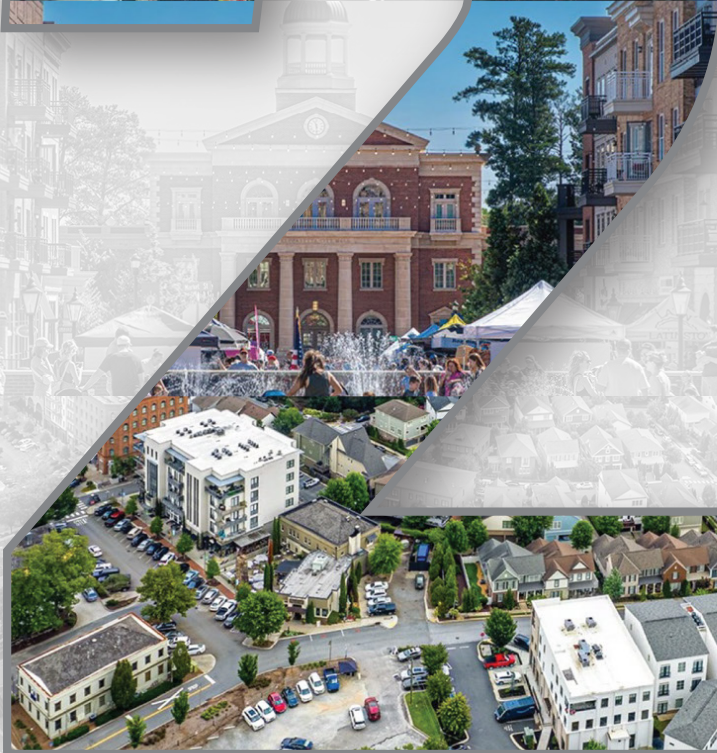


Livable Centers Initiative 25 Year Impact Report Executive Summary



July 2025



25th
ANNIVERSARY
Powered by ARC

ARC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) 25 Year Impact Report has been developed to align with ARC's Strategic Framework and fulfill our vision of creating One Great Region, where all residents have the opportunity to thrive. To get there, our region must work tougher and make smart, strategic investments, driven by the data.

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 colleagues' 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.

CREDITS

The Livable Centers Initiative 25 Year Impact Report was funded by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC).

The contents of this plan reflect the views of the persons preparing the document and those individuals are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and other transportation planning, implementation and/or service delivery agencies. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

Managed by: Lauren Blaszyk, AICP, ARC

Developed by: Gresham Smith, Spatial Plans, and SB Friedman

The ARC would like to thank the following agencies for the use of photographs for the 25 Year Impact Report:

City of Alpharetta, City of Chamblee, City of College Park, City of Decatur, City of Duluth, City of East Point, City of Fairburn, City of Fayetteville, City of Hampton, City of Jonesboro, City of Lawrenceville, City of McDonough, Midtown Alliance, City of Norcross, City of Suwanee, Town Center Community Improvement District, and City of Woodstock.

OVERVIEW

LCI PROGRAM

The Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program was established in 1999 to address the region's poor air quality by encouraging compact mixed-use and multimodal development. The program provides critical funding to local jurisdictions to envision their communities as vibrant, walkable places that offer sustainable mobility options, encourage safe, healthy lifestyles, and provide improved access to jobs and services.

Since its inception in 1999, the LCI program has invested over \$380 million in more than 120 communities across the Atlanta region. Funded by federal transportation dollars, LCI grants help pay for catalytic studies, tactical studies, and transportation projects that help communities implement their LCI visions.

- **Catalytic studies, or master plans, help develop a vision for growth of a downtown, or existing or future transit node.**
- **Tactical studies are actionable “next steps” that a community undertakes to help implement its vision.** These may include trail feasibility studies, revision of development regulations, or concept designs for transportation projects.
- **Transportation project funds allow for the construction of multimodal infrastructure investments** recommended in LCI studies.

PROGRAM HISTORY

In the 1990s, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designated the Atlanta region as a “serious” non-attainment area for ozone, with concentrations that exceeded standards set by the Clean Air Act. In response, in 1999, ARC developed a pioneering program designed to help improve air quality by reducing driving trips and encouraging walking, biking, and transit. Originally dubbed Activity Center and Town Center Investment Policy Studies (ACTIPS), ARC allocated \$5 million for planning and \$350 million in capital funding for the initiative.

In 2000, ARC funded the first round of ACTIPS, which generated momentum for implementation activities. In 2003, ARC funded the first of many rounds of LCI transportation projects, with an emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian projects, as well as transit and safety/operations projects. Recognizing the tremendous potential of the program, in 2004, the ARC Board increased LCI transportation funding to \$500 million through the year 2030. In 2020, the Board renewed its commitment to the LCI program, extending transportation funding to the year 2050, with a total commitment of \$1.1 billion. Additional funding was also granted to update LCI plans going forward.

PROGRAM GOALS

The specific wording of LCI program goals has evolved somewhat over the past 25 years, but the program has stayed true to several overarching themes focused on creating compact, walkable centers with a diversity of uses, reducing driving trips, and fostering community support through broad and inclusive outreach. As stated on ARC's website at the outset of the Impact Report process, LCI program goals include:

1. Encourage a **diversity of housing, employment, commercial, shopping and recreation land uses** at the transit station, local and regional center level accessible by people of all ages, abilities, and income levels,
2. Provide access to a range of travel modes including **transit, roadways, walking and biking** and increase roadway connectivity to provide optimal access to all uses within the study area,
3. Foster public-private partnerships and sustained community support through an outreach process that promotes the **involvement of all stakeholders**, including those historically underserved or underrepresented,
4. Encourage **mixed-income** residential neighborhoods, employment, shopping, and recreation options.



Town Center

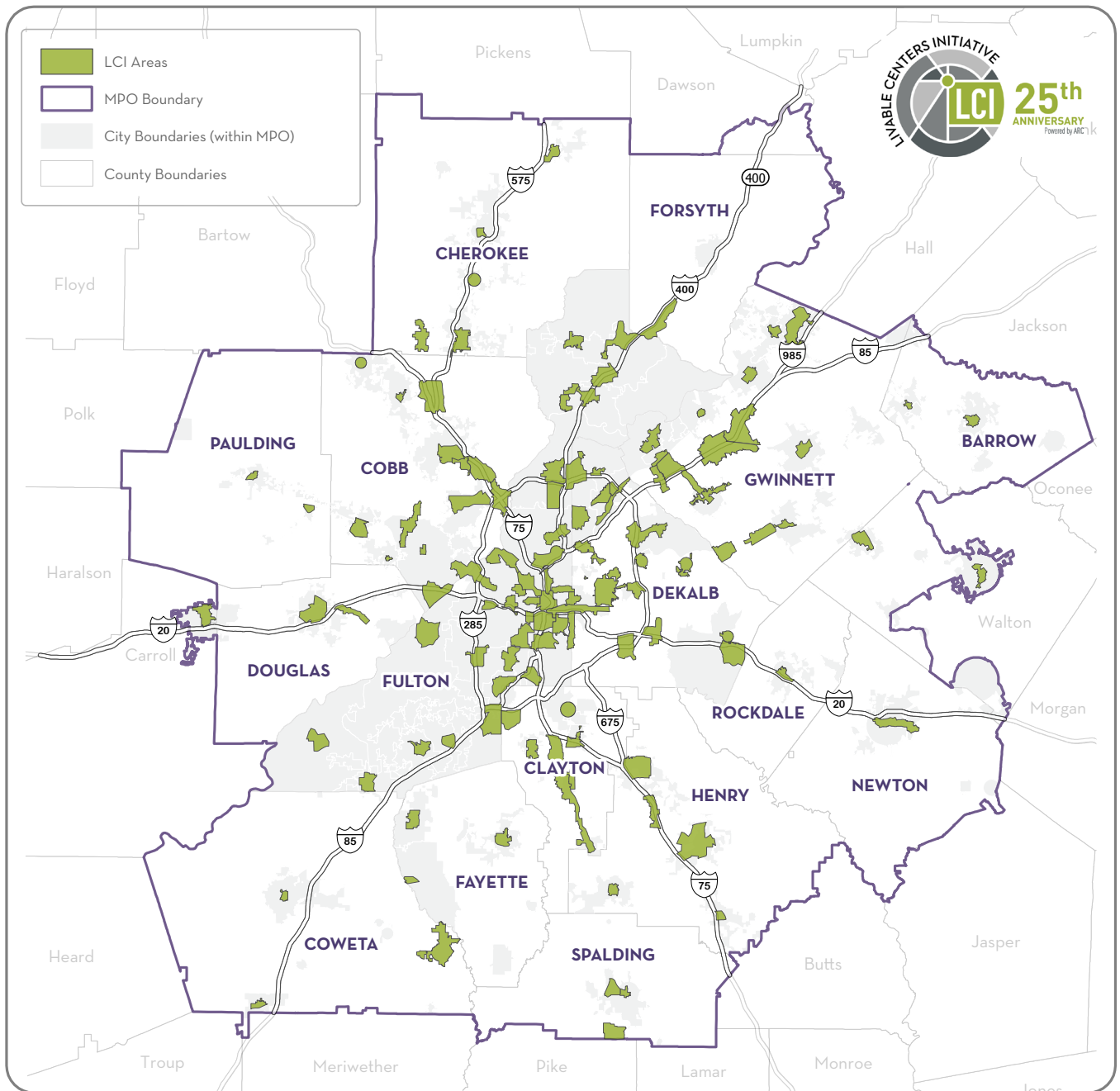


Hapeville

Figure 1. The LCI program's primary goals



Figure 2. LCI areas



PROGRAM STATISTICS

Since the LCI program's inception in 1999, ARC has awarded almost \$24.8 million in federal dollars for studies in 126 communities. This includes roughly \$9.6 million for LCI plans or catalytic studies and more than \$15.2 million for supplemental studies. These plans have produced numerous recommendations to help support safer and more convenient multimodal travel.

Building on these plans, ARC has awarded more than \$389 million in federal dollars to fund more than 145 transportation projects. These include sidewalks, side paths, bike lanes, trails, transit facilities, road diets, and street extensions. Local jurisdictions have matched these federal funds with an additional \$72.7 million, confirming their commitment to their LCI plans. To date, the ARC Board has committed \$1 billion of federal transportation funds to the LCI program through the year 2050.

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

\$75.4 M

53 PROJECTS



BIKE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

\$114.0 M

32 PROJECTS



SIDEPATHS & TRAILS

\$67.6 M

22 PROJECTS



ROAD DIET & COMPLETE STREET

\$57.8 M

13 PROJECTS



TRANSIT FACILITIES

\$45.8 M

12 PROJECTS



OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

\$15.6 M

9 PROJECTS



NEW STREETS OR EXTENSIONS

\$12.7 M

4 PROJECTS



Town Center

IMPACT REPORT

PURPOSE

This Impact Report is a retrospective of 25 years of the LCI program. It is a “look back” at the accomplishments of the program - the resurgence of town centers, new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, redevelopment, and reimagined place – as well as a “look forward” at opportunities for improvement and ways to support local jurisdictions in implementing their LCI visions.

STUDY PROCESS

The project team developed the Impact Report with data and input from two perspectives: data analysis and stakeholder feedback. The team examined a variety of metrics representing diverse topics, including transportation, land use, housing, and development. The team supplemented findings from the technical analysis with input from dozens of stakeholders who shared their diverse perspectives, insights, and experiences with the LCI program over the past 25 years.

Over a period of roughly 18 months, the project team gathered, analyzed and mapped data, conducted 17 focus groups and interviews, and produced a video highlighting the LCI program at the 2024 State of the Region event. Together, the findings from the technical analysis and stakeholder feedback helped paint a picture of the impact of 25 years of the LCI program and has helped inform recommendations to improve the program.

Data Analysis

This analysis examined data related to demographics (population, age, race/ethnicity, household income), employment, housing, development patterns, land use policy, travel modes, and transportation safety across the Atlanta region. The analysis compared LCI areas to the 21-county region as a whole and examined trends over time since the program’s inception, where possible.



McDonough

Stakeholder Consultation

The project team conducted a series of focus groups and individual interviews with key stakeholders, staff, and representatives from across the Atlanta region, and distributed an online survey to a broad group of individuals who have been involved with the LCI program over its 25-year history.

Participants included city and county governments, consulting firms, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), community-based organizations, artists, transit agencies, as well as current and former ARC staff and board members. Representatives from the consultant community included planners, urban designers, and economic development and market analysis professionals, among others.



Lawrenceville



Chamblee

EVALUATING IMPACT

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

One way to measure success is to evaluate how much progress has been made toward stated program goals. The LCI program goals do not include specific targets or quantitative measures; however, a qualitative assessment reveals that the LCI program has been highly successful in its primary goals.

The LCI program has enhanced access to a range of travel modes, increased connectivity, and improved access to a variety of activities and uses.

Since 1999, the LCI program has funded 13 road diet and Complete Street projects, 12 transit facilities, and over 100 new bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Collectively, these projects have resulted in more options for non-driving trips, created new sidewalks, trails, and paths, and improved access to public transportation.

Likewise, the LCI program has encouraged the co-location of housing, employment, recreational, and cultural amenities.

Many LCI areas boast a mix of residential, commercial, office, and other uses, often accompanied by a mix of cultural and recreational amenities like parks or green spaces or trails. Since the early 2000s, LCIs have added 133,000 new jobs, representing 37% of all jobs in the region. Similarly, new households in LCIs account for 17% of all household growth in the region, and housing units in LCIs have grown at a slightly faster rate compared to the region. This points to strong housing demand in the LCIs, smaller households living in higher-density housing, and a positive jobs-housing balance. The net result is that more people have the ability to live and work in the same area, reducing trip lengths and helping to support shops, restaurants, and other local businesses.



Fairburn

The LCI program has also helped foster partnerships and sustained community support through an inclusive outreach process that promotes the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

Across the region, 126 communities participate in the LCI program. While there are not readily available statistics on the number of people who have been engaged, it is safe to say that between grant recipients, stakeholders, and the general public, thousands of people have participated in the program, reaching all parts of the Atlanta region. The program has also been successful in encouraging outreach processes that promote the involvement of all stakeholders, encouraging new mechanisms and techniques to reach underserved communities. In the most recent LCI plans, ARC has encouraged grant recipients to conduct outreach at well-attended local festivals or at parks or other community gathering spaces, rather than holding traditional public meetings. There have also been concerted efforts to identify and engage with non-profits that represent underserved populations.

Metrics on housing, household income, and jobs indicate that LCIs foster mixed-income neighborhoods with a variety of job opportunities.

LCI households have lower annual median incomes compared to households in the region. While this may seemingly point to lower economic prosperity, this trend may actually indicate that LCIs have housing options that are affordable to lower-income households. This is bolstered by the fact that since 2000, LCIs have added 19,000 new affordable housing units, representing 35% of new affordable housing regionwide. In addition, LCIs have seen substantial growth in office-based and higher-wage job sectors, but also provide jobs in a diverse range of lower-wage sectors.

GREATEST AREAS OF IMPACT

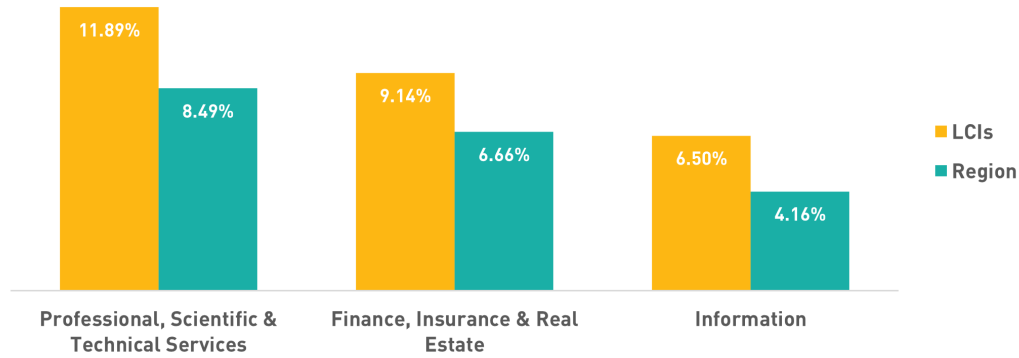
Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Communities

- Growth in housing units and employment in LCIs indicate that they are becoming more mixed use. From 2000 to 2024, new households in LCI areas accounted for 17% of all household growth in the region.
- Since 2000, LCI areas have seen strong growth in retail (30% of the region's retail space growth), multifamily rental units (nearly half of the region's units), office space (nearly half of the region's new office space), and hotel keys (nearly half of the region's hotel keys)
- LCIs have added about 19,000 new units of legally-restricted affordable housing since 2000. Many of these (roughly 25%) are designated units for senior citizens or older adults. However, affordable housing is not evenly distributed among LCI areas, and many households in LCIs are cost-burdened.

Strong Job Centers

- LCIs are strong job centers, accounting for 23% of all new job growth in the region since 2002.
- LCI areas offer a large share of high-wage jobs compared to the region as a whole – more than half the growth in Professional Services and FIRE jobs has been in LCI areas. As of 2021, LCI areas have a higher ratio of jobs per resident (2.2) compared to the region as a whole (1.2).
- LCI areas have an outsized share of office-based jobs and have shown substantial growth in these types of jobs compared to the region, but on balance workers have access to a range of jobs in diverse sectors, including healthcare, social assistance, retail trade, public administration, accommodation and food service.

Figure 3. Share of total jobs in LCIs vs. region (2021)



Source: LEHD, SB Friedman.

Increased Transportation Options

- An analysis of travel modes in LCIs indicates that there are slightly higher shares of trips made by foot, bike, and transit compared to the region.
- Intersection density in LCIs has increased over time, indicating that concerted efforts are being made to expand the street grid and create more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environments.
- Since 2000, over 200 miles of new bicycle facilities in the region have been constructed in LCIs, and in total, there are over 500 miles of bicycle networks that intersect with LCIs, providing connectivity to areas elsewhere in the Atlanta region.
- As of 2020, nearly 75% of jobs in LCIs, or approximately 448,000 jobs, are located within one mile of transit service operating with frequent headways, seven days a week.

Real Estate Investment

- Since 2000, 30% of the region's growth in retail space has occurred in LCIs.
- Nearly half of all new multifamily rental units in the region have been constructed in LCIs.
- LCIs have also accounted for about half of all growth in new office space and hotel keys across the region.

Stakeholder Support

- The LCI program is highly valued. Stakeholders have expressed that the program has overwhelmingly benefited communities throughout the Atlanta region.
- Stakeholders gave the LCI program high marks for improving pedestrian safety, enhancing multimodal access, and supporting mixed-use development in their communities.



Alpharetta

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Housing Affordability and Availability

- Even though a significant number of new affordable housing units have been constructed in LCI areas, they are not evenly distributed. Some LCIs with high job density have added no new affordable housing units. Furthermore, the cost of rental housing in some LCIs is quite high, resulting in a rental cost burden that is higher than the region as a whole.
- More than half of all households renting in LCI areas are cost-burdened, echoing regional trends, where household incomes are relatively low compared to average rents. Households in DeKalb and Gwinnett County LCIs experience high cost-burden, reaching as high as 69% in Candler-Flat Shoals and 74% in Downtown Lawrenceville.
- There is a limited supply of for-sale housing in LCIs, and the for-sale vacancy rate is higher than that of the region.

Transportation Safety

- While the program has been successful in spurring the creation of new sidewalks and bike facilities, LCIs experience high frequencies of bicycle/pedestrian crashes, many of which have resulted in serious injuries or fatalities. This echoes regional trends.

Implementation

- LCIs have advanced implementation of their visions at varying levels. Some LCI communities have seen a total transformation, while others have made incremental or minimal progress. This may be due to a number of reasons, including staff turnover, changing priorities for elected officials, and local market forces.



Midtown Atlanta

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Goals, Priority Issues, and Areas of Focus

ARC has revised and streamlined the LCI goals to more clearly articulate the main principles and desired outcomes for the program and demonstrate how the program advances ARC's goals.



1. **Healthy, Safe, Livable Communities:**

Create multimodal developments that prioritize connectivity, public health and safety for people of all ages and abilities.



2. **A Competitive Economy:** Maximize the economic potential of downtowns and transit nodes with a diverse mix of housing, jobs, and community services.



3. **Diverse Stakeholder Engagement:**

Empower and engage all stakeholders through comprehensive and impactful community outreach.

ARC will remove priority issues going forward, so that grant recipients can more readily focus on the core goals of the LCI program.

In order to renew the focus on creating compact, walkable communities, ARC will continue to include focus on (a) town centers that align with the Unified Growth Policy Map “centers” designation and (b) areas around transit stations that coincide with planned premium transit stations from the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Recipient Assistance

ARC will enhance the LCI program website to serve as a repository of all information needed for LCI planning and implementation. The agency will also consider conducting a periodic “LCI Academy” to share information on the LCI program and highlight success stories from grant recipients.



Fayetteville

On the planning side, ARC is exploring the possibility of managing select LCI planning projects for grant recipients with limited staff resources. To help with implementation, ARC will consider hosting developer forums to connect LCI communities with developers and help “kickstart” potential development or redevelopment activity. ARC will also explore the possibility of funding tactical activities as part of the LCI plan.

Funding

ARC will explore the creation of a fund to implement non-transportation LCI projects as well as smaller-scale transportation projects. This may be done through a set-aside, overmatching program, or funding swap.

Inter- and Intra-agency Coordination

The transportation coordination meeting will occur earlier in the planning process to allow relevant agencies to inform recommendations before they are finalized. Grant recipients and consultants should ensure they are engaging all agencies who own or operate transportation facilities and services in the area.

A successful LCI hinges on the close coordination between land use policy and transportation investments. To this end, each grant recipient should work with their community development departments to ensure that the zoning code and subdivision regulations support best practices in land use and development.

Grant recipients will be encouraged to involve other departments and agencies within their jurisdictions whose input is needed to move the LCI vision forward.

Monitoring

ARC will continue to compile data on metrics it currently collects and collect additional data with the goal of creating an evaluation framework for future application cycles.

ARC will identify LCIs that have not had recent activity and contact the jurisdictions to see if they need assistance with additional planning or implementation, or if the LCI is no longer a priority.



College Park

