

GLOBAL ATLANTA SnapSHOTS

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



S O U T H E A S T A S I A N S

The Global Atlanta Snapshots were created to foster understanding among all people of the Atlanta region. The Snapshots show the rich ethnic and cultural diversity that our region now enjoys. The residents of Atlanta's ethnic communities may have lived in the region for a long time or may have recently arrived. They may come from cultures and have customs significantly different from each other's, and from those of the general population of the Atlanta region. What they have in common with the rest of the region is that they make it their home, and they share in and contribute to its success. The Snapshots introduce and portray selected communities in terms of their backgrounds, their customs and cultures, their roles in the regional economy, and specific local resources available throughout the region.

Who are the Southeast Asians?

Southeast Asia is a region with people of many different languages, religions and ethnicities. Generally comprised of lands lying east of India and to the south of China, Southeast Asia today consists of 11 independent countries, from Indonesia with its population of 245 million to the tiny Sultanate of Brunei, with a population of just under 400,000, and East Timor, a country of one million people. Ten of these nations (not including East Timor) constitute the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), an organization formed in 1967 to promote economic and political cooperation within the region. The Southeast Asian nations have an estimated population of 582 million, representing about one of every eleven of the world's people.

Southeast Asians have migrated to the U.S. at various times and for a variety of reasons. People from the Philippines have been migrating for more than a century, coming in several waves. Early in the last century, Filipinos started arriving in the U.S. for higher education, with the intention of returning to the Philippines. Others migrated to Hawaii to work in the sugar cane fields or work in agriculture on the West Coast. Since the 1970s, Filipinos have been arriving in greater numbers in major metropolitan areas in the U.S., often to take professional jobs and establish permanent residence. Immigrants from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam arrived in the U.S. in significant numbers starting in the 1970s in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and other regional conflicts.

In 2000, there were a total of 35,100 people originally born in Southeast Asia living in the Atlanta region, according to the U.S. Census. That number is estimated to have grown to about 39,000 as of 2005, according to the 2005 American Community Survey. Within the Southeast Asian community, the largest group living in metro Atlanta is the Vietnamese, who were featured in an earlier Global



Angkor Wat

Atlanta Snapshot. This Snapshot highlights Cambodians (3,500), Filipinos (8,200), Laotians (3,900) and Thai (2,100) in the region.

Cambodia

Lying on the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, Cambodia shares its borders with Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. Most Cambodians (90 percent) are ethnic Khmers; the balance are Vietnamese, Chinese and other ethnic minorities. Khmers are the descendants of those who established the Angkor Empire that once extended over much of Southeast Asia. After a long period of decline, the country became a French protectorate in 1863 and became part of French Indochina in 1887. Following World War II, Cambodia gained full independence from France in 1953.

In April 1975, after a five-year struggle, Communist Khmer Rouge forces captured Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital city. The Khmer Rouge evacuated all cities and towns, forcing the residents to work in agriculture in the countryside. While estimates vary, possibly two to three million Cambodians died from executions, forced hardships

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A PERSONAL STORY

Seilavong Doeung is a second generation Cambodian-American who moved with his family to the U.S. in 1975 to flee the brutality of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. They were part of the first wave of refugees who got out before Cambodia's borders were closed. The U.S. government resettled the family in Fort Worth, Texas after a stay at a refugee camp in Thailand. Doeung was six years old then with two older brothers and two younger sisters.



Like many other second generation, Doeung experienced the "everyday struggles of American life while maintaining tradition and adapting a balance between two cultures." He grew up isolated in Fort Worth, a city with few Cambodians. He did manage to befriend some Laotian, Thai and Vietnamese children. Longing to be with other Cambodians, his parents always made an effort to join immigrants in larger cities for social events, festivities and church activities. His parents made sure to instill their language, which Doeung said he understands and can speak, but can't write. English, he said, was practical and allowed for social and professional growth.

Doeung's father, who is bilingual, was educated in the U.S. in the 1960s and prepared for a time when he would be needed. The new immigrants needed interpreters to help with medical and legal issues and to get access to churches and social services. There were few bilingual people to help them. His father was one of the few and was sought after to help bring the community together for Christmas, Thanksgiving and other holidays. Doeung understands the plight of new refugees well since he relates to their experience. He knows what it was like to grow up divided

between two societies – the expectations of the traditional family and the pressures of American life. This shared experience helped him to become a mentor.

Doeung has been the director of Bridging the Gap, Inc. (BTG) since 2003. BTG's mission is to improve the quality of life in Georgia's ethnically diverse communities. BTG pursues its mission by forming partnerships that overcome cultural barriers and promote understanding between residents, law enforcement, educators, and other service providers. BTG offers interpretation/translation services, crisis intervention, programs for at-risk youth and gang prevention, diversity training, language-specific community education/orientation sessions, citizenship/ESL classes, immigration related services, technical assistance on cultural and foreign-born issues and programs specifically designed to assist the Lost Boys of Sudan.

Atlanta is a second stop for many immigrants. Many of the Cambodians Doeung meets originally settled somewhere else first, just like Doeung. In the earlier years Southeast Asians tended to immigrate to California, Texas, and Boston. Atlanta was unfamiliar territory then. The second migration coincided with the 1996 Olympics. Doeung came to Atlanta as part of the Baptist Home Mission Board, an organization that provides guidance to local churches on how to serve local communities. Doeung served Laotians, Cambodians and Vietnamese, through counseling, mentoring, and English lessons.

Doeung enjoys Atlanta's mild climate, ease of travel offered by Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and its proximity to Florida's beaches and the Carolina mountains. He also said that he appreciates Atlanta for its status as home to the Civil Rights movement, the Carter Center, CNN and the 1996 Olympics. Today Doeung is married to a Chinese Cambodian who works as an accountant.



Holidays Celebrated

In addition to other Western holidays, members of the various Southeast Asian communities may celebrate the following:

Feb. 18	Lunar New Year	July 4	Filipino-American Friendship Day
Feb. 25	Fiesta sa EDSA (People Power Day), Philippines	Oct. 23	Chulalongkorn Day, Thai
April 6	Chakri Day, Thailand	Nov. 9	Cambodian Independence Day
April 8	Buddha's Birthday	Nov. 30	Bonifacio Day (National Heroes' Day), Philippines
April 13	Buddhist New Year	Dec. 12	Constitution Day, Thailand
April 14 -16	Cambodian New Year	Dec. 30	Rizal, Philippines
May 1	Flores de Mayo (Flowers of May), Philippines		(commemorating José Rizal, martyr of the Philippines Revolution)
June 12	Independence Day, Philippines		



Southeast Asian* in the Atlanta Region: By the Numbers

Cherokee: 293	Clayton: 2,422
Cobb: 2,306	DeKalb: 2,219
Douglas: 189	Fayette: 216
Fulton: 1,905	Gwinnett: 4,045
Henry: 335	Rockdale: 95

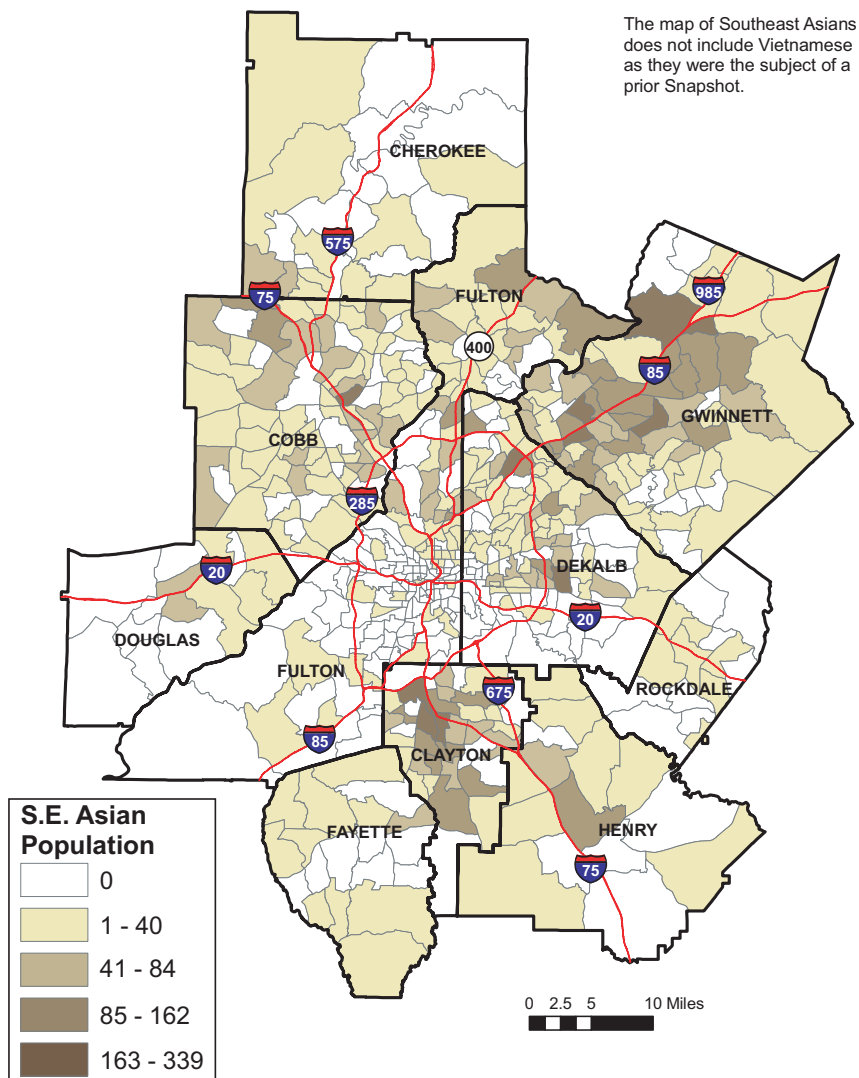
Total 10-county Region: 14,025

** (Does not include Vietnamese as this group is the featured foreign-born group in another Global Atlanta Snapshot)*

According to the 2000 Census:

- **Gwinnett County** is home to the largest population of Southeast Asians, with 4,045, followed by **Clayton** with 2,422 and **Cobb** with 2,306.
- **Gwinnett County alone** is home to **29 percent** of the Southeast Asians in the Atlanta region and **24 percent** of the Southeast Asians living in Georgia.
- The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately **42 percent** of Georgia's total population, but represents **83 percent** of the state's **Southeast Asian population**.
- The largest concentrations of Southeast Asians are found in Gwinnett County along I-85 and in Clayton County south of the airport.

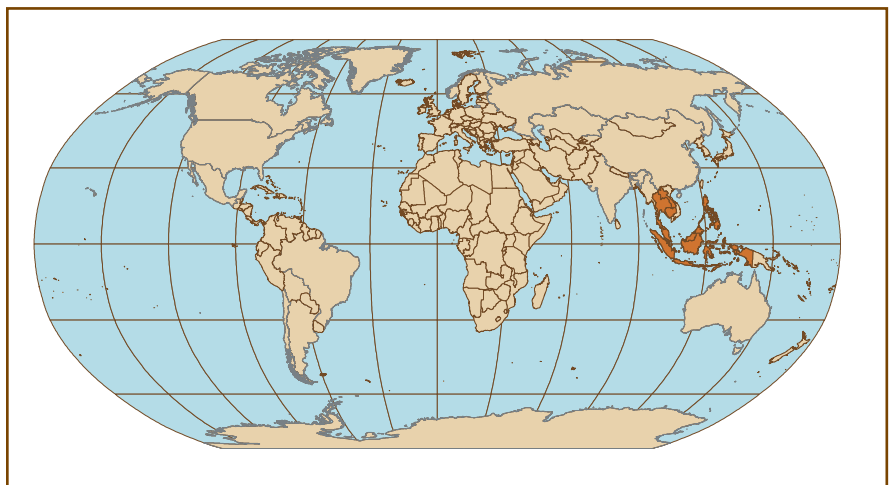
SOUTHEAST ASIAN POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



(Source: 2000 Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Country or Area of Birth)



Popular Southeast Asian desserts



Who are the Southeast Asians continued

or starvation during the Khmer Rouge regime under its ruthless leader, Pol Pot. Following the 1978 invasion by the Vietnamese and a 13-year civil war, the reign of violence in Cambodia came to an end with the 1991 Paris Peace Accords. While factional conflicts have emerged in recent years, political conditions are now relatively stable.

Laos

Laos has its roots in the ancient Lao kingdom of Lan Xang, the “Kingdom of a Million Elephants,” established in the 14th century. After centuries of gradual decline, Laos came under the control of Siam (now Thailand) from the late 18th century until the late 19th century, when it became part of French Indochina. The Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1907 defined the current Laotian border with Thailand. The name of the country is based upon that of its dominant ethnic group, the Lao people. Other ethnic groups in Laos include the Hmong, Yao, Vietnamese and Chinese ethnic minorities.

In 1975, the Communist Pathet Lao took control of the government, ending a six-century-old monarchy and instituting a strict socialist regime closely aligned to Vietnam. A gradual return to private enterprise and the liberalization of foreign investment laws began in 1986. Laos became a member of ASEAN in 1997.

Philippines

The Philippines consist of more than 7,000 islands in the Pacific Ocean, lying east of the Indo-China Peninsula. The main inhabited



areas are the large island of Luzon to the north, where the capital, Manila, is located; the island of Mindanao to the south; and the Viscayas, a group of islands between the two larger islands. The majority of Filipinos are of Malay ethnic origin, descendants of Indonesians and Malays who migrated to this Pacific outpost some millennia ago. Today, the Chinese form the largest ethnic minority group. Ninety percent of the population is Christian, the result of Western missionary work during nearly four centuries of Spanish and American rule. About five percent of Filipinos are Muslims.

An important turning point in Philippines history occurred in 1986, when the country's long-ruling dictator, President Ferdinand Marcos, was overthrown in a peaceful revolution led by Corazon Aquino, the widow of one of Marcos' political foes. Feb. 25 is now celebrated as Fiesta sa EDSA, or People Power Day, when Marcos was toppled from the presidency. While maintaining a democratic government through many changes in presidential leadership over recent decades, the Philippines still faces threats from communist guerrilla fighters and Muslim separatists in the south.

Thailand

Known to the world as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country never to have been under European colonial rule. The Thai people are 75 percent ethnic Thai; the balance of the population is Chinese (14 percent) and other (11 percent). The people are predominantly Theravada Buddhist (94.6 percent), with most of the remainder being Muslim. Thai is the national language, although English is also spoken by educated elites.

A unified Thai kingdom was established in the mid-14th century. A bloodless revolution in 1932 led to a constitutional monarchy. In alliance with Japan during World War II, Thailand became a U.S. ally following the conflict. Thailand is currently facing armed violence in its three Muslim-majority southernmost provinces. Thailand was one of the nations impacted by the December 2004 tsunami; several of its popular tourist beaches were hit by tsunami-caused flooding, with a total loss of life estimated above 8,000.



Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok, Thailand

Southeast Asians in the Atlanta Economy

Looking at the Southeast Asian community as a whole (Cambodians, Filipinos, Hmong, Indonesians, Laotians and Thai), it is easy to see the high percentages participating in the Atlanta economy as professionals in such fields as computer sciences, engineering and health care. Others are found in factories, food services and sales and office jobs. There are some notable differences, however, depending upon the particular community being considered.



Laotian Restaurant Owner

The Filipino community is highly concentrated in management and professional occupations. Among Filipino females, the 2000 census indicates that just over half (50.7 percent) are working in white-collar groupings. One of every seven female Filipino workers is a registered nurse, with fully a quarter in health care treatment or health care technician roles. Others are in office and administrative support work, finance and accounting. Filipino men are also heavily represented in management and professional jobs. Rather than having a specialization in health care, Filipino men are more likely to be found in computer science, engineering, sales and office occupations.

The Thai labor force in Atlanta follows a pattern somewhat similar to that found in the Filipino community, though with less involvement in health care. More than a third (34.3 percent) of Thai men are in the professions, with one in 10 in postsecondary teaching positions. Thai women are more likely to be in sales and office work (25.9 percent), service (21.5 percent), professional (19.4 percent) and production (18 percent) occupations.

Cambodian and Laotians workers in the Atlanta region have different occupational patterns than those of the Southeast Asian community cited above. Both groups are much more likely to be found in production and transportation jobs. In the case of Cambodians, the percentages in production/ transportation for men and women are 38.3 and 34.6, respectively; the comparable figures for Laotian men and women are 38.9 and 36.0, respectively. The men in these two communities have found a particular specialty in metals and plastics fabrication. Among Laotian women, their greatest occupation specialization is in sales and office occupations, accounting for 36.2 percent of the female work force.

Southeast Asians Life in Metro Atlanta

With one exception, the Southeast Asian community has adopted different patterns for their residential choices. Most of the groups select Gwinnett County as either their first choice (in the case of Filipinos, Laotians, Malaysians and Thai) or second (for Cambodians and Indonesians). Beyond that, there are wide variations. Both Cambodians and Laotians have established residential clusters in Clayton County. Indonesians seem to have equal preference, with between 350 and 400 residents each, in DeKalb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties. Filipinos have a notable concentration in Cobb County, while Thai residents are spread across five counties.

Examining Cambodians offers some insight into the experiences and the issues faced by the Southeast Asian communities in Atlanta. It appears that older Cambodians tend to remain together in areas they are familiar with, while younger people tend to move away from the core community after marriage. There are also a number of churches, both Baptist and non-denominational that have many Cambodian members. The core community lives in College Park, Riverdale Road and the Cherry Hill subdivision. The community supports two Cambodian grocery stores, a restaurant, a video store and two Buddhist temples, one in Lithonia and another in Riverdale. When asked about challenges facing Cambodians, Seilavong Doeung said that for young people the challenges center around misunderstanding and around relationships, education and vocation in the

context of managing their tradition and American life. People often meet in churches, temples, social gatherings and youth camps. In their own Southeast Asian country young people couldn't do things they can do here where there is more freedom, money, a driver's license, which can cause friction in families. There are cases of teenage pregnancy and marriage to gang members.

Southeast Asians bring with them a wide variety of cultural and religious traditions. Members of metro Atlanta's various Southeast Asian communities are able to practice their faiths and observe religious rites and celebrations in the region's wide array of Buddhist temples, Christian churches and mosques. The people from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand are predominantly Theravada Buddhists. Theravada, meaning "the Way of the Elders," is the oldest surviving branch of Buddhism. Roman Catholicism became the leading religious tradition for Filipinos. Those from Indonesia and Malaysia are most likely to be adherents of Islam. The Asian Cultural Experience (www.asianculturalexperienceing.com) is an event that celebrates the culture and heritage of 12 Asian countries. Each year, thousands of visitors enjoy two days of music, dancing, delicious food, fine art, native crafts, fashion shows and much more at the Atlanta Botanical Garden.



Southeast Asian Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with or have been established by local Southeast Asian Community. Additional resources are available at www.atlantaregional.com and www.globalatlantaworks.com

ARTS/CULTURE

Asian Cultural Experience

www.asianculturalexperienceinga.com
Note: Annual 2-day festival in July highlights heritage and culture of 12 nations.

ASSOCIATIONS

Filipino-American Association of Greater Atlanta

975 Cone Road
Forest Park, GA 30297
E-mail: nsalgado@atl-filam.org
www.atl-filam.org

Laotian American Society (LAS)

P.O. Box 48432
Atlanta, GA 30362
E-mail: info@lasga.org
www.lasga.org

Malaysian Association of Georgia

P.O. Box 78531
Atlanta, GA 30357
E-mail: mag@malaysia-ga.org
www.malaysia-ga.org

National Association of Asian American Professionals-Atlanta

P.O. Box 620035
Atlanta, GA 30362
E-mail: mail@naaap-atlanta.org
www.naaapatlanta.org

Philippine Golf Association of Georgia

Atlanta/Augusta, GA
770-887-6488 phone/fax
E-mail: jojoesco@aol.com
www.philippinegolfga.org

Thai Association World Center, USA

P.O. Box 96518
Marietta, GA 30066
www.tawcusa.com

BUSINESS

Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia

P. O. Box 888847
Atlanta, GA 30356
678-468-3599
www.paccga.org

GENERAL

Asian American Resource Center

6045 Atlantic Boulevard #222
Norcross, GA 30071
770-270-0663 (phone)
770-270-0979 (fax)
E-mail: aarc@aarc-atlanta.org
www.aarc-atlanta.org

Good Shepherd Services

2426 Shallowford Terrace
Chamblee, GA 30341
770-455-9379
www.goodshepherdservices.org

An Viet Center in Forest Park
4140 Jonesboro Rd. Suite B-3
Forest Park, Georgia 30297
404-366-8677

Lac Viet Center in Lilburn
656 Indian Trail Rd. Suite 106
Lilburn, Georgia 30047
770-381-2011

Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.

3760 Park Avenue
Doraville, GA 30340
770-936-0969
770-458-9377 (fax)
E-mail: cpacs@cpacs.org
www.cpacs.org

Raksha, Inc.

P.O. Box 12337
Atlanta, GA 30355
404-876-0670 main
404-842-0725 helpline
404-876-4525 fax
raksha@mindspring.com
www.raksha.org
Note: A Georgia-based nonprofit organization for the South and Southeast Asian community offering support services, education, and advocacy

MEDIA

www.khmeratlanta.com

Note: Cambodian community information portal

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

The Bridging the Gap Project, Inc.

77 Forsyth St., SW, Suite 100
Atlanta, GA, 30303
404-581-0044 (phone)
404-582-0021 (fax)
www.btgonline.org

RELIGIOUS-RELATED

Atlanta Meditation Center (Thai Theravada)

3552 Jones Mill Road
Atlanta, GA 30360
770-393-4259
E-mail: dhammakayaat@earthlink.net
http://members.tripod.com/dimc_at/main.html

Cambodian Buddhist Society

6533 Rock Springs Road
Lithonia, GA 30058

Atlanta Khmer Temple

P.O. Box 930610
Norcross, GA 30093
770-482-5563
Email: khmertemple@khmeratlanta.com
www.khmeratlanta.com/KhmerTemple.html
Note: Tradition (Theravada, Cambodian)

Kim Cang Monastery

4771 Browns Mill Road
Lithonia, GA 30038
770-322-0712
www.kimcang.com
Note: Tradition (Vietnamese Pure Land and Zen)

Laotian Baptist Church

(formerly Olive Grove)
2620 Sullivan Road
College Park, GA 30337
404-767-1000

Laotian Buddhist Community Temple

Wat Lao Buddhamoongcoon
2325 Hillside Road
Riverdale, GA 30296
770-994-9270
Email: Banrith60@prodigy.net
Note: Tradition (Theravada, Laotian)

Laotian Mission, First Baptist Church

P. O. Box 773
Jonesboro, GA 30237
770-478-6710

Lao Wat Buddha Khanti (Lao Theravada)

4052 Zoar Church Road
Lithonia, GA 30058
770-979-9375

Our Lady of Vietnam Catholic Church

91 Valley Hill Rd SE
Riverdale, GA 30274
770-472-9963

Rev. Oudone Thirakoune

64 Higgins Road
Locust Grove, GA 30248
770-977-0684

Vien Thong Buddhist Temple

2569 Ingram Road, Duluth, GA 30096
Contacts: Phe Nguyen and
Spiritual Director: Le Van Trung
770-840-7631
Note: Tradition (Mahayana, Vietnamese)

Vietnamese Baptist Mission

579 College St
Atlanta, GA 30354
404-767-1139

Vietnamese Buddhist Association of GA

Chua Quan Minh Temple
1168 Benteen Ave., SE
Atlanta, GA 30312
404-624-9782
Email: pv1@atlanta.ds.com
Note: Tradition (Mahayana, Vietnamese)

Wat Buddhachua

3094 Rainbow Drive
Decatur, GA 30034-1610
404-284-2416 (phone)
404-286-3457 (fax)
Note: Tradition (Theravada, Thai (Dhammayut Nikaya))

Contact:

E-mail: globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com

Order printed copies from the ARC Information Center at 404-463-3102 or download free from the ARC website at www.atlantaregional.com

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The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 62 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of region wide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • www.atlcf.org

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