

BELLSOUTH GETS SMARTA

Metro Plan moves 13,000 employees near mass transit

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Contributing Writer

In a four-year project, [BellSouth Corp.](#) moved thousands of employees to locations close to transit opportunities.

The company consolidated more than 13,000 of its 19,000 employees from 25 different offices into three facilities strategically placed near MARTA transit stations. The project, called the BellSouth Metro Plan, is the winner of a 2005 Development of Excellence award from the Urban Land Institute's Atlanta chapter.

Ellen Dunham-Jones, director of the architecture program at Georgia Tech and a ULI jury member, said the project promotes responsible land stewardship and helps the larger environment of Atlanta, both key factors in deciding award winners.

"BellSouth's overall plan to consolidate its offices into three dense centers, all of which are on mass transit, is an admirable intention and a great step towards sustainability for Atlanta," Dunham-Jones said. "They are helping to reduce the overall vehicle miles traveled in Atlanta, and that is a great thing."

Trent Germano, executive vice president in charge of the development group at Carter, which served as developer for the BellSouth Metro Plan, said the project is one of metro Atlanta's most important corporate initiatives.

The three facilities are Lenox Park, Lindbergh City Center and Midtown, all completed in 2001 and 2002.

"Two are directly on transit and the Lenox Park project is about a five-minute shuttle ride away," Germano said. "BellSouth now has the highest corporate transit ridership in the city."

Companywide ridership has reached about 35 percent to 40 percent, exceeding expectations of 30 percent, said Richard Gilbert, BellSouth's director of corporate real estate.

"It goes to show we did something right locating our facilities near mass transit," he said. "The employees have responded to that."

Remote parking decks at MARTA transit stations were built to encourage the use of mass transit. Employees also can hold meetings at the remote parking decks' mini-business/conference centers, complete with temporary offices and Internet access.

"This was a totally new initiative for any company in the Atlanta area," Germano said. "There were parking structures built in College Park, at the North Springs station and in Doraville."

Gilbert said there are 2,600 secured parking spaces free for BellSouth employees using these three garages, as well as a graded lot at the Indian Creek station.

"Each of the 2,000-square-foot business centers is decorated and finished with the same splash of color and fabric as the offices," Gilbert said. "They are very nice facilities."

In addition, the productivity levels have increased, as employees are better equipped to collaborate.

"This provides an opportunity to communicate and make speedy decisions," Gilbert said, adding every floor has a gathering spot where employees can make face-to-face contact and decisions.

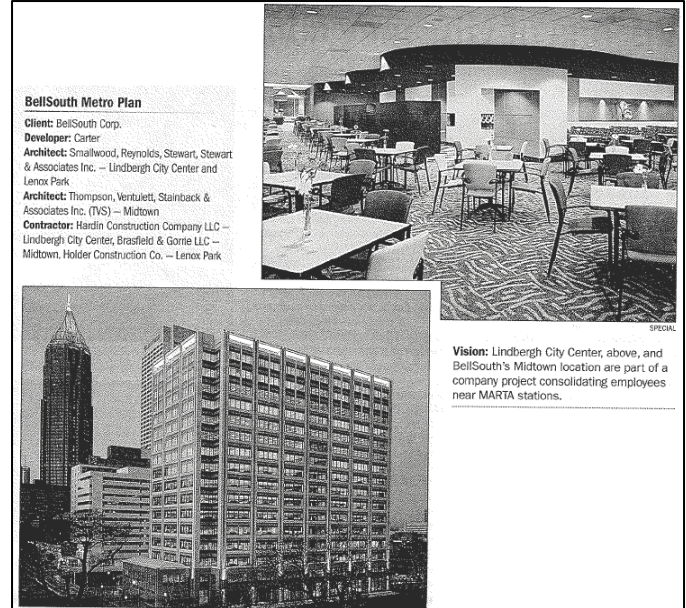
Carter served as a development manager and consultant to help BellSouth implement their plan.

"The plan was all theirs," Germano said. "Carter was just called in to help them implement it. This was a project that was many years in the making by BellSouth. It was very exciting for us to be a part of. It is not often that a project of this magnitude comes along, and to have the opportunity to work on it from the beginning of design phase to implementation was challenging. We are very proud to be associated with it."

Germano said he was impressed that leases signed years ago for the previous office locations included provisions to get the company out of the lease if this plan ever came to fruition.

Of the 25 previous offices, all but one was leased, Gilbert said.

"At the end of the '90s, we were scrambling for space," he said. "We looked around and realized that we needed short-term leases. We were able to escape most of those leases without penalty because they had expired. A lot of planning went into this, and



BellSouth Metro Plan

Client: BellSouth Corp.
Developer: Carter
Architect: Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart & Associates Inc. – Lindbergh City Center and Lenox Park
Architect: Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback & Associates Inc. (TVS) – Midtown
Contractor: Hardin Construction Company LLC – Lindbergh City Center, Brasfield & Gorrie LLC – Midtown, Holder Construction Co. – Lenox Park

Vision: Lindbergh City Center, above, and BellSouth's Midtown location are part of a company project consolidating employees near MARTA stations.

there were some great minds that worked on the development of this plan."

Germano agrees.

"BellSouth set its goals and vision out very clearly in the beginning, and as a team we monitored our progress against those goals, and BellSouth has expressed that their goals were accomplished," he said.

The three sites also offer amenities not typically found in a standard office environment, including an auditorium and conference suites, cafeterias offering "take-home meals," company stores, meditation rooms and full-service credit-union branches.