



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Northside Drive serves a diverse set of travel needs generated by a dynamic blend of urban land use contexts. It is both a regional travel route connecting residential North Atlanta to the heart of the City, and a local street connecting Atlanta University Center students to their residences. While it is home to the Georgia World Conference Center (GWCC), one of the largest convention complexes in the world, it is also surrounded by historic residential neighborhoods and small businesses. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges to developing a unified and powerful vision of future land use and transportation improvements in the corridor.

Today, Northside Drive is characterized by several different land use and urban design contexts. Near I-75, the corridor is dominated by low-rise office parks set far back from the street along with a hilly topography. Further south near 14th Street, the corridor context changes to small retail businesses located in strip commercial centers and single-family residential neighborhoods. South of Marietta Street, large amounts of vacant land and older industrial warehouse buildings define the corridor. At Simpson Street, the character of the corridor again changes, as large event facilities and multi-family affordable housing residents and apartment complexes that support the Atlanta University Center dominate it.

At the same time, Northside Drive serves many transportation needs that grow more demanding each day. Among the most pressing are serving the burgeoning development adjacent to the corridor including Atlantic Station, the Georgia Aquarium, several residential complexes that are under construction and Georgia Tech's expanding campus.

The diversity of land use contexts, and level of transportation need requires future transportation solutions that are multi-modal in nature, so that the unique travel demands of the corridor can be satisfied, without negatively impacting the quality of existing neighborhoods or reducing the potential for additional development activities. For these transportation solutions to be effective they must be linked to good urban design that will maximize corridor functionality, not just as a transportation facility, but also as a destination within the City of Atlanta.

Based on the variety of land uses, ongoing development activity, and increasing travel demand, the city of Atlanta has identified the Northside Drive corridor from I-75 North to I-20 West as a priority for meeting travel needs within the city and the region. Northside Drive is a major urban arterial and is also both a U.S. Highway and a Georgia State Route. In addition, the corridor is currently a focal point for redevelopment activity on the west side of the city. It is anticipated that major redevelopment projects will continue to take place in the corridor well into the future. A coordinated effort to accommodate and plan for future growth and its impact on the transportation system from a combined land-use and transportation planning perspective is critical.



## 1.1 Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the existing transportation infrastructure and develop alternative land-use and transportation scenarios for the corridor. Recommendations for future development and transportation scenarios will support the Regional Development Plan (RDP) and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), both of which are produced by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC).

## 1.2 Study Area

The study area runs along Northside Drive from I-75 at the north end to I-20 at the south end. The study area is illustrated in Figure 1-1.

### 1.2.1 Study Area Zones

Given its length and diversity of uses, the study area was divided into five zones for detailed analysis. The zones, which are shown on Figure 1-2, are as follows:

- **Deering Road Zone** is defined as the portion of Northside Drive from I-75 to 17<sup>th</sup> Street. It is characterized by three major office developments and a series of small retail and service-oriented business. Berkeley Heights, a mixed-use retail and apartment project is currently under construction at the entrance of the Corridor at I-75. The well-established Loring Heights and Berkeley Park neighborhoods are in this zone;
- **10<sup>th</sup> Street Zone** is defined as the portion of Northside Drive from 17<sup>th</sup> Street to Marietta Street. It is characterized by the Home Park neighborhood that abuts Northside Drive. This zone also serves as a major entrance into the Atlantic Station development at 17<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets. Prospective land uses in this zone are heavily influenced by Midtown, which lies to the east of the I-75/I-85 Connector. Georgia Tech is also a major influence in this zone;
- **North Avenue Zone** is defined as the portion of Northside Drive from Marietta Street to Simpson Street. It is in this Zone that Northside Drive jogs to the west and then to the east which is very confusing to first time travelers. It is characterized as an area of recent revitalization and will continue to attract future commercial and multi-family development. Northyards Business Park is a large development containing rehabbed office space. The Georgia Tech North Avenue Research Campus is also a major development in the Zone that continues to expand. Antioch Baptist Church North is engaged in a major redevelopment along Northside Drive with the Gateway apartments as a first phase in a larger mixed-use redevelopment by the Church. New residential and mixed-use development is occurring along the Marietta Street corridor in the zone. Large vacant parcels are available in this Zone which should attract additional major development;



**Figure 1-1: Study Area**

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- **Vine City MARTA Zone** is defined as the portion of Northside Drive from Simpson Street to Martin Luther King Boulevard (“MLK”). It includes the Vine City neighborhood to the west with substantial developable land currently being used as parking for Dome and Georgia World Congress Center (“GWCC”) events directly on Northside Drive. In addition, the GWCC is constructing a major surface parking facility at the northeast corner of the intersection of Simpson Avenue and Northside Drive and is seeking state funding for a new parking deck on land it owns at the southwest corner of the intersection. The recently expanded GWCC has a secondary entrance on Northside Drive as well as a number of surface parking lots. This zone also includes the Historic Westside Village which is about to begin a second major phase with a new development team working with the Atlanta Development Authority; and
- **McDaniel Street Zone** is defined as the portion of Northside Drive from Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Boulevard to I-20. It is characterized by the substantial renovations and new construction occurring in the Castleberry Hill area, major developments associated with the Atlanta University Center members—Spelman College, Morris Brown College, Morehouse College and School of Medicine, and Clark-Atlanta University, and the redevelopment of several public housing projects into the mixed-income communities of Castleberry Hill and College Town.

### 1.3 Study Process

The study process included extensive public and agency involvement and technical analysis as illustrated in Figure 1-3. Two steering committees were developed to guide the study. The Core Team was made up of stakeholders including neighborhood leaders and institutional representatives. The Agency Team was composed of all of the regional and local agencies with an interest in the corridor.

The study process progressed through three primary phases. The first phase involved establishing the study need and purpose statements based on an analysis of existing and future conditions. The second phase focused on the development of transportation and land use scenarios for consideration through the evaluation process. Last was the evaluation of the scenarios and the crafting of final recommendations. During this phase qualitative and quantitative data on the potential future impacts of the scenarios was generated and reviewed with the public and steering committees.

The public involvement process included five general public meetings at key study milestones. The public was also involved through presentations at neighborhood meetings, a traveling information booth and a study newsletter. The Core Team met four times and the Agency Team met three times.



**Figure 1-2: Study Area Zones**

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**Figure 1-3: Study Process**

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