

The Stitch Atlanta, Georgia

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

February 24–March 1, 2019



ULI Urban Land
Institute
Advisory Services

COVER PHOTO: Atlanta Downtown.

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The Stitch

Atlanta, Georgia

Investing in Open Space and Building
Economic Competitiveness in Downtown Atlanta

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

February 24–March 1, 2019

Urban Land Institute
2001 L Street, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-4948
uli.org

About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 81 countries.

ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2018 alone, more than 2,200 events were held in about 330 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at [uli.org](https://www.uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies.

Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 100 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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Special appreciation goes to Central Atlanta Progress staff members A.J. Robinson, Jennifer Ball, and Audrey Leous, as well as Daphne Bond-Godfrey, David Scott, Carson Cooper, and Tish Spearman for their support in coordinating with local stakeholders and putting together the panel's briefing materials.

Finally, the panel would like to thank the residents, public officials, business leaders, faith and community leaders, and stakeholders who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel over the week. The panel would also like to recognize the following key partner organizations that are required to advance the project toward reality: the city of Atlanta, Invest Atlanta, the Georgia Department of Transportation, MARTA, and the Atlanta Regional Commission.





JACQUELINE CAVALES/ULI

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About the Panel

About the 10 Minute Walk Campaign

PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL to the physical, social, environmental, and economic health of people and communities. Parks help expand the economy by attracting homebuyers, tourists, and highly talented workers. They protect the environment, provide space for the enjoyment of arts and nature, and make people healthier, happier, and more connected.

Despite these known benefits, research shows that one in three Americans—more than 100 million people—do not have a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. 10 Minute Walk is a movement dedicated to improving access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces in cities—large and small—throughout the United States. Led by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Urban Land Institute and with support from The JPB Foundation, 10 Minute Walk is working to create a world in which, by 2050, all people live within a 10-minute walk of a park or green space. This partnership drives commitments from city leaders working to achieve this vision and transform their communities.

The 10 Minute Walk Campaign has been endorsed by nearly 300 U.S. mayors so far. ULI, TPL, and NRPA are working with



partners in select cities on measurable policies and strategies to advance the 10 Minute Walk vision. Success in this work will require the expertise, creativity, and close collaboration of public- and private-sector leaders. ULI has a powerful role to play in catalyzing its members, networks, and partners around a vision of a green, sustainable, connected, and resilient future for all people.

Learn more and connect with 10 Minute Walk at **10minutewalk.org** and **uli.org/parks**.



The Prairie Line Trail in Tacoma, Washington, created a vital link in the city's active transportation system, helping support transit use and reduce automobile dependency.

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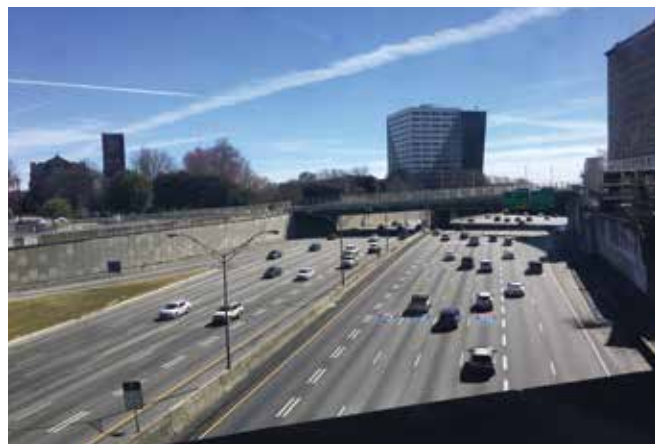
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The Panel's Assignment and Summary of Key Recommendations

“**THE STITCH**” is a concept to build a new three-fourths-of-a-mile-long “lid” above the Interstate 75/85 Downtown Connector, an interstate highway that bisects Atlanta’s Downtown, as a way to create open space in the heart of the city. Aptly named, this project is intended to “stitch” this section of Downtown back together with new streets, buildings, and parks. The Stitch concept proposes to reclaim about 14 acres of new urban green space atop a new platform structure that would extend from the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) Civic Center rail station at West Peachtree Street all the way to Piedmont Avenue.

A key goal of the Stitch project is to encourage new development that better serves the surrounding areas and absorbs growth, while also creating a large, new open space for Atlantans to enjoy. Serving as a significant employment center of Atlanta, Downtown accommodates 28 percent of the city’s jobs, and the Stitch is envisioned to continue to spur employment in the commercial areas that surround it. The Stitch can make active transportation more feasible in Downtown, creating more links and contributing toward transit-oriented development that encourages the use of MARTA buses and rail. Considering the synergy between a growing city and infrastructure investment to accommodate that growth and density, several parcels provide opportunities



A view looking west toward St. Luke's Episcopal Church from the MARTA Civic Center station.



CENTRAL ATLANTA PROGRESS

With the addition of the Stitch, Downtown would strengthen its connectivity to adjacent business communities. The diagram shows Downtown Atlanta's central location.

for redevelopment that would strengthen Downtown's place as Atlanta's central business district.

The vision for the Stitch is as follows:

- A place for Atlanta to unite. "Capping the Connector," the Stitch will bridge Downtown to Midtown, east to west, north to south, a new architecture to our past.
- An elevated urban oasis with parks, paths, development sites, and programmable spaces that engage our senses, civic pride, and higher aspirations.
- Transformational because it will weave together streets long ago cut off by the Downtown Connector, creating a new urban fabric by "Capping the Connector."
- Elevating Atlanta's worldwide reputation by wisely using existing resources and infrastructure above one of Atlanta's busiest freeways, creating one of the most recognizable, enjoyable, sustainable, and photographed places in the city.

- Uniting Atlantans in our vision for what our city can and should be.
- At the heart of the Stitch are the ideals of inclusion, unification, and access for everyone.

The Panel's Assignment

The ULI panel was charged with addressing the following strategic questions regarding the Stitch:

- **Project positioning**—key economic and community outcomes that support significant investments in public infrastructure;
- **Development impacts**—community development that could be catalyzed by the project;
- **Design**—experience and key competencies for design partners; and
- **Funding**—best practices and creative ways to build a coalition of funding partners.

Key Takeaways

After engaging in briefings from the sponsor committee, a tour of the study area, more than 70 stakeholder interviews, and an analysis of the site's existing conditions, the panel recommends the following key strategies.

Honor Your Story

Panelists encouraged local partners to use the opportunity of the Stitch to celebrate the history of Downtown Atlanta. The panel encourages the sponsor to use the site's history to craft a compelling story that enhances the Stitch's relevance for all Atlantans. Panelists acknowledged that, although they interviewed a large variety of stakeholders, some key voices were missing—including residential populations of Downtown and nearby neighborhoods, several local churches, local businesses, representatives of the school district, and others. Next steps would include engaging with local historians, showcasing neighborhood identity, and using art to tell stories—all of which will ultimately promote equity and work toward achieving the vision for the Stitch to be inclusive, to unify, and to be accessible for everyone.



PATCH, GEORGIA NEW OUTLET

A painting by renowned artist James Hiram Malone, considered a pillar in creative arts in the Atlanta arts community. This is one of many works inspired by the community of Buttermilk Bottom—a bold series filled with juke joints, rummage sales, barbecues, and the backbone of the black community, the church. This image showcases the existence of local art and how it relates to neighborhood identity in the area surrounding the Stitch.

Scale the Stitch

As proposed, the Stitch is highly ambitious in its scope, particularly in its physical footprint. After conducting an analysis that included evaluating the economics, land use context, history, national precedents, and financial feasibility, panelists concluded that a project of the size proposed was neither necessary nor financially feasible to achieve the transformative impact and highest benefits for the greatest amount of people in Downtown Atlanta. Instead, panelists recommended phasing the project by focusing on blocks 3 and 4—the northernmost blocks of the proposed project. Reducing the overall footprint of the Stitch articulates a more “bite-sized” approach and results in creating an open space that is roughly five acres in size—scaled similarly to that of a similar successful cap park, Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, Texas. Scaling the project relative to assets, costs, and impact will create a smaller funding gap, which could be addressed with the help of foundations, the city of Atlanta, the state of Georgia, and private donors. Scaling the Stitch will also reduce overall challenges relating to engineering considerations, traffic disruption, and operating and program costs.

Align Implementation Actions

At present, the Stitch remains an exercise in visioning. In order to move the project forward, it will be imperative to align efforts relating to governance, funding, and development. In particular, studies have demonstrated a value premium for properties located near a high-quality park or a transit station. Framing the Stitch as a transportation investment can unlock additional public funding opportunities, but doing so effectively will require additional political and community support.

Formalize Partnerships for Implementation

It will be imperative to form new partnerships to promote the Stitch. Panelists recommended taking active steps to create formalized partnerships around the following areas:

- **Housing.** To create inclusive communities and permanent affordability around the Stitch, the sponsor must formally engage the Atlanta Land Trust, the Atlanta Housing Authority, foundations, community development financial institutions, HouseATL, nonprofit developers, and others.



JACQUELINE CANALES/OLI

The view east toward the MARTA Civic Center station in Downtown Atlanta overlooking the I-85 Connector.

- **Homelessness.** Formalizing new cross-sector partnerships can address the needs of the unhoused population of Downtown Atlanta. Key partners include St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Woodruff Foundation, Emory University Hospital Midtown, HouseATL, and other nonprofit developers and services.
- **Transportation.** Securing funding for the Stitch will require adding the project to the Atlanta Regional Commission’s long-range Regional Transportation Plan. Emphasizing the Stitch as a cycling and greenway expansion, as well as a transit-oriented development opportunity, will help move this process forward.
- **Wellness.** Panelists suggest a concept to create an “Emory Health District,” which would be an opportunity for integrating education, research, and patient care with the park’s community health vision and help create attainable housing for area workers.
- Engaging, collaborating, and aligning stakeholders by formalizing a diverse advisory committee, hiring a designated engagement coordinator, developing a communications strategy, and establishing a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to design, develop, and operate the Stitch;
- Empowering leadership in order to drive governance;
- Beginning the predevelopment phase, including starting a campaign for the initial \$10 million investment; testing support from funders for an equitable community-driven approach; commencing preliminary engineering and design; obtaining permission to use freeway and airspace rights-of-way through the federal and state approval process; and initiating the environmental review process; and
- Reviewing and clarifying zoning and design with an eye toward the Stitch by enforcing design standards that prioritize the public realm framed by high-quality buildings that respect the human scale, and by future-proofing parking garages for adaptive use.

Prioritize Next Steps

The Stitch is a bold project, and moving from concept to reality will require ambitious action. Understanding this, panelists recommend several action items that Central Atlanta Progress can engage in immediately to maintain momentum. These include the following:

- Committing to an equitable and inclusive community that is anchored by the Stitch;



What Is Happening in Atlanta?

TO GAIN A GREATER SENSE OF THE OVERALL CONTEXT FOR THE STITCH, panelists evaluated the existing conditions of the study area and of the city of Atlanta from a variety of perspectives, including employment, population, and affordability.

Existing Conditions

From an employment perspective, Atlanta is growing increasingly competitive with other large metropolitan regions in the United States. Over the past five to 10 years, during a period of national economic recovery, Atlanta has created jobs at a rate that is faster than that seen in many areas of similar size, including Charlotte, North Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee, though it still lags behind other regions, including Dallas.

Atlanta is also growing in population, but this growth is uneven. An analysis of population growth from 2000 to 2016 indicates that growth in Atlanta's core has surpassed that of the city of Atlanta as a whole, but much of the growth has occurred in the larger Atlanta metropolitan area.

Atlanta's households—particularly those in the Downtown core—are largely young. An analysis of households by age using data from 2016 indicates that millennials (ages 14 to 32) represent the largest portion of Atlanta's growth, particularly in the Downtown core and in greater Downtown. Many of these individuals are likely students, given the locations of the Georgia Institute of Technology and Georgia State University.

From an income perspective, when compared with greater Downtown, the city of Atlanta, and Metro Atlanta, Atlanta's Downtown core represents an area with the highest concentration of people earning less than \$15,000 per year.

Housing attainability is a challenge central to Atlanta's economic prosperity. Half of the demand for new rental apartments in the Downtown core will be for lower-income households.

Existing Housing Conditions

Household income	Monthly rent	Annual potential demand (units)	Percentage of potential demand
Lower income (less than \$35,000)	Less than \$850	415	46%
	\$850–\$1,850	284	31%
	More than \$1,850	211	23%

Source: HouseATL, 2019; Bleakly Advisory Group, 2016.

About 80 percent of Atlantans spend more than 45 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation. Rents have increased by 48 percent since 2010, and each year the city loses 1,500 affordable housing units. The average rent for existing Downtown apartments is \$1,200 per month, which would be affordable to about half the potential new residents.

According to HouseATL, a collaborative task force convened by the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, ULI Atlanta, the Metro Atlanta Chamber, the city of Atlanta, Central Atlanta Progress, and the Center for Civic Innovation, housing affordability is a challenge central to the city's continued economic growth. Data show that about 80 percent of city households spend more than 45 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation and that rents have increased by 48 percent since 2010. The city is losing its existing supply of affordable housing at a rate of 1,500 apartments annually.

The Downtown market study further shows that about half the demand for new rental apartments in the Downtown area will be for lower-income units with a rent of less than \$850 per month. About 31 percent of the potential demand is for middle-income housing units renting for \$850 to \$1,850 per month, and 23 percent will be for higher-income units with a monthly rent exceeding \$1,850. This demand number does not include college and university students living in group quarters.

Market Trends

According to the Bleakly Advisory Group's Downtown Atlanta Real Estate Market Analysis, six major trends will shape development opportunities in Downtown Atlanta over the coming decade. These trends include the following:

- Acceleration in the growth of the city of Atlanta;
- Investment momentum in Downtown catalytic projects;
- Georgia State University growth;
- Emergence as a startup/technology/innovation hub;
- Dominance as the region's premier tourism district; and
- Capitalizing on the transit-rich environment.

Investment in Atlanta's Downtown is substantial. Over the past 10 years, \$3.8 billion has been invested in the city's development, with \$4.6 billion expected to be invested in future projects. This signals a great deal of promise for Downtown Atlanta—with so many big projects in the pipeline, the possibility for catalytic change is immense. A great opportunity exists for Downtown to embrace redevelopment in a way that can positively affect the city and its inhabitants.



Defining Your Story

NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES ARE CONSTANTLY EVOLVING, and the arc of a place often has a long history that extends beyond its immediate surface. Honoring the story of a place as it evolves is both a challenge and an opportunity. The Stitch and its surrounding community are home to a story with roots deeply embedded in history. As a way to celebrate the Stitch, panelists yearned to unearth more to the story than was immediately available.

Missing Voices

During the course of the week, panelists interviewed more than 70 stakeholders to glean a sense of the greater context for the Stitch from a variety of different perspectives. The information and feedback informed the panel's overall sense of opportunity and constraint for the project itself. Although panelists were able to meet with many area stakeholders, it also became clear that some key voices were missing from the conversation, including those that represented Downtown residential communities, additional local churches, local businesses, senior agency officials, members of the school district, One Atlanta, and neighborhood planning units. And although many stakeholders seemed to share excitement

about the Stitch, panelists noted that one key element was missing: a shared vision that unites all Atlantans regarding what the city and this project should be.

From a historical perspective, the 1960 urban renewal movement that demolished and cleared Atlanta neighborhoods to make way for infrastructure created a cultural void. However, the archeology of these neighborhoods, their residents, heroes, churches, and institutions, must be unearthed to provide enhanced project relevance. An intensive historical research effort is necessary to give intensive "Atlanta" meaning to the project. Furthermore, the freeway system that replaced the neighborhoods has brought many benefits to the city, while at the same time leaving neighborhoods cut off

from historically important links, cutting churches off from their relevant service neighborhoods, and generally restricting pedestrian mobility, public neighborhood scale, and institutional relevance.

Clarity as to the history of the neighborhoods that disappeared would help coherently communicate to adjacent communities what needs to be “restituted” beyond the obvious physical roadway connections. A broader dialogue related to people and places left at the edges of the freeway scar requires investigation as a way of informing a more three-dimensional stitching outside the freeway corridor wound.

Prioritizing Equity

As a project with catalytic possibilities, the Stitch offers the opportunity to address key equity challenges related to this project site. For the Stitch to move forward as a catalytic project, it must take into account the various forces

around equity and what this means for Atlanta. Challenges around housing affordability, health and wellness, parks and open space, mobility, culture, community, and jobs are all inextricably tied into the development of the Stitch. Ultimately, the panel recognizes that these threads are inherent to the project site and proposes that Central Atlanta Progress use them to move the needle on equity as part of its effort to move the Stitch forward.

Reaching a Common Vision

Celebrating culture and community by acknowledging and bringing shared histories to the surface can inspire communal support and enrich the project as a whole. By revealing lost histories, the project planning and design process can inspire community engagement at multiple levels, inform the scale and sense of neighborhood within the many project districts, and help shape the form of the project’s architecture, open spaces, and supporting infrastructure.



SAPORTA NEWS OUTLET

This image, from a 1960s edition of Life magazine, shows Mayor William B. Hartsfield’s visit to Buttermilk Bottom—where the Atlanta Civic Center now stands—a predominantly African American historic community adjacent to the site of the Stitch that lacked electricity and paved roads.

Panelists urge Atlanta to embrace the Stitch as an opportunity to “honor your story” and recommend asking some fundamental questions of all stakeholders to uncover a common vision. Some of these questions might include the following:

- What was the character of the lost neighborhoods?
- Who were key leaders of these communities?
- What were key events in the area?
- Does the site have any links to the civil rights movement?

A broad-based community engagement effort to gain support for the project at multiple levels should be preceded by a new overarching and inclusive narrative that clearly articulates why this is an important project for Atlanta. Implicit in this narrative is a strong conceptual statement that speaks to diverse populations, history, connectivity, and stewardship. Questions to focus the Stitch as a vehicle to achieve this new and inclusive narrative can include the following:

- What is special about this project that speaks to the culture and history of Atlanta?
- How and why is this project great for the city of Atlanta?
- How and why does this project reframe a set of interconnected neighborhoods?
- How does this project become a magnet that draws from near and far?

Crafting a compelling story that is relevant for Atlantans will make the Stitch a more powerful and effective project. The panel recommends engaging with local historians, showcasing neighborhood identities, and using art to tell stories as measures that will contribute to making the Stitch—and Atlanta’s Downtown—more equitable.



This diagram offers insights into different challenges relating to equity: health and wellness, jobs and small businesses, parks and open space, housing and affordability, culture and community, and mobility. The Stitch, as a project, touches on each of these challenges.

ULI



Opportunity Framework

THE STITCH REIMAGINES THE POSSIBILITIES for enhanced livability and an improved quality of life in Atlanta's Downtown by maximizing the economic value of existing transportation infrastructure as a key element of the park. In addition to reclaiming civic space over 16 lanes of existing highway, the project has the potential to catalyze investments in open space, mobility, housing, health and wellness, arts and culture, commercial development, and the public realm. Given the surrounding area's physical constraints and opportunities, the panelists devised a thoughtful opportunity framework. A broad theme of the framework is its ability to enhance the experience of Atlanta's Downtown through investing in a network of great civic spaces.

Scaling the Stitch

Envisioned at about 15 acres in size with a preliminary price tag of \$452 million, the Stitch is incredibly ambitious in its scope, especially in comparison to national precedents. A project of this magnitude is extremely difficult to implement, even in the best of circumstances. Given the existing conditions of the site and the greater social, regulatory, and physical context, the panelists agreed that scaling the Stitch will be crucial to ensuring its success. The panel recommends reframing the Stitch by concentrating on blocks 3 and 4—the northernmost blocks of the proposed overall

Delivery Strategy:
Where do we start?

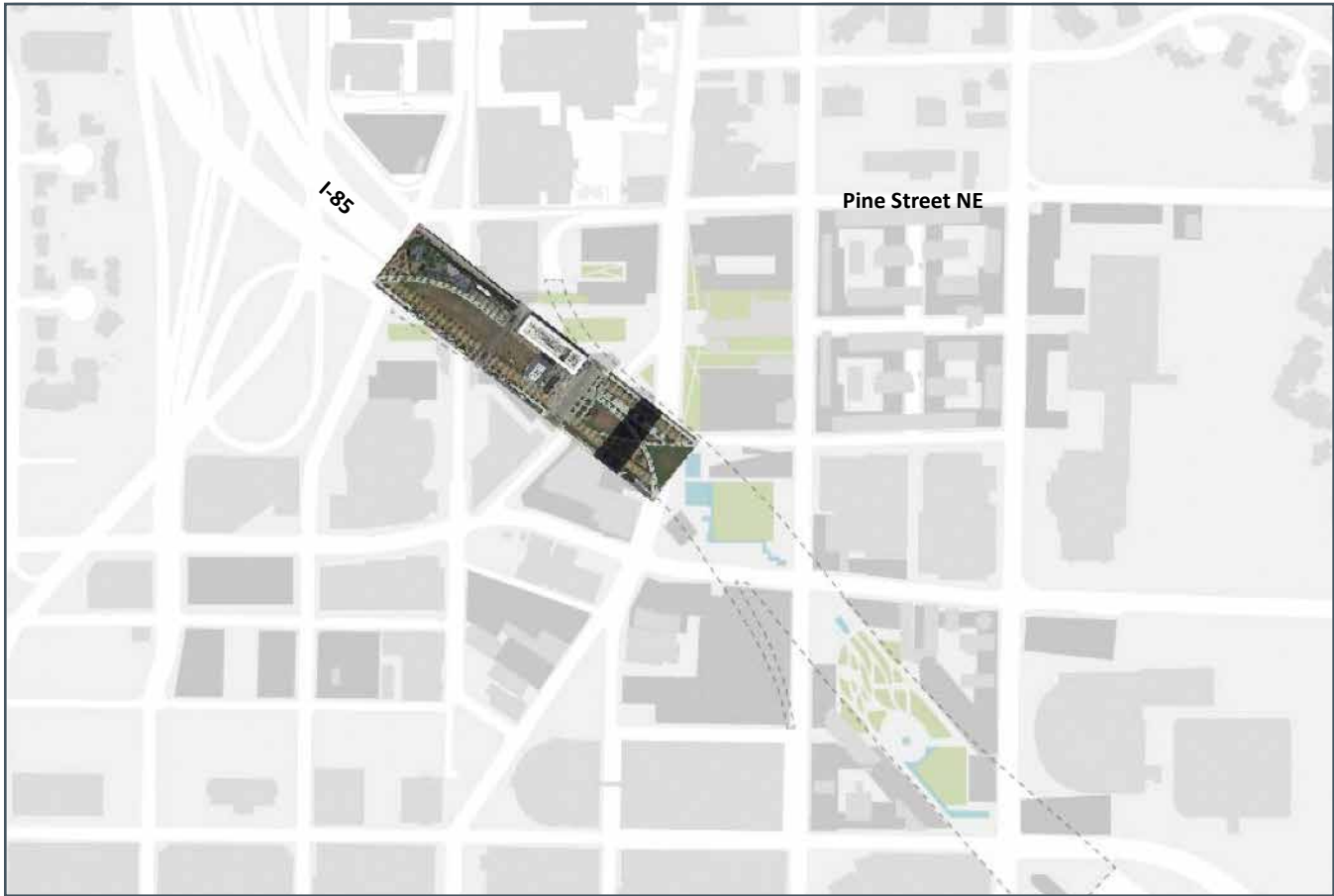
Project Impacts:

- Enhancement of Peachtree Street Corridor
- Unification of Downtown/Midtown
- Unlocking potential TOD development with MARTA.

Funding Availability:

- Recommended – Start, no stop
- Incremental Option – Start, pause, complete

Sponsor-recommended delivery strategy starting with the MARTA station at block 4 and continuing uninterrupted to Piedmont Avenue at block 0.

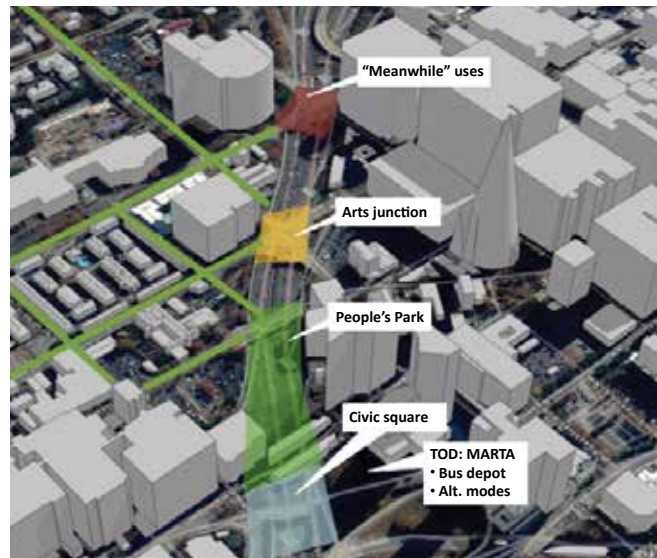


GIA BIAGI/ULI

This map of the greater Downtown Atlanta area shows Dallas's Klyde Warren Park, at scale, overlaid atop blocks 3 and 4 of the Stitch, illustrating the recommended scale of a highway lid project in Downtown Atlanta, which is consistent with national precedents. The proposed highway cap project for Atlanta is outlined with a dotted line.

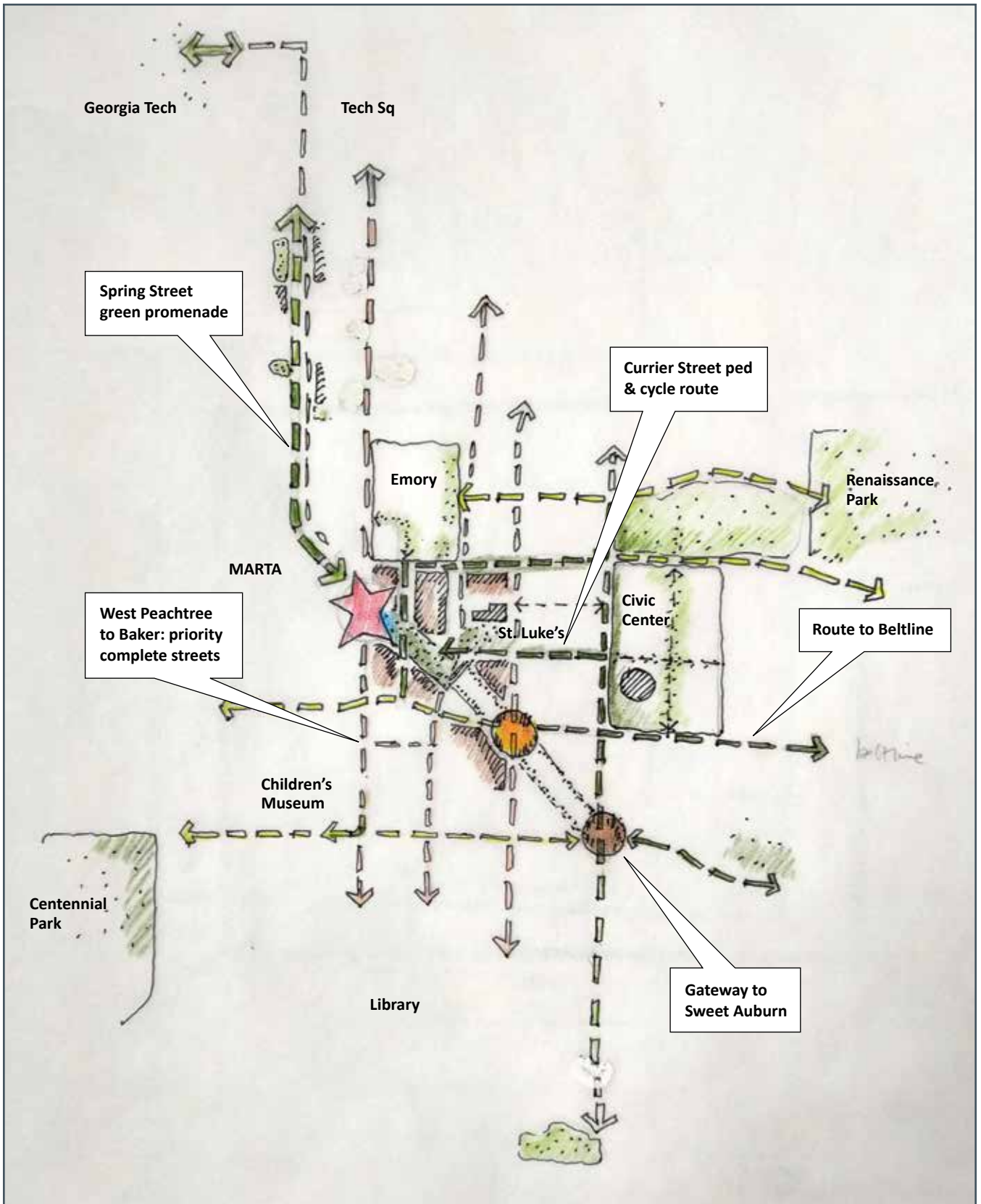


GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN FIRTH/ULI



GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN FIRTH/ULI

Isometric diagrams highlight the recommended primary transportation-oriented development surrounding the MARTA Civic Center station and the extension of the bridge, labeled as the "People's Park."



GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN FIRTH/JULI

This conceptual diagram demonstrates the panel's recommendation to reframe the Stitch in terms of connectivity and access to larger area nodes, with a focus of investment at the MARTA Civic Center station and nodes of investment at key crossings.

lid—as the project’s main focus. This scaled down project would measure about five acres with a preliminary cost estimate of \$185 million.

The current plan for the Stitch is grounded in a series of master-planning and visioning efforts conducted over the past five years that include a range of local and regional transportation plans, market studies, a Downtown Master Plan, and studies of technical and financial feasibility, as well as the Jacobs Vision Plan of 2015 that represents the first conceptual illustration of the Stitch within a preliminary understanding of constraints and opportunities. These plans and studies—several done in response to projections of unprecedented Downtown growth over the next 20 years— together offer a portrait of ambition that seeks a path forward.

Toward that path, the findings of the ULI Advisory Services panel address the technical questions and challenges identified by Central Atlanta Progress in the original assignment as well as adaptive opportunities made clear through the panel’s engagement with the study area, stakeholders, and peer discussions.

As such, the Advisory Services panel offers the following guides as a foundation for its recommendations. These guiding principles include suggestions for additional research, expanded outreach, strategic partnerships, and ways to address important policy questions facing the entire city:

- Human-scale design;
- Streets;
- Buildings; and
- Prioritizing mobility and transportation.



GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN ERTHOUJI

A massing diagram of the area surrounding the proposed Stitch project that differentiates the density and height of Downtown and Midtown area contexts.

Human-Scale Design

Downtown once supported a fine grain of buildings, blocks, and streets, as evidenced by Peachtree, Broad, and Mitchell. However, Downtown from Woodruff Park to I-75/I-85 is inconsistent in terms of street blocks and frontages, resulting in many gapping spaces fronting streets. This is caused by vacant spaces, surface parking, and buildings occupying the block in such a way that street edges are ignored. Meanwhile, Midtown is redeveloping at a rather fast pace. To witness this economic investment is encouraging; however, what is being built seems to show little regard for the human scale and the experience of the street and public realm.

Although limited historic resources remain in the Downtown to Midtown areas, a few buildings with notable features remain, which can support the urban grain through view corridors by highlighting and celebrating the Stitch project.

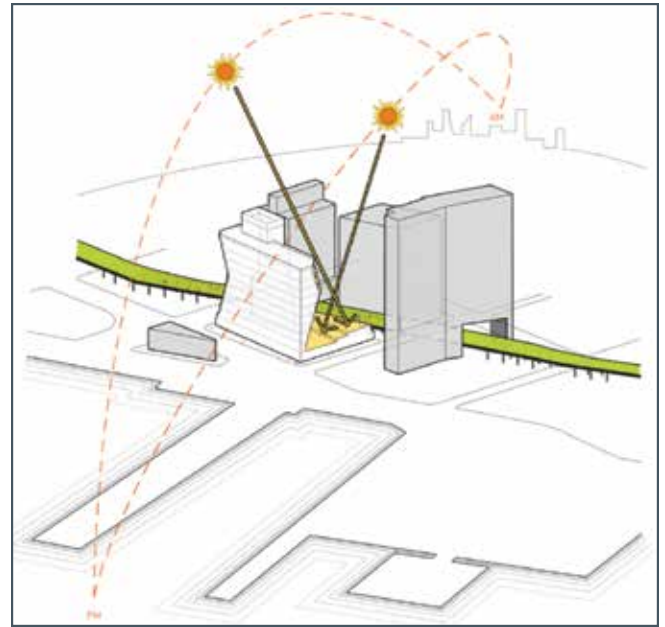
Streets

Atlanta is an automobile-oriented city. Across North America, city centers are starting to recalibrate themselves for alternative modes—walking, cycling, scootering, public transport, and preparing for the unknown impact of automated vehicles. Although expecting people to radically alter their commutes is unrealistic without improvements to public transportation, reenvisioning of how the space between buildings—the streets—is allocated is not precluded. The Stitch and its adjacent redevelopment should embrace this opportunity.

Currently, many of the north–south streets that cross the I-75/I-85 Connector, such as Peachtree, Courtland, and Piedmont, are four lanes. These streets should be reduced in traffic capacity as they travel north across the highway (Stitch or no Stitch). “Complete streets” should be applied across all streets, ensuring walkability and a bicycle-friendly set of routes. The conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets, as proposed, is definitely a step in the right direction. The U.S. Department of Transportation defines complete streets as streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are traveling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.



An example of solar carving by Studio Gang Architects at the High Line in New York City.



West Peachtree, Peachtree, and Courtland streets should change their character as they pass through the Stitch, slowing down as they become part of land bridges.

Spring Street can be envisioned as a green promenade—forming a gateway to the MARTA Civic Center station at one end and linking to Tech Square to the north. Once Spring Street reaches Fifth Street, the route can take advantage of the bridge to Georgia Tech. Along Spring Street's length, sidewalks should be widened and “greened,” taking advantage of building setbacks, vacant plots, and land currently occupied by surface parking.

In addition, sidewalk surfaces should be in good condition, wide enough to support active spill-out space and incorporate streetscape elements. These are all features currently lacking in Downtown. Locations for pocket parks and other small-to medium-scale usable and green open spaces should be identified that can provide places of repose in this very urban context—essentially stepping stones to the Stitch and other destinations, thereby shrinking the perceptual distance.

Buildings

Building height and massing must be considered not only as part of a skyline, but also in terms of the pedestrian experience. Shade, shadow, and overlook should all be considered. While the landscaping of parkland can contribute

considerably to creating a human-scaled environment, it alone should not be the only mechanism to do this. The panel suggests that a building height datum be established that relates to adjacent existing and environmental conditions. This could vary from the north to the south side of the Stitch—with taller buildings (not to exceed 30 stories) around the MARTA station, acknowledging the transit-oriented development and the existing U.S. General Services Administration building. Taller buildings in general would be on the north side of the Stitch but should step down in recognition of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and older buildings further north. On the south side of the Stitch, the Medical Arts Building sets a generous height maximum of 12 stories. The panel recommends that all flanking buildings incorporate a podium datum of four to six stories.

Although from a development perspective it is tempting to allocate a full block to a single building footprint, this is where the urban grain beloved in the older parts of cities is often sacrificed. Even if a single plot is to be developed by a single entity, mechanisms exist to ensure that the final building form does not result in what reads as a simple extrusion upward from the ground plane.

The panel's understanding is that both zoning regulations and design codes are somewhat disjointed. The panel learned that some level of control is imposed through Special Public

Interest Districts, overlay districts with unique zoning in areas such as the following (http://atlanta.elaws.us/code/coor_ptiii_pt16_ch18_sec16-18.001):

- (1) In general areas officially designated as having special and substantial public interest in protection of existing or proposed character, or of principal views of, from, or through such areas;
- (2) Surrounding individual buildings or grounds where there is special and substantial public interest in protecting such buildings and their visual environment; or
- (3) In other cases where special and substantial public interest requires modification of existing zoning regulations, or repeal and replacement of such regulations, for the accomplishment of special public purposes for which the district was established.

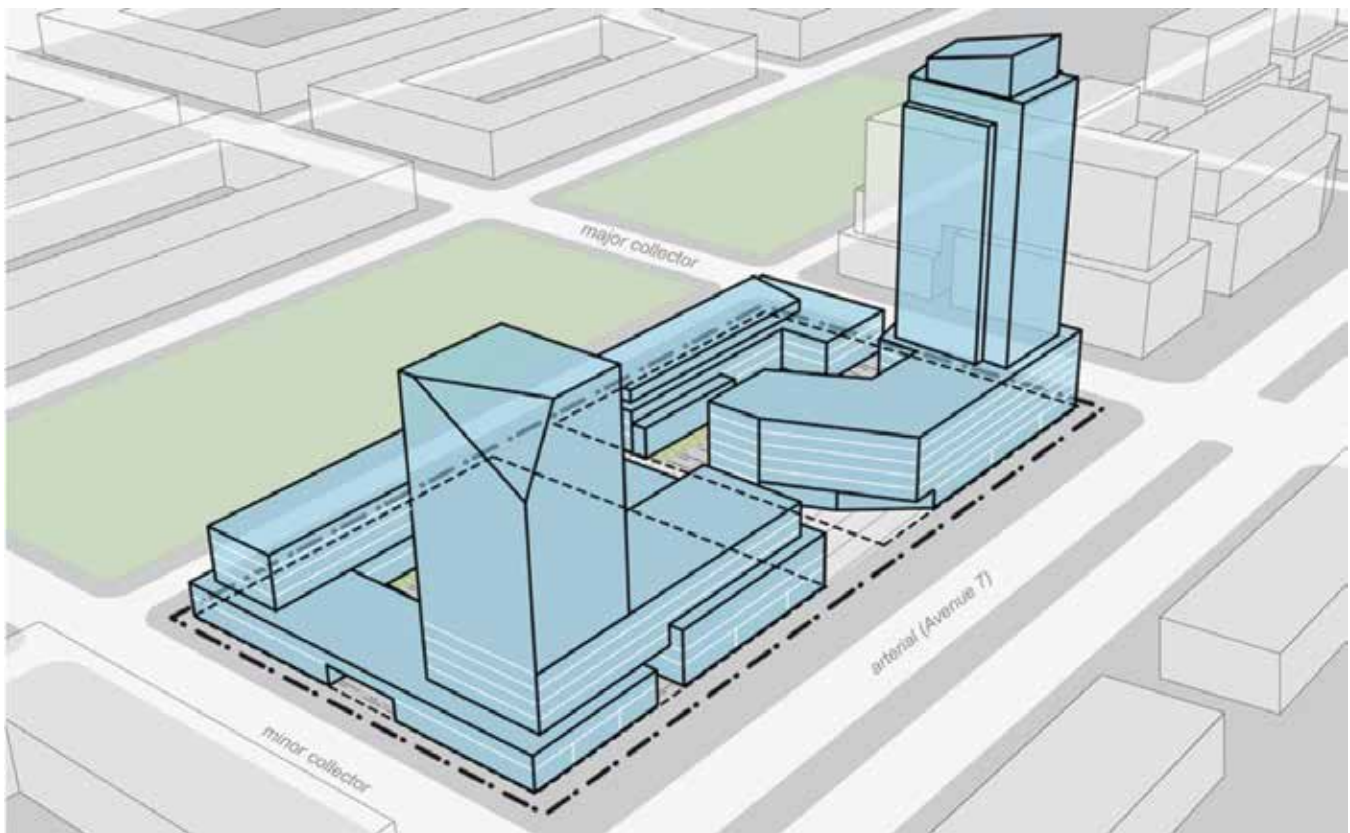
The goal of this zoning is to promote a dense, mixed-use, walkable community where people can live, work, and play. One of the primary objectives was to decrease automobile

dependency. Boundaries of the district were established to enforce dense growth within the designated zone.

These Special Public Interest Districts are numerous and inevitably bump up against each other. Moving forward, the panel recommends that these be reviewed because some seem to have been established as far back as the early 2000s. A set of clear codes and urban design guidelines should be promulgated that can address and knit together new development with the existing cityscape, hopefully catalyzing coherent human-scaled urban blocks framing the public realm.

Prioritizing Mobility and Transportation

Although the resulting surface development of a freeway cap is often a well-designed park, the removal of the freeway barrier opens up a host of new mobility connections. Reconnecting the local street grid and opening up more convenient pedestrian corridors can dramatically improve mobility for people using all modes of transportation. Furthermore, this improved access offers locational



Toronto City Government Tall Building Guidelines *for building massing in respect to the city street scale.*

TORONTO CITY GOVERNMENT

advantages for existing land uses and provides incentives for new development opportunities. The Stitch also provides the setting to significantly increase ridership for an underperforming MARTA Civic Center station. Ridership gains would be accomplished by remodeling the station and improving access to regional buses and transit-oriented development on adjacent land uses.

National Precedent for Highway Capping Projects

The design of freeway projects has substantially evolved since the completion of the buildout of the interstate highway system. Like Atlanta’s Downtown, communities around the country have historically experienced significant displacement from a highway cutting through and dividing neighborhoods. Many of these communities have advocated for pedestrian overpasses and even more ambitious “lids” or caps to restore their lost mobility and identity. In many other cases, as highways, bridges, and access ramps have needed to be rebuilt to accommodate increased traffic and growth, innovative design solutions have given rise to new multimodal uses, parks, and open space and have provided better access to community amenities.

Freeway Park in Seattle, Washington, marked the first national highway lid project of its kind. This park, which also provides space for a state convention center over the interstate and a connection between neighborhoods, was completed in 1976. Since that time, about 50 freeway cap projects have been proposed, many as a part of a significant highway expansion, with a smaller number of projects specifically planned to support a restoration of neighborhoods torn apart by freeway construction.

Lessons Learned from Previous Projects

An analysis of recently completed highway cap projects indicates common themes that spurred their success. In cities such as Boston, Dallas, Denver, Pittsburgh, St. Paul, St. Louis, and East Los Angeles, citizen and public engagement was a key component of the process. In each of these cities, citizens successfully mobilized support to educate local elected officials on the greater need, as well as possible solutions—often using innovation as a way to address intractable challenges relating to physical design.

Some key principles and practices that have led to successful large-scale highway cap projects include the following:

- Recognize the long-term timelines associated with large-scale capital project development; be patient but persistent to achieve the project objectives.
- Build a strong coalition of supporters as well as champions to provide leadership and insight in seeking financial support from the private sector, foundations, and state and federal agencies.

— National Highway Capping Overview —

Project	Year	Acreage
Seattle, Freeway Park, I-5	1976	5.2
Dallas, Klyde Warren Park, I-35	2000	5.2
Philadelphia, I-95	2022	4.0
Pittsburgh, I-579	2021	3.0
San Diego, Teralta Park, I-15	2002	5.4
Chicago, Millennium Park	2004	24.5
Dallas, Southern Gateway Public Green, I-35	2020	5.5
Boston, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Park	2008	17.0

Source: Richard F. Krochalis/ULI

This table lists a cross section of highway cap projects from around the United States. Though the sizes of these parks vary according to a variety of factors, including community objectives, site conditions, proposed amenities, funding sources, and the cost/benefit analysis of the project, many of the highway cap projects are built at around five acres in size.

For more information:

- <https://www.klydewarrenpark.org/About-the-Park/our-story.html>
- <https://archpaper.com/2017/07/freeway-park-seattle-wayfinding-remodel/>
- <https://www.rosekennedygreenway.org/about-us/greenway-history/>
- https://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/CMS/Meetings_and_Events/2013_Annual_Meeting_Handouts/FS020_Rose%20Kennedy%20Greenway.pdf

- Explore innovative partnerships to foster economic development opportunities.
- Provide outreach to community groups to find out what is needed to help leverage the project’s benefits, such as incentives to meet community goals like affordable housing.
- Create new governance models to work with government agencies using nonprofit entities, if needed to design, construct, and/or operate the parks and infrastructure associated with freeway lids.
- Develop early, small-scale “wins” or improvements that demonstrate to the community commitment to the longer-term goals.

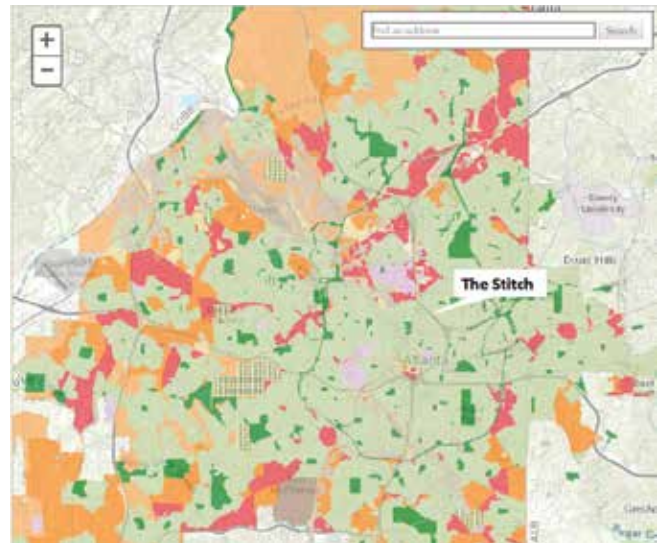
Opportunities

Reframing the Stitch in this way is recommended for a variety of reasons, including the following opportunities to align with key equity themes, such as creating open-space connectivity, improving mobility, prioritizing the pedestrian realm, enhancing access to arts and culture, and supporting strategic development.

Connecting Open Spaces

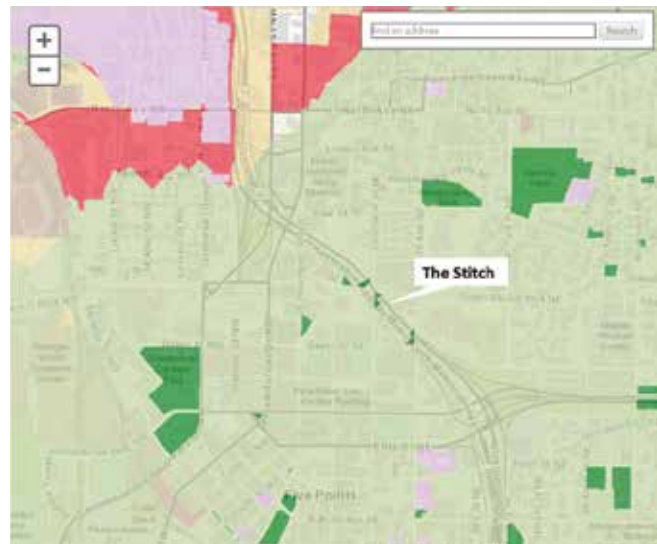
Studies show that high-quality parks provide a wide range of benefits to urban residents and cities themselves. These include physical and mental health benefits, by providing opportunities to be physically active and to interact with nature; economic benefits, by boosting business and helping revitalize neighborhoods; community-building benefits, by providing opportunities for neighbors to interact with each other and work together to improve their surroundings; and environmental benefits, by cleaning and cooling the air, improving climate resilience, and providing opportunities for environmental education.

Access to a network of high-quality parks in Downtown Atlanta is limited, and many of the Downtown open spaces are small and poorly maintained. Although Centennial Olympic Park marks a large open space, its programming tends to be geared toward tourists and does not draw activity on the neighborhood scale. Other parks, such as Central Park, Renaissance Park, and the BeltLine, feel far away. For these reasons, a real opportunity exists for the Stitch to build connectivity for the existing park network and to strengthen the access to high-quality open space for Atlanta’s Downtown.



GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN FIRTH/JULI

This map, provided by the Trust for Public Land, shows walkability to parks in Atlanta. The dark coloring represents park space, while the light green represents reasonable walking distance to a park. The red and orange coloring represents areas that are “park poor”—i.e., where a heightened need exists for access to parks and open space.



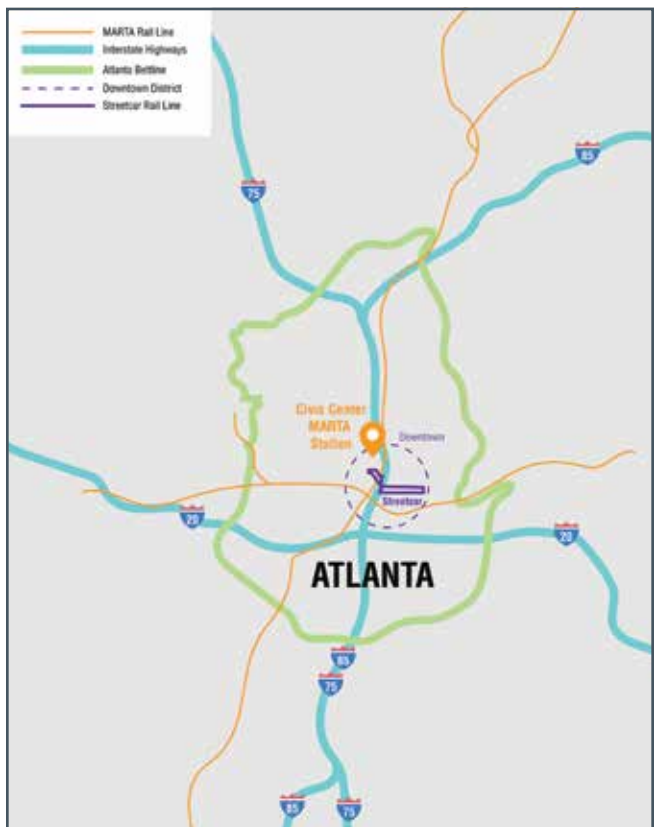
GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN FIRTH/JULI

Although Downtown Atlanta has access to open space, much of this open space exists on small parcels, is not well maintained, and fails to connect in a meaningful way with neighboring open spaces. Some areas of Downtown Atlanta, including the northwest area of this map, are park poor, with some of the highest obesity rates in the city. The Stitch, if developed equitably, could change this narrative for Downtown Atlanta and provide an opportunity to enhance overall open-space connections.

Improving Mobility

Downtown Atlanta is rich in transit assets. At the time of this panel, Downtown Atlanta was identified as having no fewer than 12 streetcar stops, eight MARTA rail stations, 17 MARTA bus routes, 16 Zipcar stations, six MAVEN stations, 7.4 miles of bike lanes, six Relay bike hubs, and 95,000 parking spaces. Leveraging these assets is a key opportunity for the Stitch—especially the existing public transit investments, which would help reduce reliance on automobiles to access the Stitch.

The MARTA Civic Center station, in particular, is pivotal to the success of the Stitch. Development of the Stitch, and around the Stitch, should be focused in a manner that is consistent with transit-oriented development. The study area is surrounded by land uses—such as Emory University Hospital Midtown—that employ a constituency who could take advantage of public transport rather than fill the massive parking garages to the north of the station. Furthermore,



Highlight of the Downtown area and central location of the proposed Stitch project adjacent to the MARTA Civic Center station, which, if built with transit and mobility improvements, can connect to the great BeltLine loop.



GIA BIAGI AND KATHRYN FIRTHULLI

This image shows the streetscape connectivity opportunities of the scaled-down Stitch project (indicated by the solid green rectangle). The blue dot identifies the MARTA Civic Center station, while the dotted green lines represent the opportunities for pedestrian connectivity around the study area given the existing street grid.

the development of the MARTA station as more of a “place” would be boosted by the creation of the Stitch, creating a mutually beneficial opportunity to catalyze development of an open space around an existing public transit investment.

Prioritizing the Pedestrian Realm

The existing Downtown street grid around the scaled down Stitch project presents an opportunity to create a more hospitable pedestrian realm. Although many of the existing roads are geared almost exclusively toward automobiles, an opportunity exists to apply complete streets principles to the street grid immediately surrounding the Stitch. When streets are reoriented to accommodate a variety of users—including pedestrians and cyclists—perceptual distance shrinks, opportunities for neighborhood-scale activity unlock, and communities become more accessible.

Enhancing Access to Arts and Culture

While Downtown Atlanta is home to many arts venues, including locations for public art, it is also home to many empty lots. The confluence of the presence of art and developable land creates a big opportunity for the Stitch. As a large open space Downtown, if programmed well, the Stitch could serve as both a connection and a node for arts and culture in Downtown Atlanta.

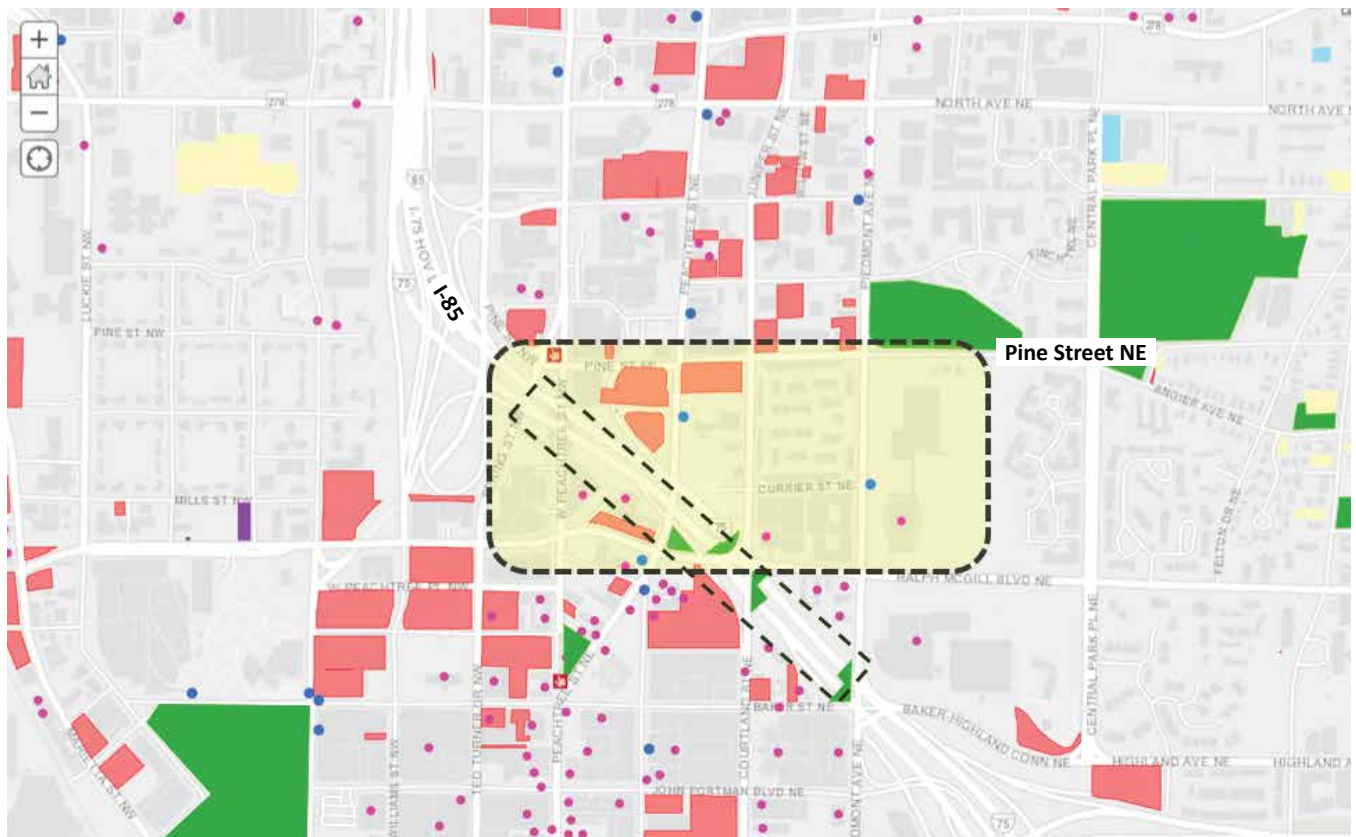
Supporting Development, Land Ownership, and Institutions

Downtown lacks diversity in job types and activities, and its overall market conditions fall short of supporting new office development. Compared with neighboring Midtown, Downtown office rents are 50 percent lower, and multifamily residential rents are 20 to 30 percent lower. Transit use in the area parallels the market trends: the MARTA Civic Center station is underused and does not offer strong pedestrian connections. Ridership at this station is relatively low compared with that of other MARTA stations.

These market trends, combined with downtown's lack of identity, present challenges with regard to overall perception. Downtown is less of a draw for current residents, and although Centennial Olympic Park is home to a variety of

programming activities, most of these activities serve a tourist market. Combined with the lack of residents near the Stitch, this limits the amount of retail that can be supported.

A large public park could be a catalyzing amenity to attract new office tenants and residents. This could have a positive impact on rents, thereby making new development more feasible. Because the Stitch will be located near many of the city's major destinations, including Centennial Olympic Park, the Georgia World Congress Center, hotels, museums, and the Georgia Aquarium, ample opportunities exist for programming and placemaking. In addition, nearby development projects, including the Gulch and Tech Square, present an opportunity to coordinate in elevating the image of Atlanta's Downtown. And while MARTA's Civic Center station is currently underused, it is an asset to the neighborhood because it is a major transit hub that serves the region.



This map illustrates the development and placemaking potential of the proposed Stitch (indicated by the diagonal rectangle) by combining an analysis of arts venues, vacant lots, and proximity to existing parks and transportation infrastructure. The red represents parking and vacant lots, giving a sense of future development opportunities. The green represents open space in the downtown core, and the dots, existing cultural and arts assets. An opportunity exists for programmatic synergies between existing arts assets and the Stitch.

The Stitch not only presents an opportunity to reconnect the communities on the north and south sides of the freeway, but it can also serve as a catalyst for private development in downtown Atlanta. Many case studies find significant increases in property value—up to 40 percent—in properties adjacent to well-maintained parks and open spaces. Some existing redevelopment opportunities are located on properties in the north end of the Stitch, including sites owned by St. Luke’s Episcopal Church and Emory University Hospital Midtown. Additional opportunities exist in the neighborhood known as South of North Avenue (SoNo) because of the recent closure of the homeless shelter, combined with potential redevelopment of the Civic Center, and the blooming business community in Midtown.

The area surrounding the Stitch is also home to many institutional stakeholders and key partners, including Emory University Hospital Midtown and St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, in particular, owns four to five acres adjacent to the core church property. While the church is committed to holding its properties for future development, it is also committed to a vision of open space that creates a “green” in front of the church, across Peachtree Street, to preserve a contemplative reflection of the church’s image. Such a vision is consistent with that of the Stitch. St. Luke’s parishioners emphasized the church’s social mission and its bandwidth to incubate the early phases of socially driven enterprises, such as its current child care program for unhoused children. Because of its social mission, the church is interested in creating affordable housing that enhances diverse populations and houses the unhoused. These values are consistent with the catalyzing impact that the Stitch may have on Downtown Atlanta.

LEVY PARK, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Owner: City of Houston

Developer: Upper Kirby Redevelopment Authority

Funding: \$15 million, funded by the public

Operation: Levy Park Conservancy and Midway Companies

In 2015, the Upper Kirby Redevelopment Authority (UKRA), in partnership with the Upper Kirby District Foundation, undertook the transformation of Levy Park into a world-class park. After it reopened in 2017, the six-acre park was managed and maintained by the private nonprofit organization. The highly programmed park was centered within the residential development projects. The UKRA assembled properties adjacent to Levy Park to improve park access and allow adjacent developments.



RIGGS CLEMENT/HALE STUDIOS

Before its redevelopment, Levy Park had fallen into disrepair, suffering from a lack of visibility, access, and activation. The three surrounding developments turned their back on the park, and public access was available only via a single street.



DAN NETZ

Levy Park has been renovated as an amenity-rich, open green space that has been warmly embraced by residents. The park has created a destination with a strong sense of place and community.

GRAND PARK, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Owner: County of Los Angeles

Developers: Related California and county of Los Angeles

Funding: \$50 million, privately funded

Operation: Los Angeles Music Center

Downtown Los Angeles has experienced a major redevelopment wave in the past decade, with a focus in the South Park area, the financial district, and the arts district. The 12 acres that Grand Park is located on, between the Music Center and City Hall, is an area that did not attract most of the investments and developments during the wave. Related's commitment to develop the park led to city approval for a \$1 billion mixed-use project in adjacent parcels. The park has largely changed the character of this previously forgotten corner of the downtown neighborhood. At present, Related is in planning for more investment in adjacent neighborhoods.



ROBERT CAMERON/SIBYLLE ALGAIER



ROBERT CAMERON/SIBYLLE ALGAIER

Top: What the Civic Center looked like from the late 1960s until 2010. Above: After two years of construction, the Civic Center reopened as Grand Park in 2012, with dramatic transformations throughout the site.



Building Coalitions

THE STITCH HAS THE CAPACITY to have an enormous civic impact for Atlanta, and to ensure success and maximize impact, building coalitions is an essential part of the process. To fund a project of this size, building coalitions will include engaging all sectors of the community (i.e., residents, property owners, businesses, government officials, anchor institutions, students, and so on) and can be a daunting experience. But, when done properly, coalition building and community engagement can go a long way toward ensuring buy-in and success for the project.

Some of the key principles in building effective coalitions include supporting locally driven community revitalization; building vibrant, healthy, walkable towns and cities; creating opportunities for everyone in America's small and medium-sized communities; and investing in smart infrastructure that creates lasting value.

Partnerships in Transportation

Atlanta is an automobile-oriented city, with limited transit options for commuters. Despite the fact that the project will be located near a MARTA rail station and several MARTA bus routes, the dominant culture of driving and parking makes accessing the Stitch a challenge for many Atlantans. Parking considerations present design challenges. Furthermore,

the undefined identity of the Stitch, combined with the lack of historical fabric, presents challenges to creating an interesting place—particularly because the Stitch's immediate vicinity has very little residential base to take advantage of it.

At present, the MARTA Civic Center station has lower ridership than other MARTA stations because of an unattractive setting, fewer nearby riders and destinations, and poor access for bus connections. The Stitch would significantly improve the attractiveness of the station setting with direct park access. Remodeling the station as a component of the More MARTA Atlanta program along with new transit-oriented development should bring more ridership.

A related public/private partnership opportunity could improve regional bus access to the station. An undeveloped private land parcel adjacent to the station could be used as a bus staging and transfer platform in the lowest level of a new office or residential tower. Valley Regional Transit in Boise, Idaho, completed such a partnership with the Gartner Company's office development in the city's central business district. The developer responded to a competitive request for proposals and built the bus transfer station paid for by local and federal funds, completed its office building above the station, and now provides maintenance and operations for the transit agency's facilities.

The opportunities for placemaking—if done effectively—could render the Stitch a major identifiable image in the heart of Atlanta. Establishing the Stitch fills a deep need to grow Atlanta's urban parks and could bring a focus on active living, health and wellness, and the arts to a community that is otherwise underappreciated by many of Atlanta's residents.

Overall, the Stitch presents a connectivity opportunity by physically linking Downtown with Midtown while also creating transit-oriented development opportunities surrounding the MARTA Civic Center station.

Of interest to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is the use and improvement of its assets over the long term. A key recommendation from the panel includes emphasizing the Stitch as a crossroads for multimodal transportation supporting a bus transit station as well as walking and biking connectivity and including this programming in the long-range Atlanta Regional Commission plan.

Partnerships in Health and Wellness

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, health disparities are heavily prevalent in the city of Atlanta. Social determinants of health and racial segregation contribute to these disparities, particularly for diseases heavily influenced by environmental factors, such as high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol, mental health conditions, diabetes, and asthma. In fact, researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University found a 12-year or more difference in life span among neighborhoods in Fulton County, where residents who live in the city's predominantly black neighborhoods in Bankhead and Northwest tend to fare worse when compared with their affluent, mainly

EFFECTIVE COALITION-BUILDING BLUEPRINT

According to Smart Growth America's *First & Main Blueprint* (<https://firstandmain.org/>), there is a road map to building effective coalitions that protect programs proven to work for local communities, improve the programs that should be more effective, and create programs that provide local communities with additional resources. This road map is intended to address inequities in the health, transportation, and economic development outcomes that result from federal investments and includes some key principles that are relevant for the Stitch project.

Implementing large-scale projects like the Stitch calls for partnering and multistakeholder collaboration among business, government, anchor institutions, and residents. Establishing strong foundations is an important precondition for effective partnering. Preliminary steps should account for the complementarity and diversity of the partners and how this will work for the benefit of the initiative at hand. A thorough, preferably jointly undertaken analysis of what is needed as well as a collaborative planning process will help ensure that the collaboration has a strong and shared sense of purpose. Such an approach also needs to ensure added value to all parties.

Partnering ventures that are not aligned in their ambitions or expectations are not likely to be sustainable. The panel recommends building partnerships in the areas of transportation, health and wellness, and housing.

white Buckhead counterparts (<https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2018/04/10/atlanta-health-disparities-highlight-need-investment-racial-equity/>).

These inequities are especially alarming when considering the city is home to world-class health care facilities. One of the major health care providers in metro Atlanta is Emory University Hospital Midtown (EUH Midtown), which opened in 1908 and has fostered a longtime commitment to the community. In 2018 alone, EUH Midtown had roughly 22,605 employees, including 720 community-based physicians, and saw 617,094 individual patients (<https://www.emoryhealthcare.org/locations/hospitals/emory-university-hospital-midtown/index.html>).

“Emory Healthcare is an integrated academic health care system committed to providing the best care for our patients, educating health professionals and leaders for the future, pursuing discovery research in all of its forms, including basic, clinical, and population-based research, and serving our community.”

—Emory University Hospital Midtown website

As a result of the increasing patient population and demand for services, new partnerships with other major health care institutions in metro Atlanta are forming, including Kaiser Permanente and MinuteClinic (http://news.emory.edu/stories/2018/06/kaiser_emory_announcement/). After \$270 million of investment since 1999, the hospital is preparing to invest another \$450 million over the next five years, which will help EUH Midtown obtain various health facilities and equipment, including a new Emory Structural Heart and Valve Center and a Women’s Health Center through Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University Hospital Midtown (https://news.emory.edu/stories/2018/01/ejch_new_womens_center/index.html).

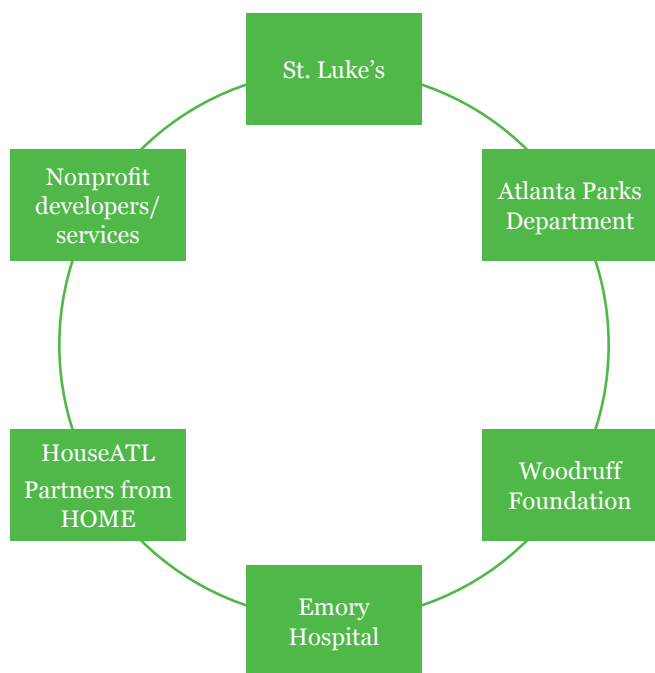
With rapid growth and partnerships on the move, EUH Midtown can provide a variety of opportunities to help bridge connections with the Stitch community and improve health outcomes. Knowing that health care institutions are increasingly recognizing the value of making connections with the citizens who live, work, and play around them, the panel recommends identifying strategic ways to synergize EUH Midtown’s catalytic growth with the development of the Stitch.

One possibility proposed by the panel is to create an Emory Health Care District. By providing parks and open spaces, affordable workforce housing, community health programs for residents and employers alike, and shared transportation and parking spaces, a health care district could serve both EUH Midtown and the Stitch. Furthermore, the panelists suggest creating an aspiration that could help guide the vision and foster successful development and desired outcomes for such a district, and to aim high when doing so. In this case, metro Atlanta might aspire to become healthiest city in the nation—a vision that could be endorsed and led by the mayor, the Stitch, and EUH Midtown.

To successfully create a health district, panelists underscored that it would be critical for the Stitch to commit to equity and inclusion to set the standard for surrounding development efforts. Establishing long-term and meaningful engagement with a broad range of traditional and nontraditional community stakeholders, including the Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation and Atlanta Public Schools, can help build trust and support throughout all phases of the Stitch’s development, maintenance, and operations.

Getting Healthy in Oklahoma City

In the hopes of making public health a priority, Mike Cornett, the former mayor of Oklahoma City, aspired to inspire the city to collectively lose 1 million pounds. To mobilize residents, the mayor established an online public calculator that invited citizens to record their exercise and track their progress on a daily basis. Farmers markets and other public venues hosted health screenings while parks and open spaces sponsored walking, cycling, yoga, and Pilates events. By 2012, the people of Oklahoma City succeeded in meeting their goal. The mayor believed that the initiative helped “rebuild the built environment and to build the city around people instead of cars.” (<https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2017-11-01/oklahoma-citys-road-from-fat-to-fit>)



The panel recognizes the following varied entities as key partners to address homelessness: St. Luke's, the Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, the Woodruff Foundation, Emory Hospital, House ATL, Partners from HOME, and nonprofit developers and services, among others.

Partnerships in Housing

One of this project's central objectives is making an opportunity to address homelessness, and doing so will require strategic partnerships. Addressing homelessness is an issue that extends beyond looking at the provision of services to help get homeless people housed; it also includes addressing permanent support housing solutions, working with city agencies and with foundations to explore how the solution can be viewed as a continuum of different types of services.

Addressing homelessness will require participation from a lot of different sectors. The medical services at EUH Midtown have an opportunity to link up with some of the activities. And panelists heard that social service providers are right on site at Woodruff Park, working with the parks department. Those types of partnerships are examples of how one can really move forward in housing implementation.

Developing a strategy that encourages the creation and preservation of housing affordable to people with a wide range of incomes is imperative. As in many other major cities, many of Atlanta's lower-income residents are

struggling to find housing that is affordable. An infrastructure investment like the Stitch is expected to raise property values and rents in the area, which would drive up the cost of housing for existing residents and potentially create displacement pressures. The Atlanta BeltLine has struggled to achieve its affordability objectives, partly because of an absence of proactive policies and strategies to protect existing residents. The Stitch presents an opportunity to get ahead of the capital investment and put strong policies in place to ensure that Atlanta's downtown remains affordable and accessible to residents of all incomes.

The panel's recommended housing strategies are based on a review of recent studies by HouseATL and Partners for HOME as well as relevant case studies from other regions that can be applied to the Stitch.

III Creating Permanent Affordability

Preserve affordability through community land trusts in partnership with Atlanta Land Trust, private property owners, and developers. Community land trusts like the Atlanta Land Trust can acquire properties near the Stitch before construction happens and then lease the land to homeowners at affordable prices. Land trusts can ensure that home prices are stable, even after the property is sold, thereby preventing gentrification and displacement. For more on community land trusts, visit <https://nextcity.org/features/view/affordable-housings-forever-solution>.

Housing Those Experiencing Homelessness

Provide permanent and long-term housing solutions for persons experiencing homelessness. ClearPath, the five-year plan for ending homelessness from Partners from HOME, concludes that "the only universal solution to homelessness for this diverse population is access to permanent affordable housing and tailored services."

Dedicating Public Land

Work with public-sector partners like the city of Atlanta, Fulton County, Atlanta Housing, the Atlanta Land Trust, MARTA, and Invest Atlanta to identify public lands that could be dedicated for production of permanently affordable housing. This could include a range of housing types—ownership housing for low- and moderate-income families, permanent supportive housing for the homeless, senior housing, and rental apartments.

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

St. Luke's Episcopal Church is a major property owner in the Stitch area. In addition, the church has a social mission to provide services in Downtown and could be a strategic partner in providing housing solutions to serve a wide variety of populations. This could include permanent supportive housing, senior housing, and mixed-income housing. Major employers and institutions (e.g., Emory, Georgia State, and so on) can also be important partners in providing attainable housing for workers and students by providing land for housing.

Arts and Culture Partnerships

Arts and culture programming, including performance venues that could be a place for pop-up events featuring music, dance, and theater, would be a welcome enhancement to the Stitch. Creating opportunities for curated exhibits within the Stitch would go a long way toward enabling the Stitch to serve as a vehicle for building an inclusive narrative about the project in the greater context of its surrounding community. Incorporating these important elements into the project, however, will require building a broader constituency and making stronger connections with the art world.

To ensure the viability and life of public art and performance within the Stitch project, it is important to create or partner with a nonprofit entity that would include an art director to lead this effort. This art director could curate the collection of art for the entire development and should also form links with other art organizations and adjacent facilities and neighborhoods, such as the Lawrenceville Theater Company, which was provided to panelists as a great example of a small theater creating economic revenue and public entertainment benefits.

Creating a comprehensive marketing strategy will also be important. Furthermore, an excellent opportunity exists to bring forward the special nature and history of adjacent neighborhoods through art installations within the Stitch project and adjoining neighborhoods. Finally, considering affordable housing for artists would add a dynamic element to the Stitch project.

Midtown Detroit

Recognizing the need to provide housing options for hospital workers, the Detroit Medical Center, the Henry Ford Health System, and Wayne State University partnered with foundations (Hudson-Webber Foundation, Kresge Foundation) and the state (Michigan State Housing Development Authority) to provide incentives for employee housing in the Midtown district. In its initial phase, the Live Midtown program provided \$1.2 million in funding for employees to access forgivable loans toward buying or renting homes in the district. (<https://www.healthleadersmedia.com/strategy/detroit-hospitals-offer-employees-25k-live-midtown>)



Implementation Framework

DENSIFYING AND REDEVELOPING DOWNTOWN is a strategic decision and should be approached methodically. If Downtown development is to be successful, it must be inclusive, celebrate history, encourage mobility options, and build identity.

Address Political Realities

At present, the city of Atlanta is caught in the midst of competing priorities for large land use development projects. Panelists learned about visions for other nearby large-scale projects—including the Gulch—which present not only challenges associated with timing and delivery, but also constraints associated with funding availability. Leadership is key to effecting change and to setting an overall vision for Downtown, and the Stitch should be central to this vision.

The Stitch will require collaboration across federal, state, and local lines and must start with the mayor championing it as a priority and building a broad constituency of support. Furthermore, overall messaging about the Stitch will require broader engagement if it is to become an open space that will be a benefit for all Atlantans. Engaging with issue-based, grass-roots organizations around issues of equity,

innovation, and social justice is imperative. This engagement should include those who currently live Downtown, as well as Old Fourth Ward residents—constituencies that are currently absent from the conversation. Finally, the Stitch must directly align with existing city priorities, including housing affordability, equity, and inclusion.

Among the next steps for building collaboration and gaining political support are looking to other large-scale projects and implementing an engagement model that calls for partnerships and multistakeholder collaboration among business, government, anchor institutions, and residents.

The panel recommends next steps in furthering engagement and collaboration among all of the stakeholders, including jump-starting and updating the Downtown Atlanta Master Plan and updating the existing advisory committee structure. The recommendation includes an engagement structure that



The chart provides a model for structuring future engagement, collaboration, and alignment among various project stakeholders.

comprises businesses, neighborhood groups, churches, universities, parks and cultural affairs, key utilities, MARTA, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), GDOT, and nonprofit organizations. The panel recommended the hiring of an engagement coordinator to develop a communications strategy and see through a separate 501(c)(3) entity as the project moves forward.

Address Right-of-Way Governance

Although the FHWA delegates many approvals and authorities to state departments of transportation, permission to use interstate airspace for non-highway-related purposes is not delegated to GDOT. Regulations governing such matters can be found in Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations sections 710.401 through 710.409, and approval from the FHWA is contingent upon the determination “that such occupancy, use, or reservation is in the public interest and will not impair the highway and interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic thereon.”

GDOT’s *Right-of-Way Manual* provides guidance on the process for obtaining a permit for use of freeway airspace. A government agency must sponsor the project and file a request for concept approval (white paper) with the FHWA via GDOT documenting the proposed public uses. The FHWA and GDOT approval process will make use of detailed project designs, including a certified right-of-way documentation, environmental review background data, and verification of GDOT design criteria regarding clearances and safety.

This approval process parallels the traditional permit process for development approvals from local and state government agencies, but it depends upon continued progress by the owner/applicant, which is assumed to be the city of Atlanta. Chapter 15 of the GDOT *Right-of-Way Manual* provides procedures for public/private partnerships and innovative contracting such as design-build, which is likely to be employed by the Stitch project.

Next-step priorities in aligning with project governance controls include the review and clarification of zoning and design guidelines. This includes the review of opportunities within the zoning rewrite with an eye toward the Stitch, enforcement of design standards that prioritize the public realm framed by high-quality buildings that respect the human scale, and future-proofing parking garages for adaptive use.

Federal
BUILD and STPG \$7 million–\$40 million
What is the transportation infrastructure element?
State
Sales tax, transportation \$3 million–\$4 million
Is there support from state officials?
Regional and City
Arc, MARTA, ATL, T-SPLOST \$20 million–\$40 million
Is this a transit and TOD project?

RICHARD F. KROCHALIS/ULI

Preliminary estimates from Central Atlanta Progress demonstrate potential federal, state, and local funding opportunities to unlock highly competitive public sources of capital.

Implementation Funding Gap

	The Stitch	The Cap (blocks 3 and 4)
Capital cost (preliminary estimate)	\$452 million	\$185 million

Potential sources of funding

Federal (BUILD and Surface Transportation Block Grant Program)	\$6 million to \$25 million	\$6 million to \$25 million
State	Unknown	Unknown
Regional (ARC RTP)	Unknown	\$10 million
MARTA/T-SPLOST	\$20 million to \$40 million	\$20 million to \$40 million
TAD bond	\$30 million to \$45 million	\$5 million to \$10 million
CJD/special assessment bonds	\$66 million to \$78 million	\$20 million to \$30 million
Other	\$4 million	—
Total funding sources	\$129 million to \$207 million	\$61 million to \$115 million
Funding gap	\$246 million to \$324 million	\$71 million to \$125 million

Source: Sujata Srivastava/ULI

Preliminary cost estimates for blocks 3 and 4 are 40 percent of the full Stitch project cost. When a scaled-back project including blocks 3 and 4 is considered, the estimated funding gap is a more feasible hurdle that could be closed through additional resources from foundations, the city, the state, and private donors.

Close the Funding Gap and Identify Financing Strategies

To have a successful funding strategy, the Stitch must reflect the values of the residents, policymakers, funders, property owners, businesses, and stakeholders. The funding environment is uncertain; many competing projects are seeking public and philanthropic support. Furthermore, the availability of private-sector funding is contingent on the strength of the real estate market and business cycles.

A recent financial analysis of the Stitch project commissioned by Central Atlanta Progress estimates that the total cost

of construction, from blocks 0 through 4, is about \$452 million. The analysis also shows that only 54 percent of the project can be funded through conventional sources and public/private partnerships, leaving a gap of \$246 million to \$324 million. Since the financial estimates were completed, Invest Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have revised their revenue-sharing agreement for the Eastside Tax Allocation District (TAD), which will restore the school district's share of revenues and reduce the amount of TAD funding that could be available for the Stitch and other projects in the TAD. Therefore, the funding gap for the Stitch is likely to be higher than the original estimate.

Scaling the Stitch to focus on blocks 3 and 4 reduces the overall cost by about 40 percent to \$185 million and leaves a funding gap of \$7 million to \$125 million—far smaller than the funding gap estimate for the original Stitch project, which was \$246 million to \$324 million. Closing the funding gap will be much easier with this reduced overall project cost.

Align Implementation Actions

Key to the success of the Stitch is alignment on a common vision and agreement on its priorities. Panelists were provided with a proposed schedule for the Stitch. The schedule includes about four years of predevelopment activity and six years of construction, which accounts for keeping roads open and accessible throughout the process. While panelists agree that this is a reasonable schedule, they emphasized the relationship and need for strategic alignment among governance, funding, and predevelopment. Leadership of the project will govern funding, which will then drive predevelopment and inform establishment of a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity to further design, develop, and operate the Stitch.

After existing funding sources are taken into account, a number of additional funding partners have not yet been part of the Stitch conversation, including foundations and state-level resources. Given the highly competitive funding environment—particularly for federal grants—it will be crucial to frame this project in the most distinctive way. Federal transportation grants that focus on infrastructure improvements will likely be the most accessible form of

federal funding, so highlighting how the Stitch is a true transportation investment for the city will be important.

Atlanta’s recent success in passing sales tax measures to support transit, transit-oriented development, and multimodal improvements signals a precedent that Atlanta is focused on transportation enhancements. Considering the Stitch as more than a park—as a place where users can access multimodal mobility options—is a continuation of this precedent and may even be able to unlock additional regional resources. Building political support at the state level can also help unlock resources that have not yet been considered.

The city of Atlanta and Invest Atlanta also have funding available, but many other megaprojects in the city also are requesting assistance from these sources. Foundations and social impact investors will need to see a strong alignment between the goals and impacts of this project and their mission or theory of change. Finally, private investors (businesses and property owners along the Stitch) will be more motivated to invest if the project demonstrates economic benefits, such as increased development potential or real estate values.

Based on a review of the previous financial analysis for Central Atlanta Progress, the panel has summarized the funding sources (listed in figure) that could be accessed for the Stitch. However, federal, state, and regional grants for infrastructure and transportation projects are highly competitive and will require garnering the support of the larger community.

Implementation Funding Gap

Agency	Funding source	Opportunities	Constraints
Federal (\$7 million to \$40 million)	U.S. Department of Transportation BUILD grants	Large grants for projects that are typically not funded by U.S. Department of Transportation	Highly competitive; project must demonstrate significant benefits from the transportation/infrastructure investment
Federal (\$7 million to \$40 million)	Surface Transportation Block Grants	Funding for roads and multimodal improvements	Highly competitive; project must have significant transit, recreational trails, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements

Implementation Funding Gap *(cont.)*

Agency	Funding source	Opportunities	Constraints
Regional	Transportation Improvement Program	Allocates federal funds for use in the construction of the highest-priority projects in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the long-term transportation vision for the 20-county region	The Stitch is not in the current RTP but could be added to the next cycle with local and regional support
MARTA	More MARTA Atlanta	Allocates funding for improvement of existing MARTA stations; Could be used to improve the Civic Center station	NA
City of Atlanta	T-SPLOST	Can be used for pedestrian improvements and complete streets	NA
Invest Atlanta	TAD revenues	Can be used for a wide range of transportation and infrastructure improvements, affordable housing, gap financing, parking garages, and so on; Can be bonded for upfront improvements	NA
Atlanta Downtown Improvement District	Community improvement district (CID)	Can fund infrastructure and parks; Can be bonded to help pay for upfront investments	Competing projects also are seeking CID funds; Assessment applies only to commercial properties, limiting the overall revenues
City of Atlanta	Sales tax, transportation	Could become a regular and reliable funding source	Requires political will and strategic leadership to implement
Foundations and impact investors	Foundations (Keneda, Woodruff, Timberland, Blank, Koch, Carlos, etc.) Impact investors and institutions (St. Luke's, Emory)	Can be a significant source of funding to help close the gap after public and private sources are committed	Highly competitive; Must be aligned with funder's mission/theory of change; Must demonstrate a significant social impact or community benefit

Source: Sujata Srivastava/ULI

Preliminary estimates show a high potential to secure funding from a variety of funding sources. The funding environment is highly competitive, however, and accessing the funds will require strategic leadership and unified governance. Panelists estimate that the federal resources in this chart amount to between \$7 million and \$40 million in potential funding; state resources amount to between \$3 million and \$4 million in potential funding; and regional and city resources amount to between \$20 million and \$40 million.

Capture the Value of the Stitch for Reinvestment

The Stitch should have a positive economic and fiscal impact on the city of Atlanta. Downtown is the city's major employment center and contributes to the overall economic growth of the city and region. The Stitch is an opportunity to increase the economic competitiveness of Atlanta by enhancing transportation connections to jobs, universities, destinations, residential neighborhoods, shopping, recreation, and so on; it can also be a central gathering space and amenity for workers, residents, and visitors. The positive effects can be measured by increased tax revenues, retail sales, and new jobs and development. However, it will be important to have an operations and maintenance plan for the park that does not place an unreasonable burden on the city's budget.

The panel commends the sponsor for conducting appropriate studies to understand the development potential that can be unleashed when making an investment such as the Stitch. The value premium, when associated with public transit infrastructure, creates an opportunity for additional tax revenues and tax increment revenues, as well as other types of property-based finance mechanisms.

When combined, park and transportation investments can generate new revenues through TADs and community improvement districts, as well as other revenues that can help fund upfront infrastructure costs. But building political support will be essential to unlocking these sources. The benefit of public/private partnerships is that they can be bonded against these feature revenues upfront, and because big investments will be needed in the early years of this project, a real need exists to align leadership and political support early, by building coalitions and forming strategic partnerships. Successfully implementing a project the size and magnitude of the Stitch will require a multipronged effort that must address commitment; funding; partnerships as an essential element; and alignment, phasing, and sequencing. The panelists urge the sponsor and the city of Atlanta to work hard to create value, capture it, and then redirect it toward the project and city priorities.

Secure Commitments of Support

Any planning effort will require early adopters to set a long-term vision, along with a coalition of stakeholders who understand the project, its costs and benefits, its funding needs, and the impact it will have on a community. Success for the Stitch will require identifying and securing different kinds of commitments from different kinds of partners. Clearly the Stitch has informal support from a variety of entities, including institutions, government officials, elected officials, foundations, neighborhood groups, and private-sector owners. Now is the critical time to assemble stakeholders in an organized way and to secure formalized commitments of support.



This diagram represents the various stakeholders needed to demonstrate a commitment of support for the Stitch.

Refocusing the cap park concept as a project that includes blocks 3 and 4 has the capacity to be transformative with a price tag that is achievable using a combination of private, philanthropic, and public funding sources. But a clear, shared vision that identifies priorities for the Stitch will be the key underpinning that guides the project's success. Unearthing this shared vision will require comprehensive community engagement and coalition building. Now is the time to engage stakeholders and craft a shared vision. Building these partnerships and developing leadership that will champion the Stitch will build political will and create a level of predictability and excitement. This, in turn, will lead to funding opportunities for the project.

SUJATA SRIVASTAVA/ALI



Conclusion

OPEN-SPACE INVESTMENTS are an increasingly important element of economic development strategies for urban places. Investing in the Stitch is therefore an opportunity to invest in Atlanta's overall economic competitiveness. The Stitch, when scaled appropriately, presents a chance to create equity, transportation investments, economic development opportunities, arts and culture enhancements, and holistic connectivity improvements for the city of Atlanta.

It is evident that the Stitch will have the potential to transform both Downtown and Atlanta as a whole. As the city and region continue to grow, Downtown has the space and density available to absorb this growth and will need to invest in more high-quality civic spaces where people can assemble and connect, and around which development can be organized and integrated.

The Stitch therefore has the capacity to catalyze change for Downtown Atlanta, making the area immediately surrounding the Stitch an equitable and resilient community that is anchored by a world-class park. With the addition

of substantial public park space through the Stitch in Downtown, the city can multiply its investments in infrastructure such as the BeltLine and make significant strides in reaching its goal to have every resident within a 10-minute walk to a high-quality park.

ULI commends the work on the Stitch so far and looks forward to the success of this project as a transformative investment for all Atlantans.

About the Panel

James Lima

Panel Chair

New York, New York

Lima has extensive experience in the planning and implementation of urban revitalization projects throughout North America. His real estate and economic advisory firm, James Lima Planning + Development (JLP+D), helps public- and private-sector clients create more vibrant, equitable, and resilient places. JLP+D provides planning, policy, real estate, and economic advisory services for downtown and waterfront revitalization, institutional real estate value creation, great placemaking, and shaping impactful public policy.

Lima is working on a broad range of urban regeneration initiatives—from planning and implementation of downtown district growth strategies to cultural arts facilities development, resilience investments, adaptive use of historic properties, and increasing access to economic opportunities and affordable housing. Recent work includes coauthoring with the Urban Land Institute *The Case for Open Space: Why the Real Estate Industry Should Invest in Parks and Open Spaces*; conducting real estate and economic analyses for flood-vulnerable urban waterfront districts in Miami, Lower Manhattan, and Silicon Valley; and conducting feasibility analyses and implementation of numerous mixed-use, mixed-income developments for private clients.

Before founding JLP+D in 2011, Lima was a partner at a national real estate and economic advisory firm focusing on downtown revitalization, mixed-use development, and waterfront revitalization. As a public development official in New York City, he led the city's Downtown Brooklyn Redevelopment Plan, which has resulted in more than \$10 billion of new investment, and was later appointed by then-mayor Michael Bloomberg as founding president of the public corporation charged with planning, redeveloping, and operating Governors Island in New York Harbor.

Dionne Baux

Chicago, Illinois

As director of urban programs, Baux leads the initiative to broaden Main Street America's offerings and engagement in urban neighborhood commercial districts. She has over a decade of experience in project coordination in the fields of urban economic development and commercial district revitalization. She has extensive expertise engaging community stakeholders; identifying and implementing projects in conjunction with community-based organizations, government institutions, and real estate development; and supporting capacity-building opportunities.

Before joining Main Street America in 2016, Baux served as senior program officer for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago, where she managed economic development initiatives for the Chicago office and developed and led the award-winning Business District Leadership program and the nationally recognized Smart Communities demonstration. Before LISC Chicago, Baux served as a financial planning analyst for the city of Chicago's Department of Community Development, where she administered rehabilitation grant programs to eligible Chicago residents and small business owners. Baux holds a master's degree in public administration from Roosevelt University and a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Gia Biagi

Chicago, Illinois

Biagi is principal of urbanism and civic impact at Studio Gang. A strategic thinker, she is widely regarded as a thought leader on issues related to urban public space. At Studio Gang, Biagi leads design teams, coordinates master plans, facilitates stakeholder engagement, and guides the urban

approach for projects such as Polis Station, which proposes how to use design to improve relationships between police and the communities they serve; Civic Commons, which reimagines how the public realm can be more relevant to and effective for people; and Edge Effect, which conceptualizes Milwaukee's industrial harbor as an estuarine condition that balances commercial, residential, and open-space development.

Before joining Studio Gang, Biagi spent more than a decade working for the city of Chicago, including as director of planning and development and later as chief of staff for the Chicago Park District, where she led multiyear planning, design, and engagement work that produced signature civic projects like Maggie Daley Park, Northerly Island, and the 606/Bloomington Trail, as well as the Park District's first strategic plan in nearly 20 years.

Biagi serves as president of NeighborSpace, a nonprofit land trust that provides long-term protection and community-based management to more than 100 urban gardens across Chicago, and is a former board member of the City Parks Alliance. She is a member of the Urban Land Institute's Public Development Infrastructure Council and Lambda Alpha, an honorary society for the study of land economics.

Kathryn Firth

Boston, Massachusetts

An urban designer with more than 25 years of international public- and private-sector experience, Firth oversees NBBJ's Urban Environments practice in Boston. Originally from Toronto, Firth spent 20 years in London, where she worked as a private consultant and as chief of design at the London Legacy Development Corporation, directing the transformation of the 2012 Olympic Games site into an authentic piece of city.

Firth has led international master planning and urban regeneration projects, working both in sensitive heritage contexts such as Covent Garden and on former industrial sites in complex urban environments, including Le Parc des Portes de Paris and Meridian Water in northeast London. Her ongoing research interests include the spatial and social dynamics of main streets, urban density and neighborhood perception, and investigations into typologies and morphologies that support intensification and growth in urban and suburban areas.

Firth holds a master's of architecture in urban design from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. She ran the MSc City Design and Social Science at the London School of Economics Cities Programme for six years and is an external examiner at the Architectural Association. She is a (London) Mayor's Design Advocate, has been a member of numerous design review panels, and continues to serve as a built environment expert for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. Firth is a design critic in urban planning and design at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

Wei Huang

Los Angeles, California

As the founder of NOVUS, Huang brought over 15 years of real estate experience in both the United States and Asia and led the company's development services in the United States. With her multidisciplinary professional background in real estate investment, development, and design, and her experience on large-scale projects in both China and the United States, she is committed to contribute her cross-border knowledge in international real estate developments.

Before founding NOVUS, Huang worked as one of the key executive team members of an international public company, leading its U.S. real estate investment and development

activities. Projects include a \$500 million urban mixed-use development project in Southern California and other acquisitions and dispositions of commercial properties in the United States. During the late 2000s, she worked for a Washington, D.C.–based development company with focus on U.S. public/private partnership projects. She was part of the project development team overseeing a 350-acre golf course resort development in Monterey County, California. Huang started her real estate career in Shanghai with the development of the 55-story mixed-use tower Maxdo Center in Shanghai.

Huang holds her master's in design studies–real estate and urban development degree from Harvard University, a master's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Southern California, and bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from Tongji University in Shanghai. She is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Accredited Professional since 2008 and a ULI full member.

Jack Kardys

Miami, Florida

After 36 years of service, Kardys is the recently retired director of the nationally accredited and gold medal award–winning Miami-Dade Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces Department (MDPROS), one of the largest and most diverse park systems in the United States with 270 parks on 13,000 acres of land. He has been a leader in the profession for more than 38 years and is currently the chairman of the board for the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and its 61,000 members nationwide. He has served as the Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA) president and has led MDPROS to earn two Florida Governor's Sterling Awards and the FRPA Agency Excellence Award and served as an executive board member for the Miami-Dade Sports Commission, Parks Foundation, and Zoo Miami.

With his leadership, the Miami-Dade County Parks and Open Space System Master Plan was unanimously adopted by the county commission and 34 municipalities, establishing the blueprint for transforming Miami-Dade into a more livable and resilient community through a system of great parks, public spaces, and natural and cultural areas connected by great greenways, blueways, trails, and complete streets that serve as linear parks. Through collaboration with public, private, and nonprofit partners, this master plan is a national model for enhancing community health, environment, social well-being, and economic prosperity.

Kardys has given keynote presentations on the relationship of parks and recreation to community health and the built environment at APHA, NRPA, City Park Alliance, Active Living Research, and FRPA conferences, and has collaborated on research related to the “Effectiveness of After-School Programs on Participant Obesity-Related Health Outcomes” that has been published in six medical journals. He holds a master's degree in management and a bachelor's degree in sports management from St. Thomas University, a Masters Certification in Human Resource Management from St. Thomas University, and certificates in strategic planning from the Florida International University Academy of Strategic Planning, and Driving Government Performance from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Kardys is an associate with PROS Consulting and the president of J Kardys Strategies LLC, working with progressive park agencies developing and implementing innovative park and public realm strategies for building healthy and resilient communities.

Richard F. Krochalis

Seattle, Washington

Krochalis is a member of the Seattle Design Commission. This commission reviews Seattle projects with public funding and advises the mayor and city council on those developments that seek to use public rights-of-way. He was the regional administrator of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Region 10 office in Seattle from May 2002 until he retired from federal service in June 2016. In this position, Krochalis was responsible for the administration of the FTA's capital, operating, and planning grant programs totaling over \$700 million annually in the four-state western region, which includes Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska.

Before joining the FTA, Krochalis served as the director of design, construction, and land use for the city of Seattle for 10 years. In that position, he improved the performance of Seattle's primary regulatory agency, which is responsible for land use and construction permitting, environmental review, and enforcement activities. Under his direction, the agency implemented a program for neighborhood design review and provided improved customer service and quality oversight for Seattle's fast-growing urban environment.

Krochalis served as a career officer in the U.S. Navy in a series of facility construction and management positions, including program manager for the U.S. Navy homeport at Everett, Washington, and planning and real estate director for the U.S. Navy's West Coast operations.

Krochalis obtained a master's degree from Harvard University in city and regional planning and a bachelor's degree from Cornell University in environmental systems engineering. He was a past president of Sustainable Seattle and the Washington City Planning Directors' Association. His current memberships include the following: the University of Washington's College of the Built Environment Planning Professionals Council (Mentor Committee chair) and the advisory board for the Master of Infrastructure Planning

and Management program, the Community Transportation Association of America's Emerging Leaders Academy Mentor Program, the Urban Land Institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, and the American Planning Association.

Glenn LaRue Smith

Washington, D.C.

Smith has built an urbanism career inspired by the intersection of landscape and architecture. He has over 35 years of private, public, and academic practice, focusing on the "city" as a cultural and artistic medium for practice. As an application of his passion for urbanism, Smith has worked on projects ranging from urban waterfronts and community redevelopment to community playgrounds and most recently memorial design. He has been a participant in urban design workshops in major American cities and an invited juror on diverse design competitions.

Smith brings to PUSH studio a respect for the intrinsic value and uniqueness of each project location. This philosophy has yielded an approach that uses the interpretation of place-specific imagery to develop highly place-specific and sculptural landscape forms. His leadership experience has been enriched by roles as the acting deputy director of the Prince George's County, Maryland, Redevelopment Authority and academic landscape architecture chairmanships at Florida A&M University and Morgan State University.

In addition to a master's of landscape architecture degree from the University of Michigan and a bachelor's of landscape architecture degree from Mississippi State University, Smith is a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He has served as president of the New York chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects and is a member of Lambda Alpha International and the New York Urban Design Forum.

Sujata Srivastava

Berkeley, California

Srivastava is a principal at Strategic Economics, a nationally recognized urban economics consulting firm. She has over 17 years of experience encompassing market studies, transit-oriented development, fiscal and economic impact analyses, economic development, and affordable housing.

At Strategic Economics, Srivastava works with local governments on strategies to integrate equity and workforce development into their economic development planning. In addition, she has worked in California cities and regions to develop strategies for increasing affordable housing, preservation, and funding, including housing impact fees and inclusionary policies. Srivastava specializes in preparing economic and market studies for transit-oriented development and infill projects.

Before joining Strategic Economics, Srivastava was a principal at AECOM/Economics Research Associates, where she worked with private developers and public agencies on urban planning projects in the United States, Mexico, Brazil, and El Salvador. She also worked for two years as a planner for Urbana Consultores in Quito, Ecuador.

Srivastava holds a master's degree in city and regional planning from the University of California, Berkeley, and a bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College. She is fluent in Spanish and proficient in Hindi and Portuguese.



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