



NEW *Voices*

Engaging Millennials at the ARC Table



ARC
ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

This report prepared for the Atlanta Regional Commission



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is interested in engaging groups that have not traditionally been included in discussions about the future of the Atlanta region. ARC is starting with a group that is widely seen as critical to the region's future - people in their 20s and 30s known to demographers as "millennials." This group represents the next generation of residents who will live and work in the Atlanta region, and shape and lead it for the next 30 to 40 years.

This consultancy for ARC, led by Clarification & Mediation and Civic Strategies, Inc. (C&M/Civic Strategies), focused on how members of the millennial generation think about the Atlanta region's problems and potential. C&M/Civic Strategies based this report on a limited literature review, a statistical profile of millennials locally and nationally and, most importantly, input received by engaging millennials from across the Atlanta region in a series of key stakeholder interviews and five focus-group styled "New Voices Conversations."

As a part of this effort, C&M/Civic Strategies developed a citizen-engagement process that may prove helpful in the future to ARC and its member cities and counties.

The consultancy aimed to answer the following:

- Who are the millennials, and how are they different from earlier generations?
- Do millennials in the Atlanta area feel differently than earlier generations about issues of concern to ARC, such as transportation and land use, economic development, the environment, and quality of life?
- Given their importance to the region's future, what can the Atlanta region and its communities do to increase the region's appeal for millennials?
- Going forward, how can ARC stay abreast of millennials' concerns and engage them in its work, while helping ARC communities better understand this critical group?

We learned the following:

- The millennials' numbers are huge. By some definitions, the millennial population is as large as the baby boom generation, about 76 million nationally.
- Nationally, millennials are a better educated and far more ethnically diverse group than earlier generations, and locally that increased diversity is starting to be mirrored across the 10-county ARC region. For a region that has traditionally considered diversity in terms of white and black, this generation's deepening diversity will challenge our thinking. Further, millennials are proud of their generation's extraordinary diversity and see it as an asset.



- Because people in their 20s and early 30s tend to be mobile, it will serve the Atlanta region and its communities well to explore ideas, approaches and concepts to attract and hold this large, diverse, and well-educated generation.
- Our interviews and conversations with Atlanta area millennials confirmed national studies which report that millennials have different perspectives than earlier generations on issues such as mobility, living and work arrangements, environmental sustainability, quality of life, and education.
 - In brief, millennials we engaged for this study are far more likely to support public transit, bike lanes, and other alternatives to automobile transportation; to favor walkable, mixed-use developments; and to desire urban over traditionally suburban-style communities (even for communities that are located in the suburbs).
 - Notably, the millennials who live and work outside Interstate-285 (the Perimeter) did not differ substantially in these desires from those who live and work inside the Perimeter. Whether inside or outside of the Perimeter, millennials expressed a similar level of desire for transit, bike lanes, and walkable, mixed-use development.
 - Surprisingly, this cohort of millennials is very familiar with the *language* of urban development. Participants in the New Voices Conversations frequently used terms like “walkable,” “mixed-use,” “density,” and “transit-oriented” to describe the places they want to live and work – indicating an unusual depth of interest in these topics.
- The Atlanta region faces some challenges in its appeal to the millennial population.
 - One concern expressed during millennial leader interviews is the region’s “slightly tarnished” reputation as a place of civic progress and economic opportunity.
 - There were reasons for both optimism and concern when millennial leaders described how they want the Atlanta region to be. While clearly eager to stay in Atlanta, the gap between what millennials want and what exists, especially in transportation and the built environment, is significant and could cause millennials to move to other communities.
 - Millennial leaders expressed concern that the Atlanta region is missing, due in large part to a lack of equity capital, a historic wave of entrepreneurship centered in technology start-ups. Their comments on the economy reflected an interest in technology and a desire that the region be a “tech hub.”
 - This is a generation surprisingly interested in, and knowledgeable about, transportation and urban development issues.

This report also offers insight from a cohort of millennials who live and work in the Atlanta region, about what special efforts ARC should consider to better engage millennials in the work of ARC. In five focus group conversations across the Atlanta region, we learned:

- As with almost any individual or group, millennials simply want to be invited in – they want to be asked to participate and they want their opinions and ideas to matter.
- And, as one participant said, “we are the microwave generation.” They are looking for immediacy of impact and response.
- ARC will have to re-tool its messages and its mediums to reach millennials. The traditional flyers, newsletters etc. will not be as effective as messages branded and targeted to millennials through new social mediums.
- Millennials are most concerned about their own neighborhoods and communities and most likely to become involved in issues that impact them directly.
- Beyond participation, millennials are clear that to maintain their involvement two things are important:
 - They want to have more than a talking or listening role. They want to be involved from invite to production, and they want their opinions to have impact and produce results.
 - They are interested in “doing something.”
- Finally, millennials are very social. The most effective engagement will meet them where they are – in spaces that are comfortable for social networking and conducive to meeting new people with diverse backgrounds as they vet ideas and exchange information.

Several suggestions for how to engage millennials are worth noting: Creation of a Board of Interns; establishing a network of millennial organizations who would serve as conduits for outreach; developing an inventory of millennial resources that can be tapped by ARC.

As a result of our Interviews and Conversations, C&M/Civic Strategies offers several recommendations:

- Invite millennials to participate with ARC using new outreach strategies, new messages, new mediums, new spaces and new meeting formats.
- Create an actionable opportunity for involvement of millennials that has immediate impact as a calling card.
- Select one or two of the ideas they have lifted in these Interviews and Conversations and implement them quickly to demonstrate the return on their investment of time.

Communities need young people to be sustainable. Planning that doesn't involve this critical segment of our regional population may fall short in creating communities that make up a strong and vibrant region. If, indeed, the issues raised by millennials in our interviews and conversations mean as much as they indicated, there should be some urgency about addressing them.

OVERVIEW

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) has served as the regional planning agency for the Atlanta region since 1947. Over the life of the organization, ARC has developed a series of plans and programs to support the region's healthy development. Traditionally, ARC has organized its programs and ritualized its processes in response to federal and state mandates, rules and regulations.

Today, however, the Atlanta region is facing near and long term changes that will impact ARC's focus and the relevancy of its work for regional constituents. There is a growing list of increasingly complex issues impacting the regions' quality of life that demands new and innovative strategies. Simultaneously, the demographic profile of the region is changing.

One such demographic shift is the increase in the number of millennials who live and work in the Atlanta region. This population becomes increasingly important as it asserts its voice and leadership across the region to define and address issues in a new way:

- National surveys tell us that young adults have different desires than older residents for transportation, housing, work, etc.
- Young adults are a key human resource for metropolitan areas
- Young adults in their 20s and 30s engage in their community in new and different ways

To remain a relevant and valued regional resource, ARC must refine its approach and retool the traditional configurations of its resources to address new ideas, issues and agendas and reach its imperative of a sustainable region with a high quality of life for regional residents.

To assist ARC, Clarification & Mediation and Civic Strategies, Inc. (C&M/Civic Strategies) have teamed to explore how a cohort of Atlanta area millennials think about the region's problems and potential, and to get their input on how ARC might better engage them in envisioning and planning for the future of the metro Atlanta region.

Specifically, this engagement focused on soliciting the opinions of millennials who live and work in the Atlanta region in around three major questions:

1. What do millennials who live and work in the Atlanta region think about issues that ARC is involved in, like transportation and housing?
2. What do millennials who live and work in the Atlanta region like most about it? What are the major issues that might cause people in the 20s and 30s to stay in the Atlanta area or leave it?
3. What can ARC do to better engage the voices of the growing population of millennial residents? How can ARC best stay abreast of millennials' concerns and engage them in

its work, while helping communities better understand the perspectives of this critical group?

METHODOLOGY

C&M/Civic Strategies organized our work in two Phases. During Phase I we conducted personal, in depth interviews of “emerging” millennial leaders. In Phase II we recruited a cross section of the Atlanta region’s millennials to attend a series of conversations about the region’s future and the possibilities for their involvement in shaping that future.



PHASE I: KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

C&M/Civic Strategies initiated Phase I by conducting a brief literature review on millennials nationally. A number of journalists and researchers are now paying close attention to how people in their 20s and 30s feel about consumer goods such as automobiles and electronics, and about issues like transportation, land use, urban location, economic development and quality of life.

2010 census data obtained from ARC’s Research Division provided valuable insight into the racial and ethnic diversity of millennials in the Atlanta area and helped guide us in whom to interview. We asked established regional leaders to identify people they see as millennial leaders in order to isolate a cohort of key millennial stakeholders reflecting the generation’s diverse ethnic composition. From the list of millennial leaders identified, C&M/Civic Strategies invited 10 who mirrored the demographics of the Atlanta region’s millennials to complete an in-depth interview. Eight persons were responsive to our requests.

Interviews took from 30 minutes to an hour. The development and use of a structured interview instrument assured a level of consistency. To allow interviewees to speak candidly, we promised not to attribute quotes to individual interviewees.

Interviewees were gracious with their time and assistance in answering questions regarding the most important challenges facing the Atlanta region and their involvement with those issues, as well as identifying potential candidates and questions for Phase II focus groups. We used the feedback from the stakeholders to inform the design of the focus group conversations executed in Phase II.

PHASE II: NEW VOICES CONVERSATIONS

C&M/Civic Strategies used a Citizen Recruitment process to identify and invite representative millennials in different parts of the region, both inside and outside of the I-285 perimeter, to

attend one of five facilitated focus groups, called New Voices Conversations (See Appendix ___, Understanding the Citizen Recruitment Process.). For each of the five New Voices Conversations, the Citizen Recruitment process required enlisting two Site Co-Chairs to build a team of 10 Recruitment Volunteers, each responsible for personally inviting millennial friends and colleagues to attend.

Although identifying Site Co-Chairs and finding suitable locations for the Conversations required time and diligence, the Citizen Recruitment process worked as designed - having millennials identify and connect C&M/Civic Strategies with their millennial peers.

In total, the Citizen Recruitment process resulted in 119 participants attending the five New Voices Conversations.

The Citizen Recruitment process also assured Conversation participants reflected the highly diverse makeup of millennials in the region. Because we emphasized this desire to the co-chairs and recruitment volunteers, teams assembled focus groups nearly as diverse as the millennials themselves, as evidenced by comparing the ethnic makeup of those attending the New Voices Conversations with the demographics of millennials in the 10-county Atlanta region.

Table I: Comparison of Ethnic Make-Up of Conversation Participants and Atlanta Region

| | White | Black | Hispanic | Other* |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|----------|--------|
| New Voices Conversations | 39% | 32% | 7% | 22% |
| Atlanta Region | 38% | 38% | 16% | 9% |

* Includes Asian

Likewise, Conversation participants were close to our target in terms of age: 87 percent of those participating in the sessions were between 18 and 34; 13 percent were between 35 and 44. None were older than 44 or younger than 18.

Three of the five New Voices Conversations were inside the I-285 Perimeter (in downtown Decatur, in Atlanta’s Little Five Points neighborhood, and in downtown Atlanta). Two were outside the Perimeter, in downtown McDonough and in downtown Duluth. The settings for the conversations were varied; a tavern, a corporate office, a community center, a restaurant and a co-working space.

Each two hour Conversation began with an introduction of the facilitators and participants. Lead facilitator Clara Axam then provided a context for the conversation, presenting the history, mission, program and services of the Atlanta Regional Commission and sharing local and national context on the millennial generation’s numbers and diversity, educational attainment and habits and trends related to community engagement and participation.

Ms. Axam then shared the purpose, objectives and methodology for the Conversation. She stressed ARC’s belief that the millennial voice is important in shaping the Atlanta region and their desire to understand the best ways to get millennials involved in making the Atlanta region a most desirable place to live, work and play.

Facilitators shared a hashtag (#NewVoices) for participants wishing to Tweet during the Conversations.

The heart of the Conversation was the discussion of three questions -- one about what the participants want the Atlanta region to become, another about how they want to be involved in making their vision of the region a reality and finally, how ARC can better engage them. As evidenced throughout this report, participants were fully engaged in the discussion and took the topics discussed seriously. We think this was, in part, because their peers personally invited them to attend, so they came to the Conversations with some knowledge of what we would talk about.



The presentation used to guide the Conversations is attached as Appendix D.

WHO ARE THE MILLENNIALS?

Defining generations is not an exact science. The millennials are more or less the children of the baby boom generation. Various demographers define the start and end dates in different years, but most see it as the generation born from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. Sometimes called Generation Y (Generation X are those born from 1964 to the late 1970s), this generation is referred to as “the millennials” because they grew up at the turn of the century.

Keeter and Taylor of the Pew Research Center offer the following profile of millennials¹:

- They are the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort of youth in the nation’s history. Among those ages 13 to 29: 18.5% are Hispanic, 14.2% are Black, 4.3% are Asian, 3.2% are mixed race or other and 59.8%, a record low, are White.
- They are starting out as the most politically progressive age group in modern history. In the 2008 election, millennials voted for Barack Obama over John McCain by 66% to 32%, while adults ages 30 and over split their votes, 50% to 49%. In the four decades since the development of Election Day exit polling, this is the largest gap ever seen in a presidential election between the votes of those under and over age 30.

¹Scott Keeter and Paul Taylor, The Millennials, Pew Research Center, December 2009

- They are the first generation in human history that regards behaviors like tweeting and texting, along with websites like Facebook, YouTube, Google and Wikipedia, not as astonishing innovations of the digital era, but as everyday parts of their social lives and their search for understanding.
- They are the least religiously observant youths since survey research began charting religious behavior.
- They are more inclined toward trust in institutions than were either of their two predecessor generations — Gen Xers (who are now ages 30 to 45) and Baby Boomers (now ages 46 to 64) — when they were coming of age.

However defined, the millennial generation is a huge generation. Depending on where you mark its beginning or end, the millennial generation may be as large as the baby boom generation, numbering about 76 million. The millennials are better educated than earlier generations and far more diverse and the millennial generation is diverse in ways that may surprise some. It includes large numbers of Hispanic and Asian-Americans, a result of changes in federal immigration laws in the 1960s, and also includes substantial numbers of cross-ethnic members -- that is, children of mixed race or mixed ethnic heritage. This diversity exists in cities as well as suburban areas.

This profile is true nationally and in the Atlanta area. Table II shows the ethnic composition of people in their 20s and 30s in the 10-county ARC region in 2010. (Note: Some in their late 30s would be members of Generation X and not all the millennials had reached age 20 by 2010, but this snapshot captures most of the millennial generation.)

Table II: Population Age 20-39 in ARC Region, By Race/Ethnicity, In Thousands (ooo)

| | White | Black | Hispanic | Other* | Total |
|--------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Region | 461.4365 | 457.6133 | 191.3161 | 108.3711 | 1218.737 |
| | 38% | 38% | 16% | 9% | |

* Includes Asian

As indicated in Table III, among people in their 20s and 30s, there was no majority ethnic group in the 10-county region in 2010. White and Black millennials are roughly equal in number, with a significantly large number of Hispanic and “other” ethnic groups (largely Asian).

The breakdown by county offers other interesting insights into the Atlanta region’s demographic make-up.

Table III: Population Age 20-39, By County, By Race/Ethnicity, In Thousands (ooo)

| | White | | Black | | Hispanic | | Other* | | Total |
|----------|---------|-----|---------|-----|----------|-----|--------|-----|---------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. |
| Fulton | 110.831 | 37% | 127.227 | 43% | 30.909 | 10% | 28.353 | 10% | 297.320 |
| Gwinnett | 81.079 | 35% | 56.653 | 25% | 62.578 | 27% | 29.828 | 13% | 230.138 |
| DeKalb | 62.410 | 28% | 111.565 | 49% | 31.500 | 14% | 20.464 | 9% | 225.939 |
| Cobb | 96.667 | 48% | 55.977 | 28% | 31.972 | 16% | 15.726 | 8% | 200.342 |
| Clayton | 7.750 | 10% | 52.858 | 66% | 14.065 | 18% | 5.423 | 7% | 80.096 |
| Cherokee | 43.173 | 76% | 3.580 | 6% | 7.670 | 14% | 2.175 | 4% | 56.598 |
| Henry | 25.858 | 49% | 20.095 | 38% | 3.731 | 7% | 2.888 | 5% | 52.572 |
| Douglas | 15.438 | 43% | 15.392 | 43% | 3.945 | 11% | 1.273 | 4% | 36.048 |
| Rockdale | 6.782 | 32% | 10.264 | 49% | 3.068 | 15% | 0.838 | 4% | 20.952 |
| Fayette | 11.448 | 61% | 4.002 | 21% | 1.878 | 10% | 1.403 | 7% | 18.731 |

* Includes Asian

In Gwinnett County the second-largest ethnic group among the millennials isn't White or Black, but Hispanic. White millennials are the majority in only two counties (Cherokee and Fayette). Black millennials are the majority in only one (Clayton) and in every county Hispanics and "others" make up 10 percent or more of the millennial generation in the Atlanta region. In Gwinnett, arguably the most diverse county in the region, Hispanics and "others" make up 40 percent of the millennial population.

Wherever they live in the Atlanta region, millennials understand that diversity is more than Black and White. It's Hispanic, Asian and mixed-ethnicities as well.

But it's not just their diversity that sets millennials apart. Considerable national research indicates that this generation has different attitudes than earlier generations about mobility, land use, housing types, and quality of life --issues that ARC has long been involved in. For example, millennials appear to be falling out of love with car ownership. In 2010, adults between 21 and 34 bought just 27 percent of all the new vehicles sold in the U.S., down from a peak of 38 percent in 1985, and the proportion of teenagers with driver's licenses fell by 28 percent between 1998 and 2008. Automakers are so concerned about millennials turning their backs on car ownership that one of them, Ford Motor Company, hired the music television channel MTV to help figure out how to get millennials' attention.

Millennials' attitudes about car ownership may be related to what does interest millennials, which is public transit and walkability. A survey by RCLCO, a real estate consultancy that has studied millennials, found that two-thirds of members of the millennial generation want to live in walkable communities and a third would pay more for housing to do so. "Even in the

suburbs, the majority prefer characteristics of urban places, particularly walkable environments,” a RCLCO report said. Studies by the National Association of Realtors and others have found similar interest among millennials in compact, transit-oriented living.

This shift in perspective and preference raises questions that will likely impact the planning focus and research of ARC. No one knows for sure why millennials are drawn to urban environments, but many have speculated. Nathan Norris of the planning firm Placemakers suggests it is a natural generational interest in the unfamiliar. Most millennials spent their childhoods in the suburbs, and urban and walkable feels different and exotic. “Like those before them, Generation Y currently finds themselves attracted to things they did not have growing up.”²

An Atlantic magazine cover story in 2012 (“The Cheapest Generation: Why Millennials Aren’t Buying Cars or Houses, and What That Means for the Economy”)³ suggested that this preference for the urban environment could be influenced by the rise of smartphones, which take some of the “hassle” out of urban living. With new technology such as smartphone apps millennials track transit arrivals, find restaurants in walking distance, and arrange for friends to meet up on short notice. Smartphones also allow people to share things not easily shared in the past. Hence, the popularity of bike-sharing services and instant rental-cars like Zipcar. These shared services reward compact, walkable environments.

Will the preference for walkability change as the millennials age? That is, will compact living look good to people in their 20s but less so in their 30s and 40s, especially as they have children? Again, no one is sure, but there’s reason to think not. Through its survey of millennials, RCLCO found that 70 percent believe they will not choose to move to traditional suburban houses once they have children.

Even if they do move as they grow older, it is expected that millennials will most likely stay in the region they chose in their 20s. For this reason, some observers believe cities and regions around the country are facing a deadline when this large generation settles down. William Fulton, the former mayor of Ventura, California and now the planning director of San Diego, wrote in *Governing* magazine recently, that this day is fast approaching. In an article entitled “Do Millennials Want to Call Your City ‘Home?’” Fulton stated:⁴

² Nathan Morris, “How Generation Y Is Causing the Great Migration of the 21st Century,” *Placemakers and Newsmakers Blog*, April 9, 2012, <http://www.placemakers.com/2012/04/09/generation-ys-great-migration/>

³ Derek Thompson and Jordan Weissmann, “The Cheapest Generation: Why Millennials Aren’t Buying Cars or Houses, and What That Means for the Economy,” *The Atlantic*, August 2012.

⁴ William Fulton, “Do Millennials Want to Call Your City ‘Home?’”, *Governing*, November 2012

Because of the demographics of young talent, the cities and suburbs on the downward cycle have a limited window to turn things around: ten years at most, and maybe no more than five.

Most people settle down by age 35, and usually don't move from one metro area to another after that. And the demographic group behind the millennials is a lot smaller. Just like baby boomers, the preferences of the millennials will drive our society for two generations. They're making location decisions based on their idea of quality of life. And they're going to make those decisions in the next few years—by the time they're 35.

So if you're not one of the hip places today, you have only a few years -- the length of one real estate cycle and the time horizon for planning an infrastructure project -- to become hip enough to keep your kids and attract others.

If Fulton is right, then there's urgency as well as importance in understanding this generation and creating places in the Atlanta region that appeal to them. If not, the Atlanta region could miss attracting and retaining one of the largest, most diverse, worldly and educated generations in America's history.

ATLANTA MILLENNIAL PERSPECTIVES ON ISSUES AND VISION

PHASE I: MILLENNIAL KEY STAKEHOLDERS IDENTIFY ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE

In interviews with millennial key stakeholders from the Atlanta region, we were curious whether they reflected the attitudes of their peers elsewhere. We asked questions that were open-ended. We asked, for instance, about the top issues they see in the Atlanta region and what they see as the region's assets and liabilities.

There were some differences between what the millennial key stakeholders said and what national reports suggest but, generally, their responses reflect the national views and/or are specific to this region. Some of the differences may also reflect who we interviewed -- identified leaders as opposed to a cross-section of the generation. As a result, we believe the stakeholder group of interviewees was more knowledgeable about things like Atlanta's recent transportation referendum than others might be.

Nevertheless, in large part, this cohort of Atlanta millennial leaders have views similar to those of millennials nationally on things like transportation, land use, diversity, and the importance of quality of life.⁵

As a general matter, interviews with millennial key stakeholders suggest that Atlanta millennials do not feel they have access to traditional regional planning groups and efforts and that there is no way to get involved. There is a sense that the more established leaders and planners, *"don't really care what I say,"* and that there is not a genuine invitation to help make decisions or influence change. All interviewees are, however, passionate about and active around issues with which they are involved, even if their involvement is not through formal/tradition regional planning efforts and agencies.

More often than not, their involvement and networks tend to have connections to career associations. One comment from an interviewee offered a poignant insight – the younger generation acknowledges the need for civic involvement and participates in volunteer opportunities, but does not recognize their activities as *"tackling regional problems."*

There is concern on the part of some interviewees that the current planning process does not allow for innovation. The current ARC structure relies on *"elected officials"* who are *"worried about the fire of the day and are limited by their terms in office."* *"ARC staff connects with local staffs,"* limiting perspectives and ideas.

These comments from the interview stakeholder cohort suggest that there is an interest, energy and enthusiasm to become involved in regional issues and to share knowledge and ideas if the outreach is properly designed.

In addition, the following reflect some of the highlights based on themes extracted across interviews:

The need for a different kind of mobility: Mobility was on nearly everyone's list of major issues facing the Atlanta region. Interestingly, the great need interviewees cited wasn't for more roads; it was for more transit. *"If you want to attract young people, you have to have transit,"* one said. *"They are not interested in remaining in their cars. They want easy access and mobility."*

The emerging leaders we interviewed connected transportation (specifically, transit) to other issues they thought were important, such as land use (the cohort favors walkable, mixed-use development), environmental sustainability, economic development, and quality of life.

⁵ As a resource on national opinions of millennials reference: Achieve and Johnson Grossnickle & Associates, The Millennial Impact Report 2012, 2012.

One said he worried about the region’s economy if more wasn’t done soon to increase the number of transportation options in the region. It is, he said, “*the biggest sticking point*” for companies looking at locating or expanding here.

The rejection of the transportation referendum disappointed all millennial key stakeholders. One interviewee suggested that there should be a fundamental shift which considers not just moving people from point A to point B, but how to address the issues surrounding points A and B to achieve connectivity. In other words, “*once I arrive at point B, I am still unable to move around within that area.*” According to this interviewee, this will require a fundamental shift from addressing “spots” to “*thinking connectivity.*”

Quality of life as a driver, not a result: Nearly all the leaders expressed the belief that quality of life is a core issue. Young people look first at a region’s or a community’s quality of life, then at things like wages and prospects for advancement. Several of those interviewed believe the Atlanta region has not yet grasped the importance of quality of life to millennials – that quality of life is an afterthought, not a driving issue.

Atlanta millennials describe quality of life as interesting, culturally diverse communities that are easily accessible by foot or by transit. Here’s a summary of how one of those we interviewed explained it:

To remain vibrant and thriving, we must be concerned with communities that are walkable, green, appreciate historic preservation and use smart development as a planning premise. Young people are looking for urban high density settings that offer a high quality of life. Young people move to a particular place because of the quality of life issues.

This mirrors the sentiment that William Fulton expressed in his Governing article, that millennials perhaps more than earlier generations are “making location decisions based on their idea of quality of life.”

A greater emphasis on start-ups and innovation for economic development: While Atlanta has seen many companies start here and grow into big corporations (Coca-Cola, Home Depot, Turner Broadcasting, to name a few), several of the millennial key stakeholders we interviewed thought the region is losing ground on the newest round of business innovation and start-ups. The entrepreneurial orientation of millennials was evident in this cohort of interviewees.

One of those we interviewed worried that, if Atlanta doesn’t create a better environment for start-ups, it will lose the most talented and educated millennials. The region’s Achilles heel, he thinks, is the scarcity of risk capital, i.e., early funding for start-up companies. “*Other than Noro-Moseley Partners, there are no substantial venture capital firms based in Atlanta.*”

"Atlanta is good at producing the human capital required by start-ups, thanks to Georgia Tech and other colleges and universities," he went on. "But it is not good at holding on to them. For every software designer," he said, "there are four jobs available somewhere in the country. We've got to keep the 23-year-old (program) coders here in the Atlanta area," he added.

Another interviewee worried about the lack of what he called the "entrepreneurial ecosystem," which includes innovation in large companies as well as start-ups. The following summarizes his comments:

"If I want to change the world, I'd likely live in New York or Los Angeles. Atlanta's draw should be a good place to start and sustain a business idea. We are not. Money here is conservative, blue stocking. Corporations do not reach out to capitalize new ideas".

Beyond Black and White: Millennials are diverse in ways that earlier generations of Atlantans are not. They come from many ethnic groups, not just Caucasians and African Americans, and a substantial number are of mixed ethnic backgrounds. Those we interviewed didn't see much acknowledgement of this greater diversity in Atlanta's social or civic spaces, and they think it is unnecessarily difficult to bring people of different ethnic backgrounds together in Atlanta. This may be, they say, a result of Atlanta's long struggles with race as defined as Black and White, and the expectations and politics that have grown up around that struggle. In a sense, millennials see Atlanta as stuck in a 1970s view of race, and that, especially for the young, diversity is bigger than that.

One interviewee who grew up in the Atlanta region stated that he has seen little progress in thinking about ethnicity since he was in high school 10 years ago. "We are still a Black and White city," he said, where there is "very little cross-pollination." This makes things difficult for his family in particular, but he believes that it also hurts the region's economy as well. His perspective is that innovation depends on unlike thinkers, often from unlike backgrounds, working together, each approaching things from his or her own way of thinking. "If it's difficult to bring unlike thinkers together, innovation is more difficult," he said. He was not a lone voice in this perspective

Another person interviewed agreed that the discussion of diversity is too narrow in Atlanta and ethnic groups are too separated. This interviewee works with nonprofits and social issues and thinks what is required is a shift from looking mostly at "what my race needs" toward looking at the greater good for the region and the world. The key question, the interviewee said, was, "How do we delete the race construct that keeps us divided and in conflict?"

Almost all of the interviewees begrudgingly identified themselves along race/ethnicity categories when we asked this question for purposes of our demographic profile. However,

many commented that the traditional categorization of race and ethnicity were insufficient to identify their cultural heritage and, in many ways, offensive to them.

The sustainable region: This concern was not documented in the national research we reviewed, but several interviewees raised it. They feel strongly that Atlanta will not attract and retain millennials without becoming a leader in environmental sustainability. This is consistent with the expressed interest of millennials about Atlanta's need for transit and compact living and their desire for a certain quality of life.

One interviewee with whom we talked had specific concerns about the Atlanta area -- that its lack of transit, sprawling development, and asphalt makes it a "*heat island*" that is both uncomfortable and dangerous for the environment. He is also concerned about how electricity is generated for the region, to a large degree through coal-burning power plants that contribute to air quality problems; and about auto emissions from the region's dependence on cars for transportation.

Another interviewee was concerned about sustainability, both for personal reasons (a child has asthma) and civic reasons. He sees some progress in the form of new companies that are offering "*green solutions*," but also major problems that are not being addressed, including energy, recycling, transportation, and water conservation.

For both, their comments related to the region's appeal to millennials, demonstrating the application of quality of life as a driver. Living in a place with a high degree of concern about the environment, one of them said "*has to do with what kind of lifestyle we want.*"

Quality education is non-negotiable: It is not surprising that millennials are concerned about education. First, they tend to be a well-educated generation. Second, they either have children or are considering having children, and the provision of education is one of the earliest major decisions that parents make. Finally, many of them live in places (inner-city neighborhoods and close-in suburbs) that have underperforming public schools, so they are interested in whether these schools will improve enough to keep them and their families there. All of those interviewed believe that education is an important issue for their generation, and they are open to new thinking about schools and the delivery of education. What they seem unwilling to do is accept the status quo. They want the region and its school systems to "*get it right.*"

Two interviewees had specific ideas about improving public education and academic outcomes. One expressed the view that better outcomes will come with much larger investments in early childhood learning and believes that a more intentional emphasis on strategies for engaging parents is critical, particularly for new immigrant populations.

It's worth noting that the authors of the Atlantic magazine article on millennials quoted Perry Wong, director of the research for the Milken Institute, as saying that Generation Y is concerned about its own continuing education, as well as that of its children. "In the past, housing was the main vehicle for investment," Wong said, "but education is also a vehicle." For the Atlanta region, this likely means assuring a variety of education options for adult education, from trade programs to graduate school.

At least one interviewee found irony in the fact that Atlanta is educational institution rich, i.e., we have 18 colleges and universities in the region, and yet we underperform on educational outcomes.

Reasons for concern . . . and hope: Some interviewees are worried that the Atlanta region has lost or is losing the kind of appeal it had for their parents' generation. One said that Atlanta's title of "Hotlanta" is "*slightly tarnished*." Another said he believes the region doesn't work well together and isn't focused on "*how to compete regionally against other areas*." The failure of the transportation referendum was cited as evidence of the inability to work together as a region. However, we also heard hopeful insights.

Researchers have found that millennials are unusually conversant in the language and ideas of planning and place making. That is, they appear to understand the things that make places interesting and how these elements work together (e.g., transit, mixed-use development and walkability). As the director of research at New Jersey Future, a land-use advocacy group wrote:⁶

...perhaps we can legitimately point to their (millennials) change in attitude as being a direct and tangible result of education and advocacy efforts, rather than some exogenous demographic force that just happens to be working in our favor. Perhaps the younger generation has been paying attention when critics have pointed out how sprawling development patterns are using up our remaining open lands inefficiently and forcing people to spend more time in their cars.

We found this to be true among those we interviewed. As a group, the millennial key stakeholders we interviewed seem to understand the elements that make up successful regions and communities—and how they work together for the comprehensive creation of a healthy region. If this is generally true for Atlanta's millennial generation, this could bode well for ARC's efforts to involve them in regional planning and community building.

⁶ Tim Evans, "City-Loving Millennials: Are They Born That Way?", *New Jersey Future*, July 28, 2011, <http://www.njfuture.org/2011/07/28/city-loving-millennials-why/>

Summarily, the following represents the issues that are important for the region to address according to the millennial key stakeholder interviewees:

- Transportation/transportation systems
 - No connection for businesses, limited connection to job centers
 - Appropriate transportation planning would solve many regional issues, e.g., energy
 - Easy access, mobility and connectivity
- Race relations
 - Very little inter-mingling and cross pollination
 - Integrating the separated ethnic populations
 - Changing state and federal immigration laws
- Lack of risk capital
 - Impacts ability to be innovative
 - Impacts retention of “young and the restless”
- Creation of an entrepreneurial eco-system – making Atlanta a good place to start and sustain a business idea
- Quality Education
 - Pre-k programs should be mandatory
 - Parent engagement
- Energy/sustainability
- Public health and wellness
- Water availability
- Poverty and incarceration
- Quality of life
- Processes for deciding how to prioritize and allocate limited resources
- Processes that facilitate innovation
- Political dysfunction
- Housing and communities
 - Affordability
 - Diversity
 - Services
 - Transportation to employment

PHASE II: NEW VOICES CONVERSATIONS—ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

C&M/Civic Strategies designed the New Voices Conversations to explore participants’ visions of the Atlanta region’s future, discuss how ARC can better engage millennials to shape the

region and further explore the sampling of opinions, perspectives and ideas offered during the Phase I interviews with selected millennial leaders.

Two broad questions framed the visioning dialogue, which was facilitated to allow a flexible and free-flowing exchange of thoughts and ideas:

Imagine that it is 20 years from now and you have chosen live in the Atlanta region.

- How does it look and work?
- What do you like best about it?

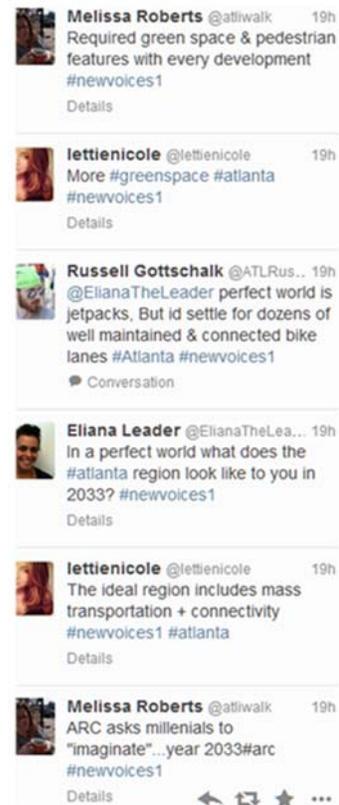
In addition to capturing their direct input, facilitators *listened* for the following:

- Do millennials in the Atlanta region want the kind of walkable, mixed-use urban experience that millennials nationally do?
- Do they share the concerns about the region’s future that millennial leaders indicated in our Phase I interviews?
- Is there a difference between what millennials inside the I-285 Perimeter want and those outside the Perimeter want?

In terms of how the cohort of millennial Conversation participants envisioned the future, we learned the following:

- They want the same kind of urban experience (walkable, mixed-use, ethnically diverse, and transit-oriented) that millennial key stakeholders and millennials nationally say they want.
- There was no discernable difference between what Conversation participants inside the Perimeter and those outside the Perimeter want. Whether living in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood in Atlanta, Decatur, Duluth or McDonough, Atlanta millennials want diversity, walkable neighborhoods with commercial areas that include mixed-use developments and, most importantly, alternatives to automobile mobility.
- They were very specific about what they want and very precise in their language – often using the lexicon favored by urban planners and community developers.

Here’s a sampling of how Conversation participants describe the Atlanta region they have chosen as their home 20 years in the future:



- *A fantastic, efficient, reliable, accessible, and affordable public transportation system that has service hours to support work and play*
- *I like that I was able to take the high-tech, clean, modern train/subway to a spot a few blocks from work, then walk along a vibrant, green boulevard to get to the office*
- *I like that people from all over the city and Metro Atlanta are able to access the richness of culture and opportunity that the region has to offer by way of public transportation*
- *It's integrated! When you look around, you see all kinds of people, multiethnic, etc. You see interracial couples, all ages, everyone out and enjoying. When you look at an electoral map, you see all colors scattered—no barriers or silos*
- *I like that new developments are centered around transportation*
- *I want to live, work, and play in the same area*
- *I'd like to see growth go up rather than outward, and see more natural areas kept safe from commercial growth*
- *Walkable communities in the suburbs*
- *Mixed-use living, even within the smaller communities in the region*
- *All schools have green roofs*
- *Permeable surfaces on roads and sidewalks*

C&M/Civic Strategies sorted the visioning comments from Conversation participants into nine categories (transportation, urban life/design, environment, education and human capital, social issues, economy, arts and culture, citizenship and involvement, and miscellaneous).

The 119 participants in our five Conversations collectively offered 214 separate ideas or images about how they wanted the region to develop. Of the 214 ideas, the greatest number of comments is about transportation and urban life/design. Below are the number of ideas and images, grouped by category.

| Category | # Ideas and Images Offered | % Total Ideas and Images Offered |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Transportation | 70 | 33% |
| Urban life/design | 56 | 26% |
| Environment | 20 | 9% |
| Education and human capital | 20 | 9% |
| Social issues | 18 | 8% |
| Economy | 11 | 5% |
| Arts and culture | 10 | 5% |
| Citizenship and involvement | 6 | 3% |
| Miscellaneous | 3 | 1% |
| Total | 214 | 100% |

The major themes noted by C&M/Civic Strategies in each category are presented below.

| Category | Major Theme(s) |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Transportation | Desire for public transportation in the city and suburbs, bike lanes, walkable streets, and alternatives to gasoline-powered cars. There was also interest in intercity rail (i.e., connections to other cities in the Southeast.) |
| Urban life/design | Desire for walkable, mixed-use communities in Atlanta and the suburbs. Desire for green space, density, and lively neighborhoods. |
| Environment | Desire for more environmentally sustainable development and easier access to green spaces. |
| Education and human capital | Desire for improved better public schools in all parts of the region. |
| Social issues | Belief in the value of diversity and desire for economic fairness |
| Economy | Belief that technology will be the key to the region's future economy. |
| Arts and culture | Belief that the arts are critical to the region's appeal, especially for young people |
| Citizenship and involvement | Desire to be involved at the neighborhood, community, and regional levels |
| Miscellaneous | Not applicable |

Below are specific comments for each of the categories. Although there was some playfulness, with suggestions of "jetpacks" and "hot air balloons," participants by and large took the discussions very seriously and spent considerable time and effort talking about their ideas.

Transportation

- *Public transportation is a socially acceptable means of primary transportation.*
- *A high level of awareness and well designed and equipped roads (including bikeable safe zones and sidewalks) make the area bike and pedestrian friendly.*
- *A fantastic, efficient, reliable, accessible and affordable public transportation system has service hours to support work and play.*
- *There is light-rail in both East Atlanta (Zoo Atlanta, Turner Field, EAV) and south DeKalb.*
- *There is a comprehensive, integrated, regional transportation*





network, with metro Atlanta counties and cities (and other parts of the Southeast) truly interconnected by transit (light rail, bike lanes, streetcars, bus routes, commuter rail etc.).

- *Regional access exists to the Southeast.*
- *The region is on a 'road diet'.*
- *There are better roads, with more traffic signals, less traffic and fewer traffic accidents.*
- *The demolition of old/abandoned buildings creates room for more roads.*
- *There is transportation innovation, with bike highways, self-driving cars and alternatives for gasoline.*
- *Interconnected transportation system (bikes, pedestrians, buses, trains and cars)*
- *Improvements in transportation that allows seamless mobility for all residents*
- *Walkable/bikeable*
- *A safe and accessible transportation system that travels throughout the city and the state (go to Savannah!), and which includes bike lanes*
- *More transit, comprehensive and affordable*
- *Better transportation with multiple options (streets, rail, bike)*
- *Increasing neighborhood density and also increased connectivity from the suburbs to the city*
- *The vast differences and diversity between our Atlanta neighborhoods (Virginia Highland, Inman Park, Brookhaven, etc.). I want more connectedness between local neighborhoods so people don't have to drive in traffic everywhere.*
- *What should be different? Transportation and more efficient access to MARTA around the whole region*
- *Transportation: Better MARTA (should be funded by the city), a rent-a-bike program*
- *Connect Atlanta's neighborhood through rapid transit*
- *Living streets with sustainable and accessible transportation*
- *Bikeable city*
- *Transit on a local scale*
- *Better modes of public transportation!*
- *Connector greenway (no more 85/75 highway)*
- *Flood 75/85 connector and turn it into a riverfront*
- *Easier to move about neighborhoods when drunk (rails, hot-air balloons)*
- *Being able to comfortably walk to some form of (reasonably priced) transportation at any time of the day and night*
- *Comprehensive, useful rail options that can get me anywhere in the region in a timely manner*
- *High-speed rail options to any Southern city of my choice, especially on the coast*



- *I like that the streets and highways have proper lighting to assist with fewer accidents and better drainage on the roads to help decrease hydroplaning for those who still chose to drive, as opposed to using the amazing public transportation that will exist.*
- *I love that I got to get on the train at the end of the day and head to the Gulf Coast for the weekend!*
- *I like that I was able to take the high-tech, clean, modern train/subway to a spot a few blocks from work, then walk along a vibrant, green boulevard to get to the office.*
- *Getting from Point A to B to C without having to worry about how to get there, regardless of mode*



- *Public transportation (regional)*
- *Walkable communities in the suburbs*
- *Connectivity and mobility*
 - Atlanta to Savannah train
 - Bikeability
 - Walkability
 - Easy access within the region
 - Ability to hop on/off a streetcar
- *Access to air travel*
- *Regional transit system*
- *Great transportation system*
- *Transportation is not as congested*

○

- *Connectivity: My neighborhood is still an old established neighborhood. I would like more access.*
- *I like that people from all over the city and Metro Atlanta are able to access the richness of culture and opportunity that the region has to offer by way of public transportation*
- *Major transportation outlets/options, such as is available in New York (through the city's boroughs, to the surrounding suburbs, throughout the tri-state area)*
- *High-speed rail connecting Atlanta with other major cities and the beach! Easy, fast access to water. And it's affordable. (It could be a hyper loop instead.)*
- *Mass transit throughout all of Metro Atlanta so anyone in the entire region can get anywhere without driving if they want to.*
- *I like that traffic is no longer an issue because effective alternative modes of transportation, throughout Metro Atlanta, exists.*
- *Incentives for using public transportation*
- *More tele-commuting:*
 - Less office space needed in Metro Area, so can create more residential/open space in urban areas



- Efficient way of working
- Facetime, Hangout, Skype make this possible
- *Electric vehicles (cars and bikes) are much more common ... and there are charging stations instead of parking meters.*
- *Jetpacks! Jetpacks for everyone!*
- *People using a "trolley" system to move around Atlanta*
- *An effective and efficient subway system has been constructed within the counties of Fulton and DeKalb. Additionally, a railroad has been developed for commuters in Cobb, Gwinnett, Henry, Clayton, Rockdale, and Douglas counties to relieve traffic congestion. The railroads and subways are affordable and allow Georgia residents to move more quickly throughout the region while also helping to promote tourism by making the region more appealing and less daunting because of the traffic.*
- *The Atlanta Airport has figured out a much more efficient method of security. No more 30-minute wait times.*
- *More carpooling and smaller parking lots*
- *Public transportation*
 - More options (trains)
 - Economically feasible
- *Better transportation (perhaps flying cars or a better train system)*
- *Transportation (transit/rail)*
- *Better MARTA (train) access to more areas (example: around the Perimeter of the city, not just in the center)*
- *Complete streets with shared transportation modes*
- *More expansive rail transit system*
- *Updated roads to support cars that drive themselves*
- *VMT tax on all single-occupant gasoline-powered vehicles*
- *Prohibition on private vehicles in downtown/Midtown Atlanta, as in London*
 - Increase pedestrian plazas, bicycle infrastructure and small local shops in unused space
- *Streetcar system connection to light rail on the Beltline, MARTA heavy rail and commuter transit via multimodal passenger terminal.*
- *Over 40 percent of cars to be electric*
- *Bike paths*
- *More electric cars*
- *Mass transit throughout ALL counties*

Urban life/design

- *More parks, green spaces and public/community spaces that are better utilized and well maintained.*
- *Building codes that require a percentage of the site developed as green space*
- *More organic food at better prices, increased farming to promote organic eating lifestyles, better genetically engineered food, faster and healthier fast food*
- *People feel safe walking at any time, there are no break-ins, women feel safe alone, a police presence exists.*
- *A clean community with less trash*
- *The "Foodie Scene"!*
- *Great places to sightsee (Water trails, Stone Mountain, Recreational Parks)*
- *There is development adjacent to a large body of water (bring the 'Hooch into town!).*
- *Mixed-use transit oriented developments abound.*
- *Where possible, old buildings have been renovated and rebuilt; useless old buildings have been demolished.*
- *More affordable housing exists within Atlanta (i.e., mixed income, rent control, etc.).*
- *Mix of uses supports increased residential living.*
- *I enjoy that the city still is as green (trees/parks) as it is*



Nicholas M. Juliano @nichol... 19h
Great conversation tonight in Decatur. Millenials and the ARC.
#newvoices1
[Details](#)

- *Budding community/connectivity (in certain areas)*
- *I like that I can get all the goods I need on foot (groceries, supplies)*
- *The wide open space*
- *More building up and not out (i.e., more high-rises and skyscrapers)*
- *Rejuvenation of existing architecture*
- *Living streets*
- *Roof-top bars (X8)*
- *A real landmark*
- *Coffee shops*
- *I like that my region has green space and neighborhoods with sidewalks and trash receptacles, regardless of the average income of residents who live in various cities/areas of the region.*
- *Smaller chain stores to shop in (regional)*
- *Sporting teams in the region (pro and college)*



- *Places to party at night: nightlife (clubs, restaurants, entertainment)*
- *More restaurants downtown*
- *I like that businesses meet needs and "do no harm" to the communities in which they reside*
- *I like that new developments are centered around transportation*
- *Urban chic meets country feel*
- *I want to live, work and play in the same area*
- *I can truly live, work and play in the same area*
- *Quality of life*
- *A small-business culture, even in the suburbs, so every business you see is not a cookie-cutter clone of businesses you see in every suburb in America.*
- *I like access to live, work and play neighborhoods.*
- *More live-work-play areas intown*
- *Mixed-use living*
- *Downtown Atlanta is going to change a lot like Georgia Tech has changed. Georgia Tech has changed to a walking campus, and I have a feeling downtown is going to have more walkability instead of ride-ability.*
- *I believe Atlanta will look a lot like New York, when the BeltLine is complete. There won't be as many cars on the road. More taxis will be used.*
- *Housing developments that connect entertainment, transit, etc. (Fewer cars, more trains)*
- *I would like to see the city of Atlanta focus more on developing the downtown area to accommodate development instead of the area sprawling to the outer areas of the region. Develop and revitalize industrial areas for living quarters and develop a community feeling. Make these new areas accessible.*
- *Preserve culture and historic landmarks.*
- *I'd like to see growth go "up" rather than outward, and see more natural areas kept safe from commercial growth.*
- *Mixed use living, even within the smaller communities in the region*
- *Incentives for using existing infrastructure have been offered so there will be fewer abandoned buildings*
- *More mixed-use districts*
- *Local parks and places for children to play*
- *Great food from around the world*
- *Advanced housing options*
 - *Apartments with elevators*





- Parking garages with self-parking cars
- *Dedicated green spaces*
 - Park areas
 - Trees
- *Making it more convenient to walk*
- *More mixed-use development (areas to eat/hang out within walking distance of where you live)*
- *Atlantic Station*
- *Sidewalks*
- *Big parks with woods*
- *Big parks*

Environment

- *Great air quality*
- *Eco-consciousness, more recycling and alternative energy use*
- *The tree canopy is protected and maintained*
- *Water collection, reclamation and reuse*
- *Robust urban agriculture that is affordable and accessible*
- *Water security (no more fights with Tennessee and Alabama)*
- *A more sustainable urban environment: solar, transit, green buildings, public art*
- *More green space*
- *Many, many gardens of food*
- *Green space*
- *Green space, which will become a government mandate to be included in every construction project*
- *Stone Mountain has been reacquired by the State and "Dollywood" has been kicked out. Stone Mountain has been turned back into a state park and wildlife preserve instead of a commercialized theme park.*
- *Preserve parks and nature.*
- *More green space!*
 - Very important to our generation
 - Create greenspace where existing empty buildings are
- *Easier access to nature*
- *All schools to have green roofs*
- *20 percent of new homes to have solar panels*
- *Edible landscapes (public food forests)*
- *Permeable surfaces on roads and sidewalks*
- *Better storm water management (i.e., pervious pavement, bio-swales, etc.)*

Education and human capital

- *Equitable access to improved, high quality K-12 and higher education*
- *City of Atlanta schools support families living in-town*
- *The people (coming from all over)*
- *Strong public education in every part of the city, so you don't have to move when you have kids*
- *Thriving and equitable education*
- *Best schools in the country*
- *Have the best public K-12 schools in the nation*
- *What I like: Intelligent, youth/young adults open to dialogue about making Atlanta a better place*
- *Working towards funding the education system and stopping the link between poor schools and prison*
- *Age-agnostic community*
- *A better school system (not as privatized, more public, to draw families into the community)*
 - *Need to address funding issues*
 - *Make APS the best*
- *High quality, diverse public schools (change the way they are funded)*
- *Better schools in neighborhoods or downtown*
- *More technical school options*
- *Making higher education more affordable for students to attend schools with high rankings*
- *Better screening of our educators in order to produce better results in our school system*
- *Great schools across the region*
- *Better public school options in Atlanta city areas (charter schools, etc.)*
- *Improved school systems within the Perimeter*
- *Better education in Georgia (to keep up with the world's standard)*



Social issues

- *Universal healthcare exists in Georgia.*
- *Multi-cultural, doing more together*
- *More mental health institutions, disability and veteran's services to help homeless/less fortunate*



- *A celebration and elevation of the civil rights theories and practices for future radical change*
- *Address the homeless issues*
 - There would be more tax-paying citizens
 - There would be safer areas
 - Areas would be cleaner
- *Very strong, engaged activist culture*
- *Sense of community economics*
- *Remove pockets of poverty*
- *Affordable housing*
- *Better schools and more affordable housing in town for families*
- *Means for better social services via recycling programs*
- *Not having to confront hunger and homelessness on the street corners and gas station parking lots because it is not prevalent*
- *Communities will no longer be divided on economic, racial and ideological lines.*
- *It's integrated! When you look around, you see all kinds of people, multiethnic, etc. You see interracial couples, all ages, everyone out and enjoying. When you look at an electoral map, you see all colors scattered – no barriers or silos.*
- *Ethnic groups are more blended together and living in the same neighborhoods, as opposed to today (Buford, Duluth, South Atlanta, etc.).*
- *True hub of racial, cultural and religious diversity*
- *More organizations to help end sex trafficking*
- *Greater cross-cultural exchange (cooperative, multicultural communities)*

Economy

- *Increased work opportunities for millennials*
- *The cost of living compared to other cities of its size*
- *Tech hub ("Silicon Valleyesque")*
- *The central location of Atlanta to surrounding states and cities: Birmingham, Savannah, N.C. mountains, Nashville, etc.*
- *Job opportunities*
- *Outside the perimeter, we would need to have jobs where people live*
- *Atlanta is known as an international influencer of arts, technology and entertainment*
- *Publicly provided, free, universal Wi-Fi access*
- *Entertainment industry boom with a surplus of actors/actresses moving to the city*
- *Better data infrastructure*
- *Google Fiber*

Arts and culture

- *What I like: Center for the arts, music, culture and entertainment events that are so frequent*
- *Diverse arts and entertainment receive support and are affordable for residents.*
- *The accessibility to art, culture and entertainment*
- *Condensed culture*
- *Arts and entertainment*
- *Arts and music community and the growth in it*
- *A vibrant, accessible arts and culture hub*
- *More funding for the arts*
- *The entertainment industry: There would need to be an area designated to the stars (as in the reality TV show set in California, "The Hills")*
- *Arts, food, culture*



Citizenship and involvement

- *There is a 'close community feel' which breeds a very specific brand of congeniality unique to Atlanta.*
- *College involvement in the community*
- *A high level of civic participation (Facebook neighborhood watch pages, Next Door social network, civic engagement email list)*
- *The Metro Region truly sees itself as a region and Georgia sees Atlanta as an important, vital and essential part of the state.*
- *I feel that I am fully engaged in my community: volunteering, membership/fellowship, entertainment*
- *I would like to see ARC help millennials run for elected offices, much like United Way has the VIP classes*

Miscellaneous

- *There is great weather year around!*
- *Cooperation between community leaders (city, business, etc.)*
- *Moving the Braves and the Thrashers back to Atlanta*

HOW MILLENNIALS APPROACH ENGAGEMENT

PHASE I: MILLENNIAL KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Several of the millennial key stakeholders interviewed by C&M/Civic Strategies said they have been disappointed by past opportunities for civic engagement/involvement. One mentioned an education forum he attended that was so poorly designed and marketed that there were more people on the panel than in the audience. He had also attended chamber of commerce networking functions that he found uninteresting and irrelevant.

Two interviewees had a specific example of a civic engagement program that resonated with them: the LEAD Atlanta program, run by Leadership Atlanta, which targets leaders between ages 25 and 32. They cited three parts to LEAD Atlanta's appeal:

- The **outreach effort**
They were recruited for LEAD Atlanta by people they know and respect. Any effort by ARC to get millennials involved in regional issues needs to work in a similar way, they said. "Get the cool kids on board," one person advised. "Get the influencers engaged."
- A **compelling format and structure**
LEAD Atlanta's programs are well designed and allow participants to learn about the issues they care most about.
- Its content is **factual and in context**
LEAD Atlanta's members are mostly young professionals. Interviewees indicated that they have no tolerance for propaganda or political speeches, but are eager to learn facts and big ideas.

Another interviewee indicated that Chicago has a good model for engaging emerging leaders.

Others spoke about the need for engagement that is flexible and interactive, i.e. not just speakers, but discussions.

One person said she has been involved in planning discussions but is not sure whether her contributions have made any impact. According to this interviewee, the current design for engagement does not allow time for adjustments based on the input received; there is no space for filtering comments or impacting prioritizations. *"There is never feedback on which plans have worked, which goals have been accomplished, or what adjustments have been made,"* she said.

The key stakeholder interviewees cautioned that, to work, engagements with millennials must be respectful of their knowledge and contributions and explained well. If not, they may come to one meeting, but not future ones.

PHASE II: NEW VOICES CONVERSATION PARTICIPANTS

To begin the dialogue, C&M/Civic Strategies asked Conversation participants how they are currently involved in their communities. The following represents their responses.



- Atlanta’s amazing arts and music environment
 - Working with children
 - Mentoring youth
 - I’m a Girl Scout leader
 - Neighborhood Planning Unit
 - Serving on nonprofit board
 - Supporting campaigns and candidates
 - Working in the community
 - Serving the public (public servant)
- Working with smaller organizations, where you can get a sense and feel of what’s happening in the community
 - Working on Quality of life issues through work and social connections
 - Working for a non-profit—and engaging through my work

When asked about their motivation for becoming civically involved the following themes emerged:

- Similar to most residents, motivation for engagement with millennials is strongest around issues that are “close to home”, i.e., issues that have a direct impact on their lives.
- There is an increased motivation to engage when issues are more “narrowly focused”.
- Efforts and opportunities to improve their neighborhoods is a strong motivator for millennial involvement.

A significant number of Conversation participants were either unaware of ARC or had limited knowledge about ARC’s activities, responsibilities or structure. Whether or not they had prior knowledge of ARC, many Conversation participants expressed a level of uncertainty about ARC’s motivation and desire to engage millennials. This might be associated with millennials’ general feeling about established public institutions and skepticism about large, slow bureaucracy, or their desire to “do something” more than talk. Participants offered the following suggestions for introducing ARC to the region’s millennial population:

- Explain what ARC is and what it does
- Share some success stories
- Give examples of your work
- Help millennials understand and know how to access the resources that flow through ARC

- *Demonstrate that ARC really cares about the millennial opinion and has an interest in hearing their voice*
- *Explain what ARC wants from millennials other than their opinions*
- *Give millennials the feeling ARC is open and welcoming, and provides the "space" for participation*
- *Assure ARC is reflective/inclusive of diverse age groups*
- *Be transparent, work to earn my trust*

When C&M/Civic Strategies asked Conversation participants how ARC might better engage them and bring them to the ARC table to address regional issues and help shape the future of the region six high level themes emerged (Total integration, actionable outcomes, immediate impact, technology and new mediums, non-traditional locations and formats, and engaging the millennial social network)

- Generally, Conversation participants expressed their preference for engagement that includes millennial involvement in the entire process -- from millennials making the invitation, to millennials facilitating the engagement, to ARC collaborating with organizations favored by or working on issues important to millennials.
- Gratification resulting from immediate results was a topic of discuss at each New Voices



Conversation. Particularly while developing an engagement relationship and history with ARC, this cohort of millennials ("*the microwave generation*") has more expectation for immediacy and responsiveness and places great significance on using their time for achieving actionable outcomes that have immediate impact.

They want more than a talking role and more than a listening role. They are interested in "*doing*". They want to know in short order, what an organization is doing and why and, if it resonates with them, how they can participate and how their involvement will make a difference. Hesitate or move too slowly, and millennials will move on to the next opportunity to be involved.

This probably should come as no surprise. Technology has allowed millennials to act on impulse and to expect immediate feedback and an immediate response.

- Although the use of technology is universally described as important and necessary, there is not always strong and clear consensus on the how and why of technology use, other than to "*use the new mediums that millennials use in new ways*" and to provide opportunities to submit and share information, ideas and opinions. Conversation

participants were clear that millennials interact through their smartphones and mobile devices - creating a whole new culture about marketing, connecting, communicating and sharing ideas and thinking.

Conversation participants repeatedly expressed that engaging through ARC's traditional means of communicating (newsletters, flyers, email) is passé. Whatever the marketing approach, branding and development directed specifically to this target market will be most effective.

- Conversation participants desire non-traditional meeting notice, times, locations and formats. By and large, there is nothing deemed nostalgic, exciting or engaging about the status quo or the old ways of doing things.
 - "Go into Atlanta neighborhoods and meet at locations easily accessible to millennials"
 - "Engage millennials where they are, like Piedmont Park tattoo shops, bike shops, bars, the Beltline, bike groups, running clubs, tennis organizations, etc."
 - "The engagement request can't be generic"
 - "Provide options and choices for involvement"
- Expect to engage conversations and meetings that have more of a social feel. In almost every case, millennials came to New Voices Conversations as much to network and meet new people, as to engage the planned conversation.

As we reflected on reaching out to millennials and getting them to participate in this effort, we realized that our engagement process was a good example of what we heard about "*outreaching to millennials on their terms*".

C&M/Civic Strategies employed a collaborative process for recruiting participants to join our New Voices Conversations that shared the lead responsibility for organizing the conversations with millennial Site Co-chairs and recruitment volunteers. Meeting places, selected by the Site Co-chairs, were generally spots that were accessible, and comfortable, open and welcoming. They were often "social spots" (e.g., pubs) where the group could network before and after our conversations, and share refreshments.

The following are specific comments offered by Conversation participants.

What is your motivation for becoming civically involved?

- *Getting older gives me a sense of urgency to make something happen*
- *For personal happiness, a rewarding feeling, the quest for meaning*
- *Guilt -- Can't complain if you don't do anything*
- *My ego – things can be done better with my input!*
- *Frustration*

- *To serve as a positive role model for children*
- *To make a difference*
- *To be a part of the process*

- *Volunteer opportunity*
- *In response to being the victim of a crime*
- *As a result of information on Twitter*
- *Because someone invited me*

- *As a part of work*
- *As a career choice that involves community work*
- *I ran for public office to try and get other people involved.*

- *In an effort to improve my neighborhood*
- *Opportunity to know my neighbors*
- *To fix a problem in my neighborhood -- Sidewalks that don't connect*
- *To address dilapidated buildings*
- *Concerned about surroundings – aesthetics and conditions*



How can ARC involve you?

- *Just ask us!*

- *Explain what ARC is and what it does. Share some success stories. Give examples of your work*
- *Create millennial representation on ARC committees*
- *Put millennials in voting seats on the ARC Board*
- *Create a cross mentoring opportunity by partnering ARC Board members with millennials to talk with and have lunch with every month*

- *Offer a "space" or methodology that provides information on opportunities for involvement*
- *Send information in ways that are different from traditional mediums*
- *Focus on branding. Younger people are very visual. Visual imagery helps with trust and authenticity.*



- *Meet us where we are digitally. (E.g., Twitter party, engage online, choose virtual locations, etc.)*
- *Increase awareness of issues and "what's going on"*
- *Focus on issues connected directly to my life and what I care about*
- *Narrow the focus of the conversation; millennials are interested when the issue is more narrowly focused.*
- *Create space/opportunity for dialogue on narrowly focused, smaller issues, e.g., bike lanes instead of road projects*
- *Create a "contagious factor" that causes involvement and participation*
- *Bad things happening, drawing us to the table*
- *Hire millennials as entry level workers*
- *Increase the number of millennials on the ARC Board*
- *Offer leadership training, education, for millennials early in their careers*
- *Demonstrate that ARC really cares about the millennial opinion and has an interest in hearing their voice*
- *Explain what ARC wants from millennials other than their opinions*
- *Help millennials genuinely understand how they can impact the ARC process*
- *Assure ARC is reflective/inclusive of diverse age groups*
- *Give millennials the feeling ARC is open and welcoming, and provides the "space" for participation*
- *Make more effort/commitment to let millennials know about what ARC is doing*
- *Help millennials understand and know how to access the resources that flow through ARC. Lots of money flows through ARC.*
- *Be transparent, work to earn my trust*
- *ARC is set up for failure because of its long-term planning focus. It needs to maintain a carrot and stick approach*
- *Connect through people millennials know*
- *Use facilitators from the millennial cohort*
- *Ask someone closer to our age to invite us.*
- *Use millennials to promote and market*
- *Create a street team of millennials to lead a resident engagement effort*
- *Tap into the population of college students and what they like to do*
- *Engage college students studying planning*



- *Tap in through local and neighborhood festivals*
- *Involve local artists (tee-shirt, screen printing)*
- *Access young professional groups within corporate communities/organizations*

- *Host meetings at times that better fit the millennial life style*
- *Go into Atlanta neighborhoods and meet at locations easily accessible to millennials*
- *Engage millennials where they are, like Piedmont Park tattoo shops, bike shops, bars, the Beltline, bike groups, running clubs, tennis organizations, etc.*

- *Provide food and beer incentives*
- *Don't make the information or the meeting "stuffy"*
- *Dialogues transforms mind, which transforms ideas, which transforms institutions. It's OK to talk on the net*
- *Make meetings more approachable and accessible for people who want to be involved—the right place and the right format.*
- *Make it real. Build discussions around specific scenarios.*
- *Use specific questions to drive the conversation, as opposed to relying on big picture concepts.*

- *ARC must make sure that this effort is not a waste of time, that it leads to something*
- *Create planning and conversation opportunities that lead to actionable outcomes*
- *Demonstrate the commitment of time you are requesting will result in having an impact.*
- *Institutions are old and slow. What's going to change?*
- *Do something already. Have something specific to do that will keep millennials engaged and interested.*
- *Engage millennials in opportunities likely to generate results immediately --that makes the conversation relevant. We are the microwave generation.*

- *Provide feedback on millennial input, actionable outcomes and progress reports*
- *Offer a roadmap for some action based on our input, so that we can track progress, perhaps online through the use of an infographic*

- *Tap into existing groups where millennial networks already exist, including student groups on campuses*
- *Collaborate with existing organizations millennials think are really neat and cool, like Wonderroot, Living Walls.*
- *Make the conversation relevant using millennial social circles, where participants can be comfortable sitting and talking and providing feedback to ARC representatives in the circle*

- *Connect with organizations that are doing issue related work millennials care about, like PEDS*

Ideas for How to Encourage the Participation of Millennials at the ARC Table

- *Invite us!*
- *Just ask for involvement, particularly for something actionable*
- *Provide immediate feedback. Feedback from ARC about tonight’s conversation is important and should be immediate*
- *Market to our generation – a newsletter isn’t the way to reach us.*
- *Flyers are great, but they are ineffective*
- *Advertise in the space relevant to the topic – if you want to talk about roads, use a billboard*



- *Create an ARC presence with millennials through mediums they use*
- *Use media created by students*
- *Create an app where ideas can be submitted*
- *Create viral videos*
- *Link conversation participants, perhaps with a millennial Facebook page*
- *Create on-line tools for providing feedback, either to an existing list or you can add ideas to the list e.g., whitehouse.gov)*
- *Create an incentive system to use social media and apps*
- *Create a single, simple app to report issues no matter where I am and link it back to the appropriate local government behind the scenes*
- *Make social media easy to use – not interested in creating passwords*
- *Use short surveys*
- *Use millennials to recruit and invite others*
- *People who are “doers” have “asking rights”. Ask active participants to make the invite*

- *The engagement request can't be generic. Provide options and choices for involvement*
- *Millennials are willing to travel to different locations if they see power and value in what they are doing*
- *Involve millennials by making involvement a part of their routine*
- *Create a "Board of Interns" comprised of college students, high school students or young adults in 20s and 30s who want to make a difference*
- *Create a network of millennial organizations and inform leaders who can then disseminate information to constituents*
- *Recruit millennial representation and involvement from different counties*
- *Support mixed income participation. Offer safe spaces where people from all access points are comfortable regardless of income, education, ethnicity, etc.*
- *Host breakout sessions on specific topics*
- *Hold town hall meetings*
- *Inventory millennial interests and skills and tap into those resources that exist*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The comments offered by the cohort of millennials who participated in this series of interviews and conversations speak for themselves. However, C&M/Civic Strategies offer the following recommendations based on our listening:

- Consider hosting a Culminating Conversation that invites participants from all five Conversations to hear the composite feedback. It is a good way to begin to establish connections with the millennial population and to invite them to the ARC table. But, be prepared to say what the next steps are. They will want to hear what impact the Conversations will have, what will be different because I gave my time and voice.
- Reach out to millennials to invite them to ARC events and activities using new outreach strategies, new messages, new mediums, new spaces and new meeting formats and, where possible, ask them to help with the outreach to other millennials.
- Select one or two of their suggestions for implementation and provide the feedback that their input has created the action.
- Create an actionable opportunity and invite the conversation participants to "do" something.
- The Citizen Recruitment process could be valuable for ARC or its member communities to use in future resident engagement efforts, especially when ARC wants to hear from a cross section of residents. The process requires time, diligence, and organizational

capacity to create the recruitment teams, but the results can be striking. And there's another benefit worth considering. Building teams of well-connected people to assist in organizing meetings builds grassroots leadership and involvement with ARC. Once the teams are familiar with ARC, they assist with future resident engagement efforts or as a grassroots sounding board for ARC proposals.

C&M/Civic Strategies strongly urges ARC and its members to involve millennials, at the regional and local levels, in finding the answers that we seek as we work to shape the future of the Atlanta region. Communities need young people to be sustainable. C&M/Civic Strategies believes that millennials would respond quite positively to invitations to join the ARC table.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: LIST OF MILLENNIAL KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWEES

List of Millennial Key Stakeholder Interviewees

Heather Aladeff, transit planner in a private firm

Tim Alborg, political consultant

Alok Deshpande, entrepreneur

Amir Farohki, lawyer and nonprofit executive with focus on issue definition across State of Georgia

Karolina Klinker, nonprofit executive with focus on education

Shyam Reddy, attorney and federal government official

Otis Threatt, corporative executive for diversity management

Janelle Williams, nonprofit executive, with focus workforce development and education

APPENDIX B: KEY MILLENNIAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

ARC Voices
Stakeholder Interview Instrument

Background

- Name _____
- Organization _____
- Title _____

Demographics

- Age _____
- County of Residence _____
- County of Work _____
- Race/Ethnicity _____

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe your involvement (input, planning, and advocacy) with issues likely to impact the Atlanta regional?
2. What are the three most important problems or conditions in the Atlanta metropolitan region that you want to see addressed as the future of the region is planned?
3. Are there issues that we should be thinking about that are not currently being addressed? If so, what are they?
4. What local thought leaders do you associate with the issues you identified?
5. What questions would be helpful to ask in our focus groups to solicit input about shaping a vision for the Atlanta region and identifying issues of regional importance?
6. Do you have suggestions about who should participate in some follow up focus groups?
 - 10 county region
 - Emerging leaders / voices
 - Preferably 20 to 30 years old
 - Diversity of gender, race and ethnicity

APPENDIX C: CITIZEN RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Citizen Recruit Process

The Concept and How It Works

- In essence, The Citizen Recruitment Process is a well-organized phone tree “re-mix”.
 - Begin with two-Site Co-chairs who recruit five “recruitment volunteers” (RVs) each.
 - Have ten (10) RVs personally invite 10 friends/neighbors/co-workers to attend the meeting (100 personal invitations)
 - Generally, about a third of those invited will attend, hence between 30-40
- The Process is scalable. You can have more than two Site Co-chairs or 10 RVs.
- The Process is targeted, so you can bring a better cross-section of the community to the meetings
 - The key is to have a cross-section of RVs who are making the invitations
 - The personal invitations are the key. It’s how you get people who wouldn’t normally attend a public meeting to attend -- because someone they trust asked them to come.
- It is critical to have a clear process that helps the Site Co-chairs and RVs to be effective
 - A training/orientation session with Site Co-chairs and RVs
 - RVs will often have many questions and some skepticism. They need to be convinced that it is an open-ended process with legitimate goals
- Create a communication facility for
 - reminding the Site Co-chairs and RVs of upcoming tasks
 - reporting call/invitation results
- The Citizen Recruitment Process can be used along with the more conventional ways of publicizing meetings. There is nothing wrong with using both processes simultaneously.

Using the Process

- The first key to success is finding the right Site Co-chairs. In this instance, we looked for:
 - People who are interested in ARC’s work and see benefits in their personal involvement
 - People who are seen as leaders in the area because if they asked others to serve as RVs, they would give serious consideration to the task

- People with diverse networks because we wanted RVs from many groups, interests
- It is important to find the right meeting location
 - Bonus if the location feels “appropriate”
- It can be difficult to coordinate location dates with co-chair, facilitator and site calendars. Build this into your project delivery dates
- Meetings using this process tend to have more high energy than most public meetings
 - Participants start out knowing some who are in the room
 - They have been told to expect something different from the usual meeting
 - The gathering can genuinely be a social event as well, as people get to know new people
- Good news: The more you do this, the easier this coordination gets