



WE ADVOCATE FOUR PRINCIPLES:

- *Support greater densities and mixed use developments* in appropriate areas, especially in our region’s centers and transportation corridors.
- *Integrate transportation investments with appropriate land use.*
- **Increase housing choices by removing barriers that artificially restrict the market.**
- *Ensure that greenfield development is designed* to achieve a sense of community, provide more housing choices, leverage existing infrastructure, and conserve natural resources.

HOUSING CHOICE GUIDELINES

Metro Atlanta has a need for more housing choices, for more housing near jobs, and for housing that is more affordable. Consider:

Quality growth means housing for everyone.

- 58 percent of metro residents live alone or with one other person, and yet two-thirds of metro area homes are stand-alone, single-family houses.
- Thirty years ago, one in two households had children. By the year 2030, only one in five will include children.
- Residents 65 and older will number more than 1.2 million in 2030, triple the number in 2000. Many won’t want large houses on big lots.
- There are up to seven jobs for every home in the region’s activity centers and major corridors.
- Two-thirds of households with annual incomes less than \$50,000 spend more than the recommended maximum of 30 percent of income for housing.

What makes housing affordable?

A commonly accepted rule of thumb holds that households should spend no more than 30 percent of gross household income on housing. Housing costs include the monthly mortgage payment or rent, utilities, property taxes, and homeowners’ association fees.

A household with income of \$50,000 should spend no more than \$1,250 monthly. Households with income of \$40,000—almost a third of all metro Atlanta households—should spend no more than \$1,000 a month. It would take a household income of nearly \$63,000 to afford a home costing \$188,800, the median price for a home in the Atlanta region in 2006.

The result is that many of the people who provide essential services—police officers, firefighters, teachers, nurses and other health care workers, retail sales workers, and restaurant workers—can’t afford to live in the communities they serve.



Why place matters



Metro Atlanta has long been perceived as a place where housing is relatively affordable. But the rising cost of land in and near commercial centers has forced much affordable housing to the edges of the metro region. When you add the cost of commuting to the cost of housing, the combination strains many households. Metro Atlanta households whose incomes fall between \$20,000 and \$50,000 spend a combined 61 cents of every dollar on housing and transportation. Only one U.S. market is more expensive—famously pricey San Francisco.

Long commutes don’t hurt just those families. They affect all of us. Traffic delays—time spent stopped in traffic or inching along—have tripled since 1992 for metro residents.



The best communities share common characteristics when it comes to housing. Look for communities that:

1. Offer a variety of housing attractive to people with a range of incomes, lifestyles and needs: stand-alone single-family homes, condominiums, flats, town houses, and apartments.
2. Make housing part of the larger community by putting it near places people need or want to go, including schools, work places, grocery stores, parks, and playgrounds. The best communities put housing within walking distance of daily destinations and offer easy access to transit.
3. Are sustainable. Houses built to EarthCraft™ standards, for example, may cost 20 percent less to heat and cool than homes built to conventional housing codes, making those homes not only easier on the environment, but also more affordable in the long run.
4. Work for residents of every age. Lifelong communities are those whose overall design respects the youngest and oldest. They give children the freedom to walk or bike to school and seniors the freedom to walk or take transit instead of driving.

How can we offer more housing choices and reduce commute times?

1. Make sure local zoning codes allow a wide range of housing types and prices, including affordable owned and rental housing.
2. Break down barriers that prevent choice, including restrictions that prohibit multifamily housing or mandate minimum lot and house sizes.
3. Support practices that keep housing affordable. Those practices include incentives that let developers build additional housing units in exchange for building some that are more affordable, and land banks that buy and hold property that would otherwise become too expensive for anything but high-priced homes.
4. Encourage mixed-use zoning and development that blends housing, offices and shops, so that at least some workers have the opportunity to cut commute times and expenses.
5. Encourage lifelong communities that respect the young and old. Such places turn out to be communities that are right for all of us.

TERMS TO KNOW

Lifelong community:

a community that respects the needs of children and seniors by making it possible to walk, cycle or ride transit to important places like schools, grocery stores, pharmacies, and parks.

Complete community:

a community whose mix of housing offers many types of homes affordable to people with a wide range of incomes.

Affordable housing:

housing that is priced within reach of households making the area median income or less.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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