

ONE REGION REALITY FUTURE



METRO
ATLANTA
EQUITY
ATLAS

A Special Initiative of the Partnership for Southern Equity



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METRO ATLANTA EQUITY ATLAS COMMITTEE (from left) - MaKara Rumley, Kendra Taylor, Kelly Hill (Co-chair), Chris Burke, Ayanna Buckner (Co-chair), Janelle Williams, Kate Little, Erika Hill (MAEA Coordinator), Nathaniel Smith (PSE Founder & Chief Equity Officer)

NOT PICTURED: Mike Alexander, Jennifer Bonds, Karen Bouye, Monifa Holman, Odetta Macleish-White, Michael Rich, Dia Sekayi (former), Alicia Caldwell Alston, Sibyl Slade, Romero Stokes, Tahmida Shamsuddin, Tashieka Tucker, and LaTresh Williams.

THE METRO ATLANTA EQUITY ATLAS [MAEA] COMMITTEE would like to acknowledge the support of our sponsors: NeighborWorks America, Georgia Department of Public Health, Annie E. Casey Foundation - Atlanta Civic Site, Enterprise Community Partners, Mercer University, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Ford Foundation, Southern Education Foundation, Emory University Center for Community Partnerships and Cox Media Enterprises.

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SPECIAL THANKS to Emory University's Center for Community Partnerships for hosting our monthly meetings. We are also grateful to PolicyLink, Reconnecting America, Manuel Pastor and David Rusk for their advice along the way.



COMMITTEE WELCOME

TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO, our committee came together to develop the Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas (MAEA) – an up-to-date, easily accessible data resource capable of supporting equity work on the ground. We had been impressed with what Portland and Denver civic leaders achieved with their equity atlases and knew the potential for such a tool in Atlanta. Over the decades, our region has experienced some serious growing pains, which seem to affect all communities to some degree. Whether it's the lack of transportation options, the challenges of managing widespread demographic shifts, or even the social barriers that limit upward mobility, the region continues to struggle with identifying ways to move forward. We saw the Atlas as an opportunity to project the big picture and get a snapshot of our collective wellbeing, so that we might craft a strategy for how we move forward together.

For this reason, the MAEA (pronounced Maya) tackles eight key topic areas which provide insight into a community's quality of life. They are demographics, economic development, education, environment, health, housing, public safety, and transportation. We chose to focus on the 28-county Atlanta-Sandy Springs metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which, at the initiation of the project, was the area the U.S. Census had designated as the Atlanta region. Over the course of the last year and a half, we have worked with geographic information systems (GIS) consultants to map dozens of indicators using a wide range of data sources. Understanding the need to make sense of it all, we partnered with prominent experts in each area to author chapters, based on our mapping, for this report. Additionally, to bring the issues to life, we partnered with another group of up-and-coming professionals to develop illustrative case studies of local communities working hard to address tough challenges. The report ends with a call-to-action which views civic health as the springboard into a brighter future and more equitable region.

As we launch this critical work, it is important to acknowledge those who have contributed to it. We would foremost like to thank our small but mighty committee whose members have given up the first Tuesday of every month for the last two and a half years for the purpose of making the Atlas a reality. We would next like to thank the funders of this project who have invested in this work because they too saw its potential for transforming our local communities. It is clear that this project could not have come to fruition without our band of contributors, whose support of this project is evidence of the power of meaningful collaboration. Lastly, we could not allow the

opportunity to pass without acknowledging the two people who have made up the project's core capacity – project coordinator Erika Hill and our chief GIS specialist Drew Murray.

We are excited to finally be able to share the MAEA with you. The entire process has been an eye-opening experience for us. For every map that confirmed what we knew, there was another map that turned conventional wisdom on its head. Of all the things we have learned from this project, perhaps the greatest takeaway is the realization that our communities have far more in common than we realize. We are one region, with one shared reality and one common future. Through concentrated effort, we can turn things around.

Keep in mind that the report only features some of the maps that have been created. The total inventory can be found at www.atlantaequityatlas.com. Also, stay connected with the MAEA through social media and the PSE website to learn more about our upcoming community engagement campaign – an effort designed to connect stakeholders to the tool and help them employ it in meaningful ways.

Sincerely,

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REPORT FOREWORD:

Equity, Our Saving Grace

AS DEMOGRAPHICS IN METRO ATLANTA

and the American South continue to shift, new approaches and leadership will be required to properly position these jurisdictions competitively in our emerging global economy. Cutting-edge research from some of our most esteemed national and international institutions has confirmed that metropolitan regions that work collaboratively to minimize inequality and sprawl are stronger both economically and socially.

Metro Atlanta's true potential remains unrealized because a blind eye is being turned to the challenges and obstacles facing many families, cities, and regions before and after the Great Recession. It is not enough to lift up the many virtues of our region; we must also show the courage needed to address many of the issues found under the categories of race, space, and opportunity.

Our public schools remain hyper-segregated. Atlanta's wages remain stagnant. Suburban poverty continues to increase while we lag behind our peer regions in creating regional strategies for balanced transportation and infrastructure. The City of Atlanta's poor children are more likely to remain poor than in any other major city in our nation. The Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas (MAEA), through sound research and the perspectives of our region's most engaged thought leaders, highlights these challenges and the solutions required to transport our region toward shared prosperity. The maps and innovations found in the MAEA will challenge our communities and their key stakeholders to reframe their collective understanding of our region's proper economic and social destination as well as what (and who) it will take to get us there.

Some may view the contents of the Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas as a projection of gloom and doom for our region, but I pray this document will elicit feelings of hope and optimism even as it illuminates the scope of the problems before us.

The Partnership for Southern Equity's tagline is, "Together We Prosper." We

chose this phrase because we believe our position on the regional, national and global stage depends entirely on our ability to embrace cross-collaboration as the key to a more viable and fair region. The resilient history and culture of Metro Atlanta and the American South makes me optimistic. The Civil Rights movement taught us that when Southerners and external allies come together, anything is possible.

As we approach the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, we must challenge our leaders to understand that communities, businesses, governments and anchor institutions will be required to work together to realize the "all in" region of the 21st Century, as articulated by our national partner PolicyLink. PSE offers the MAEA as the starting point for understanding the difference between equality and equity, between equal opportunity and equal outcomes. It is my hope that the MAEA will provide the data, information and spirit of innovation to support the civic will that will be required to realize what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. coined "The Beloved Community." The answer to unlocking the potential of our region is a complex one. The good news is we've had it all along and, in the end, it will be our saving grace.

NATHANIEL Q. SMITH, JR.

Founder & Chief Equity Officer,
Partnership for Southern Equity
and Director of Partnerships for
Equitable Development,
Emory University Center for
Community Partnerships

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE)

and its partners believe that equity is the superior growth model for our region, as it undergoes rapid and profound changes. When residents of communities have access to the highest standards of housing, jobs, education, workforce training, and healthy and safe environments, this nation's promise of opportunity begins to ring true. The goal of the Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas (MAEA) is to illuminate how regional prosperity and growth can be unlocked when communities have equitable access to a range of highly interconnected resources.

The MAEA consists of the following eight chapters, covering an array of indicators that comprise a healthy region. For each of these topic areas, the MAEA committee developed brief belief statements which express our visions of what a thriving and equitable community will look like.





POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

We believe that Metro Atlanta's strength lies in its diverse population, and that its future success will come from nurturing and tapping the potential of all of our region's youth, working adults and elderly.

HOUSING

We believe every person in Metro Atlanta deserves access to safe, decent and affordable housing options, which may include renting or owning a home, and living in mixed-income communities of opportunity.

JOBS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We believe every person in Metro Atlanta deserves access to a job that will pay a sustainable living wage and provide career advancement and personal satisfaction. We also believe a growing economy is driven by equitable access to opportunity, which fosters talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation.

EDUCATION

We believe every person in Metro Atlanta deserves access to quality educational opportunities at every level, which will prepare them for their chosen field of work and enable them to be productive contributors to a more globally competitive region.

HEALTH

We believe every person in Metro Atlanta deserves to live in healthful communities with access to healthy food, recreation and green space, and health care services within a reasonable distance.

TRANSPORTATION

We believe every person in Metro Atlanta deserves access to diverse transportation options that link them to their chosen educational, work and recreational opportunities, at an affordable price, and within reasonable distance of their home.

ENVIRONMENT

We believe every person in Metro Atlanta should be able to enjoy clean air, green space and water and expect not to live within dangerous proximity of waste or harmful materials.

PUBLIC SAFETY

We believe that every person in Metro Atlanta should feel safe while in his or her home, as well as in the broader community. When laws are broken, we believe that justice should be administered in ways that are fair and just, and strategies should be initiated to ensure that formerly incarcerated individuals receive supportive services that enable them to become more productive contributors to society.

HERE'S WHAT THE DATA TELL US ABOUT THE STATE OF EQUITY IN METRO ATLANTA.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Metro Atlanta is growing more diverse, with the fastest growing areas located outside the City of Atlanta. Indeed, most of the population growth in the core counties occurred in suburban areas. Over the past decade, the population of Metro Atlanta grew by one million people (24 percent), doubling over the past 25 years from 2.66 million people in 1985 to 5.28 million people in 2010. The region was the third fastest growing region in the U. S. between the years 2000 and 2010 and is now the 9th largest region in the U.S. overall.

The majority of this population growth occurred amongst the non-White population. Of the total population change over the last decade, 90 percent of the population growth in Metro Atlanta was due to minority population growth. Population growth over the last three decades occurred almost exclusively in suburban areas, as it has over the last three decades. The northern counties of Metro Atlanta generally grew by larger numbers than the southern counties. Gwinnett County grew the most in terms of net population growth.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is a widespread concern across the region. From 2007-2010, every county in Metro Atlanta lost businesses (from a low of 99 in Spalding County to a high of 1,605 in Gwinnett County). Despite the downturn in the economy and the decline in businesses, Metro Atlanta still showed a 13 percent increase in the number of business establishments from 2000-2010. Yet, the effect of the recession was definitely felt as the number of employees declined by 6 percent from 2000-2010. Total payroll also declined. In regard to the geographic distribution of jobs in 2010, there are concentrations of jobs in almost all the counties.

However, the greatest concentration of jobs per census tract is in the northern Metro Atlanta region consisting of North Fulton, North DeKalb, Mid-Cobb, North Gwinnett, and South Forsyth Counties.

Of greater intensity than the concentration of employment is the concentration of unemployment, primarily in a central cluster area, comprising City of Atlanta, south DeKalb County, and North Clayton County.

The number of
business
establishments
increased by
13%.



These areas have levels of unemployment ranging from 16 percent to as high as 58 percent. They are also the areas with the highest concentrations of African American residents, and in North Clayton County, a high percentage of Hispanics.

EDUCATION

In Metro Atlanta, thirty-six public school systems serve over 900,000 students. Six county or city school districts serve the majority of these students. Generally speaking, the region's student body is becoming more diverse with dramatic increases in Hispanic enrollment and continued increases in African American and Asian students. The central theme in the data is that outcomes for these student groups remain stubbornly below those of others. While overall performance levels are acceptable, with over 65 percent of

all students scoring at proficient or higher, student subgroups such as language minorities and those disadvantaged or with disabilities, consistently under-perform relative to students as a whole. More troubling is the fact that these variations in achievement tend to get worse the longer our students are enrolled.

Many believe that investments in early childhood and pre-Kindergarten programs provide a big payoff, especially for disadvantaged students who often start school with limited vocabularies and poor reading skills. On the surface, there appears to be an abundance of pre-K programs in Metro Atlanta, especially in the most densely populated counties. However, program availability drops off significantly in the outer ring of counties such as Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Douglas, Fayette, Henry, Paulding and Rockdale.

Across Metro Atlanta, 60-80 percent of the population has a high school diploma.

Based on **2007** records, if Georgia were a nation, it would rank **26th** in the world for CO₂ emissions.

Only a few census tracts exhibit higher graduation rates, while a number of census tracts exhibit lower rates. While this figure puts the region at about the national average, some might argue that the region must increase the percentage of high school graduates in order to significantly increase the college attendance rate. Metro Atlanta also has one of the largest postsecondary education infrastructures. There are 57 colleges and universities serving upwards of a quarter of a million students. Atlanta now ranks 10th or better nationally among metropolitan areas in higher education expenditures, research expenditures and enrollment growth. Additionally, overall enrollment of students of color has expanded in higher education.

ENVIRONMENT

Georgia suffers from a range of environmental challenges that impact the quality of its land, water and air. Three common contributors to land pollution in urbanized areas are

brownfields, landfills and hazardous waste sites. The data show that solid-waste landfills, superfund sites, and other potentially toxic sites are concentrated in the counties surrounding the City of Atlanta. More affluent counties such as Fayette, Henry, Paulding, and Cumming have a substantially smaller proportion of these sites.

Water pollution in Metro Atlanta is the result of overflows and spills caused by aging infrastructure, vandalism, cooking grease clogging pipes, and local authority practices. An analysis of state data by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution found that local agencies in Metro Atlanta paid nearly \$6 million in fines over the past dozen years for sewage spills and wastewater overflows into rivers and creeks. Consequently, there are several streams, creeks, and rivers that are stressed and suffer from an alarming amount of water pollution. Data suggest that a disproportionate number of those tributaries flow in and around low-income and minority communities.

When it comes to air pollution, Metro Atlanta often fairs poorly. According to the

American Lung Association report on air quality, State of *THE Air* 2012, Metro Atlanta ranked 25th for worst ozone depletion and tied for 24th for worst soot. Based on 2007 records, if Georgia were a nation, it would rank 26th in the world for CO2 emissions.

HEALTH

Health equity is defined as “providing all people with fair opportunities to attain their full health potential to the extent possible.” In our society, there are many people whose circumstances and environment make it difficult for them to make good decisions about their health. In addition, there are specific populations that are more at risk for poor health than others, because of where they live, their socio-economic status, or their race or ethnicity. Health inequities inevitably create health disparities, leading to individuals and communities who are more susceptible to health problems placing a significant burden on our health care systems. The additional burden on these systems – e.g., medicines and emergency room services – impact everyone, as we either pay higher insurance rates or taxes to support the health care of these individuals.

While Georgia has not made the “top 10 most obese states” list, the Trust for America’s Health reports that close to 30 percent of the population is obese, moving from a rate of 28 percent in 2010 to 29 percent in 2012. Looking specifically at Metro Atlanta, there are several counties that have obesity rates higher than the state average, most notably Clayton and Rockdale Counties. A major contributor to obesity is lack of access to quality food.

Interestingly enough, food deserts, areas with limited healthy food outlets, tend to be the greatest threat in the region’s outlying counties.

Another health area where Atlanta has struggled is sexual health. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Georgia recorded 2,522 diagnoses of HIV Infection in 2011, which made the state 5th in the nation after California, Florida, Texas, and New York. Fulton and DeKalb Counties ranked 1st and 2nd respectively for HIV infections. The two counties likewise lead the state in the rate of sexually transmitted infections.

HOUSING

Metro Atlanta’s housing sector has seen some of the most devastating effects of the foreclosure crisis. The hardest hit neighborhoods were already struggling to overcome a history of disinvestment and the widespread loss of home values and housing wealth only added to those burdens. Across the region, Black-White residential segregation has decreased. In fact, unlike other large Southern metropolitan areas with persistent segregation, Atlanta has experienced a dramatic decrease. Yet, while these broader regional changes are suggestive of positive trends for Atlanta, they also mask growing city-suburban disparities as well as stagnant population growth within the urban core.

The potential impact of a household’s location was starkly illuminated in the wake of the recent foreclosure crisis and Great Recession. While White homeowners typically made economic gains through homeownership, Black

One in 9 African American children has an incarcerated parent, compared to 1 in 57 White children and 1 in 28 Hispanic children.

and Hispanic households did not recognize the same level of gains, due in large part to the very different neighborhoods in which they live.

A 2012 Forbes Magazine article written by Emory University Professor Dorothy Brown shared research showing that homes in majority Black neighborhoods do not appreciate as much as homes in White neighborhoods. The 2008 financial crash and subsequent foreclosure crisis intensified this inequity, with White homeowners' median net worth decreasing by 16 percent compared to 50 percent among Black homeowners. Prior to the crash, predatory lending was concentrated in minority neighborhoods. Such practices steered borrowers to loans with higher interest rates, excessive fees and inflated property values based on fraudulent appraisals.

Between 2010 and 2012, most of the counties

in Metro Atlanta experienced decreases in the percentage of foreclosures, with Bartow, Cherokee, and Henry Counties having the largest decreases and Fulton County the smallest.

A 2013 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, written by Elora Raymond and Carl Hudson, indicates that while the Atlanta region's housing market is recovering, this rebound is not evenly distributed. Places with greater minority populations are doing worse than places with majority White populations.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The rates of arrest and incarceration in Georgia have made it, and in fact Metro Atlanta, one of the largest jailers in the U.S. In 2011, prison incarceration rates in Metro Atlanta ranged

from lows of 190-250 individuals per 100,000 in Forsyth, Paulding, and Pike Counties to a high of 1000-1050 per 100,000 in Meriwether and Douglas Counties. With the exception of Spalding County, prison incarceration rates in all of the other Metro Atlanta counties range from 500 to 750 people per 100,000.

While African Americans comprise 31 percent of Georgia's population, Georgia's prison population was comprised of 63 percent African Americans in May 2013. Sixty-three percent of all imprisoned males are Black and 44 percent of the females are Black - numbers hugely disproportionate to their representation in the population. As a result of the high incarceration rate, in 2012 the State of Georgia spent 9 percent of its total budget, or \$1,542,126,919, on public safety, which included corrections, pardons and parole, and juvenile justice. Approximately \$40,500,000 went to housing and care for incarcerated individuals.

This reality has had a drastic impact on some of the most vulnerable children in the state. One in 9 African American children has an incarcerated parent, compared to 1 in 57 White children and 1 in 28 Hispanic children. Access to counseling to minimize the damage and the pain of separation from a parent is minimal.

TRANSPORTATION

As demographics shift around Metro Atlanta, transportation has become both a critical community challenge and an asset. The most apparent challenge throughout the region is an inaccessible transportation system. Far-flung and extremely spread out development has made

it difficult to provide effective transportation. The Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority's (MARTA) heavy rail runs in DeKalb and Fulton Counties, providing nearby residents with fairly frequent, high-speed public transit. The heavy rail system is supplemented by an extensive system of MARTA buses operating over a vast coverage area but providing less frequent service. Cobb, Gwinnett and Cherokee Counties each operate their own bus services for commuters traveling into Atlanta. The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) also operates a regional express bus service for suburban commuters traveling into key employment centers during rush hour.

A region's transportation system determines its winners and losers, and defines the opportunities available to residents. Metro Atlanta's economy continues to suffer from inequitable transportation investment that has created unbalanced growth in the region, which exacerbates traffic congestion and decreases economic development potential. Public transit has been significantly underfunded, further limiting our region's ability to compete in the global economy. Inadequate transportation options impact the safety of our community, as the lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and limited transit service often leaves seniors, people with disabilities, students, other low-income groups, and families without cars navigating streets designed to protect just the motorist.

CONCLUSION:

Moving forward from here

This **Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas** represents a starting point for a deeper conversation about where inequities in infrastructure, education, and opportunities are perpetuating marginalized neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are living symbols of the social and economic potential not being realized in Metro Atlanta. Amir Farokhi, founder of Georgia Forward, captured the social cost of inequitable conditions this way:

“Where there is low social connectedness – reflected in simple things like talking to your neighbors, giving and receiving favors and eating dinner with family – there is greater economic vulnerability. Civic engagement creates places where neighbors look out for neighbors and challenges are solved together. The alternative is to live with a level of mutual distrust, separated by silos and governed by rules that neglect instead of protect.”

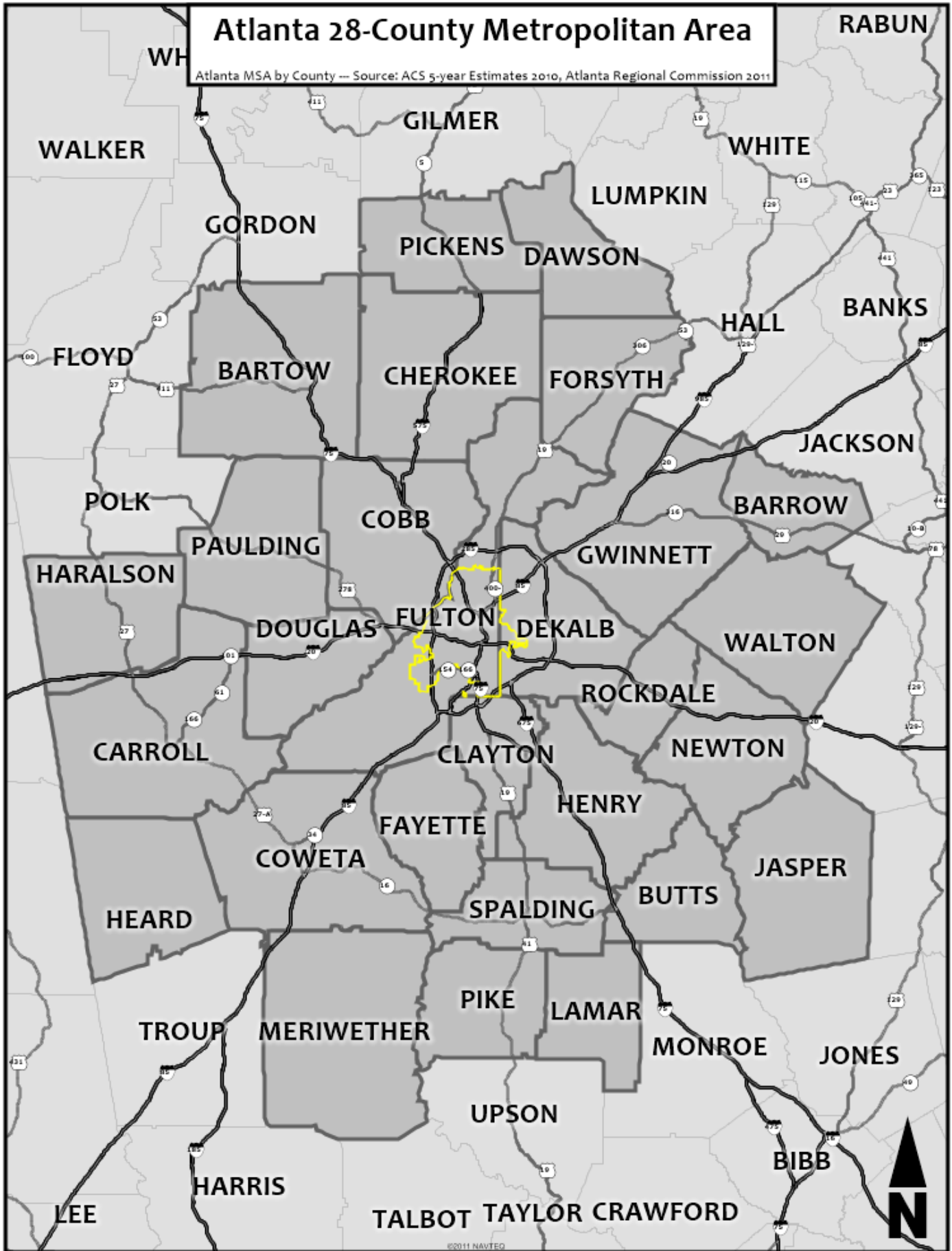
Each of the indicators represented in this equity atlas can be improved by a range of specific policy interventions but it is clear that they are all interconnected. Improving health outcomes will require taking action to locate homes, schools and jobs in healthy neighborhoods with access to nutritious foods, green space and primary care options. Reducing unemployment will mean taking action to improve elementary and middle school performance, supporting families in extending learning beyond the classroom and surrounding children with positive options for after school activities that push back against poverty and crime. Expanding transportation options so that more people have access to jobs and housing that does not disproportionately consume their paychecks will require political will, collaborative approaches and genuine community engagement.

All of these are complicated tasks, but they must begin or be supported more robustly if Metro Atlanta is to become a truly prosperous region, offering hope and success to all who work and live here. ■

THE METRO ATLANTA EQUITY ATLAS uses the 28-county Atlanta region as the focus of this report. The maps throughout the report have been scaled down, but full-sized versions of all the maps featured in this report and more can be found at www.atlataequityatlas.com.

Atlanta 28-County Metropolitan Area

Atlanta MSA by County -- Source: ACS 5-year Estimates 2010, Atlanta Regional Commission 2011





DEMOGRAPHICS

Michael D. Alexander, AICP, Research Division Chief at Atlanta Regional Commission

AS WE CONTINUE to recover from the economic impacts of the Great Recession, Metro Atlanta is awakening to a new future. The region's most valuable asset - its people - remain strongly committed to that future. This chapter examines how we, as a region, have grown and become more diverse over the last twenty years. The composition of our nation's families has changed substantially, and it is important to understand what that means for Metro Atlanta as a whole. This chapter goes on to examine aging in Atlanta using generations as the lens. Finally, the chapter delves into issues of income and poverty.

POPULATION GROWTH

The Metro Atlanta population¹ grew by one million people (24 percent) over the past decade, and has doubled over the past 25 years from 2.66 million people in 1985 to 5.28 million people in 2010². The region was 3rd among regions in total population growth in the U.S. between the years 2000 and 2010 and is now the 9th largest region in the U.S. overall.³ The majority of this population growth occurred amongst the non-White populations. Yet, the last decade of population growth was slower in percentage terms than the previous two decades. Like other large metros, without substantial growth in minority populations, it would have grown much less. Of the total population change over the last

decade, the White population change constituted only 10 percent of that growth. Stated inversely, 90 percent of the population growth in Metro Atlanta was due to minority population growth.

Geographically, most of this population growth occurred outside the central city. The City of Atlanta did experience substantial housing unit growth. However, the population did not grow because families left the city and much of the new housing was consumed by very small households. Thus population growth occurred almost exclusively in suburban areas as it has over the last three decades. This pattern of growth is evident in **Figure 1**.⁴ The northern counties of the metropolitan

Figure 1.

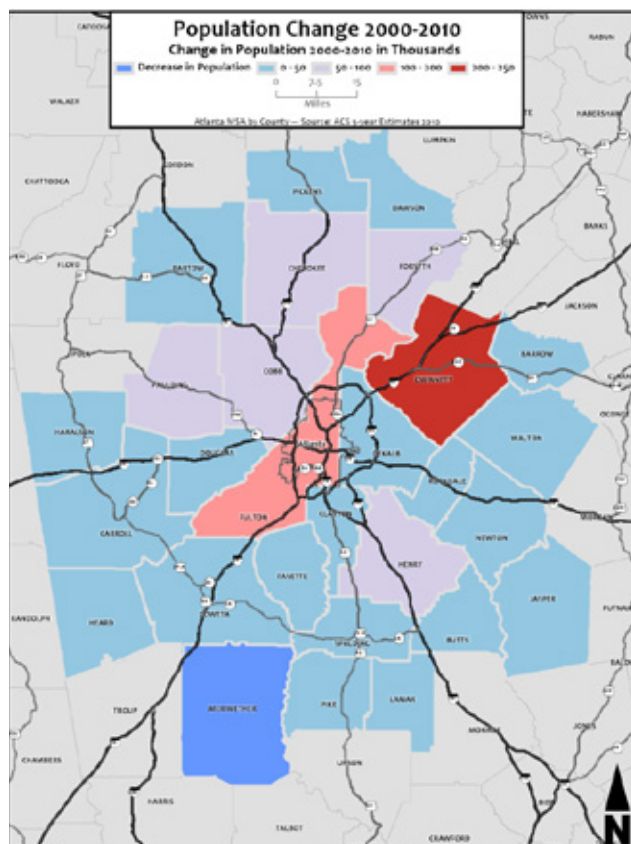


Figure 2.

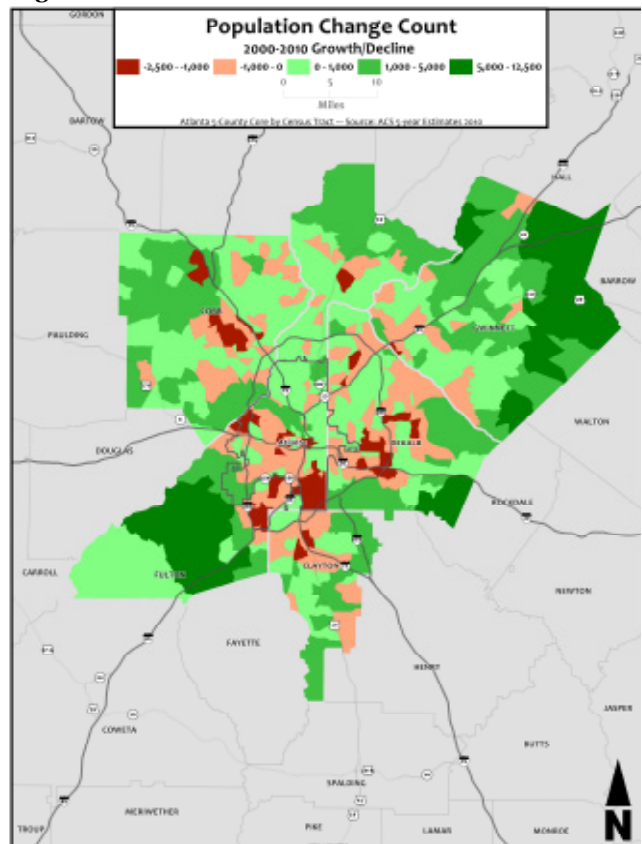
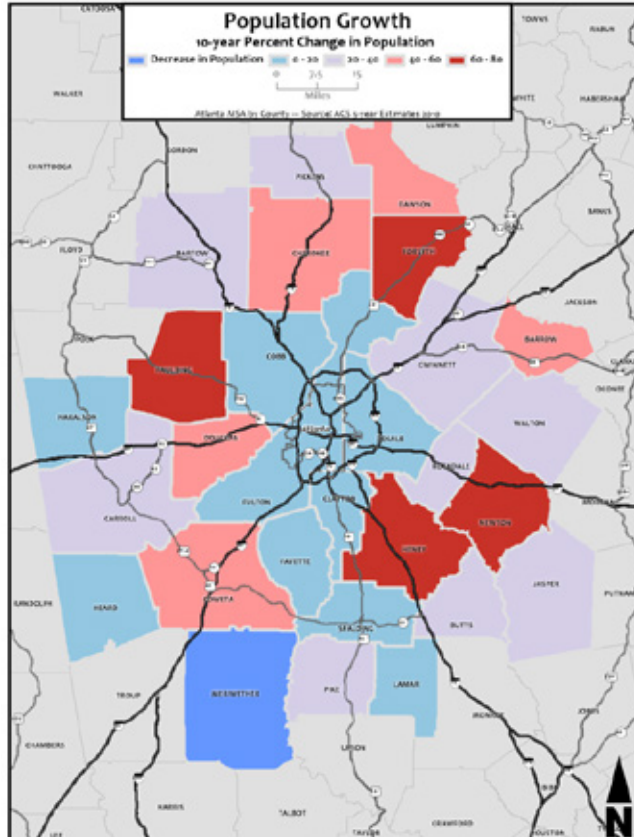


Figure 3.



suburban counties experiencing the highest rates of growth. Four counties had growth rates above 60 percent as shown in red. In fact, Forsyth and Paulding Counties were the 7th and 9th fastest growing counties in the entire U.S. during the previous decade. Five counties were in the top 20 for percentage growth rates, including Douglas, Henry, and Newton Counties, which also had growth rates around 60 percent. Core counties⁷, much larger in terms of total population, had slower rates of growth. As already noted, regional growth was driven by minority populations over the last decade, and the next section will focus on that change.

area generally grew by larger numbers than the southern counties. Gwinnett County grew the most in terms of net population growth.

Fulton County experienced the second largest total amount of new population growth, but as **Figure 2**⁵ illustrates, this growth was generally in northern and southern parts of the county, with large areas in central Fulton County decreasing in density. Significant population loss also occurred in DeKalb County, with Central and Southwest DeKalb experiencing large population losses. As the map shows, most of the population growth in the core counties occurred in suburban areas.

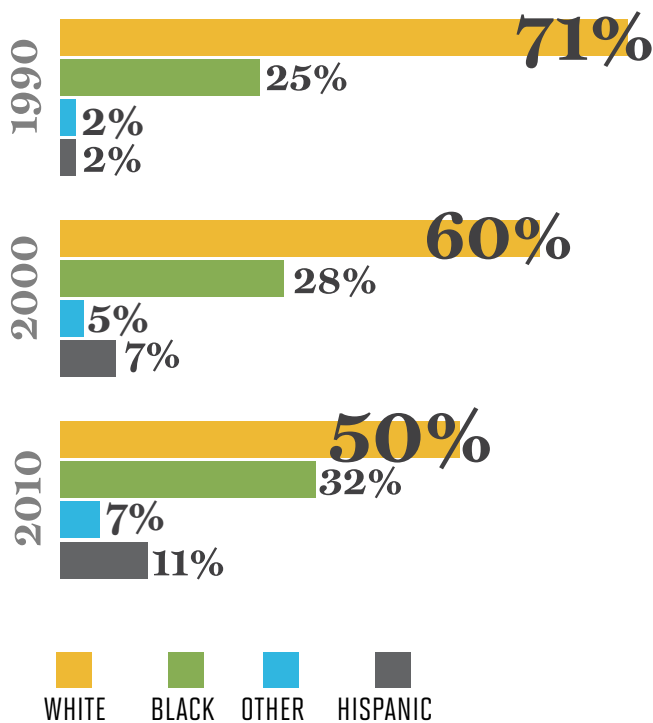
In percentage terms, population growth patterns are even more pronounced. **Figure 3**⁶ shows the ten-year change in population, with

Forsyth and Paulding Counties were the 7th and 9th fastest growing counties in the entire U.S. during the previous decade.



Figure 4.

PERCENTAGE OF RACE AND ETHNICITY
[20 COUNTY AREA]



RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Metro Atlanta has historically been a biracial region, with large shares of both White and Black populations. However, population growth in the past few decades has been largely among the Black, Hispanic and other minority populations.

As **Figure 4**⁸ illustrates, in 1990 Metro Atlanta was 71 percent White non-Hispanic. In the same year, the Black non-Hispanic share of the population was almost 25 percent, with less than 4 percent of the population being some other race or ethnicity. By 2010, in just 20 years, the White share of the total population had fallen from 71 percent to 50 percent.

This occurred even though the White population has grown by 23 percent, or 560,000 people, since 1990. Black population growth accounted for 42 percent of the total population growth in the last twenty years. In the most dramatic change of all over the twenty-year period, the net total Hispanic population growth was actually greater



Courtesy of CDF Action

Figure 5.

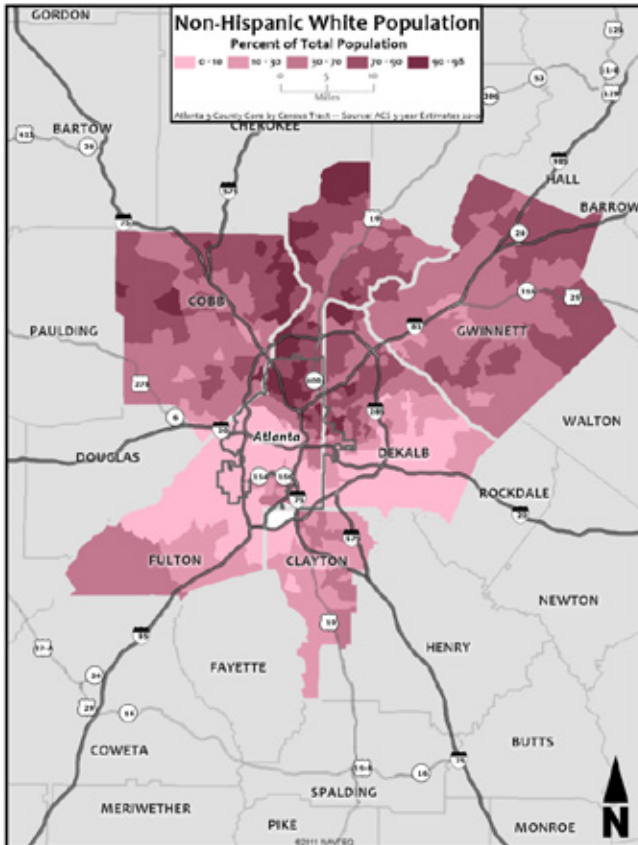


Figure 6.

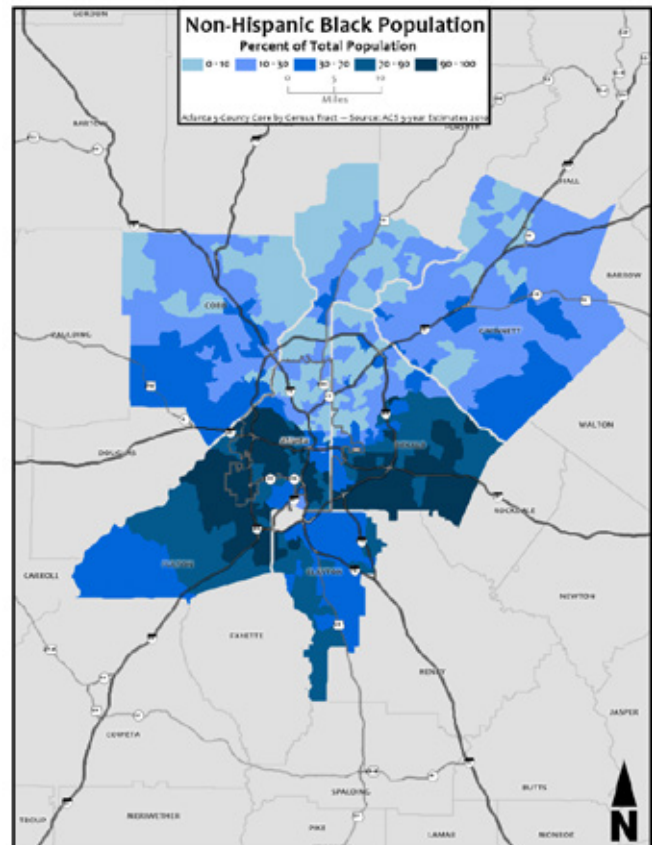


Figure 7.

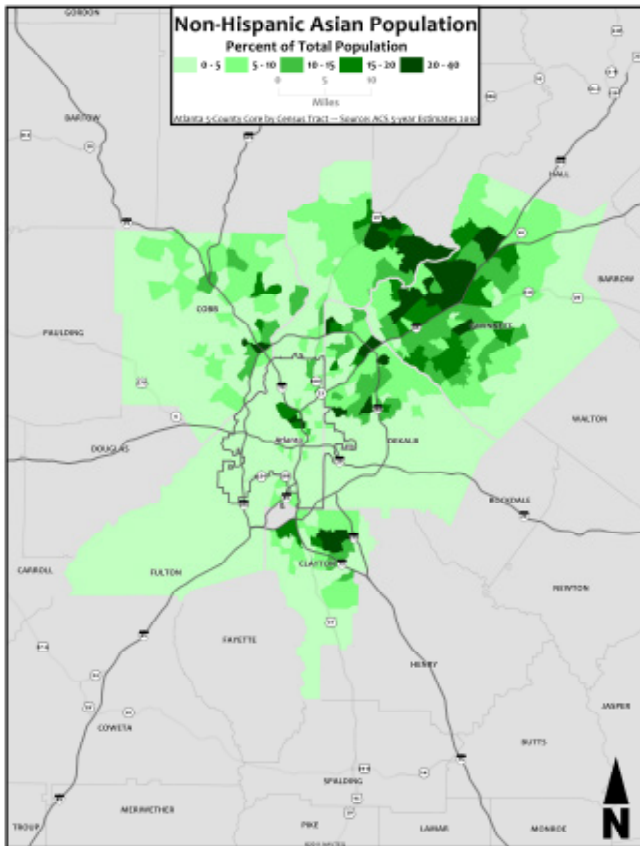
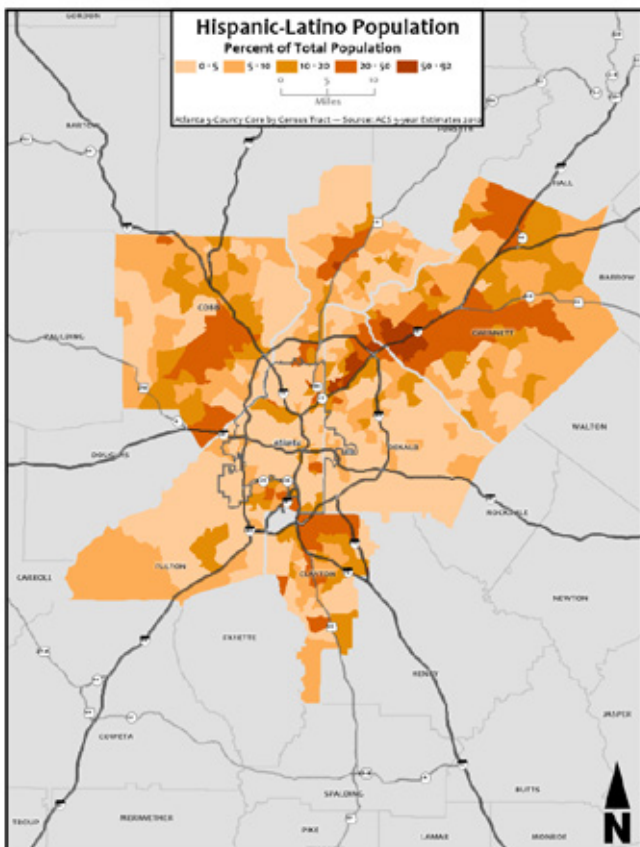


Figure 8.



than the White population growth. Similarly, the Asian and Pacific Islander populations grew dramatically from just 53,000 people to over 277,000 by 2010 - an increase of over 421 percent. If current trends continue, the metropolitan area will become majority minority before the end of this decade.

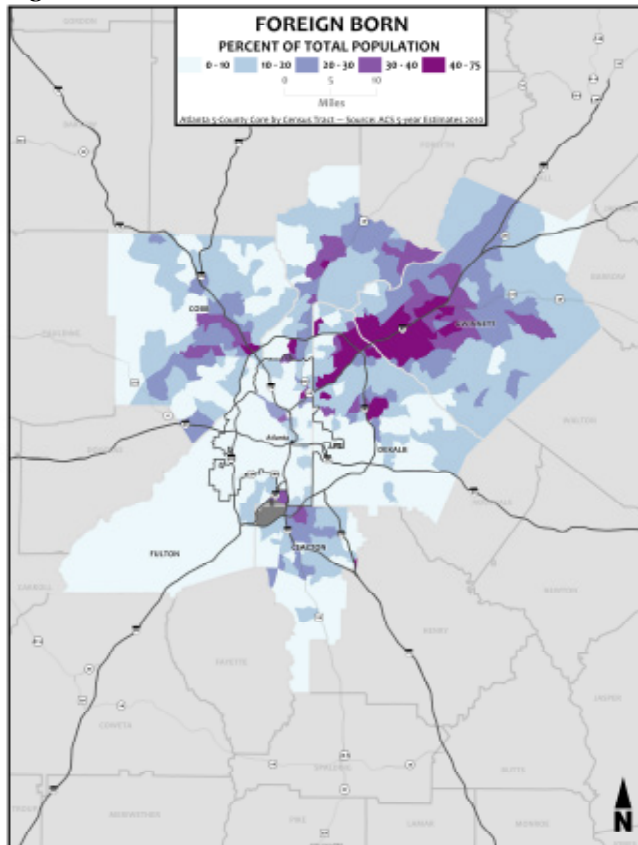
The rapid diversification of Atlanta is a story of change in the suburbs. Between 2000 and 2010, the Black population in the City of Atlanta shrunk by 29,000 people and grew in the suburbs by over 400,000. Gwinnett County led counties in net Black population growth, adding 106,000 new residents. To put this change in context, the total Black population of Gwinnett County in 2010 is 82 percent of the total Black population living in the City of Atlanta. All suburban counties experienced substantial increases in their Black populations between

IN GWINNETT COUNTY, 1 IN 5 PEOPLE IS HISPANIC AND 1 IN 10 IS ASIAN.

2000 and 2010. Forsyth County, for example, saw a 900 percent Black population increase. Hispanics and Asians also moved to the suburbs as their destination of choice. In Gwinnett County, 1 in 5 people is Hispanic and 1 in 10 is Asian. Five counties, as of 2010, had Hispanic populations over 10 percent: Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, and Gwinnett. Gwinnett and Fulton Counties account for almost 60 percent of the Metro Atlanta Asian population.

The ESRI®⁹ index, which illustrates changes in diversity, offers greater insight into this phenomenon. A score of 0 means that all people are of the same race and ethnicity and a score of 100 means there is equal distribution of all people by race and ethnicity. In 1990, Fulton and DeKalb Counties were the most diverse. Fayette County went from a score of 18.7 to 53.5 over the 22 year period. Gwinnett County, which had a score of 22.8 in 1990, passed Fulton and Gwinnett Counties to have a score of 77 in 2012.¹⁰ The picture at the neighborhood scale is more complex. While the counties have become much more diverse overall, there are still large areas of the region that have not. Such locales include the relatively affluent north central suburban areas, such as North Atlanta and Sandy Springs. Southwest Atlanta

Figure 9.





and Southern DeKalb County are still predominantly Black.¹¹

Still, suburban Johns Creek in Northeast Fulton County exemplifies how diverse Atlanta has become, with 23 percent of the population identifying as Asian as of 2010.

Figures 5 through 8¹² (See pages 24 and 25) further refine the current racial distribution of people across the core five counties.

Generally, the White population is more concentrated in the north while the Black population is to the south. The Asian population is very concentrated in Gwinnett and Fulton Counties with a large Asian community in Clayton County as well. The Hispanic population is generally concentrated in northern DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties. Finally, **Figure 9**¹³ (See page 26) shows the percentage of the population that is foreign born, which is very similar to the Hispanic map given the large share of the foreign-born population that is from Mexico and Latin American countries.

FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

Only the City of Atlanta experienced a net decline in family households

during the past decade and an increase in non-family households, which are those in which the people living in the household are unrelated by birth or marriage. Yet, while family households are still the dominant household type in the region as of 2010 - representing 68 percent of all households - family compositions are changing. The classic two-parent family continues to decline in total share of family households. The number of single-parent head of household families continues to grow in total number and share of all households, with 25 percent being one-person households and 7 percent being non-family households. The largest share of family households is in Forsyth County (80 percent), while the smallest share is in the City of Atlanta. Less than half, or 43 percent, of households in the City are family households. **Figure 10**¹⁴ shows the share of female-headed households by county. In the





northern suburbs, the percentage is relatively small, while it reaches 25 percent in Clayton County. These demographic changes are a substantial part of the explanation of why household sizes continue to fall across the region. To illustrate this, **Figure 11**¹⁵ shows household size change by county, illustrating that it fell across the region between 2000 and 2010. In some cases this natural demographic change is due to the last of the children of the baby boomers finishing school and leaving their parents' homes in counties like DeKalb and Rockdale. Regionally, the number of families with no kids grew at a faster rate than did families with kids. This, again, correlates with declining average household sizes and lower fertility rates in the region. In the City of Atlanta, one-person households make up 44 percent of the population and non-family households make up 13 percent, both of which are the highest in the region.

Walton County has the smallest number of non-family households, showing only 3.9 percent of its household base. Forsyth County has the lowest one-person household share at just under 16 percent, while the City of Atlanta has the largest. The City of Atlanta has 18 percent

Figure 10.

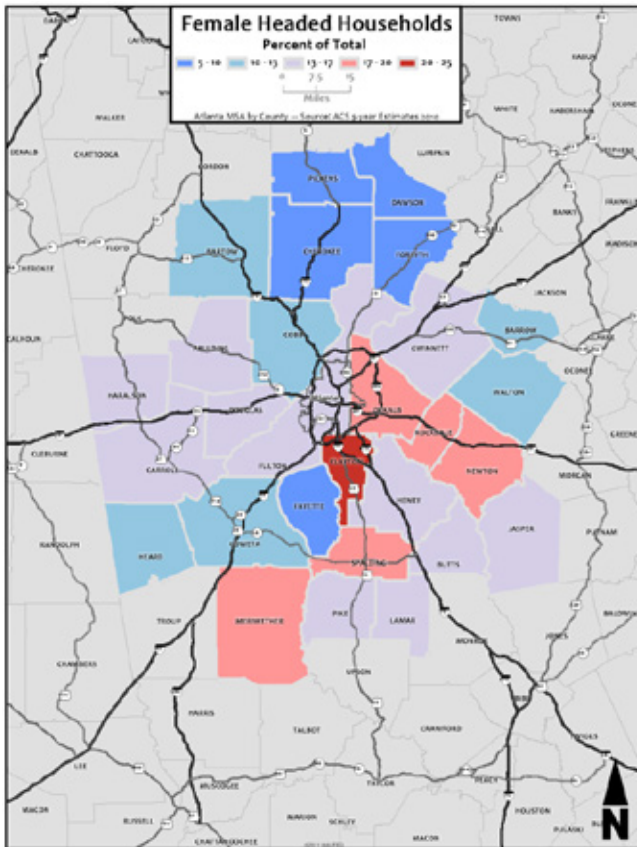
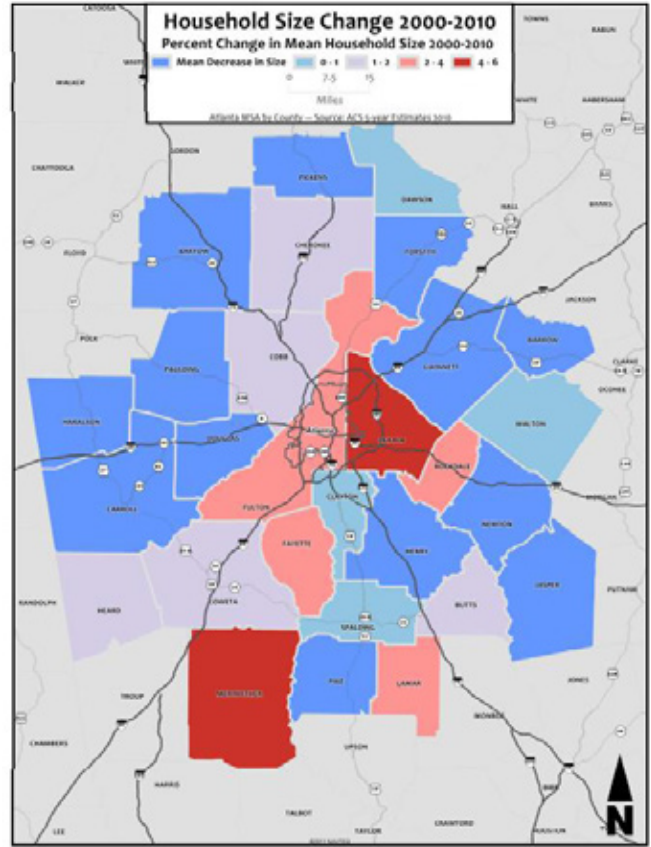


Figure 11.



of one-person and non-family households in the region as of 2010, compared to 9 percent of total households. In 2000 and 2010, most places in the region saw a percentage-point decline in the share of married families of total households between 2000 and 2010, with Rockdale County experiencing significant decreases. In 2000, 75 percent of all households with kids in Rockdale County were of married families. By 2010, that percentage was down to 61 percent, a 14 percentage-point decline. Other places with steep declines include Henry (-13 percentage points), Clayton (-10 percentage points) and Douglas (-9 percentage points) Counties.

Most places also saw both a percentage-point increase in one-person households along with a corresponding percentage-point decrease in family

households (with or without kids). In the City of Atlanta the share of one-person households increased 6 percentage points, while the share of family households decreased six percentage points. The one-person households were concentrated in the Midtown and Downtown areas.

In summation, Atlanta's recent trends in household composition are running counter to the historic norm. This counter trend however, is consistent with current national trends. There are more non-traditional families, and overall, smaller household sizes. However, family households in the region - particularly in its suburbs - continue to represent a sizable majority of all households.

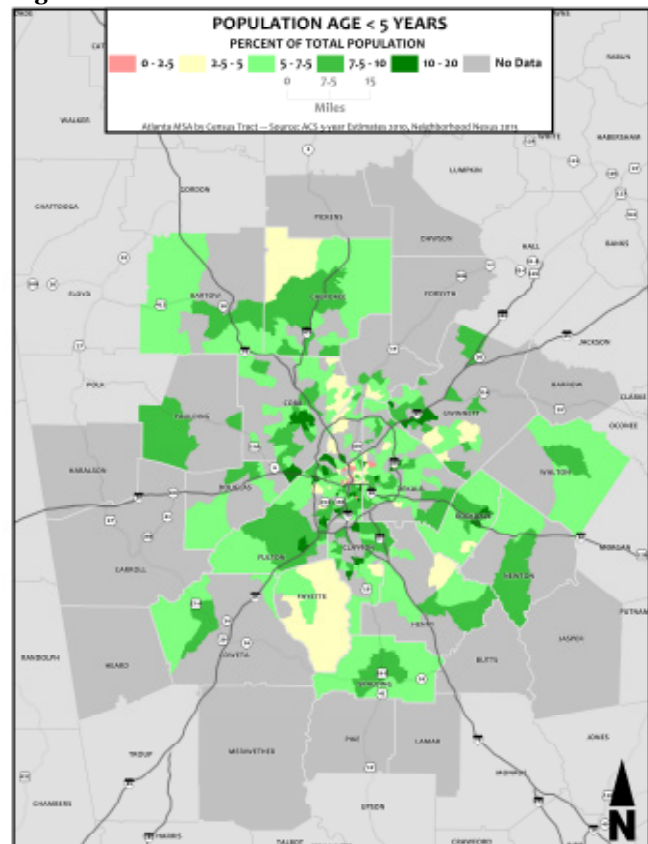


AGE

Metro Atlanta, like the rest of the nation, is home to a substantial Baby Boomer population that will age rapidly over the next twenty years. This will have a dramatic impact on the region as entire communities “age in place.” On the other side of the age continuum, our schools are becoming more diverse as new immigrants and the increasingly diverse young people who have moved to Metro Atlanta start families and have children. Atlanta has always been a relatively young city.

The number of young children, those under 5 years of age, grew by 20 percent between 2000 and 2010. However, their share within the total population actually decreased given the increasing size of older age groups.

Figure 12



THE FASTEST GROWING
AGE GROUP IN METRO ATLANTA
IS NOW INDIVIDUALS BETWEEN
THE AGES OF **45** TO **64**.



Gwinnett County, the most diverse county in the region, added the most children under five years old to the population, with over 15,000 being added between Censuses. Fayette County was the only place to have an actual decline in the under-5 population, though it was relatively small at 412 children.

Figure 12¹⁶ shows the heaviest concentrations of children, measured by their share of the overall population. They are clustered in relatively few places, and particularly in places with large percentages of Hispanics—namely in Clayton, Gwinnett and Cobb Counties.

Growth in these younger cohorts has driven the racial diversification of the region. From 2000 to 2012, most school systems saw sizeable percentage-point declines in white students, accompanied by sizeable percentage-point increases in Hispanic students. In fact, every school system in the Atlanta region experienced increases in Hispanic composition from 2000-2012. In 2000, those aged 10-29 (the Millennial generation) were the largest of the region's age groups. Yet, as expected, the 2010 Census showed that the Atlanta region was rapidly getting older. The share of those aged 10-29 actually declined between 2000 and 2010, though they are still the largest age group. The fastest growing age group now is that of individuals between ages 45-64, making up 25 percent of the region's population. The 65+ age group is the only other age group to experience a percentage point increase since 2000.

Even with the explosion in the senior population and the strong and diverse growth in the younger cohorts, the Millennial generation remains the largest age group. Gwinnett added more than 57,500 people

aged 10-29 between 2000 and 2010, the most of any jurisdiction in the region. Next were Henry County, which added 24,700, and Fulton County, which grew by 21,200 Millennials. Forsyth County had the largest percentage increase between 2000 and 2010, with an 81 percent increase in those aged 10-29. The only two jurisdictions to experience a net decline of those aged 10-29 years old between 2000 and 2010 were DeKalb County (-8,100) and the City of Atlanta (-348).

Millennials show a pattern of hyper-concentration around areas with a university – Carrollton (West Georgia), Kennesaw (Kennesaw State), Morrow (Clayton State), northern DeKalb (Emory) and the City of Atlanta (Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, Atlanta University Center)— as well as areas with concentrations of non-White populations like Clayton County, Gwinnett County in the Norcross area, Hall County, and Cobb County around Marietta.

The 30-44 age cohort, which is known collectively as Generation X, had the smallest percentage increase (8 percent) between 2000 and 2010. Traditional minorities added nearly 200,000 persons to this group during the same time period. The White, non-Hispanic 30-44 population declined by 111,000 during this period.

People aged 45 years and older made up almost 34 percent of the population in 2010, compared to just over 28 percent in 2000. This increase is predominately in the White, non-Hispanic population. There were 245,000 more White, non-Hispanics in the 45+ age group in 2010 than in 2000. In all other age groups combined, there were 160,000 fewer White, non-Hispanics in 2010 than in 2000. According to the 2010



Census, there are now more than 1.3 million people age 45-64 in the region, an increase of almost 50 percent since 2000. Those aged 65 and older were the second-fastest growing age segment, increasing by 45 percent since 2000.

Every county in the region experienced a dramatic increase in the share of those aged 45-64 years old. Paulding County, leading among counties, had 17 percent of its population between the ages of 45 and 64 in 2000. By 2010, that share had grown to 23 percent. Fayette County's share of the 45-64 population increased 5 percentage points, which was the second-highest increase in the region.

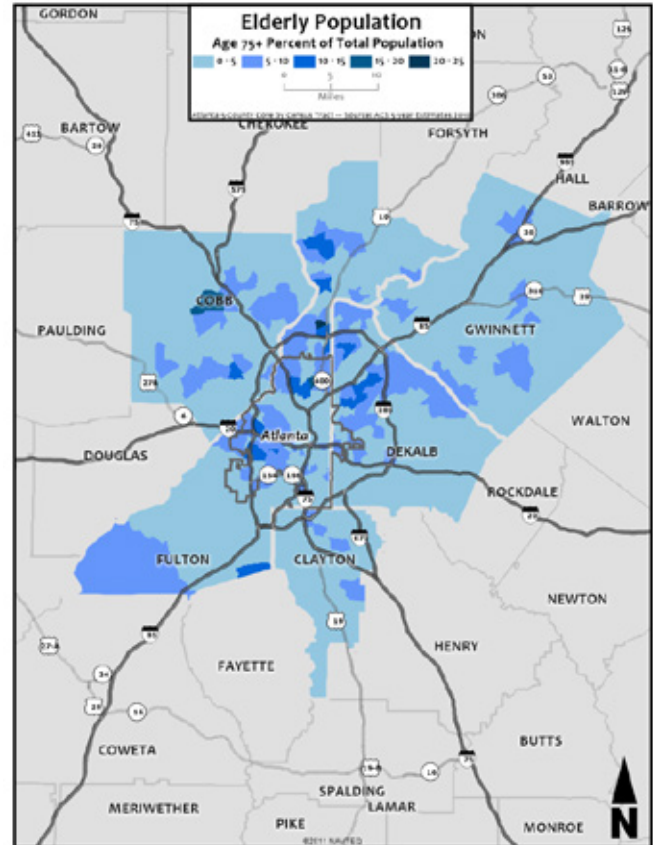
Except for Newton, each county also experienced share increases in those aged 65 and older (those considered to be of retirement age); this group increased 45 percent between 2000 and 2010, the second largest increase behind the 45-64 age cohort. Although only 465,000-strong in 2010, this age group will grow dramatically over the next two decades as Baby Boomers age in place. Gwinnett County added 23,500 people aged 65 and older, the most in the region, between 2000 and 2010. Next was Cobb County, which grew by 17,900 followed by Fulton which added 14,400 over the age of 65. In percentage terms, Forsyth County experienced the largest percent increase between 2000 and 2010, at 125 percent. Next were Paulding with a 112 percent increase and Cherokee County which added 111 percent.

No jurisdiction experienced a decline in the 65 and older population between 2000 and 2010. The median age grew in every jurisdiction from 2000-2010. As of 2010, Fayette County was the oldest and it was also the fastest aging, with a median age of almost 43 in the year 2010. Looking at the more senior age groups, those over the age of 75 as of 2010, **Figure 13**¹⁷

shows that many places across the 5-county area already have substantial shares of seniors (i.e. Sandy Springs and North Atlanta). There are also large areas in Southwest Atlanta and Central DeKalb for which this is the case.

The Region will age rapidly over the next 10 years as most of the Baby Boomer generation will cross over the age 65 threshold. The younger age groups are growing less quickly than they have in the past. Without the impact of domestic and international migration of young people, the growth rate for young children would have been significantly less. This has important consequences for the future. Our region needs a healthy mix of all ages with demographic energy that creates a working age population that can support the growth in our older age populations.

Figure 13.



INCOME AND POVERTY

The Great Recession illuminated the persistent challenge of poverty for communities across Metro Atlanta, as more people found themselves being left behind economically. In spite of regional wealth, almost 1 in 4 children in the region live below the federally-defined poverty rate. Metro Atlanta is a place of incredible income disparities within communities. While some communities are becoming more diverse, others are becoming more segregated by socio-economic status. Suburban affluence is contrasted with areas of urban and rural poverty. Forsyth and Fayette Counties are the two wealthiest counties in the state in terms of median household income, while rural Meriwether County, to the southwest of Fayette County, has the lowest household income in the metro area. The City of Atlanta has some of the richest and poorest neighborhoods in the U.S. and is unsurprisingly ranked among the worst for income inequality using the Gini index, which compares income distribution among communities.¹⁸ As shown in **Figure 14**, City of Atlanta has the highest current poverty rate in the region, with 25 percent of its population in poverty. However, the City of Atlanta had the smallest increase in poverty rates among all major jurisdictions in the region. The poverty rate only increased 1 percent between 2000 and 2010.

Of the 100 neighborhoods with the highest household incomes in the metro area, only 12 are located south of I-20. Of the 100 neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of households with incomes over \$200K, only five are south of I-20; those are all located in affluent Fayette County. Communities are continuing to become less diverse by income, as **Figures 15 and 16**¹⁹ illustrate. The percentage of households with incomes under

OF THE 100
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Figure 14.

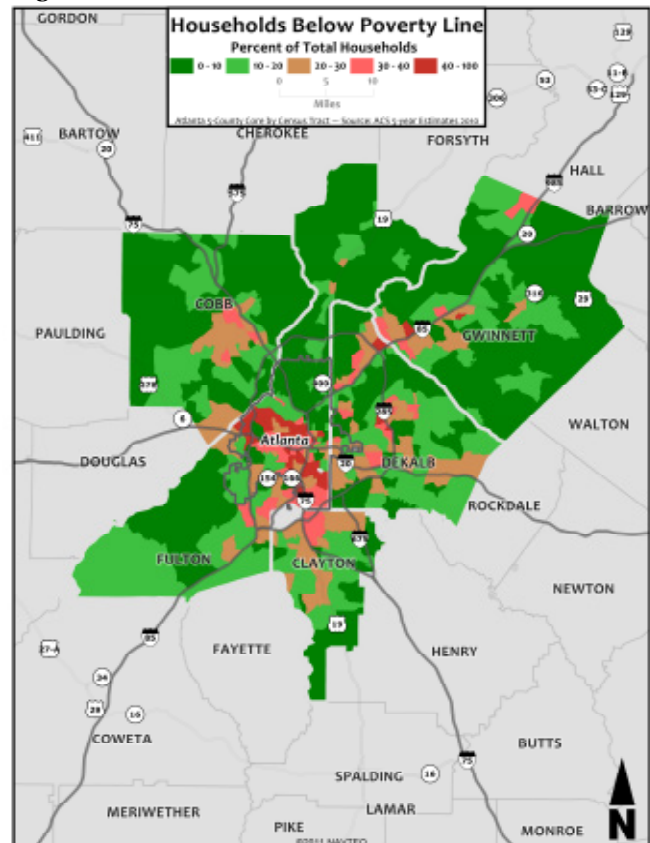
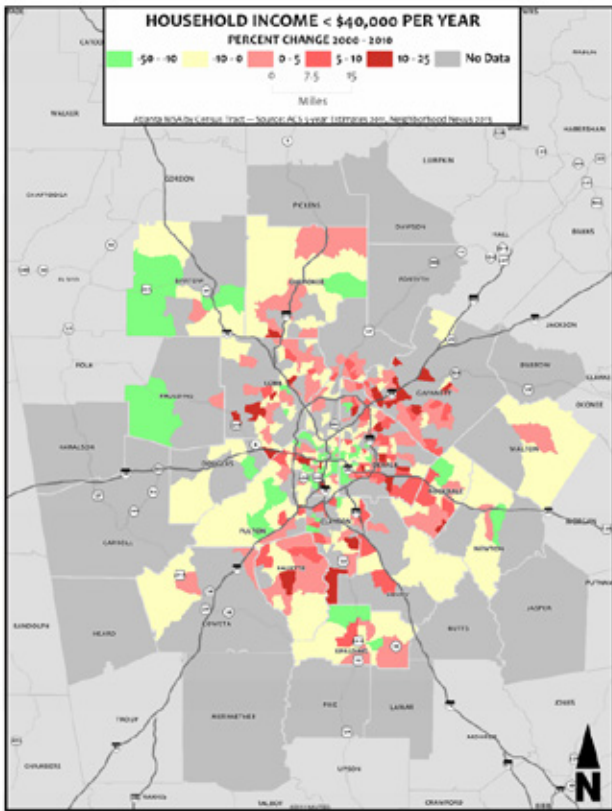


Figure 15.



\$40,000 actually fell in many areas where affluent households were simultaneously increasing, resulting in more economically homogeneous communities.

Among counties, Clayton County currently has the highest poverty rate at 22 percent. Clayton County, not surprisingly, also experienced the largest increase in poverty rates in the last decade, increasing 12 percentage points.

Figure 16.

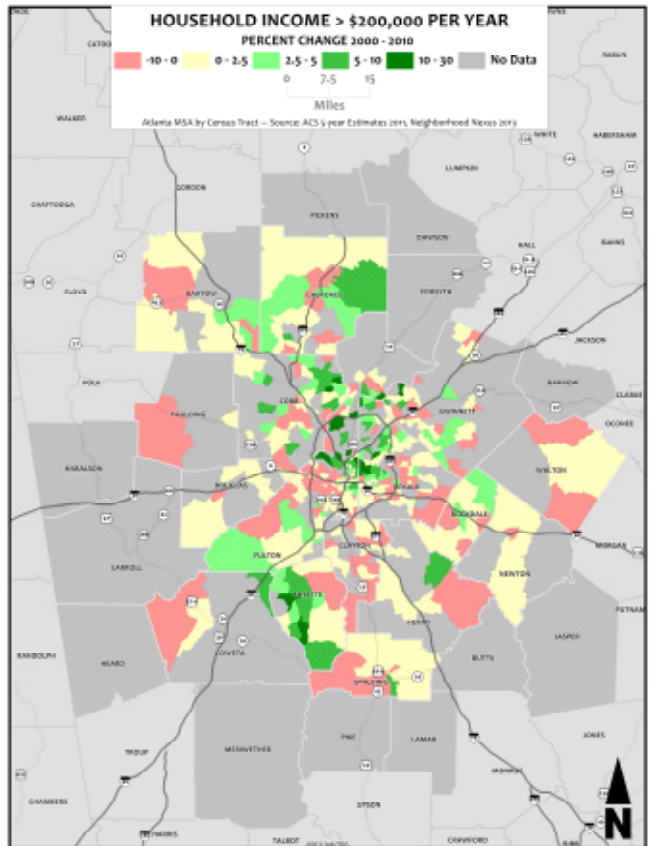
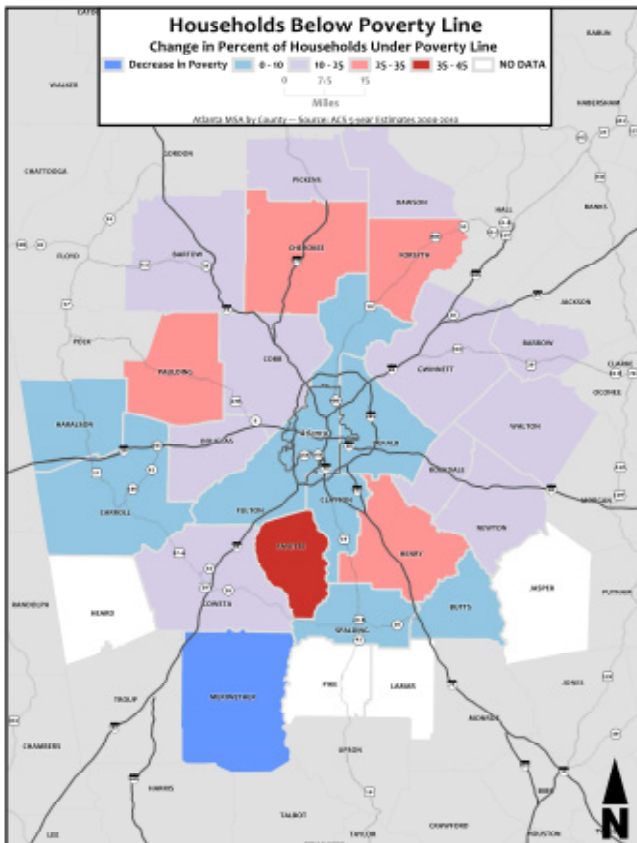


Figure 17.



The next largest increases in poverty rates were in Gwinnett County (+9 percentage points), Bartow County (+8 percentage points) and Douglas County (+7 percentage points). As shown in **Figure 17**, the suburbs are no longer immune to poverty.²⁰

In every community, the older adult population has lower poverty rates than the population as a whole. However, not all suburbs are created equal.

Figure 17

The “first ring” suburbs – those areas outside the perimeter but still in the core five counties, experienced a 6 percentage point increase, which is the highest rate increase in the region. There are communities across the region and in all counties with large numbers of households with children living below the poverty line. While much of child poverty is concentrated in the City of Atlanta, all Counties have neighborhoods where child poverty is above 30 percent.²¹ There are also small concentrated areas where the child poverty rate exceeds 50 percent, and these are the most critical places where communities are challenged.

IN SPITE OF REGIONAL WEALTH, ALMOST 1 IN 4 CHILDREN IN THE REGION LIVE BELOW THE FEDERALLY-DEFINED POVERTY RATE.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The suburbs of Metro Atlanta are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. However, at the same time, income disparities are increasing and numerous communities are becoming economically homogenous. For communities where economic diversity is lacking and poverty is increasing, disinvestment and out-migration may further place the communities at a future disadvantage. These communities may not have the economic resources to thrive and face continued long-term decline unless prescriptive action is taken. The recession’s impact was felt across the region and almost no place was immune. Aggregate poverty in suburban areas is a new phenomenon and as economic growth returns, it may be that some communities do not recover to their earlier economic health for an unwarranted length of time.

The pace of change from a bi-racial place to a multi-racial and multi-ethnic place is fastest in Metro Atlanta among the younger age groups. At the same time we will age dramatically over the next 20 years, placing new demands on our communities that were built for a younger population. This is a new frontier for suburban life, and it will challenge communities to provide the necessary resources for retirees. Even so, embracing our growing diversity is fundamental to creating sustainable, resilient communities that are economically and socially responsive and prepared to thrive.

¹The Atlanta region, or metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a 28-county region including the following counties: Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Rockdale, Spalding and Walton.

²United States Census Bureau. 2000 Census; 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2000; 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

³United States Census Bureau. 2000 Census; 2010 Census.

⁴ United States Census Bureau. 2000 Census; 2010 Census Neighborhood Nexus Data Visualization Site.

⁵United States Census Bureau. 2000 Census; 2010 Census.

⁶United States Census Bureau. 1990 Census 2000 Census; 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2000; 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

⁷ESRI, Inc. USA Diversity Index. Environmental Systems Research Institute. 2011. Web.

⁸ESRI, Inc. 2012.

⁹ESRI, Inc. 2011.

¹⁰United States Census Bureau. 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

¹¹United States Census Bureau. "Summary File."2007 – 2011 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office, 2013. Web. <<http://ftp2.census.gov/>>.

¹²United States Census Bureau. 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

¹³United States Census Bureau. 2000 Census; 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2000; 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

¹⁴United States Census Bureau. 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

¹⁵United States Census Bureau. 2010 Census. U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. Web. <<http://www.census.gov/2010census/data/>>.

¹⁶United States Census Bureau. "Summary File."2007 – 2011 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office, 2013. Web. <<http://ftp2.census.gov/>>.

¹⁷United States Census Bureau. "Summary File."2007 – 2011 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office, 2013. Web. <<http://ftp2.census.gov/>>.

¹⁸United States Census Bureau. 2013.

¹⁹United States Census Bureau. 2013.

²⁰United States Census Bureau. 2013.

DEMOGRAPHICS CASE STUDY:

CHANGE TO CREATING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES THROUGH EFFECTIVE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Doraina Walker-Williams

Student at Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Public Policy

One of the local consequences of wide-scale international conflict is refugee resettlement. Since 1975, American communities have welcomed more than 3 million refugees from all around the world, and according to a recent report published by Congress, Metro Atlanta is among the top ten areas in the U.S. for refugee resettlement. Perhaps no community has absorbed more refugees than Clarkston, Georgia, a 1.1 square mile municipality hailed by TIME Magazine as the most diverse square mile in American. Of the 16,000 refugees that have arrived in Georgia since 2007, 2,300 have resettled in Clarkston causing some to call it the "Ellis Island of the South".

The City of Clarkston, like many communities undergoing an immigrant population boom, has experienced its fair share of growing pains. New residents constituted a high-need population, thus placing a strain on already limited resources. Additionally, stark cultural differences as expressed by those from the town's 60 different ethnic groups made acclimation difficult and misunderstanding common. Over the years, the city has managed the change through the support of a cluster of non-profit organizations and university partners who walk side-by-side with residents and their families as they build new lives.

One of those community partners is Refugee Family Services (RFS), an organization committed to, "supporting the efforts of refugee women and children to achieve self-sufficiency in the U.S. by providing education and economic opportunity."

RFS aids families through a range of program offerings which deal with issues including financial literacy, home safety, food insecurity, and youth development. The organization makes extensive use of volunteers and interns who help to staff its family literacy program, which in addition to tutoring client's in English, works to prepare them for potential employment and educational opportunities.

Another organization working to effectively integrate Clarkston's refugee community is the Clarkston Development Foundation (CDF), a place-based non-profit committed to "connecting and engaging the community of Clarkston and surrounding areas by helping residents to recognize and develop the individual capacities of every person." Founded in 2010 with the goal of cultivating the rich cultural resource that is the city's diversity, the organization focuses on creating meaningful opportunities for civic engagement and community-led action. In that vein, CDF often takes the lead in convening community conversations on tough issues and works hard to ensure that all voices are heard.

Through the support of committed partners like these and others, the City of Clarkston stands as an example of what can happen when communities come together to effectively manage change. And thanks to the efforts of groups like Refugee Family Services and the Clarkston Development Foundation, members of Clarkston's refugee community are today more supported and connected. ■

¹"About RFS." About RFS. Refugee Family Services, n.d. Web. 01 June 2013.

²"City Of Clarkston Wireframe." Interesting Facts. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 June 2013.

³Koning, Abby. The Ellis Island of the South: Refugee Resettlement in Clarkston, GA. ELCA Southeastern Synod.

⁴"About RFS." About RFS. Refugee Family Services, n.d. Web. 01 June 2013.

⁵"About RFS." About RFS. Refugee Family Services, n.d. Web. 01 June 2013.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Kathryn Rice, Ph.D., Founder of Building Quality Communities

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS PURSUED NOW MORE THAN EVER as local, regional, and national economies seek to regain growth, investment, jobs and revenue. As the national economy readjusts to become more competitive, there are numerous factors that affect a community's ability to attract businesses and investment, including the number of establishments and jobs, distribution of skills, levels of unemployment, and median earnings. Ultimately, disparity in growth and development affects a community's ability to deliver a superior quality of life to its residents.



Atlanta has a history of isolation based on race and income. In 1980, Atlanta had the highest rates of Black-White segregation and incidences of Black isolation in the South.¹ Racial segregation was accompanied by an uneven distribution of power and wealth with vestiges of both the separation and inequity in community wealth remaining even today. In 2012, using Gini coefficient² calculations on Census Bureau data, Atlanta had the highest ranking of any major city (.572) in the U.S. in income inequality.³ This is a sign that to some degree, the historical roots of segregation still exist and may help explain the development and distribution of business locations, jobs and wealth in the region.

This chapter looks at Metro Atlanta from the perspective of place-based economic development. It reviews census tracts (areas averaging 4,000 people, but which can go up to 8,000) based on factors that attract and generate revenue, resources, income and wealth. The analysis looks at the growth of industry and businesses in Metro Atlanta as a measure of the level of investment. This chapter also looks at the number of jobs created, the salary levels and the skill sets that exist in the region, and the distribution of each of these factors. Conversely, this chapter also analyzes the factors that challenge or inhibit growth – levels of unemployment and the distribution of low-wage jobs and workers. By reviewing both sides, a clearer picture emerges that can help suggest solutions and prescriptions.

BUSINESS INVESTMENT

Investment is often measured by the number of business establishments that choose to locate in an area. Growth in investment reflects a confidence in the ability of the local economy to meet business needs by providing adequately trained workers, ready consumers and sufficient infrastructure.

This measure is important to local economies because businesses create jobs and pay a disproportionate share of taxes that serve as revenue to local governments while using less in public services (e.g., in 2009, businesses were 40 percent of the properties but paid 55 percent in property taxes in DeKalb County⁴). Businesses are good for an economy.

Over a 30-year period, from 1980 to 2010, Metro Atlanta experienced a dramatic increase in the number of establishments (136 percent growth versus 50 percent growth in the U.S.) and, correspondingly, the number of employees (134 percent versus 49 percent nationally⁵). Over a 10 year period alone, from 1980 to 1990, the metro area had a 52 percent increase in the number of establishments with an additional 38 percent increase the next decade (from 1990 to 2000).⁶ Metro Atlanta was well on its way to another decade of high growth until the onset of the Great Recession. From

2007 to 2010, every single county in Metro Atlanta lost businesses (from a low of 99 businesses lost in Spalding County to a high of 1,605 lost in Gwinnett County). Despite the major downturn in the economy and loss of local businesses, Metro Atlanta showed a 13 percent net increase in the number of establishments from 2000 to 2010. Still, the recession resulted in a 6 percent decline in employees and payroll, after adjusting for inflation.⁷

Metro Atlanta managed an increase in business investment from 2000 to 2010 because growth had been strong the first 7 years (with average growth at 33 percent) and outside the urban core, several counties were only mildly affected. Those counties hit the hardest were Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton and Cobb, with each experiencing the largest losses in number of employees ranging from a loss of 11,166 jobs in Cobb County up to a staggering loss of 87,212 employees in Fulton County.⁸ Rockdale and Spalding Counties lost fewer employees overall but the loss represented a significant percentage of their employee bases (approximately 10 percent and 8 percent loss, respectively). Furthermore, the loss of jobs in these areas corresponds with areas with high concentrations of Black or Hispanic/Latino populations.



EMPLOYMENT

While an increase in the number of businesses represents greater wealth in an economy and revenue to the local government, an increase in jobs signifies greater wealth in communities through individual earnings. Jobs provide income with which individuals can pay for things that contribute to their quality of life. Jobs are a sign of community stability.

Atlanta has been a top destination for job seekers, immigrants and new residents for the past 20 years.⁹ From 1990 to 2010 Metro Atlanta averaged 26 percent growth versus the U.S. metro area average growth of just 8 percent. When looking at the location of jobs in 2010, there are concentrations of jobs in parts of almost all the counties, but the greatest concentration of contiguous census tracts with 4,613 or more jobs per census tract is in the northern Metro Atlanta region consisting of northern Fulton, northern DeKalb, middle-Cobb, northern Gwinnett, and southern Forsyth Counties.

The concentration of wealth and development in the northern region, which is predominantly White, has contributed to a number of municipal incorporations in an effort by those communities to gain more control over both how their taxes are expended and over property zoning. The less developed areas in the urban core and the southern Metro Atlanta region, in which many minority communities are located, are faced with the challenges of attracting businesses, investment, new jobs and higher-salaried positions to areas that have fewer assets, smaller populations, and less income and technical infrastructure than the northern region. Similar factors can even cause economic development to be a competitive struggle within regions.



UNEMPLOYMENT

Just as job presence is an indicator of community stability, unemployment signifies the opposite. The loss or absence of a significant number of employment opportunities leaves a community at risk with residents unable to afford basic living expenses and taxes. The situation for many has worsened since 2007 as Metro Atlanta experienced high levels of unemployment. This is demonstrated in **Figure 1**. While the highest unemployment rates by county fall around 12 to 13 percent, unemployment within certain communities within those counties can get as high as 58 percent. Often times, these are areas with the highest concentrations of minorities. Unemployment leaves communities vulnerable.

As is the case with much of the information presented thus far, the concentration of development and wealth in the northern region has made for stable communities. Much of the northern region of Metro Atlanta has 94 percent or higher employment per census tract. To a lesser degree, parts of the southern metro area (Coweta, Fayette, Forsyth and Henry) also have high percentages of employment. In summary, community economic stability is strongest in the northern metro region and most vulnerable in the urban core, the center of Metro Atlanta and the accompanying areas where the concentration of minorities is the greatest – the southern parts of DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties.

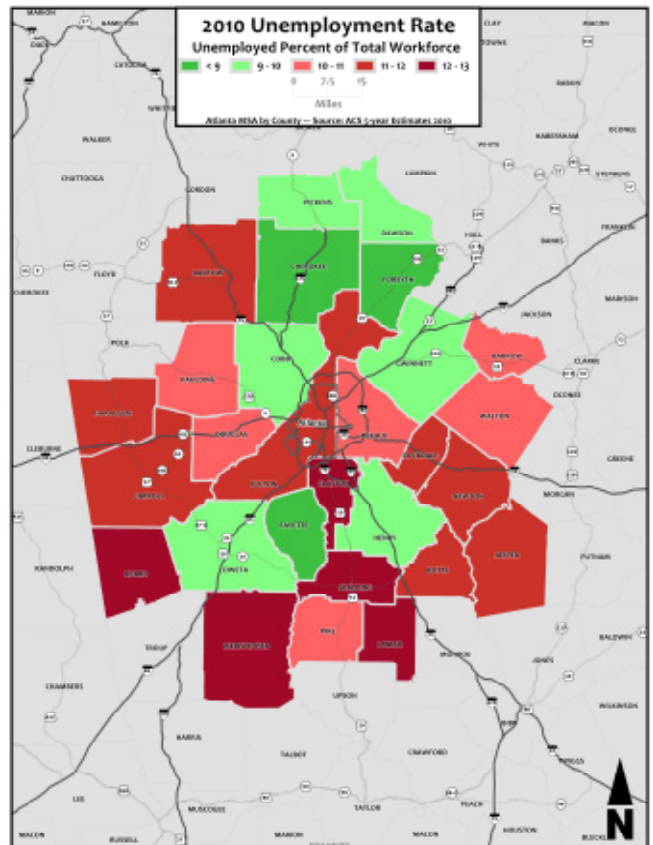




EARNINGS AND WEALTH

Individual earnings and wealth are additional indicators of a resident's ability to secure satisfactory quality of life. Higher salaries and higher household wealth enable residents to afford amenities that enrich themselves and their communities. As opposed to businesses and employment, which contribute to community stability, individual earnings are more direct measurements of personal satisfaction and freedom of options.

Figure 1.



EARNINGS AND SALARY

The median earnings for workers in the U.S. in 2011 was \$30,259 or \$2,522 per month.¹⁰ It is noteworthy that the disparity between male and female incomes still exists, as the median earnings for males working full-time, year round in the U.S. in 2010 was \$47,549 versus females who earned \$37,160.¹¹ This disparity is mirrored throughout the 28-county Metro Atlanta region in 2010. Atlanta's lower average monthly earnings in 2010 by females (\$2,616) than males (\$3,910), resulted in men earning an average of 33 percent more than women.¹² This may explain why of the 28 counties only 7 employ more men than women.

Due to limitations in the data, we cannot suggest that men and women are working the same jobs with one gender receiving less pay

or that one gender is more productive than another. However, the data does imply that female-headed households earn less money than male-headed households, and where there are high percentages of female-headed households, there is a greater likelihood of finding more financial distress or poverty.

There are also significant earning disparities based on race. In 2010, White workers earned an average of \$3,435 per month, while Asian workers earned an average of \$3,138 (9 percent less), Hispanic workers an average of \$2,547 (26 percent less) and Black workers an average of \$2,450 (29 percent less).¹³ In at least 7 counties, Asian monthly earnings were greater than White earnings, and overall their average earnings were only slightly lower (9 percent) than Whites. For Hispanics and Blacks, the earning differential from White workers is much higher resulting in a more significant financial impact on communities with large Black and Hispanic populations.

Examining the distribution between those who earn the highest salaries (\$3,333 per month or \$40,000 annually or higher) and those who earn the lowest salaries (\$1,250 per month or \$15,000 annually or lower) also helps to determine where wealth resides.¹⁴

Figures 2 through 4 explore spatial mismatch between where high wage earners live and work. Though the data is limited, they clearly show that by and large, high wage earners need to travel outside of their county of residence in order to work. For instance, Cherokee, Paulding, Coweta and Spalding Counties have some of the highest total numbers of high wage workers with the fewest high-wage jobs.

Figure 2.

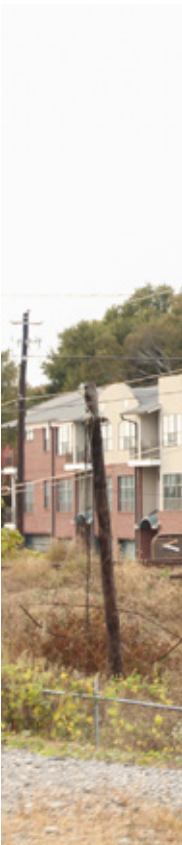
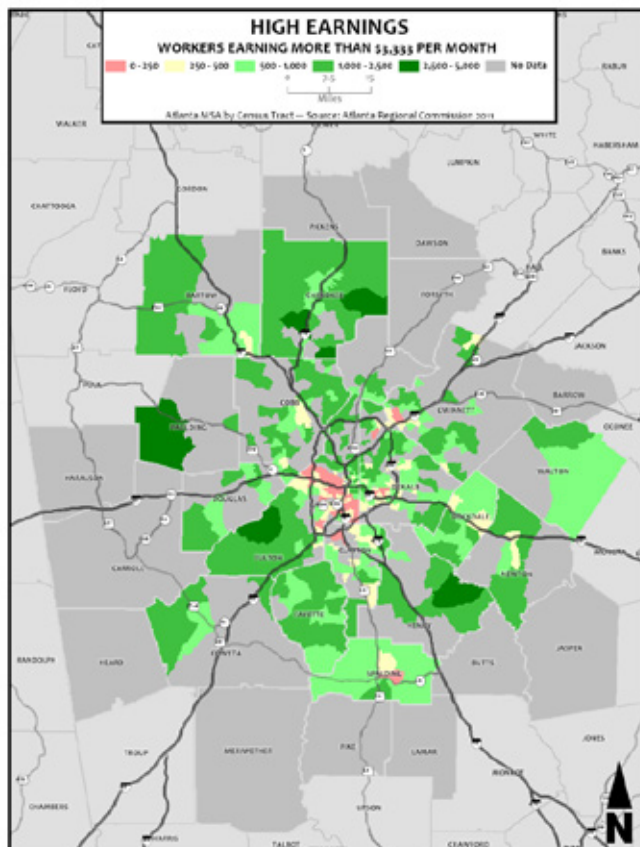
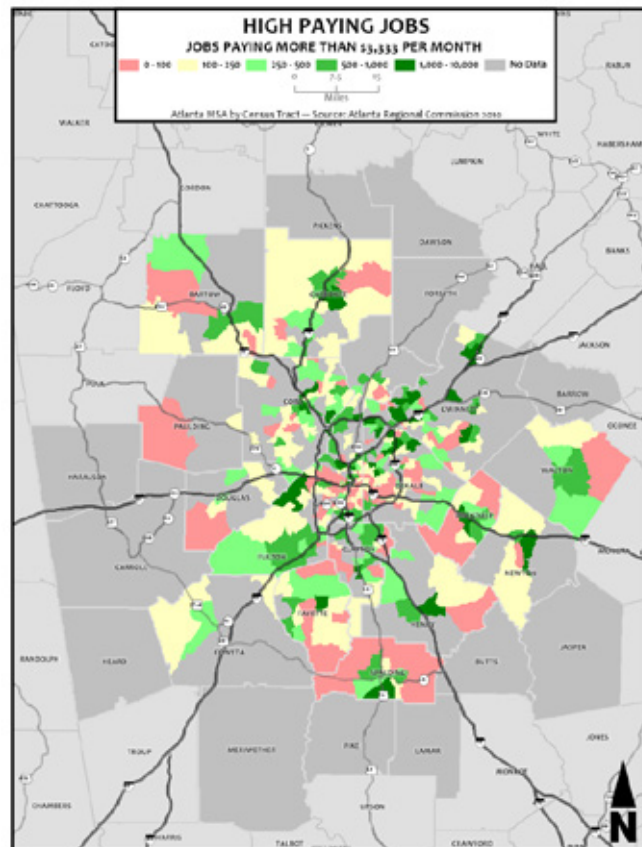




Figure 3.



This explains the inflow of commuters by the hundreds of thousands into the five core counties, as demonstrated in **Figure 4**.

Figure 5 demonstrates that many of the lower paying jobs, those earning \$1,250 or less per month (or the equivalent to \$15,000 per year), are predominantly in the suburbs of Metro Atlanta. Many of these jobs are located in the same areas where those earning the highest salaries (households earning \$200,000 or more annually) reside. This is likely due to the fact that the affluent are often providers of the lowest paying jobs – i.e. aides for the elderly, lawn maintenance, household care, and fast food workers.

These data reinforce an existing spatial mismatch, where in some cases, the low-income

have to travel substantial distances in order to reach employment.¹⁵ There likewise exists a spatial distance between where the highly-skilled workers live and where they work, though this seems to be lessening with more affluent residents relocating to the core counties.¹⁶ The central business district of Atlanta has a high density of high wage jobs, but the map shows a much larger area in the northern region that also has a high density of jobs paying \$3,333 or more per month. The commute to downtown and midtown Atlanta from the suburbs is time consuming, traffic-filled and can be considered stressful and harmful due to pollutants leading high wage workers to seek jobs elsewhere.¹⁷

Figure 4.

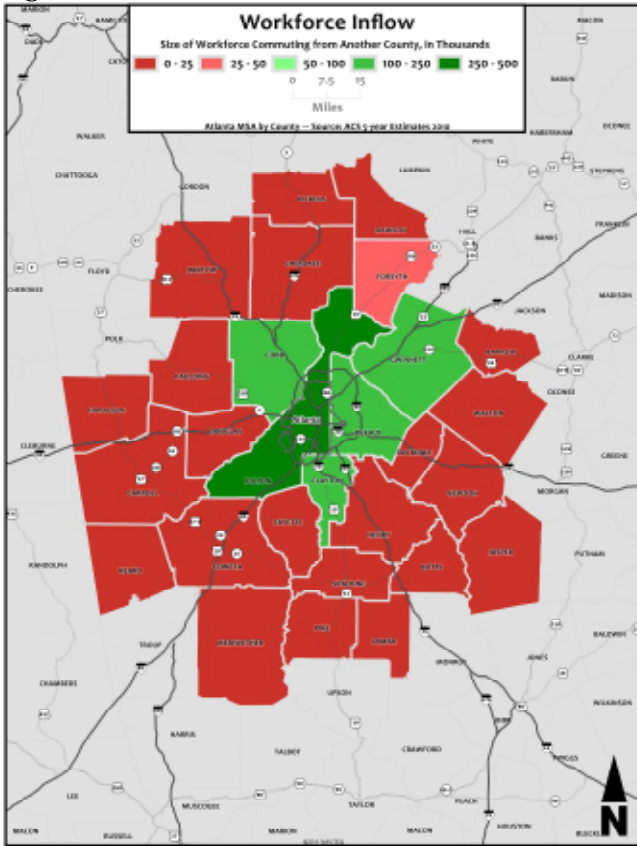
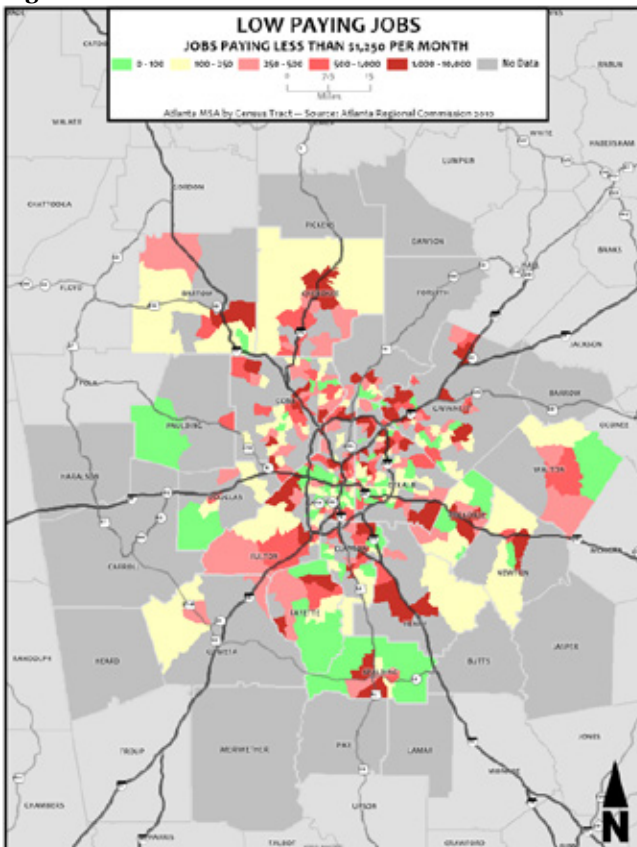


Figure 5.



HOUSEHOLD WEALTH

Prior to 2007, Metro Atlanta was enjoying economic growth and soaring home values. The demand for new homes caused the construction industry to flourish. As a result of the recession, Atlanta was one of the top 5 cities hit by foreclosures in the mortgage crisis of 2007.¹⁸ The mortgage crisis caused home values to drop and construction to slow leaving many low skilled people without jobs. The subsequent impact was felt throughout Atlanta but especially in communities of color who were the hardest hit. The combination of loss of income and loss of jobs resulted in a loss of homes, the greatest source of wealth for most Americans. According to a Pew study, from 2005 to 2009, median household wealth nationwide fell by 66 percent for Hispanics, 50 percent for Blacks and 16 percent for Whites.¹⁹ As a result of these declines, the typical Black household had just \$5,677 in wealth (assets minus debts) in 2009; the typical Hispanic household had \$6,325 in wealth; and the typical White household had \$113,149.²⁰ White households have wealth 20 and 18 times that of Blacks and Hispanics respectively. According to Margaret Simms, an economist at the Urban Institute, “blacks, especially black women, were disproportionately affected by the recession....black women had the lowest median income when compared to black men, white men and white women”²¹ (Anderson 2013). The impact of the recession has resulted in the greatest disparity (about twice the size of previous ratios) between Black/Hispanic and Whites since government began publishing such data 25 years ago.

THE CREATIVE AND SERVICE CLASSES

The presence of significant numbers of people engaged in the occupations of Management, Business, Science and Arts (MBSA), or what is commonly referred to as the “Creative Class” is important because businesses seek these gifted employees as leaders, thinkers or research and development employees in their corporations. Members of the Creative Class typically have bachelor degrees or above and average higher earnings than employees in other occupations.²² They are a key point of attraction for regional investment and they represent high salary, high performance jobs.

In terms of raw numbers, the Creative Class is congregated outside Interstate 285, north of Interstate 20, as demonstrated in **Figure 6**. Contiguous census tracts in the northern region of Atlanta (the northern parts of Fulton, Cobb and DeKalb Counties) lay claim to the largest percentages (52 percent and higher) of some of the highest wage earners in Metro Atlanta as demonstrated in **Figure 6**.

Service Sector jobs - those connected to food services, retail, clerical, and entry level healthcare – are spread throughout the metro area and in large part mimic low-wage worker trends as referenced earlier in the chapter. **Figure 7** provides greater detail.

Figure 6.

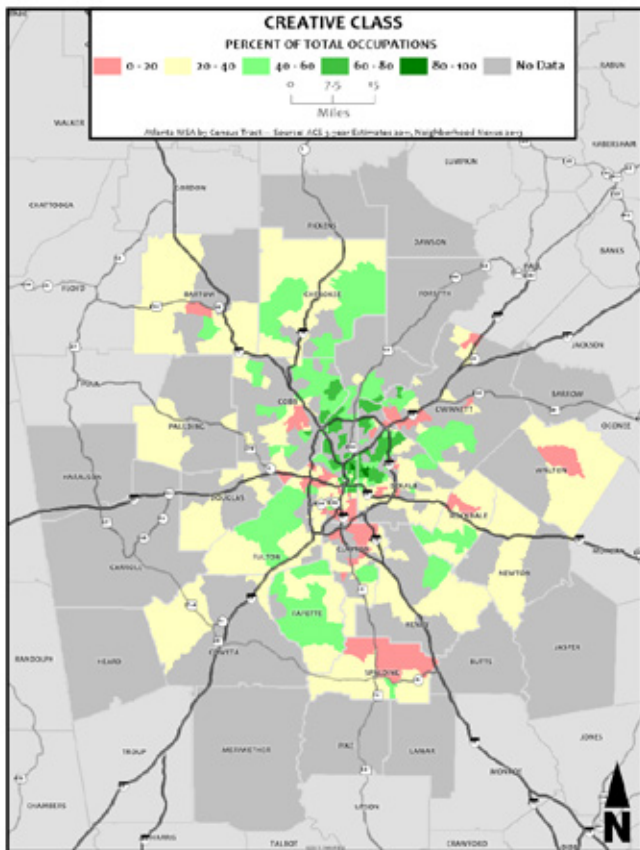
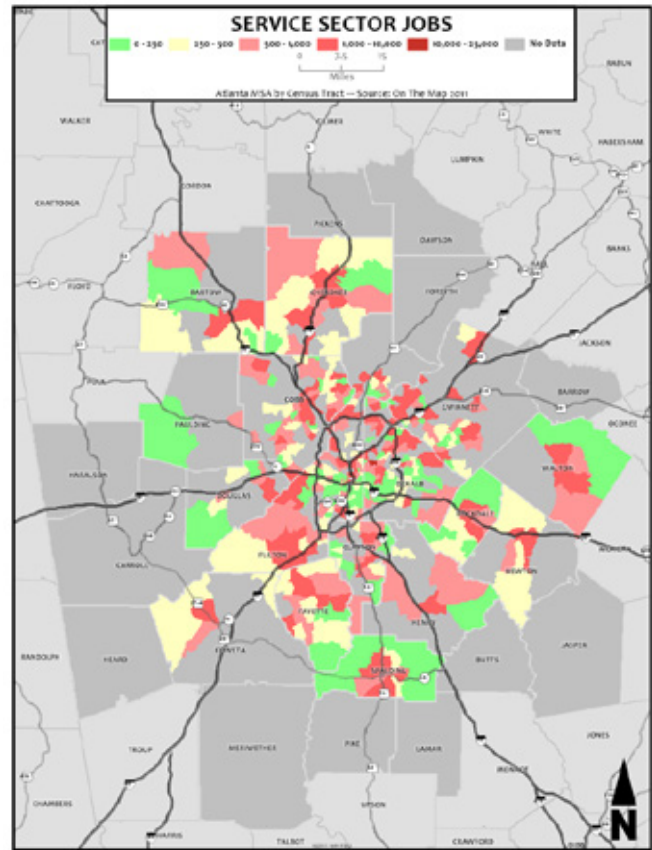


Figure 7.



RECOMMENDATIONS

What are some solutions or prescriptions that can be offered to counteract the imbalances or inequities that exist?

In terms of business investment, businesses locate or expand where there is favorable growth opportunity, where leadership in economic development (particularly targeting certain industries) is strongest and where there are multiple financing options (loan programs, incentives, and other financial programs). Thus, efforts to address inequity in business location and investment should focus on bringing the aforementioned tools and options to areas that have experienced the greatest losses or have been traditionally underserved.

Transportation (extending MARTA and improving bus service) has proven to be an effective economic development tool to spur investment, as development often follows transit. Since lower-income Black and Hispanic communities are close to the urban core where heavy rail and bus lines are present and can be expanded, development can effectively address disparities. In addition, research needs to be conducted on growth and emerging industries (where employment or the number of establishments is growing) in under-performing regions. For example, nearby counties may be able to take advantage of the growing entertainment industry in Fulton County. Leadership should be exercised to promote growth potential in those areas. This ought to be an aim for Metro Atlanta because regions with economic diversification provide better returns for the overall economy, are known to be more innovative, and are more

resilient during downturns in the economy.

To promote employment, local officials should focus on workforce development, which involves preparing people for the workforce through improving the K-14 education system, providing re-training opportunities, screening for potential needed skills, and advising on job opportunities. As part of this effort, in areas hit hardest by job loss, public-private-academic partnerships should be developed to provide specialized training to meet businesses or industry needs. As an example, Georgia's Quick Start job training program is cited as one of the best in the nation. These efforts should be conducted in tandem with the effort to attract investment and businesses.

More detailed data is needed to uncover the reasons for wage differentials. In the meantime, the inequity for female workers can begin to be addressed by finding pockets where there are high levels of female-headed households. Those areas may need supplemental income programs, social services such as childcare, health clinics that cater to low-income populations, etc. For the earning differences between Whites, Hispanics and Blacks, more research is needed to determine whether there are wage inequities within similar job roles. If so, effort needs to be put into developing policies that ensure wage equity.

In addition, the spatial mismatch for high wage earners that live in the suburbs but work in the city should be addressed. Long commute times, traffic stress and exposure to air pollutants may adversely affect both health and job performance.



CONCLUSION

The seeds of segregation that were sown even before the 1980s continue to have an economic impact. There is still a great degree of racial concentration in Metro Atlanta accompanied by marked differences in household wealth, earnings and level of skills.



The northern part of Metro Atlanta, particularly North Fulton, North DeKalb, North and Mid-Gwinnett, northeast Cobb and parts of Paulding Counties constitute an area that has more economic advantages than much of the rest of the Metro Atlanta area. It has more business establishments, more commercial investment, a workforce averaging higher wages, a more stable base of employment, and a higher percentage of employees working in higher wage occupations. The only negative factor may be a spatial mismatch of workers living in the suburbs having to travel a time-consuming and, health-affecting commute into the City of Atlanta.

In the other direction, there is another region in the southern part of Metro Atlanta, particularly South Fulton, South DeKalb and North Clayton Counties that has higher levels of unemployment, the highest proportion of minorities, a significant number of people with lower earnings (without the presence of higher earners), and less business and commercial investment. Clearly, the area composed of the inner northern ring around central Metro Atlanta enjoys a more stable environment with more options and higher quality of life than its southern counterpart.

In Metro Atlanta, policy solutions must be both place and people-based. Place-based solutions target infrastructure such as transportation that will encourage equitable transit-oriented development, especially in communities with high concentrations of lower-income Black and Hispanic residents that are close to the urban core. People-based policy prescriptions include putting greater emphasis on workforce development where there have been large numbers of people laid off from the recession. Communities with high numbers of female-headed households should seek to strategically implement social services that will enable these women to stay, grow and hopefully gain additional skills in the workforce. Establishing greater equity can have multiple effects including the increased stability of vulnerable communities, improved skills in the workforce, and supported lower-income areas able to contribute more in taxes. In the end, greater equity will enhance the quality of life for all residents in the Metro Atlanta region.

¹Massey, Douglas S., and Nancy A. Denton. 1994. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

²The Gini coefficient measures inequality across a range of cases. A rating of 0 means perfect equality while 1 means perfect inequality (i.e., one person or group has all the income).

³Weinberg, Daniel. 2011. *U.S. Neighborhood Income Inequality in the 2005-2009 Period*. edited by E. a. S. A. U.S. Department of Commerce. Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.; Thomas, G. Scott. 2012. Atlanta has worst income inequality problem of any major city. *The Business Journals* (July 5, 2013), <http://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/on-numbers/scott-thomas/2012/07/atlanta-has-worst-income-inequality.html?page=all>.

⁴Bell, Michael. 2010. Conversation with Michael Bell on Finances of DeKalb County, February 11, 2009.

⁵U.S. Census Bureau 2011.

⁶Ibid.

⁷U.S. Census Bureau 2010.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰U.S. Census Bureau 2011.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies. 2012. *Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, LED Extraction Tool using Sex, Race, Ethnicity Characteristics and Emp, EarnS, and Payroll Indicators 2000, 2010 and 2012*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴The salary demarcations were somewhat arbitrarily chosen. The low salary level was chosen somewhat higher than the poverty level of \$12,000 indicated by the Census Bureau for an individual in the U.S. in 2012. The salary level of \$40,000 is within the range of what is considered middle income (\$32,500 to \$60,000). <http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/2012/09/13/where-do-you-fall-in-the-american-economic-class-system>.

¹⁵Spatial mismatch refers to conditions of unmet supply (workers) and demand (jobs) due to transportation and/or geographical constraints. The lack of public transportation is usually a reason for the mismatch but in this case it may explain the co-existence of affluent and low income in the same area (see Atlas chapter on Transportation).

¹⁶Highly skilled workers are those who specialize in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) as well as healthcare, business, finance and the life sciences. Management in these industries are also referred to as the Creative Class, a term used further in this chapter.

¹⁷Copeland, Larry. 2001. Atlanta Pollution Going Nowhere. *USA Today*, January 31, 2001.; Carnathan, Michael. 2012. *Regional Snapshot: County-Level Congestion Trends: Jobs Play a Key Role*. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Regional Commission.

¹⁸Bottom Line. 2012. *Cities with the Most Homes in Foreclosure*.

¹⁹Kochhar, Rakesh, Richard Fry, and Paul Taylor. 2011. *The Toll of the Great Recession: Hispanic Household Wealth Fell by 66 percent from 2005 to 2009*. Pew Research Hispanic Center.

²⁰Taylor, Paul. 2011. *Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

²¹Anderson, Albert. 2013. *Economist Discusses Impact of Recession on Minorities*. *Brown Daily Herald*, April 11, 2013, Florida.

²²Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the CreativeClass: And How it'sTransforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*: Basic Books.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CASE STUDY:

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH YOUTH-FOCUSED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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Independent Consultant

DESPITE THE SLOW BUT STEADY

economic recovery, Georgia continues to struggle with higher than average unemployment. According to a recent report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Georgia recorded a 9 percent unemployment rate, compared to the national average of 7 percent.¹ While there are many factors that contribute to the nation's unemployment woes, one of the major drivers is the widening skills gap or difference between available jobs and the workers qualified to fill them. This disconnect is especially prevalent in Georgia. According to the FY 2011 Georgia Enterprise Workforce Report, nearly 45 percent of employers identify difficulty in retaining critical-skill employees and 41 percent expect difficulty in attracting them into the future.² Understanding the critical importance of this issue for its industry, Microsoft has chosen to tackle the problem head-on through its innovative Microsoft IT Academy, a school-based intervention that seeks to deepen participants' technical skills, thus making them better prepared for the 21st Century economy.

One of Microsoft's most recent partners is Rockdale County Public Schools. Toward the end of its 2012 - 2013 school year, the school district announced that it would be introducing the Microsoft IT Academy in each of its three high schools beginning in the 2013-2014 school year. Students who participate in the program

are required to take three years of course study, which will ultimately result in students becoming either a Microsoft Office Specialist or Microsoft Technology Associate. The Academy uses an integrated curriculum which engages youth through classroom and online learning, hands-on projects and group collaboration.³ In addition to developing technical competencies, the district plans to use the program to detect skill and competency gaps early-on among students.

In its first year, the program will accommodate more than 450 students per school or 1,350 across the three schools, with plans for future expansion. According to Rockdale County's School Superintendent Richard Autry, the new program adds substantially to the district's ability to effectively equip its youth. In his words, "Our vision for education in Rockdale County includes options and opportunities for our students. The Microsoft IT Academy adds to the options our students have to increase their 21st Century technical skills and receive a valuable industry certification prior to entering the workforce, higher education or the military."

The Rockdale County Public Schools Microsoft IT Academy is just one example of how, stakeholders can reverse some of our nation's most challenging economic realities through effective public/private partnerships. ■

¹U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2013. Economy at a Glance. <http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.ga.htm>. Accessed November 7, 2013.

²State of Georgia. 2011. Georgia Enterprise Workforce Report. Services Division.

³RockdaleCitizen.com. RCPS Offers Microsoft Industry Certification. <http://www.rockdalecitizen.com/news/2013/may/16/rcps-offers-microsoft-industry-certification/>. Last Accessed October 12, 2013.





EDUCATION

Kent McGuire, President of the Southern Education Foundation

ALONG WITH TRANSPORTATION AND WATER, EDUCATION

consistently ranks as one of the most important issues in the Metro Atlanta area. Business leaders understand that good schools are a prerequisite to attracting and retaining employees and parents understand that education is key to upward mobility. In the metro area, 60 percent of new jobs require at least some education beyond high school. Metro Atlanta has long sustained its above-average rates of economic growth by importing talent from across the country. However, it is unlikely that this can go on indefinitely. The regional economy will not continue to grow with degree completion rates hovering at roughly 40 percent. Key to the future is improving educational attainment among the residents of the metro area. Consequently, it is important to not only understand the state of educational outcomes in Metro Atlanta, but also the factors that best explain educational outcomes, and what might be done to improve them.

THERE ARE 57 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SERVING UPWARDS OF A QUARTER OF A MILLION STUDENTS. ATLANTA NOW RANKS 10TH OR BETTER NATIONALLY AMONG METROPOLITAN AREAS IN HIGHER EDUCATION EXPENDITURES, RESEARCH EXPENDITURES AND ENROLLMENT GROWTH.



EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Thirty-six public school systems serve over 900,000 students in Metro Atlanta. Six county or city school districts serve the majority of the student population, which is increasingly diverse. Between 2000 and 2012, 28 school districts in 20 of the 28-county metro area witnessed dramatic increases in Hispanic enrollment and continued increases in African American and Asian students. These enrollment patterns are a direct result of demographic shifts across the metro area.

Metro Atlanta also has one of the largest postsecondary education infrastructures in the country. There are 57 colleges and universities serving upwards of a quarter of a million students. Atlanta now ranks 10th or better nationally among metropolitan areas in higher education expenditures, research expenditures and enrollment growth. Overall enrollment of students of color has expanded in higher education. For African Americans, Atlanta ranks 3rd in enrollment growth in higher education over the last ten years.¹



LOW-INCOME
STUDENTS
AND
STUDENTS OF
COLOR ARE
TWICE AS
LIKELY TO BE
SUSPENDED
FROM
SCHOOL.

EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE: PRE K-12

With such dramatic growth in the education sector and such significant demographic shifts within this growth, Metro Atlanta is poised to thrive culturally, economically, and socially. However, a significant challenge in Metro Atlanta concerns the wide variations in student achievement within the K-12 system and relatively low degree completion rates at the postsecondary level, especially among students of color.

In the context of K-12, a commonly used

measure of student performance is Georgia's statewide assessment, the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) (see CRCT Web-Based Resources²). The CRCT are state-mandated end-of-year assessments designed to measure how well students have mastered the content and skills that are aligned to Georgia's Performance Standards (GPS).

These assessments are used to indicate whether students fail to meet, meet, or exceed state standards. A cut-score is used to make these determinations. For instance in Georgia, a score between 800 and 849 indicates that a

student is "proficient" or meets the state standard in a particular subject for a particular grade.

A score below 800 indicates that a student does not meet that performance standard. The state assessments cover multiple grades and subjects, certainly more than can be reviewed here. However, a few key assessments demonstrate how things are going in Metro Atlanta.

To begin, because proficient readers are better equipped to handle subjects where understanding text is key to solving a problem (i.e., an experiment in science or a story problem in mathematics), it is widely accepted that third grade reading scores are strong predictors of academic success as a student progresses through the grades. Unfortunately, many students lack strong reading proficiency by this critical milestone, and as a result, continue

to struggle throughout their matriculation. As **Figure 1** demonstrates, counties experiencing the greatest challenge with sub-par reading scores are DeKalb and Meriwether Counties. Children in Clayton County likewise struggle with reading at elevated rates. Counties where children perform best in reading include Cherokee, Fayette, Forsyth, Lamar, Heard and Pickens Counties.

The good news is that a majority of students are proficient readers, assuming the state's cut scores are good measures of reading proficiency. However, there are both specific student subgroups and specific school districts where readings scores are disappointing.

These same student groups are among the fastest growing segment of student enrollment in the region. For example, across the entire

Figure 1.

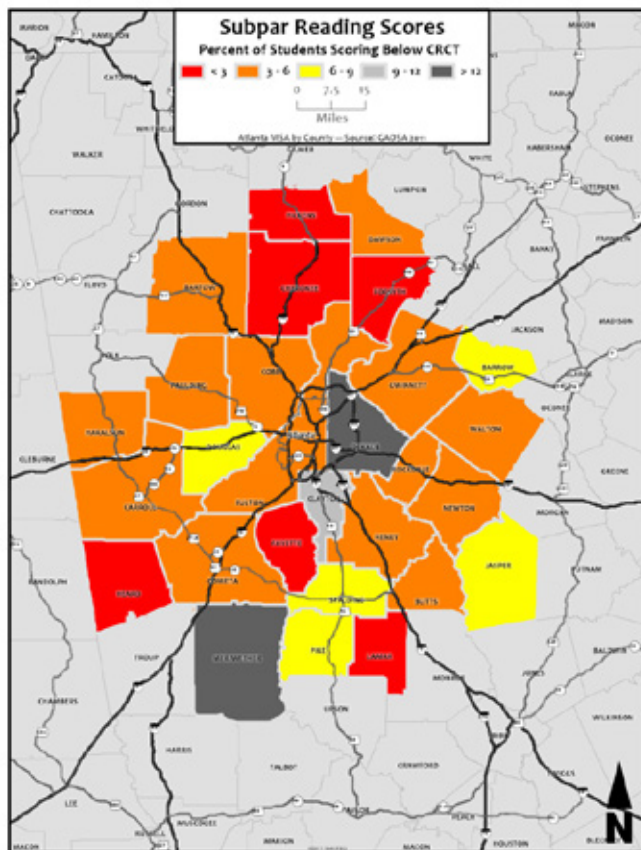
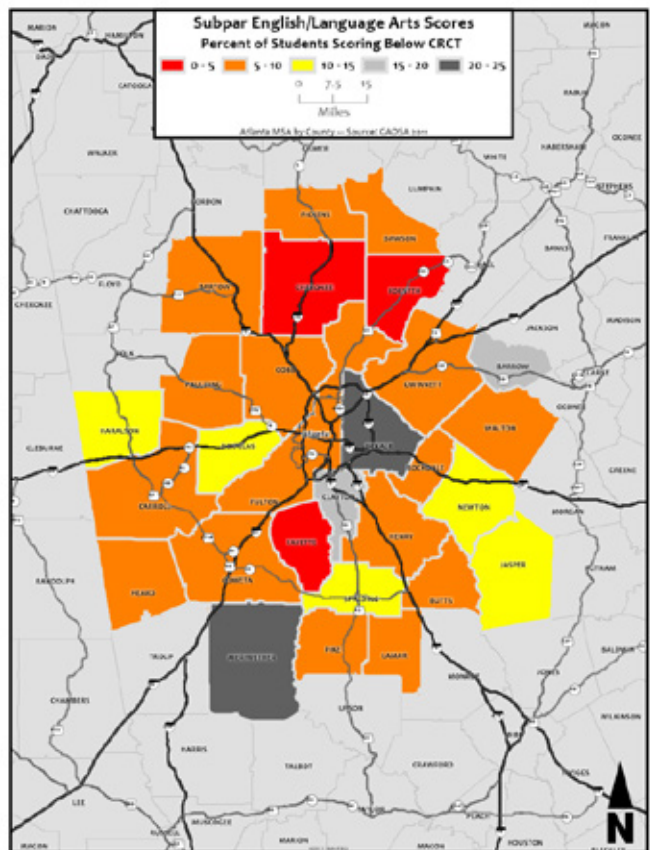


Figure 2.





metro area, students identified as economically disadvantaged (i.e. students eligible for free and reduced lunch) and students whose first language is not English consistently score less well than students as a whole.

The story is not appreciably better in the area of language arts. **Figure 2** shows that DeKalb, Clayton and Barrow schools have the highest percent of students failing to meet CRCT standards. Although overall performance levels are acceptable with greater than 75 percent of all students scoring at proficient or higher, student subgroups such as language minorities, the disadvantaged, and the disabled consistently underperform relative to students as a whole.

While these types of student performance data provide useful information to students and teachers, they are used primarily for accountability

purposes. They indicate whether schools are successful in meeting academic goals that have been set by local, state or federal officials. During the past 12 years in which the nation's education system has functioned in the context of what is known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the name for the federal law delineating the accountability requirements associated with the distribution and receipt of federal aid, lists have been published showing the number of schools that have not made adequate progress in improving student achievement year to year. It is not uncommon for a district to have a small number of schools make this list. It would be uncommon and a cause for concern for a substantial percentage of a district's schools, (i.e. 50 percent or more), to be designated as not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP). These schools are classified as "low-performing

Figure 3.

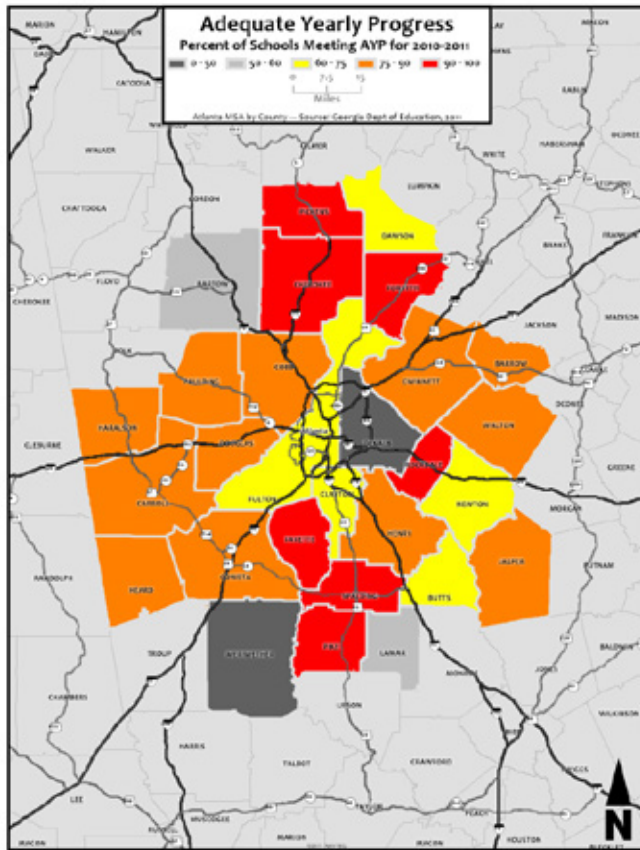
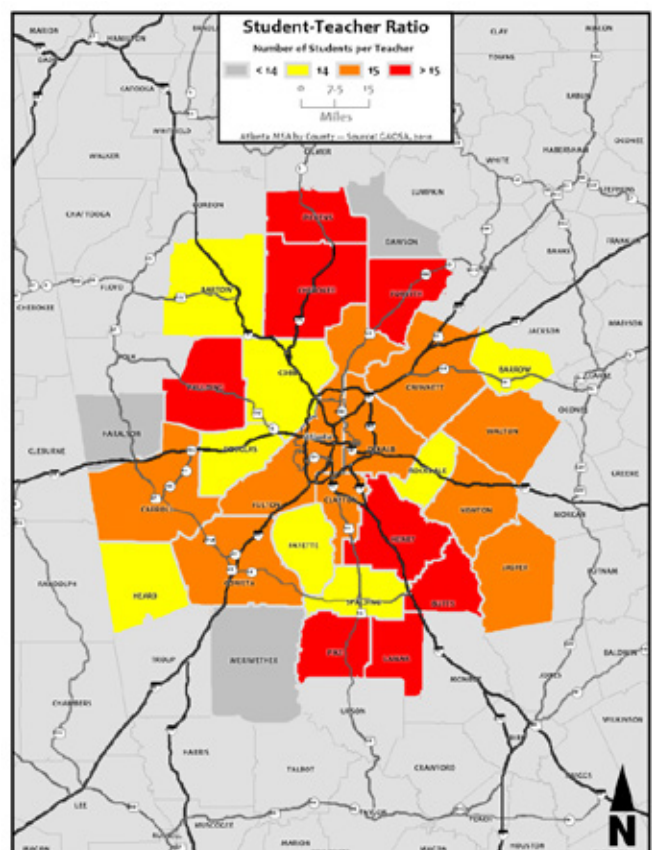


Figure 4.



schools” and are given a specified period of time to improve or face more stringent sanctions (e.g., reconstitution or closure). As shown in **Figure 3**, Metro Atlanta has two districts where less than half of the schools met AYP – DeKalb and Meriwether. These counties were followed by Bartow and Lamar Counties where approximately 50 percent - 60 percent of schools met AYP.

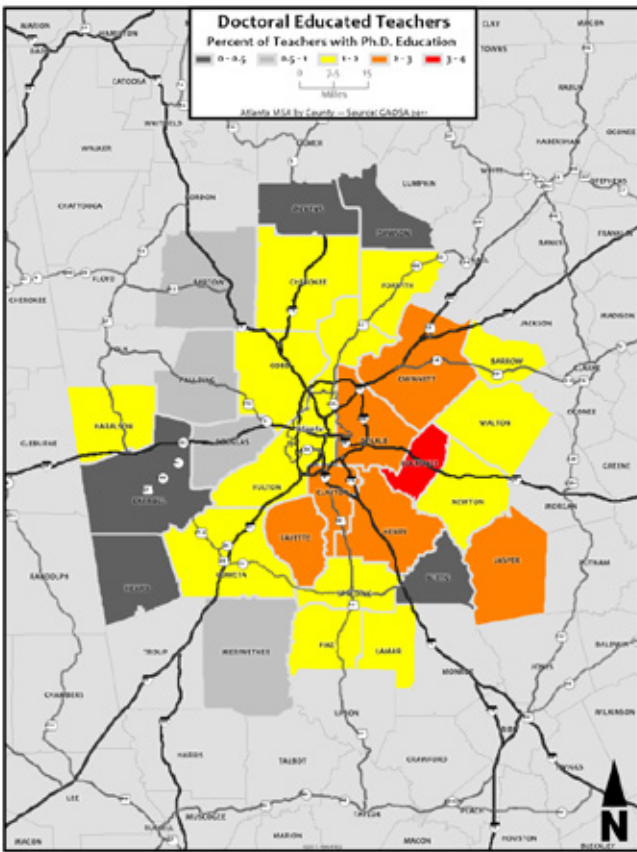
Experts typically look at two or three key variables when attempting to explain why some schools do well while others do not - average class size and the qualifications of teachers. **Figure 4** shows that there are certainly variations in pupil-teacher ratios across Metro Atlanta. Classes tend to be smaller in roughly a third of the counties in the metro area. These variations could be a function of policy choice, budget realities or a combination thereof. In any event, the

differences across the metro area are not extreme.

Neither are the differences in teacher qualifications as **Figure 5** demonstrates. While, there appear to be more teachers with advanced degrees in some of the large county systems (e.g. Gwinnett, DeKalb, Clayton, Fayette and Henry), overall the distributions of training and experience are comparable across the metro area. An exception to this might be certain schools in Atlanta that are staffed by a significant contingent of teachers that have come through alternative routes. Most alternative route strategies place recent college graduates or individuals who might still be in completion certification programs in schools.

As such, the average years of experience for these teachers is typically low and most of these teachers will not have acquired advanced

Figure 5.



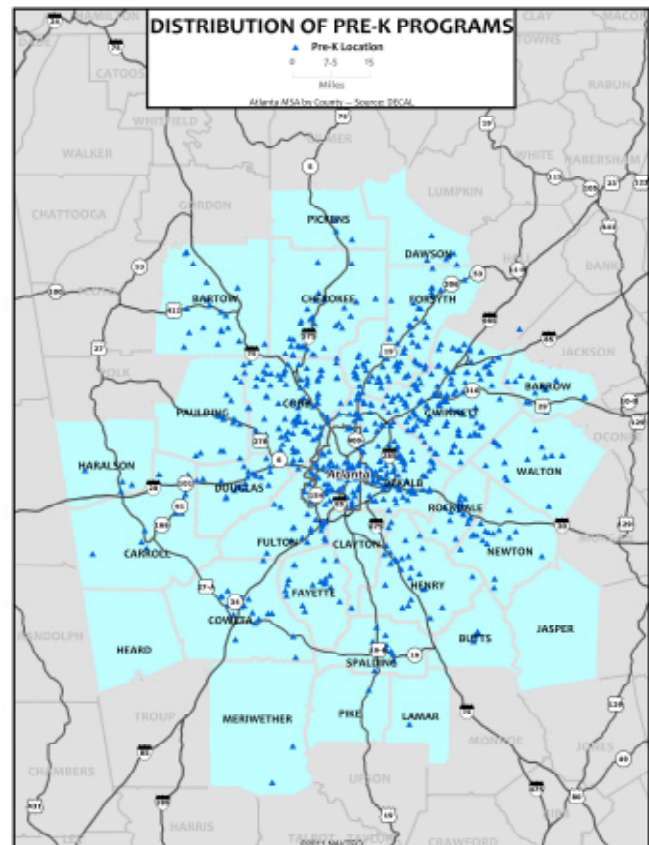
degrees. Some may not yet be fully certified in their teaching areas. Many of these individuals are subject to leave their initial teaching assignment, if not subject to leave teaching altogether, within the first two or three years of teaching.³

There are other factors that help to explain the education outcomes we observe for Metro Atlanta. Many believe that investments in early childhood and pre-Kindergarten programs provide a big payoff, especially for disadvantaged children who often start school with limited vocabularies and poor reading skills. Based on **Figure 6**, there appears to be an abundance of pre-K programs in Metro Atlanta, especially in the most densely populated counties. However, program availability drops off significantly in the outer ring of counties such as Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Douglas,

Fayette, Henry, Paulding and Rockdale. Given the demographic patterns in some of these counties, especially the growing diversity and rates of poverty, the limited supply of Pre-K programs could be a cause for concern. Poverty rates are at or above 16 percent in some counties with fairly limited availability of Pre-K programs.

We also know that demand for Pre-K has generally exceeded the number of available slots, a reality that has likely been exacerbated by recent reductions in funding for pre-K programs.⁴ Therefore, it may also be true that even in parts of the metro area where Pre-K appears to be widely available; the supply of high-quality programs lags demand, especially for families

Figure 6.



who cannot access these services without some form of assistance. The problem could be worsened by the legitimate efforts of state policy makers and regulators to raise standards for these programs, especially if the programs on the outer fringe tend to be small, privately operated day care centers.

Before turning to a brief review of higher education in the metro area, it should be noted that there are any number of issues that will require attention as part of an effort to improve learning outcomes and high school graduation rates across Metro Atlanta. For instance, one serious impediment to progress is the high out-of-school suspension rates. Low-income students and students of color are twice as likely to be suspended from school. Students with multiple suspensions are three times as likely to drop out. Many of these students, especially Black males, land in the juvenile justice system, further hampering their ability to complete their educations and find stable employment. Changes in instructional practice and school climate, as well as serious consideration of existing discipline policies and practices in schools, must be considered in order to address these high suspension rates.

Changing academic standards presents another challenge. All districts in the metro area are in the process of bringing their curriculum and teaching practices in line with a new set of national standards called the Common Core Standards. What is important about these standards is that they are presumed to reflect levels of academic performance which fully prepare students for college. If teachers are supported in adapting their practice to teach to these standards, it should bode well for students. The pace at which teachers are coming to understand the implications of these new standards for their practice should give us pause, however. Curriculum issues in particular are thought to represent one of the big unknowns for educators in that many experts do not believe teachers are sufficiently prepared with curricular maps and course materials that help them teach to these new standards.⁵ Given the percentage of students who are struggling to meet prevailing standards in Metro Atlanta, it will be important to monitor how the implementation of these standards impact the least advantaged and lowest performing students in the region.

Between
60 and 80%
of Metro Atlantans
have a high school diploma.

HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES

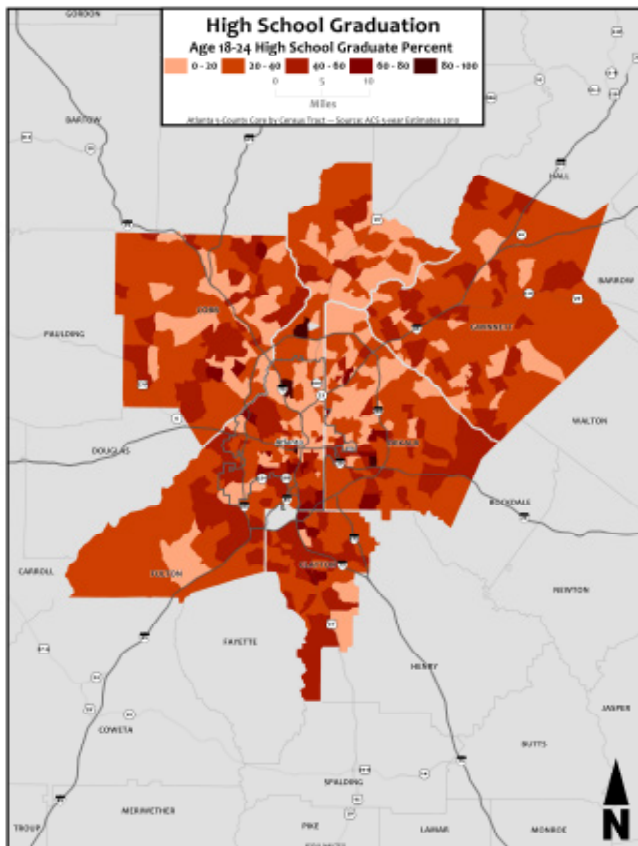
There is limited data on access to and success in higher education in Metro Atlanta. Of particular interest is the revelation that the percent of the population in Metro Atlanta with a high school diploma remains somewhere between 60 and 80 percent. **Figure 7** shows high school graduation rates for the five core counties. It demonstrates that only a handful of census tracts exhibit higher graduation rates, while quite a number of census tracts exhibit lower graduation rates. While this figure puts the region at about the national average,⁶ some might argue that not until the region increases the percentage of the population with high school diplomas can it significantly increase the college-going rate. Increasing college

attendance and completion rates will likely be key to sustained economic growth in the region.

Nationally, the idea of going to college began to increase in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 2009, nearly 70 percent of all high school graduates enrolled in some form of postsecondary education⁷ The issue today has less to do with whether students are pursuing college and more to do with whether they persist to completing a degree. Unfortunately, Georgia's higher education attainment is expected to only increase to 43 percent by 2020, with the bulk of these graduates coming from the metro area. Not only do we have to confront a college completion challenge, but we must also address a disparity in those who actually participate. If we are to reach the 60 percent target which many argue is key to sustained economic growth, we will need an additional 250,000 degree completers above our expected graduation levels.⁸ College graduation rates vary widely within Metro Atlanta. While the percent of the population with some type of postsecondary credential is high in census tracts in the very center of the metro area, that percentage declines significantly for many of the surrounding counties.

In Georgia, the HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) Scholarship represents a mechanism to increase access to college. Eligibility is based on a combination of academic factors, most notably a student's grade point average (GPA). A student who graduates from a HOPE-eligible high school or completes a HOPE-eligible home study program must earn a 3.00 cumulative grade point average on all core coursework. Funded by the state lottery, the program pays for tuition and fees at Georgia's public colleges for those who maintain a B average in college.

Figure 7.



2011 HOPE ELIGIBILITY

Figure 9.

	NO. OF GRADUATES	NO. ELIGIBLE	PERCENT ELIGIBLE
Atlanta	2217	650	29.3
Barron	605	249	41.2
Barton	709	237	33.4
Butts	216	80	37.0
Carroll	749	350	46.7
Cherokee	2059	942	45.8
Clayton	2204	715	32.4
Cobb	6777	3225	47.6
Coweta	1277	542	42.4
Dawson	208	99	47.6
DeKalb	4976	1879	36.6
Douglas	1434	515	35.9
Fayette	1786	1037	58.1
Forsyth	1879	1080	57.5
Fulton	5617	2484	44.2
Gwinnett	8970	3611	40.3
Haralson	186	60	32.3
Henry	2532	778	30.7
Jasper	111	38	34.2
Lamar	137	46	33.6
Newton	1018	444	43.6
Paulding	1676	672	40.1
Pike	205	96	46.8
Spaulding	490	186	38.0

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement

When examining **Figure 8**, which shows Hope Eligibility by percent of county graduates, an interesting pattern emerges. First, eligibility varies widely with only two counties having much more than half of their students eligible. Another five counties have between 45 to 50 percent of their students eligible. Therefore, in a majority of counties, fewer than half of the students are eligible for the HOPE Scholarship based on current eligibility requirements. No more than a third of students are eligible in a number of highly enrolled districts (e.g. Clayton, Henry Counties).

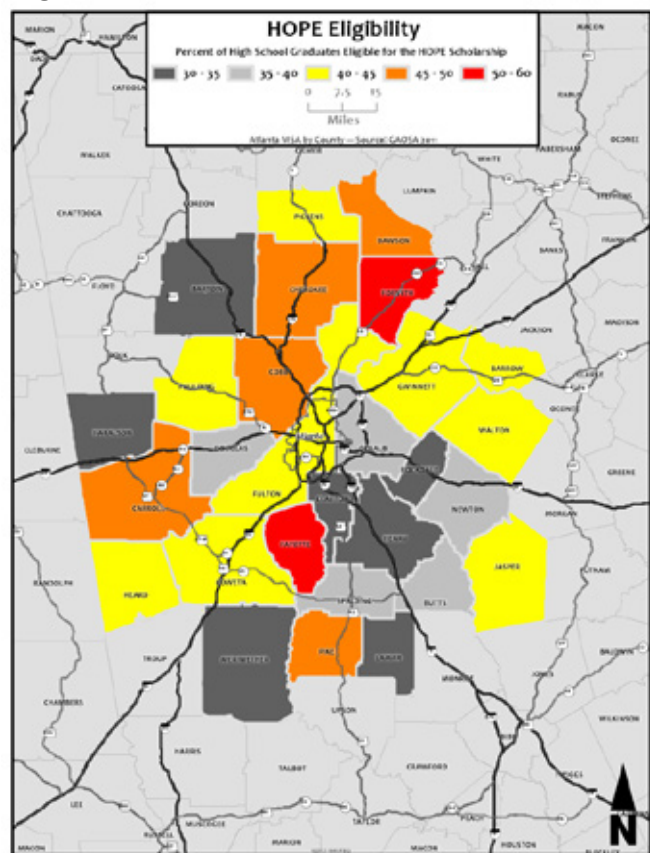
Figure 9 provides more detailed findings on Hope Scholarship eligibility. (See page 64).

One can also look at HOPE eligibility by household income which raises additional questions about the relationship between eligibility and ability to pay for college. One interpretation of the map that links eligibility and household income is that high school achievement and income are positively correlated. In essence, to the extent that students from middle- and higher-income families outperform students from low-income households, they are more likely to be eligible for HOPE. However, these same families are more likely to be able to afford college for their children. A National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper finds that the HOPE Scholarship has had a large impact on college attendance, but it also widened the gap in attendance between Blacks and Whites and between those from low and high income families.⁹

The available data do not reveal how college participation and completion varies by specific types of students – traditional versus non-

traditional, African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American or White. But nationally, we know that college completion rates are even lower for African American, Hispanic, adult, low-income, and part-time students than for the so-called “traditional” full-time White college student.¹⁰ Also important to appreciate, traditional college students (i.e. those who enter directly from high school on a full-time basis and live on a college campus) make up only a quarter of the nation’s student body.¹¹ Commuter, part-time, and adult learners constitute the majority of college students. Regional efforts to increase degree attainment will need to focus as much or more on these subgroups and “non-traditional” students if Metro Atlanta will push its postsecondary rates up near the 60 percent target.

Figure 8.





IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND ACTION

The general picture these maps paint is that Metro Atlanta is a vibrant and dynamic metropolitan area and there is talent and genuine capacity in this region's education sector. Given its location, Metro Atlanta continues to attract diverse and highly-educated newcomers. However, if regional analysts are right that our growth cannot be sustained merely by importing new talent, then the current distribution of learning outcomes suggests that we face real challenges in the years ahead.

It is essential that we reduce the variation in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The maps just scratch the surface in describing existing patterns of achievement, but they confirm that low-income students and students of color continue

to perform less well, on average, than their White peers. We might not have to worry if it were not for the fact that students of color increasingly constitute a majority of all new students entering our public schools. A new report from the Southern Education Foundation reasserts that the central challenge for the South is creating an education system that effectively serves this new diverse majority of students, a significant percentage of whom are also poor.¹² The maps for Metro Atlanta reveal that poverty is no longer a center city issue – it is a reality for many of the communities and counties surrounding the City of Atlanta.

Unfortunately, there are no quick solutions to this difficult problem. A popular theory is that we just need more effective teachers to take care of this dilemma. Ironically, the data suggest that there is a large and experienced

education workforce in Metro Atlanta. Unlike rural communities in Georgia or elsewhere in the South, the metro area has access to good teachers. In addition, there is a sizeable training infrastructure with regard to the collection of colleges and universities that could be enlisted to help with the impending challenges of new standards and assessments. While there may be significant teacher development issues associated with improving learning outcomes and educational attainment, it is not immediately obvious that finding qualified teachers is a core problem in the region. It will be interesting to see how Georgia's new teacher evaluation system impacts the current teacher workforce.¹³

In the end, it will be more important to focus on the actual educational practices that today seem to create adverse impacts for specific student subgroups (e.g., out-of-school suspensions for boys of color, disproportionate placements in alternative schools and in special education placements, the lack of quality bilingual education programs for limited-English speaking students, etc.). A central theme in the data is that while metro area learning outcomes

are satisfactory, on average, performance on statewide assessments remains disappointing for students in special education, for students whose first language is not English and for students who are poor. While there is likely a strong case to be made for additional resources that might support special initiatives targeting these hard-to-serve groups, the existing variations in per pupil spending are not so pronounced as to solely explain why such educational disparities remain by race and income.

If there is anything to add to the outcomes story, it may be found in other chapters in this series, to the extent that they more directly address correlations between the available achievement data and the Metro Atlanta variations in health outcomes, risky behaviors, access to quality food, public safety and other variables which, today conspire to hold children back from the educational attainment they need and deserve. Hopefully a careful and thoughtful review of how these broad indicators of wellbeing, taken together with the available data on educational inputs and outcomes, will paint a more comprehensive picture of the opportunities and challenges we face in Metro Atlanta.

¹Atlanta Regional Council for Higher Education, 2011.

²www.gadoe.org/curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment

³Cochran-Smith, McQuillan, Mitchell, Terrell, Barnatt, D'Souza, Jong, Shakman, Lam and Gleeson, 2012.

⁴Southern Education Foundation. *The Promise of Georgia Pre-K*. 2011.

⁵Sloan, 2010.

⁶(NCES, 2013) .

⁷Baum, Kuroos and McPherson, 2013.

⁸Complete College Georgia, 2012.

⁹Dynarski, 2000.

¹⁰Bailey and Dynarski, 2011.

¹¹Complete College Georgia, 2012.

¹²SEF, 2013.

¹³GADOE, 2012.



EDUCATION CASE STUDY:

SING – A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO ACHIEVING EDUCATION REFORM

Danielle Campbell

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In 2012, most of the school districts in the Metro Atlanta area reported improved graduation rates. Decatur City Schools graduated 91 percent of its students, which represents the highest percentage among the 15 metro school districts. Fayette County saw the biggest improvement, increasing from 78 percent in 2011 to 85 percent in 2012. Cobb County graduated 76 percent in 2012 and Fulton 71¹ percent. Even with these improvements, **Georgia is still not graduating 1 out of every 3 of its students annually.**² Atlanta Public Schools, Clayton County, and DeKalb County – some of the most populous districts in the state— each graduated less than 60 percent (at 51 percent, 54 percent and 57 percent, respectively) of their students.



The City of Marietta ranks among those districts struggling with educational performance and completion, having graduated just 62 percent of its students in 2012. Among several factors affecting student achievement, the district has identified “**the ninth grade bulge**” as an enduring instigator of the dropout rate. This “bulge” refers to the high number of students who enter ninth grade from middle school unprepared for the demanding work load or ill-equipped with the social and organizational skills required for them to succeed. Data shows a significant decrease in student enrollment from ninth to tenth grade (31 percent, 26 percent, and 26 percent decreases in 2008-‘09, ‘09-‘10, and ‘10-‘11, respectively).³ Marietta realized that in order to turn the tide, it needed to reorient its intervention tactics and make more well-informed decisions. In response, an advisory committee of business, community, and educational leaders led the Marietta City School System in conducting a comprehensive research project called the **SING (Succeeding in Ninth Grade) Initiative**. As part of this process, the committee identified 30 unique issues, ranging from student motivation, attendance, mobility and secondary teacher pedagogy to teen pregnancy and health issues, as considerable factors affecting

current graduation rates. The SING findings will be used to advance the district’s 2013-2016 Strategic Plan’s first goal of Academic Excellence—preparing all students within a supportive, engaging, student-centered learning environment that ensures continuous academic achievement.

Four action teams (Relevance and Careers, Advisement and Counseling, Programs and Interventions, and Parental Engagement) were created to collect and analyze the extensive research and address core SING components. This process included analyses of school and community data; interviews with board members and principals; parent, student, and teacher focus groups; and benchmarking to comparable school districts. Rather than advancing a top-down plan of action, the school district, through the SING initiative, engaged a broader range of stakeholders. In doing so, the district obtained an abundance of community information and a balance of perspectives about the relevant factors that will be used to guide school reform decision-making.

While still early in its implementation, the SING Initiative is just one example of how communities are coming together to effectively address our broader educational challenge.

¹<http://www.ajc.com/news/news/breaking-news/state-graduation-rate-improves-but-some-metro-atla/nXx6N/>.

²http://boostup.org/en/facts/statistics/33%_rate_not_graduating. Data as of February 2013.

³http://www.gpee.org/fileadmin/files/PDFs/Marietta_-_SING_Report_-_Final.pdf.

ENVIRONMENT

MaKara Rumley

Environmental Justice Attorney with GreenLaw

THE STATE OF OUR ENVIRONMENT not only contributes substantially to public health outcomes, but also has real implications for economic growth and viability, as well as overall quality of life. Over the years, enhancements in scientific research and modern technology have provided greater insight into the impact of human behavior on the global environment. New information has prompted the implementation of a range of governmental, corporate and individual-focused interventions intended to minimize pollutants and reduce environmental risk. Yet despite such efforts real threats to the environment persist.

What has also become clear in recent decades is that not all communities are impacted equally by environmental hazards. Vulnerable communities – those lacking access to the information or power to affect decision-making processes. tend to suffer the burdens of environmental degradation at higher rates. This chapter explores the three primary ways pollution occurs in the environment – land pollution, water pollution, and air pollution. This analysis is viewed through a lens of environmental justice, as a way to understand how the benefits and burdens of pollution exposure are dispersed. The chapter concludes with some discussion of regional best practices, along with recommendations of how the rest of the region and state might follow their lead.



ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION – AN OVERVIEW

Environmental pollution is any discharge of material or energy into water, land, or air that causes or may cause acute (short-term) or chronic (long-term) detriment to the Earth’s ecological balance or that lowers quality of life.¹ Pollutants may cause primary damage, with direct identifiable impacts on the environment, or secondary damage in the form of minor disruptions in the delicate balance of the biological food web that are detectable only over long time periods.²

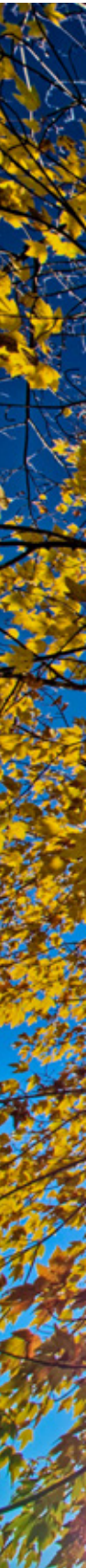
The industrialization of society, the introduction of motorized vehicles, and the explosion of the human population, have caused an exponential growth in the production of goods and services, which also brought a tremendous increase in waste by-products.³ The indiscriminate discharge of untreated industrial and domestic wastes into waterways, the releasing of thousands of tons of particulates and airborne gases into the atmosphere, and the use of newly developed chemicals have resulted in major environmental disasters.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS DEFINED AS “THE FAIR TREATMENT AND MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT OF ALL PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, OR INCOME WITH RESPECT TO THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND ENFORCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND POLICIES.”⁴

The environmental justice movement rose to national attention 30 years ago in North Carolina, as a direct reaction by minorities to environmental inequities. There, protestors marched and were arrested in a non-violent protest against the planned siting of a landfill in Warren County, where African Americans composed 65 percent of the population. Though unsuccessful in thwarting plans for the landfill, their demonstrations prompted the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to undertake a study which found that in the Southeast, African Americans comprised the majority of the population in three out of every four communities where off-site hazardous waste landfills were located.⁵ By examining the racial and socio-economic characteristics of communities surrounding commercial hazardous waste facilities and toxic waste sites, researchers found “race to be the most potent variable in predicting where these facilities were located—more powerful than household income, the value of homes and the estimated amount of hazardous waste generated by industry.”⁶ After the GAO report, more studies began to emerge demonstrating the widespread nature of these disparities. Problems especially persisted in areas that were either highly industrial or agricultural.

In a recent report published by GreenLaw, entitled the *Patterns of Pollution*, 52 environmental justice “hot spots” were found within the 14 Metro Atlanta counties included in the study.⁷ Environmental Hotspots are areas where the correlation between race, poverty, and pollution are strongest. The report found the greatest concentration of “hot spots” to be in





Carson Matthews Photography

Fulton (13), Clayton (9) and Cobb (7) Counties. There were no “hot spots” found in Fayette, Forsyth and Henry Counties – three of the most affluent counties in the region.⁸

LAND POLLUTION

Land pollution is the degradation of the Earth’s land surface through misuse of the soil by poor agricultural practices, mineral exploitation, industrial waste dumping, and indiscriminate disposal of urban wastes.⁹ **Figure 1** examines five different types of land pollution sites: 1) hazardous waste, landfills, toxic release, RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) designated waste and superfund long-term response. As the map shows, land pollution sites, regardless the type, tend to cluster towards central Metro Atlanta. Hazardous waste sites are especially prevalent. It is important to note that Fayette, Henry, Paulding, and Cumming Counties have a limited number of facilities producing

land pollution. Their corresponding minority population is significantly lower than DeKalb, Fulton and Clayton Counties, which have a higher representation of land pollution facilities.

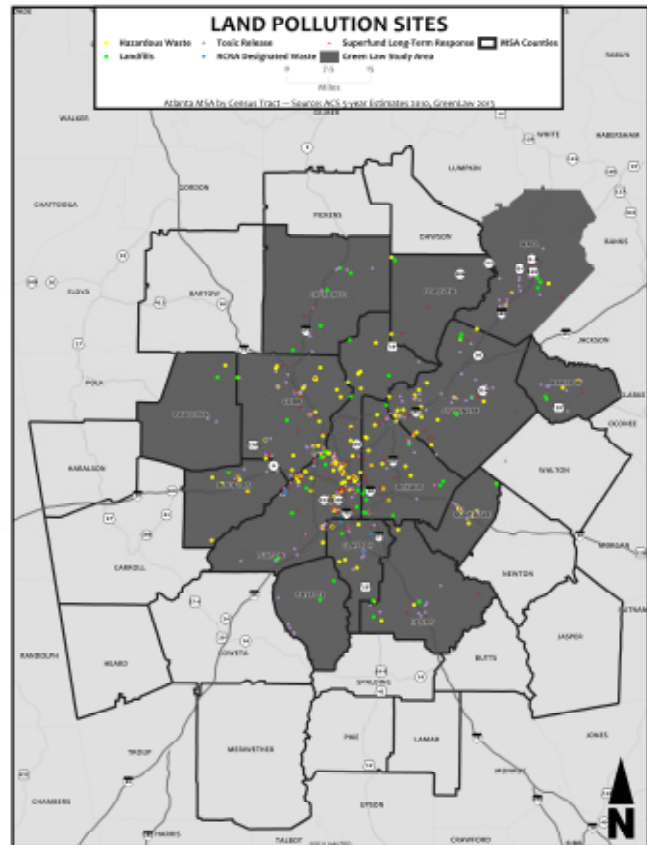
Brownfields are another common contributor to land pollution in urbanized areas. Located on former industrial sites, brownfields are abandoned properties that are contaminated, or potentially contaminated, with hazardous pollutants. Environmental justice implications have been discovered with regard to lower cleanup standards and as it relates to the priority applied for brownfield redevelopment. In order for state and local governments to provide incentives to brownfield developers, cleanup standards under brownfield redevelopment in most U.S. states are generally lower than the Superfund standard for industrial and commercial uses.¹⁰ Critics have surmised that the overall lowering of standards has reduced developer costs, but they have not determined the adequacy of the new standards to protect public health.¹¹

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division maintains a “Georgia Brownfield Properties” list, which tracks the fate of brownfields within the state and shows the dates of their planned cleanup.¹² Georgia has about 484 properties on the Georgia Brownfield Properties list.¹³

WATER POLLUTION

Water pollution is the introduction into fresh or ocean waters of chemical, physical, or biological material that degrades the quality of the water and affects the organisms living in it.¹⁴ This process ranges from simple addition of dissolved or suspended solids to discharge of

Figure 1.



insidious and persistent toxic pollutants (e.g., pesticides, heavy metals, and non-degradable, bio-accumulative, chemical compounds, etc.).¹⁵ Sewage overflows and spills can negatively affect healthy watersheds. Healthy watersheds are essential for providing clean drinking water, safe recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat. As land in a watershed is developed, natural areas are converted to hard surfaces such as streets, sidewalks and parking lots. When it rains, water that would normally soak into the ground becomes runoff, picking up litter, animal wastes, motor oil, chemicals, and other substances as it travels over these pervious surfaces. Sediment and these substances are carried by urban runoff directly to streams and rivers, where it can cause flooding, stream bank erosion, and water quality issues.

Water pollution in Metro Atlanta is largely the result of wastewater overflows and sewage spills. These overflows and spills are due to aging infrastructure, vandalism, cooking grease clogging pipes, and the practices of local authorities.¹⁶ Penalties have a direct correlation to the amount of water pollution in a given area, and right now, Georgia taxpayers are paying some of the highest penalties for water pollution. An analysis of state data by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution found that local agencies in Metro Atlanta paid nearly \$6 million in fines over the past dozen years for sewage spills and wastewater overflows into rivers and creeks.¹⁷ Fulton County

has paid more than \$1.2 million in fines since 1998, illustrating the level of water pollution exposure to Fulton County residents.¹⁸ **Figure 2** provides an overview of water pollution sites across 14 of the 28 Metro Atlanta counties. It demonstrates that water pollution, unlike land pollution, is significantly more dispersed across the coverage area. For instance, individuals living in Forsyth County appear to be just as likely to be exposed to water pollution as individuals living in Fulton County. This suggests that water pollution is very much a regional problem, and not one disproportionately borne by disadvantaged sub-groups.

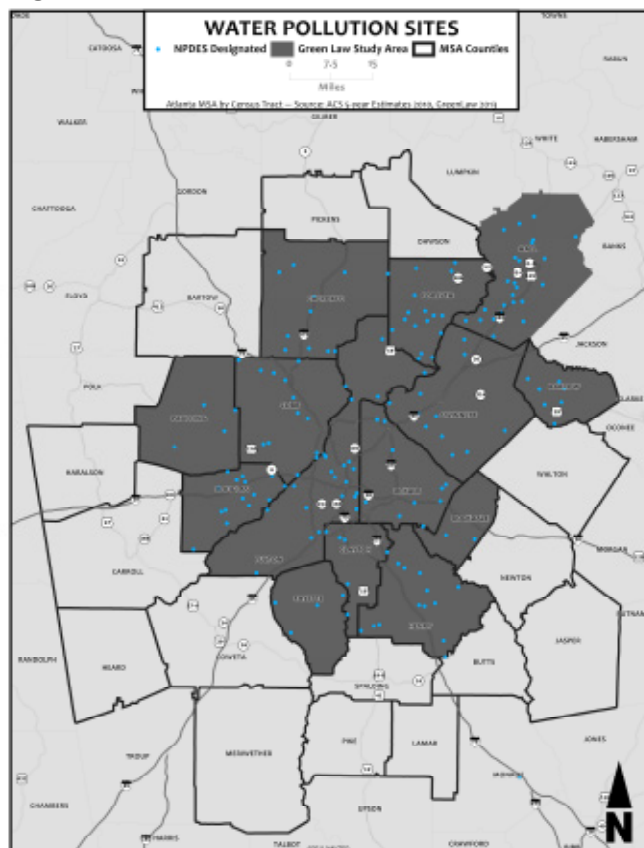


AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution is the accumulation in the atmosphere of substances that, in sufficient concentrations, endanger human health or produce other measured effects on living matter and other materials.¹⁹ Among the major sources of pollution are power and heat generation, the burning of solid wastes, industrial processes, and, especially, transportation.²⁰ The six major

types of pollutants are carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, particulates, sulfur dioxide, and photochemical oxidants. Air pollution is also the introduction of chemicals, particulate matter or biological materials that cause harm or discomfort to humans or other living organisms, or damages the natural environment into the atmosphere.²¹ **Figure 3** (see page 77) shows concentrated air pollution sites. Areas with the most severe clustering

Figure 2.



include Northwest Atlanta, the intersection of Fulton and Cobb Counties and the northern border of DeKalb and Gwinnet Counties.

In 2012, Atlanta was rated among the worst metro areas for air pollution in the nation, according to the American Lung Association report on air quality, *State of The Air*.²² The report revealed that the Atlanta region was the 25th worst for ozone and tied for 24th worst for soot in the nation.²³ In 2013, the American Lung Association ranked the region 28th in the nation for ozone.²⁴ **Figure 4** (See page 79) demonstrates that 6 of the 28 Metro area counties had 21 – 27 days where ground level ozone exceeded .08 parts per million (ppm), which is considered an allowable amount. Only the region's most outlying counties had

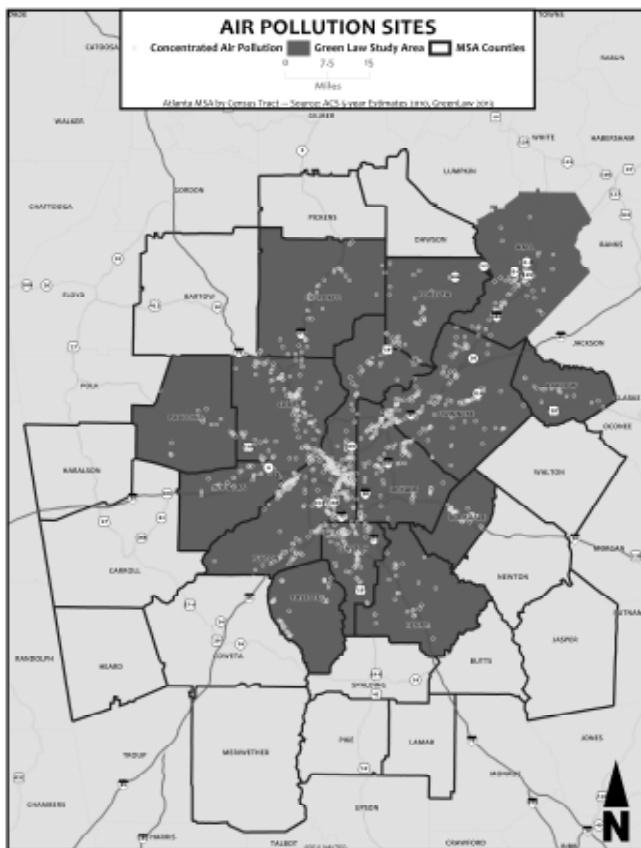
five or less days exceeding that level. This draws a strong correlation between traffic congestion, carbon emissions and ground level ozone pollution. Based on 2007 records, if Georgia were a nation, it would rank 26th in the world for carbon dioxide emissions.²⁵

Before it's conversion to natural gas, Plant McDonough Atkinson, located in Smyrna-Vinings, GA, was a significant contributor to air pollution in Metro Atlanta. Now, Georgia houses the nation's dirtiest coal-fired plant, Plant Scherer, according to a new report by *Environment America*.²⁶ Even though the plant is located 79 miles from Atlanta, air pollution has a direct correlation to health disparities in the region. Further, coal-fired plants located within wind reaching distance from the Metro Atlanta are a significant contributor to the state of the environment. Burning coal to generate energy is the largest source of carbon emissions in the U.S. Georgia's carbon emissions alone are greater than the emissions of many countries.

A contraction of the words smoke and fog, smog can be loosely defined as a multisource, widespread air pollution that occurs in the air of cities.²⁷ This type of pollution has seriously affected more persons than any other type of air. **Figure 5** (See page 79) provides an overview of particulate matter pollution – a major contributor to smog. The findings differ significantly from those relating to ground level ozone. On the contrary, core counties such as Gwinnet, DeKalb and Clayton had 0 days exceeding the allowable amount, whereas outlying counties such as Haralson, Carroll, Heard and Douglas had 10 to 12 days exceeding the allowable amount.

Scientists at the Argonne National Laboratory have found that African American and Hispanic population subgroups experience greater exposure to substandard outdoor air quality.²⁸ Nationally, 52 percent of all Whites live in counties with high ozone concentrations. African-Americans and Hispanics live in counties with ozone concentrations of 62 percent and 71 percent, respectively.²⁹ Population group distributions were found to be similar for carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, lead, and particulate matter, with higher percentages for African American and Hispanics than Whites residing in counties with excessive levels of these pollutants.³⁰ People of color bear the burden of air pollution in Metro Atlanta due to their disproportionate exposure to industrial zones because of where they reside.

Figure 3.



CHILDREN'S
ASTHMA
RATES IN
GEORGIA ARE
12 percent
HIGHER THAN
THE NATIONAL
AVERAGE.

THE EFFECTS OF POLLUTION ON HEALTH

There is a causal connection between exposure to pollution and its effects on the health of Metro Atlanta's citizens. Air pollution, including particulate matter, is linked to respiratory and heart diseases, cancer, premature death, and reduced lung function in children.³¹ Poor air quality triggers asthma attacks.³² Children's asthma rates in Georgia are 12 percent higher than the national average. Children receive greater exposures to environmental pollutants present in air, food, and water, because they inhale or ingest more air, food, or water on a body-weight basis than do adults.

Carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and mono-nitrogen oxides are proven to have adverse effects on human health. Carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides affect the respiratory system, while volatile organic compounds have a long list of health-related effects including eye, nose, and throat irritation, headaches, loss of coordination, nausea, and damage to the liver, kidney, and central nervous system. Some of these substances can cause cancer in animals; some are suspected or known to cause cancer in humans.³³

POLICY: THE ROAD TO EQUITABLE BURDENS

There are no benefits to living in close proximity to pollution. It should not be accepted that minorities, those who are linguistically isolated, or those living in poverty must live closer to polluting facilities than others. Policy is a vehicle that can be used to create equitable solutions

for disproportionate exposure. A review of the 2010 publication, *Environmental Justice for All: A Fifty State Survey of Legislation, Policies and Cases*, by the American Bar Association and the University of California, Hastings College of Law reveals that many states consider site demographics in environmental decision-making and are seeking new ways to ensure equal protection from environmental harm.³⁴ Currently, 27 states have an employee, working group or taskforce dedicated to environmental justice. Also, 18 states have a policy or law in effect that directly addresses environmental justice. This leaves Georgia in a small minority of states not directly addressing environmental justice.

Georgia's "anti-concentration" law is the only state law requiring some consideration of environmental justice principles.³⁵ The law, passed in 2004, restricts the number of solid waste facilities that may be sited within a two-mile radius of three or more other solid waste facilities. Though the law serves the important purpose of effectively preventing the clustering of landfills in Georgia, it does not take into consideration the demographics of the area where these facilities may be sited. Legislative efforts addressing environmental justice at the state level have been unsuccessful.

Much can be done in Metro Atlanta to incorporate environmental justice into decision-making. Local governments across the country, including Fulton County, have adopted environmental justice policies or laws that encourage consideration of environmental justice before permitting a source of pollution. Other efforts have been and continue to be made to incorporate environmental justice

in Metro Atlanta. For instance, the Atlanta Regional Commission, a 10-county regional planning agency, incorporates environmental justice into the regional planning process.³⁶ Also, the City of Atlanta is making efforts to promote environmental justice in the development of the Atlanta Beltline, a redevelopment plan centered on a 22-mile loop encircling the City’s urban core.³⁷

Local governments have the power to put mechanisms in place to consider environmental justice when making crucial zoning decisions to improve or deny the locations of polluting facilities. Their decisions, as well as those at the state level, can do much to lessen the burden on minority and low-income communities living in the shadow of pollution.

Figure 4.

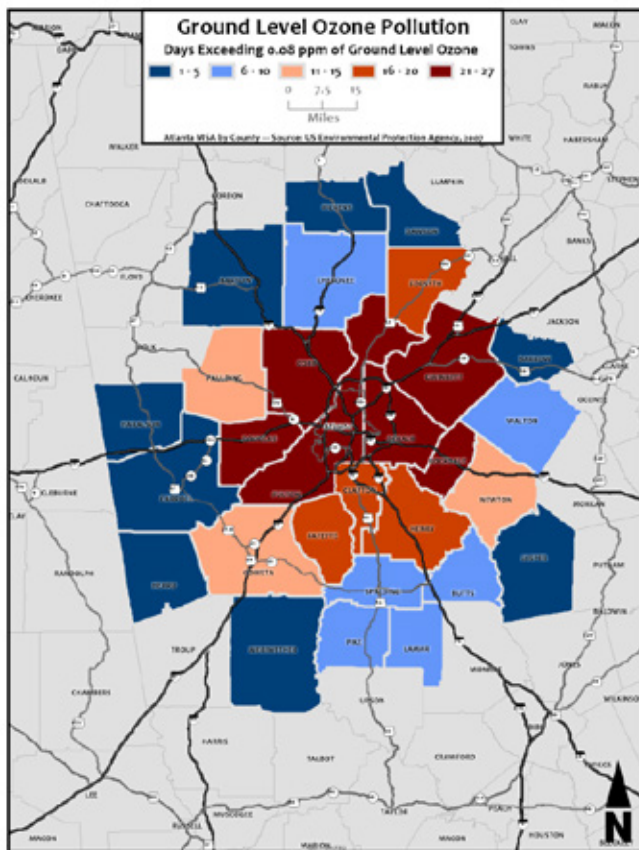
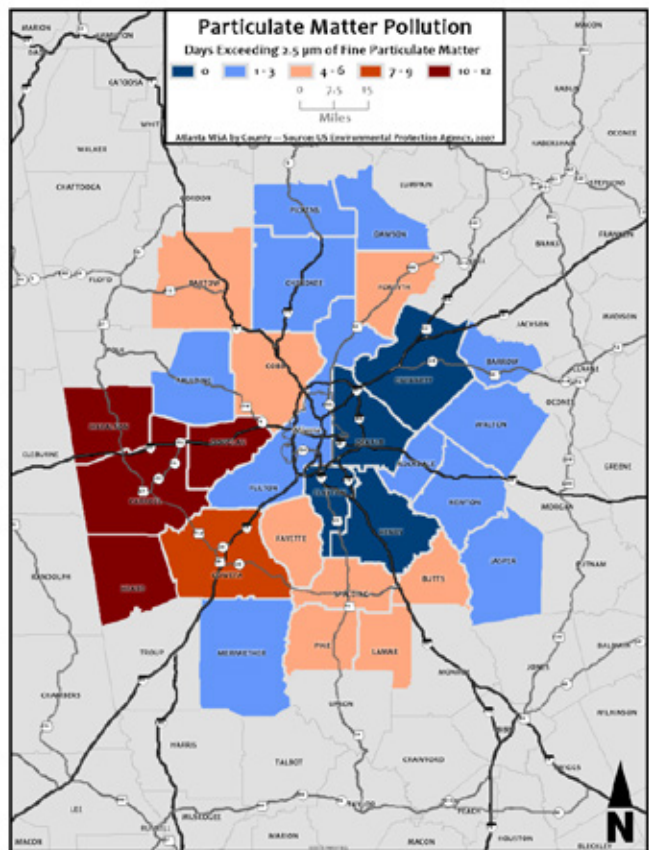


Figure 5.



RESOURCES

¹<http://www.library.thinkquest.org/c001611/pollution.html> (last visited, October 31, 2013).

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). “Environmental Justice.” <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice> (last visited, October 31, 2013).

⁵United States General Accounting Office, Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfill and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities, GAO-RCED-83-168, B-211461 (1983), available at <http://archive.gao.gov/d48t13/121648.pdf>.

⁶Anhthu Hoang, Warren County’s Legacy for Federal and State Environmental Impact Assessment Laws, 1 Golden Gate U. Envtl. L.J. 91 n.134 (2007).

⁷Green Law. Patterns of Pollution: A Report on Demographics and Pollution in Metro Atlanta. (2012)

⁸Ibid.

⁹Fitzgerald and Leigh 2002; Greenberg 2002; 2003; Hula 2002; Mank 2000; NEJAC 1996; Simons and Winson Brownfield Development and Environmental Justice 3 Downloaded by [Sangyun Lee] at 15:49 11 August 2011 2002; Solitare and Greenberg 2002).

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/geography-environment/brownfields>. (last visited, October 31, 2013).

¹²<http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/brownfields.html> (last visited, October 31, 2013).

¹³<http://www.library.thinkquest.org/c001611/pollution.html> (last visited, October 31, 2013).

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵“Water Pollution Fines Sock Counties, Cities,” by Kristina Torres, AJC 6/11/12.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸<http://www.library.thinkquest.org/c001611/pollution.html> (last visited, October 31, 2013).

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹<http://www.stateoftheair.org/2013/health-risks/>(last visited October 31, 2013).

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²³“Atlanta Ozone Problem Worsening,” by Cloud Conrad, Examiner, 4/29/09.

²⁴www.greenlaw.org/cleanair (last visited October 31, 2013).

²⁵Report Ranks Americas Biggest Carbon Polluters, by Julian Bogs, Environment America, 9/10/13.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷Breathing Polluted Air; Minorities Are Disproportionately Exposed, by Wernette, D.R. and Nieves, L.A., EPA Journal (1992).

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Environ Health Perspect.,1995 September; 103(Suppl 6): 33–35.

³⁰“Two Georgia Cities Still Bad Places for Air Pollution,” by Andy Miller, Georgia Health News, 4/30/12, <http://www.georgiahealthnews.com/2012/04/georgia-cities-bad-places-air-pollution> (last visited, October 31, 2013).

³¹“Water Pollution Fines Sock Counties, Cities,” by Kristina Torres, AJC, 6/11/12.

³²<http://www.stateoftheair.org/2013/health-risks/>(last visited October 31, 2013).

³³See A.B.A. & Hastings Coll. Of the Law, Environmental Justice for All: A Fifty State Survey of Legislation, Policies and Cases (Steven Bonorris ed., 4th ed. 2010) [hereinafter Environmental Justice for All], available at <http://uchastings.edu/public-law/docs/ejreport-fourth-edition.pdf>.

³⁴Ga. Code Ann. § 12-8-25.4 (2011).

³⁵United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Justice Guidebook,

³⁶http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/resources/guidebook/guidebook03.cfm (last visited October 31, 2013).

³⁷<http://beltline.org/progress/progress/environmentalprogress/initiatives/environmental-justice-policy/>(last visited October 31, 2013).

ENVIRONMENT CASE STUDY:

ADDRESSING REGIONAL CHALLENGES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION

Lindsey Garner

Healthcare Consultant

Environmentalism was not always trendy. Today, hybrid cars, canvas grocery bags, and energy-star appliances are marks of personal responsibility and have a certain “cool-factor” particularly with the urban upper-middle class. Even though the environmental movement was popular throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Energy Star program and LEED certifications were not created until the 1990s. However, one local Atlanta non-profit was way ahead of its time.

Southface, located in Metro Atlanta, set up shop in 1978 to forge market-based solutions for creating green jobs, clean energy solutions and sustainable communities. Not only did Southface get an early start in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, its reach extends beyond the typical demographic of high-earning young professionals. It provides real solutions to address Metro Atlanta’s social and economic woes.

With the primary goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Southface partnered with the Greater Atlanta Home Builders’ Association and developed EarthCraft, a green building certification program designed to address the challenging energy, water, and climate conditions specific to the Southeast. Although Southface is scientifically oriented, with employee titles such as “EarthCraft Renovation Project Manager” and “Weatherization Training Associate,” Southface also works to make housing more affordable and transportation more accessible for Atlantans inside and outside of the Perimeter.





Southface has worked to dispel the myth that “green costs too much” and is leading an effort to bring sustainability to affordable housing. Efficient housing saves money for those with the least to spare and improves indoor air quality for those more at risk for respiratory ailments.

Although it began with a focus on residential energy efficiency, Southface has matured into a company that marries building efficiency, residential and otherwise, with smart growth initiatives. This coupling provides a holistic approach to improving housing and transportation equity in the greater-Atlanta area. Not only does Southface lower the cost of running a home, it also makes sure residents have a way to get to and from work without depending on a car.

Southface focuses on large-planned communities developed with both green infrastructure and location efficiency in mind. Gray Kelly, Southface Communities Director, stated “it’s not just about the building construction, but it’s also about where it’s built and what land it’s built on.”¹ For example, Southface has worked with MARTA to develop communities around MARTA stations, including a project in the Edgewood neighborhood.

Southface is a shining example of an organization ahead of the curve in creatively tackling some of the region’s toughest challenges. ■

¹Interview with Southface staff.



HEALTH

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**“ THE
FIRST
WEALTH
IS
HEALTH.”**
- RALPH WALDO EMERSON

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the U.S. spent approximately 18 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on healthcare —nearly two times more than the average OECD country (10 percent).¹ However, our average life expectancy (78 years) is shorter than the average for those same OECD countries (80 years).² As a nation, we funnel a significant amount of resources into our healthcare system, yet many Americans struggle to be healthy. Moreover, the burden of shorter, sicker lives is not evenly distributed among the population, and these health disparities threaten the future prosperity of our nation.

The 28 counties that make up the Metro Atlanta region clearly reflect the uneven state of health in the United States, with perhaps even more disparities. This chapter explores the health of Metro Atlanta through a health equity lens. Specifically, the chapter uses the example of two common health areas – obesity and sexual health to provide insight into how social and environmental factors impact health. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations on how the Metro Atlanta region might collectively address disparities, thus creating a more healthy and vital region.

HEALTH AND HEALTH EQUITY: THE BASICS

Understanding that the word **health** has different connotations for many people, it is important to establish how it will be used for this discussion:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.³

This view transcends the typical medical approach to health that is disease-focused, and instead embraces a holistic approach to health.

This raises a vital question: **Why is health important?** The answer is very simple. Anyone who has had to experience a hospital visit, a debilitating disease, or just the flu knows the significance of health to our everyday experience. If we are sick and unable to fulfill our obligations (e.g., work, school, family, etc.), we will not be able to keep up with the speed of life, and consequently we will be left behind and/or keep others who depend on us

from moving forward. Ralph Waldo Emerson's assertion that health is "the first wealth" is true on many levels, beyond just the cost of being sick. When a husband and father of four is diagnosed with acute diabetes, in addition to his current obligations, he then has to deal with hospital bills, medication, and perhaps even lost time at work. His employer also suffers because when he is out on leave, other staff members (or temporary staff) have to fill in for him. His sickness also places a strain on the quality of time he spends with his family, which could have a direct impact on how his children function in school or even his wife's health, since she likely had to take on more family responsibilities. This scenario is just one example that demonstrates how being sick has physical, social, and economic impacts on individuals and even the community at large. When people are healthy, they are able to contribute more to their families and communities, which allows them to be more productive members of society.

Many believe that one of the main reasons people are unhealthy is because they inherit specific conditions from their parents, and the best way to keep them healthy is by increasing their access to health care. However, when researchers set out to quantify how much different factors contribute to early death in this country, they determined that genetics and access to care play a smaller role in longevity than one might expect. They found that medical care and genetics together only make up 30 percent of the factors that are responsible for premature deaths. **Rather, health behaviors, and the environment that shapes these behaviors, are responsible for about 70 percent of our nation's early death.** See **Figure 1**.

Figure 1.

DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

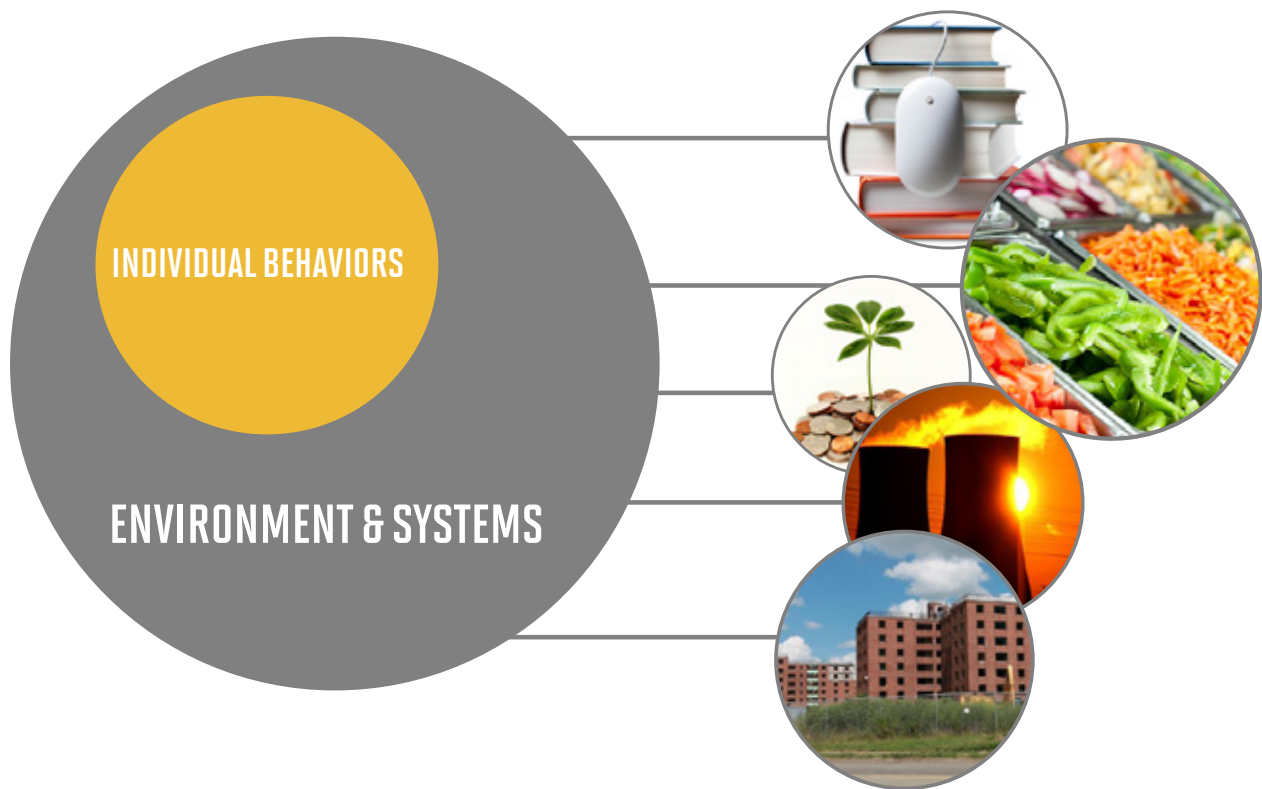


Source: McGinnis J.M., Russo P.G., & Knickman, J.R. [April 2002]. The Case For More Active Policy Attention To Health Promotion. *Health Affairs*, 21[2]: 78-93.

Furthermore, it is important to note that an individual's health behavior is largely influenced by the environment in which the individual lives. ***Health does not operate in a vacuum.*** The context within which health is produced is influenced by a number of social, economic, political, and environmental conditions, known collectively as **determinants of health** (see **Figure 2**). More importantly,

these conditions are governed by federal, state, and/or local policies. Environmental conditions (e.g., housing, transportation, education, socio-economic status, etc.) and the policies (e.g., the Farm Bill, funding for public transportation, minimum wage legislation, etc.) that regulate them play a key role in the production of the public's health.

Figure 2: Context of Health



A critical factor in the production of health, health equity is defined as **“providing all people with fair opportunities to attain their full health potential to the extent possible.”**⁴ When we talk about health disparities, we are talking about differences in health status between distinct segments of the population. When we speak about health inequities, we are referring to those health disparities that result from social and economic disadvantage, are modifiable, and therefore held to be ethically unfair. This chapter focuses on the conditions and policies that create health inequities and the importance of improving health equity for everyone living in the Metro Atlanta region.

Conditions and policies that create health inequities are important to consider, and perhaps even more so than individual behaviors. In our society, there are many people whose circumstances and environment make it difficult for them to make good decisions about their health. For example, a single mother of two may know that fast food is not the most nutritious meal for her children, but if she lives in a neighborhood without supermarkets nearby and works one or more low-wage jobs to make ends meet, then fast food may be all she can afford, access, or have time to provide for her family. She might want to send her children outside to play, but neighborhood violence or other safety concerns may lead her

...health equity, is defined as “providing all people with fair opportunities to attain their full health potential to the extent possible.”

to keep them inside. Unfortunately, her reliance on fast food to feed her family coupled with few opportunities for her children to be physically active places them at risk for being overweight or obese and developing a number of related illnesses.

In addition, there are specific populations that are more at risk for poor health than others, particularly people living in poverty and people of color. This health inequity is most times not a result of genetics or not having access to health care. They are more often the result of the environment in which these populations live, work, play, and learn. For example, while residents like the mother in the example above only have access to nutrient-poor fast food, in a different part of the same city, another mother has access to affordable, healthy food options to feed her family. She may also be a single mother but her socio-economic status allows her to live in a more affluent neighborhood where she has access to better amenities. This neighborhood may have safe, green spaces for

her children to play and be active. Her family is able to eat nutritious meals and engage safely in physical activity and therefore have a better chance of being healthy.

The bottom line is that inequities in our systems and policies inevitably create conditions that make it harder for certain individuals and communities to make healthy choices, which make them more susceptible to health problems, and subsequently places a significant burden on our health care systems. The additional burden on these systems – e.g., medicines, emergency room services – impact everyone as they trigger higher insurance rates and/or taxes that become necessary to support the health care of these individuals.

In this next segment, we examine what the data show about how health and health equity are manifested in the Metro Atlanta region. We will also provide some basic illustrations to demonstrate the correlation between our “place” – where we live, work, play, and pray – and the impact it has ultimately on our health.

A SNAPSHOT OF METRO ATLANTA'S HEALTH

One of the most influential regions in the southern states, Metro Atlanta's 28 counties now comprise a diverse population that represents the spectrum of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. This is evidenced by information from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *County Health Rankings*,⁵ where the overall rankings for health outcomes range from 1 to 141 (out of 159 counties), and health factors rankings from 1 to 147. See **Figure 3**.

- Health outcomes in the County Health Rankings** represent the overall health of a county. Two types of health outcomes are measured: how long people live (mortality) and how healthy people feel while alive (morbidity).
- Health factors in the County Health Rankings** represent what influences the health of a county. Four types of health factors are measured: health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic, and physical environment factors. In turn, each of these factors is based on several measures. A fifth set of factors that influence health (genetics and biology) is not included in the **Rankings**.

Figure 3.
Overall Rankings of Health Outcomes and Factors for Metro Atlanta Counties (2013) »

 Counties in the top 10 rankings for health outcomes and factors.
 Counties with rankings above 100 for health outcomes and factors

COUNTY	RANKING WITHIN THE STATE HEALTH OUTCOMES	HEALTH FACTORS
Barrow	61	75
Bartow	44	50
Butts	133	85
Carroll	58	56
Cherokee	5	5
Clayton	42	147
Cobb	6	7
Coweta	9	11
Dawson	18	17
DeKalb	17	29
Douglas	27	28
Fayette	2	1
Forsyth	1	3
Fulton	29	19
Gwinnett	4	8
Haralson	115	62
Heard	87	69
Henry	15	14
Jasper	55	48
Lamar	120	70
Meriwether	85	111
Newton	33	59
Paulding	25	16
Pickens	32	40
Pike	46	23
Rockdale	10	35
Spalding	141	93
Walton	30	33

Figure 4 reveals that of the counties that fall in the top 10 rankings for health outcomes are also in the top 10 rankings for health factors. In almost all of the criteria for health factors and outcomes, these counties almost consistently rank higher than the state average. **These are among the healthiest counties in Georgia.**

Based on this data, one would expect that these counties should be clustered together in a specific area. However, many of the top-ranked counties share borders with counties that have the *lowest* health outcomes in the state. Next we will examine what the data reveal about these counties and neighboring counties related to specific health conditions.

Figure 4: Metro Atlanta counties that fell within the top 10 rankings for health outcomes and factors in Georgia (2013)

TOP RANKINGS IN HEALTH OUTCOMES		TOP RANKINGS IN HEALTH FACTORS	
FORSYTH	1	FAYETTE	1
FAYETTE	2	FORSYTH	3
GWINNETT	4	CHEROKEE	5
CHEROKEE	5	COBB	7
COBB	6	GWINNETT	8
COWETA	9		
ROCKDALE	10		

While Georgia has not made the list of “top 10 most obese states” like most of its neighbors, Trust for America’s Health reports that close to **30 percent** of Georgia’s population is obese, moving from a rate of **28 percent** in 2010 to **29 percent** in 2012.⁶

Figure 5.

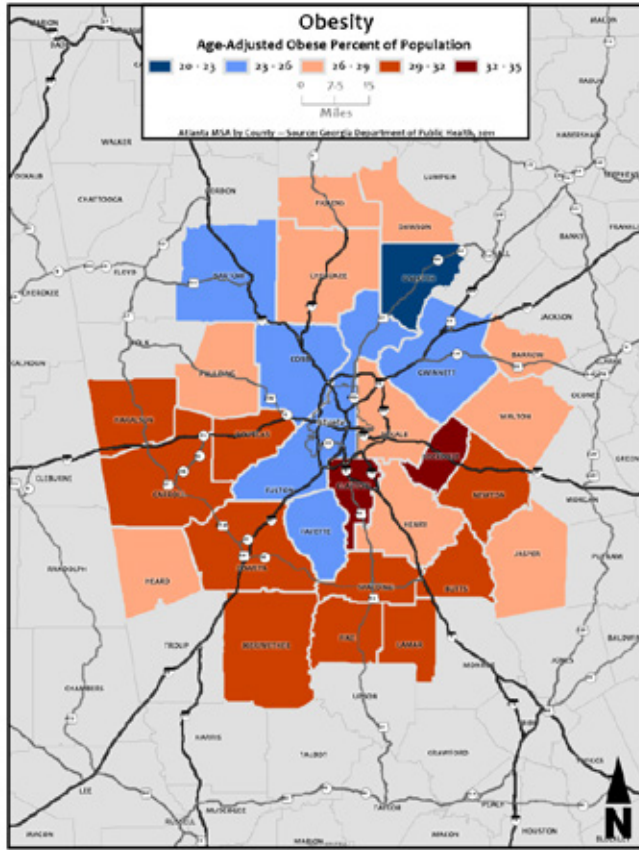
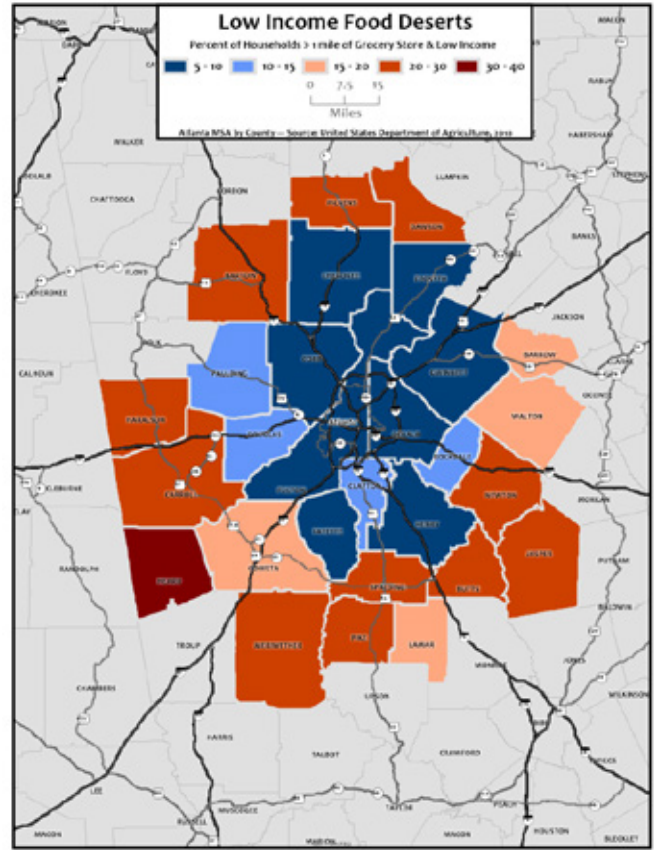


Figure 6.



This health condition is particularly important because it can lead to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

Looking specifically at Metro Atlanta, **Figure 5** shows there are several counties that have obesity rates higher than the state average, most notably Clayton and Rockdale Counties. Interestingly, Rockdale County is one of the counties in the top 10 for health outcomes, yet the data show it as having some of the highest obesity rates. Forsyth County is the only county in the region with less than 23 percent obesity. Since Forsyth County is part of the top 10 group, conditions in Forsyth and Rockdale Counties can be compared to understand potential explanations for such a disparity.

There are two major health behaviors that influence obesity: food intake and physical activity. In this comparison, the social and economic conditions that impact the eating behaviors of these counties' residents will be examined. One of the main reasons people do not eat healthily is related to whether they can afford to purchase healthy foods. This is a particular problem in urban areas which may have healthy food options; however, many residents in the areas cannot afford to purchase them, and they sometimes may have to travel far distances to access healthy food outlets. When this occurs, the area is called a **food desert**⁷ further burdens residents in their efforts to make healthy food choices. A less documented

but related concept - **food swamps**⁸, - is equally problematic, as it describes “a geographic area where the overabundance of high-energy foods (e.g., high caloric, high-fat snacks sold at convenience stores) inundate healthy food options.

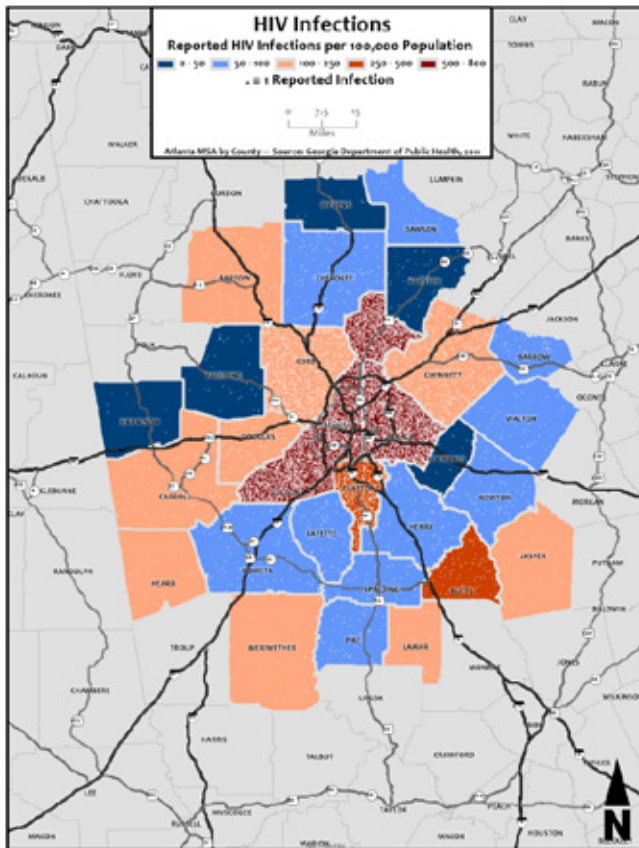
Figure 6 provides data on low income food deserts by Metro county. While many of the outlying counties have higher percentages of low income individuals in food deserts, note that those areas are less densely populated. However, specifically examining Clayton and Rockdale Counties, it is important to note that they are located in an area of Metro Atlanta that is more densely populated, yet they still have somewhat higher percentage rates of low income individuals in food deserts compared to similarly populated areas such as Fulton, DeKalb, Fayette and Henry Counties.

In Rockdale and Forsyth Counties, it is clear that the obesity and low income food desert

percentages have some correlation. Looking at additional data sets that have an influence or impact on obesity, the picture is even clearer. For example, the adult obesity rate in Forsyth County’s is 23 percent and Rockdale County’s is 32 percent; limited access to healthy food in Forsyth County’s is 4 percent and Rockdale County’s is 13 percent. Other comparative factors that provide more background on the economic conditions in both counties are high school graduation rates (Forsyth – 86 percent; Rockdale 66 percent), unemployment (Forsyth – 7 percent; Rockdale – 11 percent), children in poverty (Forsyth – 10 percent; Rockdale – 25 percent); and inadequate social support (Forsyth – 15 percent; Rockdale – 20 percent). It is clear that Rockdale’s socio-economic data is significantly lower than Forsyth County’s, which could explain why the obesity rates are so disparate.

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, GEORGIA RECORDED 2,522 DIAGNOSES OF HIV INFECTION⁹ IN 2011, MAKING THE STATE 5TH IN THE NATION AFTER CALIFORNIA, FLORIDA, TEXAS, AND NEW YORK.¹⁰

Figure 7.



In **Figure 7**, which shows the rate of reported HIV Infections per 100,000 people, Clayton County is again included with some of the worst outcomes, placing it 2nd highest in the number of HIV infections in Metro Atlanta and ranking 147th in the state for health factors. Also in this category is Butts County, which was ranked 133rd in the state for health outcomes. However, the counties with the highest numbers are Fulton and DeKalb Counties, both of which reported 500 – 800 people per 100,000 with HIV. Not surprisingly, the map illustrating the number of individuals living with AIDS in the area mirrors **Figure 8**.

Figure 8.

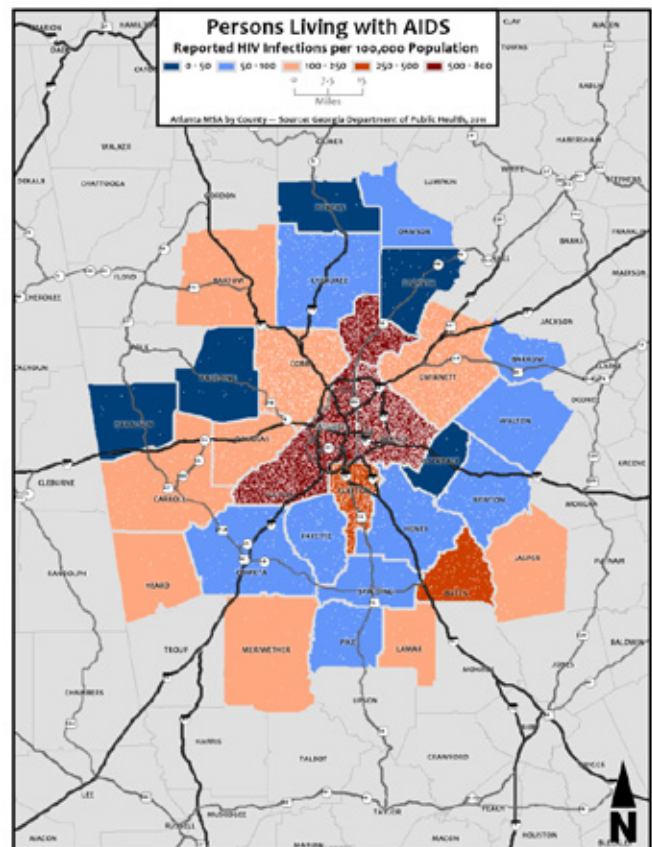
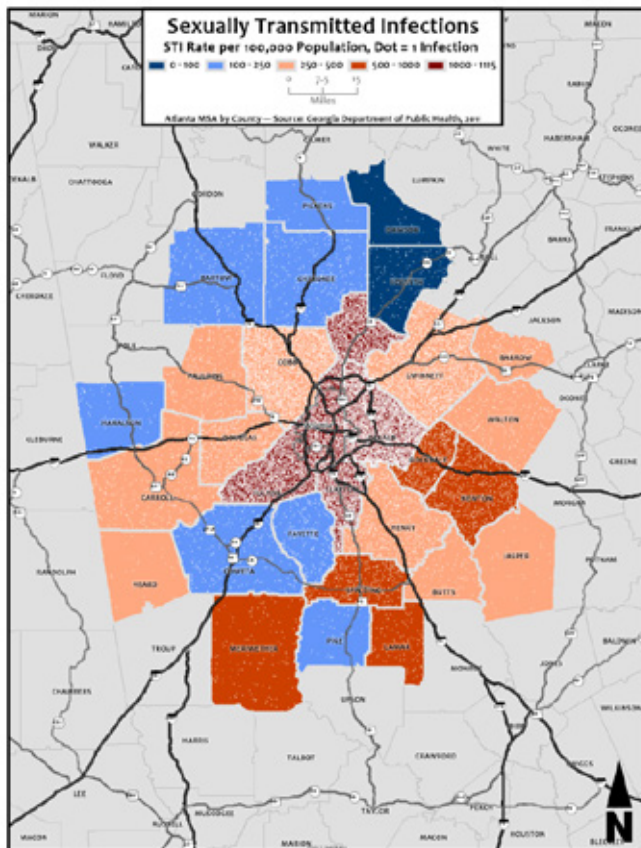




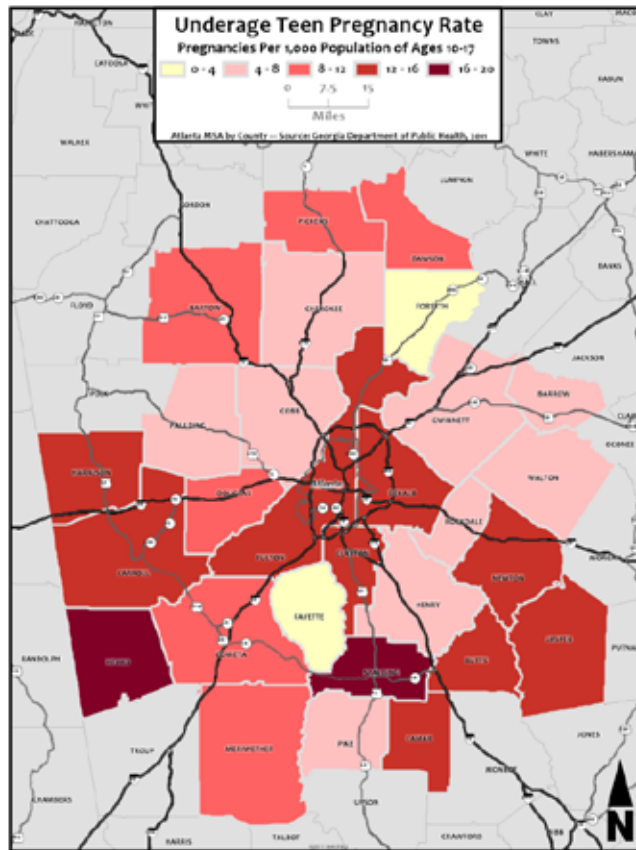
Figure 9.



Deeply connected to HIV/AIDS infections are the transmission rates of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). **Figures 7 and 8** are almost mirror images of the data illustrated for sexual transmitted infection rates in **Figure 9**.

Another public health concern associated with HIV/AIDS and STI rates are underage teenage pregnancies. These data are particularly troubling because of the impact these pregnancies may have on the lives of pregnant young women/girls and their children.

Figure 11.



What is most important to note is the potentially negative impact these conditions have both individually and collectively on the region's health. Studies show that teenage youth often engage in risky sexual behaviors because they are in a stage of life where they are eager to explore new experiences. This factor, coupled with physical and hormonal changes can have a great influence on teens' decision making processes. Risky sexual behaviors at any age may lead to individuals contracting STIs and/or HIV/AIDS, as well as the spreading of these infections to sexual partners. Studies show that individuals who are less educated and economically challenged are the ones most likely to engage in risky sexual

behavior. Young people, particularly those who do not have adequate family, community, and economic support systems, are most at risk because they are still in the foundational stages of their education (both academically and in terms of life experience). The relationship between social and economic factors to teenage pregnancy rates is stark when Fayette and Spalding Counties are compared. These counties share a border and similar physical environment characteristics, based on the information outlined in **Figure 10** below. However, there is a strikingly significant difference in rankings between these counties for social and economic factors, particularly those that have an impact on teenage pregnancy rates. For example, **Figure 11** shows that Fayette

and Forsyth Counties had the lowest teen pregnancy rates in the region. This is not surprising, given that these two counties have routinely ranked among the top 10 counties with healthy indicators. However, Fayette County's neighbor, Spalding County has some of the area's highest teenage pregnancy rates, which seems understandable based on **Figure 10**. Spalding County has 21% fewer high school graduates and 34% fewer residents

some college education than Fayette County. Spalding has a higher unemployment rate, almost 3 times the percentage of children in poverty, and double the number of children in single-parent households. Given these deficits in social and economic factors for Spalding County, particularly those that support young people, it does make sense that teenage pregnancy rates are high.

Figure 10:

COMPARISON OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS OF FAYETTE AND SPALDING COUNTIES

FACTORS	GEORGIA	FAYETTE	SPALDING
SOCIAL & ECONOMIC FACTORS		3	117
High school graduation	67%	78%	59%
Some college	59%	77%	43%
Unemployment	10%	8%	13%
Children in poverty	27%	12%	35%
Inadequate social support	21%	16%	13%
Children in single-parent households	36%	21%	46%
Violent crime rate	437	79	451
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT		56	78
Daily fine particulate matter	12	13	13
Drinking water safety	2%	0%	0%
Access to recreational facilities	8	8	8
Limited access to healthy foods	8%	7%	7%
Fast food restaurants	50%	42%	49%

While some may simply view sexual activity as solely a result of personal behavior choices, it is clear that these choices are tied to and impacted by levels of education, social supports, and economic viability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Data trends indicate that chronic disease rates have been increasing in Metro Atlanta, particularly for specific populations that have little to no social or economic supports. Their health is directly influenced by indicators such as education, housing, and transportation. This does not bode well for the future of the region because it means that the most important resources – its human assets – will live shorter, lower quality lives. Therefore, if no investments are made to improve and sustain these factors, especially for the most vulnerable populations, these populations will not prosper. Consequently, they will not contribute to the general health and well-being of the region. Rather, they will become a burden.

The purpose of comparing the data between the counties with the top rankings with those that ranked lower is to demonstrate that PLACE matters. There is a direct connection between the characteristics of where an individual lives, their access to specific resources, and their health. The access to resources is impacted by power and privilege – those who have power and privilege are usually the ones who do not have to worry about getting sick and missing days at work, who do not have to make a choice between buying medicine or food, who do not need to travel for hours each day to go to work or access services, who have the leisure time and resources for physical activity

as well as expanded individual choices.

To address these issues and reverse the inequities, it is important for community members, particularly those who live in resource-deficient neighborhoods, to understand the influence of power and privilege, and link systems throughout the region to the policies that impact the conditions where they live, work, play, and pray. Once they are educated about these systems and how they connect to the root causes of health conditions in their community, the next step is to get involved and to mobilize and develop strategies to address these problems. Those strategies should involve collaborating with other stakeholders, developing specific policy “asks” for local, regional, and state policy- and decision makers, and holding them accountable for developing and implementing policies that support healthy communities.

Policy making impacts the production of health and must be integrated into any actions to improve health (e.g., making and implementing policies about housing, transportation, health care, education, etc.). A health-in-all policies approach – i.e., one that “incorporates health and safety considerations into public policy and decision making”¹¹ – is essential for promoting health equity. Tools such as health and equity impact assessments identify and compile information and can be used by policy makers to determine if specific policies place undue burden on specific members of a community. It will be important for community members and stakeholders to encourage local and state policy makers to adopt this approach in all of their decision-making processes, in order to ensure that the policies that are implemented are not detrimental to the health and well-being of their constituents.



CONCLUSION

As previously discussed in this chapter, improving the health of Metro Atlanta's residents does not rely solely on increasing their access to quality medical services. Atlanta is home to some of the greatest medical research and service providers, as well as academicians and innovators in public health. However, the presence of these human and economic resources is not enough. The actions of many residents in the region who struggle to become and remain healthy are governed by the existence of inequitable systems and policies that directly impact their ability to make healthy choices. Improving their health means improving the conditions in which they live and changing the associated systems and policies. An *equity lens* – i.e., an approach that takes into consideration who will bear the burdens and who will reap the benefits of particular policies – is critical for addressing health inequities because it helps determine the best strategies to address the root causes of these inequities and create solutions that are equitable in nature.

Ultimately, positive changes in health and health equity will involve robust collaborative efforts among all stakeholders within the region. Those with the power and influence to make these changes must look at the cost of poor health, not only for the benefit those who are struggling, but for the entire society. The data provided in this chapter only provide the most basic understanding about the health in Metro Atlanta. These issues need to be explored even further and take into consideration additional health conditions, socio-economic factors and of course the related policies to pinpoint the root causes of poor health in the region.

Improved health and health equity in Metro Atlanta is achievable. All community members will have to become educated and engaged in the process of understanding the policies that influence the conditions in their environment and impact their ability (and their neighbors') to have a healthy life. Promoting health equity will require out-of-the-box thinking, innovative ideas, as well as stakeholders who are willing to work together, make the hard decisions, and take action towards this goal.

RESOURCES

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- ² Kane, J. Health Costs: How the U.S. Compares With Other Countries. *PBS NewsHour*. Retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2012/10/health-costs-how-the-us-compares-with-other-countries.html>
- ³Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>.
- ⁴Bravemen, P. 2006. Health Disparities and Health Equity: Concepts of Measurement. *Annual Review of Public Health*. Vol. 27: 167-184. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.publhealth.27.021405.102103.
- ⁵Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps: A Healthier Nation, County by County (Georgia). Retrieved from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>
- ⁶Trust for America's Health Issues: Obesity. <http://healthyamericans.org/obesity/>.
- ⁷Food deserts are defined by the USDA as urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food (<http://apps.ams.usda.gov/fooddeserts/foodDeserts.aspx>). To qualify as a "low-access community" for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) – part of the First Lady's *Let's Move* initiative to end childhood obesity – the USDA states that at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the census tract's population must reside more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (for rural census tracts, the distance is more than 10 miles) (<http://americannutritionassociation.org/newsletter/usda-defines-food-deserts>).
- ⁸<http://www.thefoodsection.com/foodsection/2009/10/food-swamps.html>
- ⁹Diagnosis of HIV infection refers to persons diagnosed with HIV infection, regardless of the state of the disease at diagnosis (<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/basics/>).
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HEALTH CASE STUDY RESOURCES >

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HEALTH CASE STUDY:

COMMUNITY GARDENS AS A RESPONSE TO FOOD DESERTS

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IN RECENT YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED CONCERN over the lack of healthy, affordable food options within low-income urban and rural communities.¹ These food deserts have been linked to high prevalence of chronic conditions including obesity, heart disease and diabetes, and consequently higher mortality rates. The health inequities associated with food deserts have prompted the creation of a range of locally-targeted interventions intended to address the issue. One of the most common approaches has been to grow food locally through the use of community gardens. This approach has been especially popular in urban communities as it is considered an effective way to address blight and resultant crime. The Pittsburgh neighborhood in the City of Atlanta is one such community.

Established in 1883, the Pittsburgh community lies just southwest of Downtown Atlanta. Originally home to established African Americans, the neighborhood began to see decline in the 1950's when many of those residents chose to leave. Since then, the neighborhood has experienced precipitous decline and currently suffers from a 50 percent vacancy rate, along with many of the societal ills that come along with unstable housing.² Despite the neighborhood's close proximity to downtown, some might consider it relatively isolated. For instance, while the nearest grocery store is less than three miles away, the average resident on public transportation has to take two buses and a train to get there. For these reasons, a community garden seemed a good fit for resident leaders seeking to improve the area.

In 2011, Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA), the resident neighborhood association and community development corporation (CDC) established the Welch Street Community Garden to increase area safety, promote economic development and provide residents greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables. According to Pierre Gaither, Operations Manager at PCIA, the garden has been a major asset for the community. It has served as a point of community connection for the residents and has provided economic benefit to residents who have saved money by not buying commercial produce. Gaither describes the Pittsburgh community as an area transformed by the success of the garden, which has influenced community wellness, increased health education and resulted in several health fairs and a 5K walk. Current community projects which fall under the Welch Street Community Garden include a garden club and development of a water reclamation system. Additionally, the garden project is increasing consumer awareness by initiating a consumer advocacy project in which members will compare the quality of the Welch Street produce to the quality of the produce available in area grocery stores.

Today, PCIA's Welch Street Community Garden is adding real value to the recovering community. Not only has it resulted in a new source for healthy, affordable food within the neighborhood, but it has also become a community connector – bringing residents together in meaningful ways and building lasting neighborhood pride. ■



HOUSING

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THE 1949 HOUSING ACT DECLARED that every American has the right to “a decent home and a suitable living environment.”¹ While “decent housing” refers to the quality of the actual housing structure, “suitable environment” refers to the surrounding neighborhood. Thus, this Act implies that the geographical arrangement of housing should not compromise safety, health, educational and job opportunities, or opportunities to accumulate wealth through homeownership.



This Act was perhaps the most significant in United States' housing policy history because it ushered in an era that made homeownership more broadly available via federal mortgage insurance to banks. However, it accomplished this unequally, leaving out minority populations through discriminatory lending practices. One of the consequences is persistent and unequal racial residential segregation marked by an unequal opportunity structure.² Residential segregation refers to the geographic separation of two or more population groups into different neighborhoods, typically occurring through some type of market-based sorting process.³ While explicit segregation based on race or ethnicity became illegal with Civil Rights and Fair Housing legislation in the 1960s, housing patterns continue to be marked by the separation of White residents from minority residents, which some experts refer to as a dual housing market.⁴

As we have seen, the where of where you live still matters - in terms of the quality of your housing, neighborhood, amenities, schools, access to jobs, and the possibilities for upward mobility through homeownership. This is especially so in areas experiencing economic and population growth. Metro Atlanta is a region that has experienced unprecedented growth, making it the 9th⁵ largest metro region in the country. This growth has occurred in its suburban counties with the majority of new residents being Latino and Black. The purpose of this chapter is to examine current trends in housing and how they affect socioeconomic equity. The chapter begins by examining trends in residential segregation and social equity, and then explores how these relate to housing trends. Lastly, conclusions and policy recommendations are made concerning how regional housing planning could result in improved equity.

TRENDS IN RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND INEQUALITY

Across the metro region Black-White residential segregation has decreased. In fact, unlike other large Southern metropolitan areas with persistent segregation (such as Birmingham, AL; Memphis, TN, and Baton Rouge, LA) Atlanta has experienced a dramatic decrease.⁶

Some of this can be attributed to the change in racial composition of the region including growth of the Latino population; and more Blacks living in the suburbs. Yet, while these broader regional changes are suggestive of positive trends for Metro Atlanta, they also mask growing city-suburban disparities. These include the stagnant population growth of the urban core, and an unequal racial and income composition geography largely based on where people live and what type housing they live in.

To put this into a national context, a 2013 study from The Equality of Opportunity Project found that the odds of children from families in Atlanta’s lowest 5th income distribution moving into the top 5th is only four percent.⁷

Figure 1 shows the percent change of children living in poverty by county in the Atlanta region. Interestingly, the largest changes are occurring in the suburbs. Related to this, **Figure 2** shows the percent change in poverty for the region between 2000 and 2010. Similar to **Figure 1** the largest increases in poverty occur in the suburban counties, with the exception of Meriwether County which had a decrease in poverty. Fayette County had the largest increase followed by Cherokee, Forsyth and Paulding Counties.

Figure 1.

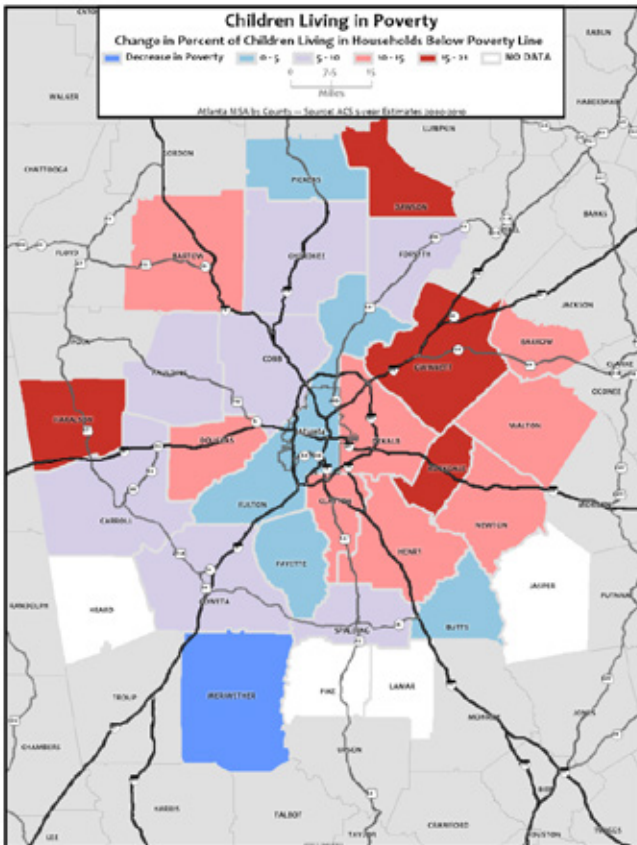
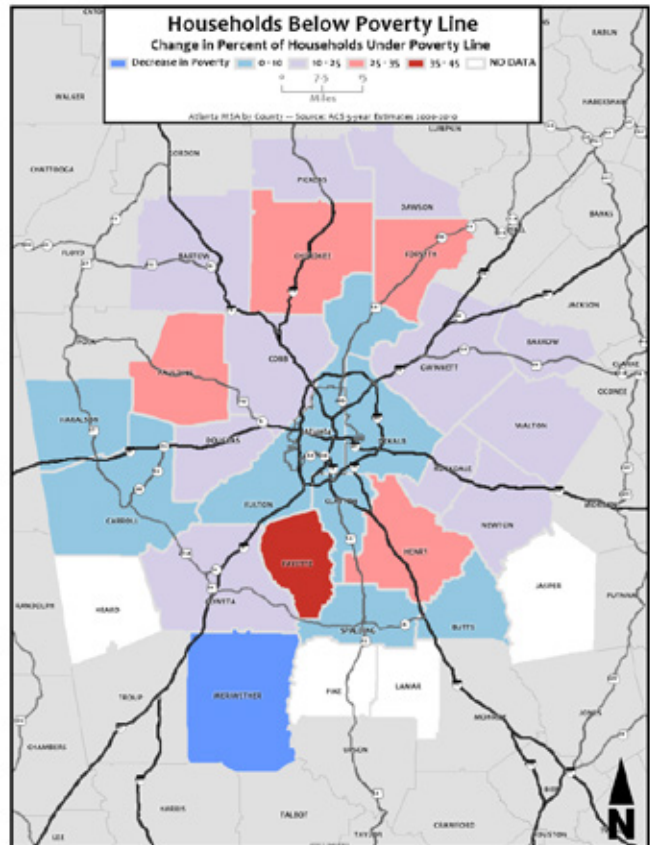


Figure 2.



It should be noted that these shifts have not been caused by the Atlanta Housing Authority's (AHA) elimination of all project-based public housing in the city over the past 15 years. Although many local media outlets and county officials cite public housing demolition and relocation as a source of a declining economy in suburban counties, the actual numbers do

not add up. First, compared to the region's total population, former public housing residents make up less than one percentage of the population. In addition, several studies examining where the City of Atlanta's public housing residents relocated have consistently shown that the majority of them remain within the city limits, primarily because of their dependence on public transportation.⁸

**DURING THE 2008
FORECLOSURE
CRISIS, WHITE
HOMEOWNERS'
MEDIAN
NET WORTH
DECREASED BY
16% WHILE BLACK
HOMEOWNERS'
MEDIAN
NET WORTH
DECREASED 50%.**

HOUSING TRENDS

Homeownership is typically thought to be a vehicle for wealth accumulation based on the assumption that property values will either remain stable or increase. Not only does this depend on where you live, but it also depends on the overall condition of the housing market as well. In addition, while White homeowners have typically made economic gains through homeownership, Black and Hispanic households do not achieve the same gains because they typically live in very different neighborhoods. For example, according to a 2012 Forbes Magazine article written by Emory University Professor Dorothy Brown, research has repeatedly shown that homes in majority Black neighborhoods do not appreciate as much as homes in White neighborhoods. The 2008 crash and subsequent foreclosure crisis has intensified this inequity as White homeowners' median net worth decreased by 16 percent compared to the much larger 50 percent decrease among African-Americans.

Predatory lending prior to the housing market crash contributed to this gap. Such practices tend to target minority neighborhoods and direct borrowers to loans with higher interest rates, excessive fees and

property values based on fraudulent appraisals.⁹ In 2012 Fulton, DeKalb, and Cobb Counties filed a lawsuit against British bank HSBC and its American subsidiaries claiming the bank violated Fair Housing laws¹⁰ by targeting disadvantaged minorities, and that the housing foreclosure crisis was a “foreseeable and inevitable result” of HSBC’s aggressive marketing of irresponsible loans, or loans that were destined to fail causing dramatic decreases in these counties’ tax base.¹¹

As **Figure 3** illustrates, these three counties had some of the greatest increases in homeownership between 2000 and 2010 along with Barrow, Spalding, Pike, and Butts Counties. The remaining counties either experienced a decrease in homeownership or stagnant growth.



Figure 3.

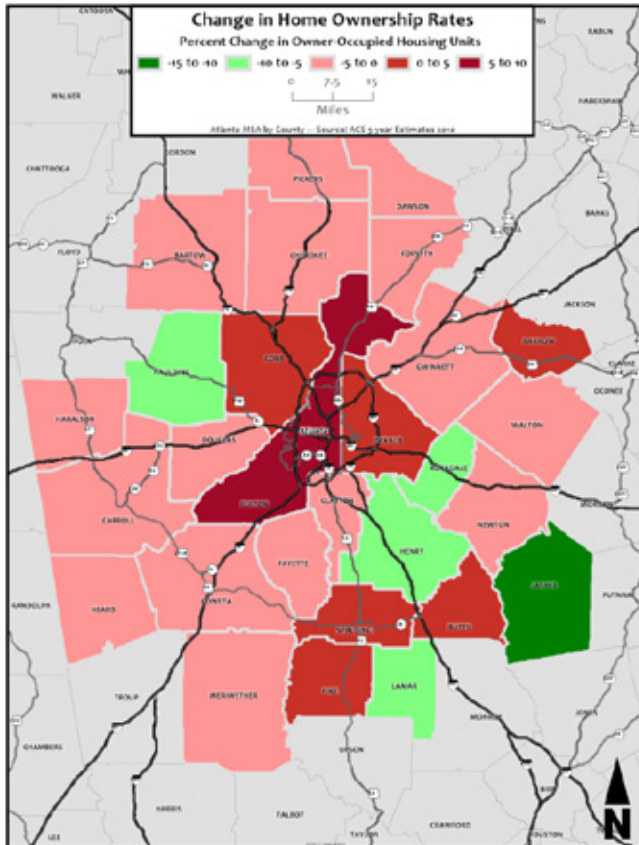
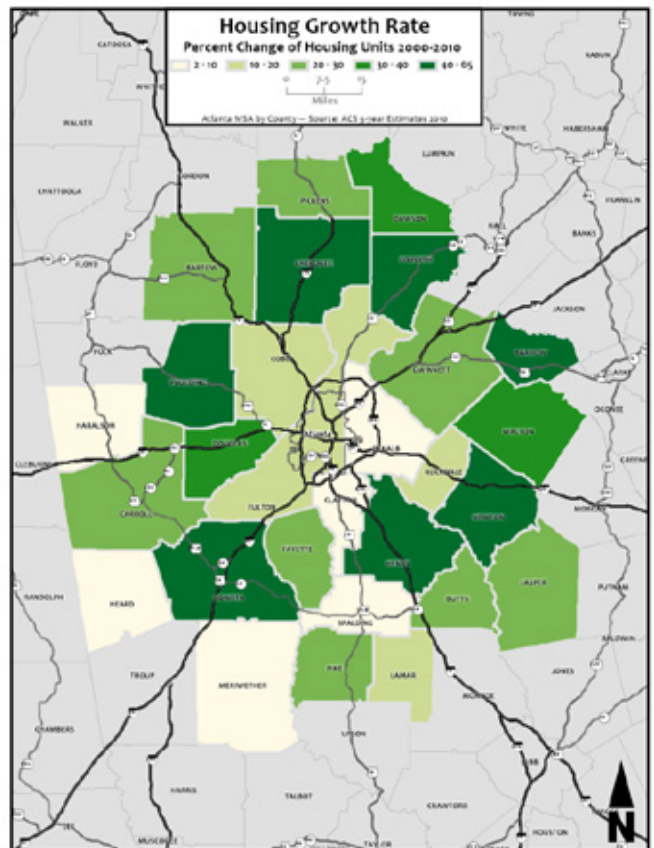


Figure 4.





At the same time, all counties - and in particular the suburban ones - experienced new residential development despite the decreases in homeownership. This growth in housing units at the same time homeownership decreased is partially due to the fact that the suburban counties closer to the city became overbuilt by the mid -2000s, causing new development to move to the exurban counties. For example, Forsyth and Henry Counties have the highest concentration of new residential development. At the same time both Harralson and Meriwether Counties have older housing stock which may correlate with these counties' lower socioeconomic status. Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton Counties have the largest portion of rental housing units in Metro Atlanta. This is not surprising since these counties represent the urban core. **Figure 4** shows the housing growth rate between 2000 and 2010; **Figure 5** shows new residential development as of 2010; and **Figure 6** shows rental-occupied housing as of 2010.

Figure 5.

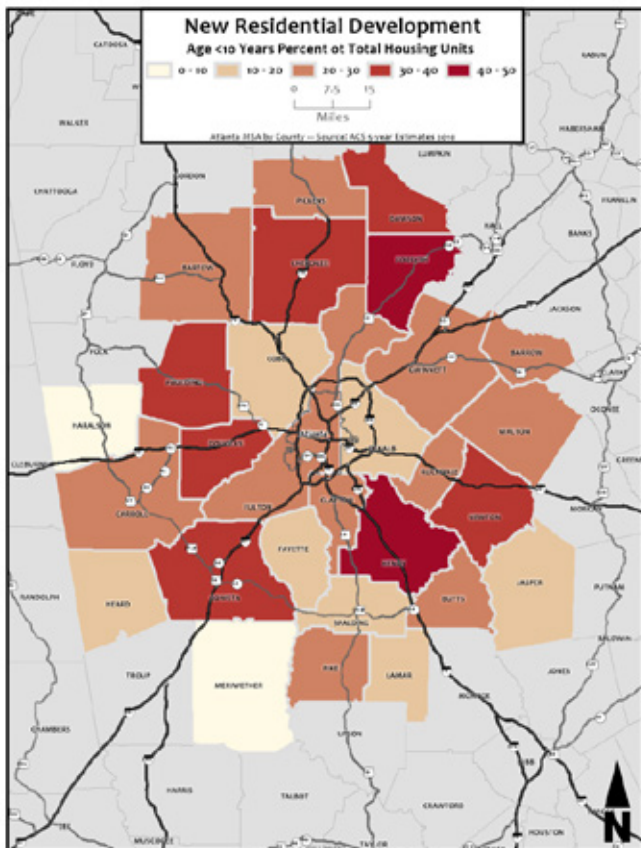
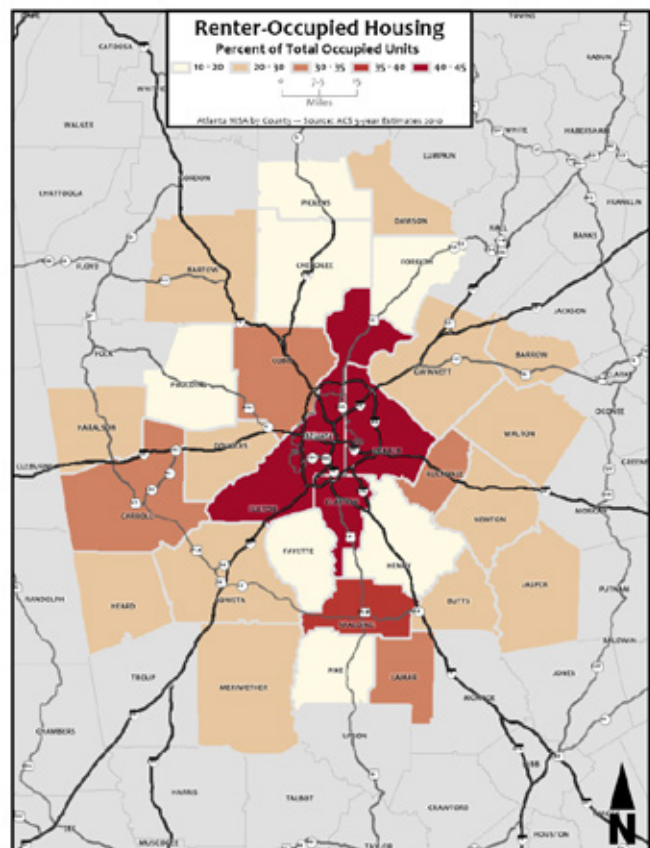


Figure 6.



Despite the growth in the housing stock, vacancy rates increased between 2009 and 2011 in many of the suburban counties, while those counties either in or near the urban core experienced little change. Only Cherokee, Paulding, Walton, Heard, Coweta, Butts, and Henry Counties experienced decreases. **Figure 7** illustrates these trends.

Figure 7.

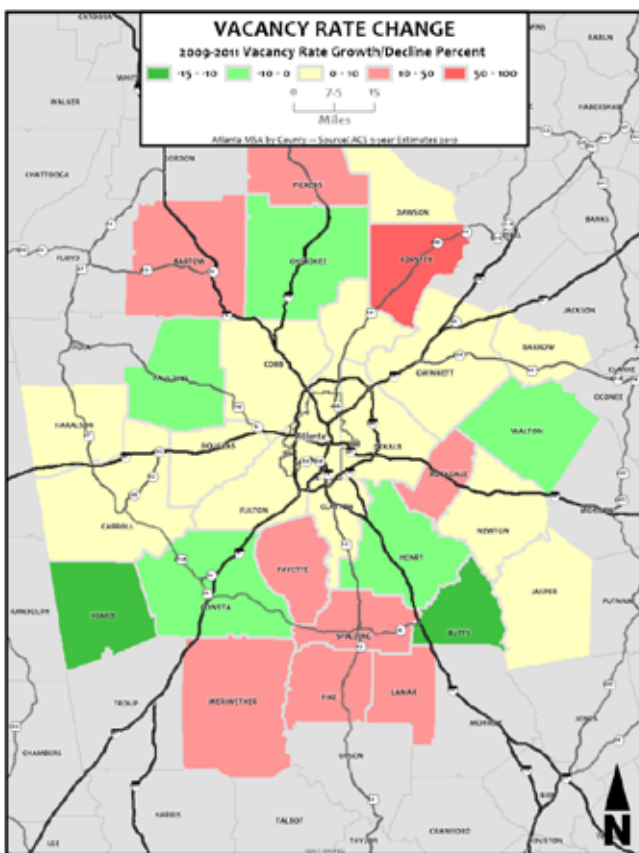
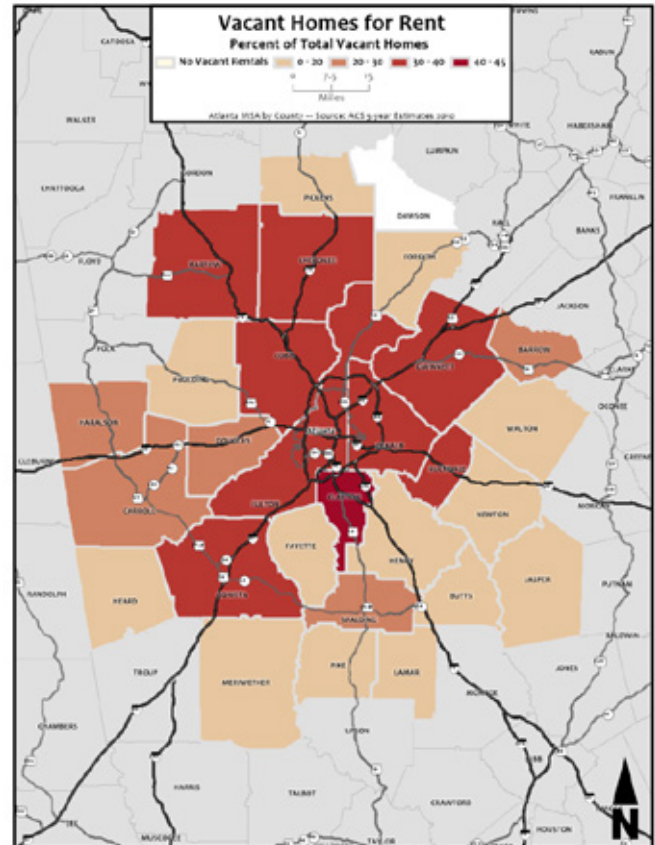


Figure 8.



The housing crash and subsequent foreclosure crisis played a significant role in the upward vacancy trend. However, a substantial share of non-foreclosed homes are vacant and for rent as well. For example of all vacant homes in Clayton, between 40 and 45 percent are for rent. In Bartow, Cherokee, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, and Rockdale Counties, between 30 and 40 percent of vacant homes are for rent. **Figure 8** illustrates this trend.

Between 2008 and 2010 the percentage of foreclosures increased the most in Forsyth County, followed by Cherokee and Gwinnett Counties. The majority of the other suburban counties experienced increases in foreclosures as well, only at much lower rates. Fulton, DeKalb and Clayton Counties experienced the lowest increase. However, these inner core counties were already having a problem with foreclosures before 2008, while foreclosures after the crash took the outer ring counties by surprise. See **Figure 9**.

Figure 9.

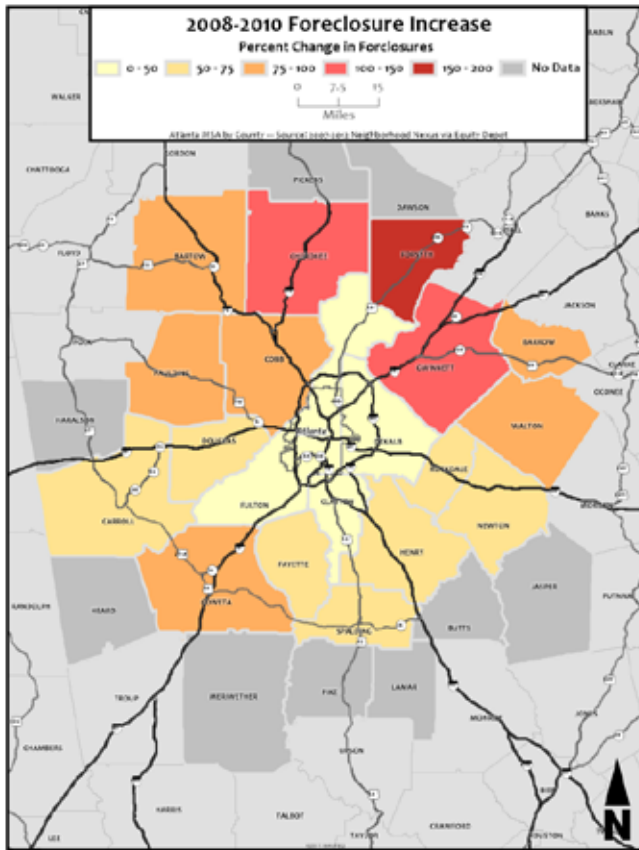


Figure 10.

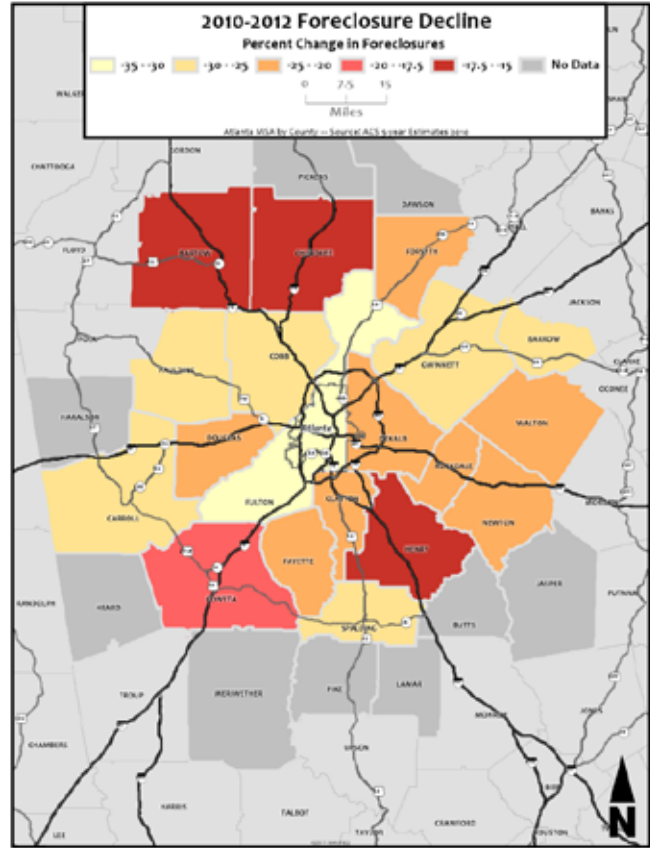
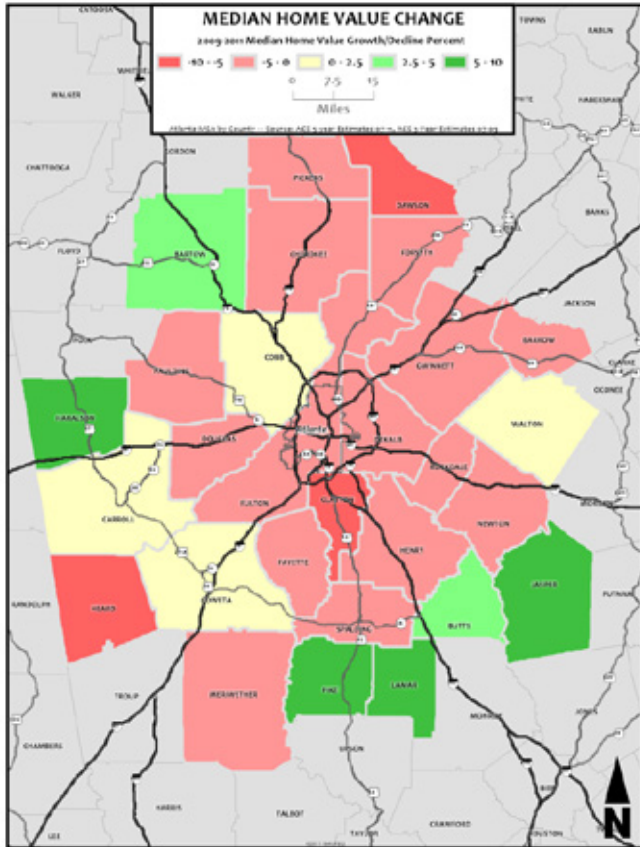


Figure 10 demonstrates how between 2010 and 2012 most of the counties in the region experienced decreases in the percentage of foreclosures with Bartow, Cherokee, and Henry Counties having the largest decreases and Fulton County the smallest. A 2013 report from the Atlanta Federal Reserve, written by Elora Raymond and Carl Hudson, indicates that the Atlanta region's housing market is recovering. However, the report also cautions that this rebound is not evenly distributed with places with greater minority populations doing worse than those that are majority White.

Figure 11.



Despite recent decreases in foreclosures, median housing values also decreased between 2009 and 2011, with the largest percentage drops in Clayton, Dawson, and Heard Counties. Both Clayton and Dawson Counties experienced an increase in the percentage of children living in poverty. Clayton County has a majority African American population, and Dawson County experienced a large increase in its Hispanic population between 2000 and 2010. Supporting previous research concerning how Whites tend to benefit from homeownership at greater rates, counties showing an increase in median home values included Bartow, Haralson, Jasper, Lamar, and Pike Counties, all of which are predominantly White and in the suburbs.

Figure 11 illustrates the uneven distribution of home value change between 2009 and 2011.





CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the past decade the Atlanta region has experienced unprecedented growth to its suburban counties. At the same time, like many metropolitan regions in the country, the 2008 housing crash and the ensuing foreclosure crisis have economically challenged the region. Although the region is presently on a rebound, counties with larger Black and Hispanic populations are faring worse than majority White counties. This is partially explained by the pre-housing bubble bust predatory lending that typically targeted working and lower income minority communities and by historically institutionalized forms of residential segregation as well. The consequences are that even in the best of economic conditions home values in places with growing numbers of Black and Hispanics households are worth less than in majority White ones. This means that the potential for upward mobility over generations is more difficult for Black and Hispanic households in the region even though their numbers are increasing in the suburban counties where homeownership is more prevalent.

As a nation, the United States continues to struggle to achieve racial and ethnic equity in finding housing in quality neighborhoods, as well as in opportunities to become a homeowner and acquire wealth through homeownership. With the rapid growth of minority populations in the region what can policymakers, affiliated planning commissions, banks, real-estate developers, community development non-profits, and Fair Housing advocates do to increase equity in housing?

Regional planning is certainly needed in terms of zoning, transportation, schools, and real estate development. Better regional enforcement of Fair Housing laws would also help. In the July 26, 2013 edition of *Atlantic Cities*, reporter Emily Badger indicated that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has proposed a new rule that would refine the Fair Housing goals of furthering integration by, “publishing extensive local data maps on patterns of integration and segregation, discrimination,

poverty, access to good schools, jobs and transit, among other things...to make it possible for local communities to recognize obstacles and opportunities to fair housing in the planning process while also arming families with the information to find the best places to live (p. 1).¹² However, Badger went on to say that the idea of HUD mapping such local information has been met with a racially-fueled ‘Not in My Back Yard’ (NIMBY) panic during the new rule’s public comment period. For example, an editorial in the Investor’s Business Daily claimed that this kind of mapping implies that homeowners are racist if they happen to choose to live in a suburb with little affordable housing. Here, the term “affordable” appears to be code for the presence of Black residents.

The Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta’s 2010 report recommended the “... increase in the flow of right-size credit to single-family and multi-family housing, particularly for moderate to low-income

households (p. 1)” – precisely because it was these vulnerable households that were targeted in the first place for high risk predatory home mortgages. The Foundation also points to the fact that any solution must be multi-faceted, including not only the borrower and the bank but also the public and community non-profit sectors as well.¹³

However, in order to most effectively address housing equity issues, renters must be included on a regional basis, particularly low-to-moderate income households. All households cannot afford to be homeowners, and therefore being able to rent in neighborhoods with high quality schools and living wage job opportunities is just as important as equitable homeownership. With the increasing diversity of the region, these issues need to be addressed in order to ensure economic sustainability and growth.

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- ⁸Newman, H. (2002) *The Atlanta Housing Authority's Olympic Legacy Program: Public Housing Projects to Mixed Income Communities* (Atlanta: Research Atlanta); Oakley, Deirdre, Erin Ruel, and Lesley Reid. (2013). *Atlanta's Last Demolitions and Relocations: The Relationship Between Neighborhood Characteristics and Resident Satisfaction*. *Housing Studies* 28 (2): 205-234.
- ⁹Squires, G. (2004). *Why the Poor Pay More: How to Stop Predatory Lending*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- ¹⁰The Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; its subsequent 1988 amendment expanded coverage to include disability and familial status, as well as implementing stronger enforcement mechanisms (Denton, 1999; Massey and Denton, 1993). While the Acts have certainly led to decreases in overt discrimination, more subtle forms of discrimination have persisted and are more difficult to prosecute. In addition, these Acts' charge requiring government at all levels to affirmatively further Fair Housing by enabling increased residential integration has largely failed (Korman, 2008; Denton, N. (1999). *Half Empty or Half Full: Segregation and Segregated Neighborhoods 30 Years After the Fair Housing Act*. *Cityscape* 4(3):107-122.).
- ¹¹Brumback, K. "HSBC Sued By Atlanta-Area Counties Over Predatory Lending Claims." Associated Press, 12/24/12 at 3:39pm EST.
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HOUSING CASE STUDY:

TAKING A HOUSING FIRST APPROACH TO ADDRESSING ATLANTA'S HOMELESSNESS PROBLEM

Eli Yewdall, Program Associate at ICLEI,
Local Governments for Sustainability

On a typical night, about 7,000 people in Metro Atlanta are homeless. Of those, almost 2,400 sleep outdoors or in places “not intended for human habitation”, while the remainder are able to find a bed in an emergency shelter or transitional housing facility. One out of ten, or about 700 of those homeless are children.¹ With the issue of homelessness seeming so permanent within American cities, service providers and advocates are increasingly embracing a less traditional model for getting people permanently off the streets.

The approach, often referred to as Housing First or rapid re-housing, focuses on getting people into long-term rental housing as quickly as possible, and then following up with needed services. Generally, a program will secure apartments at scattered sites from private landlords. Once people have a stable place to stay and do not have to worry about where to find a place to sleep every day, follow-up services such as employment assistance, job-readiness training, and financial counseling are more effective. A 2013 study found that homeless people in Georgia who went through a rapid re-housing program were only one-fourth as likely to become homeless again over the next two years, as those leaving homelessness from an emergency or transitional shelter.²

The Veterans Empowerment Organization of Georgia (VEO) operates a Housing First program for homeless veterans. The organization owns an apartment complex of 18 two-bedroom units, and also rents other apartments which it subleases to clients as long-term housing. Five-hundred and ten veterans have graduated from the program and become self-sufficient. One graduate, known as LJ, reports that “VEO has helped me to regain my life back and my self-worth by providing shelter and food to me when I was homeless. As a result, I am working now and have a permanent place to live.”³ Through the Housing First approach, VEO is making a major difference in the lives of the people it serves. ■

In addition to having severe costs in regard to the quality of life of affected individuals, homelessness creates costs for society. In January 2013, Unsheltered No More, a partnership between the City of Atlanta and community leaders, organized interviews of 749 homeless people about topics including health challenges and use of emergency room services. The study found that providing housing for the people surveyed could save **\$5 million** a year in medical costs.⁴

¹The 2011 Metro Atlanta Tri-Jurisdictional Collaborative Continuum of Care Homeless Census.

<http://www.tri-j.net/clientimages/40236/2011tri-jhomelesscensusreport.pdf>

²Rodriguez, Jason. “Homelessness Recurrence in Georgia.” State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless, Georgia Department of Community Affairs. <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/specialneeds/programs/downloads/HomelessnessRecurrenceInGeorgia.pdf>

³<http://www.veteranempowerment.org/2012/10/graduate-story-lj.html>

⁴Unsheltered No More, “Atlanta Homeless Registry,” <http://www.unshelterednomore.com/registry/>



PUBLIC SAFETY AND CRIME

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Research Professor in the Department of Community Health and Preventive
Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine

The U.S. is one of the world's largest democracies, yet it incarcerates more people than any other developed nation. With only 5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. is home to 25 percent of the world's incarcerated individuals.¹ Within the country, neither crime nor incarceration is evenly distributed. Crime statistics indicate that poor people are at greater risk of criminal victimization, particularly in their own neighborhoods. Similarly, the rates of incarceration are not proportionate with the population. For example, 38 percent of those incarcerated are African American males.²



Georgia is no exception when it comes to rates of disparity. The state manages the 5th largest prison system in the nation, and 1 in every 13 adults is under correctional supervision. The rates of arrest and incarceration have made Georgia, and in fact Metro Atlanta, one of the largest jailers in the U.S.³ African Americans comprise 31 percent of Georgia's population.⁴

Georgia's prison population, as of May 2013, is comprised of 63 percent African Americans; 63 percent of the males are Black, and 44 percent of the females are Black--numbers hugely disproportionate to their representation in the population.⁵

This chapter begins by taking a look at the fiscal costs of Georgia's current incarceration system and its burden on our economy and, thus our society. It then provides a summary of the patterns of various crimes and causes for incarceration in Metro Atlanta, highlighting the known disparities among the counties. The chapter then examines the underlying societal conditions that are at the root of the high and disparate rates of incarceration and re-incarceration. It also includes a special section on the collateral damage of incarceration and the impact on children. The chapter concludes with recommendations to be considered by citizens and policymakers.

THE FISCAL COSTS

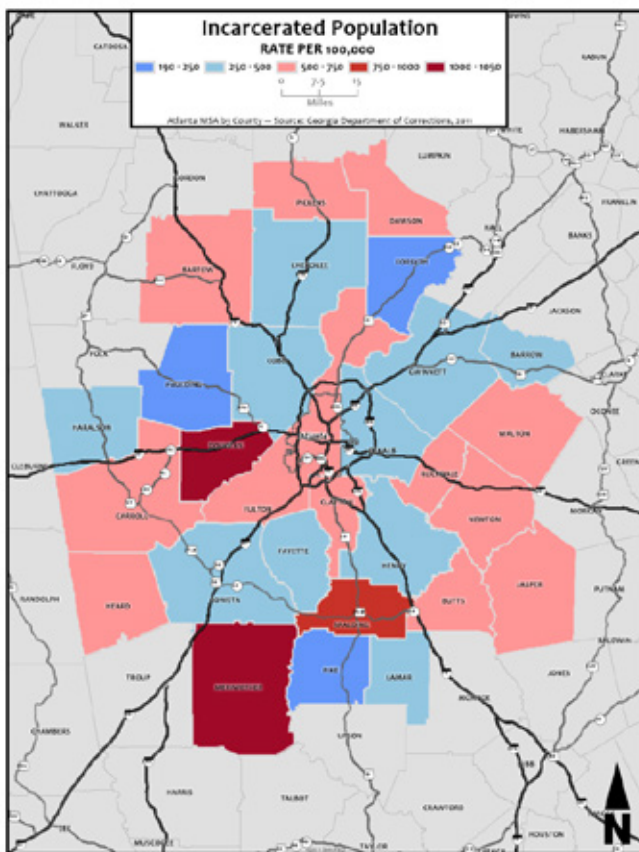
The Georgia prison population has grown by 484 percent since 1971 and has only begun to see minor reductions in growth.^{6,7} As recently as May 2013, a total of 20,869 Georgia inmates (40 percent) were from the Metro Atlanta counties. Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett Counties comprised 13,944 (66 percent) of those from Metro Atlanta. Others were from the neighboring and commuter counties of Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Coweta, Dawson, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Haralson, Heard, Henry, Jasper, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton Counties.⁸

(See **Figure 1**: Incarcerated Population).

As a result of the high incarceration rate, in 2012 the State of Georgia spent 9 percent of its total budget, or \$1,542,126,919, on Public Safety, which includes corrections, pardons and parole, and juvenile justice.⁹ Approximately \$40,500,000 went solely to inmate housing and care. The Department of Corrections, which oversees Georgia’s prisons, received just over \$1 billion to care for approximately 55,000 individuals in that year alone.^{10,11}

Building prisons is a big business and is an established way to address unemployment across the nation. Unfortunately, the Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing Program (VOI/TIS) worsened Georgia’s exponentially growing prison rates. This federal funding program was implemented in 1995 to offset state spending for the cost of building and operating new prisons. Of the \$2.7 billion available nationally, Georgia received more than \$82 million. Only 8 states received more than Georgia.¹² These new prisons were designed to accommodate those that would be sentenced by “get-tough” legislation such as Georgia’s “Two Strikes and You’re Out” laws. By the middle of 1998, there were over 2000 offenders in the prison system due to the “Seven Deadly Sins” legislation.¹³ A recent study estimated that offenders classified under the “Seven Deadly Sins” law could cost Georgia taxpayers between \$5 billion and \$8 billion over a 10-31 year period, depending on whether the judges assign the minimum (10 years) or the maximum sentence.¹⁴

Figure 1



**IN 2012 THE STATE OF GEORGIA
SPENT 9% OF ITS
TOTAL BUDGET,
ON PUBLIC SAFETY,
WHICH INCLUDES CORRECTIONS,
PARDONS AND PAROLE,
AND JUVENILE JUSTICE.**

Notably, few in policymaking, administrative, advocacy, or in the general public can name the “Seven Deadly Sins” or how they impact those arrested collectively in Georgia, as guidelines that ensure fairness across Georgia do not exist.

As shocking as these numbers may be, they are only the beginning. The money spent by taxpayers for care of those in prisons does not include the cost of care and housing of those in jails (versus prisons), as these data are not collected and aggregated by any singular agency on the state or Federal level. It is also important to consider the effect that the burden of incarceration has on the economy and the funding available for education, job creation, improving transportation, job training, and other services such as treatment for behavioral or substance use disorders.

Clearly monies must be invested to house individuals that are a danger to themselves and to members of the community.

However, money can be spent more wisely.

A redirection of funds for incarceration could be used to keep nonviolent offenders at home in drug diversion programs that rehabilitate and foster recovery from substance use disorder in the local community.

Diversion and treatment would be an improvement over the current practice of shipping nonviolent offenders to faraway places, which are not only expensive but offer limited contact with family and community-based supportive resources.

To help rein in costs, the current state legislature, under the guidance of Governor Nathan Deal, has passed new legislation.

The bill, HB 1176, focuses on prison space for serious offenders, expands cost-effective measures and sentencing options, and requires government agencies to report performance outcomes.¹⁵ The goal is to reduce monies spent on new prison capacity by hundreds of millions and to reinvest funds in programs that reduce reoffending. Georgia’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council has been charged by the Governor’s Office and the legislature with soliciting and devising plans for comprehensive reentry programs (www.cjcc.ga.gov).¹⁶

PATTERNS OF CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN METRO ATLANTA

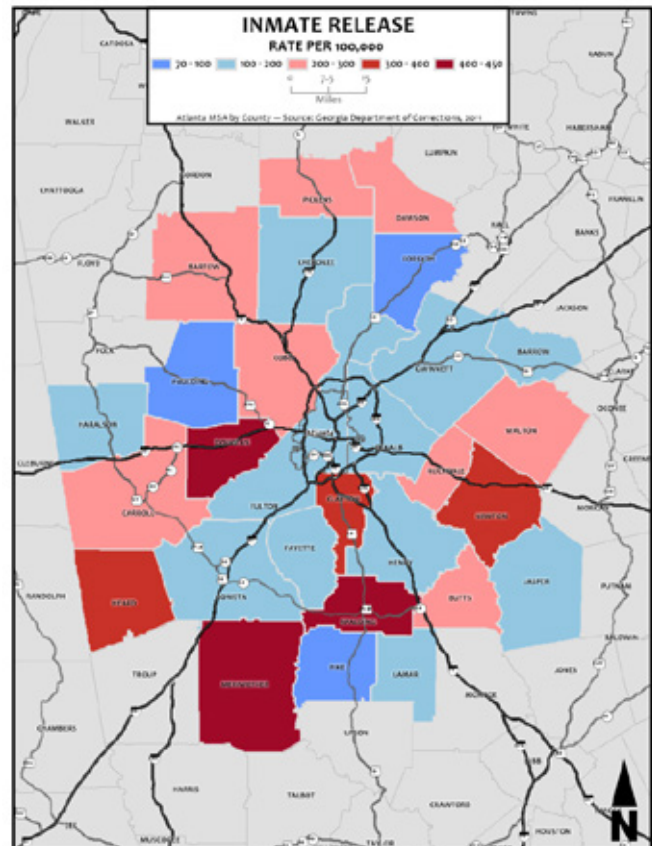
According to **Figure 1**, Prison incarceration rates in Metro Atlanta for the year 2011 range from lows of 190-250 individuals per 100,000 in Forsyth, Paulding, and Pike Counties to a high of 1000-1050 per 100,000 in Meriwether and Douglas counties. All of the other counties, with the single exception of Spalding County, range from 500 to 750 people per 100,000. These latter counties include Clayton and Fulton Counties. Some counties (e.g., Walton County) deserve close inspection of causative factors, as the rate for many of the crimes discussed below is higher than one might expect for a semi-rural area.

As **Figure 2** shows, the release rates in these counties do not mirror the arrest rates for the same counties, indicating that more individuals have been removed from their homes and families and rearrested than were released during the year 2011. In sum, there is evidently an overall growth of the incarcerated rates for individuals from these counties, despite comprehensive (though possibly underfunded) efforts by the Department of Corrections to prepare individuals for success upon reentry.

There is little variability in the types of crimes. What varies - with serious consequences - is the time for which one might be sentenced in a particular state. Crimes and their accompanying punishments are determined by each state legislature or by the federal government. Within limits, judges set the punishment for crimes. In addition, a crime committed in one state may be classified differently in another state. The recent marijuana legislation that has decriminalized marijuana in some states is an excellent example of the flexibility that states have in analyzing crimes, their danger and the resulting punishment.¹⁷

What follows is a discussion of criminal acts and sentencing options as defined by Georgia lawmakers.

Figure 2.

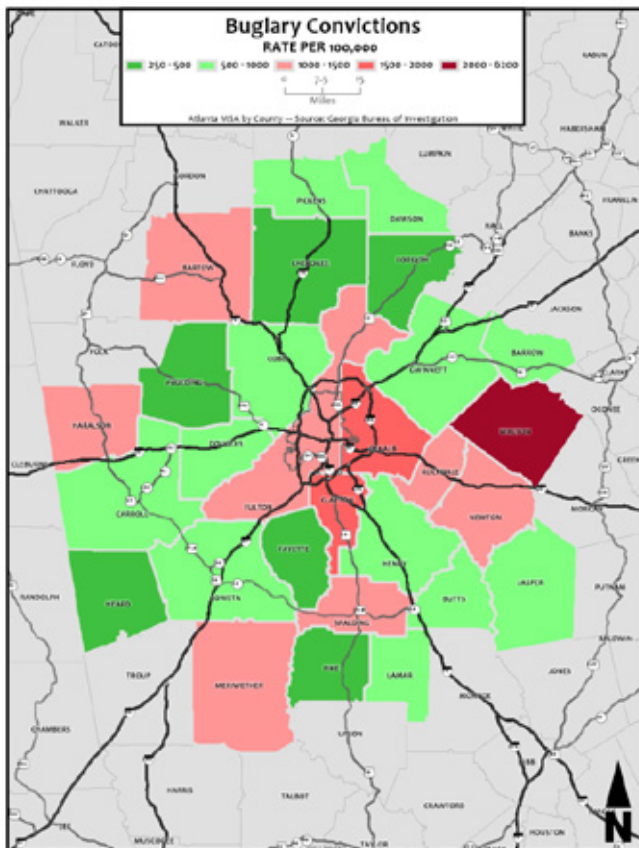


PROPERTY CRIMES

BURGLARY.

According to **Figure 3**, burglary is highest in Walton County, followed by Clayton, DeKalb, and then by Bartow, Fulton, Haralson, Meriwether, Newton, Rockdale and Spalding Counties. Rates range from a high of 2000 to 6200 per 100,000 in Walton County to lows of 250 to 500 per 100,000 in several of the other counties in Metro Atlanta. Overall, larger numbers are contributed to prison from the more populated counties. Interestingly, while the numbers contributed to prisons are lower in Walton County due to its lower overall population, the incidence, for reasons that need to be explained, are much higher, per capita.

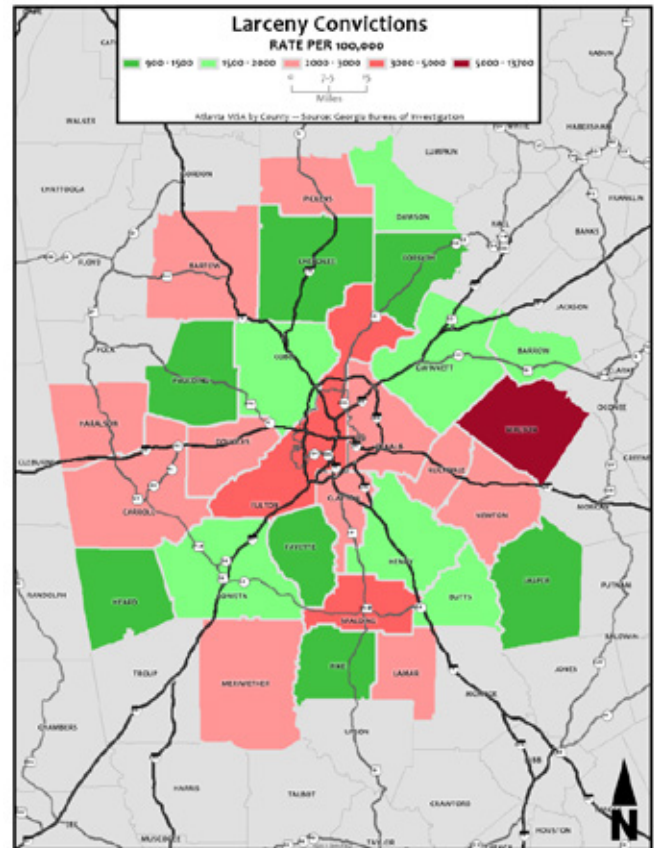
Figure 3.



LARCENY.

Larceny may or may not be a felony, depending on the value of what was taken. According to **Figure 4**, Walton County again heads the list in per capita larceny offenses, followed by Fulton and Spalding Counties with 3000 to 5000 per capita. Other counties range from 900 to 3000 per capita.

Figure 4.



ROBBERY. An individual in Georgia can be convicted of an armed robbery even if the individual did not take anything.¹⁸ According to current figures, robberies are highest in Walton County (500-900 per 100,000), followed by DeKalb and Fulton Counties (250-500 per 100,000), then Butts and Clayton Counties (100-250 per 100,000).

MINI-GLOSSARY OF GEORGIA PROPERTY CRIMES

MISDEMEANORS are crimes that are punishable by a sentence of one year or less in county jail.

FELONIES are more serious crimes and are punishable by one year or more in state prison. The most serious felonies are punishable by the death penalty (for murder only) or life imprisonment.

BURGLARY is the breaking or entering into a premise with the intent to commit a theft. Penalties for burglary offenses have been simplified and in some cases reduced.

LARCENY is the unlawful taking of possessions or services without an intent to pay for these. If the value is less than \$500, the offense is treated as a misdemeanor and is punishable by a jail sentence. If the value is \$500 or more, the offense is considered a felony and is potentially punishable by a term in prison.

ROBBERY is the taking of personal property from someone using force or the threat of force. Force, intimidation, or a threat causing fear may result in up to a 20-year sentence in prison. The robbery of a person over age 65 may result in a minimum sentence of five years and up to 20 years.

Source: “Georgia Felony Crimes by Class and Sentences.”

<http://www.criminaldefenselawyer.com/resources/criminal-defense/felony-offense/georgia-felony-class.htm>

SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

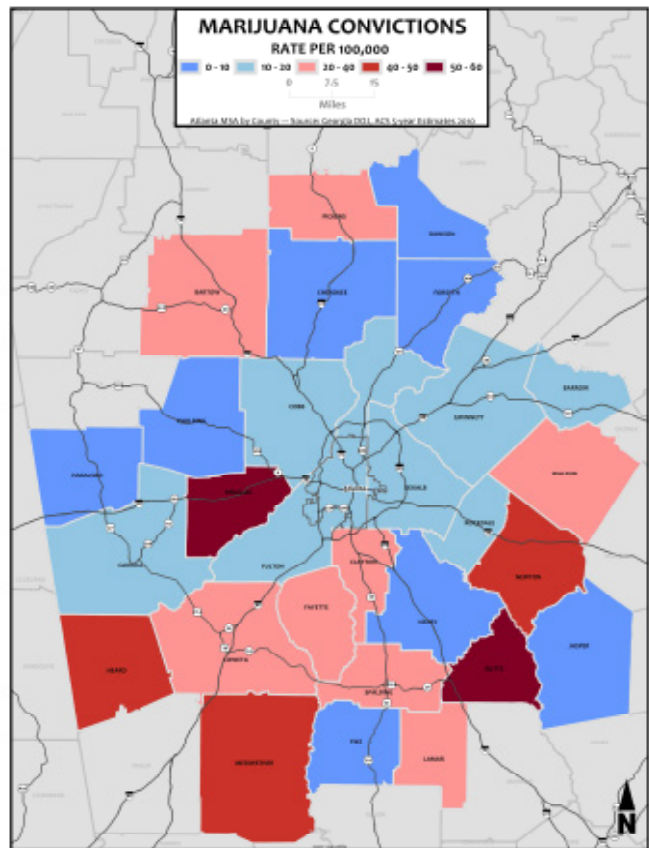
Drug convictions overall are highest per capita in Pickens County, followed by Butts, Douglas and Spalding Counties. Other counties with elevated conviction rates include DeKalb, Haralson, Henry, Paulding, and Pike Counties. Public health and criminal justice system collaboration would address the issue of equity in access and foster a vigorous discussion around what is a crime and what is an illness. National data show that approximately 67 percent of people convicted of drug offenses (2 out of 3) are rearrested within 3 years. No data are available to indicate what percent of these individuals were able to access treatment on demand.

Convictions for marijuana possession are highest in Butts and Douglas Counties per capita, followed by Heard, Meriwether, and Newton Counties, according to **Figure 5**. It is again important to remember that while conviction rates may be lower in the remaining counties, the numbers contributed to the jail or prison system, often a result of violation of the terms of probation or parole, are higher and more costly overall. Georgia has not begun to consider any laws that would legalize certain substances (i.e., marijuana) or otherwise mitigate the incarceration for those caught with marijuana in their possession. As of this writing, the lifelong consequences of the conviction on the record are severe. Most of those reconvicted and reincarcerated are for marijuana possession.¹⁹

Figure 6 illustrates that convictions for methamphetamine use are highest in Pickens

County, followed by Bartow and Dawson Counties. Following these three counties are the rural/semi-urban counties of Butts, Carroll, Douglas and Spalding. The lowest rates for methamphetamine convictions are the core counties of Cobb, Clayton, DeKalb, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, and Pike Counties. This distribution of convictions generally follows the demographic trend of White versus Black population levels, with methamphetamine being more closely associated, though not exclusively so, with rural and White populations, according to recent data.^{20,21}

Figure 5.



SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER AND BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Figure 7 demonstrates that cocaine convictions are highest in Douglas County (80-105 per 100,000), followed by Butts, Meriwether, and Spalding Counties. The counties with the next highest conviction rates are Heard, Newton, and Walton Counties. The lowest conviction rates are found in Barrow, Bartow, Cobb, Carroll, Clayton, Coweta, Gwinnett and Fulton Counties. Conviction rates may or may not be loosely related to arrest rates. Data are not available for this chapter on the rate of heroin convictions in Metro Atlanta.²²

- Alcohol abuse is not reported as a reason for conviction, though nearly 11 percent of those incarcerated report abusing alcohol (3 percent) or alcohol and drugs (8 percent) together.^{23,24} There is no definite treatment for alcohol abuse, though this may well be a contributor to addressing preventing recidivism.

These “crimes” result in increased prison populations, but may be rooted in mental or emotional illnesses. Health equity would reduce the number of persons incarcerated as a result of a medically treatable or manageable issue.

Figure 6.

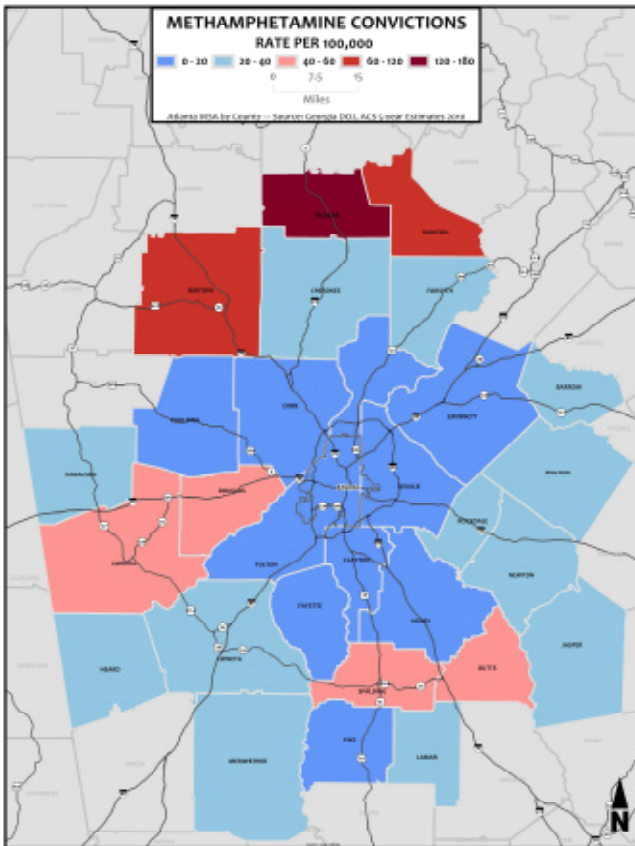
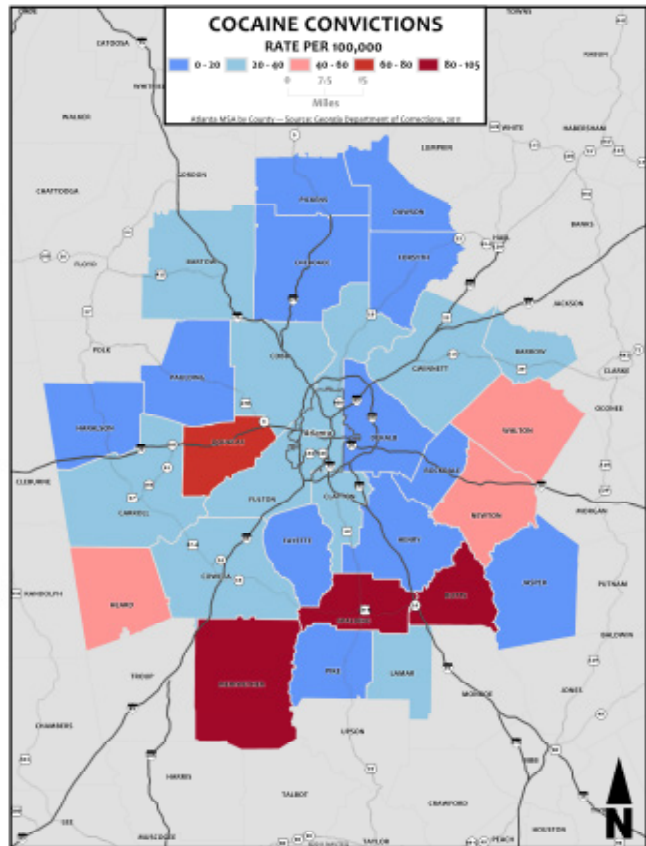


Figure 7.



MURDER, RAPE AND ASSAULT.

According to **Figure 8**, murders are highest per capita in Walton County (30-35 per 100,000). Butts, Clayton, Fulton and Pickens Counties have the next highest rates per capita, and are followed by DeKalb, Haralson, Lamar, Spalding, and Meriwether Counties. Data suggest that these types of crimes are more often committed against someone who is known to the accused, suggesting uncontrolled anger and emotions play a key factor role.^{25,26} Counseling for anger management is an underutilized resource and more could be learned about what counseling is available to poor and minority populations.

RAPE AND ASSAULT convictions vary widely in Metro Atlanta counties. Rape is higher in Clayton and Spalding Counties, and assaults are higher in Haralson, followed by Bartow, Barrow, Carroll, Fulton, Heard, Lamar, Meriwether, Newton, Rockdale, and Spalding Counties. Walton County has the highest conviction rate for both rape and assault. See **Figure 9** for Rape Convictions and **Figure 10** for Assault Convictions.

ABUSE figures are closely tied to events and circumstances that result in murder and rape. Assault may be child and spousal abuse, domestic sexual abuse, domestic violence deaths, and family violence. Domestic violence deaths were highest in Walton and Barrow Counties. Spousal abuse was highest in Bartow and Walton Counties while child abuse was highest in Barrow County, followed

by Carroll, Clayton, Pickens, and Walton Counties. Domestic sexual abuse was highest in Barrow, Carroll, Haralson and Lamar Counties, followed by Clayton, Henry, Newton, Meriwether, and Pickens Counties. Overall, family violence arrests were highest in Bartow County, followed by Barrow, Carroll, Clayton, Haralson, Heard, Pickens, and Rockdale Counties. See **Figures 11, 12, 13, and 14** (see page 127) for more detailed data on abuse.

Figure 8.

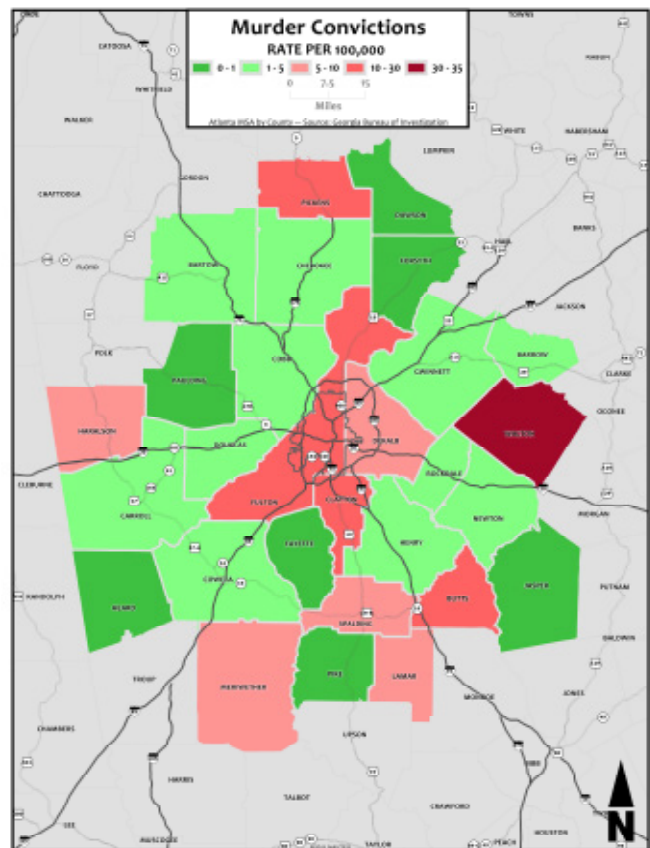




Figure 9.

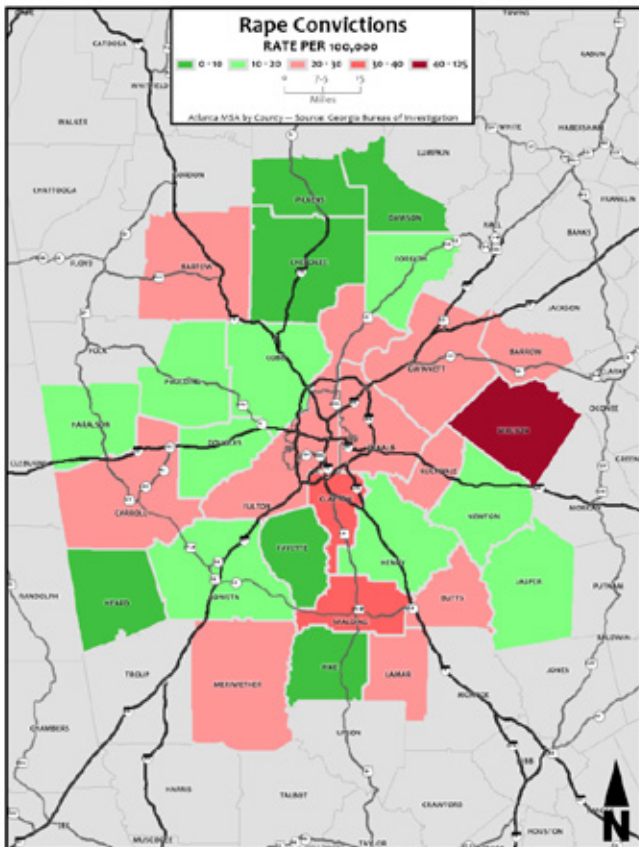


Figure 10.

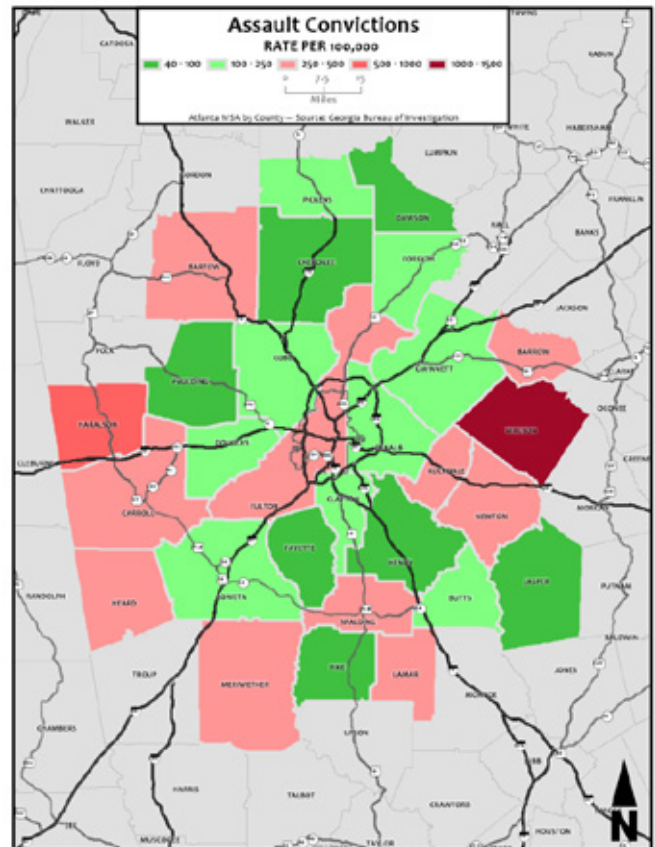


Figure 11.

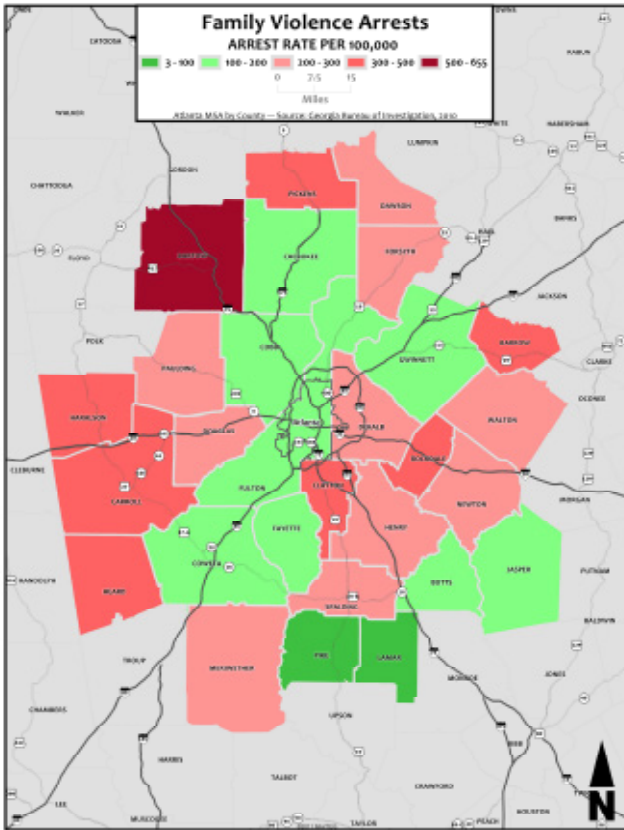


Figure 13.

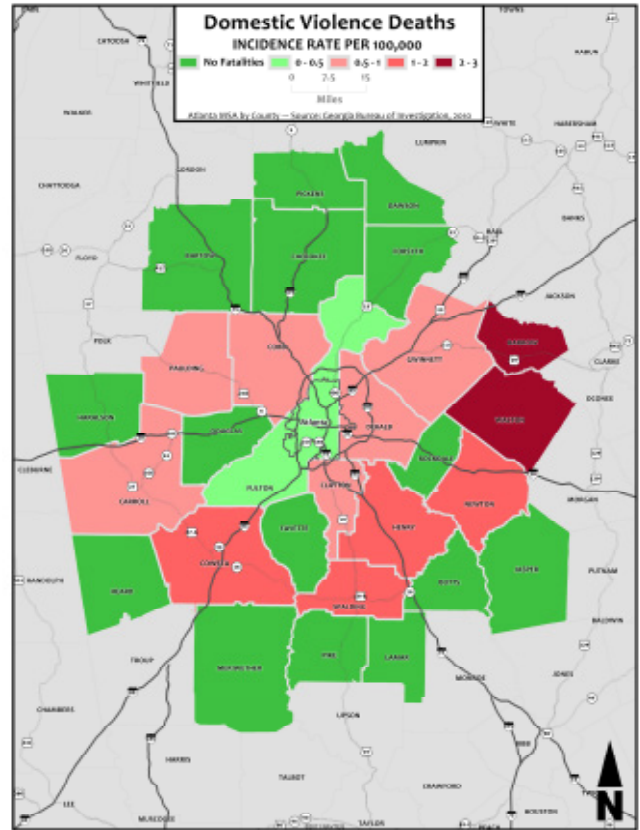


Figure 12.

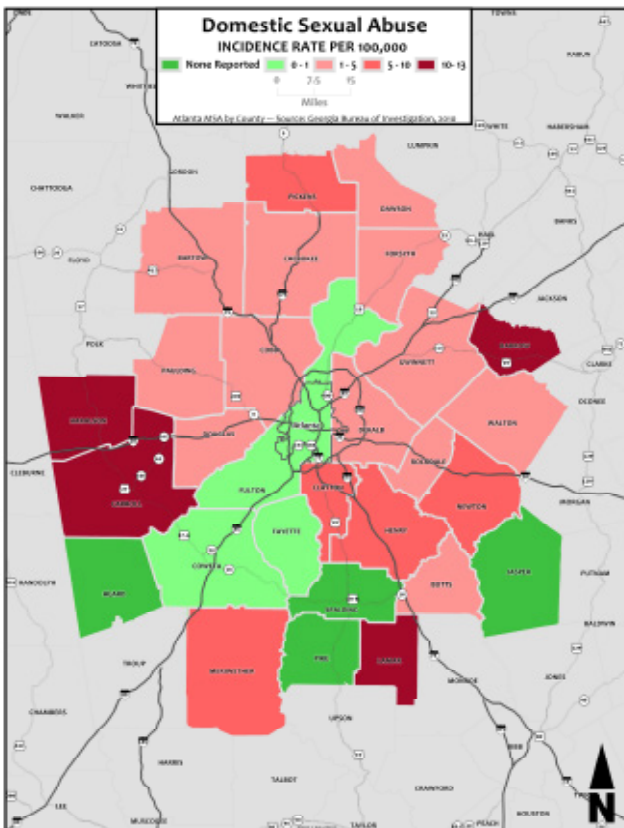
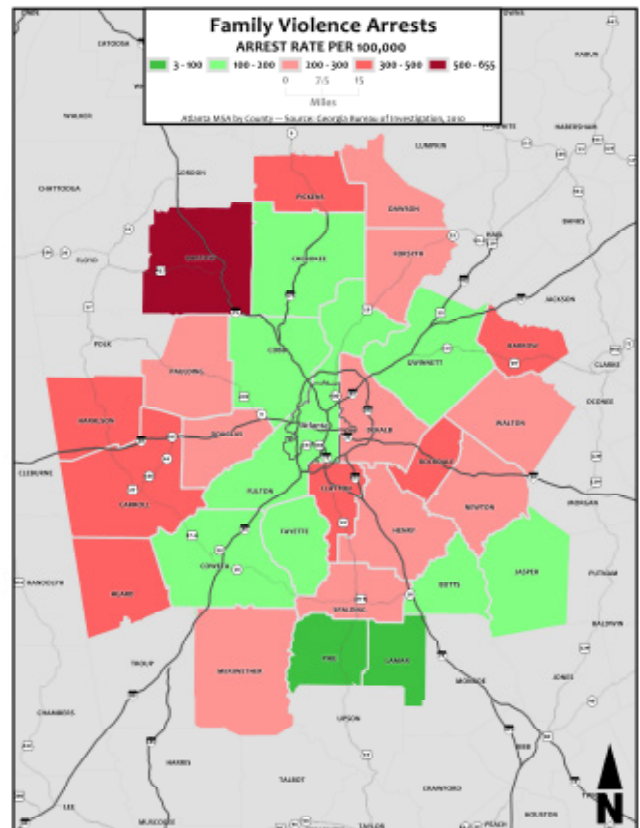


Figure 14.



THE ROOTS OF ARREST AND RE-ARREST

The failures of many intertwined systems produce the disparate effects that are seen among the prison population by race and gender and dictate the pathways that entrap their children. (See insert, “What about the Children?”)

JOBS, EDUCATION, HOPE. Despite the extensive debates about crime and violence, little has been effectively done to address their root causes, such as reducing poverty, enhancing economic opportunity, improving education, and instilling hope for upward mobility among those living at the margins of prosperous communities.²⁷

There can be little question that race does matter. A vast number of African-American males who live in poverty and with a series of poor educational experiences must navigate circumstances that give rise to crime-promoting behavior. Arrests due to family violence and abuse have been increasing. Moreover, Georgia’s unique “Seven Deadly Sins” legislation²⁸ and “two strikes” law,²⁹ are producing sentences which are inordinately long and rehabilitation in which job training and social skills training are not sufficient. The extended time away from home, often in faraway places, has resulted in broken families and severed the community ties that could assist with employment and successful resettlement. Recidivism due to new criminal offenses or violations of parole is the all too common a result, as two out of three individuals reoffend and are sent back to prison within three years.³⁰

The U.S. criminal justice system has attempted to reduce both incarceration and reincarceration but with minimal effect.

Nearly half of states have taken steps to reduce the size and cost of corrections systems by shortening terms for low-level offenders and/or by diversion programs. The motivating factors appear to be success in reducing prison growth and crime and public support from voters, crime victim representatives, and leading conservatives. More fundamentally, cost saving is a factor, and there is a growing awareness of research-based alternatives that cost less than prison and that have been shown to be more effective at reducing recidivism.³¹

HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE. Often overlooked, the relationship between health and the current health care system and incarceration system needs to be considered. Low-wage jobs without benefits and no payment source to ensure access to health services might be creating a need for incarceration because it provides health benefits (the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom from cruel and unusual punishment). In addition, the criminal justice system has been built upon the perceived need to handle those with substance abuse issues and does not distinguish between those with an illness (drug and alcohol) and those that market illegal substances. Equity requires that public health issues (substance use disorder, alcoholism, and mental illness that may foster some criminal behavior or result in incarceration to preserve the public peace) are separated from criminal justice issues. Just as systems are built to care for elderly populations, perhaps similar systems would be a part of an equity framework to ensure that individuals needing treatment for public health issues receive treatment on demand.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to cover in detail the collateral damage inflicted on the children of the incarcerated, 70 percent of them may themselves become involved in the criminal justice system, unless action is taken. In 2013, the 55,471 people who entered prison in Georgia reported having a total of 33,055 or more children, with some reporting over ten children.³² Children of the incarcerated face a greater risk of incarceration than do other children, as they drop out of school earlier and more often and demonstrate more behavioral difficulties that are not recognized as a need for special counseling and development of coping skills.³³ There is evidence to demonstrate that the next generation of prospective prisoners is being groomed right before our eyes, unless we act now.³⁴

Considering the racial disparity in rates of incarceration, it comes as no surprise that most of the children affected are African American. Access to counseling to minimize the damage and the pain of separation from a parent is minimal. The future possibilities and dreams for these children are limited before they reach middle school, in many cases by the action of a criminal justice system that is blind to the damage inflicted on them. Expulsion, suspension, and drop-out rates are higher among African American children, particularly African-American boys.

In sum, being the child of an incarcerated parent can be a further reason for an elevated rate of criminal activity unless the emotional and other needs of the children are handled before they act out in ways to bring attention to their plight. Naturally, there are more of these fragile children in neighborhoods where there are high arrest rates.

The education system is equally involved.³⁶ Graduation rates are not a strong testament to Georgia's proficiency in preparing future leaders.³⁷ Most of those incarcerated as of May 1, 2013, had completed eleven or less years of school.³⁸ Suspension is another important factor in failure to complete school.^{39,40} Drop-out and suspension rates by county, by race, and by gender are needed to determine who is leaving school and why they are leaving.⁴¹

ONE IN 9
AFRICAN-
AMERICAN
CHILDREN
HAS AN
INCARCERATED
PARENT, AS
COMPARED TO
1 IN 57 WHITE
CHILDREN
AND 1 IN 28
HISPANIC
CHILDREN.³⁵

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES. Numerous mental health facilities have been closed in Georgia and across the nation as a result of policy decisions and lack of reliable insurance options to cover charges for treatment. Therefore, while the general population grew by 14 percent since 1999, the mental health population grew by 100 percent.⁴²

No comprehensive data exist relative to development of community-based mental health services other than the Department of Corrections placement of mental health counselors in the Day Reporting Centers that

treat 21 percent of male offenders and 54 percent of female offenders.⁴³ **Figure 15** shows the probation numbers of the mental health population as the Department of Corrections seeks to find appropriate community-based placement for those with a chronic illness that, if controlled, may mitigate criminal behavior.⁴⁴ While mental illness is not a crime per se, behavior contrary to what is considered to be normal or disturbing the public peace can result in incarceration, as there is nowhere else for them to go, particularly if families can no longer cope.

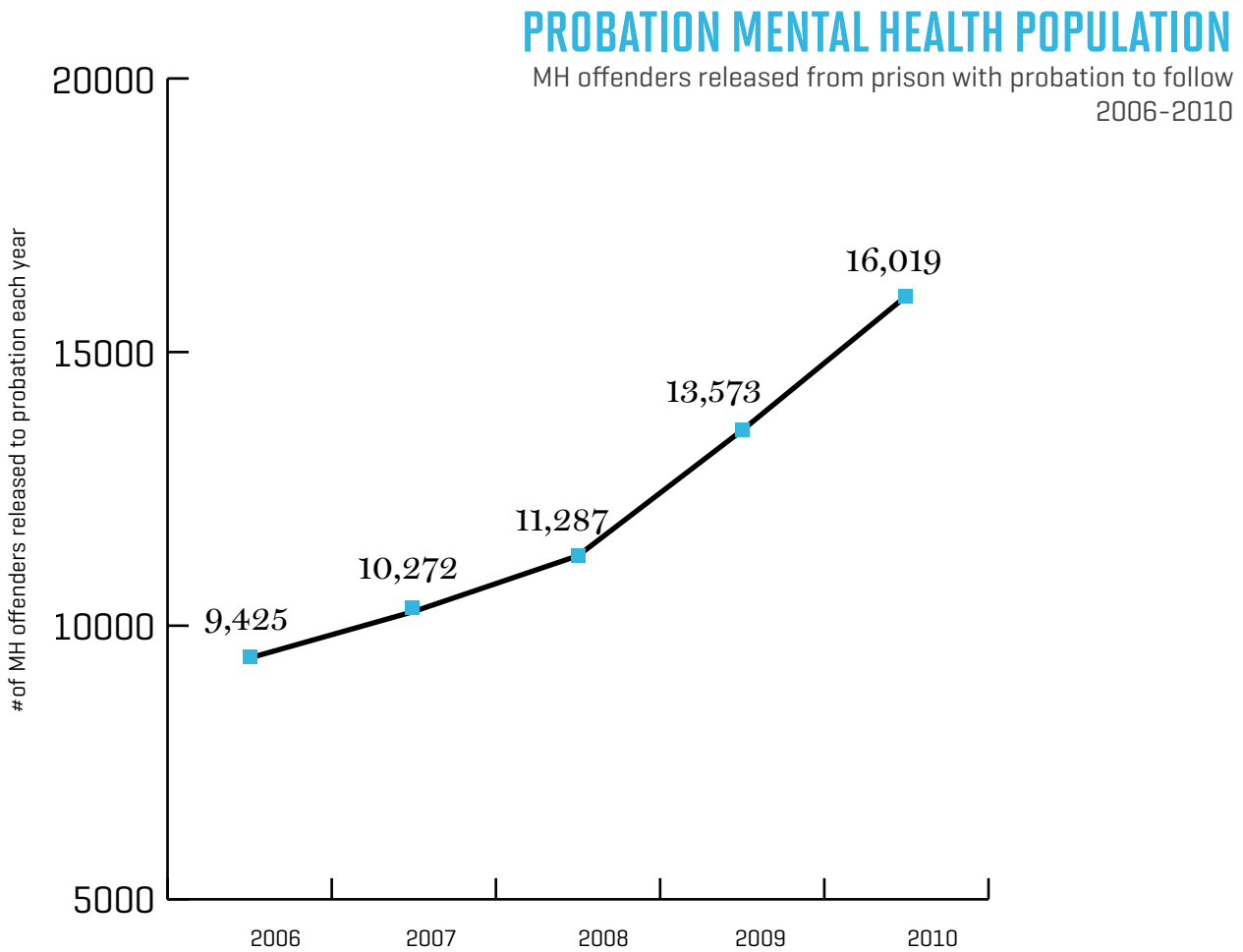


Figure 15: Probation Mental Health Population
Source: Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections. Fig. 51, p.62. (Not dated). http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/pdf/Justice_Reinvestment.pdf

CHILD SUPPORT. Nonpayment of child support is a crime that appears to be visited most harshly upon African American men and those that are poor and/or unemployed. The Federal Agency for Child Support Enforcement reports that 70 percent of all back child support is owed by men earning less than \$10,000 per year and that 29 percent of those fathers who are delinquent on their child support payments are institutionalized. Most of those who are institutionalized are actually in prison for failure to pay their support.^{45,46}

The Georgia Supreme Court has certified that it is permissible to incarcerate fathers for non-payment of child support even if they did not have access to legal counsel. Currently over 3,500 individuals are incarcerated though they have no job and no ability to earn funds while incarcerated.⁴⁷ Rates of incarceration appear to follow the incidence of poverty, based on data from counties that sent the greatest raw number of individuals to prison.

SENTENCING INEQUITY

The right of the public to not have its inalienable rights assaulted is important. Equally important in any discussion on this topic is fairness in sentencing. Equity for society and for the offender begins with appropriate sentencing after a crime has been committed. Equity must be followed by appropriate programs while an individual is incarcerated to permit him/her to develop the skills needed to reenter the community with a fair chance of finding a job and having gainful



employment. The longer an individual is away from the home, the less likely he/she will be to return home and remain as self-sufficient and productive citizen. Addressing this one issue would allow municipalities to also address racial disparities relating to incarceration rates.

Broad sentencing disparities exist among the 49 judicial circuits in Georgia, which carry out their work without a method to ensure equity regardless of race, gender, or county of residence.⁴⁸ For example, a first conviction for

cocaine possession may result in a probation sentence, as few as two years, to as many as 15 years, or to. On a second conviction, the sentence may range from as few as five years to as many as 30 years in prison, or probation.

This great judicial discretion passes on considerable burden to the taxpayer with no demonstrable impact, as crime rates are down overall in Georgia and elsewhere across the nation. No statewide accountability standards exist, and the taxpayer bears the burden of judicial personal perspectives that may or may not be related to overall practice standards and community/taxpayer benefit. The Governor's Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform is grappling with the possibility of legislatively standardizing sentencing.

Low-level non-violent offenders--who are often just bystanders or possibly "deadbeat dads" need to be distinguished from the individual who has committed serious crimes. Although many of these individuals hurt no one but themselves, the collateral

damage is harsh, and being a male of color increases the chances of receiving harsher sentences including the death penalty.⁴⁹

Once the sentence has been served, the individual must receive redemptive treatment. Redemption should not result in individuals, especially nonviolent offenders, aging into senior centers operated by the Department of Corrections because they have been away so long that they have been forgotten. The community must ask - What is to be gained by having a 70-year-old non-violent criminal incarcerated at great cost to the taxpayer? In Georgia's prisons, those over 50 years of age comprise 13 percent of the prison population.⁵⁰ If crime rate is down,^{51,52} and the public is less threatened, who benefits from the maintenance of the current system? This is a question that should be explored and answered for the sake of equity in the definition of crime, in the assignment of punishment, and in the development of reentry resources.



PROBATION AND PAROLE

According to a report by the Georgia Department of Corrections⁵³ “prison admissions are comprised of four categories: probation revocations (24 percent), parole revocations (19 percent), court ordered to serve more than 2 years (38 percent), and court ordered to serve less than 2 years (19 percent).” Probation convictions are highest in Metro Atlanta and in Douglas County (700-705 per 100,000 persons), followed by Bartow, Butts, Clayton, Dawson, Heard, Meriwether, and Pickens Counties (500-700 per 100,000 persons). Those sentenced under the “Seven Deadly Sins” legislation are not eligible for parole and must serve a full sentence, regardless of behavior or other positive attributes. This legislation alone dramatically increases the numbers of those spending long years in prison. Few data are available to determine the variation in probation and parole revocations by race, gender, or county of origin, or in the use of alternative methods to reduce the high cost of institutional re-incarceration versus community-based intervention and supervision.

Community-based intervention and support that intervene against revocation while fostering reintegration into the community and re-initialization of normalcy in employment, housing, and family connections would be of value to the taxpayer and community and could save as much as \$18 million per year.⁵⁴

18,000 individuals are released from prison every year, but approximately 21,000 are admitted, many of them (43 percent) for violations of parole or probation.

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CONCLUSION

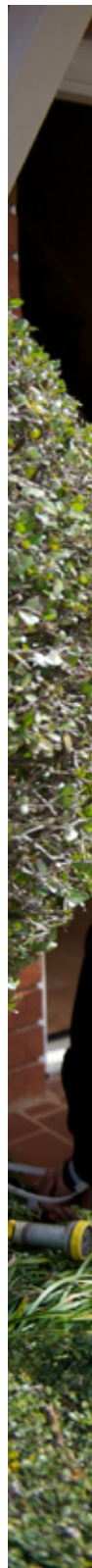
Metro Atlanta suffers from one of the highest rates of incarceration in the nation, especially among poor communities of color. The causes are deep, interwoven, and socio-economic. As well, the funding that poured into Georgia to build prisons and warehouse individuals with little framing of fairness of sentencing across the state has produced a mounting fiscal problem for taxpayers. No economic studies of the benefit of prisons to industries or individuals have been conducted. However it is clear that jobs have been created. Any attempt to attenuate the system must also include inquiry into what will replace the jobs and how the infrastructure, built at great expense may be re-positioned, if at all possible.

While investigating the economic incentives for continuing mass incarceration and the social disincentives for a continuation of this practice, many interim steps are needed. Greater investment in proven reentry strategies implemented by organizations with a record of success are the first step to stem the reversing tide of humans cycling in and out of prison. The pathway to prison for children must be destroyed by insuring that parents are able to remain in touch with their children, while improving the education and employment climate for the upcoming generation.

Taxpayer investment must be more rationalized so that a return on the funds invested is realized that endows public safety and human upward mobility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reentry resources by neighborhood and by county are ill-defined and little is known about whether enough services are available. An audit should be conducted to identify resources and gaps in services in the counties identified in this report.
2. Efforts to enforce equity in arrest rates, sentencing, probation and parole should be made transparent so that appropriate interventions or adjustments can be made throughout the system.
3. Child care centers should be established in all Georgia prisons to ensure equity of access to children by parents, regardless of gender. Transportation to the prisons should become a function of state and local government in cases of poverty and inability to travel great distances to visit parents.
4. Jobs, job training, employment opportunities, education, food stamps or subsidies for those who cannot find work are all essential components of justice reinvestment and are manageable ways of addressing inequity and insuring social justice.
5. Much better data must be collected on who is incarcerated, and there ought to be greater access to programs that prepare them for successful reentry into communities and perhaps reunification with their families. For example, two years of preparation for reentry after 18 years of incarceration may be insufficient, but more data are needed.





6. A regional approach could include a formally appointed commission to help ensure greater equity in sentencing and access to re-entry services and jobs. A regional task force should be convened by the state to include representatives from law enforcement, housing, and employment sectors to identify needs and issues by race, gender, county, and as a collective whole, and to design a network of systems that bind government and community-based organizations in implementing a pathway home that measurably and significantly reduces the 66 percent recidivism rate.
7. Employment data is needed on all ex-offenders to determine that they have a job that pays a living wage within two months of release, or sooner. “Ban the Box” (i.e., the need to admit on a job application that the individual has been incarcerated) to reduce employer rejection of ex-offenders for employment and pursue full implementation of the new expungement laws.
8. Relative race and gender changes in incarceration rates by race in Georgia as a result of the growing use of drug diversion courts are not published at this time, and it is not known if data are collected for public information. Studies are needed for examination of equity in access to incarceration options.
9. One part of reentry and prison population reduction may well entail development of economic development strategies to replace the trends set in place when the state accepted the largess of the Federal Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing Program (VOI/TIS) funds.

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⁴³Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections.

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⁴⁴Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections. Fig. 50, p.63. (Not dated).

http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/pdf/Justice_Reinvestment.pdf

⁴⁵"Child Support "Talking Points." The National Center for Men. <http://www.nationalcenterformen.org>.

⁴⁶Kouri, Jim. "Child Support Collections from Federal Income Tax Refunds." NWVnews. <http://www.newswithviews.com>

⁴⁷"Georgia Deprives Children as Indigent Parents Languish In Debtors' Jail for Inability to Pay Child Support." <https://www.schr.org/childsupport>.

⁴⁸Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections, page 11.

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⁴⁹Eberhardt, Jennifer L.; Davies, PG; Purdie-Vaughns, Valerie J.; and Johnson, Sheri Lynn,

"Looking Deathworthy: Perceived Stereotypicality of Black Defendants Predicts capital-sentencing Outcomes

" (2006). Cornell Law Faculty Publications Paper 41. http://schoarship.law.cornell.edu/lrsp_papers/41.

⁵⁰Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections, page 60.

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⁵¹Crime Rate by State, 2011. <http://www.infoplease.com/us/statistics/crime-rate-state.html>

⁵²Crime Rates by State, 2008 and 2009, and by Type, 2009.

<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0308.pdf>

⁵³Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections, page 33.

(Not dated). http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/pdf/Justice_Reinvestment.pdf.

⁵⁴Justice Reinvestment in Public Safety. Georgia Department of Corrections, page 33.

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PUBLIC SAFETY CASE STUDY:

PLACING THE FOCUS ON PRISONER RE-ENTRY

Eli Yewdall

Program Associate at ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability

Nineteen thousand people are released from prisons in Georgia each year.¹ When they are released, they likely have no job or home in which to return. Reintegrating into society presents a challenge not only for those citizens returning from prison, but also for the communities to which they return.

An Emory University study tracked nearly 5000 people who were released into parole or probation in the five core Metro Atlanta counties in 2004 and 2005. Eighty percent of them had been sentenced to prison for non-violent crimes. While the locations to which they returned were more likely to be clustered in high-poverty neighborhoods, return locations were all over Metro Atlanta. Four out of five returned to neighborhoods outside the City of Atlanta.²

Returning citizens reported that finding a place to live was their most immediate and difficult challenge after release. Study co-author Michael Leo Owens reports “For those released from prison without obtaining a guaranteed bed at a transitional house or shelter and possessing only their \$25 in “gate money”, finding a place to stay that was secure, decent and accessible was often impossible.”³ The search for housing is complicated by federal policies excluding them from eligibility for public housing, and their presence within a family member’s public housing unit is often reason enough for eviction.⁴

The other major problem facing returning citizens is finding a job. Many employers are unwilling to hire someone with a felony conviction on their record. The widespread practice of asking about prior convictions on initial employment applications makes it very hard for returning citizens to even get a job interview, as their applications are summarily screened out at the beginning of the process. Some movement toward progress has been made in changing this policy. In early 2013, after a campaign led by the organization 9 to 5 Working Women, the City of Atlanta became the first major employer in Georgia to “ban the box”, that is to remove from the initial employment application the box applicants must check if they have any prior convictions.

Challenges to finding housing and employment are made worse by a spatial mismatch between neighborhoods with high return density and affordable housing, jobs, and social services. At the community level, challenges are intensified because, for neighborhoods with a high density of returning prisoners, those returning citizens are less likely to have been employed before conviction and less likely to have high school diploma or GED. The Emory study identifies improved coordination between organizations serving returning citizens as a critical need.

²Rich, Michael J, et al, 2008. “Prisoner Reentry in Atlanta: Understanding the Challenges of Transition from Prison to Community.” Emory University Office of University Community Partnerships. <http://oucp.emory.edu/PrisonerReentryAtlanta.pdf>.

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⁴Alexander, Michelle, 2010. *The New Jim Crow*. The New Press. pp. 142-45.

PUBLIC SAFETY CASE STUDY:

THE GEORGIA METH PROJECT: A SAVVY APPROACH TO ADDRESSING TEEN DRUG USE

Lindsey Garner, Healthcare Consultant

Abuse of methamphetamine (or “crystal” meth), a highly addictive illegal stimulant, is one of the most serious public health crises in the state of Georgia. Meth use costs Georgia \$1.3 billion a year in law enforcement, family and social services, treatment and lost productivity and. The drug has a profound impact on youth, as 42 percent of child endangerment cases in Georgia involve meth and more than 30 percent of meth labs seized in Georgia are in homes with children. Despite these facts, 28 percent of teens see little or no risk in trying meth.

In response to this epidemic, the Georgia Meth Project has emerged as a best practice, bringing increased education and awareness around this critical issue.

The Georgia Meth Project is part of The Meth Project, a national organization focused on large-scale statewide prevention programs with the goal of reducing meth use. After successful implementation in Montana in 2005, the Meth Project spread to six other states, including Georgia, which launched its chapter in March 2010. Early on, the Georgia group recognized that while people often perceived a benefit in using meth, many failed to see the risk. This realization has caused the group to focus its mission on helping to equip teens and young adults with the facts they need to make well-informed decisions about meth use.

The Georgia Meth Project’s prevention campaign reaches out to youth through public service messaging, community outreach, and public policy initiatives. Their gripping advertisements are central to the campaign, as they graphically and memorably communicate the dangers of meth through TV ads, radio spots, billboards, high school newspapers and the Internet. For example, the radio ads feature quotes such as, “... I took it out and it was my tooth...it just crumbled,” as well as, “To get meth, I beat up my friend for her money...I left her and I went and used.” The TV ads have plots that include a teenage boy robbing his parents and hitting his little sister in order to steal money for meth. The print ads have shocking visuals of people desperately clawing at their already scarred skin as a result of “crank bugs,” the meth-induced sensation that insects are crawling under your skin.¹

The ads are crafted after extensive state-based research in order to better understand the attitudes and behaviors related to meth use in Georgia. The national project’s research is based on national and statewide surveys and focus groups that have reached 50,000 teens. Additionally, the project coordinates with top experts in research, prevention, advertising, and digital media to make its campaign as effective as possible.

For example, Darren Aronofsky, the Oscar-nominated director of *The Black Swan*, filmed Meth Project ads shown in Arizona, Idaho, and Colorado.²

Not only does the project reach out to youth through media, it also reaches out to them in schools. In March of 2012, the Georgia Meth Project unveiled an interactive meth prevention lesson in Georgia classrooms. Although the project previously had a direct presence in schools through assemblies and presentations, the group realized that teacher-led lessons were necessary in order to ensure that all of Georgia's 860,000 teens were educated on the risks of using meth. Over a three-year rollout, the Georgia Meth Project plans to reach 60 percent of teens statewide through educators.³

Evidence suggests that the Georgia Meth Project's efforts have achieved measurable success in the state. The 2011 Georgia Meth

Use & Attitudes Survey provides metrics regarding the change of youth behavior and perception of meth from the base year of 2010, (before the Georgia Meth Project was created) to 2011. Compared to the base year, there was an 11 point increase in Georgia teens stating there is great risk in trying meth once or twice and a 4 point increase in teens stating there is great risk in using meth regularly. Also, the survey suggests that the group's aggressive media campaign is reaching its intended audience, as 84 percent of teens reported that they had seen or heard ads communicating the dangers of meth in 2011, up from 56 percent in 2010.⁴

In less than three years, the Georgia Meth Project has helped to contain the meth epidemic in the state. It is evidence that smart national best-practices, properly applied, can make the difference when it comes to addressing tough social problems. ■



¹Georgia Meth Project Website. About Us. <http://georgia.methproject.org/About-Us/index.php>.

²Moisse, Katie. Black Swan Director Darren Aronofsky Creates Anti-Meth Ads. ABC News. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/WellnessResource/darren-aronofsky-directs-anti-meth-ads/story?id=14917405>.

³Georgia Meth Project Website. About Us. <http://georgia.methproject.org/About-Us/index.php>.

⁴Georgia Meth Project Website. About Us. <http://georgia.methproject.org/About-Us/index.php>.



TRANSPORTATION

Heather Alhadeff, AICP, LEED® Green Associate, President of Center Forward

Metro Atlanta's sprawling development pattern has created a number of challenges that inhibit the growth into a stronger regional economy. Perhaps foremost is the lack of a comprehensive, multi-modal transportation system. In a recent report by the Brookings Institution, Atlanta ranked 91st out of the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas for public transit.¹ The consequences of such shortsightedness continue to hamper businesses and residents throughout the region. According to Bankrate.com, Georgia ranks 1st among states for the highest costs-to-drive, due to above-average gasoline costs and insurance rates. In addition to the monetary cost, Metro Atlantans consistently lose time sitting in traffic that they could otherwise be spending with family and/or friends.





A 2013 STUDY BY HARVARD AND BERKELEY ECONOMISTS RANKS ATLANTA LAST IN THE NATION FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY.

A thriving region ensures a robust transportation system that provides the most access possible to all citizens. All transportation modes, including cars, are not fairing well with Atlanta's current transportation system. Our regional economy is even tougher to access for students, seniors, low-income families, and people with disabilities. In essence they have very little chance to overcome their situation. This lack of access creates just one more barrier to upward mobility which studies show is lagging in Metro Atlanta. According to a 2013 study performed by Harvard and Berkeley economists, Atlanta ranks 50th out of the 50 biggest U.S. cities in social mobility.² This means that those who are raised in low-income households in Atlanta are less likely to be able to improve their economic status. One of the highest correlating factors found to impact this ranking was Atlanta's sprawling geography exacerbated by few transportation options.³

This chapter explores the extent to which some of the most common modes of transportation are available and utilized in communities throughout the region. The chapter then takes a deeper look at transit accessibility and cost. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations on how the region might move toward the creation of a more comprehensive and equitable transportation system.



TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The variety of choices for Metro Atlanta commuters is based on where one lives. Since the system has been designed and continually funds vehicular projects, the most frequently used mode is the vehicle or personal automobile, which provides car owners with the ability to travel wherever and whenever they need. With such high costs to own and operate a vehicle, households spend higher than average amounts of their income on transportation. Many low-income households cannot afford this mode of transportation. A majority of households

with access to one or more vehicles are located in the most affluent areas of the region. **Figure 1** illustrates this disparity in car ownership throughout the region. The areas in green are where 90-100 percent of the workforce has access to an automobile, while those in red to pink vary 0 to 90 percent. Some of the areas with a lower percentage of automobile access are in locations with limited or no access to public transportation.

The second most commonly used mode is public transit. The Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority's (MARTA) heavy rail runs in DeKalb and Fulton Counties, providing nearby residents

with fairly frequent, high-speed public transit. The heavy rail system is supplemented by an extensive system of MARTA buses, operating over a vast coverage area but providing less frequent service. Cobb, Gwinnett and Cherokee Counties each operate their own respective bus services for commuters traveling into Atlanta. The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) also operates a regional express bus service for suburban commuters traveling into key employment centers during rush hour. **Figure 2** displays the coverage areas for all of these services. MARTA rail is highlighted in red, while the local and regional bus routes are shown in yellow. Bus service within this map includes MARTA, Cobb

Community Transit, Gwinnett County Transit, and Cherokee Area Transportation System. The freeway system, including state and interstate limited access highways, is shown in grey. As previously stated, the MARTA bus system and the suburban commuter-based routes are designed for coverage rather than frequency, so although the coverage area appears large, the actual service provided does not operate all day and is often too infrequent for many relying on public transit.

Less utilized and under-reported transportation options include various taxi services, carpooling, vanpooling, bicycling and walking. Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, in particular, is very limited throughout the region. Regionally, bike

Figure 1.

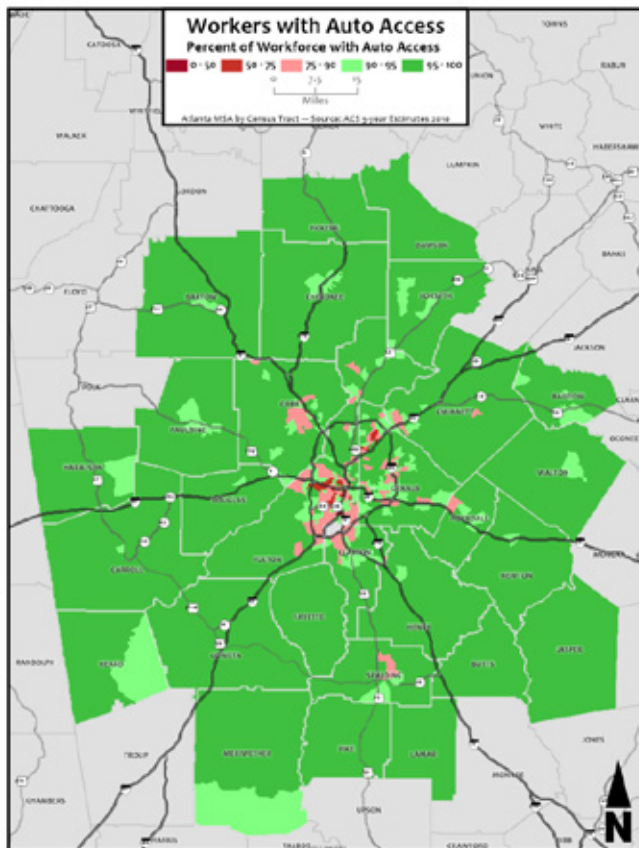
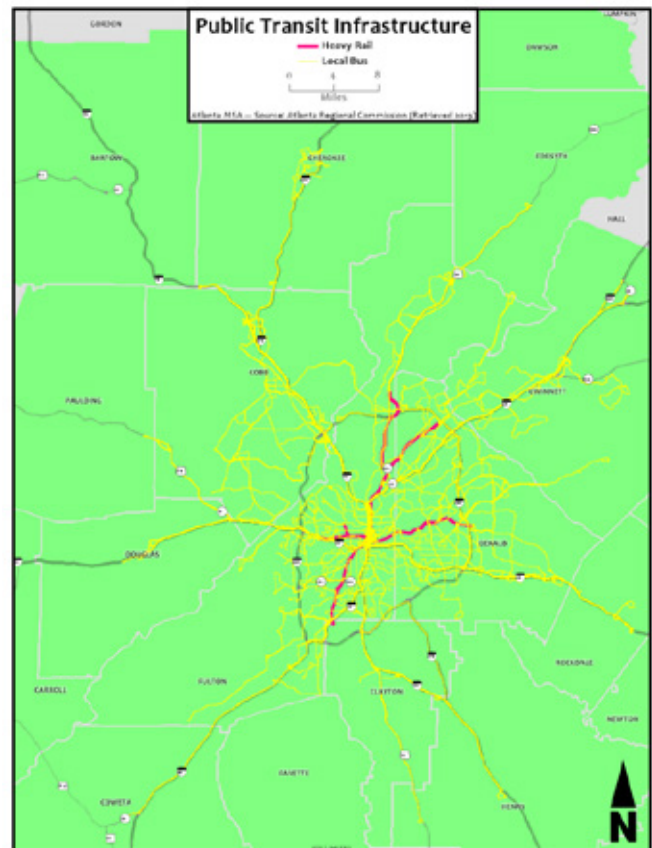


Figure 2.



facilities are fairly uncommon, but they are beginning to appear in more urban areas where those users are more concentrated. For the most part, the existing bicycle facilities separated from vehicular traffic are intermittent and disjointed, providing very little connectivity for users. **Figure 3** illustrates existing facilities in the region, but it does not differentiate between shared facilities and those that are specifically for bicyclists and separated from vehicular traffic. Much of what is shown in **Figure 3** includes signed bike routes, off-road recreational trails, golf cart paths in Peachtree City, shared roadway and other less protected facilities. Pedestrian facilities, are also lacking in many critical areas across the region. A 2011 study by Transportation for America found Atlanta to be the “11th-deadliest metro area for pedestrians.”⁴ This is in large part due to the fact that the region’s transportation system was designed primarily for automobiles.

Figure 4 demonstrates how, as the number of workers in the region has grown, the percentage of workers taking alternative modes of transportation has increased at higher rates than the growth. Interestingly enough, the number of those traveling by automobile increased at a rate less than the growth in population, which suggests both our economic loss of jobs as well as a reduced interest in vehicle trips over other modes, carpooling, and teleworking.

Figure 3.

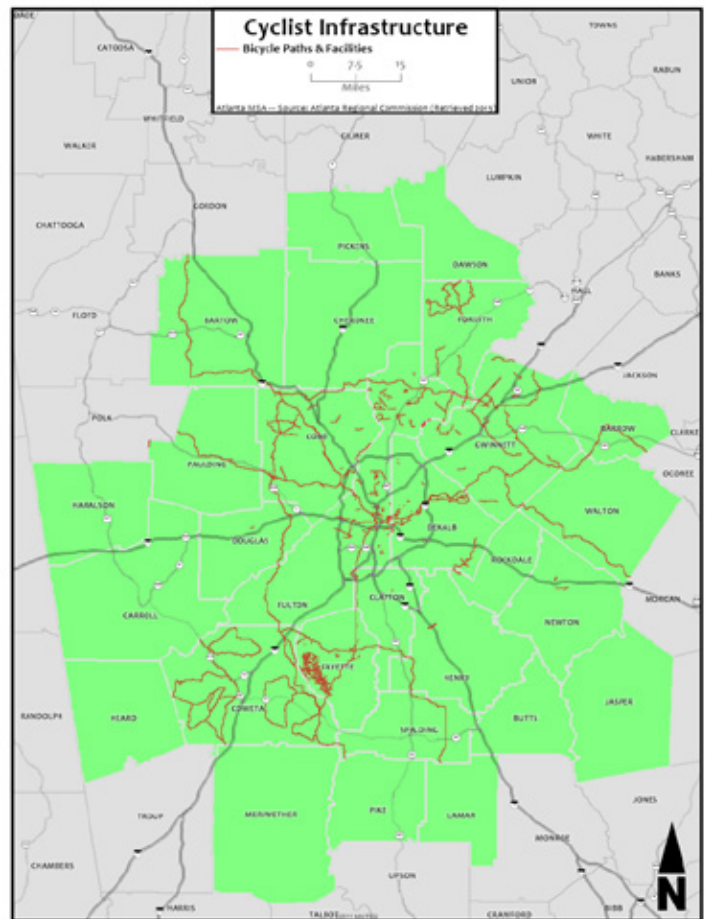


Figure 4. Transportation Mode Split. Source: Reconnecting America.

	2000	2005-2009	% CHANGE
WORKERS 16 YEARS AND OLDER	2,060,632	2,430,288	18%
TOTAL BIKED	1,958	3,750	92%
OTHER MEANS	16,082	28,634	78%
WORKED FROM HOME	71,963	123,909	72%
TOTAL WALKED	26,168	33,499	28%
TOTAL TRANSIT	75,272	89,876	19%
TOTAL AUTOMOBILE	1,867,586	2,143,566	15%
% WHO TAKE TRANSIT, BIKE, WALK	5%	5%	4%
% WHO TAKE TRANSIT	4%	4%	1%

Figures 5, 6 and 7 illustrate the geographic distribution of commuters utilizing three of the more common modes of transportation - single occupancy vehicles, carpooling and public transit. The areas with the highest percentages of commuters utilizing public transit (and lowest percentages of single occupancy vehicle commuters) are also those that fall under the lowest median incomes and lowest percentages of automobile access.

Figure 5.

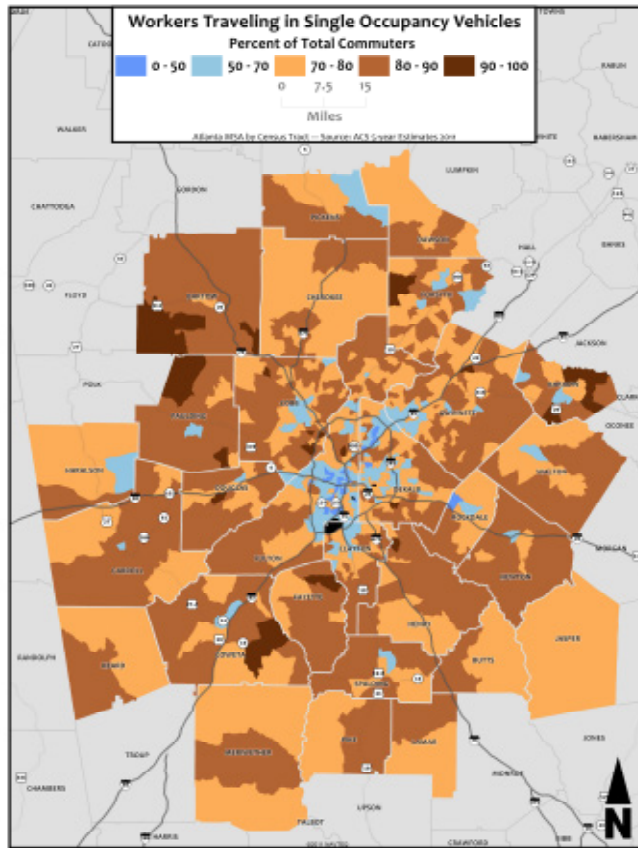


Figure 6.

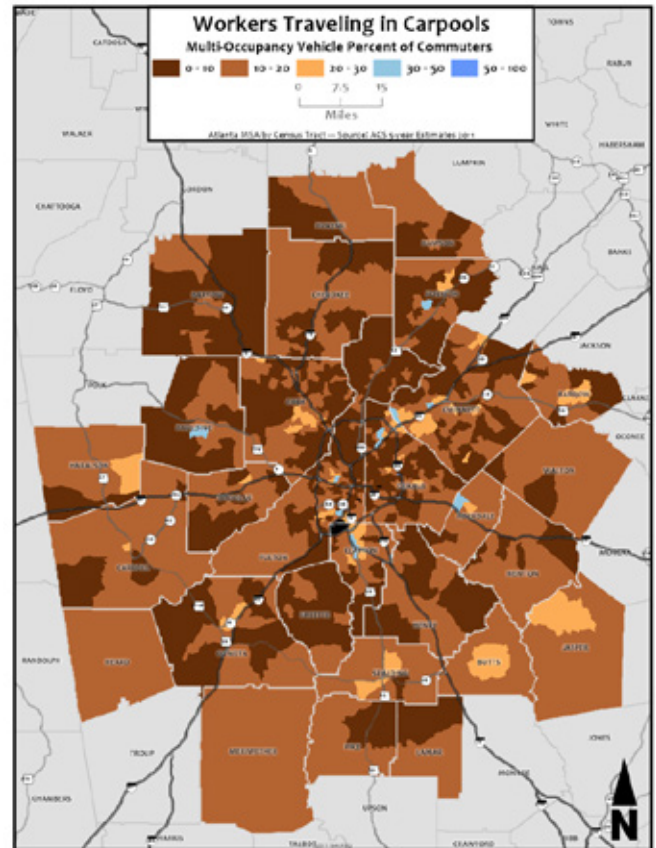


Figure 8 illustrates the population of commuters in the workforce across Metro Atlanta. Each white dot represents 10 commuters. The higher concentrations of commuters tend to be located more toward the northern portion of the metro region, which could signify a number of implications. This could be a result of a higher percentage of employment, greater access to transportation, or greater access to jobs.

Commuters in the workforce who do not have access to a vehicle, shown in **Figure 9**, (see page 150) are also described as transit-dependent, or captive ridership. This group includes seniors, children, students, low-income households, and people with disabilities. Many of these people

have jobs, or need them, but are very limited in the jobs they can access because of the existing transportation system. The largest percentages of captive ridership are located in West and Southwest Atlanta. A growing trend is appearing in the data that pockets of zero-vehicle households are also expanding into the suburban counties, where access to public transportation is limited.

ACCESSIBILITY

As stated previously, a vast majority of those in Metro Atlanta are driving to work, while a small percentage of commuters take public transit or

some other mode of transportation. This is a result of limited access to MARTA and the limited frequency of the collective bus system. It is much more convenient to drive in Atlanta than it is to take public transit. In regard to accessibility, this creates a very limited transportation system for commuters in the region. A more equitable transportation system would provide commuters with multiple modes of transportation that are equally accessible. The map in **Figure 10** displays the existing conditions of the region's multi-modal accessibility. As previously mentioned, the coverage area may seem large, but the frequency of public transit is much more limited on the outer edges of the system. The areas circled in blue represent MARTA rail stations - those locations with the highest

multi-modal accessibility or most access to multiple modes of transportation. Outside of I-285 the multi-modal accessibility drops significantly, with fewer and more sporadic services, translating to low accessibility. In these areas, there is no heavy rail service and there is less bus service in terms of coverage as well as frequency. With transportation as the critical link between residents and employment opportunities, multi-modal accessibility becomes increasingly important for access to jobs. Access to transportation determines how people are able to get to work as well as where they are able to go for employment opportunities. A strong economy relies on an equitable transportation system that enables everyone access to jobs and other destinations of necessity.

Figure 7.

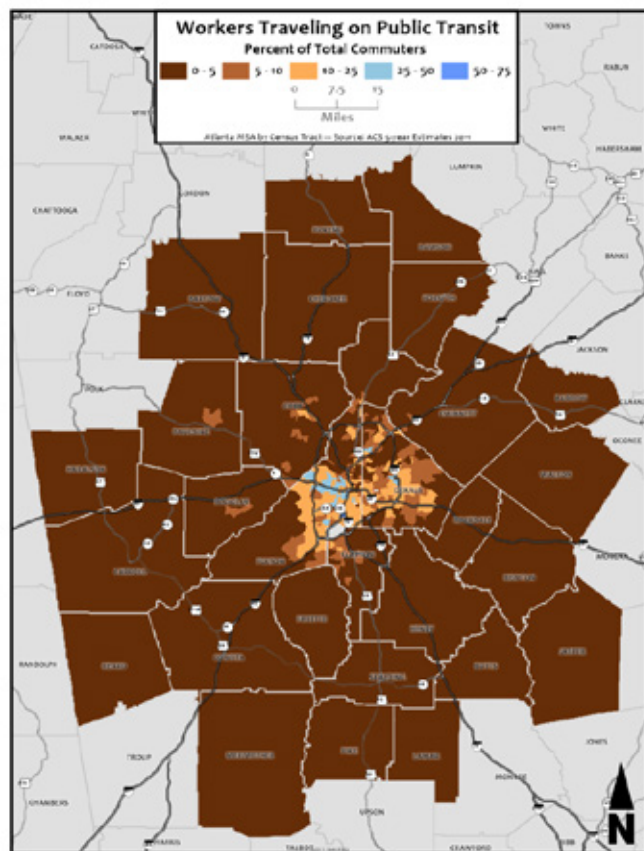


Figure 8.

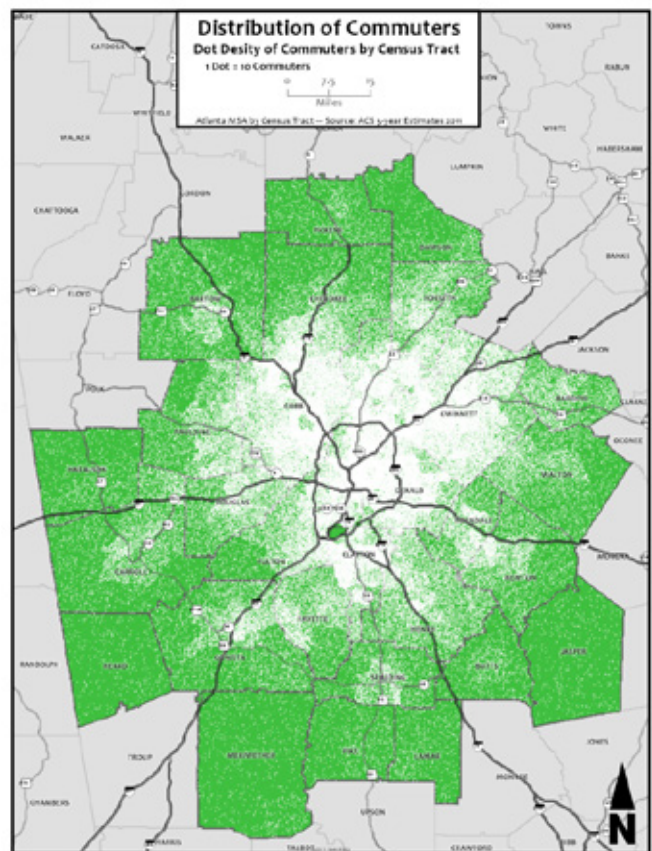


Figure 9.

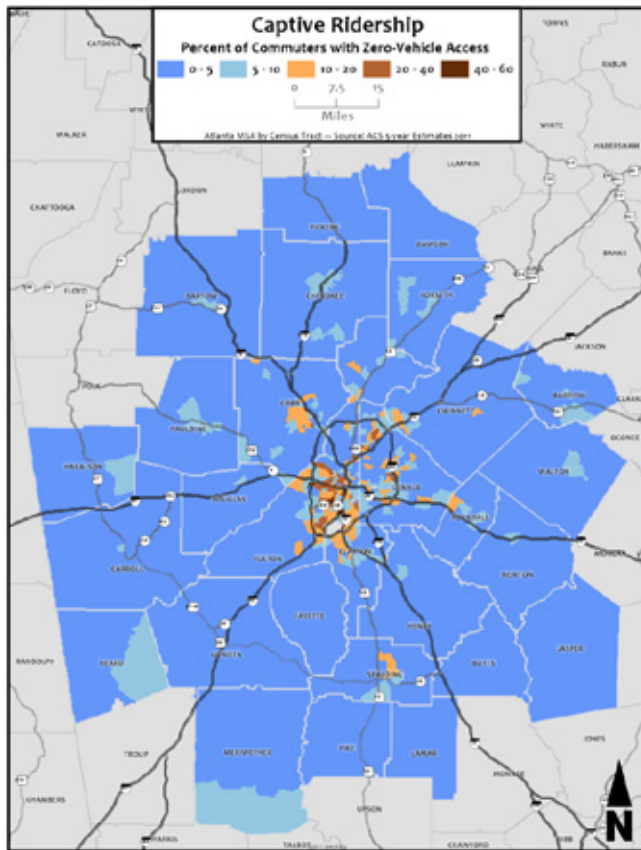
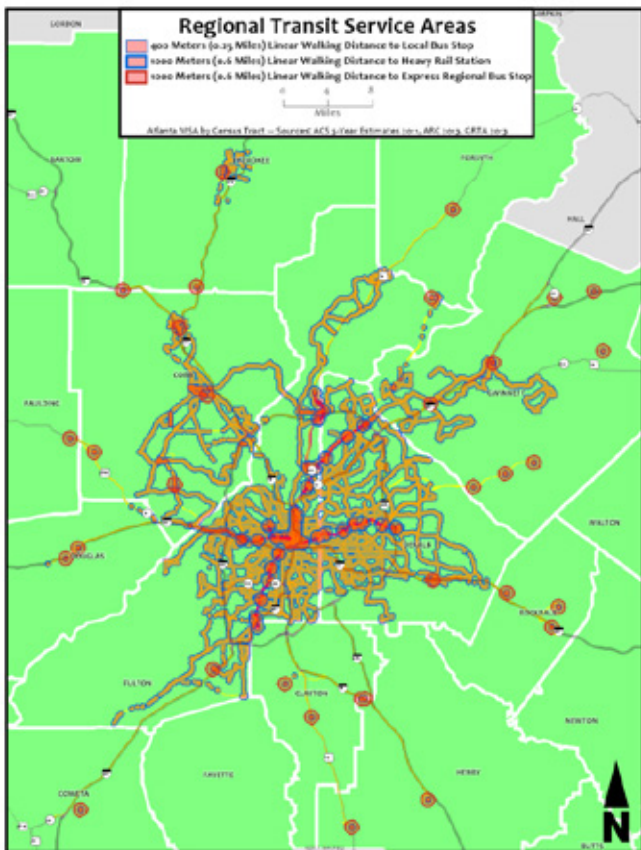


Figure 10.



COSTS OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation costs are a real and pervasive issue for many households in the region. The costs of owning and operating a vehicle, combined with the increasing time spent in traffic, equates to a significant percentage of household income. For those who cannot afford car ownership, it becomes critical to locate near employment opportunities and public transportation, but the rise of housing costs near employment clusters is making that more challenging for low-income households.

Data suggests that residents living in the outer suburbs are spending the most on transportation, from nearly 10 percent of their income to as much as to 35 percent.⁵ Another notable observation to be made relates to the areas inside the Interstate Perimeter where residents are spending the same percentage of their income on transportation. This is particularly the case in South Atlanta, where many residents are low-income or living in poverty.

Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14 (see pages 151-152) illustrate the median income of commuters, differentiated by their mode of transportation. A majority of the region's commuters traveling by single occupancy vehicle are within the income range of \$25,000 - \$50,000, while a large portion of northern commuters earn in the range of \$50,000 - \$150,000. For those who commute by carpool, the income levels vary a little more, with a larger number in the range of \$0-25,000, qualifying as low-income. The map of income for commuters traveling by public transit also shows significant variation, but there is a large portion of low-

income levels and particularly throughout South Atlanta. For those commuters traveling by foot, the distribution of incomes is even more varied.

In the metro region in 2010, a majority of residents were spending less than 30 percent

of their income on housing, which is generally accepted as the highest percentage that should be spent in order to be considered affordable.

However, when the cost of transportation is added to the equation, the percentage of household

Figure 11.

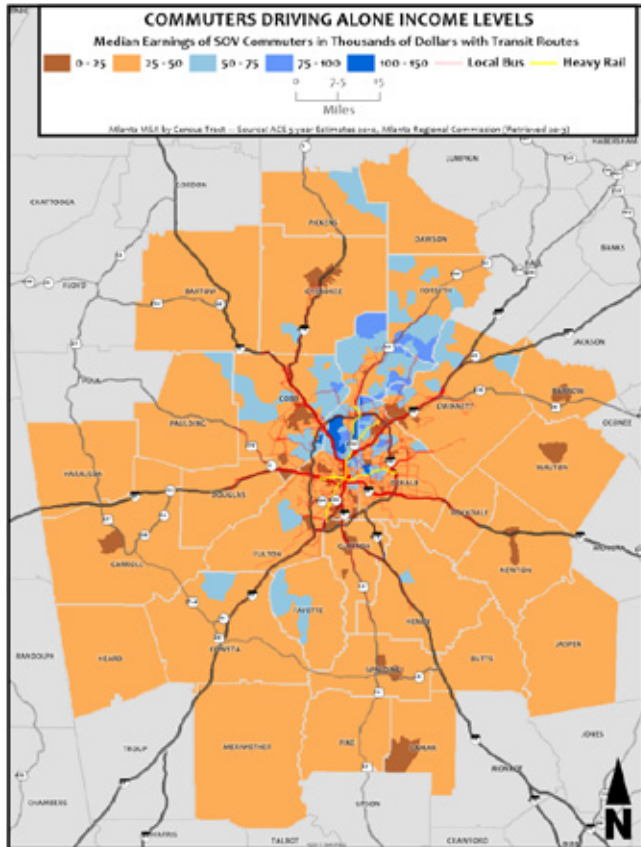
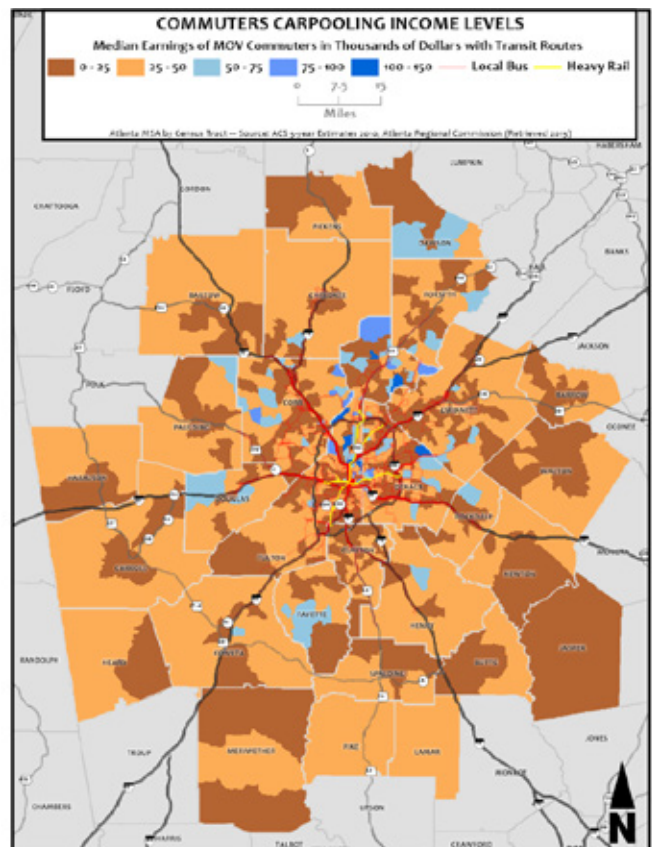


Figure 12.



income being spent drastically increases. Almost 80 percent of Metro Atlanta households are spending over 45 percent of their income on housing and transportation combined, the point at which it is no longer considered affordable. This is because people are choosing to live in the suburbs where housing is perceived as cheaper, but they are spending a much larger percentage of their income on transportation,

canceling out any savings on housing.

Figure 15 (see page 153) shows the percentage of affordable housing in proximity to public transit. Areas denoted by the darkest shade of blue are those with the highest percentage of affordable housing, while the darkest brown represents the lowest percentages. This map displays that much of the housing that is most accessible to public transit is not affordable. (Affordable

housing in this situation refers to housing units with mean costs that are less than 30 percent of the household income for the area.)

This illustrates that many of the areas with higher percentages of affordable housing offer less accessibility for residents. An assumption can be made that these households spending a smaller percentage of their income on housing are likely having to spend more on transportation to access jobs. Additionally, households that have better access or households that require access to transit are having to spend more of their income on housing.

The financial burden is not the only aspect of cost to consider when discussing transportation; the time spent in daily commutes is also a significant cost to residents of the region. **Figures 16 and 17** illustrate the various travel times associated with driving alone and taking public transit. Many areas without public transit are associated with the longest travel times for those commuters who drive alone, taking up to 40 minutes each way. Some areas served by public transit boast shorter travel times for transit commuters, but a lot of public transit riders endure extensive travel times. This could be a result of those commuters living far from where they work, but could also imply that there is infrequent or poor service provided.

Figure 13.

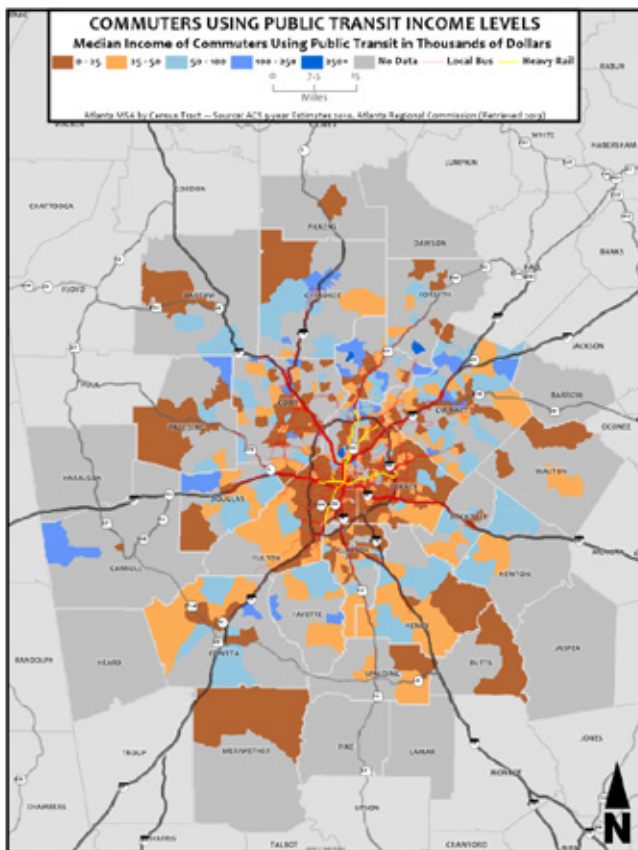


Figure 14.

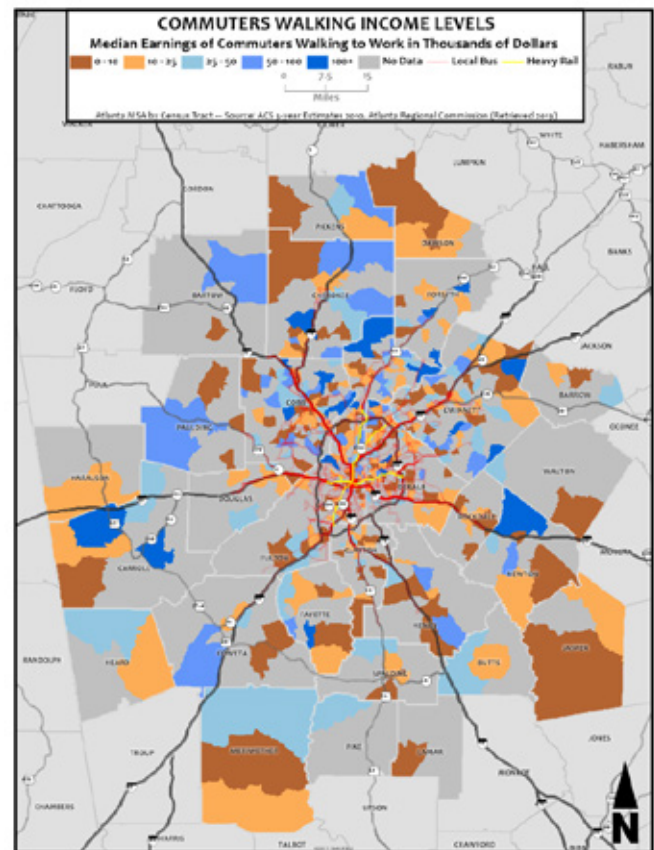


Figure 15.

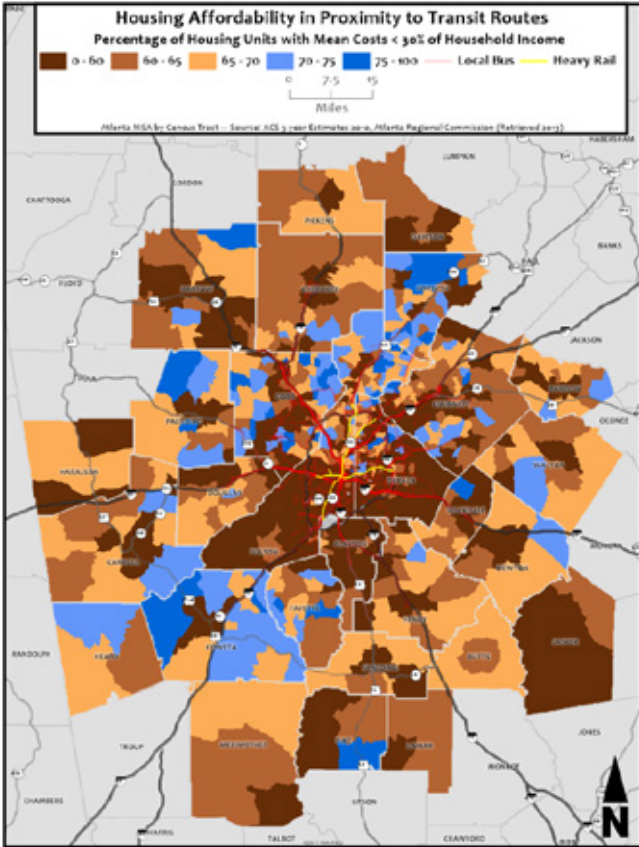


Figure 16.

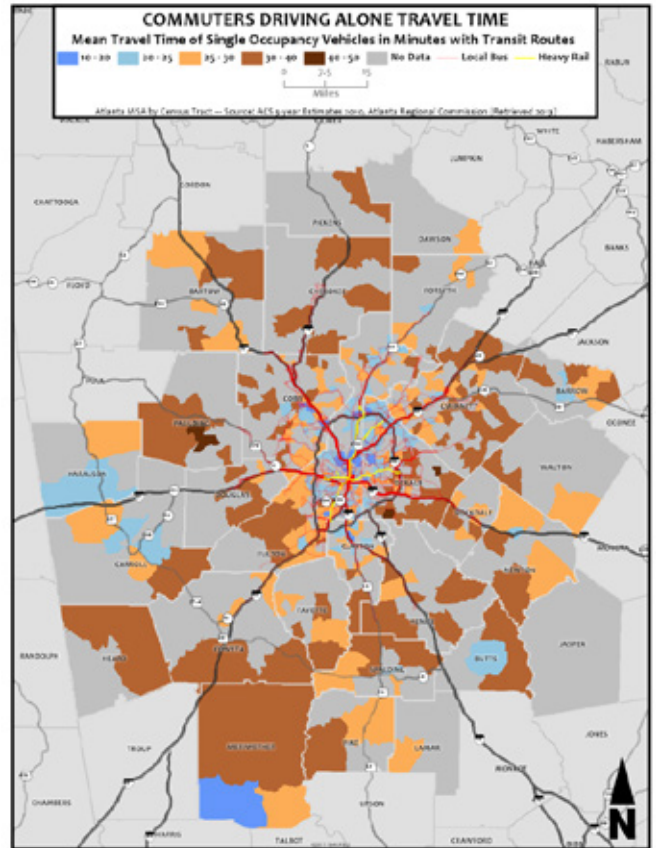
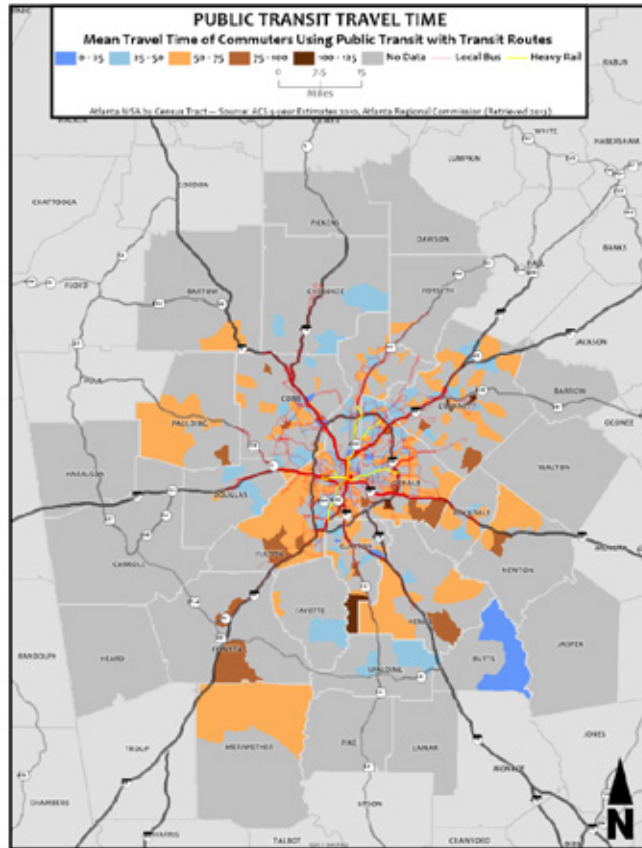


Figure 17.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The bottom line is that Metro Atlanta's transportation infrastructure is not working for everyone. Transportation is critical to the region's economy, environment, and quality of life. However, transportation is more than a means of getting from point A to point B. Metro Atlanta's transportation system determines the region's winners and losers; it defines the opportunities available to members of society. Metro Atlanta's economy continues to suffer from inequitable transportation investment. The pattern of investment has created unbalanced growth in the region, which exacerbates traffic congestion and decreases economic development. Public transit has been significantly underfunded, thus limiting the region's ability to compete in the global economy. Inadequate transportation options impact the safety of our community. The lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and limited public transit service leaves seniors, students, people with disabilities, and families without cars navigating streets that are safe for motorists. Right now Metro Atlanta is at a critical juncture – will we continue down the inequitable path, or will we seize the opportunity to create a transportation system that works for everyone and lifts our economy now and in the future?

This chapter was developed with the support of Lauren Cardoni.

¹Staff, Atlanta Business Chronicle, Brookings: Atlanta Among the Worst for Public Transit, <http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2011/05/12/brookings-atlanta-among-worst-for.html> (May 13, 2011).

²Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez, The Equality of Opportunity Project, www.equality-of-opportunity.org (July 2013).

³Paul Krugman, Stranded by Sprawl, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/29/opinion/krugman-stranded-by-sprawl.html?ref=paulkrugman> (July 2013).

⁴Waters, Veronica, Atlanta 11th in Pedestrian Deaths, <http://www.wsbradio.com/news/news/atlanta-11th-pedestrian-deaths/nCm9B/> (May 2011).

⁵Atlanta Regional Commission, ESRI Index.

TRANSPORTATION CASE STUDY:

LOCAL LEADERS COLLABORATE TO ADDRESS ATLANTA'S TRANSIT WOES

Monica L. Ponder, MS, MSPH, Founder of MLP Communications



ACCORDING TO PUBLISHED REPORTS, the City of Atlanta had the seventh worst commute in the nation in 2011. That ranking has stayed relatively steady since 2008, causing Atlanta drivers to spend an extra 51 hours a year behind the wheel in addition to their regular commuting time. Because of congestion, the average Metro Atlanta driver wastes 20 gallons of gas annually – giving the region the twelfth most wasteful commute in the country. This gridlock costs Atlanta commuters almost \$3 billion in time and fuel—roughly \$924 per commuter, per year. With respect to public transit, Atlanta’s public transportation system, Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), which comprises 48 miles of track, has

a ridership of about half a million per day. However, the transit system only services two counties within the metropolitan area, Fulton and DeKalb. While inner-ring counties such as Cobb and Gwinnet have smaller transit systems, combined regional public transportation doesn't accommodate the overall need for transit alternatives.

In 2012, Atlanta voters rejected a \$7.2 billion transportation plan that business leaders have called an essential solution to Atlanta's traffic issues. The Metro Atlanta tax would have supported a list of 157 regional projects totaling \$6.14 billion –designed to relieve congestion at key interstate highway checkpoints and opening 29 miles of new rail track to passengers. The list was comprised of both transit and road improvement proposals, which were negotiated by 21 mayors and county commissioners from 10 metro-area counties.

After the failure of the transportation tax, local non-profit and public sector leaders came together to form the Atlanta Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Collaborative, a partnership aimed at removing barriers to, and advancing incentives for, equitable TOD in Metro Atlanta. Equitable transit oriented development is an approach to place-based community development that seeks to create vibrant, inclusive communities characterized by access to public transit, good educational opportunities, jobs, and affordable housing among other things. Member organizations of the Collaborative include Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood-based Developers (AHAND), Atlanta Land Trust Collaborative (ALTC), Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, Inc. (ANDP), Atlanta Urban Land Institute (ULI), APD Solutions, Enterprise Community Partners (Enterprise), Fulton County/Atlanta Land Bank Authority (FCALBA), Georgia STAND-UP, Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE), Southface, SUMMECH Community Development Corporation, and Tapestry Development Group.

These organizations united to leverage their joint resources to ensure that Metro Atlanta capitalizes on the potential of its transit investments. The Collaborative has worked with consultants to develop typologies of neighborhoods around each MARTA station and create a feasibility study for developing affordable housing around these stations.

The mission of the Atlanta Equitable TOD Collaborative is to realize high quality, walkable mixed-income and vibrant communities with easy access to transit, and to realize communities of opportunity through an inclusive, equitable planning and implementation process. ■



TACKLING SOCIAL EQUITY THROUGH ENHANCED CIVIC HEALTH

Amir Farokhi, COO, National College Advising Corps

However, when it comes to political action and electoral participation, Metro Atlanta's numbers fall: 27th in voter registration, 22nd in voter turnout, 34th for often voting in local elections.

When James Oglethorpe and other trustees established Georgia as a British colony in 1732, they chose the motto “Not for self, but for others”. Oglethorpe was intent on making Georgia something different from the other southern colonies - starting with Savannah, Georgia which was established with a unique urban-rural land ownership policy, without slavery, and open to a wide range of religions. The goal was an engaged community of citizens, without wide social divisions, where all could participate in civic life.

Today, our civic health in Georgia and in Metro Atlanta, is not what Oglethorpe hoped. In the inaugural Georgia Civic Health Index, authored by GeorgiaForward, Georgia Family Connection Partnership, the University of Georgia's Vinson Institute of Government and the National Conference on Citizenship, Georgia's levels of civic engagement trailed much of the country in most indicators: from how often we

volunteer (34th nationally), to how much we attend public meetings (36th nationally), to whether we trust all or most of our neighbors (44th nationally). While we express opinions about community or political issues online (6th nationally) and talk about politics with friends or family (17th nationally) at high rates, we register to vote and turnout to vote at lower rates than other states (41st and 38th, respectively in 2010).

Among the 51 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S, Metro Atlanta has some strengths. Metro Atlanta is 6th in number of volunteers, 5th in school group participation, and 11th in sports or recreation group participation. However, when it comes to political action and electoral participation, Metro Atlanta's numbers fall: 27th in voter registration, 22nd in voter turnout, 34th for often voting in local elections.





Demographic groups also participate in civic life at varying rates. Across Georgia, two groups participate at lower rates than others across most measures of civic engagement: (1) those with less than a high school diploma; and (2) those from the Millennial generation (born 1981-2004). In other words, the more educated you are and/or the older you are, the more likely you are to engage in civic life.

Why should this concern us? First, civic disengagement makes it less likely that the needs of all residents will be addressed - either through public policy or through self-help. When Metro Atlanta addresses policy challenges, not everyone is participating at the same level. At times, it appears that not everyone is being asked to participate. Whether the issue is as big as 2012's TSPLOST referendum or hyper-local like the debate over the new Falcons stadium, those who are less educated and who have lower incomes are less likely to participate.

Second, and equally compelling, where there is low social connectedness - reflected in simple things like talking to your neighbors, giving and receiving favors and eating dinner with family - there is greater economic vulnerability. Among the 51 largest metropolitan areas in American, Metro Atlanta is

ranked 36th for eating dinner with household members and 34th for seeing or hearing from family members. Studies suggest that communities with strong social connectedness are more economically resilient, showing lower unemployment rates in bad times. Why? Because such communities look out for one another and help those out of work find new opportunities.

Finally, it is the fashion to want "quality of life" in our communities, but the Civic Health Index suggests we are not doing the things that are most sustaining. Civic engagement creates places where neighbor looks out for neighbor and challenges are solved together. The alternative is to live with a level of mutual distrust, separated by silos and governed by rules that neglect instead of protect.

Civic engagement is not always easy. It can be cacophonous and messy and rarely does everyone get all that they want. However, widespread engagement generally leads to creative solutions and allows us to build communities that work. Without widespread engagement, our community suffers economically and socially. The best communities work for everyone and provide opportunities to prosper and to shape the agenda.

HOW CAN WE PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT THAT CLOSES CRITICAL GAPS IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION?

Everyone has a different role. Here are some examples, laid out in greater detail in the Georgia Civic Health Index and the Metro Atlanta Civic Health Index, of what we can all do to improve civic health:

INDIVIDUALS:

- Get to know and talk to your neighbors.
- Volunteer for a community project.
- Attend a public meeting, whether it is hosted by a government entity or a community group.
- Take a young person to a public meeting.
- Take part in community and regional events.
- Call, write, email or visit your elected representatives.
- Vote.

NON-PROFIT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:

- Make a commitment to focus on engaging young people in civic activities.
- Organize forums that bring together diverse groups of people to discuss a shared problem.
- Ensure your organization is reaching out to and welcoming of all kinds of people, and find ways to keep your members meaningfully engaged.
- Leverage senior citizen civic engagement into opportunities for them to share their experiences with younger residents.
- Fund projects that seek to close gaps in civic engagement, especially for younger residents and residents with lower income and educational attainment.

FOUNDATIONS AND PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATIONS:

- Add civic engagement practices to your funding criteria to build stronger, more engaged communities.
- Partner with other agencies to produce joint civic engagement opportunities.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND GOVERNMENT:

- Partner with diverse community groups to hold public conversations on public problems. Commit to listening and responding to what all participants have to say.
- Provide opportunities for all types of residents to participate in public policy making. This may include giving residents the opportunity to redesign the format and process of public meetings.
- Use social media to target and engage all residents.
- Help underrepresented groups (e.g., Hispanics, Asian Americans and African Americans), young residents, and those with lower income and educational attainment gain the experience they need to sit on boards and commissions.
- Encourage greater voter participation in all communities.
- Reduce barriers to civic participation, including transportation, language and timing options.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

- Create incentives for employee civic engagement.
- Partner with local organizations to provide opportunities for employees to volunteer. Use corporate giving to support programs that boost civic engagement.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

- Provide civic education for parents, grandparents, and guardians, especially those from lower income and immigrant communities.
- Teach civics through service-learning and public engagement projects. Take students to see civics in action at a city council meeting or a public hearing.
- Provide training for all teachers in civics and encourage them to weave it into their courses regardless of subject matter.
- Provide ample opportunity for high school students to register to vote when of age and to participate in community service projects.
- Partner with local organizations that offer opportunities for students to learn about and participate in civic life.

In a 2013 Time article entitled “Free to be Happy”, John Meacham explores the Declaration of Independence’s inclusion of “pursuit of happiness” as a central goal for America. Jefferson was referring to something quite profound, and often overlooked in today’s political culture. Freedom and Liberty are resounding concepts, but Jefferson knew that it was the day-to-day work of fostering human connections, of “good conduct” and “generous citizenship” which

would ultimately define a society where every individual had value and could contribute to the life of the nation. That was happiness.

Boosting civic engagement can take many approaches, but it is the responsibility of individuals, schools, places of worship, corporations, media, government, foundations, and others to figure out ways to engage all populations in Georgia and Metro Atlanta. We truly help ourselves only when we help one another. ■



MOVING FROM DATA TO ACTION

Angela Glover Blackwell, PolicyLink

THIS EQUITY ATLAS vividly demonstrates the power of data to tell the story of a changing region and what it needs to prosper in the future. Now you must use this data to drive action. Metro Atlanta must capitalize on its greatest asset—its rapidly growing, diverse population—to build a strong, equitable, sustainable economy.

As the Atlas makes clear, almost all the growth in the region over the past decade has been driven by communities of color. Yet too many people in these communities are being left out and left behind. Longstanding inequities have resulted in significant gaps in education, employment, health, and wealth among the very populations that the region will depend on to be the workforce and business leaders of tomorrow.

Closing these gaps is an economic imperative, for the region and the nation. Metro Atlanta, America's seventh largest region, will effectively compete in the global marketplace only if all residents are fully able to participate in the economy and contribute to innovation. Policies and investments focus on connecting communities of color to jobs, transportation, housing, and quality education—in short, to all the opportunities and resources that make people, communities, regions, and the nation strong.

The challenge is big, but it can be overcome. Across the country, regions are doing the difficult work of bridging race, ethnicity, culture, and geography to build a movement for equity. In Atlanta, the Partnership for Southern Equity is playing a critical role in bringing together Metro Atlanta's diverse communities to advance equity in the region.

With this report, Atlanta joins a growing number of regions that are using comprehensive data atlases to foster regional action. Portland recently released its second Regional Equity Atlas. Rhode Island and Kansas City recently released equity profiles to guide plans for sustainable regional growth — and in Rhode Island, the profile sparked policy action by the governor to open up economic opportunities for people of color in government jobs and contracts. In Houston and Southeast Florida, regional planning organizations, local governments, community organizations and residents, funders, and policymakers are also working together to develop equity profiles.

By using smart data analysis illuminated by maps and graphics, this work reframes the conversation about race and equity. It's about objective facts and the American future. The data are clear. Now is time for Atlanta's equity proponents to advocate for the recommendations in this atlas, and for the region's public and private sector leaders to begin implementing them.

MAEA CONSULTANT BIOS



ERIKA HILL is the Principal of Vision Street Research, a community research consultancy specializing in market research and project management.

She has over 5 years of experience in community development, working for such organizations as NeighborWorks America, Sustainable Long Island, New York State Housing Community Research, YWCA of Greater Atlanta and United Way of Greater Atlanta.

Ms. Hill joined the MAEA Team in February 2012 as Project Coordinator. In her role Erika has coordinated a 5-county engagement effort, spearheaded a 28-county community outreach plan and aided in the establishment of MAEA's online presence.

Ms. Hill holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Clark Atlanta University and a Masters in City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University. In her spare time she enjoys playing tennis, mentoring young girls and tutoring youth in math.



DREW MURRAY currently serves as a City Planner for the City of Albany-Dougherty County Planning & Development Commission in Southwest Georgia. He joined the MAEA project in the summer of 2012 as part of a team of mapping consultants who developed some of the initial MAEA maps, but has since become the projects lead mapping consultant.

Mr. Murray has been intrigued by urban planning since childhood and grew up collecting maps of all kinds. His interest in cartography stems from a keen desire to understand the broad range of connections between socioeconomic issues. As an artist, Mr. Murray aims to produce visuals which provide a bridge between the extremities of complex data analysis and common understanding for the everyday activist and their audiences. Mr. Murray's planning studio project, Action Plan for the Fort McPherson Community, was recognized by the American Institute of Certified Planners as the 2012 Student Project Award for Contribution of Planning to Contemporary Issues.

Mr. Murray holds a Master of City and Regional Planning in Transportation Planning and Urban Design from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Regional Economic Development from Georgia Southern University with a minor in Geographic Information Science.

MAEA CHAPTER AUTHOR BIOS



MICHAEL D. ALEXANDER, AICP is Research Division Chief at the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), a position he has held since 2006. Mr. Alexander joined the ARC in 2001. In his position at ARC, Mr. Alexander manages the annual development of estimates of population and employment for the ARC planning area as well as the ARC's Geographic Information Systems efforts. He also is responsible for econometric modeling of regional infrastructure investments and the development of long-range regional growth forecasts. Mr. Alexander has worked on numerous planning efforts for ARC including Envision6 and the ARC's latest adopted plan, Plan2040. Prior to joining the ARC staff, Mr. Alexander worked in Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia in local government planning, specializing in growth and development issues. Mr. Alexander earned dual master's degrees in Public Administration and Community Planning from Auburn University. He's also served as a Marine Infantryman in Desert Storm.



HEATHER ALHADEFF, AICP, LEED® Green Associate is an accomplished transportation planner with an emphasis on land use planning and urban design. She is involved in developing and implementing plans that support multi-modal options, improve functionality, and spur economic development. Appreciation for the economic power of attractive and creative public infrastructure has led to her involvement in a range of project types from traditional highway solutions to site-specific urban infill development. She leverages her multi-disciplinary private sector knowledge with her deep public sector experience to translate technical analysis into meaningful, understandable formats that foster buy-in and accelerate implementation. She is the recipient of awards including the PEDS Golden Shoe Award, Atlanta Bicycle Coalition's Best Planning Initiative of the Year, and Atlanta Business Chronicle's 40 under 40. Ms. Alhadeff earned her Bachelor of science degree in Planning & Economic Development, Cum Laude, from Georgia State University and her master's degree in City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology.



AMIR FAROHKI is Chief Operating Officer of the College Advising Corps, an organization working to increase the number of low-income, underrepresented students who enter and complete college. Previously, Mr. Farohki was Founder and Executive Director of GeorgiaForward, a non-partisan, non-profit working to improve the state of Georgia by engaging business, political, academic and civil leaders to collaboratively shape a statewide policy agenda. Mr. Farohki is a Term Member with the Council on Foreign Relations and a 2011 Marshall Memorial Fellow, and serves on the Boards of the Charles Drew Charter School, The Galloway School and the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition.

Mr. Farohki earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Duke University and his juris doctorate from Duke University School of Law.



NEHANDA LINDSEY, MS, MIB, CMP serves as Director of Program Strategy at CommonHealth ACTION (CHA) and provides day-to-day management for the organization's major programs and communications activities. Ms. Lindsey's project portfolio includes providing technical assistance to trans-disciplinary, community-based teams participating in the Joint Center's Place Matters Initiative through conducting site visits, designing adult learning experiences, and facilitating trainings and group processes. In addition, she has helped to create products for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), specifically the Childhood Obesity Manual, the HIV Pastoral Brief and Activity Manual for Faith Leaders, and Misplaced Priorities Toolkit. Ms. Lindsey manages CHA's major events, as well as the associated continuing education processes. She has supported and managed events of up to 3,000 attendees for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Association of County and City Health Officials, the Department of Education, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Ms. Lindsey earned her bachelor's degree in International Relations and her master's degree in International Business from Florida International University. She earned a second master's degree in Information Design and Communications from Southern Polytechnic State University.



KENT MCGUIRE, Ph.D. is President of the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) where he is responsible for SEF's mission to advance equity and excellence in education in the American South, especially for African Americans. Prior to joining SEF, Dr. McGuire served as the Dean of the College of Education at Temple University where he also was a tenured professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Dr. McGuire served in the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. His prior non-profit work included Education Program Officer for the Philadelphia-based Pew Charitable Trusts and serving as Education Program Director for the Eli Lilly Endowment. Dr. McGuire has written and coauthored various policy reports, book chapters and papers in professional journals. He currently serves on many boards including: Moorestown Public Schools, Institute for Education Leadership, The New Teacher Project, Board of Managers of Girard College, Wachovia Regional Foundation and The Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation.

Dr. McGuire earned his bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Michigan, his master's degree in education administration and policy from Columbia University Teacher's College, and his Ph.D. in public administration from the University of Colorado at Boulder.



DEIRDRE ÁINE OAKLEY, PH.D. is an Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at Georgia State University and Chair of the Department's Race and Urban Concentration. She is also a Sponsoring Scientist for the National Science Foundations (NSF) Minority Postdoctoral Research Program. Her research, which has been widely published in both academic and applied venues, focuses primarily on how social disadvantages concerning education, housing, homelessness as well as redevelopment, are compounded by geographic space and how urban policy initiatives can intervene. Since 2008, Dr. Oakley has been collaborating with Dr. Lesley Reid and Dr. Erin Ruel (both of Georgia State University) on two complementary National Institutes of Health (NIH) and NSF funded projects examining the impact of public housing elimination in Atlanta. Dr. Oakley provided Congressional Testimony concerning public housing preservation and the Neighborhood Choice initiative to the Financial Services Committee in 2010. Dr. Oakley is also a recipient of a HUD dissertation award grant and is a guest editor, along with Dr. Jim Fraser (Vanderbilt University) and Dr. Diane Levy (The Urban Institute), on a Cityscape symposium concerning public housing transformation and mixed income initiatives on both sides of the Atlantic, which was published in July 2013.

Dr. Oakley earned her bachelor's degree from Bowdoin College, and her master's degree and Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Albany.



KATHRYN RICE, PH.D. is the founder of Building Quality Communities (BQC), a consultancy specializing in the intersection between economic and community development. Dr. Rice was Deputy Director of the Atlanta Empowerment Zone Corporation, President Clinton's signature community and economic development legislation, which disbursed \$100 million in federal funds to rebuild and revitalize the city of Atlanta and other inner cities. Dr. Rice taught courses in Economic Development and Urban Affairs at Georgia State University and developed a neighborhood engagement model that is currently being utilized by Affiliates of Habitat for Humanity International across the United States.

Dr. Rice earned her bachelor's degree in Government from Harvard University and her Ph.D. in public policy, specializing in economic development and urban affairs, from the Georgia Institute of Technology and Georgia State University.



MAKARA RUMLEY, J.D. is an Environmental Justice Attorney and Coordinator with GreenLaw, where she focuses on community organizing, fundraising, and environmental justice considerations in conjunction with clean air and water litigation. Her interest in the links between human rights and the environment began with her work with Amnesty International and The National Geographic Society. She continues to be committed to the right of all Georgians, regardless of background, to live in an environment free from disproportionate health burdens created by pollution.

Ms. Rumley earned her bachelor's degree from Spelman College and her juris doctorate from George Washington University Law School. She clerked for a 6th Judicial Circuit Court Judge in Maryland and managed her own successful law practice. She is licensed to practice law in Maryland and Georgia.



HENRIE M. TREADWELL, PH.D. is Director of the Community Voices Initiative, Research Professor in the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine, and Chair of The Links Incorporated, National Childhood Obesity Initiative.

As Director of Community Voices, Dr. Treadwell is responsible for program oversight and management for Community Voices: Healthcare for the Underserved Initiative, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Her work at Morehouse School of Medicine encompasses formulation of health and social policy options, oversight of programs designed to address health disparities and the social determinants of health, and special programs to facilitate reentry into communities of those engaged with the criminal justice system with a special emphasis on poor boys and men, and boys and men of color.

Dr. Treadwell is co-editor of "Health Issues in the Black Community (2009)" and Section Editor for Social Determinants in the *Journal of Men's Health*. Dr. Treadwell is the founder of the Freedom's Voice Symposium and the Soledad O'Brien Freedom's Voice Award, an award to recognize mid-career individuals doing significant work to improve global society. She was appointed to the Georgia State Board of Corrections by Governor Sonny Perdue and selected to serve on the Advisory Committee for the Georgia Justice Project. Most recently, Dr. Treadwell was appointed to the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Advisory Committee position as Vice Chair of Research and Evaluation.

Dr. Treadwell earned her bachelor's degree in Biology from the University of South Carolina, in which she enrolled as the first African American student. She earned her master's degree in biology from Boston University and her Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology from Atlanta University. Dr. Treadwell has also completed postdoctoral work at the Harvard University School of Public Health.

MAEA CASE STUDY AUTHOR BIOS



DANIELLE CAMPBELL currently works with NeighborWorks America to explore and address community issues as they relate to neighborhood development - particularly those affecting education, neighborhood vitality and access to sustainable public services. She has served as an AmeriCorps State member and Supportive Services Coordinator for three low-income neighborhoods, providing resident services for a multi-generational population and managing the After-School and Youth/Senior Recognition Programs.

Ms. Campbell earned her bachelor's degree in Anthropology and her master's degree in public policy, with a focus on education and social policy, from the University of Virginia.



LINDSEY GARNER is a hospital revenue consultant, whose professional experience includes interning at Target Corporation's headquarters in Minneapolis. Ms. Garner served as the Vice President of Finance of AIESEC-Chapel Hill, and studied Business Administration during a semester abroad in Hong Kong.

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SHERMAINE PERRY serves as an Adjunct Political Science Instructor at Georgia Piedmont Technical College, an Education Policy Analyst for BK International Education Consultancy, and a member of the Georgia Public Policy Foundation. Ms. Perry has provided policy support in innovative programs and compliance efforts across the Southeast region and has maintained an interest in policy analysis while simultaneously developing deeper interests in such diverse areas as non-profit management, economic development planning, and education policy.

Ms. Perry earned her bachelor's degree in Political Science from Spelman College and her master's degree in public administration from Strayer University. She has traveled throughout Asia and the West Indies, and she has lived and studied in Europe and the Middle East.



MONICA L. PONDER is a health and scientific communications professional with nearly 10 years experience in health communications and community initiatives through her consulting company, MLP Communications, Inc. As a health scientist, she designs and implements health initiatives that translate into business success for her clients. Trained professionally as a chemist and epidemiologist, Monica specializes in translating scientific information into various communications products. Monica has worked as a health communicator with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and, prior to joining CDC, she worked as a Public Health Liaison/Epidemiologist with the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness and led clinician engagement for the health department.

Ms. Ponder is pursuing her Ph.D. in Communication at Georgia State University.



DORAINA WALKER-WILLIAMS has over 20 years experience working in the human services sector including disability case manager, Social and Medical Science Research Assistant, and Adult Literacy Testing coordinator. She has also volunteered extensively for organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and Hammonds House Museum.

Ms. Walker-Williams is graduating in 2014 from Georgia State University with her bachelor's degree in Public Policy with a concentration in non-profit administration. Her interest focuses on the health and education disparities that are prevalent in minority communities, especially those affecting women and girls.



ELI YEWBALL is a Senior Program Officer with ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, USA. Mr. Yewdall provides technical expertise and guidance to local governments across the country in the development of programs addressing climate change, energy efficiency, and sustainability. Before joining ICLEI, Mr. Yewdall worked for two years as a full-time volunteer with St Joseph's House of Hospitality in Rochester, NY, providing meals and shelter to and advocating on behalf of homeless individuals.

Mr. Yewdall earned his bachelor of science degree from Gonzaga University and his master's degree in energy and resources from the University of California at Berkeley.



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