

Study: Transit hub would create 15,000 jobs

By Dave Williams
STAFF WRITER

A proposed transit hub in downtown Atlanta would create more than 15,000 jobs and add almost 6 million square feet of office, retail and residential space, according to a new study.

The report, released Jan. 27, marks the first attempt to project the economic impacts by 2040 of converting the blighted "Gulch" area into a mixed-use complex centered around a bus and rail terminal, a plan that has languished for years for lack of funding.

"It illustrates that potentially this could be a very positive investment for the city of Atlanta, the region and the state of Georgia," said Gary Mongeon, vice president of

Bleakly Advisory Group, one of three consultants commissioned by downtown community development nonprofit **Central Atlanta Progress** to prepare the report. "It's something that really ought to be taken seriously."

Like the rest of Georgia's commuter- and passenger-rail projects other than **MARTA**, the Multi-Modal Passenger Terminal (MMPT) has never advanced beyond the planning stages.

In the latest blow, the project failed to make it onto the final list of \$6.1 billion in transportation improvements across metro Atlanta to be funded by a proposed 1-cent regional sales tax that will be on the ballot in 10 counties

► See **TRANSIT HUB, 18A**



BYRON E. SMALL

Filling a hole: One consultant says the project would correct a major physical constraint to development.

Budget cuts may hurt Carter site, historic markers

By Dave Williams
STAFF WRITER

Proposed state budget cuts would affect the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Georgia's historical marker program among other assets and programs key to attracting visitors, tourism advocates say.

But officials with the **Georgia Department of Economic Development** say they're making smart use of stretched tax dollars, not reducing their commitment to the state's No. 2 industry.

Gov. Nathan Deal's \$19.2 billion fiscal 2013 budget contains \$662,772 in cuts to the economic development agency's Division of Tourism. The hit list includes plans to:

- Close two of the state's 11 visitor information centers, including the center in former President Jimmy Carter's hometown of Plains, Ga., that serves visitors to the nearby historic site.

- Eliminate state funding of three nonprofit organizations that cater at least partly to tourists: the **Georgia Historical Society**, the **Georgia Humanities Council** and the **Historic Chattahoochee Commission**.

- Abolish two filled positions in the division.

Many of the affected visitor centers and nonprofits already have been hit with spending cuts during the two recessions of the last decade or have been targeted by governors for reductions only to have the General Assembly restore their funding.

Among them is the visitor information center in Sylvania, Ga., now closed on

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Atlantans' philanthropy measured

By Maria Saporta
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Two-thirds of metro Atlantans donated money to causes that were important to them in the past year, 50 percent of local residents donated their time and 36 percent participated in political activities.

Those are just some of the findings of a new study done for the **Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta** on the level of philanthropic investment and engagement in the Atlanta region.

The study surveyed 2,700 metro Atlanta residents in the Community Foundation's 23-county service area in a telephone survey that included both landlines and cell phones. The goal was to try to measure the level of involvement that metro Atlantans have in their communities.

"We are setting some community benchmarks on the amount of giving and the amount of volunteerism," said Alicia Philipp, president of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. "We are establishing a community baseline, and our intention is to do this every three years and see if there's improvement."

Philipp said a goal of the Community Foundation is to encourage philanthropy and to build community, and the study revealed some areas of improvement.

Beth Schapiro, president and founder of **The Schapiro Group**, which conducted the study, said the survey asked people why they didn't give away more money or donate more of their time to community and philanthropic causes.

"Not surprisingly, the reason people aren't doing more is because they don't have the money or they don't have the time," Schapiro said.

But there were other reasons people didn't do more. Some said they didn't know enough about local issues or organizations, that they didn't know how to get involved and they didn't know how they could help.

However, the study did show that there was a strong

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JOANN VITELLI

Alicia Philipp: "We are establishing a community baseline, and our intention is to do this every three years and see if there's improvement," says the president of the Community Foundation.

MoneyTree Report: VC deals down 20% in 2011

By Urvaksh Karkaria
STAFF WRITER

After sizzling in 2010, venture capital deal volume in Georgia fizzled in 2011.

The number of venture capital deals in metro Atlanta tumbled nearly 20 percent in 2011, compared with the prior year, according to MoneyTree Report data. That compares to a more than 45 percent spike in deals in 2010, compared with 2009. Venture capital invested in the state rose 3.88 percent last year, which was roughly three times less than the year-over-year percentage increase the prior year.

Venture capital activity in 2011 leveled off from the highs of 2010, where pent-up demand from the Great Recession sent VCs into significant dealmaking.

Last year, Georgia companies received about \$343.16 million in venture capital dollars, according to the

MoneyTree report, published by **PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP** (PwC) and the **National Venture Capital Association** (NVCA). The typical VC check in Georgia last year was \$6.35 million, compared with \$4.93 million in 2010.

Nationally, venture capitalists invested \$28.42 billion in 3,673 deals in 2011, an increase of about 22 percent in dollars and a roughly 4 percent rise in deals over the prior year, noted the report, which is based on **Thomson Reuters** data.

Quarterly venture capital investment in Georgia fell consecutively last year.

That trend reflects "continued economic uncertainty domestically and in Europe, as well as a sign that investors may be stepping back a little bit to see how the presidential election plays out," said Nathan Briesemeister, partner in

► See **MONEYTREE, 21A**



JOANN VITELLI

Dealing: Partner Jeffrey Muir says Fulcrum Equity Partners reviewed 35 percent more deals in 2011 than in 2010, and will close on one in the first quarter.

Atlantans' philanthropy measured

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motivation on the part of residents to want to help their communities and that they felt it was their duty to help.

"Metro Atlanta is not an apathetic community," Philipp said. "People are motivated to help. They want to help. That's an important piece to celebrate in our community."

One of the surprising findings in the survey was how people answered the question of who was most responsible for improving the community.

The No. 1 answer was individuals — 47 percent said individuals had a great deal of responsibility and 41 percent said individuals had some responsibility for a total of 88 percent.

Local government came in second with 42 percent saying "a great deal" of responsibility, and 39 percent saying "some" responsibility — for a total of 81 percent.

Businesses and corporations were next with a total of 79 percent saying they had either a great deal or some responsibility. Neighborhood associations and faith-based organizations came in next with totals of 76 percent.

That was followed by state government at 73 percent; nonprofit organizations at 70 percent and the federal government at 62 percent.

"Atlantans feel a personal responsibility to their community," Philipp said. "That attitude is a great attitude. They are not thinking that it's somebody else who has to do it."

The challenge, however, is to figure out how to tap into that attitude and get those individuals to do more, such as a greater percentage going out to vote for the candidates of their choice during local and state elections in addition to presidential elections.

The Schapiro Group also applied a national and international index used by Gallup to determine how metro Atlantans' local engagement compares to other areas. Metro Atlanta's score of 47 fell significantly below the national score of 60 and was in the range of engagement found in Hong Kong and Denmark.

For Philipp, that statistic showed that metro Atlanta has an opportunity to improve the level of its citizen involvement.

"We wanted to set a benchmark and figure out how do we keep improving on what we have," Philipp said. "We have got to work hard."

For examples, nonprofit organizations did not rank high when respondents were asked who was responsible in improving their communities.

"Nonprofits don't pop up as who should help the community," Schapiro said.

Philipp said that finding was an opportunity for the nonprofit community to do a better job of communicating what they do and to do a better job to reach out to individuals to get involved.

"Nonprofits are now at the table more than they've ever been," Philipp said. "What are we not doing as nonprofits to get that message across about the role of nonprofits? I don't think people recognize what a nonprofit does — there's an image issue and there's a capacity issue. That's an area we need to figure out. We have got to get the message to get other people involved."

The study also showed that most

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Alicia Philipp

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Atlantans have some sort of informal ties to their communities — by getting to know their neighbors, joining their neighborhood associations and civic groups.

Although the level of involvement was consistent between the urban, suburban and ex-urban areas in the 23-county region, income did matter — the higher the income

of individuals the more they were involved.

The study also found that while a majority of Atlantans donated money to support an issue or organization in 2010, there was a decrease of 13 percent from the level of giving in 2001. Schapiro said that decrease could largely be due to the economic recession.

The areas where people did give money or volunteer their time were in education, human services, disaster preparedness and relief, children and youth services, religion and spiritual development, housing and the environment.

Also, the study showed that most Atlantans were generous on a personal level with 61 percent giving money to friends or family, not including a spouse or children.

Philipp said the study showed that there is a hyper-local connection that people have with their community, which is good and reinforces the Community Foundation's work at the neighborhood level.

"We do believe in connections at a grassroots level," Philipp said. "We care deeply about neighborhoods. If you are connected with your neighborhood, it improves your schools and your parks."

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