

**City of Lithonia, Georgia
2010 - 2026 Comprehensive Plan**

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



“Views of the Past Helping to Create a Vision for the Future”

Prepared by the City of Lithonia Redevelopment Committee

September 2010

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

This report establishes the framework for the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Lithonia (City) for the period 2010 – 2026.¹ It provides an overview of the issues and opportunities the City anticipates will impact the future growth of the community. The analysis of the report includes a review of existing conditions, land use patterns, public policies, and projected improvements. The report is prepared by the City of Lithonia Redevelopment Committee (LRC), a committee established with elected officials, citizens, key stakeholders, and volunteers.

The report is designed to meet the requirements of the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in 2005. Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan will help the City meet the requirements of a Qualified Local Government.

B. Scope

Consistent with the DCA standards, the report includes the following components:

- Section 2: List of issues and opportunities to be addressed by the community;
- Section 3: Analysis of existing development patterns;
- Section 4: Evaluation of existing policies, actions, and development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives (QCO); and
- Section 5: Analysis of supportive data and information.

This report is written in manner that easily allows the citizens and decision-makers to review the main elements and findings of the planning effort. The supporting data and information is included as the Data Appendix.

C. Methodology and Schedule

This Community Assessment is the result of a review of policies, plans, regulations, and development patterns by decision-makers and community representatives. The study area for the assessment is the incorporated area of the City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, Georgia. The City is part of the metro Atlanta area and is located 18 miles southeast of downtown Atlanta. It consists of approximately 517 acres. The map listed in Figure 1 shows the location of the community based on the 2000 U.S. Census Data. (Two additional parcels of 17 and 24 acres annexed into the City in 2002 and 2007, respectively, are not reflected on the map).

¹ The City of Lithonia missed the original deadline of submitting its Comprehensive Plan in 2006. The period covered by this report is intended to place the city on track for the required updates as determined by the Department of Community Affairs.

Figure 1. City of Lithonia Boundaries

Source: 2000 U.S. Census Data



The Community Assessment is a major step in the development of the City of Lithonia's Comprehensive Plan. As required by DCA's guidelines, this report and the Community Participation Program will be submitted to the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) for review prior to submission to DCA.

During the time that the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program are being reviewed and approved by DCA, the City will continue to work through its Redevelopment Committee with the community and key stakeholders on the Community Agenda. The focus will be to maintain the momentum that has been established during the preparation of the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program. The Community Agenda is the fundamental component of the Comprehensive Plan. The Community Agenda will be based on the community's vision for the future and the key issues and opportunities it plans to address. Most importantly, the Community Agenda will include an implementation program to achieve the community vision and address the agreed upon issues and opportunities.

SECTION 2. IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following issues and opportunities were compiled after a review by decision-makers, community representatives, and other stakeholders of the Quality Community Objectives, city policies, and prior city plans. These issues and opportunities will be further evaluated during the development of the Community Agenda. The issues and opportunities are organized as topics based on the DCA Local Planning Requirements, and include the additional feature “Quality of Life” in order to provide a more holistic approach to community development planning. The assessment topics are:

- A. Population
- B. Economic Development
- C. Housing
- D. Natural and Cultural Resources
- E. Community Facilities and Services
- F. Transportation
- G. Intergovernmental Coordination
- H. Land Use
- I. Quality of Life

A. Population

Issues

1. Population has been declining over the past 20 years within the city limits.
2. Levels of per capita income increased but remain low compared to the surrounding areas of DeKalb County.
3. Groups between 0-13 and 45-54 years of age show an increase in numbers.
4. The white population within the city has continued to decline.
5. Persons of Hispanic origin have slightly increased; the category of other races has also grown.

Opportunities

1. Room for population growth to reverse the decline.
2. New racial diversity within the city presents an opportunity to enhance the cultural richness of the area.
3. Develop services for the growing age groups of 0-13 and 45-54.

B. Economic Development

Issues

1. Need for a Downtown Development Authority to promote business development.
2. Need for more shops and restaurants to complement existing Main Street businesses.
3. Need for a stronger collection of high-quality businesses to reinforce the downtown area.
4. City's tax base is small and needs to be expanded.
5. Need for small business assistance and entrepreneur training.
6. Need for more high-wage jobs within the city.
7. Need for workforce training and continuing education opportunities.
8. Need for enhanced collaboration with area educational institutions such as DeKalb Technical College.

Opportunities

1. Re-establishment of the Downtown Development Authority to assist with the attraction of additional shops and restaurants to Main Street and the commercial core to help increase the city's tax base.
2. City's close proximity to the Mall at Stonecrest presents an opportunity for economic development.
3. Expand city's tax base by pursuing annexation options.
4. Develop partnership with DeKalb County Workforce Development and other entities to provide job-training opportunities.
5. Develop partnership with appropriate entities to provide entrepreneurship training and small business development.
6. Develop partnership with local businesses and business associations to expand employment opportunities.
7. Explore development of Business Improvement District (BID) and/or Community Improvement District (CID).

C. Housing

Issues

1. Displacement of existing residents if a housing policy is not pursued that recognizes the various levels of affordability.
2. Majority of the houses are renter-occupied rather than owner-occupied.
3. More housing choices are needed in the downtown area that includes lofts, townhomes, and single family.
4. There is a perception that an over concentration of public housing exists in the city.
5. Lack of code enforcement to address abandoned and vacant properties.

Opportunities

1. Given the growing number of houses in foreclosure, there is an opportunity to explore new homeownership initiatives.
2. Diverse homeownership opportunities need to be explored for existing residents and potential residents.
3. Provide more housing options for downtown living.
4. Proposed office developments around the Mall at Stonecrest potentially provide a base for housing developments within the city.
5. Improve enforcement of city ordinances to address abandoned, dilapidated and vacant properties.
6. Redevelop public housing units to blend with the existing housing styles within the city.

D. Natural and Cultural Resources

Issues

1. “Urban Renewal” programs of the past resulted in the loss of many historic resources.
2. Lack of an inventory of the natural resources affects the city’s ability to develop appropriate measures to preserve and protect them.
3. A capital improvement plan to improve the facilities of the Stewart Amphitheater and other historic facilities is not in place.
4. No specific ordinances are in place to preserve historic structures.
5. Community involvement to preserve historic structures is limited.
6. Lack of youth programs related to historic preservation.

Opportunities

1. Develop an inventory of the city’s natural and historic resources and to educate the community about its importance.
2. Enact necessary ordinances to preserve and promote historic buildings and sites.
3. Complete the application for designation to the National Register of Historic Places.
4. Develop youth programs to increase understanding of the importance of historic preservation.
5. Preserve undeveloped areas and to increase walking trails.
6. Make improvements to the Stewart Amphitheater to expand it as a venue to provide cultural and arts entertainment.
7. Utilize the city’s history of granite quarries and promote “heritage tourism”.
8. Develop community groups to provide cultural and historic tours of the city.
9. Expand the greenway trail system to take advantage of the city’s proximity to the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Preserve area.
10. Take steps to preserve and enhance the “small town” character of the city.
11. Restore the Bruce Street School and preserve other historic buildings and sites.

E. Community Facilities and Services

Issues

1. A network of sidewalk connectivity is missing in many areas of the city.
2. Limited bicycle and walking paths.
3. Lack of any organized cultural and arts activities for the community.
4. Maintenance of community facilities such as the city parks and amphitheater is substandard.
5. Lack of coordination with DeKalb County to provide recreational and other activities for the city's youth.

Opportunities

1. Increase connectivity of sidewalk network, particularly in areas near the middle school, recreation center, and the city parks.
2. Work with the PATH Foundation to expand bicycle and walking paths.
3. Organize cultural, recreational and arts activities for the community.
4. Improve maintenance of the city parks and amphitheater.
5. Improve coordination with DeKalb County and other partners to provide recreational and other activities.

F. Transportation

Issues

1. Pedestrian linkages from Main Street to community facilities such as the Lithonia City Park and the Stewart Amphitheater are needed.
2. Limited directional signage from and to Interstate 20 to the Main Street retail area.
3. The bypassing of traffic from Main Street due to the Evans Mills interchange to Lithonia Industrial Boulevard.
4. Limited pedestrian accessibility of sidewalks and crosswalks.
5. CSX railroad cuts through the center of the city and often blocks Main Street traffic for extended periods of time.

Opportunities

1. Improve pedestrian linkages from Main Street to the various community facilities.
2. Improve signage at all gateways into the city.
3. Improve signage to the city on Interstate 20.
4. Enhance pedestrian accessibility through sidewalks and crosswalks at key areas.
5. Develop partnership with CSX railroad to improve circulation options.
6. Develop partnership with MARTA to expand service options.
7. Encourage use of bicycles and other alternative means of transportation.

G. Intergovernmental Coordination

Issues

1. Limited coordination between city and county on planning issues.
2. Limited coordination between city and county on public safety issues.
3. Limited coordination between DeKalb County cities on issues of mutual concern and interest.

Opportunities

1. Improve coordination and cooperation between city and county on planning issues.
2. Improve coordination and cooperation between city and county on public safety issues.
3. Improve coordination and cooperation between DeKalb County cities on issues of mutual concern and interest.

H. Land Use

Issues

1. Limited housing options for downtown living.
2. Need to enhance the character and quality of development along Main Street.
3. Need to redevelop the Lithonia Plaza to support mixed-use development.
4. Lack of a town center in the city.

Opportunities

1. Improve housing options for downtown living through the redevelopment of the Lithonia Plaza.
2. Develop a plan for a town center and/or town green area.
3. Implement design standards to improve the quality and appearance of buildings along Main Street.
4. Develop a façade improvement program to enhance buildings on Main Street.

I. Quality of Life

Issues

1. Limited walking and bicycling trails.
2. Lack of connectivity of sidewalks from neighborhoods to community facilities.
3. Limited recreational facilities for children, teens, young adults and seniors.
4. Improvement of existing supermarket in terms of food choices, prices, and cleanliness.
5. Need for access to fresh produce.
6. Need to address issues of homelessness and mental health.
7. Need to address drug use and youth delinquency.
8. More alternative education choices.

Opportunities

1. Promote use of the walking and bicycling trails to improve health and reduce obesity.
2. Obtain funding to develop connectivity of sidewalks.
3. Collaborate with DeKalb County and other partners to expand recreational activities and improve facilities.
4. Partner with agencies to develop a youth baseball, soccer and tennis complex.
5. Work with supermarket management to improve quality of food choices, pricing and cleanliness of premises.
6. Support development of community gardens and farmer's market to increase access to fresh produce.
7. Partner with agencies addressing homelessness, mental health, and other health issues.
8. Partner with agencies addressing drug use and youth delinquency.
9. Partner with agencies to support alternative education choices.

SECTION 3. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS²

A. Existing Land Uses

An inventory of the existing land uses within the City of Lithonia was assessed during the planning process of the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study conducted in 2003. The land use data was collected through a series of windshield surveys and reviewed by elected officials and key stakeholders.

The land area of the city is approximately 517 acres and is divided into 620 parcels.³ Based on the survey, 39% of the total land area is residential consisting of single-family lots, duplexes owned by the Lithonia Housing Authority, some multi-family developments and a mobile home property. The next largest land use in the area is vacant land. Several of the vacant parcels contain granite beds which may make them difficult to develop.

The City of Lithonia has a commercial core at its center along the major arterials of Main Street and Max Cleland Boulevard. The commercial core comprises 6% of the total land area and includes retail/commercial properties such as the Wayfield Foods supermarket, several automotive services, City Hall and Lithonia Police Department. There are several small retail and service storefronts along Main Street. However, many of the Main Street store fronts are currently vacant. Several houses along Main Street, outside of the downtown core, have been converted from residential to office use. About 9% of the land area comprises institutional properties and includes several historic faith-based institutions, the Lithonia Middle School, post office, and the Bruce Street Recreation Center. Open space facilities include the Stewart Amphitheater, Lithonia Park, and the Bruce Street Park. Details of the land uses are contained in Table 1 below.

² The data in this section is based on information from the 2003 LCI Study prepared for the City of Lithonia by Urban Collage in collaboration with URS Corp. and Robert Charles Lesser & Co.

³ The percentages of the existing land uses do not include the additional parcel consisting of 24 acres that was annexed into the city in 2007 that will be developed as a mixed-use project including multi-family units, retail and office space, and a hotel.

Table 1. Existing Land Uses

LAND USE	NUMBER OF PARCELS	ACREAGE	PERCENTAGE OF LAND USE
Single Family	367	152	29%
Duplex	34	16.8	3%
Mobile Homes	1	5.8	1%
Multi-Family	18	31.8	6%
Commercial	38	30.7	6%
Industrial	14	19.2	4%
Institutional	21	46.2	9%
Office	7	2.6	1%
Open Space	8	27.6	5%
Surface Parking	2	.8	0%
Vacant Land	110	183.3	36%
Total	620	516.8	100%

Prior to the completion of the LCI Study in 2003, the City of Lithonia had not undertaken a major revision of its zoning ordinance for several decades. As a result there were a number of deficiencies related to the best practices of smart growth development. Figure 1 below delineates the different land use categories.

The following is a general description of the land uses that were in place:

Single Family – Category of land dedicated to residential use for single-family dwelling units.

Duplex – Category of land dedicated to residential use for two attached single-family dwelling units. This category primarily consists of public housing units maintained by the Lithonia Housing Authority.

Mobile Homes – Category of land dedicated to residential use for manufactured homes; usually single-family dwellings.

Multi-Family – Category of land dedicated to residential use containing three or more dwelling units that are typically rented rather than owner-occupied.

Commercial - Category of land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service, and entertainment facilities.

Industrial- Category of land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing or other similar uses such a bakery, bottling works, clothing manufacturing, cabinet making, laundry, optical goods, printing and publishing.

Institutional/Public - Category includes certain federal, state, county or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses includes city halls and government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, post offices, schools, prisons, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include college campuses, hospitals, churches, and cemeteries. This category does not include facilities that are publicly owned, but are classified in another land use category such as publicly owned parks.

Office – Category of land that has buildings being used for professional services such as accounting, tutoring services, and non-profit organizations.

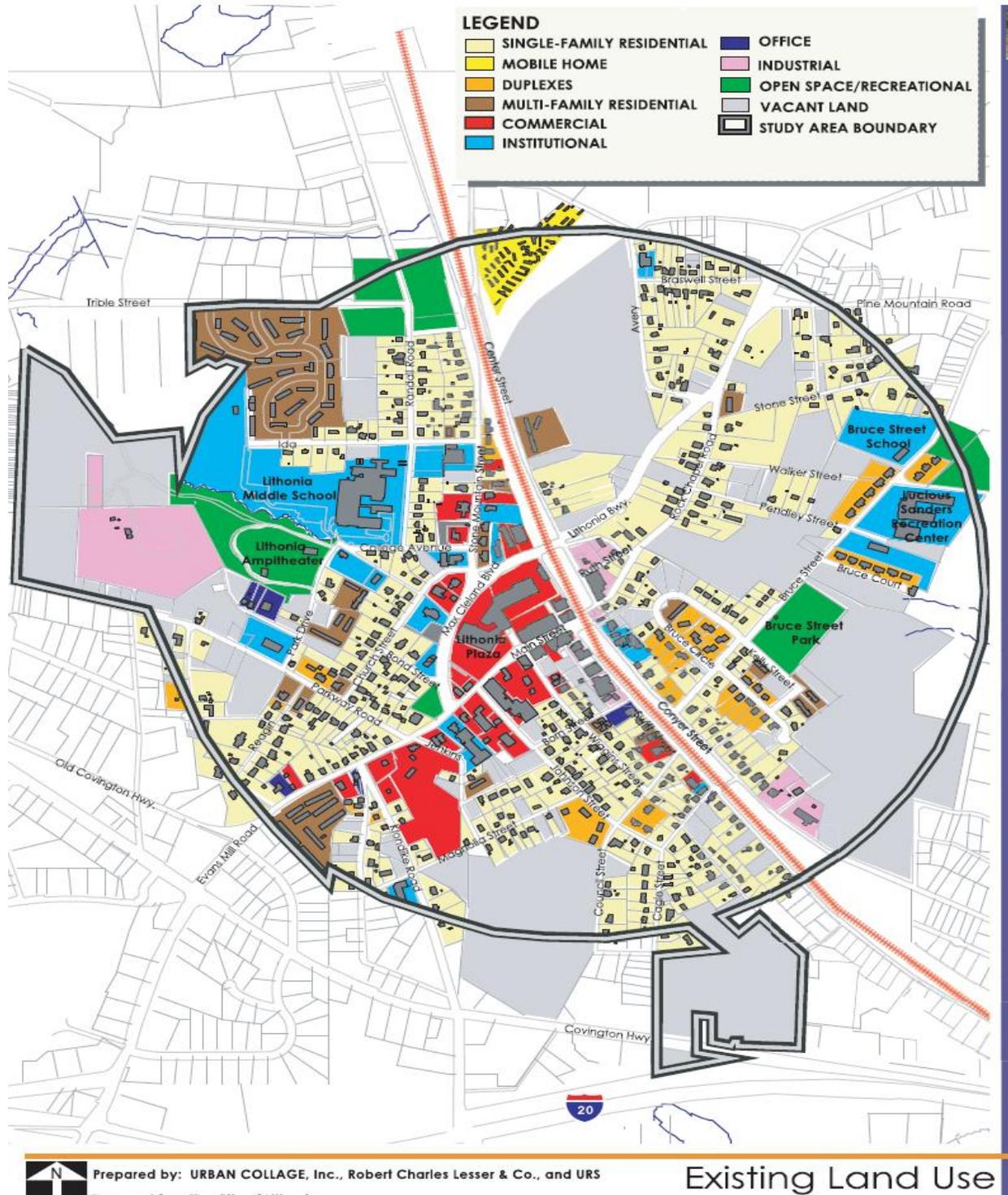
Open Space/Recreation - Category of land dedicated to active or passive recreational use. The areas have public or private ownership and include public parks, playgrounds, recreation centers or similar uses.

Surface Parking – Category of land primarily located in the downtown area of the city dedicated to parking for the businesses located in the plaza.

Vacant Land – Category of land that has not been developed for a specific use or was developed for a specific use that is no longer applicable, e.g. landfill and reservoir.

After examining the existing land uses, a number of recommendations were made in the LCI Study that included the development of a Framework Plan. The Framework Plan resulted from a series of community forums, meetings with elected officials and other key stakeholders. The city did undertake a major revision of the land uses through the adoption of new zoning ordinances in 2005-2006. The Framework Plan provides a basis to establish the character areas and is described in the section on Recommended Character Areas.

Figure 2. Existing Land Uses



B. Areas Requiring Special Attention

The Department of Community Affairs has requested that local governments examine land use patterns and trends within the community to identify areas that may require special attention. The characteristics of such areas include:

- Areas of significant natural or cultural resources, particularly where these are likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development;
- Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur;
- Areas where the pace of development has and/or may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation;
- Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness (including strip commercial corridors);
- Large abandoned structures or sites, including those that may be environmentally contaminated;
- Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites); and
- Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole.

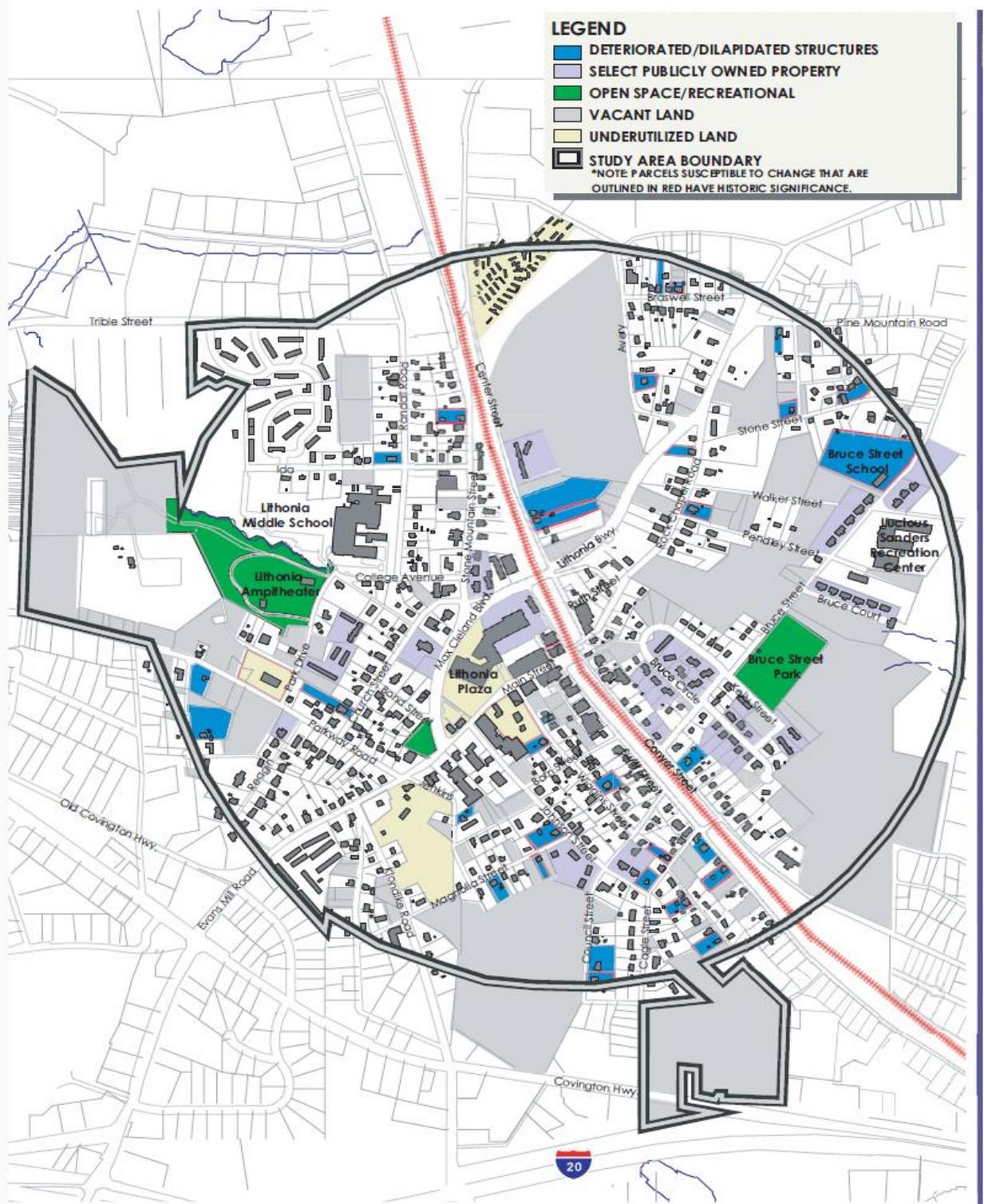
The areas that require special attention may also be described as areas that are susceptible to change. Generally, there are five types of parcels that are susceptible to change:

1. Vacant land
2. Open space/recreational
3. Select publicly owned property
4. Deteriorated/dilapidated structures
5. Underutilized land

Figure 2 identifies some of these areas within the City of Lithonia. Identification on the map is recognition that the property may be likely to change in the future when faced with market pressure. The map provides a tool to help the community in targeting planning and development efforts.

Many of the large tracts of vacant land are surrounded by single-family residences. In some cases, these areas are difficult to access due to topographic challenges, and limited frontage on public roads. Several underutilized properties were identified that have an abundance of surface parking and/or undeveloped land surrounding the existing structure, specifically along Main Street and the downtown plaza area.

Figure 3. Areas Requiring Special Attention



Prepared by: URBAN COLLAGE, Inc., Robert Charles Lesser & Co., and URS
 Prepared for: The City of Lithonia

Susceptibility to Change

C. Recommended Character Areas

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) defines a Character Area as a “specific geographic area within the community that:

- Has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced (such as a downtown, a historic district, a neighborhood, or a transportation corridor);
- Has potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance of future development through adequate planning and implementation (such as a strip commercial corridor that could be revitalized into a more attractive village development pattern); or
- Requires special attention due to unique development issues (rapid change of development patterns, economic decline, etc.).

DCA regulations further provide that “each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more detailed, small-area planning and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the community vision.”

In 2003, the Lithonia community and key stakeholders actively participated in numerous forums to articulate their vision for revitalizing the City and downtown area. This process resulted in the development of a Framework Plan which highlighted key projects that could be developed to rehabilitate and preserve housing units as well as construct new ones; to have mixed-use development to increase living options and support the downtown commercial base; to support civic capacity building; and to support public infrastructure improvements.

The initiatives identified in the Framework Plan are based on the following key concepts for revitalizing and improving the City of Lithonia and the downtown area:

- Develop various housing options in downtown that are compatible with the existing character of Lithonia and that target families and empty nesters;
- Encourage architectural preservation and design elements that are compatible with the existing Lithonia historical character;
- Create a sense of place or focal point in downtown that serves as a gathering place for the community;
- Focus on downtown retail redevelopment along Main Street that is unique in character from surrounding retail.

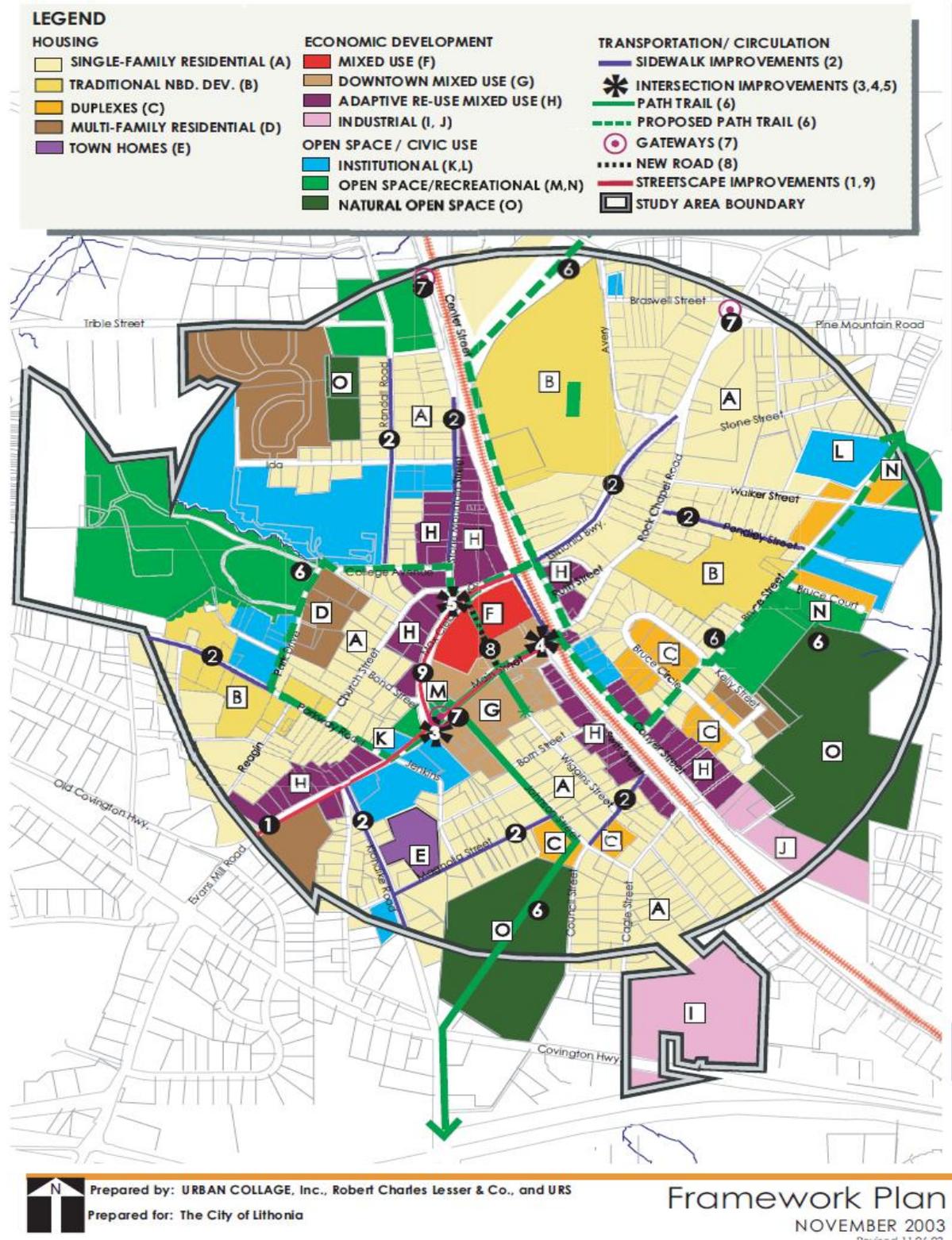
Although the initiatives contained in the Framework Plan were first identified in 2003, there has been scant attention given to any efforts to implement them to date. However, the process of developing the Community Agenda as part of the comprehensive planning effort will provide the opportunity to revisit the initiatives to determine if they are still relevant or need to be modified in light of new conditions.

To maintain consistency with the DCA requirements, the components of Lithonia's Framework Plan will be referred to as Character Areas for the remainder of this report. The Character Areas are divided into the following initiatives:

- Housing
- Economic Development
- Open Space and Civic Use
- Transportation and Circulation

The following Character Areas Map outlines each area with a letter or number. The next section provides a description of each initiative. During the preparation of the Community Agenda, the preliminary recommendations and strategies will be evaluated for each initiative.

Figure 4. Character Areas



I. HOUSING INITIATIVES (A – E)

CHARACTER AREA – TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

A. Single-Family Preservation/Restoration/Infill

The majority of the houses in Lithonia are comprised of single-family residential neighborhoods with historic building elements and styles that are the foundation of the historical character of Lithonia. Throughout these residential areas are older residences that should be preserved and restored in a fashion that is compatible with the existing historic character. There are also opportunities to construct new single-family homes on existing vacant properties with similar architectural character.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Preserve existing single-family homes;
- ❖ Encourage restoration of aging homes with historic character;
- ❖ Promote new single-family residential development with historic character.

B. Traditional Neighborhood Development (T.N.D.)

Large undeveloped vacant properties along Center Street, Parkway Road and Bruce Street have been at the center of discussion regarding their feasibility for potential development sites. Since these areas are surrounded by single family housing, and as the demand for housing increases in Lithonia, these sites should be developed to expand the housing market.

The traditional neighborhood development would consist of single-family homes on small lots (less than 1/4 acre each). Often referred to as cluster homes, this development type attracts young couples and empty nesters looking for low maintenance, detached single-family homes. The entire neighborhood would be within easy walking distance of downtown businesses, creating a captured market for new retail.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Develop new single-family homes on 1/4 acre or less lots;
- ❖ Develop new design standards to encourage higher quality development incorporating some historic design elements;
- ❖ Reduce setbacks and promote small pocket parks;
- ❖ Interconnect road network with sidewalks;
- ❖ Discourage gated communities.

C. Modernize Public Housing

The Lithonia Housing Authority is one of the major property owners in the City with approximately 175 housing units of which 75 are public housing. The public housing consists of one-story brick structures scattered throughout Lithonia and are in relatively standard condition. The existing facades are in need of architectural enhancements and modernization such as roof pitches, porches, and windows that are compatible with the existing single-family housing. In addition to façade improvements, the properties require additional lighting and landscaping, particularly at the property on Johnson Street, which is along the route of the new multi-purpose greenway trail developed by PATH and the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Preserve.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Create façade improvements to existing Lithonia public housing units that incorporate design elements of existing residential homes;
- ❖ Incorporate new lighting and greenspace and landscape enhancements.



Lithonia Housing Authority Property - Existing & Proposed

D. Senior Housing and Center

While single-family residential development is in demand in the downtown area, a need to develop housing options for seniors has been identified. A 45-unit multi-family housing development of the Lithonia Housing Authority has been redeveloped as a 90-unit tax credit project for low- to moderate-income families. A number of the units have been reserved for seniors. An added feature to the development is its close proximity to the Lithonia Park and Stewart Amphitheater and the Lithonia Middle School. The Senior Center on Bruce Street operated by DeKalb County needs some upgrading of the facility.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Renovate existing public housing and infill where appropriate into a new mixed-income senior housing facility in proximity to community facilities;
- ❖ Incorporate a small senior center for inter-generational activities;
- ❖ Work with DeKalb County to make improvements to the existing Senior Center on Bruce Street and improve connectivity to other community facilities.

E. Townhouse Development

As the demand for new housing in Lithonia increases, the construction of two-story townhouses is proposed. This development would provide a new housing type to the downtown area marketable to young couples and empty nesters looking for low maintenance residences. These townhomes should be designed with a historical character that is complementary to the architectural style of the surrounding residences.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Develop new townhomes with high quality design elements compatible with existing single-family homes.

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES (F – L)

CHARACTER AREA – TOWN CENTER

F. Lithonia Plaza Mixed Use

The Lithonia Plaza is located in the heart of downtown Lithonia and currently houses the Wayfield Foods grocery store and several retail stores. A portion of the structure is owned by the City of Lithonia. This 1970's structure should be redeveloped in order to restore the Lithonia retail core into the thriving activity center that it once was. Situated adjacent to existing Main Street businesses, this site is a prime location to expand the housing market in the downtown area. As the demand for housing increases in the downtown area, this site should be more fully developed to support the new and existing retail.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Demolition of Lithonia Plaza (in phases);
- ❖ Two to three-story live/work townhome development that fronts Max Cleland with interior surface parking;
- ❖ Commercial and Retail/Grocery reoriented to face Max Cleland Boulevard;

- ❖ Incorporate historic design standards that are compatible with Main Street design elements;
- ❖ Develop new retail and mixed-use extended along the Main Street corridor.

CHARACTER AREA – DOWNTOWN

G. Downtown Lithonia Mixed Use

With enhancements to the existing two-story historic structures along Main Street, the character of the heart of downtown Lithonia should consist of a multi-story mixed-use environment containing retail space on the ground floor with large storefront windows and office space and/or lofts on upper floors. A Main Street Overlay District has been created to facilitate mixed-used development.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Encourage two-story infill development with compatible historic character;
- ❖ Encourage historic façade restorations and improvements of existing buildings;
- ❖ Promote ground floor retail establishments, pulled up to the street with storefront windows;
- ❖ Encourage a mix of office and loft development on the second floors.



Main Street - Existing & Proposed

CHARACTER AREA – NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

H. Adaptive Re-use Projects (Mixed-Use)

Due to the current limited demand for new retail in the downtown area, some steps should be taken to improve the character of existing and underutilized structures particularly along the southern end of Main Street, Max Cleland Boulevard, Stone Mountain Street and along the railroad on Swift and Center Streets.

Along Main Street, existing single-family homes are being converted into offices (particularly for lawyers, accountants, and real estate agents). As the demand for service-oriented retail increases in the long term, this type of conversion should also be considered for existing properties along Max Cleland Boulevard, Stone Mountain Street and along the railroad corridor, to concentrate the focus of commercial development on Main Street.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Preserve existing structures with historical significance along the railroad, Main Street and Stone Mountain Street;
- ❖ Convert existing structures into office, service, and housing;
- ❖ Discourage retail facilities in this area.

CHARACTER AREA – LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

I. Light Industrial

An undeveloped 17 acre parcel north of Covington Highway and south of an established single-family neighborhood was annexed into the city and currently houses a billboard. Due to its proximity to Covington Highway, this site is proposed for light industrial/ commercial development that is non-threatening to the surrounding residential community.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Promote development of new light industry/commercial businesses;
- ❖ Explore opportunity for creation of green/clean industries;
- ❖ Improve curb appeal/gateway into the downtown area from Covington Highway with site development and façade standards such as brick, landscaping, fencing, etc.;
- ❖ Adopt ordinance regulating billboards.

J. Light Industrial Expansion

Conyers Street currently contains several industrial properties that at one time benefited from the railroad. There is an adjacent vacant property that could be developed for industrial use that contributes to the tax rolls and as an employment generator for the city.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Encourage expansion of small light industries, particularly green/clean industries;
- ❖ Identify businesses that would benefit from and/or complement the CSX Railroad;
- ❖ Improve curb appeal/gateway into the downtown area with site development and façade standards such as brick, landscaping, fencing, etc.

III. OPEN SPACE AND CIVIC USE INITIATIVES (K – O)

CHARACTER AREA – CIVIC USE AND HISTORIC AREA

K. Lithonia Cultural Center

A facility is needed to help promote and preserve the rich historical and cultural diversity within the community. Several years ago there were discussions about converting the “Seminary”, established in 1895 and centrally located at Main Street and Max Cleland Boulevard, into such a facility. Presently, the building is used for professional office space.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Create a cultural/ historical center serving as a community focal point;
- ❖ Establish a green, public gathering space.

L. Bruce Street Community Facility

The Bruce Street School was the first African-American school in DeKalb County. The structure’s interior and roof have deteriorated. There have been several unsuccessful attempts by local community groups to purchase and refurbish the building. To build upon the rich history of the school, the remaining façade should be preserved and developed into a facility that can be utilized by the community.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Preserve the Bruce Street School façade and construct new community facility;
- ❖ Incorporate a historical center or museum;
- ❖ Provide community rooms for meetings, civic uses and training.

M. Town Square

The city currently lacks an attractive focal point and a “sense of place”. The development of a town square is widely supported by the community. There is interest in having the town square include a new City Hall and community facility, as well as a plaza for outdoor gatherings and community festivals.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Develop a formal town square for organized outdoor civic activities;
- ❖ Incorporate the potential greenway trail;
- ❖ Maintain easy walking distance to downtown goods and services.

CHARACTER AREA – CONSERVATION AREA AND GREENSPACE

N. Park Expansion

The City of Lithonia has several active recreational facilities within the city limits but more facilities are warranted to provide options for additional youth activities. There are vacant parcels adjacent to the Bruce Street Park and the Lucious Sanders Recreation Center that should be developed for additional programmed open space.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Maintain and expand the Bruce Street Park and Lithonia City Park to include new play equipment and youth activities;
- ❖ Support the development of informal trail heads into adjacent natural areas.

O. Natural Open Space

Several large undeveloped parcels contain granite rock that was not quarried during Lithonia’s industrial growth. A parcel located behind the Bruce Street Park is an abandoned city landfill. Due to unknown conditions, proximity to existing single-family housing and the likelihood of granite rock limiting development, these sites should be preserved in their natural state as open spaces.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Preserve existing undeveloped area for natural open space;
- ❖ Promote informal walking trails/nature areas;
- ❖ Develop connections to the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Preserve area;
- ❖ Conduct environmental study of abandoned landfill for feasibility of future development.

IV. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION INITIATIVES (1 – 7)

The following initiatives do not specifically constitute Character Areas but are part of the component strategies needed for the development of the City of Lithonia.

1. Main Street Improvements

Streetscape improvements for Main Street in downtown Lithonia were divided into two phases. Phase I focused on improvements to the Main Street corridor starting at the intersection of Max Cleland Boulevard and Main Street. The project included on-street parking as well as landscaping to beautify the area and was completed in 2005. Phase II of the improvements running from Covington Highway along Main Street to the intersection of Max Cleland Boulevard started in Fall 2009 and will be completed by Spring 2010.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Enhance the entry to downtown with a tree-lined streetscape extending south on Main Street from Max Cleland Boulevard to the city limits;
- ❖ Improve sidewalks for pedestrian access to downtown.

2. New/Repaired Sidewalks

There is not a consistent network of pedestrian facilities within the city. Several streets within the city do not have pedestrian sidewalks and there is a lack of pedestrian connectivity from local neighborhoods to Lithonia Middle School, the Lithonia City Park and Stewart Amphitheater, and to downtown district.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Construct new neighborhood sidewalks in several key locations, particularly in ways that connect residential areas to parks and downtown.

3. Main Street/Max Cleland Boulevard/Parkway Drive Intersection Improvements

Some intersection improvements have been made for left turns from Main Street onto Max Cleland Boulevard. Improvements are needed at Parkway Drive due to limited visibility of vehicles turning onto Main Street from Max Cleland Boulevard. Additional improvements are needed, particularly on Max Cleland Boulevard, for pedestrian signalization or crosswalks.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Improve safety/visibility at Parkway Road;
- ❖ Improve vehicular and pedestrian coordination (potential traffic signal);
- ❖ Install pedestrian crosswalks and pedestrian signalization.

4. Railroad Crossing Improvements

The railroad corridor divides the City of Lithonia into two quadrants and railroad traffic is frequent. At the Main Street crossing, pedestrian connections are lacking which makes pedestrian utilization of the area difficult and unsafe. There have been several accidents with two fatalities in the past.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Improve pedestrian and vehicular connection to Rock Chapel Road;
- ❖ Explore the installation of crossing arms at Main Street;
- ❖ Enhance the image of the railroad corridor.

5. Max Cleland Boulevard/ Stone Mountain Street Improvements

The City of Lithonia is an active pedestrian community but there are insufficient pedestrian facilities at this and other key locations.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Provide adequate pedestrian crosswalks and links across Max Cleland Boulevard to the downtown area;
- ❖ Introduce traffic calming measures;
- ❖ Build upon additional planned connections through downtown;
- ❖ Enhance areas as focal points of Lithonia through pedestrian walkways and identifying markers.

6. Downtown Greenway Trails

The PATH Foundation, in partnership with the Arabia Mountain Heritage Alliance, has worked to establish multi-purpose greenway trails extending from Arabia Mountain to the Mall at Stonecrest and into the City of Lithonia. There is community interest in connecting to various places of interest within the city limits including the Lithonia City Park and Stewart Amphitheater, Bruce Street Park, Lucious Sanders Recreation Center, historic Bruce Street School and the African-American Cemetery.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Develop new downtown trail system for pedestrian and bicycle use;
- ❖ Expand upon existing trail connections from Arabia Mountain within the city.

7. Gateways

There are several granite identity markers at key locations to delineate the city limits. However, the markers are low to the ground and very small. Additional locations that require similar focal elements include Stone Mountain Street at the city limits and the Lithonia Byway. An appropriate vertical element for the Main Street and Max Cleland intersection could be a bell or clock tower that is incorporated into the proposed City Hall and town square.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- ❖ Enhance the existing identity markers by raising the level to draw attention;
- ❖ Develop new and/or enhance existing identity markers for downtown on Lithonia Byway and Stone Mountain Street (at city limits).



Gateways - Existing and Proposed

SECTION 4. ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES (QCOs)

A. Background on Quality Community Objectives (QCOs)

In 1999, the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve her unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to her fullest potential. The Office of Planning and Quality Growth created the Quality Community Objectives Assessment to assist local governments in evaluating their progress sustainable and livable communities.

This assessment is meant to give a community an idea of how it is progressing toward reaching these objectives set by DCA, but no community will be judged on progress. The assessment is a tool for use at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process. The questions focus on local ordinances, policies, and organizational strategies intended to create and expand quality growth principles.

This initial assessment is meant to provide an overall view of the community's policies, not an in-depth analysis. There is not any right or wrong answer. The merit of the assessment is based on the continuing discussions regarding future development patterns as the City undergoes the comprehensive planning process.

B. Local Assessment of Quality Community Objectives in the City of Lithonia

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS		
Traditional Neighborhoods		
Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, compact development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.		
Statement	Yes	No
1. If we have a zoning code, it does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district.		X
2. Our community has ordinances in place that allow neo-traditional development “by right” so that developers do not have to go through a long variance process.	X	
3. We have a street tree ordinance that requires new development to plant shade-bearing trees appropriate to our climate.	X	
4. Our community has an organized tree-planting campaign in public areas that will make walking more comfortable in the summer.		X
5. We have a program to keep our public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe.		X
6. Our community maintains its sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose.	X	
7. In some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired.	X	
8. Some of our children can and do walk to school safely.	X	
9. Some of our children can and do bike to school safely.		X
10. Schools are located in or near neighborhoods in our community.	X	

Comments

- The downtown Main Street area has an Overlay District that allows for mixed-use development and is zoned Office, Commercial and Residential (OCR).

- The community will be working with the Boy Scouts of America to plant a tree to commemorate the 100th anniversary of scouting.
- A program is needed to keep the public areas safe and clean.
- Sidewalk maintenance is needed on a consistent basis.
- There is a need for more crosswalks and signage to support pedestrian traffic.
- Very few children currently ride bicycles to school.
- Additional sidewalks are needed in order to increase connectivity.
- More sidewalk ramps are needed to increase accessibility in neighborhoods.
- There are issues related to safety due to perceptions of crime; unleashed dogs, etc.

Infill Development

Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.		
Statement	Yes	No
1. Our community has an inventory of vacant sites and buildings that are available for redevelopment and/or infill development.	X	
2. Our community is actively working to promote brownfield redevelopment.		X
3. Our community is actively working to promote greyfield redevelopment.		X
4. We have areas of our community that are planned for nodal development (compacted near intersections rather than spread along a major road).	N/A	
5. Our community allows small lot development (5,000 square feet or less) for some uses.		X

Comments

- The City is compiling a list of the existing vacant and abandoned houses.
- The opportunity to redevelop the brownfields and greyfields within the City will be explored.
- The minimum lot size for development is 6,000 SF.
- There is interest in working with groups such as Habitat for Humanity to recover vacant houses.

- Recommended that the City partner with the Lithonia Housing Authority to explore housing development opportunities.

Sense of Place

Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.		
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Statement	Yes	No
1. If someone dropped from the sky into our community, he or she would know immediately where he or she was, based on our distinct characteristics.		X
2. We have delineated the areas of our community that are important to our history and heritage, and have taken steps to protect those areas.		X
3. We have ordinances to regulate the aesthetics of development in our highly visible areas.	X	
4. We have ordinances to regulate the size and type of signage in our community.	X	
5. We offer a development guidebook that illustrates the type of new development we want in our community.		X

Comments

- There are insufficient markers to identify the City.
- The City received assistance from Georgia State University students to prepare an application for designation a National Historic District and needs to complete the process.
- Design standards were developed for the Main Street district as part of the LCI Study.
- The sign ordinance should be reviewed to determine if any updates are needed.
- The sign ordinance is not consistently enforced.
- Should review house numbering system on certain streets to ensure consistency and to facilitate public safety responses (e.g. Luther Street).
- Interest in incorporating stone as part of the signage design.
- Consider developing a stone gateway into the city. (There was a stone gateway at some point).

- Interest in having some uniformity in house address markers.

Transportation Alternatives

Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes, and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.		
Statement	Yes	No
1. We have public transportation in our community.	X	
2. We require that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit.		X
3. We have a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations.		X
4. We have a sidewalk ordinance in our community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks.	X	
5. We require that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible.		X
6. We have a plan for bicycle routes through our community.		X
7. We allow commercial and retail development to share parking areas wherever possible.	X	

Comments

- MARTA has 3 bus lines that service the community.
- There is express bus service to downtown Atlanta just outside of the city limits.
- There is a network of sidewalks but greater connectivity is needed.
- The PATH Foundation has proposed extending the current bike/walking trail within the city.
- Suggestion to have distance markers on the main streets to encourage walking.
- Need expressed for more accessibility for walkers and disabled persons.

Regional Identity

Each region should promote and preserve a regional "identity," or regional sense of place, defined in terms of traditional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.
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Statement	Yes	No
1. Our community is characteristic of the region in terms of architectural styles and heritage.	X	
2. Our community is connected to the surrounding region for economic livelihood through businesses that process local agricultural products.		X
3. Our community encourages businesses that create products that draw on our regional heritage (mountain, agricultural, metropolitan, coastal, etc.).		X
4. Our community participates in the Georgia Department of Economic Development's regional tourism partnership.		X
5. Our community promotes tourism opportunities based on the unique characteristics of our region.		X
6. Our community contributes to the region, and draws from the region, as a source of local culture, commerce, entertainment and education.	Partially	

Comments

- The city is located near an industrial park that used to process some local agricultural products; a large part of Lithonia Industrial Park is now vacant.
- The community is interested in having businesses that promote regional heritage (e.g. granite industry).
- The community is interested in taking a more active role in regional tourism to promote its historic characteristics and buildings.
- In the past, the city has hosted several jazz concert series at its amphitheatre that attracted people from throughout the region.
- Need expressed for increased marketing of the city.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Heritage Preservation

The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Statement	Yes	No
1. We have designated historic districts in our community.		X
2. We have an active historic preservation commission.		X
3. We want new development to complement our historic development, and we have ordinances in place to ensure this.		X

Comments

- The city has received assistance from Georgia State University to develop a preliminary application for designation as a historic district on the National Historic Register.
- Suggestion to explore participation in the History Channel's "Save Our History" program to promote awareness of Lithonia's cultural heritage.

Open Space Preservation

New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Compact development ordinances are one way of encouraging this type of open space preservation.

Statement	Yes	No
1. Our community has a green space plan.		X
2. Our community is actively preserving green space, either through direct purchase or by encouraging set-asides in new development.		X
3. We have a local land conservation program, or we work with state or national land conservation programs, to preserve environmentally important areas in our community.		X

4. We have a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity.		X
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Comments:

- The community is interested in developing a green space plan to preserve some of the existing open spaces.
- Community gardens should be developed.

Environmental Protection

Environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

Statement	Yes	No
1. Our community has a comprehensive natural resources inventory.		X
2. We use this resource inventory to steer development away from environmentally sensitive areas.		X
3. We have identified our defining natural resources and taken steps to protect them.		X
4. Our community has passed the necessary “Part V” environmental ordinances, and we enforce them.	Partially	
5. Our community has a tree preservation ordinance which is actively enforced.	Partially	
6. Our community has a tree-replanting ordinance for new development.	X	
7. We are using stormwater best management practices for all new development.	X	
8. We have land use measures that will protect the natural resources in our community (steep slope regulations, floodplain or marsh protection, etc.).		X

Comments

- The city needs to develop an inventory of its natural resources.
- The city has adopted ordinances to address stormwater management, stream buffer protection, illicit discharge, floodplain management, and litter control but needs to do a better job of enforcement and educating the community about the importance of the environmental requirements.
- The city's tree ordinance needs to be better enforced.
- The city is working with a stormwater management company to complete an inventory.
- The community needs to develop land use measures to protect the natural resources such as wetlands.
- The community can take an active part in protecting endangered species in areas surrounding the city.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Growth Preparedness

Each community should identify and put in place the pre-requisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These might include infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities and managing new growth when it occurs.

Statement	Yes	No
1. We have population projections for the next 20 years that we refer to when making infrastructure decisions.		X
2. Our local governments, the local school board, and other decision-making entities use the same population projections.		X
3. Our elected officials understand the land-development process in our community.		X
4. We have reviewed our development regulations and/or zoning code recently, and believe that our ordinances will help us achieve our QCO goals.	Partially	
5. We have a Capital Improvements Program that supports current and future growth.		X

6. We have designated areas of our community where we would like to see growth, and these areas are based on a natural resources inventory of our community.		X
7. We have clearly understandable guidelines for new development.		X
8. We have a citizen-education campaign to allow all interested parties to learn about development processes in our community.		X
9. We have procedures in place that make it easy for the public to stay informed about land use issues, zoning decisions, and proposed new development.		X
10. We have a public-awareness element in our comprehensive planning process.	X	

Comments

- Data is available through the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) about population projections for the region that is used by various decision-making entities.
- A zoning ordinance was adopted in 2005 but should be reviewed to determine what, if any, modifications are needed.
- The city needs to implement a Capital Improvements Program.
- In 2003, the community undertook a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study that outlined plans for future development.
- A review of the LCI 5-Year Action Plan will be part of the comprehensive planning process.
- Outreach to a broad cross-section of the community is being undertaken to increase participation in and awareness of the comprehensive planning process.

Appropriate Businesses

The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, long-term sustainability, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher skill job opportunities.

Statement	Yes	No
1. Our economic development organization has considered our		X

community's strengths, assets and weaknesses, and has created a business development strategy based on them.		
2. Our economic development organization has considered the types of businesses already in our community, and has a plan to recruit businesses and/or industries that will be compatible.		X
3. We recruit firms that provide or create sustainable products.		X
4. We have a diverse jobs base, so that one employer leaving would not cripple our economy.		X

Comments

- The Downtown Development Authority needs to be re-established to help develop a business development strategy; recruit businesses; and work with local commercial property owners.
- The city should work with the Greater Lithonia and DeKalb Chambers of Commerce to promote business development.
- The city should explore opportunities of the DeKalb Enterprise Zone designation.
- The city should explore partnerships to provide tax incentives for the development of green industries and businesses (e.g. solar panels, wind energy).

Employment Options

A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.		
Statement	Yes	No
1. Our economic development program has an entrepreneur support program.		X
2. Our community has jobs for skilled labor.	X	
3. Our community has jobs for unskilled labor.	X	
4. Our community has professional and managerial jobs.	X	

Comments

- There are a few non-profit organizations in the area that provide entrepreneurship training.
- There needs to be more programs available to support the development of entrepreneurs.
- There are limited jobs in the community at the skilled, unskilled, and professional/managerial levels.
- Some of the institutions in the community that provide employment are a supermarket, discount store, bank, insurance company, law office, auto mechanics, middle school, and daycare centers.
- Most of the businesses in the community are sole-proprietorships or family-operated.
- Consideration needs to be given to the development of green jobs in the community.

Housing Choices

A range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community (thereby reducing commuting distances), to promote a mixture of income and age groups in each community, and to provide a range of housing choice to meet market needs.

Statement	Yes	No
1. Our community allows accessory units like garage apartments or mother-in-law units.	Partially	
2. People who work in our community can also afford to live in the community.	X	
3. Our community has enough housing for each income level (low, moderate and above-average).		X
4. We encourage new residential development to follow the pattern of our original town, continuing the existing street design and maintaining small setbacks.	X	
5. We have options available for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development.	X	
6. We have vacant and developable land available for multifamily housing.	X	

7. We allow multifamily housing to be developed in our community.	X	
8. We support community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households.	X	
9. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs.		X
10. We allow small houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas.		X

Comments

- Accessory units such as mother-in-law units are permitted. (Related family members)
- There is not enough diversity in housing at different income levels, particularly above-average levels.
- The 2003 LCI Study recommended the development of housing consistent with the existing character of the community.
- Townhomes and lofts are proposed for the downtown area.
- A 90 unit tax-credit project has been developed for low-income persons and families.
- The smallest size lot permitted is 6,000 square feet.

Educational Opportunities

Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.

Statement	Yes	No
1. Our community provides workforce training options for its citizens.		X
2. Our workforce training programs provide citizens with skills for jobs that are available in our community.		X
3. Our community has higher education opportunities, or is close to a community that does.	X	
4. Our community has job opportunities for college graduates, so that our children may live and work here if they choose.	X	

Comments

- There is a need for workforce training opportunities.
- Some of the higher education institutions near the community are DeKalb Technical College, Strayer University, and Luther Rice Seminary.
- Some of the other educational institutions within the metro Atlanta area are Emory University, Georgia State University, Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia Technical Institute, Westwood College, and Everest Institute.
- There are a few job opportunities in the community for college graduates – middle school teachers, bank, accounting office, and law office.

GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Regional Solutions

Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.

Statement	Yes	No
1. We participate in regional economic development organizations.		X
2. We participate in regional environmental organizations and initiatives, especially regarding water quality and quantity issues.		X
3. We work with other local governments to provide or share appropriate services, such as public transit, libraries, special education, tourism, parks and recreation, emergency response, E-911, homeland security, etc.		X
4. Our community thinks regionally, especially in terms of issues like land use, transportation and housing, understanding that these go beyond local government borders.		X

Comments

- DeKalb County provides several services to the city such as sanitation, library, parks, recreation and 911 services.

Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources or development of a transportation network.

Statement	Yes	No
1. We plan jointly with our cities and county for comprehensive planning purposes.		X
2. We are satisfied with our Service Delivery Strategy.		X
3. We initiate contact with other local governments and institutions in our region in order to find solutions to common problems, or to craft region-wide strategies.		X
4. We meet regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain contact, build connections, and discuss issues of regional concern.	X	

Comments

- There are continuing discussions with County officials to address the Service Delivery Strategy particularly as it relates to the issues of tax equity and charges for services.
- Several city officials participate in the DeKalb Municipal Association on a regular basis.

SECTION 5. SUPPORTING ANALYSIS OF DATA AND INFORMATION

A. Introduction

The following analysis is based on the technical data and information contained in the Data Appendix. This analysis provides a summary of the most relevant information of the data on the community as it relates to the preliminary identification of Issues and Opportunities.

B. Analysis

1. Population

a. Total Population

Between 1990 and 2000, the population of the City of Lithonia declined by over 10%, while the population in the state of Georgia increased by over 26%. It is believed that the city's population has reached a point of stabilization.

By the year 2025, the population of the City of Lithonia is projected to increase by 285% over the 2000 U.S. census data figure of 2,187 to 6,233.⁴ It is also projected that the number of households in the city will increase from 799 to over 2,300. However, a more constrained projection of the population increase between 2000 and 2025 indicates a change of 126% representing 2,753 persons from the current 2,187. Overall, the population of the city is projected to grow in contrast to the steady decline the city has witnessed over the past twenty years.

b. Age Distribution

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, the following is the age distribution within the City of Lithonia compared to the State of Georgia:

Age Distribution Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	Difference
0-4 Years Old	9.97%	7.27%	+2.7%
5-13 Years Old	20.03%	14.94%	+5.09%
14-17 Years Old	4.39%	7.42%	-3.03%

⁴ The population projections were prepared for the City of Lithonia by Robert Charles Lesser & Co., LLC as part of the 2003 Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study. It should be noted that U.S. Census projections at the Georgia Planning & Quality Growth website shows a continuing decline in the population through 2030.

Age Distribution Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	Difference
18-20 Years Old	4.39%	4.53%	-0.14%
21-24 Years Old	4.62%	5.71%	-1.09%
25-34 Years Old	14.40%	15.87%	-1.47%
35-44 Years Old	12.99%	16.53%	-3.54%
45-54 Years Old	10.29%	13.19%	-2.90%
55-64 Years Old	7.09%	8.08%	-0.99%
65 And Over	11.84%	9.59%	+2.25%

Source: Georgia Planning & Quality Growth database.

In Lithonia, the largest age groups are 0-13 years old and 35-54 years old representing 30% and 23% of the population, respectively. The next two largest age groups are 21-34 years old and 55 years old or more at 19% each. The median age is 30 years. This trend potentially will continue and presents a challenge as to the quality and level of services the city will need to provide.

c. Race and Ethnicity

The racial composition within the city has shown a steady increase in the number of African Americans and a decrease in the number of Whites during the past 20 years. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, the total population of Lithonia had the following racial composition: 79.61% African American, 16.64% White, 0.09% Native American, 0.14% Asian, and 3.52% other races. Compared to the rest of the state, Lithonia has much higher proportion of African Americans and a lower proportion of other ethnic groups. In terms of persons of Hispanic origin, there has been a steady increase over the past 20 years although their overall percentage of the population is less than 3%.

d. Income

The median income trend shows an increase from \$18,976 in 1990 to \$29,765 in 2000. Approximately 60% of the city's population earned less than \$30,000. However, the median income for the state in 2000 was over \$80,000. The level of local income is also much lower than that of DeKalb County which is over \$49,000. The relatively low income levels represent a challenge for the city in terms of the level of poverty, the potential for household growth, reduced purchasing power, and the higher demand for basic services.

2. *Economic Development*

a. Economic Base and Labor Force

Between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of persons employed in all employment industries declined except in the categories of finance, insurance and real estate; and other services. The percentage of employment in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector went from 5.53% to 11.35%. In the category of other services, the change was 1.05% to 12.92%. The increase in the finance and real estate sector may be attributed to the large housing development boom that was prevalent during the period. However, the reduction in employment continued during the period between 1990 and 2000, except in the categories of professional, management and administrative; and educational, health and social services. The percentage of employment in the professional, management and administrative category went from 3.74% to 11.28%. In terms of educational, health and social services, the percentage of employment went from 9.42% to 18.68%. Given the current economic climate, it is uncertain whether there will be increased employment opportunities in the traditional sectors. There needs to be more attention to providing support for entrepreneurship training in future planning efforts.

In terms of labor force participation, in 1990 about 55% of the population was employed. By 2000, the number had slipped to 51%. Among males, the unemployment rate was about 10% in 1990 and over 11% in 2000. Among females, the unemployment rate was about 6% in 1990 and over 9% in 2000. The city has a significant portion of the population that is not in the labor force. This is attributed to the fact that there are a significant number of retirees in the community.

In the past, one of the major sources of employment was the granite industry. The data indicates that the majority of the workforce worked outside of the county of residence. There is a large industrial park just outside of the city limits but many of the businesses have closed or relocated during the past several years. The area may have the potential to attract new businesses in the future which could provide the opportunity for residents to find employment closer to home.

b. Economic Resources and Trends

The Lithonia Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has not functioned since 2004. The DDA needs to be re-established and provided resources to work with the local commercial property owners, local businesses, and the city's elected officials to develop a strategic plan to recruit businesses; provide technical assistance to existing businesses; support entrepreneurship training opportunities; and establish partnerships with other economic development entities. Over the years, several businesses have opened in the city and closed within a year of starting operations. Potentially, the DDA would be a resource to provide technical assistance to start-up businesses.

In terms of educational attainment, 31% of the city's population has at least a high school diploma or equivalent. About 25% of the population has some college education but no degree. These numbers indicate that there is a very basic educational level within the city. However, there is a need to pay attention to the fact that about 33% of the population does not have a high school diploma which impacts their employability given the dearth of low-skill jobs.

Compared to the state, the numbers in Lithonia are much higher. The percentage without a high school diploma statewide is about 21% compared to 33% in Lithonia. However, Lithonia has a higher percentage of high school graduates (including GED) than the state, 31% versus 29%, respectively. In terms of a bachelor's or graduate degree, Lithonia has 6% and 2%, while the state has 16% and 8%, respectively. There needs to be a concerted effort to promote the importance of education and develop partnerships to support educational activities and vocational training.

3. *Housing*

a. Housing Types and Mix

It is estimated that there are currently about 910 housing units. The majority (38%) of the housing units in the city are detached single family, followed by dwellings of 3 to 9 units (28%), and double units (11%). Compared to the state that has 64% of housing units as single family, the percentage of single family units is low. By 2000, there was a 10% decrease in the total number of housing units from the total of 1004 in 1980.

During the period of 2005 and 2009, over 100 new housing units have been built. The Oakleaf Subdivision on Max Cleland Boulevard has about 30 completed units. The original subdivision plan contemplated over 100 units but the developer of the project has been foreclosed. It is unclear how many additional homes will be built. The other new housing (The Terraces at Parkview) is a tax credit project for low- to moderate-income consisting of 90 apartment units, one of which is reserved for a resident manager.

b. Condition and Occupancy

The City of Lithonia has an aging housing stock. About 20.8% of the city's housing was built between 1940 and 1959; 30.1% built between 1960 and 1969; and 19.8% built between 1970 and 1979. Approximately 17.5% of the housing units were built in 1939 or earlier. The city saw a brief period of new housing developments between 2005 and 2009 that have added over 100 units. There is a proposed mixed-use project on land that was annexed into the city in 2007 that will include a multi-family component of 124 to 150 housing units.

In terms of occupancy of housing units, according to the 2000 census data about 60% of the units were renter occupied; 30% were owner occupied; and about 10% of the units were vacant. During the same period, the percentage of renter occupied units for the state was 29.8% with owner occupied units at 61.8%. In 1990, the percentage of renter-occupied was almost 65% with the percentage of owner-occupied at 29.4%. The percentage of vacant units was only about 5%. The increase in vacant units has occurred in the rental properties. Most of the rental properties are owned by absentee landlords bought for investment purposes, and some are estate properties belonging to family members that live elsewhere.

c. Cost of Housing and Cost-Burdened Households

The median value of property in Lithonia has witnessed an increase over the past 10 years, going from \$55,800 in 1990 to \$81,800 in 2000. Median rents increased from \$414 to \$502 during the same time frame. The median value of property at the state level in 2000 was \$111,200. The state median rent was \$613. From a financial perspective, the cost of housing in Lithonia is relatively low. At the same time from the perspective of asset accumulation, property values in Lithonia would make only a limited contribution.

As a measure of affordability, cost-burdened households are those that are paying 30% or more of their net income on total housing costs; severely burdened households are those paying 50% or more of net income on total housing costs. According to data from the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 18.68% of Lithonia households were cost-burdened as compared to 12.13% of the state. About 13.96% of Lithonia households were severely cost-burdened as compared to 8.48% of the state. There is a significant disparity between Lithonia and Georgia which may be attributed to the levels of educational attainment, areas of employment, and the high number of retirees who tend to be on fixed incomes.

d. Special Housing Needs and Jobs-Housing Balance

Because Lithonia has an increasing elderly population, consideration will need to be given to promoting housing choices that will allow persons to age-in-place. The concept of lifelong communities has been evolving in response to the national growth in the population of persons over 50 years of age. This includes the retrofitting of existing housing units as well as the construction of new units that can be adapted as a person goes through the various life cycles. Additional research needs to be undertaken to identify other special housing needs and the status of the jobs-housing balance in Lithonia.

4. Natural and Cultural Resources

a. Significant Natural and Cultural Resources

The City of Lithonia has a significant portion (36%) of its land area that is vacant. Because of the possibility that several of the parcels are comprised of significant amounts of granite, there is a strong potential to maintain parts of the area for conservation purposes. Currently, the areas designated for open space, parks and recreation only makes up 5% of the existing land use. The community has expressed a strong desire to improve and expand the amount of available green space. The city needs to conduct a detailed inventory of the natural resources within its limits. There is a wetland area near Pine Mountain Street but there may others to be identified.

In 2003, a group of students from Georgia State University (GSU) surveyed the buildings in the City of Lithonia to explore the potential to establish historic districts and have the city placed on the National Register of Historic Places. A preliminary application was prepared and submitted to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Additional research is needed to complete the application process. There are a number of historic sites within the city including the Bruce

Street School which was the first DeKalb County school for African American students, an African American cemetery dating back to the 1850's, and several churches.

Educational programs for the community to help promote the protection and preservation of the city's natural and cultural resources need to be established. Such programs are especially important for the youth to ensure that they are engaged at an early age about the necessity of protecting natural and cultural resources.

5. *Community Facilities and Services*

a. Public Safety

The City of Lithonia currently provides public safety services to its citizens through the Lithonia Police Department. The city will continue to explore ways to make improvements in the delivery of services that are more efficient and effective. There may be opportunities to expand the level of service by collaborating with other jurisdictions.

b. Parks and Recreation

There are a number of parks throughout the city, some of which are maintained by the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department. The Lithonia City Park has the Stewart Amphitheater which has hosted many community events such as church services, graduations, and family reunions. In recent years, a jazz concert series has been held at the amphitheater during the summer. The amphitheater and other park facilities are in need of upgrades and improvements. The city will develop a capital improvement program to address these needs. There is a county maintained recreation center that has not been upgraded in several years. The city will improve collaboration with the county to seek upgrades to the facility.

c. Stormwater Management

As part of an asset management program, the city has contracted to have the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) inventory completed. The inventory will include mapping and inspecting the headwalls, catch basins, grated inlets, detention ponds, and other stormwater related facilities.

d. Sidewalks and Transit

There is not a consistent network of pedestrian facilities in the City of Lithonia. Several areas within the city are in need of having sidewalks installed or repaired. Additionally, there is a lack of pedestrian connectivity from local neighborhoods to the Lithonia Middle School and other community facilities. There is also limited pedestrian connectivity from the downtown area to the Lithonia City Park and Stewart Amphitheater.

The PATH Foundation has installed a bike and walking trail in the city connecting it to the path network to the Mall at Stonecrest and the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area. Plans have been presented to extend the current trail in the city from its present location to the Lithonia Plaza. There are plans to have the Lithonia trail eventually connect to the trail system in Stone Mountain.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) bus system operates three routes that connect the city to the rail system, the Mall at Stonecrest and downtown Atlanta. There is express bus service to downtown Atlanta about a mile outside of the city limits.

e. Other Community Facilities

Water and sewer services are provided to the city through a DeKalb County enterprise fund.

Public housing in the city is under the jurisdiction of the Lithonia Housing Authority. The Authority maintains about 175 units and continually has a waiting list indicating that may be a shortage of units for eligible persons. Some upgrades have been made to the units but there may be a need for eventual replacement given that the majority of the units were built in the 1950s.

6. *Intergovernmental Coordination*

The City of Lithonia is an active participant in the DeKalb Municipal Association (DMA) and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). Through those associations, the city has an opportunity to engage in policy-level discussions on a number of issues of concern. Additionally, the DMA helps to facilitate discussions with DeKalb County about issues that affect the DeKalb County municipalities.

The DeKalb County School Board provides and administers the public school system for Lithonia students. The Lithonia Middle School is within the city limits and previously operated as the Lithonia High School. A new Lithonia High School opened in 2003 on Phillips Road outside of the city limits. Stoneview Elementary School is located just outside of the city limits off of Covington Highway. There can be better coordination with the school system to encourage walking and bicycle riding by students when possible.

Given the City of Lithonia's strategic location in DeKalb County and its proximity to Rockdale County, the city should become more actively engaged with other county and state entities to promote its unique qualities as an asset to the region.

7. *Transportation System*

a. Road Network and Alternative Modes

The transportation network within the City of Lithonia is comprised of a modest street network where the automobile is the dominant mode of travel. Local and sub-regional traffic derives from

several locations and is funneled onto three main streets within the city limits: Stone Mountain Street, Max Cleland Boulevard and Main Street/Rock Chapel Road. These roads converge, just south of downtown, into one major facility called Evans Mill Road providing access to Interstate 20, as well as other major roads including Mall Parkway which connects to the Mall at Stonecrest. Main Street/Rock Chapel Road brings in traffic through the center of downtown Lithonia. This street connects with Max Cleland Boulevard, a road that does not carry an abundant amount of traffic, but nonetheless serves as a bypass for traffic through downtown Lithonia. Stone Mountain Street comes in from the northern side of town and carries traffic onto Max Cleland Boulevard, providing easy access for traffic to Covington Highway.

The City of Lithonia has a functional classification system, which is a way of prioritizing streets by the service they provide. Generally speaking, three categories of streets have been developed. Local streets typically provide access to adjacent properties. Collector streets provide access, but also allow moderate quantities of traffic to move expeditiously between local streets and the major street network. Major streets or arterial roadways allow for an efficient movement of traffic at reasonably high speeds due to good horizontal and vertical alignment.

Traffic in and around the city is stable. Main Street/Max Cleland Boulevard from Covington Highway to Rock Chapel Road, Klondike Road and Stone Mountain Street carries the highest traffic volumes in the study area and is classified as an arterial roadway. Based upon the 2001 Georgia Department of Transportation traffic counts, the number of vehicles traveling on Max Cleland between Stone Mountain Street and the connection with Main Street during a 24-hour period is approximately 14,000. South of that intersection at Main Street and Parkway, the number of vehicles traveling on the street during a 24-hour period is 15,800, a volume that is approaching a less desirable level of service. These traffic volumes reflect the movement of traffic to and from Interstate 20, Covington Highway and the limits of Lithonia.

Traffic on local streets is comprised of through traffic where both trip ends are outside the neighborhood and local traffic whose travel patterns include one trip end within the neighborhood. Based upon the volumes of traffic, it appears there is a small amount of through traffic on local streets in Lithonia.

The relative traffic volumes through Lithonia on a daily basis are generally lower than most streets are currently designed for which suggests that the road infrastructure can accommodate a moderate amount of new growth into the future without requiring significant vehicular upgrades. One of the challenges related to traffic flow is actually the lack of significant daily traffic to the historic commercial portion of Main Street – a condition that is not conducive to supporting retail and economic development in that corridor.

b. Parking

There is adequate parking for the services provided in the Lithonia Plaza and other places in the city. An estimate of 70 to 100 parking spaces was determined to exist in the Lithonia Plaza area which seems adequate for the current land uses available.

c. Railroad

The original city limits were established around the Georgia Railroad depot, which ran through the center of town, and extended one half mile in all directions from the depot. The railroad played a key role in the development of the granite industry by shipping tons of granite in various forms across the country on a daily basis. The current CSX railroad goes through the city on a daily basis carrying freight of all types. Because the city is one of the exchange points for the railroad, a train may often block the crossing at Main Street for hours thereby creating an unsafe condition for pedestrians attempting to come to the other side. For many seniors who walk rather than drive, having to go under the underpass creates a hardship. The city has been in discussions with CSX about the installation of crossing arms at Main Street and other steps to improve pedestrian safety. CSX has proposed closing off the Main Street crossing which is viewed as creating a negative impact on the community. However, the existence of the railroad line in the city creates the opportunity for the return of commuter rail service in the future.

C. Environmental Planning Criteria

The City of Lithonia is located in the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District and has adopted a series of ordinances pursuant to the guidelines of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The ordinances adopted by the city made it eligible to participate in the Federal Flood Insurance Program. The ordinances include the following:

Stream Buffer Protection: The ordinance is intended to provide minimum buffers for streams and to set forth requirements that minimize land development within the buffer area. Additionally, the ordinance is designed to protect and stabilize stream banks in order to preserve water quality, and aquatic and riparian habitats.

Floodplain Management and Flood Damage Prevention: The objective of the ordinance is to minimize damage to public facilities and utilities such as water and gas mains, electric, telephone and sewer lines, streets and bridges located in floodplains; and to help maintain a stable tax base by providing for the sound use and development of flood prone areas in such a manner as to minimize flood blight areas.

Illicit Discharge and Illegal Connection: The ordinance is designed to prohibit the discharge of anything other stormwater into the stormwater and sewer system. It regulates industrial and construction activity discharges. The use of stormwater and sewer systems to discharge paints, varnishes, solvents, automotive fluids, cooking grease and similar pollutants is prohibited.

Post-Development Stormwater Management for New Development and Redevelopment: The ordinance applies to new developments or redevelopments that include 5,000 square feet or more of impervious cover or that involves other land development activities of one acre or more. It is also applicable to any new development or redevelopment that is determined by the city to have a significant impact on land use. The intent of the ordinance is to protect water quality from damage due to stormwater runoff.

Conservation Subdivision/Open Space Development: The ordinance provides an incentive to developers by allowing an increase in residential density in exchange for providing a greater amount of greenspace within a development.

Litter Control: The ordinance is designed to regulate litter that can diminish the quality of water and aquatic resources by finding its way into streams, rivers and lakes.

D. Consistency with Service Delivery Strategy

The Georgia General Assembly adopted the Service Delivery Strategy Act (O.C.G.A. 36-70-20 et seq.) in 1997. The Act requires all counties and cities in Georgia to prepare and adopt a Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) for their jurisdictions on a county-wide basis.

The SDS preparation process is intended to minimize the duplication of services and competition between local governments and to resolve inefficiencies in the delivery of those services. The Act also provides a mechanism to resolve disputes over local government service delivery, funding equity, and land use. The SDS preparation process also provides a useful tool for addressing incompatible land use plans between municipalities and the county. Additionally, the SDS process identifies how each government would provide funding for each specific service in each area.

According to the Department of Community Affairs regulations adopted in May 2005, the Service Delivery Strategy Agreement must be addressed in conjunction with the preparation of the new local comprehensive plan. The following Table 2 provides a summary of the 1999 Service Delivery Strategy Agreement with DeKalb County which has been extended several times pending negotiations on a new agreement. The city will update the SDS concurrently with the development of the Community Agenda.

Table 2. Service Delivery Strategy

SERVICE PROVIDED	SERVICE PROVIDED BY		INCONSISTENCIES
	CITY OF LITHONIA	DEKALB COUNTY	
<i>General Government</i>			
Finance	Yes	No	None
Purchasing	Yes	No	None
Information Technologies	Yes	No	None

SERVICE PROVIDED	SERVICE PROVIDED BY		INCONSISTENCIES
	CITY OF LITHONIA	DEKALB COUNTY	
<i>General Government</i>			
Elections	Yes	Yes	None
Personnel	Yes	No	None
Property Tax Collections/Tax Billings	No	Yes	None
<i>Legal/Judicial</i>			
Municipal Court	Yes	No	None
Public Defender	Yes	No	None
Solicitor	Yes	No	None
Local Government Attorney	Yes	No	None
<i>Public Safety</i>			
Police	Yes	No	None
Sheriff/Jail & Evictions	Yes	Yes	None
Marshall/Real Estate & Warrants	Yes	No	None
Fire	No	Yes	None
Animal Control	No	Yes	None
EMS	No	Yes	None
911	No	Yes	None

SERVICE PROVIDED	SERVICE PROVIDED BY		INCONSISTENCIES
	CITY OF LITHONIA	DEKALB COUNTY	
<i>Public Safety</i>			
Dispatch	Yes	No	None
Medical Examiner	No	Yes	None
Emergency Management	Yes	Yes	None

<i>Community Development</i>			
Economic Development	Yes	No	None
CDBG	Yes	Yes	None
Building Inspections/ Building Permits	Yes	No	None
Planning/Zoning	Yes	Yes	None
Code Enforcement	Yes	No	None
Public Housing	Yes	No	None
<i>Public Works</i>			
Water Treatment/Water Distribution	No	Yes (Enterprise Fund)	None
Wastewater Collection & Treatment	No	Yes (Enterprise Fund)	None

SERVICE PROVIDED	SERVICE PROVIDED BY		INCONSISTENCIES
	CITY OF LITHONIA	DEKALB COUNTY	
<i>Public Works</i>			
Refuse Collection	No	Yes	None
Landfill	Yes	Yes	None
Recycling Programs	No	Yes	None
Street Construction & Maintenance	No	Yes	None
Street Cleaning	Yes	No	None
Traffic Engineering	No	Yes	None
Storm Water	Yes	Yes	None
Cemetery	Yes	No	None
<i>Leisure Services</i>			
Parks	Yes	Yes	None
Recreation Programs	No	No	None
Libraries	No	Yes	None
<i>Health and Social Services</i>			
Senior Services	No	No	None

CITY OF LITHONIA
2010 – 2026 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

DATA APPENDIX

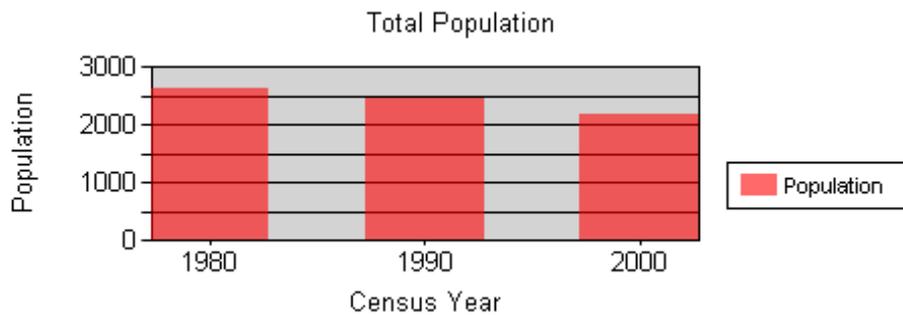
A. Population Data for the City of Lithonia

The steady decline in the population of Lithonia from 1980 to 2000 is reflected in the following tables and graph. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of the City of Lithonia declined by over 10%, while the population in the state of Georgia increased by over 26%.

1. Total Population

Total Population Trend	1980	1990	2000
Total Population	2,637	2,448	2,187

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



Total Population Growth Comparison	Georgia	United States	Lithonia
1990 Population	6,478,216	248,032,624	2,448
2000 Population	8,186,453	281,421,920	2,187
Increase in Population	1,708,237	33,389,296	-261
Growth between 1990 and 2000	26.37 %	13.46 %	-10.66 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

By the year 2025, the population of the City of Lithonia is projected to increase by 285% over the 2000 U.S. census data figure of 2,187 to 6,233.* It is also projected that the number of households in the city will increase from 799 to over 2,300. However, a more constrained projection of the population increase between 2000 and 2025 indicates a change of 126% representing 2,753 persons from the current 2,187. Overall, the population of the city is projected to grow in contrast to the steady decline the city has witnessed over the past twenty years.

2. Age Distribution

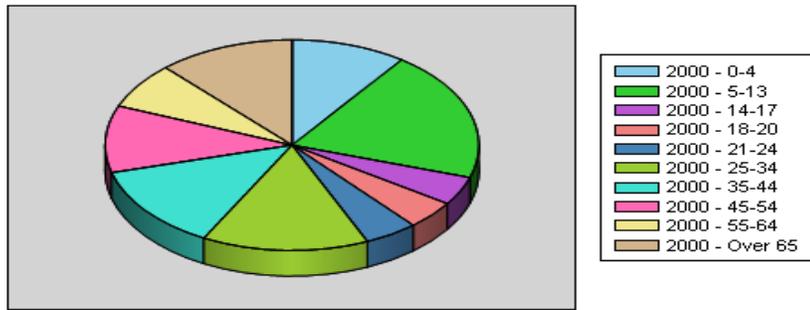
Age Distribution Trend	1980	1990	2000
0-4 Years Old	206	245	218
5-13 Years Old	394	441	438
14-17 Years Old	228	112	96
18-20 Years Old	182	108	96
21-24 Years Old	215	133	101
25-34 Years Old	385	405	315
35-44 Years Old	271	318	284
45-54 Years Old	233	200	225
55-64 Years Old	227	173	155
65 And Over	296	313	259

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

In Lithonia, the largest age groups are 0-13 years old and 35-54 years old representing 30% and 23% of the population, respectively. The next two largest age groups are 21-34 years old and 55 years old or more at 19% each. The median age is 30 years. This trend potentially will continue and presents a challenge as to the quality and level of services the city will need to provide.

* The population projections were prepared for the City of Lithonia by Robert Charles Lesser & Co., LLC as part of the 2003 Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study. It should be noted that U.S. Census projections at the Georgia Planning & Quality Growth website shows a continuing decline in the population through 2030.

Age Distribution in Year 2000



Age Distribution Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
0-4 Years Old	9.97 %	7.27 %	6.81 %
5-13 Years Old	20.03 %	14.94 %	13.06 %
14-17 Years Old	4.39 %	7.42 %	4.28 %
18-20 Years Old	4.39 %	4.53 %	4.35 %
21-24 Years Old	4.62 %	5.71 %	5.30 %
25-34 Years Old	14.40 %	15.87 %	14.18 %
35-44 Years Old	12.99 %	16.53 %	15.65 %
45-54 Years Old	10.29 %	13.19 %	13.39 %
55-64 Years Old	7.09 %	8.08 %	8.63 %
65 And Over	11.84 %	9.59 %	11.78 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

3. Race and Ethnicity

The racial composition within the city has shown a steady increase in the number of African Americans and a decrease in the number of Whites during the past 20 years. According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, the total population of Lithonia had the following racial composition: 79.61% African American, 16.64% White, 0.09% Native American, 0.14% Asian, and 3.52% other races.

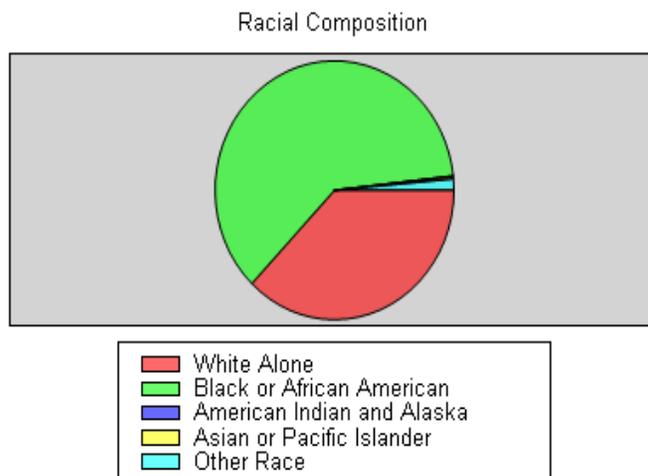
Racial Composition Trend	1980	1990	2000
White Alone	1471	868	364
Black or African American Alone	1163	1535	1741
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0	3	2
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	18	3
Other Race	1	24	77

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Compared to the rest of the state, Lithonia has much higher proportion of African Americans and a lower proportion of other ethnic groups. In terms of persons of Hispanic origin, there has been a steady increase over the past 20 years although their overall percentage of the population is less than 3%.

Racial Composition Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
White Alone	16.64 %	65.07 %	75.14 %
Black or African American Alone	79.61 %	28.70 %	12.32 %
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	0.09 %	0.27 %	0.88 %
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.14 %	2.12 %	3.64 %
Other Race	3.52 %	3.84 %	8.03 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



Hispanic Trend	1980	1990	2000
Persons of Hispanic Origin	6	39	63

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Hispanic Population Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
2000 Population	2187	8,186,453	281,421,920
Hispanic Population	63	435,227	35,305,818
Percent Hispanic	2.88 %	5.32 %	12.55 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

4. Income

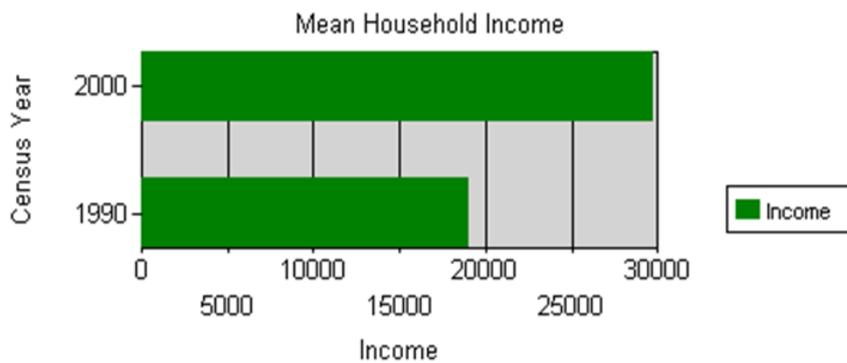
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Mean Household Income Trend	1990	2000
Income	18,976	29,765

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Mean Household Income Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
Income	29,765	80,077	56,675

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



The relatively low income levels represent a challenge for the city in terms of the level of poverty, the potential for household growth, reduced purchasing power, and the higher demand for basic services.

Per Capita Income Trend	1990	2000
Per Capita Income	7,845	10,605

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Per Capita Income Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
Per Capita Income	10,605	21,154	21,587

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

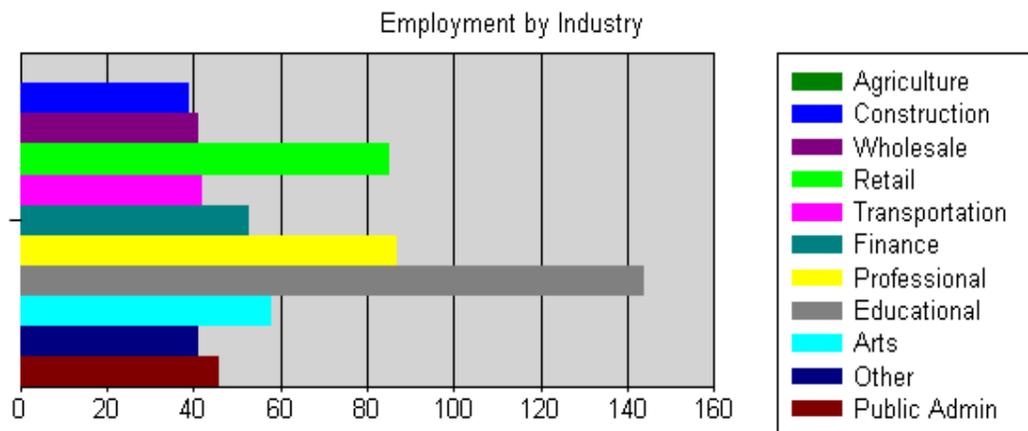
B. Economic Development

1. Economic Base

Between 1980 and 1990, the percentage of persons employed in all employment industries declined except in the categories of finance, insurance and real estate; and other services. The percentage of employment in the finance, insurance, and real estate sector went from 5.53% to 11.35%. In the category of other services, the change was 1.05% to 12.92%.

Employment by Industry Trend Employment by Industry	1980	1990	2000
Total Employed Civilian Population	1048	828	771
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	17	8	0
Construction	130	30	39
Manufacturing	227	191	101
Wholesale Trade	61	40	41
Retail Trade		144	85
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	33	65	42
Information	170	0	34
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	58	94	53
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	95	31	87
Educational, health and social services	95	78	144
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	102	0	58
Other Services	11	107	41
Public Administration	49	40	46

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



Employment by Industry Trend (Percent)	1980	1990	2000
Total Employed Civilian Population	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	1.62 %	0.97 %	0.00 %
Construction	12.40 %	3.62 %	5.06 %
Manufacturing	21.66 %	23.07 %	13.10 %
Wholesale Trade	5.82 %	4.83 %	5.32 %
Retail Trade	0.00 %	17.39 %	11.02 %
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	3.15 %	7.85 %	5.45 %
Information	16.22 %	0.00 %	4.41 %
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	5.53 %	11.35 %	6.87 %
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	9.06 %	3.74 %	11.28 %
Educational, health and social services	9.06 %	9.42 %	18.68 %
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	9.73 %	0.00 %	7.52 %
Other Services	1.05 %	12.92 %	5.32 %
Public Administration	4.68 %	4.83 %	5.97 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

An overall reduction in employment continued during the period between 1990 and 2000, except in the categories of professional, management and administrative; and educational, health and social services. The percentage of employment in the professional, management and administrative category went from 3.74% to 11.28%. In terms of educational, health and social services, the percentage of employment went from 9.42% to 18.68%.

Employment by Industry (Year 2000) Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
Total Employed Civilian Population	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	0.00 %	1.39 %	1.87 %
Construction	5.06 %	7.94 %	6.78 %
Manufacturing	13.10 %	14.81 %	14.10 %
Wholesale Trade	5.32 %	3.86 %	3.60 %
Retail Trade	11.02 %	11.97 %	11.73 %
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	5.45 %	6.02 %	5.20 %

Employment by Industry (Year 2000) Comparison			
Information	4.41 %	3.53 %	3.08 %
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	6.87 %	6.54 %	6.89 %
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	11.28 %	9.44 %	9.30 %
Educational, health and social services	18.68 %	17.59 %	19.92 %
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	7.52 %	7.15 %	7.87 %
Other Services	5.32 %	4.74 %	4.87 %
Public Administration	5.97 %	5.03 %	4.79 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

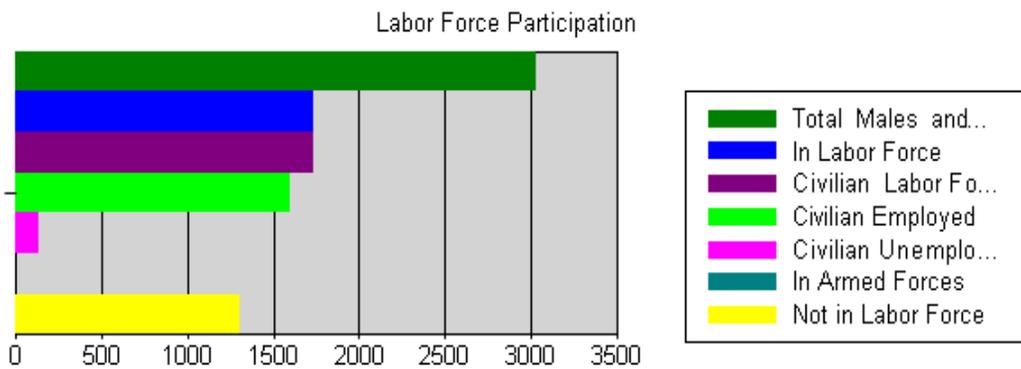
2. Labor Force

The data on labor force participation shows that in 1990 about 55% of the population was employed. By 2000, the number had slipped to 51%. Among males, the unemployment rate was about 10% in 1990 and over 11% in 2000. Among females, the unemployment rate was about 6% in 1990 and over 9% in 2000. The city has a significant portion of the population that is not in the labor. This is attributed to the fact that there are a significant number of retirees in the community.

Labor Force Participation	1990	2000
Total Males and Females	1518	1519
In Labor Force	889	847
Civilian Labor Force	889	847
Civilian Employed	828	771
Civilian Unemployed	61	76
In Armed Forces	0	0
Not In Labor Force	629	672
Total Males	547	561
Male in Labor Force	362	343
Male Civilian Labor Force	362	343
Male Civilian Employed	330	308
Male Civilian Unemployed	32	35
Male in Armed Forces	0	0
Male Not in Labor Force	185	218

Total Females	971	958
Female in Labor Force	527	504
Female Civilian Labor Force	527	504
Female Civilian Employed	498	463
Female Civilian Unemployed	29	41
Female In Armed Forces	0	0
Female Not in Labor Force	444	454

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



The data indicates that the majority of the workforce worked outside of the county of residence.

Labor Force by Place of Work Trend	1990	2000
Total Population	2448	2187
Worked in State of Residence	795	741
Worked in County of Residence	157	70
Worked outside of County of Residence	638	671
Worked outside of State of Residence	0	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Personal Income by Type Trend	1990	2000
Total Income	16,831,968	23,782,000
Aggregate wage or salary income for households	13,367,012	18,557,800
Aggregate other types of income for households	393,176	980,700
Aggregate self employment income for households	410,418	471,700
Aggregate interest, dividends, or net rental income	193,965	646,400
Aggregate social security income for households	1,632,857	1,689,100
Aggregate public assistance income for households	653,936	616,300
Aggregate retirement income for households	180,604	820,000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Personal Income by Type Comparison	Georgia	Lithonia
Total Income	100.00 %	100.00 %
Aggregate wage or salary income for households	78.24 %	78.03 %
Aggregate other types of income for households	1.70 %	4.12 %
Aggregate self employment income for households	5.60 %	1.98 %
Aggregate interest, dividends, or net rental income	5.27 %	2.72 %
Aggregate social security income for households	4.04 %	7.10 %
Aggregate public assistance income for households	0.00 %	2.59 %
Aggregate retirement income for households	4.57 %	3.45 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

3. Economic Resources and Trends

Based on the data on educational attainment, 31% of the city's population has at least a high school diploma or equivalent. About 25% of the population has some college education but no degree. These numbers indicate that there is a very basic educational level within the city.

Educational Attainment	1980	1990	2000
Less than 9th Grade	588	271	151
9th to 12th Grade (no diploma)	257	314	244
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	388	322	369
Some College (No Degree)	119	211	295
Associate Degree		68	48
Bachelor's Degree	36	56	67
Graduate or Professional Degree	24	28	22

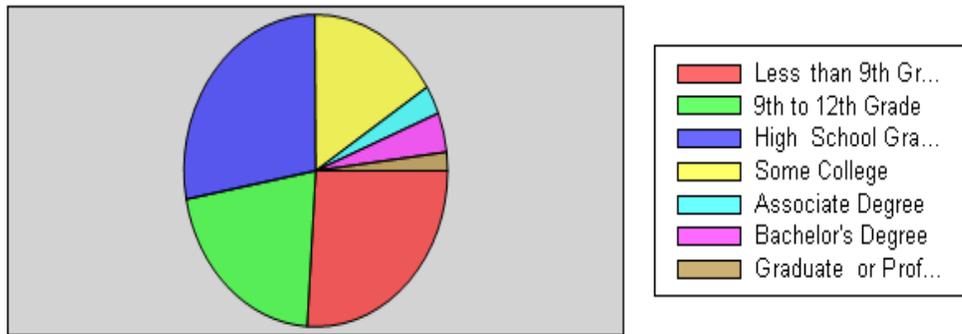
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

In terms of low educational attainment, compared to the state, the numbers in Lithonia are much higher. The percentage without a high school diploma statewide is about 21% compared to 33% in Lithonia. However, Lithonia has a higher percentage of high school graduates (including GED) than the state, 31% versus 29%, respectively. In terms of a bachelor's or graduate degree, Lithonia has 6% and 2%, while the state has 16% and 8%, respectively.

Educational Attainment	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
Less than 9th Grade	12.63 %	7.54 %	7.55 %
9th to 12th Grade (no diploma)	20.40 %	13.86 %	12.05 %
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	30.85 %	28.71 %	28.63 %
Some College (No Degree)	24.67 %	20.40 %	21.05 %
Associate Degree	4.01 %	5.19 %	6.32 %
Bachelor's Degree	5.60 %	16.01 %	15.54 %
Graduate or Professional Degree	1.84 %	8.30 %	8.86 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Educational Attainment



C. Housing

1. Housing Types and Mix

Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, there are currently about 800 households and 910 housing units. The majority (38%) of the housing units in the city are detached single family, followed by dwellings of 3 to 9 units (28%), and double units (11%). Compared to the state that has 64% of housing units as single family, the percentage of single family units is low. By 2000, there was a 10% decrease in the total number of housing units from the total of 1004 in 1980.

Number of Households Trend	1980	1990	2000
Number of Households	947	887	799

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Types of Housing Trend	1980	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	1004	936	910
Single Units (detached)	438	350	348
Single Units (attached)	54	46	49
Double Units	47	78	101
3 to 9 Units	298	213	255
10 to 19 Units	130	176	83
20 to 49 Units	7	24	23
50 or more Units	22	0	22
Mobile Home or Trailer	8	34	29
All Other	0	15	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Types of Housing Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
Total Housing Units	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
Single Units (detached)	38.24 %	64.21 %	60.28 %
Single Units (attached)	5.38 %	2.87 %	5.56 %
Double Units	11.10 %	2.75 %	4.31 %
3 to 9 Units	28.02 %	9.32 %	9.41 %
10 to 19 Units	9.12 %	3.94 %	4.00 %
20 to 49 Units	2.53 %	1.76 %	3.34 %
50 or more Units	2.42 %	2.97 %	5.29 %
Mobile Home or Trailer	3.19 %	12.03 %	7.57 %
All Other	0.00 %	0.13 %	0.23 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

2. Condition and Occupancy

The City of Lithonia has an aging housing stock. About 20.8% of the city's housing was built between 1940 and 1959; 30.1% built between 1960 and 1969; and 19.8% built between 1970 and 1979. Approximately 17.5% of the housing units were in 1939 or earlier.

Age of Housing Trend	1990	2000
Built 1970 - 1979	242	180
Built 1960 - 1969	277	274
Built 1950 - 1959	187	146
Built 1940 - 1949	27	44
Built 1939 or earlier	95	159

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Age of Housing Comparison	Georgia	Lithonia	United States
Built 1970 - 1979	18.55 %	19.78 %	18.50 %
Built 1960 - 1969	12.68 %	30.11 %	13.73 %
Built 1950 - 1959	8.64 %	16.04 %	12.69 %
Built 1940 - 1949	4.39 %	4.84 %	7.28 %
Built 1939 or earlier	5.88 %	17.47 %	15.00 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Condition of Housing Trend	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	936	910
Complete Plumbing Facilities	929	901
Lacking Plumbing Facilities	0	9
Complete kitchen facilities	929	904
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	0	6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

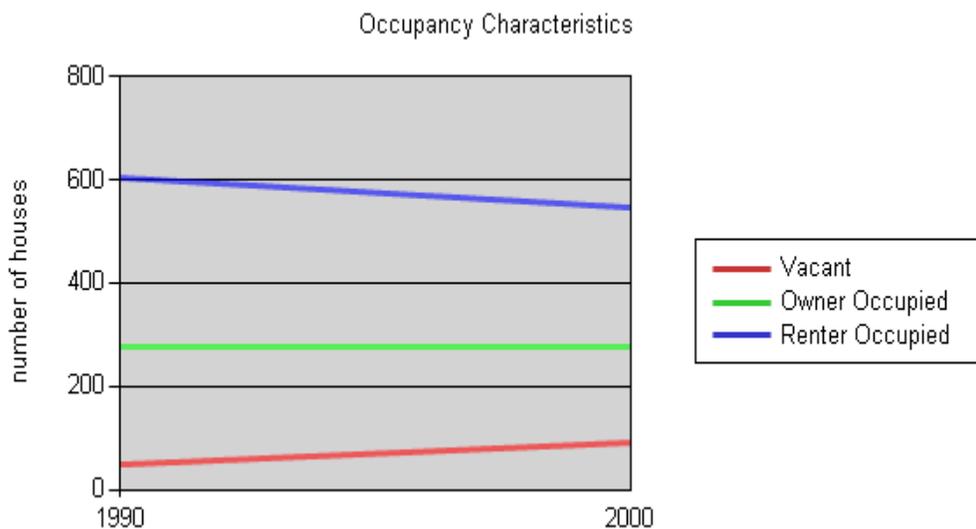
In terms of occupancy of housing units, according to the 2000 census data about 60% of the units were renter occupied; 30% were owner occupied; and about 10% of the units were vacant. During the same period, the percentage of renter occupied units for the state was 29.8% with owner occupied units at 61.8%. In 1990, the percentage of renter occupied was almost 65% with the percentage of owner occupied at 29.4%. The percentage of vacant units was only about 5%. The increase in vacant units has occurred in the rental properties.

Occupancy Characteristics Trend	1990	2000
Total Housing Units Built	936	910
Housing Units Vacant	49	90
Housing Units Owner Occupied	276	274
Housing Units Renter Occupied	604	546

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

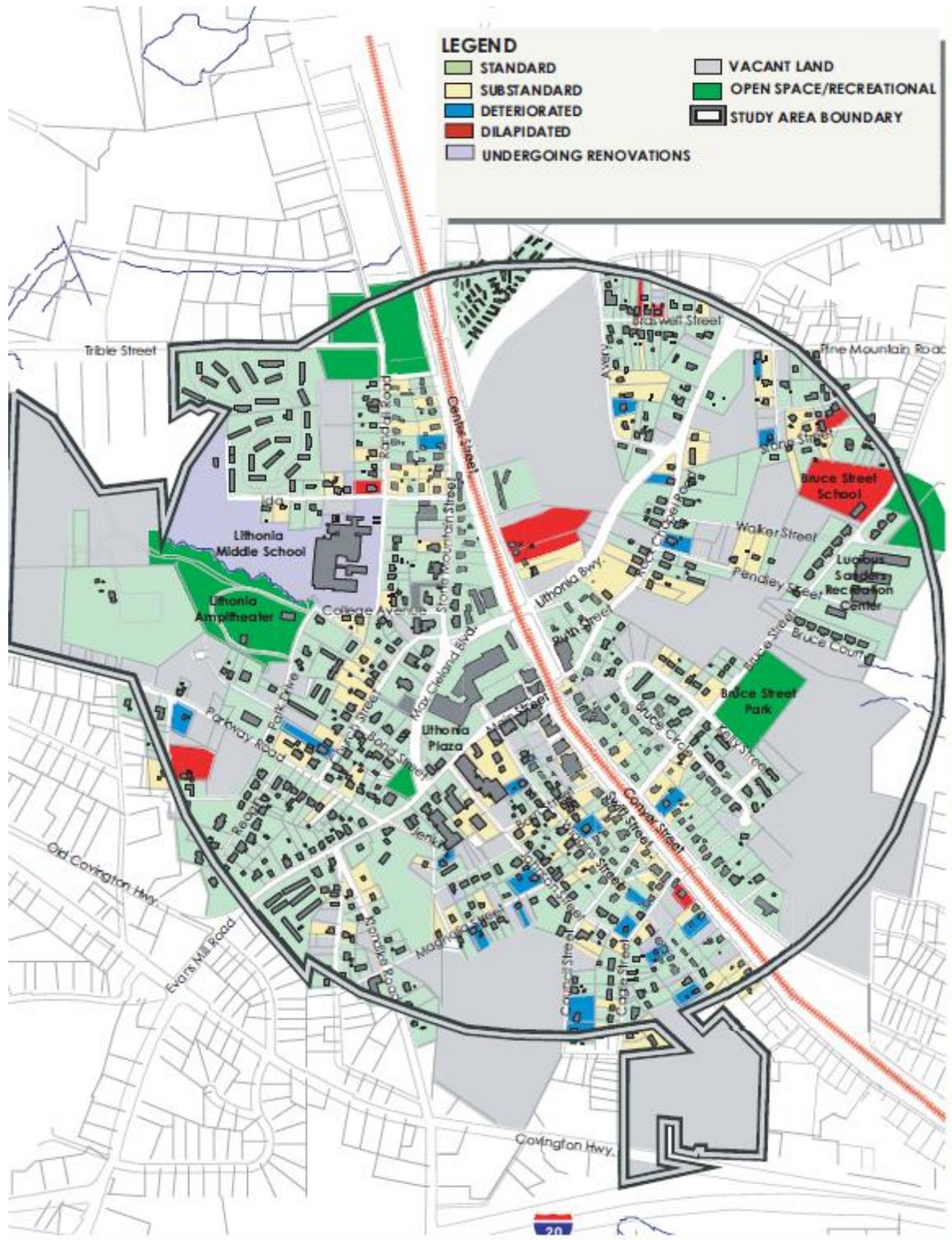
Occupancy Characteristics Comparison	Lithonia	Georgia	United States
Total Housing Units Built	100.00 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
Housing Units Vacant	9.89 %	8.39 %	8.99 %
Housing Units Owner Occupied	30.11 %	61.84 %	60.24 %
Housing Units Renter Occupied	60.00 %	29.77 %	30.77 %

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



The following map on Building Conditions indicates the properties that are standard, substandard and deteriorating.

Building Conditions in Lithonia



Prepared by: URBAN COLLAGE, Inc., Robert Charles Lesser & Co., and URS

Building Condition

3. Cost of Housing

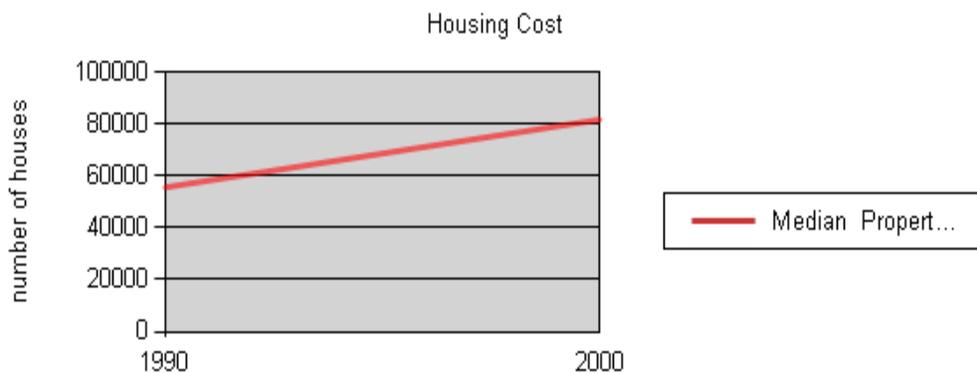
The median value of property in Lithonia has witnessed an increase over the past 10 years, going from \$55,800 in 1990 to \$81,800 in 2000. Median rents increased from \$414 to \$502 during the same time frame. The median value of property at the state level in 2000 was \$111,200. The state median rent was \$613.

Housing Cost Trend (in Dollars)	1990	2000
Median property value	55,800	81,900
Median rent	414	502

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Housing Cost Comparison (in Dollars)	Georgia	Lithonia	United States
Median property value	111,200	81,900	119,600
Median rent	613	502	602

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



4. Cost Burdened Housing

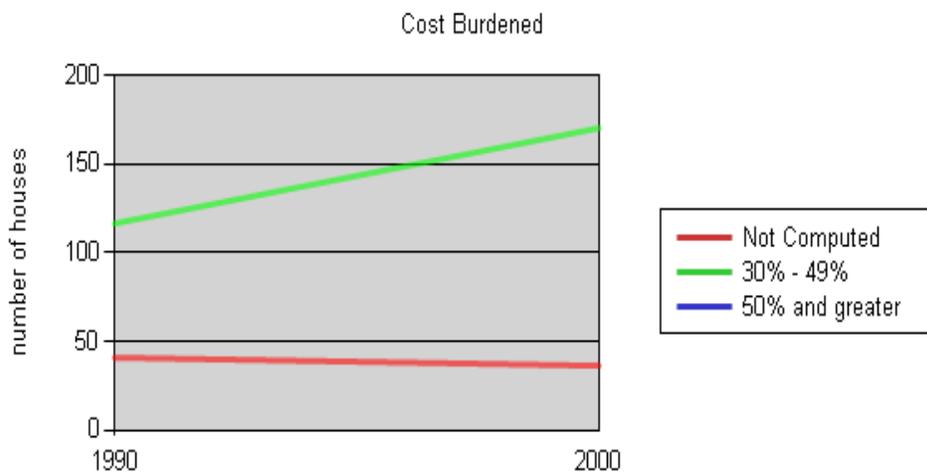
As a measure of affordability, cost-burdened households are those that are paying 30% or more of their net income on total housing costs; severely burdened households are those paying 50% or more of net income on total housing costs. According to data from the 2000 U.S. Census, approximately 18.68% of Lithonia households were cost-burdened as compared to 12.13% of the state. About 13.96% of Lithonia households were severely cost-burdened as compared to 8.48% of the state.

Cost Burdened Trend	1990	2000
30% - 49%	116	170
50% and greater		127
Not computed	41	36

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1

Cost Burdened Comparison	Georgia	Lithonia	United States
30% - 49%	12.13 %	18.68 %	12.61 %
50% and greater	8.48 %	13.96 %	8.98 %
Not computed	2.96 %	3.96 %	2.67 %

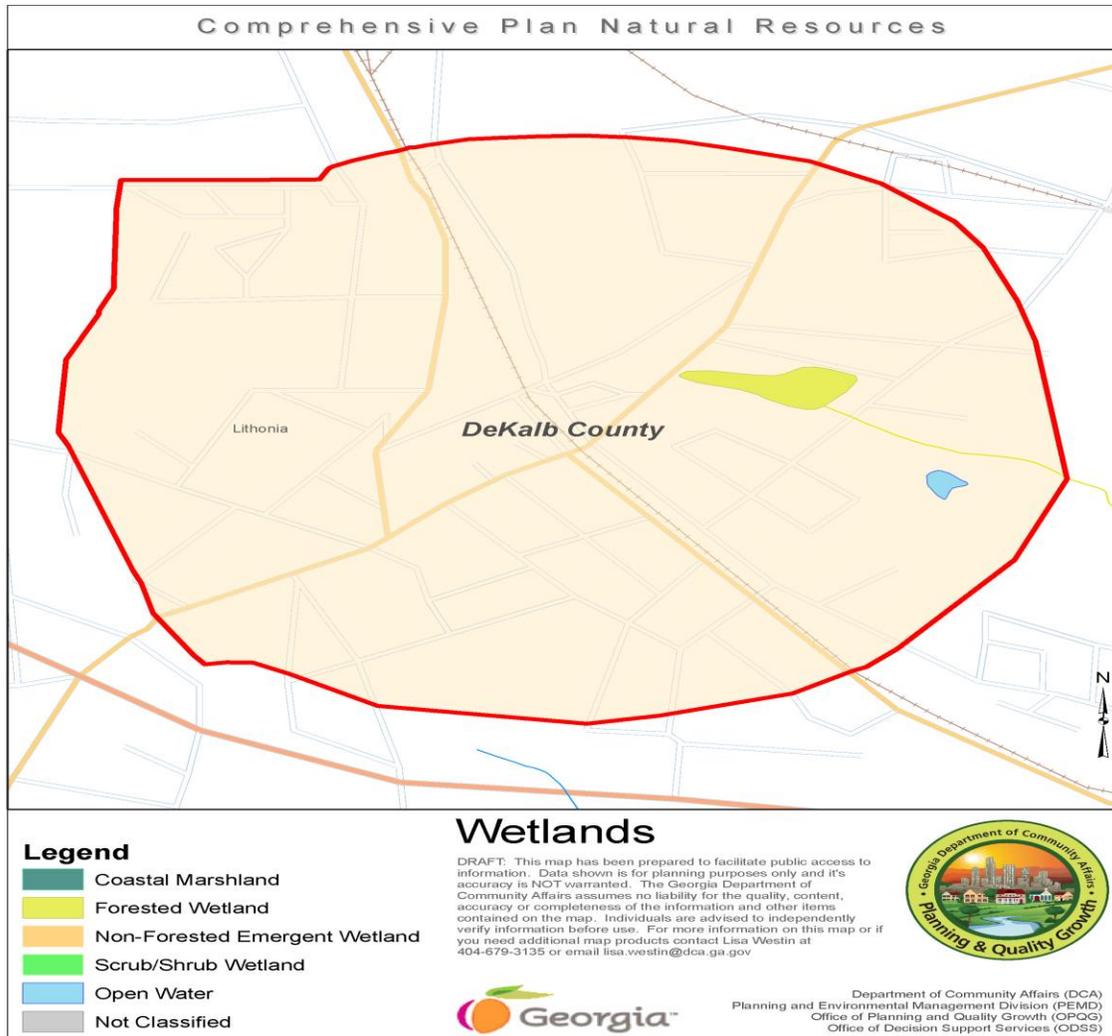
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1



D. Natural and Cultural Resources

1. Significant Natural Resources

The City of Lithonia needs to conduct an inventory of the various natural resources that exist within the community. The available data indicates the existence of forested wetland and an area of open water.



2. Significant Cultural Resources

Of the existing structures in the city surveyed in May 2003 by Georgia State University, over 230 sites were identified that meet the standard eligibility criteria as contributing historic structures constructed between 1845 and 1953, for a historic district nomination. These sites and historic resources are comprised of both structures such as homes, retail, and churches; and sites such as Cemeteries, Lithonia Park and Amphitheater, and the Bruce Street Park. The sites encompass approximately 152 acres or close to 30% of the total acres in the City of Lithonia. The Historic Properties Map and Cultural Landmarks Map on the following pages highlight these sites. Below is a brief description of the most common community landmarks.

Churches

There are a number of churches in the City of Lithonia that were constructed by locally quarried granite and built between the 1900s and the 1950s. These include Lithonia Methodist Church (1910), the former Antioch Baptist Church (1911), Union Missionary Baptist Church (1911) and First St. Paul AME Church (1931).

Library

The City of Lithonia is home to DeKalb County's first public library which was housed in the Lithonia Women's Club. Constructed in 1910 from local granite, this community landmark structure still functions as a civic meeting place.

Schools

Although the original 1920 two story granite portion of the Lithonia High School, currently the Lithonia Middle School, was demolished in 1968, the additions constructed during 1939-1965 are of salmon colored brick. The Bruce Street School, the first public school in DeKalb County for African American students was constructed from local granite on land donated by African American families in Lithonia. Although the structure's interior and roof have caved in from deterioration, the outside walls still stand and can be redeveloped as a community facility.

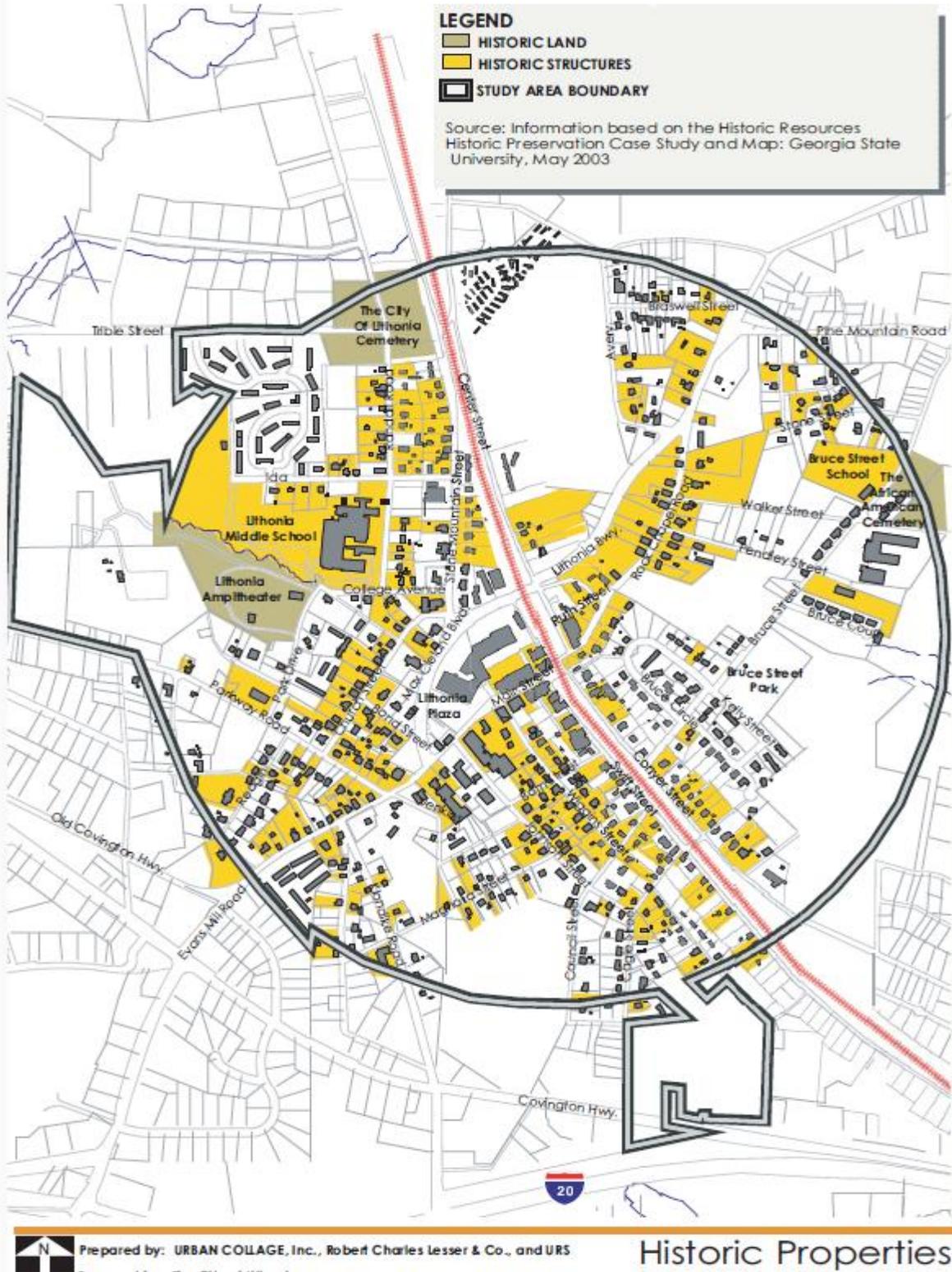
Cemeteries

The City of Lithonia Cemetery dates from approximately 1860 to 1925 with granite markers. The African American Cemetery dates from 1850 with simple granite, brick and concrete memorials.

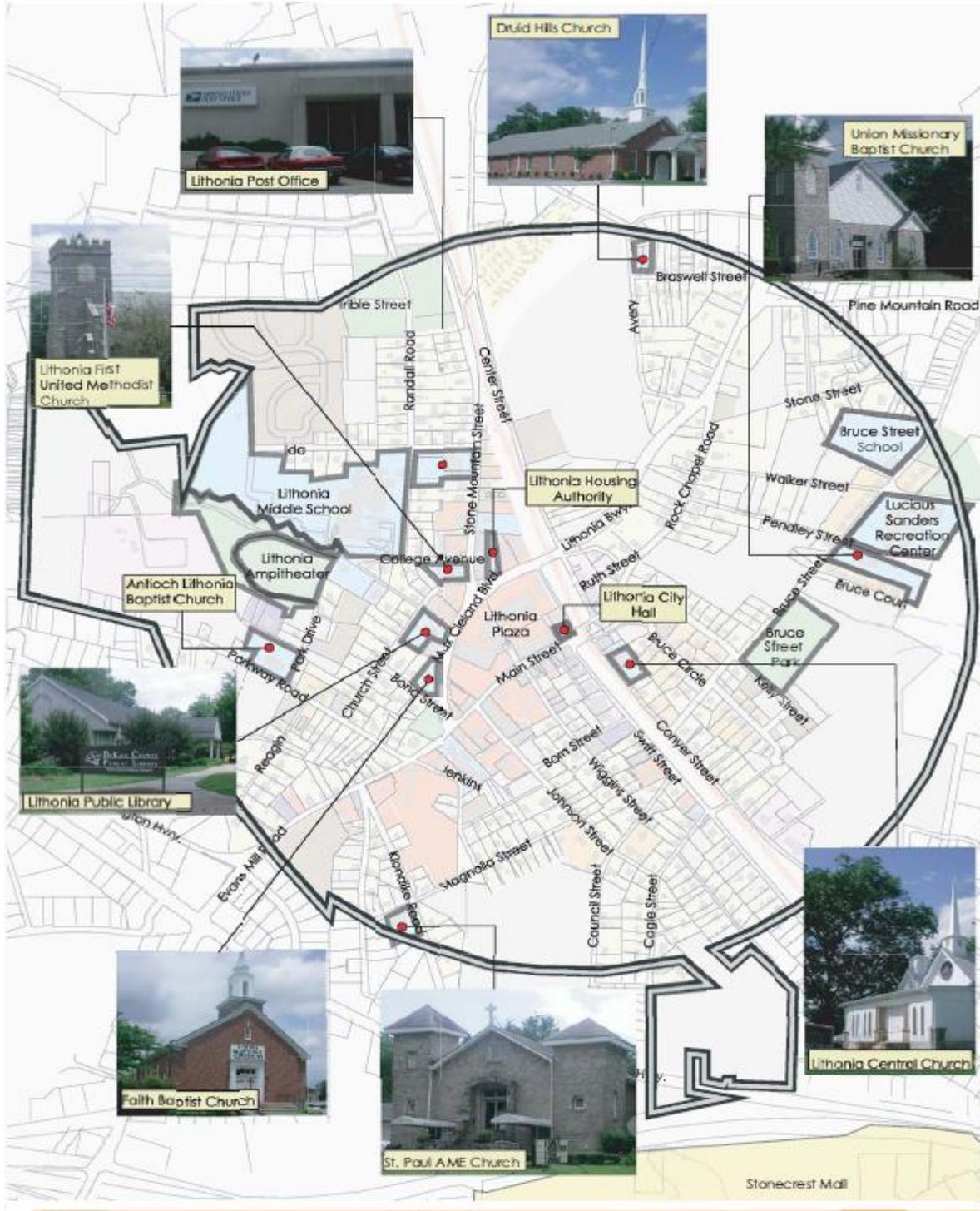
Parks and Recreation Center

Parks in the city date back to the late 1940s and early 1950s. The Lithonia Park contains an amphitheater, granite retaining walls, tennis courts, and a swimming pool. Another notable park includes the Bruce Street Park and the Lucious Sanders Recreation Center both located on Bruce Street.

a. Historic Properties



b. Cultural Landmarks



Prepared by: URBAN COLLAGE, Inc., Robert Charles Lesser & Co., and URS

Context Map

E. Community Facilities and Services

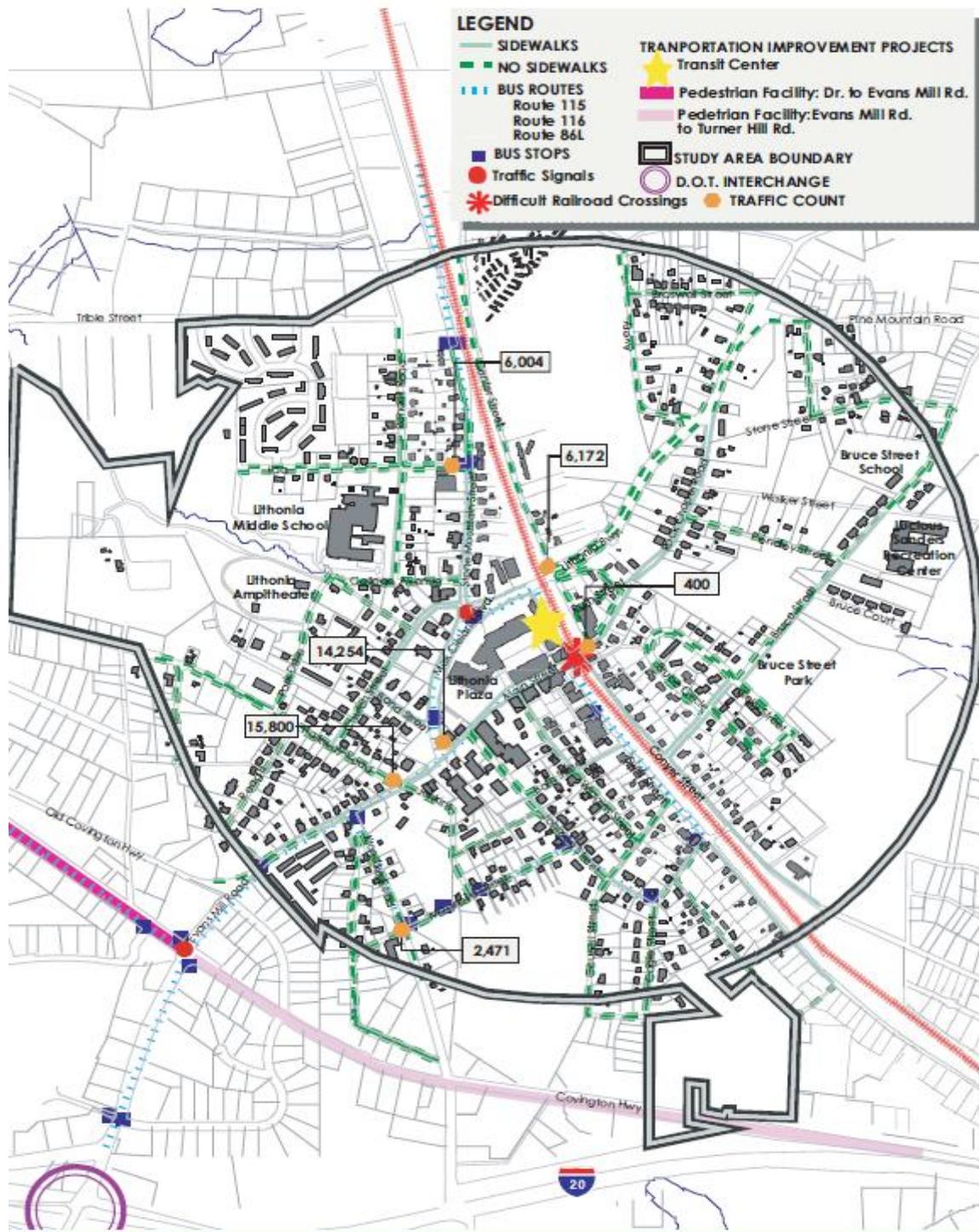
The City of Lithonia provides public safety services through its police department. The police department houses a small holding cell. The city is host to several DeKalb County community facilities. These include a police precinct and training academy; a middle school; a park with a swimming pool; a recreation center; and a senior center. DeKalb County also provides fire and emergency medical services for the city.



F. Transportation

The transportation network within Lithonia consists of a modest street network where the automobile is the dominant mode of travel. Local and sub-regional traffic derives from several locations and is funneled onto three main streets within the city limits: Stone Mountain Street, Max Cleland Boulevard and Main Street/Rock Chapel Road. These roads converge, just south of downtown, into one major facility called Evans Mill Road providing access to Interstate 20. It also provides access to other major roads, including Mall Parkway, which connects to the Mall at Stonecrest. Main Street/Rock Chapel Road brings in traffic through the center of downtown Lithonia. This street connects with Max Cleland Boulevard which serves as a bypass for traffic through downtown Lithonia. The following Circulation Issues Map highlights the major streets; bus routes; areas in need of sidewalks; and traffic counts.

Circulation Issues



Prepared by: URBAN COLLAGE, Inc., Robert Charles Lesser & Co., and URS

Circulation Issues