

Mixed Income Communities Initiative (MICI) Meeting  
June 15, 2010

The June MICI meeting provided an opportunity for MICI members to share feedback and input on the housing component of ARC's Plan 2040. More than 30 stakeholders from the affordable and mixed income housing community were in attendance, including representatives from:

- Livable Communities Coalition (LCC)
- SouthFace Energy Institute
- Robert Charles Lesser and Company (RCLCO)
- Atlanta Fulton Land Bank Authority
- Resources for Residents and Communities (RRC)
- AHAND
- GSTAND
- Georgia STAND-UP
- Georgia Watch
- Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association (GAHBA)
- IMPACT Group
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
- Habitat for Humanity
- Georgia Affordable Housing Coalition
- ANDP
- BeltLine Affordable Housing Advisory Board
- and nonprofit housing developers, realtors, and mortgage lenders.

The following is a summary of comments made by meeting participants.

#### FUNDING

- We can't count on the Federal government to provide support and subsidy. Long-term support for housing at the federal level has been declining for the past 40 years. The State and the region need to show leadership on housing issues because the Federal government will NOT solve our problems. Georgia DCA should be more aggressive in addressing housing challenges. ARC's Plan 2040 should explicitly call for more housing leadership at the State and regional levels. In addition, state, regional and local dollars are more flexible and ultimately easier to use than federal dollars.
- ARC should consider asking local governments to recycle their limited HOME, CDBG and other federal housing program dollars (rather than letting the funds burn off) to create a permanent source of funds for affordable homeownership.

#### TOD

- ARC needs to use its funding to create a development incentive program for TOD.

- Getting the “Transportation Sales Tax” right will be critical and could generate \$7 billion over the next ten years.
- Counties and Cities with MARTA stations should be promoting increased density around these stations.

#### JOBS/HOUSING BALANCE

- We need to exploit the regional jobs/housing/transit spatial mismatch and make every attempt to address that challenge through Plan 2040.
- ARC should consider linking housing to their workforce training efforts.
- With creation of new job centers (i.e. Lee Street Corridor and Fort Mac redevelopment), we must put an emphasis on strategically linking jobs and affordable housing. There should also be an effort to train students at high schools in and around the job centers for employment.
- Job centers should be required to develop specific housing strategies. One challenge is incenting CIDs to put a priority on housing issues. CIDs derive their revenue from commercial landowners so commercial land-use is their focus, but housing should be on their agenda.
- Encourage development around job/activity centers where we know it will work. Private sector investment will follow.

#### RENTAL HOUSING/PRESERVATION

- Demographic trends indicate that we need to rebalance the nation’s housing policy with greater emphasis on rental housing.
- There is an “over supply” of rental housing due to the flooded market. Rental rates at the Imperial Hotel in downtown Atlanta, for example, have been lowered by more than 20 percent. Low projected wage rates should be a continued source of concern. While the market is creating more affordable housing, the needs could be very different in the future based on jobs and wages.
- Arguably, there is enough affordable housing to accommodate housing needs for populations at 50% or below AMI, but preservation will be a critical issue. We must invest in restoring older properties.
- Preservation is particularly important in markets without a lot of opportunity for new affordable. Strategies are needed to encourage developers to preserve existing affordable units.

#### ZONING

- ARC should consider zoning policies to slow housing growth in outer suburbs that are inconvenient to jobs and activity centers. But at the same time, we need to ensure that current outer ring suburbs do not become slums.
- Plan 2040 should include zoning provisions for adaptive reuse of structures like outdated retail and homes that are out-of-scale to the neighborhood.
- Consider provisions to reduce parking requirements.
- Incentives beyond just density bonuses will be needed to be most effective.

- Consider contraction planning (i.e. Detroit, Cleveland) to increase density and expand green space.

## DATA

- Need for ARC to serve as central housing data collector to support regional framework. Consider tapping local universities to assist in this effort.
- A good regional data system could help determine where to allocate resources in the most strategic and targeted way.

## GENERAL

- The LCC DeKalb Workforce Housing report should serve as a model for county-by-county analysis of housing needs and recommendations.
- Include behavior modification efforts to educate the public and help build healthier, more diverse and dense communities.
- Encourage local governments to think strategically about available land through land banking, re-use, or green field strategies.
- Address foreclosure challenges outside of NSP targeted zip codes where federal and local resources are not being currently directed.
- Consider efforts to incentivize financial literacy education along with housing development. This strategy is important for both rental and homeownership to improve credit scores and prevent foreclosures.
- Consider how ARC can be both the carrot and the stick to incentivize and ensure that Plan 2040 is implemented.
- There are three ways of framing the issue: 1) housing location and what this means in terms of the jobs/housing balance; 2) housing price – how to reduce prices and achieve long term affordability; 3) housing size – the mismatch between what has/is being constructed and what the region’s changing demographics demand.
- ARC should consider how housing may play more of a role in the LCI program.