

Neighborhood Forum

Roswell

The Civic League for Regional Atlanta convened a Neighborhood Forum on Sept. 16, 2008 in Roswell, in Fulton County. This forum was in support of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Fifty Forward visioning initiative and was focused on a major question facing the region in the next 50 years: How can we have growth and a clean and healthy environment? Ninety-one people participated in the Roswell forum. In the course of two hours, participants worked in small groups of 8 to 10 on a series of questions that helped them think about how the region can accommodate growth and a better environment.

By the end of the evening, they had recorded 440 ideas, which are listed later in this report. Some of the most common themes of this meeting were:

- Support for **dense, walkable, mixed-use development**. One group described this as “multi-use: live, work, play.” Another said the region needed “more density to support mass transit.” Yet another said it foresaw “mid-high rises in the suburbs.”
- Support for **public transit and other environmentally friendly forms of transportation**. Every group but one listed transit as a solution and most listed rail transit. (One group said the region needed “transit, transit and more transit.”) But there were other ideas for transportation, ranging from bike paths and sidewalks to GPS-guided vehicles that circulate in neighborhoods and take people to transit hubs.
- Support for **new sources of energy**. Several groups mentioned solar and wind power as new sources. Two groups suggested the Atlanta region become the world's first “energy-independent” region.
- Strong support for **green space protection**. Every group listed green space, parks or protecting the tree canopy as important to creating a healthy environment.
- Interest in **recycling and water conservation**. There were many specific ideas in these areas, from “zero-waste requirements” for businesses and widespread use of xeriscaping to requiring every community to have its own reservoir.

Meeting Process

Participants were welcomed by Myles Smith, board member for the Civic League, who turned the program over to Jon Abercrombie, the meeting facilitator. Jon explained that participants would work in small groups or “circles” of 8 to 10 people and would be asked to think about, discuss and come to consensus on several questions. Each group selected a “moderator” to act as facilitator and write the group's comments on a large flip-chart pad.

The first question Jon asked was part of a scenario. Its purpose was to help the groups imagine how the region would look and work in 2058, if it were successful in creating growth and a healthy environment. Here's the scenario:

In 2058 iMag, the leading news web site of the 21st century, comes to our region to write about how the Atlanta Region has become a model for growth that does no harm to the environment.

Here's the question Jon posed to the groups:

What does iMag photograph, videotape and write about? What lessons does it find that other regions could learn from?

Jon gave the groups 50 minutes to work on this question. As they were finishing, Jon asked the groups to look over the ideas and images they had listed and highlight the ones they felt most reflected the rough consensus of the group – and also place a mark next to the one or two that they thought might be their most visionary ideas.



In the remainder of the meeting, Jon asked the groups to consider two other questions:

- *What do we need to preserve among things that already exist in the Atlanta Region today for the iMag article (and our vision of the future) to come true?*
- *What do we need to change in the Atlanta Region for the iMag article (and our vision of the future) to come true?*

The results of these three group discussions (a general vision of how the Atlanta Region can have growth and a healthy environment, the assets that should be preserved and things that should be changed) are in the following three sections of this report.

Small Group Results: A Vision of Sustainability for the Atlanta Region

Here are the vision ideas – the things that participants felt iMag, the leading news provider of the 21st century, would focus on, if it were writing about the Atlanta Region as model metro area for sustainability in 2058.

Small Group 1:

- Trees in medians/parking lots
- Less strip malls, more pedestrian malls

- More density in our communities (live/work)
- Alternate (environmentally friendly) transportation - light rail, walking, biking
- Rain collectors, solar panels for private residences
- More garbage recycled, not thrown away
- A more environmentally friendly attitude
- Locally grown produce (farmer's markets)
- Cleaner rivers
- Neighborhood gardens
- Interconnected cycling/walking paths
- Continuous sidewalks
- Less cars with shorter commutes
- Smaller, more efficient cars
- Less sprawl/highrise
- Atlantic Station
- Less empty buildings, make better use of what's already here instead of building new
- Increased diversity
- Young people with a more sustainable outlook on the world
- New and creative businesses
- Cultural arts (international, not just local)
- More general greenspace
- ADA-friendly environment

Small Group 2:

- Ideas that come at a reasonable cost
- Cooperation
- Sep of little cities in Fulton County
- Cooperation on transportation
- Development incentives
- Affordable housing, zoning laws
- Improvement to signs - standards
- Maintain and upgrade historic district
- History / charm of historic district
- Parks and rivers
- Multi-use - "live, work, play"
- Density
- Economics dictate - high-rise
- Is Roswell interested in bringing in visitors/tourists, or ok with being in the middle of it all but not having to pay for it (amphitheatre in Alpharetta, aquarium in Atlanta)?
- Should it be a goal to reduce restrictions so that things can be implemented?

Small Group 3:

- Parks, rivers
- Open government, active

- Do not encourage growth - create a clean and healthy environment and growth with come naturally - a la Seattle, Portland, Vancouver
- First region to become totally energy independent - windmills, solar energy
- Transportation - grow into clean power hub for rest of country
- More safe bike paths and sidewalks
- Villages centered around transit hubs
- GPS guided vehicles to go in neighborhoods to take people to hub
- Green roofs
- Rebuilt tree canopy - practice of clear-cutting eliminated
- Permanent funding mechanism in place to secure land so more green space per capita in next 50 years - more than any metro area in the country
- Secure water resources for anticipation of growth
- Find ways to desalinate more water reservoirs
- Technology developed to pull humidity out of air

Small Group 4:

- Managing density (Vickery Village) - New Urbanism of the early 21st century
- Building on existing sites
- Big box limitation and control
- Transit, transit and more transit
- Fewer miles traveled per person
- Road (paths) dedicated to low-powered vehicles, commuter bike paths
- Shared vehicles (golf carts)
- Maximize solar, wind, hydro and geothermal - ground or water-source heat pumps
- Collecting and recycling of water
- New developments required to implement measures to collect and recycle water
- Incentives to encourage measures in existing buildings to collect and recycle water
- All pavement is pervious
- Green roofs - sod
- Super efficient homes and buildings
- More stringent tree ordinances - net gain of trees
- No exposed parking lots (underground)
- Community composting
- Community gardening

Small Group 5:

- Walking community, biking
- European model
- May need density - smart density
- Need more density to support mass transit
- Height can be problem
- Bike paths
- Segways
- Plants don't need water - no outdoor watering

- Cleaned-up rivers, dredged
- Telecommuting
- Metal world
- Locally produced food - but not indigenous
- Dense communities - fewer vehicles
- Solar power
- Home fueling
- Population issues - doubling - use space better - new concept of small
- Public places - outdoor eating, etc., in center of city
- Clean Chattahoochee
- Green space
- Historic buildings and areas
- No more cemeteries
- Lots of people, few cars, places to play and work
- Lot of same things we have today - vehicles, houses gadgets
- Porches
- Polar bears still exist in the world
- Commitment to sustainability
- Commitment to public green space
- Commitment to Smart regulations - supports businesses, avoid just saying no - need regional mindset
- Commitment to replanting trees as we grow
- Key is density (similar to Roswell East concept) - Midtown concept, encourage it
- Downtown - diverse, opportunities, attractions, stores, arts



Small Group 6:

- People on street
- Trees
- Fishing in river
- Light rail
- Telecommute
- Convert highways to green space
- LEED Buildings that are less damaging on environment
- Research: where beauty and function meet
- Parks
- Sustainable products that do not hurt environment
- Sustainability taught first at college

- Trash-free environment
- Connectivity, walkable
- Multiple nodes
- Walk, bike, cart, auto, truck - in that order
- Sustainable and materials acquired near site
- Roof gardens for food production
- Community agriculture
- Community minded
- No commercial strips / sprawl
- Neighborhood needs
- Commercial strips (frown face) slow, dangerous, ugly, noisy
- Connected - easy accessibility - easy to find - wayfinding - beautifully done
- Walkability, mass transit
- Alternate fuel vehicles
- School outdoor experiences
- Car-free, but can get somewhere fast
- Safe public transportation
- European rails
- Great transit
- Compact communities
- Improve environment
- Safe parks
- Peaceful work environment
- Work close to house
- No cubicles
- Walk to work - must be beautiful
- Sustainability & social responsibility - do good for society
- Business must be involved
- Must provide affordable housing
- Sustainable products, food, lighting, etc., healthy for environment - responsible consumerism
- Business near residential
- Trash recycle/disposal
- Diversity
- Infrastructure needs upgrades
- Transportation must change - quick, designed for masses, connected, convenient, safe, beautiful - currently: congestion, pollution, time stealing, safe, beautiful
- Close-knit hamlets - connected
- Sustainable, local, organic - recycled materials, local materials and production, all must be beautiful
- Government must change

Small Group 7:

- Preserve green space
- Recycling - requirement, make it easier, recycle everything
- Green building codes - eco-friendly, energy efficient, refurbish buildings instead of demolish, recycle materials
- Make it easier to shop so that parking lots can be smaller - pre-order groceries online
- Use parking garages to reduce impervious surface lots
- Use pervious concrete for surface
- Make use of water springs underneath Atlanta
- Smart roads - cars shut off and are driven by automated system
- Make MARTA more accessible and safe for pedestrians
- Re-invest in sewer and water infrastructure
- Corporations should have a zero-waste requirement
- Capture methane from landfills
- Build parks to reclaim landfill space
- Make use of vacant buildings
- Learn how to share our water with other states
- Reduce water waste
- Use in-home systems to de-tox waste water
- Figure out how to take the water out of sewers
- Use sun for more lighting
- Partnerships start within families, with us
- Create partnerships with neighboring states
- More connected streets to facilitate more walking, biking

Small Group 8:

- Pedestrian
- Smaller, linked communities
- Urban center
- Light rail connecting communities and to larger metro transportation
- Self-sufficient neighborhoods
- Co-op gardens within greenspace and/or neighborhoods
- Less strip malls
- Slow residential building and commercial
- Slow/stop traffic to pedestrian in downtown area
- Define what "historic" means
- Alternate routes
- Grid-like streets for easier traffic flow
- Population control/limit
- Renewable energy - solar, windmill
- Protect and promote resources - Chattahoochee River, lakes

Small Group 9:

- Distinction between city and county

- Contained sprawl
- Controlled land use
- More trees, less cleared land
- Dense housing
- Extensive rail system
- More transportation options
- People that live close to work
- Thriving neighborhoods
- Educated citizens with an open mind set
- More sidewalks, more people walking
- Small cars
- Affordable intown housing
- Less city crime
- Solar energy
- Tankless water heaters
- Construction codes that require optimal water and energy efficiency
- Each town has a reservoir
- Permanent water restrictions
- Renewable energy techniques
- Climate controlled indoor air
- Zoning that protects greenspace
- Planning for green space
- Fully developed recycling system

Small Group 10:

- More density
- Mid-high rises in suburbs
- Green space preserved
- Village cluster, preserved green acres
- Walkable town center nodes
- Mixed/live-work-play/village
- Transit that is out-of-sight/doesn't cut community (Austrian countryside rail, etc.)
- Energy - no power above ground
- Energy self-sufficient region - solar, nuclear, wind
- More electric vehicles
- Personal air travel
- Transportation - roundabouts
- Transportation - no petroleum fuels
- Bikes
- Network of various transportation modes and change points
- More shuttle systems
- Neighborhood villages
- Electric busses

- Green roofs
- More grey water/rain water
- Schools - change approach to minimum land and transportation burden (parks more important)
- Trails - pedestrian, connect villages, bike, neighborhood access
- Access - better to get to parks, trails, etc.
- Housing - no abandoned projects, houses
- Better environmental requirements for residents (houses) - care about retrofits
- Off-the-grid homes
- Housing - better price point mixing
- Retail - big box is accessible, but less required with villages
- Jobs - keep market incentives to keep workplaces in the community
- Transportation - critical - will require total involvement of citizens/governments
- Transportation - subsidized so fee/cost is not a barrier to use of mass transit
- Attitude - leave it better than you found it - it's our responsibility to make it a great place - cooperation required
- Food - locally grown - local farms

Small Group 11:

- Look 50 years ago and see what went wrong
- Commuter roads vs local roads - can't take a local road long distances - lanes for distance driving
- Community transportation like streetcars - local and in Atlanta
- Control sprawl with multiuse areas with zoning control and underground utilities
- Designated greenspace that can't be build upon
- Walking areas, bicycle paths that are safe
- Billboards not allowed
- Wells that supply individual water
- Reclaimed storm water such as rain barrels
- Incentive for government to want to change
- 90% recycling by citizens and corporations
- Growth based on infrastructure first



- Government incentives for natural energy (not gas) - solar, wind, etc
- Fees for excess use of energy
- Xeriscaping, native vegetation
- Public transportation
- Protecting Atlanta as the hub of the region by proper, legal use of tax dollars
- International airport north of Atlanta
- Carpeting doesn't exist in our community
- Term limits on politicians

Consensus Ideas

Here are the ideas, from those listed above, that the groups felt reflected a consensus of their thinking:

- More density in our communities (live/work)
- Alternate (environmentally friendly) transportation - light rail, walking, biking
- Rain collectors, solar panels for private residences
- First region to become totally energy independent - windmills, solar energy
- Villages centered around transit hubs
- Rebuilt tree canopy - practice of clear-cutting eliminated
- Permanent funding mechanism in place to secure land so more green space per capita in next 50 years - more than any metro area in the country
- Secure water resources for anticipation of growth
- Road (paths) dedicated to low-powered vehicles, commuter bike paths
- All pavement is pervious
- Plants don't need water - no outdoor watering
- Commitment to Smart regulations - supports businesses, avoid just saying no - need regional mindset
- Transportation must change - quick, designed for masses, connected, convenient, safe, beautiful - currently: congestion, pollution, time stealing, safe, beautiful
- Close-knit hamlets - connected
- Sustainable, local, organic - recycled materials, local materials and production, all must be beautiful
- Preserve green space
- Recycling - requirement, make it easier, recycle everything
- Learn how to share our water with other states
- Light rail connecting communities and to larger metro transportation
- Self-sufficient neighborhoods
- Protect and promote resources - Chattahoochee River, lakes
- Controlled land use
- Solar energy
- Planning for green space
- Mixed/live-work-play/village
- Transportation - roundabouts
- Trails - pedestrian, connect villages, bike, neighborhood access

- Commuter roads vs local roads - can't take a local road long distances - lanes for distance driving
- Control sprawl with multiuse areas with zoning control and underground utilities
- 90% recycling by citizens and corporations

Visionary Ideas

Here are the ideas, from those listed above, that the groups felt were their most visionary or “out of the box” ideas:

- ADA-friendly environment
- Development incentives
- GPS guided vehicles to go in neighborhoods to take people to hub
- Green roofs – sod
- Community agriculture
- Government must change
- Corporations should have a zero-waste requirement
- Population control/limit
- Each town has a reservoir
- Schools - change approach to minimum land and transportation burden (parks more important)
- Community transportation like streetcars - local and in Atlanta

Small-Group Results: Existing Assets That Should Be Preserved

Here are existing community assets that participants felt should be preserved, if the Atlanta Region is to become sustainable in 2058. These things could include physical assets, organizations or institutions, public policies or decisions, or positive traits or skills of the people who live here now.

Small Group 1:

- Chattahoochee River
- Football
- A hometown, local feel
- Lifestyle
- Business
- Technology
- Religious institutions
- Premiere educators and schools
- Historic buildings
- Historical knowledge / oral history
- Affordability

Small Group 2:

- Support local, small businesses
- Historical aspect, traditions

- Nature = nature center, parks
- Character
- Freedoms to affect change - where we live, who represents us
- Clean air, water (healthy environment)
- Outdoor markets

Small Group 3:

- Parks, trees, rivers
- Historical landmarks
- Small town/community feel
- Community, cultural events

Small Group 4:

- Greenspace
- Tree canopy
- Watershed
- Scale
- Historic center and buildings
- Recreation
- Environment (make it better)

Small Group 5:

- History
- Agriculture
- Wildlife
- Rivers, waterways
- Academic institutions
- Parks
- Safety and security

Small Group 6:

- History/Culture
- Natural resources, lakes, streams, woods
- Jobs
- Diversity
- Education
- Sense of community
- We can have an impact on our city/region
- Parks
- Social Networks
- Safety for our children

Small Group 7:

- Water

- Greenspace
- Historic structures
- Parks
- Essence of Atlanta - southern charm
- Economic opportunities
- Social & cultural opportunities

Small Group 8:

- Trees
- Historic Roswell
- Chattahoochee
- Parks/green space
- Community education
- Community "feel"
- Local retailers
- Independent businesses (non-chain)
- Recycling

Small Group 9:

- Trees
- Clean river, clean water
- Bike paths
- Parks, green spaces
- Intown neighborhoods

Small Group 10:

- Sense of history, southern culture
- Historic worthy buildings
- River, parks, green space we have
- Airport
- Jobs, employment, business friendly
- Preserving quality of life for all ages
- Pride for our community
- Involvement in the community

Small Group 11:

- Medical infrastructure
- Higher education
- Waterways and content
- Parks, greenspace
- Land along rivers
- Historic districts
- Links between racial/ethnic/religious groups
- Public schools

Small-Group Results: Things That Should Be Changed

Here are things that participants felt would need to be changed if the Atlanta Region were to become sustainable in 2058.

Small Group 1:

- More density in our communities
- That government is able to implement the changes
- The drive to vote
- Supporting an individual sense of responsibility in education
- Government less focused on NIMBY (not in my backyard)
- "Just take it" and change, it will not be easy

Small Group 2:

- Government process
- Ineffective government
- Density ratio between community vs. residents
- Amount of time vehicles are on the road
- Consume less - change thinking on consumption
- Communication to the population more effective
- Facilitate more involvement
- Move to solar
- Focus on science, education

Small Group 3:

- Transportation mode
- Schools
- More town squares - around denser populations
- More coordination among local governments
- Positive development of vacant properties
- Reuse current airfields to accommodate more air traffic - commercial flight at Dobbins

Small Group 4:

- Run-down development
- Transportation systems
- Short-term views
- Individualism to collectivism
- Life style
- Conservation / recycling mindset

Small Group 5:

- Transportation - alternative means
- Take cars away - use bikes
- How we water - if we water

- Population equilibrium
- Smart government
- Less Barney Fife attitude
- Sports teams that win
- More recycling, less trash
- Accepting density
- Second water line into house

Small Group 6:

- Traffic situation
- Education needs enhancing
- Convert strips into walkable communities and parklands
- Educate to change mindset: government to citizens
- MARTA in town center
- Infrastructure
- Rewrite a balanced zoning, pro-business & pro-environment
- Regional governments need to work together
- Get citizen involvement - ownership of community
- More culture
- Set up reward system (incentives) for "good" development, taking better transportation, reward for driving less, etc.

Small Group 7:

- Fewer cars/emissions
- More mass transit
- Change car design to run on other fuels
- More incentives for telecommuting
- Blue laws
- School busses to run on electric or CNG fuel
- Greenspace for schools
- Mandatory buffer zones for water ways
- Laws & incentives to enforce environmental protection
- Airport travel to rail for regional trips
- Environmental education in schools

Small Group 8:

- Clean air
- Clean water
- Traffic patterns - car pools
- Control growth - use what we have
- Politics to improve quality of life
- Transportation
- School transportation
- Thinking

Small Group 9:

- Cluster businesses and shops
- Rail system
- Renovate existing buildings
- Decreased new construction
- Develop effective leaders that care about the environment
- Using the Riverkeepers to regulate water
- Recycling

Small Group 10:

- Schools - look at impact of schools on transportation
- Local jurisdiction confusion
- No corruption - return to ethics
- Attitudes toward conservation of natural resources (waste water, stormwater management, energy, etc.)
- Community better informed and involved
- Transportation - must be able to move more easily
- Add green space - tree canopy
- Better planning to allow good control of growth
- Retail approach - require so much space
- Improve water supply, energy supply

Small Group 11:

- Government structures to regional
- Government accountability to citizens
- Reduce power of DOT
- More transparency
- What government is responsible for what
- Allow crossover of emergency services - fire, police, 911, etc.
- More money to public schools
- Less students per school
- The looks of each separate community

The Civic League Lineup

As a final exercise, Jon asked participants to line up across the meeting room according to how hopeful they were that the Atlanta Region could achieve the things they had talked about that evening. On one wall, he posted a “1” and on the opposite wall, he posted a “10.” Those who were very pessimistic should line up near the 1, Jon said; those who were very optimistic should line up at the 10. Others should line up at a point reflecting degree of optimism and pessimism. A large majority lined up in the 7-10 part of the line.



Snapshot of Participants

The Civic League collected demographic surveys of the participants in this forum. Here are the results:

Gender	
Male	54%
Female	46%
Age	
Under 18	10%
18-24	2%
25-44	29%
45-65	39%
Over 65	19%

Race/Ethnic Group	
Black or African American	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%
Hispanic/Latino	2%
White or Caucasian	93%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0%
Other	3%

ZIP Code	
30076*	38%
Surrounding**	51%
Other	11%

* *This is the Roswell ZIP code.*

** *These are ZIP codes adjoining 30076.*

About the Civic League

The Civic League for Regional Atlanta is an organization that builds the knowledge, involvement, voice and power of metro Atlanta's citizens. As part of the Civic League's work, it convenes Neighborhood Forums where citizens can listen to one another and offer their own ideas for improving the region. The Civic League gathers and documents the citizens' ideas and brings them to the attention of state, local and regional leaders.

In 2008 and 2009, we are working with the Atlanta Regional Commission on its Fifty Forward visioning initiative. Our role is to help bring the citizens' voice to this effort to plan how our region will look and work in the year 2058.

In the years ahead, we will host other kinds of citizen gatherings, including forums on pressing regional issues and overlooked problems. Our format for those meetings will be similar to the Neighborhood Forums: facilitated, open-ended discussions aimed at gathering the citizens' thoughts on important issues.