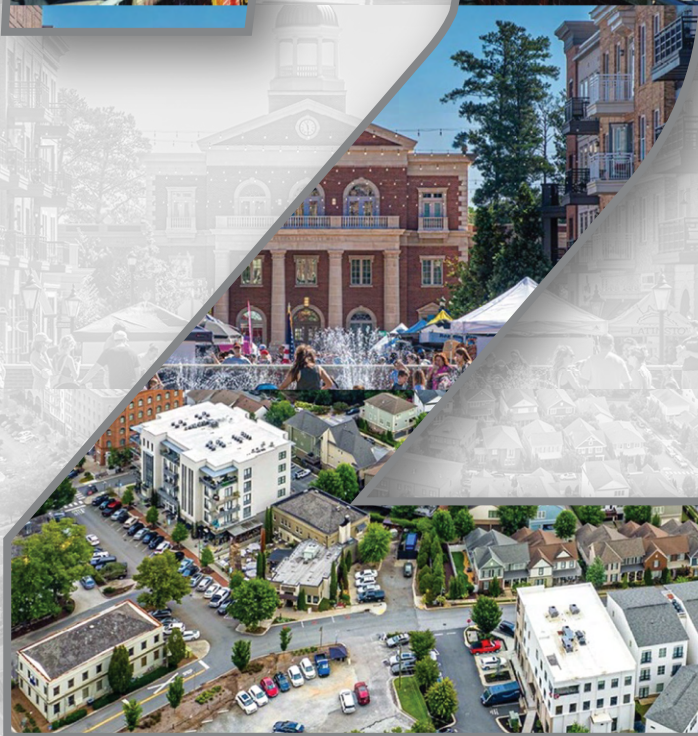


# Livable Centers Initiative 25 Year Impact Report



July 2025



**25<sup>th</sup>**  
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.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



# 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*



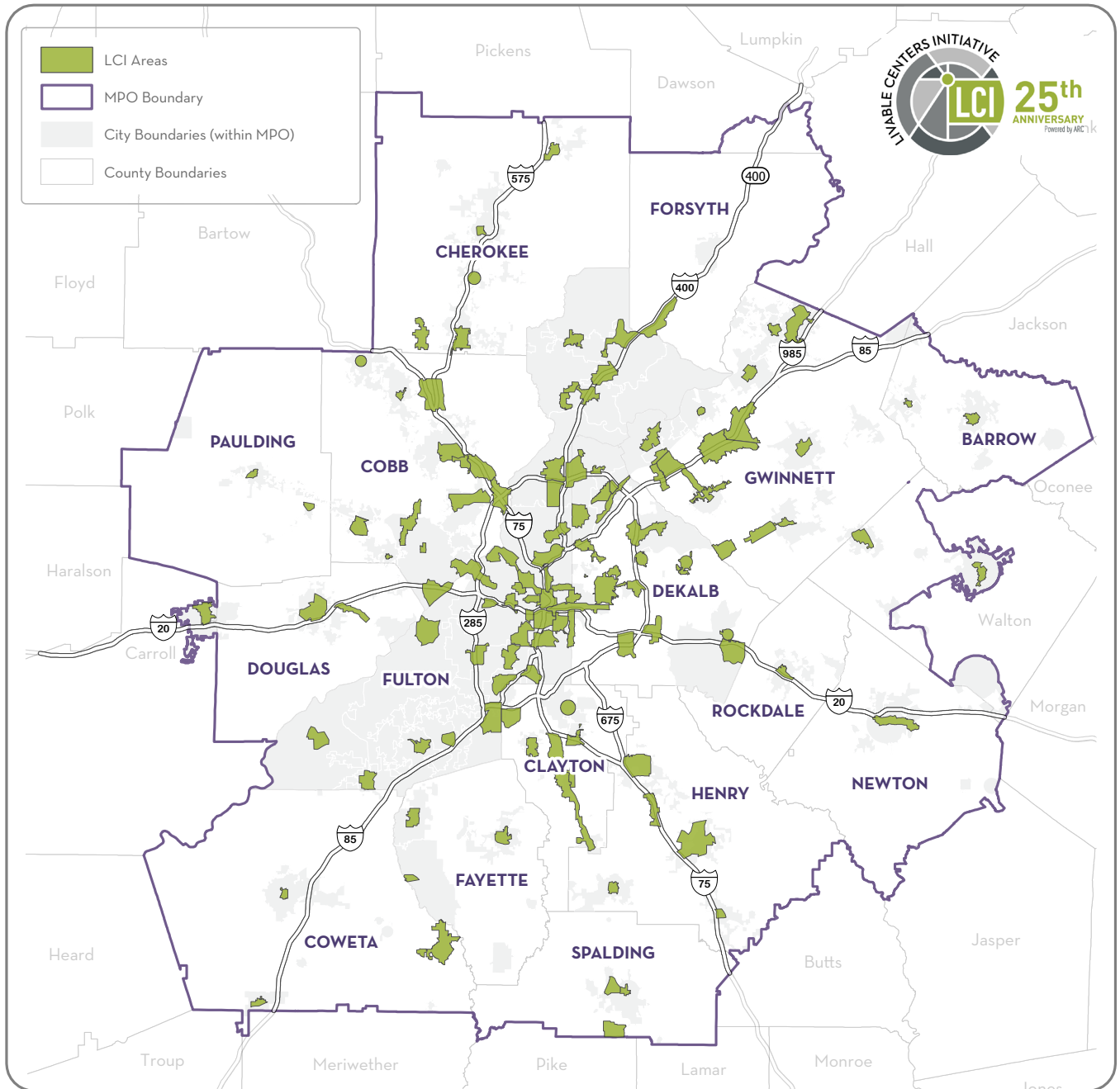
*Hapeville*

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**

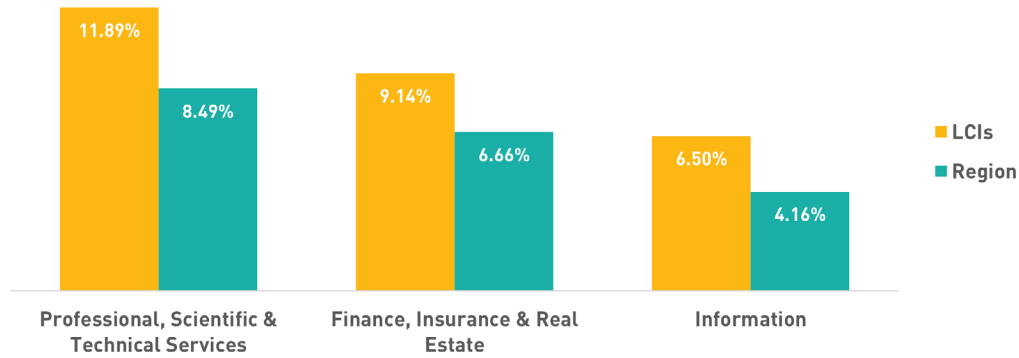
### **Mixed-Use, Mixed-Income Communities**

- 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



# IMPACT REPORT

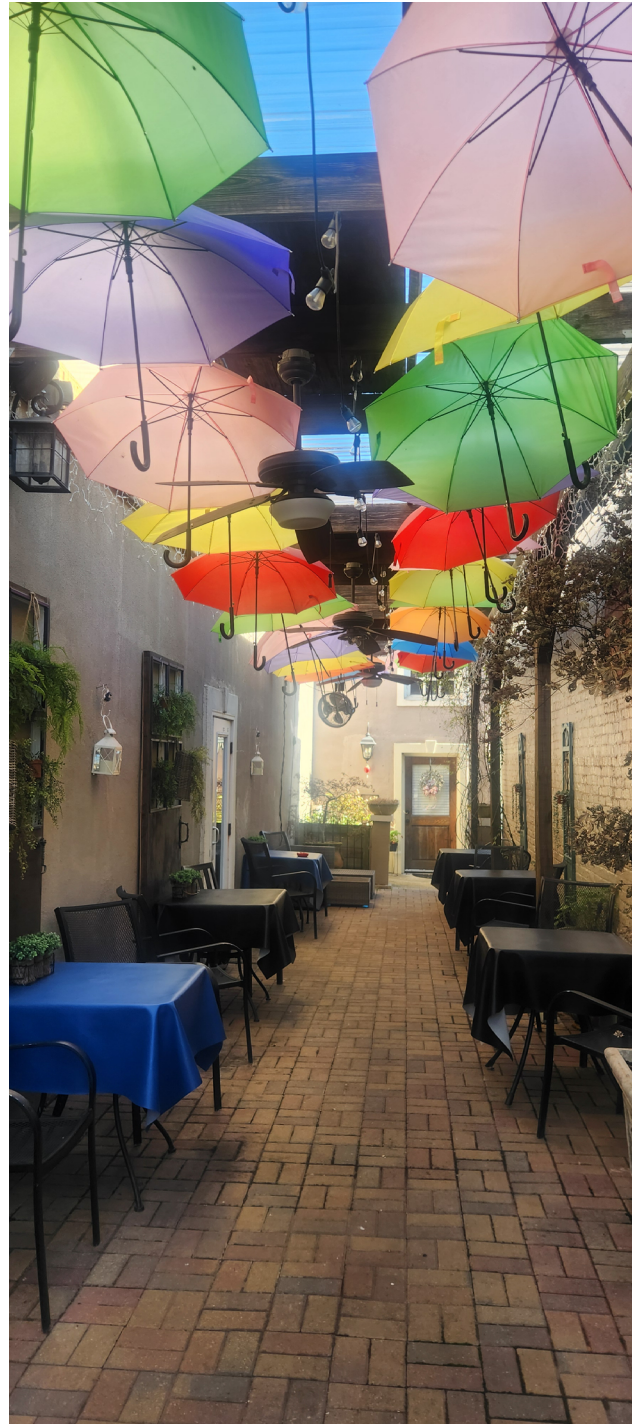
# INTRODUCTION

## PROGRAM PURPOSE

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

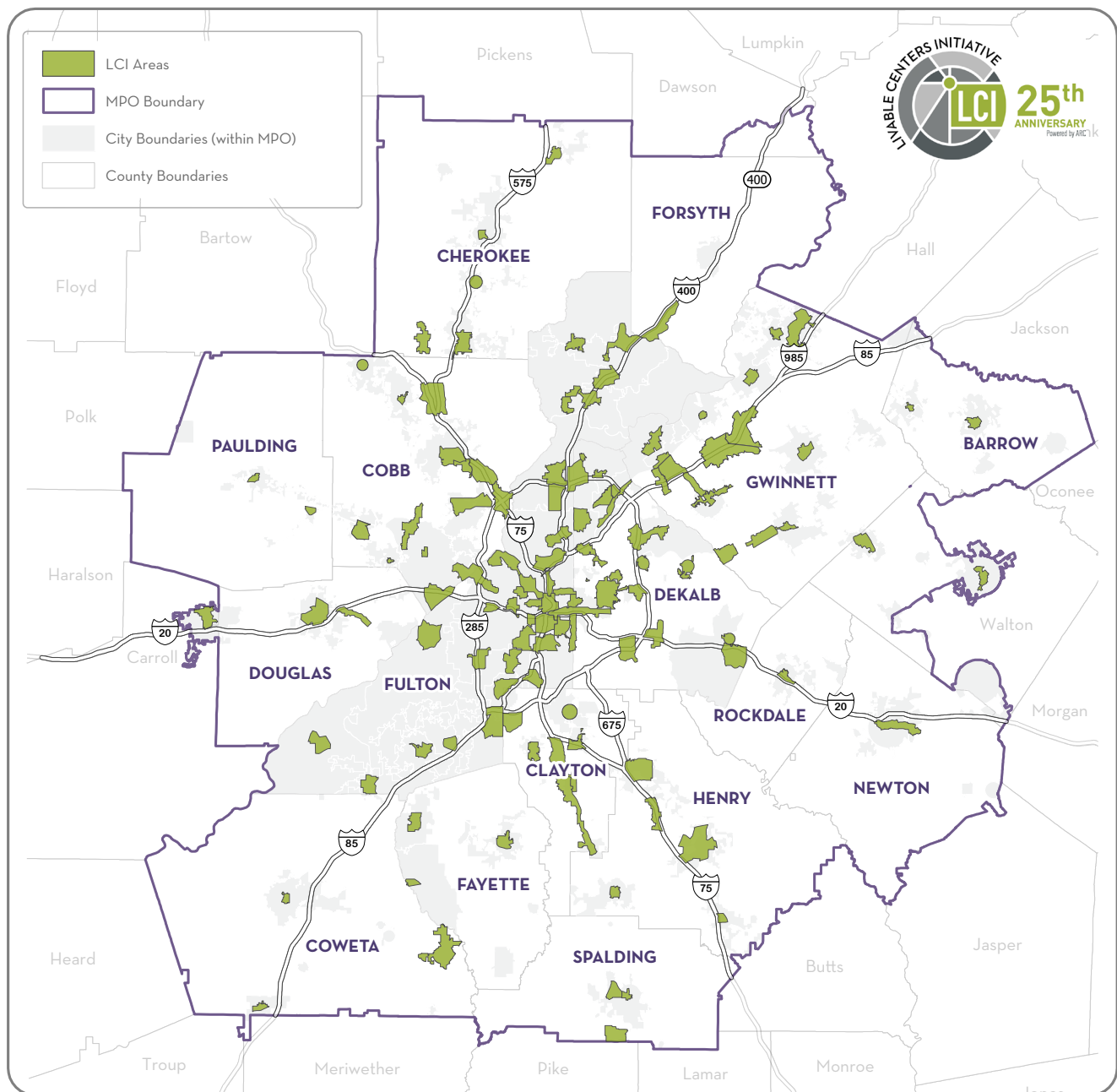
Since its inception in 1999, the LCI program has invested over \$389 million in over 126 communities across the Atlanta region. Funded by federal transportation dollars, LCI grants help pay for catalytic studies, tactical studies, and transportation projects that help communities implement their LCI 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 a trail feasibility study, revision of development regulations, or a concept design for a transportation project.
- **To date, there has been \$1 billion of federal transportation funds dedicated to the LCI program.** This includes funds that have been allocated from the LCI program's inception in 1999 through the year 2050.



*Hampton*

Figure 4. LCI areas



The LCI program has four primary goals:

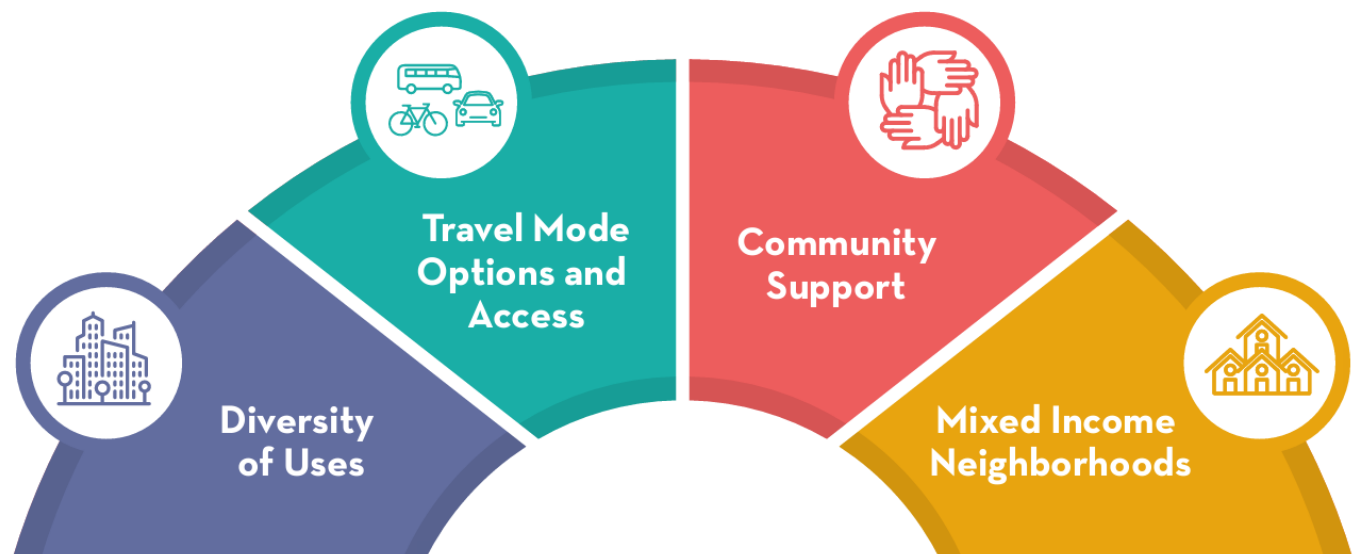
1. Encourage a **diversity of housing, employment, commercial, shopping and recreation land uses** at the transit station, local and regional center level accessible by people of all ages, abilities, and income levels,
2. Provide access to a range of travel modes including **transit, roadways, walking 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.

There are 126 LCI communities which, in total, comprise four percent of all land area in the 21-county region. The LCIs include three types of geographies, or focus areas - Town Centers, Activity Centers, and Corridors. For about 10 years, the LCI program funded corridor studies to help revitalize older development and make arterial roadways more pedestrian-friendly. Since 2017, the two primary focus areas have been Town Centers and Activity Centers, with an emphasis on those that provide access to transit stops.

**Town Centers** are traditional downtowns and main streets. Many of these were once the hub of local communities. The LCI program has helped jurisdictions create plans and programs to spur redevelopment, revive local businesses, and create more walkable environments. Examples of Town Center LCIs include Lawrenceville, Stone Mountain, and Norcross.

**Activity Centers** typically refer to hubs of retail, entertainment, and office activity, and often include higher density housing such as apartments and condominiums. Many of these activity centers are located near major interstates or rail stations. Examples of Activity Center LCIs include Cumberland, Stonecrest, Chamblee and Perimeter Center.

Figure 5. The LCI program's primary goals



## PROGRAM BACKGROUND

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

In 2000, ARC funded the first round of ACTIPS. The completion of these studies built momentum around implementation activities. In 2003, in support of these plans, 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. In 2001, ARC hosted the first LCI development fair, which helped local jurisdictions share potential development sites with local developers. This was one of the agency’s first strategic efforts to bring local governments and private sector partners together to help jumpstart redevelopment across a variety of areas. 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, this Board renewed its commitment to the LCI program by extending transportation funding to the year 2050, with a total commitment of \$1.1 billion. Likewise, the Board designated additional funding to planning efforts to update LCI plans going forward.

<b>1999</b>	Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) adopted. Land Use Committee recommends \$5M for plans and \$350M of capital funding for Activity Center and Town Center Investment Policy Studies (ACTIPS); ARC Board passes resolution approving the program
<b>2000</b>	First round of 12 ACTIPS (now LCI) Studies funded
<b>2001</b>	First LCI Development Fair hosted, linking LCI study sponsors and potential development sites with local developers
<b>2003</b>	First round of LCI Transportation Projects funded: 25 bicycle/pedestrian, two transit and two safety/operational projects
<b>2004</b>	LCI Transportation funding increased to \$500 Million through 2030
<b>2006</b>	LCI Supplemental Study applications first accepted to support implementation of existing studies
<b>2008</b>	LCI Development Fair incorporated as part of Atlanta Development Authority’s Urban Market Place event
<b>2010</b>	ARC hosts six MPOs for a Livability Peer Exchange, resulting in annual peer exchanges, later formalized as the Livable Communities Forum
<b>2013</b>	Midtown Alliance completes LCI’s first Creative Placemaking Study for the North Avenue, Midtown, and Arts Center stations
<b>2015</b>	LCI 15 Year Impact Report and video created
<b>2016</b>	LCI awards first Transit Oriented Development (TOD) award, partnering with MARTA and City of Decatur at Avondale MARTA Station
<b>2020</b>	LCI Transportation Funding extended to 2050, with a total commitment from 2000 to 2050 of approx. \$1.1 Billion. LCI 2.0 results in an increase in study funding, from \$800,000 per year to \$2 Million
<b>2024</b>	ARC marks the 25th anniversary of the LCI program with a celebration at its annual State of the Region event
<b>2025</b>	ARC releases the Livable Centers Initiative 25 Year Impact Report

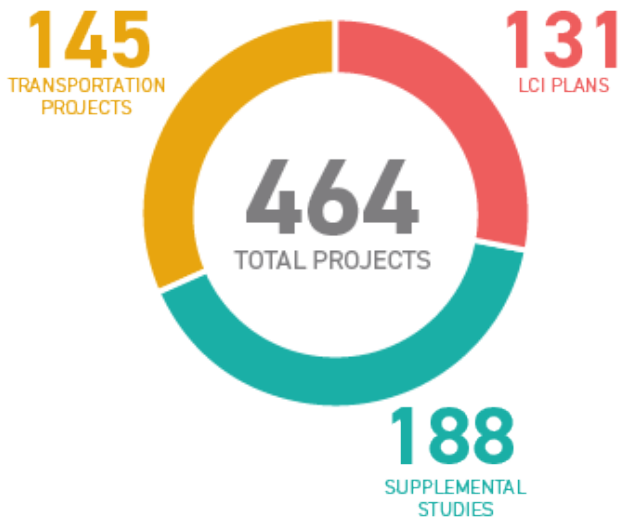


# PROGRAM STATISTICS

Since the LCI program's inception in 1999, ARC has awarded almost \$24.8 million in federal dollars for studies in 126 LCI areas, or LCIs.

This includes \$9.6 million for LCI plans, or catalytic studies, and almost \$15.2 million for supplemental studies. These plans have produced numerous recommendations for transportation improvements to help support safer and more convenient multimodal travel.

Over the past 25 years, ARC has awarded approximately \$389 million in federal dollars to fund a variety of transportation improvements. 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 \$77.8 million, confirming their commitment to their LCIs.



## Total Dollars Awarded



### PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

**\$75.4 M | 53 Projects**

Facilities exclusively for pedestrian use, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and ADA upgrades.

### BIKE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

**\$114.0 M | 32 Projects**

Facilities for use by both pedestrians and cyclists, such as a project with a sidewalk and a protected bike lane.

### SIDEPATHS & TRAILS

**\$67.6 M | 22 Projects**

A pathway separated from the roadway, at least 10 feet wide, for use by cyclists and pedestrians.

### ROAD DIET & COMPLETE STREET

**\$57.8 M | 13 Projects**

Projects that remove through-lanes and reallocate the space for active transportation uses. An example would be converting a four-lane roadway to two lanes with a center two-way left-turn lane, with the additional space for wider sidewalks, on-street parking, etc.

### TRANSIT FACILITIES

**\$45.8 M | 12 Projects**

Projects that provide amenities for transit users or support transit usage. Examples include bicycle and pedestrian facilities at transit stations, transit plazas and station enhancements, bus stop improvements, and transit-oriented developments (partnership with developers to build housing and other uses at or near transit stations).

### OPERATIONS AND SAFETY

**\$15.6 M | 9 Projects**

Projects that improve traffic operational efficiency, reduces crash frequency, and/or reduce crash severity. Examples include roundabouts, raised medians, and intersection realignments.

### NEW STREETS OR EXTENSIONS

**\$12.7 M | 4 Projects**

These projects construct multimodal streets or extend streets to expand the existing grid. The goal of these projects is to create more walkable communities with shorter block lengths and more redundancy to disperse traffic and negate the need for road widenings.

# OVERVIEW

## LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

This Impact Report is a retrospective of 25 years of the LCI program. It is a “look back” at all the accomplishments of the program – the resurgence of town centers, new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, redevelopment, and reimagined places – as well as considerations for how to enhance the LCI program from here. To that end, the Impact Report also represents a “look forward” towards new goals, funding opportunities, evaluation mechanisms, and opportunities to support local jurisdictions in implementing their LCI visions.








*Midtown Atlanta then (above) and now (below)*





Figure 6. Impact Report study metrics

				
<b>Demographics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Household Income</li><li>Race</li><li>Age Cohort</li></ul>	<b>Economic Benefits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Office Development</li><li>Retail Development</li><li>Job Growth</li><li>Job Sectors</li></ul>	<b>Transportation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Trip Modes</li><li>Transit Access</li><li>Intersection Density</li><li>Safety</li></ul>	<b>Land Use &amp; Development Regulations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Multi-family and Mixed Uses</li><li>Overlays</li><li>Design Standards</li><li>Complete Streets and Sidewalks</li><li>Parking Maximums</li><li>Affordable Housing</li><li>Street Connectivity</li><li>Form-Based Codes</li></ul>	<b>Housing and Households</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Growth in Housing Units</li><li>Housing Costs</li><li>Rent Burden</li><li>Vacancy Rates</li><li>Housing Supply</li><li>Affordable Housing</li></ul>

## STUDY PROCESS

The Impact Report has been developed from two perspectives – technical analysis and stakeholder feedback. The study has examined a variety of metrics representing the diverse topic areas the LCI program touches, including transportation, land use, housing, and development.

The findings have been supplemented by feedback from numerous stakeholders who have shared their diverse perspectives, insights, and experiences with the LCI program over the past 25 years. These include LCI grant recipients, such as staff from local governments and community improvement districts (CIDs); stakeholders such as elected officials, transit operators, community-based organizations (CBOs), artists, and economic development and housing specialists; consultants who help develop the LCI plans; and ARC staff who have been involved in the LCI program, including current and former executive managers, LCI program managers, and staff from a variety of ARC departments.

Together, the findings from the technical analysis and stakeholder feedback have helped to paint a picture of the outcomes from 25 years of the LCI program, and informed the trajectory of the program into the future.

Figure 7. Stakeholders consulted for the Impact Report

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT  
(CURRENT AND FORMER)**

**TRANSIT AGENCIES**

**CONSULTANTS**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF**

**FORMER LCI PROGRAM  
MANAGERS**

**ELECTED OFFICIALS**

**COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT  
DISTRICTS**

**COMMUNITY-BASED  
ORGANIZATIONS**

**ARTISTS**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND HOUSING SPECIALISTS**



# CHAMBLEE LCI

## Feature Community

The City of Chamblee has evolved from a predominantly industrial town to a thriving community with a rich mix of housing, job opportunities, and a multicultural population represented by dozens of languages and ethnicities. Its proximity to MARTA bus and rail, interstates and major arterials, and the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport continues to attract new businesses, residents, and visitors.

### LCI PROGRAM IN CHAMBLEE

In 2000, Chamblee received its first LCI grant to prepare a plan for the city. The city has completed two minor plan updates and one major update, along with additional LCI-funded studies for its downtown and the Buford Highway corridor, and \$7.8 Million (so far) in LCI project funding to building trails, streetscapes and pedestrian facilities. In total, Chamblee has received nearly \$6.9 million in federal funding for transportation projects and LCI studies.

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Chamblee has engaged a wide range of stakeholders in its LCI planning including the Downtown Development Authority, Chamblee Business Association, Senior Connections, Center for Pan Asian Community Services, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local property owners, business owners, and residents. These diverse perspectives have helped to guide growth in a manner that meets the needs of diverse interests.

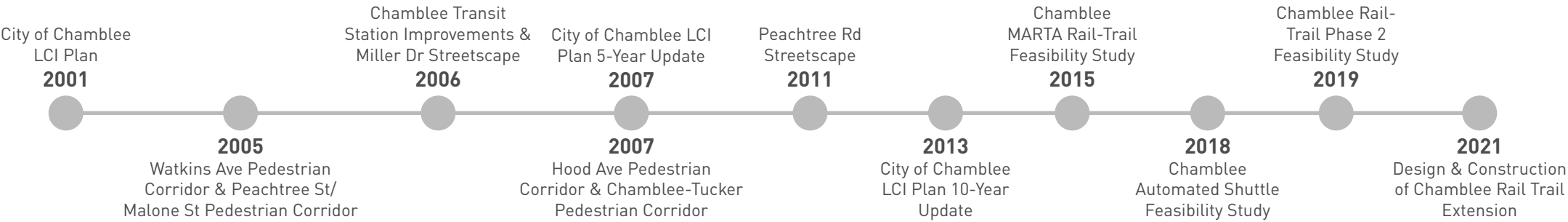
*“Downtown Chamblee is what it is today thanks to the transformative impact made through the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). Chamblee’s evolution from industrial to a charming modern community has been incredible to watch and our Downtown showcases what’s possible when we work together to strengthen the heart of our City. We are proud to be one of several cities included in the LCI’s 25-year history of transforming communities and the quality of life in our region.”*

*- Brian Mock, Mayor of Chamblee*

### LCI PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IMPACTS

The LCI program has sparked Chamblee’s incredible transformation from a hub of industry to a vibrant village. With the support of ARC, Chamblee revitalized its MARTA station area into walkable spaces, embracing mixed-use zoning and infill developments. Numerous pedestrian improvements have been made along Chamblee Tucker Road, Hood Avenue, Peachtree Boulevard, and Peachtree Road. Chamblee has also completed a 1.96-mile Rail Trail that features outdoor games and musical instruments and connects to Keswick Park.

Expansion of urban zoning designations contributed to the growth, creating a community that is both charming and modern. The city has become a vital center of activity with diverse housing options, restaurants, and retail.





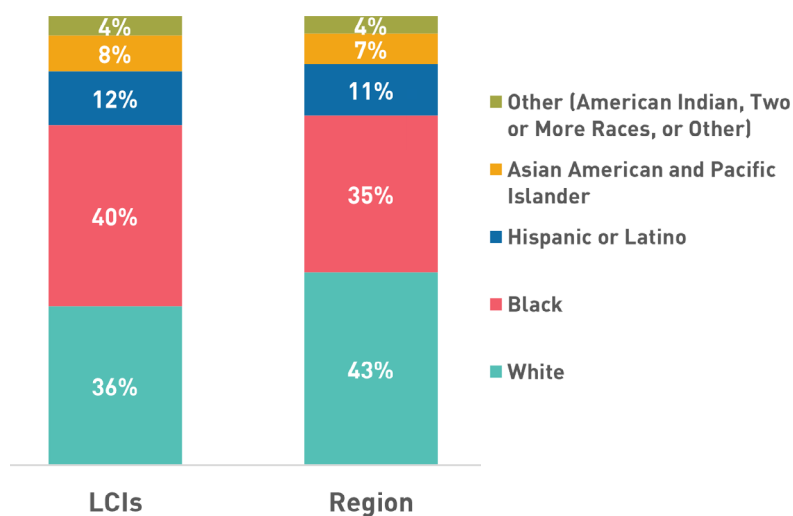
# DATA ANALYSIS

## PEOPLE IN LCIs

LCIs, particularly those in town centers, have seen the construction of new housing and attracted new residents who are seeking a different kind of lifestyle – one where they can easily walk or take transit to retail, dining, school, or perhaps their place of employment, and have a variety of amenities nearby that don't require getting in the car. People across all ranges of race, age, and household income reside in LCI areas. There are some common themes that emerge when comparing LCI residents to those in the region, or those who live outside of LCIs.

**Residents of LCI areas are more racially diverse compared to the region.** The share of residents in LCIs who identify as Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Asian American and Pacific Islander exceed the share of people in the region that identify as part of those racial/ethnic identity groups.

Figure 8. Population by race/ethnicity in LCIs and the region (2022)



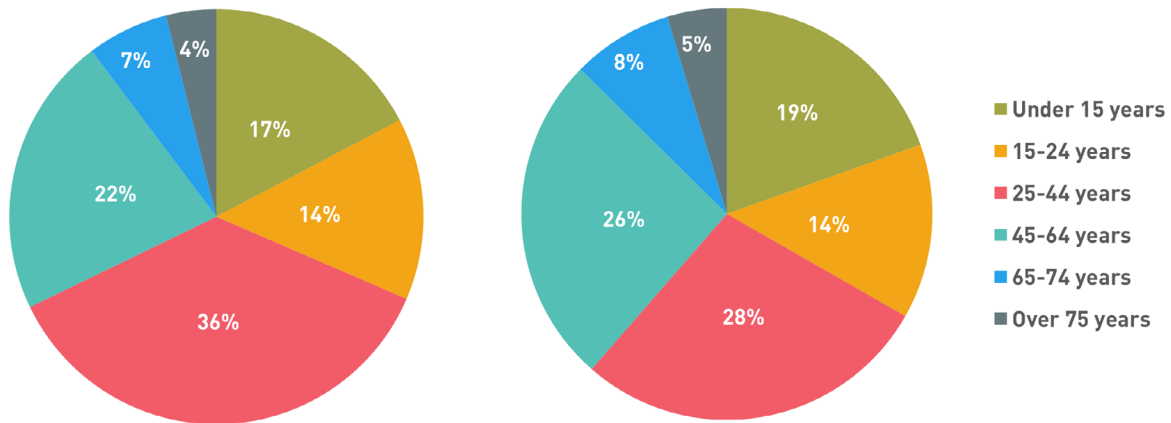
Source: Esri Business Analyst, SB Friedman.

Note: White, Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Other race categories represent the non-Hispanic share of their respective populations.



Duluth

Figure 9. Population by age in LCIs (left) vs. the region (right) (2022)



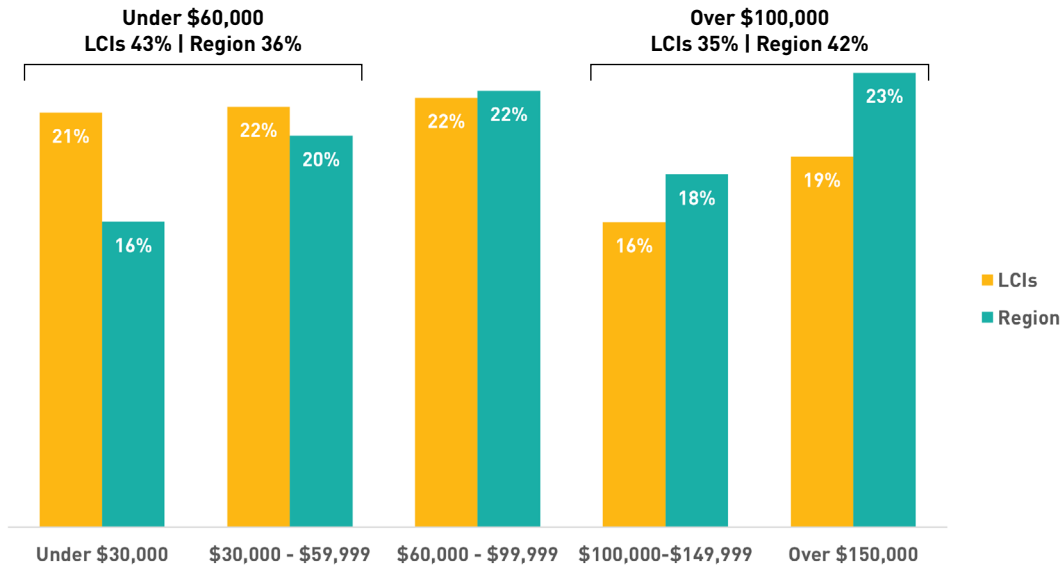
Source: Esri Business Analyst, SB Friedman.

**LCIs have a higher share of millennials and older Generation Z adults, compared to the region.** While 28% of people in the region are ages 25 to 44, over one-third of residents in LCI areas (36%) are in this age group. In contrast, there is a lower share of youth (under 15 years of age), Generation X and young Baby Boomers (age 45 to 64), and seniors (age 65 and over) in LCIs compared to the region. These age characteristics align with the typical housing types seen in LCIs - LCIs have a higher share of multifamily units, which are more likely to house non-family and smaller households.

**LCI households have lower annual median incomes compared to households in the region.** Within LCI areas, 21% of households earn

less than \$30,000 annually, compared to 16% in the region, while 22% of LCI households earn \$30,000 to \$60,000, compared to 20% in the region. This may be due to a younger demographic living in LCIs. As discussed in a later section, LCIs have a higher share of legally-restricted affordable housing than the region, and likely have more older multifamily housing stock compared to the region. **While the lower household incomes in LCI areas may seemingly point to lower economic prosperity, this trend may actually indicate that LCIs have housing options that are affordable to lower-income households. Lower-income workers also have better access to transit and are better able to walk or bike to jobs within or near LCI areas.**

Figure 10. Share of households by annual household income in the LCIs vs. the region (2022)



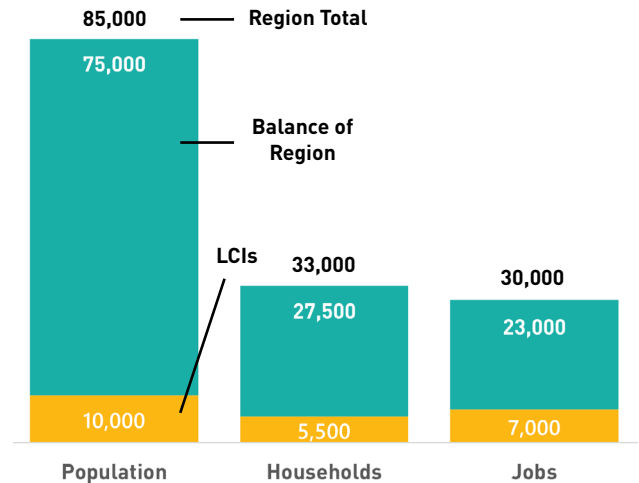
Source: Esri Business Analyst, SB Friedman.

## JOB IN LCIs

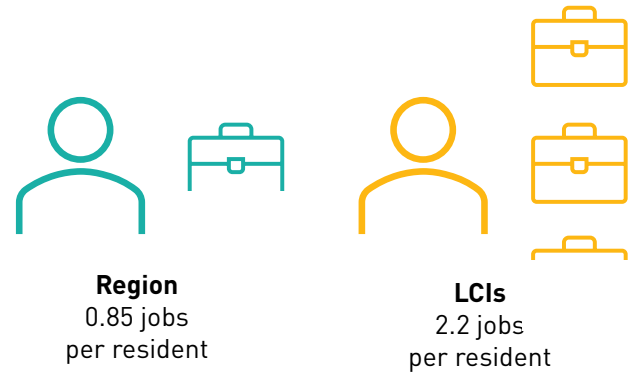
**LCIs have served as strong job centers for the region.** About 37% of the region's jobs, or 980,000 jobs, are in LCI areas. Between 2002 and 2021, LCIs added 133,000 new jobs (about 7,000 jobs annually), representing 23% of the region's job growth for the period.

**The growth in both employment and housing points to a positive jobs-housing balance, and indicates that LCIs are truly becoming more mixed-use.** In 2002, LCIs had 1.5 jobs per resident, compared to 0.5 jobs per resident in the region. In addition, LCIs have added 10,000 new residents annually. When considered with employment growth, LCIs have added 0.7 new jobs per resident through 2021. While the region also added a substantial number of jobs from 2002 to 2021 (30,000 annually), the region's population growth (85,000 annually) far exceeded its job growth.

Figure 11. Annual population, household and job growth in LCIs vs. region (2002-2021)



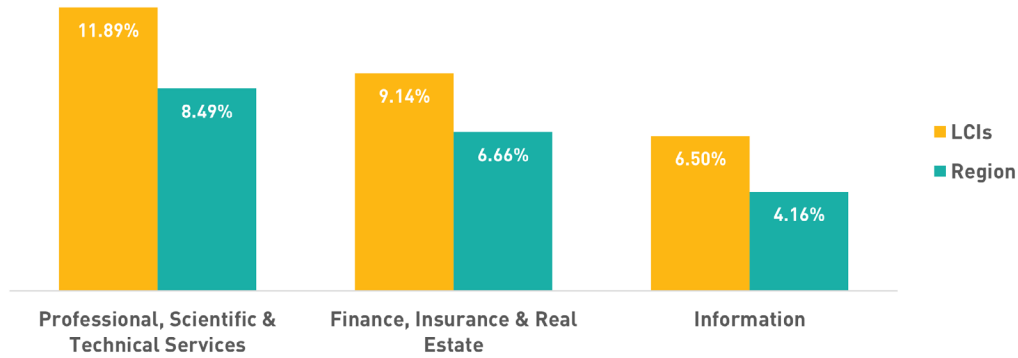
Source: Esri Business Analyst, US Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employment-Housing Dynamics (LEHD), SB Friedman.



Alpharetta



Figure 12. Share of total jobs in LCIs vs. region (2021)

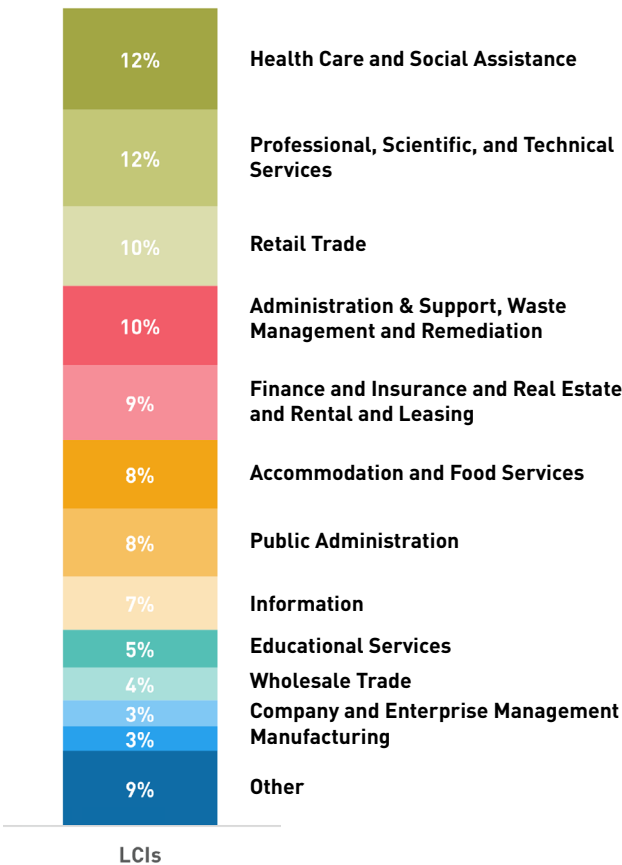


Source: LEHD, SB Friedman.

**LCIs have an outsized shared of office-based and higher-wage job sectors, and there has been substantial growth in these types of jobs compared to the region.** Professional Services; Information; and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) jobs represent 27% of all jobs in LCIs, compared to 21% in the region. Among Professional Services and FIRE jobs, 54% of job growth regionwide has been in LCIs.

**At the same time, LCIs provide jobs in a diverse range of sectors.** Other industries with a large share of jobs include Healthcare and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Public Administration, and Accommodation and Food Services. LCIs have lost manufacturing jobs as the areas have transitioned to accommodate more multifamily, mixed-use and office development. Since 2002, LCIs have lost 20,000 manufacturing jobs.

Figure 13. Comparison of employment by sectors in LCIs



Source: LEHD, SB Friedman.



East Point



# HOUSING IN LCIs

As LCIs have attracted new residents, they have likewise seen strong growth in households and housing units, at a slightly faster rate compared to the region. From 2000 to 2024, new households in LCIs accounted for 17% of all household growth in the region. Similarly, housing units in LCIs grew at a slightly faster rate than the region. **This points to stronger housing demand in the LCIs.**

Population growth in LCIs has been slightly slower compared to the region. These trends suggest that new households in LCI areas tend to be smaller than new households across the region. **This is consistent with the LCI program’s focus on creating a diversity in housing types – with smaller households, housing units in LCIs are generally smaller and built at a greater density, in contrast to suburban environments with single-family homes on larger lots.**

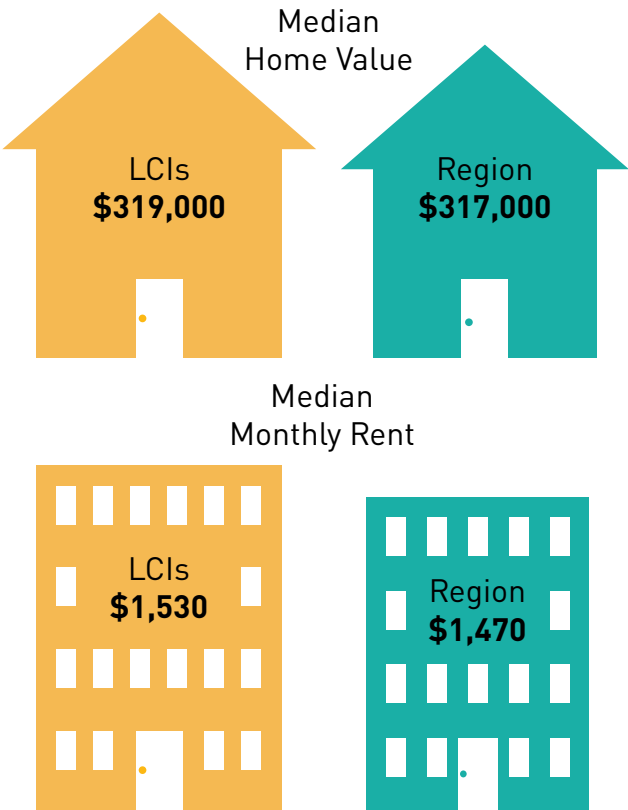
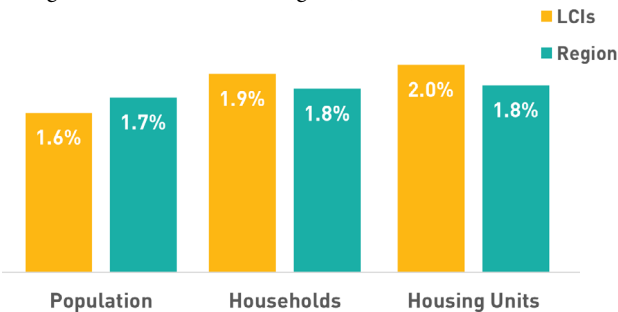


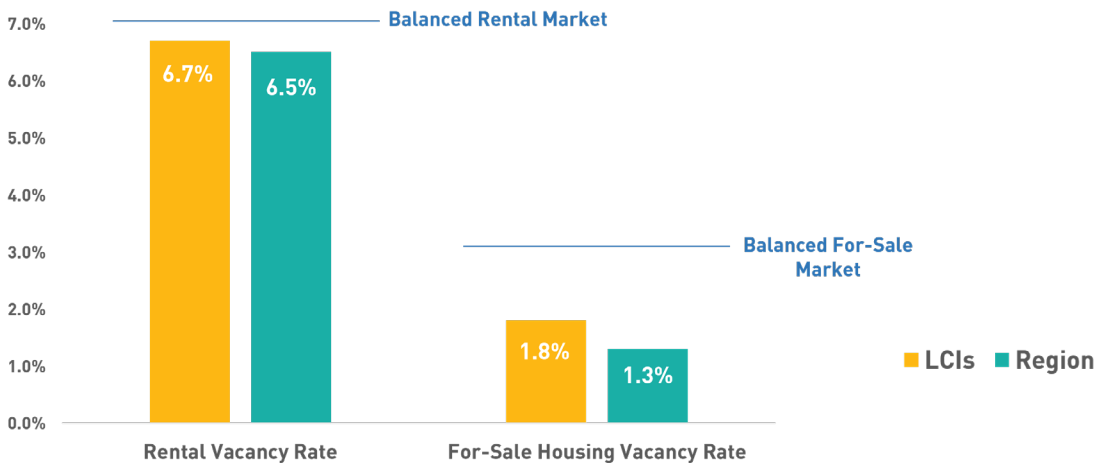
Figure 14. Annual population, household and housing unit growth rates in LCIs vs. region (2000-2024)



Source: Esri Business Analyst, US Census Bureau, SB Friedman.

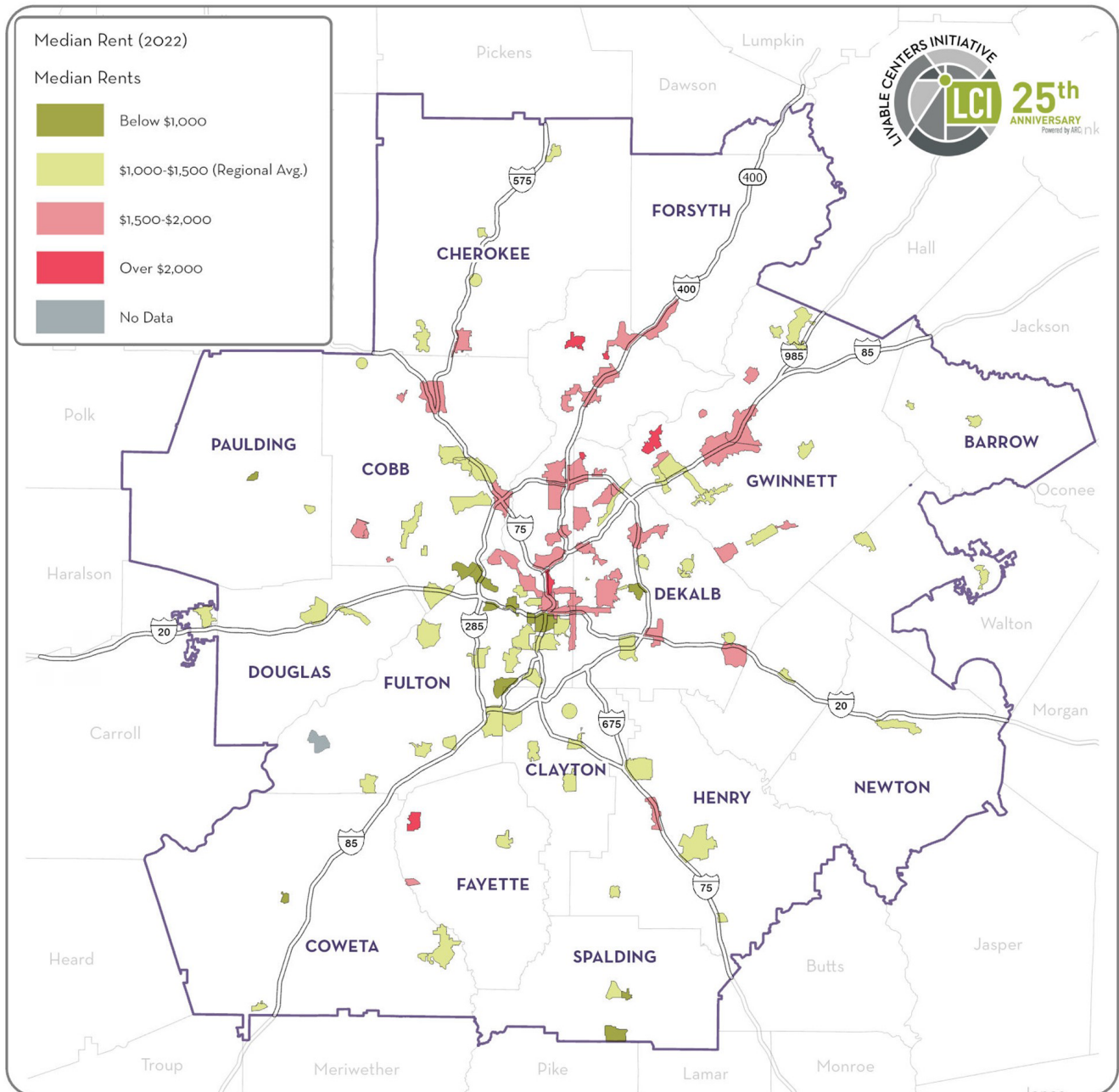
The median home values and monthly rental rates are similar between LCIs and the region. **However, there is a limited supply of for-sale housing in LCIs.** The for-sale vacancy rate in LCIs (1.8%) falls below the threshold considered to be a balanced market (3.0%). The LCI for-sale vacancy rate is higher than that of the region (1.3%), **indicating a particularly constrained market in LCIs.** The rental vacancy rate in LCIs (6.7%) is similar to that of the region (6.5%). At these rates, the rental housing market is generally balanced.

Figure 15. Housing availability in LCIs vs. region



**Housing costs vary widely across the region.** Rental rates tend to be higher on the north and east sides of Atlanta, in northern Fulton County, DeKalb County, and Gwinnett County. Housing is more affordable in the south and west portions of the region.

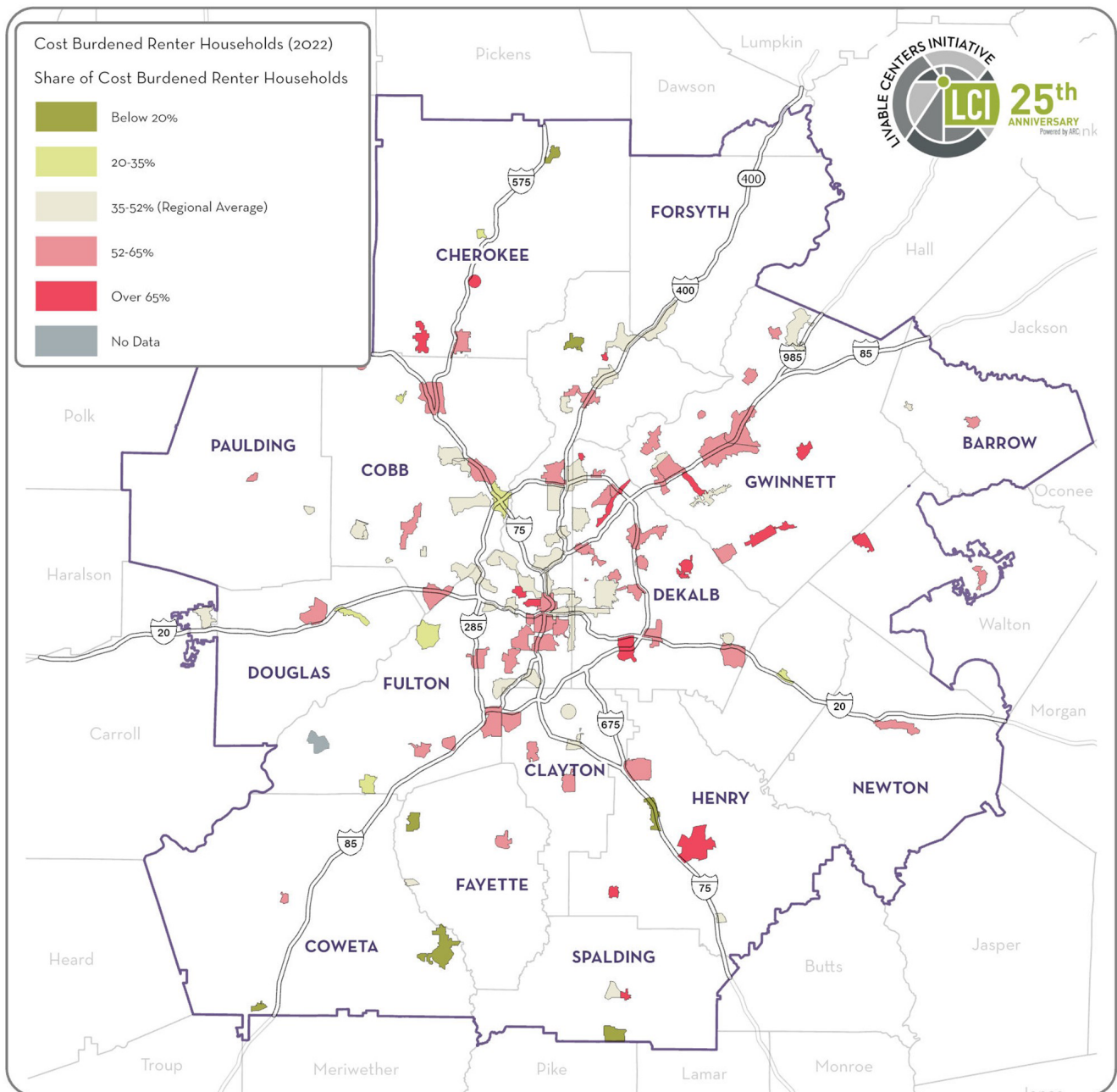
Figure 16. Median rents in LCIs relative to the regional average of approximately \$1,500



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Esri Business Analyst, U.S. Census Bureau, Gresham Smith, Spatial Plans, SB Friedman.

**Over half of all households renting in LCIs (52%) are cost-burdened, echoing regional trends.** A household is considered cost-burdened if it spends over 30% of household income on rent or mortgage payments. Households in DeKalb and Gwinnett County LCIs, in particular, have the greatest cost burden, reaching 69% in Candler-Flat Shoals and 74% in Downtown Lawrenceville. In these areas, household incomes may be relatively low compared to average rents.

Figure 17. Renter cost burden in LCIs relative to the regional average of 52%

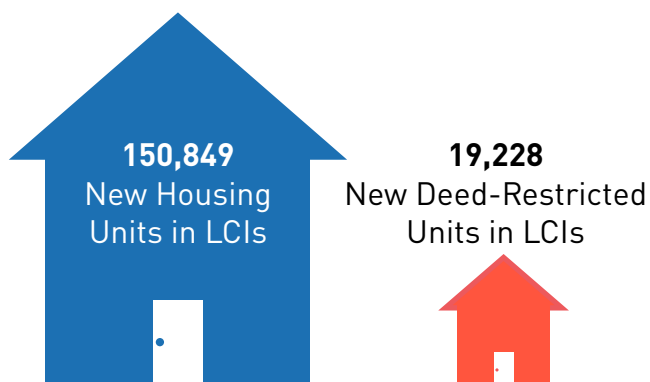


Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Esri Business Analyst, U.S. Census Bureau, Gresham Smith, Spatial Plans, SB Friedman.



**Despite these trends, LCIs have added a significant amount of legally-restricted affordable housing<sup>1</sup> relative to the region.**

LCIs have added about 19,000 new units since 2000, representing 35% of the regional total of 55,000 units. About 13% of total housing units added in LCIs annually have been affordable, compared to 7% in the region. A significant number of these are senior-oriented affordable units. LCIs have added about 5,000 new legally-restricted affordable senior housing units since 2000, accounting for over half of the 9,000 affordable senior units added across the region. About one in four affordable housing units in LCIs added since 2000 has been designated for seniors.



McDonough

*1 Legally-restricted affordable housing counts include both new units and existing units that were preserved with affordability protections through deed restrictions or other policy mechanisms. In this section "affordable housing" refers to only legally restricted affordable housing units.*



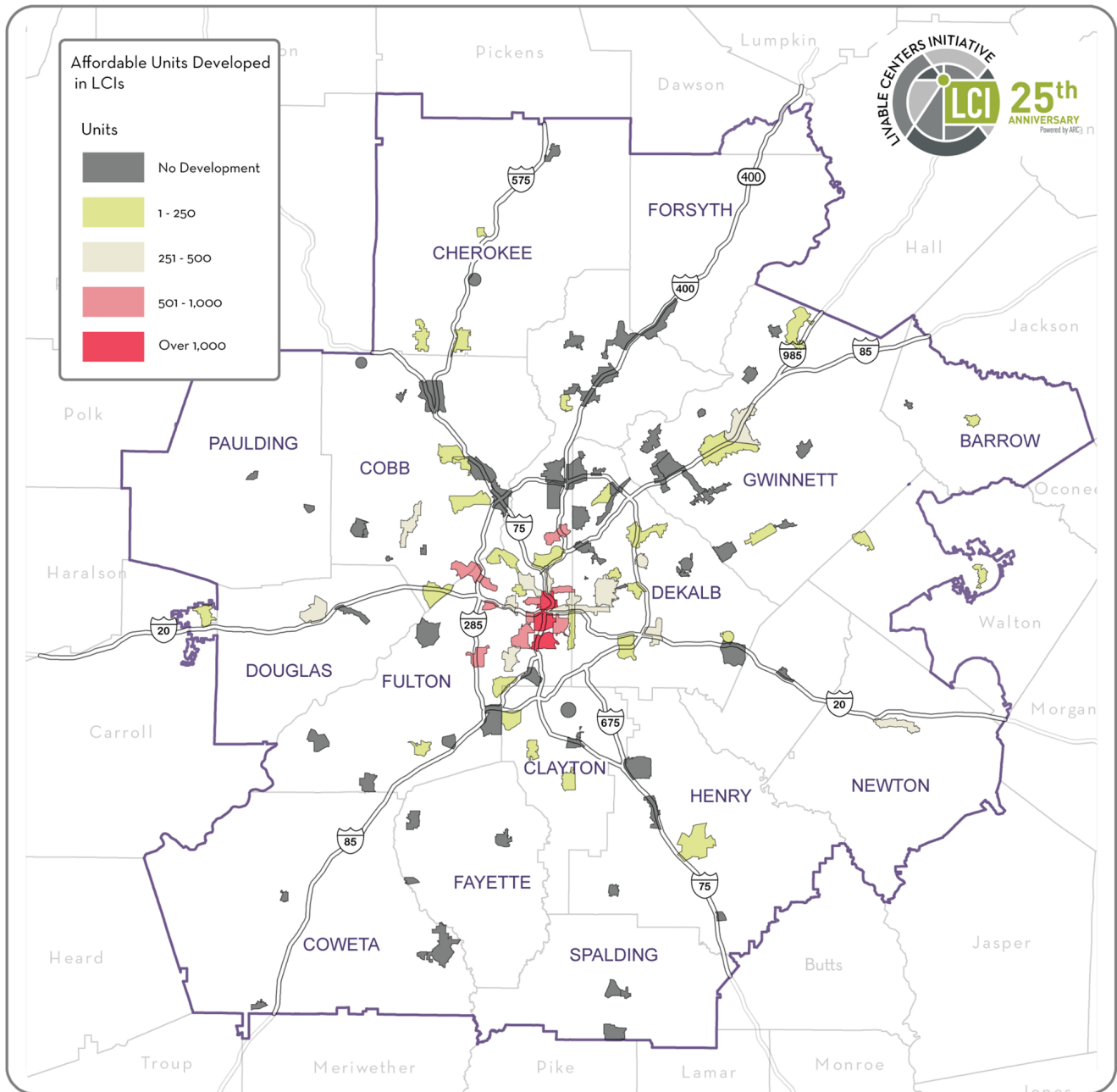
Woodstock



**Although LCIs have helped to increase the stock of affordable housing, the development and preservation of these units have been uneven across the region.**

LCIs on the south and west sides of Atlanta and in DeKalb County have added a large number of affordable housing units. By contrast, LCIs northeast of Atlanta, including those in northern Fulton County and Gwinnett County, have added limited amounts of new affordable units.

Figure 18. Legally-restricted affordable housing in LCIs created since 2000



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, HouseATL, National Housing Preservation Database, Gresham Smith, Spatial Plans, SB Friedman.

DEVELOPMENT IN LCIs

LCI areas have attracted an outsized share of real estate development in the last 25 years.

LCIs account for just 4% of the land area in the region, but since 2000, they have seen 30% of the region’s retail rentable building area, and about half of the region’s multifamily rental units, office rentable building area, and hotel. This indicates that the LCI program is also achieving goals related to higher density housing and a greater mix of uses, which helps to make more walking and biking trips possible.



Fayetteville

Figure 19. Development in LCIs as share of the region since 2000



Top left: Retail Development in LCIs as Share of the region since 2000 (Rentable SF)  
Top right: Multifamily Development in LCIs as Share of the region since 2000 (Units)  
Bottom left: Hotel Development in LCIs as Share of the region since 2000 (Hotel Keys)  
Bottom right: Office Development in LCIs as Share of the region since 2000 (Rentable SF)  
Data from 2000-2023

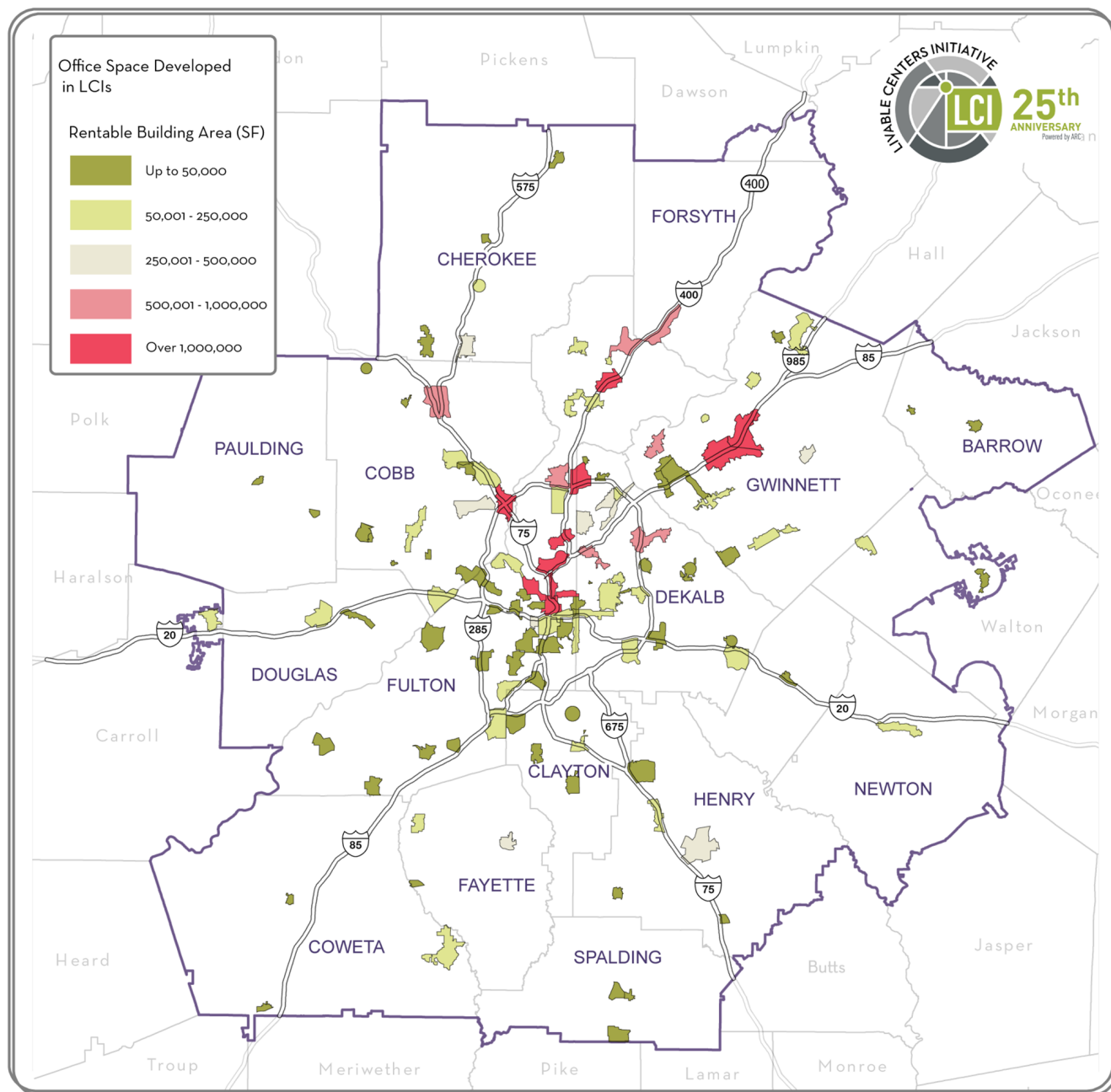
■ LCIs  
■ Balance of Region

**A significant amount of development has occurred in the Midtown LCI, which accounts for 22% of office development, 15% of hospitality development, and 9% of multifamily development within the region.**

Substantial multifamily development has also occurred in downtown Atlanta, Atlanta's north side, and in counties north of Atlanta, especially within Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett and Cobb counties. Office development since 2000 has been concentrated in the Buckhead, Perimeter, Sugarloaf, and

*2 Source: CoStar, SB Friedman.*

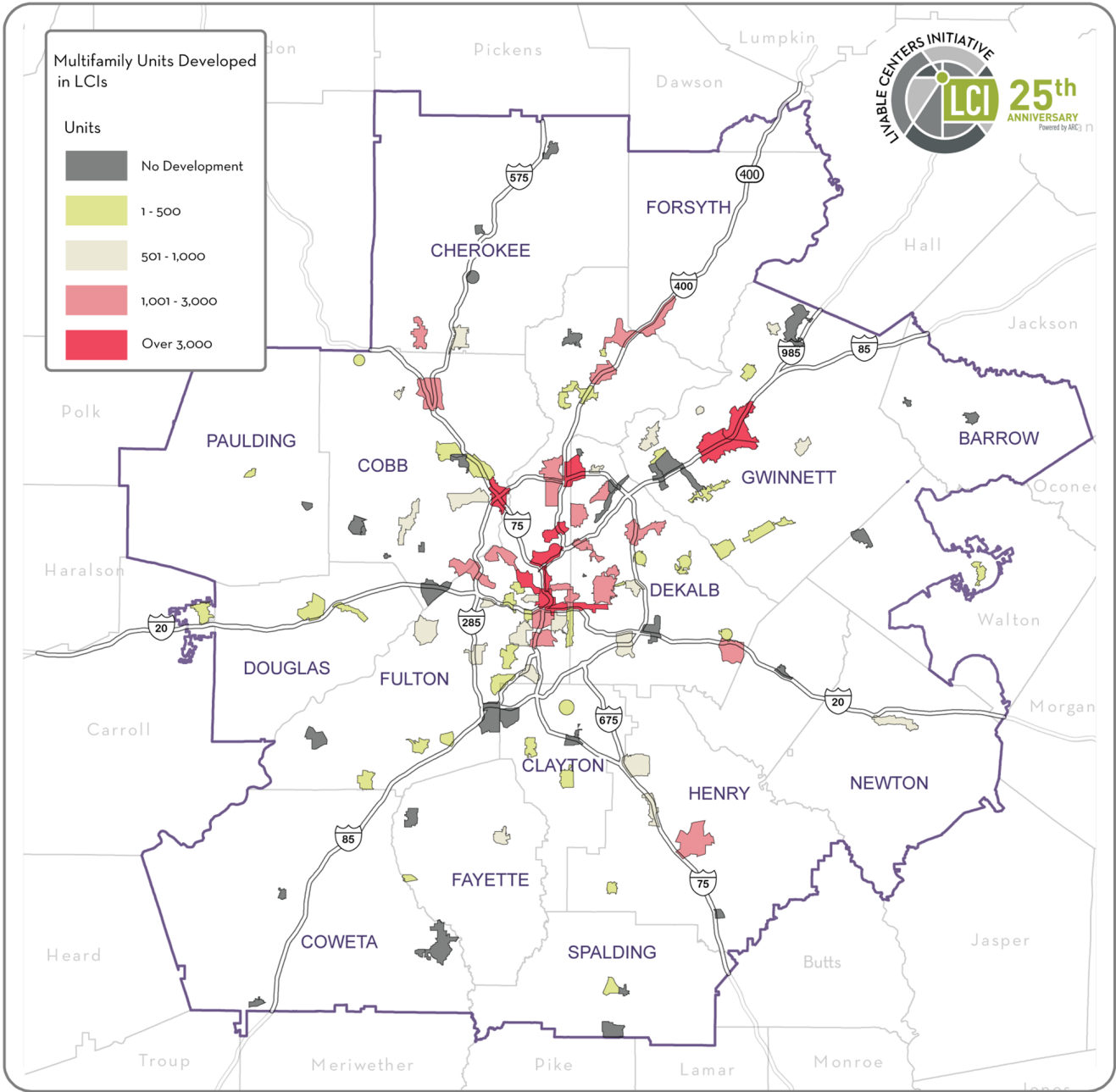
Figure 20. Office space developed in LCIs since 2000



*Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, CoStar, Gresham Smith, Spatial Plans, SB Friedman.*



Figure 21. Multifamily housing developed in LCIs since 2000



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, CoStar, Gresham Smith, Spatial Plans, SB Friedman.

# TRANSPORTATION IN LCIs

## Travel Modes

One of the current goals of the LCI program is to “enhance access to a range of travel modes including transit, roadways, walking, and biking.” Based on a snapshot of data from Spring 2024 , single-occupancy vehicle trips are the primary mode of transportation in both LCIs and the region. **However, there is a slightly higher share of walking and biking trips in LCIs compared to the region.** There is also a significantly higher share of transit trips in LCIs, though this is largely due to the lack of public transit across most counties in the region.

Trip Mode	Percentage of Total LCI Trips	Percentage of Region Trips
Single-Occupancy Vehicle Trips	74.1%	74.9%
Walking Trips	1.3%	1.1%
Biking Trips	0.3%	0.2%
Public Transit Trips	1.3%	0.6%



Decatur

## Transit Access

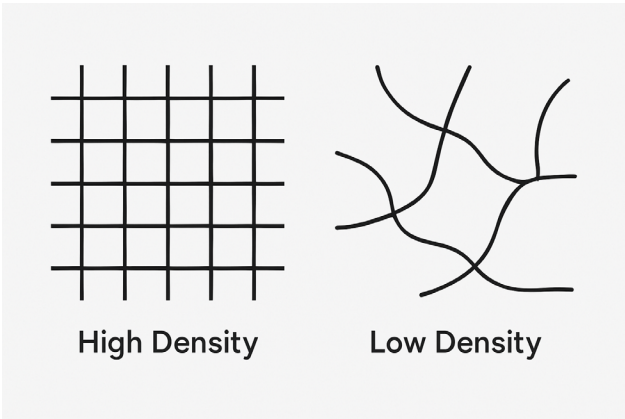
The analysis considered access to “premium” transit services across the region, or transit services that operate seven days a week and with frequent headways (generally, every 15 minutes). Based on these parameters, premium transit stops are limited to MARTA rail stations in Fulton and DeKalb Counties and stops along CobbLinc’s Rapid 10 route in Cobb County.

**As of 2020, nearly 75% of jobs in LCIs, or approximately 448,000 jobs, are located within one mile of premium transit.** As previously noted, LCIs are strong job centers for the region. This premium transit access helps employers attract workers and draw new businesses to LCIs. While most jobs in LCIs have transit access, the situation is nearly inverse for residents. **As of 2020, just 27.5% of people living in LCIs, or approximately 309,000 residents, are within one mile of a premium transit stop.** It should be noted that the greatest concentration of jobs in LCI areas are located inside of I-285 and in activity centers just north of I-285 and along SR 400. Conversely, residents are distributed more evenly across LCIs, and most LCIs (89) are not located within one mile of premium transit service. As new transit service such as South Fulton Parkway Rapid Transit (MARTA), Rapid Bus Routes in Gwinnett County (Ride Gwinnett), and similar projects from the ATL Regional Transit Plan are implemented over the next 20 years, LCI residents will have better access to transit.

Walkability

Shorter block lengths contribute to a more pedestrian-friendly environment, allowing people to more easily walk between destinations and providing more opportunities to cross streets. Generally, the greater the density or concentration of intersections, the shorter the block lengths. In 2010, in the LCI areas, there were approximately 544 intersections per square mile. By 2024, this number rose to 620 intersections per square mile, representing a 14% increase in intersection density. Although this analysis does not account for the provision of sidewalks or pedestrian crossings, **the increase in intersection density in LCI areas between 2010 and 2024 indicates that concerted efforts are being made to expand the street grid and create more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environments.**

Figure 22. Intersection density



Bicycle Facilities

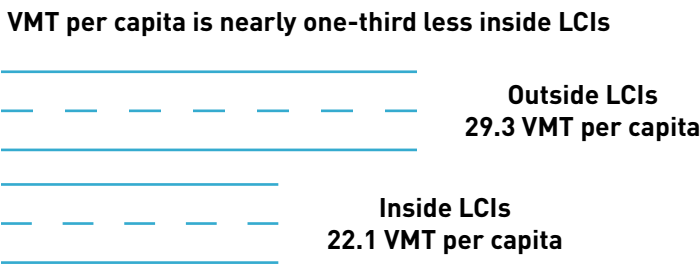
Since 2000, approximately 942 miles of bicycle facilities have been constructed across the Atlanta region. These include on-road facilities such as conventional bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, cycle tracks, and paved shoulders; side paths and multi-use paths alongside the road; and off-road trails in parks and other natural areas.

About 213 miles of these bicycle facilities are located in LCIs. The most extensive bicycle networks in LCIs include buffered bike lanes in Perimeter Center LCI; the Big Creek Greenway, which traverses the southern portion of the McFarland-Stoney Point LCI in Forsyth County; the Mountain-to-River Trail, a sidepath that serves the Cumberland and Smyrna LCIs in Cobb County; and the Northwest Trail, which is a portion of the Atlanta BeltLine. It should also be noted that in total, there are over 500 miles of bicycle networks that intersect with LCIs, providing connectivity to areas elsewhere in the Atlanta region.

Vehicle Miles Traveled

One of the goals of the LCI program is to enhance access to a range of travel modes, thereby reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Using the Replica data analytics platform, the project team examined residential VMT, or home-based trips, comparing trips in LCIs to trips outside of LCIs within the Atlanta region. For a sample weekday in fall 2023, home-based trips in LCIs demonstrated lower per capita VMT values (22.1) compared to home-based trips elsewhere in the Atlanta region (29.3). In other words, home-based trips in LCIs demonstrate nearly one-third less VMT compared to home-based trips outside of LCIs. This indicates that those living in LCIs are choosing to walk, bike, or take transit with greater frequency, and that the transportation and land use networks in LCIs are more supportive of travel by non-vehicular modes.

Figure 23. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) inside LCIs vs. outside LCIs



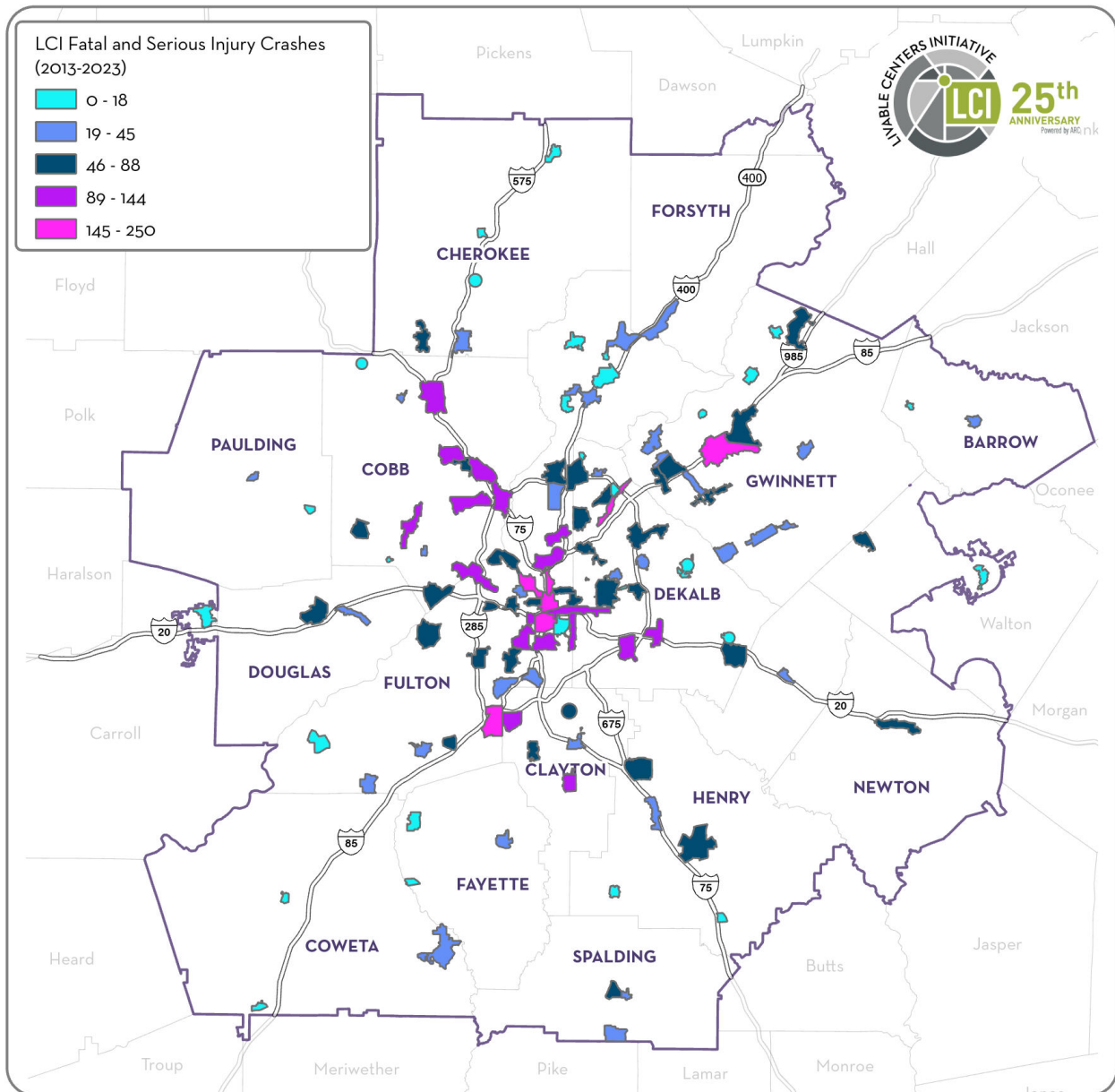


## Roadway Safety

Roadway crashes have been on the rise across the region for the past several years. After a temporary decrease in crash frequency in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts, crashes have been steadily increasing since 2013. Furthermore, fatal and serious injury crashes (also known as “KA” crashes) have been on the rise. The LCI program's vision is to create walkable, pedestrian-friendly areas—ideally, with vehicles that travel more slowly, creating a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

An analysis of historic crash data indicates that LCIs are not immune from these trends. **Between 2013 and 2024, there were a total of 6,016 fatal and serious crashes in LCIs. The LCIs with the greatest number of fatal and serious injury crashes are classified as “activity centers,” or nodes of activity.** These include LCIs in urban areas such as Downtown Atlanta and Midtown, as well as suburban areas like Old National and Gwinnett Place.

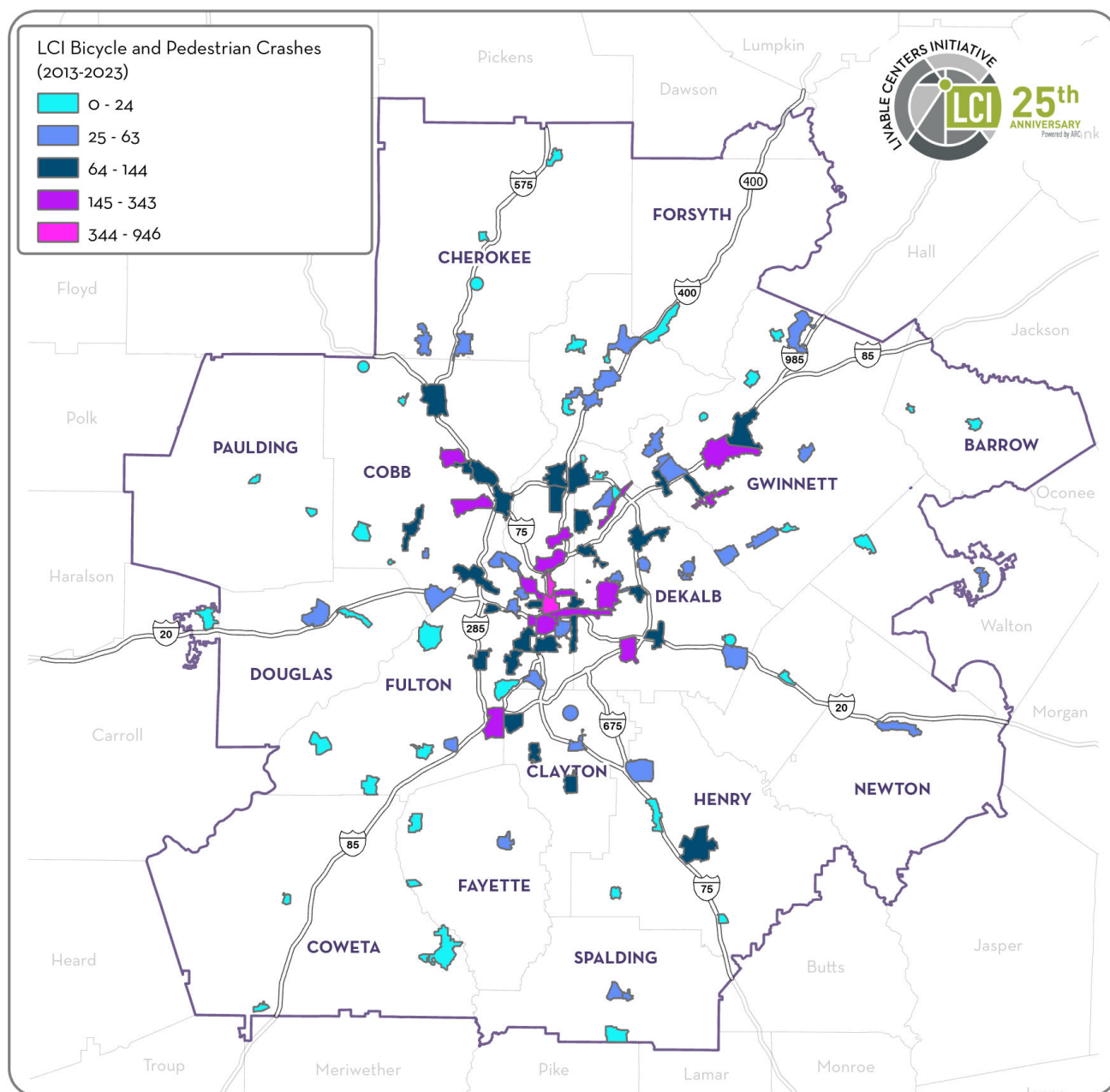
Figure 24. Fatal and serious injury crashes in LCIs



Source: GDOT AASHTOWARE Crash Database

From 2013 to 2023, there were a total of 9,588 crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians on non-interstate roads in LCIs. Similar to fatal and serious injury crashes, the LCIs with the greatest number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes are **activity centers**. There are also some “corridor” LCIs, such as Ponce de Leon and Highway 29, with high frequencies of bicycle and pedestrian crashes.

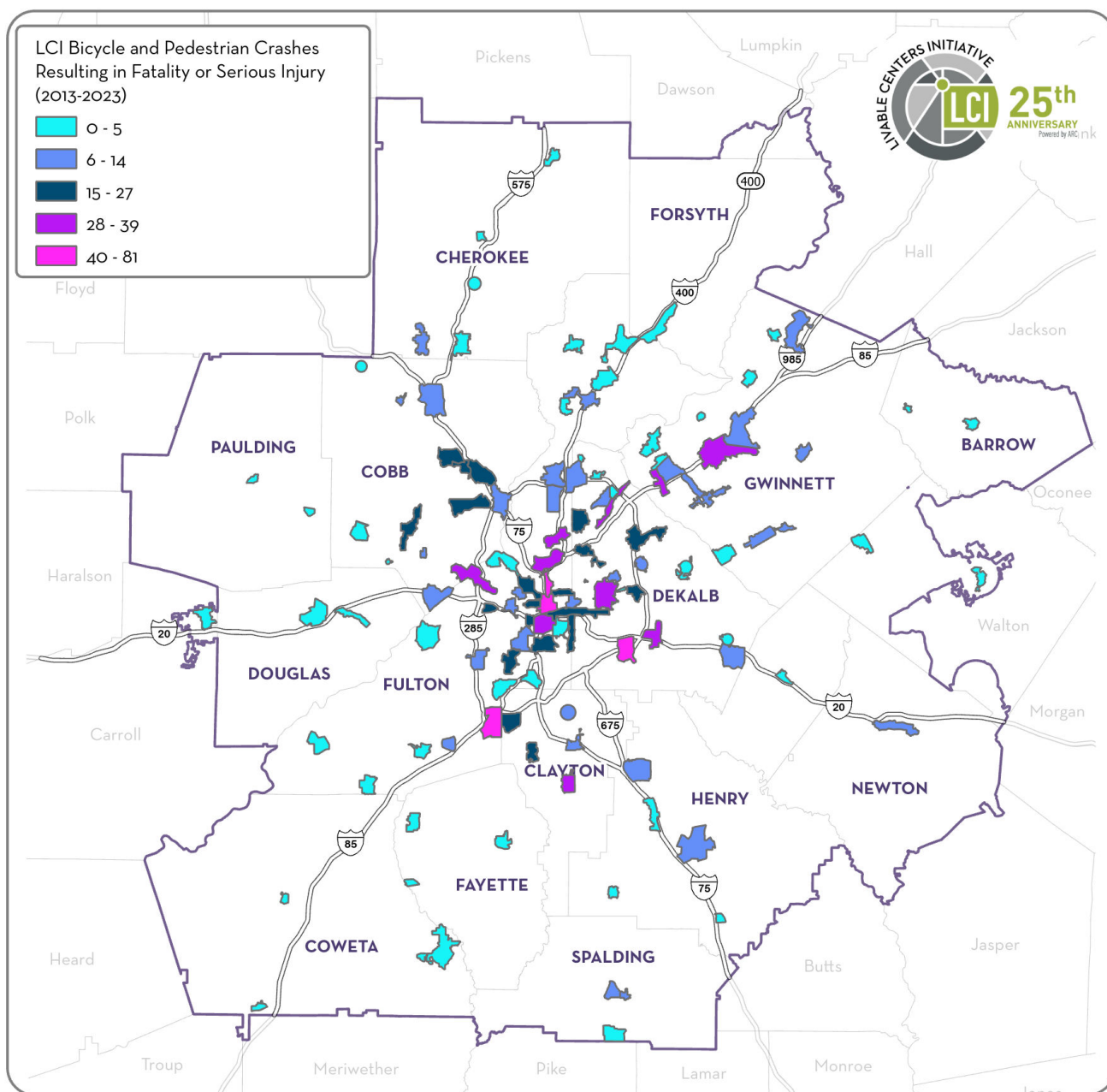
Figure 25. Pedestrian and bicycle crashes in LCIs



Source: GDOT AASHTOWARE Crash Database

**Among the bicycle and pedestrian crashes in LCIs, 15% (1,471 crashes) resulted in at least one fatality or serious injury.** While each of the LCIs with the highest numbers of fatal and serious injury bicycle and pedestrian crashes is an activity center, it is notable that some are in urbanized areas that have better coverage of bicycle and pedestrian facilities (such as Downtown Atlanta and Midtown), and others are in suburban areas with limited pedestrian and bicycle facilities (such as Old National and Candler-Flat Shoals).

Figure 26. Fatal and serious injury pedestrian and bicycle crashes in LCIs



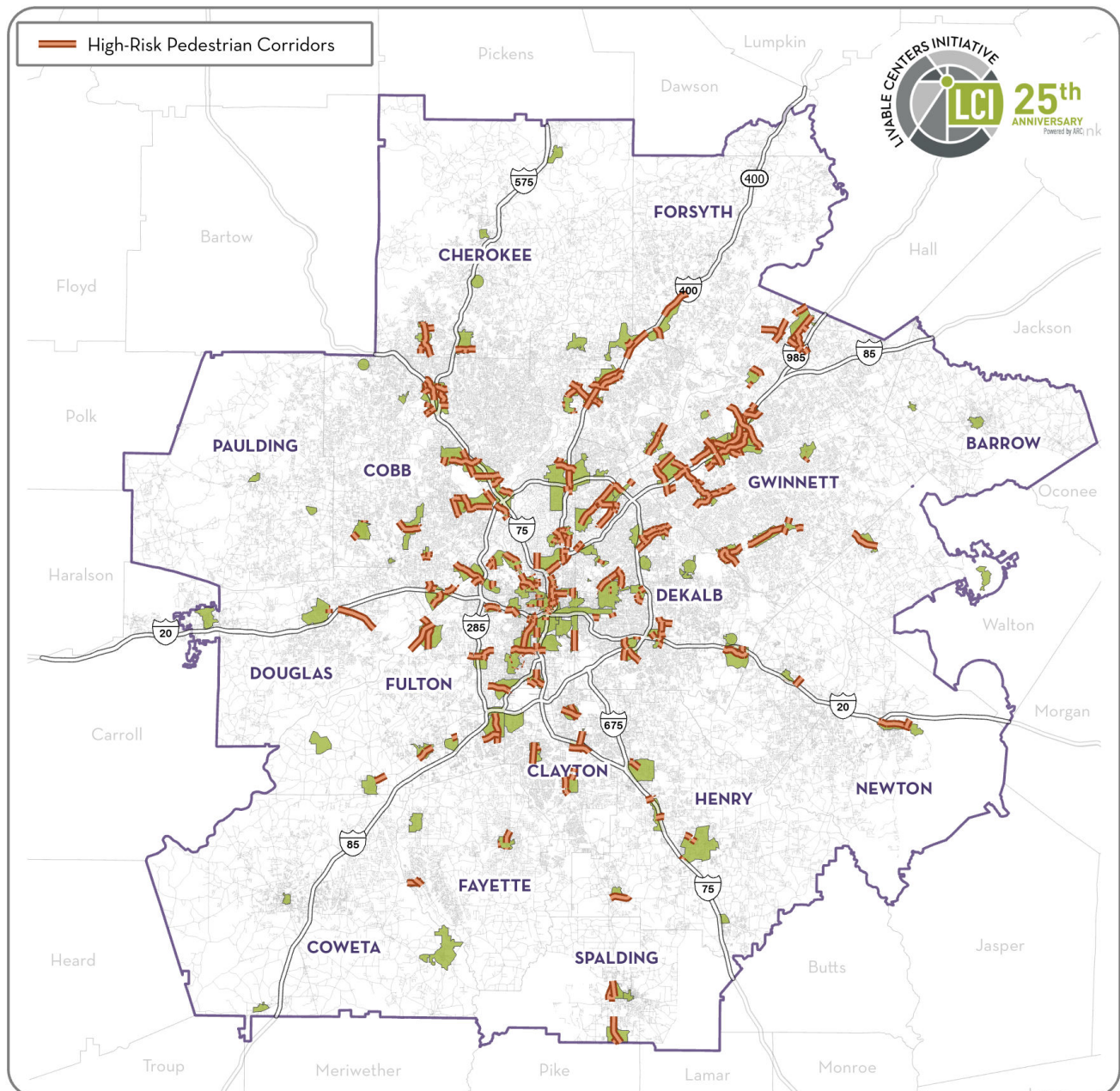
Source: GDOT AASHTOWARE Crash Database



**Although the greatest number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes are in activity centers, there are several high-risk corridors that traverse all types of LCIs.** ARC's Regional Safety Strategy identifies corridors that are risky to pedestrians due to several factors related to the design of the roadway, adjacent land uses, and proximity to trails and transit. For the purpose of this analysis, high-risk corridors have been identified based on whether they meet each of the following design features: four or more lanes, average annual

daily traffic of 9,000 or more vehicles per day, and posted speed limit of 40+ miles per hour. Ninety-seven of the 126 LCIs, or 77% of LCIs, intersect with at least one high-risk corridor. Some LCIs, such as Gwinnett Place, Sugarloaf, and Town Center, have multiple high-risk pedestrian corridors that criss-cross the LCIs. Although many LCIs have expanded and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the proximity of these high-risk corridors serve as a reminder that more work needs to be done to improve safety.

Figure 27. High-risk pedestrian corridors that intersect with LCIs



## LAND USE POLICY IN LCIs

**The majority of LCIs lie in jurisdictions with zoning codes and subdivision regulations that support best practices in land use policy.<sup>3</sup>**

Nearly all the LCIs allow for the construction of multifamily housing and mixed-use development. In 79% of LCIs, sidewalks are required to be constructed on new streets. There are some best practices, however, that are not as common among the LCI jurisdictions. For example, only 46 LCIs lie in jurisdictions that require a maximum number of parking spaces for different uses, or do not regulate parking minimums. Similarly, only 26 LCIs lie in jurisdictions that have provisions or incentives for the construction of affordable housing.

<sup>3</sup> Based upon review of local ordinances as of December 2024



**94% Allow Multifamily Housing**



**87% Allow Mixed-Use Development**



**79% Require Sidewalks**



**37% With Parking Maximums**



**21% Incentivize Affordable Housing**



*Suwanee*



*Norcross*



# DULUTH LCI

## Feature Community

The City of Duluth originated as a shipping and trading center for cotton farmers and local businesses and became one of the fastest growing cities in Georgia in the 1990s. As Duluth became part of the Atlanta metro region and took on a more suburban form, economic activity in the previously thriving downtown dispersed to other areas of the city. Today, the culturally diverse city of over 31,000 has revitalized its downtown, which offers a vibrant mix of housing, retail, restaurants, and gathering spaces.

### LCI PROGRAM IN DULUTH

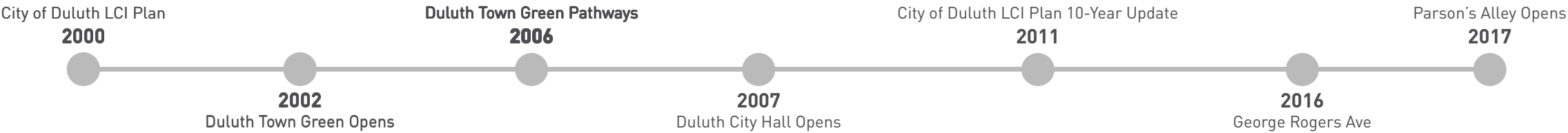
Duluth leaders envisioned a more urbanized landscape for the city that would support active modes of transportation. As one of the LCI program’s first grant recipients, the city completed its “ Envision Duluth ” LCI study in 2001, followed by an update in 2010 . Between 2006 and 2016, Duluth received nearly \$3 million in funding to implement LCI projects, including multi-use paths and a new connector road, George Rogers Drive, to a nearby hospital.

*“The first LCI [plan] was instrumental in consolidating all the ideas the community had when we started thinking about our downtown and how to make it better. It focused our efforts and gave them weight. We were then able to execute community desire into result. The LCI gave us process and vision.”*

*- Greg Whitlock, Mayor of Duluth*

### LCI PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IMPACTS

The city leveraged LCI funds to develop its Town Green, a large green space in the heart of the city where people gather casually and for community events. Duluth also constructed a new city hall and Taylor Park that connect to the Town Green, as well as a festival center featuring a fountain and amphitheater. In addition, the city added sidewalks and bike lanes downtown to create a safer and more accessible environment. Duluth’s steady implementation of its LCI plan vision has transformed the area. Downtown Duluth is now a hub of activity with a vibrant mix of shops, restaurants, breweries, residences, and civic and office space.





# STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

To assist with the evaluation of the LCI program, the project team conducted a series of focus groups and individual interviews with key stakeholders, staff, and representatives from across the Atlanta region. Participants included city and county governments, consulting firms, Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), community-based organizations (CBOs), artists, and 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 or market analysis professionals, among others. The project team conducted most of the interviews and focus groups virtually, using online meeting platforms. In total, the team conducted 12 focus groups and five interviews between June 17 and July 26, 2024. Groups and agencies that participated are shown in Figure 29.

At the interviews and focus groups, the facilitators gathered feedback and insights from those who have participated in the LCI program, to help gauge the qualitative impact of the program and inform potential future changes. The project team presented similar questions to each group, but allowed the interviews and discussions to flow naturally, inviting participants to contribute thoughts and ideas, and to respond however they wanted. The questions touched on several topics, including perceptions of the efficacy and benefits of the LCI program, the process of implementing projects, program administration and processes, the extent to which the program has helped achieve its goals, and opportunities for improvement. To preserve the anonymity of interview and focus group participants, the team did not record the sessions and did not associate individual names with comments and feedback in summaries or reports.

Figure 28. Stakeholder participation statistics

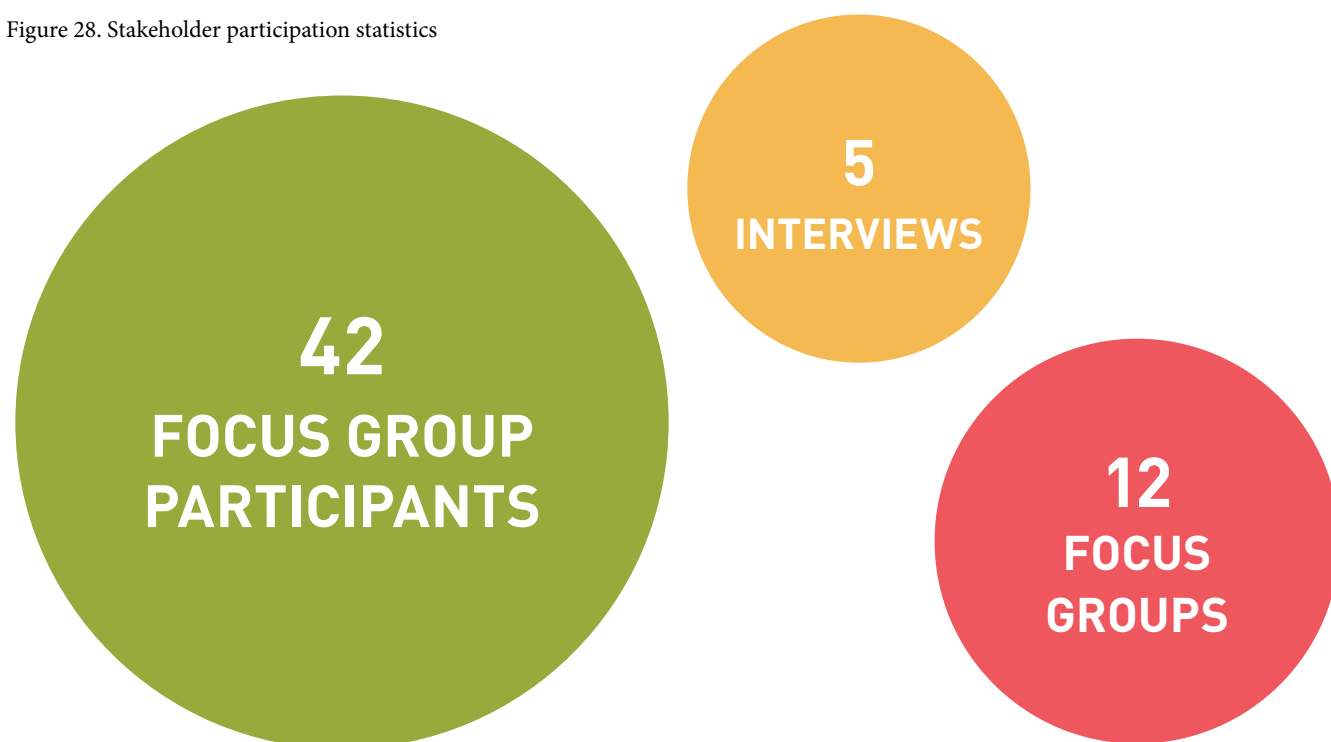


Figure 29. Interview and focus group participant agencies

Agency or Organization	Category
AECOM	Consultant
ATL Airport CIDs	Community Improvement District
Atlanta Downtown Improvement District	Community Improvement District
Atlanta Regional Commission	Regional Planning Agency and MPO
Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL)	Transit Agency
City of Decatur	Local Government
City of East Point	Local Government
City of Fairburn	Local Government
City of Lawrenceville	Local Government
City of Sandy Springs	Local Government
City of Woodstock	Local Government
Dashboard	Community-Based Organization / Artist
DeKalb County	Local Government
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Government Agency
Gwinnett Place CID	Community Improvement District
Highway 278 CID	Community Improvement District
KB Advisory Group	Consultant
Lilburn CID	Community Improvement District
Little 5 Points CID	Community Improvement District
Lord Aeck Sargent	Consultant
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)	Transit Agency
Perimeter CIDs	Community Improvement District
Perkins & Will	Consultant
Pond & Co	Consultant
State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA)	Transit Agency
Sugarloaf Mills CID	Community Improvement District
Toole Design Group	Consultant
Town Center CID	Community Improvement District
True North 400	Community Improvement District
TSW	Consultant
Tucker-Northlake CID	Community Improvement District
Upper Westside CID	Community Improvement District

## SUMMARY OF INPUT

During each interview and focus group, participants answered a series of questions that directly related to their roles with the program. The project team designed the questions to understand benefits of the LCI program; how communities have moved forward with recommendations, or challenges to doing so; and tools and strategies that have supported implementation. The team also asked how the LCI program has helped communities accomplish stated program goals or focus on LCI priorities, and challenges and opportunities to improve the administration of the LCI program.

**Overall, the LCI program is highly valued; participants overwhelmingly see benefits of the program to communities throughout the Atlanta region.** It provides a framework for communities to establish and communicate their vision, and set clear expectations for the future. Likewise, the LCI program helps to coordinate on future plans, foster partnerships, and embark on development projects. With its broad reach, the LCI program has put smart planning and design on the forefront of people's minds throughout metro Atlanta, shaping how the region thinks about communities.

*The LCI program has put smart planning and design on the forefront of people's minds throughout metro Atlanta, shaping how the region thinks about communities.*

On balance, the LCI program has increased mixed-use developments, added new or expanded sidewalks, enhanced streetscapes, and made it easier for people in LCI communities to choose to bike or walk for some trips. As with any transformative program, there are challenges in addition to benefits. For instance, the LCI plans have highlighted the broader difficulties in providing affordable housing for the local workforce. One particular challenge cited among all stakeholders is rising home prices and rental rates, particularly in LCIs that redeveloped and added new housing. While the data analysis shows that LCIs have added affordable housing units, there are numerous LCIs that have added no new affordable housing units, or a limited number. There are also challenges to implementing projects outside of transportation, especially if jurisdictions lack sufficient local funding sources.

Several stakeholders shared that they appreciate ARC's willingness to self-reflect and receive open feedback on 25 years of the LCI program.



Norcross



## BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES

From stakeholders' perspectives, one of the greatest benefits of the LCI program is that it has provided a vision and a "road map" to guide the future of an area. LCI plans provide a mechanism for communities to envision their futures; articulate the visions to residents, visitors, and developers; and identify the steps needed to initiate projects and advance implementation. The intentional focus on creating vibrant, walkable communities with jobs, housing, shopping, and other activities has helped to add density in town centers throughout metro Atlanta, gradually transforming the region. The LCI plans also help to guide comprehensive planning, transportation plans, and other foundational initiatives.

**Focus group and interview participants referred to the LCI program as "transformative," "a game changer," and a "great framework."** The program has provided a reliable source of funding for community visioning and small area planning throughout the region.

Participants held up communities like Alpharetta, Chamblee, Doraville, Duluth, Jonesboro, the Perimeter area, Suwanee, and Woodstock as examples of the positive transformation set in motion through the LCI program.



Woodstock



Jonesboro

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The degree to which LCI plans have been implemented varies widely across communities. In some LCIs, like Woodstock, there has been a full-scale transformation of the historic community center in a relatively short period of time. This is due, in large part, to the foundation laid by the city's LCI plan. Another key to success is having a local champion, or someone in a leadership position who sees the potential of the community, understands the goals, and has access to resources to help pursue funding, facilitate conversations with partners, and the political will to drive change.

Other communities have had smaller successes over time, with incremental improvements such as streetscape projects, new sidewalks and bike lanes, streetlight installation, and similar individual projects.

While LCI plans are a great tool for establishing visions, focus group participants acknowledged the realities of market forces and their impact on what types of development projects ultimately get built, or not. Several key themes emerged from the discussion around tools and strategies that have helped

communities with implementing LCI plans. Figure 30 lists some of the key implementation strategies cited by stakeholders.

Stakeholders also discussed some challenges to implementation in the LCI program. These span the life of the program, from the initial planning phase to implementation.

- Difficulty engaging with a cross-section of the community and gaining broad community support
- Difficulty building consensus around priorities and implementation strategies
- Negative community perceptions about concepts such as density
- Limited staff experience or resources to move projects from planning to implementation
- Limited funding for recommendations, especially for non-transportation projects
- Local economic forces that may not currently support redevelopment or other large-scale changes

Figure 30. Keys to implementation success (stakeholder feedback)

### Coordination

- Active participation by ARC staff
- Intergovernmental coordination within local sponsor jurisdiction, especially between planning and transportation departments

### Funding Sources

- A variety of potential funding sources, in addition to ARC funds, to help projects move forward

### Marketing

- Marketing and using LCI plans as tools for economic development officials and property owners
- Sharing LCI plans with potential partners as a tool to demonstrate why they should invest in the long-term vision of the community

### Action Plans and Demonstration Projects

- Required 100-day action plans, which hold sponsors accountable and help them think through timelines for implementation
- Focus on implementation strategies that build short-term momentum
- Demonstration projects and 'tactical urbanism' to help people see the vision and rally behind longer-term improvements

### Engagement

- Making sure representatives of the planning process are out in the community
- Engaging the community at festivals, pop-ups, and other local events, to reach a broader group of people and build community support



## CURRENT PROGRAM GOALS

In general, participants feel that the LCI program has helped communities make progress toward stated goals by increasing the amount of mixed-use development, creating or expanding sidewalks, adding trails, and making it easier for people to choose biking or walking and transit as modes of travel.

### **Goal: Encourage a Diversity of Housing, Employment, Commercial, and Recreation Uses Accessible by People of All Ages, Abilities, and Income Levels**

While the program provides a strong framework for increasing mixed-use development, diversity of shopping, employment, and residential opportunities, achieving these goals has been more difficult for some participants because of market forces, politics, and economics. Some communities have had success in this realm, and over time, participants feel that developers are more willing to follow LCI guidelines and standards.

### **Goal: Enhance Access to a Range of Travel Modes and Increase Connectivity to Improve Access**

Many LCI communities have enhanced their streetscapes and increased walkability, making walking a more comfortable and more attractive option for community members. The flexibility to pilot ideas and projects has been helpful as this allows communities to test out ideas for consideration in future transportation plans.

### **Goal: Foster Public Private Partnerships and Sustained Community Support through an Inclusive Outreach Process that Involves All Stakeholders**

The outreach component of the program is strong. It encourages local jurisdictions to consider the needs and input of the broader community. While there are opportunities to improve processes to help make outreach more inclusive, the LCI program facilitates better engagement with businesses, neighborhoods, and other stakeholders.

## PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Over time, the LCI program has added LCI priority issues, or areas of emphasis. **With regard to the current priority issues for LCI studies - smart city technology, green infrastructure, affordable housing, climate resiliency, and creative placemaking - on balance, participants feel that the LCI program has generally been effective in addressing some of these topics, but not all.** For example, creative placemaking strategies have been developed and deployed in several LCI areas. In some ways, the creative placemaking is the easiest priority because it can be tied to transportation initiatives, which ARC and other local agencies can fund and move forward. Likewise, some areas have begun to incorporate or take on smart city technology projects or educational initiatives, but with mixed results.

Many LCIs have struggled to advance or focus on workforce/affordable housing and climate resiliency. Initiatives like housing and climate have historically been more politically charged, and depending on what agency receives the LCI funding, may not be within their purview. For example, Community Improvement Districts do not have authority over land use, so while they may support an overarching desire to diversify housing options or create more mixed-use districts, they must work with local government agencies to move those initiatives forward.

In some cases, the outcomes of the LCI program may result in higher property values, leading to gentrification and potential displacement of existing residents.

Stakeholders also noted that as the priority issues expand, it is not always clear how the topics should be integrated into the overall LCI plan. Despite ARC's direction to focus their efforts, some jurisdictions feel compelled to address multiple priorities in the same study, particularly when applying for LCI plan funding.



## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND PROCESSES

Overwhelmingly, stakeholders view the LCI program as a success and feel that it works well, including its administration and management. As with any large-scale program, perceptions vary from one participant to another. Some expressed that they would benefit from additional training on administrative procedures related to program applications and reimbursement, while others feel they have a good understanding of the processes and expectations.

In the past, some staff among grant recipients are unfamiliar with the LCI program and develop more generic scopes of services, which makes it difficult, especially for consultants, to know which topics to prioritize. The main takeaway from this observation is that all sponsor agencies are not on equal footing - some may require additional support and assistance from ARC staff to understand the program and navigate the process. Furthermore, some local staff managing the LCI program often have multiple other responsibilities and limited capacity to effectively procure a consultant and manage the study process. These local governments may similarly need additional assistance from ARC.

Stakeholders offered a range of ideas for potential program improvements across multiple categories.



College Park

## Stakeholder Ideas for Program Improvements

### Education and Training

- Technical assistance to help communities and elected officials understand the LCI program
- An “implementation team” - capacity-building or training to support and help coordinate project implementation after the planning process concludes

### Collaboration

- Encourage multi-jurisdictional partnerships and projects across boundaries
- Encourage enhanced coordination between departments responsible for transportation and land use

### Goals and Priority Issues

- Refocus the program and tighten goals to discourage communities from trying to do “too much” with LCI plans
- Maintain LCI priority issues to allow flexibility in addressing pressing topics, but reinforce that applicants should choose these thoughtfully, rather than try to address them all

### Engagement and Implementation Strategies

- Provide more examples of potential short-term actions that can incrementally build momentum and kickstart projects
- Promote best practices to reach deeper into communities and to engage individuals and trusted community groups
- Provide support to local governments to help implement LCI projects across more areas of the Atlanta region

### Address Unintended Consequences

- Work with LCIs south of I-20 to encourage planning and implementation, to mitigate historic patterns of prioritizing wealthier communities that tend to have more resources and capacity to participate in these types of programs
- Help with education and messaging of topics that may have negative connotations in some communities - for example, “density” and “affordability” - may prove to be challenging in certain areas

# STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

To supplement the stakeholder focus groups and interviews, the project team distributed an online survey to a broad group of stakeholders across the Atlanta region who have been involved with the LCI program. Like the focus groups and interviews, the project team designed the survey to collect feedback on people's experiences with the LCI program. The survey questions were largely quantitative in order to help collect statistics about the impact of the program.

ARC staff compiled the list of stakeholders, and a total of 42 respondents completed the survey between June 26 and July 19, 2024. Survey respondents represented 51 communities in 15 different counties across the Atlanta region. The highest rates of participation were from DeKalb and Fulton Counties, with 18 responses each. The survey received no responses from stakeholders representing or participating in LCI projects in Barrow, Dawson, Newton, or Walton Counties. The geographic distribution of respondents is shown in Figure 31.

Most respondents identified as a representative of a grant recipient or project owner (34 responses). Some also identifies as consultants, economic development or housing specialists, or non-profit or community-based organizations. No agency/funding partners or arts and culture contributors responded to the survey.

Most respondents have participated in an LCI project some time in the past five years and many have participated in more than one LCI project. In fact, 43% of respondents have participated in three to five LCI plans or studies, and 19% have participated in six to 10. Two respondents have been involved with 16 or more plans or studies.

The vast majority (81%) of respondents have participated in "Activity Center/Town Center/Downtown" LCI projects, while slightly fewer (70%) have participated in "Corridor" projects. Nearly half of participants have participated in a supplemental or tactical LCI study.

42

SURVEY RESPONSES

51

AREAS OR COMMUNITIES

81%

GRANT RECIPIENTS/PROJECT OWNERS

Figure 31. Survey responses received per county

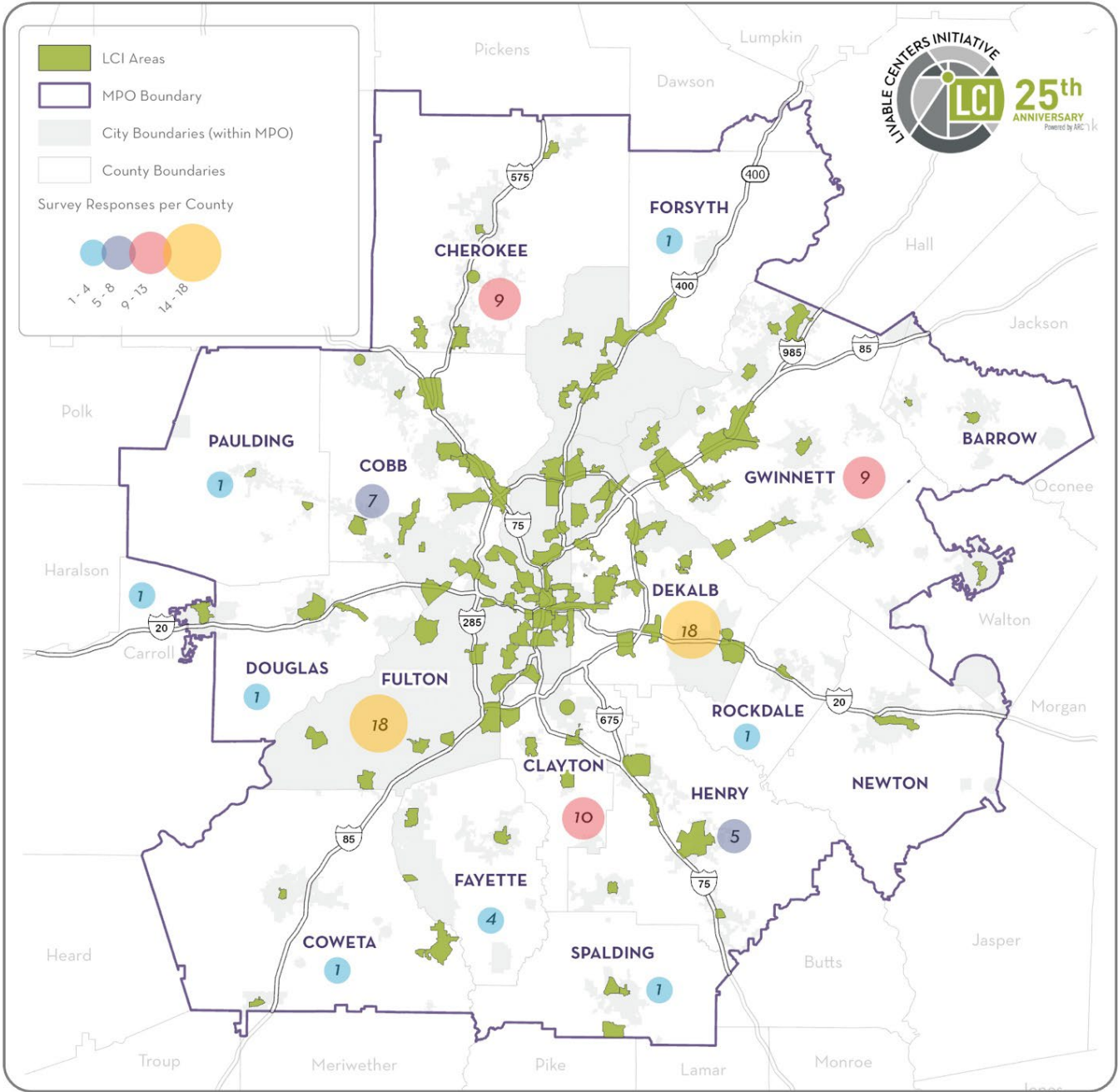
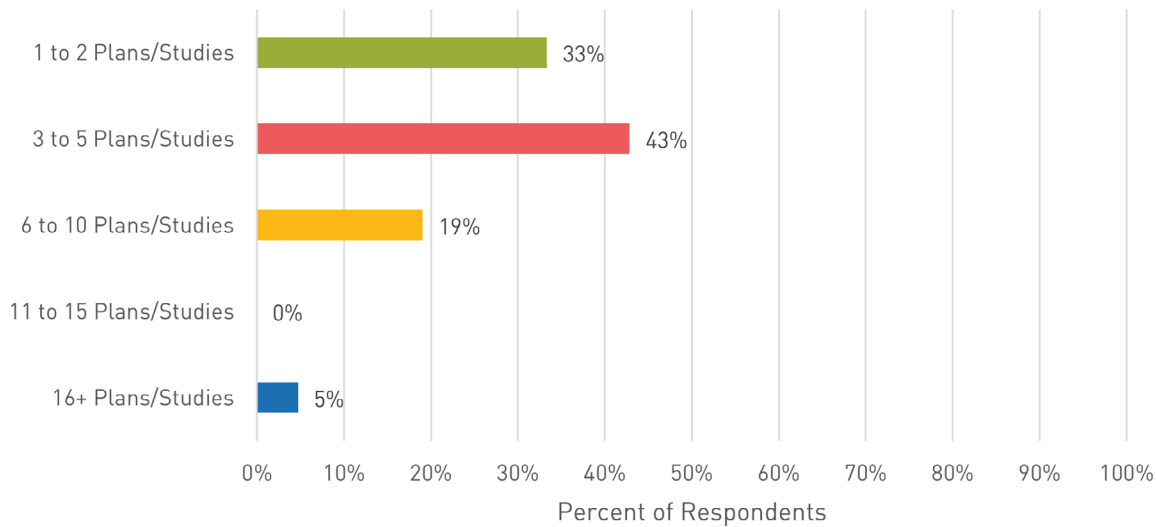


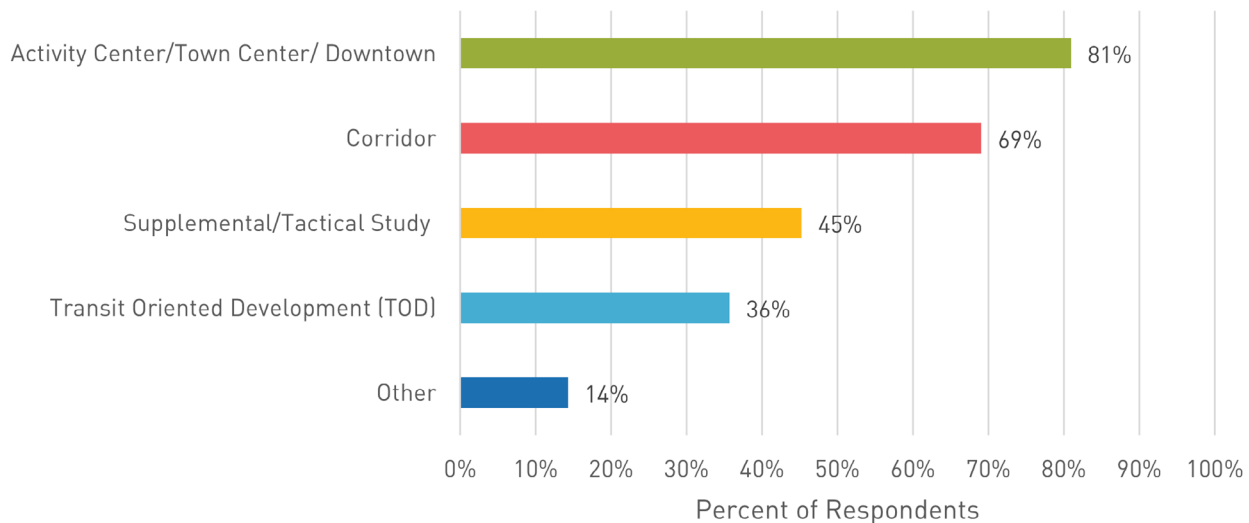


Figure 32. Survey response - LCI project participation rate



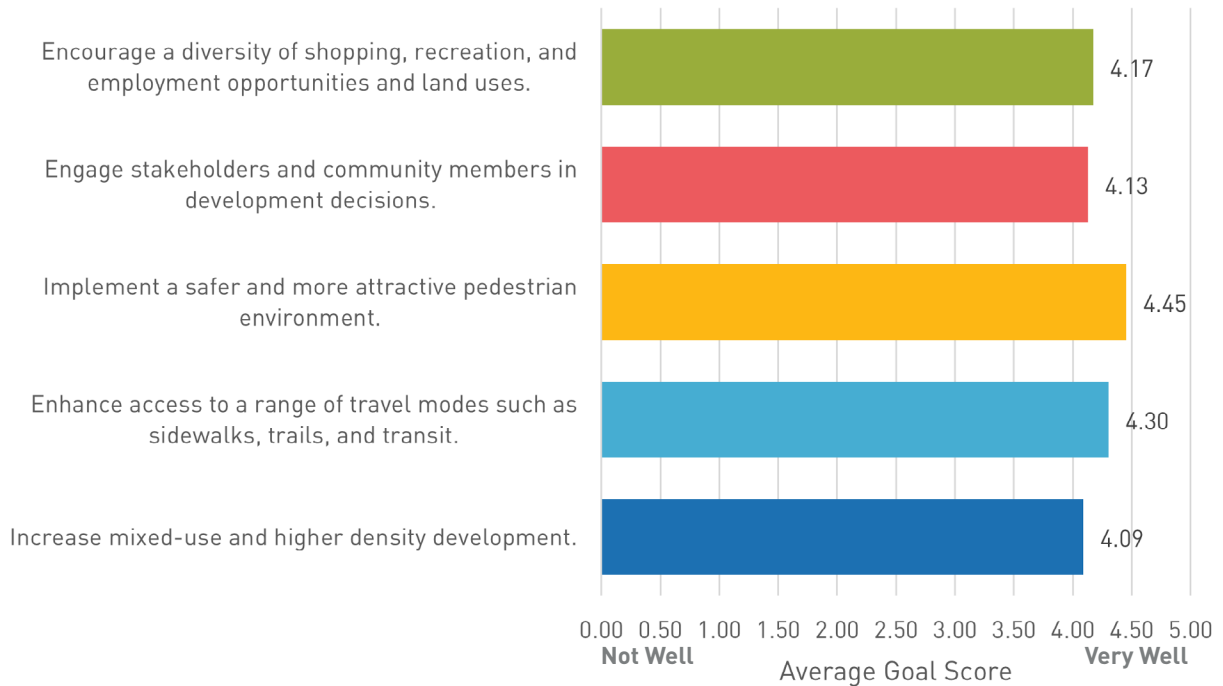
*67% of survey respondents have participated in at least three LCI plans.*

Figure 33. Survey response - LCI project type



*The greatest number of respondents have participated in activity center, town center, and downtown LCI plans.*

Figure 34. Survey response - Goal accomplishment among grant recipients



## GRANT RECIPIENTS

Among grant recipients (23 total responses) who responded to the survey, nearly half (48%) reported that some of their projects recommended from LCI studies have been implemented, while slightly more than one third reported that most or all projects stemming from their LCI plan(s) have been implemented. **Most of the grant recipients participated in LCI plans sometime in the past five years, indicating a relatively quick turnaround time for project implementation.** Some have been involved in multiple LCI plans or projects over the past ten years.

These respondents indicated that **keys to success for implementing LCI projects include development of a clear vision or path, identification of funding sources or opportunities, and successful partnerships and project support.** They noted some barriers to implementation, including lack of funding, differing community priorities, and projects that require coordination with multiple jurisdictions.

The survey asked grant recipients how well they feel the LCI program has helped their community accomplish program goals: diversifying land uses, engaging stakeholders, creating a safer and more attractive pedestrian environment, enhancing access to a range of travel modes, and increasing mixed-use and higher density development. As shown in Figure 34, on average, recipients indicated that all goals have been accomplished “well” or “very well” (scores of 4 or 5). Creating a safer and more attractive pedestrian environment received the highest score overall, followed closely by enhancing access to a range of travel modes.

Similarly, grant recipients reported an increase in community participation in local planning-related activities and an increase in bike and/or pedestrian activity within the LCI area as a result of projects and strategies implemented from LCI plans.

## CONSULTANTS

Questions directed at consultants asked about funding and timelines for LCI studies and projects, as well as for suggestions to improve administration of the LCI program. The respondents indicated that LCI projects could benefit from additional funding, especially to conduct stakeholder and community engagement. Additional funding could allow project teams to be more flexible and account for shifts in the engagement process, such as facilitating meetings with additional stakeholders, creating additional collateral materials, or presenting to elected officials multiple times if needed.

When asked how the administration of the LCI program could be improved, respondents said it would be helpful if there were a firmer timeline between the announcement of funding awards and the selection of consultants. They also noted that it would be helpful for ARC to provide guidelines for how grant recipients can share information with the consultant community. Other suggestions included increased funding for LCI studies, streamlined procurement/contracting processes, simplification of the invoicing process, and allowing greater flexibility for other scope areas.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING SPECIALISTS

The responses from economic development and housing specialists indicated that the LCI program has been very effective in helping communities accomplish stated program goals. In particular, they pointed to public meetings and tours of LCI areas as effective ways of gathering community input and creating a transparent planning process, both of which are beneficial to the community as a whole.

In general, the respondents noted that the LCI program has helped to create a variety of housing choices by type and by price. They also feel that employment opportunities and the variety of land uses have increased within LCI communities as a result of the program. In addition, they indicated that the LCI program has been successful in promoting economic resiliency, prosperity among residents, and housing stability, allowing families and individuals to “age in place” and afford both rental and owner-occupied housing. They disagree, however, that there is adequate access to both owner- and renter-occupied units within the LCI area(s) in which they have worked.



*“[The LCI program] has helped bring much-needed technical assistance to our built environment...we’ve also rallied around specific projects that have yielded interest and investment into the area.”*

*- Survey Respondent*



## OTHER RESPONDENTS

In addition to the roles mentioned previously, individuals representing non-profits/community-based organizations and “other” roles in LCI studies and projects also participated in the stakeholder survey. These respondents tended to agree that the LCI program helps foster community support and promotes involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including people who have been historically underserved or underrepresented. Responses to questions indicate that the LCI program has brought much-needed technical assistance to their areas, provided opportunities to examine the built environment, helped them connect with other jurisdictions, and built momentum for specific projects that are yielding interest and investment in the area.

In general, respondents in this group report being highly engaged in the LCI process. Despite the high levels of engagement, opinions differed on how well they feel the LCI projects help achieved stated program goals. When asked to elaborate, comments indicated that project teams (consultants) should take more time to study the geography of the project area, develop a better understanding of local politics and context, and consider historical efforts.



*Decatur*



*Fairburn*



## CLOSING QUESTIONS

A series of broad, overarching questions closed out the survey, touching on the overall impact of the LCI program on communities, challenges communities face as a result of the program, suggestions for improvement, and other types of projects or priorities respondents would like to see incorporated into the LCI program in the future.

**One of the greatest areas of impact felt by communities through the LCI program is increased access to trails, parks, and greenspace.** Respondents also indicated that the program has had a positive impact on zoning and housing policy, as well as transportation safety. All other aspects received an average score of between three and four, on a scale of one (no change) to five (high positive impact). No category received an average score of less than three, indicating that the program has a positive overall impact on many aspects of communities.

When asked about challenges communities face related to the LCI program, participants gave a variety of responses, ranging from agency coordination and a lack of funding, to addressing increases in traffic and parking, and building consensus around approaches to housing development.

Respondents also provided input on ideas to improve the LCI program, either for planning or implementation. The 20 responses given fell into five categories:

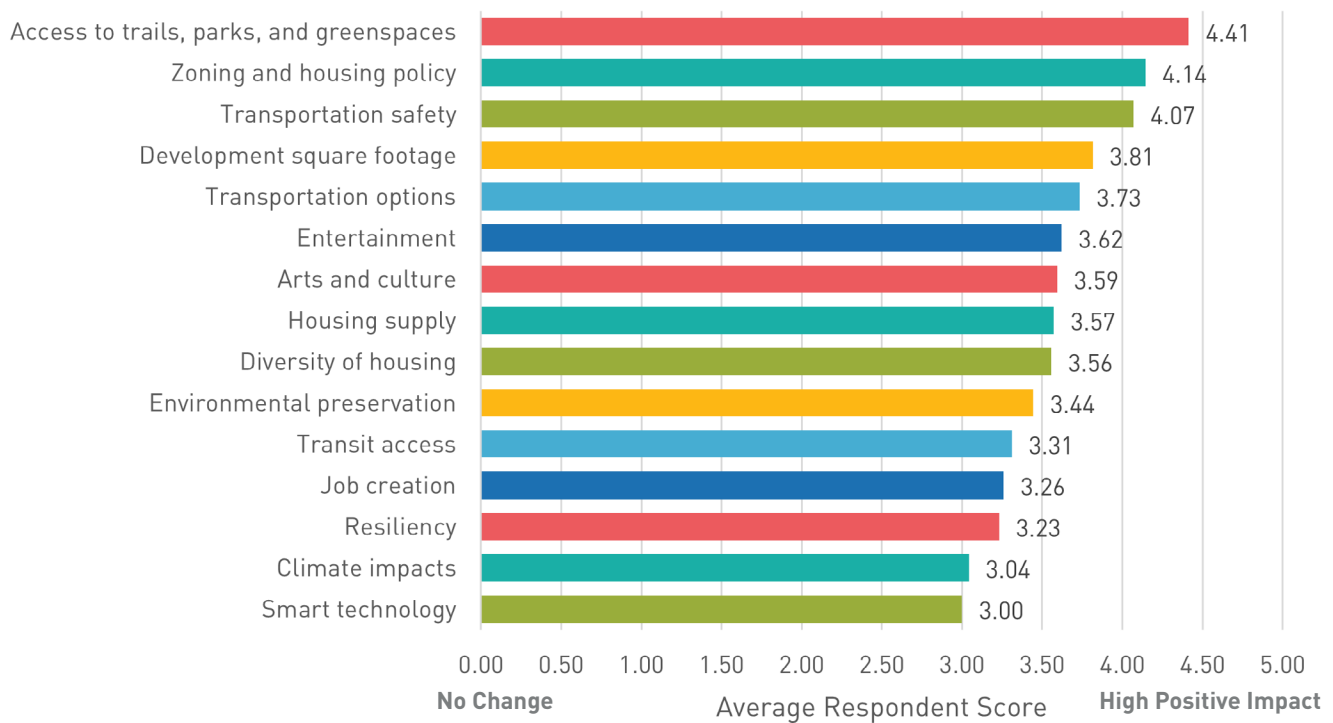
- Funding and implementation
- Project scope and timeline
- Community engagement
- Education and coordination
- Other

With regard to other potential priorities for the LCI program, responses included housing, environmental impacts or sustainability considerations, more formal support or commitments by partners to collaborate on implementation, mixed-use development, and continued ways to plan for community trails.



Midtown Atlanta

Figure 35. Survey response - Impact of LCI projects in communities



The survey asked participants about challenges communities have faced in implementing LCI plan recommendations. Respondents shared the following feedback:

- Providing and implementing mixed-use development.
- Implementing new transit.
- Agency coordination.
- Finding support from appropriate developers for small communities and ensuring land-grabs do not occur.
- Lack of adequate, available funding.
- Maintenance of new public facilities and assets.
- Responding to increases in traffic, pedestrian travel, and parking needs.
- Ability to provide affordable housing and obtain agreement on appropriate density and housing type.
- Leadership challenges, such as changes in leadership, priorities, implementation timelines, and bending to the will of individuals who do not support project implementation.
- Difficulties in boundary expansion as communities grow.



Fayetteville



The final question asked participants if they had any ideas to improve the LCI program, with regard to the planning process or implementation. Respondents provided comments related to funding and implementation, project scope and timeline, and community engagement.

### Scoping

- Work with grant recipients throughout the planning process to ensure that LCI plans align with the original scopes.
- Ensure that schedules allow sufficient time to complete all items in the scope.
- Give grant recipients guidance on how to jumpstart implementation once the LCI plans are complete.
- Consider including new geographic areas, such as suburban nodes in need of redevelopment.
- Broaden the LCI Program to support regional planning and multimodal access, particularly in underinvested areas.
- Include demonstration or pilot projects in LCI plans.

### Community Engagement

- Provide guidance on how to best engage the public during LCI studies.
- Provide guidance or resources for translation of materials for non-English speaking communities.

### Guidance for Grant Recipients

- Offer additional training from ARC for sponsors, particularly those new to planning studies or transportation projects.
- Create forums for LCI communities to share implementation strategies and tools.
- Provide avenues for communities and organizations to connect with LCI staff, fostering partnerships beyond procurement.

### Funding and Implementation

- Increase funding for implementation and encourage regional partnerships to seek federal funding.
- Award funding to communities committed to difficult policy discussions and proven alignment with LCI Program goals.
- Identify funding opportunities for non-transportation projects.
- Provide cost examples for projects to assist decision-makers.
- Help foster local jurisdiction support for CID-led projects.
- Secure commitments from responsible departments before plan adoption to ensure accountability.
- Prioritize funding for projects with the highest likelihood of implementation.



Midtown Atlanta

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Survey responses indicate that the LCI program has been successful in accomplishing its goals over the past 25 years. A diversity of stakeholders and communities agree that the LCI program has had a positive effect throughout the metropolitan Atlanta region. Across the board, participants in the survey who have been involved in LCI plans and studies in a variety of roles expressed that the program has had immense benefits to their communities in a multitude of ways. The LCI program has brought positive benefits to communities in many aspects, particularly regarding access to trails, parks and greenspaces, zoning and housing policy, and transportation safety.

The program received high marks for improving pedestrian safety, enhancing multimodal access, and supporting mixed-use development. Respondents report increases in sales and business tax revenues, increases in the amount of new sidewalk and bike facilities, and many acres of new parks and green space. Other achievements attributable to the program include the addition of civic and entertainment amenities that have strengthened community engagement.

Despite these successes, barriers remain.

Respondents cited issues such as inadequate funding, misaligned zoning laws, and slow timelines between planning and implementation. Political resistance and changes in leadership also posed challenges in some cases. Stakeholders offered several ideas to improve the program. Many suggested the need for more funding, particularly to support implementation and community engagement. They also recommended exploring new funding sources, such as partnerships with philanthropic organizations and state agencies. Better public engagement was another priority, with calls for clearer guidelines on gathering and addressing community feedback.

The LCI program has had a major positive impact on the Atlanta region, especially in areas like transportation safety, zoning, and economic development. While the program is highly valued, stakeholders stressed the importance of addressing challenges to ensure its continued success. These insights will help guide the program's evolution, making it even more effective at strengthening Atlanta's communities in the future.

Figure 36. Survey response - Sampling of supportive comments





# JONESBORO LCI

## Feature Community

The City of Jonesboro originated as a railroad hub south of Atlanta, with a bustling downtown. As the Atlanta region became more suburban, Jonesboro became a bedroom community outside the city’s urban core. Jonesboro has leveraged the LCI program to make significant strides in re-establishing its downtown and creating community spaces.

### LCI PROGRAM IN JONESBORO

In 2003, Jonesboro received LCI funds to prepare a plan that envisioned the city as a pedestrian-friendly destination with restaurants, retail, and housing. The City completed a supplemental study in 2019, Blueprint Jonesboro, to create a master plan for its downtown as well as a trails master plan. In 2022, Clayton County received implementation funds for improvements to pedestrian safety, access to bus routes, and economic development in Jonesboro.

*“The civic engagement at the LCI public meetings allowed community members to voice their opinions, ask questions, and contribute to the plan.”*

*- Andrew Simpson, City of Jonesboro  
Economic Development Director*

### LCI PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION IMPACTS

Jonesboro was honored in 2016 with the Exceptional Merit for LCI Achievement award for its Lee Street Park & Amphitheater project. This 5.7-acre park connects the downtown commercial district to residential neighborhoods and an Xpress bus park and ride lot. The park is adjacent to several schools and features two stages, a playground, and walking trail, making it an accessible and versatile space for outdoor and recreational activities.

Jonesboro kept the momentum going by revitalizing Broad Street Plaza and constructing its City Center next to Lee Street Park, providing connected spaces for city offices and community gatherings.



City of Jonesboro  
LCI Plan  
**2003**

Lee Street Park Opens  
**2016**

**2016**  
Blueprint Jonesboro: LCI Downtown  
Plan 10-Year Update

Jonesboro Trail and City Hall  
Vision Plan  
**2018**

**2020**  
Broad Street Plaza and  
Streetscape Constructed

Jonesboro City  
Center Opens  
**2022**



# KEY FINDINGS

## GREATEST AREAS OF IMPACT

**Overall, the LCI program is highly valued. Each stakeholder expressed that the program has overwhelmingly benefited communities throughout the Atlanta region.** The LCI program has provided a framework for communities to re-envision their futures and foster partnerships to implement positive change. The LCI program has put smart planning and design on the forefront of people's minds throughout the Atlanta region.

**Stakeholders noted that the projects that are most readily implemented are those that have a clear vision, identified funding sources, successful partnerships, and project support.** This is valuable feedback to consider as local governments continue to develop LCI plans and implement projects stemming from the studies.

**Anecdotally, stakeholders gave the LCI program high marks for improving pedestrian safety, enhancing multimodal access, and supporting mixed-use development.** Survey respondents also reported increases in sales and business tax revenues, increases in sidewalks and bike facilities, and new parks and green spaces.

**Residents of LCI areas are racially diverse.** Forty percent identify as Black, and 12% identify as Hispanic or Latino, exceeding the share of these groups in the region as a whole. While the LCI goals do not specifically address racial diversity, the inclusion of residents from different backgrounds promotes social cohesion, tolerance, and economic growth when diverse perspectives and experiences are leveraged.

**There is strong housing demand in LCIs. Households in LCIs are generally smaller, indicating that housing units are smaller and built at a greater density. LCIs also offer housing for a range of different income levels, supporting mixed-income neighborhoods.** As a whole, there has been a significant number of new affordable housing units added in LCIs over the past 25 years. In addition, LCI households have lower annual median incomes compared to households regionwide, indicating the availability of more affordable housing options.

**LCIs have a mix of both affluent and lower-income residents.** This diversity speaks to the beauty of the LCI program, and indicates that people, especially younger generations, are willing to pay a premium to live in a vibrant, walkable town center with good access to jobs and amenities.

**LCIs are strong job centers, accounting for 23% of all new job growth in the region since 2002.** While historic activity centers such as Midtown, Perimeter, and Cumberland have seen much of the expansion in office space, there has also been substantial growth in LCIs such as McFarland-Stoney Point in South Forsyth, and Tucker-Northlake and North Druid Hills Road in DeKalb County.

**There is a large share of high-wage jobs in LCIs compared to the region.** Over half the growth in Professional Services and Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate jobs have occurred in LCIs. At the same time, **LCIs provide diverse jobs in numerous other sectors** such as Healthcare and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Accommodation and Food Services, providing employment for individuals with a wide range of skills and educational levels.

**The growth in both employment and housing units points to a positive jobs-housing balance in LCIs, and indicates that LCIs are truly becoming more mixed-use.** As of 2021, LCIs have 2.2 jobs per resident, compared to 1.2 jobs per resident for the region.

In addition to housing and jobs, **LCIs have seen significant real estate investment in the last 25 years.** Since 2000, 30% of the region's growth in retail space has occurred in LCIs. Approximately half of all new multifamily rental units 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.

**Since the program's inception, LCI areas have become more walkable and bikeable.** The growing intersection density indicates that efforts are being made to expand the street grid and create a more connected and walkable environment. Almost 1,000 miles of bike facilities have been added across the Atlanta region in the past 25 years, with nearly one-quarter in LCIs.

**For home-based trips, LCIs demonstrate nearly one-third less value in per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) compared to home-based trips elsewhere in the region.** This indicates that people who live in LCIs are choosing to walk, bike, or take transit with greater frequency, and that transportation and land use networks in LCIs are more supportive of travel by non-vehicular modes.



*Hampton*



## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The ARC has made a significant investment in plans as well as transportation improvements as part of the LCI program, supplemented by matching funds from local governments. **However, LCI communities have advanced implementation of their visions at varying levels. Some have seen a total transformation, while others have made incremental or minimal progress.** Based on feedback from stakeholders, this may be due to a number of reasons, including staff turnover, changing priorities for elected officials, and local market forces. While many of these factors are not in ARC's control, there may be opportunities for ARC to provide additional support during the planning and implementation process, particularly for jurisdictions with limited resources.

**Stakeholders noted that ARC has been effective in addressing some priority issues, but not all.** Some areas, such as climate resiliency, are difficult to tackle at the local level and may be politically divisive.

**Many LCIs do not have lower-cost housing options.** Although LCIs have added a significant number of new affordable housing units, there are disparities in the provision of affordable housing among LCIs. Some LCIs with the highest concentration of jobs, including Midtown, Perimeter, and Cumberland, have added no new affordable housing units. Furthermore, housing rental rates are high, creating a cost burden that in some LCIs exceeds the rental cost burden of the region as a whole. This makes it difficult to create an environment that is accessible to people of "all... income levels," per the LCI program's goals. The limited supply of for-sale housing further constrains housing availability in LCIs.

**While the LCI program envisions creating numerous pedestrian-friendly communities, LCIs are not immune from the high crash rates that plague the region as a whole.** This is particularly true for LCIs that are classified as activity centers. While LCI communities cannot be the sole mechanism to address safety, greater emphasis can be placed on safety analyses during the planning phase, and incorporating proven safety countermeasures into projects. Jurisdictions should also coordinate with local safety planning efforts as well as ARC's Regional Safety Strategy when considering how to create safer environments for pedestrians and bicyclists. Because several of the high-risk pedestrian corridors that traverse LCI areas are state routes, communities also need to coordinate with GDOT on safety solutions. Effectively addressing safety will require a holistic approach that considers activities beyond engineering solutions, or the other "E's" of safety - enforcement, encouragement, evaluation, and emergency response.



Jonesboro



# CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

## GOALS, PRIORITY ISSUES, AND AREAS OF FOCUS

There is overwhelming consensus among all stakeholders that the LCI program has been beneficial to the communities that have implemented LCI visions, and to the Atlanta region as a whole. Its core purpose of re-envisioning communities “as vibrant, walkable places that offer increased mobility options, encourage healthy lifestyles and provide improved access to jobs and services,” is still relevant and should continue to be a guiding tenet as the program embarks on its next 25 years.

Over time, the goals of the LCI program have evolved and expanded to encompass a wide range of meaningful aspirations. These include a variety of travel modes, community support, public-private partnerships, mixed uses, and addressing the needs of a wide cross-section of the community, including underserved populations. As the goals have evolved, however, some of the primary principles have gotten “lost,” either buried in extra text or conflated with similar principles. Stakeholders indicated that the goals are not easy to repeat, and it may be difficult for ARC staff or leadership to concisely express the goals of the program to others. Ultimately, the goals should be designed to clearly express the intent of the LCI program to applicants, leadership at ARC, stakeholders, and the general public.

To this end, the goals have been revised to more explicitly state the primary principles and call for specific actions. This will help grant recipients understand how to structure their plans and develop implementation measures to achieve their plans’ visions. The revised goals also integrate the need to help plan for a safer transportation network.

### Revised 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.

The LCI program has also had a series of three to four “priority issues” that have changed over the years. Priority issues are currently affordable housing, green infrastructure, smart technology, and creative placemaking. When applying for LCI grants, applicants are asked to explain how the study will address one or more priority issues. Sometimes the priority issues are not always relevant to communities. Furthermore, integrating additional topics may make it difficult to focus on the core goals of the LCI program. **It is recommended that ARC remove priority issues going forward, to help communities maintain focus on the core goals of the program.**

The LCI program originally focused on revitalizing town centers or nodes of activity (typically, historic downtowns) and areas around transit stations. Over time, LCI grants have been given to enhance multimodal facilities and integrate mixed-use development along corridors, often suburban arterial roadways. **In order to keep the focus on creating compact, walkable communities, it is recommended that going forward, the areas of focus continue to include only town centers, historic downtowns or Main Streets, and areas around transit stations.** Specifically, town centers should fall within the “centers” designation on ARC’s Unified Growth Policy Map, and areas around transit stations should coincide with planned premium transit stations from the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Other planning initiatives may be funded through the Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) or other ARC programs.

Despite the success of the LCI program, there are jurisdictions who may not be aware of the program, even if their community has developed an LCI plan in the past. This is often due to staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge. ARC holds numerous meetings each year on the LCI program, particularly in advance of a call for new projects. However, this information is not always widely disseminated to key staff and leadership at local governments.

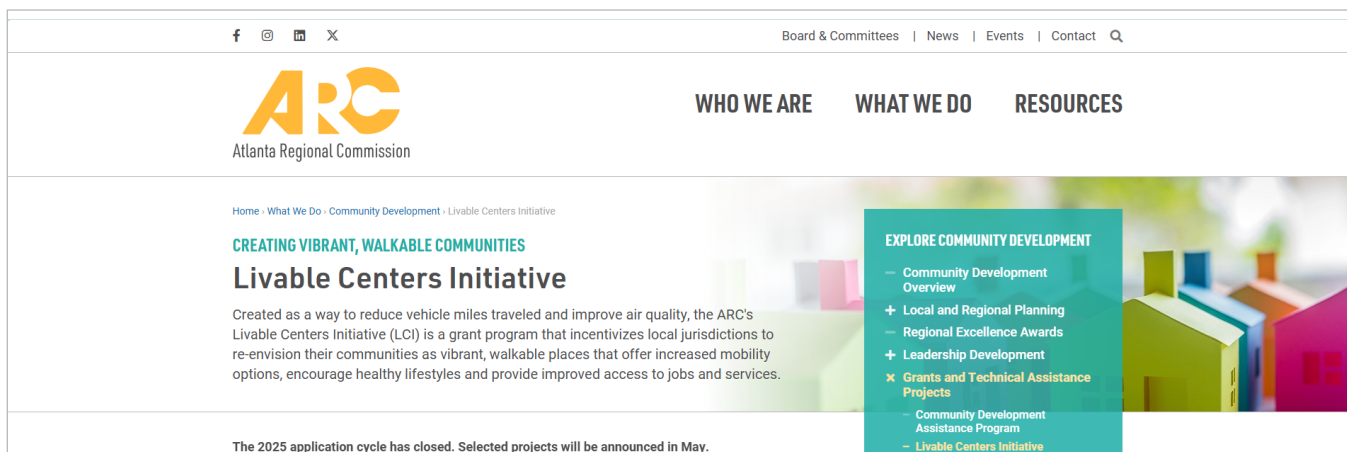
## RECIPIENT ASSISTANCE

### Enhanced Website and Resources

The ARC currently hosts a website with information on the LCI program. There are opportunities to add new resources to the website, helping it to serve as a “one stop shop” for all information about the LCI program. Some ideas include:

- **A more comprehensive manual on the LCI program** - The manual, which would supplement the shorter guidebook on ARC’s website, could include overarching information on the goals and purpose of the LCI program, instructions for how to complete the application, best practices in planning and implementation, examples from other LCI plans, and resources to help applicants during the planning process.
- **An enhanced section for Applicant Resources** - In addition to the LCI Database, Interactive Map, and GIS data, this section would include links to guidelines and best practices that ARC has developed, such as the metro Atlanta Housing Strategy Toolkit, TIP Project Evaluation Framework, and Regional Safety Strategy. This section could also provide links to webinar recordings from LCI meetings hosted by ARC.
- **A new section with LCI Success Stories** - Drawing from the Impact Report and the LCI 25 Year Impact Report video, this section would feature examples of communities that have successfully implemented their LCI plans, along with the mechanisms they used to help implement improvements.

Figure 37. A screenshot of the current LCI website



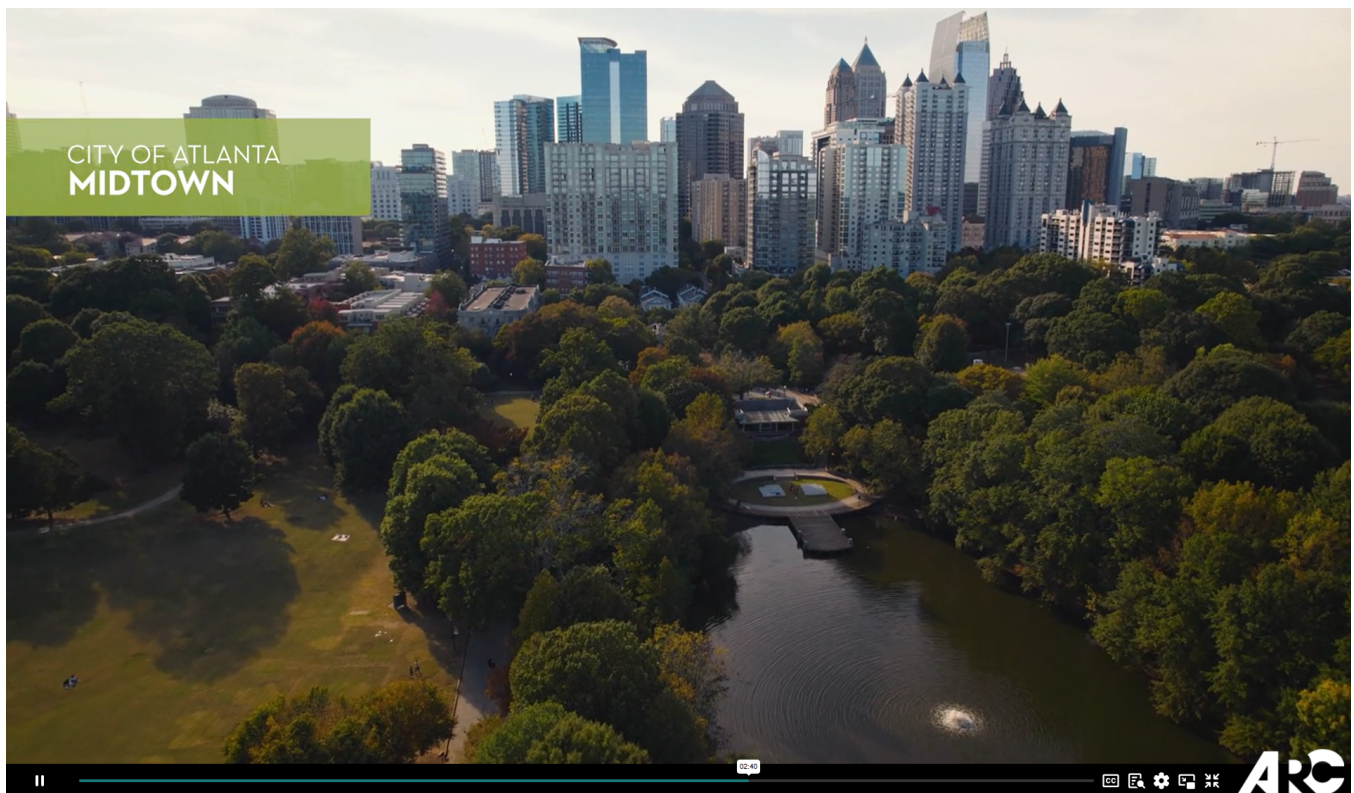
## Planning Assistance

Throughout the life of the LCI program, the ARC has awarded applicants with funding to contract with consultants to create LCI plans. This has generally been an effective way to administer project funds. There are some jurisdictions, however, that have limited staff resources to manage the projects and undertake activities like invoicing. **For some LCI applicants, ARC should explore the possibility of managing select LCI planning studies, including the procurement process and management of consultants.** This would allow local government staff to focus on working on primary tasks with consultants, including data acquisition and analysis, stakeholder engagement, and interdepartmental coordination.

## Streamlined Procurement

Because ARC provides LCI grants to local governments, there can be a wide degree of variability in procurement processes, contracting and project management across the region. **While some of these processes are not within ARC's purview, ARC should provide enhanced guidance on proper contracting procedures to ensure that local government processes are in line with ARC's standards. ARC should also continue to play an active role in managing the project, particularly for local governments with fewer staff resources and limited experience managing planning projects.**

Figure 38. A screenshot of the LCI Impact video produced for ARC's 2024 State of the Region Event







Hapeville

## Developer Forums

One of the original goals of the LCI program is to foster partnerships with private developers to strategically develop or redevelop sites with mixed uses, diverse housing types, and enhanced walking and biking facilities. Most LCI plans establish these visions, and many include a market analysis to equip local governments with the information needed to attract developers. However, some of these visions never get “off the shelf.” When ARC first created the LCI program, the agency hosted an LCI Development Fair, which allowed communities with recent LCI plans to showcase potential development opportunities to local developers. **The ARC should consider hosting developer forums once more, to help connect LCI communities with developers and “kickstart” potential development activity.**

## LCI Academy

When there is a change in local government staff and elected officials, the institutional knowledge about the ARC program and any local LCI studies may be lost. **For this reason, ARC should consider hosting a periodic “LCI Academy.”** These informational sessions would provide background on the purpose of the LCI program, and feature examples of strategies that have been effective for planning and implementation. ARC could invite local government staff to share best practices and insights on how to successfully implement LCI plans. ARC could also give shorter versions of these presentations at Land Use Coordination Committee meetings, Transportation & Air Quality Committee meetings, and similar forums.



## FUNDING

### Funds for Non-Transportation and Small-Scale Transportation Projects

Once a community has adopted an LCI plan, the jurisdiction is able to apply for federal funds to implement LCI projects. These federal funds have been a tremendous benefit to LCIs, funding over \$363 million in projects over the past 25 years. However, due to federal regulations, these funds can only be used for transportation projects. Often, LCIs develop complementary projects in areas such as parks and greenspace, placemaking, electric vehicle charging, and public art that rely on local funds or other outside grants.

**ARC should explore the creation of a fund to implement non-transportation LCI projects as well as smaller-scale transportation projects.** This may be a set-aside of LCI program funds. Alternately, these funds can be built incrementally over time through an “overmatch” program – instead of a 20% local match, the grant recipient would provide a 30% or 40% local match, and the extra 10% or 20% would be put into a fund for non-transportation LCI projects or smaller-scale transportation projects. For the first 10 years of the LCI program, ARC only provided 50% funding for supplemental studies, so there is a precedent for communities over-matching. There may also be opportunities for ARC to “swap funds,” or repurpose more flexible funding sources for implementation of non-transportation and smaller-scale projects. Between 2008 and 2010, ARC did a similar fund-swap with MARTA to help assist the agency with operations. This allowed ARC to utilize local MARTA funds on bicycle and pedestrian projects near MARTA facilities in a streamlined manner, bypassing the lengthier federal process. Overmatching and fund swapping were recommended as part of a peer exchange ARC hosted in 2010, “Best Practices in Livability Planning at Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).”



*East Point*

### Funds for Tactical Activities

Once a community has completed an LCI plan, the jurisdiction can apply for additional funds for tactical studies, or supplementary activities to help implement the LCI vision. **In order to streamline this process, ARC should explore the possibility of including tactical activities in the scope of the LCI plan.** The jurisdiction would have the funds available to create a parklet, undertake a site-specific market study, hire an artist to paint a mural, or undertake similar shorter-term activities to begin implementing the LCI vision.

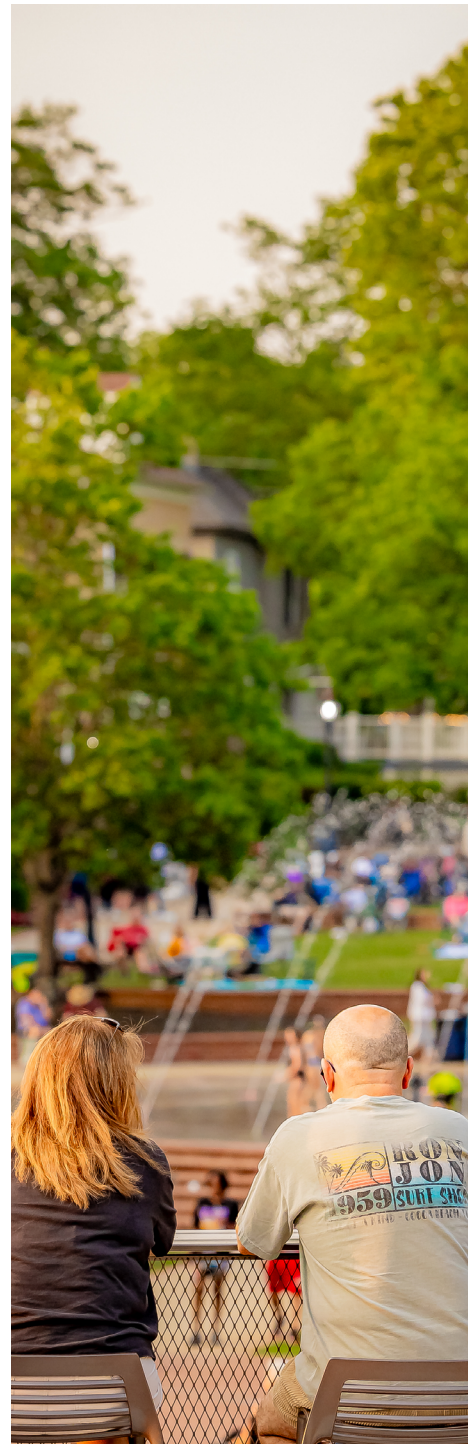
## INTER- AND INTRA-AGENCY COORDINATION

Because LCIs touch so many different aspects of communities – transportation, land use, economic development, and more – it is essential for grant recipients to coordinate both within their agencies and with outside entities as they develop LCI plans and begin implementation. During the scoping process, ARC staff remind grant recipients who should be “at the table” during the planning process, and confirm appropriate contacts with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), transit operators, and other regional and state agencies as needed. There are some minor tweaks to when and how these stakeholders are typically engaged that can go a long way towards improving coordination and the plans’ outcomes.

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

This may include local Public Works and Transportation departments, county transit providers, or state and regional agencies such as GDOT, the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA), or the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA).

- **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.** For example, the LCI vision may include mixed-use development or new apartments or condominiums. Redevelopment may take longer to implement, but if the local ordinances are revised as needed to support these types of development, then the jurisdiction will have the guidelines in place needed to properly review developers’ applications and ensure that it aligns with the LCI vision.
- **Grant recipients should be encouraged to involve other departments and agencies within their jurisdictions, whose input is needed to move the LCI vision forward.** This may include economic development, chambers of commerce, and others. Such departments or agencies should either be part of the project management team or involved in stakeholder committees.



Duluth



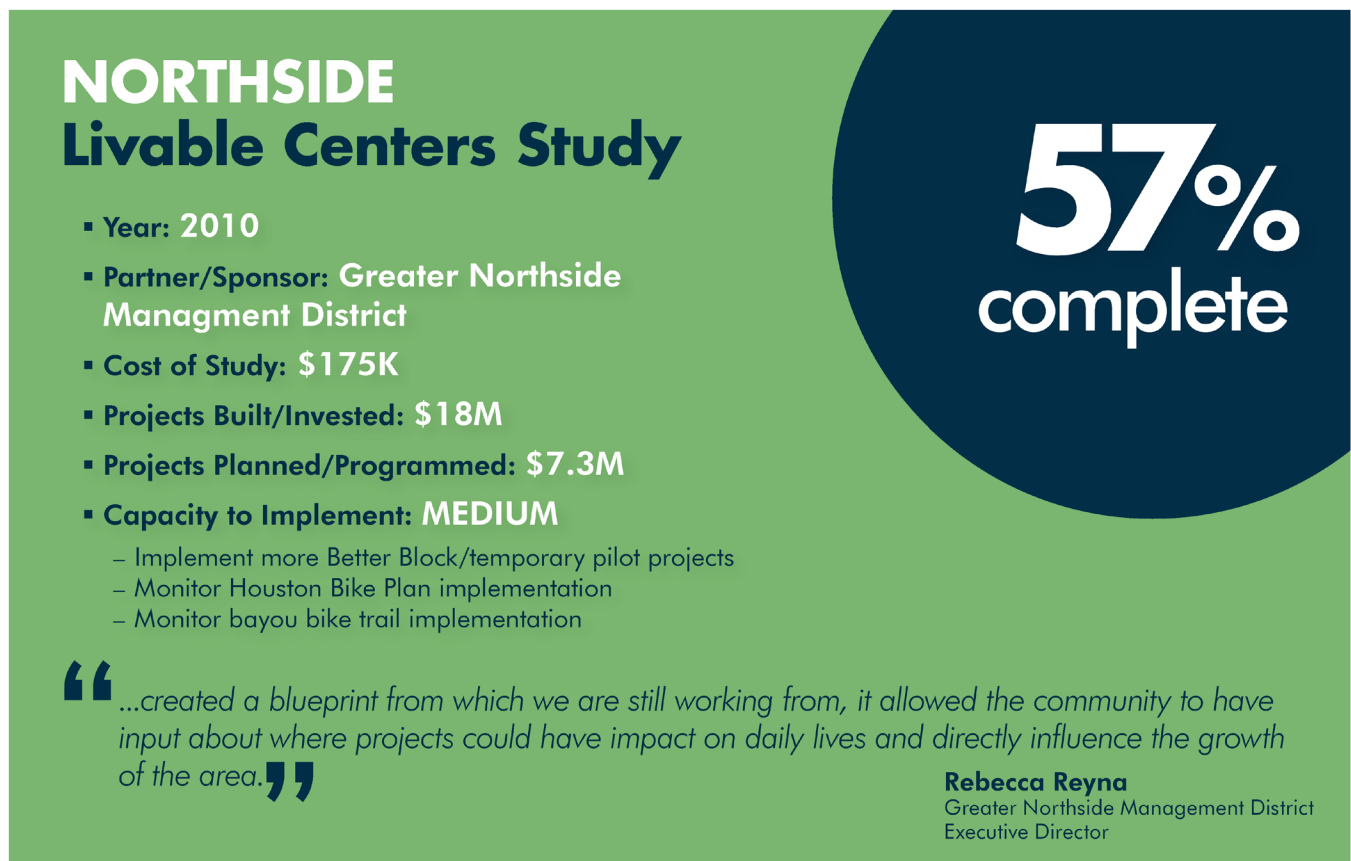
## MONITORING

Due to a variety of factors, including staff turnover, changing leadership, and local economic forces, some LCI plans have seen less progress towards implementation. Because there are so many communities that have participated in the LCI program, it can be difficult to track progress.

**The ARC should continue to compile data on metrics it currently collects and collect additional data with the goal of creating an evaluation framework.** The evaluation framework would not penalize a community that does not make progress towards implementation; rather, it would allow ARC to more effectively identify communities that may need additional resources or guidance.

There are some communities whose LCI plans have not been updated in several years, and that have not seen had any recent progress towards transportation improvements, redevelopment, or other implementation activities. **The ARC should identify LCIs that have not had recent activity and contact the jurisdictions to see if they need assistance with planning or implementation, or if the LCI is no longer a priority.** If the LCI is no longer a priority, then those areas can be “sunset,” or phased out of the LCI program.

Figure 40. Report cards from Houston-Galveston Area Council's Livable Centers Program



# **LCI COUNTY SUMMARIES**



# BARROW COUNTY LCIs



No new multifamily units



52,144 sq ft of new office space



79 new affordable housing units



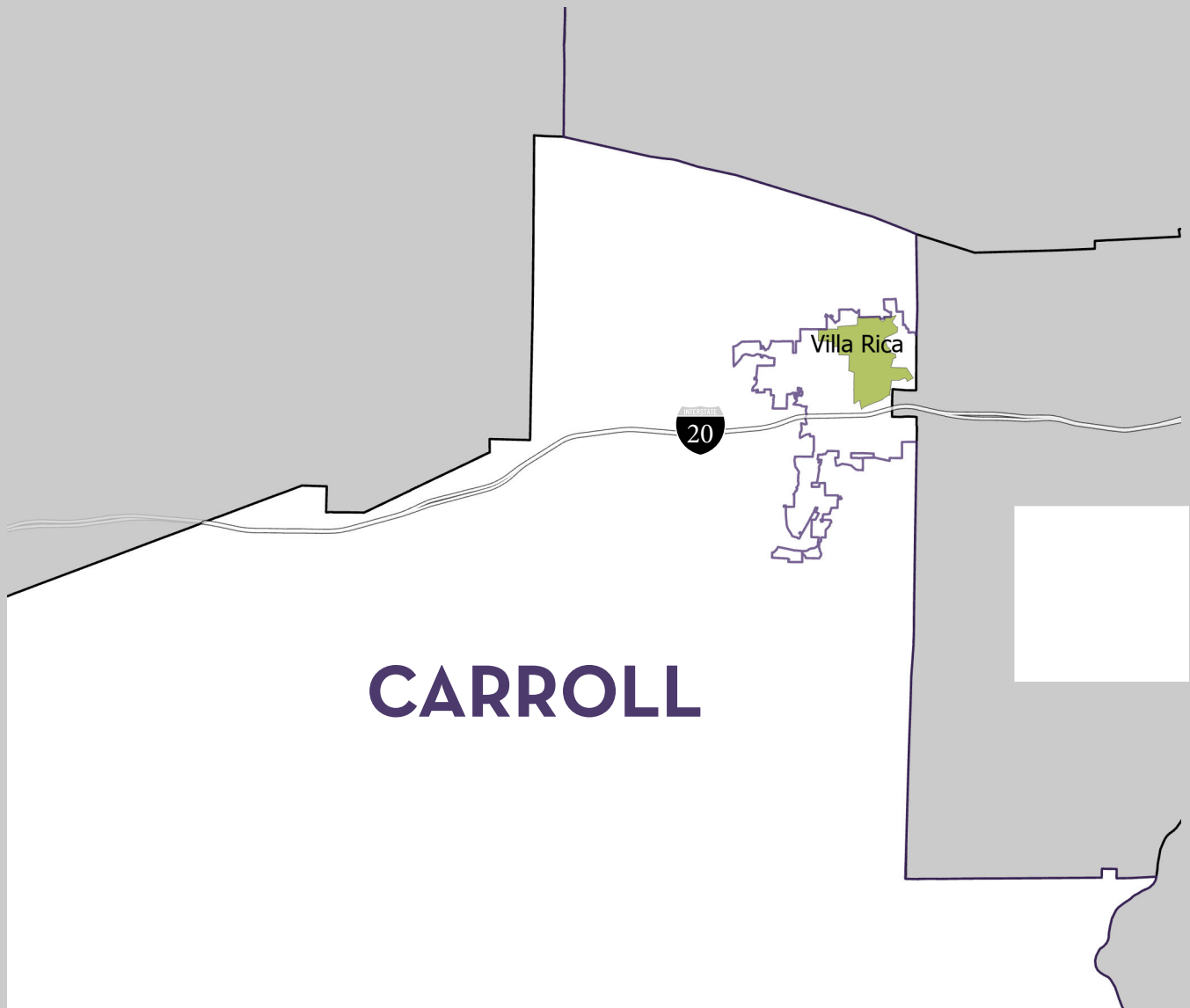
No new hotel rooms



204,698 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# CARROLL COUNTY LCIs



326 new multifamily units



221,238 sq ft of new office space



87 new affordable housing units



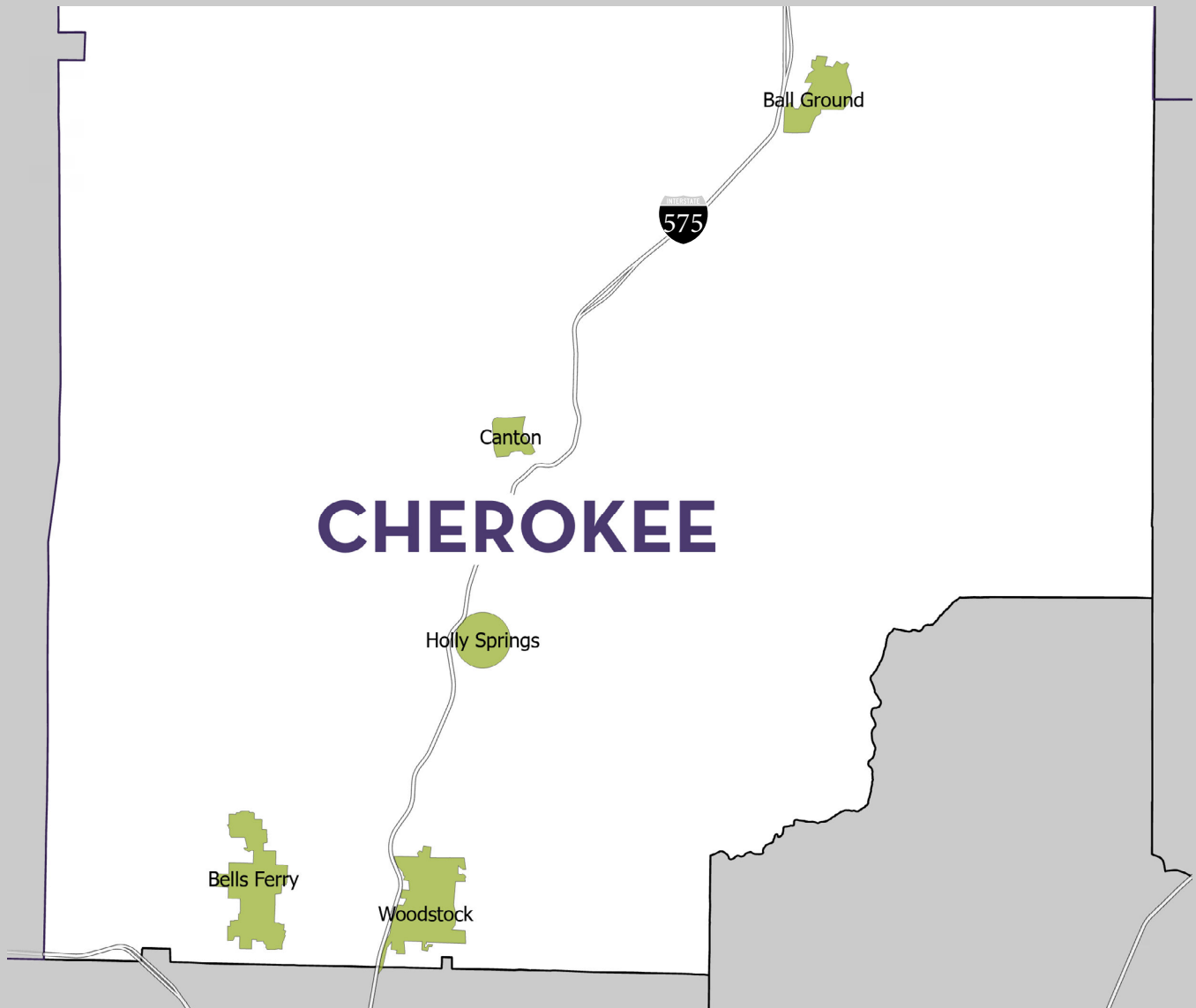
No new hotel rooms



30,126 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# CHEROKEE COUNTY LCIs



2,293 new multifamily units



471,884 sq ft of new office space



377 new affordable housing units



240 new hotel rooms

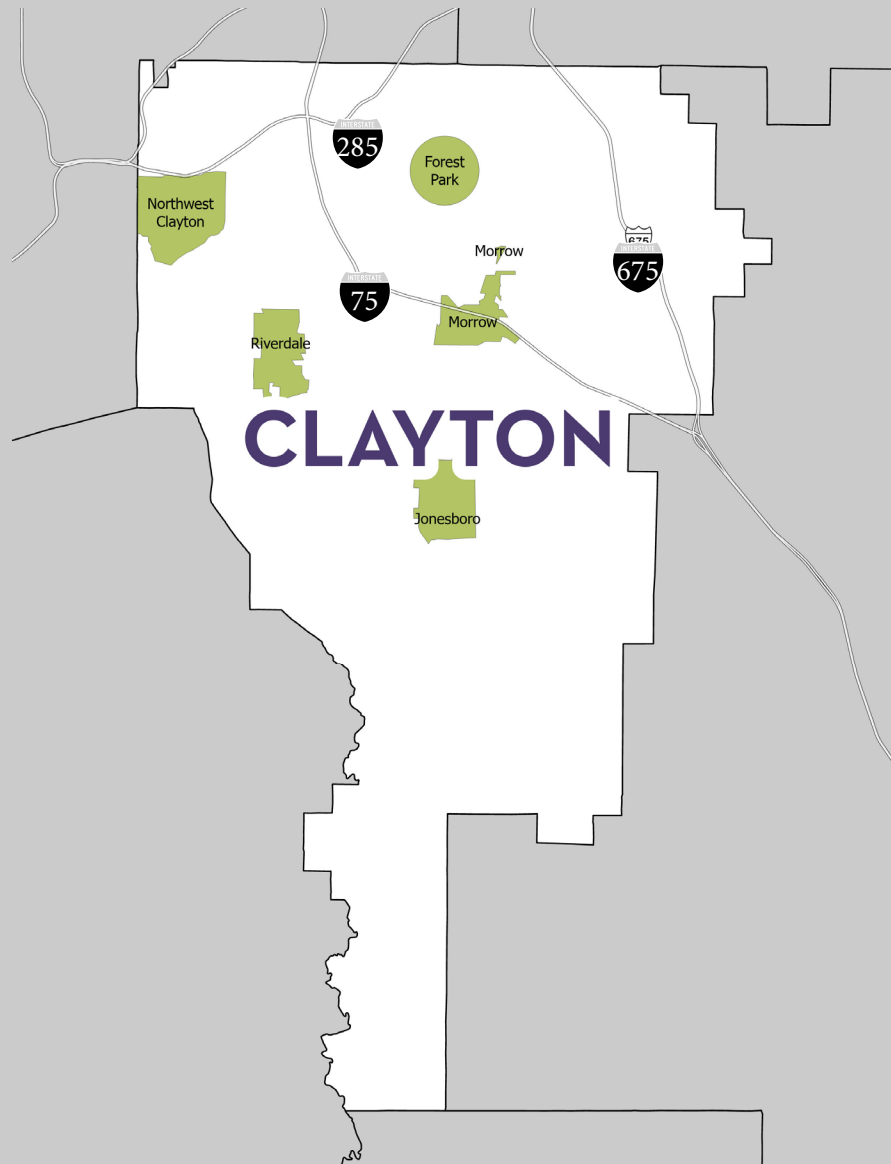


1.2 million sq ft of new of retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*



# CLAYTON COUNTY LCIs



219 new multifamily units



189,197 sq ft of new office space



449 new affordable housing units



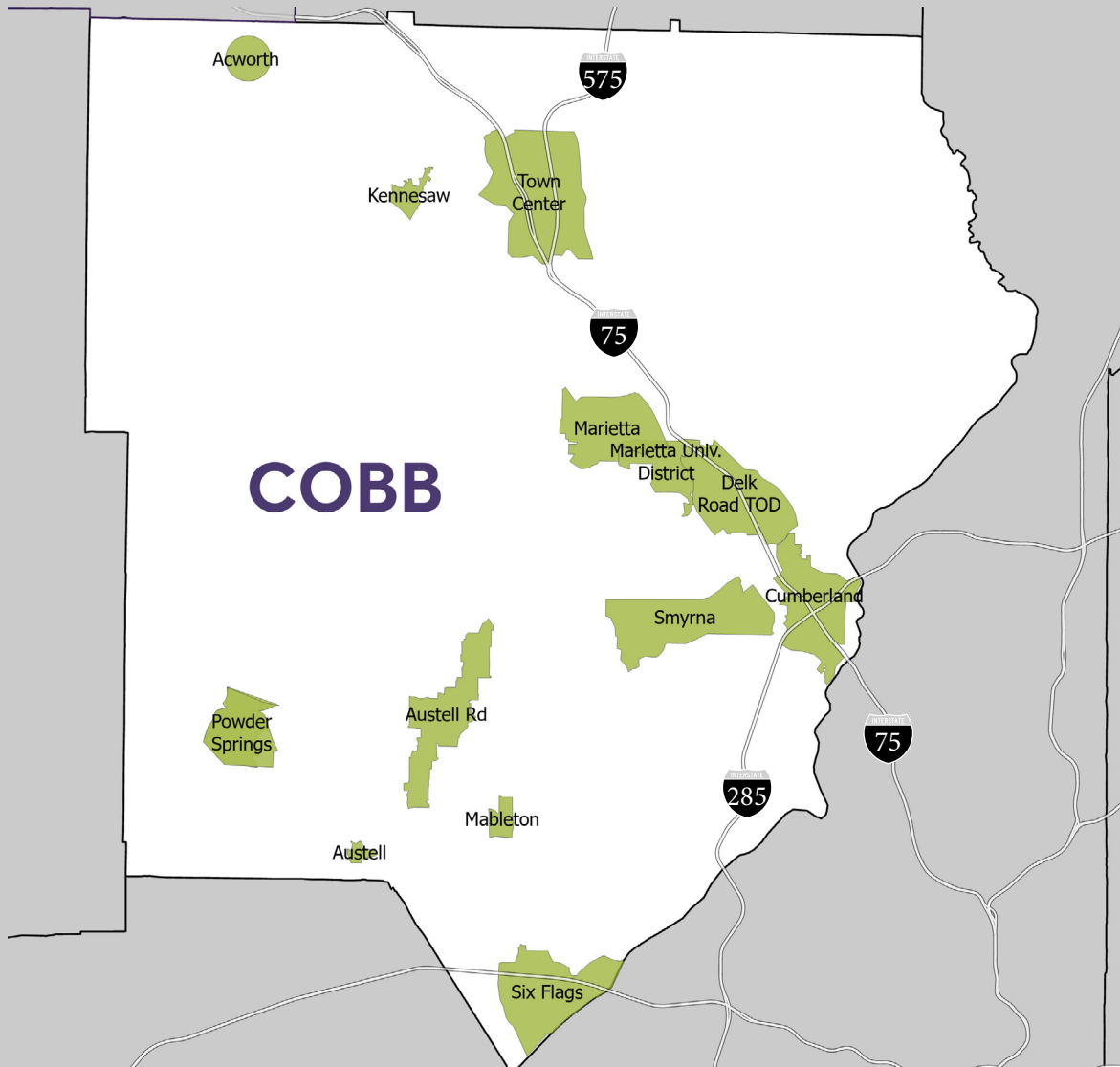
161 new hotel rooms



550,166 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# COBB COUNTY LCIs



10,937 new multifamily units



4.4 million sq ft of new office space



1,488 new affordable housing units



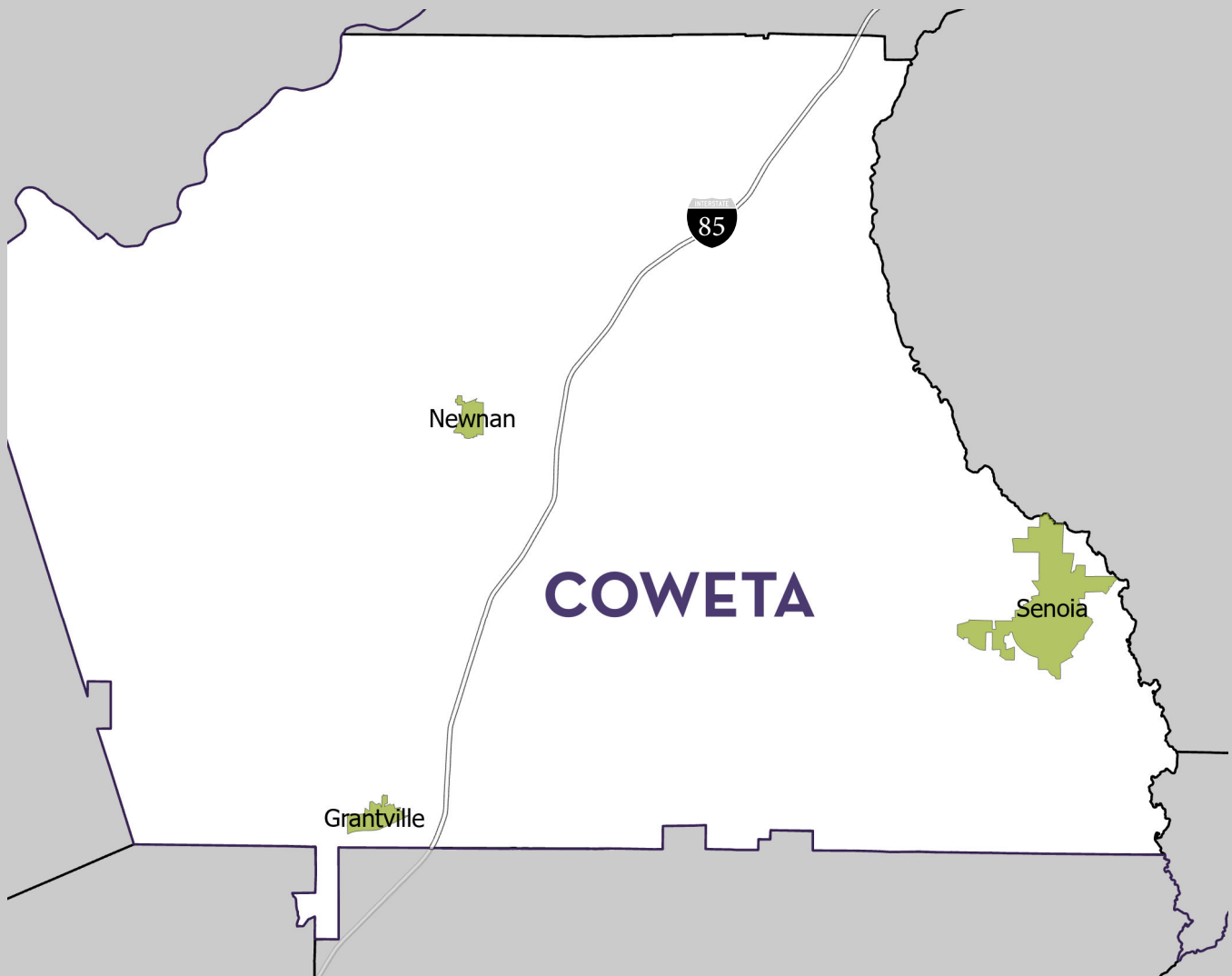
2,322 new hotel rooms



3.5 million sq ft of new of retail

*Note: Reported statistics include portions of LCIs that cross into adjacent counties.  
Data from 2000 to 2023*

# COWETA COUNTY LCIs



No multifamily units



89,770 sq ft of new office space



No new affordable housing units



No new hotel rooms

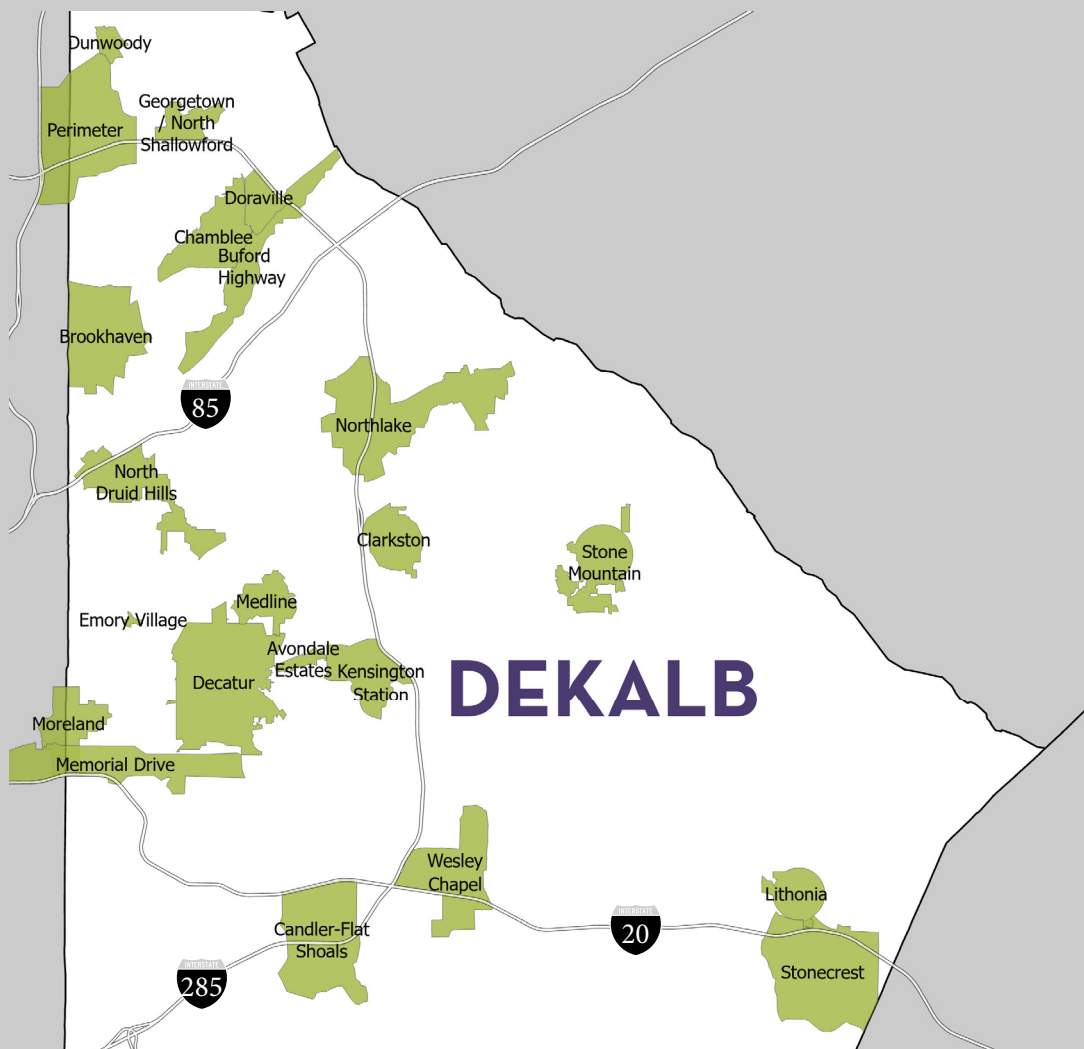


111,762 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*



# DEKALB COUNTY LCIs



29,267 new multifamily units



10.3 million sq ft of new office space



2,932 new affordable housing units



1,908 new hotel rooms



10.3 million sq ft of new retail

*Note: Reported statistics include portions of LCIs that cross into adjacent counties.  
Data from 2000 to 2023*

# DOUGLAS COUNTY LCIs



484 new multifamily units



145,661 sq ft of new office space



286 new affordable housing units



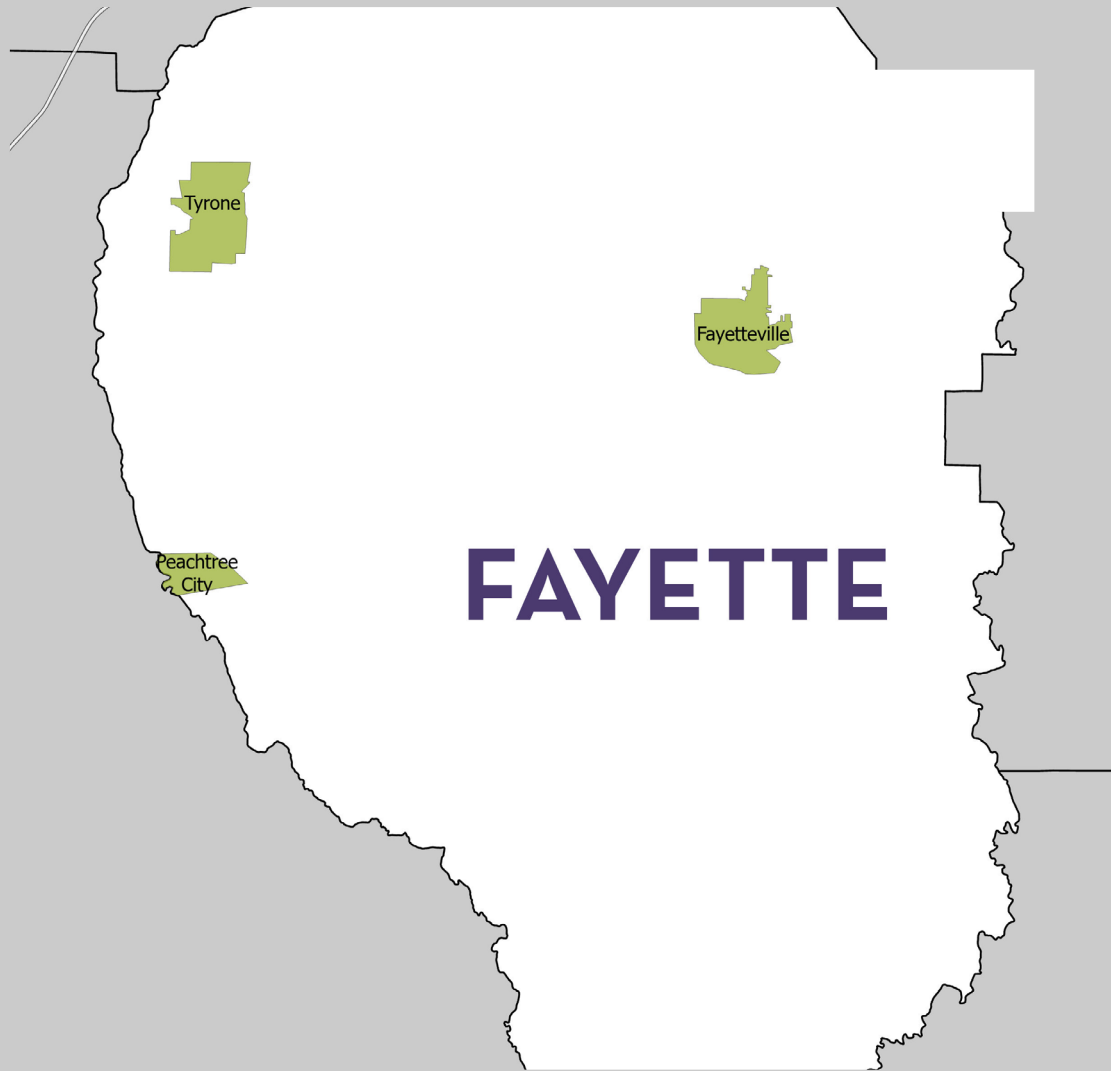
90 new hotel rooms



218,679 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# FAYETTE COUNTY LCIs



1,004 new multifamily units



328,245 sq ft of new office space



No new affordable housing units



80 new hotel rooms

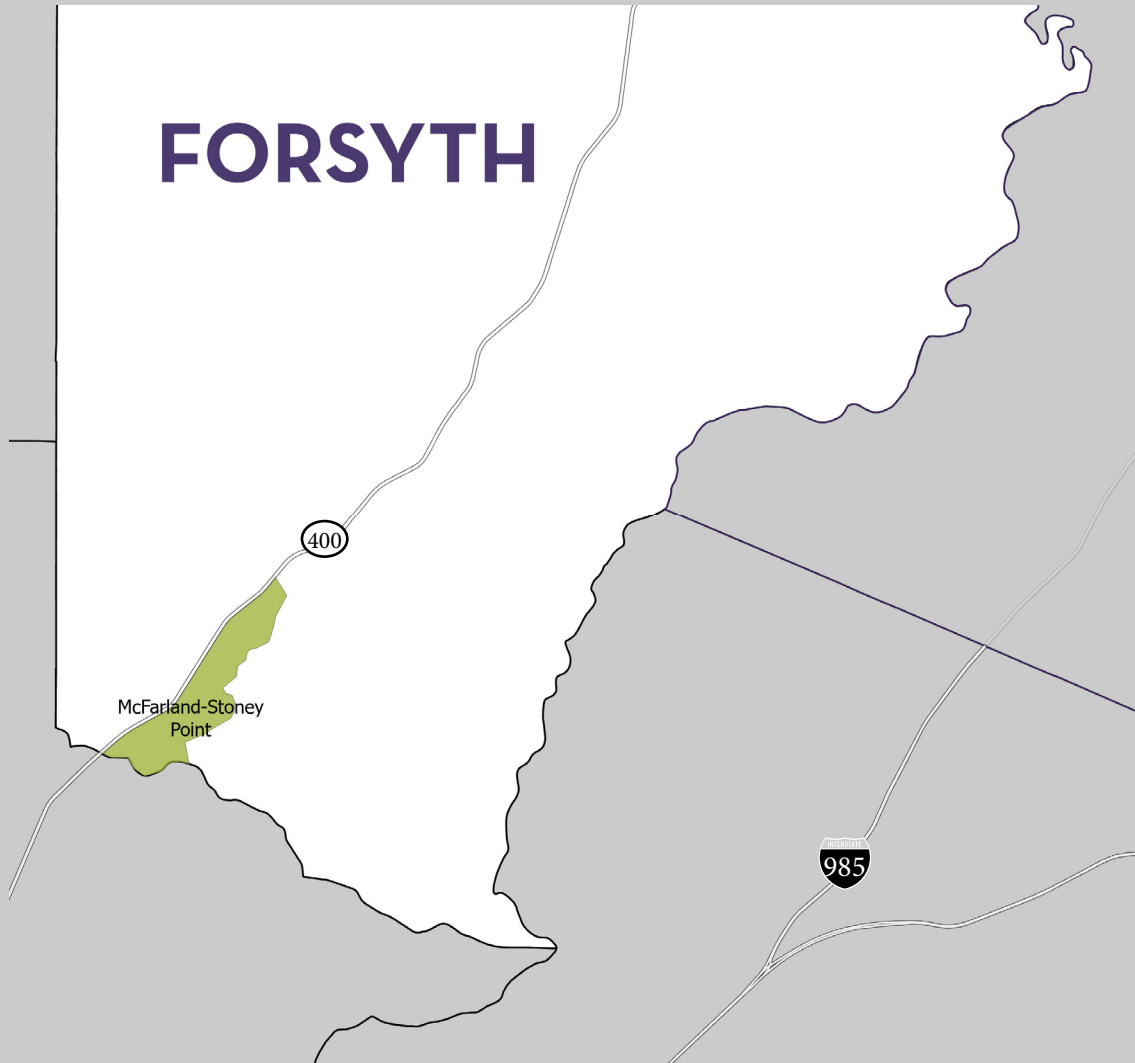


1.0 million sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*



# FORSYTH COUNTY LCIs



2,429 new multifamily units



709,062 sq ft of new office space



No new affordable housing units



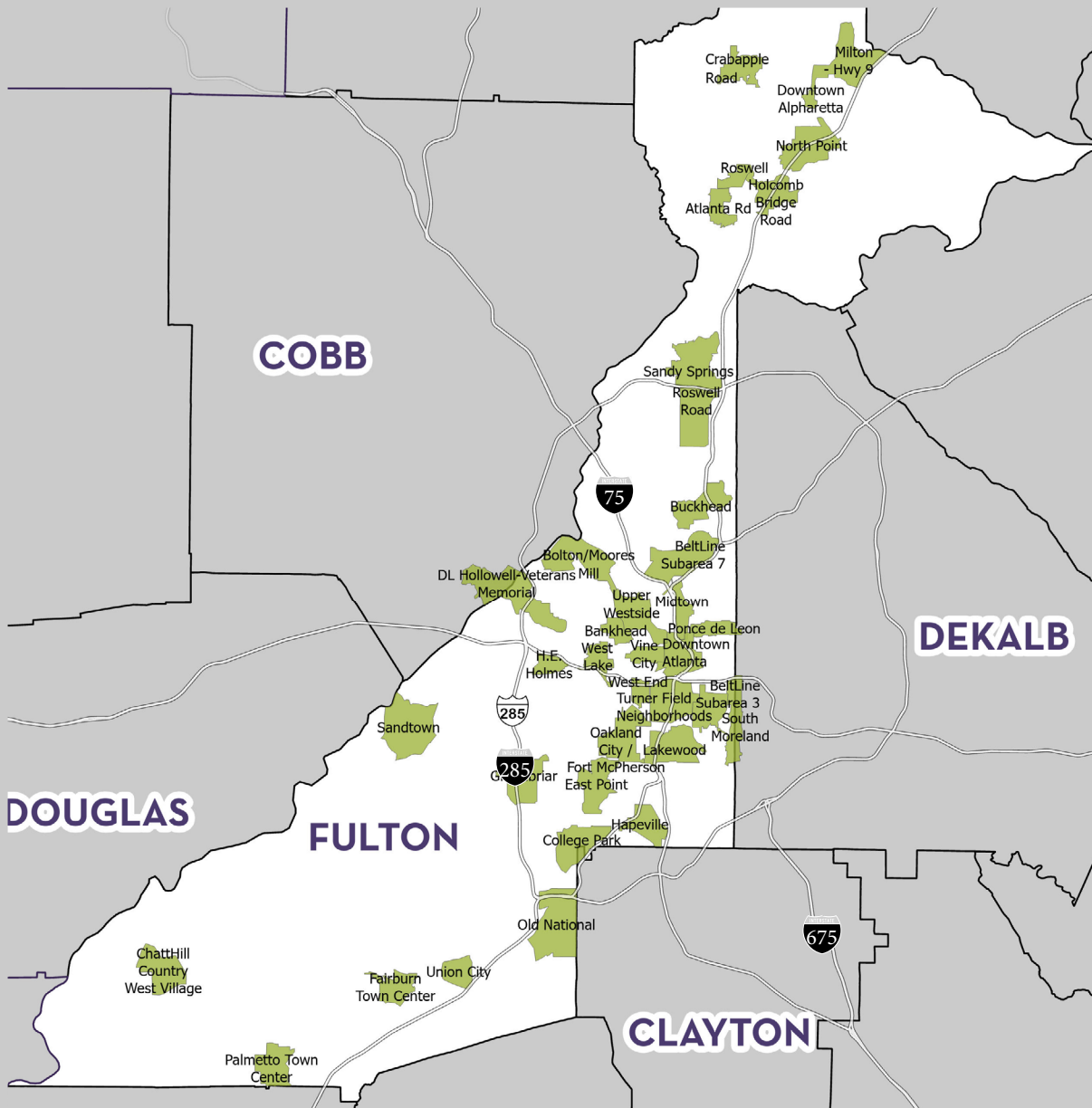
160 new hotel rooms



237,336 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# FULTON COUNTY LCIs



72,312 new multifamily units



35.8 million sq ft of new office space



14,476 new affordable housing units



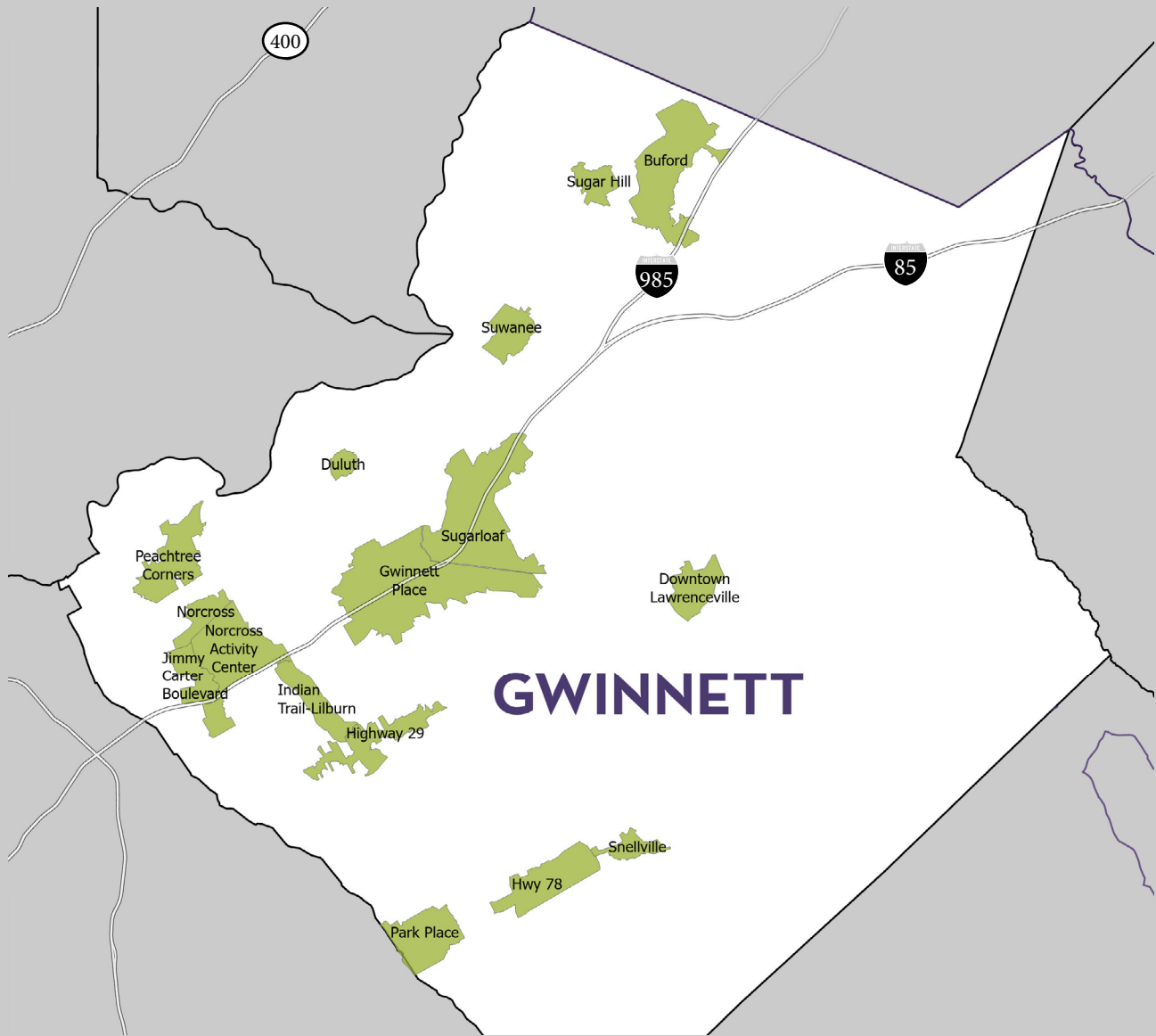
12,593 new hotel rooms



12.7 million sq ft of new retail

*Note: Reported statistics include portions of LCIs that cross into adjacent counties.  
Data from 2000 to 2023*

# GWINNETT COUNTY LCIs



12,452 multifamily units built



6.3 million sq ft of new office space



602 new affordable housing units



2,072 new hotel rooms

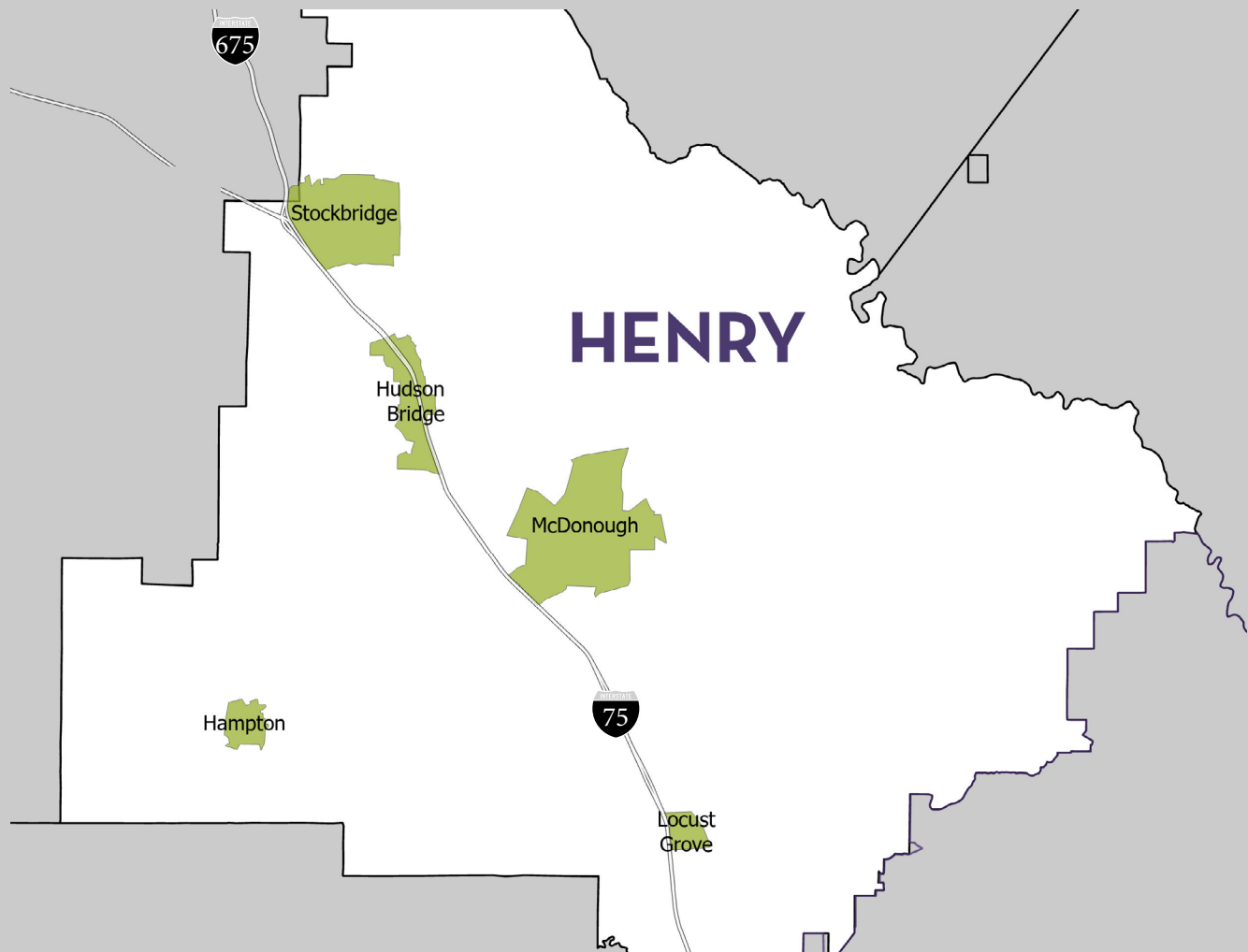


7.6 million sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*



# HENRY COUNTY LCIs



2,811 new multifamily units



488,838 sq ft of new office space



105 new affordable housing units



619 new hotel rooms



2.5 million sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# NEWTON COUNTY LCIs



733 new multifamily units



171,138 sq ft of new office space



418 new affordable housing units



No new hotel rooms



220,432 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# PAULDING COUNTY LCIs



8 new multifamily units



46,244 sq ft of new office space



No new affordable housing units



No new hotel rooms



No new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*



# ROCKDALE COUNTY LCIs



No multifamily units



13,530 sq ft of new office space



No new affordable housing units



165 new hotel rooms



31,467 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# SPALDING COUNTY LCIs



8 multifamily units



12,569 sq ft of new office space



No new affordable housing units



39 new hotel rooms



375,575 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*

# WALTON COUNTY LCIs



94 new multifamily units



99,098 sq ft of new office space



229 new affordable housing units



43 new hotel rooms



643,869 sq ft of new retail

*Note: Data from 2000 to 2023*