

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

TSW

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2026 Annual Report
Atlanta Regional Commission

Project Financing: Specific CEDS actions and projects are independently financed depending on the nature and scope of individual projects. The Atlanta Regional Commission has a Partnership Planning Grant (3-year cycle) from EDA.

October 6, 2026

Prepared by the Atlanta Regional Commission and TSW for the U.S. Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration

229 Peachtree Street NE, International Tower
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
www.atlantaregional.com

Cover Photo: Susanne2688, Adobe Stock

Vision

ONE **great** REGION

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Goals

Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.

Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.

Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.

Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.

A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

Values

Excellence – A commitment to doing our best and going above and beyond in every facet of our work allowing for innovative practices and actions to be created while ensuring our agency's and our colleague's success.

Integrity – In our conduct, communication, and collaboration with each other and the region's residents, we will act with consistency, honesty, transparency, fairness and accountability within and across each of our responsibilities and functions.

Equity – We represent a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends.

ARC
Atlanta Regional Commission

229 Peachtree Street, NE | Suite 100
Atlanta, Georiga 30303

atlantaregional.org

CREDITS

ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Anna Roach
Executive Director and CEO
Mike Alexander
Chielf Operating Officer
Sam Shenbaga
Managing Director, Community Development
Keri Stevens
Program Manager, Community Development
Kristin Allin
Senior Planner, Community Development
Lauren Blasyck
Planning Administrator, Community Development
Roshani Thakore
Head of Community Engagement and Culture Program, Community Development
Ranata Mattison
Principal Planner, Community Development
Shima Khodagholi
Planner, Community Development
Emily Carrillo
Planner, Community Development
Srushti Delhivala
Intern, Community Development
Xavier "Benji" Fitten
Intern, Community Development
Laxmi Bohora
Intern, Community Development

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jay Bailey, *Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship*
Ann Cramer, *Cox Curry & Assoc.*
Noah Downer, *Invest Atlanta*
Patti Garrett, *City of Decatur*
Shannon James, *Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance*
Ashley Jenkins, *Gas South*
Dana Johnson, *Cobb Chamber*
Eloisa Klementich, *Invest Atlanta*
Martin LaMar, *Invest Atlanta*
Georgj Lewis, *HBCE-Post-secondary Committee*
Andy Macke, *Comcast*
Matt Markham, *GDOT*
Nick Masino, *Gwinnett Chamber*
John O'Callaghan, *Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership*
Ashani O'Mard, *Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership*
Ade Oguntoye, *Annie E. Casey Foundation*
Alan Peterson, *Invest Atlanta*
Lisa Smith, *Georgia Power*
Nathaniel Smith, *Partnership for Southern Equity*
T. Ramon Stuart, *Clayton State University*
Chris Tomlinson, *SRTA*

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Daphne Bond-Godfrey, *ULI Atlanta*
Andrew Carnes, *Partnership Gwinnett*
Matthew Coleman, *Atlanta Black Chambers*
Monica Cucalon, *Latin American Association*
Ish Gayle, *Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*
John Helton, *Atlanta CareerRise*
Jessyca Holland, *South Arts*
Leigh Hopkins, *Georgia Tech*
Heather Infantry, *TranFormation Alliance*
Kyle Kessler, *Center for Civic Innovation*
Saba Long, *Atlanta Civic Circle*
Rohit Malhotra, *Center for Civic Innovation*
Santiago Marquez, *Latin American Association Atlanta*
Misti Martin, *Cherokee Office of Economic Development*
Phyllis Minter, *Old National Merchants Association*
Michael Montgomery, *Atlanta Metropolitan State College*
Amol Naik, *Ting Internet at Tucows*
Chris Pumphrey, *Douglas County Development Authority*
Emmanuel Rainey, *Old National Merchants Association*
Meaghan Shannon-Vlkovic, *Enterprise Community Partners*
Gregg Simon, *Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce*
Veronica Torres, *Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*
Ken Zeff, *Learn4Life Metro Atlanta*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION **6**
- The ARC Board 8
- The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 9
- Regional Collaboration for Metro Atlanta's Economic Competitiveness 11

2. REGIONAL ECONOMIC DASHBOARD **12**
- Summary Background Update 13
- Demographic Profile 13
- Employment + Business Community Profile 17
- Education + Workforce Resources Profile 21
- Housing Profile 23

3. ACTION PLAN UPDATES **26**
- Action Item Implementation Status Update 27

4. 2026 IMPLEMENTATION FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN **40**
- 2027 CEDS Update 45

5. APPENDIX **46**

INTRODUCTION



Source: Adobe Stock

1. INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) had a very successful year implementing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Action Plan and supporting economic efforts in the Atlanta Region. We will build off our growing network and utilize our region's resources to continue to move toward our vision of One Great Region.

ONE great REGION



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

THE ARC BOARD

The ARC Board acts as the designated Economic Development District (EDD) for the eleven-county region by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). ARC is composed of forty-one members: twenty-five public elected officials, fifteen citizen members, and one non-voting representative of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.


Andre Dickens


Michael Caldwell


Nicole Hendrickson


Alfred John


Connie Alsobrook


Kerry Armstrong


Liliana Bakhtiari


John William Bowers


Jim Brooks


Troy Brumbalow


Greg Cantrell


Alison Clark


Ollie Clemons


Lisa Cupid


Lynn Deutsch


Archie Emerson


Marci Fluellyn


Carlotta Harrell


Megan Harris


Lee Hearn


Aleika Anderson-Henry


Edward Johnson


Lorraine Cochran-Johnson


Harry Johnston


Romona Jackson Jones


Tom Meinhart


Marvin Nesbitt, Jr.


JaNice Van Ness


Justin O'Dell


Rusty Paul


Robb Pitts


Sara Ray


Robert "Bob" Reeves


Rochelle Robinson


Steven L. Stancil


Ann Tarpley


Vince Williams


Anna Roach


Tim Le

THE COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Atlanta Regional Commission developed and adopted the CEDS through a yearlong process in 2022 as required by the EDA: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) - Atlanta Regional Commission.

The CEDS is a strategy for economic competitiveness. The 2022 CEDS process was an opportunity to adapt to changing global and national economic conditions and community needs. It is a post-recession, post-COVID-19 Action Plan to reset the economy. This CEDS acknowledges the successes of past economic achievements in the eleven-county EDD but also acknowledges limitations. The CEDS includes an Action Plan that adopts practical solutions and optional experimental strategies from business leaders, universities, educational entities, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and professionals in economic development. It also includes solutions from an expanded base of nontraditional stakeholders such as non-profits, creative sector professionals, small businesses (women and minority), and faith-based organizations.



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

The CEDS will ensure that economic mobility is at the forefront in metro Atlanta including access to good jobs, a well-trained workforce, and the regional collaboration needed to invigorate economic growth. The CEDS allows communities and organizations to receive grants and assistance from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for projects and technical assistance that support the six (6) focus areas and four (4) goals.

The groundwork for the CEDS Action Plan was laid in 2023, paving the way for continued progress through 2024-2027. Several projects and initiatives reached completion, while many others were launched and remain ongoing as part of the broader Five-Year Plan.



REGIONAL COLLABORATION FOR METRO ATLANTA'S ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

It all happens through collaboration and cooperation of leaders from across the region's public, private, and nonprofit spheres. A variety of stakeholders, organizations, and government leaders need to work together to solve problems and promote projects and programs utilizing resources more efficiently.





Source: Atlanta Regional Commission



REGIONAL ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

Source: Adobe Stock

2. REGIONAL ECONOMIC DASHBOARD

SUMMARY BACKGROUND UPDATE

This annual report represents the 2026 planning period and the last year before our 2027 CEDS update. To that end, this data overview will highlight some key changes from the CEDS itself in addition to providing updates from the previous annual report The CEDS provided an understanding of the local economic environment, largely using 2020 data across four broad categories: demographic, business community, housing, and workforce resources. This CEDS 2026 Annual report provides data updates to these four profiles, highlighting post-pandemic economic conditions using the most recent data from the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates and other sources.



DEMOGRAPHIC



BUSINESS COMMUNITY



WORKFORCE RESOURCES

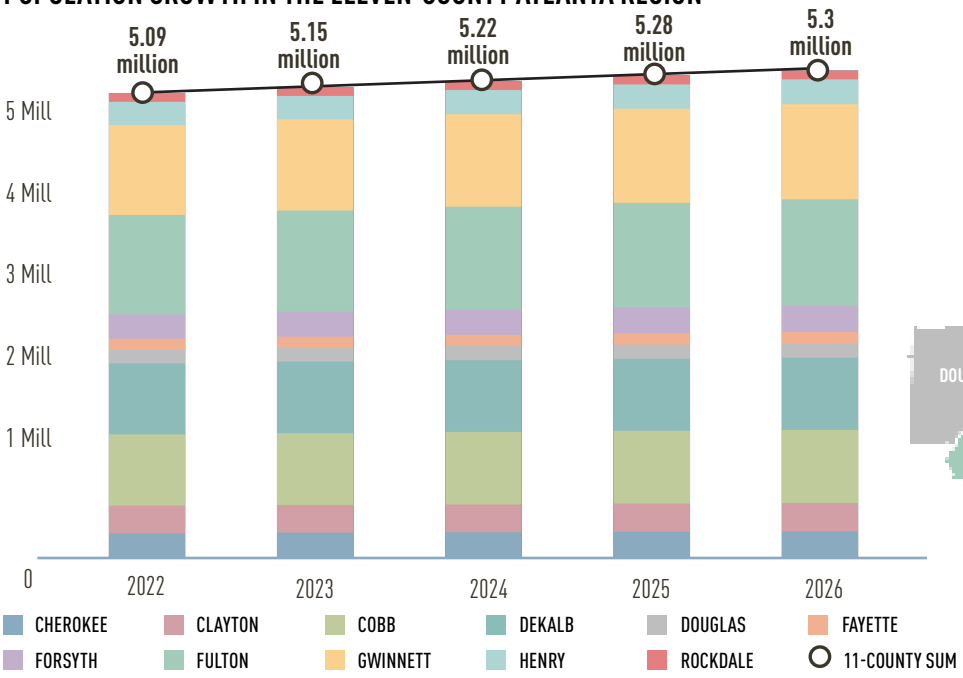


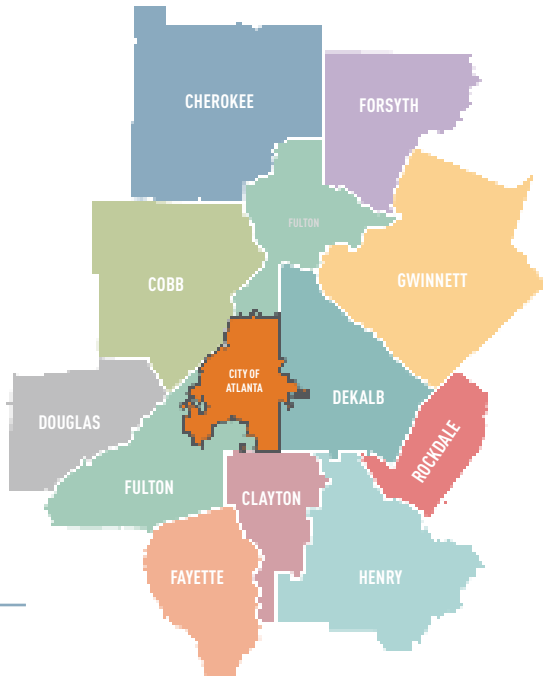
HOUSING

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Population

The eleven-county Atlanta region is now home to 5,339,164 residents, adding 53,690 new residents between April 2025 and April 2026. Growth slowed to 1.0 percent, down from 1.2 percent (64,400 residents) in 2024-25, reflecting a nationwide trend. All 11 counties gained population. Fulton County, including the City of Atlanta, led the region at 1.9 percent, followed by Forsyth (1.5), Henry (1.3), and Cherokee and Gwinnett (1.1 each). The City of Atlanta added about 6,900 residents (1.3 percent), reaching 549,615, down from last year's gain of 10,600.





Source: Atlanta Regional Commission Population Estimates



DEMOGRAPHIC

CEDS Demographic Profile Update

The following data overview highlights some key changes from the CEDS demographic profile of the 11-county Economic Development District (EDD). The "THEN" data comes from the 2022 CEDS; however, the data provided was from 2020 census data. The "NOW" data represents post-pandemic economic conditions using the most recent data from the 2024 ACS 5-year estimates, unless otherwise noted.

Population in Poverty

DATA	THEN	NOW	KEY TAKEAWAY
Population in Poverty	11-County EDD-2020	11-County EDD-2024	
Poverty - TOTAL	**533,485**	**543,953**	In the 11-County EDD, poverty rates have stayed roughly the same, only modestly increasing by 1.9% from 2020.
Poverty-White	164,803	123,767	While poverty amongst the black population remains greater than other groups, the **number of black people in poverty has decreased by .29% since 2020**, or approximately 766 people. **White poverty also decreased by 33% since 2020**, or approximately 41,036 people.
Poverty-Black/ African American	268,075	267,309	
Poverty-Asian	32,004	32,747	
Poverty-Hispanic	102,428	109,763	

Population in Poverty by County

DATA	THEN		NOW		KEY TAKEAWAYS
County	TOTAL '20 (Decennial Census)	YOUTH '20 (Decennial Census)	TOTAL -'24 (ACS 5-Year Estimates)	YOUTH -'24 (ACS 5-Year Estimates)	
Cherokee County	17,381	5,657	19,439	4,850	
Clayton County	46,679	19,200	52,887	21,563	
Cobb County	64,079	19,487	66,802	18,958	
Dekalb County	**106,725**	38,623	**103,129**	34,210	
Douglas County	16,427	5,618	15,895	5,401	
Fayette County	5,237	1,176	6,772	1,530	
Forsyth County	12,331	4,104	11,556	3,309	
Fulton County	**136,164**	43,629	**129,199**	35,502	
Gwinnett County	**96,753**	35,595	**105,229**	37,091	
Henry County	20,842	7,950	22,880	8,586	
Rockdale County	10,867	3,952	10,165	3,531	
TOTAL	**533,485**	**184,991**	**543,953**	**174,531**	

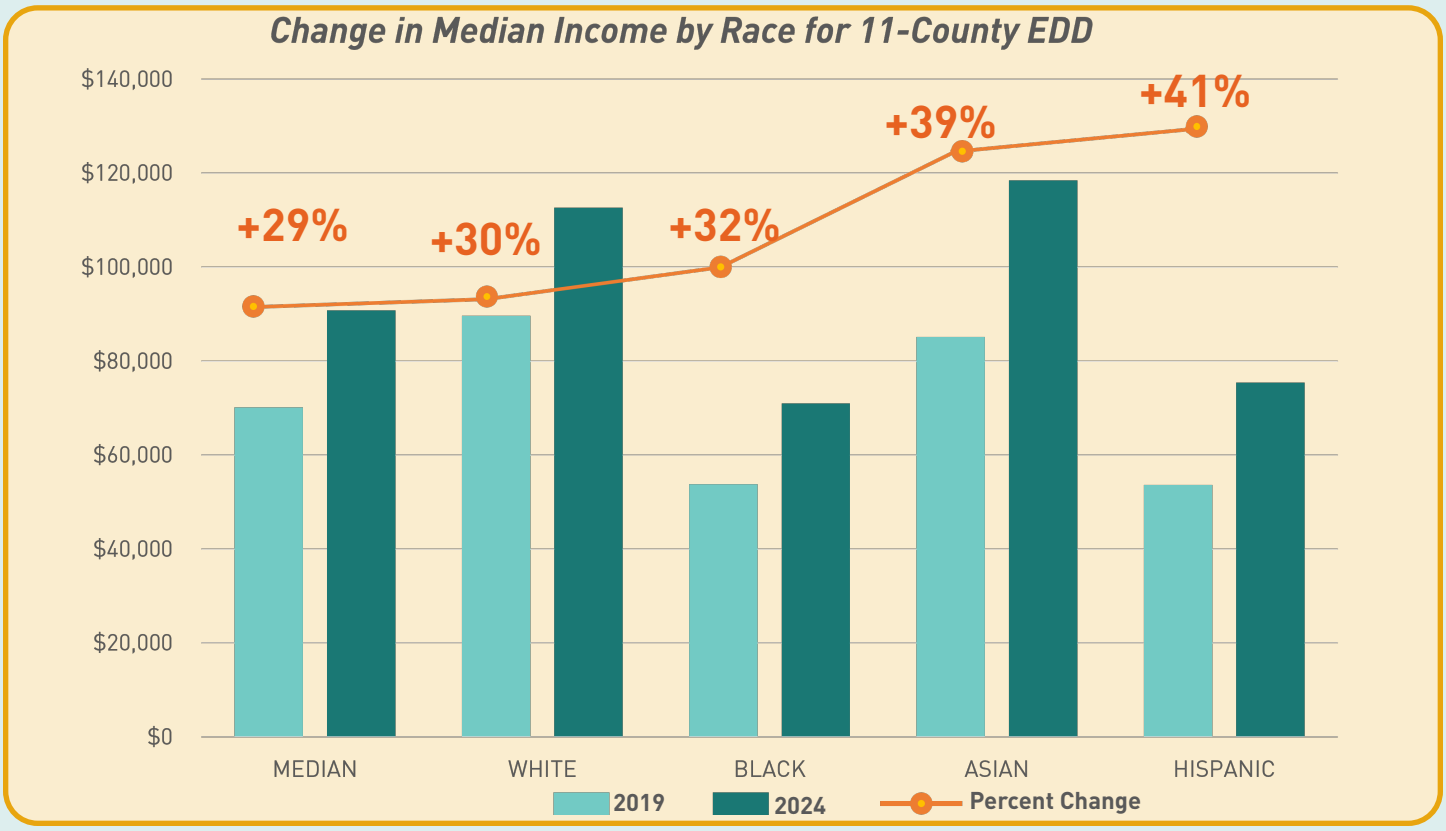
The number of people in poverty remains high amongst the region's most populous counties like Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett. Notably, **the number of people in poverty in Dekalb and Fulton decreased by 3.4% and 5% respectively. However, the number of people in poverty in Gwinnett increased by 8.76%.**

The total number of youths in poverty continued its decline between 2020 and 2023, **diminishing by 5.6% to 174,531**. Gwinnett (37,091), DeKalb (34,210), and Clayton (21,563) still have significant numbers of impoverished youths.

Fulton had one of the largest declines at 18.6% or 8,127 people while Clayton County had one of the sharpest gains at 12.3% or 2,363 youths.

Median Income by Race

DATA	THEN	NOW	KEY TAKEAWAY
Median Income	11-County EDD-2019	11-County EDD-2024	Since 2019, **White residents experienced the lowest gains (30%) in median household income.** On the other hand, **Hispanic residents saw the greatest percent increase (41%) in median income** during that time.
Median Income - TOTAL	**$70,106**	**$90,769**	
White	$89,660	$116,577	
Black/African American	$53,799	$71,001	
Asian	$85,117	$118,463	
Hispanic	$53,648	$75,406	



*In Inflation Adjusted Dollars

EMPLOYMENT + BUSINESS COMMUNITY PROFILE

Over the past decade, metro Atlanta's employment growth has been more robust than that of the nation. In fact, when compared to some of our peer metros, metro Atlanta's job recovery since the pandemic is among the strongest. In looking at how that demand has changed, occupations that were decimated during the pandemic – fast food workers, laborers, stockers, pre-school teachers – are more in-demand today. Other occupations, such as engineering, are also seeing increased demand in response to federal infrastructure investment initiatives.

Information (data processing, publishing and distributing information) and Management (corporate HQ) are relative strengths of metro Atlanta's economy. As has been the case historically, Registered Nurses and Software Developers are the two most in-demand occupations based on job postings from employers.

Inflation gains slightly outpaced wage gains over the past year (2.8% vs 2.6%), but the pace of inflation has slowed dramatically in metro Atlanta recently. The source is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U), Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Rowell.

CEDS Business Community Profile Update

The following data overview highlights some key changes from the CEDS business community profile of the 11-county Economic Development District (EDD). The 'THEN' data comes from the 2023 CEDS; however, the data provided was from 2020 employer records. The 'NOW' data represents current post-pandemic economic conditions using the most recent 2026 employer data from Lightcast and DatabaseUSA, unless otherwise noted.



BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Top 20 Employers (29-County MSA)

EDUCATION PRIVATE HEALTHCARE GOVERNMENT

DATA	THEN		NOW	
Rank	2020	Employees	2026	Employees
1	**Emory University**	**32,594**	Hartsfield-Jackson Airport	63,000
2	**Delta Air Lines**	**27,535**	**United Parcel Service Inc**	**42,622**
3	Northside Hospital	23,600	**The Home Depot Inc**	**31,703**
4	Gwinnett County Public Schools	21,493	**Delta Air Lines Inc**	**27,990**
5	**The Home Depot**	**18,600**	Hapag-Lloyd America Inc	14,509
6	**Wellstar Health Systems**	**17,740**	Primerica Inc	14,336
7	Piedmont Healthcare	16,000	Georgia Institute of Technology	12,971
8	**Cobb County Public Schools**	**12,179**	**Emory University**	**11,445**
9	**United Parcel Service Inc**	**11,300**	Delta TechOps	11,000
10	Fulton County Public Schools	11,172	NCR Voyix Corporation	10,826

Top 20 Employers (29-County MSA) - Continued

DATA	THEN		NOW	
Rank	2020	Employees	2026	Employees
11	Publix	10,757	Emory's Woman's Mental Health Pro	9,149
12	Children's Healthcare of Atlanta	7,711	Sun Trust Investment Services	8,715
13	Cox Enterprises	7,417	Charles M Hall PC	8,648
14	Argenbright Holdings	7,410	Insight Global	7,317
15	State Farm	7,300	Echelon	6,630
16	**Georgia Institute of Technology**	**7,180**	The Southern Company	6,452
17	Northeast Georgia Health Center	7,035	**Cobb County School District**	**5,954**
18	Georgia State University	5,550	Equifax Inc	5,906
19	Cherokee County Public Schools	5,000	Northside/Doctors' Centre Imaging	5,804
20	Grady Health System	4,928	World Financial Group	5,159

Key Takeaways

As of Quarter 3 in 2026, healthcare and education systems remain among the region's top 20 employers, but **Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport (63,000) leapfrogged Emory University (11,445) for the top Metro Atlanta employer**. While overall healthcare employment grew, **closure of Atlanta's Wellstar Medical Center in 2022 reduced Wellstar's regional workforce, bumping them out of the top 20 employers altogether** and diminshing the healthcare industry's share of employment.



Source: miglagoa - stock.adobe.com

School systems and universities are still among the region's largest employers **The Georgia Institute of Technology, Emory University, and Cobb County School District all rank in the top 20**, Together, they account for more than 30,000 employees across the region.

Top Five Most Concentrated Industry Clusters

DATA	THEN	NOW	KEY TAKEAWAY
Rank	**Atlanta MSA-2020** (BLS/Metro Atlanta Chamber)	**Atlanta MSA-2025** (Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS))	Since 2020, the Atlanta Region's most concentrated occupational clusters have shifted. **Business and Financial Operations and Legal occupations now lead the region, each employing more than 1.3 times the national rate.**
1	Information	Business and Financial Operations	
2	Management	Legal	
3	**Transportation and Warehousing**	**Transportation and Warehousing**	
4	Admin, and Waste Management	Computer and Mathematical	
5	Wholesale Trade	Sales	

Employment and Payroll Share by Firm Size

DATA					KEY TAKEAWAY
Firm Size		**<100**	**100-499**	**500+**	As of 2022, the distribution of total businesses, percent of total employees, and share of annual payroll mirrors 2019: about 57% of workers are employed by firms with 500+ employees, which comprise roughly 3% of businesses yet generate nearly two-thirds of payroll.
Percent of Total Firms					
THEN	2019	**94%**	**3%**	**3%**	
NOW	2022	**95%**	**2%**	**3%**	
Percent of Metro Atlanta Employees					
THEN	2019	**29%**	**12%**	**59%**	
NOW	2022	**30%**	**13%**	**57%**	
Percent of Annual Payroll					
THEN	2019	**23%**	**11%**	**66%**	
NOW	2022	**23%**	**13%**	**64%**	

Source: U.S. Census Annual Business Survey (2019, 2022) and Business Dynamics Survey (2019, 2022)

High Demand Jobs

DATA	THEN		NOW	
Rank	Job	Median Income	Job	Median Income
1	Transportation	$34,351	Office & Admin	$47,040
2	Healthcare	$71,786	Transportation	$44,120
3	Sales	$31,620	Sales	$37,550
4	Management	$117,307	Business & Finance	$81,310
5	Computer & Math	$96,742	Food Prep	$29,720
6	Office & Admin	$39,770	Management	$130,550
7	Business & Finance	$73,489	Healthcare	$94,790
8	Food Prep	$22,100	Education	$62,210
9	Install., Maint. & Repair	$50,887	Production	$44,880
10	Production	$35,943	Computer & Math	$110,010

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 2020-2025

Key Takeaway

High-demand jobs in the Atlanta MSA continue to not offer the highest wages. **Computer & Mathematical and Management occupations remain the highest-earning among the top 10 in-demand jobs. However, Computer & Math has fallen from 5th to 10th since 2020, signaling softening demand.**



Source: Nina Lawrenson - stock.adobe.com

EDUCATION + WORKFORCE RESOURCES PROFILE

Roughly 8.5% of the region holds less than a high school diploma, 45.5% hold a high school diploma, and 46% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.

CEDS Workforce Resources Profile Update

The following data overview highlights some key changes from the CEDS workforce resources profile of the 11-county Economic Development District (EDD). The "THEN" data comes from the 2023 CEDS; however, the data provided was from 2020 census data. The "NOW" data represents post-pandemic economic conditions using the most recent data from the 2024 ACS 5-year estimates, unless otherwise noted.



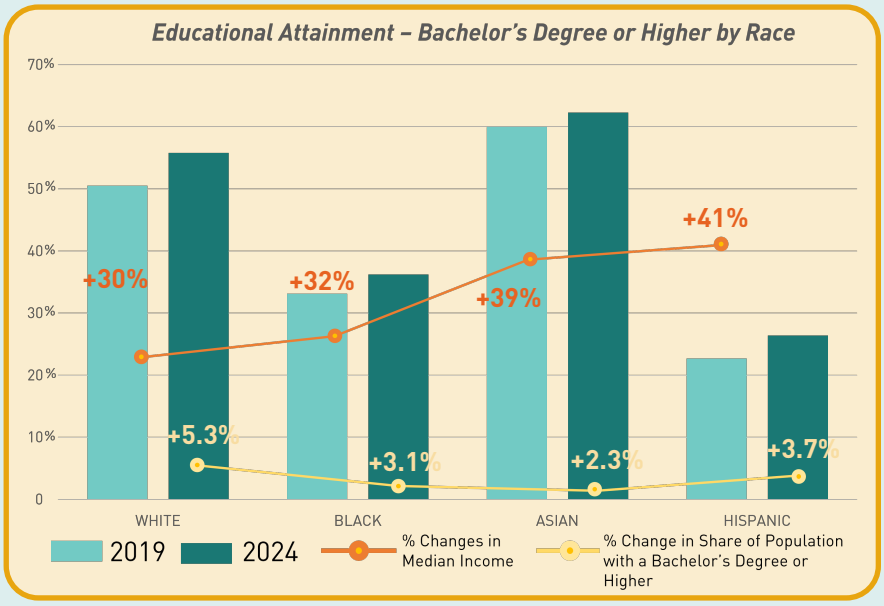
WORKFORCE RESOURCES

College Degree Attainment by County

DATA	THEN	NOW	KEY TAKEAWAYS
County	% with College Degree and Above - '20 (Decennial Census)	% with College Degree and Above -'24 (ACS 5-Year	Overall, Northern EDD counties continue to have higher shares of those with a bachelor's, graduate or professional degree; however, **nearly every county saw a decline in college degree attainment since 2020, with drops ranging from 1.5 to 8 points. Rockdale County stood out as the exception with a notable 10-point increase.**
Cherokee	45%	41.1%	
Clayton	29%	22.5%	
Cobb	56%	50.8%	
Dekalb	53%	47.4%	
Douglas	37%	30.8%	
Fayette	55%	49.9%	
Forsyth	62%	57.1%	
Fulton	60%	58.5%	
Gwinnett	47%	39%	
Henry	39%	32.4%	
Rockdale	36%	46%	

Educational Attainment by Race

Throughout the EDD, Hispanic populations continue to have a much lower educational attainment concerning bachelor's degrees or higher. During the same time period, however, **Hispanic residents saw the fastest growth in median income of any racial group, while White residents saw the largest gain in educational attainment.**



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2020-2024

Drop-Out Rates

DATA	THEN	NOW	COMP	KEY TAKEAWAYS
School District	2014-2015	2021-2025	% Change	
Cherokee	3%	1%	-66.7%	
Clayton	6%	4%	-33%	
Cobb	3%	2%	-33%	
DeKalb	**6%**	**4%**	**-33%**	
Douglas	**2%**	**2%**	**0%**	
Fayette	1%	1%	0%	
Forsyth	1%	0%	-100%	
Fulton	3%	3%	0%	
Gwinnett	3%	3%	0%	
Henry	3%	2%	-33%	
Rockdale	3%	3%	0%	
Atlanta Public Schools	**7.2%**	**3.2%**	**-55.6%**	

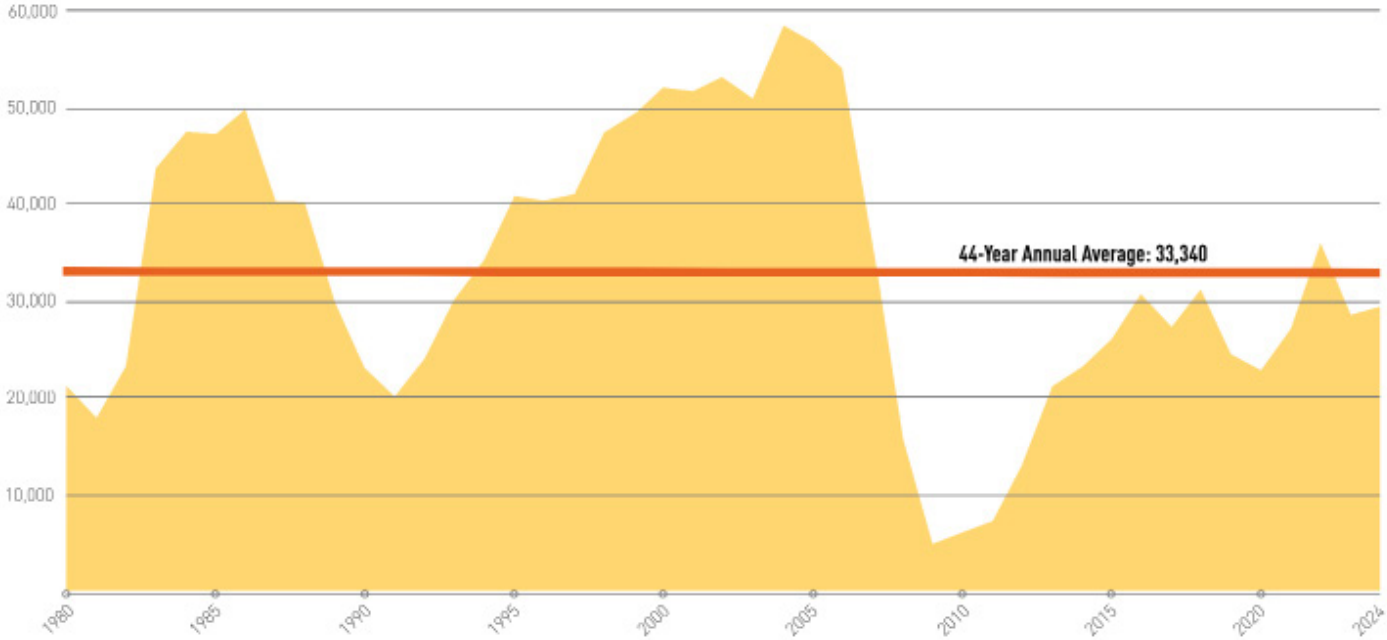
From 2021 to 2025, dropout rates declined or held steady in every district across the EDD. **Cherokee County saw the steepest decline, followed by Forsyth County, which reduced its dropout rate to 0%. Atlanta Public Schools posted one of the region's largest improvement, cutting its dropout rate more than half.**

Source: State of Georgia School District Report Card

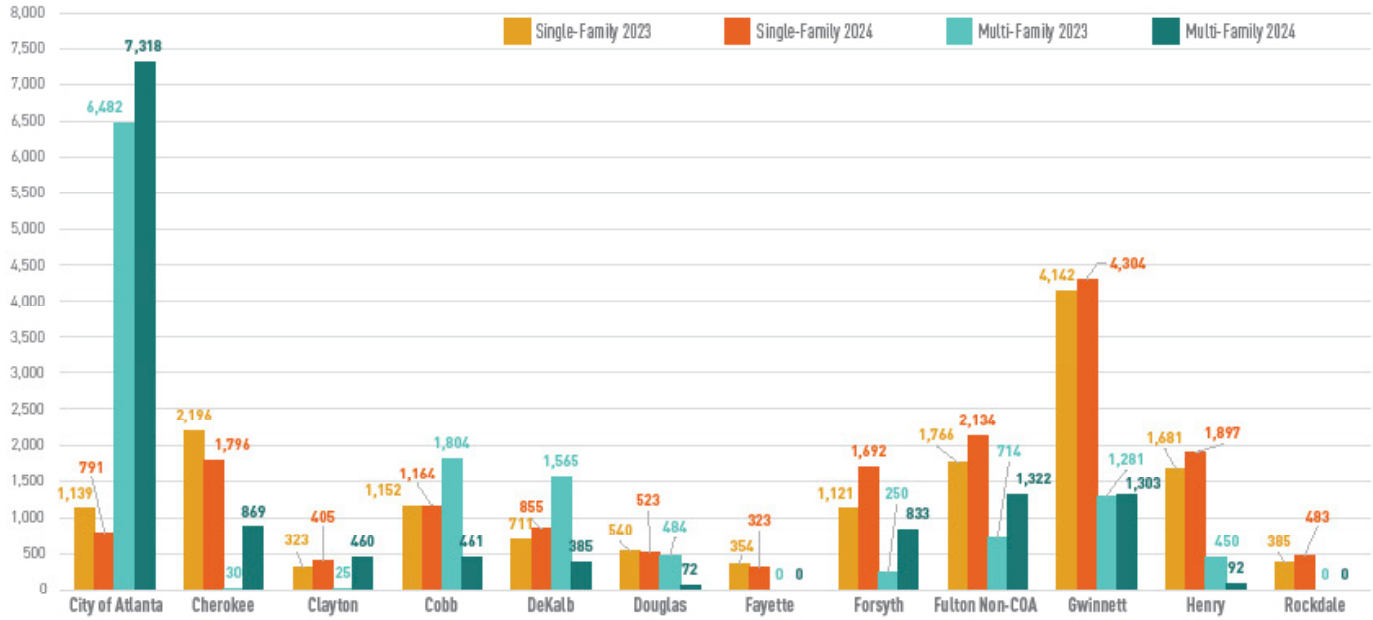
HOUSING PROFILE

The median household income in the eleven-county region is $90,769 with 10.9% of the population in poverty. In 2024, there were 29,482 new residential building permits in the eleven-county region, which was a slight increase of nearly 887 permits from 2023 calendar year totals of 28,595. Despite this increase, current building permit activity for the eleven-county region remains lower than pre-Great Recession permit levels (53,978 in 2006 and 35,932 in 2007) and below the 1980-2024 average annual level of 33,340. In 2024, single-family permits remained constrained, echoing 2023 numbers while multifamily permits increased overall, but varying at the county level. Notably, multi-family permits significantly increased in Cherokee, Clayton, and Fulton Counties. Despite the overall increase in building permit activity, factors like high interest rates and inflation are stifling housing demand even with limited supply, particularly looking ahead to 2026. https://atlantaregional.org/what-we-do/housing/housing-strategy-atlanta-region/

BUILDING PERMITS IN THE ELEVEN-COUNTY REGION 1980-2024



BUILDING PERMITS IN THE ELEVEN-COUNTY REGION 2023-2024



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission Metro Atlanta Building Permit Tracker

CEDS Housing Profile Update

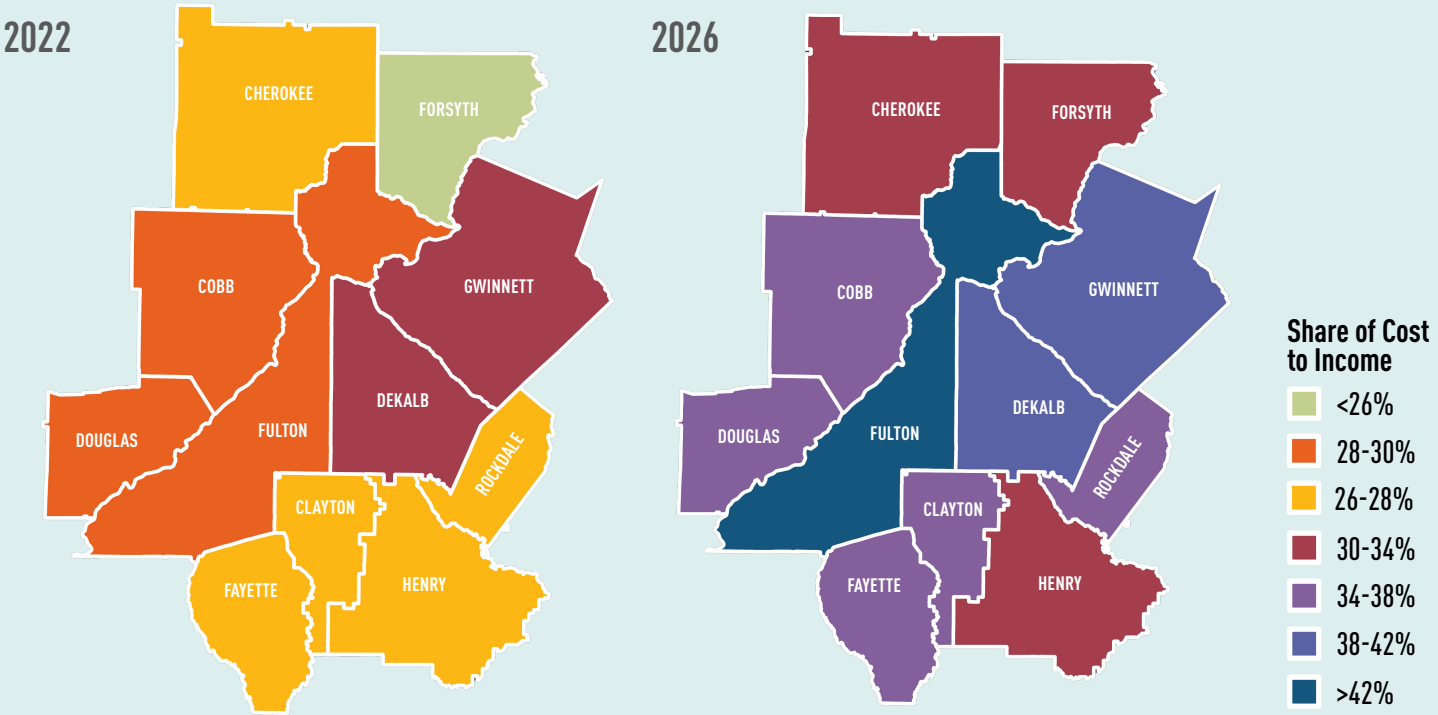
The following data overview highlights some key changes from the CEDS housing profile of the 11-county Economic Development District (EDD). The "THEN" data comes from the 2023 CEDS; however, the data provided was from 2020 census data. The "NOW" data represents post-pandemic economic conditions using the most recent data from the 2024 ACS 5-year estimates, unless otherwise noted.



HOUSING

Affordability

Ability for a Median-Income Household to Afford and Median Priced Home (by County)



Perhaps the greatest difference in the last four years is the change in housing affordability. Median incomes across the 11-county region did not keep up with the median home sale price, particularly considering rising interest rates. As recent of April 2026, each county exceeds the 30% share of cost-to-income threshold, whereas in 2022, only two counties—Gwinnett and DeKalb—crossed this threshold. Fulton County experienced the most change in affordability, overtaking Gwinnett and DeKalb as the most unaffordable county using this metric.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 2022, April 2026

Housing Tenure

DATA	THEN		NOW		KEY TAKEAWAY
County	% Own	% Rent	% Own	% Rent	
Cherokee	76%	24%	77%	23%	
Clayton	**50%**	**50%**	**55%**	**45%**	
Cobb	53%	47%	67%	33%	
Dekalb	**56%**	**44%**	**59%**	**41%**	
Douglas	66%	35%	67%	33%	
Fayette	82%	19%	80%	20%	
Forsyth	84%	16%	84%	16%	
Fulton	**53%**	**47%**	**54%**	**46%**	
Gwinnett	67%	34%	66%	34%	
Henry	71%	29%	75%	25%	
Rockdale	67%	34%	70%	30%	

Fulton (46%), Clayton (45%), and DeKalb (41%) counties **still have the highest percentage of renter-occupied housing units, but each of these counties have gained a greater share of owner-occupied units** over a four-year period.

Renter Cost Burden

DATA	THEN	NOW	KEY TAKEAWAY
County	% Cost Burdened Renters - 2020	% Cost Burdened Renters - 2024	
Cherokee	50%	57%	
Clayton	52%	63%	
Cobb	46%	50%	
Dekalb	53%	59%	
Douglas	48%	50%	
Fayette	**45%**	**59%**	
Forsyth	46%	46%	
Fulton	48%	51%	
Gwinnett	53%	62%	
Henry	**45%**	**58%**	
Rockdale	49%	53%	

The share of cost-burdened renters across the 11-county EDD rose in nearly every county between 2020 and 2024, **with Fayette (45% to 59%) and Henry (45% to 58%) seeing the largest increase.**

ACTION PLAN UPDATES



Source: Adobe Stock

3. ACTION PLAN UPDATES

The Implementation chapter of the CEDS has a list of Action Items to assist the Region meet the established goals. The Implementation Timeframe is organized as Year 1 (2023), which are immediate actions (started in 2023) and Year 5, which will be addressed over time. The matrix on the following spreads shows the progress made on identified Action Items.

In addition to the specific Action Items in the CEDS there were many related successes to move economic development forward. Examples are shown are the following pages.

Housing

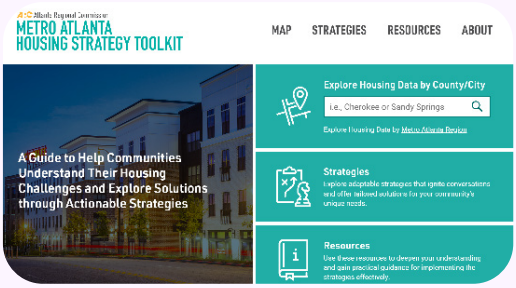
ARC and our partners have focused heavily on addressing housing challenges in our region though the following programs:

METRO ATLANTA HOUSING TOOLKIT

This is an interactive digital toolkit that provides detailed information and data about the region's housing market to the neighborhood level and offers a set of actionable steps local communities can take to address their housing challenges.

In 2025, updated housing data is being utilized to develop a concise informational brief, designed to provide communities with an accessible overview that supports educational initiatives and strategic planning.

https://metroatlhousing.org/



ATLANTA REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM



The Atlanta Regional Housing Forum is a quarterly gathering of affordable housing stakeholders from all sectors - private, public, nonprofit, philanthropic, and concerned citizens.

ARC unveiled its regional housing strategy at the September 2, 2026 housing forum. The regional housing strategy is a framework for coordinated action on housing across the 11-county region. There are four meetings per year.

https://atlantaregional.org/what-we-do/housing/atlanta-regional-housing-forum/

REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY FOR THE ATLANTA REGION

In 2025, ARC kicked off its first agency-wide housing strategy aimed to create a set of unified housing policy priorities for the agency and region, assess potential points of impact, develop resources, and measure our progress towards meeting this challenge. It will be adopted in early 2027.

https://atlantaregional.org/procurement/regional-housing-strategy/

HOUSING PLANNING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



The ARC offers grant-funded planning assistance and technical support for housing through the Community Development Department's Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) and Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program.

Clarkston Housing Planning and Assistance

In response to Clarkston's increasing need for housing solutions, city officials put forward a proposal centered on meaningful resident engagement in the planning process. Backed by ARC, the 2025 Housing Summit was created as a platform for informed discussion, collaborative learning, and open conversation about the city's evolving housing landscape. ARC is also supporting a Task Force with Clarkston in 2026 as part of our CDAP program to move the summit to implementable actions.

https://www.clarkstonga.gov/HousingSummit

Clayton County Housing Assessment

Clayton County was awarded a grant in 2025 to launch a countywide Housing Assessment and Strategy through ARC's CDAP program. The Housing Assesment and Strategy will increase understanding and policy actions across the county and cities within Clayton. The goal is to support diverse housing types across the income spectrum in Clayton County.

OTHER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

ARC is assisting Clayton County to create an Arts and Entertainment District in Historic Rex Mill. This area is a hidden gem in Clayton County. Staff is working on an overlay district and National Register Nomination.





ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUMS

ARC's Regional Economic Development Forum series brings together business and civic leaders to discuss the health of metro Atlanta's economy. In 2026, we hosted two forums. The first at 505 Courtland in Downtown Atlanta where participants worked through a SWOT analysis focused on economic mobility. The second featured National Assocation of Development Organizations (NADO) and focused on project implementation from the CEDS. Input from the forum will help shape the 2027 CEDS update. Participants identified regional strengths such as higher education and entrepreneurship, alongside challenges like housing costs and income inequality. Agendas and supporting materials are in the appendix.





In addition to the specific Action Items in the CEDS there were many related successes to move economic development forward. Examples are shown below:

OTHER SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP): Projects are chosen based on areas of regional priority identified by ARC and the selection committee. Quality-of-life improvements such as smart communities, creative placemaking, housing affordability, and healthy food access are some of the focus areas used in selection.

Website: Community Development Assistance Program - Atlanta Regional Commission

2026 PROJECTS

ARC Staff Assistance

- Clarkston Housing Assessment

Partner-Led Assistance

- Sweet Auburn Equitable Development and Preservation Strategy (Georgia Tech Urban Design Studio)
- Aging in Atlanta: Planning and Design for Lifelong Neighborhoods (Georgia Tech Urban Design Studio)

Grant Assistance

- Henry County Housing Study ($160,000)

As with all work in economic development collaboration and partnerships make the end results stronger. These are some of our partners:

- Georgia State University
- Georgia Tech Urban Design Studio

Livable Centers Initiative

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) awarded over $1 million in Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grants for six planning studies across metro Atlanta to help communities reimagine their downtowns, create vibrant transit corridors, and promote live-work-play environments. Upon completion of the studies, the grant recipients will be eligible to apply for federal transportation to fund projects, such as complete streets and bike-ped infrastructure, to bring their visions to life.

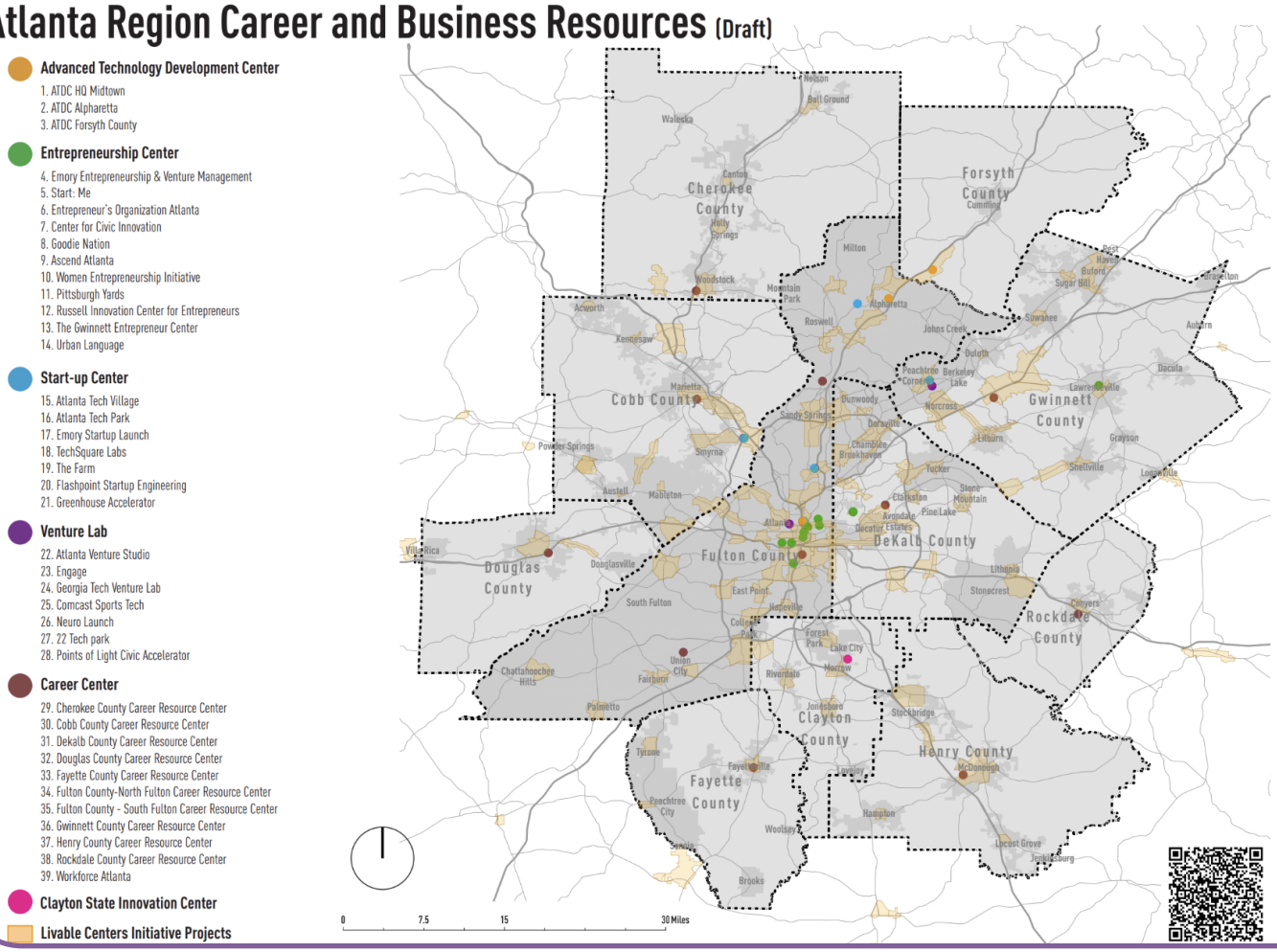
Website: [Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) - Atlanta Regional Commission]

2026 PROJECTS

Recipients Include:

- Atlanta Downtown, Inc. Sweet Auburn Pedestrian Safety Access Plan ($160,000)
- Buckhead Master Plan Update ($240,000)
- DeKalb Candler Road/Flat Shoals Parkway Area Plan Update ($200,000)
- Mableton Town Center Master Plan ($160,000)
- Stockbridge LCI Plan Update ($160,000)
- Morrow Trail Extension and I-75 Overpass Feasibility Study ($500,000)

Atlanta Region Career and Business Resources (Draft)



2025 LCI STUDY GRANT RECIPIENTS (THROUGH 2027)		
Responsible Party	Grant Amount	Action Item
City of Atlanta	$200,000	This study will advance the vision for a safe, connected, and active Ashby MARTA station. Building off the 2009 Vine City/Washington Park LCI Plan, this tactical study will focus on eliminating traffic fatalities through safer street design, speed management, and other proven safety measures; expanding equitable and affordable mobility options through accessibility improvements, bike/ped projects, and wayfinding to connect more people with the station's transit service; connecting the nearby commercial district with neighborhoods; elevating the historic and public spaces around the station to make the public realm more enjoyable, functional, and welcoming.
City of Avondale Estates	$160,000	The 2014 Downtown Master Plan has been a crucial roadmap for Avondale's downtown revitalization. The 2025 Downtown Master Plan Update will build on the 2014 plan's success by incorporating recommendations from supplemental studies and policies established over the past 10 years to provide a clear vision for the future in collaboration with developers, city organizations, and regional agencies. This updated plan will provide a vision for land-use and urban design in the downtown area. It will also suggest policies, programs, and partnerships to support better transportation options, more housing, environmental sustainability, and creating enjoyable public spaces through art and placemaking.
Kensington Area Master Plan Update	$200,000	As a follow-up to the Kensington Station Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan completed by MARTA in 2023, DeKalb County will update the Kensington Master Plan focusing on the 870 acres beyond the TOD area. The plan update will consider the area's growth and change over the last decade, with a focus on potential redevelopment opportunities for a large catalytic site owned by the county just a short distance from the MARTA station. With the community's input and updated policies, the county seeks to refine and enhance recommendations from previous studies, creating a community-driven concept for land use and connectivity within the larger LCI area.
City of Kennessaw	$160,000	The Cobb Parkway commercial corridor is the most significant corridor in Kennesaw, featuring three access points to the city's downtown. The corridor's appearance and function has been negatively impacted by vacant and poorly maintained structures. This study will identify locations for trails and entrances that connect Cobb Parkway to downtown Kennesaw, create design standards for how Cobb Parkway should look and feel, and include a market analysis to identify catalytic sites and concepts that will complement existing uses in downtown Kennesaw. The study will also suggest places for "green" stormwater systems that can support additional development.

2025 LCI STUDY GRANT RECIPIENTS (THROUGH 2027)		
Responsible Party	Grant Amount	Action Item
City of Conyers	$160,000	As Rockdale County is currently constructing its new Justice and Administrative Complex in the heart of downtown Conyers, the city recognizes the importance of updating the existing downtown/Olde Town Conyers LCI Plan to provide a stakeholder-driven vision for the area. Given the increased activity that this large county facility is expected to generate, this plan update will identify multi-modal connection and market opportunities for Olde Town Conyers to create a vibrant, safe area for workers, residents, and visitors to enjoy.
Tucker-Northlake Community Improvement District	$160,000	This initiative will update Town Center CID's nearly 10-year-old LCI plan to reflect the significant changes taking place in the area, such as increased enrollment at Kennesaw State University, growth at Cobb County International Airport, with upwards of 250 flights a day, and substantial development occurring throughout the district. This plan update will consider changes to land use and zoning ordinances, examine proposed transit routes and bus rapid transit (BRT) systems, explore housing initiatives, and study multi-modal connections for the community. The updated concept plan will make recommendations informed by an existing plans assessment, market analysis, and an action plan to guide anticipated growth of the CID over the next several years.

State Opportunity Zones:

Local governments which undertake redevelopment and revitalization efforts in certain older commercial and industrial areas can now qualify those areas for the State's maximum job tax credit of $3,500 per job. The incentive, which is available for new or existing businesses that create two or more jobs, is a Job Tax Credit which can be taken against the business's Georgia income tax liability and payroll withholding tax. The credit is available for areas designated by DCA as an "State Opportunity Zone." DCA will consider designations for areas that are within or adjacent to a census block group with 15% or greater poverty where an enterprise zone or urban redevelopment plan exists.

Here is a link to the designated Opportunity Zones and expiration dates: State opportunity_zones_designation_dates_updated_august_15_2025.pdf

18

Number of communities with designated Opportunity Zones in the Atlanta Region

3

Number of Opportunity Zone Expirations in 2026

ACTION ITEM IMPLEMENTATION STATUS UPDATE

#	Action Item	Timeframe			Responsible Party	Status	Notes
		'25	'26	'27			
GOAL 1							
1.1	Fully support Learn4Life and replicate similar cradle-to-career initiatives throughout the EDD	X	X	X		Not Started	
1.2	Expand the Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy in coordination with the Housing Leadership Academy (HLA) and continue the HLA with a new group of local leaders	X	X	X	ARC	Completed in 2023/2024 Underway for 2025-2027	Formerly the Local Leadership Housing Action Committee (LLHAC) HLA Cohort #5 will convene a new group of elected officials in 2027
1.3	Support the collaborative approach to economic development	X	X	X	RMA	2023 Completed Continuous	RMA will no longer meet throughout the year. ED professionals will meet individually or as a group, as needed
1.4	Further amplify and activate the Aerotropolis Atlanta by facilitating and supporting the implementation of Blueprint 2.0 and other Alliance Activities	X	X	X		Underway	ARC is assisting Aerotropolis Atlanta with Blueprint 2,0 implementation
1.5	Prioritize the provision of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements to increase safe and affordable access to and from Historically Disadvantaged Communities (as defined by the USDOT) to reduce dependence and associated costs for auto travel	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	LCI and CDAP awarded each year
1.6	Support CareerRise initiatives and other workforce programs to address workforce needs in the EDD	X	X		ARC,	Underway	

#	Action Item	Timeframe			Responsible Party	Status	Notes
		'25	'26	'27			
GOAL 2							
2.1	Address commercial gentrification for communities and businesses	X			ARC	Document Completed/ Digital Draft Completed	Updated data in 2026
2.2	Update local and state procurement regulations and/or access to facilitate participation for small and minority businesses	X	X	X	SBA	Underway	Research is underway
2.3	Update procurement contracting for 2.3 infrastructure, adding professional service (i.e., legal, engineering, etc.) contractors bonus points for mentorships and internships for traditionally under-served youth	X	X	X	Local	Underway	Research is underway
2.4	Encourage municipalities to develop local comprehensive plans with an Economic Development element containing strategies to reduce poverty and promote the creative sector	X			ARC	Completed	ARC completed 5 comprehensive plans in 2026
2.5	Eliminate poverty of information by expanding Broadband access in coordination with the Georgia DCA's Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative to all metro Atlanta rural and urban communities	X			SBA, DCA, Other	Completed	ARC worked with GTA and DCA to produce a webinar

#	Action Item	Timeframe				Status	Notes
		'25	'26	'27			
GOAL 2							
2.8	Convene an Economic Development Forum on the role of minority chambers of commerce to undertake tasks, help form merchant associations in minority communities, and develop ways to assist these communities in thriving by presenting a variety of resources and opportunities	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	Two Economic Forums will be held in 2026
2.9	Capitalize on the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in order to implement transportation projects that promote economic opportunities in under-served communities	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	
2.10	Support the use of EDA and other state and federal programs	X			ARC	Underway	Resources are promoted at the Economic Development Forums
2.11	Increase business engagement with all schools from cradle to career-elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and beyond to form vital partnerships and options for internships, mentoring, and training programs	X	X	X		Not Started	
2.12	Address gaps in workforce development across the region	X	X	X	Workforce Boards	Underway	Developed an incubator (other resources) draft map in 2024 Expanded research and mapping in 2026
2.13	Create a regional policy discussion on addressing youth in poverty in the region and how to scale longterm solutions	X	X	X	TBD,ARC, United Way	Not Started	
2.14	Utilize the Atlanta Housing Forum to gather input on regional housing strategies	X	X	X	ARC	Completed 2023 Continuous	Met quarterly in 2023, 2024, and 2025
2.15	Foster access to capital for entrepreneurs by convening lending institutions, venture capital, angel investors, and stockbroker leadership to provide access to capital for innovators, startups, and small businesses	X	X	X	Federal Reserve	Not Started	

#	Action Item	Timeframe				Status	Notes
		'25	'26	'27			
GOAL 3							
3.1	Incorporate strategies for innovation hubs and business incubators in employment centers in the LCI program and areas	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	
3.2	Invite CEO leadership from the 1) Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, 2) Technology Association of Georgia, and GA Department of Economic Development GA Center of Innovation, 3) HBCUs and other educational institutions with strong science and STEM membership, and 4) other appropriate stakeholders to help assemble a forum to foster innovation hubs	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	ARC will be sponsoring Economic Forums in 2026 and 2027
3.3	Leverage the rapid growth of technology and innovation clusters in the region to create a pipeline of STEM and business jobs and talent and promote this regionally, nationally, and globally	X	X	X	ARC	Not Started	
3.4	Support the expansion of innovation hubs, business accelerators, and incubators throughout the region	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	Developed an incubator (other resources) draft map in 2024. Expanded research and mapping in 2026

#	Action Item	Timeframe				Status	Notes
		'25	'26	'27			
GOAL 4							
4.1	Convene Universities, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Directors, and technology companies of the region to foster the development of emerging industry sectors and create or advance an existing partnership for ongoing collaboration and new initiatives	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	
4.2	Create or advance a public-private partnership of corporate and university STEM leaders to invest in startup companies in the regions LCIs, innovation hubs, accelerators, and business incubators	X	X	X	TBD	Not Started	
4.3	Create or advance an existing STEM investment partnership to provide financial capital for startups and existing small and small minority businesses to operate in the competitive global marketplace	X	X	X	TBD	Not Started	
4.4	Through the comprehensive planning and/or CTP process, encourage local municipalities to identify real estate most suitable for development opportunities that would encourage target industries and more synergistic surrounding development patterns	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	Various plans have done this through LCI, CP, CTP, and others.
4.5	Encourage the creation of ecodistricts along the region's greenspaces and recreational amenities, including Chattahoochee River, BeltLine, etc., through regional partnerships that include mixed uses of real estate to generate preservation and add tax value to property	X	X	X	ARC	Not Started	

#	Action Item	Timeframe				Status	Notes
		'25	'26	'27			
GOAL 4							
4.7	Build capacity and funding for a collaborative mechanism or regional convening to identify opportunities for aligned actions	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	ARC is convening Cultural Forums
4.8	Prioritize removing barriers to entry and delivering skills education and workforce development for the creative sector	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	
4.9	Invest in infrastructure to attract national business and talent growth	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	
4.10	Focus growth efforts on the following emerging industry clusters	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	
4.11	Document and promote regional actions addressing climate change challenges to attract national industry and talent	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	Climate Action Plans and Grants
4.12	Provide necessary resources to ensure successful completion of major development and investment projects	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	LCI/CDAP/TIP/Other
4.13	Encourage development that creates a live-work-play environment to attract and retain talent	X	X	X	ARC	Underway	

NEXT STEPS & UPCOMING PROJECTS

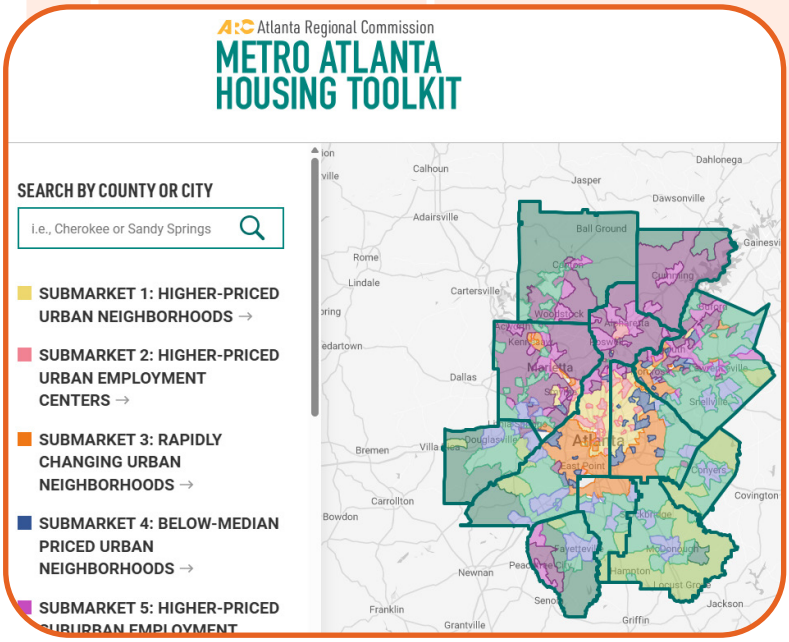


Source: Adobe Stock

4. THE 2026 IMPLEMENTATION FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

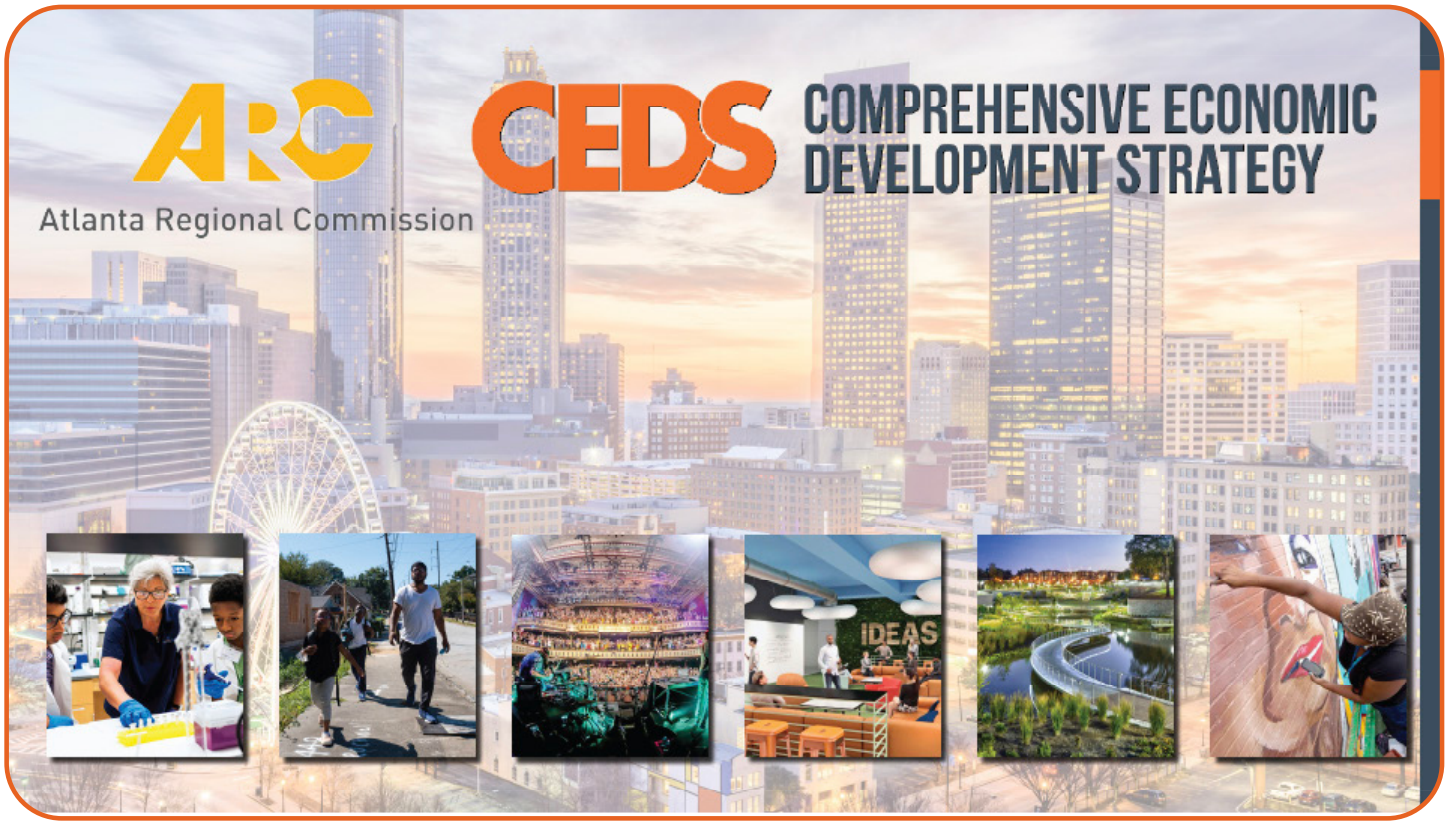
The following items are examples of some priority initiatives.

#	Action Item	Description	Supporting Efforts
1	Update the Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy: LLHAC and Data and Trends in the Region	The Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy provides detailed information and data about the region's housing market and offers a set of actionable steps that local communities can consider taking to address their housing issues. Website:Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy (metroatlhousing.org)	Effort 1: Form and Execute Housing Leadership Academy (HLA-formerly LLHAC) Cohort #5 ARC will continue the Housing Leadership Academy (HLA). ARC will incorporate newly elected officials and address topics aligned with participant interests and regional trends, while drawing on the experience and insights of previous cohorts as valuable resources. ARC has created a spreadsheet of commitments to track progress from program adoption and will work with communities to complete. Effort 2: Update the Metro Atlanta Housing Toolkit Data and Webpage ARC will maintain regular updates to the Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy (MAHS) Toolkit and distribute the newly developed one-pager as a tailored resource for individual municipalities. Effort 3: Adopt the Regional Housing Strategy Between 2025 and 2026, ARC will develop its inaugural Regional Housing Strategy to establish key policy priorities and outline actionable implementation steps.



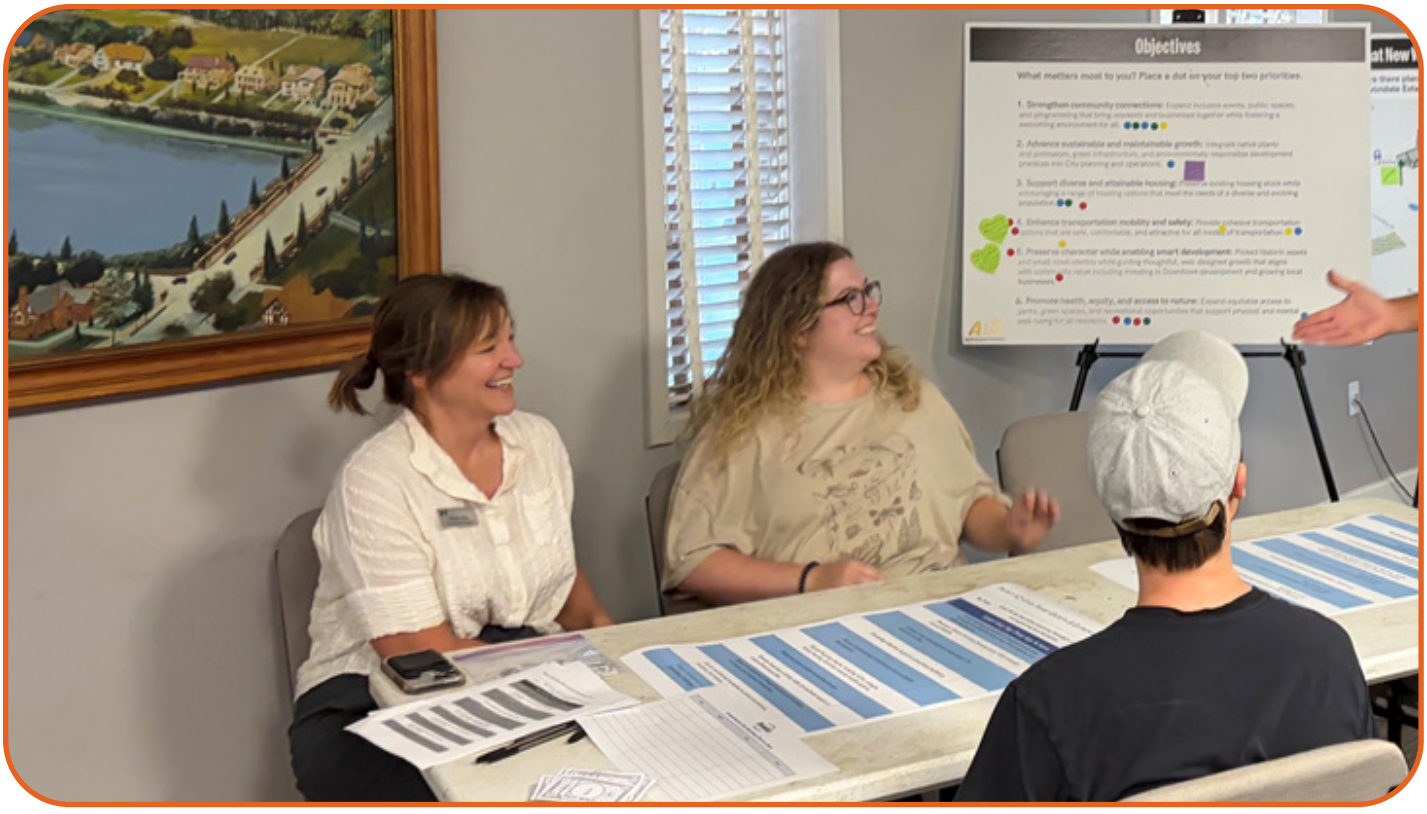
Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

#	Action Item	Description	Supporting Efforts
2	Further Amplify and Activate Aerotropolis Atlanta	ARC will assist with the implementation of Blueprint 2.0.	This includes the Tara Boulevard LCI and associated Task Force and other catalytic sites.
3	Support Local Jurisdictions/ Organizations	ARC will continue to provide needed resources and assistance to our regional community.	Letters of support/data/grant and technical assistance research
4	Economic Development Webpage Update	Utilize the Economic Development Webpage as a resource for upcoming activities, grants, and information from Economic Development Forums.	Update the Webpage as request input from stakeholders on resources that would assist them in their work.
5	Update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	Every five years, ARC is required to update the CEDS. This is due in Q4 2027.	ARC formed internal and external committees (PAG). A scope of work was finalized, and initial data research was conducted. Three engagement activies were held recieve input as well as the development of focus groups.



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

#	Action Item	Description	Supporting Efforts
6	Support Small Businesses	Regional partners have determined that supporting the region's small businesses is a top priority.	<u>Effort 1: Identify Available Government, Non-Profit, or Faith-Based Property for Small Business or Housing</u> After starting in 2025, continue working with communities and regional partners to identify underutilized properties or buildings that might be available to small businesses or provide options for housing. <u>Effort 2: Foster, Promote, and Expand Business Incubators and Similar Models/Programs</u> ARC will research what facilities and resources are available in the Region and convene a meeting to work with partners to make recommendations on next steps to support continued investment in this important sector. This was started in 2023.



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

#	Action Item	Description	Supporting Efforts
7	Economic Forums	ARC will convene bi-annual Economic Forums to bring stakeholders together to discuss and work together on key economic issues in the region.	<u>Effort 1: Continue Forums</u> There will be two (2) forums in 2026

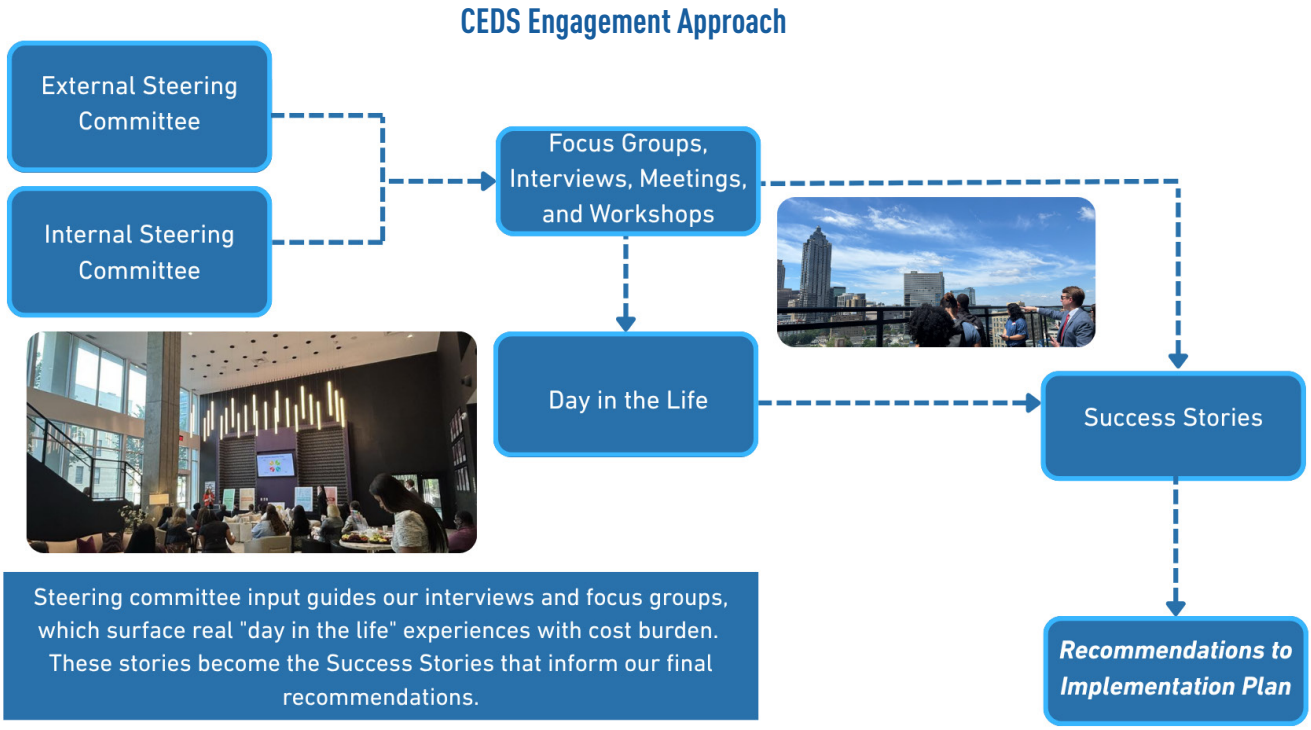


Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

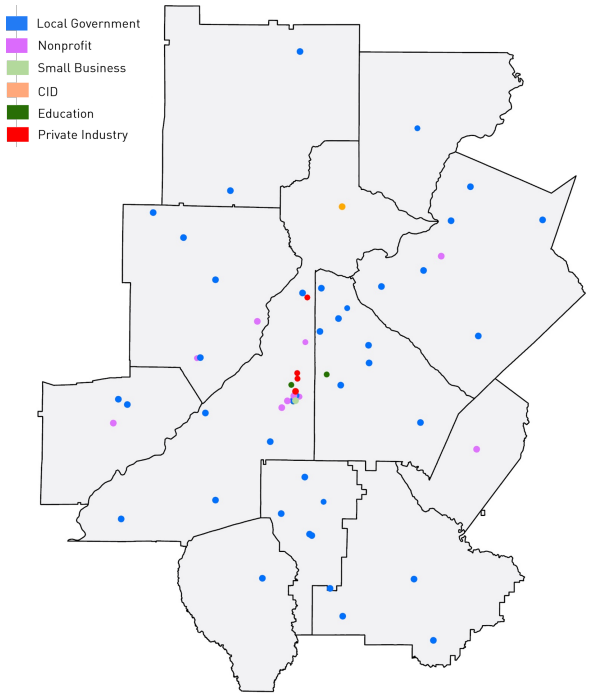
2027 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) UPDATE

The Atlanta Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) will serve as a shared five-year framework for advancing economic mobility and regional prosperity across the 11-county Atlanta region. Grounded in municipal plans and local economic development priorities, the CEDS will align regional investments with community needs while maintaining eligibility for funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. It will also provide one pathway for achieving the regional goals of Opportunity Rising by expanding access to quality jobs, housing, entrepreneurship, education, essential services, and long-term economic opportunity.

CEDS Engagement Approach



2027 CEDS Engagement by Sector



Participation from all 11 counties will be essential to ensuring that the CEDS reflects the region's diverse communities, economic conditions, assets, and priorities. ARC will engage local governments, economic development professionals, community and business leaders, workforce and education partners, and other stakeholders from throughout the region. This regionwide participation will help identify shared challenges, elevate county- and community-specific priorities, strengthen existing local efforts, and shape implementation through four strategic pillars:

CONNECTED TALENT

PLACES THAT WORK

MOVING TO OPPORTUNITY

RESILIENT PROSPERITY

APPENDIX



Source: Adobe Stock

Agenda:

Time	Topic	Description	Topic Leader
9:30 am (30 min)	Early Arrival-Organization	Arrival early, settle in, networking and snacks	Keri Stevens, Planning Administrator, Economic Development-ARC
10:00 am (30 min)	ARC Economic Development	Welcome and Introductions Overview of ED Forums and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Q&A	Participants Keri Stevens, Planning Administrator, Economic Development-ARC
10:30 am (30 min)	SWOT	Keri will conduct a SWOT Exercise Q&A	Keri Stevens, Planning Administrator, Economic Development-ARC
11:00 am (10 min)	General Grant and Technical Assistance Resources	Keri will discuss other opportunities currently available-grants or technical assistance Q&A	Keri Stevens, Planning Administrator, Economic Development-ARC
11:10 am (35 min)	Project Discussion	• Presentation-505 Courtland • Presentation-Stitch Q&A	**Patrick Kassin-** Development Partner Woodfield Development **Jack Cebe** *President & CEO* Stitch Inc
11:45 am-12:30 pm	Next Steps and Tour	• Next Steps August 6: CEDS Meeting/Workshop • Tour 505 Courland Street Development • Tour The Stitch	Keri Stevens, Planning Administrator, Economic Development-ARC Patrick Kassin and Jack Cebe

		• Q & A with presenters	

Atlanta Regional Commission

Economic Development Forum: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) + The Stitch (CEDS Input & Learning Tour: Discover The Stitch)

June 24, 2026



Vision

ONE great REGION

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Values

Excellence | **Integrity** | **Equity**

Goals



Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.



Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.



Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.



Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.



A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

Agenda

- Economic Development Forums and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Overview
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)
- Grant and Award Opportunities-Resources
- Presentation-505 Courtland
- Presentation-Stitch
- Tour



Introductions



Jack Cebe
President and CEO Stitch Inc.



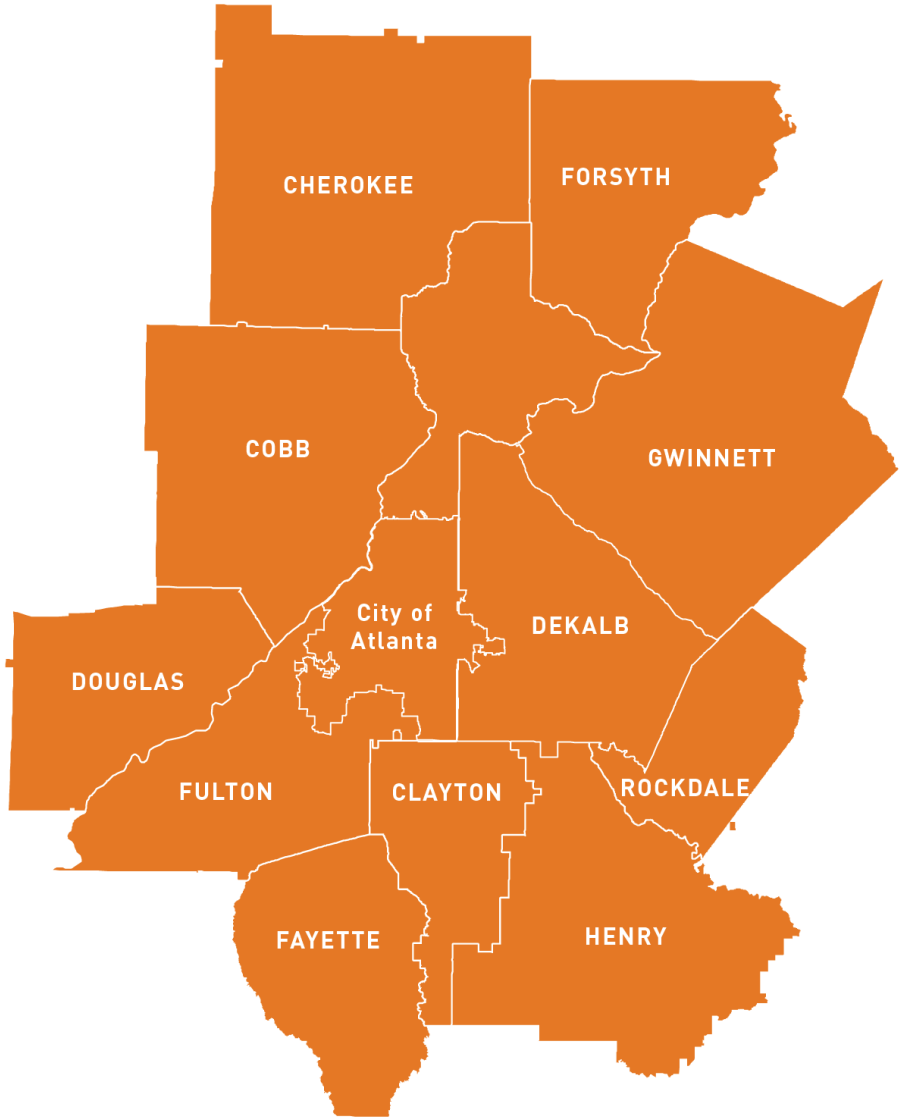
Patrick Kassin
Development Partner
Woodfield Development LLC



Keri Stevens
Planning Administrator,
Economic Development
ARC

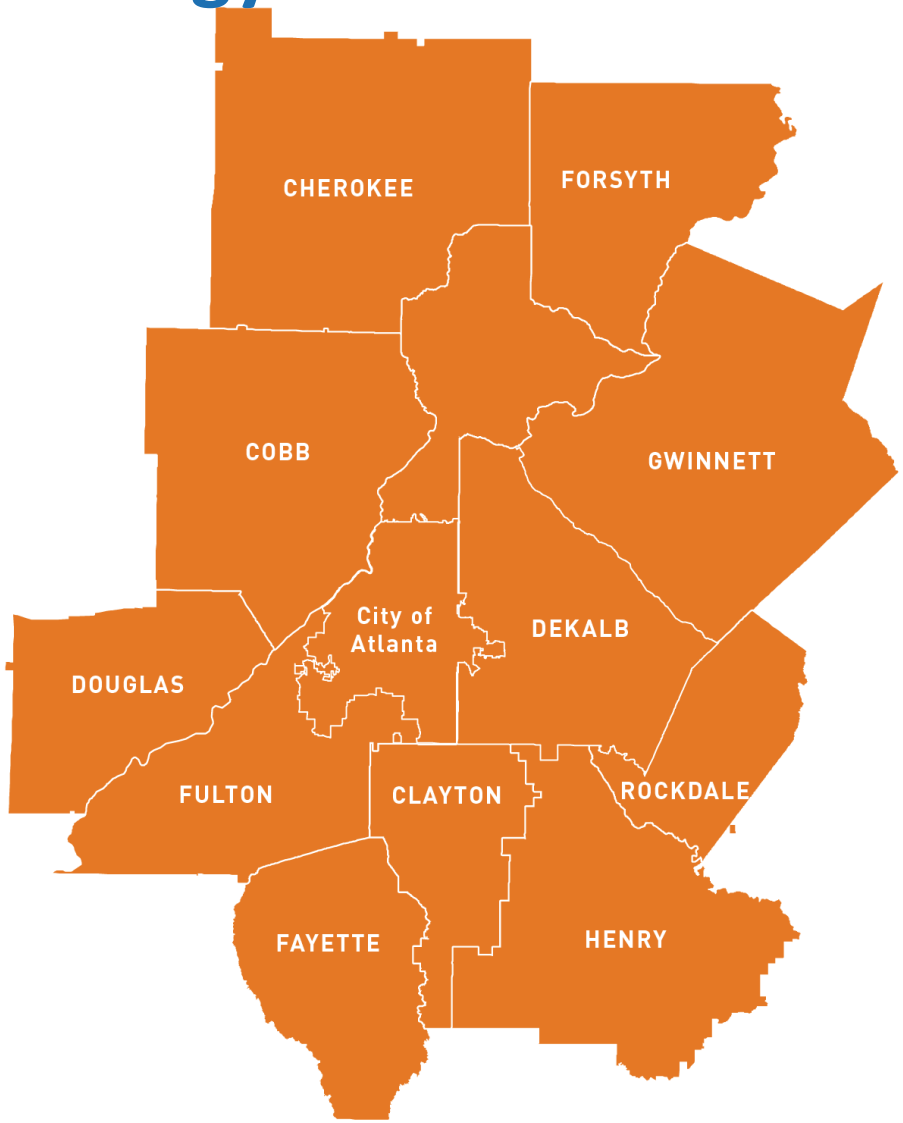
Economic Development Forums

- To empower regional communities to achieve economic goals.
- Provide resources and networking.
- Education and success stories.
- Assist with Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Implementation and Update.
- Bi-annual: Started in 2026.



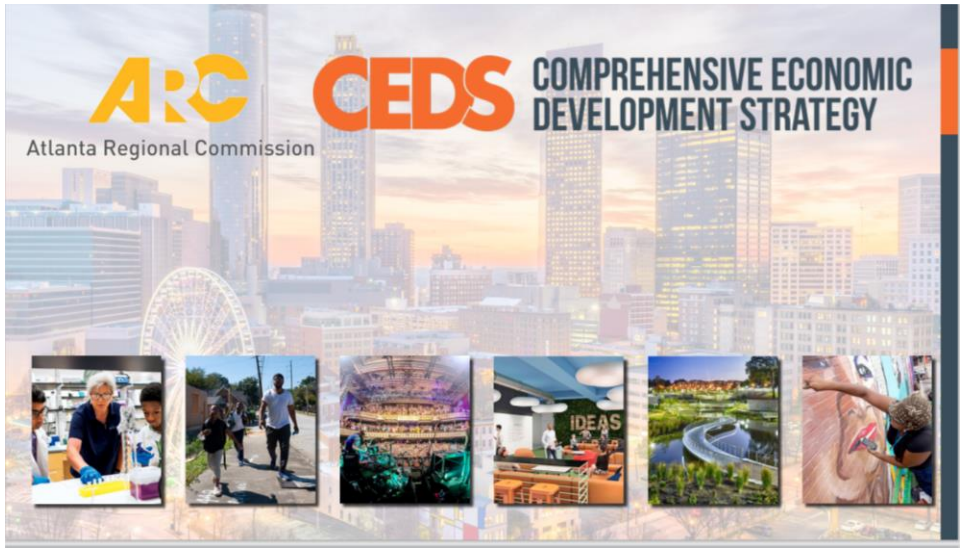
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Overview

- ARC-Designated Economic Development District (EDD)-11 County Region
- Required for EDA designation as an Economic Development District (EDD)
- Updated every five years
- Submitted to EDA regional office for approval (Adopted and Approved in 2022)
- Requirement for various EDA funding including EDA's Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs, Other



EDA Requirements and Reporting

- Plan Components: Summary Background, SWOT, Strategic Direction/Action Plan, Evaluation Framework, Economic Resilience
- Reporting:
  - Performance Progress Report (April/October)
  - Annual Report and Resolution-The Annual Report outlines the economic development activities including specific action items from the CEDS and related economic development initiatives.



Regional Demographic Update-3 Years Later

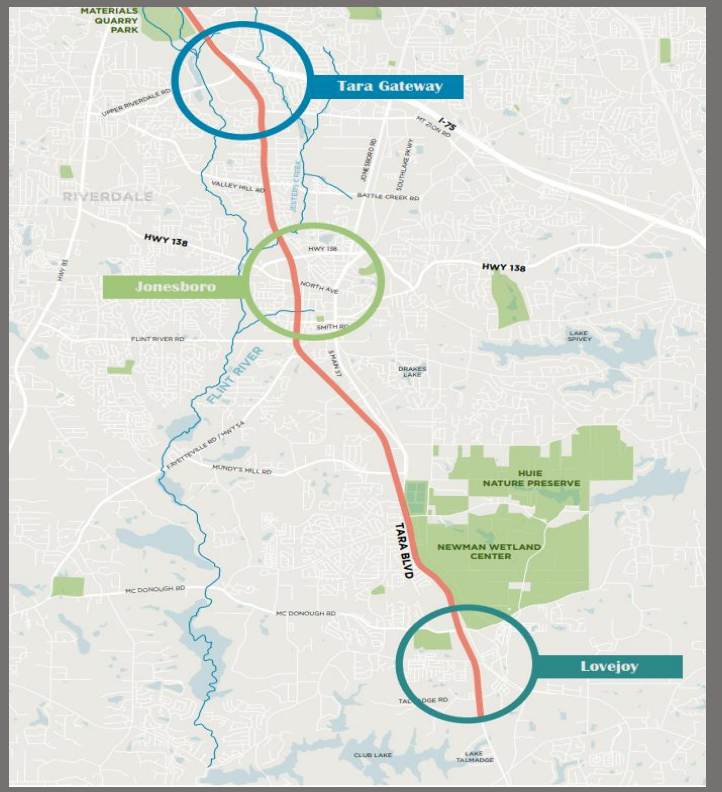
- Despite income gains, all counties are now cost-burdened compared to only two in 2022
- Largest employers (top 20)-still Heath Care and Education
  - Delta Air Lines is now #1
- Youth poverty rates fell with the sharpest decline in DeKalb County



2025 Successes

- Blueprint 2.0: Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance Implementation
  - Tara Boulevard
    - Task Force/LCI
- Housing
  - MAHS-data update and one-pager
  - Quarterly Housing Forum and Housing Task Force
  - Housing Leadership Academy (HLA) Cohort #4
  - Launch Regional Housing Strategy
- Economic Development Forum Series
  - Regional Economic Development practitioners and stakeholders
  - Focus on small businesses and workforce resources





ONE great REGION

ARC

Initiatives Planned for 2026

- Economic Development Forums (2)
- Housing:
  - Regional Housing Strategy (Agency-Wide)
- Housing Leadership Academy Cohort #5
- Local housing assessments (CDAP)
- Innovation hubs, incubators and similar resource gap analysis and regional network planning
- Economic development website-resource focused update
- Support local jurisdictions/organizations
- CEDS update-due in 2027





Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats



Grant and Award Opportunities

Water Infrastructure Planning Program (WIPP)
POSTED: JUNE 17, 2026
DEADLINE: AUGUST 31, 2026
Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA)

Automated Permitting Systems Demonstration Grant
POSTED: JUNE 12, 2026
DEADLINE: JULY 13, 2026
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP)
POSTED: JUNE 12, 2026
DEADLINE: AUGUST 04, 2026
U.S. Department of Justice

Model Cities Initiative (MCI)
POSTED: JUNE 11, 2026
DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 01, 2026
U.S. Department of Justice

Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Program
POSTED: JUNE 12, 2026
DEADLINE: JULY 30, 2026
U.S. Department of Justice

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)
POSTED: MAY 19, 2026
DEADLINE: JUNE 22, 2026
FEMA

COPS Hiring Program (CHP)
POSTED: JUNE 12, 2026
DEADLINE: JULY 29, 2026
U.S. Department of Justice

Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Program
POSTED: MAY 19, 2026
DEADLINE: JUNE 22, 2026
FEMA

Grant and Award Opportunities

Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program
POSTED: MAY 19, 2026
DEADLINE: JUNE 22, 2026
FEMA

Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP)
POSTED: MAY 12, 2026
DEADLINE: OCTOBER 16, 2026
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Program
POSTED: MAY 12, 2026
DEADLINE: OCTOBER 02, 2026
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Glass Recycling Foundation Grant
POSTED: MAY 12, 2026
DEADLINE: JULY 10, 2026
Glass Recycling Foundation

Collections Stewardship Program
POSTED: MAY 05, 2026
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 15, 2026
National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

Defense Community Infrastructure Program
POSTED: MAY 05, 2026
DEADLINE: JUNE 25, 2026
Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation

Appalachian Regional Commission Infrastructure Funding
POSTED: APRIL 02, 2026
DEADLINE: JUNE 19, 2026
Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

Georgia ReLeaf Grant
POSTED: MARCH 16, 2026
DEADLINE: JULY 15, 2026
Georgia Tree Council

Grant and Award Opportunities

[Norfolk Southern Safety First Grant]
POSTED: MARCH 16, 2026
DEADLINE: AUGUST 03, 2026
Norfolk Southern

[Norfolk Southern Thriving Communities Grant]
POSTED: MARCH 16, 2026
DEADLINE: AUGUST 03, 2026
Norfolk Southern

[The Auto Club Group Foundation Grant]
POSTED: JANUARY 08, 2026
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2026
Auto Club Group Foundation

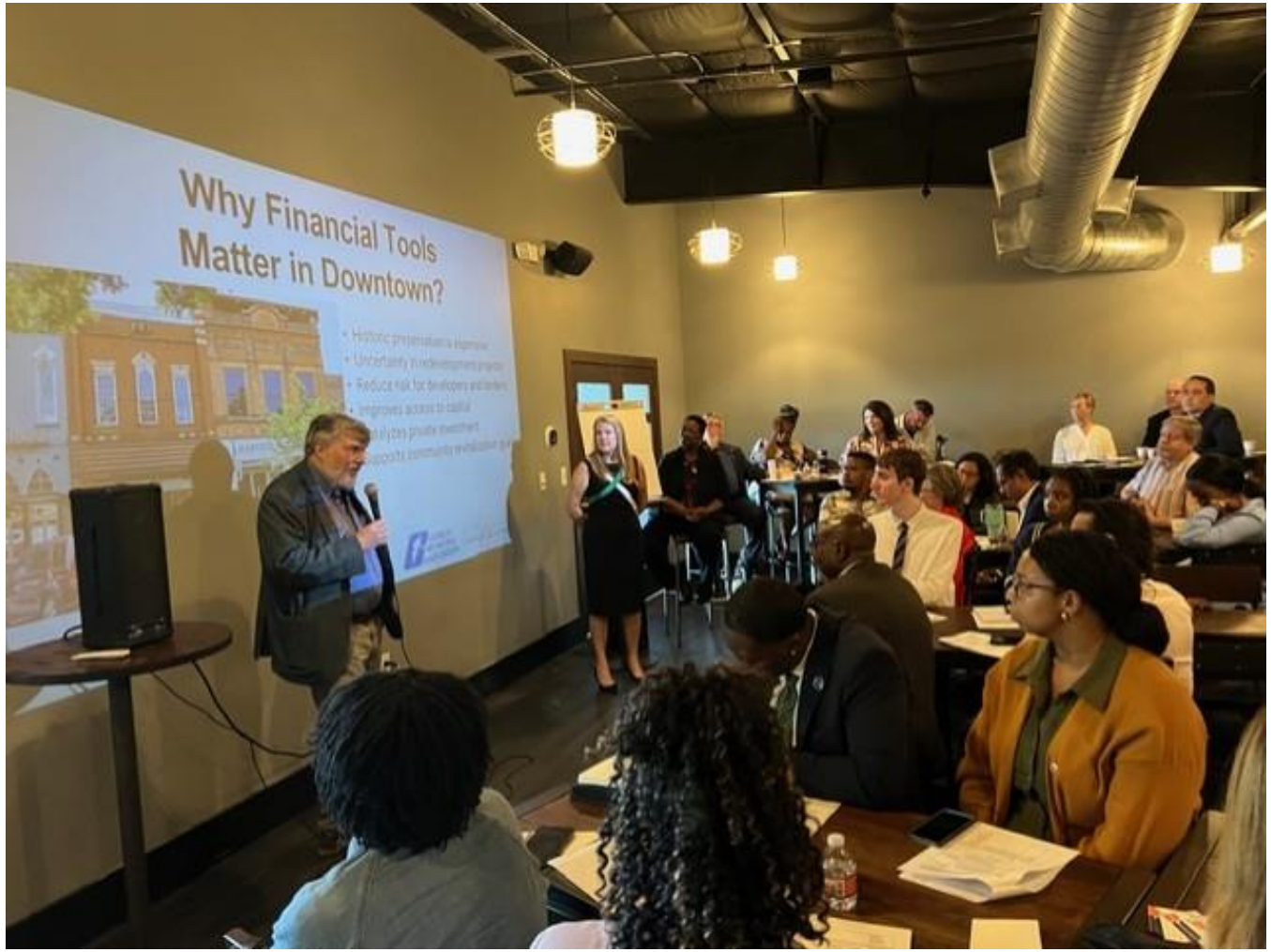
[Water & Waste Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grants]
POSTED: JANUARY 08, 2026
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2026
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

[T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program]
POSTED: NOVEMBER 25, 2025
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2026
T-Mobile

[Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Funding]
POSTED: NOVEMBER 24, 2025
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2026
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

[Community Heart and Soul Seed Grant Program]
POSTED: OCTOBER 24, 2025
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2026
Community Heart and Soul

[Making the Shade Program]
POSTED: SEPTEMBER 23, 2025
DEADLINE: DECEMBER 31, 2026
Georgia Forestry Commission



- Regionalism is a committed effort to improve communities through increased coordination and collaboration, maximizing efficiency through united approaches while preserving individual aspirations.

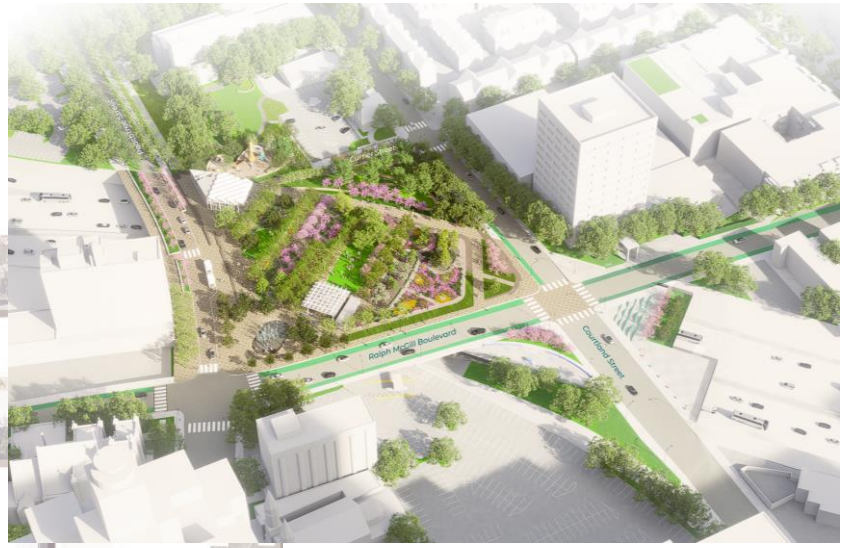
- Steve Etcher, Former Executive Director, Boonslick Regional Planning Commission (MO)

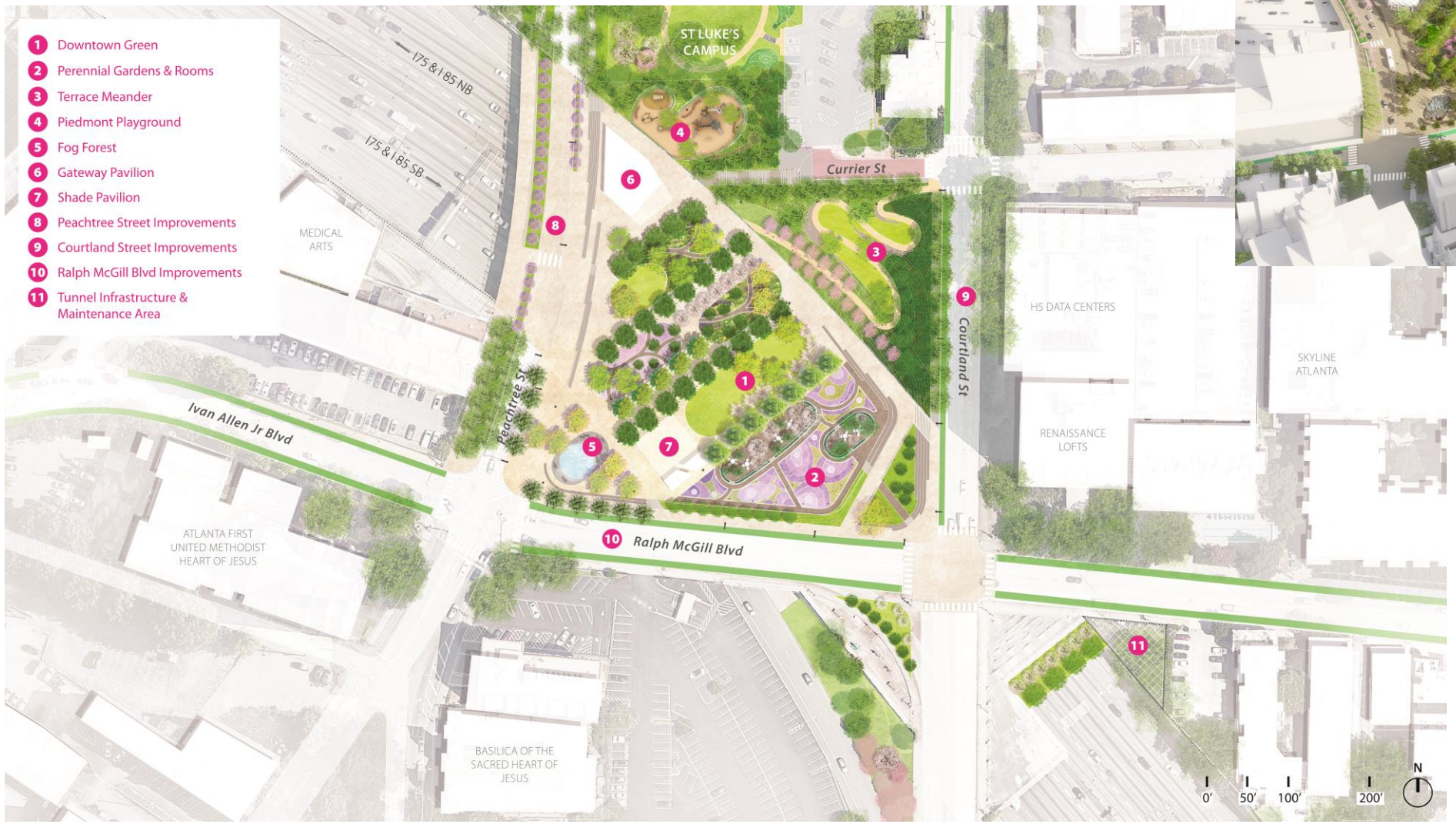
Keri Stevens, Planning Administrator
Economic Development
kstevens@atlantaregional.org

Link to CEDS: [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) - Atlanta Regional Commission]

Atlanta Regional Commission

Presentations and Tour





ONE great REGION

ARC



THE STITCH

The Stitch Overview

ARC Economic Development Forum - June 23, 2026

DOWNTOWN ATL

Downtown Atlanta Inc.



Ambassador Force



Public Space Maintenance



Capital Projects



Social Impact



Advocacy



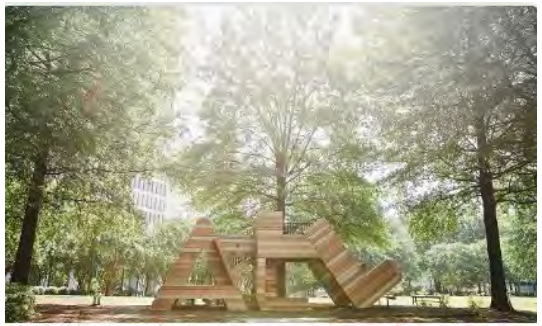
Planning



Economic Development



Placemaking

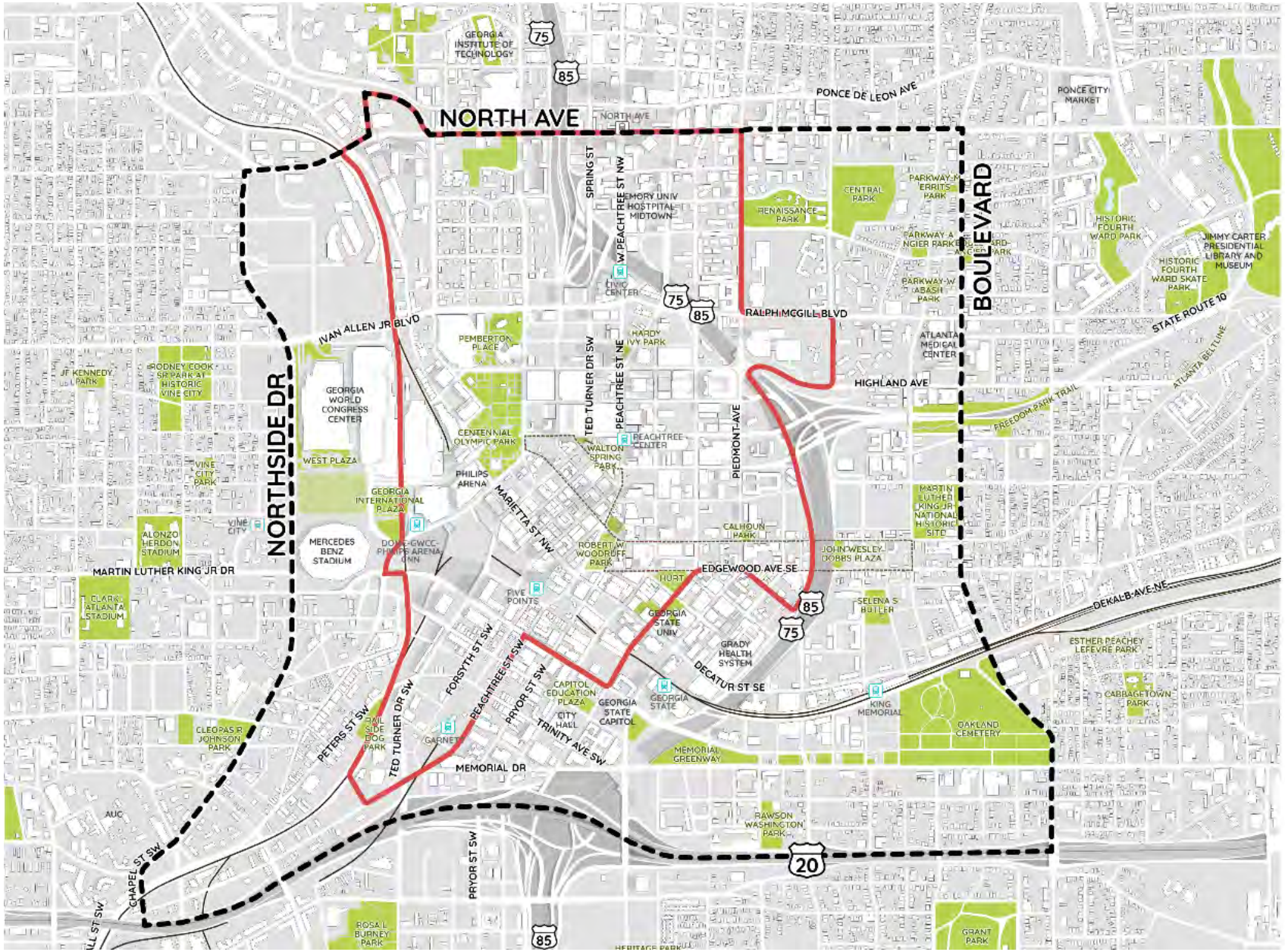


Sustainability



Marketing

Atlanta Downtown // Geography



DOWNTOWN BOUNDARY
OPEN SPACE
MARTA STATION
COMMERCIAL RAIL
STREET CAR
IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Source: City of Atlanta, Interface Studio

DOWN TOWN ATL
Downtown Atlanta Inc.

“Downtown Is For People”

- Jane Jacobs, 1958

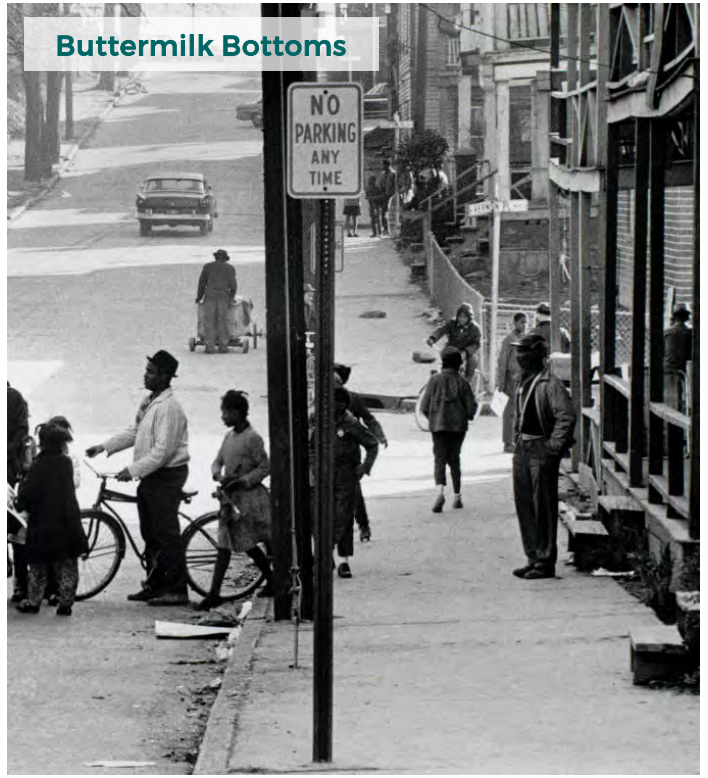
PAST



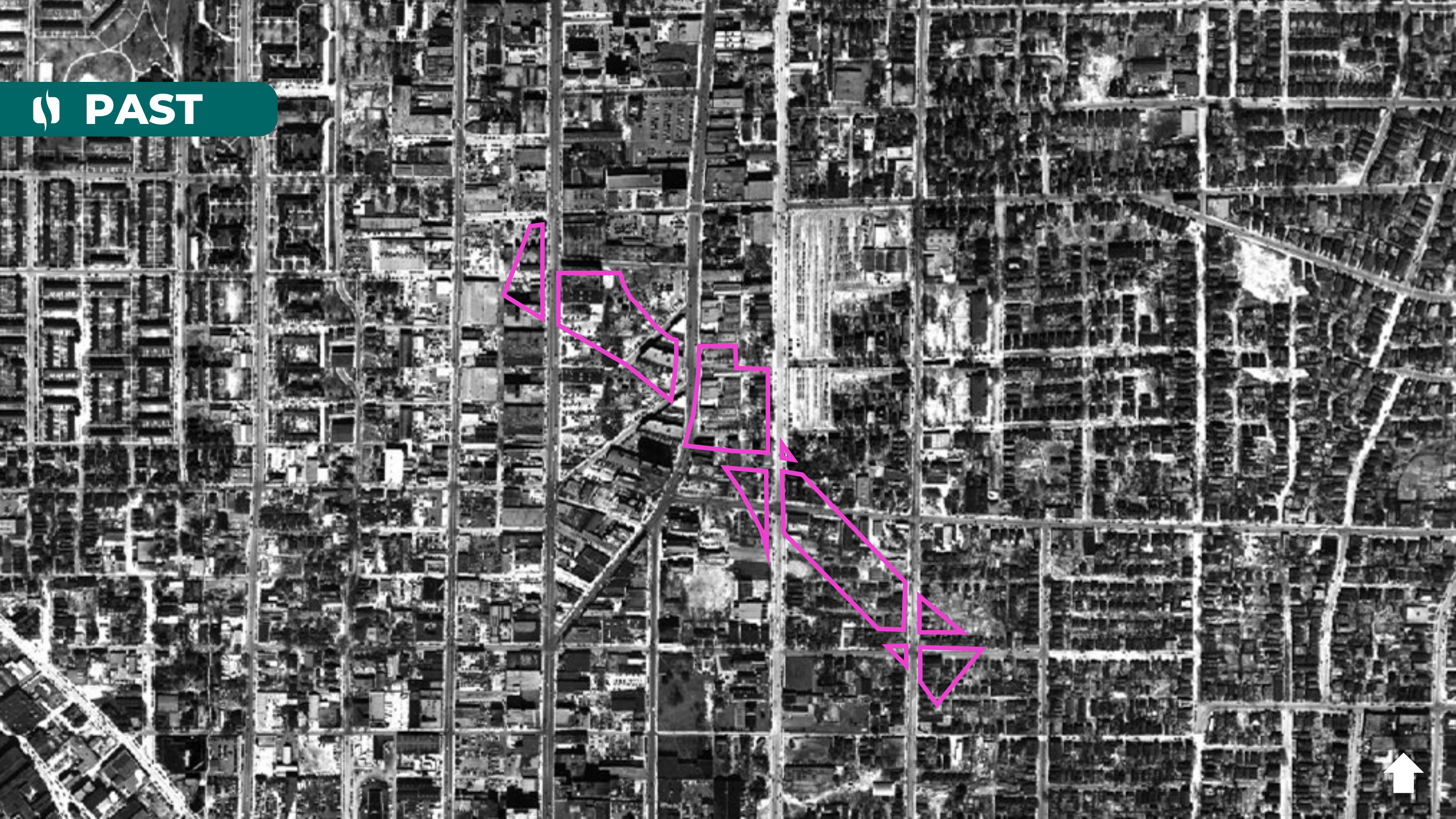
Rich's Department Store



Peachtree Street



Buttermilk Bottoms

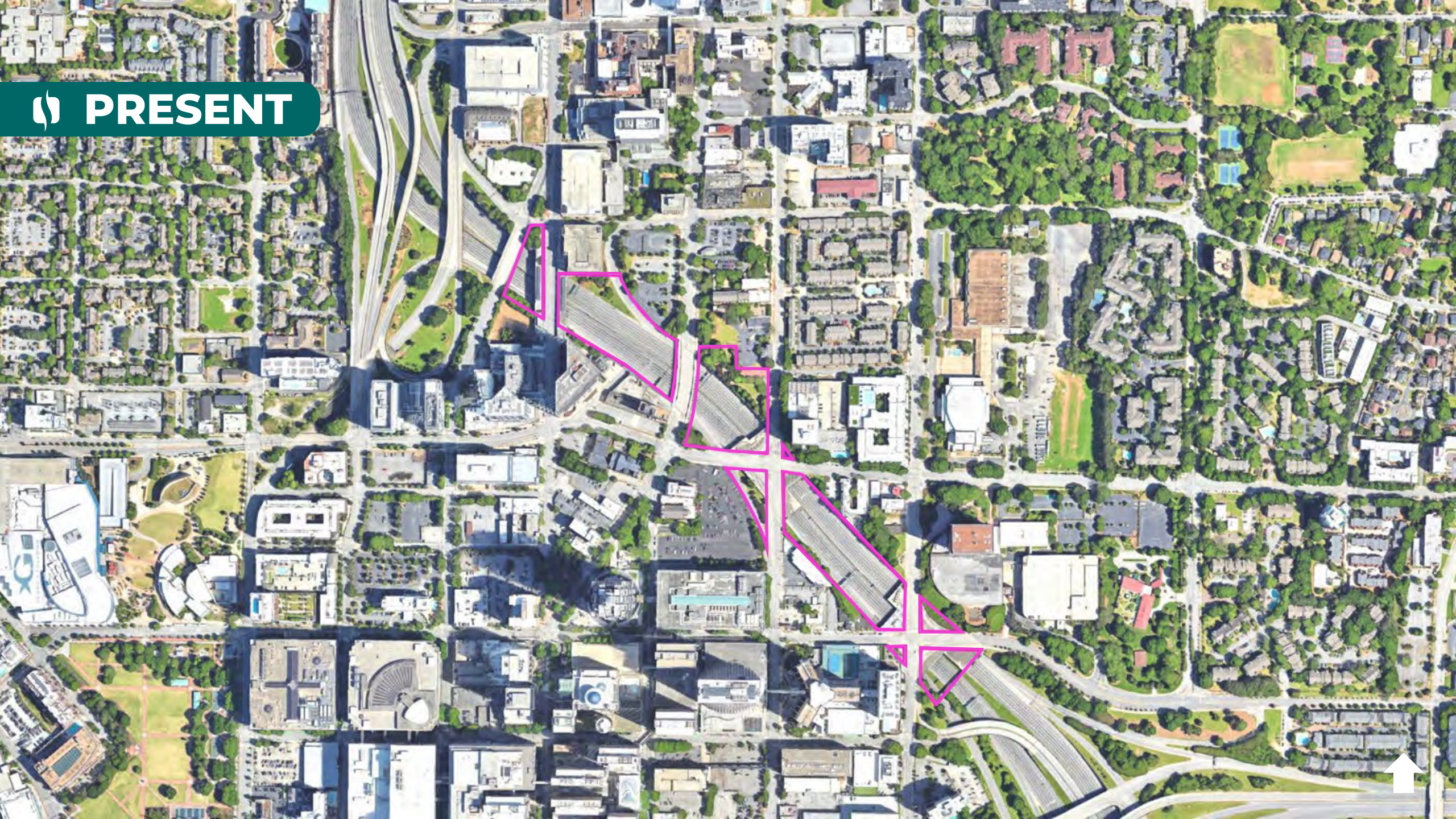

PAST

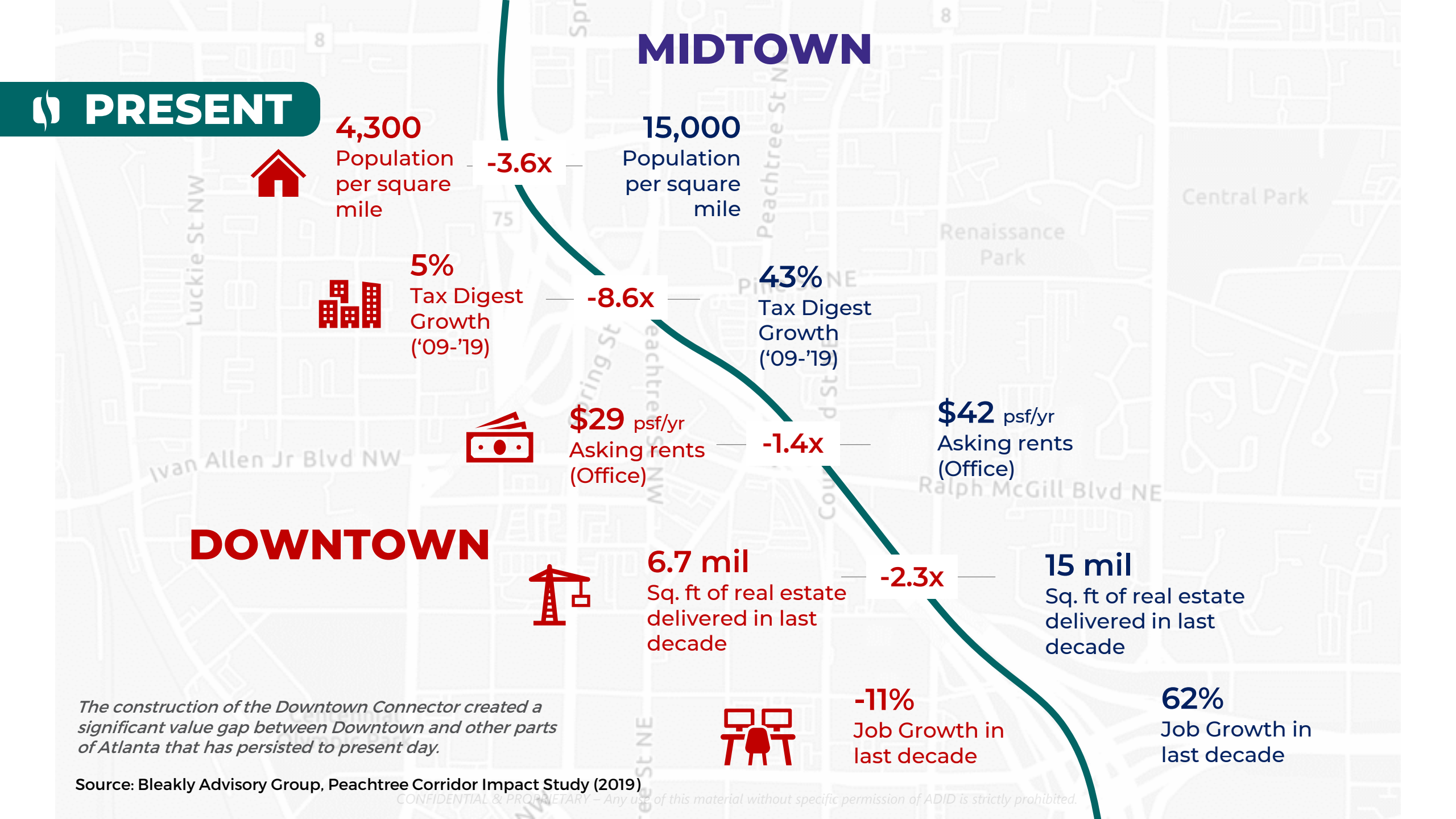
PRESENT


Piedmont Ave
baker st
ONE WAY


Peachtree Street
ONLY
OFFICE SPACE FOR LEASE


The Downtown Connector


PRESENT



The construction of the Downtown Connector created a significant value gap between Downtown and other parts of Atlanta that has persisted to present day.

Source: Bleakly Advisory Group, Peachtree Corridor Impact Study (2019)

CONFIDENTIAL & PROPRIETARY – Any use of this material without specific permission of ADID is strictly prohibited.

STITCH VISION







STITCH VISION

The Stitch is a vision for a reconnected north Downtown Atlanta that represents decades of planning, community engagement, and stakeholder collaboration.

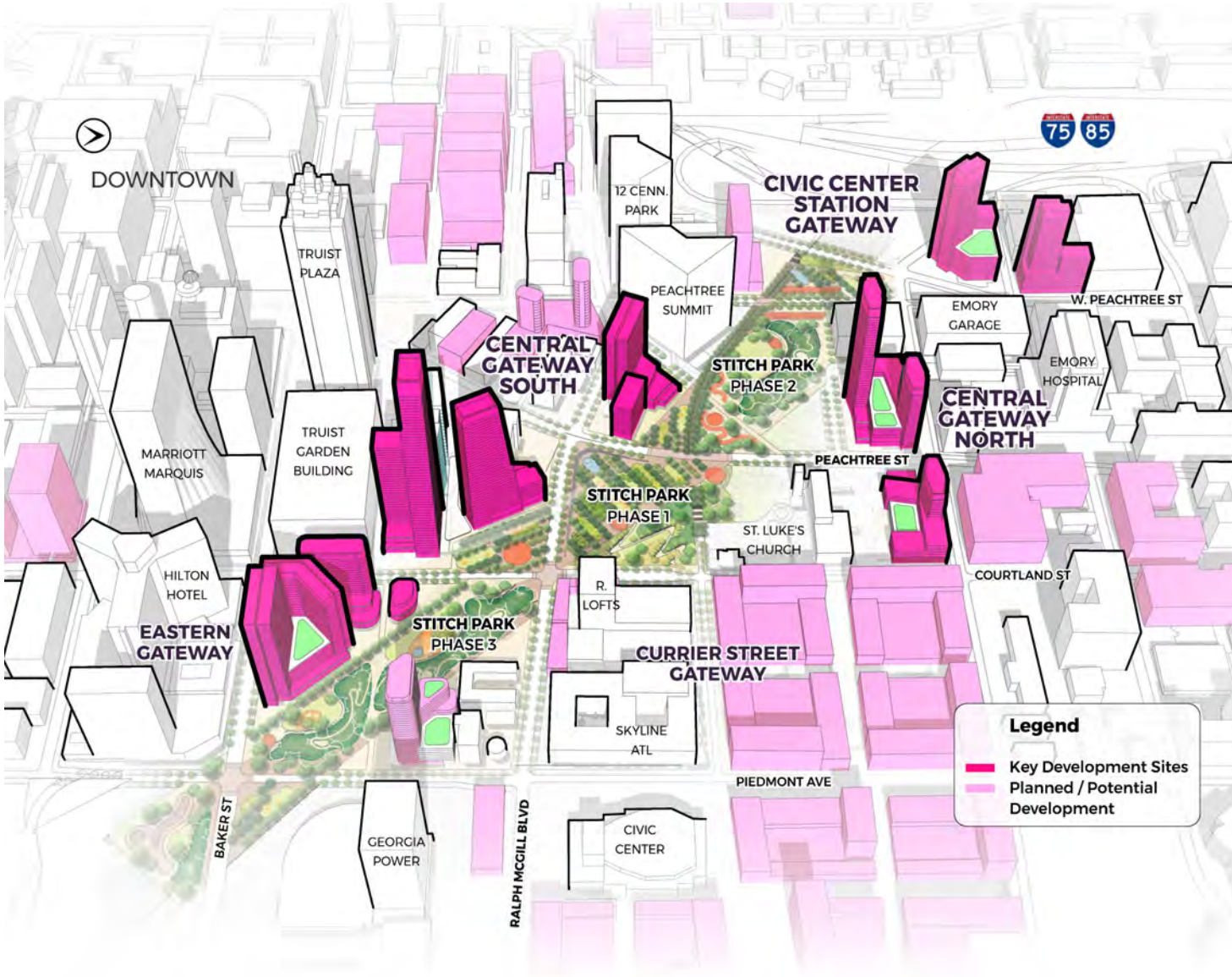
It includes new development, infrastructure, policies, and programs emanating from a new 17-acre iconic, community park that completely covers the Downtown Connector Interstate.



The Stitch will Spark a Vibrant & Family-Friendly Neighborhood Downtown.

with a promise to:

- **Ignite** an estimated $5B in Private Sector Investment to Redevelop 50+ Acres of Downtown
- **Catalyze** an estimated 25,000 Multifamily Homes
- **Support** other Major Developments by Attracting Permanent Residents to Downtown





The Stitch is Happening.

Seed Funding Secured

- **$50 million** for design & construction.
- **$3-4M annually** from The Stitch SSD for admin. & operations.

Ready to Build

- 5-acre phase 1 park will be shovel-ready by mid-2027.
- Inter-agency agreements to build & operate The Stitch are completed.
- Atlanta Downtown Stitch Inc. has been established to manage the project.

The Stitch **creates $9 Billion** in economic value **for Atlanta.**[1]

Total construction cost for all phases of the Stitch estimated as $750 Million - $1 Billion in 2025 dollars.

ESTIMATED JOBS SUPPORTED

2,000 – 4,200 / year

ESTIMATED NEW DEVELOPMENT DOWNTOWN

18 Million square feet

ESTIMATED NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

4,000 – 5,000

PROJECTED INCREASE IN DOWNTOWN PROPERTY VALUES (WITHIN 1/2 MILE OF THE STITCH)

7.5% – 15%

PROJECTED REDEVELOPMENT VALUE CATALYZED

$4.8 Billion

PROJECTED PROPERTY TAX REVENUE INCREASE

Up to $61 Million / year

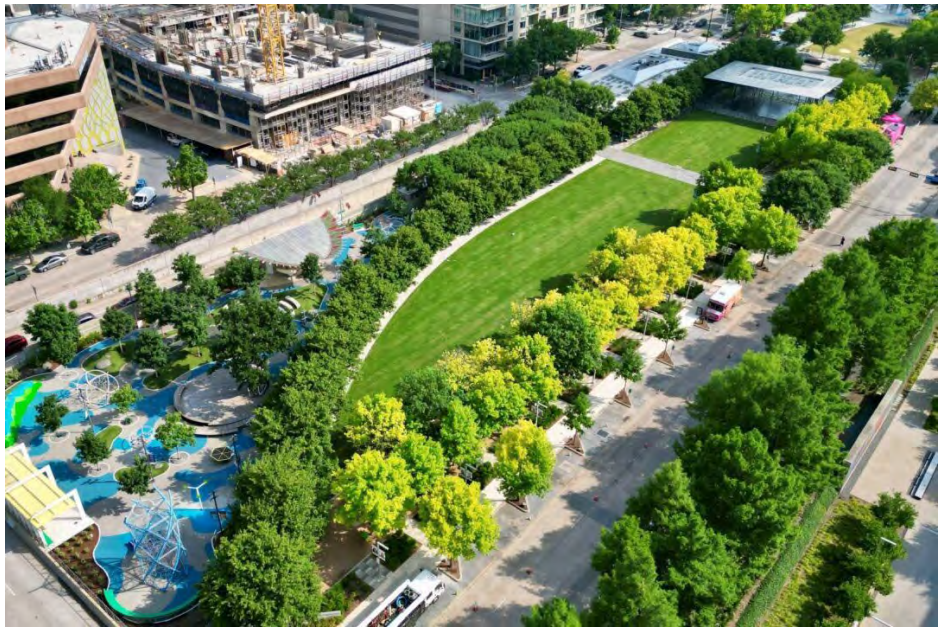
Economic Impact Estimates based on IMPLAN1 economic modelling conducted by James Lima Planning & Design.

1 - $9 billion is the net present value of estimated economic output associated with The Stitch over a 30-year period.

Klyde Warren Park

Dallas, TX

- Open year: 2012
- Size: 5.2 acres
- Construction Cost: $110 M
- Economic Benefit: $5.5+ Billion in property value

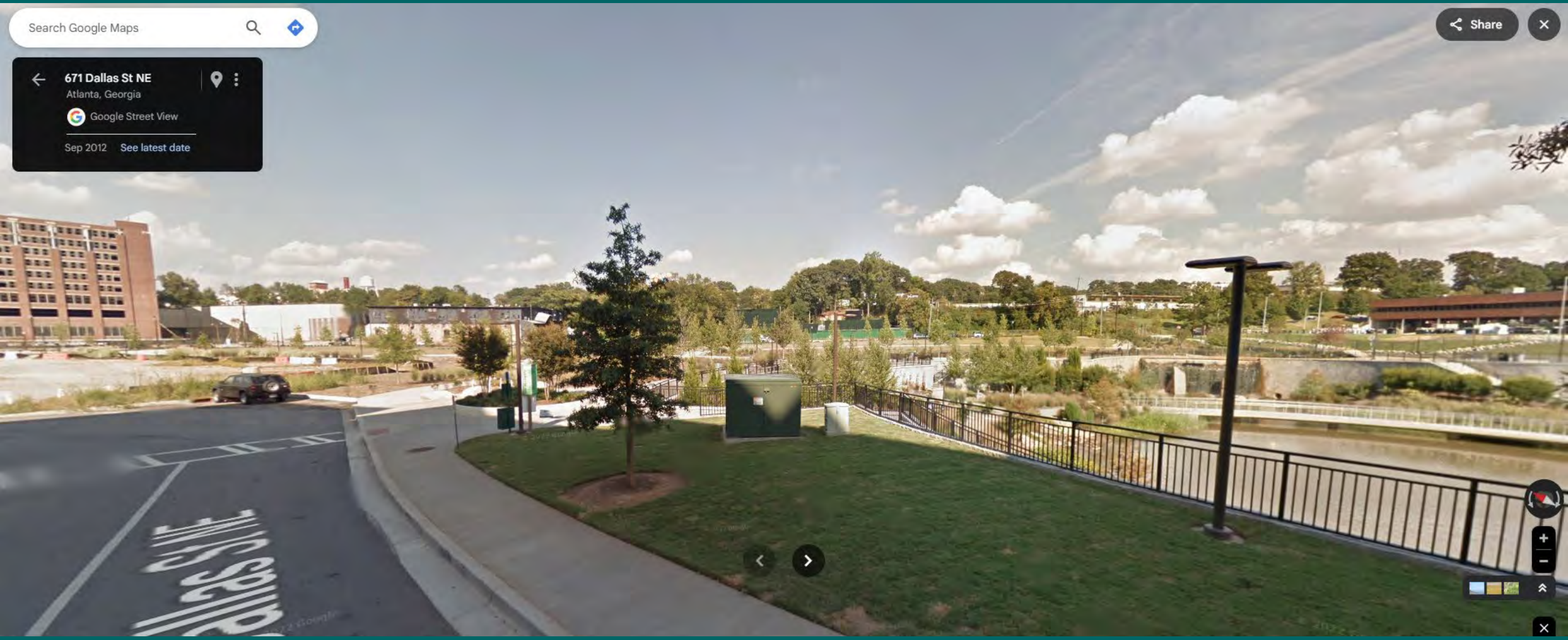




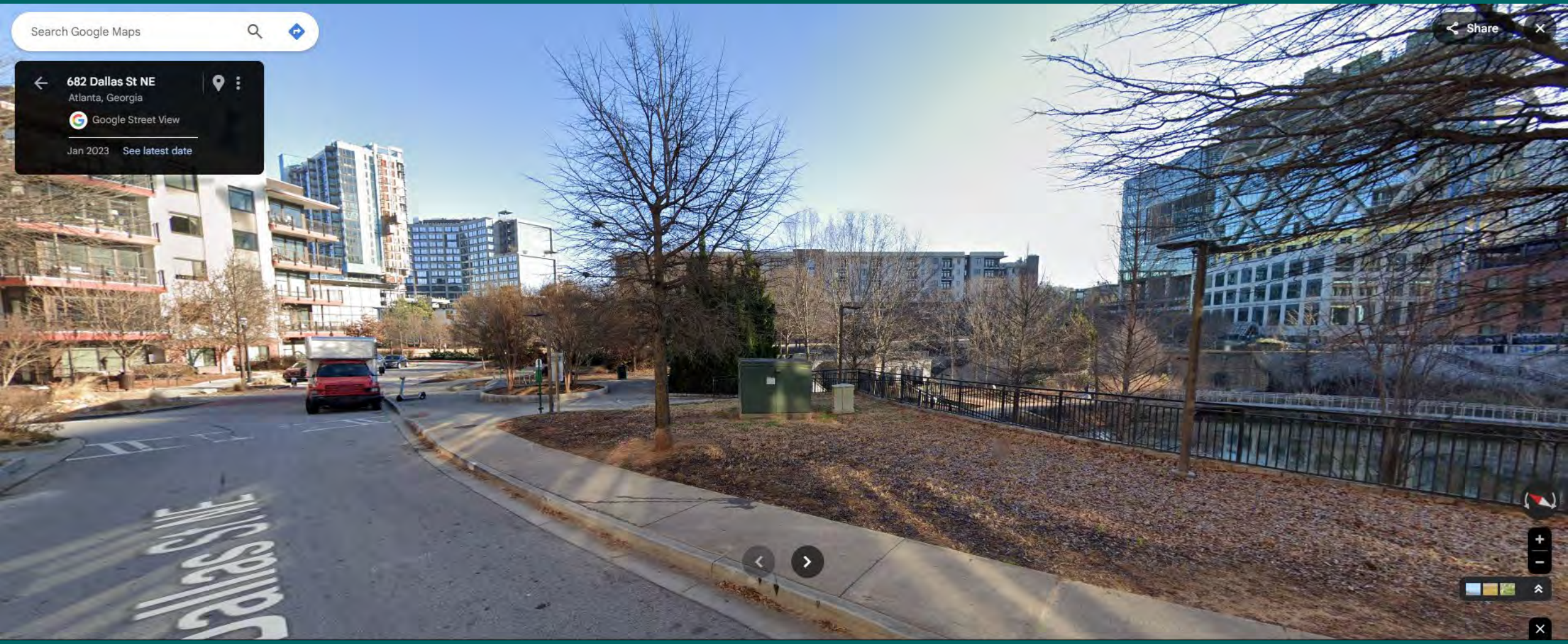




O4W Park - 2012



O4W Park - 2023



O4W Park – Then vs Now





Avondale Estates



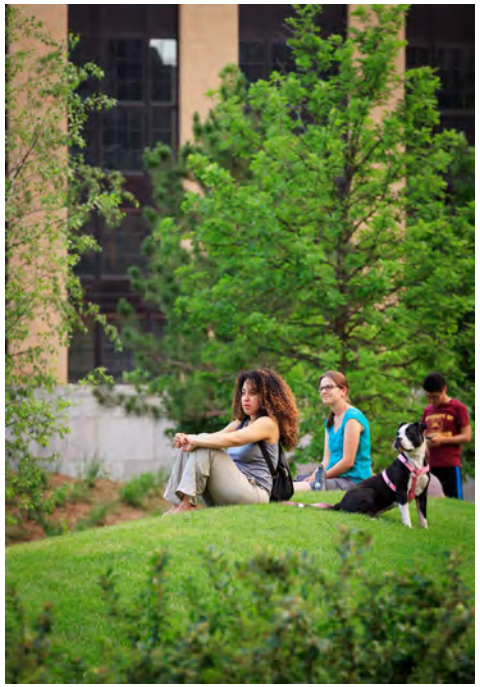

THE STITCH
DESIGN UPDATES

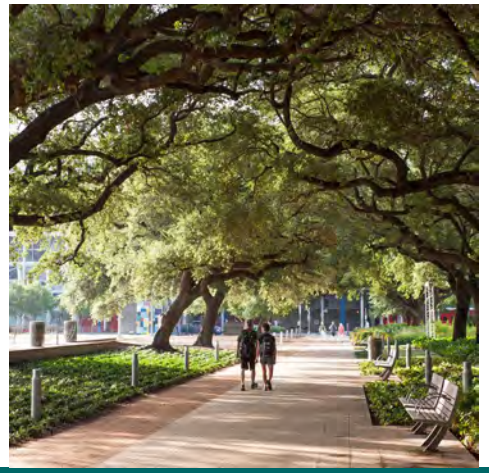
Everyday Resource

Special Destination







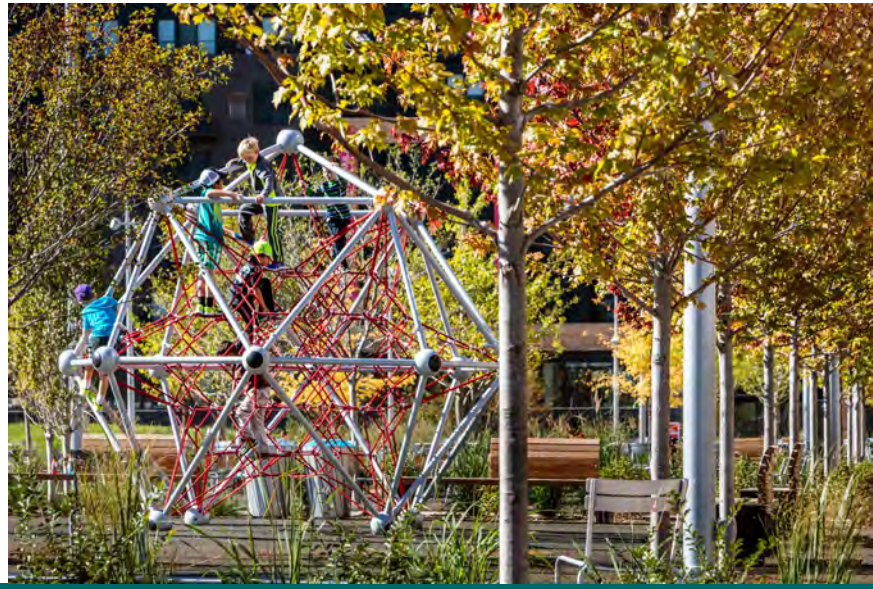


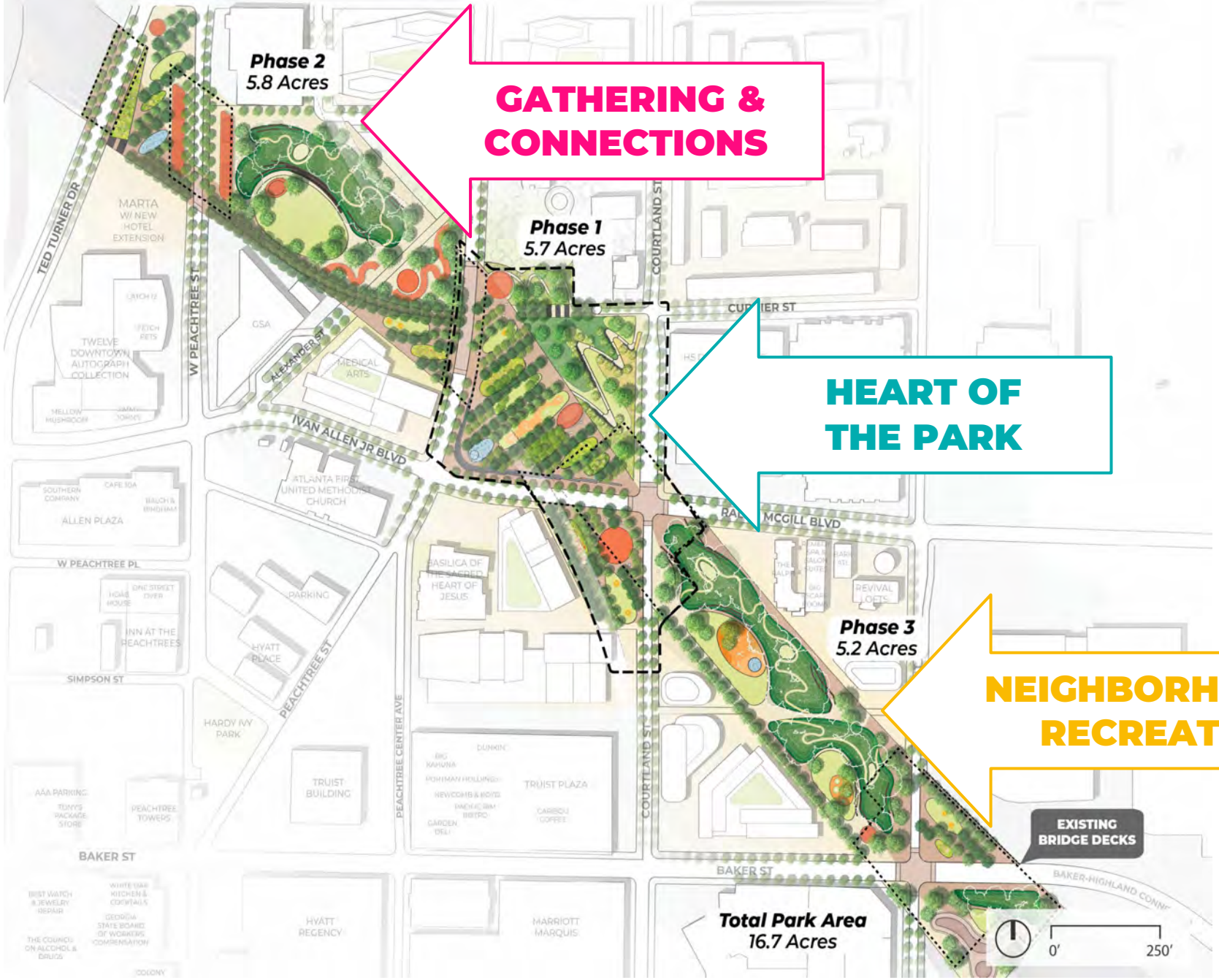











Phase 2
5.8 Acres
GATHERING &
CONNECTIONS
Phase 1
5.7 Acres
HEART OF
THE PARK
Phase 3
5.2 Acres
NEIGHBORHOOD
RECREATION
EXISTING
BRIDGE DECKS
Total Park Area
16.7 Acres
0'
250'
TED TURNER DR
W PEACHTREE ST
COURTLAND ST
IVAN ALLEN JR BLVD
MCGILL BLVD
W PEACHTREE PL
SIMPSON ST
BAKER ST
PEACHTREE ST
PEACHTREE CENTER AVE
ALEXANDER ST
MARTA
W/ NEW
HOTEL
EXTENSION
TWELVE
DOWNTOWN
AUTOGRAPH
COLLECTION
GSA
MEDICAL
ARTS
ATLANTA FIRST
UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH
ALLEN PLAZA
SOUTHERN
COMPANY
CAFE 104
BALCH &
BINGHAM
INN AT THE
PEACHTREES
HYATT
PLACE
PARKING
HARDY IVY
PARK
BASILICA OF
THE SACRED
HEART OF
JESUS
TRUIST
BUILDING
TRUIST PLAZA
DUNKIN'
PEACHTREE
TOWERS
AAA PARKING
HYATT
REGENCY
MARRIOTT
MARQUIS
REVIVAL
LOFTS
BAKER-HIGHLAND CONN


Park Kiosk & Restrooms
AMPHITHEATER
Phase 2
5.8 Acres
GATEWAY PLAZA
EVENT PAVILIONS
CONNECTIONS
POLLINATOR GARDENS
Phase 1
5.7 Acres
FOUNTAIN
Multi-Use Stage
ROLLER SKATING
Event Pavilion
Concession, Restrooms & Park Support
Shade Structure
ATLANTA ARBORETUM
FESTIVAL PLAZAS
WATER FEATURE
SPLASH PAD
OPEN LAWNS
WAYFINDING / SIGNAGE
Phase 3
5.2 Acres
DOG PARK
Event Pavilion
MULTI-GENERATIONAL PLAY
SEATING & RESPITE
Park Kiosk & Restrooms
EXISTING BRIDGE DECKS
SKATE PARK
ICONIC ART / SCULPTURE
Total Park Area
16.7 Acres
0'
250'
MARTA W/ NEW
COURTLAND ST
CURRIER ST
IVAN ALLEN JR BLVD
RALPH MCGILL BLVD
W PEACHTREE PL
SIMPSON ST
BAKER ST
PEACHTREE ST
CIVIC CENTER
TOWNHOUSE ATLANTA
RENAISSANCE LOFTS
CONQUER CENTER
SKYLINE ATLANTA
HARDY IVY PARK
PEACHTREE TOWERS
HYATT REGENCY
MARRIOTT MARQUIS
BAKER-HIGHLAND CONN



CURRENT CONDITIONS | Aerial – Over Ralph McGill Boulevard



THE STITCH PARK DOWNTOWN SQUARE (PHASE 1) | Birds-Eye View

THE STITCH



THE STITCH PARK DOWNTOWN SQUARE (PHASE 1) | Plan-View

THE STITCH



1. Downtown Green

THE STITCH



2. Perennial Gardens

THE STITCH



3. Terrace Meander

THE STITCH



4. Piedmont Playground

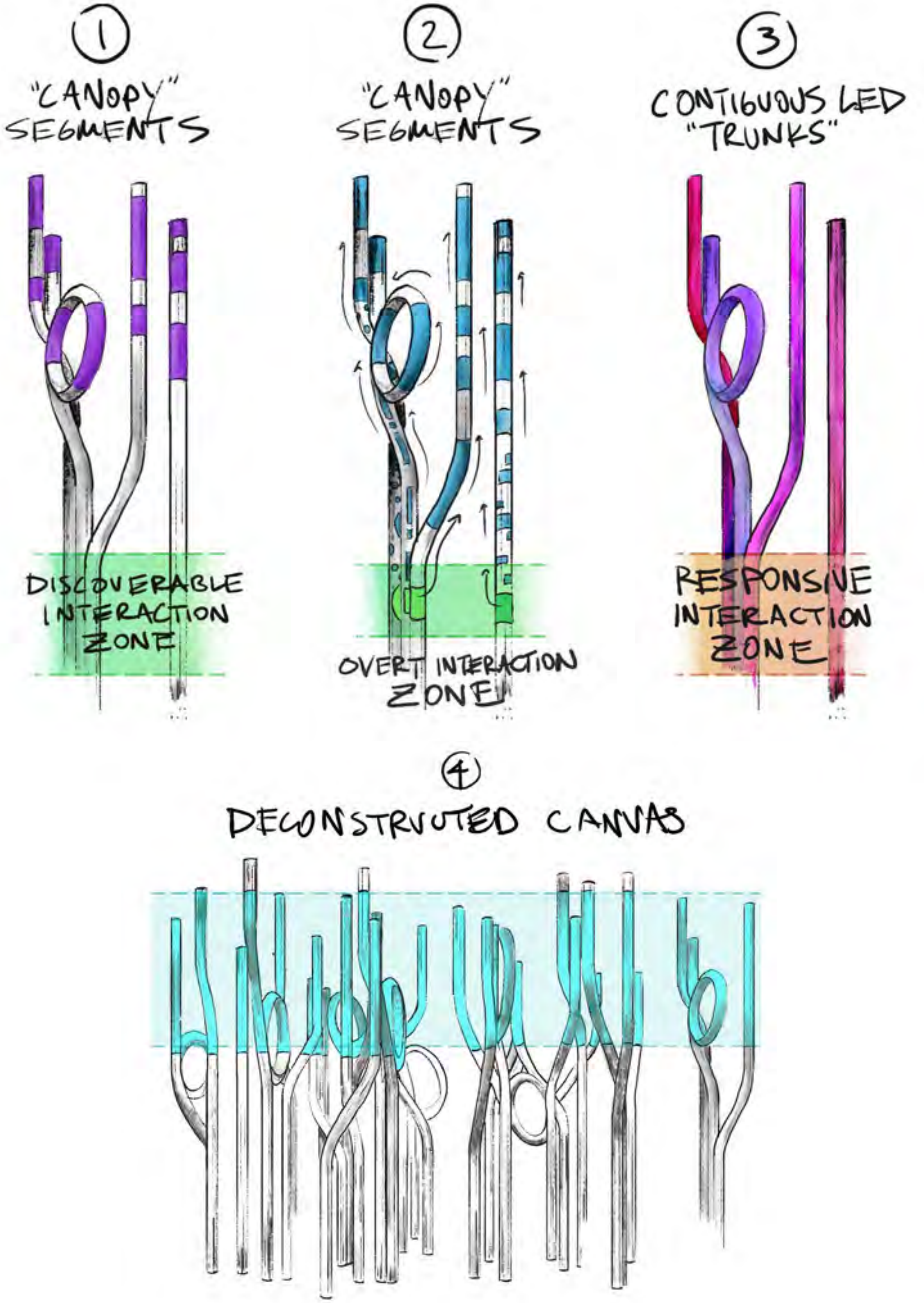
THE STITCH



5. Fog Forest

THE STITCH





5. Fog Forest Lighting & Interactive Play Concepts

THE STITCH



5. Fog Forest at Night

THE STITCH



7. Shade Pavillion

THE STITCH



7. Shade Pavillion

THE STITCH



THE STITCH

THANK YOU

Jack Cebe
President & CEO, Stitch Inc.
e: jcebe@downtownatlantainc.com
c: 864-918-3380

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy ED Professionals Workshop

Strengthening Local Action. Scaling What Works. Advancing New Ideas.

September 14, 2026

Georgia Municipal Association

9:30-12:00

Participants: Economic Development Professionals

Facilitator: Keri Stevens

Recorder: Emily Carrillo

Engagement Coordinator: Roshani Thakore

Context:

- ARC is updating the Atlanta Region's **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** to establish regional priorities and help position communities for **EDA and other funding and technical assistance opportunities**.
- The CEDS will **build on—not recreate—the work already happening locally**, identifying successful programs and projects that can be strengthened, connected, or **scaled across the region**, while also creating space for **innovative ideas and new approaches**.
- Economic development professionals and CIDs are key partners in identifying **local priorities, proven approaches, unmet needs, emerging opportunities, and new ideas**.

Meeting Intent:

- To empower regional communities to achieve economic goals. Specifically, focusing on resources and programs available to communities, organizations, and small businesses.

Meeting #1: Intended Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the **CEDS update and economic mobility focus**.
- Input into the **regional SWOT**.
- Identification of **local priorities, projects, programs, needs, and innovative ideas**.
- Identification of successful local efforts that could be **strengthened, connected, or scaled regionally**.
- Identification of **new or emerging needs and opportunities** that may require new approaches or partnerships.
- Development of an initial **CEDS Regional Project Pipeline**.
- Identification of opportunities for **EDA and other funding, technical assistance, and regional partnerships**.
- Clear **next steps** for CEDS development and implementation.

Agenda:

Time	Topic	Description	Topic Leader
9:30 am (30 min)	Early Arrival-Meeting Organization	Arrival early, settle in, networking and snacks	Keri Stevens
10:00 am (20 min)	Check In	Welcome and Introductions Brief overview of the CEDS update, economic mobility focus, Opportunity Rising, and why ED professionals are critical partners. **Opening question: What is the most important economic development issue or opportunity facing your community right now?**	Keri Stevens
10:20 (25 min)	State of the Region	Present key regional economic trends.	Ann Carpenter, Chief Research and Innovation Officer
10:45 (15 min)	SWOT: What Did We Get Right?	Interactive discussion: What is right? What is missing? What has changed? What emerging economic issues should the CEDS address over the next five years?	Keri Stevens
11:00 (10 min)	Break	Networking	All
11:10 (30 min)	What Are You Trying to Get Done? — CEDS Project Pipeline	Participants identify **1–3 priority projects or initiatives** for consideration in the CEDS. Capture estimated costs, funding gaps, readiness, barriers, and assistance needed. Discuss potential connections to **EDA and other funding, technical assistance, data, and partners**.	Keri Stevens
11:40 (15 min)	Local Priorities → Regional Opportunities	Identify common themes. What challenges cannot be solved locally? Where would regional	Keri Stevens

		coordination add value? What could ARC and regional partners help advance?	
11:55 (5 min)	From Projects to Implementation / Next Steps	Explain how SWOT findings, local plans, needs, and submitted projects will inform CEDS strategies and implementation. Discuss future engagement, project submissions, and next steps. Next Meetings: October 20-Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance	Keri Stevens

Atlanta Regional Commission

Economic Development Professionals Workshop Report

CEDS Pathways to Opportunity

September 14, 2026 | 9:30am to 12pm | Georgia Municipal Association

---

Meeting Purpose:

The Atlanta Regional Commission convened economic development professionals and partners from across the region to introduce the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy process, review regional economic conditions, and identify local priorities, project readiness, funding needs, and implementation barriers. The discussion showed broad regional alignment around housing, redevelopment, mobility, workforce development, and the need for more flexible funding and financing tools.

This report combines the meeting notes and the complete group activity record. It summarizes the regional discussion, identifies recurring themes, and preserves participant priorities for use in developing the CEDS strategy and implementation framework.

Workshop Overview

Date	September 14, 2026
Time	9:30am to 12pm
Location	Georgia Municipal Association (GMA)
Host	Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)
Agenda	CEDS overview, regional economic conditions presentation, SWOT exercise, facilitated group discussion

CEDS Overview (Presenter: Keri Stevens, Program Manager, ARC)

Keri Stevens provided an overview of the CEDS, including federal requirements, regional economic trends under review, and the draft strategic pillars. The presentation framed economic mobility as a regional economic development issue and positioned the workshop as an early opportunity for local partners to shape the strategy with current priorities and on-the-ground project knowledge.

Federal Requirements	**Summary Background:** A summary background of the economic conditions of the region; **SWOT Analysis:** In-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; **Strategic Direction/Action Plan:** The action plan should identify the stakeholder(s) responsible for implementation, timetables, and opportunities for the integrated use of other local, state, and federal funds; **Evaluation Framework:** Performance measures used to evaluate the organization's implementation of the CEDS and impact on the regional economy
Regional Economic Trends to Explore	Demographics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Health care, Housing Prices, Energy Costs, Data Centers, Local Budgets, Infrastructure Capacity, Small Business Capital, Downtowns and Offices
Draft Strategic Pillars	**Connected Talent:** Skills pipelines, youth pathways, upskilling, employer-driven training, AI disruptions **Places That Work:** Housings, Opportunity Zones, Small Business, Corridor and Downtown Revitalization, Anti-displacement **Moving to Opportunity:** Jobs close to housing, TOD, last mile connectivity, technology **Resilient Prosperity:** Infrastructure planning, climate resilience, clean energy

Opening Discussion

Participants were asked to identify the most important economic development issue or opportunity facing their communities. The responses reflected different local conditions but repeatedly connected economic development with housing, infrastructure, workforce, and equitable access to investment.

- Data centers and the need for clear community messaging about their impacts and benefits.
- Advancing projects along a major commercial corridor and continuing development of the trail network.
- Access to quality healthcare, including a planned healthcare expansion, and barriers related to funding.
- Development of a first economic development plan; affordable housing emerged as a concern across income levels and locations, while workforce development also remains a priority.
- Affordable housing, eliminating food deserts, and leveraging the technology hub opportunity.
- Office vacancies and effective responses to homelessness.
- Helping financial institutions recognize the value of investing in areas perceived as less attractive.
- The relationship between wages and the cost of living.
- Balancing the tax digest, increasing revenue, and improving a major interstate corridor.
- Diversifying the business base along a commercial highway.
- Creating a town center and activating large vacant buildings and available land.

State of the Region (Presenter: Ann Carpenter, Chief Research Officer, ARC)

Ann Carpenter, ARC Chief Research Officer, presented regional demographic and economic conditions. The presentation emphasized that continued growth is occurring alongside slower employment gains, an aging population, housing affordability pressures, and uneven economic mobility.

- Metro Atlanta continues to add population and is the nation's sixth-largest metropolitan region.
- Population growth at the region's periphery is outpacing growth in the core.

- Growth is being shaped by births and migration. The U.S. fertility rate remains below the 2.1 replacement rate, while international migration has become increasingly important.
- The region's population is aging, with implications for the labor force and service needs.
- Year-over-year employment growth in both the United States and Atlanta has generally remained between zero and one percent since December 2024.
- Healthcare is supporting job growth; registered nurses were the region's most-posted occupation from August 2025 through August 2026.
- Home-price appreciation has outpaced wage growth, while median rents have moderated.
- A significant share of lower-income working renters remains cost-burdened.
- Economic mobility varies substantially across places and income groups in the ARC region.
- Income inequality and income segregation are associated with lower mobility, while school quality and economic connectedness are associated with stronger mobility outcomes.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Exercise

Strengths

- **What we've heard:** World's busiest airport, MARTA network, and extensive interstate highway network (I-75, I-85, I-20, I-285) anchor the region's mobility assets. Strong education base (HBCUs, R1 universities, technical colleges) and a growing tech sector support talent pipeline. Additional strengths include a major film hub, strong minority-owned business community, vibrant arts/culture/entertainment scene, top 10 U.S. metro economy, strong international business presence, and the new inland port in Gainesville.
- **Added by participants:** sports tourism, I-85 corridor, land mass in south Fulton, recreation, diversity.

Weaknesses

- **What we've heard:** Traffic congestion (among the worst in the U.S.) and insufficient housing supply are recurring themes, alongside high-income inequality and a 50/50 national ranking for upward economic mobility.

Infrastructure gaps include last-mile transit connectivity, rural/lower-income broadband gaps, and water/energy systems straining under rapid growth. Underutilized/blighted buildings and long-time residents not sharing in economic growth were also flagged.

- **Added by participants:** traffic, water & sewer capacity, owner's regulations, workforce soft-skills gaps, need for more collaboration opportunities; a note on tax policy.

Opportunities

- **What we've heard:** Georgia Tech & Emory research ecosystems, the HBCU/technical college network, and demand for workforce/affordable housing present growth potential. The FIFA World Cup is driving infrastructure upgrades and international exposure. Also noted: growing aerospace/defense manufacturing pipeline, connecting rural producers to metro markets, renewable energy leadership, and state/federal funding influence.
- **Added by participants:** recreational opportunities (river corridor, multimodal access), streamlined regulations/charges, transportation system (rail + others), collaboration with CIDs and universities, infrastructure/sewer access, housing + economic development partnerships with developers, and doing gentrification "the right way."

Threats

- **What we've heard:** Competing sunbelt metros, rising housing costs, and gentrification/displacement threaten long-term community stability. Rapid growth is outpacing infrastructure capacity, and AI/automation risk displacing mid-skill workers faster than retraining can respond. Distrust of government/funding mechanisms and misinformation were also cited.
- **Added by participants:** federal landscape uncertainty, distrust of school boards, AI's impact on labor force, fear around data center growth (balance needed), use of hotels/motels as de facto housing, and low TAD/school participation.

Group Activity Findings

Participants documented up to three local priorities and considered funding gaps, readiness, and barriers. The detailed responses show a region with many projects in planning or early implementation, but with recurring challenges related to capital, infrastructure, land assembly, political support, and coordination across jurisdictions and sectors.

Housing as economic infrastructure

Workforce, attainable, affordable, and homeownership opportunities were among the most frequently identified priorities. Participants linked housing directly to workforce availability, business attraction, transit access, and household economic stability.

Downtown and corridor redevelopment

Communities identified downtown revitalization, mall and retail repositioning, mixed-use development, and corridor improvement as major opportunities. Many projects involve publicly controlled land or completed plans but still need financing, infrastructure, or private development partners.

Transit trails and multimodal connections

Transit expansion, bus rapid transit, pedestrian connections, trails, express-lane transit, and regional network connections appeared throughout the responses. Right-of-way costs, construction escalation, and federal or state funding were common constraints.

Funding and finance gaps

Funding was the most consistent barrier across project types. Participants also noted lender hesitation, incentive limitations, rising construction costs, insufficient local match, and the need for flexible programmatic funding.

Workforce and education alignment

Communities want stronger pathways between schools, colleges, workforce systems, and employers. Priorities include industry-specific training, technology upskilling, career pathways outside a four-year degree, and more flexible workforce funding.

Adaptive reuse and infill

Vacant malls, retail spaces, industrial parcels, office buildings, auditoriums, and other underused properties represent significant opportunity. Barriers include redevelopment

risk, outdated regulations, building conditions, financing, and property-owner participation.

Implementation partnerships

Many priorities depend on collaboration among cities, counties, CIDs, development authorities, school systems, transit agencies, utilities, property owners, and private investors. Political will, community education, and cross-jurisdiction coordination were frequently cited as readiness factors.

Community narrative and market confidence

Several participants identified stigma, misinformation, limited market comparables, or weak awareness as barriers. Clear messaging, data, marketing, and visible early wins will be important to attract investment and sustaining public support.

Implications for the CEDS

- Frame housing, transportation, and workforce systems as interconnected economic infrastructure rather than separate policy areas.
- Create a regional project-readiness framework that distinguishes projects needing planning or technical assistance from those positioned for near-term investment.
- Identify flexible funding and financing approaches for redevelopment, infrastructure, workforce programs, small-business support, and housing.
- Support adaptive reuse and infill through regulatory modernization, market analysis, technical assistance, and connections to experienced development partners.
- Use the CEDS to improve alignment among local priorities, regional strategies, and state and federal funding opportunities.
- Strengthen the region's shared narrative about economic mobility and investment opportunity while recognizing the different market conditions across communities.

Common Themes and Meeting Wrap Up

The workshop demonstrated that communities across the Atlanta region are pursuing different projects but encountering many of the same underlying conditions. Housing affordability affects talent attraction and retention. Transportation access shapes whether residents can reach jobs and whether businesses can reach workers and customers. Redevelopment opportunities are abundant, but many communities need stronger financing tools, infrastructure support, technical assistance, and market confidence to move from plans to implementation.

The clearest regional opportunity is to connect these local priorities through a shared economic mobility framework. The CEDS can help partners coordinate investments, identify projects that are ready for funding, build capacity where readiness gaps remain, and strengthen the case for state, federal, and private investment. Continued participation by local governments, CIDs, economic development organizations, utilities, workforce partners, and the private sector will be essential as ARC moves from engagement to strategy development and implementation planning.

Appendix A: Detailed Group Activity Record

The following entries preserve the participant-submitted priorities, readiness observations, funding needs, and barriers.

Participant response 1

Priority 1: Homeownership Opportunity

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Incentive to build types of homes for sale vs. rent
- Readiness: Plenty of allowance
- Barriers: Banks/PE

Priority 2: Existing Housing Costs

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Land value is very high
- Readiness: Code is supportive
- Barriers: Developers of big homes or big apartments

Priority 3: More connectivity (sidewalks/parks/paths)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Prohibitive land costs
- Readiness: very ready and creatively making progress
- Barriers: acquiring row with high level costs

Participant response 2

Priority 1: the community Investment & Redevelopment Strategy

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Infrastructure funding & developments partners
- Readiness: redevelopment opportunities
- Barriers: Market analysis, site readiness, data driven road map

Priority 2: the community Healthcare & Hospitality District

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Partners
- Readiness: Healthcare expansion, medical office development, hotel development
- Barriers: Hotel feasibility & healthcare/economic development

Priority 3: the community Next Economy Initiative

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Partners
- Readiness: Healthcare, technology, film
- Barriers: Workforce partnerships

Participant response 3

Priority 1: Data Center & Innovation Corridor

- Costs/Funding Gaps: TBD
- Readiness: Data center under construction
- Barriers: Attracting businesses that are complementary (high tech, fine tech, opportunity zone application)

Priority 2: GIHP Sports & Entertainment District

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: approx. 200 buildable acres
- Barriers: Incentives for developers, applied for opportunity zone

Priority 3: I-20/Sigmica Gateway Development Area

- Costs/Funding Gaps: TBD
- Readiness: Legacy families may be ready to sell right off interstate
- Barriers: Modernization of old buildings, biolab repurpose

Participant response 4

Priority 1: Revitalize our downtown/more commercial development

- Costs/Funding Gaps: over a million
- Readiness: ready
- Barriers: money, displacement, need welcome packet

Priority 2: Workforce & Bringing Jobs

- Costs/Funding Gaps: varies
- Readiness: ready
- Barriers: education, language, displacement of jobs

Priority 3: Economic Development

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: ready
- Barriers: accurate reporting

Participant response 5

Priority 1: The heart of the community project

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: waiting on the funding and the preliminary final design

Priority 2: Bethlehem interchange zoning ordinance text amendment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: infrastructure, connectivity, GDOT participation

Priority 3: Housing (Middle class housing)

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: have not had the conversation
- Barriers: getting everyone on board

Participant response 6

Priority 1: Housing affordability in the county for a growing workforce

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Collaboration between sectors, funding/incentives

Priority 2: Tools/potential collaboration to track availability of underdeveloped land

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: ready
- Barriers: data availability, lack of updated land listings, zoning

Participant response 7

Priority 1: South of the county County Development

- Costs/Funding Gaps: 10 year incentive isn't always enough
- Readiness: ready! Lots of land and quality leadership
- Barriers: Not many comps, negative stigma, historical bad policy (red lining etc.)

Priority 2: Life sciences & quality industry/businesses choosing Georgia

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Other states may have more attractive incentives
- Readiness: Ready
- Barriers: Competitiveness compared to other states

Priority 3: a commercial area mixed use development

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Many current tenants not paying rent
- Readiness: Ready; county & city partnership
- Barriers: Investors are nervous, legacy business difficulties
- Report out:
- Balancing TADs
- Trail connectivity through regional communities & downtowns

- Funding for transportation
- Redevelopment/adaptive reuse

Participant response 8

Priority 1: Transportation alternative funding

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Federal, regional
- Readiness: connection to expanding county framework
- Barriers: Funding roadblocks, speed, right-of-way acquisition

Priority 2: Redevelopment/adaptive reuse

- Costs/Funding Gaps: private
- Readiness: aversion to multi-family redevelopment
- Barriers: multi-family "clog", capital, risk aversion

Priority 3: More large employers

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Local colleges, population growth, partnership the county, growing/diverse population
- Barriers: Housing; affordability; brand

Participant response 9

Priority 1: New admin building

- Costs/Funding Gaps: ~8 million
- Readiness: conceptual
- Barriers: small parcel size, neighboring buildings/roads

Priority 2: MARTA bus rapid transit line

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: 30% (early design phase)
- Barriers: Changes in available lanes, traffic impact

Priority 3: Entertainment/arts venue

- Costs/Funding Gaps: $10 million
- Readiness: conceptual
- Barriers: Need to agree on location, size, etc.

Participant response 10

Priority 1: regional mall redevelopment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Q1 2027/Ongoing
- Barriers:

Priority 2: Greater awareness of TAD/econ dev ordinances

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Priority 3: Repurpose former industrial parcels

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Awareness, costs, correct developers

Participant response 11

Priority 1: Regional connectedness/public transportation

- Costs/Funding Gaps: federal/state support
- Readiness:
- Barriers: State Gov/Politics

Priority 2: Activation/TAD utilization

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Priority 3: Corporate recruitment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: State Gov/Politics
- Report out:
- Transportation/connectedness
- Adaptive reuse/infill redevelopment

Participant response 12

Priority 1: corridor Project/Initiative

- Costs/Funding Gaps: TBD

- Readiness: GDOT funding (currently working on similarly project for RDH)
- Barriers: technical assistance & project development

Participant response 13

Priority 1: Business recruitment & retention, focus on downtown

- Costs/Funding Gaps: incentive toolbox (tads? Pilot?)
- Readiness: Need to flesh out strategy
- Barriers: Parking

Priority 2: Marketing & promotions of downtown events & happenings

- Costs/Funding Gaps: budget constraints
- Readiness: need to flesh out strategy
- Barriers:

Priority 3: Trail Development

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Increased costs for land
- Readiness: Plan already in development
- Barriers: Funding

Participant response 14

Priority 1: Affordable housing & redevelopment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: funding, policies

Priority 2: Transportation & transit (near affordable housing)

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: funding, policies

Priority 3: pedestrian/walkability

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: funding, policies
- Notes: Businesses will comes to the area once homes are affordable and transportation is accessible

Participant response 15

Priority 1: Grow jobs

- Costs/Funding Gaps: TBD
- Readiness: In some areas, need more land
- Barriers: land availability, govt regulation

Priority 2: Redevelopment

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Millions
- Readiness: Not ready, need more tools
- Barriers: Development regulations are geared towards greenfield

Priority 3: Students graduating HS with no direction on how to better connect

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Connecting industry and education better, parents not engaging

Participant response 16

Priority 1: Transportation improvements in/around our downtown area

- Costs/Funding Gaps: SPLOST funding exists; need additional funding-millions
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Rising costs mean initial SPLOST budgets are not enough

Priority 2: Downtown redevelopment/revitalization (key redevelopment site, publicly controlled lots, downtown corridor)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: 10-50 million, depending on project
- Readiness: Land acquired, seeking funding
- Barriers: Bank's willingness to fund, land costs, rising cost of building

Priority 3: Balancing housing density w/ commercial & recreational development

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: in progress
- Barriers: community engagement/education/access to funding
- Report Out: Transit, trails parks, Housing Choice-Attainable Housing, Education/workforce pipeline

Participant response 17

Priority 1: Redevelopment North 41

- Costs/Funding Gaps:

- Readiness: Preliminary
- Barriers: Infrastructure gaps, water/sewer access, ordinance/policy restrictions

Priority 2: gateway corridor

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Exploring multijurisdictional CID creation
- Barriers: funding of project & cost starting challenges of promotion of self-taxing district

Priority 3: Obtainable housing

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Preliminary
- Barriers: Development feasibility, partnerships with the right people
- Notes: obtainable housing, educational pipeline, parks, trails

Participant response 18

Priority 1: Redevelopment

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Limited staff
- Readiness: moderate, further site identification
- Barriers: finding the right developer, utilities

Priority 2: Expansion/annexation

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Need studies on area
- Readiness: ongoing
- Barriers: utilities, collective action, special assess may be required

Priority 3: Multi-jurisdictional CID

- Costs/Funding Gaps: need plan, further refine the vision
- Readiness: on-going
- Barriers: Collective action, technical assistance, identify champions in private
- Report out: Transit trails/parks, housing choices, workforce development

Participant response 19

Priority 1: Redevelopment (town center area #1 priority, a major corridor. a major corridor.)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Incentives (tads, ssd, dacc bonds, etc.)
- Readiness: ready & must act quickly
- Barriers: Political will (county & school board & educating public)

Priority 2: Workforce Housing/Diverse Housing (impact on workforce availability)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Land bank, land trust, etc
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Political will, funding, public education, "STP" (same two people who speak out at public meetings)

Priority 3: Transportation (impact on workforce availability)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: SPLOST
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Political will, funding, public/constituent education
- Report out: transit, trails, parks, housing choice (all income levels), workforce/education pipeline (pathways other than college to careers)

Participant response 20

Priority 1: Implementing of CAM network

- Costs/Funding Gaps: ~1M to 2M
- Readiness: Nearly shovel ready
- Barriers: Future funding to integrate into operation long-term

Priority 2: Completing sweep

- Costs/Funding Gaps: ~50 M
- Readiness: 1 shovel ready segment, 3 in PE, 2 in concept
- Barriers: Funding! CID has matched funds but needs federal support

Priority 3: New Day Palisades – CRNRA renewal

- Costs/Funding Gaps: ~5 to 6M
- Readiness: shovel ready
- Barriers: Lack of funds available for rehabilitation, projects on federal land
- Report out: Transit/trails/parks, housing choice, workforce development pipeline

Participant response 21

Priority 1: Vital & filled out (walkable) downtown

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Banks – lack of commercial funding
- Readiness: need building infrastructure
- Barriers: property owner hesitance

Priority 2: Public Transportation

- Costs/Funding Gaps: No budget in public funding
- Readiness: Very little readiness

- Barriers: Funding

Priority 3: Workforce – Specificity & gaps

- Costs/Funding Gaps: low wages
- Readiness: working with local school system on curriculum
- Barriers: School system siloed from government & industry

Participant response 22

Priority 1: Prioritize/incentivize aviation industry growth

- Costs/Funding Gaps: minimal
- Readiness: Building relationship with airport
- Barriers: zoning (runway protection zone), assemblage of land near PDK, recruitment

Priority 2: TAD Development – City Center

- Costs/Funding Gaps: ~60k for redevelopment plan
- Readiness: Currently being assessed in our SEDP
- Barriers: Buy-in from property owners, timing, how to involve the school district

Priority 3: Filling vacant retail space, especially in Downtown

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Unsure, likely minimal
- Readiness: Unsure how to incentivize or regulate
- Barriers: Uncooperative/unresponsive property owners/zoning regulations

Participant response 23

Priority 1: Fresh food access

- Costs/Funding Gaps: expensive
- Readiness: Real estate, technical assistance
- Barriers:

Priority 2: Tech upskilling

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Expensive ($20M) depending on partners and programs
- Readiness: Programs
- Barriers: Workforce partners

Priority 3: Foreign Direct Investment (fdf)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Expensive ($5M)
- Readiness: Airport, need detailed strategic plan
- Barriers:

Participant response 24

Priority 1: Sports & Entertainment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: We have proof of concept now, need investment
- Barriers: finding the right partners

Priority 2: Vacant parcel development

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: political will is there
- Barriers: Offering strong incentives to developers

Priority 3: Small Business incubator

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: We have completed phase 1, phase 2 required
- Barriers: need additional funding to complete

Participant response 25

Priority 1: Trail Network Master Plan

- Costs/Funding Gaps: $4 million
- Readiness: political will is there, policy, zoning
- Barriers: funding

Priority 2: regional mall redevelopment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: an LCI study underway
- Barriers: redefining Northlake to office/retail

Priority 3: a major corridor

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Land is privately owned
- Readiness: study done
- Barriers: lack of neck steps, blighted industrial parcels

Participant response 26

Priority 1: Develop the community Town Center

- Costs/Funding Gaps: $600k-$1M
- Readiness: land is available and infrastructure is in place
- Barriers: Funding, political support, regional support

Priority 2: Renovating the community Mall

- Costs/Funding Gaps: $22M
- Readiness: Needs new landscape, new roof, new escalator, tenants
- Barriers: funding, marketing, customers

Priority 3: Build the community Police Department

- Costs/Funding Gaps: $20M
- Readiness: A building has already been identified to home the department
- Barriers: Need initial funding, raising the mileage rate

Participant response 27

Priority 1: redevelopment area

- Costs/Funding Gaps: In need of a capital ready developer
- Readiness: not ready for serious development
- Barriers: land assemblage/a neighboring jurisdiction approval

Priority 2: Beltline Integration

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Priority 3: Small Business Incubator

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Roof/AC
- Readiness: Close to grand opening
- Barriers: first one in the county

Participant response 28

Priority 1: downtown mixed-use development – Mixed use with Marta

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Housing subsidies/infrastructure
- Readiness: city owned controlled parcels
- Barriers: Brand/projects keeps starting and stopping

Priority 2: Auditorium

- Costs/Funding Gaps: 2007 costs vs 2027 costs
- Readiness: city owned
- Barriers: longstanding vacancy

Priority 3: the community Exchange – Mixed use with Marta

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Infrastructure

- Readiness: Good partners
- Barriers: Private Development
- Report out: Parks, trails, infrastructure funds

Participant response 29

Priority 1: Community-joint messaging

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Incorrect media content

Priority 2: Community readiness/infrastructure projects

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Attraction for more projects
- Barriers: construction acceptance

Priority 3: Targeted workforce needs

- Costs/Funding Gaps: funding needs dependent on skills
- Readiness: partnering with educational institutions
- Barriers:

Participant response 30

Priority 1: Marta expansion into 11-counties

- Costs/Funding Gaps: state/federal/county
- Readiness: Lot assemblage
- Barriers: Public unawareness of good impact

Priority 2: Educational/workforce initiatives

- Costs/Funding Gaps: state/federal/county
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Priority 3: Affordable housing

- Costs/Funding Gaps: special funds
- Readiness: good to go
- Barriers: financing, education, awareness

Participant response 31

Priority 1: Workforce Housing (Roosevelt Collection)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: County
- Readiness: vehicle/parking support of growth, vetting needed for teachers, public safety, etc.
- Barriers: labor cost, contractor bid/selection timeline

Priority 2: Parking Deck

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Bonds vs private funding
- Readiness: Sites/property available
- Barriers: funding/design approval

Priority 3: Hotel & Convection Center

- Costs/Funding Gaps: PPP vs. use of bonds, land lease, incorporating a hotel/motel tax
- Readiness:
- Barriers: council buy-in, antidevelopment residents

Participant response 32

Priority 1: Funding for entrepreneurship technical assistance/spaces

- Costs/Funding Gaps: programmatic funding
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Priority 2: Flexible workforce development funding

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: WOIA inflexibility, need more funding for businesses & serve more types of job seekers

Priority 3: Planning to analyze office to residential conversions

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Participant response 33

Priority 1: Centerline trail through Perimeter Office Market/Pedestrian connectivity

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Pedestrian bridges

- Readiness: Small area plan inclusion, stakeholder engagement
- Barriers: Public/political feasibility of funding a multimodal trail through a commercial district without a large voter base/residents, 3 different cities, 2 different counties

Priority 2: Business Retention/Recruitment (non-small business)

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Initial stages
- Barriers:

Priority 3: North End Redevelopment

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: existing, recently updated
- Barriers:

Participant response 34

Priority 1: Product

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: Significant land available in the Northern part of the county
- Barriers: Outrunning residential growth, funding for sites & infrastructure

Priority 2: Talent initiatives for skilled professions

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Programmatic funding
- Readiness: Working with school district
- Barriers:

Priority 3: Transportation improvements/infrastructure

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: T-SPLOST in place
- Barriers: funding needs

Participant response 35

Priority 1: Small Business & Innovation Support

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Public/private partnership to be established
- Readiness: Discussion with regional partners
- Barriers:

Priority 2: Mobility – especially in Perimeter area/Infrastructure

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Partnership w/ CID, GDOT

- Readiness: Ashford the community Rd Trail Phase 1 & 2
- Barriers: Funding/federal grants

Priority 3: Workforce development & training

- Costs/Funding Gaps: partnership w/ GSU/USG
- Readiness: workforce readiness for jobs of the future.
- Barriers:

Participant response 36

Priority 1: regional greenway Phases 2 & 3

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Phase 2 is funded, still working on phase 3
- Readiness: Phase 2 is ready
- Barriers: Construction costs

Priority 2: affordable housing development (city led affordable housing project)

- Costs/Funding Gaps: LIHTC
- Readiness: Property acquired/held by development authority
- Barriers: tax credit/financing

Priority 3: Vehicular bridge over I-85

- Costs/Funding Gaps: SSD funded but construction gaps still exist
- Readiness: Planning complete
- Barriers: small, but vocal opposition

Participant response 37

Priority 1: Multimodal trials

- Costs/Funding Gaps: 80/20 funding split
- Readiness: Planning phase, 2 trail plans underway
- Barriers: Funding/land acquisition

Priority 2: Tourism & marketing

- Costs/Funding Gaps: incremental implementation
- Readiness: in-progress
- Barriers: time, resources

Priority 3: Village/Hamlet Development Phasing

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Private sector, **need public infrastructure (water/sewer)**
- Readiness: In progress
- Barriers: Time, economic conditions, finance

Participant response 38

Priority 1: Integrate & capitalize on the opportunity of a major regional corridor express lanes and express lane transit

- Costs/Funding Gaps: Significant
- Readiness: EL- 100% ELT-30%
- Barriers: EL- heavy construction/disruption ELT-funding gap

Priority 2: Placemaking/back to office creating somewhere employees want to go

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers:

Priority 3: a regional technical college 2nd Building

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness:
- Barriers: Funding

Participant response 39

Priority 1: Position housing on economic infrastructure strategy

- Costs/Funding Gaps:
- Readiness: not ready not
- Barriers: requires walking across city agencies, developers, community organizations

PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Metro Atlanta: 2027 Update

September 14, 2026

Vision

ONE **great** REGION

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Values

Excellence | **Integrity** | **Equity**

Goals



Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.



Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.



Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.



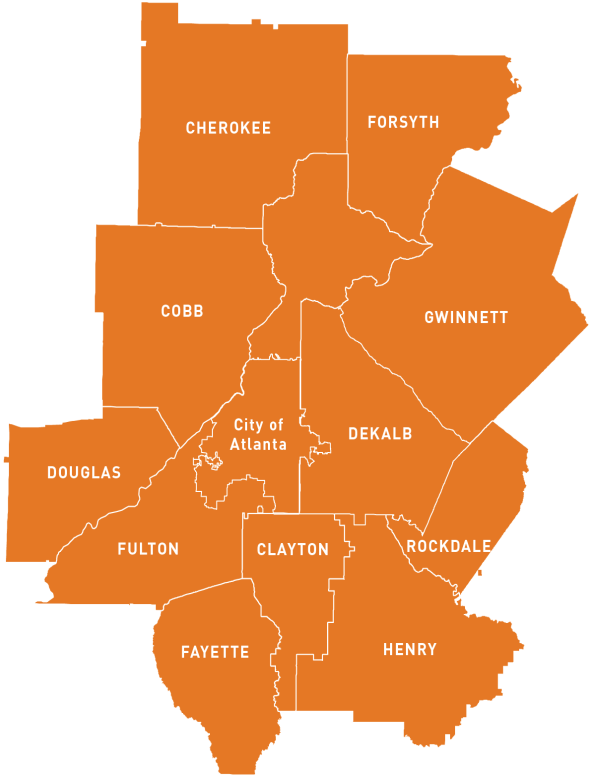
Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.



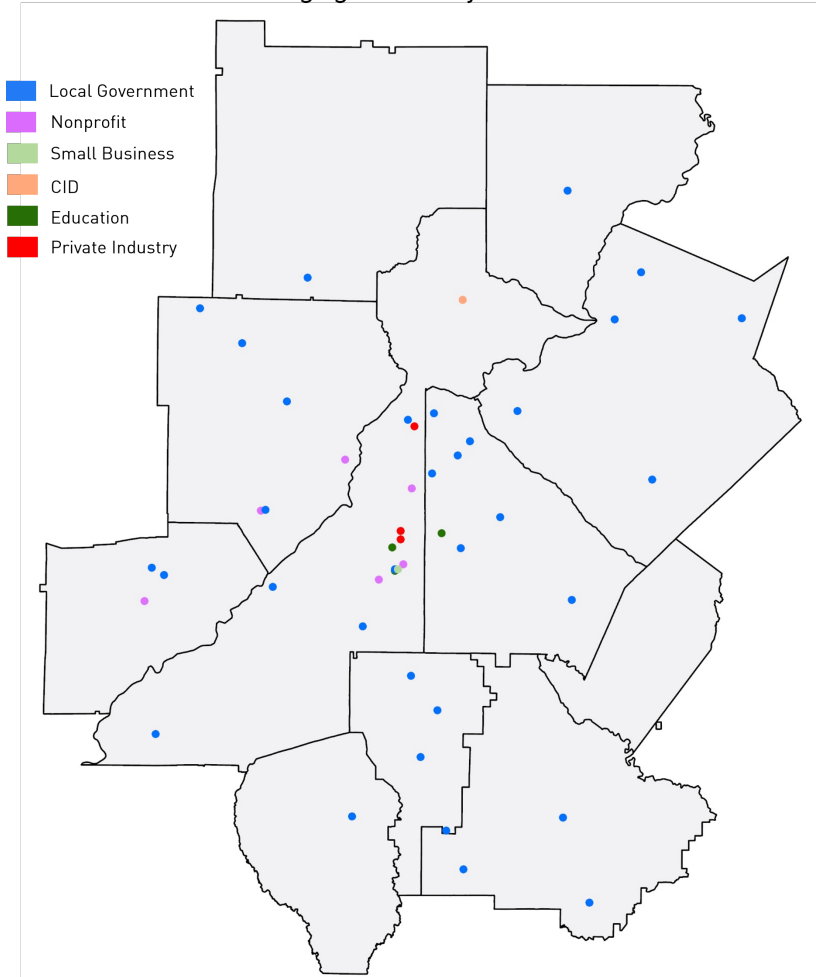
A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

Agenda

- Welcome, Introductions, and CEDS Overview
- Economic Conditions & Trends
- SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- What Are You Trying to Get Done? — CEDS Project Pipeline
- Local Priorities → Regional Opportunities
- Next Steps



CEDS Engagement by Sector



What is the CEDS and EDA Requirements

CEDS

- **Our shared game plan.** The CEDS sets the 11-county region's economic goals: jobs, business growth, quality of life.
- **Built from local voices.** Priorities come from local governments, employers, and partners, so your community helps shape it.
- **Unlocks federal dollars**. An adopted CEDS keeps the region eligible for EDA funding.

Requirements

- Executive Summary
- Summary of Regional Economic Conditions
- SWOT
- Strategy and Implementation Plan
- Performance Measures
- 5-year Update (due December of 2027)
- Current CEDS Approved in 2022 (2023-2027)



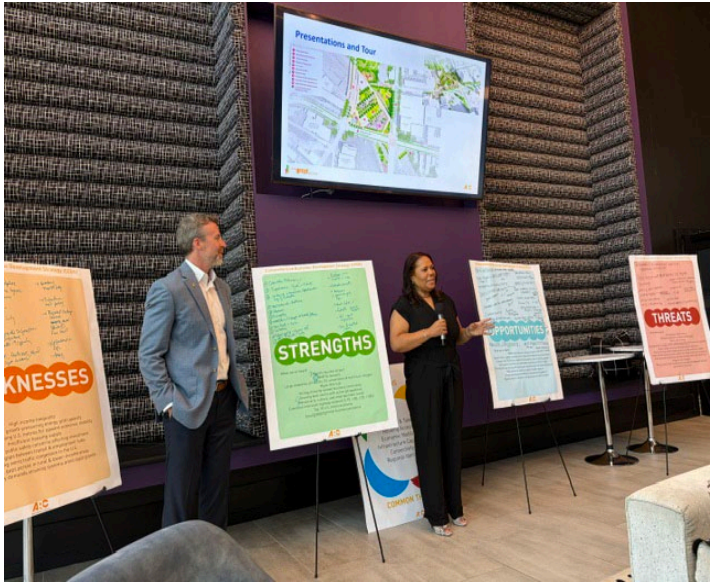
The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning process and document that creates the space for your region to identify its strengths and weaknesses and brings together a diverse set of partners to generate good jobs, diversify the economy, and spur economic growth.

EDA Requirements

CEDS Requirement	How it Supports the Region's Needs
Executive Summary	Establishes a clear regional vision that aligns economic development with ARC's strategic priorities, One Great Region, and economic mobility.
Summary of Regional Economic Conditions	Provides a data-driven understanding of demographic, economic, workforce, housing, transportation, and infrastructure trends to inform regional decision-making.
SWOT Analysis	Identifies regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through stakeholder engagement, helping ARC prioritize investments and partnerships.
Strategy & Implementation Plan	Creates an actionable roadmap that coordinates transportation, housing, workforce, community development, infrastructure, and economic development around shared regional outcomes.
Performance Measures	Establishes measurable outcomes, tracks progress, demonstrates accountability, and allows ARC and partners to adjust strategies over time.

ARC's Commitment to an Actionable Strategy

- Must be readable, repeatable, implementable
- Complement/support/leverage/align with Opportunity Rising initiative
- Economic mobility as foundation
- **Derived from municipal economic development priorities.**
- Active leadership and board engagement from the outset.
- Innovative engagement.
- Actions tied to ARC departments with real programmatic authority
- Prioritized metrics and a public dashboard to track progress in key areas.



Regional Economic Trends to Explore

- **Demographics:** The region is growing more slowly and getting older with fewer people entering the workforce than leaving it
- **Artificial Intelligence:** AI is reshaping some jobs faster than others, and the region's mix matters
- **Health care:** Costs are squeezing employer budgets and limiting who can afford to work
- **Housing prices:** Housing close to jobs now a factor in whether companies choose this region
- **Energy costs:** Cost and capacity are becoming a deciding factor in where projects locate
- **Data centers:** Big investment and tax base, but few jobs and compete for power, water, and land
- **Local budgets:** Revenue growth is flattening while service demands keep rising
- **Infrastructure capacity:** Water, roads, transit, and grid limits decide which projects a community can land
- **Small business capital:** Most job growth starts local, but access to financing is uneven
- **Downtowns and offices:** Vacancy is eroding the tax base in some jurisdictions

What Local Plans Tell Us

6 counties scanned: Rockdale, Forsyth, DeKalb, Fayette, Cherokee, Gwinnett and working on city/other organizational plans.

77–80% **of residents commute OUT of their county for work**

Rockdale 80% • Forsyth 78% • Fayette 77% • Cherokee 77% • DeKalb <30% live-work

- **Every county wants the same thing on workforce:** All six plans call for training programs built around what local employers need to hire.
- **Site readiness is a barrier everywhere:** Need for redevelopment but lack of sufficient activity due to regulatory, infrastructure, and funding constraints.
- **Everyone's after the same industries.** Advanced manufacturing tops all six county plans, with film, healthcare, tech/data, and HQs close behind.
- **Housing & displacement are economic development issues:** Workforce housing, anti-displacement, and affordability surface in DeKalb, Fayette, Forsyth, Gwinnett.
- **Access to opportunity and desire for high 'quality of life':** Schools, greenspace, safety, trails cited in every plan as the foundation of economic competitiveness.

Focused Implementation: Four Strategic Pillars

Each pillar maps to how ARC will address identified regional needs



Connected Talent

WDD+CDD

Skills pipelines, youth pathways, upskilling, employer-driven training, AI disruptions



Places That Work

CDD

Housing, OZs, small business, corridor and downtown revitalization, anti-displacement



Moving to Opportunity

TPD+TDM+CDD

Jobs close to housing, TOD, last mile connectivity, game changing technology,



Resilient Prosperity

NRD+CDD

Infrastructure planning, climate resilience, clean energy

Stakeholder Engagement

Committees

Internal: 6–8 people across 5 departments (CD, WS , TP, NR, R&I)

Note: Input will also be collected from AS and MS.

External-Steering: 10–15 strategic members modeled on the Regional Housing Strategy advisory approach

Focus Groups (6) /Interviews

4 pillar-aligned:
Connected Talent • Places That Work
Moving to Opportunity • Resilient Prosperity

2 cross-cutting:
Community Voices • Local Gov & Implementation

Individual Interviews: TBD

Board Champion

Clayton County: Chairwoman, Dr. Alieka Anderson-Henry

Forsyth County: Chairman, Alfred John

CEDS Engagement Approach

External Steering Committee

Internal Steering Committee

Focus Groups, Interviews, Meetings, and Workshops





Day in the Life

Success Stories

Steering committee input guides our interviews and focus groups, which surface real "day in the life" experiences with cost burden. These stories become the Success Stories that inform our final recommendations.

Recommendations to Implementation Plan

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Timeline



Additionally, the PMT will partner with ARC departments and external organizations for meeting opportunities.

Next Steps

01 Plan Kick-off Meeting: October 29

02 Data Collection/Survey: End of 2026/2027

03 Follow-up Meetings in 2027

Online SWOT/Other Information: Pathways to Opportunity: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update - ARC

Question?

What is the most important economic development issue or opportunity facing your community right now?

Who is important to contact in your community?

Atlanta Regional Commission

Keri Stevens

Planning Administrator

kstevens@atlantaregional.org

ceds-report-for-eda-for-submittal.pdf (atlantaregional.org)





ONE great REGION

Atlanta Regional Commission

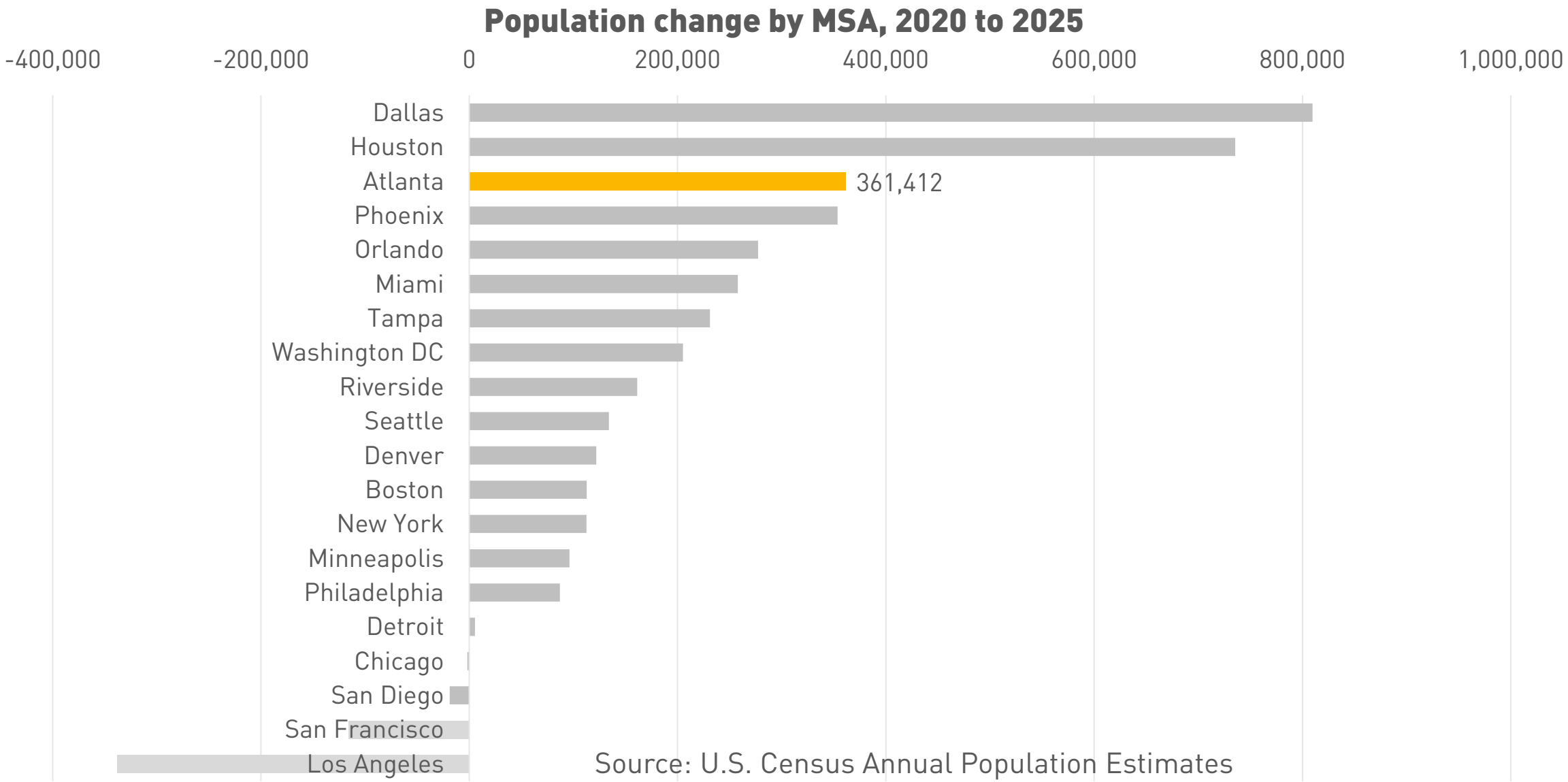
State of the Region:

Metro Atlanta is growing, but who is left behind?

Ann Carpenter, Chief Research & Innovation Officer

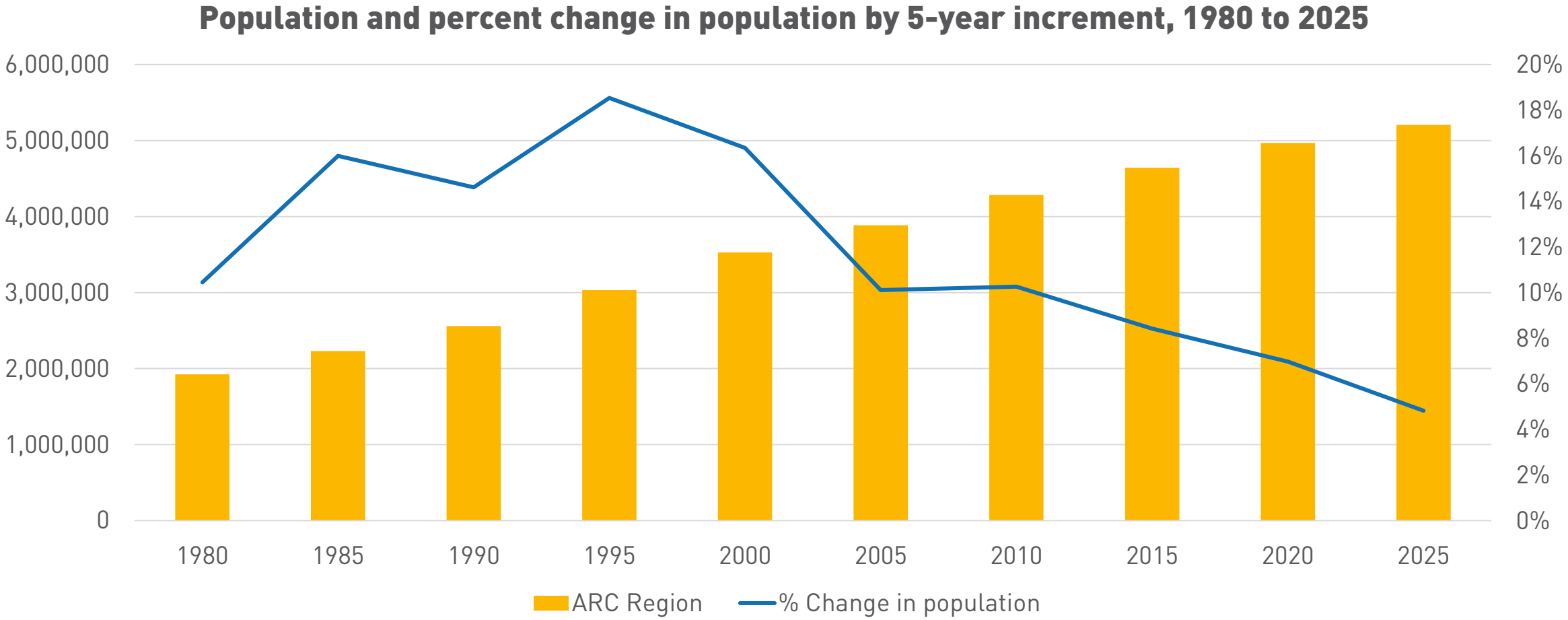
September 14, 2026

The Atlanta Metro continues to add more population than many large metro areas



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

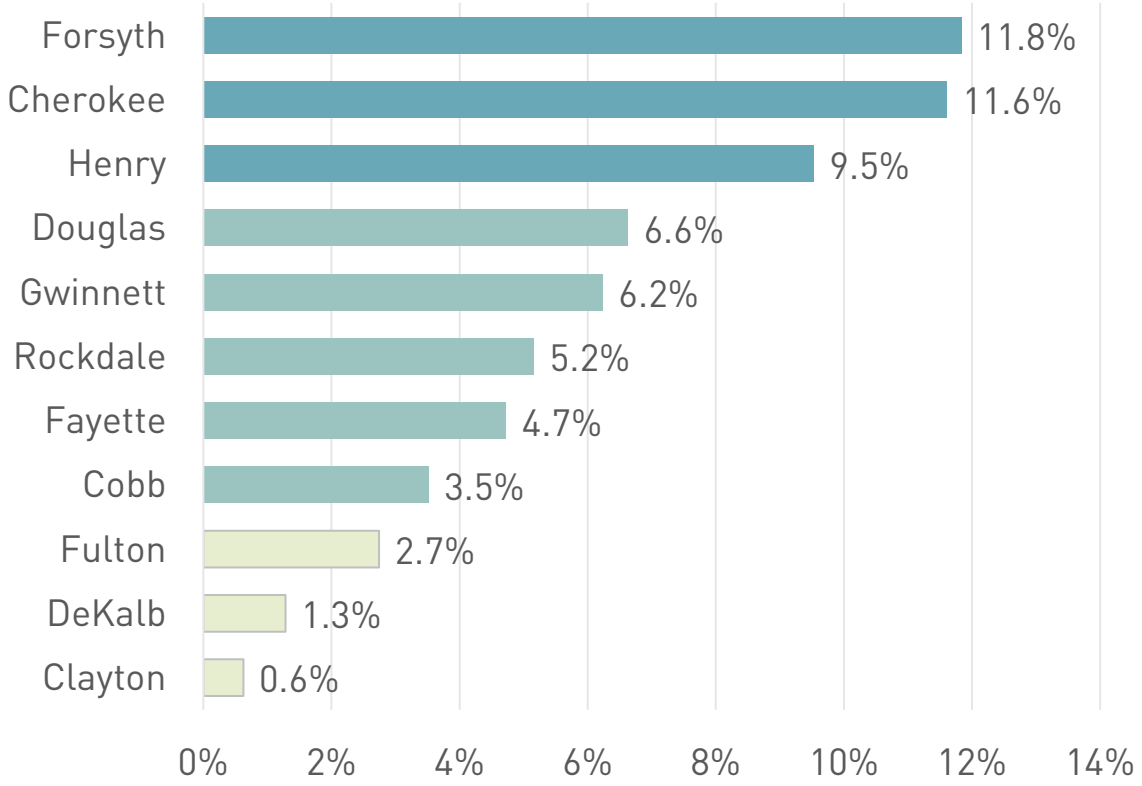
The ARC region experienced a comparatively high rate of growth in the 1980s and 1990s



Source: U.S. Census Decennial and Intercensal Population Estimates

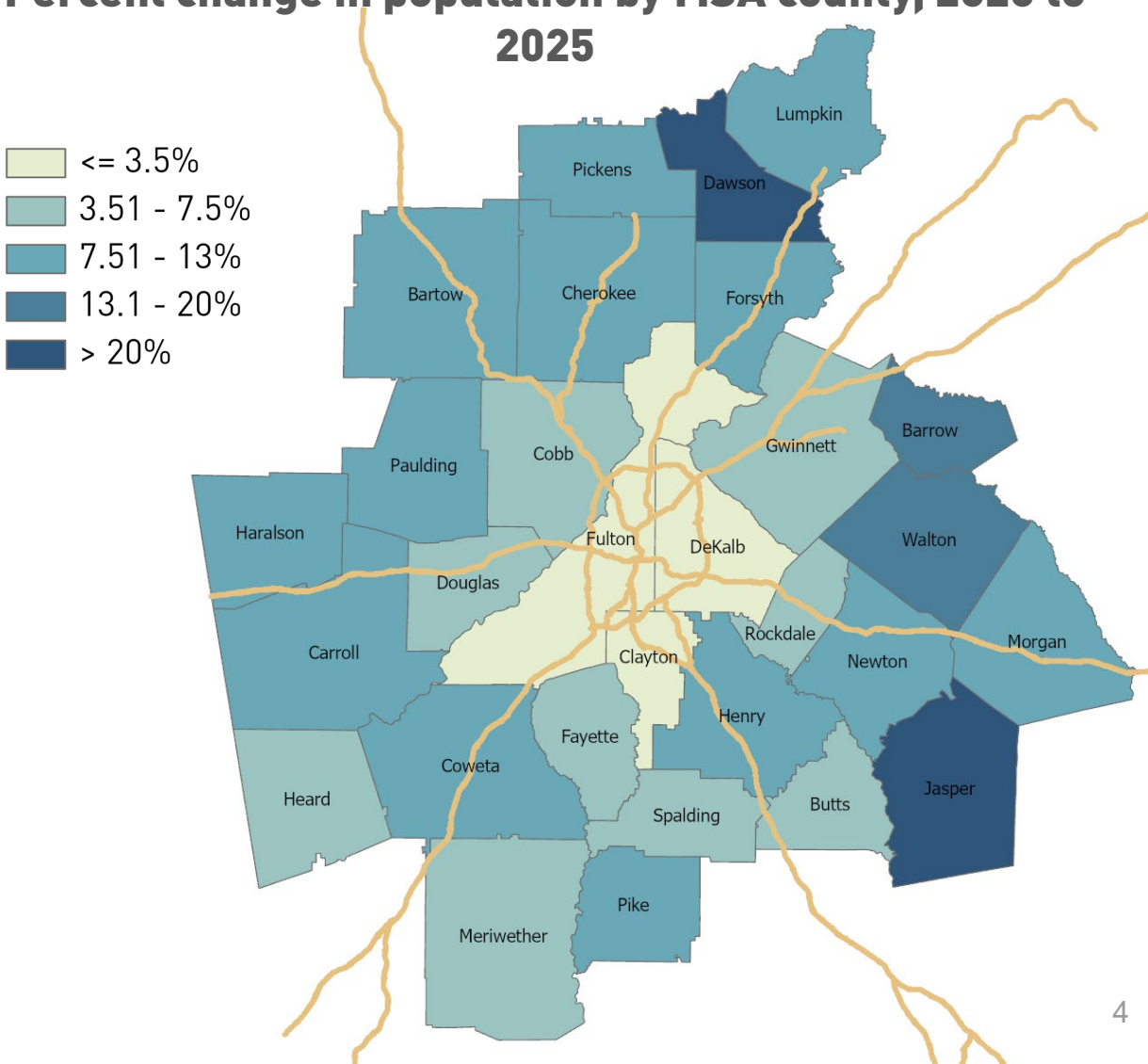
Growth in the Atlanta region's periphery is outpacing the core

Percent change in population by ARC county, 2020 to 2025



Source: U.S. Census Annual Population Estimates

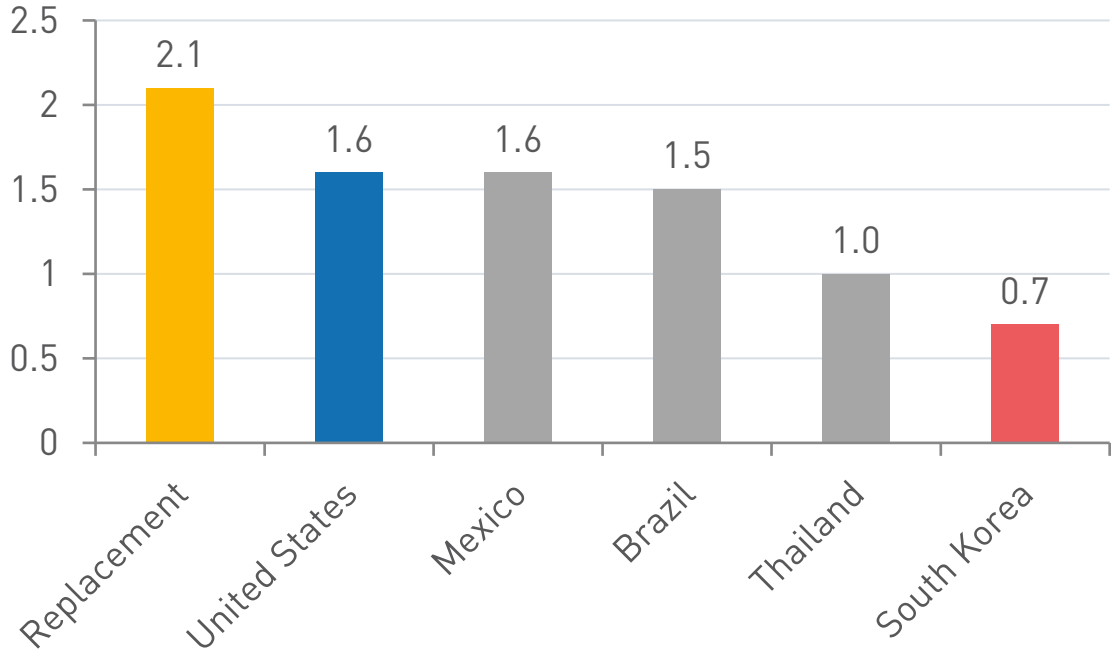
Percent change in population by MSA county, 2020 to 2025



What's next? Demography will drive Atlanta's future

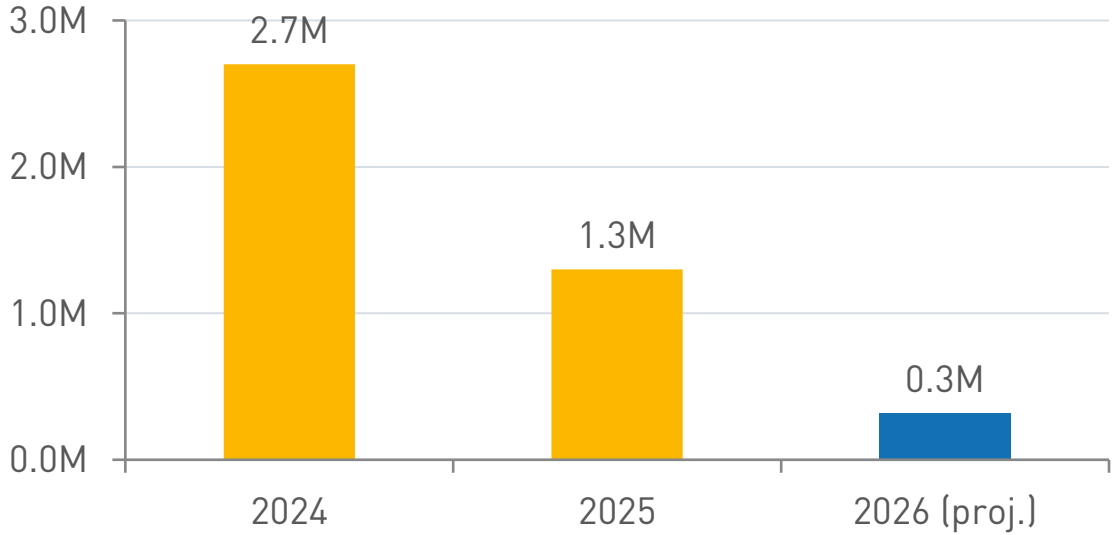
- In 2023 humanity's fertility fell below replacement for the first time; US net migration peaked at 2.7M in 2024 and may turn negative in 2025, a 50-year first.

Total fertility rate, selected countries



Births per woman — 2.1 is replacement

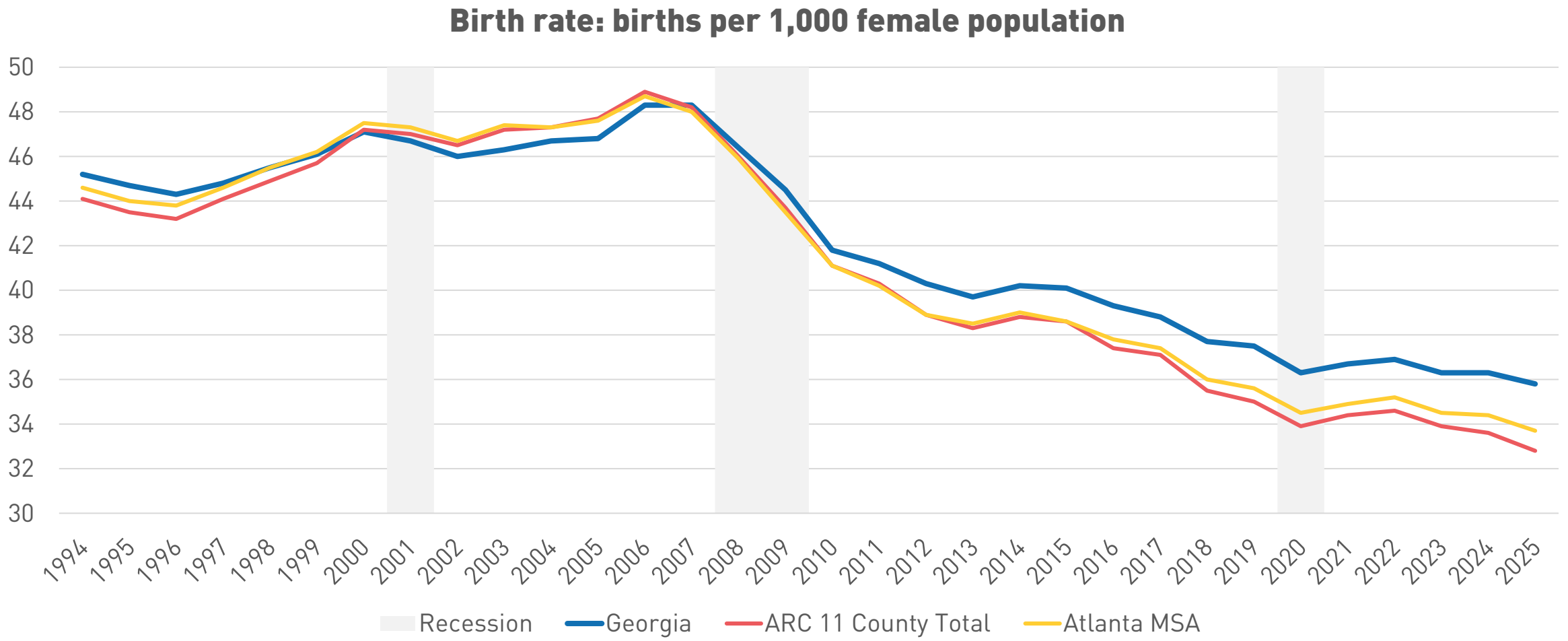
US net international migration



Net international migration to the U.S.

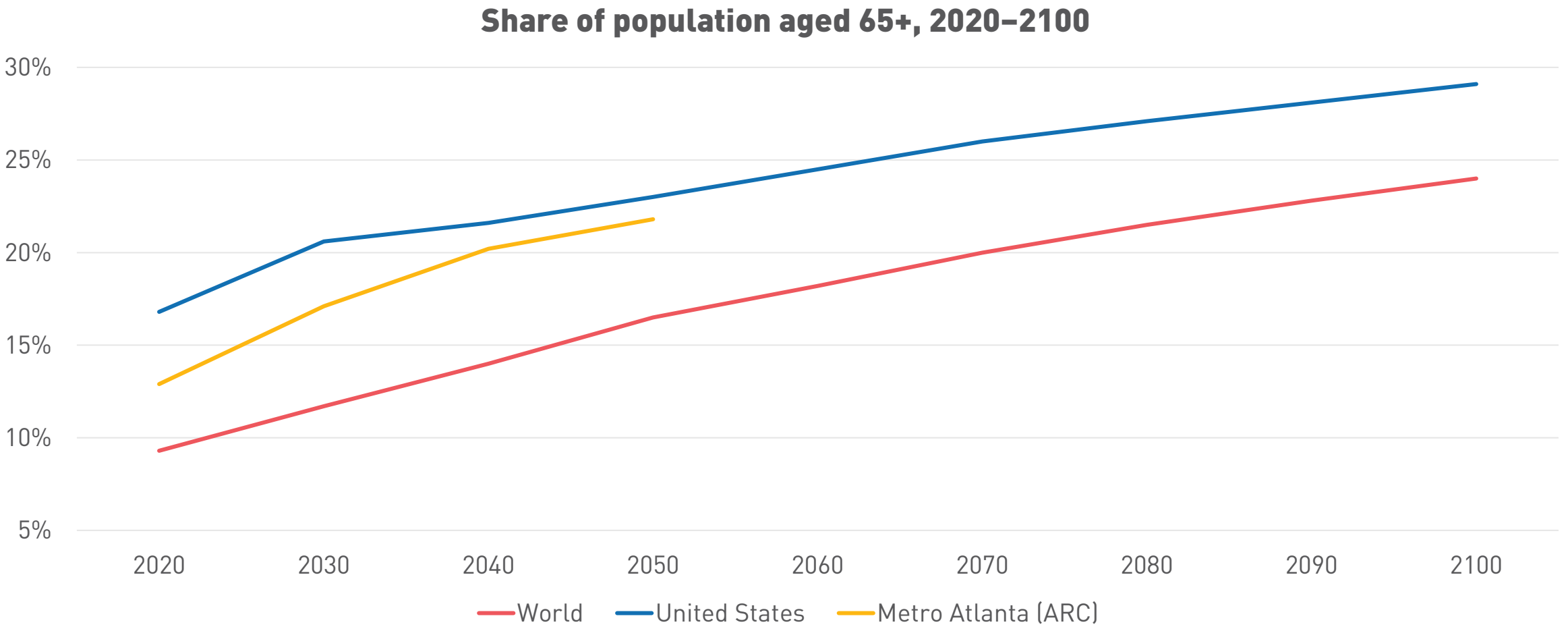
Sources: The Atlantic (2026); UN World Population Prospects 2024; Brookings (2026); McKinsey MGI

Birth rates in Atlanta have fallen since the Great Recession



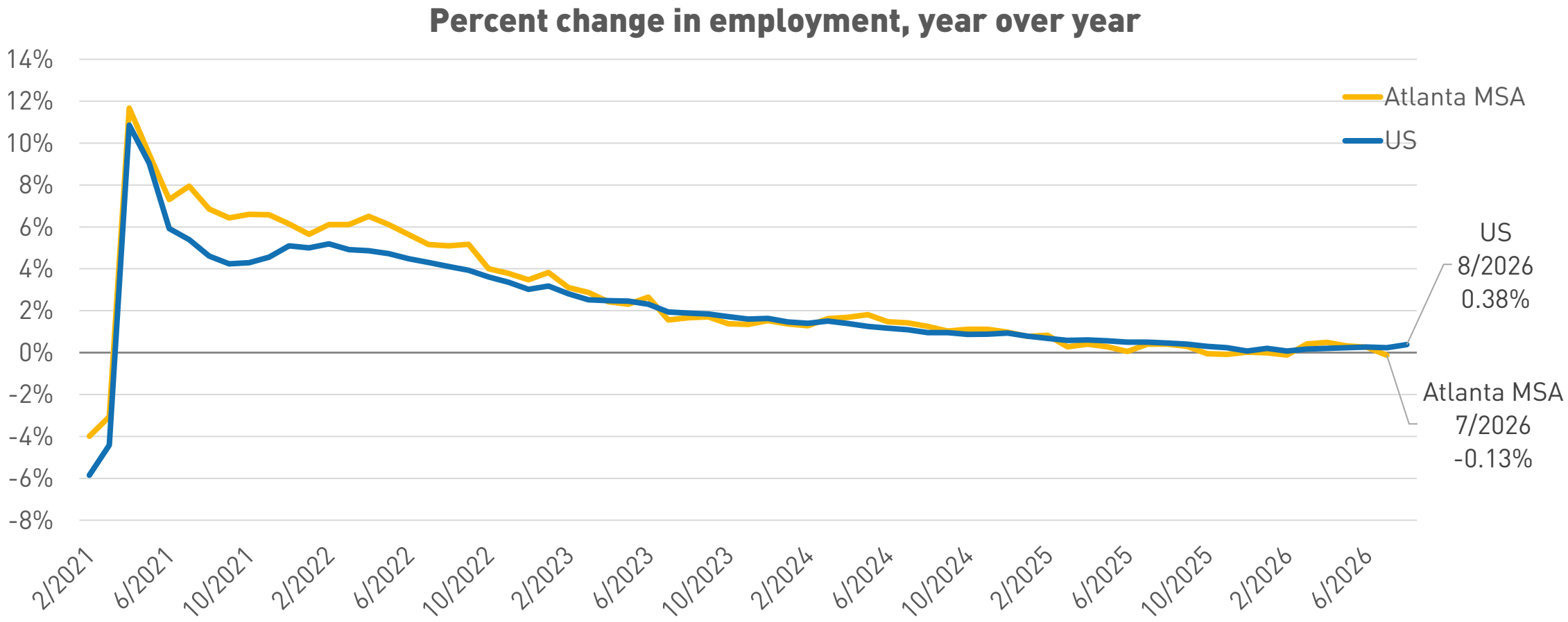
Source: Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS), Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of Health Indicators for Planning

The 65+ share of population more than doubles worldwide by 2100 and Metro Atlanta is aging faster than the nation



Sources: UN World Population Prospects 2024; U.S. Census Bureau 2023 National Projections; ARC Series 17 forecast

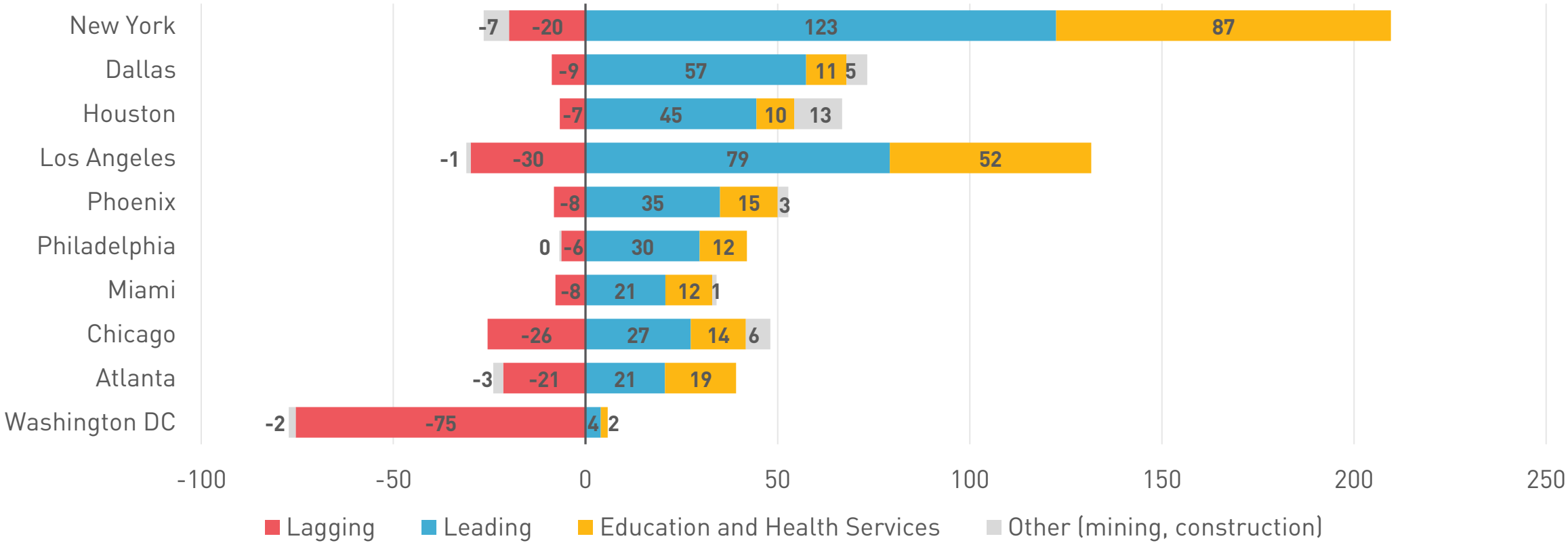
US and Atlanta year over year employment growth has hovered between 0 and 1% since December 2024



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics via FRED, Total Nonfarm, Thousands of Persons, Monthly, Seasonally Adjusted

Year over year Atlanta job growth lagged most other metros in July, driven by professional & business services

Change by leading, lagging sectors and all others, July 2025 to July 2026 (in thousands)



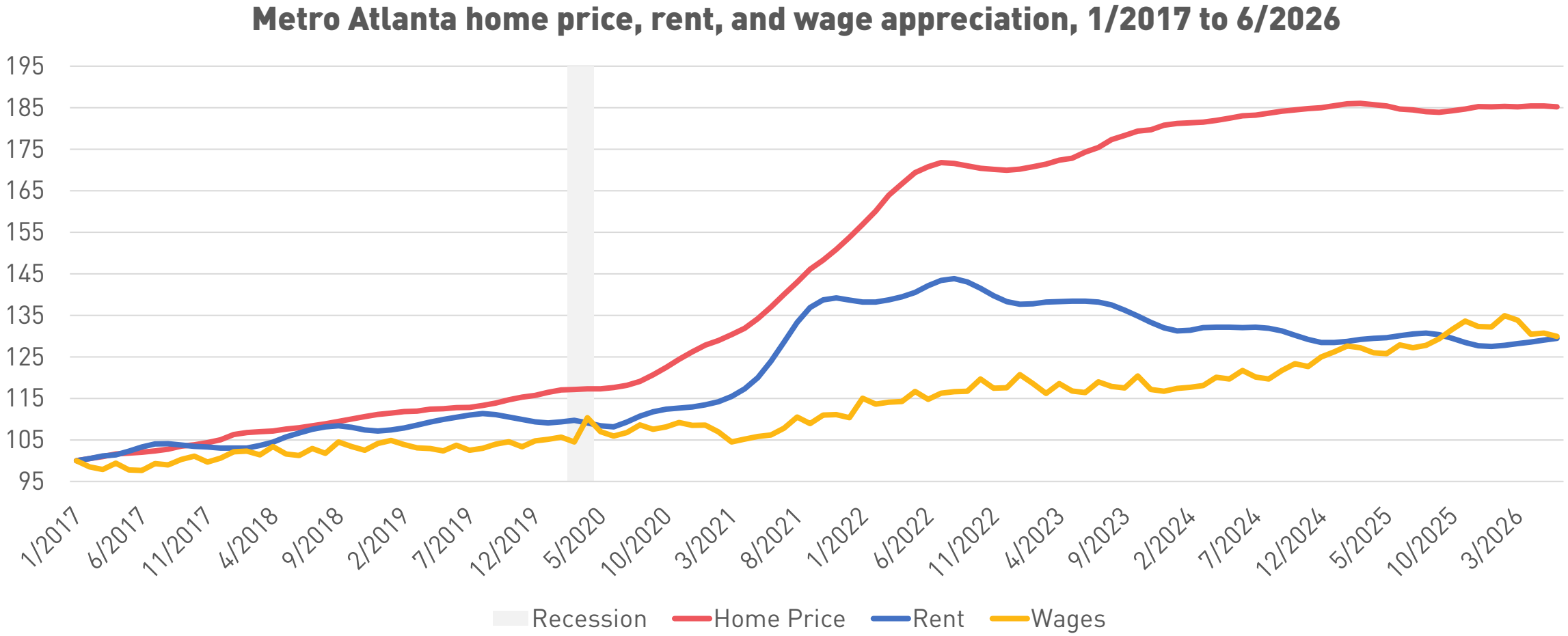
Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, State and Area Employment (SAE), Not Seasonally Adjusted

Registered nurses are the region's #1 posted job; software developers are #2 but losing ground



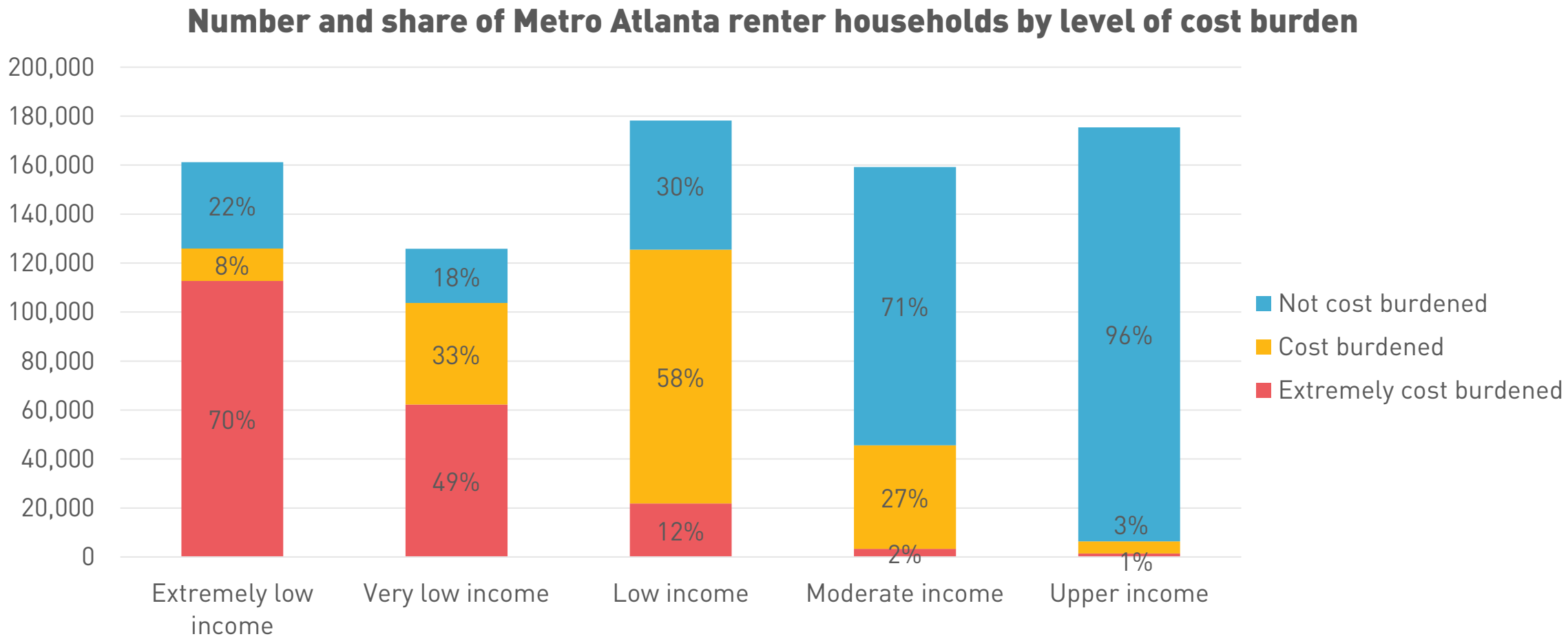
Source: Lightcast Job Posting Analytics for the 11-county Atlanta region

Home price appreciation has outpaced wages while median rents have moderated



Sources: S&P Cotality Case-Shiller Home Price Indices, ApartmentList, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Indexed (1/2017 = 100)

A concerning share of lower-income, working renters are cost burdened

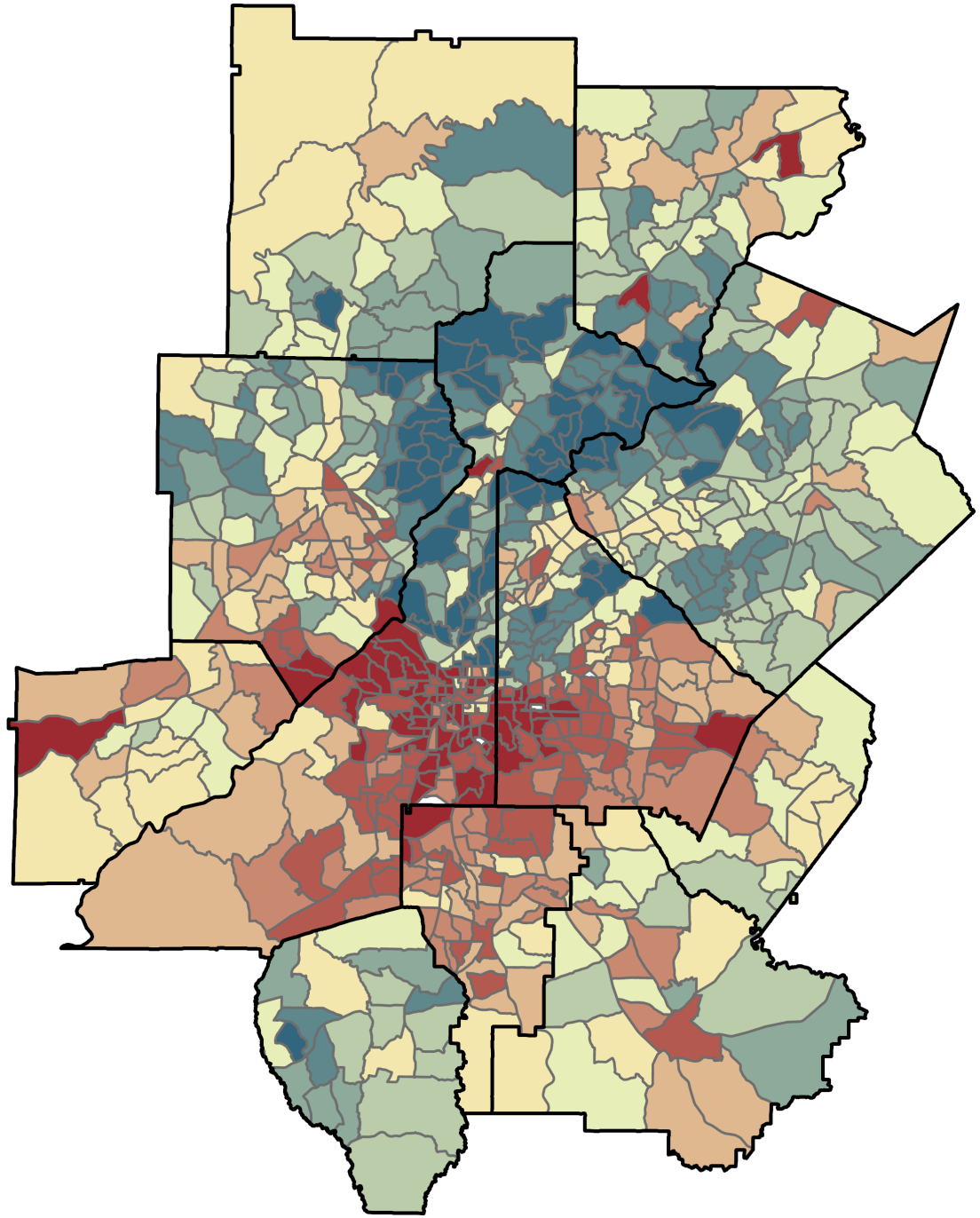


Source: Atlanta Fed analysis of 2024 US Census Bureau American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Economic mobility is uneven across geographies in the ARC region

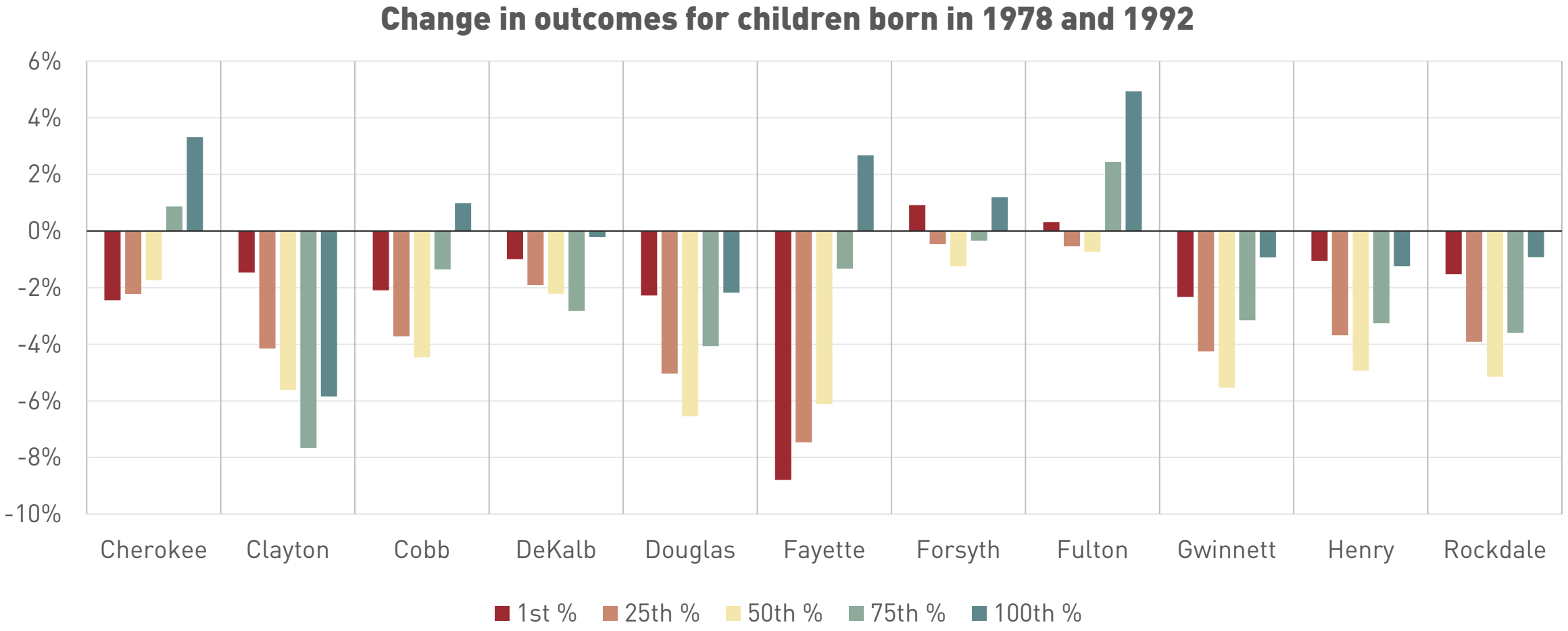
Household income at age 35 for children of low-income parents by census tract

- < $27,209
- $27,210 - $30,954
- $30,955 - $34,074
- $34,075 - $37,733
- $37,734 - $42,395
- $42,396 - $46,901
- $46,902 - $52,897
- $52,898 - $59,851
- $59,852 - $72,673
- > $72,674



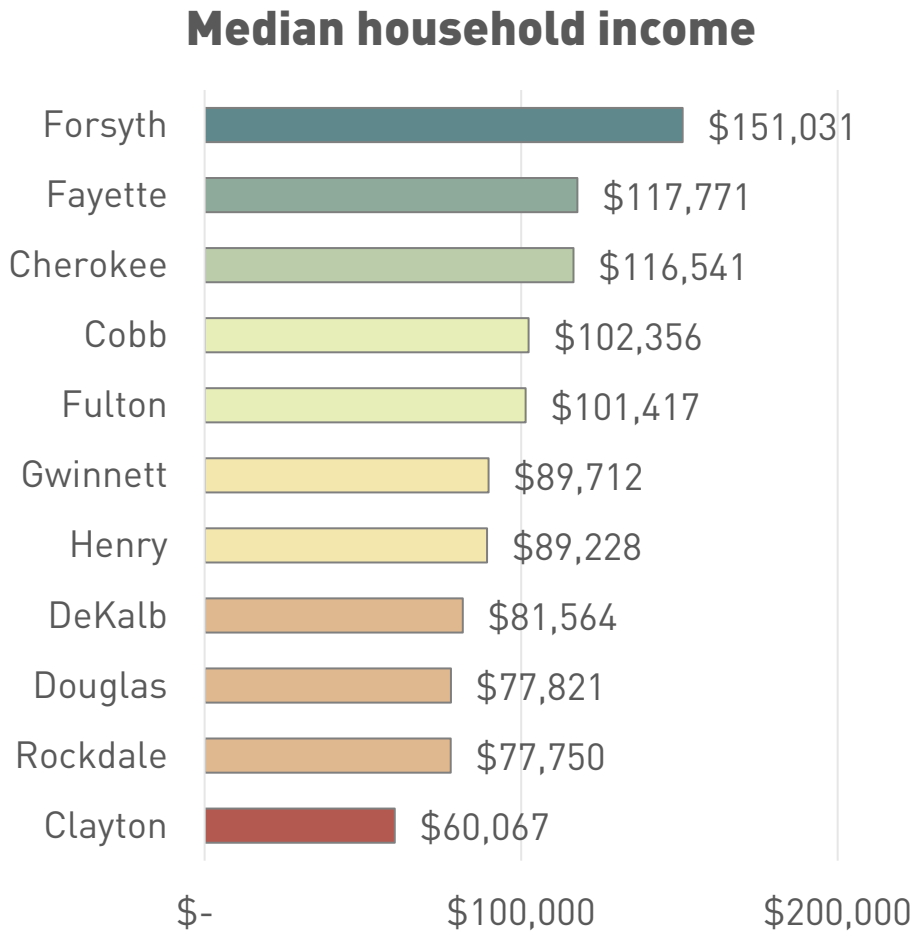
Source: Opportunity Atlas

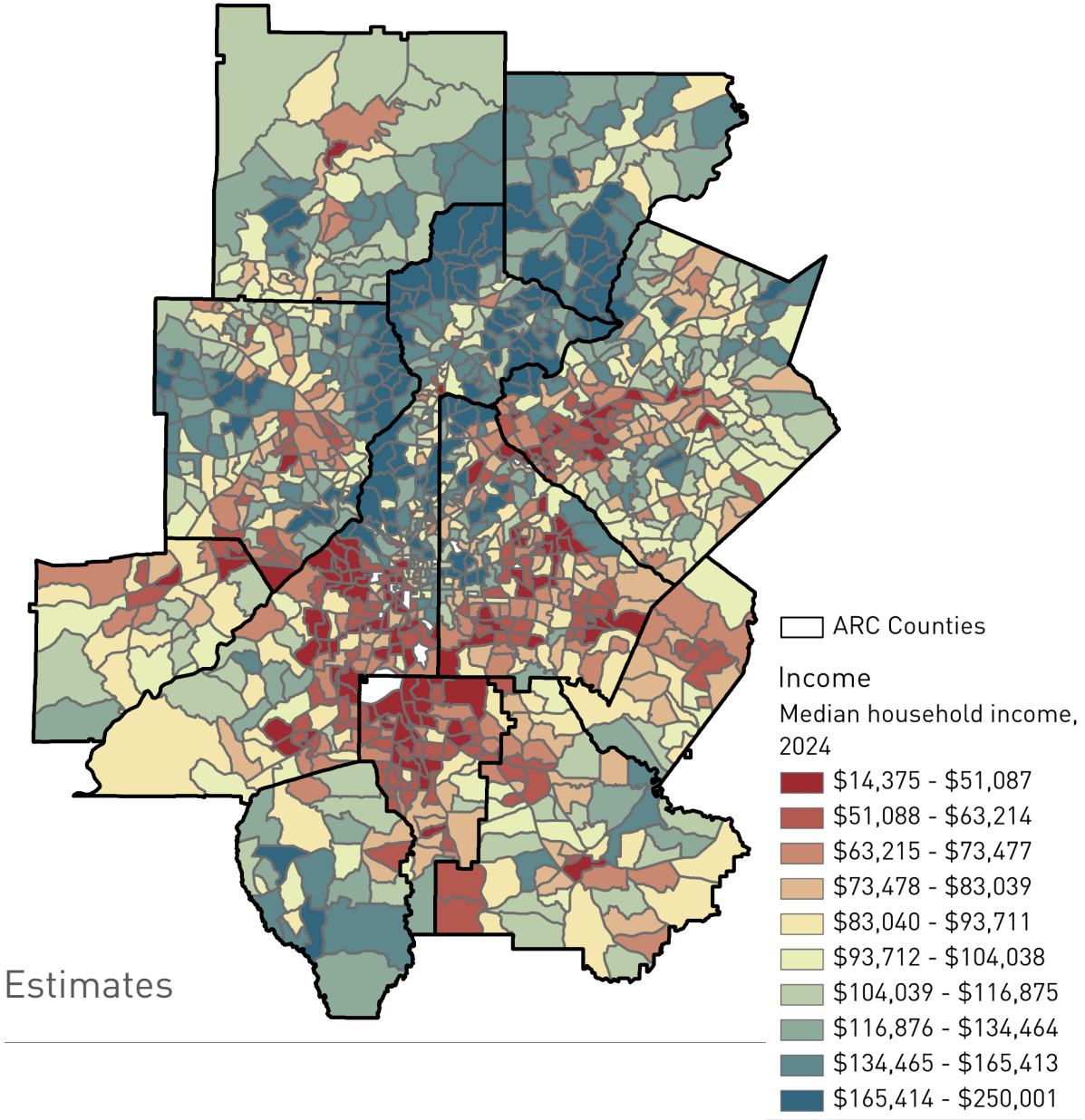
Change in percentile rank from 1978 to 1992 was *negative* for almost all counties and income bands



Source: Opportunity Insights, depicts change in mean % rank (relative to other children born in the same year) in the national distribution of household income measured at child age 27 for study cohorts born in 1992 and 1978

Income inequality and income segregation are associated with lower levels of mobility

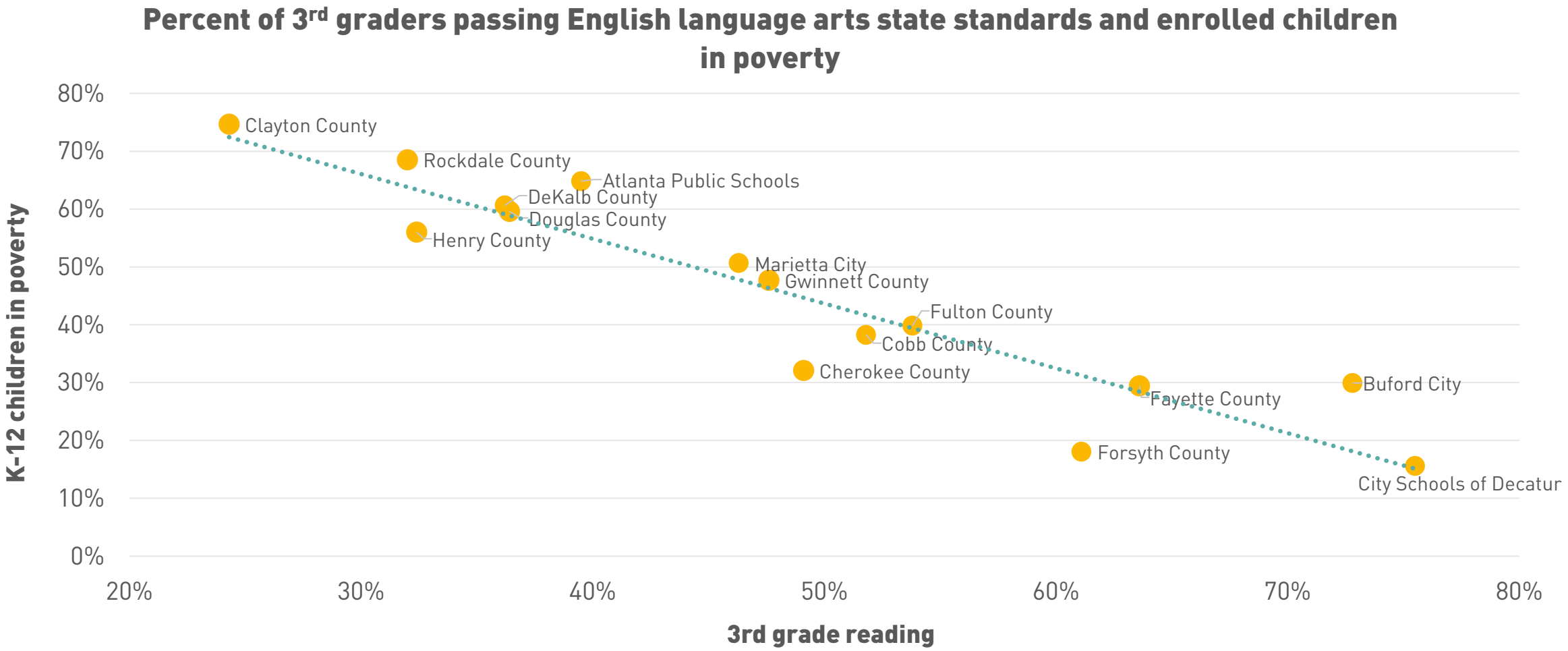




Source: US Census American Community Survey, 2024 1-Year Estimates (chart) and 2024 5-Year Estimates (map)

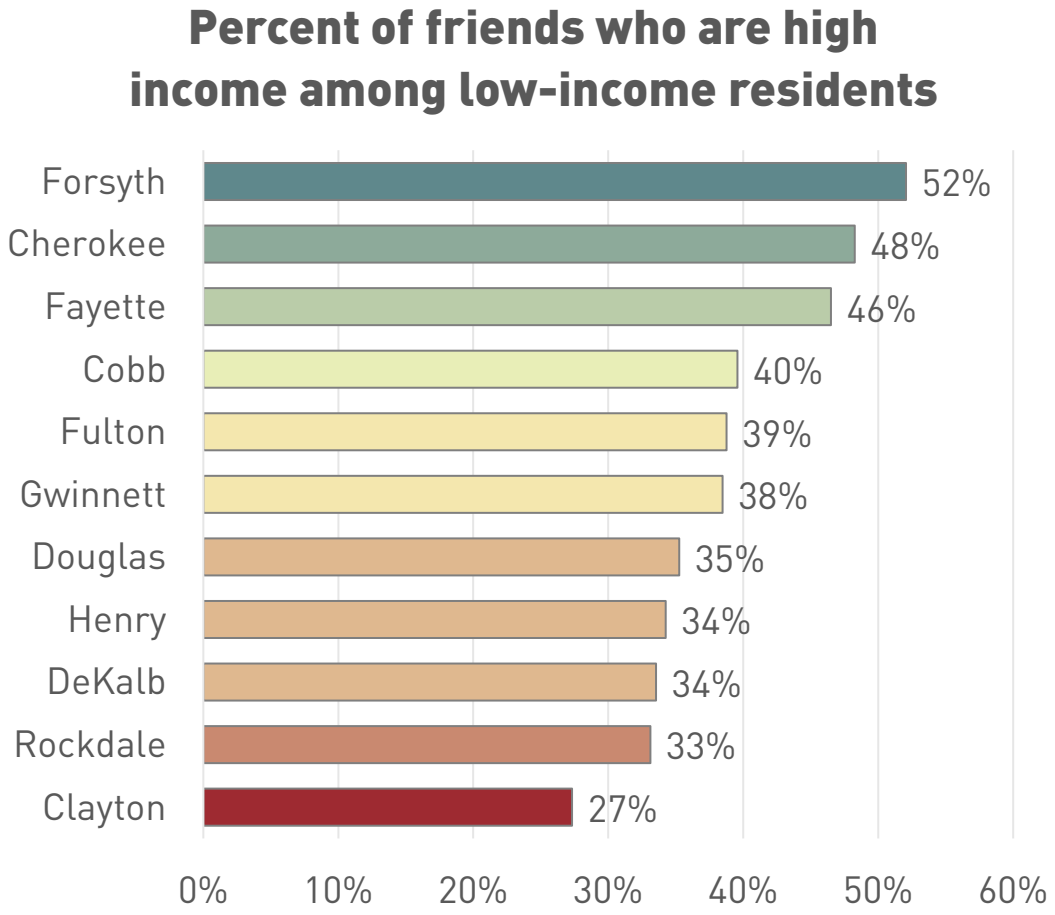
ONE great REGION

School quality: higher expenditure, smaller classes, higher test scores correlated with greater mobility

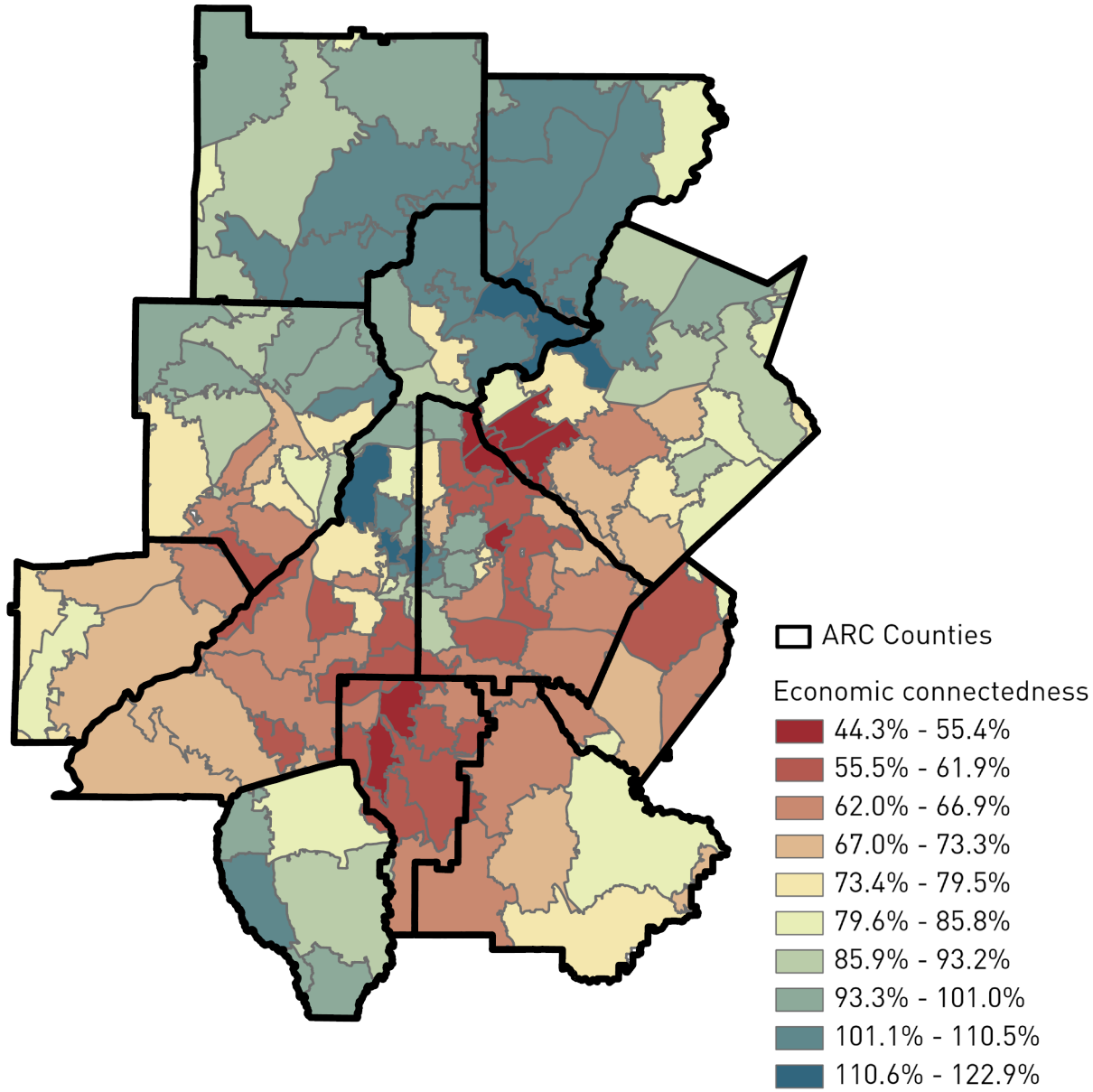


Source: Georgia Governor's Office of School Achievement, 2024

Economic connectedness is the single strongest predictor of upward income mobility



Source: Opportunity Insights Social Capital Atlas



ONE great REGION



ONE great REGION

ARC
Atlanta Regional Commission

Thank you

Ann Carpenter

acarpenter@atlantaregional.org

Atlanta Regional Commission