REBUILD BY DESIGN

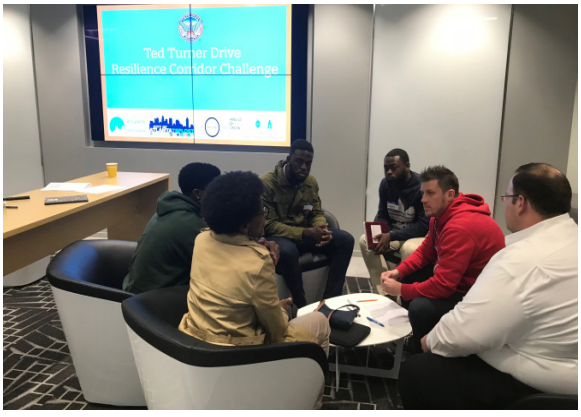
ATLANTA, GA | REBUILD BY DESIGN

Background:

Ted Turner Drive is a 1.4 mile roadway that cuts through Downtown Atlanta. Although it is a vital road to connect commuters to the downtown area, the site features a number of underutilized spaces, does little to encourage passive and active recreation, and lacks basic green infrastructure, including trees, plantings, and green space.

The City of Atlanta's Urban Resilience Strategy focuses on five key areas: water, energy, sustainability, social cohesion, and mobility which became the key goals for "greening" the Ted Turner Drive. Rebuild worked with the city to develop a collaborative student design competition -- informed by community and stakeholder input -- to solicit ideas for high impact interventions for this stretch of Ted Turner Drive. The competition to "green" the Drive was an opportunity to rethink the function and benefits of a transportation corridor by transforming this roadway into a gateway to downtown that will create pedestrian and bike friendly infrastructure, allow for a better walking and cultural experience, absorb rainwater, mitigate urban heat island effect, and build a more attractive public space.

ABOVE: Students from the participating universities along with practitioners and organizers for the Kickoff event in January.



ABOVE: Students meeting with their mentor in a breakout session to go over the workplan for the semester.

Research & Design:

Adhering to Rebuild's model of collaborative research and design, teams of students from Georgia Tech University, University of Georgia, Clark Atlanta, and Morehouse College were brought together to participate in the competition. Each university committed to offering university and professor resources and most committed a course or club to the competition. The competition began in January 2018 with a day-long event that taught students about the history of the Drive and the surrounding downtown area, as well as taught the meaning of resilience infrastructure by showcasing case studies of multi-benefit designs from the Atlanta region and beyond. Each student group was paired with a mentor who is an active practitioner in the region in the fields of urban planning, architecture, and engineering.

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The students embarked on an eight week research phase that included site analysis, field study, surveys, public observations, digital engagement, and interactive questionnaires placed throughout the area. Each mentor worked with a student team to help ground the students' research and design in real-life practice by assisting with a work plan, creation of public engagement tools, design renderings, and messaging.

At the conclusion of the research stage, students began to develop "design opportunities" based on their research learnings. These opportunities were then used for the initial design ideas as students entered the design stage after spring break. Midway through the design phase, each team presented their preliminary design proposals at a public event where residents, businesses, and stakeholders could give feedback to inform their final proposals. Following the event, students used the last two weeks of the semester to incorporate the public feedback into their proposals before their final submissions.

ABOVE: Students presenting to the Jury at the end of the semester.

ABOVE: The 1.4 mile stretch of Ted Turner Drive in downtown Atlanta lacks green space, walkability, and bike infrastructure.

Impact:

The winning design was chosen for its multi-benefit approach, innovative incorporation of community input, and feasibility that focused on three key themes: empower, connect and green. The design proposal "Spark" Strategy Plan" featured empowerment initiatives for addressing homelessness by increasing access to essential goods and resources through vending or wayfinding machines, and encouraged creativity and innovation by making Turner Drive a blank canvas for artists and innovators to showcase their ideas about resilience. The design also proposed ecologically enhancing the drive through water absorption, heat sequestration and biodiversity as well as activating certain areas with lane changes, widening of sidewalks and shutting down areas for special events. The City of Atlanta has set aside $5-7 million from the Renew Atlanta Bond to implement the entirety or a portion of the winning submission of this competition

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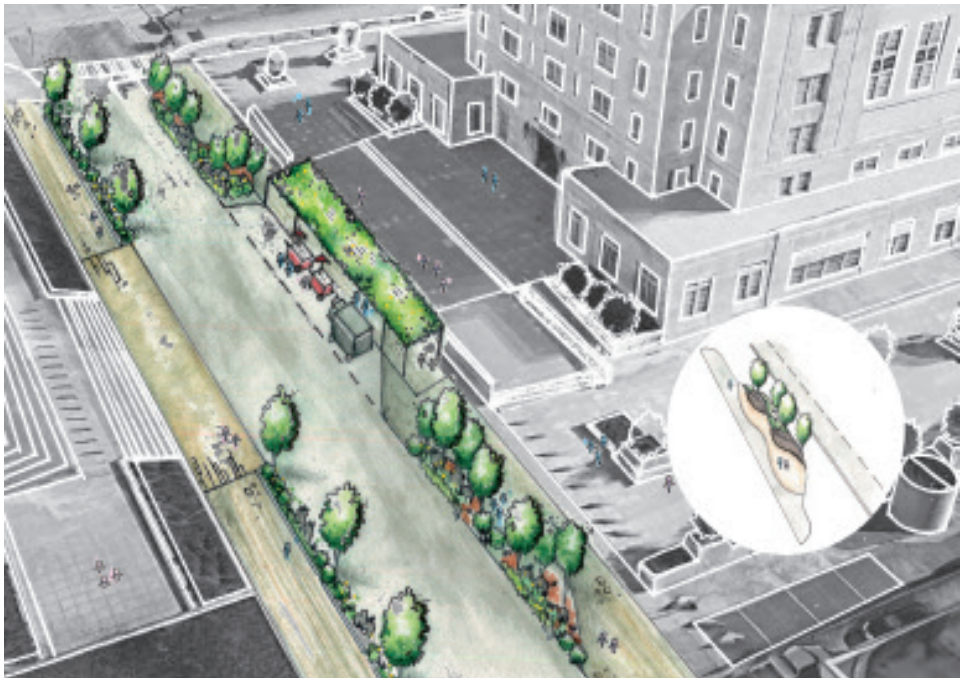
This project also created a model for sustainable and resilient street and sidewalk design in Atlanta, that can be replicated for future transportation corridors and city infrastructure projects.

Additionally, this initiative gives the city a model for engaging it's deep pool of talented university students and professors, while training the next generation of architects, engineers, and urban planners in a resilience and multi-benefit framework. This model also created greater collaboration between the various Atlanta-based universities and enhanced connection between academics and the private sector.



ABOVE: The winning design concept focused on enhancing the pedestrian experience through green infrastructure and ecological enhancements that address heat and excess water, while also creating larger sidewalks and multi-use spaces that can be sectioned off from traffic and utilized for large events.

About Rebuild by Design:
Rebuild by Design convenes a mix of sectors - including government, business, nonprofit, and community organizations - to gain a better understanding of how overlapping environmental and human-made vulnerabilities leave cities and regions at risk. Our process entails true public private partnrships where entities or institutions are needed to establish a meaningful resilience coalition to understand the specific needs in a city, and design evidence-based solutions for the community you are working with. This collaboration remains at the heart of an iterative creative process to address the intersection of physical social, and ecological resilience to drive lasting change.

If you would like more information about Rebuild by Design email info@rebuildbydesign.org.