

## LIFELONG COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

# Local government exercises commitment of walkable communities

Even though aging-in-place sounds like a sedentary activity, it's not. The concept—that communities should provide people with housing and transportation options so they can enjoy their homes and neighborhoods as they age—is the premise for the *Lifelong Communities Initiative* (LLCI). LLCI promotes housing and transportation options, encourages healthy lifestyles, and increases access to information, resources, and services for older adults in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Their efforts are designed to improve opportunities for older adults to walk to local destinations and stay active through their senior years. LLCI's success does not just impact seniors. If communities are designed to support walking for seniors, they will be more walkable for everyone, including children, families, and the disabled.

Atlanta is experiencing an unprecedented boom in its elder population. Today there are 400,000 seniors in the Atlanta metropolitan area, and by 2030 the number of people in the area over 60 years old is expected to



SENIORS SHARE THEIR OPINIONS WITH POLICY MAKERS

### QUICK FACTS

**LOCATION** . . . Atlanta, GA

**POLICY JURISDICTION**

■ Local                      □ State                      □ Federal

**POLICY ORIENTATION**

■ Policy                      □ Poised                      □ Education

**APPROACH**

■ Environmental/Institutional      □ Services/Programs

**EQUITY FOCUS** . . . . . Strong

**ISSUE AREAS** . . . Physical Activity

**POLICY DOMAINS**

■ Mass Transit  
■ Healthcare  
■ Land Use/Planning/Zoning

**WEBSITE** . . . . . Nutrition

grow to 1.2 million—or one in five. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) launched LLCI when it found that poor community design was a major barrier to older adults maintaining an independent lifestyle. As older adults age, and driving becomes harder or more dangerous, being able to walk to do errands, meet friends, or for activity can mean the difference between staying at home, or relocating to another community.

Through LLCI, ARC spearheaded the first county ordinance in the State to create senior-friendly housing. Now, other locales are adopting similar ordinances that allow for developers to include senior-friendly housing in residential areas. ARC has also worked with transit officials to adjust local transit routes and to

consider the needs of seniors in local transportation plans. LLCI emphasizes planning at the front end to influence neighborhood plans but also works to modify existing developments to accommodate seniors.

But this is not just about seniors, it is about planning communities that support walking and transportation alternatives for people of all ages. Atlanta Regional Commission sees LLCI as a good platform to create communities that promote active people at every stage. The commission has influenced elected officials and planners to consider the health needs of the population in design and development. At a 2007 summit on alternative transportation, ARC found participants eager to discuss mixed-use development, walkability, and transit options for seniors and families. Now, community stakeholders are asking to be involved, and local elected officials are championing active communities concepts. Kathryn Lawler, former employee and current consultant for Atlanta Regional Commission, attributes growing support for LLCI to their successes. “No one knows what you are talking about until you have something you have accomplished.”



**SENIOR-FRIENDLY CITY PLANNING INCLUDES PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING THAT ENABLE OLDER PEOPLE TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT**

Policy is changing practice in the Atlanta region. As cities and counties begin adapting local policies to support senior housing and transportation alternatives, they are rezoning neighborhoods, modifying the housing stock, mapping out walking paths, planning new walking trails, and tailoring bus schedules. All of these changes together represent a cultural shift among local governments in the Atlanta metro region. Local officials are beginning to really see how to provide infrastructure and amenities that meet the health needs of the population.