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A periodic update from the Peachtree Corridor Partnership

STREETCARS ARE KEY TO WALKABLE, CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

While the funding debate for new transit solutions in Atlanta remains at a stand-still, the community improvement districts in Downtown, Midtown and Buckhead continue to move on plans to create truly urban, walkable and connected communities along the Peachtree Corridor. The vision is to create a place that is not just walkable, but enjoyable to walk, with quality development catering to people, not cars, and housing choices for people with varying incomes. The proposed streetcar system is key to such a vision of Peachtree.

Peachtree is clearly poised for redevelopment, but the more critical factor to consider today is how it gets redeveloped. A quality streetcar system would encourage the Peachtree Corridor to develop in a transit-friendly way, reducing the need for parking structures and surface lots and encouraging more consumer activity at street level. According to an October 2007 *New York Times* article, the streetcar system in Portland, Oregon is an essential component that "made it possible for people to park their cars and turn Portland into a walking environment." *Read more of "A Streetcar Named Development" >*

Additionally, reducing the amount of parking lots can make housing along the corridor more affordable. In Atlanta, structured parking spaces can cost in excess of \$25,000 each. If developers can build less parking, they can pass on that cost savings to buyers and sell more units to a broader mix of income levels.

More than 70 American cities are studying the feasibility of streetcar systems, recognizing the astounding impact they can have on the economy. The same *Times* article reported that Portland's "city-owned streetcar line, which cost \$100 million to build, has helped sweep in \$2.4 billion in new commercial and housing development."

WHY PEACHTREE?

Critics of the Peachtree Streetcar proposal say that Peachtree Street is already developed, or surely will be in the near future, with or without a streetcar. However, Peachtree Street itself, while enjoying significant new investment in recent years, is still inconsistently developed, as are adjoining and parallel streets. In Midtown alone, about 30 percent of the commercial core is "ripe for redevelopment" according to the Midtown Alliance. The impact of the Peachtree Streetcar will be seen throughout the corridor, where there are countless opportunities for building rehabilitation and vacant or underutilized parcels.

Atlanta's long-term vision should be a modern streetcar system serving a number of key thoroughfares, running both north-south and east-west, and connecting at key points to the Beltline. But the Peachtree Corridor, in Midtown and Downtown specifically, is the most "transit-ready" in terms of infrastructure improvements, potential ridership, and density. It could most quickly serve as the "poster child" for an integrated transit network throughout Atlanta.

