

Appendix: Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) adopted the Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve its unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to its fullest potential.

The QCOs provide guidance for Regional Commissions, such as ARC, to assist in evaluating progress toward sustainable and livable communities. Pursuant to the Minimum Standards for Regional Planning, ARC must evaluate policies, programs, and development patterns in the Atlanta Region for consistency with these goals and objectives.

Through a variety of mechanisms ARC monitors regional progress in developing a more sustainable and livable region. ARC has inventoried and evaluated local plans and/or regulations three times in the past decade. In June of 2000, the ARC Board adopted the Joint Land Use Strategy, which directed staff to work with local governments to coordinate the Regional Development Plan with the Local Comprehensive Plans of each community. In 2004 ARC completed an inventory of local approaches to better managing growth in the of the *State of Smart Growth* report. In support of the *Envision6* RDP Policies and RTP ARC developed a local growth scenario that consisted of modeling the regional land use and transportation impacts of local plans. ARC has also developed a *Smart Growth Audit Toolkit* to assist local governments in auditing their local plans and ordinances.

Planning tools like the ARC's Community Choices program and Livable Centers Initiative are changing the way local governments approach planning. Through targeted funding and technical assistance many communities throughout the region are actively working to implement regional plan policies through local efforts.

Quality Community Objectives

Regional Identity Objective

Regions should promote and preserve an "identity," defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.

With more than 2,000 international companies employing nearly 115,000 employees in the metro region, Atlanta's dependence on the global economy is obviously significant, but the region also makes an impressive imprint as well. Metro Atlanta, home to the world's busiest airport, is the hub through which goods sold on the east coast are shipped. Home to 49 foreign consulates, 31 foreign-American chambers of commerce and 16 trade and tourism offices, metro Atlanta competes on a global level. If it were a country, metro Atlanta would be the 28th largest economy in the world.

The region is also home to vibrant urban centers, leafy suburban areas and rural hamlets that dot the landscape of the Atlanta region. The region is an economic powerhouse that works just as hard to preserve the feeling of a community. This balance will also be a key area of focus moving forward such that the region remains one of significant economic opportunity and region-wide livability.

The Atlanta Region is fortunate to have a wide variety of programs and resources to promote identity of the region. The Atlanta Convention and Visitor Bureau is the liaison that promotes tourism within the region. The Metro Atlanta Chamber promotes economic development within the region. The Atlanta region includes four professional sports teams, the Atlanta Braves, Falcons, Hawks and Thrashers that promote the regional identity of Atlanta.

Growth Preparedness Objective

Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

Through continuous planning efforts in support of long-range planning efforts ARC regularly engages with elected officials and staff members representing local governments from around the region. As one of the fastest growing regions in the country many conversations between state, regional and local leaders are centered on the topic of understanding the magnitude of future growth and identifying plans, programs and investments that can accommodate future growth in the region. While the growth of region has created a vibrant economy and substantial prosperity it has also created substantial challenges. Many in the region recognize that addressing the challenges associated with growth must involve close coordination and cooperation between many parties including ARC and our member local governments.

ARC does promote leadership and training opportunities for local officials in preparing for growth. In 2009, 287 people went through a Community Planning Academy (CPA) hosted by ARC. CPA are training for planning and other officials both as basic planning introduction and targeted classes such as Access Management, GIS training, and Economic Development Strategies. Also ARC hosts a Regional Leadership Institute (RLI) for leaders across the region expand leaders' knowledge regarding the key issues, opportunities and challenges that face the Atlanta Region. Additionally, for the past thirteen years ARC has lead cross-sector, cross-county leadership exchanges that bring together the region's most influential leaders to learn how metropolitan areas throughout the country are addressing the same challenges the Atlanta region is facing.

ARC has also developed policies and programs specifically aimed at assisting local governments, and therefore the region, in their efforts in better managing the region's explosive growth. The LCI program is aimed at communities that are expected to grow, but are looking to do so in a way that builds community and places less strain on existing local and regional infrastructure. ARC has also worked closely with local governments around region in the development of the

Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM). The UGPM is both a policy tool and a visual representation of where different types of growth should be anticipated and encouraged in the future.

While the region has made significant strides in preparing for growth the breakneck pace of development in the region has resulted in areas that are unable to keep pace, and also areas that have been altogether overlooked and/or areas that have experienced growth in the past are now dealing with the consequences of private development that has reached the end of its life-cycle. These areas represent both incredible opportunities, but also significant challenges going forward.

In terms of preparing the workforce for employment opportunities that will be dictated by future growth dynamics ARC is the administrator for the Atlanta Regional Workforce Board (ARWB) and is responsible for providing policy guidance for the Workforce Investment Service Area as designated by the Governor. This area includes seven counties: Cherokee, Clayton, Douglas, Fayette, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale. Separate boards serve the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, Fulton County and Cobb County. The Workforce board provides workforce solutions for dislocated workers, low-income adults and youth and for businesses seeking qualified applicants. ARC is also continuously investing in new tools that allow us to understand global and national growth dynamics and how these factors may influence the economic future of the region, including employment sectors that are likely to grow or contract based on the region's role in the larger economy.

Appropriate Businesses Objective

The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the community, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.

In 2009 the Atlanta region's strongest sectors are Transportation, Trade and Utilities, Wholesale Trade, Information Services, and Professional Business. Unlike many other metro regions throughout the United States, the Atlanta region's economic base is diverse with strong levels of employment in a variety of fields. The region currently has relatively low levels of employment opportunities in Education and Health Care fields.

After being one of the leaders in job growth during the 1990s, the two national recessions this decade have taken their toll on metro Atlanta's employment. In most cases, the region's economy is similar to the rest of the nation's – anemic job growth and heavy losses in a few key sectors like Manufacturing and Construction. ARC does however forecast strong employment growth for the next few decades. ARC expects the Health Care/Social Assistance and the Professional/Technical sectors to lead the way as the Atlanta region begins to recover from the most recent period of job contraction.

Given metro Atlanta's job losses and the fact that they are concentrated in the higher-paying sectors, local incomes and wages are lagging behind our peers as well as inflation. While wages are growing slower than inflation (as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for all urban

consumers) in many metros areas, metro Atlanta has an unfortunate combination of both slow wage-per-job growth and per-capita income growth.

Undereducated and less skilled job seekers exist across the region and may be left out of the push toward a technology and information based economy. The region's diversified economy offers a great deal of options to job seekers and the strong growth of the service and retail sectors of the economy provide job opportunities to many of these residents and may mitigate the harshest effects of a transition to a more technological economy.

Despite currently not having any distinct advantage in competing for jobs in the Health Care sector the initial regional forecast for employment indicates this sector will add the most jobs. This is in large part due to the magnitude of overall population growth in the region and specifically the region's transition to a region with a greater share of older adults.

Employment Options Objective

A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.

The Atlanta region's economy is diverse and therefore provides a great variety of job types. The region has performed well in job creation over the past few decades and in many industries the region has a large percentage of all jobs within that industry when compared with all other major metropolitan areas in the southeast. For example in January 2009 the Atlanta region had almost as many jobs in the Information Services sector as Birmingham, Charlotte, Chattanooga, Greenville, Huntsville, Jacksonville, Knoxville, Nashville, Raleigh and Savannah combined.

The Atlanta region does have a variety of job types within the region but an ongoing issue remains the spatial mismatch between job location and housing location. Ninety percent of the jobs in 10-County region are in the five core counties (Fulton, Cobb, Gwinnett, DeKalb and Clayton). These same five counties account for nearly 80% of the jobs in the 20-county planning area. Providing efficient and reliable transportation options that can support long-haul commute trips from suburban and exurban areas that are job-rich remains a primary regional challenge.

In 2008, fewer than 24 percent of all jobs in the 20-county region were in the top five highest-paying sectors. Between 2006 and 2008, however, the region lost about 1,700 of these jobs. In contrast, the region added nearly 24,000 jobs in the five lowest-paying sectors. All counties in the region currently have more total jobs in the low paying sectors than in the high paying sectors (Fulton County coming the closest to an even distribution).

Recent analysis by ARC of US Census Bureau data showed that low-income workers, tend to live south of I-20, while high-income workers live north of I-20 along the GA 400 corridor. Retail workers are among the lowest-paid in the region, but the spatial distribution of where these workers live is different than that observed for low-earning workers (in general). Retail workers are heavily concentrated in the suburban and exurban fringes, with a corresponding lack of

concentrations inside the perimeter and urban core. In most of the region's suburban and exurban locales, Retail employment comprises a large share of total employment. Retail workers, of course, work in establishments that sell merchandise, but also include non-store retailers who reach customers through direct-mail advertising, catalogs and vending machines.

Accommodation and Food Services workers work in restaurants, drinking establishments and hotels. These workers, on average, are the lowest-paid workers in the region their heaviest concentrations are south of I-20.

ARC's Access to Jobs Program created the first comprehensive regional job transportation plan to identify specific county-by-county transportation improvements that expand employment opportunities for minority populations, especially those with disabilities and low-incomes.

Heritage Preservation Objective

The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

Historic resources are an important aspect of an areas' character and sense of place. Historic sites, buildings or cemeteries are a record of a community's evolution and can help shape its future. The preservation of historic resources also provides economic benefits through construction jobs, heritage tourism, investment in older homes and small business and revitalization of downtown business districts.

Since 1999, ARC has funded 34 town center studies as part of the LCI program that encourages reinvestment and compatible development in traditional town centers within the region. ARC recognizes that these historic communities can serve as primary areas to attract new growth in the future as they are well served both by physical infrastructure and community assets. Ensuring the new development is compatible with the historic fabric is fundamental element in the town center studies. The LCI program allows for the redevelopment of traditional town centers while preserving the uniqueness of each community.

The region has many examples of adaptive re-use projects have transformed former schools and industrial buildings into residential developments, lofts and mixed-use centers. Through its Developments of Excellence program ARC has recognized numerous private development projects around the region that have re-used historic buildings, as well as infill development projects that have added significant vitality to historic areas.

Open Space Preservation Objective

New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.

Land consumed to support explosive growth remains an ongoing challenge for the Atlanta region. While the conversion of agricultural and forested lands has slowed when compared to earlier this decade, the 20-county region did convert some 26,000 acres of this primary, developable land into some other use, between 2007 and 2008. Most was converted to a commercial or residential use.

While this a staggering amount of land consumed in a single year it actually represents a significant decrease in recent land consumption trends. In the 2001 to 2003 period, the 13-county area converted almost 37,000 acres of developable land, annually. In the 2003 to 2005 period, that annual number jumped to almost 56,000 acres.

In 2005, 53 percent of all land in the 20-county area was either agricultural or forested. By 2008, that percentage had dropped to 51 percent. During 2007-2008, the 20-county region added nearly 20,000 acres of residential and an additional 500 acres of land dedicated to multi-family structures. Henry and Gwinnett counties converted the most land between 2007 and 2008 in both the 10- and 20-county planning area.

ARC has several existing regional polices that guide regional programs and initiatives related to the *Open Space Preservation Objective*:

Promote new communities that feature greenspace and neighborhood parks, pedestrian scale, support transportation options and provide an appropriate mix of uses and housing types.

Protect environmentally-sensitive areas including wetlands, floodplains, small water supply watersheds, rivers and stream corridors.

Increase the amount, quality, connectivity and accessibility of greenspace.

Through regional infrastructure planning, discourage growth in undeveloped areas of the region.

In addition to ARC's efforts to preserve open space around the region many local governments have identified greenspace priorities in their communities and passed measures to generate funds to acquire open space. While the efforts of local governments have expanded the region's portfolio of protected open space there remains no consistent, coordinated mechanism to ensure the region's inventory of protected lands continues to grow to meet the region's needs in the year 2040.

Environmental Protection Objective

Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.

As mentioned in relation to the *Open Space Preservation Objective* ARC has existing policies that are aimed at protecting the environment in the region. As the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation ARC is directly involved with planning for improved air quality in the region.

Currently the Atlanta region does not meet the federal standards for ozone and fine particulate matter, two of the six pollutants regulated under the Clean Air Act. Natural weather conditions, geography, mobile sources, power plants, and industries all contribute to air quality.

The number of days exceeding the eight-hour ozone standard dropped dramatically from a high of 69 days in 1999 to fewer than 20 days in 2005. While the overall trend in number of days in exceedance from 1999 — 2007 is downward, 2006 and 2007 saw increases compared to 2003–2005.

Several factors explain the decrease in exceedances this decade. Atlanta experienced a hot, dry summer in 1999, a cool, wet summer in 2004 and a very hot and dry summer in 2007. Advanced technology, such as cleaner fuel standards, fleet turnover and particle capturing devices at power plants, have all contributed to improved air quality. Enhanced tools and models also help make more accurate measurements.

ARC currently utilizes air quality performance measures as a means of determining how well long-range regional transportation plans enhance and protect the quality of life for the region's citizens. ARC's air quality measures offer a quantitative measurement to analyze this success. ARC has also identified other potential quality of life measures, but has yet to develop measurement tools to quantify these measures.

The region is also actively working to protect natural features in the region as described in the *Open Space Preservation Objective*. These efforts are voluntary and are based on individual local governments and non-profits, as well as ARC recognizing the need to protect natural features in the region through land conservation and low-impact development efforts. ARC does however have a specific regulatory role in managing a crucial natural resource in the region, the Chattahoochee River.

In 1973, in response to growing concerns about the Chattahoochee River, the Georgia General Assembly enacted the Metropolitan River Protection Act (Georgia Code 12-5-440 et seq.). It established a 2000-foot Corridor along both banks of the Chattahoochee and its impoundments for the 48 miles between Buford Dam and Peachtree Creek. The Act was amended in 1998 to extend the Corridor an additional 36 miles to the downstream limits of Fulton and Douglas Counties (the limit of the Atlanta region). The act requires ARC to adopt a plan to protect the Chattahoochee River Corridor and to review development proposals for consistency with the plan.

The Act also requires local governments along the corridor to implement the plan by issuing permits based on ARC findings, monitoring land-disturbing activity in the corridor and enforcing

the act and the plan. Under the act, land-disturbing activity in the corridor must comply with the adopted plan to be legal.

As the coordinating and review agency for DRIs within the metro region, ARC reviews DRIs for consistency with regional adopted development guides, including the Regional Development Plan and Policies, the Atlanta Region Unified Growth Policy Map, the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program and the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District Plans. ARC seeks to identify potential impacts of the development on surrounding land uses, transportation systems, water supply and stormwater usage, environmental entities such as wetlands, water supply watersheds, and protected river corridors, and governmental services such as fire, police, schools and community services.

Regional Cooperation Objective

Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.

For 60 years, ARC has helped to focus the region's leadership, attention, and resources on key issues of regional consequence such as aging services, governmental services, leadership development, research and mapping, workforce development, environmental planning, land use planning, and mobility and air quality issues.

Cooperation among local governments in the Atlanta region is a long-standing tradition. ARC and its predecessor agencies have coordinated the planning efforts in the region since 1947, when the first publicly-supported, multi-county planning agency in the United States was created. At that time, the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) served DeKalb and Fulton counties and the City of Atlanta. Since then, ARC membership has grown to its current size of 10 counties and 63 municipalities. The Atlanta Regional Commission Board is composed of officials from political subdivisions and private citizens within the region. Thirty-nine members comprise the ARC Board - 23 local elected officials, 15 private citizens and a representative of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

During development of the Regional Assessment stakeholders and regional leaders consistently stressed the need for closer coordination on many issues facing the region. In this region, as in most regions of the U.S, regional plans are implemented through various programs of incentives, state or regional rules, agreements, technical assistance and collaboration among agencies and local governments.

Transportation Alternatives Objective

Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available in each community. Greater use of alternate transportation should be encouraged.

Metro Atlanta continues to lay the groundwork for a major expansion of the regional transit system. The centerpiece of this effort in 2008 was the adoption of a regional transit plan called Concept 3, an ambitious long-range vision based on the principles of connecting people throughout the region to employment/activity centers; providing mobility choices; providing access to those without cars or who do not drive; providing reliable and competitive transit travel time; and making seamless regional transit travel convenient, accessible and attractive.

Since 2000, six of the region's twelve transit systems began operations. These six new systems have increased the regional fleet by over 400 buses and vans, increasing the number of regional transit miles traveled from 780 million in 2000 to over 911 million in 2007.

Bicycling and walking have become realistic modes of transportation as traffic congestion becomes more severe. While cyclists and pedestrians can use almost any regional transportation corridor, many facilities are not equipped or safe enough to support this mode of transportation. ARC has been promoting safe, functional, and regional bicycle and pedestrian planning since 1973 and continues to update its process to address new needs and trends.

A multi-modal transportation system includes facilities designed for all types of users, including bicycles. In Georgia, bicycles are considered vehicles and are therefore allowed to operate on nearly every roadway, with the exception of those routes on which bicycles are specifically prohibited such as interstate highways and limited-access freeways. Though bicycles are able to operate within and share the roadway with motorized vehicles, dedicated bicycle facilities are often provided to make bicycling safer and more comfortable.

ARC's Transportation Demand Management Division (TDM) strives to relieve traffic congestion and improve air quality in the region by helping commuters find simple, reliable alternatives to driving alone. ARC also manages the funding for eleven employer services organizations (ESOs) in the region. These organizations provide comprehensive service for a defined geographic area and additional programs, such as vanpool subsidies, circulator shuttles, information sessions for both employers and employees and promotional events.

The LCI program has awarded over, over \$141 million in planning and transportation funds have been allocated to support 102 distinct planning areas in the region to increase transportation alternatives. The transportation funds for the LCI program are aimed at local projects that support a multi-modal environment and encourage compatible private development.

Housing Opportunities Objective

Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.

The vast majority of housing available in the Atlanta region has been constructed over the past 40 years. In fact over 20% of the housing stock in the Atlanta region was built between 2000 and 2007. The development community, working within local government regulatory environments, has done a remarkable job of delivering substantial quantities of housing to meet historic and recent demands for housing, but it is uncertain if this supply is aligned with future consumer needs.

Workforce households in each county in the region earning between 60 and 90 percent of their county's area median income (AMI), are not able to easily afford a home priced at the county's median home value based on guidelines from HUD that as a rule of thumb home owners should not spend more than 30% of their household income on housing.

The region's lowest paying job sectors pay wages that result in a much more difficult for wage earners to find affordable accommodations. The five lowest paying sectors fall short of affording the median home price in any of the ten counties. Most of these five sectors also fall short of being able to afford rental housing in the 10-county region without having to spend more than 30% of their income on rent alone.

Approximately 30% of the 10-county region's housing stock consists of multi-family units. The majority of the region's households have less than two persons. This could represent a mismatch between the housing stock available and the number of smaller households in the region.

The remaining three Quality Community Objectives are inter-related and are represent primary focus areas for ARC.

Traditional Neighborhood Objective

Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.

Infill Development Objective

Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.

Sense of Place Objective

Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.

One of the ARC's principal goals is to support local governments in their efforts to create highly

livable and vibrant communities. Few of our programs do that as effectively as the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program. Seen as a cutting-edge program around the country, the LCI program was awarded the American Planning Association's National Planning Excellence Award for Implementation in 2009, and was awarded the Environmental Protection Agency's 2008 National Award for Smart Growth.

The planning process, project goals and deliverables outlined in the LCI program provide an efficient, realistic and effective method for communities to undertake smart-growth planning and implementation. In return, this works to achieve more balanced regional growth by concentrating new development away from undeveloped greenfields and into areas with existing infrastructure, reducing vehicle miles traveled and improving air quality. Key strategies for successful LCI communities embrace are utilizing infill development to create strong, vibrant traditional downtown areas that can serve as the focal point for the larger community and using the concepts of a traditional neighborhood design as the building block for communities that can support a mix of uses and a multi-modal environment.

The LCI program has proven enormously successful as the catalyst to major redevelopment efforts taking place in transit station areas and small and large urban centers and corridors. These investments have spurred new housing and development closer to jobs, and are helping to promote more efficient transportation nodes.

The 2009 LCI Implementation Report indicated that LCI communities are consistently capturing a growing share of the region's new development, especially office and commercial uses. Since the last Implementation Report in 2006, the amount of development concentrated into LCI areas compared with the 10-county region has doubled.

All LCI communities are different and face different challenges and opportunities. As a result, LCI plans vary in response to these specific needs. But, as unique as each community is, all LCI plans demonstrate an understanding of the primary goals and policies of the program. Analysis of these studies support conclusions that increased housing options and employment concentrated in centers and corridors, with supporting transportation options, reduce per capita VMT even while expanding the population and employment within the study areas.