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Leinberger's latest on metro Atlanta: Era of sprawl ending, WalkUPs are next cycle of development



David Pendered (<https://saportareport.com/author/david/>) • October 3, 2013 8:59 pm

By David Pendered

Chris Leinberger's new report on metro Atlanta recharges his thesis that walkable communities will characterize the region's next wave of development.


"Metro Atlanta, the 'poster child of sprawl,' is now experiencing the end of spawl," Leinberger contends in the report released Thursday, "The WalkUP Wake-Up Call: Atlanta."

Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia State University • Government Center, including ARC headquarters
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Urban Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Center • Inman Park
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Suburban Town Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alpharetta • Decatur
Strip Commercial Redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckhead • Roswell
Greenfield/Brownfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic Station

(<https://s3.amazonaws.com/saportakins-content/uploads/2013/10/WalkUPs-by-CLARC1.jpg>)

Urbanist Chris Leinberger identified seven types of WalkUPs in metro Atlanta, and the ARC provided a few examples of each. Click on the graphic for a larger

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Atlanta is the second city Leinberger examined in what may well become a series of “WalkUP Wake-Up” studies. Washington, D.C. (<http://business.gwu.edu/Walkup.pdf>) was the subject of a 2012 report, and other cities being contemplated for future analysis include Boston and Detroit.

Incidentally, the definition of a WalkUP, or Walkable Urban Place, boils down to one in which most people can meet most of their daily needs within a walk of a quarter-mile. The overall metrics include both pedestrian accessibility and a community where it's pleasant to travel on foot.

Leinberger's report on Atlanta emphasizes the importance of knowledge-based industries, as well as educated residents, in fostering communities that are both vibrant and prosperous. The report urges governments to prepare for the redevelopment of urban centers and suburban areas with appropriate land use measures and infrastructure.

As an urban land use strategist and developer, Leinberger brings a market-based perspective to his studies. Leinberger has studied metro Atlanta for three decades and may be best known locally for his work with the Brookings Institution and Robert Charles Lesser & Co. In addition, Leinberger now serves at the George Washington University's School of Business as the Charles Bendit distinguished scholar and research professor.

Leinberger pays particular attention to the Atlanta region's transportation assets, including the region's rejection in 2012 of the transportation sales tax:

- “This trend [toward WalkUPs] reinforces the need for metropolitan Atlanta to substantially invest in rail transportation, biking and walking infrastructure. The funds required to just maintain an over-extended and congested highway system will be a challenge in and of itself. However, the MARTA system has been starved of funding, as

well as the other "alternative" transportation systems like biking and walking.

• "Given that economic success has been as the transportation hub of the Southeast U.S., this lack of investment is disappointing. It is as if the reason for the region's very existence, transportation, has been forgotten. The overwhelming loss of the July 2012 transportation ballot measure is just the latest example of turning a blind eye to the reason for Atlanta's economic success."



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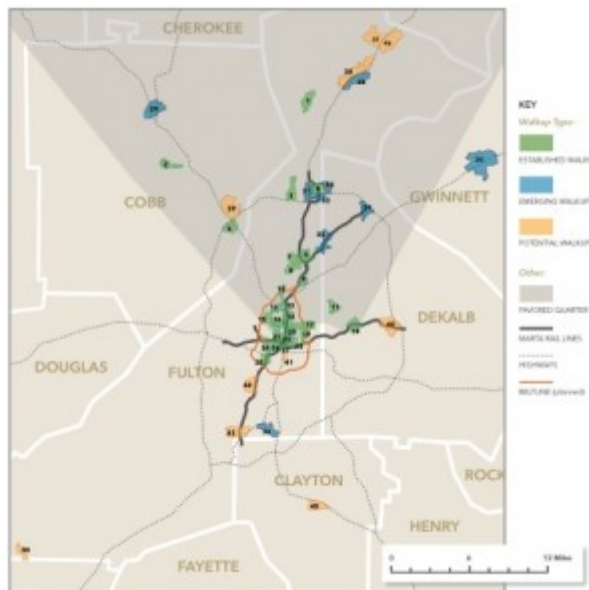


(https://s3.amazonaws.com/saportakins-content/uploads/2013/10/Glover-Park-in-Marietta.jpg)

Glover Park in Marietta is an example of a suburban town center that is defined by, "a walkable urban grid and, in many cases, historic buildings that preserve the memory of the place from a more vibrant era," according to Leinberger's study. Credit: "The WalkUP Wake Up Call: Atlanta"

The Atlanta Regional Commission facilitated the release of the new study and noted highlights including:

- "Metro Atlanta's walkable urban places are attracting an increasing share of new development and have seen a rise in rent premiums over drivable suburban areas;
- "Leinberger's report puts the Atlanta region's WalkUPs into three categories, Current, Emerging and Potential;
- "From 1992 to 2000, roughly 13 percent of real estate investment in the region went into current and emerging WalkUPs. From 2001 to 2008, that proportion doubled to 26 percent. Since 2009, metro Atlanta's share of



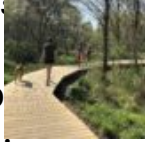
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development in WalkUPs more than doubled again, reaching 60 percent today.

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Atlanta's emerging, potential and future WalkUPs are concentrated in Atlanta's urban core and northern suburbs

Click on the image for a larger version or go to the report, page 23. Credit: The WalkUP Wake Up Call:



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The ARC is promoting the Centers Initiative some of the walkable

neighborhoods that Leinberger foresees developing. LCI grants have promoted the redevelopment of historic downtowns and commercial corridors throughout the regions, in places as disparate as downtown Suwanee and downtown Atlanta.

The LCI grants have put muscle behind the retrofitting of metro Atlanta's earliest communities – a total commitment of \$500 million that includes \$18 million in study funds from 2000 to 2017; the allocation of \$350 million for priority funding of transportation projects that result from LCI studies; and the approval of an additional \$150 million for these projects in the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan, according to the ARC's website.

“We are pleased to see thriving, walkable urban places emerging throughout metro Atlanta,” Tad Leithead, ARC's chairman said in a statement. “It's evident that the market favors the kind of development that offers real mobility choices and opportunity for new community vitality. Greater walkability, housing and retail options are keys to our future economic growth.”

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David Pendered, Managing Editor, is an Atlanta journalist with more than 30 years experience reporting on the region's urban and suburban development. He has written for print and digital publications, and has been a frequent speaker at industry events. He has also written for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Georgia's SaportaReport.com. He spent more than 26 years with The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and won awards for his coverage of schools and urban development. David graduated from North Carolina State University and was a Western Knight Center Fellow.



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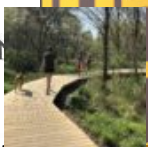
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