

# Technical Assistance Panel

**Advisory Services to provide the East Point  
Business and Industrial Development  
Authority (BIDA) and the City with Guidance  
and Direction for Revitalization and  
Redevelopment of the Downtown Commons  
Area in East Point, Georgia**



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**Urban Land Institute Atlanta**

Serving Georgia, Alabama, and Eastern Tennessee



## About ULI Atlanta A District Council of the Urban Land Institute

With over 1,000 members throughout the Metropolitan Atlanta area, ULI Atlanta is one of the largest District Councils of the Urban Land Institute (ULI). We bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs. We share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media.

**ULI Mission:** The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

## About the Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. ULI Atlanta brought this same model of technical assistance to the Metropolitan Atlanta area. Local ULI members volunteer their time to serve on panels. In return, they are provided with a unique opportunity to share their skills and experience to improve their community.

Through Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs), ULI Atlanta is able to enhance community leadership, clarify community needs and assets, and advance land use policies that expand economic opportunity and maximize market potential.

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*Robert Newcomer, Chair - ULI Atlanta  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Panel and Project Staff.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Panel Photo .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Assignment.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>East Point Profile.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Study Area Description.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Background and Site Visit.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Some of East Point’s Assets .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Some of East Point’s Challenges.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>PANEL DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Residential.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Design.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Parking.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<b>FINANCE and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Tools for consideration .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>More on Tax Allocation Districts .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Learning from the success of other cities around Georgia .....</i>	<i>21</i>
<b>PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PANELISTS’ PARTING THOUGHTS.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>PHOTOS FROM THE EVENT.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>PANELISTS’ BIOS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: SELIG’S 2006 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN .....</b>	<b>38</b>



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The panel would also like to thank the East Point First Mallalieu United Methodist Church for the use of their meeting space and the assistance of their staff in setting up the room.

## PANEL and PROJECT STAFF

ULI Atlanta would like to thank the panelists, moderators and TAP Committee members for their time, energy and passion for ULI.

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*Panelists (Back, Left to Right): Caleb Racicot; Lyn Menne; Kirby Glaze; Sharon Gay; (front row): Jo Ann Chitty; Jerry Miller; Jan Bozeman; Ellen Mendelsohn; David Haddow; Gordon Mortin*



## INTRODUCTION

The City of East Point and the East Point Business and Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) invited 10 ULI Atlanta volunteer panelists to hold a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) on January 6, 2011.

### **Assignment**

The East Point Business and Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) wished to obtain advice and recommendations for the development of a downtown master plan, specifically regarding the “Commons”. Despite having various assets such as its close proximity to Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson International Airport and downtown Atlanta as well as a MARTA transit line, East Point has had limited success attracting new businesses and residents to revitalize its downtown core. Approximately 6-8 acres of property between Main St. and East Point St. are underutilized and has significant potential to become a destination that will extend downtown’s sense of place and community. BIDA hopes that a successful master plan and development will spur additional development in the downtown central business district.

The key objective of the East Point Business and Industrial Development Authority is to lay ground work for the City to develop a strategy and implementation action plan on the “Commons” property. Land use, partnerships, site control, timelines, and specific action tasks are pivotal items that need to be addressed. BIDA also wished to build consensus towards updating the 2004 LCI study in relation to the creative, cultural, and historical nature of downtown as it applies to current market conditions. The overall questions that BIDA asked the TAP to address focused primarily on land use, market analysis and opportunities, economic development incentives, consensus building, public/ private partnerships, and implementation strategies.

The primary objective of the TAP was to provide BIDA and the City with guidance and direction for revitalization and redevelopment of the downtown Commons area. A panel of experts in the areas of market analysis, brokerage/ assemblage, land planning, finance, engineering, construction and development facilitated the production of a strategic plan. The panel discussion focused on redevelopment issues specific to Downtown East Point.

The panel discussion also focused on the following key objectives for the TAP:

- Develop preliminary options for best use of the land with a view toward making it a catalyst project for future downtown development;
- Discuss and develop a strategy for public-private partnerships to assist with land acquisition, including strategies for negotiating a purchase of the privately-owned property with existing owners or other options for acquiring the property; and
- Discuss strategies for moving forward to redevelop the property and finance the redevelopment.

### East Point Profile

East Point has always been focused on transportation, namely the railroad. With direct access to the airport, MARTA rail, and all major interstates in Metro-Atlanta, the City has always been in an enviable position for growth. However, during the 80s and 90s, population and the number of properties actually declined. With a renewed focus on more in-town living, the beginning of the 2000s saw population increase and new housing construction. East Point was hailed regionally as the next big thing and a diamond in the rough. In 2001, the City created the Camp Creek TAD and the subsequent Camp Creek Marketplace power center and the Camp Creek Business Center were constructed. This TAD is hailed as one of the most successful in Georgia. Development in the downtown area was and has not been as evident.

An LCI Plan was completed in 2004. This plan developed strategies for taking advantage of the area's walkability, access to quality affordable housing and public transportation. A key component of the plan was a signature mixed-use development in the downtown that locals refer to as the Commons. In 2006, a Corridors TAD was created to help jump start projects in downtown and along the City's struggling commercial corridors. This was the time when there was a statewide halt on all TADs, so it never made it to the Fulton County BOE for a vote. (It is hoped that the TAD will go before the BOE for approval in 2011). Also in 2006, the City and the East Point Business and Industrial development Authority solicited bids from developers interested in constructing the signature mixed-use downtown project. Renderings and designs were completed, but due to the shifting economy and administrative issues, the project failed to advance. However, a similar project is very much a priority today and there is tremendous community and political support for such a development. Due to market, land acquisition and leadership constraints, an assemblage of the key public and private entities has not taken place, which brings us to the need for the ULI TAP.



#### Basic demographics for East Point:

- 13.8 square miles.
- Estimated 2010 population is 43,000.
- 5th largest city in Fulton County.
- Average home sales: \$105,737.
- Value of residential building permits: \$96,404-\$124,853.

#### Study Area Description

The discussion focused on redevelopment of a six to eight-acre downtown site known as the "Commons". The panelists' expertise was strong in the areas of development, market analysis, real estate brokerage, property assemblage, urban design, economic development, downtown development, city government, finance, legal and public-private partnerships.

Redevelopment of the two-block “Commons” property is viewed in two phases. Phase one is the larger parcel; its boundaries are West Cleveland Avenue on the south, Main Street on the west, East Ware Avenue on the north and East Point Street (Highway 29) on the east.

The boundaries of phase two are East Ware Avenue on the south, Main Street on the west, East Point Street on the east and East Forrest Avenue on the north.

## Background

Jennifer Fine, Director of Economic Development, for the City of East Point and Steven Rodgers, Chair of the Business and Industrial Development Authority (BIDA), an all-volunteer organization, provided context for the group.

Fine said developing the “Commons” is still one of the city’s top priorities. “The time is right to receive objective third party advice on what we can do differently to make it work.”

Rodgers mentioned that both he and Fine are long-time East Point residents so they have strong personal interest, as well as professionally. “We see many strengths here that drew us to the area,” he said. They are ready to move beyond the concept stage and actually delve into a project.



## Site Visit

Panelists walked the site which has a significant amount of vacant land and derelict buildings. The City of East Point owns about 40% of the land. Other major owners are Grady and the Fulton County library system. The remaining parcels are owned by BIDA, the Downtown Development Authority, MARTA, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and three private owners. (See *Ownership Map, figure 1*).

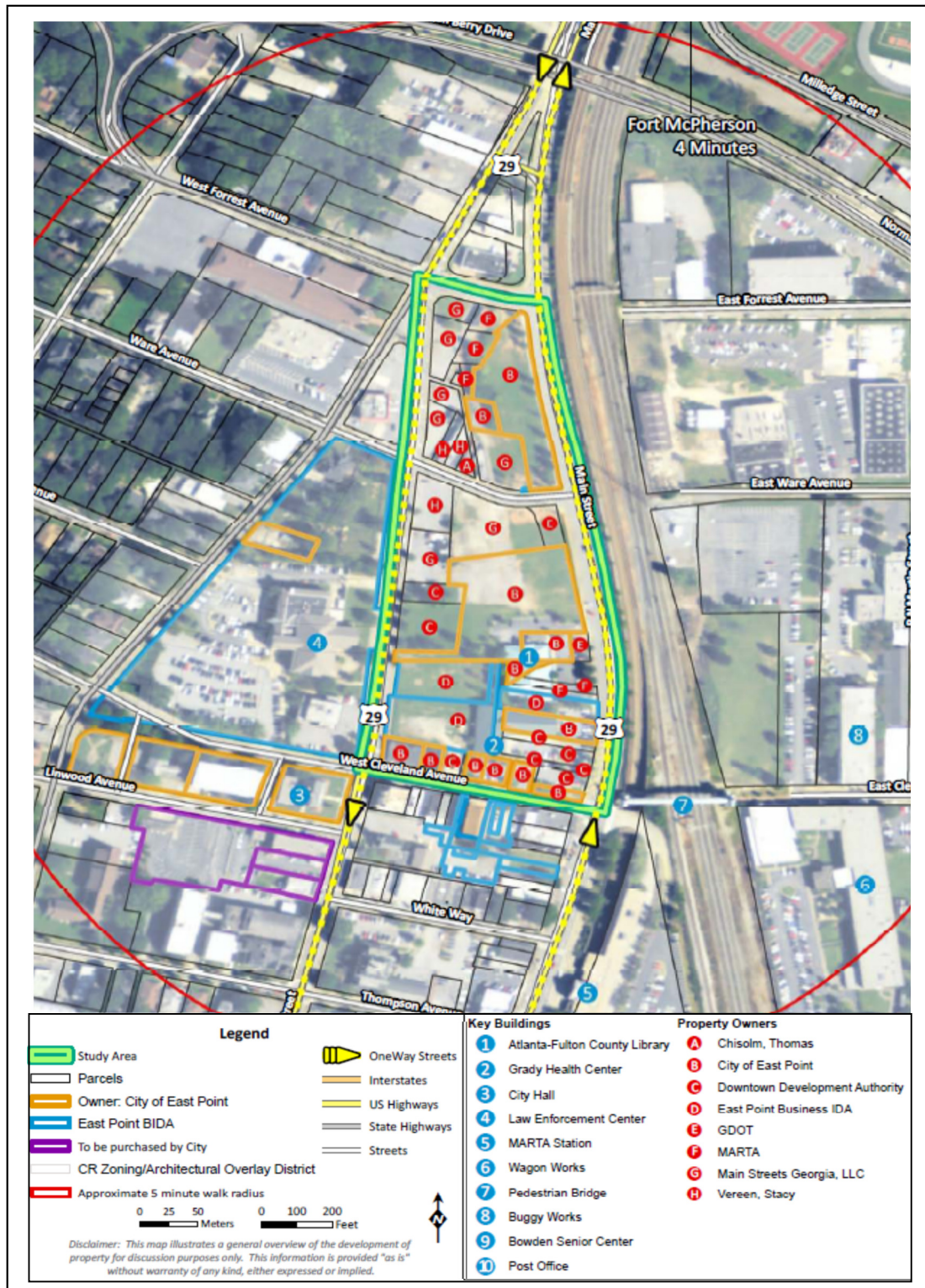
Several abandoned small buildings dot the site surrounded by aging parking lots. MARTA train tracks and station are located nearby.

The city hosts several seasonal public events in a nearby open grassy area. The July 4 celebration attracts the largest crowds with about 17,000 people. East Point would like to incorporate some civic open gathering space in the project that would complement the existing public space.





Ownership Map, figure 1



**Some of East Point's Assets**

- A MARTA station within easy walking distance of downtown and the “Commons” site
- Easy access to the airport and the highway system
- East Point has its own water and power systems, an attractive incentive for development.
- A walkable grid of downtown streets is still in place with historic character, charm and active local retail.
- Some redevelopment and residential efforts have already taken place downtown.
- A strong show of support for new development by some residents and city leaders
- From Selig’s perspective, the “Commons” is physically a good site with no impediments such as topography or wetlands.

**Some of East Point's Challenges**

- The city or BIDA- one entity- must have full site control of both blocks which involve other property owners:
  - GA Department of Transportation (GDOT), phase one
  - MARTA, phase one
  - Main Streets Georgia, LLC, phase one
  - Stacy Vereen, phase one
  - Thomas Chisolm, phase two
- Selling retailers on the potential of East Point, now and in the future. Retailers will want to know that the residential component will change and improve over time as new development occurs.
- A clear vision for what East Point can become must be established and actively marketed. The demographics are not quite strong enough today. This is a pioneering project.
- Poor traffic circulation around the site with a pair of one-way streets which are not conducive for vibrant retail.
- East Point’s lack of political stability and leadership may affect developer and business investment interests. The city is often portrayed in the news in an unfavorable light, perceived as a fractious environment where the mayor and city council are at odds with each other. This environment is not attractive to prospective investors.
- The lack of strong governance and leadership must be fixed. The city must determine if the political will is there to make this development happen. Building consensus in East Point is a necessity and will be challenging because there are so many entities.

- The lack of a champion to lead the project, BIDA meets only once a month and is an all-volunteer organization. It may be unlikely that BIDA will have the resources to hire a qualified point person required to take this project to the finish line.
- While some historic buildings of notable character exist nearby, the area surrounding the site has little sense-of-place.

**\*\*This section intentionally left blank\*\***



## PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion led by moderator Jan Bozeman focused on these specific topics:

- Land use, design, parking, traffic circulation, and site control
- Finance and economic development tools
- Necessary action steps and timeline

### Residential

*Moderator question: What are the community needs, both long and short term? And given such a large inventory of empty housing throughout the region, can East Point support more?*

The panel proposed rental units as a part of the solution. A rental product geared to young professional singles and couples, not college students, is an excellent choice for this market. High quality rental housing could stimulate downtown East Point's rejuvenation with residents with disposable income to spend at restaurants and shops.

The panel had a number of reasons for this recommendation:

Financing is not available for for-sale condos right now and won't be for perhaps another few years. The good news is capital runs in herds and in big chunks. Apartments are a vehicle where investors think they can see returns.

Developing housing is actually developing a lifestyle. East Point has several of the necessary components including close proximity to a MARTA station and a walkable downtown. While Generation Y is expected to stay single longer, apartments are not ideal for young families with children.

The Commons site is not a good place for single-family housing. The site must be developed with more density. New housing nearby can add demand to other uses, particularly retail and commercial development.

Due to the recession condos and single-family homes are now selling at distressed prices throughout the region. This could affect sales in East Point.

Single-family development may never rebound to its previous levels. Near term ownership will remain prohibitive, especially for the younger Generation Y.

During this downturn in Atlanta's housing market, apartment developers, especially those within walking distance to MARTA, will do well. The unrealized potential is still here at this site.

Even though rental units may carry a negative stigma, it will take education to get buy-in from residents, city council and BIDA for quality apartments.

Realistically, there's been a tidal shift in the real estate market since 2007. Rental tends to scare people yet if the new construction is of a desirable quality and price that should eliminate concerns.

Another target market may be empty nesters. There are many people aging in place because there's no other housing options for them, even though they're ready to leave their single-family house behind with all the maintenance and upkeep required. East Point can also capitalize on this trend and attract seniors to apartments or senior living condos.

Several audience members who are East Point residents emphasized how challenging it will be to explain to other residents that we're talking about a higher- end rental product. It does make sense to attract younger professionals to support a walkable urban lifestyle which is exactly what East Point wants and needs. However, selling the idea of apartments may be one of the biggest hurdles.

East Point offers an extensive online survey for residents and has received good response to a previous residential proposal. That response reinforces the community buy-in for new housing near the MARTA station, a grocery and more retail downtown. Survey results are reviewed quarterly and presented to city council.

*Moderator question: What will make downtown East Point a vibrant destination community? Is housing an integral component?*

The panelists agreed that housing is an integral part of making downtown East Point a vibrant destination. They went on to explain how the process had worked successfully in some other metro communities.

Several panelists have been involved with East Point for many years. Some believe East Point still lacks a central core, a soul. Decatur's Court House on the Square is a good example of a downtown with a genuine center. It's a destination where residents can feel a connection and ownership of their city.

Downtown Decatur has tried to bring housing since 1990 yet it took until 2000 for new condos to be built. Sixty percent of which were bought by empty nesters. Over 70% of those buyers lived in the City of Decatur previously, mostly in single-family homes. They all wanted to stay in Decatur and condos were the best place for them to move. The positive trend has built even more foot traffic and created demand for more restaurants and retail.

In Decatur today, there is a good balance of condos, retail and mixed-use development, but city leaders realize they are desperately missing apartments. The last one was built in 1999. Apartments are not necessarily a negative thing. A vibrant downtown needs an attractive rental product for young professionals who will frequent the businesses and services. Decatur is also talking about affordable, work force housing as a critical part of the community.

It could take 10 to 15 years for downtown East Point to take off. It all starts with a clear vision and leadership for creating an authentic sense of place. Actively programming Downtown with cultural events and festivals are also integral to that success.

Historically, downtown Atlanta was known as a convention destination only. They realized housing was needed to make the area become a 24-hour community.

### **Design**

The panel emphasized the importance of the quality of design, especially urban design, to the success of a revitalized downtown.

They noted that the city's goal must be to create an environment that's unique, safe and easy to walk around while preserving existing historic architecture. The challenge will be to create a balance between retaining East Point's walkable, historic downtown and the demands and needs of new retailers.

New buildings must come right up to the sidewalk with active, pedestrian-oriented retail/ office uses on the ground floors. Everything must be designed in a flexible way with plenty of parking in order to attract retailers.

East Point's current zoning code prohibits multi-family units on the ground floor, yet that's what adds character and allows buildings to change with market demand. In many communities where sidewalk retail is desired long-term, but is not viable today, ground floor rental units occupy future retail space, or vice versa.

The panel also pointed out that the design process must be inclusionary. For instance:

When working with a national retailer like a grocery chain, the retailer must be allowed to do what makes them successful. The worst thing would be to bring Publix in and then have it fail due to design, size or layout constraints.

Many of the site parcels are owned by city related entities. If East Point truly wants to activate the site, how will the city set the tone? We think of government buildings as stand-alone, free-standing buildings. Yet government services can actually be a destination for locals, woven into a mixed-use development. City hall could even be located on the second and third floors with retail below to stimulate street level activity.

Do not concentrate too many government functions within the site. This mistake was made in downtown Atlanta where government centers are clustered together in block after block. The result provides no opportunities for needed restaurants mixed in. Government buildings must be integrated with other uses and balanced with services people want.

While East Point needs public green space, creating a large park or public square is unlikely without government support.

Build sidewalks as wide as 30 feet in some places with interesting landscaping to create a series of connected pocket parks. Though it may not seem like a lot of space, those areas can be filled with outdoor cafes, artist markets, farmers markets and public art. However, building an inviting public realm that's well designed right into the streetscape rather than concentrating the open space in one large park is a viable option. This scenario gives you more flexibility and the area is easier to activate than a huge traditional park concentrated in one spot. The area can also be used as an attractive festival space and outdoor promenade when it's closed to cars a few times a year.

Pop up retail is another option for using the vacant retail space at the Commons. This is defined as sellers who pop up unannounced, quickly draw in crowds, and then disappear or morph into something else, delighting consumers with fresh surprises. Pop up retail is starting to happen in Midtown. Artists, musicians and crafts people are setting up temporary shops and booths for a 30-day period. Frequent changes just add interest and diversity to the offerings.

East Point's LCI plan called for a wider boulevard which the panel agreed would be an asset. Stay patient with that vision so that the concept does not get compromised.

*Moderator question: Given the site's one-way streets, how can biking and walking be encouraged?*

The panel agreed that the one-way pair around the site is unnecessary and diminishes the value and quality of the possible development concept.

The New Urbanist term for auto-oriented, one-way streets, like those surrounding the "Commons" is "car sewers" since they are geared to commuters only, not the people who actually live and visit in a community. In East Point these roads are state roads so it is difficult, but not impossible, to get GDOT to make changes. It will take patience and determination to work through the design issues and implement an appropriate traffic circulation design.

Decatur was able to work with GDOT to relocate a portion of state routes that passed through their community including stretches of Ponce de Leon. Hapeville is now in that process also. East Point should pursue that re-designation of making other roads nearby into state route alternatives. "Bump-outs" can be added where unused pavement exists to provide areas for trees and landscaping and to shorten the street-crossing distance for pedestrians. DOT has new standards that call for high-visibility sidewalks and on-street parking along state routes, all designed to slow traffic through urban areas.

From a retail perspective, one-way traffic is a real restriction, with negative financial implications for lost revenue for retailers as cars cannot easily stop. Eliminating the one-way pair and taming Main Street will potentially make the overall site plan more flexible and more successful.

Increase the number of signalized intersections. Adding one at Ware Avenue should be a priority. Making cars stop and slow down makes the site more viable for both pedestrians and retailers. The area will become more active to walkers when they feel safer.

## **Parking**

*Moderator question: Is a parking deck necessary?*

The panel agreed that adequate parking is essential but offered a number of caveats about parking and structured parking in general:

There's an art and science to getting parking right in mixed-use developments. Many moving pieces must be orchestrated based on the uses and required parking spots.

Multi-level above ground parking is very expensive and becoming passé. In today's market, with costs running \$15,000 to \$18,000 per space, a parking deck is hard to justify.

The solution is that the city has to subsidize parking. TAD funding could be used and must be as flexible as possible for this purpose.

Start by defining all of the various needs in the project and even surrounding area. Think about shared parking. The first thing to determine is the needs of each group using the shared deck and during which hours. The city must be as flexible as possible on parking requirements. The parking need may not be as great as one might think. Also, consider creating additional on-street parking options.

There are opportunities to share parking with office, daytime retail and the government, yet sharing parking spaces between grocery and restaurants is not a good fit. Grocery will stay open until 10:00 or 11:00 pm.

The rule of thumb for a grocery store is five spaces per 1,000 square feet. Restaurants generally want 10 spaces per 1,000 square feet. However, those spaces can be shared with government buildings, office workers and residents. These parking "requirements" need to be considered carefully, since they have no basis empirically and several recent studies have demonstrated that, in urban mixed-use environments, actual parking utilization is much lower.

Parking requirements can be different in the central downtown area. If the city puts public uses in this development, they must be flexible on how they pay for and consider parking. On weekends, government buildings don't need parking at all. Those spaces can be used by retail and residents.

Historically, metro Atlanta has required more parking than is necessary and still has outdated requirements, especially if the site is truly walkable from MARTA and downtown. Keep your

minimums low and vary the parking requirements up or down to fit specific sites. The new City of Atlanta parking requirements give flexibility to a given block based on specific uses, taking into account how that block may evolve over time. This is a very important issue to consider closely.

With four visible sides on this site, there's no back door to hide parking. An additional challenge will be to build an example of good urban design without the feel of a structured parking deck.

*Moderator question: What incentives can the city offer private property owners who may be reluctant to sell?*

The panelists cited several potential mechanisms for incentivizing private and public-private investment in downtown. They include Tax Allocation Districts, Opportunity Zones, land value write-downs and others.

For example, with an urban redevelopment plan, the City can specify exactly how every piece of land will be used. Individual owners must develop their parcels to conform to that plan. The city has the right to ask them how they will conform.

The threat of eminent domain for public use could help land costs remain more affordable. "Friendly condemnations" are also a useful tool in acquiring properties with a high capital gain for the owner from its sale, since condemnation yields tax benefits for the seller.

When condemning property and paying appraised value for it, the city may not have to use 100% public money. If the primary purpose will be used as a public facility with a mixed-use component, private money can also be used. Based on legal opinion that is a reasonable interpretation though it may have never been done before.

East Point has opportunities to enforce regulations on the books that are not being enforced. Georgia's constitution allows a city to determine a property as blighted and can levy a tax on that owner to make the necessary improvements. This becomes another incentive to sell now. With only three private owners in the "Commons" – the task of private property assemblage should not be a large deterrent.

It is critical that the city gets full site control of all properties in both phase one and two at the same time, even though the second block may not actually be developed for several years. The city needs to be willing to consider contributing the land for the project to make Phase I financially viable. The City wants to be ready when the time is right.

*Moderator question: What else can the City of East Point do to make the project attractive to a developer?*

The panelists agreed that, in the current market especially, the city and BIDA must be proactive. Communities can no longer expect a private developer to fund all the front-end due diligence and design work that is necessary to move a project forward. The public sector must now participate in the planning and in the costs.

The first priority must be preparing a written agreement between the City of East Point and BIDA outlining the vision, priorities and responsibilities of each organization for the “Commons” site.

The physical characteristics of the “Commons” site make it a fairly easy one to develop. The infrastructure is already in place. The panel recommended that the city demolish the existing buildings to make the site even more attractive.

The community must decide. It's the community's responsibility to prevent bad development from taking place at this critical site. East Point leaders, as well as the entire metro-Atlanta region, are beginning to wake up and realize they must be proactive to make good developments happen.

The City of East Point has to be willing to spend its own money to contribute to the project's success. The days of putting out an RFP on a great location and having several developers clamor over the chance to spend millions to develop there are gone.

East Point should appraise every parcel in both blocks of the Commons, offer that price and give owners their best chance to liquidate. They may not have such an opportunity for quite a while in tough times like these.

If all of the key players can get on the same page, the city will have a higher probability of creating a solid plan to acquire the land, reserving condemnation as a last option for a few parcels.

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## FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

### Tools for consideration

Georgia's tool kit of economic development incentives is not as large a universe as it is in other states. Possible incentives discussed were:

**Tax Allocation Districts** (TADs) are among the most powerful financial tools. The new East Point TAD has been approved by the city and county and is awaiting school board approval. The TAD boundaries include the "Commons". Typically, cities can expect about eight to 12 percent of a project's cost to be covered by TAD financing. Consider it as one layer of support with many variables, especially property values and property tax revenues.

TAD funds can also be used for any capital or soft costs to develop public and private projects as well as infrastructure. The problem with TADs is timing. You must have the development to create the positive tax allocation increment to make the TAD work.

The value of East Point's TAD will only drop as the city buys more property now. Consider asking your developer to build on properties that the city can lease to create private property ownership and generate increased tax revenue. Nothing will boost TAD revenue like successful retail.

TAD law now requires school board review and approval. You must show that your project will not add a burden to the system with a significant number of new students, and will increase income from new retail and sales taxes.

In the panelists' experience, school boards are more comfortable approving TADs when a specific project is well defined and in place to show them exactly how TAD funds will be used and how the projects will improve the community.

TAD funding agreements ask developers to agree to build an actual project that has financing and permits already in hand. If the government is a tenant in the project, then that is another tangible asset.

**New market tax credits** could give project equity or reduced interest rate financing to a project like this. The local government only has to allow the developer to go forward without a financial commitment from the city.

**Special Tax Districts** may be able to be created as places where new taxes can be levied to pay for area improvements. College Park used this tool by putting every hotel in a tax district.



Public investment in public facilities that leverage private development is a good mechanism. BIDA can fund public facilities and public projects with fewer restrictions than a local government.

**Incubator Program** could be established for new locally owned downtown businesses. They often need training on technology, marketing, operations and other business issues to maximize profits. Find ways to support your existing downtown businesses and help them prosper.

The state is currently looking at the **Georgia tax code** and will release a report to the Governor in January. It's likely they will recommend the state consolidate one-off programs into more formal, programs. If the legislature adopts the idea, the state's financial incentive tools will be refined. State incentives historically have been geared more to industrial parks and office buildings rather than downtown redevelopment projects. The new opportunity zone recommendations could be slightly more favorable to projects of this nature.

**Opportunity Zone** would provide incentives to businesses based on every new job they create. East Point has submitted an application to create a zone.

**Affordable housing tax credits** are another option where a percentage of units can be set aside. Affordable housing does not mean subsidized housing. It's actually **workforce housing** that's geared to working professionals like police, fire fighters, teachers and nurses and can benefit the community.

**Enterprise Zones** could be created to waive property taxes for a set period of years. However, it does not provide up-front capital for projects and cannot be used with TADs.

### **More on Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)**

Public services can be located in a private sector project, but to do so only requires a contract between the public and private entities.

The private sector is in business to make a profit. The public sector is motivated by improving quality of life in their community. Therefore, any good public-private partnership must offer mutual benefit to both parties. Once that's the case, many financial tools can come into play to make it work.

There are several ways to incentivize the private sector to invest, yet it's difficult for a city to commit to a long term lease. And it's difficult for a developer to get financing without a committed tenant.

*Moderator question: What does a private developer need to move forward on this site?*

- A developer must understand who has site control of every property before they can go to lenders.
- A developer must have signed leases from tenants, including an anchor.

The more developers have up front to present to lenders in the more likely they are to be able to acquire financing. Given the current economic climate, there's still uncertainty surrounding the residential piece since rental units may be more desirable than for-sale condos and town homes.

Publix could be a strong anchor tenant to connect the entire community. Panelists agree that a good grocery store should be a priority for downtown East Point as an essential asset.

Because this is a pioneering site, it will need a champion and support of the City. A public-partnership with BIDA is a win-win.

*Moderator question: If I were on the East Point city council trying to get up to speed on the project, what would I want to know to be able to support it?*

Can we acquire the land we don't own at a reasonable price or not?

What will it take to get site control? Since so much work has already been done on the site, here's how we have adjusted it for current economic times. That should get city council 100% on board, and support the idea of identifying a point person who can take the lead.

Adding a grocery store is one way to keep people in East Point. Every piece of the puzzle must work together with the overall goal of creating a safe place to walk with interesting places to go. The 2006 Selig plan for phase one was an attempt to create the first node of activity. The "Commons" is clearly the site to jump start the process for future development nearby.

## **Learning from the success of other cities around Georgia**

### **Smyrna**

Three years after their downtown redevelopment was complete, the City of Smyrna did a study that looked at the appraised value of every developed and redeveloped property within a one-mile radius. There was a \$200 million increase in assessed values in the study area which significantly increased tax revenue and had a "halo" effect on values outside the study area. Unfortunately, projections like these cannot typically be determined 100% accurately in advance.

Smyrna considered ways to make office space flexible by building a municipal complex that itself is a centerpiece development but that reflected the character of their community. Today, East Point is where Smyrna was about 25 years ago. Smyrna had similar large vacant parcels in its downtown, but without the advantage of a MARTA station.

Smyrna bought every piece of land they could as parcels came up for sale. The city amassed \$11 million worth of properties, only condemning about eight parcels for a community center geared to the public.

Especially in hard economic times like these when property values are deflated, sellers may be more motivated to sell than one might think. In this present climate, the development that occurred in Smyrna could not have happened.

### **City of Atlanta's BeltLine**

The example of former Atlanta Mayor Franklin and her unwavering commitment to the BeltLine was offered. Even when the money wasn't there for a project of such tremendous complexity, Mayor Franklin became the project's champion and strongly supported it through every obstacle. Just a few years later, the BeltLine is actually happening. It's up to East Point to muster that kind of leadership. The vision must be shared by the entire community and its leadership must effectively convey that message.

### **Decatur**

Decatur's leaders have learned that you can't "over-think this stuff." A community's leadership can't worry about what's wrong and what you can't fix. Instead, they must determine what can be done, then just move forward step by step. Someone must be identified as the project's point person to spearhead and foster the vision.

The Decatur Downtown Development Authority spent the first five years getting buy-in from its own residents, building their sense of pride for the possibilities. A similarly aggressive program to market the City of East Point was recommended. Though many cities shy away from selling themselves, it's a necessary step.

Decatur's development authority produces a newsletter for residents and business owners that appears to come from the City of Decatur. The development authority also maintains the city's website. It's all about branding and speaking with one voice. The development authority took a back seat to intentionally strengthen the brand as simply the City of Decatur. The authority also produces a directory of every business in Decatur with free listings and free distribution as one more way to promote its own.

Every festival and special event plays into engaging the community.

The role of development authorities is to advocate and advise city governments. The City staff's job is to work out all issues before a project goes to city council. They are to speak in favor of a plan with every reason why it benefits the city, and resolves zoning issues before a developer goes for the council's approval.

Decatur has two planning sessions a year with every department head present to reaffirm their roles, and most importantly, for each team member to know what their priorities are that year. The city manager's role is to keep everyone on task toward achieving those agreed upon goals. The process fosters the trust and mutual respect that makes it work.

The development authority consciously went after Steve Nygren who had a history of opening urban restaurants in undeveloped areas. He was urged to open a Mick's restaurant in downtown Decatur. Mick's became an early pioneer of their downtown transformation.

Within a few years, downtown Decatur had 10 restaurants. Decades later, Decatur now has 60. The entire process was part of a well thought-out, ongoing plan.

### Suwanee

This is another good example of a place that had no core or identity when they started the redevelopment process. They did a branding Suwanee plan with a cohesive marketing plan. The city was very conscious of its vision even before the first restaurant or retail shop located there.

### Kennesaw

Downtown Kennesaw has been working on its redevelopment plan for many years. They began by appraising every piece of property of interest. They offered owners a cash payment for the appraised amount with an offer that was good for just 60 days. Owners were told to take it or leave it. The city had the advantage of already owning the parking for most properties. Every single owner sold within the desired time frame.

Kennesaw is also building a parking deck that is being financed in conjunction with a major development. Parking must be integrated into other aspects of design and construction.

### Athens

The city will build a public parking deck, mostly at public expense, with a developer contributing some money. That parking is expected to create stronger demand for nearby sites. Similarly, East Point must seriously consider structured parking to ensure this project is self-sustaining and weigh the tremendous expense with the long-term results.

**\*\*This section intentionally left blank\*\***

## PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD

These are the action steps the panel recommended :

1. Make sure the **political will** and **consensus** are there.
2. Identify two **key people**:
  - a. Project champion who provides inspiration, vision and leadership
  - b. Point person dedicated fulltime to implementation and leadership
3. Let the point person organize essential **meetings between all key players** to arrive at a development agreement between every entity:
  - a. City of East Point and BIDA
  - b. Fulton County Library Board and Fulton-DeKalb County Hospital Authority
  - c. MARTA and GDOT
4. Create a **definitive, inter-governmental agreement** between the City of East Point and BIDA .
  - a. Begin financial modeling
  - b. Establish BIDA as the entity to take the lead and enter into an agreement with the developer. Property ownership must be transferred to BIDA.
5. Create an **acquisition plan** for taking control of every parcel at a reasonable price.
6. The Commons' point person needs to **revisit every plan** and make sure they all work together. Amendments may be necessary.
  - a. This could be a good time to have one more **public input hearing** and adjust the plans to market conditions.
7. **Go back to Selig, the previously selected site developer** to assure them you can get control of every parcel. Once Selig knows the land is under control, it can go back to Publix, it's anchor tenant, to request a renewed commitment and study the project to make sure it is financially viable. Adjust the plan as necessary. (See project note on page 38.)
8. Determine the **financial feasibility**. Identify the funding gaps and find solutions to fill them.
9. Begin **implementation**.

### 1. Political will

It's essential that all city entities agree and get on the same page. It is necessary to put political infighting aside.

There seems to be a lot of micro managing occurring in East Point's governance and perhaps not enough macro policy development. This project is symptomatic of the kinds of challenges East Point faces. A collective agreement is needed to articulate broad policy goals.

## 2. Identify two key people

There are a lot of moving parts in play. Decisions cannot be made by committee. A project like the Commons needs a champion in addition to the point person. If the right champion says this is a good thing, others will agree. The champion is responsible for casting the vision and selling it. The champion must be someone who, when he or she speaks, people will listen.

It's also essential that a point person be named for the "Commons" project right away. That person has to wake up every morning focused on how to make the project work. He or she must be given full authority to speak on behalf of the City, BIDA and the development authority. The point person must know how to really look and listen and take advantage of opportunities as they arise. He or she must also create a systematic, step by step approach to take the project to completion.

Another important reason to have such a point person is that developers need one person to work with; it must be someone who can make real decisions. It is time for East Point to put a real face with the project. It was unclear to several panelists who is in charge.

A perfect example of an effective point person is panelist Lynn Menne, Assistant City Manager, City of Decatur. "That's what I do every single day," Menne explained. She has been on staff with both the City of Decatur, and the development authority. It doesn't matter where the point person sits. As its project manager, the point person's only interest must be to advocate for that project. And those efforts must also work seamlessly with the city's marketing effort.

The point person could be a city employee assigned to BIDA with one of their key responsibilities being to keep BIDA informed. Or it could be a loaned executive from the chamber of commerce or a large company, a contract staffer for BIDA or some other arrangement. Any approach will require close cooperation between the city and BIDA and both entities must agree to provide resources for the position, a wise investment. Yet this should not be allowed to become a situation which could create another layer of infighting, perhaps delaying the project for another five years.

A unique skill set is required to do this kind of work. Those skills may be different from skills needed to attract new industry to East Point. This all-important point person must keep all constituents educated about the reasons why East Point is are doing it this way.

Once the structure, agreement, the champion and point person are in place, the structure will continue to define itself and people become comfortable with the process. The project will take on a life of its own, each piece dovetailing with the next. People will begin to support it throughout every segment of the community.

### 3. Hold meetings between all key players and property owners

Today, there are no formal written agreements between the City of East Point and BIDA setting out the scope of work, responsibilities and priorities. There are also no written agreements between the local entities and GDOT or MARTA. This is essential. Once those are in place, then work with the three private property owners as well as Grady and the Fulton-DeKalb County library.

Determine the financial needs of the Grady health center and the Fulton County library. Focus on the feasibility of the project, setting politics aside. Once that piece is resolved, do the same with MARTA and GDOT, meeting with the highest level people possible in every organization.

Issues with MARTA and GDOT are big issues. They have property disposition requirements. However, it is possible that these are surplus properties for both agencies.

It is possible to do land swaps with GDOT when property owned by GDOT is needed for a new development. The GDOT parcel appears to be excess to GDOT's needs. The point person will need to confirm this.

The library board is currently in the process of a long-range renovation plan. The City of East Point must remain in close contact with them and determine their interest in the new project and what the cost may be. The City and library leaders will need to detail their mutual goals and needs in a written contract. That way, when staff and elected officials change, the vision and plans do not.

### 4. Create written agreements

This crucial document will spell out exactly how all parties jointly agree to develop within these boundaries and with these conditions.

When former Governor Barnes wanted to make sure Atlantic Station happened, he created a high level, green light committee charged with resolving any issue that came up related to that 138-acre development. A similar high level committee for the Commons project can be created to address and solve every issue that may arise.

The ultimate goal is a “marriage” between BIDA and the city. That relationship can only occur over time as trust builds. A memorandum of understanding is a good start to building this working relationship.

There must be one entity driving the car, even though the other entity provides the keys and the gas. BIDA is the best choice for providing a vision that lasts beyond the terms of current elected officials. Under the Redevelopment Powers Law, the City and/or BIDA could do this. A developer must be able to rely on an entity that can give them a long-term agreement and commitment.



This process is similar to “herding cats.” The only way to do it is to get in front of the herd with something they all want. BIDA has that ability and leadership yet they must also have the full support and trust of city officials.

BIDA can laser focus on this development as it is their mission and purpose. Unlike city council which has many more issues to consider every day.

The same board of directors can lead both BIDA and the development authority, if it were reactivated, and simply switch hats as needed.

## **5. Create an acquisition plan**

Property ownership must be consolidated and transferred into one holding entity. While there are three public entities involved in the development, the primary vehicle must be BIDA. Once site control is secured then momentum will start rolling forward.

First inventory all parcels in the acquisition plan. Look at internal owners and external owners. Orchestrate meetings with all of the key players. Let them know how important this project is for East Point’s future. Have that conversation with every owner of every parcel and detail the vision for downtown. Some may seem impossible yet keep moving forward step by step.

Problem sellers must be identified. Public facilities may be able to be designed around those problem-seller properties. Allow the City to use the power of condemnation to acquire those properties at fair market value if necessary.

Pay attention to the front-end research, acquisition and condemnation requirements to acquire key parcels. Governments are not allowed to pay more than appraised values.

Once the price of every parcel is determined, you will identify the financial gap. Look at all tools mentioned in this report in the **Financial and economic development tools** section. Figure out how much of that gap can be plugged by public funds. If there is no gap, the City can deliver the project to the developer with no land cost. The City’s goal ideally is to get that gap down to zero.

Consider using the recently purchased property at 2791 East Point Street, across from City Hall in a land swap. Owning land is always a good resource however it’s important to know why each parcel is being acquired and how it fits into the overall development plan of Downtown. It seems like the city is going in a different direction rather than focusing on building out the “Commons” site.

Development authorities typically cannot do public projects, and the city is unable to negotiate with a developer because it cannot bind the city to any long-term commitments. BIDA does have



the authority to finance public and private projects. BIDA should become the focal hub of the project.

If East Point is not prepared to acquire a certain property, it can negotiate an option, but there may not be sufficient time to redevelop this parcel over time without full ownership.

## **6. Review every existing plan**

East Point already has an LCI plan, TAD plan and an Urban Redevelopment Plan that work together with its architectural overlay district. The Urban Redevelopment Plan is a necessary component of having DCA designate its planning area as an Opportunity Zone, however the plan must conform to the requirements of the state's Urban Redevelopment Law.

Each plan has its own value and purpose, yet implementation is the key. Each looks at different aspects of building a community and ideally, they should mesh together like building blocks.

While the city and local housing authority can create an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP), only the city can adopt it. Once adopted, the city can delegate implementation to a downtown development authority or a redevelopment agency like BIDA. A URP is required by state law before using urban redevelopment powers for condemnation.

If the City of East Point incorporates all its other plans into its Urban Redevelopment Plan, it will have a very powerful implementation tool. The plan will set the standard whenever rezoning is being considered. The City of East Point must clearly articulate the conditions for how they want development to happen within this area. The plan must be definitive and detailed to ensure that what is developed enhances the quality of life in East Point.

When a developer asks the city to do several things in order to build here, the city and the developer enter into a development agreement that is consistent with the Urban Redevelopment Plan.

Panelists cautioned city leaders to be sure to provide an easy way to make amendments and appeals to the Plan as market conditions change. All plans must be living documents, both adaptable and flexible.

Questions will come up that none of the panelists have even considered. Every step will lead to the next priority action. Opportunities change.

If the city feels that another public hearing is needed, then do so. Receiving buy-in from residents before proceeding is critical. The more people know about a project, the better. However, the city should have the key elements in place to help city council and residents support the project 100%.

## **7. Go back to Selig**

A specific, well-defined proposal based on Selig's response to the 2006 RFP already exists. A key unknown is the land acquisition costs. The plan may also have to be updated based on today's market conditions for retail, residential and loans.

As a developer, Selig would not be involved with displacing a community service like the Grady Health Center or the library. That request and plan must come from the City of East Point.

One panelist candidly said, "The City can't wait for a developer to come. It must be an active, pro-active, participant."

An anchor tenant like Publix is required to make this site work financially. If the city lost Publix, the site would have to be developed in small bits over a much longer period of time.

The traffic Publix will generate will make it possible for smaller, locally owned boutiques and restaurants to exist. These smaller retailers will not survive without an anchor tenant to bring in the crowds.

Another advantage of working with Publix is they have already built urban intown designs in Atlanta. Selig developed the Midtown Publix which fit into a larger mixed-use development with restaurants and smaller shops.

One option the city has is to not sell the land to the developer and make it pad-ready for development. Price the cost of the concrete pad so that the economics will work for the vertical development to be taken over by the developer.

## **8. Determine financial feasibility**

Pick a developer you have confidence in. Then pick trusted advisors to verify the developer's estimated costs and confirm they are reasonable. Be certain of what the City of East Point wants in the equation.

## **9. Implementation**

At the end of the day, East Point's leadership has an opportunity to create a meaningful project that will catapult East Point's downtown to the next level. Remember, this can be a fun process as all the pieces fall into place. Everyone agreed that a grocery store is a major coup and will have a positive ripple effect on the heart of East Point.

Key points to remember:

- Establish a specific vision for the project. Then the public will have something to respond to.
- Try to iron out all issues up front. A professional community facilitator may be necessary.
- Don't negotiate a deal with a developer during the public input process.

*Moderator question: In a perfect world where all of these steps moved forward easily, what is a realistic estimate of the shortest time it might take?*

Panelists estimated it would take at least 12 to 18 months to have a definitive development agreement in hand. The fact that the project requires relocating two public entities that must remain operating during the relocation, and working with a city government, means that things will move more slowly.

**\*\*This section intentionally left blank\*\***

## PANELISTS' PARTING THOUGHTS

We laid out a road map. Follow it.

Remember to orient all new development to pedestrians, not just the car.

Keep your eye on the ball.

East Point has an incredible catalyst project in the “Commons”. Look closely at how a new city hall fits in to the area or even the project itself.

East Point is in the enviable position of having in interested developer with Selig and Publix as an anchor tenant. It would be a shame to let them slip away.

This is a fun, positive problem to have. East Point has the chance to change the face of its community and meet its LCI goals.

Crisis is a better motivator than opportunity. East Point is on the cusp of a crisis. If this passes the community by, it will indeed be in a crisis.

All of the governmental authorities must join hands and work together to make this a successful project.



## PHOTOS FROM THE EVENT



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Jan Bozeman is a principal of the law firm of Hyatt & Stubblefield, P.C. She is a graduate of Auburn University and received her law degree from Georgia State University. She assists developers throughout the country in creating the governance structure for their planned communities, condominiums, and destination resorts and in establishing club membership programs for project amenities. She also works with workout companies, successor owners, and acquisition or constituent groups to "rescue" or revive troubled planned communities and clubs. Her experience includes small and large scale residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects, as well as age-qualified communities. She also counsels clients on community association governance and operations.

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Previously, Ms. Chitty was Senior Vice President of iStar Financial [NYSE:SFI] the successor company of the 1999 merger of TriNet Corporate Realty Trust and Starwood Financial Inc. She was responsible for the leasing, dispositions, and acquisition underwriting of the company's 30 million sf equity portfolio valued at approximately \$2 billion. Jo Ann Chitty received her MBA from Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Florida.

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Sharon Gay concentrates her practice in state and local government law, particularly in the areas of land use and zoning, tax allocation district financing and other economic development incentives, public-private partnerships, and procurement. She has obtained zoning and permitting approvals and economic incentives to facilitate urban, mixed-use development projects and redevelopment of industrial and infill properties. She has worked with both public sector and private sector clients to accomplish revisions in state legislation and local laws to facilitate economic development and water and waste water privatization projects.

Ms. Gay is recognized as a key player in pioneering the use of tax allocation district financing in Georgia. She has worked with local governments and developers throughout the state to create tax allocation districts to provide funds for community redevelopment. During the 2008 session of the Georgia General Assembly, she coordinated the lobbying effort to obtain passage of a constitutional amendment to restore the ability of local school districts to participate in tax allocation districts. That amendment was approved by Georgia voters in the November 2008 election.

Prior to joining McKenna Long & Aldridge, Ms. Gay served as Vice President - Governmental Affairs for the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and as deputy chief of staff and executive counsel to the Mayor of Atlanta. In addition, Ms. Gay clerked for Judge Horace Ward, United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia and also for Chief Judge Jack Sognier, Georgia Court of Appeals.



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Ms. Gay was named by Georgia Trend Magazine as one of the "100 Most Influential Georgians" as well as being included in the magazine's 2009 "Legal Elite" listing for Governmental Affairs. She has been recognized as a "Georgia Super Lawyer" in Atlanta Magazine for her Environmental/Land Use work. In addition, JAMES Magazine named Ms. Gay as one of "Georgia's Most Influential People," and she was named a "Legal Eagle" by Atlanta Woman Magazine. Ms. Gay speaks frequently to business, civic and governmental groups on economic development tools and tax allocation district financing.

Mr. Kirby Glaze is currently of Counsel to the firm Glaze and Glaze, P.C. and President of Public-Private Partnership Project Management, Inc. and Community Development Partners, Inc. Prior to this, he was Senior Vice President and Chief Legal Counsel for Park Holding, Inc. from 1999 to 2001. In addition Mr. Glaze was a member of the firm Glaze and Glaze where he represented numerous city, county and development authority boards and commissions.

Mr. Glaze has worked on a number of economic development projects and urban redevelopment plans throughout Georgia. He also has presented at various forums on public and private partnerships, intergovernmental contracts, deal structure, public finance and development authority board role and responsibilities. In addition to speaking on subjects of community development, Mr. Glaze has participated in numerous Quality Growth Resource Teams around the state sponsored by the Department of Community Affairs and the Quality Growth Council. In September 2010 Mr. Glaze was recognized by the Department of Community Affairs with the "DCA Outstanding Leadership Award", for exemplary leadership in the field of downtown development.

His professional associations include the State Bar of Georgia, Georgia Economic Developers Association, American Trial Lawyers Association, the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association and Lawyers Club of Atlanta. In the past he served as a board member of the Georgia Municipal Association, chair of the Local Government Section of the State Bar and Member/Director of the Younger Lawyers Executive Committee.

Mr. Glaze served on the Board of the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce and Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and on the executive committee of the Regional Business Coalition. He is a graduate of the Regional Leadership Institute.

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David Haddow is the president and founder of Haddow & Company. He has represented individual and institutional clients in real estate investments since 1979, including seven years at Landauer Associates, Inc., where he was Senior Vice President in charge of the real estate consulting practice in the firm's Atlanta office. He has an undergraduate degree from Emory University and master's degrees in city planning and business administration from Georgia Tech and Georgia State University, respectively.

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Ellen joined Central Atlanta Progress in 2006 and currently has the role of Vice President of Economic Development. CAP is a private, not-for-profit corporation that strives to create a robust economic climate for Downtown Atlanta. Ellen develops and executes collaborative initiatives that enhance the image, physical environment, and real estate development climate in Downtown. Additionally, she is part of the project management team for the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, which is under development and will open in Downtown Atlanta in 2013. Prior to joining CAP, Ellen spent two years at RCLCO, a real estate development consulting firm where she analyzed opportunities for developers throughout the Southeast.

Ellen graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology from Emory University and a master's degree in City and Regional Planning from Georgia Tech. Ellen sits on both the Management Committee and Advisory Board of the Urban Land Institute-Atlanta. After over 2 years as co-chair of ULI's Young Leaders Group, she currently is co-chair of the organization's Center for Leadership. Ellen also sits on the Advisory Board of the Atlanta Emory Alumni Council. She is a member of the 2010 class of LEAD Atlanta, a leadership program focused on improving the city. She volunteers as both a historic Downtown Atlanta tour guide with the Atlanta Preservation Center and as a writing coach for VOX Teen Newspaper.

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Lyn Menne is Assistant City Manager for Community and Economic Development for the City of Decatur. This position evolved out of her role as Executive Director of the Decatur Downtown Development Authority – a position she has held since 1983. Lyn has been an active partner in the implementation of the Decatur Town Center Plan. This innovative planning document, adopted in 1982, outlined the development of Decatur's central business district as a pedestrian friendly, high density center with a healthy mix of office, retail and residential projects. Downtown Decatur now has over 1 million square feet of office space, 350,000 square feet of retail space, over 600 residential units and is often cited as one of the best examples of Smart Growth planning in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Lyn received her undergraduate degree in American Studies from Queens College in Charlotte, NC and her master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Georgia. Prior to joining the Decatur staff, Lyn worked for the State Historic Preservation Office and was manager of the Georgia Main Street program. She is the past president of the Georgia Downtown Association, serves on the board of the Decatur Education Foundation and the board of trustees for the DeKalb History Center. She and her husband Doug live in Decatur and have two adult children.

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Active in real estate since the early 1970's, Jerry Miller co-founded Miller Gallman Developers in 1995, following his passion for restoring historic buildings to strengthen the fabric of the city.

Through use of the historic rehabilitation tax credit, he formulated a conservative but effective financial structure raising equity from small investors. With this unique financial engineering in place, Jerry helped pioneer the rehabilitation of historic urban buildings - eight projects, over 250 loft apartments, worth nearly \$15 million.

As Atlanta's stock of historic buildings waned, Jerry turned his attention to neighborhood-compatible infill development, primarily around buildings he had rehabilitated for loft apartments.



*This was an important style of development for Atlanta's revitalization - new lofts created with architectural styles that complement nearby historic buildings. Among those projects are the Glen Iris Lofts and Ponce Springs Lofts at Glen Iris, amounting to more that \$50 million in development on previously vacant land.*

*Millers projects have won awards from the Atlanta Urban Design Commission, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division, Athens Clark Heritage Foundation, and the Columbus Historic Foundation.*

*Prior to forming Miller-Gallman, in the 1980s, Jerry developed over \$3 million in complementary in-fill single-family housing, was a development consultant on the Olympic Neighborhood Implementation Strategy and, in partnership with Dutch interests, acquired and managed the \$20 million historic rehabilitation of the Healey Building in downtown Atlanta.*

*Jerry received a BA in Geography from Macalester College and an MBA in Finance from the Wharton School of Finance, University of Pennsylvania. He has lived in Atlanta since 1980, is married with three children. He is on the session at Central Presbyterian Church, a member of the Board of Atlanta Habitat for Humanity and the Decatur DeKalb YMCA.*

#### **Gordon Mortin**

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*Gordon Mortin is a Managing Director of the Public Finance Group of Morgan Keegan's Fixed Income Department. He has been in the brokerage business for over 35 years, starting his career with Lex Jolley & Co., Inc. in 1971 and serving as its President from 1972 until the sale of the company to Bank South in 1990. Gordon served as Managing Director of Bank South Securities Corporation from 1990 to 1996. Gordon also played a pivotal part in the creation of the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG) and all financings between 1974 and 1996. MEAG is recognized as one of the most successful joint-action public power agencies in the Country.*

*Gordon graduated with a degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Michigan and received an M.B.A. from Georgia State University. He currently holds the following licenses: Series 7, Series 63, Series 79 and has passed the principal's exam.*

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*Caleb Racicot, AICP, a Senior Principal with Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates, has over 10 years of experience in community planning, design-based zoning codes, and public outreach. Before joining TSW, Caleb was a planner with the City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning working on urban design studies and leading community workshops.*

*Since joining TSW in 2001, Caleb has been in charge of all municipal planning projects ranging from corridor studies to pedestrian and bicycle facilities to community design guidelines. Caleb has led numerous downtown planning studies focused on engaging residents, community leaders, business-owners, and other stakeholders to develop realistic, community-based plans and implementation tools, including:*

- *Argenta Downtown District Plan, North Little Rock (Arkansas APA Achievement in Comprehensive Plan award, 2010)*

- *City of Monroe Town Center LCI Study (GPA Outstanding Planning Document Award, 2008)*
- *City of Atlanta SPI-1 Downtown Livability Code (GPA Outstanding Planning Document, 2008)*
- *Cherokee County's Bells Ferry Road Community Design Guidelines (GPA Outstanding Planning Document Award, 2007)*
- *City of Atlanta's Ponce de Leon/Moreland Avenue Corridors Study (GPA Transportation Planning Award, 2005)*
- *City of Hapeville Design Guidelines and Urban Village Zoning Ordinance*
- *Lawrenceville Form-Based Code.*
- *The Old Fourth Ward Master Plan*

*In addition, Caleb has provided design and planning services for a variety of private development initiatives throughout the region, including Downtown Woodstock (Woodstock, GA), Asbury Park (Hapeville, GA), Glenwood Park (Atlanta, GA), and Vickery (Cumming, GA).*

*Caleb currently serves as project manager for:*

- *The Doraville 2010 Downtown Master Plan LCI Study*
- *The City of Decatur 2010 Strategic Plan*
- *The BeltLine Subarea 1 Master Plan*

*He is also Chair for the Atlanta chapter of the Congress for the New Urbanism.*

## APPENDIX A

### **Selig's 2006 Proposed Development Plan**

In 2006, an RFP to develop the “Commons” was issued. Only two developers responded and Selig Enterprises was selected. A representative of Selig served as a panelist. In the course of the panel discussions it was evident that Selig remains interested in the project. Additionally, to Selig's knowledge, the proposed anchor tenant, a Publix grocery store, remains interested in opening a store in this location.

Publix's interest at the time of the RFP was limited to locating on the corner of West Cleveland and Main as they believe that is the most visible and easily accessible parcel. Control of every parcel in the phase one block is needed to make the development work.

In the 2006 plan, control of the Grady Clinic property became an issue. The City of East Point did not control that parcel. The property is owned by the Fulton-DeKalb County Hospitals Authority.

The question is how can the Grady health center continue to provide its services in East Point at the same or reduced costs? Preliminary estimates to relocate Grady come in at \$2 million before the land cost. Phase one of the “Commons” could never absorb that expense.

The proposed Selig plan called for keeping the library as an amenity, perhaps in a second floor space with retail on the first level. The library is still possibly open to being part of a creative mixed-use plan.

It was noted that “East Point may not see a development opportunity like this again in many years. This is the best time to assemble all of the property parcels in order to accomplish the proposed development. Land prices may never be lower than they are right now.”

With a 2004 Livable Center's Initiative plan (LCI) already in place, a new Tax Allocation District (TAD) soon to be approved to include the “Commons” parcels, and a preferred developer already selected, many of the major pieces are in place. The panel urged East Point's public entities to make sure the political will is there and that everyone involved speaks with one, unified voice focused on a common vision.

Whatever amount of time city leaders think it will take to put the entire Commons deal together, add ten times to that.

This report offers recommendations on how East Point can take action in order to move forward on development of the site.