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## **PHOENIX CITIES: LESSONS ON RESILIENCE FROM WARSAW TO ATLANTA**

The rebuilding of Warsaw and the present-day state of development and economic progress are dissimilar from Atlanta in many respects but are worth comparison. Both city/regions have benefited from national sources of public investments. However, the economic and social progress that have resulted from those investments, and each region's long-term resilience, are still evolving.

The development of metro Atlanta after the American Civil War can be broken into distinct periods of reconstruction and growth. A relatively young city but one that was critical as a Confederate rail and supply hub, Atlanta was effectively destroyed in 1864. Reconstruction after the war led to the rebuilding and continued development of the rail network and, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, significant growth in manufacturing and industry. Substantial growth also occurred from a period immediately before the 1996 Olympic Games to the Great Recession in 2008. During this period metro Atlanta experienced extensive outward expansion to the suburban fringe, as well as an urban renaissance within the City of Atlanta. During the most recent period of growth from 2011 to 2016, urban development and multi-family construction have dominated the metro Atlanta region.

However, the true boom period of Atlanta was over 100 years after the end of the Civil War. While growth and investment occurred during late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the State of Georgia's population grew by only three million between 1860 and 1960. By contrast, Georgia then added three million more residents in the period from 1960 to 1995. The Atlanta region in this period became a magnet for growth in the southern U.S. The physical manifestation of this growth was relatively normal at first, until several large public investments in the region began to leverage a larger economy, global reach and new development pattern.

These investments began in the years following World War II. Buford Dam was constructed for the creation of Lake Lanier as the region's primary water source. Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport was expanded multiple times and became the region's airport. Interstates 75, 85, 20 and 285 provided immense vehicular access throughout the region. Finally, the MARTA rail transit system

was the first in the south. These investments were key to the growth of metro Atlanta, particularly after 1970. They provided the structure that enabled millions of migrants and jobs to move to the region and cause the population to swell. Leading up to the 1996 Olympic Games, metro Atlanta had positioned itself for long-term economic growth, but potentially at the cost of resiliency. By the late 1990s, Chris Leinberger famously stated that “Metro Atlanta has grown faster than any human settlement in history”.

The metro Atlanta economy and that of the nation have been built on a model of transportation distinct from the remainder of the industrialized world. Automobiles have dominated the American transport system and its middle class lifestyle since World War II, and metro Atlanta’s biggest phase of growth coincided with this period of automobile ascendancy nationwide. Atlanta has become one of the primary research models for automobile dominance and resulting land development patterns in the U.S, since it grew largely on the model of suburban expansion from 1970 to 1995. Metro Atlanta became the depiction of a sprawling modern American region – low labor costs, low taxation and low land costs served as fuel for a region that had also received federal financial assistance to build major infrastructure in the form of dams, airports, highways and transit. But few effective U.S. models for growth management policy during this period undermined the long-term potential resiliency of the region.

Georgia adopted a limited version of the Florida growth management model in 1989. While beneficial to local governments and the state in many ways, the Georgia Planning Act was too little and too late. The power to zone land was provided exclusively to local governments and locked into the State Constitution. Euclidean zoning, exclusionary housing practices, and the influence of the construction industry would create growth patterns that were dominant until the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

With the growth that has occurred after the 1996 Olympics to the present, metro Atlanta began to change the growth trajectory. The region was no longer sprawling, but rather retrenchment and redevelopment began in the urban core and then first-ring suburbs. By 2010 and continuing today, real estate development within the existing built areas of the region is the dominant practice. Development close to the MARTA rail system or “ITP” (Inside the Perimeter highway, or I-285) is surging rapidly. Areas outside but close to the I-285 beltway and major job centers are densifying. These trends, similar to early Atlanta growth patterns, are somewhat a reflection of national trends – younger professionals’ desire for urban living, tight mortgage underwriting and the flight of capital preferring more solid real estate investments after the real estate foreclosure crisis of 2008 to 2014.

So the Atlanta growth model could be summarized as major national migration to a southern region, enabled by federally funded public investments, during a period of auto domination, but lacking land use policy and laws to create resiliency. The U.S. and metro Atlanta remain economically dominant but possibly at the cost of resiliency and social progress. The U.S. has a 4.4% share of global

population but with 18% of global energy consumption and 22% of global prison population, as an indicator of social progress.

Metro Atlanta as a model for U.S. economic growth mirrors larger national growth and resiliency indicators. The automobile is used for 90% of trips made within the Atlanta region. While substantial progress has been made expanding commuting options and building new urban development in Atlanta, automobiles and highway construction have virtually created permanent patterns of commuting and economic conditions that rely upon the maintenance of highways for a large share of all annual transportation funding.

Current economic conditions are expected to further densify the existing core and suburbs of Atlanta, which eventually will transform the region towards more efficient growth patterns. But it could require several decades of retrofits to auto-centric areas and substantial new transit investments. National policy favoring highway funding that produced the auto-oriented economy of the U.S. and metro Atlanta are most often perceived in a global context as not resilient. U.S. energy consumption per person is twice that of other developed countries such as Japan and Germany. Without inexpensive fuel, the U.S. economy would have difficulty competing with more efficient countries.

Given the current state of the economy and infrastructure, Warsaw appears positioned for attracting growth at an increased rate during the coming decade. The A2 motorway connecting to Berlin opened in 2012. The international Warsaw Chopin airport is connected to the Warsaw city center by a rail link also opened in 2012. The Warsaw Metro continues to expand rail lines and stations. Foreign investments and funding from the European Union have spurred economic growth and new public facilities. Warsaw has four major universities and over a quarter-million university students in the city. These conditions seem to make Warsaw particularly ripe for attracting growth from technology industries or other innovation-related sectors. A Google campus is scheduled to open in Warsaw later in 2015. However, the startup environment is apparently still in its adolescence, based on discussions during Study Space.

Balancing economic growth, land use and development is key to maximizing the resiliency of Warsaw and the Mazovian region during the coming decades. Unlike the Atlanta region, the Mazovian region has large, productive agricultural lands. Protecting and leveraging the agricultural lands of the region should be a long-range priority. Many of the best U.S. models for land use planning and growth management feature productive agricultural sectors within or near the region that help support the metro area in various ways and vice versa (Minneapolis, Seattle, etc.). Regulatory structures in Warsaw and the Mazovian region should be reviewed continuously to ensure they are effective at guiding industrial uses and urban development to key centers and areas of existing infrastructure, while protecting agricultural lands for reasons of food security, economic resiliency and efficient development patterns.

In the case of the Atlanta region, major interstate highway expansions funded by the federal government, and investments by state and local governments, ensured automobile and truck access to large areas of vacant land during the 1970–2000 period. U.S. migration to the south ensured the Atlanta region expanded its footprint of development. While these highway investments were a major economic catalyst, inefficient uses of land are apparent across the metro area, limiting long-term growth. Large single-family residential communities often have excellent access to major highways or proximity to economic centers, while available land and access for new commercial or industrial uses have been virtually absorbed within close proximity to much of the region.

Atlanta’s MARTA rail transit system began development during the same period as transit systems in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco in the early 1970s. At that time, Seattle declined transit funding from the federal government, and Atlanta was the fortunate recipient of that region’s decision. However, urban decline and suburban migration in Atlanta during the 1970–2000 period coincided with the creation of the MARTA rail system, ensuring that it would require decades more to reach its full potential. At the time, contemporary urban development models for density and mixed-uses were unknown and untested in the south, and thus financing flowed to suburban growth. Today, redevelopment of many areas in metro Atlanta, including MARTA rail station areas, is rapidly occurring, but the historical development patterns of the metro will likely always be a challenge and limiting to economic growth.

A visit to Warsaw, Poland in 2015 was thrilling as an American who had never traveled east of Germany. Poland has an amazing history and welcoming culture. Based on my professional training and experience, Warsaw and the Mazovian region appear to be on a trajectory for continued economic and social achievements. Ensuring continued financing for adequate infrastructure investments and effective development policy is a challenge for every growing metropolitan area around the globe. Warsaw, like Atlanta, has a strong spirit of resilience and flexibility within its identity. This is a uniting strength that will serve both regions well in the coming periods of economic and population growth.

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### **Summary**

The City of Atlanta and the City of Warsaw, Poland, have similar wartime histories separated by 80 years. These two “Phoenix Cities” have created new infrastructure,

societies and cultural identities since their destruction and post-war rebuilding. Present-day metro Atlanta is larger than Warsaw, with a greater economic impact, but recent investments in Warsaw signal a possible trajectory for growth similar to what occurred in Atlanta over the past 45 years.

Warsaw in 2015 – unlike Atlanta in 1970 – has many contemporary city/region models for successful economic development and growth management in Europe and abroad, including Atlanta. These models offer Warsaw the possibility of more resilient growth and alternate development decisions to those which currently undermine metro Atlanta. Warsaw is a dynamic and increasingly important region on the global stage. Economic growth to the next tier of global cities that excel in innovation and resiliency is within its grasp.

## MIASTA FENIKSY: WARSZAWSKA LEKCJA ODRODZENIA PRZESTRZENI MIEJSKIEJ DLA ATLANTY

### Streszczenie

Miasto Atlanta i Miasto Stołeczne Warszawa mają podobne historie wojenne oddzielone o 80 lat. Te dwa miasta feniksy stworzyły od czasu zniszczenia i odbudowy nową infrastrukturę, społeczeństwo i tożsamość kulturową. Dzisiejszy obszar metropolitalny Atlanty jest większy niż Warszawa, ma większą siłę oddziaływania gospodarczego, ale ostatnie inwestycje w Warszawie sygnalizują podobną ścieżkę wzrostu w porównaniu do tego, co stało się w Atlancie w ciągu ostatnich 45 lat.

Warszawa w 2015 roku – w przeciwieństwie do Atlanty w 1970 roku – ma wiele współczesnych wzorców miejsko-regionalnych służących pomyślnemu rozwojowi gospodarczemu i zarządzaniu wzrostem. Dzięki tym wzorom Warszawa ma możliwość bardziej elastycznego rozwoju i efektywniejszych decyzji w stosunku do tych, które obecnie podważa Atlanta. Warszawa jest dynamiczna i ma coraz większe znaczenie na arenie międzynarodowej.

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**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE**

zarządzanie wzrostem, odporność gospodarcza, inwestycje publiczne