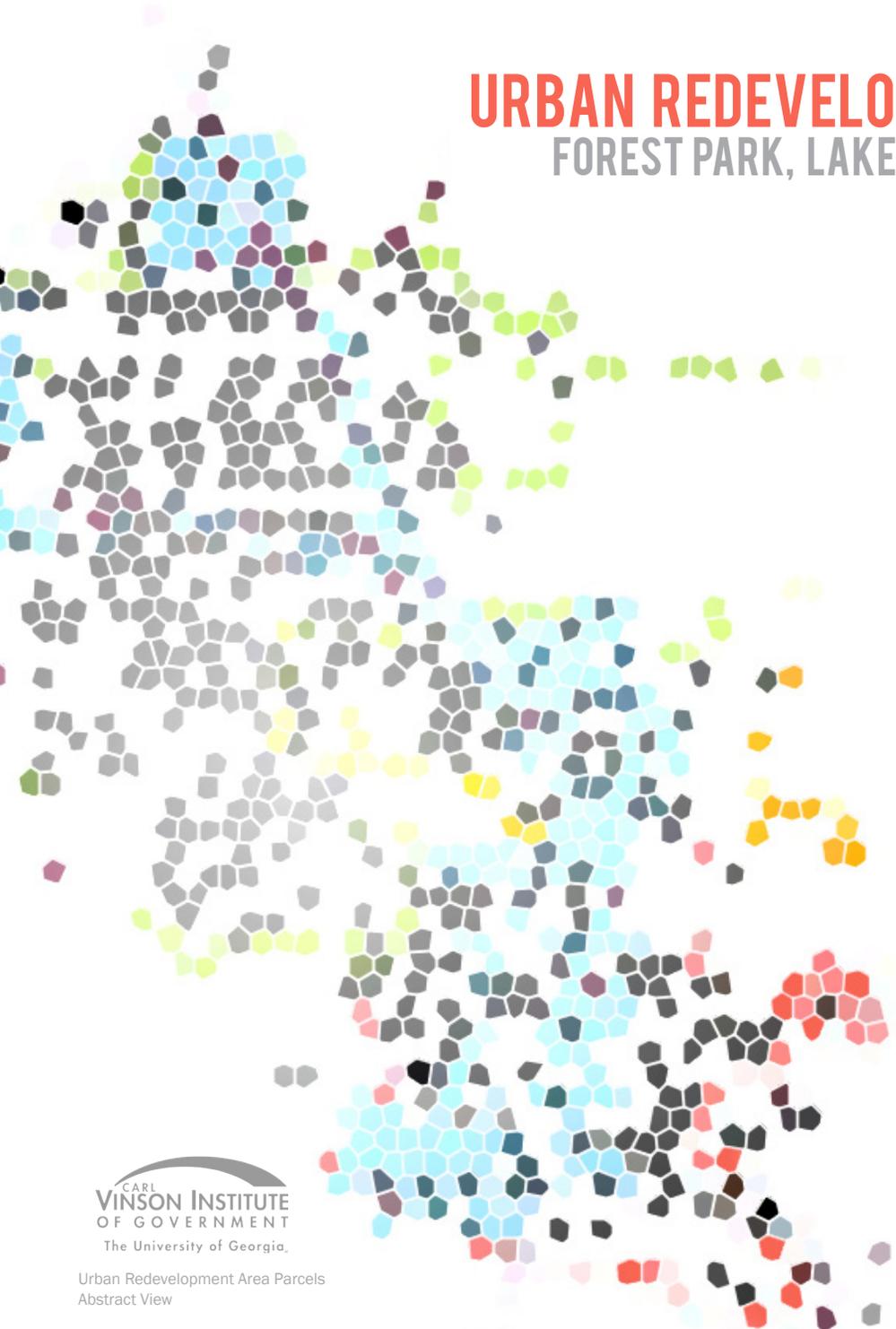


# TRI-CITIES URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

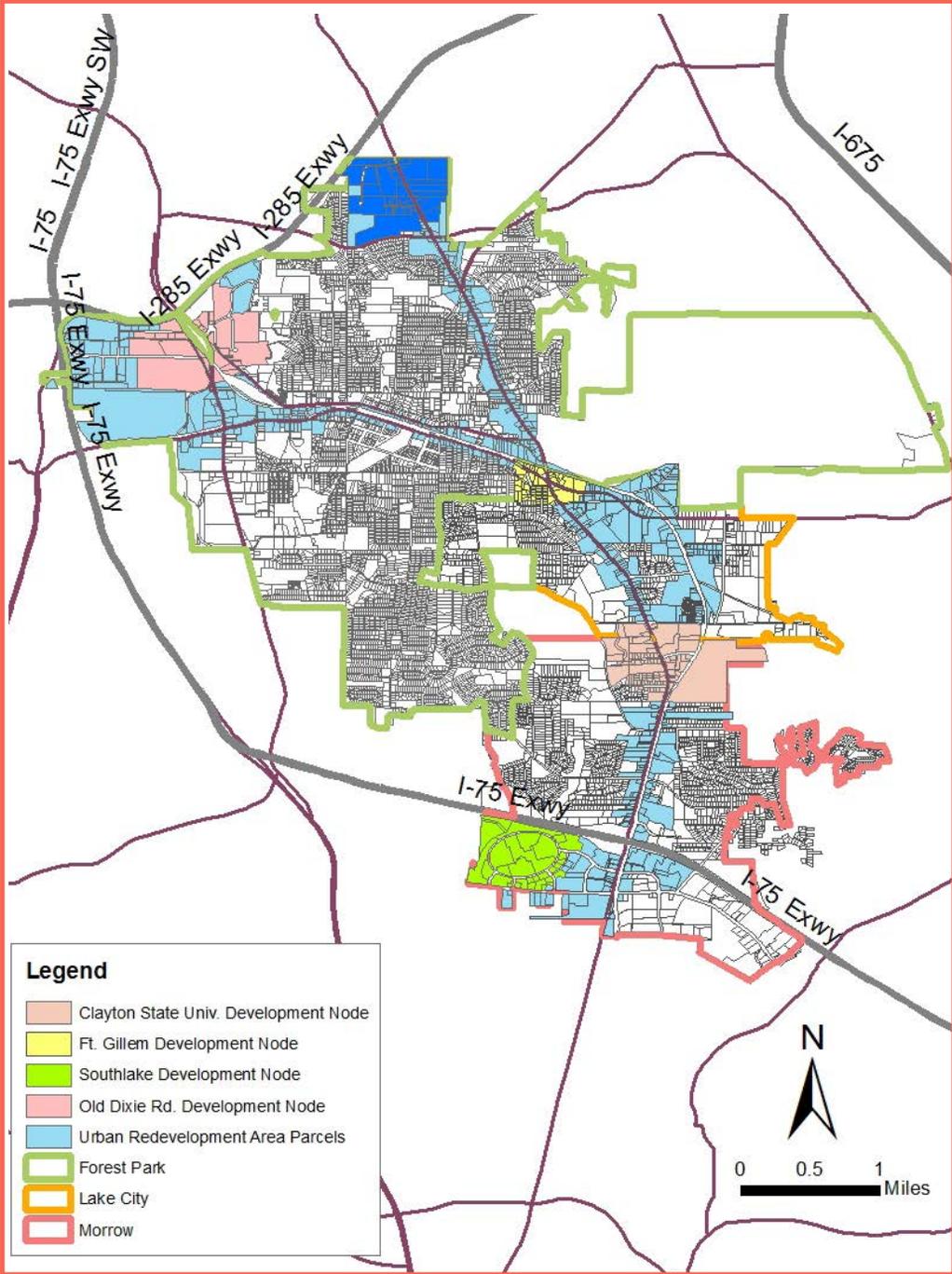
## FOREST PARK, LAKE CITY, & MORROW



CARL  
VINSON INSTITUTE  
OF GOVERNMENT  
The University of Georgia.

Urban Redevelopment Area Parcels  
Abstract View

NOVEMBER 2014



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## INTRODUCTION

The cities of Forest Park, Lake City, and Morrow have banded together in an unprecedented way to arrest economic decline, promote regional development, and remake the image of this part of the south Atlanta metro-area into one of a thriving, prosperous, and innovative community. This region is on the cusp of a potential economic resurgence as past efforts at renewal begin to come to fruition, including projects such as the local acquisition of the Ft. Gillem complex, the redevelopment of Southlake Mall, and the expansion of Clayton State University. This area also benefits from its proximity to Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and the presence of the Georgia Archives, the Southeast Regional Branch of the National Archives, and the Atlanta State Farmers Market as well as its connections to major transportation corridors I-75 and I-285. The recent opportunities along with the geographic advantages the cities possess provide this community with a unique chance to marshal internal and external resources to revitalize and grow the areas identified in this plan.

To better leverage these advantages and opportunities to restore the deteriorated and blighted parts of this community, these three municipalities have come together. They are aligning their development objectives and planning goals to create a cohesive vision for what has been dubbed the Tri-Cities Area. This Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) is the first step toward implementing this grand vision.

This URP focuses on promoting growth and redevelopment along the primary commercial corridors in the Tri-Cities Area: Jonesboro Road and Forest Parkway. These corridors represent the bulk of commercial development in the Tri-Cities Area, and they connect numerous regionally significant landmarks like the Fort Gillem redevelopment area, Clayton State University, Spivey Hall, the Georgia Archives, the National Archives, and Southlake Mall. Both of these corridors also connect the major transportation arteries of Interstates 75 and 285. This plan incorporates specific projects and goals outlined in the comprehensive plans, Livable Centers Initiative studies, and numerous other previously prepared plans for these three cities.

Because this redevelopment will initially focus on the Jonesboro Road and Forest Parkway corridors, the redevelopment area is inherently long and linear. Together these corridors represent 11 miles of commercial development through the three cities. A successful redevelopment plan requires a cohesive vision for the area and a collaborative approach to promoting development. Therefore, each municipality in the Tri-Cities Area

will adopt a common URP but create a separate Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA). Each Urban Redevelopment Agency will sign an operating agreement that describes its initial work plan, short-term goals, and a timeline for actions described in this plan to be carried out in cooperation with the other two URAs. As the implementation of this URP progresses, the three Urban Redevelopment Agencies will explore the creation of a unified Joint Development Authority for the Tri-Cities Area, with the individual Urban Redevelopment Agencies comprising the board of the joint authority. Until the creation of the Tri-Cities Joint Development Authority or some other unifying structure for the Urban Redevelopment Agencies, their operating agreements will be regularly updated and renewed as actions are completed and the phases of this Urban Redevelopment Plan progress.

**The Tri-Cities URP consists of the following four primary areas in which activities will be carried out by the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies in each of the three cities:**

1. Marketing & Branding
2. Economic Stimulus
3. Transportation Development
4. Housing & Redevelopment

Each of the primary action areas is designed to create a cohesive sense of place within the Tri-Cities Area. These activities will allow the agencies to synergistically leverage the individual development opportunities each city possesses to drive economic development and increase prosperity for all three cities and for the surrounding region.

## THE URBAN REDEVELOPMENT ACT

The Urban Redevelopment Act (O.C.G.A. §36-61-1 et. seq.) was adopted in 1955 by the Georgia General Assembly to access Federal Housing and Urban Renewal funds. Although much has changed since its adoption and the goals of urban redevelopment have evolved, the Urban Redevelopment Act remains the most powerful, flexible, and easy-to-use legislative tool for Georgia’s local governments seeking to spur economic revitalization.

The Urban Redevelopment Act gives cities and counties in Georgia specific powers to rehabilitate, conserve, or redevelop any defined geographic area within their boundaries that possesses conditions that substantially impair or retard the sound growth of the municipality or county. Designation as an Urban Redevelopment Area provides a detailed blueprint of the public sector’s vision and goals for the defined area. This designation also does the following:

- Allows the implementing entity to attach design and use requirements or limitations to specific parcels as covenants that run with the land;
- Simplifies the assembly (and possible replatting) of large tracts of land to attract private redevelopment;
- Expands local government powers of eminent domain, while protecting the rights of private property owners to participate in and benefit financially from the redevelopment strategy;
- Permits the issuance of tax exempt revenue bonds for redevelopment purposes. These may be secured by loans, grants, leases, and other development revenues and do not count in the local government’s general indebtedness cap;
- Allows a community to make exceptions to its development ordinances in order to achieve stated economic and aesthetic outcomes in the redevelopment area; and
- Expands access to some state grant and loan programs and allows the community to expand incentives for private investors.

As a prerequisite to exercising the Urban Redevelopment Act powers, the local governing body must adopt a resolution finding that the area constitutes a “slum area” as defined by the act and that redevelopment is “necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare” of the residents of the jurisdiction. The areas so designated

make up the Urban Redevelopment Area (URA). In addition to designating a URA, the local government is required by the act to adopt an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) for the target area that outlines the specific steps that will be taken to revitalize the URA. Finally, the local government adopts a resolution designating an appropriate agency to exercise the powers conferred by the act to accomplish the goals laid out in the URP.

The Urban Redevelopment Act is not limited to urban areas, and it can be especially useful in very small rural communities and even suburban settings. In fact, rural counties were among the first governments to use the act to spur economic development, rehabilitate deteriorating neighborhoods, and increase the supply of affordable housing. The act allows local governments to take strong action to promote redevelopment, but it is often used in combination with many of Georgia's other legislative redevelopment tools to support local comprehensive planning, revitalize faltering commercial corridors, recruit and nurture small businesses, rehabilitate older homes and neighborhoods, ensure architecturally compatible infill development, and generate new adaptive uses for old industrial and agricultural facilities. Several programs created or administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) have been modified based on refinements to state planning statutes. Communities that adopt URPs, especially when used in combination with other innovative redevelopment tools, may now be eligible for incentives such as higher job tax credits. These program initiatives were designed to enable both urban and very rural communities to create more effective strategies to address redevelopment and poverty.

The Urban Redevelopment Act is a relatively straightforward and flexible redevelopment tool. It balances communities' need to remove barriers to economic development created by slum and blight conditions with protecting the rights of property owners and low-income residents. It is also worth noting that this law differs from the similarly titled Urban Redevelopment Powers Act (O.C.G.A. §36-44-1), which authorizes tax allocation districts, though both laws have community development as their primary goal.

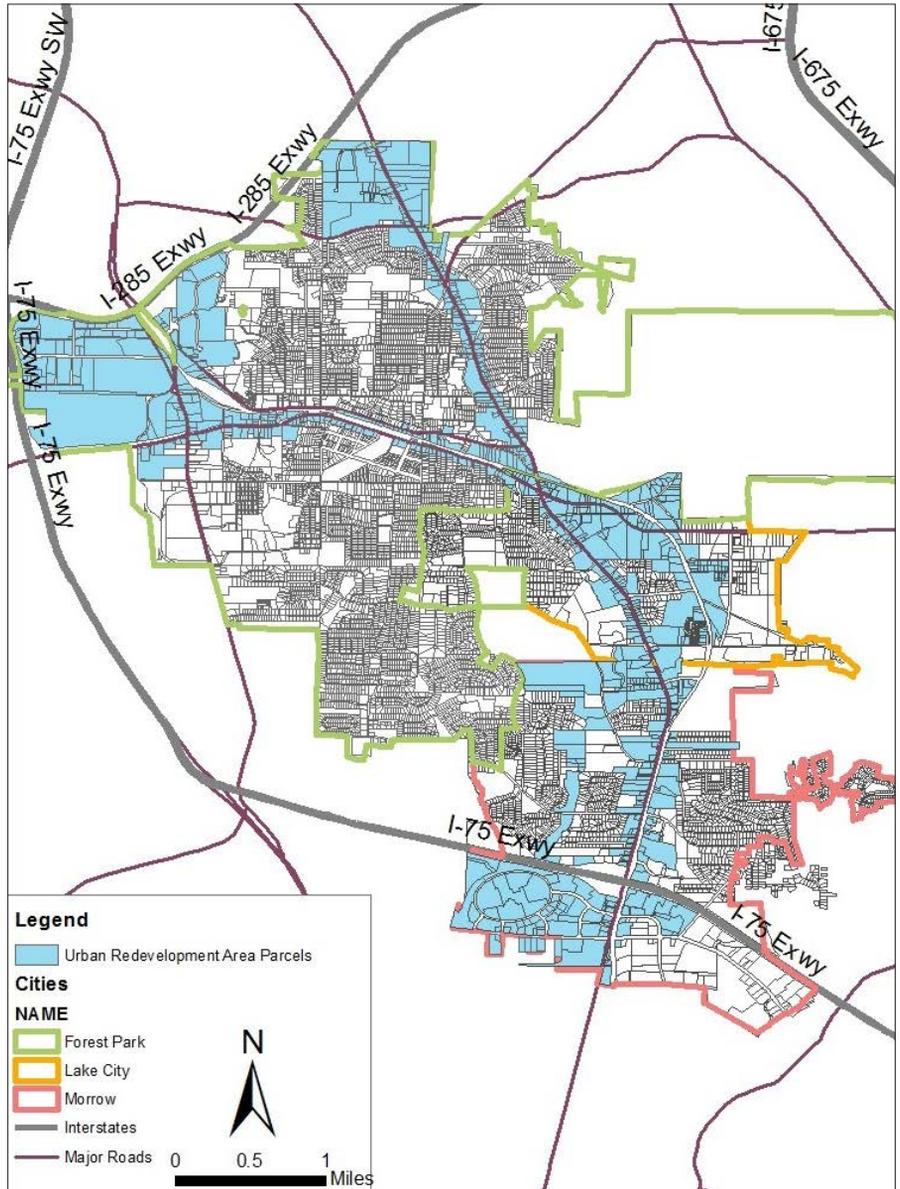
# THE TRI-CITIES URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA

Figure 1: Map of the Urban Redevelopment Area

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Areas comprise a total of approximately 2,350 acres and 935 individual parcels along approximately 11 miles of the commercial corridors in the Tri-Cities Area. The individual Urban Redevelopment Areas are:

- Forest Park Urban Redevelopment Area: 464 parcels and approximately 1,200 acres
- Lake City Urban Redevelopment Area: 245 parcels and approximately 400 acres
- Morrow Urban Redevelopment Area: 226 parcels and approximately 750 acres

The Tri-Cities Area consists of portions of the cities of Forest Park, Lake City, and Morrow based around the commercial corridors following Jonesboro Road and Forest Parkway, as shown in the map below.



## URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA NODES

Within each cities' URAs, subsets of parcels make up Development Nodes at key locations intended to be the focal points for development, as shown in Figure 2 below. These include the primary gateways into the Tri-Cities Area because they are at the intersections of the major regional transportation corridors as well as locations adjacent to major sites for future development such as the Fort Gillem complex, Southlake Mall, and Clayton State University.

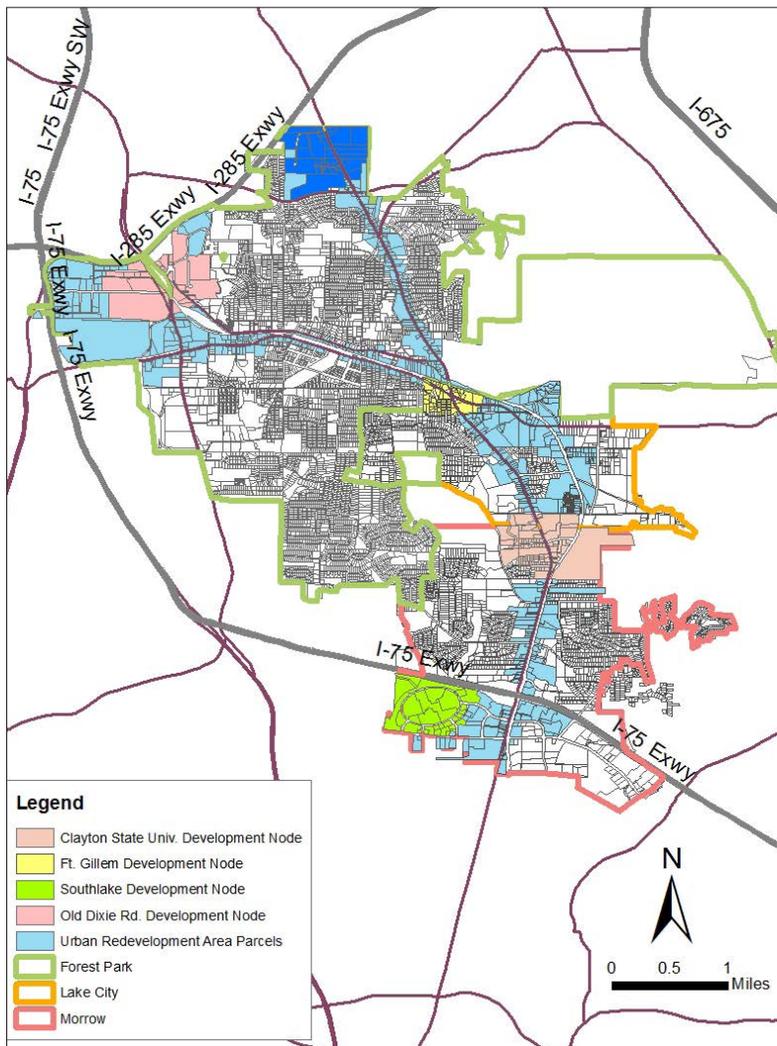


Figure 2: URAs with Development Nodes

The Tri-Cities URAs also include the commercial corridors that link these Development Nodes. These nodes will be the areas in which the Urban Redevelopment Agencies focus attention for Transportation Development, and Housing and Redevelopment activities.

## STRATEGIC VISION AND CONSISTENCY WITH THE CITIES' COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

This Urban Redevelopment Plan is designed to further the goals and policies identified in the comprehensive plans and other planning efforts of each of the Tri-Cities. The overarching goal of this URP is to create Urban Redevelopment Agencies in each of the three cities that will operate collaboratively to promote development in the Tri-Cities Area. These agencies will be charged with implementing specific tasks that promote the goals identified by each of the three cities in previous plans and with determining what additional measures are needed to achieve these goals.

### COMPLIANCE WITH THE FOREST PARK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Forest Park Comprehensive Plan 2005–2025 lays out the following vision for the City of Forest Park:

*This vision will be achieved by promoting a progressively high quality of life through a strategy to use investments in infrastructure to leverage regionally significant economic development investment in the city. Key examples of such envisioned initiatives include the development of a “transit village” and associated commuter rail station, a linear connection across the city, an emphasis on pedestrian-friendly infill development, and health/quality of life improvements such as streetscapes, parks and landscaping.*

The purpose of this URP is to build a foundation for the ongoing implementation of this vision. By leveraging the incentives made available by the designation of an Urban Redevelopment Area and utilizing the powers granted through that designation, the newly created Urban Redevelopment Agency will serve as a focal point for planning, financing, and implementing all aspects of the Forest Park Comprehensive Plan within the URA in four primary activity areas: Marketing & Branding, Economic Stimulus, Transportation Development, and Housing & Redevelopment.

The Forest Park Comprehensive Plan 2005–2025 identifies four unique economic assets: Tradeport, Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Ft. Gillem, and the Atlanta State Farmers Market. The plan’s economic development goals state policies to foster employment opportunities around these assets. The Marketing & Branding component of this URP will seek to identify these assets within this community in order to encourage economic development throughout the Tri-Cities Area.

Connecting these destinations is essential for creating a unified sense of place in the Tri-Cities Area. The Economic Stimulus activity will build off this marketing to bring new businesses and jobs that will lead to the significant economic investment envisioned by the City of Forest Park. The Transportation Development activities will center on uniting the Tri-Cities area both psychologically and physically. Moving visitors and residents effectively from one location to another encourages them to stay in the area longer, visiting additional sites and businesses. For example, students living near Clayton State would be encouraged to take advantage of public transit to reach the restaurants and shops around Southlake Mall rather than driving to venues outside of the Tri-Cities Area. This plan is supported by the future land use designations for commercial development and a mixed-use transit village shown on the Future Land Use Map in the Forest Park Comprehensive Plan 2005–2025. Finally, the Housing & Redevelopment activities will allow direct public participation in the development activities that will lead to the “pedestrian-friendly infill development and health/quality-of-life improvements such as streetscapes, parks and landscaping” envisioned by the comprehensive plan. Thus, this Urban Redevelopment Plan is in compliance with the City of Forest Park Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Forest Park also recently joined Clayton County in forming a land bank to acquire distressed properties with large outstanding tax liens. The Forest Park Urban Redevelopment Agency will be able to work in conjunction with this city-county partnership to restore dilapidated properties and return them to marketability to support the city and region’s overall redevelopment goals.

Figure 3: Forest Park Future Land Use Plan from the 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan

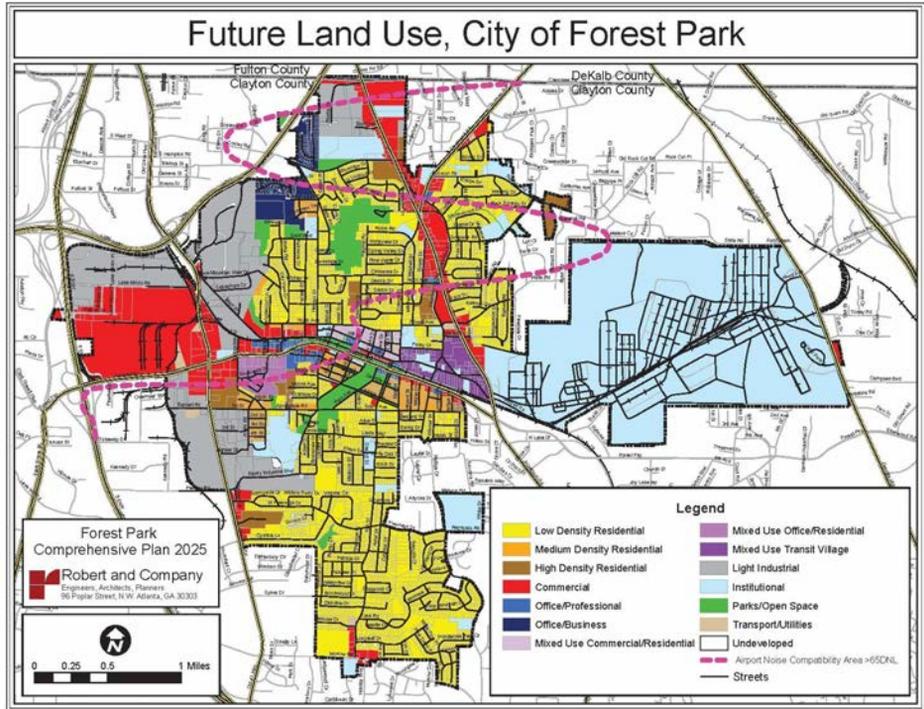
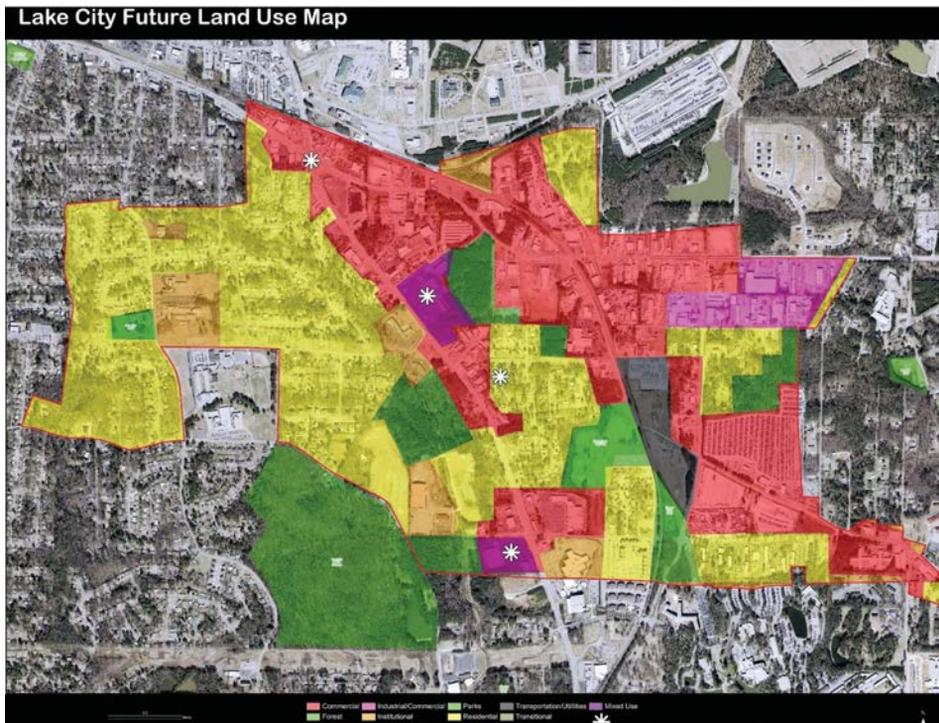


Figure 4: Lake City Future Land Use Plan from 2013-2018 Comprehensive Plan



## COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAKE CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan specifies demographic, economic, and identity challenges faced by the municipality. In a section entitled “Challenges for the Future,” the comprehensive plan states, “Stakeholders have indicated that Lake City—while it does maintain a strong sense of community among residents—does not exhibit a true ‘sense of place.’” Public input linked this to the lack of an “identifiable downtown” and a “well-defined core.”<sup>3</sup> The plan calls for a “renewed focus on the benefits of developing, revitalizing and sustaining compact, walkable, vibrant centers where people can live, work, play, do business, and gather as a community.”<sup>4</sup>

The Development Nodes identified within the URA are intended to be developed as compact urban centers around alternative transportation hubs. The Development Nodes around Clayton State University and Ft. Gillem both offer the opportunity for the type of compact, walkable, vibrant centers described in the comprehensive plan and illustrated in Lake City’s Future Land Use Map below. The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies are specifically tasked with promoting this type of development in these areas as well as creating an identity for the area.

Finally, another key issue is that the majority of Lake City residents work outside of the municipality, and people who work within Lake City are commuting into the city.<sup>5</sup> By promoting economic development in conjunction compact residential development and walkable communities, it is anticipated that more Lake City residents will both live and work in this community. Thus, this Urban Redevelopment Plan is in compliance with the City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan.

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<sup>3</sup>2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan, p.8.

<sup>4</sup>2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan, p.8.

<sup>5</sup>2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan, p.5.

## COMPLIANCE WITH THE MORROW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

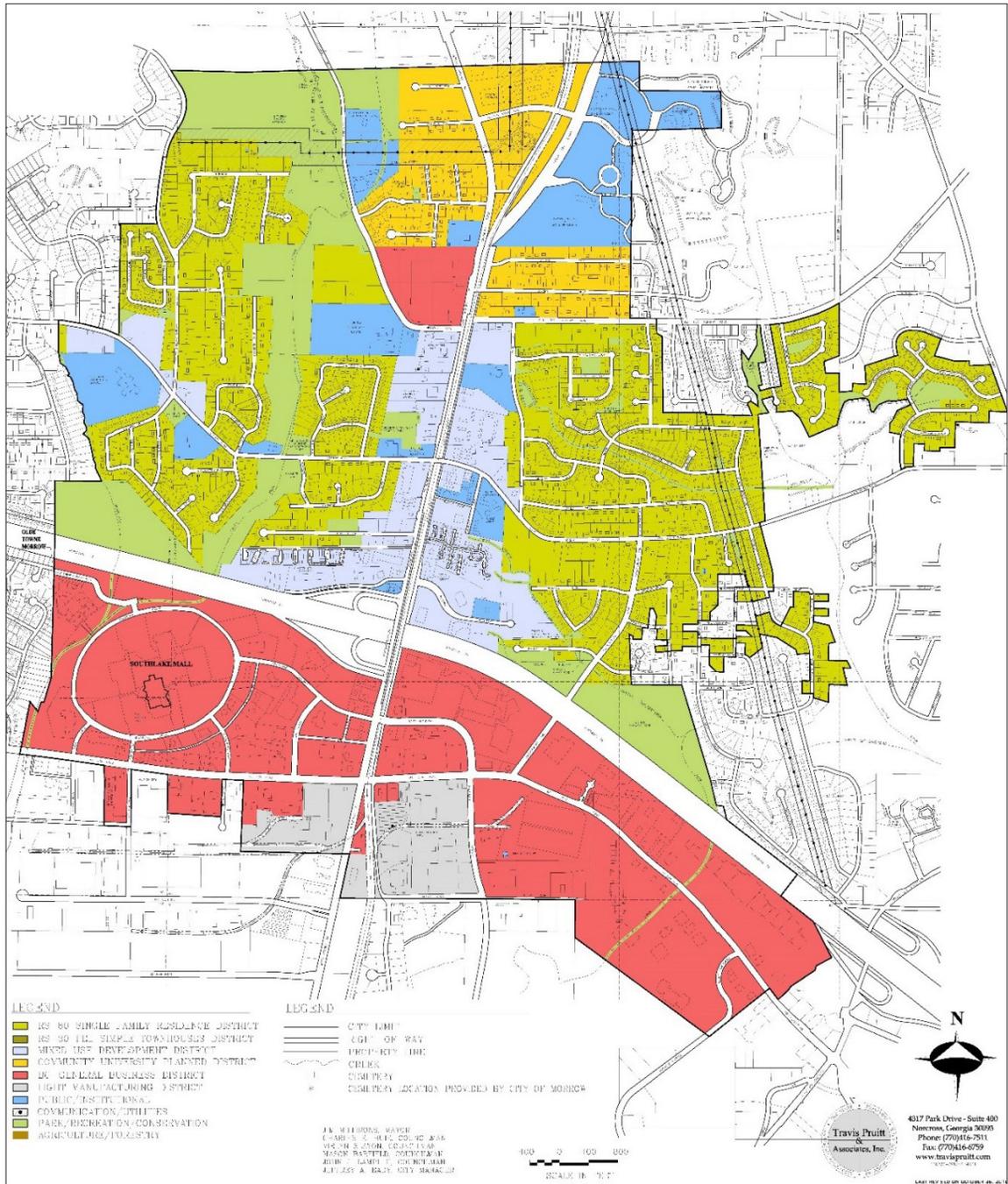
In the City of Morrow's Partial Comprehensive Plan Update 2009, the city identified four primary goals derived from DCA's Quality Community Objectives:

- Morrow needs a town center.
- Morrow needs a regional identity.
- Morrow needs alternative transportation options.
- Morrow should take advantage of its location along major transportation arteries.

Each of these goals is directly furthered by the four primary activities identified in this URP. The Economic Stimulus and Redevelopment activities will promote the growth of a true town center in Morrow around its designated Development Node. Marketing & Branding will help create a regional identity, and Transportation Development activities will focus on improving transportation alternatives, including furthering existing plans such as the Jesters Creek Pedestrian Pathway System.

To further the goals identified in its 2009 Plan Update, in 2011, the City of Morrow completed a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study for the Southlake Mall area. That plan directly informs this Urban Redevelopment Plan, particularly in regard to the location of the Development Node and a potential multimodal mass transit hub in the Southlake Mall area. In furtherance of the goals outlined in the LCI study, in 2012 Morrow completed a Implementation Guide for Mixed Used Development that promotes the same tools referenced here for fostering compact mixed-use developments along Morrow's central commercial corridor. Specifically, that guide points to Tax Allocation Districts, Community Improvement Districts, and public-private partnerships as viable funding mechanisms, all of which are included here. The land uses described here also fit with the general uses described on the 2010 Morrow Future Land Use Map shown below. Thus, this Urban Redevelopment Plan is in compliance with the City of Morrow Comprehensive Plan.

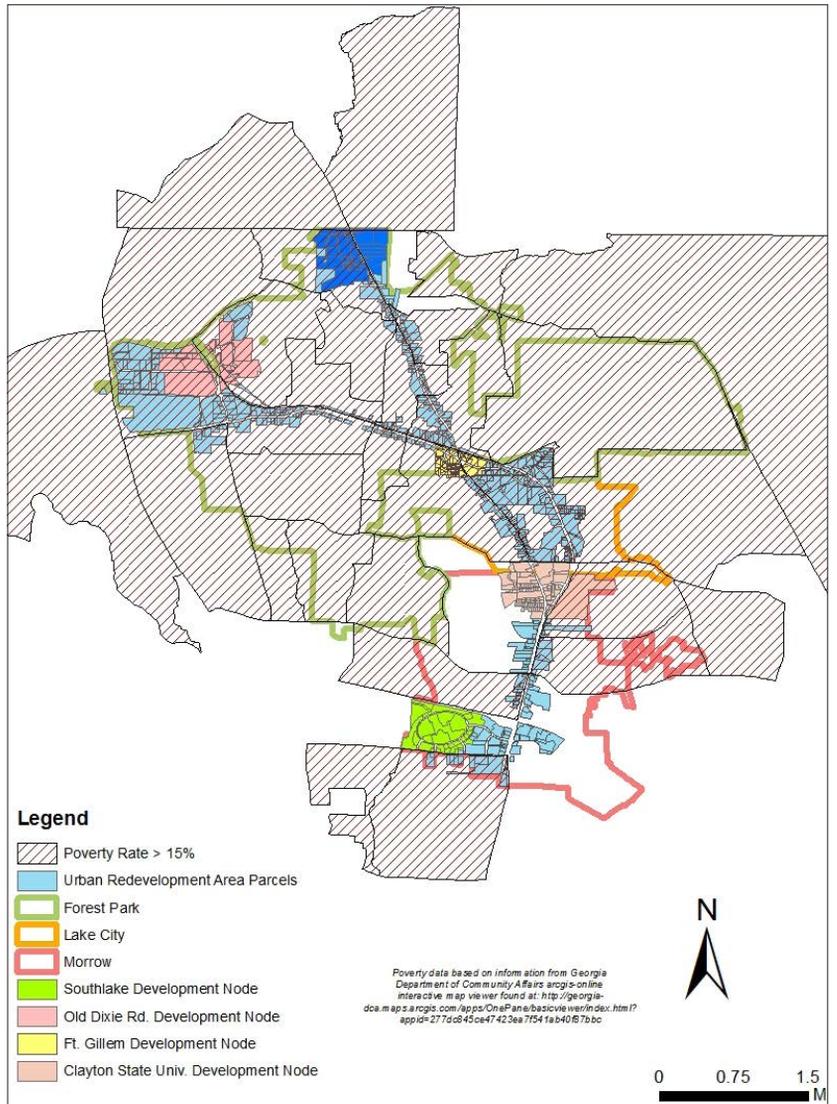
Figure 5: Morrow Future Land Use Plan form



# NEGATIVE CONDITIONS WITHIN THE URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA

In addition to the unoccupied, abandoned, dilapidated, or otherwise blighted properties present in this area, there is also pervasive poverty. The URA straddles two census block groups that both reported poverty rates above 15% in 2013, as shown below. This poverty rate, along with the designation as an Urban Redevelopment Area, qualifies this location to be designated an Opportunity Zone.

Figure 6: Census Block-Groups with greater than 15% poverty.



This Urban Redevelopment Plan comprises four primary activity areas that encompass the broad goals for the Tri-Cities' Urban Redevelopment Agencies. These agencies are required to make specific decisions about how to accomplish goals within each of these activity areas. The issues identified in each activity area will be addressed in the seven phases described below. The work plan also lays out steps to accomplish the goals outlined in the primary activities areas, designates the parties responsible for accomplishing those steps, and provides a timeline for completion of each phase.

## MARKETING & BRANDING

Development of a cohesive identity will differentiate the Tri-Cities Area from the dozens of other municipalities in metropolitan Atlanta. This distinction will help drive economic development in the area, which is a fundamental goal of the comprehensive plans and other planning efforts of each of the three cities. To that end, the Urban Redevelopment Agencies will oversee the creation of a new regional identity for the Tri-Cities Area. This campaign will highlight the regional opportunities and amenities in the cities of Forest Park, Lake City, and Morrow on a regional scale, especially those along the corridors identified as the Urban Redevelopment Area. This campaign will include the development of single logo for the Tri-Cities Area as well as common signage and other visual cues that unify this URA.

This public outreach campaign will also highlight the advantages of living, working, and recreating in the Tri-Cities Area. This will include promoting the redevelopment efforts put in place through this URP and future efforts the Urban Redevelopment Agencies implement in future phases of this process. It will also include marketing the advantages of living in the type of community envisioned by this plan and the past planning efforts in all three cities such as the cost savings of using public transportation versus driving, the health benefits of walking or biking in a connected community, and the environmental benefits of a more compact and connected urban design.

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<sup>3</sup>2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan, p.8.

<sup>4</sup>2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan, p.8.

<sup>5</sup>2013–2018 City of Lake City Comprehensive Plan, p.5.

## ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Economic growth underlies all of the objectives outlined in the Tri-Cities' comprehensive plans. This plan will encourage use of the Georgia Job Tax Credit Program to promote economic development in the Tri-Cities Area, and it will create an Opportunity Zone to expand eligibility for the Job Tax Credit to facilitate redevelopment of the most blighted properties within the URA. Once that incentive is in place to attract new development and employers, the Urban Redevelopment Agencies will assess expanding the use of these tools and determine which other available programs—whether federal, state, or locally initiated—are best suited to further encourage suitable growth in this area. The paragraphs below describe several tools available for this type of economic stimulus.

**Georgia Job Tax Credit Program** – Under the Georgia Job Tax Credit Program, Clayton County is a Tier 1 Less-Developed County.<sup>8</sup> In a Tier 1 county, qualifying businesses that create five or more full-time jobs in the fields of manufacturing, telecommunications, broadcasting, warehousing & distribution, research & development, processing, and/or tourism<sup>9</sup> may receive an annual \$3,500 job tax credit per job for five years (beginning year two after creation of the job and continuing through year six) that may be used against 100% of state income tax liability and withholding.

**Opportunity Zone** – Opportunity Zones expand eligibility for the Job Tax Credit. Businesses locating in URAs containing census block groups with a 15% or higher poverty rate or block groups adjacent to high-poverty block groups are eligible to receive the Job Tax Credit if they create two jobs. Businesses creating jobs in any field including retail are eligible. Opportunity Zones are intended to encourage development and redevelopment in geographic areas that are served by existing economic development programs, making Opportunity Zones a viable possibility for the Tri-Cities Area.<sup>10</sup> The parcels identified as meeting the criteria for an Opportunity Zone designation are identified in **Appendix A**.

**Tax Allocation District (TAD)** – TAD allows a local government to issue bonds secured by a “tax allocation increment,” which is the increase in property tax revenues resulting from the redevelopment activities taking place within a TAD’s area. Tax increment financing

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<sup>8</sup>See Rules and Regulations of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-9-1.02.

<sup>9</sup>Retail jobs are specifically excluded unless the tax credit is claimed in an area designated as an Opportunity Zone.

<sup>10</sup>See <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/economic/DevelopmentTools/programs/opportunityZones.asp>.

allows localities to make needed local improvements to spur development or redevelopment and use the increased land value stemming from those improvements to finance the construction.

**Community Improvement District (CID) or Business Improvement District (BID)**<sup>12</sup> – CIDs and BIDs are both essentially defined areas within which businesses pay an additional tax or fee in order to fund improvements within the district’s boundaries. These funds are administered by a board selected by local businesses and used for projects to help the local economy. BIDs and CIDs provide services, such as cleaning streets, providing security, making capital improvements, marketing the area, and constructing pedestrian and streetscape enhancements. The services provided by the districts are supplemental to those already delivered by the local government.

**Enterprise Zone** – Enterprise Zones provide for property tax exemptions and the abatement or reduction in occupation taxes, regulatory fees, building inspection fees, and other fees that would otherwise be imposed on qualifying businesses. The goal of this program is to promote redevelopment in cities and counties suffering from disinvestment, underdevelopment, and economic decline by encouraging private businesses to reinvest and rehabilitate such areas. To qualify for Enterprise Zone designation, a community must meet three of the following five criteria:

1. *Pervasive poverty*: established using the most current United States decennial census prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau
2. *Unemployment rate* (average for preceding year) at least 10% higher than the state average or significant job dislocation
3. *Underdevelopment* evidenced by the lack of building permits, licenses, land disturbance permits, etc.; lower than development overall rate of activity within the city’s jurisdiction
4. *General distress and adverse conditions* (population decline, health and safety issues, etc.)
5. *General blight* evidenced by the inclusion of any portion of the nominated area in an Urban Redevelopment Area<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Ga. Const. Art. IX, Sect. 7.

<sup>12</sup>O.C.G.A. §36-43-1 et seq.

<sup>13</sup>See <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/economic/DevelopmentTools/programs/enterpriseZones.asp#DownloadRelatedDocuments>.

**Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** – The CDBG program provides communities with financial resources to address a wide range of specific community development needs. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development distributes CDBG funds to large, urban communities identified as “entitlement communities,” and the Georgia DCA distributes fund for other local governments identified as “non-entitlement communities.” CDBG funds are generally available for a wide range redevelopment projects, but establishing an Urban Redevelopment Area provides advantages to securing funding for urban redevelopment projects.<sup>14</sup>

**The Redevelopment Fund** – The Redevelopment Fund gives local governments access to flexible financial assistance to help them implement projects that cannot be undertaken with the usual public sector grant and loan programs. It finances locally initiated public-private partnerships to leverage investments in commercial, downtown, and industrial redevelopment and revitalization projects that would not proceed otherwise. The goals of other DCA CDBG programs typically must benefit low- and moderate-income residents. However, the Redevelopment Fund uses a different HUD national objective of “eliminating slums or blight.” As a result, many smaller scale projects (in downtown areas, blighted industrial areas, etc.) will be competitive for Redevelopment Fund financing. The Redevelopment Fund may be combined with other DCA CDBG programs to reduce the economic challenges of redevelopment projects and increase their investment potential.<sup>15</sup>

**Revitalization Area Strategies (RAS)** – Communities that implement comprehensive redevelopment activities for targeted areas in their city or county may receive bonus points on their annual CDBG applications with an RAS designation and the ability to apply annually for CDBG funds for three years. CDBG application activities that receive the bonus point must take place in the Revitalization Area. The program rewards a comprehensive, collaborative approach that includes private and public partners. RAS Areas must be in census block group(s) with 20% or greater poverty where an Urban Redevelopment Plan has been adopted.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>See [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment/programs](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs) and <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/communities/CDBG/>.

<sup>15</sup>See <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/communities/downtowndevelopment/programs/redevfund.asp>.

**Georgia Downtown Renaissance Fund (GDRF)** – Administered by the Department of Community Affairs, the GDRF provides local governments, downtown development authorities, urban redevelopment authorities, special districts, and nonprofit organizations with financing and technical assistance to encourage economic and small business development, historic preservation, private investment, public improvements, leadership development, training, design assistance, and financing in the effort of improving downtown districts.<sup>17</sup>

### IMPLEMENTATION OF AN OPPORTUNITY ZONE

Designation of a number of particularly underdeveloped and blighted properties as an Opportunity Zone (OZ) as described above is an integral part of this Urban Redevelopment Plan for the Tri-Cities Area. Designation of an OZ is governed by O.C.G.A. §48-7-40.1 and Department of Community Affairs Regulations 110-24-1. An OZ must be wholly made up of areas demonstrating clear and visible signs of pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, general distress, and blight. The application to the DCA for an OZ designation must clearly demonstrate these four criteria. An acceptable application for an Opportunity Zone designation must contain the following:

1. A cover letter to the Commissioner of Community Affairs, Gretchen Corbin, signed by the chief executive officer of each local government joining in the request for designation;
2. A certified copy of all applicable resolutions establishing this Urban Redevelopment Area and any amendments to it;
3. Certification from the local governments' attorneys that the Urban Redevelopment Area was established in accordance with all applicable laws;
4. A narrative describing the history of the proposed OZ and the blighting conditions within the proposed zone;
5. A narrative describing the communities' revitalization strategy for the area and the efforts the communities' have made to accomplish their strategic goals for the zone. This should identify the individuals in the community who are specifically working on the revitalization of the proposed zone;

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<sup>11</sup>Ga. Const. Art. IX, Sect. 7.

<sup>12</sup>O.C.G.A. §36-43-1 et seq.

<sup>13</sup>See <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/economic/DevelopmentTools/programs/enterpriseZones.asp#DownloadRelatedDocuments>.

6. A description of any conflicts of interests with property in the proposed OZ;
7. A representative sampling of photographs keyed to a map of the proposed OZ;
8. A property tax parcel table that includes parcel number, owner, address, current tax value, acreage, and use and condition of each tax parcel;
9. Documentation of the pervasive poverty, underdevelopment, general distress, and blight that justify the OZ designation. Specifically, this should include:
  - A. The unemployment rate for the previous five years for the area compared to the jurisdiction or the county as a whole,
  - B. Building permit information for the previous three years for parcels within the proposed zone compared to the jurisdiction as a whole,
  - C. Business license information for the previous three years for parcels within the proposed zone compared to the jurisdiction as a whole,
  - D. Code enforcement actions for the previous three years for parcels within the proposed zone compared to the jurisdiction as a whole,
  - E. Crime rate information for the previous three years for the proposed zone compared to the jurisdiction as a whole, and
  - F. Information concerning the number of abandoned, obsolete, deteriorated, or dilapidated structures within the proposed zone at the time of application; and
10. A copy of the Georgia DCA Application of Opportunity Zone Designation Checklist (attached as **Appendix B**).

The application should be submitted in digital format on a disk or thumb drive along with a hard copy of a map showing the Urban Redevelopment Area, local government boundaries, and individual parcels in the proposed OZ. The submission should also include digital GIS files detailing the information about the proposed OZ parcels as shapefiles or a geodatabase, with projections (.prj file). This map should include individual polygons for the URA, parcels in the OZ, and a boundary for the OZ. Geodatabase feature classes should contain proper metadata.

## TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT

To achieve the transportation goals promoted in the Tri-Cities' various planning efforts, the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will select sites for new multimodal transit stations for a new mass transit system that will serve the area and better connect it to regional and national transportation centers such as MARTA and Hartsfield-Jackson. The Urban Redevelopment Agencies will develop a plan to finance and operate this system, beginning with a feasibility study of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system of the type promoted by the US Department of Transportation Federal Transportation Authority (FTA), which often provides financing for such projects. Typically, BRT systems have several characteristics that make them function more efficiently than typical bus lines: 1) BRTs run on exclusive lanes, reducing the impact of traffic on the system; 2) BRT loading platforms are at the same level as the floor of the bus to speed loading and unloading; 3) passengers pay while on the platform, not on the bus, speeding up the boarding process; and 4) buses have priority at intersections, often through some kind of priority signaling.

Creation of a BRT on this major corridor will allow the Tri-Cities communities to begin promoting and planning for the types of transit-related development a proposed rail line is intended to spur. It will also make the future location of such a rail line in this community more likely as that development precedes it. If a regional rail system is developed, a successful BRT system can be adapted to better connect the surrounding community to the rail station. That long-term adaptability and the relative speed at which such a system can be implemented make BRT a strong possibility to meet the Tri-Cities' immediate transportation and development needs. The BRT route should connect the Southlake Mall Development Node with MARTA, while connecting as many of the other Development Nodes as is feasible. Potential routes using Jonesboro Road, Forest Parkway, Lake Drive, and possibly Lee Street or some combination thereof should be evaluated.

Transportation Development will also involve an intense focus on improving walkability and biking. The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Areas will implement design requirements directing new residential development around the Development Nodes be designed with these transportation options in mind.

## HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT

The promotion of mixed-use and higher density housing units will provide a broader range of housing options than is currently available in the area. The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will examine regulations and policies that promote mass transit and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development. They will also identify potential projects that encourage this type of development in the area. This should include identifying sites where there are environmental, legal, or other barriers to redevelopment and assessing the tools available to remove these barriers to development. It should also involve actively courting private investment for public-private partnership projects that further the goals of this plan. Addressing housing issues through the provision of new housing in this manner promotes private investment and development and avoids stigmatizing particular neighborhoods. Consequently, the widespread economic development increases the value of surrounding single-family homes.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will implement tasks within the four primary activity areas described above in the following seven phases.

### Phase 1: Marketing & Branding

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will initiate an aggressive branding and marketing campaign to promote the Tri-Cities Area in Clayton County. This effort will include steps such as the development of a common logo for use on Tri-Cities urban redevelopment projects, distribution of promotional materials discussing programs and plans developed by all three of the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies, and a common signage design for use in the Tri-Cities' Urban Redevelopment Areas.

Initial funding for this element of the plan will be provided by the Tri-Cities, as specified in the initial operating agreement. Ongoing operations of this marketing and outreach effort will be financed by mechanisms such as a TAD and/or BID identified in the incentive and stimulus plan discussed below.

### Phase 2: Economic Stimulus

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will apply for an

Opportunity Zone designation for select commercial strips within the designated Urban Redevelopment Area through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

#### Phase 3: Economic Stimulus

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will develop an economic incentive and stimulus plan to promote business growth in the commercial areas of the designated URA. This plan will build upon the Opportunity Zone designation and will include measures such as designation of an Enterprise Zone, development of Community Improvement Districts or Business Improvement Districts, implementation of a Tax Allocation District, and development of SPLOST projects as well as direct regulatory or financial incentives such as expedited permitting or fee waivers from the local governments.

This incentive and stimulus plan will include financing for the transportation infrastructure, land acquisition, housing restoration, redevelopment incentives, and other operations

Once this economic incentive and stimulus plan is complete, this Urban Redevelopment Plan will be amended to specifically incorporate incentives into this implementation strategy. Each of the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will present this incentive and stimulus plan to their Mayor and City Council in a public hearing within one year of enactment of this Urban Redevelopment Plan.

#### Phase 4: Economic Stimulus

Working in conjunction with the Urban Redevelopment Agencies in Lake City and Morrow, the Forest Park Urban Redevelopment Agency will develop specific zoning and regulatory changes to encourage the type of development envisioned in this plan and in the Tri-Cities' other planning efforts.

Once this zoning and regulatory amendment plan is complete, this Urban Redevelopment Plan will be amended to specifically incorporate that plan into this implementation strategy. Each of the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will present this incentive and stimulus plan to their Mayor and City Council in a public hearing within one year of enactment of this Urban Redevelopment Plan.

### Phase 5: Transportation Development

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will identify sites for multimodal transportation hubs at each of the nodes identified in this plan. These transportation hubs will serve as the basis for an express bus route connecting the identified nodes to each other and to the MARTA station located at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. These hubs should be sited and designed so that they could be used for the rail stations identified in the Clayton County Comprehensive Transportation Plan should that rail system be developed in the future.

Should one of the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies determine that it is the entity that should acquire the property identified for these transportation hubs, this plan will be amended to specify how the agency will undertake the acquisition, finance it, and what conditions it may attach to the property.

### Phase 6: Redevelopment

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will, in partnership with the development community, initiate public-private partnerships to promote the types of residential and commercial development envisioned in the numerous planning exercises conducted for the Urban Redevelopment Area. Should any additional powers be required under the Urban Redevelopment Act to complete the identified projects, this plan will be amended as necessary.

### Phase 7: Redevelopment

The Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will develop a plan to incentivize and stimulate rehabilitation of substandard residential units utilizing the strategies identified above and other state and federal incentives and funding mechanisms. This will likely involve close cooperation with the Clayton County/Forest Park Land Bank, and potentially direct involvement with the Land Bank by those cities not currently participating.

Once this residential incentive and stimulus plan is complete,

this Urban Redevelopment Plan will be amended to specifically incorporate incentives into this implementation strategy. Each of the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will present this redevelopment plan to their Mayor and City Council in a public hearing within one year of enactment of this Urban Redevelopment Plan.

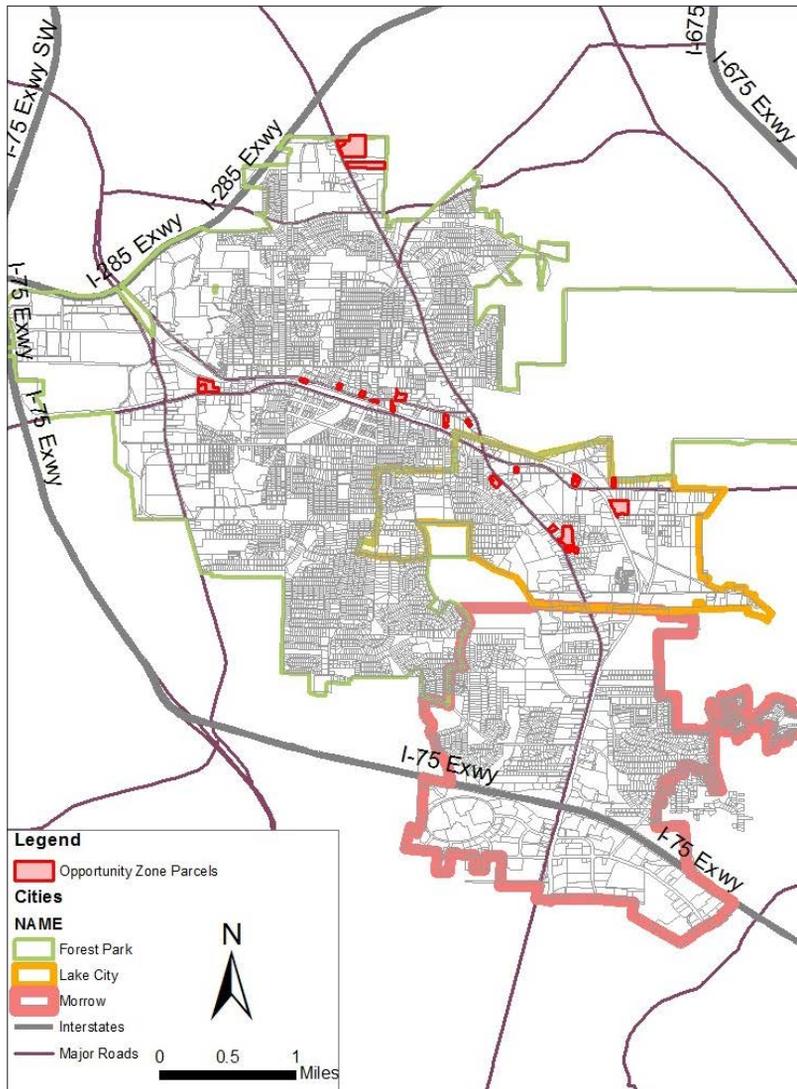


Figure 6: Opportunity Zone Parcels Map

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSIDERATIONS**

All of the Tri-Cities value their local history and heritage, and this plan seeks to preserve as many of their historic structures and possible. No historic properties will be impacted by this plan.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PARCELS TO BE ACQUIRED**

The initial phase of this plan does not involve the acquisition of any properties. In the future, the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies will procure one or more properties. When circumstances change making property acquisition necessary, this plan will be amended to reflect such changes.

## **COVENANTS AND RESTRICTIONS TO BE PLACED ON PROPERTIES**

No covenants or restrictions will be placed on properties by the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies as part of this Urban Redevelopment Plan at this time. Should circumstances change making the use of covenants and restrictions necessary, this plan will be amended to reflect such changes.

## **STRUCTURES TO BE DEMOLISHED OR REHABILITATED**

At this time, this Urban Redevelopment Plan promotes redevelopment of existing structures by private parties. Therefore, no structures in the Urban Redevelopment Area have been identified to be demolished, relocated, or rehabilitated by the Tri-Cities Urban Redevelopment Agencies. Should the demolition, relocation, or rehabilitation of buildings be required in future phases of the Urban Redevelopment Plan, the plan will be amended to reflect those changes.

## **STRATEGY FOR RELOCATING DISPLACED RESIDENTS**

The Tri-Cities have determined that the development of a relocation strategy is not necessary at this time. The initial implementation of this Urban Redevelopment Plan will focus on the redevelopment of commercial sites. Any redevelopment of residential properties will strictly be through voluntary programs that will not displace any residents. In the event displacement of residents becomes necessary at a later date, the Urban Redevelopment Plan will be amended to incorporate a plan for relocating displaced residents in accordance with all local and state statutory requirements.

Revitalization efforts in the Urban Redevelopment Area will focus on promoting mixed-use development and redevelopment in the Tri-Cities Area. The residential component of this development should promote a variety of housing types, including units available to low-income residents.

## STRATEGY FOR ALLEVIATING BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A joint development authority is created and activated pursuant to the provisions of the Development Authorities Law by joint and concurrent resolutions adopted by each of its participating local governments authorizing the development authority to act throughout their territories. Once the three Tri-City Urban Redevelopment Areas have been designated and the Urban Redevelopment Agencies created, the three cities comprising the Tri-Cities Area will form the Tri-Cities Joint Development Authority (JDA) by passing proper resolutions pursuant to O.C.G.A. §36-62-5.1 to manage the implementation of this plan in each URA. The three members of each city's Urban Redevelopment Agency will serve on the Board of the Tri-City Joint Development Authority.<sup>20</sup> Concurrently with passing the resolution authorizing the JDA, each of the cities will hold a public hearing and amend its Urban Redevelopment Plan to state that the Urban Redevelopment Agency shall only act as approved by the JDA. Once the JDA has been created, the JDA Board will draft bylaws conforming to the requirements of the Development Authorities Law and containing such other provisions as deemed necessary by the board. The bylaws of the JDA will then supplant the operating agreements of the Urban Redevelopment Agencies. Copies of the activating resolutions will also be filed and registered with the Secretary of State as required by law.

## INCORPORATION INTO A JOINT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The Tri-Cities Joint Development Authority provides a unifying structure for the redevelopment activities in the Tri-Cities Area.<sup>21</sup> The JDA Board will allow decisions to be made collaboratively by all three cities' Urban Redevelopment Agencies, ensuring that the Tri-Cities Area is developed with a shared and cohesive vision with the benefits and burdens shared throughout. Working under a unified structure provides a means to share the benefits of redevelopment projects that are brought about by common action. For instance, if a public-private development project is instigated in one city, it will have positive repercussion for development

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<sup>20</sup>A JDA must have between 7 and 9 members on its board. An alternative structure could have each URA send two members and the county could send one.

<sup>21</sup>O.C.G.A. § 36-66-18(d) requires that members of a URA board reside in the county or municipality in which the Urban Redevelopment Area operates. This precludes the formation of a single Urban Redevelopment Agency because each city has to appoint a separate board, necessitating the formation of a JDA or some other unifying structure.

## STRATEGY FOR LEVERAGING PRIVATE RESOURCES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

throughout the Tri-Cities Area. Thus, operating as a Joint Development Authority provides a mechanism for the member cities to share the direct proceeds from that venture and ensures that it is used to promote the shared vision of the Tri-Cities Area.

The purpose of this Urban Redevelopment Plan is to encourage private redevelopment. Its implementation will primarily focus on promoting private investment in the URA. Adopting an Urban Redevelopment Plan is the first step in implementing a wide array of economic development incentives, such as designating an Opportunity Zone, creating an Enterprise Zone, and implementing local tax and fee exemptions. The initial phase of this URP consists of implementing an Opportunity Zone along the identified commercial corridors shown on the Urban Redevelopment Area Map above. The URP Implementation Agency will also be charged with identifying other economic incentives that can be incorporated into this URP. Upon completion of the broader plan, this URP will be amended to accommodate those additional measures.

## APPENDICES A & B





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