



ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION 40 COURTLAND STREET, NE ATLANTA,  
GEORGIA 30303

## **Global Atlanta Works Advisory Committee Meeting Summary**

**February 21, 2007**

**11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**ARC Board Room, Level C**

Aaron Tupeau, GAW Committee Chairperson opened the meeting with a recap of the purpose of the meeting indicating it is a follow-up to the November meeting, “The Challenge of Real Diversity in Planning for the Atlanta Region where the primary intent was to familiarize the group with the workings of ARC; and the international perspective on diversity provided by Andrew Young was also part of the preparation process for this group. He reminded the group of the charge in November to go back to their respective communities and share what was learned and bring back their recommendations. He noted that the primary purpose of the meeting today was to hear from them. He recognized representatives from ARC present as resources from the Office of the Director, Research, Workforce Development, Aging and Support Services.

Tupeau reminded the group that each representative was asked in advance to be prepared to make 3-4 minute presentations addressing:

- What your organization/agency think we should be doing to maximize your input in the planning process?
- How ARC’s resources, data be utilized accessible to you
- What is most useful to your organization

### **He further noted ARC is interested in**

- Understanding your priorities;
- How your priorities fit within ARC’s organizational structure, planning requirements and priorities; and
- Determining ways to integrate ARC’s planning priorities, programs projects, resources and tools with those of your community group or organization

Tupeau noted that this information would help frame the recommendations of the GAW Advisory Committee to ARC.

### **COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

Presentations by Community Groups began with Didi O’Connor representing the Filipino community. O’Connor noted that the information presented also represents input from Victor Romero, Alex Pascual and Roni Buenaventura.

Issues in the community include the following:

1. There is a **lack of group cohesiveness**, which can be attributed to the regionalistic and linguistic diversity in a country of over seven thousand islands, resulting in an **ineffective and weak voice**.

**A low rate of Filipino owned businesses and lack of Filipino entrepreneurship** account for

the absence of Filipino ethnic enclaves in large cities, like Atlanta. And a weak business sector translates **into weak political leverage.**

***What can ARC help facilitate?***

- *Provide opportunities, tax incentives or grants to groups/investors who would develop an area for an ethnic enclave, business center or cultural center.*
- *Provide leadership training/opportunities for students and young professionals. Provide information and training for small business development.*
- *Provide resources (venue, funds) to support an ongoing language enrichment program not just for Filipinos but others wanting to learn the language.*

2. The “immigrant linguistic paradigm” of **losing native-language fluency by the third generation** is sadly accelerated for our (Filipino) group. Most second generation Filipino-Americans (American-Born children of Filipino immigrants) cannot communicate in the first language of their parents. Efforts have been made to teach Filipino language classes. But lack of community support, a convenient venue and resources, including volunteers, have prevented success.

***What can ARC help facilitate?***

- *Encourage diversity programs in public and private schools.*
- *Promote and support cultural events.*

3. **Our children are faced with the challenge of two cultures and two sets of cultural value systems: one from parents and the other from mainstream culture.** Studies suggest that for Filipino Children, a lack of connection with their heritage contributes to **a weak sense of identity and low self esteem.**

The Filipino-American community in Atlanta has made efforts in providing programs for our youth to discover and take pride in their Filipino identity: The Filipino debutante’s balls, the Pista (festivals) Pasko (Christmas traditions and practices), the regional festivals, the FSA / Filipino student association activities in the universities and local schools, Filipino-folk dance classes, language classes etc.

***What can ARC help facilitate?***

- *Provide the community with the latest census-how many and where are the Filipinos?*

4. A number of our Filipino seniors (retired elder parents who came to visit or live with their adult children) live with working adult children and are left to fend for themselves during the day. Often times they experience boredom, neglect and loneliness. The caretakers (usually children with fulltime jobs) are faced with the challenge of balancing careers and extended families. Most do not have **health insurance.** Regarding this the Philippine Nurses of GA have periodically at public events conducted free clinics, along with the doctors of the Philippine Medical Association of GA

The Filipino community as it stands now, try to help with the issues in various ways and in small ways. Its main big project is attaining a Philippine Center, the venue where most of these activities can be held.

Currently, a committee is working with the City of Atlanta to find an area within Atlanta City limits where we may develop the area to set up the **Philippine Center.** And hopefully within the next year, we may find something, a great step <sub>2</sub> towards attaining our dream.

### ***What can ARC help facilitate?***

- *Share day care/ or senior centers facility with ethnic groups, (the Filipinos) or provide taxicab vouchers or bus service for house bound seniors, organized trips to museums, parks etc. Free clinics etc.*

**David Ramezani** outlined issues and recommendations from the perspective of the **Iranian community** relative to elderly issues, language, integration, economic development and recognition of Iranian culture, customs and holidays.

**Elderly issues** –concerns of the elderly who live in Atlanta and those who come for extended visits:

- Create senior centers for the Iranian elderly.
- Directory of health-care providers, primarily for seniors.
- Educate Iranian population on translation services available in banks, insurance companies, emergency services, courts. etc.
- Educate Iranian population on public services available to them and how to obtain them. (Food stamps, subsidized housing, Medicare etc.)
- Inform Iranian seniors of educational opportunities at GA public colleges and universities.

### **Language**

- Inform Iranian community how many resources are available which teach English as a second language.
- Establish bilingual driver's education (Farsi & English), both classroom and behind the wheel. (particularly for women)
- Overcome challenges of learning a foreign language when over 40 years old. (even for the brightest, educated and motivated)

### **Integration**

- Existence of some pre-conceived notions of prejudice (on both the Iranians and the Southerners) causes neither side to want integration thus creating greater misunderstandings.
- Inform Iranians of community organizations they could be involved in, such as the Kiwanis Club, ARC, Churches, etc.

### **Economic development**

- Encourage Iranians to participate in professional organizations. First we need the knowledge of what organizations exist.
- Form an Iranian Chapter in the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

### **Recognition of Iranian culture, customs and holidays**

- Iranians should participate in community events such as the Dogwood Festival, Inman Park Festival and others to showcase Iranian culture. This should help Iranian artists to gain recognition and the Americans to have a greater appreciation of the Iranian arts.

Ramezani also identified consulting, understanding what resources are available and how other cultures have successfully dealt with issues as important for the Iranian community.

**John Lee (President of the Korean-American Chamber)** briefly spoke on concerns of the Korean community. He noted that the estimate of the Korean population is lower than it is in actuality. He characterized Koreans as being business owners and noted that 80% of the Korean households own at least one business. He stressed the importance of having accurate community facts for the various community groups and emphasized the importance of going to the various communities; participating in their events: “see, hear and feel what we are doing.”

**Tony Flores (representing the Mexican American Business Chamber)** noted the shifting hispanic population and noted the impact of GA’s new immigration legislation (SB 529, Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act) as not conducive economic development. An additional issue identified was education and the importance of English as a second language. Concern was also expressed regarding the lack of employment opportunities for immigrants and refugees.

Recommendations/Solutions included the following points:

- Atlanta is one the 'hyper-growth' market for Hispanics-Need to capitalize on the opportunities and work collaboratively with Latino organizations and individuals on strategies to create and expand their business ventures
- Important to work with the Latino/Hispanic community to educate and engage in dialogue related to immigration issues
- Improving transportation options

**Nitin Shah, CEO, Imperial Investments, representing Indian community**

- Combining cultural values of this country with Indian culture/utilizing the best of both worlds
- “If you forget where you come from, you belong nowhere.”
- Need to utilize Indian professionals
- Education - Poor math training up to 7<sup>th</sup> grade-need to get the right manpower to succeed; expand foreign language
- Understanding of immigration-not all illegal immigrants
- Turning economic strength into political strength in Indian community

**Abdirahim Haji, Multicultural Center for Wellness, Peace and Development /Somalian community**

- Resources needed for elder adults
- Business development needed

**Yonas Abraha (business owner) representing Eritrean Community** – noted that services are poor; the community is not united and something is need to bring the community together; polarizing among Eritrean professions vs non-professionals. He noted a need for the following;

- Establishment of a community center
- Training and data on resources available
- A “mentor” community – a group that has already successfully navigated being in the Atlanta area as an immigrant population.

**Charles Johnson representing the Sweet Auburn Coalition** spoke of the need for assistance in telling the story (historical significance of Sweet Auburn. Recommendations noted:

- Facilitate a global, multicultural perspective for Auburn corridor - I-75/85 corridor split Auburn and impacting its economic vitality and community spirit; assistance needing to

- transform viaduct into an international designation; an oasis along Sweet Auburn corridor
- Help tell the story(historical significance) of Sweet Auburn
- Transportation – help ensure the inclusion of the Auburn corridor in the proposed Atlanta Trolley car loop

**Deanne Bonner, President, Cobb NAACP Branch** emphasized the importance of working to highlight positive contributions and strides in the Black community as well as participating in them.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION** – Following presentations, Turpeau summarized what he heard in terms of major or recurring themes relative to what ARC could do?

- Data sharing
- Reciprocal engagement
- Resource development and support
- Transportation, affordable housing, community centers, other senior services
- Cultural competencies- ESOL/Translation, awareness and sensitivity training
- Collaborative partnerships

**Primary target populations identified in the discussion:**

- Youth and children(second generation)
- Older adults'
- Business leaders/Entrepreneurs
- Community leaders
- Older adults

## **DEMONSTRATIONS OF TWO NEW GLOBAL ATLANTA WORKS COMMUNITY BUILDING TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

Darlene Daly demonstrated the online interactive multicultural directory and Paul DiGirolano provided a demonstration of the interactive mapping system of ethnic, racial and immigrant populations which is also linked to the multicultural directory.

## **NEXT STEPS**

GAW Advisory Committee member and ARC Bd member David Sjoquist referenced the 2006 Miami LINK trip has having an impact on spurring interest of the board on diversity. And, he also thanked participants from the perspective of another board member. Turpeau noted that the group was originally asked to participate in no more than three meetings. The committee expressed interest in continuing to assist ARC by making recommendations and assessments relative to the progress of diversity in planning.

Final thanks were extended to the 30 participants.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

Based on the deliberations of the committee and review of outcomes, the committee chairman submitted the following recommendations to Sam Olens, Chairman, ARC Board.

- 1.* ARC should be a regional convenor, leading efforts to maximize participation and inclusion of diverse leaders in all aspects of decision-making in counties and cities, local boards and committees. Ethnic organizations should be consulted to

recommend participants to ensure attendees are not always the same people.

2. ARC should take aggressive actions for inclusiveness through reciprocal engagement and respect; which means members should attend community affairs to increase cultural understanding.
3. ARC should consider additional ways to use Environmental Justice policies and promote quality growth strategies, inclusive of diverse communities and all issues;
4. ARC should continue to build a comprehensive database reflecting racial, ethnic and immigrant resources;
5. ARC's Global Atlanta Works program should be continued and broadened. The Advisory Committee will reconvene 2-4 times per year to make recommendations and assess the progress of real diversity in planning.