

CHAPTER 4:

THE HERITAGE AREA PLAN



Fred Milesbko

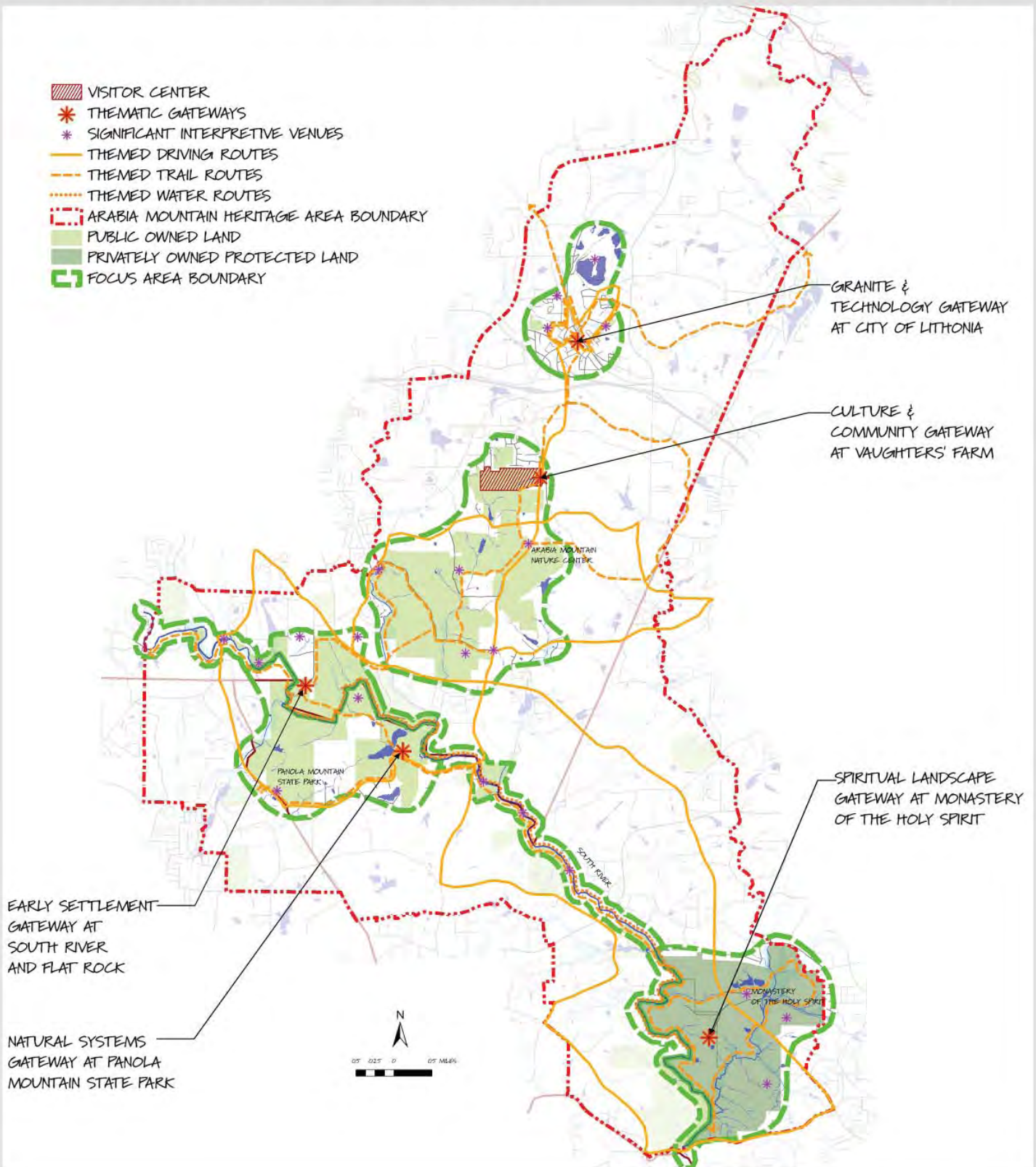
Davidson-Arabia Mountain
Nature Preserve

Protect, Connect, Educate

The preferred concept, known as the Hybrid Plan, creates designated Routes, Focus Areas and Gateways. Each Focus Area is a cultural and natural landscape with historic integrity. Focus Areas will protect the Heritage Area environments and define the sites that will be the heart of a memorable visitor experience.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE - 'THE HYBRID PLAN'

-  VISITOR CENTER
-  THEMATIC GATEWAYS
-  SIGNIFICANT INTERPRETIVE VENUES
-  THEMED DRIVING ROUTES
-  THEMED TRAIL ROUTES
-  THEMED WATER ROUTES
-  ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY
-  PUBLIC OWNED LAND
-  PRIVATELY OWNED PROTECTED LAND
-  FOCUS AREA BOUNDARY



4.1 HERITAGE AREA FOCUS AREAS AND GATEWAYS

To determine the appropriate boundary of each Focus Area, the community and steering committee identified these cultural landscapes:

- industrial (quarries)
- natural
- agricultural
- spiritual
- early settlement

Significant interpretive venues that the community immediately highlighted include:

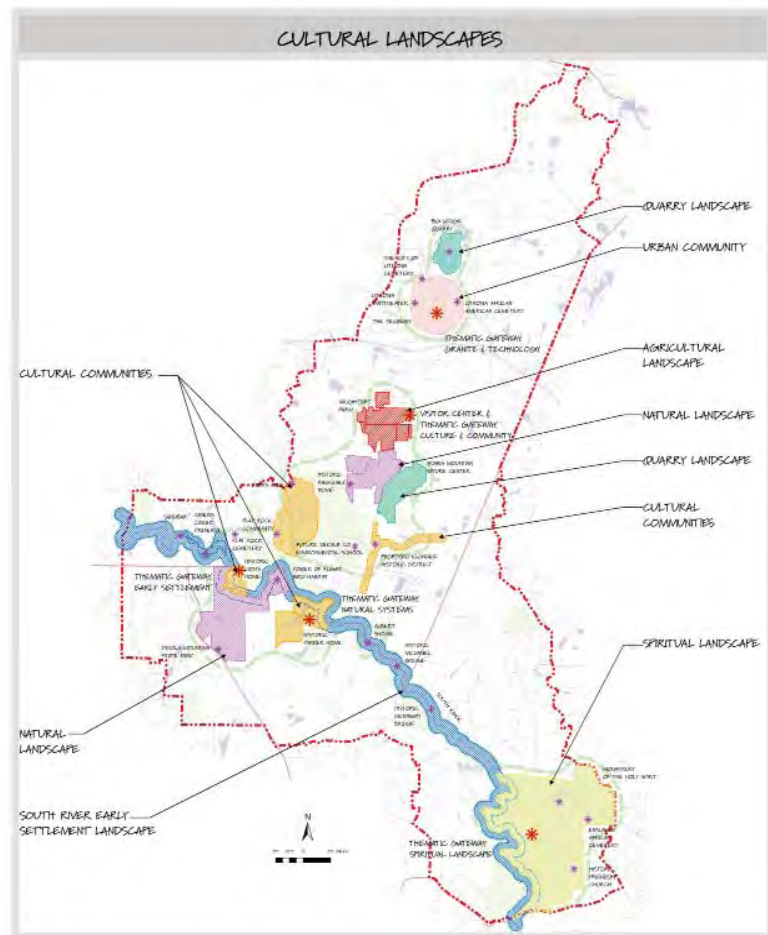
- Arabia and Panola Mountains
- City of Lithonia
- Vaughters' Farm
- South River
- the Monastery of the Holy Spirit

From this effort, five Focus Areas were selected:

- Culture and Community
- Natural Systems
- Early Settlement
- Granite Industry and Technology
- Spiritual Landscape

By defining five, overarching themes, tremendous amounts of information and choices can be more easily digested and experienced.

The best place for visitors to begin is the Heritage Area Visitors Center, the primary Gateway. People will receive a fascinating overview of the many offerings and opportunities to explore. From there, visitors 'customize' their experience at four additional Focus Areas and Gateways by traveling along specific themed Routes.



Cultural Landscapes Map



Kathryn Kolb

Vaughters' Farm--the last remaining dairy farm in DeKalb County

Focus Area: CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Gateway: Vaughters' Farm

Welcome Facility: Vaughters' Farm original home (expanded)

Visiting this facility will provide comprehensive background on the entire menu of historic, cultural and natural resources in the Heritage Area, offering in-depth information geared to visitors of all ages.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources acquired Vaughters' Farm in 2003 because of its powerful historic and cultural significance. Identified as the last working farm in DeKalb County, the 142-acre property is located in the heart of the Heritage Area on Klondike Road near I-20. The community and steering committee selected Vaughters' Farm as the Heritage Area Visitors Center and Gateway for its open, rolling topography, picturesque barn and historic granite home, all special features that reflect the Heritage Area's history and culture well.

This Gateway will offer hands-on exhibits, maps, brochures and interpretive kiosks to tell the stories of farming and quarrying. With easy access from the interstate, proximity to PATH Foundation's trail

and Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, the Vaughters' Farm Gateway will orient visitors to the entire 40,000-acre Heritage Area and encourage exploration to other Focus Areas and Gateways.

To preserve the integrity of the farm, it is recommended that the original home, located to the east of the farm across Klondike Road, be converted to the Visitors Center and include interpretive exhibits on relationships between the people, land and granite. An expansion or new facility can provide classrooms, staffed information desk, small auditorium, meeting spaces, hands-on exhibits and demonstrations, bike rentals, restrooms and dining facilities. The existing barn structures and pastoral landscape of Vaughters' Farm should be preserved to maintain the picturesque view from Klondike Road. A driving scenic overlook, and Klondike Road improvements with fencing and native plantings, could further enhance the experience. Remaining forest, wetland and pasture on the site should be protected to provide important wildlife habitat.

Other highlights of the Culture Focus Area include:

- Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve
- Evans Mill and historic Klondike communities
- Ragsdale Home (relocated) and other historic homes
- future DeKalb County environmental high school
- several historic churches and cemeteries

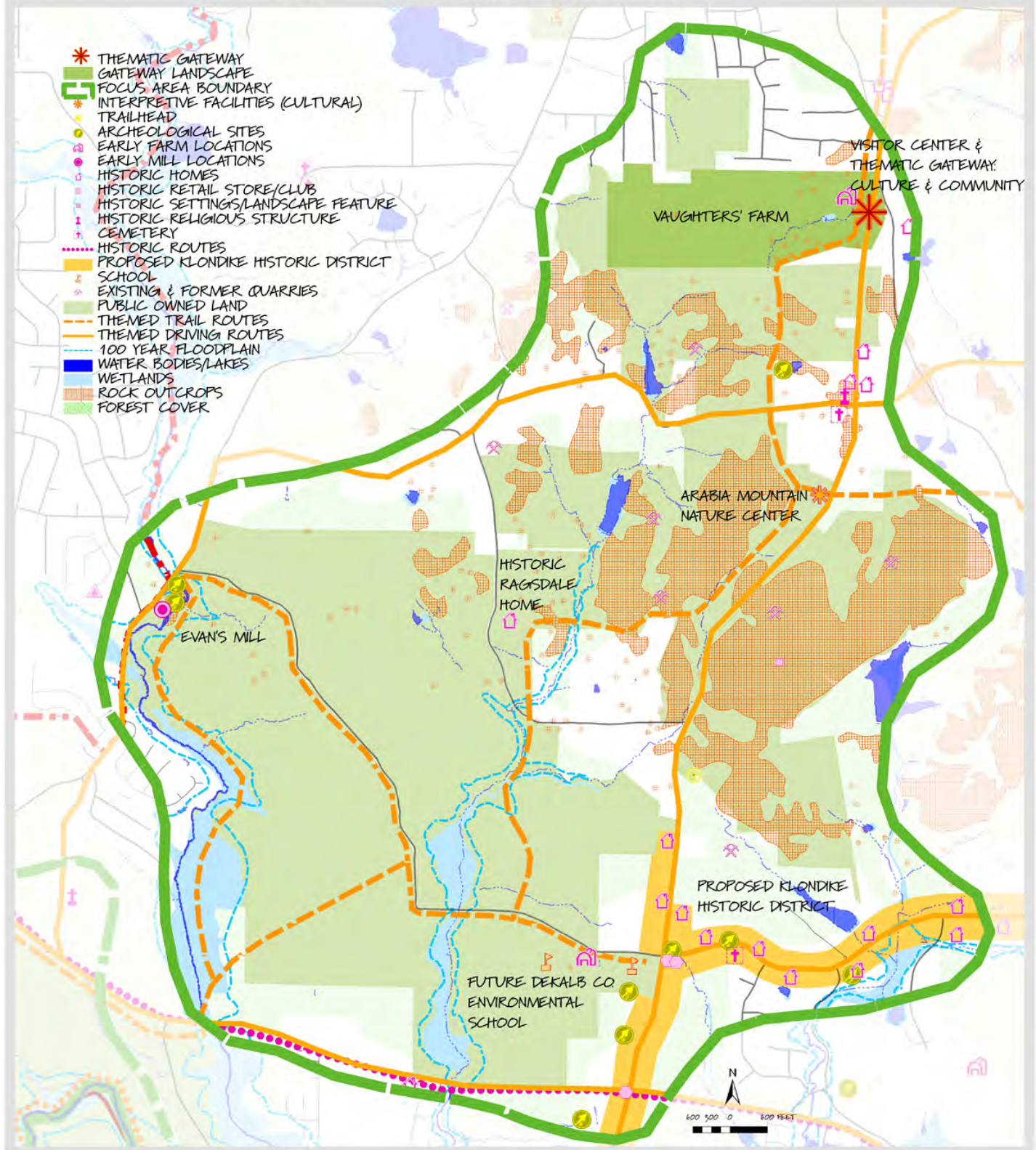
Landscapes to be highlighted:

- agricultural landscape of Vaughters' Farm
- natural and quarry landscapes of Arabia Mountain

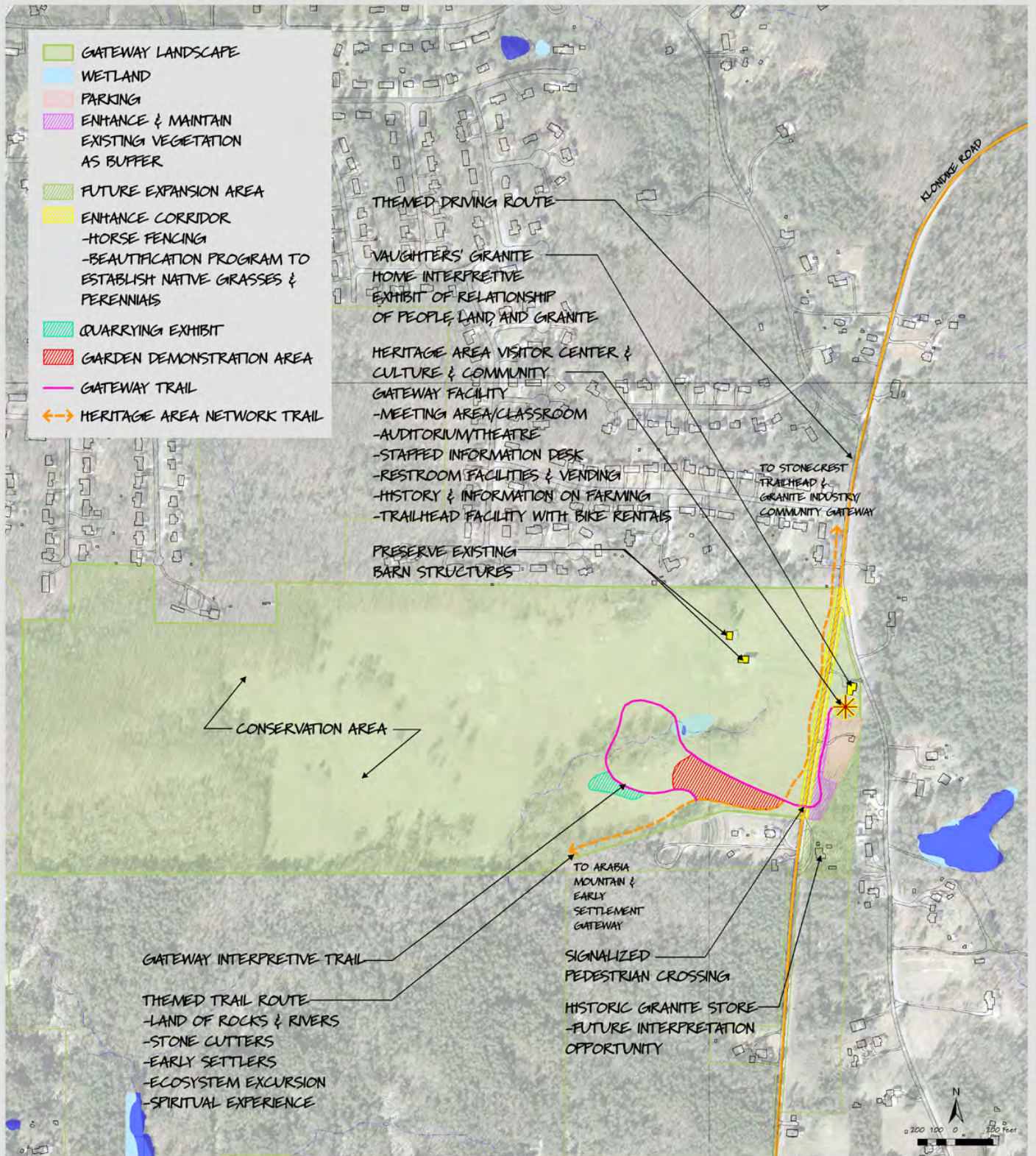
Cultural communities to be highlighted:

- Klondike
- Evans Mill

CULTURE & COMMUNITY FOCUS AREA



VISITOR CENTER & CULTURE & COMMUNITY GATEWAY at VAUGHTERS' FARM





South River near the Lyon Property in
DeKalb County

Focus Area: NATURAL SYSTEMS
Gateway: Panola Mountain State Park
Welcome Facility: Georgia State Park
Education and Demonstration Center

Panola Mountain State Park and its environs are one of the finest granite ecosystems in the United States. Established in 1969, the park encompasses granite outcrops, fields, forests, wetlands, waterways and hosts a diverse selection of trees, shrubs, mosses, lichens and flowers that provide a colorful year round show. Highlights include Sunnysbells, Sparkleberry, Yellow Daisy, Fringetree and brilliant red diamorpha. Several plant species are endemic to granite outcrops, and others grow only in a few habitats such as Arabia and Panola Mountains. Adapting over time to the seemingly harsh, rocky conditions, these plants need protection. Many are susceptible to foot damage. Several plants in the Heritage Area already appear on State and Federal lists of rare, threatened and endangered species.

Wildflowers are a common sight. Spiderwort and pokeweed are found in forested areas, while daylilies, goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace are found at the forest edge and in fields. The rock outcrops support unusual old cedar trees and a dwarf oak known as Georgia oak.

The Parker Home, built around 1822, the oldest home in Rockdale County, was also the site of Southernness Golf Course. The homestead sits on the South River adjacent to Panola Mountain, and became an 18-hole golf course in the late 1900s. The original home was preserved as well as vegetation buffers on the South River. Archeological sites along the riverbanks have also been protected. Acquired by the Georgia DNR in 2004, combined with the acquisition of the neighboring Alexander estate with its large Alexander Lake, these sites have greatly expanded Panola Mountain State Park.

It is recommended that the historic Parker homestead be renovated for use as an interpretive venue, including restoring the former golf course to a natural setting and returning it to wildlife and wetland habitats. The Gateway Welcome Facility can be located in the Georgia State Park Education and Demonstration Center, a future structure to be built near the Parker home. Meeting areas, classrooms, a staffed information desk, hands-on demonstrations, restrooms and dining facilities can be provided. The diverse ecology of mountain versus riparian habitats can be showcased, enhanced by future interpretive trails linked to the PATH system.

The neighboring Alexander estate can expand recreation opportunities by providing picnic facilities, playgrounds and overnight campsites near Alexander Lake. The existing Alexander home can provide restrooms, an information center and parking. There are also stunning opportunities to build observation areas, a scenic overlook and offer attractive places for parties, family reunions and other gatherings on both the Alexander and Parker sites. Entertaining exhibits about granite geology and the habitats it supports can be offered, and

visitors can be encouraged to experience this lovely property on a nature trail that was once, in part, a golf path.

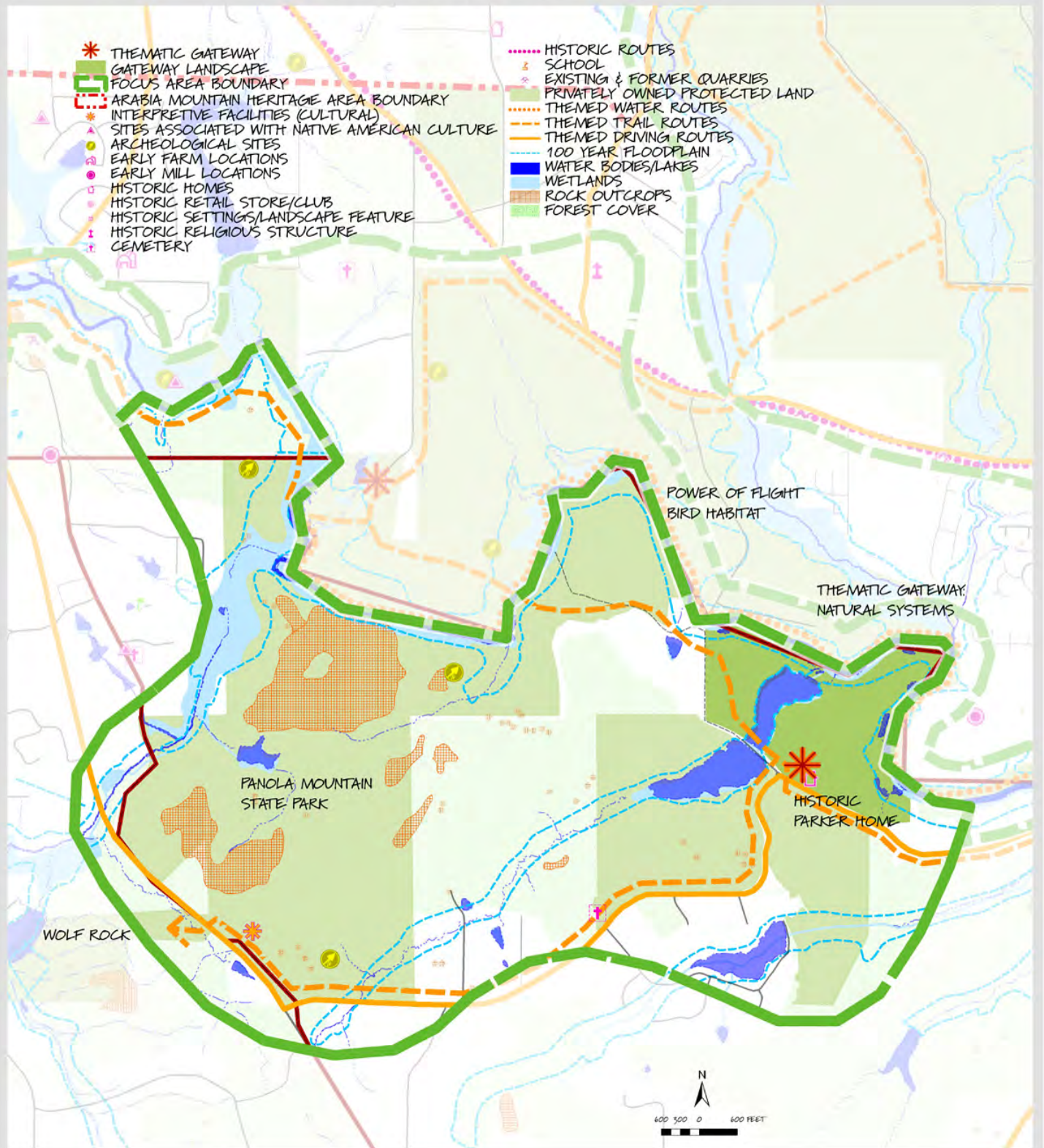
A highlight of the Natural Systems Gateway can include a canoe and kayak launch for tours on the South River. This recommendation was the impetus for the water Route System proposed during the planning process, and will greatly expand recreational, educational and cultural opportunities. The water route can also link to Miners Creek, the South Rockdale park and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit.

The Power of Flight exhibit at Panola Mountain State Park is also here and features a unique riparian corridor with sandbars, native vegetation and bird habitats. The exhibit is a special resource for protecting the delicate environment of migratory birds.

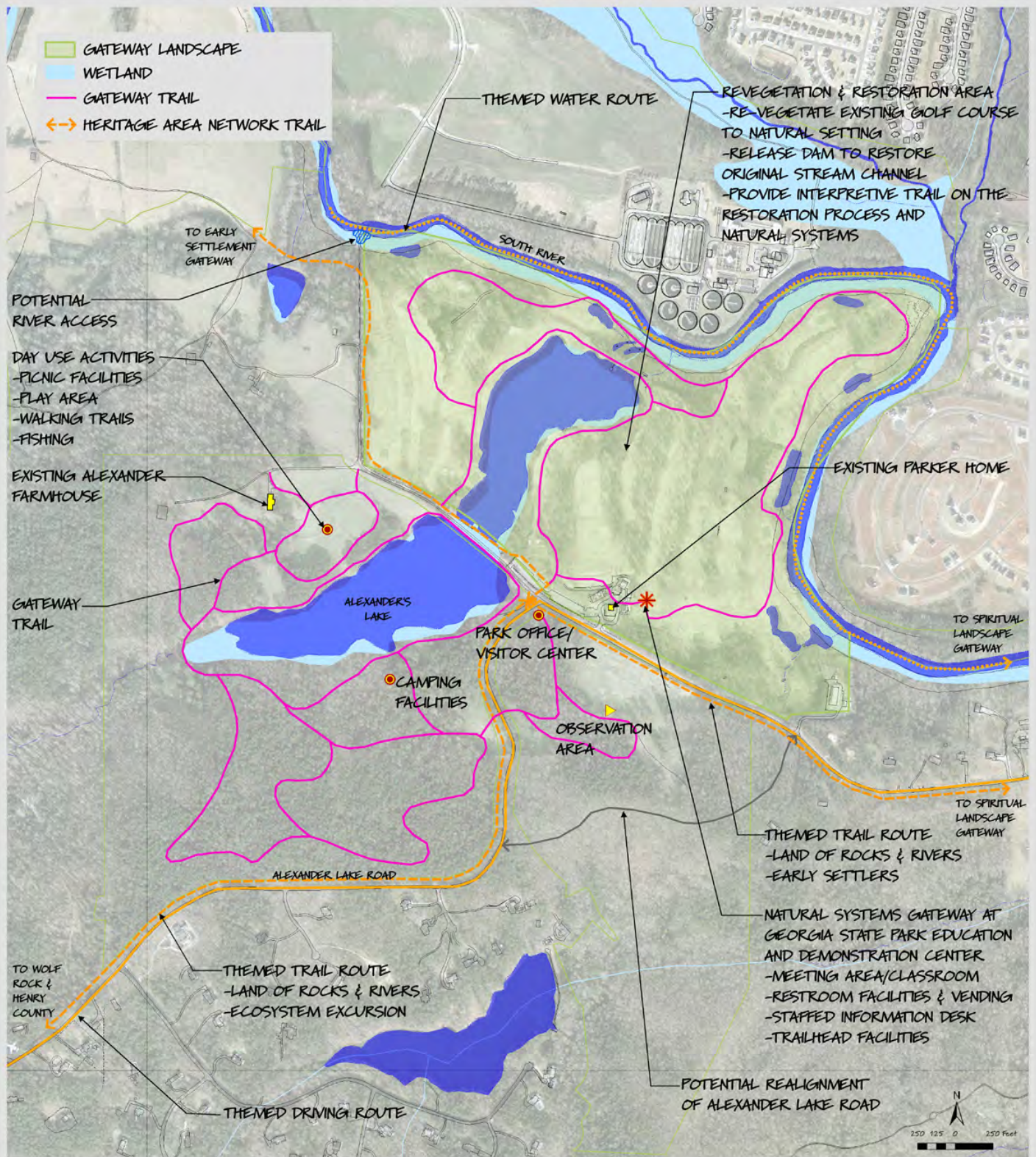
Sites to be highlighted:

- Panola Mountain and The Power of Flight exhibit
- Historic Parker homestead
- Alexander Lake with proposed overlook and gathering places
- Former golf course restored as wildlife and wetland habitats
- South River canoe and kayak launch
- Miners Creek Preserve
- South Rockdale Park and former DeCastro estate
- Monastery of the Holy Spirit property

NATURAL SYSTEMS FOCUS AREA



NATURAL SYSTEMS GATEWAY at PANOLA MOUNTAIN STATE PARK





Parker House

Focus Area: EARLY SETTLEMENT

Gateway: South River and Flat Rock Community

Welcome Facility: Lyon's Farm

Historians and archeologists have found artifacts along the South River dating back to the Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC). Native Americans traveled the South River transporting soapstone. Early European settlers farmed the land and raised cattle. Granite quarrying spurred the growth of European and African-American communities. Evidence of settlement sites include farms with residences and historic out-buildings, granite mining sites, unmarked and marked cemeteries and industrial and commercial sites; all offer fascinating insight into the daily lives of people generations ago.

Visitors to the Early Settlement Focus Area can begin exploration at the proposed South River and Flat Rock Gateway at Lyon's Farm. Built circa 1822 to 1823, it is believed to be the oldest home in DeKalb County.

The early African-American community of Flat

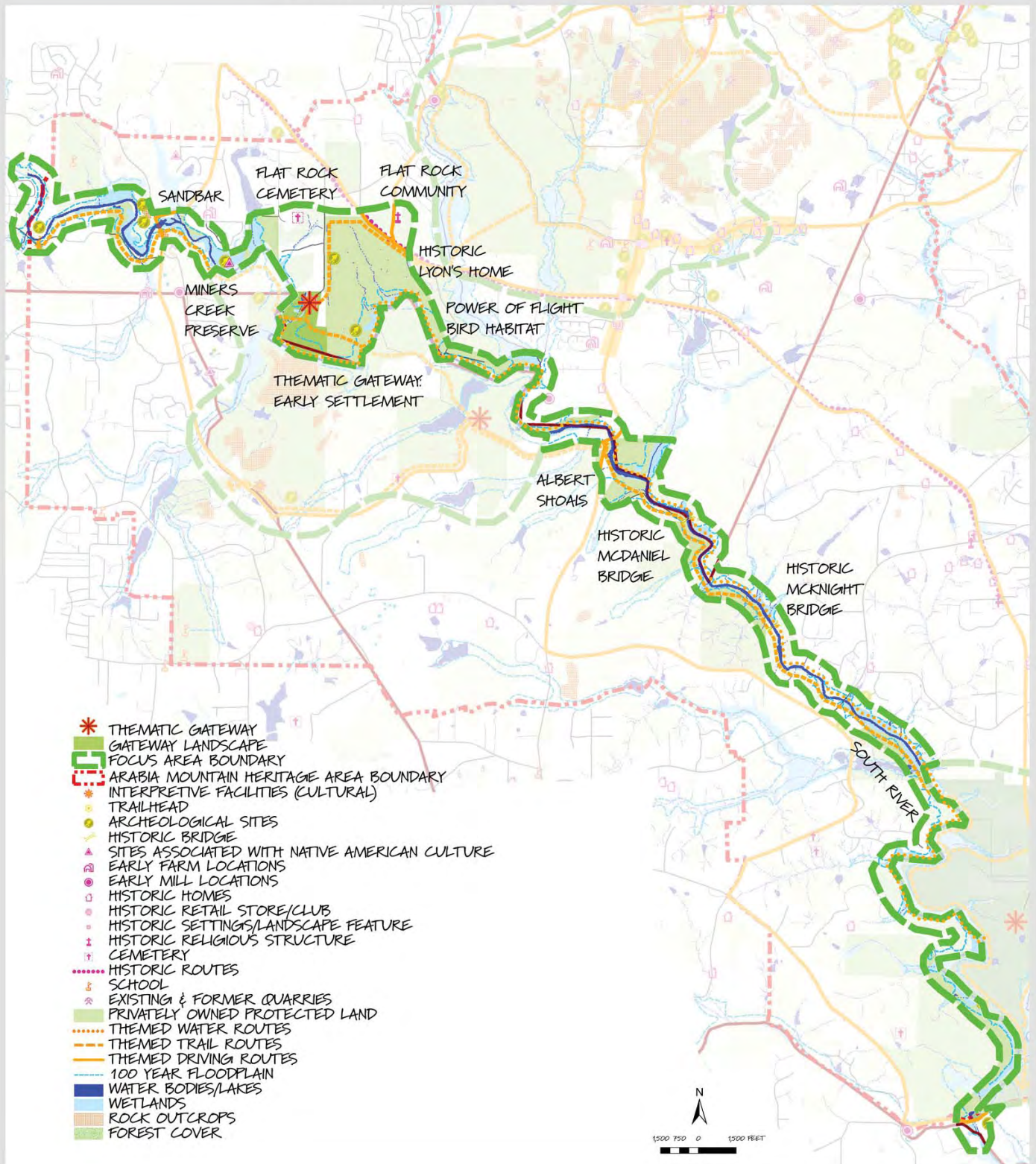
Rock, along with Lyon's Farm, can illustrate the cultural significance of this Focus Area, while the South River can be highlighted as the main natural resource. Early mill sites, farms and Native American archeological sites exist up and down its banks. Significant landmarks include Miners Creek Preserve, a Native American site dating back thousands of years, Flat Rock Cemetery (circa 1820), Panola Shoals and Pole Bridge Shoals mill sites, and the sites of historic bridges.

The story of how the Heritage Area was settled, by whom and why, can be explained through entertaining displays, photographs and maps. Archeological artifacts can highlight the South River's role in providing transportation and livelihoods for diverse cultures.

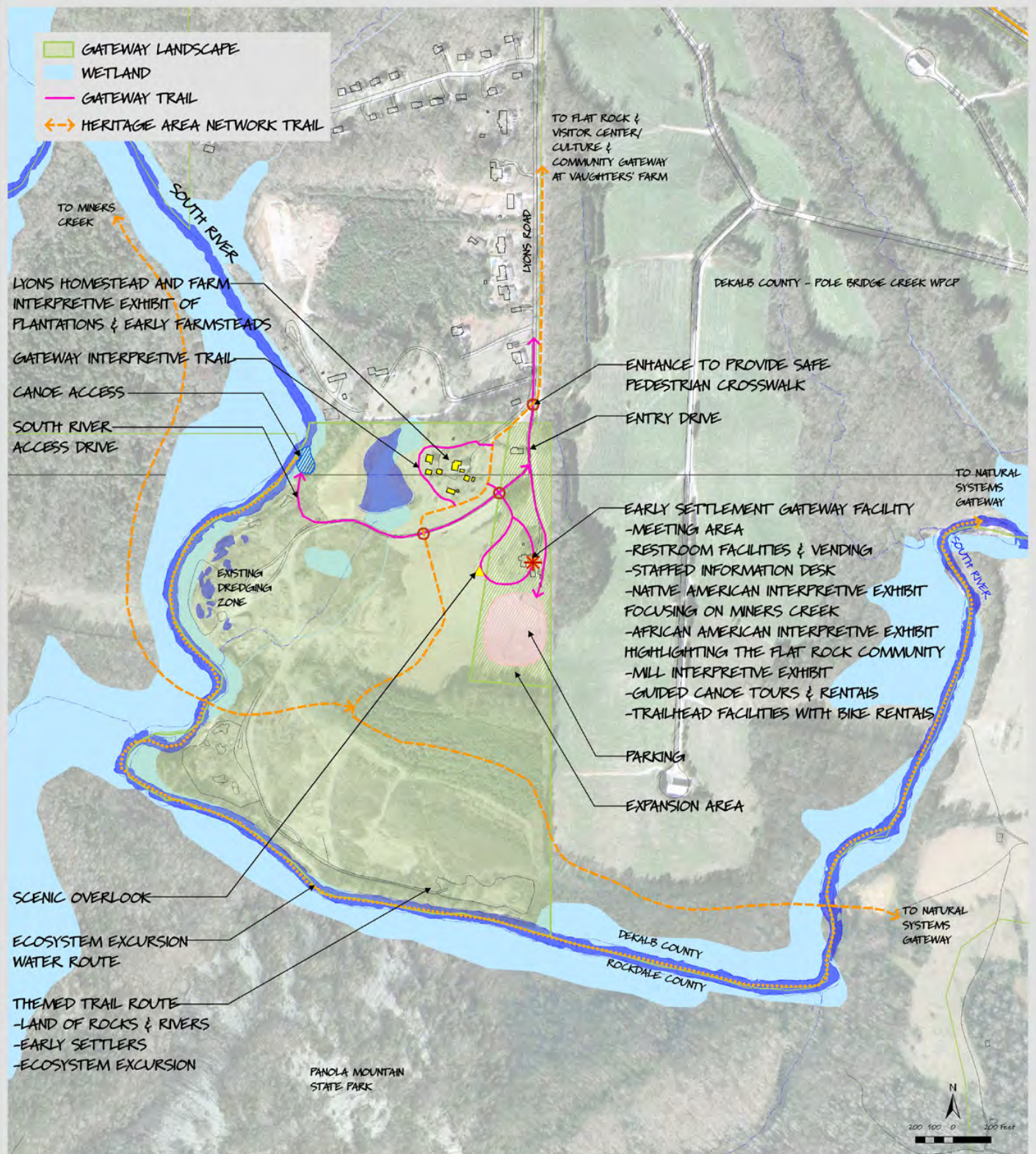
Due to its historic significance, Lyon's Farm and home should be preserved as a Welcome Facility with enthralling exhibits on early settler life. An interpretive walking trail can also be created. The PATH system can connect visitors to the historic community of Flat Rock, as well as Native American sites along the South River, as well as the Parker home, the oldest in Rockdale County, circa 1822, just across the river. A canoe and kayak put-in area can provide easy access to the river. Cultural amenities to be highlighted:

- Lyon's Farm and historic home and Parker home
- Native American sites along South River including Miners Creek Preserve
- African-American community of Flat Rock and its historic cemetery and church site
- Old water powered mill sites

EARLY SETTLEMENT FOCUS AREA



EARLY SETTLEMENT GATEWAY at SOUTH RIVER & FLAT ROCK





Lithonia Woman's Club

Focus Area: GRANITE AND TECHNOLOGY

Gateway: City of Lithonia

Welcome Facility: Lithonia Woman's Club building

The Heritage Area's geology features several forms of granite, granite gneisses and schist. Gneiss is granite like rock with bands and layers of minerals. Schist is granite like rock made of laminated minerals, primarily micas.

Granite is the primary reason why the Heritage Area is environmentally special to the region and the country. The impressive granite outcroppings at Arabia and Panola Mountains are two of the state's largest exposed granite occurrences, and are found only in the Piedmont region. Arabia Mountain is estimated to be 475 million years old. Significant rock formations also occur along the waterways and scattered through the woods. Albert Shoals and Panola Shoals in the South River and Evans Mill Shoals on Pole Bridge Creek are two examples of how rock formations create beautiful shapes and textures and were once the sites of water powered mills. They also play a valuable role in stabilizing stream beds and river banks by slowing water flow during storms.

Granite from Lithonia has been prized first as building stone, then later for its density and high

performance in curbing and roadway construction. As stated earlier, local quarries provided stone for historic buildings across the nation. The Lithonia area continues to be a major source of granite for metropolitan Atlanta. Major quarries at Rock Chapel and Pine Mountain are still active today.

Due to Lithonia's prominent contribution to the discovery, quarrying and use of granite, its businesses, homes, Main Street, cemeteries and other granite structures were selected as an ideal place for visitors to explore the Granite Industry and Technology Focus Area. It is recommended that the 1929 Lithonia Woman's Club

serve as the City of Lithonia Gateway facility, as an outstanding example of an entirely granite structure. Currently under the stewardship of the Arabia Alliance, this Gateway would be a gathering and information center, providing background on the importance of granite and Lithonia's evolution. Its central location, one block from Main Street, provides easy access to other prominent venues. The Lithonia Woman's Club will also serve as a trailhead along the PATH trail, providing an off road connection to Vaughters' Farm Gateway and Visitor Center just two miles south. Exhibits on the Lithonia Speedway and Country Club, both no longer in existence, can provide further insights into Lithonia's role in shaping the social fabric of the African-American community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Group and self-guided walking and bike tours can be the primary avenue for education, allowing visitors to experience cultural sites such as:

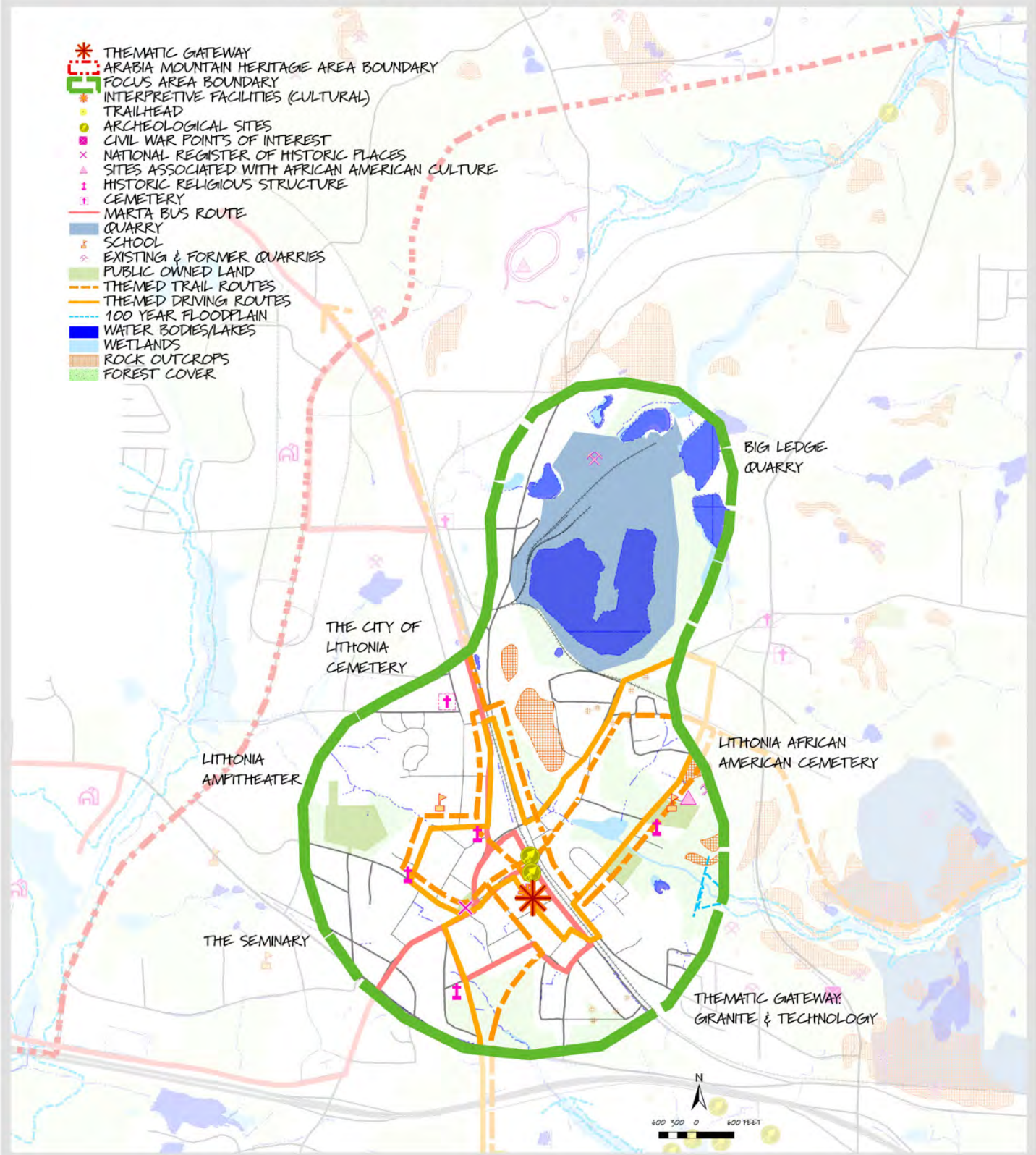
- Lithonia African-American Cemetery and City of Lithonia Cemetery
- historic Main Street and Masonic Lodge
- The Seminary (listed on the National Register of Historic Places)
- Lithonia Park and Stewart Amphitheater and other sites built of granite

Tours can be customized from this Gateway to showcase the City's architecture, history and cultural diversity.

The community also suggested that a granite museum be created in Lithonia to highlight the evolution of the granite industry. It could be supported by partnerships with the quarry industry. Community comments indicated that a Lithonia granite museum would be a catalyst for economic redevelopment and would complement the City's recent streetscape and transportation improvements spurred by the Atlanta Regional Commission's 2003 Livable Centers Initiative Project.

The Lithonia Woman's Club Gateway could also assist in marketing the Heritage Area by organizing special events, such as annual and holiday festivals, benefits and fundraisers. As a trailhead along the PATH trail system, the Lithonia Woman's Club could offer bike rentals, a staffed information desk with maps and brochures, parking, restrooms and vending facilities.

GRANITE & TECHNOLOGY FOCUS AREA



GRANITE & TECHNOLOGY GATEWAY at CITY OF LITHONIA

