4. THE CITY'S VISION AND PRIORITIES

The City of Atlanta's Vision

The vision for the City of Atlanta in the years ahead is that of a city which seizes unique opportunities and shapes itself to meet the needs of the next generation. It is a vision that works to create a more humane, safe and enjoyable place to live, work, and raise children. It is a vision that raises the quality and productivity of the lives of all its citizens. It is a vision of communities that include diversity in age, race and economic status, in which people can remain throughout their lives, because these communities are flexible enough to meet the changing needs of their residents.

A significant aspect of the City's mission is to assure that Atlanta is livable for all its citizens. The City's neighborhoods are among its most valued assets. The City is committed to protecting, maintaining and enhancing the quality of its neighborhoods, to preserving and increasing decent, secure affordable housing for all citizens, and to increasing job opportunities and improving education.

The City of Atlanta is gaining momentum as an urbane and tolerant international City. The Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) reflects Atlanta's visions, priorities and strategies for building our community through the processes of continuous interaction and communication. These include the city's planning and development agencies, citizens, interest groups, neighborhood organizations, Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs), City Councilmembers and the Mayor and her advisory committees.

How we put together Atlanta's special and defining characteristics will mark our progress as we reach for our most fulfilling future. Below are some of the action ideas that have come forth from our interactive planning process. These are clustered under themes that describe the City's present initiatives and point toward future opportunities and issues.

Community Building/Community Serving Measures

- Embracing tolerance, civility and diversity as strengths;
- Fostering community in all its neighborhoods;
- Balancing business initiative with community values;
- Preserving and conserving single family neighborhoods as a compelling priority;
- Better connecting people to their retail and service centers and park and civic resources at neighborhood and larger scales;
- Transforming abandoned and dilapidated fringe properties and parking lots into lively village centers;
- Meeting community housing needs across generations, incomes and cultures;
- Improving conditions for homeless people and the community as a whole by working collaboratively and inclusively with the provider community, neighborhoods, business and other jurisdictions;
- Preparing to appropriately accommodate newly emergent residential markets and investment: baby boomers becoming empty nesters, generation-Xers growing up, suburban returnees and new comers;

- Reflecting community to provide the continuity of life-style, housing types and incomes that reflects our progression through the stages of life, from kids to seniors;
- Combining public and private resources to support development and enhancement of its different community needs:

  → Lower income communities seeking new investment and revitalization;
  → Public housing communities seeking reintegration into larger community;
  → Neighborhoods seeking and then adjusting to the changes of new households moving in (these are neighborhoods with those solid, basic physical assets and character that have traditionally defined neighborhoods);
  → Build-out neighborhoods seeking to conserve the integrity of their fabric and their edges;
  → Commercial corridors and centers, as well as fringe, edge or transitional areas seeking to develop themselves as more intense, mixed retail/residential/ workplace communities, attracting, connecting and serving the single family neighborhoods all around;
  → And the large, high intensity residentializing centers of Downtown, Midtown, Buckhead and Lindbergh.

- Progressing toward government measured by continuous service improvements to support these community-building strategies;
- Connecting public education to community building and community-guided processes, including managing technological advances to guard against the "digital divide".

Infrastructure/Environment/Urban Design Measures

- Transforming its commercial streets and centers from repellent divides into attractive connections between neighborhoods;
- Incorporating the springs, brooks and creeks together with the streetscapes to connect the neighborhoods to their centers and MARTA;
- Continuing to redress decades-old infrastructure mismanagement;
- Consistent with Atlanta's new environmental stewardship mission, bending its infrastructure ills into opportunity to rediscover its springs, brooks, creeks and woodlands as the underlying base of past and future Atlanta;
- Restructuring the sanitary sewer system in a phased renewal that seriously explores the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) problem, including consideration of separation of sanitary sewerage from storm water, and that employs cutting edge treatment technologies;
- Devising a solid waste management strategy that affirms its commitment to environmental justice yet is affordable to its citizens;
- Managing its surface water run-off and storm water management systems to revive the creeks, to define the open space framework for the future city;
- Aggressively expanding sidewalk and bicycle linkages to connect neighborhoods with their centers and transit access;
- Designing good pedestrian ways, lighting, public arts, coordinated "street furniture", way finding systems, and small parks to accentuate the attractiveness and security of the public ways;

- Address the city's most critical problems of flooding, water pollution and water supply with particular attention to reducing risk in the most flood prone or contaminated areas;
- Protect the city's most important water resources, both those currently used for water supply and those with potential to satisfy increase demand;
- Locate new parks and other landscaped open space to preserve flood storage in the headwater and the floodplain downstream, and to enhance recharge of ground water;
- Encourage new industry, waste disposal sites, and other polluting land uses to locate outside flood plains and ground water recharge areas that are highly vulnerable to water pollution;
- Locate new public buildings outside flood prone areas and encourage new residential and commercial development to do the same;
- Provide a plan for relocation and reconstruction after a major flood;
- Explore settlement patterns that would facilitate the reuse of wastewater after treatment;
- Exploit the flood protection and water restoring abilities of existing wetlands;
- Increase the visibility of water in the city as well as public access to it.

Public Safety Measures

- Incorporating police business as everyone's business;
- Expanding community policing commitments, strategies, training and commitment;
- Developing a communication system that involves the community in both reducing crime and brings the perception of safety more in line with the more favorable reality of safety;
- Integrating code enforcement with community policing strategies.

Transportation Measures

- Maximizing the potential of MARTA, by focusing and intensifying mixed-use development around MARTA stops and by expanding its regional connectivity;
- Encouraging intensive mixed-use development in live/work/shop environments close to transit and to reduce the need for trips and the length of trips;
- Accelerating sidewalk and bicycle improvements to support transit access, mixed-use development connections and the enjoyment of the parks and greenway systems;
- Moving full speed ahead to build the multi-modal passenger terminal Downtown;
- Supporting commuter rail development and its MARTA interconnections to regain the national edge in transportation innovation and air quality improvement strategies.

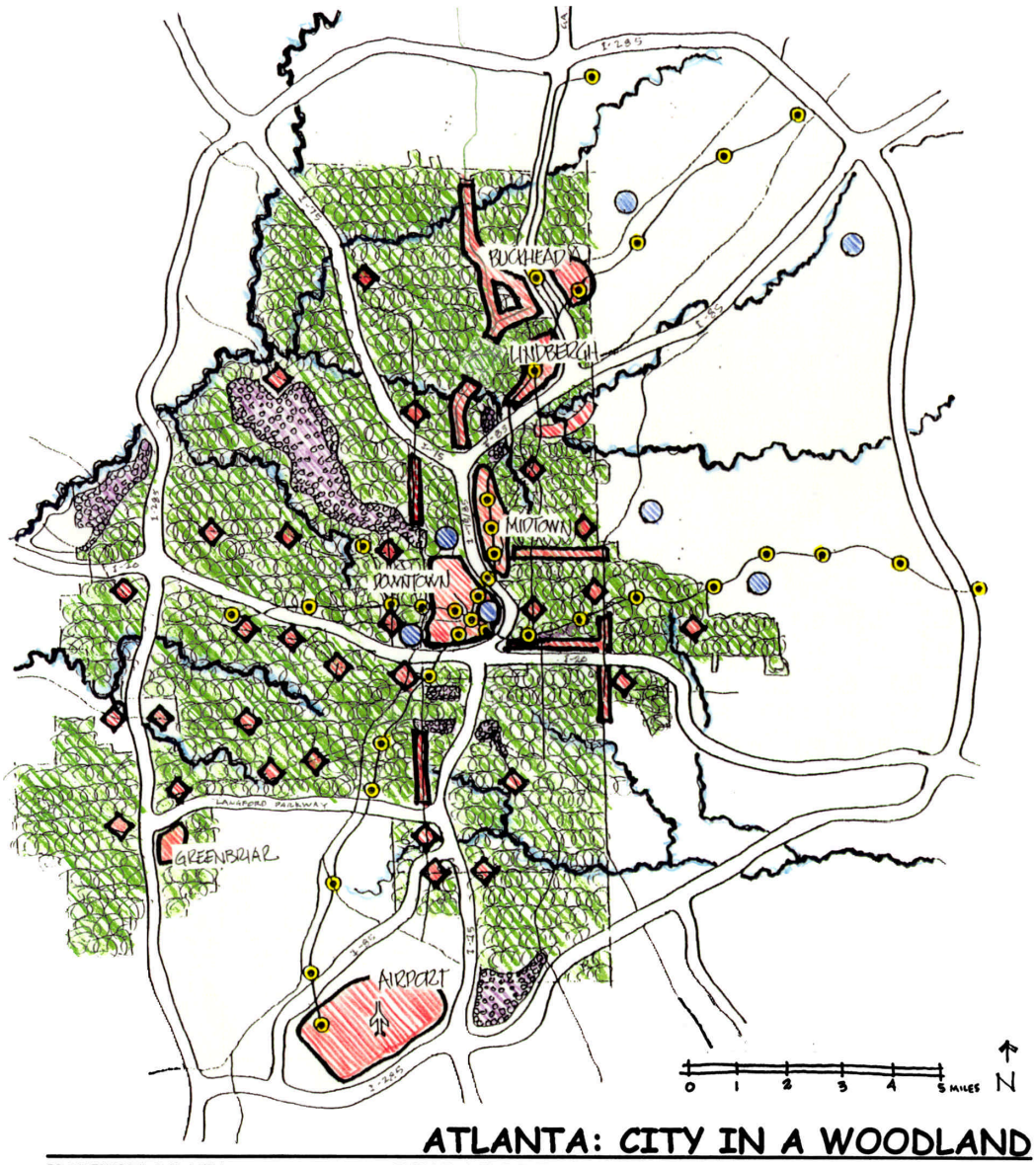
Economic Development Measures

- Accelerating Atlanta's re-emergent competitive strength as the center of a region, now choking on the leash that built it – cars, commutes and pollution – with its solid transit system with capacity to serve the full range of access needs;

- Recognizing that its historically disjointed – public and private – incentives and support structure for new investment needs synthesis with emphasis on education, training, and job readiness programs;
- Taking advantage, in this time of air quality and transportation focus, of Downtown's centrality as the area closest to the most people in the region;
- Through education and training, matching jobs to the underutilized workforce we already have, as well as recruiting new technologies, industries and jobs from around the world;
- Maintaining and planning for industrial development strategies that focus on evolving needs for space as technologies and employment profiles change, consistent with overall community values;
- Sustaining and building on organizational improvements fostered by the Renaissance Program, like creating the Atlanta Development Authority (ADA), reorganizing the city Departments of Planning and Development and Housing and Community Development, and establishing the Development Council and the Funder's Alliance, to coordinate, plan, fund and implement development initiatives across the city's building agencies (these include city departments, the ADA, the Atlanta Housing Authority, the Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Fulton County Land Bank Authority, HUD, the Urban Residential Development Corporation, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, the Enterprise Foundation and others based on the focus of the development activity;
- Following through on its development support processes so that the continuum of code enforcement, public fund leveraging, building programs, zoning, permitting, inspection and occupancy are clear, efficient and reflective of the appropriate balance between developers' and non-profits' needs and the values of communities where development occurs.

How we meet these measures gives shape to the framework for connecting all of the City's great strengths into a future that realizes its unique promise as a mature city. Business and civic patterns that have too often focused on division for their tactics and even purposes are giving way to the still fragile tendrils of trust that are essential to maturity. For all of these measures and the positive city building images they represent to guide the city's future, partnerships must continue to be forged. These partnerships must emphasize what people may positively share in their futures, not what may divide them.

The goals, from the overall scale down to the block scale, must be held paramount, with recognition that the fullness of individual aspirations gain their attainment as inclusively shared community values flourish. The City has great richness of people, cultures and physical assets whose very diversity distinguishes it from its neighbors. The policies, programs, plans and projects of the CDP build on Atlanta's strengths and seek to link the City's actions to attaining this vision.



ATLANTA: CITY IN A WOODLAND

FRAMEWORK & PLACES:

- FORESTED NEIGHBORHOODS
- MAJOR CREEKS
- MARTA LINES & STOPS
- HIGH INTENSITY CENTERS
- COMMERCIAL STRIPS
- COMMERCIAL CENTERS
- INDUSTRY CONCENTRATION
- COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

BUILDING THE FUTURE ON RESURGENT ASSETS:

- BROOKS & CREEKS LACING ROLLING FORESTS
- PEOPLE OF DIVERSE CULTURES AND ETHNICITIES
- REINVESTMENT IN TRADITIONAL SINGLE FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS
- DIVERSE & ROBUST ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
- RESURGENT CITY CENTER - DOWNTOWN/MIDTOWN
- REEMERGENT SOUTHWEST/GREENBRIAR
- BUCKHEAD BOOMING; LINDBERGH, THE FUTURE TRANSIT VILLAGE
- MARTA - THE BASE OF TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES TO THE CAR

"FIXIN' WHAT'S BROKE":

- THE INFRASTRUCTURE -STORM & SANITARY SEWERS; ROADS & SIDEWALKS
- REPLACING ASPHALT & UTILITY LINE DOMINATED STRIPS AND CENTERS WITH NEW LIVABLE, WALKABLE TOWNSCAPES, CONNECTING PEOPLE & PLACES VIA PEDESTRIAN, BIKE & GREENWAYS;
- CREATING THE LADDER OF JOBS & HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY THAT LIFTS PEOPLE TO FULL CIVIC PARTICIPATION;
- CREATING A SAFE, SECURE & FRIENDLY CIVIC ENVIRONMENT;
- REESTABLISHING THE SCHOOL, PARK, LIBRARY & SPIRITUAL INSTITUTIONS AS THE CENTERS OF THE NEW TOWNSCAPE.

CITY OF ATLANTA DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION - DRAFT - SEPT 1998

I. CREATING A SAFER CITY

a) Goal

To maintain an environment in which citizens, workers and visitors feel safe and secure.

b) Objectives

1. Reduce perception of street crime downtown.
2. Reduce violent crime.
3. Reduce crime in neighborhoods.
4. Reduce juvenile crime.
5. Increase capacity to respond to and handle medical emergencies and disastrous incidents.
6. Maintain adequate staffing levels in the Atlanta Police Department and promote career - ladder development within the Department.
7. Increase the level of public emergency preparedness.

II. DELIVERING QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICES

a) Goal

To provide services that are appropriate, cost effective and responsive to citizens' needs

b) Objectives

1. Increase efficiency and effectiveness of City employees.
2. Increase responsiveness to citizen complaints and inquiries and make customer satisfaction the highest City priority.
3. Invest in City employees through the provision of adequate training, appropriate equipment and fair compensation.

III. NEIGHBORHOOD VITALITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

a) Goal

To make Atlanta neighborhoods attractive, vibrant and sustainable places to live, and the City a good place for business investment.

b) Objectives

1. Improve the City's infrastructure--lighting, parks, sidewalks, storm drains, etc.
2. Increase demolition of dilapidated housing and clearing and cleaning of vacant lots.
3. Increase the number of minority firms & neighborhood residents participating in City projects.
4. Promote balanced growth so as to address poverty, the retention of young adults, the creation of jobs and the provision of services for youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities.
5. Create and expand economic development opportunities, which will increase private investments in the City.

Priority Areas

Since 1996, the term "priority areas" is used to target Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME resources for community development activities. It includes those areas within the Community Development Impact Area (CDIA) that have poverty levels at or above 35 percent (See also the "Consolidated Plan: Summary of Important Policies" and "Targeting: Geographic Allocation of Resources: CDBG and HOME"). Consequently, no area previously designated as a priority area--e.g. inner-city neighborhood clusters, Southtowne, or elsewhere-- retains that status unless it falls within the 35 percent-or-above poverty rate. The remaining neighborhoods in the CDIA continue to be eligible for CDBG and HOME funding, but they will not receive the preferential points in the City's proposal ranking system given to the priority areas.

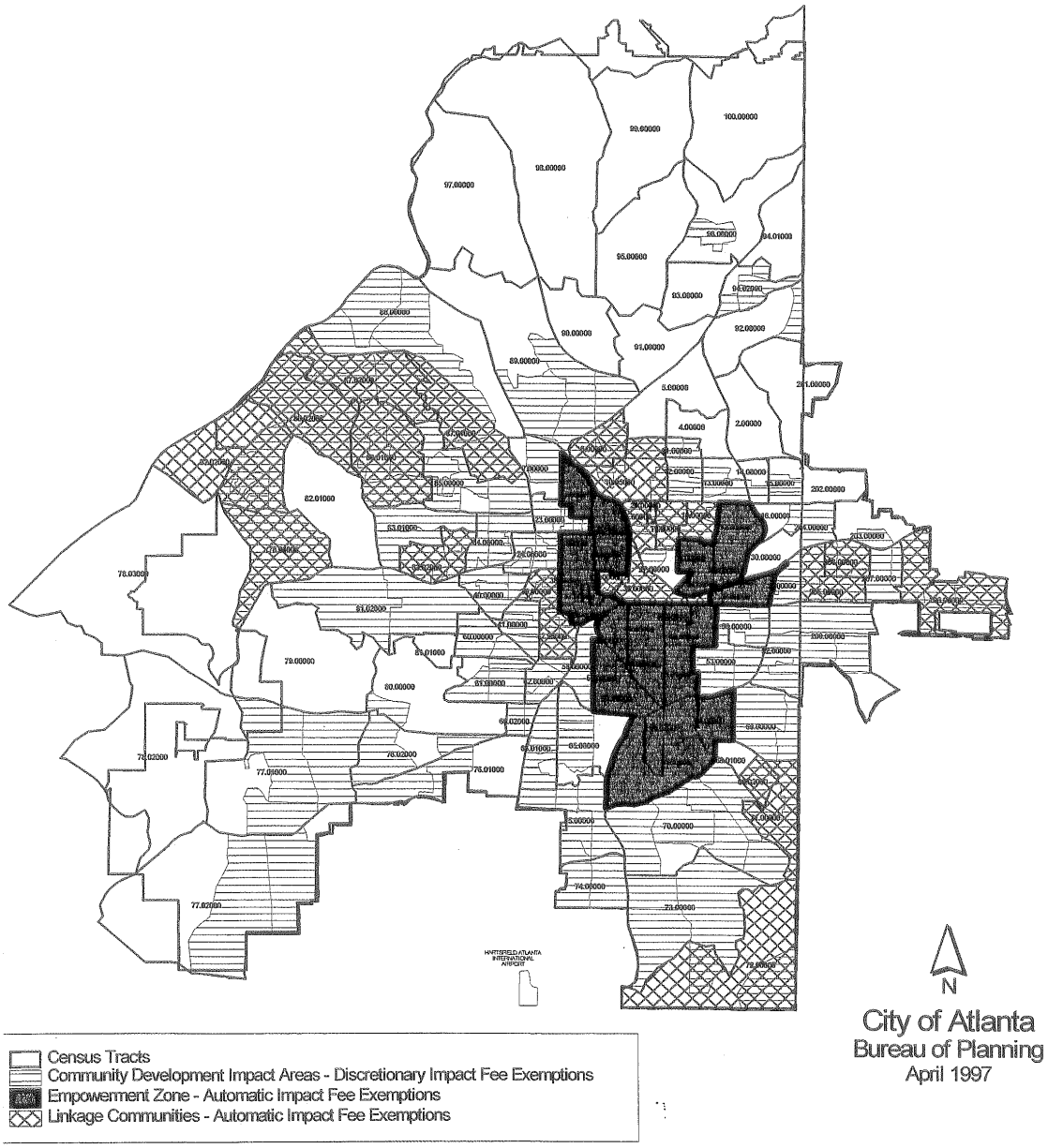
The methodology used in designating priority areas is consistent with that used to designate the Atlanta Empowerment Zone. Thus the Atlanta Empowerment Zone is included in the priority areas as a subset. The Atlanta Empowerment Zone program represents a nine square mile area of thirty neighborhoods, located south, east and west of the central business district (see Map 4-1). Linkage communities represent census tracts outside the Atlanta Empowerment Zone with poverty rates of 35% or more as determined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

The purpose of the empowerment zone legislation is to encourage job development while simultaneously preparing low-income residents to fill those jobs in some of the most impoverished areas in the country. Atlanta sees an empowerment zone as a vehicle to assist needy members of the community make the transition from poverty to full participation in the economic mainstream.

Each zone neighborhood is contained within a neighborhood planning unit (NPU) which elects representatives to the Community Empowerment Advisory Board (CEAB). The mission of the CEAB is to facilitate interagency cooperation, engage its members and agencies to ensure follow-through on commitments, and to generally promote and support the initiative. The CEAB put together Atlanta’s strategic plan for its empowerment zone program and reviews grant proposals. In addition to the grants, the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 provides special tax incentives for qualified businesses operating in empowerment zones. Businesses that either relocate or expand within the zone and hire zone residents are eligible for employer wage credit, an increased Section 179 deduction and a new type of tax-exempt bond. The new tax-exempt bond has a lower interest rate than conventional financing.

Property tax regulations are to be established in the City of Atlanta for persons living in the Atlanta Empowerment Zone or linkage communities that are seniors sixty (60) years or older on fixed-income, disabled persons, and persons making $40,000 or less in income.

Map 4-1: Community Development Impact Area, Empowerment Zone, and Linkage Communities



The enabling legislation describes the basic requirements for an empowerment zone (see Table 4-1).

Table 4-1: Atlanta Empowerment Zone Eligibility Criteria

CATEGORY	CRITERIA
POPULATION	50,000 or 10% of City population, which ever is larger
DISTRESS	Area of pervasive poverty, unemployment and general economic distress indicated by factors such as high crime rates, high vacancy rates, or designation of an area as a disaster area or high intensity drug trafficking area
SIZE	Not to exceed 20 square miles Excludes any portion of the central businesses district unless the poverty rate for each census tract in the district is 35% or above
POVERTY RATE	At or above 20% in all census tracts At or above 25% in 90% of tracts At or above 35% in 50% of tracts Unpopulated census tracts and census tracts with limited population and 75% or more zoned for commercial or industrial use will be treated as satisfying 20% and 25% poverty rate criteria
STRATEGIC PLAN	Local government and the state in which the area is located are required to provide a strategic plan for the economic physical community, and human development of the zone. The nominating state and local governments have to provide written assurances that their strategic plan will be implemented.

The population living in the Empowerment Zone is a reported 49,998 residents. The vast majorities are African-American and over 50 percent female. Persons between the ages of thirty-five and sixty represent a smaller percentage than in the City as a whole, while those sixty and over are almost identical to the citywide percentage. Therefore, the population is younger than in the City as a whole, having a greater percentage of persons eighteen and under than the rest of the City. This population is also less educated than the citywide percentage.

The high level of human and economic distress in the Empowerment Zone has made the area the target of several local efforts. They include local enterprise zones, small business improvement loan target areas, the Southtowne Plan, the Inner-City Development Plan, the Committee for Olympic Development in Atlanta (CODA) redevelopment plans, community development corporations supported by the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Corporation, and other special development projects. Citywide employment programs also target low-income residents, who include a large portion of the zone's population.