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BIOHABITATS

GOOD THINKING ATLANTA

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**CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER**

**GREENWAY STUDY**

FOR THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERLANDS

**TASK 2 MEMO**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS**

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

# HISTORICAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

## THE RIVER AS BOUNTY

Throughout the history of humans' interaction with the Chattahoochee River, **the River has played dual roles as both a source of bounty and as a border.** Fish weirs and prehistoric sites from the Woodland Period and later represent the bounty the River produced in the form of fertile, arable land and aquatic food sources. This bounty was later recognized in agriculture of historic period settlers with the production of cotton and other cash crops. The River and its creeks provided a means to power mills and was later harnessed to provide power to Atlanta's growing streetcar system at Morgan Falls Dam. Early streetcars linked Atlanta with the River at Bolton and would bring city dwellers there for recreation. Goods, like cotton, were poled down the River along short distances, linking historic plantations to railroads.

Today, the River continues to sustain its surrounding population as a recreational retreat, an abundant fishery, and a critical piece of the Metro Atlanta Area water supply. **The historic and contemporary relationships between the River, its resources, and the growth and development of the region is a critical narrative that should shape the design of the Greenway.** The design should prioritize access or visibility to physical relics, such as mill ruins along the River or industrial sites of significance like the Chattahoochee Brick Company. Historic moments along the River corridor that lack physical remains, such as historic ferry crossings and significant prehistoric sites, should be represented with creative signage strategies. **Natural and manmade landmarks in the River, such as shoals, bridges, and dams, should be prioritized as interpretive moments in the Greenway design.** They represent overlapping historic narratives and weave together different time periods in the River's past.

## THE RIVER AS BORDER

While shoals and fords along the River are historic points of confluence once used by Native Americans, **the River has also been a dividing line throughout various historical moments within the region.** As the pressure of white settlement increased in the 19th century, the River served as a border between native and whites lands. Construction of infrastructure like railroad trestles, essential in the growth of the region, was needed to span the River to connect to points north of Atlanta. Atlanta's status as a rail hub made it a target during the Civil War, and the River again served as a barrier, embodied by the earthworks that line its banks in Cobb and Fulton counties. Ferries and railroad crossings gave way to the expansion of roads tailored to the automobile in the early 20th century. The Chattahoochee would later be the front for racial lines drawn during late 20th century.

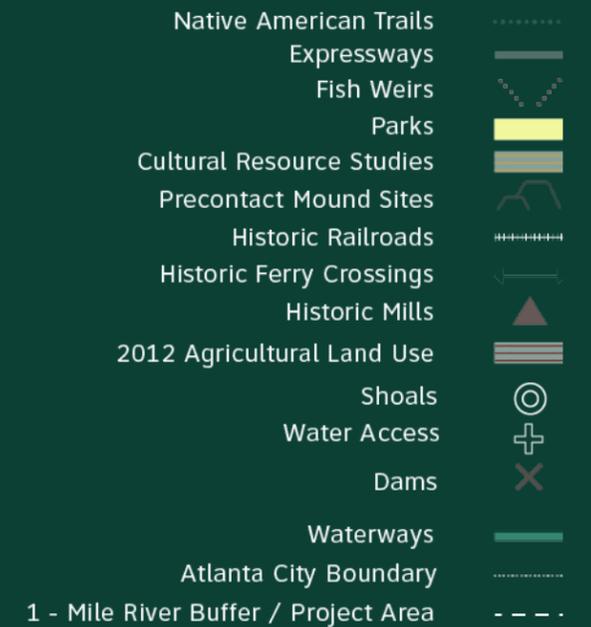
Currently, given the uneven distribution of crossings and access points along the Chattahoochee, the River still represents a border for many communities. **The Greenway Study is an opportunity to bring people back to the water's edge and to reconnect communities across the iconic water body.** Particular attention to equitable access along and across the River should be a priority throughout the study area. **Moments where the greenway aligns with historic borders and boundaries should be recognized in the interpretive marking strategy that defines the corridor.**

## A NETWORK OF SIGNIFICANT SITES

**The Greenway Study area benefits from a high density of cultural resources already open to public access in the form of parks and historic sites.** Within the River itself, evidence of prehistoric people can be seen in the five identified fish weirs in Cobb and Gwinnett Counties. The interactions between historic native tribes and early Euroamerican settlers are exemplified at parks like Standing Peachtree and McIntosh Reserve. Preserved rural landscapes can be found in the Roscoe-Dunaway Gardens Historic District in Chattahoochee Hill Country and sites like Hyde Farm in the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area. **The Greenway offers the opportunity to connect these valuable cultural resources to one another and to the River, in a way that reveals the changing human relationship with the Chattahoochee.** This represents an invaluable opportunity to reimagine the interpretation of these resources – not as a series of isolated sites of historical significance, but as **a network of historic and cultural destinations that relied upon the resources of the Chattahoochee River and its tributaries.** Emphasis should be placed on connecting these sites to the River, and linking these sites to one another.

While numerous resources have been identified within the area of the Chattahoochee Greenway project, **there are undoubtedly resources yet to be found.** Prehistoric rock shelter sites often lie on steep terrain that often avoid scrutiny during survey, and the expansive landscape of war creates features and associated artifact scatters that can go undetected. The significance of potentially undiscovered resources can impact planning processes, and the location of identified resources can inform the planning process as a whole. **The Greenway Study must propose flexible strategies to accommodate and integrate new resource discoveries that occur throughout project development.** At moments, the Greenway may intentionally bypass or buffer highly sensitive sites to protect these valuable resources.

## THE RIVER THROUGH TIME



WESTERN & ATLANTIC RAILROAD ESTABLISHED ATLANTA AS AN IMPORTANT RAILROAD JUNCTION

### THE RIVER AS BOUNTY

Fish weirs are visible traces of the longest, continuous occupation of human settlements in the US - built over 2,000 years. Semi-nomadic mound builders collected along the River's fertile banks.

NATIVE AMERICAN FISH WEIRS

BUFORD DAM - 1956



### THE RIVER AS BOUNTY

The river and its tributaries were the primary source of power for mills and industry leading to the development of the first towns along the River in the 1800s.

HISTORIC MARIETTA PAPER MILL

MORGAN FALLS DAM + ATLANTA'S STREETCARS



### THE RIVER AS BOUNTY

At the turn of the 20th Century, the Chattahoochee River powered the region's public transit system of electric streetcars that connected the urban core of Atlanta with outlying greenspaces including the Chattahoochee River.



### THE RIVER AS BORDER

The Chattahoochee River served as a border between encroaching white settlers and the remaining Cherokee and Creek lands to the west. Chief William McIntosh was a controversial chief of the Lower Creeks. In 1821, McIntosh negotiated the Treaty of Indian Springs giving away large portions of the Creeks' land to the state of Georgia. By 1838, all Native People had been removed from Georgia.

MCINTOSH RESERVE

ROSCOE-DUNAWAY GARDENS HISTORIC DISTRICT

JOHNSTON'S RIVER LINE

STANDING PEACHTREE

THE CHATTAHOOCHEE BRICK COMPANY

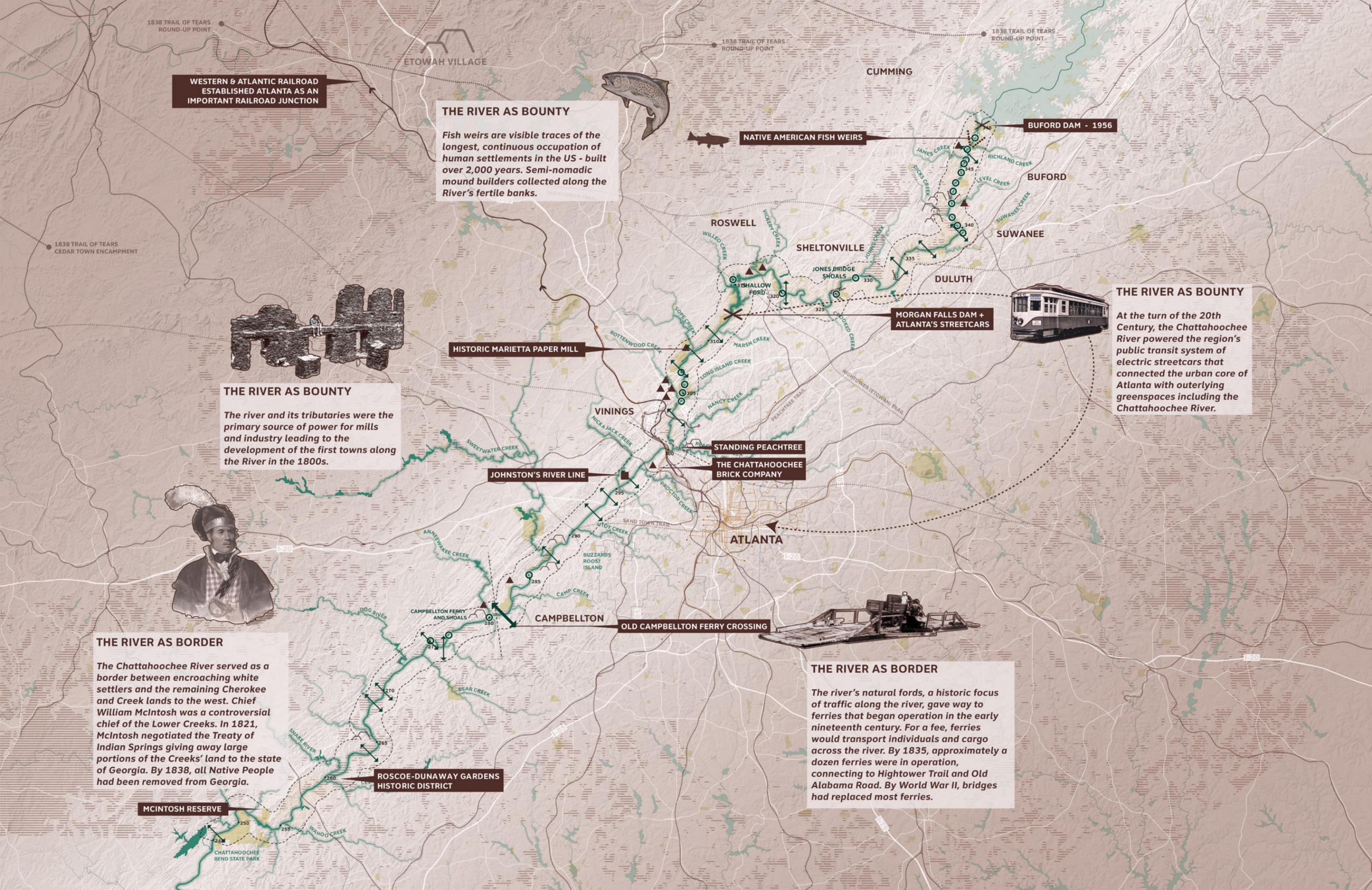
ATLANTA

OLD CAMPBELLTON FERRY CROSSING



### THE RIVER AS BORDER

The river's natural fords, a historic focus of traffic along the river, gave way to ferries that began operation in the early nineteenth century. For a fee, ferries would transport individuals and cargo across the river. By 1835, approximately a dozen ferries were in operation, connecting to Hightower Trail and Old Alabama Road. By World War II, bridges had replaced most ferries.



# ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES

## SUPPORT PUBLIC ACCESS & PROTECT A VALUABLE ECOSYSTEM

The riparian corridor and tributary connections of the Chattahoochee River provide valuable green space for people and support the plants and wildlife that are the foundation of its ecological health. Protecting those assets in light of increasing development and population growth is a core task of this plan, and a charge that **builds on the rich history of conservation and stewardship in the region.** Beginning with passionate community members – including the Friends of the River – over 40 years ago, the Chattahoochee River has inspired advocacy and activism. That was recognized in 1978 by President Jimmy Carter in the creation of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. Since 1973, the Metropolitan River Protection Act has provided a framework for balancing corridor integrity and protection with improved access. Its successful implementation has protected habitats for the variety of species whose interactions define the urban ecology of the Metro Atlanta Region.

As the Chattahoochee River Greenway moves forward, balancing recreation with protection is a consideration in both greenway design and public engagement. Protection and enhancement of this ecological resource is critical to the Greenway Study, and its living character should be carefully considered in planning and design decisions such as material selection, alignment, and proximity to the water’s edge. **The Greenway study should identify methods of enhancing responsible use and appreciation** through educational programs, environmental signage, and maintenance and stewardship programs that complement the physical route of the greenway. Those who use the River as an ecological and recreational resource, such as sport fishermen and River tour operators, can offer key insights into site-specific projects and programming as the study advances. **Opportunities to link the Greenway Study with ongoing restoration plans should be considered,** including the warm-water native shoal bass restoration plan, and sedimentation management strategies considered for the cold-water trout fishery in the upper portion of the study area.

## ENHANCE ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY

The Chattahoochee River connects both people and wildlife, allowing for movement of aquatic and terrestrial species and enabling them to withstand disturbance. **In fragmented landscapes, natural systems lose key components and then their attendant values, a process accelerated by climate change.** Despite its abundant tree cover, urban development of Metro Atlanta has dissected habitat into patches. Along the mainstem of the River, Morgan Falls Dam and Buford Dam are barriers to movement for aquatic species.

Where vegetative buffers and forest cover exist, **the Greenway Study should aim to protect these key resources and reduce fragmentation of contiguous vegetated areas.** Where forest cover is lacking, particularly in the more urban portions of the study area, **the Greenway Study can identify opportunities where trail planning could reestablish green connections between isolated ecological communities.** In these ways, the Chattahoochee Greenway represents an opportunity to restore landscape connectivity.

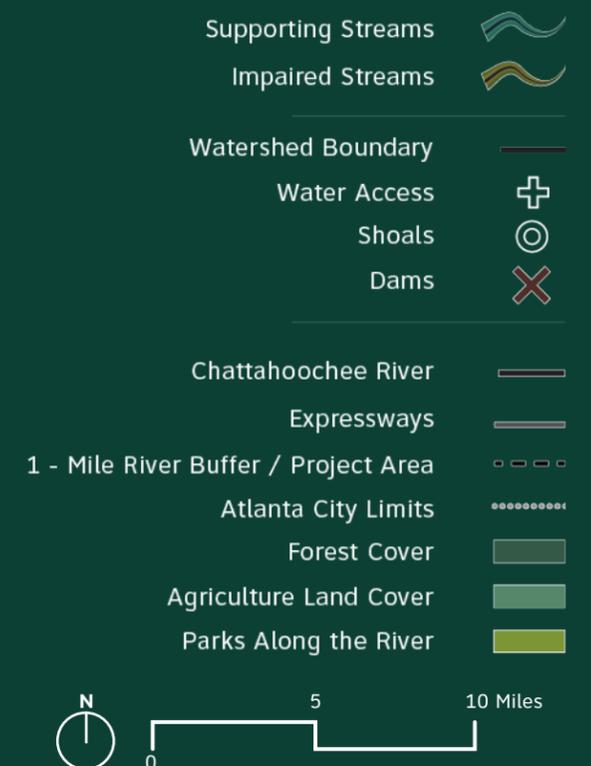
## RIVER HEALTH

The Chattahoochee River corridor currently supports ecological functions such as flood regulation, water filtration, habitat provision, and carbon sequestration. The River supports two distinct ecological areas – a highly-managed artificial cold-water zone, where trout thrive, and a naturally occurring warm-water zone that supports native species, such as shoal bass.

Yet the Chattahoochee continues to suffer from the upstream impacts of urbanization, including reduced water quality, elevated temperatures, sedimentation, and modified water flows. While water quality is improving, due to changes in development practices and investments in the Metropolitan Atlanta’s water management infrastructure, challenges remain. Many of the River’s tributaries, which are important to the health of the main river, are currently classified as impaired and face development pressure in their watersheds.

**The Greenway Study should identify opportunities for restoration of critical tributaries and key habitats along the River that could improve water quality, enhance ecological function, and positively contribute to the human use and enjoyment of the Greenway.**

## A COSMOPOLITAN ECOSYSTEM



## A COSMOPOLITAN ECOLOGY

The Chattahoochee River supports a thriving recreational fishing economy and healthy populations of native and introduced species. The construction of Buford Dam in the 1950s created cold water conditions capable of supporting the most southern trout fishery in the United States. Rainbow trout are regularly stocked in the upper portion of the river, while brown trout stocking efforts have been so successful, they now have a self-sustaining population. Cooling of the river, combined with water quality issues, once devastated the native fish population. Water quality has since greatly improved in recent years and native species like shoal bass are being reintroduced through breeding and restocking programs.



**RAINBOW AND BROWN TROUT RANGE**  
The construction of Buford Dam cooled the river enough to support trout habitat in the upper reaches of the Chattahoochee. As the river flows downstream, it becomes increasingly warm, which confines the cold water fish to Sub Area 1.

## SHOAL BASS RANGE

An endemic species, shoal bass were once present throughout the Chattahoochee but now only found in its tributaries. Recent restoration efforts have been made to bring the fish back to the river. As a warm water species, the barrier of Morgan Falls Dam combined with cooler water upstream, confines its reintroduction to Sub Area 2 and 3.



**SWEETWATER CREEK**  
A healthy tributary with a large shoal bass population

**SHOAL BASS STOCKING**  
Shoal bass are stocked in Metro Atlanta

**PROCTOR CREEK**  
CSO upgrades are improving the once heavily polluted creek

## ECOLOGY CONNECTIVITY

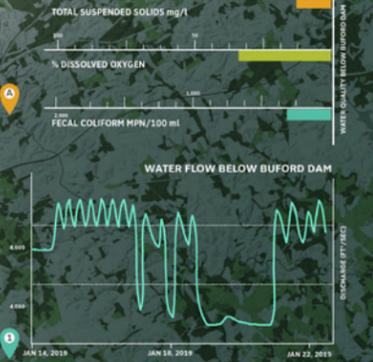
Sub Area-3 has large tracts of intact forests along the river. The area provides an ecological corridor and connectivity along the river that extends to an even larger regional network. This area also contains some of the healthiest supporting tributaries of the Chattahoochee including Sweetwater Creek and Dog River. Tributary health is important for the overall health of the river.

## WATER QUALITY

Water quality has significantly improved in recent years but the health of the Chattahoochee is largely dependent on the health of its tributaries. Water quality is impaired by the impacts of upstream urbanization, including runoff, sedimentation and disconnection of floodplains.

## WATER USE

The Chattahoochee is a valuable resource. The river and Lake Lanier provide about 70% of metropolitan Atlanta's drinking water. As a relatively small river supporting a large population, the river is heavily relied upon by metropolitan Atlanta.



**SUB-AREA 1**  
The intensity of suburban development in this area pose a barrier to ecological connectivity but cold water from Buford Dam has established a thriving trout fishery. The river water is relatively cold and clean but fluctuating and pulsing dam releases can destabilize aquatic habitats. It also impedes sediment transport and concentrates water runoff upstream.



**SUB-AREA 2**  
Despite being the most urban Sub-Area, there is still a wildness around the river that provides recreational opportunities close to the city. The legacy of combined sewer overflows affect e. coli levels near Atlanta but recent upgrades have significantly improved water quality. Morgan Falls Dam is a physical barrier for aquatic connectivity but has also become a hot spot for fishing and bird watching. It is the most highly controlled portion of the river and supports a large metropolitan population.



**SUB-AREA 3**  
Sub-Area 3 is the most rural of the sub areas. Ecological connectivity is high and there is significant intact forest habitats connecting to an even larger regional network further south. The distance from dams results in a more natural water flow but water quality is still heavily influenced by urbanization and upstream runoff.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## ANTICIPATING GROWTH

Metro Atlanta’s population has been booming for decades, and that growth is expected to continue. **The Atlanta Regional Commission projects a population growth of approximately 2.5 million people by 2040.** Such growth is expected to lead to more dense urban and suburban areas and an ever growing demand for urban green space. In the face of increasing development, the challenge for the region will be to accommodate the increased density while diminishing the impacts of this growing population on riparian habitats and streamflow.

**The Chattahoochee River Greenway Study represents an opportunity to anticipate metropolitan growth, plan and preserve the integrity of the River corridor, and provide equitable access to green space and recreational opportunities to an ever-growing population.** Significant population growth is expected in the northern portion of the study area, particularly along the southern side of the River, which is likely to increase usership of the large number of parks and public resources along the River and increase upstream environmental impacts within the watershed. **The Greenway Study should anticipate this growth, and focus on identifying key connective segments of the River corridor to prioritize what will provide equitable access to public resources, distribute impacts between parks and open spaces, and identify key buffer areas for restoration and water quality protection.** Regional planning tools should be considered for this area that emphasize best management practices for development that maximize stormwater management, conserve open space, and reduce sedimentation impacts to the River.

While ARC data shows less development pressure to the south, large landowners might change development dynamics through the sale or redevelopment of large, contiguous parcels. Regional planning tools should be considered that prioritize access to transit, environmental protections, and access to open space along the water’s edge for any large changes in land use, such as cluster zoning and transit-oriented development.

## AN INCREASING DIVERSITY

**The Metro Atlanta region as a whole is very diverse and becoming more diverse with every census.** Like Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, Stone Mountain, and the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, the Chattahoochee River Greenway promises to provide green space for a great diversity of users. However, many of the most diverse areas of the Metro Atlanta region are simultaneously places where historic communities are being displaced. **The Chattahoochee River Greenway is poised to provide a public realm where all the diverse populations of the region can benefit. The challenges of unequal access and displacement resulting from investments in urban green space will be at the forefront of the study.** The River greenway could likely have implications for housing affordability. Regional planning tools should be considered in tandem with the Greenway Study that prioritize affordable housing development and environmental justice. **The Chattahoochee River Greenway Study will take special care to engage, listen, and respond to the most vulnerable communities along the River, providing new access opportunities while preserving social cohesion.**

The study will strive to make the Chattahoochee River Corridor an inclusive public realm where all are invited to live, work, and play. This includes the consideration of **a wide range of recreational activities attractive to many ages and cultures,** appreciating differences in use of the water for religious, cultural, and spiritual practice. Multiple languages are spoken along the River corridor, and **the Greenway Study should consider multi-language and universal wayfinding strategies that are accessible to a variety of backgrounds and ages.** As residents of the suburbs become older, and younger generations move to Atlanta’s urban core, the range of active and passive recreational opportunities identified in the Greenway Study should reflect the shifting demographics of the region.

## BENEFITING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

**The City of Atlanta is home to populations vulnerable to environmental injustice with racial disparities in access to greenspace, as well as both racial and linguistic disparities in proximity to pollution.** Besides greater exposures to environmental pollution, environmental injustice has manifested as a lack of minority inclusion in environmental projects and decision-making. As the region as a whole becomes increasingly more diverse, it is critical to address the existing and historical inequalities. Today, these communities identified along the River corridor are the ones with the least access to the River and existing green spaces. The Chattahoochee River Greenway’s Public Engagement Strategy and Stakeholder Plan places **emphasis on equity and inclusion by prioritizing communication with communities that have been harmed by environmental injustices and have been identified as “Environmental Justice Target Areas” using the Atlanta Regional Commission’s 2017 Environmental Justice Model.**

By engaging with historically underserved communities early and often, by creating safe access to the greenway, and by providing additional programmatic elements where they are the most needed, the Chattahoochee River Greenway will provide co-benefits to the most underserved residents. **The Greenway study should identify areas where environmental justice issues can be actively addressed** – for example, the identification of contaminated sites where remediation can occur, or zones of the River where ecological restoration opportunities can overlap with a need for public access to the River. **Tributaries offer great potential in connecting communities to high-quality open space,** and should be investigated as potential corridors between high density development areas and the Greenway. Proctor Creek is one example of a tributary connection underway that will link an underserved community with the River.

## A RIVER FOR ALL

- Most Vulnerable Communities 
- 2040 Anticipated Population Growth 
- 1990-2010 Population Diversity Increase 
- Environmental Justice Target Area 
- Shoals 
- Water Access 
- Waterways 
- Parks Along the River 
- County Lines 
- Expressways 
- Atlanta City Boundary 
- 1-Mile River Buffer / Project Area 



### INCREASING DIVERSITY

The Atlanta metro area as a whole is becoming increasingly diverse with its fastest growing areas located outside of the City of Atlanta. Inclusivity must be central in the approach to developing the Greenway. The Greenway should strive to be a resource for the growing diverse population and pave the way for more inclusive and accessible green space.

### POPULATION GROWTH

The Atlanta metro population is projected to grow by 2.5 million people by 2040. The Chattahoochee River Greenway will be an invaluable resource to meet growing demands for urban green space and active transportation and can play a role in reducing impacts of this growing population on riparian habitats and streamflow.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TARGET AREA:  
GA-400 CORRIDOR

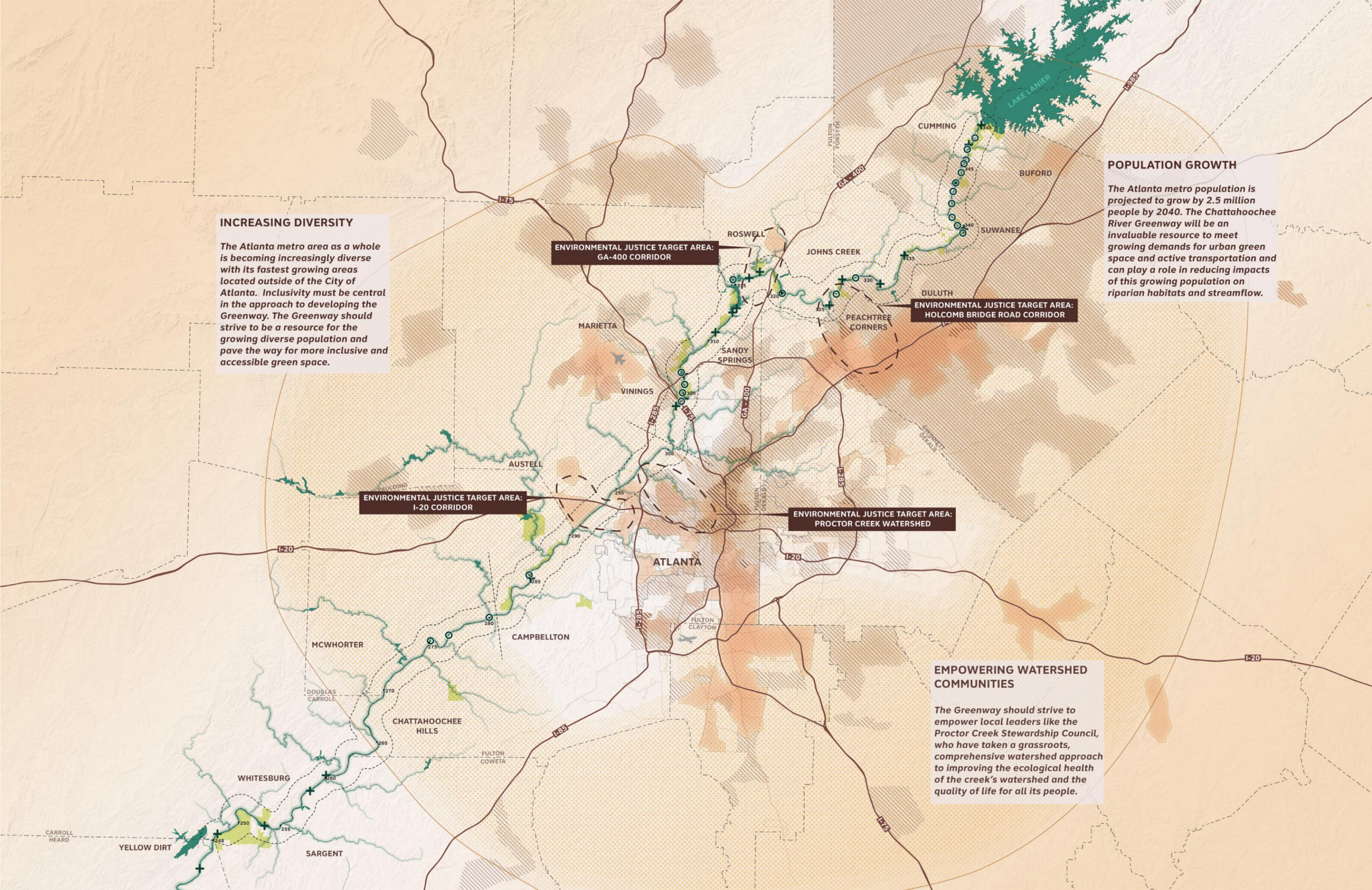
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TARGET AREA:  
HOLCOMB BRIDGE ROAD CORRIDOR

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TARGET AREA:  
I-20 CORRIDOR

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TARGET AREA:  
PROCTOR CREEK WATERSHED

### EMPOWERING WATERSHED COMMUNITIES

The Greenway should strive to empower local leaders like the Proctor Creek Stewardship Council, who have taken a grassroots, comprehensive watershed approach to improving the ecological health of the creek's watershed and the quality of life for all its people.



# CONNECTIONS & ACCESS

## GREENSPACE & WATER ACCESS

Almost 40% of greenspace exists within a half mile of the River corridor, suggesting a wealth of opportunities for Greenway planning. **However, parks, greenspace, and water access points are not equally distributed throughout the corridor**, with greater opportunities for recreation and direct water access concentrated in the north. Conversely, the southern portion of the corridor presents several challenges to direct River access and public park space, including lack of River crossings, and limited water access points. Overall, these contrasting patterns present a tremendous opportunity in the south to increase direct and indirect water access. This may be achieved **by working with adjacent property owners to seek easements for access or by identifying existing utility easements that may get people to the water**. There may also be opportunities to seek alternatives to direct access via tributaries, creeks, and to highlight existing local trail routes for access to other parts of the River. Other strategies might include prioritizing sites that could become public in the future that might be suitable for greenway segments, parks, plazas, and other spaces. Public land ownership by Georgia Power, county water departments, and other utilities should be evaluated for easement and public access. Providing this kind of access, where feasible, would go a long way in connecting people with nature, increasing recreational opportunities, and providing a wider range of physical activity and travel options.

Even where park coverage is strong in the northern portion of the study area, **access and connectivity between parks is limited**. The CRNRA units collectively represent one of the most significant public resources along the River, but the individual units are spatially isolated from one another and operate as related but separate destinations. **The Greenway Study offers the opportunity to physically connect these resources into a continuous public realm that amplifies the importance of these public national resources.**

## LAND COVER REVEALS STRONG IDENTITIES

**The Greenway Study area benefits from strong recreational anchors at either end** – Lake Lanier is a regional recreation destination, and Chattahoochee Bend State Park is one of Georgia’s largest state parks, with 5 miles of river frontage. The Greenway Study represents a clear opportunity to improve connectivity

and access between these anchors and the public landholdings that span the River, **transforming the River from a barrier to a connector of public resources.**

**Land cover data reveals distinct characteristics and identities along the River.** Sub-Area 1, north of Peachtree Creek, is relatively dominated by residential land and holds a significant portion of publicly owned land, creating opportunities for the Greenway study to connect separated parcels. Sub-Area 3 is primarily comprised of active agricultural and forested areas and fewer public land holdings. The land uses in Sub-Area 3 tend to occupy larger tracts of land and many are privately owned by a small number of individuals, indicating the need to think creatively about greenway development and strategic points for water access. Sub-Area 2, on either side of I-20, is mainly a mix of industrially-zoned land, as well as utility easements. This portion of the River presents a different set of design challenges in terms of access and experience, with MRPA protections creating forested buffers that should be carefully considered for trail planning. In each of these three Sub-Areas, it will **be important for the greenway segments and associated amenities to respect and honor the characteristics of the surrounding land uses while creating an iconic identity for the corridor**, making it a destination that highlights the assets of the greater region.

## TRANSIT CONNECTIVITY & ACCESS

**The Greenway Study must identify how people get to the River corridor using public and private transportation as well as expand the number and density of access points to equitably serve the region.**

Providing direct and comfortable connections to transit stops and stations would enable a substantial proportion of the Metro Atlanta population to reach the River without needing a personal vehicle. Currently, many local transit routes get riders close to the River but not to it. Bus and rail service is more feasible within Sub-Area 2 and portions of Sub-Area 1 but is largely absent south of I-20 and in suburban counties with limited bus service. **The location of new river access points can be aligned to existing transit stops and new stops can be placed to align with river access points.** More direct and comfortable connections can be made between MARTA rail stations and locations along the River. An example is the Proctor Creek Greenway

that will eventually extend between Bankhead station and the River making what is now a five-mile ride along busy roads a safer and more pleasant experience.

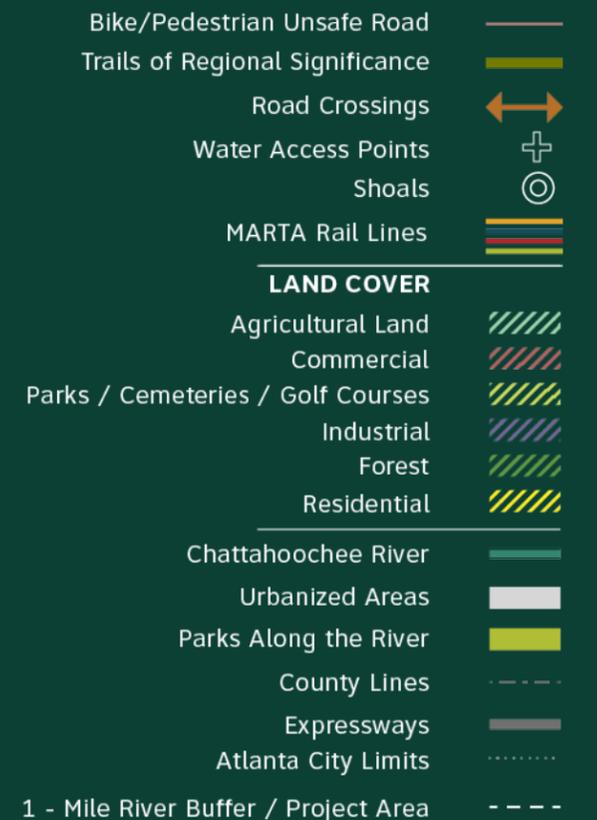
Accessing the greenway by personal transportation – either bicycle, foot, or automobile – is critical to linking the region to the River. **The Greenway study should link to key regional trail initiatives that prioritize bicycle and pedestrian connectivity**, such as the Atlanta Beltline, Proctor Creek Trail, Roswell Riverwalk Trail, Big Creek Greenway, the Mountain to River Trail, and Silver Comet Trail.

Crossing the River today can be difficult with no pedestrian bridges and few roadway bridges that prioritize the experience of the pedestrian. **The Greenway Study should consider crossing locations for pedestrian and bicycle bridges within the areas of the River that lack bridge crossings.** Current highway bridge crossings are one of the few places where the Chattahoochee is routinely visible to the public, and are mostly concentrated in the northern reaches of the study area. These high-visibility points of crossing offer significant opportunities to improve access to the study area and should be reconsidered as spaces for human access.

## SAFETY

Development patterns are such that opportunities to cross the River are relatively few and far between. **Many of the roadways that cross the Chattahoochee River exhibit high risk for pedestrian safety.** Correlations are also evident between these segments, roads that parallel the River, and locations of past bicycle and pedestrian crashes. **Taken together, these point to the need for safer alternative routes for people walking (and biking) to get from one side of the River to the other.** Off-street greenways and trails and dedicated bicycle/pedestrian crossings may provide safer, more comfortable alternatives for people seeking to travel along and across the Chattahoochee River on foot or on bike. Where on-street crossings are necessary, the greenway should prioritize segments with lower risk.

## ACCESSING THE RIVER





### SUB-AREA 1

The northern portion of river, north of Peachtree Creek, is dominated by a suburban fabric; low density residential housing and subdivisions. This area benefits from numerous water access points, as well as large parks encompassing a dense network of trails and multi-use paths. The presence of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and its network of parks is a major asset for the greenway study but the land ownership patterns present challenges to communities that live further away from the river.



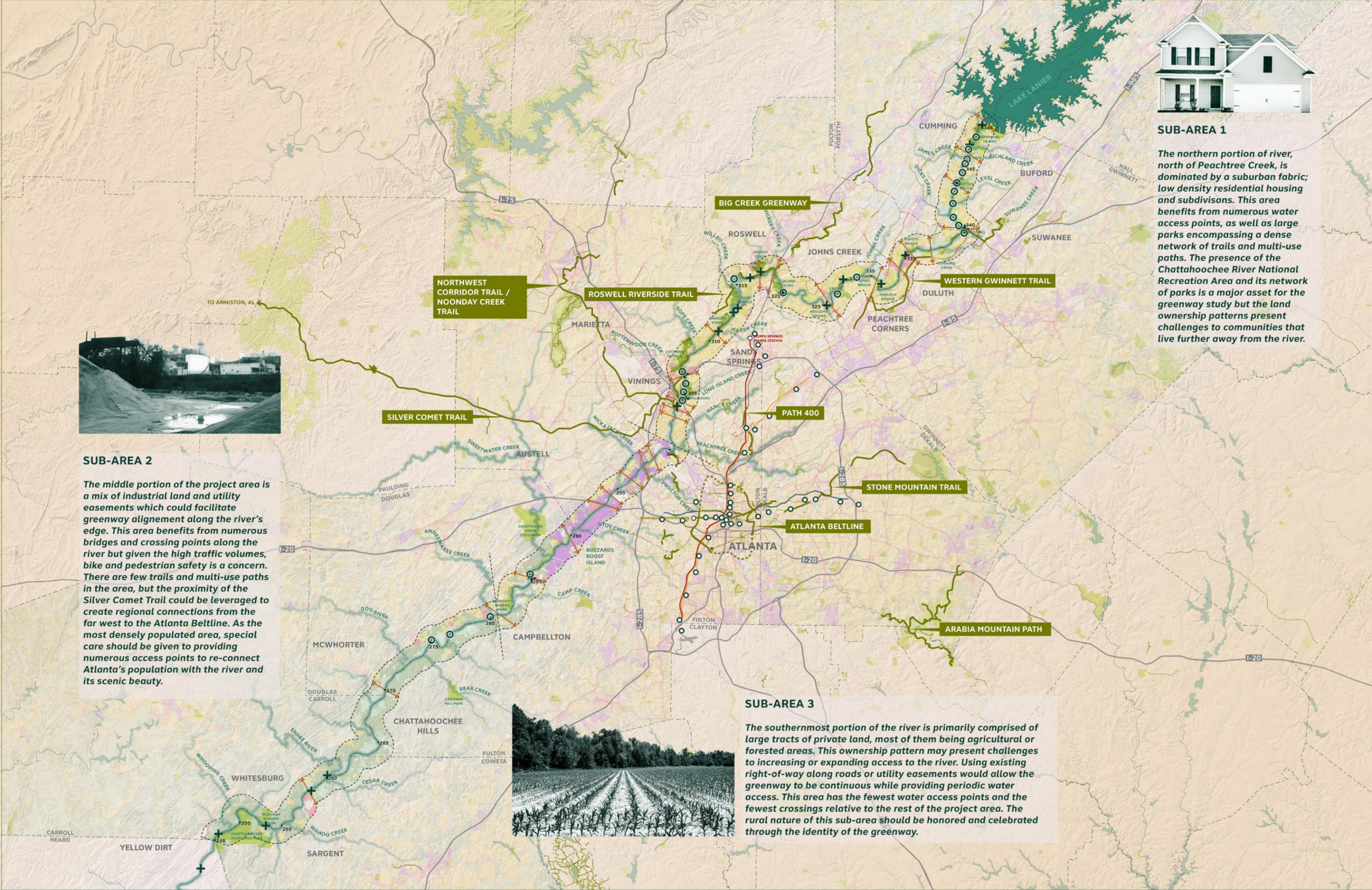
### SUB-AREA 2

The middle portion of the project area is a mix of industrial land and utility easements which could facilitate greenway alignment along the river's edge. This area benefits from numerous bridges and crossing points along the river but given the high traffic volumes, bike and pedestrian safety is a concern. There are few trails and multi-use paths in the area, but the proximity of the Silver Comet Trail could be leveraged to create regional connections from the far west to the Atlanta Beltline. As the most densely populated area, special care should be given to providing numerous access points to re-connect Atlanta's population with the river and its scenic beauty.



### SUB-AREA 3

The southernmost portion of the river is primarily comprised of large tracts of private land, most of them being agricultural or forested areas. This ownership pattern may present challenges to increasing or expanding access to the river. Using existing right-of-way along roads or utility easements would allow the greenway to be continuous while providing periodic water access. This area has the fewest water access points and the fewest crossings relative to the rest of the project area. The rural nature of this sub-area should be honored and celebrated through the identity of the greenway.



# CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER GREENWAY SUB-AREAS

To enable the Project Team to scale down the 100-mile corridor and develop a more detailed analysis, the Design Team has proposed to divide the Project Area into three distinct Sub-Areas. Jurisdictional boundaries, land use characteristics, environmental and topographical constraints as well as demographics characteristics were used to identify the Sub-Areas. It is important to acknowledge that the boundaries between the Sub-Areas could be drawn in many ways and that great diversity lies within and between the defined boundaries. Sub-Areas help focus the analysis and aid in the development of a nuanced and contextual planning approach, but it remains critical for the Project Team to constantly recognize diversity and difference within Sub-Areas and their relationship to the larger Project Area.

## SUB-AREA 1

Sub-Area 1 is defined by Buford Dam to the north and Peachtree Creek to the south. It is the longest Sub-Area with approximately 48 miles in length, 16 bridge crossings and 14 tributaries. The total Sub-Area is part of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area (CRNRA), including the 15 CRNRA park units and the largest number of public river access points. Land use patterns reveal large areas of low-density residential land use with the highest rate of home ownership that defines the suburban character of this northern portion of the corridor. Additionally, the area includes forests and the largest area of publicly accessible open space.

Sub-Area 1 has seen the highest number of prehistoric and historic settlements along the banks of the Chattahoochee River, and today hosts a high number of incorporated municipalities. After the Civil War numerous industries emerged, including a high concentration of historic mills and distilleries, the latter of which are mostly concentrated near present-day Buford Dam. The River in Sub-Area 1 has a historic relationship with the City of Atlanta, as it hosts the Morgan Falls Dam, built in 1904 to power historic street car lines. The rich history of this area is evident in multiple sites of historical significance, including Gwinnett County Fish Weir, Ivy Mill, Slope Creek Ruins and Standing Peachtree Park.

The physical geology is dramatically expressed by 9 notable shoal complexes, such as Jones Bridge Shoals, that are enjoyed by the public throughout the seasons. This reach of the River is most controlled and impacted by the dam release schedules from Lake Lanier, and the water released from Lake Lanier results in modified hydrologic flows and lower-

than average water temperatures. Dam releases are controlled by the Army Corps of Engineers, and release cool water from the lower depths of the reservoir. They support a cold-water fishery of rainbow and brown trout that are not native to the region but are a highly popular recreational draw for the River and support a strong fishing economy in this reach.

Demographics analysis reveals that Sub-Area 1 has a relatively high population density which is anticipated to increase even more in the years to come. Residents are predominantly White with pockets of Asian and Hispanic communities. The area has both low poverty and a low unemployment rates; its population has high educational attainment (bachelor's degree or higher) and has the highest median household income within the project area. Environmental Justice Target Areas are found along the GA-400 corridor and east of the Holcomb Bridge Road corridor. Since 1990, the area has become more ethnically and racially diverse and home to an aging population.

The area benefits from numerous water access points and connections to a well-established network of trails and multi-use paths. However, the CRNRA Park units are disjointed. There is a great opportunity to link the existing CRNRA Park units in Sub-Area 1 into a continuous greenway culminating in a more cohesive single National Park system.

## SUB-AREA 2

Sub-Area 2 starts at Peachtree Creek to the north and runs along the River to SR 154 / Campbellton Rd / Fairburn Rd to the south. It is approximately 19 miles in length. This segment of River runs through the western edge of the City of Atlanta and through vast tracks of industrial land on the Fulton County side. In this segment, there are 8 bridge crossings and 6 tributaries flow into the River.

The River down-stream of Atlanta sees major impacts, including treated waste water and Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO). Most notably, the impaired Proctor and Peachtree Creeks, which both have CSO outfalls. Water quality monitoring in the area has historically found relatively low levels of dissolved oxygen and relatively high levels of fecal coliform, but water quality is improving due to recent city investments in response to Chattahoochee Riverkeepers lawsuit against the City of Atlanta in 1995. No recent instances of low dissolved oxygen within this stretch of River have been documented.

Sub-Area 2 has the highest concentration of Civil War historic sites and structures in the Project Area, for example the Johnston's River Line on the Cobb County side of the River, a series of trenches and Shoupades fortifications built in-part by slave labor and used as a defensive line by the Confederate Army.

Sub-Area 2 has a moderate population density, with a higher population density near Peachtree Creek to the north. The area has the highest Black population. The Proctor Creek and Utoy Creek sub-watersheds are home to a higher number of residents over 65 Years Old.

A demographics analysis reveals a high concentration of vulnerable communities in the area. Social vulnerabilities include higher rates of disability, food deserts, asthma, obesity, cancer and particulate matter. Additional, characteristics such as low median household income, high poverty and unemployment rates, low home ownership rate as well as some environmental justice concerns, define the Sub-Area as an area where social inequalities are persistent. Here, more than anywhere else, the Chattahoochee River Greenway presents an opportunity for inclusive and equitable planning, prioritizing investment, and providing underserved communities with co-benefits.

This Sub-Area is defined by a mostly industrial land use and utility easements which could facilitate greenway alignments along the River's edge. The presence of underserved communities within the Proctor Creek watershed and the I-20 Corridor, and an overall lack of public access to the River, will be a challenge here. The Chattahoochee River Greenway Study should identify areas where environmental justice issues can be actively addressed. Tributaries offer great potential to connect communities to high-quality open space, and utility easements parallel to the River may offer greenway alignment opportunities.

## SUB-AREA 3

Sub-Area 3 starts at SR 154 / Campbellton Rd / Fairburn Rd to the north and down to Chattahoochee Bend State Park to the south. This River segment is approximately 33 miles long. The area is characterized by large tracts of private land, where agriculture and forests are most prevalent. This portion of the River is the least developed with the lowest population density. The number of incorporated areas is also the lowest. It has 7 noted tributaries feeding the Chattahoochee River.

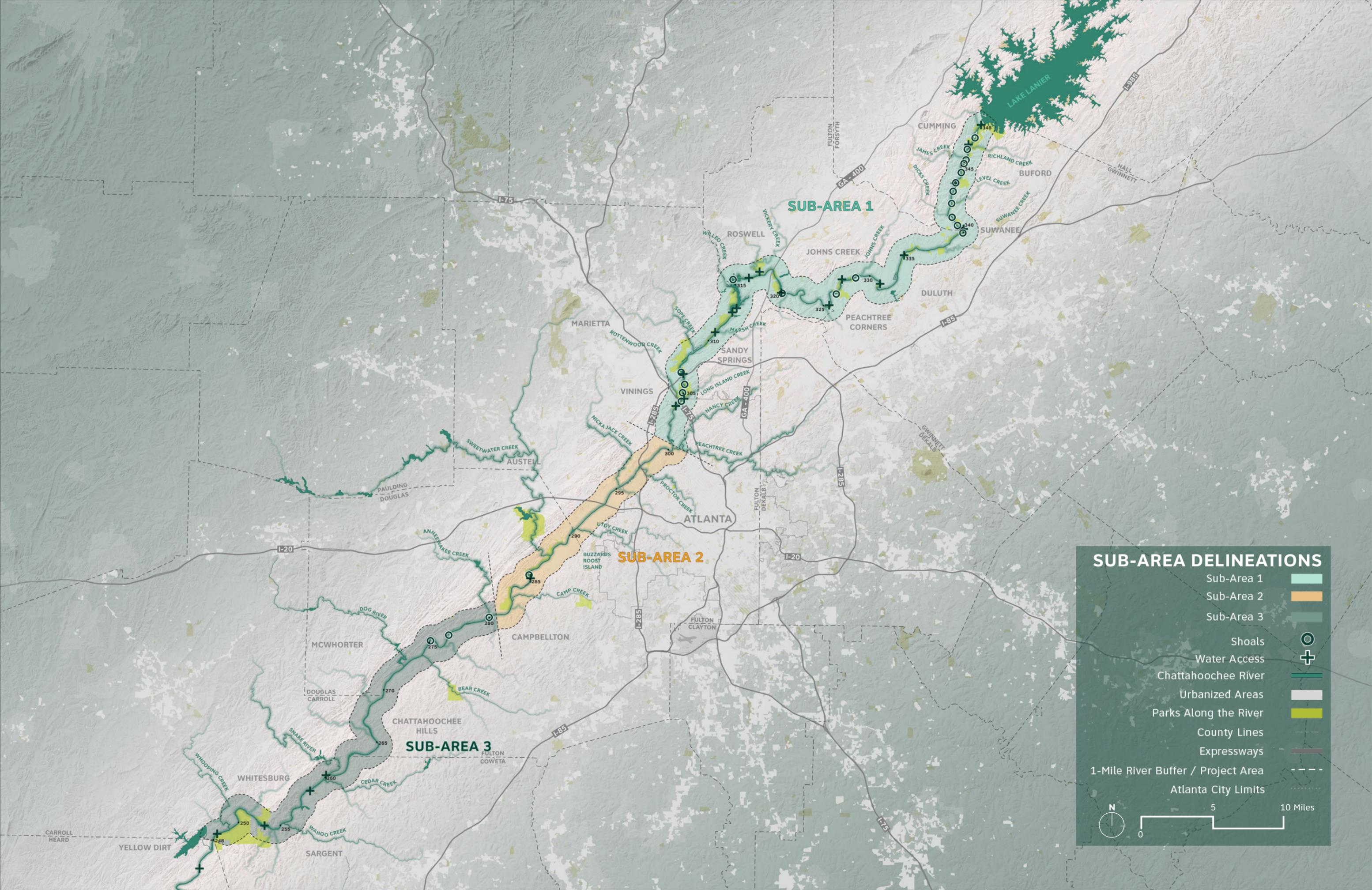
Residents in Sub-Area 3 have a low propensity for walking and biking, few roadway connections, and have access to only 3 bridge crossings. Although Chattahoochee Bend State Park is the largest continuous park space of the study area, there are few public park spaces along the River and only one public access point to the water. Other large parks include McIntosh Reserve and the Roscoe-Dunaway Gardens.

The River has a consistent flow rate which is less impacted by the dam release schedules to the north, and warmer waters than the upper Sub-Areas. Water Quality Monitoring Station at Capps Ferry Road has shown the highest level of Suspended Solids in the corridor. As Sub-Area 3 is downstream of the Metro Atlanta Area, its water quality remains impacted by upstream urbanization, combined sewer outfalls, and Atlanta's water management practices. While water quality has been improving in recent years, this stretch has water quality challenges, and a significant percentage of its flows are composed of treated wastewater.

This area is the most rural of the Sub-Areas. Anticipated challenges to the greenway here include lack of River access, lack of public transit alternatives, poor bicycle and existing regional trail infrastructure, and large tracts of privately-owned land along the River. Another challenge is to preserve the agrarian legacy of the area which has resulted in the preservation of large connective habitat zones. This area also contains some of the healthiest supporting tributaries at Dog River and Sweetwater Creek.

## NEXT STEPS

The Design Team will be establishing Sub-Area Committees (SACs) for each of the three Sub-Areas. Engagement with individual Sub-Area Committees will set expectations for the Greenway Plan, generate useful ideas and concepts that impact the design and provide advice for future outreach efforts. The SACs will include municipal representatives, technical experts and community activists that are intimately familiar with the region. Working with each SAC, the Design Team will develop numerous "narrative themes" which highlight opportunities, constraints, vulnerabilities, and limitations that are specific to each Sub-Area of the project. This will begin to inform a unique design approach for the Chattahoochee River Greenway Study that is specifically tailored to the challenges within each Sub-Area.



### SUB-AREA DELINEATIONS

- Sub-Area 1
- Sub-Area 2
- Sub-Area 3
- Shoals o
- Water Access +
- Chattahoochee River
- Urbanized Areas
- Parks Along the River
- County Lines
- Expressways
- 1-Mile River Buffer / Project Area
- Atlanta City Limits

N

0 5 10 Miles

