



# The Pulse of Progress

## Atlanta's Economic Monitor

Volume 2, Issue 11

November 2006

### What's Inside

- [Parks and Greenspace Add Value to New and Existing Development](#)
- [New Plan to Guide the Creation of Green Infrastructure in Atlanta](#)
- [Mayor Franklin Kicks off "I'm Seeing a Greener Atlanta" Campaign](#)
- [Green Buildings are Sprouting across Atlanta](#)
- [Atlanta is Making Visionary Investments in City Parks and Recreation](#)
- [BeltLine Update](#)
- [Neighborhood of the Month: Collier Heights](#)
- [Upcoming Economic Development Events](#)

### Parks and Greenspace Add Value to New and Existing Development

Everyone knows that parks make for happier residents, shoppers and office workers - but creating and properly maintaining parks and greenspace also has a positive impact on the bottom line for developers and property owners. Here are some examples:



- Property values abutting or fronting a passive park are **20 percent** higher than similar property not situated near a park, according to a recent study from a Texas A&M University researcher.
- Shoppers are willing to pay up to **11 percent** more for products purchased in shops along tree-lined streets than they would pay for the same item in a barren setting.
- The presence of trees increases a property's value between **3 and 7 percent**.
- A KPMG study of high tech workers found that the quality of life in a community increases the attractiveness of a job by **33 percent**.

The Peachtree Boulevard Project is an example of the transformative power of trees and greenspace. The Buckhead Community Improvement District (CID) is leading an effort to make 1.5 miles of

### Community Partner Links

[New Greenspace Interactive Mapping](#)

[Ft. McPherson Land Use RFP](#)

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### ADA's Mission

ADA is the catalyst for residential and commercial economic vitality in Atlanta. To accomplish this, we will:

Peachtree Road more livable, walkable, bikeable and drivable through the creation of 50,000 square feet of greenspace, a tree filled center median, 11,000 linear square feet of sidewalks and a five-foot wide bike lane. The Buckhead CID will invest \$8 million in the project and property owners have donated \$2.5 million in right-of-way, leveraging \$8.5 million for construction.

Coordinate efforts with the City, County, State and other key stakeholders;

Jumpstart redevelopment activity within the City's tax allocation districts;

Provide small business loans for expansion and start-up;

Supply mortgage down-payment assistance to low and moderate income families;

Issue bonds to spur residential and commercial development;

Acquire land for green space, residential and commercial development;

Implement quality of life projects in underserved communities;

Retain and expand existing business, recruit new business, promote the City and available business development incentives.

**New Plan to Guide the Creation of Green Infrastructure in Atlanta**

Atlanta's Department of Planning and Community Development is in the process of updating and enhancing the 1993 Parks, Openspace and Greenways Plan. Its goal is to lay the foundation for a visionary "world class" park system by creating an integrated approach for the creation, development and protection of desirable outdoor spaces.



The new Plan will establish an overall framework, strategic direction and an action program to achieve this vision. Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT), a nationally recognized planning firm, is the lead consultant for a team of experts developing a plan that will guide the City's parks and greenspace actions for the foreseeable future.

The WRT Team's approach to the project has two interrelated areas of focus. The first is to improve the City's current provision of parks and recreational facilities to meet the present and future needs of its citizens. The second is to develop a plan for Atlanta's greenspace system that creates a network of "green infrastructure." By embracing the concept of a green infrastructure, the Plan will provide Atlanta with a comprehensive framework that will help guide and integrate the actions of diverse people, organizations and agencies involved in protecting open space. It will also enhance the City's image, provide park and recreation opportunities, enhance land conservation efforts and promote smart growth and smart conservation throughout the City.

In January 2007, the City will hold a series of public forums to gain community input on issues, such as how to protect its sensitive lands, provide better access to parks and create vibrant streetscapes throughout the City. The consultant team will present its recommendations to the City Council in the fall of 2007.

For more information, contact Dee Merriam, Parks, Open Space, and Greenways Planner, City of Atlanta at [dmerriam@atlantaga.gov](mailto:dmerriam@atlantaga.gov) or 404-330-6143.

**Mayor Franklin Kicks off "I'm Seeing a Greener Atlanta" Campaign**

As of October 26, 2006, Mayor Shirley Franklin and 323 mayors representing over 50 million Americans have signed the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement making a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to seven percent below 1990 levels by the year 2012.

To inaugurate her commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Mayor Franklin recently hosted the U.S. Conference of Mayors Second National Summit on Energy and the Environment, "Implementing the 2030 Challenge." This summit brought together mayors, business leaders, developers, retailers and architects from across the country to discuss strategies for attaining the goals and objectives set forth in the Carbon Neutral 2030 Challenge. With the goal of all buildings being carbon neutral by 2030, the challenge was unanimously adopted by the mayors. If this goal is achieved, scientists estimate that greenhouse gas emission levels will be reduced enough to reverse the negative impact of global warming.

Summit attendees shared best practices, as well as determined effective strategies, incentives and solutions that will make this goal achievable. Guest speakers included Ray Anderson, Founder and Chairman for Interface, Inc. who is known as the "greenest" chief executive in America and Ed Mazria, an award-winning architect that is currently working with cities to meet the 2030 Challenge.

To support this initiative and other greening Atlanta programs, Mayor Franklin formed an Environmental Green Team led by Dianne Harnell Cohen, Commissioner of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. This team will work with all City departments and stakeholders to develop an Environmental Action Agenda that will determine the City's short and long-term environmental initiatives.

For more information, visit the City's new Green webpage at [www.atlantaga.gov/mayor/greener\\_atlanta\\_102306.aspx](http://www.atlantaga.gov/mayor/greener_atlanta_102306.aspx).

To find our more about the Carbon Neutral 2030 Challenge, visit [www.architecture2030.com](http://www.architecture2030.com).

More about the U.S. Climate Protection agreement can be found at [www.cityofseattle.net/mayor/climate](http://www.cityofseattle.net/mayor/climate).

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**Green Buildings are Sprouting across Atlanta**

Atlanta is transforming its built environment and improving the quality of life of residents and visitors through green building projects in the region. Atlanta and the metro area have one of the highest percentages of USGBC LEED certified projects in the U.S. Building green can reduce operating costs, create healthier and more productive occupants, and conserve our natural resources.

Atlanta is home to 81 U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) member companies and organizations, as well as nearly 900 LEED Accredited Professionals, ensuring that the number of green buildings in Atlanta will continue to increase in the coming years. As of October 2006, the City of Atlanta has 33 LEED? certified and registered projects.



**Atlantic Station**, a national model for smart growth and sustainable development, totaling 15 registered buildings with over 8.5 million square feet, is a LEED Campus Pilot Program.

The Arthur M. Blank Family Office, home to the **Arthur M. Blank Foundation**, was Georgia's first LEED Gold-certified building and the Southeast's first Gold-certified office building.



**EarthCraft House**, created in 1999, is a residential green building program of the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association in partnership with Southface. This program serves as a blueprint for energy and resource-efficient homes. In Atlanta and the metro area, over 3,500 EarthCraft House single family homes have been certified, providing a long term pollution prevention impact.

Developers working with EarthCraft House to promote environmental policies on a larger scale, have created six EarthCraft Communities in the Greater Atlanta region.

**Glenwood Park**, a Green Street Properties mixed-use project, was built on a former brownfield. All of the homes in this community are certified under the EarthCraft House program, and the development features a Department of Energy Building America research and demonstration home that is open to the public.

**Hedgewood Properties** was chosen 2003 Builder of the Year by Professional Builder Magazine for its niche-based smart growth strategy and market leadership in design, energy efficiency and green building. In January 2000, Hedgewood became the first builder to commit to building all its homes to the EarthCraft House standard.

### Atlanta is Making Visionary Investments in City Parks and Recreation

Through the vision of Mayor Franklin, the confidence of City Council and the leadership of Dianne Harnell Cohen, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, the City of Atlanta is investing record dollars in its parks and recreation system.

In 2005, the City Council approved \$105 million in Park Opportunity Bonds, \$40 million of which will be used for improvements to existing parks and the balance for acquisition and development of new parks adjoining the BeltLine. A host of improvements to specific existing parks include new security lighting, tennis and basketball court resurfacing at 24 sites, ballfield turf renovations, pool and bathhouse renovations, recreation center improvements for 14 sites and new park signage for 50 parks. Significant evidence of these improvements will be seen during early 2007.

The current Five-Year Work Plan for the Beltline calls for another \$184 million to be used for acquisition and development of BeltLine right-of-way, parks, greenspace and trails. In concert with funds from the Department of Watershed Management, the City recently acquired the 138 acre site of the Vulcan Bellwood Quarry from Fulton County to be the cornerstone of the largest park in the City.

According to Ellen Wickersham, parks and greenspace consultant at

ADA, Atlanta made significant progress during 2006 in acquiring greenspace along the BeltLine from the Trust for Public Land using both Park Opportunity Bonds and Quality of Life Bonds. "The City also acquired parks and easements needed for the completion by the PATH Foundation of the Whetstone Creek Trail in northwest Atlanta. Using a combination of Park Impact Fees and Quality of Life Bonds, the City acquired land for the expansion of Frankie Allen Park and Ben Hill Park," she said.

Other acquisitions throughout the City are underway for new and expanded parks and trails. Later this year, the City will acquire property assembled by The Conservation Fund creating new access to the Morningside Nature Preserve using a grant from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation to the Atlanta Development



Authority. And, in early 2007, the Department of Watershed Management plans to complete its \$25 million Greenway Acquisition Program, which has protected over 1,200 acres of watershed greenway along priority streams within the City limits and south of Atlanta.

**BeltLine Update**

Brownfield sites in the BeltLine Redevelopment Area are prime opportunities for adaptive reuse. Brownfields are properties that are abandoned or underutilized because of actual or perceived contamination. Of the 6,500 acres of land area within the BeltLine tax allocation district (TAD), six percent is either unoccupied or partially occupied and nine percent is in substandard, deteriorated or dilapidated condition. These areas will require environmental assessment and possibly remediation activities to foster redevelopment.

To facilitate a brownfield plan, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded grant funding to the City of Atlanta for the evaluation of potential brownfield sites based on past or current suspected activities or proximity to sites of environmental concern. As part of this grant, the MACTEC consulting team performed a preliminary assessment of potential brownfield sites in the BeltLine TAD, identifying a total of 146 properties.

In 2005, the City of Atlanta was awarded additional funding by EPA in the form of two city-wide Brownfield Assessment Grants. These funds were used to expand the scope of the program and further analyze properties considered to be contaminated by petroleum and other hazardous substances. Currently, the MACTEC team is accepting recommendations for site assessment from the public and formalizing a process to identify, prioritize and assess sites, in addition to analyzing various remediation strategies.

Grant resources have also funded assessments on property intended for park and greenspace use in the BeltLine. In addition, the Five-Year Work Plan approved by the Atlanta City Council in July 2006 allocates an additional \$8 million for brownfield testing and remediation for key sites. Program guidelines for the BeltLine Brownfield Fund have not yet

been developed. Funding will be available once TAD bonds have been issued.

For more information on the City of Atlanta's Brownfield Redevelopment Project, visit [www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/brownfields.aspx](http://www.atlantaga.gov/government/planning/brownfields.aspx).

### Neighborhood of the Month: Collier Heights

Residents in Collier Heights are taking a leading role in enhancing their neighborhood's quality of life by improving their local parks and greenspace. With help from Park Pride, a non-profit organization that leads and inspires action for parks and greenspace, Collier Heights residents were able to revitalize both Collier Heights Park and the Adamsville Triangle, a small greenspace on M.L. King, Jr. Drive.

Using a \$500 micro grant from Park Pride, residents installed landscaping and a fountain at the Adamsville Triangle, creating a gateway to their community. The Friends of Collier Heights Park was formed soon after as residents began expanding their focus to one of the two community parks in Neighborhood Planning Unit H.



The older residents of the West Atlanta neighborhood were still looking for an outlet for their extra time and energy after their initial projects. Then, Collier Heights resident Barbara Leath learned about LifeTrail, an outdoor fitness system for older active adults at a park conference. "We began looking for something that would appeal to the older active adults in our community and we discussed options with Park Pride," said Mrs. RR Harris, chairperson of Neighborhood Planning Unit H. "The LifeTrail system is perfect for our community in that it keeps us active and healthy."

Earlier this year, Park Pride assisted residents with developing a new conceptual master plan for their park. The plan calls for new pavilions, woodland restoration and the resurfacing of the existing tennis courts, among other things. The work of residents on this and other projects shows how much neighborhoods value their parks and the importance of parks and greenspace in building a community.

### Upcoming Economic Development Events

November 9th, **Central Atlanta Progress/Atlanta Downtown Improvement District Town Hall Meeting**, 7:30 am, at the Westin Peachtree Plaza

November 9th, **Business Growth Expo2006**, Sponsored by the Atlanta Business Chronicle and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, at the Cobb Galleria Centre

November 12th, **BET Hip Hop Awards**, at the Fox Theatre

November 14th, **Logistics Innovation: Succeeding in a Flat World Luncheon**, Hosted by the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, 11:30 am, at the Cobb Galleria Centre

November 15th, **Downtown Development Day**, Sponsored by Central Atlanta Progress, 7:30 am, at AmericasMart - Building 3

November 15th, **Peachtree Corridor Task Force Public Input Meeting**, 6:00 pm, visit [www.peachtreecorridor.com](http://www.peachtreecorridor.com) for more information.

November 16th, **ICSC Atlanta Alliance Program and Luncheon**, Learn about Wal-Mart's urban development projects, 11:15 am, at the Wal-Mart at the District at Howell Mill

November 17th, **Atlanta Regional Commission's State of the Region Breakfast**, at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta

November 23rd, **Atlanta Marathon and Half Marathon**, 7:00 am, at Turner Field

November 27th, **City of Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan Public Hearing**, 6:00 pm, in the Atlanta City Hall City Council Chambers

December 5th, **Midtown Alliance Annual Meeting 2006**, Learn about the future of development in Midtown at the "Midtown Market Forecast," 7:00 am, at the Fox Theatre

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