

**CITY COUNCIL  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**24-O-1011**

**AN ORDINANCE BY COUNCILMEMBERS JASON DOZIER, AMIR FAROKHI, MICHAEL JULIAN BOND, MATT WESTMORELAND, HOWARD SHOOK, ANDREA L. BOONE, DUSTIN HILLIS, JASON WINSTON, MARY NORWOOD, LILIANA BAKHTIARI, MARCI COLLIER OVERSTREET AND BYRON D. AMOS AS SUBSTITUTED BY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE AND BY THE ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL TO AMEND CHAPTER 150 (TRAFFIC AND VEHICLES), ARTICLE III (GENERAL RULES OF VEHICLE OPERATION), SECTION 150-74 OF THE CITY OF ATLANTA CODE OF ORDINANCES, TO PROHIBIT TURNS ON RED LIGHTS AT ALL INTERSECTIONS WITHIN DOWNTOWN ATLANTA, MIDTOWN ATLANTA, AND CASTLEBERRY HILL WHERE APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE INDICATES SUCH PROHIBITION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

WHEREAS, the City of Atlanta is committed to fostering a safe and vibrant environment for its residents, workers, and visitors; and

WHEREAS, Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Castleberry Hill serve as metropolitan and regional hubs for commerce, culture, residential life, and community activities, attracting a diverse population that relies on the accessibility and safety of their pedestrian infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the City of Atlanta recognizes that a thriving center city is contingent upon the well-being and security of its pedestrians, who contribute to the vitality and economic prosperity of the area; and

WHEREAS, Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Castleberry Hill are home to numerous cultural attractions, businesses, and residential areas, attracting a high volume of pedestrian traffic throughout the day and night; and

WHEREAS, fostering a pedestrian-friendly environment contributes to a sense of community, encourages social interaction, and supports local businesses, thereby contributing to the overall quality of life for center city residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the safety of pedestrians is paramount, and initiatives aimed at reducing potential hazards, such as accidents involving turns at red lights, are integral to maintaining a secure and inviting atmosphere in Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Castleberry Hill; and

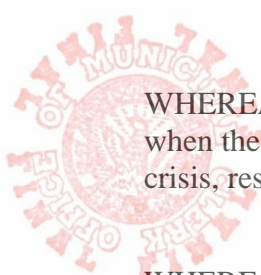
WHEREAS, the success of Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Castleberry Hill as dynamic urban centers is closely tied to the safety and accessibility of their sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian pathways; and

WHEREAS, enhancing pedestrian safety aligns with the City of Atlanta's commitment to sustainable and inclusive urban development, encouraging alternative modes of transportation and reducing the reliance on single-occupancy vehicles; and

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WHEREAS, no turn on red was a standard traffic policy across most of the United States until 1975 when the federal government demanded allowance of turns as a fuel conservation measure during the oil crisis, resulting in compliance of all states by 1980; and

WHEREAS, while the impact on fuel consumption is unclear, the impact on pedestrian and cycling safety has been significant as the new policy triggered a sharp increase in crashes involving conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists and right-turning vehicles; as reported in a 1982 study, in Ohio, such collisions rose 57% for pedestrians and 80% for cyclists, and in Wisconsin, those figures were 107% and 72% respectively; and

WHEREAS, a report by the Governors Highway Safety Association estimates that the number of pedestrians struck and killed by drivers in the United States in 2022 was at its highest in 40 years; and

WHEREAS, this represents a continued increase in pedestrian deaths as reported by the Governors Highway Safety Association; and

WHEREAS, research by Boston University School of Public Health and Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health indicates that black pedestrians experienced traffic deaths at more than twice the rate per mile walking as white pedestrians; and

WHEREAS, according to the Atlanta Department of Transportation, since 2010, over 3,000 Atlanta families have been impacted by traffic violence; and

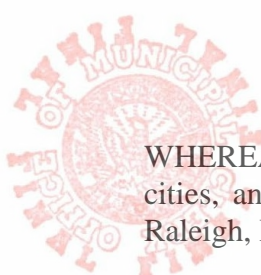
WHEREAS, the number of pedestrians struck and killed by people driving cars in Atlanta rose 23% between 2021 and 2022, from 31 to 38 fatalities, according to a report by Propel ATL; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ordinance 20-O-1239, adopted by the Atlanta City Council on April 20, 2024 and approved by signature of the mayor on April 24, 2024, the City of Atlanta adopted Vision Zero, a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, as Atlanta's official roadway safety program; and

WHEREAS, a recent academic study found that at intersections, drivers are often focused on the flow of cars that they seek to merge into, rather than anyone biking or walking in their immediate vicinity; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Highway Administration describes how right-turning motorists usually pull up into the crosswalk to wait for a gap in traffic, blocking pedestrian crossing movements, and in some instances, simply do not come to a full stop at all, thereby denying the right-of-way to somebody walking or biking as the driver is blocking their path; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Highway Administration has advised that turning on red "should be prohibited where and/or when there are high pedestrian volumes"; and



WHEREAS, the City of Atlanta acknowledges the proactive measures taken by other municipalities, cities, and urban centers, such as Raleigh, NC, Washington, DC, Ann Arbor, MI, Seattle, WA, and Raleigh, NC, to prohibit turns on red lights; and

WHEREAS, their actions provide valuable insights and precedents for the improvement of Downtown Atlanta's, Midtown Atlanta's, and Castleberry Hill's safety infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, prohibiting turns on red is a proven measure aligned with Vision Zero's best practices and the City's focus on creating a safe environment for pedestrians and all modes of transportation on City streets; and

WHEREAS, state law provides in the Uniform Rules of the Road at OCGA Sec. 40-6-21(a)(3)(B), (C) as a default that vehicular traffic facing a steady red light signal may cautiously enter the intersection to make a right turn after stopping and remain stopped for pedestrians and yield the right of way to other traffic proceeding as directed by the signal at such intersection; and

WHEREAS, state law provides in the Uniform Rules of the Road at OCGA Sec. 40-6-21(a)(3)(B), (D) as a default that vehicular traffic facing a steady red light signal may make a left turn from the left-hand lane of a one-way street onto a one-way street on which the traffic moves toward the driver's left but shall stop and remain stopped for pedestrians and yield the right of way to other traffic proceeding as directed by the signal at such intersection; and

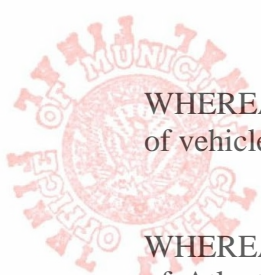
WHEREAS, state law also provides at OCGA Sec. 40-6-21(a)(3)(B), (C), (D) that the general default in state law which permits turns on a red light under the circumstances described may be restricted, but only where signage is erected prohibiting such turns; and

WHEREAS, specifically, state law at OCGA Sec. 40-6-20 (b) provides that “[n]o provisions of this chapter which require official traffic-control devices shall be enforced against an alleged violator if at the time and place of the alleged violation an official device was not in proper position and sufficiently legible to be seen by an ordinarily observant person”; and

WHEREAS, accordingly, where there is no sign prohibiting a turn on a red light under the circumstances described in OCGA Sec. 40-6-21(a)(3)(B), (C), (D), state law affirmatively permits vehicular traffic to turn on a red light, and the City is preempted from taking any action to generally prohibit turns on red light where no signage is installed; and

WHEREAS, state law provides at OCGA Sec. 40-6-371(b) that “[n]o local authority shall erect or maintain any official traffic-control device at any location so as to require the traffic on any state highway to stop before entering or crossing any intersecting highway unless approval in writing has first been obtained from the Department of Transportation of the State of Georgia”; and

WHEREAS, however, state law at OCGA Sec. 40-6-371(a)(2), (9) also provides that the state Uniform Rules of the Road “shall not be deemed to prevent local authorities with respect to streets and highways under their jurisdiction and within the reasonable exercise of the police power from [r]egulating traffic by means of police officers or official traffic-control devices [and] [r]egulating or prohibiting the turning of vehicles or specified types of vehicles”; and



WHEREAS, accordingly the City of Atlanta may enact ordinances which regulate or prohibit the turning of vehicles on a red light where appropriate signage is installed; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to this authority, the City Council of the City of Atlanta desires to amend the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances to prohibit all turns on red lights at intersections within Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Castleberry Hill where appropriate signage indicates such prohibition; and

WHEREAS, notwithstanding the amendments in this ordinance, state law at OCGA Sec. 40-6-6(a), (b)(2) provides that drivers of authorized emergency vehicles or law enforcement vehicles, when responding to an emergency call, when in the pursuit of an actual or suspected violator of the law, or when responding to but not upon returning from a fire alarm, may proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation.

NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ATLANTA, GEORGIA, HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1: That Chapter 150 (Traffic and Vehicles), Article III (General Rules of Vehicle Operation), Section 150-74 of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances, currently Reserved, be amended such that it shall read as follows:

Sec. 150-74. - Prohibition on turning on red lights in specified neighborhoods.

(a) Definitions. For purposes of interpreting this section, the following definitions shall apply:

*Downtown Atlanta* means the area bounded by North Avenue on the north, I-20 on the south, Northside Drive on the west, and I-75/I-85 (also known as the ‘Downtown Connector’) on the east and is inclusive of the Castleberry Hill neighborhood.

*Midtown Atlanta* means the area bounded by I-85 on the north, North Avenue on the south, I-75/I-85 on the west, and Piedmont Avenue on the east.

*Red light* means a steady circular red signal located in an official traffic-control device.

*Turn on red light* means any turn made by a vehicle after coming to a complete stop at a red light and yielding the right-of-way to all pedestrians and vehicles lawfully within the intersection or proceeding as directed by the signal at such intersection.

(b) *Prohibition on turns on red lights.* A turn on a red light shall not be permitted at any intersection within Downtown Atlanta or Midtown Atlanta as defined herein.

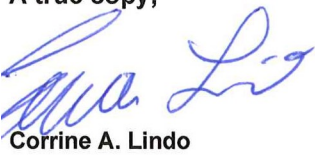
(c) Motorists shall not be subject to a citation for a violation of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances for a failure to adhere to the requirements of this section. Instead, the prohibition contained in this section shall be enforceable against motorists only in accordance with the Georgia Uniform Rules of the Road; and only at intersections where, in accordance with the Georgia Uniform Rules of the Road, signage has been erected prohibiting such turns.

SECTION 2: That Chapter 150 (Traffic and Vehicles), Article III (General Rules of Vehicle Operation), Sections 150-75-150-85 of the City of Atlanta Code of Ordinances, previously reserved, shall remain reserved.

SECTION 3: That except as otherwise provided herein, the amendments in this Ordinance shall become **effective December 31, 2025.**

SECTION 4: That the Municipal Clerk is instructed to retain all legislative history references in the codified version of Chapter 150, including Editor's notes, and shall not delete any such reference, but shall amend them to include reference to this Ordinance.

A true copy,

  
Corrine A. Lindo

Municipal Clerk

ADOPTED by the Atlanta City Council

FEB 19, 2024

APPROVED per City Charter Section 2-403

FEB 28, 2024