

# **Health Impact Assessment of the Buford Highway and NE Plaza Redevelopment Project – Atlanta, Georgia**

## **Executive Summary**

**November 22, 2004**

Research has demonstrated that low density auto-oriented developments result in surroundings or built environments that adversely affect public health in a number of ways. It is expected that redeveloping greyfields (underused sites without gross environmental damage) using the principles of “smart growth”, such as creating walkable neighborhoods with a range of housing options, mixing of land uses, and providing a variety of transportation options, will produce healthier environments by decreasing pollution, increasing walking and biking, and decreasing pedestrian injuries.

Buford Highway, considered one of the most dangerous highways in the country, is a seven-lane arterial that starts near downtown Atlanta and runs north into the suburbs parallel to Interstate 85. The area along the Buford Highway in Atlanta, Georgia, reflects many of the urban problems typical of many contemporary cities: single use ubiquitous strip developments, low density, and auto-orientation. The highway is pedestrian unfriendly though it is home to a growing immigrant population that uses public transport, walking and biking as means of travel; it is estimated that 12% of such households do not have cars.

The proposed redevelopment includes highway design changes, such as reducing the number of lanes, adding sidewalks, crosswalks, medians, bike lanes, and on-street parking and changes to the NE Plaza, an underutilized shopping plaza, include increased land-use and connectivity. This Health Impact Assessment (HIA) examined the expected health benefits of these proposed changes, with special emphasis on impact on physical activity and pedestrian

injuries. This HIA demonstrates that a set of applied analytical tools and prototypical models for changing the built environment could have very broad applicability in other locales.