

## Notes for the Atlanta BeltLine Employment Advisory Group Meeting

March 7, 2011

### Participants:

- Aaron Uddin, *Blue earth network*
- Burrell Billingslea, *Fulton County Workforce Development (former)*
- Charles Edwards, *Atlanta Center for Self Sufficiency*
- David Jackson, *The Center for Working Families*
- Deborah Scott, *Georgia STAND-UP*
- Derrick Duckworth, *Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce*
- Diane McCants, *United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta*
- Elke Davidson, *Davidson Consulting*
- Faye Dresner, *Year-Up*
- Fred Hicks, *Georgia STAND-UP*
- Garry Harris, *Center for Sustainable Communities*
- Harold Craig, *Atlanta Technical College*
- Janelle Williams, *The Center for Working Families*
- Jon Effron, *Sanctuary Real Estate*
- Julie Johnson, *Atlanta Urban League*
- Keith McNeil, *Georgia STAND-UP*
- Kweku Forstall, *Year-Up*
- Linda Schneider, *Jewish Family & Career Services*
- Melissa Conrad, *Georgia STAND-UP/MAC Consulting*
- Nathaniel Smith, *Emory University Office of University Community Partnerships*
- Rob Brawner, *Atlanta BeltLine Partnership*
- Tasha Brimmer-Taylor, *Atlanta Public Schools*
- Thomas Cook, *New Hope Enterprises*
- Valarie Wilson, *Atlanta BeltLine Partnership*
- Von Nkosi, *City of Atlanta/Southface*
- William Teasley, *Atlanta Education Fund*

### Introduction

The third meeting of the Atlanta BeltLine Employment Advisory Group (ABEAG) was convened on March 7, 2011. The overarching task of the meeting was to develop a framework for taking the work of the ABEAG from theory to action. After introductions, Rob Brawner (Atlanta BeltLine Partnership) gave a brief overview of the genesis and mission of the group and the work that had been completed to date.

### Potential Subcommittee Structure

Next, Elke Davidson (facilitator) proposed a “month on/month off” model for managing ABEAG work moving forward: the larger group would meet every other month, with working subcommittees meeting on the off months. These subcommittees would report back to the large group for input and vetting, as well as work with each other across subcommittee lines when issues demanded. The group approved this structure, and next turned to consider what issues the subcommittees should be organized around.

At the end of the second ABEAG meeting, the group brainstormed a list of 10 key areas of work to serve as a platform moving forward. Elke and Rob worked to consolidate these 10 areas into four subcommittees, which they presented to the group for their consideration. The subcommittees included the following:

1. **Human Resources:** Focus on recruitment, hiring, retention issues. Potential participants include JF &CS, Wells Fargo (Nicole Robbins), private sector recruiting firm, Atlanta Tech College (placement?)
  - Understand and map job seekers' process
  - Understand and map how hiring needs change by employer size/sector
  - ABLiSS: Business model
2. **Marketing:** Focus on identifying and packaging critical information for key audiences. Potential participants include Rukiya Eaddy/ABI, BeltLine Chamber, Definition 6, BeltLine employers.
  - Employee transportation issues and retention
  - Value proposition of BeltLine for businesses
  - Linking local hiring with other pro-local movements (local buying, local food, etc.)
3. **Program/Policy Models:** Scan and identify model programs and policies both locally and nationally to support our design process. Potential participants include ADA (Charles W.?), Fulton County Workforce Development, Nathaniel Smith (Equity Atlanta), BeltLine employer, Atlanta Tech. College?
  - Incentives for hiring locally
  - Place-based workforce development (PolicyLink – Detroit?)
  - Local initiatives (COA/Southface Building Retrofit project pilot, Center for Working Families/GA Stand-Up, local workforce development initiatives, ABI workforce development/economic development efforts, Mayor Reed's property tax-exemption for city employees, etc.)
4. **Workforce Development:** Focus on human capital/community development aspect of the initiative. Potential participants include Melissa Conrad/Deborah Scott (GA Stand-Up), David Jackson (Center for Working Families), Atlanta Education Fund (APS nonprofit), BeltLine employer.
  - Aligning training with employer needs
  - Addressing barriers to workforce participation (expurgement, transportation, child-care, remedial ed., retention issues, etc.)

- Re-aligning existing workforce development efforts towards BeltLine n’hood pipeline

### Group Discussion and Committee Revisions

The group engaged in a spirited discussion about the proposed committees, and came up with the following revisions:

1. **Human Resources:** During this discussion, the group concluded that *providing a range of services and incentives to local employers was critical to getting them to prioritize hiring residents of BeltLine neighborhoods*. The group considered developing an additional committee (“Business Retention”), but finally agreed to the following:
  - Rename the subcommittee “Employer Services”
  - Include the issues and questions described above in “Human Resources”
  - Also include a focus on business retention and development, especially for small and mid-sized business. Focus on businesses embracing the value of the BeltLine not just because “it’s cool,” but because locating near the BeltLine provides access to a range of services that help build their bottom-lines.
  - Consider a wider group of employer services including but not limited to *marketing, back office services, collective contracting, etc.*, all of which have been identified as functions that smaller businesses can struggle with.
  - Consider methods for accessing the input of small/mid-sized businesses into this discussion, including *meeting times after work/on weekends, focus groups and surveys*.
2. **Marketing:** In general, the group agreed with the title and focus of this subcommittee. The following suggestions were offered:
  - The value proposition of the BeltLine and hiring locally should be articulated in multiple terms, including its link to *smart growth principles (live/work/play), environmental quality, services available to businesses located on the BeltLine, and alignment with a range of “local” movements*.
  - “Making the Case:” We need to clarify and develop a communications strategy around what we are “making the case” for. Von N’kosi referenced the experience of the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership’s Mixed Income Communities Initiative and its “Making the Case” report. Are we arguing for the value of the BeltLine in general, the importance of local hiring by BeltLine businesses, the economic

empowerment of BeltLine n'hood residents, or some combination? How do we articulate this clearly and convincingly, and to which audiences?

3. **Program/Policy Models:** The group had a few suggestions for this subcommittee, including the following:
  - *Funding* will be a critical component to the implementation of this multi-faceted initiative. What types of funders, both local and national, have shown interest in similar efforts? Can dollars already committed to the Atlanta BeltLine (i.e. bond funds) be dedicated to this effort? What kind of business model will be most likely to contribute to the financial sustainability of our efforts?
  - There are already several similar efforts focusing on various aspects of workforce development in play around Atlanta. It will be important to stay abreast of these efforts to work against duplication and promote coordination and the leverage of all our collective assets.
  
4. **Workforce Development:** The discussion about this subcommittee surfaced the following recommendations:
  - Rename the subcommittee “Human Capital Development.”
  - Include a focus on the *demographic and economic changes* happening in BeltLine neighborhoods currently and in the future. Ensure that whatever model (business services or human capital) we develop is flexible and able to evolve in tandem.
  - Make sure the discussion about human capital development takes into consideration the two categories of jobs around the BeltLine: *short-term construction jobs* and *on-going economic opportunities*.

#### General Comments

The group had a spirited discussion that included several issues not specific to the subcommittee structure and content. The issues and challenges raised are described below:

1. **It will be critical to engage, include and plan for small and medium-sized businesses around the Atlanta BeltLine:** Most of the employers currently engaged in this initiative are larger, anchor employers like Piedmont Hospital, GA Power, Wells Fargo and Whole Foods. However, the employers most likely to benefit from the employer services discussed above are small and medium-sized businesses. Specific challenges and opportunities include the following:

- How can we partner with the Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce in this recruitment effort?
  - How can we clean and refine available ADA data about existing businesses to get a more accurate picture of who we'd like to target?
  - Are there other sources of this data, for example GA Power? Is this data proprietary, or can we access it below the summary level?
  - How can we paint a picture of the businesses around the BeltLine by size, sector and region?
  - Many smaller businesses have had to let employees go and are working harder than ever with less. Owners don't have a lot of time for extra meetings. How can we both *get their input on the front-end while making sure we have enough developed to show that there will be added value for them if they participate?*
2. **Non-profits should be seen as employers, not just service providers.**
  3. **We need an open structure for cross-committee collaboration:** Many of the issues we will be grappling with are relevant to multiple committees. How can we structure a process that will allow folks to get targeted while encouraging communication and collaboration across committees? Will communicating at the larger group meetings be enough?
  4. **We need to more fully engage the Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. in this process to ensure we align with and leverage their efforts and resources.** This could include but not be limited to the following:
    - How do our efforts coordinate with the *Community Benefits Agreement* developed by ABI?
    - How do our efforts coordinate with the *Equitable Development Plan* developed by ABI?
    - How do our efforts coordinate with existing or future *economic development initiatives/plans* developed by the ABI?

### Conclusion and Next Steps

Each subcommittee met at the end of our larger group meeting. During this time, they identified a meeting date in April, began developing a preliminary agenda for this meeting, and discussed potential needs (i.e. data, additional expertise or stakeholder participation, research, etc.). The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership will coordinate with each subcommittee to try to ensure these needs get met.

Valarie Wilson, the Partnership's Executive Director, closed with an update from her recent trip to Washington D.C. While in D.C., she met with Derek Douglas, head of the

Office of Urban Affairs at the White House to pitch the idea of the Atlanta BeltLine as a “living laboratory” for many of the principles and initiatives in urban revitalization pushed by the Obama administration. Mr. Douglas was intrigued by the concept, and requested that Val and her team put together a draft proposal for how the federal government could engage with the BeltLine around a range of smart growth, ped/transit, open space, affordable housing and economic empowerment issues. Mr. Douglas expressed interest in coming to Atlanta with his team in the fall for a site visit.

Valarie stated that she saw the ABEAG initiative as one of the key components of this “living laboratory” effort. In the same way that the Ford Foundation has become actively engaged in supporting the Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative as a national model for bringing the CLT movement to scale, she believes that the ABEAG initiative will draw federal (and other national) interest as a model for place-based economic and workforce development.

Finally, the group committed to a meeting in May 2011, and Rob Brawner from the Partnership agreed to send a Doodle to schedule it.