Public Realm Action Plan

DONALD LEE HOLLOWELL PARKWAY
MARIETTA BLVD>>NORTHSIDE DRIVE

Executive Summary

In this study of Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, the primary focus is on people and public space. Many plans have been written postulating the future of the corridor, each intently focused and solving a critical problem, be it transportation, parks and trail access, or economic development. However, when considering these reports holistically, it is evident that a fundamental component is missing: the consideration of the daily lives of people within the communities and the need for a vibrant, active, accessible public realm.

The technical approach of previous plans provides the necessary foundation of understanding and recommendations for the corridor. This study aims to build off of these technical recommendations, and integrate the overarching consideration for people. By modifying the lens through which we consider the future of Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, short-sighted and one-dimensional improvement efforts can be reconsidered and re-imagined to better serve the people of the community. A striking example of a less-successful improvement project is the recent intersection improvement of Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway and Marietta Boulevard. While the project achieves the goals of improving vehicular traffic flow, the road geometry results in expansive lanes, narrow sidewalks, and long crosswalks, creating a hostel pedestrian environment. This is particularly disappointing considering the community's reliance on alternate transportation, on top of the project's immediate proximity to Maddox Park, Bankhead MARTA Station, and the future Proctor Creek Greenway. By focusing solely on solving the problem of vehicular throughput, this improvement project moderately achieves this goal at the detriment of the overall livability of the community. In an area that has been plagued with disinvestment, it is vitally important to advocate for improvements that better serve and support the community.

With this in mind, this effort to imagine a potential future for Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway is largely inspired by the work and writings of Jan Gehl, founder of Gehl Studios. The foundational text, *How to Study Public Life*, provides a framework for public life studies as a vital tool in understanding how people use public space, and how those spaces can be improved to better support the building of social capital toward equitable community identity, vibrancy, and resiliency. Serving as a framework of these ideas in action, *Downtown Denver 16th Street Mall: Small Steps Towards Big Change* and *Downtown Pittsburgh: Public Realm Action Plan* are used extensively to inform the recommendations of this study. And most importantly, Gehl's publications *Public Diversity Toolkit 2.0* and *Action-Oriented Planning* served as reference documents to: 1) ensure the research thoughtfully addresses the needs of existing community members and advocates for recommendations that provide equitable, diverse access to the improvements, and 2) ensure there is a clear path for implementation, utilizing iterative processes through pilot projects that engages community members in imagining the future of their neighborhood.

In this era of rapid revitalization, Atlanta must consider challenging questions regarding the identity of the City. If the vision of Atlanta City Design toward a Beloved Community is to become a reality, public life and public space must become a centerpiece of our values moving forward.

Contents

1 | Introduction

Neighborhood Context

BANKHEAD MARTA STATION

NORTHSIDE DRIVE

CHAPPELL ROAD

PROCTOR CREEK

MADDOX PARK

FUTURE BELTLINE TRAIL

ENGLISH AVENUE

CHAPPELL ROAD

NORTHSIDE DRIVE

Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions Analysis

BIKE LANES
SIDEWALKS
Pedestrian + Bike Amenities

Bus Stops

PROCTOR CREEK GREENWAY
MADDOX PARK
FUTURE BELTLINE TRAIL
ENGLISH AVE COMMUNITY GARDEN
Parks + Public Spaces

Data Analysis
Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway

Demographics

8,320
Total Area Population

2,408.1
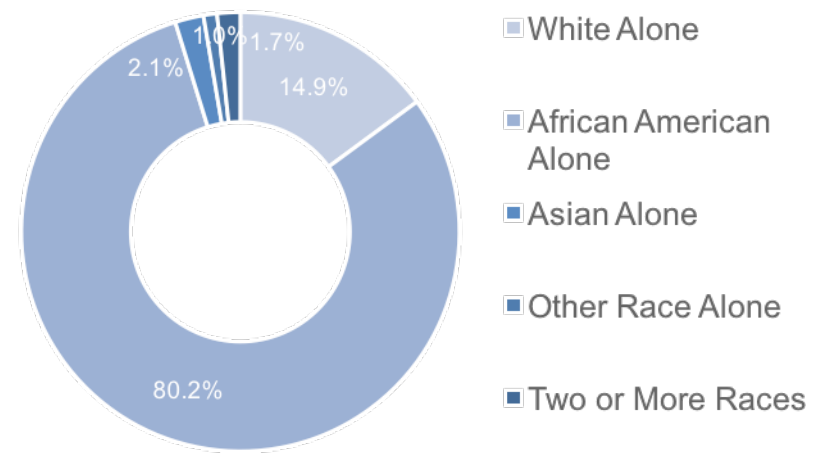Population Density/Mile

$24,254
Median Household Income

19.9%
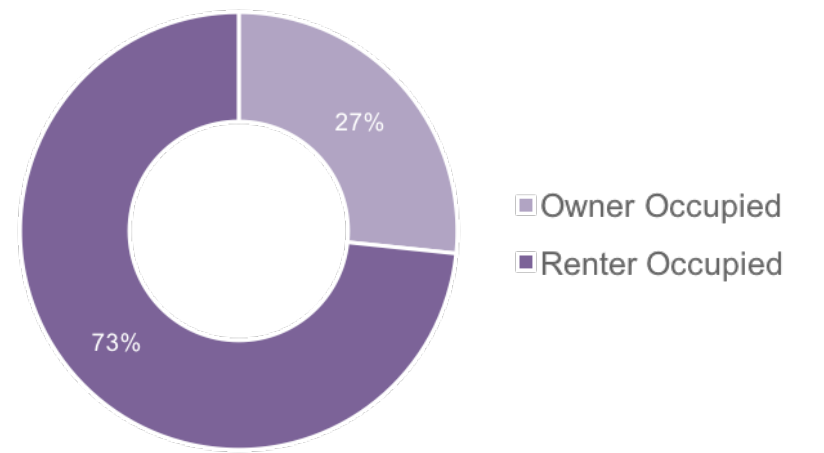Households with Income Below the Poverty Line

22.2%
Unemployment Rate

$88,166
Median Home Value

$863
Median Gross Rent
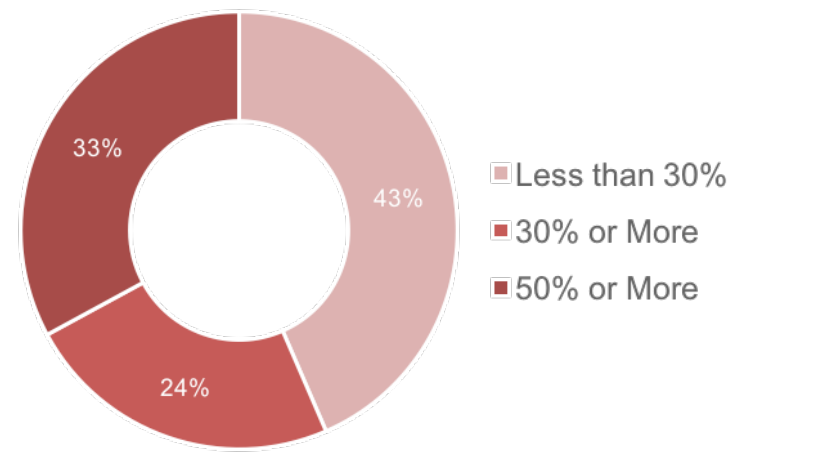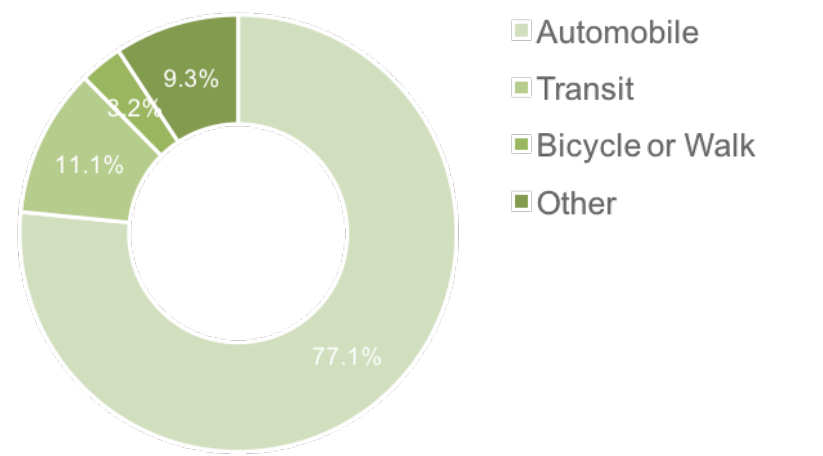
Race + Ethnicity

- White Alone — 14.9%
- African American Alone — 80.2%
- Asian Alone — 2.1%
- Other Race Alone — 1.0%
- Two or More Races — 1.7%

Housing Tenure

- Owner Occupied — 27%
- Renter Occupied — 73%

Cost Burdened Renters

- Less than 30% — 43%
- 30% or More — 24%
- 50% or More — 33%

Commute Patterns

- Automobile — 77.1%
- Transit — 11.1%
- Bicycle or Walk — 3.2%
- Other — 9.3%

Housing Occupancy

- Occupied — 58%
- Vacant — 42%

Cost Burdened Owners

- Less than 30% — 62%
- 30% or More — 26%
- 50% or More — 12%
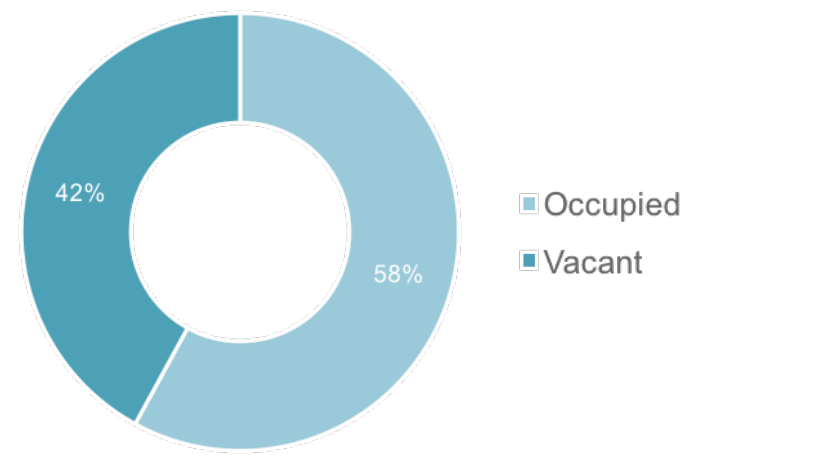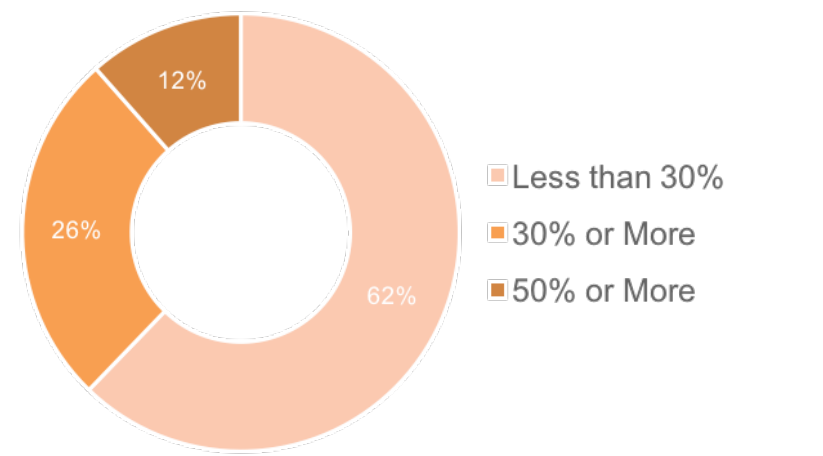
Souce: Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates) (SE), ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates), Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau

Data Analysis
City of Atlanta

Demographics

456,378
Total Area Population

3,427.5
Population Density/Mile

$49,398
Median Household Income

18.8%
Households with Income
Below the Poverty Line

10.4%
Unemployment Rate

$222,300
Median Home Value

$998
Median Gross Rent
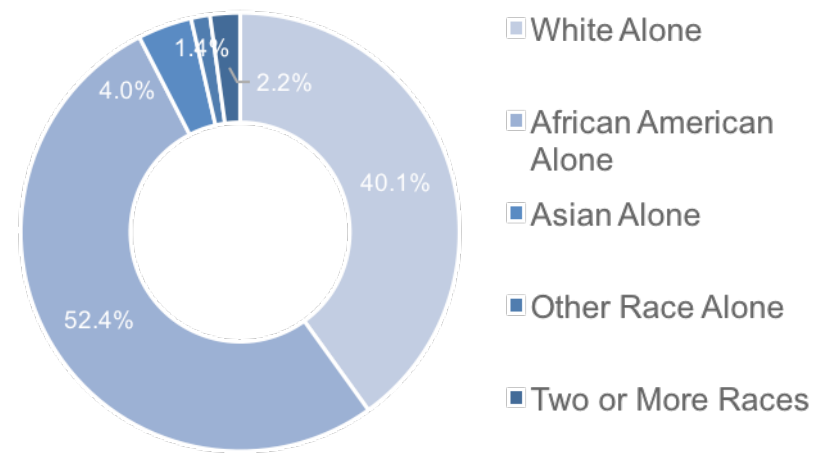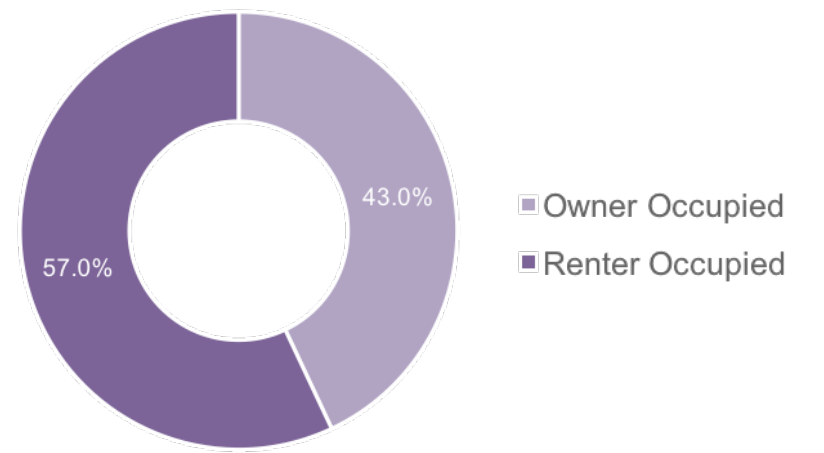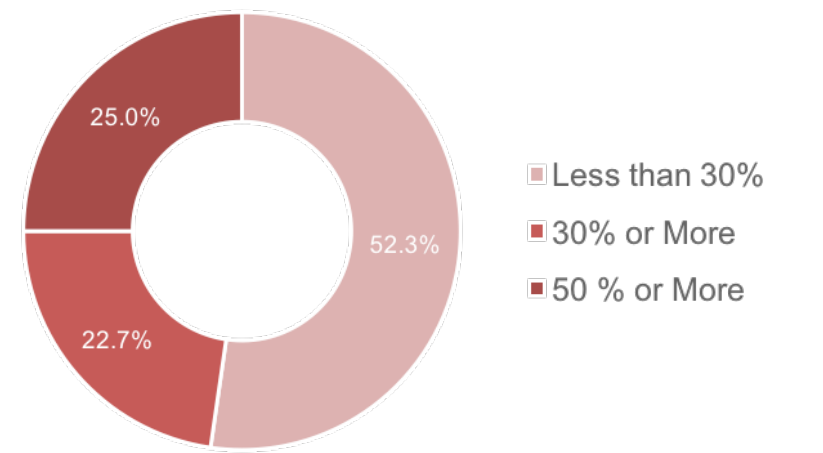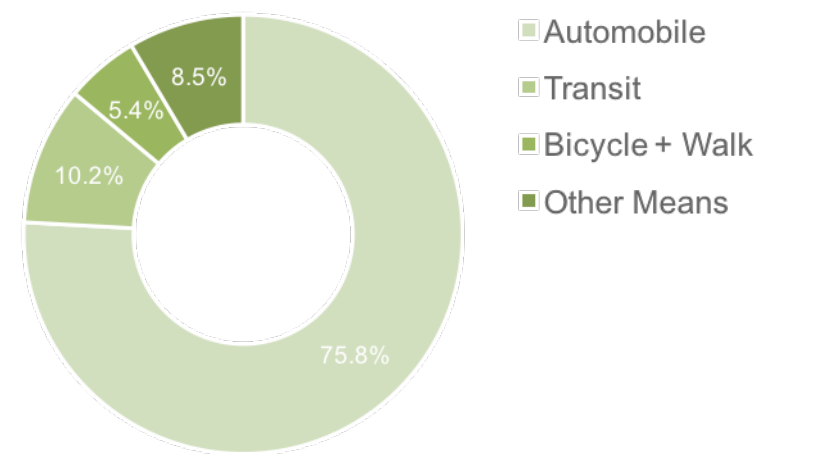
Race + Ethnicity

- White Alone
- African American Alone
- Asian Alone
- Other Race Alone
- Two or More Races

1.4% 2.2% 4.0% 40.1% 52.4%

Housing Tenure

- Owner Occupied
- Renter Occupied

43.0% 57.0%

Cost Burdened Renters

- Less than 30%
- 30% or More
- 50 % or More

25.0% 52.3% 22.7%

Commute Patterns

- Automobile
- Transit
- Bicycle + Walk
- Other Means

8.5% 5.4% 10.2% 75.8%

Housing Occupancy

- Occupied
- Vacant

18.2% 81.8%

Cost Burdened Owners

- Less than 30%
- 30% or More
- 50% or More

11% 24% 65%
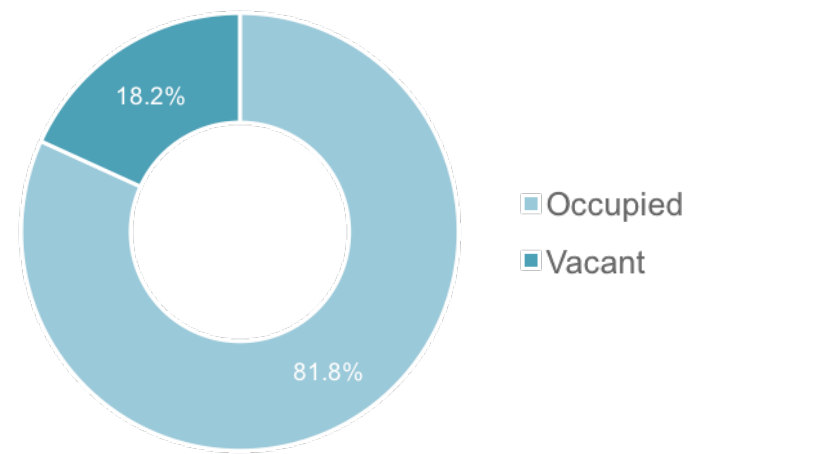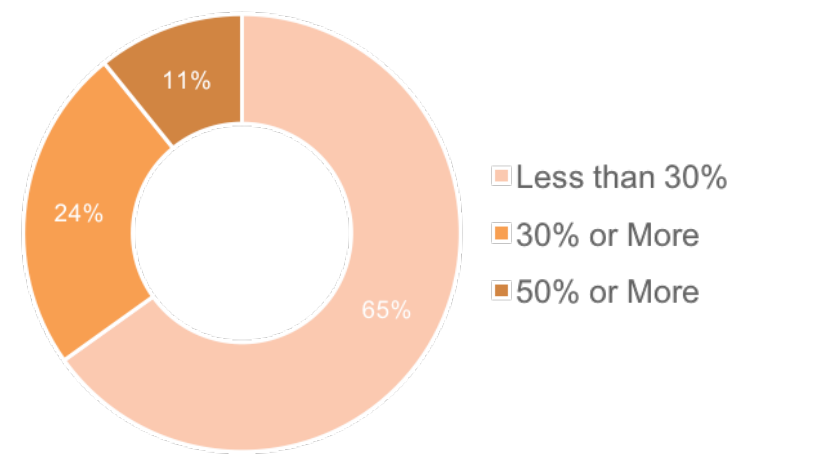
Souce: Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates) (SE), ACS 2016 (5-Year Estimates),
Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau

2 | Opportunities +
Processes

Previous Plans + Studies

Current Plans + Studies

Bankhead MARTA LCI

Total Area Population

+

D3 Westside Revive

Total Area Population

District 3: Recap
August 19| 10AM – 12PM
C.A. Scott Recreation Center
1565 M.L.K. Jr., Dr. NW

Tim Keane, Commissioner
City of Atlanta Department of Planning and
Community Development

Charletta Jacks, Director
DPCD Office of Zoning and Development

Councilmember Ivory L. Young, Jr.
Atlanta City Council District 3
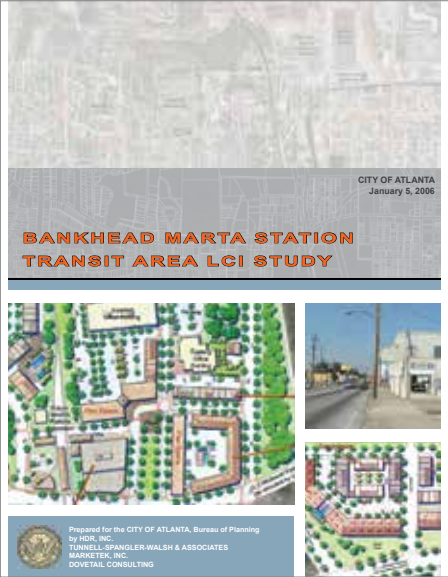
Beltline Subareas 9 + 10

Total Area Population

+

Atlanta City Design

Total Area Population
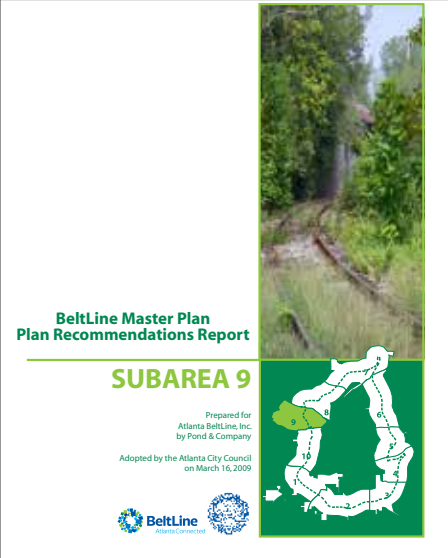
DLH Redevelopment Plan

Total Area Population

Donald L. Hollowell Parkway
Redevelopment Plan

Presented by
The City of Atlanta
Bureau of Planning
November 2003

Proctor Creek Greenway

Total Area Population

Stakeholder Mapping

Non-Profits:
1.   *Emerald Corridor Foundation*
2.   *Atlanta Beltline*
3.   *Westside Future Fund*
4.   *Westside Communities Alliance*
5.   *Friends of English Avenue*
6.   *Greater Vine City Opportunities program*
7.   *Historic Westside Cultural Arts Council*
8.   *West Atlanta Watershed Alliance*

Civic Associations / Community Groups:
1.   *Northwest Business Association*
2.   *English Ave Neighborhood Assoc.*
3.   *Historic Westin Heights / Bankhead Neighborhood Association*
4.   *Northwest Community Alliance*
5.   *Washington Park Community Club & Neighborhood Association*
6.   *Vine City Civic Association*
7.   *Proctor Creek Stewardship Council*

Institutions:
1.   *Atlanta Public Schools*
2.   *Georgia Tech (SLS)*
3.   *Atlanta Community Improvement Association*

Vision

Community lead
Vision for the community that is there now, not for displacement
People-focused, and people-centric

First Steps

Data Collection
Small-scale intervention

Next Steps

Large scale planning
Large scale interventions

3 | Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

Provide a series of experiences
Encourage lively edges
Create an integrated network of places
Support surrounding neighborhoods
Support a network of investment
Continue to evolve

#1: Provide a series of experiences

» *Around the clock activation (places to stay)*
» *Streetscape improvement by character of district*
» *Transportation choices*
» *Next Steps to achieve*
   1. *Sign to get community input*
   2. *Test public space projects*

#2: Encourage lively edges

» *Active facades – facade improvement project*
» *Activate existing businesses*
» *Encourage new businesses*
» *Next Steps to achieve*

#3: Create an integrated network of places

#4: Support surrounding neighborhoods

#5: Support a network of investment

»   *Build upon and support existing initiatives, collaborate*
»   *Extend network opportunities with public institutions*
»   *Create focus on neighborhood participation, "Civic Innovation" projects*
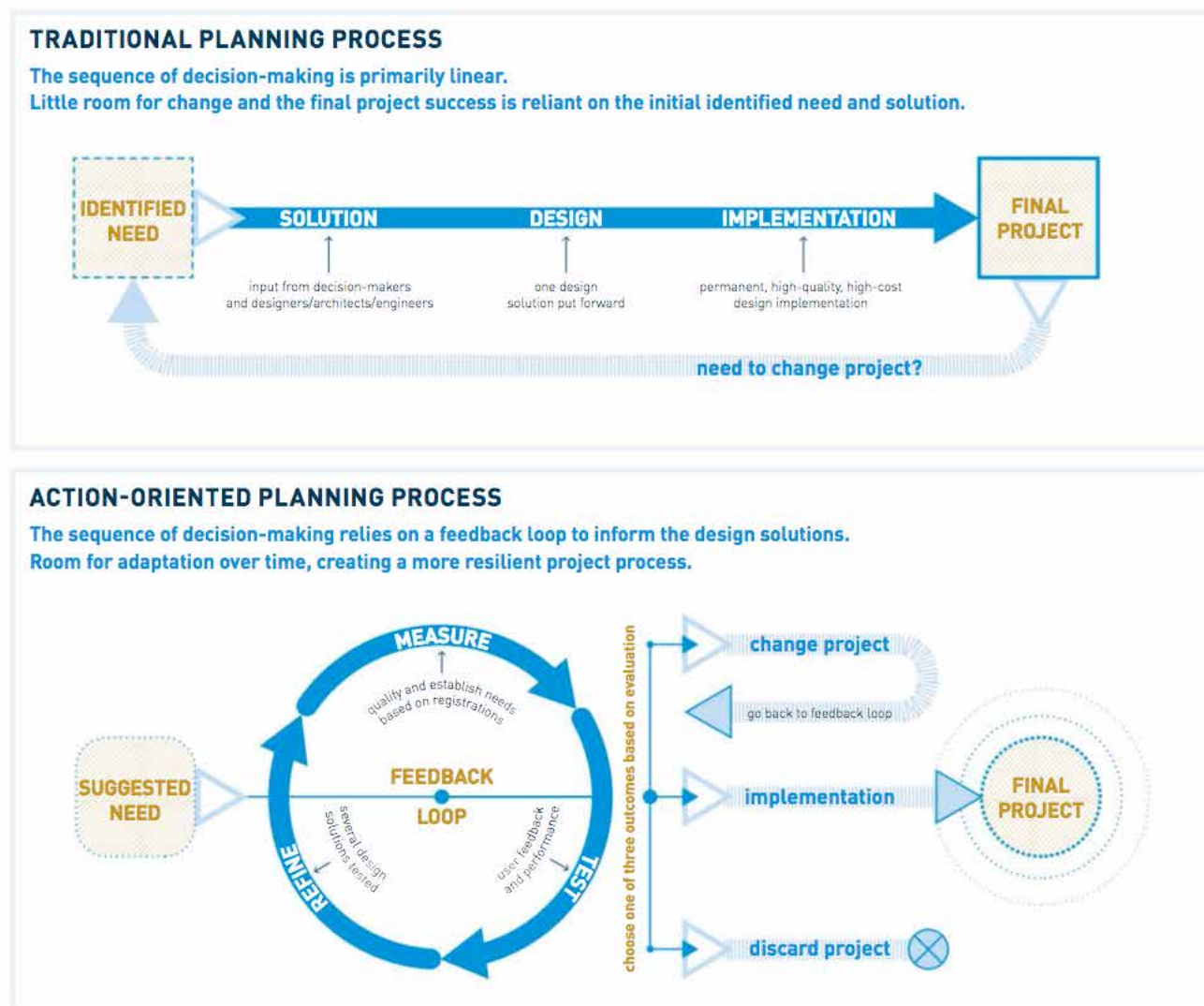»   *Next steps to achieve*

#6: Continue to evolve

»   *Evidence based decision network*
»   *Prototyping method*
»   *Implementation plan*

4 | Moving Forward

Action-Oriented Planning

TRADITIONAL PLANNING PROCESS

The sequence of decision-making is primarily linear.
Little room for change and the final project success is reliant on the initial identified need and solution.

IDENTIFIED NEED → SOLUTION → DESIGN → IMPLEMENTATION → FINAL PROJECT

input from decision-makers and designers/architects/engineers

one design solution put forward

permanent, high-quality, high-cost design implementation

need to change project?

ACTION-ORIENTED PLANNING PROCESS

The sequence of decision-making relies on a feedback loop to inform the design solutions.
Room for adaptation over time, creating a more resilient project process.

MEASURE
quality and establish needs based on registrations

FEEDBACK LOOP

several design solutions tested

REFINE

user feedback and performance

TEST

choose one of three outcomes based on evaluation

change project
go back to feedback loop

implementation → FINAL PROJECT

discard project

Note: Images, text, and concept by Gehl Studio, *"Action-Oriented Planning"* published March, 2016.

Introduction

Action-Oriented Planning uses pilot projects as community engagement during the planning process in order to show community members how design decisions will impact the community. The process emphasizes *showing* improvements rather than *telling* stakeholders about improvements. This approach to planning is inherently human-scaled, user focused, highly iterative, and multidisciplinary-often leading to increased political buy-in and new perspectives in solving old problems.

Project Typologies

» **Regeneration Catalyst:** Creating new destinations on vacant sites.
» **Full-Scale Test:** Full-scale project mock-up, using quicker, less costly, reversible or less intensive physical means.
» **Demonstration Project:** Fully detailed implementation, illustrating the best practices of a proposed design.

» **Process Pilot:** Testing new methods of community engagement to build trust, engage stakeholders, and create solidarity.
» **Insurgent Project:** Unsanctioned project using loopholes and spontaneously claimed space.
» **Tactical Project:** Strategic projects engaging communities to create change.

Steps to Implementation

Step 1: Define the Project Scope

Clearly define the purpose and focus of the project, and how it will be implemented.

Checklist:

» Project focus
» Past Lessons
» Ease of Implementation
» Measure-test-feedback loop definition
» Public Impact
» Collaboration + Stakeholder interest

» Alignment with ongoing projects
» Long term perspective
» Flexibility + Resilience
» Diversity + Inclusiveness
» Connectivity + Accessibility
» Local Champions identification

Step 2: Set the Project Goals

Determine the primary 1-5 goals of the project, and the success criteria for reaching those goals.

Sample Goals:

» A Street for People
» Community Engagement
» Shared Civic Spaces

» Opportunity + Access
» Building Capacity
» Longevity

Step 3: Evaluate the Project Impact + Success

» Before: Evaluate existing conditions
» During: Measure goals and success criteria
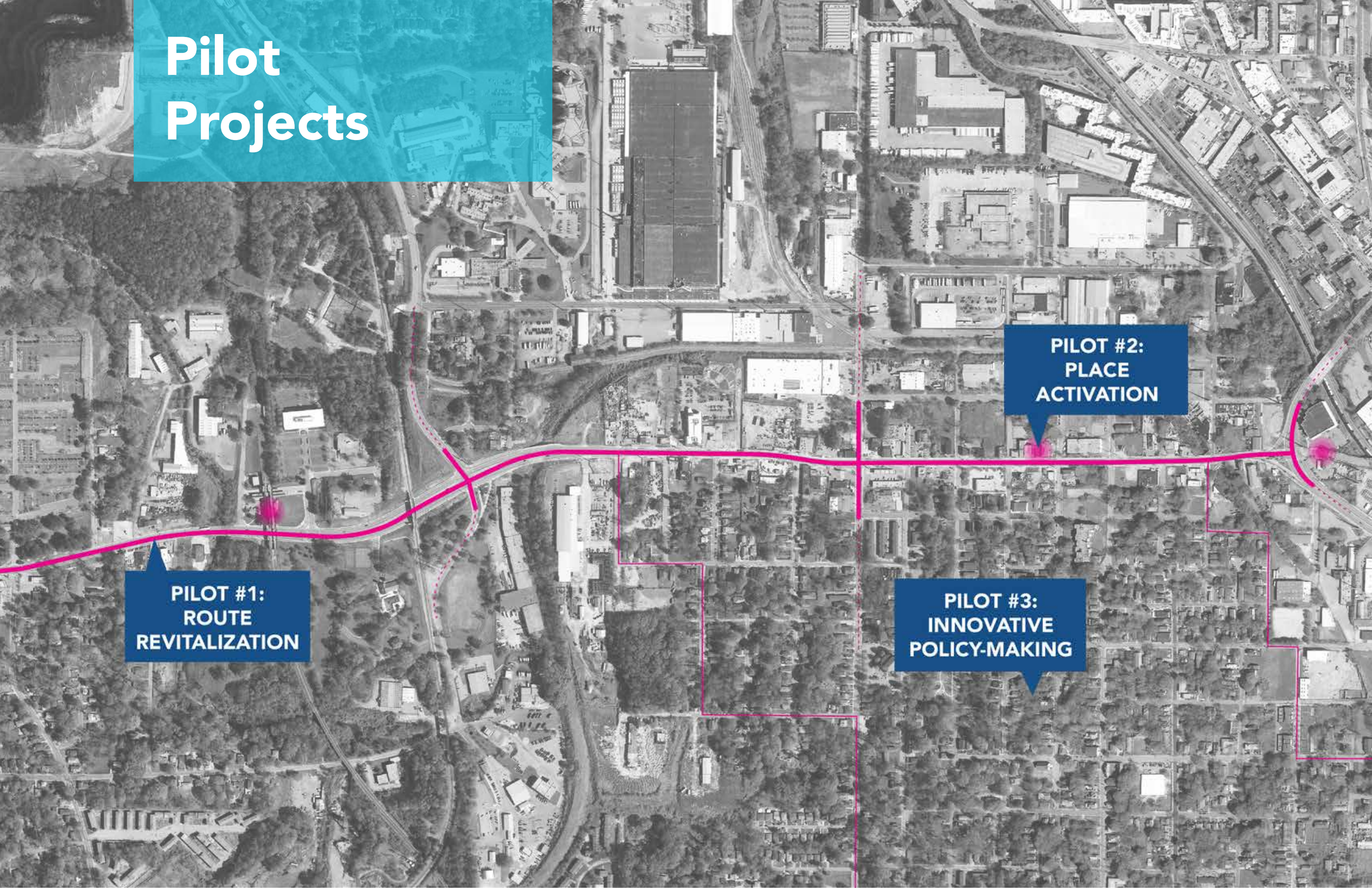» After: Evaluate success from different stakeholder perspectives

MEASURE

Public Life
Measure the existing public life using observational studies, quantative data collection and qualitative surveys and registrations. Measure pedestrian counts and flows, types of activities (stationary) and user diversity and demographics.

Public Space
Measure the existing public space using qualitative and quantitative assessment tools. Study the quality of facades and the functions in the buildings surrounding the public space.

User Experience & Needs
Investigate people's needs through intercept studies, both qualitative and quantitative. Questionnaires must be filled in by at least 1000 people to be representative for a quantitative study. Anecdotes and personal experiences can be collected from just a few representative users.

TEST (1:1)

Establish New Behavior
Implement a pilot project that answers some of the needs established through the measure-phase. Test how the use of the public space changes when the physical environment is changed. Are there new patterns of usage and users?

Feedback On Experience
Investigate people's new needs based on the impact of the pilot project on the public space and public life. Are users more or less happy to spend time in the public space? Are all socio-economic groups represented?

Evaluate
Consider how the project has been successful, how it could be more successful and whether there is a basis for more tests or for permanent implementation.

REFINE

Better Chance of Success
Use the learnings from the first two phases to refine the project's next steps and/or permanent implementation. The next project implementation should have an even better chance of success based on the feedback-loop.

Investment Benefits
Long-term projects will be more cost-efficient and resilient if their performance has been tested and evaluated in advance. If the first pilot project does not reach the goals, consider running more tests until the right needs are met.

Acceptance and Ownership
Projects that grow out of tests of real needs are more likely to be adopted by the local community, which ensures long-term use and therefore a more successful project.

Pilot Projects

PILOT #2: PLACE ACTIVATION

PILOT #1: ROUTE REVITALIZATION

PILOT #3: INNOVATIVE POLICY-MAKING

Pilot #1

*1 // **Route Revitalization***
Provide a series of experiences
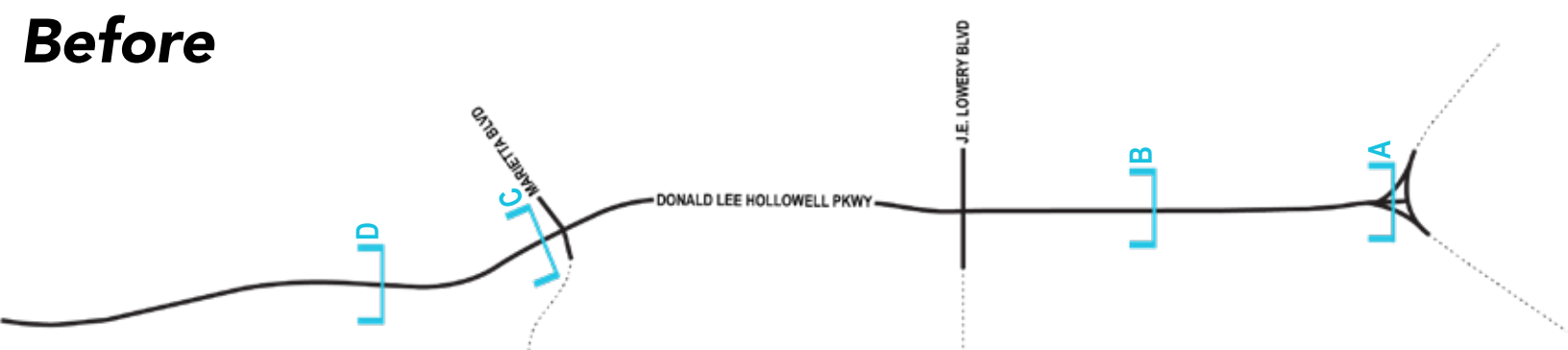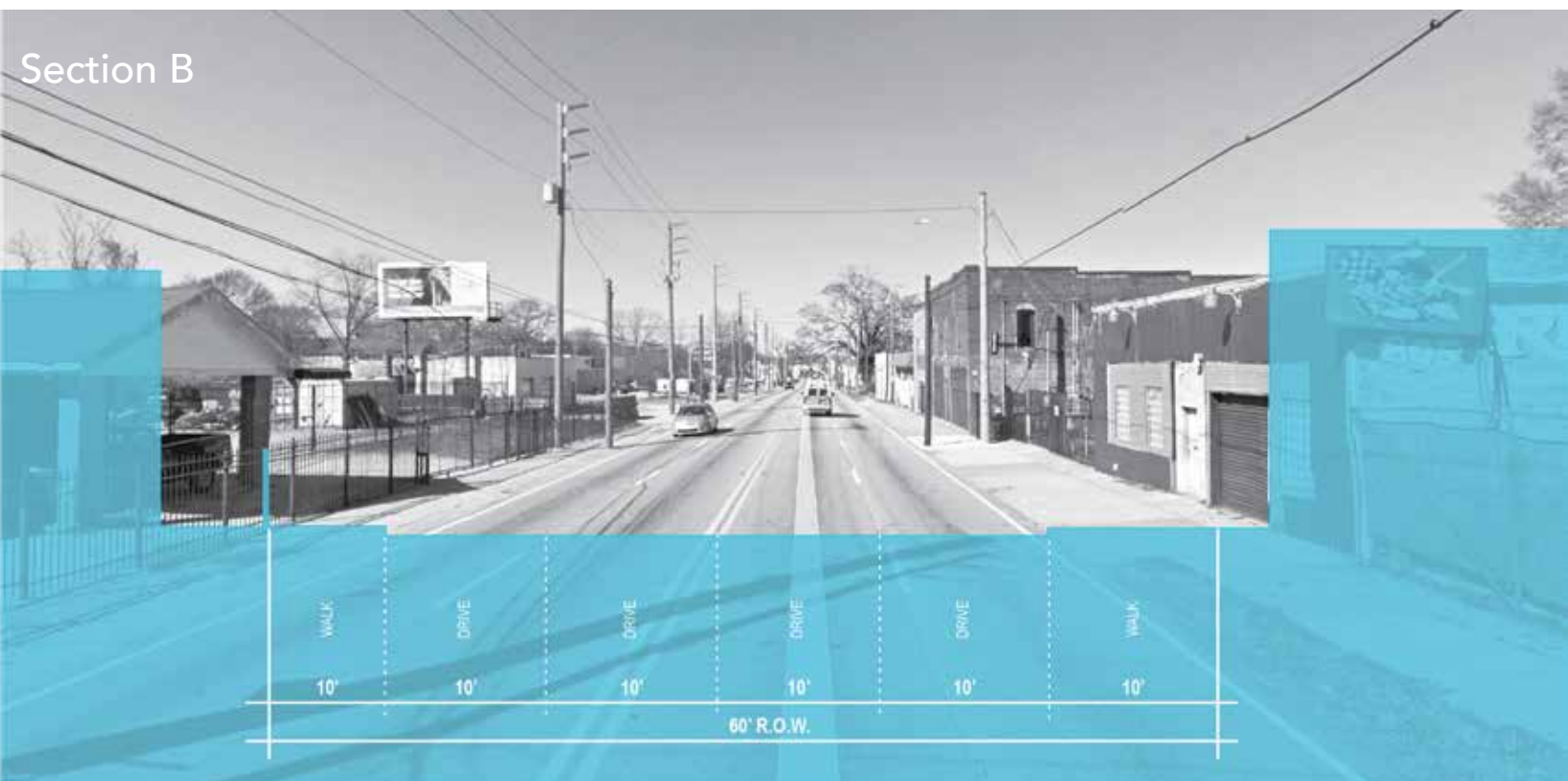*Encourage lively edges*
Create an integrated network of places
Support surrounding neighborhoods
Support a network of investment
Continue to evolve

35 MPH   19,800 ADT

Section A

Section B

WALK	TURN	BUFFER	PLANT	WALK	DRIVE	DRIVE	PLANT	DRIVE	DRIVE	WALK	PLANT	DRIVE	WALK
9'	13'	13'	20'	8'	11'	11'	15'	11'	11'	8'	12'	13'	9'

164' R.O.W.

WALK	DRIVE	DRIVE	DRIVE	DRIVE	WALK
10'	10'	10'	10'	10'	10'

60' R.O.W.

Before

MARIETTA BLVD

J.E. LOWERY BLVD

DONALD LEE HOLLOWELL PKWY

D   C   B   A

After

Ugitet alignist volupta vendipide nest, sitatiosti torepe volupta eperspeditas nima volorupta nem sa cusciur? Quissi comnimi, con re que quo omniae vendae plaut quat.
Nam quam ut quament evendi omnit labo. Et eum eum fugiatiis etur?
Mos ut venturit volore et officab orepedis et et di cus iducius minisquate vendelignim volora velecti iscidundem invelest omnimus, con coribus dolorere dis doluptio int ex etus nullupta dolenim aximus
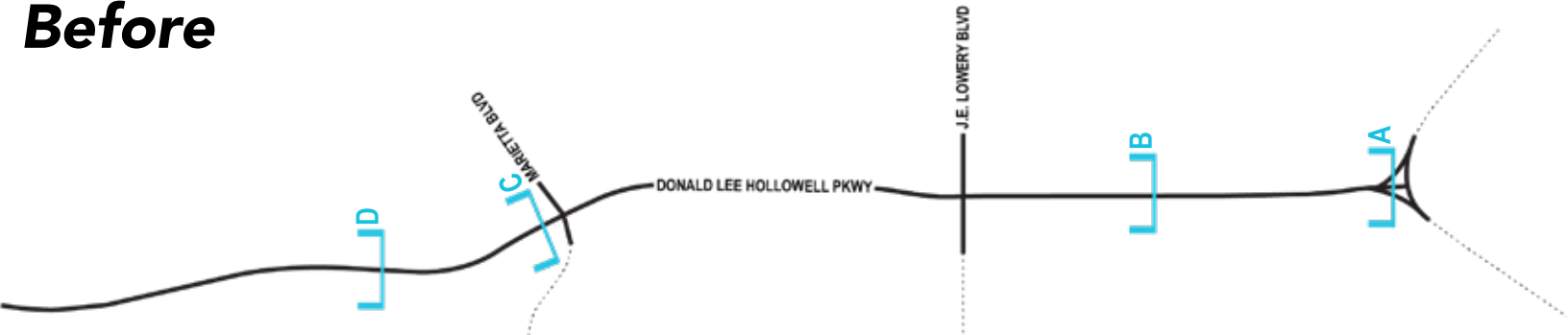
Section C

WALK 6' | PLANT 2' | BIKE 4' | DRIVE 12' | DRIVE 12' | SLOW 11' | TURN 11' | MEDIAN 12' | DRIVE 12' | DRIVE 12' | BIKE 4' | PLANT 2' | WALK 6'

90' R.O.W.

Section D

WALK 6' | PLANT 2' | BIKE 4' | DRIVE 12' | DRIVE 12' | TURN 11' | DRIVE 12' | DRIVE 12' | BIKE 4' | PLANT 2' | WALK 6'

67' R.O.W.

Before

MARIETTA BLVD
J.E. LOWERY BLVD
DONALD LEE HOLLOWELL PKWY
D
C
B
A

After

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Nam quam ut quament evendi omnit labo. Et eum eum fugiatiis etur?
Mos ut venturit volore et officab orepedis et et di cus iducius minisquate vendelignim volora velecti iscidundem invelest omnimus, con coribus dolorere dis doluptio int ex etus nullupta dolenim aximus

Crosswalks + Lighting

Seating + Planting

Streets for People
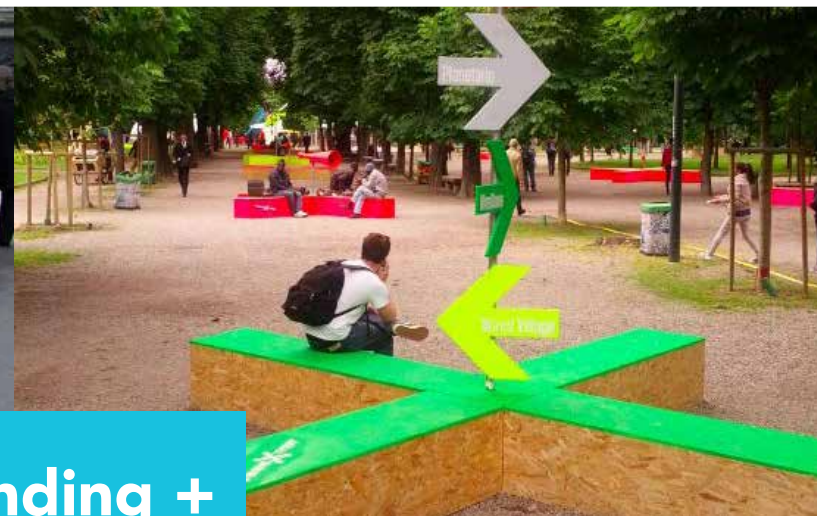
Wayfinding + Markers

Pilot #2

2   //   *Place Activation*
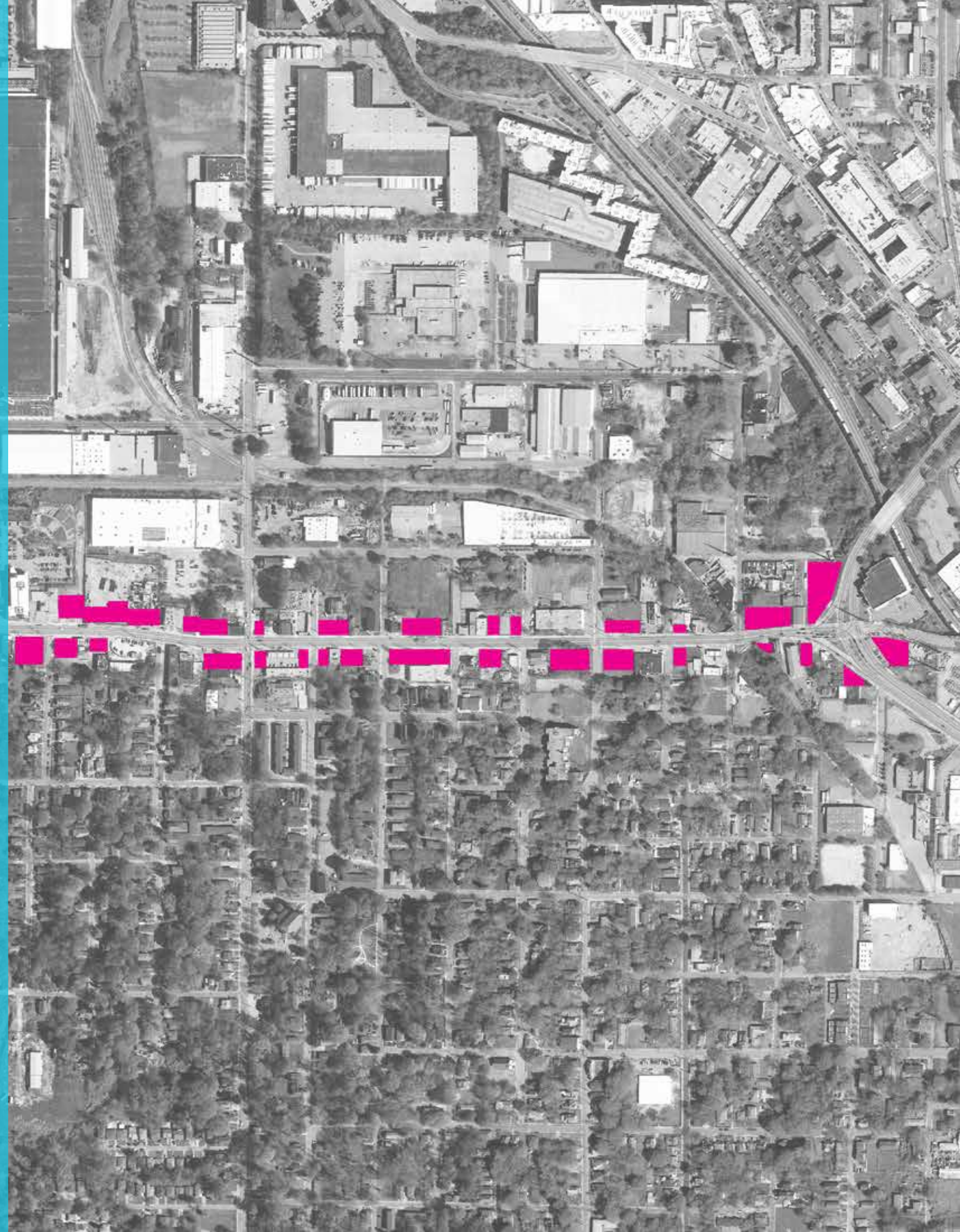*Provide a series of experiences*
Encourage lively edges
Create an integrated network of places
Support surrounding neighborhoods
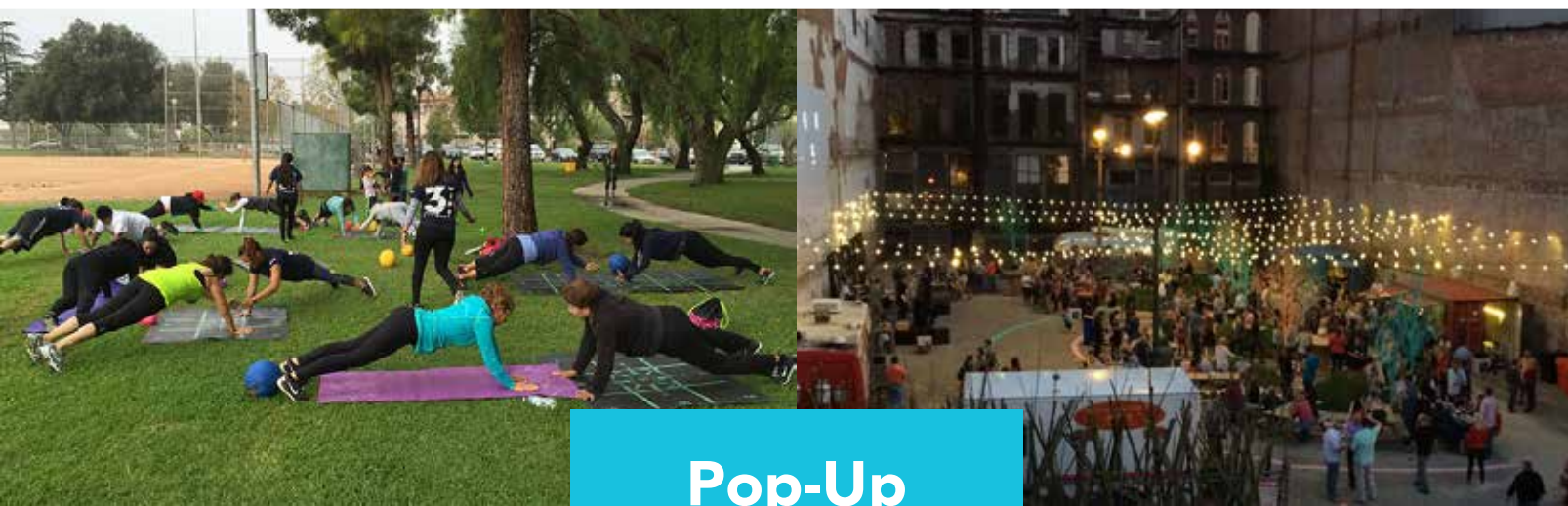*Support a network of investment*
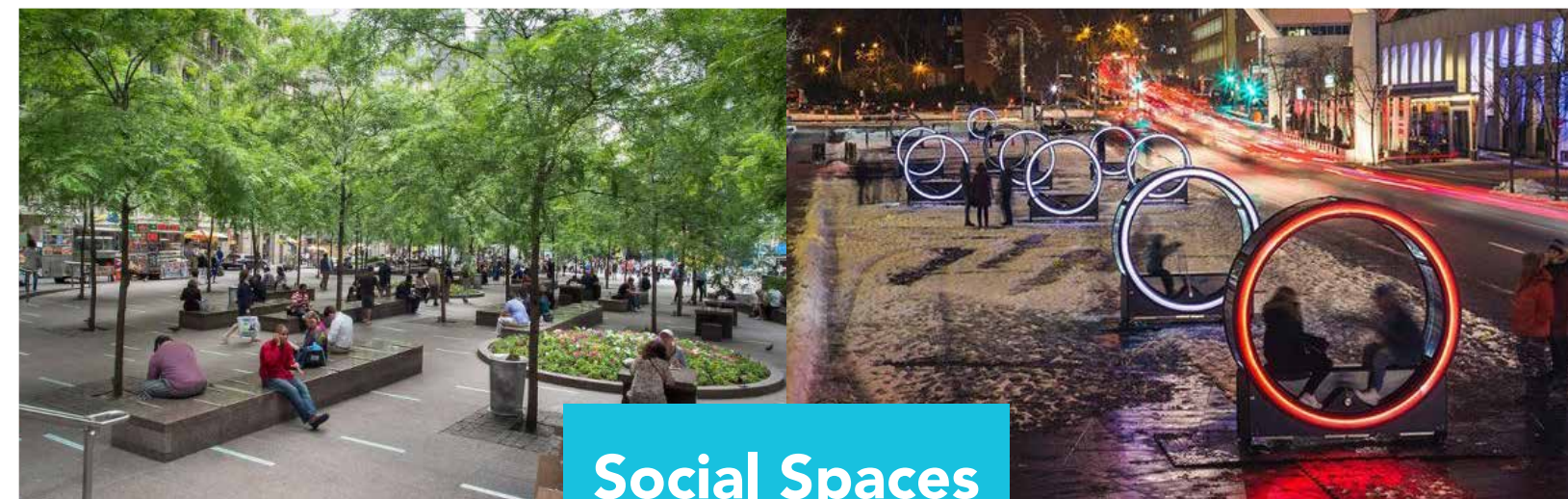*Continue to evolve*

Before

After

Before

After

Art +
Activation

Vendors

Pop-Up
Programming

Social Spaces
+ Furniture

Pilot #3

*3   //   **Innovative Policy-Making***
Provide a series of experiences
Encourage lively edges
Create an integrated network of places
Support surrounding neighborhoods
Support a network of investment
Continue to evolve

Housing Policy

» *Who is Atlanta building for? Lecture*
» *Affordable housing policies*
» *Anti-displacement measures*

Walkability + Bikeability

Social Capital + Engagement

» *Community engagement mechanisms*
» *Public Life Diversity Toolkit, Gehl*
» *Action-Oriented Planning, Gehl*
» *Planning for People + Communities, not cars + data*

Schools + Community Development

» *Marjy Stagmeier, Affordable Housing and Schools*

Small Business Economic Development

» *CDFIs*
» *Business Incubator Programs*

Access to Public Space

» *Parks and Trails*
» *Public gathering spaces / plazas*

Access to Transit

5 | Data Appendix

Data, Maps, + Tables

» *Sidewalk quality*
» *Bike lanes*
» *Facade quality*
» *Ground floor functions*
» *Vacant property / lots*