





*“One day, I dream this park will
enliven the area I call home.”
- Community Member*

This vision plan would not have been possible without the dedicated, conscientious, and steadfast support from community members and key stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

The Community Steering Committee for Memorial Drive Greenway worked resolutely through the complexities of this project and persevered despite some contentious debates.

Brent Beatty, President of Friends of Memorial Drive Greenway, was a steady advocate and firm believer in the transformative potential of this project.

We would also like to thank Wanda Rasheed, Daniel Gura, Katherine Huded, Rick Hudson, Andrew Kohr, David Lively, Jennifer Miller, Tad Mitchell, Lisa Hanson, Julia Neighbors, Neale Nickels, Camric Schultz, Joe Thomas, and Maceo Williams for giving of their valuable time to attend monthly meetings to guide the development of the plan.

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Ellen Wickersham and Invest Atlanta for sharing the vision for Memorial Drive Greenway and for taking steps toward making this park a reality.

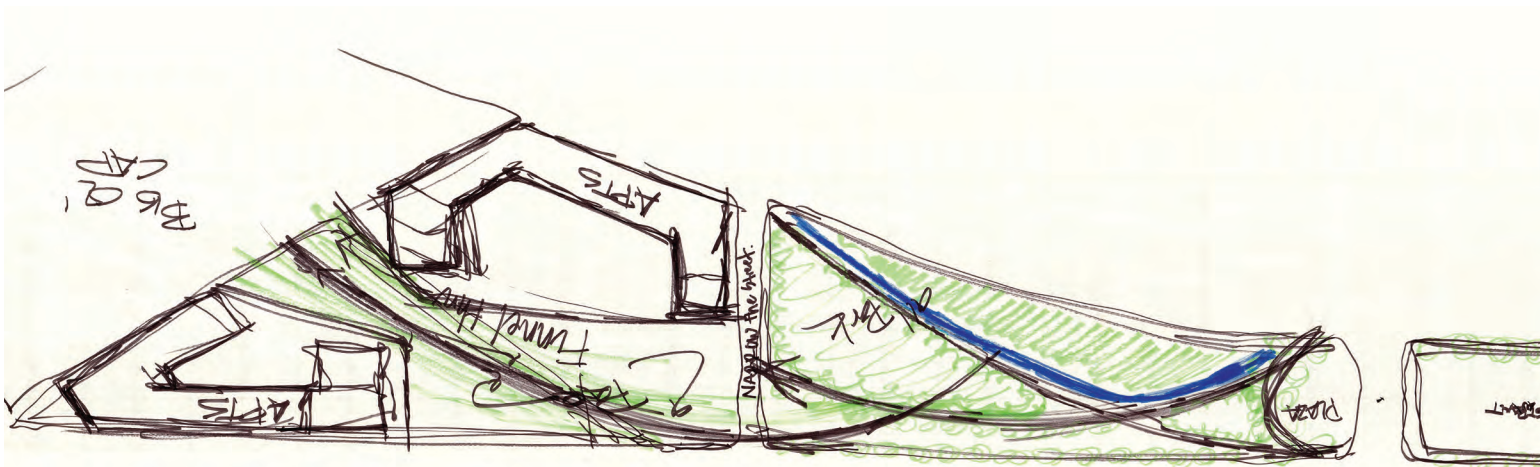
The hard work and research by Philippe Pellerin and Jesse Clark into alternate scenarios for the park was appreciated.

Also, a big thank you to Commissioner Amy Phuong, Deputy Commissioners Emily Love and Alvin Dodson, Walt Ray, Bronaugh Bridges, and Dan Calvert from the City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation. Your long-term stewardship of this project through ever-shifting economic situations has brought the vision for this park steadily closer to realization. Thank you for your continued support!

We also recognize our dedicated intern, Natasha Burr from the University of Georgia, who anticipated our every need and kept us impeccably organized.

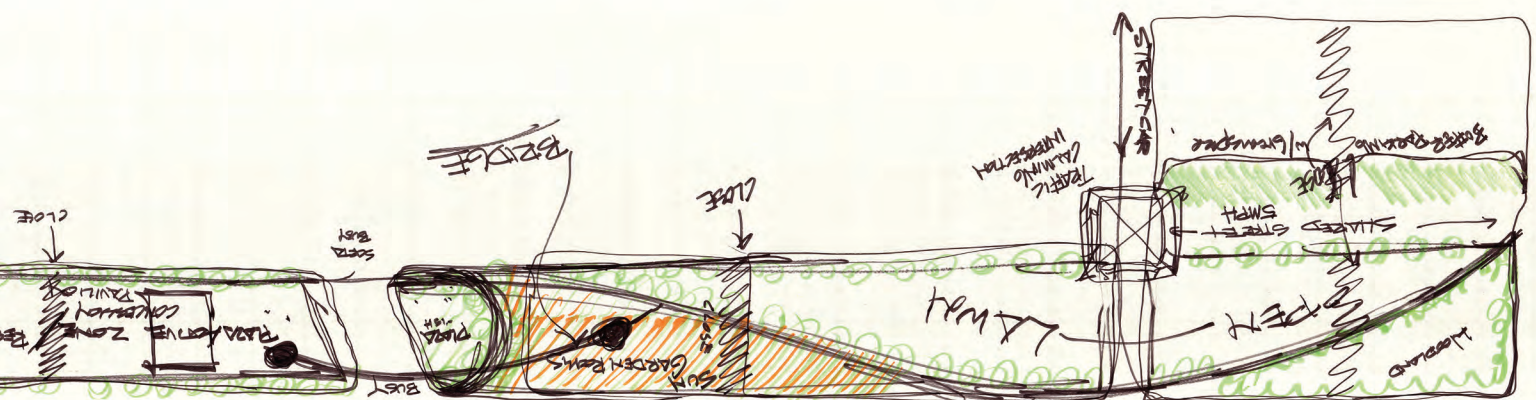
Last but not least, thank you Councilmembers Natalyn Archibong and Carla Smith for your tireless support and advocacy for the communities you represent. Projects like this cannot happen without the will and support from our political leaders!

This effort would not have been possible without the love, kindness, support, and hard work of each of you. You are our heroes!



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This Vision Plan for Memorial Drive Greenway is the latest in a history of planning exercises that explore the potential for a linear park between Memorial Drive and Martin Luther King, Jr Drive, which connects the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta with Historic Oakland Cemetery.

Executive Summary



The promise of Memorial Drive Greenway has been present in the minds of many for several decades as a clean, safe, connected greenspace that gives people a place to gather to discover Atlanta's history and have a voice in its future. The greenway also serves as connective infrastructure; as a walkable, bikeable linear park that offers transportation options that strengthen the links between Downtown Atlanta and the neighborhoods of Eastern Atlanta.

The visioning process kicked off in May 2016. During the ten-month process, Park Pride met monthly with a Steering Committee composed of residents and facilitated four public engagement events with the larger community. We also conducted two community surveys and guided a walking tour of the site to increase public awareness and involvement.

Community response was strong with over 700 responses to the survey and with well-attended public meetings.

The final concept plan presented in this report is the result of the park visioning process and is a tool for the community to use in its park advocacy and fund-raising efforts. Although many communities use Park Pride's Visioning Process to gather and maintain momentum for park projects, it is important to note that this plan carries no weight of law and is neither a promise nor a mandate. The list of projects and order-of-magnitude costs may be used to advance the park through advocacy and fund raising. It combines recommendations and ideas gathered during the public engagement process.

Memorial Drive is an important east-west corridor in the City of Atlanta. Flanked by historical neighborhoods that are being restored, and new denser multifamily developments that are reinventing the area, Memorial Drive is rich in character and history. Unfortunately, high travel speeds, infrequent pedestrian crossings, and lack of multimodal options have contributed to Memorial Drive's reputation as an uninviting place and as a divider rather than a connector.

Context

Historic Oakland Cemetery

One of the most recognizable historic features of Memorial Drive is the 48-acre Oakland Cemetery at the corner of Memorial Drive and Boulevard SE. Founded in 1850, the grounds were "designed as a rural garden cemetery, a 19th-century innovation conceived as an alternative to traditional graveyards which often were crowded and aesthetically unappealing." (www.oaklandcemetery.com) Important milestones in Atlanta's history are expressed within its walls, including the Civil War, 20th-century industrial growth, and the Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, several prominent Atlanta citizens are memorialized in the cemetery.

In addition to its past significance, Oakland Cemetery contains stunning natural beauty and an impressive collection of art and architecture from many stylistic traditions. Today, Oakland Cemetery is still used as a city park and is valued as public greenspace that offers many programs and events to connect the Atlanta community to its past.

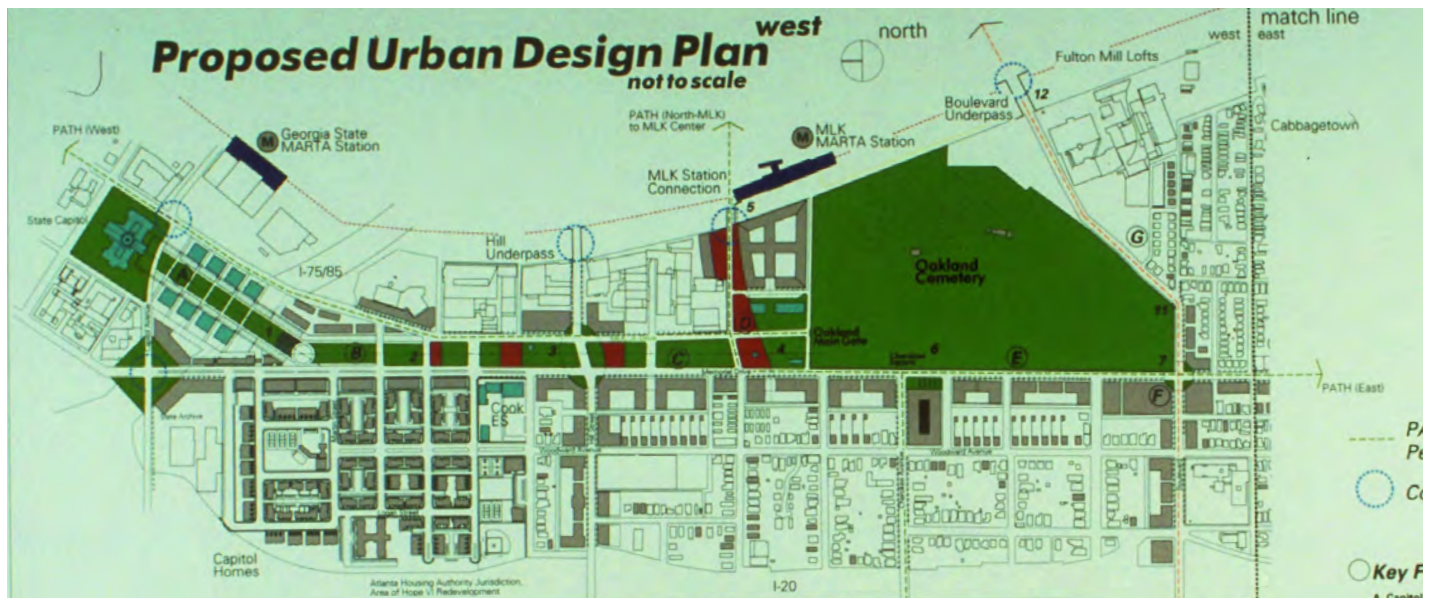
The presence of Oakland Cemetery contributes significantly to the design of the greenway. As the anchor institution at the eastern end of Memorial Drive Greenway, it has great influence on both the program and form of the park.

The Historic Oakland Foundation (HOF), the non-profit organization charged with the long-term preservation and interpretation of the cemetery, participated in the park planning process for Memorial Drive Greenway. One of the needs they identified was for a presence "outside the gates" of the cemetery proper, perhaps in the form of a visitor center with office space for staff. This facility would be designed to be a "first stop" for visitors and would increase awareness of and access to the cemetery.

Georgia State Capitol

Another major cultural resource adjacent to Memorial Drive Greenway is the Georgia State Capitol at the greenway's western end. Built after the Civil War, its iconic gold dome acts as a major landmark in downtown Atlanta and as a symbol of Georgia's pride and independence. It houses the offices of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of State, as well as ceremonial chambers for both houses of the Georgia State Legislature. The Capitol building is surrounded by commemorative statuary dedicated to Georgia's most well-known and influential citizens.

In addition to its cultural artifacts, the Capitol serves as an important site for political debate



"An urban park will connect two of Atlanta's most significant landmarks, the State Capitol and Oakland Cemetery. The park will provide a central green space for most of the new development along Memorial Drive and Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive. This new public space will emphasize formal civic and cultural functions near the Capitol and be a more casual neighborhood park in the Grant Park/Oakland area."

Excerpt from Memorial Drive- MLK Drive Revitalization Study by r+p/v (romm+pearsal/verge studios) for the City of Atlanta Department of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Conservation and the Atlanta Empowerment Zone Corporation. published 2001

and free speech where ideas about Georgia's future are debated and legislation is passed. As such, the Capitol is an important symbol of government power, and thus is an appropriate and obvious place to express political ideas. To this end, the Georgia Building Authority constructed a dedicated park space for political speech in 2015. Named Liberty Plaza, this park space is directly east of the Capitol building and forms the westernmost endpoint of the greenway.

MARTA and other multi-modal transportation

Just a short walk north of the greenway, elevated commercial rail and MARTA train lines transport goods, residents, and commuters back and forth from downtown Atlanta. Memorial Drive Greenway neatly parallels these tracks from the Memorial/ MLK Station westward to the Georgia State Station, making the area an excellent opportunity for transit-oriented development. Although proximity to MARTA stations is a strength, the existing connections from Memorial Drive northward go through tunnels that may be perceived as unsafe.

Bicycle infrastructure in this area is lacking. Although dedicated bike routes exist through the neighborhoods south of Memorial Drive, no formal facilities exist along this heavily-traveled and populated corridor. Although long-term plans exist for Martin Luther King, Jr Drive to be redesigned as a complete street, no funding has been allocated for this purpose. Similarly, Historic Oakland Foundation is studying the possibility of improving access and connectivity.

Expanded Atlanta Streetcar service is also being studied in this area, potentially connecting the greenway and the surrounding development with the Atlanta BeltLine to the east. One streetcar alignment under consideration would bring the route along Memorial Drive up Grant Street to connect with the MLK/Memorial MARTA station. This potential alignment is shown in the conceptual plans presented in this report.

As a state route, Memorial Drive is under Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) jurisdiction. Improvements to Memorial Drive itself are currently being studied, which may include interventions

such as crosswalks, reduced speed limits, widened sidewalks, as well as buffers and medians to help slow traffic and improve pedestrian safety.

All of this presents a great opportunity for Memorial Drive Greenway to facilitate and enhance the many multimodal options planned for this area.

Previous Studies

Park visioning for Memorial Drive Greenway was preceded by a history of plans published by the City of Atlanta and Central Atlanta Progress for the corridor, as well as ideas from the State Government to provide space for public discourse adjacent to the Capitol Building.

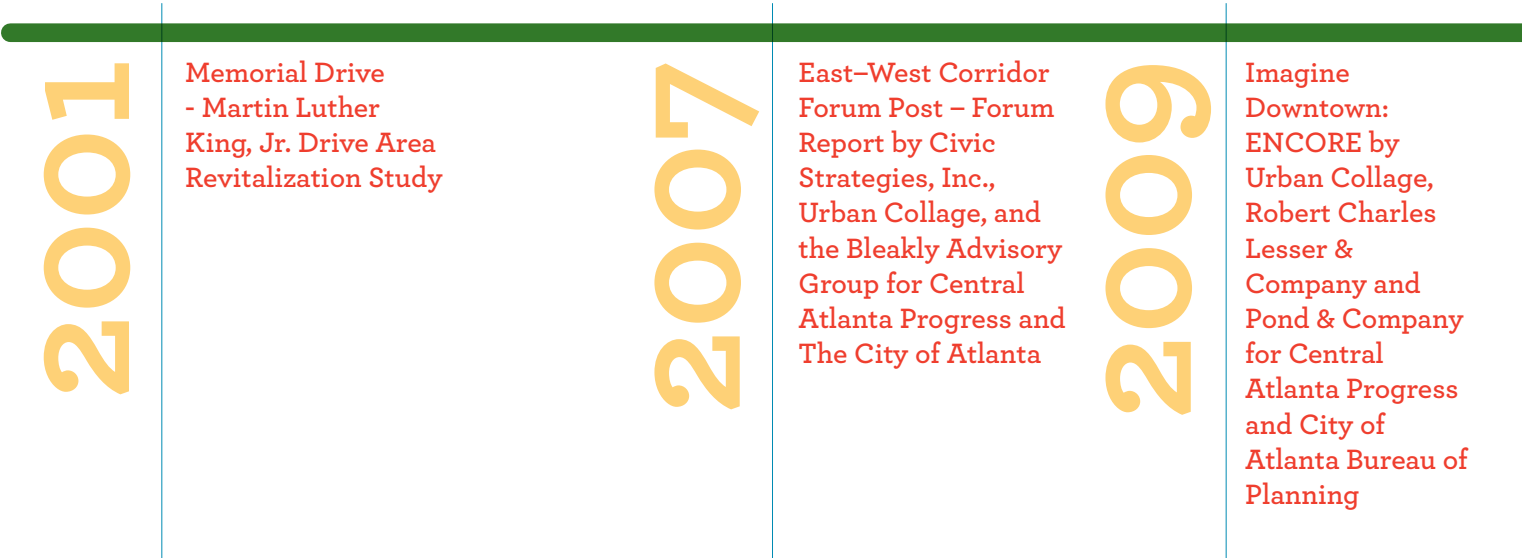
The concept for Memorial Drive Greenway has been around for several decades, but had a breakthrough in 2001 with the publication of the Memorial Drive - Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Area Revitalization Study by romm+pearsall/verge studios. This benchmark study identified the strip of land bound by Memorial Drive to the south and Martin Luther King Jr Drive to the north as a linear green space. This green space

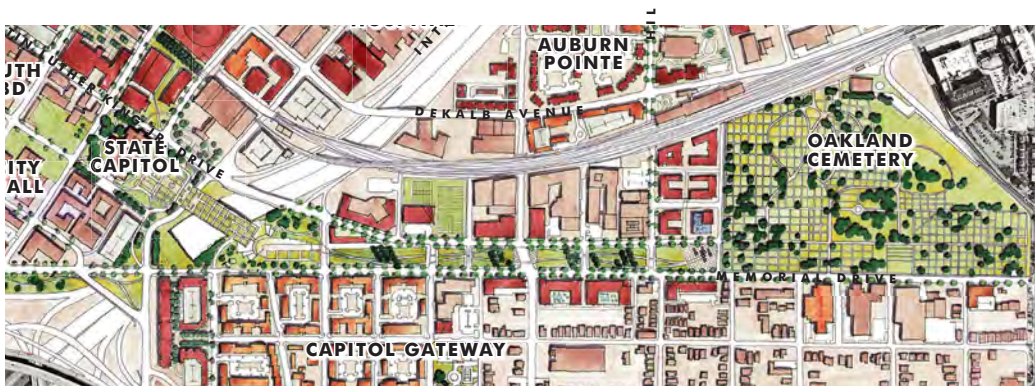
would be surrounded by higher-density mixed-use development to act as the user-base for the park and to frame the space with activated streetscape.

The aspirational quality of the 2001 vision, at a time when none of the land was under public ownership, demonstrated the transformative potential of the space. The plan quickly garnered public support, and the City of Atlanta adopted a special zoning ordinance to protect and encourage the corridor to develop in accordance with the proposed plan. This special zoning, known as Special Public Interest 22 (SPI-22), Subarea 2 (Capitol-Oakland Corridor) is still in force at the time of this writing.

These plans reinforced the idea of Memorial Drive Greenway as a public park space that would connect Downtown Atlanta to the neighborhoods its eastern edge, though the details of programming and design were left undeveloped.

Timeline of Memorial Drive Plans and Studies





Left: The 2009 Imagine Downtown: Encore plan included a linear park from Oakland Cemetery to the State Capitol.

Below, left: The 2011 I-75/85 Atlanta Connector Transformation plan also included a linear park



2011

I-75/85 Atlanta Connector Transformation by SWA Group for Central Atlanta Progress and Midtown Alliance in collaboration with Urban Collage.

2015

Imagine Memorial: a planning partnership with Councilperson Natalyn Archibong, Atlanta residents, and Georgia Tech's School of City and Regional Planning

2016

Park Pride Vision Plan

To review the details of the SPI-22 zoning designation, see:

http://atlanta.elaws.us/code/coor_ptiii_pt16_ch18v

Memorial Drive Greenway encompasses approximately 14.3 acres of land under various ownership, and may include up to an additional six acres if a structural cap over the I-75/85 Connector is built. Of the 14.3 acres of existing space, Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) owns 6.9 acres, City of Atlanta owns 3.6 acres, the State of Georgia owns 2.2 acres, and various private entities own the remaining 1.6 acres.

Existing Conditions

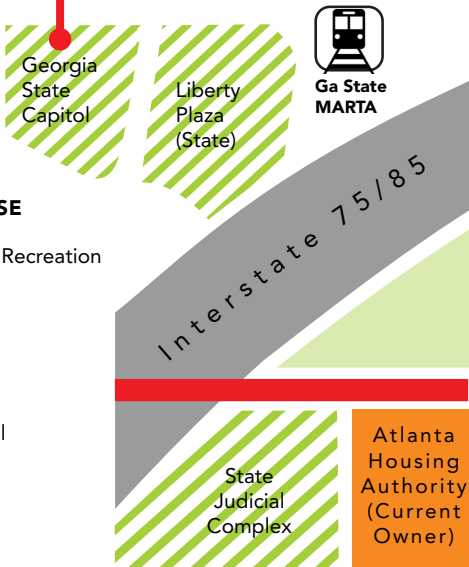
Atlanta Housing Authority is a quasi-governmental nonprofit organization charged with building affordable housing in the City of Atlanta. The 6.9 acres of land owned by AHA is been used for housing for much of the last 100 years. Built in 1940, the Capitol Homes projects stood on the land directly east of the State Capitol for almost 70 years before being torn down and partially replaced with Phase I of the new Capitol Gateway mixed-income development, constructed south of Memorial Drive.

AHA is still the landowner of these 6.9 acres, and is federally mandated to fully replace the affordable units that were lost when Capitol Homes were razed in 2004/2005. To this end, AHA and its development partners are planning to develop the land as Phase II of the Capitol Gateway mixed-income housing development.

After the 2001 publication of the Memorial Drive - Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Area Revitalization Study, AHA partnered in a development approach to relocate the housing redevelopment to allow for a park. As a condition of this deal, the State of Georgia, under the Roy Barnes administration, was going to swap ownership and development rights for the old Archives building. Unfortunately, the land swap was never finalized, and the Archives building has since been slated to become the new State Judicial Complex.



Panoramic views of the State Capitol are but access is hindered by the highway soundwall and I-75/85.



New and existing multifamily residential developments flanking Memorial and MLK Jr. Drive provide little if any greenspace for residents.

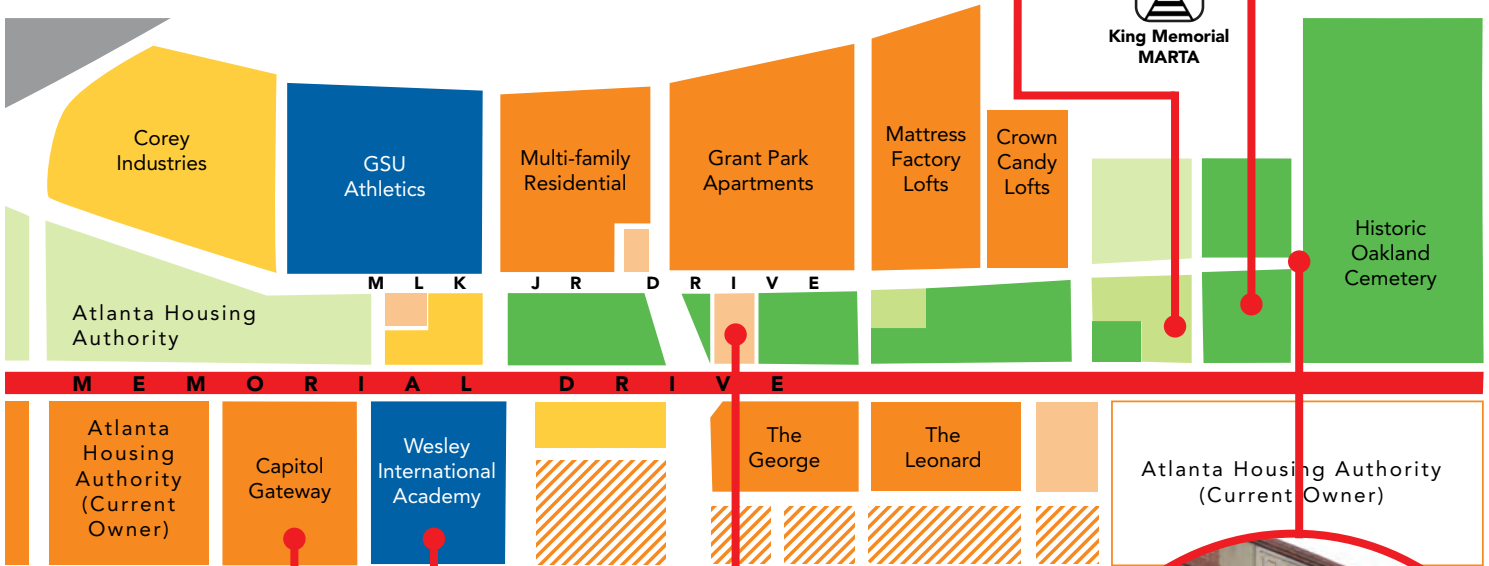


Meanwhile, Invest Atlanta (IA), the City's development arm, began to purchase land identified for the future greenway. From 2001-2012, IA brought 3.6 acres of land into the city's park inventory. All land purchases were made at fair market value in at-will transactions. In all, the City invested about \$7M in the acquisition, demolition, and remediation of the land.

Because the City was committed to acquiring land in the free market, IA did not pursue eminent domain proceedings and decided instead to wait until each individual owner was ready to sell. Thus, some of the land remains in private hands. The lots that were acquired for the park were cleared of buildings and landscaped with naturalistic plantings and boulders, which remain today.

Below left: Some properties, such as the former Harp's Transmission site, are under private ownership.

Below right: Parcels already owned and managed by Atlanta's Parks & Recreation department are marked by boulders and bollards.



Wesley International Academy, a K-8 Atlanta public school



Daddy D's, sits in the middle of the proposed park at Hill Street.



Gates into Oakland Cemetery



In 2014, the Friends of Memorial Drive Greenway, a small group of neighbors adjacent to the park, applied to receive a park visioning from Park Pride. Although deferred in 2014, in early 2016 the application was revisited. The interest and development surrounding the proposed park had reached a level that necessitated a renewed push to advance the conversation, and the decision was made to award the visioning grant.

Community Engagement

Steering Committee

The visioning process was led by a steering committee of dedicated area residents, assembled and constituted by Park Pride to achieve broad representation from different stakeholders. Between March and May of 2016, a representative from Park Pride attended neighborhood association meetings in Cabbagetown, Grant Park, and Summerhill to invite interested individuals to participate as members of the steering committee. Additional steering committee members were invited through existing neighborhood and institutional contacts. Local business owners and developers were also invited.

The steering committee met monthly from May of 2016 until March of 2017, guiding the process, preparing materials, and vetting results. They were charged with representing their constituencies and the voices of the broader communities surrounding the park.

Park visioning kicked off on May 18th with the first steering committee meeting, which was attended by fifteen community members and leaders. The project scope was discussed at this meeting, and the project schedule was developed, which included four public meetings and tabling at Grant Park's annual Summer Shade Festival.

Steering Committee, May 2016:
(Clockwise starting top row, left)
Maceo C. Williams, Sr., Dan Gura, Joe Thomas, Brent Beatty (Chair), David Lively, Lisa Hanson, Julia Neighbors, Neale Nickels, Tad Mitchell, Camric Shultz, Wanda Rasheed, Trish O'Connell (Atlanta Housing Authority), Andrew White (Park Pride), Katherine Huded, Jennifer Miller, Greg Giuffrida (Central Atlanta Progress). Not pictured are Rick Hudson, Teri Nye (Park Pride)



In preparation for public meetings, the steering committee discussed and created a survey to collect data and raise public awareness of the project. The survey was posted online and distributed through online networks. Hard copies were also printed and distributed throughout neighborhoods by steering committee members.

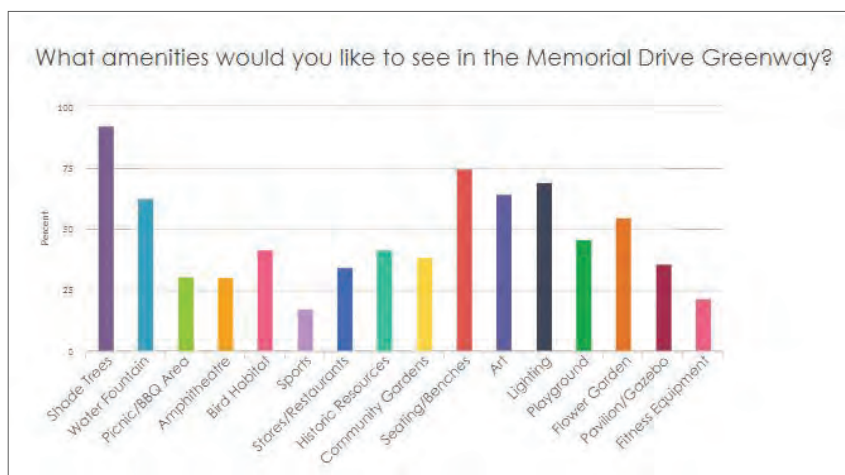
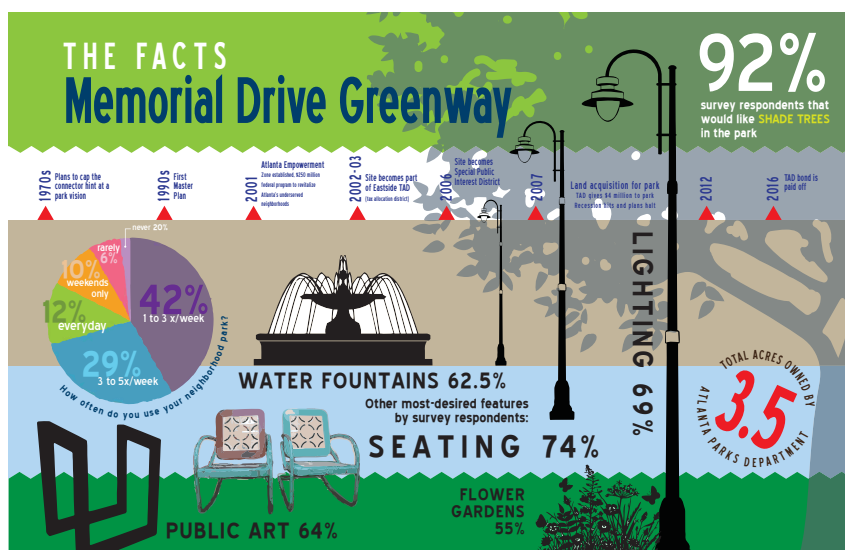
A **yard sign (top right)** displaying the park logo and the words "Let's Make This Park Happen!" was developed to raise awareness and advertise opportunities for public input.

Survey Results

In all, 790 people responded to the survey, which is by far the most responses to a survey that Park Pride has ever received. The large number of respondents is evidence of the strong public interest surrounding this park project. Because of the wealth of quantitative and qualitative information from the survey, Park Pride created an infographic to help the public quickly absorb the big take-aways from the surveys. Survey responses are summarized graphically in the **infographic (middle right)**.

The **top features (bottom right)** that survey respondents said they would like to see in the park were: Shade Trees, Walking and Bike Paths, Lighting, Water Fountains, Flower Gardens, Public Art, and Seating. Dedicated sports facilities, such as baseball fields and tennis courts received low marks, as did community gardens and fitness equipment.

Survey respondents also expressed concern for the existing businesses, especially Daddy D'z, that lie in the path of the proposed park. Strong opinions were voiced on both sides of the issue, with some wanting to keep the businesses as-is and some willing to negotiate relocating the existing businesses to accommodate more greenspace.



Ideas of access and transportation were also strongly voiced. The challenge of safe access to the park across Memorial Drive and Hill Street was expressed by several people who were concerned about pedestrian safety. However, the opportunity for the park to act as a key piece of bike and pedestrian infrastructure was also expressed by a large percentage of survey respondents. The word “bicycle” appeared more than any other word in all the written responses.

Other concerns voiced by the community through the survey included public safety and maintenance. However, the clear majority of responses recognized the potential and opportunities surrounding this greenspace and were supportive of the greenway concept.

Summer Shade Festival

The Summer Shade Festival at Grant Park gave the steering committee an opportunity to raise awareness and get input from the community in advance of the first public meeting. The Grant Park Conservancy generously donated space for a Memorial Drive Greenway booth, where festival-goers were invited to learn more about the project and take the survey. The first public meeting was also advertised.



Steering committee members and Park Pride visioning staff took shifts at the **booth (above)**, interacting with the public and raising awareness. The two-day event allowed for many conversations, all of which contributed to greater community awareness of the project.





Memorial Drive Greenway FIRST VISIONING MEETING

Pedestrian First

Memorial Drive Greenway FIRST VISIONING MEETING

It needs to connect with surrounding neighborhoods and Capital complex via good walking routes and bike lanes

- low impact running/walking routes
- low maintenance beautiful landscape
- water feature → retain rainwater
- band stand and community space
- to create active park

We are here to listen!

Write your thoughts, ideas, and inspiration above or email us at visioning@parkpride.org

Memorial Drive Greenway FIRST VISIONING MEETING

DON'T OVER THINK IT. THE LAND IS SOON TO BE ALMOST FULLY FLANKED BY RESIDENTIAL. MAKE IT A PARK FOR THE COMMUNITY WHILE OUT OF TOWNERS ARE WELCOME. ~~NOT~~ EVERY PARK DOESN'T HAVE TO TELL A DEEP STORY. AT IT'S HEART IT JUST NEEDS TO BE A PLACE FOR PEOPLE.

We are here to listen!

Write your thoughts, ideas, and inspiration above or email us at visioning@parkpride.org



Visioning Meeting

On August 30, 2016, the first public meeting was held at Trees Atlanta Kendeda Center. Approximately 80 people attended the meeting, which focused on getting the community to "DREAM BIG" and consider large goals and guiding principles for the entire space. All ideas were considered, regardless of feasibility, budget, or site control.

The room was set up as a representation of the greenway, with a projector at both ends: one with images of Oakland Cemetery and Atlanta's past, and the other with images of the State Capitol

and progressive projects the city has recently developed, such as Bike Share, the Atlanta BeltLine, and the Streetcar. A wide strip of green paper was affixed to the floor as a representation of the park, and community members were invited to sit along each side facing each other.

After an introductory presentation, the meeting broke into four smaller focus groups, each of which was facilitated by two members of the steering committee. To get the smaller groups to stay focused on big goals rather than get bogged down in details, a series of questions (below) was developed to guide the conversation. The questions were meant to get people thinking about the importance of this park not only to their neighborhood, but to their city and state as well.

Public Meeting Questions:

What is special about Atlanta?

How can we symbolically weave together our history with our city's progress?

What experiences would you like to have in this park?

What memories do you have of a welcoming place?

What would make you feel comfortable in this park?

If Atlanta is the Gateway to the South, how can this park be the Gateway to Atlanta?

What inspires you about this park?

How can this park feel like Atlanta's front porch?

How will the world be different tomorrow because of today's meeting?

Several key ideas came out of this meeting. One key point of consensus was around the nature of the park as an "activated passive park." The public did not see a need for lots of recreational sports facilities, but rather a passive green space where there were plenty of sites to see, things to do, and people to watch.

Another key point of consensus was the idea of the park as a connective "people corridor" that would tie Downtown to the residential areas east of the I-75/85 Connector. The idea of the greenway acting as a transportation option for area residents via a strengthened connection to Downtown was compelling for many in attendance.

The idea of creating unique naturalistic environments in addition to more developed spaces also gained traction. Water and trees as natural cooling elements were popular features listed by many participants.

Lastly, participants placed high importance on preserving and framing views of both the State Capitol and Oakland's Gates. These iconic "bookends" of the park were seen as instrumental in giving the park meaning.

Design Workshop

On October 5, 2016, the second public meeting was held at the Georgia Hill Center in the Summerhill Neighborhood. This meeting was structured as a design workshop where the goals outlined in the first public meeting were located within the boundaries of the proposed park. Approximately 30 people attended.

Large maps were rolled out on the table along with cut-outs of different programs and features mentioned in the surveys and in the first public meeting. Attendees were then invited to imagine and draw possibilities on the map, considering proximity to existing and proposed developments and land uses. Four conceptual plans were developed at the meeting.



Steering Committee Restructuring

Park Pride strove for an inclusive steering committee composition, which included many voices from financially disinterested parties. However, questions were raised after the first public meeting as to the impartiality of some members, who were parties in a proposed housing development on land that had been identified as future park space. To rectify this issue, another developer, who was proposing a commercial development on privately-owned land within the proposed park, was invited to steering committee meetings to balance the points of view and opinions heard by steering committee members.

The issue of private development and new uses within the boundaries of the proposed park was a controversial topic with strong opinions on both sides. Because the City of Atlanta was not able to acquire all the land for the park in years past, several lots are still privately owned.

One developer recognized the opportunity inherent in a park-oriented development that could activate the park space while providing services to park users. He purchased one of the private lots for this purpose. The developer stated that he hoped to catalyze the stalled development of the park proper by directly financing public park improvements and sensitively developing the privately-owned site to minimize visual and physical obstacles to the linearity of the park. Additionally, the argument was made that thoughtful urban design in the greenway would be consistent with accepted best practices of pedestrian-oriented and human-scale development. In short, he saw the proposed development as helping the park effort move forward.

This proposed commercial development was seen by others as a threat to the park rather than a help. It had always been the City's intention, they argued, to acquire the rest of the land when current owners were ready to sell. If one private lot could be redeveloped for a new use, then they asked what would prevent all the other private lots from doing the same. Land values

would increase rapidly as developers bought up the remaining parcels, and the City would essentially be priced out of acquiring any more land for the park. The big idea and vision for a linear park would be lost for the foreseeable future, they argued.

Both viewpoints were expressed in meetings, which led to a stalemate. In late 2016, Park Pride made the decision to put the process on hold until early 2017. During the hold, steering committee members that had a real or perceived financial stake or conflict of interest were approached individually and asked to step down from the steering committee. They were invited to continue to raise their concerns in the public forums. All agreed to this request, and the process resumed in January of 2017.

Walking Tour

In preparation for the third public meeting, a walking tour of the greenway was organized for Sunday, January 29, 2017. A small group of approximately 15 residents and interested parties met outside the gates of Oakland Cemetery on a blustery winter morning. The tour highlighted projects along and within the greenway corridor and gave participants a sense of scale and place while showcasing its potential for enhanced connectivity, urban design, and beauty.



Community members got a better idea of the potential park's scale during the walking tour.



Presentation of Preliminary Plans

On January 31, 2017 the third public meeting was held in the auditorium at Wesley International Academy. At this meeting, two alternate conceptual designs developed by Park Pride were presented to the public and feedback was requested on worksheets distributed at the meeting. Approximately 60 people attended the meeting.

The steering committee decided to strike a balance between being aspirational in the planning effort to push the envelope of what is possible and to dream big while also confronting the realities of the market and current situation.

The plans did not address ownership. Proposed commercial uses did not necessarily mean that the land was privately owned. Park Tavern and Willy's in Piedmont Park are examples of viable businesses within parks, the revenue from which can go to support long term park maintenance and improvements. After the meeting, a blog post was written and additional feedback was requested through an online survey.

The pages following describe the two alternate conceptual designs that were presented to the public in January 2017. In each description, the greenway is divided into character areas separated by cross-streets starting at the State Capitol and progressing eastward to Historic Oakland Cemetery.

Community members reviewed and discussed the concept plans and proposed guiding principles during public meetings.



Option 1 imagines a Memorial Drive Greenway as just that—a continuous greenspace stretching from Oakland Cemetery to the Georgia State Capitol, reaching over the highway via a pedestrian bridge to Liberty Plaza. This plan suggests that the park would be installed as one contiguous design, with agreements made to relocate all existing/potential development, including that associated with the Atlanta Housing Authority, restaurant/commercial establishments, and the Silver Leaf Baptist Church. Street closures are suggested for Moore Street, Fort, and George Streets, with Oakland Street converted to a pedestrian-priority street.

Conceptual Plan, Option 1

KEY FEATURES

- Continuous greenspace from Oakland Cemetery to the State Capitol
- Pedestrian bridge over I-75/85 (not a full cap)
- Curving pathways
- Playground
- Open views of State Capitol
- Dedicated food truck area, Oakland to Grant Street
- Permitted kiosks throughout



Liberty Plaza to Connally Street

Rolling eastward from the State Capitol, the western end of the Memorial Drive Greenway is a space suitable for events of state, regional and city-scale. Features in this setting might include grand event lawns, wide promenades, landscape-scale art, formal plantings, a fountain focal point and rows of trees to direct eyes to views of the Capitol. This option turns existing surface parking over I-85/75 into an intimate shaded corner park serving the Judicial Complex, City and State employees plus Capitol Gateway residents in the immediate area. Memorial Drive Greenway and Liberty Plaza connect via a wide pedestrian bridge over, but not capping, the

freeway. This triumvirate of bridges—MLK Jr. Drive, Capitol Ave and the pedestrian bridge—provide a cost effective yet gracious entries into downtown Atlanta from all cardinal points. Reimagined ramps from the below-grade highway become front doors rather than neglected escape routes. Additional 'complete street' improvements are planned for MLK Jr. Drive. Within the park's boundaries, a new restaurant venue, available for lease from the City, would face the State Capitol with rooftop views as well as garden-level dining.

A large enclosed playground is proposed at the intersection of Memorial, MLK Jr, and Connally. This site was selected because of its proximity to Wesley International Academy and the family-oriented multifamily housing units at Capitol Gateway. The generous lawn now in this block would be retained with the addition of walkways and build-in, low-profile event seating.

Connally Street to Hill Street

The section of the plan between Connally and Hill Streets, features additional unprogrammed lawns at the west end and a woodland/quarry garden and outdoor classroom at the eastern end adjacent to Hill Street. This garden would make use of the existing sloping topography to create a naturalistic xeric woodland garden, reflecting the Piedmont region's granitic outcrop ecosystems in plant materials and boulder ledges. This zone would be a suitable location for a natural green infrastructure element as needed as well as for outdoor education activities.

Hill Street to Grant Street

The second-largest contiguous segment in this option is between Hill and Grant Streets, with the closure of Fort Street. This segment is primarily unprogrammed green space featuring open lawns and tree-shaded walking paths. There is a centrally-located water feature near a food truck plaza that faces MLK Jr. Drive. This space would provide a centralized location for mobile food vendors as well as pop-up markets, small concerts or other temporary events.

Grant Street to Historic Oakland Cemetery

The eastern-most portion of this plan forms a transitional space between Historic Oakland Cemetery and the more active areas of the park. It features formal curving walkways shaded by tall canopy trees and lawns that can accommodate formal and informal events. Elements that evoke a past-to-present connection include a quad-like lawn with tall canopy trees, a covered promenade overlooking a sunken gravel-filled grove with small tables or chairs scattered amid a grove of native understory trees such as dogwoods or Carolina silverbells, and possibly an interpretive signage system to explain how the area has changed over time.



Option 2 explores a potential future in which the park coexists with buildings having multiple uses. This plan provides flexibility if some properties are not available for immediate incorporation into the park. It also acknowledges the current plan for a large affordable housing development in the area closest to the Capitol, but suggests locating a portion of the development onto a cap over the Connector to allow for more park space. This option creates a variety of experiences within the park, including a Visitor Center for Historic Oakland Cemetery, restaurants, cafes, a day chapel, fountains, and paths.

Conceptual Plan, Option 2

KEY FEATURES

- Incorporates existing uses (restaurant/spiritual/housing) with updates
- No playground, focus on unprogrammed green space
- Cap over I-75/85 providing space for AHA housing and thus more greenspace
- Linear, angled paths
- Buildings perforated with through-passages to encourage walkability
- Clustered buildings create human-scale
- Non-denominational chapel



Liberty Plaza to Connally Street

The first two blocks of the proposed Memorial Drive Greenway are currently under the ownership of the Atlanta Housing Authority and stand as undeveloped greenspaces. Option 2 explores ways to integrate high-density affordable and market-rate housing into a greenway plan that reads as a unified park. AHA has offered to set aside a percentage of the properties as public park space in exchange for higher density allowances, i.e., taller buildings.

In order to create more usable open space, Option 2 suggests capping Interstate-75/85 to provide additional land for the AHA to meet their density goals while keeping building heights down and views open. The freeway and adjacent structures across I-75/85 were originally constructed to support buildings.

In order to humanize the large building masses, the plan increases the permeability of the housing blocks in the park with walkways and courtyards throughout. Rooftop decks also provide ample space for dining and recreation, including a possible rooftop dog run. Other ways to create a more approachable environment include dividing the buildings into smaller units with inward-facing courtyards. Interior courtyards and gardens also provide a variety of options for private areas for residents amid, but separate from, the larger public spaces. Parking is also a concern and this plan suggests interior/below grade options that would leave at-grade locations with pedestrian priority.

Connally Street to Moore Street

The properties between Connally and Moore Street are currently under private ownership. Moore Street is proposed to be closed and converted to a shaded seating area. An abandoned house at the corner of Moore and MLK Jr Drive is renovated as a café that can be leased to vendors. If the property is acquired by the Parks & Recreation Department, the plan proposes a plaza and open lawn, closure of Moore Street to vehicular traffic, and a kiosk for vendors.

Moore Street to Hill Street

Option 2 focuses on passive recreation and relaxation rather than on active play. There is an existing playground, tennis courts, and ballfields at Rawson-Washington Park, adjacent to the south end of Wesley International Academy on Connally Street. Moore is suggested as a pedestrian-priority street. Moving east on the greenway, the landscape becomes progressively more like a natural woodland with water features and footpaths. This woodland garden could provide a calm respite from the busy streets nearby. All edges of the greenway are buffered from traffic by rows of street trees and, at some points, understory shrubs or perennial plantings.

Hill Street to Fort Street

Continuing east across Hill Street is the current site of Daddy D's restaurant. In this option, the venue is updated by either the current owner or under ownership by the City to include outdoor seating and service access from MLK Jr. Drive. Paved walkways connect key points along the perimeter and anticipate desire-lines from neighboring residential units. Lawns intermingled with trees provide a place for a quick stroll, lunch or a quick stroll around the block with the dog.

Fort Street to Grant Street

Option 2 also seeks to retain the spiritual traditions that are important in the southeast. Across Fort Street, the Silver Leaf Baptist Church is reimagined as a non-denominational day chapel in the style of an open pavilion. The block would feature quiet sounds of water, leaves in trees, and open views toward Oakland Cemetery.

Grant Street to Historic Oakland Cemetery

The eastern-most segment of the park in this option suggests using this space as the new Historic Oakland Cemetery Visitor Center. The building would welcome visitors directly from the greenway into this important Atlanta landmark. Facing the new visitor center, the former Harp's Transmission site is shown as a low-profile mixed-use development including a restaurant and retail options. Some in the community were concerned about plans to redevelop the site as a multi-story building, which would disrupt the flow of a linear park. Instead, community members recommended adaptive reuse of the existing one-story building with an open atrium in the center to maintain the continuous views of the park.



Feedback received from the public indicated a preference for a hybrid approach. Although several people appreciated the large green space of Option 1, they felt it did not go far enough in capping the connector. Likewise, Park Pride received several comments that residents liked the idea of smaller vendors in Option 2 to purchase food or drink, but felt that the concept was weighted too heavily toward buildings rather than greenspace.

Final Conceptual Plan

KEY FEATURES

- Park with small-scale commercial uses scattered throughout
- Full cap over I-75/85
- Atlanta Housing Authority development relocated to adjacent/nearby sites
- Non-denominational day chapel with outdoor event seating
- Oakland Cemetery visitor center sited on current parking lot north of park
- Pedestrian-priority streets at Oakland Street, George Street, and MLK Jr. Drive from Oakland to Grant Streets, and street closure of Moore Street
- System of covenants to guide future development

Presentation of Final Concept Plan

On February 28, 2017, the fourth and final public meeting was held in the auditorium at Wesley International Academy. At this meeting, a final version of the plan was presented, and comments were invited from the public. Approximately 40 people attended. The meeting began with a presentation of the process and how the plan was developed. The plan itself was then presented, followed by an open-house-style forum where input was invited from the public.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, although the idea of a day chapel gave some attendees concerns, and they suggested that an open-air shelter of architectural interest would be a better substitute for the chapel feature. Most attendees appreciated the hybrid approach as a balance between the two options presented in the previous meeting. Many attendees expressed a desire to “see something actually happen,” and were more concerned with implementation of the park rather than the details of program.

The public meeting was followed up with a blog post on Park Pride’s website, which in turn generated more online feedback, the clear majority of which was also positive.



Liberty Plaza to Martin Street

In the final consensus plan, the largest segment of the greenway opens like a funnel to the State Capitol from the park and adjacent neighborhoods. Reflecting this scale-change from residential neighborhoods to city/state and regional, walkways become wider with curved secondary sidewalks merging along the length of the central promenade to the Capitol. A grand fountain marks the vertex where the narrower portion of the greenway turns and opens toward the Capitol, creating a civic space similar to the National

Mall. Elements suitable for this space include a sculpture garden with public art, tree-lined sidewalks, sweeping views of the Capitol and a landmark restaurant with rooftop dining and views of the skyline. The existing elevated pedestrian bridge over Capitol Avenue is modified in this plan to offer workers and residents a traffic-free route to the park. Finally, this western-most end of the greenway would act as a welcoming grand entrance off the southbound I-75/85 Connector into the heart of Atlanta at the MLK Jr. Drive exit.

Martin Street to Connally

Public surveys indicated that a large percentage of the community did not want to see residential development in the park. This block is shown in this option as open park space. In the block between Connally and Martin, a playground is sited farther back from Memorial and buffered from MLK Jr. Drive by a row of trees, a sidewalk, a fence, and shrubs. Restroom facilities are indicated on this plan, in twin structures forming a gateway into the playground and potentially including refreshment vendors. The sweeping lawn present in this block remains with the additional walkways and built-in, low-profile event seating.

Connally Street to Moore Street

The block that extends from Connally Street to Moore could provide a more formal answer to the woodland landscape and include a lawn, a small refreshment kiosk, tables for outdoor dining, and a plaza facing Wesley International Academy. Moore Street, once closed to traffic, could remain paved and host food trucks or market stalls. A wide sidewalk traversing the park would create a visual connection to the school's front entrance, across Memorial and the greenway and to the communities on the north side of the park.

Moore Street to Hill Street

The large parcel extending from Moore to Hill Street is designed after Georgia's local granitic outcrop woodlands, complete with smaller footpaths winding through various levels, boulders for climbing and exploring, and a naturalistic water feature mimicking ephemeral pools. The native plant materials of granite outcrops translate well to the urban environment. They are naturally resilient to extreme weather conditions such as drought and temporary inundation and accustomed to growing in thin, rocky soils. This block would provide residents and nearby students with a naturalistic landscape to explore and learn. The woodland could host environmental education programs, while bringing Georgia's unique natural character into the city.

Hill Street to Fort Street

This plan keeps Fort Street open as a drop-off point for the chapel but could be designated as pedestrian-priority. Facing the day chapel to the west is the beginning of a pedestrian walkway that would raise pedestrians above grade and allow them to traverse Hill Street above the busy traffic. This elevated walkway would provide several access points including one onto the roof of a re-imagined full-service restaurant at the current site of Daddy D's. Below the elevated walkway in this block, are multiple options for seating and/or dining, including the open lawn, benches along walkways, and a ground-level courtyard at the restaurant.

Fort Street to Grant Street

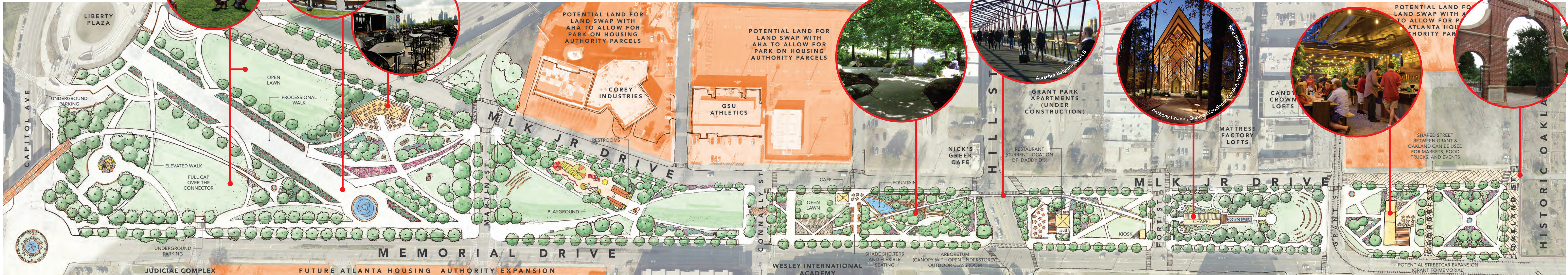
The block between Grant and Fort Streets is currently designated as park space except for the property owned by Silver Leaf Baptist Church. If acquired by the Parks & Recreation Department, the consensus plan reflects a desire to retain a spiritual setting on this site as a reflection of Atlanta's strong faith traditions. This property could become a non-denominational day chapel, open for all to enjoy as a place of peace and quiet reflection, ceremonies or small-scale celebrations within the City. The surrounding park could complement these uses with a series of shaded footpaths curving through gardens, and an outdoor seating area for small concerts or gatherings.

Grant Street to George

A large portion of the block between George and Grant Streets—the former Harp's Transmission site—is under private ownership. Adaptive reuse of the existing building is recommended for this portion of the block. The community expressed a preference for a low-profile beergarden-style establishment, that would provide a relaxed place to meet/dine and drink toward the eastern end of the park. The southwest corner of this block is currently owned by the City of Atlanta. If the proposed streetcar is installed as noted on the proposal, this corner will be encumbered by the streetcar rails.

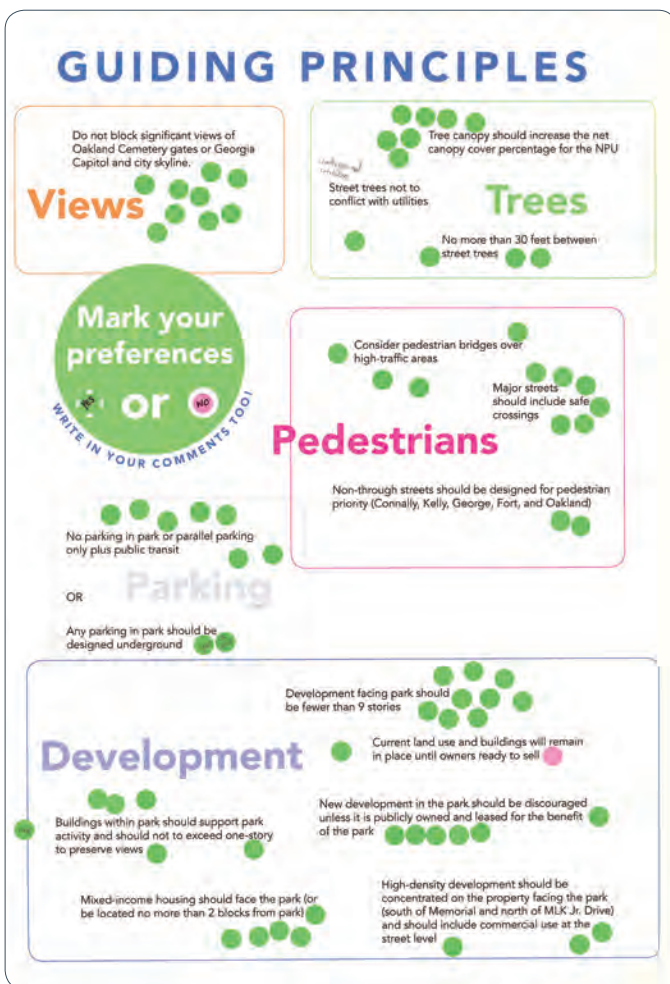
George Street to Oakland

This parcel, owned by the Atlanta Parks & Recreation Department, will be redesigned to offer a better transition into Oakland Cemetery. Elements would include a quad-type space formally landscaped areas, a central fountain and pedestrian-priority streets on Oakland Street between Memorial and MLK Jr. Drives, and on MLK Jr. Drive from Oakland Cemetery to Grant Street.



In addition to the programmatic elements in the plan (open space, playground, food & drink, etc), the steering committee thought it equally important to put forward several guiding principles to guide the form of future park development.

Guiding Principles



Above: The Guiding Principles board that was reviewed by the community at the final public meeting.

These guiding principles are chiefly intended to clarify and record important concepts that may be lost in the plan, but are essential to the character of the proposed park. A set of draft guiding principles was put forward for comment at the final public meeting, and feedback was invited from meeting participants. Among participants, there was near universal support for these draft principles, and they are thus incorporated here.

Protect Views

“Do not block views of Oakland Cemetery gates or Georgia Capitol and city skyline”

One consistent theme in almost every conversation was the importance of protecting existing views, including of the State Capitol, Oakland Cemetery’s iconic west gate, and the Atlanta city skyline. Many views available today from the greenway are spectacular and help contribute to an acute sense of place. Additionally, keeping viewsheds open helps orient park users to their present location in relation to known landmarks and contribute to feeling of safety.

Trees

“Tree canopy on greenway should contribute to a net increase of canopy cover for the NPU”

“Tree plantings should not conflict with existing utilities”

“Street trees should be planted no more than 30 feet apart”

Emphasis on the tree canopy as an important cultural touchstone and natural shade element was also consistently highlighted in public discussion. It was noted that Memorial Drive Greenway, as a passive park space designed for strolling, cycling, and people watching is a perfect venue to host a large number and variety of understory and shade trees. It should also be restated here that 92% of survey respondents listed shade trees as an element they would like to see in the park.

Pedestrian Safety

"Consider pedestrian bridges over high-traffic areas"

"Major streets should include safe crossings"

"Non-through streets should be designed for pedestrian priority (Connally, Kelly [sic], Fort, and Oakland)"

Among the biggest concerns expressed by community members through both surveys and meetings are the unpleasant or downright unsafe conditions for pedestrians crossing Memorial Drive, Hill Street, and the I-75/85 Connector. Additionally, the idea of redesigning some of the smaller side streets that cross Memorial Drive Greenway to reprioritize pedestrian traffic with appropriate facilities also came up.

The idea of a cap, which would essentially act as a pedestrian bridge over the Connector, was particularly popular in both online and in-person forums. Some in the community also expressed a desire for a pedestrian bridge over Hill Street to take advantage of the views of Downtown, as well as provide an alternative path through the greenway. However, some expressed concern after the final plan was released that a pedestrian bridge over Hill Street may not function as intended, and indeed may have the opposite effect by giving the impression that pedestrians crossing Hill at street level should not be there.

Parking

"No surface parking in park – use only street parking plus public transit"

"Any parking in park should be designed underground"

In a car-dependent city like Atlanta, parking is inevitably part of the conversation. However, no new surface parking is proposed for Memorial Drive Greenway. The park will have a built-in user base with adjacent residential, commercial, government, and retail operations. Additionally, the park is expected to expand pedestrian and multimodal access as a connective element between Downtown and several historic neighborhoods. Connections to MARTA facilities can also be expanded and improved, especially the MLK and Georgia State rail stations. On the west end of the park, some underground parking may be constructed to offset the demolition of existing parking facilities near the Georgia State Capitol.

Development

"Development facing park should be fewer than 9 stories"

*"Current land use and buildings will remain in place until owners ready to sell" **(this is the only principle that received a "no" sticker)**

"New development in the park should be discouraged unless it is publicly owned and leased for the benefit of the park"

"High-density development should be concentrated on the property facing the park (south of Memorial and north of MLK Jr Drive) and should include commercial use at the street level"

"Buildings within park should support park activity and should not exceed one-story to preserve views"

"Relocated AHA mixed income housing should face the park (or be located no more than 2 blocks from the park)"

Many of the most contentious discussions centered around proposed private developments within the footprint of the proposed greenway. While the visioning plan does not address property ownership, it does make recommendations for restrictions on development, either public or private, that reinforce our understanding of community preferences. It should be restated here that this plan is not an officially adopted master plan, and therefore carries no weight of law.

This order-of-magnitude opinion of probable cost for the Memorial Drive Greenway vision plan is formatted as a series of sections, defined by blocks.

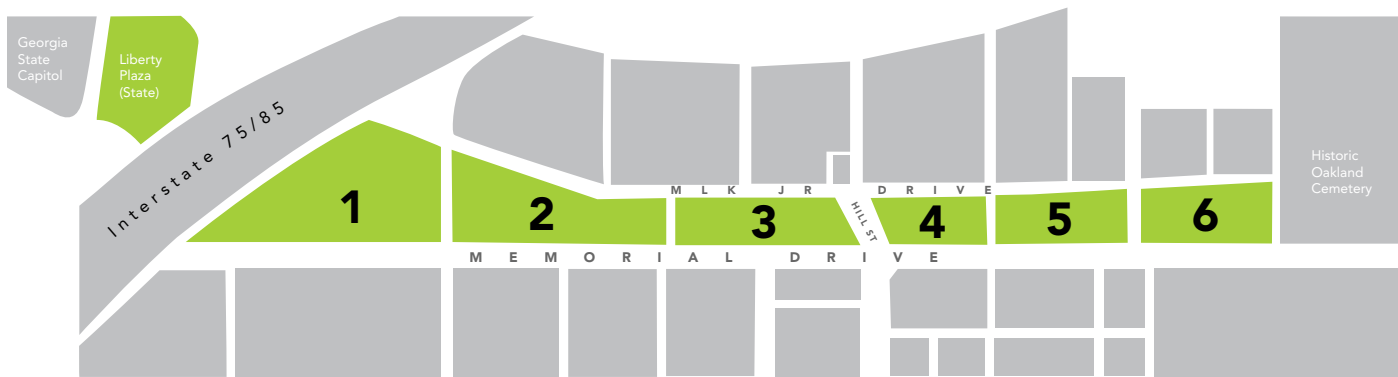
Projects & Budget

Costs were estimated using a combination of allowances, standard costs, and comparison with recent projects based on 2017 construction costs. It does not include costs associated with road improvements, streetcar expansion, land acquisition, demolition, and remediation.

The full cap over the connector was estimated using the lump sum cost to build Klyde Warren

Park in Dallas, Texas. This cap has the potential for most variability based on structural needs and engineering requirements.

Although we believe these estimations to roughly reflect the projected cost of the project, they are still based on limited information. The purpose is to give interested groups a starting point for budget consideration and fund-raising efforts.



Park Segment	Location	Description	Cost Estimate
1	From Liberty Plaza to Martin Street	Includes full connector cap, sculpture garden, café, fountain plaza, open lawns, processional walk, and streetscape improvements	\$115,751,290
2	From Martin Street to Connally Street	Includes a playground, restrooms, an event lawn, low stone retaining seatwalls, and streetscape improvements	\$2,249,310
3	From Connally Street to Hill Street	Includes a stone plaza, café, open lawn, shade shelters, plaza w/seating, fountain, arboretum, and streetscape improvements	\$2,693,390
	Elevated Pedestrian Bridge over Hill Street		\$7,000,000
4	From Hill Street to Fort Street	Includes a restaurant, kiosk, trees, lawn, and streetscape improvements.	\$1,033,090
5	From Fort Street to Grant Street	Includes an open-air chapel, fountains, performance lawn, and streetscape improvements	\$2,731,995
6	From Grant Street to Oakland Street	Includes a restaurant/beer garden, fountains, and streetscape improvements	\$2,469,276
	TOTAL		\$133,928,351

Memorial Drive Greenway is a large and ambitious project that will take considerable capital, community advocacy, and political will to become fully realized. However, its potential value as a vital piece of connective infrastructure to Downtown Atlanta and the considerable public investment that has already been spent for land acquisition present a compelling case for continued investment and implementation. With the current development boom of medium-density multifamily housing directly adjacent to the park, a user base for the park will soon be in place as well, making the need for serviceable park space in this part of town even more urgent.

Next Steps

Site Control

One of the first steps required for park implementation is the acquisition of the remaining parcels of land required to build the park. From 2001 to 2012, the City of Atlanta, through its development authority Invest Atlanta, was successful in acquiring just over 3.6 acres of private land east of Connally Street at a cost of approximately \$7M and transferring it to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

There remain seven privately-held parcels between Connally Street and Oakland Street that may yet be acquired for park land. Two of these parcels, Harp Transmission and Kelly's Clutch have, at the time of this writing, been acquired by Pellerin Real Estate, a private development interest. The other parcels consist of mainly commercial-use properties, one to two stories in height, including a small church and a much-loved BBQ restaurant called Daddy D'z. Altogether, these parcels add up to approximately 1.6 acres of developed land. Because of the rapidly growing demand for commercial and multifamily real estate opportunities in this part of town, it is

recommended to move forward with all deliberate speed toward full site control by the city. Funding should be prioritized for this use and an acquisition strategy aggressively pursued for all outstanding privately-held parcels, including those recently purchased by private interests.

The other large tracts of land west of Connally Street are controlled by the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA), which is a quasi-governmental agency that is mandated to construct affordable housing in the City of Atlanta in accordance with Federal housing policy. Capitol Homes, the old public housing project west of Connally Street, was demolished in 2005 and partially replaced with phase I of a new mixed-income housing development called Capitol Gateway south of Memorial Drive. Since that time, the 6.9 acres of land identified for public greenspace has been vacant. It is still owned by the AHA, which has plans to redevelop the sites as mixed-income housing in accordance with its mission and in partnership with its development partners, Integral Group and Urban Realty Partners.

This land is likely the biggest challenge in terms of site control issues. To meet their mandated minimum number of affordable units, AHA must build housing somewhere in this vicinity. A land swap is required to bring the large 6.9 acres into the fold as park space. Because of its prime location, considering its proximity to Downtown Atlanta, Georgia State, MARTA rail, the interstate, and desirable historic neighborhoods, finding land that would be suitable and available for a land swap is a challenge. Although not within the scope of this study, the final vision plan identifies several parcels of land that may be suitable on the north side of MLK Jr Drive. It also floats the possibility of increasing allowable density for AHA south of Memorial Drive to provide more park space for the greenway.

Design Development

This document offers suggestions for park development based on the public engagement process described herein, but changes to these plans are expected based on budget considerations and more detailed site analysis and design. A qualified landscape architecture and engineering firm should be engaged to take the project through design, permitting, and construction once site control is established.

For some parts of the project, such as the cap over the Connector, engineering costs can be expected to be considerable. Costs for design and engineering can be expected to be anywhere from 12-15% of the total project cost.

Funding

As with many contemporary large-scale urban projects, a public-private partnership is the funding model most likely to yield a successful outcome. Due to its proximity to the State Capitol complex, Georgia State, and MARTA, the park has more potential sources of public funding than other comparable projects.

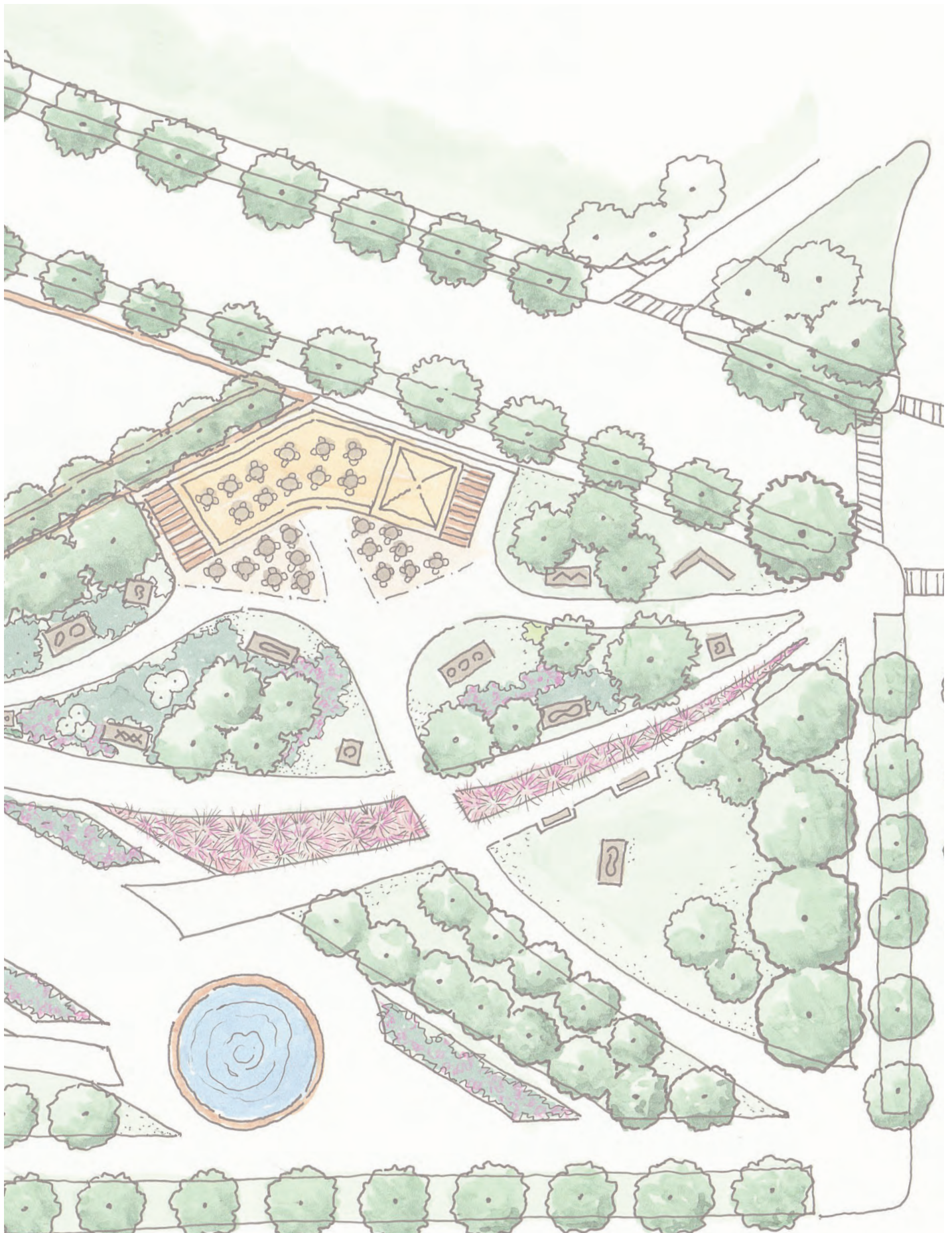
Although a funding model is outside the scope of this project, a table of potential funding sources is included below.

Once built, the park itself may also generate revenue for ongoing maintenance and upkeep from leasable park concessions, event fees, and sponsorships. It is estimated that \$1-2M per year will be needed for lighting, gardens, waste management, security, landscaping, management, and security.

Potential Sources of Support

PUBLIC	PRIVATE
City of Atlanta Departments and Agencies	Philanthropic organizations
City of Atlanta Eastside Tax Allocation District	Community groups
Georgia State University	Foundations
Georgia Department of Transportation	Corporations
MARTA	Individuals
Georgia Building Authority (State Capitol)	Developers of park-adjacent properties
Atlanta Housing Authority	

Thank You!





for the greener good



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