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ABOUT US | INFO CENTER | LAND USE | ENVIRONMENT | TRANSPORTATION | LOCAL GOVERNMENT | WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS | AGING RESOURCES

News & Press > Press Releases > All Press Releases > ARC Awards Six Communities Funds for LCI Supplemental Studies

ARC Awards Six Communities Funds for LCI Supplemental Studies

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(ATLANTA - June 22, 2007) Six communities received supplemental study grants totaling \$165,000 from the **Atlanta Regional Commission's** Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), a program promoting quality growth by encouraging greater mobility and livability within existing centers and corridors.

The grantees include **Alpharetta** to study downtown circulation, **Atlanta** to assess parking along the Midtown Mile, **Decatur** to study affordable housing, **Griffin** to identify improvements to bolster downtown connectivity, the **Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District** to develop an overlay district and **Riverdale** to support implementation of its transportation master plan.

The award-winning LCI program was created in 1999 to help local jurisdictions better link transportation improvements with land use development strategies to create sustainable, livable communities that help reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Some communities seek grants from the LCI Supplemental Study Program to help bridge the gaps between plan development and implementation. Once the studies are completed, communities are eligible to apply for additional funding to implement their LCI plans.

The City of Decatur and Midtown Alliance were grandfathered into the LCI program in 2001, while Alpharetta was grandfathered in 2006. The cities of Griffin and Riverdale received LCI grants in 2006, while Gwinnett Place received its grant in 2001.

"This program further reinforces ARC's commitment to making regional communities more livable," said Dan Reuter, Chief of ARC's Land Use Division. "The region's LCI communities have shown great commitment to developing innovative plans, but sometimes additional studies are needed to implement those plans. That's where the LCI Supplemental Study Program comes in."

LCI has awarded more than \$115 million since its inception in 1999, including nearly \$7 million in study grants and more than \$107 million in transportation funding. The program awards up to \$1 million annually in study grants for 10 years and \$500 million for transportation funding in LCI areas.

LCI plans in the implementation stage include 724 development projects that will add more than 62,000 new homes, 9,000 hotel units, 11.5 million square feet of commercial space and 40 million square feet of office space. Of the 79 areas that have completed LCI studies, almost two-thirds of the communities have put in place new design guidelines, four in 10 created special LCI zoning districts and more than a third adopted affordable or senior housing policies. The transportation projects and LCI developments cut vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled by up to 25 percent, while increasing transit ridership and opportunities and reducing air pollution.

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LCI areas are located in local communities, activity centers and employment hubs throughout the Atlanta region, including four in Cherokee, five in Clayton, 11 in Cobb, 15 in DeKalb, two in Douglas, two in Fayette, 14 in Fulton, 11 in Gwinnett, two in Henry and one each in Forsyth, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Spaulding and Walton. The City of Atlanta has 14 LCI areas.

Go to www.atlantaregional.com/LCI for more information about the Livable Centers Initiative.

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The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta region, including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties as well as the City of Atlanta and 65 other municipalities. The Atlanta Regional Commission serves as a catalyst for regional progress by focusing leadership, attention and planning resources on key regional issues.

2007 LCI SUPPLEMENTAL STUDIES

Alpharetta Town Center

Scope: Downtown Circulation and Multi-Modal Study

Award: \$37,500 from ARC; \$37,500 local match

Contact: James Drinkard, Economic Development Coordinator, 678.297.6075

The City of Alpharetta completed its Downtown Alpharetta Master Plan in July 2003 with an underlying goal of creating a central downtown area that offers a mix of commercial and residential uses as well as a destination for local residents and visitors. A circulation study and multi-modal transportation plan is necessary to fully and successfully implement the recommended Downtown Master Plan. The chief goal of this effort is the creation of a detailed, integrated plan for efficient vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit access into and throughout Downtown Alpharetta. The plan will consider the relationship between long-term land use planning, infrastructure improvements and streetscape urban design elements that are needed to ensure quality multi-modal connections within downtown, with immediately adjacent neighborhoods and to other proximal activity centers.

Decatur Town Center

Scope: Affordable Housing Market Study

Award: \$25,000 from ARC; \$25,000 local match

Contact: Lyn Menne, Assistant City Manager, 404.371.8387

As Decatur continues to attract growing numbers of high-income residents, the demand for support from the service industry is increasing. But at the same time, the opportunities for affordable housing for service industry employees is on the decrease. As a result, Decatur must either develop an effective affordable housing program or expect to see traffic increase as essential employees are driven further away to find suitable housing. This market study will help the city identify what types of affordable housing developments will successfully meet the needs of the target audience. This study will provide the basis for future affordable housing programs in the city.

Griffin Town Center

Scope: Sun City to Downtown Connectivity Study

Award: \$12,500 from ARC; \$12,500 local match

Contact: Frederick Gardiner, Director of Planning and Development, 770.233.4130

The Sun City to Downtown Connectivity Study addresses the need for additional study along North Hill Street to determine how to improve connections to the proposed Sun City Peachtree

Development north of downtown. The study will take a detailed look at the northernmost portion of the original LCI study area and assess existing land uses and roadway conditions, identify current and future needs, and recommend a mix of land uses and multimodal transportation improvements. The goal of the study is to identify improvements that will help the City of Griffin attract economic and social resources from the 3500-unit Sun City Peachtree Development currently under construction. The City of Griffin will coordinate with Spalding County and Sun City developer to study the corridor needs outside the Griffin Town Center LCI study boundaries.

Gwinnett Activity Center

Scope: Gwinnett Place Overlay District

Award: \$35,000 from ARC; \$35,000 local match

Contact: Joe Allen, Gwinnett Place CID Director, 678.924.8170

The main goal of the Gwinnett Place Overlay District is to provide flexible development guidelines and incentives; improving transportation systems, including street, public transportation, pedestrian, and bike facilities; and maintaining the vision of the LCI study by incorporating the "look and feel" of the CID area. The Gwinnett Place CID established streetscape guidelines in 2006 as it implemented the original LCI study. Some of the property owners are volunteering to comply with the intent of these standards by incorporating these elements into their designs and out to the street. But without the creation of the Gwinnett Place Overlay District, the efforts will result in a piecemeal approach. The overlay district will also expand the streetscape guidelines to include site development standards, architectural design standards and public improvement standards.

Midtown Activity Center (City of Atlanta)

Scope: Midtown Mile Parking Assessment

Award: \$30,000 from ARC; \$30,000 local match

Contact: Shannon Powell, Midtown Alliance Vice President, 404.892.4782

The Midtown Mile Retail Initiative is a critical element in implementing the retail goals of Blueprint Midtown, the master plan that has guided Midtown's quality build-out. This initiative introduces flagship retail along 14 blocks of Peachtree Street from North Avenue to 16th Street. One of the greatest challenges in implementation of the Midtown Mile is formulating a strategic plan to address the issue of available and accessible parking. This supplemental study will seek to determine how many parking spaces are needed to support a high-end retail district, both now and in the next five years; map the current amount and location of existing parking; and determine whether that parking is in the best location.

Riverdale Town Center

Scope: Transportation Master Plan

Award: \$25,000 from ARC; \$25,000 local match

Contact: Doug Manning, Community Development Director, 770.996.3397

The Riverdale Town Center plan was completed in 2006. The five-year implementation of the LCI study focused on several transportation enhancements collectively comprising the Transportation Master Plan that will guide implementation of the Town Center. The suggested projects call for the future development of a street network that would facilitate a compatible mixture of residential, institutional, retail and service uses. The LCI Supplemental Study will support the implementation of the Transportation Master Plan by creating design standards to guide public and private investments regarding streetscape improvements in this area. This study will also recommend a method to integrate transportation reviews into land use regulations and the development review process.