A City Divided:
Rethinking the Role of the Transit Station in Metro Atlanta

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Abstract

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Atlanta's public transit system, known by the acronym MARTA, has been underused by Atlantans since its inception and has gained a city-wide reputation for being unreliable and unsafe. This stigma, rooted in social divisions within the city, has repeatedly halted public support for expansion and improvements of the system. With long-awaited approval of funding in 2016, the design of new transportation infrastructure will play a significant role in the success or failure of the MARTA expansion. This thesis argues that architecture of transit can serve as a gateway between communities, providing a sustainable and efficient means of commuting while cultivating connections within and between neighborhoods. The design proposal for a new bus transit center in Metro Atlanta will enhance the identity of its place while improving public perception of the city-wide transit system.

Thank you

To my advisors Richard Mohler, Susan Jones, and Louisa Iarocci for your wisdom and guidance

To my parents Cindy and Alan Skaggs for providing incredible opportunity and unending support

To my friends and family for listening and teaching, for patience, and for much-needed perspective

To the city of Atlanta for your continued dedication to progress

Figure 1 | MARTA bus stop

A CITY DIVIDED

Rethinking the Role of the Transit Station in Metro Atlanta

chapter **ONE** / introduction

The city of Atlanta is growing at a rapid rate. In 2017 it was the 3rd fastest-growing metro area in the country, but Atlanta's built infrastructure is not equipped to handle its existing density, much less the anticipated growth.

Growing up in Kennesaw, Georgia, and moving to Midtown Atlanta for college, I spent my first twenty-two years living in Metro Atlanta. I traveled regularly throughout the city, but in reflection, I can recall only two occasions when I utilized the city's public transit system. While there may be more instances buried in distant memory, it is evident that public transportation was never a regular means of commuting throughout the city for me or those close to me. After moving from Atlanta to multiple cities where I relied heavily on bus and rail schedules, I have become aware of the opportunities presented by successful public transportation systems. This realization has spurred an intense curiosity about the system in my hometown - MARTA - and my own bias against public transit.

Figure 2 | Atlanta traffic and cityscape

In Atlanta, like most Southeastern cities, the car dramatically trumps all other modes of transportation, but the underutilization of MARTA goes beyond a preference toward automobiles. MARTA has been underused by Atlantans since its inception and has gained a national reputation for being unsafe and unreliable.[1] Many of the problems with MARTA are related to insufficient infrastructure and lack of funding, but the system also suffers from poor public perception with a reputation for high crime and poor service. In reality, MARTA's crime statistics are similar to, if not lower than, other major rail systems in the country. Regardless, this stigma, rooted in social divisions within the city, has repeatedly halted public support for expansion and improvements of the city's public transit.

For the first time in four decades, the counties of Metro Atlanta have approved funding to improve and expand their public transportation system. While this consensus among voters is a notable breakthrough, Atlantans must overcome a long-standing bias against the city's existing transit system for any positive change to take place.

1 TIME Staff, "The 20 Best and Worst Cities for Public Transit," TIME, May 12, 2011, Accessed February 26, 2018, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2070992_2071052_2070981,00.html.

Figure 3 | King Memorial Station escalator

The current network that began as a bus system in 1971, includes heavy rail transit, light rail transit and bus, serving Atlanta and select suburbs. With the long-awaited approval of funding in 2016, the design of new transportation infrastructure will play a significant role in the success or failure of the MARTA expansion.

To relieve the congestion caused by single-passenger vehicles, the city must rethink existing stigmas toward public transportation. This thesis argues that the architecture of transit can serve as a gateway between communities, providing a sustainable and efficient means of commuting while cultivating connections within and between neighborhoods. The design proposal for a new bus transit center in Metro Atlanta will enhance the identity of its place while improving public perception of the city-wide transit system. To improve Atlanta's perception of mass transit, these facilities must be safe, accessible and responsive to surrounding conditions. They must respond to the needs of the rider, while developing a sense of local identity and representing mass transit as a sustainable and efficient means of travel.

chapter **TWO** / the petri dish

> *Atlanta is on the brink of either tremendous rebirth or inexorable decline. At the center of a perfect storm of failed American urban policies, Atlanta has the highest income inequality, and its metro area features the longest commutes, in the country . . . suburban sprawl impaired the environment as it eroded the urban tax base and exacerbated a long history of racial injustice. Although many cities suffer these problems, the issues have collided nowhere so conspicuously as in Atlanta.*[2]

This thesis addresses the reform of Atlanta's public transportation system with the understanding that this issue cannot be studied in isolation. Infrastructure evolves as a product of the social, political and physical forces of its environment. Atlanta has endured great turmoil in the past and thus, requires even greater sensitivity in efforts to reform the existing system. In his book *City on the Verge*, Mark Pendergast argues for the significance of impending changes in the city.

This chapter will present a brief history of Atlanta's public transportation infrastructure and identify current challenges. It will then analyze principles for successful public transit design and explore related architectural precedents.

2 Mark Pendergast, *City on the Verge: Atlanta and the Fight for Amer-*

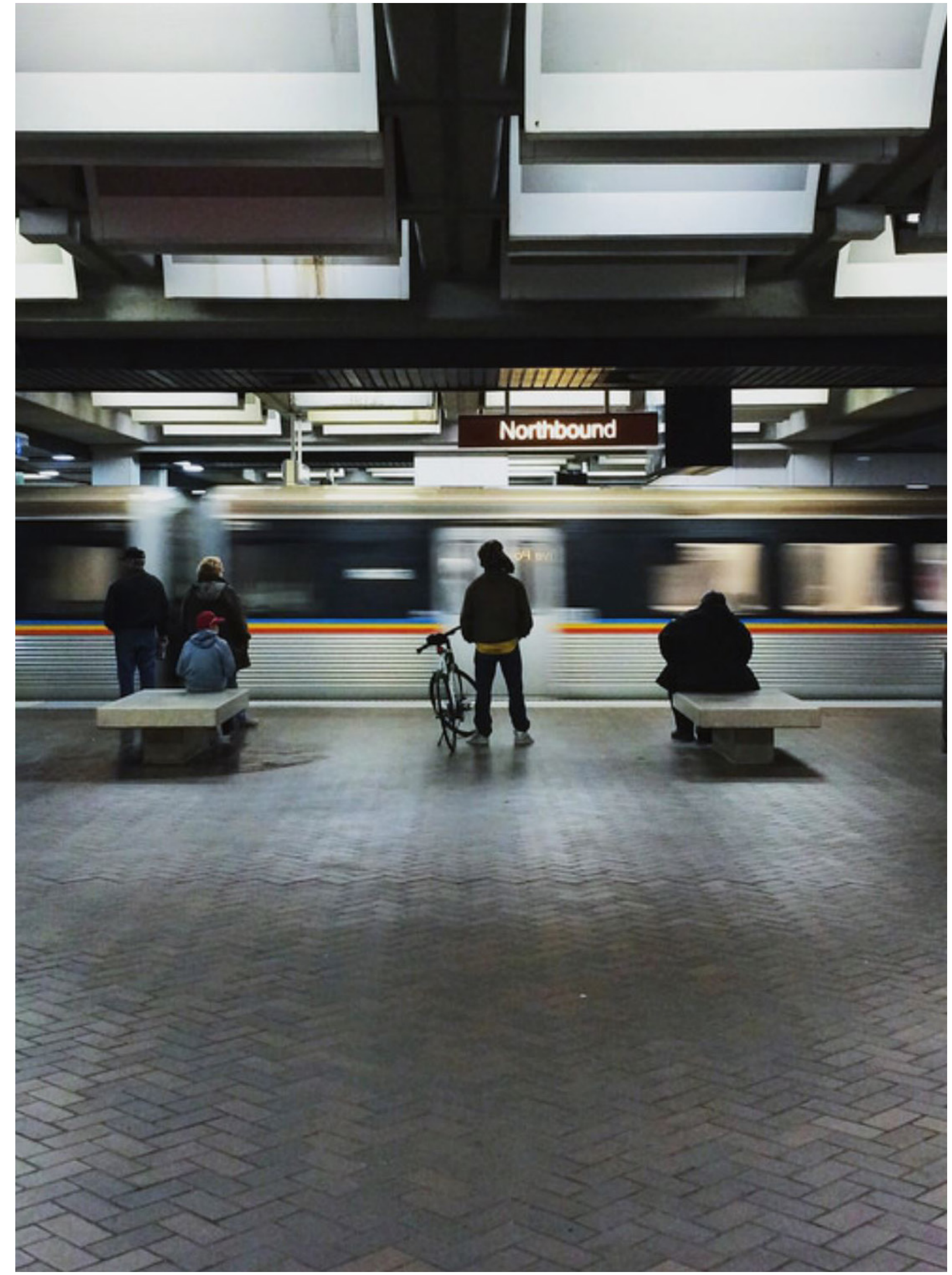

Figure 4 | Atlanta traffic and cityscape

THE BIRTH OF MARTA

Atlanta's journey toward public transportation began in the early 1960s, led by the city's mayor at the time Ivan Allen. In 1965 the Georgia General Assembly voted to create the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), a public transit system that would serve the city of Atlanta and its five surrounding counties: Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinett. Unfortunately, support for this unified and expansive system quickly diminished, as only two of the five counties (Fulton and Dekalb) approved both the necessary referendum and tax funding (See Figure 7). Regardless of its new limitations, MARTA officially formed in 1971 and purchased the Atlanta Transit System, the city's existing bus service.[3] MARTA became the only public transit authority in the Metro Atlanta area, and operated exclusively as a bus system for the next eight years.

In 1975 MARTA began construction on their heavy rail system, backed by $900 million in federal funding, which became available after Seattle voters rejected a similar rail system.[4] Beginning with only one rail line and thirteen stations in 1979, MARTA grew steadily throughout the next two decades to provide 4 lines (48 miles total) and 38 stations by the year 2000.[5] Since then the heavy rail system has yet to grow beyond this physical infrastructure (See Figure 8). Along with its heavy rail lines, MARTA currently provides additional service through 101 bus routes, totaling 1,439 miles of Atlanta road. In 2017 MARTA rail and bus service ranked tenth in overall public transportation ridership in the U.S.

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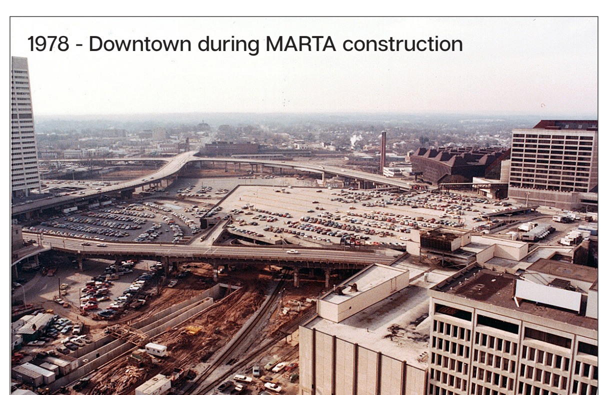
ica's Urban Future, (New York, Basic Books, 2017), IX.

3 Joey Kline, "History of MARTA," AdvanceAtlanta.com, February 14, 2016, https://www.advanceatlanta.com/transportation-and-marta-updates/the-history-of-marta/.

4 HistoryLink, "Voters reject rail transit plan and three other Forward Thrust bond proposals on May 19, 1970," HistoryLink.org, September 19, 2002, http://www.historylink.org/File/3961.

5 Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson and Angel O. Torres, *Sprawl City: Race, Politics and Planning in Atlanta*, (Washington, DC, Island Press, 2000), 57.


1961 - Downtown before MARTA construction


1978 - Downtown during MARTA construction

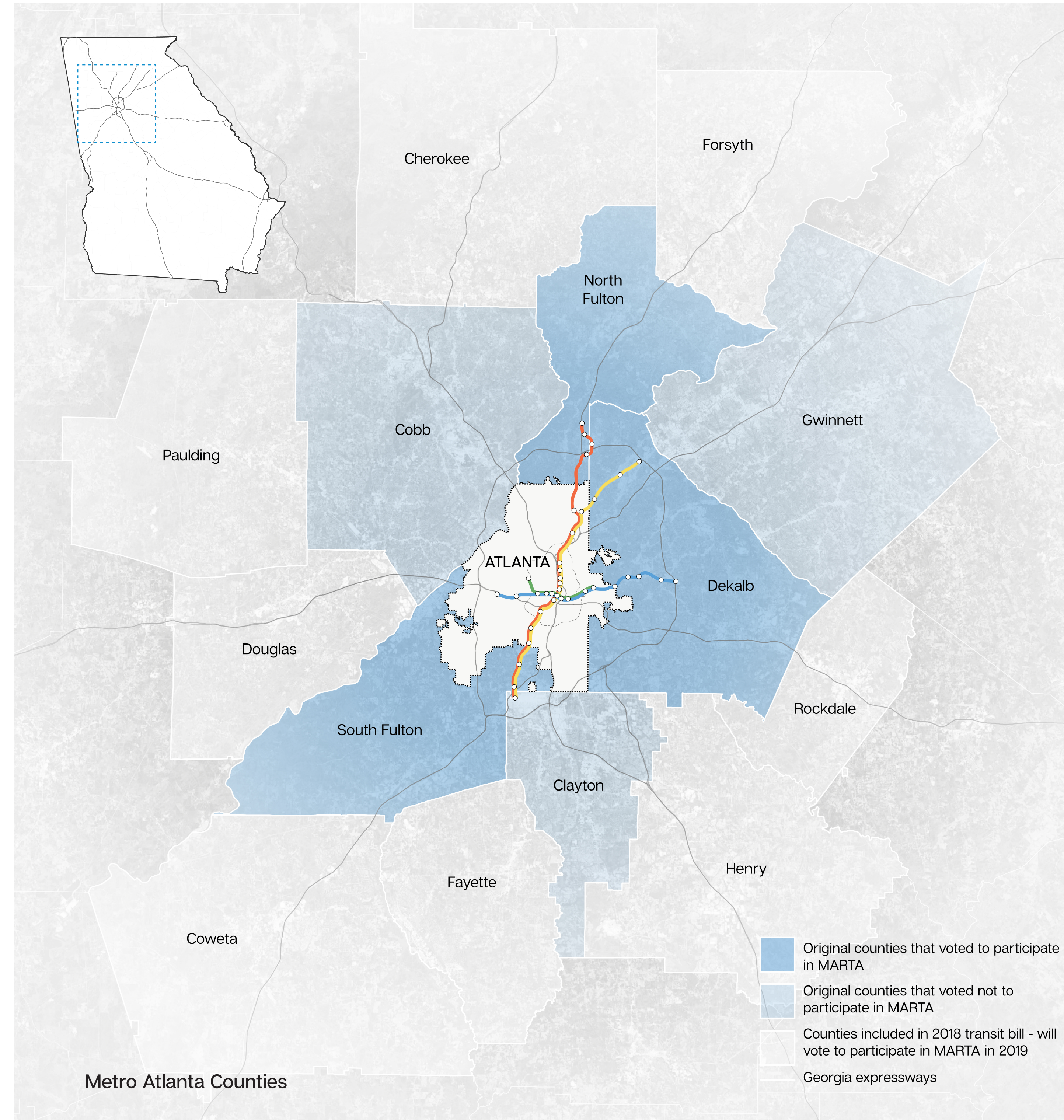


Figure 5-7 (left to right) | Atlanta before MARTA construction(1961), Atlanta during MARTA construction (1978), Metro Atlanta counties

with an estimated 124 million transit passenger trips per year, just behind Seattle with 132 million trips reported. The same year Atlanta ranked ninth in rail service (67.8 million trips) and sixteenth in bus service (56.3 million trips). [6]

While statistics prove that the system is well used, the numbers pale in comparison to cities like New York, Chicago and even Los Angeles. Atlanta's total transit trips per year calculate to an optimistic 478,000 trips per day (counting only business days in 2017) compared to New York with just under 14 million trips per day.

6 APTA. "Ridership Report Archives." APTA.com. March 18, 2018. Accessed June 7, 2018. http://www.apta.com/resources/statistics/Pages/RidershipArchives.aspx.

Figure 8-9 (left to right) | Existing rail lines, MARTA vs Sound Transit infographics

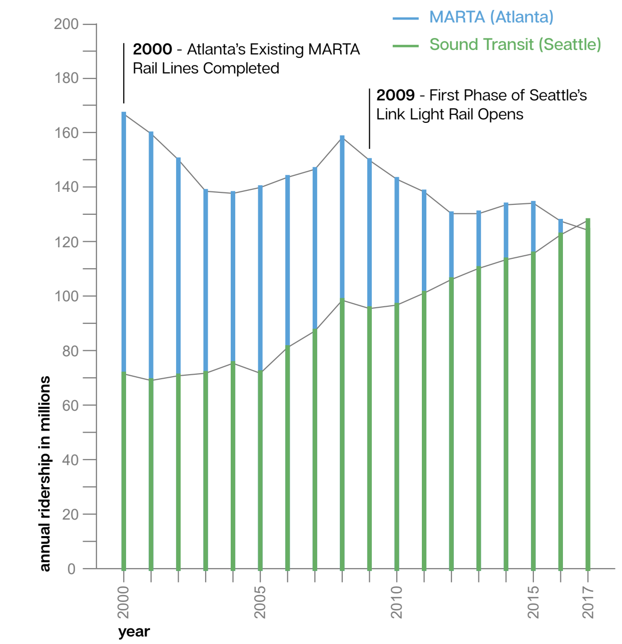
MARTA VERSUS SOUND TRANSIT

Comparing MARTA ridership with Seattle's more familiar Sound Transit system, Figure 9 shows annual ridership from 2000 to 2017. Atlanta completed construction of their heavy rail in 2000 while Seattle opened the first phase of the Link Light Rail in 2009.

Atlanta's annual ridership has decreased 26% since the year 2000 while Seattle's annual ridership has increased 71%. In 2015, Atlanta was ranked 37tth in the US for ridership per capita at 9.8% while Seattle ranked 15th at 20.1%.[7] It is also important to note the percentage of riders using bus versus rail. Seattle shows a significant bias toward bus, while Atlanta shows a bias toward rail.

But, as the next section will discuss, in order for Metro Atlanta to accept mass transit as a viable means of commuting, the city must overcome a history of division in its physical and social fabric.

7 American Community Survey, "List of U.S. cities with high transit ridership," Wikipedia, Accessed October 26, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._cities_with_high_transit_ridership.



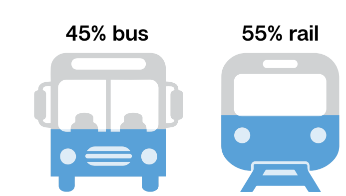
MARTA vs Sound Transit Ridership

ATLANTA

26% decrease since 2000

9.8% ridership per capita (2015)

37th in US for ridership per capita (2015)

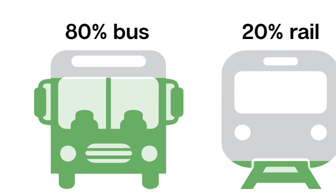


SEATTLE

71% increase since 2000

20.1% ridership per capita (2015)

15th in US for ridership per capita (2015)



A CITY DIVIDED

In its early years of operation, Atlanta bus and rail transportation quickly gained a reputation for being unsafe and unreliable. To better understand the negative perception of MARTA, it is important to recognize the social landscape of Metro Atlanta during the second half of the twentieth century. The goal of public transit is to efficiently and effectively move people throughout the city, but this task becomes exponentially more challenging when invisible barriers are erected between communities. As Mark Pendergast describes, "There are really two Atlantas, black and white. . . the racial divide remains an often unspoken aspect of every other issue facing the city."[8] The history of this division spans centuries, but the "white flight" movement of the 1960s had a crucial impact on the transportation issues still plaguing the city today. As lawmakers prohibited segregation in the public realm in education and housing, citizens took it upon themselves to divide by means of geographic separation. By 1980 approximately 160,000 whites had fled the city.[9]

8 Pendergast, *City on the Verge*, 63.
9 Ibid, 82.

The resulting urban sprawl increased dependency on personal automobiles and personal space, antithetical to the mission of mass transit. What remains in the urban fabric is a stark division between the city and its suburban surroundings. The separation is apparent as Atlantans commonly categorize themselves as "ITP" or "OTP," living inside or outside the perimeter highway (I-285) that encircles the city. Those who live OTP, or outside the perimeter, have historically resisted the expansion of public transit for fear of providing "unsavory people" access to their communities.[10] This fear most often implies a correlation between mass transit and increased criminal activity, as illustrated by an Atlanta native in 1997 arguing, "[t]he criminals can get off the train and break into your home and get back onto the train."[11] This common belief has been refuted by statistical analysis. In 2003 Keith R. Ihlanfeldt, a professor of Economics at Florida State University, performed an in-depth study on the correlation of rail transit and neighborhood crime in Atlanta, concluding that transit actually reduced suburban crime.[12] Other suburbanites have admitted blatant prejudice in their motives for resisting MARTA. Gwinnett County commissioner W.J. Dodd stated in 1990, "One of our worst fears is bringing people out of Atlanta, the minorities."[13] While this mindset persists for some, considerable progress has been made in the past two decades. Concurrently, the demographics of Metro Atlanta have shifted in a major way. Four of the five core Metro Atlanta counties are now "majority minority" districts, and experts anticipate all five to become so by 2021.[14] Discrimination has played a considerable role in the development of the city, but as demographics shift, the boundaries between these "two Atlantas" are blurring, and in some areas, disappearing.

10 Eric Jaffee, "The Myth That Mass Transit Attracts Crime Is Alive In Atlanta," CityLab, December 11, 2014, Accessed June 8, 2018, https://www.citylab.com/equity/2014/12/the-myth-that-mass-transit-attracts-crime-persists-in-atlanta/383609/.
11 David Pendered, "Where to draw the line: North Fulton and DeKalb debate best place for MARTA expansion," Atlanta Journal and Constitution, August 17, 1997, Accessed June 13, 2018.

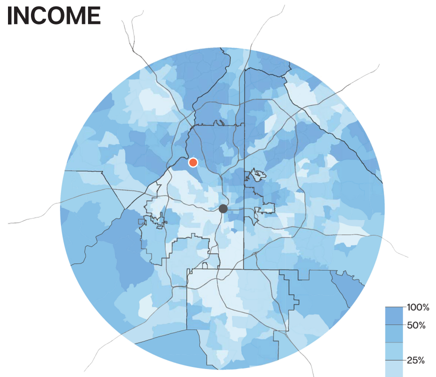
12 Keith R. Ihlanfeldt, "Rail Transit and Neighborhood Crime: The Case of Atlanta, Georgia," Southern Economic Journal, Vol. 70, No. 2 (October 2003), Accessed June 13, 2018, p. 273-294, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3648969.
13 David Firestone, "Overcoming a Taboo, Buses Will Now Serve Suburban Atlanta," The New York Times, April 8, 2002, Accessed June 8, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/08/us/overcoming-a-taboo-buses-will-now-serve-suburban-atlanta.html.
14 Bo Emerson, "The new face of Cobb County: Whites will be a minority in 4 years," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, April 27, 2017, Accessed April 13, 2018, https://www.myajc.com/news/local/the-new-face-cobb-county-whites-will-minority-years/6nF-3PmSrpkFfy5TSrXCYaL/.

DEMOGRAPHICS

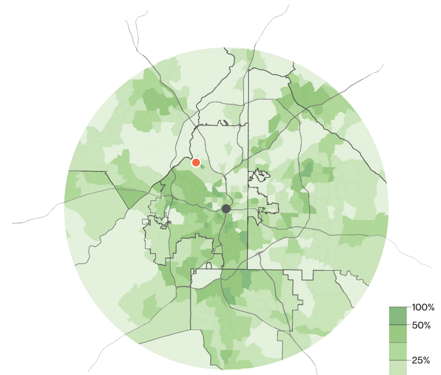
The maps shown on the following page (figure 10), depict some of the demographics of the city - income, education, race, and transportation. Concentrations of higher income and education, along with racial divisions, are evident, but the most homogeneous of these maps are those pertaining to transportation. According to 2018 census data, the strong majority of Metro Atlanta households own one or more vehicles.[15] Overlaying these demographic colors, figure 11 shows communities connected by MARTA rail. The neighborhoods reached are limited by rail infrastructure. Figure 12 then shows the communities connected by rail and bus combined. The expanded radius illustrates the crucial role that bus service plays within a successful transit network.

15 Easy Analytic Software, Inc. (EASI), "Household - Median Vehicles," (2018), Distributed by SimplyAnalytics.com.

INCOME

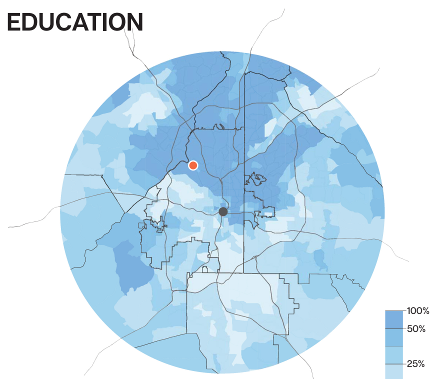


Percentage of Population with
Household Income > $100,000

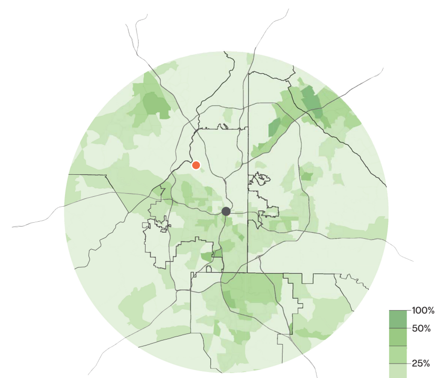


Percentage of Population
Living in Poverty

EDUCATION

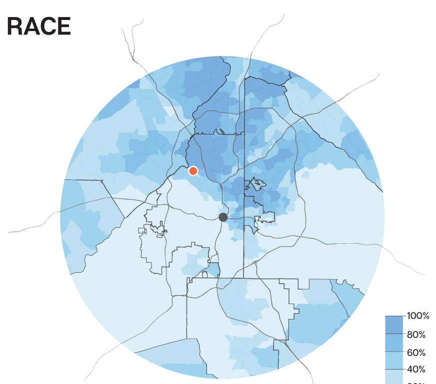


Percentage of Population with
College Degree or Higher

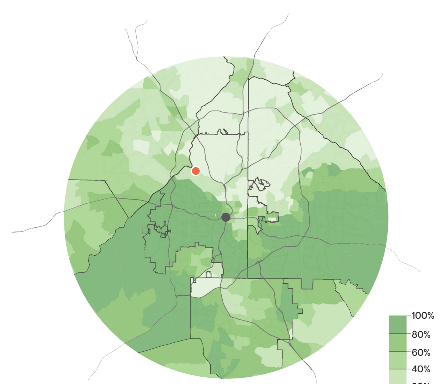


Percentage of Population with
No High School Diploma

RACE

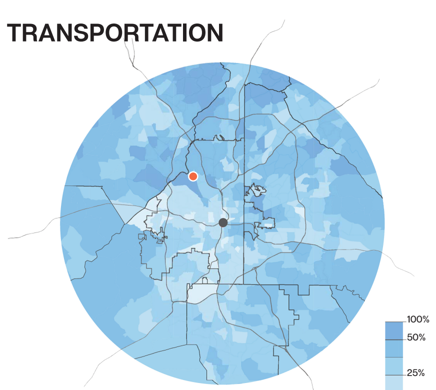


Percentage of
White Population

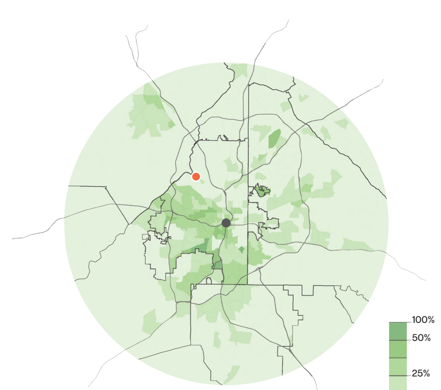


Percentage of
Black Population

TRANSPORTATION



Percentage of Households with
Two or More Vehicles



Percentage of Households with
Zero Vehicles

communities reached by MARTA RAIL

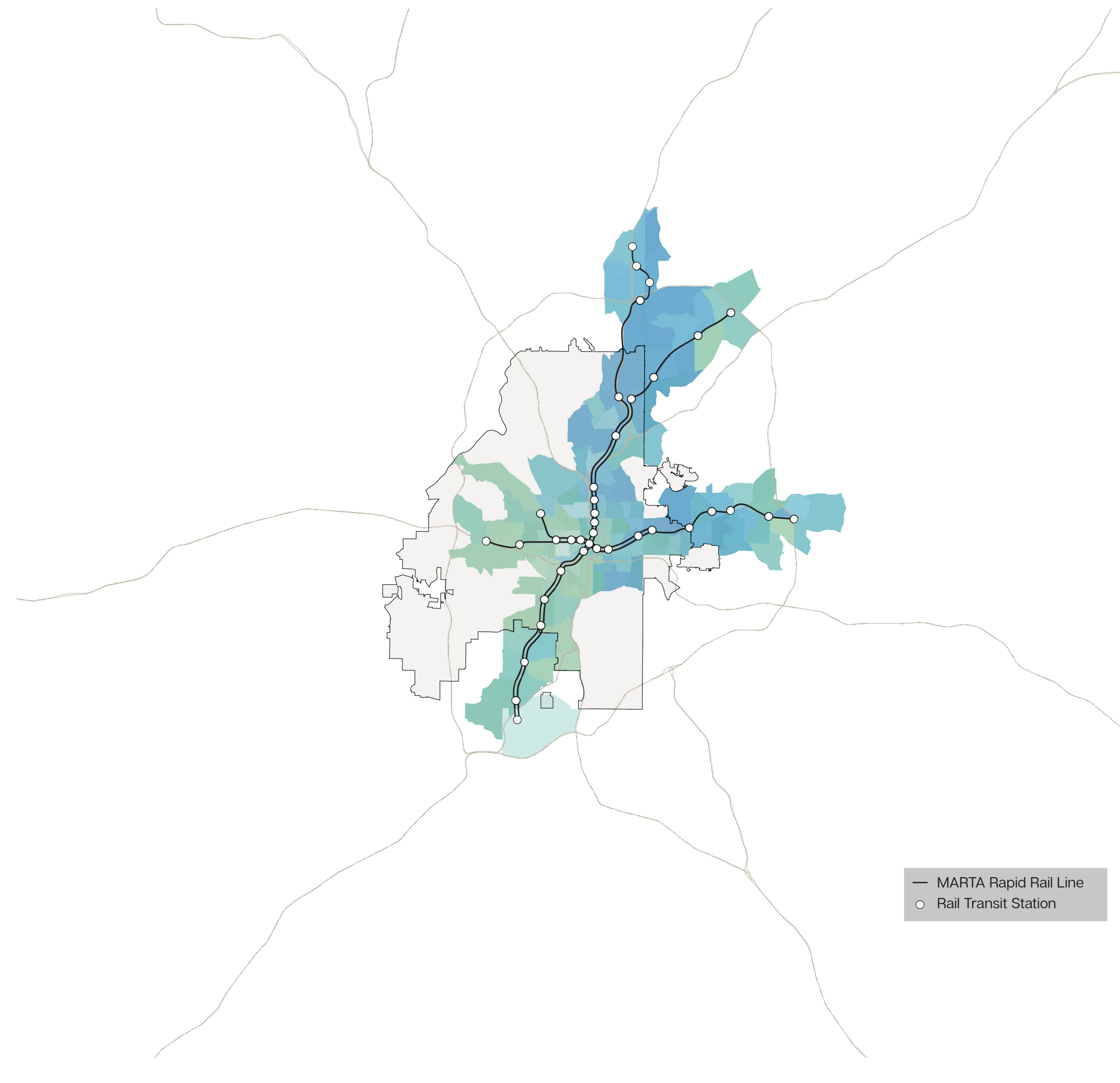
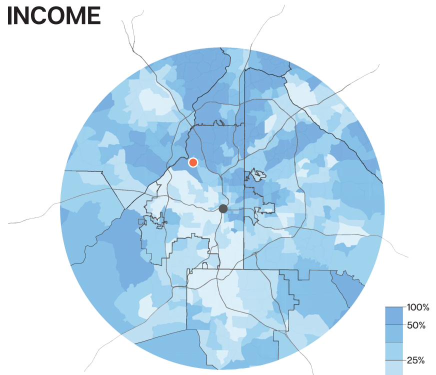
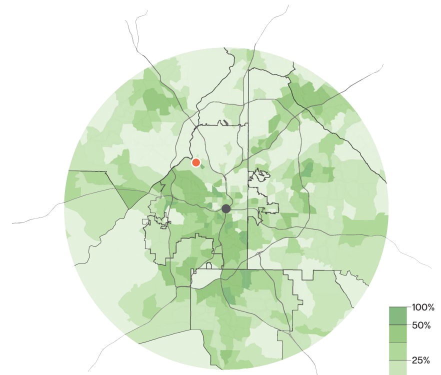


Figure 10-11 (left to right) | Atlanta demographics, Communities reached by MARTA rail

INCOME

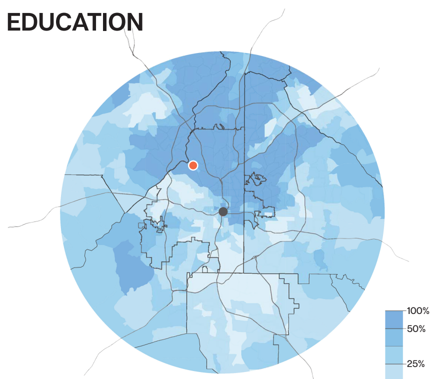


Percentage of Population with
Household Income > $100,000

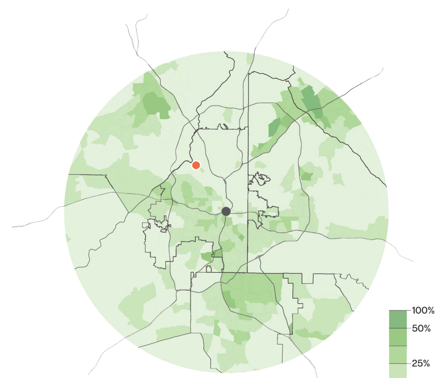


Percentage of Population
Living in Poverty

EDUCATION

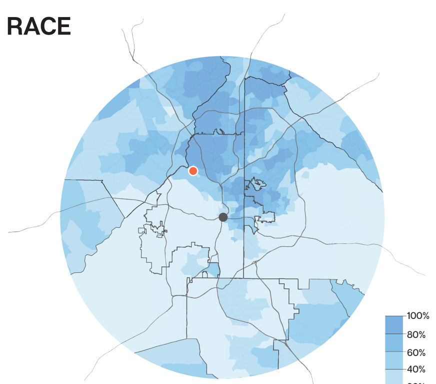


Percentage of Population with
College Degree or Higher

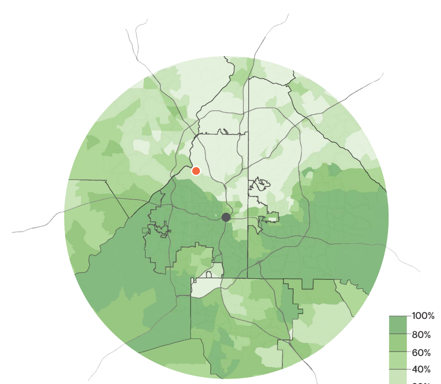


Percentage of Population with
No High School Diploma

RACE

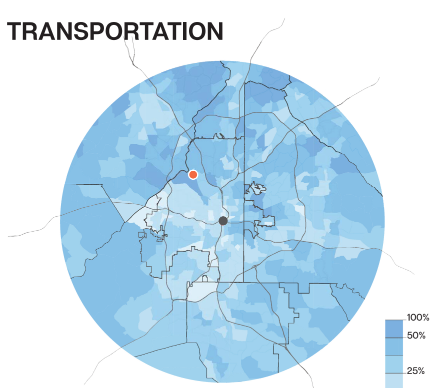


Percentage of
White Population

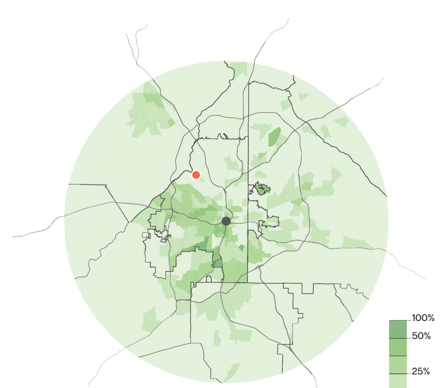


Percentage of
Black Population

TRANSPORTATION



Percentage of Households with
Two or More Vehicles



Percentage of Households with
Zero Vehicles

communities reached by MARTA RAIL AND BUS

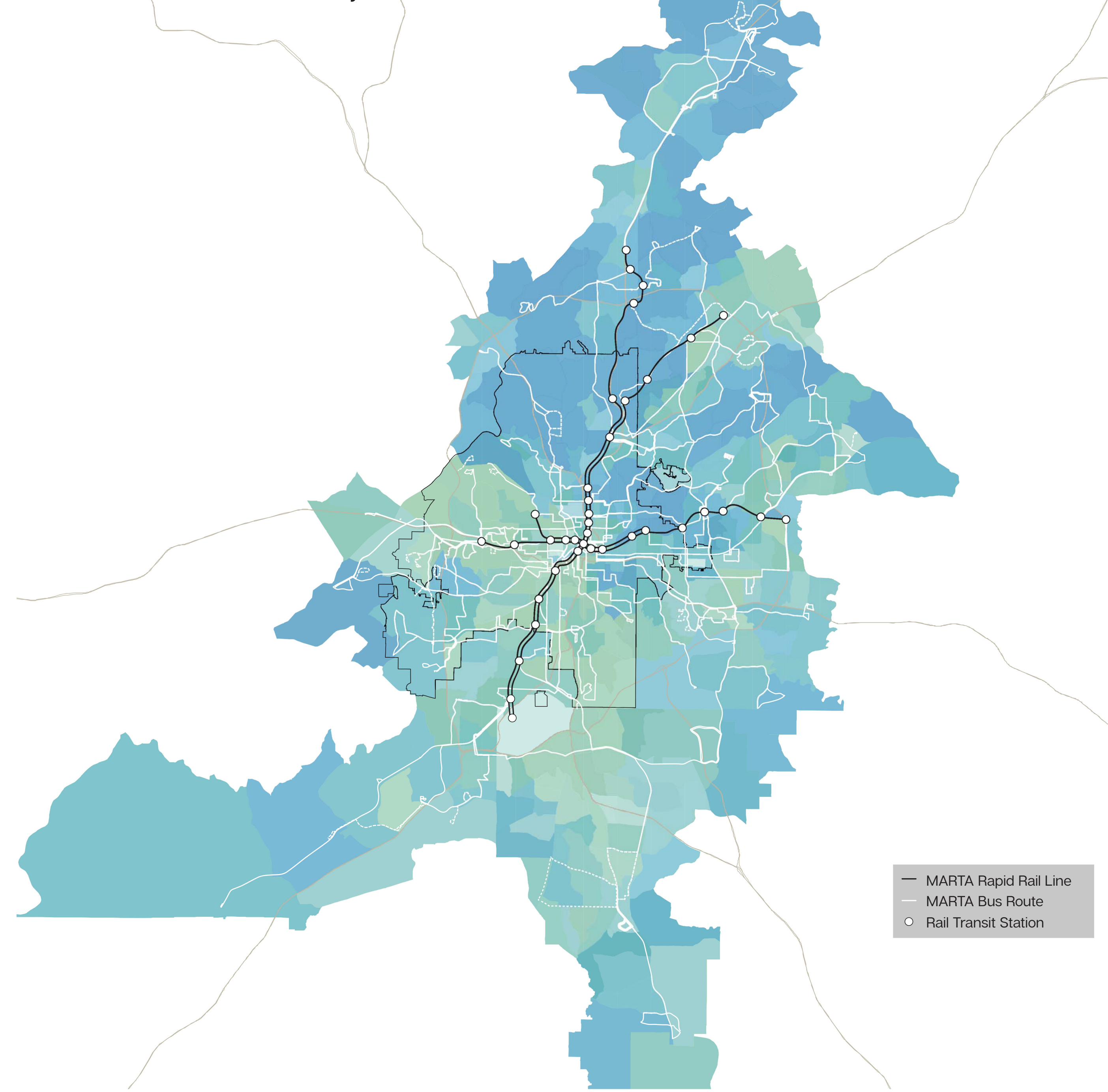


Figure 10,12 (left to right) | Atlanta demographics, Communities reached by MARTA rail and bus

WHAT REMAINS

While resistance to integration affected MARTA adversely during its inception, the social landscape is only partially responsible for its deficiencies. At the time of MARTA's development, the city was torn between its historic allegiance toward car owners and emerging commitment to mass transit users. At every scale, from city-wide infrastructure to a single rail station, MARTA is designed for the car over the pedestrian. As a result, the existing stations are oversized, poorly located, and largely inaccessible by foot. Many of the world's most successful mass transit systems, like those in Paris, New York, and Madrid, were built near the turn of the twentieth century, before the rise of the personal automobile. When Atlanta began developing their version of mass transit, the car already ruled the city, and with it, came a complex network of roads and highways. Former transportation reporter David Goldberg notes the city's "failure to capitalize on the incredible success . . . in winning funding for MARTA by undermining it with the incredible success . . . in getting funding for the interstate highways."[16] Mass transit has always been treated as a secondary form of transportation, which is reflected in its funding and operation.

In contrast to the small and unobtrusive metro entrances seen in New York and Paris, many MARTA stations resemble "giant bunkers and block-sized compounds."[17] Most are difficult to access on foot and feature large surface parking lots. While parking remains a necessary component in Atlanta's stations especially near the suburbs, car storage often inhibits users arriving on foot or bike. The existing stations are typically uniform and utilitarian in design. Architects of the 1970s and 1980s relied on this austere style for civic buildings to prioritize function and reinforce recognition. In the aim of reinforcing the MARTA brand, the stark appearance was believed to project competency and instill trust in riders. But the resulting utilitarian design is regrettably cold and drab, with each station nearly identical to the next.

16 Doug Monroe, "Where It All Went Wrong," *Atlanta Magazine*, August 1, 2012, Accessed May 12, 2018, http://www.atlantamagazine.com/great-reads/marta-tsplost-transportation/.
17 Derek Edwards, "Why is it so hard to walk to a MARTA station?", Progressive Transit, March 4, 2013, Accessed May 12, 2018, https://progressivetransit.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/why-is-it-so-hard-to-walk-to-a-marta-station/.

Figure 13-14 (top to bottom) | King Memorial Station 2003, Five Points Station 2002

Figures 15 and 16 show recent improvements made to the existing stations seen in figures 13 and 14 by integration of public art and community-focused program. Emory PhD Dr. Fahamu Pecou completed the first of four large-scale MARTA murals at King Memorial Station. The artwork features the message "RISE ABOVE," inspired by the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "An individual has not started living until he can *rise above* the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."[18] Figure 15 shows Pecou proudly posing in front of the King Memorial mural at the ribbon-cutting event in 2016. Figure 16 shows a different method of station rehabilitation by the integration of additional community-focused program. This soccer field addition at the Five Points Station is the first installation of the Station Soccer initiative by Soccer in the Streets, an Atlanta-based nonprofit that brings children's soccer programs to less privileged communities.[19] With funding from Atlanta United FC, these soccer fields have begun to re-energize the once-barren public space of urban stations.

Many Atlantans still regard MARTA's greatest downfall as its infrequency of transit stops and general unreliability. TIME Magazine ranked Atlanta among the ten worst cities for public transit based on three data points – percent of working-age residents near a transit stop (38%), median wait time for any rush hour transit vehicle (10.2 min), and percent of jobs reachable via transit in 90 min (22%).[20] MARTA's insufficient network and unreliable service is, undeniably, one of its greatest hurdles, not to be ignored. This thesis, however, recognizes the steps that MARTA and the city of Atlanta have taken towards improving problems related to infrastructure. These improvements will take considerable time and money and can only be successful if Atlantans relinquish their reliance on personal automobiles. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on the role that architecture can play in enhancing rider experience with intent to reform the public's perceptions of mass transit.

18 Kimber Williams, "Art for all: Fahamu Pecou takes his painting to the people," Emory New Center, June 30, 2016, Accessed December 13, 2018, https://news.emory.edu/stories/2016/06/er_fahamu_pecou_marta/campus.html.
19 Camille Pendley, "Soccer in the Streets brings the game to MARTA's Five Points station," Atlanta Magazine, March 21, 2017, Accessed December 13, 2018, https://www.atlantamagazine.com/news-culture-articles/soccer-streets-brings-game-martas-five-points-station/.
20 TIME Staff, "The 20 Best and Worst Cities for Public Transit."

Figure 15-16 (top to bottom) | King Memorial Station 2016 with mural artist Dr. Fahamu Pecou, Five Points Station 2017 with soccer field addition

ARCHITECTURE OF TRANSIT

Cities like Atlanta, Los Angeles and Seattle are limited in the knowledge they can glean from successful transit systems of the past. These newer car-centric cities are facing a new challenge – designing in and around existing infrastructure while transportation technology rapidly evolves. So the question arises as to how to design transit centers for the future. Urban planner Caroline Bos addresses this issue in her firm, UNStudio's design of a new rail station in the Dutch city of Arnhem in 2015. While the context differs greatly from the U.S., the strategy of emphasizing people over vehicles is universally applicable, particularly to the situation in Atlanta.

One of Bos's primary principles in transit design promotes equity among riders in the aim to *"create no hierarchy of passengers."* [21] Mass transit must similarly function as an equitable network. One mode of transportation, whether it be bus, heavy rail, or light rail, cannot effectively serve an entire city. Unfortunately, modes can be

21 Feargus O'Sullivan, "Planning the Transit Hubs of the Future," CityLab, July 10, 2017, Accessed May 12, 2018, https://www.citylab.com/design/2017/07/planning-the-transit-hubs-of-the-future/532905/.

Figure 17-20 | Metro Atlanta pedestrian photos 1-4

stereotyped according to the socio-economic class of the riders, which is reflected in their funding and design. Fergus O'Sullivan observes, "Too often, bus or streetcar terminals are treated as embarrassing afterthoughts in transit hub design . . . This serves to perpetuate the idea that buses are a grubby, second-tier way of getting around."[22] All transit options are dependent on each other, and accordingly, must be designed for every user, from the city to the suburbs. As public transportation reaches into the Metro Atlanta suburbs, rail transit will be imperative in moving people from outside the perimeter into the city, but all forms of transit must work harmoniously to achieve a fully successful transit system.

Caroline Bos identifies another important principle of transit design – *"Transit hubs are social centers and expressions of civic identity that can boost or damage local pride."*[23] Bos explains that transit design should reflect locality, but in a sensitive manner to avoid clichés. While city-wide spirit emanating from sports fanatics can be energizing, pride that is truly transformative originates at the neighborhood scale. A transit network has the unique ability to change in character along its route, telling a distinct narrative about the city along the way. MARTA has begun embracing this principle by incorporating local art into their stations, through an initiative called Artbound. MARTA arts administrator Katherine Dirga speaks about the experiential quality of these interventions, noting how "[a]rt and performance humanizes these spaces, warms them up, and makes them feel less imposing. Seeing a fantastic artwork or listening to live music redefines the transit experience."[24] Over the last century, the American commute has gained a reputation of dreaded monotony. Art integration can add variety to the commute and encourage citizens to use transit over other modes of travel. Concurrently, Atlantans have affirmed that they value these efforts. Courtney Hammond, a MARTA Advisory Council for the Arts board member and co-founder, explains "[a]rt is no longer an afterthought in Atlanta development. For the public to accept and embrace a project, it's hands down a requirement."[25]

22 O'Sullivan, "Planning the Transit Hubs of the Future."
23 Ibid.

24 Jacinta Howard, "Mass transit, mass art: How MARTA acts as a canvas," *Atlanta Magazine*, 2017, Accessed April 29, 2018, http://www.atlantamagazine.com/list/new-generation-atlanta-artists/mass-transit-mass-art-marta/.
25 Howard, "Mass transit, mass art: How MARTA acts as a

Figure 21 | Artbound program - Artists paint mural at Midtown Station (2018)

Figure 22 | Artbound program - Completed Fahamu Pecou mural at Ashby Station (2018)

Figure 23 | Artbound program - Dashill Smith and his band at West End Station

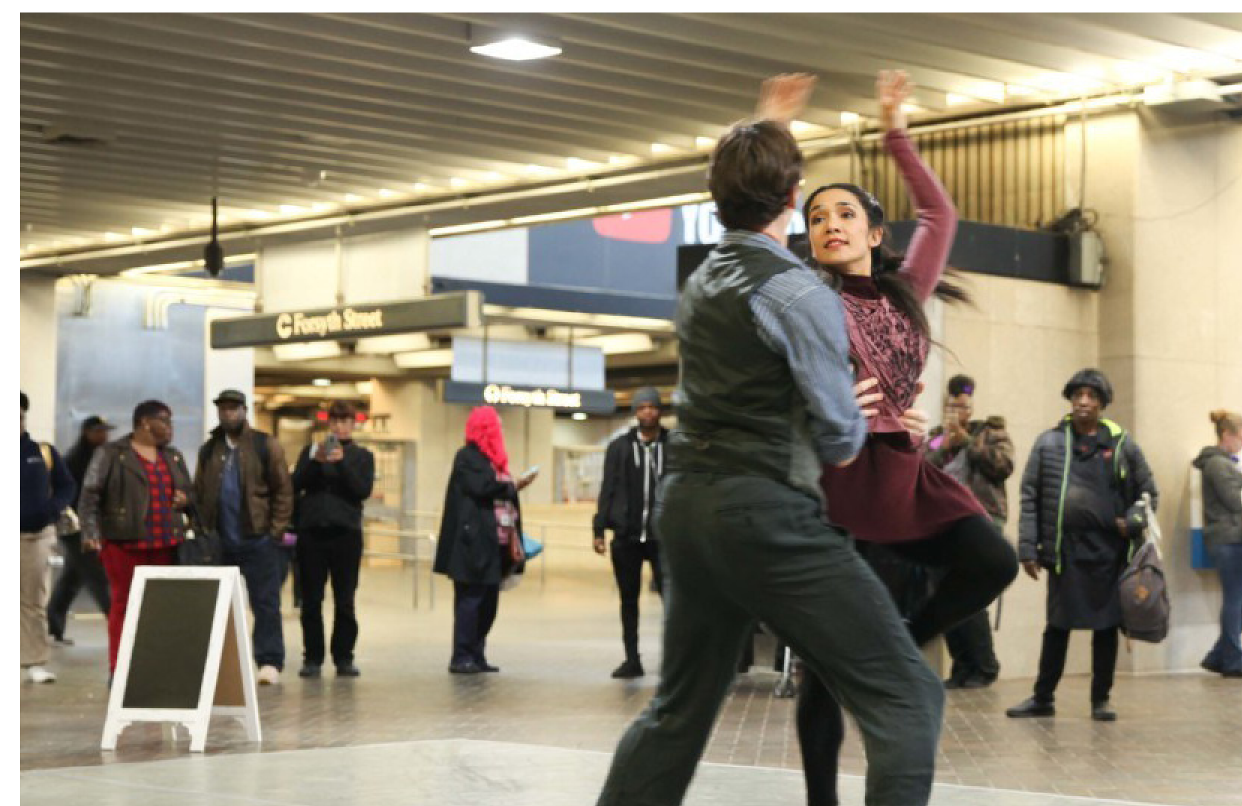


Figure 24 | Artbound program - Terminus Modern Ballet Theater at Five Points Station

Artbound recently partnered with local artists to complete murals on three of their heavy rail stations – Midtown, Ashby and Decatur. These quick and inexpensive efforts have dramatically humanized existing stations, transforming the experience of both the transit user and passersby.

Finally, the aim of designing for safety and accessibility may seem implicit, but this cannot go unsaid. Given the high percentage of the public who associate public transit with crime and unreliable service, this thesis prioritizes design strategies which counteract these perceptions. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) has published six principles for designing safe and accessible transit stations and stops. These principles range from guidelines for equitable design to defining the best physical relationship between the street and the platform, all of which have informed this thesis (See Figure 25).[26] NACTO presents one principle in particular that speaks to the way that both designers and users should think about transit stations and stops.

> *Stations are Gateways. . . Design stops and stations as introductions to the transit system, paying special attention to how transit space interacts with the sidewalk and adjoining buildings. . . [which] can anchor an improved local pedestrian realm and improve rider perceptions of transit service.(Figure 25)*[27]

Atlantans currently see stations as a means to an end, one of many unpleasant steps in the process of commuting. This mindset does not promote the significant benefits of travel that go beyond convenience and efficiency. Katherine Dirga, with the Artbound program, shared her goal for stations to instead "feel like destinations."[28] "Destination stations" typically require the addition of other programs, which sometimes take over the main goal of travel. This thesis argues that stations should be seen as gateways, "a means of access or entry to a place."[29] Mass transit provides a network which connects people to places throughout the city, and stations are the nodes that serve as the primary physical and symbolic link for the pedestrian. NACTO defines clear design strategies that help create a successful gateway that include wayfinding and site considerations.[30] The following case studies show how such simple strategies can be employed to activate the role of the transit station in the public realm.

canvas."

26 National Association of City Transportation Officials, "Transit Street Design Guide: Station & Stop Principles," NACTO.org, https://nacto.org/publication/transit-street-design-guide/stations-stops/station-stop-principles/.

27 NACTO, "Transit Street Design Guide: Station & Stop Principles."

28 Howard, "Mass transit, mass art: How MARTA acts as a canvas."

29 Google Dictionary, s.v. "gateway," accessed June 14, 2018, https://www.google.com/search?q=gateway+definition&oq=gate&aqs=chrome.0.0j69i57j0j69i61j69i65l2.1636j1j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

30 NACTO, "Station & Stop Principles."

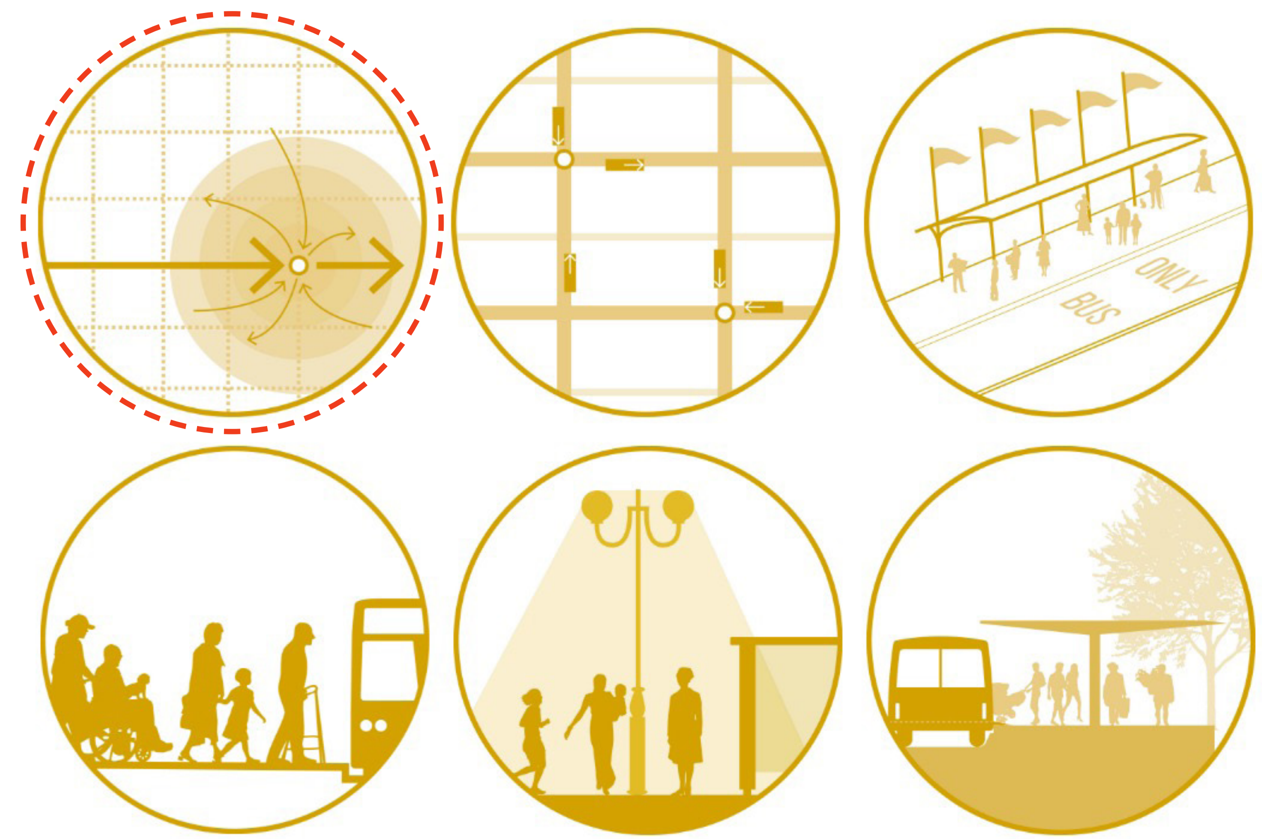
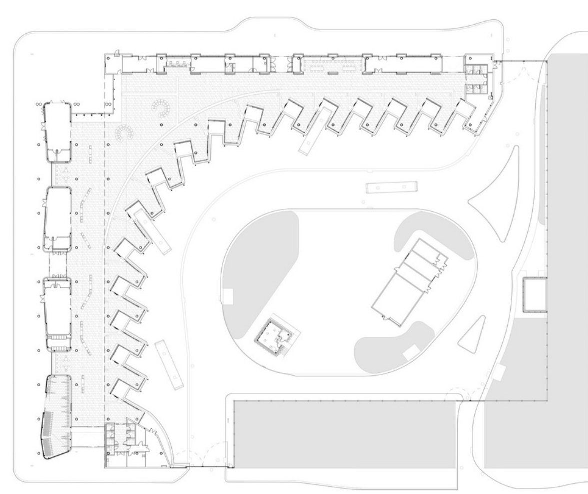


Figure 25 | NACTO station and stop principles

Christchurch Bus Interchange — Christchurch, New Zealand

The Christchurch Bus Interchange in New Zealand designed by Architectus illustrates the impact transit architecture can play in the revitalization of a city. Completed in 2015 after a devastating 2011 earthquake, this bus interchange illustrates an efficient strategy for circulation in plan, while creating a playful and iconic roof structure overhead. The architect explains, "As a vital part of the new civic infrastructure it needed to not only provide a highly efficient public transport hub but also help define the rebuilt city's identity and public space experience."[31] The station successfully accommodates a range of transportation methods, including bus, rideshare, and cyclists, with the possibility of integrated light rail in the future. The L-shaped building establishes a strong presence on the street, while also providing an open and ventilated waiting zone. Architectural writer Barnaby Bennett describes the building as a "hopeful example of design that focuses on the needs of people not the efficiencies of technological systems."[32] This bus interchange demonstrates civic design at an appropriate scale for the surrounding context and the clever, but sparing, use of dramatic forms to mark the pedestrian experience (See Figures 18-20).



31 "Christchurch Bus Interchange / Architectus," ArchDaily, July 16, 2016, Accessed April 29, 2018, https://www.archdaily.com/791283/christchurch-bus-interchange-architectus-plus-athfield-architects.

32 Barnaby Bennett, "Christchurch Bus Interchange," ArchitectureNow, February 23, 2016, Accessed June 16, 2018, http://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/christchurch-bus-interchange/.

Figure 26 (above) | Christchurch Bus Interchange ground plan, Figure 27-28 (right) | Christchurch Bus Interchange photos 1-2

Bus Station Canopies — Rotterdam, The Netherlands

The bus station canopies designed by MAXWAN architects + urbanists in Rotterdam are an experiment in minimal, but effective, design using limited resources. The designers noted that disparities in funding resulted in less attention to bus stop design compared to train stations. MAXWAN argues, “By paying close attention to all public space surrounding the railway hubs, the promise of true Transport Oriented Development can be kept alive. . .[E]ven within a limited budget, signature canopies [can] be designed and constructed.”[33] The resulting bus stop structures are nicknamed pillow and hammock, based on the direction in which the 5 x 10 meter roof warps. Each thin metal roof rests on four flat steel columns, all painted light pink, adding to the light and airy quality of the structures. These canopies dramatically draw the public eye, as MAXWAN intended. While the scale may be not appropriate for many sidewalk bus stops, the structures do highlight their role as shelter and marker (See Figures 21-22).

CONCLUSIONS

Atlanta is entering a pivotal time in the transformation of its public transit system, and Atlantans have already begun the fight for a better, more unified city. These case studies illustrate how the architecture of transit can make a significant contribution to the public realm while reinforcing the city’s identity.

33 “Bus Station Canopies / MAXWAN architects + urbanists.” ArchDaily, February 16, 2015, Accessed April 29, 2018, https://www.archdaily.com/598607/bus-station-canopies-maxwan-architects-urbanists.

Figure 29-30 (right) | Bus Station Canopies photos 1-2

chapter **THREE** / a changing city

With recent legislation and approved tax funding, Atlanta's transit initiatives are developing rapidly. This chapter will introduce the most recent developments, including the Atlanta BeltLine project and proposed MARTA expansion plans. Understanding an overview of the changes taking place in the city outlines the opportunities for design intervention, ranging in both context and scale. Chapter 3 concludes with an analysis of transit architecture from the smallest intervention, the bus stop, to the heavy rail station, identifying the architectural elements which compose these transit facilities and their significance to riders.

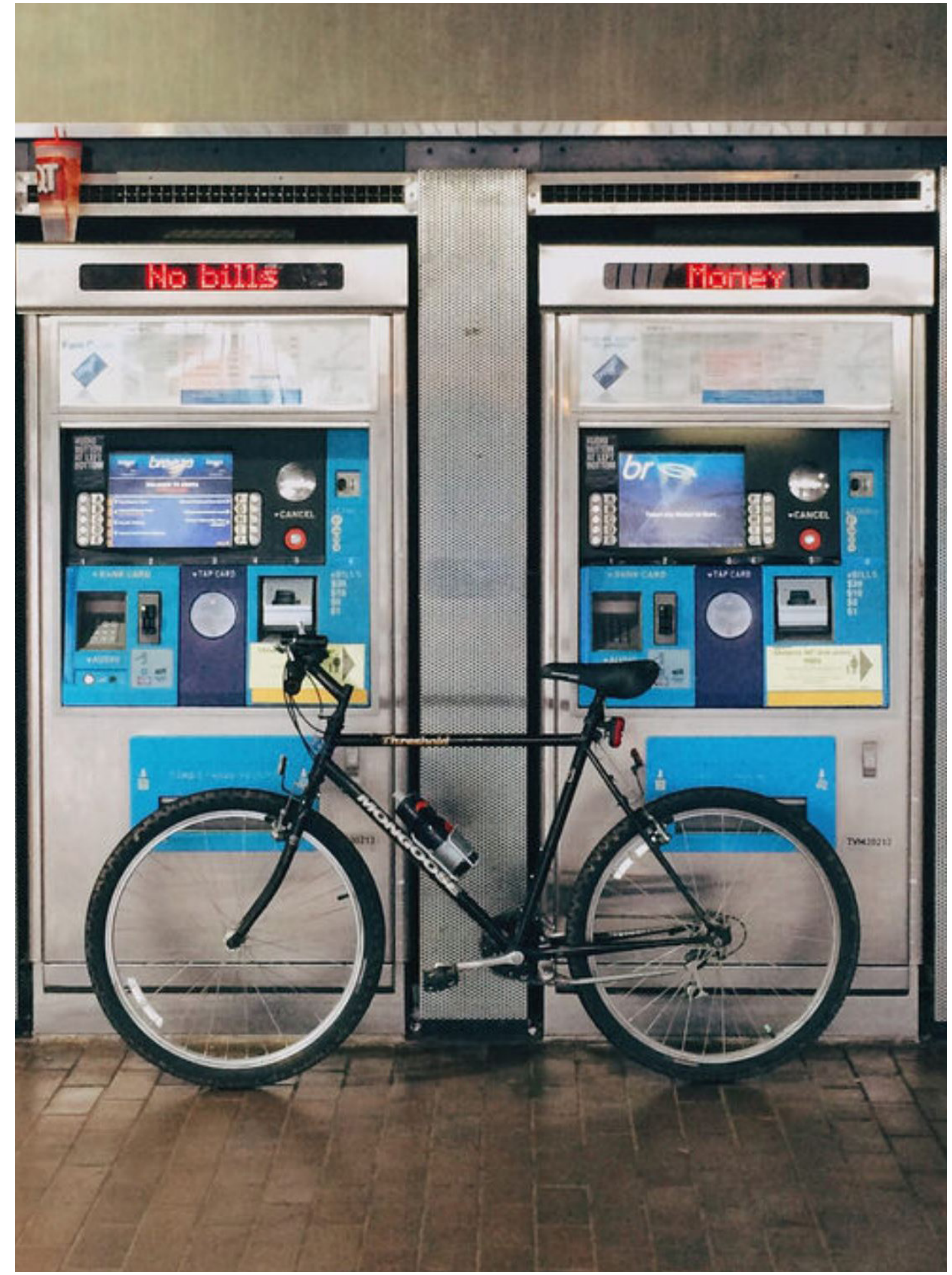


Figure 31 | Bicycle at MARTA ticketing kiosk

THE BELTLINE

The city's most recent, and ongoing, development in transportation reform is called the Atlanta BeltLine. The BeltLine is a redevelopment initiative that transforms the 22-mile historic railroad corridor encircling the city into a pedestrian walkway and potential streetcar line. The project was first conceived in 1999 as a master's thesis by Ryan Gravel, an architectural graduate student at Georgia Institute of Technology. Four trail segments and seven renovated parks are now open along the BeltLine, with two additional trail segments currently under construction. According to the BeltLine Implementation Plan published in 2013, the project is expecting completion of the first of three phases by the end of 2018 and full completion by 2030 (See Figure 32).[34] With the tagline "Where Atlanta comes together," the BeltLine initiative aims to connect people from all over the city, transforming a "traffic-obsessed" metropolis into a walkable, transit-oriented city.[35]

34 Atlanta BeltLine, "2030 Strategic Implementation Plan: Final Report," BeltLine.org, December 2013, Accessed April 29, 2018, http://beltlineorg.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Beltline_Implementation-Plan_web.pdf.
35 Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion and the Future of Great American Cities*, (New York, Knopf, 2012).

The BeltLine has received high praise from experts in urban planning, with land-use strategist Christopher Leinberger deeming it "the most important rail-transit project that's been proposed in the country, possibly in the world."[36] But many are still wary of the city-wide development, fearing the effects of gentrification on low-income neighborhoods. The 22-mile loop cuts through 45 Atlanta neighborhoods, which range along the socio-economic spectrum from mansions to homeless encampments. Georgia Tech professor and prior planning commissioner Mike Dobbins observes,

> *It has been a boon to people who ride bikes through vibrant, gentrifying neighborhoods to 21st-century jobs . . . [H]owever, the basic needs of the very people whose presence guaranteed the funding . . . have gone unmet. By realigning its significant resources, the BeltLine has the opportunity to honor one of its stated purposes: redressing the causes of Atlanta's persistent wealth gap.*[37]

The completed portion of the BeltLine has certainly

36 Richard Fausset, "A Glorified Sidewalk, and the Path to Transform Atlanta," *New York Times*, September 11, 2016, Accessed April 29, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/12/us/atlanta-beltline.html?_r=o.
37 Mike Dobbins, "Left Behind in Atlanta," *New York Times*, September 20, 2016, Accessed April 29, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/21/opinion/left-behind-in-atlanta.html.

attracted a higher income demographic, but the work has just begun. As noted by Dobbins, the Atlanta BeltLine developers still have the opportunity to assess and realign their resources over the next decade of development.

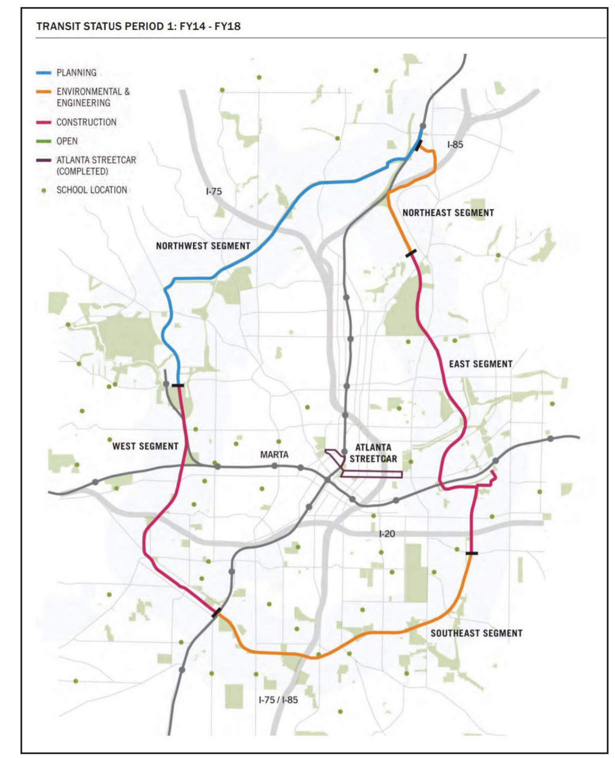


Figure 32 | Atlanta BeltLine Transit Plan, Period 1

EXPANSION PLANS

On May 3, 2018, Atlanta Governor Nathan Deal signed House Bill 930 into legislation, giving 13 Metro Atlanta counties the opportunity to raise sales tax for mass transit in a 2019 vote. Following this development, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* published a county-by-county analysis of current transit conditions and the likelihood of each county to embrace a transit tax.[38] The counties of Dekalb and Clayton, which joined MARTA in 1971 and 2014 respectively, are each anticipating extended rail lines, while Gwinnett County, which is not yet connected to the system, plans to expand both bus and rail. Four additional counties – Cobb, Henry, Coweta, and Douglas – have expressed partial interest, but four others – Fayette, Forsyth, Paulding, and Rockdale – do not anticipate that their voters will opt in for the MARTA tax.[39] Lastly, Fulton County, which encapsulates the city of Atlanta and MARTA's core, will see the most transit growth in the coming years through a 2016 initiative called "More MARTA."

Of these Metro Atlanta counties, Cobb has developed the most complicated relationship with MARTA, described at times as hostile. Cobb County voters are quite conflicted over

38 David Wickert, "Metro Atlanta transit expansion: a county-by-county look," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 4, 2018, Accessed May 5, 2018, https://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/metro-atlanta-transit-expansion-county-county-look/jrLJg9oGVg5zBaTjXuoSZN/.
39 Ibid.

transit expansion, some eager to improve public transportation options and others concerned that MARTA will take advantage of the county's wealth without addressing their unique needs.[40] With the third highest population of the 13 counties and its proximity to Downtown Atlanta, Cobb County has been granted increased flexibility by the General Assembly, being allowed to create a special district for the 2019 transit vote. The special district, if created, will most likely isolate South Cobb, which currently operates its own bus system called the CobbLinc. The special exemptions provided by HB 930 will hopefully inspire progress in Cobb County, enabling MARTA to execute their regional transit vision.

With an understanding of the long-term plans for the region, this thesis will focus on the published expansion plans, all of which exist within Fulton County and Dekalb County. In October 2018, MARTA published their proposed transit expansion and improvement plans. The proposal includes six light rail transit (LRT) routes, three bus rapid transit (BRT) routes, three arterial rapid transit (ART) routes, increased frequent local bus service, two new transit centers, and a number of station upgrades (See Figure 33).[41] Atlantans have criticized these plans because the project list was significantly diminished since the 2016 "More MARTA" vote. "It is not enough," expresses Ryan Gravel, urban planner and Atlanta Beltline visionary, who believes the city should prioritize Beltline LRT over the Clifton Corridor project.[42] While Gravel's criticism is valid, this thesis accepts the MARTA-proposed sites as appropriate for responsible development and in the city's best interest.

Given the range of interventions proposed in the 2018 expansion plan, the following analysis begins to identify the different architectural considerations required for projects throughout the city.

40 David Wickert, "Cobb County's conflicting views complicate regional transit vision," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 2, 2018, Accessed June 14, 2018, https://www.myajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/cobb-county-conflicting-views-complicate-regional-transit-vision/OnBDBHqxmxiLPThmrt7VvN/.

41 MARTA, "More MARTA Atlanta Fact Sheet: Fall 2018," itsMARTA.com, October 3, 2018, Accessed November 26, 2018, https://www.itsmarta.com/uploadedFiles/MARTA_101/Why_MARTA/City%20of%20Atlanta%20More%20MARTA_Print_v9.pdf.

42 David Wickert, "MARTA transit plan includes 21 miles of light rail," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 11, 2018, Accessed June 14, 2018, https://www.ajc.com/news/local-govt--politics/atlanta-transit-plan-includes-miles-light-rail/i82gtczJk7826JemLo87rJ/.

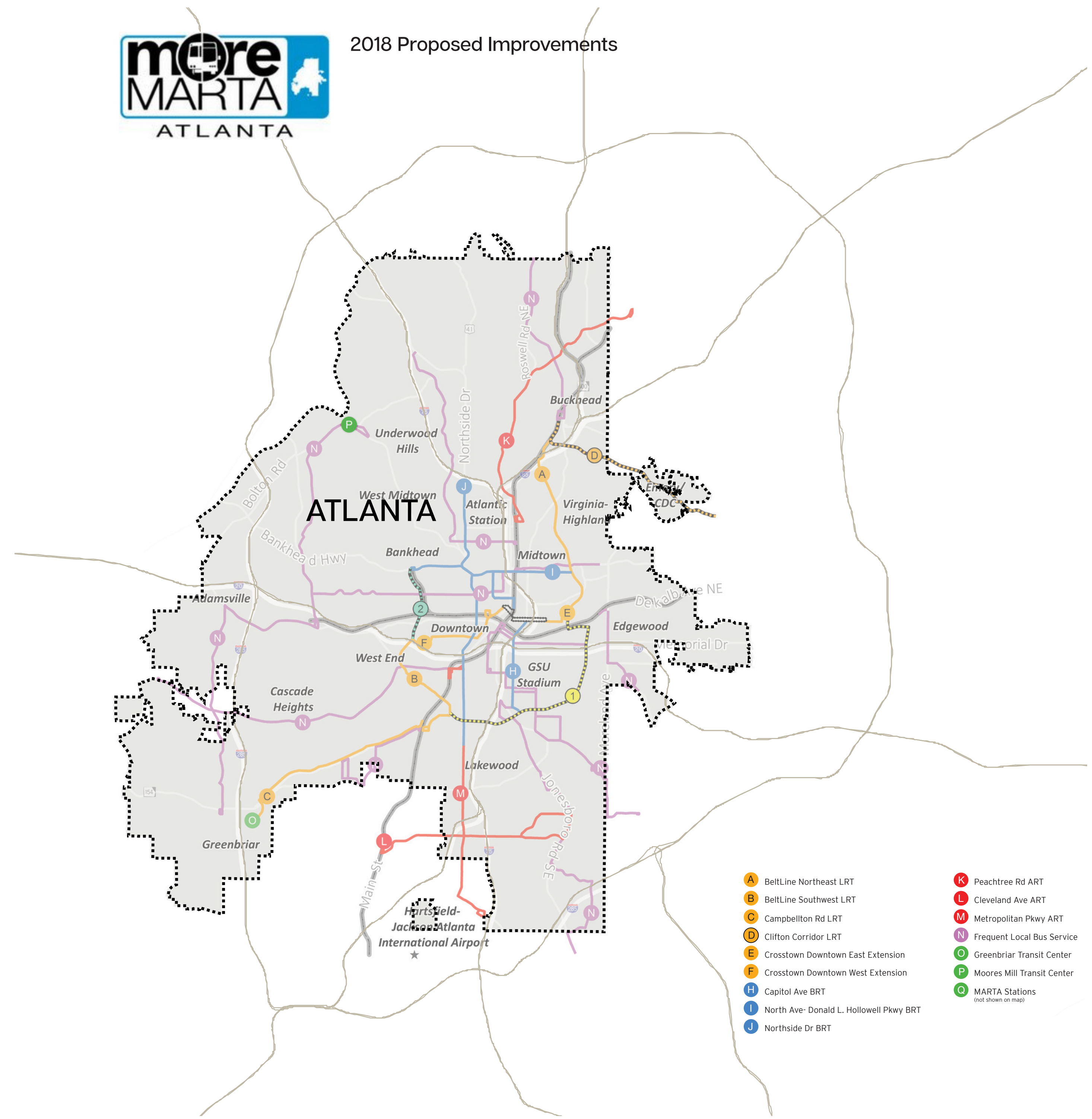


Figure 33 | "More MARTA" 2018 proposed improvements

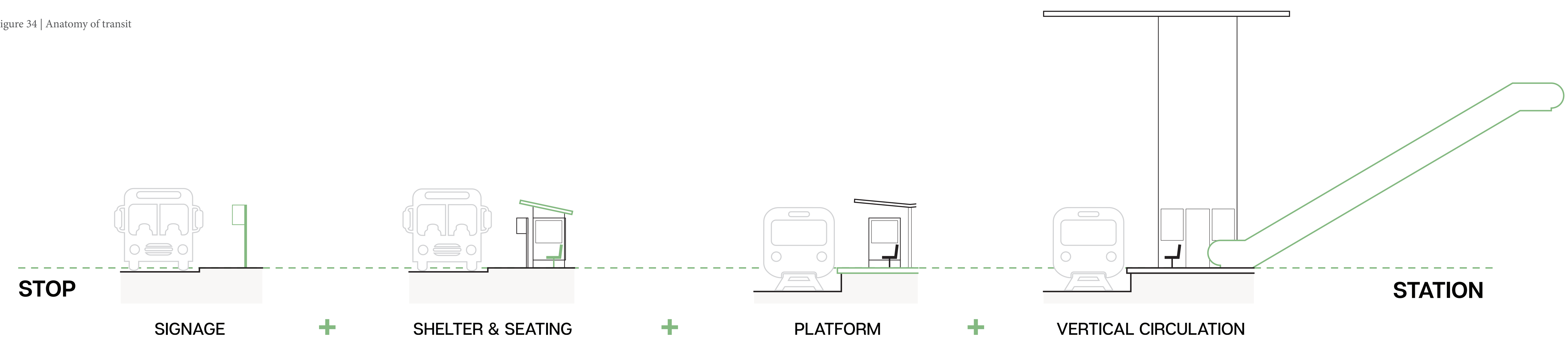
SITE, STATION AND STOP

Transit architecture varies dramatically across the city on two spectrums – one related to site and the other to the mode of transit. Addressing site, the built conditions within Atlanta city limits range from urban at its core to suburban at its boundary. In Downtown Atlanta, the most urban context, public transit options are at their highest volume, accompanied by a dense network of roads. At the city's northwest edge, the most suburban context, public transit is limited to bus service. Routes are infrequent and roads are far from pedestrian-friendly. These sites require different programmatic needs. For example, suburban sites may require more parking in addition to increased housing density nearby, while urban sites must be sensitive to the complex systems that overlap within the public realm and cater its program to facilitate overall success of the network.

Transit mode varies in terms of necessary infrastructure. Required infrastructure tends to increase as speed of the transit vehicle increases. Traditional bus service requires simple bus stops with no in-ground rail or added medians, while bus rapid transit (BRT) makes use of dedicated lanes and larger bus stops, ideally equipped with elevated platforms and kiosks. On the other end of the spectrum, heavy rail transit (HRT) requires in-ground rail and dedicated stations, usually built above or below grade. The demands for light rail transit vary depending on its relationship to the ground (above, below, or at-grade), but the required infrastructure is typically between BRT and HRT. Lastly, the streetcar is a low-efficiency transit method that requires moderate infrastructure, often reserving this mode for tourist-heavy areas.

The site and mode of transit then determine the architectural elements required for individual stops and stations. As previously mentioned, transit architecture must first, and foremost, provide an effective and efficient service to the public. Figure 34 below describes the architectural elements necessary to provide this service. The bus stop requires only one physical element – signage; however, a more comfortable stop may also incorporate shelter and seating – protecting transit users from weather and offering a place of rest for long wait times. Rail stations require more built elements based on their relationship to the ground; these stations can be built either above, below, or at-grade. The at-grade transit station requires signage, shelter and seating, along with a platform for passengers to pass comfortably onto the train or bus. Lastly, the above/below-grade transit station requires all the aforementioned elements, along with one or more versions of vertical circulation (ie. stair, escalator, elevator). Stops and stations can incorporate supplementary program, requiring additional architectural elements, but those mentioned represent the minimum for transit service. This analysis of the architecture of transit informed the determination of site and program, further described in Chapter 4.

Figure 34 | Anatomy of transit



chapter **FOUR** / proposed site and program

This thesis proposes the design of a bus transit center in the neighborhood of Moores Mill. The opportunities for design intervention within the city are vast, but research to this point, as well personal familiarity and interest in suburban conditions, identify the site as one with challenges significant to the exploration of this thesis. The following chapter will describe the proposed site and program, with expanded site analysis investigating surrounding bus stops. It will also examine the anatomy of the bus stop and the role of the transit station within the Moores Mill community. This analysis produces a set of guidelines that are integral to the design process.

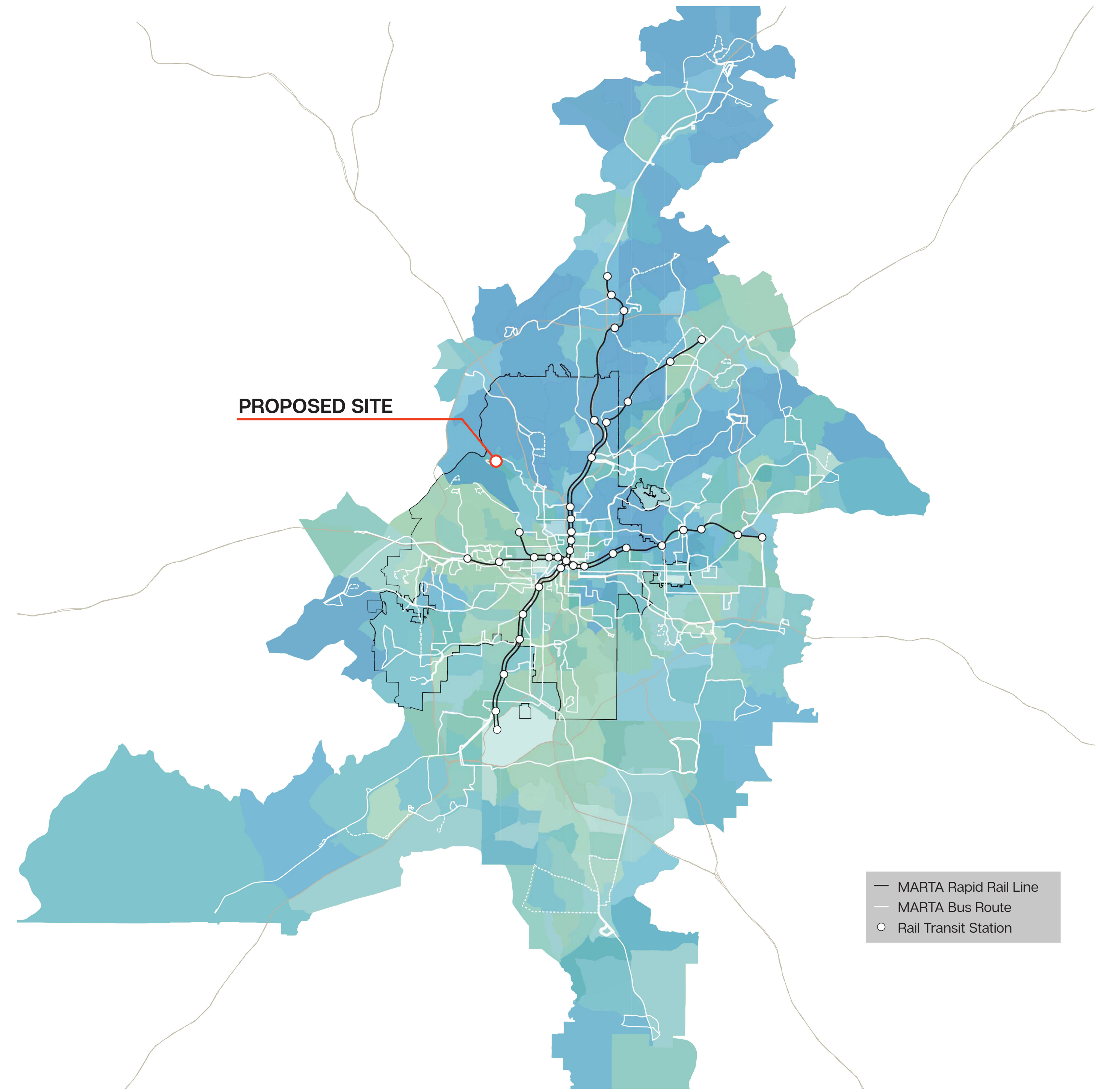


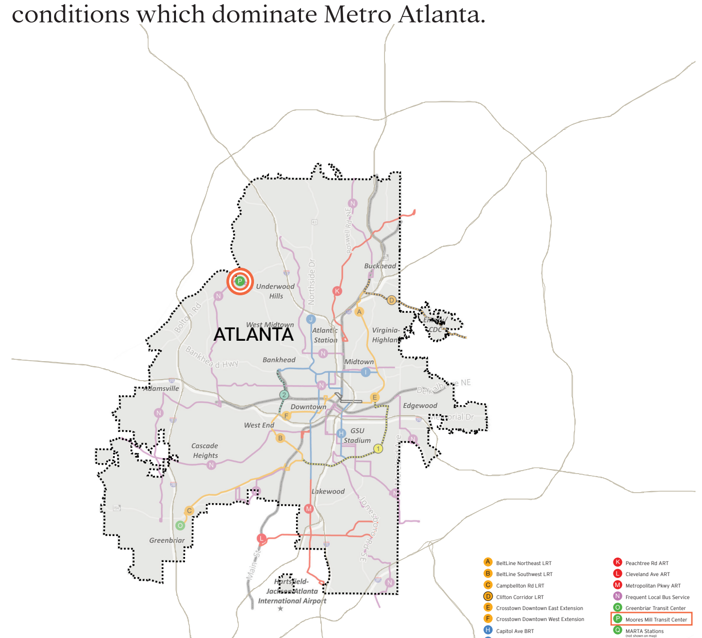
Figure 35 | Communities reached by MARTA bus and rail with proposed site

SITE / Marietta Blvd at Bolton Rd

The site for the proposed design project lies right inside Atlanta city limits on the border of Cobb County. As noted previously, of the original five Metro Atlanta counties, Cobb has been the most resistant toward MARTA expansion. Georgia House Representative Teri Anulewicz (D-Smyrna) finds it "deeply concerning that, right now, Cobb is a blank spot on the transit map."[43] Original MARTA plans reveal that this was never the intent. Comparing the original 1971 proposal for MARTA heavy rail (Figure 37) to the existing heavy rail network, one line running from Downtown to Cobb County was never realized. This line runs directly through the proposed Moores Mill site. The site is also identified on the 2018 "More MARTA" expansion plan as a transit center for bus service (See figure 36.) These two maps strongly affirm the need for transit integration in this region of Metro Atlanta.

The site, while inside city limits, is suburban in nature, dominated by oversized parcels and surface parking lots. The area to the north is mainly occupied by industrial infrastructure, immediately adjacent lies a water treatment plant. The two blocks southeast of the site are currently being developed. One has recently been completed with a new grocery shopping center and the other under construction for multi-family housing. The future land use plan for the immediate context includes mixed use and low to high density residential. This thesis acknowledges the need for a long-term master plan of the site and the significant role that land use planning plays in the success of Atlanta's transit system. This design proposal however will focus on the role of transit architecture and explore the challenges of designing in the suburban conditions which dominate Metro Atlanta.

43 Wickert, "Cobb County's conflicting views complicate regional transit vision."



"More MARTA" 2018 Proposal

Original 1971 MARTA Proposal

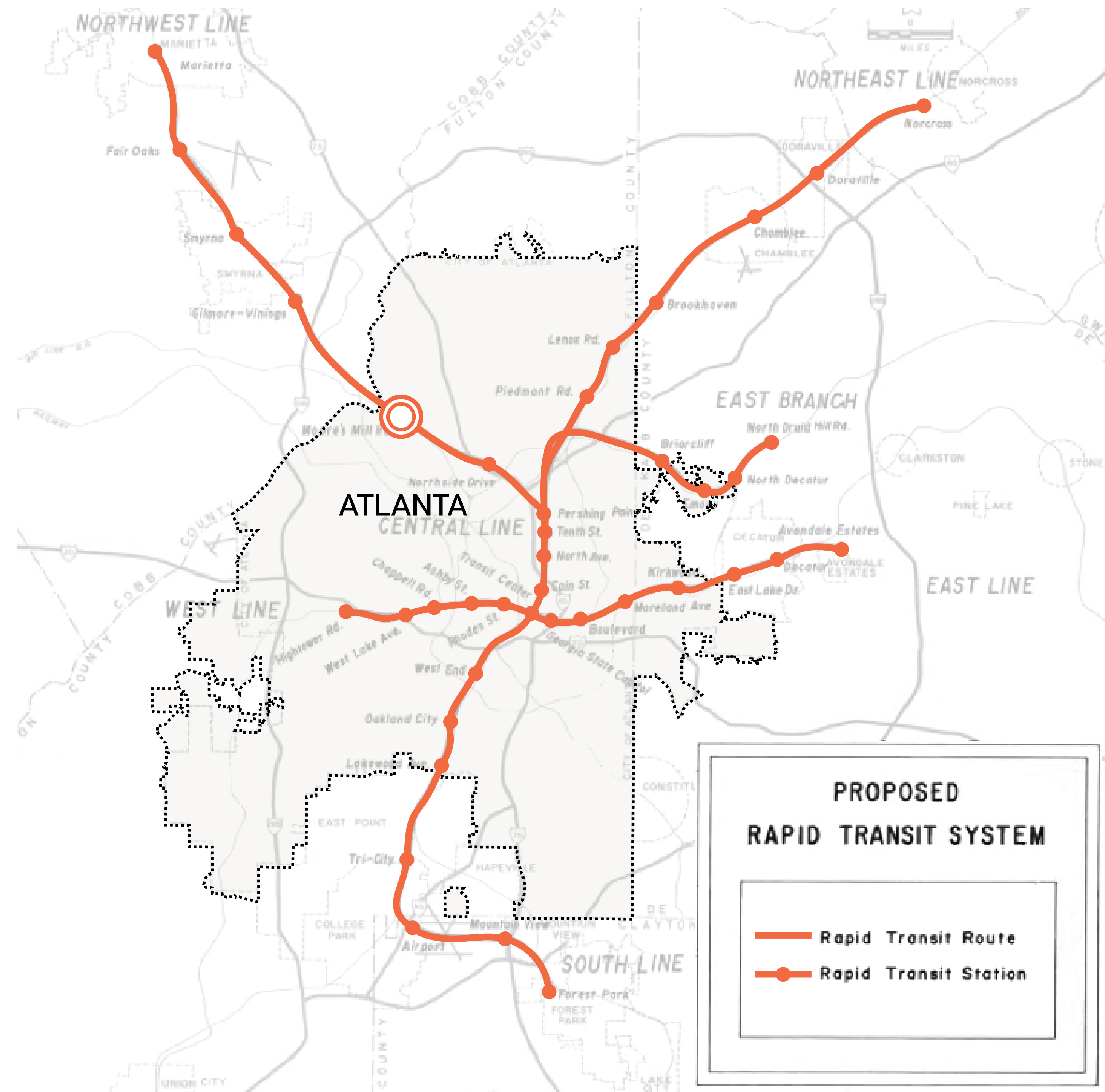
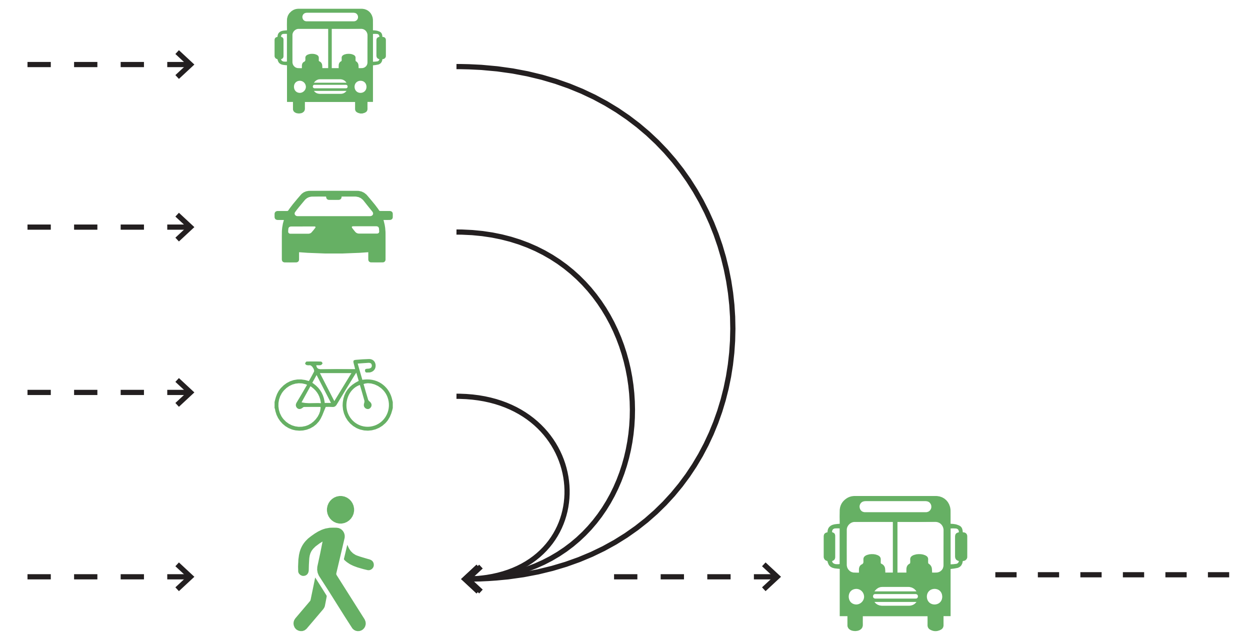


Figure 36-37 (left to right) | "More MARTA" 2018 proposal, Original 1971 MARTA proposal

Figure 38 | Site - Marietta Boulevard at Bolton Road

PROGRAM / bus transit center

The proposed design is for a bus transit center with hopes for future development and integration of light rail toward Cobb County. Required program is limited. Spaces for waiting and circulation are primary, but given the neighborhood's needs, the station will also incorporate space for community use. Secondary program elements include food service, administrative service, and public art integration.



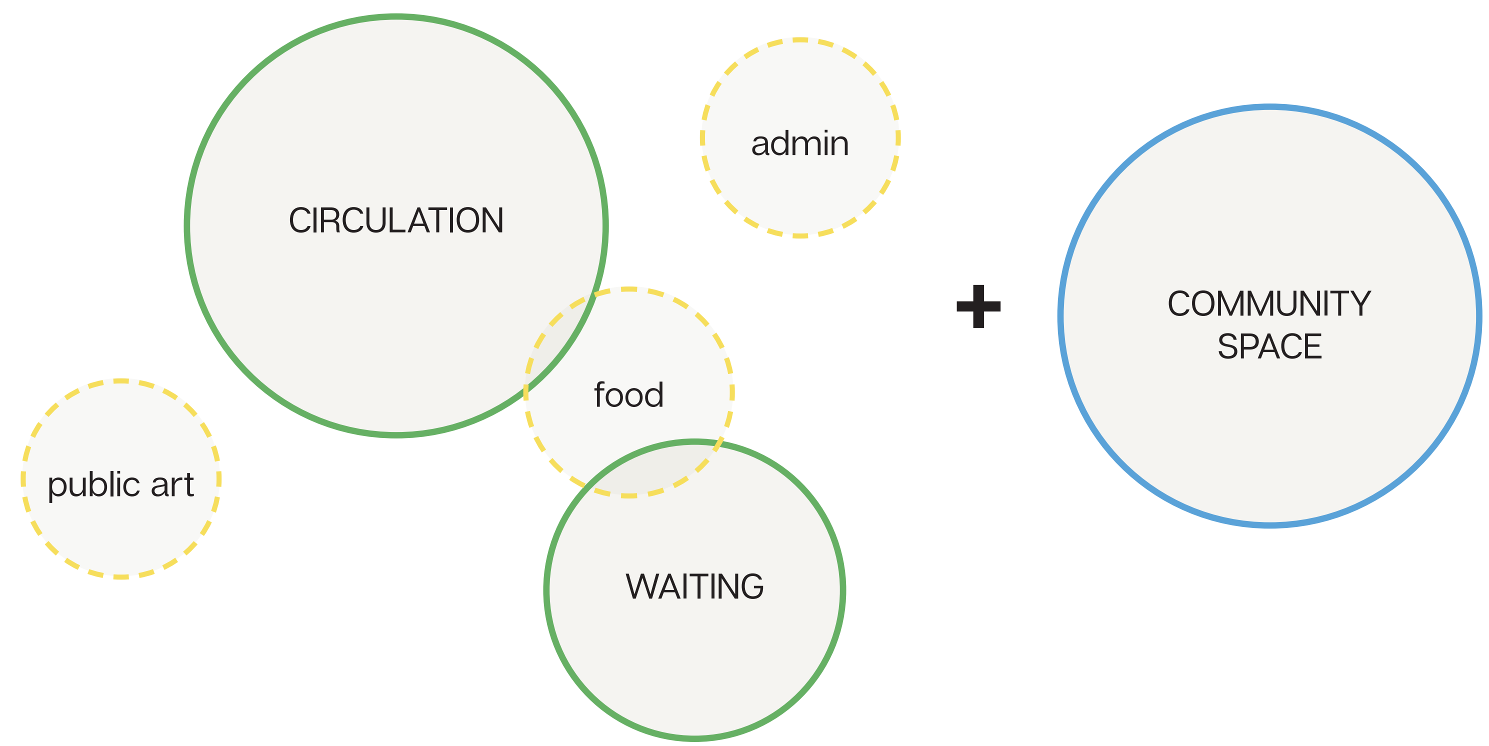


Figure 39-40 | Bus transit diagram, Program diagram

anatomy of the STOP

With bus transit as the primary program, the following analysis investigates the essential architectural elements of the bus stop. Although the bus transit center is designed at a larger scale, the basic program of the stop and station are similar. They each provide space for shelter and rest while communicating information and facilitating transition.

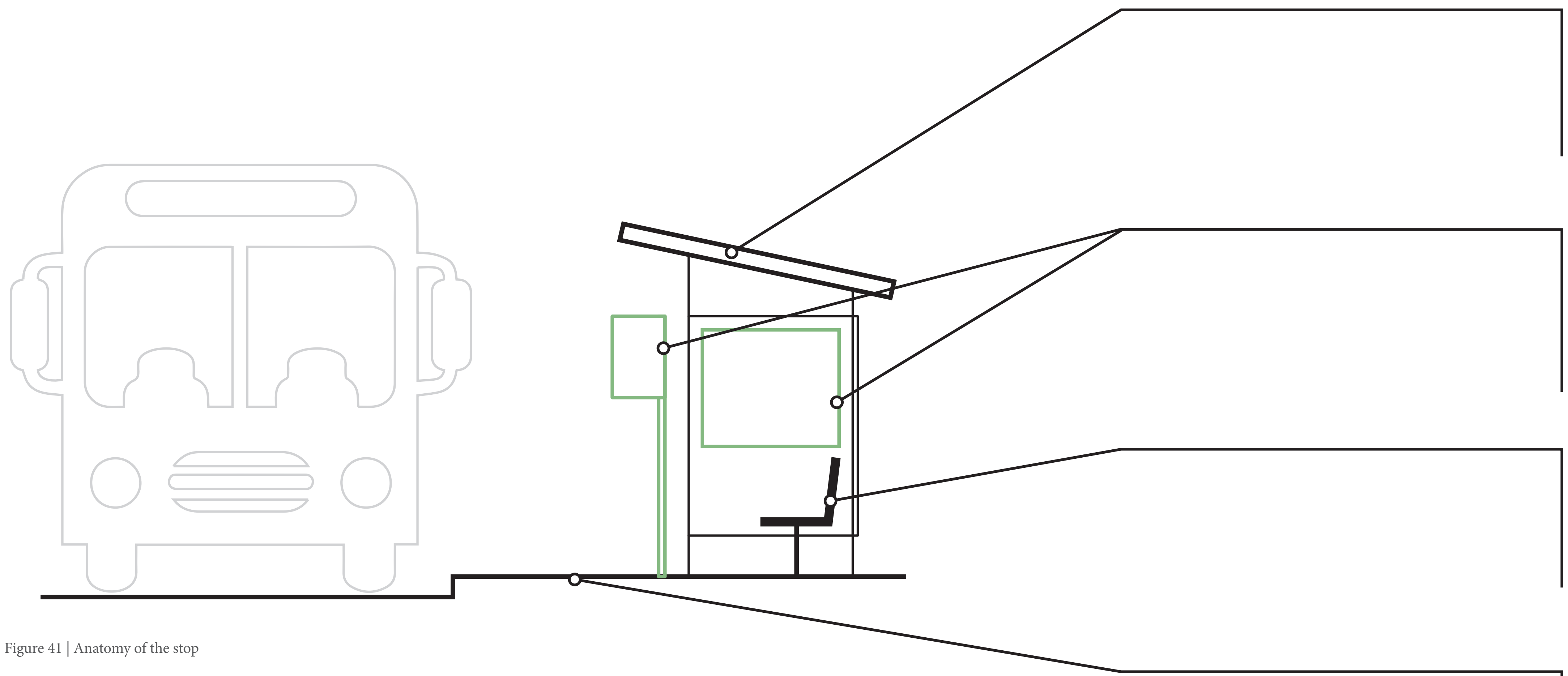


Figure 41 | Anatomy of the stop

ROOF // shelter
The roof serves the traveler in time of waiting. It minimally must shelter the traveler without hindering circulation.

> Protection, recognition, design interest, lighting

SIGNAGE // communicate
Signage plays arguably the most crucial role in transit design, directing the traveler for a safe and efficient trip. Coupled with technology, signage can also provide real-time updates on the expected vehicles.

> Visibility, recognition, integration, adaptability

SEATING // rest
Alongside the roof, seating allows the traveler to rest during time of anticipated arrival.

> Comfort, variety, integration, maintenance-friendly

PLATFORM // transition
In bus stop design, the curb becomes a platform. Although not as high as those required for rail transit, the curb does serve a significant role, facilitating safe transfer from ground to vehicle.

> Safety, accessibility, wayfinding

To further understand the Moores Mill community's relationship to bus transit, the site analysis extended to the study of existing bus stops surrounding the future bus transit center. The following images (Figure 42) show select bus stops within walking distance of the site.

Most stops are marked by small signs, which display MARTA's logo but provide no further information of bus route or schedule. Only three of the twenty surrounding stops offered shelter or seating and few of the ground conditions could be considered proper platforms facilitating transition. These four elements should be the basic minimum offered to bus passengers.

ROUTE 60 / bolton rd

ROUTE 37 / defoors ferry rd

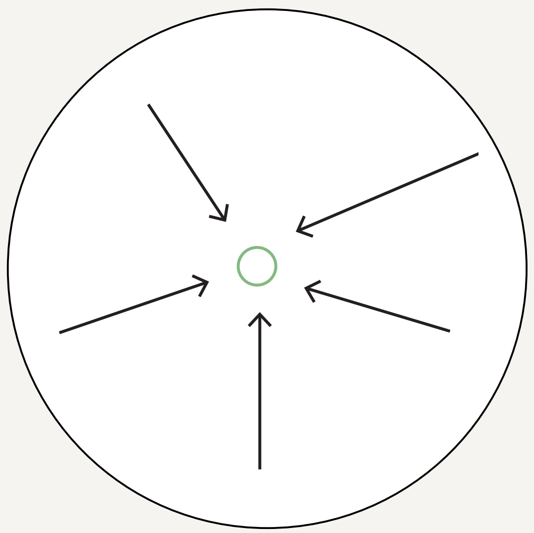
ROUTE 01 / marietta blvd

Figure 42 | Site - surrounding bus stops

role of the STATION

Following site analysis, the question arises, what role will this station serve within Moores Mill neighborhood and surrounding community?

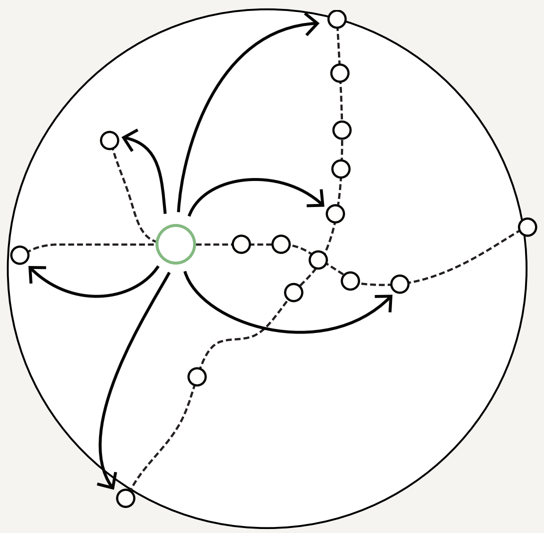
Considering the station within the following framework informs the project's relationship to the public realm.



station as HUB

Stations must be accessible and central to a community, facilitating gathering and movement.

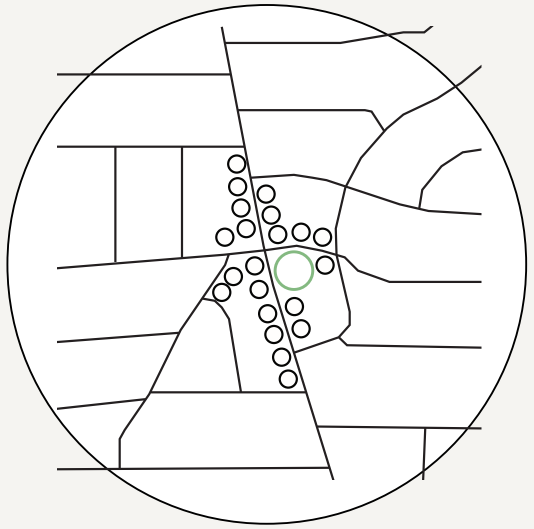
Accessible by primary pedestrian paths



station as GATEWAY

Stations provide opportunity. A place to transport from one community to another and architecture should reflect this spirit of potential.

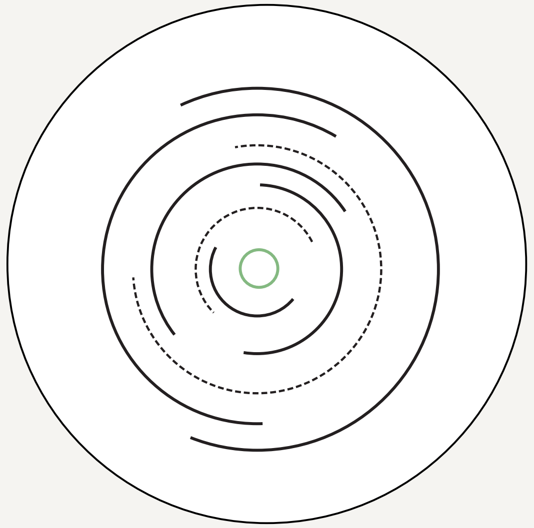
Built structure should be well-lit and inspire movement



station as CATALYST

Stations must live harmoniously within the community that they serve, embracing the character of place, while enhancing the identity of its neighborhood and encouraging forward movement.

Program should serve unmet needs of the community and design should reflect/enhance community identity.



station as PLACE

The station is a place of transition, which residents should feel ownership over and adopt as a representative of the neighborhood.

Building tectonics should reflect the character of the neighborhood. Spaces should serve both movement and waiting.

Figure 43 | Role of the station

chapter **FIVE** / design

Site analysis provides insight into the essential elements of the bus stop and the role that the transit station should play within the Moores Mill community. With these guidelines in place, the design phase requires thoughtful reconsideration of these architectural elements. Often composed in a conventional way, the roof, signage, seating, and platform are re-imagined in the Moores Mill station to enhance the experience of the rider, as both a visitor to the station and a pedestrian within the neighborhood.

Chapter 5 describes the design of the Moores Mill Transit Center, from division of the large triangular site to the integration of seating and signage.

Figure 44 | East elevation with mural "Walter"

SITE DIVISION

Three priorities are evident in the placement of the station on the large triangular site - visibility, accessibility, and circulation. Given that this thesis focuses foremost on perception, visibility becomes the primary driver. Placing the project at the tip of the triangle provides unique opportunities for both public space and connection to the neighborhood.

Bus circulation then plays a major role in carving the site as shown in figure 46. Four bus routes currently circle the site. Route 60 operates North/South from H.E. Holmes Station to Moores Mill Center, serving areas southwest of the site. Route 37 operates from Arts Center Station to Moores Mill Center, running southeast of the site. Route 01 and 14 both access the site from Marietta Boulevard. Route 01 operates North/South between West End Station, Ashby Station, and Moores Mill Center. Route 14 operates East/West between Midtown Station and Moores Mill Center. Both of these last routes terminate at Moores Mill, but the design accommodates bus circulation north on Marietta Boulevard into Cobb County with hopes that this integration will be made possible after the 2019 vote.

Providing dedicated car and bus lanes improves efficiency, while facilitating a safer pedestrian experience. These lanes split the site into three parcels for green space, transit, and future housing. As seen in figure 48, bus circulation clearly defines the two "platforms" for bus interchange along Marietta Boulevard and Bolton Road. These platforms inform the design of the other three architectural elements - seating, signage, and roof.

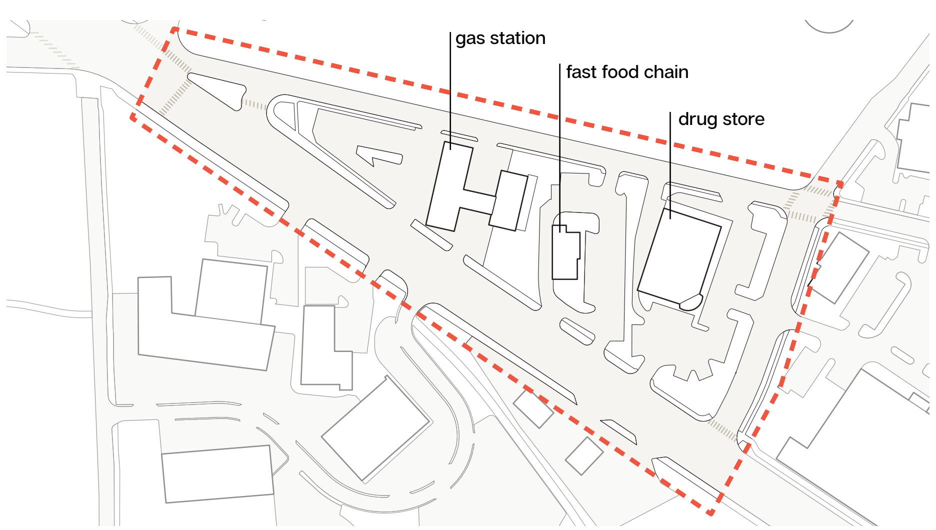


Figure 45 | Site - existing conditions

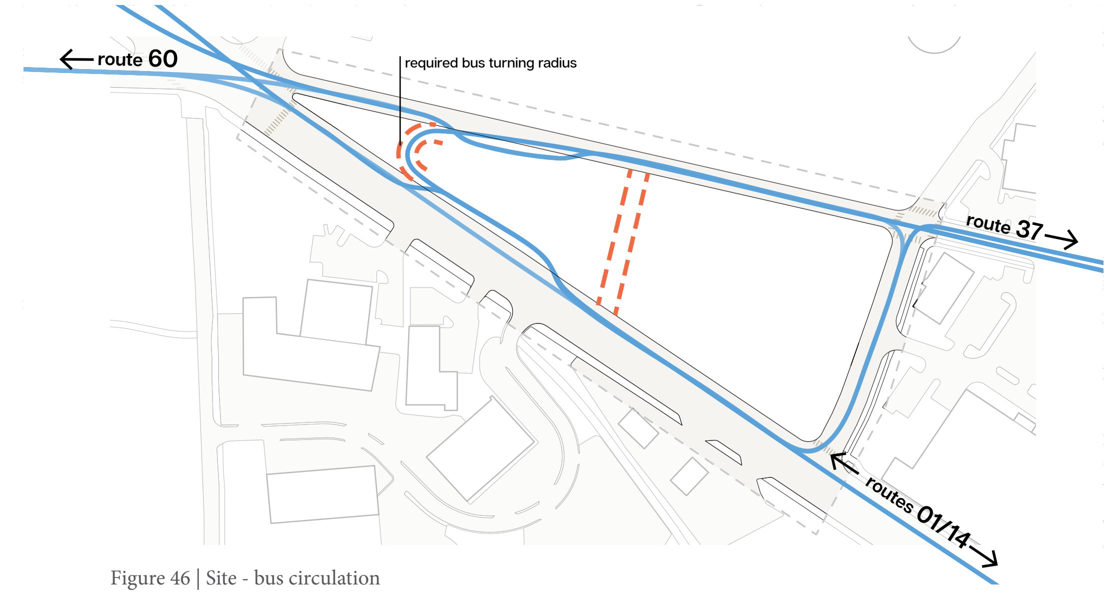


Figure 46 | Site - bus circulation

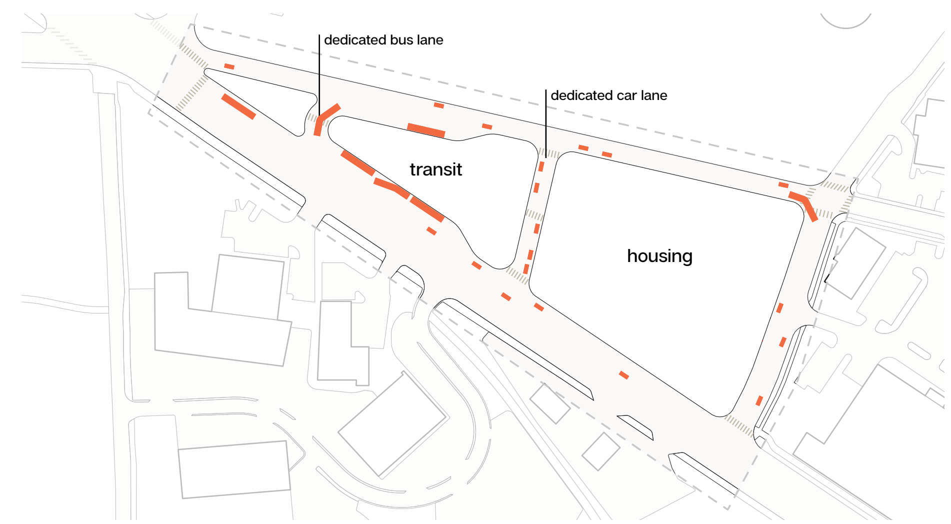


Figure 47 | Site - division

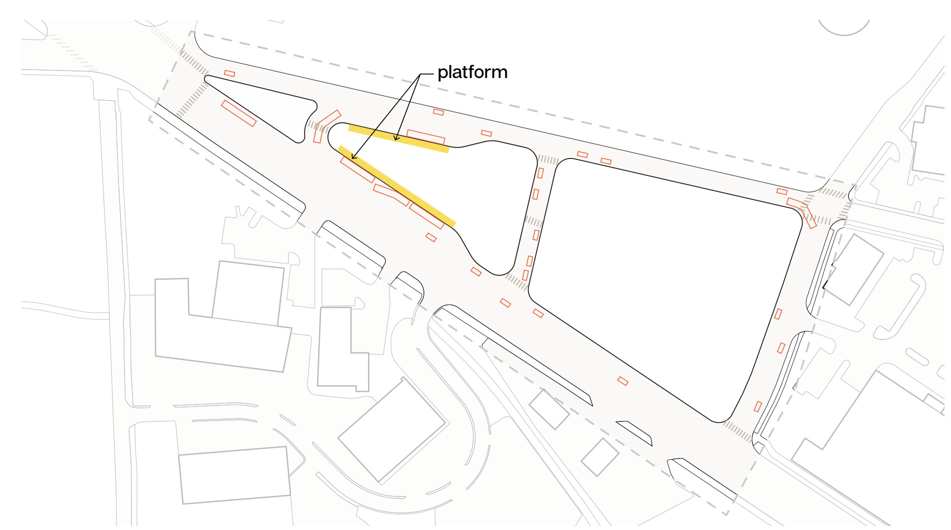


Figure 48 | Site - platform

Figure 49 | Site plan

SITE PLAN

The building features three roofs that form a triangular roof plan. Given the dominant nature of the road within this suburban context, it is included within the building site. The road has been redesigned to offer spacious pedestrian crossing zones. A new paving pattern surrounding the site encourages cars to slow down and be more aware of surroundings.

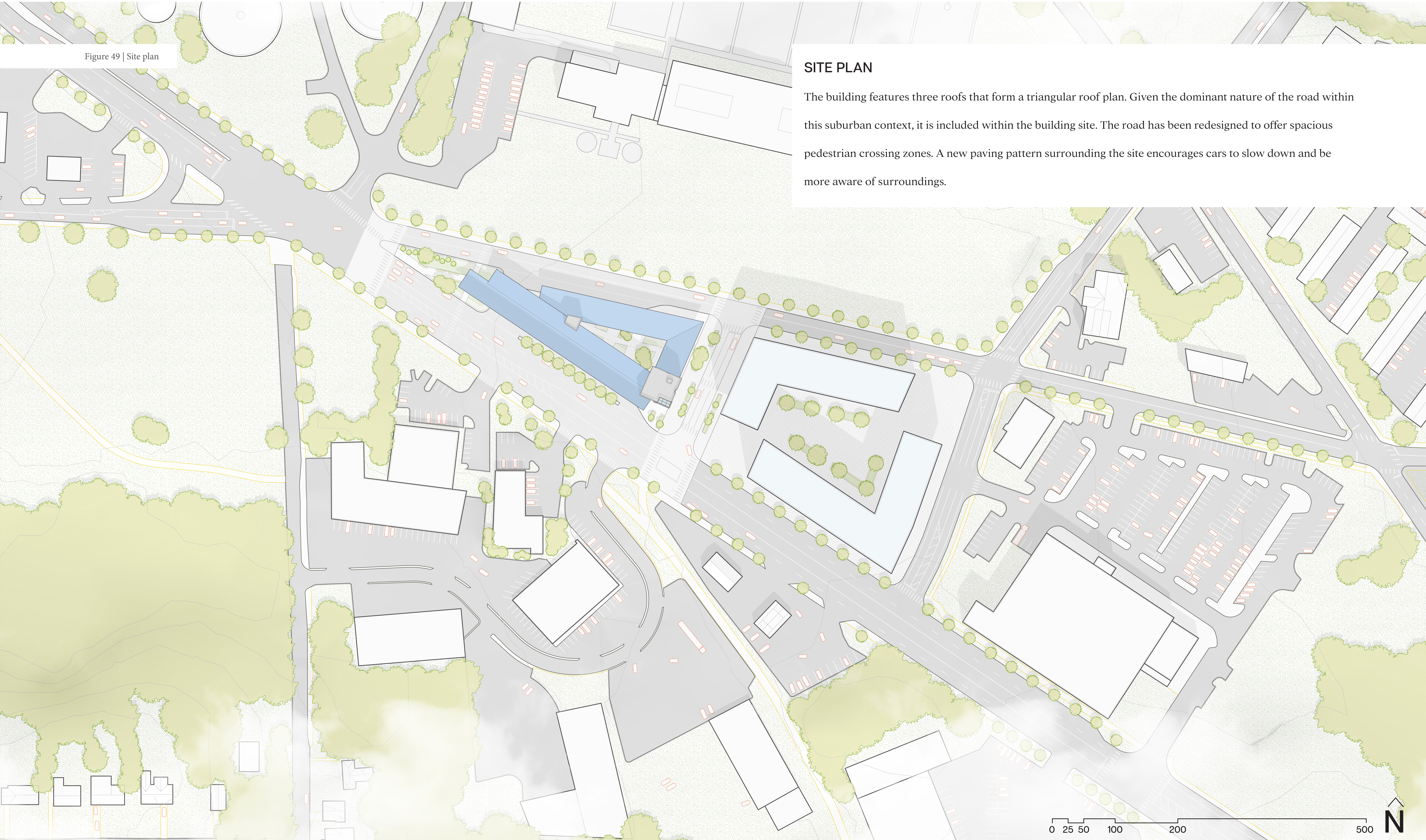


Figure 50 | Section perspective

The roofs provide interior and exterior shelter for bus passengers in times of waiting. The space between these roofs then becomes a courtyard - a public space of rest, refuge and community.

Signage and seating is integrated throughout the building, primarily in areas of circulation and waiting. The platforms along Marietta Boulevard and Bolton Road provide ample room for both transit riders to gather in waiting and pedestrians to move freely throughout the site.

RAIN GARDENS

The three roofs slope to strategically channel water into the two green spaces - the courtyard and pedestrian park. These rain gardens are designed with raised walkways and seating, allowing visitors to enjoy the greenery while water is collected below for future use on site.

Figure 51 | Rain garden perspective

Figure 52 | Ground level circulation

GROUND LEVEL

The ground floor of the transit center facilitates movement. Numerous crosswalks marked by distinct paving material provide access to the station from all directions. The building then fluidly directs visitors throughout the site. Transparent walls allow visitors to identify areas of interest within the building while tracking arrival and departure of transit vehicles.

BUS INTERCHANGE

The bus interchanges along Marietta Boulevard and Bolton Road provide integrated seating, signage and ticketing kiosks, all accessible from the interior and exterior circulation zones. The inverted roof forms are expansive and well-lit space on the exterior while offering a more intimate interior space scaled to the human body.

Figure 53 | Bus interchange perspective

The corner block anchors the large roofs at the southern edge of the site. In contrast with the airy roof structures, the block is a grounded element which holds administrative program and community space. This solid element is strategically located at the southern corner to benefit from visibility at Marietta Boulevard and lower anticipated pedestrian traffic.

Capitalizing on this visibility, the block also functions as signage. These solid walls, which conceal core program like restrooms, elevators and stairs, also serve as a large canvas. The mural depicted is a placeholder by Agostino Iacurci titled Walter, which can be found on Campbelton Road in Atlanta.

The entry plaza opens up toward Bolton Road to welcome pedestrians from the many neighborhoods east of the site. The entry provides a number of ticketing kiosks and access to an information desk within the corner block. Moving up in the building, Level 2 and 3 provide community space for neighborhood gathering with a large open community room on Level 2 and a mezzanine and meeting room at Level 3.

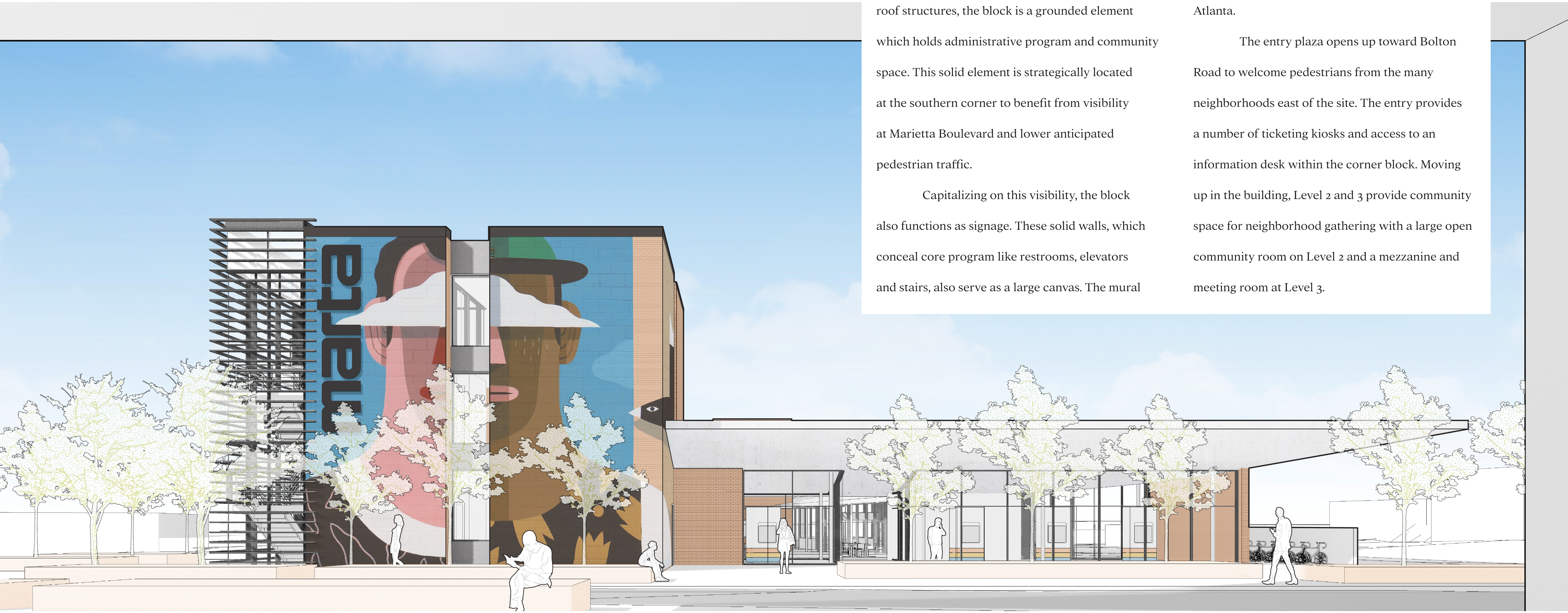


Figure 54 | East elevation with mural "Walter"

Figure 55 | Ground level plan

Figure 56 | Level 2 plan

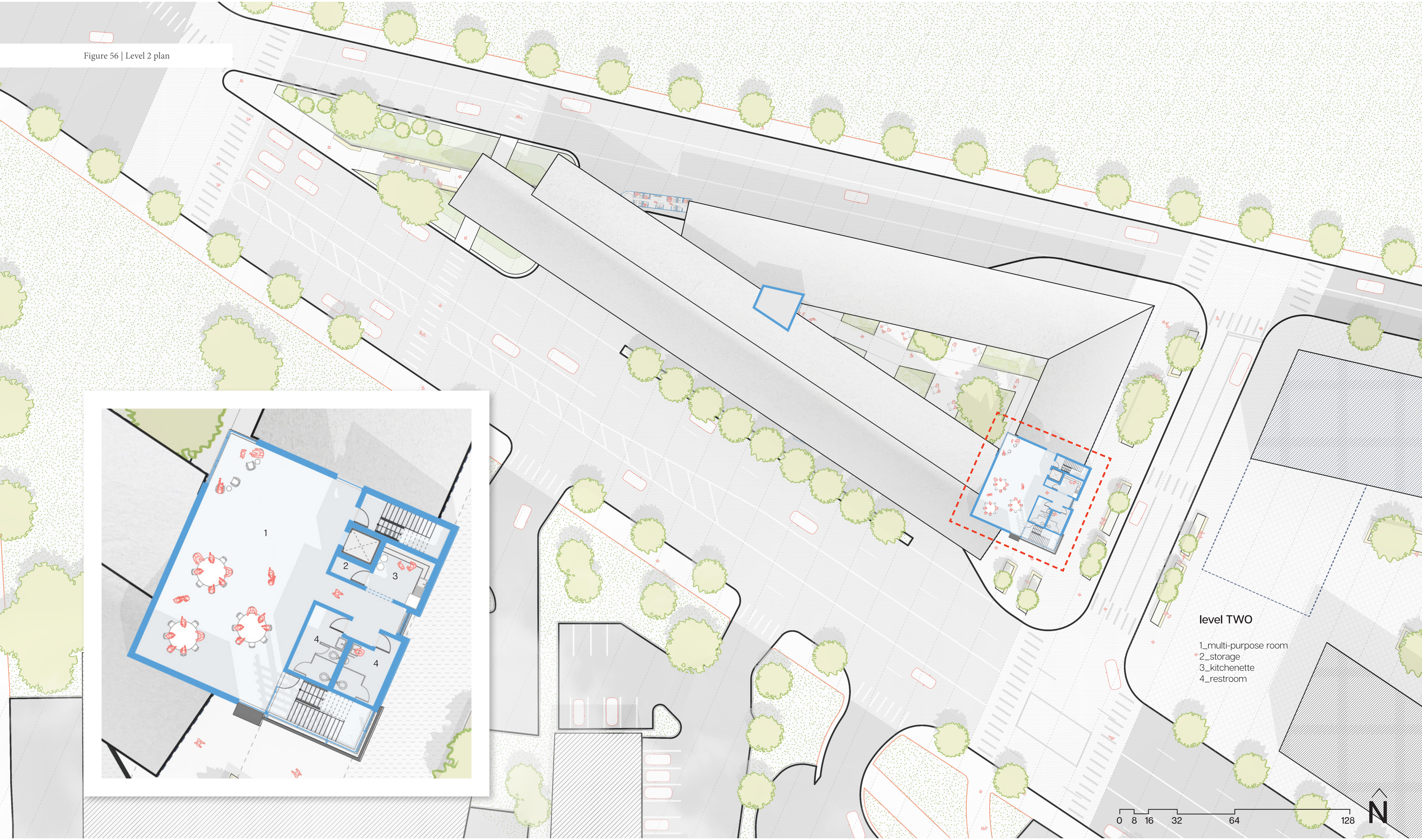
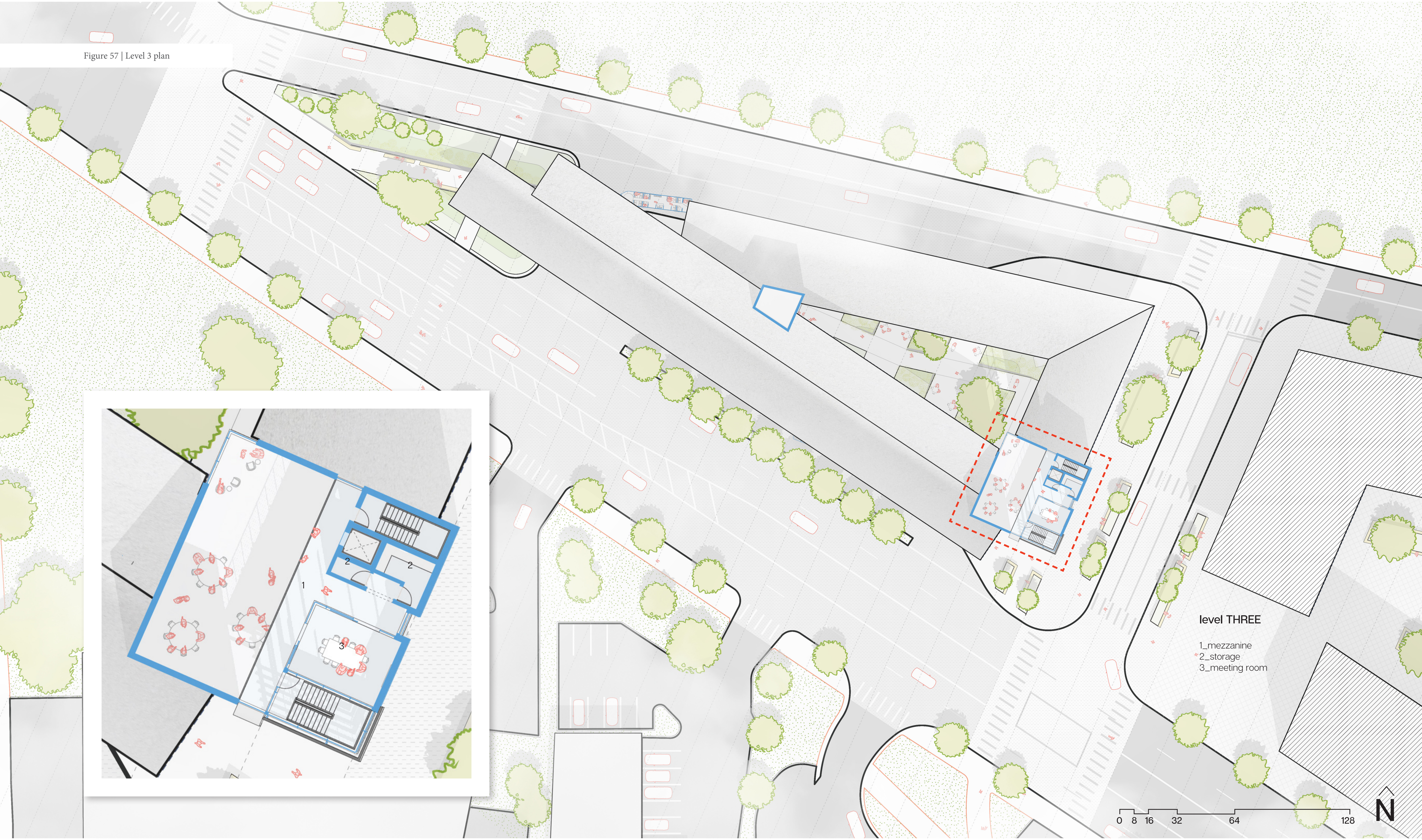


Figure 57 | Level 3 plan



chapter **SIX** / conclusions

Atlanta's built environment presents many challenges for designing a successful public transit system, but action taking place in the legislature and city infrastructure is beginning to address these challenges. This thesis has explored the role of architecture in the reform of Atlanta's public transportation system. The issues facing MARTA are vast, bearing a spectrum of possible architectural interventions - from existing stations in the inner-city to new construction in the sprawling suburbs. This thesis might have studied a breadth of these conditions from a broad standpoint or explore one intervention at greater detail. Either approach could have provided insight, but I chose to focus my research on one community, addressing a context with which I am most familiar and presents challenges I had yet to face in my academic studies.

The proposed design intervention of the Moores Mill Transit Center challenges existing stigmas related to public transit, as well as assumptions related to suburban conditions in the city. By incorporating the elements that are essential

to transit commuters, as well as re-imagining those elements, the station provides an improved experience for the neighborhood resident and visitor. Suburban communities have evolved out of a desire for increased privacy and personal space, but this pursuit of privacy has proven divisive within the city. The design problem sought to examine the conditions of a Metro Atlanta suburb with the intent to glean insight on this suburban context surrounding the city.

A constant dilemma faced in this thesis was dealing with the correlation between density and successful transit stations. Most upcoming transit stations are not designed in insolation, they are rather integrated within a transit-oriented development. This approach ensures that new transit-enthusiastic residents frequent these stations soon after completion. While ensuring access on foot and via bike, these transit developments attract a specific demographic of eager transit riders. This thesis does not criticize this kind of transit-oriented development, rather notes its limitations in changing perception and converting single-family homeowners and life-long car-users to commuting by public transit. For this reason, I chose not to redesign the entire Moores Mill area as a walkable high-density development, but rather chose to focus on the site in order to think critically about the existing conditions and transit architecture's place in suburban sprawl. The proposal is an intermediate step which encourages a reconsideration of both the station itself and the context in which it is sited.

Reviving a public transportation system is a complex task which requires cooperation by city leaders in every discipline. This thesis, however, argues that thoughtful and innovative design at the scale of the stop and the station can instill confidence in transit commuters, challenging existing social stigmas that construe public transit as lower-tier means of traveling throughout the city. Stations can also take on a broader role within the communities they serve to strengthen the identity and local pride of Atlanta neighborhoods.

Figure 58 | Marta bus

“[W]ith its short, turbulent history, hubris, diversity, creative public-private partnerships, fraught politics, climate, and drastically contrasting affluence and poverty, Atlanta can serve as a kind of petri dish for the remaking of a city.”

City on the Verge, Mark Pendergast (2017)

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