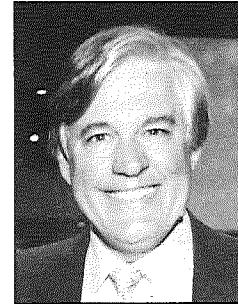


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**WHAT'S NEXT
FOR REGION?**
ARC Chairman Tad
Leithead talks plans
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2C

SPECIAL SECTION

Section C

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ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

2011 STATE OF THE REGION

Plan 2040 sets path for Atlanta region

By **Tonya Layman**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Communities focus on livability, walkability

By Tonya Layman
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ARC's Livable Centers Initiative has provided the impetus for local communities to invest in town and activity centers. As a result, the region is seeing the emergence of a more walkable, livable region that provides more options for people to live closer to where they work and play.

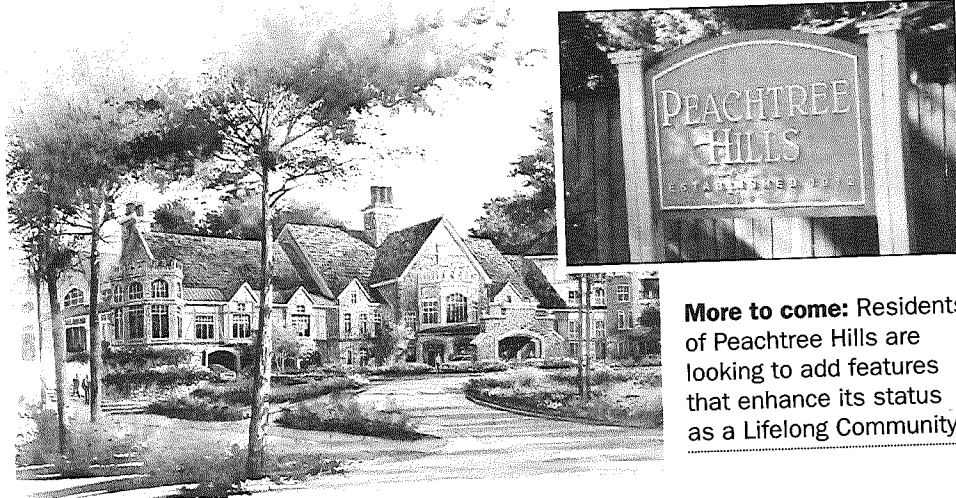
Over the last decade, the area has experienced a transformation in terms of its development patterns, said ARC Land Use Division Chief Dan Reuter.

"In the late '90s around metro Atlanta, we didn't have a lot of new, innovative, mixed-use projects. Now you look around and those types of projects are all over the city," he said.

A complement to LCI is ARC's Lifelong Communities initiative. As the region prepares for the aging of the baby boomer generation, the Lifelong Communities initiative is helping communities focus on expanding housing and transportation options, community design and programs to encourage healthy living and expand access to services for older adults.

"We are trying to integrate the needs of older adults into all areas of development," said Laura Keyes, manager of ARC's community development unit in the aging division.

The region's residents age 65 years and older will more than double by 2040. Meeting the needs of a changing population requires a built environment, services and supportive transportation systems that



More to come: Residents of Peachtree Hills are looking to add features that enhance its status as a Lifelong Community.

allow all residents to be active, productive and independent.

In a recent survey, 83 percent of the region's 55 and over population said they plan to remain in their community as long as possible.

But, many older adults, after raising their children, paying their mortgage and contributing to neighborhood, civic and religious organizations find it difficult, or even impossible, to stay.

"Finding this unacceptable, local governments, businesses and nonprofit organizations are coming together to create communities that work for a lifetime," Keyes said.

This initiative is not just for serving the elderly. ARC is trying to create a place individuals can live throughout their lifetime.

"While boomers and older adults want walkable communities and access to parks and having healthy communities, they aren't the only ones. Studies have shown that this is something that millennials want, as well," Keyes said.

Local Lifelong Community groups are popping up all over the region.

In addition to completing a walkability assessment, Lifelong Mableton has adopted a form-based code that will encourage growth and development in the heart of Mableton. New amenities are a farmer's market and intergenerational community garden located in the envisioned town square and the creation of nutrition and preventive health classes, all with the goal of enhancing a healthy lifestyle.

In early 2011, the Clayton County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to support Lifelong Community principles and established the Lifelong Clayton Steering Committee. The county is undergoing a walkability assessment.

The Atlanta Housing Authority is building ARC's Lifelong Communities principles and other strategies for healthy aging into its renovation of 11 high-rise buildings for seniors and disabled residents.

The Peachtree Hills neighborhood in Buckhead has conducted a community assessment to see how it stacks up as a great neighborhood for young and old.

"This is very exciting and has a lot of potential for our neighborhood," said Jeff Spencer, Peachtree Hills Civic Association board member and Neighborhood Planning Unit representative.

Spencer said he hopes this will help Peachtree Hills return to what a community once was.

"Generations used to stay in the same area but that doesn't happen anymore," he said.

Initial assessments in Peachtree Hills show residents have many features that make it a Lifelong Community, but they are looking at their downfalls, such as a lack of bike lanes, bus shelters, community rooms and nearby assisted-living facilities.

Keyes said Lifelong Communities serve as an economic driver for communities.

"This initiative is a great opportunity for the Atlanta region to redefine itself," she said.