

THE OLD ATLANTA PRISON FARM

by

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(Under the Direction of Sungkyung Lee)

ABSTRACT

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm was an operational correctional facility from the mid to late 1900s. While the idea behind the farm was to provide rehabilitation services through land programming, the farm was unable to deliver and has a history of negligence and abuse against incarcerated people. Today, the farm has sparked a debate between community members and the city of Atlanta regarding the development of a police training facility. This thesis uses public comments, historical documentation, design visions set forth by Save the Old Atlanta Prison Farm, and place attachment theory to create a set of design guidelines for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. This series of guidelines are just one iteration of what the site could be. They should be used to continue the conversation surrounding the area, ignite imagination, and provide a basis for future research.

INDEX WORDS: prison farm, landscape architecture, design, green space, community

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, friends, and cohort. Thank you for being with me through this process and providing endless amounts of emotional support and candy. I could not have finished this project without you. With you, it always gets done.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The ruins of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm are in Unincorporated Dekalb County at 1420 Key Rd SE, Atlanta, GA. This plot of land covers approximately 300 acres of forested green space, forming an important corridor in the South River Forest. It is surrounded by residential communities, two landfills, and a juvenile detention facility.

However, implementing this facility at the Old Atlanta Prison Farm has been unpopular among voters in

Atlanta and has garnered national attention as protesters gather to protect the forest and preserve the history of the land. Several interest groups have come together over the years to protect the site.

Organizations such as the South River Forest Coalition, Save the Old Atlanta Prison Farm (STOAPF), and Defend the Atlanta Forest have formed in an effort to try and keep the Old Atlanta Prison Farm and other green spaces in Atlanta from being clear-cut. These groups are comprised of Dekalb and Fulton County residents, environmental activists, and other community members.

The South River Forest Coalition was formed in 2018 by residents of south Dekalb County, who proposed that 3,500 acres of land in south Dekalb be preserved. This land is known as the South River Forest and contains Intrenchment Creek Park and the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. According to their

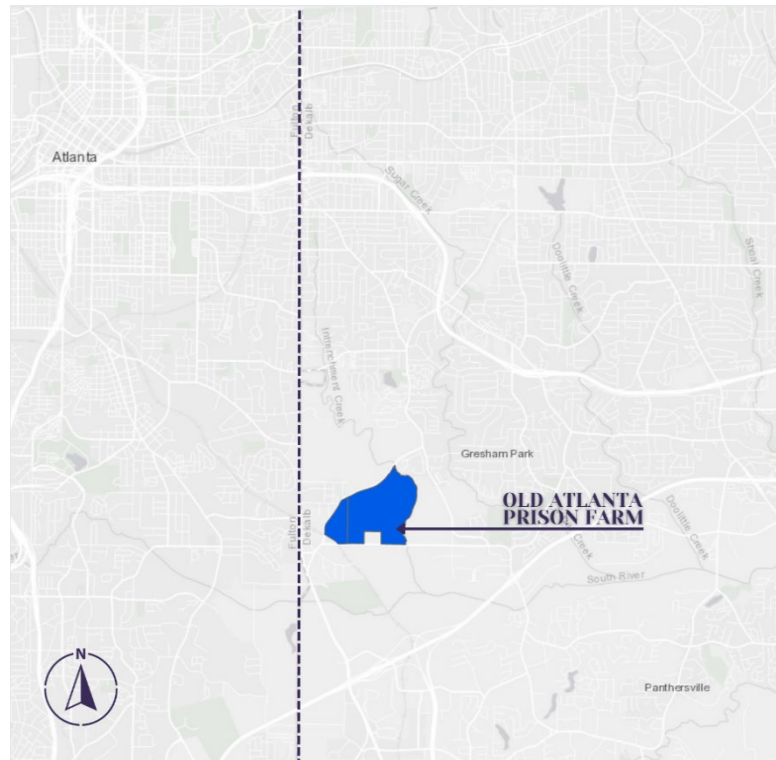


Figure 1. *A context map of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm.*

website, The South River Forest Coalition members strive to, "organize support for a broader, more sustainable, and equitable land use planning initiative for southeast Atlanta and southwest Dekalb County." The group has outlined several goals for the South River Forest, including fostering community and supporting health equality at a local level, providing amenities such as parks and nature preserves, preserving resources that will promote environmental justice, and creating a model to promote sustainable communities and healthy living. The South River Forest Coalition provides a grand overview of what the South River Forest could be to the city of Atlanta and the chance to model urban forest communities within the United States.

Another organization, STOAPF, is specifically interested in the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. This group has been working with the community, in collaboration with the South River Forest Coalition, to raise awareness of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm and the environmental hazards on the site. Through the years, they have encouraged the community to share their ideas for the property and have posted a list of visions to be incorporated on the site to their website. These visions include a dog park, conventional park, nature preserve, sports fields, eco park, outdoor music venue, community gardens, art/cultural events, historic site, and regional network of trails. Their goal is to give vision to these ideas so they may one day become a reality.

Grassroots organizations such as Defend the Atlanta Forest have taken to the South River Forest to protest and prevent attempts at developing Intrenchment Creek Park and the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. The group considers itself an autonomous movement that is protecting the forest to ensure Atlanta's resiliency to climate change. Community members without association to these groups have also taken it upon themselves to voice their opinions about the property. On September 17th, 2021, the City Council of Atlanta held a meeting to vote upon leasing the property to the Atlanta Police Foundation. In this meeting, over 17 hours of public comments were received and posted to the city council's Facebook page. After analyzing the comments, I found that a vast majority of respondents do not agree with the development of the police training facility.

Despite clear public backlash to the implementation of the facility, the city of Atlanta continues to move forward with the development of the property. Protests at the prison farm site reached a boiling point on January 18th of 2023, when Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, known as Tortuguita, was killed during a police raid of the forest. Georgia Patrol is the only witness of the incident and claimed that the Tortuguita fired a gun at officers. However, an autopsy report requested by the family showed that Tortuguita was sitting cross-legged with their hands up when they died. No bodycam video of the event has been released by the Atlanta Police Foundation. Tensions have remained high between the police and protestors since the death of Tortuguita (Li 2023).

In addition to the controversy surrounding the potential deforestation of the area, the historical context is also significant in the issues surrounding the prison farm. The ties of the land to convict leasing and a state-run prison farm make the decision to give the land to the Atlanta Police Foundation insensitive. The land containing the Old Atlanta Prison Farm contains the ruins of the prison and, with it, memories of the past, one that is both significant to the evolution of racial injustices in America and the progression of the American carceral system.

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm and the 300 acres of forested land have much to offer the community and the greater city of Atlanta. Natural landscapes buffer against climate change and provide necessary environmental resources like fresh air, clean water, and soil. The benefits of green space and outdoor contact with nature are well-documented in academic fields such as landscape architecture, sociology, and psychology. Green space in urban areas provides opportunities for exercise and passive stress release. Not only are natural outdoor spaces essential for physical and psychological health, but they also provide space for memorials and community gatherings. These features often result in strong attachment ties between the community and the landscape.

This thesis aims to answer the question: What would the design guidelines for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm be if public comments from the 2021 Atlanta city council meeting and the design visions set forth by STOAPF were used to determine site development? Using public comments provides a wealth of information about public desires. Furthermore, the field of landscape architecture gives a unique

opportunity to explore design through the eyes of others and to develop land responsibly. This cannot be done without consideration of public needs and concerns.

The overarching goal of this thesis is to produce a series of design guidelines that are informed by public comments and to build off previous design visions established by STOAPF. The exploration of public comments through keyword extraction and place attachment theory will provide deeper insight into public desires and provide a systematic way of categorizing comments into design guidelines. Finally, this thesis aims to provide graphic representation and design work to give visualization to an alternative future for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis aims to demonstrate how public comments and design goals from STOAPF can be used to determine design guidelines for an alternative future of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. To do this, we must use landscape architecture theory and history to guide and understand the current cultural and political conflict taking place over the land.

Landscape, in this thesis, will be defined by the book, *Ruptured Landscapes*. In this book landscape is defined as an object of human perception that acts as an avenue to convey changes in cultural, political, and social attitudes (Sooväli-Sepping, Reinert, and Miles-Watson 2015). With this definition, we can highlight the importance of the landscape, not only due to its impact on the environment, but also because of the importance of the land to the human condition. Access to nature and outdoor contact has the power to impact cultural identities, health, and opportunity.

In recent years there has been a focus in academic research on the negative impacts that occur when green, ecologically functional spaces are unavailable to communities. These discussions have covered issues such as nature deficit disorder, environmental racism, and classism that work to segregate and discriminate against minority communities, keeping them from benefiting from healthy, natural environments (Louv 2008; Cunningham 2016).

These issues are not new, there are many instances of communities all over the country, including those who are currently working to defend the Old Atlanta Prison Farm, who are determined to fight for their right to access natural resources and green spaces, in order to reap the psychological and physical benefits of nature.

Disadvantaged people and minorities bear the brunt of the uneven distribution of access to nature. While income, wealth, and urban locals all predict a greater burden of environmental hazards, race has been shown to be the strongest predictor (Checker 2005). These communities are more likely to live in

neighborhoods at greater risk of environmental hazards and live in closer proximity to hazardous waste facilities, landfills, and other facilities that produce a large amount of air pollution (Checker 2005; Cunningham 2016). Disadvantaged groups often lack the political power to force companies to be environmentally responsible or push government agencies to fund clean-up campaigns in the area. Another reason disenfranchised groups may live in polluted neighborhoods is the cost associated with clean environments. The advantaged can pay large amounts of money to clean their neighborhoods, while the disadvantaged cannot. Access to nature is essential to human health. Functional ecology and a space free of pollutants are human rights. However, systemic forces keep many Americans from benefiting.

2.1 Importance of Access to Green space

Values systems are an essential piece of the puzzle in landscape architecture. The central values of landscape architecture include promoting a positive human experience, enhancing social equity, and sustaining/improving environmental quality (Murphy 2005). These values guide landscape architects in creating and maintaining natural spaces for human well-being.

The importance of nature and accessibility to green space and to community well-being cannot be exaggerated. In 2021 the World Health Organization (WHO) published the *Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment*, this document declares that the natural environment, when functioning correctly, protects communities from hazards related to climate change and pollution. When resources like water, air, and soil become contaminated, humans are at risk for health complications. Noise and population density, two issues that can be solved with increased green space, can also result in psychological stress (Largo-Wight 2011). The need for natural, ecologically functioning spaces in which communities can meet is essential and access to these spaces should be a right. Just as ecologically unhealthy spaces cause adverse health impacts, natural spaces that function well and are open to the public can have several positive health impacts. Outdoor nature contact supplies the most direct health benefits (Largo-Wight 2011). Outdoor nature contact occurs outside and frequently includes interactions with elements such as plants, animals, earth, water, and wilderness. The benefits of outdoor nature contact are so immense that wilderness therapies are used in the treatment of public health issues such as

substance abuse and at-risk teenagers (Largo-Wight 2011). Having wooded parks in an urban setting has been found to contribute to reductions in crime, aggression, violence, and road rage (Kuo and Sullivan 2001). Furthermore, participants undertaking "green exercise" in natural settings, such as a park, showed greater psychological stress recovery following a stressor than participants walking in urbanized environments (Largo-Wight 2011).

Children may be among the most impacted by outdoor nature contact. Richard Louv coined the term "nature deficit disorder" in his book, *Last Child in the Woods*. Nature deficit disorder links time spent in nature and childhood health issues related to stress and attention capacity. Nature deficit disorder has been confirmed by studies that show a negative correlation between opportunity for outdoor nature contact and the incidence of attention deficit disorder (ADD) symptoms and perceived stress (Taylor, Kuo, and Sullivan 2001; Largo-Wight 2011).

2.2 Landscape Architecture's Role

Landscape Architecture is the practice of modifying and understanding the earth and natural landscapes for practical or aesthetic reasons (Murphy 2005). The profession is multi-faceted and requires a broad knowledge base, including land sciences, geology, biology, sociology, horticulture, chemistry, ecology, physics, etc. This broad scope of expertise makes landscape architecture applicable to various subjects and gives landscape architects unique perspectives when encountering wicked problems, or problems that are difficult or impossible to solve, such as environmental racism or inequality. While many landscape architects work today to improve wicked problems, this hasn't always been the case.

Landscape architecture began as a white male-dominated field. Furthermore, many famous parks were created by destroying minority neighborhoods and excluding minority groups from conversations about how to develop green space and who should be able to access said green space. For example, Central Park was built upon the bones of Seneca Village, a once-thriving black community that was destroyed to build the park in the 19th century (Zdanowicz 2019).

It wasn't until the 1980s that the environmental movement recognized the link between social and environmental problems. The Environmental Justice Movement began to address the unequal distribution of environmental waste in communities of color by advocating for its removal (Butler and Ramos 2021).

However, it isn't enough to remove hazardous materials from disadvantaged neighborhoods. Green space access also needs to be addressed. Green space, in the urban setting, most commonly comes in the form of a park. When parks are implemented correctly and have working ecosystems, they provide health benefits to the community and can buffer against climate change (Heo and Bell 2022).

Landscape architects can use their knowledge of social issues and the environment to help communities advocate for hazardous waste removal and the implementation of green space through graphic communication, listening to community input, and selecting projects that empower community members.

2.3 Social Impact of Landscapes

While the landscape and natural settings benefit mental and physical health, landscape can also play an important social role. Many landscapes are given meaning through historical events and community gatherings. The events that take place within or on a specific landscape can cause attachments to form and identity to be built between the community and the landscape (Sooväli-Sepping, Reinert, and Miles-Watson 2015). However, attachment and identity are subjective experiences, and different experiences can result in group-on-group conflict.

Landscape as an identity has become an important discussion in the academic world of landscape architecture. Landscape and identity are closely related parts of culture that work to inform each other. Both landscapes and identity are complex and dynamic concepts that are subject to change based on interpretation (Howard, Thompson, and Waterton 2013). Due to the dynamic relationship between landscape and identity, differing ideas of land usage can result in conflict. These conflicts are defined as a *rupture*. A rupture is a "dramatic upheaval and continuous, unpredictable change: social, political,

economic, environmental and climactic” (Sooväli-Sepping, Reinert, and Miles-Watson 2015). Ruptures act as catalyst for change within society and landscape.

Ralf Dahrendorf, who worked as a sociologist, political theorist, and public intellectual, developed a conflict theory that emphasizes conflict as not only natural, but also productive (Kuehne, Schoenwald, and Jenal 2022). It is through social conflict that change is sparked. Social conflicts, according to Dahrendorf, follow a specific course of events. First, there is a structural starting point in which parts of society form 'quasi-groups' with the same interests and expectations. Second, group formation occurs when those interests and expectations are freely expressed. Finally, groups obtain a 'visible identity,' and deviation from the identity is no longer tolerated, resulting in conflict (Kuehne, Schoenwald, and Jenal 2022).

It is through conflict that changes are made to the landscape; these changes to the landscape have the power to either strengthen or weaken community ties. Many of these ties can be analyzed through how humans bond to the landscape. This is known as place attachment.

Place attachment is a theory with multidisciplinary uses and has become a significant area of study for several fields, including geography, psychology, and sociology. The definition of place attachment has been historically muddled, with several terms used for the same idea, making research on the topic difficult (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001). However, place attachment has generally been defined as an emotional bond between people and specific places (Hidalgo and Hernández 2001).

Furthermore, place attachments are dynamic and ever-changing. They change with time and new experiences. Cross, in her article, “Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework,” breaks down the interactional process of place attachment into six categories: sensory, narrative, historical, spiritual, ideological, commodifying, and material dependence (Cross 2015). These categories add essential insight into why/how humans develop strong ties to different landscapes and help shed light on

how and why communities assign value to different places, including the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. The next few chapters will use this framework to analyze the public comments about the prison farm.

2.4 Convict Leasing

A distinguishing feature of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm property is the presence of the ruins of the city-run Honor Farm. Honor farms are correctional facilities that force manual labor in the form of farming and animal husbandry. State-run honor farms, in the time that the prison farm was active, were typically an extension of convict leasing. Convict leasing became popular in the 19th century after the ratification of the 13th Amendment and the abolishment of slavery (Baker 2021). Slave patrols, which had ensured black compliance with slavery, were formally disbanded, and replaced by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacy groups (Duchess and Rebecca 2020). Local police departments continued to enforce racist laws by enforcing Black Codes. Black Codes were used to limit the freedom of black people by harshly punishing them for minor crimes like breaking curfew, stealing, or loitering (Duchess and Rebecca 2020; Oshinsky 1996). Jim Crow laws would also be established to enforce segregation and act to disenfranchise black people until the civil rights movement in the 1960s (Duchess and Rebecca 2020; Oshinsky 1996).

While slavery was no longer legal in the South, the assumptions which maintained slavery remained securely in place. When it was time for black people to leave plantations that had enslaved them, the view of them as lazy was strengthened in the eyes of white people (Oshinsky 1996). Many black people found themselves without the resources needed to leave their plantations. They stayed on false promises of payment or lies about their status as free Americans. Many black people relied on theft to make ends meet. In reaction to this, harsh laws were enacted in the South that increased the prison sentences for low-level crimes, resulting in the carceral system becoming overrun.

Convict leasing evolved as the primary form of incarceration in the South to ensure that the Southern economy, one that was entirely built on slave labor, was able to function after the Civil War (Baker 2021; Oshinsky 1996). This type of leasing occurred when the state auctioned out incarcerated

people to private entities. These private contractors, in trade for the profit of free labor, would oversee the living arrangements, work schedules, diet, and medical care of all who were leased to them (Baker 2021). Those who were convicted were sent to work in plantations, coal mines, railroads, and other facilities that had previously been run on slave labor.

Convict leasing was a particularly harsh form of free labor. Many of the private contractors felt no obligation to take care of or invest in the convicts due to the lack of ownership, as opposed to slavery. For this reason, the death rate among those who were leased was very high (Alexander and West 2020; Baker 2021). Incarcerated people were frequently served rotten meals, kept from participating in good hygiene, and forced to work long shifts while experiencing extreme forms of mental and physical torture. Convict leasing affected black people disproportionately in 1901. The ratio of black incarceration was three times greater than white incarceration, 1 for every 306 people in the population vs 1 for every 856 people. Due to public disapproval of the harsh treatment of convicts and the unchecked ability of the state to increase its profit level by moving incarcerated individuals into state-run prison farms, convict leasing was abolished in the early 1900s (Baker 2021).

One of the most infamous state-run prison farms, Parchman Farm in Mississippi, was very similar in design to an antebellum plantation but with convicts instead of slaves. As in a slave plantation, captive labor was used to grow and harvest crops. Additionally, punishment on the farm was physical and often included whipping which carries strong racial overtones because of its frequent use against slaves (Oshinsky 1996).

The Atlanta Prison Farm was developed in this same era, but unlike Parchman Farm, it functioned as an Honor Farm. The Atlanta Prison Farm was intended to host petty criminals and provide rehabilitation and education through working the land. However, the Atlanta Prison Farm would end up resembling Parchman Farm in cruelty and the continuation of exploitative labor practices.

2.5 Research Question

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm has triggered much controversy over the last several decades. The recent decision by the city of Atlanta to lease the land to the Atlanta Police Foundation without public

consent is not only historically insensitive but also restricts green space to the surrounding communities, stripping them of the health benefits of nature contact and neglecting the social impact that this landscape has had on the community. Central to this objective is the question: What would the design guidelines for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm be if public comments were to determine site development?

CHAPTER 3

ATLANTA PRISON FARM HISTORY



Figure 2. *Atlanta Prison Farm photo identification cards, ms4283*, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries (Athens: n.a. 1956-1972)

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm in Dekalb County is historically significant to the city of Atlanta, the history of North America, and the evolution of the American Carceral System. This piece of land encompasses layers of social, political, cultural, and environmental controversy that extend from the Late Archaic Period to the present day (Cullison 2018; Ponitz 2021).

The land containing the Old Atlanta Prison Farm is less than a mile from the northern boundary of Soapstone Ridge, making it more than plausible that Native American activity occurred on the Atlanta Prison Farm plot (Ponitz 2021). Due to the proximity of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm to Soapstone Ridge, further archeological analysis needs to be conducted to determine if the site contains artifacts. It is important to acknowledge that the land being discussed first belonged to the Creek Nation, who ceded their land containing the site DeKalb County would be founded on in 1822 to the United States of

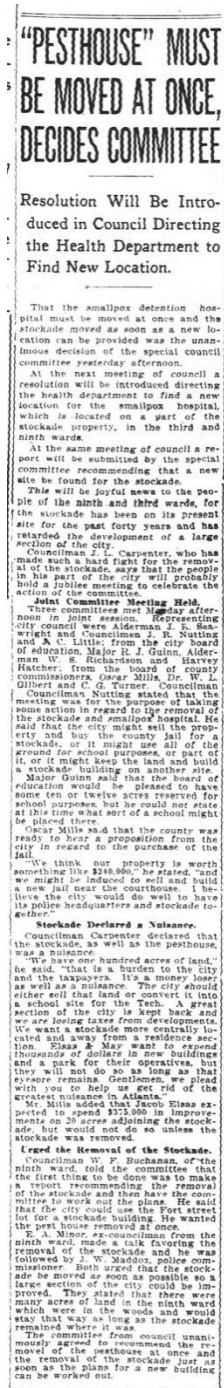


Figure 3:
Pesthouse Must Be Moved At Once Decides Committee
(Atlanta: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 1918).

America (Ponitz 2021). A detailed history of the Creek Nation at this site is outside the scope of this thesis, but further investigation into the topic is needed.

According to a 20-page historical analysis by Jillian Wooten of City Planning, the first known documentation of ownership of the prison farm site was by Lochlin Johnson, a Dekalb City leader. He was said to have developed the land into what is probably “the finest plantation in the country” (Wooten 1999; Douglas 2008).

By 1915 the city of Atlanta took ownership of the parcel that would become the Atlanta Prison Farm (Ponitz 2021). At the time, it was being run as a dairy farm. According to the article, “Pesthouse Must be Moved at Once, Decides Committee” published by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in 1918, city officials decided that the Atlanta Stockade, which functioned as a smallpox hospital and penal complex, needed to be moved to a new location due to its role in slowing down the development of the ninth and third wards of Atlanta. *The Atlanta Community Press Collective*, in their 2021 article “A brief history of the Atlanta City Prison Farm” points out that T.B. Lanford, superintendent of Prisons, a man known for using tactics like flogging and solitary confinement as punishment, suggested the incarcerated individuals of the Atlanta Stockade be moved to the dairy farm where they could be used for free labor. The city council passed a law allowing prison facilities to be built outside the city and created the Atlanta Prison Farm.

The decision to move the smallpox hospital and stockade was not without conflict. In 1917 an article published by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, “Pest House in Dekalb to Bring Injunction,” highlights some of the concerns. The

community worried for its children as they passed the proposed pest house to visit Marvin School House and a community church.

However, these complaints would not stop the development of the site. The municipal dairy farm was converted into an honor farm. The first warden of the honor farm was Pet Fry, who was given credit for transforming the unkempt land into a productive farm. Fry believed that the skills learned at the Atlanta Prison Farm would equip those who were formerly incarcerated with the knowledge they would need to “make an honest living” (Wooten 1999). The farm was to be worked by the honor system which meant that there were no guards, cells, or fences intended to keep incarcerated people on the property. Those who were incarcerated at the prison farm were caught for petty crimes and often had a sentence of less than a year (Wooten 1999). According to the historical analysis done by Jillian Wooten, “Of the original sixty-nine prisoners on the farm perhaps sixty were serving sentences for moonshining” (Wooten 1999).

Days on the farm were long, and incarcerated people were often responsible for constructing the new prison buildings, including facilities like the dormitory and kitchen. Incarcerated individuals were also tasked with working the land and had duties such as caring for “fifty-eight cows and two bulls, and planting and harvesting vegetation” (Wooten 1999). In their 2021 article the *Atlanta Community Press Collective* found that the farm became financially beneficial for the city, and by 1925 the council members were being praised for the large number of people who were incarcerated and the savings the farming practices allowed the city. The agricultural products produced at the honor farm were not being used solely to feed the incarcerated at the prison but were used to supply food to city council members and those they would entertain at the Atlanta Prison Farm. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* chronicles such events in 1925 with articles titled, “Council Members



Figure 4: *Constitution Gets Barbecue Treat From City Farm* (Atlanta: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 1925)

Forget Dignity at Melon Feast” and “Constitution Gets Barbecue Treat From City Farm.” City officials were benefiting from the labor of the people at the prison farm facility despite clear ethical issues with unpaid labor and the treatment of the incarcerated.



Figure 5: *View of the Atlanta Prison Farm in south Atlanta, Georgia, January 3, 1937* (Atlanta: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 1937).

For the rest of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, the prison farm would continue to expand and grow, both in the amount of money that it brought to the city and in agricultural production

(Wooten 1999). While this seemed like a win for the city, life inside the prison farm was far from ideal. The *Atlanta Community Press Collective* stresses the sordid history of nonexistent medical treatment, corporal punishment, labor, overcrowding, malnutrition, poor sanitation, and racism that would continue throughout the 1930s -1940s at the site. These two decades began to poke holes in the narrative that the farm was a place of peaceful reform for petty criminals. In 1930 the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* printed an article, “Acting Mayor Frees 258 Prisoners,” which quoted Mayor Couch defending the incarcerated and stating that their crimes were not great enough to keep them from freedom.

Mayor Couch's edict to free the incarcerated people was not popular among all officials, and contemporary newspaper articles documented the prison farm's continuing inhumane treatment of those incarcerated there. The rest of the 1930s would bring about the construction of more dormitories to allow for racial segregation. In addition, there were 56 prisoner escapes, 6 suicide attempts from a female inmate after being locked in a “sweat box,” reports of inadequate health care, and multiple deaths, all while serving as a locale where officials would meet and entertain one another (Byrne 2022). The 1940s and 50s would not be much better: the prison farm continued to expand and even added a wing for the

treatment of venereal diseases. The prison would host more deaths, be criticized by reporters for barbaric behavior, and continue to treat black and white people unequally (Byrne 2022).

In the 1960s the prison farm became one of the holding spots for black Americans who participated in sit-ins to end racial segregation. Even Dr. Martin Luther King's brother, Reverend A.D. King, was held at the Atlanta Prison Farm in October of 1960 after a sit-in at Rich's Department Store, along with other activists (Byrne 2022).

In October of 1965, reporter for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Dick Hebert, went undercover to investigate the conditions of the prison farm. He reported that a man who was found to be selling pills at the prison farm was sentenced to a room called "the hole." Hebert describes the hole as being a "...four-by-six windowless room in which you are fed a biscuit and water three times a day. You are not allowed cigarettes in there, and your commode is a bucket. You have no furniture" (Hebert 1965). He painted a picture of a facility where there were not enough bunks, with sick people who slept on the concrete, where bugs frequented the floors, and food was in short supply and poor condition. The facility also lacked a sick bay and had no recreation amenities (Hebert 1965).

It is these factors that led to the prison farm being shut down in the late 80s. After its closing, the prison farm became a dumping site for the city. In 2002, ideas of turning the property into a park for Dekalb County became public but were never realized.

According to the *Atlanta Community Press Collective*, records on all who died on the farm are not available, but it is known that several deaths occurred at the prison farm, and there are likely many unmarked graves on the site that have been communicated using folk stories. Furthermore, they found a memo in the Georgia Archives describing the burial procedure for prisoners who were not collected by family members. These prisoners were to be given a pauper's grave that would be limited to \$50.00. This increases the likelihood that unmarked graves could be in the area.

This is not a complete history of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. More research needs to be done to accurately collect and preserve the history of the site. Recently, great efforts have been made by several organizations to collect and preserve this history. Groups like the *Atlanta Community Press Collective* and *I Am the Mountain* have collected large amounts of archival data that were used in this section. However, the site has never been fully explored for its historical artifacts, nor has its story been fully preserved. Furthermore, the trauma that the prison farm inflicted on those who were imprisoned has yet to be acknowledged in a meaningful way.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE OLD ATLANTA PRISON FARM



Figure 6. A connectivity map of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm.

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm is conveniently located near Atlanta and has several amenities when it comes to connectivity. The site has direct access to public transit routes to the south side of the property, and due to the proximity of the Atlanta Beltline, a connection is possible (denoted in orange dots in Figure 6). There is a lack of sidewalks around the site, but it is easily accessible by car. Figure 6 shows access points to the Old Atlanta Prison Farm through transit routes and major roadways.

Figure 7 is a land usage map that shows how the plats around the Old Atlanta Prison Farm are zoned by the county. Most notably, the site is surrounded by industrial facilities to the southeast corner and a landfill in the northeast corner. Having these facilities incasing the site could increase the amount of pollution in the forest due to run-off.

This site is also heavily surrounded by residential neighborhoods making it a prime location for a public park. Adding a sidewalk around the perimeter would increase walkability to the surrounding neighborhoods. Furthermore, the green areas in Figure 7 indicate that the property is well connected to

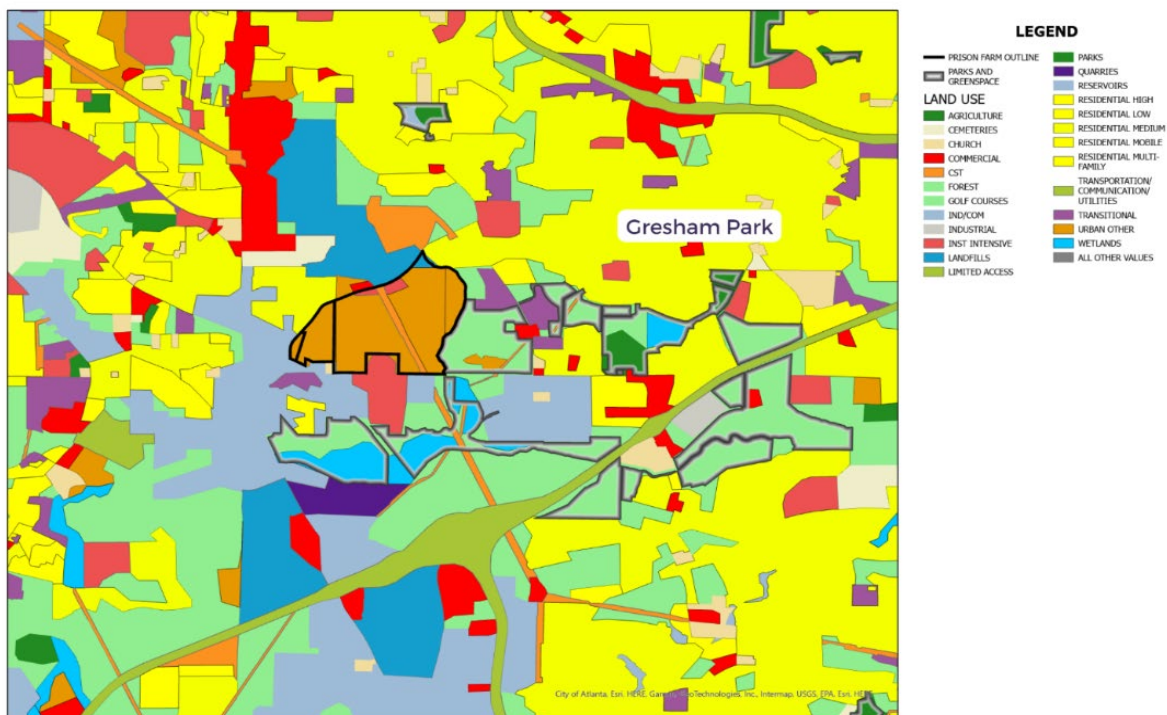


Figure 7. A land usage map of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm.

other parks in the area. Having substantial amounts of green space connected in this way provides important corridors for wildlife.



Figure 8. A context map showing the surrounding infrastructure of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm.

Developments around the site include Ronald McNair Sr. High School, a juvenile detention facility, shadowbox studios, and a children's health center. Figure 8 shows where these institutions are in relation to the prison farm. Many of them are within a short walk to the green space, making it a prominent location for a publicly accessible park.

In 2018, the South River Forest Coalition partnered with Perkins & Will to conceptualize the South River Forest (which encompasses the Old Atlanta Prison Farm). They performed analyses using ArcGIS to identify the socio-economic status of the communities surrounding the green space.

The maps they produced, Figure 9, show that the communities surrounding the Old Atlanta Prison Farm are among the most vulnerable to social health stress factors. They have low levels of health insurance coverage, high rates of people experiencing physical health distress, and higher rates of people below the poverty line (South River Forest Coalition 2018). Having more green spaces could provide some relief to people who are experiencing physical health distress. The communities surrounding the prison farm would greatly benefit from public green space because of its positive impact on mental and physical health.



Figure 9. Four maps showing the community health statuses of neighborhoods surrounding the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. (Atlanta: South River Forest Coalition, Perkins & Will., 2018)

4.1 Ecology

The Piedmont is an ecoregion located in the Southeastern United States. This area has been occupied and controlled by human forces for millennia. Long before the arrival of Europeans, the land was

influenced by Native Americans. Today, more than half of the Piedmont is abandoned farmland in different stages of succession. The composition of plant communities is driven by the ability of the soil to maintain moisture. These plant mixes then define the available habitat for animal communities (Godfrey 2012). It is important to remember that the ecosystem is a dynamic network and that disrupting any part of the network can destroy the system.

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm is classified as part of the Southern Outer Piedmont (Figure 10). This ecoregion is defined by lower elevations and loblolly

shortleaf pine forests. Gneiss, shist, and

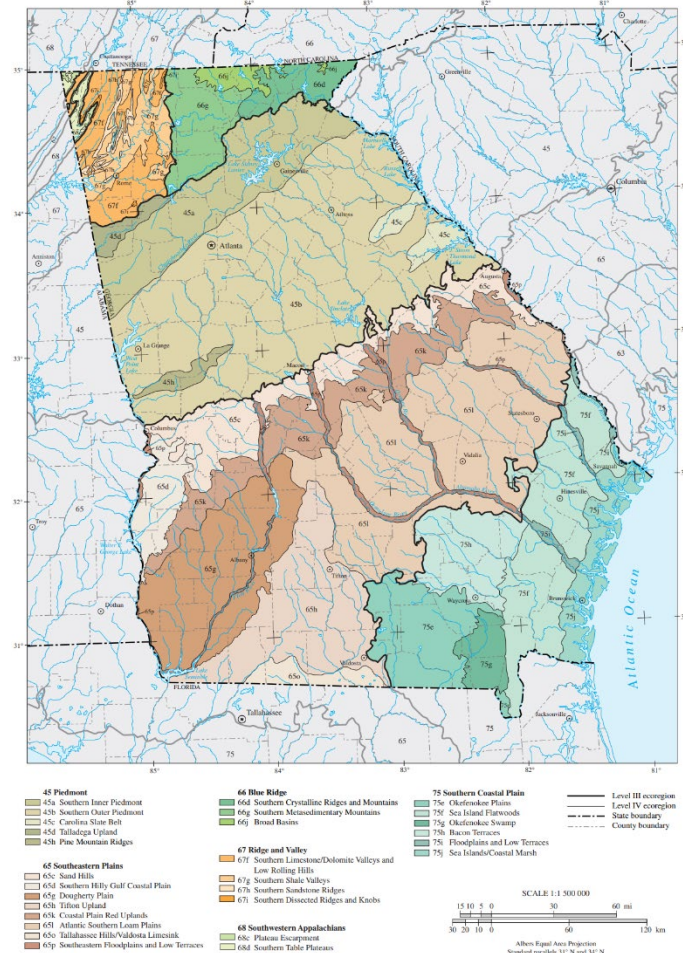


Figure 10. *A map showing the ecoregions of Georgia.* (Oregon: G.E Griffith, et.al., 2001) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

granite are the dominant rock types. These rocks are covered with deep saprolite and red clay subsoils.

Much of the soil is Kanhapludults. The area is mesic, meaning soils are typically well-drained and have mild slopes (Griffith 2001; Godfrey 2012).

This property, previously a plantation, dairy farm, and prison farm, has been undergoing successional changes since its abandonment in the 80s. In the Georgia Piedmont, the pioneering plants are the loblolly and shortleaf pines. After a century of pine growth, the understory develops, and trees like red

maple, tulip poplar, and sweetgum begin to take over the understory. After two centuries, Spanish oak, white oak, and post oaks will establish, which indicates deciduous plants have taken over the canopy. Plants like redbud, white mulberry, dogwood, and sourwood will also appear (Godfrey 2012). The shrub layer is the last to develop. These plants typically include strawberry bush, lowbush blueberry, and Downy Arrowwood. Others include beggar's ticks, pipsissewa, rattlesnake orchids, and Christmas ferns (Godfrey 2012).

Understanding the successional changes of the land will help to determine the right kind of plants to strengthen the forest. Invasive plants such as kudzu and wisteria must be removed from the Old Atlanta Prison Farm property and replaced with native plant species. Removing such species can be done by cutting, mowing, or using herbicides. Removing these invasive species will allow native plantings to establish, increasing the biodiversity of plants and animals. Having greater diversity in the forest will ensure that the ecosystem has a better chance of surviving in the face of environmental hazards and buffering against climate change.

Using native plants not only benefits the ecosystem but has aesthetically pleasing qualities. Plants native to the Georgia Piedmont host an array of colors and textures that can increase aesthetic interest in planting beds year-round while also supporting ecology. Implementing edible plants can provide resources and educational opportunities for park visitors (Godfrey 2012; Georgia Native Plant Society 2023).

When forests are clear-cut or invasive species reduce biodiversity, the whole system is at risk of collapse. By learning about the successional changes of the land and implementing native plantings to improve habitat for other living organisms, the forest surrounding the Old Atlanta Prison Farm can be improved and preserved. These actions will help to restore and protect natural resources in the area, ensuring the longevity of the land and increasing resilience (Godfrey 2012).

4. 2 *Environmental Analysis*

Understanding the ecology of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm site is only the first step to remediating the land and making a resilient green space. The Old Atlanta Prison Farm has been inhabited by humans since the archaic period, and the land has been significantly altered by humans (Ponitz 2021). Pollution accumulation in the waterways can make activities such as fishing and swimming dangerous for the public. Pollution that has been absorbed by the soil can also have detrimental effects on the public if they wish to grow food for consumption. Having a complete environmental report is the only way to diagnose the current state of the soil, water, and air on the property. Only with this knowledge can the land be rehabilitated to function not only for flora and fauna but the public as well.

Furthermore, the Old Atlanta Prison Farm site may contain environmental hazards due to the urban and industrial zones surrounding the property. A group known as the South River Watershed Alliance has been working to improve the ecology of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm and the surrounding green spaces in the area, taking it upon themselves to investigate solutions to fix the pollution problem.

Pollution can come from multiple sources and have a wide variety of effects on the landscape. According to, *Our River Challenges*, an article published by the South River Watershed Alliance in 2020, There are two different classifications of pollution; point source pollution (PSP) and non-point source pollution (NPS). PSP can be linked to a specific source like a facility, while a specific origin cannot be determined for NPS pollution. According to South River Watershed Alliance, most of the PSP exposure in Intramural Creek, which flows on the east side of the property, comes from Dekalb County sewer spills and from the Custer Avenue CSO Storage and Dechlorination Facility. Dekalb County has been known for sewage spillage and, in 2011, was issued a Consent Decree requiring it to identify and quantify sewage overflows and their causes. Subsequently Dekalb County was ordered to rehabilitate all priority areas within 8.5 years (Harris-Young 2020). However, Dekalb County requested an extension that was

approved by U.S. District Court Judge Steven D. Grimberg in 2021. This extension grants Dekalb County an additional seven years to complete the necessary repairs to prevent more sewage spills (Estep 2021).

NPS pollution includes hazards like trash, fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides, oil, and heavy metals. When it rains, stormwater washes these pollutants into the nearest waterway. This runoff can degrade the environment in several different ways. For example, fertilizer runoff causes an increase in nitrogen and phosphorus that can cause algal blooms, reducing the amount of oxygen in the water, making it uninhabitable (the South River Watershed Alliance 2020; Kharbush, Robinson, and Carter 2023). Additionally, activities such as construction and deforestation can also cause large amounts of sediment to accumulate in water bodies. In 2023 the USA Environmental Protection Agency published, *Climate Adaptation and Erosion & Sedimentation*, this article states that sedimentation build up in streams is detrimental to the aquatic environment because it suffocates fish and amphibians, destroys spawning sites, and depletes food sources.

Further environmental analysis needs to be done to ensure that the site and its resources are available to future generations. Improving the condition of the site will also offer some protection from the adverse effects of climate change.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC COMMENT ANALYSIS

September 7th and 8th of 2021, the Atlanta City Council prepared to vote on leasing the Old Atlanta Prison Farm to the Atlanta Police Foundation. They recorded and posted approximately 17 hours of public comments to the City Council's Facebook page. Each commenter was given three minutes of time to give their opinion on the leasing of the land to the Atlanta Police Foundation.

I had the comments transcribed using GoTranscript, a human-based transcription company, and then sorted the comments, by hand, into those in favor of the Atlanta Police Training Facility, against the Atlanta Police Training Facility, and unrelated or unclear. After removing duplicates, the total number of comments amounted to 827.

The comments representing the opinion of the majority, those against the building of the police training facility, were coded using the program MonkeyLearn. MonkeyLearn is a machine-learning platform for text analysis. I used it to extract keywords from the comments. From here keywords were used to place comments into place attachment categories (Cross 2015). The categories were sensory, narrative, historical, ideological, and commodifying and material dependence (see Table 1). The spiritual category was left out due to lack of responses focusing on it. While this analysis did not provide direct design suggestions, it highlighted the concepts surrounding the Old Atlanta Prison Farm that are important to the public. These opinions were then used to shape design guidelines. This data is essential for understanding how the majority of the community callers feel about the property and its proposed future as a police training facility. This analysis gives insight into what an alternative future for the site might be.

Table 1. The Interactional processes of Place Attachment (Cross 2015).

TABLE 1. Interactional Processes of Place Attachment

Processes	Nature of Process	Action (individual or interactional)	Meaning (individual or cultural)	Change over Time
Sensory	Experiencing the place through the five senses	Individual experience	Personal assessment and meaning: aesthetic value judgments based on personal preference, interpersonal interaction, and cultural values	Expands and develops over time, meanings shift with interaction and reinterpretation
Narrative	Practice of telling stories about the place, individuals in place, and cultural stories of place	Interpersonal story-telling, cultural stories of place	Individual, family, group, cultural	Continually evolving as people select which stories to retell and which to overlook and what personal and cultural meanings to emphasize
Historical (Biographical, Genealogical, Ancestral)	Personal life experience, family history, cultural history	Accumulation of life history and events in a place, family history, cultural history	Association of key life events with place, and association of place history to personal biography	Progressively expanding over time in place
Spiritual	Deep feeling or sense of belonging	Ongoing feeling of deep "oneness" with place	Deeply personal, difficult to share, often creates conflict over "authentic" attachment	Usually constant
Ideological	Moral, ethical, legal commitment to place	Individual, group or cultural commitment	Individual, interpersonal, cultural	Requires ongoing commitment/ adherence to code and related action
Commodifying	Cognitive act of assessing place based on a list desirable traits	Individual, interpersonal	Individual, interpersonal, cultural	Often diminishes as other processes develop
Material dependence	Reliance on a social resources, or features of place	Individual, interpersonal, cultural	Individual, interpersonal, cultural	Changes as material conditions change (e.g., life-course), and as personal requirements change (e.g., new attitudes, experience)

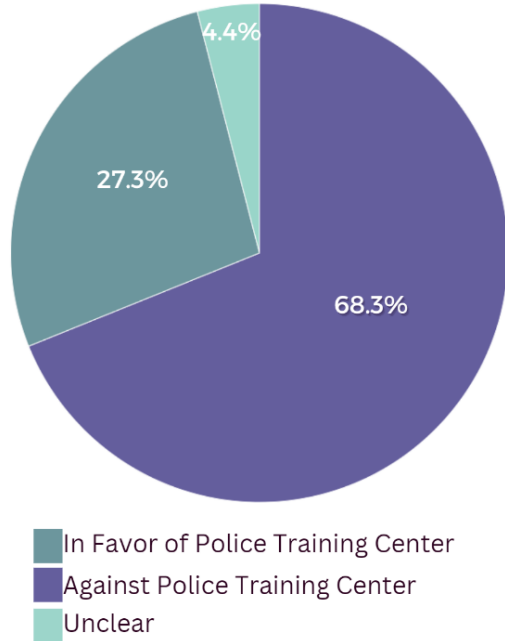


Figure 11: *A pie chart of the public comment data.*

Many comments, 565 (68.3%), were against the proposal to build the police training facility; in contrast 266 (27.3%) comments were in favor of the police training facility. The remaining 36 (4.4%) are unclear or unrelated (see Figure 11).

A keyword extraction was performed on the public comments against the proposed training facility. I selected a specific set of keywords for each place attachment category and calculated the number of phrases that contained the keywords. If a phrase contained

multiple keywords, it was counted for each category. Keywords included terms such as community, beauty, aesthetic, etc.

The use of keywords helped to organize the comments into place attachment categories. For each category, I produced a keyword cloud. Keyword clouds are a data visualization technique that allows the reader to see the most important concepts within a set of text. The larger the word, the more times it appears and, therefore the more important it is in the groupings.

5.1 Sensory

Sensory process is the experience of place through the six senses. Sensory processes are idiosyncratic: they derive from personal experiences and are based on cultural background. These experiences can change over time (Cross 2015). The six senses shape individual relationships to the landscape and influence whether a place is desirable or not. Based on my analysis of public comments, stakeholders were primarily concerned with changes due to rising temperatures, noise pollution, and the loss of aesthetic values of the natural landscape.

Public comments expressed sensory concerns when considering a future without green space provided by the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. Of the 20 comments, there were 24 total phrases that expressed sensory concerns. 50% of the sensory concern phrases were about noise. 20.8% were about the beauty/aesthetics of the site, and 39.2% of the comments expressed concerns about heat in the form of rising temperatures.

Comments about noise were concerned with how the newly proposed firing ranges and detonation sites might impact the surrounding community. Worries about the increased noise pollution from explosives have some stakeholders concerned about health:

“I’m a mental health practitioner, and I know that noise from the gunshots and the explosions will be happening at this, um—[sic] that will cause severe psychological harm to neighbors. Particularly those who have been affected by gun violence or who has [sic] PTSD.”

Not only are commenters worried about the adverse health effects that noise would have on the community, but they feel that the noise coming from the police facility is unnecessary. One comment instead suggests the Atlanta Prison Farm be used as a park to improve quality of life:

“I feel strongly that the residents in that part of the city deserve to have a park and to have their quality of life protected from noise and different types of pollution that that development would create.”

Noticeably, the threat of more noise pollution is a problem. Currently, the site has one police firing range, the removal of this firing range and the development of a park would reduce the amount of noise pollution that the community is experiencing.

In addition, plans to remove the tree canopy at the Old Atlanta Prison Farm have caused concerns to the public because of the potential for temperature increases. Citizens fear that rising temperatures will make the community uncomfortable in the summer months, especially during heat waves and droughts. One commenter states:

“This training facility will not keep us safe and it will only exacerbate the effects of climate change. As the public lands the Atlanta Forest, which will help to mitigate flooding, extreme heat in the city, and purifies our air. [sic]”

Another corroborates:

“...the area is essential for drainage and for keeping like the city from being a heat box during the summer.”

Certainly, citizens have serious concerns. Not only is a rise in temperature uncomfortable, but it can become deadly for those who are not able to combat the heat effectively.

Finally, some commenters expressed concern about losing the natural beauty that the forest provides to the city. Atlanta is known as the “City in the Forest” and cutting down 85 acres of trees seems like a contradiction to that ethos:

“...I moved to the city... to enjoy the natural beauty that's already here. And it would be, ludicrous to bulldoze the beauty we already have and replace it with something that [sic] community doesn't even want.”

People move to the city of Atlanta for its natural beauty. A feature that not many major metropolitan areas possess. The forest contains an abundance of beautiful biodiversity that is worth protecting. As one commenter elegantly stated:

“The old Atlanta Prison Farm is a beautiful forest of old oak trees, a river, all sorts of birds, deer, possums, raccoons, squirrels, salamanders, wildflowers, and more. This needs to be preserved and turned into a regional park that Atlanta can be proud of. We don't need to a [sic] paved paradise and put in another parking lot or in this case even worse, a parking lot with guns, assault rifles, machine guns, bombs, helicopters, noise, and barbed wire fences. Please vote no on destroying the natural beauty of the old Atlanta Prison Farm.”

The comments in this section highlight a connection to place that is based on attachment through the six senses; they demonstrate a desire to protect the natural features of the property and to reduce the amount of discomfort experienced through heat and noise. In addition, maintaining the forest canopy would ensure that future generations have access to space's natural beauty and protection from adverse climate effects.

Figure 12. *A keyword cloud based on sensory public comments.*

Design Guidelines:

1. Community members want to see nature at the Old Atlanta Prison Farm site. Features like trees, wildflowers, and wildlife are things that should be preserved and enhanced within the site.
2. Loud noises from the current police shooting range and the threat of more explosives are viewed negatively by the public commenters. The design of the property should not increase noise pollution.
3. Concerns of increasing heat due to deforestation are top of mind for many community members. The design should attempt to preserve existing trees and maintain forest canopy.

Keywords: Heat, Noise, Beauty, Aesthetic

5.2 Narrative

Narrative refers to the stories that we share about a specific place. These stories evolve with time and are variable; they represent cultural meanings and emphasize important objectives (Cross 2015). In the context of the current state of the Atlanta Prison Farm, narratives about crime prevention tactics dominate the conversation. There are a total of 188 comments and 337 phrases containing the keywords “crime” and/or “community.” Of the 337 phrases 76.6% have to do with community and 23.4 % are related to crime. Many of the commenters believe the money for the police training center would be better spent investing in community services and programs. One commenter states:

“The city must address poverty, inequality, food deserts, public transportation, lack of affordable housing, [sic] aid to our homeless community. This proposal by Joyce Sheperd lacks democratic process. The surrounding residents in the [sic] Dekalb County were not consulted prior to this proposal to lease the land. City council has a responsibility to seek community input when making decisions.”

Comments like this show support for community crime prevention methods. Community crime prevention refers to actions that are intended to change social conditions that are thought to encourage crime within a residential setting (Hope 1995). These social conditions include poverty, joblessness, inequality, etc. Improving the services that alleviate these conditions has been proven to reduce crime. Programs that offer social services such as help finding employment and initiatives that clean up the appearance of neighborhoods through the addition of green space have been proven to reduce crime, without the need for police (Kuo and Sullivan 2001; Sharkey, Torratts-Espinosa, and Takyar 2017).

Public parks provide space for two crime prevention strategies, at a minimum, the first is creating a space that more people use and the second is the strengthening of community ties through group interaction (Kuo and Sullivan 2001; Sharkey, Torratts-Espinosa, and Takyar 2017). One commenter states:

“...if you look it up, there’s a lot of research proving that having public spaces and parks decreases criminal activity and increased [sic] well-being and health of an area, which saves the community thousands, if not millions of dollars.”

Investing in the community by providing more accessible green space and public services could reduce crime without the need for a police training facility. Many of the commenters expressed frustration at the continual investment in the police vs. attempting to find other crime-reducing solutions. Underlying these frustrations is a lack of faith and trust in the police force, one commenter emphasizes:

“Investing more resources into policing is not going to make our communities any safer. At best, police can intervene after a crime has occurred; they can’t prevent crime from happening. Even worse we have seen countless examples of Atlanta police officers brutalizing, targeting, and murdering our black neighbors.”

Institutionally, the police respond to crimes and rely on their presence to act as a deterrent. However, the police cannot be in every location, making it impossible for them to prevent crime in its entirety. In addition, police have discretionary power over the laws they enforce: not all citizens are guaranteed equal protections. The comments within this section have a clear objective; they show that the public wants the city of Atlanta to capitalize on crime prevention through community investment, not policing. This can be done through the implementation of public green space, providing opportunities to strengthen community ties, and investment into community programs that target social conditions that lead to crime.



Figure 13. A keyword cloud based on narrative public comments.

Design Guidelines:

1. Provide spaces where community members can interact together and exert energy.
2. Provide space for community cohesion to occur. This could be achieved through art or gathering spaces.
3. Contact with nature is beneficial. Any design should emphasize the importance of nature within an urban setting and provide space for individuals to experience nature.

Keywords: Community, Crime

5.3 Historical

Historical context includes narratives that are personal but can also encompass a cultural history (Cross 2015). The Old Atlanta Prison Farm, due to its historical use and present-day controversy, has undoubtedly had an impact on the personal history of many. 15 total comments with 19 total phrases referenced examples of historical place attachment. Of these phrases 63.2% involve history, 21.1% relate to preservation, and 15.8% discuss enjoyment.

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm has come to be important to many people. A vast majority of the comments below do not incorporate personal history, this may be due to the lack of access to the site. However, evidence of connection to the site through cultural history is present. One commenter states:

“I’m a resident of the city of Atlanta and I wanna [sic] state my opposition to the Atlanta Prison Farm property being used for anything until the history of the site has been researched and documented. There is a—[sic] there’s way too many unknowns at the moment about that site and a lot of stuff that needs to come to light, especially considering all the Black Lives Matter protests and issues that were not addressed yet from last year’s protest.”

This comment highlights the importance of the site to contemporary social issues as well as its poorly documented past. The use of the land as a plantation and prison farm, both places steeped in racially based violence, make the Old Atlanta Prison Farm site a particularly poor option for a training facility. Instead, having space for the memorialization and acknowledgment of past events and self-expression may be more appropriate, specifically because the comment above points out that issues from the previous year's Black Lives Matter protests were never addressed. Other comments focus less on social issues and more on the experiences that the site could offer citizens of Atlanta:

“Um [sic] part of our appeals [sic] to living even in the community area, is the prospect of having developed green space that could be for the use and enjoyment of the Atlanta community.”

Having open green space is valuable to the community and its members because it provides opportunities to experience nature. Studies have found that experiences in nature are associated with increased pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, appreciative activities in nature, those that relate to enjoying the environment without altering it, are more strongly related to pro-environmentalism (Rosa and Collado 2019). With the threat of climate impact due to mass habitat destruction, providing more public green space will give more citizens the opportunity to build a personal history with the land. This could influence their future actions to be more environmentally friendly leading to a more sustainable future for all.

The development of attachment to the land through history has the potential to be powerful. Interactions with the site through nature contact, social movements, and history have the capacity to influence the actions and decisions of future generations. Developing the green space provides opportunities for appreciative nature activities, memorials, and preservation of historical attributes that would give citizens of Atlanta the opportunity to benefit from the land.

the land in to the police training facility or to maintain an open green space. However, the ideologies behind the actions differ because of individual value systems. One commenter states:

“I see this project as environmentally and socially irresponsible and doesn’t live up to the daily values of our cities, and I would like to make a comment that I am against the proposed construction.”

This comment hits upon what many citizens see as a contradiction of city values and city council action. As previously mentioned, Atlanta is known for its expansive tree canopy. In April of 2023, the Atlanta City Council approved legislation to maintain a 50% tree canopy throughout the city. The goal being to ensure trees are not cut down at the expense of new developments (Leoffler 2023). However, the mass removal of acres of trees does not follow this ideology. One commenter points out:

“The legislation allows the Atlanta Police Foundation to completely bypass public input and eliminates the need for APS [sic] to consider alternatives, even those that would attain their goal. Just when much of this neglected corridor is being considered for a South River Forest green space network, this land is being slated for destruction with zero public input. Alternatives for achieving the foundation’s goal exist if there is the will to pursue them.”

There are other locations where the police training facility could be placed that would not sacrifice green space. For example, old industrial buildings or a military base. Moreover, the comment above states that community input was bypassed. The city council is composed of representatives who are voted into office by constituents. When voting, many citizens choose representatives who they believe will listen to them and vote accordingly. When this does not occur, constituents can feel as though their representatives are not following through with their moral obligations. A number of other comments criticized the process the city council adopted to promote the police training facility. One commenter succinctly stated:

“The proposal is undemocratic. The two public input sessions for Fulton and Dekalb County residents did not allow any real public input.”

Comments like the one above express distaste for the lack of input the community has been able to give. It highlights the belief that the city council has a moral and ethical responsibility to listen to its constituents. Listening to and implementing public opinion in land development projects is important because the community deserves to have a say in the neighborhoods they live in and the impacts these developments will have on them.

Another ideological issue surrounding the site is the admittance of clear-cutting the tree canopy during a climate crisis. One commenter emphasizes:

“Um, I can't see any paper trail about, uh, APD even trying to, um, renovate current location, and it just seems like a cheap lamb scrap really, um, with no consideration of public input, uh [sic], in a largely black area. Uh, also, uh, environmentally seems like a terrible idea to wreck, uh, the, a importance about what is it the big- as big as half of the size, the [sic] Central Park or so. I know that um, the groups [sic] like Sierra Club and other environmental groups are against this. Um, and even with eco mind development [sic], I think with what's happening right now with our climate crisis, we need to consider, um, of the forest land that we have.”

Ideological place attachment is complex due to differing ideas about what is moral and ethical. Climate change is caused by human actions, and the idea that we must do what we can to reverse those effects is a form of morality that not every group shares (Thompson and Bendik-Keymer 2012). Maintaining the Old Atlanta Prison Farm as a green space to combat climate change plays into this idea of morality. A vast majority of commenters in these public comments agree that maintaining the tree canopy is the right thing

to do. These public comments emphasize the desire to maintain the tree canopy, to combat climate change, and be heard by local representatives.



Figure 15. *A keyword cloud from ideological public comments.*

Design Guidelines:

1. The community values the environment and wants to have a sustainable green space with working ecologies that will last for future generations.
2. Community input is important, and the following designs should be seen as a continuation of a conversation between the community and development of the land.
3. Any infrastructure proposed to be built on the land should not impact the tree canopy or disturb any land that is currently forested.

Keywords: Public Input, Value

5.5 Commodifying and Material Dependence

The material dependence of place attachment relies on both social resources and the features of a place. The commodifying attachment to place is based on the assessment of the resources that are available (Cross 2015). The Old Atlanta Prison Farm has an excess of desirable resources, these include but are not limited to space, water, biodiversity, community, and history. A total of 89 comments and 122 phrases related to material and commodifying dependence. Of the phrases, 77.0% mentioned green space, and 23% mentioned park land.

The Old Atlanta Prison Farm has many desirable resources and traits. The ability to have access to natural resources is an amenity to the surrounding community. Citizens can use the space to meet with each other and build social relationships in addition to improving mental and physical health, leading to a better quality of life. On commenter states:

“I feel strongly that the residents in that part of the city deserve to have a park and to have their quality of life protected from noise and different types of pollution that that development would create. Um, I feel strongly that city leaders need to plan for how to make the city resilient in the face of extreme heat, flooding, air, noise, and water pollution, which are on the rise in Atlanta due to the growing population and the climate crisis. And so, I feel that we need to protect our remaining green spaces, tree canopy, and watershed, which are so vital to our health and safety.”

Having the current green space converted into a park for the residents of the city would promote the protection of natural resources. And it would ensure that future generations have access to nature within the city of Atlanta. Development that disrupts the tree canopy will take important natural materials and commodities away from the community.

The tree canopy is more than just enjoyable: it provides protection from climate change. Forest areas provide a buffer during the rain by absorbing stormwater, especially in urban environments where there are a plethora of impervious materials. As mentioned before, tree canopies also purify the air and cool the environment. Public access to the site would ensure that all current community members and visitors are able to access the resources that green space can provide. One commenter writes:

“Alternatives for achieving the foundation's goal exist if there is the will to pursue them. The negative impacts on residents and the natural environment that protect-protect [sic] highly impacted Intrachment Creek are [sic] unnecessary and avoidable. The green space and the environmental benefits it afford [sic] Intrachment Creek cannot be replaced.”

The comment highlights the rarity of having large amounts of open space in an urban setting. The Atlanta Police Foundation can build its facility on another site as mentioned previously; however, the natural resources and opportunity for public access to green space would be impossible to replace.



Design Guidelines:

Keywords: Green space, Park

Analyzing the public comments and categorizing them into different place attachment categories allowed me to focus on areas of concern and create a series of design guidelines based on those concerns. Most public commenters would like the land to be preserved and protected. These comments provide the

backbone for more equitable design and answer the research question: What would the design guidelines for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm be if public comments are to determine site development? We now know that the design and plans for future development for the site should prioritize environmental health, public access, and community input.

CHAPTER 6

DESIGN AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this thesis is to exhibit how public comments and design goals set by STOAPF could provide an alternative future for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. Many of the public comments advocate for a healthy tree canopy while also providing spaces for the community to interact with the landscape and each other. The site programming should place emphasis on the historical aspects of the land while embracing community art and expression.

STOAPF envisions the Old Atlanta Prison Farm as a green space for community use and recreation. Through years of discussions with community members, the organization has gathered a list of visions for the site. Their visions include a dog park, conventional park, nature preserve, sports field, eco park, outdoor music venue, community gardens, arts and cultural event venue, historical site, and a regional network of trails.

The following images are meant to continue the discussion about the future of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm. The use of imagery allows for the design guidelines to be fully realized and explored. While this design encapsulates one vision for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm, it is incomplete without public review and critique. However, that is beyond the scope of this thesis, and the torch can be passed to future projects or organizations.



Figure 17. The masterplan for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm site based on design guidelines and STOAPF visions.

The masterplan above lays out programming for the site that prioritizes the preservation of both the natural features and history of the land. Amenities such as a museum, art gallery, and amphitheater give the public the opportunity to connect and express themselves, while areas for restoration ensure the forest can develop working ecologies. Areas such as the natural playscapes, trails, and picnic spots will give visitors the opportunity for nature contact.

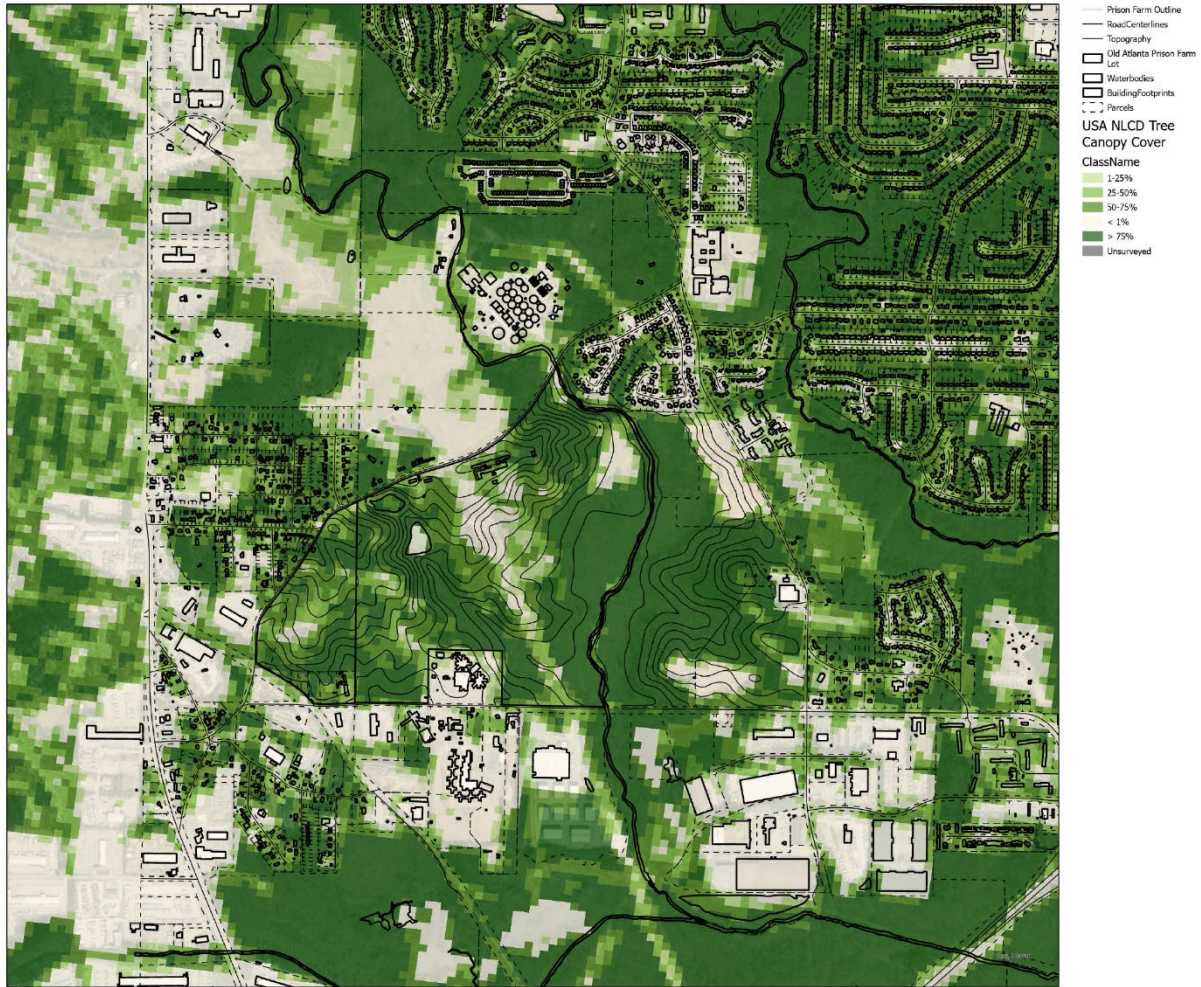


Figure 18. A tree canopy map of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm.



Figure 19. A map showing the areas for development on the Old Atlanta Prison Farm plat.

Figure 18 shows locations for site development that have been picked based on evidence of previous deforestation, building footprints, and trails (See Figure 17). This is to preserve and restore as much tree cover as possible and to prevent further deforestation.

6.1 Prison Farm Museum and Art Gallery

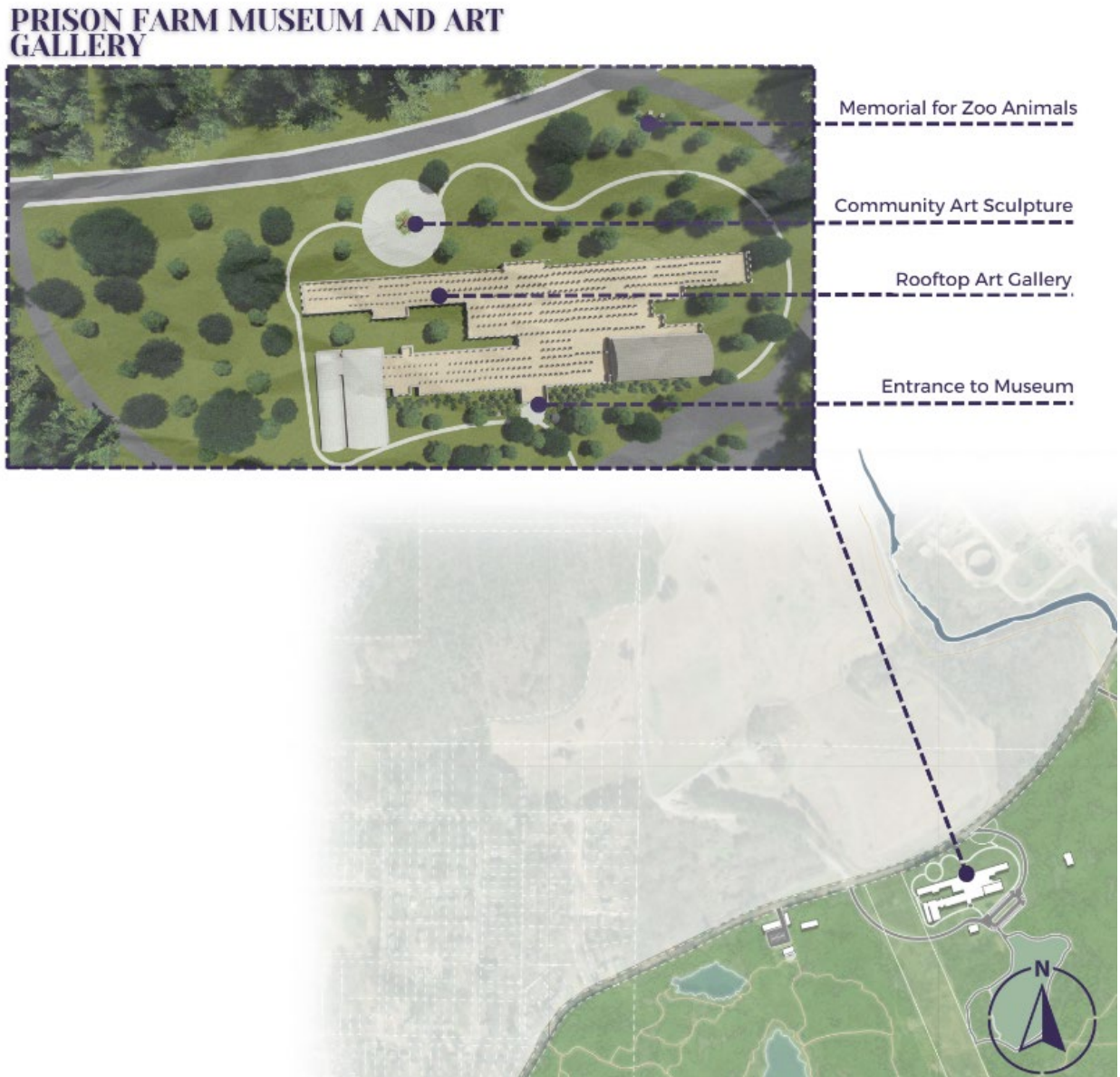


Figure 20: A graphic showing the location of the prison farm museum and art gallery.

I suggest that the ruins of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm be restored and turned into a museum that will address the history of the prison farm and its role in the history of Atlanta and the American Carceral System. The ability for visitors to walk through cells, dormitories, and spaces of punishment will inform visitors about the reality of life in a carceral institution such as this.

ENTRANCE TO MUSEUM



Figure 21: *A conceptual rendering of the museum entrance.*

The rooftop will serve as both an art gallery to display local graffiti and a memorial to commemorate the historical horrors of the site and the current conflicts that still plague the land. Currently, the ruins of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm are covered in graffiti from visitors and community members. Looking at images of the ruins, one can feel the strong sense of community spirit through these paintings. To preserve that spirit, the roof will be lined with 6' columns that can be covered with graffiti. These paintings will provide an outlet for self-expression, and the height of the columns will work as a maze for viewers, providing a sense of enclosure. Guests should be invited to leave sentiments like flowers or stones for those who have lost their lives at the prison farm or on the land.



ART GALLERY

Figure 22. *A conceptual rendering of the art gallery.*

6.2 Natural Playscape Area and Picnic Locations

NATURAL PLAYSCAPE AREA AND PICNIC LOCATIONS



Figure 23. A graphic showing the location of the natural playscape and picnic locations.

Natural Playscapes give a chance to reuse materials on the site and provide hands-on activity with nature for children and adults. I suggest that wood and tires from the site be used to make play equipment. Since these features will be built in collaboration with the landscape, there will be no need to remove trees and other naturally occurring plant life unless they are non-native.

Natural playscapes and picnic sites will require the removal of invasives and plantings of native species to increase forest diversity and habitat. Having edible plants labeled can act as a teaching opportunity. Signage should be placed throughout the site to educate visitors on ecosystems and traditional uses of the land by the Muscogee people.



Figure 24. *Conceptual renderings of the natural playscape area and picnic spots.*

6.3 Pond Docks

POND DOCKS

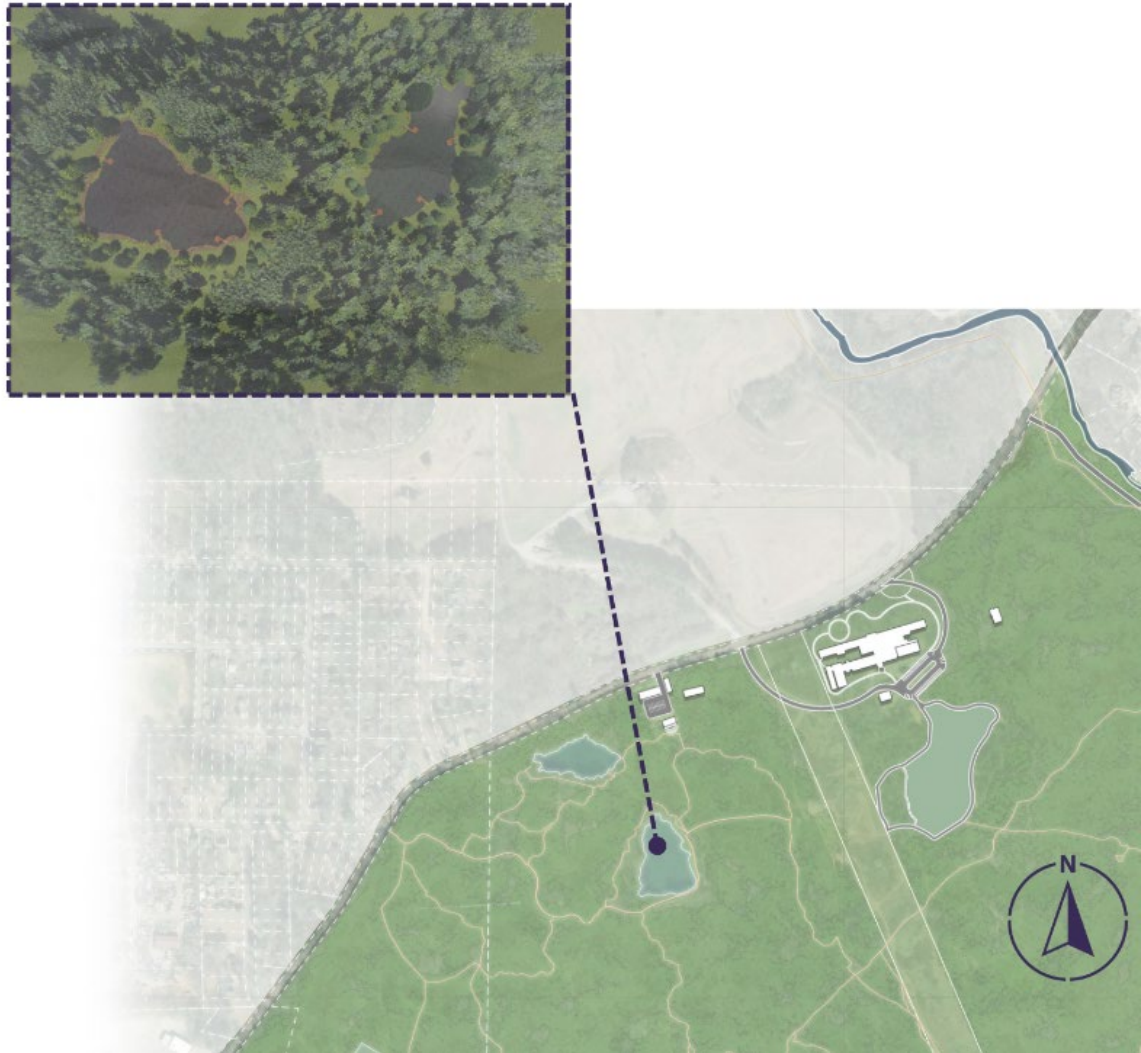


Figure 25. *A graphic showing the locations of the pond docks.*

Docks should be added to the pond areas so visitors can observe wildlife and launch kayaks and other nonmotorized vehicles into the water. Due to the surrounding landfills and dumping, the water will need to be analyzed and cleaned before fishing or swimming can occur. Improving the water quality at the ponds will improve the habitat for native wildlife like frogs, salamanders, and birds. Providing docks gives the community designated areas to view wildlife and interact with the water.



Figure 26. A conceptual rendering of a pond dock.

AMPHITHEATER AND WELCOME CENTER

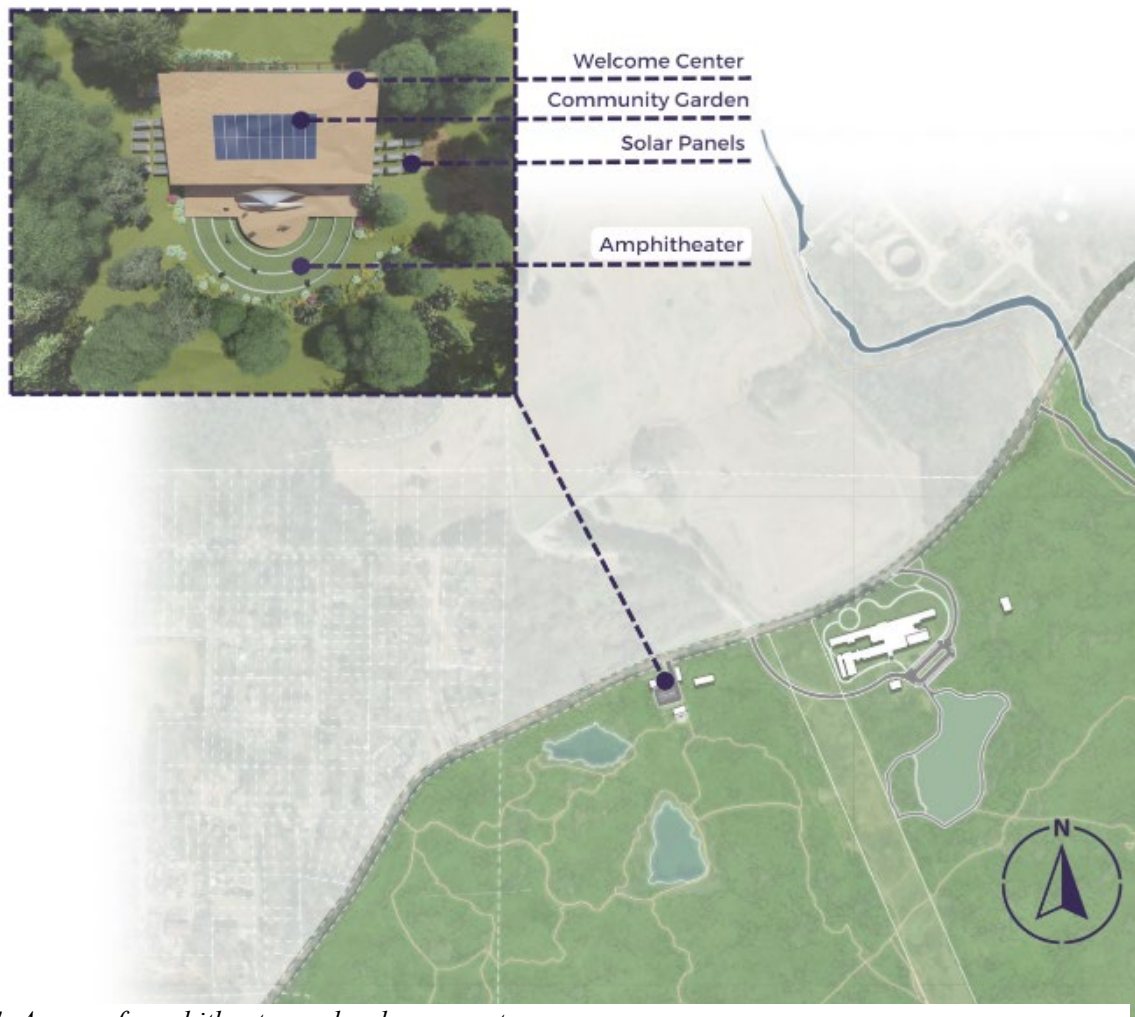


Figure 27. A map of amphitheater and welcome center.

The inclusion of an amphitheater provides an opportunity for community voices to be heard and self-expression to take place. The amphitheater will be run on solar panels that are connected to the welcome center. The welcome center should be run on 100% renewable energy and house composting toilets for visitors. The center will provide maps for trails along with educational information and activities concerning the history of the site from the archaic period to the days of the prison farm.



Figure 28. A conceptual rendering of the amphitheater and welcome center.

6.5 Recreation Fields

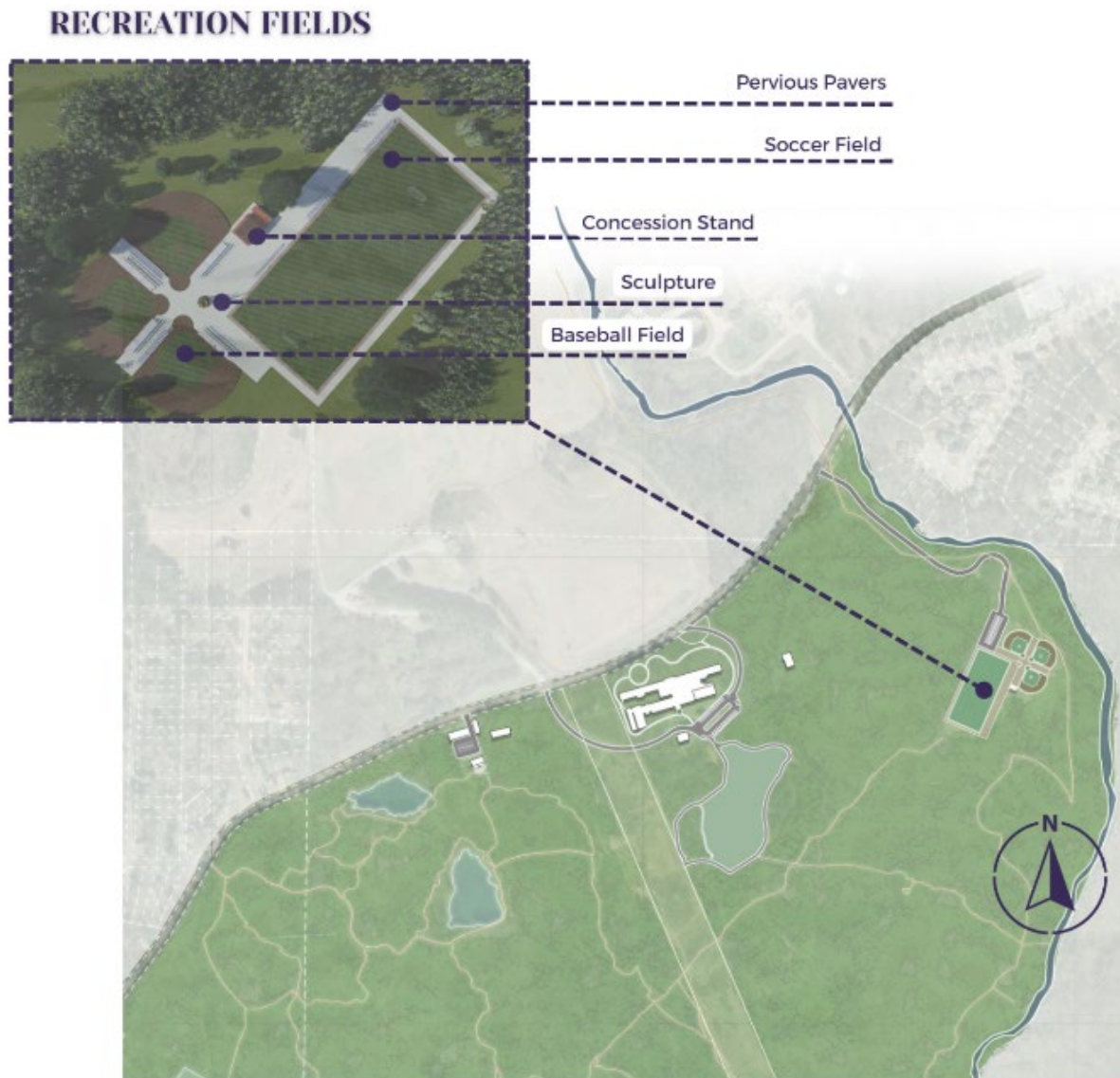


Figure 29. A map showing the location of the recreation fields.

Recreational fields are located at the current police firing range to avoid any further deforestation. Having sports fields instead of a firing range will reduce the amount of noise pollution that surrounding neighborhoods experience and increase community bonds through group activities. The concession building will house composting toilets and be powered by solar panels. Native trees will be planted around the site to reforest the surrounding area.



Figure 30. *A graphic showing the recreation fields.*

6.6 Dog Park



Figure 31. A map showing the location of dog the park.

Dog parks provide space for humans and animals to play in a designated area. This can help to reduce the amount of pollution found in other places on the property. The dog park has purposefully been placed away from water bodies to avoid pollution. Native trees will be planted inside the dog park; however, they will be sparse to avoid unwanted interactions between dogs and wildlife.



Figure 32. *A conceptual rendering of the dog park.*

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The purpose of creating design guidelines for the Old Atlanta Prison Farm is to give a vision of an alternative future to the one proposed by the city of Atlanta and to build upon preliminary design work that was produced through conversations with the community by STOAPF. This thesis was informed by public comments, historical documentation, STOAPF, and place attachment theory. This series of guidelines are just one iteration of what the site could be. They should be used to continue the conversation surrounding the area, ignite imagination on what could be, and provide a foundation for future projects.

Many of the public comments were concerned with losing the ecological buffer the property provides. As such, improving ecological system health and preserving nature should be a top priority for site development. Working ecologies and a healthy tree canopy will be vital to offset future climate change effects. The design guidelines reflect these ideas (see Figure 33). Discretion must be used when developing the site to avoid further harm to the environment, and a more in-depth site analysis needs to be done by an ecology team to identify soil health and water quality.

The site's history provides important context about the communities that have been displaced, marginalized, and abused. It is essential for history to be known and recognized to provide an opportunity for healing. Unfortunately, many artifacts have been lost, destroyed, or mismanaged and are no longer accessible. However, there are still many archival and archeological artifacts that could be used to fill a museum and designate the site as historic.

The research in this thesis was severely limited by the lack of access to the property due to the rising tensions between the Atlanta Police Force and civilians. The property is private, and visitation is illegal. However, this has not stopped protesters from living in the forest and preventing further

development by the Atlanta Police Foundation. Other limitations include a lack of demographic information in the data set and human error. It is impossible to know if one individual called more than once or if all the callers are from the city of Atlanta.

The design shown only has a few small spaces of the lot developed to increase features such as community engagement and recreation. The lesson from these conceptual designs of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm is the power of minimal development. This piece of property has the potential to be used as green space for neighborhoods that are historically underserved when it comes to access to natural resources. By carefully using specific spots for development and choosing to preserve the ruins, this design avoids further diminishing the tree canopy. The tree canopy protects the surrounding area from environmental hazards like increased stormwater runoff and heat islands. Maintaining this canopy will ensure that the site's natural resources are available for future generations. Just by remediating the land, many of the goals delineated in the design guidelines can be met, even if development is not pursued.

Many questions are left unanswered by this thesis. Future work needs to be done to determine if there are undiscovered graves on the site, what the condition of the site is from an environmental standpoint, and to gather and implement community critique on the design work that has been done up to this point. While there are still many questions about the property's future, I hope these renderings will communicate what the property could be if public comments were taken seriously. The renderings created during this project will be given to STOAPF. 85 acres of the Old Atlanta Prison Farm were cleared within the last few months. However, activists hold onto hope that the development of the police training facility can be stopped.

GUIDELINE OVERVIEW

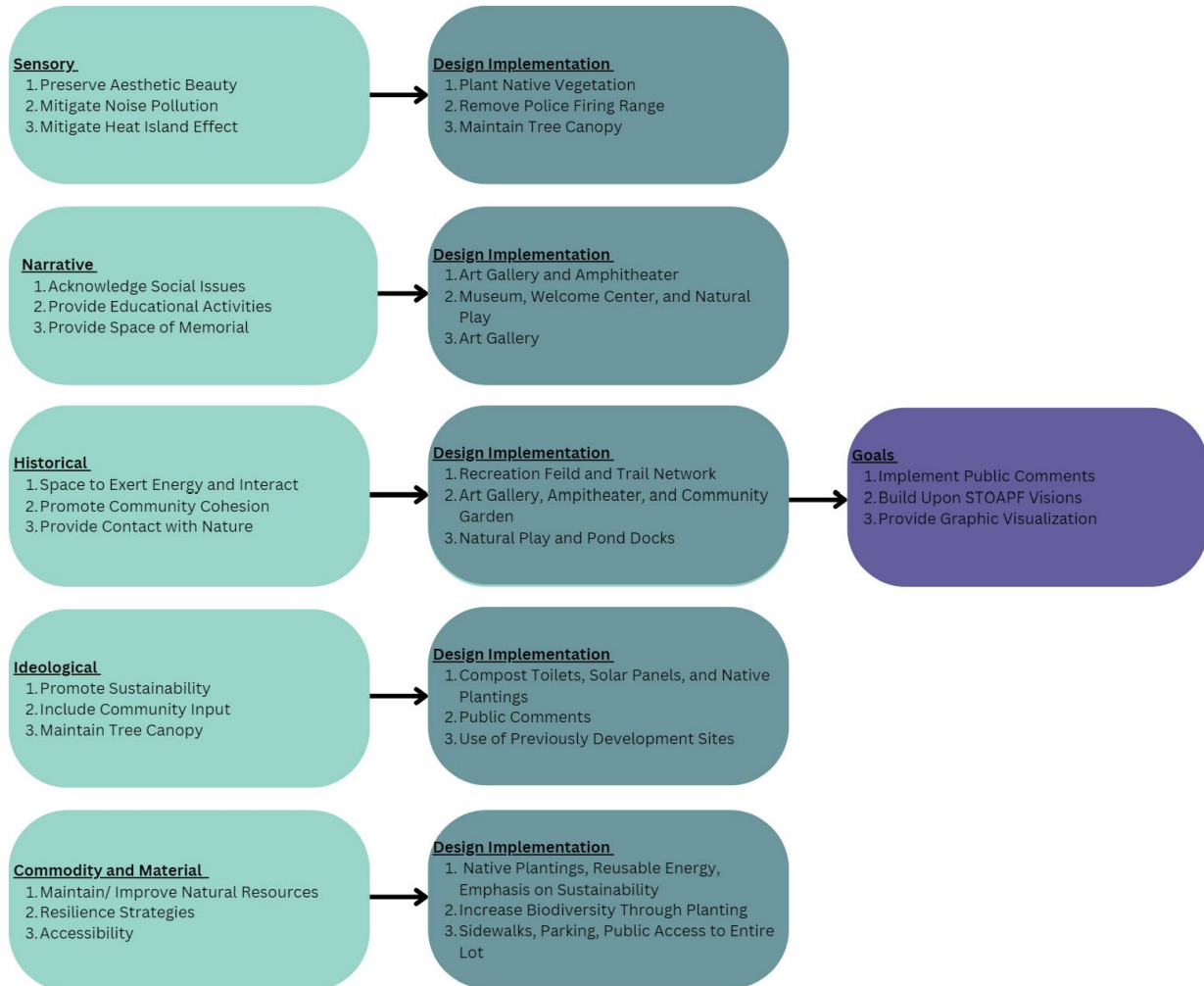


Figure 33. A flow chart showing the relationship between guidelines, design work, and goals set forth by STOAPF.

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