Atlanta BeltLine Employment Advisory Group January 30th, 2012 Meeting Notes

Participants:
- Aaron Uddin, *Blue Earth Network*
- Alvetta Thomas, *Atlanta Technical College*
- Andrea Harper, *Georgia Department of Labor*
- Angele Hawkins, *New Hope Enterprises*
- Beth McMillan, *Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.*
- Burrell Billingslea, *Fulton County Workforce Development (retired)*
- Charles Edwards, *Atlanta Center for Self-Sufficiency*
- Chuck Meadows, *Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce*
- Dameon Daniels, *The Center for Working Families*
- Derrick Duckworth, *Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce*
- Elke Davidson, *Davidson Consulting*
- Gary Harris, *Center for Sustainable Communities*

- Jon Effron, *Keller Williams Realty*
- Katina Raines, *Georgia Department of Labor*
- Kay Wallace, *STAND-UP/TRADE-UP*
- LaNovia Meuse, *Junior Achievement Georgia*
- Liz Coyle, *BeltLine Network, Atlanta BeltLine Chamber of Commerce*
- Nancy Flake Johnson, *Urban League of Greater Atlanta*
- Richie Shapiro, *ProLogistix*
- Rob Brawner, *Atlanta BeltLine Partnership*
- Sarah Brookes, *Emory University*
- Shirley Harris, *Atlanta Workforce Development Agency*
- Tasha Brimmer-Taylor, *Atlanta Public Schools*
- Tom Bickes, *EmployBridge*
- Valarie Wilson, *Atlanta BeltLine Partnership*
- Warren Pincombe, *Atlanta Technical College*

Introduction/Framing

Rob Brawner of the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership began the meeting by sharing a draft model of the work that the group has been engaged in and will need to be engaged in moving forward (see attached); the model, while preliminary, should provide the group with a framework to understand the connections between the range of efforts by various committees, staff and other partners.

Elke Davidson next talked about the *lifecycle of a working group,* and potential challenges for groups when they are transitioning from one phase of work to another. She reminded participants that they had hit a transition point several months ago when the group moved from *problem definition at the large group level* to *creating committees to tackle tangible pieces of work.* The group is now at another point of transition, she suggested: moving from *proposing and designing potential strategies* to *executing concrete, real-time initiatives.* Many groups have difficulty making this transition, and participants confirmed that they had all been part of planning efforts that had fallen apart at this juncture. Elke affirmed that **two concrete pieces of work had surfaced from the efforts of the committees over the last several months, and indicated that one key goal of today's meeting would be to determine how to best get them done. The**

pieces of work include *the convening of the first three focus groups for the construction sector,* **and** *designing the workforce development pilot projects in construction and health care.*

The meeting was loosely organized around report-outs from the various committees, described in the sections below.

Executive Committee

Charles Edwards from the Center for Self-Sufficiency provided the overview of the Executive Committee meeting. Charles reported that the EC is made up of himself, David Jackson from TCFWFI, Derrick Duckworth from the BeltLine Chamber of Commerce, Willie Palmer from GA Power, Burrell Billingslea formerly with the Fulton County WDA and Dr. Alvetta Thomas from Atlanta Metro Tech.

The role of the EC is the following:

➢ Provide strategic guidance and vet proposed process and program recommendations;

➢ Focus on soliciting BeltLine business' input and understanding their needs;

➢ Develop a value-proposition for our efforts and communicate to business

➢ Develop the framework for a Business Advisory Council (BAC) as a strategy for ensuring BeltLine business participation.

➢ Fund development as needed.

Charles then described the structure of the BAC developed by the Executive Committee at their first meeting:

1. **The BAC shall have 15 members:** 5 anchor employers, 5 medium-sized employers, and 5 small employers. Membership should reflect the diversity of BeltLine businesses by sector if possible.

2. **The first phase of recruitment should be for the 5 anchor employees for the following reasons**: they will be able to help identify medium and small-sized businesses, their participation will legitimize the BAC and help with recruitment, and we may be able to leverage their procurement process to create labor demand amongst medium and small employers around the BeltLine.

3. **The BAC should be positioned as an ad-hoc committee of the BeltLine Chamber of Commerce**. This will allow us to combine recruitment efforts, leveraging the Chambers networks and allowing the Chamber to market itself as an opportunity for local businesses to influence the BeltLine.

At this point in the discussion, Chuck Meadows from the Metro Atlanta Chamber began to discuss the Metro Chamber's efforts in workforce development. Their work is focused regionally, and is primarily organized around the technology sector, particularly Health IT. He reported that the Metro Chamber does have a history of working with local chambers (i.e. DeKalb and Gwinnett), but that it does so on a case-by-case basis. He indicated an interest in partnering with the newly-formed BeltLine Chamber, and also stated that **he would be able to share data on Chamber members by zip-code.** Elke confirmed that this establishment-level data would be helpful to the EAG, and committed to getting Chuck the zip-codes that make up the ½ mile donut on each side of the BeltLine that is the primary focus of this effort.

The group next had a discussion about whether its mission included *attracting and growing businesses around the BeltLine* as well as *maximizing the opportunities for local BeltLine residents to access jobs in businesses around the BeltLine.* After a robust discussion, **the group confirmed that while it is an important task, attracting and/or growing businesses around the BeltLine is outside the goals of the Employment Advisory Group.** The group confirmed that ABI and Invest Atlanta (formerly the Atlanta Development Authority) should be developing and implementing a targeted economic development strategy for BeltLine neighborhoods. Valarie Wilson, the E.D. of the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, committed to sitting down with Brian McGowan, President and CEO of Invest Atlanta, to discuss the organization's strategy relative to these issues.

Data Committee

Elke Davidson reported that she had made contact with Katina Raines of the GA Dept. of Labor, a new member of the Human Capital Committee. Katina had identified several resources at DOL that could be helpful in our efforts, particularly in our desire to get the

establishment-level data (name of business, contact info, sector, size) that we will need to populate our focus groups and implement and market our pilot projects:

> **Active Accounts:** Every business over 2 (or 3?) employees in GA must pay into the state unemployment fund. In order to do this, they must sign up with the Dept. of Labor, setting up an "active account." All businesses that sign up for these accounts are asked a series of standard questions, including the number of employees, their sector, and contact information. Katina is exploring if and how DOL might be able to provide access to this information by zip-code; this would transform our capacity to analyze the current businesses around the BeltLine, design services for them, recruit for a range of types of engagement, and market our final programs.

> **Career Centers:** In the metro area, DOL has 2 career centers: South and North Metro. These centers serve as hubs for a variety of D of L services, and each has an **Employer Committee.** These Committees may be useful as we are recruiting for the Business Advisory Committee as well as our focus groups. Katina will identify the jurisdictional boundaries for each Center, and connect us to the appropriate staff as relevant.

Elke next asked for additional volunteers to support our data efforts, and Janelle Williams from the Center for Working Families, Inc. agreed to participate. We have a meeting in mid-March set up with Katina and Faye Duzan from DOL's Dept. of Workforce Statistics and Economic Research.

The group discussed the possibility of accessing various proprietary sources of data describing businesses at the establishment level (Info USA, Dunn and Bradstreet, etc.). We discussed our budget limitations in this regard, and Tom Bickes, the President of EmployBridge, suggested that we might be able to negotiate free access to the data if we could frame it as a pilot opportunity for the companies. What value proposition could we offer Info USA in working with us? What could they learn from working with us that they could apply to new markets or use to create new opportunities?

Human Capital

Kay Wallace from STAND-UP next presented on the work of the Human Capital Committee. The Committee touched on several key issues and opportunities, including the following:

1. **Clarify targeted sectors for pilot projects:** Participants confirmed that EAG should pursue a pilot project in the construction sector. When discussing health care, the other potential pilot sector, the group recommended a more refined approach, and decided health should be broken into 4 sub-categories:

   ➢ **Health care providers:** The group wants to focus on entry-level jobs that are at the bottom of identified career ladders and can serve as a jumping-off point for residents seeking to grow in a health-related field (i.e. CNA, medical tech, etc.). The group is interested in asking local health-care businesses – as well as pursuing state and national sources of data like the GA and federal Dept's of Labor, trade associations in the medical field, etc. - to identify current and future trends in hiring. Given the number of large-scale health care employers around the BeltLine, this will likely be our first pilot effort within health care.

   ➢ **Environmental health:** Participants reported that they are seeing a coming trend in federal funding for training in environmental health remediation jobs like lead abatement and asbestos removal, particularly from the EPA. The group is interested in confirming this through research on federal funding and sectoral projections around job growth.

   ➢ **Health Information Technology/Health Infomatics:** There is confirmed growth in health IT jobs both regionally and state-wide, and there are state and federal initiatives supporting growth in this arena linked to the computerization of patients' medical records. The group agreed to explore this option as well.

   ➢ **Biotech:** This area was raised because of the biotech focus at Ft. McPherson, as well as recent state-level efforts to grow the biotech industry in Georgia. It remains an area of interest, but will need more background research to confirm its suitability in terms of training required and growth potential.

2. **Link construction pilot to the range of publicly and privately-funded large-scale construction projects adjacent to the BeltLine:** These projects will provide demand for trained, local workers, and include:

   ➢ Renovation of Fort McPherson

   ➢ City Hall East/Ponce City Market

   ➢ Construction of the multi-modal transit hub in downtown Atlanta

   ➢ New international hangar at the airport

   ➢ Downtown street-car project

   ➢ Better Building Challenge – green retrofits of commercial buildings in the downtown core

> ➢ Emerald Cities green retrofit project for MUSH buildings (medical, universities, schools and hospitals)

> ➢ National Center for Civil and Human Rights

> ➢ City of Atlanta residential retrofit project funded by DOE and GA Power

3. **Programs should be tailored to address the needs of a range of populations:** The group identified four key populations that EAG may seek to support, and affirmed that programs and policies will vary depending on which category a job-seeker falls into:

   a. *Hard to place candidates with barriers to employment*: Barriers could include prison records, drug and alcohol issues, lack of basic academic skills, lack of child-care, lack of transportation, etc.

   b. *Candidates with need for training*: Candidates with few or no barriers, but who need either high, medium or low levels of training for specific job types.

   c. *Candidates with no need for training but who could benefit from matching and placement services*: Candidates who are ready to work from both a soft and hard-skills perspective.

   d. *Candidates who are already in jobs but would benefit from growing within their field*: Whether the candidates are underemployed or merely looking to grow within their field, programs should be explored to address the already employed as well.

4. **Evaluation and measurement issues:** The group looked at a range of measurement and tracking issues, including:

   a. **Track outcomes across populations served:** The group emphasized the importance of developing outcomes across multiple groups. For example, outcomes should be tracked for *new hires* as well as *existing workers that move up a job ladder as a result of training*. In addition, outcomes should be tracked for *jobs that require training to access*, as well as for *jobs secured as a result of simple placement/matching activity*.

   b. **Time-frame for measurement:** The group also emphasized the need to identify a time frame for defining success: if a resident is trained and placed but doesn't have the job for more than 6 weeks, is that considered successful? As an example to explore further, Angele Hawkins from New Hope Enterprises reported that her group uses the national STRIVE model which uses a 2-yr. time frame for evaluation of their CNA training efforts.

c. **Geographic focus:** Currently, the boundaries are set at ½ mile stretching from each side of the path of the BeltLine, for a total 1 mile band around the corridor; census tracts with a minimum of 50% of their population in this donut are included. Instead, the group considered developing a *several tiered system.* The primary tier would be residents from the identified BeltLine neighborhoods, secondary would be city of Atlanta, third would be Fulton County, and fourth beyond Fulton County. This would be important to increase our chances of success (i.e. any job generated around the BeltLine, regardless of who takes it, becomes a measure of success), as well as to align with the geographic focus of existing workforce development programs.

The Human Capital Committee also identified a seven-part process for developing our pilot projects; this process should apply regardless of the sector being addressed. Elke reviewed this process for the larger group, and encouraged them to think about the best way to take action on them – is this a set of activities we can ask Committee members to engage in? Do we need further staff support? What combination of volunteer and staff resources will be best to implement the following:

1. **Identifying employers:** Address challenges and combine existing data describing businesses around the BeltLine (i.e. business license, ARC, Dept. of Labor, proprietary, etc.). Build partnerships with large-scale employers (GA Power, Piedmont, Atlanta Medical, Morehouse Medical, Wells Fargo, Whole Foods, etc.).

2. **Identifying key job categories:** This will involve working with local businesses, local/state/federal data, trade association data, etc. to identify the jobs with growth potential we are interested in training, placing and tracking.

3. **Recruitment:** Strategies linked to identifying key populations within BeltLine neighborhoods by characteristic (income level, barriers to employment, recent high school graduates, mid-career, etc.), and designing programs and policies to link these residents to training and placement pipelines.

4. **Training:** Strategies linked to existing training programs, new training programs, revised training programs, creation of partnerships between training programs, etc. Issues include quality assurance, funding, links to employers, etc.

5. **Addressing barriers:** Barriers include but are not limited to prison background, drug and alcohol issues, remedial education needs, child-care, transportation, etc.

How do we build up-front programs and on-going support to address these issues that can work against stable employment for hard to employ populations?

6. **Matching/placement:** For both candidates that do and do not come through workforce training programs, strategies linked to job matching and placement.

7. **Measurement:** What metrics do we use? Number of candidates completing training? Number of candidates employed (BeltLine/COA/Fulton Co./other?)? Length of time employed? Measurement linked to *self-sufficiency* (employment as a proxy for financial sustainability – can we assume if one then the other? Household income – can we parse what is a function of new/higher-income households vs. increases in income of existing households)? Time-frame for measurement? Other?

Focus Groups

Participants next had a spirited conversation about focus groups. As mentioned earlier, the next phase of qualitative information gatherings is a series of focus groups with BeltLine businesses in the health care provider and construction industries. Charles Edwards expressed concern about using focus groups to *influence the upfront design* of programs and policies as opposed to *testing potential designs* with potential users. After the group dug into these issues, participants agreed that there was value in combining the information we have or will get from ARC, Dept. of Labor and the Business Advisory Council with information solicited in focus group with local businesses. This discussion led to a larger conversation about a range of topics linked to mission, target audiences, definitions of success and potential in-kind resources for the EAG to explore. Issues raised included the following:

- ➤ **Clarify basic value-proposition of the EAG's work:** Several newer members wanted a succinct description of the goal of the EAG's work, and the following model was offered and accepted:

WORKERS
(BeltLine residents)

**PROVIDE TRAINING
ADDRESS BARRIERS
FACILITATE PLACEMENT**

JOBS
(BeltLine businesses)

- ➤ **Define and prioritize categories of success:** The group confirmed that there were three levels of potential success for our work, listed in order of priority below:
    1. BeltLine resident takes a job in a BeltLine business.
    2. Currently unemployed BeltLine resident takes a job in a non-BeltLine business somewhere else in Atlanta or the region.
    3. BeltLine business fills a job with a non-BeltLine resident.

    These 3 definitions of success reflect the fact that the EAG is seeking to *promote financial self-sufficiency among BeltLine residents, enable BeltLine businesses to survive and thrive by providing qualified, productive applicants,* and *foster a live/work/play environment that will reduce auto traffic, limit carbon emissions and provide clean air.*

- ➤ **Additional Dept. of Labor resources:** Staff from the GA Dept. of Labor confirmed that they can provide *customized training and recruitment services* for a range of targeted industries and firms. We need to explore if and how EAG can access these services in a way that provides value beyond what BeltLine residents and businesses can already access from DOL. In addition, DOL staff reported that their offices (Career Centers?) can be used as an HR facility for recruiting businesses (i.e. place for applicants to submit info, take assessments, get interviewed, etc.). Can this be useful to the EAG?

- ➤ **Focus groups:** Participants emphasized that the focus groups can be part of our strategy to engage businesses, and that they can provide an example of the access to BeltLine planners that membership in the BeltLine Chamber can provide.

Group members stated that large scale employers like Piedmont Hospital have an incentive to participate because they have identified traffic congestion (at least partly due to commuting employees) as a key barrier to their sustainability. Finally, **Atlanta Tech volunteered to provide space and food for the focus groups when they are scheduled.**

Action Steps

Elke ended the meeting by identifying all the action steps the group had identified to be completed before the next meeting. These actions included the following:

1. **Business Advisory Council:** Confirm fifth anchor employer (Kroger vs. Home Depot), invite first 5 members, and convene first BAC meeting.

2. **Metro Chamber data resource:** Contact Chuck Meadows to access establishment-level data by census-tract; confirm info is not proprietary.

3. **Invest Atlanta contact:** Valarie Wilson will meet with Brian McGowen to explore ADA/ABI economic development strategies linked to the BeltLine.

4. **Dept. of Labor data:** Elke and Janelle Williams from TCFWFI will meet with Katina Raines and Faye Duzon to determine how to access relevant DOL data.

5. **Proprietary data sources:** Explore whether proprietary data providers would be willing to provide data on BeltLine businesses for free on a pilot basis.

6. **Develop "pipeline" matrixes:** Using the Stand-Up matrix for green construction jobs training and placement as a model, develop pipelines for *health-care* and *general construction.*

7. **EAG asset map:** Develop an asset map of EAG members with a focus on workforce developers and educational institutions.

8. **Reconstitute the Employer Services Committee:** Tasha Brimmer-Taylor (APS) and Angele Hawkins (New Hope Enterprises) volunteered to work with Elke and Rob in interviewing private sector temporary staffing companies; this info will be used to help design the HR services we may provide to BeltLine businesses. Convene meeting with Beth Herman from Manpower as our first step.