

CHAPTER 8

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**\*\*MARCH 1, 2006 DRAFT\*\***



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## 1.0 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment is a review and summary of the potential impacts of the five proposed management alternatives proposed for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area (AMHA or Heritage Area). This analysis is a summary of the possible impacts on the natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources of the Heritage Area. Therefore, this Environmental Assessment does not address any proposed development activities.

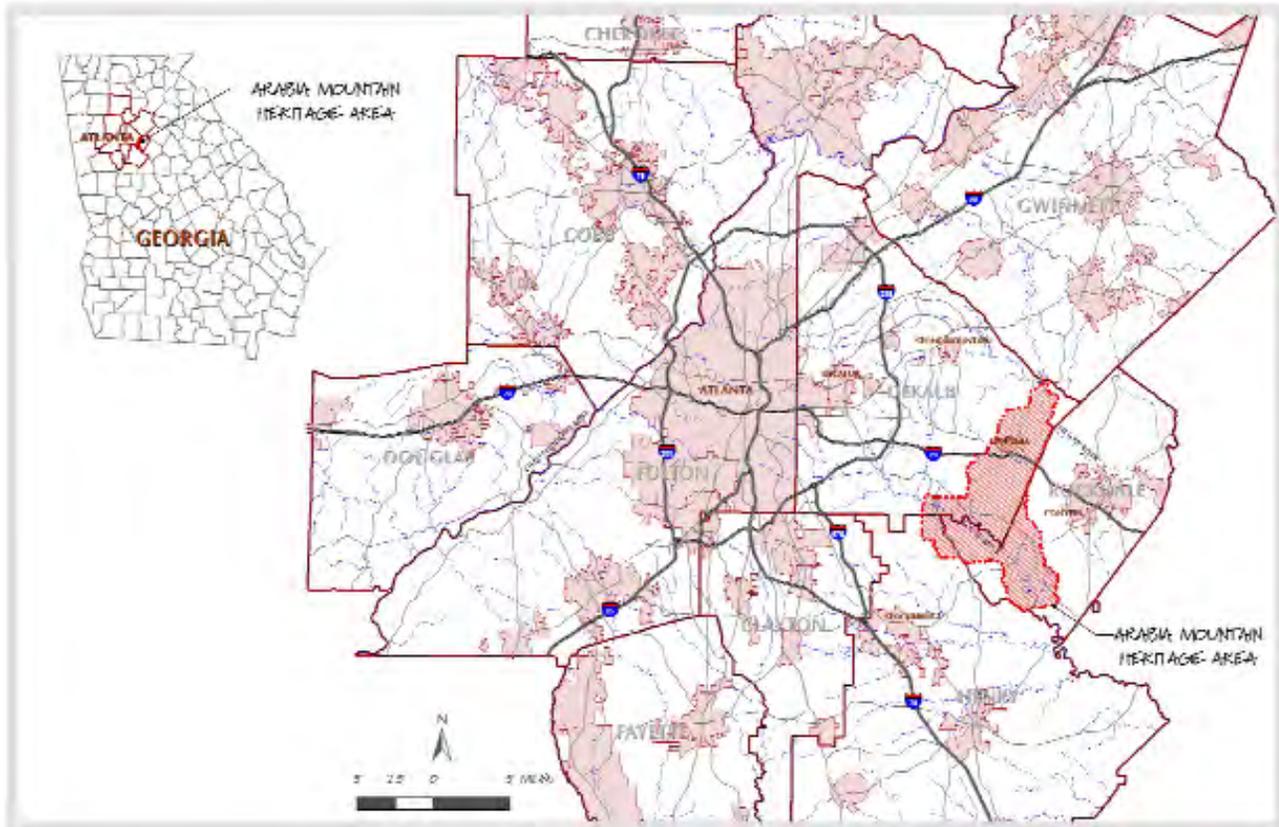
The analysis of the alternatives in this Environmental Assessment is presented as a broad overview of the potential impacts to the resources of the Heritage Area. Once the Secretary of the Interior adopts the Management Plan, actions implemented in the future will require compliance, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act

of 1969 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

There are five management alternatives presented and reviewed in this document: Alternative 1 (No Action), used as a baseline for all other alternatives; Alternative 2 (Network); Alternative 3 (Area); Alternative 4 (Cluster); and Alternative 5 (Hybrid – Preferred Alternative).

### 1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area is approximately 40,000 acres, and is located east of the City of Atlanta. It is comprised of land in the counties of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry, including the City of Lithonia. Included in the Heritage Area are Arabia and Panola Mountains, numerous businesses, historic homesteads, Civil War battle sites, active and former quarries, religious institutions, local and State parkland, schools and private residences. The basis for the boundary was determined during the Arabia Mountain National



Heritage Area Feasibility Study (February 2001), conducted for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance (Alliance), the non-profit management entity established for the AMHA. The boundary was expanded on October 16, 2003 to include future greenspace to both the north and south. The final boundary determined during the planning process comprises approximately 64 square miles. Approximately, the Heritage Area is bounded by the Yellow River, the DeKalb/Rockdale County line, Honey Creek, Monastery of the Holy Spirit Property, Oglesby Bridge Road, Camp Creek, Union Church Road, Rock Creek, Austin Road, Pole Bridge Creek, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Rock Chapel Road.

### 1.3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The land that comprises the Heritage Area includes active quarries, rolling topography, rural landscapes and unique granite outcroppings, such as Arabia and Panola mountains, which are two of the State's three largest exposed granite formations. Other significant cultural features include the City of Lithonia- known for its history in the quarry industry- and the early African-American settlements found in such communities as Flat Rock and Klondike. These and other qualities all comprise a unique "cultural landscape," essentially creating an area that is rich in natural, cultural, social and economic characteristics, reflecting an on-going collaborative relationship between people and the land.

Arabia Mountain and other nearby granite outcrops are part of an area in eastern Metropolitan Atlanta that has been linked to human settlement and activity for thousands of years. From Native Americans transporting goods via the South River to Civil War battlegrounds, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area contains unique and distinct ecosystems that encompass spiritual landscapes, mountains, quarries, woodlands, lakes, rivers and farmland. Some of the plant-life is threatened and endemic or limited to the granite ecosystems of the Heritage Area. The history of human settlement in this region is intimately connected to its geological

resources, starting over 7,000 years ago with the quarrying and trading of soapstone.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area contains layers of natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources within an approximately 64 square mile area. Many of these resources are unique and rare not only in the Atlanta Region, but in the nation. Growth pressures of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area make it key to protect and preserve the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area. The process of establishing the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area began through the efforts of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, which is a non-profit organization that includes environmental organizations, community leaders, and government officials. The Alliance contracted ICON architecture to complete the *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. The Feasibility Study concluded the following:

- The designation of a National Heritage Area
- Creation of a Definite Boundary for the Heritage Area containing a concentration of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources (or unique features)
- Defined key Stakeholders in the Heritage Area: Counties of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry; City of Lithonia; State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources; Evans Mill, Klondike, South Rockdale, and Flat Rock communities, Monastery, Churches, Stonecrest Mall, etc.
- Identified possible "Themes" for interpretation based upon the Heritage Area's history and culture
- Recommended the completion of a Management Plan for the Heritage Area to comprehensively plan for the preservation and interpretation of the Heritage Area's natural, scenic, cultural, and historical resources

The nine-month planning process for the Management Plan began with the establishment of a Steering Committee comprised of the key stakeholders in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area. The Steering Committee consists of voting

members from the community, community businesses, the three counties of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry, the City of Lithonia, and the State of Georgia, as well as a non-voting advisory group to provide assistance in decision-making. This committee was created to provide valuable insight into the current climate and future goals of the Heritage Area, and to offer guidance on the plan elements, potential strategies and direction for the community meetings. The first task of the Steering Committee was to select a Consultant Team to complete a Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the proposed Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, as required by the Secretary of the Interior for National Heritage Area designation. The selected Consultant Team consists of Ecos Environmental Design, Inc., ICON architecture, inc., Planners for Environmental Quality (PEQ), and The Media Kitchen.

The Consultant Team collected, interpreted, and analyzed all data pertinent to the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area and completed a series of inventory and analysis maps of all natural, cultural, historical, scenic, recreational, and economic resources. The team then implemented a Management Plan website as a communication tool throughout the planning process. All maps, data, events, and news completed during the project were posted on the website for public display and comment. Monthly meetings with the Steering Committee, a day long Steering Committee Concept Charrette, and three Community Meetings were conducted to present and receive information and comments. During the meetings, the community was engaged in various interactive sessions, such as placing dots on features of highest priority, making comments on sticky notes, marking on maps, and filling out surveys.

At the first Community Meeting, the Consultant Team introduced the planning process, purpose, and schedule. The accomplishments of the Heritage Area were highlighted and community members gave feedback on the environmental issues, challenges, interpretation possibilities, and educational, economic, and marketing opportunities. At the day long Steering Committee Concept

Charrette that followed, the committee explored why the Heritage Area is unique, what stories should be told, and where should interpretation occur. The Committee analyzed the community comments and selected Management Plan Goals for the Heritage Area. The goals and comments combined with the discussion of interpretation themes and opportunities assisted the group in creating three alternative concept plans. The Consultant Team refined the concept plans and presented the three alternatives for community comment and review at the Second Community Meeting. A data and map review was also conducted at the meeting to ensure that all significant resources had been documented.

Based upon the consolidated comments of the community and Steering Committee, the Consultant Team merged the three alternative concepts into one concept plan. They presented this draft concept plan to the Steering Committee for additional feedback. After further design, analysis, and refinement, the draft concept plan was presented at the Third and Final Community Meeting. The Consultant Team explained that the concept plan will incorporate a strategy for preserving and interpreting the resources of the Heritage Area and provide a means to set priorities and make strategic improvements and investments. The community was also asked to provide feedback on strategies and implementation priorities for the draft concept plan.

The next step was to amend the draft concept plan based on community comments and Steering Committee review. Throughout the Steering Committee and Community Facilitation Process, the Consultant Team continued to work on the compilation of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Document. Three components were included with the Management Plan. The first was this Environmental Assessment, which meets NPS/DO-12 requirements and includes an Environmental Screening Form. It analyzes several alternative approaches and describes how each impacts the Heritage Area's resources, as well as the overall Vision. This document will provide the

information necessary to select the environmentally preferred alternative and determine if there is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The second component is the Interpretation Strategy that details the themes of the Heritage Area and describes the appropriate approach for potential venues and programs. The Implementation Program is the third component. This involved completing an inventory of resources; outlining the vision, goals, mission, and objectives; explaining the strategies; identifying the responsibility of key players; proposing a timeline and phasing of strategies and programs; creating a funding strategy; and describing the structure of the management entity. The completed Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan will provide vision, practical steps for its implementation, and future guidance for the Heritage Area.

The adoption of a Management Plan for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area will establish guidelines and strategies that will allow the Heritage Area and its management entity to:

- Preserve distinctive natural, historic and cultural resources within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental and educational opportunities that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors
- Preserve existing landscapes from encroaching commercial and residential development
- Prohibit negative environmental effects from damaging the resources of the area (i.e. air and water pollution, etc.)
- Initiate partnerships between private, public and not-for-profit organizations that can accomplish the Heritage Area's goals.
- Create a sustainable Heritage Area that successfully achieves a balance in economic, social and environmental issues of the area.
- Improve interpretation to educate and encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.
- Focus interpretation of the area's history and culture at key locations or places so visitors can comprehend the Heritage Area's

'themes' and stories.

Implementing a Management plan will:

- Educate visitors and residents on the history and culture of the Heritage Area
- Stimulate a diversity of tourism in the area – fulfilling the current void in attracting visitors with cultural and historical interests, as well as those interested in unique ecosystems and recreational opportunities
- Strengthen the Heritage Area's existing greenway trail system, by advocating an extension of the system
- Provide an opportunity for the Heritage Area to engage in sustainable practices, such as expanding the multi-use trail system, preserving ecosystems, restoring riparian habitats and fostering youth activities.
- Integrate the importance of historical preservation with ecosystem conservation
- Engage public-private-non profit coalition opportunities in the region in order to improve the quality of life in the area.

#### **1.4 NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION**

Because the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area is not a designated National Heritage Area, there is no requirement to prepare a Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. However, the Alliance continues to work to obtain designation and anticipates that this will soon occur. Therefore, in preparation for the designation, the Alliance feels that the planning process should move forward and this includes the Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. The increased development pressures of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area heighten the need to establish a plan to protect, connect, and educate. The people within the region and visitors need to be made aware of the many significant resources and the Heritage Area's rich story. Through the combination of environmental information and public involvement, the Management Plan will establish goals, guidelines, and strategies for the Heritage Area. The Management Plan will also outline the structure of a Management Entity to implement the

Management Plan by receiving and dispersing funds and providing technical assistance.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area was designated a National Heritage Area by Congress on \_\_\_\_\_. The legislation, Public Law \_\_\_\_\_ requires that a Management Plan with Environmental Assessment be submitted to the Secretary of Interior for approval. The National Environmental Policy Act states that both its purpose and the National Park Service mission aim for the “conservation and protection of our nation’s resources for the benefit of future generations.” The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area needs organization and a Management Plan to evaluate the impacts of issues on the Heritage Area’s unique natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources so that they may be enjoyed and understood by future generations.

## 1.5 MISSION AND GOALS

The purpose and goals for the Heritage Area have evolved from initial planning efforts and steering committee and community meetings during the Management Plan process. The current management entity for the AMHA is the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance. The mission of the Alliance is to ‘ensure that the recreational, natural and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors and well managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia’s heritage.’

The overall theme of the Management Plan is to **protect, connect, and educate**. Below is the list of goals, organized from highest to lowest priority, as established during the planning process:

### **Preservation Goal: To protect historic resources in the Heritage Area, such as:**

- City of Lithonia, its structures, corridors and communities
- Existing and former Quarries and related resources
- Existing and former Farms, Mills, and other culturally significant structures
- Cemeteries from past cultures

- Native American and African American Settlements

Preservation is best achieved by explaining the relevance of the Heritage Area to the larger community through interpretive opportunities that allow visitors to understand and experience the uniqueness of the area first hand.

### **Education Goal: To create new learning opportunities / facilities that will increase:**

- Appreciation of the environment
- Appreciation of the history
- Knowledge of the connection to the region, and the historical impact to the United States
- Knowledge of sustainable preservation and growth practices

By engaging the Heritage Area’s schools and organized groups, the vision of the Heritage Area and the mission of protection and connection can be spread throughout the region. Education is the primary step in fulfilling the goal of preserving this unique area for future generations.

### **Economic Development Goal: To encourage “Smart Growth” & Sustainability by:**

- Supporting acceptable growth management techniques
- Engaging in tourism and economic development that respects resources
- Encouraging a partnership / team approach to the Heritage Area’s management

Many communities within the Heritage Area are searching for ways to improve the current economic climate. Much of the Heritage Area is experiencing rampant residential development, due to the Heritage Area’s resources and proximity to metropolitan Atlanta. Increasing tourism; providing recreational and educational facilities; and promoting community development opportunities will bring economic benefits to the residents of the Heritage Area. The Plan recommends a template for how to efficiently handle the future residential and commercial demands that also protects the quality of life.

**Conservation Goal: To protect & restore the Heritage Area’s natural resources, such as:**

- Riparian corridors in the Heritage Area
- Arabia and Panola Mountains, and their unique flora and fauna
- Wildlife / Plant life, and their relationship to the granite environment
- Vast array of Ecosystems & landscapes within the Heritage Area

Future protection of the Heritage Area’s unique landscapes and environments is critical to its sustainability. These resources are finite, and must be properly explored, viewed, protected and highlighted in a manner that is engaging and informative to visitors and residents.

**Recreation Goal: To expand open space and recreation opportunities through:**

- Existing and future trails and greenways that connect the Heritage Area’s resources
- Encouraging both active and passive opportunities
- Expansion of parks and greenspaces
- Addition of public facilities

Recreational opportunities will improve the quality of life and the community’s appreciation of the Heritage Area’s regional significance. Greenspace and recreation are the primary criteria for determining the livability of an area. Further, greenspace expansion is necessary for improved water quality and wildlife habitat protection in the area.

**Interpretation Goal: To tell the diverse story of the region:**

- The geology and the land
- Granite quarrying and its impacts
- The communities and settlers
- Unique ecosystems, wildlife and plant life

Designating actions to explain how the Heritage Area has affected generations of residents, as well as construction efforts in other parts of the US, will increase awareness of the Heritage Area’s unique background and relevancy to the region.

Interpretation fosters stewardship and is critical for

future protection and conservation efforts. Wars, diverse cultures and industry have shaped this area significantly, and the breadth of this story should be shared with others.

**1.6 RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS**

This document was preceded by a feasibility study to propose the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area be designated as a National Heritage Area. In February 2001, the *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* prepared for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance was completed by ICON architecture inc.

**1.7 DECISIONS TO BE MADE**

The proposed Management Plan represents a comprehensive strategy for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area that will stimulate economic development, preserve key landscapes and conserve historic and cultural resources through sustainable practices. To be successful, the following decisions must be considered:

- **Protect**
  - Most effective and sustainable method of protecting, conserving and interpreting the Heritage Area’s cultural and natural resources for current and future generations.
  - Cooperative efforts to initiate a South River Greenway Corridor Master Plan among the counties, local owners and other public entities.
  - Continued maintenance and enhancement of key publicly owned landscapes, including Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, South Rockdale Community Park, Vaughters’ Farm and others.
- **Connect**
  - Appropriate means for integrating the future economic and environmental actions of others into the Management plan in a manner

that complements the AMHA's management goals.

- Continued maintenance and construction of the multi-use trail network to promote recreation and sustainable transportation between the Heritage Area's residential and commercial centers, as well as schools, parks and recreational centers.
- Balance between the interest of the residents of the Heritage Area and those of the City of Lithonia, State of Georgia, the counties of DeKalb, Henry, and Rockdale and other non-profit entities with regards to tourism, economic development, and preservation of resources.

- **Educate**

- Most effective method for educating visitors on the significance of the Heritage Area's cultural and natural resources.
- Which stories should be told about the Heritage Area, and where should this interpretation occur.

## 1.8 SCOPING AND ISSUES

The alternatives presented in this plan are conceptual, thus the issues and the potential impacts of the alternatives on the environmental resources will be discussed more generally and strategically. Separate, more specific federally assisted projects within the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area will require separate more detailed environmental evaluations.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area issues were identified through community meeting comments, steering committee direction, the research and exploration of the environmental resources, and the preceding *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. The impact topics are listed below in Section 1.8.1 with their corresponding issues of concern.

### 1.8.1 Impact Topics and Associated Issues

The following impact topics are listed with their corresponding issues.

**Natural Resources** – Sustainably preserving natural resources while allowing educational, recreational, and economic opportunities in the Heritage Area. Preserving, conserving, and protecting natural resources with development and visitation pressures.

- **Topographic and Geological Features** – Preserving the geological features and the unique ecosystems they create within a rapidly developing metropolitan area.
- **Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality** – Enhancing the riparian corridors to improve the current poor water quality and biodiversity, while preventing increased non-point and point source water pollution.
- **Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species** – Protecting rare and endemic species and vegetation communities from foot damage, invasive exotic species, and development.
- **Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species** – Preventing the elimination of unique wildlife habitats and corridors.
- **Air Quality** – Improving air quality by increasing the use of alternative transportation, planning that links transportation with land uses, and increasing the efficiency of existing transportation and land use infrastructure.

**Cultural Resources** – Educating the visitor on the cultural, archeological, and historical resources by telling the story of the Heritage Area in a cohesive and comprehensive manner. Simultaneously protecting and preserving the sites and structures.

- **Archeological Resources** – Preserving existing sites and promoting studies to prevent undiscovered sites from being destroyed by development.
- **Cultural and Historical Resources** – Preserve, educate, and maintain cultural and historical sites and structures.

**Socio-Economic Considerations** – Promote sustainable environmental planning to protect important resources and to balance and direct growth.

- **Recreation/Open Space Resources** –

Promoting recreational and greenway opportunities, while providing public safety and preventing detrimental impacts from overuse.

- **Regional Growth and Land Use**

**Pressures** – Prevent and/or alleviate parking issues and traffic congestion with increased development and visitation in an environmentally sustainable method.

- **Tourism** – Stimulating economic development and tourism while also practicing sustainability.

The impact topics and issues are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.0 Affected Environment and 4.0 Environmental Consequences.

### 1.8.2 Impact Measurement

The impact analysis predicts the magnitude of the issues or the relationship between the alternatives and the resources. In order to do this, a methodology has been established to evaluate both the direct and indirect impacts. The intensity, context, duration, and timing of the impacts are examined in Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences. The following terms will be used in comparing the environmental impacts among alternatives:

- *Negligible* – The impact is barely perceptible or not measurable
- *Minor* – The impact is slightly detectable and measurable but is either localized or would not adversely affect resources.
- *Moderate* – The impact is clearly detectable and could have appreciable effect on resources.
- *Major* – The impact is substantial and highly noticeable or measurable.
- *Short-term* – The impact lasts less than one year.
- *Long-term* – The impact lasts one year or longer.

The impact analysis will also state if the resulting impacts are *adverse* or *beneficial* to the environmental resources. Table 3 provides a Summary of the Direct and Indirect Impacts for the Alternatives. Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences looks in

greater detail at the impact of alternatives upon the Heritage Area's resources based upon the above

## 2.0 ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives section is the heart of this Environmental Assessment. This section describes in detail the No Action alternative, the proposed action, and other reasonable alternatives that were studied in detail. Then based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the Affected Environment and the Probable Impacts, this section presents the beneficial and adverse environmental effects of all alternatives in comparative form, providing a clear basis for choice among the options for the decision maker and the public.

The alternatives were devised through public outreach during the planning process. An extensive outreach process guided by the project agenda and schedule established for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan was conducted during the study. The outreach process utilized a variety of methods for engaging and informing the public including steering committee meetings, project database, direct mail and e-mail, public meetings, advertising, newsletters and a website. As a result of the many outreach techniques utilized, significant input has been received from the public.

The first alternative was included because the NEPA process requires that a No Action alternative be considered. In October 2004, the Steering Committee, comprised of key stakeholders in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area, participated in a Concept Charrette that after refinement by the Consultant Team resulted in three additional alternatives. The three alternatives were presented during the second Community Meeting in November 2004. Based upon community comments, along with additional feedback from the Steering Committee, a fifth alternative was created. The community provided comments on the fifth alternative during the third and final Community Meeting in March 2005.

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The natural, historical and cultural resources prevalent in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area provide

an exceptional opportunity for recreation, environmental education and heritage preservation. In order to effectively manage the recreation, visitor experience, environmental concerns and fiscal issues of the Heritage Area, the project team, steering committee and community members analyzed a number of approaches.

The five alternative approaches assessed in this document are as follows:

**Alternative 1: No Action:** This alternative, required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), is a continuation of current management and procedures.

**Alternative 2: Network:** Improve trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation that encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.

**Alternative 3: Area:** Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.

**Alternative 4: Cluster:** Focus interpretation of the Heritage Area's history and culture at key locations that become the "gateways" to understand the Heritage Area's 'themes' and story.

**Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred):** Combines characteristics of Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, and would define a central visitor center.

## 2.2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

### Alternative 1: No Action

*This alternative, required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), is a continuation of current management and procedures.*

Under the current climate, the Heritage Area would not receive federal funds, and would rely solely on volunteers and donations for environmental education and preservation activities. The current management group, the Arabia Alliance- a volunteer organization comprised of residents, civic-minded individuals, non-profit organizations, political leaders, governmental agencies and community activists – while viable, would have no guidance as to the appropriate programs and venues that should be completed for the Heritage Area. Further, the staffing for this group is currently one member; therefore lack of future staffing will compromise the organization's capabilities in the future. There would exist no framework for funding and resources. Development in the Heritage Area is occurring at a rapid pace, and without a plan, key resources could be negatively affected. Marketing opportunities- to both visitors and residents- would be missed, and the lack of knowledge about the Heritage Area could be detrimental to its conservation and preservation in the future.

# ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT - 'NETWORK'

## CONCEPT

IMPROVE TRAILS AND KEY BYWAYS AS THE PRIMARY CORRIDORS OF INTERPRETATION THAT ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO EXPERIENCE THE SITES AND HISTORY OF THE HERITAGE AREA.

## POSSIBLE THEMES FOR TRAIL & DRIVING ROUTES

### 'LAND OF ROCKS & RIVERS'

--- (TRAIL)  
— (DRIVING)

### 'STONE-CUTTERS'

--- (TRAIL)  
— (DRIVING)

### 'EARLY SETTLERS'

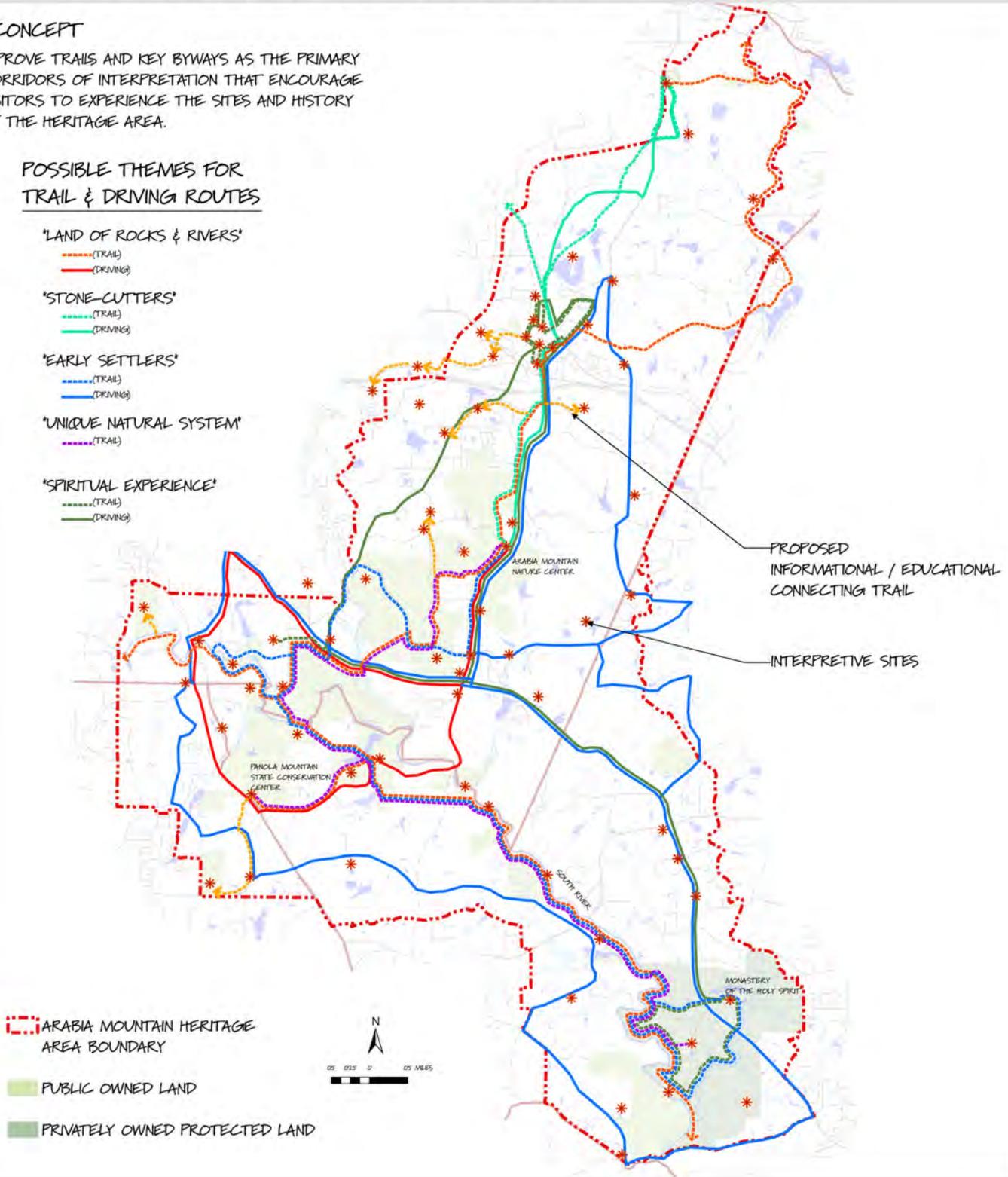
--- (TRAIL)  
— (DRIVING)

### 'UNIQUE NATURAL SYSTEM'

--- (TRAIL)

### 'SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE'

--- (TRAIL)  
— (DRIVING)



ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY

PUBLIC OWNED LAND

PRIVATELY OWNED PROTECTED LAND



**Alternative 2: Network**

*Utilize trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation, encouraging visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area. The Network alternative focuses on routes as the primary access to key features, venues and facilities within the Heritage Area. The concept is to experience the environment through a number of interpretive facilities along a route system that links heritage resources.*

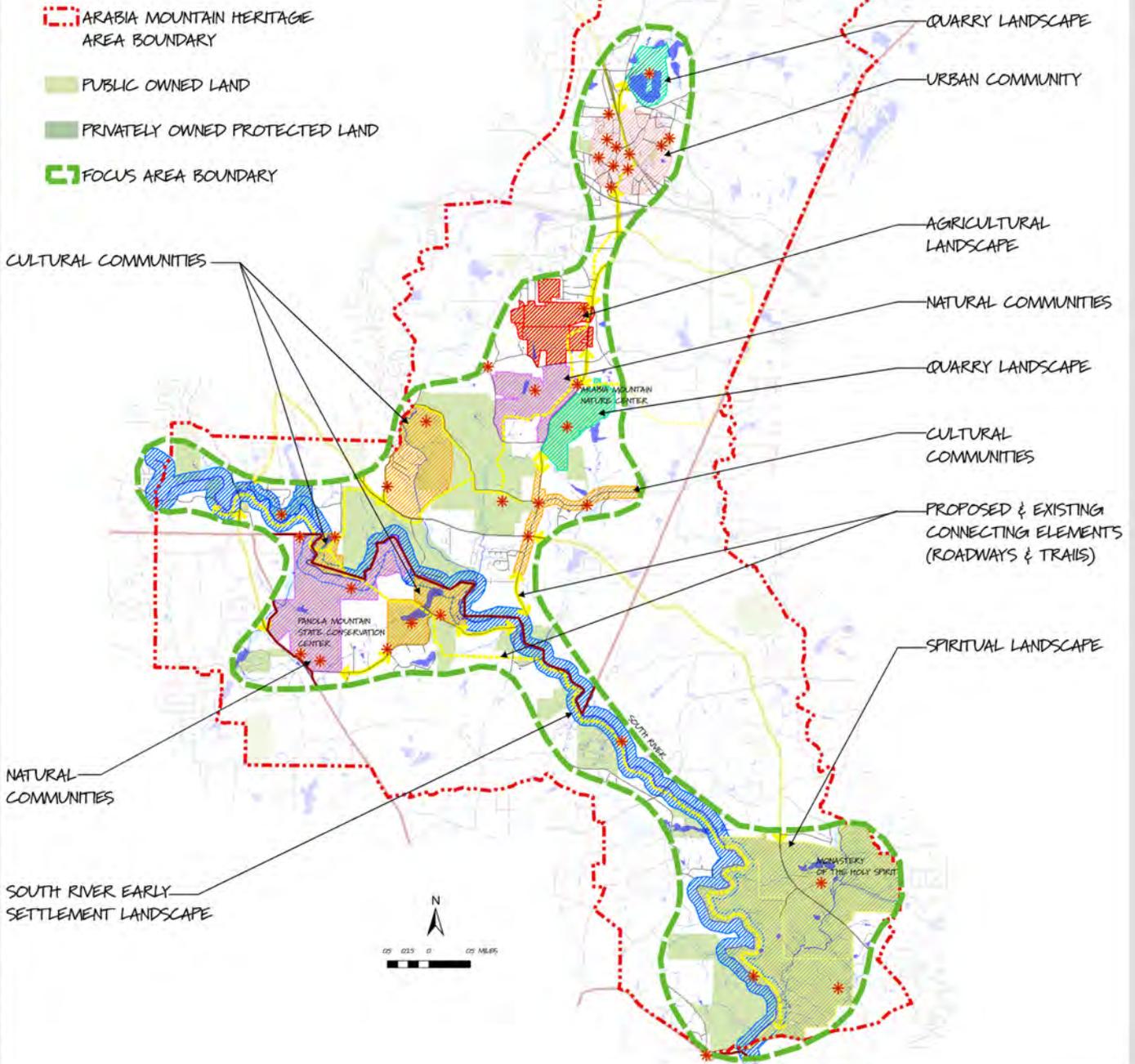
The Network serves as a connector and unifying element of the Heritage Area. Spur trails from the primary north-south route will allow visitors to explore diverse features of the Heritage Area. The Network concept envisions existing and future trails, identified roadways and selected waterways to serve as the means for visitors to initially experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area. Visitors along this network of routes can learn about the history and significance of the Heritage Area at key venues, on guided tours and at existing and proposed facilities. Once in place, these routes could be ‘customized’ based on such themes as historic homesteads; natural areas and wildlife; quarrying and granite; etc. Possible gateways- or access points- onto this network concept include existing trailheads (i.e. Stonecrest Mall or Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve); Panola Mountain State Conservation Park; future facilities in the City of Lithonia; the Klondike community and along the South River.

The Network concept emphasizes the experience of moving through the Heritage Area as the primary means to understand and learn about it. By utilizing interpretive signage, designated roadways and trails, informational kiosks and new and existing facilities, the Network concept focuses on the visitor *experiencing* the sites and history of the Heritage Area.

# ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT - 'AREA'

## CONCEPT

PRESERVE DISTINCTIVE NATURAL AND MAN-MADE LANDSCAPES WITHIN THE HERITAGE AREA AS LARGE SCALE AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY THAT COMMUNICATE THE HISTORY AND CULTURE TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.



### **Alternative 3: Area**

*Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.*

*The Area concept seeks to enhance and preserve the quality of the Heritage Area's landscapes by differentiating areas of varying character and encouraging local entities to preserve these settings. The Area concept emphasizes the branding and identity of different environments to educate the user on the complexities of the Heritage Area.*

Visitors to the Heritage Area will experience key environments that effectively convey the rich culture and history of the Heritage Area. The visitor will understand the story of the Heritage Area through these uniquely different 'places' in the landscape. Preservation of key landscapes is the focus of both the management and educational experience of this concept. The vast difference between the urban fabric of the City of Lithonia and the agricultural beauty of Vaughters' farm is just one example of how the Area concept will effectively convey the dynamic relationship between the culture, history and landscape of this unique and diverse place.

The selected environments to be highlighted in this concept will be connected and accessed via the existing (and future) trail system and roadways. Possible stories that can be told at specific landscapes include:

- City of Lithonia- The story of the people in the 'place of rock'
- Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve -The granite impact: flora, fauna and geology
- Vaughters' farm- The agricultural evolution
- Panola Mountain State Conservation Park- Natural systems and the relationship to the South River

# ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT - 'CLUSTER'

## CONCEPT

FOCUS INTERPRETATION OF THE AREA'S HISTORY AND CULTURE AT KEY LOCATIONS THAT BECOME THE 'GATEWAYS' TO UNDERSTAND THE HERITAGE AREA'S 'THEMES' AND STORY.

 ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY

 PUBLIC OWNED LAND

 PRIVATELY OWNED PROTECTED LAND

 FOCUS AREA BOUNDARY

CLUSTER C THEME:  
'NATURAL SYSTEMS OF THE HERITAGE AREA'

PANOLA MOUNTAIN STATE CONSERVATION PARK GATEWAY

PROPOSED & EXISTING CONNECTING ELEMENTS (ROADWAYS & TRAILS)

CLUSTER A THEME:  
'PEOPLE OF THE HERITAGE AREA'

CITY OF LITHONIA GATEWAY

CLUSTER B THEME:  
'CULTURE OF THE HERITAGE AREA'

ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATURE PRESERVE GATEWAY

INTERPRETIVE SITES

CLUSTER D THEME:  
'LAND OF THE HERITAGE AREA'

PROPOSED GATEWAY



**Alternative 4: Cluster**

*Focus interpretation of the Heritage Area's history and culture at key locations that become the 'gateways' to understand the Heritage Area's 'themes,' or stories. The Cluster concept utilizes a series of areas (or clusters) to communicate the rich story of the Heritage Area. Each cluster serves as a gateway into the Heritage Area, thereby clearly and comprehensively representing a particular subject or theme. The intent of this concept is to educate the visitor on four major themes through experiences and interpretation at four key locations within the Heritage Area.*

Each cluster utilizes a gateway facility to provide interpretive information to engage the visitor. The clusters are connected to one another via a driving and walking tour via the existing and proposed multi-use trail system.

This concept provides four clusters that allow the visitor to 'customize' the experience and story based on interest, time or accessibility:

The gateway for *Cluster A: City of Lithonia* utilizes an existing building within the city limits, and highlights the relationship of *People of the Heritage Area*. Additional locations for interpretation within Lithonia could include historic structures, Main Street, churches, cemeteries, and the connection to the existing multi-use trail system.

The gateway for *Cluster B: The Davidson- Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve* highlights and interprets the stories of the *Culture of the Heritage Area*, utilizing the existing (and potentially expanded) Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include Vaughters' farm, the PATH trail system, Evans Mill, the surrounding cemeteries and churches, Native American sites and historic homesteads.

The gateway for *Cluster C: Panola Mountain State Conservation Park* utilizes the existing (and potentially

expanded) Panola Mountain Interpretive Center, and highlights the *Natural Systems of the Heritage Area*. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include future connections to South River via the PATH trail system and Native American sites.

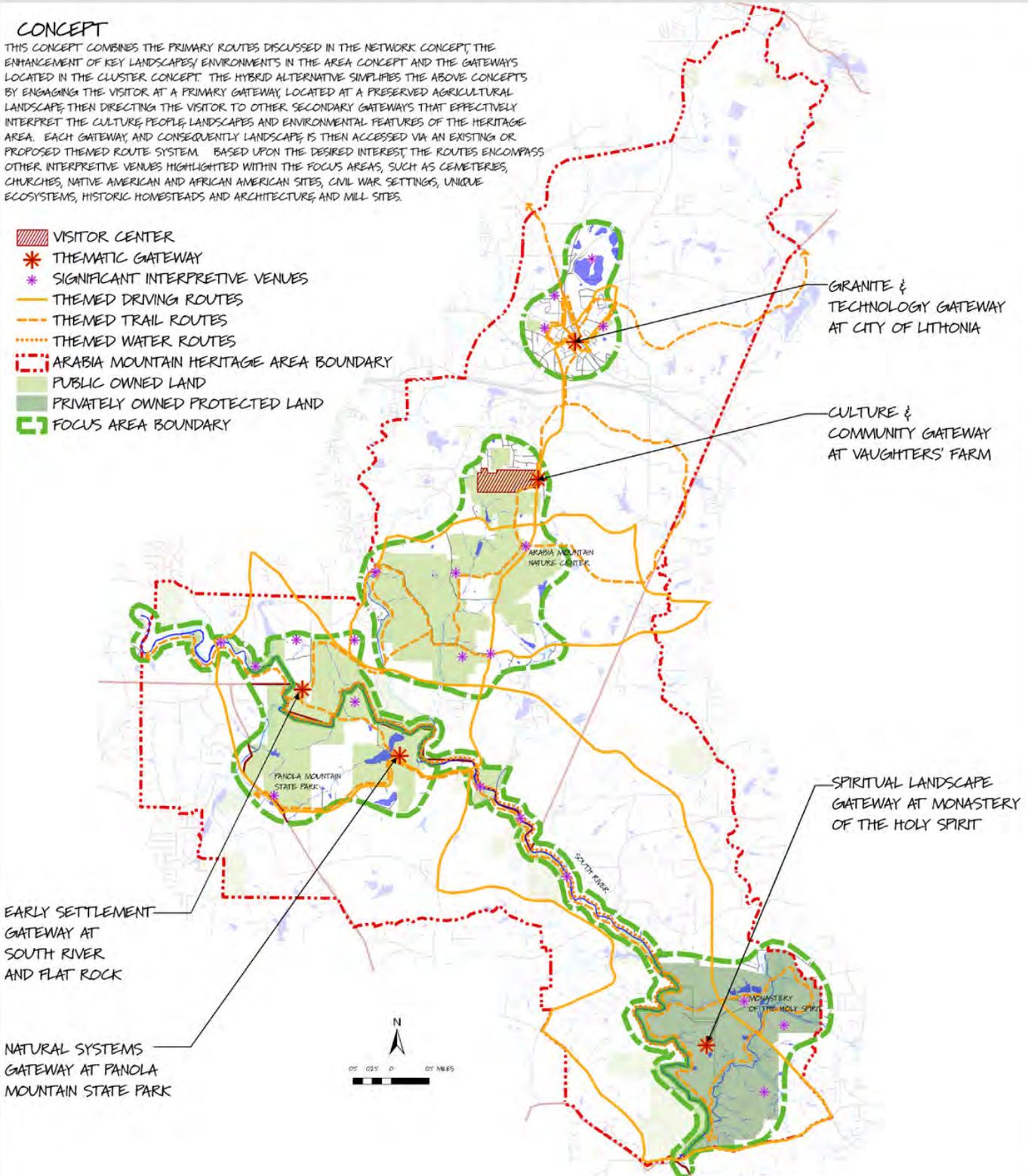
The gateway for *Cluster D: The Monastery of the Holy Spirit* interprets the stories of the *Land of the Heritage Area*, utilizing a proposed facility located adjacent to the South River. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include the Monastery grounds, future connections to South River via the PATH trail system and Native American and African American sites.

# PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE - 'HYBRID'

## CONCEPT

THIS CONCEPT COMBINES THE PRIMARY ROUTES DISCUSSED IN THE NETWORK CONCEPT, THE ENHANCEMENT OF KEY LANDSCAPES/ ENVIRONMENTS IN THE AREA CONCEPT AND THE GATEWAYS LOCATED IN THE CLUSTER CONCEPT. THE HYBRID ALTERNATIVE SIMPLIFIES THE ABOVE CONCEPTS BY ENGAGING THE VISITOR AT A PRIMARY GATEWAY, LOCATED AT A PRESERVED AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE, THEN DIRECTING THE VISITOR TO OTHER SECONDARY GATEWAYS THAT EFFECTIVELY INTERPRET THE CULTURE, PEOPLE, LANDSCAPES AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OF THE HERITAGE AREA. EACH GATEWAY, AND CONSEQUENTLY LANDSCAPE, IS THEN ACCESSED VIA AN EXISTING OR PROPOSED THEMED ROUTE SYSTEM. BASED UPON THE DESIRED INTEREST, THE ROUTES ENCOMPASS OTHER INTERPRETIVE VENUES HIGHLIGHTED WITHIN THE FOCUS AREAS, SUCH AS CEMETERIES, CHURCHES, NATIVE AMERICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN SITES, CIVIL WAR SETTINGS, UNIQUE ECOSYSTEMS, HISTORIC HOMESTEADS AND ARCHITECTURE, AND MILL SITES.

-  VISITOR CENTER
-  THEMATIC GATEWAY
-  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



**Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)**

*Combines characteristics of Alternatives 2,3, and 4, and defines a central visitor center. This alternative evolved during the planning process into the Preferred Alternative. This concept combines the primary routes discussed in the Network Concept (alternative 2), the enhancement of key landscapes/ environments in the Area Concept (alternative 3) and the gateways located in the Cluster Concept (alternative 4). The Hybrid alternative simplifies the above concepts by engaging the visitor at a primary gateway, located at a preserved agricultural landscape, and then directing the visitor to other secondary gateways (currently under non-profit or public ownership) located at themed focus areas that effectively interpret the culture, people, landscapes and environmental features of the Heritage Area.*

The proposed gateways are currently under different levels of protection from development, with a majority under public ownership. This alternative encourages visitors to experience the resources that make the Heritage Area what it is today.

The central visitor center, or primary gateway, located at Vaughters’ farm, provides an all-encompassing historic and cultural account of the Heritage Area. This visitor center is the central focus of interpretation, and provides educational opportunities, wildlife habitat protection, and historic architecture. Each gateway facility will highlight and interpret a theme of the Heritage Area, defined by the title of the focus area itself. Due to the fact that this gateway is located at an historic agricultural landscape, Culture is the highlighted theme at this focus area. This gateway is located along existing vehicular and pedestrian routes, and is centrally located within the Heritage Area, allowing the visitor to easily access the other four focus areas and gateways: Lithonia Woman’s Club (Granite Industry & Community Focus Area); Panola Mountain State Conservation Park (Natural Systems Focus Area); South River and Flat Rock Community (Early Settlement Focus Area); and Monastery of the Holy Spirit (Spiritual Landscapes Focus Area).

Each gateway, and consequently focus area, is then accessed via an existing or proposed driving,

vehicular or water route system. These routes are also themed based upon five distinct interpretive opportunities/ interests: the Land of Rocks and Rivers; Stonecutters; Early Settlers; Unique Natural Systems and Spiritual Experience. Based upon the desired interest, each route encompasses other interpretive venues, such as cemeteries; churches; Native American and African American sites; Civil War settings; unique ecosystems; historic homesteads and architecture and mill sites.

**2.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES**

In order to ensure the Preferred Plan addresses the purpose and need for the AMHA, the alternatives have been compared based upon the Heritage Area’s goals. The goals were established through initial planning efforts and steering committee and community meetings during the Management Planning Process. Refer to Section 1.5 Mission and Goals for a detailed description of the goals.

Table 1 briefly reviews the general concept of each alternative. Each alternative is examined and compared with other alternatives and to what degree each meets the Management Plan goals. The effectiveness to which each alternative meets the goals is illustrated using a point rating system. In the table, a rating of High (2 points) represents a very good effectiveness to which each alternative meets the goals is illustrated using a point rating system. In section 4 Environmental Consequences, the alternatives and their potential impacts are covered in detail.

**Table 1: Overview Comparison of Alternatives**  
 Source of Point Rating System: Cane River National Heritage Area Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

FACTOR	ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE 2: NETWORK	ALTERNATIVE 3: AREA	ALTERNATIVE 4: CLUSTER	ALTERNATIVE 5: HYBRID (PREFERRED)
General Concept	The continuation of the current operation of the heritage area by the Arabia Alliance.	Improve trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation that encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.	Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.	Focus interpretation of the area's history and culture at key locations that become the "gateways" to understand the Heritage Area's 'themes' and story.	Focus interpretation of the area's unique significance at a central visitor's center. Direct visitors to customize their experience to secondary landscapes and venues utilizing themed trails and byways.
Preservation	M Alliance would continue its fundraising, marketing and resource preservation efforts for the heritage area. Private property owners would continue to individually protect their property. There would exist a lack of assistance and project programming. Many key historic homes and unique landscapes are currently protected by public and private entities.	M Through interpretation along themed routes and at key venues, visitors and residents would be able to get out and experience the relevance and significance of preserving the area's resources. The network corridors, which cross all of the area's cultural landscapes and connect to many of the venues, would be preserved.	H Identifies cultural landscapes and differentiates areas of varying character and encourages local entities to preserve these settings. Preservation of key landscapes in the area is a focus of both management and educational experiences.	M Interpretive settings and venues would be preserved, however much of the preservation would rely on encouragement and coordination with City, County, and State entities as well as private land owners.	H The five focus areas encompass varying and unique cultural landscapes of the area and would provide for their enhancement and preservation. The interpretive components of gateways and themed routes also relieve the visitation pressure off of existing interpretive centers and preserved landscapes. The South River and trail corridors would also be preserved and conserved.

Education	<p>L Encouragement of others, especially School Board and existing Interpretive Venues to establish new facilities, innovative curriculums, and other educational opportunities to engage people in the AMHA.</p>	<p>M Interpretive signage would educate the visitor along the trail system. A driving tour distributed on a CD ROM would provide additional direction and information. Tours would be themed so visitors can customize their experience. The route system would also connect to schools and exiting interpretive facilities, allowing perception and knowledge to be experienced as one moves through the area.</p>	<p>M Brands and creates identity for different environments to educate the user on the complexities of the Area's landscapes. The visitor would learn the story of the Heritage Area by experiencing the uniquely different 'places' in the landscape.</p>	<p>M The intent is to educate visitors on four major themes of the Area through experiences and interpretation at four key gateways within the Heritage Area. Each gateway can direct visitors to other interpretive venues within the Clusters. Visitors can customize their learning experience based upon interest, time, and accessibility.</p>	<p>H Visitors are introduced to the heritage area at the visitor center, and are then directed to four other distinct gateways to learn about particular aspects of the area that matches their interests. These gateways occur in distinct environments with signage, educational opportunities, and hands-on activities. An all encompassing historical and cultural account of the area would be provided. The themed route system would offer further educational opportunities and direct visitors to other key interpretive venues and cultural landscapes.</p>
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Economic Development	<p>L</p> <p>The Alliance would have a minor impact on improving the current experience of the visitor to the area. Marketing of the area would be limited due to lack of funding and staff. Venues managed by different entities would pursue different goals. There would exist a lack of unity, priorities and overall identity.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>The Alliance would provide assistance to local entities to extend and complete trails and byways, to provide interpretation en route, to enhance venues on the network, and to develop recreational and educational linkages that build on the network. Economic benefits would stem from recreational and educational opportunities along scenic byways and multi-use trail network.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>Local, County, and State entities would take leadership in landscape preservation, while the Alliance would provide assistance in interpreting these landscapes in a consistent way, reinforcing the sense of identity of the Heritage Area. Guidelines and examples of best practices for each key landscape would be developed. Provisions for technical and financial assistance would be made to local entities to encourage definition and protection of landscape qualities.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>Each interpretive gateway would be the responsibility of a single entity – City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, State DNR, etc. The Alliance would provide financial and technical assistance to these entities and would assist in maintaining linkages between them.</p>	<p>H</p> <p>Each of the five interpretive gateways would be the responsibility of a single entity – City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, State DNR, and Monastery of the Holy Spirit. The Alliance would provide financial and technical assistance to local entities to extend the trails and byways, to provide interpretation en route, enhance venues on the network, and develop recreational and educational linkages.</p>
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Conservation	<p>M Protection and restoration of natural resources would rely on individual public and private entities. Many key historic homes and unique landscapes are currently protected by public and private entities.</p>	<p>M The network would provide an engaging and informative way for visitors and residents to explore and learn about the Area's finite resources. The creation of the network corridor would provide protection to key habitats. The route system would direct and link visitors to unique ecosystems and to new and existing protected land.</p>	<p>H Cultural landscapes would be conserved to convey the dynamic relationship between the culture, history, and landscape of this unique and diverse place.</p>	<p>M Natural, cultural, and historical resource conservation effort would occur within the four clusters and along roadway and trail connections. Much of the conservation would rely on encouragement and coordination with city, county, and state entities as well as private land owners.</p>	<p>H The five focus areas encompass varying and unique cultural landscapes of the area and would provide for their enhancement and preservation. The themed gateways would support a mix of educational opportunities and conservation practices. The South River and trail corridors would also be preserved and conserved.</p>
Recreation	<p>L Alliance would continue its efforts in promoting greenspace protection, but would rely on others to properly plan for and provide both passive and active recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>H The creation of the routes and greenways would create additional protected land and would connect existing greenspace. Additional trailhead facilities and the multi-use trail would provide a place for walkers, runners, bikers, and skaters to recreate and learn.</p>	<p>M The existing and future trails system and roadways would be utilized to connect visitors to the key landscapes of the area. By characterizing the different landscapes, locations for passive and active recreation would be more easily identified and planned.</p>	<p>M Interpretive clusters would be connected by driving tour and walking tour via multi-use trail system. Recreation opportunities would be provided at the gateways via interpretive trails and throughout the area at existing and expanding greenspace with the coordination of local entities.</p>	<p>H The themed walking, driving, and water routes will allow residents and visitors to 'get out and experience' the Area based upon their interests. The three prong route system will provide a 'layering' approach for visitors of all ages to learn about the Area's key features. The routes would also provide a means of connection to greenspace and other recreational opportunities.</p>

<p>Interpretation</p>	<p>L Encouragement of others to interpret the diversity and culture of the area. For example, support others to locate interpretive signage along the existing trail system.</p>	<p>M Strengthen the existing trail and roadway network; build new trails; develop 'hands-on' interpretive experiences along these routes; provide driving and walking tours; provide interpretation along key routes; strengthen interpretation at key venues along routes; customize routes for specific interests; define streetscape standards for key roadways and provide incentives to implement.</p>	<p>M Define the key landscapes – natural, historical, extractive – and the character-defining values of each. Encourage public and private entities by providing technical and financial assistance to them to maintain, enhance, and preserve these landscapes. Develop interpretation at each landscape, using the environmental character and "sense of place" within each to communicate the history and significance of the Heritage Area.</p>	<p>M Select a small number of key sites that best tell the story of the Heritage Area. Create interpretive exhibits and activities at each venue that focus on a specific theme and/or story and also provide an overview of the Heritage Area. Develop self-guided tour routes to connect the venues to one another.</p>	<p>H Initiate interpretation of the area's history and culture at a central visitor's center. This center would be located in the heart of the area and act as the primary gateway into the Heritage Area. Themed walking, driving, and water routes engage visitors to experience all five focus areas with corresponding gateways and associated venues and sites. Themed routes and interpretive gateways will each tell a piece of the Heritage Area's story.</p>	<p>2 7 8 6 12</p>
<p>Total Points (High = 2 points, Medium = 1 point, Low = 0 point)</p>						

## 2.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is the one concept that will promote the national environmental policy as detailed in the National Environmental Policy Act (Section 101 (b)). The following Table 2 compares the ability of each alternative to meet the six NEPA requirements. In the table, a rating of High (2 points) represents a very good potential to meet the requirements versus a rating of Low (0 points) representing a poor potential.

By preserving five different and distinct landscapes,

utilizing gateway facilities to interpret the Heritage Area’s significance, and incorporating other significant venues via a themed network of driving, walking, and water routes, the Alternative 5: Hybrid is the environmentally preferred alternative.

Alternative 5: Hybrid most effectively meets the NEPA requirements. The ability of this alternative to also address the issues associated with the natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources is demonstrated in Table 3 Summary of Indirect and Direct Impacts of Alternatives and in Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences.

**Table 2: Comparison of Alternatives to NEPA (Section 101 (b)) Requirements**  
Source of Point Rating System: Cane River National Heritage Area Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

National Environmental Policy Act (Section 101 (b)) Requirements	ALTERNATIVES				
	1	2	3	4	5
Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.	M	H	H	H	H
Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.	L	M	H	M	H
Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.	L	M	M	M	H
Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.	M	M	H	M	H
Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities.	L	H	M	H	H
Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.	L	M	H	M	H
Total Points (High = 2 points, Medium = 1 point, Low = 0 point)	2	8	10	8	12

## 2.5 SUMMARY OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS FOR ALTERNATIVES

Table 3 provides a Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts for Alternatives. Refer to Section 1.8

Scoping and Issues for an explanation of issues for each impact topic and the measurement methodology used. Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences explains the direct and indirect impacts in more detail and provides Cumulative Impacts.

Table 3: Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts for Alternatives

IMPACT TOPIC	ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE 2: NETWORK	ALTERNATIVE 3: AREA	ALTERNATIVE 4: CLUSTER	ALTERNATIVE 5: HYBRID (PREFERRED)
NATURAL RESOURCES					
Topographic and Geological Features	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to development pressures on non-renewable resource	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness and the directing of visitor traffic	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to creating buffers, protecting granite formations, preserving geological ecosystems, and educating visitors on history and use of granite	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increasing visitor knowledge and awareness of resource sensitivity	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increasing public awareness, directing visitor traffic, and relieving pressures of increased visitation on granite formations
Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality	<i>Moderate, Short and Long-Term Adverse Impact</i> due to continued increase in development and resulting water pollutants	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness and visitor observation of the impacts of water pollution	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to buffering, enhancing, and preserving riparian corridors and visitor awareness of historical and environmental significance	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educating and demonstrating to visitors stream and wetland restoration and enhancement	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to restoring, preserving, and buffering of riparian corridors and increased visitor knowledge and awareness of hydrologic systems
Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species	<i>Moderate, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to relocation and removal of vegetation and increase in exotic species from the expansion of development and infrastructure	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educating visitors and controlling foot traffic to protect vegetation communities	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to preservation, protection, and enhancement of diversified ecosystems	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness through education, interpretation, and observation of vegetation communities	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to controlling foot traffic, educating visitors, relieving visitation pressures on sensitive ecosystems, and enhancing key ecosystems
Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species	<i>Moderate, Short and Long-Term Adverse Impact</i> due to increased development that could destroy and inhibit wildlife habitats and water resources	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educating visitors and directing foot traffic to protect wildlife habitats and resources	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to maintaining, buffering, revitalizing, protecting, and creating wildlife habitats and resources	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness through education, interpretation, and hands on demonstrations	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to controlling visitor impact, relieving visitation pressures on sensitive habitats, educating visitors, and enhancing and protecting wildlife resources

Air Quality	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to continued development and growth and lack of initiative for alternative transportation	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to providing alternative means of transportation	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to encouraging use of multi-use trail and preserving landscapes that assist in filtering pollutants	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to encouraging use of multi-use trail and clustering uses limiting the need to drive	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to providing and encouraging use of alternative transportation that links key resources
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>					
Archaeological Resources	<i>Major, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to increased development and lack of initiative for intensive archaeological surveys could cause loss of non-renewable resource	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to interpretation and education on known and potential resources	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to interpretation and preservation of known and high potential sites with resources	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to public awareness through interpretation and education on past generations and cultures	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to a layering approach for education, preservation, and appreciation of key resources and their known and potential locations
Cultural and Historical Resources	<i>Major, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to increased development and lack of programming to protect resources	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educational programs on preservation and highlighting resources	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to interpretive programs and conservation of historic and cultural landscapes	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to preservation programs and protecting and restoring historic character	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to combined effort of landscape preservation, historic structure and site conservation, and interpretation for visitors
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS</b>					
Recreation/Open Space Resources	<i>Negligible, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to recreational opportunities neither encouraged or discouraged and relying on outside interests to expand recreation and open space	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of existing multi-use trail and greenway system	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to connectivity of multi-use trail system to landscapes that provide recreational opportunities	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to connectivity of multi-use trail system and recreational opportunities at gateways	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of existing multi-use trail, greenspace connectivity, and promotion of river and wildlife recreational opportunities

Regional Growth and Land Use Pressures	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to continued development and growth and lack of sustainable practices	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to providing alternative transportation and expanding greenway corridors	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to reuse of existing structures, connectivity of trail system, and buffering and preserving key landscapes	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of visitor facilities, reuse of existing structures, and connectivity of trail system	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of visitor facilities, reuse of existing structures, and providing alternative transportation, and expanding greenway corridors
Tourism	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to lack of marketing and tourism program	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to engaging visitors along trail and driving tour	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to visitor experience and education of diversified landscapes	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to engaging visitors in educational and hands on activities at gateways	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of visitor facilities, providing central visitor center, and providing connectivity and tours through driving and walking routes

### 3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area encompasses parts of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry County in north-central Georgia and lies within the fast growing Atlanta region. The approximately 40,000 acre area includes the City of Lithonia or “Place of Rock” and the smaller communities of Flat Rock, Rock Chapel, and Klondike. The Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park with their unique granite formations, along with portions of the South River and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit are also important parts of the Heritage Area. The Heritage Area has close proximity to the east to Historic Conyers, to the west to Soapstone Ridge Historic District and downtown Atlanta, and to the north to Stone Mountain Park.

The resource information below includes and expands upon the preliminary work of the *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. Many resources were used as detailed in the reference section of this plan. The community and Steering Committee provided valuable insight into the Heritage Area’s resources.

### 3.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

#### 3.1.1 Topographic and Geological Features

Geographic and geologic features of the land are important, character-defining elements and lie at the heart of the culture, people, and landscape of the Heritage Area. The Heritage Area is defined by a landscape of rolling hills and ridges cut by numerous streams. These streams merge to form larger waterways including the South and Yellow Rivers. Most of the landforms in the region relate to underlying bedrock of granite and metamorphic rocks and are part of Georgia’s Piedmont Plateau.

The geology of the Heritage Area involves several forms of granite, granite gneisses, and schists. Some of these rocks are exposed monadnocks and rock outcrops of which the best examples in

Georgia are Arabia Mountain, Panola Mountain, and north of the area Stone Mountain. These unique granite outcroppings represent three of the state’s largest exposed granite occurrences. Nationally, the occurrence of these specific types of granite outcroppings are very rare and do not happen anywhere outside the Piedmont Region. Within the Piedmont Region, these outcroppings only occur in a small percentage of the geological types and within those only a very small percentage of the coverage is actual exposed granite. Granite in this region is younger than granite found in other regions of the country, formed several hundreds of million years ago. Arabia Mountain is the oldest of the three outcroppings at an estimated 475 million years. Its uniqueness also lies in its structural make-up and density due to the mild climactic conditions in Georgia. In addition to the rock outcrops and monadnocks, rock formations can also be observed in the waterways of the Heritage Area. Albert Shoals in the South River and Evans Mill Shoals in Pole Bridge Creek are just two examples of how the rock formations in riparian ways not only create beautiful vistas, but assist in flow turbulence and streambed and bank stability.

Historically, the granite in this Heritage Area has been quarried and utilized around the nation. It has been utilized for its density and high performance in curbing. The stone has also been used in many of the nation’s important buildings including the military service academies at West Point and Annapolis, and reputedly the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. The Lithonia area continues to be a major source of granite for the metropolitan area. The Rock Chapel, Pine Mountain, and Big Ledge quarries are still in active use. Stone Mountain and Arabia Mountain were early quarry locations, but these sites have been protected by state and county ownership since 1959 and 1973, respectively. Panola Mountain has been protected by state ownership since 1969.

The uneven nature of the outcroppings combined with erosion creates dips and pools that collect rainwater. These are called vernal pools and are home to several types of federally listed rare,

threatened and endangered plant species. Big boulders and pieces broken off from the striation in the granite are part of this landscape. This type of rock outcrop is valued by The Nature Conservancy which has already protected two other outcrops in Georgia; Heggie's Rock, near Augusta, and Camp Meeting Rock, near Carrolton. Both of these outcrops are in rural areas, unlike the Arabia Mountain site, which lies in an area that is under pressure of urban growth and in need of protection. The Arabia Mountain site has been rated by the staff biologist for The Nature Conservancy as one of the top twenty sites in the world for this ecosystem. Refer to Appendix A, Landform Inventory map for locations of topographic and geological features.

### **3.1.2 Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality**

The riparian systems within the Heritage Area are important for greenway and recreation opportunities, cultural and historical resources due to early settlements, wildlife corridors and habitat, and natural resources. According to the National Wetland Inventory, approximately 5.7% of the Heritage Area is emergent, scrub/shrub, and forested wetlands. Wetlands are largely restricted to the bottomland forests of the South and Yellow Rivers and their major tributaries. These are relatively undisturbed areas of forested wetland or scrub-shrub wetland. The abundant stream and river corridor wetlands perform the important ecological functions of flood control, water purification, ground water recharge, and providing wildlife habitat. These functions become increasingly important and valuable as the Heritage Area experiences rapidly increasing rates of development.

The main sub-watersheds of the Heritage Area are the Upper South River and Middle Yellow River, which are part of the Upper Ocmulgee River Basin. Only a small portion of the Heritage Area lies in the Upper Yellow River and the Indian Creek sub-watershed. The divide between the South and Yellow Rivers runs along Stone Mountain Lithonia Road and cuts through the city of Lithonia. Land

use within the sub-watersheds is predominately low and medium density residential and forested/open space, with commercial and industrial areas focused more closely to Lithonia and Interstate 20. The headwaters of the South River do originate in the more densely populated area of metro Atlanta. Development within the South River Watershed is especially on the rise and increases the need to protect the riparian systems and their natural filtration processes.

Water quality in the area has greatly improved since the 1980s; however, most of the waterways do not meet or only partially meet the EPD designation of 'Fishing'. The main point and non-point sources of water pollution in the area are due to urbanization and development, water pollution control plants, combined sewer overflow, poor erosion and sediment control, and urban runoff. There are currently three wastewater pollution control plants along the full length of the South River and two will expand and upgrade if population demand requires. The Pole Bridge Wastewater Pollution Control Plant is located in the Heritage Area. The DeKalb County Water & Sewer Division has produced a South River Watershed Assessment and Management Plan that examines the watershed and makes recommendations for pollution control, restoration, monitoring, implementation, and funding. Federal, especially the AmeriCorps, state, and local agencies have shown support for improving the South River Watershed. In addition, the South River Watershed Alliance has been established and their "mission is to protect and restore the water quality and biodiversity of this watershed to the beneficial use of humans and wildlife". The three counties that encompass the Heritage Area are supporters of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Clean Water Campaign to increase public awareness and education.

The South River is the most significant water feature in the Heritage Area and is the third largest river in the Atlanta Region. The river drains into Jackson Lake located in Newton, Butts, and Jasper Counties and is a major surface water recharge source. The existence of parks and other publicly owned land along the river offers the potential for a

greenway corridor and connecting trails. Panola Mountain State Conservation Park abuts the river on its northern boundary and granite formations create Panola Shoals. Further downstream, at the Everett property, Albert Shoals fall 25 feet in a distance of 300 feet. The northern boundary of South Rockdale Community Park fronts the river and Miners Creek Preserve is on the river. Early mills, farms, plantations, and Native American archeological sites exist all along the South River. The Yellow River has also been significant in the history of both Native American and European settlement of the Heritage Area. Regional historical documents indicate that original settlers farmed, built mills, and traded with Native Americans along the Yellow River near Rock Chapel. A tributary to the South River, Pole Bridge Creek houses the historic Evans Mill and beautiful cascading rock shoals. Other significant tributaries include Stephenson Creek, which originates in the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Honey Creek that forms the eastern boundary of the Heritage Area. The 6 acre Arabia Lake located in the northwest corner of the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve also has an interesting history. The lake once supplied all of the quarries at Arabia with water, which was piped to an air compressor near the Nature Center building. During the Davidson Granite Companies ownership of the lake, Georgia Tech leased the water body to conduct demolition test for research purposes in conjunction with the Department of Defense. Now the lake supports a variety of flora and fauna. The environment has an amazing way of recovering, but we have to remember that water is a finite resource and needs protection. Refer to Appendix A, Hydrology Inventory map.

### **3.1.3 Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species**

Within the AMHA are a wide variety of land cover types. Developed urban and suburban areas are dominating the northern portion of the Heritage Area (north of Interstate 20) centered around the City of Lithonia. The dominant land cover in this

area is high density to low density residential and commercial development. While historic resources are numerous in these areas of long use and development, natural resources are limited to isolated open space and narrow undeveloped riparian corridors associated with the Yellow River, Swift Creek, and Pine Mountain Creek. Upland open space is generally mixed pine hardwood stands while bottomland hardwood forests or mixed hardwood-pine forest dominate the undeveloped stream corridors.

South of Interstate 20 the Heritage Area is significantly less developed. High-density residential and commercial development is much less common south of Interstate 20. The dominant land cover is mixed pine-hardwood forest, pine forest and mixed hardwood-pine forest. Large undeveloped tracts of both public and private land are common in this portion of the Heritage Area. Residential development is primarily low-density single-family houses while commercial development is very limited. A significant portion of the Heritage Area is in pasture, hay field or old-field.

Much of the Heritage Area is in high quality natural vegetation. The dominant habitat types are the upland mixed pine-hardwood forest, upland hardwood forest with scattered pines and the bottomland hardwood forest. The larger areas of intact natural vegetation support the greatest diversity of wildlife species. The riparian bottomland forests provide travel and migration corridors for many species of wildlife. Old-fields, pastures and hayfields are common and scattered throughout the Heritage Area. These habitat types contribute to the overall diversity of plant and animal species of the Heritage Area and are important reminders of humans current and past land-use in the Heritage Area.

The granite outcrops, fields, forests, wetlands, and waterways/bodies in the Heritage Area host a diverse selection of trees, shrubs, mosses, lichens, and flowers that can be enjoyed year round. Some of the flora includes Sunbells, Sparkleberry, Yellow Daisy, Fringtree, Georgia Oak, and brilliant

red *Diamorpha*. Within the Heritage Area there are several species of flora endemic to granite outcrops as well as those that are limited to the wetlands ecosystem and the unique habitats found at Arabia and Panola Mountains. These species have adapted to the unique habitat conditions of these granite outcrops and are in need of protection. Many of the species are very fragile, especially when dry, and are susceptible to foot damage. Several species of flora in the Heritage Area already appear on the State and Federal Lists of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species.

At least 23 species of rare plants likely occur in the Heritage Area. This includes 8 species that are state protected and two species that are federally protected. The two federally protected species are little amphianthus (*Amphianthus pusillus*) and black-spored quillwort (*Isoetes melanospora*). Both of these species are found in shallow water-filled depressions on exposed granite outcrops. These outcrops are extremely important habitats for the diversity of rare plants and animals associated with these outcrops. The permanent protection of these fragile habitats is crucial to the long-term protection of these rare species. Refer to Appendix A, Rare Species and Natural Communities Inventory map. Appendix B contains a list of Flora Species for Arabia Mountain and Panola Mountain and contains a list of rare flora species within the tri-county area. Also contained in Appendix B is a list of protected plant species known to occur or potentially occur in the AMHA and rare species (but not protected) with known occurrences in the AMHA.

The South River Corridor and other riparian ways host an array of mixed pine, hardwood, and bottomland species. Appendix B contains a large list of major vines, shrubs, and trees found in the South River Corridor. Wildflowers are also a common sight to the Heritage Area. Spiderwort and pokeweed are examples of wildflowers found in forested areas, while daylilies, goldenrod, and Queen Anne's lace can be found at the forest edge and in fields. In some areas the invasion of exotic species is an issue and greatly inhibits the survival of native species. The primary invasive species are privet,

Japanese honeysuckle, and kudzu.

### 3.1.4 Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species

The diversity of habitats found throughout the Heritage Area allows a wide variety of wildlife to thrive. White tailed deer can be seen crossing rock outcrops, while frogs and salamanders survive and lay eggs in the vernal pools and ponds. The wooded Piedmont area surrounding the rock outcrops provides for water, shade, and shelter for a variety of insects and animals. It takes a tough species to survive the conditions on the outcrops. The 140 degree heat and drought in the summer and the flooding and freezing in the winter would drive many animals away, but these conditions provide a satisfying habitat for others. The Pileated woodpecker, the largest woodpecker in North America is one species that does well on the outcrops. Due to shallow soil depths, drought, and extreme temperatures, pine trees frequently die before their time. Insects move in immediately to feast on the dead and dying wood, providing a smorgasbord for many types of insect eating birds. Cavity-nesting birds also take advantage of holes in the pine trees for nesting and raising young. In addition to woodpeckers, bluebirds, goldfinches, nuthatches, owls and more utilize this habitat.

Some other fauna species in the Heritage Area include bobcats, coyotes, the common nighthawk, Chuck-will's-widow, beavers, lichen grasshoppers, butterflies, and dragonflies. An array of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds utilize the habitat of the riparian corridors, especially the South and Yellow River. The fish habitat in the South River consists mainly of shifting sand and rock shoals that most commonly support bream, bass, and minnows.

**Terrestrial Wildlife:** The relatively undeveloped condition of the Heritage Area and the diversity of habitat types support a wide variety of terrestrial wildlife. Over 150 species of birds, 49 species of reptiles, 40 species of mammals and 32 species of amphibians have ranges that include the Heritage

Area. Most all of these species are likely found on the Heritage Area at some time during the year. The common terrestrial wildlife most often seen in the Heritage Area includes: white-tailed deer, red fox, coyote, raccoon, cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, striped skunk, several species of bats, beaver, opossum, chipmunk, many species of perching birds, ducks, Canada goose, herons, barred owl, hawks, and many species of turtles, snakes, frogs and salamanders.

White-tailed deer are common throughout the Heritage Area. While the deer population has remained fairly stable in recent years, conflicts with humans have increased due to the increasing human population in the Heritage Area. As conflicts increase, there will likely be increasing pressure from the public to control the size of the deer population. A number of options are available to control the size of the deer herd in the Heritage Area, but all of the options are very controversial and expensive. Additionally, the success in reducing deer numbers through active management practices is usually very limited.

As many as 30 rare species could be found on the Heritage Area. This includes 5 state protected birds, two of which are federally protected (bald eagle and Bachman's warbler); and two state protected mammals, of which one is federally protected (Indiana bat).

**Fisheries:** The South River, Yellow River and the many streams within the Heritage Area are home to a relatively diverse and healthy fish population. Over 60 species of fish are likely found in the rivers and streams of the Heritage Area. Six of these species are rare enough that information on the occurrence and status of these species is gathered by natural resource agencies. The goldstripe darter is a state-protected species whose range includes the Heritage Area. While this species has not been collected from the streams of the Heritage Area in recent years, it is believed the higher quality streams in the area may still harbor this species. Fish

common in the streams of the Heritage Area are redbreast sunfish, spotted sunfish, bluegill, bluehead chub, yellowfin shiner, creek chub, striped jumprock, bullhead, largescale stoneroller, speckled madtom, and silverjaw shiner. The most significant threat to the aquatic fauna of these streams is siltation caused by sediment laden stormwater runoff from construction sites.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources provides recommendations on fish consumption based upon fish species and any restrictions in the area are due primarily to PCBs and chlordane. Most of the waterways in the area do not meet or only partially meet their EPD designation of 'Fishing'. The main reasons for water pollution and the destruction of wildlife habitat in the area are due to urbanization and development, water pollution control plants, combined sewer overflow, poor erosion and sediment control, and urban runoff.

In late 2004, the Heritage Area witnessed the ground breaking for the new facilities for the Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (A.W.A.R.E.). A.W.A.R.E. is a non-profit animal rescue and rehabilitation center that is "committed to the preservation and restoration of wildlife and its habitat through education and wildlife rehabilitation". Appendix C contains a list of Vertebrate Wildlife whose range includes the AMHA and a list of Protected animal species known to occur or potentially occurring in the AMHA.

### 3.1.5 Air Quality

The Heritage Area has close proximity to downtown Atlanta and is considered part of the metro area. Ground level ozone and particulate matter, which can cause serious health and environmental problems, are the air pollutants of most concern for metropolitan Atlanta. These pollutants are two of the six air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act and the EPA. According to established standards, thirteen counties in the Atlanta region are currently designated as a nonattainment area for one-hour

ozone standard and of course will still be in nonattainment when the revised 8-hour ozone standard goes into effect. The three counties that encompass the Heritage Area, DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry fall within the Atlanta nonattainment area. When the new 2.5 particulate matter designations occur in late 2004 or early 2005, the Atlanta Regional Commission reports that Atlanta will be in nonattainment. Although the particulate matter nonattainment boundary has not been determined, the Georgia EPD recommended boundary would include the Heritage Area.

The variety of sources for ground level ozone and particulate matter include increase in automobiles, heavy diesel engines, power plants, industrial processes, natural processes, and wood burning stoves. Although the population of the Atlanta Region has continued to grow, the air quality has been improving. According to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) factors that will help to improve air quality will be increased use of alternate transportation, planning that links transportation with land uses, and increasing efficiency of existing transportation and land use infrastructure. While the Georgia EPD continues

to monitor progress, the GRTA is working on establishing measures and targets to combat air pollution. National and State Regulated controls are already in place to improve the air quality.

### 3.2 Cultural Resources

#### 3.2.1 Archeological Resources

##### Archeological Overview

Archeologists divide the prehistory of Lower Piedmont province, within which Arabia Mountain is located, into four major time periods, Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian. These are further broken down into subperiods based on changes in arrowhead types, ceramic types, settlement patterns and other technological changes evident in the archaeological record. There are a total of 78 prehistoric sites in the Heritage Area, of which 40 have identifiable components, and 46 sites with historic components. This table gives the names of the prehistoric periods and subperiods, their time spans, and the components or cultural complexes that correspond to them.

**Table 4: Archeological Periods, Dates, and Components**

Period	Date	Components
Paleoindian	12,000-8,000B.C.	Clovis, Dalton
Early Archaic	8,000-6,000 B.C.	Palmer, Kirk
Middle Archaic	6,000-3,500 B.C.	Stanly, Morrow Mtn., Guilford
Late Archaic	3,500-1,000 B.C.	Savannah River, Otarre
Early Woodland	1,000-100 B.C.	Kellogg
Middle Woodland	100 B.C.-A.D. 500	Cartersville
Late Woodland	A.D. 500-900	Swift Creek
Early Mississippian	A.D. 900-1,200	Woodstock, Averett, Macon Plateau, Etowah
Middle Mississippian	A.D. 1,200-1,300	Savannah
Late Mississippian	A.D. 1350-1550	Lamar

The earliest prehistoric period of Georgia is the Paleoindian. However, no sites dating to this time period are currently known in the Heritage Area. This time period is associated with fluted arrowheads or projectile points, called Clovis points. Paleoindians

focused their settlement strategy on base camps situated in ridge top barrens and in proximity to bottomland swamps and prairies, depending in part on hunting Pleistocene megafauna such as mammoth.

The 19 Archaic Period occupations in the area can be divided into three sub-periods. The Early Archaic appears to be a modification of the preceding Paleoindian Period with a shift to the hunting of more modern large game. The social organization at this level is probably best defined as egalitarian bands who hunted and gathered seasonally available resources within limited geographic areas.

The Middle Archaic Period is differentiated from the Early Archaic by ground stone tools, and by a change in projectile point types, usually made of quartzite. Economic organization probably changed very little from the small hunting bands thought to characterize the Early Archaic and Paleoindian Periods.

The Late Archaic Period saw the transition from a pre-ceramic, hunting-gathering culture to a society whose people produced fiber-tempered ceramics and used horticulture on a limited basis as an addition to their hunting and gathering subsistence strategies. Information concerning the social organization of these people remains largely unknown. However, it is generally believed they lived in small bands within limited geographical areas. This was also the period when soapstone was quarried in nearby Soapstone Ridge and used for cooking stones, later for cooking bowls, and for other items.

The transition from Archaic to Woodland culture in the region is marked by the appearance of sand and grit tempered ceramics, sedentism, and horticulture, while the use of soapstone cooking pots died out. The period as a whole is characterized by increased social complexity, ceremonial activities and a diversified subsistence pattern that relied on small game animals, aquatic life and horticultural products. Diagnostic artifacts include ceramic types, which have a much more localized focus. The 30 sites with occupations in the Woodland Period can be divided into three sub-periods based on ceramic and point types and on the presence or absence of burial mounds.

The Early Woodland Period in North Georgia is not well documented; however, there is growing evidence

that suggests the people of the Early Woodland were less dependent upon agricultural goods than previously thought. These people lived in villages, which were located in floodplains along creeks and streams. In addition to ceramics, other artifacts include grinding stones, perhaps indicative of plant domestication. These people continued to rely on hunting, but at the same time, supplemented their diet by the exploitation of wild plants.

Hunting and gathering still played an important role in the daily economy of Middle Woodland groups, although the presence of large village sites along major rivers and streams suggests an increasing reliance on domesticated plants. During this period the first burial mounds were constructed in North Georgia, indicating increased social complexity and sedentism. The Miners Creek site along the South River, the only intensively studied site in the Heritage Area, belongs to this sub--period.

Evidence suggests that Late Woodland peoples continued to rely heavily on domesticated plants as a subsistence base. This sub period is viewed as the transitional period from a semi-agricultural to a fully-agricultural subsistence base which marks the beginning of the Mississippian Period.

The Mississippian Period is marked by the presence of temple mounds rather than burial mounds and by an agriculturally-based subsistence economy. Mounds are usually located adjacent to or in large stream floodplains and were probably parts of larger villages or towns. Maize and probably other crops were grown by Mississippian people, although hunting and gathering were still part of their economy. One of the major Mississippian sites in North Georgia is the Etowah Mound complex in Cartersville. Cultural markers of this period include stockaded villages, a hierarchical social system, temple mounds, maize agriculture, and a variety of new ceramic and projectile point types. The Late Mississippian culture ended with the appearance of European explorers. Five sites from the Mississippian Period have been recorded for the Heritage Area, but none have mounds.

The Protohistoric Period in Georgia begins with the explorations of three Spaniards, de Soto, de Luna, and Pardo, in the mid-sixteenth century. Hernando de Soto was the only one to visit the Piedmont. De Soto's mission was to find and obtain wealth, especially precious metals. Archeological evidence suggests he may have visited several sites in North Georgia, such as Bullard's Landing, Cowart's Landing, the Lamar site, the Shinholser site, the Shoulderbone site, and the Dyar site, before he left Georgia for South Carolina. He returned to Georgia in the summer of the same year, 1540, and is believed to have visited the province of Coosa in the area now known as the Little Egypt site. He moved on to Itaba, thought to be the Etowah site, and visited the province of Ulibahali near what is now Rome, Georgia, before traveling to Alabama. So far there is no evidence that de Soto or the other early explorers visited the Heritage Area.

There is archeological evidence for the historic occupation of the area from the early nineteenth century until the present. Such historic period sites include farmsteads with their houses, outbuildings, associated activity areas, and slave quarters; granite mining sites in and around Lithonia and Arabia Mountain; town lots in Lithonia; unmarked and marked cemeteries; and industrial and commercial sites, to name a few. Such sites can offer much historical information on the daily lives of people who otherwise left no mark in the historic record, but nevertheless made up the majority of the population. Understanding the undocumented daily lives of these people, prehistoric and historic, should be a goal of the archaeological research in the Heritage Area.

### **Current Research in the Heritage Area**

Two preliminary tasks have been completed for the Heritage Area, archaeological background research and a geographic information system (GIS) to help manage the cultural resources within the Heritage Area. The background research included a search for historic maps, historic structures and archaeological sites at the Georgia State Archives and History where their map collection was examined for relevant items; collection of historic soil maps and early county highway maps from the historic map collection at the Science Library of the University of Georgia;

examination of the state archaeological site files at the State Historic Preservation Office and University of Georgia where copies were made of the relevant site forms and cultural resource reports; and examination of the archives at the DeKalb Historical Society. Finally, a day was spent talking to local residents who were invited to share their information with project archaeologists and historians, and who volunteered family photographs and their own knowledge of sites located throughout the Heritage Area.

Geographic data were collected within a rectangle in UTM Zone 16 South bounded by Northings 3715000 and 3743000 and Eastings 758000 and 776000 to insure that data would be collected for the current and any future expansions in the proposed Heritage Area limits. A bibliography that includes all known reports within and adjacent to the proposed Heritage Area was also completed.

The Heritage Area contains 101 previously recorded archaeological sites and 12 sites noted during oral history interviews with residents for a total of 113 sites currently known in the Heritage Area. There were 85 sites in DeKalb County, 24 in Rockdale County, and two each in Gwinnett and Henry Counties. Since very little intensive archaeological survey has been conducted in the Heritage Area and it contains a major river and various third and fourth rank streams, there is a high likelihood that the total number of sites is many times that known today.

In order to keep from having to survey the entire 40,000 acre (approx.) Heritage Area, a prohibitively expensive exercise, a site probability model was developed. It was felt that the area requiring intensive survey could be cut to perhaps a third of the entire Heritage Area which would significantly reduce costs, while at the same time meet obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Using the information collected from professional surveys in and near the Heritage Area, as well as all National Register eligible sites found within the Lower Piedmont geophysical province, two models of site probability were developed, one for prehistoric sites, based primarily on slope and hydrography; and one for historic sites, based primarily on slope and historic road locations. These models are represented by layers in the GIS and will be refined as more information on site occurrence in the Heritage Area is obtained.

The models do not account for the abnormal, non-habitation site. Such sites can be located in nearly any topographic location and might be used for quarrying stone for arrowheads, religious ceremonies, hunting stations, rock art, or for one of many other uses. No probability model can insure that it will always find every site. So while the model can “red flag” certain areas and single them out for intensive investigation in the planning process, a less intensive level of investigation will also be needed to check that other specialized sites are not present in future project areas.

The Heritage Area has been occupied for at least the last 6,000-8,000 years and possibly much longer. While 113 sites have been recorded in the Heritage Area, few intensive, professional archaeological surveys have been conducted, indicating that there are many more prehistoric and historic sites yet undiscovered. To avoid unintentionally impacting these non-renewable resources and to provide information with which to study the every day life of the people who have lived here, the undiscovered sites need to be found and managed within a well thought out framework. Appendix A contains the Historical and Archeological Inventory map showing the location and potential locations of prehistoric and historic archeological sites.

### 3.2.2 Cultural and Historical Resources

From the Pre-historic to the Modern Era the unique geological and riparian resources of the Heritage Area and the surrounding area have been intimately linked to human settlement and activity. The Heritage Area has experienced the settlement of Native Americans, African Americans, and Europeans as evidenced by archeological sites along river corridors, historic granite structures throughout Lithonia and Klondike, cemeteries and churches from Flat Rock to the Monastery to downtown Lithonia and early farm, mill, and quarry locations throughout the Heritage Area. Historic and archeological features consist of former mill locations, early farms and plantations, civil war sites, sites associated with Native American and African American culture, cemeteries, and historic homes, retail stores, clubs, barns, schools, and religious structures. The Lyon’s Home within DeKalb

County and the Parker home on the Southernness Property in Rockdale County are the oldest homes within their respective county and are located in the Heritage Area along the South River. The Seminary in downtown Lithonia is the only site within the Heritage Area on the National Register of Historic Places; however, numerous historic features are identified for DeKalb County in the Georgia Historic Resources Survey by the Historic Preservation Division of Georgia DNR and for Rockdale County in the Rockdale County Historic Resources Survey. The sites listed in these documents within the Heritage Area are listed in Appendix D. In addition the Klondike Historic District, which incorporates historic structures in the vicinity of Klondike and South Goddard Roads has been approved. The Historic Preservation Department at Georgia State University has been involved in researching and compiling historic information on the City of Lithonia. They have completed Historic District Nomination Forms for three Proposed Lithonia Historic Districts. The districts would encompass approximately 80% of the Lithonia Community. The Georgia State Historic Preservation Department also coordinated with FLAAC (Friends of the Lithonia African American Cemeteries) to produce the *Lithonia African American Cemetery* history book. Appendix D lists the structures within the Klondike and Proposed Lithonia Historic Districts.

Information on archeological sites within the Heritage Area has been documented, but much of this information needs to be field verified. An archeological report has been completed for Miner’s Creek Native American Site along the South River and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Rockdale County has a collection of various Native American artifacts. Reports also exist on the location of mills along the South and Yellow River and their tributaries and former quarries on the monadnocks and large granite outcrops. Remnants of Evan’s Mill are preserved along Pole Bridge Creek and portions of the old Arabia Mountain Quarry Office still remain. In addition, one of the most intriguing sites in the Heritage Area is the pastoral landscape, old barn, and granite house at Vaughters’ Farm.

The farm is located close to Interstate 20 off of Klondike Road and is preserved by Georgia DNR. Refer to Appendix A Historical & Archeological Inventory map for locations of key features within the Heritage Area.

#### *Pre-European History*

Evidence suggests that humans first lived in this region about 10,000 years ago during the Paleoindian Period (13000 BC - 7900 BC), when early nomadic peoples traveled the waterways to gather, fish and hunt. The region was densely forested and presumably rich in wildlife. Throughout the Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC), indigenous people developed tools of increasing sophistication, along with agricultural techniques that allowed for a sedentary lifestyle.

During the Archaic Period, indigenous people settled in Soapstone Ridge along the South River, making it an early site of trade and commerce. Archeologists have identified more than 110 sites along Soapstone Ridge containing various artifacts. Soapstone was initially used to make cooking utensils, bowls, tools and ornaments, and was an important product for trade.

Soapstone was plentiful and easy to work, yet difficult to transport. When ceramic pottery developed along the Savannah River in South Georgia around 2500 BC, it gradually replaced the use of soapstone to make bowls. In the Heritage Area, we believe this transition prompted people to leave Soapstone Ridge for sites more conducive to agriculture.

During the Woodland (200 BC - 900 AD) and Mississippian Periods (900 AD - 1700 AD), villages were generally located on higher ground, overlooking waterways. Settlement sites from these periods have been located along the Yellow River near Lithonia. On the South River, Miners Creek Preserve contains evidence of settlement spanning 400 years during the "Panola Phase" of the Middle Woodland Period.

Our knowledge of Native American culture in the

Heritage Area is limited to oral tradition, known artifacts and written observations by early European travelers and settlers. When early European settlers arrived, Native American culture in the region was divided between the Cherokee and Creek nations. Land that today comprises DeKalb, Henry and Rockdale counties was largely Creek territory, yet sparsely inhabited. This landscape was regarded as a buffer and hunting zone between the two cultures. Native American settlement remains evident today in the existence of footpaths, still visible, dating from the pre-European era, as well as archeological sites and soapstone quarries. Browns Mill and other roads are examples of trails being adopted as part of the contemporary roadway and rail system.

#### *Early Settlement to the Civil War*

Most documented European history for North Georgia dates to the late 18th century. European settlement had an extreme impact on Native American cultures, whose populations dropped dramatically from exposure to foreign diseases, and involvement in wars with the English, Spanish and French. Early Europeans initially settled north of the future site of Atlanta along the Chattahoochee River. Settlement increased tremendously in the Heritage Area after 1821 when Creek Indians ceded a large land tract to the State of Georgia that encompassed present-day DeKalb, Henry and Rockdale counties. Land lots were distributed by lottery to qualified settlers such as the Lyon family. Initially, early settlers followed Native American trails to travel through the region, yet the influx of settlers required construction of roads and rail.

James Diamond, the first surveyor in DeKalb County, reportedly moved to Rock Chapel in 1820. Thus, Rock Chapel at Rock Mountain became the first European community in the Heritage Area. Another early community known as Cross Roads evolved at the junction of two major roads. In 1856, it was chartered and renamed Lithonia. In 1845, a rail line linked Marthasville (an early name for Atlanta) to Augusta on the Savannah River through the area that would be known as Lithonia.

### *African-American Experience*

The Heritage Area is also rich in early African-American history. Former slaves remained in the vicinity and others were drawn there in search of farmland. The community of Flat Rock is one of the oldest African-American settlements in Georgia, dating back to 1820, and one of the oldest African-American cemeteries in the state still exists there. The grave of U.S. serviceman Lucious Sanders, who founded the Lithonia Civic League in the 1940s to promote voting rights, lies in the Lithonia African-American cemetery.

### *Agriculture and Mills*

Not long ago, there were more than 50 dairy farms in DeKalb County, which was known as the dairy farm capital of Georgia. Today, Vaughters' Farm has been preserved as the last remaining dairy farm landscape, providing an excellent educational tool to share this lifestyle with future generations.

Throughout the 19th century, the Heritage Area remained largely agricultural. Another fine example of agricultural living during this time is evident at the Lyon family home, spared by Sherman's troops, and the oldest continuously occupied structure in the Heritage Area, circa 1823. The Klondike community was named in the 1830s in hopes that gold would be found. Instead, farming became the staple business. As the Heritage Area was settled, many mills were built along creeks and rivers, using water power to grind grains and mill cotton. Though a complete mill structure does not exist today, the legacy lives on in names such as Browns Mill, Evans Mill and McDaniels Mill roads. By 1860, Georgia ranked fourth among the states in cotton production, though cotton production peaked in the South in the late 1800s. Cotton remained, however, the most important agricultural product until the end of the century, when granite quarrying on a large scale developed.

### *Granite's Role in the Heritage Area*

The success of the granite quarrying industry had a lasting impact. From the 1880s to 1920s, the industry flourished from new technologies and increasing demand. The expanding railroad system

facilitated industrial production and transportation of granite. The use of dynamite enabled efficient quarrying and allowed large slabs to be separated intact. Another development, the steam drill, was first used around 1883 to facilitate granite production. The most successful quarry district included Stone Mountain, Lithonia and Conyers, located in western Rockdale County. While other parts of Georgia also developed around the quarry industry, the Lithonia-Stone Mountain-Conyers district remained the most productive.

Lithonia granite was superior because it withstood weathering, was harder than other types and retained its color and pattern. Compared to Stone Mountain granite located farther north, Lithonia granite was easier to quarry and more readily split. According to the Cultural Resources Report for Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Lithonia granite is similar to granite found only in Russia and Norway. Lithonia granite was used throughout the U.S. including at the West Point Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, state and federal offices in Atlanta, reportedly for the foundation of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., the Brooklyn Bridge and other structures throughout New York City. It was also widely used as "Belgian" paving blocks in streets across the nation. The peak use of this type of granite spanned the 1890s to the 1920s.

Quarries in the Heritage Area were known by names such as Big Ledge, Arabia Mountain, Pine Mountain and Rock Chapel. Many families began quarries around Lithonia, and large quarrying companies later acquired these smaller operations. Both the Davidson and Venable families were prominent in the quarrying business, operating quarries in Lithonia. The granite industry attracted skilled immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Scandinavia and Italy, as well as African-Americans who migrated to Lithonia after the Civil War.

The thriving granite industry helped Lithonia develop both economically and culturally. New streets and homes were built, and granite details and architecture became a distinctive feature of the

downtown. One of Lithonia's most prominent buildings, originally known as The Seminary, is on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently under renovation. Other well-known granite structures include a Masonic lodge chartered in 1849 and the Lithonia Woman's Club building.

The Great Depression ended quarrying operations at Arabia Mountain and slowed production at Big Ledge and Pine Mountain, both Davidson family businesses. The family survived the Depression by inventing new uses for granite and expanding into other products. For example, in the 1920s, innovative methods were used to isolate minerals from granite, enabling portions to be used for applications ranging from pottery and glass production to agriculture. Granite aggregates were used as poultry grit, a food supplement to help chickens digest corn. Later, crushed stone from the Big Ledge quarry was used for road construction, while the Pine Mountain quarry became a source for finished stone.

#### *The Heritage Area Today*

After World War II, DeKalb County communities were strongly impacted by Atlanta's booming economy and urban growth, and Lithonia's granite industry made a comeback. While this period was productive socially and economically, a darker side of history was always present. Beginning in the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan had become active again in the Atlanta area, burning crosses on nearby Stone Mountain. However, Lithonia's African-American community flourished. Popular gathering spots such as the Lithonia Speedway and the Lithonia Country Club opened in the 1940s, and boasted musical acts such as B.B. King and James Brown. Lucious Sanders, an African-American activist and veteran, challenged racial discrimination by forming the Lithonia Civic League in the 1940s.

During this time, the character of the Heritage Area transformed from a largely rural landscape to one with a more suburban character. This change rose from the decline of the quarry industry and the influx of residential and commercial development. From 1970 to 1990, DeKalb County reported the

third largest population increase in the United States. Before this population surge, DeKalb County created the Parks and Recreation Department in 1953 to provide recreational opportunities and manage open spaces. The State of Georgia purchased Stone Mountain in 1959, establishing Georgia's largest granite outcrop as a recreational park and tourist destination. Panola Mountain State Park was created by the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources in 1969 and designated as a National Natural Landmark in 1980. Arabia Mountain was gifted to DeKalb County by the Davidson family, and designated as the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve in 1992.

Today, the Heritage Area experiences increased pressures of residential and commercial growth. The Mall at Stonecrest, developed in the late 1990s, has brought an influx of new residents and retail services, and will remain a catalyst for future economic development in DeKalb and Rockdale counties. Multi-family housing, single-family subdivisions and retail establishments dot the landscape surrounding the mall. This growth has brought added demands on infrastructure and services for existing residents. Communities are actively working with the counties to determine appropriate measures for retaining the Heritage Area's high quality of life through the Arabia Alliance's efforts including this Plan.

Recreational and educational improvements have enhanced the Heritage Area in the 21st century. At the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, PATH Foundation has completed eight miles of paved walking and bike trails throughout the Nature Preserve, creating a continuous linear park from the City of Lithonia to Arabia Mountain and on to Panola Mountain. These attractive trails wind through a variety of landscapes including Vaughters' Farm, forests, wetlands and granite outcrops. Planned additions to the trail system include connecting along the South River to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, the largest contiguous greenspace in Rockdale County.

In the near future, one of the most significant

additions will be an environmental high school built by DeKalb County Public Schools. The actual building, as well as the curriculum, will actively engage students in environmental studies with emphasis on natural systems found in the Heritage Area. The site is connected to the PATH trail system.

Another Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve innovation will be a future development to cluster a public library, police station and fire station together, directly along the PATH trail. Normally, these community amenities are separate. By locating them together in one place, all three become more accessible to the public. School groups can more easily enjoy tours of the fire station; young and old can walk or bike to the library; the trails will be used by police and fire fighters.

In 2004, Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) opened on Klondike Road and has become a trusted source for protecting wildlife and their habitat. Through an active environmental education and animal rescue program, AWARE ([www.awareone.org](http://www.awareone.org)) has saved hundreds of birds and animals in the Heritage Area.

Three fulltime rangers are now employed at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve by the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the relocated historic Ragsdale home will soon be restored, and expanded parking and trailhead facilities have recently been added to the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.

Recognizing the importance of Panola Mountain State Park to the metropolitan Atlanta, the Georgia Parks and Historic Sites Division has created a new park master plan that will introduce outdoor recreation, environmental education and sustainable stewardship to millions of Georgia citizens and visitors. The Division is pursuing additional property acquisitions to buffer existing park property, protect the natural landscape, expand the opportunity for recreational developments and connect the park to Rockdale County properties downstream along the South River. The park

master plan calls for reorienting the park entrance, creating expanded day-use and family activity areas, developing overnight camping areas, expanding hiking and walking trails, wildlife viewing areas, river access points, and stabilizing and restoring the historic Parker Home. The master plan also includes the development of an environmentally sustainable outdoor recreation educational center which could house the Division's state headquarters offices. See Appendix G for the Panola Mountain State Park master plan.

Recent increases in the number of recreational amenities has laid the groundwork to create popular attractions for Atlanta-area residents and families seeking activities in nature, all in close proximity to where they live.

### **3.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **3.3.1 Recreation/Open Space Resources**

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area covers a wide variety of natural and open space resources and spans three counties, the eastern portion of DeKalb County, western Rockdale County, and northern Henry County. The resources prevalent in this Heritage Area provide an exceptional opportunity for recreation, education, and heritage preservation, all within a 20 minute drive from downtown Atlanta. Containing the last semi-rural areas of DeKalb County and fast developing Rockdale and Henry Counties, the region of this proposed National Heritage Area is home to several significant open space resources. The open space resources are listed below and identified in Appendix A on the Recreation Inventory map.

#### **State**

*Panola Mountain State Conservation Park* – Established in 1969, this park is approximately 1,118 acres and includes a designated National Landmark, the 100-acre monadnock, Panola Mountain. The mountain's

ecology is largely intact, including fragile lichens and mosses. The park is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, is open to the public, and includes natural interpretation as well as passive recreation facilities.

*Alexander Estate (part of Panola Mountain State Conservation Park)* – This estate was recently acquired in 2002 and includes approximately 260 acres of a picturesque open landscape with a large lake. Through the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion, this estate will house day-use activities, extensive hiking trails, overnight camping, and Park Visitor Center.

*Parker Estate (part of Panola Mountain State Conservation Park)* – The newly purchased property last year is the former location of the Southerness Golf Course. The estate encompasses approximately 167 acres and contains the Parker Home, the oldest home in Rockdale County. Through the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion, this site will contain the Georgia State Park Education & Demonstration Facility, as well as the opportunity to observe stream and native plant restoration.

*Vaughters' Farm* – Located north of Arabia Mountain, this farm was the last working farm in DeKalb County. The 141 acre farm was purchased by the state in 2002 and is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The farm presents a striking view from Klondike Road and contains an old barn and the Vaughters' granite home.

## **DeKalb County**

*Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve* – Established in 1973, the heart of the preserve is comprised of 535 acres of granite outcrops with wetlands, pine and oak forests, streams, and a lake. Through the efforts of the Alliance numerous properties contiguous to the nature preserve totaling over 2000 acres have been preserved.

*Everett Property North* – The 41 acre property was purchased in 1997, with an additional 27 acres from

Chestnut Lake obtained in 2004. The site is adjacent to the South River at the location of Albert Shoals and contains cultural, historical, and environmental resources. Canoe access is a potential; however, the site has difficult road access.

*Miners Creek Preserve* – This site, along the South River, is a 73 acre area that contains documented evidence of early human settlement activities, including remains of early mining activities. Archeological studies have shown usage of the site as early as 5000 years ago, establishing this as an archeologically significant site that should be further explored. Miners Creek was established in 1977 and an additional 19 acres was obtained in 2004 to potentially provide access into the site.

*Lyon's Estate* – This 90 acre estate recently obtained in 2004 includes the oldest home in DeKalb County. The site provides magnificent views to the South River and to Panola Mountain. Plans are underway to connect the multi-use Path trail from the Murphey Candler Elementary School through the Lyon's Estate and then across the South River. The site also has the potential to provide canoe access.

*Rock Chapel Park* – This 20 acre park includes baseball, softball, playground, and picnic areas. The park also has youth sports programs.

*Union Grove Park*

## **DeKalb County Adjacent To Heritage Area**

*Yellow River North* – This 18 acre park is a natural area along the Yellow River.

*Yellow River South* – This 1.8 acre park is a natural area along the Yellow River.

## **Henry County**

*Wolf Rock* – Recently established in 2003, this 66.2 acre site contains a large granite outcrop.

## **Rockdale County**



*Decastro Nature Preserve* – The site was obtained in 1996 and includes 100 acres. The estate includes a pedestrian suspension bridge that will be a part of the future trail system along the South River corridor.

*Everett Property South* – This 44 acre site along the South River was obtained in 1998. The site contains cultural, historical, and environmental resources including mill foundations, distillery remnants, several old cemeteries, and historic bridge remnants. Canoe access is a potential.

*South Rockdale Community Park* – The 176 acre community park established in 1991 includes a mile long nature trail along the South River and picnic facilities.

### **City of Lithonia**

*Bruce Street Park* – This 4 acre park includes multi-use field and court, basketball court, playground, and picnic areas.

*Kelly Park* – This is a small pocket park in the heart of Lithonia. It is located next to the only site in the Heritage Area on the National Register of Historic Places, ‘The Seminary’.

*Lithonia Community Park* – Multi-use field and court, basketball court, swimming pool, playground, picnic area, and trails are all a part of this 53 acre park.

*Lucious Sanders Park* – This 2 acre site contains a recreation center and a playground. The site offers youth sports programs.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance has been focusing on linking publicly owned greenspace, other publicly owned land, and schools into an area wide greenway network to provide recreational opportunities and to protect the unique features of the Heritage Area. The additional open space will provide increased buffering for existing sensitive park/open land. Through the efforts of

the Alliance numerous properties contiguous to the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve totaling over 2000 acres have been preserved. Additional properties along the South River have been obtained in an effort to connect the existing greenspace into a South River Greenway Corridor. The involvement and continued coordination of the Alliance with the Path Foundation, the Counties, the State, and private land owners is key to the continued effort in creating greenway corridors.

Planned trails are also a major element in the linkage of the open space and cultural resources. Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park contain trails and guided tours that focus on bird watching, plant identification, wildflowers, sunset walks, moonlight tours, and educational walks with school children. The Path Foundation out of Atlanta has created a master plan of multi-use trails for DeKalb County and connecting trails along the South River to Rockdale County, Henry County, and up to Atlanta. The completed portion of trails within the Heritage Area moves south from the Lithonia Woman’s Club into the Stonecrest Mall development. Then the trail connects to the Vaughters’ Farm land along Klondike Road and links down to Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. Once in the preserve, the trail proceeds south to Murphey Candler Elementary School and the location of the Future Environmental School at Arabia Mountain. The completed trail features several new arched granite bridges, wooden boardwalks and bridges, a short segment over rock outcroppings, and a covered bridge over Stephenson Creek. Rock outcroppings the size of football fields, streams rushing over woodland waterfalls, hundred acre farms, and fields of wildflowers undulating in the breeze can be observed along the trail.

A future loop trail is proposed to connect from the Arabia Mountain Nature Center east toward Honey Creek and north up to the Stonecrest Mall development. Through the coordination of Path, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, the Georgia DNR, and consultants plans are being

developed to locate a trail from Murphey Candler Elementary School to the Lyon's Estate with DeKalb's oldest home and down to the South River and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park. Future trails are to run northwest and southeast along the South River to provide access to South Rockdale Community Park, the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, and Miners Creek. Path and its public and private sector cooperators intend to design, build, and maintain all trails along the waterways in the most environmentally sensitive way so as not to damage the riverbanks or water quality. To the north, closer to I-20 and Lithonia, future trails will provide access to Stone Mountain Park via Stone Mountain Lithonia Road. The community has expressed interest in both paved and soft surface trails.

### 3.3.2 Regional Growth and Land Use Pressures

The population of the ten-county Atlanta region has more than doubled over the period between 1970 and 1999, from approximately 1.5 million to 3.2 million residents. As of April 2004, the population was 3,716,100. In the last decade the average rate of regional population growth has been 3% per year. As stated in the Atlanta Regional Commission's Regional Development Plan, "If the land consumption rate experienced between 1995 and 2000 continues during the next two decades, 600,000 acres will be developed to accommodate just over one million new residents. The land consumed by this rate of .542 acres per person equals the land area of Cherokee, Douglas, and Fayette counties." The following Table 5 shows key growth characteristics for the region and the counties within the Heritage Area.

DeKalb County has a diverse population and is generally growing at a slower rate than the entire region largely because of lack of developable land. However, the part of the county, which includes the Arabia Mountain area, is growing at a faster rate than the rest of the county. DeKalb County has the highest density of any county in the Heritage Area and the region, increasing the development

pressure on the last remaining open space areas around Arabia Mountain. Rockdale and Henry Counties have relative low densities of development, substantially below the regional average. However, Henry County leads the region in rate of population growth and is experiencing one of the highest rates of growth in the nation, with substantial new development over the last decade.

Growth pressures have resulted in new housing, retail, and office developments throughout the Atlanta region, absorption of open lands by new developments, and traffic overload and periodic gridlock on regional highways and arterials. In many ways, the interest in open space preservation and protection of the area around Arabia Mountain has been prompted by recognition that there is a narrow window of opportunity to retain open lands, to encourage "Smart Growth" and sustainable environmental planning, and to protect important resources before land costs and the economics of development make such initiatives impossible. The Heritage Area is in the path of rapid development, located at the nexus between the denser urban core of the region and counties with relatively more open land. Development pressures are felt increasingly on the remaining open lands and on resources associated with settings such as Arabia Mountain. The construction has been completed for Stonecrest, a new regional super mall that will be surrounded by mixed uses, adjacent to I-20 between Lithonia and Arabia Mountain. Another new development, the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, consists of a several hundred-acre campus facility for 23,000 members, including a church building, schools, and retirement homes. This new mall and related new developments will have direct impacts on the surrounding communities. Without great care in planning for future transportation, community facilities, infrastructure, housing patterns, and non-residential development these new developments will pose a risk to the overall quality of this Heritage Area and may overwhelm its natural and historical assets.

**Table 5: Key Growth Indicators**

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

	Atlanta Region	DeKalb County	Rockdale County	Henry County
Population 2004	3,716,100	695,100	75,100	156,300
Average Annual Percentage of Population Increase from 2000-2004	2.0	1.1	1.7	7.0
Average Annual Percentage of Population Increase from 1990-2000	3.0	1.9	2.6	7.3
Land Area (acres)	1,907,864	171,617	83,403	206,531
Population Density 2004 (people/acre)	1.95	4.05	0.90	0.76
Total Housing Units 2004	1,511,689	285,668	28,314	59,824
Average Annual Change in Housing Units 2000-2004	45,106	6,109	808	4,165
Average Annual Change in Housing Units 1990-2000	27,883	2,971	512	2,189

To promote a balance between growth and protection, efforts have been made by the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, the counties, Lithonia, and the Stonecrest Mall developer to form a “Smart Growth” initiative known as GRASP (Greater Arabia Stonecrest Plan.) It is believed that the new mall and the Heritage Area can co-exist and mutually benefit with proper planning. Working toward these goals, GRASP has actively held large-scale meetings to bring together key players on issues such as transportation and watershed management. The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance is a volunteer organization with the mission to ensure that recreational, natural, and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors and well managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia’s heritage. The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance seeks to set a national standard for “Smart Growth” in its approach to the development, conservation and preservation of Arabia Mountain and its surrounding lands. The Alliance has succeeded in gathering environmentalists, developers, politicians, and community members into a uniquely

cooperative organization, dedicated to preserving several thousand acres of pristine wilderness in the heart of Atlanta’s next big expansion area, while promoting the harmonious development of that area into thriving communities.

Other initiatives to promote smart growth include the Livable Centers Initiative planning grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission and Smart Growth Design Protocol prepared by the Smart Growth Leadership Institute and the University of Southern California for the City of Lithonia, and the Stonecrest Area Study by Rockdale County. These studies are comprised of recommendations and implementation strategies for revitalization, economic growth, design standards, and enhancement of community character.

### 3.3.3 Tourism

The information in this section provides excerpts and summary of the research work done by the Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute under the direction of Dr. Rich Harrill. The full document is entitled *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area: Opportunities for Tourism Development*.

## Other National Heritage Areas

According to the National Park Service, a Heritage Area is a region in which residents, businesses, and governments join together to preserve, promote, and celebrate their heritage, culture, and natural resources to benefit current and future generations. Congress has designated 27 National Heritage Areas around the country where conservation, interpretation, and heritage tourism activities are planned and implemented through partnership among federal, state, and local government, residents, and the private sector. It is important for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area's constituents and leadership gain knowledge of tourism marketing and development in the other National Heritage Areas. Dr. Rich Harrill with Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute conducted telephone interviews with directors and representatives of 24 National Heritage Areas on the topic of tourism marketing and development. The interviews resulted in the following key factors for success and advice for Heritage Areas.

### Factors for Success:

- Attain local support/interest/participation
- Develop and maintain partnerships
- Embrace a preservation ethic
- Gain congressional/political support
- Send clear and consistent messages
- Provide economic development
- Attract visitors/increasing tourism

### Advice:

- Be able to achieve a distinctive identity
- Garner grassroots support
- Develop and maintain partnerships
- Invest in planning process
- Emphasize storytelling
- Budget for tourism

There is a lack of tourism research for National Heritage Areas, attributed mainly to expense and too many entry points that are often far apart to collect valid and reliable data on visitation and economic impact. The National Heritage Area

Alliance did contract with researchers at Michigan State University to produce a report, *Economic Impacts of National Heritage Areas: Summary Results from Seven National Heritage Area Visitors Survey* (2004). The survey evaluated local residents, day trips from outside the local area, and overnight trips involving stays in local motels or with friends and relatives for seven National Heritage Areas, based on 25,000 annual visitors. The direct impacts of spending were \$780,000 in wages and salaries, 1.2 million in value added and 51 jobs.

Ultimately, the economic future of a National Heritage Area depends upon a series of decisions concerning economic development and tourism. Failure to create a coherent narrative concerning the importance of the Heritage Area to America's history and development can result in the creation of ineffective marketing materials. Once produced, these marketing materials must find the right outlets targeting the type of tourism most likely to visit the Heritage Area. Traditionally, these materials have included maps and brochures, but the Heritage Areas are increasingly investing in websites and information kiosks. Adequate signage remains important in directing visitors around the Heritage Area. Tourism development is another important part of the equations. There should be enough physical development to attract visitors, yet not so much that the building and maintenance of these facilities become a burden to the national Heritage Area's limited budget. Conservative investment in a visitors center, museum, and perhaps a few local renovations undertaken with partners often suffices. With careful choices, a National Heritage Area can become an important economic engine for a city or region.

## Arabia Mountain Heritage Area

The Atlanta Metropolitan Area is well-known as a destination for conferences and sports tourism. However, for the region to remain viable in the increasingly competitive tourism industry, it must diversify its current product to attract other promising market niches. The Arabia Mountain

Heritage Area, a short drive from downtown Atlanta, has great potential to attract visitors interested in nature, culture, and heritage. Increased visitation to the Heritage Area can translate into substantial economic benefits for DeKalb, Henry, and Rockdale counties and their respective municipalities.

A few of the tourism assets the Heritage Area offers include Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, the South River, historic buildings and quarries, Native American sites, greenway linkages, and agricultural land. A proposed bike path to Stone Mountain Park will also help in building regional tourism linkages. As a nationally recognized contributor to “smart growth” in the region, Arabia Mountain Heritage Area tourism can play a dual role in stimulating economic development while preserving quality of life and sense of place. Many of the potential liabilities or eyesores of the Heritage Area are reasonably well buffered; however, area tourism developers need to remain vigilant to developments that threaten or degrade the physical appearance of the landscape, and act to prevent or buffer them when possible. Both a curse and a blessing to the development of the Heritage Area, I-20 brings thousands of travelers through the region each day. The key to increased visitation will be convincing travelers along I-20 that despite appearance, the Heritage Area has significant natural and historic assets worthy of a stop.

Lifestyle analysis can be a means of targeting specific Arabia Mountain Heritage Area tourism niches, given that surveying current visitors can be expensive. To most efficiently and effectively target marketing efforts in Heritage Area, it is crucial to understand the nature of visitors there. Their needs, desires, attitudes, and perceptions should be carefully considered when creating a marketing campaign and undertaking product development. The nature of these various visitor segments will dictate where print advertising is placed, the content of that advertising, and the appearance and content of all collateral marketing materials such as brochures, signs, maps, and visitors’ guides. A

PRIZM analysis was used to develop lifestyle clusters related to the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area tourism. PRIZM NE is a neighborhood lifestyle segmentation system developed from such sources as the U.S. Census, and it works because of the adage “birds of a feather flock together.” People with similar cultural backgrounds, needs, and perspectives naturally gravitate toward each other. TRACS researchers identified visitors through sources indicated as important by the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance and Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The PRIZM NE market segmentation system was used for over 8,000 reservations from 1995 to 2005 for Panola, Providence, Smithgall, Sweetwater, and Tallulah Georgia state parks, all sharing a conservation theme. The top markets for Arabia Mountain Heritage Area are described below.

- Beltway Boomers
  - In their 40s and 50s, college educated, married late in life, upper middle-class, and home-owning, raising children in suburban subdivisions.
  - Median household income: \$69,830
  - Suburban
  - High Asian, Hispanic
  - Read computer magazines, *Business Week*, *Golf Digest*, *Golf Magazine*, *Working Mother*, *Black Enterprise*
- Fast-Track Families
  - Upper middle-class incomes, numerous children, spacious homes, prime acquisition years; buy latest computer technology
  - Median household income: \$70,216
  - Town
  - Camping, boating, fishing  
Read *Country Living*; *Working Mother*, *Redbook*, *Modern Bride*
- Kids & Cul-de-Sacs
  - Upscale, suburban, married with children in recently built subdivisions; younger than Beltway Boomers
  - Median household income: \$68,785
  - High Asian, Hispanic

- Suburban
- Read parenting magazines; *Family Fun, Working Mother, Parenting, Home, and This Old House*
- Big Fish, Small Pond
  - Older, upper-class, college-educated professionals, among leading citizens of their small-town communities; upscale empty-nesters
  - Median income: \$77,666
  - Town
  - Country clubs, large investment portfolios, and computer technology
  - Read *Southern Living, Golf Digest, Golf Magazine, Travel & Leisure*
- Country Casuals
  - Middle-aged, upper-middle-class households that have started to empty nest; Own small businesses
  - Median income \$66,401
  - Town, rural
  - Travel, own timeshares, eat out
  - Read hunting and fishing magazines; *Country Living, Southern Living, Field and Stream; Delta's Sky*

Of course, there are other high potential market segments that may or may not exist within these clusters of travelers most likely to visit the Heritage Area. These include nature based tourists, heritage and cultural tourists, African American tourists, and couples with dual income and no kids. It is important to develop a two-tier marketing approach directed at regional and local high potential market clusters.

Tables 6 and 7 look at the potential economic impact of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area visitation. The impacts were analyzed according to local, non-local, hotel, and other lodging visiting sectors. Table 6 displays the potential distribution of attendance throughout those sectors comprising local tourism economies. The distribution of visitors was based on the visitation to seven des-

ignated National Heritage Areas profiled by Stynes and Yen Sun (2004). Table 7 details the potential impact of total visitor spending within the visiting sectors. The total spending includes retail, lodging, and other spending such as food and beverage. One must keep in mind that leakage of total impact flow out of the local economy can be as much as 50 percent, although the total spending may continue to attract companies and businesses to the area stimulating further economic growth.

**Table 6: Potential Tourism Visitation**

Per Year	Local Day	Non-Local Day	Hotel	Other Lodging	Total	Total Non-Local
5,000	1,100	1,500	1,700	700	5,000	3,900
10,000	2,200	3,000	3,400	1,400	10,000	7,800
15,000	3,300	4,500	4,500	2,100	15,000	11,700
20,000	4,400	6,000	6,000	2,800	20,000	15,600
25,000	5,500	7,500	7,500	3,500	25,000	19,500

**Table 7: Potential Tourism Visitation/ Total Spending**

Per Year	Local Day	Non-Local Day	Hotel	Other Lodging	Total	Total Non-Local
5,000	\$61,468	\$127,545	\$889,066	\$163,499	\$1,241,578	\$1,180,110
10,000	\$122,936	\$255,090	\$1,778,132	\$326,998	\$2,483,156	\$2,360,220
15,000	\$184,404	\$382,635	\$2,667,198	\$490,497	\$3,724,734	\$3,540,330
20,000	\$245,872	\$510,180	\$3,556,264	\$653,996	\$4,966,312	\$4,720,440
25,000	\$307,340	\$637,725	\$4,445,330	\$817,495	\$6,207,890	\$5,900,550

The following are recommendations for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area to help establish, guide, and promote tourism development.

- Improve signage and interpretation
- Emphasize small-town atmosphere
- Develop regional tourism linkages; golf, camping, hunting, fishing amenities
- Develop tour itinerary
- Simplify narrative
- Implement modest tourism programs; be cautious about facility investments
- Market to families (women and children) and growing multi-cultural interests
- Develop materials for distribution by DeKalb and Atlanta CVB
- Feature Stonecrest Mall Retail Area prominently in marketing materials

#### 4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The Environmental Consequences section evaluates and compares the impact of the conceptual alternatives. Since the alternatives presented in this plan are conceptual, the potential environmental consequences or impacts are discussed in broad terms. The direct and indirect impacts are organized below first by impact topic and secondly by alternatives. Cumulative impacts are also discussed for each impact topic.

The methodology used evaluates the intensity, context, duration, and timing of the impacts. The following terms will be used in comparing the environmental impacts among alternatives:

- *Negligible* – The impact is barely perceptible or not measurable
- *Minor* – The impact is slightly detectable

and measurable but is either localized or would not adversely affect resources.

- *Moderate* – The impact is clearly detectable and could have appreciable effect on resources.
- *Major* – The impact is substantial and highly noticeable or measurable.
- *Short-term* – The impact lasts less than one year.
- *Long-term* – The impact lasts one year or longer.

The impact analysis will also state if the resulting impacts are *adverse* or *beneficial* to the environmental resources. Table 3 provides a Summary of the Direct and Indirect Impacts for the Alternatives. Section 1.8 Scoping and Issues provides additional information on the impact topics and associated issues and the impact measurement methodology.

### Cumulative Impacts

The AMHA planning effort is not occurring in a vacuum in the Atlanta Area. Rather, other planning initiatives and projects are underway, or in the planning stages, and will have cumulative effects on the Heritage Area.

These initiatives include:

- **Atlanta Regional Commission Regional Development and Transportation Plan:** The ARC is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency that encompasses the three counties within the Heritage Area. To guide and coordinate regional decisions, the ARC completes two long-range plans. The first, the Regional Development Plan consists of a Technical Staff Report with inventory and analysis and a Regional Agenda, which incorporates research and public input for identifying future needs, goals, objectives, and implementation strategies. The regional plan combines and interrelates local planning efforts to establish regional policies for issues such as sustainable growth, transportation, water supply and quality, and human services. The second, the Regional Transportation Plan consists of a balanced mix

of transportation projects. The ARC also completes or initiates many other studies and programs for the region, including the annual Transportation Improvement Program and the Livable Centers Initiative.

- **Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) Initiatives:** In late 2004, the Heritage Area witnessed the ground breaking for the new facilities for AWARE. AWARE is a non-profit animal rescue and rehabilitation center that is "committed to the preservation and restoration of wildlife and its habitat through education and wildlife rehabilitation". They focus not only on the immediate help to animals, but on educating people so that the positive affect on wildlife and habitat can be long lasting into the future.
- **City of Lithonia's Livable Centers Initiative and Smart Growth Design Protocol:** In 2003, the City of Lithonia received the Livable Centers Initiative planning grant from ARC to assist in revitalization, economic growth, and enhancement of community character. The LCI plan consisted of a background, a development plan, and an action plan. The Smart Growth Design Protocol prepared by the Smart Growth Leadership Institute and University of Southern California spurred from the LCI and includes recommendations for design review and approval protocol and design guidelines and standards.
- **County wide effort to create South River Greenway:** The AMHA Alliance has been working closely with the Path Foundation, the Counties, the State, and private land owners in an effort to create a greenway corridor along the South River. Many properties have been acquired in an attempt to connect existing greenspace.
- **DeKalb County Board of Education Arabia Mountain Environmental School Project:** In August 2002, a Steering Committee was composed to develop the beliefs, vision, mission, and strategies for a neighborhood school in the Arabia Mountain area. The following is the School's vision: "We visualize the Arabia Mountain Environmental Campus as

an energy-smart, sustainable, living laboratory that inspires staff, students, and the community to learn and live with a heightened sense of environmental awareness. The school will provide an interdisciplinary, environmentally focused curriculum utilizing the richness of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area to empower the students and community to become stewards of the environment. The curriculum will foster academic achievement, relevant hands-on research, and experimental learning. This campus will build bridges between indoor and outdoor environments, multiple generations, diverse cultures, varying abilities, and the school and community." The high school is targeted for 2006-07 and will acquire LEED certification. The middle school will follow and the Murphey Candler Elementary School already exists.

- **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Plans:** GDOT has been working on widening I-20 and creating a new exit for Evan's Mill Road into the AMHA. This work and other transportation projects spur mitigation. Therefore, GDOT has been working on mitigation projects along the South River. This presents an opportunity to create more greenspace and to provide connections along the proposed South River Corridor.
- **Georgia State University History Department Studies & Initiatives:** Graduate students from the Heritage Preservation Program, as well as students from Historical American Landscapes and Case Studies in Historic Preservation classes have played an integral role in the nomination of the Klondike Historic District and are currently working on the nomination of three historic districts within Lithonia. They have provided studies and videos on the history of Lithonia.
- **Monastery of the Holy Spirit Master Plan:** The Monastery of the Holy Spirit has a rich history in the Heritage Area and offers spiritual retreats, monastic vocation, and daily prayers open to the public. Stain glass design and production also occurs at the Monastery. As stewards of the land for over 60 years, Native

American artifacts have been discovered while plowing the landscape, dating as far back as 10,000 B.C. Further due to preservation of the wetlands and riparian habitats on the Monastery property, the Monks have documented 88 varieties of butterflies, 48 species of dragonflies, and over 10 species of damsel flies. The Monastery has developed a Master Plan that will showcase the natural environment, religious history, and spirituality of the land. The plan utilizes a nature center, trail system, and outdoor exhibits to educate visitors. The granite Susong Home will be renovated to serve as a nature center and trailhead. The Monastery is in the process of acquiring the 260 acre Susong Homestead. The Monastery of the Holy Spirit, lying on the largest protected greenspace in Rockdale County, would then total over 2,200 acres.

- **New Birth Baptist Church Development:** The Church Development lies on 250 acres in DeKalb County off of Evans Mill Road. The 25,000 plus member church complex includes the Cathedral, Administrative Offices, Faith Academy, New Birth's Christian School of Excellence, and various other programs and activities. The Cathedral accommodates 10,000 people and a library, bookstore, computer lab, kitchen, audio and video studios, a nursery, and more. The New Birth Baptist Church Development is continuing to expand to offer more services to its members and the extended community.
- **Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Master Plan:** Established in 1969, the park includes a designated National Landmark, the 100-acre monadnock, Panola Mountain. The mountain's ecology is largely intact, including fragile lichens and mosses. To further protect this sensitive environment, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources expanded the park to include a former golf course and farm estate. The Panola Mountain Park Expansion will host an array of day-use activities and the Georgia State Park Education & Demonstration Facility. The Park will provide an opportunity for overnight camping,

extensive hiking trails, and to observe stream and native plant restoration. By providing a separate location for higher use activities, the GA DNR will be able to further protect Panola Mountain through restricted access and only guided tours. They are also working to create the Power of Flight Bird Habitat adjacent to the South River.

- **Path Foundation Master Plan:** The Path Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing trails, has created a Master Plan for existing, planned, and future multi-use trails in the Atlanta Region. Many of these trails, such as the Arabia Mountain Trail and Rockdale River Trail, go through or link to the AMHA.
- **Quarry Industry Activities and Initiatives:** Quarrying has played an integral role in the history and culture of the AMHA. Lithonia Granite has been used in many important structures in the nation. Three quarries are still in operation today and continue to aid the local economy. These include the Big Ledge, Pine Mountain, and Rock Chapel, which have the potential to provide strong partnerships in implementing the goals of the Heritage Area. Major quarry industries in the Heritage Area have been coordinating on new projects, including the potential erection of a granite museum.
- **Rockdale County Stonecrest Area Study:** With increased development pressure and the influence of the Stonecrest Mall development, this study was created to assist the local community in meeting their vision for an economically viable, safe, and sustainable place for people. The plan provides recommendations for land use, transportation, and urban design and represents intra-jurisdictional cooperation between Rockdale and DeKalb County.
- **South River Watershed Alliance Efforts and Initiatives:** The mission of the South River Watershed Alliance is "to protect and restore the water quality and biodiversity of this watershed to the beneficial use of humans and wildlife". The newly formed Alliance merges various citizen groups along the 544 square mile

drainage basin of the South River into one group for water quality and flooding issues. Their goals include educating, networking, monitoring, ensuring the implementation of water protection, and promoting management planning for the South River Watershed.

- **Stonecrest Mall Development:** The Stonecrest Mall is a Development of Regional Impact, meaning the impact of the development will extend beyond one jurisdiction. The Mall, along with rapidly growing development around, is an economic generator and offers shopping to residents and visitors in the eastern Atlanta Metropolitan Area.

## 4.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

Alternative 2, 3, 4, and 5 may cause *negligible, short-term adverse impacts* due to construction of trails and interpretive gateways and venues and high visitation; however, the *minor to major, long-term beneficial impacts* of these alternatives to the natural resources far outweighs the *minor to major, long-term adverse impacts* of the No Action, Alternative 1.

### 4.1.1 Topographic and Geological Features

#### Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local policies. Arabia Mountain Heritage Area and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park protect the larger monadnocks and rock outcroppings; however, the protected land and other non-protected geological formations in the Heritage Area could feel the pressure of continued development and experience *minor, long-term adverse impacts*.

#### Alternative 2: Network

The Network's themed interpretive trails could not only increase public awareness of the sensitive ecosystem produced by the Heritage Areas geologic formations, but could help direct and control the footprint of visitors. This would result in a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* to key topographic and

geologic features.

### **Alternative 3: Area**

The Area alternative would help to create buffers to existing protected formations, preserve the ecosystem of the geological formations, and provide additional open space to disperse visitors and provide for more active recreation opportunities away from sensitive formations. This alternative allows visitors to experience the natural state of rock formation, the human use through quarrying, and the recovery of the ecosystem created by granite formations resulting in a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact*.

### **Alternative 4: Cluster**

The Cluster alternative contains gateways at the two major geological formations of Arabia and Panola Mountain. These gateways can assist in educating the public on granite formations, while the Lithonia gateway can tell the story of the economic significance of the granite. A *minor, long-term beneficial impact* would result by increasing visitor knowledge and awareness.

### **Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)**

The themed routes and interpretive gateways of the Hybrid alternative can increase public awareness, direct and control visitor access, and by having gateways apart from the protected granite formations can relieve the pressures of increased visitation. The Hybrid alternative would have a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* to the topographic and geological features.

### **Conclusions**

Even though the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park protect the two major granite formations, there is a need to buffer these areas and to provide public awareness and protection for these and additional topographic and geological features. Alternatives 2 and 4 provide *minor benefits*, while Alternative 3 and especially the combined attributes of Alternative 5 would provide the *most benefit*.

### **Cumulative Impacts**

Two of the largest monadnocks in the Heritage Area, Arabia Mountain and Panola Mountain, would continue to be protected by DeKalb County and Georgia DNR. Georgia DNR has been working to further protect Panola Mountain with its recent expansion and Master Plan that will relocate day-use activities away from the mountain allowing for restricted access and only guided tours. The implementation of any one of the alternatives, except Alternative 1, would facilitate continued preservation and conservation of geological resources resulting in an improved appreciation of the Heritage Area's unique flora, fauna, and ecosystems. The encroachment of development may deter protection; however, with the effort to support sustainable development and smart growth, a *long-term beneficial impact* would result.

#### **4.1.2 Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality**

##### **Alternative 1: No Action**

The No Action alternative would continue local policies and if urbanization and development continues to increase, *moderate, short and long-term adverse impacts* could result. Increased development without mitigation would increase the main water pollutants to the Heritage Area of urban runoff, combined sewer overflow, and erosion and sediment control.

##### **Alternative 2: Network**

The Network alternative would cause a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* through interpretive trails that would increase public awareness by taking visitors to and through riparian corridors. Visitors would have the opportunity to observe first hand the impacts of pollution on hydrologic systems.

##### **Alternative 3: Area**

The South River corridor is emphasized in the Area alternative as the Early Settlement Corridor. Therefore, visitors would become aware of the historical and archeological as well as environmental significance of the waterways through interpretation and experiences. Enhancement and preservation of

riparian corridors could include stream restoration and increased buffering from development, thus providing a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact*.

#### **Alternative 4: Cluster**

The Cluster alternative would result in a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* by enhancing the stream corridors within the clusters and by providing interpretation in the Natural Systems Cluster. The Natural Systems Cluster would house a stream and wetland restoration area, allowing visitors to visualize and learn.

#### **Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)**

The Hybrid alternative utilizes the interpretive routes of the Network alternative to connect visitors to and through riparian corridors from the Yellow River down to the South River. The South River is emphasized as a riparian and early settlement corridor, which would assist in restoration, preservation, and buffering from development. The result would be a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* through visitor education, observations, and awareness.

#### **Conclusions**

The protection, enhancement, and buffering of riparian corridors is important to water quality and riparian habitats. No Action could result in *adverse impacts* to hydrology, while Alternatives 2 and 4 and especially 3 and 5 could result in many *long-term benefits* by enhancing riparian systems and visitor knowledge and awareness.

#### **Cumulative Impacts**

The Georgia DOT has been working on mitigation projects along the South River Corridor, which is creating more protected land. This combined with the efforts of the newly formed South River Watershed Alliance, the county-wide effort to create the South River Greenway, and mostly either alternative 3 or 5 would promote increased preservation of waterways and riparian corridors, due to awareness of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area's water crisis. By increasing public knowledge and awareness of water issues and the need for best management practices and erosion and sediment

control, the combined effort would result in *long-term beneficial impacts*. Although, continued residential and commercial development would continue to cause *short-term adverse impacts* on the Heritage Area's waterways, due to erosion and pollution. The implementation of alternative 2 or 4 would result in less benefits and alternative 1 would have no added benefit.

#### **4.1.3 Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species**

##### **Alternative 1: No Action**

The No Action alternative would continue local policies and development and infrastructure could continue to expand, clearing vegetation groups. Habitat and ecosystem relocation and removal and increase in exotic species that inhibit native species may result. This could lead to *moderate, long-term adverse impacts*.

##### **Alternative 2: Network**

The Network alternative does not protect groups of vegetation, but it does provide an interpretive network of trails to educate visitors and to keep foot traffic in a defined corridor. The routes take visitors through a variety of plant types and communities and would assist in creating *minor, long-term beneficial impacts* to vegetation.

##### **Alternative 3: Area**

The Area alternative preserves, protects, and enhances granite outcrops, fields, forest, wetlands, and riparian corridors, which are all key to plant species survival. It identifies and defines the cultural landscapes of the Heritage Area to teach visitors about the historical and ecological importance and sensitivity of the Heritage Area. This would result in a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact*.

##### **Alternative 4: Cluster**

Although preservation would only occur in key cluster locations, a variety of land cover, unique ecosystems, and riparian segments would benefit. The focus of one cluster is on the Natural Systems of the Heritage Area and can assist in increasing

public awareness and knowledge through interpretation and observation. This would lead to a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

#### **Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)**

The Hybrid alternative utilizes themed trails to control visitor footpaths, key gateways to educate visitors and to relieve pressure from high visitation on more sensitive environments, and enhances the South River corridor along with other key vegetative groups and ecosystems within the other interpretive focus areas. The result would be *moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*.

#### **Conclusions**

No Action could produce *adverse affects* and cause degradation of unique vegetative communities and rare plant species. Alternative 2 and 4 and primarily 3 and 5 would provide many *beneficial impacts* to vegetation through identification, interpretation, education, and observation.

#### **Cumulative Impacts**

The continued education at the Heritage Area's existing interpretive facilities, the new Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort facility, and the Future DeKalb County Environmental School combined with the influence of either alternatives 2, 3, or 5 on habitat corridor enhancement and landscape preservation would result in an improved appreciation of the Heritage Area's unique vegetation and wildlife habitats. Alternative 4 would have less of an impact since it highlights existing facilities and doesn't ensure habitat connectivity between facilities. Through the implementation of the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Master Plan, visitors would have the opportunity to observe the restoration of a golf course back to native plant material and stream corridor. The result of visitor education and observations would provide *long-term beneficial impacts*. Continued residential and commercial development would potentially cause *short to long-term adverse impacts* to vegetative groups and rare and endangered species populations.

#### **4.1.4 Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species**

##### **Alternative 1: No Action**

The No Action alternative would continue local policies. Increased urbanization and development could not only destroy wildlife habitats and corridors, but could inhibit water resources with increase water pollution from urban runoff, combined sewer overflow, and sediment and erosion control. This could have *moderate, short and long-term impacts* to birds, fish, and wildlife.

##### **Alternative 2: Network**

The Network alternative can educate and control visitors through themed interpretive trails; however, it does not directly preserve wildlife habitats and corridors. This would result in a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact*.

##### **Alternative 3: Area**

Wildlife habitats and corridors can be maintained, revitalized, and protected through the landscapes within the Area alternative. The sensitivity of riparian and granite outcrop habitats are emphasized, while additional land would create protective buffers and could provide more habitat resources for wildlife. A *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* would result.

##### **Alternative 4: Cluster**

This alternative would protect key wildlife habitats within the clusters, but it would rely on existing and proposed greenspace to create connecting wildlife corridors. The gateways could assist in public awareness through interpretation, education, and hands on demonstrations. Thus the result would be a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact*.

##### **Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)**

The Hybrid alternative would revitalize and protect key wildlife habitats and corridors. The gateways would relieve the pressure of high visitation on more sensitive wildlife resources. The interpretive venues and trails would educate visitors, while controlling their impact to the surrounding environment. *Moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*

would result.

### Conclusions

The preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and corridors is key to the survival of birds, fish, and wildlife. Alternative 2 and 4 would provide *negligible benefits*, while Alternative 3 and 5 would result in the *most beneficial impacts* to wildlife habitats and corridors.

### Cumulative Impacts

The Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort provides many educational opportunities on the preservation and restoration of wildlife, while the Future DeKalb County Environmental School would utilize the AMHA as a living laboratory to teach students and the community. The Panola Mountain State Conservation Park is planning for the creation of the Power of Flight Bird Habitat for the preservation of migratory birds. Bird watching tours already occur at Arabia and Panola Mountain. These initiatives would be enhanced by the implementation of any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1, resulting in *long-term beneficial impacts*. Continued residential and commercial development would potentially cause *short to long-term adverse impacts* by displacing wildlife through the removal of their habitats.

#### 4.1.5 Air Quality

##### Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local policies. Therefore, continued development and growth, coupled with a lack of initiative to provide alternative means of travel, could cause a *minor, long-term adverse impact* on the air quality within the Heritage Area. With the No Action alternative, the automobile is the sole means of transportation in the Heritage Area.

##### Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative focuses on the expansion of the existing multi-use trail system to experience the Heritage Area. This would result in *minor, long-term beneficial impact* on air quality by providing an alternate means of transportation via the multi-use

trail system and potential trolley and shuttle services along key driving routes.

##### Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative works in conjunction with the existing and future multi-use trail system, and would have a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact* on air quality. This alternative does not focus on the trail system, but does utilize it to connect between cultural landscapes. It also aids in preserving and buffering key environmental resources that assist with filtering pollutants.

##### Alternative 4: Cluster

Cluster alternative centralizes visitors at one location to provide education and interpretation. Use of trails would be encouraged to connect clusters. This alternative would have a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact* by encouraging the use of alternative means of transportation and by clustering uses so less driving is required.

##### Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative focuses on trail linkages and the use of alternative transportation within the Heritage Area, via shuttle service and trolleys. The encouragement of alternative means of travel, other than the single-occupancy automobile, will result in *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

### Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would result in some means of *beneficial impacts* to air quality by providing or encouraging the use of alternative transportation and promoting sustainable planning. No Action could cause *adverse impacts*.

### Cumulative Impacts

According to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) factors that will help to improve air quality will be increased use of alternate transportation, planning that links transportation with land uses, and increasing efficiency of existing transportation and land use infrastructure. The Plans by the Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia DOT, the City of Lithonia, and the Counties present strategies for land use, infrastructure, and

transportation that would assist in improving air quality. Although, these plans do not control or guide all development, and increased development would result in *adverse impacts* due to increased pollution from traffic and structures. The Path Foundation has completed miles of multi-use trails in the AMHA and their Master Plan provides for more. This provides an alternate form of transportation for both residents and visitors. Traffic congestion and air pollution in the area would be lessened by the continued construction of the multi-use greenway trail system in the Heritage Area. The combined efforts of these on-going plans with either alternatives 2 or 5 would result in *long-term beneficial impacts*. The implementation of either alternative 3 or 4 would result in lesser beneficial impacts.

## 4.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

All of the cultural, archeological, and historical resources of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area are non-renewable. Planning efforts need to be made now to ensure the preservation and protection of these sites and structures. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would all result in some means of *long-term beneficial impacts* to the cultural resources, while the No Action could lead to *major, long-term adverse impacts*.

### 4.2.1 Archeological Resources

#### Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local practices. There is a high likelihood that the total number of archeological sites is many times that known today. The lack of programming and push to conduct more intensive archeological surveys and to provide protection for known sites combined with increased development could lead to *major, long-term adverse impacts* to this non-renewable resource.

#### Alternative 2: Network

The themed route system of the Network alternative would provide interpretation and educational opportunities on known archeological sites and the potential locations of others. This alternative would result in *minor, long-term beneficial*

*impacts*.

#### Alternative 3: Area

By emphasizing the preservation and conservation of cultural landscapes, especially the South River Early Settlement Landscape, the Area alternative would protect many known archeological sites and high potential areas for additional sites. This combined with the interpretation opportunities would result in *moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*.

#### Alternative 4: Cluster

Through the use of interpretive sites and gateways, this alternative can create awareness and provide educational opportunities on past generations and their archeological remains and artifacts. *Minor, long-term beneficial impacts* would result.

#### Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

This alternative would have a *major, long-term beneficial impact* by providing a layering approach of components to educate and promote preservation of key archeological resources. The focus areas highlight landscapes and corridors with high potential for archeological sites, while the themed route system and gateways provide interpretation and appreciation of key resources.

## Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would result in *minor to moderate benefits*, while alternative 5 would result in significant and *major benefits*. The No Action alternative could result in the destruction of non-renewable archeological resources and thus cause many *adverse impacts*.

## Cumulative Impacts

Since very little intensive archaeological surveys have been conducted in the Heritage Area and it contains a major river and various third and fourth rank streams, there is a high likelihood that the total number of sites is many times that known today. To avoid unintentionally impacting these non-renewable resources and to provide information with which to study the every day life of the people who have lived here, the undiscovered sites need to be found and managed within a well thought out

framework. Local jurisdictions need to ensure that archaeological resources are documented appropriately and preserved on development plans. Development can destroy and permanently displace archaeological resources resulting in *long-term adverse impacts*. Plans occurring in the area do increase the amount of preserved land, especially on riparian corridors, which will aid in the protection of archaeological features. Even more so, the implementation of either alternative 2 or 4 or especially 3 or 5 combined with other area plans would result in *long-term beneficial impacts* due to education and preservation.

#### 4.2.2 Cultural and Historical Resources

##### **Alternative 1: No Action.**

The No action alternative would continue local practices, and would not implement any additional programs to conserve and protect the Heritage Area's resources. This lack of programming could lead to a loss of existing resources. This alternative would cause a *major, long-term adverse impact* on cultural and historic resources in the Heritage Area.

##### **Alternative 2: Network**

The Network alternative would emphasize preservation through programs that would highlight the Heritage Area's cultural sites and historic structures for educational and interpretive uses. The driving and trail system would provide interpretive links to key cultural and historic venues. This alternative would cause a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* on preservation in the Heritage Area.

##### **Alternative 3: Area**

The Area alternative would place emphasis on conserving key historic and cultural landscapes through programs, interpretive opportunities, and identification. By highlighting selected environments in this alternative, visitors would be able to experience the relationship between people and the land and the importance of preserving the stories they tell. This alternative would cause a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* on historic preservation in the Heritage Area.

##### **Alternative 4: Cluster**

By promoting existing historic and culturally significant sites as gateways, the Cluster alternative protects and restores the historic character of the Heritage Area. Encouraging the revitalization of downtown Lithonia and development of a interpretive center along the South River are similar programs that will preserve the Heritage Area's cultural resources. This alternative would cause a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* on preservation in the Heritage Area.

##### **Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)**

By combining the effort of landscape preservation with the conservation efforts of revitalizing historically significant buildings and sites, the Hybrid alternative will have the most significant effect by promoting parallel programs for protection of the Heritage Area's resources. Utilizing former homesteads as visitor centers or interpretive facilities, coupled with visitors' hands-on experience in unique landscapes will have a *major, long-term beneficial impact*.

#### **Conclusions**

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would have a *beneficial impact* on the historic and cultural resources, with Alternative 5 providing the most significant to the Heritage Area. The No Action alternative could *negatively impact* the Heritage Area in the *long-term*.

#### **Cumulative Impacts**

Through the effort of both public and private entities, five of the oldest historic homes in the Heritage Area have been protected. Examples include the Parker home on the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit working to preserve the granite Susong home. Coordination between the AMHA Alliance and DeKalb County facilitated moving the historic Ragsdale home to protected park land so that it would not be destroyed by development. The Georgia State University History Department has played an active role in identifying historic structures and promoted the nomination of the Klondike and Proposed Lithonia Historic Districts. These efforts combined with any one of

the alternatives, except alternative 1, would promote the continued conservation of the Heritage Area's historic resources particularly granite, resulting in an appreciation of the Heritage Area's cultural heritage and a *long-term beneficial impact* on the Heritage Area's historic resources.

### 4.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Alternative 2, 3, 4, and 5 may cause *negligible, short-term adverse impacts* due to construction of trails and interpretive gateways and venues and high visitation; however, the *long-term beneficial impacts* of these alternatives to the socio-economic resources far outweighs the *long-term adverse impacts* of the No Action, Alternative 1.

#### 4.3.1 Recreation/Open Space Resources

##### Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local practices, and would not expand the recreational resources of the Heritage Area. Recreational amenities in the Heritage Area may expand by outside interests, yet would neither be encouraged or discouraged by this alternative. This alternative would cause a *negligible, long-term adverse impact* on promoting tourism in the Heritage Area.

##### Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative would greatly expand the existing multi-use trail system in the Heritage Area. As planned, the multi-use network would encompass many miles of greenway trails, including rest facilities, interpretation and visitor information. This alternative would cause a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* on encouraging recreation in the Heritage Area.

##### Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative utilizes multi-use trails for connectivity, and therefore, promotes the expansion of the system. The sensitivity of riparian and granite outcrop habitats would be preserved, while additional land would create protective buffers and could accommodate more active recreation uses. This alternative would have *minor, long-term beneficial*

*impact* on recreation resources.

##### Alternative 4: Cluster

The Cluster alternative emphasizes activities within gateway locations, promoting educational and hands-on activities, as well as linkages to other gateways via multi-use trails. Each gateway allows the visitor to experience the resources of the Heritage Area through hiking, interpretive signage, wayside exhibits and hands-on activities, such as a children's quarrying exhibit. This alternative would have *negligible, long-term beneficial impact* on recreation resources.

##### Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative expands the Heritage Area's recreational resources by promoting the expansion of the existing multi-use trail network, through connectivity of greenspace, the promotion of river and wildlife activities (canoeing, kayaking, bird-watching, hiking, etc). This alternative would enhance and promote the recreational resources of the Heritage Area, and encourages programs that engage the visitor to 'experience' the Heritage Area. Thus, this alternative would have a *major, long-term beneficial impact*.

### Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would have a *beneficial impact* on the recreation resources, with Alternative 5 providing the most significant to the Heritage Area. The No Action alternative could *negatively impact* the Heritage Area in the *long-term*.

### Cumulative Impacts

The AMHA Alliance has been coordinating with the Counties, State, and private entities on creating greenway corridors and linkages, especially around Arabia Mountain and along the South River. This combined with on going GDOT mitigation has resulted in thousands of additional greenspace acres within the AMHA. The Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion will be providing additional day-use activities, camping, and hiking trails. In addition, the Path Foundation completed and planned multi-use trails provide key greenspace connections. Recreation development may increase, due to the popularity of the existing multi-use trail,

additional greenspace acreage, and the demand by future residents. The implementation of any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1 would enhance the effort of the other groups/plans. This would result in *long-term beneficial impacts* to recreational resources in the AMHA.

#### 4.3.2 Regional Growth and Land Use Pressures

The Alliance promotes sustainability and seeks to set a national standard for “Smart Growth” in its approach to the development, conservation and preservation of Arabia Mountain and its surrounding lands. As stated in their mission, they work to ensure that recreational, natural, and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors and well managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia’s heritage. The Alliance has succeeded in gathering environmentalists, developers, politicians, and community members into a uniquely cooperative organization, dedicated to preserving several thousand acres of land in the heart of Atlanta’s next big expansion area, while promoting the harmonious development of that area into thriving communities.

The Preferred Plan/Alternative for the AMHA would not determine land use and zoning, but it should be a sustainable plan. In order to provide *long-term beneficial impacts*, the alternatives should strive to incorporate sustainable planning principles and promote sustainable development and smart growth. As defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, “Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable planning provides a balance between the limited renewable and non-renewable resources and community needs. The Smart Communities Network writes “sustainable development provides a framework under which communities can use resources efficiently, create efficient infrastructures, protect and enhance quality of life, and create new

businesses to strengthen their economies.”

#### Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local policies. Therefore, continued development and growth, coupled with a lack of sustainable planning initiatives to protect the Heritage Area’s resources and provide alternative means of travel, could cause a *negligible, long-term adverse impact* on the regional growth pressures within the Heritage Area.

#### Alternative 2: Network

The Network concept engages the visitor via a multi-use trail system. This alternative would enhance driving corridors through beautification programs and interpretive signage and create trail corridors that would serve to educate, connect, and provide alternate transportation. These efforts would aid in slowing growth and promoting sustainable development resulting in *minor, long-term beneficial impacts*.

#### Alternative 3: Area

The Area concept expands visitor facilities and calls for the reuse of existing structures. It also buffers and preserves key cultural landscapes for future generations and utilizes the multi-use trail system to connect these landscapes and provide alternative transportation. This would result in *minor, long-term beneficial impacts* by slowing growth and promoting sustainability.

#### Alternative 4: Cluster

The Cluster concept expands visitor facilities and calls for the reuse of existing structures. By clustering key interpretive venues and connecting them with the multi-use trail system and potentially a shuttle, this alternative reduces the need for visitors to drive and promotes sustainability. This alternative would result in *minor, long-term beneficial impacts*.

#### Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid concept expands visitor facilities, renovates existing structures and promotes alternative transportation to experience the Heritage Area. This alternative would expand greenway

corridors for the trail system and for habitat protection and enhancement. Beautification programs would be promoted to enhance the driving tour. These combined efforts would result in slowing growth and promoting sustainability to create *moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*.

### Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would provide *long-term beneficial impacts* by enhancing and promoting sustainable practices in the Heritage Area. The No Action alternative could *negatively impact* the Heritage Area in the *long-term*.

### Cumulative Impacts

In many ways, the interest in open space preservation and protection of the area around Arabia Mountain has been prompted by recognition that there is a narrow window of opportunity to retain open lands, to encourage "Smart Growth" and sustainable environmental planning, and to protect important resources before land costs and the economics of development make such initiatives impossible. The Heritage Area is in the path of rapid development, located at the nexus between the denser urban core of the region and counties with relatively more open land. The influx of residents requiring additional services, the existing catalyst of the Mall of Stonecrest, and the proximity to downtown Atlanta will create increased demand for commercial and residential development. If new development does not utilize environmentally sustainable planning methods, then *long-term adverse impacts* would result. Any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1, combined with the many on going plans in the area, such as the City of Lithonia Livable Centers Initiative and the Rockdale County Stonecrest Area Study are planning ahead for changes in the area and promote sustainable planning practices to provide *long-term benefits* to future generations. Traffic congestion and air quality in the Heritage Area will be lessened by the continued construction of the Path Foundation multi-use greenway trail system.

### 4.3.3 Tourism

#### Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local policies, and would not include a marketing or tourism program. Visitation to the Heritage Area would neither increase nor decrease using this alternative. This would cause a *minor, long-term adverse impact* on promoting tourism in the Heritage Area.

#### Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative utilizes interpretation along the multi-use trail and a driving tour audiotape or CD to engage the visitor. Beautification programs would be promoted along the trail and driving tour to prevent or buffer eyesores. This alternative would enhance visitation and would have a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

#### Alternative 3: Area

Through the Area concept, the visitor experiences entire landscapes to learn about the diversity of the Heritage Area. This alternative includes interpretation and facilities and would have a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

#### Alternative 4: Cluster

Through the Cluster concept, the gateways provide visitors with visual and hands-on education opportunities at key locations throughout the Heritage Area. This alternative would include four visitor centers and interpretation facilities, and would have a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

#### Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative expands the visitor facilities to include one centrally located education and learning center, with linkages to other facilities and hands-on education opportunities. This alternative would greatly expand visitor facilities, provide a large central facility and promote economic development and revitalization throughout the Heritage Area. Beautification programs to enhance the driving and trail network would be promoted to alleviate eyesores. Thus, this alternative would have

a major, long-term beneficial impact.

## Conclusions

The No Action alternative would have an *adverse impact* on tourism, while Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would *benefit* the Heritage Area's tourism.

## Cumulative Impacts

Any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1, combined with the Atlanta Metropolitan Area as a well-known destination for conferences and sports tourism, the shopping opportunities at the Mall of Stonecrest, and the nearby historic Conyers would provide *long-term beneficial impacts* to tourism by diversifying the region's current product to attract other promising market niches. The AMHA has a great potential to attract visitors interested in nature, culture, and heritage. AMHA tourism can play a dual role in stimulating economic development while preserving quality of life and sense of place. Heritage Area tourism developers need to remain vigilant to developments that threaten or degrade the physical appearance of the landscape, and act to prevent or buffer them when possible. If not, *adverse impacts* to tourism would result.

## 4.4 MITIGATION

Recommended projects, programs and structures (i.e. Visitor centers) may require mitigation. These projects would be thoroughly reviewed and scrutinized with current conditions, and the appropriate mitigation determined as based on public review and comment, and the Plan's goals and policies. Jurisdictional requirements must also be met.

Some potential activities for the AMHA that would require mitigation:

- Traffic and roadway improvements
- Infrastructure Development
- Rehabilitation or Redevelopment of Existing Structures/Sites
- Construction Activities requiring land disturbance
- Development affecting Wetland and

Riparian Corridors

- Development affecting Cultural, Historical, and Archeological Resources

## 5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

The Environmental Assessment was prepared for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance by Ecos Environmental Design, Inc. The following is the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Consultant Team.

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## 6.0 COORDINATION

### 6.1 Public Outreach Summary

An extensive outreach process guided by the project agenda and schedule established for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan was conducted during the study. The outreach process utilized a variety of methods for engaging and informing the public including steering committee meetings, project database, direct mail and e-mail, public meetings, advertising, newsletters and a website. As a result of the many outreach techniques utilized, significant input has been received from the public.

### 6.1.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was initiated to represent the broad and varied interests of the Heritage Area. Twenty-one representatives from key stakeholder groups within the Heritage Area including DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry Counties, City of Lithonia, DNR, community associations, area businesses, schools and other interests comprised the committee. The group provided valuable insight into the climate and future goals of the Heritage Area and offered guidance on the plan elements, potential strategies and direction for the community meetings. During the study process, the committee met five times. However, committee members were also extensively involved in the promotion of the public meetings and participated in a variety of ways including sending e-mails and direct mail, putting out road signs announcing upcoming meetings, making telephone calls and other methods to generate and maintain public interest.

Steering Committee Meetings were held on the following dates:

- July 6, 2004
- August 18, 2004
- October 20, 2004 – Steering Committee Concept Charrette
- November 18, 2004
- January 12, 2005
- February 16, 2005
- March 16, 2005

### 6.1.2 Database Development

In order to insure broad public outreach, a database of individual stakeholders was developed including local, state and federal elected officials, key government officials, and the general public. Contacts used to develop the initial database were obtained from a variety of sources and included both mailing and e-mail addresses. A mailing list of close to 700 and an e-mail blast of close to 500 were ultimately developed with overlap between the two. The lists were used for notification of meetings and other newsworthy issues related to the Arabia Mountain area. The lists were maintained and updated as new persons/groups were identified and

others moved away. The lists were used for 7 direct mailings to include meeting announcements and newsletters, and fifteen e-mail blasts for purposes of meeting notification and other Arabia Mountain news of interest.

A database of media outlets (primarily newspaper) was also developed and used to notify the media about public meetings. The list included 8 area news publications. Additionally, representatives of the media attended public meetings to observe and hear first hand the presentation of findings from the study and feedback from the public. Several articles and announcements were also written to capture not only the public outreach process but also to inform the public of ongoing activities at Arabia Mountain.

### 6.1.3 Public Meetings

A total of 3 public meetings were conducted for the study and was the primary method used to engage the public. More than 250 people attended the three meetings. A written announcement was prepared for each meeting and mailed to the project database as well as distributed to area libraries. Additionally, 9 signs were placed at key street intersections in DeKalb and Rockdale Counties, and the City of Lithonia announcing the meetings. The first meeting held in September 2004 focused primarily on the Management Plan process and the Heritage Area boundaries and geographic area. The second meeting held in November 2004 provided details on the draft alternative concepts and interpretive themes. Also during this meeting a survey was conducted to assess the opinions and attitudes of the community about Arabia Mountain and the surrounding area. The final public meeting held in March 2005 presented the final concept (hybrid) and discussed the next steps for the project following the completion of the study. Agendas and other handout materials were also provided during each meeting.

For each meeting, the public was given the opportunity to provide feedback orally, on comment forms and at the various displays developed during the process. Additionally, a public e-mail address was established for the purpose of ongoing comments

that could be submitted at any time during the process. A total of twenty-three comments were received utilizing the public e-mail address. Individuals also used the e-mail address to update contact information.

Community Meetings were held on the following dates:

- September 8, 2004
- November 17, 2004
- March 1, 2005

#### 6.1.4 Newsletters

A total of 4 newsletters have been prepared and distributed to date as another method of keeping the public informed about the study. For distribution, the newsletters were mailed, e-mailed and posted to the study web site. The first newsletter introduced the Management Plan study process, announced the first public meeting and provided information on how to stay informed. The second newsletter provided an overview of the first public meeting along with the feedback received from participants. The third newsletter highlighted the October 2004 steering committee charrette that identified draft goals and objectives for the Management Plan. Additionally, this newsletter announced the second public meeting date and continued to emphasize the use of the web site as a mechanism to stay informed and provide comments. The fourth newsletter summarized the November 2004 public meeting where the 3 draft concepts were presented.

The Newsletters and release dates are listed below:

- The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan is officially underway! – September 1, 2004
- Community comes together to learn about the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Project – September 15, 2004
- Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Steering Committee Charrette accomplishes draft goals and plan alternatives – November 4, 2004
- Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan moves into design phase – January 19, 2005

#### 6.1.5 Web Site

The creation of the Management Plan web site located within the existing AMHA Alliance site was another important information tool for the public during the study process. The site was used as a repository for all information related to the study including the newsletters, meeting handouts and summaries, and all materials produced during the study process. A mechanism was also provided on the web site that allowed for ongoing public feedback.