



CITY OF ALBANY **HARLEM** **AREA**

REVITALIZATION **PLAN**



FINAL ADOPTED
SEPTEMBER 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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OVERVIEW

PLAN CONTEXT

The City of Albany has recently developed a Downtown Master Plan to outline a clear vision and achievable action items to facilitate and attract the best quality development and redevelopment. As a vital part of downtown, Harlem was addressed in the Master Plan with preliminary recommendations developed specifically for this community. The following map shows the context of Harlem within the Downtown Master Plan Area. In order to further facilitate the revitalization of this historically significant area, the City hired a consultant to build on the Master Plan momentum and produce a more detailed plan for Harlem and its adjacent areas.

This plan was created with the input of the community and stakeholders through three community meetings and online engagement opportunities.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

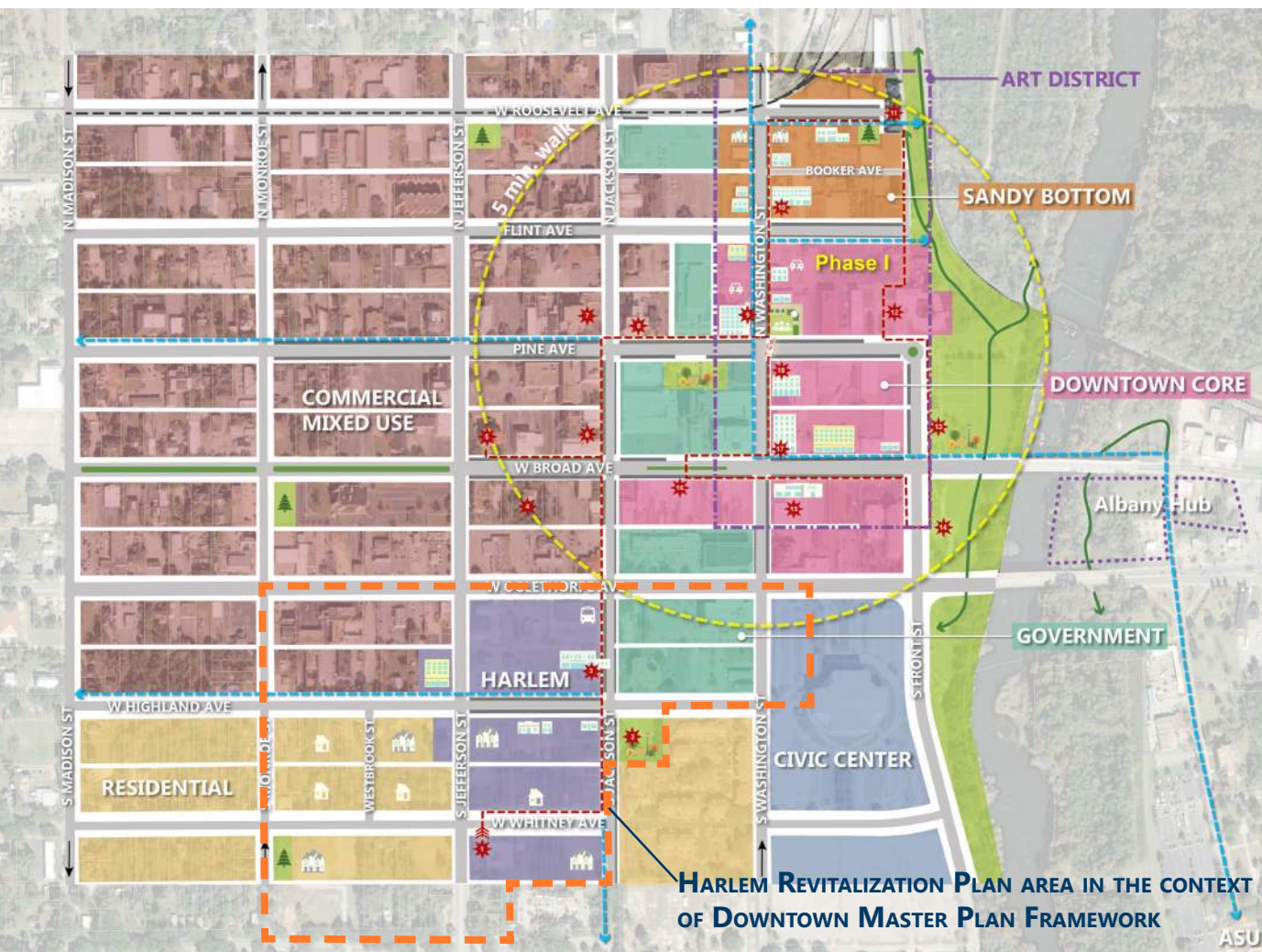
Harlem's Past and Present discusses the history and existing conditions that impact the area.

The Planning Process outlines the process used by the consultant team to solicit community and stakeholder input.

The Plan discusses the vision and goals established by the community, and revitalization recommendations for the future of Harlem.

The Actions discuss the implementation strategies and major projects needed to realize the plan's vision and recommendations.

This plan prevails over the Downtown Master Plan when there is inconsistency in recommendations regarding Harlem.





CHAPTER I

HARLEM'S PAST AND PRESENT

THE HISTORIC HARLEM DISTRICT

Harlem, which is located directly to the south of the Albany Central Business District, has historically served as the center of African-American commerce in the City. Established in the early part of the twentieth century, Harlem is a compact area that includes a mix of commercial, civic, institutional, and residential uses.

Harlem is historically significant for its prominent long-term role in African-American life in Albany, and also because of its association with the Civil Rights era. Several events took place in Harlem which had national impacts during this period and involved such prominent figures as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the

Freedom Singers, Charles Sherrod and Reverend Ralph Abernathy.

These events showed the resiliency of the people that lived in the area as well as the passion that they had for the justice of their collective community. This passion and support for community has been shown time and time again in Harlem and its effects are still seen today.

The culture of community advocacy and justice that was vital during the Civil Rights Movement is reflected in the way that modern icons from Albany influenced the culture of the United States.

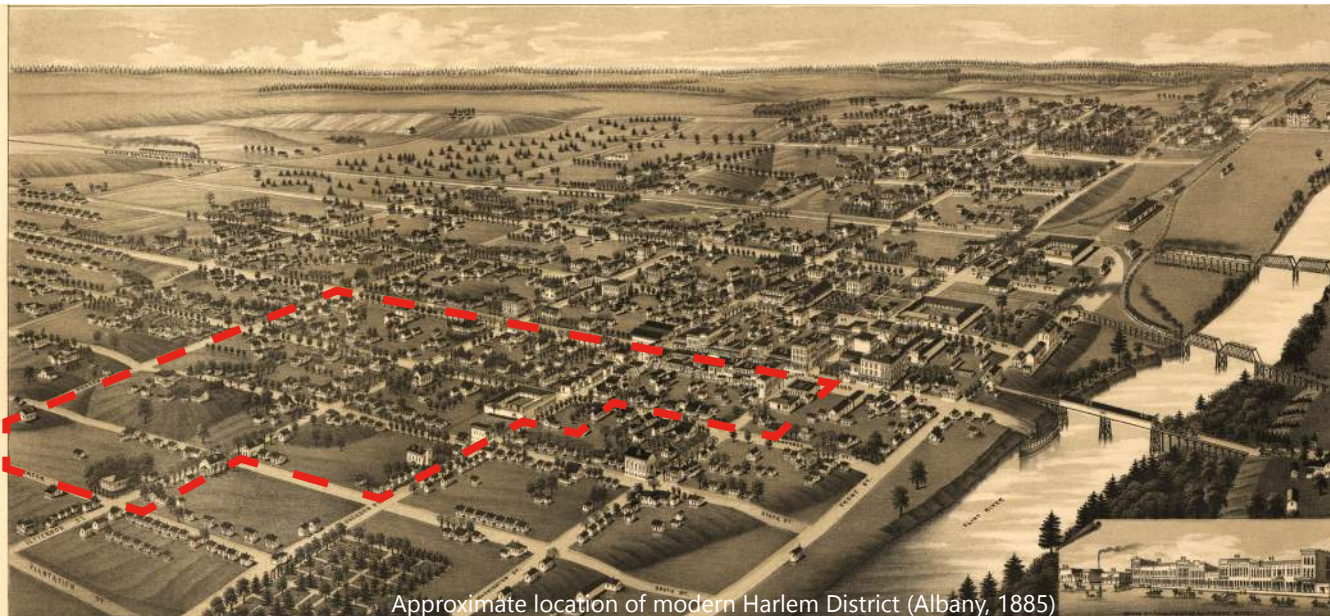
Local heroes such as C.B. King, Osceola Macarthy Adams (also known as Osceola Archer), and Ray Charles used their passion and skills to inspire generations of people and lasting change in the fields of law, community engagement and the arts.



Albany Movement, 1961



Osceola Macarthy Adams



Approximate location of modern Harlem District (Albany, 1885)



Jackson Street back in time

THE HARLEM DISTRICT TODAY

Today, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, the Albany Civil Rights Institute, and Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church are important landmarks for the City. The Freedom Trail--sections of sidewalks that are marked with metal footprints,--starts at Shiloh Baptist church on Whitney Avenue and goes along Jackson Street leading to downtown. It represents the route marchers took to protest at the City Jail and is one of the memorials to the Civil Rights Movement, which is integral with Harlem's identity. Charles M. Sherrod Civil Rights Park, located at the corner of Jackson Street and Highland Avenue, is the home for a Civil Rights Memorial in the center of the park.

As the historic African-American commercial center in Albany, there are historic buildings on S. Jackson Street and Highland Avenue, including the Ritz Theater. However, these buildings are mostly vacant and in poor condition. The community needs to find new uses for them to thrive again.

The northern part of the area along Oglethorpe Boulevard is dominated by auto-oriented commercial uses on the west and public uses like the Albany Police Department and Civic Center on the east. Overall, the area has many vacant and underutilized properties, most of which were casualties of the 1994 flood and were never rebuilt or renovated since. Among these vacant properties is the site of a former school on Monroe Street between Whitney Avenue and Mercer Avenue, which could provide an opportunity for new housing development.

An example of recent progress in Harlem is the construction of the new Albany Transportation Center. It broke ground in October 2021 and is expected to open in early 2023. As the hub for both local bus transit and Greyhound service, this key project is an important step in revitalizing the community.

It is also worth mentioning that the old Carver Gym and the C. B. King Law Firm building are just south of the Study Area. The revitalization of Harlem will potentially bring them new life.

The map on the following page shows the existing land uses in the Study Area.

Concurrent with this planning process, there are a couple of development initiatives underway with the potential to transform the area:

- The Mt. Zion/Renaissance Group is planning a mixed-use and/or residential redevelopment in the heart of the Harlem near Highland Avenue and Jefferson Street.
- The Destiny Group is working with private development interests to redevelop properties near the intersection of Oglethorpe Avenue and Jefferson Street. It is intended for residential and/or mixed use.

Both groups' representatives attended the community meetings for the revitalization plan, and communicated their commitment to keep working with the City to achieve quality development.



Ritz Theater/Cultural Center and adjacent commercial buildings are mostly vacant.



Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church



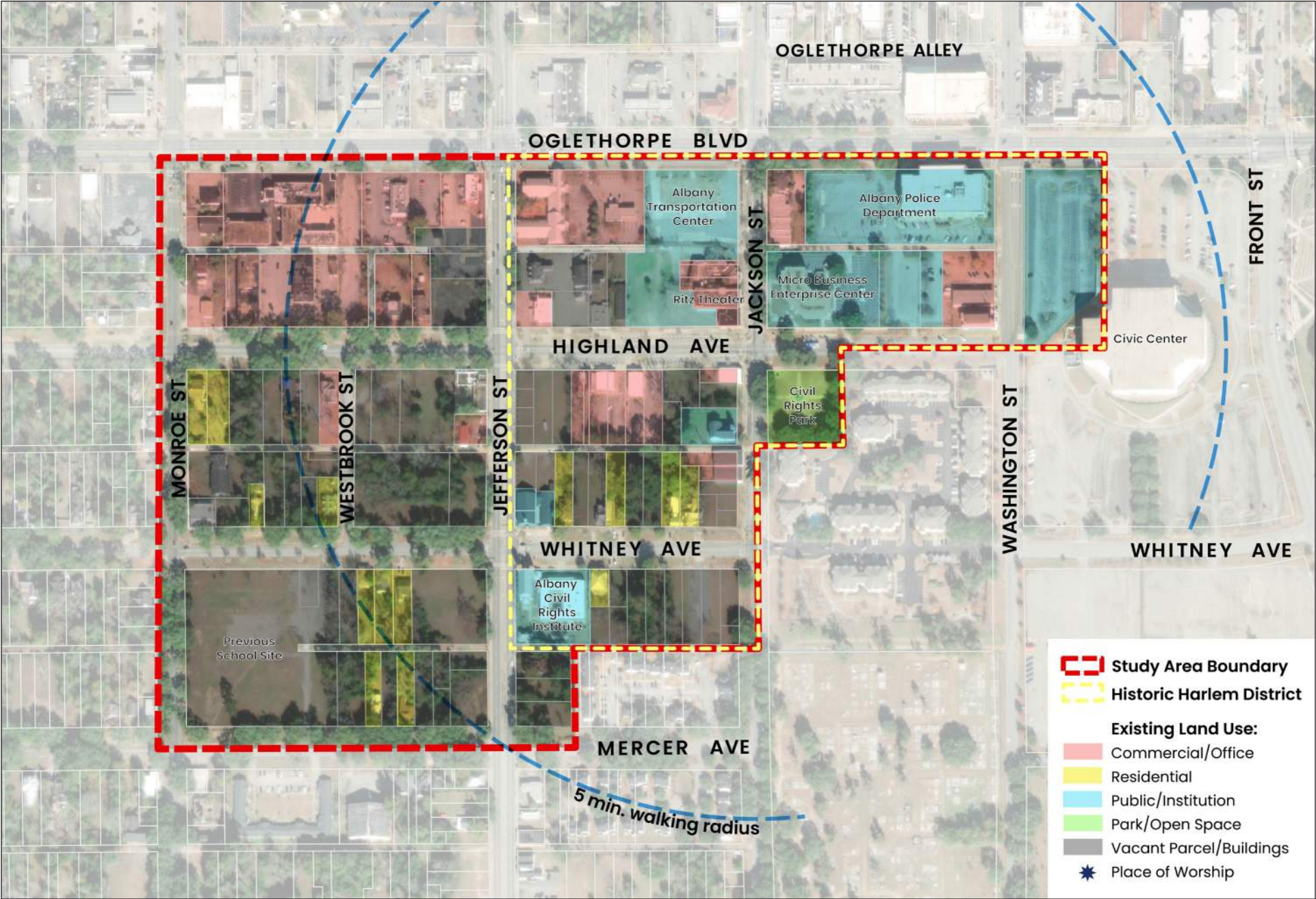
Auto-oriented uses along Oglethorpe Boulevard



Most single-family houses left in the area are in need of repair.

EXISTING LAND USE

Existing Land Use Map



ZONING

Current zoning in the Study Area ranges from medium density residential, to commercial and to mixed-use. The following is a list of zoning classifications in the Study Area:

C-1, Neighborhood Mixed-Use Business District

This district is intended for pedestrian-oriented development with a mix of retail, restaurant, service, and office uses that serve nearby residents and do not generate large traffic volumes or parking issues. Live/work and other types of mixed residential, office, and commercial uses are allowed in this district.

There are two properties located at the intersection of Jefferson Street and Whitney Avenue with C-1 zoning; both are vacant at the time of this study. The northeast corner of Monroe Street and Whitney Avenue also has property with this designation, which is the home of a seafood market and a vacant building.

C-2, General Mixed-Use Business District

The only area zoned C-2 in the Study Area is south of the intersection of Washington Street and Oglethorpe Avenue, which is part of the Civic Center and home to Albany's Police Department. This district is intended for a wider range of uses and a greater height of buildings than is permitted in C-1.

C-3, Commercial District

This district is intended to permit businesses along major arterials that will attract regional customers and require greater automobile accessibility. Mixed residential, office, and commercial uses are allowed.

Properties with this zoning designation are mainly located between Highland Avenue and Oglethorpe Avenue and along Jackson Street.

C-5, Office-Institutional-Residential District

This is a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district that is intended to permit office, institutional, residential, and certain restricted business uses that provide local employment opportunities.

Most properties with this designation are located on the south side of Highland Avenue between Monroe and Jefferson Streets. The Civic Center and AME church across Washington Street also have this zoning designation.

C-R, Community Residential Multiple Dwelling District

This district is intended for a variety of residential uses ranging from single family, townhouses, duplexes, to apartment buildings with limited sidewalk-oriented commercial uses at the intersection of arterial and collector streets.

Properties with this zoning designation are mainly located along Whitney Avenue and Mercer Avenue, as well as some areas on the south side of Highland Avenue.

All of the above zoning districts have maximum setback requirements from the property line or sidewalk, which is called the supplemental yard. The supplemental yard is intended for additional sidewalk activities like seating and dining or landscape in front of buildings. It is clearly specified that in C-1, C-5, and C-R districts, no parking or loading is permitted between a primary structure and the edge of street (the supplemental yard). These are all intended for pedestrian friendly downtown development.

Riverfront District

The area east of Jefferson Street is in the Riverfront District, which is intended to be a pedestrian-oriented, high-density, cultural, and tourism district within downtown, providing an environment where people can live, work, play, and discover.

This district ordinance sets requirements for the following:

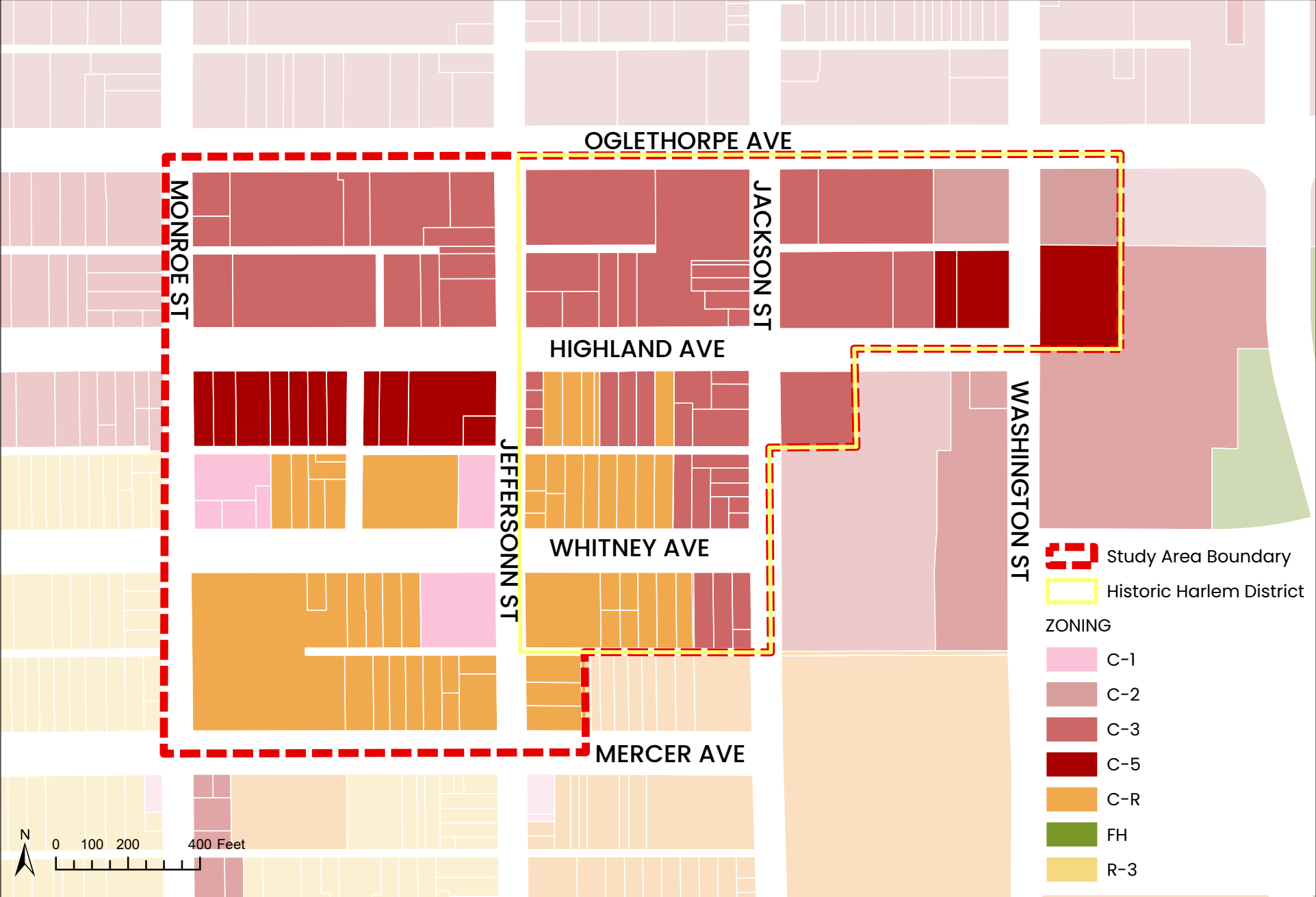
- Open space;
- Parking, driveway, and access;
- New streets and alleys;
- Sidewalk area;
- Building street facade;
- Building entrance;
- General site and building;
- General use; and
- General upkeep and care.

Historic Preservation Design Guidelines

Albany established a historic district in 2000 and developed design guidelines through its Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Currently, the design guidelines are administered by the HPC in evaluating the rehabilitation of existing historic properties or new construction projects. The guidelines work as an overlay on existing zoning regulations. It deals only with the appearance and not the use of the properties in the district.

The entire Study Area is within the Albany Historic District. As a result, the appearance of development and redevelopment are subject to HPC review.

Zoning Map



PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

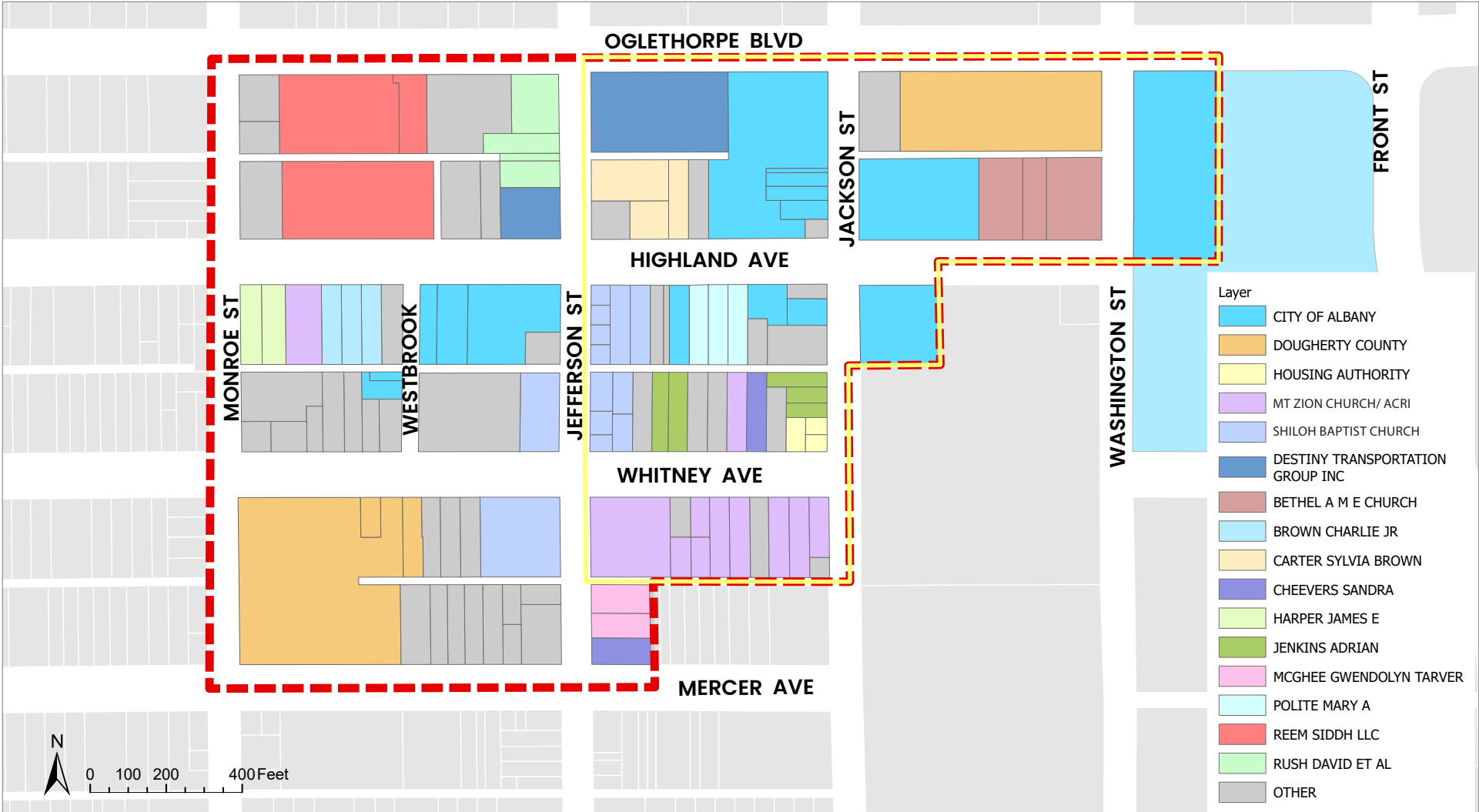
The map below shows property ownership information. Most owners who own more than two pieces of property are included on the map.

Areas owned by the City or County normally can serve as catalytic sites for development. In Harlem, the vacant school site owned by the County is a great opportunity for residential development. Two City-owned vacant lots

at the southwest corner of Jackson Street and Highland Avenue are also good candidates for revitalization.

Religious institutions like Mt. Zion Church, Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, and Bethel AME Church, can play a significant role in redevelopment efforts. The City and consultant team have been coordinating with these groups to ensure their initiatives are consistent with the overall Revitalization Plan vision.

Property Ownership Map

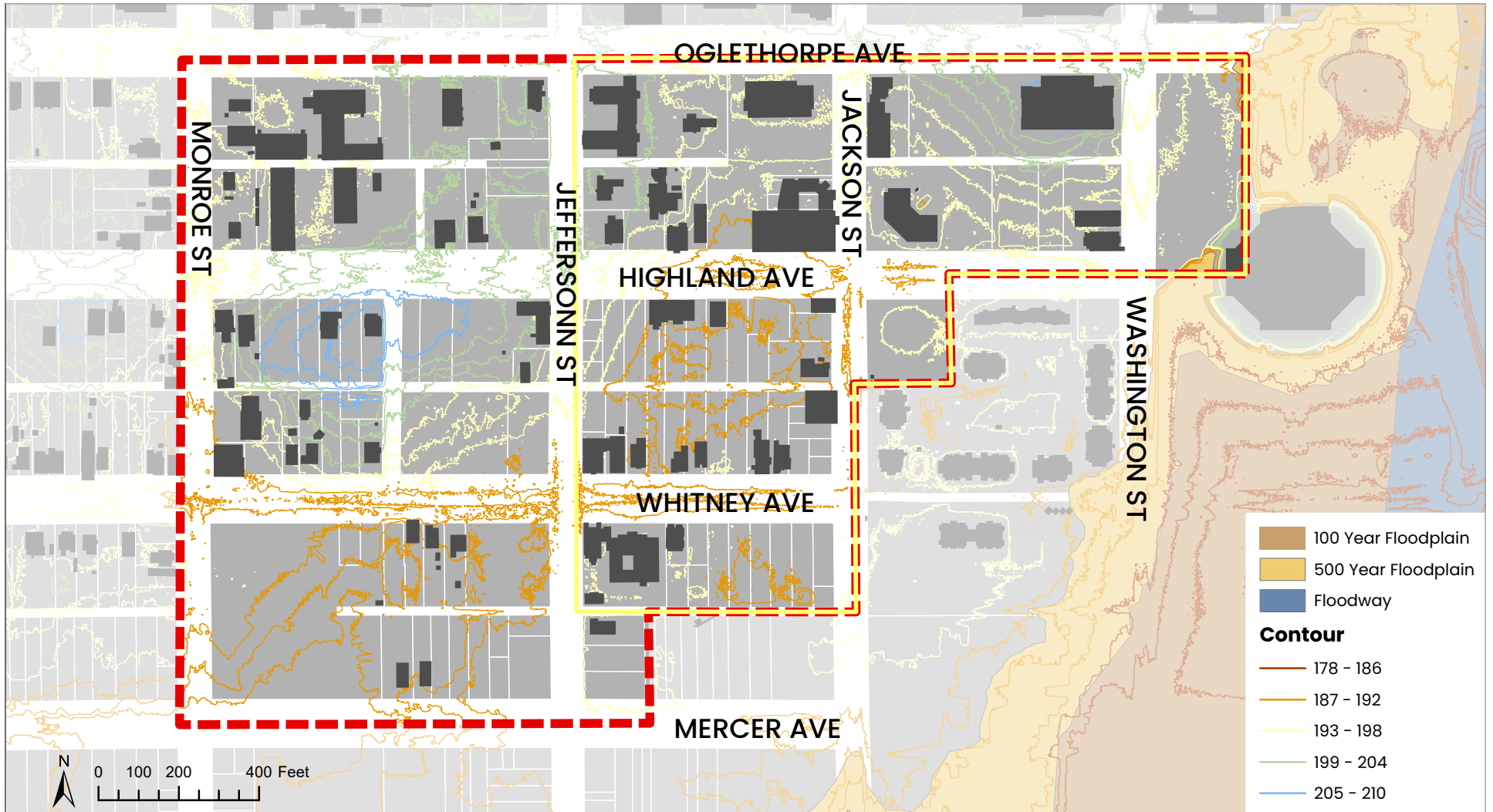


ENVIRONMENT

The map below shows contours and floodplain areas in and around the Study Area. The area is relatively flat, with the north side generally being slightly higher than the south. Even though the area is outside the 100- and 500-year floodplains, it is still vulnerable to flooding events associated with the Flint River.

The building footprints on the map--or rather, the gaps between them--highlight the considerable amount of vacant lots. Many buildings were lost as result of the 1994 flood. Most of the buildings that remain are set closer to streets, which is a valuable historic characteristic of the area and should be respected with when redevelopment happens.

Environmental Condition Map



TRANSPORTATION

As part of downtown, Harlem has a strong, well-connected grid of streets. Oglethorpe Boulevard is a principal urban arterial that carries over 20,000 daily traffic. Jefferson Street and Monroe Street are minor arterials with a decent amount of traffic (about 8,000 daily). Highland Avenue, Jackson Street and Washington Street are major collectors, while Whitney Avenue and Mercer Avenue are local streets with relatively low traffic. Notably, Jackson Street between

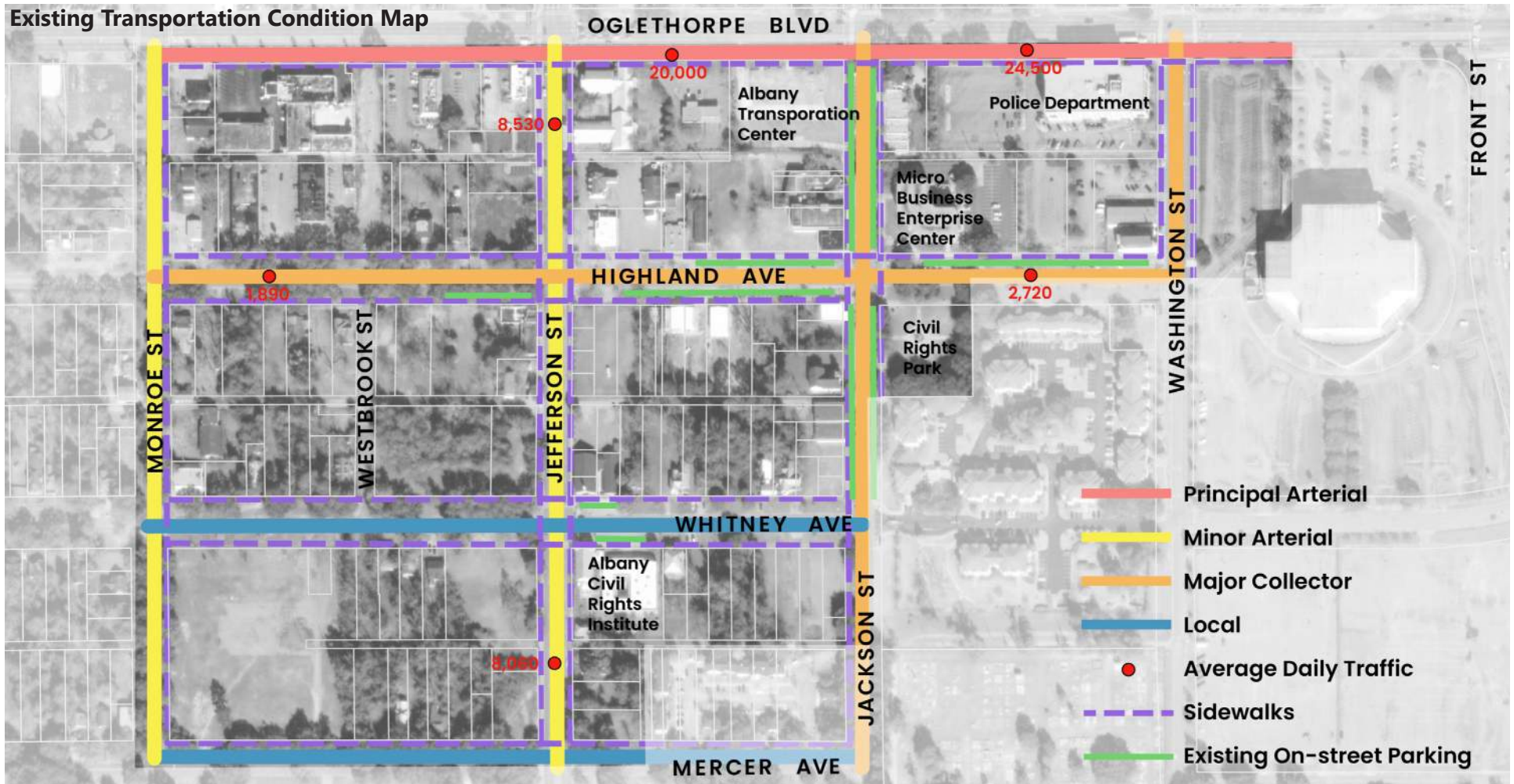
Oglethorpe and Highland is one-way southbound, and Monroe Street is entirely one-way northbound.

On-street parking is concentrated along the commercial sections of Jackson Street and Highland Avenue. There are sidewalks on all streets but improvements are needed in most places. Currently there are no bike facilities in the study area.

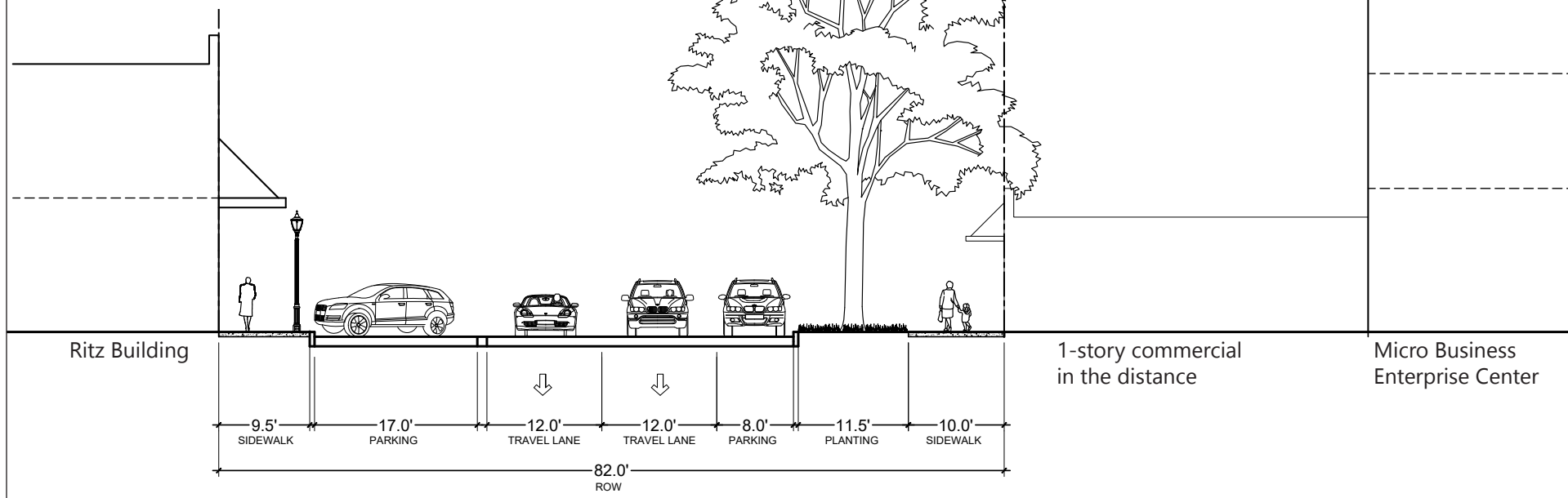
All 12 bus routes in the City of Albany will commence

and conclude at the Albany Transportation Center, making Harlem an important transit hub. During the planning process, some stakeholders brought up the idea of a trolley connecting to other areas in downtown, but this should be studied in the context of existing bus service.

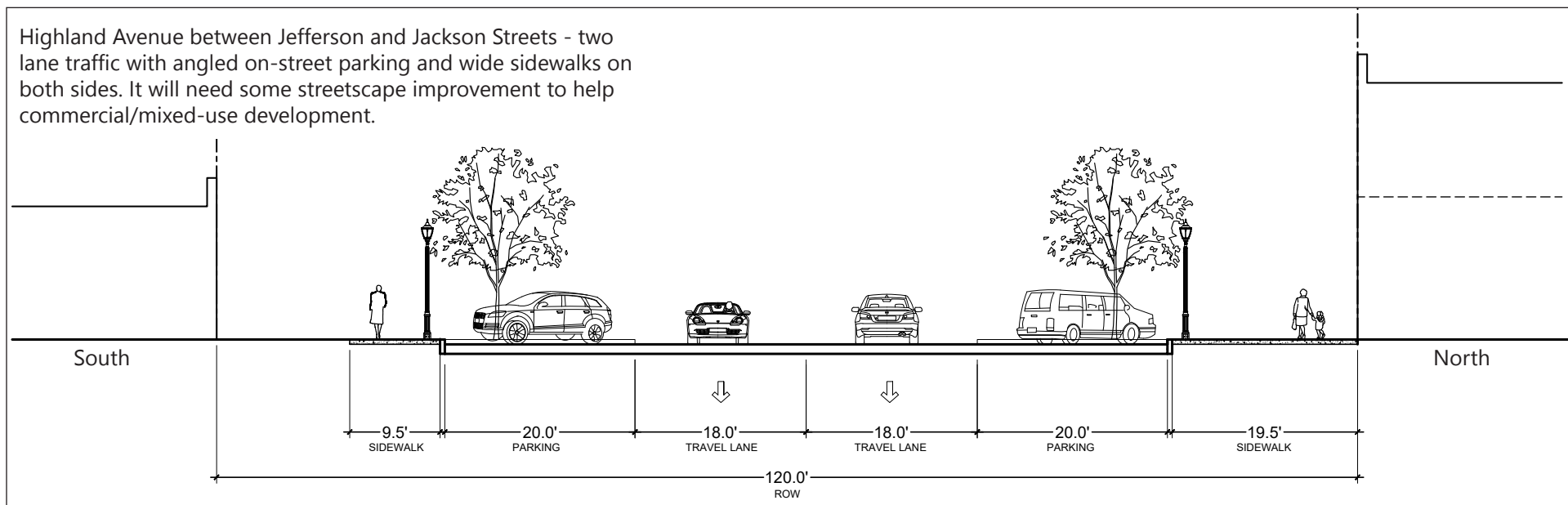
The following page shows existing cross sections of two major commercial streets in the Study Area.



Existing Jackson Street north of Highland Avenue is one-way south. Both the 1996 Albany Downtown Riverfront Master Plan and the Downtown Master Plan adopted last year (2022) recommended it to be converted to two-way to better support businesses.



Highland Avenue between Jefferson and Jackson Streets - two lane traffic with angled on-street parking and wide sidewalks on both sides. It will need some streetscape improvement to help commercial/mixed-use development.





CHAPTER 2

THE PLANNING PROCESS

PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

During the public outreach process, the City of Albany Planning Department and consultant team hosted three community meetings to gather public input for the Revitalization Plan. The consultant team used surveys in two meetings to get feedbacks about draft recommendations.

During the planning process, the consultant team also created and maintained a project website to communicate the plan status and contents.

The following diagram illustrates the entire planning process in relation to public engagement opportunities.



COMMUNITY MEETINGS

COMMUNITY MEETING #1

The first community meeting was held on August 9, 2022. More than 40 people attended the meeting.

The City and consultant team introduced the planning project and briefed the stakeholders about the existing conditions and previous plan recommendations for the Harlem area.

Major takeaway ideas gathered from the participants included:

- The oral history of Harlem and Albany should be gathered, noted, and compiled
- The planning process should value the rich history of Harlem and take it into consideration
- Some stakeholders would like to see African-American members on the planning team.
- Learn from other successful revitalization efforts in comparable communities
- Preserve existing historic markers and memorials like the Freedom Trail and improve Civil Rights Park
- Add housing to Harlem and adjacent areas
- Need bicycle trails to connect to downtown
- Need to improve sidewalks
- The area needs sustainable development of a good quality

COMMUNITY MEETING #2

The second community meeting was held on September 21, 2022. About 40 people attended the meeting.

To address the questions and concerns from the first meeting, the consultant team presented more detailed information about the planning process and preliminary recommendations for the Study Area based on the Downtown Master Plan.

A survey was conducted after the presentation to get feedback on the recommendations and gather additional input. The survey was offered both in electronic and paper format, and was available for two weeks after the meeting to maximize community input.



Presentation at community meeting #2

COMMUNITY MEETING #3

The last community meeting was held on October 18, 2022. Over 20 people attended the meeting.

The consultant team presented the draft plan recommendations and conducted a survey on the recommendations and project priorities.

Again, the survey was offered both in electronic and paper format, and was available for two weeks after the meeting to maximize community input.



Participants at community meeting #3

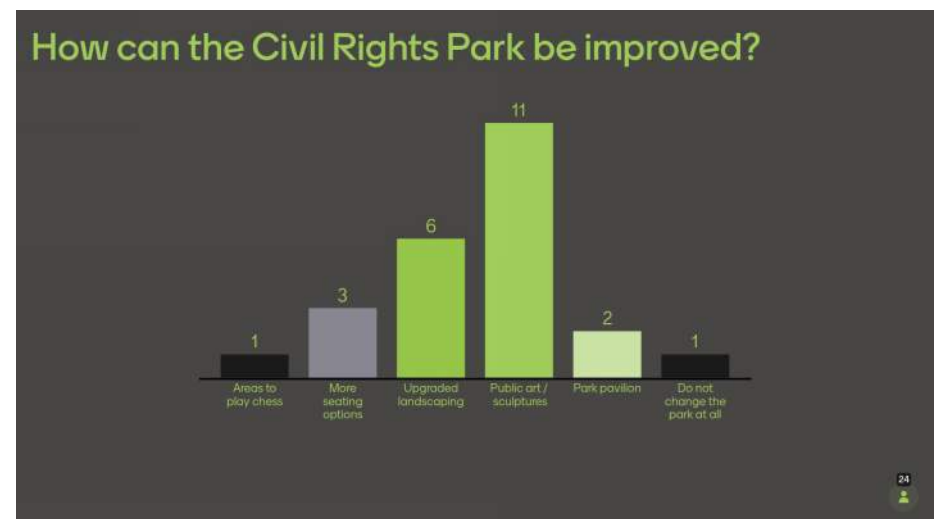
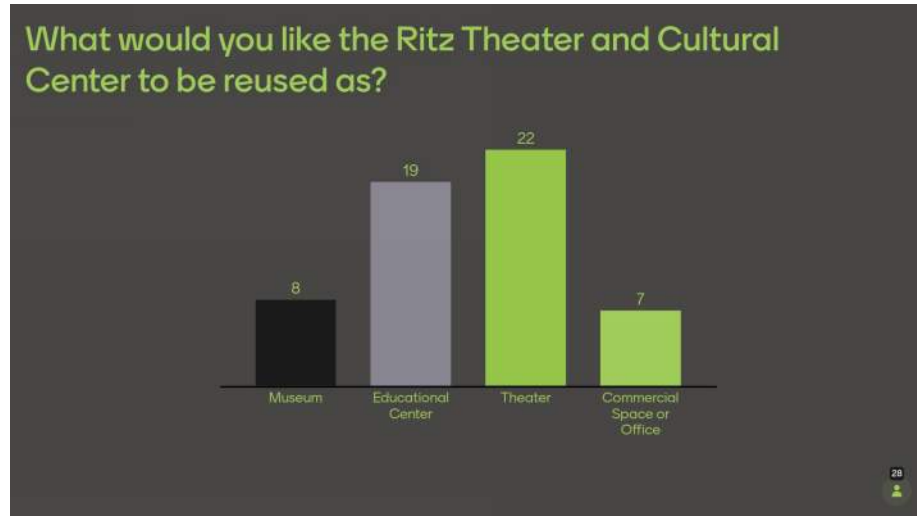
SURVEYS

The surveys used during the project were conducted through an online polling system called Mentimeter. This program allows for participants in person or digitally joining the meeting to answer questions and see the group's results live. Printed versions of the survey were also available for participants who might not have access to or feel comfortable with technology.

These surveys were introduced at the second and third community meetings and received input from a total of fifty participants. These questions gathered

information on the community's interest in all areas of the project such as a potential trail system through the area, improvements that can be made to existing historic markers, and the preferred ranking of which projects should be given priority in the future.

The results of these surveys then went directly into refining the recommendations seen in this report to reflect the community's vision of the area.





CHAPTER 3

THE PLAN

GOING FORWARD

VISION

To create a vibrant and unique African-American cultural district that respects the area's rich history and includes commercial, residential and public uses. Attract incoming residents to a unique live, work, and play environment.



GOALS

- Preserve the history and culture of the Harlem District as its own distinct character
- Provide housing
- Create community gathering spaces
- Improve public safety
- Create more green space and plazas
- Improve walking and biking spaces
- Increase commercial and residential property ownership representative of traditional residents.



LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Based on the historic character of Harlem, its existing conditions, and community input from the planning process, a framework plan was developed to guide the overall land use and development pattern for the future. Key elements of the framework plan include:

- Revitalize the area around the intersection of Jackson Street and Highland Avenue, focusing on commercial and entertainment uses associated with the Ritz Theater and Cultural Center. This will potentially serve as an African-American history museum and education center for Albany.
- With the Albany Civil Rights Institute and Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church as anchors, revitalize the Jefferson Street corridor as a live/work district with housing and local small businesses.
- Currently the Destiny Group and the Renaissance Group (Mt. Zion Church) are working on development plans for the area north of the Jackson Street/Highland Avenue intersection. This plan is setting the foundation for residential and/or mixed-use development.
- The existing public uses should continue to serve as anchors and contribute to the district with improved public spaces. These include the Albany Transportation Center, the Micro Business Enterprise Center, the Albany Civil Rights Institute, the Albany Police Department, and local churches.
- Encourage residential development and infill throughout the area. Focus on the vacant school site and other areas with a concentration of vacant properties.

- Make necessary regulatory changes to facilitate the plan's vision.

The concept plan on the following pages illustrates one way to improve the area. Future development does not need to be built exactly as shown, but should follow the land use and urban design direction to create a desirable live, work, play environment. The following images illustrate some desirable types of development for the area.

The City should adopt the Land Use Framework Plan on the next page for this area.



Active, safe, and accessible open space



Neighborhood commercial with historic character



Medium Density Residential - Cottages

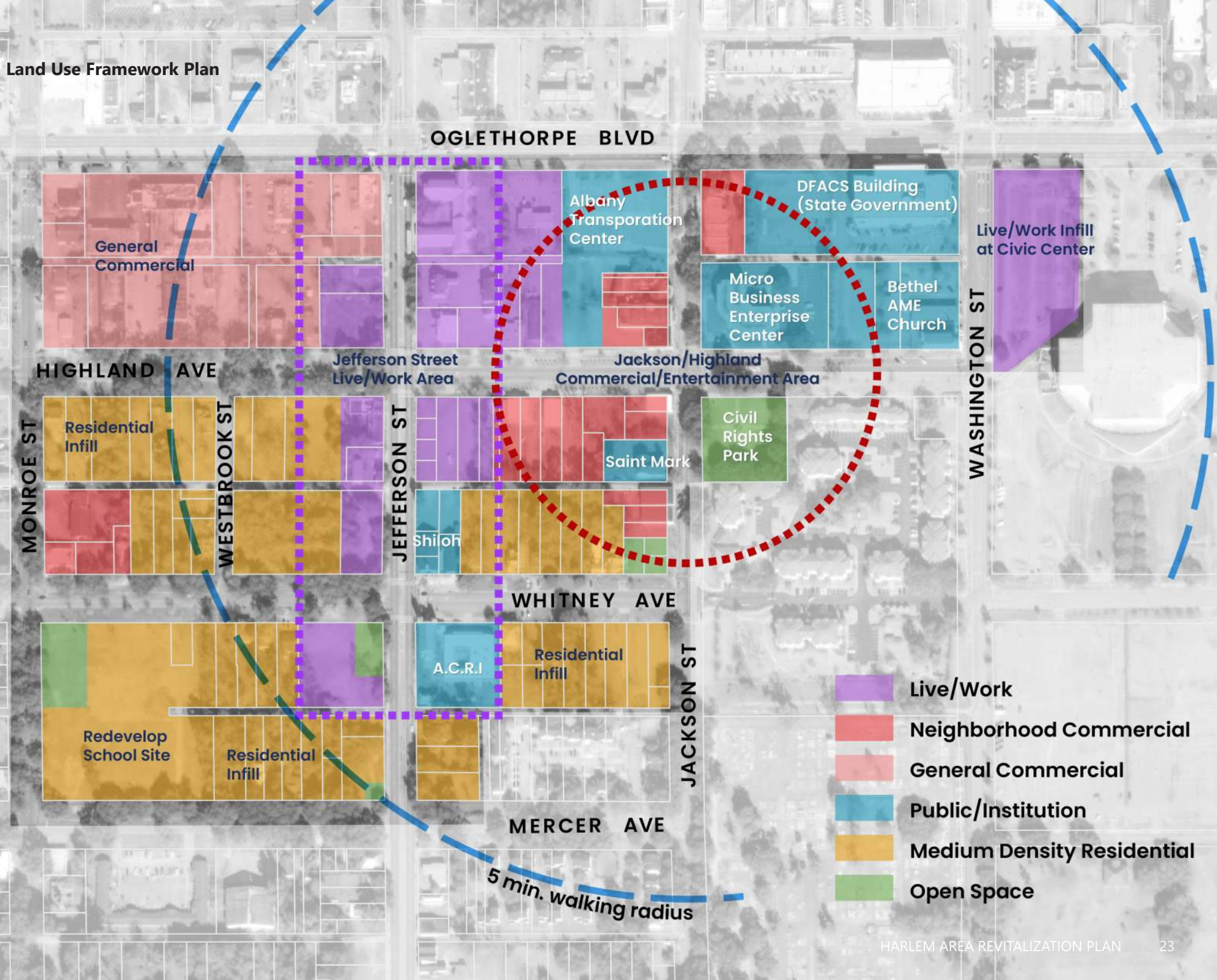


Live/Work with quality design



Medium Density Residential - 4-plex

Land Use Framework Plan



- Live/Work
- Neighborhood Commercial
- General Commercial
- Public/Institution
- Medium Density Residential
- Open Space



REVITALIZE HISTORIC COMMERCE CENTER

The intersection of Highland Avenue and Jackson Street is the historic center of African-American business in Harlem. Bringing life back to this area is key to the revitalization effort.

One of the major priorities is to renovate and reuse the Ritz Theater and Cultural Center. It can be turned into a multi-functional facility to accommodate a local African-American history museum and education center with a theater. There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Albany Civil Rights Institute to showcase history at different periods in Albany. The Jack Hadley Black History Museum in Thomasville, Georgia is a good example.

Other major focuses of this area include:

- Keep existing businesses in the area, but encourage building facade and outdoor space improvement. The City's experience improving Front Street Market can be applied here.
- Attract new neighborhood commercial development on vacant parcels along Highland Avenue and Jackson Street.
- Promote live/work uses around the intersection of Highland Avenue and Jefferson Street.
- Encourage outdoor seating, gathering, and dining space along Highland Avenue to help create a retail/entertainment core.
- Convert the one-way portion of Jackson Street to two-way, which will help activate businesses in that block.

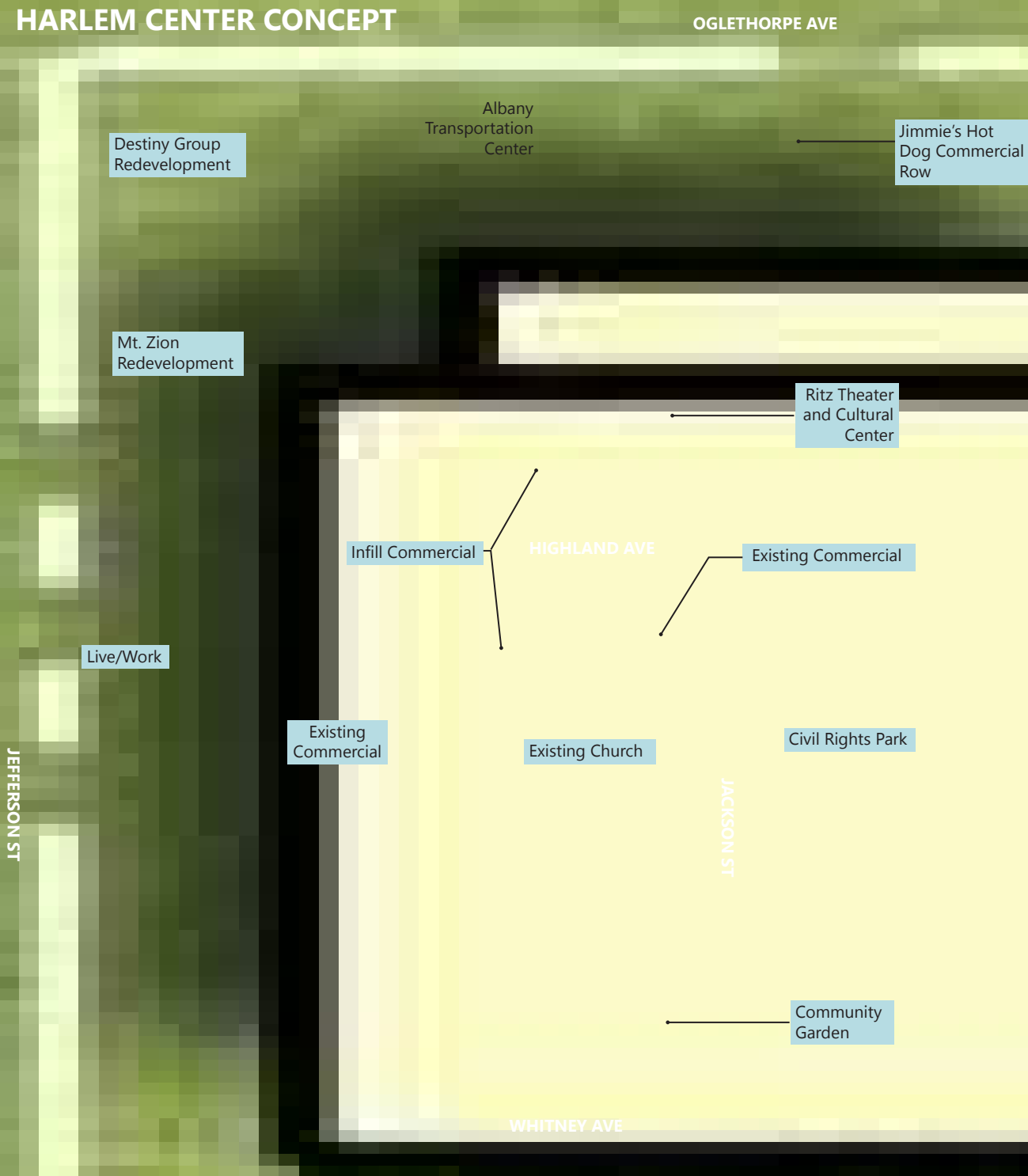


Jimmie's Hot Dogs is a famous locally owned business located in the commercial building on Jackson Street. Improvements to the building and its sidewalk will help Jimmie's, and attract more businesses. This building also has the advantage of directly facing the new Albany Transportation Center, which will bring more people to the area. The images here show before and after improvement views for this strip.



Improve the sidewalk with landscaping and outdoor dining, and convert Jackson Street to two-way traffic.

HARLEM CENTER CONCEPT



New Albany Transportation Center concept renderings - the facility will bring more people to Harlem once completed.



Jesus Pattern Ministries Inc. is currently under renovation. It is a contributing historic structure along the Jackson Street Corridor.

IMPROVE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF JACKSON STREET AND HIGHLAND AVENUE

The City of Albany owns two vacant parcels around Connie's Corner store. It is an ideal location for a gathering space since it is across the street from the Civil Rights Park, the Micro Business Enterprise Center, and the new Albany Transportation Center. A food truck court in the near term will function well at this location and work as a placeholder until the market is ripe for commercial development.

The images on the bottom from left to right show the existing conditions, potential near-term truck court arrangement, and a long-term commercial build-out plan. The image on the right shows an example of successful food truck event.



Existing vacant lots owned by the City



Short term concept - food truck court



Long term concept - commercial development

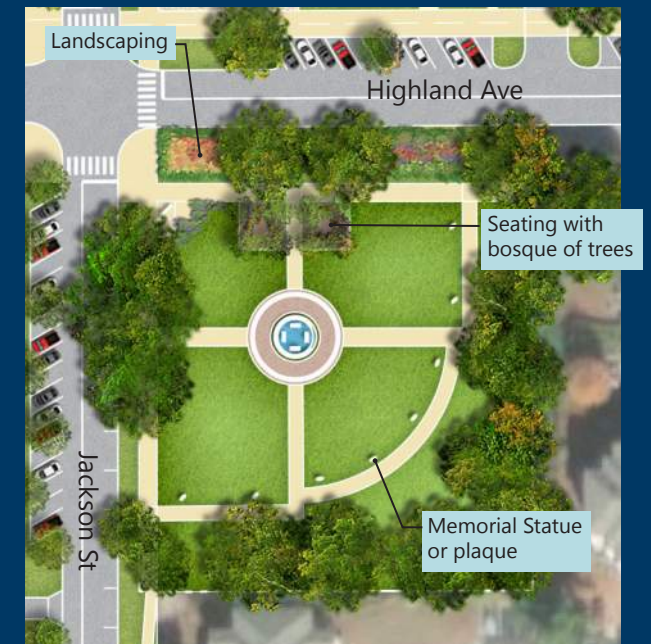


THE CHARLES M. SHERROD CIVIL RIGHTS PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The Civil Rights Park is a significant component of this historic area and should be improved with seating areas and landscaping.

The before and after images on the left show how the park can be transformed to become a more active anchor space:

- Add a seating area with bosque of trees next to the existing sidewalk along Highland Avenue
- Invest in landscape improvements on edges along streets
- Add historic statues/plaques along paths throughout the park





PROMOTE LIVE/WORK USES ALONG JEFFERSON STREET

The Jefferson Street corridor once had many thriving businesses and homes. Local residents and stakeholders would like to see this area thrive again with a mix of uses--preferably as a live/work environment.

The intersection of Whitney Avenue and Jefferson Street will be framed by vertical mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail/office and residential above. To contribute to and activate the intersection with existing significant institutions on the east, the mixed-use corner could incorporate a plaza with a fountain and seating areas where the community can gather.

The intersection of Highland Avenue and Jefferson Street could have similar live/work development along with renovation and reuse of the vacant Slater N. King Center building on the southwest corner.

The above two intersections will serve as neighborhood activity nodes with residential infill development in between along the corridor to attract more residents to the area. See the concept plan on the facing page for details.



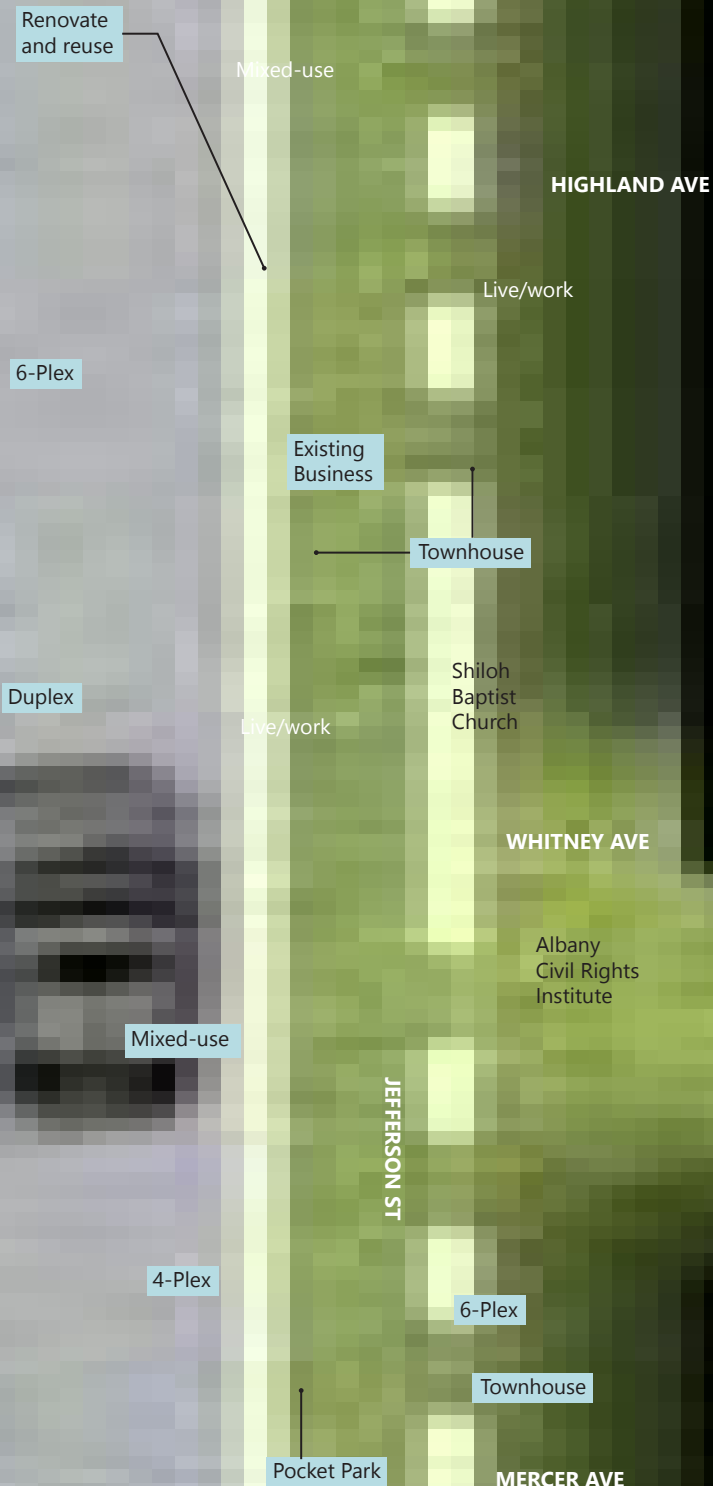
The intersection of Whitney Avenue and Jefferson Street can be transformed to an activity center with future mixed-use development on the west side.



Desirable type of Mixed-Use - Live/Work



Desirable type of Mixed-Use - flats over Retail



ALBANY CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTE IMPROVEMENTS

Located in the 1906 Old Mt. Zion Church and an adjacent new building, the Albany Civil Rights Institute is an iconic facility in Harlem. Its program and exhibits need to be revamped and expanded to attract more visitors and share the story of Albany's Civil Rights Movement history.

The Ritz Theater and Cultural Center can become a branch of the museum to showcase more local history beyond the Civil Rights Movement.

The following examples can be explored to help the case in Harlem:

- Birmingham Civil Rights Museum in Alabama
- Montgomery Civil Rights Museum in Alabama
- Jack Hadley Black History Museum in Thomasville, Georgia



<< JEFFERSON CORRIDOR CONCEPT



REDEVELOP PREVIOUS SCHOOL SITE

The vacant County school site south of Whitney Avenue presents great opportunity for mixed residential development with a community park.

The concept plan on the facing page shows cottages around a corner park at Monroe Street and Whitney Avenue. Cottages will have parking next to the house or in a common parking area as shown in the concept plan.

Single-family lots with enough depth can accommodate a main house and a garage in the back which could have an accessory unit above. This additional unit can be rented out to university students or downtown entry-level employees.

The County and Albany Housing Authority should take the lead on this development initiative. Architectural design should reflect historic Albany, and Harlem in particular. It will be subject to review by HPC since the area is within the historic district.

Zoning regulations need to be updated to allow small lot single-family and cottage development which are more affordable and appropriate in this area. See detailed zoning recommendations in the action plan chapter.



View of the school site housing development from Whitney Avenue



Before and after images at the corner of Whitney Avenue and Monroe Street



Inspiration - cottages facing green



Inspiration - single-family homes



Inspiration - accessory unit above garage



INFILL AT OTHER AREAS

In addition to the two areas mentioned above, there are numerous vacant lots in Harlem which could be suitable for infill development. Generally, opportunities exist on individual residential lots throughout the area.

The area east of Westbrook Street and the area east of the Albany Civil Rights Institute have groups of vacant parcels. If assembled, they present great opportunities for townhouse or small multi-family (4-plex and 6-plex) development.

The Albany Civic Center is surrounded by parking lots on all sides, which are rarely filled. The parking area at the northwest corner can be developed for mixed-use buildings with parking behind them.

The concept plan here shows how this infill development can happen. Developers do not necessarily have to use this plan, but should follow the general direction of land use and urban design intentions.

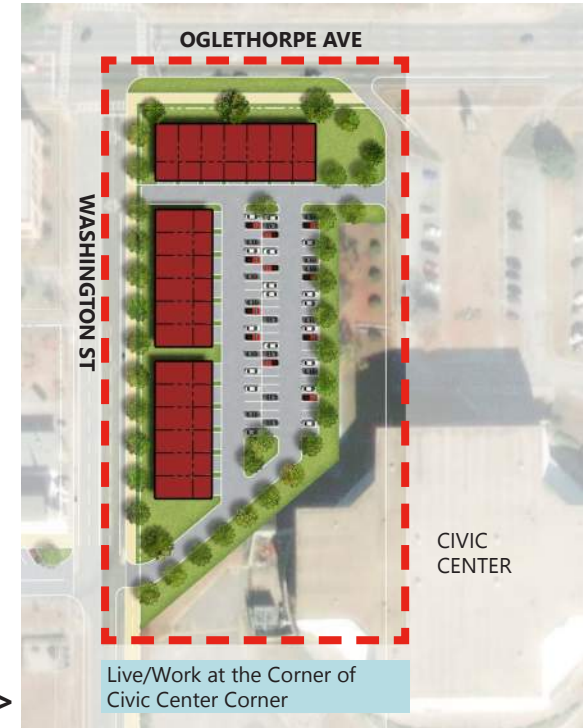


Potential type of townhouse development

CIVIC CENTER CORNER CONCEPT >>

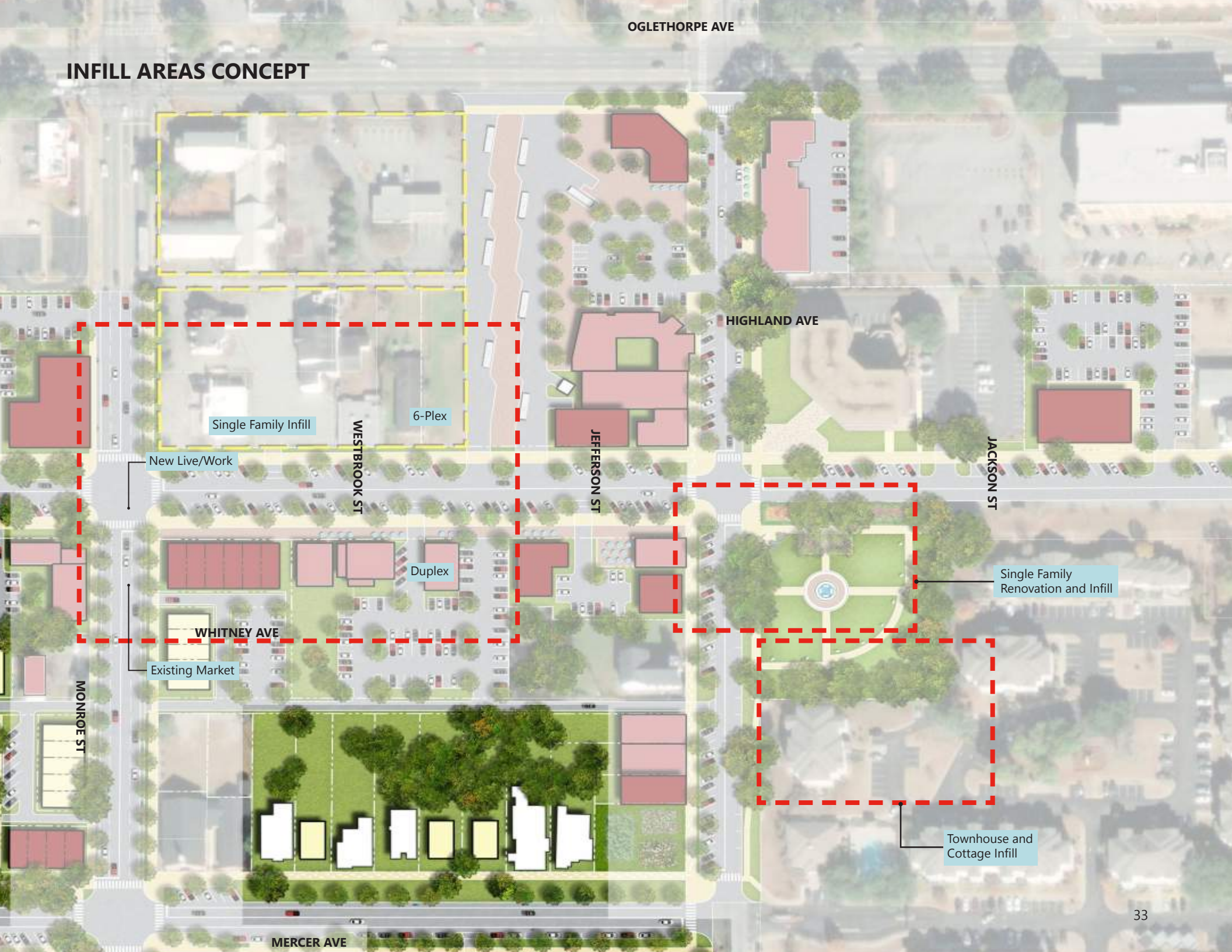


Potential type of small multi-family development



Potential Type of live/work development

INFILL AREAS CONCEPT





OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL NETWORK

The map on the facing page shows the recommended open space and trail network for the Study Area. Highlights include:

- Improve the Civil Rights Park (See details on page 29)
- Preserve and enhance the Freedom Trail
- Incorporate new parks as development happens in the area
- Taking advantage of the existing wide sidewalk along the north side of Highland Avenue, create a multi-use trail from Washington Street to Monroe Avenue. It can be extended further west to connect more neighborhoods. A multi-use trail can also be considered along the east side of Washington Street between Whitney Avenue and Highland Avenue to complete the bicycle network.
- The existing pavement width on Whitney Avenue is very generous (about 40 feet for two-lane traffic). It can be re-striped to accommodate on-street bike lanes on both sides with a buffer zone. As redevelopment happens, on-street parking can be added outside the bike lanes.

Jefferson Street currently has five lanes including a center turn lane. It can be reconfigured within the pavement to accommodate 4-lane traffic and bike lanes on both sides. Washington Street between Oglethorpe Avenue and Highland Avenue is in the same configuration and could be similarly redone.



Inspiration - bike lane with on-street parking



Inspiration - multi-use trail



Inspiration - housing facing onto community park



Existing community garden at the corner of Jackson Street and Whitney Avenue should be maintained.

Further details about how to accommodate the multi-use trail and bike lanes can be seen on page 39-41.

OPEN SPACE AND TRAIL NETWORK MAP



06



STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Street improvements are recommended for the following corridors:

1. Highland Avenue:

Multi-use trail and sidewalk improvements

2. Whitney Avenue:

Sidewalk improvements and bike lanes

3. Jackson Street:

One-way to two-way conversion between Oglethorpe Boulevard and Highland Avenue; improve sidewalks and streetscape.

Multi-use trail on east side between Highland Avenue and north of cemetery.

4. Jefferson Street/Washington Street:

Sidewalk improvements and bike lanes.



Before and after images of proposed multi-use trail on Highland Avenue.

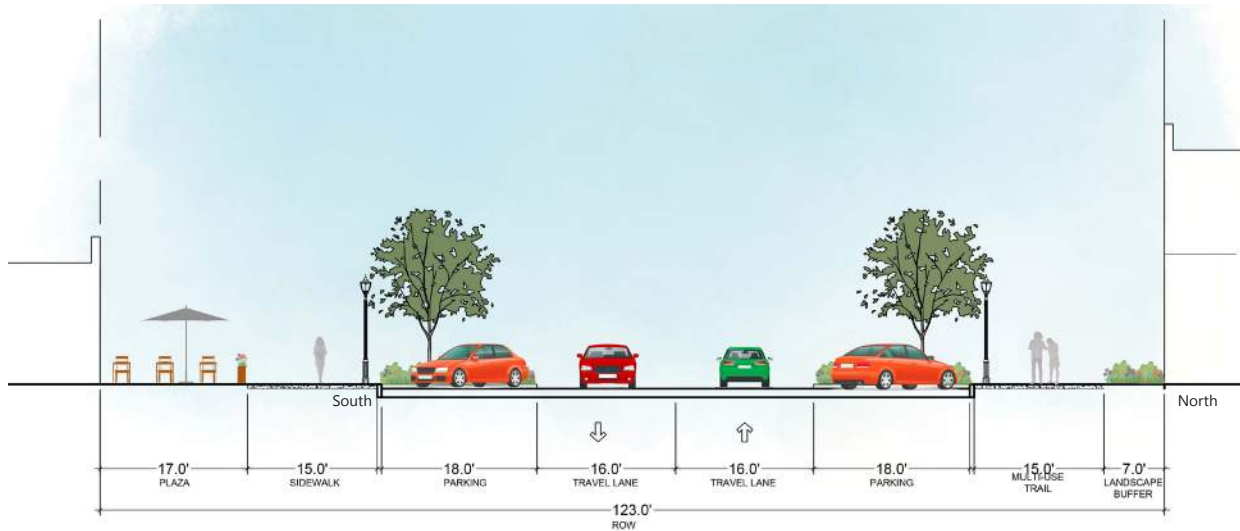


HIGHLAND AVENUE

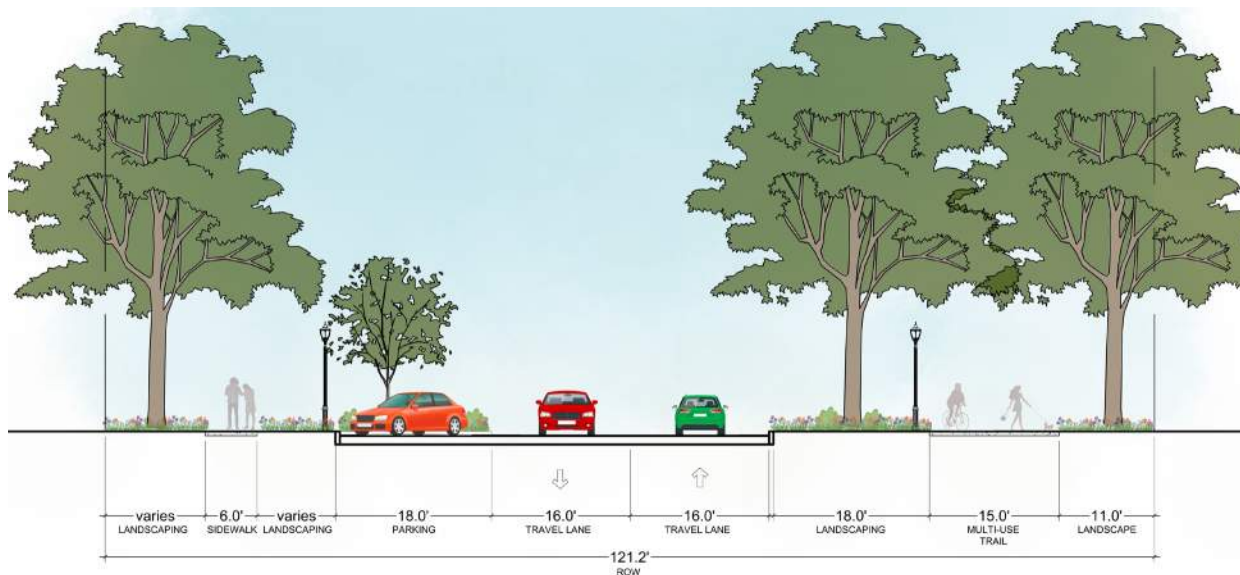
Existing sidewalks on Highland Avenue are generously wide. It is ideal to transform the sidewalks on the north side into a multi-use trail with improved landscaping and repositioned street lights. The before and after image on the previous page shows the potential look of multi-use trail in front of the Micro Business Enterprise Center.

Sidewalks on the south side can also be improved with better landscaping and paving materials. It appears that there is space between the existing sidewalks and buildings, which is ideal for supplemental uses like outdoor seating and dining activities.

Existing on-street angled parking supports businesses and should be improved or added with future development needs.



Proposed Highland Avenue section (commercial/mixed-use area)



Proposed Highland Avenue section (residential area)

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

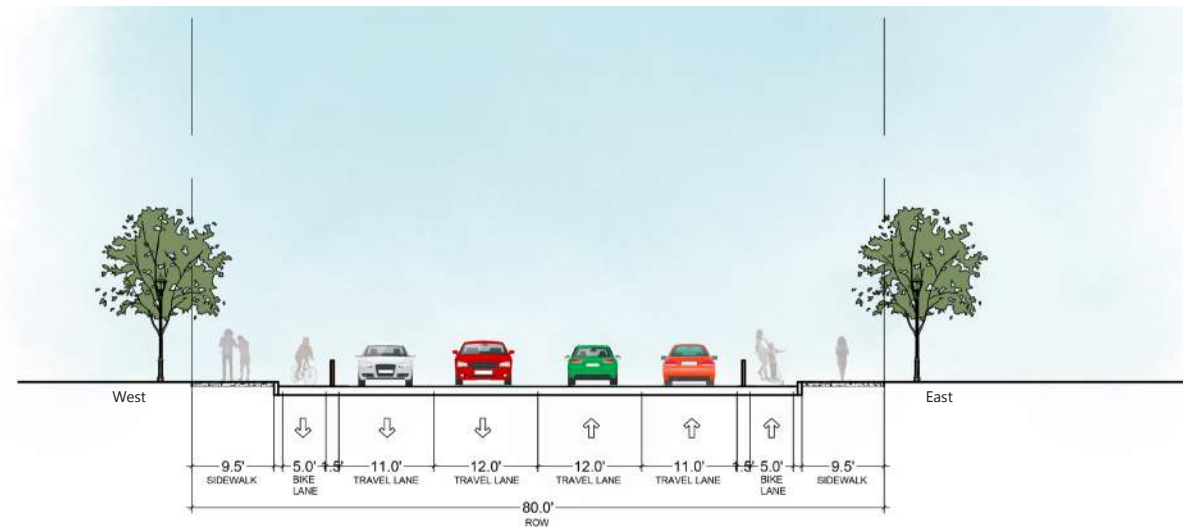
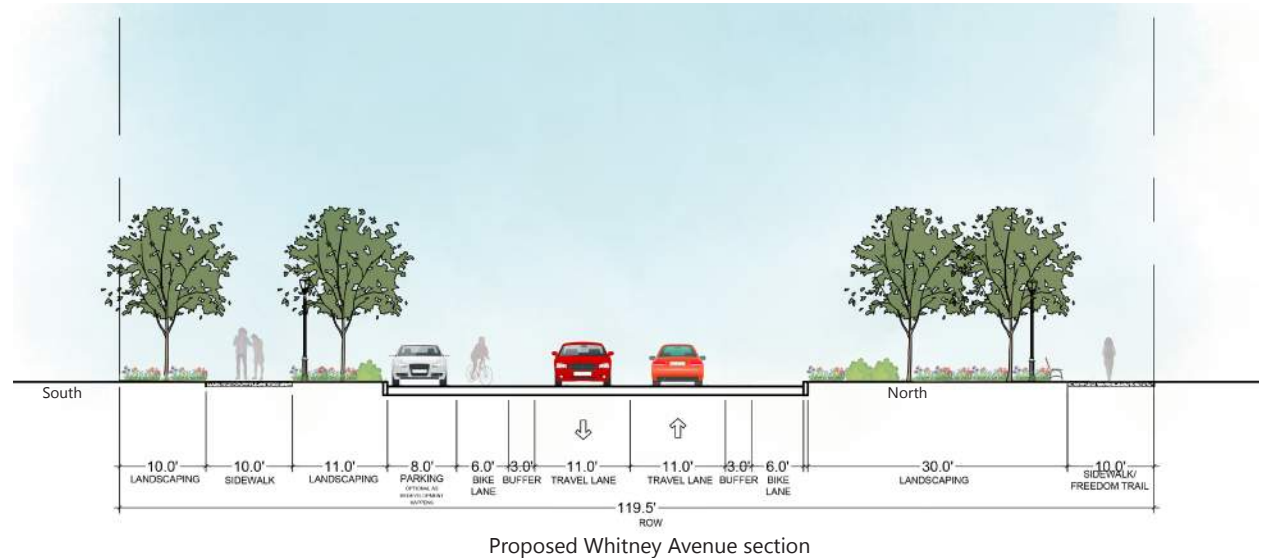
WHITNEY AVENUE

Whitney Avenue is currently two-way with about 40-foot wide pavement. It can be re-stripped to accommodate bike lanes on both sides with a buffer zone. In addition to sidewalk improvements, the section between Jefferson Street and Jackson Street can be improved with more street trees and landscaping. This section also has potential for infill development. On-street parking can be added outside the bike lanes when development happens.

See section on the right for details.

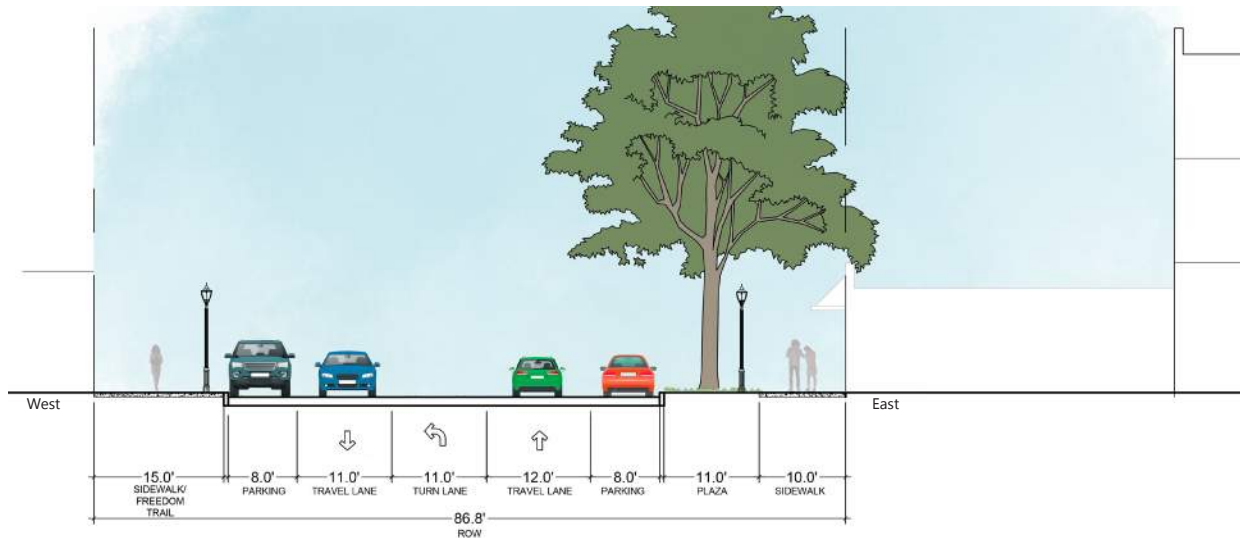
JEFFERSON STREET AND WASHINGTON STREET

Jefferson Street currently is a 5-lane roadway including a center turn lane. Washington Street between Oglethorpe Avenue and Highland Avenue has the same configuration. They can each be transitioned into a 4-lane road with bike lanes in both directions to help build a downtown bicycle network. Existing sidewalks should be improved with pedestrian lighting.

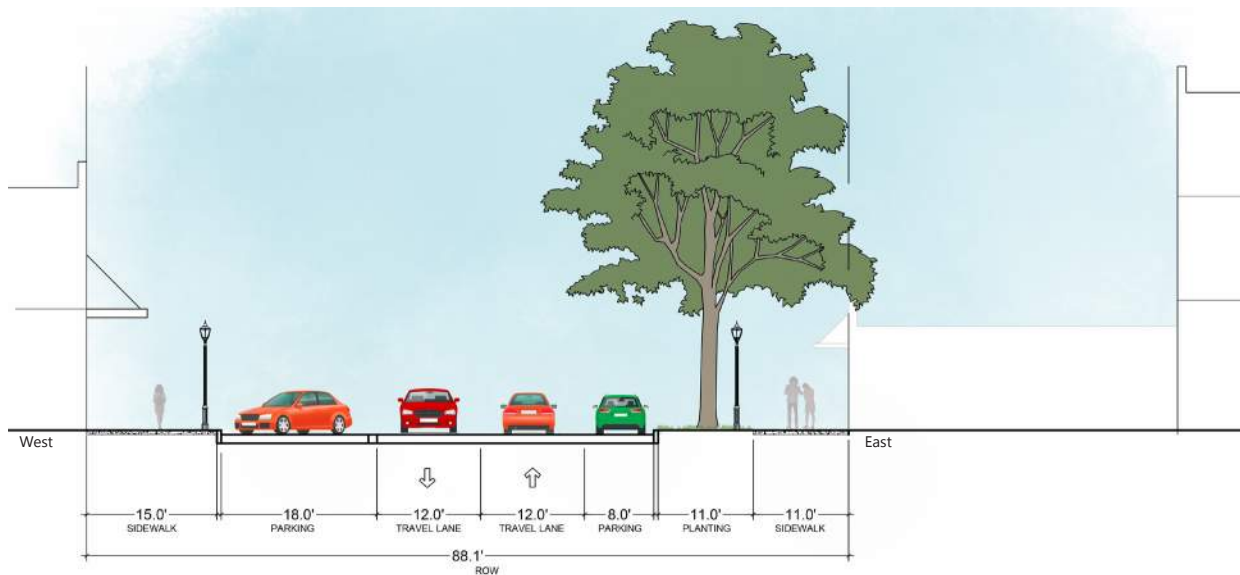


JACKSON STREET

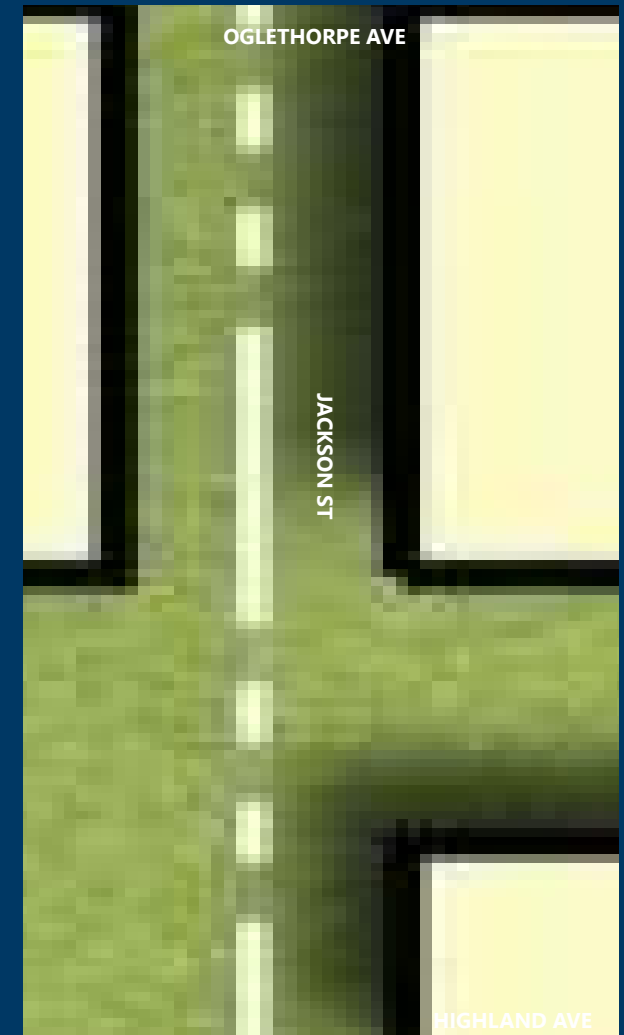
The one-way section of Jackson Street between Oglethorpe Avenue and Highland Avenue can be converted to two-way to better serve businesses along it. See sections on the left and plan below.



Proposed Jackson Street section (north of Oglethorpe Alley)



Proposed Jackson Street section (south of Oglethorpe Alley)





PRESERVE AND ENHANCE HARLEM'S CHARACTER

Harlem is seen as the center of Albany's African-American community. To preserve the area's character, it is important to document and compile a more complete local written and oral history and share it widely. The stories gathered can further be displayed through a local history museum, and symbolized in the built environment through markers, monuments, art, and events. The following are people and places that should be celebrated:

- Osceola Macarthy Adams - one of the first Black actresses to appear on Broadway.
- Ray Charles - the famous musician and artist
- Alice Coachman - first Black woman to win an Olympic Gold medal in 1948
- Philip Joiner - member of the Georgia House of Representatives from Dougherty County.
- Dorothy Hubbard - First African-American Female Mayor
- Charles Sherrod - Member and organizer of SNCC, one of the leaders of Albany Movement, former Albany City Council member and ASU teacher
- Rutha Mae Harris - SNCC Freedom Singer
- Mary Young Cummings - Former state representative
- Ola Mae Quarterman - the young woman who defied racism on the bus in the Albany Movement
- Carter's - the soul food restaurant established in 1968 in Harlem
- B'nai Israel's synagogue and its history

The Freedom Trail, which consists of metal footprints embedded in the sidewalk, leads from Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church to Pine Avenue where the City Jail formerly stood. It represents the path marchers took from group meetings at the church to peacefully protest outside the jail where hundreds of African-Americans had been imprisoned. The footsteps are an important memorial to the Civil Rights Movement which need to be preserved and improved when necessary.

The Albany Civil Rights Institute, which is owned and operated by the Albany Civil Rights Institute, Inc., has limited capacity and operating hours. It could attract more visitors by expanding its exhibits, programs, and active operation hours.

The vacant Ritz Theater and Cultural Center is another significant landmark in the Harlem District; it potentially can be transformed into an African-American history museum and education center.

The Charles M. Sherrod Civil Rights Park currently has a list of local historical events on monuments around the central fountain. This park can be improved with more detailed installations, and additional landscaping.

Harlem used to be home for many small businesses, cottages, and small single-family homes. Revitalization should respect this character and provide a variety of uses and residential options. The architectural style of new development should fit in with local characteristics.



Historic marker at Shiloh Baptist Church



Freedom Trail along Jackson Street

BUSINESS RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT



Potential improvements to Jimmie's Hot Dogs row



Existing businesses on Highland Avenue



New Albany Transportation Center across street from Jimmie's Hot Dogs

To maintain and increase local business vitality, it is important to retain and improve existing businesses in this area, especially on Jackson Street and Highland Avenue.

With the new Albany Transportation Center coming to life, Jimmie's Hot Dogs commercial row across the street has an opportunity to be reactivated. Building facade improvement and recruitment of new businesses for empty store front spaces can help reactivate this strip; improved outdoor seating/dining areas under shade trees will help as well.

Other businesses can also benefit from the Albany Transportation Center. But to keep existing businesses and attract new ones, the area needs more housing to draw residents.

The City needs to develop a strategy to attract more businesses--especially an anchor--into the area. This anchor potentially can be a technology company to benefit the entire city. It can be located at any of the new commercial/mixed-use buildings shown on the concept plan.

The strategy should also focus on how to bring in a locally owned restaurant like Carter's Grill, as well as other businesses like bars, book stores, sports clubs, etc.

The Micro Business Enterprise Center at 230 S. Jackson Street is a business incubator that provides business assistance and professional office space for new and small businesses. Stakeholders have expressed the need to evaluate and improve its utilization.



CHAPTER 4

THE ACTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

The ambitious “big ideas” for Harlem will require the long-term cooperation of the public and private sectors to come to fruition. The following pages list recommended implementation projects, along with a rough cost estimate, potential funding sources, and level of priority based on public input.

Many of these projects will not happen immediately due to financial or other constraints. For most projects, however, interim steps can be implemented with only modest funding in order to demonstrate a project’s viability. The long-term version of the project will more fully meet the goals and needs of the area but may require more time and funding.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

In order to realize the vision of the Harlem Area Revitalization Plan, public and private partners must work together. The City, the DDA and ADICA will be involved in most aspects of implementation, but will need to work with a broader network of partners.

Some projects will need to be funded and implemented by the public sector; others are funded through public/private partnerships or private efforts that require some public sector incentives. Some projects may be led entirely by the private sector.

Ongoing work on these projects will require funding from a variety of sources. Grants and other public funding sources will ensure that the financial burden for implementation does not fall entirely on local taxpayers.

CITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

- City of Albany
- DDA
- ADICA
- Dougherty County
- Albany Housing Authority

OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS

- Southwest Georgia Regional Commission
- State of Georgia
 - Georgia Cities Foundation
 - Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
 - Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Federal Government

OTHER LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

- Albany State University
- Albany Technical College
- Albany Civil Rights Institute
- Albany Chamber of Commerce
- Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Thronateeska Heritage Center
- Local civic and non-profit organizations and churches

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS

- Developers and investors
- Local property and business owners
- Other local citizens

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

01 ALBANY CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTE (ACRI) IMPROVEMENTS

ACRI has developed a Master Plan (July 1, 2022) for experience enhancement. They will continue to work with the City and potential sponsors for implementation.

Lead by City, Albany Civil Rights Institute

Estimated Cost \$2.4-3.0M

Funding Sources Grants/ACRI/ Potential Sponsor

Priority ★★★★★



02 RITZ THEATER AND CULTURAL CENTER RENOVATION AND REUSE

Renovate and reuse existing buildings. One of the potential options is a local history museum and education center in addition to the Albany Civil Rights Institute.

As of May 2023, an architect has submitted an estimate of the costs to renovate the buildings. Out of the estimated cost below, Rep. Bishop has secured \$2 million for this project.

Lead by City

Estimated Cost \$7.5M

Funding Sources Government Grants

Priority ★★★★★



03 TRUCK COURT ON CITY OWNED PROPERTIES

The two vacant lots around Connie's Corner at the intersection of Jackson Street and Highland Avenue can be used as a food truck court with some cleanup and minimal improvement. This can be an interim use before the area is ripe for higher value commercial redevelopment.

Lead by City

Estimated Cost \$750,000 - \$1.5M

Funding Sources Government Grants

Priority ★★★★★



04 CIVIL RIGHTS PARK IMPROVEMENT

Improve landscape around the park; add a seating area with a bosque of trees near sidewalk on Highland Avenue; install displays and markers throughout the park to tell more diverse local stories.

Lead by City
Estimated Cost \$500,000
-\$1.0M

Funding Sources Government Grants

Priority ★★★★★



05 DEVELOP SCHOOL SITE

The school site is ideal for mixed-residential development to provide a variety of housing for Harlem.

Phase I: Issue RFP

Lead by City/Dougherty County

Estimated Cost Staff time

Phase II: Renovation and Reuse

Lead by Private Sector

Estimated Cost TBD

Funding Sources Private/AHA

Priority ★★★★★



06 COLLECT AND COMPILE LOCAL HISTORY

The City will need to work with local organizations and institutions like the Thronateeska Heritage Center, the Albany Civil Rights Institute, and ASU, or hire a consultant to carry out this initiative.

The result can be shared via a website and social media, displayed in museums, and further applied to the built environment through permanent displays, markers, and public art.

Lead by City
Estimated Cost \$50,000
Funding Sources SPLOST/
TSPLOST

Priority ★★★★★

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

07 STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

The previous chapter has recommended improvements to multiple streets in Harlem:

1. Jackson Street from Highland Avenue to Oglethorpe Avenue. Convert one-way to two-way street with sidewalk and landscape improvements (Length: 500 feet).
Estimated Cost: \$267,400
2. Highland Avenue Streetscape from Washington Street to Monroe Street. Landscape improvements, multi-use trail on north side and sidewalk improvements on south side (Length: 2,300 feet).
Estimated Cost: \$894,000
3. Whitney Avenue Streetscape from Jackson Street to Monroe Street. Add bike lanes in existing pavement, improve landscape and sidewalks (Length: 1,600 feet).
Estimated Cost: \$745,800
4. Jefferson Street Streetscape from Whitney Avenue to Oglethorpe Avenue. Reconfigure 5-lane roadway to 4-lane with bike lanes. Improve sidewalks (Length: 1,050 feet).
Estimated Cost: \$536,500
5. Washington Street Streetscape from Highland Avenue to Oglethorpe Avenue. Reconfigure 5-lane roadway to 4-lane with bike lanes. Improve sidewalks (Length: 500 feet).
Estimated Cost: \$260,400
6. Multi-use trail on east side of Jackson Street from Highland Avenue to north of cemetery (Length: 810 feet).
Estimated Cost: \$108,200

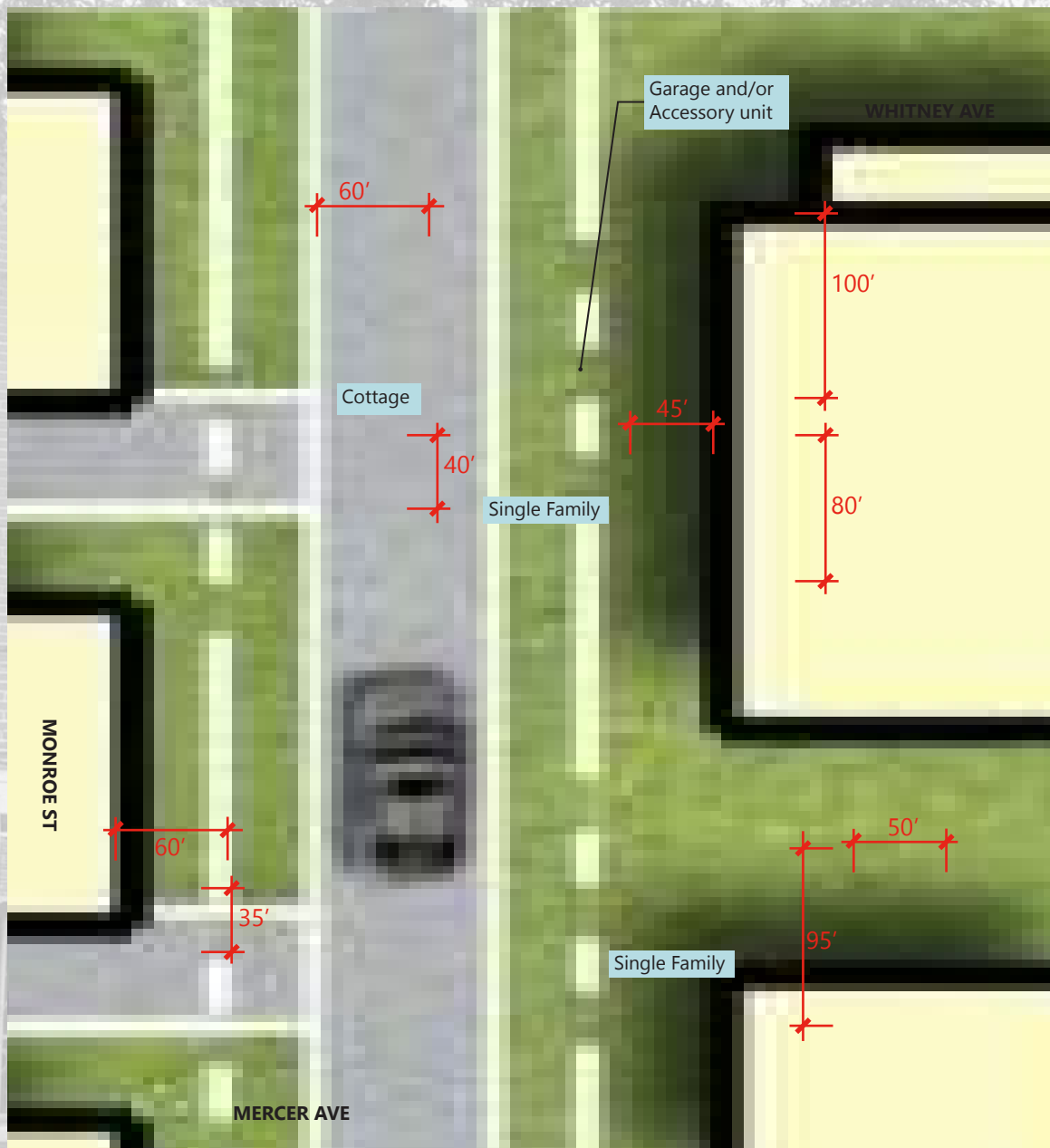
Lead by	City
Funding Sources	SPLOST/ TSPLOST
Estimated Cost	\$2,812,300

Priority ★ ★ ★

For the above streetscape projects, some interim actions can be easily implemented at relatively lower cost. These actions include changing pavement markings on Whitney Avenue, Jefferson Street and Washington Street to accommodate bike lanes within existing pavement width, and adding bike route signage on all streets.

Landscape and sidewalk/multi-use trail improvements can be carried out later. As improvements and development happens on private properties, areas between street-fronting buildings and sidewalks can be improved as part of the development activities.





08 ZONING AMENDMENTS

The following changes are recommended to facilitate the type of development recommended in the concept plan.

Reduce minimum lot size to allow a variety of urban residential products ranging from smaller single-family, townhouse, to cottage development. The current minimum lot size for single-family is 5,000 square feet (sf). It would be more affordable and appropriate for the area to allow single-family lots with a minimum lot size of 3,600 sf (typically 45 feet x 80 feet). Allow cottages on 2,100 sf (typically 35 feet x 60 feet) lots. Townhouse lots could be a minimum of 1,300 sf (typically 20' feet x 65 feet). Please see concept plan on the left for reference.

Review accessory dwelling unit regulations to ensure they will allow the proposed development pattern. Accessory units provide more housing opportunities for university students and entry level employees in the downtown area, as well as providing the homeowner an additional income source..

Lead by	City
Estimated Cost	staff time
Funding Sources	City general fund

Priority ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

09 COMMERCIAL BUILDING FACADE IMPROVEMENT

Increase the facade improvement grant from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per application.

Lead by City
Estimated Cost \$10,000/case
Funding Sources City

Priority ★ ★ ★



10 MICRO BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTER EVALUATION AND PROMOTION

Evaluate current utilization of the Micro Business Enterprise Center, and develop marketing and operation strategies to recruit and help more entrepreneurs and businesses.

Lead by City
Estimated Cost \$100,000
Funding Sources Government Grants

Priority ★ ★ ★



These ten projects are mostly efforts led by the City and other public entities. Their implementation will be catalytic to the revitalization of Harlem.

The following page lists private development and infill opportunities in the Study Area. Other individual infill opportunities are not listed but can be seen on the plan. The City can use it as a guide for future development interests.

For funding source information on different types of development, please refer to the last section of the Albany Downtown Master Plan for details.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the 10 projects listed on previous pages, Harlem has many development opportunities which are more likely to attract private interests. Here is a summary for major opportunity sites in the context of the entire Study Area.

When private entities develop these sites, they do not need to use the exact site plan in this document, but should follow the intention of uses and urban form and respect Harlem's historic character.



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