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City of Avondale Estates Undertakes Walkability Audit; Engages ~50 City Stakeholders and National Walkability Expert

Avondale Estates – March 12, 2013 - The City of Avondale Estates completed a day-long walkability workshop and audit of its commercial business district with the help of national expert, Dan Burden, executive director of the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute, and with assistance and grant funding from the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Pfizer Foundation, Grantmakers in Aging, plus support from AARP.

Mr. Burden conducted the workshop to inspire, teach, connect and support the City's residents, businesses, City staff and elected officials as they plan for the City's future, focusing on improved health and well-being through a better "built" environment. He explained, "As a nation, we took our eye off the prize, which was to build communities for people, not cars. Today, we explored how to re-engage all of Avondale Estates' best historical features such as sidewalks, trolleys, public transit, bike paths, local businesses and more to create a place of the heart, a place we can love, and a place that makes money."

City Planner Keri Stevens praised the workshop, saying, "Today we gathered important data about the City's accessibility needs, challenges and opportunities, incorporating the invaluable input of close to 50 City stakeholders. We now have a blueprint for prioritizing Avondale Estates' best approaches to creating safe, attractive and enjoyable access to our commercial and recreational amenities."

Local business and building owners were especially interested in the findings of the walking audit as 96 percent of residents who responded to a February survey on the subject ranked safe, crossable streets as "important" or "very important." Survey respondents also expressed a desire for sidewalks throughout the City, and improved access to the business district and MARTA.

Said workshop participant and Avondale Estates resident Julie Feely, who also chairs the City's Planning and Zoning Board, "Participating in today's walking audit of Avondale Estates was an interesting exercise for everyone. Together, we learned a lot about how walkable access to services and activities helps local businesses to thrive, and also creates connectivity and a sense of place. Most helpfully, we were able to give input on how we can revitalize Avondale Estates' downtown area."

As a result of the day's work, the City of Avondale Estates will create a 100-day action plan for change. Additional follow-on activities include these initiatives:

- A review of Avondale Estates' zoning and housing codes that will identify ways to update these to best support Lifelong Community projects.
- The City will stripe and improve at least two crosswalks along U.S. 278 this summer. Following completion of the work, the City will host a community event to celebrate the improvements.
- ARC will host health and wellness programs to connect community members with needed services, including SPARC (Sickness Prevention Achieved through Regional Collaboration) and a Chronic Disease Self-Management Program. ARC will host these events in the spring.
- ARC and Avondale Estates stakeholders will collaborate on additional health and wellness education.

Summarized City Manager Clai Brown, "The City of Avondale Estates is committed to enhancing our downtown for the benefit of all residents and businesses. In order to design the best possible solutions to the City's needs, we were delighted to have had the invaluable help of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Lifelong Communities Initiative, walkability expert Dan Burden and the AARP. We look forward with anticipation to mobilizing the whole community to take the next steps in this exciting process."

About the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

The Walkable and Livable Communities Institute is a nonprofit organization founded with a mission to improve the built form of cities and towns throughout the world to make them walkable, bicycle- and transit-friendly, more sustainable, socially connected and livable. For more information, please go to www.walklive.org.

About the Atlanta Regional Commission

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta Region, including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties as well as the City of Atlanta and 69 other cities. The Atlanta Regional Commission serves as a catalyst for regional progress by focusing leadership, attention and planning resources on key regional issues. Additional information about the agency's Lifelong Communities Initiative is available at www.atlantaregional.com/lc.

About the City of Avondale Estates

Located just seven miles east of Atlanta, Avondale Estates is a dynamic and growing city, and a community of good neighbors who embrace local businesses, great ideas and big opportunities. [Click here](#) to read the Atlanta Regional Commission's report on the Avondale Estates Lifelong Communities survey.

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