

# THE ATLANTA REGION'S PLAN

August 2015

THE REGION'S PLAN  
POLICY FRAMEWORK



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

# What is The Policy Framework?

Atlanta is one of the world's most dynamic metropolitan areas, competing globally on the strength of its resilience, diverse population, robust economy, cultural assets and attractive lifestyles. The Region's Plan aims to "win the future" through collaboration that honors and leverages the uniqueness of the region's communities. This policy framework establishes directions for The Region's Plan, articulating a common vision for the future.

In 2014, the ARC Board adopted a planning framework for The Region's Plan update that focuses on a threefold vision of providing world-class infrastructure, building a competitive economy and ensuring the region is comprised of healthy and livable communities. This vision, along with six key goals set by the ARC Board, serves as the foundation for The Region's Plan Policy Framework. Objectives and policies to realize the vision and goals are outlined to provide an actionable roadmap for the region's future.

The objectives and policies presented in this document build off the work established in the region's last comprehensive plan, PLAN 2040, focusing on a sustainable region that balances social, economic and environmental needs of current and future generations.

Cover photo credit: Sinan Sinharoy for Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.

## VOICES HEARD

Over the course of two years, ARC has employed a variety of techniques to engage a diverse range of community members. The input from these community voices has influenced these draft policies for The Region's Plan.

455

Community Conversations

6,300

Metro Atlanta Speaks Surveys

15,000

Online Surveys

360

Leadership Policy Discussions

300

Building Opportunity Series

300

Millennial's Advisory Panels

# THE REGION'S PLAN VISION



Atlanta is one of the world's most dynamic metropolitan areas, competing globally on the strength of our diverse population, robust economy, myriad cultural assets and attractive lifestyles. We will 'win the future' through intensive collaboration that honors and leverages the uniqueness of our communities.



- GOALS** | Building the region as a globally recognized hub of innovation and prosperity
- Developing a highly educated and skilled workforce, able to meet the needs of 21st Century employers

## GOAL:

BUILDING THE REGION AS A GLOBALLY RECOGNIZED HUB OF INNOVATION AND PROSPERITY

### Ensure that our existing and emerging employment centers support innovation and balance job growth and economic development

The Region's Plan supports balanced growth throughout the region. Economically prosperous innovative regions are not created by accident, but are instead designed. The Region's Plan policies support equitable access to digital infrastructure, like high speed internet, to ensure all parts of the region can attract new employers and allow for innovation. The Region's Plan also encourages developing and enhancing existing and emerging employment centers, which serve as the backbone of the region's economy, through improvements in transportation and land use.



FREIGHT



START-UPS



FILM

Photo Credit: Swan House at the Atlanta History Center

## GOAL:

BUILDING THE REGION AS A GLOBALLY RECOGNIZED HUB  
OF INNOVATION AND PROSPERITY

### **Maintain the region's current successes in existing and emerging employment sectors**

Over the last few decades, logistics, hospitality, information technology and life sciences have blossomed in the Atlanta region. Incentivizing start-up opportunities, local business development and expansion of successful ventures will ensure continued prosperity. The Region's Plan seeks to further improve the region's economic viability by preserving access to key intermodal freight facilities and by advancing policies that make the region more attractive to business.

# GOAL:

DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE, ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY EMPLOYERS



## Work with local communities to implement a regional approach to workforce development

Having a well-trained workforce is critical to remaining competitive in the global 21st Century economy. To that end, a regional approach to workforce development is essential. We must improve coordination between educators, workforce organizations, employers and government. This approach ensures every student's educational success and equitable access to opportunities, career training and skill development.



## GOALS

Ensuring a comprehensive transportation network, incorporating regional transit and 21st Century technology

Secured, long-term water supply



## GOAL:

ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK,  
INCORPORATING REGIONAL TRANSIT AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TECHNOLOGY

### **Maintain and operate the existing transportation system to provide for reliable travel**

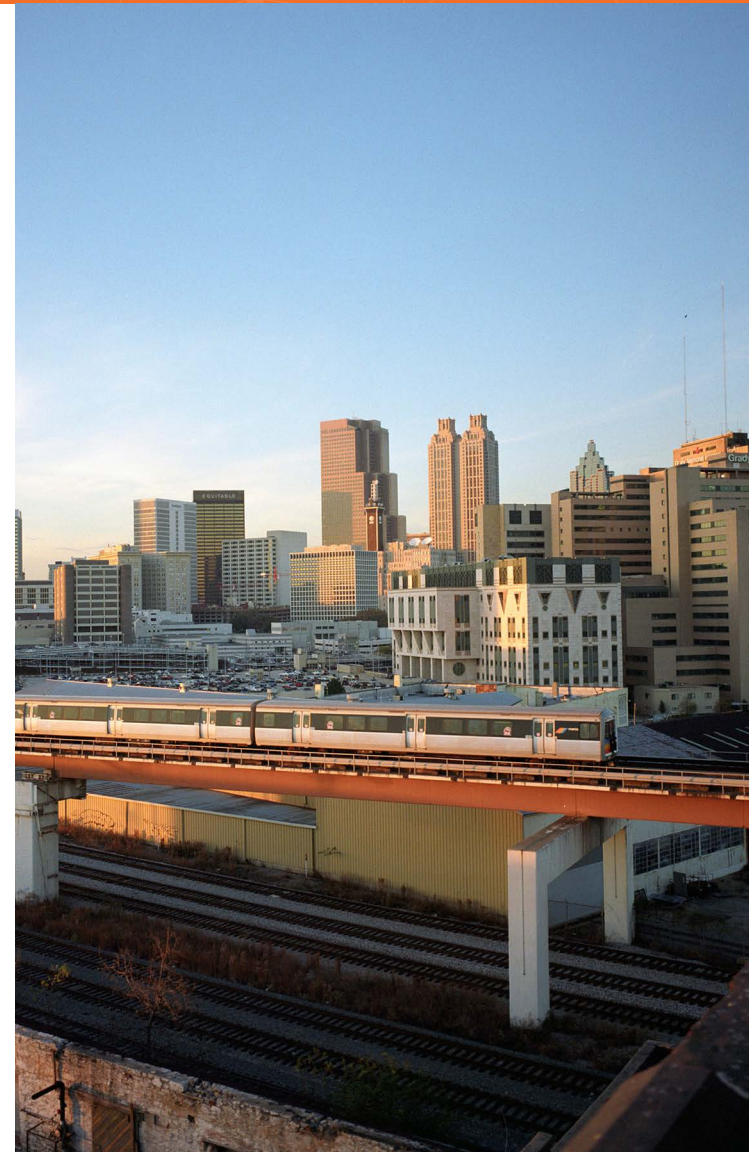
It is vital that the region focuses resources on maintaining and operating the existing transportation system before allocating resources to expand the current system. The Region's Plan prioritizes the maintenance of our transportation system while promoting trip reliability and system resiliency in the future.

### **Improve transit and non-single occupant vehicle options to boost economic competitiveness and reduce environmental impacts**

71% of Metro Atlanta Speaks regional survey respondents said that improved public transportation is very important for the future. Transit provides people with travel options, serves as the main source of transportation for thousands of residents, helps mitigate congestion and improves air quality. For existing and emerging centers, The Region's Plan policies prioritize transit expansion projects in areas with transit-supportive land use and regulations to ensure implementation of transit in the region.

### **Strategically expand the transportation system while supporting local land use plans**

When applicable based on a community's unique context, roadway expansions should be implemented as complete streets to accommodate people driving, riding transit, walking and bicycling. The expansion of roadways into rural areas should emphasize facilities that support economic competitiveness by improving multimodal connectivity between centers or by addressing critical safety needs.



## GOAL:

ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK,  
INCORPORATING REGIONAL TRANSIT AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TECHNOLOGY

### **Foster the application of advanced technologies to the transportation system**

Technology has changed the way residents live and travel in the Atlanta region. New technologies provide travelers with real-time data to inform decisions and will continue to shape the way residents and goods move in the future. The Region's Plan supports the development and further application of existing technologies, such as user friendly smart phone apps, to improve the travel experience. The application of technologies, such as synchronized signal timing and advanced traffic management systems, improve how governments stay ahead of congestion.

Looking further into the future, the Region's Plan fosters the implementation of emerging technologies, such as interconnected autonomous vehicles, to ensure the region stays competitive and technologically ahead of the curve.

### **Promote an accessible and equitable transportation system**

Many residents of the Atlanta region live in areas with low access to transit, or where people own few cars, making access to jobs and services difficult. Specifically, as our aging population grows and some no longer drive, accessing daily needs will be more of a challenge. It is vital to maintain and expand the comprehensive transportation system to ensure equal access for everyone.



## GOAL:

### SECURED, LONG-TERM WATER SUPPLY

#### **Protect public water supplies and water quality**

A clean abundant water supply is vital to the continued prosperity of the Atlanta region. Innovative approaches for better managing the supply and quality of our water resources support economic growth while also preserving the region's natural resources. This type of integrated water management, which includes a robust education program, is a key focus of the Metro Water District's 2016 Plan Update.

#### **Implement a diverse approach to sustainable solutions for the region's water and environmental infrastructure**

In planning for future investments in the Atlanta region's infrastructure, new approaches, such as addressing resiliency, must be considered to ensure those investments can adapt to changing conditions. Innovative practices, such as green infrastructure which better mimics natural conditions, is a nationally recognized approach for protecting water resources and infrastructure from current and future challenges. The Region's Plan encourages coordination between governmental bodies to develop sustainable solutions that safeguard public expenditures.





- GOALS** | Developing additional walkable, vibrant centers that support people of all ages and abilities
- Promoting health, arts and other aspects of a high quality of life

# GOAL:

DEVELOPING ADDITIONAL WALKABLE, VIBRANT CENTERS THAT SUPPORT PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

## In partnership with local communities, equitably and strategically focus resources in areas of need and importance

Strategically focusing resources and maximizing existing investments increases access to opportunities such as housing, services and employment. Transit-Oriented Development is one method to strategically focus resources to create mixed-income communities that make connections to employment opportunities, fresh foods, services and affordable housing along a transit route.

## Invest in equitable and improved access to a variety of safe, quality housing, including options for aging in place

Too many of the region’s residents must accept housing located in unsafe or distant neighborhoods that does not meet their needs. Encouraging the development of a variety of housing near major employment centers ensures that residents of all means will have access to jobs and services while fostering diverse inclusive communities.

How important is it for the region to promote a variety of housing options that are connected to existing and future job centers via expanded transit?



44% Very Important  
 25% Important  
 19% Not that Important  
 12% Unimportant

2015 Phase II The Region’s Plan Survey Respondents

## GOAL:

PROMOTING HEALTH, ARTS AND  
OTHER ASPECTS OF A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

### **Improve public health through the built environment**

The design of communities can impact health. For example, access to parks and greenspace improve air quality and promote exercise. The Region's Plan policies seek to better integrate public health impacts into the planning process through public safety, encouraging walking and bicycling, identifying opportunities for local food production and planning for the expansion of green infrastructure.

*Seniors practice Tai Chi at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens*



### **Integrate sound environmental management principles**

In order for the Atlanta region to maintain its high quality of life, it must retain its environmentally sensitive areas to support both humans and wildlife. Greenspace, like parks, wetlands and forests, help clean both water and air, protect health and preserve water quality. Considering changing trends in extreme weather is also important for managing infrastructure and community services in the future.

## GOAL:

PROMOTING HEALTH, ARTS AND  
OTHER ASPECTS OF A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

### **Promote the use of creative placemaking to build and maintain the character of communities**

The Atlanta region is home to a diverse set of cultural resources that bring local character to the region's communities and help establish a sense of place. The Region's Plan policies seek to enhance placemaking by focusing on identifying regional cultural amenities, maximizing accessibility to these venues by all modes of transportation and encouraging the intersection of art and the built environment.

### **Foster coordination with regional partners to implement community priorities**

The Region's Plan policies spell out some of ARC's key roles and commitments to the Atlanta region. Chief among those duties is ARC's role as a convener on topics of importance to the quality of life in the Atlanta region. For example, the ARC-led Educated Committee convenes experts from chambers of commerce, the United Way, the Community Foundation, ARC and local workforce investment boards to work together with education partners to support education in the region.



URBAN FARMING

Photo Credit: Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture

# THE REGION'S PLAN OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES





GOALS	OBJECTIVES	IT IS THE POLICY OF THE ARC TO...
<p><b>BUILDING THE REGION AS A GLOBALLY RECOGNIZED HUB OF INNOVATION AND PROSPERITY</b></p>	<p>Ensure that our existing and emerging employment centers support innovation and balance job growth and economic development in the region</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fully leverage economic generators through planning, partnerships and investments</li> <li>2. Support communities to achieve higher levels of investment and development in line with their local vision</li> <li>3. Promote transit and active transportation modes to improve access</li> <li>4. Promote equity of access to digital infrastructure like high speed internet</li> <li>5. Support diverse housing options</li> <li>6. Support engagement of a rapidly growing older workforce</li> </ol>
	<p>Maintain the region's current successes in existing and emerging employment sectors</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain and improve the economic viability and accessibility of key intermodal freight facilities</li> <li>2. Continue to grow the region as a top market for academic research, innovation, and commercialization</li> <li>3. Encourage start-up opportunities, local business development and expansion by improving access to capital and incentives</li> <li>4. Coordinate efforts to promote Metro Atlanta as a place to live, work, visit and do business</li> <li>5. Advance public policies that make the entire region more attractive and competitive for business</li> </ol>
<p><b>DEVELOPING A HIGHLY EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE, ABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF 21ST CENTURY EMPLOYERS</b></p>	<p>Work with local communities to implement a regional approach to workforce development</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elevate public education to the top of local, regional and state policy and public awareness</li> <li>2. Support education leaders in integrating best practices and innovative programs to positively impact PreK-12 classrooms</li> <li>3. Support the creation of, and maturing of, a regional workforce development system</li> <li>4. Promote the development of skills and education needed for key jobs within the region</li> <li>5. Improve coordination between education, workforce organizations, employers and government</li> <li>6. Develop and support comprehensive youth workforce development programs</li> <li>7. Ensure equitable access for people of all ages, abilities and income levels to educational opportunities, career training, and skills development to match employer demands</li> </ol>

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	IT IS THE POLICY OF THE ARC TO...
<p>ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK, INCORPORATING REGIONAL TRANSIT AND 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY</p>	<p>Maintain and operate the existing transportation system to provide for reliable travel</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prioritize data-supported maintenance projects over expansion projects</li> <li>2. Promote system reliability and resiliency</li> <li>3. Promote transit and active transportation modes to improve access</li> </ol>
	<p>Improve transit and non-single-occupant vehicle options to boost economic competitiveness and reduce environmental impacts</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish effective transit services that provide regional accessibility</li> <li>2. Prioritize transit projects in areas with transit-supportive land use, plans and regulations</li> <li>3. Promote bicycle transportation by developing safe and connected route options and facilities</li> <li>4. Promote pedestrian-friendly policies and design</li> <li>5. Enhance and expand Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs</li> </ol>
	<p>Strategically expand the transportation system while supporting local land use plans</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prioritize solutions that improve multimodal connectivity</li> <li>2. Direct federal funding for road capacity expansion to the regional strategic transportation system, including the managed lanes system</li> <li>3. Road expansion projects in rural areas should support economic competitiveness by improving multi-modal connectivity between centers</li> <li>4. Implement a complete streets approach on roadway projects that is sensitive to the existing community</li> </ol>
	<p>Provide for a safe and secure transportation network</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote and enhance safety across all planning and implementation efforts; including support for the state strategic highway safety plan</li> <li>2. Coordinate security and emergency preparedness programs across transportation modes and jurisdictions</li> </ol>
	<p>Promote an accessible and equitable transportation system</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain and expand transportation options that serve the region's most vulnerable populations</li> <li>2. Improve connectivity around transit stations and bus stops for all users</li> <li>3. Increase funding for Human Services Transportation (HST) and Medicaid transportation services</li> <li>4. Increase access to areas with essential services, including healthcare, education, recreation, entertainment and commercial retail</li> </ol>

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	IT IS THE POLICY OF THE ARC TO...	
<p>ENSURING A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK, INCORPORATING REGIONAL TRANSIT AND 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY</p>	<p>Support the reliable movement of freight and goods</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide safe and reliable access to freight land uses and major intermodal freight facilities</li> <li>2. Promote the use of information technologies to foster the most efficient movement of freight</li> <li>3. Preserve industrial land uses in proximity to existing freight corridors</li> </ol>	
	<p>Foster the application of advanced technologies to the transportation system</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pursue the application and use of advanced technologies</li> <li>2. Encourage the application of passenger information technologies</li> </ol>	
	<p>SECURED, LONG-TERM WATER SUPPLY</p>	<p>Protect public water supplies and water quality in coordination with the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage innovative approaches and leverage resources to secure, conserve and develop the region's water supplies</li> <li>2. Encourage and support innovative approaches to improving water quality</li> <li>3. Work with local jurisdictions to promote growth in a way that protects natural resources</li> </ol>
		<p>Plan for and implement a diverse approach to sustainable solutions for the region's water and environmental infrastructure</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include system resiliency in water and other planning efforts</li> <li>2. Plan for and support the implementation of regional green infrastructure</li> <li>3. Encourage communication within and amongst governmental bodies</li> </ol>

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	IT IS THE POLICY OF THE ARC TO...
<p>DEVELOPING ADDITIONAL WALKABLE, VIBRANT CENTERS THAT SUPPORT PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES</p>	<p>Improve quality of life at the neighborhood, city, county and regional levels</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage development, redevelopment, and transportation improvements to consider impacts on neighborhoods and communities</li> <li>2. Foster inclusive communities integrating residents of all ages, cultures and incomes</li> <li>3. Promote and support urban design standards that enhance elements of accessibility and livability</li> </ol>
	<p>In partnership with local communities, equitably and strategically focus resources in areas of need and importance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage increased housing, services and equal employment opportunities for residents around transit stations</li> <li>2. Focus investments in redevelopment opportunities of a regional scale</li> <li>3. Implement targeted planning efforts for areas with infrastructure of strategic regional importance</li> <li>4. Encourage equitable access to opportunities and resources for the region's disadvantaged and vulnerable populations</li> </ol>
	<p>Invest in equitable and improved access to a variety of safe, quality housing, including options for aging in place</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support local jurisdictions through resources and technical assistance</li> <li>2. Encourage local communities to increase housing options near large employment centers</li> <li>3. Support the preservation of existing, and the construction of new, mixed-income housing near transit and employment centers</li> <li>4. Encourage local communities to diversify housing options within existing neighborhoods, including equal access to housing options</li> </ol>
	<p>Promote land development that expands the sustainable use of resources</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage appropriate redevelopment of the built environment in the region's developed areas</li> <li>2. Balance investment to promote equitable growth in the region's communities as identified in regional and community plans</li> </ol>

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	IT IS THE POLICY OF THE ARC TO...
<p>PROMOTE HEALTH, ARTS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE</p>	<p>Improve public health through the built environment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrate public health into initiatives, programs and investment priorities</li> <li>2. Identify opportunities for local food production, access to healthy food options and nutrition education</li> <li>3. Support regional greenspace networks, which may include green infrastructure, to foster improved conservation and recreation spaces</li> <li>4. Promote public safety efforts to create vibrant 24-hour communities</li> </ol>
	<p>Integrate sound environmental management principles that ensure the region's sustainability</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mitigate the impacts of impaired air quality</li> <li>2. Advance technologies and strategies that improve energy efficiency and use renewable sources</li> <li>3. Plan for the impacts of extreme weather events on community services and infrastructure, including system resiliency</li> <li>4. Protect natural resources to attract and retain people and businesses</li> </ol>
	<p>Promote the use of creative placemaking to build and maintain the character of communities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify cultural resources and promote the development of cultural amenities</li> <li>2. Encourage opportunities for integration of public art into planning for infrastructure and public spaces</li> <li>3. Foster improved access to cultural assets</li> <li>4. Connect existing cultural partners with new audiences</li> <li>5. Seek ways to activate underutilized spaces and transform them into community assets</li> </ol>
	<p>Foster coordination with regional partners to implement community priorities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage communities to improve resident participation in the planning process</li> <li>2. Support regional policy through data and research</li> <li>3. Foster improved coordination for federal, state and local programs</li> <li>4. Serve as a convener on topics of importance to the quality of life of the region</li> </ol>



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

[www.atlantaregional.com/theregionsplan](http://www.atlantaregional.com/theregionsplan)