

CITY OF ATLANTA



June 22, 1967

CITY HALL ATLANTA, GA. 30303

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
COLLIER B. GLADIN, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.

FROM: Collier B. Gladin

SUBJECT: Plan for Central Business District

With reference to the proposal presented by Mr. Bob Bivens, Executive Director of Central Atlanta Progress, Inc. (C.A.P.) to the C.A.P. Board of Directors at their meeting of June 1, 1967, concerning the development of a plan for the Central Business District, first of all I want to agree with Mr. Bivens and C.A.P. that a C.B.D. Plan is vitally needed for downtown Atlanta. The advent of rapid transit, the relocation of garment wholesalers from the C.B.D., the extensive developments of John Portman at Peachtree Center, the Nasher Air-Rights and the Cousins Air-Rights developments, the proposals for urban renewal in the C.B.D. area by the C.I.P., and the Georgia State College development plan, all will have a tremendous impact on the future development of downtown Atlanta.

The City Planning Department has long advocated the development of a C.B.D. Plan. In 1962 this department published a report entitled "Central Atlanta," which contained an inventory of retail and office uses in the C.B.D., and recommended that a plan be developed. In 1965 I wrote to Mr. Pollard Turman, then president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, advocating such a plan in response to inquiries by the Chamber. I have had recent discussions with Mr. Cecil Alexander, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and with Mr. Bivens, regarding the development of a C.B.D. Plan. Considerable data has been gathered through the update of our Land Use Plan. The C.B.D. has not gone unnoticed by the City's Planning Department.

I strongly disagree with Mr. Bivens over the method he is advocating for preparing such a plan, however. Mr. Bivens, Mr. Jeff Wingfield of the Metropolitan Planning Commission (M.P.C.), and I have recently discussed this matter and agreed that each of our respective organizations has an interest in and a role to play in the development of such a plan.

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We agreed, however, that no one organization should play a dominant role. C.A.P., of course, is vitally interested in what happens to the immediate downtown area, but is not too concerned with the effect on the rest of the city or the Metropolitan region. M.P.C. is more concerned with the impact the C.B.D. has on the region as a whole and is not primarily concerned with the City of Atlanta. The City Planning Department, on the other hand, is most concerned with the C.B.D. and its relationship to the corporate limits of the city. All three agencies then are concerned with a different segment or interest of the population.

In order to assure the enthusiastic support of these three agencies as well as others such as the Chamber of Commerce, the C.B.D. planning process must be set up to allow the conflicting interests of the various agencies to be resolved. Without the wholehearted support of each of these bodies, the plan cannot be successfully implemented. C.A.P. represents the leaders of the business community whose property and business interests are involved and whose political support will be necessary to carry out the plan. Most of the funds to carry out the plan will no doubt come from bond funds paid for by the City of Atlanta and will require the support and approval of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen. Any federal funds used in the planning phase must be channeled through M.P.C. or through M.A.R.T.A., the agency responsible for the greatest single impact on the future development of the C.B.D.

It was generally agreed by Mr. Bivens, Mr. Wingfield, and myself that the approach designated as Number 4 in the C.A.P. minutes of June 1, 1967, more closely fitted the bill (i.e., using an outside consultant as coordinator).

Through his recommendations to C.A.P., Mr. Bivens has placed us in an awkward position. He has chosen to attempt to have C.A.P. play the dominant role and has almost completely left the City and M.P.C. out of the planning phase. Although he mentions the need for public (i.e., City) support, and the need for formal adoption and implementation by the City, and even proposes that the City supply a large part of the funds in cash, no where does he specify the role of the City's planning staff in the process.

By his action he has created an impasse between the City, C.A.P., and M.P.C. Unless the City wishes to turn the dominant role of C.B.D. planning over to C.A.P., then it must reject C.A.P.'s proposal. On the other hand, if the City were to undertake to prepare the plan itself, then we could expect little or no cooperation from Mr. Bivens and C.A.P., which cooperation is vital to its accomplishment. If we reject the C.A.P. proposal without explanation, then it puts us in the embarrassing position of not supporting planning for the C.B.D. as is implied by Mr. Bivens in his report to C.A.P. If either agency plays the predominant role, the other agencies will be constantly snipping at the results.

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It is my recommendation that C.A.P.'s proposal be rejected, and the reasons explained to the representatives of C.A.P.'s Board of Directors. Then I recommend that an alternate procedure be proposed to C.A.P. utilizing the private consultant as coordinator concept, originally discussed between Mr. Bivens, Mr. Wingfield and myself. Such an alternate proposal is discussed below.

I propose that a 15 - 25 member Central Business District Planning Committee be established by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen to supervise the preparation of a C.B.D. plan. That this committee be composed of representatives from the various affected bodies or groups such as the City (e.g., chairmen of Planning and Development Committee and Finance Committee of the Board of Aldermen), C.A.P., M.P.C., M.A.R.T.A., Chamber of Commerce, A.I.A., A.I.P., etc.; that the City of Atlanta, C.A.P. and the federal government through A.R.M.P.C. or M.A.R.T.A. appropriate funds to this committee for the purpose of preparing the plan; that the committee be authorized to employ a planning consultant (e.g., Eric Hill and Associates) to coordinate the activities of various technical specialists such as an economic consultant (e.g., Hammer, Silas, Green and Associates), traffic engineering and parking consultant (e.g., Allan Voorhees), architects (e.g., any one of a number of local architects), and the technical staffs of the City Planning Department, C.A.P., M.P.C., M.A.R.T.A., and to prepare a final plan based on the results of the work of the various technical specialists. Upon approval of the plan by the C.B.D. Planning Committee, it would be presented to various public and private bodies, including the Mayor and Board of Aldermen for their approval and adoption

This proposal is similar in some respects to the way our C.I.P. was set up; except that for the C.I.P. the wrong consultant was chosen for coordination, and the work programs and contracts did not sufficiently spell out the exact responsibilities and requirements of the participating consultants. After our experience with the C.I.P., we are able to profit from these mistakes and are in a better position to assist in establishing a more workable and successful arrangement.

Under the above proposal, the staffs of C.A.P., M.P.C., and the City Planning Department can be better utilized to make a more realistic contribution, since no one staff is able to do the complete job adequately alone. The C.B.D. Planning Committee will perform the role of resolving conflicts between C.A.P., the City and M.P.C. Each will have an opportunity to participate on an equal footing.

The above proposal seems eminently more feasible than that proposed by Mr. Bivens and C.A.P. Certainly a C.B.D. plan cannot be developed overnight - at least one that is workable and reasonably acceptable to all parties involved. But what good is a plan - no matter how quickly it is produced - which has virtually no chance of ever being implemented.