

Atlanta Regional Commission

CEDS ANNUAL REPORT REVIEW (CEDSAPR)

FOR THE

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
(CEDS)

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Prepared for

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Economic Development Administration

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**ARC Board (EDD Board):** ARC is composed of 39 Members: 23 Public Elected Officials, 15 Citizen Members and 1 Non-Voting Representative of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

The ARC Board acts as the EDD Board.

**CEDS:** The Atlanta Regional Commission developed the a CEDS through a yearlong process in 2022, as required by the EDA: <https://atlantaregional.org/ceds>.

The CEDS is a strategy for economic competitiveness. The 2022 CEDS process was an opportunity to adapt to changing global and national economic conditions and resident needs. It is a post-recession, post-COVID-19 Action Plan to reset the economy. The pandemic added focus to the vulnerability of one-fifth of our population, compounded by a lens on inequity, racism, and poverty, where communities and businesses of color were more impacted by the loss of jobs, income, medical care, and access to education. This CEDS acknowledges the successes of past economic achievements in the 11-county EDD but also acknowledges limitations. The CEDS seeks to develop an Action Plan that adopts practical solutions and optional experimental strategies from business leaders, universities, educational entities, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and professionals in economic development. It also seeks to include solutions from an expanded base of nontraditional stakeholders (non-profits, faith-based organizations, etc.). The document was created in three steps. Summary background data was reviewed by the team and a SWOT analysis performed. The SWOT was reviewed to establish the four goals. The Action plan incorporated best practices and the economic environment.

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

**Regional Collaboration for Metro Atlanta’s Economic Competitiveness:** It all happens through collaboration and cooperation of leaders from across the region’s public, private, and nonprofit spheres. The process allowed for a variety of stakeholders, organizations, and government leaders to work together to solve problems and promote projects and programs utilizing resources more efficiently.

### **Project Financing**

The CEDS was developed with the assistance of a consultant paid for with CARES Act funds.

Specific CEDS actions and projects are independently financed depending on the nature and scope of individual projects.

**Economic Highlights:**

- The ARC region has seen improvements in overall poverty rates, especially for children, higher median household incomes, and lower school dropout rates. However, with over 500,000 11-County residents in poverty, many disparities remain. As stated previously, approximately 700,000 residents in the Atlanta MSA live in poverty.
- Poverty within the 11-county EDD is greater among the Black population.
- Poverty has declined in several counties, several counties are still severely affected by poverty. For example, DeKalb has over 106,000, and Gwinnett has over 90,000 people in poverty.
- While youth poverty declined in all counties over this five-year period, with Clayton County experiencing the sharpest decline, there are approximately 187,000 youths in poverty within the 11-county EDD. Gwinnett (36,000), Cobb (20,000), and Clayton (19,000) have significant concentrations of youths in poverty. Please note this number does not represent children of “working poor” families that earn 150% of poverty levels.
- African American residents have seen the largest increase in median household income but they are still less likely to own their own businesses and earn less revenue than their peers in the same industry owned by those of other racial backgrounds.
- Additionally, each of the 11 ARC counties has similar shares of educational attainment at certain levels, but variations exist in post-baccalaureate education achievement, particularly when observing by race and ethnicity.
- As of January 2021, many of the largest employers in the region are in the medical/healthcare sector, including Northside (23,600), WellStar (17,740), and Piedmont (16,000).
- The region’s school systems are also major employers in the region, including Emory University (32,600), Gwinnett Public Schools (21,500), Cobb Public Schools (12,180), and Fulton County Public Schools (11,170).
- None of the primary industry sectors declined during the pandemic. All maintained their overall share of the national growth in these industry sectors.
- Nearly 60% of those employed in the Atlanta MSA in 2019 were employed by the largest firms (500+ employees). However, only 3% of all regional firms have at least 500 employees, and these large firms represent just over 66% of the region’s overall payroll.

- The jobs with the highest demand in the Atlanta MSA are not always the highest paying.
- Despite offering the two highest median annual earnings after adjusting for cost of living, management and computer & mathematics occupations were high in demand in the Atlanta MSA for 2021. Still, they were not in the top three occupations demanded.

In August 2021, the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research at Kennesaw State University conducted the “Metro Atlanta Speaks” survey on behalf of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). A total of 4,804 adult residents across eleven counties in the metro area were included in the 2021 survey. The survey incorporated both landline and cellphone telephone samples and, for 2021, online surveys were included as part of the overall survey strategy. The online panel consisted of a total of 1,937 respondents across the eleven counties, accounting for almost 40% of the entire sample. The remaining respondents were evenly divided between cellphone and landline samples.

The 2021 survey offered some fresh insights on the stark effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as insights into the state of crime and race relations in metro Atlanta.

For the first time, crime was the largest regional concern at 33%, up from 16% in 2020, followed by public health at 13% and the economy at 12%

#### The Pandemic’s Acute Impact on Employment

- More than half of workers said they had worked from home either all, most of the time or occasionally as a result of the pandemic.
- 44% strongly agree and 30% agree that increasing the minimum wage will be good for the economy.

#### Heightened Housing, Hunger, and Economic Concerns

- Nearly 1 in 4 respondents (24%), up from 18%, said they received help from a church or food pantry.
- 1 in 6 respondents said they were not at all or only slightly confident in their ability to make their next mortgage or rent payment.
- If faced with a \$400 emergency expense, 32% of respondents, up from 27%, would have to borrow money, sell or pawn something, be unable to pay right now—or did not know what they would do.

#### Insights on Race Relations in Metro Atlanta

This year’s survey also shed light on the state of race relations in metro Atlanta.

- 7.3% of survey respondents named race relations as the region’s biggest concern, compared to 12% in 2021.

- 76%, down 1% from 2020, either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “Discrimination against Black people in the United States is a serious problem.”
- Two out of three respondents said high levels of income inequality have a negative impact on the economy.
- And more than three in four said ensuring racial equity is essential to maximizing economic growth in our region.
- In answer to a new question this year, about three in four said increasing the minimum wage would be good for the economy.
- And when asked what option could best help attract and retain skilled workers, the top responses were creating more job training opportunities followed by increasing affordable housing options.

For additional information about the survey, including county level results, please visit [atlantaregional.org/metroatlantaspeaks](http://atlantaregional.org/metroatlantaspeaks).

**The 2022 CEDS was completed and six (6) Focus Areas and four (4) Goals, with associated actions, and an evaluation framework were developed. The success of the plan will be reviewed each year.**

#### **Focus Areas:**

- Equity, Inclusion & Access (EIA)
- Housing Production and Preservation (HPE)
- Infrastructure Expansion and Maintenance (IEM)
- Education and Workforce Development (EWD)
- Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Small Business Development (ESB)
- National and Global Business Competitiveness (NGB)

#### **Goals:**

- Build on Previous Successes to Promote the Economic Resiliency and Prosperity of all Residents, Businesses, and Communities with a Renewed Focus on Equity
- Reinforce Equity as the Foundation for Regional and Local Initiatives
- Focus on Business Innovation to Support the Development of Small and Mid-Sized Businesses
- Ensure the Global and National Competitiveness of the Regional Economy

## **Recent Partnerships:**

### **CEDS Partnerships:**

Throughout 2022, ARC worked with a variety of stakeholders, organizations, local governments and others to develop the CEDS. Here is representative list of partners we worked with during the process:

- *Non-Profits*
- *Faith Based Organizations*
- *Creatives (Arts and Entertainment)*
- *Small Business*
- *Elected Officials*
- *Economic Development Directors*
- *Community Improvement Districts*
- *Educators*
- *Black Chamber of Commerce*
- *Urban Land Institute (ULI)*
- *MARC (Model Atlanta Regional Commission)*
- *University Presidents/Professors*
- *Elected Officials (Current/ Former)*
- *Housing Specialists*
- *Youth Organizations*
- *Creatives Representatives*
- *Technology*
- *Corporations*
- *Financial Institutions*

### **Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP):**

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

### ***-Cascade Heights Greenway Network Plan***

*The Cascade Springs Nature Conservancy seeks assistance in prioritizing a proposed network of eight multi-modal greenway corridors connecting 600+ acres of greenspace within a 1-mile radius of the Cascade Heights Business Historic District. The planning process will include convening primary stakeholders and decision makers to prioritize trail segments identified in several planning documents, including the 2006 Campbellton-Cascade Corridors Redevelopment Plan and 2021 AeroATL Greenway Model Mile Atlanta Project Feasibility Study. The completed plan will include renderings of the prioritized*

segments, cost estimates for design and construction of the multi-modal corridors, and a matrix of funding sources.

**-Cobb County Housing Study**

Cobb County seeks assistance in analyzing the current state of housing in Cobb and the needs to support their growing population, identifying issues and opportunities related to attainable housing, defining housing goals, and providing policy and programming recommendations to achieve those goals. As a part of this initiative, the County hopes to gain an understanding of the current inventory of housing countywide, including the number and type of various types of housing units, average cost of housing, and how this range of housing is distributed countywide. The completed study will summarize engagement conducted with key community stakeholders, as well as detail the data collection and analysis conducted.

**-Gwinnett County Safe & Equitable Multimodal Access Study & Mountain Park Commercial Revitalization Plan**

**GRANT AMOUNT: \$250,000**

Gwinnett County seeks assistance in developing a multimodal access study in the area generally bound by I-85 to the north, US 29/SR 8 to the south, SR 378/Beaver Run Road to the east, and Old Norcross Tucker Road to the west - one of the most diverse, and often under resourced, areas in the County. In addition, the County seeks assistance in developing a commercial revitalization plan for the intersections of Five Forks Trickum Road at Rockbridge Road and Killian Road in collaboration with the Mountain Park Community Association. The completed study and plan will detail prioritized project recommendations and provide a framework for evaluating inequities in multimodal facilities, as well as provide a guide for the creation of vibrant commercial nodes in the Mountain Park community.

**-Henry County Housing Study**

The Georgia Institute of Technology will be working with Henry County on the following project.

Henry County seeks assistance in completing a study focused on housing affordability and services for low-income households and the unhoused. The planning process will include the facilitation of stakeholder meetings to assess the state of homelessness and analyze the affordability of housing, as well as outreach and engagement of families and persons receiving housing assistance and families that include homeless students. The completed study will assist in defining and better understanding "homelessness" within the County, as well as identify County committees and sub-committees and their assigned tasks toward filling the current gaps in services for the homeless population.

**-Villa Rica Placemaking and Alleyway Activation Plan**

*The Georgia Conservancy will be working with the City of Villa Rica on the following project.*

*The City of Villa Rica seeks assistance in developing a program for downtown placemaking – identifying opportunities for public art, gateway enhancements, place building, and green infrastructure. The completed plan will identify locations for specific placemaking improvements and demonstration projects related to alley improvements and public art installations and include an implementation plan to guide the city and its community partners in future placemaking activities and projects. The Placemaking and Alleyway Activation Program is an extension of the Villa Rica LCI Study. The LCI identifies downtown gateways (D1.03), alley activation (D1.11), and public arts (D1.13) in the Project and Policy Recommendations section of the study.*

**Livable Centers Initiative:**

*The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) awarded over 1.5 million in Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grants to fund planning studies in 9 metro Atlanta communities. The grants are designed to help communities become more vibrant, walkable places that offer increased mobility options, encourage healthy lifestyles, and provide improved access to jobs and services. Upon completion of the studies, communities will be eligible to apply for federal transportation funding for projects such as sidewalks, multi-use trails, and smart corridor improvements that help implement their plans.*

Here is a link: [LCI Past Projects - Atlanta Regional Commission](#)

**EDA CARES Act:**

Aerotropolis Alliance Blueprint 2.0-(\$150,000): The Aerotropolis Alliance is updating the 5-year strategic plan. Here is a link which further explains the project: [Title \(atlantaregional.org\)](#).

CareerRise Workforce Development (\$25,000): CareerRise utilized funds to organize efforts for regional workforce development.

**State Opportunity Zones:**

Local governments which undertake redevelopment and revitalization efforts in certain older commercial and industrial areas can now qualify those areas for the State's maximum job tax credit of \$3,500 per job. The incentive, which is available for new or existing businesses that create two or more jobs, is a Job Tax Credit which can be taken against the business's Georgia income tax liability and payroll withholding tax. The credit is available for areas designated by DCA as an "State Opportunity Zone." DCA will

consider designations for areas that are within or adjacent to a census block group with 15% or greater poverty where an enterprise zone or urban redevelopment plan exists.

*Number of communities with designated Opportunity Zones: 61*

*Here is a link to the designated Opportunity Zones and expiration dates:*  
[opportunity\\_zones\\_designation\\_dates\\_updated\\_july\\_19\\_2021.doc \(live.com\)](#)