

SOUTH FULTON PARKWAY CORRIDOR PLAN

DECEMBER, 2016



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The planning team wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the following people:

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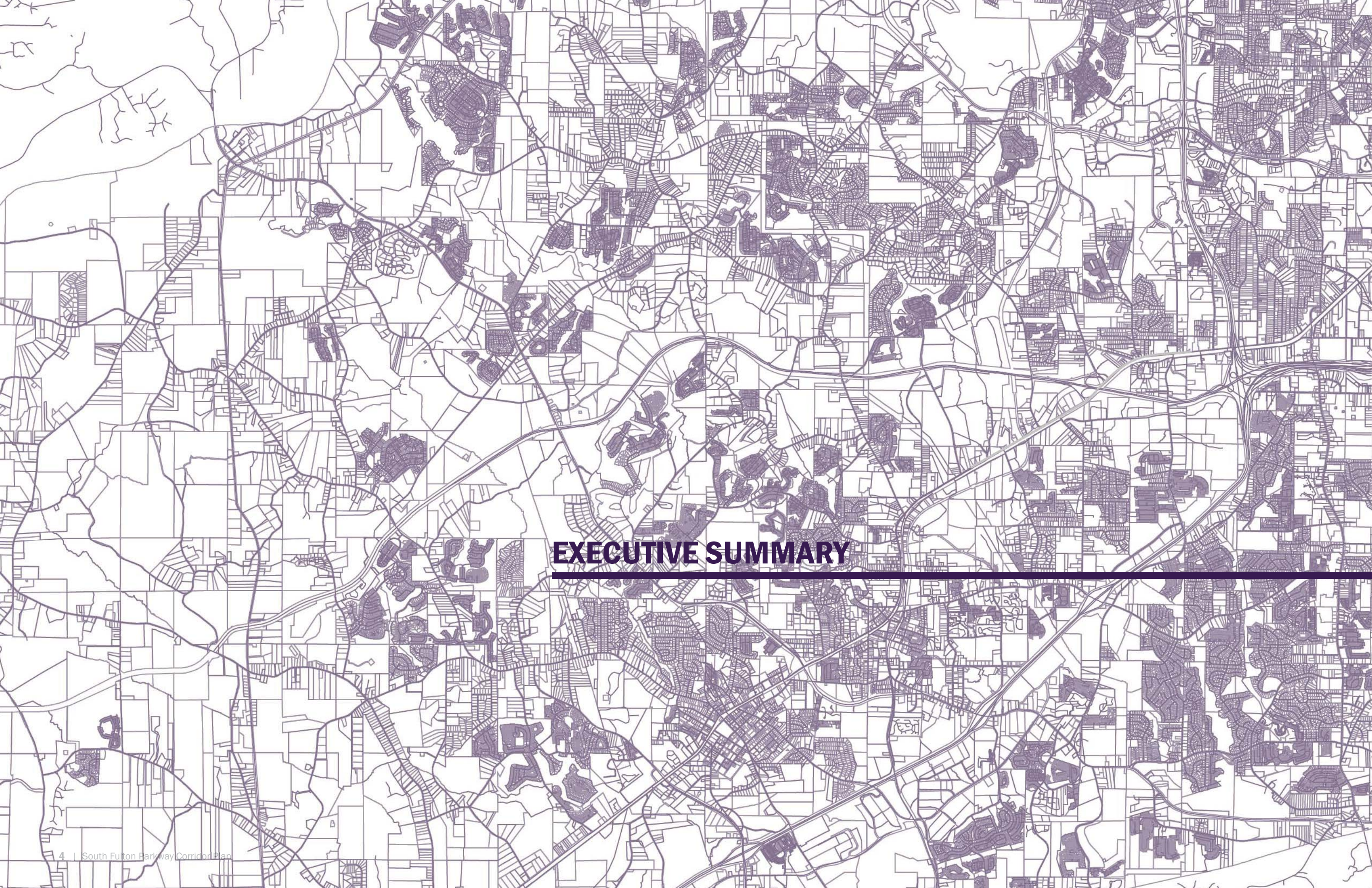
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
■ INTRODUCTION.....	9
■ CURRENT AND PREVIOUS PLANS	12
■ EXISTING CONDITIONS	24
■ CONCEPTS FOR GROWTH.....	36
■ PREFERRED CONCEPT.....	51
■ NEXT STEPS.....	63

APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

APPENDIX B: FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE SITE PLAN



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Located immediately southwest of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, South Fulton Parkway is ripe for development. The corridor stretches through the heart of South Fulton County, and represents one of the biggest opportunities for development close to the heart of the Atlanta region. It is an opportunity that is not only unique to Atlanta, but to the entire United States in terms of its size and proximity to a major international airport.

Over the past 15 years, multiple plans have been developed for the corridor. Each of these plans represent a different set of stakeholders, and make numerous recommendations—sometimes in direct conflict with one another.

The intent of the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan is to bring all of the Parkway’s stakeholders together to reach consensus on a single vision for land use and transportation. This vision will represent the long-range goal for the area’s future—one where everyone benefits, and where growth is thoughtfully balanced with the Parkway’s resources.

This plan focuses on a 9.5 mile segment of the Parkway between Roosevelt Highway and Highway 154/Cascade-Palmetto Highway. The study area includes land within a 1-mile radius of each side of the Parkway, totaling approximately 23.8 square miles. According to the 2010 United States Census, the study area is currently home to approximately 20,000 people. These residents are spread among multiple jurisdictions: unincorporated Fulton County, the City of Union City, the City of Chattahoochee Hills, and the City of College Park.

PROCESS

Sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan was developed over a five-month period in 2016. Tasks were organized into three primary phases: background information and start up, the charrette, and final report and presentations. Stakeholder and public engagement formed a critical component of the plan, and in the development of both the preliminary and preferred concepts. The heart of the process was a two-week charrette held in October, which engaged over 100 people from the community. The resulting plan represents a vision for the study area that is supported by those who participated in the process.

CURRENT AND PREVIOUS PLANS

One major impetus of the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan is to rectify conflicting recommendations from a number of previous and existing plans. Some of these directly affect the study area, whereas others provide a broader context for this part of the Atlanta region. Contextual plans evaluated as part of this effort included the following:

- Fulton County Comprehensive Plan
- Douglas County Comprehensive Plan
- City of Chattahoochee Hills Comprehensive Plan
- City of Palmetto Comprehensive Plan
- City of Fairburn Comprehensive Plan
- Aerropolis Atlanta Blueprint
- Union Station Redevelopment Study Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)
- Chattahoochee Hill Country LCI
- Fairburn Historic Downtown LCI
- Palmetto LCI
- Union City Town Center Redevelopment Plan
- Chattahoochee Hill Country Regional Greenway Trail Master Plan

Taken together, these plans illustrate a broader community desire for many mixed-use centers throughout South Fulton County; significant industrial development along Interstate 85 (I-85); growth and investment around the airport; and the preservation of rural areas west of Highway 154/Cascade-Palmetto Highway.

Specific attention was paid to plans that directly affect the study area. These plans included:

- South Fulton County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)
- South Fulton Parkway Access Management Plan
- South Fulton Parkway Transit Feasibility Study
- South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan
- Fulton County Comprehensive Plan
- Union City Comprehensive Plan
- Union City Urban Redevelopment Plan
- Parkway South: An Economic Development Master Plan

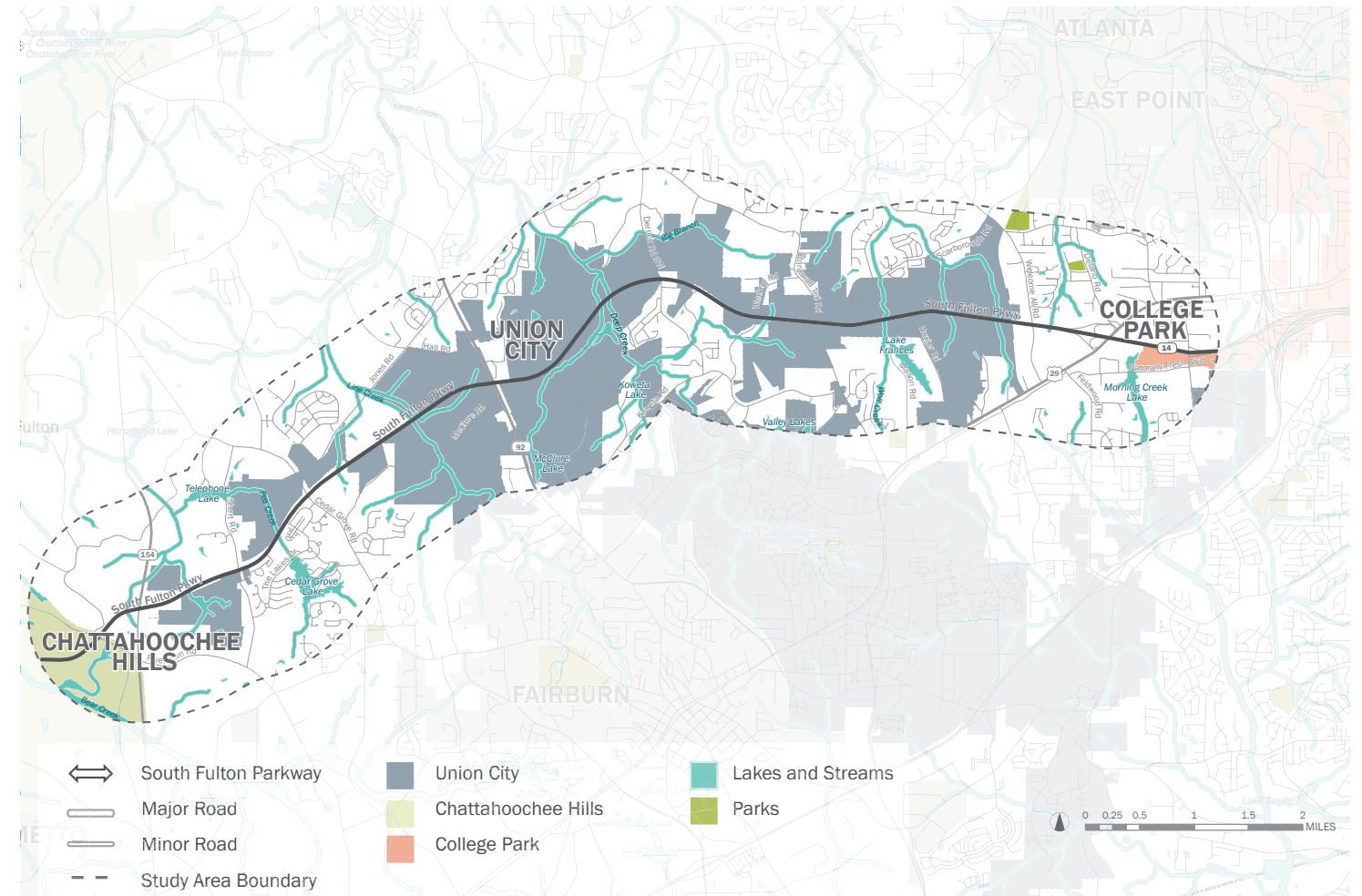


Figure 1. Study Area Jurisdictions



Open House #1



Stakeholder Session #1



Open House #2

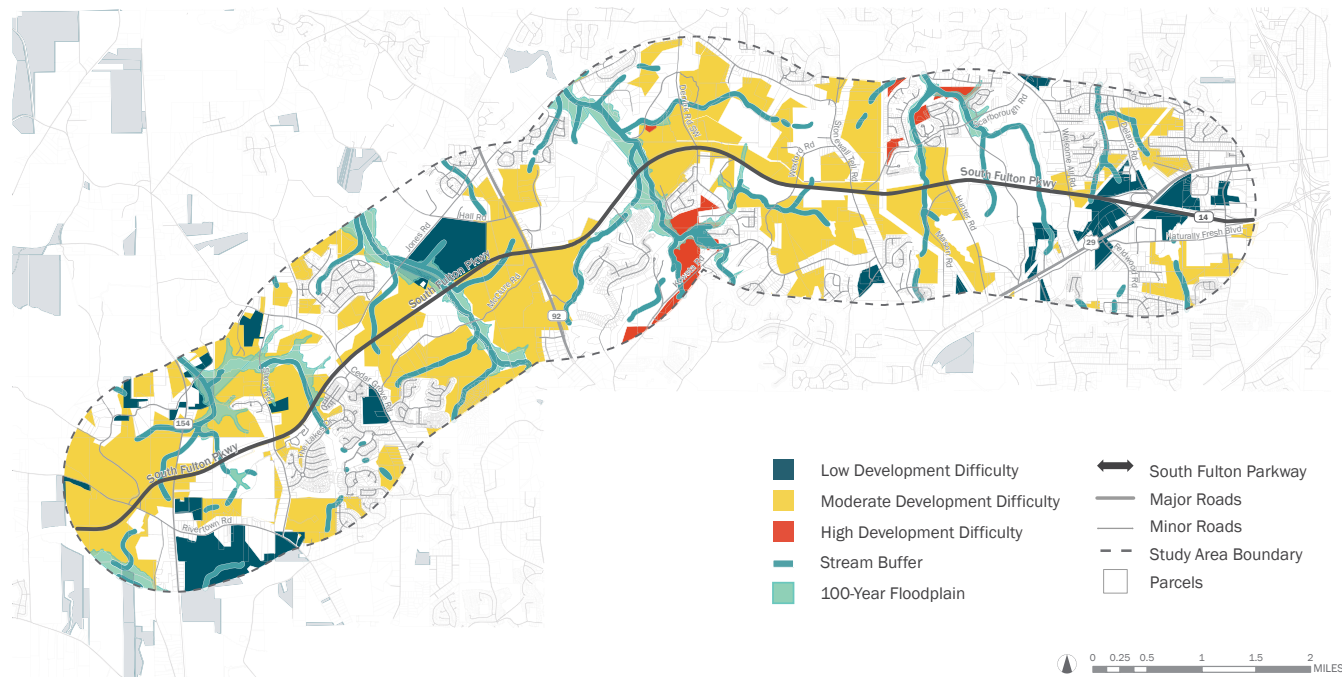


Figure 2. Developable Land Analysis



Figure 3. Areas of Opportunity

Although these plans made various recommendations for the study area, they agreed on one aspect: growth is coming to the Parkway. What they disagreed on was the type of growth, intensity of growth, locations of growth, and how growth would be served effectively by transportation.

This South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan is a first step in resolving these differences to determine a single, community-supported vision for the future.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Although there is a sense that the Parkway is a “blank slate” for development, the planning team’s examination of current data indicated that this is not entirely the case. Multiple parts of the study area have already been developed, creating a patchwork of communities. These areas are primarily newer single-family residential to the west, and a mix of industrial and older single-family residential areas in the east. Approximately half of the study area is undeveloped.

In contrast to current land use, the existing zoning in the study area allows for significant development, particularly along the Parkway. Although the intent of much of this zoning is to encourage mixed-use development, current zoning is largely flexible and allows a broad range of uses.

The existing transportation system is inadequate to support the level of growth allowed by zoning. Apart from the Parkway, there are few major arterials in the study area, and a lack of secondary east-west roadways that could accommodate local trips. There are no bicycle facilities, and sidewalks are primarily limited to newer housing developments and lack connectivity to one another. Transit is limited to a handful of MARTA routes in the east side of the study area.

One of the most predominant aspects of the Parkway is its rural, natural character. The natural features present in the study area pose some constraint to future growth, in particular the multiple stream corridors (and their protected buffers) and steep topography. Additionally, approximately 980 acres within the study area are under conservation easement and protected in perpetuity.

When considered as a whole, the existing conditions analysis hinted at a study area that has opportunities for development, but limitations to where this growth can occur. To confirm this, the planning team conducted a high-level analysis of developable land. In this analysis, land that is already developed or under conservation easement was considered undevelopable at this time. Land that remained was then evaluated for the presence of known natural constraints such as stream buffers and steep topography. The result is a three-tiered identification of developable areas within the corridor.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

Using the developable lands analysis as a base, the planning team identified four major areas of opportunity for future growth. These areas represent the locations within the study area that have the greatest adjacency and concentration of potentially developable land. It should be noted that these four areas do not represent an intensive, parcel-by-parcel analysis—instead they are a high-level framework for identifying broad areas that have growth potential.

CONCEPTS FOR GROWTH

The areas of opportunity provided the “containers” for envisioning growth in the study area. Based on a combination of existing plans and initial stakeholder input, the planning team developed three preliminary concepts:

Concept 1: Stay the Course

Rooted in existing zoning and approved Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs), Stay the Course represents a potential outcome if the study area continues along its current trajectory.

Concept 2: Green Corridor

The Green Corridor concentrates growth in a series of villages and towns connected by a system of greenways, trails, and secondary roadways.

Concept 3: Mega-Node

The Mega Node focuses growth into a dense, mixed-use, city-like community with transit.

These three concepts were presented to stakeholders and the public during the first week of the charrette. Almost all participants agreed that “Staying the Course” was the least preferred option. Most participants noted that they liked aspects of both the Green Corridor and the Mega-Node, and wanted to see the best of these two visions combined.

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT COMPARISON

CONCEPT

KEY FIGURES

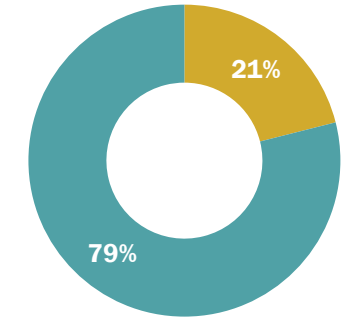
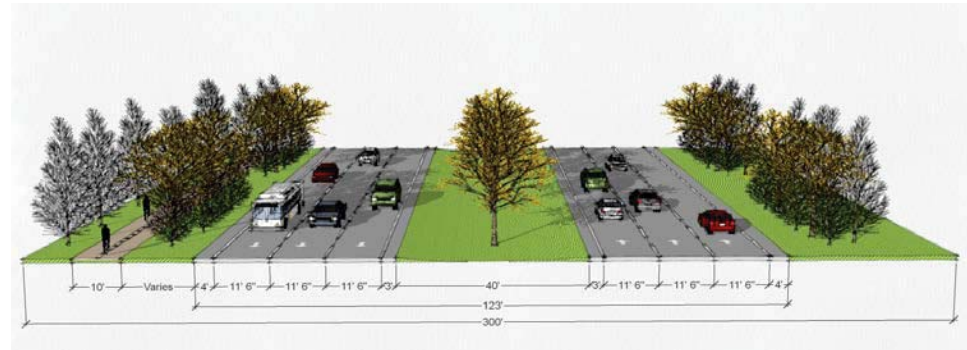
PARKWAY CROSS SECTION

RANKING BY PUBLIC*

STAY THE COURSE



New Residents: 24,500
New Residential Units: 10,600
Additional SF Retail: 430,000
Additional SF Office: 2,910,000
Additional SF Industrial: 8,860,000
New Trips Generated Daily: 162,000

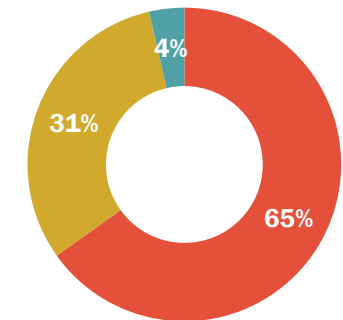
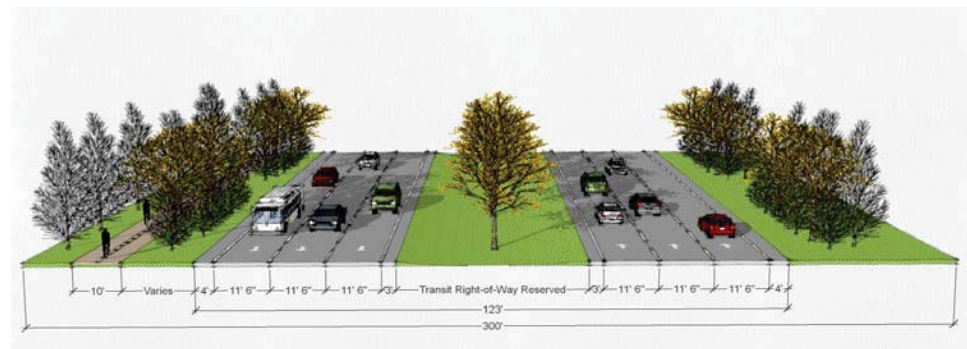


■ 1st ■ 2nd ■ 3rd

GREEN CORRIDOR



New Residents: 24,100
New Residential Units: 10,500
Additional SF Retail: 1,130,000
Additional SF Office: 3,360,000
Additional SF Industrial: 6,100,000
New Trips Generated Daily: 140,000

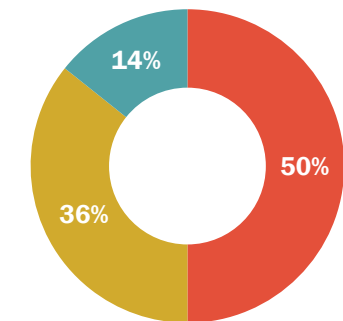
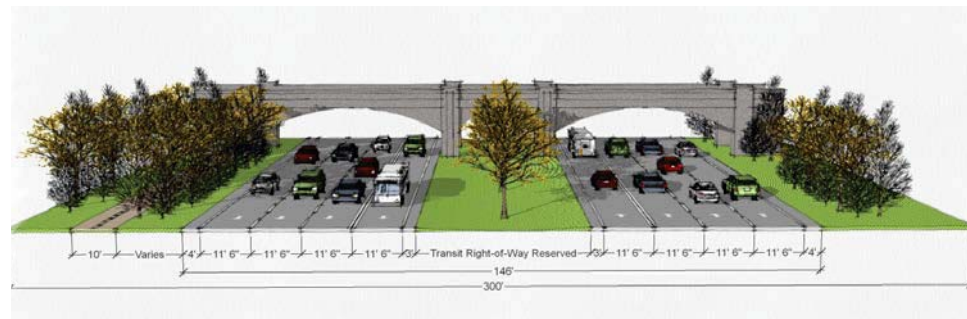


■ 1st ■ 2nd ■ 3rd

MEGA NODE



New Residents: 60,700
New Residential Units: 26,000
Additional SF Retail: 6,200,000
Additional SF Office: 13,700,000
Additional SF Industrial: 6,400,000
New Trips Generated Daily: 345,000



■ 1st ■ 2nd ■ 3rd

Figure 4. Comparison of Preliminary Concepts

*Not all participants voted for a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice

PREFERRED CONCEPT

The preferred concept for growth applies the greenway system from the Green Corridor to the intensity of the Mega-Node in the east, and the village pattern of growth in the west. Together, this vision maximizes growth potential in balance with the Parkway's natural character to become the new center of South Fulton County.

In general, the intensity of development tapers off from high-intensity industrial and office uses in the east to more rural, lower-intensity land uses in the west near Chattahoochee Hills. Dense urban centers characterize areas in the east, with compact villages and towns dominating growth patterns further west.

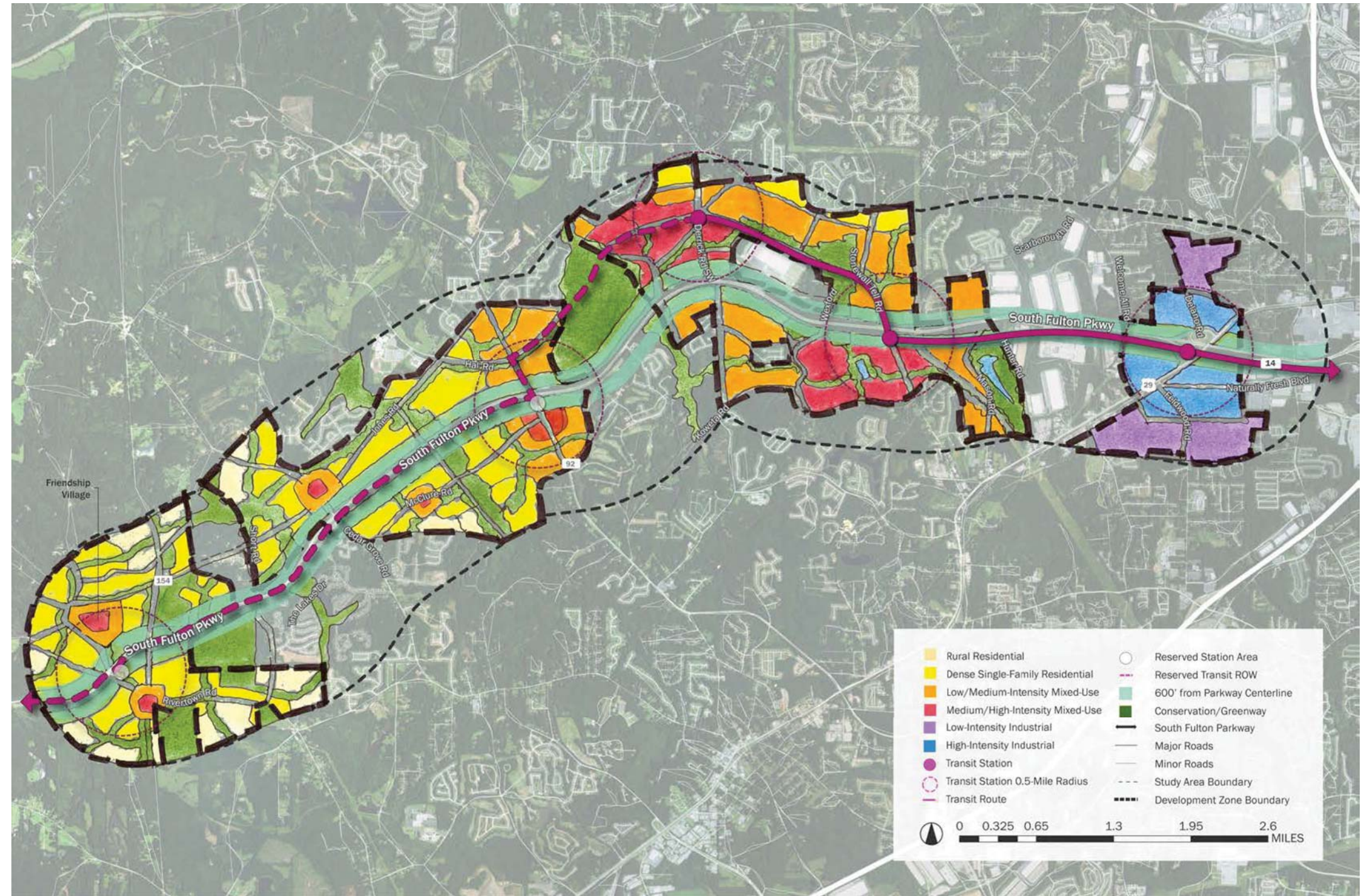
The transportation system will be significantly upgraded to accommodate the expected growth. The Parkway will be widened, and some intersections will be grade-separated to preserve mobility. Off the Parkway, a robust network of secondary and tertiary roads will provide more route options for local trips, as will the system of multi-use trails. Premium transit is envisioned to serve the highest intensity urban centers east of Highway 92, and right-of-way (ROW) will be reserved to the west for future transit development.

NEXT STEPS

Implementation of the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan will require a combination of strategic organizational partnerships, land use policy and zoning adjustments, prioritization of funding opportunities, and strong marketing of and commitment to a unified outcome for the corridor. Immediate (next 90 days) steps include reconvening the inter-jurisdictional working group; promoting the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan to neighboring cities, CIDs, and other organizations; and supporting corridor marketing campaigns that are currently under development.

In the next year to two years, it is recommended that stakeholders form a "Corridor Compact" that represents a commitment to the plan's vision. Additionally, other plans will need to be updated to align with the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan; zoning codes should be re-evaluated; the new City of South Fulton should be actively engaged as a new partner; trail and greenway planning should move forward; and both GDOT and MARTA should be engaged more directly.

When the next South Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan is updated in three to five years, it is essential that the South Fulton Parkway corridor plan be integrated into its recommendations.



58,600

NEW RESIDENTS



3,190,000

ADDITIONAL SQUARE FEET OF RETAIL



25,500

NEW RESIDENTIAL UNITS



6,430,000

ADDITIONAL SQUARE FEET OF INDUSTRIAL



12,770,000

ADDITIONAL SQUARE FEET OF OFFICE



304,000

NEW TRIPS GENERATED DAILY

Figure 5. Preferred Concept and Estimated Growth Numbers



INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, GDOT moved forward with a plan to build South Fulton Parkway, a 20-mile corridor through the heart of South Fulton County's undeveloped land. The intent of the Parkway was to open land for new residential, commercial, and industrial development. Some residents feared that sprawl would soon follow, but to-date growth has been modest and the Parkway still feels like a piece of rural Georgia.

The slower pace of growth can likely be attributed to a number of reasons. First, the Parkway does not connect two major destinations. Although Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport anchors the parkway to the east, there is currently no large population or job center at its western terminus. Second, land around the Parkway is heavily forested, and punctuated by steep slopes, streams, and floodplains; although developable, site preparation is costly and more expensive than in other areas with fewer natural constraints. Third, the communities along the Parkway have not reached consensus on a cohesive vision for future development, and the area lacks an identifiable "brand." Without this, misconceptions or negative impressions may deter investment and the desired levels of growth.

But the strengths outweigh the challenges. Along South Fulton Parkway are thousands of acres of land available for development interspersed with land protected for conservation, all within a 15-minute drive of the world's busiest airport. The land is beautiful, and still retains a strong sense of place.

Most importantly, there is a strong network of stakeholders who are deeply committed to the Parkway's future. Many of these stakeholders have sponsored studies to examine the possibilities for the area's growth and develop a vision for the future. The challenge is that each stakeholder has a slightly different interest in the Parkway, leading to the creation of multiple visions for the same area.

The intent of this plan is to bring all of the Parkway's stakeholders together to reach consensus on a single vision for land use and transportation. This vision will represent the long-range goal for the area's future—one where everyone benefits, and where growth is thoughtfully balanced with the Parkway's resources.

PROJECT PROCESS

Sponsored by the ARC, the South Fulton Parkway Corridor Plan process spanned five months in late 2016. Because of the large body of planning work and studies that have already been conducted in the region, the main focus of this plan was to develop consensus around a single vision. The plan was carried out in three general phases:

- **Phase 1: Background Information and Start Up.** The planning team evaluated existing studies and met with stakeholders for a start-up meeting and bus tour of the corridor. Using this input and previous studies as a springboard, the planning team developed three preliminary concepts for consideration.
- **Phase 2: Charrette.** Over two weeks in October, the planning team presented three preliminary concepts to stakeholders and the general public. Through the course of multiple meetings, these concepts were refined and ultimately a single concept was selected as the preferred vision for the Parkway's future.
- **Phase 3: Final Report and Presentation.** The planning team developed a report to document the process, and presented the process, findings, and final concept to ARC, the South Fulton Municipal Association, and the South Fulton Parkway Alliance.

STUDY AREA

Located approximately 12 miles southwest of downtown Atlanta, the project area study focused on a 9.5-mile segment of South Fulton Parkway between US 29/Roosevelt Highway and Highway 154/Cascade-Palmetto Highway. The corridor connects Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport with the City of Chattahoochee Hills and beyond to Douglas County.

The study area includes land within a 1-mile radius of each side of the Parkway, totaling approximately 23.8 square miles. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, approximately 20,000 people live within the study area.

Historically, land within the study area was mostly part of unincorporated Fulton County. In 2006, Union City annexed over 4,100 acres, much of it in the study area. Today, approximately 35 percent of the study area is part of the City of Union City, 62 percent is part of unincorporated Fulton County, 3 percent is City of Chattahoochee Hills, and the rest is split between the Cities of College Park and East Point. A referendum on the creation of the City of South Fulton could result in another jurisdiction being introduced into this area, further underscoring the complexity of governance in South Fulton County.

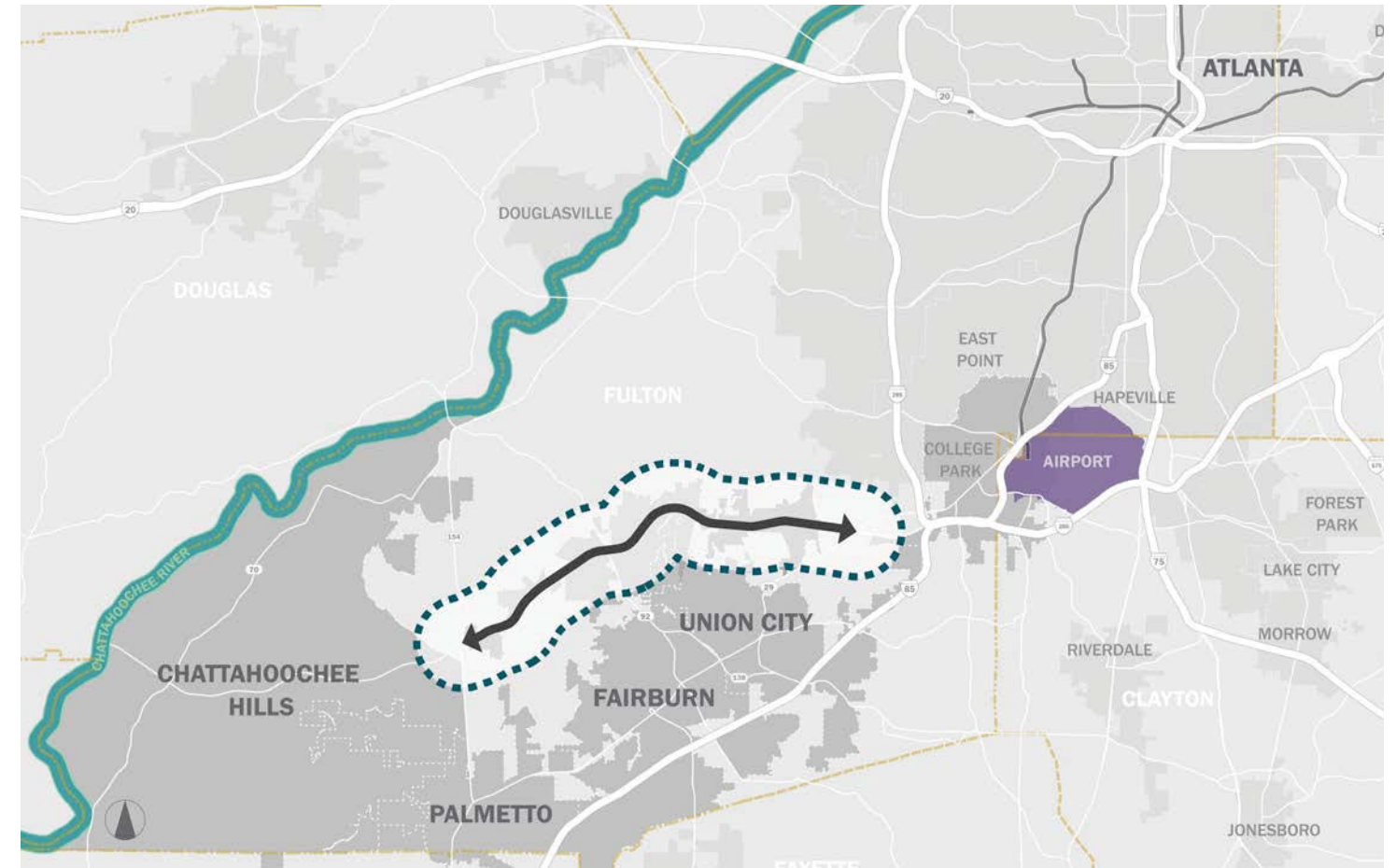


Figure 6: Regional Context of Study Area

South Fulton Parkway Corridor Stakeholders

- o Fulton County
- o City of Union City
- o City of Chattahoochee Hills
- o City of Fairburn
- o City of Palmetto
- o Douglas County
- o GDOT
- o Georgia Department of Economic Development
- o Georgia State House of Representatives Districts 62, 64, and 65
- o Georgia State Senate Districts 35 and 39
- o Major property owners
- o ARC
- o South Fulton Parkway Alliance
- o Utility companies
- o Cedar Grove community
- o Cliftondale community
- o Churches
- o Neighborhood groups and associations

Please see Appendix A for the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

STUDY AREA

The study area encompasses a blend of jurisdictions, land uses, assets, and challenges. Following is a summary of existing conditions related to land use, zoning, transportation, the environment, topography, community and cultural facilities, DRIs, and developable land.



Figure 7: Study Area

