

## CLAIMING A STREET NAMED KING

CLAIMING A STREET NAMED KING IS A COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. THE PROJECT WAS THE VISION OF THE PAST GEORGIA CLIENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT, TERENCE DICKS. IT BEGAN WITH RESEARCH IN ATHENS AND AUGUSTA GEORGIA THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SCHOOL OF [ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN](#). RESEARCH WAS LED BY DR. MARY ANNE AKERS IN COLLABORATION WITH GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM, GEORGIA STATE TRADE ASSOCIATION OF NON-PROFIT DEVELOPERS (G-STAND) AND NEIGHBORHOOD WORKS AMERICA, INC.

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Derek Alderman, a cultural geographer at East Carolina University, has done [extensive research on Martin Luther King Jr. roadways](#) and was a key advisor for the Clients Council and stakeholders. There are over 700 streets named after Martin Luther King in the United States. There are also a number of other countries that have named streets in honor of Martin Luther King.

Many of the streets named in honor of Martin Luther King are in beautiful well manicured neighborhoods, downtown business districts, interstate and highways. But too many Martin Luther King Jr. throughways are in poor, crime infested dilapidated communities. "To name any street for King is to invite an accounting of how the street makes good on King's promise or mocks it" states Jonathan Tilove author of "Along Martin Luther King" The Claiming A Street Named King is the Georgia Clients Council CED effort to make good on King's promise one community at a time.

The Claiming A Street Named King is more than building new houses or rehabbing homes. This community economic development project is a citizen initiated economic [development strategy](#) which seeks to revitalize the economy of low-moderate income and marginal neighborhoods both urban and rural for the benefit of the whole community. Its principal objective is to assist consumers in becoming producers, users to become providers, employees to employers. The CED utilizes entrepreneurial methods similar to traditional business methods.

### THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

This project is the Georgia Clients Council's vision of the Beloved Community - one street at a time.

#### *What is the Beloved Community?*

The Beloved Community is Martin Luther King's global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human indecency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an [all inclusive](#) spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. In the Beloved Community, international disputes will be resolve by peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation for adversaries, instead of military power. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace with justice will prevail over war and military conflict.

King's Beloved Community was not devoid of interpersonal group or international conflict. Instead he recognized that conflict was inevitable part of human experience as people moved toward the idea of "positive peace" of social equality rather than the "negative peace" of maintaining social order simply for the sake of order. He believed that conflicts could be resolved peacefully and adversaries could be reconciled through mutual, determined commitment to nonviolence.

In a July 13, 1966 article in Christian Century Magazine, Dr. King affirmed the ultimate goal inherent in the quest for the Beloved Community:

*"I do not think of political power as an end. Neither do I think of economic power as an end. They are ingredients in the objective that we seek in life. And I think that end or that objective is truly brotherly society, the creation of the beloved community."*

The Claiming a Street for King (CASNK) project provides a way of grounding and enhancing the idea of a Beloved Community in the spaces, places and streets in which we live. The project seeks to evaluate the many roadways named for Dr. King and expose the forms of racism, discrimination, and inequality still found along and near these streets. Our intention is to use community-based research and critical public dialogue to understand what social, economic/development, environmental, and health challenges face communities along Dr. King's streets as well as think about concrete ways of improving the quality of life in these communities.

You can read more about Derek Alderman's project by downloading the presentation [here](#).

#### *Athens*

The first meeting of the Claiming a Street Named King (CASNK) was held in Athens, Georgia. It was presented by Terence Dicks, former president of the Georgia Clients Council. Present were Alvin Sheats, Director of the Hancock Community Development Center, Phyllis Holmen, Director of Georgia Legal Services Program, Ovita Thornton, Director of the Georgia Clients Council, and Dr. Maryanne A. Akers, University of Georgia Professor.

After much discussion, Dr. Akers took the role of developing the research using her School of Environmental Design graduate and under graduate students. Not only did college students do the research but Georgia Clients Council members took part in the community and classroom course, but "Sitting in a college classroom motivated me to go back to school and get my GED and now I am taking classes at Athens Technical College," states Juanita Johnson.

You can read the full report [here](#).

#### *Augusta*

Collaborating with Marshall Crawford of NeighborWorks® America and Kate Little of G STAND helped produce the Augusta report. Georgia students interviewed and collected stories about Martin Luther King Street in Augusta, Georgia. Senior citizens at the Mays Senior reflected on the changes they had seen on MLK. Mr. Brown talked about the beautiful yards that used to be on MLK. Students interviewed business owners and local politicians on MLK about the how the area had deteriorated. Tracomedia recorded these personal stories.

[Download the presentation](#) or [read the report](#).

### LIVABLE STREETS

"Livable Streets" is an increasingly important theme in development and planning circles. Underlying this theme are a few key issues.

- First, some streets and roads are more livable places than others and hence more or less supportive of a certain quality of life.
- Second, livability is a broad concept that addresses the environmental, social, economic, and health conditions found along streets.
- Third, livability is a human right and connected to improving people's well being, including the poor and historically marginalized. The concept of livable streets recognizes that there is an assortment of users of roads from a variety of walks of life.
- Fourth, the livability of streets is not permanently set but can be altered through good planning, which begins with an assessment of the conditions, problems, and resources found along streets.

You can read more about livable streets [here](#).

### NLADA PRESENTATION BY GA CLIENTS COUNCIL

Georgia Clients Council presented the Claiming A Street Named King at National Legal Aid Defense Association (NLADA) November 2010. There were approximately twelve cities from across the country represented-as far as west as California, as far north as Massachusetts and as far south as Alabama. When asked to describe their MLK streets some of the comments were crime infested, poor black communities, public housing area etc., Jonathon Tilove, author of "Along Martin Luther King", says "To name any street for King is to invite an accounting of how the street makes good on King's promise or mocks it."

Mr. Tilove has been directly involved in CASNK. Participants were interested in more follow-up.

[Click here](#) to download this presentation.