



ACTION PLAN

As noted, the current demographics and real estate market conditions along the Memorial Drive Corridor east of I-285 in DeKalb County generally constrain opportunities for the redevelopment of individual land parcels as well as large-scale multi-parcel tracts. While the conditions allow for continuing successful operations of a large number of retail/commercial businesses in the corridor, the lack of density of household incomes and a lack of expected future household growth combine to keep the area from undergoing a positive transformation due to market-driven real estate and economic development. If it is to occur when the market is left to its own devices, improving market conditions in an area such as this is often a slow and incremental process. In similar situations, often the public sector can catalyze the improvement of market trends through various strategies. However, even the most aggressive public sector entities are limited in their ability to institute large-scale changes in large areas such as the Memorial Drive Corridor. Nevertheless, the public sector does have a set of potential tools to apply in an effort to influence markets.

Often a first step for a local government in bringing about positive development outcomes in a large area is to establish a vision and goals for an area through an area master plan built on the consensus of a wide array of stakeholders and other interested parties. This document should be received as the first major tactic in what will be a long strategic process to help improve the economic conditions along the corridor.

In order to for the public sector to provide substantial assistance in the redevelopment process of a large area such as the Memorial Drive Corridor, it must provide affirmative evidence of its willingness to be an active partner in the process. DeKalb County is home to hundreds of commercial corridors, many of which also struggle to attract large amounts of quality private sector investment. The County government is in a position to determine which corridors are priority locations for enhanced public sector engagement. Given the centrality and visibility of this corridor, formal statements from the County's elected officials that clearly points to the prioritization of County initiatives with the intent of economic development for this corridor can be a powerful indication of intent. Such statements should accompany a realistic actionable work plan detailing the County's planned involvement with accountable parties identified to carry out specific tasks that will lead to accomplishing goals. A statement and work plan that prioritizes economic development activities in the area will send a signal to the private sector to monitor improvements in the Corridor and eventually seek investment opportunities when deemed appropriate.

While County's affirmative declaration of the corridor as an economic development priority will help to set the stage for potential enhanced private sector investment, assertive County action will further enhance redevelopment potential. The County has a range of potential moves that it can make in order to promote investments that will lead to the implementation of this plan.

Because conditions on the corridor do not naturally support redevelopment, the visions for Gateway West, Global City, Hambrick Village, and Gateway East are inherently ambitious. On one hand, the articulation of this vision is important as a guidebook for when and if redevelopment pressure starts on the corridor. On the other hand, this plan takes a more proactive approach recognizing that the revitalization and redevelopment of the corridor may need more than just the planning achieved during this process and will instead require active and ongoing work by many parties to create the conditions that will encourage redevelopment.

If the aspired revitalization of this corridor is similar to how other areas redeveloped, it is likely that this plan is just the first step in a multi-step process that may even include temporary setbacks before finally being successful. Similarly, it will take more than just one successful initiative. There will likely need to be several modest and incremental victories addressing the revitalization of the corridor from multiple perspectives and opportunities. Thematically, there are three overall strategies that should be followed to help encourage and make the revitalization of the corridor more probable.

STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

While there are many notable and positive things happening on the corridor, this section of Memorial Drive has a perception problem. Initiatives and activities need to take place to encourage people to rethink these perceptions and see the corridor in a different light.

STRATEGY

2

CREATE DEMAND

Because it has effectively been 30 years since there was demand for new development on the corridor, public sector initiatives will need to take place that fill in that gap and create demand where there is currently none by the private sector. By leading the way, private sector investment can follow.

STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

A positive regulatory environment can make it easier for the private sector to invest in the corridor by offsetting the risk associated with redevelopment.

The following pages detail the various initiatives that support these three overall strategies. In addition to the descriptions and intent of each initiative, additional administrative considerations are provided as shown below:

- Generalized time frames (as indicated below) for implementation are identified as indicated:
 - Immediate Initiatives – To start pursuing within the next year
 - Short-Term Initiatives – To start pursuing within 1 to 3 years
 - Mid-Term Initiatives – To start pursuing within 3 to 10 years
 - Long-Term Initiatives – To start pursuing within 10+ years
- The various County Departments, partners, and organizations that will likely need to champion and/or participate in each initiative are identified
- Budgetary costs are identified where possible. As it relates to these budgetary costs, it should be noted that the costs for many of these initiatives could vary considerably depending on how each initiative is implemented and the amount of intensity and resource desired by the County for each initiative. In particular:
 - Many of the physical infrastructure initiatives of Strategy 2 will be influenced specific design and engineering challenges/opportunities at specific sites and the methods and materials and items used for construction.
 - Similarly, many of the policy and program oriented initiatives of Strategy 3 will be heavily influenced by the policy routes pursued and the scope of individual programs and projects.

STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

While there are many notable and positive things happening on the corridor, this section of Memorial Drive has a perception problem, as indicated by many of the comments received through the plan's Online Survey (see pages 28-29). Initiatives and activities need to take place to encourage people to rethink these perceptions and see the corridor in a different light.

Initiative	Potential Responsibilities	Likely Costs	Potential Funding Source	Potential TimeFrame			
				Immediate	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
1.1 Façade Improvement Program	DeKalb County Department of Community Development, Decide DeKalb	Minimum of \$25,000 per location. Potentially much more.	General Funds		◆		
1.2 Leverage the County's Tree Bank	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability	Varies/No Cost	General Funds	◆			
1.3 Investigate the Feasibility of and Implement a CID	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Private Sector	\$100,000+	General Funds, Additional Tax Assessments of Commercial Properties	◆			
1.4 Hold Public Events & Embrace Tactical Urbanism	DeKalb County, Private Sector, Potential CID, Discover DeKalb	Minimum of \$25,000 per event	General Funds with Hope to be Self Funded	◆			
1.5 Food Tours	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Private Sector, Potential CID, Discover DeKalb	\$2,500+ per tour	Ideally Self Funded		◆		

Initiative	Potential Responsibilities	Likely Costs	Potential Funding Source	Potential TimeFrame			
				Immediate	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
1.6 Re-Brand the Corridor	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Private Sector, Potential CID	\$50,000-\$100,000	General Funds, Private Investment		◆		
1.7 Enhance Safety & Security	DeKalb County Police, Potential CID	\$500,000+ annually	Police Funds, CID Funds		◆	◆	
1.8 Market for Filming	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Discover DeKalb, Decide DeKalb	\$100,000+	General Funds, Private Investment		◆		
1.9 Improve Visibility to GSU and Georgia Piedmont	DeKalb County Department of Transportation, GDOT, GSU, Georgia Piedmont	\$500,000+	General Funds			◆	◆
1.10 Foster Partnerships	Varies	Varies	Varies	◆			

Initiative 1.4 includes holding events such as a night market that can help people envision how spaces could be re-utilized such as the long-term vision to transform an underutilized segment of North Indian Creek Drive into a pedestrian only plaza.



STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

Changing the perception of the corridor means actively changing the conversation and how people think and feel about the corridor. Many of the initiatives that support this strategy simply mean taking advantage of positional advantages that are already in place.

Initiative 1.1 – Façade Improvement Program

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Community Development; Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Minimum of \$25,000 per location put potential much more
Potential Funding Source	General Funds
Potential Timeframe	Short-Term

If embraced, a Façade Improvement Program would likely be a Countywide initiative to help support reinvestment along Memorial Drive and other areas where redevelopment is desired. Such a program aims to support the private sector by providing incentives to modernize and enhance the aesthetics of private development and could take on many forms including direct grants, no or low interest loan packages, or tax incentives for properties that would meet a pre-determined set of criteria. The goals of a Façade Improvement Program could also vary from aiding ambitious property enhancements to more modest improvements such as new paint, signage, and/or landscaping.

For many of the shopping centers along Memorial Drive, the architecture and materials clearly date many of the buildings to the 1970s and 1980s, subtly implying and reinforcing a lack of investment in the area. In contrast, the impact of such a program can begin to subtly communicate to residents and investors that the corridor is a place that is re-investing in itself again. An example would be the potential incremental step in the development of the Gateway West area and the illustrative visual enhancements envisioned at the D&K Suit Plaza in the image below.



Initiative 1.2 – Leverage the County’s Tree Bank

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability
Likely Costs	Varies/No Cost
Potential Funding Source	General Funds
Potential Timeframe	Immediate

Similar to the Façade Improvement Program, the ongoing beautification of the area through landscaping and (specifically) more tree cover can also begin to change the conversation along the corridor. Many of the initiatives envisioned by this plan, including the Façade Improvement Program but also ideas for park features and trails, could overlap with an effort to utilize a ‘Tree Bank’ program that already exists at the County level, making it a great candidate for an immediate initiative to investigate and implement further, initially in areas that are publicly owned.

Initiative 1.3 – Investigate the Feasibility of and Implement a CID

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Private Sector
Likely Costs	\$100,000+
Potential Funding Source	General Funds, Additional Tax Assessments of Commercial Properties
Potential Timeframe	Immediate

Community Improvement Districts (CID) have been used throughout Georgia as a mechanism to broadly improve the quality of an area. Created and authorized by commercial property owners that elect to self-tax themselves, a potential CID could be a powerful tool in the revitalization of the corridor through opportunities for more direct reinvestment and leveraging of funds to help assist with many of the other initiatives envisioned by this plan.

An initial step is to determine the feasibility of and interest by commercial property owners in forming a CID. This is an immediate step that DeKalb County leadership recently committed to exploring with a CID Feasibility Study that began in late 2019.

While the initial support of the County to get the process started is invaluable, it is important to note that most successful CIDs are explicitly community-led sometimes with distinct goals from the local government. Therefore, should a potential CID move forward and form, the CID should be treated as an ongoing partner with the County but not necessarily as a tool to further the County’s goals.

STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

Initiative 1.4 – Hold Public Events and Embrace Tactical Urbanism

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County; Private Sector, Potential CID, Discover DeKalb
Likely Costs	Minimum of \$25,000 per event
Potential Funding Source	General Funds with Hope to be Self Funded
Potential Timeframe	Immediate

Another way to change perceptions is to find mechanisms to reuse and re-envision space on the corridor. In short, public festivals on the corridor can also be a powerful tool for area residents and others to being to see a corridor that is more walkable and civically engaging.

There are some built-in opportunities and audiences to carry this idea. Both the cultural diversity along the corridor and the daily student population at GSU and Georgia Piedmont Technical College create natural opportunities to hold unique events. Events such as night markets or lantern festivals can be used to enhance, educate, and celebrate local culture which can be further supported through food truck festivals and other relatively modest events. Candidate locations for such events include places such as the D&K Suit Plaza (in Gateway West), Campus Plaza (in Global Village), or the International Trade Mall shopping plaza (in Hambrick Village) that features large areas of underutilized parking.

At first, it is likely that various departments within DeKalb County will need to take the lead to organize and promote such events. Over time, the goal should be to transfer at least some of these responsibilities to others such as engaged local residents, property owner, and even a CID if one forms.



Pressing slightly more ambitiously, these festivals and events should be viewed as an opportunity to embrace tactical urbanism techniques where the physical spaces on the corridor are temporarily transformed into what could potentially be proto versions of what a potentially redeveloped space would look like. A unique location on this corridor is in Global City on an underutilized spur of North Indian Creek Drive that could potentially be temporarily shut down to vehicles (the road effectively only provides access to a few surrounding properties) to hold these types of events. This would help people envision the long term vision for that space that would transform that road to a pedestrian only public space that could anchor surrounding redevelopment.



Holding events such as a night market (pictured above) can help people envision how spaces could be re-utilized such as the long-term vision to transform an underutilized segment of North Indian Creek Drive into a pedestrian only plaza (below).



STRATEGY

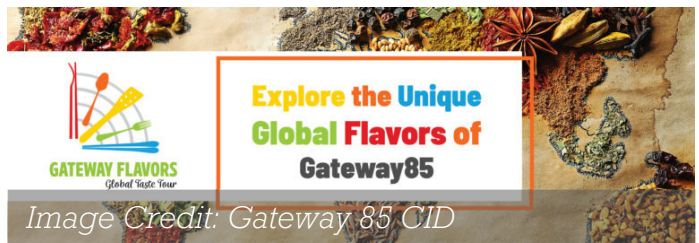
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CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

Initiative 1.5 – Food Tours

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Private Sector, Community Improvement District (if formed), Discover DeKalb
Likely Costs	\$2,500+ per tour
Potential Funding Source	Ideally Self Funded
Potential Timeframe	Short-Term

A similar concept that can educate on the unique culinary (and by extension, cultural) opportunities on the corridor is to organize and hold food tours to celebrate local culture. Such tours have been held on Buford Highway through private organizations such as We Love BuHi and in Gwinnett County by the Gateway 85 CID.



Initiative 1.6 – Re-Brand the Corridor

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Private Sector, Community Improvement District (if formed)
Likely Costs	\$50,000 - \$100,000
Potential Funding Source	General Funds, Private Investment
Potential Timeframe	Short-Term

If changing the perception of the corridor means changing the conversation, that also means finding ways to *literally* change the conversation. While the perceptions around the phrase ‘Memorial Drive’ are changing, due in part to a recent wave of redevelopment along parts of the corridor in Atlanta, stigmas remain as the corridor gets further into DeKalb County. Quite simply, the corridor and area need a “re-branding.”

The ideas expressed in this plan of referring to parts of the corridor as Gateway West, Global City, Hambrick Village, and Gateway East are an initial attempt to “re-brand” but should be followed up with a more comprehensive, corridor-wide, and focused effort to articulate a new way to talk about the corridor.

Responsible parties could vary towards this effort but a formal organization could potentially be led by the potential formation of a Community Improvement District (CID) along the corridor, and the inherent branding that would go along with the naming of such a CID.

Initiative 1.7 – Enhance Safety & Security

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Police, Community Improvement District (if formed)
Likely Costs	\$500,000+ annually
Potential Funding Source	Police Funds, CID Funds
Potential Timeframe	Short to Mid Term



Image Credit: Gateway 85 CID

Another perception along the corridor is a heavy presence of crime, although in many ways it is sporadic and, typical area residents and visitors are not necessarily likely to be victims. Nonetheless from a redevelopment perspective, the perception of there being a crime problem means there is effectively a crime problem. DeKalb County police should continue to take an active role to address safety and security in the area in an explicitly visible manner.

This is another initiative that a potential CID could provide further assistance. Other CIDs in the metro Atlanta area have partnered with local police to supplement security patrols and have also providing financial assistance in increasing the presence of security cameras and their active monitoring.

Initiative 1.8 – Market for Filming

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Discover DeKalb, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	\$100,000+
Potential Funding Source	General Funds, Private Investment
Potential Timeframe	Short-Term

As implied by many of these initiatives, changing the perception often means bringing people to the corridor. In recent years, many TV shows and movies have been filmed throughout Georgia on location and increasingly at film studios. Active marketing of the corridor for filming can increase interest in the corridor and would tie-in with the long term ideas of encouraging a film studio to anchor parts of the Gateway East redevelopments.

STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

Initiative 1.9 – Improve Visibility to GSU and Georgia Piedmont

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Transportation, Georgia Department of Transportation, GSU, Georgia Piedmont Technical College
Likely Costs	\$500,000+
Potential Funding Source	General Funds
Potential Timeframe	Mid to Long Term

It is quite possible that most of the 30,000 or so travelers passing through Memorial Drive each day in their cars do not even realize that there are two college campuses right off the corridor. In part, this is because both campuses orient to perpendicular North Indian Creek Drive but the other reason is that the two access points to the campuses from Memorial Drive barely announce themselves (see image below). As part of a broader effort to engage and embrace the opportunities afforded by these schools, a key step should be to continue to engage with both schools and explore opportunities to enhance these entrances with features that honor the important institutions they lead towards.



An unsignalized entrance to the backside of the GSU campus has no signage or announcement of the institution.



A signalized entrance to both campuses does include signage but as this photo suggests, the signage is lost in the visual clutter of utility poles, decorative lighting, and business signage and is easily missed when driving past at 45 miles per hour. Note, from this viewpoint, a sign for Georgia Piedmont Technical College is behind (and nearly obscured entirely) by the Georgia State University sign.

STRATEGY

1

CHANGE THE PERCEPTION

Initiative 1.10 Foster Partnerships

Potential Responsibilities	Various
Likely Costs	Varies
Potential Funding Source	Varies
Potential Timeframe	Immediate

As implied by many of these initiatives, redevelopment and revitalization is less likely to occur by DeKalb County's efforts alone. Partnerships to advocate for the area, leverage funding, and broadly build awareness of the corridor's highlights will likely play a critical role in revitalizing the area.

Potential CID: As mentioned throughout this plan, the formation of a CID can be a unique mechanism to increase funding for the area through the elective self-taxing of commercial properties. While such a potential CID should be distinct from the County, goals will likely broadly align and there are several potential initiatives described in this plan in which a potential CID could effectively be the champion or at the least provide funding assistance.

GSU/Georgia Piedmont: The presence of two notable secondary educational facilities on the corridor has historically been an untapped opportunity, though that has changed recently. The County should continue to coordinate with these institutions to identify opportunities that they can play a part in the revitalization of the corridor. This could potentially include funding assistance for initiatives that are similarly attractive to these institutions but also applies more broadly to identifying mechanisms that can strengthen the physical relationship between the campuses of these two schools and Memorial Drive. An initial start to that effort is mentioned in **Initiative 1.9**, which seeks to improve the visibility of these campuses to travelers on Memorial Drive. Another effort that may be of specific interest to GSU is part of the trail initiative described in **Initiative 2.3**, due in part to a segment that would effectively connect the Clarkston Campus to the GSU owned and maintained Indian Creek Recreation Area.

PEDs: PEDs is an advocacy organization dedicated to making the streets and communities in Georgia safe and accessible to all pedestrians. Because of the relatively high volume of pedestrian activity on Memorial Drive and an unfortunate history of crashes involving pedestrians on the corridor, PEDs is a natural organization to partner with to increase the safety of pedestrians in the area. Their advocacy has resulted in GDOT (who maintains the right-of-way along Memorial Drive) performing a detailed Road Safety Audit (RSA) in December 2019 that will culminate in specific pedestrian safety improvement recommendations.

GDOT: Charged with maintaining the actual public right of way on and along Memorial Drive, coordination and partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation will be critical. The aforementioned Road Safety Audit being conducted in December 2019 is a good initial partnership to address pedestrian safety (**Initiative 2.4**). That partnership will also be critical for any pedestrian improvements that arise out of the Road Safety Audit as well as any of the streetscaping improvements suggested in **Initiative 2.5**.

PATH Foundation: The PATH foundation forms partnerships with local governments to build greenway trails. In fact, the foundation effectively formed as a response to developing what eventually became the Stone Mountain Trail, just north of the corridor. Their expertise includes assistance with the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of trail projects. In some cases, they also provide financial assistance through matching funds to access state and federal opportunities to fund trails. As such, they are a potential partner in the development of a trail network that is described in **Initiative 2.3**.

Park Pride: Park Pride is an advocacy organization working with communities in the Atlanta region to improve park space. In addition to their advocacy programs, they provide services to help envision the future of park spaces and grant programs to help in the creation of parks. As the gateway concepts in **Initiative 2.1** and related Arts Corridor idea of **Initiative 2.2** evolve there may be opportunities to partner with Park Pride.

Local Citizens and Advocates: Reinforcing the idea that revitalization of this corridor will require the work of many organizations, local citizens who advocate for their community can be a particularly strong mechanism to bring attention to revitalization efforts. From a formal perspective, the Business Development Advisory Committee that was formed to provide advisement during this planning process can be an initial starting point for this type of advocacy. Another example along the corridor is Friend of Refugees which promotes community empowerment through training, tutoring, and direct community investment. Elsewhere, other examples of community based advocacy include We Love BuHi, which eventually became a formal organization but began more modestly as an effort by a local resident on the Buford Highway corridor to highlight restaurants and businesses along that corridor.

Discover DeKalb: As the Convention and Visitor's Bureau for DeKalb County, Discover DeKalb can play an active role in the hosting and/or promotion of the events and festivals described in **Initiative 1.4**, the food tours of **Initiative 1.5**, the marketing of the corridor for filming of **Initiative 1.8**, the investment in an arts corridor described in **Initiative 2.2**, and some of the direct investment ideas (such as a centralized Convention or Event facility for the County) described in **Initiative 2.6**.

Decide DeKalb: Decide DeKalb plays an important role in the economic development of DeKalb County and will need to be an active partner in several initiatives described in this plan including the marketing of the corridor for filming of **Initiative 1.8**, the expedition of permitting and approvals envisioned in **Initiative 3.2**, and the detailed study and marketing of sites in **Initiative 3.4**.

Because it has effectively been 30 years since there was demand for new development on the corridor, public sector initiatives will need to take place that fill in that gap and create demand where there is currently none by the private sector. Many of these initiatives support the creation of ‘experiences’ through amenitization that can generate “buzz” and energy about the area among residents and workers. By leading the way, private sector investment can follow.

Initiative	Potential Responsibilities	Likely Costs	Potential Funding Source	Potential TimeFrame			
				Immediate	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
2.1 Gateways to the Corridor	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Planning & Sustainability; Park Pride	\$500,000+ per location	General Funds		◆		
2.2 Establish an Arts Corridor	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Planning & Sustainability; Park Pride; Property Owners; Discover DeKalb	Will vary considerably, but at least \$5,000 per installation but can be significantly more.	General Funds		◆		
2.3 Implement a Trail Network	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Department of Transportation; GDOT; GSU; Path Foundation	\$2.5 million a mile on average	Transportation and Park/Recreation Funds			◆	◆

CREATE DEMAND

Initiative	Potential Responsibilities	Likely Costs	Potential Funding Source	Potential TimeFrame			
				Immediate	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
2.4 Address Pedestrian Needs	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, DeKalb County Department of Transportation, GDOT, Peds	Varies, Initial Road Safety Audit between \$50,000-\$100,000	Transportation Funds (including potential state and federal dollars)	◆	◆	◆	◆
2.5 Enhance Active Mode and Aesthetic Experience Along Memorial Drive	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, DeKalb County Department of Transportation, GDOT	\$3.0 million a mile on average	Transportation and Park/Recreation Funds				◆
2.6 Direct Investment in the Corridor	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Explore DeKalb	Varies, but likely expensive	General Fund		◆	◆	◆



Initiative 2.1 includes ideas to place gateway memorials and pocket parks at the entrances to the corridor. Initiatives 2.2 and 2.3 further expands this idea by advocating for an arts corridor (that would include similar memorials and art features throughout the corridor) and a trail network that would help connect these newly created points of interest.

Creating demand along the corridor is all about identifying public side investments (often infrastructure oriented) that can help lead the way for redevelopment.

Initiative 2.1 Gateways to the Corridor

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Planning & Sustainability; Park Pride
Likely Costs	\$500,000+ per location
Potential Funding Source	General Funds
Potential Timeframe	Short-Term

Gateways features are a very strong mechanism to help identify a sense of place. Thankfully, both ends of the corridor offer opportunities to place gateway features for those entering the corridor. Likely a collaboration between several DeKalb County departments, these gateway features would also effectively serve as pocket parks and would tie in strongly with other initiatives described in **2.2** and **2.3**.



CREATE DEMAND



In Gateway West, the southeast quadrant of the I-285 interchange is an abandoned gas station, which could serve as the site of a gateway feature and accompanying pocket park. As the conceptual park plan depicted on the left indicates (and on the top half of the following page), acquisition of that property for such a use offers some key advantages including the re-purposing of the gas station's canopy structure, that would tie in with the broader Arts Corridor idea presented in **Initiative 2.2**. A similar concept expressed during by some residents during the planning process was the use of the interchange bridge to host the flags of various countries to embrace the cultural diversity of the corridor.

In Gateway East, depicted above, the northwest quadrant of the intersection with Goldsmith Road (and just south of the Goldsmith MARTA Park and Ride) can also serve as a gateway feature, pocket park, and potentially serve as a trailhead for the concept identified in **Initiative 2.3**.

GATEWAY WEST



GATEWAY EAST

CREATE DEMAND

Initiative 2.2 Establish an Arts Corridor

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Planning & Sustainability; Park Pride; Property Owners; Discover DeKalb
Likely Costs	Will vary considerably, but at least \$5,000 per installation but can be significantly more
Potential Funding Source	General Funds
Potential Timeframe	Short-Term

Building off the gateway concept, the corridor could be established as an arts corridor hosting various forms of public art in undevelopable spaces along the corridor. Trading into the name of 'Memorial Drive, such art installations could even potentially be branded as 'memorials' and further tie in with the trail concept (potentially the 'Memorial Trail') envisioned in **Initiative 2.3**. In addition to the explicit gateway features, these installations would ideally express the cultural diversity of the area and would be placed at key points along the corridor including the other two major nodes identified in this planning process (Global City and Hambrick Village). For further consideration is the idea that these installations could reflect some of the unique attributes of their immediate surrounding area but be thematically similar across the corridor.

There are broader opportunities to embrace the arts along the corridor through installations on private property. In particular, large murals have become a touchstone of many revitalizing corridors, an idea that could potentially tie in with the Façade Improvement Program of **Initiative 1.1**.



A recent (and particularly celebrated) mural installation in the Little Five Points neighborhood of Atlanta celebrates the critically acclaimed local rap duo Outkast who formed in nearby East Point and popularized Southern hip hop.

Initiative 2.3 Implement a Trail Network

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Department of Transportation; GDOT; GSU; PATH Foundation
Likely Costs	\$2.5 million a mile on average
Potential Funding Source	Transportation and Park/Recreation Funds
Potential Timeframe	Mid to Long-Term

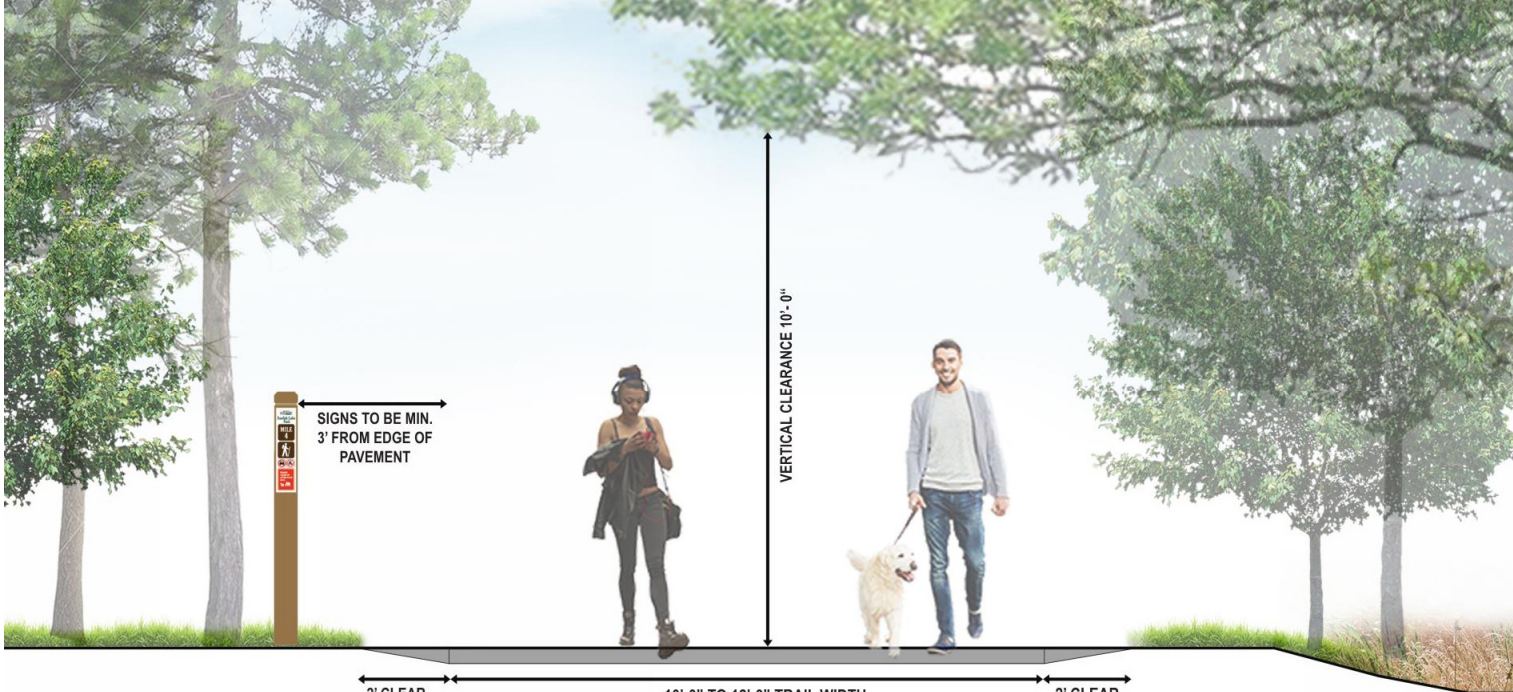
While expensive (often around \$2.5 million/mile), a celebrated trail network can be a powerful tool to spark revitalization (consider the impact of the Atlanta Beltline). Building off of the Stone Mountain Trail just to the north of the corridor, the planning team has identified several different high level concepts for how a trail and a more comprehensive active mode network (pedestrians and bicyclists) can be developed. While specific alignments would need to be studied in significantly more detail, the unifying theme of the concepts envisioned include the following features:

- Providing a new East-West dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facility along the corridor. In general, this facility would be better served as an off-road facility that could activate properties off of Memorial Drive from the back, but in certain places may require being designed more as a sidepath or through other facility designs (such as sidewalks and sharrows) in the residential neighborhoods surrounding the corridor. This trail could also serve as a connecting mechanism to the gateways and pocket parks of **Initiative 2.1** and the various art installations/memorials envisioned in **Initiative 2.2**.
- Tying into the MARTA system including either the heavy rail stations at Kensington and/or Indian Creek and the park and ride located at Goldsmith.
- A potential connection to the Indian Creek MARTA station would likely take on the form of a multi-use path on the side of South Indian Creek Drive. In addition to providing the key connection to MARTA, such a connection may be of potential interest to GSU as it can help connect their Clarkston Campus with the GSU owned Indian Creek Recreation Area.
- There are various opportunities to tie into the surrounding residential neighborhoods but a key feature of any trail network should be to connect as best as possible into the Stone Mountain Trail to the north of the corridor.



Consider the transformative impact of the Atlanta Beltline Trail, where new development is now being constructed to face the trail, turning its back on the conventional roadway access to these developments.

CREATE DEMAND



TRAIL AT GRADE

Initiative 2.4 Address Pedestrian Needs

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, DeKalb County Department of Transportation; GDOT; Peds
Likely Costs	Varies, Initial Road Safety Audit between \$50,000 - \$100,000
Potential Funding Source	Transportation Funds (including potential state and federal dollars)
Potential Timeframe	Immediate to Long-Term

With high pedestrian activity on the corridor and a relatively high number of crashes (102 from 2014 to 2018) involving pedestrians, enhancing pedestrian safety is not just an important component of revitalizing the corridor.

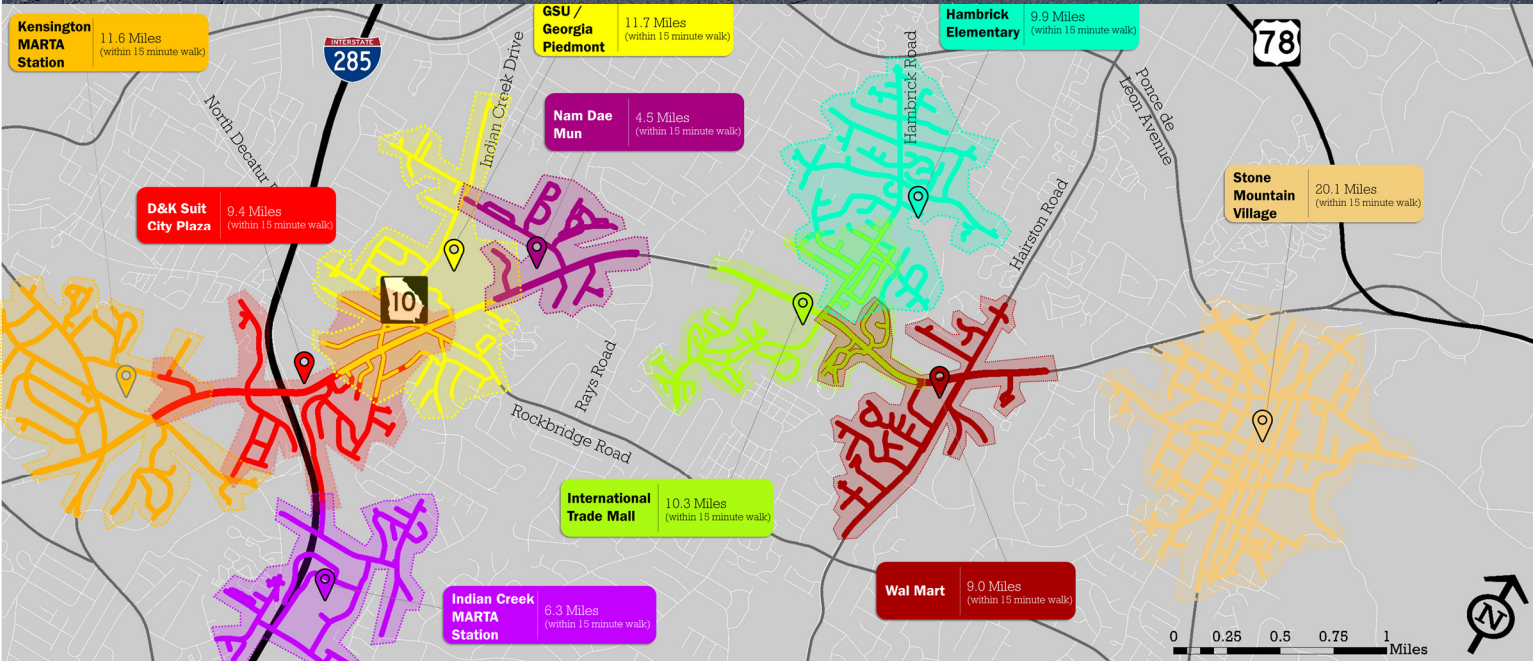
The auto-oriented environment, coupled with the large amount of pedestrians and bicyclists on the corridor results in some areas with a high number crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclist, particularly around the I-285 interchange and around Hairston Road. Despite signage and facilities, the huge expanse of area intersections (see the image below) and the long distance to travel creates challenges for pedestrians to get around. An initial step is the Road Safety Audit (mentioned as an early partnership with Peds and GDOT as part of Initiative 1.10) which will ideally be followed by the implementation of any potential pedestrian safety enhancements that may arise out of that audit.

However, the pedestrian experience along the corridor is more than just the safety along the corridor. The large setbacks (see the image top right) of the suburban oriented shopping centers creates inconveniences and further challenges for area pedestrians and bicyclists. Further, the lack of connectivity in the corridor further limits the accessibility and convenience of area points of interest to pedestrians. Consider the image to the bottom right which indicates the number of miles within a 15 minute walk radius of different points of interest on the corridor with the more connected and grid oriented Stone Mountain Village immediately to the east. As the area redevelops, smaller block sizes, buildings and businesses that are pulled up to the sidewalk, and other urban design features that emphasize the pedestrian will be important to make sure the revitalization creates a walkable and human scaled environment.



CREATE DEMAND

2

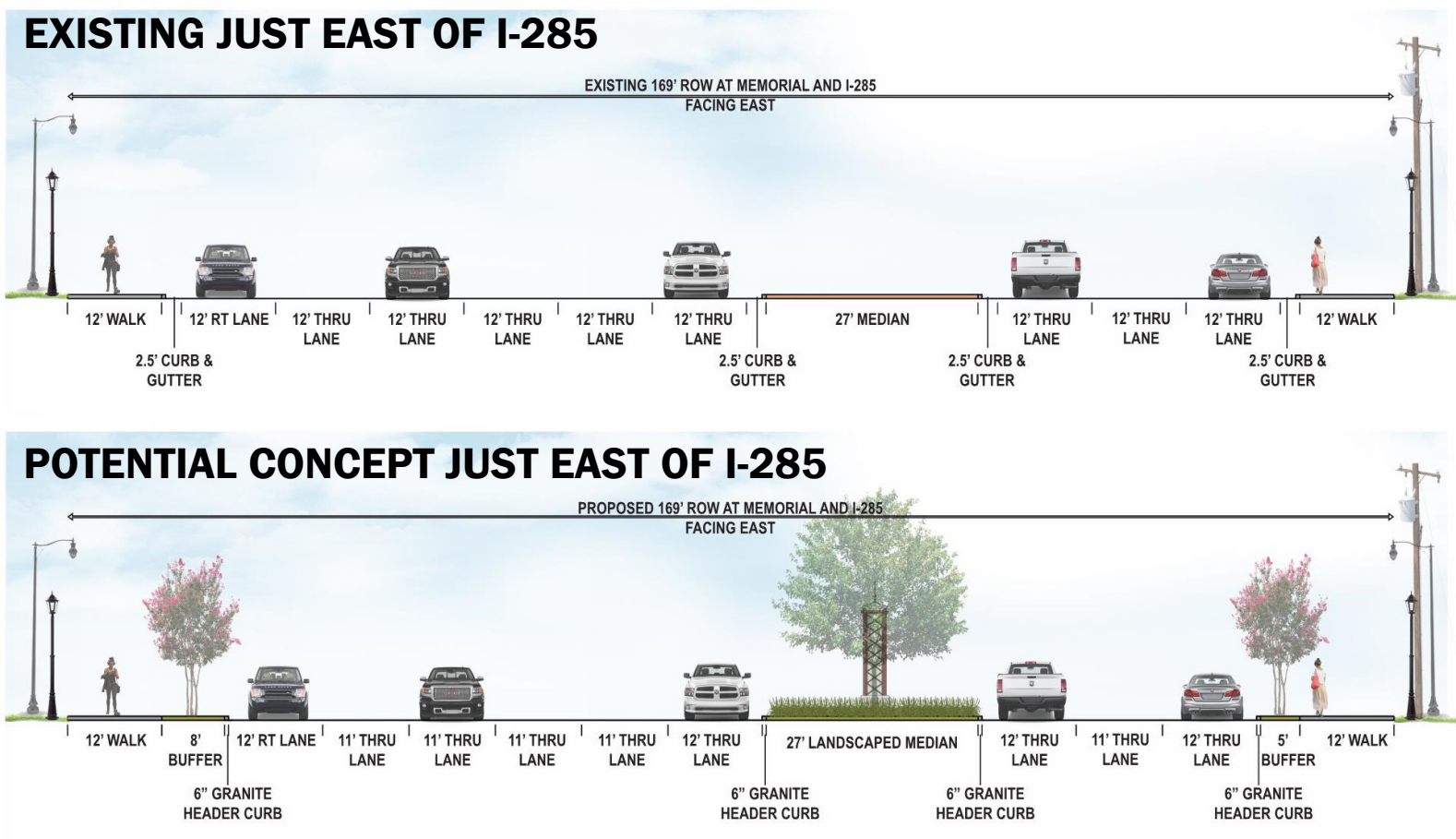


15 Minute Walk Distances

Initiative 2.5 Enhance Active Mode and Aesthetic Experience Along Memorial Drive

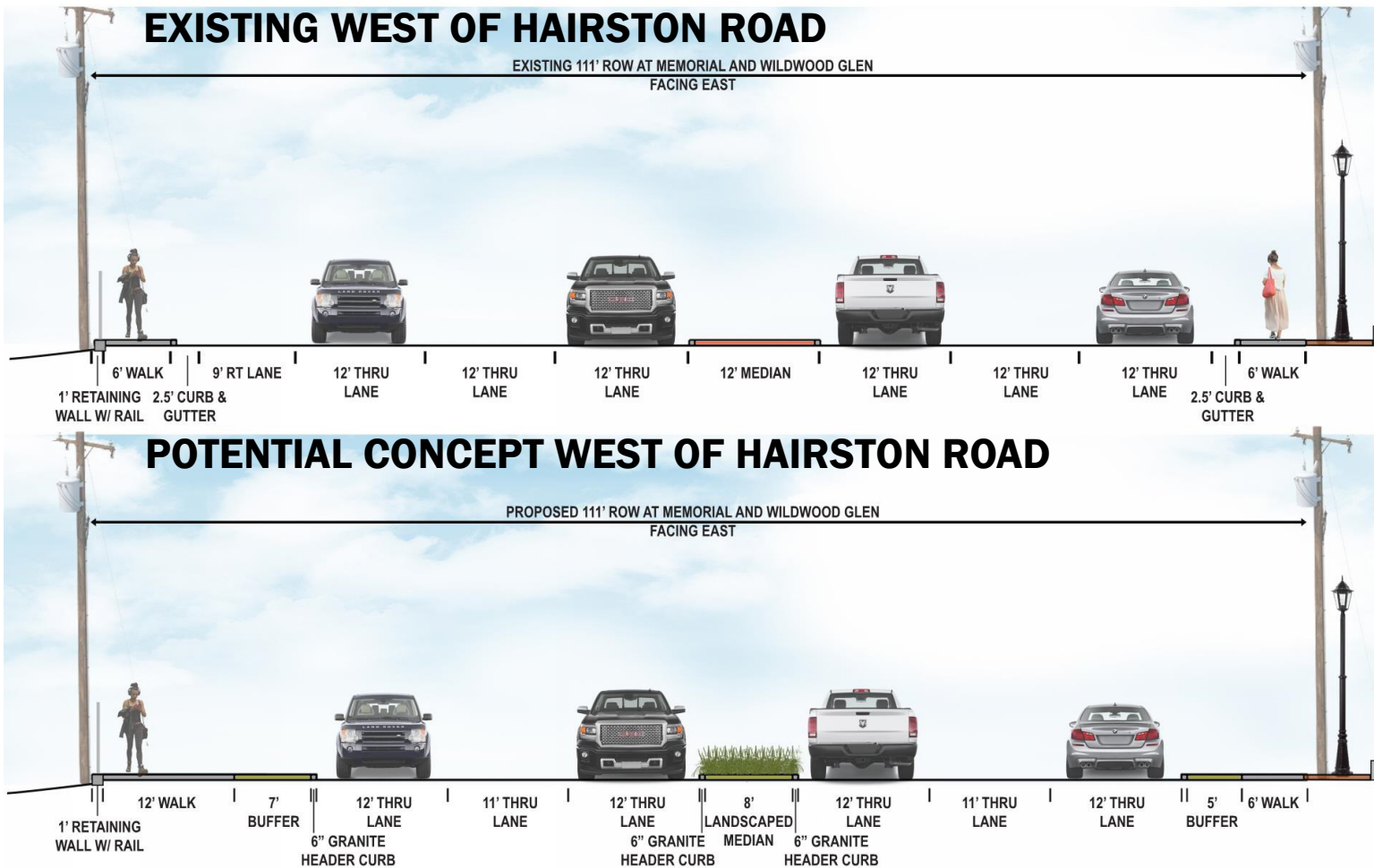
Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Departments of Public Works, Department of Transportation; GDOT
Likely Costs	\$3.0 million a mile on average
Potential Funding Source	Transportation and Park/Recreation Funds
Potential Timeframe	Long-Term

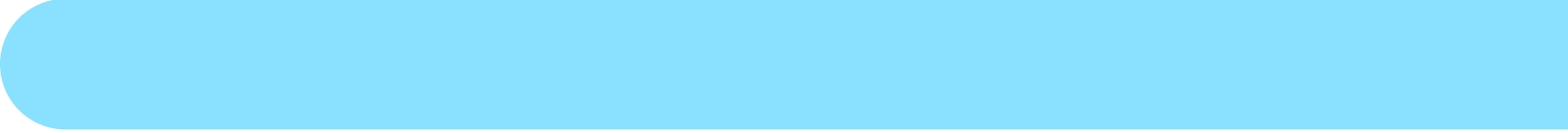
Overlapping with addressing the pedestrian needs along the corridor are specific enhancements that could be made on Memorial Drive itself. A common concern heard from many area residents during the planning process was the lack of comfort in being a pedestrian on Memorial Drive, despite the wide expanse of sidewalk on both sides of the road. This is likely due to the lack of a buffer zone between the vehicular traffic and the sidewalk area leaving pedestrians perceiving themselves to be unprotected from the high speed traffic nearby.



CREATE DEMAND

Taking several typical cross sections along the corridor, conceptual ways to add such a buffered area between pedestrians and vehicular traffic were considered along with landscaping options in that buffer and the addition of a landscaped median for aesthetic purposes. With the intention of addressing these considerations within the existing right-of-way and curb space, these options would require reducing the vehicle lane widths in some places from the standard 12 foot width to 11 feet. As a GDOT maintained facility, their buy-in to the concept (which would start to emphasize pedestrian comfort over the needs of vehicles) will be critical towards any implementation.





Initiative 2.6 Direct Investment in the Corridor

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, Explore DeKalb
Likely Costs	Varies, but likely expensive
Potential Funding Source	General Fund
Potential Timeframe	Short, Mid, and Long-Term

DeKalb County has already made direct investments on the corridor including located the Department of Watershed Management in a space in the D&L Suit Plaza and the DeKalb County Fleet Maintenance Facility. Such investments help underscore the County's commitment to the corridor, fill spaces that may otherwise be vacant, and can be an important tool to mitigate risk by creating anchor tenants that can help build patronage for other surrounding businesses and developments.

Just west of the corridor (on the other side of I-285), the Kensington area continues to be considered as a possible location to centralize many of DeKalb County's offices and services. While such an investment would likely have broad benefits to this part of the Memorial Drive corridor, where possible and appropriate, the County should consider similar investments east of I-285 as well.

A particular opportunity in DeKalb County that should be explored further is the potential need for a civic or convention center in the County that could host everything from High School graduations to professional conferences and festivals. As a centralized location with both interstate and MARTA heavy rail access, the Gateway West area of the corridor could play host to such an investment. Likewise, this idea is generally consistent with the idea of having a cultural and/or theatre component of any redevelopment here and would likewise be a particularly strong anchor for the mix of uses envisioned.

CREATE DEMAND

STRATEGY

2



A long-term vision for Gateway West could include a host facility for conventions and other events to anchor mixed use development.

STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

A positive regulatory environment can make it easier for the private sector to invest in the corridor by offsetting the risk associated with redevelopment.

Initiative	Potential Responsibilities	Likely Costs	Potential Funding Source	Potential TimeFrame			
				Immediate	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
3.1 Address Changes in the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability	Minimal	Staff Time	◆	◆		
3.2 Expedite Permitting & Approvals	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability	Varies, but generally minimal when coordinated with other initiatives	Staff Time, General Fund		◆	◆	◆
3.3 Investigate Investor Programs	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb	Initially \$50,000-\$100,000	Staff Time, General Fund		◆	◆	◆
3.4 Detailed Study & Marketing of Sites	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability	Varies, but generally expensive (\$500,000 but likely much more)	Staff Time, General Fund		◆	◆	◆
3.5 Opportunity Zones	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability	Minimal	Staff Time, General Fund		◆	◆	◆
3.6 Become an Active Development Partner	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb	Varies, but generally very expensive	Staff Time, General Funds, CDBG Grants			◆	◆

Initiative	Potential Responsibilities	Likely Costs	Potential Funding Source	Potential TimeFrame			
				Immediate	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
3.7 Create a Corridor Tax Allocation District	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, DeKalb County Public Schools Decide DeKalb	Self funding	Staff Time to Set Up, Self Funding		◆	◆	◆

Proposed Character Areas



Initiative 3.1 recommends specific changes to Character Areas in the Comprehensive Plan and zoning to align land use regulations with the vision developed for the Memorial Drive corridor.

STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

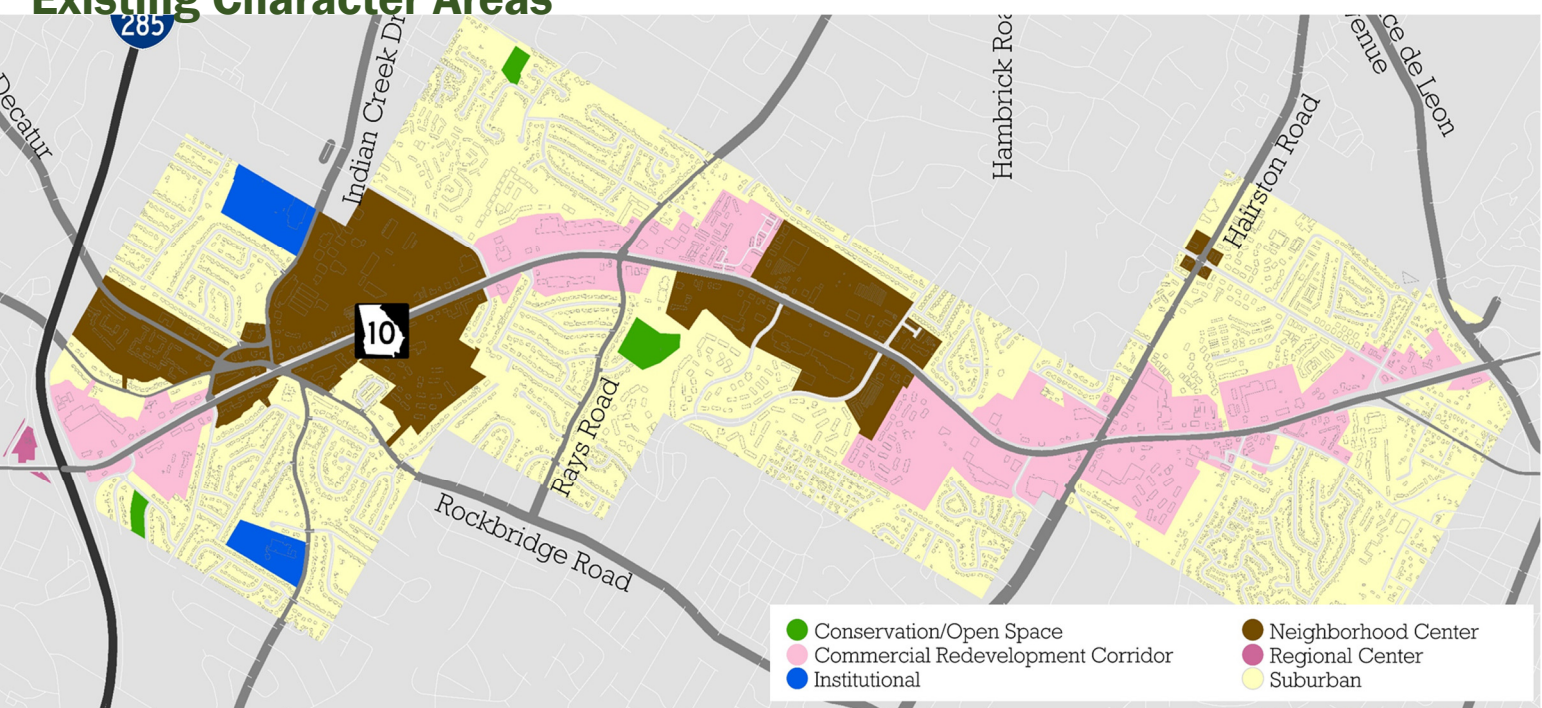
Encouraging healthy redevelopment is all about creating a positive regulatory environment that can make it easier for the private sector to invest in the corridor by offsetting the risk associated with redevelopment.

Initiative 3.1 – Address Changes in the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability
Likely Costs	Minimal
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time
Potential Timeframe	Immediate to Short-Term

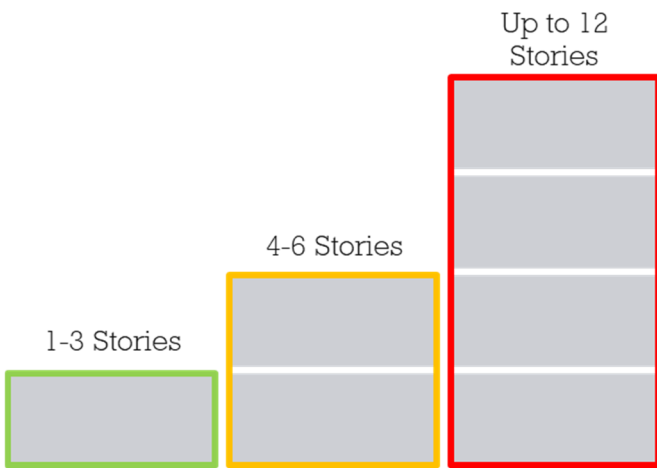
In order to create a regulatory land use environment that will allow for the redevelopments envisioned at Gateway West, Global City, Hambrick Village, and Gateway East, it is appropriate to change the Comprehensive Plan designations for these parts of the corridor as well as the zoning for individual properties. For instance, at Gateway West (where the most dramatic changes in character are suggested) the current Comprehensive Plan Character Area designation is for a “Commercial Redevelopment Corridor.” This plan’s recommendations increase that Character Area to be a “Regional Center” in order to match the intensity of the Kensington area on the other side of I-285 and reflect the vision suggested through the community engagement component of the plan development.

Existing Character Areas



Additionally, to create a zoning framework for the future desired redevelopment, it will be necessary to update zoning along the corridor. Nearly all of the commercial properties on the corridor are currently zoned C-1 (Local Commercial) district which to be consistent would need to be refined as followed to be consistent with the proposed character area changes:

- **Regional Center:** Change to MU-4 (Mixed-Use High Density) and/or MU-5 (Mixed-Use Very High Density) District
- **Town Center:** Change to MU-3 (Mixed-Use Medium Density)



REGIONAL CENTER

The intent of the Regional Activity Center is to promote the concentration of regional serving activities to a centralized location that allow for a variety of uses while reducing automobile travel, promoting walkability and increased transit usage.

TOWN CENTER

The intent of the Town Center Character Area is to promote the concentration of residential and commercial structures, which serve many communities in order to reduce automobile travel, promote walkability and increased transit usage. The areas consist of a focal point for several neighborhoods with a variety of activities such as general retail, commercial, professional office, higher density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses that are easily accessible by pedestrians. This character area is similar to neighborhood center, but at a larger scale.

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The intent of the Neighborhood Center Character Area is to identify areas that can serve the local neighborhood's needs for goods and services. These areas shall complement the character of neighborhoods and the location of the commercial areas shall reduce automobile travel, promote walkability and increased transit usage. These areas consist of a neighborhood focal point with a concentration of activities such as general retail, neighborhood commercial, professional office, higher density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses that are easily accessible by pedestrians.

COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

The intent of the Commercial Redevelopment Corridor Character Area is to promote the redevelopment of declining commercial corridors and to improve the function and aesthetic appeal of more stable commercial corridors. These areas mostly consist of strip style shopping centers that are in need of aesthetic or functional improvements, are in economic decline or are vacant.

Proposed Character Areas



STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

Initiative 3.2 – Expedite Permitting & Approvals

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Varies, but generally minimal when coordinated with other initiatives
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time, General Fund
Potential Timeframe	Short, Mid, and Long-Term

A concentrated effort should be considered to expedite permitting and approvals in areas such as Memorial Drive where the risks associated with redevelopment need to be offset as much as possible. On the Planning & Sustainability side, this can include the development of pre-approval zones to facilitate targeted investment on corridors like Memorial Drive and/or at specific sites such as Gateway West, Global City, Hambrick Village, and Gateway East.

This type of initiative works hand in hand with **Initiative 3.1**, where zoning and land use controls are modified along the corridor to help to attract redevelopment interest by creating an environment that is receptive to private sector efforts. Developers are more likely to seek opportunities in locations with a framework receptive, rather than antagonistic, to the unique challenges of their work. Locations that provide “carrots” for working in challenging environments are often rewarded with developers willing to take additional risks with a vision for achieving rewards.

Flexible “by-right” zoning can help to both achieve the desired outcomes for the county and provide an environment for developers to execute projects efficiently. Examples of an attractive development environment could include a form-based zoning option for some or all sites to enable mixed-use walkable development, as well as an expedited permitting process to help eliminate costly delays. Working with developers to understand their desired “carrots” can also lead to the public sector softening the “sticks,” or requirements, that are placed on developers. For example, the County may insist that a mixed-use development include affordable housing in order to mitigate negative outcomes of change in the area. This requirement is often costly to a market-rate developer and can decrease development interest in some cases. However, working with a developer that agrees to include affordable housing by offering expedited permitting has proven to be an effective strategy in some cases throughout the nation.

Decide DeKalb can play a role to similarly prioritize this corridor or specific sites through incentive packages, pre-approved financing opportunities, and tax abatements. A particularly unique solution could be to set up a program similar to the state level Georgia Ready for Accelerate Development (GRAD) program which certifies sites that are ready for fast track construction projects. While that program is geared specifically to industrial oriented development, the intent of a DeKalb based program can be very similar in which advanced due diligence of candidate sites is performed prior to redevelopment. This due diligence can include addressing such categories as Environmental Assessment, geotechnical investigations, cultural and endangered species investigations, consistency with zoning (underscoring why addressing **Initiative 3.1** can be particularly important), assessment of utility service, and delineating wetland and stream impacts.

Initiative 3.3 – Investigate Investor Programs

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Initially \$50,000 - \$100,000
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time, General Fund
Potential Timeframe	Short, Mid, and Long-Term

There are two specific opportunities in the vision for the corridor's future that speak to the need for startup programs, incubators, and /or co-working spaces.

- In and near Global City, tapping into potential entrepreneurs that reflect the diversity of the corridor and/or are related to (potentially students) of GSU or Georgia Piedmont Technical College.
- In Gateway East, where there is a broad vision to increase light industrial, manufacturing, and craft oriented employment.

An initial step is to investigate further programs or opportunities with Decide DeKalb and possibly at the state level. The subsequent implementation of such programs on the Memorial Drive corridor would likely require leadership by Decide DeKalb.



STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

Initiative 3.4 Detailed Study & Marketing of Sites

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Varies, but generally expensive (\$500,000 but likely much more)
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time, General Fund
Potential Timeframe	Short, Mid, and Long-Term

Similar to (and potentially in support of) the GRAD style program envisioned as part of **Initiative 3.2**, the County should undergo further research and analysis to understand the opportunities and challenges of redeveloping specific sites and locations. As a planning process and study, this plan has identified focus areas (Gateway West, Global City, Hambrick Village, and Gateway East) throughout the corridor but additional more detailed and site-oriented work will be necessary to help market individual sites.



A visualization of potential redevelopment at Hambrick Village. To help encourage such redevelopment, more specific site studies should be conducted to address specific development challenges, identify opportunities, and ultimately market the site.

Initiative 3.5 – Opportunity Zones

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Minimal
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time, General Fund
Potential Timeframe	Short, Mid, and Long-Term

Opportunity zones are state run tax credit programs related to job creation. As described in the map below, there are several sites along and around the corridor that are already identified as part of state level opportunity zones. In addition to continuing to try to leverage this pre-existing opportunity, the County should coordinate with Decide DeKalb to determine the possibility of expanding the opportunity zone boundaries to include parts of Gateway East to support the employment vision for that area.

Separately, the State now has the ability to designate certain areas for consideration as part of a Federal Level opportunity zone. Because this program is relatively new, there are few examples of the nomination process and criteria for selection to use as an indication of the likelihood of success on Memorial Drive. Therefore, opportunities for Federal Level opportunity zone should be monitored further for potential applicability.



Future Land Use & Opportunity Zones

Source: DeKalb County 2035 Comprehensive Plan

- Conservation/Open Space
- Commercial Redevelopment Corridor
- Neighborhood Center
- Institutional
- Regional Center
- Suburban

STRATEGY

3

ENCOURAGE HEALTHY REDEVELOPMENT

Initiative 3.6 Become an Active Development Partner

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Varies, but generally very expensive
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time, General Funds, CDBG Grants
Potential Timeframe	Mid, and Long-Term

The level of County involvement in one or more development deals could vary but the possibility of providing incentives for redevelopment should be considered. Measured incentives can help to provide “proof-of-concept” for innovative development. Once redevelopment concepts have been proven successful, the need for incentives for subsequent development will likely become less necessary.

Incentives could include ideas such as:

- Building from the ideas described in **Initiative 3.4**, the County should take the lead in identifying priority redevelopment sites that are large enough to attract the interest of experienced sophisticated developers and then prepare the sites through site clearance, assemblage, or sub-division.
- Subsidizing infrastructure development, either preemptively or in cooperation with a developer.
- Creating leasehold agreements with landowners to lower tax and infrastructure burdens to provide time for construction of new developments to take place.

The County could stand-up a Redevelopment Authority whose purpose would be to shepherd development along Memorial Drive. The tools afforded Georgia's Local Government Authorities are commonly used in some jurisdictions to incentivize housing and other developments deemed worthy for the advancement of the community. Such an initiative could be advanced through and active Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program targeted for the corridor. CDBG can be used for pre-development, site acquisition, site improvements, property acquisition, property rehabilitation, and first-time homebuyer assistance. CDBG funds can also be used for other purposes, such as the construction of public facilities, public services, and economic development activities. At least 70% of CDBG funds must be used for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households.

The County and/or Decide DeKalb could also become a partner in establishing a Public Purpose Development Company whose sole purpose is to stimulate development on Memorial Drive. A successful example of this is River City Company in Chattanooga, Tennessee. River City Company was created as a private non-profit in 1986 to implement a 20-year blueprint for Chattanooga's riverfront and downtown development, originally capitalized with \$12 million from local foundations and financial institutions. By working with local government, the private sector, and the philanthropic sector, River City Company supports and helps to develops specific real estate projects in Downtown Chattanooga.

Land acquisition funds to support strategic redevelopment initiatives have been a growing trend in urban areas around the nation. These funds can be used to acquire sites for future development to acquire and preserve existing affordable housing before land and property values increase. Doing this ensures that the economics of development deals work and community goals are addressed. An example comes from Charlotte, NC where the city council appropriated \$5 million to the South Corridor Land Acquisition Fund to purchase land near planned transit stations along its South Corridor Light Rail. Using money from the fund and other sources, the city purchased 17 acres of land for \$9.2 million to partner on a project that includes 80 affordable housing units, which will be built by the Charlotte Mecklenburg Housing Partnership, as well as 820 market-rate housing units, retail space, a hotel, and park land.

Using publicly owned land for the development of affordable housing has become a national best practice for increasing the availability of affordable housing in communities. This strategy could be used to maximize the use of public property in locations in or near the study area in order to attract housing and/or employment. Specifically, the County-owned and MARTA-owned land west of I-285 has the potential to catalyze additional development nearby that would benefit this part of the Memorial Drive corridor. The County should take an active role in creating and executing a high-intensity mixed-use mixed-income job center on public land between the Kensington MARTA station and I-285. These parcels hold more immediate redevelopment potential than any other parcels within the Memorial corridor study area, and their successful redevelopment would have a significant positive impact on the local market and the Memorial corridor.

Initiative 3.7 Create a Corridor Tax Allocation District

Potential Responsibilities	DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability, DeKalb County Public Schools, Decide DeKalb
Likely Costs	Self Funding
Potential Funding Source	Staff Time to Set Up, Self Funding
Potential Timeframe	Short, Mid, and Long-Term

Consider a Tax Allocation District (TAD) for the area. TAD funds can be used strategically to leverage other funding sources where possible and to incentivize private investments that create new taxable digest. The intent is to employ TAD proceeds as available and necessary to make site development financially feasible and to attract the types of end-users that would positively impact the redevelopment area and the County economy.

TAD proceeds can be used to supplement private equity and debt financing and reduce overall development costs in order to make proposed projects financially feasible. TAD proceeds can be applied to address on- and off-site development costs, including demolition costs or other internal infrastructure, as well as to help reduce building construction costs to levels that can be supported by prevailing market rents.