



Livable Centers Initiative

Atlanta, GA

Atlanta Regional Commission

Top: Riverdale's new town center hosts public events and provides recreation opportunities. Photo by ARC.
 Bottom: The Atlanta Beltline is a network of trails that connect the city's neighborhoods. Photo by Atlanta Beltline.

The Livable Centers Initiative incentivizes municipalities to re-envision their communities with pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit infrastructure to spur economic growth.

CONTEXT

- Rural, urban, and suburban settings.
- Southeast.
- Program started in 2000.



MPO PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM

- The Livable Centers Initiative seeks to encourage economic growth by investing in mobility options. The program has invested over \$200 million across 119 communities in the greater Atlanta region.

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT DRIVER?

The Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) provides grants to municipalities for planning studies and the construction of transportation projects. ARC established the program in 2000 to spur economic growth and transit-oriented development by **expanding access to transit**, increasing multimodal travel options, and promoting **Context Sensitive Solutions**. The LCI also aims to improve air quality by reducing single occupancy vehicle trips and making it easier for residents to travel using active transportation. ARC funds this program through FHWA's Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program.



Greenprint Midtown was a planning initiative that promoted green zones, buffers between traffic and the sidewalk that provide rest areas, bicycle racks, and shade. Photo by Midtown Alliance.

To receive a grant, communities must first complete an LCI planning study. This helps shape the projects in a way that is aligned with ARC’s values and principles. Once the studies are complete, these communities become eligible to receive funding for transportation projects, such as sidewalks and intersection improvements, to help implement their visions. The LCI program also encourages **stakeholder engagement** in the transportation planning process. Municipalities that apply for a grant must submit a robust public outreach plan that involves all stakeholders.

HOW DID THIS CONNECT THE COMMUNITY?

Examples of funded projects include:

- **Atlanta’s Beltline** is one of the largest, most comprehensive urban revitalization efforts in the country connecting 45 adjacent neighborhoods through multimodal transportation investments. The Beltline is an interconnected network of public parks, multi-use trails, and transit services on 22-miles of historic railroad corridors circling downtown Atlanta. LCI funds were used for selected elements of the Beltline network.
- **Central Atlanta Progress** assists employers in downtown Atlanta in implementing transportation solutions that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. The project involves reducing the

number of single-occupancy vehicle trips while encouraging people to ride transit.

- **Oakland City/Lakewood Livable Centers Initiative** provides recommendations for land use, transit circulation options, and implementation strategies for the MARTA transit stations, the surrounding residential areas, and the Metropolitan Parkway commercial corridor. Engagement with residents, local businesses, and community leaders was central to developing a vision based on community consensus.

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS?



INVEST

The benefits of the projects included in the LCI program vary depending on the project type, and typically include improved air quality, safer conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, economic development spurred by the increase in foot traffic in business districts, or increased mobility caused by **expanded access to transit** or **improved transit service**.

ARC uses a data inventory system to compile information on communities that have received LCI grants. The database tracks the types of projects undertaken, the construction status of those projects, and the total size of residential, commercial, and green space in each community. LCI communities make up less than 4 percent of metropolitan Atlanta’s land area, but contain 29 percent of its growth in commercial development and 69 percent of its growth in office development. These communities have an average 13 percent reduction of single-occupancy vehicle miles traveled per capita each day. Parks and open space have been developed in more than half of the communities that have received LCI grants.

ARC has also developed an **Environmental Justice** tool known as the Equitable Target Area Index based on the lessons learned from the LCI program. This index helps ARC understand communities of concern (such as those with a high poverty rate or high minority population) and to make more effective investment decisions in those areas.

For more information: <https://atlantaregional.org/community-development/livable-centers-initiative>