



Midtown Alliance

greenprint midtown

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN 2012

MIDTOWN ALLIANCE
SOUTHFACE ENERGY INSTITUTE
RENAISSANCE PLANNING GROUP
SUSTAINABLE ATLANTA
PERKINS+WILL



executive summary

Midtown Atlanta is perfectly positioned to be a leader in sustainability due to its location, its infrastructure, and its people. The purpose of Greenprint Midtown, is to spur actions that further enhance Midtown's development as one of the nation's most livable, innovative, economically successful, and sustainable communities. This plan adds a "green lens" to Midtown Alliance's existing programs and identifies new opportunities to increase Midtown's sustainability. The report examines five impact areas – energy, water, open space, transportation, and waste – focusing primarily on the 118 blocks that make up the core of Midtown.

A 6-month long planning process captured input and direction from hundreds of residents, restaurateurs, retailers, employers, employees, property owners and subject area experts. This report details recommended high priority as well as longer-term actions, projects and programs that will make Midtown an even more appealing and sustainable place, building on the Midtown Alliance's past success in developing and implementing long-range community-based plans. Successful implementation will require the participation of all members of the community; however, Midtown Alliance and its leadership will play a unique and essential role to bring disparate entities and efforts together to galvanize the community around a collective vision and facilitate implementation.

LEADING FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH

Located in the heart of the city, Midtown is a high-density, mixed-use, walkable community. Midtown is home to many of Atlanta's most prominent institutions – the Woodruff Arts Center, Emory University Hospital – Midtown, the Center for Puppetry Arts, Georgia Institute of Technology, and the Savannah College of Art and Design – Atlanta. Over the past 15 years, Midtown has experienced unprecedented growth. Today, this community boasts over 24 million square feet of office space, 1 million square feet of restaurant/retail space, 12,000 multi-family residential units and 4,000 hotel rooms.

Midtown's accelerated growth is due in large part to its high level of regional and local accessibility. With four MARTA rail stations, regional and local buses and shuttles, an established grid of streets with sidewalks and bike lanes, and Interstate access, Midtown is highly connected.

Two hundred acres of adjacent green space create a virtual forest within the city. Piedmont Park serves as a regional destination for recreation and rejuvenation, and a growing number of smaller public and private parks and plazas punctuate the district and create places for people to relax and play. A distinguishing feature of Midtown is its over 2,000 street trees. Midtown's sidewalk canopy allows for a comfortable and inviting walking environment. Midtown's Atlanta Botanical Garden consistently ranks as one of the best in the country and has a long-term commitment to conservation.

Midtown's property owners, businesses, and institutions all play a strong role in shaping Midtown as a sustainable community. Georgia Tech is one of the nation's leading research institutions with a deep commitment to innovation and sustainability. Office tenants are seeking green buildings and property owners and developers are responding. Eight of the last ten buildings developed in Midtown are LEED certified and seventeen (17) office buildings in the Midtown Core have received the Energy Star designation. The diverse mix of residents, students, doctors, architects, engineers, researchers, artists, lawyers, and even puppeteers makes for an interesting and vibrant community but also present a unique opportunity for developing innovative and creative solutions to sustainability challenges.

DOVETAILS WITH CITY AND REGIONAL EFFORTS

Greenprint Midtown aligns well with a number of city and regional efforts to address sustainability. The plan feeds into the City of Atlanta's Power to Change sustainability plan. Greenprint's investigation of new opportunities for open space furthers the City's efforts to add new green spaces as identified in Project Greenspace. The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce's recently

released Sustainable Economic Growth Initiative (SEGI) presents a strategy to link job growth and environmental sustainability. At the regional level, Plan 2040, the regional growth plan developed by the Atlanta Regional Commission, embraces sustainability as its organizing principle. The Metro North Georgia Water Planning District has plans and programs to address water supply and conservation, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management.

FROM BLUEPRINT TO GREENPRINT TO ECODISTRICT

Blueprint Midtown, completed in 1997 and updated in 2003, serves as the foundation for Greenprint Midtown. The Blueprint was created as a vision plan for a mixed-use, walkable, transit friendly community that catalyzed and directed growth and development in the core of Midtown. The planning process incorporated the input of thousands of community members and spurred Midtown's transformation.

Greenprint Midtown continued the focus on community engagement by hosting public and stakeholder meetings, reaching out to the community through extensive surveying efforts, and capturing the expertise from technical and advisory committee members. Greenprint reinforces the original Blueprint vision but builds on it. This plan takes a deliberate approach to being more sustainable. It has a strong action bias and was designed for near-term success.

As Greenprint Midtown moves from planning to implementation, Midtown Alliance will brand Midtown as an EcoDistrict. An "ecodistrict" is defined by national sustainability leaders as a place that has made a broad commitment to district-scale sustainability. The Midtown Eco-District brand will provide an opportunity to highlight success stories, create additional awareness around sustainability, and inspire others to take part.

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following briefly summarizes the recommended opportunities and priority programs for each the five Impact Areas. Programs were prioritized based on their expected level of impact, their value to the community, and their likelihood of success.

I. ENERGY: Midtown's economic growth and quality of life depends on reliable and affordable energy - to keep buildings comfortable, to move trains and cars, to manage traffic, and to keep Midtown streets and sidewalks safe. Midtown's energy goals are to promote energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy; to reduce energy use by minimizing demand; and to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The following programs are recommended to meet these goals:

- Energy Efficiency and Conservation in Buildings
- High Efficiency Public Spaces Lighting

II. TRANSPORTATION: The function, convenience, comfort, and safety of our transportation system has a significant effect on quality of life, the environment and the economic health of regions and communities. The transportation goals for Midtown are to improve access and mobility, decrease single occupancy vehicle trips to, from and within Midtown, and to reduce the total amount to miles people travel. Midtown has an opportunity to build on a relatively high number of commuters and residents using transit, walking, and/or bicycling through additional emphasis on the following programs:

- Streetscape Program Implementation
- Bicycle Plan Implementation
- Enhanced Transportation Demand Management
- Improved Local Transit and Coordinated Shuttle Services

III. WATER: Clean and readily available water is fundamental to environmental and human health, as well as economic prosperity. Our City and State face significant water quality and supply issues that could affect how our community grows and prospers. Through the Greenprint Midtown process, three overarching goals have been identified to meet these needs in Midtown: minimize storm water runoff from impervious surfaces; increase water efficiency in buildings; and reduce potable water consumption. The following programs will aid in meeting those goals:

- Green Stormwater Infrastructure Program
- Restaurant Water Efficiency Outreach
- Multi-family Water Efficiency Outreach
- Rainwater Harvesting Outreach

IV. OPEN SPACE - The largest positive impact that we can have on our natural environment is encouraging more options for living and working in dense urban districts where we use less land and fewer natural resources. Programmed open spaces and tree-lined streets are important to providing a quality of life that will attract residents and businesses and catalyze new development. The open space goals outlined in Greenprint Midtown are to provide increased access to permanent and temporary open spaces; to design and program spaces to encourage community vitality and interactions; and to preserve and enhance Midtown's tree canopy and landscaped areas. Programs include:

- Acquisition and Development of Civic Squares
- Temporary Park and Plaza Development
- Open Space Activation
- Landscape Enhancement

V. WASTE: Given the density of people that live, work and play in Midtown, a significant amount of waste is generated in Midtown. This waste contributes to air, water and land pollution. However, Midtown's diversity and concentration of uses, particularly restaurants, provides significant opportunities for successful waste reduction strategies that can make measurable differences in waste reduction, are cost neutral, and support local industry. The overall goal is to reduce the amount of solid waste generated by maximizing reuse, recycling, and composting. Programs include:

- Restaurant Waste Reduction Outreach
- Multi-family Building Recycling Outreach
- Electronics Recycling Outreach

IMPLEMENTATION

Transitioning the recommended programs from Greenprint Midtown into an implementation strategy is key to its success. To that end, Midtown Alliance will focus on near-term implementation efforts that include fine-tuning programs, combining programs where appropriate, developing tools to educate and inform the community, cultivating partnerships with key stakeholders, and establishing tracking and measurement tools. While implementation will require participation by all members of the community, Midtown Alliance's role as implementer, catalyst, or facilitator will be critical to ensure long-term success.

Three pivotal strategies that have the potential to positively influence all Impact Areas and can be implemented in the short-term are described below:

Develop Partnerships – Midtown Alliance relies on partnerships to execute its work plan. There is a near-term opportunity to further an existing partnership with Georgia Tech that would serve to tie together innovation, economic development, and sustainability. Combining the unique research and innovation assets of Georgia Tech with an organization that brings people and institutions together offers great potential for Midtown to become a “sand box” for innovations that solve energy, water, and transportation challenges.

Midtown EcoDistrict Brand – Branding Midtown as an ecodistrict will identify Midtown as a place where sustainability is important. The brand can also be used to create awareness and educate residents, employees, and visitors about sustainability initiatives in Midtown and the individuals and entities that are contributing to its success.

Green Business Recognition Program – Another opportunity to raise the level of awareness of businesses that have made a commitment to sustainability is to create a “green” business certification and recognition program. This program would empower Midtown stakeholders to support sustainable businesses, would provide positive reinforcement for businesses adopting sustainable practices, and would serve to inspire other businesses to engage in sustainable actions.

In short, Midtown has the opportunity to build on the assets, existing programs, and commitments from this community’s stakeholders to make Midtown one of the most livable, innovative, and sustainable communities.