Population Estimates for the Atlanta Region:
The Lowdown on a (Slight, So Far) Slowdown
The Highlights

- The 10-county Atlanta region is now home to 4,692,000 in 2020, up from 4,628,400 in 2019. From April 1, 2018 to April 1, 2019 the region added 63,600 new residents. This represents slower growth than what the region experienced in each of the previous four years.

- The Atlanta region’s 2020 population is larger than that of 24 states.

- The lower amount of growth reflects a slowdown in job growth over the past year. (NOTE: These estimates for April 1 do not reflect impacts of any pandemic-related job loss)

- From 2019 to 2020, Gwinnett added 15,500 new residents, the largest single-year growth in the region. Next were Fulton with 12,400 new residents, Cobb with 8,200 new residents, and Cherokee with 6,800 new residents.

- The City of Atlanta continues to experience steady but slowing growth. With lower levels of multi-family development, the city added 7,700 new residents between 2019 and 2020, down by almost a third from the record increase of 10,900 between 2018 and 2019.

- In 2019, there were 22,580 new residential building permits in the 10-county region, which was a drop of over 5,000 permits (primarily a decline in the multifamily sector) from 2018 totals. Current building permit activity for the 10-county region as such remains lower than pre-recession permit levels, and still trails the 1980-2019 average annual level of 31,888.
## 2020 Population Estimates

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta Region</td>
<td>1,500,823</td>
<td>1,896,182</td>
<td>2,557,800</td>
<td>3,429,379</td>
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<td><strong>4,692,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>63,600</strong></td>
<td><strong>58,425</strong></td>
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<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>31,059</td>
<td>51,699</td>
<td>91,000</td>
<td>141,903</td>
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<td>262,700</td>
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<td>Clayton</td>
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<td>150,357</td>
<td>184,100</td>
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<td>259,424</td>
<td>283,900</td>
<td>288,900</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<td>Cobb</td>
<td>196,793</td>
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<td>453,400</td>
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<td>766,400</td>
<td>774,600</td>
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<td>DeKalb</td>
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<td>758,230</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>6,634</td>
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<td>144,900</td>
<td>147,000</td>
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<td>1,037,070</td>
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<td>12,400</td>
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<td>Gwinnett</td>
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<td>166,808</td>
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<td>Henry</td>
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<td>246,800</td>
<td>5,900</td>
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<td>1,100</td>
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<td>478,200</td>
<td>7,700</td>
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**Note:** The City of Atlanta totals are included in both DeKalb’s and Fulton’s population estimates.

Source: ARC’s 2019 Population Estimates, Census
Job Growth Trends

Total Employment - Metro Atlanta (000s)
(Focus on March-March Growth)

+77K  +58K  +69K  +27K

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, ARC Research & Analytics
Units Authorized by Building Permits
Inching Back Towards Historical Average

40-year annual average of 31,888

Source: State of the Cities Data System, ARC Research & Analytics
Where Growth is Going--Multifamily

Multifamily Housing, Existing and Under Construction
2019 Through Q1 2020

Source: CoStar (data); ARC Research & Analytics (processing and mapping)
In metro Atlanta some 43 percent of occupied multi-family units contain single-person households, compared to only 20 percent of single-family unit households occupied by one person.
Once approved by ARC Board August 26, these 2020 ARC estimates are the set basis for 2021 dues.

The 2020 Census is “well underway” but has been and will remain a true challenge:
- Georgia household mail-in response was around 63 percent, leaving a “gap” of 37 percent of all households
- Field work to reach these households (and the associated persons) was significantly delayed by COVID-19
- Follow-up field work reported in process and to be done by the end of September
  - Timeframe was shortened a month from Census Bureau request for an extension to the end of October
  - Because of the pandemic, fewer people will staff the effort and answers will be harder to get.

The first data from the 2020 Census are now expected by Dec. 31, 2020; they will supersede these ARC estimates for 2020 population and will drive Congressional reapportionment.

The 2020 Summary File 1, expected in late March of next year, will provide the baseline data (population by age, race, household sizes, housing units, etc.) for all future ARC intracensal estimates (2021 to 2030).

ARC Research & Analytics will be moving to a newer, even more rigorous regression-based methodology for those subsequent intracensal estimates...

Sneak preview: ARC 2021 estimates are likely to show a severe downturn from the COVID-19 pandemic.

AND, we will continue to depend on accurate and complete Census data for foundational information for almost 100% of the planning and policy work that we do...
And For Now...

DATE: August 26, 2020

ISSUE SUMMARY: Annual Population Estimates

FROM: Mark Mathews, Chair, Community Resources Committee

IMPORTANCE:

The Atlanta Regional Commission annually produces population estimates for major jurisdictions in the Atlanta Region. These estimates are the basis for assessing dues for the following year. Under the law establishing the Atlanta Regional Commission, the estimates and dues calculation must be adopted by the Commission before the end of August.

METHODOLOGY:

The foundation for these population estimates is the 2010 United States Census. Counts of housing units are updated to April 1 of the estimate year based on prior year building permit data and previous year estimates. The updated permit trends are translated into population change based on observed 2010 average occupancy rates and household sizes adjusted for best available current vacancy information from the United States Postal Service and school enrollment data. The estimates derived from the assessment of building permits are further refined by consideration of birth, death, and migration data from the U.S. Census Bureau. This additional data is used in a demographic accounting equation estimates model that was calibrated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Attached is a proposed resolution adopting the April 1, 2020 estimates.

ACTION REQUIRED:

The ARC Board will be asked to adopt population estimates at their August 26th monthly meeting.

RESOLUTION BY THE ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION
APPROVING ANNUAL POPULATION ESTIMATES

WHEREAS, under Subsection (b) of Georgia Code Section 50-8-101, as amended, the Atlanta Regional Commission is required to prepare annual estimates of the population of each county within the Area and the City of Atlanta as the basis for determining the operating funds which each county and the City of Atlanta will provide the Commission in the calendar year next following the year in which the estimates were made; and

WHEREAS, Subsection (c) of Georgia Code Section 50-8-101 requires that after the first day of April but before the first day of September of each year the Atlanta Regional Commission shall make the necessary population estimates and compute the amount due from the governing body of each political subdivision in accordance with a formula set forth in Subsection (b) of Georgia Code Section 50-8-101 and certify such population estimates and other data to each such governing body; and

WHEREAS, the staff of the Atlanta Regional Commission has prepared population estimates based on the analysis of a variety of social and economic measures and calculated the amount due from the governing body of each political subdivision as set forth in the attached table;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Atlanta Regional Commission hereby approves the April 1, 2020 population estimates and computations set forth in the attached tables and authorizes the Director to certify them to the governing bodies as required by law.