



IMAGINE MEMORIAL

A planning partnership with Councilwoman Natalyn Archibong,
Atlanta residents, and Georgia Tech's School of City and Regional Planning

DRAFT
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Housing Strategy

Suggested topics for comment:

Would you support the development of housing on the corridor for people of all incomes?

Would you support the development of more senior housing on the corridor?

Would you support property tax freezes based on income requirements for single-family properties that see a large increase in value over a short time period?

Would you support some housing affordability requirements being included in rezoning requests that would change the underlying land use and price point of a property?

Would you support additional transit oriented development within the corridor? Would you support zoning for higher density near transit and at key commercial nodes?

Please share any other ideas that you have related to this topic.

neighborhood and private developers' interest in reimagining the commercial nodes and intersections. The investment in the livability and access to the Memorial Drive corridor will hopefully attract new job centers and kickstart grassroots neighborhood efforts like eco restoration, as well.

5-Year Housing Strategy

Introduction

Affordability will continue to be an issue along the length of the Memorial Drive corridor, as popularity of Eastside in-town neighborhoods grows with the Atlanta BeltLine and other amenities around it. In short, it will be a displacement and supply problem. Rising home values are already leading some long-time residents to leave the area, whether by choice or inability to keep up with property tax increases. On the supply side, much of the new residential development is not affordable, or the number of affordable units is not high enough to supply the needs of residents at all incomes. To the east, there is a large stock of existing affordable properties, mostly in the form of older single-family homes and garden apartments. But there is increasing price pressure from the Kirkwood and Oakhurst neighborhoods and around the Drew Charter School.

A sound five-year housing strategy for the study area will consider the following areas, of equal importance:

- Affordability
- Economic diversity
- Job-housing match
- Aging in place
- Efficient use of transportation facilities

Based on these priorities, this 5-year strategy contains the following tactics:

- A) Helping existing residents stay in their homes if they choose
- B) Preserving and improving the existing stock of affordable options (both subsidized and market-rate)
- C) Promoting the development of new affordable unit
- D) Promoting development that takes advantage of transit and other alternative modes, as well as jobs-housing match
- E) Promoting infrastructure and services that allow elderly residents to remain in their homes and active members of their communities

Existing Conditions

The LCI study area encompasses a diverse range of people, employment and incomes, housing types, market activity, and needs for the future. The following demographic analysis uses the same Census tracts as those in the background report. Unless otherwise specified, the housing data below come from the American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Estimates. It's important to note that some of the Census tracts stretch farther away from the corridor than others, but the overall conditions across each tract don't vary greatly.

Some key findings on the study area compared to the City of Atlanta (details in Table 1):

Housing composition and density

- More owner-occupied units (56% to 46%)
- More single-family detached units (57.7% to 40%)
- Fewer large multifamily properties (10.3% to 21.5%)
- Broadly, multifamily and denser single-family housing is located in the western half of the study area, while the eastern half is

largely single-family housing, with a few multifamily sections directly on Memorial Drive.

Affordability

- Slightly lower median value of owner-occupied homes (\$215,000 to \$223,000)
- Nearly equal gross rent and rent as percentage of income (\$940 to \$945; 32.8% to 32%)
- Slightly higher number of renters paying more than 50% of income to rent (28.8% to 27.6%)

Transportation

- Roughly equivalent commuters who drive alone (67.7% to 66.9%)
- Slightly higher numbers of commuters who carpool and bicycle (10.2% to 8%; 1.5% to 0.8%)

Aging in Place

- A slightly higher median age than the city (35.7 to 33.2), but fewer residents over the age of 55 (17.9% to 19.4%)

FIGURE 5: Comparison of key housing figures for the study area and City of Atlanta

	Total Study Area	% of Study Area	City of Atlanta
Population	40,268		425,931
Total housing units	21,196		224,615
Owner-occupied	9,983	56.0%	46%
Renter-occupied	7,836	44.0%	54%
Housing type			
Single-family, detached	12,236	57.7%	40%
2 to 9 units	3,264	15.5%	16%
10 to 49 units	2,269	10.7%	16.8%
50 or more	2,172	10.3%	21.5%
Median Value of Owner-occupied Properties	\$215,299		\$223,121
Median Gross Rent	\$940		\$945
Median Gross Rent as % of Household Income		32.8%	32%
Units paying 50%+ of income to rent	2,255	28.8%	27.6%
Monthly Owner Costs as % of Household Income			
Less than 30%	4,794	59.9%	59.3%
30% or more	3,046	38%	39.8%
50% or more	1,521	19.0%	17.9%
Means of Transportation to Work			
Drive alone	13,704	67.7%	66.9%
Carpool	2,064	10.2%	8.0%
Transit	2,058	10.2%	11.5%
Bicycle	303	1.5%	0.8%
Walk	450	2.2%	4.7%
Work at home	1,357	6.7%	6.9%
Average Commute Time to Work (min)	28		26
Median Age (female/male)	36.5/34.9		33.8/32.5
Residents over 55	7,210	17.9%	19.4%

Source: Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2008 to 2012 (5-Year Estimates) (SE), ACS 2008 -- 2012 (5-Year Estimates), Social Explorer; U.S. Census Bureau

HOUSING STRATEGY

A) HELP EXISTING RESIDENTS STAY IN THEIR HOMES IF THEY CHOOSE

The circumstances of longtime homeowners in the study area vary widely, but there are several common themes that have emerged from the Great Recession and the ongoing transformation of Atlanta's Eastside neighborhoods. This strategy aims to isolate the most pressing problems, identify possible remedies, and offer timelines, where possible.

Problem: Rising property taxes

Remedy	"Circuit breaker" tax freezes, which freeze tax assessments at a given level whenever the property value of a home increases by too much in a given time period. Seniors already get a one-time tax freeze, but the concept could be applied to younger owners below a given income level.
Public Expense	To be determined
Difficulty	High political effort
Timeline	Likely 2-3 years for policy research, advocacy, passage by Council, County Commission

Problem: Foreclosure

Remedy	Connect homeowners with existing programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HomeSafe Georgia, which administers \$339 million for foreclosure relief HUD-approved housing counselors
Public Expense	Low to none
Difficulty	Low, requires outreach
Timeline	HomeSafe Georgia funds available through 2016

Problem: Major repairs, such as leaks and flooding

Remedy	Connecting homeowners with existing programs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Atlanta's Limited Repairs Program offers seniors a grant of up to \$7,500 for eligible repairs, including HVAC, roof, plumbing, code violations.
Public Expense	Current CDBG allocation
Difficulty	Low, requires outreach
Timeline	Life of CDBG funding, which is limited and must be renewed through competitive process.

Problem: Energy costs

Remedy	Connecting homeowners with existing programs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for households below 60% of AMI City's Limited Repairs Program offers seniors a grant of up to \$7,500 for eligible repairs, including HVAC, roof, plumbing, code violations. Georgia Power rebates and incentives for efficient appliances; Whole House energy improvement program
Public Expense	FY 2014 LIHEAP distribution was \$61,000; 2015 allocation pending
Difficulty	Low, requires outreach
Timeline	Life of federal LIHEAP funding, which is limited and must be renewed by Congress

HOUSING STRATEGY

B) PRESERVE AND IMPROVE EXISTING STOCK OF AFFORDABLE UNITS

Current land and development costs make it more expensive to approve and develop new affordable housing than to preserve, acquire, or renovate existing properties. An added benefit is keeping households in their communities. With this in mind, there are several promising models for protecting affordable units, both at market rates and with subsidy. Preserving some affordable market-rate units is important because of long waiting lists for rental vouchers and eligibility requirements that exclude some worthy residents.



Figure 6: Renovated market-rate garden apartments

While new affordable units should be promoted, another key part of an overall housing strategy is preserving rental housing that is affordable to working families at market rates. The apartments above are affordable to a household of three earning roughly 45% of the area median income (AMI). Source: Google Streetview; Georgia Housing Search, Feb. 2015.

Problem: Existing market-rate affordable multi-family properties at risk for redevelopment

Remedy	Zoning: Consider affordability requirements in rezoning requests and site approvals that would change the underlying use and price point.
Public Expense	No explicit funding, but requires staff time, energy, political capital; Potential legal risk
Difficulty	Medium to High
Timeline	Ongoing: Depends on specific properties and market conditions
Remedy	Acquisition/rehab of existing multifamily properties with affordability requirements (Example: Trestletree Village) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) • Tax-exempt bonds from Invest Atlanta
Public Expense	Statewide LIHTC allocation in 2014 was \$29.5M Tax-exempt bonds limited by IA capacity
Difficulty	High (LIHTC process is competitive with high application and compliance rules)
Timeline	Ongoing; Annual allocations of LIHTC funding set by population size
Remedy	Nonprofit investment in existing properties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy Housing • Enterprise Community Dev. Partners
Public Expense	Medium to Low; Various public matching funds can be applied, depending on the project
Difficulty	High (LIHTC is competitive process with high application and compliance requirements)
Timeline	Ongoing; Can be useful tool for renovation during down-cycles of real estate market

HOUSING STRATEGY

C) PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AFFORDABLE UNITS

The rebound of the metro Atlanta real estate market has seen dozens of large multifamily projects break ground in desirable parts of the city within walking distance of amenities and transit. Memorial Drive is no exception. Promoting the inclusion of affordable units in these new developments will ensure that the ongoing transformation of these neighborhoods is inclusive. There are several existing models.

Problem: Existing market-rate affordable multi-family properties at risk for redevelopment

Remedy	For city-owned or –controlled land, put in place affordability requirements for any residential use, on top of subsidy programs.
Public Expense	Low; Requires staff time and effort; political capital
Difficulty	High political difficulty
Timeline	Ongoing; Depends on specific properties and market conditions; Potential litigation
Remedy	Nonprofit development, aided by public subsidy (Example: Reynoldstown Senior) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy Housing • BeltLine Affordable Housing Trust Fund (BAHTF)
Public Expense	Medium; Matching funds usually involved
Difficulty	Low politically, Medium administratively
Timeline	Ongoing; Depends on specific properties and market conditions; BATHF is currently depleted, next capitalization unknown.

Remedy	Land acquisition/sale/donation as subsidy for affordable development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARTA TOD program • Atlanta-Fulton Co. Land Bank Authority • Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative
Public Expense	Medium to Low; Various public matching funds can be applied, depending on the project
Difficulty	High (LIHTC is competitive process with high application and compliance requirements)
Timeline	Ongoing; Can be useful tool for renovation during down-cycles of real estate market
Remedy	Conventional subsidy tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-Income Housing Tax Credit • Invest Atlanta programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHDO Grants • Housing Opportunity Bonds • Urban Enterprise Zone • HOME Multifamily financing • Tax-exempt bond financing
Public Expense	High, some immediate, some deferred debt
Difficulty	High
Timeline	Ongoing; funding sources fluctuate based on political climate, bonding capacity, etc.

HOUSING STRATEGY

D) PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT NEAR TRANSIT AND OTHER MODES; SUPPORTING JOBS-HOUSING MATCH

Although the study area has some key employers that contribute to the Atlanta area's economic diversity, it is not currently a major job center. Local hiring by existing and future employers is encouraged. But a complete strategy for jobs-housing match will consider transit connections to greater Atlanta job markets. The best locations for multimodal accessibility include:

- On or near Memorial Drive, which is served by bus routes (74, 21) and crossing routes (32, 55, 186, 4, 34, 107, 15). One proposed route for BeltLine transit would use Memorial, from Grant St. to Bill Kennedy Way.
- Near the Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail extension, which will offer ped/bike access to Inman Park, Old 4th Ward, and Midtown. Another proposed BeltLine transit route would use this corridor.
- MARTA rail stations at Georgia State, King Memorial, and Inman Park/Reynoldstown. To the east, where MARTA rail is farther away from Memorial, focus on bus routes connecting to the rail system.

Problem: Promoting new Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Remedy	Zoning for higher density near key transit stops and corridors. Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MARTA TOD strategy • Atlanta BeltLine Subarea Master Plans
Public Expense	Low; Requires staff time and effort; political capital
Difficulty	Medium politically
Timeline	Ongoing; Depends on specific properties and market conditions

Remedy	Advocate for stronger priority given to TOD in existing affordable subsidy programs, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Qualified Allocation Plan • Invest Atlanta development programs
Public Expense	Low; Requires staff time and effort; political capital
Difficulty	High administratively
Timeline	Long; Major changes to QAP process take time



Figure 7: Rendering of proposed King Memorial TOD project
The King Memorial TOD project intends to build almost 400 apartments and retail space on an underused parking lot. Twenty percent of the units will be affordable for seniors. It's expected to reduce car trips, increase transit ridership, and contribute to jobs-housing match. Source: Atlanta Business Chronicle

HOUSING STRATEGY

E) PROMOTE HOUSING THAT ALLOWS SENIORS TO AGE IN PLACE

In many cases, the tactics outlined in the existing residents section (A) will help low-income seniors remain in their homes and communities. There are also options to keep seniors living in their communities even if their housing situation changes, such as shared housing, new senior development, and services for at-home care.

Problem: Accommodating seniors who want to stay in their communities

Remedy	Shared housing with seniors in similar situations. Local service providers, neighborhood groups, and community leaders can help connect seniors with similar needs. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women for Living in Community • National Shared Housing Resource Center
Public Expense	Low; Some outreach and marketing required to connect residents to services and programs
Difficulty	Low
Timeline	Ongoing

Problem: At-home care and services

Remedy	Existing programs for nursing, cleaning, shopping, meal delivery, transportation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulton County Office of Aging • DeKalb County Senior Services • Various non-profit and church services
Public Expense	Medium to High
Difficulty	Low, outreach required
Timeline	Ongoing. Lifetimes of programs vary.

Problem: Affordable housing for seniors

Remedy	Develop new senior housing (low- or mixed-income) using existing subsidy models. (Example: Reynoldstown Senior) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LIHTC • HUD 202
Public Expense	High
Difficulty	Medium; Senior housing generally sees less opposition than mixed-income family housing.
Timeline	Ongoing; subject to competitive funding process, availability of federal funds.

Problem: Home conversions for senior needs

Remedy	Existing programs for wheelchair ramps, handrails, shelving, alarms, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Access Program, Georgia DCA • Credit-Able program for low-cost loans • HUD Title 1 Improvement Program
Public Expense	Low
Difficulty	Low, outreach required
Timeline	Ongoing. Lifetimes of programs vary.