



Livable Centers Initiative Innovation Study

DRAFT Report & Economic Development Plan

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Executive Summary



Below are the key take-aways from the Baseline Assessment. The planning team plans to build on these items in developing the Executive Summary once the draft recommendations are vetted with PMT & Core Team.

The CID possesses a strategic location for economic success – near major transportation arteries, in close proximity to in-town markets, near major educational and research institutions; **however:**

- The SMCID area’s infrastructure and built environment requires upgrades to retain and attract businesses.
- Streamlining and modernizing County development processes will strengthen the CID’s ability to capture business opportunities.
- Stronger partnerships between the business community, DCPS and area technical schools are essential to improving employment prospects for DeKalb students and residents.
- Now is the time for the DeKalb Community (government, schools, etc.) to support economic development!

Capacity exists to achieve desired economic growth, but coordination is needed to fulfill the vision of a vital business environment.



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A. Introduction



1.0 LEADING THE WAY – WHY HERE, WHY NOW?

This Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Innovation Study reflects the determination of the Stone Mountain Community Improvement District (SMCID) and its public and private partners to drive new and sustainable growth in the Stone Mountain Industrial Park area. The receipt of the Atlanta Regional Commission’s (ARC) LCI innovation studies grant provided a timely opportunity for the CID to pause, consider its ambitions for the future, and craft its plan for generating jobs and strengthening its position as a desirable location to do business.



This planning initiative comes on the heels of two major events impacting the Stone Mountain Industrial Park area:

- The Great Recession, a major downturn in the US economy causing increased vacancy rates and reduction in business size and employment, and
- The formation and subsequent expansion of the SMCID in June 2011 and July 2012, respectively.

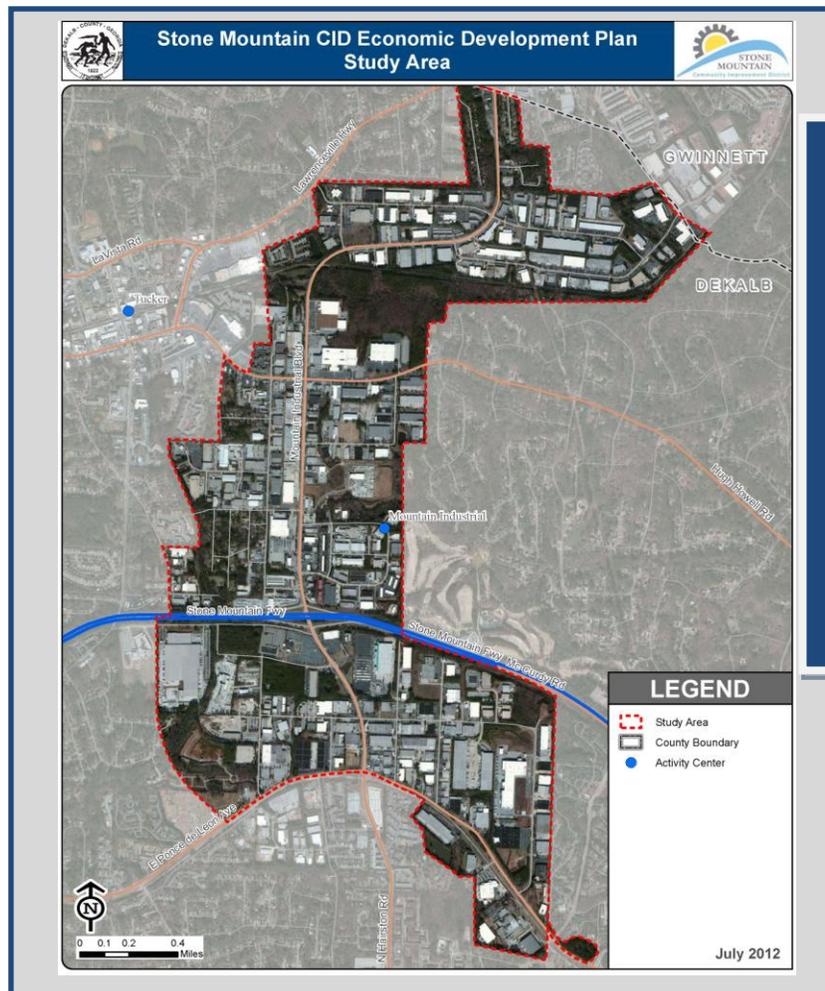
The first of these events has impacted communities and employment centers around the region and world. In the case of the SMCID area, the event also made evident to the area’s business leaders that as an older industrial center, a reenergized and out of the box approach would be required to retain and maintain its business owners while attracting new industry. The second of these events, formation of the CID, demonstrates one of the first steps in this direction. The CID is a critical link between the area’s property and business owners and the county, regional, and state partners that are essential to make this area thrive. The area now has an advocate and mobilizer for moving things forward.

A vision for the future and strategic implementation plan for getting there is the critical next step for moving from talking the talk to walking the walk. The primary result of this

study effort, the Economic Development Plan for the SMCID area, is a demonstration that the SMCID area is not just walking forward but moving forward at an increased and steady pace. The CID is not moving alone either, a significant aspect of the development of this study was the engagement of those partners that will play an important role in seeing the plan forward to implementation. DeKalb County’s multiple departments, elected officials, and staff that are critical to supporting the change required to implement this plan were essential participants in the process. The County as well as the CID, inclusive of its member owners, worked together with other partners to develop this plan.

The time is now for resurgence of job growth in DeKalb County, and the SMCID has the leadership, plan, and motivation to be a guiding light for this resurgence. The ultimate goal of the CID is to achieve success in implementing its Economic Development Plan and subsequently serve as a model to other parts of the county in how they too can achieve economic revitalization.

Figure 1-1: SMCID LCI Study Area



The study area is consistent with the boundaries of the CID, including East Ponce de Leon Ave to the south and the Gwinnett County line to the north with Mountain Industrial Boulevard and US Highway 78 bisecting the district in the north-south and east-west directions. The planning area includes the newly incorporated portion of the CID, which extends the CID boundary northward to the Gwinnett County line.

2.0 STUDY PROCESS

2.1 Purpose

The driving force behind this study was the need to develop a strategic economic development plan to re-establish the area's strong industrial and freight presence in DeKalb County and the southeastern US. The primary product of the study process is an Economic Development Plan, contained in Part C of this report, to guide CID and DeKalb County decisions and investments in the area and serve as a catalyst for desirable business and job growth moving forward.

The recommendations of this study demonstrate the commitment of area leadership to retain and attract businesses through rigorous economic growth strategy, systemic and regulatory changes that meet or exceed standards of competitor areas, and finally, transportation and other physical improvements to demonstrate public/private investment.



2.2 Methodology & Key Steps

Two primary items shaped the format and key steps in the study process: the ARC's standards for Livable Centers Initiatives program and the unique goals of the planning initiative. Aside from the influence of these unique items, the study process followed an approach typical to planning initiatives, with the primary activities revolving around data gathering and analysis, public input and engagement, and development of the Economic Development Plan.

The following steps were taken:

- Initiated project by engaging study and area leaders in a series of standing committees and data gathering activities: Project Management Team, Core Team, and stakeholder interviews;
- Completed analysis of existing conditions and trends, summarized in a Baseline Assessment;
- Initiated Business Environment Survey as an additional means to gather input on study area strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats;
- Conducted Public Kick-off Meeting to inform community;



- Developed draft Economic Development Plan and recommendations based on Baseline Assessment findings, stakeholder input, and consideration of best practices in benchmark communities;
- Held two additional meetings with public to gather feedback on draft recommendations and final recommendations of plan;
- Held coordination meeting with the ARC to ensure consistency with LCI goals and initiatives; and
- Finalized Economic Development Plan for Adoption by CID and DeKalb County.

2.3 Time Frame

The study process extended over a six month time frame, beginning in June 2012 and ending in November 2012 with the finalization of the study and approval of the plan by the Atlanta Regional Commission. SMCID and DeKalb County adoption of the plan is anticipated in late 2012/early 2013. Below is a project timeline demonstrating the key milestones in the study process.

Figure 1-2: Project Timeline for SMCID LCI

Task	Task Description	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Task 1	Assessment of Existing Conditions						
Task 2	Strategic Communications Plan - Meetings						
Task 2A	Project Management Team	15-Jun	17-Jul	10-Aug	24-Sep	19-Oct	9-Nov
Task 2B	Core Team	15-Jun		15-Aug		4-Oct	
Task 2C	Kick-off Meeting/ Data Gathering			15-Aug			
Task 2D	Presentation of Draft Plan					11-Oct	
Task 2E	Final Plan Public Review						15-Nov
Task 3	Project Deliverables						



2.4 What's Inside

This report embodies the whole of this planning effort: beginning with the planning team kickoff to the finalization of a five-year action plan. The combined final report and economic development plan is separated into three key parts and appendices of valuable supporting information.

Part A: Introduction. In addition to the text leading up to this point, this Part A includes key findings from the Baseline Assessment and a summary of study recommendations.

Part B: Interagency Collaboration. This element of the report highlights the underlying theme that resonates throughout the report – economic development requires teamwork. The work highlights the stakeholder engagement and communications process. It also identifies those related planning efforts and initiatives with which this planning effort has been coordinated with and informed by.

Part C: Economic Development Plan. The section provides the specific recommendations for achieving the area's economic growth goals. Recommendations are grouped under three major umbrellas:

- Essential Economic Development actions,
- Regulatory and Systemic Enhancements, and finally,
- Strengthening the Physical Environment, a focus on transportation and design improvements.

Appendices – Several appendices are provided to support the primary content provided in parts A, B, & C.



3.0 KEY FINDINGS FROM BASELINE CONDITIONS

A critical component of this planning process was establishing a summary of initial conditions and trends. This data is highlighted in the Baseline Assessment document, provided in Appendix A. This section provides a summary of key findings from that effort, which form the foundation on which the Economic Development Plan is built.

3.1 Competitive Business Environment

3.1.1 Assessing Current Realities in the SMCID Area

In the first phase of this planning process, a Competitive Snapshot was produced that framed the major competitive issues and opportunities faced by the SMCID area. In addition to infrastructural and regulatory issues, economic factors such as business sector dynamics, workforce capabilities, and the network of economic development partners were examined. The Snapshot was a critical step in building the SWOT analysis included in Appendix B and the draft recommendations pertaining to economic development. The key findings are summarized in the narrative that follows.

3.1.2 How is the local economy performing?

The Great Recession has proven to be the most defining economic moment in generations. The United States lost approximately eight million jobs and less than half of those jobs have returned. The weaknesses exposed in the national economy manifested themselves in a myriad of ways in local economies, with some communities being hit disproportionately hard, while others simply slowed their growth.

The Atlanta metro region continues to struggle with anemic economic growth and elevated unemployment, a telling sign of the severity with which the metro suffered economic setback. Counties and localities are the bearers of the economic volatility. Between 2008 and 2010, jobs in DeKalb County declined by 8.1 percent. This loss was magnified in the SMCID, as job losses topped 13 percent (approximately 1,622 jobs). The swiftness and indiscriminate nature of the Great Recession losses is evident in the SMCID as between 2005 and 2008, employment grew by 10 percent (1,134 jobs). Three years of growth was essentially negated in two years.

3.1.3 Is the local economy diversifying?

The largest concentrations of employment in the SMCID are in wholesale trade, manufacturing, and retail. Companies in these sectors represent the core business profile- companies with \$1-5 million in revenue- of the SMCID as well as some of the largest enterprises. In 2010, these sectors combined for just over 61 percent of total employment in the SMCID. Since 2008, each of these sectors experienced employment contraction that was with at par with or less severe than sector losses in DeKalb County. This would seem to suggest that losses in the SMCID were not disproportionate, but that there are competitive advantages for these sectors in the area. Further, the SMCID



area is host to a large share of DeKalb County's wholesale trade and manufacturing activity, making it a local hub for such operations.

One of the bright spots for the SMCID, as well as DeKalb County, is the emergence of health care as a growth sector. Between 2008 and 2010 the sector added 94 jobs and grew by over 130 percent. Embracing health care as a strategic priority will hedge against continued sluggish growth in manufacturing as well as open up new avenues for relationships with large health institutions in the metro area.

3.1.4 Can businesses flourish in the SMCID?

As mentioned previously, the factors that affect the business environment are many. One of the key concerns for businesses looking to expand or relocate is the availability of labor. If the local workforce does not mirror the needs of a company, then there is little incentive to choose that location. Ensuring that education and workforce pipelines are integrated with business needs is a key component of successful economic development. While businesses in the SMCID should expect to draw from a regional labor pool, educational and workforce development challenges have resulted in fewer than one in four jobs in the SMCID being filled by a DeKalb County resident.

Businesses in the SMCID have access to the entire Atlanta metro labor shed. The top five counties from which workers commute to the SMCID are Gwinnett (28.4 percent of workers), DeKalb (22.7 percent), Fulton (8.3 percent), Cobb (4.7 percent), and Walton (2.9 percent). As such, the SMCID should continue positioning itself as a regional labor destination and participate in dialogues about regional competitiveness, especially as an amplifier for business concerns.

From an occupational standpoint, businesses in the SMCID primarily employ salespeople (21.5 percent of employees), office and administrative workers (16.3 percent), and production workers (15 percent). The forecasted regional demand for these types of workers tends to be driven by replacement needs, rather than new growth. This dynamic suggests that programs for training and re-training workers will be critical to regional and local competitiveness. Low demand for production occupations implies skill gaps for manufacturers that must be addressed by local training efforts.

The transportation and distribution activities in the metro area hold much promise for stimulating economic growth in DeKalb County and the SMCID. The SMCID is strategically positioned to capture opportunities in this sector as it has proximity to major interstate, a diverse and international workforce, and available buildings. Occupations in transportation and material moving account for 13.8 percent of employees in the SMCID and are forecasted to continue to be in-demand (an increase of 24.4 percent between 2008 and 2018). Leveraging the region's projected growth in demand for transportation and distribution workers will be important, especially with SMCID connectivity advantages.



3.2 Regulatory Context

3.2.1 Regulatory Context

The SMCID is located in unincorporated DeKalb County. As such, rezoning requests, redevelopment proposals, related land development initiatives, building modifications, and business licensing are regulated DeKalb County policy. The DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan along with the County's Code of Ordinances are the umbrella policy and legal frameworks from which decisions must be made. The Comprehensive Plan is the overarching policy document for growth, redevelopment, and prioritization of initiatives within the county. The last update of the Comprehensive Plan occurred in 2011. Although the Plan speaks generally to the County's economic development goals, the Future Development Map (**Figure 3-1**), which divides the area into the following character areas, is the element of the plan that provides specific recommendations for the SMCID area:

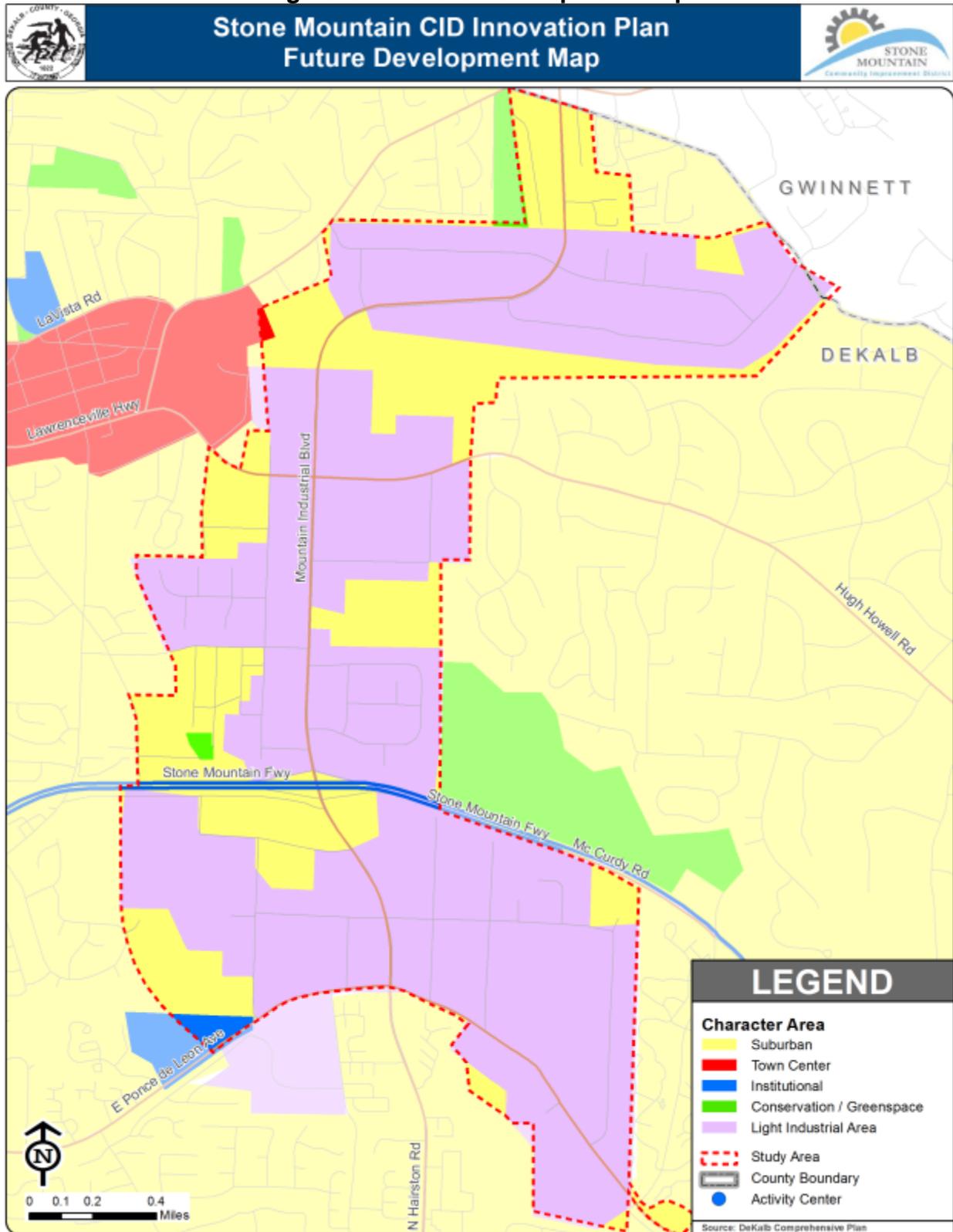
- Light Industrial = 71% of area
- Suburban= 28% of area
- Town Center - just outside western study boundary, along Lawrenceville Hwy (Tucker area)
- Conservation - just outside eastern study area boundary, along northern boundary of Stone Mountain Hwy
- Institutional - Intersects southwest corner of study area, along East Ponce de Leon

The intent of the Light Industrial Character Area is identify areas appropriate for industrial type uses. The location of these areas should preserve the appeal and appearance of residential and commercial areas from the prospective intrusion of light industrial land uses. These areas consist of areas used in low intensity manufacturing, including wholesale trade, and distribution activities that do not generate excessive noise, vibration, air pollution or other nuisance characteristics.

-DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan

The majority of the study area is classified under the light industrial character area, which is identified as appropriate for industrial uses, although the character area description highlights the need to preserve the sanctity of adjacent commercial and residential areas. A notable portion of the study area is placed in the suburban character area, deemed by the Comprehensive Plan as appropriate for low to medium density residential land uses should be permitted. These designations are important because they determine if and into what districts land can be rezoned.

Figure 3-1: Future Development Map



3.2.2 Existing Zoning

Most of the study area is currently zoned M-Industrial as demonstrated by the Zoning Map (**Figure 3-2**), which is generally compatible with the area's business growth plans. A notable percentage of parcels are zoned commercial particularly along Mountain Industrial Boulevard and Hugh Howell Road. These areas meet service needs of area business employees and those traversing the district as through traffic. The County's current policy is to limit commercial rezoning of property if there is an excess of vacant commercial land within a reasonable distance of the proposed rezoning. Additional areas within the study boundary are zoned single or multi-family residential; these areas are primarily located on the outskirts of the study area. There are also some very limited parcels zoned for office distribution and office institutional. These properties are mainly concentrated in the northern portion of the study area near the Gwinnett County line.

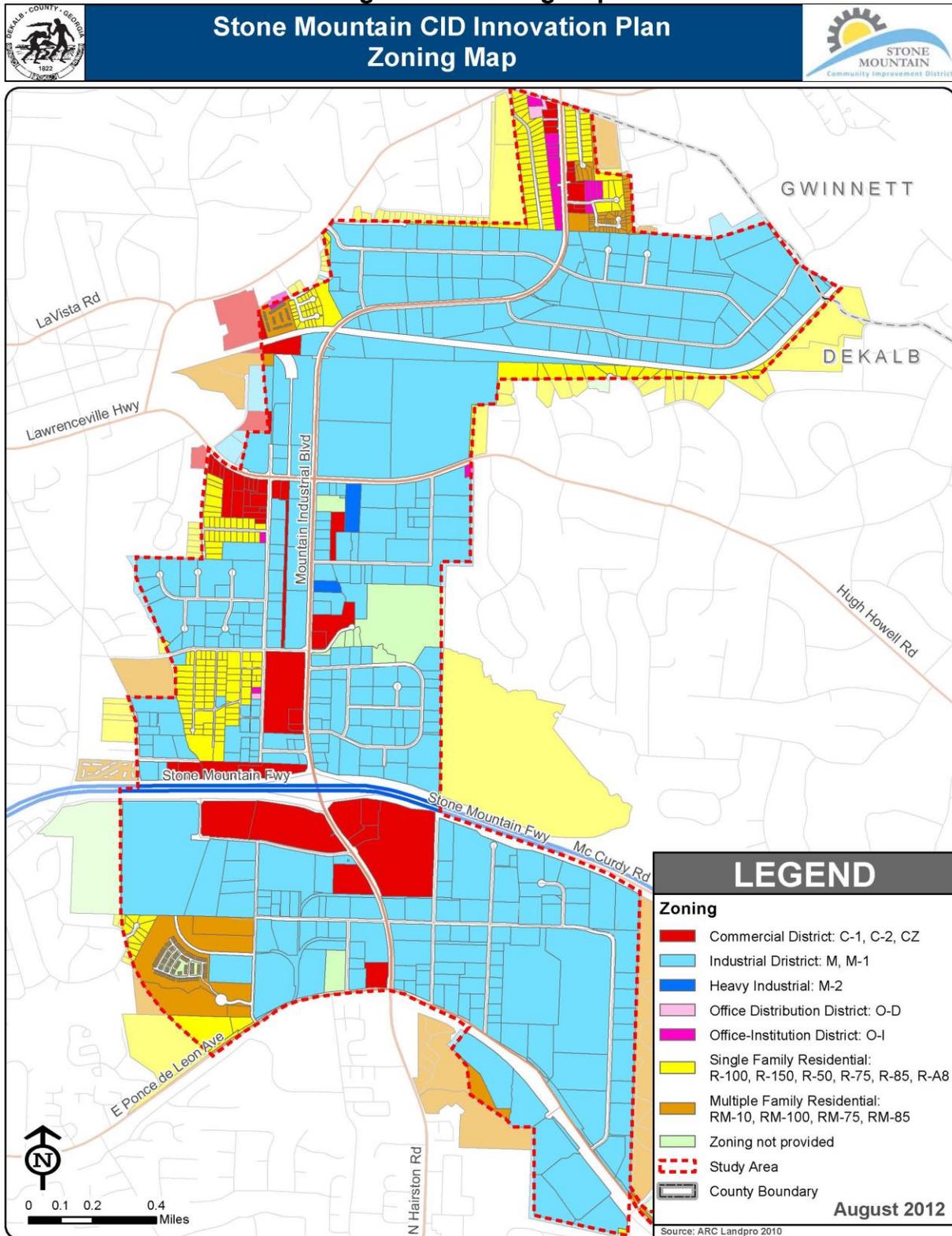
Some issues and opportunities with this zoning classification include the following:

- The M district allows some potentially incompatible uses if a special land use permit (SLUP) is obtained, including adult entertainment, night clubs, churches, and general commercial with outdoor storage.
- The area's industrially zoned land is land-locked by residential land uses, which could be positive from a workforce pull standpoint; however, it also may lead to competing interests at the time of redevelopment. The expansion of these residential areas or redevelopment industrial uses must be undertaken in a compatible manner.
- Properties in C-1 and C-2 require a special use permit to build higher than two stories, which may make it more difficult for commercial properties to redevelopment over time.



Parking and loading area at existing industrial site

Figure 3-2: Zoning Map*



*See Appendix A for full list of zoning classifications represented in the study area



- The County’s stormwater regulations require that any development that creates more than 5,000 sq. ft. of impervious surface or any redevelopment that includes the creation, addition or replacement of 5,000 sq. ft. or more of impervious cover provide a combination of storage and controlled release of stormwater runoff. Some reprieve is provided for redevelopment of sites. If forty (40) percent of a site is to be redeveloped, all stormwater requirements must be met for the redeveloped area only and the non-disturbed area is exempt from the stormwater requirement. When more than forty (40) percent of the site is to be redeveloped, then the entire site must meet all stormwater requirements. While this amendment helps, the costs of the development of stormwater management systems remain a disincentive for redevelopment.
- A strength of the current zoning requirements is that administrative variances can be granted for minor (10%) reductions in requirements.

The County intends to update zoning and development regulations to be consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan update, and although this initiative is underway, it had not yet been completed at the time of this planning effort. This provides a great opportunity to ensure that zoning policy changes prioritized by this planning effort are incorporated in final iterations of proposed regulations.

3.2.3 Administrative Environment

The DeKalb County zoning process has been viewed as inefficient by many study area businesses, which has in turn discouraged some businesses from maintaining their presence in the area. In certain cases, businesses have chosen to relocate to other area communities due to the inefficiency of the County’s administrative processes. Decisions on rezoning are often deferred and there is not an apparent process to expedite priority economic development (job growth) projects or a person specifically tasked with advocating for them at the County offices.

3.2.4 Current Permitting & Licensing Processes

Efficient, rational, and user-friendly permitting and business licensing programs are essential to maintaining and attracting businesses to the SMCID area. The assessment portion of this planning process identified some dissatisfaction among property owners and developers, businesses, and their partners in the efficiency of the DeKalb County’s system. The existing system is often perceived as cumbersome and lacking user-friendliness. Specific concerns include long wait times, excessive submittal requirements compared to other communities, and lack of preference for businesses with long-standing relationships with DeKalb County. These regulations are laid out in various aspects of the Code of Ordinances and implemented by various departments as depicted in **Table 3-1**.



Table 3-1. Summary of Land Development & Construction Permitting & Business Licensing in DeKalb County

PERMIT OR LICENSE DESCRIPTION	CODE SECTION
<p>Land Development Permits are required prior to initiation of land disturbance activity, defined as any activity which may result in soil erosion from water or wind and the movement of sediments into state waters or onto lands within the state, including, but not limited to, clearing, dredging, grading, excavating, transporting, and filling of land; they are overseen by the Planning and Sustainability Department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A land disturbance permit requires a site plan, grading & drainage plan, utility plan, soil and erosion sedimentation control plan, landscape plan, and tree survey and must be preceded by a pre-submittal meeting with the Department. 	Chapter 14
<p>Building Permits are required prior to beginning construction, erection, alteration or repair to a building or structure and administered by the Building Official.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application process includes submittal of an application, indication of the use and occupancy for which the work is intended, construction plans (including a site plan, valuation of work to be done, among other related requirements. • The building official is required to examine all applications within 60 days of their receipt. 	Chapter 7
<p>Certificates of Occupancy permit occupancy of a building or structure, certifying that all final inspections are complete and the County verifies that the building has been built in conformity with the Code of Ordinances.</p>	Chapter 7
<p>Certificates of Change of Tenant are required when there is a change of tenant occupancy in any building, structure, or changed in use with no construction, alterations, improvements or repairs to the building, structure, plumbing, mechanical, gas or electrical systems have been or are to be made. As built floor and fixture plans must be submitted. Approval of plans and change of tenant fee are required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An issue for some study area businesses and potential businesses is the requirement to provide architectural drawings to permit a new tenant to occupy an existing building. The intention for doing this is to give the County time to ensure that new businesses are working in safe environments, consistent with new building code regulations that may have been put in place during the last business tenancy. However, doing this can be cumbersome and time-consuming particularly because the process required to obtain approval involves both the Planning & Sustainability Department and the Fire Department. • The County indicates that the process should take 5-10 business days assuming all Code requirements are met, yet it is seen as a time-consuming burden to SMCID property owners and respective business tenants. 	Chapter 7
<p>Occupational License Certificate – An occupational license certificate (often referred to as a business license) is processed by the Finance Department; in coordination with other departments. All new applications and changes of address require Planning and Sustainability Department approval to ensure compliance with zoning regulations. Regulated businesses such as night clubs, catering, and automobile sales require additional approvals and permits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DeKalb County engages in both regulatory and revenue making business licensing as does Gwinnett County. The revenue activity helps account for the municipal services that a business uses or causes to be used. 	Chapter 15



3.3 Transportation

The following section contains a baseline of transportation characteristics that lend themselves to assessing both short term and long term mobility needs in the LCI study area. As such, key characteristics in the corridor include:

- Existing Roadway Network
- Public Transit
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
- Network Connectivity
- Freight Mobility

The information contained in this section is a combination of data from local, regional, and state agency planning partners and that gathered from on-site field surveys.

3.3.1 Existing Roadway Network

Functional Characteristics

The primary roadway network within the LCI study area consists of the following roadways: Mountain Industrial Boulevard, Stone Mountain Freeway, Hugh Howell Road, and E. Ponce de Leon Avenue. A summary of the overall traffic characteristics of this network within the study area is provided in **Table 3-2**.

Table 3-2: Key Roadway Network Characteristics

Roadway	Segment	Number of Lanes	Average Daily Traffic 2010	Average Daily Traffic 2040	Level of Service 2010	Level of Service 2040
Mountain Industrial Boulevard	Gwinnett Line	4	38,117	50,667	F	F
	S Royal Atlanta Dr.	4	36,642	54,255	D	F
	S of Hugh Howell	4	45,040	56,257	E	F
	N of 78	4	62,072	75,531	F	F
	S of 78	4	50,480	66,628	F	F
	Ponce de Leon	4	41,434	56,003	E	F
Stone Mountain Freeway	E of Mt. Industrial	6	69,209	113,192	D	F
	W of Mt. Industrial	6	87,001	122,140	D	F
Hugh Howell Road	E of Mt. Industrial	4	10,506	19,112	B	C
	W of Mt. Industrial	4	21,660	31,516	D	F
E Ponce De Leon Avenue	E of Mt. Industrial	2	6,014	8,780	B	C
	W of Mt. Industrial	2	5,642	10,016	C	C

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia Department of Transportation (2011)

Based on the information provided in **Table 3-2**, the following highlight existing and future conditions along the major network of the CID:



- The number of trips on the overall roadway network is projected to increase significantly by 2040. This is particularly true along Mountain Industrial Boulevard and roadways in the eastern part of the study area.
- Most of Mountain Industrial Boulevard is operating at LOS E or worse. In 2040, the entire roadway through the LCI study area will be operating at LOS F – which indicates severe congestion. The traffic along this roadway is projected to increase on average by approximately 30% by 2040.

Safety Characteristics

A key factor in identifying potential locations for improvements is safety. Locations with crashes – particularly multiple crashes – are typically in need for operational improvements. These improvements could include turn lanes, wider shoulders, or traffic signalization improvements. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) keeps a database of crashes throughout the state. In 2011, a total of 13 crashes occurred in the LCI study area. Of these, nine occurred along Mountain Industrial Boulevard. A map of crash locations within the LCI study area is provided in **Figure 3-3**. Overall, the accident rate for the LCI study area network is relatively low.

Signalization and Roadway Characteristics

Proper and adequate signalization is critical for facilitating travel in a safe and efficient manner. There are a total of 14 signalized intersections in the study area. A map of the signalized intersections is provided in **Figure 3-4**. Of these intersections, most are along Mountain Industrial Boulevard. A detailed inventory of the signalization and roadway geometrics is provided in **Appendix D**. In general, the following characteristics apply to the CID network:

- Overall, most of the signalized intersections within the CID have adequate turning radii to accommodate the high level of freight traffic in the study area. Typical Truck dimensions range from 46' (WB-40) to 69' (WB-62) with an average 55' (WB-50). The WB-50 truck has a required radius of 45'. The intersection radii range within the study area from 10' to 75', with 40' being the average. Of the 14 signalized intersections within the study area, eleven have turn radii of less than 45'.
- All of the signalized intersections along Mountain Industrial Boulevard between Hugh Howell Road and E. Ponce De Leon Avenue are being upgraded to include new signal equipment and ADA compliant pedestrian amenities.
- While adequate turn radii exists, the stop bar locations at some of the approaches need relocating based on observed wear.

More detail on the overall needs of the network is provided in **Section E**.

Figure 3-3: Crash Locations - 2011

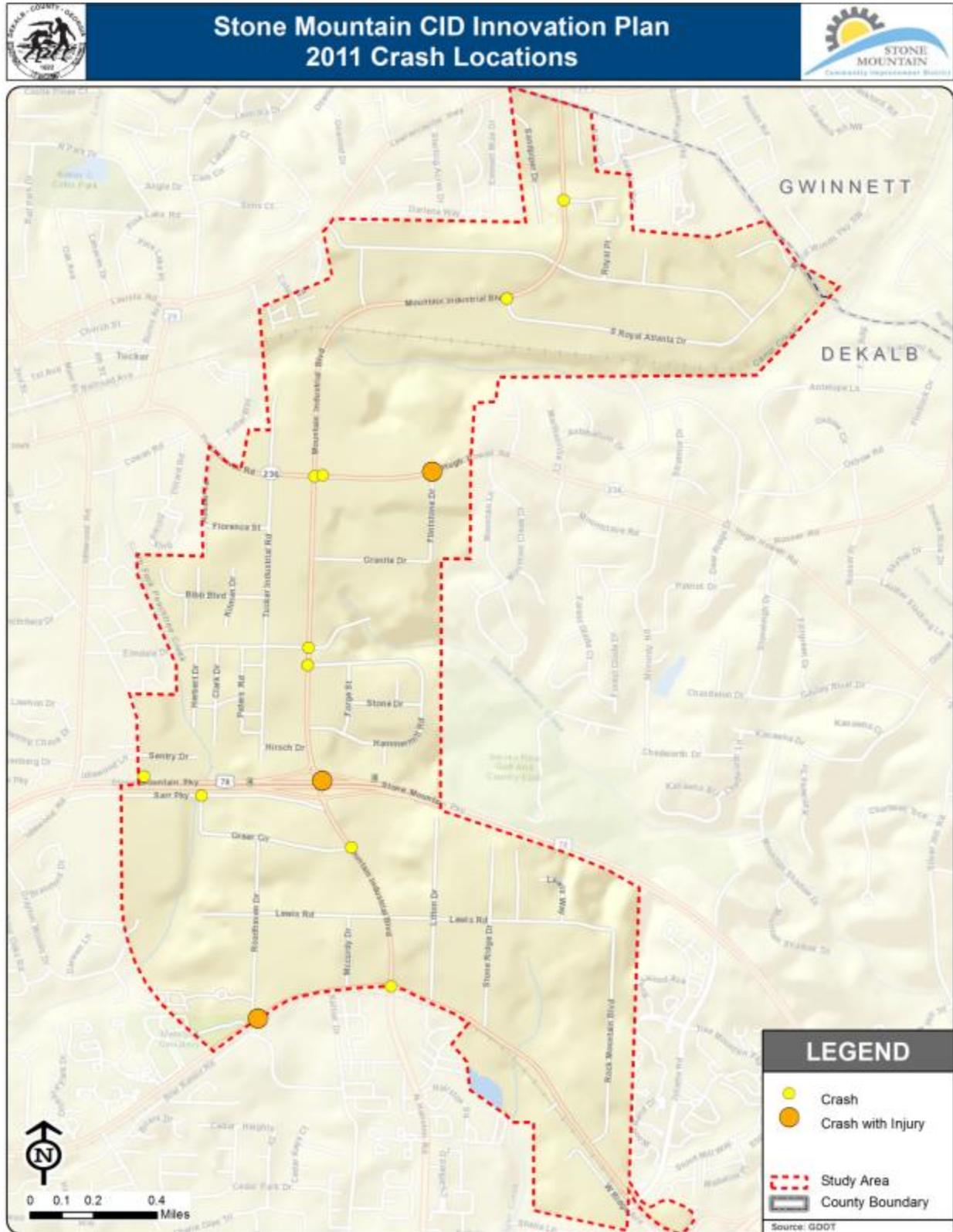
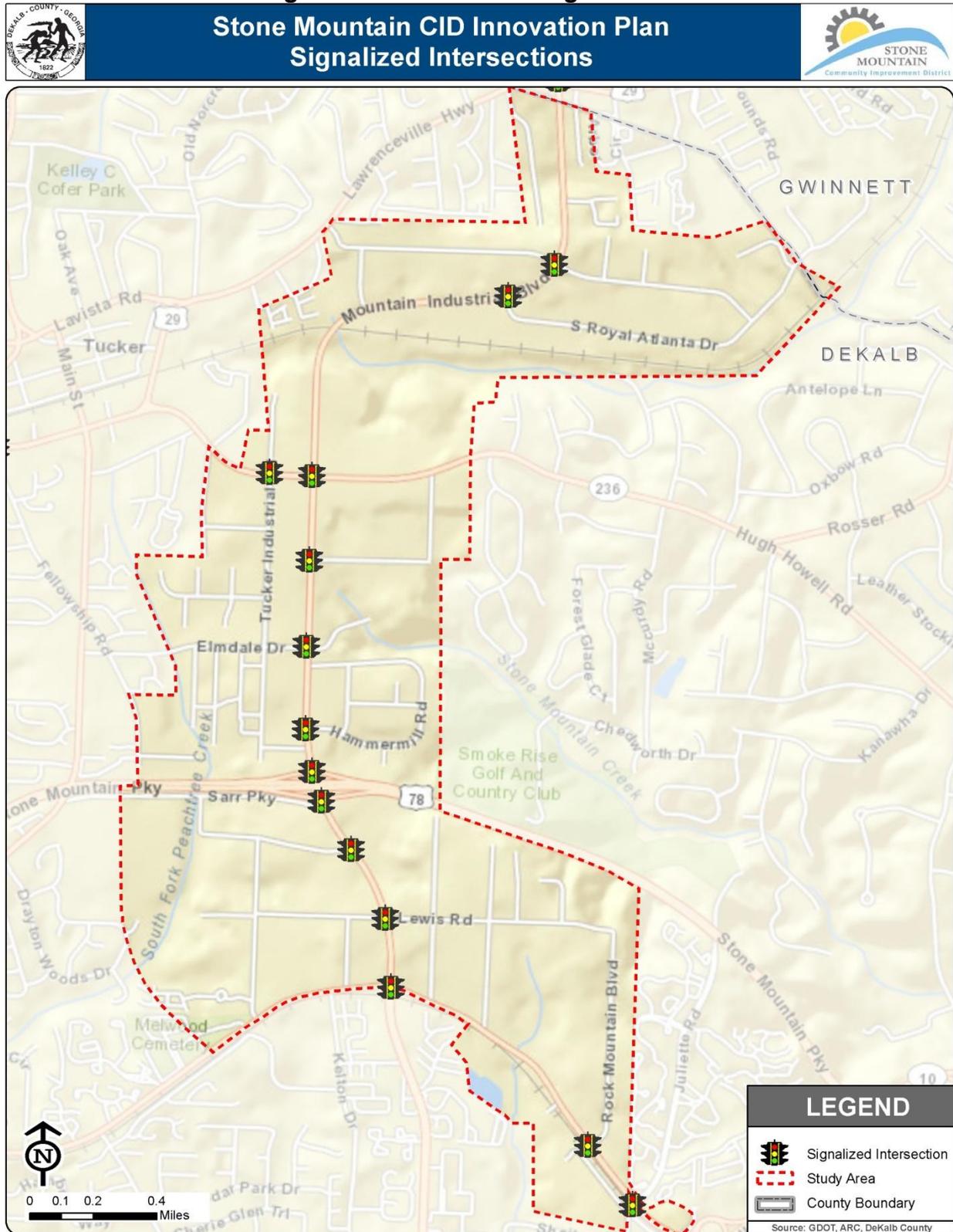


Figure 3-4: Intersection Signalization





3.3.2 Transit Service

There are currently four MARTA routes that currently service the LCI study area. These routes are summarized below in **Table 3-3** and depicted in **Figure 3-5**. Additional descriptions of the transit routes area available in Appendix A. It should be noted that Gwinnett County Transit also operates a GRTA Xpress service Route 418 from Snellville to Atlanta that traverses the study area. However, it provides no direct service to the CID.

Table 3-3: Existing Transit Characteristics

Route	Route Name	Service Frequency – Peak (Minutes)			Average Daily Riders (Weekday)
		Peak	Non-Peak	Weekends	
75	Tucker	20	30	45*	1,837
120	E. Ponce De Leon Avenue/Tucker	10	20/30	20/25	3,747
121	Stone Mountain/Memorial Drive	15	20/30	20	3,957
520	Memorial Drive BRT Limited	10	N/A	N/A	1,041

*- No Sunday Service

Note: Average Daily Ridership represents weekday averages for the time period of September 2010 to December 2011.

Source: MARTA

3.3.3 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

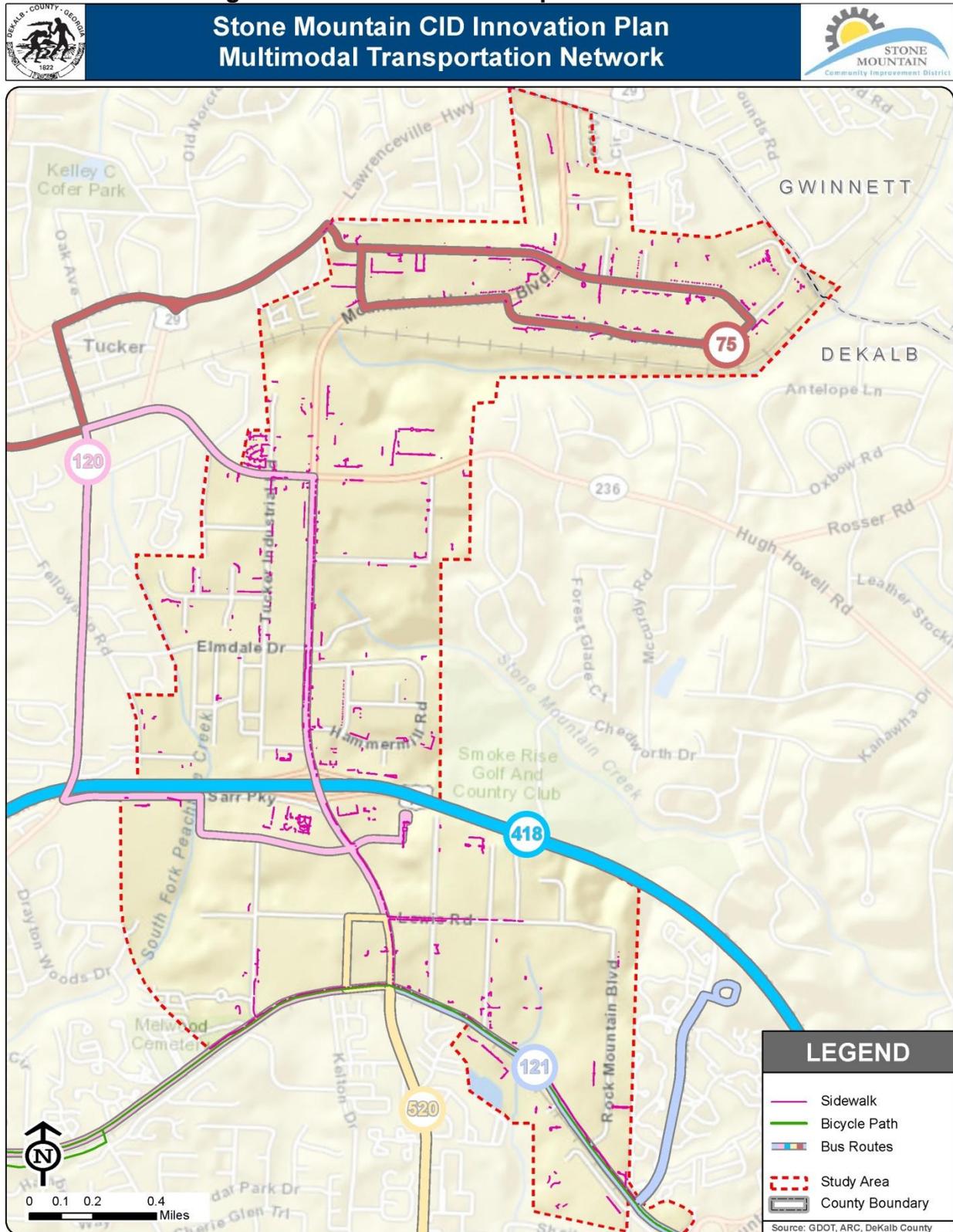
As a primarily industrial area, the demand for bicycling throughout much of the study area is somewhat less than other areas throughout the region. However, the LCI does have a regional bicycle facility, the Stone Mountain Trail, which runs parallel to E. Ponce De Leon Avenue and traverses the southern portion of the study area.

As shown in **Figure 3-5**, pedestrian facilities within the study area are somewhat scarce. Most of the sidewalks in the area are discontinuous, which lends them less attractive to pedestrians. There are ADA compliant pedestrian shoulders at most of the signalized intersections; however, many are not connected to sidewalks.

3.3.4 Network Connectivity

While the bicycle and pedestrian components of the network are characterized by an overall lack of connectivity, the same does not apply to the roadway network. Throughout the study area, there are several roadways that provide parallel relief for Mountain Industrial Boulevard – which is the ‘backbone’ of the transportation network. These parallel relievers include Lewis Road, Rock Mountain Road, and Tucker Industrial Boulevard. Connectivity to the surrounding residential neighborhoods is not desirable due to the high volume of truck traffic in the area.

Figure 3-5: Multimodal Transportation Network



3.3.5 Freight Mobility

A designated roadway truck system is instrumental for the efficient and reliable movement of freight and the sustainability of the economy of the Atlanta region. Commercial vehicles rely on properly engineered and constructed roads to move through the region in order to deliver freight in a timely and safe manner. With a high concentration of industrial uses, this is particularly relevant to the LCI study area. Stone Mountain Freeway and Mountain Industrial Boulevard are both designated as regional thoroughfares and regional truck routes. There are certain design considerations, listed in Figure 3-6, that should be applied to these facilities. Truck-friendly design of an arterial should be based on these considerations.

Generally, the two primary truck corridors, Mountain Industrial Boulevard and Stone Mountain Freeway, meet the conditions listed in Figure 3-6. However, there are some deficiencies along Mountain Industrial Boulevard that are noted in Section 8.3.1, which identifies recommended improvements to better facilitate freight mobility.

Based on data derived from the ARC travel demand model, both Stone Mountain Freeway and Mountain Industrial Boulevard carry a high volume of truck traffic:

- The average truck traffic on Mountain Industrial Boulevard is approximately 3,000 trips per day. This represents approximately 7-8% of the total trips on the facility. Typically, truck traffic represents roughly 3-5% of traffic along the regional thoroughfare network.
- With 4,000 truck trips per day, the share of truck traffic along Stone Mountain Freeway is similar to that along Mountain Industrial Boulevard.
- With an increase of 35% projected for both facilities, the importance of addressing goods movement in the LCI study area is heightened.

Figure 3-6. Design Considerations for Arterial Roads

- ✓ *Appropriate functional class*
- ✓ *Connectivity, continuity and accessibility, especially to intermodal facilities and major terminals*
- ✓ *Adequate travel lane width- 12 to 13 feet wide*
- ✓ *Adequate shoulder width*
- ✓ *Posted speed limit at least 45 MPH*
- ✓ *Bridge conditions (adequate weight limit, vertical clearance, and sidewalk width)*
- ✓ *Lack of at-grade railway crossings*
- ✓ *Appropriate nearby land use (relatively low amount of travel in residential areas)*
- ✓ *Acceptable crash history*
- ✓ *Adequate design speed (shallow horizontal and vertical curves)*
- ✓ *Signal timing and coordination that favors through movements*
- ✓ *Adequate sight distance on curves, at intersections and driveway approaches*
- ✓ *Adequate turning radii at intersections*
- ✓ *Longer turn lanes and acceleration lanes*
- ✓ *Adequate pavement standards*
- ✓ *Adequate clear zone along route*
- ✓ *Few steep grades and provision of passing lanes on steep grades*
- ✓ *Long transitions for grade changes at intersections and driveways*
- ✓ *Good route signage and wayfinding information on route*

3.4 Land Use & Design

Design reflects the intersection of private and public sector policy and initiatives, so while the initial character of the study area was primarily driven by private sector design decisions that character has evolved over time with new construction and public sector policy, which often reinforced that character. In case of our study area, that character is predominately industrial.

Figure 3-7 illustrates the geographic mix of existing uses both within and adjacent to the study area. An analysis of the **existing land use mix** revealed that 69% of the land in the study area was dedicated to Industrial uses, and that only 8% of the total land area was still undeveloped. As a result, most new construction will be in the form of redevelopment or renovation of existing, likely industrial, building stock.

SMCID existing land use mix:

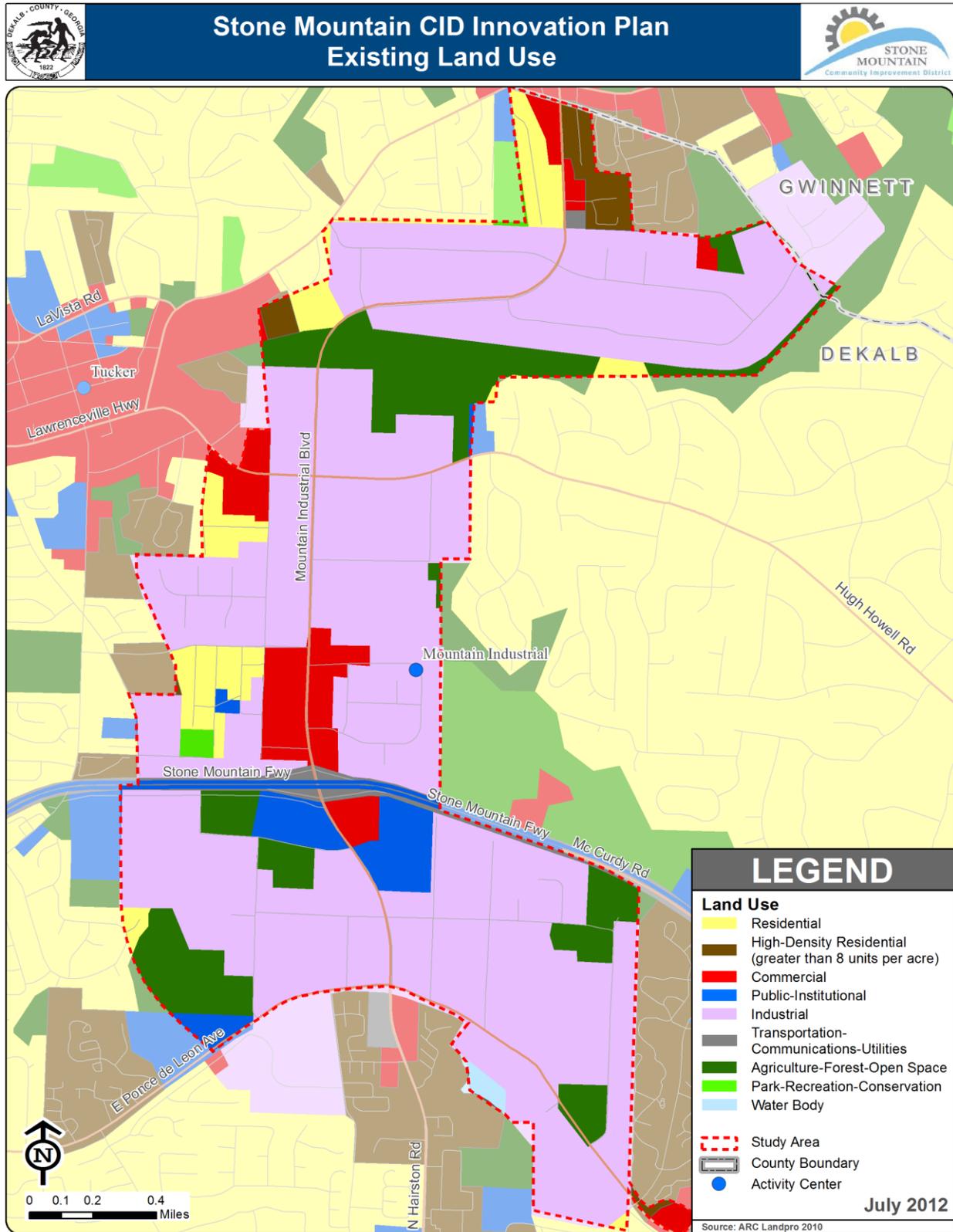
- Industrial – 69%
- Residential – 5%
- Undeveloped 8%
- Institutional – 3%
- Commercial – 6%
- Other – 9%

Much of the industrial building stock is 40 to 50 years old, and designed by the standards of the day, which in retrospect are smaller footprints than the typical new industrial building stock built today. Part of the reason for this is that the standard truck trailers are longer today than they were in the past. As a result, the typical industrial tenant is looking for larger space than what they may find in the CID.

A very strong influence on the character of an area and the attractiveness to potential investors is simply the view that the traveler sees as they pass through. Unifying style in such design elements as signage, the architectural character of building facades, and landscaping have a big influence on the aesthetic character of an area, particularly when used at key intersections where motorists have to stop. In looking at these types of features within the study area as part of the assessment, it was clear that signage, branding and wayfinding are big issues. Though there are some good examples of signage and monuments in the area, much of the signage is inconsistent in material, quality, and heights. There is also a multitude of illegal and ill-placed signs that contribute to the visual blight.



Figure 3-7: Existing Land Use



B. Interagency Collaboration



4.0 TEAMWORK

Economic development initiatives are successful when all affected parties come to the same table to work as a team. This team effort requires the development and maintenance of a collaborative relationship between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. The relationship must be symbiotic.

The public sector provides the infrastructure, business friendly policies and regulations, economic incentives, and support network to meet and accommodate business needs. While the private sector offers jobs, dedication to the local community, and additional tax revenue that enhance the level of services the County is able to provide. Non-profit entities such as colleges help fill needs such as workforce development.

Teamwork and the subsequent partnership environment created among these aforementioned players and others will be a critical factor to achieving the SMCID's economic development goals.

5.0 COMMUNICATIONS & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

This planning process represents a major milestone in engaging and garnering support from the broad group of partners that have a role in the future of the SMCID area. Stakeholder involvement and the overall communications strategy were core elements of this planning effort. Leadership from the SMCID, area businesses, DeKalb County, the State of Georgia, and area workforce development agencies played varying roles in the study process and development of the Economic Development Plan provided in Part B.

5.1 Means of Participation

Stakeholders and the general public were offered a variety of means to participate in the LCI study. The general public was informed of the planning process via a robust communications program, which included several press releases, news articles, availability of study materials on the CID website, and newsletter updates to the general public.

The general community was also invited to attend and provide input via three public meetings¹ for the study process:

1. Public Kick-off Meeting – August 15
2. Presentation of Draft Plan – **October 11**
3. Final Plan Public Review – **November 15**

Because the planning process focused on economic development, the remaining activities concentrated on engaging key stakeholders, including businesses and economic development partners. Businesses will experience the outcome of the Economic Development Plan and make decisions based on its effectiveness, and the economic development partners will have a role in implementing the economic development plan.



Stakeholders chat with CID Board Chairman, Larry Callahan of Pattillo

Stakeholder-focused activities included the following activities, all of which helped inform the direction and final recommendations of the plan:

Project Management Team – A project management team, made up of representatives from the SMCID, DeKalb County Office of Economic Development, Atlanta Regional Commission, and the consultant team of Jacobs and Market Street Services, oversaw the management of the study process, including finalizing planning priorities, outreach and communications strategies, deliverables, and recommendations.

Core Team – This group of community leaders and stakeholders met three times throughout the process, offered guidance to the study process, and provided feedback on outreach tactics. The Core Team also played an important role in reviewing draft recommendations prior to them being provided to the general public.



Core Team members discuss workforce development needs.

Stakeholder Interviews – At the start of the study process, the planning team interviewed several area stakeholders to obtain their perspective on strengths

¹ A summary of each of these meetings is available in Appendix C.



and weaknesses of the area for economic development from the perspective of their respective agencies. Interviewees included two DeKalb County Commissioners, which help provide crucial linkages between the economic development planning effort and the County’s broader goals and plans. A summary of these interviews is available in Appendix C.

Business Environment Survey - For a period of **three months**, a Business Environment Survey was available at the SMCID’s website to collect input from businesses and other community partners with an interest in promoting economic growth in the area. **Results of the survey area provided in Appendix C.**

5.2 Who Participated

5.2.1 Project Management Team

First Name	Last Name	Title/Position/Role	Organization
Jeff	Corbin	Communications	SMCID
Matt	DeVeau	Economic Development Analysis	Market Street Services
Amanda	Hatton	Public Involvement	Jacobs
Randi	Mason	Economic Development	DeKalb County
Jonathan	Miller	Economic Development Analysis	Market Street Services
Emory	Morsberger	CID President	SMCID
Matthew	Tester	Project Manager	Market Street Services
Jon	Tuley	Principal Planner	Atlanta Regional Commission
Megan	Will	Project Manager	Jacobs

5.2.2 Core Team Roster

First Name	Last Name	Title/Position/Role	Organization
Rhonda	Briggins-Ridley	Senior Director, External Affairs	MARTA
Robert	Brown	DeKalb Representative	GDOT Board
Bill	Bryant	Community & Economic Development	Georgia Power
Larry	Callahan	SMCID Chairman, Pattillo CEO	Pattillo
Sheryl	Chapman	Director	DeKalb Workforce Development
Gary	Cornell	Planning Director	DeKalb County
Cedric	Hudson	Planner	DeKalb County
Steve	Craine	SMCID Board and President of Eagle Rock Distributing	SMCID, Eagle Rock Distribution
Alan	Dishman	SMCID Treasurer, VP of Wells Fargo Bank/DeKalb	
Larry	Kaiser	SMCID Engineer	
Patrece	Keeter	Supervising Engineer	DeKalb County Transportation
Donovan	Kirkland	Stone Mountain Plant Manager	Pepsi Bottling Group
Paedia	Mixon	Executive Director	Refugee Resettlement Immigration Services of Atlanta
Mary Ellen	McClanahan	Project Manager	GA Department of Economic Development
Rusty	McKellar	SMCID Board, VP of Pattillo	SMCID, Patillo
Emory	Morsberger	President	SMCID
Janide	Sidifall	Senior Regional Planner	MARTA
Richard	Smith	Vice President of Economic Development	Georgia Piedmont Technical College
Marvin	Toliver	Community Relations Manager	MARTA



First Name	Last Name	Title/Position/Role	Organization
Jon	Tuley	Principal Planner	Atlanta Regional Commission
Patrick H.	Vickers	Economic Development Field Services Representative	GA Department of Community Affairs
Delmas L.	Watkins	Director of Career & Technical Education	DeKalb County School System
Charles R.	Whatley Jr.	Director of Jobs & Economic Growth Group	DeKalb County
Brian	Williamson	Assistant Commissioner	GA Department of Community Affairs
Betty	Willis	Senior Associate VP, Governmental and Community Affairs	Emory University

5.2.3 Meeting Participants

To add list after final public meetings.

5.3 Strengthening the Business Ecosystem Foundation

Not sure if this section is necessary, content is covered by introduction to section. It may be better to add content after have reviewed MSS section on Business Ecosystem.

6.0 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

This study process was coordinated with several other planning efforts to ensure that the resulting Economic Development Plan is both consistent with and plugged into greater County and regional efforts. May need to adjust this section based on Market Street write-ups.

6.1 ARC Livable Centers Initiative Program

The ARC LCI program has a long-standing tradition of providing grants to communities throughout the Atlanta region to prepare studies with “local relevance and regional impact.” The SMCID received funding for this study effort via the newly introduced PLAN 2040 LCI Innovation Studies program. This newest addition to the grant program is intended to help implement Plan 2040 by “supporting jurisdiction-wide policies, plans or programs that focus on livable communities, consistent with the goals of PLAN 2040 and LCI” (ARC).

The ARC was engaged throughout this planning process to help ensure that objectives of the LCI program and Plan 2040 are being met. ARC staff served on the Project Management Team and Core Team and otherwise lent advice as requested during the process.

One component of the LCI program is a series of supplemental studies grants and implementation funding for transportation projects. These items are potential implementation tools for some of the study recommendations.

6.2 ARC Plan 2040

Plan 2040 is the ARC's comprehensive blueprint for the Atlanta Region's sustainability and prosperity through 2040. During this time period the region is expected to grow by three million residents. Plan 2040's five core objectives include the following: Serving People, Building Community, Enhancing Mobility, Preserving the Environment and Growing the Economy. This planning process provides a special focus on the objectives of growing the economy, enhancing mobility, and serving people.

6.3 ARC Transportation Plans

6.3.1 Regional Freight Mobility Plan

The Atlanta Freight Mobility Plan was adopted by ARC and GDOT in February 2008 as was the first comprehensive effort to address freight issues in the Metropolitan Atlanta Area. Atlanta is one of the most active freight hubs in the country, and freight movement plays a vital role in regional economy. This plan addresses all forms of freight including trucking, rail and air, and proactively offers a framework for addressing freight and goods mobility needs and challenges both now and in the future. In the plan both Mountain Industrial Boulevard and US Highway 78 identified as "Freight Corridors."

6.3.2 Strategic Regional Thoroughfare Plan (SRTP)

Recently completed by the ARC, the SRTP identified the Regional Thoroughfare Network (RTN), which is a collection of the most critical surface roads in the region. The SRTP provides design guidelines that can be applied to the RTN in order to boost the level of corridor planning and improvement to such a critical network. These guidelines were referenced in preparing the recommendations for streetscaping along the major transportation corridors in the study area.



6.3.3 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) examines the region's transportation needs and provides a framework to address anticipated growth through systems and policies. The RTP provides a comprehensive statement of the regional future transportation needs as identified by local jurisdictions, the State and other stakeholders. It contains strategies aimed at improving mobility and access, and defines both short- and long-term transportation strategies and investments to improve the region's transportation system.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) allocates federal funds for use in construction of the highest-priority transportation projects in the near term of the

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The TIP must be consistent with the long-range objectives of the RTP and must be financially balanced.

Both the RTP and TIP were referenced in conducting this study in order to determine the regional priorities for transportation improvements in the study area. The study too may influence the regional priorities for future transportation investment when the RTP and TIP are next updated.

6.4 DeKalb County Initiatives

6.4.1 General County Coordination and Document Review

As the umbrella regulatory and administrative arm for the unincorporated county and the area encompassed by the SMCID, DeKalb County Government is a fundamental partner in this study process. As previously described, the County's Department of Planning and Sustainability, Office of Economic Development, and Board of Commissioners have been actively involved in providing data, helping identify solutions, and providing support to the planning process to help ensure that recommendations of this process are consistent with or help inform other initiatives by the County.

As a part of this effort, DeKalb County's Comprehensive Plan, Code of Ordinances, including permitting, land development, zoning, and business licensing processes, and economic development programs and incentives have been considered.

Similarly, the cities of Stone Mountain and Clarkston as well as the adjoining neighboring community center of Tucker have been engaged to ensure that the CID economic development plan is vetted by these communities.



6.4.2 DeKalb County Office of Economic Development's Organizational Assessment and Implementation Strategy

This process, conducted by the DeKalb County Office of Economic Development in 2011, was a comprehensive effort designed to enable the County to build economic development capacity to increase its competitiveness and livability for businesses and individuals. As such, the Development Authority of DeKalb County retained Market



Street Services to facilitate the development of implementation efforts that will enhance the economic and community development activities and programs in the county. The process of creating an organizational implementation plan involved steering committee and community leadership input and research which were then crafted into a creative and realistic plan that can affect meaningful, sustainable organizational change.

The Organizational Analysis and Implementation Plan process was comprised of two phases. The first phase will focused on research and discussion of DeKalb County's current and preferred economic development structure. This phase included a stakeholder input process and a comprehensive analysis of DeKalb County's existing economic development program and capacity. The second phase leveraged these key findings and feedback into recommendations for an organizational Implementation Plan for DeKalb County's new economic development organization. While whole scale implementation of the plan has yet to materialize, the project did determine that DeKalb County would greatly benefit from a public-private economic development function reflective of current best practice models. Recently, a group of stakeholders has moved to carry forward the recommendations of this process by initiating preliminary steps to launch a public-private economic development organization called Development DeKalb.



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C. Economic Development Plan



7.0 TODAY'S STARTING POINT & TOMORROW'S VISION

Text to be added in later draft.

8.0 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS: FOSTERING A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

8.1 Essential Economic Development

The establishment of the SMCID marked the beginning of a new era for businesses in the vicinity of Mountain Industrial Blvd and U.S. 78. As an entity wholly committed to improving the proximate business environment, it represents a strong new ally in the effort to reinvigorate economic activity after the scourge of Great Recession. As evidenced by its ambitious goal of bringing 2,000 new jobs to the area in less than two years, the CID and its leadership are eager to tap every resource and maximize every opportunity in pursuit of revitalization.

However, with a single staff person and limited funds, the CID will need to draw on the resources of a vast network of partner organizations to realize its goals. Economic development in today's post-recessionary climate is too resource-dependent for any organization capacity to go it alone. Despite an oft-cited lack of coordination of economic development activity in DeKalb County, recent developments – such as the organizational assessment process conducted by the Office of Economic Development in 2011 – point to a renewed interest in practitioners working together for the good of local businesses. This planning process is also a positive step, introducing many opportunities for partnerships. Even without a major change in the current landscape of economic development organizations, this Economic Development Plan will challenge the SMCID leadership to effectively connect with the people, assets, and opportunities embedded in this network, improving its visibility and prospects for successful development.

Successful economic development over the long term requires a comprehensive approach that includes the “three legs of the stool”: the development of small businesses and entrepreneurs; the retention and expansion of existing businesses; and the marketing and recruitment of new businesses. Effectively executing each “leg” requires a multitude of partners and communities that recognize that a “team sport”



attitude is needed to marshal the resources and the people necessary to address challenging community issues and capture high-value opportunities. A single organization rarely has the resources, expertise, or access to lead all aspects of economic development. **Appendix D** provides a detailed description of the universe of entities with a role in shaping opportunity for property owners and business owners in the SMCID. This Appendix should be used as a reference tool when reading the potential action steps in the following sections.

The following sections will describe how the SMCID can bolster the area's competitiveness through leveraging the three "legs of the stool" and other critical channels such as workforce development and incentive optimization.

8.1.1 Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs and small business owners, as key drivers of new job growth, are beginning to receive more attention and support from policymakers, practitioners, and economists. While economic developers cannot ensure the success of a small business, they can advocate for policy and procedural changes that minimize the cost of and complexity of regulations. Ensuring that the necessary bureaucratic processes are as clear, streamlined, and navigable as possible will reduce the costs associated with starting and operating a small business.

More than 70 percent of the 837 businesses establishments with an address in the SMCID boundary have annual revenues of less than \$2.5 million. This highlights the importance of small businesses to the district's economic well-being and the need to ensure their continued success. Small businesses in the SMCID must become aware of how they can engage partner organizations to receive financial assistance, consulting services, and valuable networking opportunities. DeKalb County's website includes a page with information and links to additional resources and organizations, but staff reductions in recent years have limited the County's capacity to serve as the "front door" for new small businesses. The DeKalb Enterprise Business Association (DEBCO) is a private, non-profit financial organization based in Decatur that provides access to capital to small businesses in DeKalb County through methods such as a revolving loan fund and micro loans. The Georgia Small Business Development Center, which is part of the University of Georgia, maintains an office in DeKalb County through which it provides a range of education and consulting services to small business and entrepreneurs. The Advanced Technology Development Center is a business incubator and startup accelerator at the Georgia Institute of Technology that seeks to mentor technology startups as they transition into profitable businesses. These entities and others in the field offer direct support to small businesses; however, the SMCID can play a role by ensuring that small businesses within its boundary are aware and taking advantage of these resources.



The following actions would support the start-up and growth of small businesses in the SMCID area:

- Reach out to partners involved in the development of start-up businesses in key business sectors to inform them of the SMCID area’s capacity to site and support start-ups.
 - Engage the Advanced Technology Development Center’s Health Information Technology (HIT) Startup Circle at Centergy Center in Atlanta to market the CID area’s business advantages to early-stage companies.
 - Consult with research and commercialization offices of Georgia Tech, Emory, Morehouse College of Medicine, and other area universities to identify start-up and early stage companies looking for suitable space.
 - Coordinate with DeKalb Enterprise Business Corporation (DEBCO) to educate funds-seeking start-up enterprises about available spaces within the CID area.
- Organize a consortium of leaders of DeKalb County business associations and influential firms to collectively lobby for streamlined government permitting processes and fast-track capabilities.
 - Advocate for the County to develop a “one-stop” shop business-development office where prospective business owners can access information on launching a company and secure the permits and approvals necessary to initiate the business-creation process.
 - Advocate for the development of fast-track permitting protocols that can be activated for a variety of circumstances, including the launch of start-up enterprises in target business sectors.
- Reduce the cost of starting a business by allocating a percentage of the CID’s annual revenue to a fund used to cover the business license fees for any business opening or relocating into the SMCID area.
- Partner to develop a high-value, additive manufacturing incubator in the SMCID area.
 - Consult with the Georgia Tech Research Institute, Enterprise Innovation Institute, and Georgia Power on the potential to launch an off-site lab devoted to the testing and commercialization of additive manufacturing processes and products.
 - Hold meetings with local property owners in the SMCID area to gauge their interest in providing no-cost or low-cost access to one of their buildings to serve as a research and production space.
 - Convene meetings between officials and business owners to initiate discussion on moving the concept forward.



What is additive manufacturing?

Additive manufacturing, also known as 3D printing, is an emerging technology with potential to revolutionize manufacturing in coming years. It is a process that employs a specialized printer to make solid, three dimensional objects by depositing successive layers of material in a design guided by a digital model. While the technology has long been used and developed by hobbyists and enthusiasts, the potential for larger-scale commercial and industrial applications is being rapidly expanded as more research and development funding is being funneled into the field. Capabilities have rapidly expanded in recent years, and potential applications are vast. The emergence of additive manufacturing has spurred major research interest – in August 2012, the National Additive Manufacturing Innovation Institute was jointly founded by the Department of Defense and the White House. The technology holds vast opportunities for entrepreneurs to innovate and commercialize new applications, which makes it an excellent choice for incubation

- Send delegates to regularly attend the meetings and activities of the international- and minority-serving chambers of commerce in the Metro Atlanta area for the purpose of marketing opportunities in the SMCID.
 - Ensure that the SMCID has representation at Georgia China Alliance, Korean American Association of Greater Atlanta, Korean-American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, and Latin American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, among others.
- Hold quarterly “Business Resource Nights” to support small businesses in the SMCID area.
 - Provide small business guides, such as the “Toolbox” developed by DeKalb County, and other collateral pertinent to starting a business in the area.
 - Convene a roster of experts to help business owners with concerns regarding licensing, permitting, access to capital, access to workforce, and technical assistance. Ensure that representatives from SCORE Atlanta, Workforce DeKalb, DeKalb OED, DeKalb Planning and Sustainability, DEBCO, the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, and local trade association chapters are present.

8.1.2 Business Retention and Expansion

Business retention and expansion (often referred to simply as “BRE”) programs help elevate the competitiveness of existing businesses, support expansion plans, alleviate burdens and barriers to competitiveness, and encourage them not to relocate elsewhere. Numerous studies over the years have shown that existing businesses within a community are responsible for between 60 and 80 percent of all new job creation. BRE programs enable the public, private, and non-profit sectors to support business expansions and mitigate closures or reductions in employment

The most effect BRE programs are based on personal, face-to-face interaction, typically accomplished through site visits and interviews with executive leadership. Additional means of outreach include telephone interviews, web-based surveys, and mail surveys.



These visits and surveys should be carried out by economic development practitioners. Outreach protocols are typically tied to various attributes of a firm such as total revenues, number of employees, business sector classification, years in business, and other factors. Site visits, interviews, and survey questionnaires typically seek to identify business and tax climate concerns; labor or training needs; regulatory concerns; financial needs; issues with permits, licenses, and local ordinances; physical infrastructure concerns and needs; satisfaction with elected and appointed officials; and other points of concern. The feedback received from firms often helps to inform necessary changes to local regulations, legislative priorities, future infrastructure investments, and other strategic actions. Site visits, interviews, and survey questionnaires also seek to track a number of key attributes of firms in the community in order to develop and inform an “early warning system.” Such a system is used to identify firms that may be at at-risk of contraction or closure.

The Organizational Assessment and Implementation Strategy conducted by the DeKalb County Office of Economic Development in 2011 revealed that there is currently a severe lack of BRE activity in the county; there is also no strategic BRE effort from either the public or private sectors in support of DeKalb target sectors. While the SMCID can visit key local employers, it lacks the capacity to singlehandedly implement a comprehensive BRE program. Efforts must be made to ensure that both the concerns and aspirations of businesses within the CID area are catalogued and conveyed to those with the ability to act on them.

The following actions would support the retention and expansion of existing businesses in the SMCID area:

- Ensure that the SMCID is active in the development and governance of the Development DeKalb initiative or alternative public-private economic development partnerships under consideration.
 - Push the organization to develop into the expansive public-private partnership for economic development recommended through the DeKalb County Office of Economic Development’s Organizational Assessment in 2011.
 - Prioritize BRE activity as a primary responsibility of the organization.
- Until a robust, county-level BRE program is established, engage the SMCID area’s largest employers through SMCID staff.
 - Determine the extent of any organized BRE initiatives run by the county, local chambers, regional economic development entities, or state government that cover the SMCID area.
 - Inquire of the Georgia Department of Economic Development whether they would permit SMCID staff to utilize a license of their BRE software platform.



- Partner with organizations conducting BRE to talk to the employers regarding their competitive issues and opportunities to help them expand.
 - Reference the input garnered during the Economic Development Plan's stakeholder input when developing interview questions.
- Regularly convey critical findings from the BRE interviews to county, regional, and state economic development partners and those with influence over factors of import to the interviewed businesses.
- Utilize visits to glean information regarding workforce needs, and inform workforce development partners of identified needs.
- Should a true BRE program materialize through Development DeKalb, utilize BRE software or another suitable technology platform to conduct at least one business call per week with the purpose of conducting a thorough BRE interview.
- Develop an SMCID Business Resource Guide that provides information on products and services offered in the SMCID area.
 - Develop an annually-updated guide (printed or web-only) that local businesses can easily reference.
 - Utilize CID ownership meetings, email communiqués, and BRE visits to build interest in the concept and to collect all pertinent information.
 - Include contact information for participating businesses.
- Plug SMCID businesses into target business councils throughout the Metro Atlanta area, including those run by the Metro Atlanta Chamber, state of Georgia, and DeKalb County.
- Connect Georgia's Centers of Innovation to the SMCID area.
 - Partner with the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and DeKalb Office of Economic Development to host annual site tours and familiarization meetings with the directors of key Centers, including: Agribusiness, Energy, Life Sciences, Logistics, and Manufacturing.
 - Ensure that the full complement of relevant SMCID businesses are included in the maps and supply chain networks published by the Department of Economic Development for the State's target industries and Centers of Innovation.



8.1.3 Marketing and Recruitment

Economic development marketing is an external program designed to “sell” an area to desired audiences. Like most marketing today, it is increasingly executed through internet platforms and can be very resource-intensive. Yet, it is most successfully executed through the intentional cultivation of relationships and networks. It is typically practiced by economic development organizations that seek to attract new business and expand existing economic activity in the areas they serve, be they state, regional or local territories. These organizations – whether public or private – are typically well-funded operations with the staff capacity to undertake marketing efforts on a broad scale, sometimes nationally or even internationally. They are also frequently the first point of contact for businesses considering a relocation or expansion. Economic development organizations work with these businesses to identify their needs and the potential communities, sites, or buildings that could satisfy them. They also work with government to prepare incentive packages for qualified prospects as necessary.

Because the SMCID does not – and likely will not – have the capacity to develop and run an external marketing program, it must partner with those organizations that implement such programs. A key partner in this regard is the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), the state’s official sales and marketing arm. GDEcD has a staff of industry-specific project analysts that assist businesses through the site selection process and facilitate interactions with local communities and economic developers. Georgia Power, the state’s primary electric utility, also has a full-service Community & Economic Development department and promotes the whole of Greater Atlanta to broader prospect markets. Building strong connections and relationships with these and other organizations will be the most effective way for SMCID to promote its “product” – available building, sites, and redevelopment opportunities – beyond its present sphere of influence. SMCID staff can then work with economic development partners to manage active relocation projects and assist prospect companies.

It is also important that the SMCID understands how the building and site dynamics in the CID area align with the business sector targeting efforts of key partners. Key sectors for SMCIDs are those for which the local building stock, business sector strengths, and location dynamics favorably position it to plug into regional target priorities. The top portion of the following graphic, **Figure 8-1**, lists those sectors of activity targeted by organizations with the capacity to do target marketing on a large scale. It is by connecting to these entities that the CID will have the baseline capacity to ensure its sites and buildings are marketed, listed in online databases, and communicated to prospects.

The CID area’s stock of sites and buildings was analyzed using Georgia Power’s SelectGeorgia.com tool, which provides data for all sites and commercial/industrial properties in the metro area. There are two developable sites and 71 industrial properties for sale or lease in the CID area. Most of the 71 industrial properties are brick



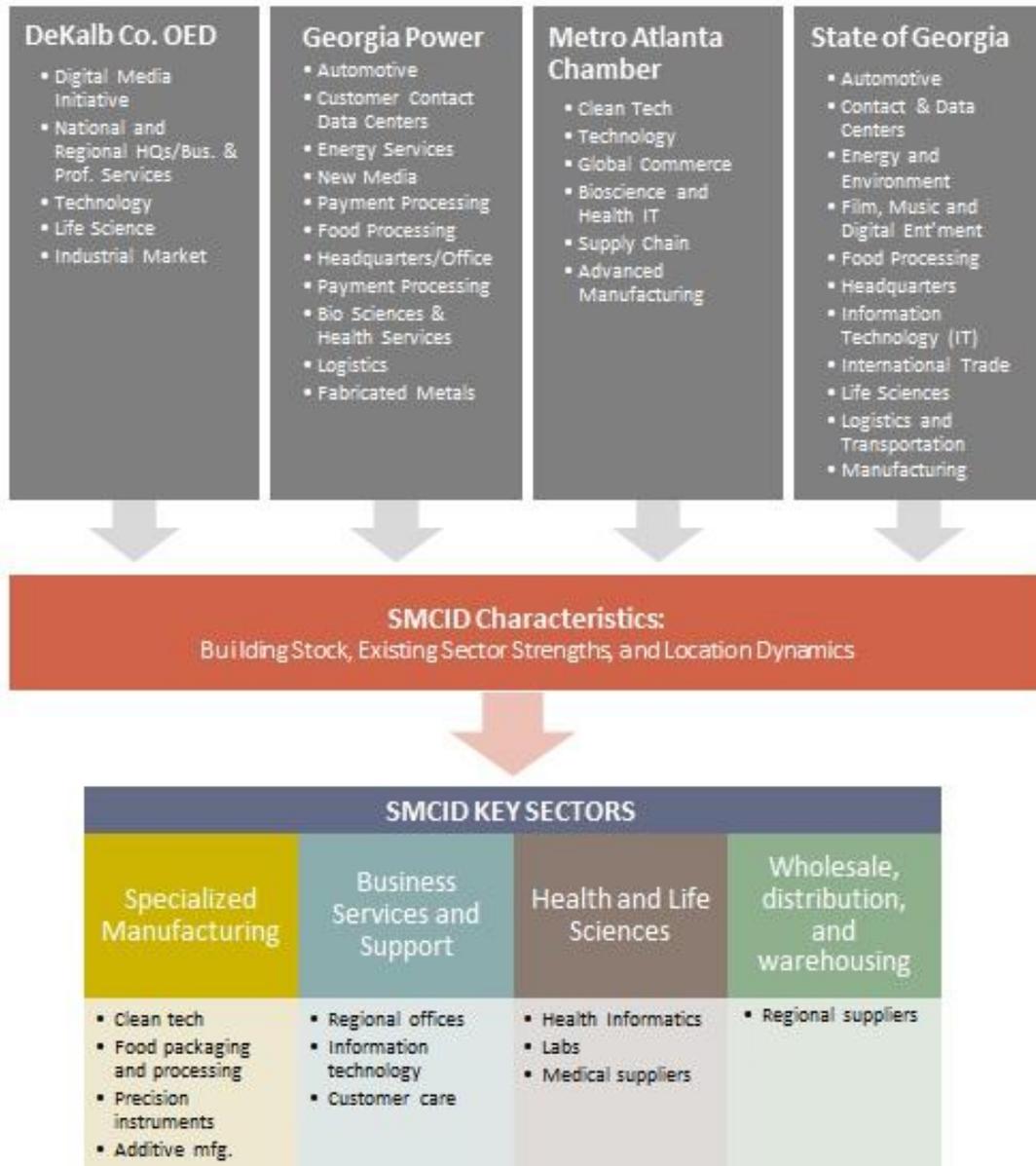
warehouse types. The average building size is 65,872 square feet, with 46,582 square feet of available space. There are 12 buildings over 100,000 square feet and 24 under 40,000 square feet. Average ceiling heights are 19 feet, which is lower than the 30 feet minimum preferred by large-scale warehousing operations, but suitable for local and regional distributors. Only one of the available buildings has a 30 feet ceiling.

Sectors dynamics show that wholesale trade and manufacturing remain the pillars of the Stone Mountain area's economic activity. Wholesalers of construction products have struggled, but food products, cosmetics, and international-serving businesses have become established in recent years, pointing to potential diversification opportunities. Wholesalers and distributors serving the metro Atlanta area rather than the broader Southeast or national markets, such as Eagle Rock Distributing, should continue to find suitable facilities in the CID area. Manufacturing is prioritized throughout the region and state, and many of the today's high-tech manufacturers are well suited to moderately sized, flexible spaces such as those throughout the CID. Health care has increased its presence strongly in the CID area in recent years, and the proximity to major health care service centers should continue driving opportunity for satellite care centers, medical suppliers, and labs and testing facilities. Business services and support is projected to grow faster nationwide than all sectors save health care, and the CID can capture some of the local growth in zones suitable for office use.

The following actions would help improve the SMCID's exposure to prospective businesses and facilitate new relocations:

- Ensure that local, regional, and state economic development marketing partners have access to complete, up-to-date information regarding buildings and sites in the CID area.
 - Purchase or acquire a complete, data-rich inventory of all vacant sites and buildings in the SMCID area through an information vendor such as CoStar or Loopnet.
 - Work with Georgia Power to supplement SelectGeorgia.com, their interactive mapping and database tool, with the capability to select pre-defined CID boundaries when querying current property data.
 - Update the SMCID website with an embedded map from SelectGeorgia.com and a link to the site.
- Develop lasting relationships with project managers and directors from the Georgia Department of Economic development, Georgia Power, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber such that the SMCID is considered a partner in entertaining prospects in DeKalb County.
 - Ensure that EDO partners are constantly apprised of new business and development happenings in the SMCID area. When possible, hold meetings in SMCID locations.

Figure 8-1: Key Business Sectors





- Ensure that SMCID sites are included in product tours for commercial brokers and site-location professionals.
- Hold an annual SMCID Open House to showcase prime development and redevelopment opportunities to real estate developers, brokers, and economic development project managers.
- Work with County and state project managers to determine specific building characteristics favored by businesses in key business sectors.
- Host a property tour with DeKalb's Camera Ready liaison to inventory the properties in the SMCID area with the features most frequently required of major film projects.
- Develop a marketing pamphlet that provides an overall profile of the SMCID's real estate assets and describes how regional and state target priorities can flourish in the area.
- Work with the Georgia Department of Economic Development to identify and attend trade shows and conventions for target sectors deemed high-value for DeKalb County and the SMCID area.
- Utilize intelligence garnered during BRE visits to inform DeKalb OED of potential supply chain linkages between SMCID businesses and trade partners in China, where the Office is developing a relationship through trade missions and cooperative agreements.
- Lobby the DeKalb OED to fully pursue the DeKalb Life Science Initiative that was launched to market and grow the substantial assets in this sector.

8.1.4 Workforce Optimization

The supply and quality of the local workforce has emerged as perhaps the most important factor in business decisions to locate or expand in a given market. As technologies rapidly evolve and global competitive dynamics shift in response to dizzying array of factors, communities that demonstrate the capacity to prepare and the responsiveness to re-train a skilled workforce will place themselves at an advantage.

The Competitive Snapshot revealed substantial competitive challenges in DeKalb County's workforce development profile. DeKalb County Schools are underperforming compared to the systems of neighboring counties in crucial indicators of success, including graduation rates and performance on standardized tests. While the county is home to a number of enviable postsecondary and technical education assets that some stakeholders feel are responsive to business community needs, input participants noted that they have difficulty filling open positions with local workers, and often go outside of the county to find new hires. This is a major competitive concern for county leaders to address, as evidenced by the many anecdotal stories of businesses relocating from DeKalb to other nearby counties.



DeKalb County must assert its commitment to workforce development at all levels to regain competitive advantage. Much of this work must take place on a large scale – at the school district, county, regional, or even state level. However, there are many existing resources which SMCID can tap into ensure that businesses in the area have access to required talent. The SMCID and its businesses can work directly with educational institutions such as DeKalb County Schools to adjust curriculums – such as the career pathway in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) –to meet the needs of employers. Similar possibilities for collaboration exist at the post-secondary level with Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC). The state of Georgia also can provide training directly to eligible manufacturing and logistics firms through its Quick Start program, which leverages the Technical College System of Georgia, of which GPTC is a part. Area businesses can also utilize agencies that match job-seekers with vacancies, such as the Georgia Department of Labor and DeKalb Workforce Development, and refugee resettlement services.

It must also be remembered that the area’s labor shed is much broader than DeKalb County, and efforts must be made to connect the SMCID’s businesses with quality talent found throughout the region and being developed in institutions outside DeKalb County.

The following actions would help businesses in the SMCID access and develop the employees they need to thrive:

- Position the SMCID area as a potential location of offsite research, laboratory or incubation spaces for Metro Atlanta colleges and universities.
 - Initiate exploratory discussions with the directors of innovative, target-supportive research and development entities on opportunities to establish new centers of operation in SMCID properties. Examples include:
 - Atlanta Clinical & Translational Science Institute (a partnership between Emory University, Morehouse School of Medicine, and Georgia Tech, which includes the Biomedical Informatics Program)
 - Health Systems Institute (a partnership of Georgia Tech and Emory University)
 - Robotics and Intelligent Machines at Georgia Tech
 - Morehouse College of Medicine
- Establish a CID Internship Program that places at least one student from DeKalb County Schools and one student from Georgia Piedmont Technical College in a CID-area business each semester.
 - Develop a joint program to coordinate business needs in the SMCID and career-preparation pipelines through the DeKalb County School District.



- Work with the DeKalb County Career Technology office to identify student-business matches from the career tracks that best align with the SMCID key business sectors.
- Survey SMCID businesses regarding their interest in participating in a training program to provide advanced career and technical education to students in the Career Technology program.
- Prioritize students from GPTC's Pathways to Excellence program tracks.
- Ensure that SMCID businesses are exposed to the benefits of two- and four-year colleges in Gwinnett, Fulton, Cobb, and other Metro Atlanta counties.
 - Regularly invite representatives of such institutions to present information on program offerings, trends, and partnering opportunities at SMCID owners' meetings and other events that engage SMCID businesses.
- Create opportunities for SMCID businesses to access the resources available to them through DeKalb Workforce Development, the Georgia Quick Start program, Georgia Work Ready system, and other local programs.
 - Invite representatives from each of these institutions to attend meetings and events for SMCID owners and businesses.
 - Provide links on the SMCID website to these training resources and institutions and direct SMCID businesses there through mailings and other collateral.
 - Serve as an intermediary between SMCID businesses and refugee resettlement organizations with job placement programs.
 - Develop a platform for representatives from the Coalition of Refugee Sourcing Agencies (or individual agencies) to present to the property and business owners within the SMCID a summary of the skill sets embedded in their constituent communities.
 - Share workforce needs of SMCID businesses gleaned from BRE calls with staff from the refugee resettlement agencies.

8.1.5 Economic Environment and Incentives

With vacancy rates in the SMCID area reaching historical highs, incremental steps to improve the general business and development environment in the area must be made. However, the challenges of the regional development environment have rendered some of the most popular incentive tools less effective. This section explores some of the policy and incentive options that have garnered some interest from stakeholders of this process.

One popular economic development tool with potential to infuse vitality into the SMCID is known as a Tax Allocation District (TAD). TADs are special districts that communities



enact to catalyze investment and redevelopment in areas that are underdeveloped or blighted. This is primarily accomplished through a mechanism known as “tax increment financing.” The concept works by establishing a district and identifying the present taxable value of the real property within its boundary. The local jurisdiction then issues tax-free bonds to fund infrastructure and other public improvements within the district. As these improvements take place, the taxable value of real property within the district increases, and the “increment” between this new value and the original at the time of the district’s creation is used to secure and ultimately repay the bond debt. The TAD is dissolved when the bonds – and any other resulting public debt – are retired.¹

This mechanism is the defining characteristic and principle advantage of TADs. Because they rely on future revenues, TADs can be used to stimulate growth and advance economic development goals without tapping present resources. TADs provide communities with additional flexibility by allowing for the exercise of eminent domain within district boundaries and because the debt issued in support of projects does not count against state-imposed local debt ceilings.²

Due to the required level of legislative involvement, creating a TAD can be challenging, particularly if the organization advocating for its formation does not possess full legislative powers, as is the case with a CID. Additionally, TADs have several other drawbacks. The Great Recession has generally had a drastic negative impact on real property values. This has made many developers nervous about projects they perceive as risky, and it has decreased the amount of revenue available for projects in TADs formed before the downturn.

TADs are also not ideal for industrial development for two reasons. First, businesses such as manufacturing operations hold most of their taxable value in personal property – things like equipment and machinery. Their actual buildings are typically not worth as much as other forms of real property commonly associated with TADs, such as office or multi-family residential buildings. Accordingly, increments on industrial projects may not be sufficiently large. DeKalb County also does not allow for the use of tax abatements in its TADs.³ These incentives are typically important to industrial users and developers, and the lack of their presence could actually inhibit future development.

Overall, TADs can be an excellent way to finance redevelopment activities. Should the SMCID wish to further explore the tool, it should undertake a comprehensive feasibility

¹ “Tax Allocation Districts Q&A,” Georgia Municipal Association, May 4, 2008

² Carolyn Bourdeaux & John Matthews, “Georgia’s Redevelopment Powers Law: A Policy Guide to the Evaluation and Use of Tax Allocation Districts.” Research Atlanta, Inc., November 2004



study that evaluates TADs in comparison to other incentives designed to spur economic development.

One such tool is an Opportunity Zone, a designated area in need of redevelopment and revitalization where businesses creating jobs may receive special tax incentives. Georgia has a statewide program that provides tax credits to companies that add new jobs. These credits lower an organization's state income tax liability and make the state a more attractive place for business. The credits, however, are typically available only to companies in certain business sectors such as manufacturing or warehousing, and the dollar value of the credits and the minimum number of new jobs a company must create to receive them vary by county. In DeKalb, eligible businesses typically receive a \$1,750 credit per job if they are adding at least 15 new workers. But in Opportunity Zones, the credits are significantly improved in the following ways:

- A credit of \$3,500 per job, the maximum allowable under state law
- A minimum threshold of just two new jobs, the lowest in the state
- Any company – regardless of line of business – may claim the credit
- The credit may be applied against 100 percent of income tax liability, and any excess may be applied to withholding

Opportunity Zones are actually comprised of individual land parcels. The process of creating a zone begins with determining whether parcels meet two locational conditions. First, all parcels in the proposed zone must be located in a census block group with a poverty rate of at least 15 percent – or in a census block group adjacent to such an area. Second, all parcels must be located within a designated redevelopment area (as with a TAD) or in an enterprise zone, an area that meets specific criteria related to factors such as poverty, unemployment, distress, and blight. If all parcels in the proposed zone satisfy the above requirements, then the local government may petition the state Department of Community Affairs for the designation.

The potential to extend an Opportunity Zone designation to parcels within the CID should be considered, along with other incentives presently available in DeKalb County, which includes:

- Property tax abatements for 10 years for qualified businesses creating at least five jobs in an enterprise zone
- A two-year tax exemption on expansions to existing buildings
- A 100 percent "Freeport" ad valorem tax exemptions for manufacturer's raw materials and goods-in-process, finished goods held by the original manufacturer, or finished goods held by distributors or wholesalers that are destined for out-of-state shipment



The following actions would help improve the overall economic environment in the immediate vicinity of the SMCID:

- In consultation with the DeKalb Office of Economic Development, determine whether a Tax Allocation District is the most viable and/or desirable means of incentivizing redevelopment activity within the SMCID area.
 - Should it prove preferable, proceed to initiate fundraising for a comprehensive feasibility study.
 - Leverage OED to manage the ongoing assessment and cataloguing of properties in the TAD as well as active TAD projects and administrative protocols.
 - Ensure that economic development partners are marketing the Stone Mountain TAD to development prospects.
- Alternatively, proceed with existing plans to establish an Opportunity Zone covering the SMCID area.
- In conjunction with district-scale redevelopment activities, pursue redevelopment of the SMCID's highest-priority underutilized sites and buildings.
 - Develop and maintain a list of the five sites considered the highest redevelopment priorities by the SMCID Board.
 - Host a delegation of developers and brokers to determine the assortment of factors that would have to be aligned for the Sears property on Mountain Industrial Boulevard to be a viable redevelopment opportunity.
 - Consider working with Sears to sponsor a design charrette or studio with students from Georgia Tech's College of Architecture that would begin to craft a long-term vision for better utilizing the parcel.

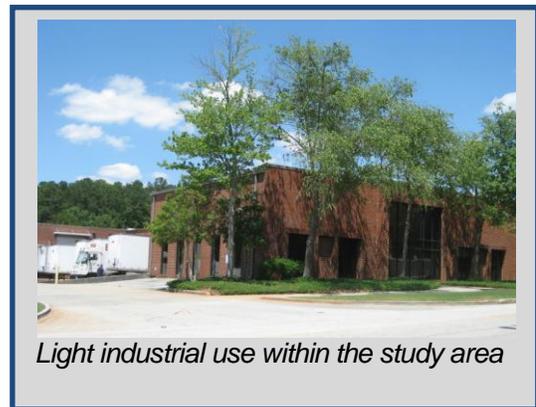
8.2 Regulatory & Systemic Enhancements

Sustained business attraction and retention within a set geographic area is a product of multiple factors coming together to produce a preferred business location. Such factors include, but are not limited to, desirable and easily accessible location, appropriate building supply, adequate infrastructures and services, workforce availability, and a supportive regulatory environment. In particular, if all other things are considered equal or nearly equal, it is absolutely critical that the regulations overseeing business location and site modifications be positive and user friendly, from both an administrative and regulatory aspect.

Businesses can choose to locate in a variety of industrial areas within and near the metropolitan Atlanta area. This makes it, critically important that the regulations governing development within the SMCID are particularly accommodating to the area's key business sectors.

This section considers how the following regulatory and systematic elements or processes could be improved, modified, or enhanced to facilitate the area's economic vision described in Section 8.2.1.

- Comprehensive Plan and Future Development Map
- Zoning and Land Development Requirements
- Business Licensing Process
- Strategies to Promote Key Business Sectors
- Other related regulatory policies



8.2.1 Changes to Comprehensive Plan & Future Development Map

The DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan has no specific recommendations for the SMCID area other than those policies identified in the Future Development Map.

Because the Comprehensive Plan is the overarching development and growth plan for the County, it is recommended that the following actions be taken to ensure the vision of the area is formalized in the document.

- DeKalb County Commission to formally adopt the Stone Mountain LCI Innovation Study as an amendment to the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan as currently adopted already incorporates several small area studies that have been completed throughout the county as formal policy guidance for growth and redevelopment in certain areas. Adopting the Innovation Study, inclusive of the Economic Development Plan would be



consistent with County policy, and provide leverage to prioritize initiatives, zoning and policy changes, and other recommendations outlined in the Five-Year Action Plan in Section 10.

- Modify Light Industrial Character Area designation to better promote key business sectors and prioritize light industrial areas as targeted job growth centers.
 - To better accommodate the specific economic development and job growth goals, it is recommended that the Character Area language be clarified to add a sentence to the effect of “The Light Industrial Character Area represents major employment opportunities in the county and should be marketed by the Office of Economic Development as a prime business location area.”
 - The primary land use description for the character area should also be amended to include Health and Life Sciences, Business Services and Support, Training Facilities, and Small Scale Office Development.
 - Implementation measures should be amended to include “expedited permitting” and “public infrastructure investment.”

8.2.2 Zoning and Development Regulatory Changes

The SMCID area has established a unique identity and economic role within DeKalb County, therefore it is appropriate that the area have more tailored zoning and development regulations to retain its character while facilitating the area’s economic growth potential and meeting its unique needs, as outlined in Section 8.1. Adapting the County’s zoning and development regulations to better accommodate the area’s vision will facilitate reuse, renovation, and redevelopment of buildings and sites and ultimately job growth.

To this end, the SMCID Board has drafted an Overlay District that accomplishes three main goals for the area: (1) identifies the needs behind preserving and enhancing the area’s character and land use mix; (2) prohibits certain uses that are incompatible with the area’s existing character, industry mix, and vision; and (3) reinforces the good examples of industrial design already evident in the area while prohibiting design elements and characteristics that are out of character with the area. Prohibited uses ensure that new uses in the area are compatible with the area’s industrial character while not interfering with the neighboring residential districts.

As redevelopment occurs in the study area, one of the biggest redevelopment challenges a developer faces is meeting stormwater requirements. Off street parking requirements can place an added constraint on redevelopment activities as they limit the amount of land available for building space.

To improve County zoning and development regulations to better accommodate the needs of the CID, the following recommendations are proposed:

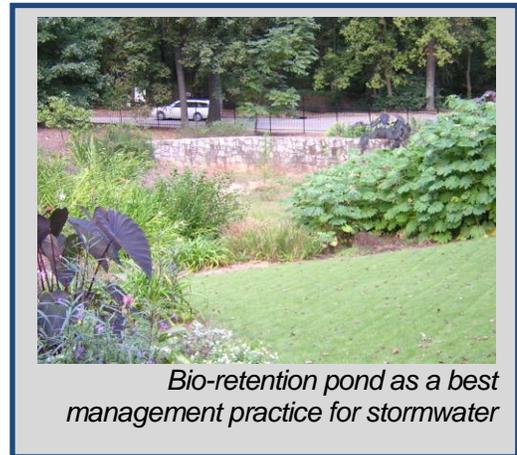
- County Commission to adopt Mountain Industrial Boulevard Overlay District.

These proposed regulations address many of the area’s immediate zoning needs. The overlay district has been approved by the CID Board and is being circulated among County staff currently to facilitate approval by the County Board of Commissioners. Adoption of the overlay is a critical step in moving the CID’s land use goals forward.
- Develop Design Guidelines to facilitate desirable aesthetics within the Mountain Industrial Boulevard Overlay District.

As redevelopment occurs, the area should be developed in such a way to facilitate a sense of investment. Over the last several years, lack of visual cohesiveness has arisen due to lack of consistent design. Design guidelines can be adopted to further guide redevelopment in the area, particularly those items that connect the public and private realm, including signs, landscaping, and lighting. While design guidelines will be helpful for all uses, they will be particularly helpful for ensuring that commercial development does not inhibit the area’s sense of business and that commercial uses are generally compatible with the primary industrial uses in the corridor.
- Develop incentives for Joint Stormwater Management.

Stronger incentives for joint stormwater management systems and natural, non-structural systems employing best management practices are necessary to ease the burden of these requirements in the study area. Doing so will help remove barriers to economic development. This relief of requirements could be added to the Mountain Industrial Boulevard Overlay District.
- Develop Incentives for Shared and Reduced Parking.

Creation of shared and reduced parking incentives is recommended to help facilitate broader use of existing buildings and sites within the area. These incentives will help make the area more adaptable to the variety of small businesses and key business sectors that the CID has potential to attract to strengthen and expand its jobs base, as highlighted in Section 8.1. Although shared parking may not be a realistic opportunity for certain industrial users, it may be helpful to some smaller scale redevelopment efforts such as those





supporting the Business Services and Support industry sector and commercial businesses in the corridor. For example, certain properties and buildings in the area may be too small to host many traditional industrial uses, but may be appealing to retrofit or redevelop as office or commercial spaces.

- The County's current Code allows for a 10% reduction in parking requirements by special exception if it is determined that the building would not need all such spaces for operations. Stronger language to allow for greater reduction in parking requirements could be added to the overlay district to increase flexibility of requirements and ease development costs.
- Shared parking should be permitted in cases where an adjacent use has an excess of parking or two uses can demonstrate that their parking demands generally peak at different times of the day. Although this may have limited application, it will ultimately allow for more flexibility in the district over time, easing the case for reuse or redevelopment. This may be particularly helpful along Mountain Industrial Boulevard, Hugh Howell Road, and other mixed use areas of the corridor. Current practice in some County overlay districts is allowance of up to a 20% reduction in total required parking under shared parking agreements. Approval by the County requires a written consent agreement between property owners.
- Establish adjusted setback requirements for area and incorporate in Mountain Industrial Overlay District.

The County's existing zoning regulations contain setback requirements that make it difficult to improve or redevelop some properties within the district because the requirements are tailored to new development. In many cases, setbacks are unrealistic based on how structures were initially located on properties prior to new regulations. While the zoning variance procedure provides a method to seek relief from unattainable setback requirements (up to 10% reduction in requirements), it is a time-consuming process: the current regulations allow up to a 60 day period between submittal of a complete variance application and hearing on the application by the Zoning Board of Appeals. To alleviate this burden, it is recommended that adjusted setback requirements be established for the study area and be incorporated in the Mountain Industrial Overlay District.

- To determine appropriate setbacks for the area, a survey of existing setbacks in the area should be completed.
 - The survey would help establish a series of setback precedents within the area, and moving forward, new setback requirements would be determined based on their compatibility with those existing in the area.
 - Setback compatibility standards could be established on a block by block basis or potentially based on the type of road typology the property is located on.



- Expand Mountain Industrial Overlay District to provide for expedited administrative processes by allowing administrative approval for variances for certain regulations, such as reduced parking, setbacks, and stormwater management.

8.2.3 Improvements to Permitting & Licensing Processes

In order for businesses to continue locating or decide to locate in the SMCID, the DeKalb County processes for obtaining business occupational certificates, certificates of occupancy, and necessary land development and building permits must be as easy or easier than pursuing such items in adjoining jurisdictions. The current perception is that obtaining these items in DeKalb County is substantially more difficult than obtaining them in neighboring communities. While DeKalb County has indicated that it is working to improve this situation, it is important that the CID partner with the County to improve those processes and policies that are discouraging businesses to continue or start doing business in DeKalb County.

This planning process recommends that the following improvements be made to these applicable systems, including a combination of both regulatory and administrative improvements.

- Work with County to develop expedited permitting & licensing processes.
 - The County is already working on this issue and is anticipated to reach a resolution by the end of the year. It is recommended that the CID work with the County to encourage that the expedited processes accommodate the following:
 - Business licensing for businesses establishing a new location in the SMCID.
 - Development and building construction permitting processes supporting the location or expansion of businesses within the SMCID.
 - Development and building construction permitting processes for businesses willing to pay extra to expedite permitting.
 - Business licensing for businesses located 20 plus years in the county.
 - Other fast-track permitting protocols as determined appropriate.
 - Details for expedited processes should be included in the Mountain Industrial Overlay District, ensuring that projects in the CID area go down a streamlined approval process.
- Advocate for the establishment of a pilot Priority Projects Team Program for Mountain Industrial Overlay projects.
 - A Priority Projects Team would be established by and operate within the County to expedite permits and business licensing applications coming out of the SMCID area. The team would include staff from across the County's departments to work collaboratively to get rezoning applications, new business licenses, and development/construction permits for SMCID projects through the system. A



CID representative could also be assigned to serve on the team. Although it would be preferable that all new and otherwise significant projects within the CID get this priority service, if that is not possible, additional criteria could be applied to determine when a project warranted a Priority Projects Team review. For example, the Priority Projects Team process could be activated when the following characteristics exist for projects within the SMCID area:

- Addition of five new jobs, and/or
- Some threshold for revenue, and/or
- Some threshold for renovated/reused industrial square footage.

The team would ensure efficient issuance of development and building permits and business licensing and positive customer service. The group would meet early on with the developer, property owner, or business owner to identify issue areas so that time-consuming issues are curtailed upfront. This action item is consistent with the CID's goal to serve as a model for business attraction and retention that can be emulated throughout the County. Based on the program's performance, the Priority Projects Team could be applied elsewhere in priority economic development areas in DeKalb County.

A similar process called a Major Projects Team has been implemented in the City of Atlanta with the mission to ". . . ensure that the City of Atlanta efficiently processes the issuance of building permits for major permitting projects while delivering a high level of customer service." The process includes a similar team approach to that being proposed in the SMCID and includes a transparent/responsive communications process and responses to permitting concerns. A project is considered for the Major Projects Team process when the following criteria are met:

- \$10 million+, and/or
 - 50+ Residential Units and/or
 - 100+ Multi-Family Units and/or
 - University, College, or Public School and/or City building and/or City Landmark.
- Advocate for a business license fee reduction or waiver policy at the County to apply to businesses within the CID meeting certain criteria.

This initiative would help incentivize business location or expansion in the CID. A license fee reduction or waiver could be applied to businesses locating "X" number of new jobs in the CID or for all new businesses locating within the Mountain Industrial Overlay District. This policy could be established in place of or in coordination with a potential CID fund for covering business license fees, as identified in Section 8.1.1.



- Encourage County to streamline administrative aspects of land development and building procedures as well as business licensing to make process more customer-oriented and the land development and construction process more fluid.
 - Encourage County to complete comprehensive, 3rd party efficiency study of the land development, building, and business licenses processes.

A similar study was carried out to improve Gwinnett County's permitting processes. It resulted in recommendations to move staff, change organization of departments, and provide a new processing system that expedited processing of applications by digitizing the workflow. Another outcome of the study may result in reorganization. For example, Gwinnett County's business licensing is hosted in the Planning and Development Department, while DeKalb County's business licensing is handled by the Finance Department. By having the business licensing process integrated with Planning and Development, Gwinnett's coordination process is more fluid as staff work together rather than in fragmented departments, ultimately reducing application review and turn-around times.
 - The SMCID should continue to participate in work sessions held by the County to identify improvements to the county. Doing this will help ensure that any changes to the County's systems address concerns identified by SMCID businesses.
 - Advocate for the County to develop a "one-stop" shop business-development office. *(See Section 8.1.1 for more detailed discussion. Initiative should also be coordinated with the Priority Projects Team Program recommendation discussed on the previous pages.)*
 - Work with County to establish a simplified process for obtaining Certificate of Change of Tenant.

Current building owners or new tenants are required to submit current as-built floor and fixture plans for review under all circumstances. This process requires extra time and resources from the new tenant or developer. Gwinnett County allows greater flexibility in this process, leaving it to the discretion of the Fire Plan Review Section, to determine if as-built plans are required. A similar process could be implemented in DeKalb County.
 - Work with County to make County website pages on permitting and licensing easier to follow.

While DeKalb County does provide online resources to facilitate the permitting and licensing process, they are not laid out in such a way that it is easy to follow. The Gwinnett County website has a straight forward process laid out on its website, while the DeKalb website is more difficult to follow. Recommendations for improvement include the following:
-



- *Make website content more succinct & use hyperlinks to provide more detailed information.* The Gwinnett page provides brief overviews of the licensing processing and requirements, and additional links are provided with more detail. The DeKalb County website is more technical oriented with detailed information that one has to scroll through. Additionally, DeKalb County's online permitting system is a separate site from the County's main website. It would be more fluid and easier to follow if the two were hosted in the same location. Businesses need a quick reference guide and easy to use system.
- *Place all related permits, licenses, and plan reviews under the same menu.* Gwinnett County places all related business review items within one list under the Planning & Development Department, whereas DeKalb County has business licensing under Finance and permitting and plan review under Planning and Sustainability.

It was confirmed via the interview process that DeKalb County is working to improve its online permitting content. The CID can help ensure that improvements are made and offer guidance on any additional changes.

8.2.4 Other Administrative Enhancements

In addition to improvements to permitting and development review processes, the following two recommendations for administrative improvements are presented as means to enhancing business attraction and expansion initiatives within the study area.

- **Develop a Computerized Inventory of Existing Buildings and Sites in the SMCID area & Link to County's GIS System.**

At the time of this report, the County did not have a digital, GIS compatible inventory of current vacant and available buildings or sites for businesses. It is a recommendation of the Comprehensive Plan to do just that: "Build a computerized inventory linked to the County's GIS system and tax records of existing buildings and sites suitable for industrial and large-scaled commercial development according to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan text and map." The action item is listed in the County's Comprehensive Plan as a GIS and Planning and Development initiative and is also cross referenced in the Economic Development short term work program. The County has indicated that this initiative is resource intensive and time consuming and will require DeKalb County's GIS department taking the lead in its development.

It is recommended herein that the CID work with the County to develop the portion of the inventory specific to the study area. Since the DeKalb County Office of Economic Development and Georgia Power work hand-in-hand in achieving regional economic development goals, it is essential that initiatives be coordinated. In particular, the inventory should be coordinated with Georgia Power's SelectGeorgia.com tool, which provides data for all sites and commercial/industrial properties in the metro area.



- Establish a Development Review Committee consisting of CID Board Members.
 - One of the biggest barriers to expediting permitting is limited County resources to review permits quicker. To help expedite the review process for development proposals, a formal Development Review Committee could be established for any applications that arise from the CID. The Development Review Committee would include CID board members and potentially a CID-based planner. Such Committee would help expedite permitting by allowing projects to bypass or move more quickly through certain preliminary steps in the application review process, such as bypassing the now required pre-submittal meeting for land development applications. This incentive would expedite the development processes, help relieve backlog at the County, and ultimately serve as an incentive for businesses to expand or locate in the study area. This arrangement would require more structured conversation with the County and require a joint agreement between the CID and DeKalb County. Such arrangement could be formalized in the Mountain Industrial Boulevard Overlay District.
 - A similar arrangement has been established within the City of Atlanta to facilitate development within the SPI-9 Buckhead Village Overlay District where a Development Review Committee serves as an advisor on Special Administrative Permits.
 - Hire an additional CID staff person to support planning and economic development efforts as well as day-to-day operations of the CID.

The CID should hire an additional staff to work in partnership with CID property owners, developers and businesses to compile necessary document development applications, permitting requests, and business licensing renewals and applications. The staff could play a key administrative and technical advisory



role in the proposed Development Review Committee and also support partners in economic development pursuits. Said person could be hired as CID staff with commitment to work full time on implementing the CID’s vision and plan for sustained economic prosperity and growth.

8.2.5 Policies and Strategies to Promote Key Sectors

By comparing the target sectors of local, regional, and state economic development organizations with the SMCID’s property, locational, and business sector characteristics, the consultant team has identified a set of key business sectors with potential to drive economic growth in the area going forward. While the SMCID should welcome all manner of suitable businesses into the area, these represent areas where the CID can plug directly into high-value targets being pursued by economic development partners. Defined this way, key business sectors for the CID to pursue include:

SMCID KEY SECTORS			
Specialized Manufacturing	Business Services and Support	Health and Life Sciences	Wholesale, distribution, and warehousing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clean tech ▪ Food packaging and processing ▪ Precision instruments ▪ Additive mfg. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional offices ▪ Information technology ▪ Customer care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health informatics ▪ Labs ▪ Medical suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional suppliers

Source: Market Street Services

Aside from general economic development incentives to promote these types of businesses in the County and more specifically, the CID, it is critical that the zoning and development process encourage these industries rather than inhibit them.

The following specific recommendations are made to promote these key business sectors.

- Institute multimodal transportation improvements and aesthetic improvements laid out in Section 8.3.2.

Several of the industries identified below are not the typical businesses that have inhabited the CID. Attracting new, higher wage industries will be facilitated by a more attractive environment in the CID as well as better accessibility to the area by an eclectic workforce that either depends upon or chooses to utilize alternative travel modes.

- Amend zoning and development regulations to accommodate likely key sector needs identified in **Table 8-1**.



Table 8-1: Land Use and Zoning Policies and Strategies to Promote Key Sectors

Key Sector	Site & Building Needs	Zoning Needs	General Notes
Specialized Manufacturing Clean tech Food packaging and processing Precision instruments Additive manufacturing	-Moderately sized, flexible spaces	-Permit recycling/materials recovery in M zoning district. - Flexibility to install alternative energy generators & alternative stormwater design	The DeKalb Board of Commissioners voted to form a task force to develop policies and procedures to encourage manufacturing. The CID should support the County in developing and implementing these policies.
Business Services & Support Regional offices Information technology Customer care	-Limited site needs -Access to strong fiber-optic network ; encourage area utilities to upgrade fiber optic network	-Shared parking opportunities	Future Development Plan should be updated to emphasize appropriateness of these industries in light industrial character area.
Health and Life Sciences Health informatics Labs Medical suppliers	-Access to strong fiber-optic network; encourage area utilities to upgrade fiber optic network	-Opportunities for green building design & site features	Future Development Plan should be updated to emphasize appropriateness of these industries in light industrial area.
Wholesale, Distribution, & Warehousing Regional suppliers	-Sufficient turning radii; loading and docking space	- 30 ft minimum ceiling preferred by large-scale warehousing operations - Setback variances may be needed as well as flexible stormwater requirements for redevelopment	Existing space and opportunities for redevelopment will best accommodate local and regional distributors



8.3 Strengthening of the Physical Environment

8.3.1 Transportation

Planned and Programmed Improvements

Planned and programmed improvements were identified through a review of the ARC PLAN 2040 – the long range transportation plan for the Atlanta region. Currently, there are no projects in the study area planned or programmed within PLAN 2040. However, the CID has recently received grant from the State Roadway and Tollway Authority (SRTA) for improvements to E. Ponce De Leon to make the segment from McCurdy Drive to Rock Mountain Boulevard more truck-friendly. The CID has also applied for L230 funds from ARC for these improvements as well.

Public and Stakeholder Input

In order to supplement the information highlighted in Section 2, a series of stakeholder interviews and a public meeting were completed. While most of the comments received were focused on economic development, the following transportation related observations were provided:

- Many jobs in the CID are lower paying and, as such, employees rely on transit and bicycles for work trips.
- Increases in truck lengths (+/- 20 ft.) over recent years now require wider turning radii.
- Improved traffic signalization and turn lanes capable of accommodating trucks are needed – particularly along E. Ponce De Leon Avenue.
- Sidewalks are needed along Mountain Industrial Boulevard.
- The area is served well by MARTA, but better pedestrian connections to bus shelters are needed.

Transportation Recommendations

Based on the current and projected conditions in the study area in conjunction with stakeholders and public input, the following needs with respect to transportation have been identified:

- Capacity improvements to Mountain Industrial Boulevard.
With a projected LOS F and 35% increase in general and truck traffic in 2040, the CID is encouraged to coordinate with the ARC to include a capacity improvement along the entire roadway through the LCI study area in the next long range plan update. It should also be noted that the bridge over Stone Mountain Freeway lacks sidewalks. However, given the lack of available right of way on the bridge, it is a reasonable assumption that these sidewalks will not be provided without a capacity improvement or programmed bridge replacement.



- Pedestrian improvements along Mountain Industrial Boulevard.

While much of the LCI study area lacks indications of pedestrian demand (such as footpaths), there is evidence of pedestrian demand along Mountain Industrial Boulevard. With the new intersection improvements along the roadway, better connections to the ADA compliant ramps are needed.
- Extension of MARTA Route 520.

The extension of the Route 520 to Hugh Howell Road or Royal Atlanta will increase transit access to jobs throughout the CID. This in turn presents a more attractive commute option than regular bus service to and from the MARTA Kensington station.
- Sidewalks to MARTA bus shelters.

Many of the bus shelters throughout the study area lack sidewalk access. Provision of said sidewalks will make transit a more attractive mode choice.
- Modified vertical approach to railroad overpass of Mountain Industrial Boulevard.

The bridge approaches just north of the Sears Outlet need to be redesigned for general vehicular safety. As observed, vehicles are braking abruptly to lessen the effect of the "hump" in the road in both directions. Specifically, trucks are more dangerously impacted due to their weight and reduced braking ability.
- Travel demand management strategies and coordination.

With the projected increase in congestion throughout the LCI study area, the CID should continue to coordinate with its membership to incentivize employees to use alternative means of transportation such as transit, vanpooling, etc.
- Increase signage and wayfinding to prevent conflicts with cyclists and trucks.

Bicycle safety can be enhanced by including signage throughout the study area that, in turn increases awareness of cyclists by trucks and general traffic alike.
- Review of roadway configurations to accommodate freight turn movements.

While many of the study area intersections are under improvement, field survey did reveal some deficiencies throughout. Stop bar setbacks and median noses should be checked for turning clearances at all intersections where these improvements are taking place. This includes both intersections along major and minor roadways. In addition, there are some stretches – particularly along Mountain Industrial Boulevard where some median reductions may be necessary to increase ingress and egress. The recommended actions in the next section identify where some of these deficiencies exist.



Multi-jurisdictional Corridor Level Considerations

The needs described in the previous section were identified through a detailed scope of the LCI study area. However, it should be noted that the Mountain Industrial Boulevard corridor within the study area is a subset of a much larger economic development corridor in the northeast Atlanta metropolitan area. This corridor extends from the southern boundary of the CID north into Gwinnett County via Jimmy Carter Boulevard to I-85. As such, it is envisioned that this corridor as a whole will become a major freight corridor from a regional perspective with great potential for employment growth. In order for this to occur from a transportation perspective, the most critical need is interagency coordination at multiple levels, such as the following:

- Coordination between DeKalb County and Gwinnett County is needed to develop a coordinated approach to ensure a cohesive land use policy with similar objectives with regard to issues such as land use, access management, etc.
- Since the corridor is comprised completely of County roadways, a cross jurisdictional signal timing plan between DeKalb County and Gwinnett County is needed to ensure steady freight movement and traffic flow along the corridor.
- The corridor also traverses two CIDs (Stone Mountain and Gwinnett Village) and impacts a third (Gwinnett Place). A coordinated approach to business recruitment between these CIDs will assist in developing a corridor with a specific identity that, in turn, leads to attracting certain industries of similar interests.
- As a major transportation and employment corridor, coordination is also needed with MARTA and Gwinnett County Transit and local governments to ensure reliable, high quality transit service to attract potential employers along the corridor.



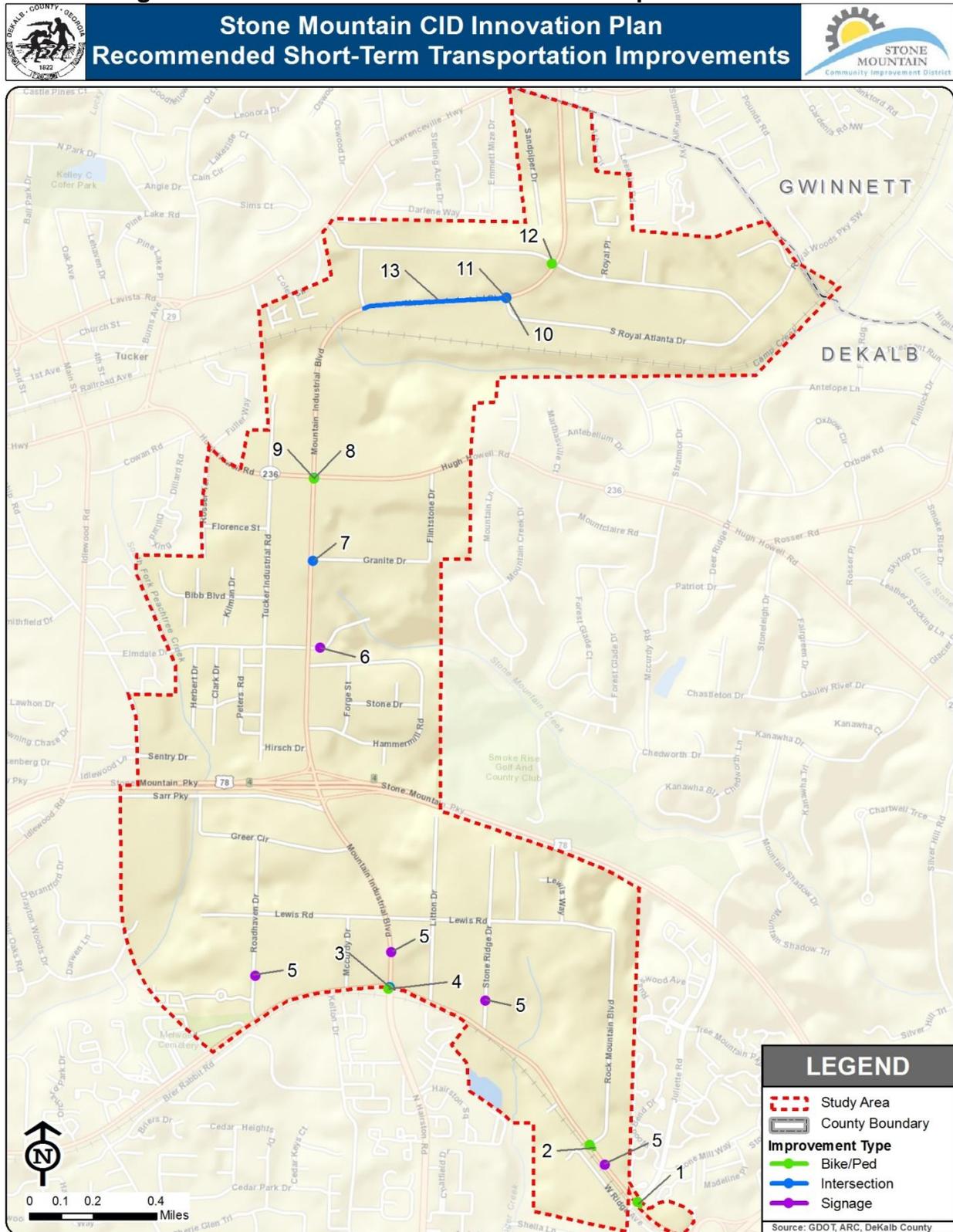
Recommended Transportation Actions

To address overall needs highlighted in the previous section, the following improvements (**Table 8-2**) are recommended. For ease of review, these improvements have been organized by improvement type and their implementation timeframe. All of the short-term projects are ordered by their location in the study area from south to north and are shown in **Figure 8-2**. Again, many of these recommendations are a result from field surveys throughout the study area, which is included as **Appendix E**.

Table 8-2: Recommended Transportation Actions

ID #	Improvement Description	Improvement Type	Implementation Timeframe
1	Sidewalk installation along E Ponce De Leon from Juliette Road to bus shelter and along east side of Juliette Road	Bike/Ped	Short-term
2	Sidewalk installation along E Ponce De Leon from Rock Mountain Boulevard to bus shelter	Bike/Ped	Short-term
3	Relocate stop bar on westbound E. Ponce De Leon at Mountain Industrial Boulevard to allow for more turning radii	Intersection	Short-term
4	Increase signage and ensure adequate crossing time for pedestrians using the Stone Mountain Trail at Mountain Industrial Boulevard	Intersection-Bike/Ped	Short-term
5	Provide 'Share the Road' signs along major north-south roadways accessing the Stone Mountain Trail – including Mountain Industrial Boulevard, Roadhaven Road, Rock Mountain Road, and Juliette Road.	Intersection-Bike/Ped	Short-term
6	Place a 'Do Not Block Intersection' sign for westbound Elmdale Drive traffic at driveway to QT to minimize blockage for eastbound left turns into QT.	Signage	Short-term
7	Improve turning radii at SE corner of intersection of Mountain Industrial Boulevard and Granite Drive to allow for better truck movement	Intersection	Short-term
8	Relocate stop bar on southbound Mountain Industrial Boulevard at Hugh Howell Road	Intersection	Short-term
9	Restripe pedestrian crossings at Mountain Industrial Boulevard at Hugh Howell Road	Pedestrian	Short-term
10	Reconstruct median nose and right turn radii onto South Royal Atlanta Drive from northbound Mountain Industrial Boulevard	Intersection	Short-term
11	Add stop bar to northbound approach of South Royal Atlanta onto Mountain Industrial Boulevard	Intersection	Short-term
12	Construct ADA compliant pedestrian facilities and extend sidewalk to bus shelter on North Royal Atlanta Road at Mountain Industrial Boulevard	Pedestrian	Short-term
13	Replace median with continuous turn lane on Mountain Industrial Boulevard from Tuckerstone to South Royal Atlanta Drive	Intersection	Short-Term
14	Coordinate with CID membership to incentivize travel demand management practices with their employees	Travel Demand Management	Mid-term
15	Coordinate with MARTA to extend Route 520 further north to Hugh Howell Road or Royal Atlanta.	Transit	Mid-term
16	Coordinate with ARC, DeKalb County, and/or GDOT for inclusion of capacity improvement to Mountain Industrial Boulevard in the next update of regional long range transportation plan	Capacity/Widening	Long-term
17	Coordinate with ARC, DeKalb County, and/or GDOT for resurfacing of vertical clearance of approach to Mountain Industrial Boulevard bridge over the rail line (near Sears).	Safety	Long-term

Figure 8-2: Recommended Short-Term Transportation Actions





8.3.2 Land Use and Design

Areas successful at achieving economic growth have a physical environment that is attractive to businesses and investors. They demonstrate public investment in those essential features needed for moving materials and people, such as roads and utilities. Such areas have a strong sense of place and character that is welcoming to customers, employees, residents, and visitors. People know that they have arrived in a place that is progressing. One of the first steps undertaken as part of this planning effort was to see how our study area demonstrated these physical characteristics of success. Then based on these results, recommendations were formulated to address any deficiencies.

There are many examples of other CIDs in the Atlanta area that have incorporated gateway features such as consistent and attractive monument signs, banners, directional signs, and highway intersection landscaping to address visual blight and help create a sense of success. The SMCID has begun to promote this type of branding, as evident in a current effort to landscape the intersection of Stone Mountain Freeway and Mountain Industrial Boulevard, and the crafting of a proposed Mountain Industrial Boulevard zoning overlay district (described earlier), but more can be done. The CID and this study provide an opportunity for further coordinated area-wide enhancement of the built environment.

Gateways and Branding

It is recommended that a Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan be undertaken so the location, style, and cost of the effort can be tailored to the desires of the SMCID Board.

The benefits of such as master plan and particularly its implementation include improvements to the visual appeal along the most heavily travelled corridors in the study area, improved traffic safety as visitors to the area have a better sense of where to find location destinations, and improved awareness of the CIDs activities in the area.

- It is recommended that gateways be installed at key intersections within the study area, as indicated in **Figure 8-3** and listed here.
 - Mountain Industrial Boulevard (MIB) and Lawrenceville Highway (US 29)
 - MIB and Hugh Howell Road
 - MIB and Stone Mountain Highway (US 78), both NE and SW quadrants of the interchange
 - MIB and East Ponce de Leon Ave
 - East Ponce de Leon Ave and Rock Mountain Boulevard
- With the primary spine of the local transportation network being Mountain Industrial Boulevard it is further recommended that banners be installed on the street lights along the corridor. An example of what such a banner could look like is shown in **Figure 8-6**.

Figure 8-3: Recommended Gateway Locations

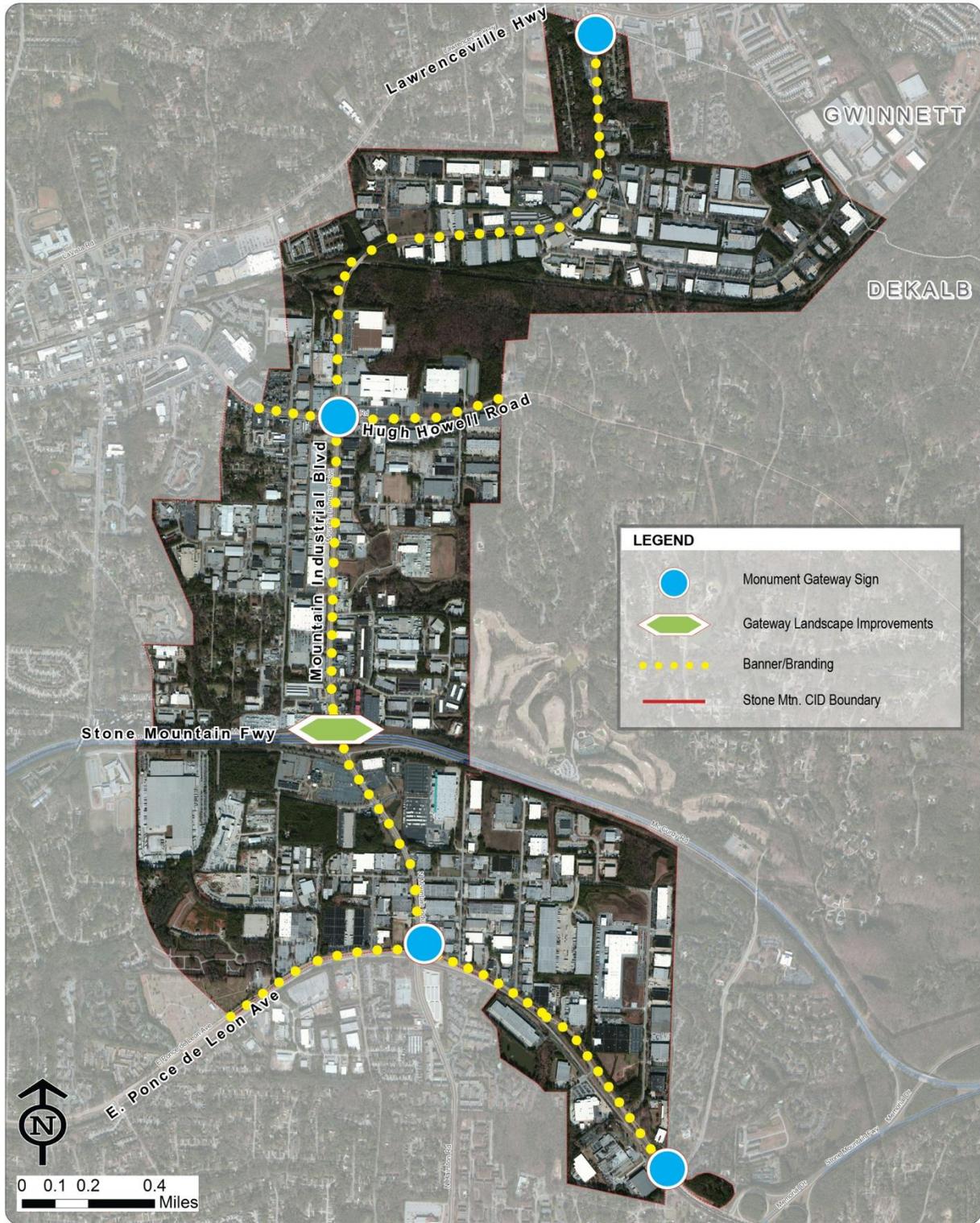


Figure 8-4: Concept plan of Proposed Highway Landscaping



Figure 8-5: Gateway Monument Concepts

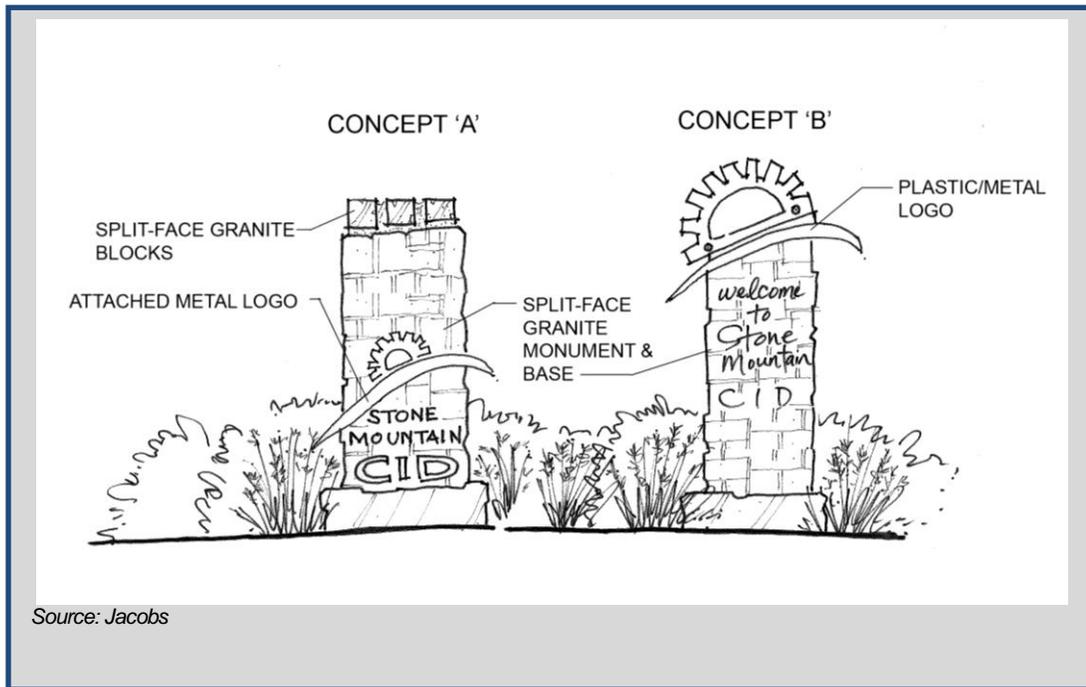


Figure 8-6: Example of Potential CID Banners



Streetscaping

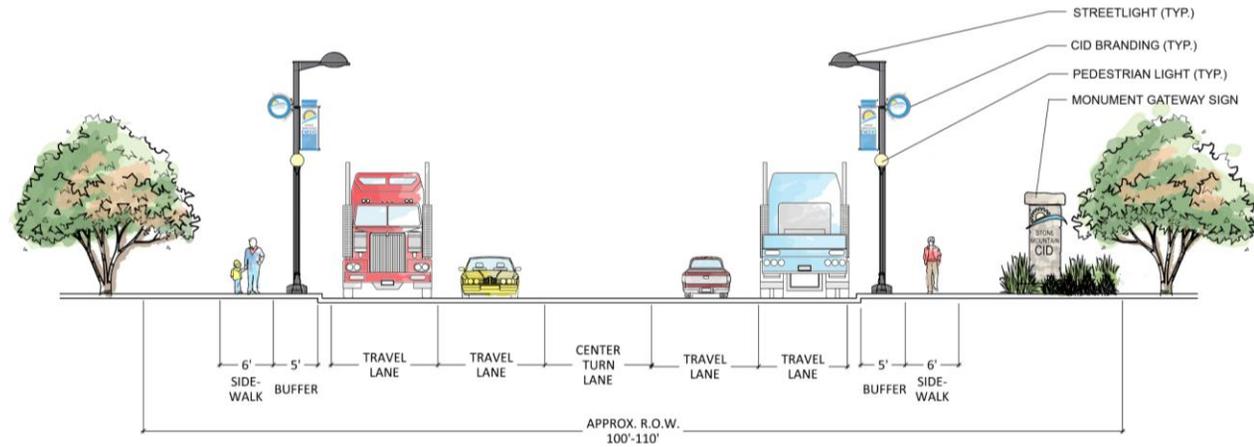
Adding branding elements and gateways are just a part of improving the overall view of the area, and such elements should be coordinated with a comprehensive streetscape program for the CID.

The following streetscape enhancements are recommended:

- Basic streetscape elements include street and pedestrian lighting, sidewalks/paths, benches, trash receptacles, and landscaping.
- Most streetscape projects include street trees, but due to the industrial character of the area, and the high volume of truck traffic, it is recommended that no trees be planted in a street median or between the sidewalk and street curb.
- Small understory street trees may be appropriate in particular situations on the outside of sidewalks, as long as the branches do not interfere with pedestrian, bike or vehicular traffic.

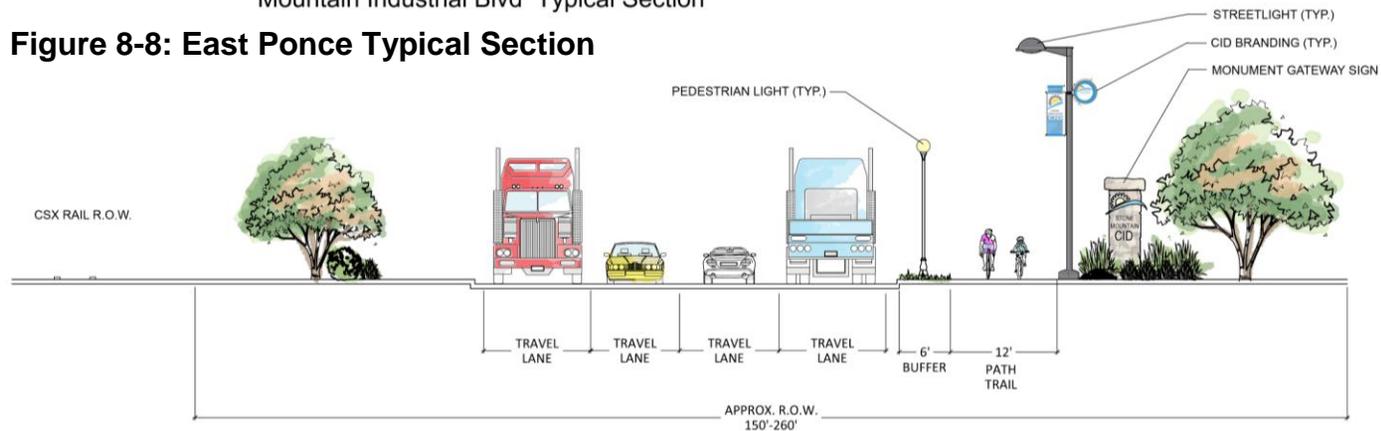
Figures 8-7 through 8-9, on the following pages, provide typical street cross sections to illustrate how this may look. These cross sections are based on design guidelines from ARC's Strategic Regional Thoroughfare Plan. Right of way widths are based on average widths of like roadways in the study area.

Figure 8-7: Mountain Industrial Blvd Typical Intersection



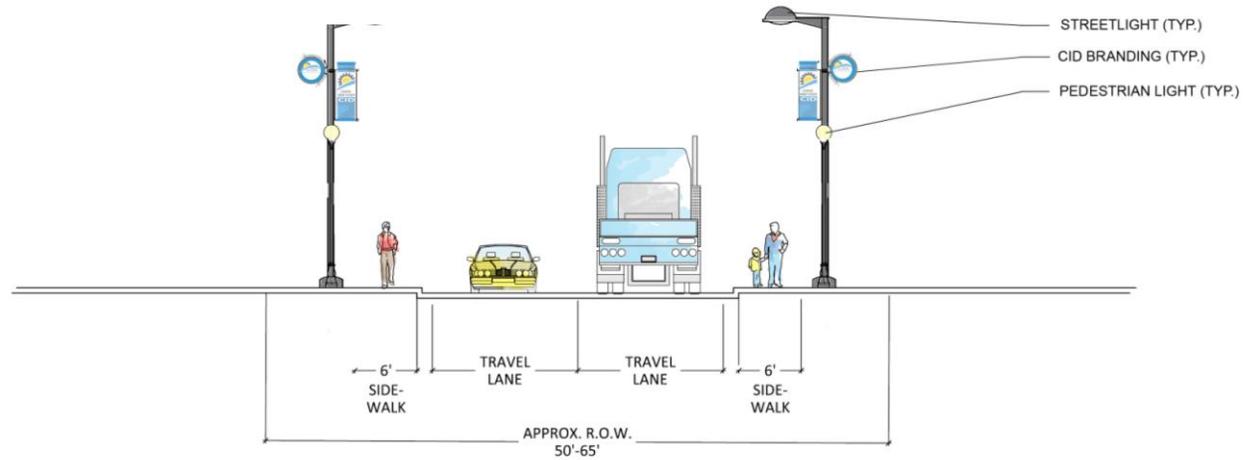
Mountain Industrial Blvd Typical Section

Figure 8-8: East Ponce Typical Section



East Ponce Typical Section

Figure 8-9: Lewis Road Typical Intersection

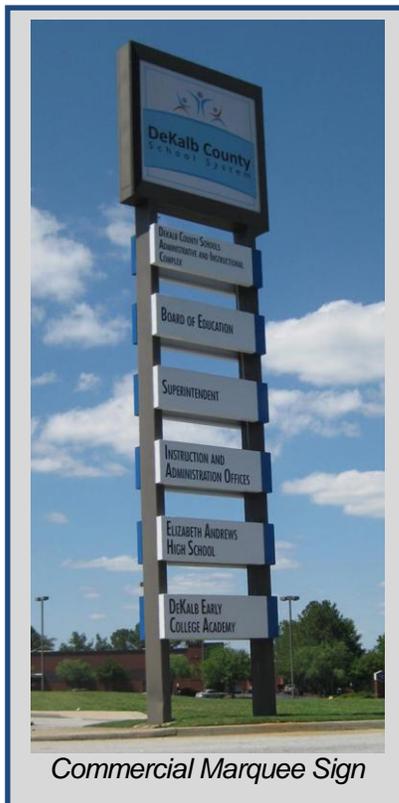


Lewis Road Typical Section

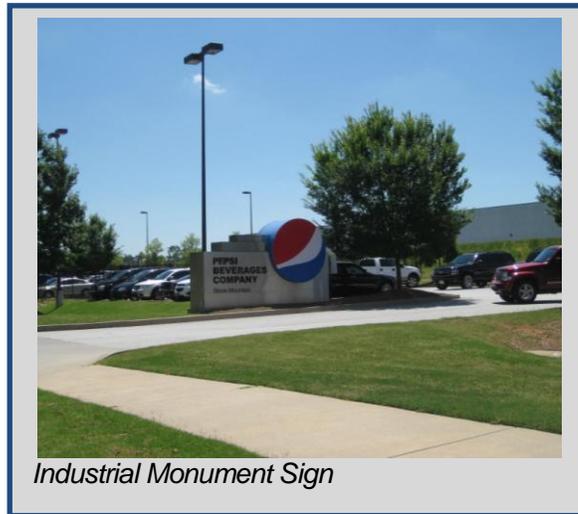
Signage

As pointed out the Baselines Assessment, sign blight is an issue for the study area, but in looking at the current DeKalb County Sign Ordinance, it is clear that the issue is more related to the lack of enforcement of the regulations, and the age of the surrounding development. The current regulations have been in effect for over a decade, but many of the poor examples of signage in the area predate that and are grandfathered, meaning that they do not have to meet the current requirements until they are replaced either due to major damage or new construction.

Even given this, however, there is room for improvement, which can be gained through design review as new construction is attracted to the area, and potentially the overlay district for the area could add sunset provisions for compliance, if the county is willing to do so. Good examples of what has been built in the area and should be replicated are illustrated below. In each of these examples, the signage is architecturally integrated with their surroundings in terms of size, shape, color, texture, and lighting. The result being that the signs do not visually compete with architecture of the building or the design of the site.



Commercial Marquee Sign



Industrial Monument Sign



Commercial Monument Sign

Architectural Guidelines

The draft Mountain Industrial Boulevard Overlay includes some design standards for architecture that should reinforce the good examples of industrial design already evident in the area, and prevent any new construction from being out of character. For example, the overlay limits building exteriors to the following materials:

- Brick or brick veneers.
- Stone or stone veneers of natural stone such as, but not limited to, granite, limestone and marble. Terra Cotta and/or cast stone, are also allowed. Painted stone is not allowed.
- Pre-cast concrete.
- Painted concrete block, which may only be used on a side or rear façade not facing a public street.
- Split-face block/concrete masonry unit.
- True and synthetic stucco.
- Metal, when used for architectural accents.



Almost all the primary industrial buildings currently in the CID follow these guidelines, (see examples below) and any inappropriate new construction, such as metal buildings will be prohibited. Depending on how the district boundaries are drawn, these guidelines would also impact commercial and residential uses in the district, which would help to create a more uniformed and aesthetically pleasing character for the area. Other draft provisions of the draft overlay that will also help improve the look of the area include no chain link fencing, outdoor storage, service areas, trash dumpsters or mechanical areas visible from the public right-of-way.



Because of the green nature of some of the key business sectors, it recommended that the CID work with private developers to encourage LEED certification and/or best practices in site design and building construction for new building construction, renovations, expansions and interior building modifications. This could be a selling point for attracting clean industries to area, and would be good public relations for the surrounding residential community.