Fighting Small Business Displacement with Public Land: Commercial Community Land Trusts in the City of Atlanta

Applied Research Paper

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I. Introduction

Atlanta is the 8th largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States, and the largest in the Southeast if Texas is excluded (Green 2022*).* For the past eight years, Georgia has been rated the number one state for doing business according to *Site Selection* magazine (Georgia Department of Economic Development, n.d.) which has further spurred the economic and business growth in the city. A focus on maintaining this business environment has helped fuel economic development initiatives focused on the traditional objectives of job creation and economic growth statewide and in the Atlanta region. Often, these initiatives have translated into investment and policies in the city's neighborhoods that aim to attract wealthier residents that fled to the suburbs in prior decades.

A repercussion of this revitalization, however, is that there have few safeguards put in place against adverse effects of market forces that has led to spikes in real estate prices. The consequences are documented at length in the housing market, where rents and property taxes rise so drastically in certain areas that many residents, whose incomes have not increased with the rates of housing costs, become displaced (Marcuse 1985; Quastel, Moos, and Lynch 2012; Immergluck and Balan 2018). The trend of relative affordability in Atlanta compared to other large cities has started to change–especially since the 2020 covid-19 pandemic (Urban Land Institute 2021).

A less documented effect of post-revitalization is the impact on existing businesses, primarily small businesses (Meltzer 2016). Due to similar market forces of rising commercial rents and property taxes, they may be forced to shut down or leave a neighborhood. According to the Small Business Anti-Displacement Network (SBAN) run by the University of Maryland's

National Center for Smart Growth (NCSG), commercial gentrification is “the process by which long-term businesses that provide products and services to established residents are forced to move or close and are replaced by establishments that cater to more affluent consumers” (Alvarez, Andrews, and Lung-Amam 2021). Many small businesses in these communities serve important functions such as the local grocery store or as the dominant employers of residents in the area and have for many years. For decades, small businesses have been at the very center of local communities and have also been the main ways for minority and immigrant populations to gain empowerment through entrepreneurship (Sutton 2010). Their displacement or closure can contribute to the decline of the original community that existed before the area was revitalized. Traditional economic development strategies centered on economic growth do not properly address this phenomenon, so alternatives need to be explored. One potential solution is to foster commercial community land trusts (CLTs). This paper analyzes current conditions in Atlanta to explore if and how the city might use its publicly owned land to foster commercial CLTs in areas that face commercial gentrification risks.

In April 2020, the City of Atlanta announced the launch of a program to convert some of its publicly owned land to affordable housing in order to combat rising rents and home prices (Capelouto 2021). Publicly owned land was defined as land owned by the City of Atlanta, the Beltline, the Atlanta Land Bank, Atlanta Housing, and Invest Atlanta and excluded land used by MARTA, Atlanta Public Schools, and related to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. The City of Atlanta owns over 1,300 parcels, but a small fraction is currently suited for such uses (Atlanta Department of City Planning). This leaves the city with the opportunity to use those parcels for other applications.

Although CLTs are more commonly used to promote more affordable housing opportunities, this paper argues that using community land trusts for commercial tenants is an economic development strategy worth exploring for maintaining and fostering small businesses during times of revitalization. Its contribution is to analyze how such policies could be implemented in Atlanta Georgia, where there currently are no such efforts being led by the city government. It does so by informational discussions and analyzing spatial and land use data to conduct a suitability assessment. The objective of this paper is to present a path for city officials and those devising economic development strategies in Atlanta to begin exploring this alternative public land use and determine potential parcels to explore.

The rest of the paper is structured through the following sections: (II) a literature review of prior research on the impacts of gentrification, its impacts on businesses, and application of the community land trust model; (III) research design and methods outline; (IV) suitability and risk assessment using spatial information and parcel zoning classifications to determine public land in Atlanta that could be used for commercial purposes and are in areas at risk of displacement pressures; (V) discussion of findings; (VI) policy implications & conclusions related to complementary policies and initiatives the City of Atlanta can support to create and develop commercial CLTs on these sites.

II. Gentrification, Revitalization, and the Commercial Community Land Trust Solution

The term gentrification was first used by Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe the movement of the “gentry”, or those just under nobility, in the 1950s and 1960s into lower income neighborhoods in London. In other words, it was a phenomenon of a wealthier class moving into an area dominated by a lower-income class. This phenomenon, however, existed before the term “gentrification” was used. For example, there is documentation of “brownstoning” in Brooklyn during the 1940s where the highly educated postindustrial middle class began to flock to the “distinctive brownstone-fronted townhouses” in Brooklynn which were not home to those in this same economic class (Osman 2011). More recently, the word gentrification refers to “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential or commercial use” (Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008). Due to the historic segregation and demographic divides in the United States, gentrification is often observed when a historically disinvested area - often areas that are predominately African American, offer low job opportunities, and low wages - see an influx of a predominately white, college-educated population with higher incomes.

Since it is also these areas where revitalization projects are focused, there are concerns around the effects of gentrification (Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008). The “revitalization” is often centered around the tastes and consumer demands of those moving in instead of residents already living there (Smith 1979). Revitalization is used as an economic development tool used to create initial market conditions that will allow the further development to continue (Smith 1976, Sanders 1980). The initial low land rents in these areas are economic attractants for businesses to set-up shop (Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008). Those same businesses and other amenities draw individuals from outside the community to relocate. The demand for space by both businesses and people, when leaving market forces unencumbered, results in the eventual rise in both commercial and residential rents which in turn draws more investment (and increases municipal funding tied taxes) (Grier and Grier 1978).

A consequence of this form of development, however, is that it is a place-based initiative (Theodos 2022, Kubisch et. al 2010). The desired end is not whether the people residing in this area are better off, but if the area now has factors that can make it more valuable (whether that be from higher property taxes, higher rents, or higher consumer spending). A drawback of this approach is the effect it can have on exacerbating inequality, and it calls into question if market-driven approaches can "take care" of this growing divide (Fullerton 2018). For example, revitalization efforts may fill initial market gaps by attracting "pioneering creative entrepreneurs" whose operations are viewed as being able to turn the area around, but then these "early arrivals" will become displaced by "higher-value" commercial businesses over time and as the desirability of an area continues to increase (Ferm 2016).

Through this process, the local neighborhood has both won and lost – it now has more affluent businesses to strengthen its economic activity but the bedrock of what anchored the community and/or made it initially desirable no longer remains. The industry or businesses that are displaced move to a more affordable location (if they move at all and do not shut down), but then the cycle may begin again. Their stay is temporary, and they may be displaced again once similar market conditions from the original location make its way to the new neighborhood. As Jane Jacobs (1961, 247) observes, the businesses and the ideas behind them "[are] destroyed by the duplication of [their] own greatest successes."

New possible clientele to revitalized areas incentivize more businesses to move into an area which risks displacing localized businesses that were initially there (National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders, n.d.; Cohen & Pettit, 2019; Ferm 2016). The introduction of new businesses may be viewed positively since they will further attract wealthier consumers who will generate more business activity in the area. This place-based perspective, however, may not account for the impact or purpose the prior businesses had for residents. Small business owners often act as vested members of those communities since they chose to locate there (Studer 2018) and losing these small businesses may mean the loss of community cohesion and the ability for that community to withstand shifts (ex. gentrification) and shocks (ex. covid-19) (Sauser et al. 2017). This does not include the negative impacts from unemployment and possible skills deprecation that result from job displacement (Nyström 2020) or the social leverage and mobility possibilities that arise from social networks (Dominguez and Watkins 2003) that can be supported by a vibrant small business environment.

There is extensive literature on the importance of social networks, also referred to as social capital. There is concern that market-based structures are a particular concern for destroying these networks in poorer communities (Ansari et al. 2012). The breakdown of these social networks can deprive the community and its residents of possible stability and resiliency. Looking at communities overall, prior literature has also discussed how communities that have higher social capital are more prepared to confront poverty, handle internal community confrontations, and be able to take advantage of opportunities more quickly (Woolcock 2001).

If incorporated into economic development strategies, social capital can help to spur innovation, increase quality of life for residents in the community, and make micro credit lending more feasible (Blair and Carroll 2009). For businesses, better social capital can increase their connections to “dealmakers”, or highly connected individuals within a given area, who can help connect them to the regional economy and grow (Kemeny, Feldman, Ethridge, Zoller 2016).

This prior literature suggests that both residents and businesses would be negatively impacted if social capital within the community were to breakdown. The linkages between residents and businesses, especially small businesses, adds even more cohesion risks in the community. Small businesses make contributions to their surrounding community and these contributions are reciprocated through support from the community which further enhances the success of that business (Kilkenny, Nalbarte, and Besser 1999). If the social capital within a community is disrupted, it may hinder the ability to smaller businesses to grow or remain in the community. Although one singular small business does not employ an entire community, small businesses overall can add dynamism to the local economy (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, Miranda 2014) so their role in local community development should not be overlooked. The question becomes, how can small business displacement be addressed and how can negative effects of displacement counteracted. There are multiple strategies that can be adopted, but this paper specifically examines commercial CLTs.

A CLT is a nonprofit that acquires land with the goal of maintaining ownership to maintain affordability, traditionally for tenants and homeowners. Affordability is achieved by charging lower rents or entering ground leases with tenants where the tenant owns only the structure on top of the land and leases the land from the CLT. The intellectual origin behind CLTs is attributed to American economist Henry George back to the 19th century who viewed land as a shared resource instead of something to be speculated and sold to the highest bidder (Davis 2014). He wrote *Progress and Property* which explored the associated rise of economic growth and poverty and the role that the commodification of land played in that. His proposition was to create a single tax that would be on the appreciating values of land while eliminating all other taxes.

While George is attributed with the theory and intellectual framework that would lead to CLTs, he did not start any himself. The first CLT in the U.S. was New Communities Inc. (NCI) founded in southern Georgia. It was created in 1969 as a network of agricultural cooperatives for black farmers. NCI purchased over 5,000 acres of land, but a combination of farming challenges, heavy debt, consecutive years of draught, and discriminatory lending by the Farmers Home Administration forced them to foreclose on their land in the 1980s (Davis 2014). Although NCI was not able to last, its leaders documented lessons learned and best practices that were used to help develop *The Community Land Trust* which aimed to provide a framework for this landownership model. Today, there is now *The CLT Technical Manual* which acts as a practical guide for current CLTs and new ones looking to start. A summary of the manual and overview of its information for starting commercial CLTs can be found in **Section A** in the Appendix.

This continued work by leaders in the CLT space has led to increased adoption and implementation across the country. According to the Schumacher Center for a New Economics, there are 195 CLT related entities across 44 states in the United States. A breakdown of the number by state can be found in **Section B** in the Appendix along with the link to the center's directory. Traditionally created as an alternative to more affordable housing, CLTs have also been used to address affordability in local commercial spaces by making it possible for smaller enterprises, businesses, and centers such as business incubators or grocery stores to operate (Brown and Ranney 2012). Commercial CLTs are cited as "spearheading community engagement and advocacy efforts" on top of "creating new commercial enterprises" (Rosenberg and Yuen 2012). They are increasingly looked to by government officials and economic developers to help keep small businesses in place (Palmer 2019).

Much of the gentrification discussion and literature focuses on the impacts on residents and less on small businesses. However, the reviewed literature showcases that displacement pressures resulting from gentrification and its impacts can be felt by both residents and businesses. With the relationship between residents and smaller businesses closely linked, the displacement of one can exacerbate the pressures on the other. As cities, especially growing ones like Atlanta, design policies and projects for the future, city governments may need to explore alternative forms of affordability for both residents and businesses. Due to the role small businesses have in their local communities, this paper analyzes current conditions in Atlanta to explore if and how the city might use its publicly owned land to combat risks of small businesses displacement. More specifically, it will examine where the city government can foster commercial CLTs in areas that face commercial gentrification risks.

III. Research Design/Methods

The research design for this exploration consisted of two parts: informational discussions and a suitability and risk assessment. Since there aren't any commercial CLTs in Atlanta, the informational discussions were conducted to learn more about current commercial CLTs, build context for how they could fit into the commercial and economic development environment in Atlanta, and gather suggestions for further research. These conversations helped with gathering background research and guide possible policy implications. The suitability and risk assessment used parcel data retrieved from the city to observe where publicly owned land exists and other spatial characteristics of those parcels. The parcel data was stored in shapefile format to make it compatible with mapping software. More detail about these two parts is discussed below.

Informational Discussions

Informational discussions were conducted with both existing commercial CLT staff members and professionals in Atlanta working in real estate, land use, and economic development. Discussion participants are listed in **Table 1**. The discussions were informational in nature and followed a conversational structure. Participants were primarily asked about the missions and goals related to their organization, challenges their organization has faced or ones they've seen in the areas they work in, and how they thought government entities could help with pressures being felt by themselves or small businesses they work with.

Atlanta-based participants were identified based on existing knowledge of their organization's work and its connection to the research topic. Contact information was derived from the organization's website. Although the Schumacher Center for a New Economics has a directory of CLTs in the U.S., the directory does not contain contact information, website, or residential v. commercial use for every CLT listed. Therefore, it was not used for choosing CLTs to contact. Seven commercial CLTs were contacted based on their reference in prior literature or working documents. Of those, three responded and two agreed to discuss their commercial operations. The Small Business Anti-Displacement Network was also contacted, but a response was not received.

Name	Title	Organization	Type of Organization (Location)
Kara Cooper	Director of Economic Development	Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.	Economic Development Agency (Atlanta, GA)
Radhika Krishna	Director of Operations	Anchorage Community Land Trust	CLT (Anchorage, AK)
Brittany Palmer	Community Land Trust Program Manager & Community Organizer	Northern Missoula Community Development Corporation	CLT (Missoula, MT)
Bob Oaks	Executive Director	Northern Missoula Community Development Corporation	CLT (Missoula, MT)
Amanda Rhein	Executive Director	Atlanta Land Trust	CLT (Atlanta, GA)
Antariksh Tandon	Development and Design Director	The Guild	Co-Living Company (Atlanta, GA)
Joel Dixon	Principal	Urban Oasis Development	Developer/Builder (Atlanta, GA)
Melody Echols	Assistant Director, American Rescue Plan Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Program	Invest Atlanta	Economic Development Agency (Atlanta, GA)
Alan Ferguson	Former Senior VP of Community Outreach	Invest Atlanta	Economic Development Agency (Atlanta, GA)
Pam Joiner	General Manager	Municipal Market Company (Sweet Auburn)	Historic Market (Atlanta, GA)

Table 1. ***Informational discussion participants***

Suitability and Risk Assessment

After gathering background research guided by the informational discussions, the suitability and risk assessment was conducted. Over 2,500 parcels owned by a public entity in Atlanta were identified and analyzed to determine parcels that would be suitable for deploying CLTs. Potential criteria for commercial CLT suitability were whether the parcel was labeled as vacant, current zoning regulations, access to public transportation, neighborhood, and displacement classifications for the surrounding area. Data about the publicly owned parcels contained information about the parcel's: parcel ID, acreage, council, Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU), neighborhood, zoning classification, public agency that owned it, whether it was part of a Tax Allocation District (TAD), whether it was vacant or occupied, and the total appraised value.

Displacement classification criteria was observed from two different sources. The first source was the City of Atlanta's Neighborhood Change Report (NCR). This source was chosen because it was the most recent publication from an Atlanta public entity on this topic and the data was made publicly available. The report classifies Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs) based on changes in distributions of low and non-low-income populations from 2010-2018 using U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) data. NSAs were used because the Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta's Metropolitan Planning Organization, provides ACS data apportioned to neighborhoods via these boundaries. NSAs that had substantial change over the study period are classified as: Growth, Low-Income Displacement, Low-Income Concentration, and Population Decline. A link to the report can be found in the Further Resources section at the very end of the Appendix.

Because the NCR used income as the predominant factor in categorizing an NSA's "change" and many of the NSAs were considered to not have had a substantial change, a second source was used as a supplemental comparison. The second source used was the Urban Displacement Project (UDP), which is a research and action initiative conducted by the University of California Berkley and the University of Toronto. Data for this source is also from the ACS; 1990, 2000, and 2010 Decennial Census; and the Zillow Home Value Index. The geography is at the census tract level instead of NSA because UDP observed the trends for the 10-county Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The UDP created a 2018 map for the Atlanta region and the data is publicly available. A link to the project can be found in the Further Resources section at the very end of the Appendix. The UDP used more typologies than the NCR and are listed in **Table 2** with the ones used for this analysis in bold. These five were chosen because they explicitly referred to displacement or gentrification.

Urban Displacement Project Typologies
Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
Ongoing Displacement
At Risk of Gentrification
Early/Ongoing Gentrification
Advanced Gentrification
Stable Moderate/Mixed Income
At Risk of Becoming Exclusive

Becoming Exclusive
Stable/Advanced Exclusive
High Student Population
Unavailable or Unreliable Data

Table 2. ***Urban Displacement Project Typologies***

Shapefiles for the census tracts used by UDP were available and ArcGIS mapping software was used to overlay this data with the shapefiles of public ownership data to determine which of these typologies the public parcels overlapped with. Shapefiles were not available for the NCR data, but NSA boundary shapefiles were available from the ARC. ArcGIS mapping software was used to manually add the NCR classifications to the NSAs there were classified as one of the four types of change categories. Similar to the UDP shapefiles, it was then overlayed with the shapefiles of the public ownership data to determine which of those typologies the public parcels overlapped with. Shapefiles for Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) rail and bus routes were also accessible from the ARC and were overlayed.

Since the public parcel data was in shapefile format, it could be filtered to only show parcels based on certain criteria. This was done for two criteria: zoning classification and whether the parcel was vacant. Because of the lengthy process necessary for rezoning or special permitting, the parcels were filtered for classifications that allowed some form of commercial use. Vacancy was a filter to determine which sites would be available for more immediate use.

IV. Results

An initial summary analysis of the public parcels indicated there were a total of 2,503 listed publicly-owned properties with an average total appraised value of $927,724. Nine hundred and three of these properties were located within a TAD. The data includes properties owned by City of Atlanta, Atlanta BeltLine Inc., Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Housing Authority, the Atlanta Land Bank, and those related to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. **Table 3** lists each entity, the total amount of parcels they own, total amount of acres, and total parcels within a TAD. Only properties owned by the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Housing Authority had total appraisal values, so that information was not included in this table.

Entity	Total Number of Parcels	Total Acreage	TAD Parcels
Atlanta Housing Authority	424	896	160
Atlanta Public Schools	26	280	7
Atlanta Airport	465	24,448	1
Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.	19	96	18
City of Atlanta	1,342	5,290	608
Invest Atlanta	125	131	80
Atlanta Landbank	102	39	29
Grand Total	**2,503**	**31,181**	903

Table 3. ***Entity Summary***

Looking at the break-down by Atlanta neighborhood, there are just over 2,000 parcels accounting for over 6,000 acres. **Table 4** contains the summary for the top six neighborhoods in terms of number of parcels. **Map 1** shows all the properties overlayed with the Atlanta neighborhoods.

Atlanta Neighborhood	Total Number of Parcels	Total Acreage	Total Appraised ($)
Vine City	145	68	20,376,800
Blair Villa/Poole Creek	131	168	1,239,000
Downtown	102	83	407,855,200
Mechanicsville	91	69	13,806,500
Summerhill	74	28	21,715,200
Ashview Heights	71	19	4,563,500

Table 4. ***Top Six Atlanta Neighborhoods by Number of Publicly-Owned Parcels***

For the suitability analysis, the first filter was zoning classification. Within Atlanta, there are 95 different zoning classifications. As mentioned in the previous section, only parcels with a commercial zoning classification were examined to mitigate the need for variances or special permits. A list of those classifications, their descriptions, and the number of publicly-owned parcels with that classification can be found in **Table 5.**

District	Description	Total Number of Parcels
C-1	Community Business	54
C-2	Community Service	10
C-4	Central Area Commercial-Residential	4
MRC	Mixed Residential Commercial District	38
NC	Neighborhood Commercial District	8
R-LC	Residential-Limited Commercial District	15
Total	**6**	**129**

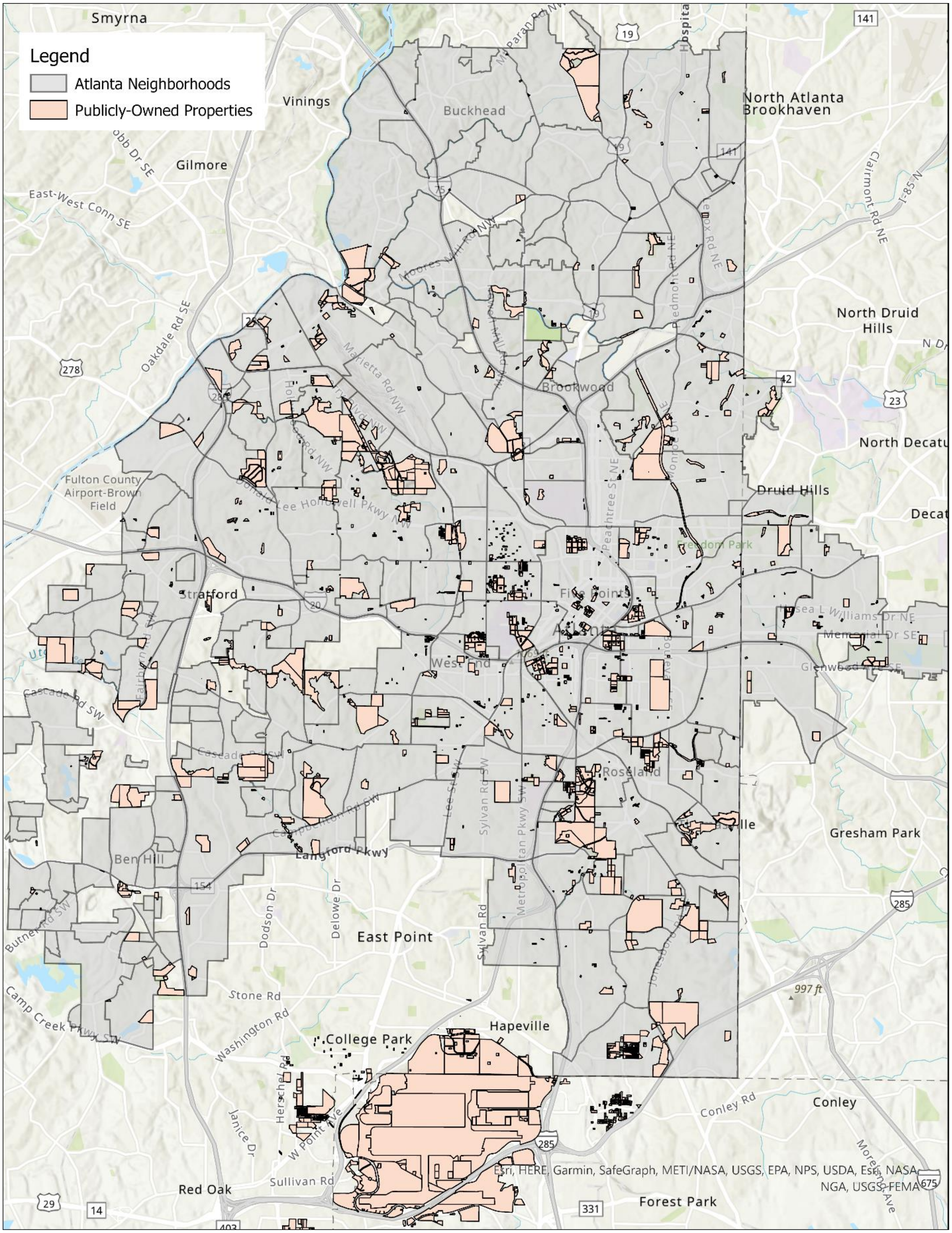
Table 5. ***Commercially Zoned Parcels***

These 129 parcels collectively are approximately 405 acres and span 45 neighborhoods. If accessibility without a car is desirable, 51 of the properties are within 1 mile of a MARTA rail station and all of them fall along a MARTA bus route. 39 of the 129 parcels are vacant, 16 of which are within 1 mile of a MARTA rail station. A list of these parcels can be found in **Section C** in the Appendix. **Map 2** shows all the commercial properties overlayed with the MARTA bus and rail routes.

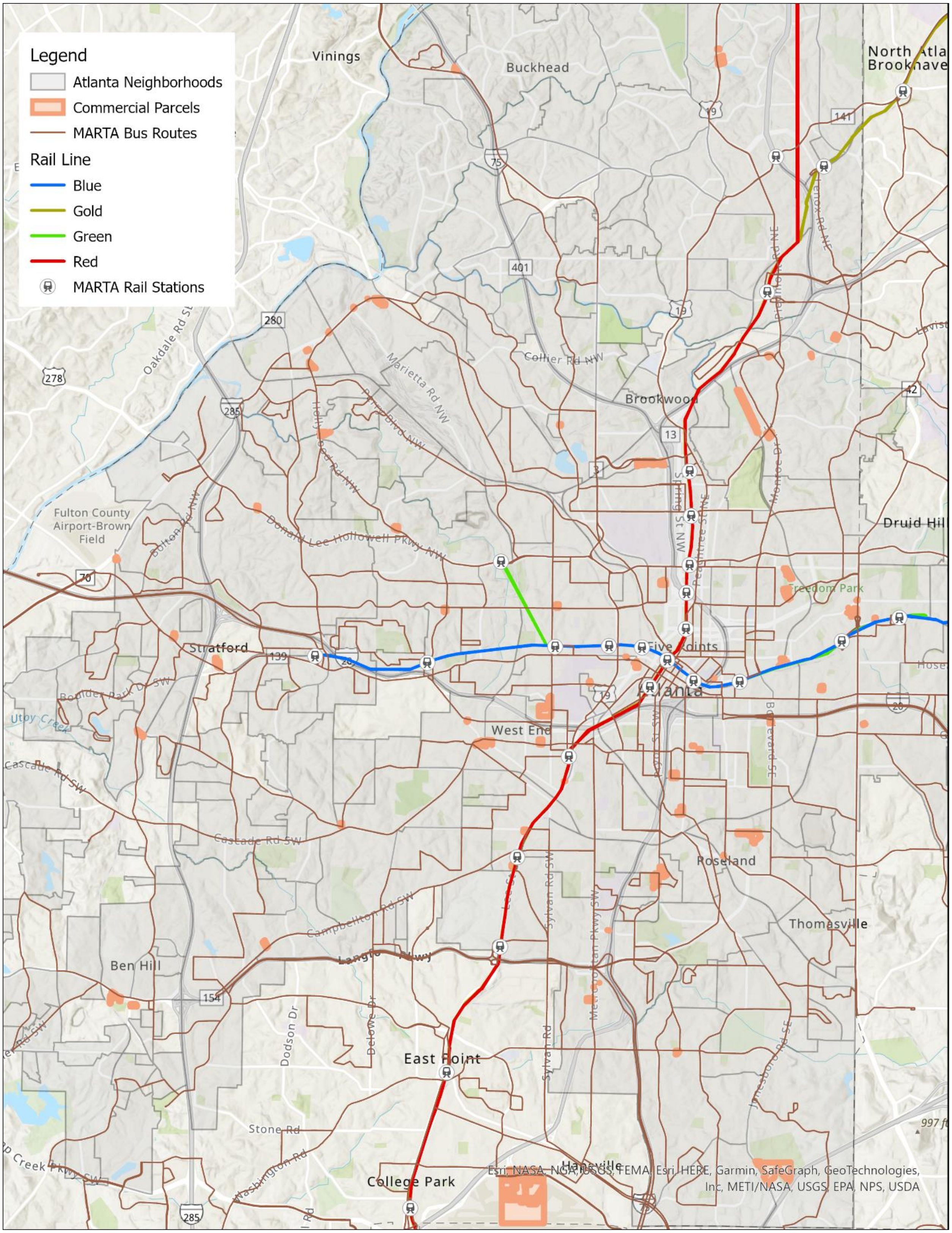
To observe public parcels in areas at risk of displacement pressures, the commercial parcels were overlayed with both the UDP census tracts and NCR NSAs. Looking solely at the UDP typologies (repeated in Table 4), 99 parcels fell into one of these classifications. Fifty-nine are either in tracts At Risk of Gentrification or Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement. Of those, 17 are coded as vacant. **Table 6** lists the number of total and vacant parcels for each UDP category. A list of these parcels can be found in **Section D** in the Appendix. **Map 3** shows all the commercial properties overlayed with the five UDP typologies.

Typology	Total Number of Parcels	Number of Vacant Parcels
Advanced Gentrification	16	4
Ongoing Displacement	13	9
Early/Ongoing Gentrification	11	2
At Risk of Gentrification	30	4
Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement	29	13
Grand Total	**99**	**32**

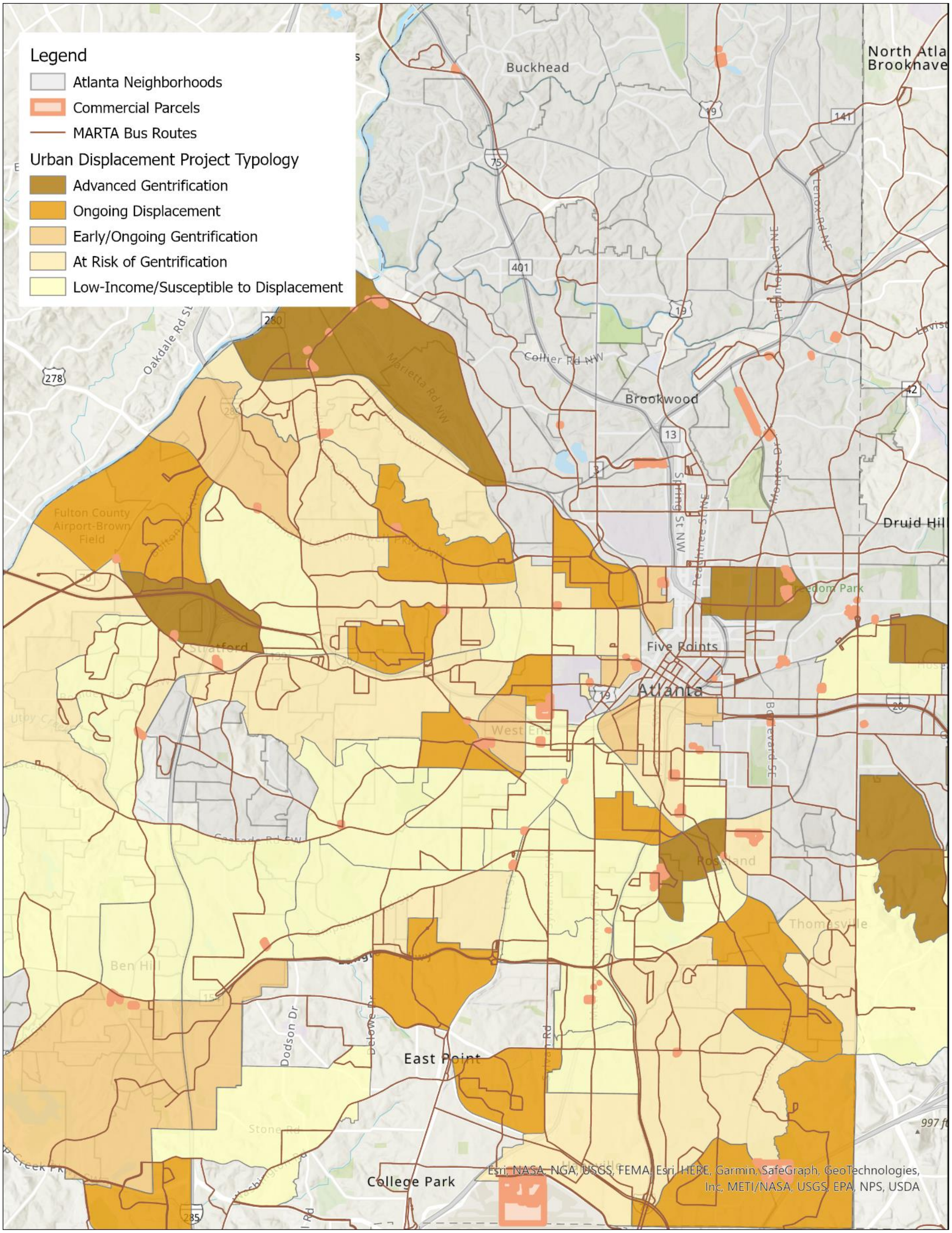
Table 6. ***Parcels by Urban Displacement Project Typology***
Source: Urban Displacement Project (2018), City of Atlanta (2019)



Map 1. ***All Publicly-Owned Parcels Overlayed with Atlanta Neighborhoods***



Map 2. ***Commercial Properties Overlayed with Atlanta Neighborhoods and MARTA Rail/Bus Routes***



Map 3. ***Commercial Properties Overlayed with Atlanta Neighborhoods and UDP Typologies***

A similar spatial analysis for the Neighborhood Change Report areas indicated 44 of the commercial public parcels fell into the Growth, Low-Income Concentration, or Low-Income Displacement classifications. Only 4 were marked vacant and these were in the Growth areas. A list of these parcels can be found in **Section E** in the Appendix. **Table 7** shows the number of parcels for these three areas. **Map 4** shows all the commercial properties overlayed with the three NCR classifications.

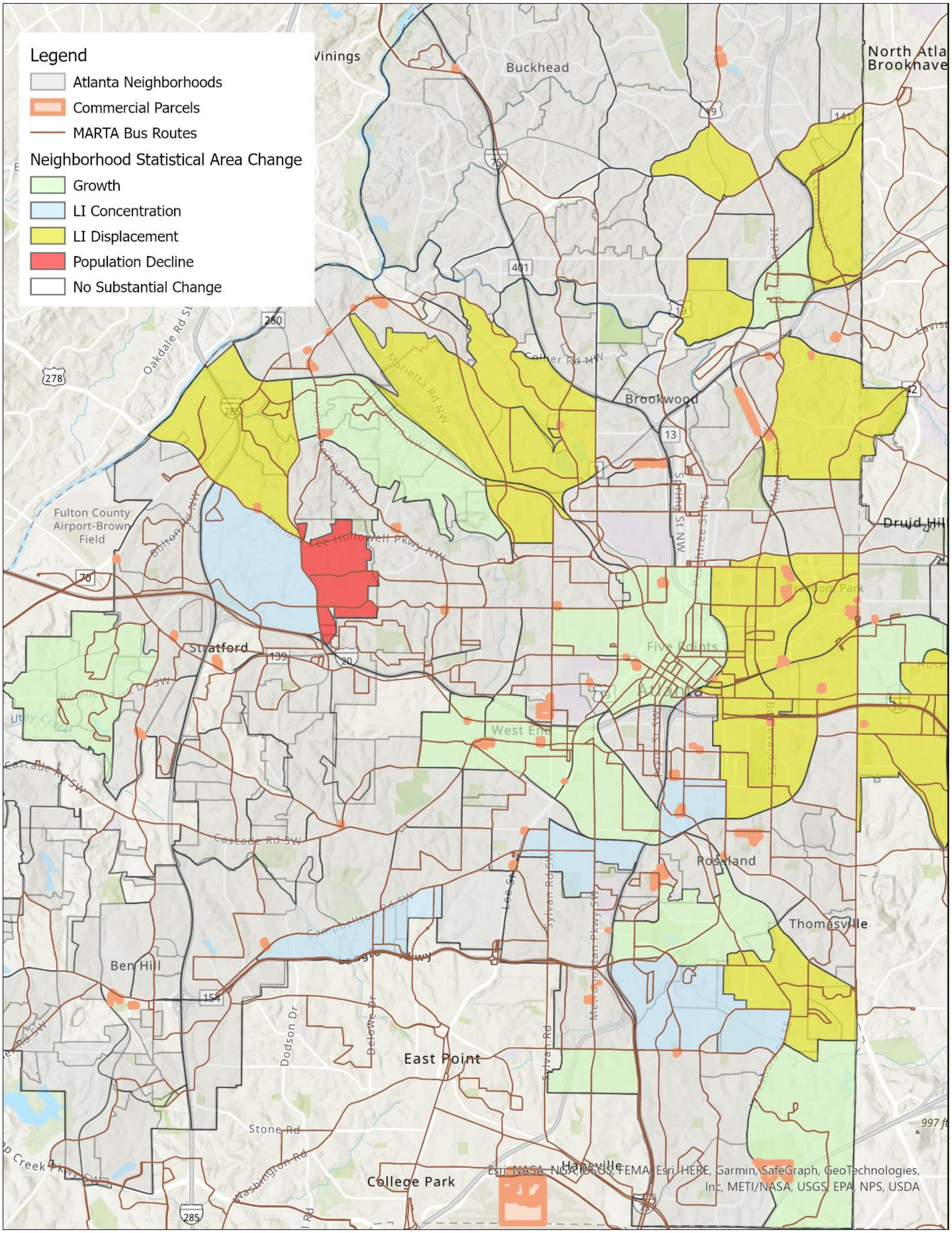
Classification	Total Number of Parcels
Growth	13
Low-Income Concentration	12
Low-Income Displacement	19
Grand Total	**44**

Table 7. ***Parcels by Neighborhood Change Report Classification***
Source: Neighborhood Change Report (2021), City of Atlanta (2019)

Although both use different typologies, there were four parcels that overlapped between the two sources. These are included in **Table 8.**

Parcel ID	Neighborhood	UDP Typology
14 00840004069	Castleberry Hill	Early/Ongoing Gentrification
14 00840004084	Castleberry Hill	Early/Ongoing Gentrification
14 01070006066	West End	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
17 0250 LL013	Carver Hills	At Risk of Gentrification

Table 8. ***Parcels by Neighborhood Change Report Classification***
Source: Urban Displacement Project (2018), Neighborhood Change Report (2021), City of Atlanta (2019)



Map 4. ***Commercial Properties Overlayed with Atlanta Neighborhoods and Neighborhood Change Report Classifications***

V. Discussion

Based on the suitability and risk assessment, between the two metrics there are 32 public parcels that exist in an area with possible displacement pressures. These parcels represent areas that city officials and economic developers can begin looking to give land to a CLT for commercial uses. It is also encouraged that officials look beyond just the parcels specified in this report. This analysis used parcel information that was last updated in 2019, leaving the possibility that the vacancy of certain parcels may have changed. The data, while indicating vacant or occupied, does not specify use, so there is also the possibility that a parcel could support a CLT even if it is occupied. It is recommended that further research be done to investigate this so that more possible sites could be determined, as well as more information on neighborhood and local level business trends.

Business data collected by the City of Atlanta was reported in The Neighborhood Change Report which does provide some insights. Percent net change from 2010-2018 for several indicators is shown in **Table 9**. Average gross revenue for the one population decline neighborhood was not included due to a data entry error from the City of Atlanta. While the Low-Income Displacement neighborhoods were the only neighborhoods to see an increase in number of businesses and had the smallest decrease in non-corporate ownership (the category most small businesses would fall into), the Growth neighborhoods saw a higher decrease in both. This may be due to the difference in displacement pressure absorption between residents and businesses. These trends, however, do support the spatial findings of displacement pressures in these areas potentially impacting the small businesses in these areas.

The Low-Income Displacement category refers to residents and, although resident displacement is used as a proxy for business displacement, it is important to note that they might not always occur at the same time. A business may be able to pass on rising costs onto its customers longer than a resident can absorb rising housing costs. Furthermore, if a business owner is displaced from the neighborhood they reside in, that does not necessarily mean their business has to close or switch locations.

Neighborhood Type	Number of Businesses	Corporate Ownership	Non-Corporate Ownership	Average N of Employees per Business	Average Gross Revenue
Growth	-12.8	-5.2	-17.3	30.7	65.8
Low-Income Concentration	-13.1	-2.0	-21.7	76.2	13.7
Low-Income Displacement	1.5	8.2	-8.0	24.1	54.4
Population Decline	-22.2	-3.7	-40.7	14.4	-
No Substantial Change	-4.2	2.5	-9.5	13.2	70.4

Table 9. ***Business Statistics by Neighborhood Type***
Source: Neighborhood Change Report (2021)

VI. Policy Implications & Conclusions

With rising affordability concerns nationwide, especially after the pandemic, policy makers and planners must look to new strategies to address disruptions this could cause for residents and businesses. This paper reviewed the CLT as one option and its potential in one large MSA. Although the CLT was designed to support housing affordability and mitigate residential displacement, the framework is adaptable to commercial uses to protect against business displacement. There are not many current examples for planners to look to for guidance, and few, if any, have had direct support from their local municipal government. However, the City of Atlanta has the opportunity to spearhead this effort and support commercial CLT creation as it plans to do with residential CLTs.

With the City of Atlanta already having land at its disposal in areas that risk affordability for businesses, how could it not explore this use? The effects on businesses have been missing from the conversations about gentrification impacts and displacement. Many of the models and strategies to combat small business displacement require initial up-front investments, with land acquisition being one of them. A portion of the funds Atlanta received from the American Rescue Plan is meant for small business programming, but it cannot be used for acquisition. By using already publicly-owned land, this provides greater opportunity for funding to be used for programming.

What policies can Atlanta consider helping promote and/or foster commercial CLTs? The CLT model can be spearheaded and/or managed by a government entity so the city could create the CLT. The CLT could be part of an existing department, or it could function quasi-independently through city appointment of board members. The latter structure is already existent in a non-CLT relationship between the City of Atlanta and the Municipal Market in Sweet Auburn. The City of Atlanta owns the land and historic building, but it is not involved in its operations. It appoints members to the board and does not give funding to the Market. The Municipal Market functions as an incubator for primarily food-based small businesses and its only consistent funding source comes from the rent it charges the different businesses. It does not operate on a for-profit basis, which allows them to keep rent below market value. An example of a business that started here is Grindhouse Burgers – a popular restaurant in Atlanta with multiple locations now.

The CLT model can also be paired with other approaches such as community-ownership models, an approach known as strategy mixing (Lowe & Feldman 2018). The functionality of the Sweet Auburn Market could lend itself to incubating non-food related businesses or local co-ops, as exemplified by both of the commercial CLTs spoken with. An example of a community-ownership model Atlanta is the partnership between The Guild and Urban Oasis Development who are looking to create a mixed-use space using a Community Stewardship Trust (CST) in the Capitol View neighborhood. A pilot of The Guild's Groundcover initiative that aims to invest in alternative development models that can keep existent community frameworks and build community wealth, the commercial building located on 918 Dill Ave will be remodeled into three stories that contain commercial on the bottom floor and 18-20 rental units on the remaining stories. These units will be priced at 60% Area Median Income (AMI). By using the CST model, the development will be owned and managed by the residents that live there and the surrounding SW Atlanta community. The city could support these kinds of efforts by setting up a CLT with organizations like The Guild and Urban Oasis, but the city would maintain ownership of the land. These organizations could build commercial or mixed-use spaces and could maintain the community/resident ownership of the structure if they still wanted a stewardship model.

These are some opportunities that the City of Atlanta has in using publicly-owned land for non-residential and non-governmental purposes. It can take a proactive role in setting up a framework across the city that can be used to mitigate displacement pressures small businesses face. Depending on the criteria the City wants to consider, there are multiple parcels that would be suitable for possible use in a commercial CLT or related structure.

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Appendix

A. *__The CLT Technical Manual__*

The Grounded Solutions Network, a merger between the National Community Land Trust Network and Cornerstone Partnership, provides many resources related to community land trusts. One of those resources is *The CLT Technical Manual* which acts as a practical guide for current CLTs and new ones looking to start. A thorough reading of the full manual is strongly recommended if there are desires to start a CLT. This section will briefly summarize chapters related to CLT development first steps and non-residential leases, but this is not an exhaustive review of all relevant chapters for starting a CLT. Each subsection will include the related chapter numbers from the manual for easy reference.

Where to Begin [Ch. 2,3]

When discussing CLTs the "CLT" is the entity that retains ownership of the land and is the entity that enters into the ground lease in order to remove the cost of the land from what is developed on the property. This kind of long-term land lease (typically 99 years) is set-up for lessee-ownership of improvements. Any group or individual can come together to form an "organizing committee" who then begin the process of applying for non-profit status. This process can take upwards of a year or more so proper planning will be necessary, especially if there are tight timeline concerns. Basic organizational documents needed to obtain the tax-exempt status of a nonprofit entity are (in order):

1. *Articles of incorporation* filed with the corporation's office at the appropriate State department
2. *Bylaws* (a binding legal document signed by board members that does not need to be filed with a government agency other than the IRS)

3. *Application for federal tax-exemption* (submitted to the IRS with articles of incorporation and bylaws)

CLTs have been created by faith-based organizations, community organizing programs, housing and community development organizations, and local government agencies (p. 48). The CLT can be strengthened by including individuals/agencies from within and outside the housing and community development sphere. Common funding streams will come from federal dollars, such as Community Development Block Grants, or private philanthropic funds, so having staff that has experience or connections with these types of funding can help with the longevity of the CLT. Regarding the initiating of a CLT from local government, while the CLT would be separate, the local government could opt to retain control of the organization through appointing most of the board members and/or housing the CLT within an existing government office or department. A pro of this approach is that it gives the CLT relatively more reliable streams of funding compared to relying on philanthropic donations and it gives the local government more oversight over its resources. A con, however, is that it risks putting the CLT in way of political pressure and election politics. These risks have motivated some government entities to have the CLT be a fully independent organization.

Thinking about size and scope, it is important to consider who the CLT wants to serve. Scaling up to larger geographies can help capture economies of scale and may help with receiving larger amounts of donor funds. However, the larger of an area the CLT covers, who "community" refers to will change. A CLT's mission can relate to several neighborhoods, for example, but the CLT risks becoming more distanced from the original community. *Who* that community is also matters. In this case, the needs of residents and commercial tenants may differ in approach and specific details. Those needs may differ further when it comes to type of commercial space and background of the business owner and workers.

Non-Residential CLTs

The manual emphasizes that with non-residential uses, it is more common for the CLT property to not involve a ground lease. For example, a CLT may retain ownership of both land and improvements and then lease the whole property to a nonprofit or for-profit entity. Due to the variety of scenarios that would lead to non-residential uses of a CLT, the manual does not provide one model lease for non-residential use like it does for residential, but it does outline areas the CLT should consider addressing. Not summarized here but at the end of this chapter there is a list of articles from the model single-family residential ground lease (Chapter 11-A) that can be adapted for a non-residential use.

Referencing commercial uses for CLTs, the manual mentions several purposes that include creating or supporting small business opportunities for community residents as well as creating jobs, and/or job-training opportunities for community residents (348). For these purposes, the CLT is not encouraged to have too strict of use restrictions. For example, it may limit the use to just retail but not restrict the types of products sold unless there is a particular kind of good or service the CLT wants to promote in the community (ex. a grocery store). If local ownership is another goal, then the CLT needs to define what it would consider an “absentee owner” or one that is absent from the community and what the restriction would be. An important question is whether the owner should be a resident of that community or if being physically on-site daily is sufficient.

Another factor to consider is whether the CLT desires that the commercial tenant be able to invest in the permanent improvements. If the goal is to serve an "incubator" function and provide a space for businesses to start-up, then the CLT may want to be more restrictive. Lower-income residents will have access to less capital for the up-front investments of starting a business which will limit what the CLT can expect them to contribute/add. Since the failure rate of start-up businesses is high and those that do not fail end up outgrowing their original space, the CLT may not want to allow for significant permanent improvements to the space that are unique to certain operations. If, however, the goal is to provide an anchor commercial space to the community and add more investment and jobs to the area, larger more permanent investments may be desirable. An already existing and established business is more likely to have the capital and means to purchase a building and customize it to their operations.

Transferability is the last factor considered. If local ownership is the goal, then the CLT may want to limit transferability to only existing residents (although what defines an "existing" resident would also need to be determined). If investment in the area is the goal, then there does not need to be such a tight restriction. An additional aspect of transferability relates to price restrictions and whether the CLT wants there to be equity build-up. When a homeowner sells a home on land owned by the CLT, they are allowed some equity build-up to allow for the home to be an asset for household wealth, but the amount is restricted so that that CLT can retain some of the equity in order to maintain the affordability for the next household. For CLTs wanting more local ownership for commercial uses, the restriction needs to be similar to residential uses so that the property remains affordable for future lessees, but it also needs to leave room for prices to adjust so that the value can reflect the improvements made by the tenant. There is also the option of letting the price be driven by the market since, depending on the other lease restrictions, the market price would be lower.

The full manual is linked in the Further Resources section at the very end of the Appendix.

B. Number of CLTs, CLT Networks, and/or CLT Coalitions by State (Schumacher Center)

State	Number of CLT related entities*
Alabama	1
Alaska	2
Arizona	4
California	19
Colorado	6
Connecticut	4
Delaware	2
D.C.	1
Florida	9
Georgia	2
Hawaii	2
Idaho	2
Illinois	3
Iowa	1
Kansas	1
Kentucky	1
Louisiana	3
Maine	5
Maryland	2
Massachusetts	14
Michigan	3
Minnesota	7
Mississippi	2
Missouri	4
Montana	4
New Hampshire	2
New Mexico	3
New York	16
North Carolina	5
North Dakota	2
Ohio	6
Oregon	4
Pennsylvania	6

State	Number of CLT related entities
Rhode Island	4
South Carolina	2
South Dakota	1
Tennessee	1
Texas	3
Utah	1
Vermont	4
Virginia	3
Washington	25
Wisconsin	2
Wyoming	1
Total	195

The directory is linked in the Further Resources section at the very end of the Appendix.

C. Commercially Zoned Parcels

Parcel ID	Acres	Council	NPU	Neighborhood	Zoning
14 00540001028	0.234596	1	V	Summerhill	MRC-1-C
14 00840004069	0.122292	3	M	Castleberry Hill	MRC-2-C
14 00840004084	0.026235	3	M	Castleberry Hill	MRC-3-C
14 01070006066	0.056497	4	T	West End	MRC-1-C
14 01090005075	0.057722	4	T	Atlanta University Center	C-1
14 01090005062	0.218267	4	T	Atlanta University Center	C-1
14 01090005076	0.043448	4	T	Atlanta University Center	C-1
14 01090005083	0.1027	4	T	Atlanta University Center	C-1
14 01090005073	0.040015	4	T	Atlanta University Center	C-1
14 01160010085	0.078785	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1
14 01160010089	0.136167	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1-C
14 01160010119	0.37108	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1
14 01160010086	0.132639	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1
14 01170003013	0.258059	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1
14 01170003054	0.547487	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1
14 00540001150	0.561226	1	V	Summerhill	MRC-3-C

D. UDP Vacant Commercial Public Parcels

Parcel ID	Acres	Council	NPU	Neighborhood	Zoning	Typology
14 00720004005	0.260824	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00840004069	0.122292	3	M	Castleberry Hill	MRC-2-C	Early/Ongoing Gentrification
14 00840004084	0.026235	3	M	Castleberry Hill	MRC-3-C	Early/Ongoing Gentrification
14 00900001073	0.036808	12	X	Sylvan Hills	C-1	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00910002068	0.036735	12	X	Perkerson	MRC-2-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 01020007044	2.005836	12	X	Perkerson	MRC-2-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 01070006066	0.056497	4	T	West End	MRC-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 01760005016	1.753225	9	J	Grove Park	MRC-1	Ongoing Displacement
17 0250 LL013	2.843079	9	G	Carver Hills	C-1	At Risk of Gentrification
17 0253 LL014	0.21728	9	D	Riverside	MRC-2-C	Advanced Gentrification
17 0244 LL050	4.359393	9	D	Bolton	C-1-C	Advanced Gentrification
14 0127 LL1248	1.231159	12	X		C-1	At Risk of Gentrification
14 0072 LL038	3.132036	1	Y	The Villages at Carver	C-1-C	Advanced Gentrification
14 01760005020	0.002296	9	J	Grove Park	MRC-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 00560006020	0.176207	1	Y	Chosewood Park	C-1-C	Advanced Gentrification
14 01760005031	0.002296	9	J	Grove Park	MRC-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 01160010085	0.078785	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 01160010089	0.136167	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1-C	Ongoing Displacement
14 01160010119	0.37108	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 01160010086	0.132639	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 01170003013	0.258059	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 01170003054	0.547487	4	T	Ashview Heights	C-1	Ongoing Displacement
14 0041 LL011	6.994699	1	Y	Englewood Manor	MRC-3-C	At Risk of Gentrification
14 0041 LL010	4.934342	1	Y	Englewood Manor	MRC-3-C	At Risk of Gentrification
14 00720002033	1.823553	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00720002008	0.376672	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00720002032	0.314892	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00720002031	0.156814	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00720002012	0.353803	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement

14 00720002007	1.002012	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00720002010	1.467073	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement
14 00720002023	0.250639	12	Y	Joyland	C-1-C	Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement

E. NCR Vacant Commercial Public Parcels

Parcel ID	Acres	Council	NPU	Neighborhood	Zoning
14 00840004069	0.122292	3	M	Castleberry Hill	MRC-2-C
14 00840004084	0.026235	3	M	Castleberry Hill	MRC-3-C
14 01070006066	0.056497	4	T	West End	MRC-1-C
17 0250 LL013	2.843079	9	G	Carver Hills	C-1

Further Resources

The CLT Technical Manual
https://groundedsolutions.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Community%20Land%20Trust%20Technical%20Manual_0.pdf

Schumacher Center CLT Directory
https://centerforneweconomics.org/apply/community-land-trust-program/directory/#States

City of Atlanta Neighborhood Change Report
https://www.atlantaga.gov/home/showdocument?id=50098&t=637514975329330000

Urban Displacement Project – Atlanta Map
https://www.urbandisplacement.org/maps/atlanta-gentrification-and-displacement/