



PARTNERSHIP FOR A  
**NEW AMERICAN  
ECONOMY**

## Atlanta's Global Rise

With a growing economy, businesses that range from American icons to thriving startups and a growing international population, Atlanta has leaped into the future so quickly that its transformation has almost escaped notice. Atlanta is now a driving force behind global economic growth and has the fourth most Fortune 500 companies in America.<sup>1</sup> It isn't competing with Birmingham and Chattanooga, it is competing with New York, Chicago, Shanghai, and Mumbai. There are few cities in America that can boast the economic and population transformation that metropolitan Atlanta has experienced in recent years. The explosion of growth is owed both to entrepreneurial immigrants determined to succeed in America and to Atlanta's own determination to capture the world's imagination, capital and talent.

The metro area is now home to three quarters of a million foreign-born residents comprising 13% of the population.<sup>2</sup> Atlanta has now become one of the most popular destinations in America for foreign tourists.<sup>3</sup> Business leaders know immigrants are a huge asset for the city and a big reason why Georgia experienced the largest growth in the nation in entrepreneurial activity over the last decade. The trend is continuing. A Kaufmann Foundation report found that in 2010, Atlanta was among the nation's biggest hotbeds for new start-ups.<sup>4</sup> It attributes much of the gains to rising rates of entrepreneurship among the region's new Latino and Asian communities.

Atlanta – and all of Georgia – have more importantly, become a magnet for well educated immigrants – increasing the percentage of population with college degrees. And as these immigrants have integrated into the community their economic contribution has skyrocketed. The 2009 purchasing power of Georgia's Latinos totaled \$15.5 billion—an increase of 1,063% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$8.7 billion—an increase of 678.3% since 1990.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500/2010/cities/>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.ajc.com/news/foreign-born-population-continues-780806.html>

<sup>3</sup>[http://www.forbes.com/2010/04/28/tourism-new-york-lifestyle-travel-las-vegas-cities\\_slide\\_5.html](http://www.forbes.com/2010/04/28/tourism-new-york-lifestyle-travel-las-vegas-cities_slide_5.html)

<sup>4</sup><http://www.ajc.com/business/study-atlanta-a-hotbed-864013.html>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.terry.uga.edu/selig/docs/GBEC0903q.pdf>

In Chamblee, Georgia, part of the Atlanta metro area, local leaders have discovered that immigrants represent an incredible opportunity for revitalization and growth. In the 1990s the town faced a serious threat after the local Kodak plant shut down. Instead of reeling, the town sprung into action to develop its booming immigrant population into a new economic engine to showcase to the world in time for the 1996 Olympic games. In 1994, Chamblee officials zoned for the International Village, a residential and commercial development that they hoped would bond new residents to their community and spur a new economic sector. Within five years it was estimated that the International Village's 5,000 plus residents had started more than 700 new businesses in Chamblee.<sup>6</sup>

A graduate of Chamblee's school district, the town's first city manager Kathy Brannon was responsible for implementing this new vision.

"You have to believe that the reason people come here is the same reason everybody's been coming, for that opportunity. Isn't that what we founded our country on?" Brannon told the AP.<sup>7</sup>

The re-imagination of Chamblee continues. A recently revised master plan document<sup>8</sup> shows that Chamblee seeks to invest further in its flourishing immigrant community so that they may reap even greater returns in the future. The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce is on board.

"With the increased influx of immigrants and refugees to Georgia during the last decade – and the promise of more to come – the International village will create opportunity while addressing potential problems facing these groups and capitalize on what is one of the assets of an international city – culturally diverse people."<sup>9</sup>

Given Atlanta's successful global debut, rival cities are rushing to emulate the city's positive environment for immigrant entrepreneurship. Nashville, Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Detroit are all fighting to attract new populations of driven, hard-working individuals who will found start-ups, create jobs, and allow those cities to better compete with Atlanta for a share of the global economic stage.

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<sup>6</sup><http://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/24321?show=full>

<sup>7</sup>[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29620622/ns/us\\_news-life/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29620622/ns/us_news-life/)

<sup>8</sup>[www.chambleega.com/client\\_resources/.../Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf](http://www.chambleega.com/client_resources/.../Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf)

<sup>9</sup>[www.chambleega.com/client\\_resources/.../Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf](http://www.chambleega.com/client_resources/.../Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf)