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# Introduction and Summary

The City Of Clarkston owes much of its beginnings to the Georgia Railroad. In the 1830's, the Georgia Railroad built a rail line through what is present day Clarkston to connect the merchants of Athens with outlets in Augusta and South Carolina. Originally called "New Siding" after Jake New, a Section Foreman that worked for the Georgia Railroad, the City of Clarkston was officially chartered by Governor Alexander H. Stevens on December 12, 1882. Clarkston was named in honor of Colonel W.W. Clark, a Covington Lawyer and a Director of the Georgia Railroad.



Because the railroad made Atlanta so accessible for commuting, Clarkston became a community of homeowners who worked in Atlanta. Clarkston became one of the South's first "suburban" communities. Commuting citizens accounted for much of Clarkston's early growth.

Around the turn of the century, one colorful folktale mentions the early origination of "Goatsville" and "Angora Heights" as names bestowed on Clarkston. It was said that in the early 1900s high prestige was derived in the number of goats a person owned so many Clarkstonians owned fifteen to twenty of these prized creatures. The goats, believed to be the high quality Angoras variety, grazed open range and therefore had to be run out of the school house and other establishments for the citizens to conduct their business. Visitors soon nicknamed the city "Goatsville" which was later changed to the more prestigious "Angora Heights." Though these monikers have faded from current usage, the Clarkston High School pays homage to this history, by having adopted the Angora Goat as their school mascot.

Since this time Clarkston has experienced several major growth spurts, the first occurring between 1960 and 1970. The construction of the Stone Mtn. Freeway and I-285 Interstate made Clarkston an excellent location to live and helped the population swell from 1524 to 3127, a 105.2 percent increase. The population grew steadily throughout the 70s and 80 due mainly to construction of several large multi-family projects in the City. During the mid 1990's Clarkston and surrounding areas were designated as a federal refugee resettlement area for people fleeing various types of persecution throughout the world. This influx of immigrants helped create one of the most diverse multi-cultural cities in the Southeast and also produced one of the highest population densities in Georgia.



The City of Clarkston is centrally located in Dekalb County approximately 10 miles northeast of Atlanta and 5 miles east of Decatur and 5 miles west of Stone Mountain. Clarkston has remained a small city, encompasses approximately 700 acres or 1.1 square miles. The residents and elected officials of Clarkston have enjoyed the small town feel and have therefore chosen not to greatly expand the boundaries of the City. Today the railroad still runs through Clarkston as a steadfast reminder of the city's historic beginning.

## **Vision, Goals and Objectives**

In March 2004, Clarkston engaged the services of a planning team headed by Altamira Design and Common Sense, Inc. and comprised of Huntley Associates, Peter Drey & Company and UrbanTrans to prepare a Study of for the City of Clarkston in support of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). The LCI program was adopted in May of 1999 to provide funding for investment studies and transportation projects located in activity and town centers in the region.

The Atlanta Regional Commission's three major goals for the LCI program are:

1. Encourage a diversity of uses including mixed income residential neighborhoods, employment, shopping, and recreation choices.
2. Provide access to a range of travel modes including transit, roadways, walking and biking to enable access to all uses within the study area.
3. Develop an outreach process that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders particularly low to moderate income and minority citizens.

The LCI program requires that communities, successful in obtaining study grants, address the following 10 items in their LCI planning studies:

1. Land use mix appropriate for future growth.
2. Transportation demand reduction measures.
3. Internal mobility requirements – traffic calming, pedestrian circulation, transit circulation, bicycle and pedestrian circulation.
4. Mixed-income housing, job/housing match and social issues.
5. Continuity of local streets in study area and development of a network of minor roads.
6. Need/identification of future transit circulation system and line haul routes.
7. Connectivity of transportation system to other centers.
8. Center development organization and management, promotion and economic restructuring.
9. Stakeholder participation/support.
10. Public and private investment policy.

The Clarkston LCI Study Area encompasses all of the 1.1 sq. miles of the City of Clarkston being bound by the city limits. The City is located in Central Dekalb County, approximately ten miles northeast of Atlanta and approximately five miles north of Decatur. Surrounding the study area to the west are numerous multifamily housing units along Ponce de Leon, to the east is Interstate 285 and unincorporated Scottdale mixed with Industrial uses and some single family housing, to the south along N. Indian Creek is Perimeter College and Dekalb Tech with a concentrated level of multifamily housing.

The Vision for Clarkston began with and was largely influenced by public participation that included a series of meetings with community residents, where participants engaged in visioning exercises, public discussion and a design charette. In addition to the public input, the consulting team interviewed civic, community, business and government leaders, and completed research and analysis.

The Vision for Clarkston that ultimately emerged is one of a "village center": a destination where residents and visitors could live, work and play in a secure, attractive environment. This environment would feature open spaces for public gatherings; a mix of land uses and development; owner housing available to households across the economic scale, and all built out at a pedestrian friendly scale. Community amenities would include attractive tree-lined sidewalks and bike paths that link to the rest of the community.

## **Concept Plan: Redevelopment Summary**

In channeling public preferences that showed underlying market support into suitable locations within the study area, the study team came to focus on what it considers to be Clarkston's natural "Town Center" for private-sector redevelopment, as well as several promising locations where a desired mix of development uses could be attracted and, to some extent, controlled. Five major development initiatives are recommended, as follows:

### **1. Town Center Mixed-use Development**

The study team recommends the gradual redevelopment of the approximately eight square blocks of existing retail shops, offices and auto-related services bordered generally by E. Ponce de Leon Avenue, N. Indian Creek Drive and Montreal Road into a mixed-use "Town Center" district. The Town Center would be developed primarily around the existing retail, with the introduction of additional restaurants, specialty shops and boutiques that, hopefully, will build around the cultural and ethnic diversity that distinguishes Clarkston from most of the surrounding communities. Over time, the Town Center could hold as much as 60,000 square feet of retail – primarily restaurants and other food offerings, as well as specialty merchandise – and services, as well as 40 residential units (primarily townhouse and "live/work" lofts above retail).

### **2. The E. Ponce de Leon-Church Street Corridor**

E. Ponce de Leon Avenue offers great potential as a strong, defining visual entry into not only Clarkston generally, but the proposed Town Center in particular. When coupled with Church Street, the "E. Ponce de Leon-Church Street Corridor" can transform a current "negative" – the rail line – into a visual "positive" that enhances rather than diminishes Clarkston's identity as a distinct community. The study team recommends that a coordinated package of development and design incentives and zoning controls for commercial uses along the Corridor, as well as extensive streetscape and landscape improvements be used to transform this Corridor from an unattractive, disruptive traffic pass-through into an appealing centerpiece of community definition, continuity and atmosphere.

### **3. Multi-family Residential Community Development**

The study team has identified several areas of Clarkston that currently contain somewhat-incompatible mixtures of residential, institutional, retail, services and storage facilities that could, in the near future, become desirable, attractive communities with landscaped visual buffers that would also serve as borders between different uses, compatible design themes, and densities appropriate to the surrounding communities and roadway network. The study team recommends that the City adopt a set of policies – zoning controls combined with incentives – that would facilitate the redevelopment of these areas through the next 5-10 years into communities that address the anticipated changes in Clarkston's resident profile.

### **4. Single-family Residential Development**

The study team recognizes what it considers to be a growing threat to Clarkston's primarily single-family, detached housing communities – one of its key strengths. Projected increases in land values and housing prices will produce tremendous pressure to redevelop significant portions of established single-family housing neighborhoods as multi-family complexes. Even as owned units, these multi-family developments could threaten the character of the overall neighborhood, as well as adjacent communities. The study team recommends a set of density-based zoning controls and incentives that will prevent an inappropriate escalation of housing densities in such established single-family communities.

### **5. Streetscape and Landscape Improvements**

The study team recommends the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive program of streetscape and landscape improvements, including a significant extension of the existing PATH trail system, throughout key areas of Clarkston. A public participation process should be used during the master planning phase to develop a unifying theme for all proposed streetscape, gateway and intersection improvements.

## **Implementation Summary**

Fully utilizing its existing municipal powers, current and future staff and resources, as well as resources of Dekalb County, the City should explore all available economic incentives – including zoning (use and density) incentives, direct grants and loans, tax and impact fee abatements and deferrals, bond financing, land write-downs and infrastructural support – that can be used to facilitate recommended projects within the study area. In particular, it is strongly recommended that the City actively pursue the creation of a mixed-use “Overlay District” encompassing the proposed “Town Center District” of Clarkston, as well as a program of combined zoning-based controls and incentives that will encourage desirable residential redevelopment of major potential development sites within the city. Major funding sources include the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Livable Centers Initiative Implementation Grants, the PATH Foundation, Dekalb County’s Community Development Block Grant and Greenspace programs, the County’s bond authorities, and potential Tax Allocation District bond financing.

# Public Participation

## Outreach

At the beginning of the project, a Core Team Committee was assembled by local government officials to assist with the planning effort. The Core Team Committee contributed to the inventory efforts, assisted in identifying issues, anticipated challenges and potential solutions.

Beyond the Core Team Committee, the Consulting Team sought the participation of a wide range of local stakeholders, including neighborhood representatives, property owners, business leaders, local developers and a cross-section of residents. Announcements about meetings and project status were reported via email, brochures and flyers, open house, community groups, and an interactive website.

## Public Meetings

Six public meetings and a one day Design Charette were held at various locations within the Study Area to enable the Consulting Team to extract, refine, and assemble the public's ideas for the future of the study area.

The public kick-off meeting took place on May 8, 2004 to bring public support and participation for the Clarkston LCI. The following meeting held on June 16<sup>th</sup> was used by the Consulting Team to present an overview of the study area, an explanation of what the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) planning study is and objectives and methodology for the project. Participants were then engaged in an exercise to begin to articulate their vision, goals and objectives. This process helped to report, record and synthesize the opinions and attitudes of resident participants.

From this visioning process, residents expressed the opportunities and constraints they saw within the community:

### Opportunities

- Downtown (Great Gathering Space)
- Some housing improvements beginning to take place (Renovations-Wyncrest & Peachtree Trace)
- Nature Preserve at Forty Oaks and Friendship Forest seen as a major community asset
- Stone Mtn. to Atlanta PATH Trail
- Diversity (Cultures, Markets)
- Access to I-285
- Strong Sense of Place/Identity
- Ample Marta Bus Stations

### Constraints

- Excessive amount of Rental Units and Condition
- Railroad Tracks
- Montreal/N. Indian Creek Rd. Intersection
- Diversity (Cultural Barriers)
- Downtown (Lacks Marketing & Aesthetic Appeal)
- Roadways (inadequate sidewalks/streetscaping)
- Lack of City Guidelines & Ordinances
- Old unused Telephone Poles (Lighting) particularly along Railroad ROW
- Community Volunteers
- Excessive Car related businesses in Village Core (i.e. Autoshops, Salvage, Used Car Dealerships)

The third meeting was held on July 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss existing conditions and analysis of the city. Several exercises were conducted during the meeting to further develop an understanding of what the envisioned from the city. A visioning exercise was conducted to gather feedback from the community of housing and retail preferences, likes and dislikes, and transportation destinations within the city.

### Overall Community Preferences

- Streets not on Grid System like neighboring cities

## LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE STUDY

*Clarkston, Georgia*

### Please Plan to Attend!!

*Help make a difference in your Community*

Wednesday July 28, 2004 6:30pm

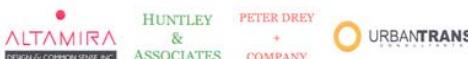
Location: Clarkston Woman's Club

Clarkston, Georgia

The City of Clarkston is conducting an Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative Study. This Study will impact future Land Use Development, Transportation Improvements, and Commercial Development for your City. Your input is important to the future of Clarkston.

Please Attend!!

For more information please visit our website at [www.clarkstonlci.com](http://www.clarkstonlci.com)  
Or contact Chris Abernathy at 404.688.4454 ext. 23 or email:  
[chris@altamiradesign.com](mailto:chris@altamiradesign.com)



- Additional Bus Shelters
- Diversity
- Clarkston should have a sense of place with its own unique identity and gateways
- New Retail coming into City
- Open/Greenspace
- Sidewalks
- Historic Homes
- Bike Trails
- Access to Higher Education
- Significant Government Buildings

#### Overall Community Dislikes

- Busy intersections: Northern Ave. Church Street, Pope Ave. and Mell Street
- Aesthetic Value (too many trashy car dealerships and garages)
- Traffic Speeds
- Density levels due to Multi-family developments
- CSX Railroad Crossings and lack of pedestrian crossings
- Sidewalks
- Connectivity/access to I-285
- Intersection @Indian/Ponce/Church
- Present Village Center
- Existing Parking behind City Hall
- Salvage Yards
- Smaller older disjointed apartment complexes
- Adult Entertainment Store
- Lack of Lighting on Sidewalks



## The Design Charette

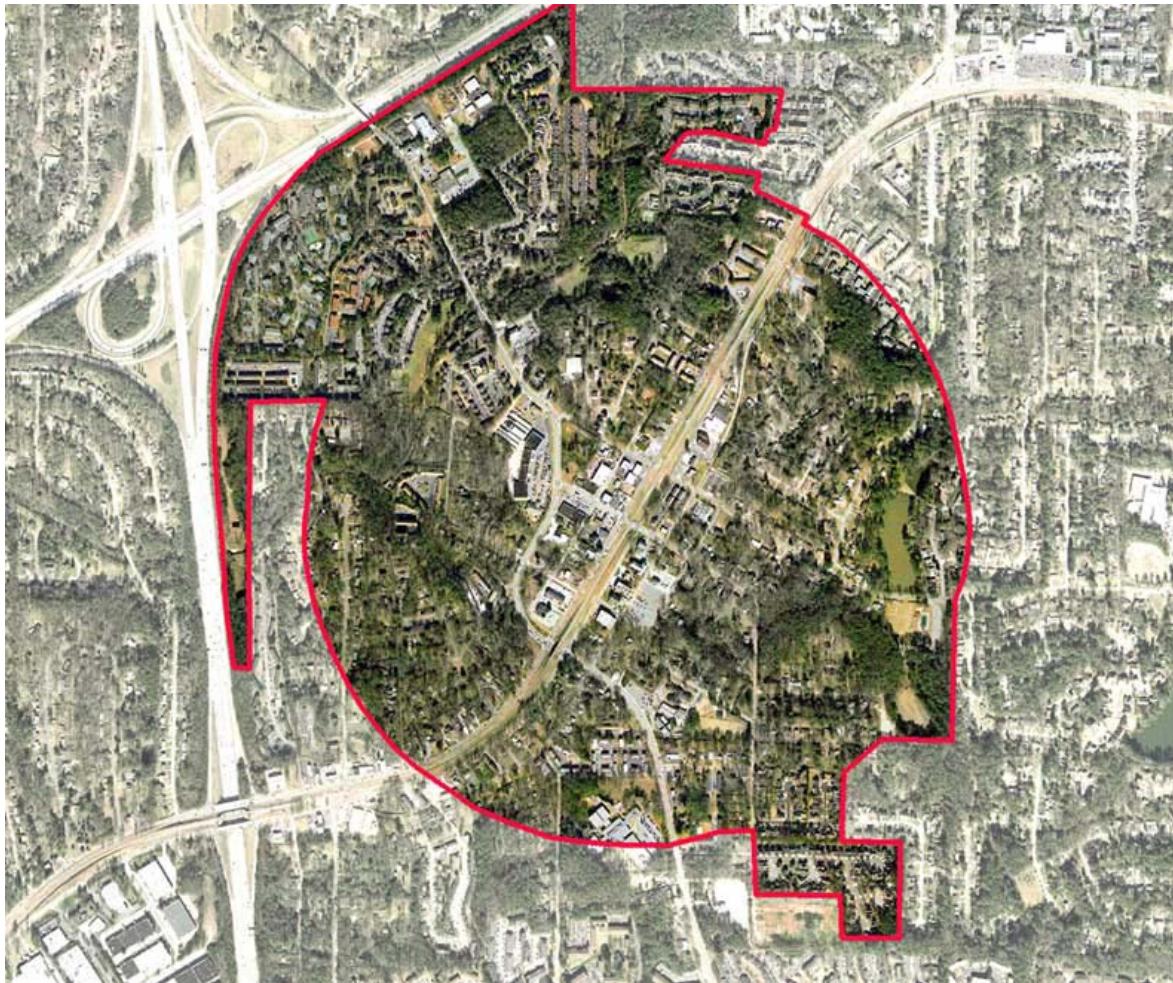
*From a creative standpoint a design charette is an intense effort to solve any architectural problem within a limited time. The term Charette initially appeared in the early part of the late 1800's. Architecture students in Paris who needed to rush their drawings to the Ecole Des Beaux-Arts placed them on a cart which was called a charette. Later the word broadened its meaning and came to describe any intense, short term student design project. Today the word is used by the Architectural community at large to describe any intense, on the spot effort.*

After the earlier meetings that were held discussing existing conditions, stakeholder interviews, and the preliminary analysis a design charette for the Clarkston community was held on Saturday September 18, 2004 at First Baptist Church in Clarkston. This workshop was held in order to provide a hands on opportunity for the participants to develop a community driven vision for the Study Area.

The charette started with a brief overview of the team's initial findings and the market analysis for the area to further assist in directing the participants with their planning. Two teams were organized to develop redevelopment plans for the City. One Group concentrated on the City as a whole while the second group focused in more detail on the Village Center Area along Market Street, East Ponce De Leon and N. Indian Creek. Working with a series of scaled maps of the Study Area, the groups proceeded to organize the future vision of their community. The resulting community designs identified areas needing improvement, preservation of stable communities, areas appropriate for redevelopment, and the types of land uses appropriate for these areas .

This Town Center Area was defined by the participants as an area bounded by E. Ponce De Leon, N. Indian Creek, and Montreal Roads. The group envisioned this area as mixed use with small retail shops on the bottom and office and/or residences on the upper floors. The area would have a gathering space such as a public square or small park with streetscaping throughout the area and along Ponce De Leon. Improvements at the Intersections of Market Street, East Ponce de Leon and Church Streets to facilitate connections with neighborhoods east of the CSX Railroad were seen as crucial to creating a pedestrian friendly Village Center.

Following the charette the team took the drawings and conclusions from the participants and further refined these ideas into a comprehensive plan reflecting the citizen, business owners, and city input that had been discussed. These ideas were presented in the next and fifth public meeting on October 13<sup>th</sup> at the Woman's Club in Clarkston. The purpose of this meeting was to present preliminary recommendations based on the previous community input, analysis by the consultants, and ideas generated from the charette. Comments from the community were recorded and used to help further refine the vision for the final public meeting on November 10, 2004. The final plan provided an overview of the key development, redevelopment, and transportation projects required to actualize the vision for the future of the City. The general feeling of the community for the Vision created by the LCI Planning process was both positive and energetic inspiring the participants.



**Clarkston LCI Study Area**

## EXISTING CONDITIONS AND MARKET ASSESSMENT

### Key Findings within the Study Area

During the last decade in particular, two major factors have influenced – and will continue to influence over the next decade – the character and identity of Clarkston. First, the city has served as a federally designated transition center for international refugees, particularly though not exclusively from East Africa and Southeast Asia. Secondly, Clarkston is quickly being swept up in the accelerating urbanization of Metro Atlanta – a powerful market force driven by the region's continuing growth in jobs and population, as well as a renewed desire among both "Boomers" (now older and more affluent, and increasingly with childless households) and "Echo Boomers" (their children, now forming households of their own, often with two incomes and an increasing proportion of childless families – and at least a delay in having children).

These current and pending changes in Clarkston's resident profile present the city with a number of opportunities to capitalize on both the diversity and the growing affluence of its increasingly urbanized population. These changes, coupled with the sheer strength of the market forces that drive both residential and commercial development in the region, also pose certain threats to Clarkston as a community. A key objective of this study is to identify not only those opportunities and threats, but those community strengths upon which a positive response by the City can be based, as well as those weaknesses that must be addressed as a critical part of that response.

## **Strengths**

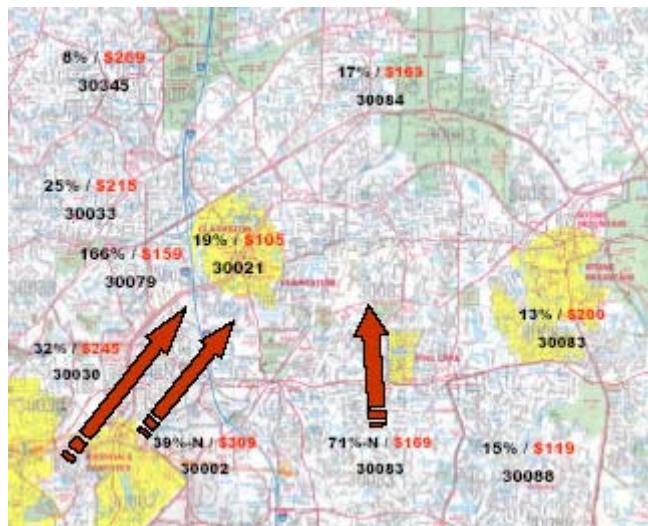
Clarkston exhibits a number of strengths upon which it can build. At this point in its history, those strengths are related primarily to its position within the fundamental changes that the metro Atlanta area has been undergoing since the 1960's: regional dominance as a diversified employment center, which has driven population growth; national and, increasingly, international importance as a transportation hub; physical growth unfettered by natural boundaries or, until recently, resources; and a growing cultural and ethnic diversity in its population, particularly with respect to Hispanic and Asian residents. Both as an individual town that has been geographically incorporated into the urbanized metro-Atlanta region and as a part of that larger whole, Clarkston can capitalize on certain strengths that may allow it to shape its own future rather than be overrun by uncontrolled market forces. Those key strengths include the following:

- **Location and Access**

Clarkston's main strength is its excellent location. It has exceptional access to I-285, the Stone Mountain Freeway (State Highway 78) and Scott Boulevard/Ponce de Leon Avenue, which gives it convenient access to the major North Central/Perimeter, Northeast/Northlake, Buckhead and Downtown/Midtown employment centers. In the next several years, as first-time homebuyers seek both affordability and urban convenience (relative to jobs and amenities), Clarkston's location will significantly increase its attractiveness to a growing market of "Echo Boomers." Eventually, as suitable condominium properties and centrally-located amenities become available, the Echo Boomers' parents – the "Baby Boomers," now both older and richer – will find Clarkston increasingly attractive as they become Empty Nesters.

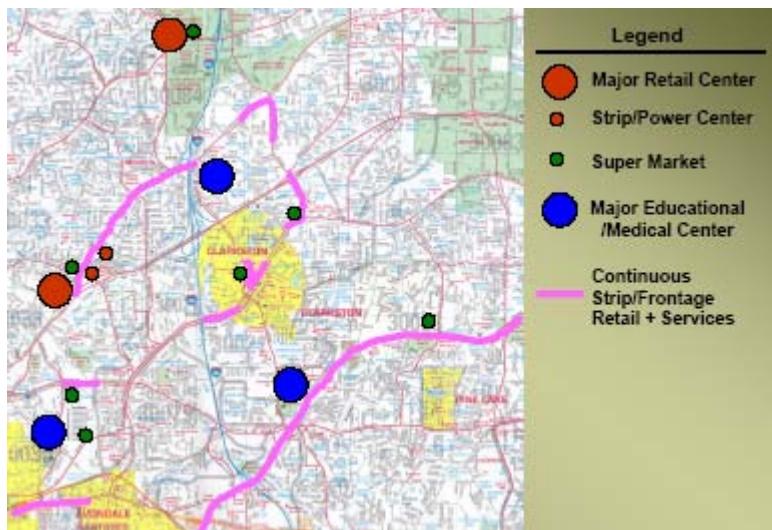
- **Housing Appreciation**

New residential growth to the south of the study area has been significant, as has the increase in household affluence and disposable income. Over the past three years, single-family housing prices have increased 32% (a current average sale price of \$245,000) in Decatur and 39% (a current average sale price of \$309,000) in Avondale Estates. As even Decatur's lower-priced communities and almost all of Avondale Estates become priced out of the reach of start-up households, Clarkston becomes more attractive as a close-in but affordable option for the new wave of urban-oriented first-time purchasers. Strong appreciation in housing prices (71% increase in new home sale prices since 2001, up to an average of \$169,000) is apparent in the area south of Rockbridge Road to Redan Road – possibly another indication of a wave of first-time purchasers seeking affordable housing options.



- **Retail and Services**

Clarkston's excellent location and access, as mentioned above, applies also to its proximity to major retail and services (banking, medical, legal, repair). While the retail and services within Clarkston itself are limited in terms of offerings and price range, being directed primarily toward mid-to-low-income renters and those seeking auto repair services, a broad range of retail and services are within a relatively convenient distance from most sections of Clarkston. Major full-line supermarkets (Publix) are located on Memorial Drive at Rays Road and Shamrock Plaza (N. Druid Hills at Lawrenceville Highway), as well as North Decatur Road one-half mile west of E. Ponce de Leon (Kroger). Moreover, one of Atlanta's best-known grocery destinations – the Dekalb Farmers Market – is only a short drive down E. Ponce de Leon toward Decatur. The Northlake Mall area, with several power centers in addition to the mall itself, offer full-service supermarkets (Publix and Kroger) as well as a wide variety of "big-box" and other national chain retailers.



Decatur itself, five miles from Clarkston, has become a major Atlanta restaurant destination, with a wide variety of moderately priced chains (Mick's, Appleby's) and an eclectic mix of higher-priced cafes and bistros. Avondale Estates has begun to focus on developing a "destination urban restaurant" node. Major chain fast food and other retailers and services can be found along the "sprawl mall" strip retail lining Memorial Drive only a few minutes drive from Clarkston.

- **Diversity**

In a relatively short period of time, Clarkston's resident population has become possibly the most diverse in Georgia, with a significant influx of different ethnic groups and cultures over the past ten years. This diversity is one of the city's major strengths, in that it introduces a unique mixture of foods and goods, as well as faiths, customs and dress that cannot be easily duplicated in any other part of the Metro Atlanta region. This diversity creates the foundation for a distinct identity for Clarkston and an appeal to persons throughout the region seeking a rich multicultural community to visit or in which to live.

- **Quality of Life**

While Clarkston has undergone a recent wave of change as the combined result of international emigration and growing urbanization, it maintains an appealing quality of life. The maintenance of single-family neighborhoods, several parks and nature areas, as well as access to decent public schools, retail, services and health facilities combine to create what most would consider a good overall quality of life. While exceedingly dense in terms of population on its north/northwest side, Clarkston retains a relaxed small town pace and feel.

## **Weaknesses**

Its strengths notwithstanding, Clarkston does exhibit several weaknesses that need to be addressed. The key weaknesses include the following:

- **Railroad**

While considered a “fact of life” in Clarkston, the rail line bisecting Clarkston along E. Ponce de Leon Avenue and Church Street does present a set of problems common to many towns and cities not only in Georgia, but throughout the country. Rail lines often present a physical barrier between communities. Achieving multi-use trail connections across the lines will be a difficult challenge. If the line is active, as is the line going through Clarkston, they can be loud on a frequent basis, particularly if there are crossings (as in Clarkston) that require the sounding of the train whistle (actually a loud horn). Lastly, the partially elevated tracks and their extensive rights-of-way on both sides are simply not attractive. Running parallel to E. Ponce de Leon and Church Street, the rail lines present a visual definition of Clarkston – or perhaps worse, prevent an awareness that one is entering Clarkston – to anyone traveling that corridor into and through the center of town.

- **Density & Age: Older Multifamily**

The existence of multi-family properties in Clarkston is not, in and of itself, a glaring weakness. As markets strengthen and property values rise, property owners – especially new owners seeking property within rising markets – usually will respond with upgrades of existing facilities. In Clarkston, at least two older multi-family complexes that were formerly rental apartments either have undergone or are presently undergoing transitions to ownership (condominium) properties.

Another response to rising markets is the purchase of older multi-family complexes, which usually have much higher densities than newer condo or apartment complexes, for replacement with lower-density, higher-priced multi-family properties – usually condominiums – or, at the least, a replacement of housing units with amenities (clubhouse, swimming pool, tennis courts, added landscaping) required by a rising market’s pool of consumers/purchasers. Thus, the current high density in Clarkston may be a lesser long-term weakness than the actual age of most multi-family properties in the city. That age – generally 25-40 years – may make either conversion to ownership or upgrade through extensive renovation (and reduction of density) difficult, as the basic systems, size and layout of the facilities simply may be obsolete.

- **Lack of Development Sites**

While the study team has identified several redevelopment sites within the city, there are no undeveloped sites available for new development for either desired retail or residential.

- **Lack of Open Space**

For a town its size, Clarkston actually does have several open spaces – parks and nature areas. Forty Oaks Nature Preserve located in the eastern edge of the City is a great amenity for the residents but is heavily forested and fails to provide enough area for assembly or other sizable community uses. This designation as a Nature Preserve restricts its civic use. Another similar community asset is the Friendship Forest Bird Sanctuary on the northern edge of Clarkston. Even though enough open space is available for community gathering the designation as a bird sanctuary makes it unsuitable for this purpose. Milam Park, while attractive and heavily used as a recreation site, is limited in size and capacity, and its location makes it a poor candidate as an amenity for all Clarkston residents. There are no centrally located public gathering parks or plazas.

- **Lack of “Center”**

As with its lack of a central public gathering space as mentioned above, and perhaps related to it, Clarkston lacks a perceived “center” that is apparent and identifiable to passers-through or recognized and adopted as a town center by all of its residents.

- **Aesthetics**

Clarkston has no apparent zoning or design standards. Development has been allowed to proceed in any manner desired by the property owner and/or tenant. This is common of most smaller cities and towns in Georgia. A reticence to impose governmental authority in any form on private property is not only ingrained in the culture, but is built into the State constitution. When combined with the impact of the active rail line and railroad right-of-way, however, the result of any form of civic standards regarding facility design or property landscaping can be what one finds in Clarkston today: a number of extremely attractive individual residential communities and some attractive landscaping along major public roads, but overall an unattractive entryway (E. Ponce de Leon) and natural town center (Market and Montreal to N. Indian Creek) that establish either a negative image of Clarkston or, almost as damaging, no image at all.

## Opportunities

Clarkston's strengths, combined with the potential to address its weaknesses, offer a number of related opportunities that public policies can not merely participate in, but shape, including the following:

- **Attractive, Affordable Housing**

Clarkston offers a good mix of housing types and wide range of affordability, including both new housing product and older single-family product suitable for upgrade. The appeal of the single-family residential neighborhoods in the "southern" half of Clarkston is apparent in the appreciating value found in those communities. The high-density "northside" of Clarkston provides a variety of housing types and prices, including affordable condominium units, affordable and lower-income rental units, and higher-end rent units within a gated community. Even the Wyncrest Apartments, which some considered a short time ago to be among the worst residential units in the city, have undergone an extensive renovation that will provide affordable transitional and work force housing for the indefinite future.

Two potential assemblages present opportunities for Clarkston to attract desirable new townhouse development within its city limits. The first is immediately south of the Stone Mountain Freeway just inside Clarkston's city limits on Montreal Road. Currently a collection of institutional and service facilities, the multiple-parcel site is directly in the path of market forces that have generated a dense multi-family complex immediately north of Highway 78. While the overall site currently has several valuable uses within it, including a Dekalb Tech facility, the continuing increase in market values in that area present a development threat (as described in "Threats" below) that the City, with the proper incentive package, can turn into a positive development opportunity. Also, the area immediately south of Peachtree Creek on the east side of Montreal Road, with limited existing commercial, residential and institutional development, offers a potential assemblage and development opportunity that the City, with proper planning and incentives, can shape into a long-term urban oriented residential development that complements the proposed Town Center District.

- **Influx of Income, Urban Lifestyles**

The increasing affluence that Clarkston can expect to experience over the next ten years offers a host of opportunities, particularly in non-essential goods and services that thrive on increases in disposable income. This growth in incomes and "urban households" (dual incomes, non-traditional households/families, fewer or no children) provides the foundation of market support for a several essential "livable community" concepts: geographic/physical linkages within a community, transit-oriented but internally pedestrian systems of movement, mixed uses, unique retail built into the existing community fabric, and food-and-entertainment clusters ("Town Center" or "Village Retail") appealing to both locals and surrounding markets.

- **Medical and Educational Complexes**

The proximity of both a regional medical complex (Northlake Medical Center) and a two-campus post-secondary institution complex (Georgia Perimeter College and Dekalb Technical College) offers major generators of residential and retail consumer traffic for Clarkston. Georgia Perimeter College is completing

a long-term campus master plan calling for on- and near-campus student housing. It has expressed its keen interest in physically linking with Clarkston via an enhanced multi-use trail system and would likely be open to transit connections along N. Indian Creek Drive, particularly if a Clarkston “Town Center” offered a source of student, faculty and staff housing as well as a desirable alternative to the retail sprawl of Memorial Drive.

The Northlake Medical Center has already enhanced the housing market – including assisted living – in its immediate vicinity. Hospital staff provide a viable market for Clarkston-area housing of all price ranges, as well as retail patrons. Patients undergoing long-term treatment and their relatives also offer a secondary market for extended-stay and assisted living facilities and retail customers. Hospital-related medical offices and ancillary services are another potential source of office tenants/owners in and around Clarkston’s Town Center.

- **Aesthetics: Negative to Positive**

Perhaps the biggest short-term opportunity that presents itself to Clarkston is the opportunity to improve its visual appeal – its attractiveness – with a relatively inexpensive program of landscaping and streetscape improvements, particularly along E. Ponce de Leon Avenue. The approval of CSX Railroad to allow plantings along the rail lines within the railroad right-of-way may be difficult to obtain, as railroads are notoriously conservative in granting any access to right-of-way property for any purpose, even one that could not possibly impact the operation or safety of the railroad. The visual impact of landscaping – particularly blooming flowers – along the rail line from I-285 to the northern limits of Clarkston would have an immediate, positive impact on the perception of (1) entering Clarkston and (2) the image of Clarkston as an attractive, colorful town. A strong negative perception could rather quickly become a strong positive perception.

- **Railroad: Negative to Positive**

Turning the railroad – specifically the active rail line – from a negative to a positive will require both the visual improvements along the rail line and within the right-of-way on both sides of the tracks (as described immediately above), as well as the safe crossing of the tracks with multi-use trails. If both can be achieved, the rail line turns from an unattractive, disruptive element dividing Clarkston to a unifying ribbon of color that helps define Clarkston and its commercial and civic center.

- **Potential Town Center**

The natural growth of Clarkston has established the framework for a true center of the town at Market Street from E. Ponce de Leon to N. Indian Creek. Physically, this represents the geographic center of Clarkston. The existing retail shops and services represent the basis for a unified, complementary collection of restaurant and specialty goods. Vaughan Street presents the opportunity to expand the Town Center off of Market, thereby increasing significantly not only the amount of potential retail space within the Town Center, but also the potential for mixed-use development that incorporates office space and residential units.

- **“Urban Village” Retail**

While the Market Street area offers potential as Clarkston’s Town Center, the market forces that are generating appreciation in housing values, attracting higher two-income households and greater disposable income, and accelerating the urbanization of consumer preferences are creating a market for “urban village” retail. Urban village retail emphasizes non-chain restaurants and eclectic, limited-menu cafes and bistros as well as specialty food, along with specialty retail, boutique apparel and accessories, antiques and household-related retail. This type of retail is a perfect fit with the physical layout, design and ambiance of a mixed-use town center. Moreover, this type of retail, particularly when concentrated in an identifiable Town Center location, has great appeal to consumer markets outside Clarkston’s immediate trade area. It has the potential to become a retail-and-restaurant destination, similar (though on a smaller scale) to Decatur and the Virginia-Highland neighborhood.

## **Threats**

The same strong market forces that offer Clarkston unparalleled opportunities could, if left unchecked, could overwhelm it. Several of the major threats to the current quality of life in Clarkston – in fact, to its very identity as a distinctive place within metro Atlanta – include the following:

- **Unchecked Urbanization, Uncontrolled Development**

The results of unchecked, uncontrolled urbanized development can be seen throughout Clarkston today, as well as along Memorial Drive and the Lawrenceville Highway, among others. Cluttered signage, deteriorating store facades, haphazard roadside parking and frontage “seas of concrete” without landscaping are the rule rather than the exception in urban sprawl development. Market forces that cause land values to outpace existing market demand, pressuring developers to (1) seek – and often demand through litigation – higher densities than a community can reasonably sustain and (2) cut “non-essential luxuries” such as landscaping, visual buffers, sidewalks and pedestrian pathways, adequate on-site parking (preferably hidden), compatible design themes, attractive signage and lighting, and other elements that define sustainable “new urbanism” development.



- **Assemblages and Higher Density Development**

In an appreciating market with rising land values, developers may find it easier and more profitable to pursue an assemblage strategy: purchasing several lower-priced single-family homes and lots to redevelop as higher-density multi-family properties.

Clarkston’s increasing value as a site for high-density residential development is already recognized by the development community. Examples include new multi-family condominium developments just outside the city limits to the northwest on Montreal Road just over Highway 78 and to the northeast along E. Ponce de Leon Avenue. The opportunities for the City’s shaping desirable multi-family townhouse condominium development in two potential assemblages on Montreal Road just south of the Stone Mountain Freeway and Peachtree Creek, as well as the Mell Avenue-Jolly Avenue neighborhood and proposed Town Center District itself could, without City initiatives regarding zoning and incentives, turn into development threats.



- **No Design Control**

As mentioned above, incompatible design is currently the norm in Clarkston and most surrounding retail nodes, particularly along major arterial roads. Design quality is, of course, open to debate. As with art, however, one generally knows when quality is missing. The study team has not only assessed Clarkston’s current visual environment, but more importantly, has listened to Clarkston residents themselves during

public meetings. The consensus is that the city, particularly along E. Ponce de Leon and within the proposed Town Center District, could benefit significantly from the introduction of design suggestions, guidelines and general standards, as well as the means to implement them in new and existing developments alike. Without such design initiatives, new development will only add to the current lack of visual appeal and identity in Clarkston.



- **Competitive Retail Clusters**

Clarkston is not the only Northeast Atlanta community recognizing the growing strength and opportunities of the residential and commercial markets. Decatur, while a mature location, is maximizing its market appeal with higher-density mixed-use development consisting primarily of mid-rise (4-5 levels) condominium development above street-level urban retail and services. Avondale Estates recently completed its own Downtown Master Plan that calls for highly urbanized mixed-use redevelopment that will include not only a concentration of restaurants and specialty retail, but live/work lofts, urban-scale townhouses and distinctive open-space design. It clearly intends to capitalize on the appeal and “spill-over” market of Decatur, which itself captured the next wave of market appeal of the Virginia-Highland and Little Five Points neighborhood commercial districts.

While Clarkston stands in the path of the “Echo Boomer” urbanization market, it could easily lose its potential market not only to Avondale Estates (which is well on its way to being a combination resident-and-destination urban retail/mixed-use center), but to potential competitive centers such as Scottdale, Stone Mountain and other area towns and “development nodes” that are currently unknown and/or unrecognized. The market is large and growing, but it is entirely capable of bypassing some locations.

- **Cultural & Ethnic Divisions**

One of Clarkston’s greatest strengths, and perhaps its most distinctive characteristic – its cultural and ethnic diversity – could easily become one of the greatest threats to its success as a sustainable “livable center.” Diversity is still viewed in many, if not most, communities as a problem to be overcome rather than as a strength to be embraced and built upon. As an international refugee transition center for the past decade, Clarkston perhaps faces a tougher challenge than most communities that have undergone more gradual ethnic transition. While the community appears to have come together around its diversity, the next several years could see tensions arise over perceived differences between long-time residents and first- or second-generation residents.

- **Loss of Identity**

The accelerating urbanization of metro Atlanta outside of I-285 could overwhelm unprepared communities, particularly those within distinct, clearly defined identities. At the moment, Clarkston exhibits certain strengths as described above that may protect it from the “homogenization” that urban sprawl can create – a sameness in look, feel and attractions that tends to diminish a town’s or community’s sense of uniqueness and place. Over the next few years, Clarkston may succumb to the downside of unchecked urbanization and development: a loss of identity. In most cases, a city, town or community needs to take aggressive action to protect itself from such this “flip side” of appreciating value and market strength.

## Demographic Findings

### Population & Household Growth

An assessment of population and household characteristics reveals the current profile of residents as well as emerging trends. Population is always dynamic, whether increasing or declining, and is subject to such factors as availability and affordability of housing, accessibility to employment, services and other quality of life features, or simply personal preferences relative to nearby alternatives.

The 2000 Census and updates since then indicate that Clarkston, although one of the smallest communities in Dekalb County, is also one of the most ethnically diverse. At 2000, the Clarkston population was 7,230, living in an area of about one square mile. In the prior decade, Clarkston's population increased by more than one-third, from just under 5,400 persons. Clarkston's density contributes to its modest population growth, estimated to be less than 2% since 2000, and for its projected growth over the next five years of less than 1% annually.

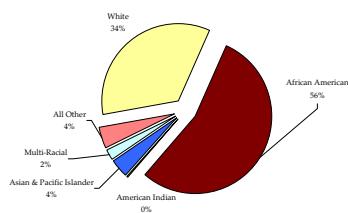
Clarkston accounts for approximately 1% of the Dekalb County population and households. Dekalb County, one of the largest in the Atlanta region and the state, experienced a 22% increase in population between 1990 and 2000. Currently, the County's population is approaching 682,000 in 254,000 households. Between 1990 and 2000, the county increased by more than 4,000 households each year, a pace that has slowed some since 2000 to around 1,000 new households each year. By comparison, Clarkston has fewer than 2,500 households, with negligible growth projected over the decade.

### Racial Composition

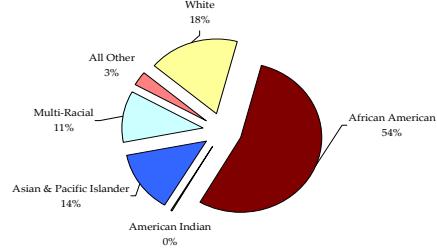
For more than a decade, Clarkston has been a designated refugee relocation center. Thousands of international citizens, from a dozen countries in eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, have received support services and relocation assistance from agencies located within the community. Many of these refugees have settled in Clarkston; consequently, the community's ethnic mix is among the most diverse in Georgia. Less than one in five Clarkston residents is white. The largest constituency is African American, with 54% of the population. More than 13% identify as Asian (largely Vietnamese and Asian Indian) and another 6% are Hispanic.

Dekalb County is similarly racially diverse: nearly 55% of residents are African American. White and Asian residents account for 38% of the population and Hispanics, which can be of any race, are about 10% of the total. In the past decade, much of the County's population growth has occurred in predominantly black South Dekalb, where there is the greatest concentration of undeveloped land. In central and north Dekalb, most areas are built out and new development occurs through assemblage of multiple parcels – often developed decades earlier as large lot subdivisions.

Dekalb County Racial Mix



City of Clarkston Racial Mix



## Household Composition

Household characteristics for Clarkston reflect the community's appeal to families and successful integration of immigrant families into the community. The average household size in Clarkston is approaching 3 persons, compared to 2.6 persons at the county level. Average household size is expected to increase over the next few years, with population growth apparent in household size but not in the number of new households formed.

Clarkston maintains both larger and younger households than the rest of the County. The average age in Clarkston is 30 years, significantly lower than the 34.6 average for Dekalb County. Thirty percent of Clarkston residents are youth under age 18; only 4% are over age 65. In Dekalb County, 25% are under age 18 and the population over 65 is 8% of the total.

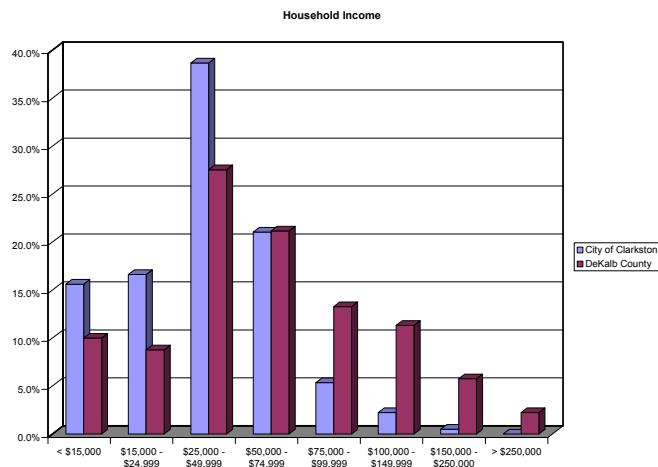
One and two person households, which may include young singles and couples first forming a household, or empty nesters that no longer need a home to accommodate a growing family, account for 50% of Clarkston households and nearly 60% of Dekalb County households. These are the households that heavily influence housing markets and preferences: new households are often first time buyers and price sensitive; older homeowners often have equity and some price flexibility, but seek low maintenance, convenience and the option of aging in place.

Large households (five or more persons) are almost 20% of the Clarkston population, but only 12% of the County population. Larger households usually reflect households with adults and children under age 18. These households support demand for larger, older and often more affordable housing as well as a variety of community services. These larger households also represent future demand for housing, as the needs of adult children and aging parents change.

## Household Income

Household income is one among several key measures of a community's wealth. Clarkston incomes, along with a disproportionate volume of rental housing and moderate housing values, suggest a community of modest means. That Clarkston has remained affordable despite increasing development activity and price appreciation in nearby communities is reflective of the community's stability. It also suggests the community's potential, as market forces converge to take advantage of modest home prices and the community's excellent central Dekalb location.

Currently, the median household income in Clarkston is about \$37,000, compared to more than \$54,000 for the County. Nearly 20% of Dekalb County households report incomes above \$100,000; fewer than 3% of Clarkston residents attain that level. A majority of Clarkston residents, 70%, have incomes below \$50,000. For the County, about 46% have incomes below \$50,000. More than 20% of Clarkston households live below the poverty level; only about 8% of County residents meet that threshold.



## **Market Study**

### **Location**

Clarkston remains one of an increasingly rare breed: the close-in community that, despite the push of urbanization, retains its small town scale and feel. Almost every destination in Clarkston is accessible by foot; and it is not uncommon to see pedestrians and bicyclists moving easily throughout the community. Housing is clustered in traditional single family neighborhoods, where older homes sit on wide lots, and in higher density multifamily communities located along several major roadways. Services, retailing and institutional uses such as churches, schools and the library, are comfortably interspersed among residential areas.

The city is well-situated to attract and serve as a home base for commuters who work across the metro area. Convenient to I-285, Lawrenceville Highway and the Stone Mountain Freeway, and serviced by MARTA, Clarkston enjoys a strategic location that will likely influence future growth. North and east of Clarkston are centers of office/retail (Northlake) and industrial and business services activity (Mountain Industrial corridor). Surrounding the community are a number of amenities, including several college campuses, retailing in both strip centers and major malls, health care and recreation.

The potential for transformation in Clarkston is largely a measure of the potential for redevelopment – the adaptation or reuse of existing sites for more market-driven uses. The community is largely built out, which means that any development will occur through assemblage and reuse – possibly including rezoning – of existing properties. Much of the existing inventory, residential and commercial, is more than 40 years old. Along Ponce de Leon, a number of businesses operate from converted houses, suggesting that some transition in land use has already occurred. While this type of redevelopment is most likely to occur along major corridors, redevelopment of single family detached residential neighborhoods to higher density, conversion of multifamily rental to ownership, and upgraded commercial corridors are all foreseeable changes. And these changes may be driven heavily by market forces, with little need or influence from the city of Clarkston.

### **Residential Trends**

New residential growth that in recent years has transformed Decatur and Avondale Estates, as well as neighborhoods to the south of Clarkston, but has not yet reached Clarkston. The demand for intown and close-in living, that began in Midtown and Virginia Highlands, has spread east and west, generating demand and the ensuing price escalation in communities such as Avondale Estates and Decatur. In addition to pressure from intown householders seeking more affordable housing, commuters from outside the perimeter began to seek alternatives to shorten their commute. Avondale Estates and similarly located areas became a viable alternative.

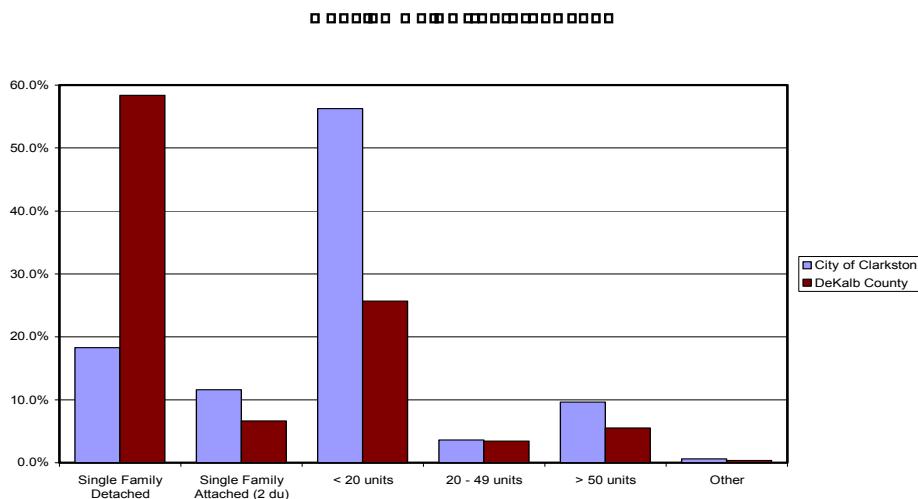
The lack of inventory, limited new development, and modest housing turnover has limited Clarkston's participation in this current surge in housing demand. Trends in housing development and sales in nearby communities suggest a demand for both single family detached and attached housing (condominiums or townhomes). However, in Clarkston there is almost no inventory. Single family detached homes are a small portion of total inventory. Less than 20% of homes are single family detached; of the 2,500 housing units in Clarkston, only about one-fourth are owner-occupied.

## Housing Types

Clarkston's housing development boom ended more than 15 years ago. Over half the existing housing stock was built in the 1970s and 1980s: large brick ranch homes on wide lots; two story传统s and split levels. Less than 5% of existing homes were built since 1990. By contrast, more than 20% of Dekalb County's housing was erected since 1990.

The current housing mix in Clarkston consists of a disproportionate volume of multifamily housing. According to census and survey data, there are over 1,500 rental units in the city; additionally, an estimated 300 families rent single family homes.

More recent additions to the housing stock include several cluster home communities in the southeast quadrant and new townhome development on the eastern perimeter of Clarkston.



## Housing Tenure and Value

75% of Clarkston residents are renters, living primarily in small, older multifamily properties. Most of this inventory was built in the 1960s – 70s, and consists of clusters of garden apartments. Rents are low, frequently below \$.75/sf, about 30% - 40% below market rates in the Decatur-Avondale corridor. Multifamily housing is largely found in the northern part of the City and along major corridors including Indian Creek Drive and Ponce de Leon.

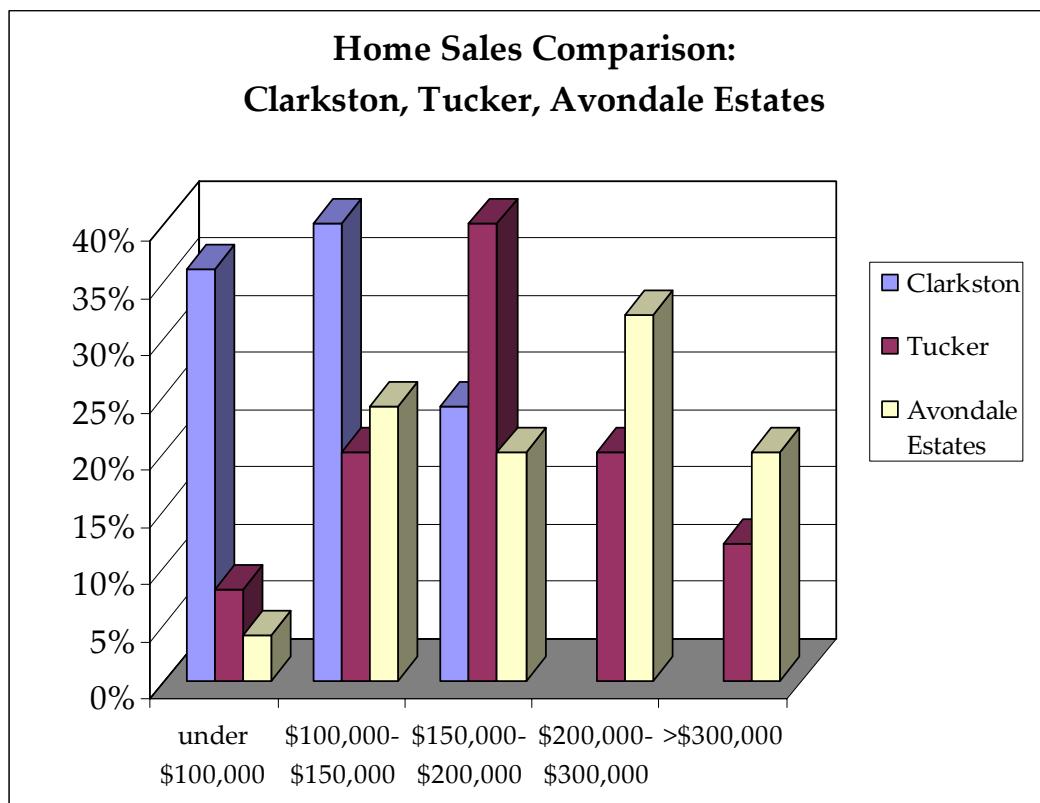
Only one in four households owns their home in Clarkston, compared to almost 60% in Dekalb County. In suburban counties, such as Cobb, home ownership approaches 70%. Homeowners in traditional neighborhoods are found mostly south of the railroad. These stable neighborhoods are also home to schools, parks and other community amenities.

The average home value in Clarkston was \$119,000, and more than 80% of the home inventory is valued below \$150,000. For the county, census estimated average home value of \$163,000. Only about 40% of homes are valued below \$150,000, with about 15% valued at more than \$300,000.

## New Construction & Sales

Like much of Dekalb County, new construction activity in Clarkston is limited, more dense and higher priced than existing home inventory. In the past few years, new residential development has occurred only on the periphery and in attached home communities. Priced at a premium above existing homes, new homes in the Clarkston area are still more affordable – by as much as half – than new condominium or townhomes in Avondale Estates or downtown Decatur.

A comparison of recent home sales data for 2003 reveals that all home sales (new and resale) in Clarkston were below \$200,000. In Tucker, a community just east of Clarkston, one-third of home sales were priced about \$200,000, while in Avondale Estates, to the west, fully half of all home sales were priced about \$200,000.



## Clarkston LCI Transportation Existing Conditions

The following provides an overview and understanding of how the Clarkston transportation system is functioning today, in order to make viable recommendations for the future. The project team gathered information from a variety of sources including interviews, community meetings, internet research and site visits.

### Transportation History

A major factor in Clarkston's early development was the railroad, which was opened in the early 1830's by the Georgia Railroad.<sup>1</sup> The line connected Atlanta to South Carolina, via Athens and Augusta. Passenger trains carried Clarkston's residents to their downtown Atlanta jobs, encouraging early suburban type development.

Today the railroad still runs through Clarkston, operating approximately 30 freight trains a day and is a dominant transportation feature in the community. The train no longer stops in Clarkston, but the railroad shapes traffic patterns, land use decisions and community interaction, as it divides the city into two distinct neighborhoods. Citizens see the railroad as both a positive tie to the past and as a modern day noise nuisance and community barrier.



### Transportation System Overview

#### Roadway Corridors

The main corridor through Clarkston is East Ponce De Leon Avenue, an east-west two-lane roadway with substandard sidewalks on the north side. East Ponce parallels the railroad tracks and is flat, with steep banks on the railroad side. Commuters use the corridor as a throughway connecting Stone Mountain to I-285. Because Clarkston lacks regional destinations, this road functions to serve pass-through traffic, not destination oriented traffic.

Widening this roadway would result in additional traffic passing through Clarkston, threatening Clarkston's sense of community and limited historic resources. Instead, there is a significant opportunity to upgrade the roadway with streetscaping, pedestrian crossings, transit enhancements and retail, restaurant and professional development that provides both pass through commuters and residents encouragement to slow down and stop. The adjacent railroad presents existing greenspace and the possibility for a bicycle and pedestrian trail. The railroad operations and right-of-way also limits the ability to add a great deal of capacity to the roadway.

North Indian Creek/Montreal Avenue offers a north-south route through the city, connecting to Georgia Perimeter College and Dekalb Technical College. Except for a very short section of Montreal Avenue, north of the City, the roadway is two lanes, with substandard sidewalks. This route has a grade separated railroad crossing. The North Indian Creek/Montreal Avenue corridor generally functions well for vehicles, with the exception of the intersections at the grade separation. Improved traffic signal timing and minor system improvements at North Indian Creek and East Ponce and Church Street will enhance traffic flow at this location. Pedestrian and transit enhancements are needed on both sides of the roadway.

Two additional roadways of note are Church Street, providing east west access on the south side of the railroad tracks and Market Street, which includes an at-grade railroad crossing and access to Milam Community Park. Opportunity exists with both of these routes to improve pedestrian connections and enhance Clarkston's image with streetscaping and quality development adjacent to the roadway.

<sup>1</sup> [www.cityofclarkston.com](http://www.cityofclarkston.com)

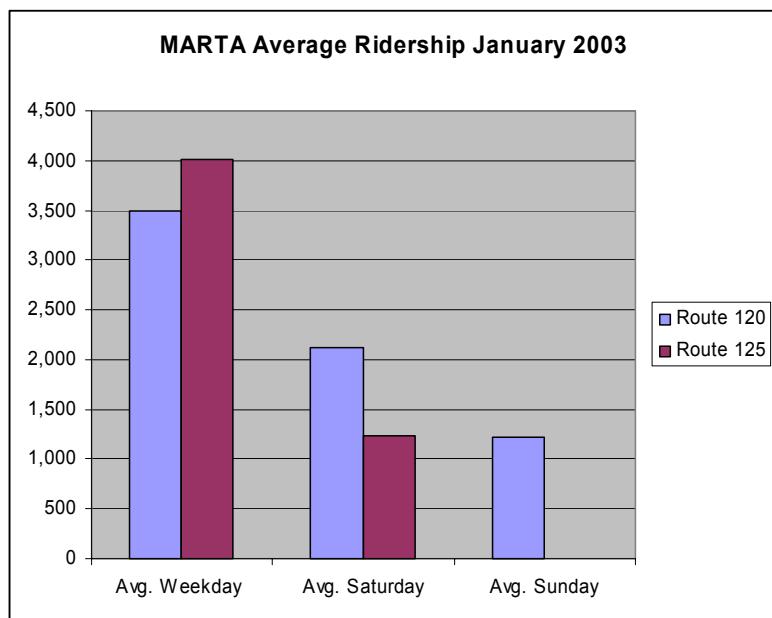
The city has a very limited grid local street network and numerous substandard roadways serving low-density residential areas. As redevelopment occurs, developers and the city must bring the roadways up to current standards, including the development of a residential sidewalk network.

## Transit

The city has two MARTA routes serving the Clarkston's commercial, governmental and residential areas (see Figure 1):

- Route 125: Northlake Mall to Avondale MARTA station via Montreal Road and Indian Creek.
- Route 120: Stone Mountain Village to Avondale MARTA station via East Ponce de Leon.

Both routes travel to the Avondale MARTA rail station, primarily with peak periods headways of 15-20 minutes suggesting that the majority of the travel is commute oriented. The following graph shows the latest ridership numbers that have been gathered for Routes 125 and 120.



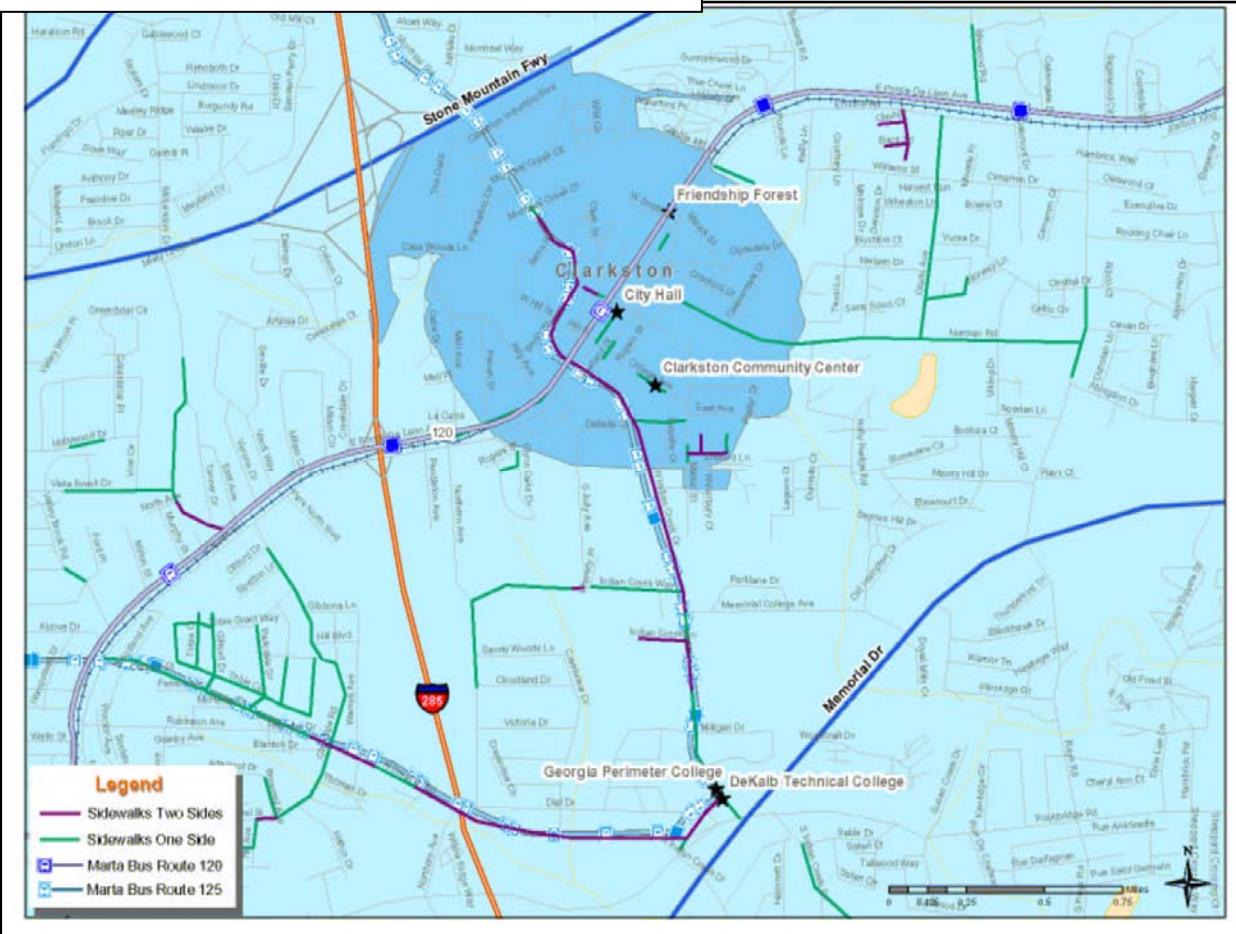
more with the development of individual properties, rather than a cohesive plan for pedestrian movement. In most cases, sidewalks are only located on one side of the street, with typical widths of approximately 4 to 5 feet. The condition of sidewalks varied greatly. Many existing sidewalk routes within the downtown area do not provide connectivity. Figure 1 displays existing sidewalks in the Clarkston and surrounding areas.

Transit users rely on connections with other modes, including walking, to make their trips. If these connections are inconvenient or uncomfortable, then transit use may be discouraged. There is currently poor access to transit within Clarkston via a connected sidewalk and pathway system. Transit amenities are also limited at several bus stops, including a lack of seating, signage, bicycle parking and bus schedules. An opportunity exists to integrate transit and transit support measures into the Study Area's development recommendations.

## Sidewalk and Bicycle Inventory

The project team reviewed all roadways within the city for the presence of sidewalks. Generally, the presence of sidewalks appeared to be associated

**Figure 1: Existing Sidewalk and Transit Facilities**



The Stone Mountain Trail also passes through the city roughly following the railroad tracks adjacent to Church Ave. The path provides bicycle and pedestrian connections from Georgia Tech to Stone Mountain. There are no other formal bicycle facilities in the city or surrounding area.

Primary biking and walking destinations, as identified by the community include:

- Market Street/Milam Park
- Thrifttown shopping center
- Georgia Perimeter College, Clarkston Campus
- DeKalb Technical College
- Friendship Forest
- Clarkston Community Center



## Commute Characteristics Overview

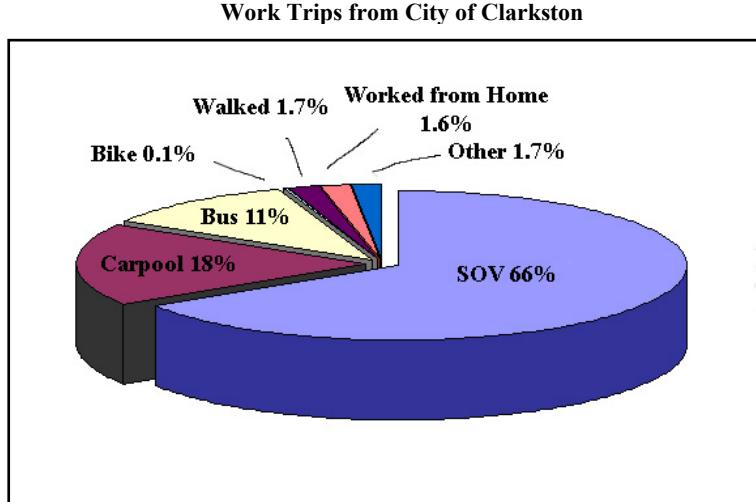
Since most transportation demand occurs during peak travel hours it is important to review what types of modes of transportation Clarkston residents are using to get to work and where they are going.

Forty four percent of commuters use alternative modes of transportation, a high number when compared to Dekalb County and the region. Transit trips are 3 percent of regional commute trips, 8.4 percent of Dekalb County trips and 11% of Clarkston trips. Carpool is 9.8 percent of regional trips, 10.6 percent of Dekalb County trips and 18 percent of Clarkston trips.

The number of alternative mode users may be correlated to the refugee population. This population may be dependent on shared rides and transit to get to work.

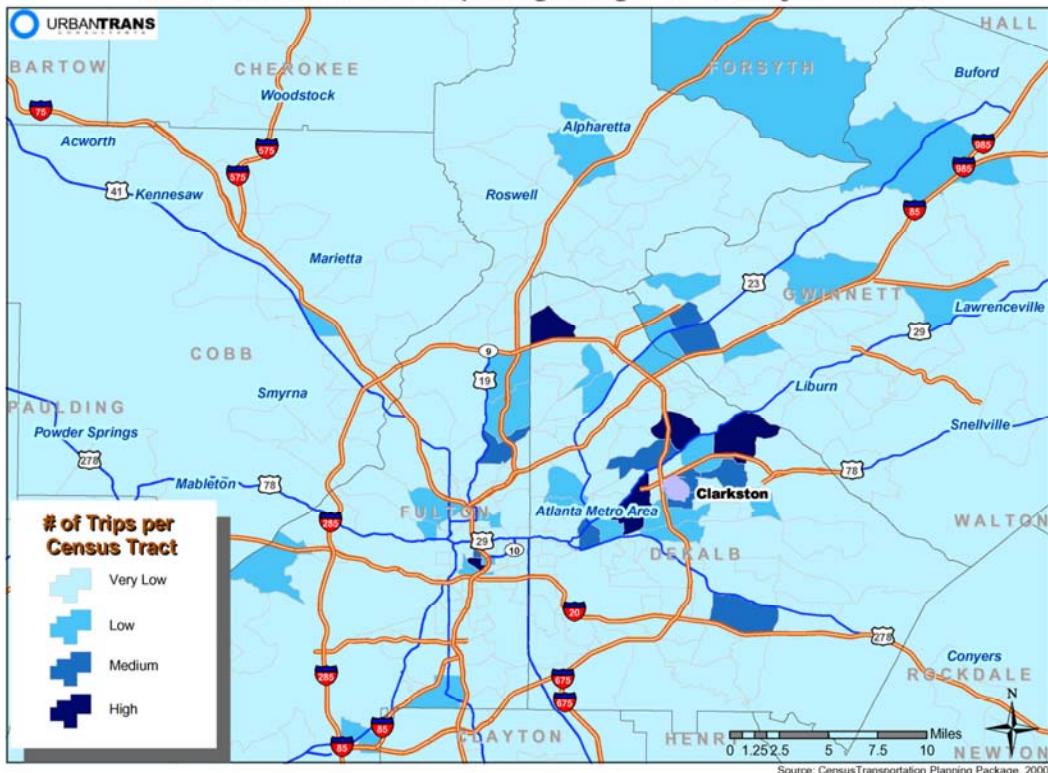
To maintain and facilitate increased use of alternative modes, the study team analyzed Clarkston resident's employment designations.

The following Figure 2 displays all work trips. The remaining figures focus on each specific mode of transportation: carpool, transit, bike, walk and work from home trips.

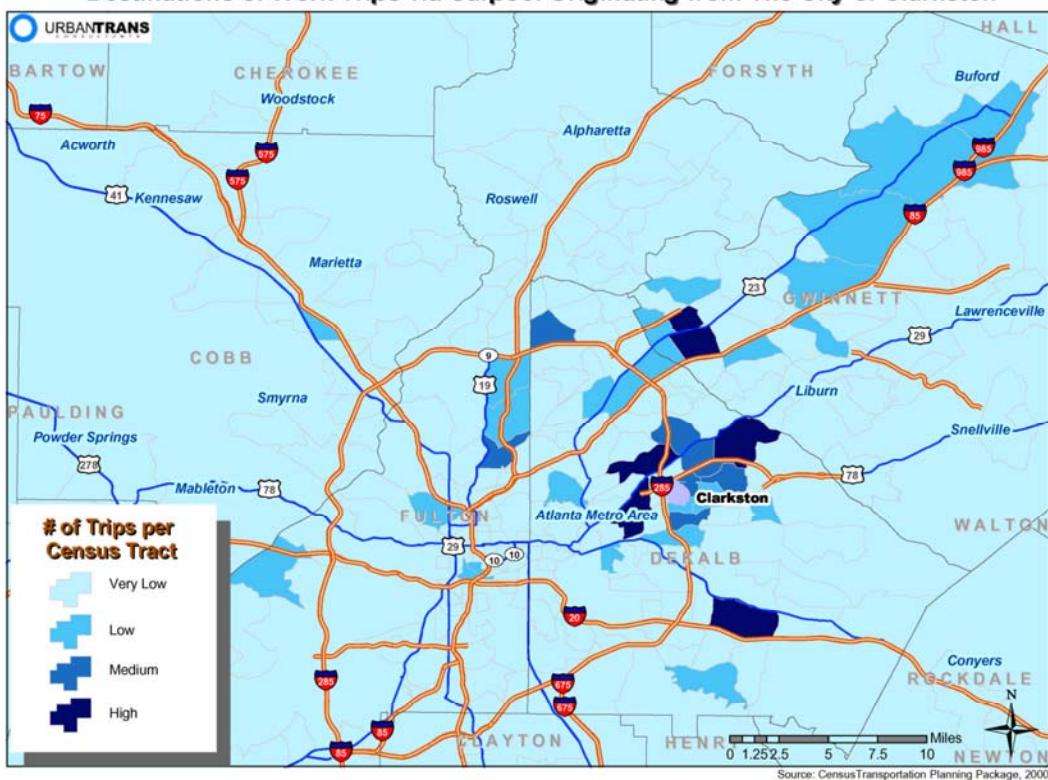


Source: Census for Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) Journey to Work, 2000

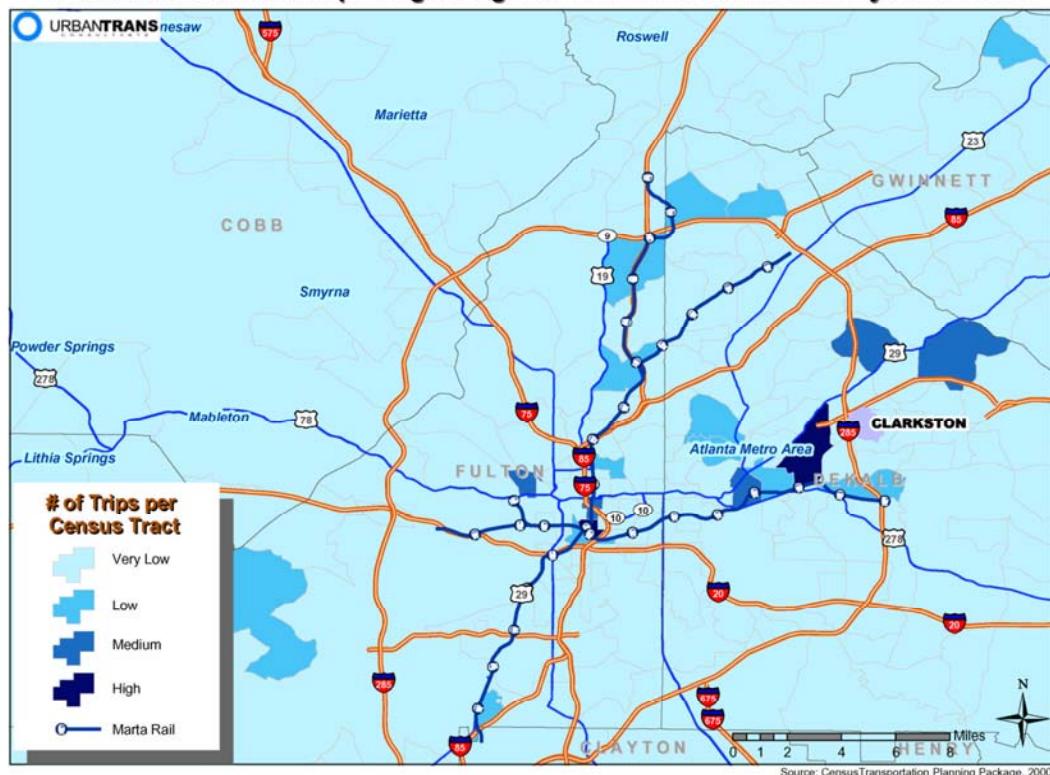
### Destinations of All Work Trips Originating from The City of Clarkston



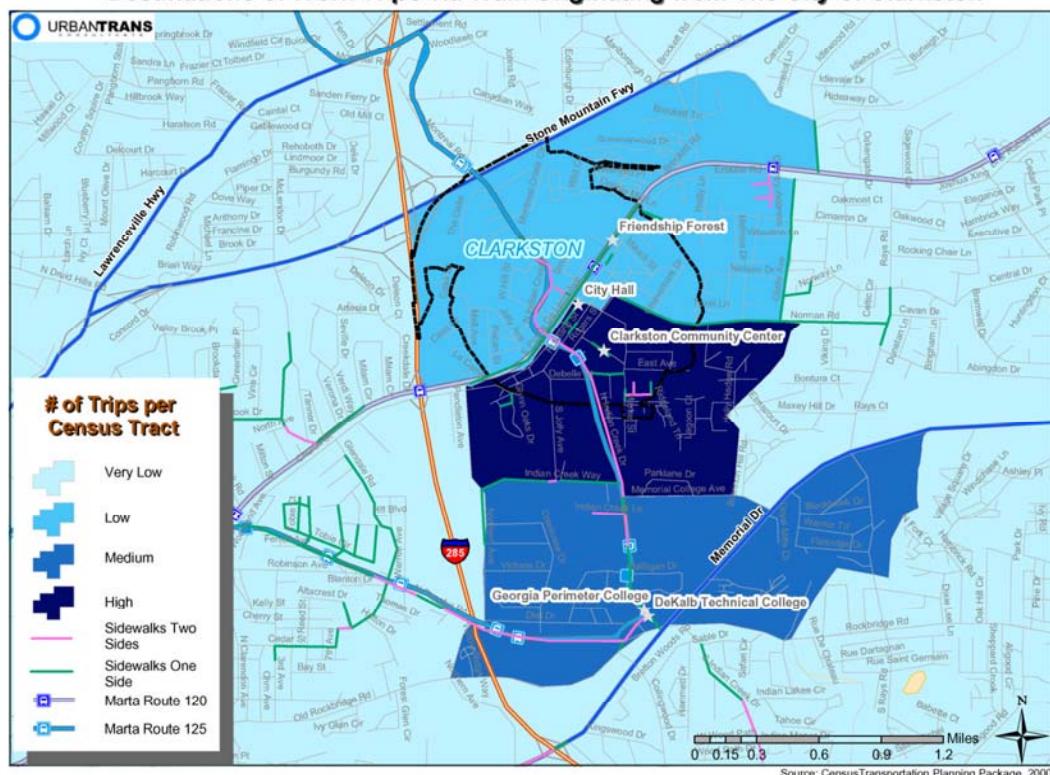
### Destinations of Work Trips via Carpool Originating from The City of Clarkston



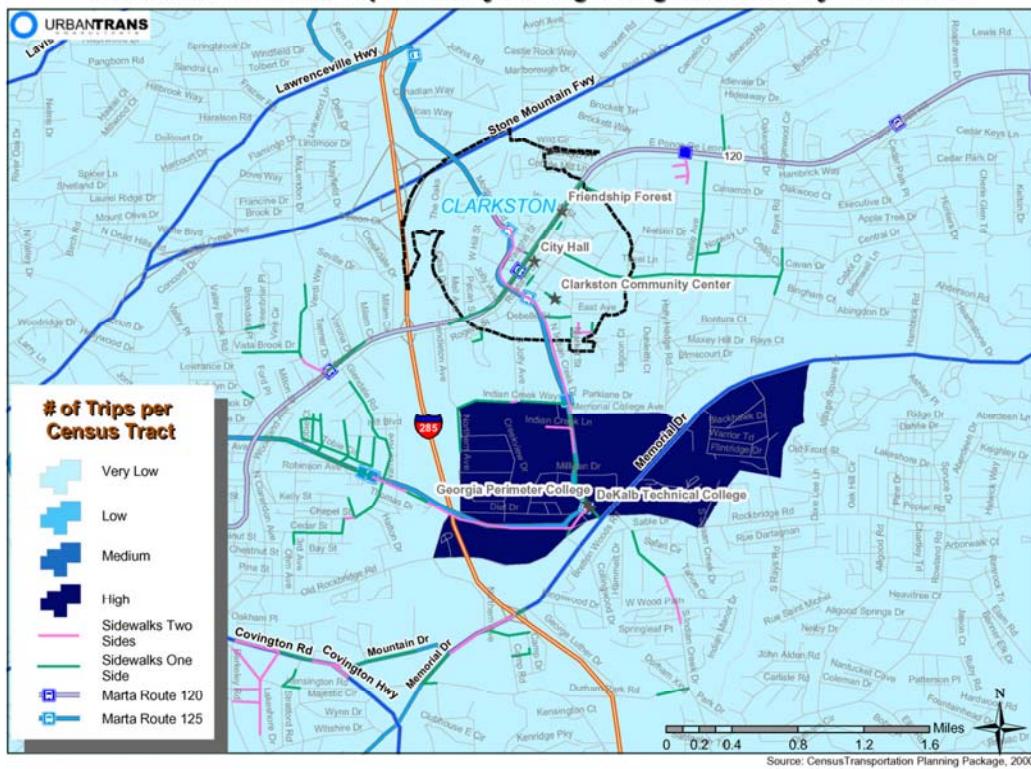
### Destinations of Work Trips Originating via Public Transit from The City of Clarkston



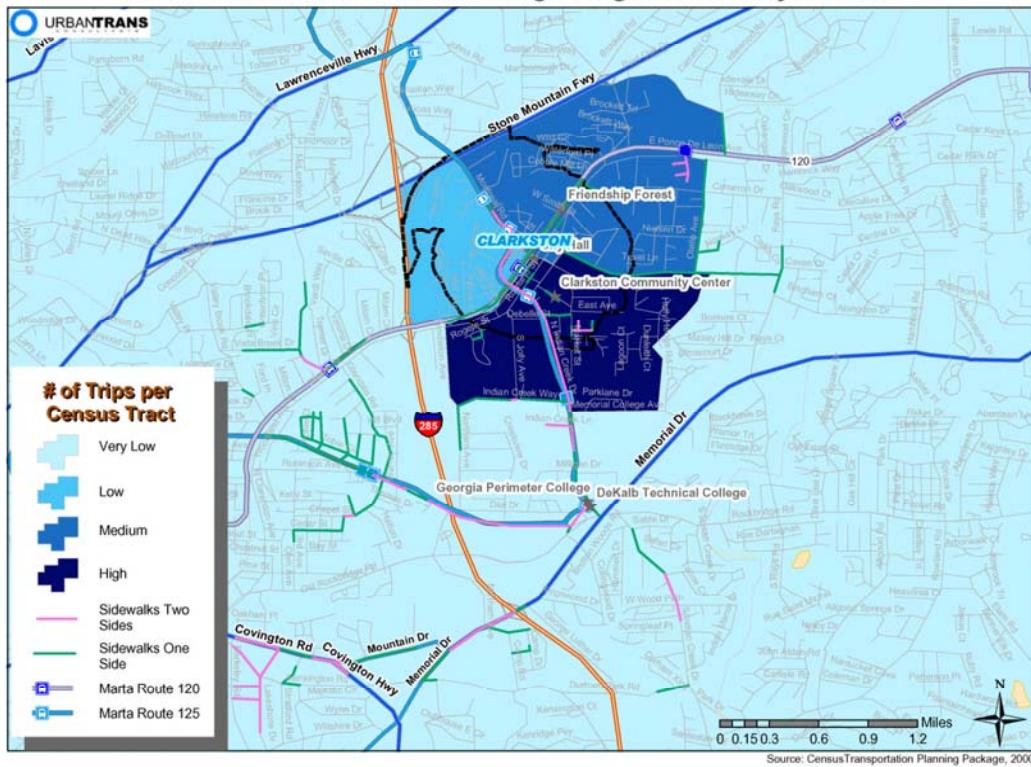
### Destinations of Work Trips via Walk Originating from The City of Clarkston



### Destinations of Work Trips via Bicycle Originating from The City of Clarkston



### Work Locations of Teleworkers Originating from The City of Clarkston



The majority of all Clarkston's resident's trips are relatively short and remain within Dekalb County. Short trips are well served by transit, as is confirmed by the transit destinations, primarily in Dekalb County industrial parks. Because 11 percent of Clarkston's population use transit, and destinations are nearby, the City has an opportunity to improve service through pedestrian connections, shelters, working with MARTA and Dekalb County on service improvements and widely distributing information to citizens on how to ride MARTA and the bus schedules.

Additional activity centers that Clarkston residents are traveling to include:

- Perimeter
- Norcross
- Stone Mountain
- I-20/Covington
- Decatur
- Downtown Atlanta

These destinations provide additional opportunity to promote carpooling and vanpooling. The City can work with local Transportation Management Associations in Perimeter and downtown to discuss vanpool arrangements. Many TMA's offer flat rate fares or deeply discounted fares. By assisting with the home end connection, the City can foster vanpool formation. The City can also promote ridesharing and encourage citizens to register in the regional rideshare database: I-87-RIDEFIND.

The colleges (Georgia Perimeter and Dekalb Technical), south of Clarkston are attracting the most bicycle trips. To increase usage to both biking and walking the City must work with Dekalb County on creating a bicycle system both within the city and connecting to nearby destinations, such as the campuses.

## **Dekalb County Transportation Plan**

The Dekalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) is currently under development and will include countywide transportation projects over the next thirty years. The County is focusing their transportation funding on projects that link residential areas to schools, MARTA stations and transit. An opportunity exists to integrate Clarkston's LCI recommendations into the county's plan, scheduled for completion in December 2005. Projects will include traffic signal timing, pedestrian, transit and railroad crossing improvements.

## Concept Plan

In shaping the Concept Plan for the Clarkston Study Area, the study team has been careful to draw upon the key findings of the overall LCI Study Process:

- (1) The “Community Vision” that unfolded throughout the Public Participation Process, which encompassed four public meetings and one half-day Design Charette, as well as numerous informal one-on-one discussions and interviews with Study Area residents, property owners, business operators, real estate developers, financial lenders and prospective investors, as well as elected officials and administrators of not only Clarkston, but Dekalb County;
- (2) A Market Assessment that looked not only at census-based numbers and consumer spending profiles, but also at the real developments – residential and commercial – and market successes in and around Clarkston in recent years, as well as the locations, stores, shopping centers, and residential products that have not succeeded by any reasonable definition;
- (3) A critique of the Study area’s current and potential “livability” in terms of its internal sense of interconnection and community, of the physical context that offers both constraint and promise, and of compatibility – or lack thereof – among various current and possible future land uses that can advance the basic LCI principals and goals; and
- (4) A critical examination of redevelopment and community-building preferences expressed in the community “vision” and its component parts in light of market forces, site availability, financial resources, community resources, and political commitment and will.

Driven by the public preferences that focused on improving retail offerings (unique, not “big-box”), increasing dining and entertainment opportunities, encouraging an affordable range of ownership housings of various types, connecting the community through pathways and open spaces, and enhancing the sense of history and place that is Clarkston, the Study Team has prepared a Concept Plan that it believes will prove to be a useful guide to providing a solid “livable center” foundation over the next few years that will foster and sustain such continued development and quality over the next 25 years and more.

In facilitating new urban development in the study area, Clarkston will be geographically balancing its primary development nodes, thus strengthening this market’s total competitive ability and allowing it to compete aggressively for new development opportunities that might otherwise locate outside of the city or Dekalb County.

The basic goals of the Concept Plan are as follows:

- To provide desirable, affordable residential product types to the growing non-traditional markets that have been identified in the Market Assessment as being attracted to Clarkston and Clarkston-type urban locations: smaller households, fewer children, generally younger but a growing number of older “empty nesters,” more affluent, and with an ownership preference.
- To provide retail, dining, entertainment and other commercial offerings within Clarkston – preferably within the proposed Town Center in order to create a critical mass sufficient to attract a destination retail market.
- To maximize land use though the development of mixed-use communities that allow live-shop – and possibly live-work – convenience to residents.
- To encourage development that will protect and enhance existing Study area neighborhoods while connecting them to the civic and commercial center of “Downtown Clarkston.”

- To enhance connectivity within and among Clarkston communities through the design, introduction, extension and general improvement of walking, running, biking and multi-use trails and paths; sidewalks; connecting open spaces and pocket parks; and local streets.
- To improve the community function, efficiency and aesthetic appeal of arterial roadways that border and/or divide the study area.

The City and its residents, of course, are fully aware of the economic impact of such a development program, among them the following:

- Increased employment opportunities for Clarkston residents;
- An increased tax base with which to fund basic City, County and School District services;
- A healthier balance between rental and ownership residential properties;
- Better access to and egress from the interior Clarkston communities without additional arterial intrusion or increased collector programs through neighborhoods; and
- A higher profile throughout Metro Atlanta and new-arrivals markets seeking unique, convenient, safe, community-oriented housing locations.

The Concept Plan will provide the City of Clarkston with an effective tool for achieving both a full realization of its commercial and residential development potential, as well as a better geographical balance in the development it attracts.

With specific respect to the goals of the LCI Study, the Concept Plan is designed to achieve the fundamental goals of LCI initiatives, as follows:

- Connecting homes, shops and offices;
- Enhanced streetcapping and sidewalks;
- Emphasizing the pedestrian;
- Improving access to transit and other transportation options; and
- Expanding housing options.

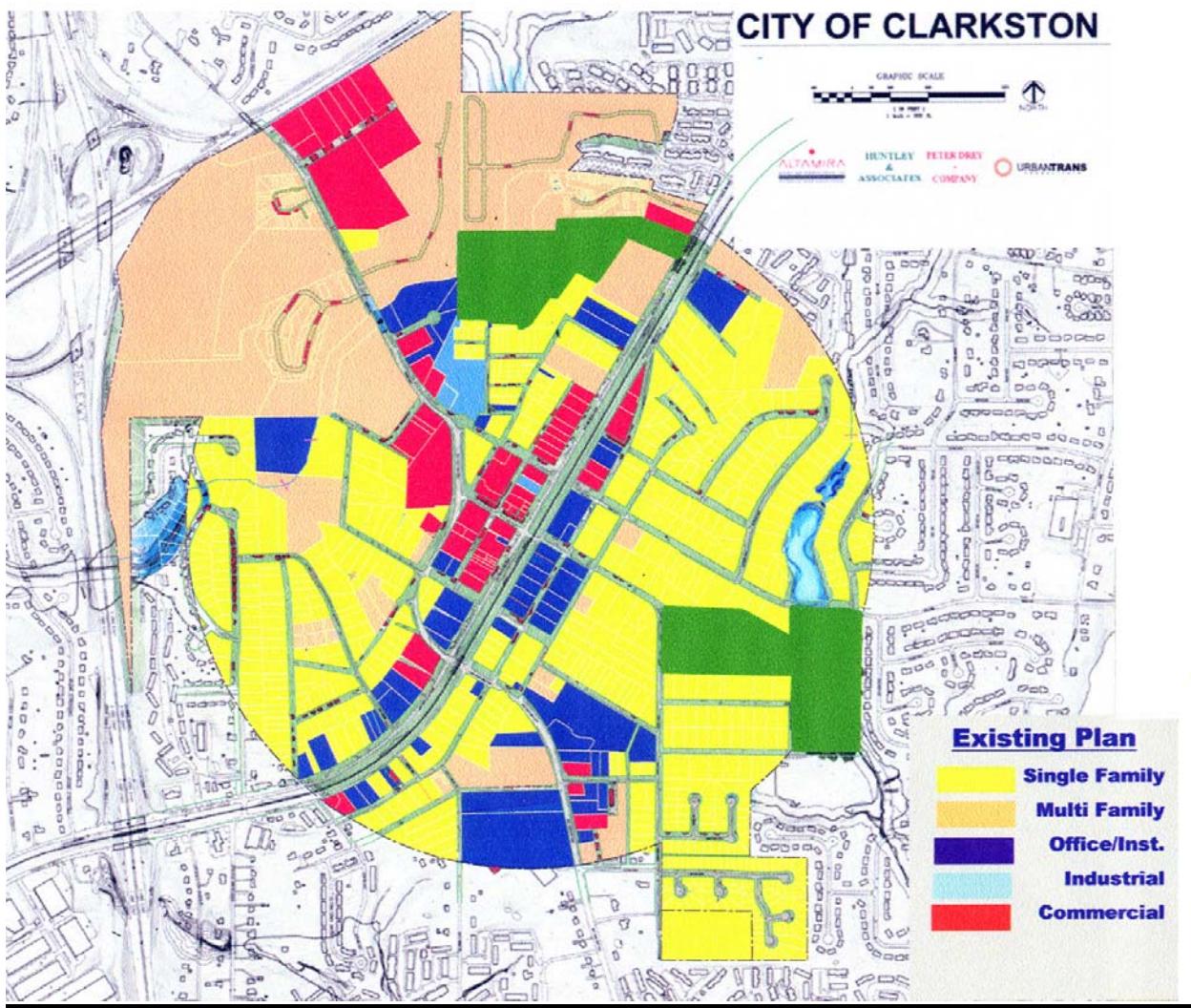
The implementation of the Concept Plan will help embody the city's vision and commitment to balanced and smart growth throughout the city while generating the development and redevelopment for a wide range of compatible land uses, including, without limitation, office, retail, residential, hospitality and meeting, cultural, entertainment, and parks and open space.

## **Proposed Land Uses and Redevelopment Projects**

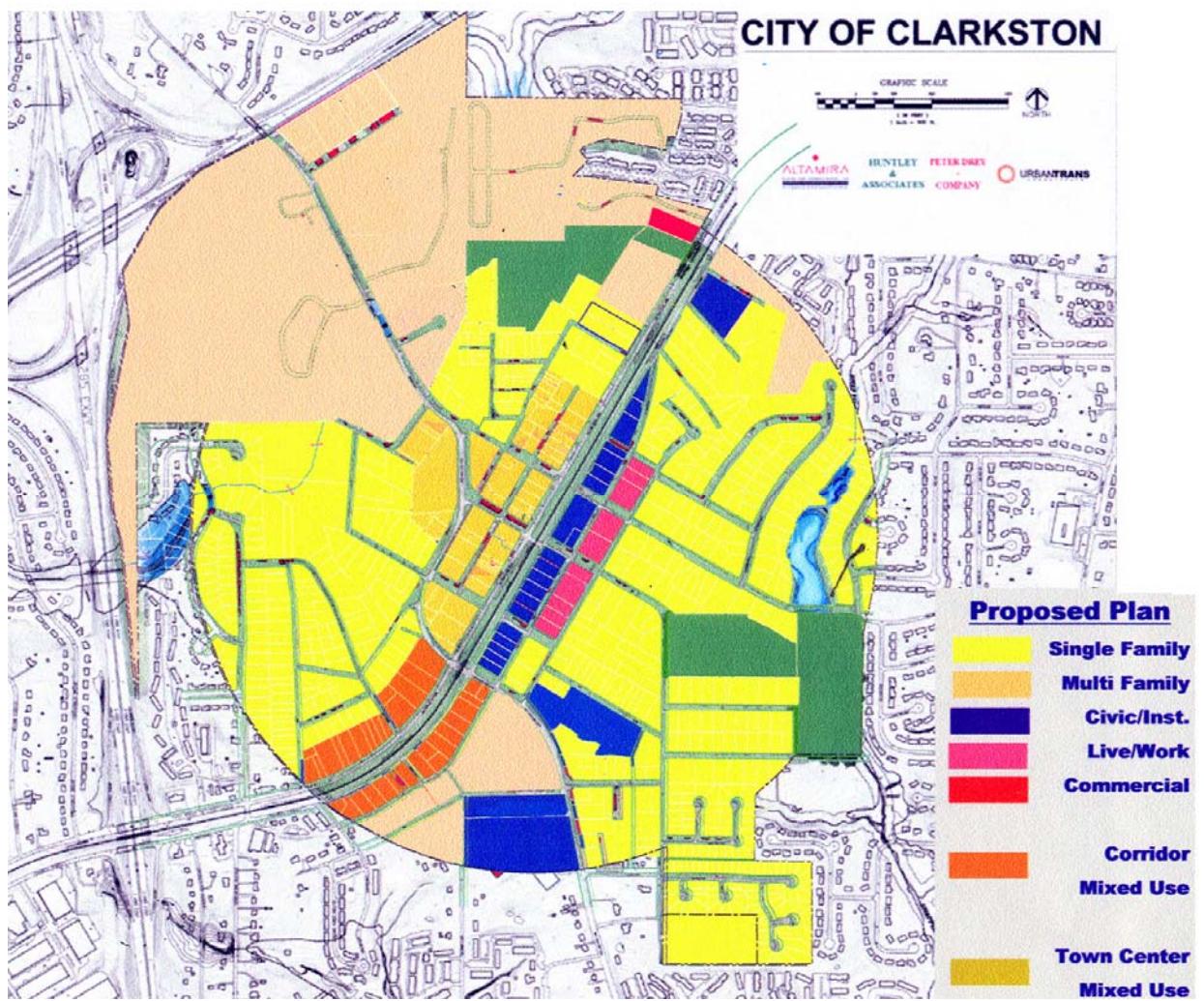
The LCI Study process produced a Concept Plan that includes a variety of "urban" land uses in the Clarkston Study Area, which, as has been stated before, is relatively dense and built out. Recommended land uses, which will need the appropriate zoning and other regulatory framework, include the following:

- Mixed-use: Residential and Retail Commercial
- Mixed Residential: Type (attached, detached, mid-rise) and income
- Mixed-use: Residential, Retail Commercial and Office
- Live-Work Loft
- Urban Residential: smaller lots and units with common open areas

With the right inducements and assistance from the City of Clarkston, most of these types of development could be developed over a relatively short period of 7-9 years, with the last phase of this initial group of projects anticipated to be complete by the end of 2010. There are other areas that would likely be developed, redeveloped and revitalized between 2010-2028. Dividing the anticipated projects into Short-term, Medium-term and Long-term groupings, these projects fall within the following timeframes:

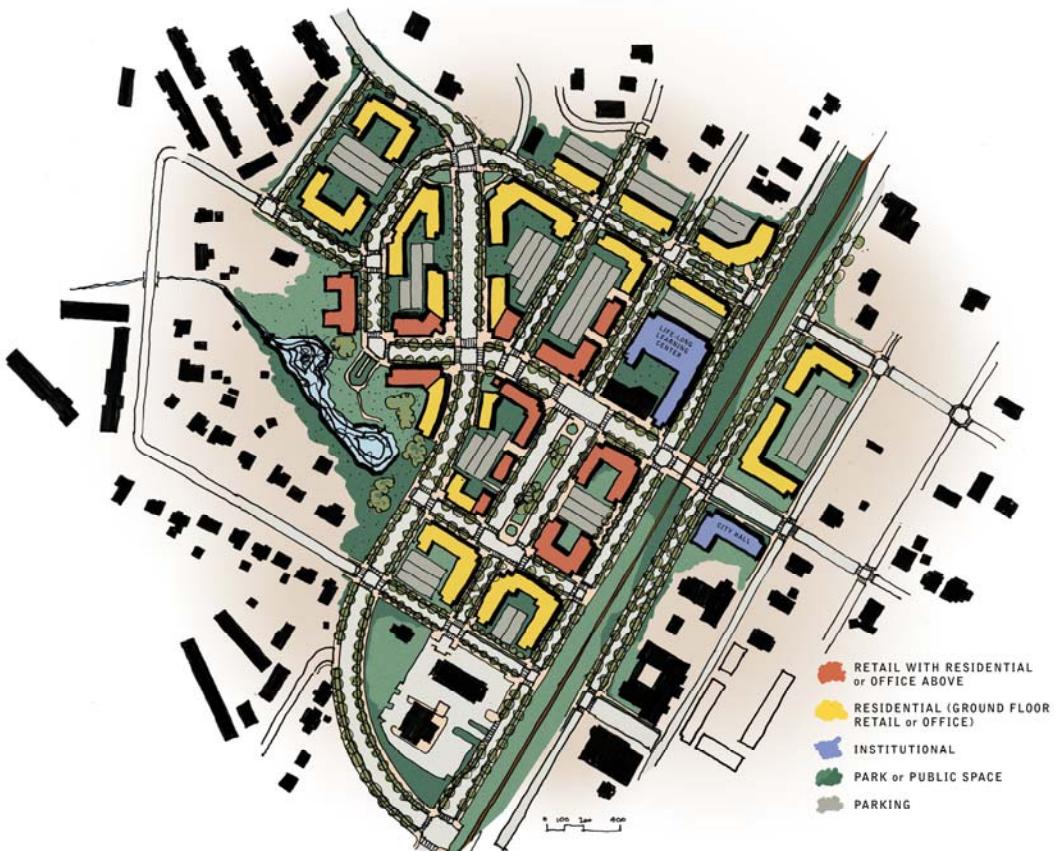


Existing Land Use Plan



Proposed Land Use Plan

## Short-term (1-5 Years) Projects



## DOWNTOWN CLARKSTON PLAN

Residents and visitors unanimously recognize the center of Clarkston as the intersection of East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Market Street. This crossroads is presently the loose focal point of downtown business. Our plan proposes building on the strength of the current town focus and create a condensed walkable shopping, office and residential town center centered about Market Street.

The plan proposes that Market Street be widened to accommodate two through lanes of traffic, a center turn lane, and on street parallel parking on each side. Very wide sidewalks (at least 15 feet) should be built on each side of the street to create an expansive, comfortable walking environment. The

North of Market Street, ground floor retail shops with residential or office space above are planned to front on Vaughan Street all of the way to Montreal Road. A proposed new “life-long learning center” is shown on the parcel between Ponce and Vaughan to serve local educational outreach programs. Its placed so that students can easily walk to Market Street businesses between classes. Parking is located on the interior of the blocks so shoppers can park and walk down a comfortable sidewalk, past various retailers and services, to their ultimate destination. This approach breaks the tight bond between a shop and immediately adjacent parking in favor of shared parking that serves all of the businesses collectively.

South of Market Street, Vaughan Street straddles a new, wide public park stretching from Market to a proposed new cross street. This street shortens the walk from Market to Hill Street and allows easier traffic circulation through the planned new buildings and businesses to the parking and service areas on the interior of the blocks.

Beyond the new street, Vaughan narrows back to conventional dimensions until it dead-ends at Hill Street. Although no new development is shown for the Hill/Ponce/Indian Creek block, land owners may find that redevelopment becomes an attractive possibility when Vaughan Street is reconstructed, and their parcel offers an excellent end to a dramatic vista down with a notable building, tower, or similar element.

The new park provides an opportunity to reanimate Clarkston's town center with a delightful new amenity that, if well designed and well-executed, will lure visitors from all over to enjoy casual relaxing beside its fountains, sculptures, and walks. The park is the most important new element proposed as part of this plan and its design is critical to the success of the plan. We encourage the city to make sure that its construction is well funded and its design quality exceeds that of all other public spaces in the area.

West of Indian Creek Drive, we anticipate that the existing Market center will continue to operate successfully for the foreseeable future. However, as the town center core area between Ponce and Indian Creek strengthens, owners of the market place may consider intensifying the use of their parcel by rebuilding the retail and service buildings with parking located underneath (thus bringing the shopping level up to the same elevation as Market Street), extending Market Street into the interior of the property, and building residential and/or office uses above the shops. The Market/Indian Creek intersection will then become as important as the Market/Ponce intersection in defining the center of Clarkston. If redeveloped according to the master plan, Market Street would end with a view into the park and pond.

The plan shows a new grassy park and pond at the head of Indian Creek along the Boulevard to introduce informal recreation space into the town center and help separate the intense new uses there from the traditional single family homes along Hill Street. This park is part of an effort to create a sense of transition from the existing neighborhoods on all of the town center's edges.

East of Ponce de Leon, the railroad forms a formidable “edge” to the town center, making it unlikely that the commercial intensity required for the town center can be carried over to the other side of the railroad. Instead, the master plan proposes that institutional uses and relatively intense residential uses be constructed facing East Ponce (and where possible on the parking lots behind the existing churches and city hall along Rowland Street) thus forming a civic/residential gateway into the town’s existing single family neighborhoods.

**Streets and Thoroughfares.** The plan approaches the design of various street types differently – those intended to have many pedestrians must be designed so that people on foot have priority over cars. Market, Vaughan, Hill and the proposed new street all have “pedestrian priority”.

Ponce de Leon and Indian Creek serve regional traffic. Nevertheless, they are also important pedestrian routes to the town center and therefore must have safe, comfortable and enjoyable sidewalk environments if Clarkston is to succeed in its goal of becoming a livable center in future years. Therefore, sidewalks on each of these streets must be at least six feet wide, lined with pedestrian-scaled light fixtures for safety and comfort, and shaded with tall trees.

The result of these new initiatives will be a beautiful, comfortable, concentrated town center flanking Market Street and the new Vaughan Street Park, edged by green streetscapes and the railroad, containing seven blocks of walkable streets lined with shops, businesses and homes. Parking will be found in the middle of each block, screened by buildings and landscaping, but easy to access. In the daytime, business and services will prosper; in the evening, patrons can stroll among shops, restaurants and cafes while waiting on friends taking classes at the life-long learning center.

The Clarkston Town Center will then be a model of urbanity – safe, comfortable, and elegant.

## **Medium-term (6-10 Years) Projects**

During the Public Involvement process, one of the goals of the community was to provide more opportunities for single family home ownership. The community also recognized that since there is little or no vacant land that provides for redevelopment opportunities within the City, there will be increasing pressure to assemble and redevelop areas that are not densely developed and that presently contain homes that are in need of renovation and/or repair.

Two such areas that held potential for future redevelopment were identified during the site analysis and presented to the community during the Charette. One area is the area around the intersection of E. Ponce de Leon and West Smith Street. The other is the area bounded by E. Ponce de Leon on the south, Pecan Street on the east, Mell Street on the west and Jolly Avenue on the north.

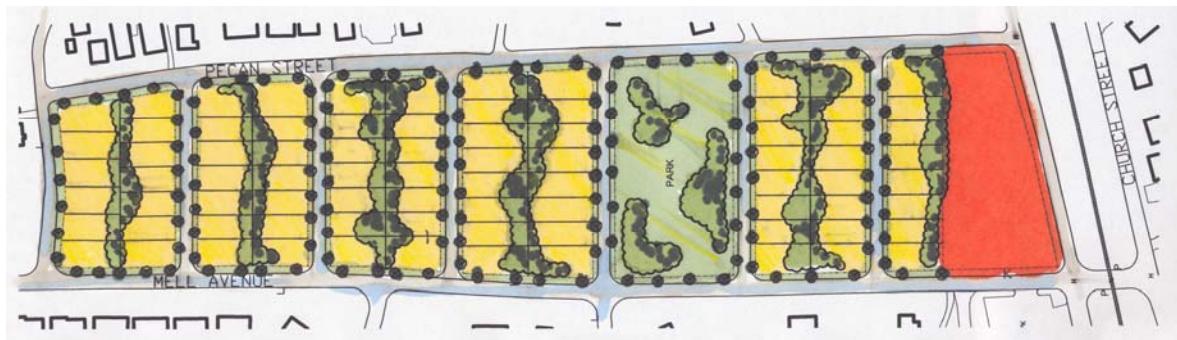
Presently there are 10 structures on approximately 7 acres of land along E. Ponce de Leon and West Smith Street. West Smith Street is a 20' dead end street with no curb and gutter and no ability for emergency vehicles to turn around. The existing homes are relatively small and although some homes have been recently renovated and others show evidence of repair for the most part, the homes are not owner occupied and show signs of neglect and disrepair.



The Concept plan suggest utilizing existing sewer, water and storm infrastructure and extending and improving the existing roadway to a loop system that would encircle a .75 acre park and create 23 approximately 7500 square foot lots and still provide for frontage along E. Ponce for a mixed use project, multifamily or limited commercial use. The concept plan clusters the homes around the park and increases the gross density from 1.4 per acre to 5.3 per acre while creating a sense of place and community.

The other area is approximately 16 acres and contains approximately 35 homes and two commercial structures along E. Ponce de Leon. The homes in this area are relatively small and on relatively large tracts of land that average approximately 15,000 square feet with lot widths of 70 feet or more and depths averaging 200 feet. Several of the lots have been combined in various configurations creating lots over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre with several structures in addition to the homes on the lots. The homes in this area are 40 to 50 years old and although in serviceable condition, the economics of redevelopment might outweigh the economics of renovation.

The concept plan for this area also utilizes existing infrastructure and adds 6 streets approximately 200 feet long. The addition of these streets allows for the creation of 80 lots with lot widths of 50 feet and depths of 100'. The plan also envisions a 2 acre park that is centrally located within the project. The plan provides for alley fed houses and the vision for this development is a traditional neighborhood design with sidewalks and street trees and period light standards. The plan also preserves a 2 acre tract fronting on E. Ponce de Leon that could be developed as a mixed use project containing retail, office and housing. The overall density is increased from 2 units per acre to 5 units per acre.



## **Long-term (10+ Years) Projects**

Two areas were also identified that provide opportunities for future Multi-family development. The first tract is approximately 22 acres and is bounded on the north by the Stone Mountain Freeway and on the west by Montreal Road. The rest of the tract is bounded by multi-family rental properties. The site presently contains DeKalb Tech, a Gas Station, a Hindu Temple and some office structures. The portion of Clarkston the site lies in is bounded by Stone Mountain Freeway on the North and I-285 on the West and the South Fork of Peachtree Creek on the South and East is primarily multi-family rental. The community thought that a Multi Family project for ownership will be more compatible than the exiting uses. The proposed plan is for 128 Town Homes that are alley fed and that front on internal roads. There are no structures that front on Montreal Road. A streetscape project is proposed for this section of Montreal Road which will reinforce and strengthen the entrance into the Town Center Area. A 1.5 acre central park is also proposed for this project. The proposed density for this area is 6 units per acre.



The second area is approximately 13 acres and is bounded on the North and East by the South Fork of Peachtree Creek and on the West by Montreal Road and on the South by Clark Street. This site presently contains the Post Office, a Grocery Store, some Office Structures and a Manufacturing Facility. The Plan proposes 128 units in a stacked configuration in eight (8) structures. The structures are oriented towards an internal roadway system and setback substantially from Montreal Road; thus reinforcing the park like streetscape system proposed for Montreal Road from the Stone Mountain Freeway. An acre park is proposed on the southeastern side of the intersection of Indian Creek and Montreal Road that serves as an entrance to the Town Center. The area on the northern side of Clark Street between the street and the Multi-Family Project will be subdivided into 18 single family lots and a cul de sac created at the end of Clark Street. The cul de sac remedies the current dead end street configuration and will provide for emergency vehicle access. The proposed density for the Multi-Family project is 25 units per acre and the overall density for the area is 14 units per acre.



These concepts were presented to the community at the last public hearing. The community supported the concepts as possible redevelopment scenarios.

## Potential Town Center Retail Mix:

The natural growth of Clarkston has established the framework for a true center of the town at Market Street from E. Ponce de Leon to N. Indian Creek. Physically, this represents the geographic center of Clarkston. The existing retail shops and services represent the basis for a unified, complementary collection of restaurant and specialty goods. Vaughan Street presents the opportunity to expand the Town Center off of Market, thereby increasing significantly not only the amount of potential retail space within the Town Center, but also the potential for mixed-use development that incorporates office space and residential units.

While the Market Street area offers potential as Clarkston's Town Center, the market forces that are generating appreciation in housing values, attracting higher two-income households and greater disposable income, and accelerating the urbanization of consumer preferences are creating a market for "urban village" retail. Urban village retail emphasizes non-chain restaurants and eclectic, limited-menu cafes and bistros as well as specialty food, along with specialty retail, boutique apparel and accessories, antiques and household-related retail. This type of retail is a perfect fit with the physical layout, design and ambiance of a mixed-use town center. Moreover, this type of retail, particularly when concentrated in an identifiable Town Center location, has great appeal to consumer markets outside Clarkston's immediate trade area. It has the potential to become a retail-and-restaurant destination, similar (though on a smaller scale) to Decatur and the Virginia-Highland neighborhood.

An "urban village" retail center would likely include the following retailer elements:

- Café Restaurants
- Ethnic Restaurants
- Diner
- Deli
- Tavern/Pub
- Arts & Crafts
- Antiques
- Home Accessories
- Kitchenwares
- Hardware/Garden

Market conditions would likely support the incremental growth of "urban village" retail within the designated Town Center of Clarkston over both the short-term and medium-term, after which the geographic area of the proposed Town Center District would probably need to be expanded. The growth in retail stores is projected to occur as follows:

Year	Square Feet	Cumulative Sq Ft
1-2	5,000	5,000
3-4	10,000	15,000
5-6	20,000	35,000
7-10	25,000	60,000

Specific examples of types of restaurants and shops, along with respective store sizes and sales, are provided in the chart below:

### Clarkston Town Center Retail

	Store Size: Square Feet	Annual Sales per SF	Number of Stores	Size: Square Feet	Annual Sales	Annual Sales per Store/Rest
<b>Food</b>						
Restaurant & Bar	5,000	\$ 500	2	10,000	\$ 5,000,000	2,500,000
Restaurant	3,000	350	3	9,000	3,150,000	1,050,000
Bar/Entertainment	3,000	500	-	-	-	1,500,000
Deli/Café	2,000	350	6	12,000	4,200,000	700,000
Coffee/Desserts	1,000	500	2	2,000	1,000,000	500,000
Fast Food	2,000	500	-	-	-	1,000,000
<b>Total Food</b>			<b>13</b>	<b>33,000</b>	<b>\$ 13,350,000</b>	
<b>Non-Food Retail</b>						
Women's Casual	1,500	400	-	-	-	600,000
Women's Accessories	1,200	500	2	2,400	1,200,000	600,000
Men's Casual	1,500	350	-	-	-	525,000
Men's Accessories	1,200	400	-	-	-	480,000
Specialty Gifts	1,000	350	3	3,000	1,050,000	350,000
Arts & Crafts/Antiques	1,000	350	3	3,000	1,050,000	350,000
Jewelry	800	600	1	800	480,000	480,000
Home Furnishings	2,500	300	-	-	-	750,000
Kitchenware	1,200	450	1	1,200	540,000	540,000
Books/Cards	2,500	350	1	2,500	875,000	875,000
Music/Video	1,500	500	1	1,500	750,000	750,000
Beauty/Salon	1,000	300	2	2,000	600,000	300,000
Hardware	2,500	400	1	2,500	1,000,000	1,000,000
Electronics/Phone	1,500	500	3	4,500	2,250,000	750,000
Business/Copies	1,500	500	1	1,500	750,000	750,000
Business Services	1,000	300	5	5,000	1,500,000	300,000
<b>Total Non-Food</b>			<b>24</b>	<b>29,900</b>	<b>\$ 12,045,000</b>	
<b>Total Retail</b>			<b>37</b>	<b>62,900</b>	<b>\$ 25,395,000</b>	

The Town Center can also hold an additional 30,000 square feet of second-floor (above the retail) rental or owned office space – approximately 20 spaces at an average of 1,500 square feet each. Condominium residential townhouses and “loft” units can and should also be included in the Town Center mixed-use program, with approximately 40 residential units built above retail or on their own pads throughout the Town Center District, but located primarily off of Market Street and on Vaughan both north and south of Market.

Parking for retail will require approximately 315 spaces, with office requiring another 90 and residential units 60-80. While the majority of retail parking will be surface spaces, some may be incorporated into deck parking, which would also accommodate the office parking and possibly some of the residential parking. Surface parking should be behind the main retail storefronts except for the limited amount of street parking that Market and Vaughan can accommodate.

## Transportation Recommendations

As noted in the existing conditions section, forty-four percent of commuters use alternative modes of transportation, a high number when compared to DeKalb County and the Atlanta region. The transportation recommendations are designed to sustain that number by emphasizing bicycle, pedestrian, transit and transportation management projects.

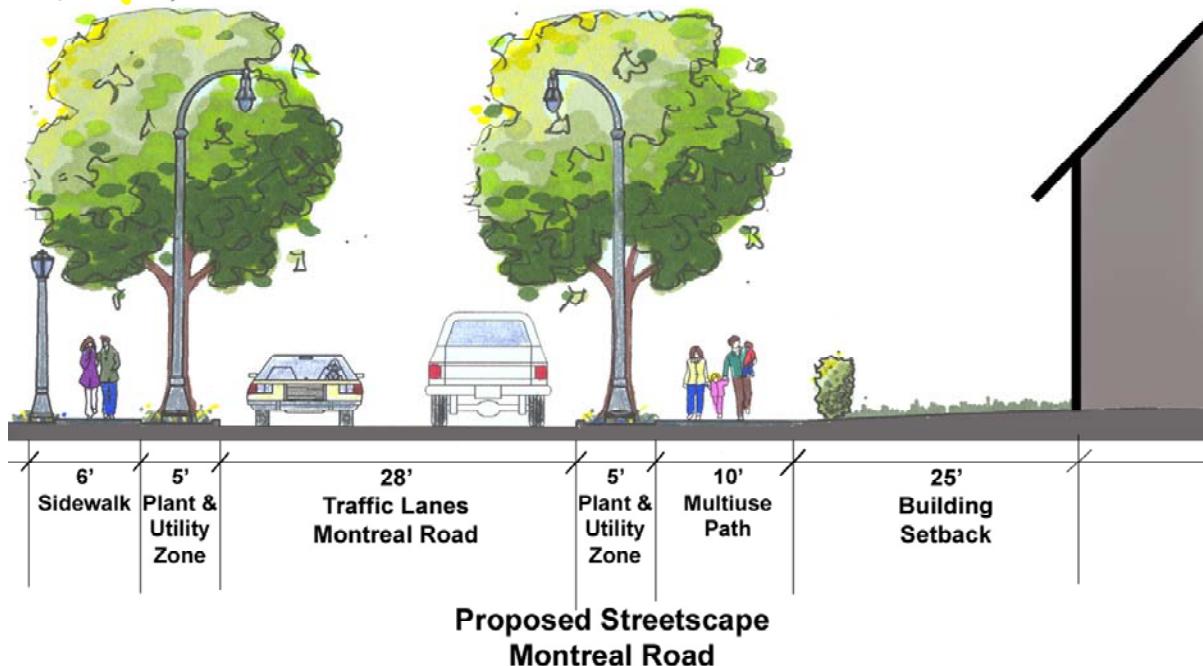
The following section describes each category of recommendations and provides action steps for implementation. The Clarkston LCI transportation improvement program (TIP), including individual projects, costs, potential funding sources and maps for all transportation-related improvements and investments is included in Five Year Implementation Plan.

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Recommendations

A safe and convenient environment for pedestrians can dramatically increase the number of residents, visitors and employees walking to offices, stores, schools, bus stops, etc. Providing bicycle facilities can encourage bicycle travel and complement transit services, extending the reach of alternative modes of travel. Therefore, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are recommended citywide to serve major destinations in Clarkston. The LCI projects, included in the TIP, prioritize pedestrian and bicycle corridors that provide direct connections between residences and the town center area.



For higher capacity sidewalks, specifically within the town center and along bus routes, existing or new sidewalks are recommended to be designed wide enough (5' minimum) to accommodate two-way pedestrian traffic and are planned for both sides of the roadway. Several of the projects separate pedestrian and bicycle traffic from vehicular traffic in order to improve safety. Major pedestrian projects include landscaped (safety) buffers, transit enhancements, street benches, trashcans, landscaping, signage and lighting within their costs.



To expedite and complete the multi-modal network throughout the entire community (beyond the LCI grant process) the city should integrate the design of pedestrian and bicycle facilities into the development review process.

Combining land use and site design elements, city staff can facilitate the use of modal alternatives. Traveling between point A and point B is a process largely affected by physical features. It is important to recognize the significant way that the physical landscape can influence travel decisions, and dedicate attention towards a set of basic design criteria that can make traveling by alternative modes more convenient. Examples include:

- *Bicycle amenities* – Required bicycle-parking facilities at employment sites can result in reductions in parking requirements and expansion of modal options onsite. Developers should place bicycle racks and lockers near front entrances or under covered parking facilities.
- *Protected pedestrian corridors* – Pedestrian corridors on-site provide safe means across parking lots and campus facilities. These increase the walkability of a multi-modal corridor, resulting in more support for pedestrian travel. A short, non-motorized trip can substitute for a longer car trip (i.e. a shopper might choose to walk to a small local store instead of driving their car).
- *Building orientation* – reducing building setbacks offers more direct street access for transit users, cyclists and pedestrians. Locating parking areas to the side or behind buildings encourages on-street activity and safety. New development projects should cluster buildings and avoid development that discourages pedestrian and bicycle travel.

As new development and redevelopment occurs, a process for regularly coordinating bicycle and pedestrian projects with development proposals is required.

#### Action Items:

1. Apply for federal funding through the LCI plan implementation process.
2. Perform preliminary engineering and acquire necessary right-of-way for bicycle and pedestrian projects.
3. Construct bicycle and pedestrian projects.
4. Develop a citywide bicycle and pedestrian program for remaining areas, addressing coordination with future development.

Responsibility: City

Time frame: 2005 - 2010

Cost: See Five Year Implementation Plan

## Railroad Crossing Recommendations

A safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian option for crossing the CSX railroad tracks at Market Street is necessary to provide access from the north side of the town center to institutional and residential destinations on the south side. The current crossing is designed for vehicles only. The at-grade crossing will be improved and widened to provide access for pedestrian walkways or sidewalks, and even for bicycle users to cross safely without vehicle interaction. Recommendations to improve these crossings include the addition of more gates, or longer gates, updated flashing lights, additional thermoplastic markings, and possibly median barriers to separate different traffic movements. A key improvement, added to the East Ponce project is decorative safety fencing along both sides of the railroad to discourage pedestrians from crossing the railroad at undesignated areas.

In January 2005 the National Railroad Association will adopt an official Quiet Zone policy. This will address the requirements for use of the locomotive horn at the Market Street crossing. The improved railroad crossing and safety gates along the tracks should address the diminished need to use the train horn as a warning device to both pedestrians and vehicles.



### Action Items:

1. Hold coordination meeting with CSX and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to review recommended improvements at both Market Street and along East Ponce and Church Street.
2. Review updated noise regulations, when posted at [www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov).
3. Apply for federal funding through the LCI plan implementation process.
4. Perform preliminary engineering and acquire necessary right-of-way for railroad crossing project.
5. Construct railroad-crossing project.
6. Integrate railroad safety into school education programs and other safety programs.

Responsibility: City, CSX, GDOT

Time frame: Year 2005

Cost: See Five Year Implementation Plan

## **Transit and Transportation Demand Management Recommendations**

Eleven percent of Clarkston's population use transit. To continue encouraging transit three approaches are recommended. The first is integrating pedestrian and bicycle improvements and bus stop enhancements, as outlined in the bicycle and pedestrian section. To ensure that proper signage is used, announcing the stop location and route number, the City should coordinate with MARTA during the design process.

Second, transit should be integrated into development and site design regulations. Bus stops should be located within 500 to 1,000 feet of the building entrance at employment sites and major activity centers, with the entrance oriented towards public transportation facilities, not parking lots.

Last, the City can take an active lead in providing transit information to the community. This effort can be combined with an overall transportation demand management (TDM) program. In addition to 11 percent of Clarkston residents using transit, 18 percent already carpool or vanpool and 2 percent bike and walk. These numbers can be increased simply through civic and community group participation and providing information and encouragement.

Programs recommended for Clarkston include:

- *Commute Options Information Campaign.* Distribute information of the various commute options available in Clarkston (vanpool, carpools, bike/walking and transit, including schedules) to new residents. Information should be posted on website and at City Hall.
  - Develop a Local "How to Ride Transit" Guide in several languages. The Guides should be a user friendly public transit information package that includes information on how to read a bus/train schedule, where to get on the bus/train near Clarkston and how to use online transit information to assist current and potential transit users to overcome any predispositions commuters might have against using MARTA. The transit information package can include a collection of information available regarding GRTA Express Busses, MARTA, Gwinnett County Transit, and other transit providers as relevant.
- *Town Center Transportation Center.* Maintain a town center transportation information center at City Hall and at the community center that provides bus passes, maps, schedules, ridematching information and services and more. Ensure that the information desk at City Hall is prepared to answer questions on alternative transportation.
- Host a "Ride with Council" day, when City Council members use MARTA to go to major destinations.

Action Items:

1. Apply for federal funding through the LCI plan implementation process to develop programs and specialized materials.
2. Train city staff to answer questions on alternative transportation.
3. Add information on commute alternatives to website.
4. Implement Town Center Transportation Center(s) and other programs.

Responsibility: City, Community Center, MARTA

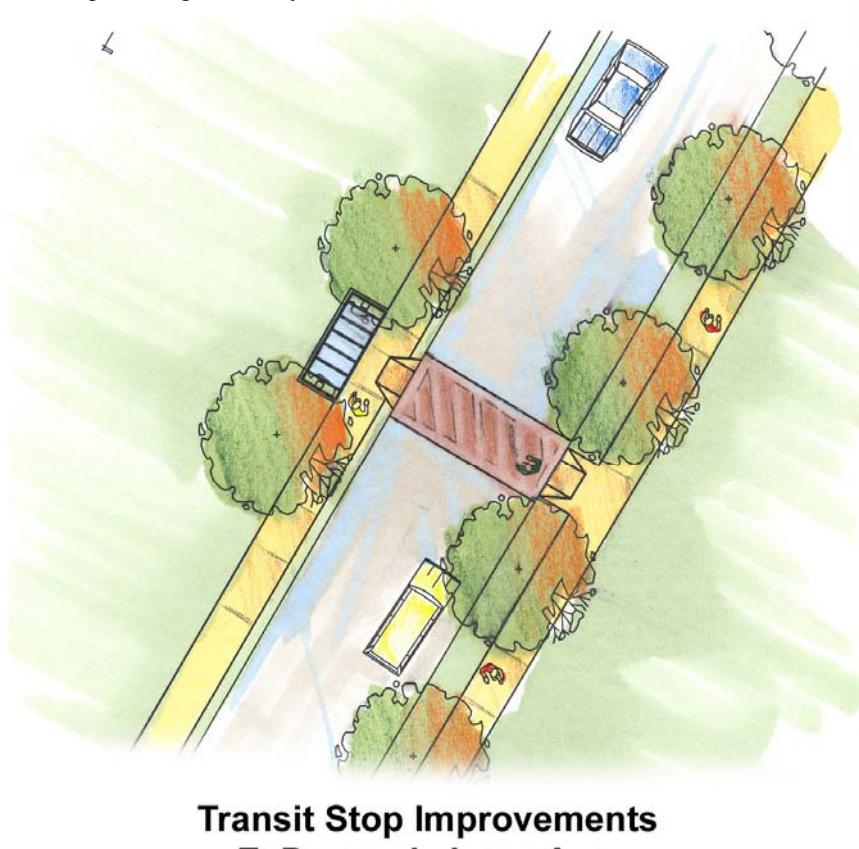
Time frame: Year 2005 – on going

Cost: See Five Year Implementation Plan

## Roadway and Intersection Recommendations

Roadway and intersection improvements should be implemented to provide better interaction for different modes of transportation within the city. Most of the existing intersections are designed primarily for vehicles and do not provide safe crossings for pedestrians. By creating corridors that accommodate all users of the transportation system and include sidewalks, bike lanes, transit shelters, etc., walkers and bikers could feel as welcome and safe as people who are driving. By adding crosswalks, improved signage, curb ramps at all crossings, and even pedestrian refuge areas when possible, Clarkston roadways will be greatly improved.

Clarkston does not need many major roadway improvements within the downtown area to provide a more livable community. Corridors leading to the town center area require improved signal timing to provide a safe and efficient flow of traffic, while still providing necessary access.



### Transit Stop Improvements E. Ponce de Leon Ave.

#### Action Items:

1. Coordinate signal timing and intersection improvements with Dekalb County and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan process.
2. Coordinate with Dekalb County and apply for federal funding through the LCI plan implementation process.
3. Perform preliminary engineering and acquire necessary right-of-way for roadway and intersection projects.
4. Construct intersection and roadway projects.

Responsibility: City, Dekalb County

Time frame: Year 2005 - 2010

Cost: See Five Year Implementation Plan

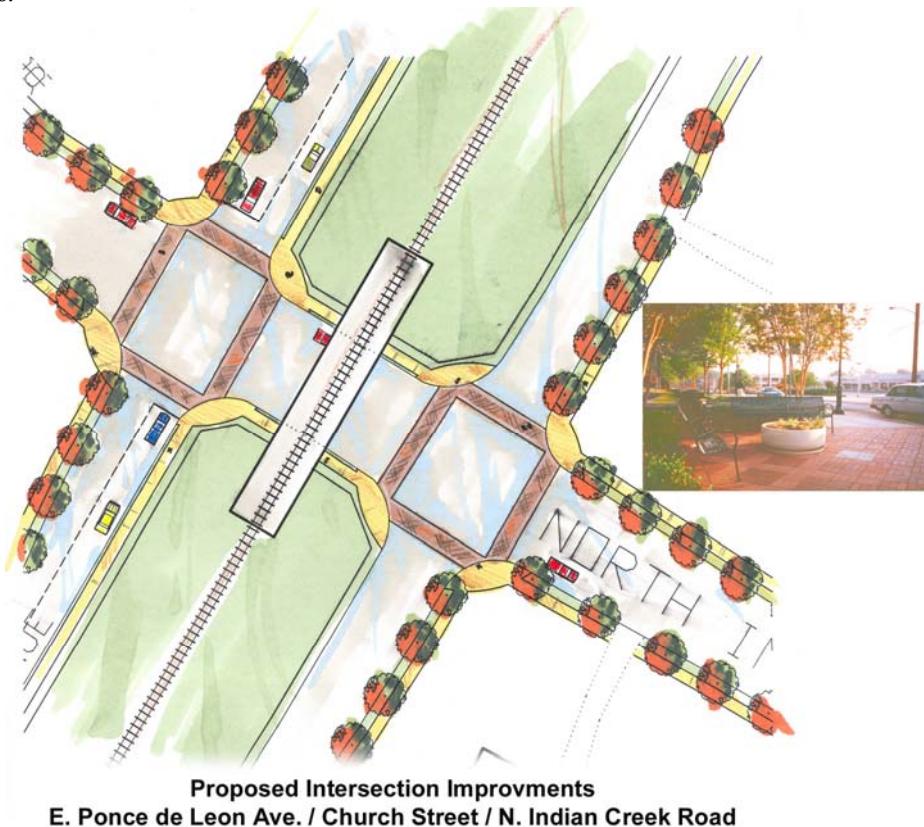
## **Signage/Gateway Recommendations**

Attractive signage and gateway treatments into and around the City should be developed, creating a sense of identity by providing specific focal points that inform travelers that they have not only entered the City itself but also acknowledge the distinct commercial center of Clarkston.

For Clarkston, gateways are recommended on E. Ponce de Leon at the southwest City Limits (nearest I-285), the intersection of E. Ponce de Leon and N. Indian Creek, and the northeast City Limits on Ponce de Leon.

In addition to the gateway at E. Ponce de Leon and N. Indian Creek it is proposed that intersection improvements with decorative crosswalks and more pedestrian friendly street corners with benches, planters and lighting should be used to compliment this gateway into the commercial district.

A standardized feel should be established using a public participation process in the master planning of these areas and also the intersection improvements proposed for Market/E. Ponce de Leon/Church, Market/N. Indian Creek, E. Ponce de Leon/N. Indian Creek/ Church Street. These design elements selected during the public participation process should also reflect elements in the proposed streetscape to create a unifying design for all proposed improvements.



### Action Items:

1. Apply for federal funding through the LCI plan implementation process.
2. Finalize designs.
3. Implement signage projects.

Responsibility: City, Imagine Clarkston

Time frame: Year 2006

Cost: See Five Year Implementation Plan

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Concept Plan is built around several basic strategies for achieving successful implementation, as follows:

- Build to proven market strengths, particularly those strengths reflected in (1) the retail success of Decatur and other urban retail communities and (2) the residential success in Decatur, Avondale Estates and in residential communities to the west and south of Clarkston.
- Base a financing structure on multiple funding sources and, where possible, the leveraging of those various capital sources through public/private partnerships that shift risk to the Private Sector partner.
- Identify and secure a major economic incentive – a source of financing controlled by the City – that can be used to attract private investors and developers;
- Provide an organizational framework for implementing the Concept Plan, emphasizing the fostering of an effective partnership between the public and private sectors to correct economic limitations that have impeded the redevelopment of sites identified as development opportunities in this study;

Market strengths have been addressed in the “Existing Conditions and Assessment” section of this report. Economic incentives that should be put in place to attract and leverage private development and investment are described below as part of the recommended overall financing structure for Concept Plan implementation, as is the Organizational Framework for making that implementation successful.

Ideally, the key elements of the Implementation Plan for Clarkston would include the following general task areas and the corresponding municipal or other entity responsible for carrying those tasks out:

- City: Zoning, Overlay District
- City: Redevelopment Organization/Process
- City: Tax Allocation District (TAD), Community Improvement District (CID)
- City: Design Standards
- City: Task Forces
- City: Developer Recruitment/Solicitation
- City: Staff Capacity to Maintain Focus
- County OED: Assistance re TAD Creation and Developer Recruitment
- County Community Development: CDBG, Section 108 Guaranteed Loans
- ARC: Implementation Grants
- PATH, TPL: Pathways, Trails, Pedestrian Connections

### **Incentives**

Most municipalities have certain economic tools at their disposal that can be used both to attract desired development as well as to control or limit undesired development. Some of the most powerful incentives, many of which can be combined into a comprehensive package of incentives, include the following:

- **Zoning Relating to Density and Use**

The City's most powerful economic development incentive is its ability to award/approve density requests by developers regarding specific sites. Density is driven largely by land prices, and most land prices outpace development that can occur at existing densities – i.e. both seller and purchaser of land in appreciating markets anticipate obtaining zoning changes that increase development density and, thus, the ability to defray land prices among more units of whatever type of product is being developed (e.g. housing, retail, office condos). While zoning remains a powerful municipal tool, a growing body of legal precedents has, over the past 15 years, greatly increased the likelihood that a developer can win in court if and when a municipality seeks to control growth by refusing to approve requests by developers (or the private land owner) to increase a site's density. This shift in the courts' collective view of zoning restrictions underscores the importance of a city's seeking constructive ways of negotiating development densities to attract and shape development rather than simply refusing to approve higher-density zoning requests. The "carrot" approach can emphasize trading off higher density (particularly in instances where the use itself is not a major concern) for increased landscaping, physical and/or visual buffers between the site and public roads or parks, on-site retail or other mixed-use elements, or adherence to accepted design standards.

- **Redevelopment Plan**

The State of Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act provides municipalities with a broad range of powerful tools for facilitating redevelopment in areas of economic stagnation. These powers must be preceded, however, by a formal Redevelopment Plan adopted by the municipality. The Redevelopment Plan, usually prepared by a consultant or team of consultants, identifies reasons for creating the Plan, problems within the municipality that need to be addressed, and general – sometimes quite specific – development projects that can be undertaken to restore a community's economic vitality. One of the most powerful tools that a formal Redevelopment Plan provides a city is the ability to acquire property through condemnation if the current property owner refuses to conform to the adopted Redevelopment Plan. Downtown Development Authorities also have powers of eminent domain under similar circumstances.

- Tax Allocation District
- Community Improvement District
- Public and Shared Parking
- Streetscapes and Landscapes

## Financing Resources

The redevelopment costs could be funded from a variety of public and private sources, including the following:

- Proceeds of Tax Allocation District (tax increment financing) bonds
- Federal and State transportation funds, including Transportation Enhancement Funds (TEA)
- Governors Open Space Acquisition Program
- Non-profit/Foundation Funds: Trust for Public Land, PATH Foundation, Nature Conservancy
- City of Clarkston Impact Fees
- City of Clarkston Community/Business Improvement District special tax assessments
- Other federal, state and local grant and funding sources as appropriate and available
- ARC LCI Implementation funds
- ARC Surface Transportation Improvement funds
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds (CMAQ)
- DeKalb County Greenspace funds
- Community Development Block Grant funds from DeKalb County
- Section 108 Guaranteed Loans funds from DeKalb County
- Conventional private debt
- Private equity, including land contributions

## **Organizational Framework**

The City of Clarkston should plan to attract a private developer or group of developers to the site to develop a planned mixed-use community in accordance with principals and recommendations of the current Livable Centers Initiative Study. The City may want to use the LCI Study as the foundation for a formal Redevelopment Plan.

Key components of the proposed Organizational Structure should include the following:

- City Community/Economic Development Office
- Downtown Development Authority
- Town Center Association
- Task Force: Town Center Retail/Development
- Task Force: Recreation and Pathways/Trails
- Task Force: Cultural and Ethnic Diversity
- Non-profit Development Organization: Business-based
- Community-based Development Corporation
- City Economic Development Corporation
- DeKalb County Office of Economic Development
- DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce

The State Redevelopment Powers Law authorizes the City of Clarkston to designate a Redevelopment Agency for the purpose of carrying out any Redevelopment Plan the City may prepare. It is anticipated that the City will designate the City of Clarkston Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to serve as the City's Redevelopment Agent responsible to the City for implementing the proposed LCI Plan. As the City's Redevelopment Agent, the DDA will carry out tasks in the following areas:

- Coordinating implementation activities with other major participants in the Redevelopment Plan and their respective development and planning entities, including DeKalb County, the DeKalb County Board of Education, the communities impacted and other stakeholders, as well as with various City of Clarkston departments involved in implementing the LCI Plan.
- Conducting (either directly or by subcontracting for services) standard predevelopment activities, including - but not limited to - site analysis, environmental analysis, development planning, market analysis, financial feasibility studies, preliminary design, zoning compliance, facilities inspections, and overall analysis of compatibility of proposed development projects with the City's Comprehensive Development Plan and Livable Centers Initiative Study.
- Seeking appropriate development projects, financing and other forms of private investment in Clarkston from qualified sources.
- Developing public-private ventures, loans to private enterprise and intergovernmental agreements as needed.
- Marketing the Redevelopment Area among developers, capital sources and the general public.
- Coordinating public improvement planning and construction with the City's Department of Public Works, Department of Community Development, and other relevant City and County departments and offices.
- Entering into negotiations, either directly or through designated brokers, with property owners and real estate developers within the Redevelopment Area for the purpose of acquiring land and property for redevelopment in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan.

- The DDA will perform other duties as necessary to implement the Redevelopment Plan.

For the foreseeable future, the City will have to act as its own Redevelopment Agent. If it so chooses at some future date, the City could create one of several types of redevelopment entities to coordinate its development activities, as follows:

#### **New/Expanded City Department**

The City could create a Department of Economic/Community Development with a staff of City employees capable of facilitating and monitoring projects called for in the Redevelopment Plan.

#### **Downtown Development Authority**

The City could create a Downtown Development Authority, which would act as Clarkston's Redevelopment Agent within a broadly-defined "downtown" area. The DDA would have eminent domain powers and the power to issue bonds.

#### **Private Non-profit Corporation**

Many non-profit organizations are currently in existence in Clarkston and DeKalb County. Most have "missions" that relate to the provision of social services. Economic development corporations may also take this form. Moreover, they can act as a city's Redevelopment Agent and/or economic development arm under a negotiated contract with that city. These non-profits – usually organized as 501(c)(3) organizations – can include a membership and/or Board of Directors representative of the broad community or can be primarily controlled by either the City or, for example, members of the Business Community. To manage the redevelopment process, the Redevelopment Agent will seek to enter into contractual arrangements with qualified vendors to provide the professional and other services required in qualifying and issuing the bonds, as well as in services including design, feasibility, project management, legal, engineering, and other services required for implementation of the proposed Redevelopment Plan.

The City of Clarkston's basic redevelopment and development-control efforts can also take the form of a more-clearly defined relationship or process among existing City, County and Private Sectors stakeholders. The County's Office of Economic Development and its Human & Community Development Department have worked with Clarkston over the years.

### **Initial Implementation Steps**

<b>SHORT-TERM (Years 1-5)</b>	
<b>Action Items:</b>	<b>Responsible Parties:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Zoning and Density Criteria</li> <li>■ Design Standards</li> <li>■ Grant Applications</li> <li>■ Public Improvements Design</li> <li>■ Private Sector Recruitment</li> <li>■ Marketing</li> <li>■ Public/Private Partnership Agreements</li> <li>■ Special-purpose Tax Districts</li> <li>■ Task Forces, Interface with Business and Community Organizations</li> <li>■ Greenspace and Pathway Planning and Acquisition</li> <li>■ Railroad Right-of-Way Design and Negotiation</li> <li>■ Initial (Phase I) implementation of public improvements and private redevelopment projects</li> </ul>	<p><b>DeKalb County Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Office of Economic Development</li> <li>■ Department of Human and Community Development</li> <li>■ Office of the Chief Executive Officer</li> <li>■ DeKalb County Commission Representative</li> <li>■ DeKalb County Development Authority</li> <li>■ DeKalb Chamber of Commerce</li> </ul> <p><b>Others:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consultants</li> <li>■ Task Forces, Business/Community Organizations</li> <li>■ Partnerships with Other Municipalities within DeKalb County</li> </ul>

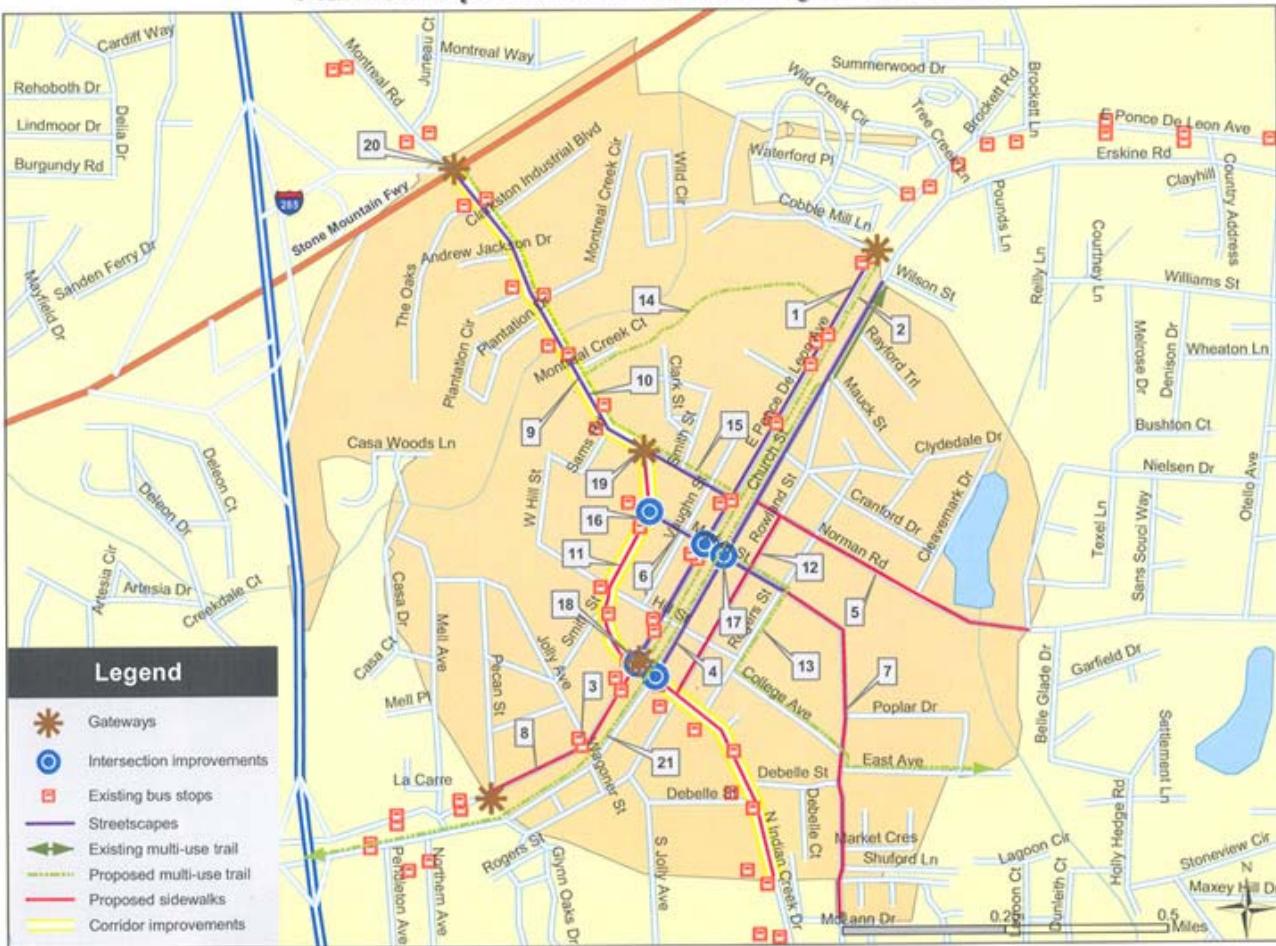
## **Personnel and Organizational Resources**

The City should make every effort to move toward creating a full-time City staff position for economic development. In a very short period of time, the activities associated with facilitating, coordinating and monitoring the redevelopment activities recommended in this report – both public improvements and private redevelopment – will require the exclusive focus of at least one trained professional. Over time and as financial resources become available, support staff might be added.

Until a City position can be created, funded and filled, the City can turn to several other sources of assistance in taking the initial steps toward implementing a comprehensive LCI program. These include the following:

1. DeKalb County: Both the Office of Economic Development and the Department of Human and Community Development are capable of providing technical assistance to Clarkston's implementation efforts, particularly in the preparation of grant applications. In fact, the Department of Human and Community Development will be the agency that approves the City's requests for CDBG funds or Section 108 Guaranteed Loan funds, as well as several other housing-related funding programs. The Office of Economic Development can be particularly helpful in assisting the City or organizations within Clarkston in obtaining bond financing for both public and private projects.
2. Consultants: Consultants brought in to perform specific tasks within a specific period of time can be quite useful in carrying out implementation tasks in the absence of a full-time City economic development staff. The City will soon need to prepare applications for LCI Implementation Grants and other funding; consultants are particularly adept at providing this type of service, particularly if the consultant has had prior and/or on-going experience with the prospective funding agency.
3. Task Forces, Business and Community Organizations: The City would be wise for a variety of reasons to move quickly to establish formal, recognized processes and partnering organizations for moving forward with LCI program implementation. The Clarkston business community seems active and eager to join with the City in taking full advantage of favorable market conditions. Obviously, some business or property owners will prefer that conditions stay as they currently are in Clarkston, but a unified implementation front that includes not only the City, but also other business and property owners would be extremely difficult to stop. The City should start by discussing an implementation strategy with current business and property owners, either as represented in existing associations or simply as a group of interested businessmen willing and able to form an organization and work with the City through an agreed-upon "partnership process." The same type of arrangement can be made with non-business community groups, including those formed around concerns about greenspace, community services, city beautification or crime. Such organizations will be able to take on a variety of implementation tasks in the short-term and should prove to be valuable assets to the City when it is able to create a professional economic development staff position. If fact, such organizations may prove to be a source of funding for such a position.
4. Partnerships with Other Municipalities: DeKalb County has several smaller municipalities within it that individually are not large enough to have all the development resources and options available to larger municipalities, such as Decatur. Obviously, these municipalities can join forces in lobbying County and State governments for common objectives, but there may be some new and novel ways for such municipalities to "pool" resources to attract development funding. Specifically, there may be a way for Clarkston to join with several other municipalities within the County to form a Tax Allocation District pool wherein several small individual TADs within individual municipalities are underwritten together, or at least bonds are issued at one time rather than one issue for each TAD. This in itself would greatly reduce the cost of issuance, which usually makes issues of small amount of bonds prohibitively expensive. The TAD bonds would be allocated to each municipality in proportion to the tax revenues each pledges to service the bonds in accordance with State law. TAD financing can be a very powerful economic development tool. In Clarkston's case, the only difficulty is creating a TAD district large enough to generate a reasonable amount of bonds. Perhaps this consortium or "pool" arrangement could provide a means of bringing the benefits of TADs to smaller municipalities.

## Planned Improvements for The City of Clarkston



\* See 5 Year Implementation Plan for Project Descriptions

# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Map ID	Project Description	Location	Project Type	Project Length (LF)	PE	PE Timeframe	CST	CST Timeframe	Total	Responsible	Funding Source
1	East Ponce Pedestrian Project Section 1: northside sidewalks (6 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), street trees, street furniture, fixtures and lighting	Northside of East Ponce from North Indian Creek to Eastern City Limits	pedestrian/transit	3884	\$ 145,650	2007	\$ 971,000	2008	\$ 1,118,657	City	LCI
2	East Ponce Pedestrian Project Section 2: Southside sidewalks (6 feet), planting and utility zone (18 inches), street trees, street furniture, fixtures and lighting and decorative railroad safety fencing	Southside of East Ponce from North Indian Creek to Eastern City Limits	pedestrian/transit	3884	\$ 166,041	2007	\$ 1,106,940	2008	\$ 1,274,988	City/CSX	LCI/CSX
n/a	East Ponce mid-block crosswalks: Patterned concrete crosswalks	Four locations, at transit stops, between of East Ponce from North Indian Creek to Eastern City Limits	pedestrian/transit	4	\$ 2,400	2007	\$ 16,000	2008	\$ 20,407	City	LCI
4	Church Street Pedestrian Project: southside sidewalks (6 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), street furniture, fixtures and lighting. This project will connect to the Stone Mountain PATH at Maurok.	Southside of Church Street from North Indian Creek to Maurok	multi-use	3672	\$ 137,700	2008	\$ 918,000	2009	\$ 1,057,708	City/PATH	LCI
5	Norman Road sidewalks rehab (existing curb and gutter) and share the road bike signage	Norman Road (sidewalks on Westside only) from Church street to southern city limits	pedestrian/bicycle	2453	\$ 14,823	2009	\$ 98,817	2010	\$ 115,648	City	LCI
6	Market Street sidewalks (6 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), street trees, street furniture, fixtures and lighting	Market Street from North Indian Creek across railroad tracks to Rogers Street	pedestrian	2470	\$ 92,625	2007	\$ 617,500	2008	\$ 712,132	City	LCI
7	Market Street sidewalks (6 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), street trees, and street lighting	Market Street from Rogers Street to southern City Limits	pedestrian	5936	\$ 178,080	2008	\$ 1,187,200	2009	\$ 1,367,288	City	LCI
8	East Ponce sidewalks (6 feet), curb and gutter	Northside of East Ponce from North Indian Creek to Western City Limits	pedestrian	3304	\$ 32,214	2007	\$ 214,760	2008	\$ 248,981	City	LCI
9	Montreal Road Pedestrian Project Section 1: Westside sidewalks (6 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), street trees, street furniture, fixtures and lighting	Westside of Montreal Road from Stone Mountain Freeway/City Limits to East Ponce (Town Center area)	pedestrian/transit	3582	\$ 134,325	2009	\$ 895,500	2010	\$ 1,031,834	City	LCI
15	Montreal Road Pedestrian Project Section 2: eastside multi-use trail (10-12 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), street trees, street furniture, fixtures and lighting	Eastside of Montreal Road from Stone Mountain Freeway/City Limits to East Ponce (Town Center area)	multi-use/transit	1920	\$ 21,818	2009	\$ 145,455	2010	\$ 169,282	City	LCI
11	North Indian Creek sidewalk, plant and utility zone, street trees, street furniture, fixtures, lighting and updated transit signage	Both sides of North Indian Creek from Montreal Road to southern city limits	pedestrian/transit	8276	\$ 620,700	2010	\$ 4,138,000	2011	\$ 4,760,710	City	LCI
12	Rowland Street sidewalks and curb and gutter	Northside of Rowland Street from North Indian Creek to Norman Road	pedestrian	3340	\$ 32,565	2011	\$ 217,100	2012	\$ 251,676	City	LCI
13	Clarkston Multi-Use Trail: plant and utility zone (5 feet), street trees, street furniture, fixtures and lighting	Connecting colleges to existing Stone Mountain Trail: from southern City Limits along river to Milam Park to East Ave to College to Rogers to Market Street	Multi-Use	3798	\$ 43,159	2007	\$ 287,727	2008	\$ 332,893	PATH/City/ DeKalb County	DEKALB/ PATH
14	Friendship Forest Multi-Use Trail: benches and lighting	Connecting from East Ponce through Friendship Forest to Montreal Road	Multi-Use	2436	\$ 20,761	2011	\$ 138,409	2012	\$ 161,181	PATH/City/ De Kalb County/Friend ship Forest	LCI/PATH
10 & 18	Montreal Road/North Indian Creek Corridor system improvements, including traffic signal timing at CSX grade separation	From Stone Mountain Freeway to Colleges	Corridor System Improvements	n/a	\$ 10,000	2006	n/a	n/a	\$ 10,000	DeKalb County/City	DeKalb County
16	North Indian Creek/Market Intersection Improvement-	Montreal Road at North Indian Creek	Intersection improvements	n/a	\$ 10,000	2008	\$ 40,000	2009	\$ 52,008	City	LCI
17	Market Street railroad crossing upgrade	Market Street and CSX RR: vehicular railroad crossing upgrade and pedestrian crossing improvements	RR Crossing	n/a	\$ 10,000	2006	\$ 250,000	2007	\$ 262,006	City/CSX	LCI/CSX
3	East Ponce Gateway and Transit Stop Improvements: Integrate gateway features into a transit waiting area	North Indian Creek at East Ponce	Transit Enhancement	n/a	\$ 25,000.0	2011	\$ 75,000	2012	\$ 100,000	City/CSX	LCI/CSX
19	Town Center Gateway/Intersection Design	Montreal at North Indian Creek	Intersection improvements and gateway	n/a	\$ 50,000.0	2010	\$250,000	2011	\$ 300,000	City/CSX	LCI/CSX
20	Montreal Gateway	Montreal at Stone Mountain Freeway Bridge	gateway	n/a	\$ 10,000.0	2011	\$100,000	2012	\$ 110,000	City	LCI

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

n/a	Commute Options Informational Campaign	Citywide	TDM	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$ 50,000	2005	\$ 50,000	City	LCI
n/a	Town Center Transportation Center	Town Center Area	TDM	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$100,000	2007	\$ 100,000	City	LCI
n/a	Ride with Council Day	Citywide	Transit	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	2005	0	City	City
21	Church Street multi-use path (10-12 feet), plant and utility zone (5 feet), railroad safety fencing.	Northside of Church Street (adjacent to railroad) from North Indian Creek to Maurk	multi-use	6112	\$ 101,543	2007	\$ 676,950	2008	\$ 780,500	City/PATH	LCI

**CLARKSTON LCI - FIVE YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

***Other Local Initiatives***

Ref. No.	Description	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Costs	Construction Year	Construction Costs	Total Project Costs	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Local Source	Match Amount
<b>Program L-1</b>											
L1.1	Create and Adopt Zoning Ordinance that will allow LCI Implementation	N/A	2005	\$20,000	N/A	N/A	\$20,000	*City	City	City	\$0
L1.2	Develop Design Guidelines for new development within City Limits	N/A	2005	\$20,000	N/A	N/A	\$20,000	*City	City	City	\$0
L1.3	Update & Adopt Comprehensive Plan	N/A	2005	\$65,000	N/A	N/A	\$65,000	*City	City	City	\$0
L1.4	Implement New Residential Urban Infill Guidelines	N/A	2006	\$20,000	N/A	N/A	\$20,000	*City	City	City	\$0
L1.5	Create 3 Community Gateways	N/A	2007	\$15,000	2006	\$100,000	\$115,000	City	City	City	\$0
L1.6	Strictly Enforce Building Code Violations	N/A	2005	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$75,000	City	City	City	\$0
<b>Program L-2 Housing Projects/Initiatives</b>											
L2.1	New Park-Land Assemblage and Construction	N/A	2008	\$150,000	2009	\$2,000,000	\$2,150,000	City & Private	City & Private	City & Private	
L2.2	Create Development Authority w/ funded Director Position	N/A	2005	\$35,000	N/A	N/A	\$35,000	City	City	City	
L2.3	Fund Zoning & Building Code Enforcement Position	N/A	2006	\$50,000	N/A	N/A	\$50,000	City	City	City	
L2.4	Develop Overlay District For Village Center	N/A	2005	\$15,000	N/A	N/A	\$15,000	City	City	City	
L2.5	Develop Urban Design Guidelines for the City that includes Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks	N/A	2006	\$20,000	N/A	N/A	\$20,000	City	City	City	
L2.6	Coordinate with Dekalb County Development Authority (DCDA) to promote private investment for infill and redevelopment initiatives	N/A	2005	\$30,000	N/A	N/A	\$30,000	City	City	City	
L2.7	Investigate the potential for developing a Development Authority for the City of Clarkston	N/A	2005	\$10,000	N/A	N/A	\$10,000	City/County	City	City	
L2.8	Develop a Community Development Corporation	N/A	2005	\$25,000	N/A	N/A	\$25,000	City/Private	City	City	

# 25 Year Employment/Population Projections

## Comparison of Development Impacts, 2004 - 2029

	2000	2004	2009	2014	2019	2024	2029
<b>Current Conditions</b>							
<b>population</b>	7,231	7,371	7,558	7,932	8,314	8,480	8,650
<b>housing units</b>	2,618	2,616	2,619	2,735	2,867	2,924	2,983
<b>employment</b>	3,540	3,757	3,988	4,232	4,492	4,768	5,060
<b>LCI Implementation</b>							
<b>population</b>	7,231	7,371	7,790	9,665	10,040	10,415	10,790
<b>housing units</b>	2,618	2,616	3,116	3,866	4,016	4,166	4,316
<b>employment</b>	3,540	3,757	4,075	4,455	4,883	5,348	5,841
<b>LCI Impl Net Impact:</b>							
<b>population +/-(-)</b>	-	-	232	1,733	1,726	1,935	2,140
<b>housing units +/-(-)</b>	-	-	497	1,131	1,149	1,242	1,333
<b>employment +/-(-)</b>	-	-	87	222	391	580	781

## Key Assumptions:

### current conditions:

1. Population and housing growth is modest, consistent with patterns observed since 1990.
2. Growth in housing stock likely from a combination of loss of existing stock and replacement at higher densities.
3. Multi-family for sale housing likely to be the primary component of housing stock increase, through continued conversion of existing stock and new construction.
4. Base employment increases annually at 1.5%.

### Under LCI plan

1. Population growth associated with new housing development demand, derived from preferred location and affordable product.
2. Population and housing unit increase not linked to new job growth within Clarkston, but likely influenced by employment growth in east metro area.
3. Household size declining in next five to ten years, as first generation of new housing attracts smaller one and two person households; average household size assumed: 2.5 persons/hh.
4. Base employment increases annually at 1.5%. Net new retail increases employment by 1 job per 200 square feet of retail. Net new office space increases employment by 1 job per 250 square feet of office.

source: 2004, 2009 figures based on Claritas projections; all other figures, study team analysis.

## Appendix A: Public Outreach Overview

July 15, 2004	Image Clarkston Meeting covering development issues in Clarkston relating to LCI Study
July 21, 2004	Interfaith Refugee/Immigrant Services – Joyce Wade attended and announced LCI Grant Information
July 28, 2004	LCI Core Team Meeting – flyer – Website Notification – Public invited to attend (approx. 35 attending including Jan Gardner)
August 4, 2004	Multiple Email Advertising September 18 <sup>th</sup> LCI Charette – also flyer handed out to citizens by Joyce Wade, Lassie Stevens & Jan Gardner
August 9, 2004	Facsimile transmitted to Refuge Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta & International Rescue Committee providing invitation to attend September 18, 2004, LCI Charette
August 12, 2004	Multiple Email – Flyer – Website notification for September 18 <sup>th</sup> LCI Charette (Nancy Quan-Sellers – member of the Asian American Commission for a New Georgia emailed RSVP to attend)
August 24, 2004	Clarkston Health Collaborative meeting minutes – Discussion of Changing term “Gentrification” to “Community Revitalization” with regards to Clarkston’s new developments and suggestion for Community representative involvement with LCI Study as LCI Meetings are open to the public (Mayor and John Shipman in attendance)
September 18, 2004	LCI Meeting – Flyer/Email/Website – Public invited to attend
September 28, 2004	Clarkston Health Collaborative Meeting minutes – (Person not identified – information incorrect) Issue raised of LCI meetings not well publicized/attended. Update was given for LCI study, notification given for LCI Public Meeting for October 13, 2004. Public encouraged to attend
September 28, 2004	Clarkston Health Collaborative Flyer – Agenda refers to LCI update
October 1, 2004	Press release by Altamira Design for Clarkston Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study
October 13, 2004	LCI Public Meeting to hear preliminary recommendations – flyers and website advertisement of event
October 13, 2004	Meeting Attendance Roster – Jan Gardner & Chris Holiday in attendance (approx. 37 in attendance)
October 26, 2004	Clarkston Health Collaborative Meeting Flyer with update on LCI Study on agenda

November 9, 2004	Multiple Email reminder of LCI Public Meeting for November 10 <sup>th</sup> (including Chris Holiday as email recipient)
November 10, 2004	LCI Public Meeting – Flyer and website advertisement of event
November 18, 2004	GA Perimeter College Charette – Mayor, Joyce Wade and Chris Abernathy attended and discussed LCI
November 19, 2004	Multiple address email and flyer to inform on LCI Draft Plans availability for Public review December 1 – December 8, 2004
December 21, 2004	Additional LCI Public Meeting – Flyer and website advertisement of event  Several Newsletters posted to website and distributed at City hall regarding LCI Study  Rosemarie Nelson, Chris Abernathy and Harry Housen attended various meetings discussing the LCI Grant  Joyce Wade met with Market Commons Association regarding LCI Grant  Joyce Wade contacted many businesses and Ken Greenwood to request that he activate the Clarkston Business Assoc. to further promote the LCI Study and its impact on the community  Mailed flyers for viewing Draft Plans. Mayor, Council, Core Team members calling and visiting residences and businesses

## **Appendix B: Transit User Overview**

Three Clarkston residents participated in short interviews to gauge current transit usage in the area. Two participants identified themselves at a Clarkston LCI meeting as transit users who wanted to share information about their transit usage. An additional participant was contacted by referral. Residents responded to questions about daily commuting patterns, access to transit, and perceived problems with transit in Clarkston.

Based on interview results, the residents would like to see various aesthetic and safety related changes to the area to improve transit usage in the area. Residents recommended cleaning up areas around transit stops, security patrolled pedestrian areas, increase walk/bike paths to transit stops, and better lighting for walkways. The Results of the interviews are summarized below.

### **Transit User Summary**

- Many Clarkston residents drive to MARTA's Avondale train station during rush hour to get to their destination.
- Majority of bus trips are from a Clarkston bus stop to MARTA's Avondale train station.
- Clarkston has a moderate population of transit dependent residents.
- Residents use transit for in Clarkston for daily commute trips as well as for pleasure.
- Safety and security walking to bus stops are big concerns for transit users.
- Transit users in Clarkston are satisfied with the frequency of service in their area.
- Major reasons cited for transit usage include:
  - Transit dependent
  - Transit more predictable than Atlanta traffic
  - Proximity to transit station
  - Free transit passes provided by employer



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JUNE 24, 2004

## Clarkston Reviews Land Use and Transportation Needs With LCI Grant

BY [MARY SWINT](#)

The City of Clarkston has instituted a six-month moratorium on new applications for zoning changes in the downtown area, while it conducts a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study.

At their May 4 meeting, the Clarkston City Council decided they would not accept applications for variances or changes of zoning until Nov. 4 and said the moratorium would have no effect on pending applications. City attorney Jack Rhodes said at the meeting the city planned to change the land use ordinance and adopt a land use map as part of the LCI study.

A few days later, on May 8, about 150 people attended the LCI kickoff picnic at Milam Park, according to City Council member Joyce Wade. The LCI study of the downtown area will cost \$81,250. Most of the cost will be covered by a \$65,000 study grant the Atlanta Regional Commission awarded Clarkston in February. The city will provide the remaining \$16,250 for the study. The LCI study will result in a long term land use plan, a five-year capitol improvement plan, and a Town Center Master Plan, Wade said, adding that it will also help make the city, which contains 1.1 square miles, more pedestrian friendly.

"We are looking for what our city can look like and then (we'll) try to get the people in to do these things," Mayor Lee Swaney said. "I have been really impressed with changes made in Kennesaw, where my son lives, as a result of an LCI grant....We are trying to get everyone involved."

The first in a series of public meetings for the LCI study was held June 16 at the Clarkston Woman's Club. About 20 to 30 people attended, according to project manager Chris Abernathy of Altamira Design and Common Sense Inc.



Desaray Ross, a student at Georgia Perimeter College, studies on her lunch break at Dolcé Ice Café & Pub in downtown Clarkston. The city of Clarkston has received a Livable Centers Initiative study grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission, which will allow the city to study how it can improve its infrastructure, land use policies and transportation options, including making the city more pedestrian friendly.

"One of the challenges in the public input process is trying to get participation by the refugee population," said Abernathy, a Clarkston resident. "We need to see what their needs are."

"One of the things that came out of the first public meeting was that many refugees on Montreal Road have to wait 30 to 45 minutes for a bus but on Ponce buses are running every 10 minutes," Abernathy added. The study, which will cover transportation needs, may include recommendations for sidewalks, traffic signals and rerouting buses that don't meet the needs of MARTA's target market.

Wade added that the city is also in dire need of sidewalks. "Clarkston has lots of 'pig trails' that cut across yards and railroad tracks," he said.

Improving transportation options will not be the only focus of the study. "We will look at ways to reorganize land use to promote mixed use developments," Abernathy said. The study will also point out opportunities for commercial development in the small city of about 7,200, which has one of the highest population densities in the state and about 50 nationalities. According to the 2000 census, three-quarters of the housing units in the city are renter occupied, compared to one-third of the homes in the Atlanta metro area.

"Town Center is one to two blocks wide and three to four blocks long," Abernathy said. "It is hard to tell where it ends because some houses have been converted into businesses." The downtown area is between Ponce and N. Indian Creek with Market St. in the center.

The next public meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the Clarkston Woman's Club. Consultants will present their transportation and economic analyses. A charette workshop is expected to follow on Sept. 18 and two more public meetings will be held on Oct. 13 and Nov. 10.

Altamira, which is the prime consultant for the LCI project, worked on Smyrna LCI study and helped redevelop the East Lake area. They will be involved with land use and urban design issues along with Peter Drey and Company. Walt Huntley and Associates will do the market analysis and will be involved in economic development and housing issues. Transportation planning will be provided by UrbanTrans.

Since 1999, 51 communities in the Atlanta region have received LCI grants to develop quality growth plans. The nine new LCI study grants announced in February ranged from \$65,000 to \$80,000. ARC has also provided grants for the implementation of plans that result from these studies.



DECEMBER 23, 2004

## New Parks And Streets Plus Higher Density Included in Clarkston LCI Plan

BY MARY SWINT

Clarkston residents and business people met this Tuesday to learn more about the city's Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan before it is submitted to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) by year's end. In the short term, the concept plan, drawn up by Altamira Design of Atlanta, calls for a condensed walkable shopping, office and residential town center focused around Market Street, which would be widened to include two through lanes of traffic, a center turn lane and parallel parking on each side. Sidewalks at least 17 feet wide would be built on either side of the street, also.

On Vaughan Street from Market Street north to Montreal Road, there would be ground floor retail shops with residential or office space above. Shared parking spaces would be located in the interior of the city blocks. A "life-long learning center" is envisioned between Ponce de Leon Ave. and Vaughan for local educational outreach programs.

The most important new element proposed in the plan is a new park located on Vaughan south of Market Street. It would have fountains, sculptures and walks and would stretch from Market Street to a new cross street, which would shorten the walk from Market to Hill Street and allow easier traffic circulation.

The existing Market Center west of Indian Creek Drive on Market Street would continue to operate for the foreseeable future but its owners may want to rebuild the retail and service buildings with parking located underneath, extend Market Street into the property's interior, and build residential or office spaces above the shops later as the town center between Ponce and Indian Creek grows, according to the draft LCI plan.



Downtown Clarkston is the focus of the recently completed LCI study.

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The plan calls for a new grassy park and pond at Indian Creek and Boulevard to serve as a transition area to the traditional single-family homes along Hill Street. On Market Street, Vaughan, Hill and the new cross street, pedestrians would have priority over cars. At least eight-foot wide sidewalks are proposed for Ponce de Leon and Indian Creek with light fixtures for safety and tall trees for shade. The town center would have seven blocks of walkable streets.

For medium-term projects, the draft plan identifies two areas in Clarkston that could be developed for higher density single-family homes. One plan would make West Smith Street, which is a dead end, loop around a new .75 acre park and replace older homes on that street with 23 new homes on 7500 square foot lots. It would also include a mixed use, multifamily or commercial use fronting on East Ponce de Leon. Ten structures on seven acres would be involved. Gross density would increase from 1.4 per acre to 5.3 per acre.

Another proposal would replace 35 small older homes and two commercial structures on 16 acres along East Ponce de Leon with 80 residential lots 50 feet wide and 100 feet deep built on six new streets about 200 feet long and near a two acre park. Overall density would go up from two units per acre to five.

The LCI study, which was launched in May, was funded in part by the city and in part by a \$65,000 grant from the ARC. A draft of the plan was on display at the City Hall, Clarkston Library and the Clarkston Community Center from Dec. 7 to the 13th.

"We are not trying to run anyone away from the city," Mayor Lee Swaney said. "We want to make it enticing to get people to stop in at the city and spend their money."