



Roxy Theater – Located on Athens Street, the Roxy was in operation through the 1950s before being torn down. Photo credit: Roxy Theater, Hall County, Georgia historical photograph collection, Hall County Library System.

INTRODUCTION

ATHENS STREET/ 129 SOUTH CORRIDORS

The Athens Street corridor, along with E.E. Butler Parkway/129 South, has changed immensely over the last century. The area, as it was, cannot be described any better than it is in *Black America Series – Hall County Georgia* by Linda Rucker Hutchens and Ella J. Wilmont Smith:

By the mid-1900s, African-American entrepreneurs had begun to develop businesses along the corridor of Athens Street in Gainesville. In ensuing years, Athens Street evolved into a virtual “Mecca” and became a main thoroughfare for African Americans in Hall County. Here, one could have most of one’s needs met in one’s neighborhood without having to chance an unpleasant or undignified encounter while venturing downtown. Athens Street hosted a Black theater, a drugstore, two funeral parlors, several restaurants and cafés, a tourist home, taxi stands, a shoe shop, pool halls, a record store, dry cleaners, and barber shops with shower facilities.



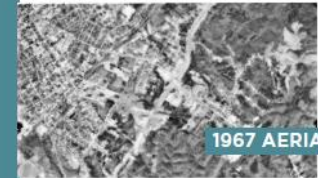
1960 AERIAL

This 1960 photo shows Athens Street as the main thoroughfare into and out of Gainesville. However, the development of Interstate 985 and 129 South changed that significantly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ATHENS STREET

Residents and business owners describe Athens Street as feeling forgotten and passed over. Once a major route into and out of town, the area seemed destined for economic prosperity. However, with the construction of 129 South and the exits from Interstate 985 locating north and south of Athens Street, decline was inevitable as businesses moved elsewhere.



1967 AERIAL



1973 AERIAL

This plan presents a stakeholder-driven vision to invest in Athens Street, connect it both visually and physically to other areas of Gainesville, and look for ways that public investment might spur private investment.

While Athens Street currently hosts a mix of commercial and industrial uses, a variety of single-family homes, duplexes, and apartments are also present both on and just off the corridor. Because of the residential nature of much of the area, improving pedestrian safety must be a priority. This plan focuses on providing a complete network of sidewalks and crosswalks, adding resources and amenities that focus on community-building, and installing streetscaping and art to connect the area visually to Midland and downtown.



[Gainesville - QCT 8](#)
North Athens Street Improvements Project

Rock Creek Greenway

Midtown Greenway

Airport Connector Trail

Chicopee Trail

UNG Connector Trail

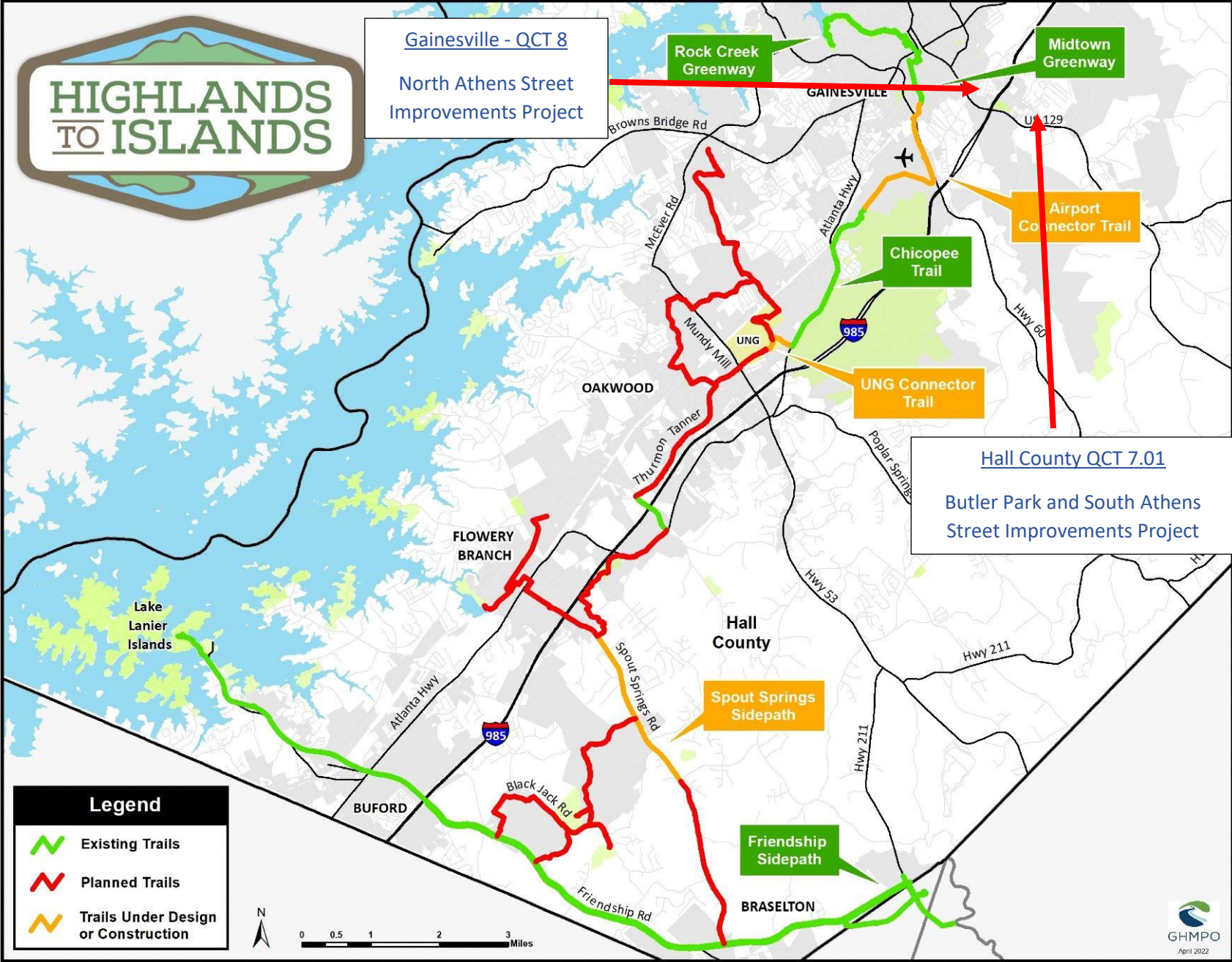
[Hall County QCT 7.01](#)
Butler Park and South Athens Street Improvements Project

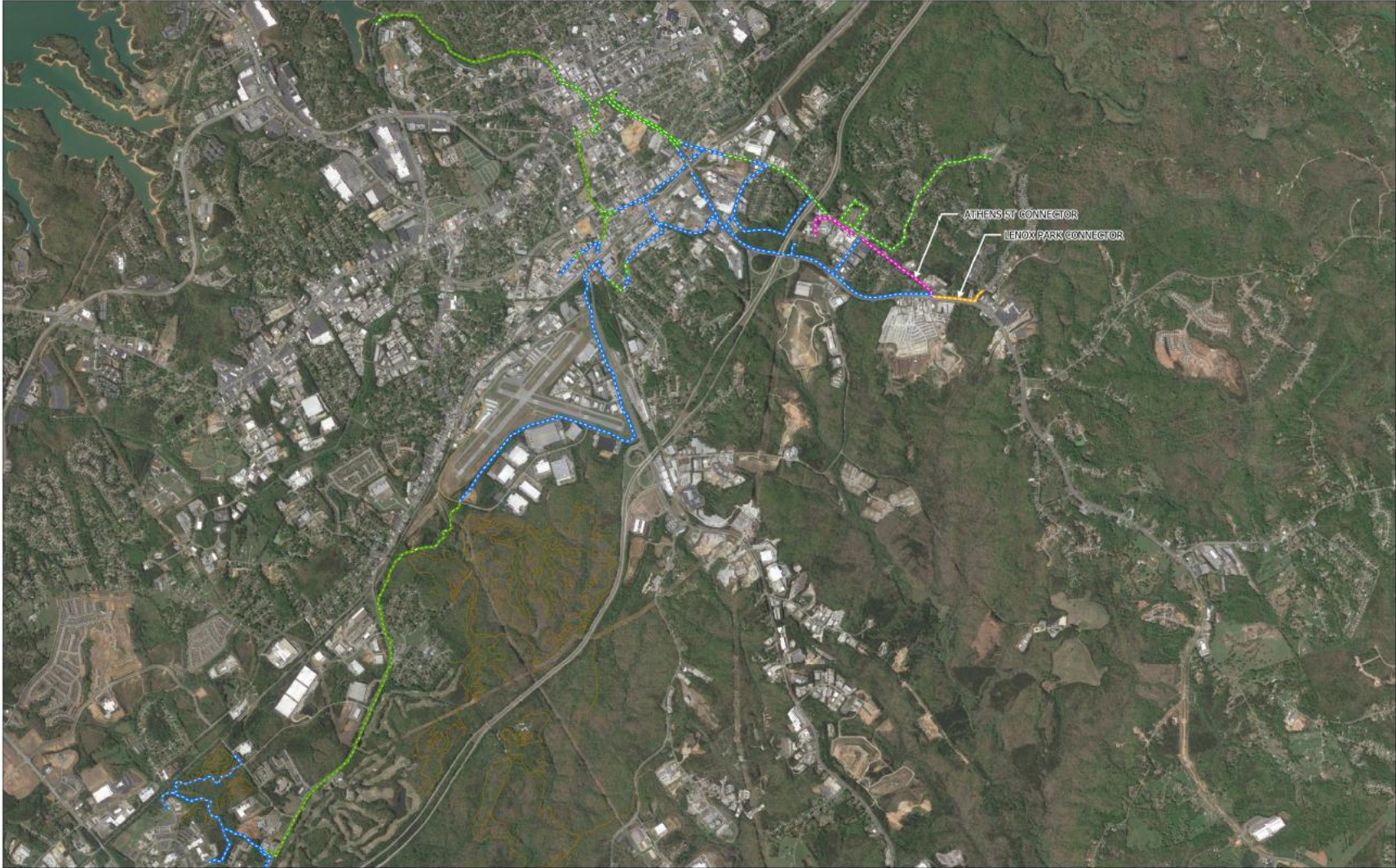
Spout Springs Sidepath

Friendship Sidepath

Legend

- Existing Trails
- Planned Trails
- Trails Under Design or Construction

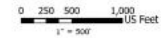






- Athens Street Connector
- Existing Trail
- Future Trail
- Concept to Under Construction
- Kingswood Trail

Highlands to Islands
Athens Street Connector project

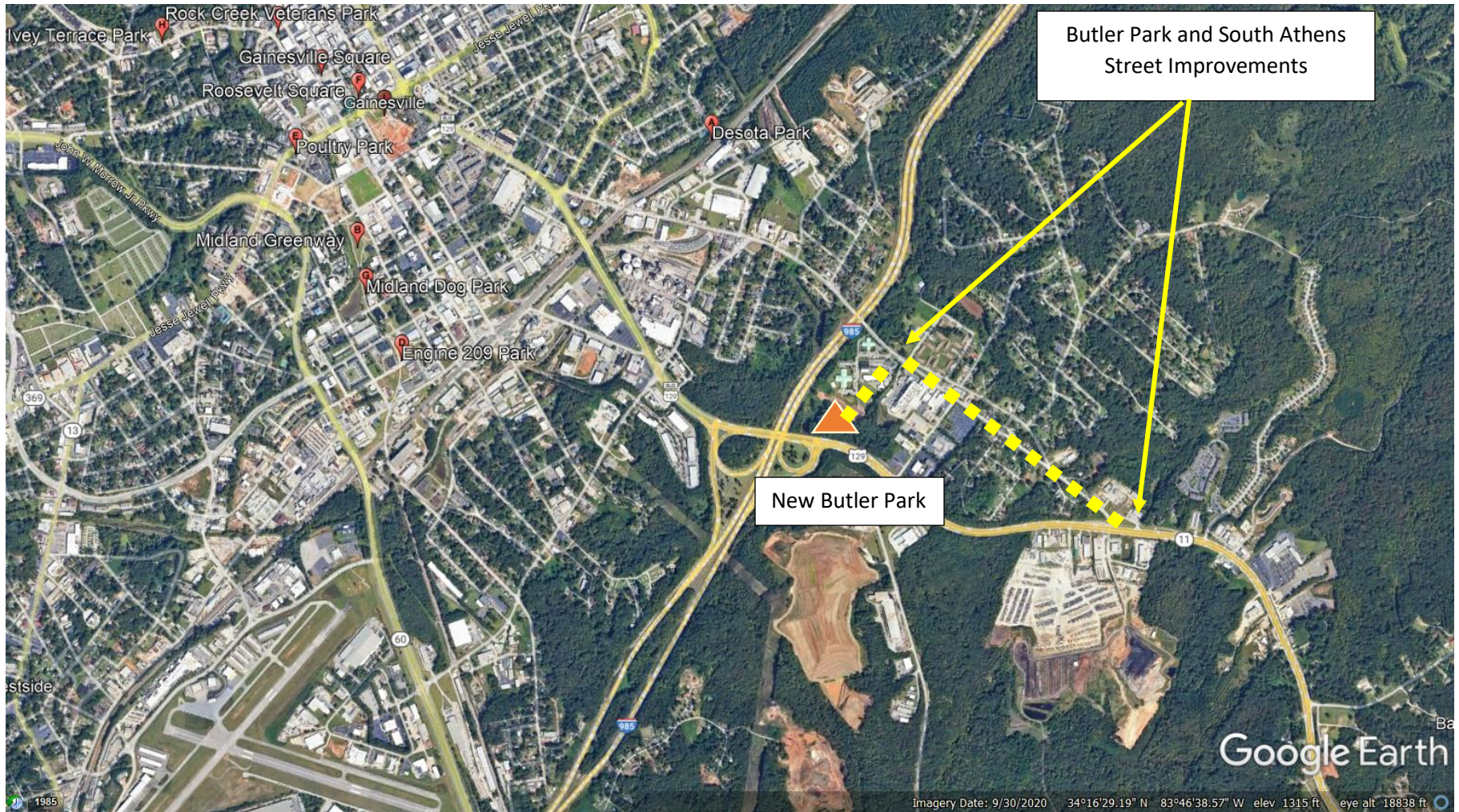


11/13/2019
Athens_ST_Connector_Review_11132019.pdf

Google Earth Image of Southeast Gainesville - Proximity and Accessibility to Parks

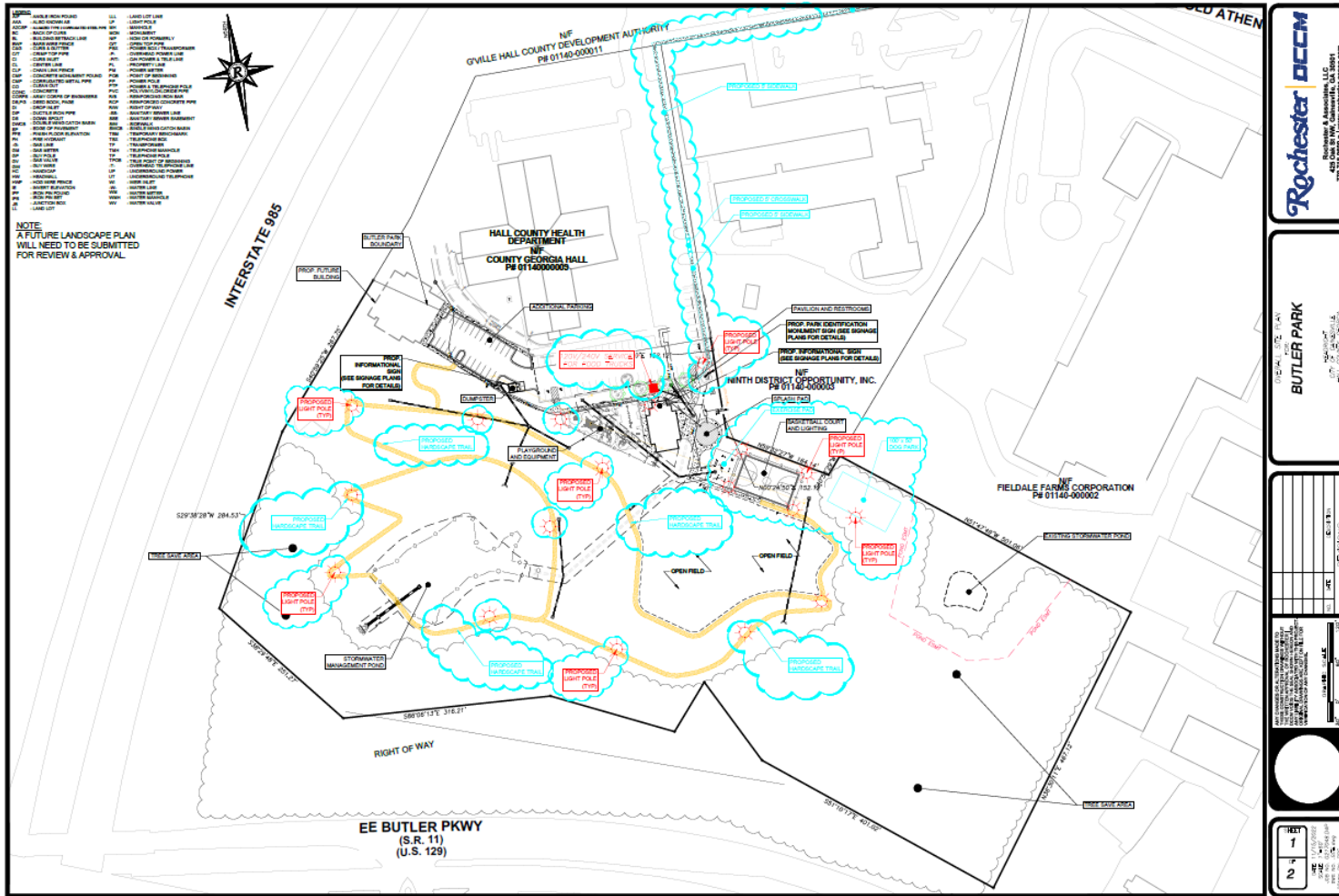
Gainesville Square is near upper left

Existing Parks and Sidewalk Connectivity in This Part of the County is Primarily West of I-985

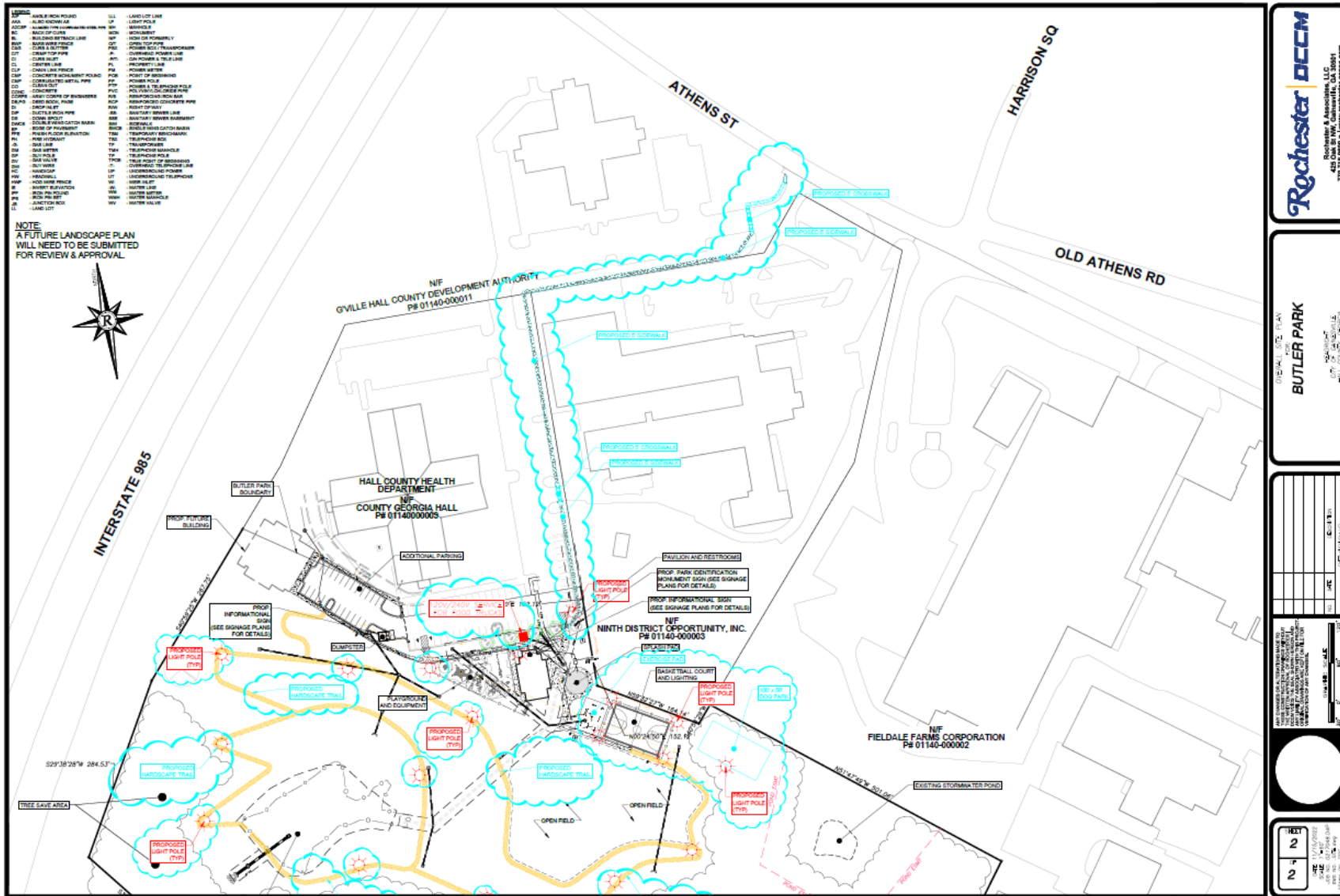


QCT 7.01 Butler Park and South Athens Street Improvements – The Project is composed of three Focus Areas:

Focus Area One- Butler Park Improvements – Further improvements at the new neighborhood park including safe route pedestrian connectivity to Athens Street – Sheet 1 Details Butler Park Improvements – hard surface (concrete) walking path, lighting, dog park, food truck electrical and safe-route sidewalk to Athens Street.



Focus Area Two - Safe-Route Sidewalk to Athens Street



Rochester DCCM
 Rochester & Associates, LLC
 425 Oak St NW, Columbus, GA 31907
 770.775.8880 | www.rochester-dccm.com

BUTLER PARK
 BUTLER PARK
 CITY OF COLUMBUS
 425 OAK ST NW, COLUMBUS, GA 31907

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION
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SCALE
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 2/2/2024

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Focus Area Three – South Athens Street Improvements

Excerpts from [July 2022 City of Gainesville Vision for the Athens Street and 129 South Corridors](#) (highlighted emphasis added)

QCT 8



The project area comprises the Athens Street corridor, from its intersection with Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to its intersection with Highway 129 South, and the E.E. Butler/129 South corridor, from the intersection of E.E. Butler Parkway and Jesse Jewell Parkway through the intersection of 129 South with Morgan Drive.

6 Gainesville GA | Master Plan 2022

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PROJECT

QCT 7.01

Following the successful development of the Downtown Master Plan in 2014 and the Park Hill Corridor Plan in 2020, the City of Gainesville launched the Athens Street and 129 South Corridor visioning process in 2021. As with the Park Hill plan, the Athens Street/129 South plan is focused exclusively on the corridors themselves to determine where improvements can be made that will positively impact the area. By focusing on the main corridors first, Gainesville is able to determine where its investments will have the most impact and, in turn, encourage and influence private investment along the corridors and beyond.

A Vision for the Athens Street and 129 South Corridors 7

CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT



CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT



RECOMMENDATIONS: Athens Street

ATHENS STREET SIDEWALK

An Example Site Near Monroe Drive

Through this part of the Athens Street corridor, the right-of-way width varies from 80 to 100 feet, leaving plenty of space for the addition of pedestrian infrastructure. Possibly, this portion of Athens Street was considered as an exit from I-985, explaining the wider-than-normal right-of-way.



The existing streetscape is completely absent of any pedestrian infrastructure aside from one small sidewalk strip on the corner adjacent to Fieldale. An unused paved area runs along the shoulders of the road, with poorly defined curb cuts. The area also lacks any intentional landscaping.

The addition of a 6-foot sidewalk along both sides of the road is the first step in providing pedestrian access to this area. New crosswalks are also added at key intersections. The addition of several speed humps and signaled crossings are shown along Athens Street leading up to the crossing in front of Fieldale. Traffic-calming measures such as these should be used to help slow traffic through this area.

The road edges are smoothed out with a planted buffer between the sidewalks and the driving lanes, improving pedestrian safety and the appearance of the area. Unnecessary curb cuts are also reduced, with clear entry and exit points defined for businesses along the road.

Street tree plantings along the road edges further beautify the area, adding environmental value and shade to the corridor. The street trees act as an additional buffer between pedestrians and traffic, promoting lower speeds and giving added safety to those using the sidewalks.

Clusters of shrub plantings near the intersections and pedestrian crossings further improve the landscape character of the area and give a more pleasant experience to both pedestrians and motorists.



RECOMMENDATIONS: Athens Street

A LOOK AT THE DETAILS

The existing streetscape contains 13-foot driving lanes with a large amount of unused space on either side of the road. Currently, no designated buffer separates pedestrian areas from the roadway.

The proposed changes drastically alter the streetscape appearance. Buffer plantings now encompass two new sidewalks that are lined with street trees. The aesthetic quality of the businesses in the area are elevated, and pedestrians now have safe, pleasant access to this section of Athens Street.



SIDEWALKS

Current Conditions



Proposed Changes

