



Workshop **4** Home Park

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Blueprints for successful communities





The Home Park Community Design Workshop

**results of a community design
workshop for Home Park,
Atlanta, Georgia**

**A component of The Blueprints for
Successful Communities Initiative
of The Georgia Conservancy in
Partnership with:**

**The Interprofessional Community
Design Collaborative and,
The Georgia Tech Urban
Design Workshop**

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Contents

Blueprints for Successful Communities	page 2
Community Assets and Issues	page 3
Vision for the Future/Goals for the Plan Market Context	page 4 page 8
Community Survey and Analysis	page 10
Study Area Results	page 14
Summary of Goals	page 24
Phase 1 Strategic Actions	page 26
The Atlantic Steel Site	page 27
Participants	page 28



The Blueprints Initiative

Renowned planner Jan Gehl once compared cities to all-night house parties by saying, "Cities, like parties, come in three versions. Some you don't go to unless you have to; some you leave as soon as you can; and others you go and stay for much longer than you planned." When cities, towns and neighborhoods become lost in the morass of sprawl development they begin to feel like places you want to leave as soon as you can.

There is a growing consensus among members of the environmental and business communities that the current trend of low-density, decentralized, automobile-dependent development so common in this country for the past 50 years is a major threat to quality of life. Not only is it expensive for local governments to serve, but the impact that this urban form has on the environment is staggering. Automobile emissions create toxic air pollution. Stormwater surging across miles of asphalt poisons rivers and streams. Thousands of acres of farms, woodlands and open space are lost to strip malls and parking lots.

In Georgia a diverse group of people including home builders, architects, planners, developers, environmentalists and neighborhood leaders are among a growing number of people who are beginning to understand the link between the health of our environment, our economic stability and the way we use land. In 1995, The Georgia Conservancy convened such a group of people to foster public awareness about better ways to grow communities. A coalition was formed called the Successful Communities Partners.

The Successful Communities Partners have been instrumental in raising public awareness in Georgia and in the Atlanta region specifically about alternative land use and transportation strategies that are good for the environment and good for the economy. Part of the work of the partnership includes a project known as the Community Design Workshop. With the Urban Design Workshop of the Georgia Tech College of Architecture and the Interprofessional Community Design Collaborative, the partnership conducts workshops in

selected communities in Georgia to address specific development issues in those communities which may be prototypical for the state in general. The workshops also serve to integrate the Successful Communities Principles that have been established as a result of this initiative.

The Home Park Community Design Workshop was conducted in November 1998. By participating in the design of their own neighborhood, residents were able to create a model to guide the future of their community. This model will hopefully lead to a community designed for people, where walking to the corner store is commonplace, where tree-lined streets and bike paths are the norm, and where traffic congestion and air pollution are minimal.

Successful Communities Principles

Successful Communities:

- work together to produce a high quality of life that they want to sustain;
- work to create regional strategies for transportation, land use and economic growth;
- understand that sustainable community design is based on the effect of the built environment on the natural environment, aesthetics, scale, history and culture;
- promote efficient use of existing infrastructure, energy, water and land;
- incorporate compact integrated land uses which bring people closer to work, to school and shopping and safeguard undeveloped lands for agriculture, greenspace and recreation;
- provide transportation options so that each member of the community has access to goods, services and recreation;
- are designed to be safe, healthy, economically strong, environmentally sound and inclusive.

Objectives of Urban Livability

- Diversity of income.
- Diversity of family/household type (age, size composition).
- Balanced economic growth for both job development and commercial services.
- Diversity of land uses, closely integrated within the community.
- Access by all persons to housing options, including single family, multi-family and extended family opportunities in both rental and ownership formats.
- Access by all persons to transportation options (pedestrian, bicycle, automobile and transit) supported by a fine-grained street system.
- Efficient use of existing physical/social infrastructure.
- Availability of a variety of civic uses and spaces for both social and recreational purposes.
- Preservation and efficient use of historic architectural and landscape character.
- Strong visual community identity through legible neighborhood edges, gateways, and public spaces.

THE HOME PARK COMMUNITY ASSETS AND ISSUES

The workshop process included weekly meetings of the Home Park Workshop Steering Committee which consisted of neighborhood residents and representatives from the City of Atlanta, Georgia Tech, the Atlantic Steel Development Team, the Midtown Alliance, Turner Broadcasting System and the Atlanta Development Authority. Presentations and discussions were held concerning each of these adjacent areas and their current development plans and policies.

In addition, the process included two separate sessions where residents were asked to list and rank the assets and issues of their community. The questions posed were:

1. What do residents value most about living in Home Park? What attracted you to the neighborhood and what do you regard as its most important assets?
2. As the development pressures build up within and around the neighborhood, what problems will need to be addressed in order to maintain, preserve and enhance the characteristics most valued by the residents?

The results are presented in the following table. A ranking of 1 is the highest.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS AND VALUES	RANK	NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES	RANK
A. Quality of Life		A. Land Use/Zoning and Building Codes	
1. Strong sense of community; ever-present vitality.	2	1. Inappropriate land uses and development are widespread. Many uses are incompatible with existing buildings. Architectural styles are mixed; the neighborhood's historic character is threatened.	2
2. The place is quiet; it has a small town quality.	3	2. Enforcement of the City's building and zoning codes is spotty.	5
3. Diversity and the acceptance of diversity.	8	3. Lack of neighborhood convenience retail	7
4. Having a community-run day care center.	12	B. Property Values/Absentee Ownership	
B. Physical and Natural Excellence		1. Absentee ownership of many properties has brought about many negative impacts	1
1. Walkability of the community; the presence of sidewalks	4	2. Rising property values, while appreciated by long-term homeowners, is tending to change the character and affordability of the neighborhood	13
2. Predominance of single-family houses, with front and rear yards.	6	C. Streets/Sidewalks/Traffic	
3. Narrow streets give a compactness to the residential character	7	1. Traffic congestion on 10th and 14th	8
4. There are places of historic value and interest in the neighborhood	9	2. On-street parking is made more troublesome due to employees who work in nearby offices and students from Georgia Tech who park all day	9
5. "We live in a forest. There are Wild Things about!"	10	3. Narrow streets limit access (especially with so many on-street parked cars. Emergency vehicles are constricted.)	10
C. Economic Opportunities		4. Many sidewalks are in poor repair and difficult to walk on, especially for older citizens	11
1. Location: nearness and good access to downtown, the interstates, Hartsfield Airport, Centennial Park, places of work, medical facilities, Georgia Tech, private schools.	1	D. Public Services and Safety	
2. Affordability of the housing (although this is changing).	5	1. Crimes against property are not uncommon. Concern about crime against people is not as great, but there is an uneasiness in walking after dark.	6
3. Proximity to Georgia Tech has meant that faculty members are part of the community.	11	2. City does not provide sufficient police and sanitation services.	12
		E. Impact of Adj. Existing and Proposed Uses	
		1. Atlantic Steel, impacts unknown (north of 14th, south of 14th)	3
		F. Need for a Comprehensive Future Vision and Master Plan	4

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Residents, businesses and institutions regard Home Park as one of Atlanta's most desirable communities in which to live and raise their children. It enjoys strong personal associations, considerable physical charm, buildings of historical importance and abundant natural beauty. Diversity can be found throughout: in its people, its housing and other land uses, and in its institutions. A close-in location gives easy access to places for shopping, education, entertainment, health services, and work. It's housing remains affordable.

The residents, businesses and institutions of Home Park value these assets and are committed to their preservation and enhancement. They recognize that this will require the building of a broad community consensus around a Master Plan for the neighborhood to assure that the quality of life they now enjoy will constantly improve. Such a plan will need to address many problems which could threaten this sustainability: the condition of housing, infrastructure and open spaces, as well as problems associated with traffic, parking and safety. It will describe the neighborhood's future within a changing City's environment: its relationship to the development of the Atlantic Steel property and to the growth of Georgia Tech, Midtown and other close by properties. It will identify its role in proposed improvements to transportation systems and modes.

The future of Home Park is tied to recognizing and confronting this change. Its residents, businesses and institutions are committed to addressing the critical issues in order to realize the planning goals which it has set for the community's future.

The overall goal of the Home Park neighborhood is to achieve a livable and sustainable inner-city community. This can only be achieved by integrating all parts of the neighborhood into one diverse and vital whole, including

- The historic traditional residential neighborhood
- The new development on the Atlantic Steel property
- The emerging multi-use district west of Northside Drive

Long term sustainability for an integrated Home Park community consists of the following components at least:

- Housing diversity of household type (age, size,

income, demographic composition) in a balance of rental and owner formats

- Diversity of land uses that serve the neighborhood population, including retail, civic and recreational uses
- Balanced population of permanent residents, students, and daytime workers.
- Balanced accessibility to, from and within the neighborhood to a variety of transportation options (pedestrian, bicycle, automobile and transit) supported by a fine grained street system

GOALS OF THE WORKSHOP NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

1. Retain and enhance the neighborhood's physical character

The plan seeks to maintain the small town character of the neighborhood, including qualities reflected by its narrow streets, sidewalks and walkability, heavy tree cover, and its close-knit and compatible architectural style. Included also is the protection of the historic buildings and places valued by the community. It seeks, above all, to continue to preserve the serenity of the neighborhood.

2. Maintain Home Park's sense of community

The plan seeks to sustain the neighborhood's present cohesiveness and vitality, which grow out of strong community institutions and associations. To maintain this sense of community, the goal is to establish a continuous planning process, provide open and widespread citizen involvement, and retain a balance in the diversity of residents who live in the community.

3. Strengthen Home Park's organizational structure

The plan seeks to describe the means to implement its recommendations. This will require modifying the existing organizational structure in order to undertake the recommended program or to reach out to other appropriate public and private organizations which have the responsibility and capacity to undertake the recommendations.



Home Park Neighborhood Context