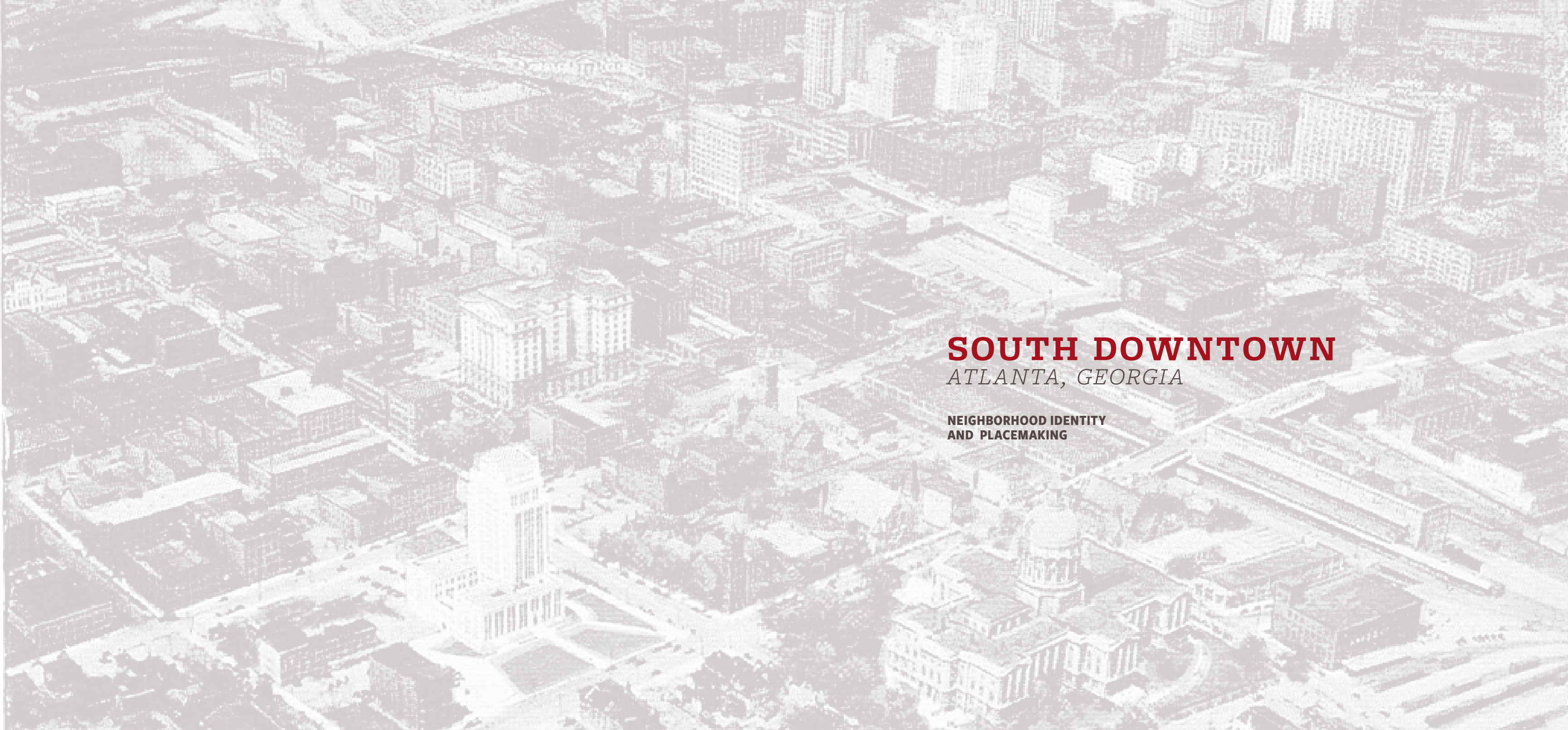




**NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY
AND PLACEMAKING**



SOUTH DOWNTOWN
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY
AND PLACEMAKING**

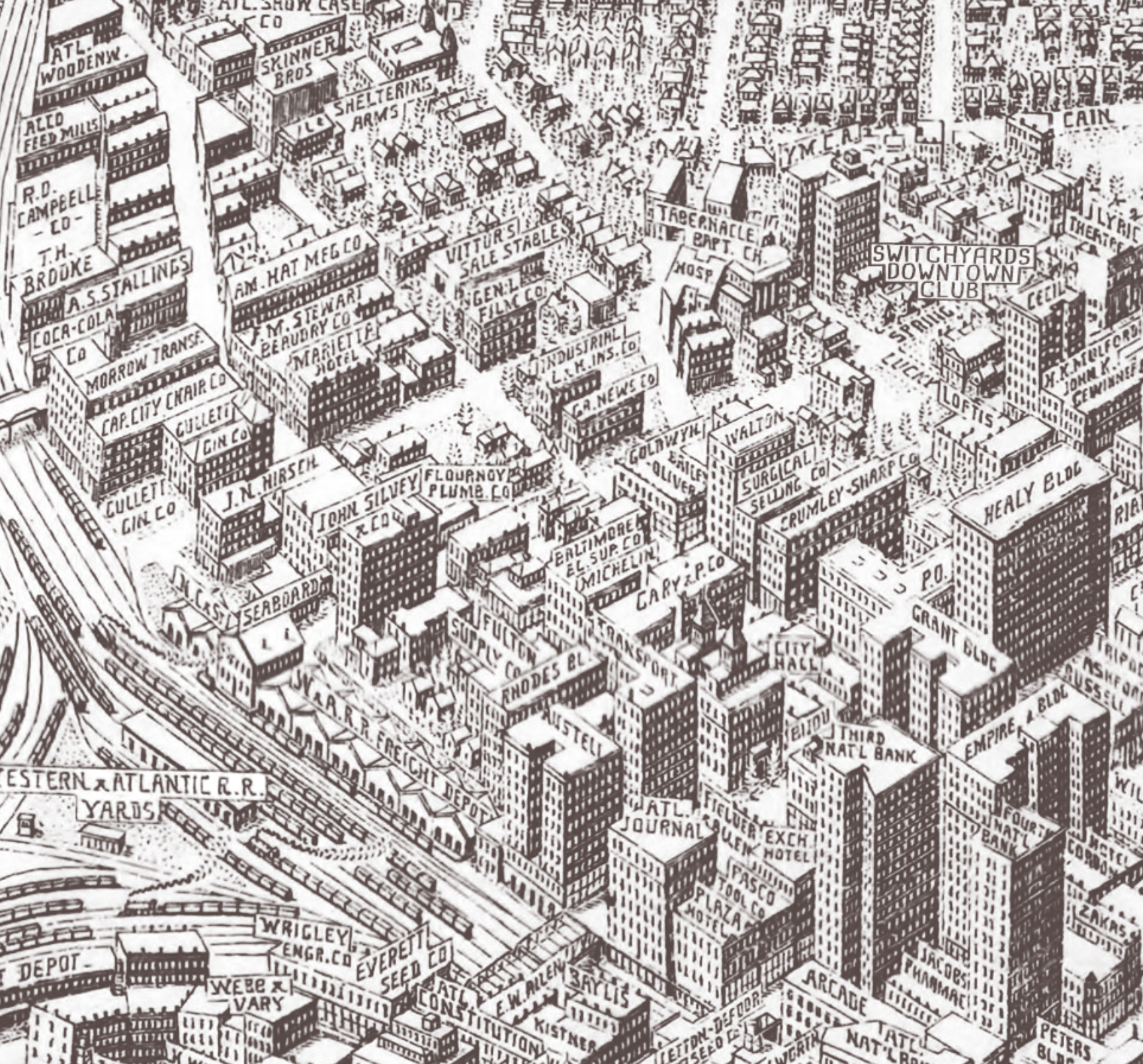


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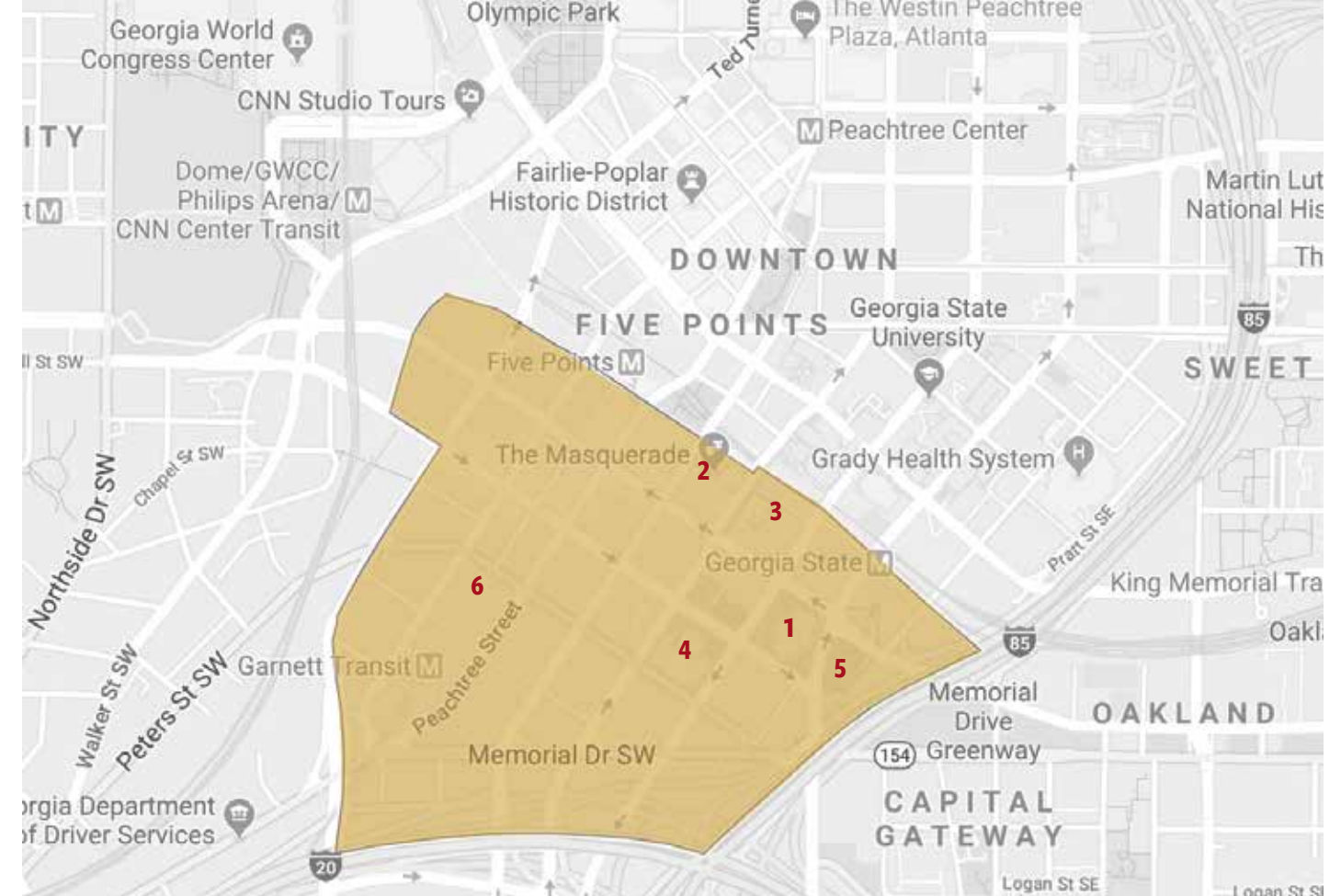
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SOUTH DOWNTOWN OVERVIEW

South Downtown is considered to be the area south of Five Points. Alabama Street marks the northern boundary, Ted Turner Drive marks the western edge, and the I-20 and I-85 corridors mark the eastern and southern boundaries.

The area is also home to the Georgia State Capitol and several other government agencies at the city, county, state, and federal levels. During the development boom of the early 2000s, South Downtown was largely ignored. The neighborhood currently has very little retail or residential space; besides the government district, most of the area is made up of empty buildings and surface parking lots. Its lack of development is partially made up for by the preservation of some of Atlanta's most historic buildings and architecture.

Over the past five years, interest in South Downtown has rekindled among domestic and international developers. Three separate development companies currently hold the a few swaths of the area. This neighborhood that has been ignored for decades is on the cusp of monumental changes.



STATISTICS

- <300 residents
- 3 MARTA stations
- >30 parking lots
- >20 government agencies
- 7 National Register of Historic Sites
- 3 parks

POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1 Georgia State Capitol
- 2 Underground Atlanta
- 3 Georgia Railroad Freight Depot
- 4 Atlanta City Hall
- 5 Liberty Plaza
- 6 Broad Street



GENERAL RESEARCH

Several trips were made to walk the area to gain a better understanding of the neighborhood's personality. Though South Downtown has few residents, the many government agencies help populate the neighborhood during the week. On weekends the area is nearly desolate, and any public plazas and parks in the area are closed. There is a clear demarcation as you pass from the government district west toward Ted Turner Drive. Green lawns and traditional architecture give way to blocks made of empty buildings and surface parking.

Along with exploring the area, I attended an Atlanta Downtown Neighborhood Association Meeting and interviewed several individuals concerning the neighborhood's issues and potential:

Heather Alhadeff
*Director, Department
of City Planning*

Robyn Jackson
*Area Resident, Atlanta Downtown
Neighborhood Association*

Stephen Krauska
*President, Atlanta Downtown
Neighborhood Association*

Charles Wingate
*Area Employee,
General Services Administration*

Jeff Morrison
Local architect and historian

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

My research and interviews led me to South Downtown's historical significance in the history of Atlanta. The settlement that grew around the site of the Western and Atlantic Railroad would be incorporated as the City of Atlanta in 1847. The zero milepost that marked the railroad's terminus is located within South Downtown boundaries, and Atlanta's original city limits were drawn in a circle with this milepost marking the center.

As other railroad lines were built to meet up with the Western and Atlantic Railroad, Atlanta became the transportation center of the South. All the major stations and freight depots were located in South Downtown, and as the city grew, several bridges or viaducts were built over the railroad lines. As the streets rose above the rails the city grid rose as well, creating unusual areas like Atlanta Underground.

Today, though the rail lines are mostly gone, the raised city grid and preserved hotel buildings remain to point to the fact that South Downtown was not only the birthplace of Atlanta, but served as the gateway into the growing city and transportation artery throughout the region for decades.



AREA CHALLENGES AND STRATEGY

The challenges facing South Downtown are long-standing and complex. Its current status as an urban desert is exacerbated by the fact that there is little to no awareness of the neighborhood's historical significance to Atlanta. Walking through the area, there is no signage or acknowledgment that these streets were once the bustling heart of Atlanta.

In narrowing down the neighborhood's main issues, I found a theme of disconnection:

Lack of neighborhood community interaction
Lack of engagement and activities
Obvious divide within the area
Disconnected from the rest of Atlanta

As I determined my central goal for the project, I also identified three target audiences to consider:

Employees and commuters
Atlanta Metro residents
Out of town visitors

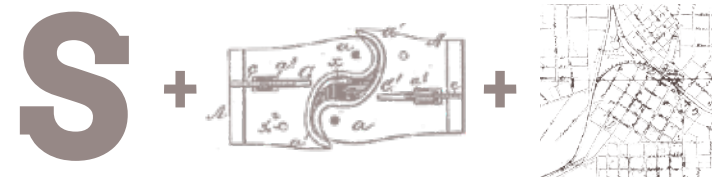
CENTRAL GOAL

Use South Downtown's exclusive history to create moments of engagement and interaction that connect the area to its heritage and the rest of Atlanta.

NEIGHBORHOOD LOGO

The logo represents both South Downtown's railroad history and the theme of connection. Based on the Arvo capital S, the mark combines the letterform with the shape of a railcar coupler. The mark is tilted at an angle as a nod to the unique direction of South Downtown's street grid, determined from the very beginning by the first railroad surveyors.

The entire logomark references the stamps used by the railroads for tickets and official documents. As a further nod to the neighborhood's historic significance, the year of Atlanta's incorporation is included in the seal.





PLACEMAKING PROPOSALS

The South Downtown neighborhood identity can be utilized in many urban planning and community improvement efforts. All improvement proposals aim to connect the neighborhood to its history and the rest of Atlanta with the identity serving to increase awareness as employees, Atlanta residents, and out-of-town visitors pass through the area:

PLACEMAKING

Historic railroad walking tour
Rotating pop-up space at Garnett Station

BEAUTIFICATION

Gateway signage
Window graphics
Historic murals

COMMUNITY EVENT

International Park(ing) Day

PLACEMAKING

HISTORIC RAILROAD WALKING TOUR

The Historic Railroad Walking Tour identifies 12 historic landmarks related to South Downtown's railroad history. Some of these landmarks have been demolished and replaced; a signage system is used to mark where these sites once stood.

The signs are 7 feet tall by 2 feet wide, containing educational information about the landmark as well as a map detailing the location of the other tour landmarks. As individuals walk follow the tour, sidewalk markers help guide them to the next landmark. These markers contain the South Downtown mark and reference the logo with their circular shape.



TERMINAL STATION



1905
ATLANTA TERMINAL COMPANY

This elegant Beaux Arts train station, designed by the same firm that created the Fox, was topped with a red tile roof and twin minarets. It was once Atlanta's transportation hub, where well-heeled travelers would hop on the Crescent route to ride to New York and New Orleans; its demolition in 1972 is considered by many to be the Atlanta's single greatest architectural loss.

Opened in May 1905, Terminal Station served Southern Railway, Central of Georgia, and Atlanta & West Point. Beginning in 1916, it also served the Seaboard, which previously used the 1871 Union Station. Until November of 1934, it served the ABC, which moved to the 1920 Union Station nearby.



In its twentieth century heyday, Terminal Station was used by such well-known trains of the time as the Crescent, Man to Man, Nancy Hawks, Ponce de Leon, and Silver Comet. A veritable rail-travel crossroads of the American Southeast, it was a critical railroad link between the warm climate of Florida and the Gulf Coast, and the rather colder, more densely populated states of the Northeast and Midwest. For many northern Americans, Atlanta Terminal Station was the gateway to the south. The Atlanta Convention Bureau released a postcard in the 1920s that claimed that Terminal Station was served by 86 trains per day.

After Terminal Station closed in June 1970, Southern Railway continued to operate its Southern Crescent and Piedmont passenger



- Historic Railroad Walking Tour**
- 1 ZERO MILEPOST
 - 2 FIRST & SECOND UNION STATIONS
 - 3 STATE SQUARE
 - 4 KIMBALL HOUSE
 - 5 RICH'S DEPARTMENT STORE
 - 6 THIRD UNION STATION
 - 7 WYE JUNCTION
 - 8 SWITCH TOWER
 - 9 TERMINAL STATION
 - 10 HOTEL ROW
 - 11 ATLANTA UNDERGROUND
 - 12 GEORGIA RAILROAD FREIGHT DEPOT

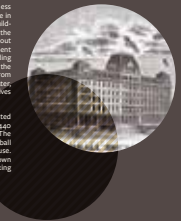
KIMBALL HOUSE



1870
1885
HAMBALL KIMBALL

Occupying nearly an entire block, the 325-room hotel was considered at one time to be the finest hotel in the South. In 1870, on a recommendation of building contractor John C. Peck, Hamball Kimball purchased a lot near the Union Depot where the Atlanta Hotel had been before being burned in 1844 during the Civil War.

The completed six-story building was built of brick and painted yellow with brown trim. It had a four-story grand lobby filled with plants, flowers, and a 12-foot-tall fountain. The house also boasted gaslight chandeliers, a central heating plant, a sunny billiard hall, and 570 hotel rooms. It also had sixteen sports to suit the first building in Atlanta to have elevators and central heating.



In many ways, the building was the public face of Reconstruction-era Atlanta. Housing presidents and railroad executives while housing political and business meetings, the Kimball House saw victors like President Cleveland and McKinley, and Robert Toombs made the hotel his second home in Atlanta. The hotel showcased famous entertainers of the day including General Tom Thumb and Edwin Booth, brother of John Wilkes Booth.

In 1892, the Kimball House was the center of excitement surrounding the first University of Georgia vs. Auburn football game held on February 20, 1892. Both teams arrived in Atlanta via the railroad, the Georgia team riding on the Georgia Special, and they immediately headed to the Kimball House where tickets were being sold 25 cents for adults and 25 cents for children.



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ZERO MILEPOST



1836
WESTERN & ATLANTIC RAILROAD

The Zero Milepost stands as reminder of the early railroad days and the birth of Atlanta. This stone milepost marks the southeastern terminus of the Western and Atlantic Railroad.

The railroad generated settlement that provided Atlanta originally were by three names: Thrasherville and Terminus were unofficial names. Mariettaville was incorporated in 1843 and was reincorporated as Atlanta in 1847.

The Zero Milepost also marks the center of the city from which the Atlanta city limits were measured. It was the railroad that provided the impetus for the beginning and subsequent growth of the city of Atlanta. From this small, struggling railroad town has grown one of the largest metropolitan cities in the country.



A convention was held and it was decided that the State of Georgia would build its own railroad through the center of the state and allow private branch lines to join with it. When the legislature met in November of 1835, a bill to construct a railroad was introduced and passed.

Work on the Western and Atlantic Railroad to join the Chattahoochee River to the Tennessee River began on September 10, 1837. Stephen Harrison Long chose Marietta to establish his office because the city was already established and the largest city in Northwest Georgia. In 1838, the state of Tennessee granted Georgia the right of way to complete the railroad to the Nash Street Depot on the corner of Nash and Market Streets.



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Historic Railroad Walking Tour

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PLACEMAKING

ROTATING POP-UP SPACE

The Garnett MARTA Station offers a key opportunity for placemaking. A large, empty plaza leads up to the station, and commuters have to walk several hundred feet before reaching either the station or the sidewalk.

This space would be used to house 2-3 converted shipping containers. These containers provide flexible space for rotating pop-ups—food trucks, coffee shops, or art exhibits. As security is a concern in the area, these spaces can be closed and secured when not in use. The interior and exterior of these containers would be branded with the South Downtown identity—each container would be themed after an iconic passenger train that came through Atlanta in the early 20th century. These graphics allow the structures to be informative and engaging even when closed.





BEAUTIFICATION

GATEWAY SIGNAGE

Gateway signage would be placed at key points of entry into the neighborhood by car or public transportation. Not only would this be an important indicator for out-of-town visitors, but encourage further awareness among Atlanta residents that this area is significant enough to require distinction.

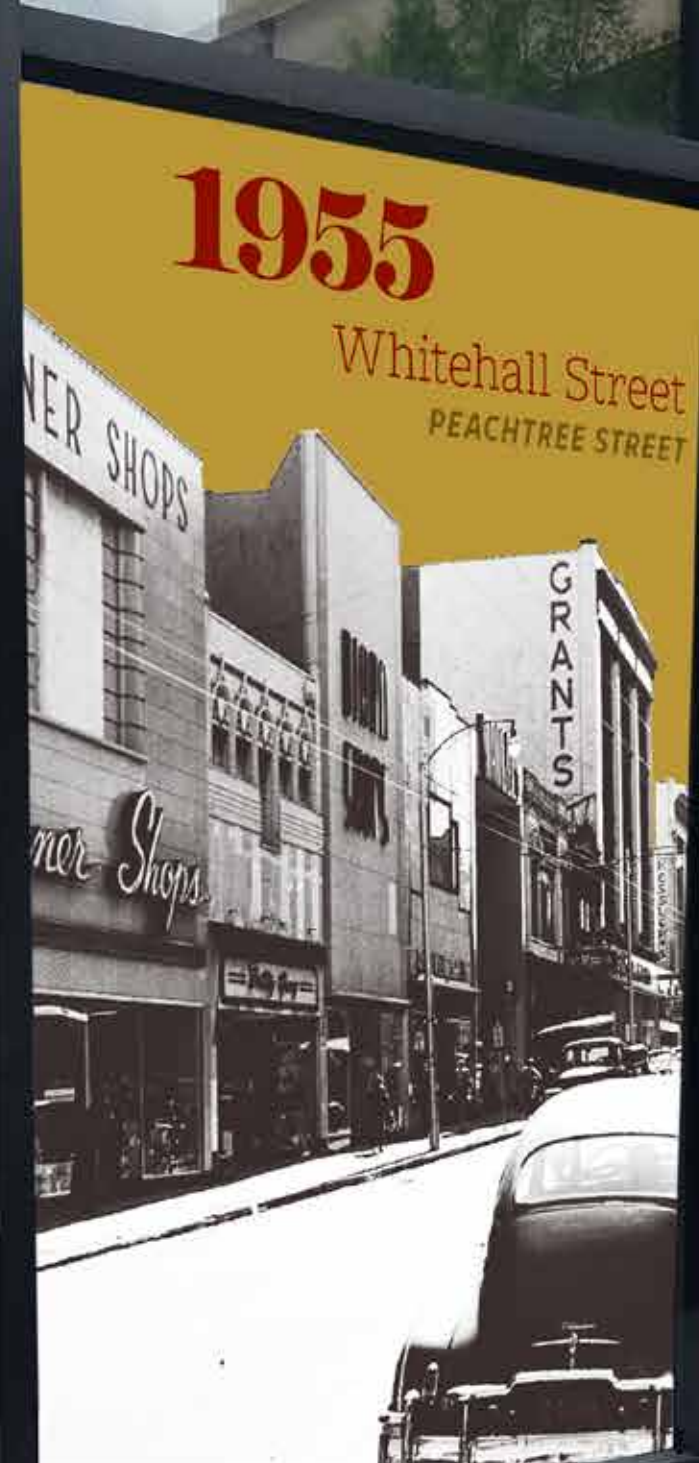
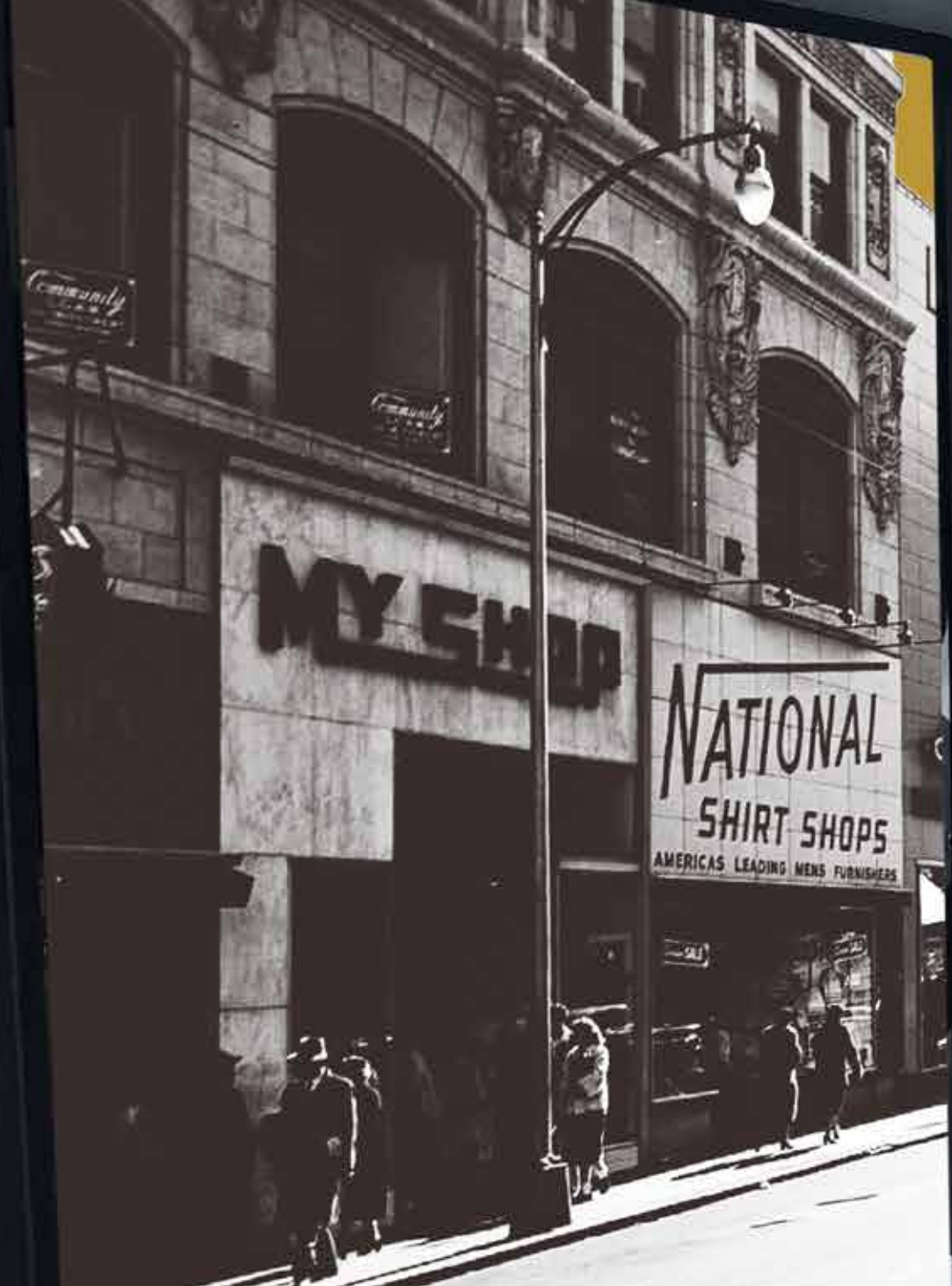




BEAUTIFICATION

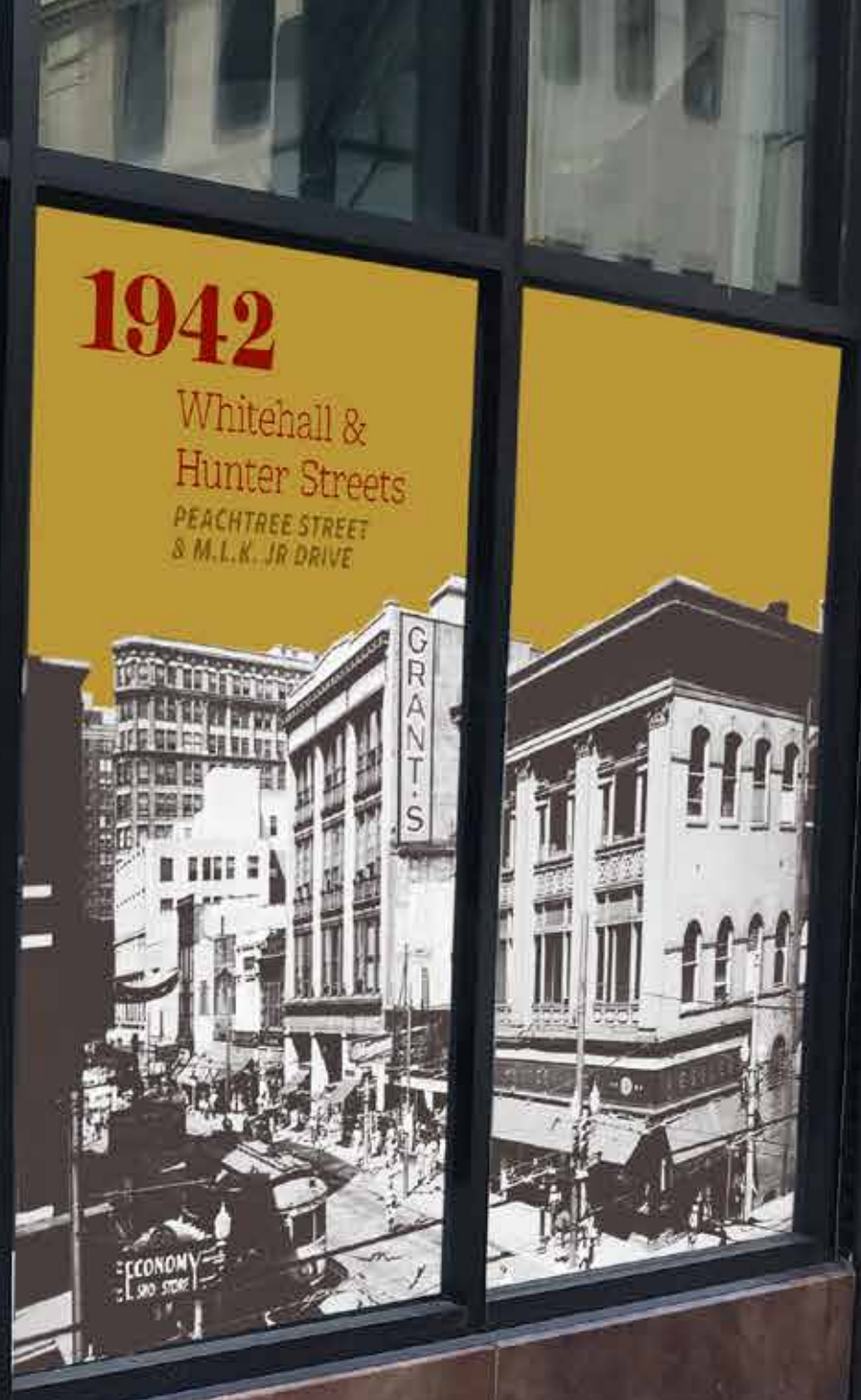
WINDOW GRAPHICS

To combat the abandoned building problem, branded window graphics can be used to relieve the blight of empty storefronts and bring color and interest to the streets. For example, these could show photos of the specific street from the past, giving passersby a chance to appreciate their immediate surroundings and see what has changed.



1955

Whitehall Street
PEACHTREE STREET



1942

Whitehall &
Hunter Streets
PEACHTREE STREET
& M.L.K. JR DRIVE

BEAUTIFICATION

HISTORIC MURALS

There are several ongoing efforts to improve South Downtown with public art murals and installations. To create something more specific to the neighborhood, new murals in key areas would be historically focused.

The Georgia Railroad Freight Depot is the oldest building in downtown Atlanta, but it is not open to the public or easily seen from the road. Any plaques or signage telling of the significance of the building are tucked away behind fencing. However, a large blank parking deck wall rises above the Freight Depot, providing a canvas to point out the landmark in a way that can be easily viewed by anyone.

Other opportunities for similar murals can be found throughout the area. A boarded up building across from a busy pedestrian intersection can display a streetcar timeline, detailing the history of Atlanta's extensive streetcar system that predated MARTA and modern public transportation.





DOWNTOWN STREETCAR TIMELINE

The West End & Atlanta Street Railroad Company and the Metropolitan Street Railway begin construction on lines downtown.

1871
The Atlanta Street Railway Company runs the first streetcars, pulled by horses.

1883
The West End & Atlanta Street Railroad Company and the Metropolitan Street Railway begin construction on lines downtown.

1889
The Metropolitan Street Railway runs 7 steam-powered cars on Atlanta lines.

1891
Five streetcar companies merge into the Atlanta Consolidated Street Railway Company.

1902
All streetcar lines are consolidated as the Georgia Railway and Electric Company, later to become Georgia Power.

1937
The first trackless trolleybus runs, marking the beginning of the decline of electric streetcars.

1949
Georgia Power runs its last streetcar, leaving only trackless trolleys and buses.

1959
Atlanta's public transportation system is officially desegregated.

By 1889, Atlanta had an extensive electric streetcar network that reached far west from downtown to the suburbs.

The first car being in Atlanta was the central figure in the public relations battle known as the "Second Battle of Atlanta."

Height of the feud between competing electric streetcar companies that was nicknamed the Second Battle of Atlanta.

Streetcar models that could be operated by one man were introduced in 1937 in order to increase wages and alleviate racial disparities.

The effects of transit will be felt well beyond the city desegregation.

COMMUNITY EVENT

INTERNATIONAL PARK(ING) DAY

International Park(ing) Day is a global event that takes place every year. People pay for a parking spot for the day and use the space to create an interactive parklet—an art display, sitting area, or interactive station. With the parking problem that plagues South Downtown, International Park(ing) Day provides an opportunity to reclaim neighborhood space and celebrate Atlanta’s history.

The Atlanta Junction would be the local International Park(ing) Day event held in South Downtown. Students from local universities would partner with the Atlanta History Center to create interactive parklets that explore different aspects of the city’s history—civil rights, music, Olympics, etc. The event would be located on Broad Street, M.L.K. Jr. Drive, and Mitchell Street where street parking is prevalent. Posters and t-shirts using the South Downtown identity would promote the event.





CONCLUSION

Atlanta is a city of transplants—the population continues to boom as more newcomers keep arriving to call Atlanta home. Even though the average Atlanta resident is no longer an Atlanta native, there is a growing interest in understanding and appreciating the place you have chosen to call home.

As South Downtown is facing monumental change in the next decade, now is the time to ensure the change does not erase the neighborhood's history and unique story. South Downtown is Atlanta's ground zero and until the past several decades served as its bustling center. If the history of South Downtown is lost in the name of development, Atlanta comes closer to losing its narrative as a metropolitan railroad town and becoming simply another large city.

