

# Westside Neighborhoods Community Benefit Guiding Principles: Menu of Proposed Actions to Fulfill Transformational Aspirations

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## FINAL DRAFT

Students in Georgia Tech's School of City and Regional Planning produced this report as part of their studio project on Northside Drive over the last school year (2012 – 2013); it provides the basis for considering the community benefits component for this year's studio project on the Stadium Area neighborhoods. The work produced and ongoing for these projects may be viewed at [www.northsidedrvision.gatech.edu](http://www.northsidedrvision.gatech.edu)

The Guiding Principles are a broad set of rules that have been established in order to encourage the provision of community benefits in the case of development that would affect the Westside neighborhoods. These principles were drawn after several discussions took place between community members of the Westside neighborhoods and Georgia Tech Masters students who conducted a Northside Drive Corridor study. One group of students in particular focused on these neighborhoods directly affected by two major project proposals. These include the Multi-Modal Passenger Terminal (MMPT) and the new retractable-roof stadium for the Falcons, comprising investments that might reach two billion dollars over the next several years. The needs and wishes of those living in this area, all under the overall banner of human development, were addressed in depth, and options for accommodating future growth and development were outlined. The Guiding Principles are intended to be coupled with other implementation tools such as neighborhood master plans, equitable development policies, affordable housing policies, and other topic areas as described below. The following community benefits action agenda, responding to expressions of what are taken to be good faith commitments to help on the part of the projects' progenitors, will help to realize the goals established by community members, mitigate any negative impacts of these major developments, and hopefully play a positive transformative role for the people there. The listing below does not distinguish as to importance or priority – at this point each listing is as important as any other.

### **1. JOB CREATION AND TRAINING**

*Job training programs should be mandated for all new developments, particularly those that have the potential to affect the Westside community. Major focus should be placed on targeting the long-term unemployed, regardless of criminal or substance abuse history, provided that they stay clean and sober. Jobs should not simply be limited to those in the realm of construction and hospitality but should include others in the project delivery chain, like consultants, attorneys, and administration. All should offer the possibility for long-term employment and upward mobility within any career path.*

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Identify training partners, both existing institutions and prospective private sector bidders
- Set measureable goals for numbers of people in low wealth census tracts to engage in job prep, apprenticeships, and jobs (both numbers and percentages of long term unemployed)
- Establish a recruitment process that sets targets and timelines for fulfilling goals

- Include stipulations for fulfilling these goals in all pre-qualification documents for prospective bidders

## 2. INFRASTRUCTURE

### **Storm water and green space**

*Use the Proctor Creek/North Avenue (PCNA) planning developed by Park Pride and in early implementation by the City, the EPA, foundations, and local watershed coalitions to guide projects and priorities. Design the stadium and the MMPT to contain all rain event run-off on site for later release into PCNA identified drainages. Retrofit GWCC to meet the goal of run-off retention. Plan neighborhood revitalization plans in the context of the storm drainage strategies to guide locations, land use and density mixes, timing, and priorities for new development. Include detention and retention basins as positive opportunities for park and recreation amenities.*

### **ACTIONS:**

- Build on EPA, City, foundation, and local watershed coalitions efforts to develop a staged implementation program that includes job targets (PATH Foundation Westside Trail, Boone Boulevard “Green Street,” and Mims Park, and Health Impact Assessment already in motion)
- Incorporate stormwater detention requirements for Stadium and MMPT design, as well as a retrofit program for the GWCC
- Reflect storm water management and park system features as amendments in the City’s Comprehensive Development Plan and subsequent zoning and subdivision requirements
- Include a jobs strategy into the bid documents for all emerging projects

### **Transportation**

*Improve street, parking, transit, sidewalk and bike access and quality, north- south and east west as an integrated and comprehensive network. Minimize open parking fields and design those that are to be built for community sports and gathering places for when they’re empty (most of the time). Look for meeting parking needs in shared use structures with new higher density mixed use, mixed income development. Design parking to lie behind tree- and shrub-lined streetscapes, obscured from view of the travelling public.*

### **ACTIONS:**

- Develop a staged implementation plan for Bus Rapid Transit, to include MARTA, Cobb Community Transit, and GRTA, in the Northside Drive corridor, from I-75 to West End MARTA station, beginning with formal “transit corridor” designation and the initiation of local bus service
- Plan to extend Downtown streetcar to the MMPT and then either to the Stadium, along MLK to the AUC campuses or down Walker Street to Fair Street and then to AUC campuses
- Support the incremental development of the City’s and PATH’s bicycle infrastructure improvements – the Boone Blvd “Green Street” and the Westside Trail to Centennial Olympic Park funded and underway with a north-south bike/trail along James P. Brawley slated for later
- Project location and priorities for sidewalk improvements, beginning with sidewalks that serve larger pedestrian volumes or that are missing altogether

- Provide oversight to the development of parking strategies for the Stadium, including community and church leaders and their technical advisors
- Include a jobs strategy into the bid documents for all emerging projects

### **3. HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

*Housing in the Westside neighborhoods is experiencing many challenges, including abandonment, foreclosures, speculation, deterioration, flooding impacts, and crime. Faced with these crises, housing strategies to be pursued in support of community priorities include conserving sound housing stock, rehabbing deteriorating structures, creating a framework for new housing that respects and supports historic housing and protects current residents from unwanted displacement. Housing within the City of Atlanta's "Westside TAD" should be affordable for a range of incomes. It should be built with the highest standards for quality and sustainability. Strategies should seek to increase the percentage of homeowners in the neighborhoods.*

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Survey existing housing stock for historic significance, condition, and suitability for rehab
- Using storm drainage and green space as a frame for shared amenities, identify areas where significant redevelopment might be acceptable, anticipating higher densities and more mixed use development generally closer to Northside Drive
- Partner local community-based organization with seasoned developers to select projects that meet the above criteria
- Seek funding support from the full range of housing support organizations to assure meeting affordability goals
- Include a jobs strategy into the bid documents for all emerging projects

### **4. LAND DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN DESIGN**

*The Stadium, the MMPT, and all major new mixed use development should incorporate street-fronting retail, restaurants, services, and other convenience activities so that the needs of the public can be met in this intense development area and the pedestrian environment is inviting. Adjoining or nearby uses should be compatible. Land development and urban design initiatives should reflect the goal of dissolving the east-west divide across Northside Drive. All areas should be well-lit to promote a safe, pedestrian community. There should be administrative support for locally spawned CDCs or other community-based organizations. Investment in this area should promote revitalization rather than gentrification.*

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Establish design guidelines for the Stadium and MMPT that fulfill the above principles
- Submit the projects to the ARC and GRTA for state-mandated Development of Regional Impact review
- Amend the Comprehensive Development Plan and zoning regulations to require adherence to the principles
- Assure that projects build streetscape and other public interfaces into their plans
- Include a jobs strategy into the bid documents for all emerging projects

### **5. PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC AREAS AND HERITAGE**

*Buildings and places of historic significance should be protected from impending development and maintained so as to celebrate, not diminish, their historic value. Steps should be taken to*

*ensure that important landmarks are recognized. Creating a network of historic places would help to unify the area as a whole and bring further attention to these important landmarks.*

**ACTIONS:**

- Conduct a historic survey of significant events, places and buildings
- Create a historic preservation strategy, including designation and a vehicle for interpreting and maintaining this heritage

**6. INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY**

*Investment in the community should be geared toward lifelong human development. There should be investment in early childhood development programs to better prepare children for school and work in later life. The investment should continue until these children are of working age in order to ensure they have the skills necessary to be successful in a career. Investment in the people, not just in the structure, of the community is of paramount importance. Thus, health, education, and public safety programs should be developed cooperatively with community members concurrently with the facilities to accommodate and coordinate the range of functions necessary.*

**ACTIONS:**

- Devise a coordinated lifelong learning program and work with APS and foundations to implement
- Identify structures to accommodate intergenerational learning components, considering especially AUC resources, Kennedy Middle School, the vacant English Avenue Elementary School, and the Bellwood Boys and Girls Club
- Provide administrative training and management skills to assist local organizations to better achieve their goals
- In planning for public education, consider the likelihood that there will be an influx of school age children moving into the area over the next few years – consider this eventuality in particular with respect the future of Bethune and Kennedy
- Develop strong citizen-police working relationships based on building mutual respect and trust in order to better manage crime

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