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Westside Future Fund Announces Atlanta City Council's Adoption of Westside Land Use Plan

Adoption Comes Only Weeks After Council Approves Affordable Housing Legislation – "two important first steps" for mixed-income growth on Atlanta's Historic Westside

ATLANTA – December 8, 2017 – At its last official meeting of the year, Atlanta City Council made another landmark decision in support of mixed-income growth and community retention on Atlanta's Historic Westside.

Council unanimously approved the **Westside Land Use Framework Plan** – a design and implementation strategy for the equitable revitalization of the historic Westside neighborhoods of English Avenue, Vine City, Ashview Heights, Atlanta University Center, Booker T. Washington and Just Us – sponsored by Westside Future Fund, City of Atlanta and Chick-fil-A Foundation.

The plan, which will help guide future developments, was introduced by District 3 Councilmember Ivory Young, longtime resident of the community, and District 4 Councilmember Cleta Winslow. The plan was championed by fellow councilmember and Westside native Michael Julian Bond (Post 1 At-Large).

"As a longtime Westside resident and steward of the community, I am encouraged by the support we received from our City's leadership to adopt this very important plan, which will serve a catalyst for the revitalization of my entire City Council district," said **Councilmember Young** whose district-wide Westside Revive plan includes the Land Use Framework Plan.

"The history, culture and people that exist in these neighborhoods cannot afford to be lost or compromised. This plan will allow us to oversee positive change and guide these neighborhoods to become 'whole' and vibrant again."

Westside Future Fund commissioned the plan in 2015 – less than a year after its founding - as one of its first orders of business. Plan principles include:

- **Grounding in best practice and existing community knowledge:** Renowned urbanist Dhiru Thadani and Atlanta-based firm APD Urban Planning and Management were hired to lead the project, which coupled best-practice research of other successful and similar community revitalization projects with extensive consideration of how to link past planning efforts.
 - The recommendations built upon the 18 previous plans and studies that were completed in the past 15 years, including the City's most recent Atlanta City Design Project, created by City of Atlanta Planning Commissioner Tim Keane and Atlanta BeltLine visionary Ryan Gravel.

- **Robust Community Engagement Process:** Community engagement meetings with all neighborhoods were conducted over the course of a year and a half, beginning spring 2016, with each neighborhood providing input on a unique vision statement and goals.

More than 1,000 stakeholders participated in the process, including all six neighborhood associations and the Atlanta University Center institutions (Morehouse College, Spelman College, Clark Atlanta University, Morris Brown and Morehouse School of Medicine).

- **Focused Vision for Resident Retention, Neighborhood Character, Infrastructure and Parks and Open Space:**
 - Resident retention through the strengthening of neighborhood assets
 - Preservation of each neighborhood’s unique identity, including recommendations around the protection of historic structures and sites
 - Identification of key infrastructure projects and investment opportunities
 - Improvements to quality of life and mobility through increased access to parks, open spaces

Significant Strides toward Equitable Development

The adoption of the Framework Plan comes just weeks after Council’s unanimous approval of the **Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning Legislation**, which supports the creation of quality, affordable mixed-income housing - a key component of the plan.

The legislation requires new rental housing developments in BeltLine communities, such as the Historic Westside District, to reserve a percentage for affordable “workforce housing*” units.

Under the law, developers must allocate either 10 percent of its total units for households at 60 percent Area Median Income (AMI)* or below OR 15 percent of its total units for households at 80 percent AMI or below.

“We are extremely grateful for the leadership of Mayor Kasim Reed, Commissioner Tim Keane and his team and Atlanta City Council to ensure that all residents — no matter their background or socioeconomic status — have an opportunity to be part of the tremendous growth and revitalization that’s happening in our city,” said **John Ahmann, executive director of the Westside Future Fund**.

“These two actions are critical and important first steps, but only the beginning. We must continue to be intentional about creating opportunities for individuals who still find themselves below the current threshold,” **Ahmann added**. “As the birthplace of Civil Rights leaders and the adult home of Dr. King, we have great responsibility to carry on their legacy. Westside Future Fund is dedicated to fostering a community they would still be proud to call home. One that is compassionate, inclusive and economically just.”

Of the 6,300 current historic Westside households, 90% are renters. Of that number, more than 70% fall below the qualifying AMI, earning on average less than \$15,000 annually and often occupying notoriously sub-standard housing.

Since the establishment of the Westside Future Fund in Dec. 2014 by Mayor Reed and the Atlanta Committee for Progress, the organization has focused on ensuring the historic Westside develops as a mixed-income community, not displacing current residents, while also creating housing options for future residents of all income levels, especially as planned growth and development across the city foreshadow a higher demand for intown real estate.

According to Atlanta City Design Project, the City's population is expected to grow to 1.2 million people by 2050, nearly triple the city's current size.

- In 2016, Westside Future Fund led the development of a **community retention plan**, created to specifically address Westside residents' (homeowners and renters) concerns about displacement and gentrification.

The plan is a complement to the Land Use Framework Plan, outlining recommendations and strategies to address the concerns expressed during the community engagement period. Partners in the collaboration were City of Atlanta's Department of Planning and Community Development, the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Atlanta Housing Authority, Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Beltline and Atlanta Habitat for Humanity.

This collaborative of public-private entities, along with organizations within the nonprofit sector, are considered potential implementation partners** of the strategy as well.

- In April 2017, Westside Future Fund, in partnership with Mayor Reed and the City of Atlanta, announced one of the first initiatives of the strategy - the **Anti-Displacement Tax Fund**, which will pay property tax increases for the next 20 years for current, qualifying homeowners.

For renters, however, the solution has been more complex.

As part of its strategy for providing better quality of life for renters, Westside Future Fund lobbied for the Westside's four historic neighborhoods to be included in the new legislation, but acknowledges the long road ahead toward guaranteeing high quality, affordable options for all.

"To be successful at ensuring legacy residents are not displaced and can benefit from the current and future development, it will take collaboration across the public, private and nonprofit sectors," said **Ahmann**. "Leveraging philanthropy to bridge this disparity is our greatest opportunity, and we'll be calling upon the Atlanta community to help us address this need."

The inclusionary zoning policy will go into effect on all developments seeking a permit 60 days from the Nov. 7 City Council meeting date.

The Land Use Framework Plan will now be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Development Plan, ensuring its recommendations are factored into future planning decisions.

To learn more about the Westside Future Fund and its programs and initiatives, visit www.westsidefuturefund.org.

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About Westside Future Fund: The Westside Future Fund is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to reinvigorate community growth by coordinating and accelerating efforts to elevate the quality of life for residents in Atlanta's historic Westside neighborhoods.

*Definition of Terms:

- **Area Median Income (AMI):** The Area Median Income divides the income distribution for a geographic area into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median. HUD uses the median income for families to calculate income limits for eligibility in a variety of housing programs. HUD estimates the median family income for an area in the current year and adjusts that amount for different family sizes so that family incomes may be expressed as a percentage of the area median income.
- **Average Median Income:** Average median income is based on Census data and does not factor household size, but a general average of all incomes divided by the number of people reporting. Median household income for the Historic Westside neighborhoods is \$24,778, less than half of the City of Atlanta's (\$48,405).
- **Workforce Housing:** Workforce housing is a term that is being increasingly used to describe housing that is affordable for households with an earned income that is insufficient to secure quality "market rate" housing within a reasonable proximity to a workplace. Workforce is typically deemed between 60 and 120 of the Area Median Income (AMI).

The term "workforce" refers to those who are gainfully employed and represents a group of people who are not typically thought of as the focus of affordable housing – such as service industry, government, civil service, law enforcement professionals. Examples include teachers, nurses, police officers, firefighters, retail clerks, etc.

**Example Framework Plan Implementation Partners:

- Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
- Atlanta Housing Authority
- Atlanta University Center Consortium
- City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation
- City of Atlanta Department of Planning
- City of Atlanta Department of Public Works
- City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management
- City of Atlanta NPU-L
- City of Atlanta NPU-T
- City of Atlanta Office of Resilience
- Development Partners
- Fulton County/City of Atlanta Land Bank Authority
- Habitat for Humanity
- Invest Atlanta
- Local Nonprofits
- Metro Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA)
- Neighborhood Associations
- Park Pride, Inc.
- Private Property Owners
- Westside Future Fund