

Foreword

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Cities are where hope meets the street. They are the fast-moving, densely populated, vibrant population centers where dreams are both realized and deferred, often within blocks of each other. The growing importance of the city both nationally and globally represents a significant departure from the past. We live in an increasingly city-centric world where America's metropolitan regions drive economic, political, social, and cultural trends and national public policy.

This Symposium is about progressive cities, the challenges they face, and the potential solutions they offer for some of today's most difficult economic and social issues. In the pages ahead, the authors discuss the topics of economic inequality, adequate housing, environmental sustainability, immigration policy, and food access in urban areas. At a time when partisan gridlock has made real policy change at the federal level virtually impossible, and we compete in the global marketplace with emerging centers of commerce such as Shenzhen, Mumbai, and Dubai, the leaders of large cities are trailblazing on major policy issues of vital importance to the nation. Perhaps more now than ever, local leaders are called upon to devise policies and strategies that allow the businesses in their municipalities to compete on a global scale.

As the Mayor of Atlanta, I am deeply concerned with the issues presented in this Symposium. I share the view of the authors that they are of vital concern to progressive leaders and that local governments can play an important role in addressing these topics. I also believe that to successfully bring about substantive change on these issues, progressive leaders must first build a strong fiscal foundation and establish a high level of trust between their governments and constituents. Fortunately, cities and local government leaders are in a stronger position than ever to do so.

The dynamic role of the progressive American city in shaping and leading on issues of critical importance to the nation is a relatively new phenomenon. Not too long ago, the nation could still be defined as primarily rural. At the turn of the twentieth century, more than half of the population of the United States lived in rural areas, and forty-one percent of the workforce was employed in agriculture.¹ We defined ourselves as a country built on small-town values, idealized by television shows such as *The Waltons* and Walt Disney World-like images of Main Street U.S.A.

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¹ CAROLYN DIMITRI, ANNE EFFLAND & NEILSON CONKLIN, U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., *THE 20TH CENTURY TRANSFORMATION OF U.S. AGRICULTURE AND FARM POLICY 2* (2005).

The Great Depression and World War II led to a population shift that fueled several decades of urban growth in the nation. The nation's African American community, the vast majority of which lived in the South since the nation's founding, began its Great Migration to cities such as Detroit, Chicago, and New York.² By mid-century, the American city began to symbolize the aspirations not only of our nation's black population but also of a new, diverse wave of non-European immigrants seeking opportunity and a better life for their families.

However, the beginning of the 1960s marked the decline of the city. Main sources of urban prosperity such as auto plants and factories began to close at staggering rates.³ The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways enabled middle-class and affluent families seeking a greater sense of security, better schools, and larger homes to move to newly built suburbs. These new roads also enabled major employers to relocate to modern facilities and pay lower tax rates.⁴

The social and civil rights movements that took place throughout the 1960s and 1970s added to the pressures faced by city leaders. In the South, the brutal beatings of black Americans were broadcast on television stations across the world.⁵ The "urban renewal" efforts in northern cities displaced entire black communities and added to already mounting racial tensions.⁶ Demonstrations, sometimes violent, to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam inflamed both white and black America.⁷ The civil disobedience and rioting following the assassination of public figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made it seem as though the city's shining moment would be forever replaced with images of Newark, Chicago, and New York in flames.⁸ Many of the residents who remained in the heart of American cities during this period and in its aftermath were those who could not afford to live elsewhere.

After several decades of dealing with escalating crime rates, heavy job losses, and abandoned and blighted neighborhoods, many of America's cities are now on the rebound. More than eighty percent of the United States pop-

² See ISABEL WILKERSON, *THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS: THE EPIC STORY OF AMERICA'S GREAT MIGRATION* 9 (2011).

³ See NATHAN WRIGHT, JR., *READY TO RIOT* 57 (1968); see also GOVERNOR'S SELECT COMM'N ON CIVIL DISORDER, STATE OF N.J., *REPORT FOR ACTION* 45 (1968) (investigating the causes and events of the 1967 Newark race riots).

⁴ See William H. Frey, *Central City White Flight: Racial and Nonracial Causes*, 44 *AM. SOC. REV.* 425, 426–28 (1979).

⁵ See generally ANIKO BODROGHKOZY, *EQUAL TIME: TELEVISION AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT* (2012) (documenting the role of television network news in the civil rights movement).

⁶ See TOM HAYDEN, *REBELLION IN NEWARK: OFFICIAL VIOLENCE AND GHETTO RESPONSE* 6 (1967).

⁷ See generally CHARLES DEBENEDETTI & CHARLES CHATFIELD, *AN AMERICAN ORDEAL: THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT OF THE VIETNAM ERA* (1990).

⁸ See, e.g., James Coates, *Riots Follow Killing of Martin Luther King Jr.*, *CHI. TRIB.*, Apr. 5, 1968, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/politics/chi-chicagodays-kingriots-story,0,4609945.story>.

ulation now lives in large cities with 150,000 or more residents.⁹ Large cities generated almost eighty-five percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010, compared with seventy-eight percent for large cities in China and just below sixty-five percent for those in Western Europe during the same period.¹⁰ In the next fifteen years, the 259 largest American cities are expected to generate more than ten percent of global GDP growth—a share bigger than that of all such cities in other developed countries combined.¹¹

Atlanta is a key example of urban growth and renewal over the past decade. The city is home to approximately 422,000 residents,¹² with a population of almost 5.3 million in the twenty-eight-county metropolitan area.¹³ We have the world's busiest passenger airport with more than 95 million passengers per year¹⁴ and an annual economic impact of \$32 billion;¹⁵ the nation's fourth largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies;¹⁶ and more than fifty-seven colleges and universities in Atlanta and the surrounding area.¹⁷ Our future is bright in many regards: per capita income in the city increased by one percent over the past decade, even though it declined by a dramatic twelve percent statewide.¹⁸ Among young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, sixty percent are enrolled in college.¹⁹ However, we also must address areas of concern. Atlanta has the highest income inequality of any city in America.²⁰ The city's high-school graduation rate is

⁹ JAMES MANYIKA, JAANA REMES, RICHARD DOBBS, JAVIER ORELLANA & FABIAN SCHAER, MCKINSEY GLOBAL INST., *URBAN AMERICA: US CITIES IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY* 10 (2012).

¹⁰ *Id.* at 2.

¹¹ *Id.* at 1.

¹² *Regional Snapshot: 2012 Atlanta Region Population*, ATLANTA REG'L COMM'N (Aug. 2012), http://www.atlantaregional.com/File%20Library/Info%20Center/Newsletters/Regional%20Snapshots/Population/RS_August_2012_Pop.pdf.

¹³ *Large Metropolitan Statistical Areas—Population: 1990 to 2010*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (2012), <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0020.pdf>.

¹⁴ *Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport Still the Busiest in the World*, ETN GLOBAL TRAVEL INDUSTRY NEWS (Mar. 28, 2013), <http://www.eturbonews.com/34075/hartsfield-jackson-atlanta-international-airport-still-busiest-w>.

¹⁵ HARTSFIELD-JACKSON ATLANTA INT'L AIRPORT, 2009 ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY 2 (2009), available at http://www.atlanta-airport.com/docs/NewsRoom/2009_Economic_Impact_Study_report.pdf.

¹⁶ *Metro Atlanta Fortune 500 & Fortune 1,000 Headquarters*, METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER, 1 (2012), <http://www.metroatlantachamber.com/docs/resources/fortune-500-1-000-headquarters.pdf>.

¹⁷ *Metro Atlanta Is the Best Place to Nurture Your Business, Whether You're a Fortune 500 or an Innovative Start-up*, METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER, <http://www.metroatlantachamber.com/why-metro-atlanta> (last visited May 21, 2013).

¹⁸ This information comes from the internal records of the Atlanta Regional Commission.

¹⁹ This information comes from the internal records of the Atlanta Regional Commission.

²⁰ G. Scott Thomas, *Atlanta Has Worst Income Inequality Problem of Any Major City*, ON NUMBERS (July 4, 2012), <http://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/on-numbers/scott-thomas/2012/07/atlanta-has-worst-income-inequality.html?page=all>.

a dismal fifty-two percent.²¹ Nearly twenty percent of our children grow up in extreme poverty.²²

These disparities, faced by mayors across the nation, are the subject of the first article in the journal. Richard C. Schragger challenges us to question the definition of a “progressive city” and whether the usual liberal agenda—promoting economic growth and job creation, improving downtown amenities, and attracting high-income residents—is truly an effective means of producing economic development, and more importantly, of spreading resources and opportunity to a city’s poorest residents.²³ Schragger argues that most mayors, even those in primarily Democratic cities, are constrained from advocating and adopting a truly progressive agenda due to their desire to tout a pro-business growth agenda instead of a policy platform that addresses metropolitan-area inequality. A second impediment, he argues, is that our strong federal government hamstringing the ability of cities to have influence over the policies that affect them. Finally, Schragger posits that city leaders tend to be “invisible” in our national political discourse.

The solution, the author suggests, is for the truly progressive city leader to seek leverage in transactions with corporations and business entities and to resist abdicating the role of the city in providing education, housing, health care, and other resources to its most vulnerable constituents. Schragger sees opportunity for the adoption of this “twenty-first century urban liberal agenda” because of the deleterious effect of the Great Recession not only on the inner city but also on the suburbs, possibly leading to the embrace of a more regional outlook. He is also heartened by the rise of urban-based movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the progressive electoral coalition that re-elected President Barack Obama to a second term. A blatantly anti-corporate response, he warns, may not lead to a liberal agenda. Schragger cites the renewed libertarian discourse in the nation and the emergence and coalescence of power by the Tea Party in the wake of the Great Recession as examples of a nonprogressive backlash.

The collapse of the housing market and the high level of foreclosures in many communities are perhaps the most outwardly devastating and intractable consequences of the Great Recession and are the subject of Robert Hockett and John Vlahoplus’s intriguing article on one of the most vexing challenges facing city leaders.²⁴ They propose a solution for how cities can solve the foreclosure crisis that has left communities, such as San Bernardino, California, and Wayne County, Michigan, with depressed housing prices and unemployment and poverty rates significantly higher than the na-

²¹ Jacques Couret, *New Formula Shows Lower Georgia Graduation Rate*, ATLANTA BUS. CHRON. (Apr. 10, 2012), <http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2012/04/10/new-formula-shows-lower-ga-graduation.html>.

²² This information comes from the internal records of the Atlanta Regional Commissions.

²³ See Richard D. Schragger, *Is a Progressive City Possible?: Reviving Urban Liberalism for the Twenty-First Century*, 7 HARV. L. & POL’Y REV. 231 (2013).

²⁴ See Robert Hockett & John Vlahoplus, *A Federalist Blessing in Disguise: From National Inaction to Local Action on Underwater Mortgages*, 7 HARV. L. & POL’Y REV. 254 (2013).

tional average. The cyclical irony is that cities, facing widespread blight and, in some cases, an increase in crime in neighborhoods hardest hit by the collapse of the housing market, cannot raise enough revenue to address these problems. They are unable to do so because property taxes, usually the single largest revenue generator for a city, have plummeted and have yet to rebound from the collapse of the housing market in 2008. Citing federal inaction, Hockett and Vlahoplus call on municipalities to expand their role and take the lead in resolving the foreclosure crisis by using their traditional eminent-domain powers to purchase underwater mortgage loans at fair value and sidestep the complicated pooling-and-servicing agreements used during the boom years to secure loans.

Michael Negron, Chief of Policy to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, writes a compelling piece about how cities can augment and, in fact, move more swiftly than the federal government to enact change in a priority area for today's progressive municipal leaders: sustainability.²⁵ While cities do not have authority that is not delegated to them from the state, Negron challenges local leaders to make substantive progress on policy issues, such as climate change, that seemingly fall entirely within a federal context. He illustrates how Chicago, through creative use of its planning authorities, buying power, and the bully pulpit of the Mayor, has earned a reputation as one of the nation's greenest cities. The city became a global leader in green roofs and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified buildings, developed an innovative approach to purchasing electricity through a coal-free agreement with its supplier, and partnered with community and environmental activists to close the last two coal plants in the nation within the limits of a major city.

In Rick Su's analysis of immigration policy, he shows how local government leaders deal with the often sensitive and complicated issues that affect immigrant communities and often lead the national discourse on effective strategies in this area of policy making.²⁶ Su deftly outlines how cities have served to moderate the increasingly divisive and rancorous rhetoric at the federal level. Local governments do not have the legal authority to make immigration policy; yet, they are often at ground zero of the federal strategies that focus primarily on the enforcement of immigration laws, such as border protection. As such, local governments have taken it upon themselves to enforce federal policy in ways they see fit, based on the social needs and concerns of the immigrant communities they encounter at close proximity.

Many mayors and municipal leaders interact with immigrants on a much more intimate level than federal policy makers and indeed, Su argues, value the cosmopolitan culture of those diverse communities. These local

²⁵ See Michael Negron, *Limited Authority, Big Impact: Chicago's Sustainability Policies and How Cities Can Push an Agenda Amidst Federal and State Inaction*, 7 HARV. L. & POL'Y REV. 277 (2013).

²⁶ See Rick Su, *The Promise and Perils of Cities and Immigration Policy*, 7 HARV. L. & POL'Y REV. 299 (2013).

leaders have chosen various ways to respond to federal enforcement policy, including resistance, accommodation, and deflection. An example of local resistance is refusing to automatically hold a suspect for federal authorities on immigration-related grounds. Some city leaders decide instead to accommodate undocumented immigrants. They avoid forcing these individuals to the margins of society and give them special identification cards that enable them to access services at public libraries, hospitals, and banks. Other local government leaders deflect the challenge of addressing undocumented residents by enacting stringent labor and housing laws and other measures that cause immigrant populations to move to nearby suburbs, cities, or states. Interestingly, some cities practice a combination of strategies. Los Angeles, for example, has enacted policies and measures that resist federal immigration enforcement, accommodate undocumented residents, and shift some of the population to other cities through wage and working conditions.

Such proactive steps by local governments are not without risk for progressive immigration policy. There are consequences. For example, a local government may be quicker to transfer an undocumented immigrant to federal custody to avoid the bill for incarceration. Ultimately, however, it appears likely that local leaders will increasingly play a more active role in the immigration debate because the expansion of federal immigration regulations affects cities in a multitude of ways every day, from the screening of laborers to responding to undocumented immigrants at the neighborhood level in schools and hospitals.

Municipal leaders are also becoming involved in decisions related to food access, starkly redefining a nation in which the traditional rural hubs of agriculture and food production were far removed from the inner city. In her article on food access at the local level, Emily Broad Leib details the various ways in which cities are working to promote healthier eating and lifestyles among their residents through various policies.²⁷ Whether they are called “food deserts” or “food swamps,” a range of communities across the nation lacks access to healthy food options, a disparity that is greater in African American and Hispanic neighborhoods than in the general population. Broad Leib suggests city leaders hire a food policy director or coordinator and engage the community to work on a range of initiatives ranging from planting urban gardens to supporting farmers markets, permitting food trucks, and increasing mobility to enhance access to more food choices.

As the leader of a major American city, I am challenged by these same issues on a daily basis and agree with the aforementioned authors that comprehensive, data-based solutions should be integral components of any progressive local or municipal agenda. When I was inaugurated three years ago, the unemployment rate in metropolitan Atlanta was 10.2%. Entire neighborhoods had been abandoned due to the foreclosure crisis. The city’s sustainability plan was largely a white paper versus a proactive agenda with

²⁷ See Emily Broad Leib, *All (Food) Politics is Local: Increasing Food Access Through Local Government Action*, 7 HARV. L. & POL’Y REV. 321 (2013).

real goals and measurable results. State lawmakers, representing politically conservative legislative districts, enacted tough immigration policies. And several communities in the city's urban core lacked grocery stores, access to fresh produce, and healthy food options.

However, I decided to first focus on several priorities before pursuing a broader agenda that encompassed those issues. Why? I believe that a local leader can successfully enact progressive reform only if he or she delivers fundamental services to the public and earns a high level of confidence from his or her constituents. Sir Michael Barber, who helped guide British Prime Minister Tony Blair through some of the United Kingdom's leanest times as his Chief Adviser on Delivery, discussed this essential point in his book *Instruction to Deliver*.²⁸ Barber stressed that government leaders must first focus on a small number of key initiatives that win constituent confidence and support before tackling a broader, more far-reaching agenda.²⁹ It would be impossible to discuss my vision for Atlanta to become one of the greenest cities in America if the city had no funds in its reserves or could not provide the most basic, essential services in a timely and efficient manner. As such, my top priorities during my first year in office were to restore the city's financial health, reduce crime and hire more police officers, invest in the well being of the city's youth, and improve customer service.

In January 2010, Atlanta was in a weakened fiscal state. The city only had \$7 million in cash reserves and faced a \$48 million budget shortfall. The city's \$1.5 billion unfunded pension liability was eating up twenty percent of the city's annual budget, which was \$550 million and had decreased by almost \$100 million since 2008.³⁰ Due to the housing-market collapse, revenue collections had plummeted.³¹ The city's tax digest had decreased by \$15 million. I directed my administration to immediately focus on strengthening the city's financial health.

Since then, the city has had balanced budgets every year with no property-tax increases. Its reserves have increased seventeenfold to more than \$126 million.³² With the unanimous support of the Atlanta City Council, and in partnership with the city's employees' unions, the city enacted sweeping reform in 2011 to address a runaway unfunded pension liability that had grown from \$321 million to \$1.5 billion between 2001 and 2009.³³ The pen-

²⁸ MICHAEL BARBER, *INSTRUCTION TO DELIVER: TONY BLAIR, PUBLIC SERVICES AND THE CHALLENGE OF ACHIEVING TARGETS* (2007).

²⁹ See *id.*

³⁰ Jeremiah McWilliams, *Atlanta Increases Cash Reserves to \$127 Million*, ATLANTA J.-CONST. (Jan. 7, 2012), <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/local/atlanta-increases-cash-reserves-to-127-million/nTpsZ/>.

³¹ See Motoko Rich, *A Dismal Distinction in Housing*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 1, 2012, at B4.

³² Dave Huddleston, *Atlanta Adds \$119M to Cash Reserves in 2 Years*, WSBTv (Jan. 7, 2013), <http://www.wsbtv.com/news/news/local/atlanta-adds-119m-cash-reserves-2-years/nTp nB/>.

³³ Penelope Lemov, *Atlanta Pulls Off a Major Pension Overhaul*, GOVERNING MAG. (July 14, 2011), <http://www.governing.com/columns/public-finance/atlanta-pulls-off-major-pension-overhaul.html>.

sion reform legislation will save the city \$270 million over the next decade and \$500 million over the next thirty years.³⁴

My next priority was enhancing public safety. I believe creating a safe city is essential for local leaders to build and maintain public trust. Since I took office, violent crime is down to levels not seen since 1972.³⁵ My administration also invested in the Atlanta Police Department by hiring more than seven hundred police officers, bringing the force to nearly two thousand sworn officers, the largest in the city's history.³⁶ Last year, we realigned the police department's beat structure to reduce response times throughout the city and allow patrol officers time to engage in proactive, community-oriented policing. The department also designated two full-time police-officer liaisons to work with the city's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) community. In 2011, the department also launched a state-of-the-art video surveillance network that connects public- and private-sector cameras to enhance public safety.³⁷ My administration also hired more than seventy-five new firefighters, eliminated brownouts due to staffing shortages, and improved response times.³⁸ As a result, fire deaths and property loss are at a historical low in the city of Atlanta. I also asked my administration to focus on re-opening all of the city's recreation centers and pools, which were closed in 2009 as a result of the recession. We launched two after-school programs, called "Centers of Hope," for some of our city's most vulnerable young people in several of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods.³⁹ In an interview with Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Thomas Friedman, I said:

The nation's leaders could no longer afford to accept low educational attainment and limited employment options for many of its poor, minority and rural populations. The United States must fully invest in its people to successfully compete against emerging economies around the globe and continue to be a force for freedom and democracy.⁴⁰

³⁴ See Richard Anderson & Phil Kent, *Pro & Con: Does Atlanta's Pension Reform Substantially Fix the Problem?*, ATLANTA J.-CONST. (July 13, 2011), <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/opinion/pro-con-does-atlantas-pension-reform-substantially/nQJYF/>.

³⁵ See *Mayor Says Felonies in Atlanta Lowest in Decades*, POLITIFACT GA. (Feb. 13, 2013), <http://www.politifact.com/georgia/statements/2013/feb/26/kasim-reed/mayor-says-felonies-atlanta-lowest-decades/>.

³⁶ Walter C. Jones, *Reed Plays Role as Statewide Mayor*, SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS (Jan. 28, 2013), <http://m.savannahnow.com/news/2013-01-28/reed-plays-role-statewide-mayor>.

³⁷ See *Atlanta Police Including Private Surveillance Cameras in Monitoring Center*, GOV'T TECH. (Sept. 20, 2011), <http://www.govtech.com/public-safety/Atlanta-Police-Including-Private-Surveillance-Cameras-in-Monitoring-Center.html>.

³⁸ See Duffie Dixon, *Atlanta Fire Rescue Making Strides to Fully Staff*, 11ALIVE.COM (Oct. 31, 2011, 8:42 AM), <http://www.11alive.com/news/article/211077/40/Atlanta-Fire-Rescue-Making-Strides-to-Fully-Staff>.

³⁹ See Ernie Suggs, *Atlanta Mayor Reed Opens Community Centers as He Promised in Campaign*, ATLANTA J.-CONST. (Aug. 10, 2010), <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/local/atlanta-mayor-reed-opens-community-centers-as-he-p/nQjHr/>.

⁴⁰ See THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN & MICHAEL MANDELBAUM, *THAT USED TO BE US* 134 (2012).

The “Centers of Hope” initiative provides safe, structured, academic, physical-fitness, and character-building activities for children in the critical hours between three o’clock and seven o’clock in the evening. We have learned that the majority of the students enrolled in the program qualify for the federal government’s free and reduced lunch program; most have told their counselors and coaches that they do not always have a hot meal at night.

Finally, my administration has enhanced customer service in every department. We streamlined the city’s building-permit process, created a Customer Service Bill of Rights, trained all city employees in a courtesy-and-respect program, launched a new website with greater customer interactivity, and are in the process of opening a 3-1-1 Customer Service Center.

Once those top goals were met, my administration turned its attention to many of the broader policies and topics that will be discussed in this Symposium. An issue on which my administration has focused is the widening economic inequality in the inner city. This is especially important to me because Atlanta has a long history, beginning with Mayor Maynard H. Jackson, of fostering and supporting entrepreneurs, especially women, minorities, and small-business owners. I believe a progressive city agenda requires a strong economic platform; you can’t love jobs and hate business. We have focused on attracting a range of jobs to the city, both high-paying salaried jobs and jobs in inner-city neighborhoods that pay hourly wages.

Invest Atlanta, the city’s economic-development authority, works to strengthen the city’s economy and global competitiveness by fostering increased opportunity and prosperity. Its programs and initiatives focus on developing and fostering public-private partnerships to create jobs, grow the economy, revitalize neighborhoods, attract new investments, spur innovation, and encourage entrepreneurship. A strong progressive agenda also requires a strong relationship with the corporate community. This partnership can result in substantive assistance for some of a city’s most vulnerable residents. Since I have been Mayor, those relationships have netted more than \$4 million in corporate philanthropic support to my youth initiative, the “Centers of Hope,” which provides safe, structured after-school environments where young people can study, play, and build strong character skills. Dedicated corporate partners, including Coca-Cola, Turner Broadcasting, and Wells Fargo, are among those who have contributed over \$4 million to this initiative.⁴¹ The programs serve more than nine hundred children every week and will expand to two more locations this year.⁴²

As I think about Atlanta’s future, I am pleased that the city is making great strides in the area of sustainability, an area of growing importance across the nation. Cartlanta, the city’s new residential recycling program,

⁴¹ See M. Alexis Scott, *Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed Is Living His Dream*, ATLANTA DAILY WORLD (Feb. 15, 2013), <http://www.atlantadailyworld.com/m-alexis-scott/mayor-reed-state-of-the-city-atlanta-mayor-kasim-reed>.

⁴² *Centers of Hope*, CITY ATLANTA (Jan. 31, 2012), <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?recordid=674&page=744>.

has increased recycling tonnage by thirty percent, while internal recycling rates in City Hall and other municipal building have increased sixfold.⁴³ The Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, an initiative that seeks to reduce energy and water consumption by twenty percent by the year 2020 in commercial buildings, now includes forty-eight million square feet and seventy-four properties.⁴⁴ The city's Midtown district has been recognized for creating the Southeast's first EcoDistrict, a model for sustainable, mixed-use, urban living.⁴⁵ The city also completed a co-generation project at one of its wastewater treatment centers, which eliminates open-air gas flaring and produces up to twenty percent of the plant's electricity needs. The project is expected to save the city more than \$1 million annually. These projects, as well as the establishment of an increasing number of urban gardens, farmers markets, and food trucks throughout the city, have gained momentum through the efforts of the city's revitalized Office of Sustainability.

I am also focused on improving Atlanta's transportation infrastructure, a challenge that has critical implications for a city's ability to address economic inequality, foster a mobile and diverse workforce, improve sustainability, improve access to food, and create a healthier lifestyle for its residents. Over the past three years, the city has opened four-and-a-half miles of new trails and four new parks totaling more than thirty acres, including the city's first energy-cost-neutral park on the Atlanta BeltLine, a twenty-two mile loop of parks, trails, and eventually rail that circles the city's inner core.⁴⁶ As part of the Atlanta BeltLine project, the city has remediated nearly eighty acres⁴⁷ of contaminated land, and funding has been committed for more than 120 affordable housing units.⁴⁸ To date, the Atlanta BeltLine has garnered more than \$41 million in private support⁴⁹ and was named as one of the best transportation projects in the nation by the Sierra Club in 2012.⁵⁰

⁴³ Press Release, Atlanta Mayor's Office of Commc'ns, City of Atlanta Increases Recycling Collections Since Launch of 'Cartlanta' Program (Jan. 17, 2013), available at <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=672&recordid=1612>.

⁴⁴ Greg Bluestein, *Atlanta Energy-Efficient Building Challenge Spreads Fast*, ATLANTA J.-CONST. (DEC. 28, 2012), <http://www.ajc.com/news/business/atlanta-energy-efficient-building-challenge-spread/nTgzzi/>.

⁴⁵ See Catherine Smith, *Midtown Alliance Wins E3's "Power of Place" Award for Leadership in Creating the Midtown EcoDistrict*, MIDTOWN PATCH (Mar. 28, 2013), <http://midtown.patch.com/announcements/midtown-alliance-wins-e3s-power-of-place-award-for-leadership-in-creating-the-midtown-ecodistrict-669c65c3>.

⁴⁶ Kasim Reed, *An Open Letter From Mayor Kasim Reed*, <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=736> (last visited May 21, 2013).

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ See *Affordable Housing Progress*, ATLANTA BELTLINE, <http://beltline.org/progress/progress/affordable-housing-progress/> (last visited May 21, 2013).

⁴⁹ Jeremiah McWilliams, *Woodruff Foundation Donates \$3 Million to Atlanta Beltline*, ATLANTA J.-CONST. (Nov. 16, 2012), <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/local/woodruff-foundation-donates-3-million-to-atlanta-b/nS8Sg/>.

⁵⁰ David Pendered, *Sierra Club Names BeltLine as One of Nation's Best Transportation Projects*, SAPORTA REP. (Dec. 19, 2012), <http://saportareport.com/blog/2012/12/sierra-club-names-atlanta-beltline-one-of-nations-best-transportation-projects/>.

In addition to the Atlanta BeltLine, the city recently commenced the construction phase of the Atlanta Streetcar project, a two-and-a-half mile of track that connects the city's downtown and tourist hub with the historic African American Sweet Auburn district. My administration also has funded \$2.5 million to create twenty-six new, high-quality bicycle projects around the city, which will enhance safety and efficiency for current cyclists and is part of the city's plan to attract new riders by connecting diverse neighborhoods to the Atlanta BeltLine and various activity and employment centers.

I have also spent considerable time and energy on cultivating the talent of young professionals, an aspect of progressive leadership that I believe is often overlooked and perhaps may be the most important leadership principle for local government officials. Organizations that succeed recruit and hire the best people, invest in their human capital, and then help them innovate and create. Two years ago, I attended a conference with mayors hailing from cities all over the country. The financier and innovator Michael Milken gave a presentation on the importance of investing in talent and how the best leaders are able to inspire a small number of people to do amazing things.⁵¹

In his speech, Milken used Singapore and Jamaica as examples. In 1960, both Singapore and Jamaica declared their independence from the United Kingdom. At the time, both were very similar in size, climate, population, and wealth. But Jamaica's leaders, despite their efforts, were not able to take full advantage of their new independence from Great Britain to try innovative practices. The country relied on tourism, agriculture, and old manufacturing practices. Singapore, on the other hand, took stock in its people, put faith in their abilities and their innovations, took chances, and stepped into the future. Today, fifty years later, Singapore is a wealthy, innovative nation with more than four times the average per capita income of Jamaica. Milken argued that both are wonderful countries with unique characteristics, but Singapore grew economically by putting its stock into human capital—its people—and allowing them to innovate and change. Modern, progressive leaders must work along two tracks: now and the future. They must deliver today for the “what have you done for me lately” crowd and also think ahead and plan for twenty, thirty, and fifty years ahead.

Without a doubt, progressive cities will lead and shape our nation for generations to come. Local leaders should first deliver on their basic obligations to their constituents and then chart a progressive agenda that can be executed by talented professionals who are passionate about public service. To effectively address the issues outlined in this Symposium, local leaders will have to forge strong partnerships with the private sector as well as with the state and federal government. But by setting clear objectives and measurable outcomes, I believe they can create bipartisan, progressive agendas

⁵¹ See Crystal D. Swann, *Milken Offers Perspective Looking “Toward a New American Century,”* U.S. MAYOR, Aug. 1, 2011, at 9, available at http://www.usmayors.org/usmayor/newspaper/documents/08_01_11/080111USMayor.pdf.

and succeed in enacting them, creating more prosperous and just cities. More than simply promulgating an agenda—for there is promise and peril in any undertaking—city leaders are uniquely poised at this time to move the nation forward due to the paralysis at the federal level. It is not a question of whether we can do it; rather, it is whether we have the will to do it.