

The State of Atlanta's Neighborhoods

TRACKING THE HEALTH OF
ATLANTA'S 102 NEIGHBORHOOD
STATISTICAL AREAS

Center for Urban Research

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EDUCATION

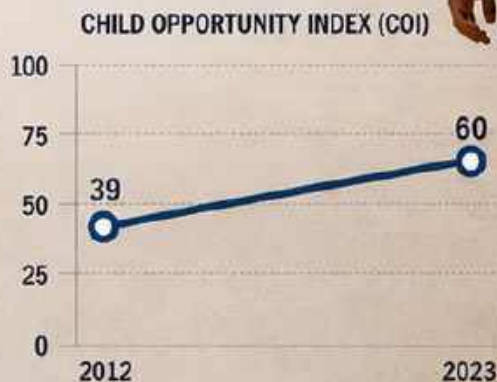


HEALTH &
ENVIRONMENT



SOCIAL &
ECONOMIC

BELTLINE



HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Atlanta's Neighborhoods

Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens has set an ambitious goal: to become the best major city in America to thrive and raise every child. Achieving that goal requires more than economic growth and improved services. It requires ensuring that every child—regardless of the neighborhood in which they live—has access to safe streets, quality schools, healthy environments, economic opportunity, and affordable housing.

While overall opportunity improved across Atlanta from 2012 to 2023, neighborhood trajectories varied widely. Some historically distressed areas saw major gains, others saw only modest change, and many high-opportunity neighborhoods continued to advance—even as revitalization made several communities increasingly unaffordable to long-time residents. Nearly half of Atlanta's housing is now out of reach for median-income households. Atlanta's goal of becoming the best city in the country to raise a child requires more than aggregate progress—it demands ensuring that every child, in every neighborhood, can grow up with real access to opportunity without being displaced by it.

The Center for Urban Research offers this report as the first comprehensive assessment of neighborhood health across all 102 of Atlanta's Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs). Using the Child Opportunity Index (COI)—a nationally recognized measure of neighborhood conditions—together with housing affordability data, it examines how the health and accessibility of Atlanta's neighborhoods has changed between 2012 and 2023. The findings reveal a city that has made remarkable – yet imbalanced – progress while continuing to grapple with persistent inequality and growing affordability challenges.

Atlanta's Neighborhoods Are Healthier Than They Were a Decade Ago

Between 2012 and 2023, Atlanta's [Child Opportunity Index](#) score increased from 39 to 60, reflecting substantial improvement in neighborhood conditions across the city. The largest gains occurred in the Health & Environment domain, driven in part by major investments in parks, trails, environmental remediation, and neighborhood revitalization. Educational outcomes and social and economic conditions also improved in most neighborhoods.

Importantly, these improvements were not limited to neighborhoods that were already thriving. Some historically low-opportunity neighborhoods recorded the largest gains, reducing geographic disparities across the city. This narrowing was substantial: Atlanta's neighborhood-level Gini coefficient—a measure of how evenly healthy neighborhood conditions are distributed across the city—fell from 0.55 to 0.38 over the past decade.¹

Progress Has Been Uneven

While citywide indicators have improved, neighborhoods followed very different trajectories. Thirty-one NSAs experienced substantial improvements in neighborhood health, particularly along the Beltline, Memorial Drive, and Cascade Road corridors. Some formerly distressed neighborhoods recorded dramatic gains in educational opportunity, environmental quality, and economic conditions.

¹ The Gini coefficient is a statistic commonly used to measure inequality. Applied to neighborhood opportunity, the Gini coefficient measures how unevenly opportunity is distributed across the city's neighborhoods. A value of zero would indicate that every neighborhood offers roughly the same level of opportunity, while a value of one would indicate that opportunity is concentrated in only a handful of neighborhoods.

At the same time, thirty-seven neighborhoods remained persistently low-opportunity. Despite modest improvements over the decade, many continue to experience high poverty, weak educational outcomes, poor environmental conditions, and limited economic opportunity. These neighborhoods remain concentrated primarily on Atlanta's west, southwest, and south sides. The result is a city that is healthier overall but where place continues to exert a powerful influence on life outcomes.

Opportunity Has Expanded, But Affordability Has Contracted

Perhaps the report's most consequential finding is that neighborhood improvement often coincides with declining affordability.

Eleven NSAs experienced strong markers of gentrification: rising population, increasing homeownership, and significant declines in Black population share. Many of these neighborhoods now offer substantially improved conditions than they did a decade ago, but they have also become increasingly inaccessible to the families who lived through the years of disinvestment.

Citywide, nearly half of Atlanta's housing stock is now unaffordable to households earning the region's median income. As neighborhood quality has improved, access to many of the city's healthiest neighborhoods has become increasingly constrained. This is Atlanta's defining equity challenge: ensuring that rising neighborhoods lift their existing residents rather than price them out.

From Progress to Promise

The variation in neighborhood health trajectories across the city suggests that Atlanta should judge success not simply by citywide averages, but by whether opportunity is becoming more broadly shared across neighborhoods. The city's progress over the past decade demonstrates that neighborhood conditions can improve dramatically when sustained public and private investment is focused at the neighborhood level. The challenge now is to extend those gains to neighborhoods that have yet to experience meaningful change while preserving affordability in neighborhoods that are rapidly improving.

If Atlanta succeeds, it will not simply become a more prosperous city. It will become a city where a child's opportunities in life are increasingly determined by their potential rather than their address.

Atlanta’s Neighborhood Health Trends, 2012–2023



THE GOAL

Creating Healthy, Thriving and Accessible Neighborhoods

Mayor Andre Dickens has launched a 20 Year Vision for the city of Atlanta designed to ensure that all of Atlanta's children live in healthy, thriving and accessible neighborhoods. His Neighborhood Reinvestment Initiative represents the city's first effort to align public, private and philanthropic investment in a set of targeted distressed neighborhoods with the goal of returning them to their former health.

The focus on the health of neighborhoods is intentional. Decades of research point to the same conclusion: where a child grows up shapes nearly every aspect of their future lives. Neighborhoods determine which school a child attends, exposure to environmental hazards, access to parks and healthy food, and through them, long-term physical and mental health. They determine whether the streets outside are safe enough to walk to a corner store or a bus stop, and whether those streets connect to the jobs and opportunities that make economic mobility possible.

These conditions don't operate in isolation—they compound. A child in a neighborhood with a failing school, blighted housing, high crime, poor air quality and low levels of social cohesion faces not one disadvantage but an interlocking set of them, each making the others harder to escape. Conversely, a child in a neighborhood where these conditions align—where schools are strong, streets are safe, and amenities are accessible—accumulates advantages year over year. This is why neighborhoods are not merely a backdrop to city life. They are the most powerful determinants of whether children will flourish.



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While improving the health of neighborhoods is the goal, it is not sufficient. A neighborhood can become "healthy" by conventional measures while becoming unaffordable to families of modest incomes. When rising property values and rents displace longtime residents, neighborhood improvement fails to benefit everyone it should serve. Gentrification may eliminate distressed neighborhoods statistically, but it risks relocating disadvantage rather than addressing it.

Atlanta therefore needs neighborhoods that are both healthy *and* accessible. Healthy neighborhoods offer children quality schools, safe streets, clean environments, and economic prosperity. Accessible neighborhoods remain affordable to households across the income spectrum, enabling diverse families to benefit from vibrant urban environments. A truly child-friendly city provides healthy neighborhoods for everyone.

Achieving that goal is the central role of municipal government. This report is our first attempt to build an ongoing way to track the health and accessibility of our neighborhoods over time, so that the trends it surfaces can inform decisions made by the City and its partners as they together seek to improve the lives of all Atlantans.

THE METHODOLOGY

Measuring the Health of Neighborhoods

The Unit of Analysis: Neighborhood Statistical Areas

Atlanta is composed of 245 distinct neighborhoods that have been aggregated into 102 Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs) for analytical purposes.² These NSAs provide a meaningful geographic unit for analysis, balancing the granularity needed to capture local conditions with sufficient population size to generate statistically reliable measures. This approach allows for consistent tracking of neighborhood conditions over time while maintaining alignment with how residents actually experience their neighborhoods.

Measuring Neighborhood Health: The Child Opportunity Index

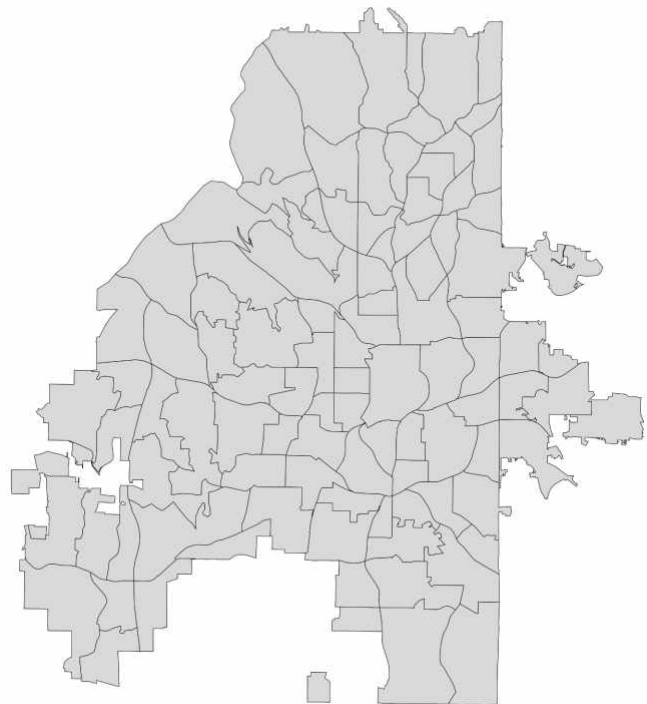
The Child Opportunity Index (COI) serves as the primary measurement system for tracking the health of Atlanta's neighborhoods. The COI is a place-based composite index developed by researchers at the Institute for Equity in Child Opportunity and Healthy Development at Boston University. Data collection began in 2012, allowing changes in neighborhood health to be tracked over time.

The COI synthesizes 44 research-supported place-based indicators across three domains: Education, Social & Economic, and Health & Environment. In each domain, neighborhoods are rated on a 0–100 scale relative to all U.S. neighborhoods, enabling comparison both within Atlanta and against national benchmarks.

Measuring Neighborhood Accessibility: Housing Costs

Supplementing the COI are measures of housing conditions—housing costs, vacancy rates, and homeownership rates—that together reveal how accessible each neighborhood is to households across

Atlanta's Neighborhood Statistical Areas



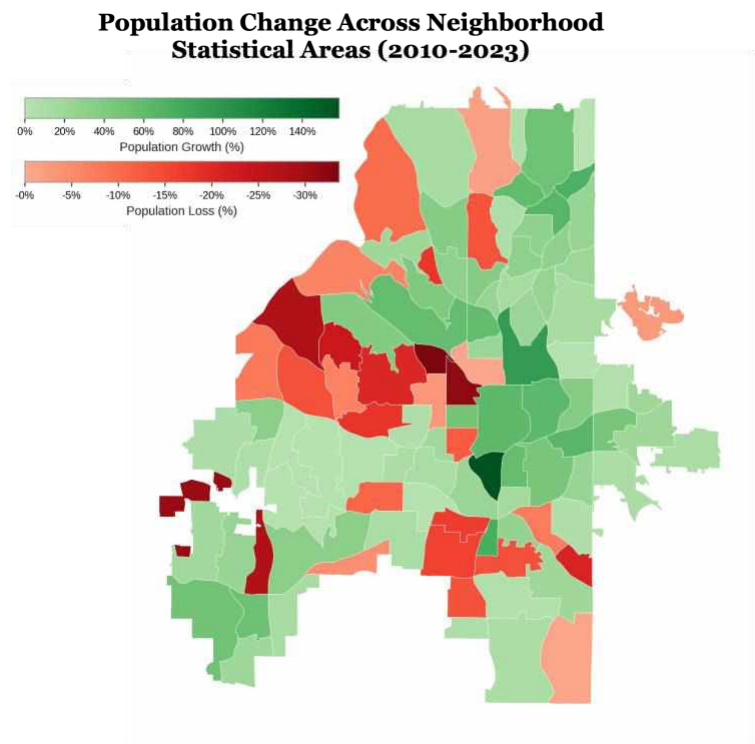
² The Airport NSA has been excluded from this analysis

the income spectrum. U.S. Census Bureau data is used for housing unit and vacancy rate data. Zillow data is used for housing affordability data.

THE HEADLINES

Four Major Findings

- ▶ **Between 2012 and 2023, Atlanta recorded significant improvements in neighborhood health.** The city's overall COI score increased from 39 to 60. The greatest improvement occurred in Health & Environment, which went from the lowest performing domain in 2012 to the highest in 2023.
- ▶ **Atlanta is experiencing strong population growth, adding 79,000 residents between 2010 and 2023.** But this growth was not distributed equally: six NSAs alone accounted for 43% of the city's growth while 30 NSAs lost a combined 15,000 residents.
- ▶ **The city's demographic composition continues to change significantly.** Although the Black population of Atlanta increased by over 8,000 between 2010 and 2023, its share of the overall population declined from 53% to 46% as other racial categories grew at higher rates.
- ▶ **Housing affordability shows deep imbalances.** Of the city's 291,000 housing units, 78,000 are affordable to households earning less than 80% of the region's median income. In 22 NSAs over 70% of housing is affordable at that level; in 41 NSAs less than 10% are.



POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

A Growing City

Atlanta's population grew 18% between 2010 and 2023, from 421,598 to 498,717. That makes it one of America's fastest-growing big cities. However, this growth was not evenly distributed. Some neighborhoods experienced strong growth while others stagnated or lost residents.

Midtown alone added nearly 14,000 residents—a surge that transformed it from business district to bona fide urban center. Portions of Buckhead and the neighborhoods along the eastern Beltline trail also showed significant growth.

While most NSAs gained residents during this period, 30 NSAs lost a combined 15,000 residents. Fifteen neighborhoods suffered double-digit percentage population declines. The Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway corridor and portions of southeast Atlanta experienced the sharpest declines in population.

Although the Black population as a share of the city total declined from 53% to 46% between 2010 and 2023, the total Black population increased by over 8,000.

NSAs with large absolute increases in Black residential population include Atlantic Station/Loring Heights (+2,268), Castleberry Hill/Downtown (+2,225), and Midtown (+1,967). Buckhead Heights/Lenox/Ridgedale Park stands out for relative growth—its Black population increased from 200 to 1,679 (+1,479). Georgia Tech/Marietta Street Artery, Amal Heights/Betmar LaVilla/High Point/Joyland, and Berkeley Park/Blandtown/Hills Park each gained over 1,300.

Citywide, the number of residents below the federal poverty line fell from approximately 87,700 to 81,800—a decline from 21% to 17% of the population. The number of NSAs with poverty rates above 30% fell from 32 to 26. However, a troubling pattern emerged: 15 of the NSAs that lost population continued to have poverty rates above 25%. Thomasville Heights held a 36% poverty rate after losing 21% of its residents. South River Gardens maintained a 46% rate while shrinking. Lakewood Heights, Perkerson, Dixie Hills, and Capitol View/Capitol View Manor all fit this pattern.

Change in Black Population Across Neighborhood Statistical Areas (2010-2023)

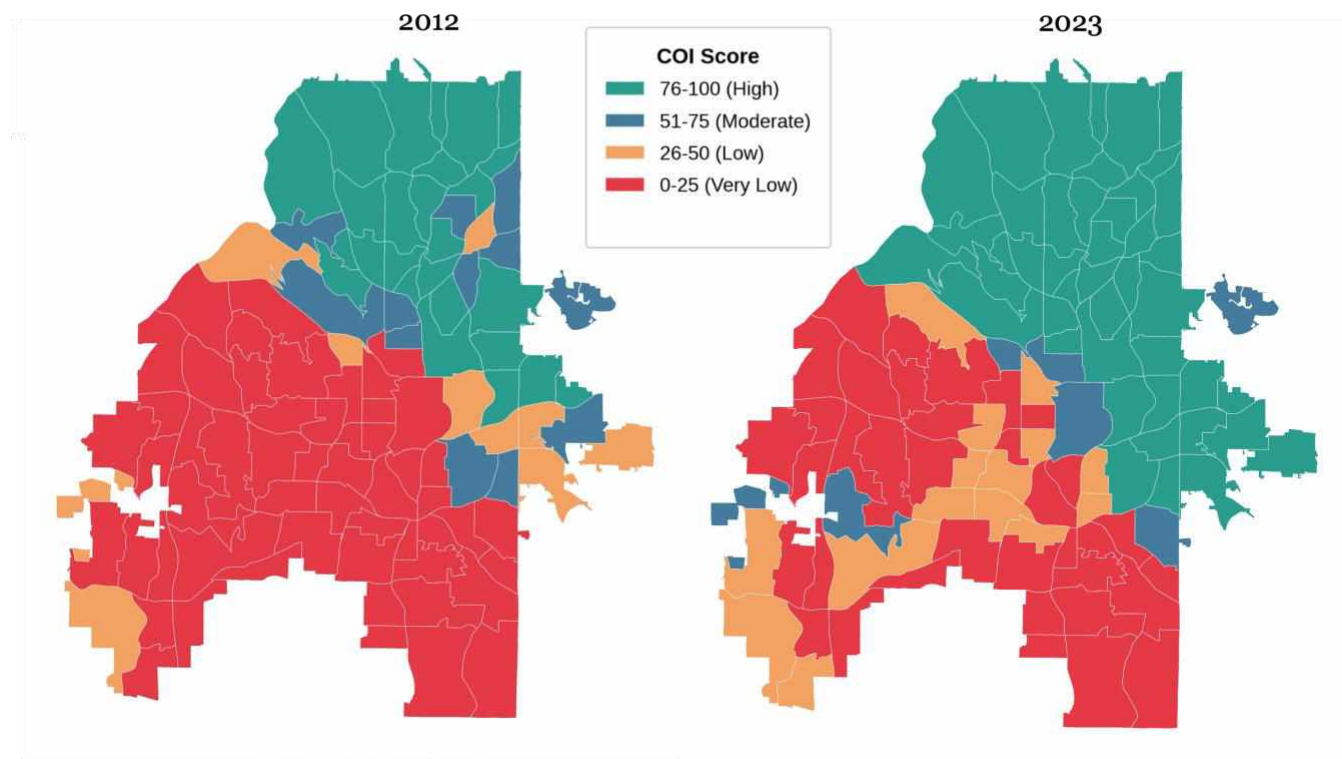


THE CHANGE

The Health of Atlanta's Neighborhoods is Improving

Atlanta experienced substantial improvement in the health of its neighborhoods over the past decade. Atlanta's overall Child Opportunity Index (COI) score increased from 39 in 2012 to 60 in 2023, with dramatic gains in Health & Environment and more modest but significant improvements in Education and Social & Economic indicators.

Child Opportunity Index Scores by NSA

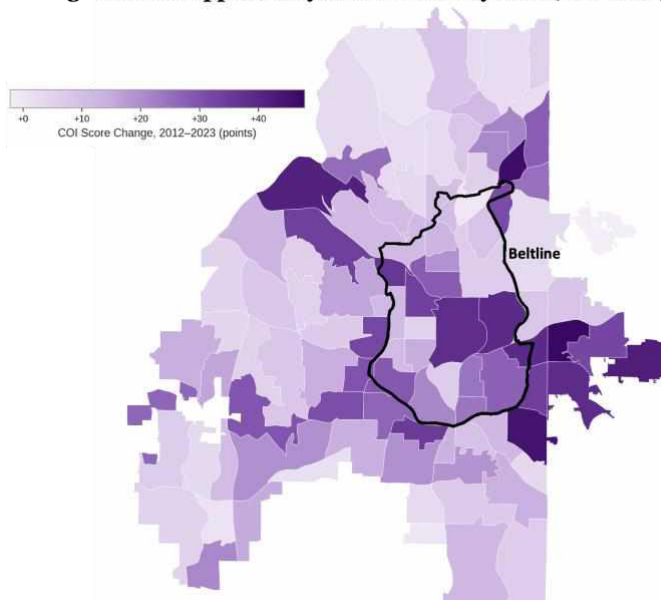


Improvement in Atlanta's COI was not evenly distributed across the city. The largest gains are concentrated in NSAs bordering the Beltline, Memorial Drive and Cascade Road corridors. The Beltline's benefits are already evident but still in their early stages since some of the trail and parks network is either still in planning or under construction.

On the west side, the Cascade Road corridor experienced significant gains with the adjacent NSAs seeing COI score gains of up to 30 points. The completion of the Princeton Lakes development in the far southwestern section of the city increased the COI score in that NSA by 21 points.

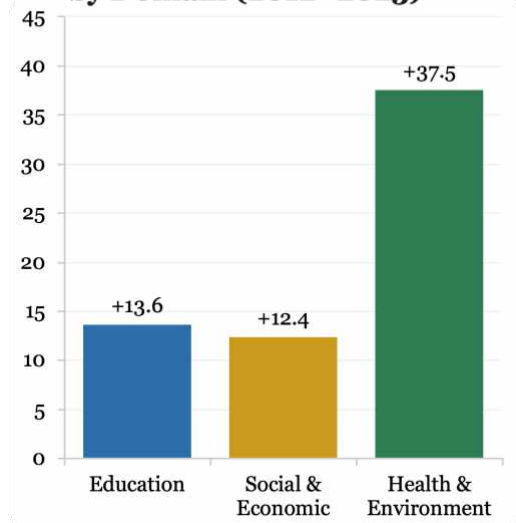
The five NSAs with the largest gains—Edgewood, Lindbergh/Morosgo, Benteen Park, East Lake, and Bolton/Riverside—averaged a nearly 45 point improvement in their COI scores. The bottom five performing NSAs were largely unchanged. This wide variation in performance suggests that improvements in COI scores can be attributed to neighborhood-specific causes as opposed to general trends that might impact neighborhood conditions across the city. It also indicates that neighborhood conditions can change dramatically in a relatively short period of time.

Change in Child Opportunity Index Scores by NSA (2012-2023)

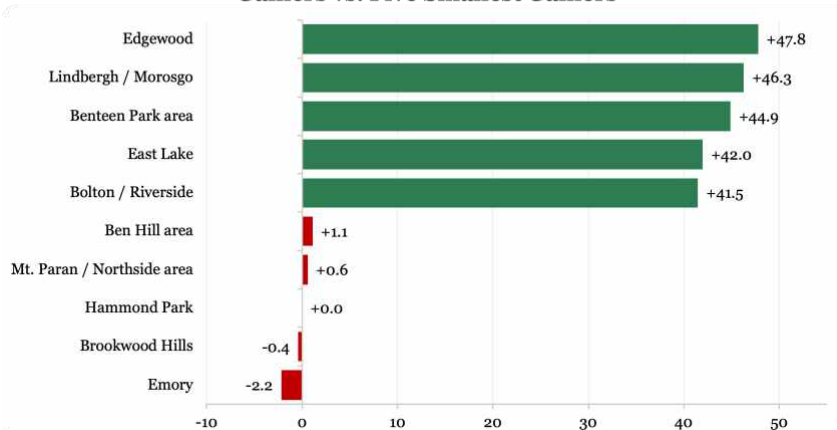


Not only are gains in COI scores highly variable across NSAs, they also vary considerably by domain area. The Health & Environment domain, for example, experienced an average improvement of nearly 38 points during the study period. Most of this gain coincided with significant

Average COI Score Increase by Domain (2012–2023)



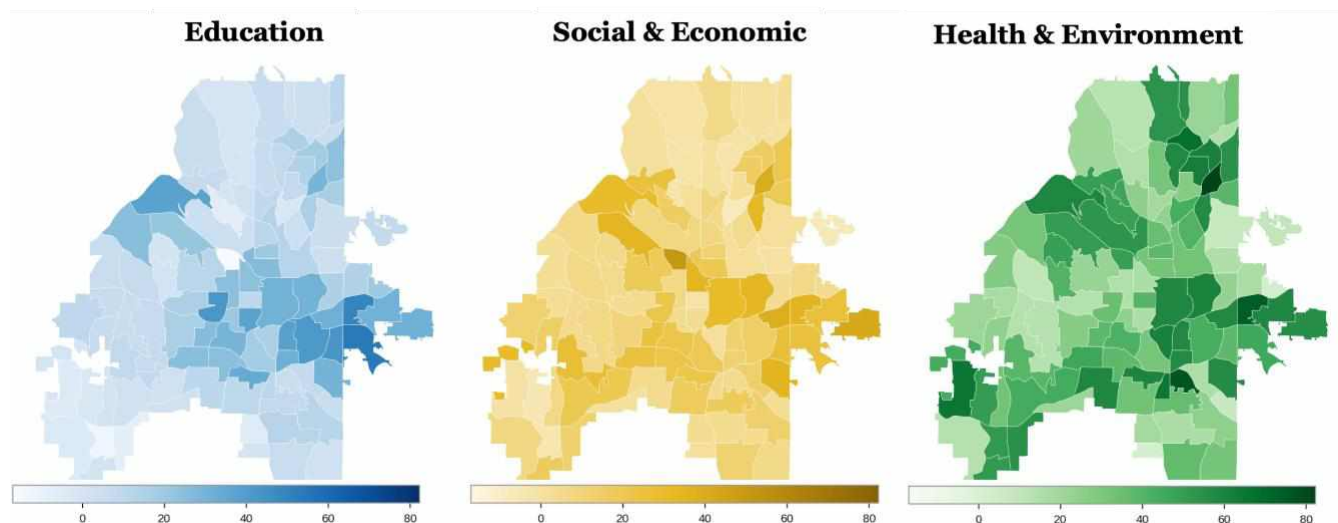
COI Score Change, 2012–2023: Five Biggest Gainers vs. Five Smallest Gainers



investments in the city's park and trail network. Neighborhood revitalization efforts along the Memorial Drive corridor also appear to have played a critical role, with general blight reduction and the elimination of food deserts as several grocery stores opened along the corridor.

Improvements in the Education and Social & Economic domains are also concentrated in the Beltline corridor. The adjacent NSAs have benefited from investments in neighborhood-serving retail, improved school performance (particularly in the Maynard Jackson High School cluster), and reduced levels of housing vacancy.

Change in COI Scores By Domain (2012–2023)



THE NEIGHBORHOOD TYPES

Variations in Neighborhood Performance

To better understand the pattern of neighborhood change, the city's NSAs have been distributed across three categories based on their 2012–2023 COI trajectory: Sustained High Opportunity, Improving Opportunity and Sustained Low Opportunity.

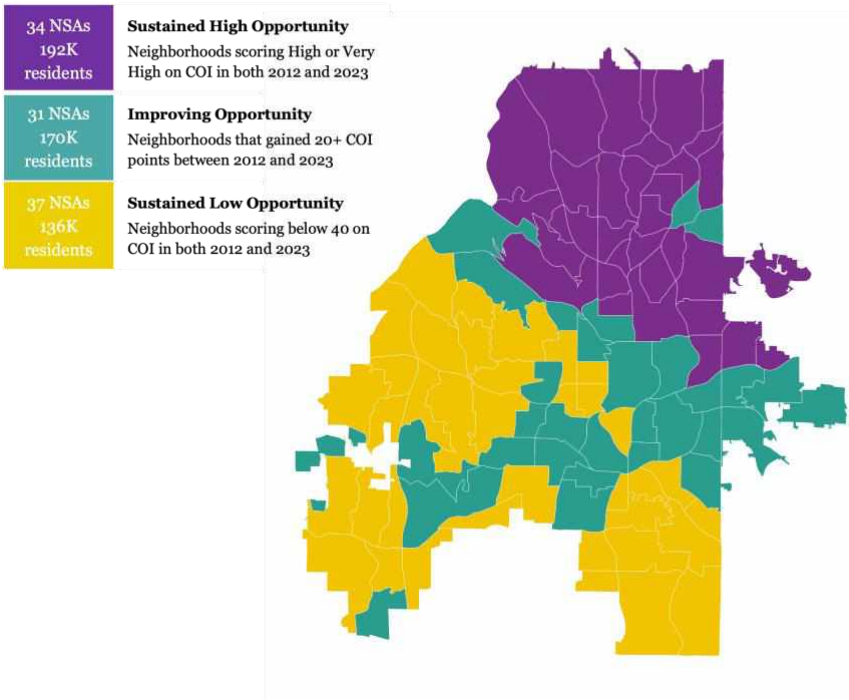
The Improving Opportunity Neighborhoods

Perhaps the report’s most encouraging finding is the size of the Improving Opportunity category. Over one-third of Atlantans live in the 31 NSAs that saw large improvements in neighborhood health over the past decade. These NSAs experienced gains across all three domains: Education improved by an average of 26 points; Social & Economic improved by 27 points; Health & Environment increased by 48 points. In all of these NSAs, school performance improved, environmental hazards were remediated, and employment opportunities expanded.

The Improving Opportunity NSAs are geographically concentrated along three corridors: the Beltline trail on the east and south sides, the Memorial Drive corridor, and the Cascade Road corridor. Key NSAs in this group include Old Fourth Ward, Summerhill, Grant Park, Pittsburgh, West End, Adair Park, Westview, and Cascade Avenue. What unites them is proximity to major public investment—the Beltline trail, neighborhood revitalization efforts along Memorial Drive, and the development of mixed-income communities on former public housing properties—suggesting that targeted, place-based investment at scale can produce measurable and lasting gains in neighborhood health.

Sixteen of the Improving Opportunity NSAs began 2012 with COI scores below 20—the bottom quintile nationally. These areas—including English Avenue, Capitol Gateway/Summerhill, Adair Park, Westview, and West End—were among Atlanta's most distressed communities with an average 2012 COI score of 6. By 2023, these neighborhoods had improved to an average score of 35, for an average improvement of 29 points.

NSA by COI Typology



Improving Opportunity Neighborhoods
Average Gains by Domain

+26 pts	+27 pts	+48 pts
Education	Social & Economic	Health & Environment

The Sustained High Opportunity Neighborhoods

Atlanta's 34 Sustained High Opportunity NSAs represent the city's most consistently advantaged neighborhoods, a group that has maintained strong COI scores. In 2012, these areas already averaged a COI score of 83—well above the citywide average of 39—and by 2023 that average had climbed further to 92, reflecting continued investment in neighborhoods stretching from Buckhead and Chastain Park in the north through Midtown, Virginia-Highland, Morningside, and Inman Park in the interior. These areas are geographically concentrated in the northern and northeastern quadrants of the city, with a handful of outliers such as Atlantic Station, Berkeley Park, and Home Park reflecting newer, mixed-use redevelopment closer to the urban core. Across all three COI domains, performance is high: average Education scores rose from 82 to 91, Social & Economic scores from 84 to 90, and Health & Environment scores—consistent with the citywide trend—saw the largest jump, climbing from 57 to 92 between 2012 and 2023.

Sustained High Opportunity Neighborhoods
Average Gains by Domain

+9 pts	+6 pts	+35 pts
Education	Social & Economic	Health & Environment

Of the Sustained High Opportunity Neighborhoods, only three (Grant Park, Cabbagetown/Reynoldstown, Berkeley Park) have Black populations exceeding 30%. Black residents made up just 10% of the population in these NSAs in 2010, rising to around 20% by 2023. The doubling of the Black population in absolute terms—from about 14,900 to 28,900—is a meaningful shift, though it still leaves these high-opportunity neighborhoods significantly less racially diverse than the city as a whole. These findings expose one of the central equity challenges facing Atlanta: the neighborhoods with the most durable opportunity remain among the least accessible to many of the city's low-income Black households.

The Sustained Low Opportunity Neighborhoods

Atlanta's 37 Sustained Low Opportunity NSAs represent the clearest expression of the city's entrenched geographic inequality. These neighborhoods—spanning much of the west, southwest, and south sides—scored an average of just 5 on the COI in 2012 and, despite modest gains, remained deeply disadvantaged by 2023 with an average score of only 14. No NSA in this group exceeded a score of 33 in 2023, meaning none came close to crossing the moderate health threshold of 50.

Domain-level data tells a similarly stark story: Education scores averaged just 6 in 2012 and climbed to 14 by 2023, while Social & Economic scores moved from 7 to 13—marginal improvements that leave these neighborhoods in a structurally different condition than their higher-opportunity counterparts across the city. The one area of more substantial change was Health & Environment, where average scores rose from 7 to 38, mirroring the citywide trend but still leaving these NSAs well below the moderate health threshold.

Sustained Low Opportunity Neighborhoods
Average Gains by Domain

+8 pts	+6 pts	+31 pts
Education	Social & Economic	Health & Environment

These neighborhoods are also home to a disproportionate share of Atlanta's Black population. In 2010, Black residents made up an average of 93% of the population across these NSAs—a figure that declined only slightly to 86% by 2023. In absolute terms, the total Black population in these areas actually fell by about 2,800 people even as overall population grew, suggesting some outmigration from the city's most disinvested communities during a period when Atlanta's overall population was expanding. This combination—minimal opportunity gains, overwhelmingly Black demographics, and slight population decline—underscores the degree to which sustained low opportunity in Atlanta is not randomly distributed but follows clear and longstanding patterns of racial and geographic concentration.

Fourteen of the Sustained Low Opportunity NSAs have 2023 COI scores of 10 or below, placing them in the bottom 10% of neighborhoods nationally. Hammond Park, Campbellton Road, Perkerson, Thomasville Heights, and Adamsville all score 3 or less. Neighborhoods like Vine City, Mechanicsville, English Park, Grove Park, and the Bankhead corridor have remained at the bottom of the opportunity distribution since 2012, raising questions about whether incremental gains in domain scores alone are sufficient to meaningfully change life outcomes for the families living there.

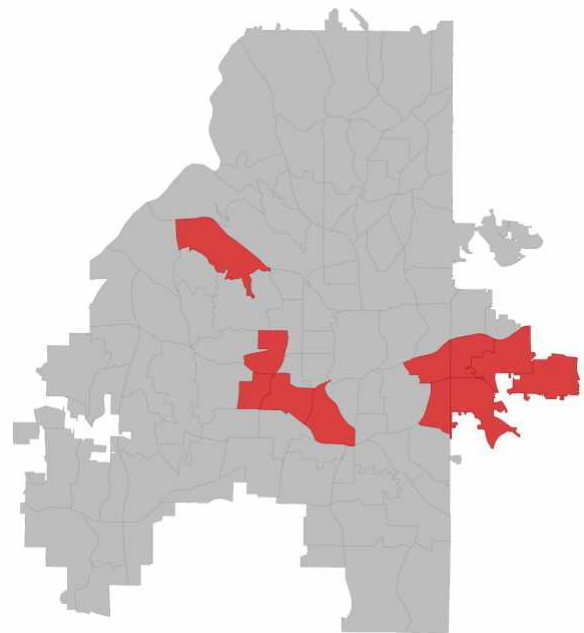
GENTRIFICATION

The Convergent Markers

Gentrifying NSAs are defined using three criteria applied across all 102 NSAs: net population growth between 2010 and 2023; a decline of at least 15 percentage points in the Black population share; and an increase in the homeownership rate.

All three conditions have to be met simultaneously. This combination was chosen because no single indicator adequately captures gentrification-driven displacement. Population growth alone could reflect organic neighborhood vitality. A falling Black population share alone could reflect outmigration for reasons unrelated to gentrification. Rising homeownership alone could reflect policy interventions or changing household preferences. It is the convergence of all three—new residents arriving, existing Black residents departing, and lower-income renters being replaced by higher-income owners—that distinguishes gentrification from other forms of neighborhood change.

NSAs with Strong Gentrification Markers



Eleven NSAs meet these criteria. These NSAs had a combined population of 45,312 in 2010, growing to 55,927 by 2023. Just over one in ten Atlantans live in gentrifying neighborhoods based on this definition.

All of these neighborhoods experienced significant improvement in their COI score, but they also saw a material loss (>15 percentage points) of their share of Black residents. They split into two groups based on starting conditions. The first five—Adair Park/Pittsburgh, Westview, West End, Carver Hills, and Hunter Hills—started with very low COI scores (between one and four) and remain below 40 in 2023. These are early-stage or still-ongoing gentrification cases where change is visible in the racial composition and homeownership data but poverty rates have barely moved.

The remaining six—East Lake, East Atlanta, Edgewood, Kirkwood, Cabbagetown, and Ormewood Park—started with higher COI scores and have now crossed into medium or high opportunity territory. These are the advanced cases: poverty has fallen sharply and COI scores have doubled or tripled.

What these eleven neighborhoods collectively illustrate is the central tension at the heart of Atlanta's neighborhood story: the same forces that improve opportunity also threaten to displace the residents who most need it. The advanced cases—Edgewood, Kirkwood, Cabbagetown, East Lake, and Ormewood Park—are, by every conventional measure, success stories. Schools are better, streets are safer, poverty is down, and the

COI scores confirm it. But the Black population share in these neighborhoods fell by an average of 22 percentage points over the same period, meaning many families who endured the years of disinvestment did not benefit from the turnaround.

The early-stage cases tell a more ambiguous story: change is clearly underway, but poverty has barely moved. Taken together, the eleven gentrifying NSAs raise a question that aggregate progress metrics cannot answer—progress for whom?—and make clear that any strategy serious about equitable neighborhood improvement must include tools to ensure that longtime residents are not simply priced out of the neighborhoods their presence helped stabilize during the decades when no one else was investing.

NSAs with Strong Gentrification Markers

NSAs showing population growth, declining Black share, rising homeownership, and falling poverty rates, 2010–2022/23

NSA	Population			Black share			Homeownership			Poverty rate			COI score	
	2010	2022	Chg %	2010 %	2023 %	Chg (pts)	2010 %	2022 %	Chg (pts)	2010 %	2022 %	Chg (pts)	2012	2023
Adair Park/Pittsburgh	3,433	4,206	+23%	92%	75%	-17	21%	28%	+6	3%	3%	0	1	22
Westview	2,836	3,122	+10%	97%	77%	-20	38%	49%	+11	29%	27%	-2	2	32
West End	4,175	4,910	+12%	93%	76%	-18	19%	38%	+19	24%	24%	0	4	33
Carver Hills/Rockdale/West Highlands	3,587	5,019	+40%	91%	64%	-27	28%	32%	+4	27%	22%	-5	1	35
Hunter Hills / Mozley Park	3,865	4,129	+7%	95%	74%	-21	33%	45%	+13	10%	13%	+3	4	36
East Lake / Villages at East Lake	4,388	4,774	+10%	72%	48%	-24	51%	69%	+18	49%	14%	-35	34	76
East Atlanta	5,447	5,783	+6%	55%	39%	-16	64%	60%	-4	23%	2%	-21	38	77
Edgewood	3,757	5,205	+47%	58%	36%	-22	43%	49%	+7	90%	65%	-35	33	81
Kirkwood	5,994	7,485	+20%	53%	27%	-26	57%	59%	+2	22%	15%	-6	51	83
Cabbagetown / Reynoldstown	3,837	6,028	+65%	50%	28%	-22	40%	46%	+6	49%	10%	-39	50	89
Ormewood Park	3,993	4,825	+25%	38%	20%	-18	61%	76%	+15	15%	23%	+8	59	93
Average (11 NSAs)	4,120	4,954	+24%	73%	51%	-22	41%	50%	+9	32%	20%	-12	25	60

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESSIBILITY

Large Variations in Housing Affordability

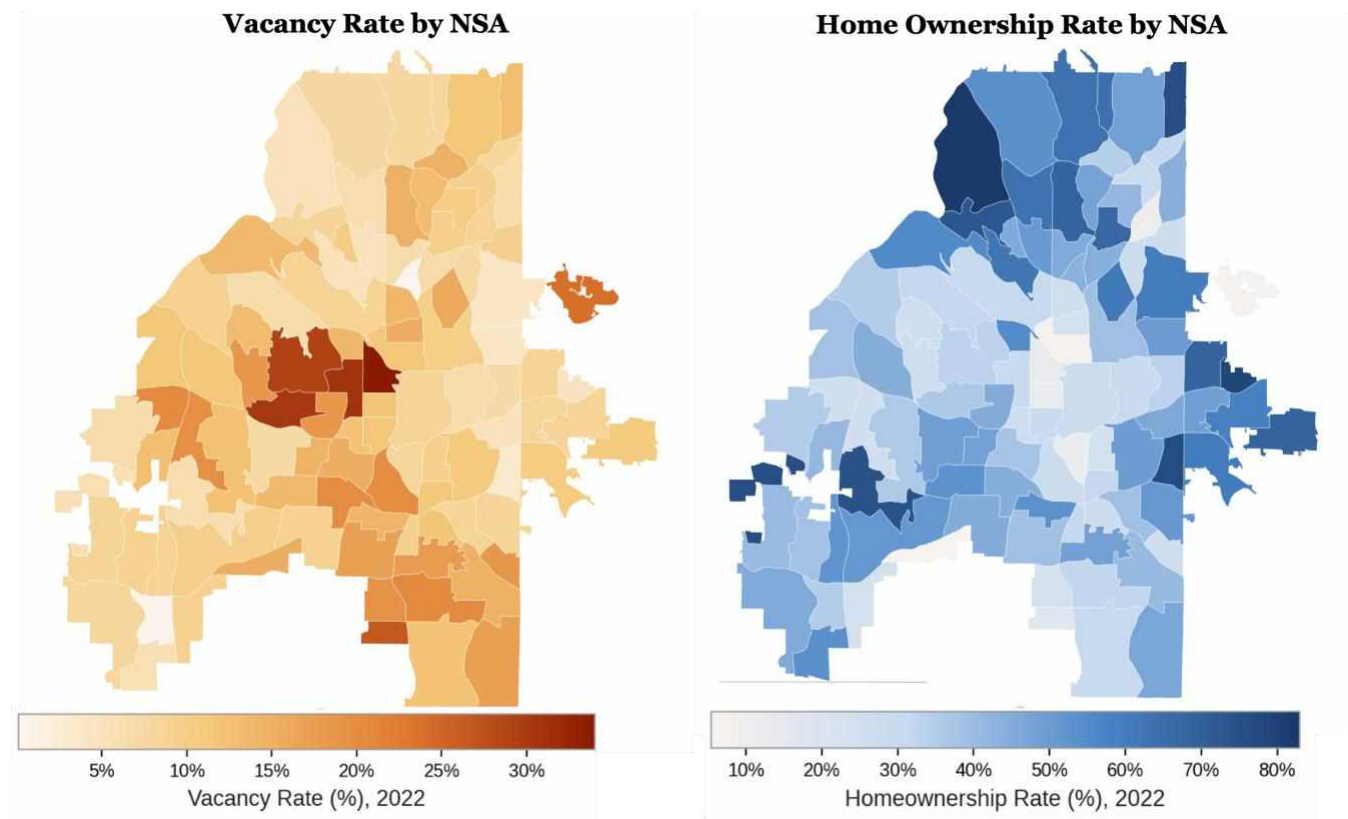
The COI tells us where opportunity exists. Housing data tells us who can access it. Together, they reveal Atlanta's central equity challenge: a city where improvements in neighborhood quality have, in many cases, directly produced losses in affordability. Atlanta's housing stock grew by nearly 30,000 units between 2010 and 2022—but that growth has not been evenly distributed across price points, geographies, or income levels, and the gap between where housing is affordable and where opportunity exists has widened over the decade.

At the same time that Atlanta's housing stock has grown, the city's vacancy rate fell significantly, dropping from 20% in 2010 to 11% in 2022, reflecting both absorption of previously vacant housing stock and continued demand pressure from population growth. But vacancy rates still vary greatly across NSAs, with some neighborhoods in the low single digits (e.g., Morningside, Underwood Hills, Lake Claire) while others have rates of nearing 30% (e.g., Bankhead, Grove Park, Dixie Hills). High vacancy rates in what are otherwise affordable neighborhoods suggest that housing costs are not the critical issue in these neighborhoods. Rather it is the living conditions—crime, school quality, lack of amenities—that are collectively undermining interest in residing in these neighborhoods.

Homeownership rates have edged up modestly, from 38% in 2010 to about 42% in 2022, though this citywide average masks wide variation—from single-digit rates in dense rental corridors near Midtown and downtown

to ownership rates above 80% in established single-family neighborhoods in Buckhead, the eastside and parts of the southwest. Some areas saw homeownership leap significantly: Chosewood Park went from 12% to 40% owner-occupied; East Lake climbed from 51% to 69%.

Neighborhood Accessibility

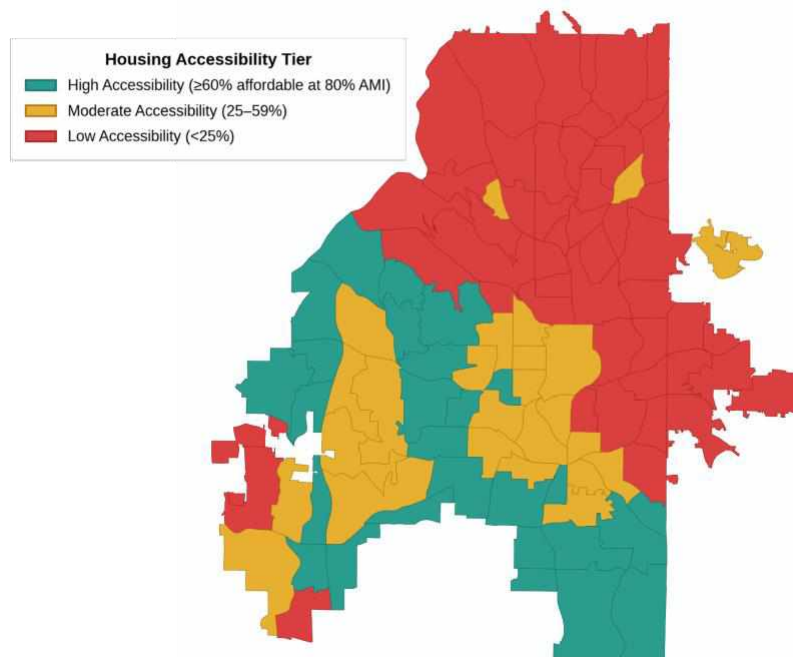


For this analysis, a neighborhood's accessibility is defined by the share of its rental units affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the Atlanta Area Median Income. The 80% AMI threshold is used because it corresponds to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of "low income" and represents the point at which housing costs become a genuine constraint on household budgets. It captures working families—teachers, healthcare workers, public employees, service industry workers—who are not in poverty but struggle to compete in a market-rate environment without spending more than 30% of their income on housing.³

Using this metric, Atlanta's 102 NSAs are classified into three tiers. High Accessibility NSAs are those where 60% or more of rental units are within reach of low-income households—neighborhoods where working-class families have a genuine range of options. Moderate Accessibility NSAs fall between 25% and 60%, offering some foothold for lower-income renters but with a constrained supply. Low Accessibility NSAs fall below 25% and represent neighborhoods that are effectively closed to low- and moderate-income households.

Of Atlanta's 102 NSAs, 50 fall into the Low Accessibility tier, 25 have Moderate Accessibility, and 27 have High Accessibility. The geographic pattern is not random—it is almost perfectly aligned with the city's north-south opportunity divide.

³ The 30% threshold is the long-standing federal standard used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Census Bureau to define cost burdened households.

Housing Accessibility by NSA

The 50 Low Accessibility NSAs are concentrated almost entirely in north Atlanta, the intown Beltline corridor, and the eastside neighborhoods that have gentrified most rapidly over the past decade. All but one of the 34 Sustained High Opportunity NSAs fall into the Low Accessibility tier. These neighborhoods — Buckhead, Virginia-Highland, Morningside, Midtown, Old Fourth Ward, Kirkwood, East Lake, and Cabbagetown among them—contain 63% of the city's rental housing stock but are effectively inaccessible to low-income households. In the most exclusive northern NSAs, fewer than 1% of rental units are affordable at 80% AMI. The 11 gentrifying NSAs sit mostly in this tier as well: East Lake, Kirkwood, Ormewood Park, Edgewood, East

Atlanta, and Cabbagetown/Reynoldstown have all crossed below the 25% threshold, with accessibility rates now ranging from 5% to 11%. These were working-class rental neighborhoods as recently as a decade ago.

The 27 High Accessibility NSAs are concentrated in Atlanta's south and southwest—in the very neighborhoods that score lowest on the Child Opportunity Index, carry the highest vacancy rates, and have seen the greatest population loss. The most accessible neighborhoods in the city—South River Gardens, Bankhead Courts, Thomasville Heights, Hammond Park, Campbellton Road, and the Fairburn-area NSAs—are also among those with the greatest structural disadvantage. Collectively, the Highly Accessible tier contains only 17% of the city's rental units, even though it serves the largest share of the city's low-income population.

The Moderate Accessibility tier—occupying much of the city's south-central and west-central areas—provides the most nuanced picture. NSAs like Vine City, Mechanicsville, English Avenue, and West End remain in this category, offering meaningful accessibility while also being closer to the city's employment centers and undergoing active investment. Several of the gentrifying westside NSAs—Adair Park/Pittsburgh, Hunter Hills/Mozley Park, and West End—are currently in this tier, but their trajectory is downward: as investment continues and rents rise, they are likely to join the Low Accessibility category within the next decade.

Taken together, the map illustrates that accessibility and opportunity in Atlanta do not coexist in the same geographies. Low-income families can find affordable housing in the city, but only by concentrating in neighborhoods where schools underperform, vacancy is high, and the structural conditions for economic mobility are weakest. The neighborhoods where opportunity is greatest are precisely those from which low-income households are being systematically excluded.

CONCLUSION

Neighborhood Health is Improving, But Challenges Remain

Atlanta's story over the past decade is one of genuine progress shadowed by persistent inequity. The city's overall Child Opportunity Index score rose 21 points. New housing was built. Parks and trails transformed neglected corridors by providing amenities that attract investment and residents alike. By almost any aggregate measure, Atlanta became a better city in which to raise a child.

Importantly, the distribution of opportunity across Atlanta neighborhoods became more equal between 2012 and 2023. The largest gains occurred among historically low-opportunity neighborhoods, resulting in a substantial reduction in overall geographic inequality. The city's Gini coefficient—which measures geographic inequality across the entire distribution of NSAs—fell from .55 in 2012 to .38 in 2023. While significant disparities remain, the average Atlanta neighborhood today is substantially healthier than it was a decade ago.

But aggregate measures can obscure as much as they reveal. Although opportunity became more evenly distributed across Atlanta between 2012 and 2023, the paths neighborhoods followed were remarkably different. Some historically distressed communities experienced substantial improvements in opportunity, while others saw only limited progress. At the same time, many of the city's highest-opportunity neighborhoods continued to strengthen, and several revitalizing neighborhoods became increasingly unaffordable to long-time residents.

Eleven neighborhoods improved dramatically, and in doing so became unaffordable to many of the families who lived through the hard years that preceded their renaissance. Nearly half of the city's housing stock is now beyond reach of households earning the area's median income. Atlanta became both more opportunity-rich and more affordable-housing constrained at the same time.

Atlanta has articulated an ambitious goal: to become the best major city in the country to thrive and raise every child. This report makes clear what achieving that goal requires. It is not enough to improve neighborhood conditions in the aggregate. It is not enough to celebrate the transformation of once-distressed communities if those transformations displace the families they are meant to serve. The goal demands that every child in Atlanta—in Thomasville Heights as well as Buckhead, in Grove Park as well as Virginia-Highland—grows up in a neighborhood that gives them a genuine chance to lead a healthy, happy and productive life.

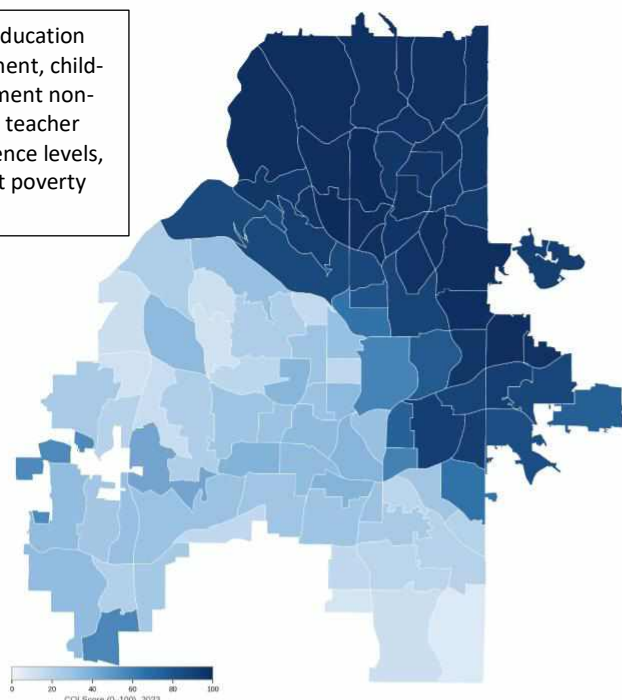
That is a harder task than what the past decade has accomplished. It requires sustained investment in the neighborhoods that Atlanta's growth has largely passed by. It requires housing policy that can produce affordability at scale—not just in the neighborhoods where the market already delivers it, but in the neighborhoods where rising opportunity would otherwise price out the people who need it most. And it requires the will to measure progress not by average outcomes, but by the distance between the city's best and worst neighborhoods.

Atlanta's success will ultimately be measured not by how prosperous its strongest neighborhoods become, but by whether every neighborhood becomes a place where every child has a genuine opportunity to thrive.

Appendix – COI Sub-domain Scores for 2023

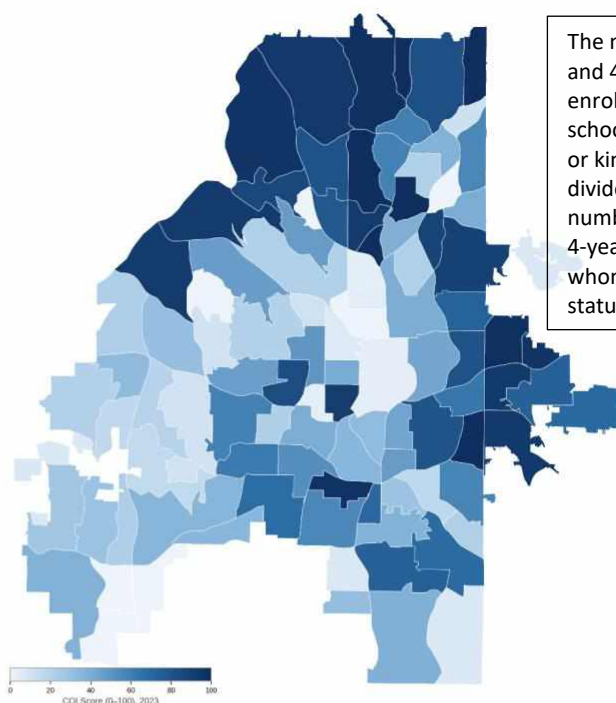
Educational Resources

Adult education attainment, child-enrichment non-profits, teacher experience levels, student poverty rates



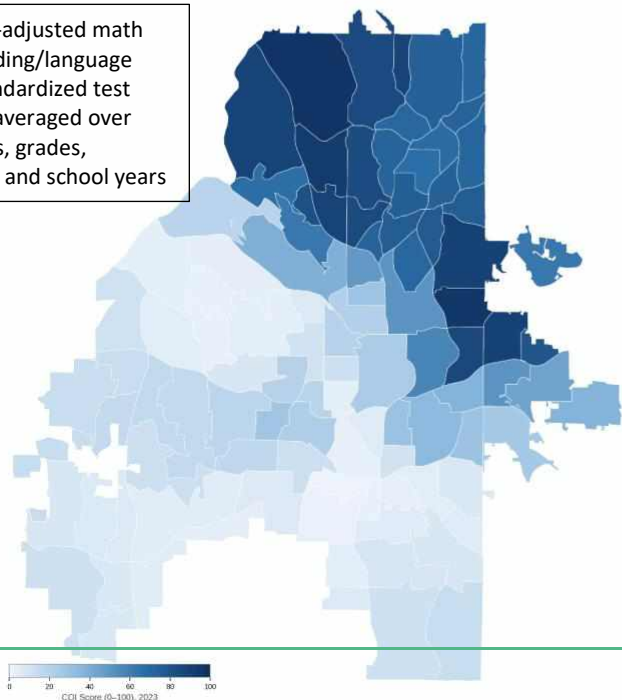
Early Education

The number of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten divided by the number of 3- and 4-year-olds for whom enrollment status is known



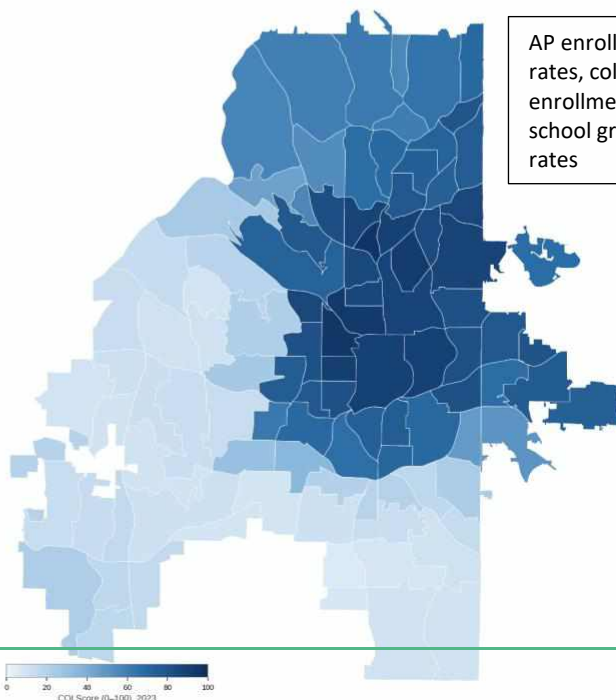
Elementary Education

Poverty-adjusted math and reading/language arts standardized test scores, averaged over students, grades, subjects and school years



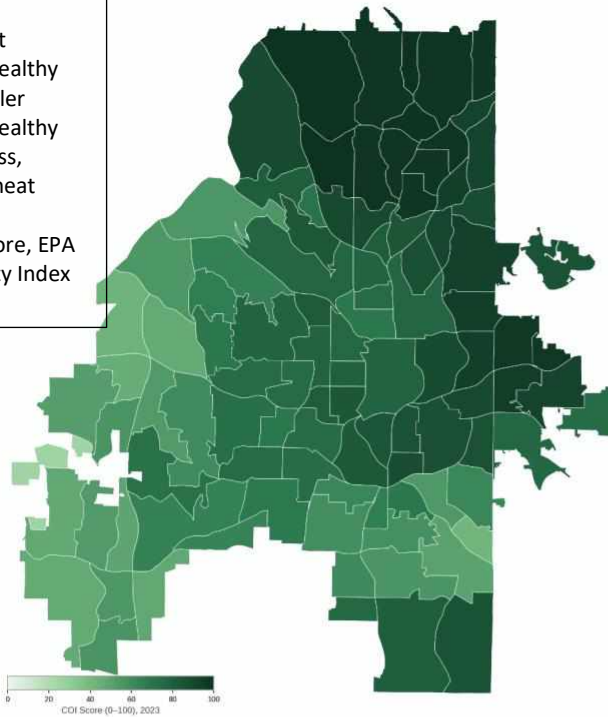
Secondary and Post Secondary Education

AP enrollment rates, college enrollment, high school graduation rates



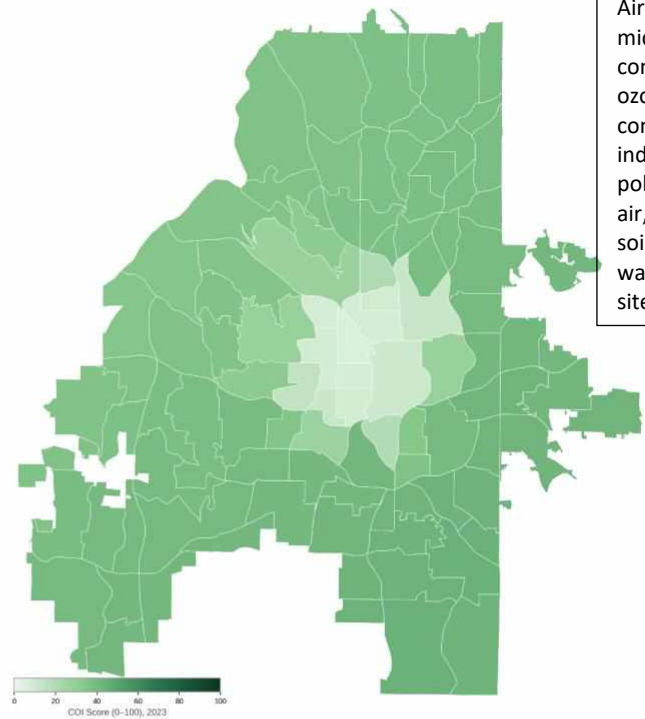
Health Environment

Fast food restaurant density, healthy food retailer density, healthy food access, extreme heat exposure, NatureScore, EPA Walkability Index score



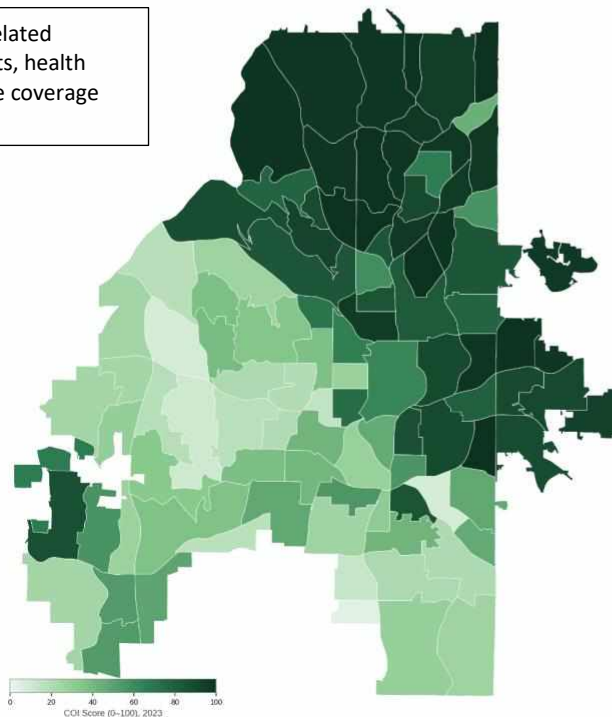
Pollution

Airborne microparticle concentration, ozone concentration, industrial pollutants in air, water and soil, hazardous waste dump sites



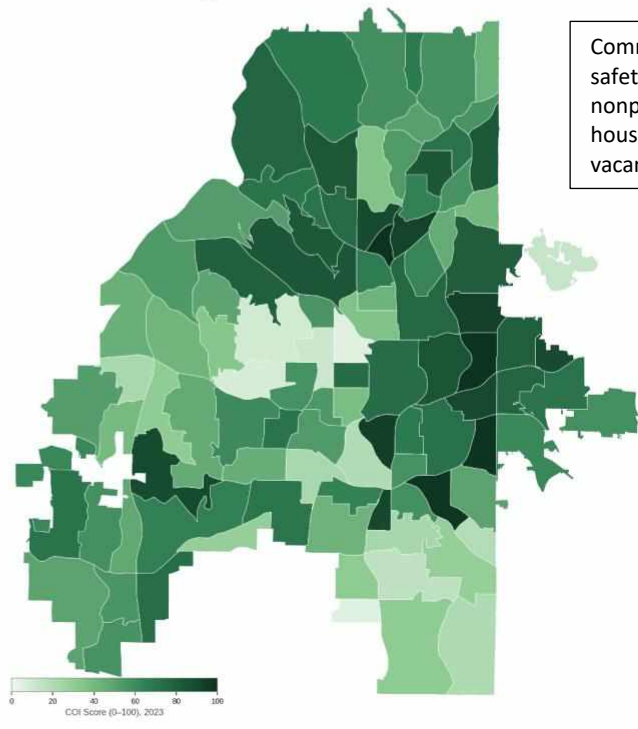
Health Resources

Health-related nonprofits, health insurance coverage rate



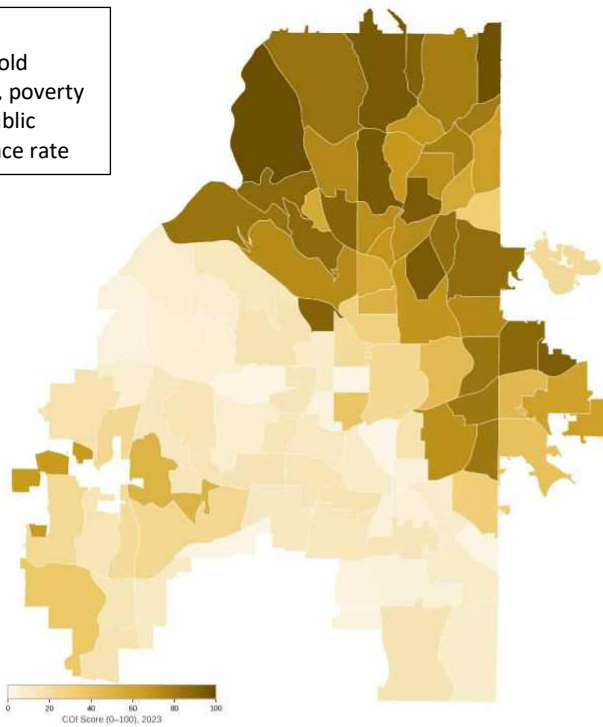
Safety-Related Resources

Community safety-related nonprofits, housing vacancy rate



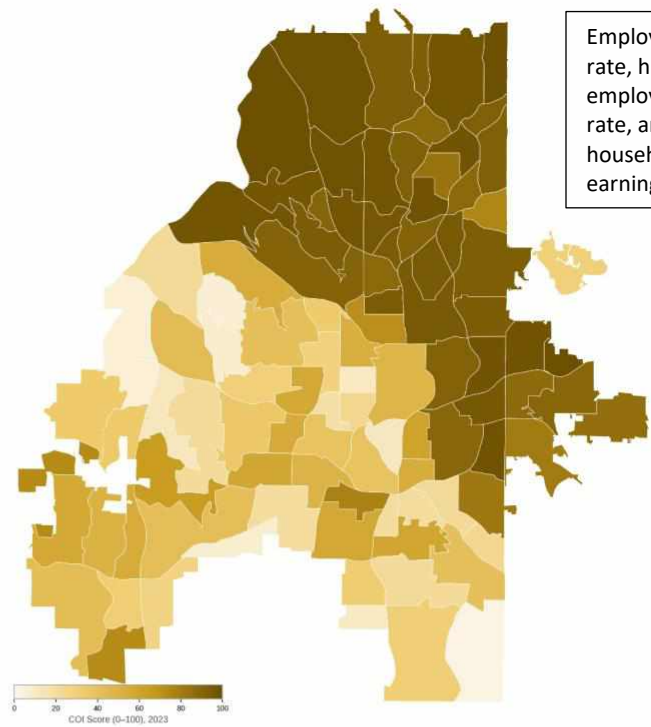
Economic Resources

Median household income, poverty rate, public assistance rate



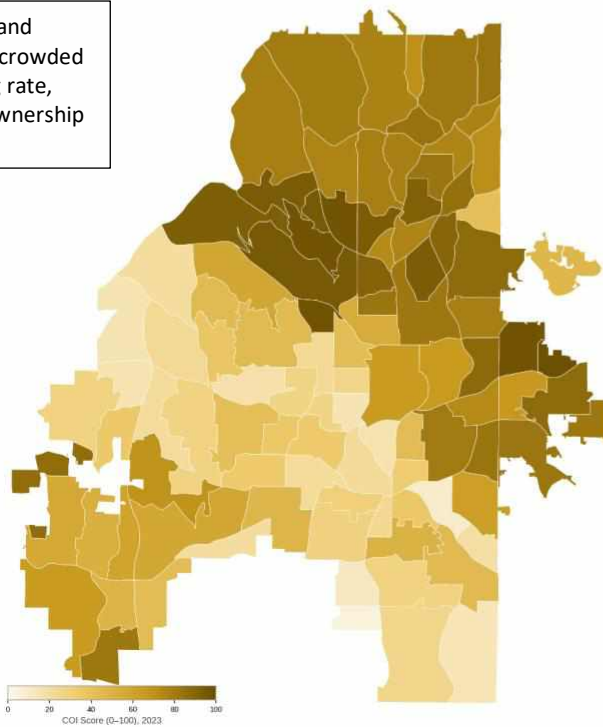
Employment

Employment rate, high skill employment rate, annual household earnings



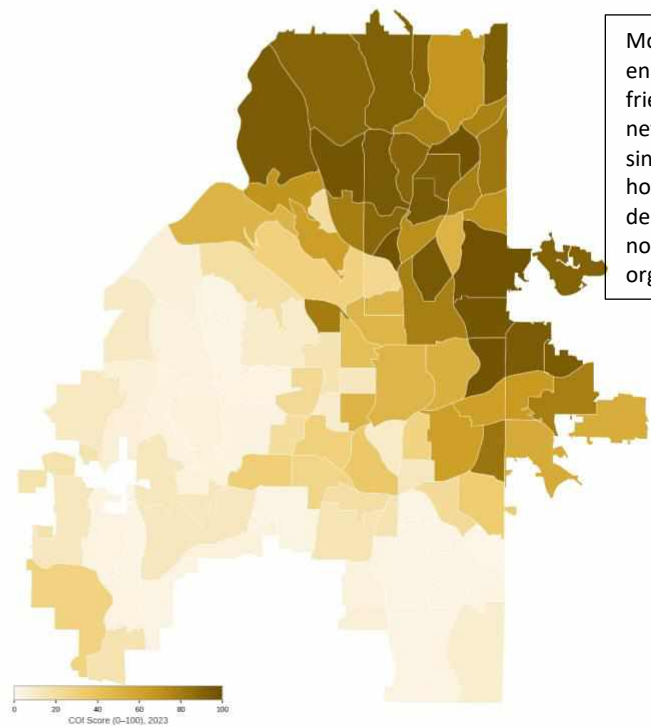
Housing Resources

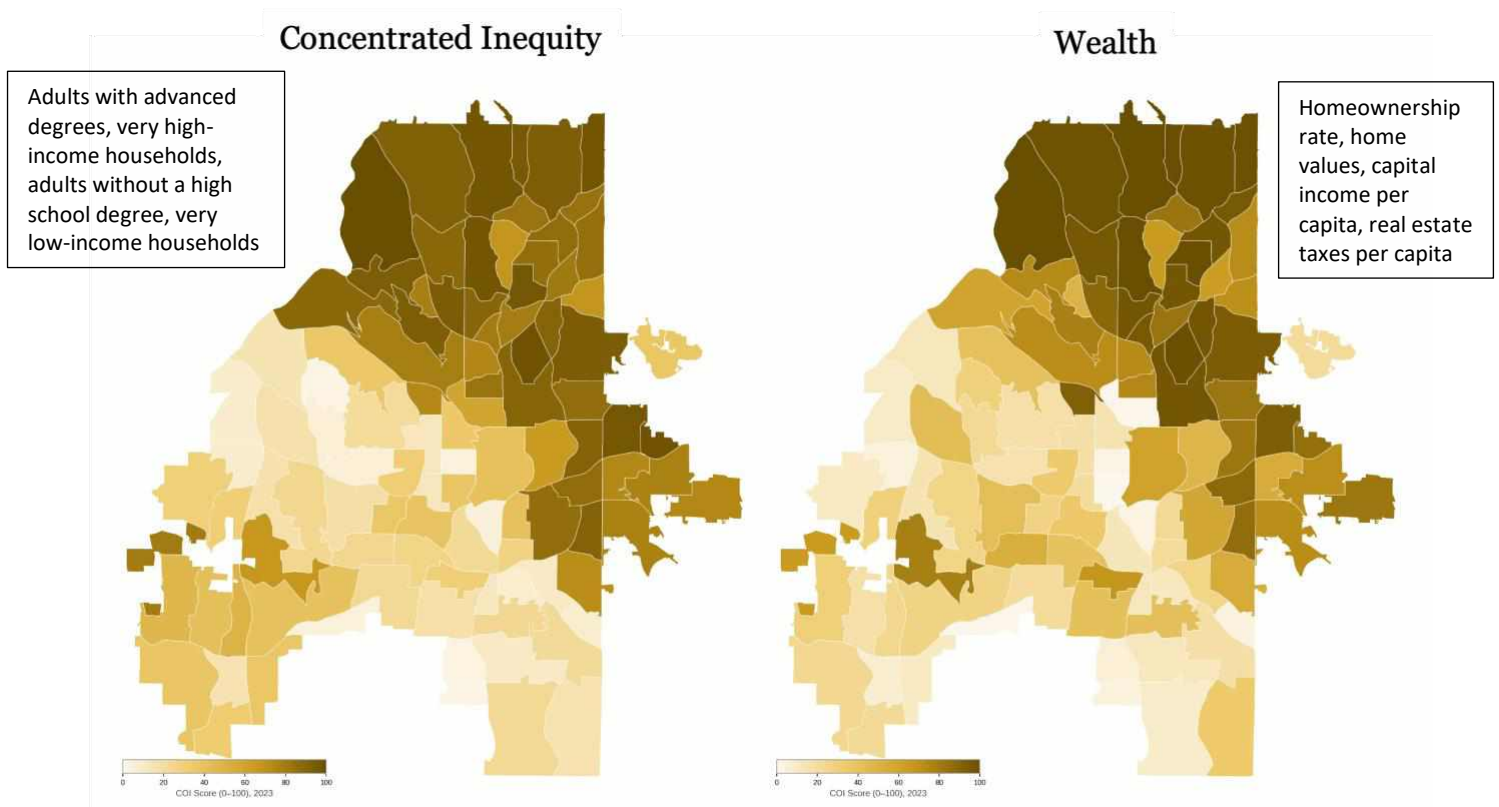
Broadband access, crowded housing rate, homeownership rate



Social Resources

Mobility-enhancing friendship networks, single-headed households, density of nonprofit organizations





Technical Appendix

This report combines two principal data sources: the Child Opportunity Index (COI), tracking neighborhood conditions from 2012 to 2023, and U.S. Census Bureau demographic data spanning 2010 to 2022. The COI, developed by diversitydatakids.org and maintained by Boston University's Institute for Equity in Child Opportunity, synthesizes 44 place-based indicators across the Education, Social & Economic and Health & Environment domains. Scores range from 0 to 100 and are normalized at national, state, and metropolitan levels. This report uses nationally-normed scores. For descriptions and sources for the 44 indicators deployed, please see [Child Opportunity Index 3.0 Technical Documentation](#).

Census data derive from the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Censuses and the 2023 American Community Survey five-year estimates. The analysis examines 102 Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs) aggregated from Atlanta's 245 named neighborhoods. The Airport NSA is excluded.

Housing affordability data is drawn from Zillow and calibrated against HUD's published Area Median Income figures for the Atlanta metropolitan area. Accessibility tiers are defined using the share of rental units affordable at 80% AMI (High: $\geq 60\%$; Moderate: 25–59%; Low: $< 25\%$).

Child Opportunity Index (COI) by Neighborhood Statistical Area

2023 overall COI score, change since 2012, and 2023 domain scores (nationally normed)

Neighborhood Statistical Area (NSA)	2023 Overall COI Score	Change in COI Score Since 2012	2023 Education Domain Score	2023 Health & Environment Domain Score	2023 Social & Economic Domain Score
Margaret Mitchell, Paces, Pleasant Hill	100	3	96	97	100
Brookhaven	100	6	96	99	100
Wyngate	99	3	98	97	99
Peachtree Heights East, Peachtree Hills	99	6	97	96	98
Kingswood, Mt. Paran/Northside, Mt. Paran Parkway, Randall Mill, West Paces Ferry/Northside, Whitewater Creek	99	1	97	98	96
Candler Park, Druid Hills	98	9	98	99	97
Chastain Park, Tuxedo Park	98	8	97	96	98
East Chastain Park	98	3	98	100	97
Lake Claire	98	8	96	99	97
Ansley Park, Sherwood Forest	98	9	90	94	99
Collier Hills, Collier Hills North, Colonial Homes	98	10	98	99	95
Brandon, Castlewood, Westminster/Milmar, Woodfield	98	3	94	100	94
Morningside/Lenox Park	98	3	98	95	96
Buckhead Village, Peachtree Park	97	22	93	96	97
Inman Park, Poncey-Highland	97	8	97	100	94
Ardmore, Brookwood	96	11	99	98	92
Channing Valley, Memorial Park, Springlake, Wildwood	95	3	96	98	93
Atkins Park, Virginia Highland	95	3	97	89	91
North Buckhead	95	3	92	94	94
Garden Hills	94	21	91	91	94
Ormeadow Park	93	34	86	100	91
Piedmont Heights	93	31	94	94	90
Midtown	93	7	83	84	94
Underwood Hills	90	11	84	92	90
Pine Hills	90	28	89	97	86
Westover Plantation	90	25	85	84	90
Peachtree Heights West	89	8	88	96	84
Cabbagetown, Reynoldstown	89	39	82	95	89
Lindbergh/Morosgo	88	46	90	95	83
Brookwood Hills	88	0	88	99	81
Buckhead Forest, South Tuxedo Park	87	12	84	96	84
Buckhead Heights, Lenox, Ridgedale Park	86	2	81	68	89
Grant Park, Oakland	85	27	82	93	81
Kirkwood	83	32	79	91	81
Bolton, Riverside, Whittier Mill Village	82	42	69	73	85
Berkeley Park, Blandtown, Hills Park	81	11	76	90	79
Edgewood	81	48	86	94	71
Lindridge/Martin Manor	80	25	92	64	68
Cross Creek	79	3	90	87	68
Home Park	79	19	70	75	79
Atlantic Station, Loring Heights	78	13	79	69	74
East Atlanta	77	39	80	83	70
Old Fourth Ward, Sweet Auburn	77	39	81	92	68
East Lake, The Villages at East Lake	76	42	70	87	75
Knight Park/Howell Station	65	36	17	70	81
Castleberry Hill, Downtown	56	38	61	74	49
Emory	55	-2	85	58	39
Midwest Cascade, Regency Trace	55	27	26	58	65
Cascade Heights, East Ardley Road, Green Acres Valley, Green Forest Acres, Horseshoe Community, Magnum Manor, West Manor	54	29	18	63	63
Benteen Park, Boulevard Heights, Custer/McDonough/Guice, State Facility, Woodland Hills	53	45	32	59	58
Georgia Tech, Marietta Street Artery	52	28	66	72	40
Capitol Gateway, Summerhill	45	24	66	87	34
Capitol View, Capitol View Manor	42	35	37	67	36
Princeton Lakes	37	21	21	62	37
Hunter Hills, Mozley Park	36	32	57	37	28
English Avenue	36	34	48	19	36

Neighborhood Statistical Area (NSA)	2023 Overall COI Score	Change in COI Score Since 2012	2023 Education Domain Score	2023 Health & Environment Domain Score	2023 Social & Economic Domain Score
Carver Hills, Rockdale, Scotts Crossing, West Highlands	35	34	23	53	37
Cascade Avenue/Road	33	31	28	51	31
West End	33	29	41	51	28
Arlington Estates, Ben Hill, Botner/Tell, Elanco Estates, Fairburn, Fairburn Tel, Fairway Acres, Huntington, Lake Washview	33	5	27	29	40
	32	30	35	43	29
Ashley Courts, Greenbriar Village, Niskey Cove, Niskey Lake, Atlanta University Center, The Villages at Castleberry Hill	31	6	12	80	33
	30	15	58	43	19
Bush Mountain, Oakland City	28	27	27	40	26
Peopletown	28	24	42	62	19
Adams Park, Laurens Valley, Southwest	26	20	11	52	30
Fairburn Mays, Mays	24	16	10	37	27
Ben Hill Acres, Briar Glen, Cascade Green, Heritage Valley, Meadowbrook Forest, Mt. Gilead Woods	23	11	10	39	28
Sylvan Hills	23	20	16	37	24
Adair Park, Pittsburgh	22	21	24	34	21
Ben Hill Terrace, Kings Forest, Old Fairburn Village	22	3	19	60	22
Lakewood Heights	20	19	11	39	22
Fort McPherson, Venetian Hills	19	14	16	65	14
Greenbriar	18	15	8	63	16
Beecher Hills, Florida Heights, Westwood Terrace	18	14	20	34	16
Ben Hill Forest, Ben Hill Pines, Brentwood, Deerwood, Melwood, Rue Royal, Tampa Park	17	1	6	62	15
Grove Park	17	16	13	24	21
Baker Hills, Baker's Ferry, Boulder Park, Fairburn Road/Wisla Lane, Ridgecrest Forest, Wildwood (MPU-H), Wilson Mill Meadows, Wisteria Gardens	17	15	11	32	18
Bankhead, Washington Park	16	12	37	19	13
Audobon Forest, Audobon Forest West, Chalel Woods, Harland Terrace, Peyton Forest, Westhaven	16	8	12	21	18
Armat Heights, Betmar LeVila, High Point, Joyland	15	13	14	70	10
Lakewood, Leila Valley, Norwood Manor, Rebel Valley Forest	15	14	13	27	16
Ashview Heights, Harris Chiles, Just Us	15	11	39	33	9
Atlanta Industrial Park, Bolton Hills, Brookview Heights, Chattahoochee, English Park, Lincoln Homes, Monroe	14	13	26	33	19
Chosewood Park, Englewood Manor	14	12	10	23	14
Blair Villa/Peole Creek, Glenrose Heights, Orchard Knob	13	12	8	42	13
Rosedale Heights	12	5	33	49	5
Vine City	12	6	9	21	14
Ivan Hill	10	9	7	66	8
South Atlanta, The Villages at Carver	10	8	10	16	13
Coller Heights	9	7	14	22	8
Browns Mill Park, Polar Rock, Swallow Circle/Baywood	8	7	23	66	3
Mechanicsville	8	7	18	15	6
Odde Hills, Penelope Neighbors, West Lake	8	7	5	35	9
South River Gardens	7	6	2	52	7
Almond Park, Carey Park	6	5	2	43	7
Center Hill, Harvel Homes Community	6	5	8	30	5
Bankhead Courts, Bankhead/Bolton, Carroll Heights, Fairburn	5	4	6	20	5
Adamsville, Oakcliff	4	3	6	25	4
Thomasville Heights	4	3	2	22	5
Parkerson	3	2	4	26	3
Campbellton Road, Fort Valley, Pomona Park	1	0	4	3	3
Hammond Park					