

# ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

An ARC Five-Year Strategic Framework

October 26, 2016

## Regional Impact: 2016-2021

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### ARC Strategic Planning Task Force

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*Co-Chairman*

Mike Houchard, ARC Citizen Board Member, District 6

Cesar Mitchell, President, Atlanta City Council

Charlotte Nash, Chair, Gwinnett County Commission

Kerry Armstrong, ARC Board Chair  
*Ex Officio*

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# Milestones

2011-2016

Updated ARC Board bylaws

Played key role played in transportation and transit funding legislation

Implemented Economic Development Strategy

Integrated arts and culture as part of ARC portfolio

Pioneered program to dramatically reduce hospital readmission

Created 'Metro Atlanta Speaks' region-wide survey

Led the development of a high-functioning Homeland Security and Recovery division

Launched the Atlanta Aerotropolis Alliance

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# Forward

## ARC Colleagues:

In 2011, the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Board of Commissioners adopted a strategic plan, which was developed by the board's first Strategic Planning Committee. The work of the committee was developed to serve as a guide...

**"...to both current and future board members and staff in focusing resources and efforts most efficiently on the region's most critical needs. This plan is measurable and one that must grow and change as we work together towards implementation and the new challenges and opportunities ahead."**

Over the past five years, this strategic plan has served as the fundamental road map to guide ARC's critical – and evolving – role in meeting the needs of communities across our diverse and dynamic region. From the time the first strategic plan was adopted, the Board has focused on establishing expertise and demonstrating strategic leadership. As a result, the Board's ability to identify existing and emerging regional issues and guide the development of regional solutions has been greatly enhanced.

As our political, social and civic environment continues to change, the driving concerns of our Board have evolved. But the strategic objectives developed by the board in 2011 – demonstrating thought leadership, embracing innovative and holistic problem solving and adopting an action orientation – are dynamic and flexible. As such, they continue to serve as guiding principles of our 2016 strategic planning effort.

With great insight, the co-chairs of the Strategic Planning Task Force have reframed our efforts, moving away from the detailed language of a strategic plan to the guiding description of a strategic framework. This change enables the Board to provide a set of guiding principles for staff, while still allowing a high degree of autonomy for our staff to go about the business of executing on existing and emerging priorities.

Our work remains as important and relevant as ever, if not more so. Our ever-increasing competence and capacity as a trusted convener, our research and data, and our broad technical expertise makes our role in regional leadership increasingly significant. Armed with our newly refined strategic framework, we will be in position to have positively impact our region.

I deeply appreciate the efforts of the Strategic Planning Task Force and the leadership demonstrated by its Chair, Mayor Clark Boddie, for stewarding us through such a thoughtful and inclusive process. I look forward to working with each of you to build upon the product of their good work.



W. Kerry Armstrong  
Chairman

## INTRODUCTION

# The Charge

Since the development of the 2011 Strategic Plan, the ARC Board has hired a new Executive Director, who has implemented an “evolution strategy” designed to change the culture of ARC staff to support and extend the concepts embodied in the strategic plan. The 2011 strategic

plan is now five years old and must be reviewed and refreshed to reflect the agency's progress, as well as the current and anticipated civic environment.

## Atlanta Region is Changing Rapidly

Atlanta is one of the world's most dynamic metropolitan areas, competing globally on the strength of its resilience, diverse population, robust economy, cultural assets and attractive lifestyles. The dynamic nature of our region, along with increasingly rapid regional and national change creates higher levels of uncertainty. The Atlanta Regional Commission can expect greater levels of scrutiny as a broader set of variables are pulled into play, our sphere of influence widens, and as various community leadership and policymaking arrangements are negotiated in this shifting landscape.



**FIGURE 1:** The Evolution Strategy principles were implemented in 2012 and now serve to guide the development of the 2016 Strategic Framework.

## The Approach

In response to this charge, a six-person Strategic Planning Task Force was empaneled by Chairman Kerry Armstrong. The Task Force has been chaired by Mayor Clark Boddie, co-chaired by Chairman L.B. “Buzz” Ahrens and composed of four other Board members. The Task Force has been supported by senior staff. With a clear charge to review and refresh rather than replace or supplant, the Task Force established an aggressive timeline of activity. First, Board members were surveyed, to assess their perceptions of the agency’s risks and opportunities. At the Task Force’s request, senior staff also participated in the survey.

Armed with this information and with the recently completed Atlanta Region’s Plan, the Task Force set the context in which the 2016 strategic framework<sup>1</sup> would be crafted. The Task Force was able to increase and to sharpen:

- Its understanding of ARC’s operational context, to ensure that our mission, vision, and value statements remain relevant in these rapidly changing times
- Its understanding of key objectives which serve as high-level organizing themes for our work and, perhaps more importantly, serve as guidelines for making decisions about potential new or expanded opportunities
- Its effort at crafting a set of strategies needed to make significant progress toward achieving the stated objectives (as outlined on page 6 and following of this document).

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<sup>1</sup> The term “framework” versus “plan” was adopted by the committee, reflecting the broader directional, less prescriptive nature of the product

## Scope & Scale

The 2016 framework, like its predecessor, provides a comprehensive set of objectives and strategies enabling ARC to move forward in leading and supporting the region. This framework covers a five-year period (2016-2021); however, given the complex and fast-changing nature of our civic environment, the Board should regularly review and update this document as needed to adapt agency resources in response to, or anticipation of ,changing social, political, economic, technological and/or civic conditions.

### Elements of this Strategic Framework

The structure of this framework document begins with the Task Force review of high-level strategic elements (purpose, mission, vision and values) affecting the Atlanta Regional Commission. The document then addresses the finer elements, such as objectives and strategies. In drafting the strategic framework, the Task Force used the following definitions:

#### Mission

The mission describes why the organization exists. It describes its fundamental purpose and core business for the benefit of its stakeholders and society as a whole. Focused on the present, it emphasizes what the agency currently is and not what it is striving to become.

#### Vision

A vision is the definition of the state of nature for the organization some time in the future. It can define either the external view of the world as a result of the organization’s activities or the internal state of the organization. An explicit vision provides a clear picture everyone has of progress being made. Its ultimate purpose is to create a sense of shared purpose, motivation and drive to achieve among the organization and its employees.

## Values

Values are the organization's key guiding principles, fundamental beliefs and expected behaviors. Values help create a cohesive organizational culture and are critical to supporting the organization's mission and ensuring that its vision is ultimately achieved. They are the basis for decision-making as well as program design, and adherence to them requires continuous reinforcement.

## Objectives

Objectives are higher-level organizing ideas that, when achieved, support agency efforts to realize its vision. Objectives can be subdivided into lower-level organizing ideas called strategies.

## Strategies

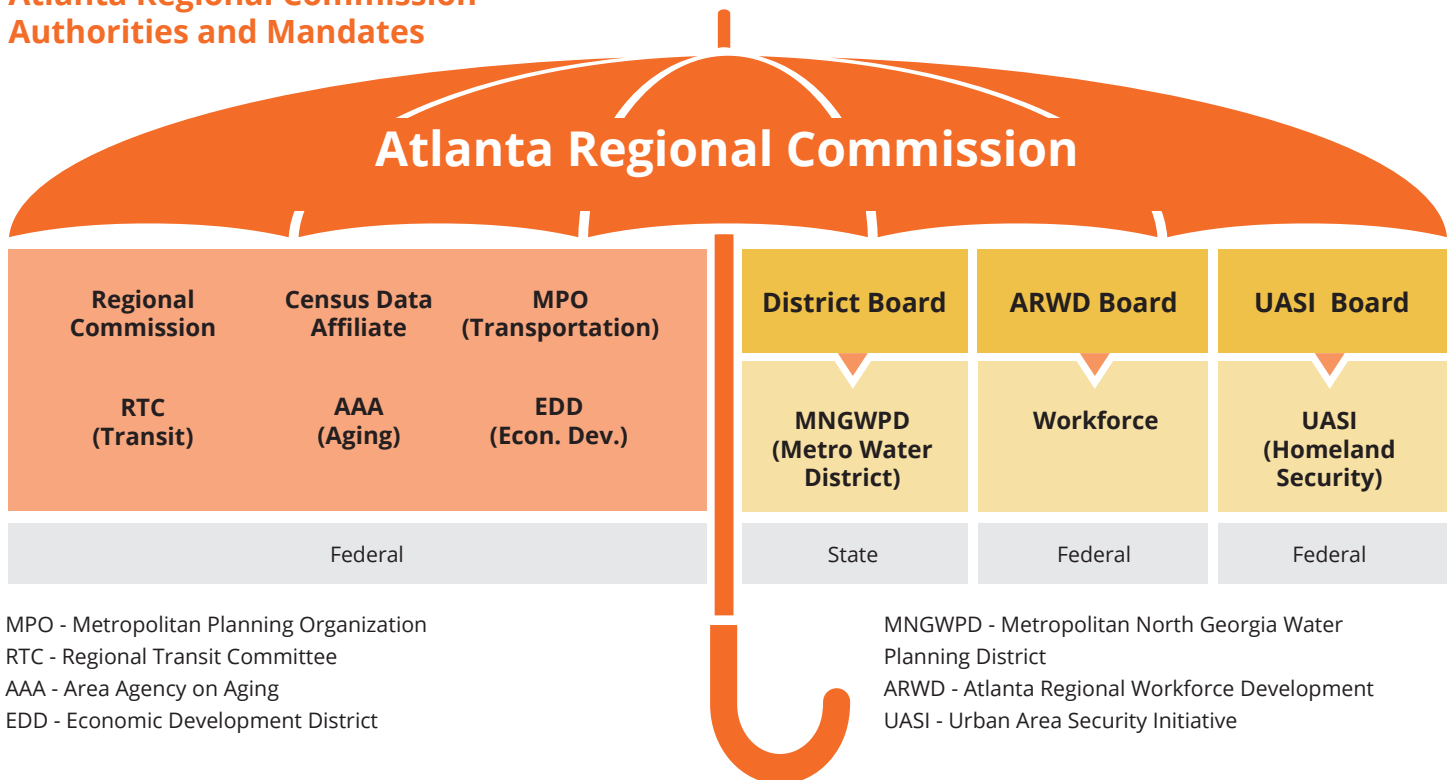
In our case, strategies are categories into which programmatic and project-related activities are organized.

# Stakeholders

The audience for this strategic framework document remains ARC stakeholders. They include, but are not limited to:

- Atlanta Regional Commission Board members and staff
- Local county and municipal governments
- Regional partners
- The governor and state legislators
- Residents of the region

## Atlanta Regional Commission Authorities and Mandates



# Mission, Vision & Values

## Mission Statement

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) advances the national and international standing of the region by leveraging the uniqueness of its evolving communities, anticipating and responding to current realities, and driving a data-driven planning process that provides a high quality of life, balancing social, economic and environmental needs of all our communities.

## Vision Statement

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) employs shared foresight, expert staff, the ability to convene diverse communities, and its reputation as a regional and national leader in order to support local governments, enhancing the lives of all our citizens by providing world-class infrastructure, building a competitive economy and shaping a regional ecosystem comprised of healthy and livable communities.

## Value Statement

### Regional Leadership

We exhibit, build and foster regional leadership to address and act on critical challenges and opportunities.

### Creative Regional Solutions

We anticipate challenges and develop creative, *holistic* solutions based on professional knowledge and *shared foresight*, community engagement and collaboration with our partners.

### Public Service

We are accountable to our stakeholders, try to exceed their expectations and exhibit the highest standard of ethical conduct.

### Collaborative Teamwork

We work in an *interdisciplinary, outcome-focused manner* with each other, with partners and with residents of the region in a concerted effort to build the highest quality of life for the metropolitan region and *ensure the success of our colleagues and partners*.

### Continuous Learning

We constantly seek new information, knowledge and skills to better serve the Atlanta region.



## OBJECTIVES &amp; STRATEGIES

## Summary

Objective Theme	Objective	Strategies
<b>Maintain ARC's Position as a Regional Leader</b>  Leadership is perceptual and/or structural, and because we are thinking more about perceptual leadership in this case, we must position ARC to be perceived by relevant players as a leader addressing regional issues.	To be recognized among regional stakeholders and national peers for being an important actor in achieving positive regional change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assume impactful leadership roles in various programs, projects and initiatives.</li> <li>Document the leadership roles and significant programmatic accomplishments, in the context of larger strategic objectives, on a regular basis.</li> <li>Ensure that our communications efforts are reported to a strategically developed portfolio of stakeholders and other targeted audiences.</li> </ul>
<b>Operate in Ways Relevant to State Legislators, Local Governments, Regional Communities and other Strategic Partners</b>  ARC's continuing relevance in advancing the regional interests is best demonstrated when we convene people and communities and provide technical and strategic support for state legislators, local governments and strategic community partners.	Pursue innovative regional solutions by convening people and communities and by supporting local governments and strategic partnerships in pursuit of aligned interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and reinforce strategic relationships with a broad spectrum of communities and organizations, in the pursuit of advancing regional interests.</li> <li>Track partner perception of satisfaction and contribution regarding ARC participation.</li> <li>Provide technical and strategic support of federal, state and local efforts to advance communities and the region.</li> </ul>
<b>Deliver Positive Impact, Aligned with our Mission and Values, in Areas Where ARC has a Presence</b>  ARC support of regional advancement, whether on our own or as part of collaborative work, should be additive and aligned – that is, our involvement should make a difference related to our unique portfolio of capabilities, capacities and expertise and be consistent with our mission and values.	Demonstrate advancement of major projects and initiatives that are in alignment with ARC's mission and values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that ARC's engagement in existing programs and projects is additive and aligned with the Board's mission and values.</li> <li>As a criteria for participation as part of major new programs and projects, articulate how ARC's involvement is additive and demonstrates alignment with the Board's mission and goals.</li> <li>Endeavor to make time, money and intellectual capital investments in areas of our skills portfolio, which broaden and/or deepen additive capability and capacity for the purpose of advancing our mission in ways consistent with our values.</li> </ul>
<b>Drive Organizational Operations Which are Efficient, Adaptive and Well Governed</b>  Our internal operations should be aligned so that all relevant resources are operating to achieve strategic outcomes and that operations are executed in a way consistent with our values.	Demonstrate organizational effectiveness and efficiency in support of major programs and internal operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure and manage a broad but representative set of organizational efficiency, effectiveness and strategic framework outcome.</li> <li>Align program and project processes and outcomes where there is an opportunity for greater resource leverage and/or impact.</li> <li>Maintain a solid financial base and balance budget.</li> <li>Provide regular opportunities for employees to share management best practices, both internally and with leaders from outside the agency.</li> </ul>

# Objective One

**To be recognized among regional stakeholders and national peers as an important actor in achieving positive regional change.**

Leadership is perceptual and/or structural, and because we are thinking more about perceptual leadership in this case, we must position ARC to be perceived by relevant players as a leader addressing regional issues.

## Strategies

### 1-1 Assume impactful leadership roles in various programs, projects and initiatives.

- Played a pivotal role in key transportation and transit funding legislation, 2015 and 2016
- Founded and led ARCHI (Atlanta Regional Collaborative for Health Improvement), along with United Way of Greater Atlanta and Georgia State University
- Developed memorandum of understanding for interoperable communication radio frequency; three of six jurisdictions have signed thus far
- Partnered with Atlanta Federal Reserve, United Way's Career Rise, Metro Chamber and ARC Research Division, to create the Metro Atlanta eXchange (MAX) workforce database – a first in the nation
- Developed and launched Atlanta Aerotropolis Alliance (now Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance)

- Created Regional Partners Council (with Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, United Way of Greater Atlanta and Metro Atlanta Chamber)

### 1-2 Document leadership roles and significant programmatic accomplishments, in the context of larger strategic objectives, on a regular basis.

- Developed first Metro Water District metrics report
- Led the region's five workforce development boards to create first regional strategic workforce development plan

### 1-3 Ensure that our communication efforts are reported to a strategically developed portfolio of stakeholders and other targeted audiences.

- Developed media partnerships with Public Broadcasting Atlanta (PBA), Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC) and Atlanta Business Chronicle
- Conceived and executed strategically-focused State of the Region Breakfast events
- Enhanced development and administration of leadership programs, including Regional Leadership Institute (RLI), LINK (Leadership Involvement Networking Knowledge) trip, Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta (ALMA) program, and Community Planning Academy (CPA)

# Objective Two

## Pursue innovative regional solutions by convening people and communities, and by supporting state legislators, local governments and strategic partnerships in pursuit of aligned interests.

We believe ARC's continuing relevance in advancing the regional interests is best demonstrated when we convene people and communities and provide technical and strategic support for state legislators, our local governments and strategic community partners.

### Strategies

#### 2-1 Establish and reinforce strategic relationships with a broad spectrum of communities and organizations in the pursuit of advancing regional interests.

- Organized regional exchange Board work sessions in Savannah and Columbus
- Established a Millennial Advisory Panel
- Strengthened relationships with external stakeholders, including the Metro Atlanta Chamber, United Way of Greater Atlanta, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, Georgia Chamber, Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC), National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), Georgia Transportation Alliance and others in an effort to align ARC interests with broad coalitions in pursuit of policy goals

- Significantly improved relationships among state and federal legislators and their staffs
- Absorbed arts planning and support from Metro Atlanta Arts & Culture Coalition

#### 2-2 Track partner perception of satisfaction and contribution regarding ARC participation.

#### 2-3 Provide technical and strategic support of federal, state and local efforts to advance communities and the region.

- Established Government Outreach ("GO") Teams, in conjunction with the Government Affairs division
- Built partnerships with nonprofit groups by executing community resilience and preparedness education program and a Regional Citizen Corps Exercise during National Preparedness Month
- Played a pivotal role in the passage of key transportation and transit funding legislation in 2015 and 2016

## Objective Three

**Demonstrate advancement of major projects and initiatives that are in alignment with ARC's mission and values.**

We believe that ARC support of regional advancement, whether on our own or as part of collaborative work, should be additive and aligned – that is, our involvement should make a difference related to our unique portfolio of capabilities, capacities and expertise and be consistent with our mission and values.

### Strategies

- 3-1 Ensure that ARC engagement in existing programs and projects is additive and aligned with our mission and values.**
- 3-2 As a criteria for participation in major new programs and projects, be able to articulate how ARC's involvement is additive and demonstrates alignment.**
- 3-3 In ways consistent with our core values, ARC will make investments of time, money and intellectual capital in areas which broaden and/or deepen capability and capacity for adding positive economic, social and environmental value to efforts advancing our mission.**

## Objective Four

**Demonstrate organizational effectiveness and efficiency in support of major programs and internal operations.**

Our internal operations should be aligned to achieve strategic outcomes in a manner that is consistent with our values.

### Strategies

- 4-1 Measure and manage a broad, but representative set of organizational efficiency and effectiveness measures.**
  - Implement Executive Director's agency dashboard in 2017 to track representative metrics of the organization's performance.
- 4-2 Align program, project processes and outcomes where there is an opportunity for greater resource leverage and/or impact.**
- 4-3 Maintain a solid financial base and balanced budget.**
- 4-4 Provide regular opportunities for employees to share management best practices, both internally and with leaders from outside the agency.**
  - Establish a community of practice among community engagement staff, independent of the center or division in which they work