SPRAWL THE CHALLENGE FOR METROPOLITAN ATLANTA



The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pre	face 3
I.	Executive Summary4
II.	The Dimensions of Unbalanced Growth7
	Population
	PovertyIO
	Income
	Race
	Schools
	EmploymentI8
	Housing
	Transportation
III.	The Consequences of Unbalanced Growth24
IV.	Behind the Trends: Lessons from Atlanta's History30
V.	Pulling It All Together
VI.	Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta
App	endix: County Profiles40
Enc	notes44
Sele	ected Bibliography
Ack	nowledgments inside back cover

"Recent anxieties about sprawl and traffic congestion in the Atlanta region have resulted in greater public demand for information about the area's growth trends and for responses to some of the negative consequences of the region's growth."

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PREFACE

he Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy seeks to understand how large economic, demographic, and policy trends affect cities and metropolitan areas. The Center

conducts research nationally, working through local scholars and practitioners to comprehend these trends from the ground up. The research sponsored by the Center also focuses on particular metropolitan areas in the United States that we believe teach important lessons about growth trends and policy outcomes.

Recent anxieties about sprawl and traffic congestion in the Atlanta region have resulted in greater public demand for information about the area's growth trends and for responses to some of the negative consequences of the region's growth. The Atlanta region is in the enviable position of having a large group of locally-based research institutions, philanthropic institutions, and scholars who have amassed a wealth of empirical data about the metropolitan area. The area's regional planning organization, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), produces comprehensive annual statistics about the region's job market, population, and transportation trends; the scope of ARC's research goes far beyond that of most of the nation's metropolitan planning bodies. These resources are invaluable to the Atlanta region, and give Atlanta a



distinct advantage over other metropolitan areas by providing a comprehensive and up-to-date body of research and statistics that can inform regional policy decisions.

This report attempts to synthesize this considerable body of research in order to show how the trends documented by scholars relate to one another. It seeks to make scholarly findings more accessible to local, state, and national decision-makers, and it is intended to challenge these decision-makers to think more broadly about the solutions necessary to reduce sprawl and improve life in the Atlanta region. A bibliography listing the key sources cited as well as other important works about Atlanta can be found at the end of this report.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

he Atlanta region is one of the nation's great metropolitan success stories. Home to four of the ten fastest-growing counties in the nation, the area has added more than 650,000 people and

350,000 jobs since 1990. Its diverse economic base includes rapidly-growing, white-collar industries that are increasing per capita wealth and indicate continuing regional affluence in the future. It is becoming a center for high-tech employment. Population and job growth show no signs of slowing in the Atlanta area; the region may see two million more residents in the next twentyfive years. The region is a place of economic opportunities for both whites and African-Americans, and it is a magnet for new immigrants from Latin America and Asia. But Atlanta is experiencing the downside of this incredible success. Low-density development has made its urbanized area grow rapidly, replacing farmland and forests with asphalt, subdivisions, and low-rise commercial buildings. The region's water systems, trees and green space, and air quality are severely affected by its rapid expansion. Recent anxieties about sprawl, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation in the Atlanta region have resulted in increased public demand for information about the area's growth trends and for responses to some of the negative consequences of the region's growth.

This report brings together the findings of a large body of recent scholarly research about the Atlanta region. Following the lead of the Atlanta Regional Commission, we define the region as the following ten counties: Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale. The report does not intend to simply reiterate what we already know about Atlanta's hypergrowth, traffic problems, and sprawl, but to bring overlooked facts and findings to light, and make this research more accessible to local, state, and national decision-makers. Furthermore, it is intended to challenge these decision-makers to think more broadly about the solutions necessary to reduce sprawl and improve the quality of life in the Atlanta region. This report finds that:

I.There is an often stark divide between northern, affluent parts of the Atlanta region and poorer, slow-growing southern areas. The Atlanta region's growth problem is much more than that of too-rapid suburban growth: it is a problem of unbalanced growth between the northern and southern parts of the region. The majority of new residents, new jobs, and new wealth are on the north side of the Atlanta region—both within the City of Atlanta and its suburbs. At the same time, the most rapidly growing population centers are outer suburban areas up to thirty miles from Atlanta's central business district. Jobs, people, and prosperity have moved northwards and outwards, leaving a large arc of little or no population growth, economic decline, and an unusually high concentration of poverty on the south side of the

Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta

"Population and job growth show no signs of slowing in the Atlanta area; the region may see two million more residents in the next twenty-five years."

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City of Atlanta and its close-in southern suburbs. The far, exurban south side of the region does have some rapidly growing areas, particularly Henry and Fayette counties, but as noted above, this prosperity is outwards, far from the region's core. The region's division is not between city and suburbs: many parts of the City of Atlanta have gained jobs and population in the last decade; and in established neighborhoods of north and northeast Atlanta the median home prices are among the highest in the region. Despite the presence of a large middle-class black population in the region, the north-south dividing line between prosperity and poverty strongly corresponds with long-standing residential racial segregation patterns.

2. The challenges of the northern and southern portions of the region are fundamentally connected.

A disproportionate number of the region's jobs are in one half of the region, so roads on the northside become more clogged with traffic. High housing prices on the job-rich northside and a desire to avoid economically declining neighborhoods on the southside cause new residents (and builders of new homes) to "leapfrog" further out into the metropolitan fringe. The northward tilt of job

growth also means that jobs move farther away from the inner neighborhoods of south Atlanta and the close-in southern suburbs, keeping the region's low-income and minority workers spatially isolated from economic opportunities. Overcrowding in the northern parts of the region and stagnation in the southern parts of the city and its neighboring suburbs also create a twopronged environmental crisis: on the northside, extensive development and traffic congestion threaten air and water quality and eat up green space; on the near southside, an aging infrastructure and a concentration of "dirty" industry increase

the chances of environmental degradation and could present a troubling public health problem. It is clear that the polarizing growth trends in the Atlanta region are hurting fast-growing counties and further isolating slowgrowing communities. If left unchecked, the pattern of development in the region will permanently affect its environmental assets, its residents' quality of life, and possibly its economic potential.

3. The Atlanta region has an opportunity to move beyond sprawl and tackle both the problems of explosive growth on the northside and too little growth on the southside. The Atlanta region already has one powerful tool to address its sprawl problem—the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). This

state entity, run by a board of civic and business leaders appointed by the Governor, is one of the most promising efforts to address metropolitan sprawl in the nation: it provides an opportunity for the region to envision and achieve alternative forms of growth. Atlanta also has a great advantage in that its regional planning organization and local scholars have conducted research on the city and region to a degree that is unmatched in most U.S. metropolitan areas. This region can tackle the big questions facing the Atlanta metropolitan area in a well-informed, comprehensive way and in doing so provide a model for other regions.

GRTA's present mission centers around reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. Yet this only addresses one side of the sprawl challenge. In their efforts to find better ways to grow, GRTA's leaders and others in the Atlanta region cannot ignore the full array of forces that drive growth in some parts of a region and not in others. Poor schools in one jurisdiction push out families and lead to overcrowded schools in other places. A lack of affordable housing in thriving job centers leads to long commutes on crowded freeways for a region's working families. Expensive housing—out of the reach of

most households—in many close-in neighborhoods creates pressures to pave over and build on open space in outlying areas, as people decide that they have to move outwards to build a future. In order for anti-sprawl efforts in the Atlanta region to work, there must be a broad, multifaceted response that addresses both the consequences and the driving forces of unbalanced growth.

This report recommends three actions that we believe the Atlanta metropolitan area needs to take to move beyond sprawl. First, the region needs a transportation agenda that embraces an alternative vision

of land use (particularly concerning residential and commercial development) and invests in public transit as a competitive necessity. Second, the region needs an ambitious housing agenda that stimulates the development of affordable housing for low-, moderate- and middle-income households throughout the area. Third, the region needs an economic development agenda that leverages public and private sector investments in the slow-growing portions of the city and nearby counties. In carrying out these actions, the region needs to recognize the pervasive role of race in shaping metropolitan growth patterns and undertake sustained efforts to give African-Americans and other minorities greater access to educational and economic opportunities.



II. THE DIMENSIONS OF UNBALANCED GROWTH



portation patterns. This section explores these various dimensions and what they mean for the Atlanta region.

Before exploring these dimensions, however, it is important to point out that the jurisdictions that make up the region are complex, and the way that they are affected by these trends varies. The appendix briefly discusses particular counties and sub-county "superdistricts" in the Atlanta metropolis in order to show the unevenness and complexity of the region's growth patterns. No part of the Atlanta region is monolithic; urban and suburban communities within each of the northern and southern halves of the region and within individual counties often have very different levels of job growth, population growth, racial makeup, and income levels. Neither are the conditions in either part of the region static. In the 1990s, the proportion of African-Americans living in the northern part of the region has gone up slightly, indicating increased racial and economic integration.



Yet, while counties, cities, and towns all have their own, complicated stories, there is a clear overall picture of growth that emerges from the extensive scholarly literature and statistical information on the Atlanta region. This data indicates clear divisions between areas of hypergrowth and areas of economic stagnation. There is a north-south dividing line that roughly parallels Interstate 20 as it moves through Fulton and DeKalb counties; Atlanta's beltway, the Perimeter Highway, demarcates an inner suburb-outer suburb divide on the southside. Jobs are clustering in the northern part of the region and population is shifting to exurban communities—mostly in the northern counties, but also in far southern counties. The vast majority of the region's economically distressed areas are in the vicinity of or south of I-20 and within the Perimeter Highway. And the areas of the greatest growth, greatest sprawl, and most critical traffic congestion are north of I-20.

Perhaps most significantly, this north-south divide mirrors a dramatic and long-standing divide between predominantly African-American neighborhoods (both city and suburban) and predominantly white ones. The imbalances in economic opportunity and growth in the Atlanta region closely match patterns of racial segregation, indicating that race is an important factor contributing to unbalanced growth in this metropolis.

7

1. POPULATION

THE TREND: Explosive population growth is occurring in the northern and outer suburbs of the Atlanta region.

Almost 70 percent of the region's population growth from 1990 to 1998 occurred north of the region's core. As the accompanying chart shows, the Atlanta region's population is growing at an extraordinary rate the area gained more than 650,000 new residents in the 1990s alone. But this growth is highly unbalanced.¹

The Atlanta region's southside areas gained roughly 170,000 new people from 1990 to 1998. The entire southside grew by only about 340,000 people between 1980 and 1998. The growth disparities between the north and south halves of the region are even more dramatic when traced by sub-county "superdistrict."² The inner suburban superdistricts on the south side of the City of Atlanta and the southern suburbs have had tiny population gains. South Fulton County (the South Fulton, Tri-Cities, and Shannon superdistricts) had a net gain of 6,600 residents (a 5.5 percent gain). Southwest DeKalb gained less than 1,000 residents (a 1 percent gain). Areas like Southeast Atlanta, Tri-Cities (immediately south of the city), and the part of the City of Atlanta in DeKalb County slightly lost population.³

The population growth in the Atlanta region's southern counties has occurred almost entirely in exurban bedroom communities. Between 1990 and 1999, Henry County gained 51,500 residents (an 87 percent gain). Fayette County gained 28,100 residents (a 45 percent gain).⁴

The City of Atlanta's rate of population growth lags far behind that of the region. According to the Atlanta Regional Commission, during the 1990s Atlanta gained about 12,000 residents, a population growth rate of less than 3 percent. While a city is no longer losing population as it did in the 1970s and early 1980s, the city is not gaining residents at the same pace as its suburbs. The City of Atlanta was home to 22.4 percent of the region's population in 1980, but only 13.3 percent in 1999. A one-year growth snapshot is revealing: from April 1998 to April 1999, the region grew by 94,300 people, yet the city itself gained a mere 900 residents.⁵

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Extremely rapid population growth puts enormous pressure on the infrastructure and natural resources of fast-growing northern and exurban southern **counties.** These places, many of which were essentially non-urban in 1970, have to make significant investments in infrastructure—e.g. new schools, new sewer and water lines-and services to accommodate this enormous influx of people. The impact on natural resources is similarly great. Fayette County has seven times the people it did in 1970, and Gwinnet County has more than six times its 1970 population. Four out of the ten fastest growing counties in the United States are in the Atlanta region (only one, Henry County, is in the ten-county area covered by this report. Two of the other three, Forsyth and Paulding, are in the larger Metropolitan Statistical Area).

Explosive population growth is bypassing the southern parts of the city and some close-in southside suburbs. The fact that the City of Atlanta's population growth has lagged behind that of the suburbs has to do partly with the fact that Atlanta is already highly urbanized. However, the City of Atlanta's urbanization does not completely explain the pattern of almost exclusively suburban population growth, because significant portions of western and southwestern Atlanta (south of I-20 and within the Perimeter Highway) are relatively undeveloped.

: 1999 Percent Abso	
Change Cha 1990–1999 1970-	nge Change 999 1970–1999
135,400 48.79% 104	341 335.94%
218,600 18.74% 120	474 122.77%
567,800 25.23% 371	007 188.53%
610,000 10.15% 194	613 46.85%
93,500 30.40% 64	841 226.25%
90,900 44.75% 79	536 699.89%
786,100 17.19% 180	890 29.89%
523,900 46.96% 451	551 624.13%
110,700 86.99% 86	976 366.62%
68,000 24.77% 49	848 274.61%
3,204,900 25.30% 1,636	538 113.54%
89%	<u>89% 3,204,900 25.30% 1,636,</u>

-2.29%

427,500

2.96%

-67,539

-13.64%

The Atlanta Region: Population by Jurisdiction, 1970–1999

City of Atlanta495,039424,922-14.16%415,200Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Region Outlook, December 1999



2. POVERTY

THE TREND: The poor in the Atlanta region tend to live in the southern parts of Atlanta and the close-in southern suburbs. The northside of the region has very low poverty rates and almost no areas of concentrated poverty.

The Atlanta region has a high number of poor people, many of whom live in very poor neighborhoods. According to 1995 Census data, 12.5 percent of the region's population were in poverty. Data from 1990 show that over 44 percent of the region's poor individuals lived in high-poverty neighborhoods and nearly 19 percent of the region's poor lived in extreme-poverty neighborhoods.⁶ High-poverty neighborhoods are those in which 20 percent or more of the residents are poor; extreme-poverty neighborhoods are those in which 40 percent or more of the residents are poor.

The Atlanta region's poverty challenge has a strong racial dimension. A 1999 study found that 91 percent of the welfare recipients in the City of Atlanta are African-American, and only 4 percent are white. In the Atlanta region as a whole, 70 percent of welfare recipients are African-American and 19 percent are white. Welfare recipients who are black are concentrated in predominantly black, high-poverty neighborhoods: fewer than 10 percent of welfare recipients in the City of Atlanta live in neighborhoods that are less than 50 percent African-American. By contrast, white, and to some extent Hispanic, welfare recipients are dispersed. In the region as a whole, less than 5 percent of white welfare recipients and about 10 percent of Hispanic welfare recipients live in high-poverty neighborhoods.⁷

Fulton and DeKalb counties bear a disproportionate share of the region's burden of poverty. In 1995, these two counties were home to 37 percent of the region's population, but 66 percent of the region's poor people. Most, but not all, of the poverty population of these two counties lives in the City of Atlanta. In 1990, 27 percent of the City of Atlanta's residents were poor. This was one of the highest urban poverty rates of major U.S. cities.⁸ The City of Atlanta in 1990 had only 16 percent of the regional population but nearly 43 percent of the region's poor.⁹

In 1990, the City of Atlanta had all of the region's neighborhoods of extreme poverty. Over 84 percent of the City of Atlanta's poor lived in neighborhoods of high poverty, and over 44 percent lived in neighborhoods of extreme poverty. Nearly 25 percent of the city's *entire population*—poor and non-poor—lived in neighborhoods of extreme poverty.¹⁰

The northern suburbs' poverty populations are disproportionately low, and they have a negligible number of high-poverty neighborhoods. As the accompanying chart shows, in 1995, Gwinnett, Cobb and Cherokee counties all had a smaller share of the region's poverty population than their share of the population as a whole. Gwinnett County had 7 percent of the region's poor, but 15.8 percent of the region's total population. Cobb County had 11.1 percent of the region's poor, but 18.2 percent of the region's total population. Cherokee County had 2.1 percent of the region's poor, but 4 percent of the overall population.¹¹

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Concentrated poverty has detrimental consequences for individual households and neighborhoods; it can also "push" away businesses and middle-class families, further undermining those neighborhoods and fueling sprawl. Poverty also affects the "geography of opportunity" for those people who remain in inner-city neighborhoods. Neighborhoods of extreme poverty are isolated from economic and educational opportunities elsewhere in the city or region. Poor residents often lack the means—such as information about suburban jobs and reliable and affordable transportation to work-to access those distant opportunities. As a result of this isolation from opportunity, people who live in very poor neighborhoods are more likely than residents of moderately poor or non-poor neighborhoods to drop out of school, become a single or teenaged parent, and receive welfare payments. Living in a very poor neighborhood exacerbates the difficulties of being poor.

Being home to large numbers of poor people also places serious financial burdens on entire jurisdictions that serve as a huge disincentive for middle-class taxpayers and firms to locate or remain there. A series of studies from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania has shown that, despite





receiving federal anti-poverty aid, cities with high levels of poverty have to spend more of their own revenues on direct poverty expenditures (e.g., welfare, public health, and hospitals) than do jurisdictions with low poverty. Poverty also drives up the cost of providing other services like police, schools, courts, and fire protection. As two Wharton scholars concluded, "This reduces the resources cities have to serve non-poor residents and increases the tax rates they have to charge all their residents."¹² That means that all the residents and businesses in the City of Atlanta and in the near southern suburbs that have high concentrations of poverty are paying for poverty's costs, at the expense of better services and infrastructure.

3. INCOME

THE TREND: The City of Atlanta and the close-in southern suburbs are home to most of the working poor and moderate-income families in the Atlanta region.

The census tracts with the greatest percentages of single-mother households were in the City of Atlanta and the close-in suburbs of DeKalb and Fulton counties. More than half (51.6) of all Atlanta households with children under 18 were headed by a single mother, according to Myron Orfield's analysis of the 1990 census. As the map shows, however, these families tended to live in only part of the City of Atlanta-northern Atlanta neighborhoods had very low percentages of femaleheaded households. Parts of DeKalb and Fulton counties outside of Atlanta also had almost half of their households with children headed by single mothers with children, and large swaths had single parent families comprising 31 to 44 percent of all households with children. Across the region, 21 percent of all households with children were female-headed households. By contrast, large portions of the suburban counties in the northern and far southern corners of the region had percentages of female-headed households that were roughly half of the regional average.

In 1990, families with incomes below the regional median lived primarily in the City of Atlanta, and in Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton counties; significant concentrations of these families also lived in farther suburbs. The City of Atlanta's median household income was \$22,275, or less than two-thirds of the regional median of \$36,640, but as with the single-parent figures, the overall number belies the north-south division within the city. There were also pockets of low-income households in Cherokee, Cobb, and Rockdale counties. The wealthiest areas of the region were mainly in Fayette, north Fulton, and Cobb counties.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Higher-income families live in the region's northern and far southern areas, while working families earning less than the area's median income are concentrated in the southern neighborhoods of the City Atlanta, suburban DeKalb and Fulton counties, and in a handful of suburban areas. Both femaleheaded households and households that earn below the area median income face serious challenges. While single-mother households may not necessarily be impoverished, they tend to be less economically secure than two-parent families. In 1997, the median household income in the United States for a married couple with children under 18 was approximately \$52,000, for a single father with children \$37,000, and for a single mother with children \$23,000.

Many (although not all) of the challenges of the officially poor are shared by those with incomes well above the poverty line, but well below median income, such as a lack of job advancement opportunities, and neighborhood schools on the brink of decline. In some ways, working families have to struggle harder than officially poor families, because their income is too high to qualify for government-provided or subsidized childcare and medical care.

Female-Headed Households with Children as a Percentage of Total Households with Children by Census Tract, 1990



Source: Myron Orfield. Atlanta Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability. A Report to the Turner Foundation, December, 1998.



Median Household Income by Census Tract, 1990

MOVING BEYOND SPRAWL: THE CHALLENGE FOR METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

4. RACE

THE TREND: The northern and outer southern suburbs in the Atlanta region are majority white; close-in southern areas are majority non-white.

The Atlanta region's overall population is 72 percent white. Most of the non-white residents of the region are African-Americans, according to 1998 Census data.

North of Interstate 20, the Atlanta region is over 80 percent white. Gwinnett, Cobb, and Cherokee Counties were all more than 86 percent white in 1999. Cherokee County was home to 6,400 non-white residents out of a 1999 population of 135,400, making it more than 95 percent white. Northern neighborhoods of Atlanta were majority white in 1999, while the city as a whole was less than one-third white.

In the far southern suburban communities of the region, at least 85 percent of the population is white. In 1999, according to ARC, only 13,489 (12 percent) of Henry County's 110,700 residents were non-white. Fayette County was over 90 percent white; 8,282 of its 90,900 residents were non-white.

Two counties, Fulton and DeKalb, are home to 74 percent of the region's non-white population. Fulton County (including Atlanta) had 24.5 percent of the region's population and 41.6 percent of its non-white population, and DeKalb County (including Atlanta) had 19 percent of the region's population and 32.7 percent of its non-white population.¹³

In 1999, almost one-third of the region's non-white population lived in the City of Atlanta. The accompanying pie chart demonstrates these segregation patterns. Atlanta had 30 percent of the region's non-white population but only 13 percent of the overall regional population.

In some places, particularly the City of Atlanta, the racial divide corresponds to great income disparities. In 1990, over 88 percent of the residents of extreme-poverty neighborhoods in the City of Atlanta were African-American.¹⁴ Not only is the vast majority of Atlanta's poverty population African-American, but the average 1989 income of black families in the City of Atlanta was about \$24,700. The average income for white families was nearly *four times* as much, about \$96,700. While the poverty rate for whites in the City of Atlanta was under 5 percent, over 32 percent of blacks in the city lived in poverty in 1989.¹⁵

WHAT THIS MEANS:

The region is starkly divided by race. The numbers speak for themselves: African-Americans tend to live in Fulton and DeKalb counties and the City of Atlanta. By contrast, the northern and far southern suburban counties-Gwinnett, Cherokee, Cobb, Henry, and Fayette—are overwhelmingly white. Many studies have documented that the segregation of African-Americans across the country-not just in Atlanta-has remained high. In American Apartheid, authors Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton found that segregation levels were almost as high for affluent and middle-class blacks as for poor blacks, and that blacks were more segregated than other racial groups, even if those other groups were mostly poor. Massey and Denton wrote that, in 1980, Atlanta was one of sixteen metropolitan areas where blacks "were hypersegregated."16

The racial divide and the income divide are often related, but are not identical. While being poor often means being black, as the stark income differences in the City of Atlanta show, the reverse is not true-the Atlanta region is home to a thriving African-American middle class. Two statistics from Fulton County show the complicated, unpredictable patterns of race and class: the county, as noted above, is home to 41.6 percent of the region's non-white population, and it also has the highest per capita income in the region—nearly \$33,700. Comparing maps of median household income by census tract (see previous section) and the racial composition of schools (see next section) yields the same conclusion. Many of the schools in eastern DeKalb county are majority black, but these students come from families with incomes above the regional median.

The Atlanta region is becoming increasingly diverse. While the vast majority of the region's population is Caucasian or African-American, the Atlanta region has become home to a growing population of Hispanics and Asians during the 1980s and 1990s. Between 1980 and 1990, census figures show, the region's Hispanic population more than doubled and its Asian population more than quadrupled. Between 1990 and 1998, the Hispanic population and the Asian population in the region doubled. While the net percentage of Asians and

The Atlanta	Region: Population b	by Race and Ethnicity,	1990 and 1999

	Total		White		Black and		Percent		
	Ρο	Population		Population		Other Population		Black and Other	
	1990	1999	1990	1999	1990	1999	1990	1999	
Cherokee County	91,000	135,400	88,422	129,042	2,578	6,358	2.8	4.7	
Clayton County	184,100	218,600	132,656	156,326	51,444	62,274	27.9	28.5	
Cobb County	453,400	567,800	395,794	493,444	57,606	74,356	12.7	13.1	
DeKalb County	553,800	610,000	293,790	311,525	260,010	298,475	47.0	48.9	
Douglas County	71,700	93,500	65,138	82,941	6,562	10,559	9.2	11.3	
Fayette County	62,800	90,900	58,041	82,618	4,759	8,282	7.6	9.1	
Fulton County	670,800	786,100	314,065	407,179	356,735	378,921	53.2	48.2	
Gwinnett County	356,500	523,900	323,836	472,442	32,664	51,458	9.2	9.8	
Henry County	59,200	110,700	52,456	97,211	6,744	13,489	11.4	12.2	
Rockdale County	54,500	68,000	49,206	60,352	5,294	7,648	9.7	11.2	
Region	2,557,800	3,204,900	1,773,404	2,293,080	784,396	911,820	30.7	28.5	
City of Atlanta	415,200	427,500	126,124	137,523	289,076	289,977	69.6	67.8	
DeKalb County part	35,300	34,000	8,943	9,185	26,357	24,815	74.7	73.0	
Fulton County part	379,900	393,500	117,181	128,338	262,719	265,162	69.2	67.4	

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Region Outlook, December 1999





Hispanics in the Atlanta region is still very small, the rate of immigration attests to the fact that the region's prosperity makes it a magnet for international immigration.¹⁷

Hispanics in the ten-county region now number 115,534, or 3.7 percent of the total population, and Asians number 101,443, or 3.3 percent of the population.¹⁸

5. SCHOOLS

THE TREND: High-poverty students, minority students, and poor public school performance are found in the city and close-in southern suburbs of the Atlanta region.

The City of Atlanta and southern inner suburban districts have higher than average numbers of poor students, while most northern and far southern suburban districts have much lower than average numbers of poor students. For the 1995-1996 school year 41.4 percent of the region's public schoolchildren were eligible for free and reduced-cost lunch. In the Atlanta school district, 86 percent of students were eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch in 1995. In southern DeKalb County, 60 percent of students were eligible for these subsidies. Clayton County had 53.1 percent of its students qualifying for free or reduced-cost lunch. By contrast, 18.9 percent of Cherokee County students, 16.5 percent of Gwinnett County students, and 32.7 percent of Cobb County students qualified for lunch subsidies. In Henry and Fayette Counties, the numbers were even lower, with 9.5 and 17 percent of students eligible for free or reduced cost lunches.¹⁹

The accompanying map shows individual elementary schools and their percentage of students eligible for free and reduced cost lunch. In the 1995-1996 school year, 49 of the 61 schools with 90 percent or more of their students qualifying for lunch subsidies were in Atlanta, 10 were in DeKalb outside of Atlanta, and two were in south Fulton. By contrast, most of the 21 schools with fewer than 5 percent of their students qualifying for lunch subsidies were in Gwinnett, Fayette, and Cobb counties and north Fulton County.

In the northern and far southern suburbs, particularly wealthier areas, schools are often between 85 and 95 percent white; in the city and in some of the close-in southern suburbs, they are majority black. For the 1995-1996 school year, Cherokee, Fayette and Gwinnett county school districts had 4.8, 11.7 and 15 percent non-Asian minority students, respectively. The region as a whole had 44.8 percent non-Asian minority school children. Of the 86 elementary schools in the region with more than 97 percent non-Asian minority students, 58 were in the City of Atlanta, 21 were in suburban DeKalb County, and seven were in south Fulton County. The accompanying map demonstrates the racial segregation of the region's school districts.²⁰ The segregation of public schools in the region escalates in the higher grades. In the City of Atlanta, 9 of the 14 high schools were at least 98 percent African-American in the 1997-98 school year; in Gwinnett County, every high school was at least 90 percent white.²¹ An indicator of the trend towards increased segregation (and of the wealth of whites) in the City of Atlanta is the rising percentage of the city's white children enrolled in private schools, which grew from 11.4 in 1970 to 54.3 in 1990.²²

WHAT THIS MEANS:

A high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-cost school lunches is a strong indicator of neighborhood distress. There are three reasons for this. **First,** federal lunch subsidies may be a more reliable measure of distress than the poverty level, simply because the poverty level is very low: \$16,276 for a family of four in 1997. A focus on only those families officially below the poverty level ignores the other families earning slightly more who are subject to many of the same difficulties as the officially poor. Therefore relying on poverty levels underestimates the amount of distress in a community or in a school population. In order for students to be eligible for reduced-cost meals, their families' income must not be above 185 percent of the federal poverty line. **Second**, school populations more or less mirror the populations of the neighborhoods in which the schools are located. **Third**, schools with high proportions of lowincome students have a significant impact on where families with children choose to live. To sum up, as researcher Myron Orfield has observed, "local schools become socioeconomically distressed before neighborhoods themselves become poor. Hence, increasing poverty in a community's schoolchildren is a prophecy for the community."23

Schools with high numbers of poor students are more likely to be majority black and lag behind in achievement tests. White flight, the concentration of black poverty, and the lack of community resources in impoverished areas have made the low-income and

Percentage of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals by Elementary School, 1995



Source: Myron Orfield. Atlanta Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability. A Report to the Turner Foundation, December, 1998.

Percentage Non-Asian Minority Students by Elementary School, 1995



segregation problems also school performance problems. The schools with poor children are also the schools with minority children. These schools struggle to create an effective learning environment for students from distressed families, but they face enormous difficulties. Families with resources—both black and white—are reluctant to keep their children in schools with large numbers of poor children, and they move away in search of more solidly middle-class schools. This flight of middle-class families from distressed schools only further weakens neighborhoods that are on the edge of instability. Inadequate public education systems make the children and young adults of the distressed neighborhoods of south Atlanta and the southern suburbs ill-equipped to compete for skilled jobs. Atlanta's fastest-growing, best-paying job sectors—like telecommunications and high technology—require a trained, highly educated workforce. Without proper education and training, workers are relegated to lower-paying unskilled employment that holds out less hope for job stability and career advancement. The fact that poor schools are disproportionately black in their student population means that the opportunity gap created by educational inequity increases future economic challenges faced by African-American youth.

6. EMPLOYMENT

THE TREND: Most new jobs—and high-paying jobs—are on the north side of the region, in north Fulton County, north DeKalb County, Gwinnett County, and Cobb County.

Nearly 350,000 new jobs have been added to the Atlanta region since 1990; almost three-fourths of this job growth has occurred in the northern part of the region. Many new jobs are in fast-growing industries like transportation, retail, communications, and hightech. New jobs in these growing industries have resulted in new wealth; the region's per capita income has risen by more than 75 percent since 1970.²⁴ Employment in the Atlanta region is concentrated in five counties: Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton. The region's high technology sector, for example, is centered in Alpharetta, in north Fulton County. Clayton is the only job-rich county entirely in the south, and its employment strength derives principally from the fact that it is the location of Hartsfield International Airport and associated wholesale and industrial businesses (nearly 20 percent of the county's 1998 jobs were in the air transportation sector).

Many of the areas of greatest job increase are outside Atlanta's perimeter highway. Examination of the intracounty concentrations of this job growth reveals a clear tilt towards the far north and northeast, and shows the movement of jobs outward as well as northward. The accompanying map dramatically demonstrates these trends. Gwinnett County saw its number of jobs more than quadruple between 1980 and 1997, while Cobb County's job total more than doubled. In Fulton County, the northern suburbs account for 62 percent of the county's job growth. The area around Alpharetta in northern Fulton saw a 175 percent increase in jobs between 1990 and 1996.

Entry-level jobs are also moving outwards, away from the core of the Atlanta region. Welfare recipients and the working poor are most like to fill entry-level jobs, particularly in the administrative, sales, transportation and service sectors. Yet the city of Atlanta accounts for only 15.8 percent of entry-level jobs in the region. Threequarters of new entry-level jobs are located more than 10 miles away from the neighborhoods where city welfare recipients live.²⁵ **Despite flourishing commercial areas in the north of the city, Atlanta is slipping overall in its share of jobs.** The northern parts of the City of Atlanta (Buckhead, Midtown, Lenox) have over 132,000 jobs—24,000 more than the central business district.²⁶ When new jobs come to the Atlanta region, they tend not to go to the City: only about 20,000 (or 5.7 percent) of the 350,000 jobs gained between 1990 and 1997 were in the City of Atlanta. One study that looked at private sector job growth from 1993 to 1996 found that, while the City of Atlanta had an employment growth rate of 10 percent, the suburbs had a growth rate of 20 percent.²⁷

There is little or no job growth in majority non-white neighborhoods. South Atlanta had a net *loss* of nearly 1,000 jobs in the 1990s. South DeKalb County, about 83 percent non-white in 1998, had a net gain of 324 jobs between 1990 and 1997. This is minuscule growth compared to the rest of the region.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

The unbalanced growth and entrenched lines of racial segregation in the Atlanta region keep many African-American residents isolated from the greatest concentrations of jobs and affluence. There is both a great spatial separation and a social separation of majority-black areas from many of the northern job centers that have a large and increasing share of whitecollar and blue-collar jobs. Research has shown that this makes African-Americans less likely to have good information about job opportunities and forces them to make extra efforts to find and keep work.28 A recent multi-city study by the Urban Institute concluded that "in [Atlanta], job opportunities are widely dispersed across the suburban landscape, creating significant challenges for central city jobseekers and complicating the design of transportation strategies linking central city neighborhoods to suburban work sites."25





	1980-1990	1990-1997	1980-1990	1990-1997
	Employment	Employment	Population	Population
ENE	100,768	60,394	162,690	95,716
ESE	24,658	11,418	64,027	37,364
SSE	21,221	22,717	33,276	55,615
ssw	45,709	23,508	59,749	31,481
wsw	14,337	12,939	13,100	22,554
WNW	9,632	12,080	25,002	25,108
NNW	126,009	78,764	175,231	92,493
NNE	159,939	121,677	130,615	112,622
CORE	22,570	4,503	-2,072	2,647
Region	524,843	348,000	661,618	475,600

1980-1990 Employment Change 1990-1997 Employment Change 1980-1990 Population Change 1990-1997 Population Change

Adapted from: Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Region Outlook, December 1999

There is not only a north-south divide in the number of jobs, but also in the kind of jobs. As researchers in other regions have observed, declining shares of jobs in central cities and slow-growing suburbs reflect three things: (1) certain service- and retail-sector jobs are increasing in the suburbs in order to serve a growing suburban population; (2) businesses without a primarily residential customer base choose to locate in the suburbs because other, similar firms are there (following principles of "agglomeration economies" often seen in central cities); and (3) employers choose wealthier suburban locations because of the "pull" of residential suburbanization and the "push" of high taxes, regulatory constraints, and public service inefficiencies in the city and aging suburbs. In the Atlanta region, we see these forces at work behind the job growth in the near north (home of the high-tech industry) and the far south (increased service jobs catering to new residents). The northside is the home of flourishing white-collar industries like high technology, while most of the job increases in the southern suburbs are in the service sector, catering to new residents, or in service jobs connected to Hartsfield International Airport.

The Atlanta Region: The Spatial Gap Between Jobs and Potential Workers, 1998



Source: Turner, Margery Austin, Mark Rubin, and Michelle DeLair, "Exploring Welfare-To-Work Challenges in Five Metropolitan Regions." Washington: The Urban Institute, 1999.

MOVING BEYOND SPRAWL: THE CHALLENGE FOR METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

7. HOUSING

THE TREND: There is little housing that middle-class³⁰ residents can afford in the core of the Atlanta region, and almost no housing that low-income working families can afford in the job-rich areas.

There is a shortage of middle-class housing in the City of Atlanta. Atlanta residents tend to be extremely rich or extremely poor—not that many of them are middle class. One reason for this is the nature of the city's housing stock. In the City of Atlanta, either very high-end or very low-end housing predominates. In 1990, only a quarter of the houses in the City of Atlanta were in the \$75,000 to \$175,000 price range, compared to 62 percent in Cobb County and 73 percent in Gwinnett County.³¹

There is also an acute affordable housing shortage in some of the northern suburbs. In these suburbs, the vast majority of the housing units are single-family homes whose median value is highest in and near the areas of the most vibrant job and population growth. This pattern is repeated with rental housing, where the highest monthly rents are in the close-in northern and eastern areas of the region. The accompanying charts show the pattern of affordable housing in the region. No city near the job-rich northern arc has a median monthly rental rate of less than \$375 per month, which is considered affordable for a household earning between \$13,500 and \$18,000 annually.³² On average, a two-bedroom apartment in the region rents for \$665 a month, which is considered affordable for a family earning upwards of \$24,000 a year.33

There is a severe jobs-housing imbalance in the jobrich areas of the northern suburban arc. In 1995, the eight superdistricts extending from northern Atlanta to Roswell, Marietta, and Norcross accounted for over 46 percent of the region's jobs. They had just over 21 percent of the region's people.³⁴

The Atlanta region's housing stock is overwhelmingly composed of low-density, single-family homes. In the 1990s, the Atlanta region's housing stock increased by over 228,000 units, but only 21 percent of these new units were in multifamily developments. Suburban counties promote low-density development and price out less affluent residents through minimum lot size requirements that can range between 12,000 and 18,000 square feet and minimum home size of 1,500 to 1,800 square feet.³⁵ Regionwide, over 67 percent of the existing housing stock is single-family homes; outside Atlanta, 70 percent of the housing stock is single-family.³⁶

Existing high-density development tends to cater to affluent residents, particularly in the City of Atlanta. Atlanta saw its population increase by about 12,000 people between 1990 and 1999, and saw its housing stock increase by over 3,500 units during the same period.³⁷ Much of this new construction is high-end, multi-unit housing development rented or bought by single professionals or couples desiring a short commute or an urban lifestyle. Affluent professionals are also gentrifying some Atlanta neighborhoods by buying and renovating older homes. A significant number of the persons interested in downtown living in Atlanta are upper-middle-class professionals.³⁸

WHAT THIS MEANS:

The spatial distribution of affordable housing plays a central role in shaping metropolitan growth patterns. One reason that low-income families live in the southern part of the metropolitan area is that there is almost no affordable housing elsewhere. That is partly because subsidized housing tends to be located in distressed inner-city and older-suburban neighborhoods and partly because wealthier suburbs practice exclusionary zoning and limit affordable housing within their borders.

The lack of affordable housing in many northern suburban communities clearly limits the educational and employment opportunities of many working families, particularly minority families, in the region. The housing deficit also worsens the area's congestion problems by forcing families to travel long distances to their place of employment. Additionally, the housing imbalance places enormous stresses on the region's employers by limiting the pool of workers who can live within a reasonable commuting distance.

10 County Atlanta Metro Region Housing Units with the Lowest Rents*



From: Sawicki, David et al. *Jobs-Housing Imbalance in Atlanta: Regional Consequences and Solutions.* Atlanta: Good Government Atlanta, 1998.

10 County Atlanta Metro Region Housing Units with the Lowest Prices*



From: Sawicki, David et al. *Jobs-Housing Imbalance in Atlanta: Regional Consequences and Solutions.* Atlanta: Good Government Atlanta, 1998.

Many middle-class families are unable to afford to live in many of the City of Atlanta's residential areas or in job-rich parts of the suburbs. However, middle-class housing does exist only a few miles from downtown. This housing is in the southern, predominantly African-American areas of the region. Enduring patterns of residential racial segregation have meant that white families, who make up the bulk of the suburban population, do not tend to live in these southern areas. The declining quality of city and south suburban school districts also is a factor in middle-class families' (of all races) moves to the exurban fringe.

Development "leapfrogs" out into the exurban fringe because many families are priced out of the near northside housing market and avoid the southside.

This is part of the reason the square mileage of the Atlanta region is growing at such a furious pace. Middleclass families simply move further and further away from the center in order to find more affordable and desirable housing.³⁹ Therefore, exurban areas of Cherokee, Forsyth and Henry Counties are seeing huge upswings in the construction of new housing.

8. TRANSPORTATION

THE TREND: The bulk of the Atlanta region's infrastructure funds have been spent on highways, particularly in the northern part of the region, rather than on alternative forms of transportation.

The Atlanta metropolitan region contains over 361 miles of multi-lane highways and nearly 2,000 miles of arterial roadways. Most large U.S. cities have at least one multi-lane interstate highway running through them. Three interstate highways intersect in downtown Atlanta, and two other multi-lane state highways are within its boundaries. Another highway circles the city ten miles from downtown, and there are serious proposals to construct an outer perimeter highway linking exurb to exurb nearly 30 miles from downtown.

While all parts of the region are remarkably wellserved by roads and highways, the majority of these roads are on the north side of the region. The northern suburban counties have a larger share of road and highway mileage than the southern suburban areas. Cherokee, Cobb, and Gwinnett have over 38 percent of the region's roadways; Clayton, Douglas, and Fayette have about 15 percent.⁴⁰

In the past two decades, there have been enormous investments in highways; by contrast, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is constrained by a lack of state funding. Georgia has the nation's smallest gasoline tax and its state

constitution prohibits the use of these tax funds for anything but road construction.⁴¹ Major thoroughfares like State Route 400, which stretches from north Atlanta into north Fulton County, were built during the 1980s and 1990s using significant amounts of state funds. While the state has invested billions in roads, particularly in the northern arc of suburbs, MARTA is the only metropolitan transit system in the country that receives *no* funding from the state government.⁴²

MARTA's riders are disproportionately non-white, and MARTA serves only two counties: Fulton and

DeKalb. The accompanying charts show the limited reach of the MARTA system and the racial breakdown of MARTA riders. The fact that most public transportation riders are African-American has limited MARTA's growth in predominantly white and well-off suburban areas.

Suburban Cobb County has its own transit system that links in some places to MARTA. The rest of the metropolitan area—including some of the booming north-suburban job centers—currently has limited public transit.⁴³

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Today, many of the largest job centers in the region are not served by public transit. MARTA has over 1,600 miles of rail and bus lines and serves over half a million people each weekday, yet it does not reach three out of the five counties (Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton) in which the region's employment is concentrated.⁴⁴ Transportation investments in highways have swollen the size of the Atlanta metropolis and have accelerated the pace of growth, particularly in those areas outside the region's perimeter highway, leaving MARTA ill-equipped to properly address the region's transportation needs.

Transportation patterns play into the north-south

divide. More highway investments are made in and planned for the northern part of the region than the southern part. Public transit, overwhelmingly relied upon by minorities and low-income people who tend to live in the southern parts of the city and the region, is relatively underfunded and constrained by suburban resistance.

Research on the connection between highway building and economic growth does not clearly answer the question of whether highways spur economic growth or simply follow along growth's trajectory. However, new research does suggest that state infrastructure expansion (i.e. new highways) tends to redistribute growth.⁴⁵ It is clear that employment and population growth have occurred mainly on the northside of the Atlanta region, and that the northside has had an advantage over the southside when it comes to transportation investments.



Adapted From: Atlanta Regional Commission, Regional Transit Fact Book, December 1998

The Atlanta Region: Ethnicity and Trip Profile of MARTA Commuters, 1989

	Suburb to City	Suburb to Suburb	Within City	City to Suburb
Ethnicity				
African-American	57%	81%	74%	78%
White	39%	15%	23%	19%
Hispanic	1%	1%	1%	1%
Asian	1%	0%	0%	1%

Source: Truman Hartshorn & Keith Ihlanfeldt, The Dynamics of Change: An Analysis of Growth in Metropolitan Atlanta Over the Past Two Decades, (Atlanta: Research Atlanta, 1993).

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBALANCED GROWTH

he connections between these trends in population, income inequality, racial segregation, schools, jobs, housing and transportation become evident when we examine their cumulative consequences. Atlanta is struggling with traffic problems,

environmental problems, and a wide gap—both spatial and social—between low-income people and jobs. These result not simply from Atlanta's accelerated growth rate but also from the way Atlanta has grown—with an unbal-

anced and unequal distribution of people and jobs. Unbalanced growth has three kinds of consequences.



TRAFFIC CONGESTION

The Atlanta region is like many other large U.S. metropolitan areas in that it is difficult for most residents to get around without a car. About 90 percent of the Atlanta region's commuters drive to work.⁴⁶ By 1996, the rate of vehicle ownership was nearly one car per person in most parts of the region. In exurban counties, the ratio of cars to people was 1.23 to 1. More than 2.8 million vehicles were registered in the region in 1997, up more than 32 percent from 1990.⁴⁷

But the unbalanced growth patterns in the Atlanta region exacerbate the negative effects of decentralized, car-dependent development and help create extreme traffic congestion on many of the region's roadways. Because the region's job growth has a decidedly northward slant, and its fastest-growing and most lucrative job sectors are located almost entirely in the northern part of the region, more people commute to and within the northside, clogging its highways and extending the time of commutes. Low-density housing and low-density employment centers only increase the hours spent in the car. As this chart shows, as employment density decreases, household vehicle hours of travel rise.⁴⁸ The average per capita driving distance in Atlanta is nearly 35 miles per day—farther than in any other city on earth.⁴⁹

As a result of traffic congestion, the average Atlantaregion driver faced 68 hours of traffic delays in 1997 (the latest year for which data are available), compared to 30 hours a year in 1990, and only 16 hours a year in 1982. These delays exact a cost not only in time, but in pollution. Atlanta drivers wasted 214 million gallons of gasoline sitting in traffic in 1997—106 excess gallons of fuel per driver. The combination of delay and excess fuel consumption costs the region more than \$2 billion a year, and eligible drivers more than \$1,100 a year.⁵⁰

Three Atlanta intersections were ranked eleventh, twelfth, and eighteenth in a survey of the worst traffic bottlenecks in the United States. The survey examined only those intersections that caused more than 9 million hours of delay a year. The I-285/I-85 junction caused 14 million hours of delay; the I-75/I-85 junction led to 13.5 million hours of delay, and the I-285/I-75 junction congestion resulted in 9.5 million hours of delay.⁵¹



The Atlanta Region: Household Vehicle Hours of Travel by Employment Density

Adapted from: Lawrence D. Frank, "Land Use Impacts on Household Travel Choice and Vehicle Emissions in the Atlanta Region," January, 1999.



Source: Cambridge Systematics, Unclogging America's Arteries: Prescriptions for Healthier Highways, A Report for the American Highway Users Alliance, November 1999

MOVING BEYOND SPRAWL: THE CHALLENGE FOR METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

ENVIRONMENTAL ENDANGERMENT

A second consequence of hypergrowth and unbalanced growth is environmental damage. Atlanta is plagued by environmental problems that are common to many modern metropolitan areas, but it also faces some exceptional environmental challenges. These arise both from factors that the region cannot control, like its location and topography, and from regional public- and privatesector policy choices about growth and development. These various factors have resulted in a multi-faceted environmental problem.

First, Atlanta has a serious air pollution, specifically ozone, problem. Thirteen counties in the MSA have not attained air quality standards mandated by the federal Clean Air Act and consequently have been denied \$600 million in federal funding for transportation assistance.⁵² Air pollution keeps on getting worse in Atlanta; in 1998, the region had 40 days of unhealthy air, the third-worst year on record. One of the reasons behind Atlanta's bad



air quality is its location. Meteorological and topographical conditions cause air to often stagnate over the section of the southeastern U.S. in which Atlanta is located, making it more difficult for pollution to dissipate and move away from the metropolitan area.⁵³

Yet there are a number of controllable factors that affect air quality in the region. Ozone is formed through a reaction of nitrogen oxides, volatile organic

compounds, and sunlight. Cars, trucks, and buses contribute more than 49 percent of the nitrogen oxide pollution in the region.⁵⁴ Car dependence clearly is a major culprit in the region's non-attainment of air quality standards, as is the type of development fostered by this dependence. Lawrence Frank of the Georgia Institute of Technology has demonstrated the powerful connection between driving, land use, and pollution in the metropolitan area.⁵⁵ The fact that the region's housing and job markets have grown unevenly contributes to the region's miserable air pollution record.

Second, rapid and unbalanced growth has endangered the extensive system of natural waterways within the region. Intensive suburban development has followed the path of the Chattahoochee River, which winds through the northern and western parts of the Atlanta region, seriously threatening the river's water quality because of polluted runoff from new developments in the northern suburbs and the exurbs. Overloaded sewer systems have collapsed and spewed raw sewage into the river, killing wildlife and making the waterway temporarily unusable for recreation and fishing.⁵⁶ In addition, Atlanta's drinking water intake systems are located near the junction of Peachtree Creek and the Chattahoochee, one of the least clean parts of the region's natural water system because of its proximity to environment-unfriendly new development. This adds to the public health challenges presented by the region's rapid and unbalanced growth.

Third, the outward movement of the Atlanta metropolitan area has taken its toll on green space. As the conservation organization American Forests notes: "trees are a good indicator of the health of an urban ecosystem. The greater the canopy coverage, the less impervious surface and the more environmental benefits. Trees provide communities with many valuable services that can be measured in dollar benefits. Two of the most critical are: 1) slowing stormwater and reducing runoff and 2) improving air quality."⁵⁷

In Atlanta, the explosive growth of the urbanized area reduced the MSA's forest land by about 15 percent and grassland and cropland by about 6 percent between 1973 and 1992. The first set of maps here provide a dramatic demonstration of this deforestation. As the second set of maps show, these changes in land use have dramatically increased what is known as the "urban heat island" around Atlanta.⁵⁸ The Georgia Conservancy estimates that 27 acres per day of tree cover are lost in the region; without transit-supportive and higher-density land use patterns, the Conservancy estimates that 200,000 acres of tree cover will be lost by 2020.59 The outward movement of population growth-not just to suburbs, but to exurbs—has meant the construction of thousands of houses, commercial developments, and roadways that replace forests and open farmland.

So, on the northside of the region, there are the lowdensity, car-dependent, wealthy and white communities, where rapid development has brought down trees, overloaded water and sewer systems, and increased the number of cars and amount of congestion on the roads. On the south side of the region, there are poorer, predominantly minority areas that are particularly vulnerable to environmental damage because of aging infrastructure. In 1996, for example, seven of the nine combined sewer overflows in Atlanta were in majority African-American neighborhoods on the southside whose housing values were well below the median. Polluting industries are also clustered on the less-desirable parts of the south side, decreasing air quality and presenting other threats to public health.⁶⁰

MOVING BEYOND SPRAWL: THE CHALLENGE FOR METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

26



Source: American Forests, 1999

SPATIAL MISMATCH

As the regional job market moves further north into the suburbs of Gwinnett, Cobb, and north Fulton counties, the "spatial mismatch" between jobs and people—workers living in one place, jobs in another place, and no feasible transportation options in between-affects an increasing portion of the workforce (primarily low-income workers) who may not have access to a car. This mismatch primarily affects families receiving welfare and living in Fulton and DeKalb counties. In 1997, for example, only about 5 percent of welfare recipients in Fulton and DeKalb counties had access to a licensed vehicle.⁶¹ Yet more than half of the region's jobs are located outside of

those counties—and therefore beyond the reach of public transportation.⁶² A 1999 Urban Institute study found that "most entry-level job creation [is] occurring more than ten miles from the primary neighborhoods where welfare recipients are clustered."⁶³ The jobs that Fulton and DeKalb welfare recipients can reach generally require more education and experience than the jobs located in other counties. Entry-level jobs in Fulton and DeKalb by and large pay less than entry-level jobs in other parts of the region.⁶⁴ This is not to say that welfare recipients in outlying counties do not face obstacles of their own: in most areas of the Atlanta region, less than three out of four welfare families have access to a car.⁶⁵

The spatial mismatch between entry-level jobs and lowincome people is not unique to Atlanta, but it is particularly intense here because of patterns of residential segregation by race and class and because much of the new and most vibrant development is concentrated in the northern arc of suburbs.



This mismatch has a racial dimension. Non-whites in Atlanta are less likely than whites to have access to a car, so they cannot drive to northern suburban jobs. Nonwhites also make up a disproportionate percentage of MARTA riders—and as noted previously, MARTA does not reach the northern suburbs.

The percentage of jobs that are transit-accessible is expected to decrease over time as the suburbs and exurbs gain a larger share of the regional job market. This will greatly affect low-income workers, who may see transitaccessible jobs shrink from 43 percent of the low-income job market to 31 percent by 2025 if transit service is not expanded.⁶⁶

* * * *

The Atlanta region is growing unevenly, with hypergrowth in the northern and outer portion of the region and slow growth in the inner-southern areas. This unbalanced growth pattern has serious consequences for the economic future and quality of life in the region. Traffic congestion and environmental problems worsen as growing numbers of people and jobs are concentrated in the north. Economic and social opportunities are limited for the working and low-income families who do not have access to the region's areas of prosperity.



The Atlanta Region: TANF Households, March 1997

Source: Michael J. Rich, "Access to Opportunities: The Welfare-to-Work Challenge in Metropolitan Atlanta." Paper presented at the annual research conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, D.C., November 6, 1999.



Atlanta MSA Business Employment, 1998

Source: Michael J. Rich, "Access to Opportunities: The Welfare-to-Work Challenge in Metropolitan Atlanta." Paper presented at the Annual Fall Research Conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, D.C., November 6, 1999.

IV. BEHIND THE TRENDS: LESSONS FROM ATLANTA'S HISTORY

he Atlanta region's prevailing growth patterns are in part the manifestations of long-developing national trends towards lowdensity development, auto dependence, decentralized labor

markets, and the shift of population towards suburbs rather than cities or rural areas. However, growth and change in Atlanta has had some region-specific twists that have furthered the negative effects of these national trends and created a deep and multidimensional division between the northern and southern sides. Indeed, several local conditions have helped shape the rate and degree of Atlanta's metropolitan growth pattern in the past fifty years. Ironically, many of these localized characteristics are also the reasons behind Atlanta's astounding economic success.

GEOGRAPHY, TOPOGRAPHY, AND ENVIRONMENT.

The car-centered culture and resultant sprawl is pronounced in the Atlanta area partly because of the region's natural topography. There are no natural geographic barriers like mountains, lakes, or oceans to prevent the region's urbanized settlement from expanding further and further outward. The absence of geographic barriers also means that the negative environmental consequences of sprawl—particularly polluted air affect a region far larger than the Atlanta metropolis.

Air pollution is also exacerbated by Atlanta's location. Research demonstrates that, because of the usual patterns of the jet stream and other large weather patterns, the Atlanta region lies within a large pocket of generally stagnant air. This weather pattern intensifies the region's Clean Air Act attainment difficulties by keeping polluted air over and around the Atlanta area.

COMING OF AGE IN THE SUBURBAN ERA.

In 1940, Atlanta was a small, Southern metropolis of about half a million people—similar in size and economic structure to Birmingham, Alabama.⁶⁷ By the end of the 1990s, the Atlanta region was home to over 3 million people, the busiest airport in the nation, and some of the world's top multinational corporations, and it had hosted the largest Summer Olympic Games in history.

It is crucial to remember that Atlanta experienced this phenomenal growth in size and influence in the post-World War II era of urban decentralization and de-densification. Today, visitors to Atlanta often wonder at the small size of its downtown, forgetting that in the era of downtown-centered urban development in the United States, the Atlanta metropolitan area was only a fraction of its current size. Despite annexation in the 1950s that tripled its territory, the City of Atlanta is physically one of the smallest major U.S. cities.

Atlanta

"Indeed, several local conditions have helped shape the rate and degree of Atlanta's

metropolitan growth pattern in the past fifty years."

The Atlanta metropolis is essentially a suburban city. While its downtown and central city areas can be vibrant areas to work, live, and play, the relentless suburban growth of the 1980s and 1990s is wholly in character with Atlanta's history. Atlanta is not, nor has it ever been, a large, dense urban center like Philadelphia or New York. Its patterns of growth have been much more akin to Sunbelt cities like Los Angeles than to other urban centers on the East Coast.⁶⁸

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE.

Atlanta was founded at the termination of a major railroad line, and its transportation networks—first rail, then highway and air—have been key to the region's prosperity. The Atlanta region recognized the economic and social importance of highways very early on, creating a regional highway transportation plan in 1946—a full ten years before the passage of the federal Interstate Highway Act. Highways were not only seen as important to the mobility of the region's residents, but as a crucial element in maintaining Atlanta's regional and national dominance as a commercial transportation center. Atlanta's leaders also vigorously promoted the city's airport as a center for freight and passenger travel.

Both the region's extensive highway mileage and its role as a major hub of air travel have attracted new businesses and new residents to the Atlanta metropolis. But these choices about where to develop and extend the road infrastructure have contributed to the severely unbalanced patterns of growth in the region and have deepened the north-south divide.

As in other cities, Atlanta's highways have enabled development on the fringe of the region, and their expansion has made it possible for residential and commercial development to advance further away from the city center. But Atlanta's exceedingly well-developed highway system has not prevented high levels of traffic congestion and sprawl.

PRO-GROWTH POLITICS.

William B. Hartsfield, who was Mayor of Atlanta through most of the 1940s and 1950s, once remarked that "the secret of our success [is that] we roll a red carpet out for every damn Yankee who comes in here with two strong hands and some money. We break our necks to sell him."⁶⁹ In a more modified form, this ethos of aggressive recruitment of new business endures in contemporary Atlanta and is arguably greatly responsible for the region's economic success. Researchers have attributed to this pro-growth politics to the close alliances between Atlanta's elected officials and its business community throughout recent decades.⁷⁰



The pro-growth politics of Atlanta's leadership have been assisted by the region's political configuration. First and foremost, the entire region is (at the moment) within the same state, thus there are no differences in state land-use laws to retard growth. Local political circumstances also work in sprawl's favor. While Georgia has unusually small counties, zoning and property tax laws in the Atlanta region do not greatly differ from one county to the next. There is an "elasticity" throughout the Atlanta region that allows for continued outward growth.⁷¹

As research has recently documented, the focus on freeway-building, the willingness of counties to support other infrastructure improvements and services, and the relatively low impact fees and minimal red tape in suburban counties place outer areas at a distinct advantage in the regional economic development game. In contrast, land prices are at least eight times as high in Fulton County as in surrounding counties. This, combined with the city's tax laws and other fees, makes the probable rate of return on an office building within the city limits much less than in economically vibrant edge cities in the northern suburbs.⁷²

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE.

Ironically, while the region's political configuration is elastic enough to encourage sprawl, it is multi-jurisdictional enough to make regional cooperation extremely difficult. There are four tiers of decision-making in Georgia: the governor and state legislature, cities, counties, and special districts (which include school districts). In the Atlanta region, which not only contains many cities but large amounts of unincorporated (yet heavily populated) areas, this creates multiple layers of authority and territoriality. In addition, there is a much larger regional "commuting shed" that, at this point, is not involved in the regional decision-making processes.

Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta

Rationalizing these many layers of governance is an enormous challenge for the region.⁷³

Despite these many layers, the region has a strong county-dominated governance structure. This can be an asset in addressing sprawl and transportation problems. As the county profiles in the appendix demonstrate, some of the counties in the Atlanta region are demographically and economically diverse. Fulton and DeKalb counties, in particular, encompass areas of great prosperity and areas of economic distress. It is therefore in these counties' interest to rectify uneven development in the region so that struggling areas can enjoy a larger share of the region's economic opportunities. At the same time, the northern and outer suburbs that are experiencing excessive growth also have an interest in collaborating on the revitalization of declining south side areas. Reinvestment in the southern core of the region can take demographic and market pressures off of areas growing too rapidly. Regional coalition-building is a feasible approach to balancing the Atlanta area's growth patterns and improving the overall quality of life in the region.

RACIAL TENSIONS AND RACIAL TOLERANCE.

One of the reasons Atlanta grew during the postwar era to become a nationally and internationally significant metropolis was its reputation (energetically publicized by its elected and professional white leadership) for being racially progressive. Unlike other Southern cities, Atlanta during the 1950s and 1960s began to distance itself from the region's racist history, famously labeling itself "the city too busy to hate." This was one reason Atlanta attracted a high rate of outside business investment and new migrants well before other Southern cities.

The reality of metropolitan Atlanta has always been much more complicated. While it has been a place of great economic and cultural opportunity for African-Americans, white Atlantans' exodus to the northern parts of the metropolis has been fueled in large part by a desire to distance themselves from blacks, from crime, and from poverty. Race plays a significant role in the suburbanization of all United States cities. In Atlanta, because of history, geography, and culture, it perhaps plays an even more important part.⁷⁴

There are both positive and negative trends in the metropolis' race relations in recent years. In the 1980s and 1990s, an increasing number of blacks have suburbanized, some to very affluent neighborhoods. There also seems to be relatively strong support among both black and white Atlanta region residents for neighborhood integration. A 1993 survey of Atlanta's urban and suburban residents showed that nearly all blacks were willing to move into an integrated neighborhood and about twothirds of whites would be comfortable or very comfortable living in a neighborhood that was one-third black. These results were more positive than those of similar surveys in other metropolitan areas.⁷⁵

However, a willingness to integrate does not appear to mesh with the reality of the metropolitan area. Given the extremely high correspondence between lines of residential racial segregation and divisions between poverty, education, and job opportunities in many parts of the region, addressing racial tensions and increasing racial tolerance is an important component in addressing current growth patterns.



V. PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

This report draws a number of conclusions from its review of the scholarly literature and statistics about the Atlanta region.

Atlanta is an extraordinarily prosperous and dynamic metropolitan area, and its prosperity shows no signs of slowing. In 50 years, Atlanta has gone from a small Southern city to a huge metropolis of international influence that is a magnet for new residents and new jobs. In the 1990s alone, it has gained 650,000 new residents and added 350,000 jobs to the regional economy. Nearly every part of the Atlanta region is growing steadily.

There is an often stark divide between northern, affluent parts of the city and region and poorer, slowgrowing southern areas. The northern and outer suburbs of Atlanta are home to the bulk of the region's population and job growth, investment, and opportunities, while the inner southern portions of the region house the area's lower-income and minority families, and have much slower job growth. The region's growth is not necessarily a "city versus suburb" problem. The City of Atlanta is reaping some of the benefits of growth. Unlike other central cities that have experienced population loss or stagnation into the 1990s, Atlanta has had a net gain of about 12,000 new residents since 1990. But, with very few exceptions, the booming neighborhoods are in the northern sectors of the city. They are predominantly white, exceptionally affluent, and less dependent on city services. In established neighborhoods of north and northeast Atlanta, the median home prices are among the highest in the region, and the population is in some places nearly 90 percent white. While the northern sections of the city are doing well, there are, by contrast, southern suburban areas, particularly in south Fulton, portions of DeKalb, and northern Clayton counties that are struggling with intense social needs and insufficient resources.

At the same time, the prevailing trend in the region's population growth has been movement outward—not only to inner-ring suburbs, but to outer-ring exurbs that can be 30 miles away from the central business district. The exurban movement of the population is fueled by a well-developed highway system, high housing prices in parts of the city and inner suburbs, and the movement of jobs to the suburbs. These patterns of exurban residential growth combine with the northward tilt of job growth to create long commutes by car on congested roads.


These two trends—hypergrowth in the north and disinvestment in the south—are fundamentally connected. Explosive growth in one part of the region and insufficient growth in another are two different expressions of the same phenomenon. Poor schools in one jurisdiction push out families and lead to overcrowded schools in other places. A lack of affordable housing in thriving job centers leads to long commutes on crowded freeways for a region's working families. Expensive housing—out of the reach of most households—in many close-in neighborhoods creates pressures to pave over and build on open space in outlying areas, as people decide that they have to move outwards to build a future.

The negative consequences of unbalanced growth affect all of the region's residents, no matter where they live. The north-south divide in the Atlanta region means that the wealthier parts of the region have become more congested, more sprawling, and less livable as more people are drawn in by better job opportunities, better schools, and better housing. The pressures of growth in the

northern parts of the region greatly diminish its environmental resources. At the same time, the movement of jobs and middle-class families away from the inner neighborhoods of south Atlanta and the suburban southside, and the inadequate supply of affordable housing for low- or moderate-income families in northern areas, means that the region's low-income and minority workers are increasingly spatially isolated from economic opportunities.

As a result, the Atlanta region is rapidly losing its forests and farmland to parking lots and low-density residential and commercial development. Its rivers and other waterways have become more polluted. Air quality has declined throughout the Atlanta region's airshed a much larger area than just the Atlanta metropolis due in large part to excessive use of the automobile. Roads become more crowded, commutes become longer. People are cut off from educational and employment opportunities because they happen to live in one part of the region, rather than another. The quality of life in the region is not what it used to be, nor what it can be for all its residents.

VI. MOVING BEYOND SPRAWL: THE CHALLENGE FOR METROPOLITAN ATLANTA



o, how does a place built for the automobile move beyond sprawl? How does a historically polarized region promote equity among different races and classes? How does a metropolis accommodate

continued population and economic growth and still

live comfortably?

The Atlanta region has already taken one bold step towards addressing its sprawl problem through the recent creation of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). This state entity, run by a board of public and private sector regional leaders appointed by the Governor, is one of the most promising efforts to curb metropolitan sprawl in the nation: it provides an opportunity for the region to envision and achieve alternative forms of growth. Atlanta also has a great advantage in that its regional planning organization and locally-based scholars have conducted research on the city and region to a degree that is unmatched in most U.S. metropolitan areas. This region can tackle the big questions facing the Atlanta metropolitan area in a well-informed, comprehensive way and in doing so provide a model for other regions.

GRTA's present mission centers around reducing traffic congestion and directing new development. Yet this only addresses one element of the sprawl challenge. In its efforts to find better ways to grow, GRTA's leaders and the Atlanta region cannot ignore the full array of forces that drive growth in some parts of the region and not in others. In order for anti-sprawl efforts in the Atlanta region to work, there must be a broad, multifaceted response that addresses both the consequences and the driving forces of unbalanced growth.

Fortunately, GRTA is only one step the Atlanta region is taking to address its growth problems. Changes to Atlanta's traditional low-density development patterns are occurring as the local business community, including some major real estate developers, are focusing more of their resources in central parts of the metropolitan area, locating offices and building multi-unit housing in underdeveloped parts of the City of Atlanta and near transit stations in the city and closer-in suburbs. Atlanta's second-largest employer, BellSouth, recently announced that it will relocate 13,000 employees from suburban job centers to facilities that are accessible by rail transit lines.

The region also has chosen to use federal funds to support higher-density "town center" developments throughout the city and its suburbs. Important initiatives are underway to increase the availability of affordable and desirable middle-income housing in the city and in jobrich suburbs. And the region is taking steps to preserve urban green space and clean up rivers and other waterways. Many of these efforts build upon the tremendous infrastructure investments made in conjunction with the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, an event that has had lasting and positive effects upon the Atlanta regional economy.

In addition to these laudable efforts, we recommend that the Atlanta region adopt a broad definition of "smart growth" that does not stop with concerns about traffic congestion and development density, but also addresses the environmental, economic, social, and racial inequities

"In order for anti-sprawl efforts in the
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of its growth patterns. In order to move beyond sprawl, we believe that the Atlanta region must incorporate strategies that tackle factors, such as school quality and the location of affordable housing, that influence where families choose to live and businesses choose to locate. We urge GRTA and other state and regional leaders to consider the following:

I. Implement a transportation agenda that embraces an alternative vision of land use and invests in public transit as a competitive necessity.

Like other regions, the Atlanta metropolitan area cannot curb sprawl or relieve congestion by simply widening major roadways or building another beltway. The way that the region has grown-low density settlement, the separation of residential, commercial, office and industrial uses, the absence of affordable housing in rapidly growing suburbs, underinvestment in the southside—has led to the current levels of traffic congestion and rapid outward expansion. If the region's transportation and environmental crises are to be resolved, a different form of growth will need to take hold. In rapidly developing counties that will mean concentrating future population and employment growth in existing towns and cities. In already developed counties that will mean creating greater residential density in some areas and clustering new commercial and residential development on the same sites. In underdeveloped parts of the city and close-in suburbs that will mean taking advantage of available land in existing neighborhoods to grow new areas of economic vitality. Only by making land use decisions that strengthen the central city, remake the existing suburbs and create new kinds of suburbs can the region make intelligent transportation investments and realistically move beyond sprawl.

Public transit will be a necessary part of this new vision. MARTA performs a crucial service to the metropolitan area, but its effectiveness is severely limited by funding restrictions and by resistance to creating a multi-county, administratively integrated public transit system of bus and rail that can better connect people to places where jobs are concentrated. In an economy defined by global competitive pressures, an efficient public transit system is increasingly a long-term, competitive necessity for regions. Public transit, where effective, can provide an efficient and desirable alternative to the automobile for middle class residents, a reliable way to link low-income workers with employers who need them and a responsible approach to ease the strain that explosive growth is placing on the natural environment. Atlanta's challenge is not only to expand its public transit system but to do so in a way that reflects a unified regional vision rather than a series of parochial, separate investments.

2. Expand housing opportunities for middle-class families in the city and in the close-in suburbs, while creating more affordable housing near job centers. Working in concert, regional elected leaders should balance the local housing market through zoning changes, subsidies, school reforms, and tax incentives so that all families-both middle class and low-income-have more choice about where they live and how to be closer to jobs. Bringing middle-class housing closer to the center of the metropolitan area, closer to public transit, or closer to job centers will reduce the vehicle miles traveled and the congestion on Atlanta's roadways, improving air quality and preventing more sprawl into forests and farmland. At the same time, the region needs to stimulate the production and preservation of affordable housing for working families in suburban communities.

3. Help the southside grow. Public and private sector leaders throughout the region should consider strategies that enhance private investment in not only the southside neighborhoods of the City of Atlanta but also the close-in southern suburbs. These communities have the built-in advantage of being near the airport and the downtown, and could benefit greatly from targeted economic development investments. County and municipal governments should make school, infrastructure, and housing investments that increase the desirability of these neighborhoods to middle-class families, and encourage cluster development on the southside that is transit-accessible.

As the region undertakes these far-reaching actions, it must also expand the regional dialogue to recognize and reflect the central role that race has played in shaping the Atlanta metropolis. It is fair to say that race permeates everything in the Atlanta region. It has fundamentally affected where people choose to live. It has exacerbated the concentration of poverty in the central city. It has impeded efforts to expand MARTA beyond Fulton and DeKalb counties. There can be no doubt that the divide has diminished the educational and economic opportunities of minority families living in the region.

In the past, the racial divide was perceived as affecting only the central city and close-in southern suburbs. Yet the racial divide has also placed enormous pressures on growing counties, both on the northside and far southside of the region. Race shapes growth patterns and drives business and residential decisions in ways that no single other factor can match.

The racial divisions in Atlanta (and elsewhere in the United States) are not going to be solved overnight. But frank, open conversation about the causes and consequences of these divisions is helpful. And, progress on issues like transportation, housing and economic investment can mitigate the divisions in substantial ways. Ultimately, the state and region—not just the city, not just the close-in suburbs—need to tackle the challenges presented by schools overburdened with poverty and neighborhoods undermined by lack of investment and lack of opportunity.

We believe that the Atlanta region has the ability to make this list of policy priorities a reality. Its regional leadership is cohesive, proactive, and has agreed that the region must grow smarter in order to continue to compete in the regional, national, and international economy.

The Atlanta region is not going to stop growing—its economic base is diversified, healthy, and encompasses fast-growing and profitable sectors of the labor market. It continues to be a magnet for new residents from other parts of the country and other parts of the world. New subdivisions and office parks continue to spring up in the suburbs, and new office buildings and apartments continue to open in the city. But the region can grow smarter. The great challenge for Atlanta's metropolitan leadership is to make the promises of the above initiatives—particularly GRTA—a reality. This will require great vigilance, great political will, and the close involvement of all levels of government. The steps taken so far are dwarfed by the pull of low-density, car-centered, development that is skewed towards the northside.

It is important that the region's leaders remember that "growing smarter" involves making big and sometimes difficult policy decisions that do far more than unclog traffic. Just as Atlanta's challenges go beyond those of transportation, the solutions to Atlanta's urban sprawl must be more than transportation-related fixes. They also cannot be cookie-cutter urban policy solutions but must acknowledge and respond to the remarkable history and present-day characteristics of the Atlanta metropolitan area.



The Atlanta region cannot continue to be as competitive an economic force if one side of the region continues to decline in income and education levels and the other side continues to become more crowded. The problems that result from this economic imbalance will only grow as the region's population grows in the future. Sprawl, in the end, is not just about too much growth. It is also about too little growth in many parts of the region. Atlanta's public and private leadership must understand that linkage and bridge that divide.

APPENDIX: COUNTY PROFILES

hile the demographic and economic patterns within the Atlanta region are complicated, it is possible

to loosely categorize some of the county and sub-county areas by their dominant socioeconomic characteristics. The accompanying chart provides a rough classification of the region's counties. JOB-RESIDENTIAL HUBS have rapid job growth, rapid population growth, high average household incomes, and are majority white. BEDROOM SUBURBS have rapid rates of population growth but less white-collar job growth. Bedroom suburbs have moderate to high household incomes and are majority white. URBANIZED AFFLUENT areas have rapid white-collar job growth, moderate population growth, high household incomes, and are majority white. STATIC areas have little job or population growth, moderate to high household incomes, and may have large minority populations. DECLINING areas are experiencing job decline, static population growth, and low to moderate household incomes. They are majority non-white. Unless otherwise indicated, these statistics are derived from the Atlanta Regional Commission's *Atlanta Region Outlook* published in December 1998.



Fulton County is the home of the City of Atlanta and it also contains some of the region's most flourishing edge cities and residential neighborhoods. The county had a net gain of over 100,000 new residents between 1990 and 1998; only 12,000 of these were in the City of Atlanta. By 1998, about 350,000 people lived in the Fulton County suburbs. About 430,000 lived in the City of Atlanta.⁷⁶ The county is responsible for about one-sixth of the region's job gains in the 1990s; 80 percent of this growth was outside the City of Atlanta. Fulton has the highest per capita income in the region—nearly \$33,700.

The north side of Fulton County is one of the region's JOB-RESIDENTIAL HUBS. Buckhead, one of the City of Atlanta's most prosperous areas, was responsible for nearly two-thirds of Atlanta's population growth in the 1990s. The county's northern suburbs—including areas in and around municipalities like Alpharetta-have some of the most vibrant job centers in the region. A new highway, Georgia 400, has spurred development of a new regional mall and many other commercial structures. Suburban north Fulton County added nearly 50,000 new jobs and had an incredible population increase of over 70,000 people since 1990. Housing units rose from about 77,500 in 1990 to over 113,000 in 1998, a 46 percent increase. The demographic differences between north and south Fulton County have spurred talk among some residents that suburban north Fulton should secede into a separate county.⁷⁷

The southern portion of Fulton County does not share in this prosperity and contains most of the region's DECLINING neighborhoods. South Atlanta contains the highest concentrations of poverty in the region. In 1990, nearly 43 percent of the region's poor lived in the City of Atlanta. Over 84 percent of the city's poverty population lived in neighborhoods of high poverty; over 44 percent of this group lived in areas of extreme poverty.⁷⁸ The county's southern suburbs—including the cities of East Point, Fairburn, and Palmetto—are very slow-growing and very lightly developed.

The northern parts of **Clayton County** have a lot in common with areas of south Fulton but are better classified as STATIC. Another area in this category is **Douglas County**, immediately to the west of South Fulton's suburbs, and also lightly developed and slower-growing.

DeKalb County contains a small part of the City of Atlanta and also a number of older towns and suburbs, like Decatur, Doraville, Chamblee, and Lithonia. But 85 percent of its 1998 population of nearly 600,000 people live in unincorporated areas of the county. DeKalb is home to Atlanta's more mature suburbs, areas that experienced their growth spurts in the 1980s or before. In the 1990s, job and population growth has been relatively stable. The per capita income in 1996 was a little over \$25,000—significantly less than neighboring Fulton County.

DeKalb County is changing. In the 1980s and 1990s, northern DeKalb County has become a magnet for immigration from Latin America and Asia. Use of school-lunch vouchers—one sign of low family incomes in a community—has risen in the DeKalb school district, where in 1995 over 60 percent of students were eligible for reduced-price or free lunches.⁷⁹

Parts of DeKalb are classic aging, blue-collar suburban neighborhoods that can be found today in many large U.S. metropolitan areas.⁸⁰ But the intra-county differences in racial demographics and job and population growth mean that on its north side it is generally STATIC and in parts of its south side it is DECLINING. DeKalb too is affected by a north-south divide.

In contrast to divided Fulton and DeKalb, **Gwinnett County** is an area that uniformly has experienced explosive population and job growth in the past two decades, making the entire county classifiable as a JOB-RESI-DENTIAL HUB. Gwinnett is one of the northside's hot spots, where new developments seem to crop up every week; it is also one of the areas most plagued by sprawl and traffic congestion.⁸¹

Gwinnett County was one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation in the 1980s, and its growth has continued apace in the 1990s. It led the region in net population increase, adding nearly 143,000 residents between 1990 and 1997. It ranked second in net employment increase during this period, adding almost 89,000 new jobs. Gwinnett's population is overwhelmingly white.

By 1998, over 75 percent of Gwinnett's housing units were single family homes; in some parts of the county, median home values were among the highest in the Atlanta region.⁸² While the county's job growth can be attributed in part to the massive population growth (construction jobs increased by over 7,000, for example, because of increased demand for housing), commuting patterns and the ratio of non-service sector jobs to people in parts of the county reflects the fact that Gwinnett's job market draws workers from other parts of the region.

The growth patterns of **Cobb County** in the 1980s and 1990s are very similar to Gwinnett: enormous growth in the 1980s, more growth in the 1990s, large suburban job centers, extensive single-family residential development. While parts of the county (particularly on the west) are primarily residential, Cobb's strong job market makes it a JOB-RESIDENTIAL HUB.

Finally, it is instructive to look at the growth patterns in the newer, up-and-coming parts of the Atlanta region that are largely BEDROOM SUBURBS. The fastestgrowing county in the nation, **Forsyth County**, is in the far northeast of the region. Forsyth provides the most dramatic example of the rapid movement of primarily residential, low-density development into areas that were recently quite rural; its urbanization is so new that the county is not even included in the Atlanta Regional Commission's definition of the ten-county region. Its population has risen 90 percent since 1990, growing 13 percent between 1997 and 1998 alone. Forsyth is now home to over 86,000 people, almost all of whom are white.⁸³ While the number of jobs has risen in Forsyth County, it does not have job-rich, white-collar edge cities like those in Gwinnett or Cobb County and is a bedroom community for suburban job centers in other counties.

Cherokee County, another BEDROOM SUBURB on the north side of the region, is growing rapidly partly because of the greater availability of affordable singlefamily homes there than in Cobb County or north Fulton County. Woodstock, in southern Cherokee County has seen its population grow from less than 44,000 to over 66,000 people between 1990 and 1998 (this accounted for 61 percent of the county's overall population increase). Single-family homes make up 87 percent of the housing in Woodstock. Although there has been job growth in this sub-county region, there are less than 14,000 jobs; like Forsyth, the area is essentially a bedroom community. There recently has been a political backlash against the rapid pace of growth in Cherokee County. After many years of being governed by pro-growth county leaders who welcomed and encouraged new development, the county recently elected a political novice as county commission chairperson—homemaker and bookkeeper Emily Lemcke—who ran on a no-growth platform.

In the 1990s, new exurban BEDROOM SUBURBS have not been confined to the northside. Henry County, for example, has experienced average growth of over 7 percent per year between 1990 and 1998. This has caused the population to leap from just over 59,000 to nearly 103,000 in eight years. The accompanying job growth in the county has been in industries that serve this new population. Like Cherokee, Henry is chiefly a bedroom community offering more affordable singlefamily detached housing than other parts of the region (86 percent of its housing stock is single-family homes). While the growth of such communities on the southside is an important new trend, it is crucial to note that the county is not racially integrated (only 12 percent of its residents were non-white in 1998) and that its most rapid growth is occurring on the metropolitan fringe-far away from the distressed urban and suburban areas of the close-in southside.

Fayette County, another affluent and fast-growing southern county, has much in common with Henry County, although its per capita income levels are higher—thanks largely to the fact that well-paid airline staff, who like the county's proximity to Hartsfield International Airport, choose to live there.

Community "Types" in the Atlanta Region Selected Examples of Counties and Superdistricts

JOB- RESIDENTIAL HUBS: Rapid Job Growth, Rapid Population Growth, High Household Income, Majority White	BEDROOM SUBURBS: Rapid Population Growth, Less White-Collar Job Growth, Moderate to High Household Income, Majority White	URBANIZED AFFLUENT: Rapid White-Collar Job Growth, Moderate Population Growth, High Household Income, Majority White	STATIC: Little Job or Population Growth, Moderate to High Household Income	DECLINING: Job Decline, Static Population, Low to Moderate Household Income, Majority Non-White
Gwinnett County Cobb County North Fulton	Forsyth County Cherokee County Fayette County Henry County	Northeast Atlanta	Southwest Atlanta (Majority Non-White) North DeKalb Douglas County Clayton County Rockdale County	Southeast Atlanta South Fulton South DeKalb



ENDNOTES

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- 17 Atlanta Region Outlook, 1998, 9; Truman Hartshorn and Keith R. Ihlanfeldt, The Dynamics of Change in Atlanta: An Analysis of Growth Over the Past Two Decades (Atlanta: Research Atlanta, Inc., 1993),27; Lucy Soto and Matt Kempner, "The New Suburbanites," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, January 3, 1999.
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- 20 Orfield, Atlanta Metropolitics, 26.

- 21 Many in the Atlanta community are beginning to conclude that their focus should not be fighting racial segregation in the schools, but in turning predominantly black schools into "centers of academic excellence." Others disagree. See Leon Stafford, "Georgia Schools Becoming Resegregated," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 17, 1998.
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- 23 Leon Stafford, "Georgia Schools Becoming Resegregated," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, June 17, 1998; Lucy Soto and Matt Kempner, "The New Suburbanites," The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, January 3, 1999; Myron Orfield, Atlanta Metropolitics, 22.
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- 32 David Sawicki et al, Jobs-Housing Imbalance in Atlanta: Regional Consequences and Solutions. (Atlanta: Good Government Atlanta Research Foundation, Winter 1998) 14.

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- 39 Sawicki et al. 14-16.
- 40 Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Regional Transportation Planning Fact Book (December 1998), 9.
- 41 Nelson 12.
- 42 Nelson 12.
- 43 Hartshorn and Ihlanfeldt 77-78.
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- 45 See Andrew F. Haughwout, "State Infrastructure and the Geography of Employment," Growth and Change, 30, (1999), 549-566; Haughwout, "Regional Fiscal Cooperation in Metropolitan Areas: An Exploration," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 18, (4) (1999), 579-600; and Marlon Boarnet, "Spillovers and the Locational Effect of Public Infrastructure," *Journal of Regional Science*, 38 (3) (1998), 381-400.
- 46 Sawicki et al.
- 47 Alan Ehrenhalt "The Czar of Gridlock," *Governing* (May 1999); Atlanta Region Outlook, 1998, 31; Matt Kempner and John McCosh, "Drudgery of Driving is Draining Quality of Life," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 17, 1999, data derived from Atlanta Regional Commission and Texas Transportation Institute reports.
- 48 Lawrence Frank, Land Use Impacts on Household Travel Choice and Vehicle Emissions in the Atlanta Region, a paper funded by and prepared for the Turner Foundation, January 1999.

- 49 Sawicki et al. 3; Matt Kempner and John McCosh,"Drudgery of Driving is Draining Quality of Life," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 17, 1999.
- 50 Texas Transportation Institute, 1999 Annual Urban Mobility Study. Tables 4, 6, 7, and 8. The study is available at http://mobility.tamu.edu.
- 51 Cambridge Systematics, Inc. "Unclogging America's Arteries: Prescriptions for Healthier Highways" A report prepared for the American Highway Users Alliance. November 1999.
- 52 For discussion of environmental and public health problems raised by Atlanta's non-attainment status, see George William Sherk, The Costs of Nonattainment: Atlanta's Ozone Imbroglio (Atlanta: Research Atlanta, 1997). Researchers point out that one surprising and little-acknowledged fact about the state of Atlanta's environmental quality is that there are many other large U.S. cities that have equally if not more polluted air. The Atlanta region falls in the "serious" category-the third tier of Clean Air Act nonattainment standards-while cities like Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee are in the second tier of "severe" and sprawling Los Angeles is in the first tier, "extreme" (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, cited in Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Fact Book 44). Attention has focused on Atlanta in large part because it is the only large urban area that has faced such drastic federal sanctions because of its air quality. Alan Ehrenhalt notes that more severe violators "have all been given extensions well into the next decade to solve their ozone problems; Atlanta, for reasons best known to the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency], has not" ("The Czar of Gridlock," Governing [May 1999]). In an attempt to force federal and state officials to change road-building and planning practices that foster this air-polluting car-dependence, local environmental groups filed a lawsuit in early 1999 to halt the construction of new road projects. In June 1999, an out-of-court settlement of the lawsuit allowed 17 of the 61 projects to go forward (David Goldberg, "17of 61 Road Projects OK'd," Atlanta Journal-Constitution, June 22, 1999). For a breakdown of air pollution causes, see Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division, found in Atlanta Regional Commission, Regional Transportation Plan Needs Assessment Report May 1999) 3-9.
- 53 The Georgia Conservancy, *Livable Region Update* 4 (April 1999), 1.
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- 55 The quantitative link between the Atlanta region's land-use patterns and auto emissions has been documented by Georgia Tech's Lawrence Frank in his *Land Use Impacts on Household Travel Choice and Vehicle Emissions in the Atlanta Region*, a paper funded by and prepared for the Turner Foundation, January 1999.
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- 58 Because of the rapid changeover from forest land and open space to low-density development in much of metropolitan Atlanta, NASA has initiated "Project ATLANTA" to measure the growth and effect of the urban heat island through satellite mapping. See Dale A. Quattrochi and Jeffrey C. Luvall, "Urban Sprawl and Urban Pall," *Geo Info Systems* (May 1999). Also see American Forests, Urban Ecological Analysis for Atlanta, Georgia, March 1996.
- 59 Livable Region Update 3.
- 60 Robert D. Bullard, Glenn S. Johnson, and Angel O. Torres, "Environmental Consequence of Sprawl," in *Sprawl Atlanta: Social Equity Dimensions of Uneven Growth and Development*, a report prepared for the Turner Foundation by the Environmental Justice Research Center, Clark Atlanta University, November 1998, 27.
- 61 Michael J. Rich and Joseph Coughlin, "The Spatial Distribution of Economic Opportunities: Access and Accessibility for Welfare in Metropolitan Atlanta," Paper prepared for presentation at the 94th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Boston MA, March 28, 1998, 11. For extended discussion of low-income transportation problems and the "spatial mismatch" between jobs and people in the Atlanta metropolitan area, see as well as Keith R. Ihlanfeldt and Madelyn V. Young, "The Spatial Distribution of Black Employment Between the Central City and the Suburbs," *Economic Inquiry* 34 (October 1996), 693-707;
- 62 Michael J. Rich, "Access to Opportunities: The Welfare-to-Work Challenge in Metropolitan Atlanta," Paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Fall Research Conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, D.C., November 6, 1999. 12-14.
- 63 Turner et al, p. 8.

- 64 Rich and Coughlin, 10.
- 65 Rich, 12-14.
- 66 *Regional Transportation Plan Needs* Assessment Report 4-46. Keep in mind, however, that being "transit-accessible" may not necessarily mean a feasible commuting time between home and work. Because of the size of the Atlanta region and the dispersion of its job centers, workers may face much longer commute times if they are dependent on public transit.
- 67 Nelson x.
- 68 Scholars have begun to argue that the historical growth patterns of Atlanta and similar multinodal cities demonstrates a need for a new definition of urban form and an analytical framework that goes beyond the traditional "city versus suburb" critique. See for example Greg Hise, Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
- 69 This quote appeared in one of the early national news stories that noted Atlanta's ability to overcome the South's historic racial and economic problems and attract new business (William Emerson, "Where the Paper Clips Jump and M Stands for Men, Money, and Millions," *Newsweek*, October 19, 1959).
- 70 The commitment to "selling" Atlanta has, some scholars argue, skewed local decision-making in favor of the more affluent parts of the region. See for example Helling and Sawicki 14.
- 71 John Bergstrom, Jeffrey H. Dorfman, and Keith R. Ihlanfeldt, "The Effects of Government Policies on the Location and Type of Development: A Case Study of the Greater Metropolitan Atlanta Area," a report prepared under contract for the American Farmland Trust, February 1998.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Nelson 5.
- 74 For a scholarly analysis of the role of race in Atlanta's political history and its urban growth, see Ronald H. Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Also see Gary Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn* (New York: Scribner, 1996).

- 75 Geller et al. iii.
- 76 This figure is ARC's most recent estimate. The Census Bureau's most recent estimate finds that less than 404,000 people lived in the City of Atlanta. These discrepancies have stemmed in part from an undercount in the 1990 Census, adjusted figures for which were released in 1992. In addition, some researchers use population and size estimates from the Census-defined Metropolitan Statistical Area or Urbanized Area. In the interests of consistency with other ARC statistics cited, this appendix uses ARC population estimates unless otherwise indicated.
- 77 Sam Begner, "A Northern Secession in the South," Urban Land (April 1999), 29.
- 78 Ihlanfeldt, 8. Jargowsky.
- 79 Orfield, Atlanta Metropolitics, 25.
- 80 In his case study of Minneapolis-St. Paul, Orfield identifies the socioeconomically declining inner suburb as a type of community that whose social and economic indicators are much closer to those of the central city than of other suburbs. For further discussion, see Orfield, *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press and Cambridge, MA: The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 1997).
- 81 Atlanta Regional Commission, Regional Transportation Fact Book (December 1998), 37.
- 82 Sawicki et al.
- 83 Haya El Nasser, "Suburbs Continue to Sprawl, Census Data Shows," USA Today, March 12, 1999. See also David Firestone, "Many See Their Future in a County with a Past," New York Times, April 8, 1999.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy would like to thank many people for their support, comments, and guidance on this report. We would like first to thank the Turner Foundation for its generous support and guidance. Peter Bahouth and Kevin Kelly of the Foundation were of great assistance in bringing us together with key leaders in the Atlanta region to discuss policy challenges and opportunities facing this metropolis, and in helping to ensure that the report accurately reflected the region's experience.

Brookings held several briefings with many leaders in the Atlanta region about this project. We benefited greatly from the expert advice of scholars, business coalitions, environmental organizations, community development leaders, and regional planners during these sessions. While there are too many of you to name here, we want to thank all of you for giving us your thoughtful input. We are especially grateful to David Sawicki of Georgia Institute of Technology and Keith Ihlanfeldt of Georgia State University, who provided useful comments on earlier drafts and whose research made invaluable contributions to this report. David Sawicki also facilitated very useful consultations with other scholars from the Atlanta region. Georgia Tech graduate student Brenan Stearns provided timely assistance with maps. We also want to thank several other Atlanta-area researchers and civic leaders who provided the author and Brookings staff with special assistance in the research process: Hattie Dorsey of the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership, Leon Eplan, Jim Skinner of the Atlanta Regional

Commission, and Tom Weyandt formerly with Research Atlanta. Special thanks also to Myron Orfield and his research staff at the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, Gary Moll and the GIS team at American Forests, Michael Rich at Emory University, and Mark Rubin at the Urban Institute. All of these researchers' brilliant and compelling maps were crucial in helping us tell Atlanta's story. Any errors of interpretation or facts are the responsibility of the Brookings Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy.

Brookings would like to thank Margaret Pugh, a doctoral student in history at the University of Pennsylvania, who was the principal author of this report. She is also the author of the Brookings discussion paper *Barriers to Work: The Spatial Divide Between Jobs and Welfare Recipients in Metropolitan Areas* (1998).

Finally, Brookings would like to thank Maria Sese Paul of Sese/Paul Design for her first-rate work in organizing and presenting this information in a beautiful, cogent, and engaging manner.

The views expressed in this report are not necessarily those of the trustees, officers, or staff members of the Brookings Institution.



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