

# The Pulse of Progress

## Atlanta's Economic Monitor

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### Celebrate a Greener Atlanta



Earth Day only comes once a year on April 22, bringing with it eco-friendly festivities and cheery reminders to reduce, reuse and recycle. Amid an influx of downtown development in the face of

severe drought conditions, many in Atlanta are realizing the benefits of moving toward a culture of conservation year-round. Mayor Shirley Franklin has made environmental sustainability a priority in her efforts to raise Atlanta's national best-practices profile. Sustainability is the latest buzzword, and Atlanta is taking steps to ensure that this trend becomes a part of everyday life.

For example, recent months have seen the opening of Atlanta's first LEED-certified multifamily housing project, Oakland Park. ADA President Peggy McCormick was on hand to celebrate the opening of this six-story LEED Silver condominium development on Memorial Drive in Grant Park. This certification means that a third party has examined the building for energy efficiency in terms of design, construction and long-term impact. Eco-friendly features such as bamboo floors, low-emittance windows, high-performance plumbing and energy efficient appliances helped the building achieve LEED recognition.

On a larger scale, the City of Atlanta's Sustainable Atlanta initiative debuted last fall within the various departments of city government; the idea is that when the public component of Sustainable Atlanta is rolled out later this year, citizens will be able look to city hall as an example of good practice. All policies and programs have been analyzed through the lens of environmental sustainability and are being improved accordingly or recognized for their success.

A portion of Sustainable Atlanta's private funding has gone toward the hiring of Director of Sustainability for the City of Atlanta Mandy Schmitt, who previously worked for the Georgia Conservancy and helped launch the BeltLine project. Schmitt will be responsible for implementing the recommendations of a team of consultants researching national best practices as to what public policies Sustainable Atlanta should adopt.

### Community Partner Links

[Celebrate Earth Day](#)

[Historic Downtown Walking Tour Podcast](#)

[Find affordable in-town housing with ADA's downpayment assistance program](#)

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### ADA's Mission

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

An overall goal of the program is to make Atlanta a "best in class" city, a leader in sustainable practices. These green intentions got national and international press recently when Atlanta represented the U.S. Eastern Time Zone for Earth Hour 2008. On March 29, landmark skyscrapers, businesses and homes in Atlanta went dark as they turned off all non-essential lights from 8 to 9 p.m. to conserve energy and express support for combating climate change. Nineteen other cities around the world participated as well.

Georgia Power reported that electricity use was reduced by nearly 4 percent during the Earth Hour event compared to usage during similar time frames, just shy of the City's goal of a 5-percent reduction. The average electricity saved was enough to power 1,750 homes.

Atlanta aspires to be a leader in sustainable practice. When it takes its greening from city hall to the streets, the City plans to partner with multiple organizations already working toward a more sustainable Atlanta to give guidance and provide incentives for businesses and residents alike.

"Our aim is to make Atlanta a community that lives within the self-perpetuating limits of our environment, while maintaining high standards for economic growth, environmental integrity, and social justice," said Schmitt.

For information on this year's Earth Day events and other opportunities to support sustainability in Atlanta, visit [www.KeepAtlantaBeautiful.org](http://www.KeepAtlantaBeautiful.org).

**Brand Atlanta Update**

Brand Atlanta is in the midst of an aggressive branding campaign for the city in multiple markets, in national magazines and on the worldwide Web.

The latest campaign theme "City Lights, Southern Nights" targets adults ages 25-44 and promotes Atlanta as an ideal destination for weekend getaways and add-on business trips. The ads feature such attractions as our Tony award-winning Alliance Theatre, nationally recognized dining, distinctive events and festivals and incomparable shopping.

Brand Atlanta has also produced a new [TV commercial](#) that showcases Atlanta's cosmopolitan arts and culture and unique attractions, as well as its down-home southern warmth, weather and charm. The spot was produced in conjunction with Turner Broadcasting and will air on cable channels such as TNT, The Travel Channel, BET and The Food Network in Atlanta's top fly-in and drive-in markets: Chicago, Washington, D.C. and Jacksonville, Fl. Full-page ads and promotions are also running this spring in Travel & Leisure, Conde Nast Traveler, Essence and Delta Sky magazines.

The "Sophisticated Ladies Getaway," the first of Brand Atlanta's recent promotions, was a big success in Conde Nast Traveler. It featured a grand prize "girlfriends' getaway" package, including a stay at Twelve Hotels, highlighting Atlanta's arts and culture. The Twelve hotel group has been thrilled with the results. The next major promotion for Brand Atlanta will feature Atlanta's award-winning restaurants and thriving cuisine scene. A sweepstakes for the "Grand Gourmand Getaway" will be promoted through Travel & Leisure magazine, American Express, TV ad

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.



tags and Web marketing.

Another major marketing initiative is Brand Atlanta's Web campaign, which is currently rolling out, including an interactive game promotion called "How Do You ATL?" Web banner ads and e-blasts, as well as print and TV tags, will advertise the game, in which visitors design their own perfect Atlanta getaway and enter to win it. (The game can be found at [www.atlanta.net/win](http://www.atlanta.net/win).) The interactive promotion also lets visitors customize a Web page that represents their personal Atlanta, built from a list of things to do in the city and their own preferences. Icons ranging from a mummy's tomb for the Carlos Museum to a Varsity hot dog can be displayed on the custom page, along with an uploaded personal photo. Once the personal ATL page is finished and has been submitted to the contest, participants can e-mail it to friends or download it as wallpaper or a screensaver.

Brand Atlanta's programs and branding efforts, in conjunction with the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau's long-standing initiatives, successfully achieved a 10.7 percent increase in overnight leisure visitors for 2006 over the previous year. This equates to 13 million more visitors and \$792 million in additional economic impact. The new campaign will achieve over 84.5 million geo-targeted brand impressions on TV, print and the web, with our messaging targeted to reach consumers in key northeast markets and the southeast region.

### **Working Together to Improve the Visitor Experience**

In an effort spearheaded by the Atlanta Development Authority, several local economic development organizations have been putting their heads together since last fall with the goal of improving the Atlanta visitor experience.

Because of a slowing economy and increased fuel costs, business travel is declining nationwide. Atlanta will need to attract more leisure visitors to make up for the loss in business travelers in order to stay strong. Employment within Atlanta's hospitality sector is predicted to decline over the next two years as well. The committee aims not only to protect jobs in tourism and hospitality but also to increase the number of jobs in this sector. As an industry, accommodations and foodservice is the already second-largest employer in the city of Atlanta.

The consortium of economic development stakeholders is working on the following initiatives:

- **Increasing awareness of what there is to see and do in the city.** Each year, 13 million visitors traveling by car stop at one of the State of Georgia's 11 visitor centers before arriving at their final destination. Our goal is to equip visitor center employees with brochures, maps and other information so they can more effectively communicate to the Atlanta visitor what the city has to offer.
- **Improving the MARTA experience.** MARTA will be endorsed as the preferred mode of transportation to local festivals and events through promotion of its online *My Commute trip planner*. Brand Atlanta will install its new virtual concierge kiosks at the Five Points MARTA station. Finally, Dr. Beverly Scott, MARTA's new CEO, has said that Five Points and other MARTA stations will also

be enhanced with better lighting and signage.

- **Improving the taxicab experience.** An educational training seminar for cab drivers is being developed so that they can become better ambassadors for the city.
- **Improving awareness of downtown parking.** The perception is that there is not enough parking downtown when, in fact, the reality is quite the opposite. Central Atlanta Progress has developed an [online parking map](#), hard copies of which will be distributed to Georgia's 11 visitor centers.
- **Improving the International visitor experience.** Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is upgrading the international terminal and customs area, where they recently installed more than a dozen plasma screen monitors to help direct visitors. These will also display a video from Brand Atlanta and the State of Georgia that highlights what there is to see and do in Georgia. Another video on "What to expect upon arrival," for use on inbound international flights, is being developed to educate the traveler about the customs process in Atlanta.

"Not only do we need to promote the good things we already have to offer visitors," said Sonya Moste, ADA's director of Marketing & PR, "but we also have to continue to improve the Atlanta product so they will come back and recommend Atlanta to their family and friends."

ADA is leading this effort to further a common purpose through increased cooperation and shared resources among committee members. Participating organizations include: the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau, Brand Atlanta, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the taxicab industry, MARTA, Georgia State University, Central Atlanta Progress, and the Tourism Bureau of the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

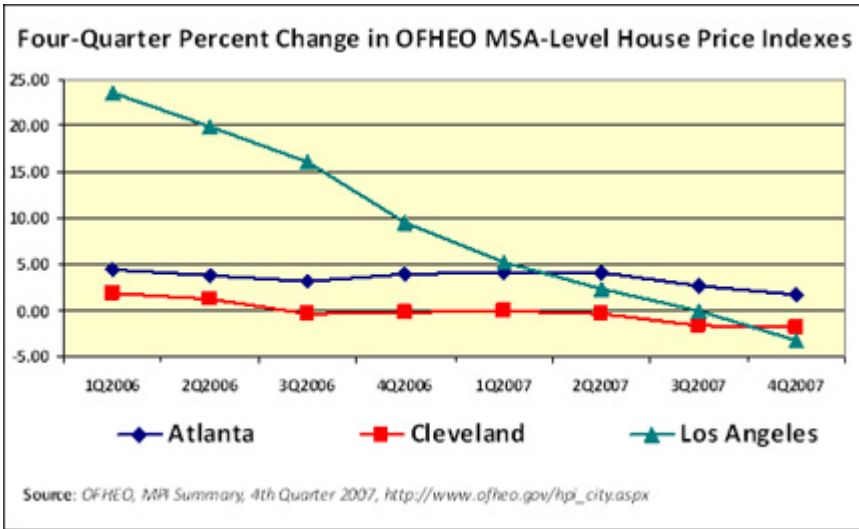
**Atlanta's Vital Signs: the Housing Market**

The Atlanta housing market has lost some steam in the last 18 to 24 months, but overall Atlanta has weathered the storm fairly well compared to other national housing markets. The data validates the healthy heartbeat of housing prices in Atlanta.

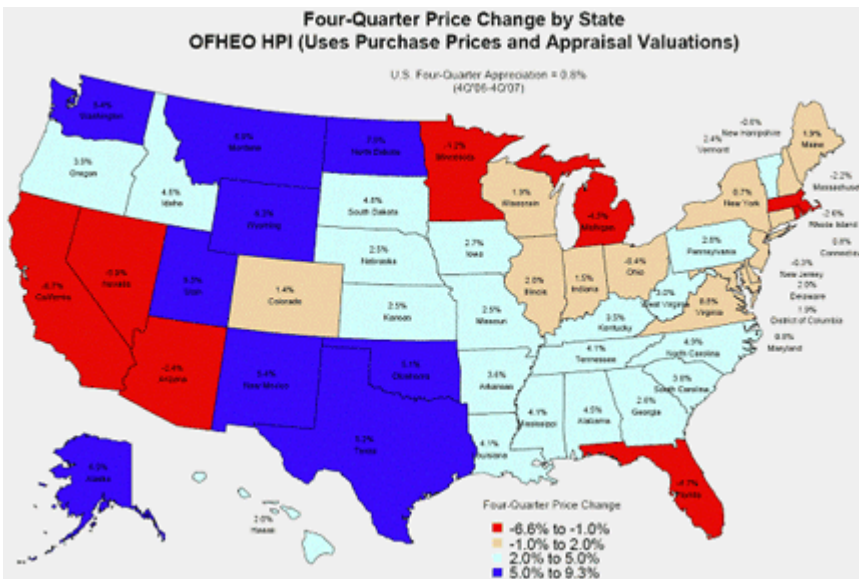
According to the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight (OFHEO), the rise in housing prices has slowed down in the Atlanta metropolitan area during the last three quarters of 2007.

Four-Quarter Percent Change in OFHEO MSA-Level House Price Indexes			
Qtr.	Atlanta	Cleveland	Los Angeles
1Q2006	4.48	1.92	23.50
2Q2006	3.85	1.26	19.90
3Q2006	3.08	-0.35	16.00
4Q2006	4.00	-0.18	9.54
1Q2007	4.12	-0.09	5.14
2Q2007	4.16	-0.45	2.42
3Q2007	2.72	-1.62	-0.12
4Q2007	1.63	-1.74	-3.23

Atlanta has continued to see increases in home prices, in contrast to decreases in cities such as Cleveland and Los Angeles. These cities were chosen as representative of pacific coast and Midwest markets.



Putting home prices in a larger context, national home prices have dropped 3 percent from January 2006 to January 2007. Home prices in the South Atlantic U.S. also dropped 3 percent during this same period. The following chart shows that Georgia's four-quarter appreciation of 2.6 percent falls within the blue highlighted range of state appreciation values. Among the states with negative appreciation values are California (-6.6 percent), Florida (-4.7 percent), and Ohio (-0.4 percent).



Source: OFHEO

Hit the worst are Pacific coast states, Florida, and the Great Lakes states, which are experiencing little to negative appreciation of home prices. This affects the ability of home owners to tap into equity or refinance to a fixed rate mortgage. In some cases, it even makes it impossible for some to sell their homes because they may be upside down, and the seller doesn't have the cash to come out of pocket at

closing. Thankfully, Atlanta is not facing this level of difficulty compared to the rest of the US because it continues to post positive appreciation.

Metrostudy, a provider of primary and secondary housing market information, reported that the number of closings on new housing construction in metro Atlanta decreased 37.3 percent (8,033 units) from 3Q2007 to 4Q2007. The number of housing starts decreased 56.5 percent (4,905 units) during the same period. The good news is that, despite these decreases during 4Q2007, there were approximately 1.6 times more closings than starts, which indicates that the excess supply of new construction units is diminishing.

In addition, Metrostudy reported that there is almost an 11-month supply of new home construction, of which there is nearly a 7-month supply that is finished and vacant. The positive difference between the 8,033 home closings and the 7,757 completely constructed homes during 4Q2007 is another indicator that Atlanta customers are buying down the oversupply of new construction, particularly in south Fulton County. Princeton Lakes (199 closings), Oakley Township (131 closings), and Hampton Oak (128 closings) were three south Fulton communities ranked in the top 15 selling communities by closings in metro Atlanta by Metrostudy for 2007.

Housing Unit Building Permits for Atlanta, GA														
March 2007 - February 2008														
	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total	%
Total	437	1,330	1,984	982	400	655	779	462	374	328	485	80	8,296	100.0%
Single Family	164	364	152	114	57	94	56	63	104	75	68	57	1,168	14.1%
Multifamily	273	1,166	1,832	868	343	561	723	399	270	253	417	23	7,128	85.9%
2-unit	2	2	14	4	6	6	4	0	0	2	0	4	44	0.5%
3 and 4-unit	3	0	4	4	18	0	3	0	4	3	0	4	43	0.5%
5+ Unit	268	1,164	1,814	860	319	555	716	399	266	248	417	15	7,041	84.9%

A 12-month view of housing permits for the City of Atlanta shows a declining trend for both single-family and multifamily housing. The City of Atlanta issued more than twice as many permits for single-family units as for multifamily units in February 2008. During the 12-month period almost 86 percent of the permits issued were for multifamily units, which consist almost exclusively of units with five or more bedrooms.

Atlanta's housing market reflects the resiliency of its economy overall. While it is true that Atlanta's housing production has been influenced by the national decline in home construction, the evidence suggests that Atlanta does not have a "bursting" housing bubble.

**Neighborhood of the Month: West End**



West End is one of Atlanta's oldest historic neighborhoods - in fact, the community, established in 1835, predates the City of Atlanta itself. Annexed into the city in 1894 as its 7th ward, West End is on the National Register of Historic Places. Last fall, the neighborhood was the first in

The Wren's Nest, historic home of Uncle Remus author Joel Chandler Harris, is Atlanta's oldest house museum Atlanta to break ground on its part of the BeltLine trail, which will connect more than 45 neighborhoods through paths and transit. Its portion of the eventual 22-mile BeltLine arboretum will be a "model mile" for the segments to follow.

I-20 runs along the northern edge of this southwest Atlanta neighborhood, which is largely residential with a concentrated commercial area along Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard. The houses reflect the historic designation of the neighborhood: many of them were built anywhere from 1870 to the 1930s, and, among the various styles represented, the craftsman-style bungalow predominates.

It was one of these "incredible" houses that brought Carl Nes, current president of West End Neighborhood Development, Inc., to the area 19 years ago. Affordable, historic homes are a big draw to the area, Nes says. "People are looking at prices in Grant Park, Midtown and Candler Park and can't see affordability," he says, "and they're seeing West End, five minutes from downtown, older, more historic and these opportunities to get into houses at under a hundred thousand." Despite the mortgage crisis, Nes says, there is a wave of homebuying activity in West End.

Since arriving in West End, Nes has been active in the neighborhood association. He estimates now that there are about 120 regularly participating members in WEND. Other active local associations are the West End Merchants Association and Our West End Newspaper, distributed monthly. "It's a composition of new America right in West End. It's really quite amazing," Nes says of the neighborhood. "We're an eclectic community."

Curious about West End? See it firsthand during the West End Tour of Homes, May 3 and 4. The weekend will kick off with a fundraising celebration and jazz concert at the historic Wren's Nest, former home to Joel Chandler Harris and Atlanta's oldest house museum. For more information about the neighborhood and this event, visit [www.atlantawestend.com](http://www.atlantawestend.com).

#### Upcoming Economic Development Events

April 16-17, **GEDC Industry Review Meeting**. Technology Square Research Building. For more information call (404) 894-1400 or e-mail [industryreview@gedcenter.org](mailto:industryreview@gedcenter.org).

April 17, **Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. Quarterly Briefing**. 6-8 p.m., Atlanta Public Schools Auditorium, 130 Trinity Ave. For more information contact Roland Young at [ryoung@atlbeltline.org](mailto:ryoung@atlbeltline.org) or Rukiya Eaddy at [ready@atlbeltline.org](mailto:ready@atlbeltline.org).

April 19, **Atlanta Earth Day Festival**. 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Zoo Atlanta. For a full list of events visit [www.keeptatlantabeautiful.org](http://www.keeptatlantabeautiful.org).

April 21, **Georgia Economic Developers Association Monthly Meeting**. 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., luncheon/program at Georgia World Congress Center. Speakers will discuss creative methods of economic development for communities, such as culinary and recreational tourism programming, followed by an afternoon tour at the Aquarium and an evening at Turner Field for the Braves vs. Nationals game. For registration and more details visit [www.geda.org](http://www.geda.org)

April 25, **City of Atlanta TADs Information Session.** 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Atlanta Development Authority, 86 Pryor Street, 3rd Floor. For developers, financing institutions, property owners and others. Learn about where Atlanta's TADs are and how TAD funding can be used. (Note: this session will not cover the BeltLine TAD.) Capacity limited to 70 people. RSVP to [rsvp@atlantada.com](mailto:rsvp@atlantada.com) or call Michelle Brown at (404) 614-8308.

April 26, **Atlanta Earth Day Festival.** 10 a.m.-10 p.m., Glenwood Park. For a full list of events visit [www.KeepAtlantaBeautiful.org](http://www.KeepAtlantaBeautiful.org).

April 29 - May 1, **CDFA 2008 Annual Development Finance Summit.** St. Louis, Mo. ADA's Cheryl Strickland will be speaking at a workshop on advanced tax increment financing on April 29. For more information visit [www.cdfa.net](http://www.cdfa.net).

April 30, **Small Business Monthly Information Session.** 5 p.m. at the offices of the Atlanta Development Authority. To RSVP, send an e-mail to [cbrackett@atlantada.com](mailto:cbrackett@atlantada.com) or call (404) 614-8295.

May 2, **West End Tour of Homes Opening Concert.** 7-10 p.m. at the Wren's Nest Amphitheater, 1050 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. Fundraiser and jazz concert with Theresa Hightower, \$25. For tickets and more information visit [www.atlantawestend.com](http://www.atlantawestend.com).

May 3-4, **West End Tour of Homes and May Day Celebration.** \$15. For more information visit [www.atlantawestend.com](http://www.atlantawestend.com).

May 5-6, **Vision: the Power to Transform - Georgia Nonprofit Summit 2008.** Hyatt Regency Atlanta. For more information and to register online visit [www.gcn.org](http://www.gcn.org).

May 5-6, **BioFusion™ 2008** - 3rd Annual Partnering Conference. Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Buckhead. For more information and to register online, visit [www.ebdgroup.com/biofusion](http://www.ebdgroup.com/biofusion).

May 28, **Small Business Monthly Information Session.** 5 p.m. at the offices of the Atlanta Development Authority. To RSVP, send an e-mail to [cbrackett@atlantada.com](mailto:cbrackett@atlantada.com) or call (404) 614-8295.

June 3-6, **GreenBusiness Works™ EXPO.** Georgia World Congress Center. For more information and to register online, visit [www.greenbusinessworksexpo.net](http://www.greenbusinessworksexpo.net).

June 15-20, **International Microwave Symposium 2008.** Georgia World Congress Center. The IMS 2008 conference will feature a large trade show as well as a wide variety of technical papers and workshops. For more information visit [www.ims2008.org](http://www.ims2008.org).

October 19-22, **IEDC Annual Conference: The Next Billion - Mobility, Flexibility, Agility, Livability.** Hyatt Regency Atlanta. For more information visit [www.iedconline.org](http://www.iedconline.org).

This newsletter published by the Atlanta Development Authority.

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