

Creating Resilient Black Neighborhoods in Urban Environments  
Through Effective Community Planning

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**Abstract**

This report is broken into two areas: a discussion of the neglect and needs of Black neighborhoods; and propose ways to improve and revitalize Black neighborhoods through an Atlanta case study, Bankhead. The term resilient, in *Creating Resilient Black Neighborhoods in Urban Environments*, relates to having the ability to spring back from difficult conditions. Many Black neighborhoods in America are not resilient due the historical racism and inequality. These neighborhoods have been disenfranchised and neglected by American society throughout history due to racial covenants like urban renewal and segregation. A general problem with this study is the information is not new, but many people choose to ignore it. My report breaks down the racism into planning areas where ideas and solutions can be created. And the end of the report will bring together the planning strategies and best practices for more resilient Black neighborhoods in a redevelopment case study for Bankhead. In this case study, I will discuss the weaknesses, strengthens, and opportunities within Bankhead and provide recommendations for future conservation and economic development

## Literature Review

This work presented below begins with the history and ideology of Blacks in the United States. Since colonization, Blacks have been disenfranchised and discriminated against through American laws and society. Today, Blacks in the United States continue to face issues limiting their ability to pursue a full life, liberty, and property, rights that are supposed to be protected by the Fifth Amendment in the Bill of Rights and U.S. Constitution. Many of these laws and policies were planning and land-based and prohibited the success, economic and social stability, and protection of Black neighborhoods and communities across the United States.

### Racism and Segregation of Blacks

Racism is the prejudice and discrimination against an individual or group of people due to a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior to another. White Americans, colonizers from Northern Europe, seen moving to North America have been racist towards Native Americans and Africans. White Americans took land and killed Native Americans upon their arrival to North America and enslave African Americans, Blacks, (1619 -1863) to satisfy the labor needs of the rapidly growing North American colonies. Racism has been in American history since the beginning Northern European settlers migrated to North American.

Segregation, specifically racial segregation, is the separation of people into racial or other ethnic groups in daily life. The restricting and separating of people based off race and ethnicity wherein residences, public institutions (schools and churches), and facilities (parks, restrooms, restaurants, etc.). The Jim Crow laws (late 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1965) were state and local laws that enforced racial segregation, predominately in the Southern United States. The Jim Crow laws were renowned for the phrase “separate but equal.” Some Blacks and other Americans say Jim Crow laws are still active in the United States.

Racism and segregation are one in the same when understanding the location and movement of African American corridors. For many years, Black neighborhoods were adjacent to white neighborhoods regardless of efforts to segregate them. The adjacent Black and White neighborhoods were filled with middle-income black and white families, as well as Blacks that work for neighboring White families. In the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Black population grew, resulting in a Black housing shortage which caused Blacks to move into white neighborhoods (Taylor Jr., 2000). Many planning initiatives and tools were thus used as a form of segregation against African Americans. These planning initiatives and tools included public housing, urban renewal, and zoning. Before the Federal Housing Act and redlining, two planning law cases began the domino effect of social segregation.

In the 1917 court case of *Buchanan vs Warley*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared Louisville, Kentucky racial zoning unconstitutional. According to June Manning, a professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Michigan, “Although *Buchanan v. Warley* apparently declared racial zoning unconstitutional in 1917,

unchallenged discriminatory ordinances allowed residential segregation to become entrenched. Particularly in southern cities, zoning became a powerful tool for maintaining class and racial segregation,” (June Manning, 1994).

As racial tensions heightened in the United States, especially in the South, many Southern cities found other ways to exclude African Americans. These cities turned to “‘expulsive zoning’<sup>1</sup>”, which permitted the intrusion into Black neighborhoods of disruptive incompatible uses that have diminished the quality and undermined the stability of those neighborhoods,” (Silver, 1991). Even the most well-known zoning case, *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Company* (1926), had racial intentions: “One of the most important developments during the period between the world wars was the establishment of zoning as a tool for social segregation. The major actors in the landmark zoning case of *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Company* (1926) included men who held strongly exclusionary views of African Americans and European immigrants,” (June Manning, 1994). This was the start of creating “social origins”<sup>2</sup> in zoning and planning. As in many racial policies in the United States, the Northern cities were progressive in enhancing and protecting property while the Southern cities practiced racial segregation in property management and land law. “Another popular device was the racially restrictive covenant, a private contract limiting home sales or rentals to blacks or Jews. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld restrictive covenants in *Corrigan v. Buckley* [1926]. These two devices-zoning and racially restrictive covenants-effectively protected socioeconomic segregation and limited the mobility of people of color,” (June Manning, 1994).

In the 1930s and 1940s, public housing developments extended racial segregation. The first public housing development, Brewster Homes, in Detroit, Michigan, was built on the edge of black communities to place white residents to prevent black encroachment. The next big planning development used to racially segregate African Americans and their communities were urban renewal in the 1940s through the 1960s. Urban renewal was a land development program to clear out “urban decay”<sup>3</sup> in cities. As June Manning explains, “Urban renewal also provided countless examples of the interconnection of racial change with local policy. The outrage that many opponents of urban renewal displayed came in part because urban renewal caused the systematic destruction of many black communities. That this clearance worked in conjunction with clearance for highway construction only made matters worse. The city simultaneously cleared out slums and displaced racial minorities from prime locations for redevelopment and highway construction,” (June Manning, 1994). These urban renewal areas can be seen in multiple cities across the United States. In Atlanta, Georgia, many African American communities, such as Sweet Auburn<sup>4</sup> and Buttermilk Bottom<sup>5</sup>, have been destroyed, displaced and disconnected due to urban renewal. These communities and

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<sup>1</sup> Expulsive zoning is a zoning law that is ideally suited for racial segregation and black disenfranchisement.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Silver discusses “social origins” in Yale Rabin’s study in his article, *The Racial Origins of Zoning American Cities*, as the way Southern cities in the United States used to racial segregate property. Full Citation found in bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> Urban decay areas are parts of the city that has fallen into despair. These areas may feature deindustrialization, abandoned buildings and infrastructure, high unemployment, and political disenfranchisement.

<sup>4</sup> Sweet Auburn is a predominately African American community located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia. The Downtown Connector (Interstate-75 and Interstate-20) cut through Auburn Avenue in the early 1950s as an urban renewal initiative.

<sup>5</sup> Named from the downward sloping sewers in the areas which caused the community to have a buttermilk smell, Buttermilk Bottom was a damaged and disenfranchised African American neighborhood that was demolished for a civic center for urban renewal.

neighborhoods were disenfranchised and neglected by federal, state, and local governments. The people within these African American hubs were displaced from their homes and communities because of race, class, and lack of care for these neighborhoods and African American people.

### **Culture in Black Neighborhoods**

Black American culture is very distinct from the mainstream American culture. Within the Black communities, the culture is built from the historical experiences, rituals, and ceremonies from slavery to the present day. From Black American culture, local resources and infrastructure, such as parks, churches, restaurants, and schools, have been built to maintain and grow within all Black communities. During urban renewal when the Blacks were forced out of their neighborhoods and relocated throughout cities, they lost the social and physical connection to the communities and their cultures. As Manning explains in *Planning History and the Black Urban Experience*, “Black residents suffered particularly because of the relocation process. Studies of other cities revealed that people of color suffered disproportionately from relocation,” (June Manning, 1994).

The social and cultural resources and infrastructure of these communities hold them together or try too. “Thomas Bender<sup>6</sup> suggests most definitions of the term focus on community as an aggregate of people who share a common interest in a particular locality. Territorial-based social organizations and social activity thus define a community,” (Taylor Jr., 2000). During urban renewal, displacement and relocation, these African American neighborhoods lose or become disconnected from their social and cultural community assets. For example, African American churches have been a place of safety, refuge, and faith since the days of slavery in the United States. During slavery, Africans had their faith in God and found refuge in their churches, through worship and meetings for escape or insurrection. Today, these churches are known as “the Black Church<sup>7</sup>”. Many Black Churches have been around for hundreds of years and have been a catalyst for change and development in African American communities. In Atlanta, Georgia, Morehouse College, a Historically Black College (HBCU), was founded in the basement of Springfield Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia. Likewise, Spelman College, a female only HBCU, was founded in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia as Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary. As these examples show, the Black Church has also been a development tool for African American neighborhoods.

Once African Americans are displaced and relocated from their neighborhoods and communities including homes, churches, shops, parks, and schools, readapting and reconnecting to those uses and sources become more difficult and may get lost. These social and cultural foundations in African American neighborhoods should be preserved and protected. If a neighborhood is displaced, the source of displacement should make sure that the residents of that community are not disconnected from their social and

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<sup>6</sup> American historian, specializing in urban history and intellectual history

<sup>7</sup> The Black Church was the first institution and source of land ownership for slaves in the United States and a place for worship and refuge for slaves and today, African Americans and other Blacks.

cultural foundations. Disconnection has many implications, especially for African American neighborhoods and communities, which are outlined in the list below:

**Characteristics of a Disconnected and Disenfranchised Community:**

- Disconnected residents and youth
- Increase in low-income and poverty
- Increase crime
- Food deserts
- Poor buildings and infrastructure
- Decrease in Public Health
- Decrease in Mental and Physical Health
- Increase in Unemployment

These are just a few effects of an economically, socially, and culturally neglected community.

The purpose of this report is to show the value and importance of Black neighborhoods and their local economies. Planners, designers, and politicians need to see the possible economic sustainability that could live and thrive in these neighborhoods, then city planning and development can enter a new age of revitalization and revival standards.

## **Implications of Discrimination and Poor Health**

Economic and social neglect through racial inequality and institutional racism has been proven to lead to poor health for Black neighborhoods (C. P. Jones, 2000). Both direct and indirect influences of racism can affect the mental and physical health of African Americans. As discussed in the Literature Review, direct racism includes the zoning policies and racially restrictive covenants for residential properties. Some examples of indirect racism are urban renewal effects on African American neighborhoods. Urban Renewal was designed for the clearance of urban decay, not necessarily against African American neighborhoods. However, these areas of urban decay were often the neighborhoods of African Americans and other marginalized interest groups.

With racism, there is discrimination. Discrimination is the unfair or unjust treatment of someone due to gender, race, class, community, physical characteristics, religious view and more. There are two forms of discrimination: racial and institutional. Racial discrimination is the idea that humans are divided into races and some races are better than other races. Racism and racial discrimination are responsible for the slave trade and numerous genocides such as the Holocaust<sup>8</sup>. Next, Institutional discrimination is the unjust and discriminatory mistreatment of an individual or group of individuals by society. This mistreatment can be intentional or unintentional. African Americans neighborhoods have been subjected to institutional discrimination since slavery through the Civil Rights Movement<sup>9</sup> and still today in the year 2018. As R. Williams and

<sup>8</sup> The Holocaust was a genocide during World War II in which Adolf Hitler lead his followers the Nazi Germany to systematically murder more than six million European Jews.

<sup>9</sup> The Civil Rights Movement was a social justice movement that took place mainly in the 1950s and 1960s for Blacks to gain equal rights under the law in the United States.

Williams-Morris (2000) explain, “Institutional discrimination can restrict socioeconomic mobility. This has led to racial differences in socioeconomic status (SES) and exposure to poor living conditions that can adversely affect mental health,” (R. Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000).

Human Health is connected to three main environments: the natural environment, the built environment, and the social environment. “The World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity,” (Hanna, 2001). This definition confirms that health is not just physical but psychological and societal. Since African American corridors have been neglected and devalued via direct and indirect racial and institutional discrimination, the health of these areas has been deteriorating.

### **The Natural Environment**

The natural environment includes all-natural elements such as land, water, and air. If the quality of these elements is poor, there are health hazards. Through time, African Americans and other marginalized interests’ groups have been forced into poor natural environmental living conditions. For example, the Buttermilk Bottom in Atlanta, Georgia, is in the valley of two white neighborhoods on ridges, and the land quality is poor due to sanitary conditions in this area. Another example of poor land quality is the Westside Communities of Atlanta, Georgia: Vine City, English Avenue, Bankhead and Washington Park. These communities are on lower land than downtown Atlanta, and a lot of water, runoff and sewage runs through these communities and African American neighborhoods. The Westside Communities thus have land and water quality issues. For example, the Proctor Creek, which was once a recreational and social amenity, runs through the neighborhoods. The North Avenue Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)<sup>10</sup>, located in Westside Communities’ Maddox Park<sup>11</sup>, dumps its stormwater and sewage mix into Proctor Creek which discharges downstream into the Chattahoochee River. The communities around Proctor Creek suffer public health risks and threats related to flooding and pathogens (such as fecal coliform) released from the CSO discharge. In the early 2000s, the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA), along with Westside residents and stakeholders, led community efforts to close the North Avenue CSO. This is an environmental health threat as well as a public health threat. The CSO not only harms the African American Westside neighborhoods but also harms the States of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida because the Chattahoochee River is a main water source for all three states. The lack of green space, brownfields, and poor water quality, as well as new developments and redevelopments, raise environmental justice issues and new initiatives in these communities. This new-found interest in the Westside brings up the issue of gentrification and displacement with the new greenways, parks, and redevelopments in the area to improve the land and water quality.

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<sup>10</sup> Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Many of the CSO sites may be redesigned as a public amenity in the Proctor Creek Greenway.

<sup>11</sup> Maddox Park is a 50+ acre community park located in Westside Atlanta, GA (Bankhead neighborhood), named in honor of the former Atlanta mayor Robert Maddox and opened in 1931.

## The Built Environment

The built environment is the environment designed and constructed by humans. Which can have bias and discriminatory intents. The built environment is more complex than the natural environment because its social and political influences problematically impact marginalized interest groups like African Americans and lead to issues of commerce, social justice and community (Hanna, 2001). A built environment strategy with great effects on the African American corridors and neighborhoods is urban renewal. As a planning and development program, it was man-made with human intentions and benefits. However, urban renewal only helped middle to upper-class white Americans. For example, interstates and highways divided African Americans' and other marginalized groups' neighborhoods. Still today, we see the effects and long-term consequences of urban renewal in the United States. Mindy Thompson Fullilove, in *Root Shock: The Consequences of African American Dispossession*, discussed three ways urban renewal affected the health of the African Americans.

First, health effect is a direct cause of ill health. "Urban renewal caused a great deal of stress, which has been implicated, at least anecdotally, in deaths among the elderly and aggravation of some kinds of existing illness. The process was...traumatic...leading to trauma-related mental disorders, such as prolonged grief, which are the best-documented of the negative health outcomes," (Fullilove, 2001). This is justifiable because for an African American family, being forcibly removed from their home, possibly a home passed down from generations with physical and sentimental attributes, could cause stress, depression, anxiety, and psychological disorders.

Second health effect is the indirect cause of illness. "Many people displaced by urban renewal were forced to live in substandard housing or in concentrated areas of poverty. Therefore, they were exposed to conditions associated with higher rates of illness," (Fullilove, 2001). The removing, relocation and displacement of any group of individuals from the cultural, social, and familiar foundations of their lives can be devastating to those individuals and lead to long-term trust and stability effects.

Third health effect is how urban renewal acts as the "fundamental cause<sup>12</sup>" of disease. "Urban renewal forced a small number of people to expend economic, social, and political capital on resettlement, thus placing them at a disadvantage relative to the rest of society," (Fullilove, 2001). Gentrification and displacement during urban renewal was the true source of the decline of African American health.

Atlanta is well-known for gentrification. The gentrification of Atlanta's inner-city neighborhoods began in the 1970s and continued through the 1996 Olympics to today. Due to the influx of millennials and young families wanting to move into the city, more development and redevelopment is occurring in the inner-city neighborhoods. The next inner-city neighborhoods subjected to gentrification and displacement are the Westside Communities. The Beltline is a 22-mile old rail corridor loop around the city, which is

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<sup>12</sup> "Fundamental causes of disease are those factors in the environment that influence the distribution of and access to resources," (Fullilove, 2001).



being redeveloped into a multi-use trail with mixed-use development. The Beltline is designed to improve transportation, increase greenspace and promote economic development. However, the Beltline runs straight through the Westside neighborhoods. The Beltline will be great for the influx of people moving into Atlanta's inner-city neighborhoods, but it will be devastating for the residents of the current Westside neighborhoods. Many of these residents are retired, in poverty, and low-income. They are unlikely able to pay and maintain their property once the value increases due to the Beltline and adjacent developments.

### **The Social Environment**

The social environment is the human behavior. Human behavior can affect the socioeconomic aspect of African American corridors, which can benefit or harm the health of that community. The terms neglect and disenfranchisement apply to the social environment of these corridors. Once society has declared an African American neighborhood undesirable, or a decay due to class, poverty, race, religion or any other characteristic, these neighborhoods become disinvestments. The neighborhoods start to decline economically, and residents start abandoning their communities. Stores and businesses move out; doctors and pharmacies move out; and adequate, reliable transportation options decline. All these factors relate to socioeconomic disinvestment in these neighborhoods. Once businesses move out, the social factors of the communities start to change and decline due to neglect. The community and the residents turn against one another. According to Fullilove (2001), "Within the African American community, those who wanted to hang on resented those who sold their homes early, and those who spoke out resented those who remained quiet. On the whole, it was a terrible political test for a community not yet politically strong enough for such a challenge. Urban renewal also left lingering hostility and suspicion toward the white establishment," (Fullilove, 2001). The actual physical environment does not affect the health of the residents as much as the social and human behaviors. According to Hanna, health behaviors and lifestyle accounts for about 50 percent of premature mortality (Hanna, 2001). It is human nature to be loved and cared for by other humans because our brains are naturally wired to connect with others. Neighborhoods are the same way; if there is no emotional connection, there will be mental decline or in the case of African American neighborhoods, an economic and social decline.

### **Conclusion of Literature Review**

How can a Black neighborhood become resilient through discrimination and poor health? It cannot, by itself. The natural, built and social environments must be in one accord for the economic and social sustainability of any neighborhood. Environmental health affects public health in multiple ways, as discussed above. Regulations, policies, and programs should be in place to protect these environments from deterioration thus preventing a decline in public health.

## **Black Neighborhoods and Urban Planning Methods**

The purpose of this report is to discuss the neglect and need of Black neighborhoods. Black neighborhoods have many community assets attached to them such as churches, restaurants, parks, and schools. In these Black neighborhoods, we will find the economic, cultural, social, educational, and health aspects of the communities. Through times of prosperity and neglect, these communities have been resilient and adapted to new changes.

### **Introduction of planning specializations**

Urban, city and regional planning is a very broad profession, divided up into multiple specializations. These specializations are designed to focus on different issues and needs within the planning and built environment. There many planning specializations in the practice of city and urban planning. For the purpose of this study, I will explore Black neighborhoods through these six areas of planning: land use, urban design, urban design, environmental and public health, housing and community development, economic development, and transportation. These specializations focus on different issues and needs within the planning and built environment. Each specialization is very important to the resiliency and sustainability of city and urban environments as well as communities and neighborhoods. African American neighborhoods need these planning specializations to align and function together to benefit the community.

### **Land use**

Land use, the most comprehensive specialization in the planning profession, involves the management and regulation of the physical environment. This includes establishing land uses such as recreational, commercial, agricultural, and residential. Because land use is connected to zoning, it is important for the development and redevelopment of African American neighborhoods. Often, these neighborhoods are subjected to gentrification and displacement due the change in land use. When these neighborhoods are targeted for redevelopment and revitalization, taxes increase, property values increase, more expensive commercial businesses move in and higher income residents move in and push the lower income African Americans out of their neighborhoods. Post slavery, African Americans have gained millions of acres of land from 1865 to the early 1900s. However, most of those land assets have been lost due to racial and institutional discriminatory land law. Today land trusts and land banks support lower income communities retain their land assets. For example, Black Family Land Trust, Inc.<sup>13</sup> gives education, technical, and financial support to Black landowners and motivates Blacks to consider land heritage in planning for the future. Black Family Land Trust, Inc. is doing a service to Blacks that is very essential to the internal resilience of Black communities and neighborhoods because they educate them about the use and maintenance of their property for long-term sustainability. Many Blacks in America do not know or understand the financial, legal and technical side of land ownership. This lack of knowledge kills the communities long-term and leads to socio-economic disenfranchisement. Communities and land owners that understand the key principles and needs of the legal and financial

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<sup>13</sup> The Black Family Land Trust, Inc. (BFLT) provides educational, technical, and financial services to ensure, protect, and preserve landownership for African Americans and other historically under-served landowners. The BFLT currently works primarily in the Southeastern United States, with active projects in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina – [www.bflt.org](http://www.bflt.org)

side of land use, land law, and zoning are better equipped to preserve, conserve and protect their communities and neighborhoods.

### **Urban Design**

Urban design is an interdisciplinary specialization that deals with the process of designing and formation of cities and urban environments. Urban design uses many built environment professions, such as landscape architecture, architecture, urban planning, and engineering. This specialization mainly focuses on the aesthetics of the community and/or city. Urban design is essential to Black neighborhoods, which often have their own aesthetic and unique design. Many times, governments do not understand the social and cultural design within these neighborhoods and decide to “enhance” the neighborhood with new trends and standards. These new trends are not rooted in the communities and will not be sustainable because they are designed for a “different crowd” of people, typically middle to high-income white people. Urban design can be used to enhance these neighborhoods by making them more walkable, safe, and connective to other neighborhoods and necessities like grocery stores and pharmacies. An example of urban design improvements that benefitted a predominately Black community is the streetscape program in the community of Cascade Heights located in Atlanta, Georgia. In 2006, the City of Atlanta created the 2006 Campbellton-Cascade Corridor Redevelopment Plan. This plan had many new improvements for the community, but the most physical and noticeable improvement was the streetscape program by the Department of Public Works. This street improvement added traffic calming elements, wider sidewalks, medians and more tree planters. These urban changes improved walkability and safety for pedestrians in the Cascade Heights Commercial District.

### **Environmental and Health**

Environment and Health Planning deals with the two fields of environmental management and public health to better understand the connection between human and ecosystem health. In the built environment, human and ecosystem influences affect both parties. The health of the natural environment can affect human health as discussed earlier in Implications of Discrimination and Poor Health. If Blacks are placed in poor natural environmental conditions, then they are more prone to negative health effects. When the natural environment is unhealthy, so is the community and neighborhood. Environmental and Health Planning uses many professions as well, such as epidemiology, urban design, environmental planning, environmental engineering, medicine, and public policy. However, many planners and designers do not consider the health effects of the built environment on the natural environments and the direct or indirect implications for public health.

### **Housing and Community Development**

Housing and Community Development planning encompasses housing, community, and real estate development in the private, public, or nonprofit sectors. This specialization is important to community adaptation and redevelopment. Understanding where the community has come from and the prospective outcomes of the redevelopments to enrich the community is what housing and community planning can

achieve. In Blacks communities, the real estate may fluctuate depending on the current neighborhood conditions, like infrastructure and amenities. There are many successful Blacks neighborhoods. Often low-income communities have public or project housing which is frequently these housing developments are left in poor condition with bad management. Many state and local governments have housing authorities that provide subsidized and affordable housing. These housing authorities are supposed to provide adequate housing for low-income people in mixed-use and mixed-income communities with access to schools, jobs, and other community amenities. These housing authorities are generally non-profit corporations. On the federal level, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD's responsibility to the American people is to create sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes. HUD has many programs and vouchers for affordable housing like Section 8<sup>14</sup> and HOPE IV<sup>15</sup>. The first HOPE IV grant was given to the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) to redevelop the Techwood/Clark Howell to public housing, today known as Centennial Place. Adequate, safe, and mixed-income housing is very important to all communities' health and welfare for internal resiliency.

### **Economic Development**

Economic Development planning seeks to create a stable economy for a community, city, and/or region. Forming a sustainable and stable economic base for the community will not only preserve and protect the community but increase the standard of living by creating new opportunities and infrastructure that supports it. In economic development, jobs are a priority. Often low-income African American communities have few job opportunities and high unemployment rates. Economic development can also deal with, technology, industrial growth, and environmental concerns. When providing economic development and sustainability for African American communities, new technologies should be introduced but at a rate that is not intimidating for the community:

"Community economic development (CED) offers a promise of improving economic and employment opportunities for low-income communities. Impoverished neighborhoods of color are inherent to our nation," (Ong, 2006). These communities need modern technology and development, however, some may see this as a community threat and an act of gentrification. There should be education sessions for the community on new trends in technology and economic development, especially if the communities are mostly retired and low-income residents. Economic development also involves many professions like land use planning, public policy, environmental planning and management, and economics. Accessibility to employment in these low-income communities is also very important. "The economic part of community development...remains central to the efforts to address the myriad of employment problems blighting many low-income minority communities. There are social, cultural, and political issues that should be addressed by community development, but improving economic and employment opportunities is critical to the material well-being of any

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<sup>14</sup> HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program Section 8 (Section 8) is a housing choice voucher program for very low-income families, elderly and disabled people. This voucher is to assist these groups of people find affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary housing. – [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

<sup>15</sup> The HOPE VI Program was developed as a result of recommendations by National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing, which was charged with proposing a National Action Plan to eradicate severely distressed public housing. – [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

community,” (Ong, 2006). This statement further shows that positive economic development and influence is essential for a stable and resilient community.

## **Transportation**

Transportation planning pertains to local accessibility and regional mobility within the urban or city setting and is shaped by civil, traffic and transportation engineering. Accessibility and connectivity can improve or diminish African American neighborhoods. Often, these neighborhoods are not as well connected to the city with the job opportunities as the middle to upper white class neighborhoods. Adequate transportation is needed in these neighborhoods to maintain a stable economy within them. If the residents of the neighborhoods make money, they will put it back into the community. If the residents do not have access to transit for more stable job opportunities, the residents will suffer (word choice) as well as the neighborhoods. Transportation has a history of dividing and disconnecting low-income Black communities. For example, highway construction has displaced thousands of families, communities and businesses. Transportation should be used and enhanced for better connectivity and accessibility to community services and amenities. Examples of transportation benefiting communities include regional mass transit expansions, like the T-SPLOST<sup>16</sup> and MARTA, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, in Atlanta, Georgia. This expansion of MARTA will help connect many metro Atlanta communities and neighborhoods into the central business districts (CBDs) located within the city of Atlanta (Atlanta, 2016).

## **Understanding Internal Resilience**

Resiliency can be interpreted in many ways, such as being able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult or harsh conditions. Resilience in planning is when individual, communities, businesses, governments and other systems work together in a city to adapt and grow from “chronic stresses and acute shocks<sup>17</sup>.” This topic of resiliency is very popular in the built environment profession, especially when dealing with climate change. However, in the world of community development, where are the resilient communities? There are 100 Resilient Cities® which is a network of sustainable cities implementing different plans, programs and initiatives in their cities as proactive and reactive responses to climate change, but that is not an internal community resiliency idea. There are resilient districts, like the Gentilly Resilience District<sup>18</sup> in New Orleans, Louisiana. This resilient district is a part of the 100 Resilient Cities ® network and focuses on the climate change and modern “smart city” technology<sup>19</sup> by adapting to climate change and economic sustainability. These are all external modes of resilient planning for cities and communities. Professionals in the built environment need to understand and be knowledgeable about the internal modes of resilient planning.

<sup>16</sup> TSPLOST is the Fulton County Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

<sup>17</sup> The terminology of “Shocks and Stresses” come from defining Disaster Resilience, it is also used in the 100 Resilient Cities network by The Rockefeller Foundation. “A shock is defined as a sudden event that impacts on the vulnerability of a system and its components. In case of slow onset hazards is when the event passes its tipping point and becomes an extreme event. A stress is a long-term trend that undermines the potential of a given system and increases the vulnerability of actor within it” – DFID, 2011 – Defining Disaster Resilience: a DFID approach paper

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nola.gov/resilience/resilience-projects/gentilly-resilience-district/>

<sup>19</sup> A smart city is a municipality that uses information and communication technologies to increase operational efficiency, share information with the public and improve both the quality of government services and citizen welfare: [internetofthingsagenda.techtarget.com/definition/smart-city](http://internetofthingsagenda.techtarget.com/definition/smart-city)

Internal resiliency is within individual communities. Unlike external resiliency, internal resiliency often is not replicable because it is community dependent through histories of prosperity, neglect, and revitalization. Internal resiliency is more difficult to practice, maintain and understand because of the more personal side of the planning method. Black neighborhoods need to external and internal resiliency, so making internal resiliency a part of city planning practices is essential.

## Precedents in the United States

### The Black Wall Street – the Greenwood District, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Figure 1: Aftermath of the Tulsa race riot



Source: Ever Heard of 'Black Wall Street'? (Weber, 2016)

This case study is about racism towards successful Black communities. In the early 1900s, the Greenwood District (Greenwood) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was filled with successful Black entrepreneurs, business owners, educators, and other professionals (more specific). Greenwood had thriving Black-owned businesses, strong Black middle and upper-class residents, with schools, hospitals and theaters. All which helped the community earn the name “America’s Black Wall Street”. However, in 1921, Greenwood was the site of one of the most devastating massacres in the United States, which was hidden from society and is not often told or written in textbooks. In this massacre, known as the Tulsa race riot, a local white mob destroyed the Greenwood District. The Tulsa race riot of 1921 occurred between May 31 and June 1, 1921, which led to the fall of the Black Wall Street.

In Tulsa, the St. Louis-San Francisco railroad tracks (also known as the Frisco) divided the white side of town from the Black, also known as Little Africa. As mentioned in the History and Ideology section of this report, there were many laws preventing Blacks from moving into white neighborhoods and communities. In Tulsa, the same racial land laws were set. Blacks could not shop in white areas, so the money earned in the communities was put back into the communities which elevated the Black Wall Street economy. However, as the community grew, so did white hatred and jealousy. “The schools [in Greenwood] were superior to those of the white areas, and many of the houses had indoor plumbing before those in the white areas did,” (Weber, 2016).

During this time in history, the United States was dealing with failed Reconstruction from the late 1800s and was living under the Jim Crow laws. The Jim Crow laws enforced

and legalized racial segregation in the Southern United States. The Jim Crow era coined the phrase “separate but equal.” With this mindset, it is not hard to believe that racial tension arose in the Southern and segregated states. During Jim Crow, there were violent and fatal acts towards Blacks. Most violent and fatal acts towards Blacks were done by the white supremacist group known as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). “After the Ku Klux Klan...was organized in 1915, the number of murders increased throughout the country dramatically,” (Murphy, 2011).

Figure 2: The Burning of the Greenwood District



Source: Ever Heard of 'Black Wall Street'? (Weber, 2016)

On the span of two days, May 31 – June 1, 1921, nearly every business in Greenwood was burned to the ground, including hotels, hospitals, libraries, and clinics. The police detained and arrested over 5,000 Blacks that lived in Greenwood. The fire department was told not to put out the fires in the district. Thirty-five city blocks were burned to the ground, thousands of Blacks were left homeless, hundreds of Blacks were killed, and over 500 blacks were injured due to the racial hatred from their neighboring white communities. This is an important case study and precedent in the history of land law and planning. Racial covenants and segregation laws are deadly to the United States, socially, economically, and politically fatal. As of January 2018, almost 100 years after the fall of the American Black Wall Street of Greenwood, this community has not been revitalized or redeveloped into a sustainable and resilient foundation for community stability.

There are three reasons why this community, and others like it, has not and will not successfully regain productivity. First, due to the history and lack of acknowledgment of disenfranchisement and wrongful destruction, the United States does not know how to apologize and make amends for misconduct and corruption. It does not matter how many laws are put in place for redeveloping communities and/ or funding programs to assist gentrifying and displaced communities. Until these stories are rediscovered, put into textbooks, taught in schools, and have preventive laws in place and enforced in local, state, and federal governments to keep this destructive, wicked, and evil behavior

from happening, Black communities, low-income communities, and disenfranchised communities will not thrive in today's America. Hatred, racism and discrimination will always exist, but there needs to be people and parties in the government that will enforce laws that make racist acts and segregation (intentional and unintentional) illegal. This will be the hardest action for the United States to complete because this way of thinking and acting has been rooted in the system since the Europeans first came to this native land.

Second, short-term and tactical urban planning solutions can be detrimental to the health and well-being of Black neighborhoods. Tactical urbanism is low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment to improve communities by bringing community awareness and attention to social and economic needs. This can also be known as Pop-Up or D.I.Y. Urbanism. Tactical urbanism is a great short-term solution to help gain community interest and involvement, and short-term solutions can be a catalyst for community engagement, connections, and growth through multiple planning, envisioning and incremental proposals. However, it is not a stable long-term solution, and these communities need long-term solutions and policies in place to preserve and protect them.

Third, mixed-income and interracial housing communities are hard to enact. Mixed-income housing includes diverse housing types within one neighborhood or community; these housing units, such as apartments, condos, townhomes, and/or single-family housing, are for people with a range of income levels. Mixed-income housing is difficult to implement because it's a choice solution for people. We should incentivize mixed-income housing for middle to high-income households. Often there are more mixed-income and interracial communities in middle-income communities, however, they are still not plentiful. When it comes to low-income and high-income communities, Blacks live with Blacks and Whites live with Whites. For effective change, American people need to lessen this segregation and division mentality. This discussion of segregation in communities also goes beyond race and class into gender (single parent communities), sexuality, and religious beliefs. The federal government is taking a leap in the right direction in fair and equitable housing, for example in the Supreme Court case of *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.* (2015). In this court case, the Court upheld disparate impact<sup>20</sup> as a legal tool for proving housing discrimination under the Fair Housing Act<sup>21</sup>. From this case, HUD issued the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Rule. This ruling from HUD supports the notion that fair housing should account for mixed-income and race.

“Specifically, affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions that, taken together, address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity, replacing segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns, transforming racially and ethnically concentrated areas of

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<sup>20</sup> Disparate Impact is a legal term that refers to the practices of employment, housing and other areas of work, live and play that adversely affects members of a protected group or minority, such as race and gender. Disparate impact is a form of indirect and unintentional discrimination, nonetheless still illegal.

<sup>21</sup> The Fair Housing Act of 1968 can be found in the Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. This act provides equal housing opportunities regardless of race, religion, or national origin.



poverty into areas of opportunity, and fostering and maintaining compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws,” ((HUD), 2015).

## #2 Sweet Auburn – Auburn Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia

The Sweet Auburn corridor was a catalyst and headquarters in the South for the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Much like the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Sweet Auburn was an area filled with successful Black financial institutions, professionals, educators, entertainers and politicians. Sweet Auburn, also known as Auburn Avenue, was the central commercial corridor for the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. During the restricted Jim Crow legislation, Blacks were confined to only a few areas in the city of Atlanta which was between downtown and Atlanta University, now Clark Atlanta University (CAU) a HBCU located in southwest Atlanta. Sweet Auburn was also home to many churches, restaurants, and dynamic institutions. Two of the famous churches in Sweet Auburn are Ebenezer Baptist Church, where three generations Martin Luther King Jr.’s family were pastors and Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which is the oldest African American congregation in Sweet Auburn.

Figure 6: Big Bethel 1940s

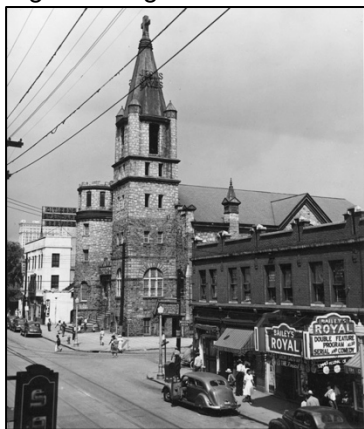


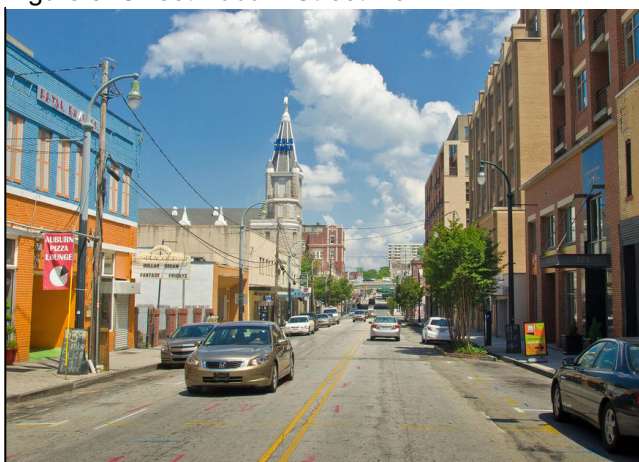
Figure 3: Big Bethel 1975



Figure 4: Big Bethel 2010



Figure 5: Sweet Auburn Street view



Sources – Big Bethel 1940s: Atlanta History Center; Big Bethel 1975: Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History; Big Bethel 2010: Steve Minor, 2010; Sweet Auburn Street view: National Trust for Historic Preservation

Despite rich and vibrant African American culture in Sweet Auburn, the 1970s and 1980s brought in despair to the once thriving neighborhood. The I-20/75 Connector in Atlanta cut through the Sweet Auburn neighborhood. The Atlanta mayor at the time, Maynard Jackson, tried to revitalize the community, however, the neighborhood still fell into urban decay. In the late 1990s, the City of Atlanta decided to make Sweet Auburn “a heritage tourism landscape dedicated to the experiences and history of African Americans,” (Inwood, 2010). The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States defines heritage tourism or cultural heritage tourism as the experience of places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. “Heritage tourism is increasingly seen by governments and nonprofit institutions as a way to promote and sustain economic development in urban areas that have historically been underserved,” (Inwood, 2010).

Today Sweet Auburn is under revitalization for the City of Atlanta. There are many new and old successful business in Sweet Auburn, such as the Sweet Auburn Curb Market. Also, the Atlanta streetcar runs through the corridor and connects to the downtown CBD. Overall, Sweet Auburn has been recognized as a vital corridor in the City of Atlanta and is well underway for redevelopment and renewal.

### **Cascade Heights Commercial District (CHCD) – Cascade Heights, Atlanta, Georgia**

Figure 7: Cascade Heights Commercial District Street View



Source: Cascade Heights Commercial District today (Peart, 2015)

Located in southwest Atlanta is the socially and economically diverse neighborhood and community of Cascade Heights along with its historically significant commercial district, the Cascade Heights Commercial District, (CHCD) located at the intersection of Benjamin E. Mays Drive and Cascade Road between Delowe Avenue and Venetian Drive. This area is now a point of redevelopment and revitalization for the City of Atlanta, with the Atlanta City Studio located in the heart of the commercial district. From

its proximity to the city and Hartsfield-Jackson Airport to its lavish parks and preserves, Cascade Heights has much to offer to the City of Atlanta and its residents. But of course, this neighborhood and community has not always been an area of planning cohesion and collaboration.

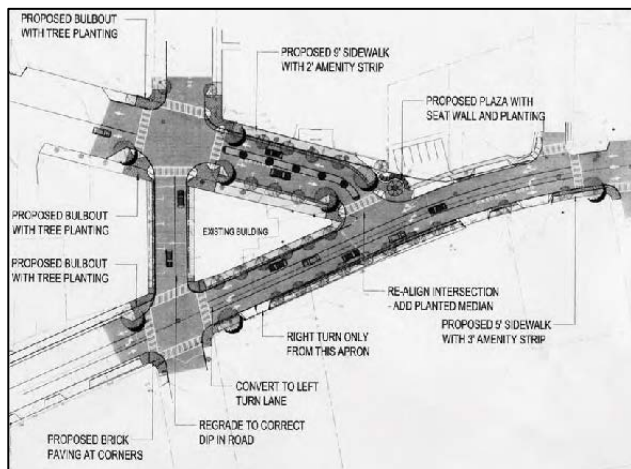
Throughout most of its history, Cascade Heights has been an area of racial tension within the City of Atlanta due to the Peyton Road Affair, commonly known as Atlanta's "Berlin Wall." In 1962, Mayor Ivan Allen Jr ordered barricades on Peyton and Harlan Roads to keep blacks from moving into a predominately white neighborhood. Luckily, the barricades only lasted for 72 days before a court ordered its removal, but the impact on exclusionary and inclusionary zoning as well as race relations has forever changed the city. Now Cascade Heights is home to many of Atlanta's "black elites."

Today Cascade Heights is undergoing redevelopment. There are many community assets such as parks, recreation, and greenspaces, like the 150-acre Adams Park and the 135-acre Cascade Springs Nature Preserve, that make the Cascade Heights neighborhood a desirable key area for revitalization. The Cascade Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization assists with these revitalization efforts. Formed in 2014, CHCDC consists of community members and leaders, such as renowned architect Oscar Harris, FAIA, who have called this community home for many years. The redevelopment efforts of the community have both short-term/tactical urbanism solutions and long-term/sustainable initiatives for a more resilient community.

Figure 8: Cascade Heights Land Use



Figure 9: Proposed Street Improvements



Source: Campbellton-Cascade Corridors Redevelopment Plan Report (Planning, 2006)

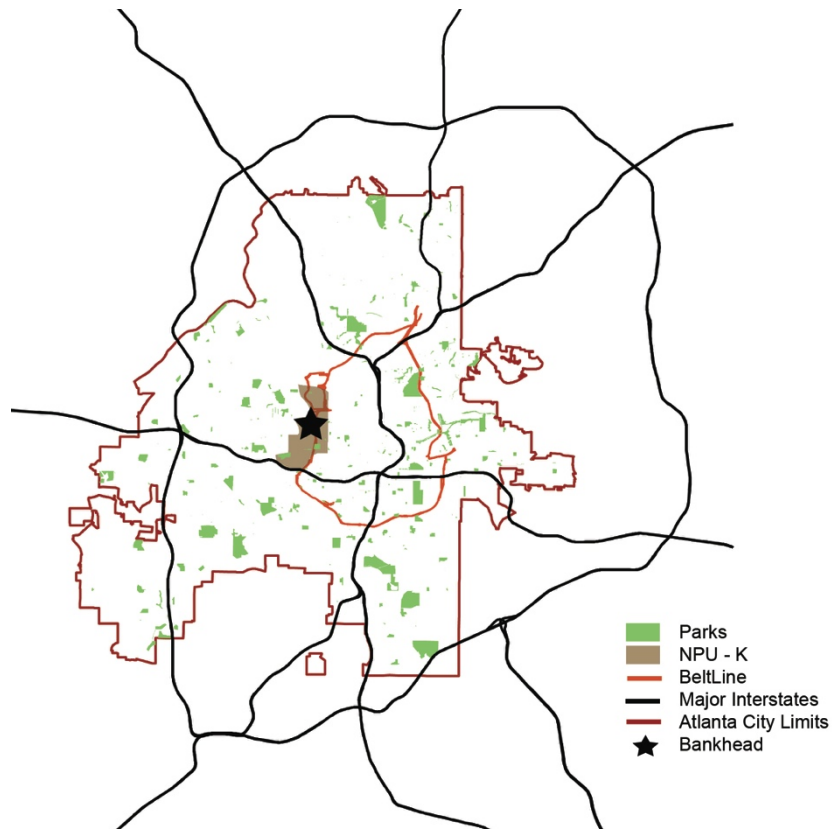
The formation of the CHCDC came after the 2006 Campbellton-Cascade Corridors Plan and this plan helped the CHCDC continue revitalizing the Cascade Corridor. The 2006 Campbellton-Cascade Corridors Plan Report (2006 Plan) by the City of Atlanta's Bureau of Planning (now Department of City Planning) set goals and recommendations to enhance, preserve and restore the two corridors of Campbellton and Cascade. The top five goals and improvements for CHCD were: 1) strengthen and stabilize the

surrounding neighborhoods, 2) revitalize the neighborhood commercial centers to better serve the community's needs and aesthetically enhance the corridor, 3) make the corridor more pedestrian friendly, 4) calm and slow traffic, and 5) provide better pedestrian connection to schools and parks. The 2006 Plan listed seven recommendations to meet the proposed goals and revitalize the community through a series of land use and zoning regulations, incentives for developers, and different studies and programs. One of the most noticeable completed recommendations is the streetscape program implemented by the City of Atlanta's Department of Public Works. In this streetscape program, the improvements included wider sidewalks, tree plantings, brick paving at sidewalk corners and a new median with plantings. the completion of the streetscape program met many goals, such as enhancing the visual quality of the corridor and making the corridor more pedestrian friendly; the median acts as a traffic calming and slow tactic, and the overall program assists with better connectivity throughout the CHCD and adjacent neighborhoods and amenities. Cascade Heights overall has made great strides in community engagement and redevelopment. The community also has the attention of the City of Atlanta. For example, the Atlanta City Studio, the City of Atlanta urban planning and design pop-up studio, is temporarily located in the CHCD to assist the CHCDC and the community with renewing and revitalizing this corridor and neighborhood.



## Report Case Study: Bankhead, Atlanta, Georgia

Figure 10: Location Map



### History and Location

Bankhead is a predominately Black neighborhood located west of downtown Atlanta, Georgia also known as Westside Atlanta. Bankhead is nestled between many other historic Black neighborhoods in the Westside, such as Grove Park, English Avenue, Washington Park, and Hunter Hills. The neighborhood's name came from the Bankhead Highway, renamed Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway after a civil rights attorney who lived near Bankhead.

Figure 11: Bankhead Context

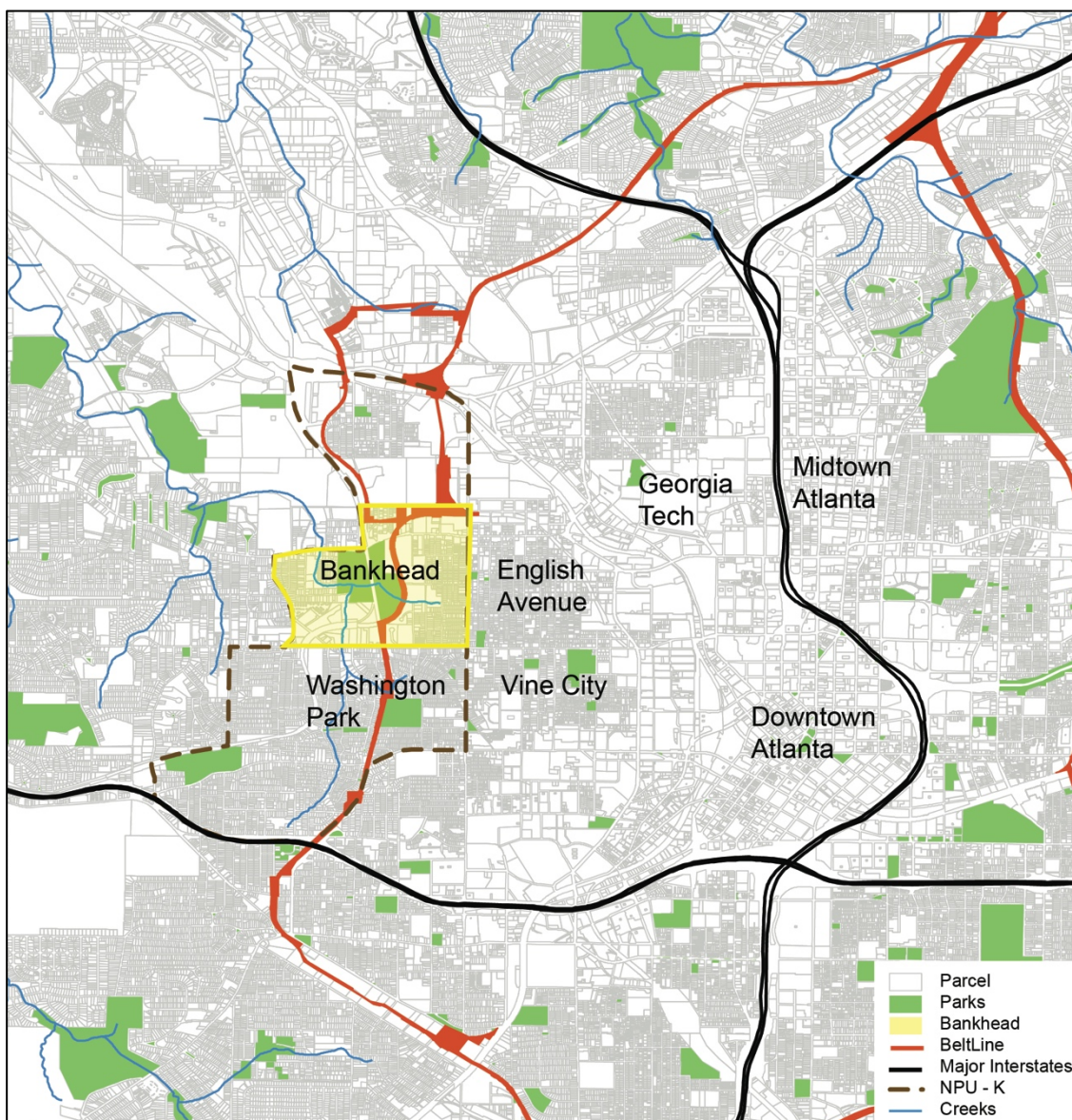
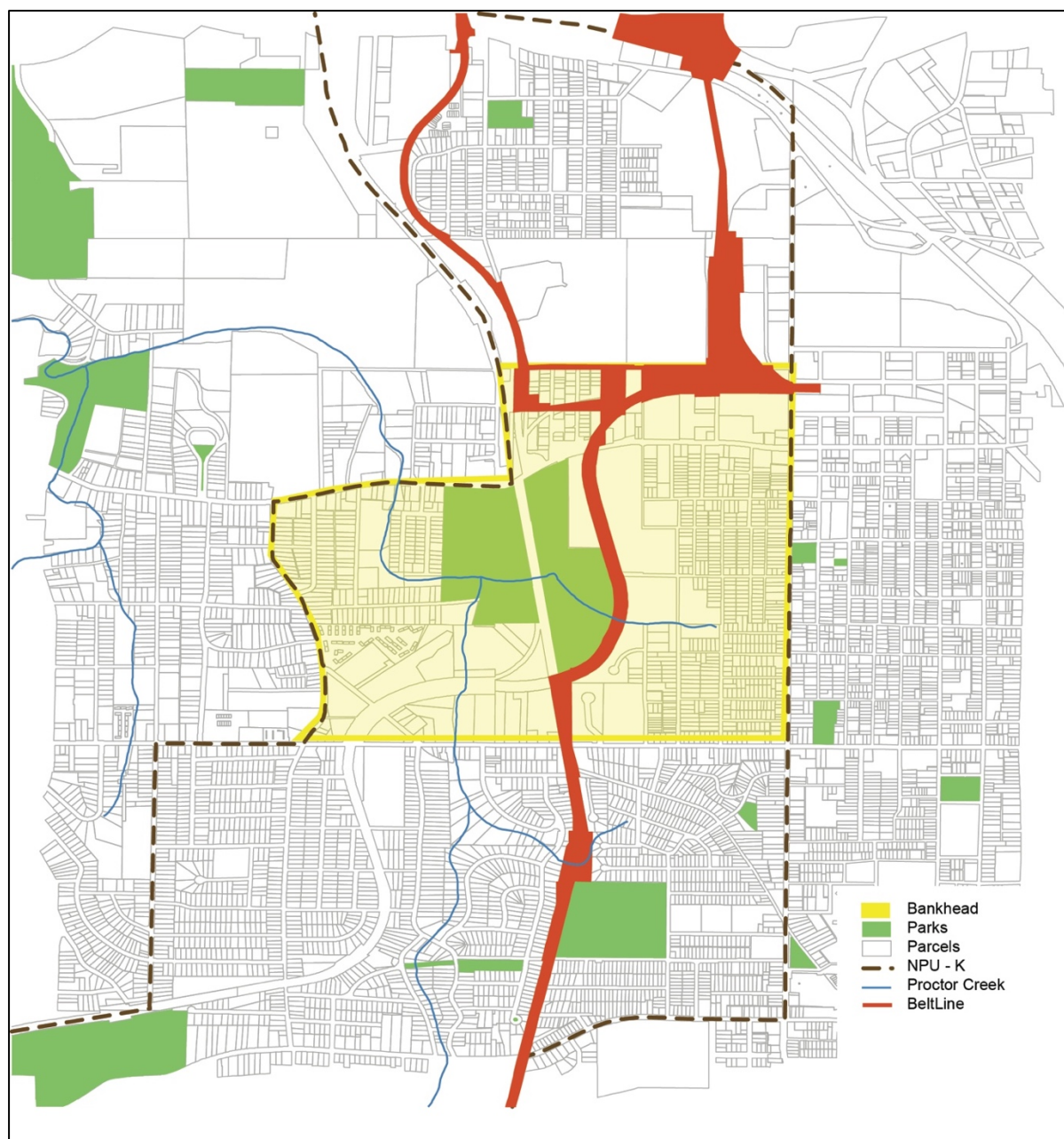


Figure 12: Bankhead Boundary





I chose Bankhead as my case study Black neighborhood because it is not as well protected as other Black neighborhoods in the metro Atlanta. The Westside community has a Westside Future Fund, a non-profit made of Atlanta community leaders to revitalize and grow the Westside. The Westside Future Fund has many plans to help revive the Westside such as promoting safety and security, education, health and wellness, and mixed-income communities. The Westside Future Fund is only for the specific Westside neighborhoods of Vine City, English Avenue, Ashview Heights and Atlanta University Center; Bankhead is not included in the Westside Future Fund and will not receive the socio-economic attention it needs to grow into a sustainable neighborhood and community. However, the amenities in Bankhead are very important to the Westside community because Bankhead is the gateway into the future Emerald Corridor which will grow into the biggest park and greenspace in the city of Atlanta with more than 400 acres of greenspace along with economic development. My proposal is for Bankhead to be included in the Westside Future Fund. The neighborhood has two major assets: Proctor Creek and Maddox Park.

Bankhead has other community assets like churches and schools. However, Bankhead has been experiencing an economic downturn for the past few decades. Due to new development in midtown and downtown Atlanta, Bankhead and a few other Westside neighborhoods have been cast aside. Bankhead is mostly low-income and poverty-stricken with high crime rates and high unemployment rates. According to *City-Data*, Bankhead's economic demographics are:

Figure 14: Residents below poverty 2016

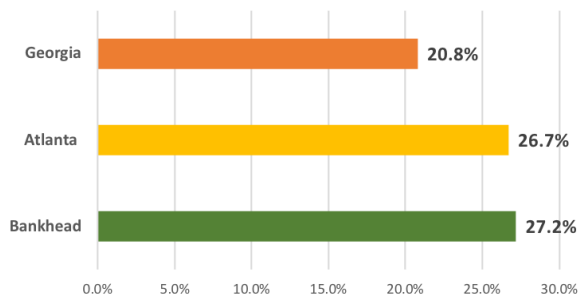


Figure 13: Median Household Income

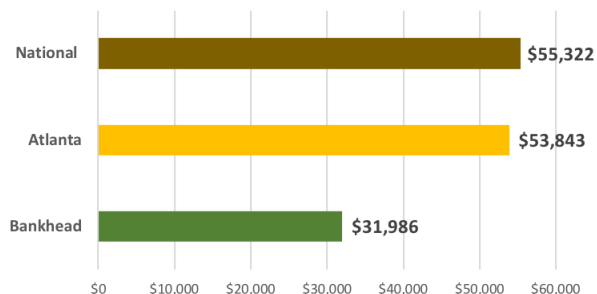
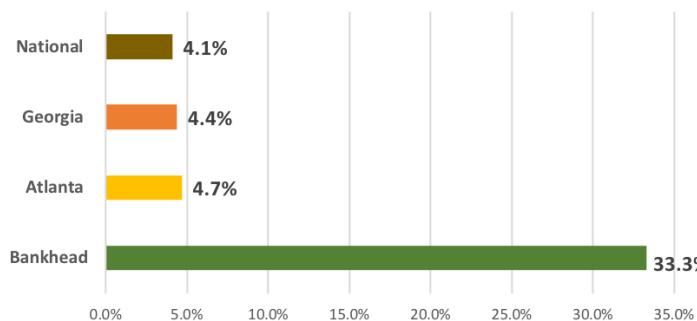


Figure 15: Unemployment Rates



Sources: Urban Mapping and Point2 Bankhead Demographics



Median household income: less than \$30,000

Unemployment: 33.3%; much lower than the national average: 4.1%<sup>22</sup> and state average: 4.4%<sup>23</sup>

Residents below the poverty level: 27.2%

Figure 17: Education Statistics

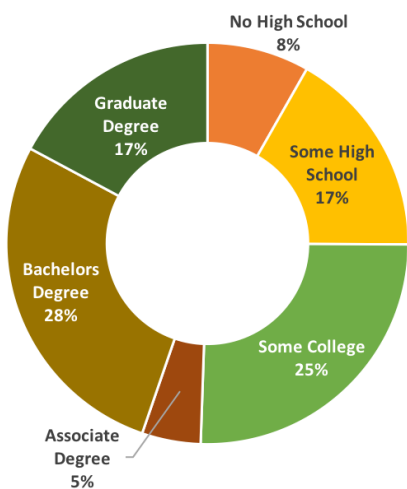
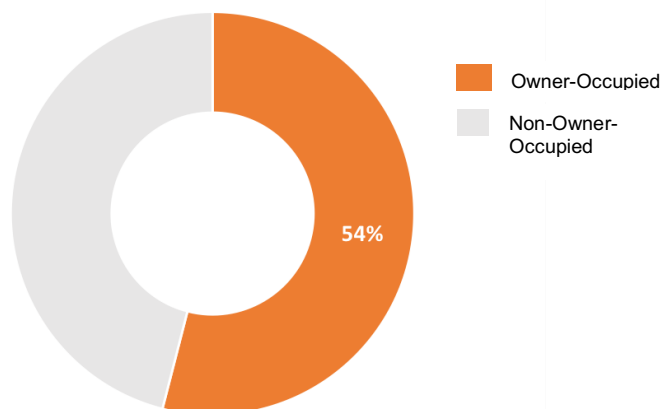
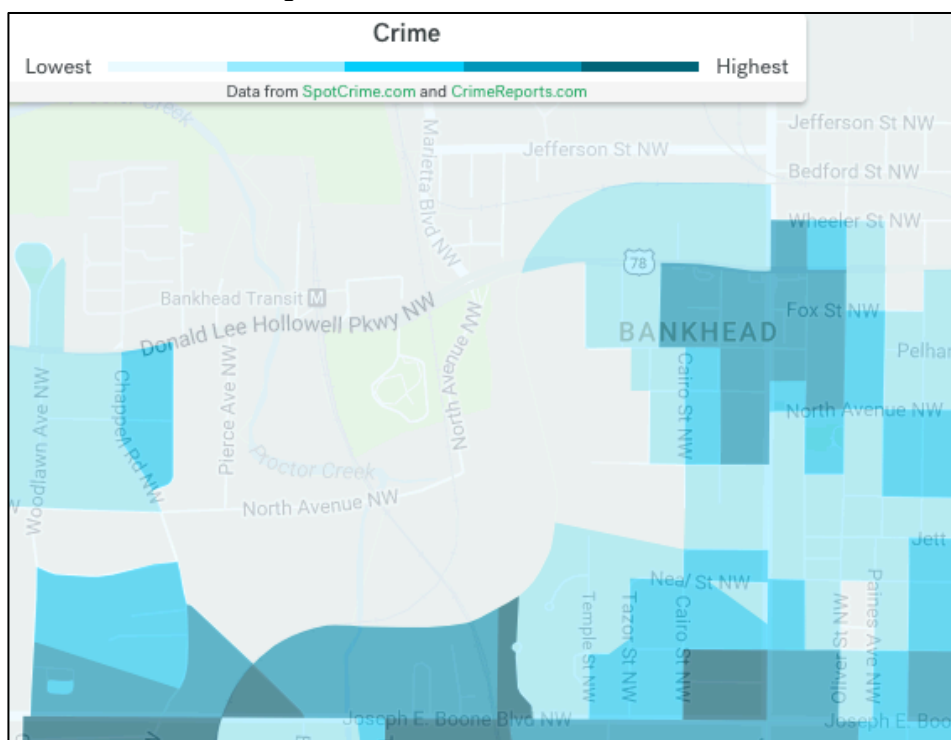


Figure 16: Owner-occupied households



Source: Point2 Bankhead Demographics

Figure 18: Crime in Bankhead, Atlanta



Source: Trulia – Bankhead Crime Statistics

<sup>22</sup> Data taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the U.S. Department of Labor

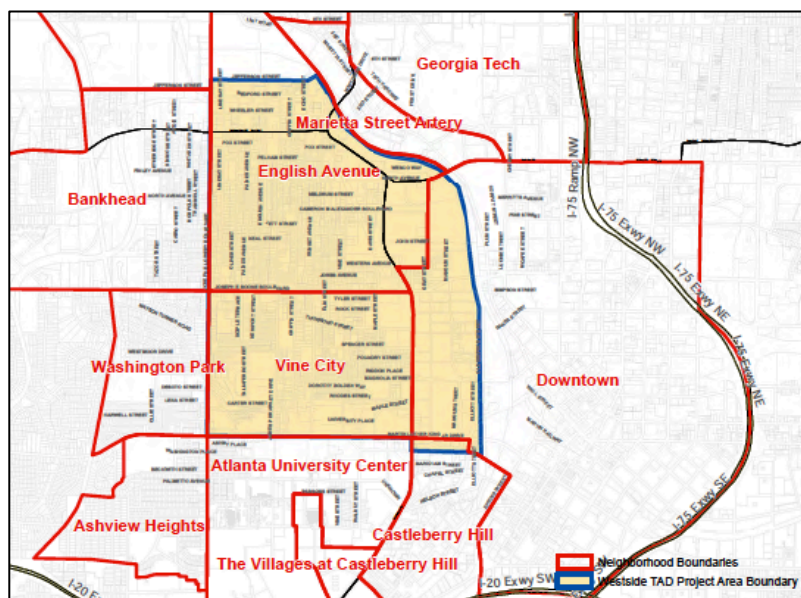
<sup>23</sup> Data taken from the Georgia Department of Labor

The City of Atlanta is turning its attention to Bankhead with the Future Westside Beltline Trail. With the Beltline comes new development and redevelopment which can lead to displacement and gentrification. The relocation and displacing of this Black neighborhood begins with the land use.

## Land Use

The first topic important to land use in Bankhead is Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), which are defined areas where the real estate property tax money gathers above a certain threshold used for a specified improvement. The key to TADs are the specific improvement specified. There are two in this area, the Westside Tax Allocation District Neighborhood Area (Westside TAD Neighborhoods) and Atlanta Beltline Tax Allocation District.

Figure 19: Westside TAD



Source: 2013 Westside TAD (APD Urban Planning & Management, 2013)

The Westside TAD Neighborhoods includes only English Avenue and Vine City. This TAD focuses on growing and rebuilding these neighborhoods. “Invest Atlanta has contributed \$116 million of TAD funds that have leveraged an estimated \$926 million of total development to the Westside TAD, some of which has been allocated specifically to the Westside TAD Neighborhoods of English Avenue and Vine City,” (APD Urban Planning & Management, 2013). This TAD has many goals and objectives with a strategic project approach that links community engagement to job creation and human capital.

Figure 21: Beltline TAD

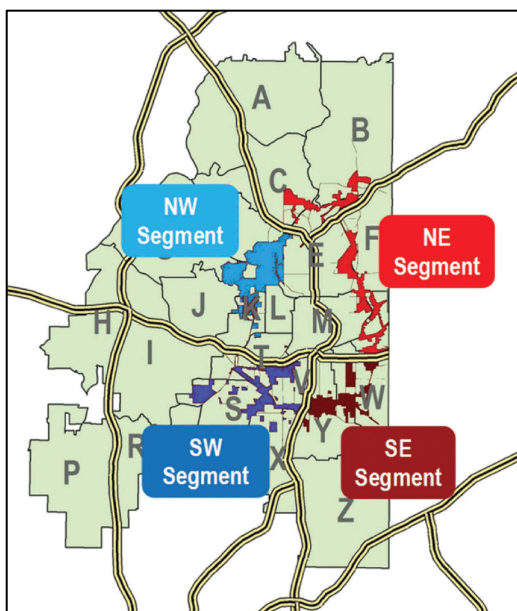
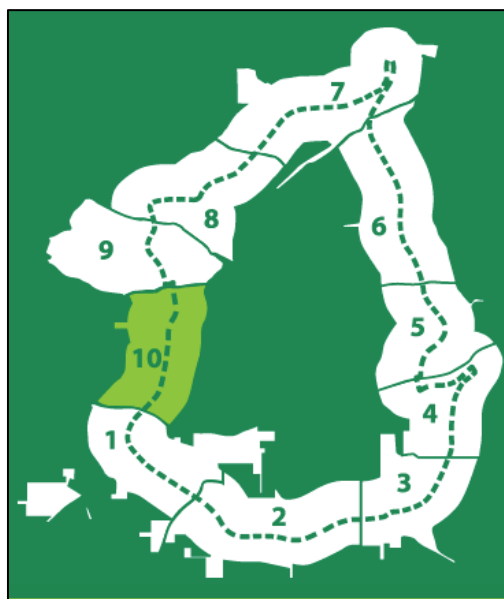
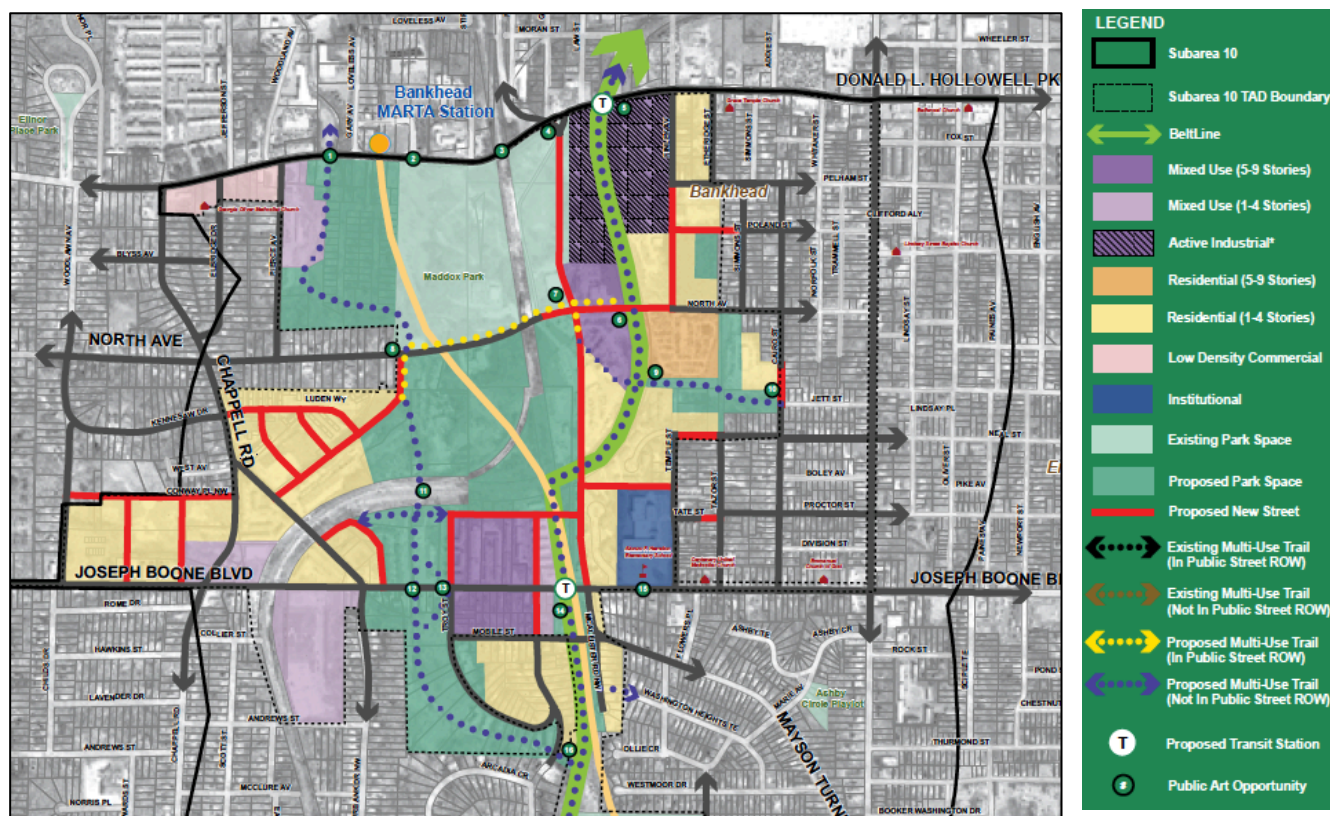


Figure 20: Beltline Subareas



Sources: Beltline TAD (Immergluck, 2017);  
Beltline Subareas (MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, 2010b)

Figure 22: Beltline Improvements in Subarea 10



Source: Beltline Improvements in Subarea 10 (MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, 2010b)



The Bankhead neighborhood is included in the Beltline TAD. However, the specified improvement is not community growth and development but construction and economic development around the Beltline. The Beltline will be a great asset to the city of Atlanta long-term, but the economic development and increase of taxes around the future Beltline negatively impacts the current communities around the Beltline, especially Black, low-income neighborhoods and communities.

### Environmental and Health

Although Proctor Creek and Maddox Park are two major neighborhood assets, they are also the most problematic and hazardous. Proctor Creek, which runs through Bankhead and discharges into the Chattahoochee River<sup>24</sup>, was once used for recreation, but over the years, the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) and residents have polluted the creek. Proctor Creek is the most polluted creek in the Atlanta region and contributes to about 12% of the pollution in the Chattahoochee River. Over the past few years, there has been reinvestment in Proctor Creek: “In the spring of 2013, Proctor Creek was designated as an Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) watershed. The original federal partners included: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE),” (Partnership, 2017). Many other local organizations and non-profits have stepped in to clean up and improve the creek, such as the Emerald Corridor Foundation and West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA).

Figure 25: Maddox Park Master Plan



Figure 24: Proctor Creek



Figure 23: Proctor Creek



<sup>24</sup> The Chattahoochee River originates in the southeast corner of Union County, Georgia, in the southern Appalachian Mountains and flows southwesterly through the Atlanta metropolitan area before terminating in Lake Seminole, at the Georgia-Florida border. The river runs for a total distance of about 434 miles. The river joins with the Flint River as the two flow across the Georgia-Florida border, and the name changes to the Apalachicola River, which flows on to the Gulf of Mexico. – Georgia River Network, [www.garivers.org](http://www.garivers.org)

Sources: Maddox Park Master Plan, (MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, 2010a); Proctor Creek (Partnership, 2017); Proctor Creek (MACTEC Engineering and Consulting, 2010a)

Figure 28: Maddox Park Swimming Pool



Figure 27: Maddox Park Gateway



Figure 26: Maddox Park Pavilion

Sources: Maddox Park Swimming Pool Photo by Gloria Woods; Maddox Park Gateway Statue Photo by Gloria Woods; Maddox Park Pavilion Photo by Gloria Woods

Maddox Park is a historic park in the Bankhead neighborhood. Maddox Park was Atlanta's first dump, which closed around 1920, and this park currently has many safety and health hazards, such as CSX rail lines running through the park, historic soil contamination, and water and air quality. These three hazards are major issues because of the pedestrian interactions with them. The CSX rail lines divide the park and its amenities in half, and there is no safe rail line crossing inside the park. In addition, the soil quality is poor due to the historic dump location and soil remediation may be necessary with redevelopment. Lastly, water and air quality are poor, especially towards the south of the park because the polluted Proctor Creek runs south of the park. The cleanup and remediation of the creek is very important to the health and livelihood of the park because the City of Atlanta plans to expand Maddox Park south beyond Proctor Creek to connect it to the future Beltline.

### Community Development

With community development, there also needs to be community preservation. The new developments around and in Bankhead will significantly change the neighborhood socially, environmentally, and economically, which benefit and harm residents and businesses. The three pillars of sustainability are social, economic, and environmental. All pillars are needed for a sustainable and resilient neighborhood. However, the cultural and social aspects of communities can easily get lost in environmental and economic development. However, a great example of positive community development is the Cascade Heights precedent. When Cascade Heights community leaders and residents

noticed the neighborhood going in a negative direction, they took action. The community leaders created a Community Development Corporation (CDC), known as the Cascade Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC) that consists of architects, planners, and community advocates. Now the CHCDC works with the City of Atlanta to plan and redevelop their community. For successful community development, the community not only has to be engaged but involved because the local residents will always have the community's best interest in decision making.

### **Economic Development**

Economic Development for Black neighborhoods is about job opportunities and accessibility. Currently, the City of Atlanta and Invest Atlanta have the Business Improvement Loan Fund (BILF) Program. The BILF encourages revitalization in targeted business districts and supports commercial and industrial development. For example, the Donald E. Hollowell Parkway is a designated Business Improvement District.

Recent projects around Bankhead that will impact economic development include, but are not limited to, the Mercedes-Benz stadium, Beltline, and Emerald Corridor. These recent and ongoing developments will affect the local real estate and property values, zoning and land use, current residents, current businesses, and future developments.

## **Best Practices for Rebuilding Resilient Black Neighborhoods**

### **Community Engagement and Public Participation**

Public engagement and participation are key aspects of in the planning and decision-making processes is public engagement and participation. Public participation lets the community voice their concerns, needs, and values. This involves a two-way communication and interaction process between policymakers and the community which can form better decisions for long-term resilience. Community engagement and public participation (CEPP) is a powerful tool for social empowerment and an alternative to traditional planning. "Traditional planning procedures generally consider the direct input of communities in the final stages of a linear decision-making process in which the staff...attempts to 'sell it' to various constituents," (Botchwey, 2018). traditional planning is not the most effective and inclusive method for public engagement and participation. CEPP, on the other hand, is a collaborative process used in the early stages and throughout of planning process. Incorporating the community into the planning process can create a sense of ownership and pride. CEPP also leads to a more democratic planning process because more people directly participate in decision-making, deprofessionalization<sup>25</sup>, and decentralization.

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<sup>25</sup> Deprofessionalization in planning is the when professionals are not the only force shaping the future of the neighborhood or community in question, but citizens and community advocates are involved.

### **Identify Community Strengths and Weaknesses**

Every community has strengths and weaknesses. Community assets and strengths can be used to improve weaknesses and community life. Community assets should be used to improve the quality of communities. According to Berkowitz, “Knowing the community’s strengths makes it easier to understand what kinds of programs or initiatives might be to address the community’s [weaknesses],” (Berkowitz). To understand the community’s strengths and weaknesses, planners should conduct a community assessment. Within this assessment, planners and the community should conduct surveys; identify community assets and issues through mapping and documentation; identify opportunities and possible outcomes; discuss and secure funding; and meet federal, state, or local requirements.

### **Understand Governmental Policies around Redevelopment**

Community plans and programs fail when they do not meet federal, state, or local policies towards economic and community development. According to the American Planning Association’s definition of redevelopment, “The term “redevelopment” is meant to describe one or more public actions that are undertaken to stimulate activity when the private market is not providing sufficient capital and economic activity to achieve the desired level of improvement. This public action usually involves one or more measures such as direct public investment, capital improvements, enhanced public services, technical assistance, promotion, tax benefits, and other stimuli including planning initiatives such as rezoning,” ((APA), 2004).

Community planners and advocates should adhere to these governmental policies and codes. For local community redevelopment, local government redevelopment programs and policies are essential. Many community organizations fail to include active public stakeholders in their community planning and redevelopment. When governmental policies are introduced in the preliminary planning process, the more the policies can favor the redevelopment plans. On the other hand, if policies are not recognized until the final stages of the planning process, there will likely be limitations and issues when trying to implement the redevelopment plan.

### **Cultural Economic Development**

Communities’ abilities to create independent identities are very important. Usually, the social and cultural aspects of communities are those unique identifiers. As urban environments continue to grow, cultures are expanded through migration and dissolved through gentrification. Culture is an economic sector, which includes labor and employment, supply and demand, and producers and consumers of citizens that market their talents, interests, and heritage. Culture can provide a more sustainable and resilient urban redevelopment. “Culture is part and parcel of urban revitalization projects in degraded urban areas throughout the development and social interaction among weaker groups, and gives to “excluded” individuals a chance to their own start businesses or to catch up socially,” (Van der Borg & Russo, 2005).

### **Overlay Districts and Designated Zones**

One form of neighborhood preservation and conservation is a neighborhood conservation overlay district (NCOD). A NCOD is a zoning tool used to preserve, revitalize, protect, and enhance significant, unique features of a residential neighborhood. NCOD's are perfect for historic black neighborhoods because these neighborhoods have been catalysts for civil and economic change in the United States. NCOD are unique within the zoning process because they are tailored to each neighborhood and reflect the special qualities of that neighborhood. NCOD's also help build or strengthen (more active verbs) internal resilience of redevelopment communities in the United States. The development of NCOD's protects the public right-of-way and may vary from urban form and design to natural environment features. "One of the goals of an [NCOD] is to stabilize and enhance neighborhood character by providing a clear plan and set of design guidelines that accurately reflect the neighborhood as a cohesive unit," (Greensboro). These districts will not only conserve the community's physical environment but also help stabilize property value and encourage new development and reinvestment in the neighborhood. Indirectly this NCOD can re-introduce social and community empowerment, neighborhood pride, resident involvement and a greater sense of place by recognizing and bringing forth the neighborhood's unique features and values.

### **Strategic Plan and Supported Documents**

Strategic planning is a process of steps to achieve a manageable and sustainable goal or action. This process requires planners, designers, and other stakeholders to analyze the internal and external environments from residents to government regulation. Strategic planning can be a tedious process that includes many analyses such as environmental, economic, current state, and demographics; defining the future state and future impacts; developing objectives and strategies to achieve the defined goal or vision; and finally, implementing, assessing and evaluating the process and results. This process will include many forms of documentation such as reports, executive summaries, presentations, websites, and pamphlets. It is important to have many forms of documentation for easy transfers to stakeholders and policymakers.

### **Bankhead – Planning for Redevelopment**

This section details six strategies for making strong revitalization plans and practices. The following strategies and opportunities fulfill the best practices listed above. These Best Practices should be used for community redevelopment in the preliminary planning phases. The planning process should encourage strategic and diverse thinking, identifying many problems and discovering many solutions.



## Identify Community Strengthens and Weaknesses

Figure 29: Maddox Park Future and Existing Infrastructure



### Strengths:

There are seven major strengths within the Bankhead neighborhood: Maddox Park, MARTA Bankhead Station, Proctor Creek, Beltline Westside Trail, Beltline TAD, Emeralds Corridor Foundation, and Neighborhood Schools. These strengths have positive social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects for Bankhead.

Maddox Park is a major benefit for the neighborhood because it is a City of Atlanta park. According to the Atlanta Beltline Master Plan, there is a redevelopment and expansion of Maddox Park in the Subarea 10: Boone/Hollowell<sup>26</sup>. The Beltline Westside Trail and Maddox Park benefit the neighborhood due to the social and economic impacts they will bring to the area. The Beltline will bring tourism, economic development, mixed-income housing, mixed-use developments and reinvestment into and adjacent to the area. However, policymakers and planners should be aware of the negative impacts of the Beltline and Maddox Park improvements that can lead to the gentrification and

<sup>26</sup> The Atlanta Beltline development has divided the 22-mile project into 10 divisions called subareas. In these 10 subareas, the Atlanta Beltline, Inc., and City of Atlanta Department and Community Development will development master plans that will address land use, transportation, and parks.

displacement of the current residents. The Beltline TAD will incentivize development and reinvestment in the area. Thus, the Beltline, Beltline TAD, and Maddox Park Expansion will definitely have benefits for the local economy as long as the policymakers preserve and protect the local culture within the Bankhead community.

MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) is the main public transport operator for the Atlanta metropolitan region. Bankhead has its own MARTA stop at the west end of the Green Line on Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway. This station is adjacent to Proctor Creek and Maddox Park, two other assets of the neighborhood. Having a MARTA stop is great for accessibility and connectivity to and from central business districts within the city.

Proctor Creek and the Emerald Corridor Foundation are environmental strengths for the neighborhood. The cleaning of Proctor Creek can improve the water quality, improve air quality, decrease airborne diseases and illnesses, and increase recreational use of this historic creek. The Emerald Corridor Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to the healthy and sustainable revitalization of Proctor and adjacent neighborhoods. Bankhead is in a great situation because it is at the Gateway of the Emerald Corridor trail and parks. The Emerald Corridor will run through Bankhead, adjacent to Maddox Park, continue down through the south residential neighborhoods, and stop at Washington Park. The Gateway will emerge at Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, the Bankhead MARTA Station, Maddox Park, and the future developments of the Proctor Greenway, Proctor Park, Atlanta Beltline, Quarry Park, and Atlanta Streetcar. From now, this area will be a completely new and redeveloped Westside. As with the strengths of Maddox Park and the Beltline, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental organizations need to consider the positive and negative impacts of these developments on the Bankhead and Westside neighborhoods.

Atlanta, like many other cities, is growing exponentially and will continue to grow as more institutions and businesses move back into cities. We, as planners and policymakers, need to help these urban neighborhoods adapt to the change in the urban environment around them to lower displacement and gentrification in cities.

#### Weaknesses:

Bankhead has many weaknesses in physical, social, and economic infrastructure like CSX rail line, municipal Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO), connectivity (roads, streetscape, and access), poverty, crime, community disinvestment. There are public and environmental health issues from soil, air, and water quality within and around the area. The CSX rail line cuts through Maddox Park and divides the park in half with an unsafe railroad crossing. The CSX rail line is disruptive to the park and neighborhood environment. The municipal CSO is another major weakness and the source of many of the issues within the neighborhood. The municipal CSO is located south of Maddox Park causing fecal coliform<sup>27</sup> to overflow into Proctor Creek when the stormwater runoff system becomes overloaded. This not only negatively affects the Bankhead area but

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<sup>27</sup> Fecal coliform is a facultatively anaerobic, non-sporulating bacterium. High levels of fecal coliform in the water can affect the public health, economy, and environment of a community.

downstream users of Proctor Creek and the Chattahoochee River. Due to poor water quality in the area, water and airborne illnesses are prevalent in Bankhead surrounding the creek.

### Opportunities and Recommendations

Through strengths and weaknesses, there are opportunities for improvement. In the Bankhead area, there are opportunities near and around Proctor Creek, such as reinvestment in current and new businesses due to the Beltline Westside Trail, Redevelopment of Maddox Park, and Emerald Corridor. Other opportunities that were not mentioned in the strengths and weaknesses are the Westside Future Fund and TADs, like the Hollowell and Westside TAD.

The Westside Future Fund (WFF) is like the Emerald Corridor Foundation, except the WFF focuses more on more economic sustainability than the Emerald Corridor Foundation. The WFF and the City of Atlanta have established an Anti-Displacement Tax Fund program in 2017. The program is an initiative which will pay qualifying homeowners' property tax increases in WFF four neighborhoods. This program is designed to help ensure that current homeowners are not displaced due to rising property taxes. I propose three options for Bankhead to address and lower future displacement:

1. Have Bankhead included in the Westside Future Fund as one of the neighborhoods eligible for the Anti-Displacement Tax Fund program and other WFF benefits and assistance.
2. Create an Emerald Corridor Future Fund (ECFF) with the WFF as a precedent. This ECFF will be a fund governed by the leaders of the Emerald Corridor Foundation and Atlanta community leaders. The goals will be same as the WFF but for the neighborhoods within walking distance (five-minute walk) of the Future Emerald Corridor Development. The ECFF will help more neighborhoods than Bankhead, which makes this option more appealing. The ECFF will also have programs like the Anti-Displacement Tax Fund
3. Create a Beltline Anti-Displacement Fund. This option will be harder to achieve because the Atlanta Beltline will cover over 1,300 acres and raising funds for dozens of neighborhoods would be extreme. The final decision of the Beltline has already been made and part of the Beltline Eastside Trail has been constructed; because development and redevelopment around those areas have already taken place, it's almost too late for those communities.
4. Expand the Donald Lee Hollowell TAD from the 2006 Hollowell/M.L. King Redevelopment Plan and Tax Allocation District into the Bankhead neighborhood. The Atlanta Development, now Invest Atlanta, prepared this plan for the City of Atlanta. Like the Beltline TAD over Bankhead, the Donald Lee Hollowell TAD is an opportunity for cultural economic development and growth. The Hollowell/M.L. King TAD was designed to "strengthen the City's ability's to

promote truly balanced economic growth by directing one of its key economic development tools [TAD] toward revitalizing ...neighborhoods that have been identified by the City as being in need of such support,” (Authority, 2006).

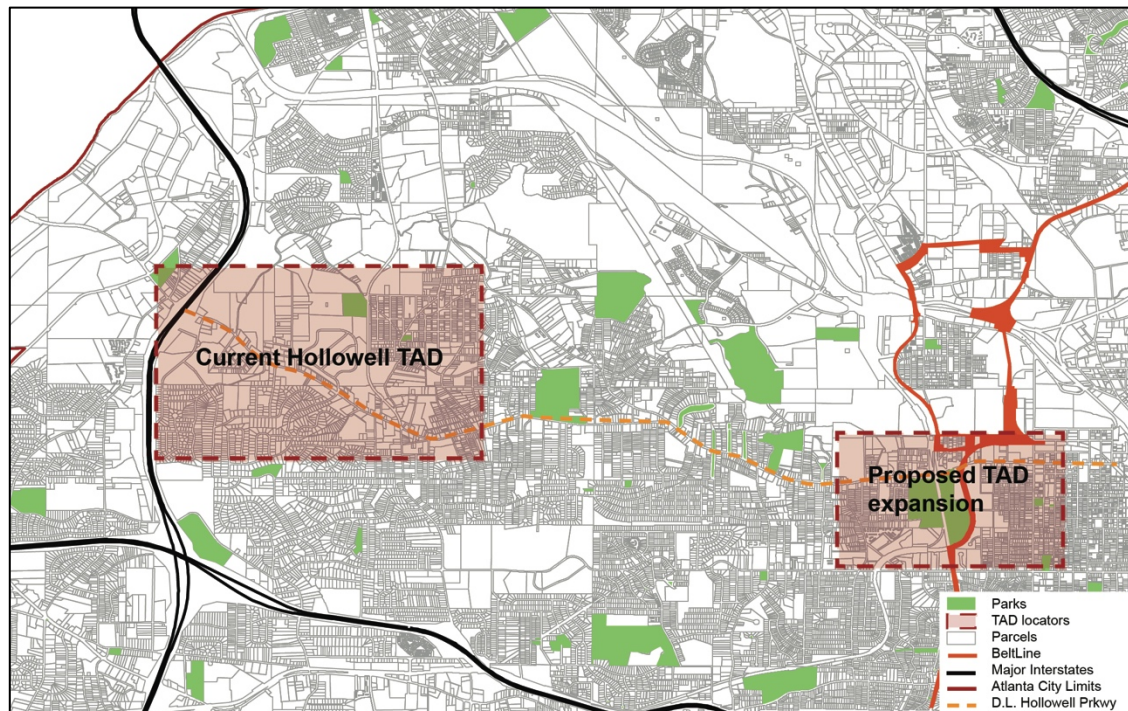
Throughout the past decade, intown Atlanta communities have been experiencing urban revitalization and resurgence, like Little Five Points, Virginia Highlands, and Old Fourth Ward. The 2006 Hollowell/M.L. King Redevelopment Plan and Tax Allocation District came from the 2003 Hollowell Redevelopment Plan. The 2006 Hollowell/M.L. King Redevelopment Plan and Tax Allocation District was proposed to do the following:

- a. To attract private, taxable redevelopment opportunities to the Hollowell/M.L. King sector of the City of Atlanta.
- b. To further the City’s goals of improving underdeveloped urban areas as well as of attracting desirable development, including professional jobs.
- c. To provide funding that, in turn, will attract additional regional, State and Federal funding to allow improvements to land use, transportation, and recreational areas.
- d. To realize the full economic potential of an increasingly urbanized community.
- e. To increase employment opportunities for residents of the TAD area.
- f. To increase opportunities for market-driven residential and commercial development within the Hollowell/M.L. King area.
- g. To overcome constraints to development generated by aged and obsolete commercial and residential structures, inefficient transportation infrastructure and inadequate physical connections to the surrounding community.
- h. To maximize the tax revenue potential of the TAD

Source: 2006 Hollowell/M.L. King Redevelopment Plan and Tax Allocation District (Authority, 2006).

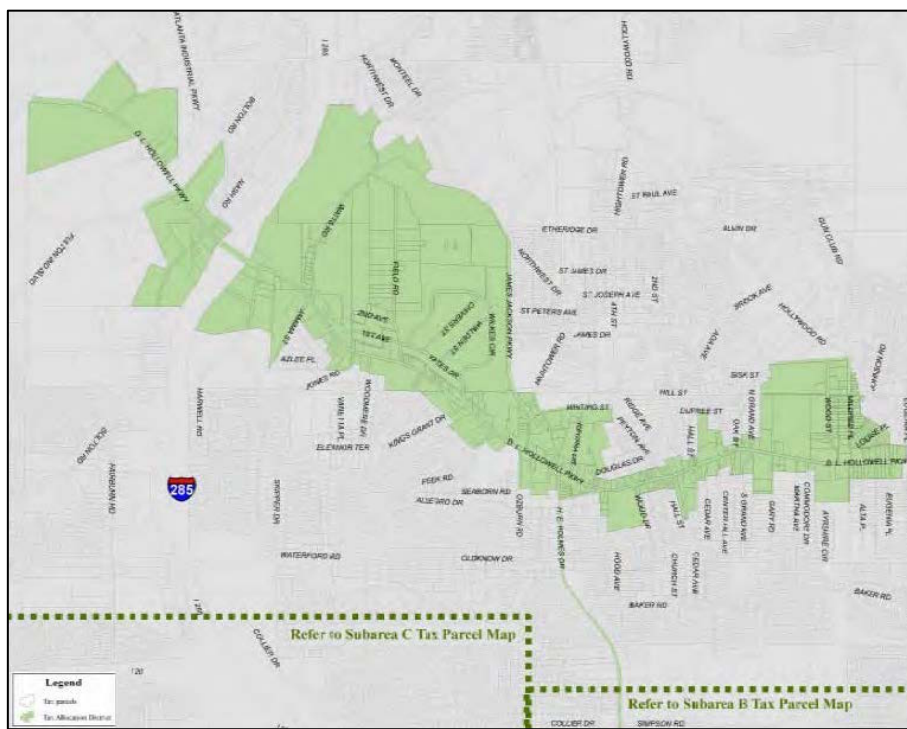
The expansion of the Hollowell TAD east into Bankhead would overlap with the Beltline TAD, however, it will serve as a tool to promote growth and opportunities for the Bankhead neighborhood specifically. The following three images are of the current Hollowell TAD and the proposed expansion into Bankhead location comparison, current Hollowell TAD parcels, and the proposed expansion into Bankhead parcels.

Figure 30: Current Hollowell TAD Zone and Proposed Hollowell TAD expansion



Source: Gloria Woods

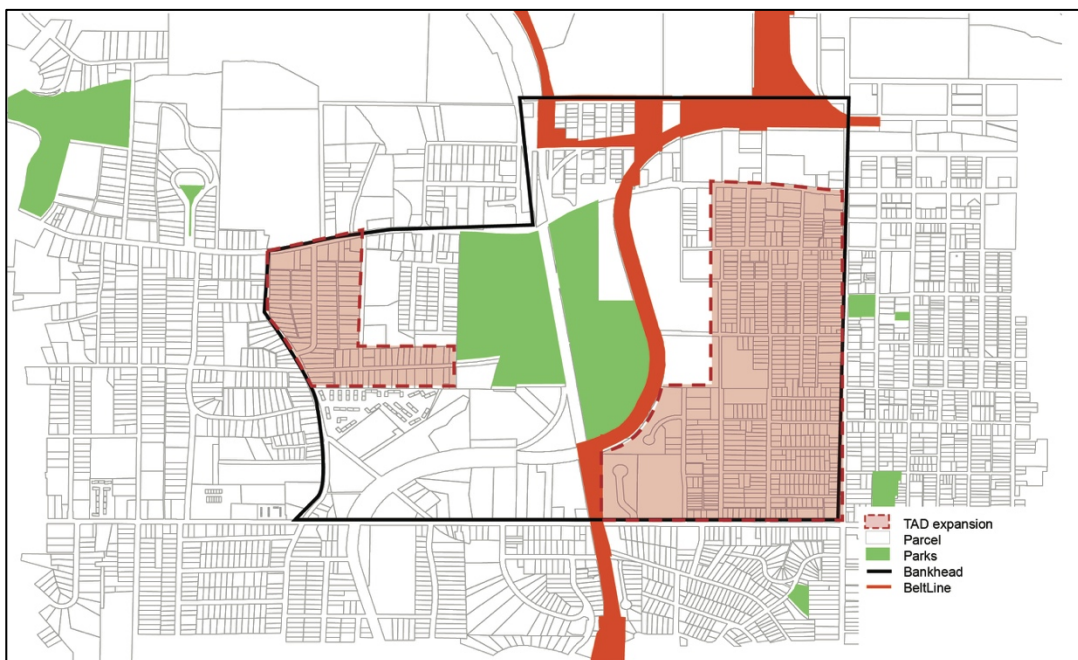
Figure 31: Current 2006 Hollowell TAD



Source: Atlanta Development Authority (Authority, 2006)



Figure 32: Proposed Hollowell TAD expansion



Source: Gloria Woods

### Community Engagement Opportunities

Community Engagement has two sides of impact: the community and the planners. The neighborhood and community of Bankhead should have community advocates and leaders present during the planning and decision-making process. I recommend the Bankhead neighborhood form a Community Development Corporation (CDC) made of community members, advocacy planners, and other policymakers. The CDC can be an active voice for the community. A neighborhood steering committee will also suffice for neighborhood representation. There are no local non-profits dedicated to Bankhead, however, there are Atlanta non-profits that can assist in community advocacy and partnerships.

Planners have a major role in CEPP by making sure the community is involved in the community development and planning process. The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) has developed 10 national standards for community engagement. The 10 standards are below:

Table 1: Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement

<p><b>1. The Involvement Standard</b> We will identify and involve the people and organizations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.</p> <p><b>2. The Support Standard</b> We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.</p> <p><b>3. The Planning Standard</b> We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.</p> <p><b>4. The Methods Standard</b> We will agree the use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.</p> <p><b>5. The Working Together Standard</b> We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively.</p> <p><b>6. The Sharing Information Standard</b> We will ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.</p> <p><b>7. The Working with Others Standard</b> We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.</p> <p><b>8. The Improvement Standard</b> We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.</p> <p><b>9. The Feedback Standard</b> We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.</p> <p><b>10. The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard</b> We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement.</p>
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Source: Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement (Places, 2014)

These standards are useful and should be implemented in common planning practices for community engagement and public participation. Various methods and techniques can be used to encourage public participation and community engagement, such as community mapping, public meetings, focus groups and workshops, and public forums. All methods listed have their own strengths, weaknesses, and suitability for different circumstances.

### Understanding Governmental Policies around Redevelopment

The Atlanta Department of City Planning and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) are great planning assets for Atlanta. many initiatives, programs, and plans are helping to redevelop and fund many areas of the city, such as the Beltline TAD. The City of Atlanta already has redevelopment plans for the Bankhead area, however, they are outdated. Nonetheless, the community and planners should use this as a time to revisit those plans as well as the 2016 Comprehensive Development Plan (2016 Plan) for the City of Atlanta. The 2016 Plan addresses economic development, housing, natural resources, land use and more. Bankhead is a key neighborhood node in the 2016 Plan, and the future development of the Bankhead neighborhood should include and/or mention the 2016 Plan recommendations. The Bankhead neighborhood should have political allies and advocates, such as Councilmembers like Andre Dickens, to support resilient and sustainable redevelopment. Other nongovernmental agencies like the

Emerald Corridor and Westside Future Fund are great allies and partners for community development.

### Cultural Economic Development

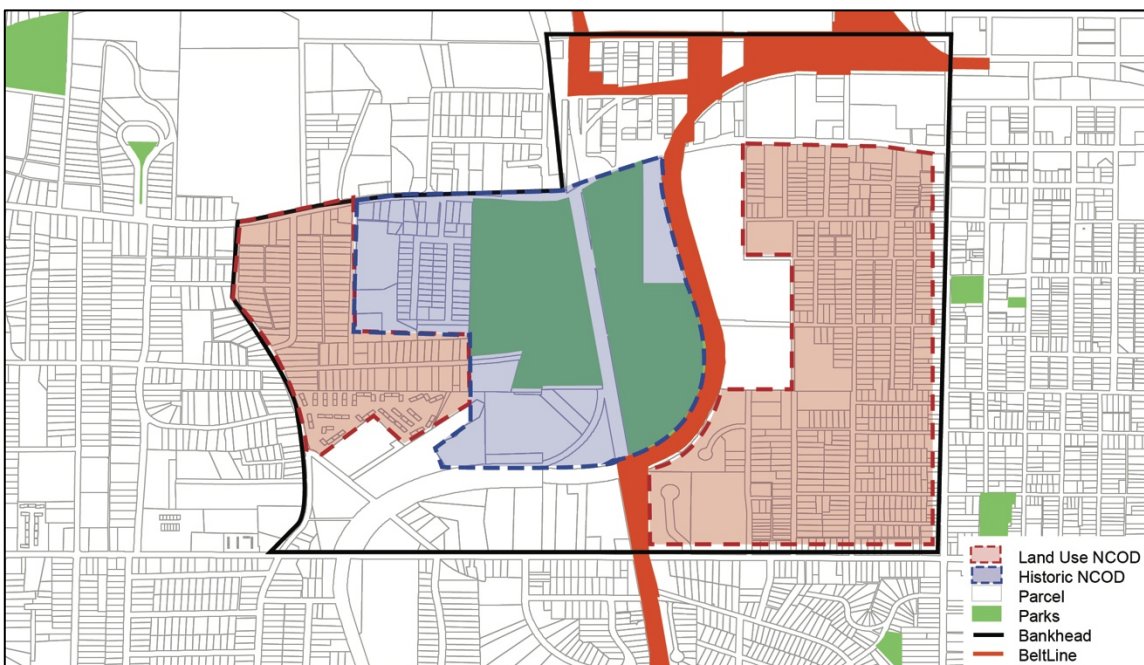
Cultural Economic Development around Maddox Park and Proctor Creek is encouraged. A Cultural Economic Development Program or Fund in Bankhead can provide financial support for projects that stimulate sustainable economic development that connects with cultural resources like Maddox Park and Proctor Creek. Other cultural resources may relate to food, art, and history. Another recommendation could be a Cultural Economic Development Division, a non-profit organization that protects the cultural and natural resources in Atlanta's neighborhoods. There are many neighborhoods that need this division.

Cultural Economic Development Division objectives are to:

- Improve economic opportunities for cultural businesses
- Encourage sustainable cultural economic businesses
- Contribute to the stability of current businesses and organizations
- Develop diversity of cultural resources
- Support growth of local economies

### Proposed an Overlay District

Figure 33: Proposed Overlay District



Source: Gloria Woods

By making designated areas of Bankhead a neighborhood conservation overlay district (NCOD), the cultural and natural resources of Bankhead will be preserved. Once the Westside Beltline Trail and Emerald Corridor Greenway are developed then the NCOD



can protect the residents and only effect new developments in the neighborhood. The NCOD can be divided into two categories: historic and zoning/land use. Historic areas include Maddox Park and Proctor Creek along with their immediate adjacent areas. Zoning/land use will protect the single-family residential areas from being rezoned into commercial and multi-family which can gentrify the area.

The purpose of the NCOD is to preserve, promote, and protect the designated neighborhood. Through the NCOD and a funding mechanism (i.e. Anti-Displacement, Emerald Corridor Future Fund), the residents of Bankhead will have greater security from the changing physical environment in West Atlanta.

### **Conclusion**

Black neighborhoods are vital to the society and culture of American cities. They provide social, physical, and economic resources to cities. Even though they are rooted in a history of racism, discrimination, and inequality, some neighborhoods with active community involvement and strategic planning have been revitalized. Rebuilding Black neighborhoods to be resilient requires cultural understanding. Communities and decision-makers should not only recognize the issues and inequities in the societal system but understand and emphasize with the communities.

The City of Atlanta is well-known for its Black culture and history. Over the past decade many organizations, such as Invest Atlanta, Westside Community Alliance, and Westside Future Fund, have been established to aid predominately Black neighborhoods in West Atlanta. The Bankhead neighborhood needs to be included in the City of Atlanta's cultural and social protection for the local residents and their resources. I have mentioned several recommendations for the City of Atlanta and local non-profits to include in the decision-making process. The economic development for the Beltline is already affecting the real estate and livelihood of the Westside residents. Bankhead is next on the Westside Trail will little protection for the residents, unlike the adjacent neighborhoods of English Avenue and Vine City. Hopefully, this research paper will motivate policymakers, planners, and designers, when planning for economic development, to aid and protect residents and resources in Bankhead to better preserve Atlanta's history.

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