In this issue

CQGRD and the Beltline

The Beltline provides unique opportunities for promoting quality growth, at a scale that will affect not only the immediate neighborhoods and city, but also the metropolitan region as a whole. The 22-mile corridor encircling downtown Atlanta is designed to create a network of parks, multiuse trails and transit. In turn, these infrastructure improvements provide new opportunities for economic and neighborhood redevelopment, as well as challenges to do so in ways that enhance the character, connectivity, and livability of neighborhoods and the city. The scale and configuration of the Beltline, imbedded as it is in 45 neighborhoods, requires the development of new tools of analysis, design, and synthesis if we are going to effectively plan for and implement this vision.

Recognizing this need, the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) has worked on a wide range of Beltline projects. With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Atlanta Partnership, three projects have explored the health impacts of developments related to the Beltline. In 2005, CQGRD began its first BeltLine Health Impact Assessment (HIA). Using a variety of methods to assess the potential health impacts, the research team concluded that the BeltLine would have a largely positive affect on the health of Atlantans but that these could be enhanced by accelerating the BeltLine implementation and explicitly prioritizing health outcomes in funding decisions and development review. In 2007, CQGRD conducted an HIA of the neighborhoods surrounding Piedmont Hospital, the largest employer located directly on the Beltline.

(Continued on page 4)
Aerotropolis Health Impact Assessment Enters Appraisal Phase

CQGRD is conducting a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on redevelopment plans for the site of the former Hapeville Ford Assembly Plant in Hapeville, GA. The assembly plant is to be redeveloped as ‘Aerotropolis Atlanta’, with over 6.5 million square feet of office, hotel, shopping and airport parking facilities, as well as a solar energy component. CQGRD is about halfway through the HIA, responding to comments on the scoping phase and developing the appraisal. HIA follows six basic steps – screening, scoping, appraisal, recommendations, dissemination, and monitoring and evaluation.

Researchers developed a study area profile by geography, infrastructure and land use, demographics, and health status. They found a diverse community with elevated rates of death, illness, and emergency department usage. Heart disease, stroke, HIV, and homicide were the leading causes of death, although there was distinct geographic clustering of these causes in different parts of the study area. They also summarized proceedings from the Advisory Committee, which participated in visioning and scoping exercises. According to stakeholders, tax revenue, economic stability, connectivity, and availability of public and commercial services must be present in order to create a safe, walkable, interactive community with access to jobs and education, access to healthy food, and a strong sense of social support.

Based on the community demographic and health profile and input from community representatives, CQGRD is investigating potential health effects through connectivity, access to retail, community development and revitalization, access to jobs, trip generation, traffic safety, traffic emissions, proximity to airports, brownfields, social capital, and noise. Geographic boundaries of the study area have been refined.

Next, CQGRD will conduct a Quality Growth Audit and develop latent demand scores for walking and bicycling. A questionnaire will be distributed to stakeholders on the topics listed above. Training and technical assistance activities are also planned for the appraisal period. This will include a HIA training session for key staff and executives of decision-making entities which impact the physical environment through planning and construction.

Of related interest, Georgia Tech Professors Bert Bras (Mechanical Engineering), Nancey Green Leigh, and Jiawen Yang (both from City and Regional Planning) are also studying the redevelopment potential of the Ford Assembly plant, assessing the triple bottom line benefits of different mobility and transport options for the site, surrounding neighborhoods, the adjacent Atlanta airport, and the regional transportation system, coupled with different energy generation and industrial co-location options.

Jason Barringer, Research Scientist

Jason Barringer, Research Scientist II at CQGRD, will be leaving the center after almost 6 years to help raise he and his wife Angela’s first child, due in August 2011. Jason started work for CQGRD after earning his Masters in City and Regional Planning from Georgia Tech. During his tenure at CQGRD Jason has contributed significantly to its emergence as a nationally recognized and widely respected research entity. Jason has been instrumental in the Center’s groundbreaking work on megaregions, health impact assessments and spatial planning. In addition he has led a number of projects focusing on communities in Georgia bringing a strong analytical background to those efforts. One example is his work employing spatial planning in examining the future growth and development of Troup County. Jason’s work on population forecasts for the Georgia coast is used in decisions to allocate water resources to coastal cities. Jason is also an avid runner and cyclist and set a standard in both these undertakings which earned him the distinction of being CQGRD staff member most committed to physical activity. We are indebted to Jason and look forward to adding a new member to the CQGRD family.
Financing Tools for Urban Regeneration Projects

Dr. Jin Nam, a former visiting scholar at CQGRD, Dr. Myungje Woo, and Dr. Catherine L. Ross have published a study on the analysis of U.S. Tax Increment Financing (TIF; also known as “TAD”) statues and case law. The study, published in the Journal of Korea Planners Association, looked at 50 TIF statues and 29 case laws in the U.S. focusing on the revenue sources of TIF and major issues related to legal challenges. Also, the paper provides policy implications for the application of TIF for urban regeneration projects in Korea where most development projects in blighted areas are currently financed by the private sector.

Smart City Logistics

City logistics can be defined as any service contributing to an optimized management of the movement of goods within cities and providing innovative response to customer demands. Creative experiments to increase the efficiency and environmental sustainability of goods movement’s have recently surged. These experiments involve transport operators, commercial real estate developers, major retailers, local governments and many start-up companies. In German cities, DHL has implemented a ubiquitous network of ‘packstations’ – automated parcel pickup boxes for products bought online. Underground municipal parking facilities in central Paris accommodate small logistics terminals used by providers that run last-mile deliveries with electrically assisted ‘cargocycles.’ An urban consolidation center in Yokohama, Japan, manages all deliveries to the upscale retail area of Motomachi using natural gas trucks. Very low noise delivery vehicles and handling equipment have been designed and manufactured by a Dutch government funded company and are being introduced in many urban European trucking markets. With excellent social and environmental results, these schemes provide new directions for more sustainable city logistics activities around the world. However, here at CQGRD we argue that policy-makers should not focus only on these high tech costly solutions designed for city centers. Metropolitan wide issues related to freight transportation remain crucial, such as highway congestion, sprawling patterns of logistics facilities, air pollution, community sensitive design of suburban freight facilities, or the lack of trained personnel for delivery operations. Contact laetitia.dablanc@coa.gatech.edu
Now, CQGRD is initiating a HIA study of the Northeast Trail, the first extensive section of the BeltLine trail system to be built to final design standards.

CQGRD is also working with the BeltLine Tax Allocation District Advisory Committee (TADAC) to help it develop performance metrics related to future BeltLine projects. With BeltLine-related developments expected to cost $2.8 billion over 25 years, being able to assess progress towards goals such as improving social equity and quality of life will be crucial. The enabling legislation for the BeltLine requires these changes to be evaluated through a decision support tool (DST). The DST will organize relevant information, spatially resolve actions of the plan, predict impacts, inform decision making, and generate performance measures and other metrics to help ensure accountability for effective and equitable implementation of the BeltLine. CQGRD began helping TADAC develop guidelines for the DST in 2008, and recently was selected through a competitive process to design and assist in implementation of the DST.

Finally, CQGRD is also working with property owners adjacent to the Beltline who seek to promote the highest quality design through a process of inquiry and effective engagement of neighbors and stakeholders early in the design process. This project, looking at properties located at the intersection of Monroe and 10th Streets and adjacent to Piedmont Park, will bring together the property owners and the community to explore opportunities and challenges of Beltline re-development, thereby hopefully building a model for future redevelopment efforts.

The Beltline process has provided significant opportunities for research that supports the mission of the CQGRD, the needs of Beltline planners and designers, and the concerns and hopes of the various stakeholders. It is our aspiration that this CQGRD research will help produce, disseminate, and implement ideas for a more sustainable, equitable, and superior quality of life on the Beltline, through sound planning, policy, and design.

---

Pew Health Impact Project Meeting

Dr. Catherine Ross led the CQGRD team to Washington D.C. for the first annual Health Impact Project Grantee Meeting, January 25 and 26. The meeting brought current grantees together with health impact assessment (HIA) practitioners and experts from around the country. Grantees shared their experiences and identified successful strategies in community engagement, data collection, and outreach to decision-makers. Dr. Michael Elliott presented evaluation methodology that could be used to evaluate HIA results. Both Elliott and Ross participated in a video project conceived by the Health Impact Project, while research scientists Jason Barringer and Michelle Marcus participated in strategy sessions. CQGRD is currently acting on two grants: an HIA of the Atlanta Aerotropolis Brownfield Redevelopment Project at the former Ford assembly plant in Hapeville, and an HIA of Atlanta Regional Plan 2040. The Health Impact Project is an initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Notable Quote

Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta
to WBEZ, a Chicago radio station, 3/4/11

“My goal is to make Atlanta the logistics hub for the western hemisphere, which is why I’m working to deepen the port in Savannah. We have the fastest growing port on the eastern seaboard, the fourth largest port in the United States.”

“Our job - and my job as mayor - is to be number one among southeastern cities because we’re moving to a world where you’re going to have mega-regions. So, you will have a Chicago that is the center of the Midwestern region, New York will maintain its dominance, and my view is that Atlanta will be the dominant force of the southeast. You’re really going to have about eight or ten mega-regions that will really determine the flow and growth of GDP in the United States.”