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This report summarizes the findings and designs of the nine-day Lifelong Communities Charrette hosted by the Atlanta Regional Commission in partnership with DPZ & Company. The charrette brought together experts from around the region and across the country to examine how Atlanta area communities could become places where people of all ages and abilities can live as long as they would like. The charrette developed:

- Five conceptual master plans which incorporate mixed-use, mixed-income, multi-generational designs, promote physical activity and healthy living;
- Model Lifelong Communities standards and zoning codes; and
- Regional development principles to meet the needs of the growing older adult population

The Lifelong Communities Initiative of Atlanta Regional Commission is a set of programs and policies that allow all people to remain in their homes and communities as long as they desire. The work is based on the premise that it is not possible to meet the needs of the growing older adult population with supportive programs or innovations in healthcare alone, but rather requires rethinking the way we plan for and regulate the built environment. The Lifelong Communities charrette brought together healthcare, aging, mobility, transportation, accessibility, architecture, planning and design experts to explore the challenges of creating lifelong Communities in the largely suburban landscape where most baby boomers live. After significant research, study and the development of five conceptual master plans, the group came to several central conclusions:

- Lifelong Communities must adhere to the fundamental principles of New Urbanism to truly be places where all people can live throughout their lifetimes.
- To be fully accessible, from inside the dwelling, down the street and into the restaurant, theater or store, New Urban developments must be supported by codes which address accessibility continuously across the entire urban environment.
- The past century gave humans the gift of longevity, often with the presence of managed disabilities or chronic conditions. Traditional building forms must be modified to reflect the new reality which includes ever increasing life expectancies and varying levels of ability.
CHARRETTE CONTEXT

The Atlanta region has one of the country’s fastest growing older adult populations.

This group will double between 2000 and 2015. By 2030, 1 in 5 residents will be over the age of 60. Not only will the region very quickly become home to more older adults, this growing senior population is like none before it. They expect and demand different things. As caregivers for their own parents, they have been well-educated about the challenges of growing older. They want to live in the communities they have helped develop and love and they expect to have the options and choices they desire.

This tremendous shift will transform the region and challenge every aspect of community life: healthcare, transportation, employment, housing, recreation and leisure, economic development, infrastructure expansion, and education. It will force local leaders to question the way billions of dollars are spent. It will affect the way public and private services are delivered, homes are built, even the way streets are crossed. In response to and because of these changes, the rapidly increasing older adult population offers the Atlanta region the opportunity to re-imagine what it means to live as a community, improving the quality of life for all residents, no matter their age.

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) as the Area Agency on Aging, the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Regional Development Center must develop a strategy to meet the needs of the growing older adult population while accommodating the land use and transportation needs of the entire region. Any meaningful response to the demographic shift is likely to change the way the region develops, spends transportation and infrastructure dollars, delivers healthcare, promotes services and trains professionals.

With the severe economic outlook challenging almost every aspect of our lives, it is not easy to imagine or re-imagine much Atlanta’s collective built future. Yet, the individuals, companies and regions that use this time for research and development will be best positioned to capture the market once it returns. The Atlanta region must continue to refine its competitive advantage and the growth in older adult population, is one of the most significant forces driving change.
CHARRETTE BACKGROUND

New ideas require changing the way all of us, but especially local governments and developers think, plan and implement. And while change is never easy, changing development patterns, local policy and community expectations can be particularly difficult.

ARC developed the Lifelong Communities Initiative in 2007 as a comprehensive effort to help communities in the metro area respond to a changing population and its diverse needs. Creating Lifelong Communities includes the development of programs, policies and funding that allow all people to remain in their homes and communities as long as they desire. The Lifelong Communities Initiative of ARC has three goals:
1. Promote housing and transportation options;
2. Encourage healthy lifestyles
3. Expand information and access

In order for older adults to remain in the community, they must have housing choices and alternatives to the car. They must be able to become and stay active. They need access to basic and preventive healthcare. Older adults and their families must be empowered with information so they can maximize their own resources and plan for their futures.

The Lifelong Communities Initiative evolved from the work of the Aging Atlanta Partnership which was funded in 2002 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Community Partnerships for Older Adults program. This initial work demonstrated not only the importance of challenging assumptions and piloting unconventional ways of meeting needs, but the critical role that partnership can and must play in creating substantial and sustainable change. ARC created the Lifelong Communities Initiative in 2007 to “scale-up” the critical lessons learned through Aging Atlanta. Over the course of two years ARC staff held meetings in each of the region’s ten counties with a wide range of professionals that represent a diverse set of skills and expertise. These county specific groups were comprised of community residents and elected officials, public health, planning and transportation professionals, hospital administrators, housing developers, public safety officers, parks and recreation directors, librarians, doctors and lawyers who first examined local data about the growing older adult population in their community. They then analyzed community assets contributing to housing and transportation options, healthy lifestyles and information and access, identifying key areas and priorities for their community.

To date, cities and counties in the region have successfully implemented a wide range of programs and policies to support the goals of a Lifelong Community. In May 2008, the Atlanta Regional Commission Board adopted the three Lifelong Community goals as agency policy. Still, a number of specific challenges prevented the Initiative from actualizing its goals:
• Local officials, planners and developers need concrete examples of what Lifelong Communities look like and how design principles can shape them. The region needs practical ideas for better integrating housing and transportation alternatives, retail and health services into neighborhoods.
• Lifelong Communities challenge existing development patterns and regulations. While many community groups and professionals acknowledge that change is needed, accepting and approving plans that reflect new ways of organizing communities is hard to do. ARC needs to build momentum in the region to imagine how the different goals of a Lifelong Community can be realized on the ground.
• Even after consensus is achieved, critical decisions about development are often made in late night planning and zoning meetings. Local officials need simple and direct guidelines for deciding which developments can support the goals of a Lifelong Community and which do not.
CHARRETTE PROCESS

Because a charrette offers a way to combine multiple sources of expertise, build momentum and consensus, and create visual representations of very complicated ideas, a regional Lifelong Communities charrette quickly emerged as the next important step.

The charrette was organized to explore housing, transportation, and community planning that could support the rapid growth in the Atlanta region’s older adult population. It started from the initial premise that change was necessary; that current land use policy and development patterns in the metro area do not provide the choices needed for current and future older adults to live healthy, independent lives. The charrette was designed to be an interactive and dynamic experience, that challenged assumptions about the older adult population, and developed consensus around new community design concepts that will meet their needs.

The charrette intentionally sought to break down institutional and professional silos in order to foster a cross disciplinary approach to community design and development. Historically, service providers do not work with designers or architects, planners do not engage the healthcare community, and transportation engineers largely ignore the needs of the non-driving population. The resulting infrastructure and services are inefficient, creating silos that reflect funding and regulations, not communities that reflect how people live. The challenge of the charrette was to bring those same professionals together and create a collaborative learning environment in which everyone’s expertise was valued and integrated into the final result.

The charrette was held at the Loudermilk Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Over 1500 people participated in the various presentations, work sessions, concurrent workshops and in the design studio. Experts came from across the region and the country to participate in discussions about: Regional Demographics and Planning, Market Analysis, Retrofitting the Suburbs to Meet the Aging Demand, Mobility and Accessibility, Health and Healthy Aging, Health, Community Design and Active Living, and Accessibility Regulations for the Built Environment. Concurrent workshops included sessions on the Green House Model, a Regional Plan for Health and Wellness, and Human Services Transportation. The larger regional community was invited to participate in the Opening Charrette presentation, the Community Design Review and the Final Charrette presentation.

Originally five sites were selected from the over 20 submitted for review. Sites were chosen to provide a diversity of location and conditions, and to be representative of the region.

This unique opportunity to bring together such a wide range of expertise—aging, design, engineering, health, marketing, community development and economic analysis—was a first for the region and for the country. We are confident that what we learned and produced will impact not just Atlanta and the state of Georgia, but communities across the nation, already engaged in the work of creating age-friendly communities.
CHARRETTE BREAK THROUGHGS

Lifelong Communities and Urbanism

Urbanism and Accessibility
URBANISM AND LIFELONG COMMUNITIES

After extensive discussion and debate, charrette participants agreed that it is not possible to create a Lifelong Community without the fundamental principles of good urban design. The connectivity, diversity of housing stock, range of transportation options, walkable environment and access to retail, social and health services that provide quality of life at younger ages, become absolutely essential for older adults. If a community is truly going to be a place where residents can live throughout their lifetime, then these elements are not optional. Unfortunately in the Atlanta region, the vast majority of neighborhoods were built to conventional suburban development codes. As a result, the process of creating Lifelong Communities has two critical pieces:

First it is essential to repair the local infrastructure to provide the connectivity, diversity and walkability missing in most of the Atlanta region.

Second, certain design elements are critical to meet the needs of the aging population. These are specific approaches to the design of social spaces, streetscapes, recreation and entertainment facilities, transportation options, retail and residential buildings that incorporate the needs of an aging body.
URBANISM AND ACCESSIBILITY

Suburban sprawl with its complete dependence on the automobile, has made it almost impossible for individuals and families to live in the same neighborhood as they age or when their physical or mental abilities change. Even in the best of health, suburban sprawl discourages walking for either recreation or access to goods and services, increasing the likelihood that residents will suffer from obesity, diabetes, depression and loss of motor functions.

Lifelong Communities prioritize urbanism—the integrated design of the total built environment—as an issue of accessibility. To be fully accessible, from inside the dwelling, down the street and into the restaurant, theater or store, a development must be supported by zoning codes which address accessibility continuously across the entire urban environment.

In the existing regulations, accessibility is monitored through a mix of standards which start and stop at the edges of each building or public space. The experts at the charrette crafted a set of zoning and building codes that tie accessibility to space and geography. They address not only how an environment should be made accessible but where the most accessible spaces need to be located in the community. By correlating zoning code with building code, interventions can be tailored to the conditions of the site and ultimately measured by their performance not just their compliance.

The Atlanta Regional Commission will continue to work with those who gathered for the Lifelong Communities Charrette and other national and regional experts to develop a set of design standards at the building, street, community and regional scales that reflect these breakthroughs. A preliminary discussion of these standards is included in this report. These guidelines will continue to be refined over the next 9-12 months and updates will be made available on the Atlanta Regional Commission website.
Lifelong Communities recognize that economic vitality, stability, and health cannot be maintained over an individual’s lifespan without a coherent and supportive physical neighborhood framework. The Lifelong Communities Initiative joins with the New Urbanist movement in recognizing that reforming sprawling development patterns and improving the quality of life for an aging population is one interrelated community-building challenge.

While the Lifelong Communities Initiative advocates for development practices to support a comprehensive restoration of the urban environment, it does so from a distinct vantage point and set of concerns. During the charrette experts from a variety of professional fields including aging, healthcare, land use, anthropology, architecture, and transportation identified existing conditions at the study sites that must be restored or repaired to prepare the ground for a Lifelong Community. These basic underlying urban design and land use issues must first be addressed before any site in the Atlanta Region can adequately support the specialized programs, policies, and building types of a Lifelong Community.

**FIXING WHAT’S BROKEN**

- Connectivity
- Pedestrian Access and Transit
- Neighborhood Retail and Services
- Social Interaction
- Dwelling Types
- Healthy Living
- Consideration for Existing Residents

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FIXING WHAT’S BROKEN

CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity is the single biggest challenge facing Atlanta. While the initial layout of the metropolitan area included many railroad right-of-ways and challenging topography, it has been the overlay of suburban, cul-de-sac development that has further hindered connectivity amongst the region’s neighborhoods and services. Therefore, finding every possible opportunity to weave the street grid back together is the first step and highest priority at each of the study sites. Connectivity is essential to neighborhood safety, vitality, and social health and it is simply not possible to effectively address the needs for safe roads for people of all ages until the street system can be restructured from a dendritic system of cul-de-sacs, collectors, and arterials to a dispersed system of connected grids. Connectivity was also a particular focus of the charrette out of a desire to reverse the association of older adult communities with gated subdivisions. Crime statistics indicate that sense of security provided by gating a community often does not affect the rate or type of crime in a neighborhood. The Lifelong Communities Initiative maintains that the isolation and segregation by gated communities does more damage to the neighborhood and surrounding community than is warranted by any potential safety benefits of such security measures.

Lifelong Communities provide connected networks of streets and sidewalks. People have many paths to choose from to get to their destinations, and may do so using a variety of means. In conventional development, street systems are strictly hierarchical and therefore cut-off adjacent uses from each other. People are required to use cars to get places that are close by, which results in traffic congestion and isolates those who do not drive.

Lifelong Communities integrate all mobility options into a vibrant and cohesive built environment. The result is easy access to the necessities of daily life no matter an individual’s level of mobility. In conventional development, streets are designed according to their type and are required to limit connectivity according to abstract formula, ignoring the urban context.
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND TRANSIT

Pedestrian access and transit must be provided to people of all ages and physical ability. To start, mobility must begin inside the individual unit or house and carry continuously throughout the entire built environment. As such, transit must be framed as more than a way of getting people to and from work, rather it must be understood as an integral part of the continuous mobility network. This network enhances the local retail and service network by drawing in larger customer catchment areas and enables local residents to more easily and efficiently access regional centers for employment, shopping, and services. During the charrette, each of the study sites demonstrated how circulating transit could provide an extension to the ¼ mile radius of the typical neighborhood unit. Using a small shuttle system along routes that pass through and between neighborhoods, opportunities exist to deliver local riders to single connection points that include district lines, which in turn connect riders to regional hubs. A circulating transit system structured this way would free district lines to run on express rather than local time intervals, and would provide a better means for local circulation by operating at a shuttle scale within clusters of interconnected neighborhoods.
NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL AND SERVICES

The right to have neighborhood retail and services must be reclaimed from single-use zoning codes. Having basic services within walking distance is a great convenience for all residents but an absolute necessity for an aging population. It should be possible to take a walk to get a cup of coffee after you have retired and given up your morning commute. At the same time, a daughter should not have to take a day off work to help an elderly parent get prescriptions refilled. A pharmacy should be within walking or at least local delivery distance.

At some of the charrette sites “grandfathered” businesses constructed before modern zoning codes outlawed their existence, already provide such amenities. Other charrette sites have already benefited from mixed-use zoning ordinances recently adopted by progressive local governments. Yet several sites still suffer under the single-use restrictions that make Lifelong Communities difficult to implement. Thus, this initiative must first address the basic limitations of the local land use and building codes before moving forward with the development itself. New communities will need mixed-use zoning. Existing neighborhoods where most older adults live will have to Retrofit and Re-zone areas for local commercial centers.

In addition to the simple mixing of uses, Lifelong Communities must also address the special use permits required of congregate housing types that can provide community-based care to those who need it. Understanding that many of the dominant forms of institutionalized care facilities are not yet suited for community integration, local governments might consider a special designation for care facilities that are appropriate for integration into a neighborhood setting, thereby allowing those facilities to build as-of-right provided that they meet the design and programming criteria required by that designation (See Appendix A for examples of innovative building types for community-based health institutions developed during the charrette).
SOCIAL INTERACTION

Most of Atlanta’s urban fabric impedes rather than fosters social interaction. Several of the study sites exhibited existing conditions that were likely to increase isolation among older adults. Isolation related depression can dramatically increase physical and mental health problems, whereas a quality neighborhood can foster connection to a supportive community. A first step in making Atlanta’s neighborhoods more conducive to social interaction is to remove extensive front yard setbacks requirements and instead institute build-to requirements that place houses closer to the street. This encourages more interaction and defines the public realm as an “outdoor room.” Alleys should be utilized to the greatest extent possible to avoid repeated curb cuts needed for front entry driveways. Alleys also provide the added benefit of providing a semi-private space that is allowed to be a bit messier, a quality treasured by kids who can leave toys about or those for whom tinkering with automobile and furniture repair projects provides a focused but communal activity.

The Atlanta region must also reverse the trend of barring neighborhood coffee shops and cafes through single-use zoning. Otherwise the rich social environments created by such beloved neighborhood centers, will never develop what sociologists call “third places”. In essence, third places act like collective living rooms for the community in that they provide semi-public spaces that are informal and comfortable for a knitting circle, business meeting, or a date.

Lastly, Atlanta’s neighborhoods should all have a system of well structured parks and greens that support planned neighborhood events as well as pick-up games of football or impromptu pot luck picnics. During the charrette careful attention was paid to providing a robust range of these types of social spaces through each Lifelong Community.
Dwelling types within a community must range widely to accommodate individuals as abilities, incomes, and spatial needs fluctuate over their lifetimes. This range includes sufficient smaller connected units, like condominiums or townhomes that reduce maintenance and expense, to assisted and even skilled nursing care. The Atlanta region has many challenges on this front because most of the region’s development is guided by low-density, use-segregating zoning practices. Thus, large swaths of the region provide only the large single family homes appropriate for a family with young children, but too large and difficult to maintain for many empty nesters. The charrette focused on strategies that yield a rich diversity of townhouses, apartments and condos, as well as detached homes, accessory apartments, and enough supportive housing and skilled nursing care to ensure a continuous care environment within the community.

Lifelong Communities provide a variety of housing options within the neighborhood unit, allowing residents’ needs to be met within their community through many stages of life. This also provides a high degree of social interaction across age and income levels. Conventional development segregates housing types and income levels from each other, allowing no one to live within their community through life’s stages and limiting sociability.
HEALTHY LIVING

Longevity is only an opportunity if individuals are healthy enough to enjoy it. Unfortunately in a recent national public health report, Georgia’s older adults were ranked among the unhealthiest in the country. Fortunately, Atlanta is home to the Center for Quality Growth, Rollins School of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control that have received international attention for their groundbreaking research changing the way planners and public health professionals understand the relationship between urban form and health outcomes. It is now empirically clear that the places people live play a major role in determining how healthy they will be. Health is much more than just medical care, it is about the ability to exercise regularly, eat healthy, fresh foods, access supportive, diagnostic and treatment services, and engage mentally and socially with others. With rising healthcare costs and a growing older adult population these issues have become more important than ever.

Lifelong Communities must prioritize planning practices which promote healthy lifestyles. Trails, recreation facilities, neighborhood based clinical, therapeutic and medical services, and grocery stores within walking distance are critical to the health and economic vitality of the region. Too few communities in the region have these essential services and the Lifelong Communities approach to community development is the opportunity to retrofit the Atlanta region to improve health and ensure that all residents can enjoy the highest quality of life as they age.

Putting all of the pieces together, Lifelong Communities are diverse, permeable, and complete neighborhoods, town, and cities that fulfill the daily needs of their residents. Lifelong Communities do not discriminate against any age group young or old. They celebrate community as not only a place to live but a place to recreate, shop, socialize, and generally live a healthy and engaged life.
CONSIDERATION FOR EXISTING RESIDENTS

Consideration for existing residents during redevelopment is an inherent and mandatory aspect of Lifelong Communities. Redevelopment of an area represents progress when the new development provides an improved urban condition that benefits the entire community. However, it must be noted that outdated and underutilized development tends to house a high percentage of older adults, most of whom have aged in place over a lifetime. Any move can be traumatic, but frail elderly can experience confusion and diminished self-help capacity when relocated to unfamiliar settings. It would be at odds with the goals and values of Lifelong Communities to not give careful consideration to relocation strategies when existing communities are being considered for redevelopment.

Any locality that provides entitlement benefits to Lifelong Community developments needs to also tie those entitlements to an appropriate resident, or tenant relocation plan. In all relocation strategies, the right to return to the new development should be convincingly guaranteed to those who want it. Lifelong Communities recommends four basic relocation strategies based on the intended time frame of the redevelopment.

a. Complete demolition and redevelopment of an occupied site:
Lifelong Communities highly values incremental redevelopment and discourages the wholesale clearing of any large site in an existing, occupied urban fabric. Clearing and redeveloping a large site in one fell swoop tends to homogenize many aspects of the new development and may diminish the project’s environmental sensitivity. Buildings built all at once tend to look much alike and the bulk lease occupation or sale of residential and commercial units tends to attract a narrower spectrum of the economic, racial, and cultural market than does gradual occupation over time. When complete demolition and redevelopment is unavoidable, Lifelong Communities recommends adoption of HUD relocation requirements as a minimum standard unless the developer and tenant association can reach mutually agreeable alternatives.

b. Immediate but incremental demolition and redevelopment:
When a large site in an existing, occupied urban area is targeted for immediate redevelopment, Lifelong Communities values phased redevelopment that provides on-site accommodation to the greatest extent possible. In this scenario, enough units are assembled for an initial phase of redevelopment through natural attrition or mutually agreed upon off-site relocation. Some relocation within the existing units on site will likely be required to fully vacate one portion of the site, but this should be minimized and additional considerations should be provided for those inconvenienced through multiple relocations. Once a sufficient area of the site has been vacated to initiate the first phase of redevelopment, replacement housing should be provided in sufficient quantity to permanently accommodate existing residents in the second phase area. This housing should provide right of first refusal to the existing residents.

c. Immediate redevelopment in a partially developed site:
Whenever opportunity exists to build replacement housing on site before demolition of existing housing, Lifelong Communities place a high value on offering this housing first to the existing residents, and encourages both developer and local government to make the necessary arrangements to ensure that the housing is affordable to the existing residents.

d. Non-immediate, land banking for redevelopment:
Some things are worth waiting for, and both developers and localities can work on long term relocation plans, particularly when existing improvements are income producing and self-sustaining. In these instances, land trust structures can be developed to allow for the land to be purchased and assembled by a development entity, while allowing the use of the existing improvements for some structured period of time. The use of land trust structures can also allow the locality to contribute to the more gradual transition to redevelopment by exempting some or all of the taxes and fees that are collected from the property. There is an increasing volume of best practice literature on effective mechanisms for “land banking” property to allow the aggregation of strategic assemblies gently over time. Land banking mechanisms are particularly effective when done in partnership with the local government and supported by State legislation. When structured in whole or part by public entities, land banks can be used to abate existing tax debts, clear clouded titles, and exempt some or all of future tax burdens during the holding period. Used responsibly, land banking can be an effective holding and assembly strategy for advancing necessary long term and large scale redevelopment plans while mitigating displacement.
Lifelong Communities are not specialized forms of urbanism intended only for older people. Instead, Lifelong Communities recognize that the inadequacies of the built environment fall disproportionately hard on the young and the old. Most importantly, Lifelong Communities recognize that older residents are especially well positioned to take leadership roles in addressing these inadequacies. Lifelong Communities seek to both better accommodate the aging population and to leave a better region for the young to inherit.

Duany Plater-Zyberk and Company has been pleased to study five sites in the Atlanta Region on behalf of the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Aging Division. Through the charrette process we have had the chance to learn from health professionals and policy advocates who make it their business to improve the quality of life for older adults. The discussions have enlightened us to the nuanced needs of the aging population and have helped us to delve further into building type and streetscape issues that will allow us as town planners to better serve the aging population.

The DPZ charrette team could not help but notice the distinct sense that positive change was in the air in the Atlanta region. Lifelong Communities is clearly an initiative driven by a sense of stewardship as much as need. The baby boomers are the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful generation this country has ever produced, and the design teams were repeatedly challenged to explore not just what we could do for the aging, but what they could do for the community. And to this challenge, we have a great list of responses: the needs of the urban environment that are painstakingly detailed in the volumes of planning practices known collectively as the New Urbanism. These New Urban practices have been demonstrated at each of the study sites, but need to be applied more widely across the region. This will require new policies at the local, regional, and state levels. It demands leadership. This is what the boomers can do.

In the five case studies that follow, the charrette team has accommodated the diverse needs of all ages while paying particular attention to the aging population in each development. In the process we have discovered that there are pervasive issues of accessibility, specific matters of building type, and general considerations for program that the New Urbanism needs to further refine and develop. The charrette has enabled us to get started on that work.
But the case studies also layout the larger challenges that are faced at each site as Atlanta’s aging communities take up the tasks of repairing and retrofitting their urban environments. These challenges are many and they are great, and we have not attempted to portray them in anything less than their full extent. None of the case studies present a site plan that will solve the region’s urban problems. Instead each establishes a foothold for local leadership to participate in a regional repair and recovery process.

Lifelong Communities is a legacy project for Atlanta’s retiring baby boomers. It is in the interest of older adults and it is within the power of older adults to start this project. These are case studies, and they detail opportunities to lead by example. They start rather than finish a process that will ultimately need to be taken up by the next generation if it is to reach fruition. The DPZ team is please to assist Atlanta’s aging population in inspiring Atlanta’s next generation to do not as they have done, but as they are about to start doing. This is a redeeming legacy to leave.
This page sets out the five case studies that were identified as templates to creating Lifelong Communities out of what is currently an area of suburban sprawl. Each case study illustrates the current challenges of the area and the interventions required to mend it. The five charrette case studies are templates for how to transform traditional suburban sprawl into Lifelong Communities.

1. Boulevard Crossing
Atlanta Beltline

The Atlanta site is an inner-city brownfield on the cusp of being reclaimed as transit oriented development focused on a central public park and connected by a new light rail and trail conversion of an industrial rail corridor.

2. Mableton
Cobb County

Cobb is a historic train depot town with a good underlying urban structure needing reclamation from the last decades of sprawl.
3
CONYERS
ROCKDALE COUNTY

The Conyers site is a historic train depot town that now has potential as a bedroom community well connected to the region by an array of transportation opportunities.

4
TOCO HILLS
DEKALB COUNTY

The Toco Hills study area is an out dated and under utilized site, bordered by two road arterials choked with inter- and intra-county traffic, but adjacent to world-class regional park facilities and near some of the region’s largest employment centers.

5
STELLA PLACE
FAYETTEVILLE

Fayetteville is a historic train depot town in easy reach of Atlanta’s International Airport, but in need of better regional traffic management and an enhanced local street grid.
CHARETTE RESULTS AND NEXT STEPS

Over 1500 individuals participated in the Atlanta Regional Commission's Lifelong Community Charrette. The Lifelong Communities Charrette team developed master plans for each of the five case study sites and explored the retrofit of a regional shopping center as a sixth example of how communities across the metro area and the country can re-imagine the way they live together. Each plan implements the seven core Lifelong Community Planning Principles: Connectivity, Pedestrian and Transit Access, Neighborhood Retail and Services, Social Interaction, Dwelling Types, Healthy Living, Consideration for Existing Residents.

The five case studies demonstrate how diverse settings, both urban and suburban, with and without existing transit systems, can be retrofitted to create Lifelong Communities.

In addition to the master plans, the team outlined and will continue to refine over the next 12 months, a comprehensive accessibility code. Current codes, laws and guidelines regulate the different parts of the built environment in complete isolation from one another. Very often an accessible house is located within a community that does not have adequate sidewalks, retail and neighborhood services, local and regional transit, literally trapping the resident inside their accessible unit. At the same time laws can require extensive accommodations to a public facility or shopping center but the lack of transportation options or mixed use construction making it impossible for individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities to live near or access these services. The comprehensive accessibility code starts with the perspective of the individual and examines the built environment first and foremost from their direct experience living in a home and in a community.

The charrette also developed new designs for senior centers, supportive housing models that can be integrated into a neighborhood and retrofit strategies for single family neighborhoods.

NEXT STEPS:
The Atlanta Regional Commission will continue to work with the five study sites to facilitate the implementation of the designs. Embarking on an extensive education and outreach campaign ARC will share the results of the charrette with residents, developers, planners, designers and local officials in the region. ARC is integrating the principles of the Lifelong Communities initiative into the regional transportation, land use and local government support plans and programs.

The Charrette made clear that cross disciplinary dialogue and exploration is the only real way to design communities and services that reflect the way people live and age. The Atlanta Regional Commission is committed to fostering ongoing dialogue across professions, sharing the current lessons and insights from this charrette with all who are interested.

All Charrette site plans, presentations and designs are available on the Atlanta Regional Commission's website:
www.atlantaregional.com/lifelong

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