Atlanta City Design: Nature

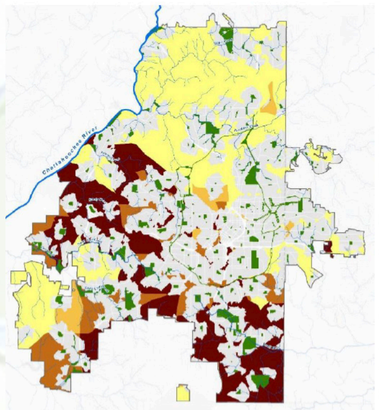
Jennifer Dowdell, FASLA, Biohabitats

Atlanta is often called “the city in a forest” based on its development patterns and the abundance of tree canopy. Predicting dramatic population growth, the city developed Atlanta City Design, an inclusive effort to envision Atlanta in the next 20+ years that is “For People, For Nature, and For People in Nature.” Supporting this, Biohabitats led an interdisciplinary team working with the Department of City Planning to develop Atlanta City Design: Nature. Establishing the natural context for Atlanta’s growth and development, the project determined aspects of nature to be preserved, restored, and accentuated by the public realm, and advances a citywide green network benefiting all city residents. Urban ecology provides the framework for a livable future that is not just based on sustainability, but on regeneration -the process of integrating living systems with human aspirations.

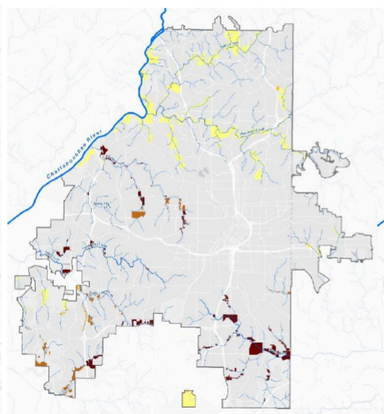
Atlanta City Design: Nature emphasizes equity and inclusiveness and promotes stewardship for the natural environment. A geospatial analysis assessed habitat and biodiversity, ecosystem services— including flood and heat island mitigation potential, areas of high social vulnerability, and parks and open space access. Informed by community input and data analysis, the team recommended opportunities, strategies and policies to restore ecosystems and habitat, improve water quality, reduce flooding and heat island effects, generate connected green and blue spaces, and promote similarly aligned development. Biohabitats also revised the citywide tree ordinance to align with tree canopy conservation and enhancement strategies outlined in Atlanta City Design: Nature. By integrating ecological processes into the city’s cultural fabric, Atlanta is becoming more resilient, vibrant, and healthy.

Environmental & Climate Justice

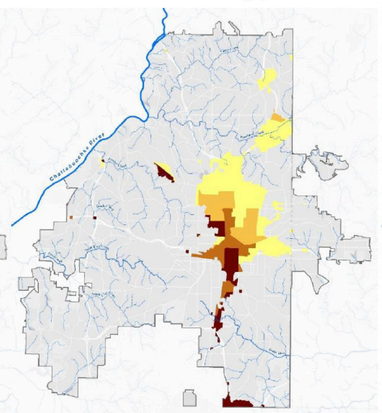
Vulnerable Populations Overlay of Park Desert Areas



Vulnerable Populations Overlay of Floodplain

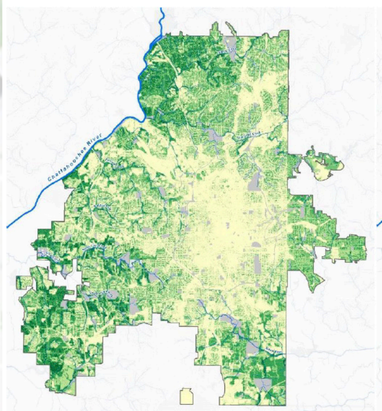


Vulnerable Populations Overlay of High Air Pollution and Low Tree Canopy Areas

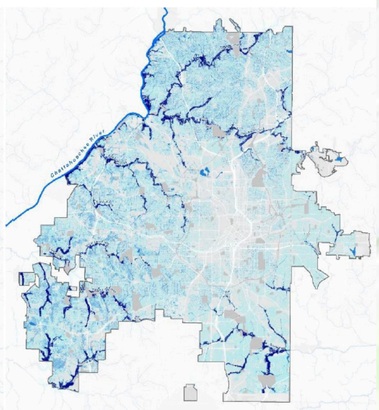


Ecosystem Services

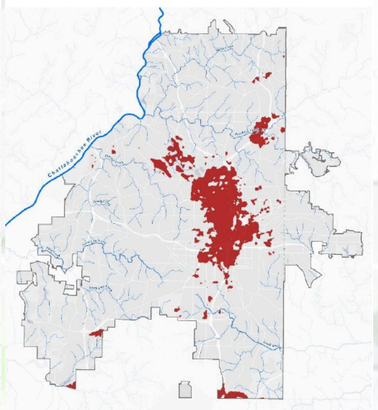
Carbon Storage outside of Parks and Conservation Easements



Flood Mitigation and Water Quality Treatment outside of Parks and Conservation Easements



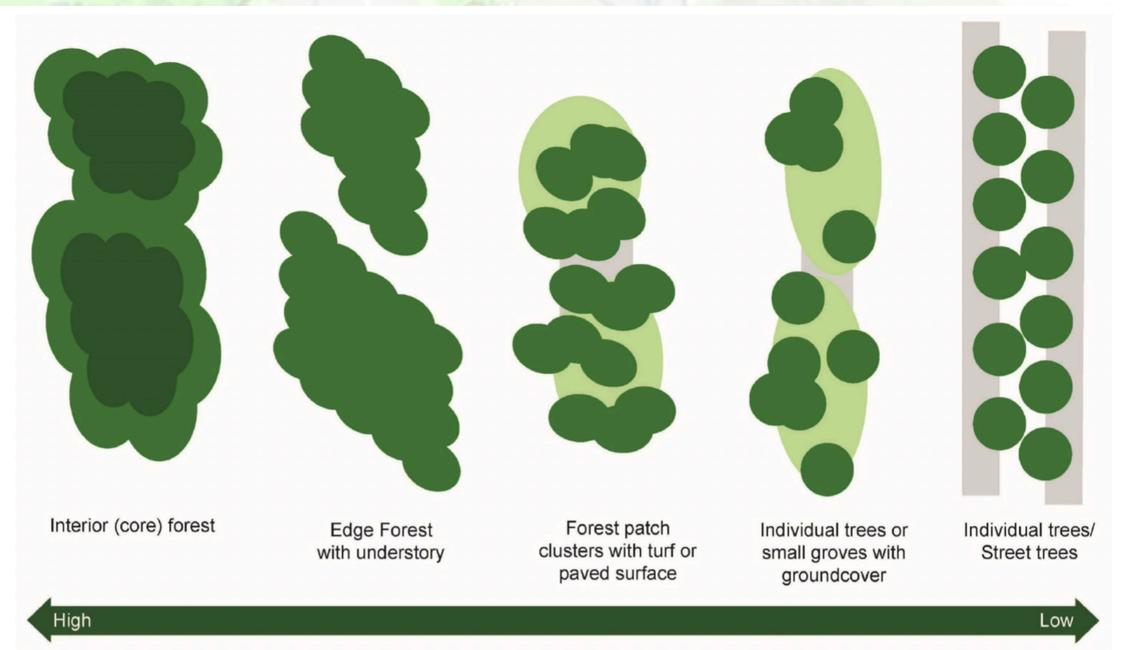
Heat Island Hazard with Low Tree Canopy



Atlanta City Design: Nature emphasizes equity and inclusiveness and promotes stewardship for the natural environment



Spectrum of Ecological Function



Design With Care: Joan Nassauer and the Importance of Ecological Design, Aesthetics and Management

The 2026 Whittemore Lecture in Landscape Architecture