



ATLANTA REGION PLAN 2040

Technical Assistance Panel Implementation Strategy Report January 2010

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SPONSOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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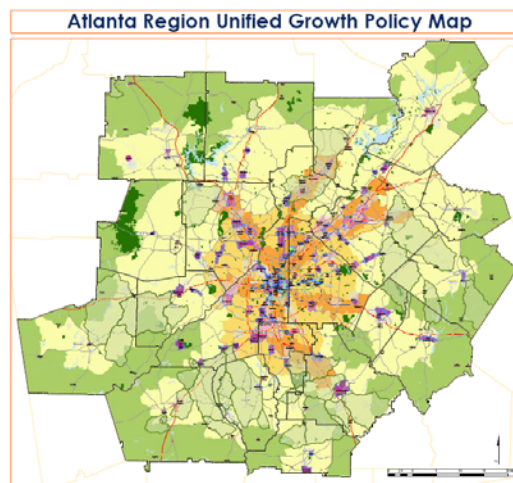
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



On July 28, 2009, ULI Atlanta assisted the Atlanta Regional Commission in re-evaluating its materials and planning policies for its 2040 Plan through its Technical Assistance Program (TAP). A total of thirty (30) panelists participated in the 2040 Plan TAP exercise. The 30 panelists were divided into three discussion groups to evaluate ideal densities and development types for a variety of land uses. In addition, each group strived to identify opportunities for new development and redevelopment. Finally, the groups evaluated whether or not Atlanta's current growth model is successful.

In terms of land use types, the groups evaluated ideal densities for three primary areas: (1) along primary transportation corridors; (2) areas without existing infrastructure; and (3) suburban areas. The groups also were asked how an updated Development Type Matrix might enforce these densities.

Along primary transit corridors, the groups viewed south of the city and downtown Atlanta as key areas for development. The group also advised the ARC to re-evaluate the IT3 plan to identify areas for future development. Infill development in suburban areas and in downtown was seen to be without barriers and within current market demands. Barriers to development acknowledged by the groups were aging infrastructure, availability of water, air quality, transportation, zoning issues, proximity to quality healthcare, and access to quality education. Participants proposed that the Urban Growth Policy Map needed to be updated to reflect these barriers and simplified to clearly outline acceptable development types.



The groups suggested that the current Development Type Matrix be simplified to include a broader range of densities for the various development types in order to increase flexibility. By allowing all development types to become more scalable, the ARC could open up a variety of options for rural and suburban areas to slowly introduce density.

The group agreed that the current suburban growth model was successful in the past, but - needs more flexibility in the future. Sprawling growth was identified as the key culprit in unsustainable growth and something that would require major policy changes to reduce. Regional cooperation will be necessary to limit unilateral local decision making and maintain the tax base to fund schools and infrastructure being utilized by many of the surrounding suburban areas.

	Mixed Use				Single Use Employment			Parks
	City Center	High Residential Mixed Use	Activity Center Mixed Use	Town Center Mixed Use	General Commercial	Office Park	Industrial	
Residential Density per acre	40	80	30	15				N/A
Job Density per acre	100	25	70	15	10	40	8	
Average Height	8 to 50	8 to 50	8 to 40	2 to 5	1 to 4	3 to 4	1	
Regional Places								
Central City								
Regional Centers								
Town Centers								
Station Communities								
Interchange Nodes								
Interstates & Limited Access Facilities								
Freight Corridors								
Urban Redevelopment Corridors								
Regional Strategic Facilities								
Urban Neighborhoods								
Urban Corridors								
Suburban Neighborhoods								
Rural Areas								
Regional Environmental Protection Areas								
Regional Parks								
	Residential Areas							Conservation 50% Open Space
	Medium Rise	Low Rise	Townhouse	Residential Small Lot	Residential Med Lot	Residential Large Lot	Residential Very Low	
Residential Density per acre	44	22	10	7	5	3	1	0.5
Job Density per acre	8	4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Average Height	8	4	2	2	2	2	2	2
Regional Places								
Central City								
Regional Centers								
Town Centers								
Station Communities								
Interchange Nodes								
Interstates & Limited Access Facilities								
Freight Corridors								
Urban Redevelopment Corridors								
Regional Strategic Facilities								
Urban Neighborhoods								
Urban Corridors								
Suburban Neighborhoods								
Rural Areas								
Regional Environmental Protection Areas								
Regional Parks								

Conditionally Recommended (Orange) Strongly Recommended (Blue)
 Recommended if appropriate contextual development is proposed. Recommended development for Regional Places.

Final observations were that the current growth and development model in Atlanta will need additional options to create the sustainable future required to continue the region’s success. Density must be increased around primary transit corridors and suburban nodes. Additional sprawl, characterized by low density and single-use development, can be limited by additional tools and options offered at the local level. More flexibility to offer development options should be utilized to discourage unsustainable development. Public policy changes are needed in a number of areas and the disconnect between informed practitioners and the general public be closed. Ensuring sustainable job growth would likely ease development issues, but we must focus on recruiting specific job types and be prepared to handle new growth and development.

The following three (3) questions are addressed in this report:

Question 1: What scale and types of development should exist in different areas throughout the region?

Question 2: What are the overlooked opportunities or areas of the region that should be a focus for new development or renewed attention?

Question 3: Is the Atlanta suburban growth model working? Is there a difference in perspective from the private development view and the public policy view? How can they be better aligned?

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Question 1: What scale and types of development should exist in different areas throughout the region?

- a) In the primary transportation corridors, MARTA station areas, and other major activity centers?
- b) In areas without infrastructure?
- c) How should we think about the range of suburban character areas?
- d) How well does the current Development Types Matrix reflect the recommended types of development? What modifications does the group recommend?

KEY FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 1

1a.) In the primary transportation corridors, MARTA station areas, and other major activity centers:

- Current density requirements are way too low and outdated.
 - Development along these primary transportation corridors or at significant nodes should be 40-50 units/acre minimum.
- Sunflower diagram should be the map for current and future development/transportation corridors.
 - Development should be encouraged and transportation corridors strengthened and developed to sustain 1 million people inside the perimeter highway, I-285.
 - Outside the perimeter, nodal development surrounding the city should be the focus.
- MARTA stations need to be better utilized. MARTA has been in place for 30 years, yet the Atlanta Region only has one or two successful transit-oriented developments (TODs). Many jurisdictions in the Atlanta Region never followed MARTA with the proper policies—this coupled with the fact that we just had the biggest economic boom of our lifetime and we still didn't crack TOD, is viewed as a big planning issue.
 - Arlington, VA is a great example of how MARTA should work to utilize development around the stations.
- Residential density must be aligned to support transit.
 - If bus transit runs through an area, then the surrounding density should meet the threshold needed to support bus transit.

- In developed areas, density of 70du/ac or greater is needed so that transit can support itself.
- If density is allowed in MARTA nodes, there still may be a disconnect of people choosing to live there.
 - People may not choose to live in a MARTA node regardless.
 - This goes back to variables such as education: families with children typically choose to go where there is a quality school system.
- There is not a lot of available land for TODs near MARTA stations.
- Mega-corridors could have a ½ mile radius in which density and development is intensified.
 - Dense corridors could transition into outlying neighborhoods with lower densities.
- A major obstacle that must be addressed is that redevelopment corridors need high densities to be able to redevelop (in order for the revenue from new development to outweigh the cost of the land and redevelopment).
 - And transit is needed to redevelop these corridors at the high densities at which they should be developed.
 - Transit will not be built without the densities in place. And building the densities without the transit only contributes to the congestion and traffic problems.
 - For example: if you triple Roswell Road's density, you MUST have transit. But yet, you cannot economically and feasibly redevelop without three times the current density.
- Atlanta needs grids!
 - We should follow Virginia and require new subdivisions to meet some sort of connectivity requirement.
- Developmental Transit—Denver, Portland are examples—put in transit infrastructure before the new residents and development come.
 - Make the investment first, knowing development will follow.
- What should be allowed is what is sustainable at the time.
- The job/housing balance is key.
- If a county is projected to have 40% growth, you have to accommodate the growth regardless.
- Local governments predominantly decide on development policies and regulations.
- We have to continue increasing density where we already have transit.

- We are certainly not over-capacity in those areas; we are actually under-capacity in most cases.
- The Beltline is the first step towards moving away from the predominant hub-and-spoke pattern.
- How about bringing the outer perimeter idea back on the table?
- The historical European cities like Paris and some American metropolitans like Chicago, have public transportation infrastructure in addition to the hub-and-spoke system. So the two systems are not mutually exclusive, they can coexist.
- To transition from the existing development and regulatory patterns, we have to build parallel infrastructure.

1b.) In areas without infrastructure?

- The region needs to adopt a comprehensive transportation plan and stick to it.
 - There is an entitlement mentality throughout the region that if “I buy a house in an exurban community, you will build the roads for me.”
- We should think about not cutting down another tree. The region already has so much underperforming asphalt, how can we justify more greenfield development?
 - Redevelopment, infill development should be the focus for the Region.
- The region has multiple local governments working at cross- purposes to maximize local advantage. This has always been a big problem when trying to limit certain types of growth.
- IT3 should be followed, with no more lanes added to freeways that are not managed lanes.
- Appropriate and realistic tools should be utilized: TDR, Smart Growth (you get no \$ if you build in area without appropriate infrastructure), build private roads.

1c.) How should we think about the range of suburban character areas?

- Some areas should limit growth: density is not appropriate everywhere. But low density must be defined and located appropriately.
- Education/school systems shape market demand.
- Utilize TDR.

- Find validity in getting people to use transit (bus in some places) to get into the city for work.
- The shortage of credit and mortgages may be a natural market shift closer into the city, where people are able to find rental.
- Increased gas prices will shift markets and bring people closer to the city. And not just gas prices, but the time and money people are wasting sitting in their cars will help reinforce development concentration into the five inner urban counties.
 - Georgia has comparatively low gas taxes. If people paid an extra dollar a week in gas, there would be significant revenue to fund operations of transit.
- Look at getting rid of 3-5du/ac.
- Low density is too expensive for a city to run. The message should not just be about emissions, smart growth, but also how this helps cities balance budgets and deliver services more effectively.
- These suburban character areas are the least sustainable areas.
- Future suburban development should replicate old development, pre-interstate. Service retail should be in neighborhoods, not just expensive boutique stores, but stores that carry goods and services people will actually utilize on a regular basis.
- Generation X and Y will demand good schools—somehow urban education system must be addressed if we expect a complete movement to move and stay in town centers and activity centers.
- Would polycentric mixed use centers (such as historic town centers and mature activity centers) throughout the region decrease traffic and emissions? Or should we concentrate on high density at the urban core, with decreasing densities moving out?
- The current form of an urban core, with 4 larger nodes, and 3 even smaller nodes has some aspects that work. Greater emphasis and detail needs to be placed on transit and land use within nodes – ARCs tools need more of a finer grain of uses in these areas for it to work.
- The region’s affordable housing policy is “drive until you qualify”—not sustainable.
- We should consider implementing an Urban Growth Boundary.
- What are different ways for setting policy? Transferable Development Rights is one way.
- There needs to be a framework to help curb suburban sprawl.

- We would like everyone to be able to have village town centers, no suburbs anymore, to create more sustainable development.

1d.) How well does the current Development Types Matrix reflect the recommended types of development? What modifications does the group recommend?

- Matrix should be re-assessed, simplified.
- Some of these encourage development patterns we don't want.
- City center should be much higher densities.
 - First 3 categories could be combined. Where would these high density centers belong?
*Anywhere near rail transit (not bus), within a half mile walking distance. Around stations there should be a minimum density.
 - To drive growth along mega-corridors 15du/ac is way too low. 30,40,50du/ac is more appropriate (although it depends on where you are along the corridor).
 - Rural residential 1:1 not appropriate. Rural density must be defined.
- Is the matrix an average or a minimum per project? This should be defined.
- In corridors such as Roswell Rd/Sandy Springs area—should FAR be used over du/ac?
 - Suggestion that use of dwelling units per acre may not be an appropriate metric for any area.
- A corridor mixed use category would be appropriate. Within this category a single block could transition from 5-3 stories, to ease the transition into the single family neighborhoods surrounding.
- Do general commercial, and office park really need their own, single use category? Don't we have few enough single use developments occurring now so that single uses could be eliminated?
 - This could be changed to: Parks, Industrial, and small, medium, and large commercial/office/res mixed-use categories.
- Dwelling unit density should be increased. Residential small lots should be minimum 8du/ac – this supports bus service. But even then, 8du/ac bus service will be slow. 15du/ac would support a more regular bus service.

- Dwelling unit densities should align with transit thresholds so that density and transit will work together.
- Suburban categories: get rid of large lot categories
- Outside the ½ mile high density corridor radius (mentioned above) is where some of the bottom residential matrix uses should be allowed.
- Simplify low density categories-think about what we want
- Is Vickery a good model? It is not self contained, most work in Atlanta.
- Urban agriculture, interesting concept that should be explored and likely encouraged.
- Office density rate→is it relative? What does it mean?
- We are not doing well with town centers on the land use map, which means we are not going to do well with open space either.
- If we continue to move towards design and form, we would ultimately attain a fiscally sustainable planning model.
- The fundamental problem with the land use map is that it does not specifically address suburban sprawl, which accounts for 80% of the land.
- Regional goals are required.
- Re-categorize matrix to have broader character.
- The matrix should not be split in half: Jobs versus Housing.
- To encourage context-sensitive design, we have to modify the matrix. We have to expand the medium-high density section. This category is more sustainable than the current low density development, and at the same time it is not too overwhelming to accept.
- To make the matrix more interactive, it needs to be more general to reflect the regional level.
- In the matrix, the residential breakdown seems too specific; you cannot get that specific with residential densities when thinking in regional terms.
- Open space should be a planning character.

SUMMARY FOR QUESTION 1

After round table and group discussions, it was decided that development in close proximity to transit first needed some variability. Requirements for a development near a MARTA train station should vary

greatly in comparison to one adjacent to a bus stop. Overall, the density requirements surrounding transit corridors were seen as low and groups agreed that a floor of 30-40 unit/acre would be beneficial.

In light of the current abundance of single-use development, ARC should consider eliminating options for new, single-use development. A preferred alternative would be to develop a sunflower diagram surrounding the city that illustrates and encourages significant growth inside the perimeter and suburban growth along transit corridors, in major nodes, and in areas that appropriately relate to the nodes and transit corridors.

For areas currently without infrastructure, there was general agreement that the main concern was regulating any additional growth in them. One proposed concept was that Atlanta adopt an Urban Growth Boundary to discourage this kind of development. Another option was to get central control of water and dictate growth patterns through the availability of that resource. Gas prices, traffic congestion and improvements in the inner-city school system were seen as natural regulators against future development in these areas.

The school issue was magnified in the discussion surrounding the suburban development. A major question was whether or not the schools in suburban areas will be overbuilt if people continue to move to the inner-city. Also, it was expressed that there is a need for greater focus on the job/housing ratio. Many of the tactics within this category were aimed at getting suburban communities to ease into density. One such tactic was focusing more on form and character in the requirements initially versus focusing on density. The density floor suggested for suburban development was 6-7 units/acre which increases to 8 in proximity to transit and 12 for all townhouse developments.

The development matrix needs to be re-assessed and simplified. A greater focus should be put on design and form in order to create a fiscally sustainable planning model. By reducing the number of categories and allowing each to include broader ranges of densities, we could better encourage sustainable development based on specific location. We must also eliminate the types of development that we don't want. There is no need for a single-use office or commercial center because we are already over saturated with that type of development. The density matrix should focus more on driving higher densities along the mega-corridors. It should also work to better define appropriate types of suburban and rural development in order to decrease sprawl and greenfield development.

Question 2: What are the overlooked opportunities or areas of the region that should be a focus for new development or renewed attention?

- a. Using the United Growth Policy Map as a guide for discussion, what areas may deserve “re-envisioning”?
- b. Are there new realities that the UGPM does or does not reflect?
- c. Do you believe that the UGPM creates any barriers to what the market demands?
- d. Are there areas on the map that are consistent with market demands and/or goals but may not be achievable due to barriers of one kind or another?
- e. What issues or opportunities are not currently being addressed through current infrastructure, land use and zoning practices?

KEY FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 2

2a.) Areas that deserve “re-envisioning”

- We need to re-think the map. Concentric circles drawn on map represent: Urban core (inside 285); then Suburban (outside of 285); then Exurban (low density); then Conservation areas/Rural
 1. Urban core – has lots of shades; does it need to be more general?
 2. Suburban ring – there’s a need for more complexity, more shades
 3. Exurban zone/conservation zone – these are not necessarily in the right areas now.
- The general diagram has not changed since the 1960s (just suburban sprawl)
 - Atlanta started as a hub-and-spoke system
 - How can we handle 4M+ with the same infrastructure? We should not just use infrastructure that currently exists, but we need new infrastructure added in as well.
- We need to understand the carrying capacity of current and future policies and policy proposals. If we go with what we have, where are we?
- Atlanta lacks a transportation strategy for its outer areas; Perhaps the city needs another mode of transportation outside of the core area.
- We need to encourage more in-ward growth/ infill of suburban ring. There’s significant growth potential without having to continue to sprawl outward.

- ARC should take a fresh look at the following: IT3 Plan (map should reflect plan); Pre-285 highways; Rail proposals (there are opportunities where rails intersect with major interstates, and new nodes could be created near these intersections); Transit toward Roswell, Buford Hwy.; Southwest Atlanta seems to be behind the rest of the city in terms of development- determine how to encourage growth in Southwest Atlanta.
- Other overlooked areas include: Either side of I-75/I-85; South of I-20; SCBD (challenge of negative perceptions); LCI areas (aging commercial areas); MARTA stations (opportunity for development around these stations); Park-and-ride land use; Areas around Ford and GM plants; and there is still more capacity for residential downtown development.

2b.) New realities

- Reality of the real estate market in the new economy:
 - Do we push people inward or draw the city further out?
 - Financing is tough in urban and exurban areas, so rather than investing a lot of money in huge urban mixed-used developments, plan for developments that are smaller- to mid-scale, such as smaller mixed-use, mid-density, “sustainable scale” developments (e.g. the redevelopment of the Mead Paper site, Inman Park). These are the types of projects that will be financed.
 - Properties under foreclosure could be mapped out to look at new opportunities in these areas (e.g. park land).
- Proximity to quality healthcare and quality education is a defining issue for future development.
- Simplify the map:
 - Section off land use designations and make it easier to understand (urban development, suburban development, etc.)
 - Use dots for scale
 - Map neighborhood character
 - Map brownfields and greyfields
 - Colors and terminology do not match on the current map and matrix and need to be made consistent
 - Develop internal vs. external maps (external maps should be easy to understand)

2c.) Barriers

- Water availability
- Water and sewer overlay
- Air quality (air quality drives growth in; water availability drives growth out)
- Storm water management (seen as a major barrier to redevelopment– do we need different policies?)
- Political lines can act as barriers to good land use
- Natural and man-made boundaries, such as rivers, streams and interstates
- Low-cost housing along the periphery
- Education/ School quality
- Healthcare
- Parking- It would help if parking requirements were market-based (rather than requiring one space for every one bedroom)
- Zoning- overlays don't follow development opportunities; Developers can get over-zoned
- Regional policies (approval process needs to be more efficient); It would help to streamline redevelopment in target areas, e.g., create "green taping."
 - Green taping does not necessarily mean that DRI thresholds should be lowered in redevelopment or target areas. Rather, means by which the DRI and/or other procedural processes can be expedited. Savings in time and some greater levels of certainty could serve as key ways to encourage the desired development pattern.
- The map should reflect green space connectivity (tie green space together)

2d.) Areas that may not be achievable due to barriers

- Do we want to go so far south on I-75? (see map)
- Use map analytically and forensically:
 - Map vehicle miles traveled and determine how it impacts people circulating through the region.
 - Map rail and other commuter systems; Look at transportation system problems and how they impact land use.
 - Look at 1-5 mile trips to identify opportunities for road connectivity.

- Look at school performance to inform future growth; Map where schools are and also how well they're performing (public schools and universities). NOTE: The performance of suburban schools can be fluid over time and not necessarily the best predictor of future growth (e.g. Forsyth County had marginal schools when the development boom began there). Universities are also a major draw for businesses, etc.

2e.) Issues/opportunities not currently being addressed

- There was a concern that the current development pattern does not create the types of communities that most people desire. An example was given that in the City of Atlanta's older subdivisions there is a sense of neighborhood and community identity as well as a sense of being part of the fabric of the city. In contrast, newer, farther out subdivisions have much less of a sense of community and connection, even though they and the older subdivisions were both originally built as market-oriented suburban developments. The ability to create "community", belonging, and connectivity in the suburban environment will be key to Atlanta's longer term competitiveness. Some of the areas that are marked as conservation areas on the map are actually prime for development; also, some conservation areas aren't shown.

SUMMARY FOR QUESTION 2

After roundtable and group discussions, it was determined that the following areas of Atlanta should be a focus for new development and renewed attention: both sides of I-75/I-85; south of I-20; South CBD; LCI areas; MARTA stations; park-and-ride lots; areas around Ford and GM plants; and southwest Atlanta.

It was also recommended that the ARC take a fresh look at the following: the IT3 Plan (the map should reflect the plan); pre-285 highways; rail proposals; and transit toward Roswell and Buford Highway.

Another focus area is downtown Atlanta: participants suggested that there is still capacity for more residential development within the urban core of Atlanta. Further, since Atlanta grew outward so quickly, there are overlooked areas within the first and second generation suburban rings that deserve re-envisioning. Participants emphasized that they would like to see more infill within the suburban ring, thereby bringing citizens closer to the city and preventing further sprawl.

The group also discussed new realities and barriers that the ARC should keep in mind as it considers the future development of Atlanta. Since the region is likely to grow by approximately four million new residents over the next 30 years, the group emphasized the importance of creating new infrastructure. The group did not believe the region's current infrastructure—much of which has been in place since the 1960s—could support an influx of four million more people. Other key barriers that the region needs to address include water availability, air quality, storm water management, transportation and parking, zoning issues and restrictive public policy. The group also noted that it's critical to consider proximity to quality healthcare and quality education when planning for future development.

Further discussion centered on the reality of the real estate market in the current economy. The group discussed the difficulty of financing large urban mixed-use developments, and it determined that going forward, the focus should be on small- to mid-scale mixed-use developments that have a better chance of being financed.

As the ARC further analyzes these overlooked areas, current realities and existing barriers, the group suggested updating and simplifying the United Growth Policy Map. The participants proposed that the map needs to reflect land-use designations so that it's easy to understand what areas are intended for development. Likewise, the group suggested that the map needs to be used analytically and forensically in order to determine how things like transportation and education impact development.

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Question 3: Is the Atlanta suburban growth model working? Is there a difference in perspective from the private development view and the public policy view? How can they be better aligned?

- a. What needs to change?
- b. What tools or other means can influence that change?

KEY FINDINGS FOR QUESTION 3

- There was in disagreement on whether or not the suburban growth model is or is not broken. One group said that it has been broken for at least two years, and that now is the opportunity and time to fix it. Another group said it has worked because it created communities, opportunities for home ownership, affordable housing, a higher standard of living and better quality of life for many people. After discussion, there was consensus that it did work for a period, but that we have outgrown it, and the current suburban model is not sustainable.
- Although the current suburban model appeals to a lot of people, it has precluded other types of growth.
- The suburban model “just happened.” It wasn’t designed to accept the amount of growth it’s seen. Now 60-70 percent of Atlanta is suburban.
- Growth is not a zero-sum game.
- The current suburban model has had various problems, including segregation issues and traffic (did the model create the traffic problem?)
- Are we locked into the model and lacking other options? We need to find a way to deliver land use better in the future. Perhaps the form-based zoning model like the one in Montgomery, Ala., would work but would require detailed analysis. The market is ready for new options (ahead of policy).
- We need to usher in a new era of less sprawl because sprawling growth isn’t sustainable. We won’t have the infrastructure to support/facilitate sprawl. We need policies that limit pushing utilities, water and sewage out and restrict infrastructure from sprawling.
- There was a discussion on who is paying for the services of Atlanta. It was mentioned that all suburban residents benefit from their proximity to Atlanta, but Sandy Springs, etc. are breaking away from the city. There is concern that they are taking away the tax base that supports the things

in Atlanta that they benefit from and enjoy. Suburban taxes are needed to support Atlanta's infrastructure, schools, etc.

- There is concern about the cost of living in Atlanta. According to the Brookings study, moderate income Atlanta households are spending greater than 60% of their income on housing and transportation combined. This means when you combine the cost of housing with the cost of transportation, Atlanta is close to San Francisco in terms of the cost of living. When you combine the housing and transportation costs, the majority of Atlantans are paying greater than their defined 45% cost burden. So although Atlanta can continue to tout affordable housing as a key competitive advantage, the actual combined cost of housing and transportation makes Atlanta among the more expensive markets. See: [http://htaindex.cnt.org/mapping_tool.php?region=Atlanta, GA](http://htaindex.cnt.org/mapping_tool.php?region=Atlanta,GA)
- The suburban model has hit the wall with water and transportation issues. Smaller communities around Atlanta were making independent decisions about water, transportation, etc.; these cities have now grown into metro Atlanta. We need to address these issues regionally and as a whole. The transportation issue and the water issue have reached a choke point. Air quality is also an issue that needs to be addressed.
- The current suburban model cannot deal with 2-3 major infrastructure issues (water, transportation and air) because no one who can meaningfully make change is in control. Currently, decisions are made at the local level, and the aggregate impact isn't considered.
- Groups questioned whether or not the current suburban model serves the aging population and increased diversity.
- We need to tie land use and transportation together, but the GDOT is a barrier because it controls most of the money.
- In creating a model that works, we need to listen to the market, but the regulatory environment doesn't always allow for this.
- The importance of bringing jobs to Atlanta was emphasized (sustainable job growth). Even in the current economy, Dallas, Houston and the research triangle in North Carolina are seeing job growth right now. We need to have 4-5 job categories that Atlanta targets for job growth. Suggested target categories include: medical, bio-tech, university and banking jobs. Atlanta needs to compete with Houston (medical); Charlotte (banking). We need to give these types of businesses an incentive to come to Atlanta.

- Before we develop more housing and retail space, we must have more businesses and jobs. We need to re-use empty developments for incubator space (e.g., empty big-box stores can serve as inexpensive space for businesses such as call centers; instead of sending these businesses offshore, use existing, cheap space to create more jobs). Empty spaces could also house trade-schools, high schools, churches, etc. Atlanta cannot support more housing or retail until the city has more jobs. To make this happen would require new zoning codes. We need to make it easier to get a permit (don't need to make new businesses/ organizations go through the current onerous process). We should simplify the "change of use" process and make it easy to re-use existing space.
- Pockets of vacant, paved land (such as car lots that are closing and failing shopping centers) need to be used. Over the next two years, we will see excess commercial inventory in mass, and we need to bring new businesses to these areas.
- Currently, there's a difference between what the private sector wants vs. public policy; we need consensus between developers and politicians.

SUMMARY FOR QUESTION 3

After much discussion, there was consensus that the suburban model did work for a period, but that we have now outgrown it. The group agreed that the current suburban model is not sustainable. However, concern was expressed over whether or not we are locked into the model and lacking other options. The group agreed that we need to find a way to deliver land use better in the future, and mentioned that the form-based zoning model (like the one in Montgomery, Ala.) may be a potential solution. The group said that to create a model that works, we need to listen to the market, but the participants acknowledged that the current regulatory environment does not always allow for this.

The group determined that several things need to change about the current suburban growth model as Atlanta continues to develop. Sprawling growth is a major concern, as the group believes this type of growth isn't sustainable. It was suggested that Atlanta needs policies that restrict infrastructure from continuing to sprawl. One panelist stressed that growth is not a zero-sum game. Other major concerns are water and transportation issues, which have reached a choke point according to the group. Air quality is also an issue that needs to be addressed.

In the past, part of the problem with addressing these infrastructure concerns has been the fact that decisions about these issues are being made on the local level. Several smaller communities have grown into metro Atlanta, and we can no longer afford for each community to make independent decisions without considering the aggregate impact. Rather, we need to address these issues regionally and as a whole.

The cost of living in Atlanta is also seen as a barrier that needs to be addressed. It is estimated that residents spend about 60 percent of their income on housing and transportation costs. While there are places within the metro area that offer cheaper housing, this usually means a longer commute.

Bringing new businesses and jobs to Atlanta would address some of the needed changes. Emphasis was placed on the importance of remaining competitive with other cities by bringing sustainable job growth to Atlanta. The group suggested targeting four to five job categories for job growth and giving incentives to businesses in these categories if they come to Atlanta. One panelist noted that before we develop more housing and retail space, we must have more businesses and jobs to support it. Bringing in new businesses would also be a great way to re-use some empty commercial development space.

In closing, the group acknowledged that new policy is needed in order to bring about the needed changes. Currently, there's a difference between what the private sector wants and what public policy allows. Therefore, it is essential to find consensus between developers, politicians, and the public at large.

The Experience (photo gallery)



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL PROGRAM

Since 1947 the Urban Land Institute (ULI) has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. ULI Atlanta brought this same model of technical assistance to the Metropolitan Atlanta area. Local ULI members volunteer their time to serve on panels. In return, they are provided with a unique opportunity to share their skills and experience to improve their community.

Through Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs), ULI Atlanta is able to enhance community leadership, clarify community needs and assets, and advance land use policies that expand economic opportunity and maximize market potential.

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