

## YEAR IN REVIEW

# Our Constantly Changing Region

AS WE TURN THE PAGE FROM ONE DECADE TO A BRAND NEW ONE, there are many things to reflect on as a regional planning agency. During the last decade, our Atlanta region has grown by more than one million new residents. At the same time, our region has grown older and more diverse. You could say that our region is a constantly changing palette, which makes our work at the Atlanta Regional Commission forever interesting and challenging.

Our region, like the rest of our nation, has suffered the severe impacts of the nation's Great Recession. During this global downturn of two years, metro Atlanta has lost more than 200,000 jobs. The Atlanta region's economy, so dependent on growth itself, was hit harder than most regions around the country and is still searching for the "new normal." It's no surprise that the construction sector has accounted for one quarter of our job losses.

Despite this recent slowdown, extraordinary strides were made during the last decade toward creating more livable communities in our region. In 2009, we celebrated 10 years of ARC's Livable Centers Initiative program—a grants program helping more than 100 communities seed great ideas for quality living.

We have fresh opportunities to re-imagine how our region might evolve in the future. ARC continued its Fifty Forward initiative to gaze 50 years ahead to determine trends and opportunities that we can capitalize on to position our region for success. We held a nine-day charette led by famed architect and planner, Andres Duany, to explore the concept of Lifelong Communities in six sites around our 10 counties, where age won't be a deterrent to quality living. What emerged was ground-breaking work for our region and our nation.

Our strengths are many, but we also must address some challenges that could slow us down. Mobility has been a chronic problem for this

region, and we must move forward in 2010 with our robust transportation plans and the funding to implement them. The General Assembly should finally act to give our region the options it needs to determine for ourselves how to fund much needed solutions to our congestion challenges.

Second, we are the largest metro area in the country that depends on such a small and finite water supply. In July, a judge determined that metro Atlanta's use of Lake Lanier for water supply purposes is not a federally designated use. Our state and metro area are working hard on many fronts to meet our water challenges. No matter what happens, we must create a culture of conservation to preserve the lifeblood of our region.

Thanks to all of you for your dedication to making the Atlanta region the best place to live, now and in the future. We look forward to working with you in the decade ahead.



Tad Leithead  
ARC Chairman



Chick Krautler  
ARC Director

## Mapping Our Future Through Plan 2040

Since 1947, ARC has generated regional plans to guide and shape metro Atlanta into one of the most dynamic cities in America. Those regional plans were not always implemented to the letter, but they represented a consensus vision of the region's residents and stakeholders. That vision has led to the busiest airport in the world, protection of the Chattahoochee River and the first rapid rail system in the Southeast, along with an extensive interstate and roadway network.

In 2009, ARC initiated another iteration of its visioning and planning efforts to ensure our region's positive development well into the 21st Century. Plan 2040 will result in a unified approach to addressing the many facets of life in our diverse region.

Here is a timeline for the development of Plan 2040. There is still plenty of time for you to get involved. To do so, visit [www.atlantaregional.com/plan2040](http://www.atlantaregional.com/plan2040).

### 2009

- Gather and analyze data that will impact the region, such as projected growth, employment and the economy.
- Review important information from previous planning efforts.
- Determine the region's major assets and challenges.
- Hold conversations with regional residents about how to reach desired outcomes.

### 2010

- Continue conversations with regional residents about how to reach desired outcomes.
- Determine the best ways to channel available resources toward our desired future.
- Evaluate land use and transportation scenarios.
- Identify potential transportation strategies.

### 2011

- Craft Regional Development Plan policies and priorities.
- Finalize the Regional Transportation Plan.
- Present a unified Plan 2040 to the board of the Atlanta Regional Commission.



## Providing Mobility Options for a Growing Metropolis

The slow economy reduced the number of commuters on metro Atlanta's roadways in 2009, easing congestion along many corridors. It also reduced the tax bases of state and local governments, yielding less funding for transportation projects needed to ease congestion in the future.

In early 2009, ARC was expecting to have to cut more than half of the projects from the region's **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**, due to a lack of funding. Thanks to the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)**, ARC instead found itself in the position of managing the distribution of more than \$600 million in stimulus transportation funding throughout the 20-county region. The ARC board voted to provide \$25 million in ARRA funds to MARTA to help the struggling transit agency maintain service at its current levels through fiscal year 2010.

Tied to ARRA was the September visit of Ray LaHood, U.S. Secretary of Transportation. LaHood praised ARC's **Livable Centers Initiative** program, which uses federal transportation dollars to fund the planning of developments that link transportation improvements to quality land use strategies. LaHood said that "livability" would be a watchword for transportation moving forward, and he encouraged other metro regions to follow ARC's lead.

In cooperation with the **Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA)** and the **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)**, ARC continued its work to develop a region-wide transit

system. In 2008, the Transit Planning Board unveiled Concept 3, a \$50 billion, 25-year plan to build light rail, streetcars, commuter rail, bus rapid transit and bus operations throughout the region. In 2009, operating as the Transit Implementation Board (TIB), that body moved forward with planning a seamless fare system and creating a permanent body to govern transit across the region. At the end of 2009, the TIB disbanded and ARC's board approved the formation of a new ARC committee, the **Regional Transit Committee**, to take the place of the TIB.

Transit is not the only way to get vehicles off the roads. **RideSmart**, a program provided by ARC, in cooperation with **GDOT** and the **Federal Highway Administration**, served more than 61,000 commuters in 2009, up from fewer than 50,000 the year before. As more people in the region sought options to driving alone, RideSmart continued to improve its services by launching a more interactive Web site at [www.myRideSmart.com](http://www.myRideSmart.com), enabling commuters to find ride matches using Google Maps and providing options for communication via text messaging. Almost 50,000 unique visitors to the Web site received commuting information and almost 5,000 more used the 24-hour telephone hotline. ARC also worked with service partners to provide more than 1,700 rides through the regional **Guaranteed Ride Home** program.

ARC's Transportation Planning Division also continued to work with local governments to review and update their comprehensive transportation plans. In 2009, this work included assisting Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, North Fulton and Rockdale counties.

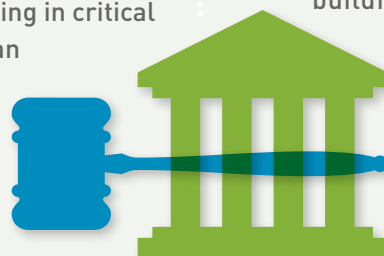


## Promoting Strong Governance and Leadership Development

Building stronger communities by providing area governments and leaders with a broad range of value-adding services and programs is the focus of ARC's Local Government Services Division.

ARC helps cities and counties optimize their performance and enhance their service delivery to residents by assisting in critical areas, including management and operations, human resources and community planning. In 2009, ARC's **Community Choices** program helped nine cities with a broad range of technical services to promote and enhance quality growth.

Appointed planning and elected officials, as well as city and county planning staff, are faced with an enormous responsibility to help guide the development and future of their communities. Through its **Community Planning Academy**, ARC offered courses and workshops in 2009 to nearly 300 people on topics ranging from retrofitting communities to planning in a challenging economy.



ARC's **Local Government Training Institute** and its **Management Development Program** both provide a range of offerings for all levels of local government staff. Another 150 people took advantage of training programs on topics such as Performance Measures, Customer Service and Strategies for Strengthening Your Organization.

There is no substitute for strong leadership in building great regions. ARC has long placed leadership as a high priority through two of its signature programs, the **Regional Leadership Institute (RLI)** and the **LINK** exchange program.

In 2009, ARC's six-day RLI program led a diverse group of civic, government and business leaders in an exploration of regional planning, problem-solving and community-building. National and regional experts addressed diverse topics, including the ingredients of a successful region, community collaboration, transportation, land use and economic and social trends. This year marked the 20th graduating class of RLI and to date, more than 1,000 regional citizens have graduated from the program.

The **LINK** (Leadership, Involvement, Networking and Knowledge) exchange program took more than 100 regional leaders to the Minneapolis — Saint Paul, Minnesota region in 2009 to explore common issues and exchange ideas and solutions regarding pressing regional challenges.

## Creating a Culture of Conservation

This has been a year of unprecedented water management challenges in metropolitan Atlanta. 2009 began with the region still contending with a multi-year drought brought on by years of below average rainfall. In July, legal issues involving the metro area's primary water source escalated when the court ruled that the Corps of Engineers is not authorized to manage Lake Lanier for water supply. Then, September brought torrential rains and devastating floods to many metro communities.

Through it all, the **Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District**, staffed by ARC, continues to be a force for effective water management planning as it works in partnership with local governments to bring about best-in-class water resources management in metro Atlanta. The Metro Water District celebrated a milestone in May when the District's board adopted comprehensive updates to the region's three water management plans. These integrated plans build on the progress achieved since the District was created in 2001 and are consistent with the State Water Plan.

Even though the drought ended, the need to conserve water is more important than ever.

The new plans include additional management strategies to strengthen the Metro Water District's already aggressive water conservation program. Two new measures — water recycling for new car washes and low-flow toilets and urinals in government buildings — were added to the 10 measures in the original plans, and three original measures were made stronger.



In addition, ARC, the **Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District**, the **Georgia Environmental Protection Division** and the **Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce** have come together to plan and implement a region-wide water conservation campaign to instill a "culture of conservation" in the region. **Grey Atlanta** has generously provided creative services pro bono to help develop the ideas and strategy for the "I'm In" water conservation campaign. The estimated value of their contribution to date is \$100,000.

ARC continues to provide leadership and coordinate the responses of local governments to the legal proceedings between Georgia, Florida and Alabama over the allocation of water from the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa (ACT) and Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) basins. In response to the court ruling, Governor Perdue has outlined a multi-pronged approach for addressing the challenge the court decision presents to metro Atlanta and the state.

Governor Perdue and the governors of Alabama and Florida have re-opened negotiations to determine an equitable allocation of the waters in the ACF basin. A task force appointed by the Governor has evaluated contingencies for alternate supplies.

ARC also launched the **Green Communities Certification** program, an initiative to foster greater environmental stewardship through recognizing local governments that invest in sustainability programs. It's the first regional "green" certification program in the country and looks to spotlight communities for their work in 10 areas including green building, energy-efficiency, greenspace and tree planting, recycling and innovation. Nine communities earned certifications in 2009.

## Land Planning for Quality Living

As the population of the Atlanta region approached five million in 2009, ARC's Land Use Division continued to provide technical assistance to local governments, review local comprehensive plans and assess **Developments of Regional Impact (DRI)**, while working with other regional organizations to promote quality growth.

One of ARC's most successful programs for advancing quality communities is the **Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)**. During 2009, ARC received the **American Planning Association's (APA) National Planning Excellence Award for Program Implementation**. In July, the ARC board voted to extend the program through 2012, making \$1 million available to local governments throughout the region each year. The LCI program, adopted by ARC in 1999, has allocated more than \$141 million in planning and transportation funds to 102 distinct areas in the Atlanta region.

Since the first LCI grants were awarded in 2000, more than 85,000 residential units, 19 million square feet of commercial space and 38 million square feet of office space are either planned, under construction or complete in these areas. Regionwide, more than 60 percent of all new office space has been built within LCI areas. Four cities and three counties received LCI grants totaling more than \$500,000 in 2009, and eight additional communities received \$204,000 in grants to supplement their existing LCI efforts. ARC also assists local governments with LCI transportation project management

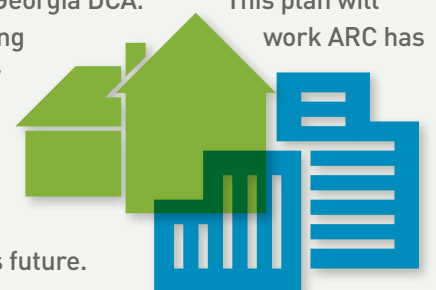
through coordination with Georgia DOT permitting and approval of federal regulatory requirements.

Large-scale developments, projects that are likely to have an impact beyond the borders of the host local government, are reviewed by ARC as **Developments of Regional Impact**. In 2009, ARC reviewed 10 DRIs, compared to 43 a year earlier and 73 in 2007.

As the region welcomes new residents in the coming years, housing issues must be addressed. ARC hosts the quarterly **Atlanta Regional Housing Forums**, in collaboration with nearly a dozen community partners, to explore and initiate new strategies for providing more housing choices for the future. ARC has worked closely with the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP) to provide new data and resources for housing planning.

ARC continued its work on **Plan 2040**, a major update to the Regional Development Plan (RDP) and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) revised the rules for regional planning in November 2008. Based on these new rules, ARC will undertake a "unified" planning process to integrate both regional and local plans. This process will constitute another major step forward in planning, including the use of new data and models. A major component of the plan update will be a **Regional Resource Plan**, as required by Georgia DCA.

This plan will be based on greenspace planning work ARC has undertaken during the past few years. Linking environmental resources with planning for issues such as watershed protection can provide multiple benefits for the Atlanta region's future.

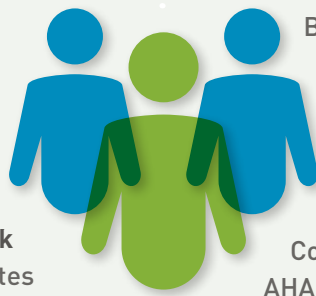


## Creating Lifelong Communities for All

2009 was the year that the concept of **Lifelong Communities** — neighborhoods, cities and counties that offer a high quality of life for residents of all ages — began to blossom in metro Atlanta. Since 2007, ARC's Aging Services Division has worked with stakeholder groups in all 10 counties in the region on strategies to promote housing and transportation options, encourage healthy lifestyles and expand access and information about services in the region to meet the needs of the rapidly growing older adult population.

Consistent with the purpose of Lifelong Communities, ARC and the Aging Network continue to develop and provide services and programs that help older adults remain in the community and maintain a high quality of life.

In February, more than 1,500 regional residents participated in the Lifelong Communities charrette, organized by ARC. This nine-day event brought aging, health, transportation and other experts together with the internationally-recognized town planning and architecture firm of **Duany, Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ)** to develop design concepts for six sites in the Atlanta region to show what age-friendly communities really look like. The concept plans incorporate the principles of connectivity, improved transit and pedestrian access, neighborhood retail and services, social interaction, housing choices, healthy living and consideration for existing residents.



Local governments have also embraced the concept of Lifelong Communities. DeKalb County created **Lifelong DeKalb**, which brings together community members and professionals to assess ways to integrate these principles into county policies and programs. Their targeted focus is on housing options for older adults and opportunities for older adult recreation, social interaction and access to basic needs.

On the other side of the region, ARC initiated **Lifelong Mableton** through a grant from the **U.S. Administration on Aging**, to implement a lifelong community and advance the findings from the region's recent Lifelong Mableton Charrette. This effort will serve as a comprehensive and innovative approach to implement the tools and programs necessary for Mableton residents to "age in place" and reside in their community throughout their lifetime. This project will develop the frameworks needed to promote transportation and housing options, healthy lifestyles and access to health and supportive services. ARC will partner with Cobb County government, local residents, private and nonprofit businesses and organizations throughout the course of this effort.

Beyond assisting local governments, ARC is working with the **Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA)**, which received stimulus funds to retrofit 12 highrises for older adults and young adults with disabilities. AHA recognizes that older residents want to age in place and are eager to integrate the Lifelong Communities design principles into their renovations. AHA has invited ARC to work closely with the architectural and design teams to ensure that aging in place guidelines and Lifelong Communities principles are integrated into the retrofit designs of the common areas of each building, the site itself and the building's relation to the street, public transportation and the larger community.

## Preparing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce

Demands on ARC's Workforce Division increased significantly during 2009 as a result of the economic downturn. More than 29,000 individuals visited Career Resource Centers in the seven Atlanta Regional Workforce Board (ARWB) counties in the last six months of 2009, compared to 46,000 for the entire 2008-2009 program year.

More than 36 companies with 50 or more employees experienced layoffs since mid-2008. ARC's Rapid Response team has held meetings with dislocated workers, assisting them with resume preparation, career counseling and training.

Thanks to regular Workforce Investment Act funding, supplemented by federal dollars, ARC has been able to help more laid-off workers, low-income adults and disadvantaged youth. More than 1,600 youth participated in a summer jobs program at 455 different worksites. Currently, 761 dislocated workers and low-income adults are in training.

On a positive note, economic and workforce development agencies in Georgia have developed stronger partnerships than ever before to ensure that businesses have the trained workforce they need and job seekers can find jobs in the occupations they've trained for. Nowhere are these partnerships more evident than in the **Innovation Crescent**, a 13-county region stretching from metro Atlanta to Athens, which is an emerging hub of life science in

the Southeast and well on its way to becoming a certified a **Work Ready Region** in the state.

ARC is a lead partner in helping metro area counties become certified as **Work Ready Communities** and in helping the Innovation Crescent become a Work Ready Region. As a result, individuals in the Innovation Crescent earned a record-breaking 20,458 Work Ready certificates, or nearly 20 percent of the state's total certificates. Further, more than 3,100 youth and adults have taken classes to prepare for taking the Work Ready test.

Central to the creation of a Work Ready Region is the development of career pathways aligned to jobs in bioscience. Under a grant from the Governor's Office, ARC and Georgia BIO spent more than a year developing career pathways and forging agreements between high schools, technical schools and the University System of Georgia so that young people who aspire to careers in the life sciences can transfer credits and move seamlessly through the education system, from high school to technical college to the University System. Seven high schools in the region helped pilot a new curriculum focused on biotechnology.

This program is being replicated in Valdosta and Augusta in partnership with industry groups in those communities.

As a result of these and other initiatives, the Governor's Office of Workforce Development recognized ARWB as the Workforce Investment Board of the Year.

