



ARC Regional Economic Competitiveness Strategy

July 28, 2023

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the designated Economic Development District (EDD) for the 11-county region by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The EDD helps lead the locally based, regionally driven economic development planning process that leverages the involvement of the public, private, and non-profit sectors to establish a strategic blueprint (i.e., an economic development roadmap) for regional collaboration. This is known as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). In 2022, the Atlanta Regional Commission Board adopted an update to the region's CEDS, which aims to foster economic prosperity across metro Atlanta, with an emphasis on equity, resiliency, and addressing the needs of the region's underserved communities.

Accelerate economic development to be the U.S. leader for innovation, and rated the #1 global metropolitan area for

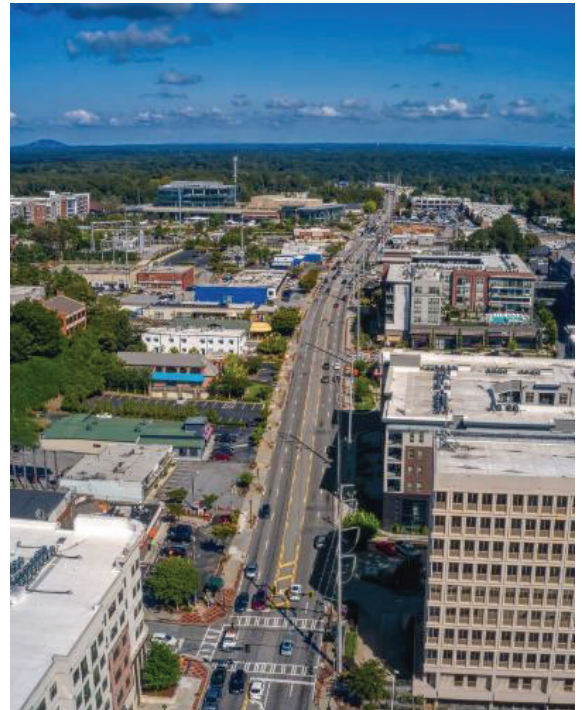
prosperity, equity, talent, and eliminating poverty.

The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. A CEDS is the result of a “regionally owned” planning process designed to guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. It provides a coordinating mechanism for individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about the economic direction of their region.

What Does the CEDS Do?

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy can...

- build on the strengths of a region, as well as identify gaps in resources or expertise that need to be addressed;
- facilitate regional collaboration, expand supply chains, and grow and support new industry clusters;
- assist regions in attracting federal funds and technical assistance by demonstrating that resources are used efficiently and effectively;
- make a region more resilient and better positioned to plan for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters and economic shocks; and
- be much more than just a static document, but rather an engaging platform that generates region-wide discussions and serves as a call to action for economic development.



Economic Development Administration (EDA) Requirements

The ARC updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every five years, as required by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The EDD is the largest geographic economic generator and policy influencer for the Atlanta MSA and the State of Georgia. The CEDS is a requirement for various EDA and other funding opportunities. ARC adopted the most recent CEDS in 2022. The CEDS process is an opportunity for a collaborative and collective public engagement process to plan for the EDD's future and strives to create bold new regional public-private partnerships. Per the EDA's guidelines, the main components of a CEDS are as follows:

1. Summary Background
2. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)
3. Strategic Direction/Action Plan
4. Evaluation Framework
5. Economic Resilience

The Vision

ONE **great** REGION



Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Goals

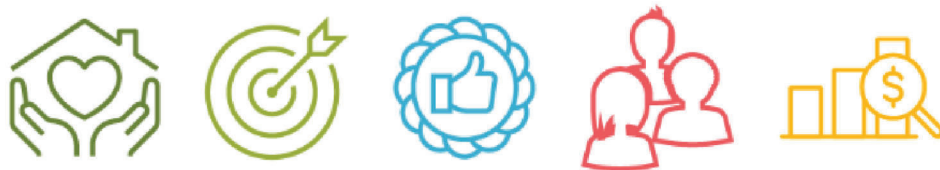
Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.

Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.

Regional services delivered with **operational excellence and efficiency**.

Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.

A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.



Values

Excellence: A commitment to doing our best and going above and beyond in every facet of our work allowing for innovative practices and actions to be created while ensuring our agency's and our colleagues' success.

Integrity: In our conduct, communication, and collaboration with each other and the region's residents, we will act with consistency, honesty, transparency, fairness and accountability within and across each of our responsibilities and functions.

Equity: We represent a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends.



Overarching Reporting Goals & CEDS Specific Goals

The CEDS update was the Region's opportunity to adapt to changing global, national, and local 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 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 and focuses on practical solutions and optional experimental strategies from business leaders, universities, educational entities, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and economic development professionals with an expanded base of nontraditional stakeholders (non-profits, faith-based organizations, etc.). Over the next five years ARC and our partners will work together to implement this action-oriented plan.



General EDA Reporting Goals

The updated goals for this strategy are listed below, followed by a more detailed summary of each goal's policies and action items.

1. Coordinatization of federal, state, local, and not-for-profit resources/funds to optimize the implementation of the CEDS

action plan and progress toward attainment of regional goals, objectives, and vision.

2. Implementation of the Action Plan of the CEDS including grant writing, planning and technical assistance, other economic development assistance, training, travel, and other related activities, if directly associated to CEDS Implementation.
3. EDA program outreach to local member governments to facilitate project development and implementation of strategies to ensure the region's capacity to provide the necessary infrastructure and workforce to attract private investment and encourage the creation and expansion of higher-paying-jobs.
4. Utilization of the CEDS and CEDS process to foster collaborative regional economic development efforts.
5. Review Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Region, as appropriate and complete required Performance Progress Reports and Annual Report.

CEDS Goals

1. Build on Previous Successes to Promote the Economic Resiliency and Prosperity of all Residents, Businesses, and Communities in the Region.
2. Reinforce Equity as the Foundation for Regional and Local Initiatives.
3. Focus on Business Innovation to Support the Development and Expansion of Small and Medium Sized Businesses.
4. Ensure the Global and National Competitiveness of the Regional Economy.



2023 CEDS Successes

The Implementation chapter of the CEDS has a list of Action Items to assist the Region in meeting the established goals. The Implementation Timeframe is organized as either Year 1, which are immediate actions or Year 5, which will be addressed over time. ARC

has focused on completing the Year 1 actions while starting to work on the more long-term Year 5 actions.



**Action Item: Support the Collaborative Approach to
Economic Development through the Regional Marketing
Alliance (RMA) Meetings and Events**

What is the Regional Marketing Alliance (RMA) and why is it important?

The Atlanta Regional Marketing Alliance (RMA) was formed in the spirit of collaboration out of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Alliance consists of the 11 Metro Atlanta Counties in the Atlanta Region, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the City of Atlanta (Invest Atlanta), the Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Power Company, and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

The economic developers of RMA work collaboratively to promote the region by operating as a unit when marketing to site location consultants and real estate brokers while sharing best practices to uplift each county and economic development organization in the Atlanta Region.

Website: [The Alliance – Atlanta Regional Marketing Alliance](http://atlalliance.com)
(atlalliance.com)



Action Item: Further Amplify the Aerotropolis Atlanta

Aerotropolis Atlanta consists of 15 jurisdictions – *Fulton*: Atlanta (South), Chattahoochee Hills, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Union City, Palmetto, City of South Fulton / *Clayton*: Forest Park, Lake City, Lovejoy, Jonesboro, Riverdale, and Unincorporated Clayton County.

Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance serves as a catalyst for regional economic competitiveness for the area surrounding Hartsfield-

Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The Blueprint and the update—Blueprint 2.0—includes the strategic plan and action items.

Blueprint 2.0 was so successful that partners wanted to expand the scope. Clayton County Development Authority, Fulton County Development Authority, the City of Fairburn, and Aerotropolis Atlanta provided additional funds to pursue the additional scope.

Website: [Aerotropolis Atlanta - Aerotropolis Atlanta \(aeroatl.org\)](http://aeroatl.org)

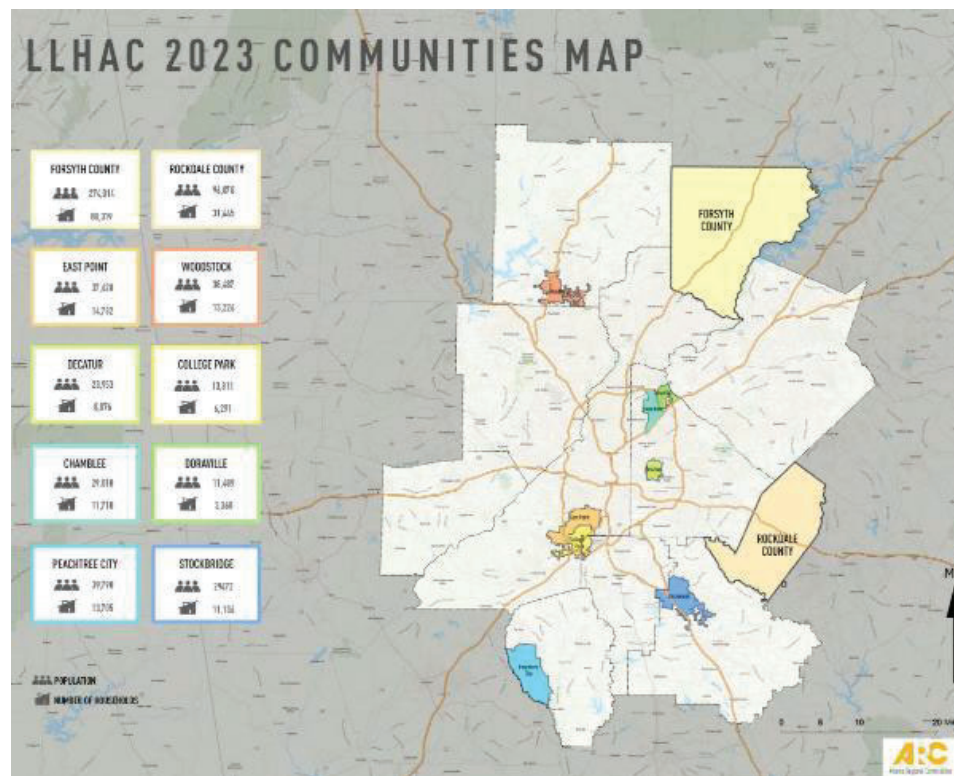


**Action Item: Expand the Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy
in Coordination with LLHAC and Continue with a New
Group of Local Leaders**

Effort 1: The Local Leadership Housing Action Committee (LLHAC) consists of elected officials from around the region. Cohort #2 met over the past year to explore the region's housing challenges and identify their leadership roles in influencing and transforming affordable housing in their communities and Metro Atlanta.

Effort 2: ARC and other partners host a Housing Forum quarterly. Over 200 people attend each Forum. The Forum examines housing policies, best practices, ongoing collaborations and initiatives, and the need for more subsidies in affordable housing development throughout metro Atlanta.

2023 Topics: Housing Diversity, Homelessness, Increasing Housing Supply, Housing Preservation, Homeowner Stabilization and Blight, Structural Community Engagement



Website: [Atlanta Regional Housing Forum](#)

The Atlanta Regional Commission is also pursuing grant funding to support housing efforts in the Atlanta Region.

HUD Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing)

- Grant Amount: \$6M
- Website: [Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing \(PRO Housing\) | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)



Action Item: A Toolkit to Address Commercial Displacement and Small Business Retention/Expansion

ARC, based on community input, created a toolkit to retain and expand small, minority, and legacy businesses. The toolkit provides resources for government staff and elected officials, the development community, and community members.

The Toolkit includes the following:

- How to Identify At-Risk Areas
- Intervention Policies & Programs
- Property Based Policies & Programs
- Financial Policies & Programs
- Business Operations Based Policies & Programs
- Community Resources

This Toolkit is under review and will be available in early 2024.



Action Item: Eliminate Poverty of Information by Expanding Broadband Access

ARC partnered with the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), and the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) to highlight existing Broadband Programs and upcoming funding opportunities through a webinar. ARC will continue to partner with these groups to highlight resources in the Atlanta Region and beyond.

Website: [Statewide Broadband Programs and Funding Opportunities](https://atlantaregional.org/statewide-broadband-programs-and-funding-opportunities)
- [ARC \(atlantaregional.org\)](https://atlantaregional.org)



Pursue Grants and Promote Partnerships

New partnership: Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC)

- Grant Funds Allocated: \$56,000.
- Website: [Southeast Crescent Regional Commission](#)

Grants Underway

EDA Recompete Pilot Program

- Grant Funds: Strategy Grant (\$500,000)/Recompete Plan (\$5 - \$20M)
- Website: [Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program](#)
- Workforce Partners: Aerotropolis Atlanta, Beltline Inc., Calyton State University, Clayton County Development Authority, CareerRise, Goodwill

DOT Reconnecting Neighborhoods and Communities

- Grant Amount-\$130-150M
- Website: [Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program](#)

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- Grant Amount: \$6M
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2024 Implementation (5 Year Action Plan)

The following items are examples of some priority initiatives which are expected to be addressed over the next four years. Work will continue in 2024 for some action items or begin in 2024.

Update the Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy: Data and Trends in the Region

The [Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy](#) provides detailed information and data about the region's housing market and offers a set of actionable steps that local communities can consider taking to address their housing issues.

Form and Execute LLHAC Cohort #3

ARC will continue the Local Leadership Housing Action Committee (LLHAC). This will be the third year and incorporate new elected officials and issues relevant to participants and regional trends.

Support Small Businesses

Start to work with local and state governments to promote more favorable and accessible procurement regulations and permitting processes.



Image: View of Volare Wine & Bistro near Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport

Identify Available Government, Non-Profit, or Faith-Based Property for Small Business or Housing

Work with communities and regional partners to identify underutilized properties or buildings that might be available to small businesses or provide options for housing.

Foster, Promote, and Expand Business Incubators and Similar Models/Programs

ARC will research what facilities and resources are available in the Region and convene a meeting to work with partners to make recommendations on next steps which support continued investment in this important sector.

Define and Quantify the Metro Atlanta Creative Economy

Build off the success of the Arts, Culture, and Creative Placemaking Strategic Plan and the Culture and Community Design Program.

Website: [Regional Arts & Culture - ARC \(atlantaregional.org\)](http://atlantaregional.org)



Image: Culture and Community Design Program session



Staff Contact Information

Find the CEDS report [here](#) and contact Project Manager Keri Stevens at kstevens@atlantaregional.org for any questions.



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