

*Aaron Turpeau presented recommendations of the Global Atlanta Works Advisory Committee for maximizing the input of minorities and ethnic minorities in the planning process to the ARC Board on April 25, 2007. His report is summarized below.*

The Global Atlanta Works Advisory has successfully completed its original assignment over the course of three meetings. Our charge was to find ways to involve the many different minority and ethnic groups in the planning process for the future of this region. While the City of Atlanta and a couple of counties have a successful history of minorities being the majority, our ARC staff has reported that by 2030, the white population will be in the minority in the Atlanta region.

U.N ambassador Andrew Young, who was formerly a member of this group while serving as Mayor of Atlanta and who has a well- deserved international reputation of understanding race and ethnic group relationships, spoke to our committee. His themes were “Do not fear diversity, it is a blessing” and “Stay at the table”.

Our Committee struggled with the big question of what kind of region do we want to live in; Chinatown, Little Italy, Germantown, Little Cuba, Liberty City etc.? Do we want full integration? The last time we tried this, it was more like assimilation than integration. Do we want to be left alone, but consulted with, understood, sharing cultures, respected as equals? While we did not answer this main question, the Committee was leaning toward the latter.

ARC’s Global Atlanta Advisory Committee reached back to member organizations to seek ways of involvement and received positive responses. The first responses were “What can you do for me, or our people need this, or our people want this type social service or adjustment services. These were very parental responses, which were to be expected. It will take some concerted effort to build the belief that our government leaders really want their input in planning everyone’s future. Most ethnic minorities come from countries that this concept of community input would be totally foreign and the racial minorities that grew up here are still suspect of acceptance of equal access and input into the decision process.

With all of these considerations, our recommendations are:

- ARC should be a regional leader in maximizing the participation and inclusion of diverse leaders in decision-making in counties and cities, local boards and committees and consult ethnic groups to recommend participants.
- ARC should take aggressive actions for inclusiveness through reciprocal engagement and respect, which means members should attend multiethnic community affairs to increase cultural understanding.
- ARC should consider additional ways to use Environmental Justice policies to promote quality growth strategies that are inclusive of diverse communities.
- ARC should continue to build a comprehensive database reflecting racial, ethnic and immigrant resources.
- ARC's should continue and expand Global Atlanta Works and convene the advisory committee up to four times a year to make recommendations and assess the progress of diversity in planning.

Mr. Chairman, your Global Atlanta Works Advisory Committee does believe that Real Diversity is a blessing and encourages our government leaders to bring ethnic groups to the local and regional tables for input and staffing.

We would like to make it clear that that our goal is not to take anyone's piece of the American pie, but only to add more flavor and make it larger so all can share.

*Aaron Turpeau is chairman of the Global Atlanta Works Advisory Committee and ARC Board member from Atlanta.*