

Georgia Institute of Technology

Metropolitan Parkway: Complete Street Redesign



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Abstract

Metropolitan Parkway is a major thoroughfare that runs just south of Downtown Atlanta to Hapeville, Ga ending at the city limits. The street runs through many blighted and improvised neighborhoods in the city. In recent years, there has been a push for urban renewal along with the early onslaught of new residents causing some gentrification within the residential neighborhoods, mainly in Adair Park and Capitol View where the Atlanta Beltline is driving up property values. The implications of redevelopment have highlighted the need for the area to become a more livable and sustainable community. In this study, a framework will be provided to a viable community development plan focusing on previous studies, a complete street redesign and revised frontage requirements along Metropolitan Parkway beginning at the Dill Avenue intersection continuing south to the Cleveland Avenue.

Metropolitan Parkway: Complete Street Redesign

Introduction

The Metropolitan Parkway Complete Street Design lays out a vision for designing a safe, accessible, and vibrant street in the city of Atlanta. The basis of the design focuses on the Smart Growth America guidelines for complete streets, which ensure safety along with convenience for all transportation users, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and private motorists. The goal is to use street design to influence mobility choices, which in turn can lead to better safety and quality of life in neighborhoods. Streets designed with only vehicular traffic in mind often lead to an unsafe environment for other users as it invites higher speeds. Metropolitan Parkway will feature several key urban design components, including street design and building requirements that will make the study area, a unique mixed-use corridor.

Historical Context

Metropolitan Pkwy is located in the southern region of the city of Atlanta. The roadway carries traffic for state highways 19 and 41, which makes it an important arterial. Originally, the street had many businesses that catered to travelers such as motels and service stations. In the 1960s, the Interstate Eisenhower Interstate Highway System was created and traffic that traversed the bustling street rerouted onto the newer expressways such as interstates 75, 85, 285, which bypassed many of the communities that were along Metropolitan Parkway. Consequently, businesses along the corridor

began to struggle and slowly disappear and some of the swank motels transformed into seedy overnight stays in a response to the growing adult entertainment and sex trade in the local economy.

The decline of the area would continue into the 1990s when the area had become a full-blown Red Light District lined with gentlemen's clubs, bars and sex shops. In the following years, ordinances passed making it difficult for businesses associated with adult entertainment to acquire building permits and licenses needed to conduct business. The city later completely rezoned the corridor in the area to make it almost impossible to build any business of that nature in the area. The community chose to change the original name of the street from Stewart Avenue to Metropolitan Parkway celebrating the newly accredited Metropolitan State College giving the community more pride. The communities have continued to distance themselves from the bad reputation associated with Stewart Avenue with only a few stores and churches still bearing the original name.

Metropolitan Parkway and its neighborhoods are in a unique position due its proximity to the Atlanta Beltline. Longtime community residents now stand alongside new residents mostly young educated millennials see the growth potential in the area's revitalization. The areas along the parkway were working class and mid to low income but with the new influx fears of higher property value and gentrification have left many worried and uncertain of their place in the area's bright future.

LITERATURE REVIEW



Literature Review

Metropolitan Parkway and the communities that surround corridor have been part of various studies focusing mostly on redevelopment and rezoning. The community leaders have been pushing for new development in the community to spur jobs growth. The bustling film industry has been a boost with Screen GEMS and Tyler Perry Studios anchoring the two major development opportunities in the area. The Atlanta Beltline is poised to be the most transformative project the area has seen in years. The city and others have eyed this region as a possible location to pour economic resources but it seems now more than ever the plans are recently coming to fore wishing.

Stewart Avenue Plan (1999)

The city of Atlanta conducted the Stewart Ave Plan in 1999, this first of the many plans done on the Metropolitan Pkwy and its surrounding communities. Metropolitan Pkwy then known at Stewart Avenue, the plan addresses zoning for commercial districts as the street had become inundated with adult entertainment related establishment, including sex shop's, clubs, and short stay hotels. Residents mobilized to combat the growing sex trade in the area and voted for rezoning in the areas along Metropolitan Pkwy to remove most of the establishments and the sex trade that accompanied them. Lastly, the name of the street entirely to remove the negative association between Stewart Avenue and prostitution, which was led to the name being changed to Metropolitan Parkway after the newly accredited Metropolitan State College.

Oakland City/Lakewood Plan (2004)

The Oakland City/Lakewood Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) completed in 2004, in collaboration with the City of Atlanta, MARTA, the Atlanta Regional Commission, residents, community leaders, property owners, and other local groups. The LCI program is part of a regional program administered by the Atlanta Regional Commission and is aimed at encouraging increased residential and mixed-use land uses, and improving connectivity around transit and activity nodes, and enhancing the transportation infrastructure service to the area. The area around the intersection of Cleveland Avenue and Metropolitan Parkway is part of both the LCI study and the Cleveland Avenue Corridor Study. The LCI identifies the area as the Cleveland Avenue Gateway and highlights the area as a development opportunity. The plan recommends development of additional retail out parcels in the Kroger Citi-Center parking lot and installation of sidewalks and landscaping.

NPU-X Comprehensive Plan (2005)

The Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) X Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2005, is a comprehensive planning and development plan conducted by the city of Atlanta. The western portion of the Cleveland Avenue Corridor Study Area is part of NPU X. It includes the Capital View, Capital View Manor, Sylvan Hills, Perkerson Park, and Hammond Park neighborhoods. The goals of the plan include addressing deficiencies in commercial service quality and neighborhood retail availability, to be inclusive and promote “smart growth”, public transportation, affordable single-family and multi-family housing, human services, clean and safe

environment, and to advocate expansion and improvements to open space, infrastructure and parks in each of the five neighborhoods. The main component of the NPU X Comprehensive Plan addressing the Cleveland Avenue Corridor area is a recommendation of zoning changes around the Cleveland Avenue and Metropolitan Parkway intersection to include rezoning to Mixed Residential Commercial, focusing on enhancement of the existing commercial node that serves the surrounding neighborhoods.

Metropolitan Pkwy TAD Study (2005)

The Metropolitan Parkway Redevelopment Plan and Tax Allocation District (TAD) by Invest Atlanta to spur development in the area along Metropolitan Parkway, as well as much of the commercial portion of Cleveland Avenue between Sylvan Road and I-75. The goal of the Redevelopment Plan is to promote mixed-use, commercial, and residential redevelopment along Metropolitan Parkway that is in line with both the redevelopment trends within Atlanta, and with the goals of the surrounding neighborhoods. TADs utilize economic incentives based on anticipated property value tax increases to target and encourage balanced economic growth.

Pittsburgh Community Redevelopment Plan (2006)

The Pittsburgh Community Redevelopment Plan by city of Atlanta outlines steps to revitalize the Pittsburgh Community into a safe and sustainable community. An Oversight Committee was developed for the Pittsburgh Redevelopment Plan to oversee and guide the planning process. The Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA) selected key representatives, from the

community including city and county officials. The plan follows their vision of making a “city within a city” with the planning department help developing community strategy to make Pittsburgh a more unique, historical, and diverse community that promotes homeownership, economic and community development, public safety, education, recreation, and community pride.

Atlanta Beltline Subarea 2 Master Plan (2009)

The Atlanta Beltline has broken up the entire project into Subareas that focus on the individual master plan for all the communities within a ¼ mile of the trail way. The Subarea 2 Master Plan focuses on developing a comprehensive implementation plan, budget and prioritization in the individual subareas. This phased approach is supposed to ensure a uniform approach to implementing projects and an equitable distribution of development across all geographies of the entire Beltline regardless of the sequencing of Subarea Master Plans. Master plans by their nature are subject to periodic review and at times changes to reflect changing conditions in the local area, refined neighborhood visions and city policies, demographic shifts and other factors.

Lakewood LCI (2013)

The Lakewood Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is a joint effort by the City of Atlanta and Invest Atlanta to prepare a community-based, economic development focused plan for the area in and around the Lakewood Fairgrounds. The plan is funded through the Atlanta Regional Commission, which awards planning grants for the enhancement of existing centers and corridors consistent

with regional development policies. The program also provides dedicated funding that the City can competitively apply for to implement key transportation projects emerging from the plan.

CHARACTERISTICS

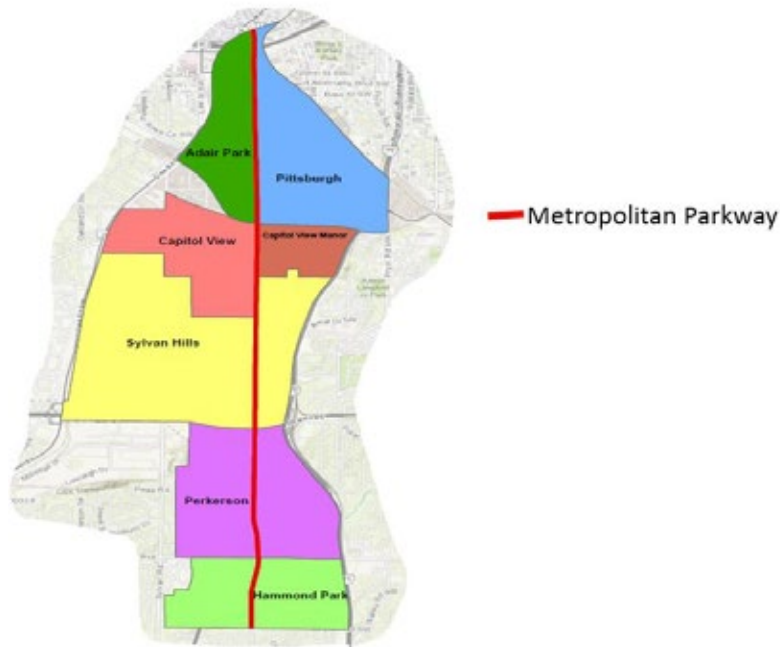


Residential Characteristics of Study Area

The study area has had many population growth patterns; household and housing characteristics, employment patterns, and business concentration are key factors in gauging the strength and current condition of a local market. The following section discusses the conditions, as well as provides key demographic data for the Metropolitan Parkway Corridor. The analysis will also compare the corridor with the market area and the city of Atlanta.

Neighborhoods

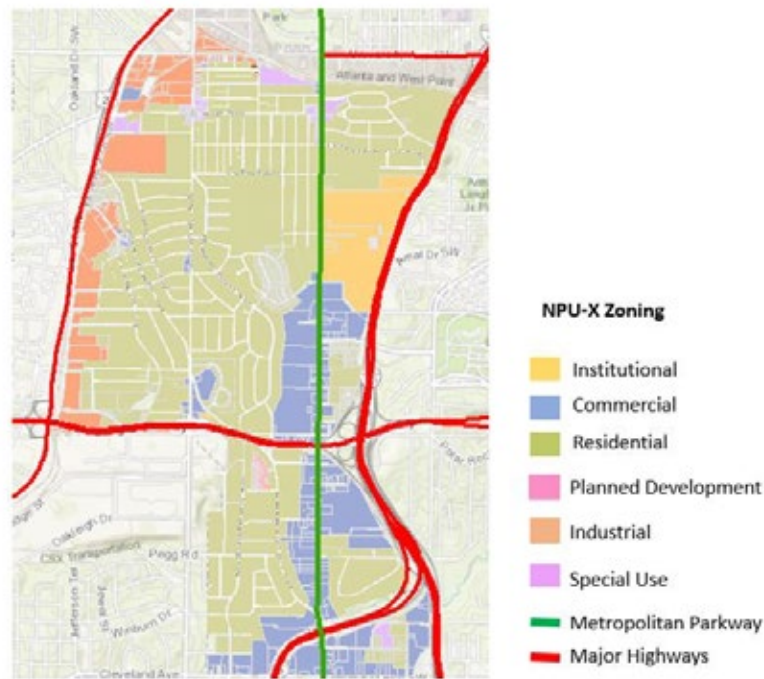
The neighborhoods along Metropolitan Parkway have character and charm as various styles of architecture dating back to the early and middle 20th century is dominant. In the northern part of the study area Capital View, Capital View Manor, and Adair Park all have well defined street grids that with enhanced walkability. The redevelopment plan, will seek to continue this grid as much as possible at certain points near Langford Parkway creating more connections to Perkerson Park. In Perkerson and Hammond Park neighborhoods there is great potential for redevelopment along the corridor along with reimagining the crossroads shopping center. Residents would benefit from the additional infrastructure along the corridor in the form of streetscape improvements allows for better bike accessibility.



Demographics

The Metropolitan Pkwy Corridor is an area that has suffered through years of socioeconomic issues and lack of economic development. The neighborhoods surrounding the street are mostly low lower income but have experienced some economic diversity with gentrification beginning to take place in the areas north of Langford Pkwy. There are many new residents opting to purchase more affordable housing ahead of the development of Atlanta Beltline's Sub Area 2 plan located on the former CSX right of way between Dill Ave and University Avenue along Metropolitan Parkway. Unfortunately, many lots of the lots located adjacent to the street south of Langford Parkway are mostly vacant and abandoned creating a barren wasteland of impervious surface.

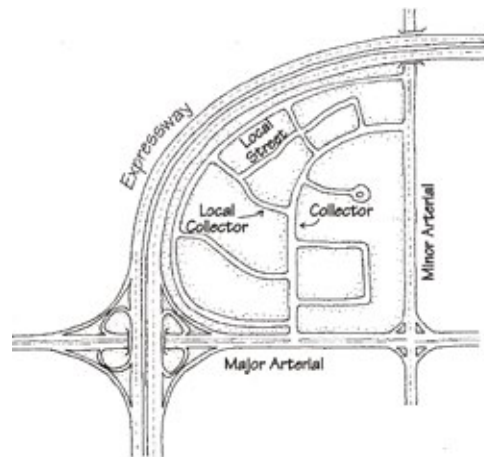
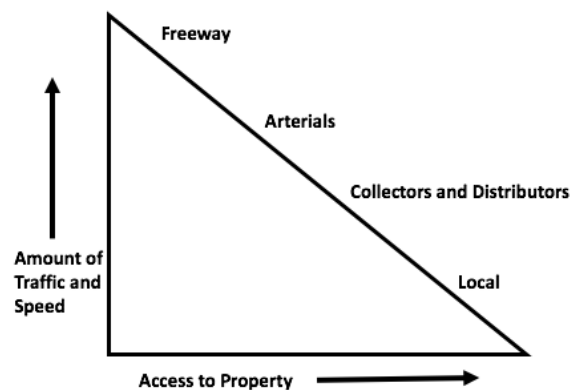
Existing Zoning



The largest single land use by category is single-family homes, followed by institutional land uses such as the colleges and the Lakewood Fairgrounds. Overall, the study area has only 2.5 residences per gross acre. While this low density can be a barrier to creating lively, walkable places, as well as providing public services affordably, several neighborhoods in the within the northern study area have higher densities. Notably, 30% of land within the study area is vacant and/or undeveloped. There are large amounts of new, single-family to apartments, and affordable to market rate. There are 15 existing base zoning designations within the study area. Due to the complexity of the existing map and regulations, this analysis highlights two factors. The first are the existing uses allowed by the current zoning, shown at left. A broad variety of uses are allowed, including industrial, institutional, commercial, and residential, but these uses are for the most part separated into distinct pods rather than being combined into walkable, mixed-use areas.

Street Hierarchy

Metropolitan Parkway is an Urban Arterial that serves the Downtown Atlanta and Hartsfield Jackson International Airport as major centers of activity and have the highest traffic volumes. Originally created as an avenue, which are walkable streets of moderate to high vehicular traffic capacity and low to moderate speed that are short distance connectors between urban centers and serve as access to abutting uses. The current street design is ideal to serve as primary pedestrian and bicycle routes and may serve local transit routes. Avenues are like urban minor arterials or urban collectors in the functional street classification system.



Source: FDOT

Below is a street hierarchy that describes ...

Urban Minor Arterial – Serves to interconnect with principal arterials and other roads and has a lower level of travel mobility.

Urban Major Collector – Provides land access and traffic circulation in residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas.

Urban Minor Collector - Provides land access and traffic circulation in residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas on a smaller scale than a major collector.

Urban Local Road – Provides primary access to residential property.

Source: FDOT

FOCUS AREA



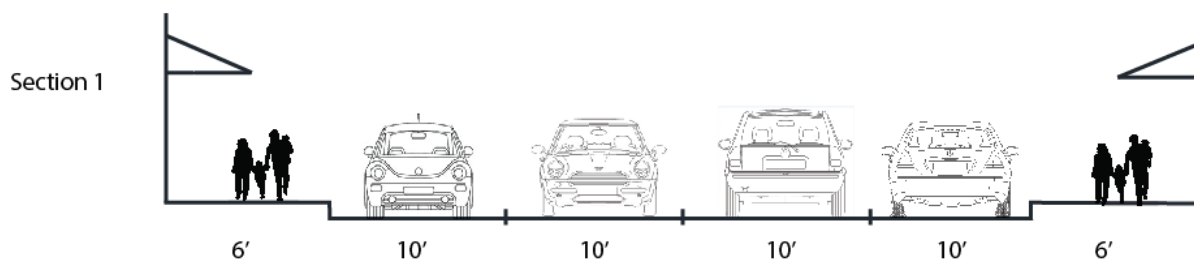
Methodology

Initially the plan was to include the entire Metropolitan Parkway but after further investigation and observation it was determined that entire road would not be suitable a advanced level of complete street infrastructure due to street width and lack on available vacant property for right of way expansion. Instead the first stretch could receive modest streetscape improvements until Dill Avenues. That Focus Area will focus on the stretch of roadway between Dill Avenue and Cleveland Avenue in the Capital View, Sylvan Hills, Perkerson, and Hammond Park neighborhoods of NPU-X. The focus area is in great distress in terms of employment, development and infrastructure.

The plan includes a complete street which is a procedure where singular functionality streets are converted into multiple use platforms that support several types of transportation suitable for pedestrians, cyclist, motorists, and transit users, including closer frontage requirements for properties along the street. The name “Complete Street” refers to the idea the street design is encourage not just more efficient traffic flow but also healthy communities and allowing them to now become walkable. In the densely residential single story homes along Metropolitan Parkway this would be ideal as the street serves as an arterial thoroughfare. The area has many residents that rely on public transportation as their sole means of transport, a complete street would open a plethora of options from transport and mobility including cycling. Automobile dependence in Atlanta is a big issue in Atlanta contributing, to the traffic infamy. In the area along Metropolitan Parkway public transportation and safe places to walk and bicycle will make the area very attractive to new residents and developers something area desperately needs particularly south of Cleveland Ave where large empty lots dot the landscape.

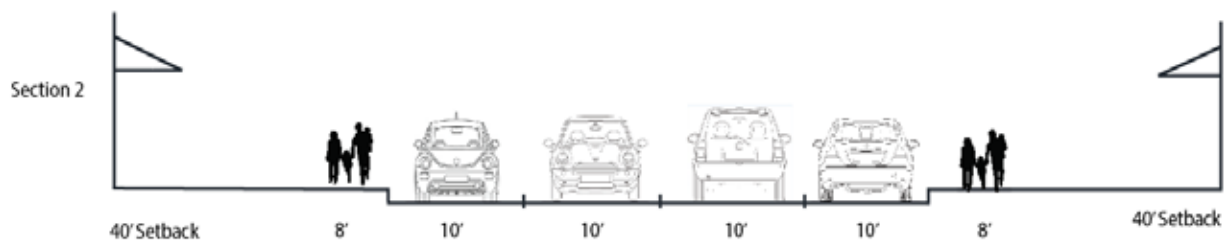
Transportation Segmented Analysis

Node 1: Northside Drive - Langford Parkway



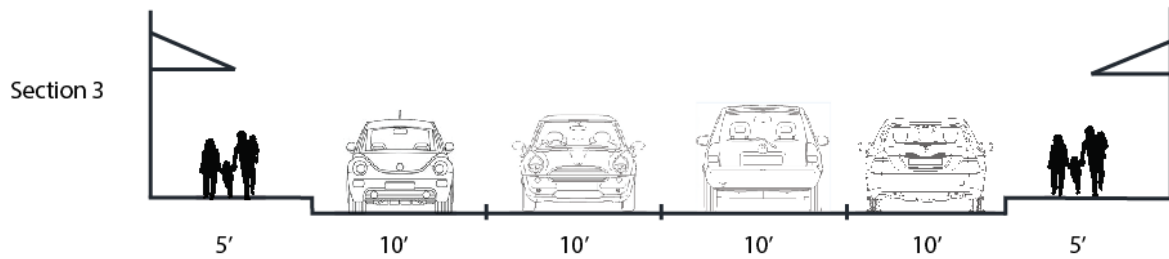
My analysis starts at the origin of Metropolitan Parkway as the northern stretch branches from Northside Drive continuing south to Langford Parkway. The area features most of the industrial zoned parcels within the corridor with many fronting the street including large warehouses before becoming dominated by single family residential home.

Node 2: Langford Parkway -Cleveland Avenue



The second section, this middle section continues south from Langford Parkway to Cleveland Avenue. Most businesses along this node have large parking lots that front the street creating a sense desolation, further compounded by large abandoned commercial businesses.

Node 3: Cleveland Ave -Mt Zion Road (City Limits)



The last section, is very residential and begins to transition into a more suburban atmosphere with large lot sizes and narrower streets before becoming a fully residential street.

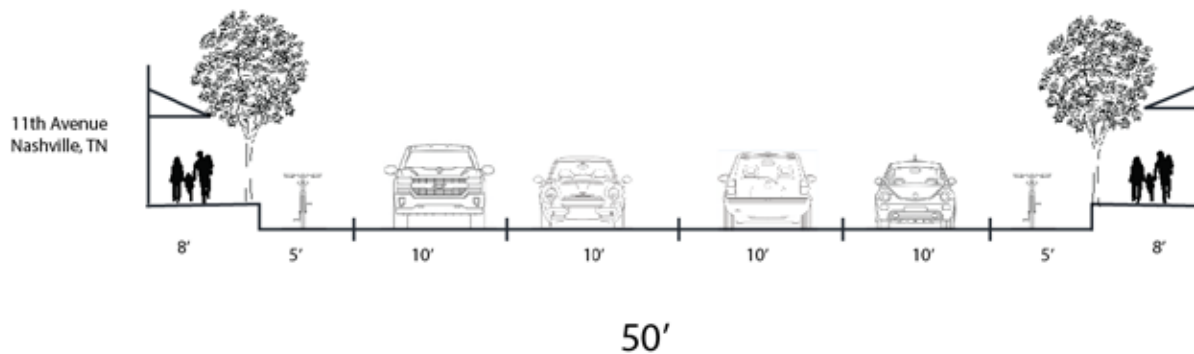
CASE STUDIES



11th Avenue: Nashville, TN



Source: Pinterest

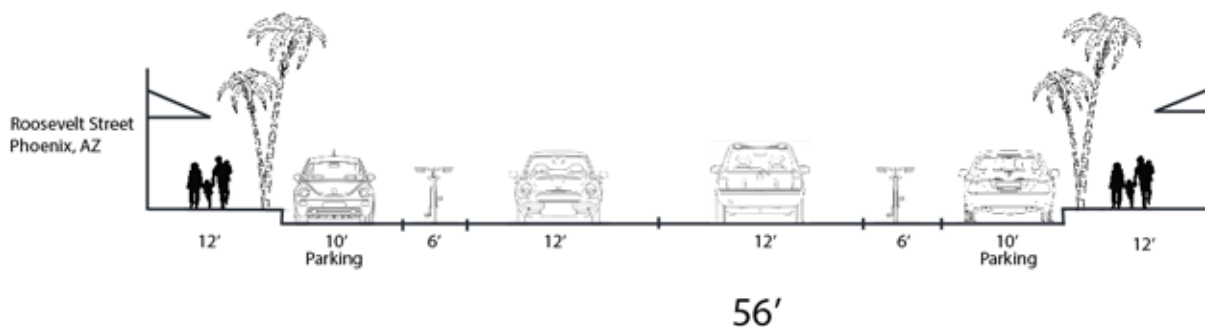


The 11th Avenue Complete Street Project, primarily industrial roadway for most of its life, 11th Avenue in the Gulch area of Nashville serves as the main artery for this constantly changing, hip neighborhood of Nashville. The city wanted to find a way to reimagine this street by using a complete street design. An almost \$3 million investment in the Gulch neighborhood the street is located was made the home of an annual festival. The project transforms a half mile of 11th Avenue from Laurel Street to the Church Street Viaduct into a complete street. The revamped street prioritizes pedestrian accessibility by increasing sidewalk width, colored bike lane and erecting barriers, such as trees, between pedestrians and motorists. The Metropolitan Redesign will incorporate many of these concepts that help users have a better experience.

Roosevelt Row: Phoenix, AZ



Source: Pinterest



Roosevelt Street, in Phoenix, Arizona has developed a reputation as a district for local artists and other creativity based businesses. Roosevelt Row continues to grow in popularity as a destination point for people to view work of local artists and meet them in their studios. Roosevelt Row is a unique area in that varying densities of residential development, and small businesses, in addition to artist studios, already exist and are planned and encouraged for this area. This type of development is intended to generate a vibrant environment in which people can live, work, and socialize near the downtown core.

The development along Roosevelt Row along the street provides be affordable housing for young professionals, students, artists. The district is ideal being located within a reasonable biking distance from mass transit and the light rail. The future expansions of Valley Metro System and growth at nearby Arizona State University attaches more people to the area along with commercial businesses to support the influx. The current residents represent a positive example of economic diversity in the community which is achieved through more affordable housing.

Caroline Street: Houston, TX



Source: Pinterest



Caroline Street is one of the roadways most relied upon by pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists travelling to Houston Community College. The Caroline Street Reconstruction Project allowed for the redesign of the area to add enhancements for safety and convenience. The project included a complete roadway reconstruction with new concrete pavement and public utility upgrades. In addition, the project includes sidewalk improvements with landscape and pedestrian amenity enhancements as well as improvements to the city's designated bicycle route along Caroline Street. New design elements for Caroline Street include rain gardens filled with cypress trees and irises that create a stunning seasonal display, a dedicated bicycle lane, signage and way finding, and custom furnishings.

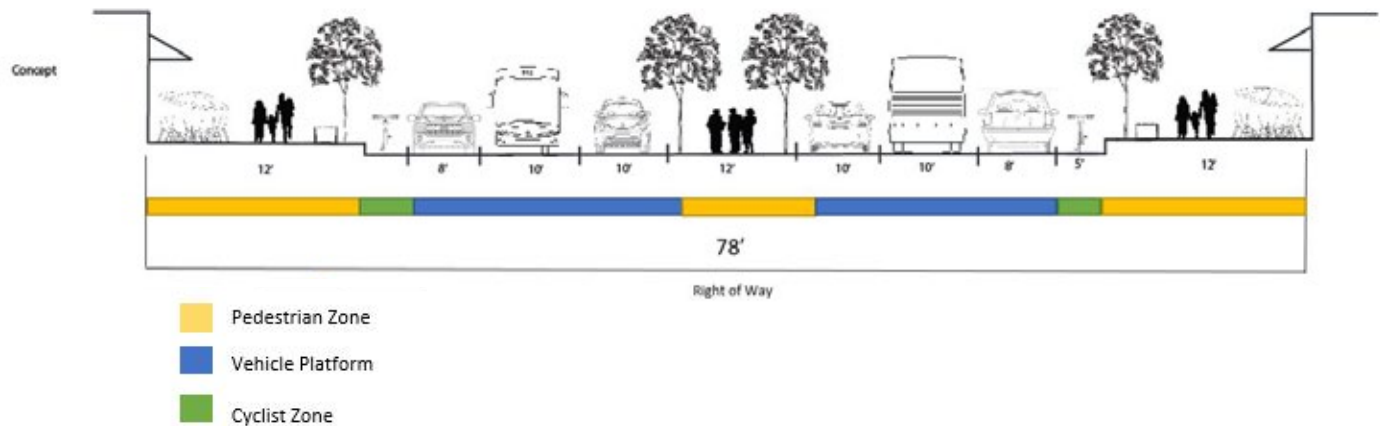
Takeaways

The case studies all demonstrate design principles Metropolitan Parkway could learn from relating to, pedestrian and cyclist safety. There are opportunities to create housing with closer frontage along Metropolitan Parkway like Roosevelt Row in Phoenix that could attach shops and boutiques. Pedestrian safety features incorporated. The analysis also shows how streets can be reimaged as a place for people and how design can influence behavior.

CONCEPT

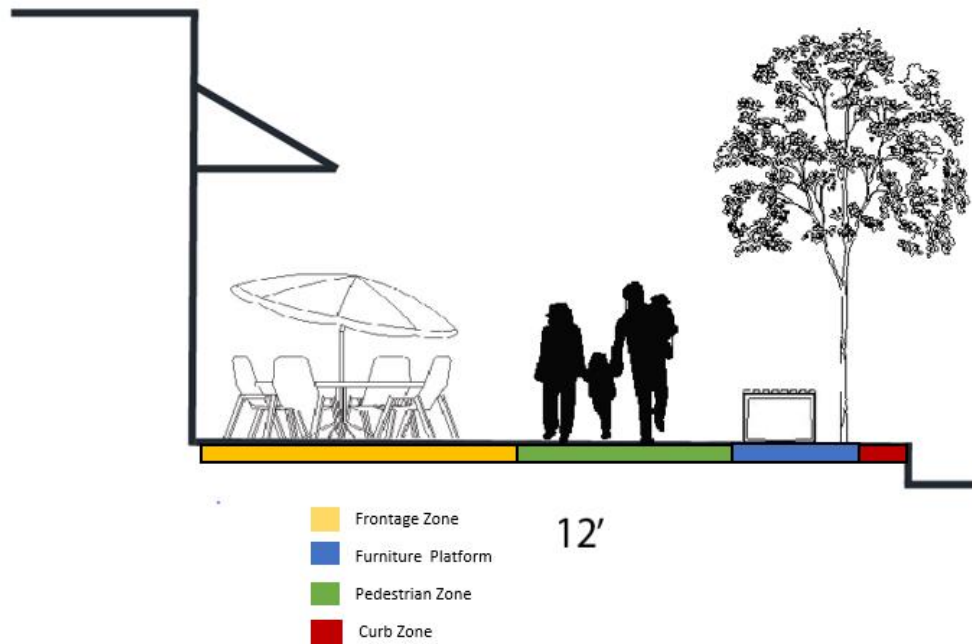


Design Goals



The Metropolitan Parkway Redevelopment Plan will first look at the three main activity nodes along the street. One of these nodes is the intersection of Metropolitan Parkway and Cleveland Avenue. The complete street design itself will focus on this stretch of roadway and then elaborate on how this space can be expanded and partially redeveloped to include more buildings fronting along the street and to create a more walkable, pedestrian friendly environment. The redesign will consider the broader plan redevelop the shopping center at the intersection will include new commercial development that compliments the street itself.

Metropolitan Parkway does not have equal right of way the entire length, so complete street techniques can be applied sparingly until after Dill Avenue where right of we can be expanded to 75' feet allowing for on street parking, wider sidewalks, divided median and 10' feet. The area has 40' feet or further setbacks with large storefront parking lots that can be converted to new market rate housing and additional greenspace, with lower level retail that can service the community.



Frontage Zone - The transition area between the property line and sidewalk where awnings, stairs, storefront displays, and other building elements intrude into the sidewalk is known as frontage. There are three zones that must be taken into consideration, Pedestrian, Furnishing, and Curb Zones which will be taken into consideration mainly within the “district” area and the street itself.

Pedestrian Zone - The clear portion of the sidewalk on which pedestrians travel.

Furnishing Zone - The portion of the sidewalk used for street furniture, trees and landscaping, transit stops, lights, fire hydrants, and other furnishings.

Curb Zone - The portion of the sidewalk where the curb is located.



Source: Pinterest

Crosswalks

Marked crosswalks will delineate the preferred crossing routes for pedestrians and alert other road users where to expect crossing pedestrians. Crosswalks and curb ramps will be paired with tactile warning strips per ADA guidelines. Crosswalks should be 10' wide in the district; the wider crosswalks can accommodate larger volumes of pedestrian traffic. Pedestrian signals will inform pedestrians when to cross at signalized intersections by providing WALK, flashing DON'T WALK, and DON'T WALK indicators. Pedestrian countdowns will have prioritized based on pedestrian volume.



Source: Pinterest

Street Furniture

Functional and aesthetically pleasing street furniture will be along the entire route with unique and creative furniture in the “district” that is will double as place making contributing to a pleasant walking environment. Other furniture such as, bike racks and shelters, and waste receptacles will be added with unique styles in the district to support the use of the street as a public space.



Source: Pinterest

Lighting

Increased visibility of pedestrians and bicyclists, thereby increasing their comfort and safety. Illumination along corridors to increase motorists' ability to see pedestrians walking along the road at night, which will be important as the transit service and land uses along the street will generate pedestrians. Pedestrian scale lighting will supplement or replace standard lights on were high pedestrian traffic in expected.



Source: Pinterest

Trees/ Shading

A tree belt area will be along the street between the curb and the sidewalk whenever possible. A minimum width (2' – 5') is desired when feasible. Street trees and other landscaping will provide aesthetic enhancements to a street, and help mitigate air pollution. Shade will provide lower temperatures, provide a buffer for pedestrians and cyclist, and provide green storm water management.



Source: Pinterest

Medians

Medians will separate different lanes or directions of traffic within the roadway using planted, raised concrete islands, or landscaped boulevards. The new median will provide opportunity for plantings, green infrastructure, and allow for pedestrian refuge islands. Raised medians will be at all pedestrian crossings where the total roadway width exceeds 60'. The design will account for changes in traffic circulation and emergency vehicle access along with bike lanes that will travel in the center of the roadway.



Source: Pinterest

Parking

On-street parking serves an important need for motor vehicles, however it will be limited front parking with metered spaces, parking will be inside the blocks along Metropolitan Parkway. The storefront parking will make streets more comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists by providing a buffer from traffic and calming traffic by narrowing the perceived width of the roadway. Parklets are strategically placed in parking areas to other enhance the pedestrian environment, creating place to set and helping to calm traffic as well.



Source: Pinterest

Curb Extensions

Access for all users is an important part of any Complete Street. The American Disabilities Act ensures that wheelchair ramps with detectable warning strips are installed wherever a sidewalk crosses a curb, and existing ramps.



Source: Pinterest

Max Posted Speeds

The target speed is the desirable speed at which vehicles should operate on a street in a specific context. The target speed 35 mph will be strictly enforced in the area as the new design will encourage high levels of pedestrian and bicycle activity. The target speed is achieved through a combination of measures that include physical measures such as curb extensions and medians to narrow the traveled way. Also, signal timing for moderate progressive speeds between intersections including elements such as on-street parking. The target speed is the current speed of the roadway because initially an urban avenue in a predominantly residential or commercial.



Source: FDOT

Bus Stops

The transit stops will be located at surface level, providing a safe distance from moving vehicles in the traveled way. The stops are located to provide passengers convenient access to and from their likely destinations, particularly passengers with disabilities. A transit stop must meet all ADA standards. They can either be part of the shelter with turnouts for buses to reenter the traffic stream.



Source: Pinterest

Bicycle Lanes

Buffered bike lanes are conventional bike lanes with a designated buffer space (2'-3') separating the bicycle lane from adjacent lanes for motor vehicles or parking. The lanes create a larger space for bicyclists without potentially causing the bike lane to look like a travel lane or parking lane for motorists.



Source: Pinterest

Rezoning

The rezoning along the street in the planned district will incorporate three components mixed land uses, compact building, and quality mixed income housing. The development will be a vision of the community and will have closer setbacks from the street along with different designs to create architectural distinctiveness, as well as expand choices in housing. The goal is to create an interesting, unique community that reflects the vibrant history and culture of the people who reside there building the urban fabric. Mixed land uses are a critical component of achieving better places to live, residential, commercial and recreational uses near one another, alternatives to driving, such as walking or biking, become viable. Providing quality housing for people of all income is important the creation of a wider range of housing choices, the area can benefit from more middle housing. The district could help residents lower auto dependence with the updated infrastructure making a more efficient community, close to the jobs created by the commercial floors for a better jobs housing balance, and generate a strong foundation of support for neighborhood.

CONCLUSION



The Metropolitan Parkway Complete Street Redesign will be a major redevelopment project for the city that can be funded through the City of Atlanta Infrastructure Bond and Georgia Department of Transportation being a State Highway. Policies exist such as the Metropolitan Parkway TAD and Beltline TAD that can help leverage investment. The project incorporates many sustainable street design techniques with general street design principles. The design seeks to utilize the resources that are already found in existing neighborhoods. The concept will be very attractive to the private sector bring much needed private development to the area. The complete street design will also create great places to live, work and play encouraging residents and other community members to create a livable community vision.

The complete street design will also provide many benefits for the communities along the street. The benefits include value to the community by creating walkable neighborhoods, that are safer and healthier that are unique in their character. The development along the street will increase the amount of equitable and affordable housing. The economic competitiveness will be increased in the areas along the street by new store fronts. Transportation accessibility will be increased as the street will provide more transportation choices and decrease household transportation costs with employment within the neighborhood, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

The Metropolitan Complete Street Redesign can lead to changes in the way the City of Atlanta approaches street design. A Complete Streets policy could be adopted that has guiding principles for how the modification of the road or transportation system could influence development in underserved communities. The concept and techniques used along Metropolitan Parkway can be applied to similar locations and lead to more livable communities in the future.

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