



# Atlanta Overview

August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Druid Hills Civic Association

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## Executive Summary

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- Druid Hills has requested that we present to the community Atlanta's progress in recent years
- Under Mayor Reed's leadership, Atlanta has delivered improvements in public safety and quality of life for citizens while at the same time increasing operational efficiency and fiscal management
- This information is fact-based so that Druid Hills can make an informed decision about its future
- Significant legal and financial analysis would be required to answer every remaining question

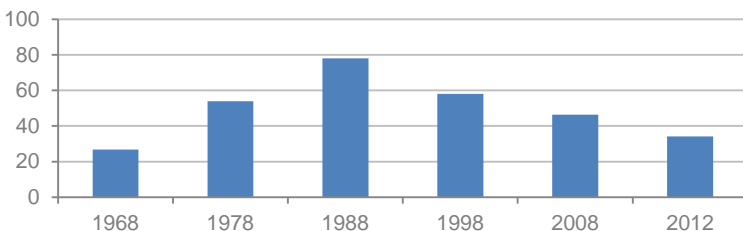


# In the past four years, Atlanta has made substantive investments in citizen services and quality of life

## Atlanta is the safest it has been in over four decades

- Over **800 police officers hired** since 2010, bringing the force to ~2000 officers
- Stood up units for Atlanta Public Schools, Beltline, Video Integration Center, et al.

Atlanta part one crimes (thousands)



## Atlanta has tripled its funding for the Arts in the past four years

- \$1.25M/yr in funding**, from \$450k
- 60% increase** in the average grant amount
- Six additional organizations funded, and 4 additional recipients of the emerging artist award
- Direct investment in local theaters, art on the Beltline, music programs, etc.

*“Young children in particular benefit from the arts...[the] City’s support means the Center can offer **thousands of free and discounted tickets** to schools and organizations **servicing children each year.**”*

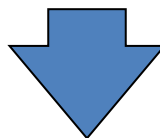
Rainie Jueschke, Development Director, Center for Puppetry Arts

## Atlanta has increased parks and recreation acreage over 10% since 2010

- Over **\$3.5M spent** to acquire or rehab nearly **550 acres of land for recreational use**
- Resident population living within ½-mile of a park **increased from 50% to 63%** in four years
- We have opened **6.8 miles of the Beltline**...there is now a contiguous link from Dellwood & Deepdene Parks through to Piedmont Park

## There are multiple additional initiatives to establish us as a world-class city

- Centers of Hope, **delivering quality afterschool programming** in our rec centers across the city
- Atlanta 311 (December launch) **centralizing all city service delivery** in one call center
- Cartlanta recycling program, **driving a 14% increase in recycling tonnage** across the city
- Permitting improvements, **reducing the average permit time from thirty days to six**



**Atlanta is safer, greener, and more responsive to citizens than ever before**

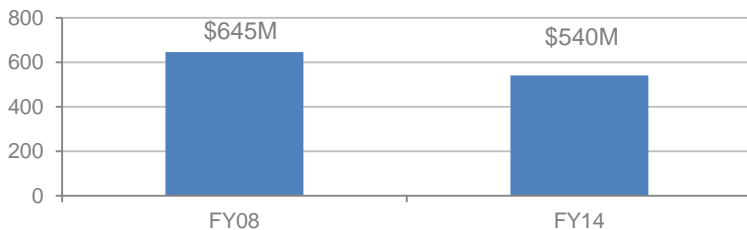


# At the same time, Atlanta has increased efficiencies significantly through professional management

## Atlanta's FY2014 operating budget is ~\$105M less than FY2008

- ~16% reduction in operating expenditures
- Net of a ~\$40M investment increase in Police, Recreation, Arts & Cultural Affairs, etc.
- **No tax increases**

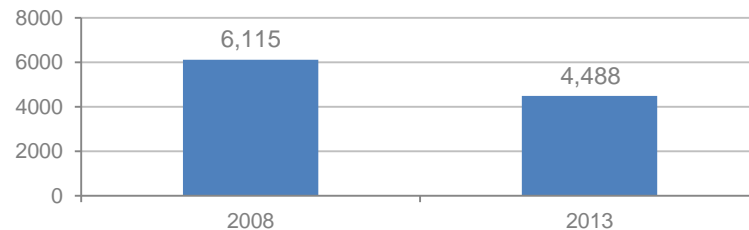
Atlanta operating budget (\$ millions)



## Atlanta is leaner and focused on fiscal prudence and performance management

- Atlanta's operating cash reserves have **increased from \$7.4M in FY08 to \$126.8M in FY13**
- Citywide performance metrics and targets **established and tracked for every function**

Atlanta general fund positions



## Atlanta was the first major city nationwide to resolve its pension issues

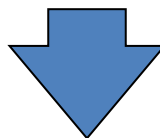
- Started with a **\$1.4B unfunded liability**, with annual pension costs **escalating at 13% per year**
- Closed the amortization cycle, shifted mix of benefits, and increased employee contributions to close the gap
- Approach **saves ~\$20M per year, up to \$300M over the life of the fund**, and ensures employee pensions will be preserved for their retirement

## Atlanta's professional management has been widely recognized

- Rating agencies improved Atlanta's GO, Watershed, and Airport credit ratings earlier and higher than most of our peers
- Received Bond Buyer 'Deal of the Year' Award for HJAIA ~\$2.0B issuance

*"The politicians we need...combine fiscal prudence with growth initiatives to make their cities great again. One of the best...is Atlanta's inspiring Mayor [who] started his reforms by enlisting professionals...to run the city."*

Thomas Friedman, New York Times Contributing Editor



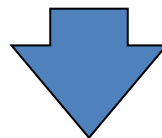
**City services are fundamentally scalable, and Atlanta is taking advantage of its scale**



We have practical, effective partnerships across the public and private spectrum to continuously improve our city

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- Strong partnership with the President and federal government has resulted in over **\$200M in investments in city initiatives** such as Public Safety and the Streetcar
- Supportive relationship with the Governor and the State has resulted in **regional and Statewide wins** such as the expansion of the Port of Savannah
- Partnership with the business community has resulted in the **attraction of 60 businesses, over 9,000 jobs, and over \$800M in incremental economic activity** even through the worst of the recession
- Partnership with the labor organizations has resulted in being the **first large municipality in the country to resolve their pension crisis** with union support
- Partnerships with the communities and civic organizations results in one of the **strongest neighborhood participation networks in the country** through our Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) and other organizations
  - Supports a **robust historic preservation commission**, with eighteen historic districts established across the city



**Atlanta is a vibrant, energized, and professionally managed city**



# Atlanta’s Historic Preservation Ordinance is strong, flexible, and community-oriented

## Robust process

- Historic designation may be initiated by City officials, property owners, or groups of property owners ensuring that multiple situations can be addressed
- The ordinance requires public input and notification of the effected property owners at multiple points in the designation process
- The designation process is highly collaborative so that the unique characteristics and circumstances of a given area can be reflected in the district requirements
- Requirements allow for a “fine tuning” of zoning and development rules so that proposals are assessed based on their local surroundings and not generic City-wide standards

## Efficiently administered

- The levels of review match the scope of the project, meaning that simpler proposals can be administratively reviewed and complicated proposals are heard by the Urban Design Commission, assuring that public input and oversight is commensurate with the scope of the project
- Regulations are integrated into the City’s Zoning Ordinance so that Zoning and Building Inspection Staff are empowered to provide enforcement and inspection services

## Policy-focused

- The City’s historic preservation staff are housed within the Office of Planning which results in close collaboration on multi-disciplinary projects and programs
- Designation at the Landmark level incentivizes rehabilitation of significant buildings through tax policy to support the long term growth of the City’s digest base



# There are two applicable annexation methods; charting a path for schools requires further evaluation

## Annexation pursuant to the 60% method

- Requires confirmed signed petition of owners of at least 60% of the land area
- City develops and approves a service delivery plan and holds a public hearing
- Council may annex after public hearing if it determines that annexation **“would be in the best interest of the residents and property owners of the area proposed for annexation and of the citizens”**

## Annexation using the Referendum method

- Requires adoption of a resolution of intent to annex the area by Atlanta City Council
- The City must develop a service delivery plan and hold a public hearing
- A referendum of the qualified owners in the area to be annexed will be held, passing upon simple majority of voters
- **Likely requires written agreement with DeKalb due to service delivery overlap**

**Schools are often a primary concern in annexation and engagement with APS will be required to answer the outstanding questions**

- **Simplest approach:** schools within the annexation boundaries of Druid Hills would join APS, or potentially become an APS charter cluster
  - Surrounding APS schools of Mary Lin, Morningside, and Springdale are among the highest performing in the system
- Keeping the schools within DeKalb County or bringing the recently adopted full charter cluster within APS are **alternatives that require further evaluation**



# Backup

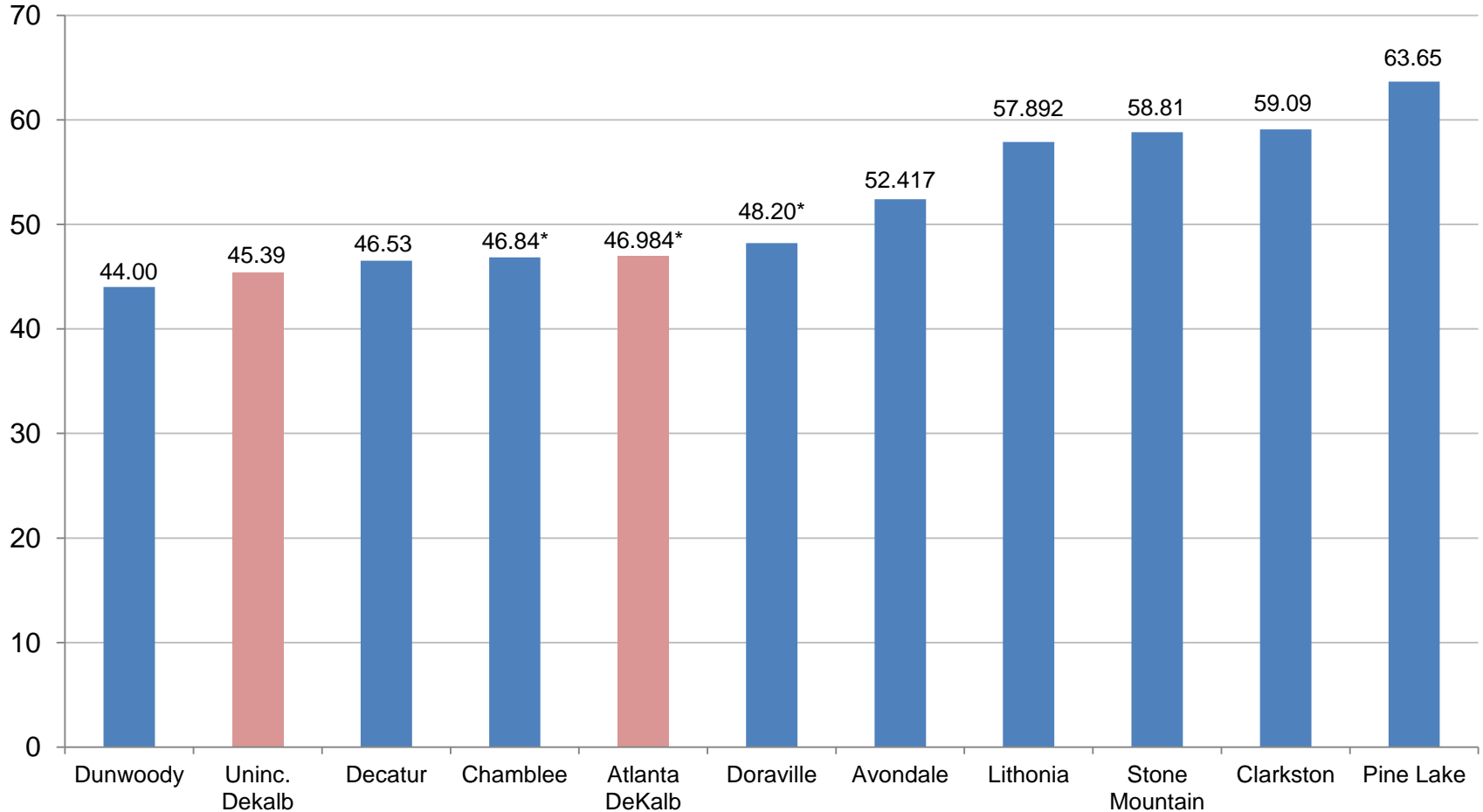
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# Comparison of proposed 2013 millage rates

## 2013 Applied Millage, including schools



\* Reflects a reduction from 2012 millage

Source: DeKalb County Tax Assessor's Office, Atlanta Office of Revenue, Dunwoody Crier (June 11, 2013)