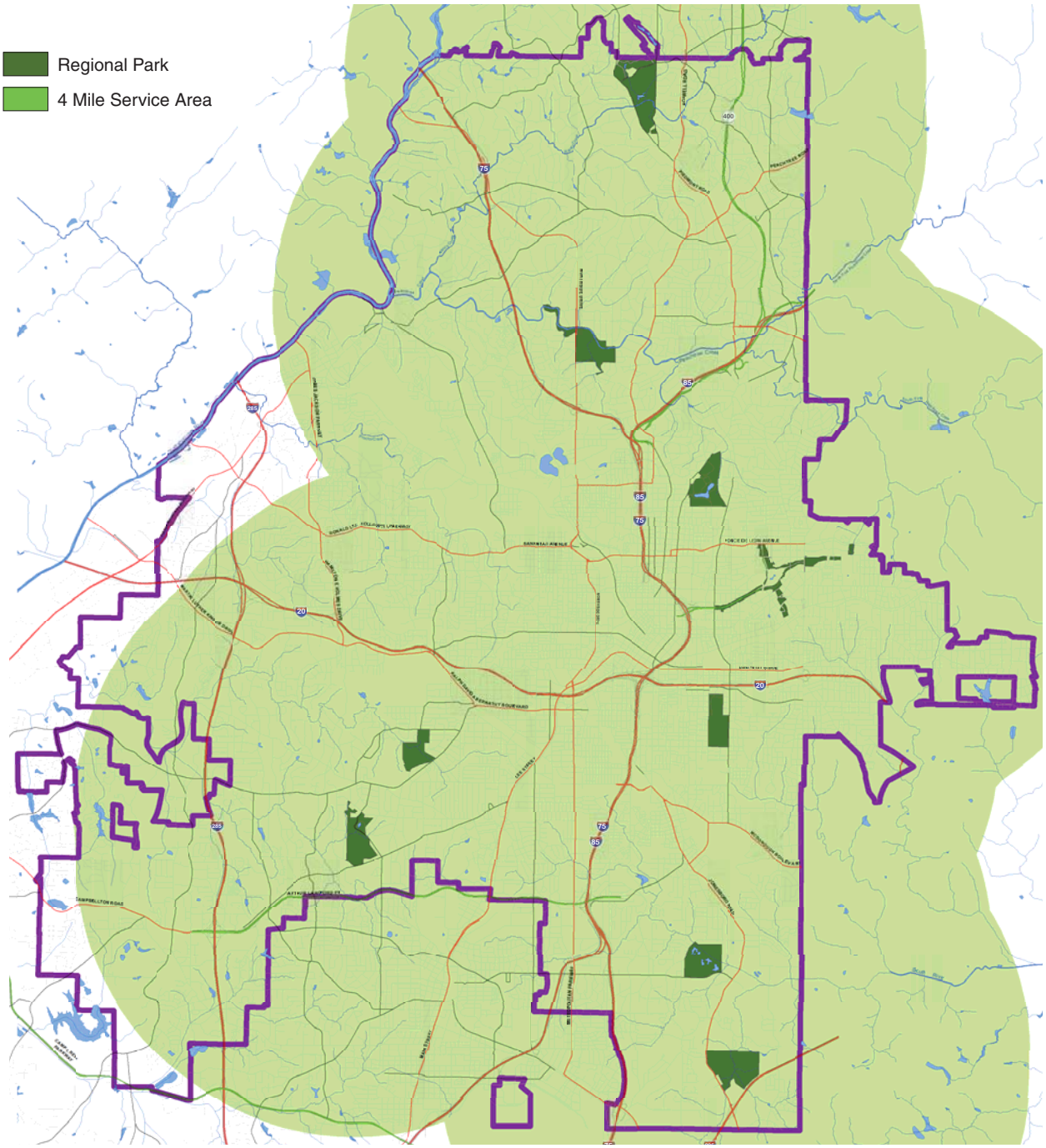
Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.6. Community Park Distribution Overlap



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.7. Regional Park Distribution



Data Source: City of Atlanta

To measure the impact of including school facilities in Atlanta's city park system, similar ¼ and ½ mile radii were calculated around public schools with useable greenspace and outdoor recreation facilities (see Section 4.2.1). The population captured within the combined city park/public school

Figure 4.8. Park Proximity - Population

	2005	2030
Parks: 1/4 Mile Linear Radius	197,546 (41%)	317,180 (41%)
Parks: 1/2 Mile Linear Radius	358,090 (74%)	571,225 (73%)
Parks: Outside 1/2 Mile Linear Radius	122,541 (26%)	207,049 (27%)
Parks/Schools: 1/4 Mile Linear Radius	247,577 (51%)	399,046 (51%)
Parks/Schools: 1/2 Mile Linear Radius	401,249 (83%)	644,348 (83%)
Parks/Schools: Outside 1/2 Mile Linear Radius	79,568 (17%)	133,926 (17%)

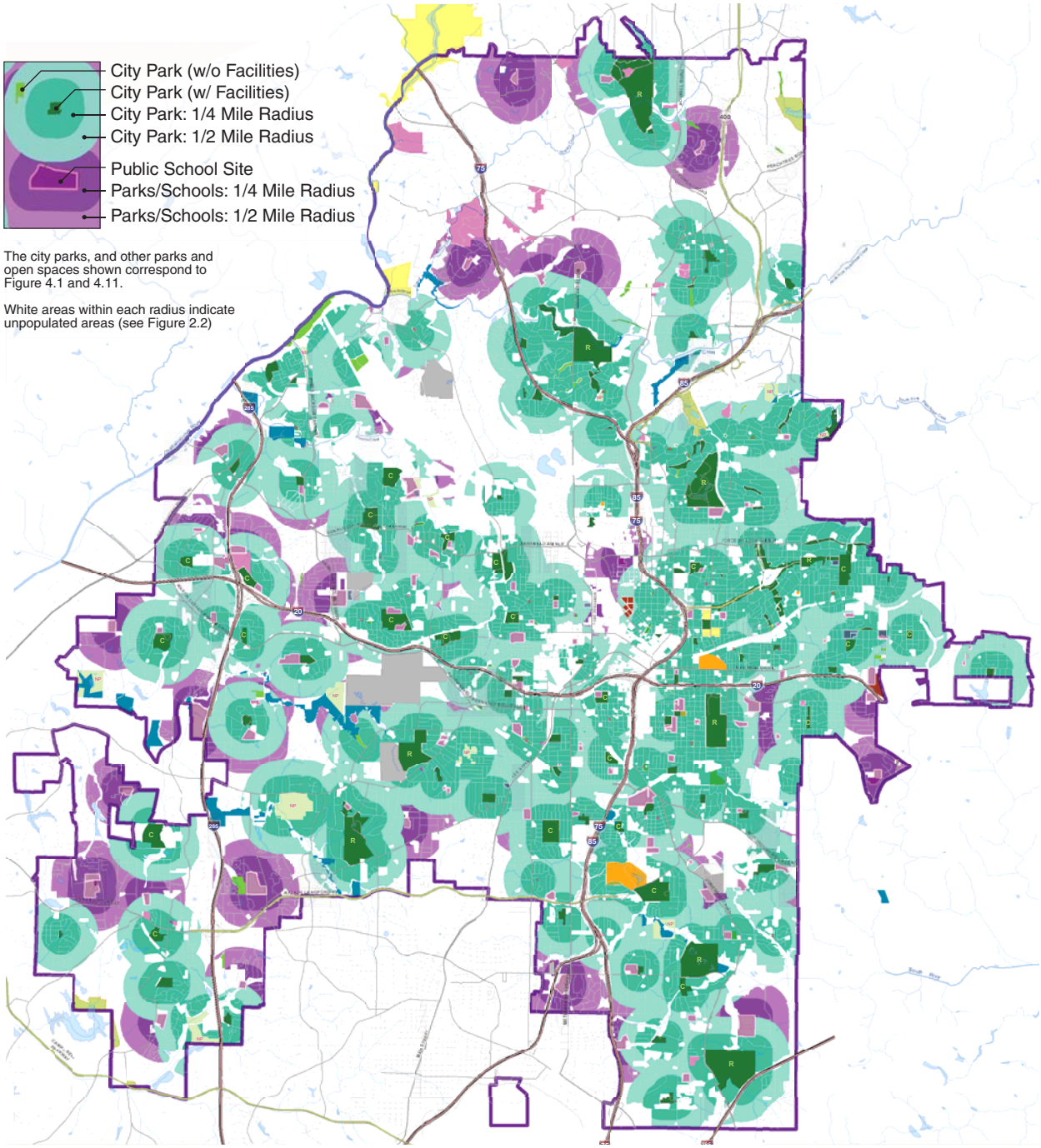
radial zones indicates that 247,577 (51%) people lived within a ¼ mile and 401,249 (83%) people lived within a ½ mile of city parks and schools in 2005. Projected to 2030, 399,046 (51%) people will live within a ¼ mile and 644,348 (83%) people will live within a ½ mile of city parks and schools. Therefore, the portion of the population living farther than a ½ mile from any city park or school facility in 2005 was 79,568, or 17% – significantly fewer people than the 26% of the population when city parks are considered alone. Projected to 2030, 133,926 (17%) will live farther than a ½ mile of a city park or school facility. This population analysis is summarized in Figure 4.8.

4.1.4 Park Accessibility

In 2005, the Georgia Institute for Technology conducted a study for the City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning to identify access to city parks developed with facilities. The study followed the street network outward from park entrances for a distance of ¼ and ½ mile to establish service areas for surrounding neighborhoods. Figure 4.10 illustrates the results of this analysis.

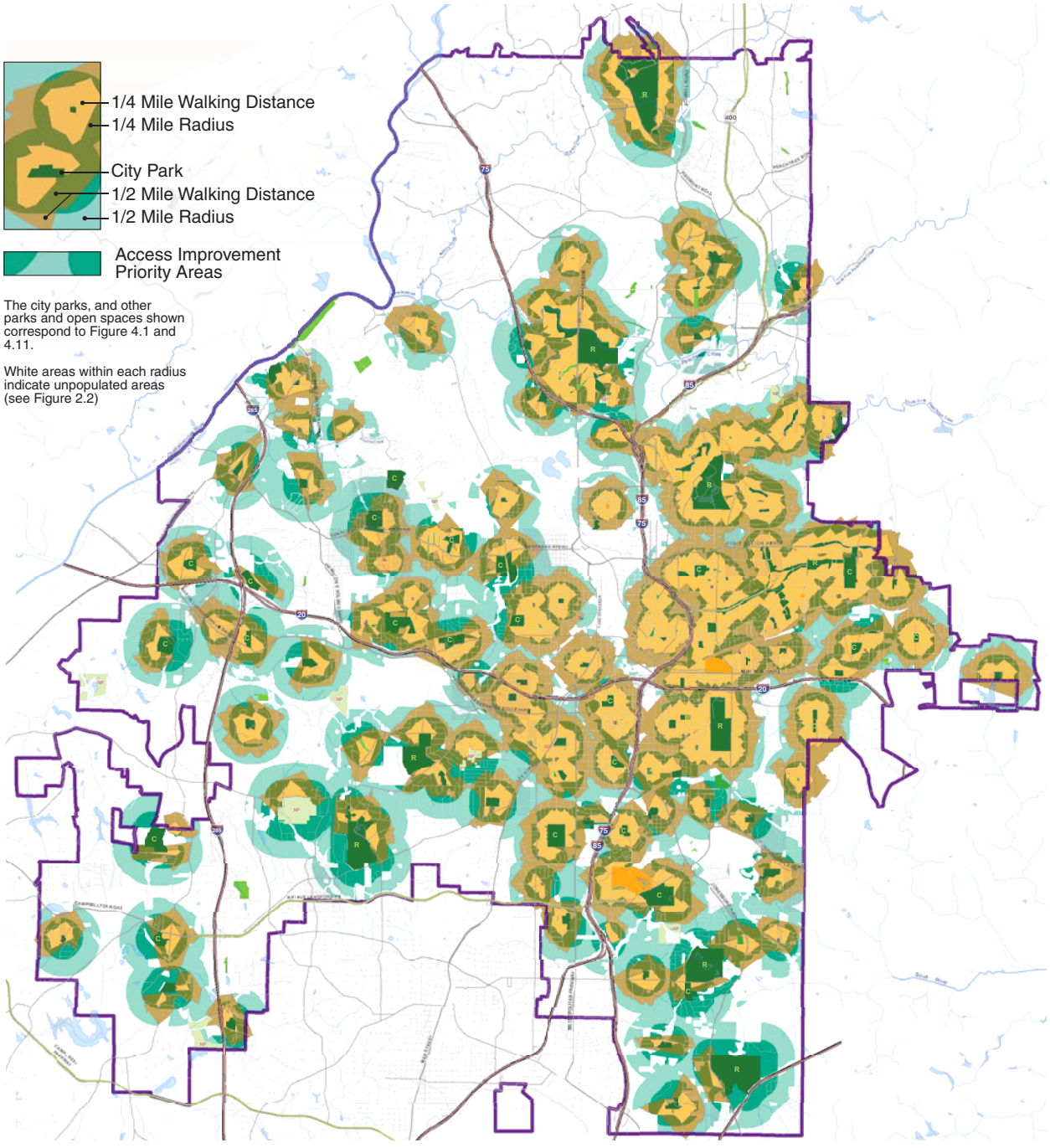
Quarter and ½ mile walking distances defined by the street network are shown for 153 city parks, mostly classified as Neighborhood, Community, and Regional (see Section 4.1.1). Correcting for unpopulated areas, population projections (see Section 2.3.1) indicate that 91,786 (19%) people lived within a ¼ mile distance along streets and 227,437 (47%) people lived within a ½ mile distance along streets from these 153 parks in 2005. Projected to 2030, 150,513 (19%) people will live within ¼ mile walking distance along streets, and 367, 359 (50%) people will live within a ½ mile walking distance along streets. While the Georgia Institute of Technology study assumed that all streets in the network are walkable, many lack adequate sidewalks and are difficult or unsafe to navigate, especially for children. Therefore, these numbers overstate the extent of pedestrian access to parks.

Figure 4.9. Park Proximity



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.10. Park Accessibility



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.11. Park Accessibility - Population

	2005	2030
1/4 Mile Linear Radius	194,088 (40%)	311,132 (40%)
1/4 Mile Walking Distance	91,786 (19%)	150,513 (19%)
Access Improvement Priority Areas (difference)	102,302 (21%)	160,619 (21%)
1/2 Mile Linear Radius	355,662 (74%)	566,342 (73%)
1/2 Mile Walking Distance	227,437 (47%	367,359 (50%)
Access Improvement Priority Areas (difference)	128,225 (27%)	198,983 (26%)

For comparison purposes, simple linear ¼ and ½ mile radii (excluding the street network) are also shown around the same 153 parks. The population captured within each of these areas indicates that 194,088 (40%) lived within ¼ mile, and 355,662 (74%) lived within ½ mile in 2005; and 311,132 (40%) will live within ¼ mile, and 566,342 (73%) will live within ½ mile in 2030.
Areas outside of the ¼ and ½ mile street network but within the ¼ and ½ mile linear radii define those neighborhood areas that could readily benefit from park access improvements. The population captured by these areas – identified as *access improvement priority areas* in Figure 4.10 – reveals that in 2005 102,302 (21%) people lived within a ¼ mile and 128,225 (27%) lived within a ½ mile of these 153 city parks, yet did not have convenient access to them via the street network. Projected to 2030 those numbers increase to 160,619 (21%) people within a ¼ mile and 198,983 (26%) within a ½ mile. Figure 4.11 summarizes this data. The results indicate that significant access improvements are required in order to meet a goal of ensuring that every Atlanta resident lives within a ½ mile walk of a park via the street network.

4.1.5 Recreational Facilities

As part of Project Greenspace, an analysis was conducted to understand the provision and distribution of city recreational facilities in Atlanta and to define the present and future needs for these facilities based on the citizen survey, comparative benchmarking against other communities, and other evaluation methods. The results of the analysis, including standards for different types of recreational facilities and present (2005) and future (2030) needs based on the standards, are presented in a separate document, the Needs Assessment Report. Figure 4.12 summarizes key findings of this report.

4.2 Greenspace Analysis

In addition to city parkland, other types of permanent open spaces contribute to (or potentially contribute to) the sustainability, interconnectedness, and/or recreational facility needs of Atlanta's greenspace system. These include other types of parks and open space not in the city's direct control (e.g. state parks, private golf courses, etc.), Atlanta's natural drainage framework (e.g. rivers, streams, floodplains, etc.), environmentally sensitive areas (e.g. wetlands, steep slopes, etc.), and potential

Figure 4.6. Recreational Facility Needs

Facility Type	Level of Service Standard	Current Inventory	Current Target	Current Need[1]	2030 Target	2030 Need[2]
Walking/Biking Trails	1 mile per 3,000 residents	15 miles	161 miles	146 miles	261 miles	246 miles
Rentable Picnic Pavilions	1 site per 7,500 residents	27 sites	64 sites	37 sites	104 sites	77 sites
Outdoor Pool (50 meters)	1 pool per 35,000 residents	3 pools	14 pools	11 pools	22 pools	19 pools
Outdoor Pool (25 yards)	1 pool per 25,000 residents	12 pools	19 pools	7 pools	31 pools	19 pools
Natatoria	1 pool per 50,000 residents	5 pools	10 pools	5 pools	16 pools	11 pools
Spray Pads (stand alone)	1 pad per 10,000 residents	1 pad	48 pads	47 pads	78 pads	77 pads
League Play: Youth Baseball/Softball (5 fields)	1 complex per 75,000 residents	3 complexes	6 complexes	3 complexes	10 complexes	7 complexes
League Play: Adult Softball (4 fields)	1 complex per 200,000 residents	1 complex	2 complexes	1 complex	4 complexes	3 complexes
League Play: Foorball/ Soccer/Track	1 complex per 120,000 residents	0 comlpexes	4 complexes	4 complexes	7 complexes	7 complexes
League Play: Informal Open Practice Fields	1 field per 5,000 residents					
Playgrounds	1 site per 4,000 residents	105 sites	121 sites	16 sites	196 sites	91 sites
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1 court per 7,500 residents	63 courts	64 courts	1 court	104 courts	41 courts
Off-Leash Dog Parks	1 site per 50,000 residents (min. 2-acre site)	1 site	10 sites	9 sites	16 sites	15 sites
Tennis Centers	1 center per 100,000 residents	5 centers	5 centers	0 centers	8 centers	3 centers
Outdoor Tennis Courts (informal, pick-up play only)	2 courts per 7,500 residents (group courts in pairs)	114 courts[3,4]	129 courts[3,4]	15 courts[3,4]	209 courts[3,4]	95 courts[3,4]
Special Events/Festival Site	1 50-acre (min.) site					
Recreation Centers	1 square foot per resident (min. 30,000 sf per facility)	468,906 sf	483,108 sf	14,202 sf	782,952 sf	314,046 sf
Cultural Centers	1 center per 250,000 residents					
Golf	1 course per 80,000 residents	5.5 courses[5]	6 courses[5]	1 course[5]	10 courses[5]	4 courses[5]

[1] Current target less current inventory
[2] 2030 target less current inventory
[3] Excludes courts in tennis centers; tennis centers evaluated separately
[4] Does not account for groupings of two courts
[5] Includes 1 nine-hole course; excludes private golf courses

greenspace connections (e.g. utility corridors, the arterial street system, etc.). Each is described in the following sections. Figure 4.13 presents the approximate acreage of land in each category.

4.2.1 Other Existing Parks and Greenspace

Other types of parks and greenspace not under the city's direct control make significant contributions to the overall viability and interconnectness of Atlanta's greenspace system. Shown in Figure 4.14, these types of parks and greenspace resources include:

National Park Service (NPS) Sites

NPS sites add recreational and historic value to Atlanta's greenspace system. Several NPS sites are located within or adjacent to the City of Atlanta. These include sites like the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (located just over the northwest boundary of the City).

Figure 4.13. Existing Parks and Greenspace Acreage

Other Parks and Open Spaces	Existing Acreage
National Park Service Sites	286 acres
State and DeKalb County Parks	36 acres
Greenways (consent decree)	680 acres
Golf Courses	91 acres
Cemeteries	560 acres
Atlanta Public Schools	911 acres
K-12 Private Schools	396 acres
Colleges and Universities	n/a
Atlanta's Drainage System	**Existing Acreage**
100-Year Floodplain	4,092 acres
Flat Areas	470 acres
75-Foot Riparian Buffer	2,328 acres
Steep Slopes (drainage network)	2,357 acres
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	**Existing Acreage**
Environmentally Sensitive Land	5,432 acres
Wetlands	30 acres
Steep Slopes	1,667 acres
Greenspace Connections	**Existing Acreage**
Undeveloped Land	1,721 acres

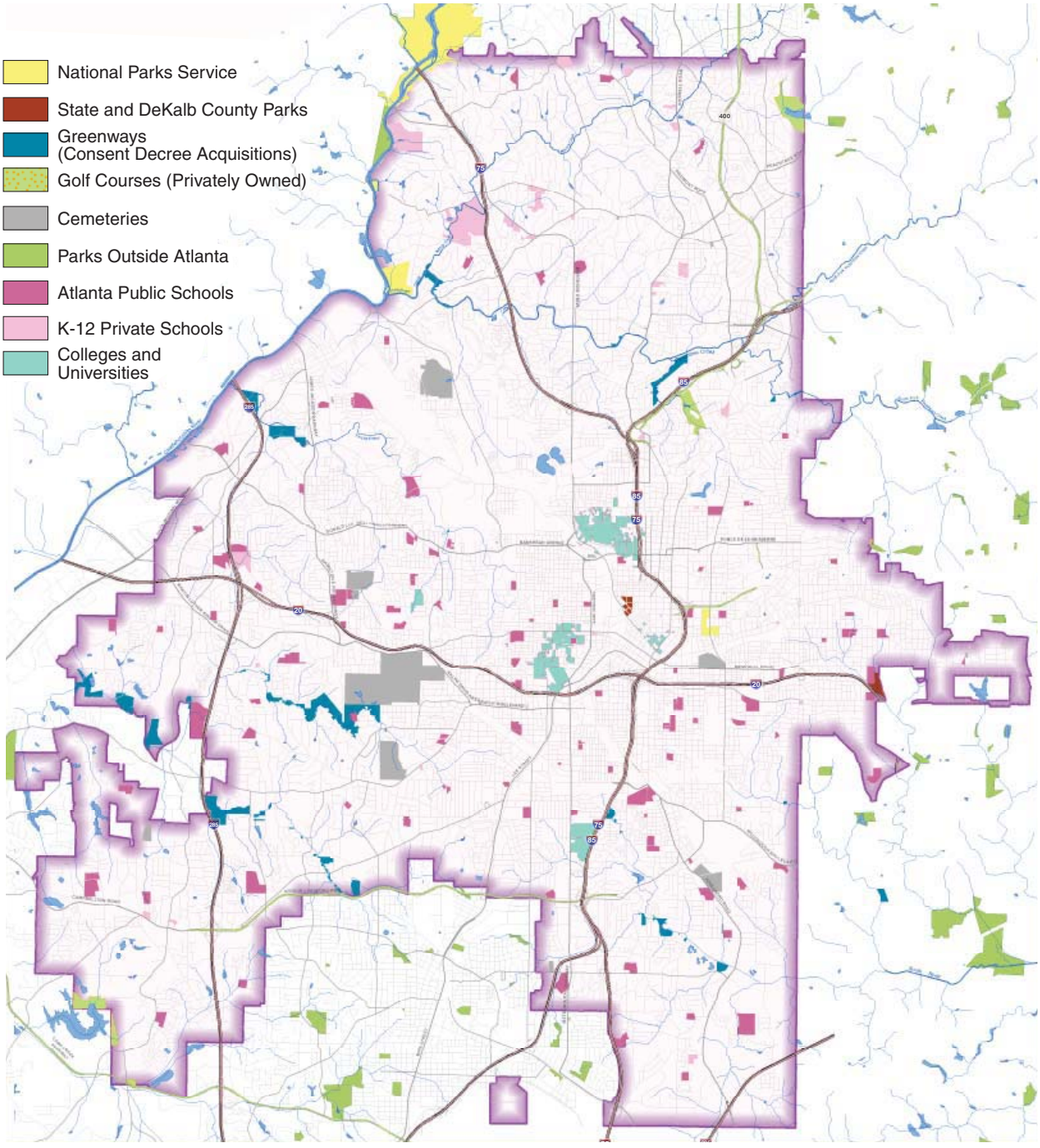
State and DeKalb County Parks

There are relatively few state and county parks within the City. The largest example of this type, Centennial Olympic Park, is managed by the State of Georgia and is an example of a significant park resource located adjacent to the downtown.

Greenways (consent decree acquisitions)

These properties include acquisitions and conservation easements along river and stream corridors made per the 1998 Combined Sewer Overflow Consent Decree. They typically allow up to 10% of the site to be developed for public access. Together with City parks located along stream corridors, consent decreee acquisitions and easements have begun to establish greenway corridors. Further acquisition of floodplains and stream buffers will be an increasingly appropriate response to federal requirements under the Clean Water Act to mitigate non-point source pollutants.

Figure 4.14. Other Parks and Open Spaces



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Golf Courses (privately owned)

Private golf courses offer a recreational amenity on large tracts of land maintained in a park-like setting. Therefore, golf courses are important components of Atlanta's existing greenspace system.

Cemeteries

Atlanta has several very large cemeteries within its borders, like Lincoln Cemetery. Similar to golf courses, cemeteries maintain large areas of land in a park-like setting.

Atlanta Public Schools

The recreational facilities and undeveloped land found at many public school sites make Atlanta's public schools a potentially important component of the city's greenspace system. For the purposes of Project Greenspace, usable greenspace on public school property greater than one acre was estimated from aerial photography (excluding schools that are located in parks).

School sites abandoned as part of school consolidation efforts could provide future greenspace activities. However, the Board of Education needs to derive the highest possible return on properties declared surplus due to financial constraints therefore limiting opportunities to acquire and utilize these sites for public recration. Joint planning for schools and parks would increase opportunities to provide citizens' park and recreation needs while meeting Board of Education objectives.

K-12 Private Schools

Private school sites are similar to public school sites. The City would need to partner individually with these institutions to benefit from the facilities and potential greenspace they provide.

Colleges and Universities

Though many of the city's colleges and universities are adjacent to downtown and quite urban in character, they do offer open spaces and facilities within their campuses. Colleges and universities are shown in Figure 4.14 to illustrate how these resources may connect to the larger greenspace system.

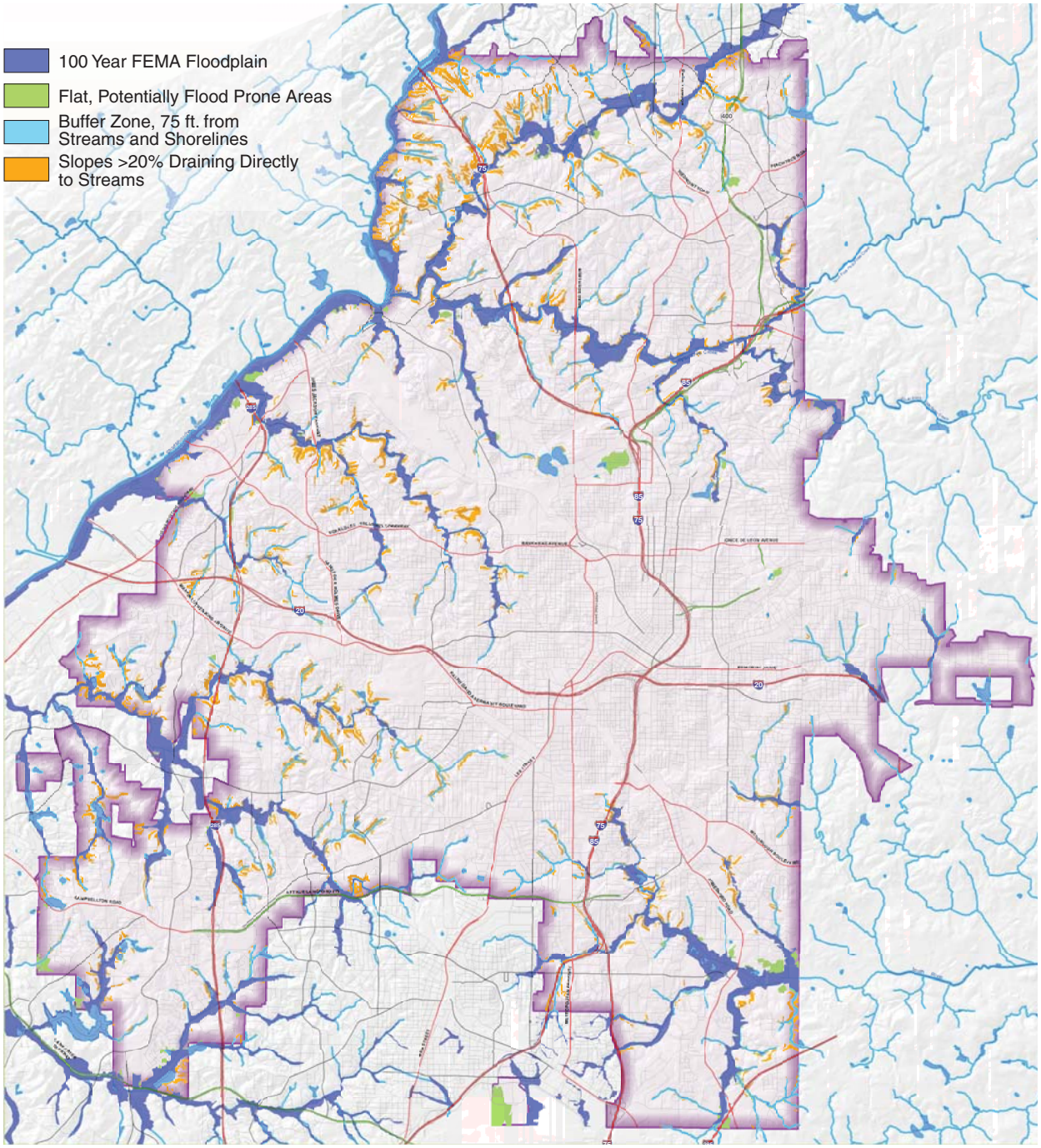
Parks outside Atlanta

Parks and other open space resources outside of the city limits are also shown in Figure 4.14 to highlight potential greenspace connections to these resources.

4.2.2 Atlanta's Drainage System

Atlanta's natural drainage system – the dendritic pattern of rivers and streams and the land forms associated with them – is an important feature of the Atlanta's greenspace system. Figure 4.15 shows the resources that compose this system. These include the 100-year floodplain as delineated by

Figure 4.15. Atlanta's Drainage System



Data Source: City of Atlanta

FEMA; additional flat land areas (up to 2% in slope) next to the FEMA 100-year floodplain; 75-foot wide land buffers adjacent to the edges of rivers, streams, and other water bodies; and steep slope areas (20% and greater in slope) adjacent to rivers and streams. In addition, Figure 4.15 shows the City's watersheds and topographic low points. As environmentally sensitive areas, these resources are subject to federal, state, and local development regulations. Together, they function as natural corridors for human recreation and wildlife habitat. Protecting and enhancing these resources should be one of the city's primary goals to ensure a sustainable, interconnected greenspace system. Each of the land areas that compose Atlanta's natural drainage system is described in greater detail below.

The 100-Year Floodplain

The 100-year floodplain, as shown in Figure 4.15, is delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to define land areas within communities that are eligible to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). In order to participate in the program, local governments must adopt ordinances and other development regulations that minimize the risk to life and property and prevent increased flooding within the 100-year floodplain during flood events. NFIP makes flood insurance available to affected land owners in participating communities.

FEMA mapping of the 100-year floodplain does not exist for all areas of Atlanta subject to periodic flood inundation. For developments proposed along watercourses for which FEMA mapping does not exist, the city's flood area regulations require engineering studies to be performed to determine the area where inundation is likely to occur during the 100-year base flood.

The floodplain performs very important natural functions within the City of Atlanta, including temporary storage of floodwaters, reduction in soil erosion, groundwater recharge, and removal of pollutants contained in stormwater runoff. The linear nature of the 100-year floodplain also provides important habitat corridors for wildlife and opportunities for multi-use trails. Because these areas are flat, floodplains can also accommodate types of recreation and sports facilities that are not severely impacted by frequent flooding (e.g. soccer, baseball, etc.). About 4,092 acres of FEMA designated floodplain exists in the City of Atlanta.

Flat Areas

Flat land areas up to 2% in slope and contiguous with the FEMA delineated 100-year floodplain are also shown in Figure 4.15 and constitute about 470 acres of the City's land area. These flat areas, though un-delineated by FEMA, are likely subject to minor flooding. These areas could also include unmapped wetlands. Like the FEMA delineated 100-year floodplain described above, flat land areas can contribute to Atlanta's greenspace system by providing important wildlife habitat and accommodating recreation facilities.

75-Foot Riparian Buffer

In an effort to protect and improve the quality of the city's waterways, the City of Atlanta has adopted an ordinance requiring a 75-foot riparian buffer to be maintained on both sides of each river, stream, and natural drainage channel. Unless a variance or exemption is granted, building activity of any kind cannot occur within this area (see section 2.2.4). If properly maintained, buffer areas provide numerous environmental protection and resource management benefits, such as improved water quality and wildlife habitat. A 75-foot buffer adjacent to each river and stream yields about 2,328 acres of potential greenspace.

Steep Slopes (integral to the drainage network)

The stability of steep slopes adjacent to rivers and streams has a direct impact on water quality. Land areas greater than or equal to 20% in slope adjacent to the city's rivers and streams are shown in Figure 4.15. Development activity on or near steeply sloped areas should be controlled in order to limit or prevent the negative impacts of soil erosion on adjacent waterways. If left in their natural vegetated state, steeply sloped areas can provide important wildlife habitat and contribute to the overall quality of a healthy greenspace system. There are about 2,357 acres of steep slopes in the city.

Low Points

The City's topographic low points are shown in Figure 4.16 to illustrate regional water detention pond facility opportunities. Each low point is classified according to the relative size of the watershed area upstream, and have the potential to serve as regional detention areas while providing opportunities for much needed parkland. The relationship of each low point to the 100-year floodplain and undeveloped potential greenspace illustrates the potential extent that a water detention facility could be developed. Note that the identification of low points and their size classifications were based on existing topographic data only. Detailed hydrolgical and engineering feasibility studies would need to be executed in order to determine the viability of each low point and adjacent land as regional detention pond facility.

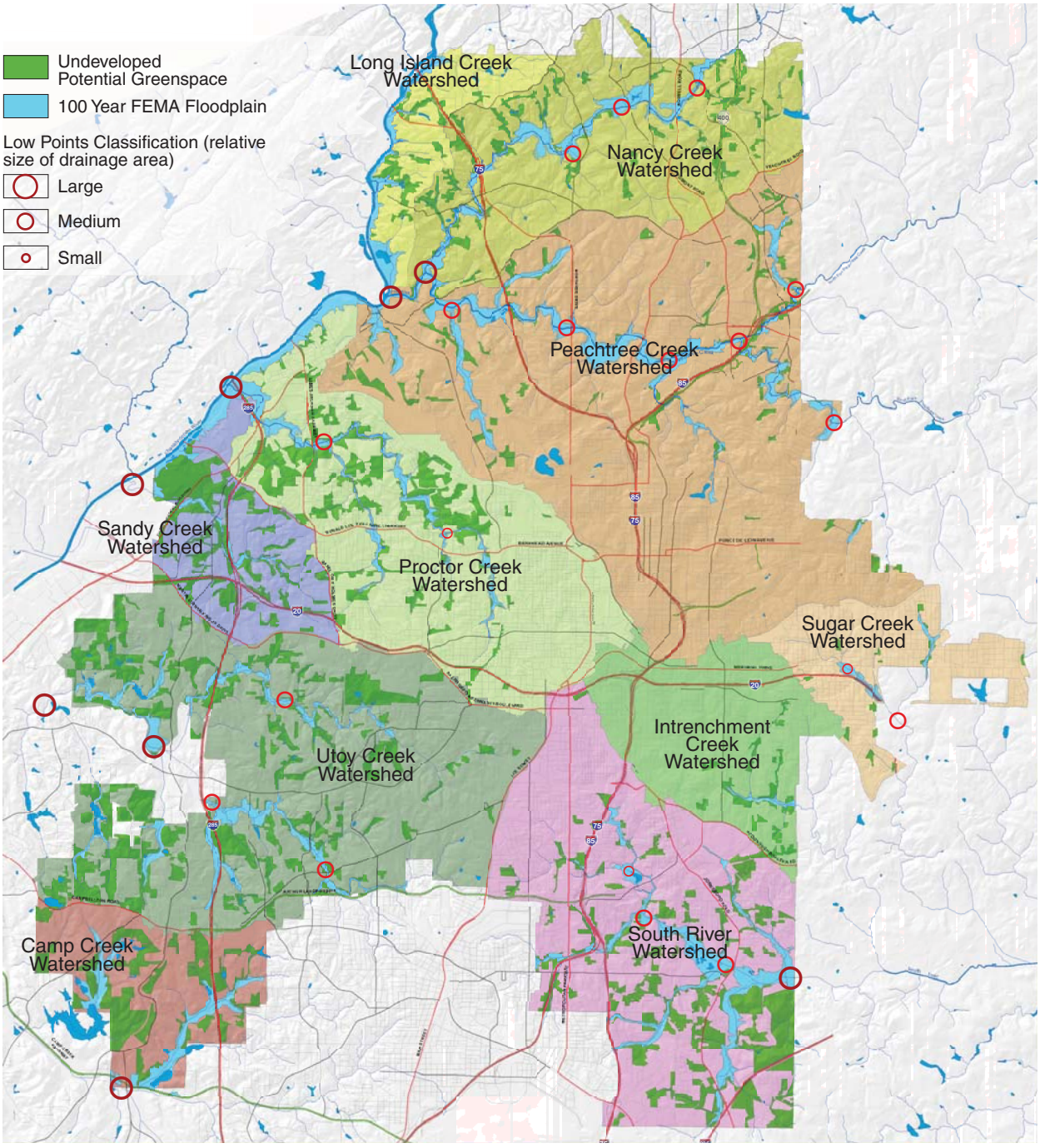
4.2.3 Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Figure 4.17 shows other land areas within the City that have a high environmental sensitivity and/or are subject to development regulations. These include undeveloped land with extensive forest cover or located within proximity to water bodies, land areas with steep slopes, and wetlands. Each is described in greater detail below. The permanent protection of these land areas represents a significant opportunity to expand the city's greenspace system.

Environmentally Sensitive Land

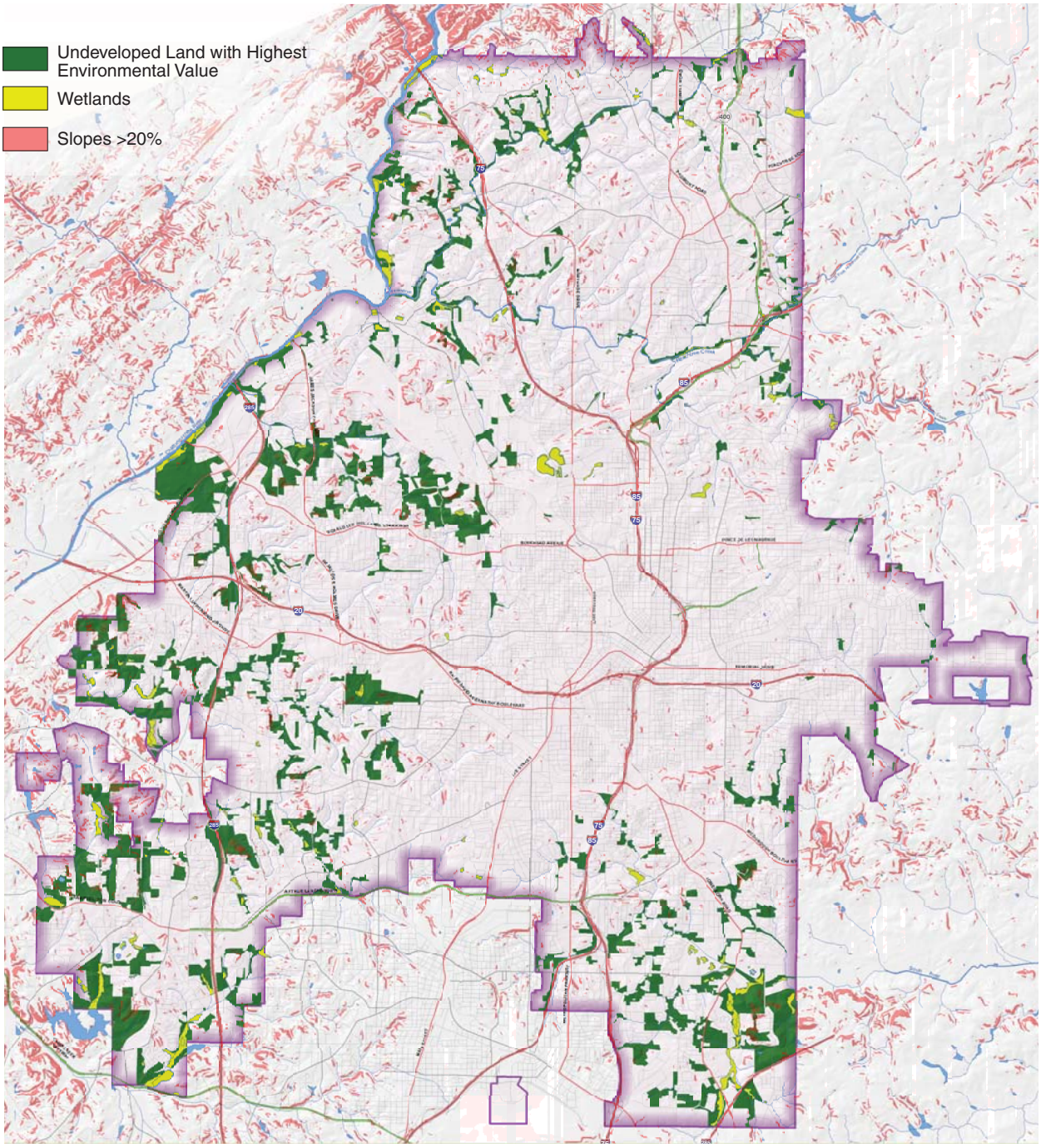
The environmentally sensitive land shown in Figure 4.17 is based on the "Greenspace Acquisition Support System Report, 2002" funded by Trees Atlanta and the Turner Foundation, and prepared by

Figure 4.16. Low Points



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.17. Other Environmentally Sensitive Areas



Data Source: City of Atlanta

the Georgia Institute of Technology Center for GIS. The land areas shown are undeveloped areas (excluding existing city parks and including some areas of golf courses and cemeteries) greater than five acres in size that exhibit high environmental and greenspace value in terms of:

- **Water Quality**: based on proximity to water bodies, floodplains, and wetlands; and proximity to "priority" stream segments designated as part of the 1998 Consent Decree.
- **Forest Cover**: based on canopy area percentage and the relative mix of evergreens and hardwoods. Greater canopy area and greater stand purity (either evergreen or hardwood) resulted in higher values.
- **Connectivity**: based on proximity to existing parks, schools, cemeteries and the size of the parcel.

To provide a current inventory of environmentally sensitive land within the City, the Greenspace Acquisition Support System Report was updated by ATS, Inc. (a member of the consultant team) to identify and exclude areas that have been developed or are now protected as parks or greenways since the completion of the report in 2002.

The proximity and/or environmental relationship of these land areas to the land areas that compose the city's drainage system (see Figure 4.15) represent a significant opportunity to expand Atlanta's greenspace.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. The wetlands delineated in Figure 4.17 are from the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wetlands offer numerous environmental benefits, such as flood control, groundwater recharge, and provision of important wildlife habitat.

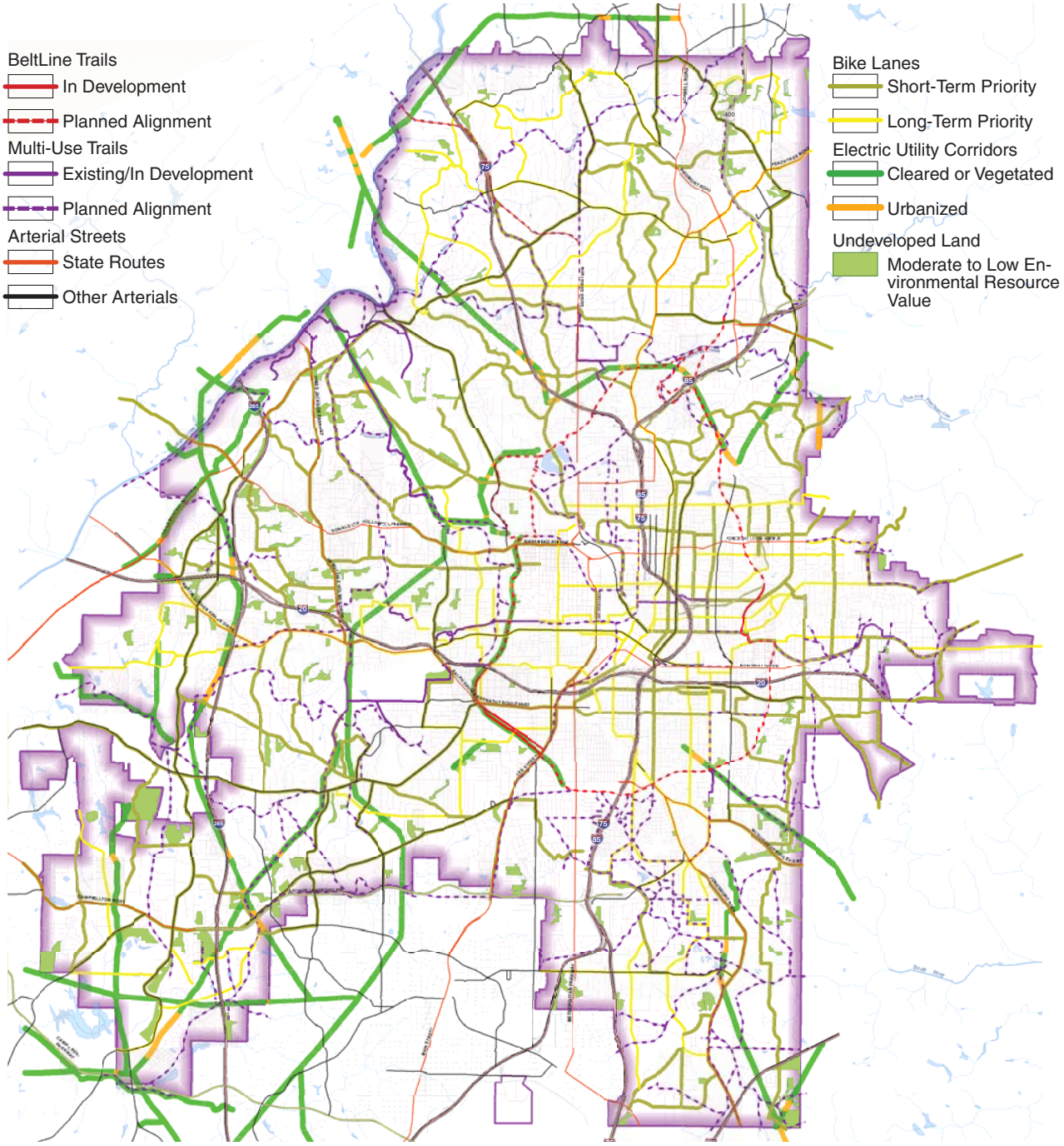
Steep Slopes

Land areas greater than or equal to 20% in slope are shown in Figure 4.17. The steep slopes shown here are not integral to the drainage system shown in Figure 4.15. Development activity on or near steeply sloped areas should be controlled in order to limit or prevent the negative impacts of soil erosion. If left in their natural vegetated state, steeply sloped areas can provide important wildlife habitat and contribute to the overall quality of a healthy greenspace system.

4.2.4 Greenspace Connections

The provision of linear connections facilitates improved access between and among the city's greenspace resources. Greenspace connection opportunities are illustrated in Figure 4.18. These include Beltline initiative trails, other multi-use trails, the on-street bike lane network, the arterial street network, utility corridors, and undeveloped land. Each is described in greater detail below.

Figure 4.18. Potential Greenspace Connections



Data Source: City of Atlanta

BeltLine Trails

The 22-mile loop trail system proposed for the BeltLine initiative circles the downtown and mid-town areas of the City, connecting residents to many existing and future parks. Trail alignments both in development and planned are shown in Figure 4.18.

Multi-Use Trails

In conjunction with the PATH Foundation, the City has prepared a master plan for the development of multi-use trails throughout the City. The network of trails described in this master plan is shown in Figure 4.18. The PATH Foundation has been very active in recent years managing the design and construction of many these trails – these are shown as existing trails in Figure 4.18. Also shown are the planned trail alignments.

Arterial Streets

The City's arterial street network is shown in Figure 4.18 to highlight the potential street connections that exist between and among Atlanta's greenspaces. At the present time these streets are designed primarily for vehicular movement and typically are not safe or pleasant for pedestrians and bicycles. However, the greenspace connection potential of many of these streets could be improved through new streetscape improvements.

Bike Lanes

The City's existing and proposed on-street bike network is shown in Figure 4.18. This network includes both dedicated bike lanes as well as streets that are shared with vehicles.

Utility Corridors

Utility corridors offer valuable greenspace connection opportunities in the City of Atlanta. Several of the longest utility corridors (high-tension electric lines for example) cross the entire city and contain a significant amount of open space, maximizing their potential as both connections for residents as well as valuable wildlife corridors.

Undeveloped Land

Like the environmentally sensitive land described above, the undeveloped land shown in Figure 4.18 is based on the "Greenspace Acquisition Support System Report, 2002" funded by Trees Atlanta and the Turner Foundation, and prepared by the Georgia Institute of Technology Center for GIS. The land areas shown are undeveloped areas (excluding existing city parks and including some areas of golf courses and cemeteries) greater than five acres in size that exhibit a comparatively lower value than the environmentally sensitive land described above in terms of water quality, forest cover, and connectivity. Nevertheless, these land areas do represent some value to the potential greenspace system for Atlanta, particularly when land ownership and acquisition opportunities are considered.

4.2.5 Potential Greenspace System

Figure 4.19 provides a synthesis of the existing greenspace resources described above. The synthesis shows established public and private greenspace resources that should be preserved and enhanced, the potential for future greenspace growth, and a network of connections linking the city's residents to its greenspace resources. Based on the combined acreage of existing city parks (see Figure 4.2) and other existing parks and open spaces (see Figure 4.14), the total acreage of Atlanta's potential greenspace system is 24,613 acres or roughly 29% of the city's total land area of 85,466 acres.

4.3 Other Greenspace Opportunities

Many other opportunities are present throughout the City to grow greenspace and contribute to the overall health, sustainability, and quality of Atlanta's greenspace system. These include preserving significant views and vistas at topographic high points, linking to cultural and historic resources, and incorporating greenspace into future development opportunities.

High Points

The City's high points and the vistas enjoyed from them create points of visual interest that contribute to Atlanta's image and sense of place. Selected high points should be protected as destinations for residents and visitors and to provide interpretive opportunities within the greenspace system.

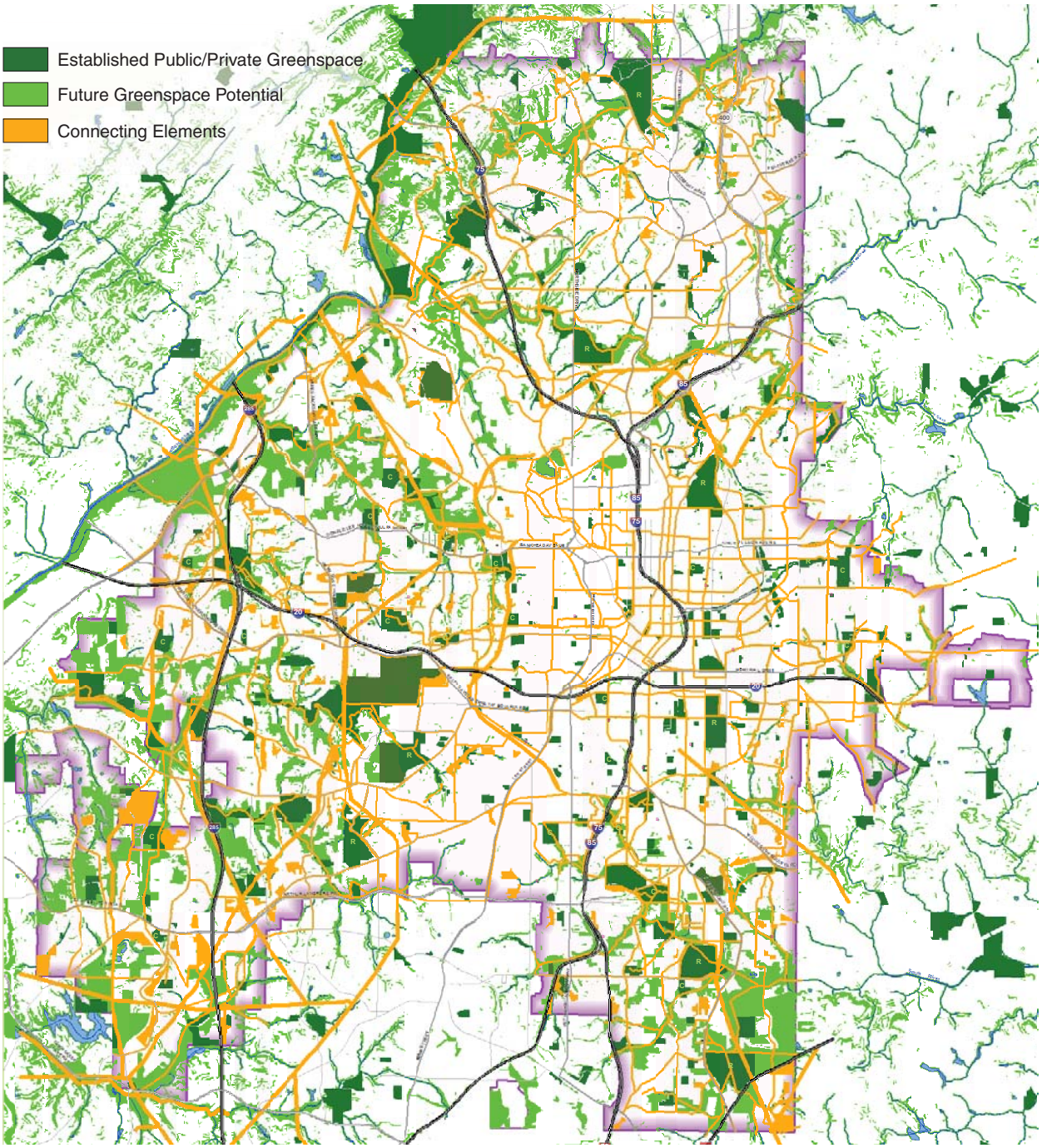
High points throughout Atlanta and their relationship to the city's watersheds are shown in Figure 4.20. High points on developed land far from open areas and high points within existing parks (and therefore already protected) are not shown. The remaining 146 high points were analyzed to measure their viewsheds within a five mile radius. High points were classified by the potential visibility of surrounding terrain, without considering views blocked by buildings or vegetation.

In Figure 4.20, the most extensive views are those characterized as having 8% to 15% of the surrounding terrain visible within five miles. Moderate views are those with 4% to 7% visible, and less prominent views are those with 0% to 3% visible. Those high points within 500' of potential greenspace (based on the findings of other analyses described throughout this document) are also shown on Figure 4.20. Though further on-site verification is required, high points characterized as having the most extensive views and within 500' of potential greenspace should be protected from future development and incorporated into Atlanta's greenspace and multi-purpose trail systems. Other views may also warrant protection based on further on-site study.

Cultural and Historic Resources

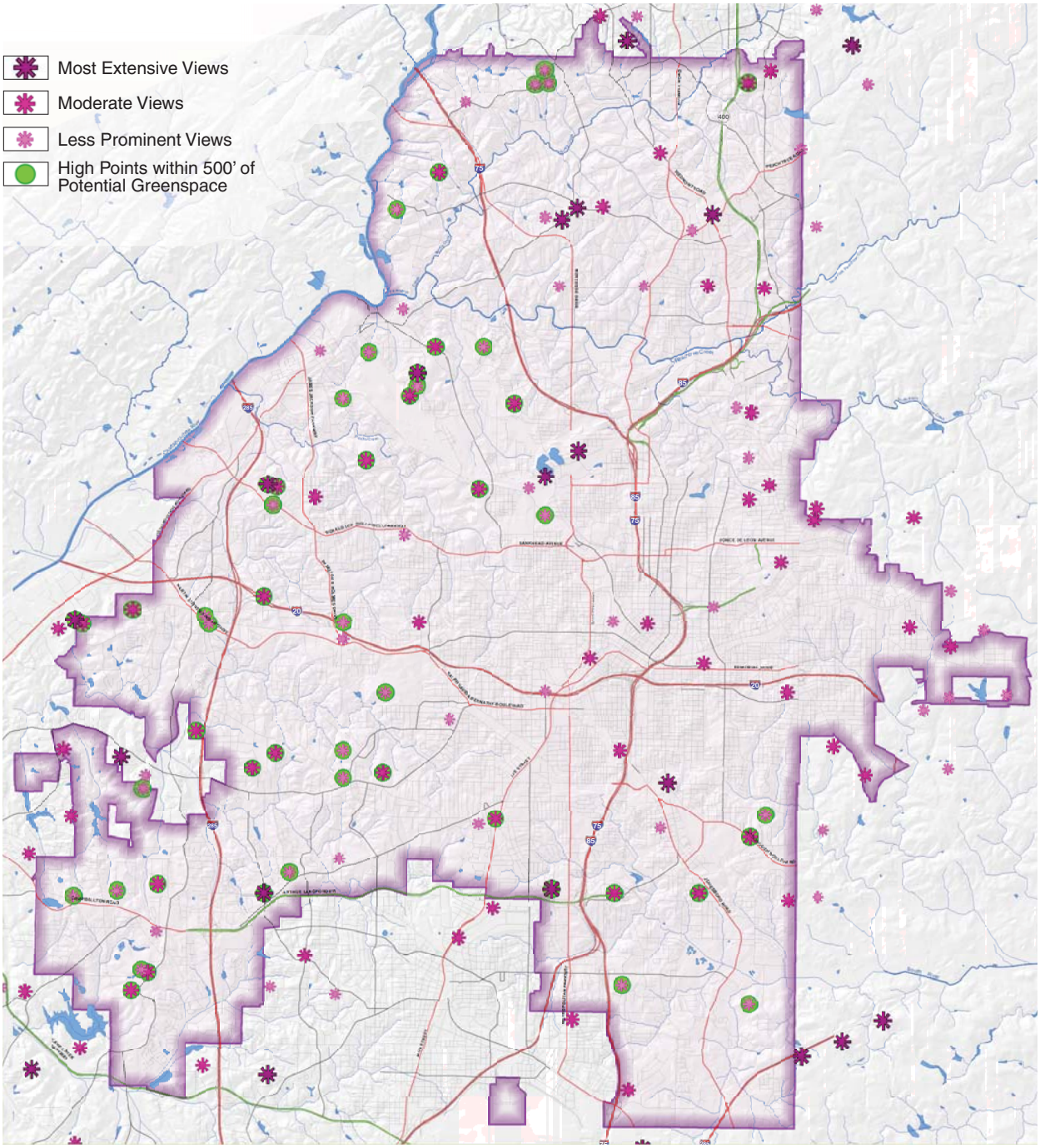
Historic districts and buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places or locally designated by the Atlanta Urban Design Commission (AUDC) are shown in Figure 4.21. Also shown on Figure

Figure 4.19. Atlanta's Potential Greenspace System



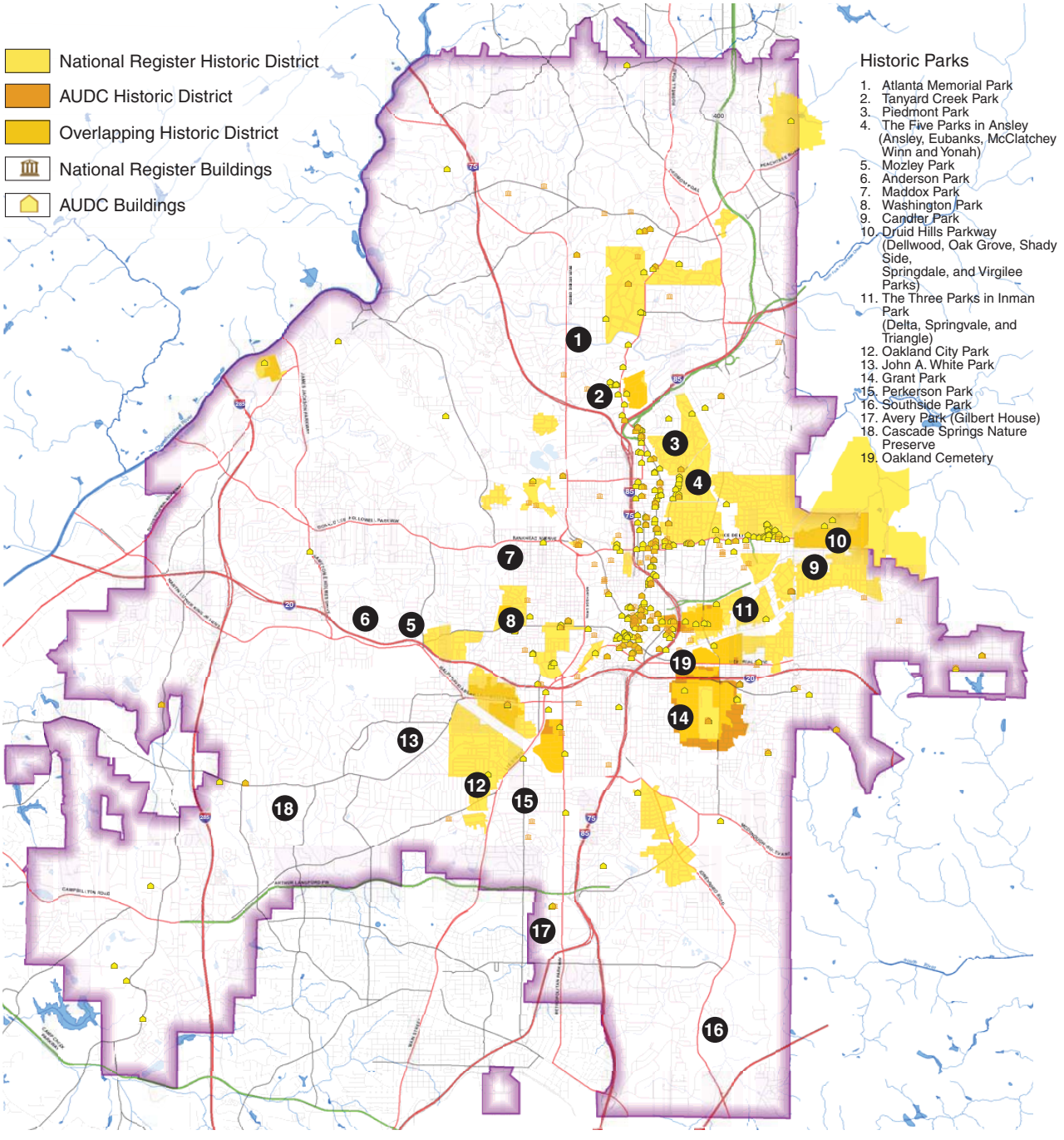
Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.20. High Points



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.21. Cultural and Historic Resources



Data Source: City of Atlanta

4.21 are 19 city parks that were identified as having major historic importance by *Atlanta's Lasting Landmarks*, the AUDC's official inventory of historic resources published in 1987. Historic resources are important components of Atlanta's greenspace that contribute to sense of place and cultural identity within the City and the region. Many important resources, such as Native American settlements and Civil Ware battlefield remains, have not been fully documented. Numerous opportunities exist to better protect, connect, interpret, and integrate cultural and historic resources into Atlanta's greensapce system.

Development Opportunities

As described throughout this document, the integration of greenspace features into future development is important to maintain the health and sustainability of Atlanta's greenspace. There are many areas where future development or re-development is likely in the near- or mid-term, representing significant opportunities to integrate greenspace features.

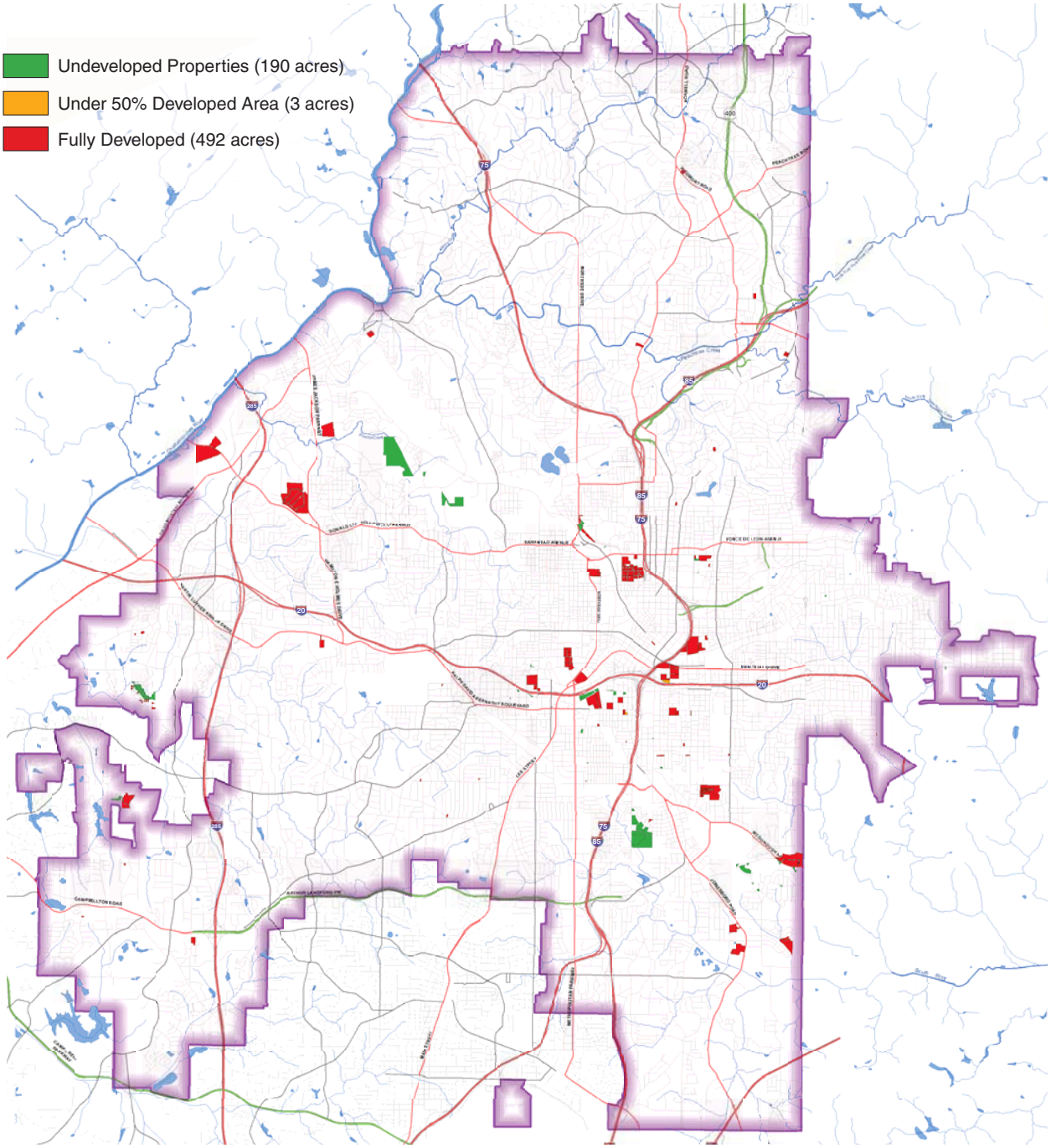
The Atlanta Housing Authority owns significant tracts of land throughout the city. These properties are shown in Figure 4.22. There are approximately 190 acres of undeveloped properties in AHA's control. A small tract of land near the interchange of Interstates 20 and 75 is only 50% developed. The remaining properties are fully developed and total about 492 acres. Undeveloped properties represent obvious opportunities to acquire additional greenspace. The remaining properties represent opportunities to integrate greenspace features into these projects as they redevelop. AHA could be a valuable partner in growing Atlanta's greenspace.

More imminent is the implementation of the BeltLine. The BeltLine will leverage billions of dollars of new investment in the city of Atlanta. Shown in Figure 4.23 are the brownfield sites adjacent to the Beltline where redevelopment is likely to occur in the near-term. These sites could either be developed entirely as new parks, or integrate greenspace into the future development project.

Land areas where the city can leverage direct control over development activities also present significant opportunities to grow greenspace. Tax delinquent properties, other brownfield sites, and more specifically the redevelopment of Lakewood Fairgrounds and Fort McPherson are several examples.

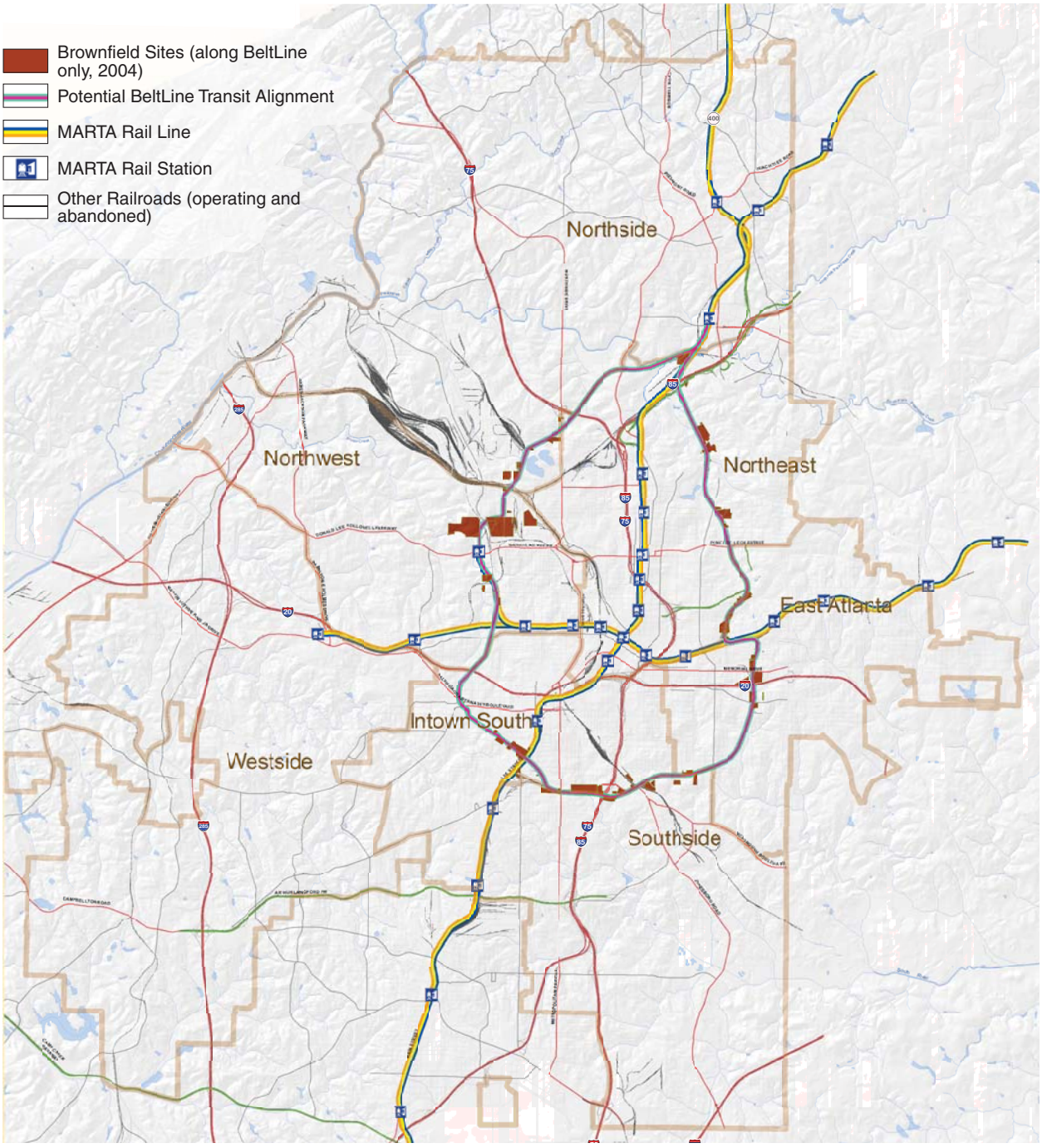
Also shown in Figure 4.23 are railroad alignments other than the BeltLine. These include both active and abandoned industrial rail rights-of-way. The conversion of rail rights-of-way to trails ("rails-to-trails") offers significant opportunities to expand and increase the interconnectivity of the multi-use trail system throughout Atlanta.

Figure 4.22. Atlanta Housing Authority Land



Data Source: City of Atlanta

Figure 4.23. Transportation Opportunities



Data Source: City of Atlanta