Plan 2040 Neighborhood Forum
Clayton, Fayette, Henry, Rockdale and Spalding

On July 27, 2010, The Civic League for Regional Atlanta convened the second of four Neighborhood Forums on the Atlanta Regional Commission's Plan 2040, a comprehensive plan currently under development to accommodate the region's population and economic growth sustainably over the next 30 years. Targeted toward residents of Clayton, Fayette, Henry, Rockdale and Spalding Counties, this forum was held to solicit public input on the early stages of the planning process, including its vision, goals and objectives, and focus areas. Twenty-seven people participated in the forum, working in four groups for about two hours. ARC staff members were on hand to provide information and respond to participants' questions.

Participants recorded their reactions and ideas related to the evening's discussion on flip charts. Their comments were later transcribed by Civic League staff and are included in this report under the heading "Small Group Results". Participants' comments were wide-ranging and should be read in their entirety, but several observations are worth noting:

- Participants came for many reasons, ranging from an interest in transit/transportation to concerns about education, quality of life and sustainability to preparing to run for office. An important recurring theme, however, was the desire to collaborate or connect with other individuals and other communities to create solutions and drive progress.
- Their initial reactions to the presentation on Plan 2040 also varied widely. Many participants expressed an interest in transit and transportation; one voiced a concern that the citizen feedback collected during the Plan 2040 Forum actually "goes somewhere". One participant wanted to hear more about how Plan 2040 projects would be funded; another was "pleased to hear ARC is focusing on efficiency [because] the money is not there for larger projects."
- When groups were asked what they considered the three most important of Plan 2040's nine focus areas, there was considerable consensus around *3. Focus resources and public investments in existing communities;* and *4. Through regional infrastructure planning, limit growth in undeveloped areas of the region.* Two focus areas received no votes: *2. Assure the preservation, maintenance, and operation of the existing transportation system;* and *7. Increase the number and variety of uses around existing and planned transit stations.* (Note: None of the counties represented in this forum are currently served by mass transit.)

Meeting Process
Participants were welcomed by Trey Ragsdale, a member of The Civic League board of directors. Trey

introduced Civic League staff members Ellen Mayer and Trip Ferrell; ARC staff members Judy Dovers, Dan Reuter, David Haynes, and Lyubov Zuyeva; and facilitator Mattice Haynes. Mattice welcomed participants, gave them a brief overview of the night's agenda and directed their attention to a quick "getting connected" exercise in which group members introduced themselves, stated which county they lived in and explained their motivations for attending the forum.

Dan, who is ARC's land use division chief, then gave forum participants an overview of Plan 2040, including current needs in metro Atlanta; its vision, goals and objectives; and reactions to the plan thus far (Appendix A).

At the conclusion of Dan's presentation, Mattice gave the groups 20 minutes to respond, asking them to record on their flip charts the answers to three questions: *What did we hear? What are our reactions?* and *What questions do we want to ask?*

Following this discussion, Dan made a second presentation outlining nine potential directions and focus areas for Plan 2040 (Appendix B). Mattice then asked groups to work through two questions:

- Which three of these focus areas do you think are most important to really drive progress in the region over the next 30 years towards the vision, goals and objectives and WHY? Are there any focus areas missing? If so, what's missing?
- What will be different in our region if Plan 2040 is successful and how will we know?

The groups had about 20 minutes to address each question, and Mattice asked a spokesperson from each group to report out key points before moving on to the next question.

At the end of the evening, Judy Dovers from ARC thanked participants for their input and invited them to continue their involvement in the development of Plan 2040 by participating in ARC's online public meetings.

Small Group Results
For the first small group exercise, participants were asked to state their motivations for attending the Neighborhood Forum.

Group 1

- Obtaining information; staying abreast of civic league activities
- Regional concerns; examine best practices
- Provide insight on likes/dislikes related to transportation/land use
- Hearing from citizens
- Infrastructure concerns as it relates to economic development
- Discuss the impact of education system and effects on community/economic development
- Transportation initiatives leading to job creation
- Marketing of southern region/Develop a "brand"

Group 2

- Friend recommended forum from previous experience
- Interested in the latest and greatest
- Mass transit to ease mobility
- Help city plan for future
- All of the above

Group 3

- Ideas about issues/ impact of plan
- Why do some communities collaborate and prosper, while others do not?
- Want us to work as a team for progress
- Part of process or problem
- Running for office/ learning
- Educator- need to be knowledgeable/ current
- Collaboration with neighbors

Group 4

- Concerns about quality job, quality lifestyle in region
- Desire for sustainability
- Concern about decline in community
- Want to be part of the solution

Following the introductory presentation on Plan 2040, forum participants were asked to discuss and document their reactions to what they had heard and note any questions they had.

Group 1

Reactions
- Light Rail (MARTA? What will we call it?)
- Funding (mechanisms): CIDS, taxes, matching
- Connect housing and jobs
- All-inclusive communities for seniors
- Marketing
- Gridlock- from a public health prospective
- Globalization

Questions
- *No questions recorded.*

Group 2

Reactions
- County commissioners, mayors and citizens on panel- a plus!
- Sad to hear of too many regulations
- Satisfied with the collaboration on the plan
- Promoting transportation
- The need for Atlanta to stay competitive

Questions
- How will the water problem be resolved?
- Who decides how the money is dispersed across the counties (transportation)?
- Water conservation- what are the plans to conserve this resource?
- What are the ARC/metro counties doing to stay ahead of Charlotte, Dallas, Phoenix and other cities of our size?
- What is the plan to upgrade infrastructure to facilitate growth? This includes traffic/roads, schools, sewers/utilities, etc. This is not an exhaustive list.
- What is the definition of cultural assets?

Group 3

Reactions
- OK to benchmark others (NCCHA)
- Civic League data goes somewhere
- Perception vs. reality -> transportation
- Choices- travel, jobs, education

Questions
- Why are we not excited and energized to fix these issues?
- Why can't we demonstrate our excellence vs. other communities?

Group 4

Reactions
- Pleased about (+) statements about growth
- We all have common problems across region
- We hear problems, not many solutions
- Pleased that ARC is focusing on efficiency, money is not there for larger projects

Questions
- We hear problems identified. How do we address the problems?
- What are solutions to transportation problems? Transit? More roads? Etc.
- Funding to solve transportation problems
- How do we promote local job growth to keep revenue local in order to prevent

subsidizing local services?

Participants then heard a second presentation, this time outlining nine potential focus areas for Plan 2040 as well as a proposed vision, goals and objectives. Following the second presentation, the discussion groups were asked to identify three focus areas they thought were most important to drive progress in the region over the next 30 years toward the vision, goals and objectives and why. Mattice also asked them to note any focus areas that should have been included in the list but were not.

Group 1

Priority focus areas
- #1 – Promote sustainable and energy-efficient land development and transportation investments.
- #4 – Through regional infrastructure planning, limit growth in undeveloped areas of the region.
- #9 – Promote alternatives and efficiencies of the existing transportation system before adding capacity.

Missing from the list
- Communications
- Branding
- Economic Development

Group 2

Priority focus areas
- #3 – Focus resources and public investments in existing communities.
- #4 - Through regional infrastructure planning, limit growth in undeveloped areas of the region.
- #5 – Encourage a variety of choices related to housing and transportation.

Missing from the list
- Community awareness
- Defining growth boundaries
- Other funding mechanisms to fund transportation (as in smaller gov/less taxes)
- Education

Group 3

Priority focus areas
- #3 – Focus resources and public investments in existing communities.
- #4 – Through regional infrastructure planning, limit growth in undeveloped areas of the region.
- #9 – Promote alternatives and efficiencies of the existing transportation system

before adding capacity.

Missing from the list
- Education
- Communication

Group 4

Priority focus areas
- #3 – Focus resources and public investments in existing communities.
- #6 – At strategic regional locations, plan and retain industrial and freight land uses.
- #8 – Conserve and protect environmentally-sensitive areas and increase the amount and connectivity of greenspace.

Missing from the list
- Market demands should lead discussion

Finally, Mattice asked small groups to consider how Plan 2040's success might be measured. What would be different in our region if Plan 2040 is successful and how will we know?

Group 1

- Government Efficiency; citizen satisfaction
- Green space in public spaces (parks, schools, natural resources)
- Better quality of life
- Health benefits/ lower health care costs
- More transportation options
- Greater variety of housing
- Jobs to housing ratio
- Closer proximity of businesses to residential areas

Group 2

- People will be broke
- People getting involved
- Less freedom (property rights, outside growth areas)
- More transportation options (provided efficiency/ less corrupt government)
- More interconnected communities
- Healthier, vibrant population
- Better lifestyle/jobs for residents
- Increase in density
- Greener, more sustainable communities

- Increase in educated population
- Taxes are going up!

Group 3

- Less drive time (better system/ choices, job closer, telecommute)
- Community not as stressed
- More time for family/ fun
- Smaller sq/ft housing w/ more green space
- Better education
- Charlanta!!!!

Group 4

- People happy where they live
- More options for getting around
- Less migration, more local commuting
- People won't have to commute to work

Snapshot of Participants
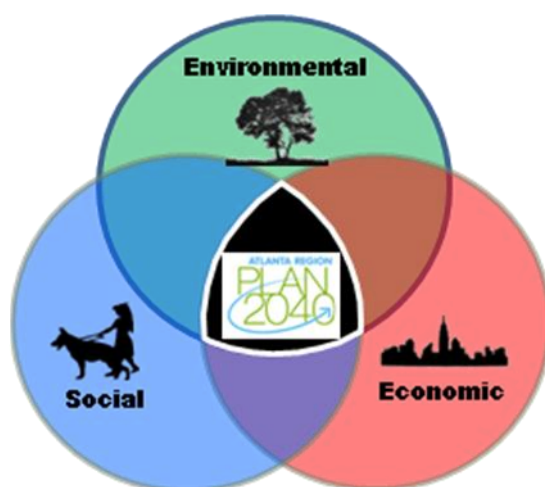The Civic League collected demographic surveys of the participants in this forum. Here are the results:

Demographic Snapshot (22/27 forms turned in)	
Male	15
Female	7
Under 18	0
18 to 24	1
25 to 39	4
40 to 54	9
55 to 65	6
Over 65	2
Black	10
White	9
Native American	2

Metro Atlanta's future: How do we make it what we want?

What is PLAN 2040?

Metro Atlanta's plan to accommodate economic and population growth over the next 30 years. The Plan is organized around a foundation of sustainability.

What are some key current needs in metro Atlanta?[1]

- ✓ We are well positioned for an economic recovery, but we must begin adjusting how we live and do business.
- ✓ Our long-term economic success rests on having an adequate water supply.
- ✓ Significant transportation investments are required along with increased housing in major employment centers.
- ✓ We do not have the financial capacity to expand further if we expect to meet our needs.
- ✓ Our future population will be very different than it is today, being both older and more racially diverse.
- ✓ Housing demand will shift toward communities that offer amenities close to employment and cultural opportunities.
- ✓ Approximately 75% of us have no other option but to drive to where we want to go.
- ✓ Beyond the need for increased transportation funding, existing assets must be better managed.

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[1] Additional information on regional needs is available on-line at http://www.atlantaregional.com/transportation/plan-2040.

✓ We must focus our planning on both existing urbanized communities and those areas reserved for conservation.

How could we address these needs?

Vision

Provide aggressive leadership for sustainable growth and balance environmental responsibility, economic growth and social needs while maximizing benefits to all.

Goals: What do we want metro Atlanta to be and do for its residents, businesses, and visitors?

- Lead as the global gateway to the South
- Encourage healthy communities
- Expand access to community resources.

Objectives: How will we go about achieving our vision for metro Atlanta?Increase mobility options for people and goods

- Foster a healthy, educated, well-trained, safe and secure population
- Promote residential choices in locations that are accessible to jobs and services.
- Improve energy and resource efficiency while preserving the region's environment and critical assets.
- Identify innovative approaches to economic recovery and long term prosperity.

How are metro area leaders and residents reacting to this information?[2]

- ✓ Focus on doing better with what we have, including finding more efficiencies in existing systems and resources.
- ✓ Connect housing, jobs, and transportation assets.
- ✓ Emphasize the interconnectivity between transportation options, land infrastructure, health consequences, energy efficiencies, and water supply.
- ✓ Provide more than one choice for travel.
- ✓ Provide incentives to implement public policy decisions.
- ✓ Provide transit options in many forms, including support for a regional transit system.
- ✓ How do we focus investments on already developed areas versus outlying areas?
- ✓ Density in land developments only works in certain areas.
- ✓ Safety is a primary concern from both a travel perspective and in our neighborhoods.

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[2] Additional information on input received to date is available on-line at
http://www.atlantaregional.com/transportation/plan-2040/what-weve-heard/

PLAN 2040 Potential Plan Direction/Focus Areas

1. Promote sustainable and energy-efficient land development and transportation investments.
2. Assure the preservation, maintenance, and operation of the existing transportation system.
3. Focus resources and public investments in existing communities.
4. Through regional infrastructure planning, limit growth in undeveloped areas of the region.
5. Encourage a variety of choices related to housing and transportation.
6. At strategic regional locations, plan and retain industrial and freight land uses.
7. Increase the number and variety of uses around existing and planned transit stations.
8. Conserve and protect environmentally-sensitive areas and increase the amount and connectivity of greenspace.
9. Promote alternatives and efficiencies of the existing transportation system before adding capacity.

Evaluation and Feedback Results

How satisfied are you with tonight's forum?

Very satisfied	3
Satisfied	14
Neither	1
Dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	0

Did you learn something new about our region?

Yes	16
No	1
Unsure	1

How committed are you to staying involved?

Very committed	5
Committed	13
Neither	0
Uncommitted	0
Very uncommitted	0

How confident are you that Plan 2040 will be successful?

Very confident	1
Confident	7
Neither	8
Skeptical	1
Very skeptical	1

What worked especially well at tonight's forum?

Group Interaction	11
Organization	4

What would you do differently in future forums?

More publicity/people	7
Focus on fewer topics/ economy	3