20TH ANNIVERSARY

LINK

Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex

2016

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION
regional impact + local relevance

LINK Leadership Sponsors

NORTH FULTON
COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

PARTNERSHIP GWINNETT
A Community & Economic Development Initiative of the Gwinnett Chamber

2016 SPONSORS

– Leadership –

NORTH FULTON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

PARTNERSHIP GWINNETT
A Community & Economic Development Initiative of the Gwinnett Chamber

– Platinum –

ATLANTA Aerotropolis COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

CUMBERLAND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

DELTA

GEORGIA POWER
A SOUTHERN COMPANY

HNTB

– Diamond –

COUNCIL for QUALITY GROWTH

PERIMETER COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS
PERIMETERCID.ORG
ATLANTA·GEORGIA·USA

hope in Action
SOCIETY of ST. VINCENT de PAUL GEORGIA

– Gold –

ARCADIS Design & Consultancy for natural and built assets

DAFC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY of FULTON COUNTY

evermore Community Improvement District

GAS SOUTH

HL STRATEGY

MIDTOWN Alliance

INDIAN HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

Kimley»Horn

T·Y·LIN INTERNATIONAL

– Session –

BUCKHEAD Community Improvement District

ch2m.

DOUGLAS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Your Partner in Business

Metro Atlanta Chamber

TOWN CENTER COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

– Silver –

ATKINS

– Bronze –

INVEST ATLANTA

McGUIREWOODS

ROHADFOX Construction Control Services Corporation

LINK Delegation Gathers Insights in Booming Dallas-Fort Worth

The Atlanta and Dallas-Fort Worth regions have much in common.

Both are fast-growing Sunbelt regions anchored by hub airports and major Fortune 500 companies. Both have played host to Super Bowls and Final Fours and boast world-class arts and cultural institutions. And, yes, each wrestles with traffic congestion.

Of course, there are also key differences between them. And that's what drew more than 100 metro Atlanta leaders to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex for the 2016 LINK trip, organized by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). The journey to Texas marked a milestone, as it was the 20th LINK trip.

The Atlanta delegation, made up of civic, business, nonprofit and government leaders, toured a park built over a downtown freeway, got a first-hand look at how transit has transformed a Dallas suburb, explored educational reform efforts and learned how the region was reclaiming the long-ignored Trinity River.

While many innovative ideas were shared, LINK participants were particularly interested in following up in four key areas upon their return:

- Expanding public transit
- Offering Increased Opportunity to the Region's Underserved
- Educating a Diverse Population
- Collaborating to Compete

A Suburb Embraces Transit

Plano, about 20 miles north of downtown Dallas, resembles affluent Atlanta suburbs like Roswell or Kennesaw. A key difference: Plano has rail transit connecting it to downtown Dallas.

The LINK delegation rode a sleek, yellow Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) train from Dallas to Plano, where they met with community leaders who said the train and the access it provides has helped transform the historic downtown area. Once-vacant storefronts, now home to thriving locally-owned restaurants and shops, join apartments clustered near the tracks. The group had lunch on the roof of one such restaurant, watching the trains as they rolled into Plano after stopping at State Farm's regional headquarters visible in nearby Richardson.

"During the suburbanization period, downtown Plano became lost. It was a ghost town," said Frank Turner, former deputy city manager of Plano. "It really took DART to be the catalyst for change."

Plano was named a *Great Place in America* by the American Planning Association in 2015.

Frisco's population in 2000 was less than 34,000. In 2015, it reached 147,000.

Pam Hatcher, president of a downtown Plano neighborhood association, said that some Plano residents were still wary of having public transit in their town. But she drew applause from LINK participants when she spoke passionately about transit's ability to encourage diversity and connections in their divided region.

Offering Increased Opportunity to the Region's Underserved

A panel discussion about leadership in the Dallas-Fort Worth region turned into a frank, sobering exploration of the region's struggles with income inequality. And this theme pervaded much of the remainder of the visit.

The DFW region's affluent, fast-growing north side serves as the area's economic engine. The struggling south side, in contrast, is marked by pockets of endemic poverty and a lack of investment.

"The wealth gap in the region, especially in the city of Dallas, is not sustainable," said Larry James, CEO of CitySquare, a nonprofit group that fights poverty in Dallas. "We need a regional approach. We have not cracked that yet."

Dr. Michael Sorrell, president of Paul Quinn College, a private school in south Dallas that serves a largely low-income population, said education is key to closing the income gap.

Dr. Sorrell detailed innovative steps that the college has taken, from slashing tuition, eliminating textbooks, scrapping the costly football program and converting the stadium into an urban farm to address the lack of healthy food options in the neighborhood.

Another part of this discussion included North Texas Giving Day, a charitable event that raised more than $33 million for nonprofits around the region last year. Our state has a similar effort, Georgia Gives Day. In 2015, it raised more than $3 million for charities and nonprofits around the state.

DFW is home to 6.9 million people.
29% of those earn less than $35,000 annually.

Getting an Education on Education Reform

What's the best way to tackle education reform in a way that is effective and long-lasting? It's a question that vexes many communities, and one that the Atlanta region is tackling as part of ARC's Regional Economic Competitiveness Strategy.

In Plano, the LINK delegation heard from a panel of Texas educational leaders that included Dr. Michael Hinojosa, former Cobb County Superintendent who now leads the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). Ninety percent of the students in his district are low-income. Hinojosa, who could see education from the perspectives of both regions, outlined a number of reforms in place in the DISD. These include increasing the number of "choice" schools that offer specialized programs and are open to families no matter where they live.

DFW has 57 independent school districts with more than 1.1 million students enrolled in public schools. Dallas ISD has a graduation rate of 86.9%, Fort Worth ISD has graduation rate of 84.1%.

Todd Williams, executive director of a regional education collaborative called Commit! Dallas, noted that 80 percent of the region's students are non-white and come from demographic groups with traditionally low graduation rates.

"A lot of people in Dallas live in bubbles," he said. We need to communicate what the larger region looks like. We can't export the kids that fail."

Advice and insights about regional collaboration on education included:

- Focus on a few key milestones, such as third-grade reading proficiency and high school graduation rate. In other words, streamline your goals so you don't lose sight of them.
- Share data across jurisdictions.
- Invest properly in the organization that is charged with carrying out reform measures.

Collaborating to Compete

The DFW region has been one of the most successful in the country at attracting new employers.

As such, the populations of both Dallas and Fort Worth rank in the nation's 20 largest cities. And with Arlington, Frisco, Plano and others rising rapidly, this growth has created a very competitive environment for economic development professionals.

Mike Rosa of the Dallas Regional Chamber told the LINK group that all the cities in the region are "big dogs." While that might lead to animosity and in-fighting in some regions, Rosa said all those dogs have learned to respect one another's strengths and to play nicely together.

Behind the scenes, DFW claimed two key advantages that made metro Atlanta leaders jealous.

- They have a massive collection of state and local financial incentives at their disposal.
- Their elected officials have a growing understanding of economic development and the idea that when something good happens nearby, it helps their community too. In fact, the majority of jurisdictions have agreed to a pact that states they will not try to poach existing employers away from one another.

"If they don't land in Frisco, we'd love for them to land in Plano," said Jim Gandy, president of the Frisco Economic Development Corporation. "Plano's win is our win because many of those employees will live and play in Frisco."

Bill Thornton, president of the Fort Worth Chamber, told the story of a Dallas company that recently contacted his chamber and requested a pitch on why they should move to Fort Worth. He said that he immediately called the Dallas Chamber and told them, "We're not playing that game."

Other Lessons Learned

Overview of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex

Dr. Timothy Bray, Director, Institute for Urban Policy Research, University of Texas at Dallas

Mike Eastland, Executive Director, North Central Texas Council of Governments

Moderator: ***Doug Hookcer***, Executive Director, ARC

- DFW has population of 6.9 million, compared to metro Atlanta's 5.5 million.
- DFW is home to 21 Fortune 500 headquarters (more than New York City). Atlanta is home to 18.
- 28% of DFW's population is Hispanic or Latino, compared to 10% of Atlanta's.
- Across three different agencies, DFW has 147 miles of rail transit, compared to metro Atlanta's 48 miles.
- 1.6% of DFW's population regularly rides public transportation to work, compared to 3.1% of Atlanta's.

Bray gave the group a view of the DFW region through the numbers, pointing out differences between metro Dallas and metro Atlanta. For example, he noted that school districts in Texas are not defined by geographic boundaries. This leads to the Dallas Independent School District being 80 percent Hispanic, 15 percent Black and 5 percent White, even though the population in that area is about 33 percent each. He also told the group that while the area was fourth in the U.S. for new millionaires, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen.

Eastland pointed out some of our similarities, like the lack of transit ridership and the penchant for long commutes by car. He also noted that, like Atlanta, one of their biggest concerns in north-central Texas is education.

Welcome to the City of Fort Worth

Hon. Betsy Price, Mayor, City of Fort Worth

Mayor Betsy Price brought a folksy humor to the first stop of the LINK delegation. She bragged about her city's downtown, voted the best in the nation. She also called Sundance Square, where participants strolled leisurely before lunch, Fort Worth's living room.

Price also teed up a conversation regarding Fort Worth's newfound love affair with the Trinity River, telling participants that the Trinity River Vision Authority had created 12 miles of public waterfront, turning a "muddy drainage ditch" into a popular recreation area.

The Fort Worth Story: Inclusive Plans and Effective Collaboration

Andrew Taft, President, Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.

J.D. Granger, Executive Director, Trinity River Vision Authority

Fernando Costa, Assistant City Manager, City of Fort Worth

Nancy Jones, President & CEO, North Texas Community Foundation

Moderator: ***Hon. Kenneth Barr***, Former Mayor, City of Fort Worth

Fort Worth is home to the headquarters of two Fortune 500 companies, American Airlines and Radio Shack.

"It's OK to wear cowboy boots and drive pickup trucks and go to the opera," said former Fort Worth mayor Kenneth Barr, when describing the city.

Barr moderated a panel discussion that ranged from the collaboration of the city with the Trinity River Vision Authority to connect neighborhoods to the river, bringing thousands of residents to the water for recreation, to the North Texas Community Foundation collaborating with diverse donors and organizations to have a collective impact on education, poverty and other issues in the region.

Welcome Address

Hon. Mike Rawlings, Mayor, City of Dallas

With the natural beauty of the Nasher Sculpture Center as his backdrop, Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings talked to the LINK participants about the momentum of his region. He credits the growth to a strong economy and a focus on quality of life issues like parks, public transportation and the arts.

After comparing the regions and calling Atlanta "my biggest competition," Rawlings got down to serious business. He challenged the group to compete with Dallas in creating the best urban school system in the United States, saying, "The only sustainable, scalable strategy to close the economic gap between the haves and have-nots is education."

How Things Get Done in the Dallas-Fort Worth Region

Hon. Clay Jenkins, County Judge, Dallas County

Hon. Oscar Trevino, Mayor, City of North Richland Hills

Larry James, CEO, CitySquare

Dr. Michael Sorrell, President, Paul Quinn College

Mark Masepohl, Senior Vice President & General Manager, Univision Communications, Inc.

Moderator: ***Brent Christopher***, President & CEO, Communities Foundation of Texas

Between 2010 and 2014, DFW added 528,120 residents. 53.5% of that growth was due to in-migration.

What began as a panel discussion on how governments and communities collaborate to accomplish things in DFW turned quickly in to a discussion about the growing wealth gap. Larry James noted that this gap is a regional problem that requires a regional approach. "We have not cracked that yet," he said.

There was discussion about getting the faith community more involved and in collaborating across all sectors and political boundaries to tackle this issue.

Downtown Dallas Renaissance: Reimagining the Core

Kourtny Garrett, President, Downtown Dallas, Inc.

Tara Green, President, Klyde Warren Park

Kevin Moriarty, Board Chair, Dallas Arts District and Artistic Director, Dallas Theater Center

Moderator: ***Kevin Green***, President and CEO, Midtown Alliance

The Dallas Arts District spans 68 acres and 19 contiguous blocks. It represents more than $1 billion in public investment.

This panel was one of many that gave partial credit to The Boeing Company for their success. One of the reasons Boeing located in Chicago rather than Dallas in 1999 was because downtown Dallas was not a vibrant place to be. Since then, the work of Downtown Dallas Inc. has helped create and maintain Klyde Warren Park and the Dallas Arts District, among other things. This panel talked about how much different downtown is today, with thousands of residents, activity around the clock and one of the nation's leading arts districts.

The next step, they said, is to begin serving more of the region with the arts. "The arts should ultimately reflect and serve all of its people," said Moriarty. If people can't get to the arts district, he said it's time to start taking the art to the suburbs.

Transportation Funding to Expand Mobility

Gary Thomas, President/Executive Director, Dallas Area Rapid Transit

Michael Morris, Director of Transportation, North Central Texas Council of Governments

Jim Cline, President, Denton County Transportation Authority

Moderator: ***Keith Parker***, CEO and General Manager, MARTA

The residents of 13 cities in the Dallas-Fort Worth area voted for a sales tax to fund the light rail via the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). Today, DART boasts the longest light rail system in North America. And as the region has continued to sprawl, people expect public transportation to move with them. So much so that Denton County, one of the most conservative-voting counties in the state, formed its own transit agency with 70 percent voter approval. Panelists agreed that the expectation of residents to have options beyond driving a car is what drives the continued expansion of transit.

The group also discussed the need for affordable housing around their transit stations, programs that encourage the hiring of local workers to build their projects, and how the blinding speed of technological advances is confusing the issue of further transportation network expansion.

Residents of DFW love their cars even more than Atlantans. 80.8% of DFW commuters drive alone, compared to 77.6% of metro Atlantans. Only 1.6% ride public transportation, compared to 3.1% of metro Atlantans.

The average DFW driver experiences 53 hours of delay each year due to traffic.

Address from Ambassador Ron Kirk, Former U.S. Trade Representative

Ambassador Kirk, who addressed the LINK group as mayor of Dallas in 1999, spoke about lessons he learned from great Atlanta leaders like Maynard Jackson and the similarities the two regions share. However, he also made several powerful points about collaboration within a region and across regions that resonated with the 2016 participants. Kirk complimented the LINK contingent for being such a large and distinguished group, and left them with an overall positive feeling about what they were learning and why they were there.

Ignite/ArtsDallas: Expanding the Reach of the Arts

Clyde Valentin, Director, Ignite/ArtsDallas, SMU Meadows School of the Arts

LINK participants looked at the arts through a different lens, discussing how they can be used to bring a community together and to generate a more accepting and equitable environment for all residents. Through the Meadows School of Art at Southern Methodist University, students and community partners focus on outreach and inclusion through a wide variety of arts programs.

LINK Past + LINK Future

Kerry Armstrong and Doug Hooker led a group discussion during which participants celebrated 20 years of the LINK program and its many success stories. He then asked the delegation to think about the future of LINK, with an understanding that the trip needs to include people from more diverse backgrounds, specifically in regards to age, ethnicity and careers. Several possibilities were discussed, and Mr. Hooker promised that ARC leadership would consider all of them and report back to the group.

The LINK program celebrated 20 years in 2016. During that time, it has visited 17 different metros in the U.S. and Canada. A few metro Atlanta programs that are direct results of the LINK trip include: Metro Atlanta Mayors Association; Atlanta Regional Public Art Program; Metro Atlanta Speaks public opinion poll; and the Atlanta Regional Economic Competitiveness Strategy.

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION
regional impact + local relevance

40 Courtland Street, NE | Atlanta, Georgia 30303
atlantaregional.com