

Hear Every Voice

Case Study: Model Atlanta Regional Commission



A youth commission for high school students to contribute to the community and develop leadership skills.

Atlanta, Georgia

Atlanta Regional Commission, YMCA of Georgia

Context: The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the Atlanta region. Its mission is to “demonstrate professional and forward looking leadership to ensure sustainable growth and competitive advantage by focusing and balancing Environmental Responsibility, Economic Growth, and Social Needs” (<http://www.atlantaregional.com/about-us>). As the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization, it serves 10 counties and 68 cities with a population of approximately 4.1 million (ARC 2010).

Public Involvement: In 1998 the Atlanta Regional Commission partnered with the YMCA of Georgia to set up an opportunity for youth to engage in regional planning efforts. Named the Model Atlanta Regional Commission (MARC) and modeled after the Georgia State Youth Assembly, it is an opportunity for high school students to contribute to their community and develop leadership skills. Every year roughly fifty students from the 10 counties in the ARC area are selected to serve on MARC through a competitive application process. Students are chosen based on a variety of factors such as academic achievement, extracurricular activities, level of interest, a written essay, and recommendations (California Center for Civic Participation 2004).

Project Details

Location

Organizations

Case Summary

Visualization

Internet

Meeting Activity

Model Atlanta Regional Commission Application Form

source: <http://www.atlantaregional.com/about-us/leadership-opportunities/model-atlanta-regional-commission>

Students selected to serve on the MARC are required to attend five Saturday sessions and one overnight retreat during the school year. Additionally, students are expected to spend up to four hours on research between meetings if required. During the MARC sessions, students learn about issues affecting the Atlanta area. Various local experts provide information on topics such as transportation, water quality, human services, land use, and development. After students have a general understanding of the topic and issues at hand, small committees are formed. The small committees are then tasked with developing possible solutions to the region's challenges (California Center for Civic Participation 2004).



source: <http://www.vimeo.com/12271965>



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At the MARC final meeting, youth commissioners present and vote on the resolutions they have drafted. Modeled after the ARC Board meeting, this meeting is intended to capture the top resolutions that will help create a "stronger, healthier Atlanta region" (MARC 2010). As a final step, the final resolutions identified by the youth commissioners are presented to the ARC for consideration.

THE MARC has developed solutions to challenges facing the Atlanta region. Solutions included:

- *An incentive plan for students to carpool in order to combat air pollution*
- *Creating community centers to serve as central gathering spaces that nurture neighborhoods (California Center for Civic Participation 2004); and*
- *Development of "Stick to It" program that asked people to give up their cars for one day a week to lessen traffic in the Atlanta region (from MARC video clip, Rodrigo Ortiz-Gomez).*

MARC is in its 13th year as an effective program to engage youth in the planning process for the Atlanta region. It has been successful in developing solutions to some regional challenges, and has provided students with extracurricular leadership skill-building opportunities.

Model Atlanta Regional Commission Example Resolutions



MODEL ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Subject: Resolution by the Model Atlanta Regional Commission concerning Atlanta's effort to prepare for the installation of a High Speed Rail Hub.

Introduced By: Transportation and Air Quality Committee

WHEREAS, The Model Atlanta Regional Commission desires to improve Atlanta's preparation for the federal installation of a High Speed Rail Hub in Atlanta and surpass the efforts of other competing southeastern cities; and

WHEREAS, If another southeastern city (some of which are already exceeding Atlanta's preparations) succeeds in winning the federal government's approval for the building of the hub in their city, Atlanta's economy and role as the international hub of the southeast could be compromised; and

WHEREAS, Having the hub located in Atlanta will improve the connectivity of the metro-Atlanta region and also improve the connectivity of the Southeast mega-region; and

WHEREAS, The introduction of a High Speed Rail hub in Atlanta will improve business and attract companies to establish their bases in Atlanta; and

WHEREAS, The High Speed Rail Hub would increase tourism in the region, bringing in more revenue, and therefore improve the economy of the region; and

WHEREAS, the hub's proximity to the international Hartsfield-Jackson Airport would bring more international attention to the region;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Model Atlanta Regional Commission, in order to improve preparation for the High Speed Rail Hub, proposes to work in collaboration with the Communications and Public Involvement Committee to encourage public knowledge and support of the High Speed Rail project. This will be achieved through media advertisements and also Transportation and Air Quality Committee representatives who can inform the public, along with local companies and businesses, knowledgeable about the High Speed Rail project and the importance of the Atlanta hub.

AND, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that to supply further publicity and the financial backing that the project requires, the Model Atlanta Regional Commission proposes to win the support and investments of Atlanta's leading companies in order to keep all aspects of the region involved. The cooperation will be advertised as joining together to work towards an improvement for the entire region.

source: <http://www.atlantaregional.com/about-us/leadership-opportunities/model-atlanta-regional-commission>

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Model Atlanta Regional Commission. 2011. MARC brochure. Retrieved from <http://www.atlantaregional.com/about-us/leadership-opportunities/model-atlanta-regional-commission>.

Atlanta Regional Commission. 2010. ARC MARC program [video]. Retrieved from <http://www.vimeo.com/12271965>

1. California Center for Civic Participation: <http://californiacenter.org>

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References

Resources