



DeKalb County
GEORGIA



RESTITCHING COMMUNITIES:

A Bold, Equitable Vision
for the Stone Mountain Trail Corridor

GPA Fall Presentation
October 2025

GPA FALL CONFERENCE 2025 SPEAKERS



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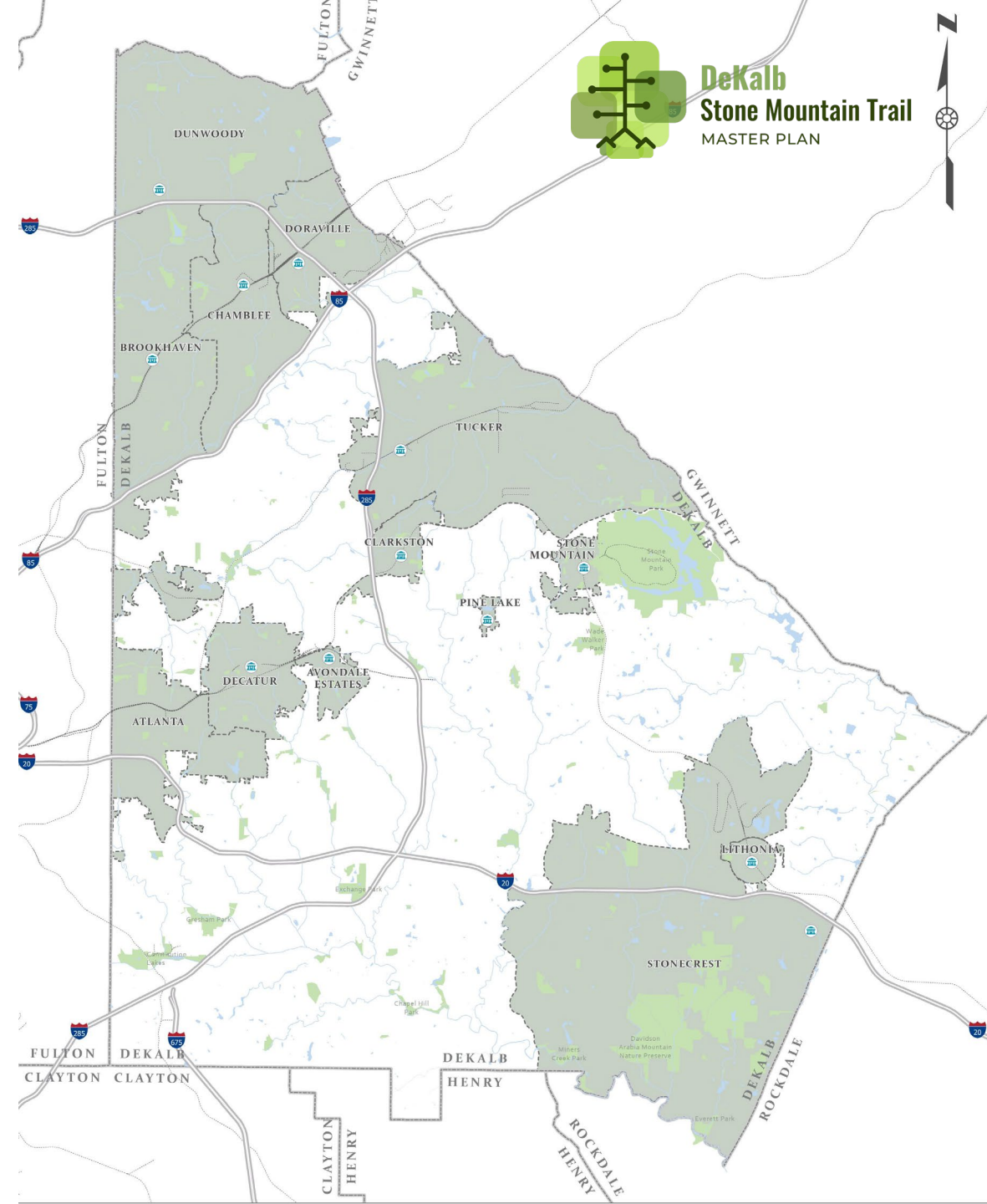


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DEKALB COUNTY

- ~43% incorporated
- **Suburban** - most common FLU
- 2050 Unified Plan focused on Activity Centers and the transportation nexus with land use
 - FLU designations prioritizing mixed-use development in high-intensity corridors and intersections
- Leveraging trail corridors as economic development opportunities
 - In conjunction with the DeKalb Trails Master Plan, how can we promote high-density housing, trail-side amenities, placemaking, and anti-displacement strategies?



HOW IS DEKALB COUNTY MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS?



Promoting **Small Area Planning** projects to fill in detailed community goals not covered by the Unified Plan



Implemented **Economic Development** to build robust and resilient communities



Enhancing the **efficiency of processing** of land use, zoning, Building permits, and business licenses operations



Seeking a **grant through the ARC** Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) and Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) to update Small Area Plans

PARTNERSHIPS CREATE SUCCESS

Local Partnerships

- **Memorial Drive Revitalization Plan**
 - Creation of Community Action Groups & Memorial Drive Task Force
- **CBO list audit**
 - Involving active organizations as stakeholders for impactful involvement
- **Community 101**
 - Empowering communities and fostering partnerships through education on policy, zoning, land-use, & other planning-related matters



as a Partner

- **CDAP: Stone Mountain Trail Master Plan**
 - Transportation nexus ties in with Unified Plan
 - Intergovernmental coordination
 - Clarkston Housing Summit coincided, aiding in cross-collaboration
- **Kensington LCI Update**
 - Capitalizing on MARTA's partial update of the station's TOD plan
 - Furthering goals of creating high-density, mixed-use, & walkable Activity Centers

ARC'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- 📌 **One region. Many communities**
- 📌 The Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP)
 - 📌 Provides planning assistance to local governments, CIDs, & non-profits across the metro Atlanta region
 - 📌 Staff assistance, partner assistance, or grant assistance
 - 📌 Grant assistance projects require strong transportation element
- 📌 **2023 CDAP Project: Stone Mountain PATH Trail Master Plan**
 - 📌 Selected for Grant Funded Assistance



[Community Development Assistance Program - Atlanta Regional Commission](#)



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION - CDAP APPLICATION



Project application initially to ARC's 2023 Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Program

Application goals:

- **Integrated Planning:** Develop a shared land-use vision aligned with transportation and redevelopment plans while fostering new economic opportunities.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** Convene a diverse set of stakeholders, including Clarkston's refugee population, legacy African American neighborhoods in Scottdale and Stone Mountain, and residents of qualified census tracts and opportunity zones.
- **Comprehensive Housing & Land Use Strategy:** Conduct cross-jurisdictional zoning and land-use analysis to expand affordable and accessible housing opportunities, while addressing past mistakes along trail corridors through a focus on affordability, housing stability and anti-displacement for impacted communities.
- **Aligned, Action-Oriented Planning:** Build on the ARC Regional Housing Strategy and DeKalb County's Unified Development Plan to translate long-term vision into practical steps—protecting legacy residents while creating affordable, diverse housing options for new community members.
- **Future Readiness:** Anticipate rising housing demand near trails and greenspace by reimagining growth strategies to balance access, equity, and sustainability.

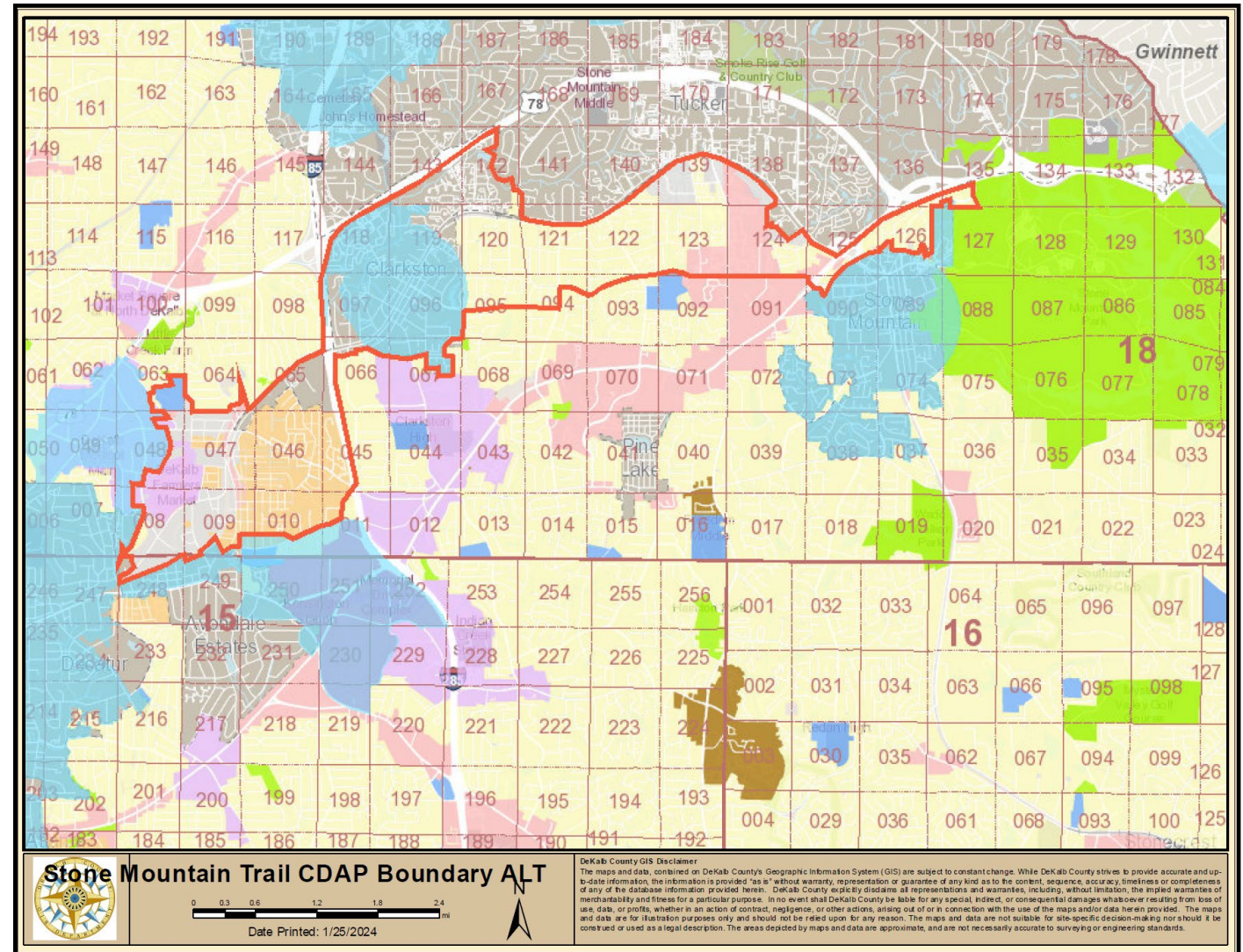
ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION- CDAP SCOPE



Defined Boundary: crossed not only DeKalb County but city jurisdictions, southern portion of Tucker.

Concurrent Planning:

- 2023 LCI: **Stone Mountain Greenway Connectivity Study**, City of Stone Mountain
- 2022 LCI: **Clarkston Greenway Study**, City of Clarkston



PROJECT OVERVIEW

VISION AND PURPOSE

Create a cohesive corridor through the lens of anti-displacement

The purpose of this study is to develop enhanced access to greenways and trails, transit, and enhance connectivity to Institutions and gathering spaces along the Stone Mountain Trail Master Plan.

GOALS

1. HOUSING AND ANTI-DISPLACEMENT STRATEGIES:

Demographic trends and strategies for equitable development.

2. TRANSPORTATION, MOBILITY, AND MICROTRANSIT:

Enhance connectivity between the PATH trail, neighborhoods, and transit hubs.

3. LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Smart growth that prevents displacement, while driving economic development through strategic partnerships.

4. PLACEMAKING:

Transform public spaces with placemaking elements.

5. TRAIL MAINTENANCE, SAFETY, AND INFRASTRUCTURE:

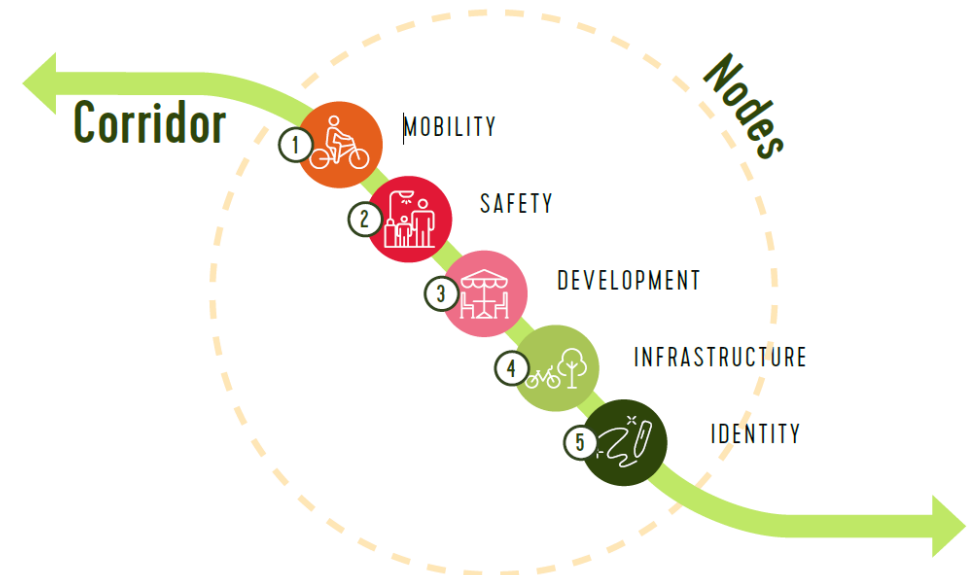
Improve trail safety by enhancing wayfinding, signage, and maintaining essential infrastructure for long-term accessibility and user experience

PROJECT TIMELINE



FRAMEWORK

2 scales, 3 nodes, 1 unifying trail



Discussion Topic 1

Who Gets a Seat at the Table?

Planning often misses the voices of certain groups.

What are some creative ways to make sure everyone feels heard and represented in planning decisions?

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT



DEMOGRAPHICS

The TTA's median household income is \$55,018 which is well below the countywide \$81,401. Homeownership rates are under 50%, and the area has a higher share of minority residents and lower educational attainment levels. Sixty percent of households earn at or below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), making them eligible for federal housing programs but also placing them at high risk of being priced out.



EMPLOYMENT

Local jobs are concentrated in public administration (18.6%), retail trade (12.8%), and manufacturing (11.2%). Despite overlapping industry presence, few residents work locally, pointing to a workforce disconnect and a missed opportunity to capture more local spending and reduce commute times.



HOUSING

The corridor's affordability is largely due to older housing stock, much of it built in the 1970s, with minimal new construction in recent years. For-sale vacancy rates (3.7%) exceed the healthy market rate of 1.5%, and rental vacancy rates (10.1%) are double the long-term equilibrium. While this creates naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH), reinvestment without protections could rapidly transform the market and displace vulnerable households.



COMMERCIAL MARKETS

Commercial markets along the Stone Mountain Trail corridor are mixed. Retail vacancy is tight at 2.8%, though East I-285 rents fell 30.9% in the past year. Office space has a low 5.1% vacancy but is recovering slowly with no new deliveries. Industrial space is in high demand with 3.4% vacancy, East I-285 rents up 20.5%, and West I-285 rents down 11.5%. The Trail Trade Area holds nearly 20% of DeKalb County's industrial inventory.

Study Area Highlights

25+ neighborhoods

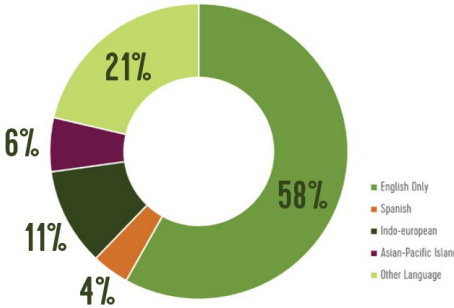
18.6% households below poverty level

6 jurisdictions

9.6% zero car households

\$62,152 median household income

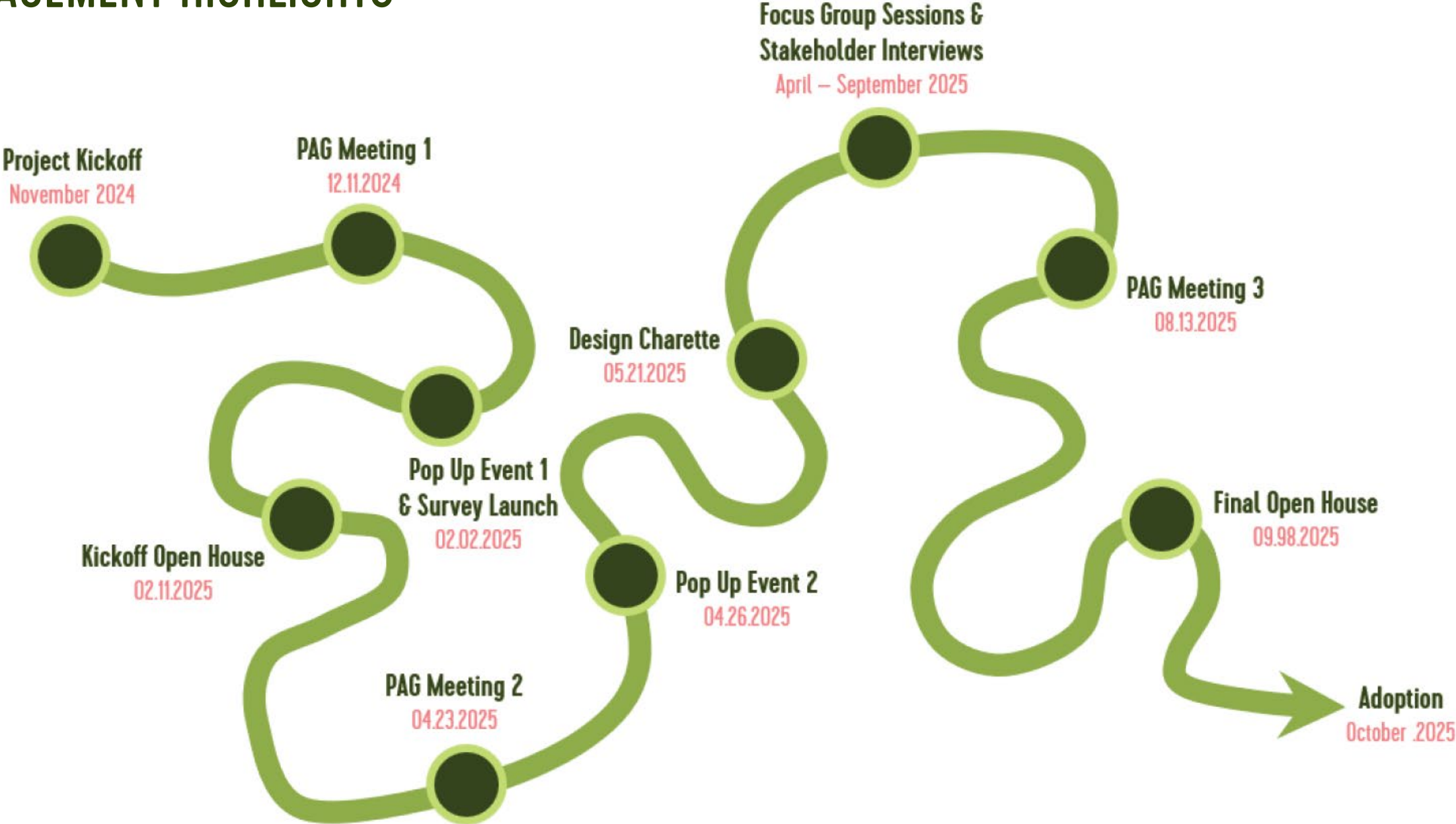
60+ languages spoken



9.6% seniors (age 65+)

27.6% youth (age <18)

ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS



COMMUNITY VOICES

WHO HAVE WE REACHED?

3500+ people reached!



Check out the project website here!



*Listening to and learning from **those who live, work, and invest their time within and around the study area** was a vital part of the community engagement process.*



COMMUNITY VOICES

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Keep Housing Affordable:** Add diverse and accessible options.
2. **Stop Displacement:** Protect current residents and businesses as changes happen.
3. **Connect Neighborhoods:** Link housing to resources and recreation.
4. **Preserve & Celebrate Identity:** Maintain and elevate the character of local communities.



Discussion Topic 2

Equity in Planning

Love the Idea, how do we make it real?

What are some strategies or partnerships that could help turn inclusive planning goals into real lasting change?

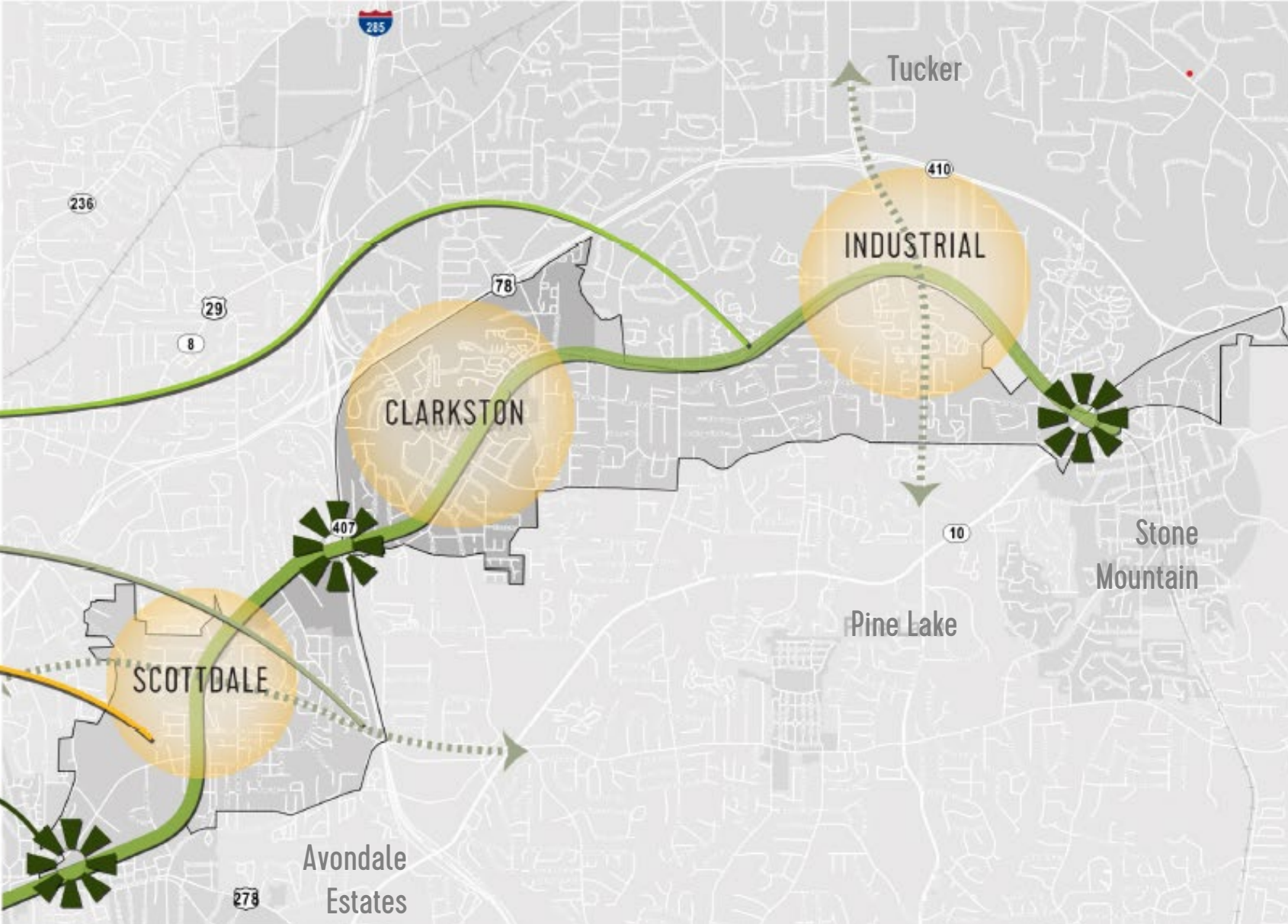
STUDY AREA COMPONENTS

 **01** CORRIDOR

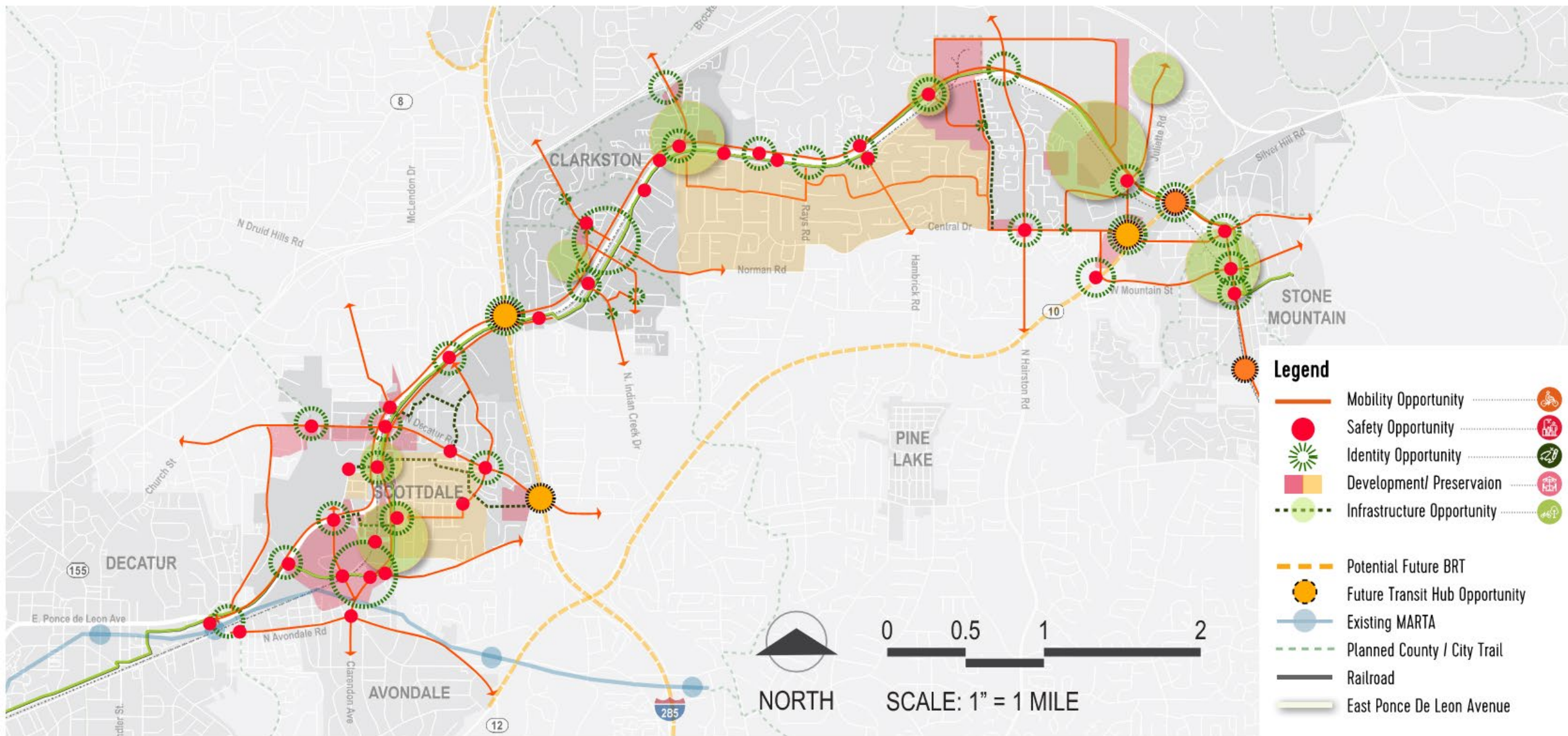
 **02** STREETScape

 **03** NODES

 **04** GATEWAY



TRAIL DISTRICT DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS



TRAIL DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS



Figure 24. Trail Section

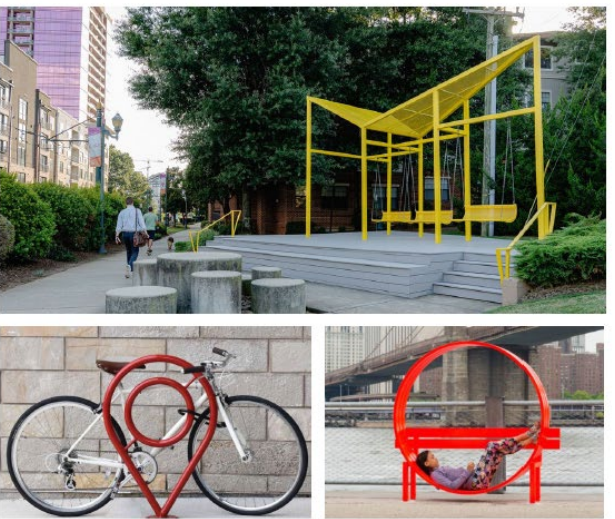
1 BOLD TRAIL RIBBON + INTERSECTION ART

Repeating sidewalk art creates a consistent character, highlights the trail at intersections, and introduces attractive design throughout the corridor.



2 ICONIC BOLD SITE FURNISHINGS

Vibrant site furnishings provide a repeated element for a signature and recognizable features. Attractive and bold benches, bike racks, water fountains could be utilized.



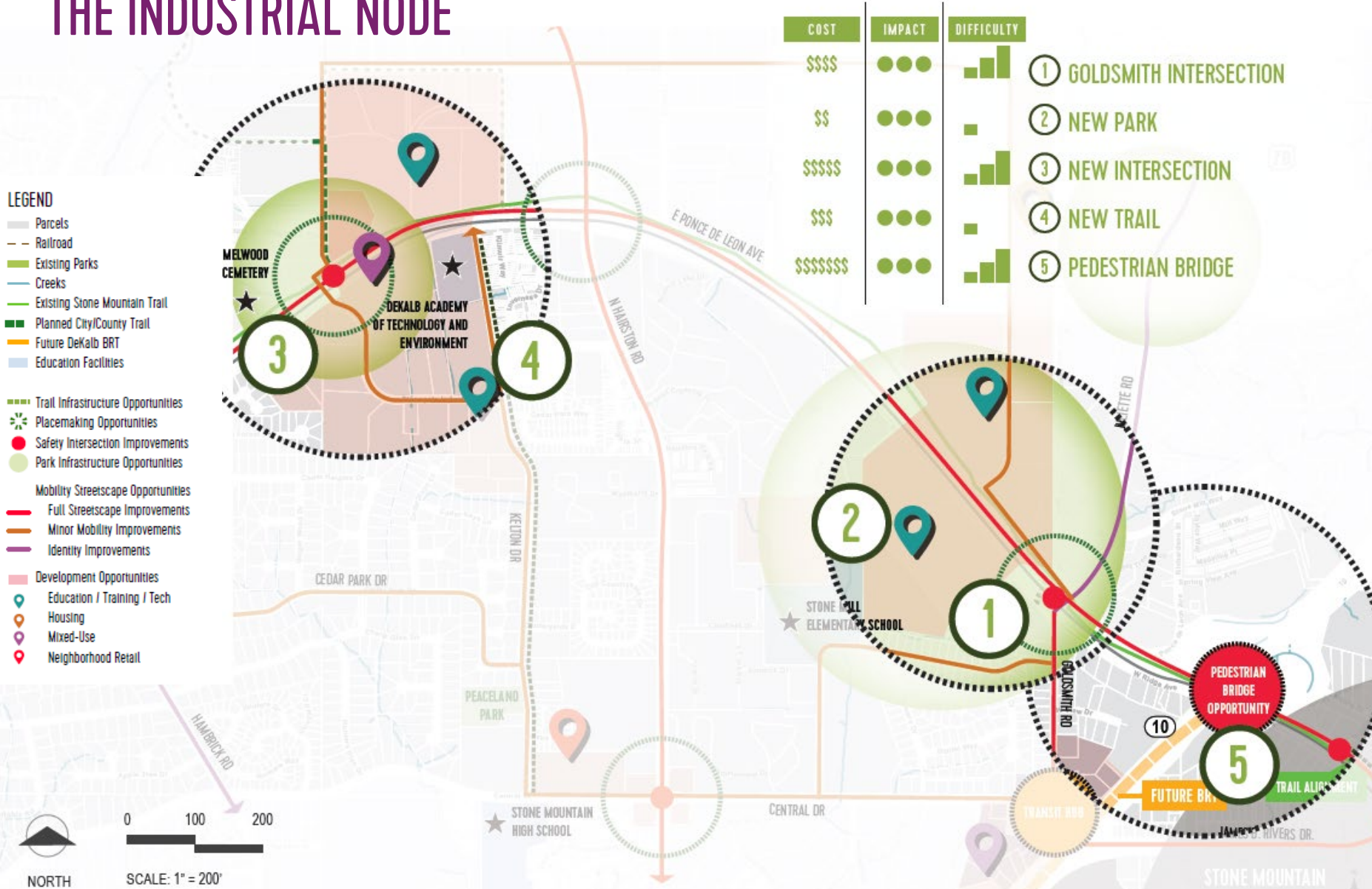
3 DESIGNED INTERACTIVE WALL

In order to create a sense of place that crosses multiple cities, major roads, and railroads the scale and intent needs to be BIG.



NODAL RECOMMENDATIONS

THE INDUSTRIAL NODE

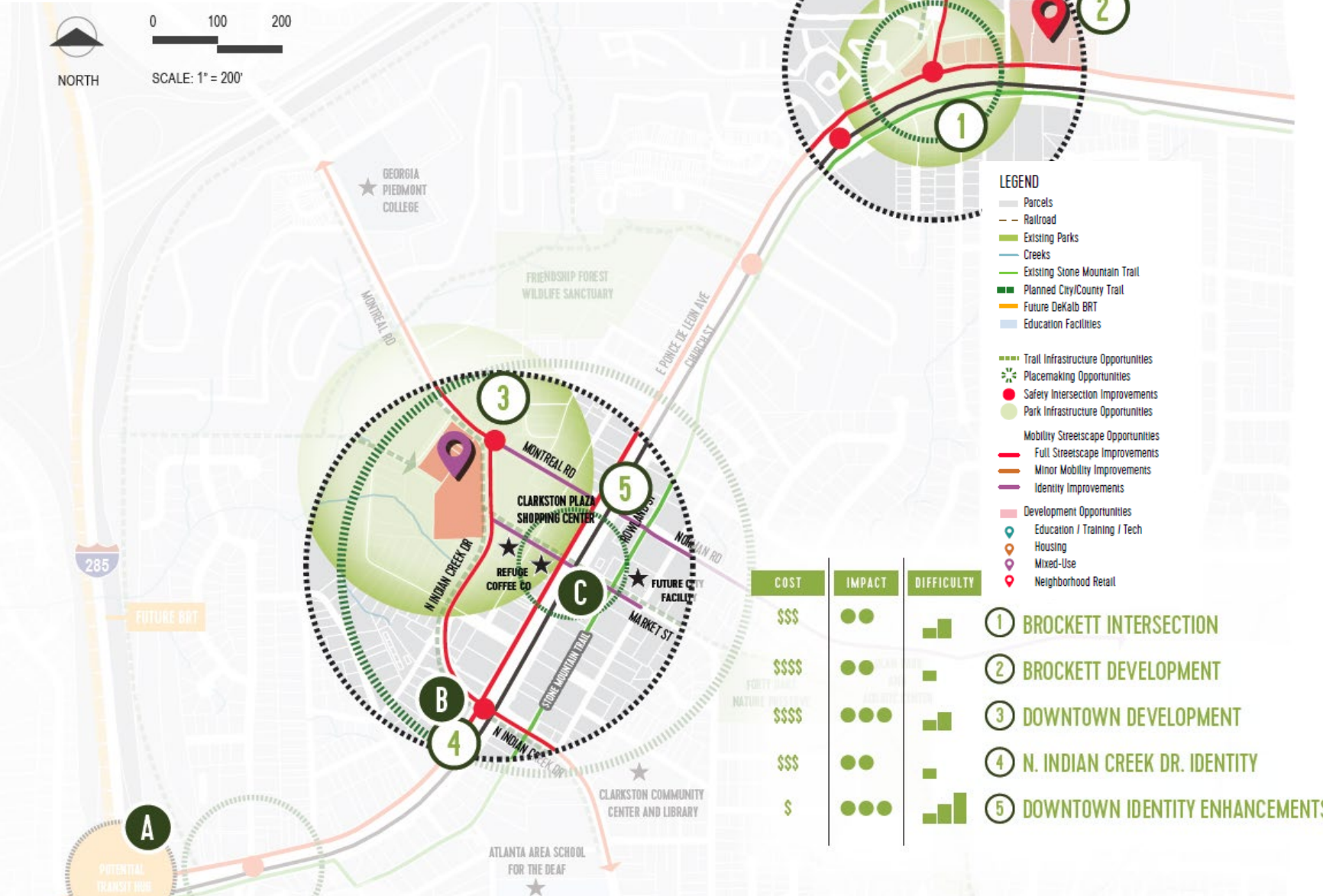


PRIORITIES

- 1 GOLDSMITH INTERSECTION**
The recommendation is to re-imagine the Goldsmith and Ridge intersection across the railroad to connect the district to Tucker investments. Increasing visibility in the intersection and adding wayfinding and signage will create a gateway to the community.
- 2 NEW PARK**
A greenspace addition is recommended in vacant or underutilized parcels. Greatest opportunity exists near the elementary school.
- 3 NEW INTERSECTION**
A new intersection is proposed at Roadhaven drive to enhance connectivity for residences.
- 4 NEW TRAIL**
A small local trail connection is proposed to connect the parks, schools, and communities.
- 5 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE**
The proposed pedestrian bridge over State Road 10 / Memorial Drive would close the regional Stone Mountain Trail Gap and link the district to Stone Mountain. A proposed realignment and intersection upgrade from the Stone Mountain LCI is included to illustrate the final proposed Stone Mountain Trail connection.

NODAL RECOMMENDATIONS

THE CLARKSTON NODE



2

PRIORITIES

1

BROCKETT INTERSECTION

The Brockett intersection needs to implement the transportation enhancements planned to connect communities to the trail. This plan recommends gateway and wayfinding enhancements to build off of the streetscape plan.

2

BROCKETT DEVELOPMENT

Adding neighborhood services is key to increasing activity for residents in the Northern area of Clarkston.

3

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

New mixed use development would build off the success of the downtown and help activate local businesses and increase housing opportunities.

4

N. INDIAN CREEK DR. IDENTITY

Adding visibility, safety enhancements, identity, and wayfinding will increase access over the major barriers disconnecting Clarkston.

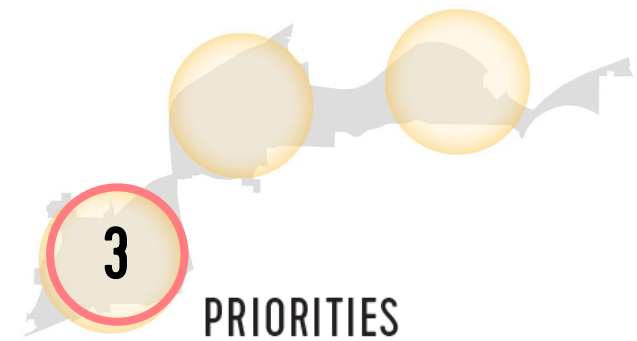
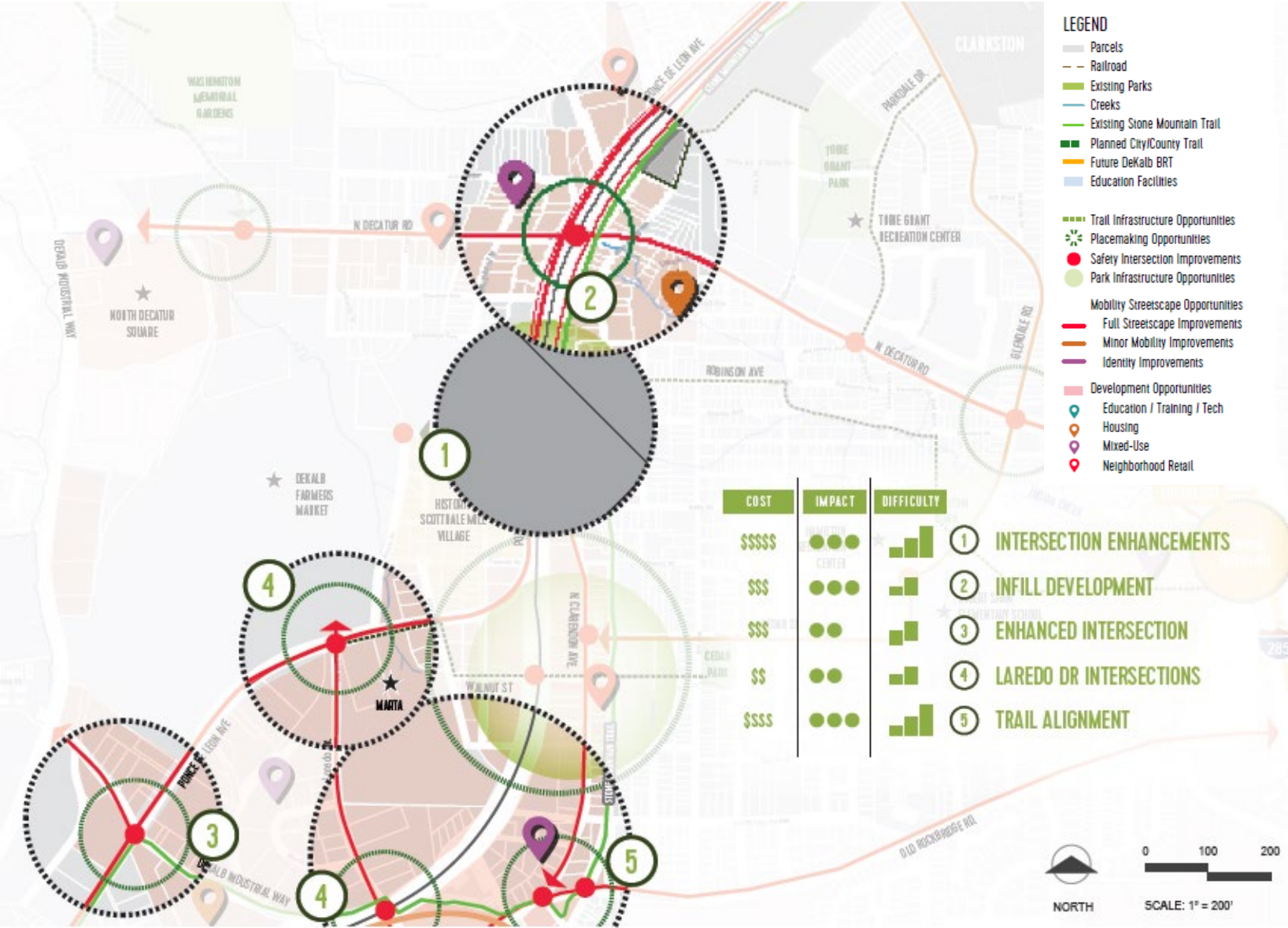
5

IDENTITY ENHANCEMENTS

Specific enhancements along East Ponce De Leon Avenue will bring the identity of the community to the forefront of the city. The scale differs depending on the location and need. Examples of highway, vehicular and pedestrian appropriate designs are illustrated in images A, B, and C.

NODAL RECOMMENDATIONS

THE SCOTTDALE NODE



PRIORITIES

- INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENTS**
 The 7 point Robinson Ave intersection is a major hazard for all modes of travel. Improvements here would fix many of the connectivity issues of the district and connect regional gaps.
- INFILL DEVELOPMENT**
 Infill development along this area of the East Ponce corridor can add needed density and services to the community.
- ENHANCED INTERSECTION**
 The intersection enhancements along DeKalb industrial way is a key gateway that connects this community to MARTA stations and the greater ATL area.
- LAREDO DR INTERSECTIONS**
 Adding visibility, safety, and placemaking elements can build off of the Avondale Estates streetscape improvements and connect Avondale Estates to the Scottdale.
- TRAIL ALIGNMENT**
 With new development in the area the roads should be realigned to create safe intersections and a fully connected trail.



Discussion Topic 3

Affordable... But Accessible?

Affordable housing is a big focus, but what are some strategies to connect housing with opportunities in an equitable way?

HOUSING NEEDS AND MARKET PRESSURES



- Strong housing demand near train station.
- 1,030 new rental units added, but vacancy remains low
- Mix of single-family homes and new apartment complexes

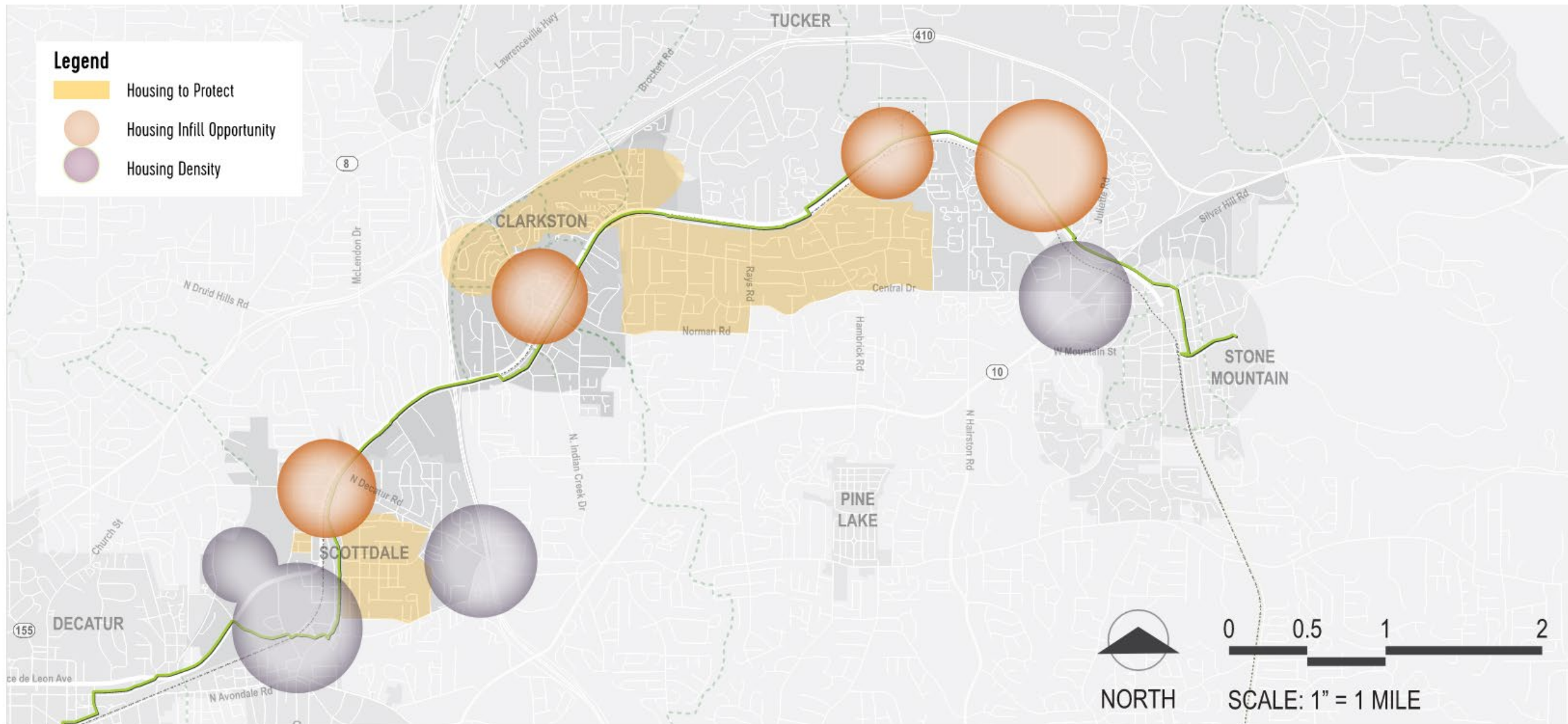
Opportunity: Allow more density + protect single-family areas to maintain diversity.



- Higher share of older housing stock (many pre-1980)
- Large multifamily + single-family neighborhoods; rents dropping
- High concentration of NOAH; many residents under 50% AMI

Opportunity: Add workforce housing, rent protections, and policies to preserve affordability.

HOUSING STRATEGY



HOUSING POLICY

HOUSING STRATEGY GOALS

- 1 Preserve Legacy Neighborhoods & NOAH:**
Preservation protects both affordability and identity 
- 2 Align Housing with Workforce Opportunity**
Housing access should support the corridor's workforce 

- 3 Protect Tenant Stability and Renters Rights**
Addressing property conditions before market pressure intensifies 

ZONING AND OVERLAY STRATEGIES

1 Inclusionary Zoning Overlay **Updates Near Job & Transit Hubs**

- Require affordable units in new developments
- Offer density bonuses + expedited permitting

2 Historic Overlay Districts for **Neighborhood Character**

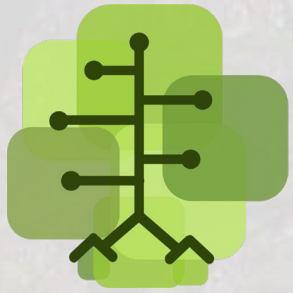
- Protect neighborhood character in Scottsdale Historic Mill Village Neighborhood
- Update the existing Tier 3 overlay to provide greater flexibility
- Clear design & preservation guidelines
- Use tax relief to offset homeowner cost burdens

3 Neighborhood Stabilization **Overlays in Vulnerable Areas**

- Pause rezonings in designated vulnerable areas with housing typology protection recommendations
- Streamline ADUs + homeowner support programs
- Require affordability + resident engagement in redevelopment

4 Adaptive Reuse Incentives **for Housing Conversion**

- Allow reuse of motels/ underutilized industrial sites near transit
- Require affordability in adaptive reuse projects
- Expand zoning for diverse housing types (duplexes, triplexes, cottage courts, ADUs)



DeKalb Stone Mountain Trail MASTER PLAN

Thank you!



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