

NOVEMBER 2009



**KENSINGTON STATION
LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE
STUDY AND ACTION PLAN**

**Five-Year Update
2010-2015**



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INTRODUCTION

DeKalb County in conjunction with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), worked together to spur development, encouraging economic growth and enhancing urban design and mobility in and around the Kensington MARTA Station. In an effort to revitalize the Memorial Drive corridor, Dekalb County was awarded one of ten Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) planning grants in 2004, that focus on developing comprehensive recommendations for future land use patterns, transportation and circulation options, zoning improvements and implementation strategies for a defined area.

The pursuit of LCI funds is the result of the larger Memorial Drive Revitalization Study, which was completed to recognize the need to create “pulsed” activity centers through selective redevelopment along Memorial Drive. This study identified 10 areas along the corridor where activity centers could be created, with four key potential activity centers identified as being the most viable locations for redevelopment. The Kensington MARTA station area was identified as the primary location where mixed use development and a sense of location could be created along the corridor.

As a result, the area surrounding the Kensington MARTA Station was selected as the mixed use activity center with the greatest opportunity for redevelopment due to its location, market opportunities and property owner’s development interest. The five-year update to the 2003 plan shows the County’s continued commitment to the improvement of the study area and the LCI program.

The Kensington Station LCI study area is comprised of the Kensington MARTA station, a large Dekalb County governmental core, the I-285-Memorial Drive interchange, numerous multi-family apartments, office parks and surrounding single-family neighborhoods. The boundary line is defined as: I-285 on the east, MARTA rail easement to Kensington Road to Porter Road on the south-east, Covington Highway to Kensington Road on the south-west, Clarendon Avenue on the east, and Old Rockbridge Road on the north.

Despite the many successes in implementing the LCI plan, there are many improvements that have yet to be completed. These needs are related to infrastructure, redevelopment of



private commercial and residential areas, and expansion or improvement of public facilities. It is not surprising that many of the action plan items have not been completed given the large number of items and the limited resources of DeKalb County. In the original five-year evaluation of the 2003 LCI plan, County staff finds that the 2003 action plan was very optimistic in both the timeline for project completion, expected cost and availability of external funds.

Nearly without exception the issues, opportunities, general goals, and the policy recommendations included in the 2003 plan are still valid. DeKalb County is invested in the vision for the study area the plan provides and will continue working to bring this vision to reality.

EVALUATION AND APPRAISIAL REPORT

Below is a summary of key projects and accomplishments that have taken place in or around the Kensington study area since 2003.

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

DeKalb County adopted a new Comprehensive Land Use Plan in June 2007. The Comprehensive Plan designated the Kensington area as a Town Center. The Comprehensive Plan defines a Town Center as a focal point for several neighborhoods that has a concentration of activity such as general retail, service commercial, professional office, higher density housing and appropriate public and open space uses easily accessible by pedestrians. In other words, the Town Center is a mixed use activity center of high concentration which should help implement the LCI plan. The designation allows up to 60 dwelling units to the acre.

Land Use and Policy

Within the adopted DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan, land use policies have been developed to implement each character area. The Town Center policies that support the Kensington LCI Plan, encourage creating compact mixed use district and reducing the automobile dependency and travel to obtain basic services; require consideration of staggered height implementation when developments are adjacent to single family residential neighborhoods; and, create small area plans and overlays for activity centers as a way to further refine the countywide nodal/activity center concept.



Transit Oriented Development Study Guidelines

MARTA established Transit Oriented Development (TOD) guidelines not only for the current MARTA system but for the future transit network of Metro Atlanta. In 2008, MARTA, ARC, and the GRTA adopted a long term expansion plan known as “Concept 3”, which includes Atlanta Beltline, MARTA rail extensions, commuter rail, light rail, streetcars, and bus rapid transit (within Dekalb County,) as well as throughout the region.

Zoning Code Update

DeKalb County is in the process of updating its Zoning Code Ordinance and implemented other development standards and policies. There are new zoning districts that allow mixed use development, multiple story dwellings and reduced setbacks and other development features.

DeKalb County will continue to significantly invest when feasible in creating a consolidated government center in the Kensington area. This area benefits from strong regional access via both MARTA’s east line and I-285 which, is becoming an increasingly critical factor to development. Strong residential neighborhoods in Avondale Estates, fueling new residential infill development north and west of the study area, create an attractive setting for development of new residential and commercial uses in the study area.

Friendly and supportive ownership or control of key properties in the study area by MARTA and DeKalb County, enhance opportunities for collaborative public private development and, the proposed reconstruction of I-285 interchange and the opportunity to invest streetscaping funds around the interchange and potentially along Memorial Drive through the study area, creating a potentially strong gateway into the area. These strengths help create a location where access to employment and regional amenities is very strong, and where the potential benefits of the public sector can be maximized through both participation and enhancement of infrastructure and design.

A continued examination of the study area’s key strengths and challenges is necessary to effectively document potential development opportunities for redevelopment to successfully occur.



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN WITH FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

There have action on many of the recommendations included in the 2003 LCI plan. The recommendations of the original plan are in large still vital goals for the study area, and the County, and other local groups will work together to continue the implied implementation of these goals.

The five year action plan contains 19 specific projects. Implementation of the updated Kensington LCI will be achieved through continued collaboration between DeKalb County, board of commissioners and other-not for-profit community groups. Through this process a monitoring chart will be created to list all projects that are goaled to be completed. This monitoring chart will be updated each fall as the progress of each project is continued. This will provide an opportunity to review and implement projects on an annual basis with the time and possible resources to restructure if needed.

Development and redevelopment at the Kensington station fulfills an opportunity recognized by DeKalb County government and MARTA, as well as the interested private property owners and developers within the study area. This implementation or action plan identifies tasks, mechanisms, and responsible parties to help assure that the planned revitalization become a physical reality. Internal coordination at the County level, and leadership to help assure cooperation and coordination are essential elements of the implementation plan. These entities include the CEO's office, Office of Economic Development, Office of Community Development, and Office of Planning and Development.

IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE WITH STRATEGIES

There is a demonstrated public commitment to redevelopment within the study area, as evidenced through the construction of the Gregory Adams Juvenile Justice Building along with various streetscapes projects with an interchange upgrade at Memorial and I-285. There are various projects with committed strategies that will take place to make the Kensington LCI study area success. The following are recommended projects with strategies.

STRATEGY-Single family preservation will provide a density buffer between the higher density uses proposed for the heart of the station area and the single-family neighborhoods that are adjacent. The immediate station area will be developed to a higher density than that of the surrounding community. By decreasing the density and



size of the development as it moves away from the station towards the existing neighborhoods, the residential areas will not be overwhelmed by the new construction.

STRATEGY-The DeKalb County Government Center Node will facilitate the establishment of a DeKalb “Government Center” on the existing county land around the Detention Center. This would occur through the consolidation and relocation of the departments scattered throughout the County, and the construction of new administrative facilities and new juvenile court facility. In addition, a new open space quadrangle would be included, serving as a focal point for the development area. The Government Center would also be served by a BRT stop located at some point within the campus.

STRATEGY-The Regional Employment Center will be supported by development efforts of the Roberds site and adjacent single family neighborhoods on Farrar court. The Roberds building is currently being leased by the County for use as a Tax Commissioner’s service center. With the development of the Kensington Station site and the creation of a “Government Center”, this area would be primed for growth. The Employment Center could include a high density office development and associated conference center. Density should be concentrated towards Mountain Drive and Memorial Drive, thinning as development moves north. New multi family development at the north of the site would assist in the transition from high density office to the adjacent Avondale Crossing Apartments. In addition, the pedestrian connection between the MARTA station and the Employment Center would be strengthened with the construction of new access roads and a transit plaza on the MARTA site, oriented towards Mountain Drive, and with pedestrian improvements to Mountain Drive itself.

STRATEGY- Multi-Family redevelopments will anticipate long term redevelopment of the aging multi family housing stock. The housing that exists, both north and south of the station area, is older and not in good condition. As conditions in and around the study area improve, these developments will be upgraded.

STRATEGY-The idea of open space is to preserve and expand greenspace. Use the station area to connect to the County greenway system, from the PATH connection as Avondale Middle to the Avondale Dunair Park across I-285. This would be accomplished by improving pedestrian conditions and adding bike lanes along Covington Highway and Kensington Road, and by developing the land alongside the MARTA tracks into a greenway. This greenway park would extend from Kensington Road, south of Memorial Drive, into the Government Center and across the highway to the park, via a new overpass shared with BRT.



STRATEGY- The Kensington MARTA station mixed use redevelopment as a mixed use community with high density housing, office, retail and open space. This is a multi phase and long term development, beginning on the parcel adjacent to the MARTA access drive and Memorial Drive and extending into the existing MARTA surface parking. This development would consist of street level, topped with multi-family housing. Development would continue on both sides of the station, including retail, additional multi housing, and single family attached housing. This would incorporate mixed use along Memorial Drive and Covington Highway, replacing aging and scattered neighborhood serving retail. The existing services would be consolidated, perhaps served in the future by a shared parking deck.

Successful redevelopment of the Kensington LCI area conceived herein as a partnership between the County, MARTA and to be identified private developers, must operate on the following principles:

- A collaborative approach among the primary public entities, DeKalb County, MARTA and ARC, will increase the probability of success
- Internal coordination with leadership to help assure cooperation and coordination are essential elements of the implementation plan

APPENDICES

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE KENSINGTON MARTA STATION LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE (LCI) APPLICATION AND TO TRANSMIT THE RESOLUTION TO THE ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC), AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, LCI studies help foster greater livability, mobility and accessibility in activity centers and corridors and help the region better integrate the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) with the goals and objectives of the Regional Development Plan (RDP) of the ARC; and

WHEREAS, LCI studies demonstrate a range of ideas and plans to achieve connecting homes, shops and offices, enhancing streetscapes and sidewalks emphasizing the pedestrian, improving access to transit and other transportation options, and expanding housing options; and

WHEREAS, the Kensington LCI Study was completed in 2003 and had support from civic organizations, businesses and stakeholders interested in promoting cohesive growth objectives in concert with the RDP; and

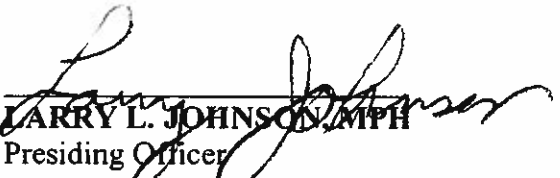
WHEREAS, the LCI Supplemental Study program is open for funding to all communities that have completed an original LCI study or have been grandfathered by ARC as completing an LCI equivalent study, and the community must have submitted an LCI 5-Year Plan Update to ARC; and

WHEREAS, the ARC requires a resolution of support from the Board of Commissioners be submitted with the application.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts this resolution to provide support for the Kensington MARTA Station LCI Study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any and all resolutions, or any part thereof, in conflict with this resolution are hereby repealed. This resolution shall be effective immediately upon its adoption.


ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this 17 day of November 2009.


LARRY L. JOHNSON, MPH
Presiding Officer
Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia


APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this 20 day of November, 2009.


W. BURRELL ELLIS, JR.
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

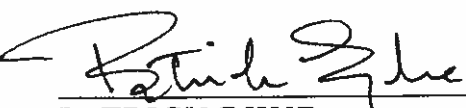
ATTEST:


BARBARA SANDERS, CCC
Clerk to the Board of Commissioners
and Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


LISA E. CHANG
County Attorney
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE:


PATRICK EJIKE
Director of Planning and Development
DeKalb County, Georgia

REPORT OF
ACCOMPLISHMENTS
&
KENSINGTON LCI
5-YEAR
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
UPDATE

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Kensington LCI-11/20/2009

Transportation Initiatives

Project	Description	PE Year	Construction Year	STATUS				Notes
				Complete	Underway	Not Started	Not Relevant	
Construction of Kensington Rd. realignment	roadway (1000 lf)	2012	2013			√		Kensington Rd. "Main Street"
Implementation of Kensington Rd. streetscape improvements	streetscape (1600 lf)	2012	2013			√		Kensington Rd. "Main Street"
Construction of Entry Rd.	roadway (1000 lf)	2012	2013			√		Entry Road Improvements
Implementation of Entry Rd. streetscape improvements	streetscape (1000 lf)	2012	2013			√		Entry Road Improvements
Site acquisition	openspace (2.2. acres)	2012	2013			√		Kensington Plaza
Kensington Plaza site development	openspace (2.2. acres)	2012	2013			√		Kensington Plaza
Construction of Kensington Plaza Roadway	roadway (500 lf)	2012	2013			√		Kensington Plaza
Implementation of Kensington Plaza streetscape improvements	streetscape (500 lf)	2012	2013			√		Kensington Plaza
Construction of Government Center new roadways	roadway (8300 lf)	2012	2013			√		Government Center Improvement
Implementation of Govt Center streetscape improvements	streetscape (8300 lf)	2012	2013			√		Government Center Improvement
Create a Bus Rapid Transit System	BRT	2009	2010		√			Underconstruction by MARTA
Signal Improvements for BRT system on Memorial Drive	signal	2009	2010		√			Underconstruction by County
BRT stop to serve new facilities	bus stop	2009	2010		√			Underconstruction by MARTA
Create pedestrian friendly connection between MARTA transit station with mixed use development	pedestrian	2009	2010		√			Underconstruction by County
Complete an assessment of pedestrian corridors in the study area to determine improvements such as sidewalk, street trees and furniture	pedestrian and streetscape	2009	2010		√			Underconstruction by County
Construction of pedestrian plaza	opeanspace (1200 lf)	2012	2013			√		Government Center Improvement

KENSINGTON LCI
5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FIVE YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Description	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Costs	ROW Year	ROW Costs	Construction Year	Construction Costs	Total Project Costs	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Local Source &	Match Amount
KENSINGTON PLAZA MIXED USE	GROUND FLOOR RETAIL RENTAL FLATS SURFACE PARKING PARKING DECK	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	2013	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD
KENSINGTON COMMERCIAL CENTER	RETAIL	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	2013					COUNTY	
KENSINGTON COMMERCIAL CENTER MAIN STREET	TOWNHOMES PARKING RETAIL PARKING DECK	2014	TBD	TBD	TBD	2015	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD
MOUNTAIN DR. MIXED USE	OFFICE PARK	2011	TBD	TBD	TBD	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD
KENSINGTON PLAZA TOWNHOMES	GROUND FLOOR RETAIL RENTAL FLATS PARKING DECK	2014	TBD	TBD	TBD	2015	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD
KENSINGTON PLAZA MIXED USE WEST	RENTAL FLATS SURFACE PARKING	2014	TBD	TBD	TBD	2015	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD
TOWNHOMES	TOWNHOMES SURFACE PARKING	2015	TBD	TBD	TBD	2015	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD
MEMORIAL DRIVE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT	OFFICE SURFACE PARKING	2011	TBD	TBD	TBD	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	COUNTY	TBD

KENSINGTON LCI
5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

Description	Type of Improvement	Engineering Year	Engineering Costs	ROW Year	ROW Costs	Construction Year	Construction Costs	Total Project Costs	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Local Source &	Match Amount
KENSINGTON ROAD MAIN STREET	MAIN STREET TYPE STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT	2011	\$466,200	TBD	TBD	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
MOUNTAIN DRIVE EXTENSION	1-LANE ONE WAY SIDEWALKS, STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS	2011	\$295,800	TBD	TBD	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
ENTRY ROAD IMPROVEMENTS	STREETSCAPES	2011	\$7,000	TBD	TBD	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
KENSINGTON PLAZA	ACQUISITION, HARDSCAPE & LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT, STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT	2011	\$3,400,000	TBD	TBD	2012	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Totals			\$4,169,000		\$0		\$0	\$0				
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KENSINGTON LCI
5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

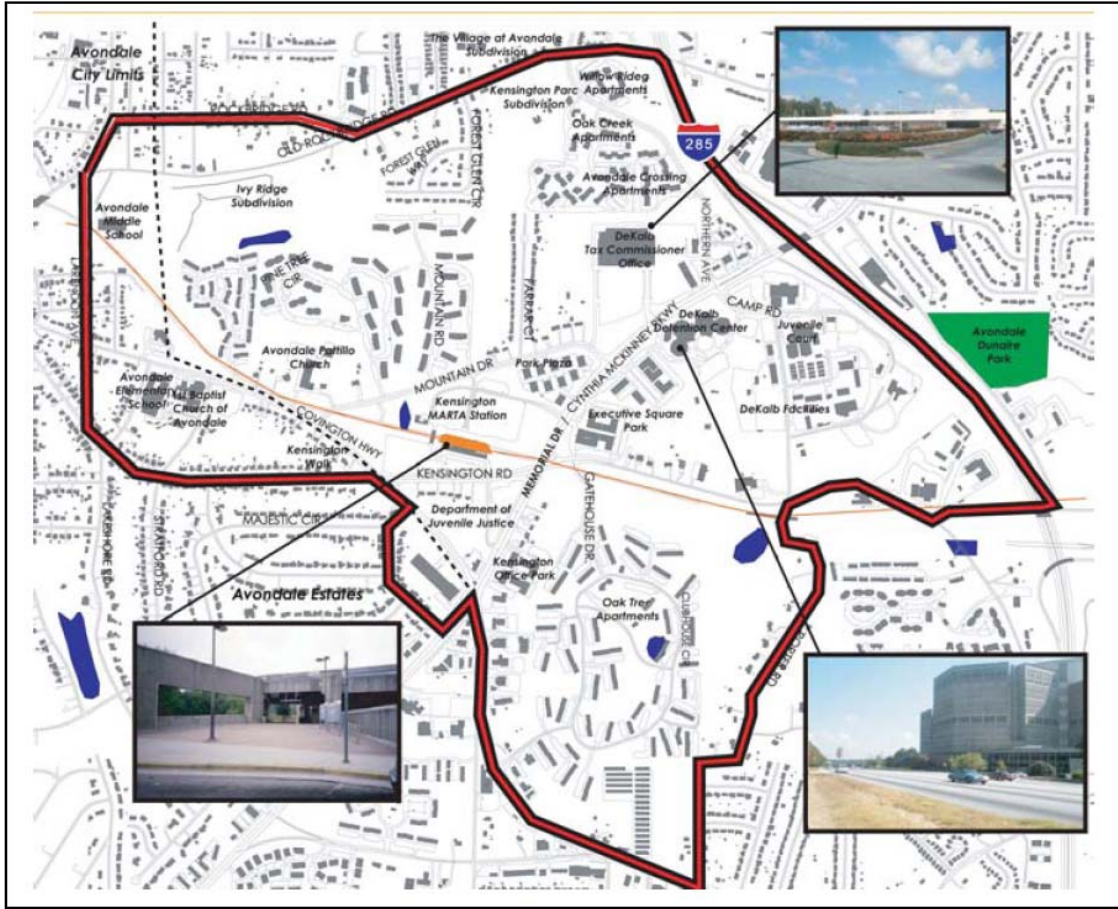
Housing Projects/Initiatives

Description/Action	Cost	Year	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Create new zoning district or site specific zoning overly to address density	\$0	2010	DeKalb County	Staff
Hold desing charettes at neighborhood meetings	\$0	2012	DeKalb County	Staff

Other Local Initiatives

Description/Action	Cost	Year	Responsible Party	Funding Source
Establish design standards for public signs and gateways based on use and location	TBD	2011	County	Staff
Solicit bids from signage companies for street name signs, bike routes, and directional signs	TBD	2011	County	Staff
Support neighborhood associations through increased participation and communication	TBD	2010-2014	County	Staff
Develop architectural standards for study area	TBD	2013-2014	TBD	TBD

MAPS



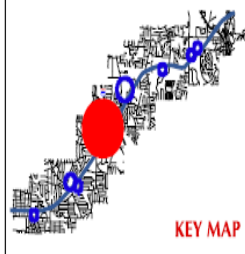
Study Area Context Map



KENSINGTON MARTA STATION / GOVT. CENTER NODE



1. Market-rate Multi-Family Housing Options
2. DeKalb County Government Center Complex
3. New Convention Center/ Hotel Complex
4. Mixed-Use Development to include Office and Retail
5. Parking Deck Servicing Government Center
6. Undeveloped Land Converted into Park/ Open Space/ Recreational Facility
7. Create Town Center Gateway
8. Streetscape Improvements
9. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Route
10. Shared Parking Facility
11. Establish Pedestrian Connections
12. Improve Nbd. Access to MARTA Station
13. Kensington MARTA Station

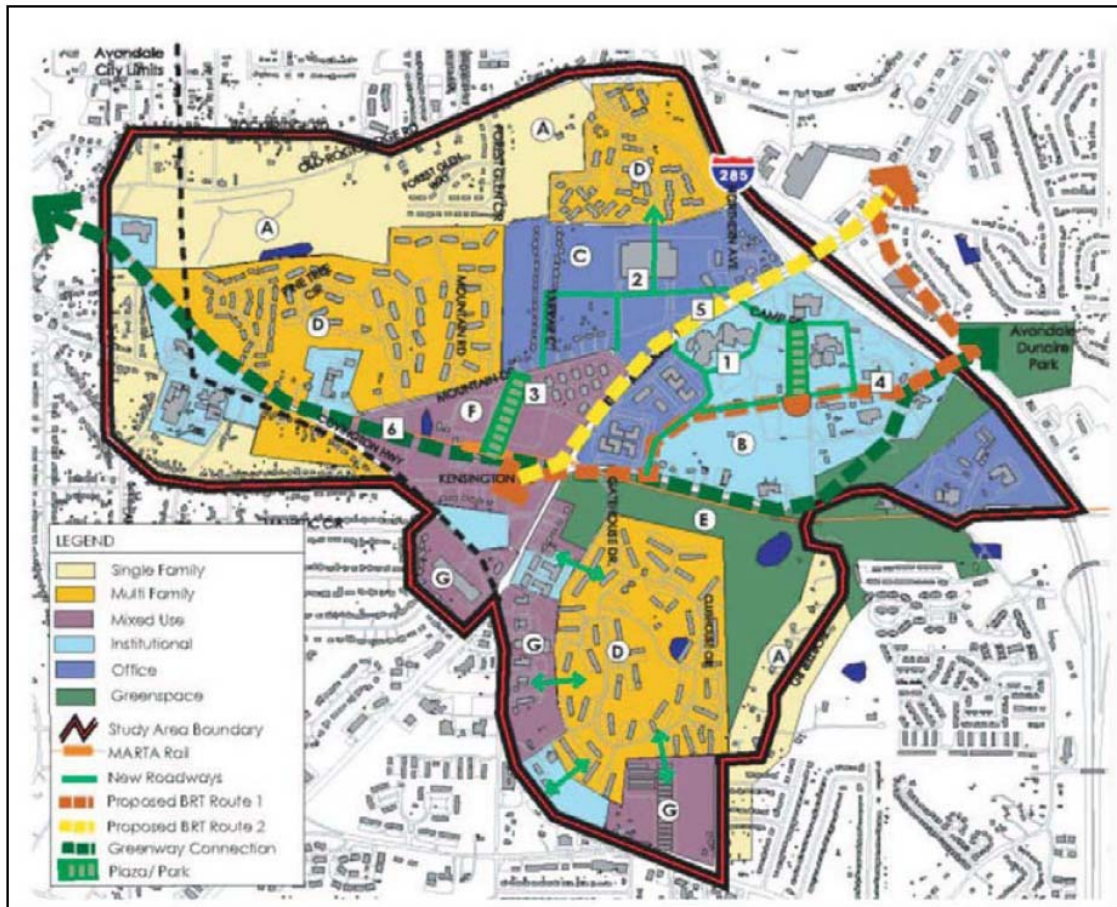


KEY MAP

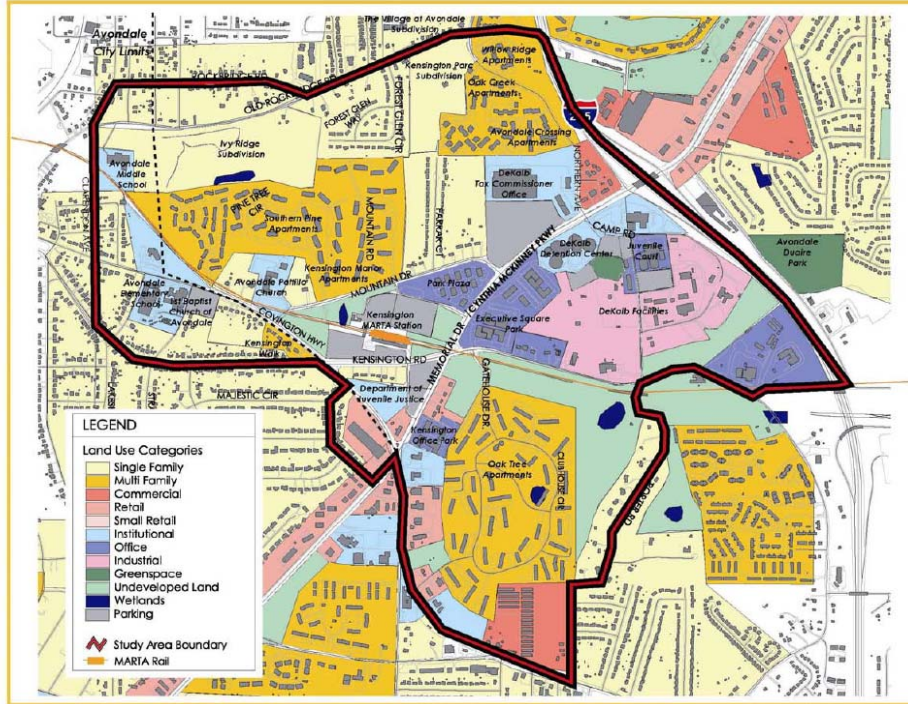
DEKALB COUNTY STRIP RECOVERY PLAN:
 An Economic Development Strategic Action Plan For Cynthia McKinney Pkwy
 FEBRUARY, 2002

ROBERT CHARLES LESSER & Co.
 URBAN COLLAGE, INC.
 Clatting Jackson
 Huntley & Associates

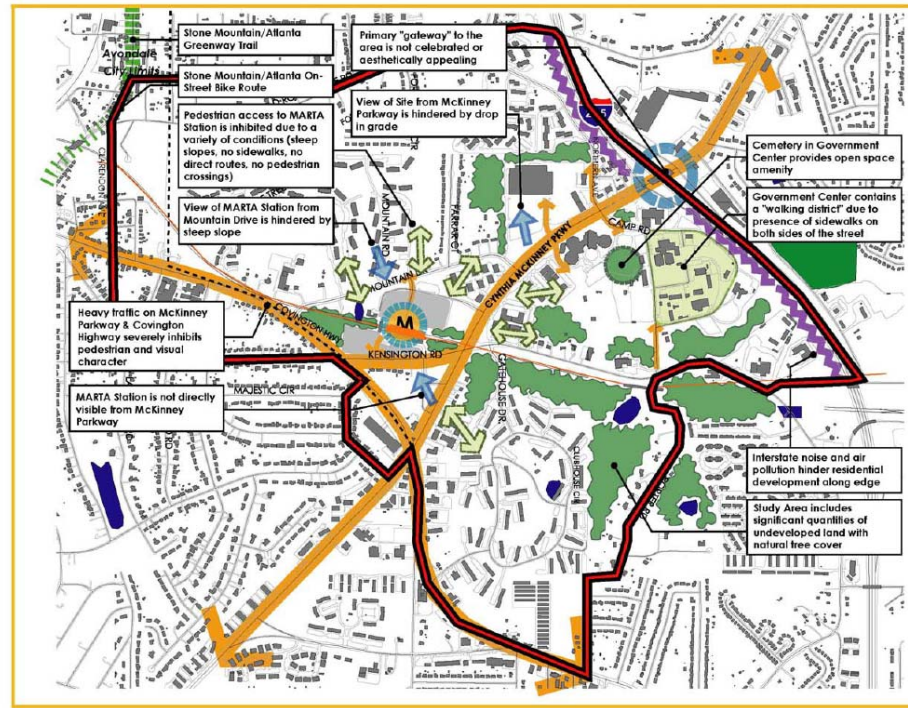
KENSINGTON MARTA STATION/ GOVERNMENT CENTER NODE



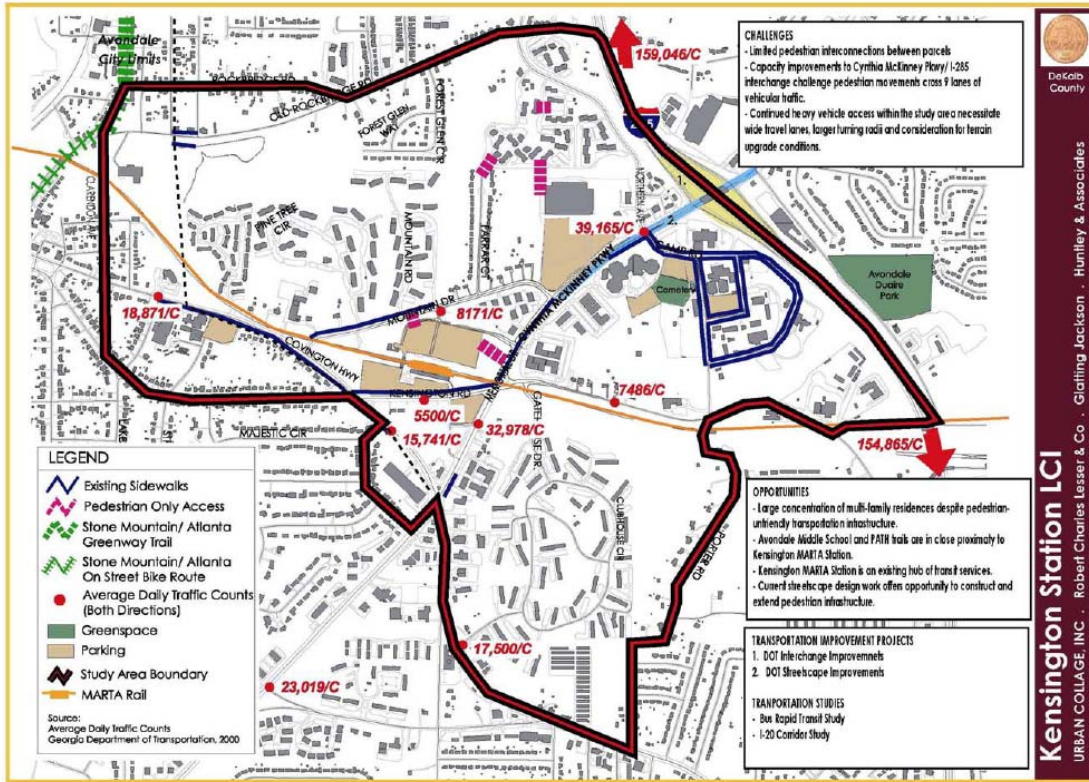
KENSINGTON LCI CONCEPT PLAN



EXISTING LAND USE



EXISTING URBAN DESIGN ISSUES



EXISTING TRANSPORTATION ISSUES