

Friday, August 25, 2006

Live. Work. Play. Lose weight?

*CDC study to look whether Atlantic Station residents are more physically active*

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CALLING ITSELF a national model for smart growth and sustainable development, Atlantic Station has caught the attention of real estate executives, city planners and ... the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC has given a \$400,000 grant to professors from Emory University and the Georgia Institute of Technology to test whether relocating to a dense mixed-use environment promotes physical activity and pedestrian-oriented travel.

Basically, the study will show if people who move to Atlantic Station "walk more frequently instead of using their automobiles," said Karen G. Mumford, the lead investigator for this project and an assistant professor in Emory's Department of Environmental and Occupational Health.

Brian Leary, vice president of design and development at Atlantic Station, said if the study shows people in mixed-use developments lead healthier lives, developers will have a valuable marketing tool.

"As they should. They should celebrate it," Leary said.

There would be plenty to celebrate, as Atlanta is experiencing a mixed-use boom. Under way are Barry Real Estate Cos.' and Post Properties Inc.'s Allen Plaza; Sembler Co.'s \$400 million Brookhaven Place near Oglethorpe University; North Highland Property Development's The Mix at 841 in Virginia-Highland; Cousins Properties Inc.'s Terminus at Piedmont Road and Peachtree Street in Buckhead; and Hines' partnership with Loudermilk/Rohrig LLC for a yet-to-be-named project at the corner of Peachtree and Seventh streets.

The researchers, Mumford and Emory colleague Karen Glanz, received the grant in May and are preparing to start the three-year study on Oct. 1.

It will track 200 adult participants who live in non-mixed-use settings around metro Atlanta but plan to move to Atlantic Station. Leary said Atlantic Station has about 2,000 residents, and expects another 3,000 during the next three years.

With help from Atlantic Station's developers, the researchers will contact potential participants through letters and surveys. For a financial incentive (Mumford said the amount has not been decided), one adult per household would wear a battery-operated activity monitor similar to a pedometer.

The activity monitor, worn on a belt around the participant's waist, will measure steps and accelerations, giving, for example, a low reading for a person sitting versus a higher reading if he was jogging.

Each participant will wear the activity monitor for five days—three weekdays and two weekend days—three to six months before they move into Atlantic Station. About nine to 12 months after moving in and becoming settled, they will wear the activity monitor again for the same length of time, Mumford explained.

During both periods, the participants also will log their daily activities in a journal, also noting whether their activities are routine. Researchers also will ask participants about their perceptions of their old neighborhood and their new Atlantic Station community.

Mumford said their concern about an American obesity epidemic fueled their desire to conduct this study.

"Despite the fact that many of us are aware of the benefits of physical activity, most adults in the U.S. don't meet the recommended levels of physical activity," she said, noting that a lack of physical activity causes people to be overweight.

"I think from a public health perspective, it just gives the public and developers some evidence that if you construct a mixed-use development, it may promote healthy activities," Mumford said.

Developers of mixed-use communities say they promote a less transit-oriented lifestyle, with shopping, recreation and businesses within a short distance.

Atlantic Station, which has condominium, single-family home, apartment, townhomes and loft developments, offers walking accessibility to a Publix grocery store, a movie theater, various retailers, restaurants and other entertainment venues. There is an office building, and another office tower under construction, and a Target store is under development.

Mumford said she would like to conduct another study in the next two to three years about the benefits of living and working in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified, or LEED, buildings. The U.S. Green Building Council established this third-party verification to assess aspects of building performance and sustainability such as indoor air quality, use of water and energy efficiency.

There are more than a dozen LEED-certified commercial buildings in Atlanta, including 1180 Peachtree and 171 17th Street at Atlantic Station.

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