



Atlanta Business Chronicle goes red in support of American Heart Month

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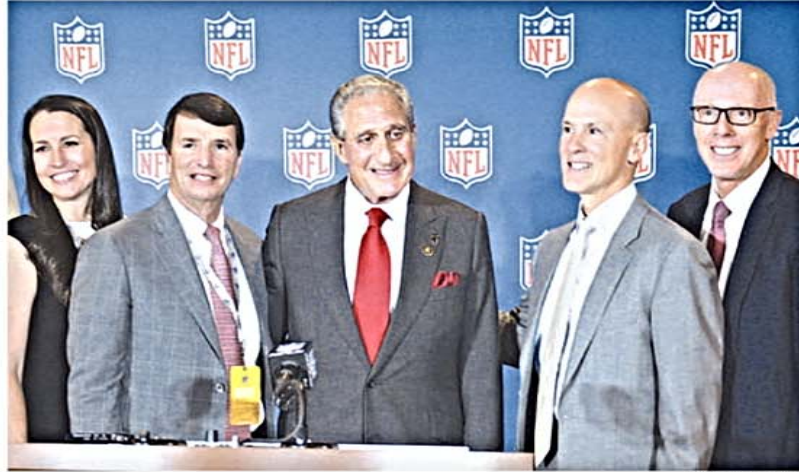


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**29A**



### THE INSIDER

Gov. Brian Kemp at Buckhead Coalition.  
**6A**



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Arthur Blank, center, with other Atlanta and Falcons leaders at the May 2016 announcement that Atlanta had won its bid to host Super Bowl LIII.

## BLANK: ATLANTA 'DID A GREAT JOB' WITH SUPER BOWL LIII

BY MARIA SAPORTA  
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Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank says he "couldn't be prouder" of Atlanta's performance during Super Bowl LIII.

"We've given birth to a wonderful, beautiful baby," Blank said in an exclusive interview on the day after the Feb. 3 game. "It was a long process - going through labor.

But we got it, and we did a great job. So it was wonderful."

The lasting impact of the Super Bowl could take years to materialize, but there are several indicators the 2019 Big Game could lead to tangible results for future economic development as well as sporting and entertainment events.

During the game, Blank hosted

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## ATLANTA DIDN'T PLAY, BUT WON SB LIII BUSINESS GAME

BY DOUGLAS SAMS  
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Atlanta fans had to cringe Feb. 3 when the New England Patriots celebrated a Super Bowl victory on the Falcons' \$1.5 billion home field. The Patriots broke the city's heart just two years ago in Houston.

But there was another big game in Atlanta last week. In the competition for corporate relocations and the high-paying jobs that come with them, Atlanta may have won.

"Think of all the influential, wealthy CEOs who came in town to interface with Atlanta business leaders and developers," said John Boyd, principal with the site selection firm The Boyd Co. "It was a powerful opportunity for Atlanta to showcase itself and its assets."

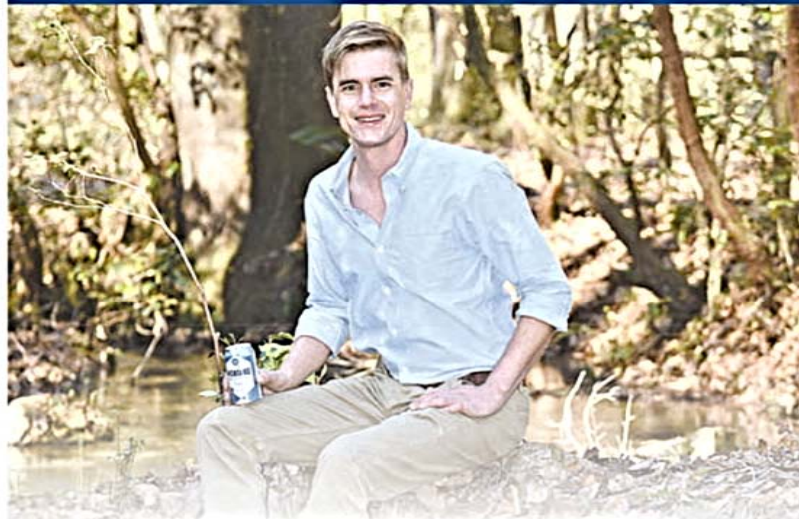
It's worked for other Super Bowl cities.

Houston hosted Super Bowl LI, an infamous game in the memory of Atlanta fans, the site of the Falcons' 28-3 collapse to New England in 2017.

Aside from the pain of a historic loss, Atlanta may want to look back on that Super Bowl in a favorable light. Houston was a forerunner of what the

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### COVER STORY



## SPRINGING FORWARD

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STORY BY Alex Galley • 16A



## BROOKHAVEN MARKET REPORT

Brookhaven begins planned parks beautification

B SECTION



NEWS



BYRON E. SMALL

"People who had not been to Atlanta in a long time were very impressed by how compact the city was," said William Pate, president and CEO of the ACVB.

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city can now expect—a likely boost in the number of companies interested in relocating.

"We saw a significant uptick," said **Jason Ford**, vice president of regional economic development at the **Greater Houston Partnership**.

Houston already landed one company that created about 1,000 jobs.

Ford declined to identify the employer, but he said its executives were invited to Super Bowl events. That's where the economic development courtship between the city and the company started to get serious.

Massive sporting events such as the Super Bowl and the FIFA World Cup, which Atlanta is competing for in 2026, are "big, under-the-radar, powerful drivers of commerce," Boyd said.

Former Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal understood that. The Masters Tournament in Augusta is the gold standard in red-carpet economic development tours, Boyd said.

"It's the Holy Grail," said **John Heagy**, a senior managing director with Houston-based real estate giant **Hines**, which has maintained a prominent Atlanta office for years.

Gov. **Brian Kemp** probably paid close attention to Deal's playbook.

The state's economy ended last year at basically full employment. Some 800,000 new private-sector jobs were generated under Deal. Big corporate expansions included Norfolk Southern Corp., which confirmed last year it will put its new headquarters in Midtown.

"Kemp wants to continue that," Boyd said. "The Super Bowl was an obvious opportunity for showmanship."

Two years ago, Atlanta leaders traveled to Texas to see how their Houston counterparts prepared for the event. Houston officials explained one of the best decisions was revamping downtown with an updated convention center, new restaurants and open space. The project was called Avenida Houston, Spanish for

"Houston Avenue."

During the Super Bowl, a gathering spot for many events was a 12-acre downtown park called Discovery Green.

Like Houston, Atlanta just won praise for its own downtown Super Bowl campus.

"People who had not been to Atlanta in a long time were very impressed by how compact the city was," said **William Pate**, president and CEO of the **Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau**.

Almost every NFL event was in walking distance of 12,000 downtown hotel rooms. The layout created a walkable urban campus in a city that isn't exactly known yet as pedestrian friendly.

"They were able to walk to the events. They were able to walk to the stadium. People were surprised by that," Pate said.

MARTA rail ridership was at record levels. The day before the Super Bowl saw an estimated 270,000 passengers. That underscored MARTA chief Jeff Parker's call for a \$100 billion long-term investment in transit as Atlanta edges closer to becoming the nation's sixth-largest metro region.

"This was a window into the future of Atlanta," Parker said of the congestion in the city during the Super Bowl. "I had never seen the city like this before. My guess is it may have looked something like this during the Olympics, but those events were more spread out. This was compact."

**Martha Brooks**, former president and chief operating officer of Novelis Inc., now board chair of CARE, said of the Super Bowl, "I think many people from the Northeast have the attitude that we are a backwards, stupid place. We weren't that. We were a welcoming, warm international city."

**Doug Hertz**, a minority owner of the Atlanta Falcons who helped lead the bid for Super Bowl LIII, said, "Atlanta showed very well to the rest of the world, and my hope is that it creates the opportunity for other major events to come."

--*Maria Saporta and Amy Wenk contributed to this story.*



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