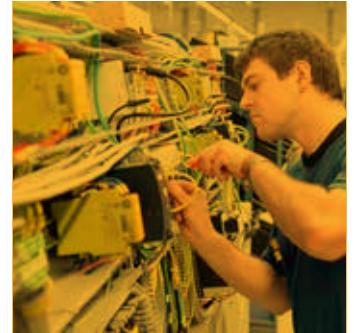


# *Pathways to Prosperity*

## ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY, GEORGIA

a member community in the Network for Southern Economic Mobility



**DRAFT**

Version 4.0

2/1/2019



# *A Message from the team*

On behalf of the Network for Southern Economic Mobility Athens Team, we are honored to share this report on the status of economic mobility in Athens along with our recommendations to move the community forward.

Over the past three years, our multi-disciplinary team has studied economic and social mobility by analyzing community data and surveying lived experience. We've worked along side three other southeastern cities (Chattanooga, TN; Greenville, SC; and Jacksonville, FL) sharing their findings, building ideas and creating a strong case for deliberate action. This report consolidates those findings and organizes the recommendations into five influencing factors. We believe there is more human potential in Athens than is currently finding opportunities for success. Through this work we hope to better illuminate these opportunities and build stronger pathways to prosperity.

**A present and growing challenge.** Athens is a vibrant and thriving community. Our population growth, active civic environment and cultural amenities are all indicators of our collective success. But while we excel in many measures there are also Athenians who are left behind. High poverty rates (even when adjusted for the student population), disparities in economic outcomes between races, and lowering workforce participation all feed an strengthening cycle of poverty in Athens that limits the potential of young people born into these conditions.

**An opportunity for action.** Athens is a community that cares. As a team, we see great potential to improve the outcomes for economic and social mobility through a coordinated strategy that engages the full range of effective community actors, organizations, and institutions. We view this report as the beginning of a conversation that will forge greater understanding of the issues and a shared sense of ownership in the outcomes.

We are grateful for this opportunity to share our thoughts and findings to envision better ways of empowering our young citizens' future economic and social prospects.

Best Regards,

The Athens Team in the Network for Southern Economic Mobility

**Lawrence Harris**  
Clarke County School District

**James Barlament**  
Clarke County School District

**Suzanne Barbour**  
University of Georgia

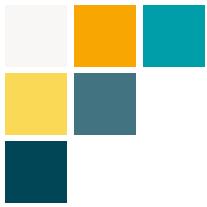
**Deborah B. Lonon**  
Athens-Clarke County Housing & Community Development

**Judge Robin Shearer**  
Athens-Clarke County Juvenile Court

**Richie Knight**  
HW Creative Marketing

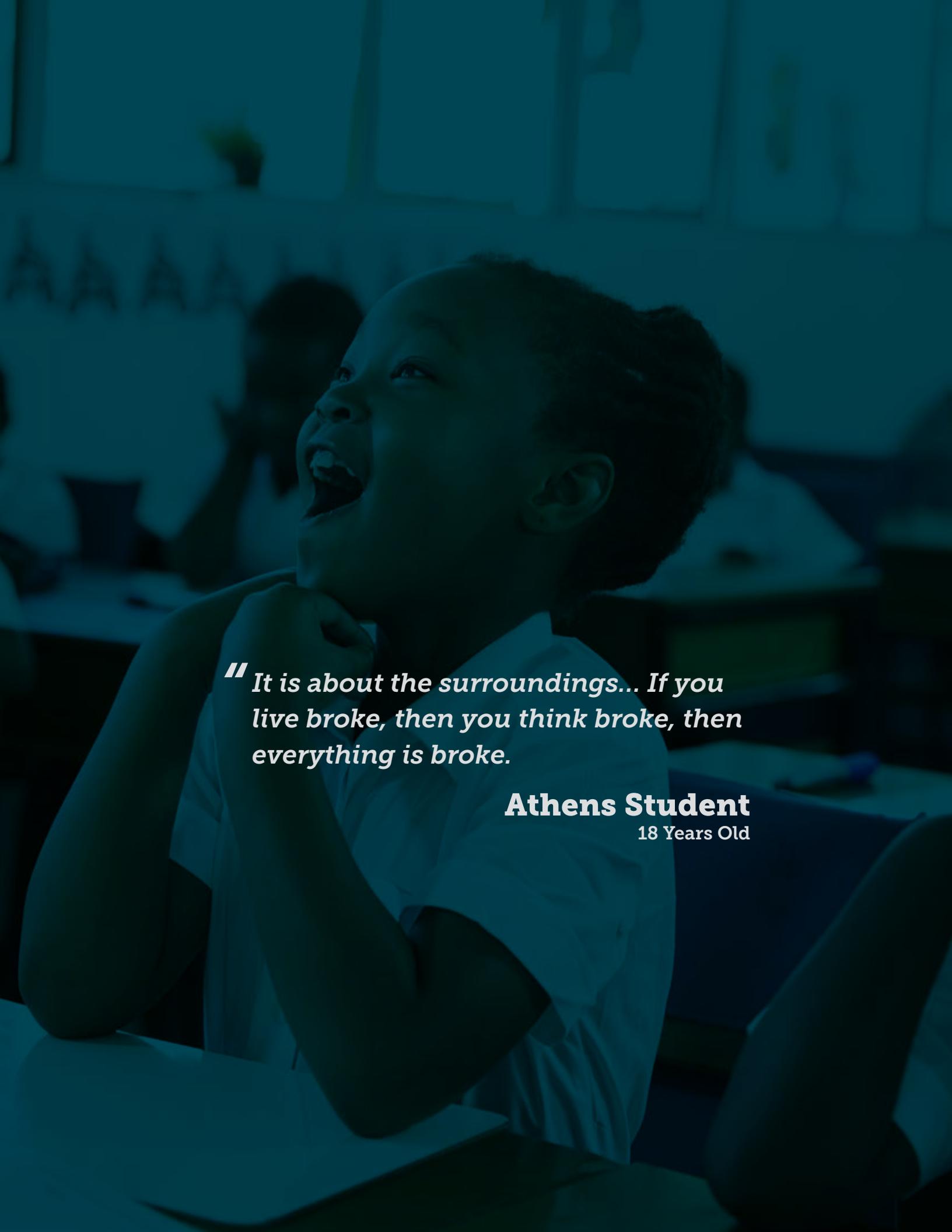
**Lemuel LaRoche**  
Chess and Community

**Michelle Nguyen**  
Athens-Clarke County Economic Development



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A young boy with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt, is sitting in a classroom. He is looking upwards and to the right with a wide, joyful smile. His head is tilted back slightly, and his eyes are closed. The background is blurred, showing other students and classroom furniture.

**“It is about the surroundings... If you live broke, then you think broke, then everything is broke.**

**Athens Student**  
18 Years Old

# What if...

*What would it mean to unlock the potential of every Athenian? If we were able to remove the artificial barriers to upward mobility, what sort of talent, ambition and creativity might we discover? By clearing the pathway to prosperity, would we find an Athens described in our oath, “**not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.**”*

**Today, we fall short...** The Athens-Clarke County poverty rate continues to rise. Forty percent of school aged children live in poverty, and their path out is muddied and steep. Consistent with national trends, Athens has seen decreases in youth economic mobility—a child’s ability to have a higher standard of living than their parents. The question is, what can we as Athenians do to level and illuminate the path of upward mobility and provide more equitable access to opportunities and advancement for our youth?

**Who we are and what we will achieve...** In July 2016, the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County learned of an opportunity to become part of a network of southeastern cities focused on improving the economic mobility of the community’s youth being formed by MDC, a nonprofit out of Chapel Hill, NC. With assistance from the Clarke County School District and the Athens Land Trust, an application was submitted. In September, the announcement was made that four cities had been accepted into the Network (NSEM): Athens-Clarke County, GA; Chattanooga, TN; Greenville, SC; and Jacksonville, FL.

The NSEM team has examined how our existing systems are reaching those young people facing the most difficult barriers to advancement, as well as the policies, systems and culture that impede their progression; and adapt or build the pathways that connect institutions and social supports, from school to rewarding employment. Ultimately, the team strives to eliminate the barriers that keep a high percentage of low-income young people from rising into the middle class.

THE ATHENS NETWORK FOR SOUTHERN ECONOMIC MOBILITY TEAM



The NSEM team meets to discuss their vision in June 2017. The team developed its findings and recommendations over a multi-year research period that included interviews, data analysis and best practice research.

The team is accountable to the Athens Clarke County Unified Government and the Clarke County School District as joint funding providers, and to the youth of Athens-Clarke County community.

Guided by principles of transparency, empowerment and respect, the team is committed to being open and honest with data and recommendations regardless of content, and representing the beliefs and ideas from both the its experiences as well as others. The team strives to offer a holistic approach to improving youth and young adult economic mobility and is dedicated to incorporating the entire community without judgment—accepting of all differences. The team aims to work in conjunction with other community efforts, while maintaining our focus on economic mobility for youth.





Our challenge...

# ECONOMIC MOBILITY

*A better life through striving?*

Where you start doesn't always describe you finish. Success through striving hits at the heart of the American promise and is a fundamental component of our national narrative. Hard work secures a livable income and this income creates wealth. Children inherit tangible benefits through inheritance, but perhaps—more importantly—they learn from their parents what it took to build that wealth. Economic mobility is a generational process. It refers to both the opportunity for, and the speed of, movement up and down the income ladder.

## A shared and growing challenge ...

In America, children's prospects of earning more than their parents has fallen from 90% to 50% over the past half century; and between black and white children, significant disparities exist. Black children have much lower rates of upward mobility and higher rates of downward mobility. Today, these disparities in the United States make a clear case for how economic, social and family factors influence your earning potential and ability to succeed.

### *Stuck in place...*

The determinants of upward mobility are disproportionately affecting minority youth. For five racial and ethnic groups, people of Hispanic ethnicity and Non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, Asians, and American Indians; the Equality of Opportunity Study found, Black and American Indian children have substantially lower rates of upward mobility than the other racial groups. Black children born to parents in the bottom household income quintile have a 2.5% chance of rising to the top quintile of household income, compared with 10.6% for white children. Despite significant economic growth from the national recession in 2008, decreases in poverty have stalled leaving around 37 million Americans earning at or below the poverty rate.

### *Racial disparities...*

Black and white men have very different outcomes even if they grow up in two-parent families with comparable incomes, education, and wealth; live on the same city block; and attend the same school. In 99% of neighborhoods in the United States, black men earn less in adulthood than white men who grow up in families with comparable income; and black boys have lower rates of upward mobility than white boys in 99% of Census tracts in the Country. All of this contributes to growing economic disparities. According to the Congressional Research Service, "In 2015, black and Hispanic households were disproportionately in lower income quintiles ... whereas white and Asian households were disproportionately in higher".

CHILDREN WHO MAKE  
MORE THAN THEIR  
PARENTS



The likelihood of a child earning more than their parents decreased from 90 to 50 percent from 1940

PERCENT OF PLACES IN THE  
US WHERE BLACK MALES  
GROW UP TO MAKE LESS THAN  
WHITE MALES

**99%**

Even when born into relatively similar environmental and economic circumstances

BLACK CHILDREN BORN  
INTO HIGH POVERTY  
NEIGHBORHOODS

**1 in 3**

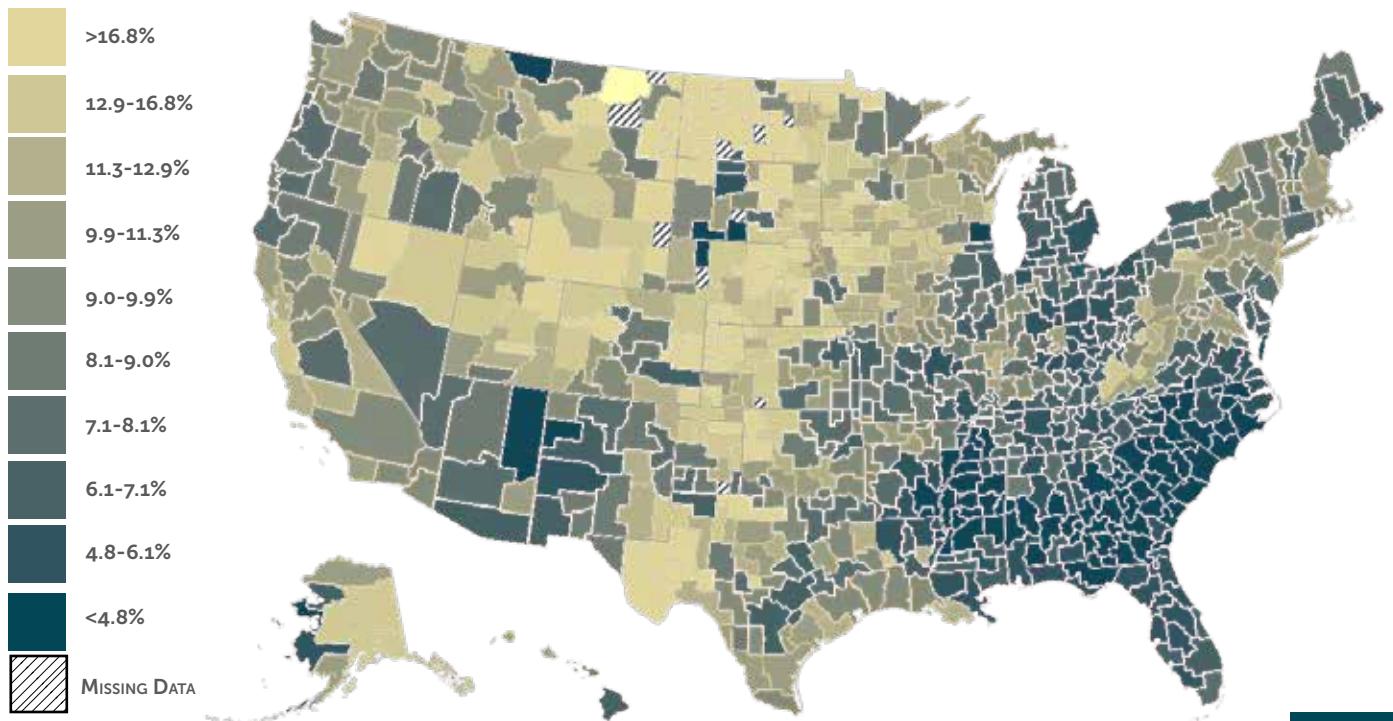
Close to a 33 percent of Black children born between 1985 and 2000 were raised in high-poverty neighborhoods compared with just 1 percent of whites

## Less favorable outcomes in the South...

The decrease in upward income mobility is not evenly spread across the country. Rather certain regions are seeing more dramatic effects than others. The South has among the highest poverty rates in the country; and the Southeast United States, including Georgia and Athens, performs less

favorably in expected economic mobility outcomes. According to the Washington Center for Equitable Growth (2014), children born to low-income families in southeastern states have less favorable expected economic mobility outcomes.

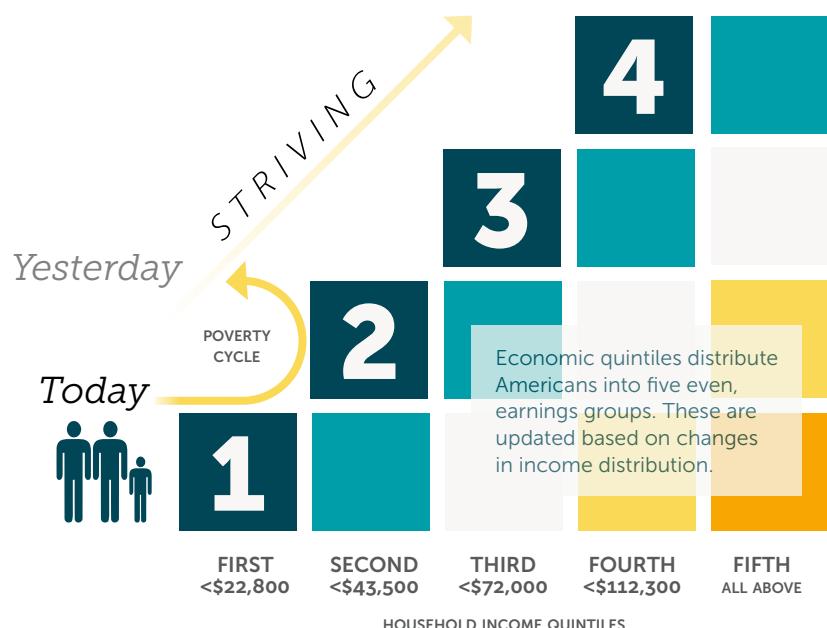
A CHILD'S CHANCES OF REACHING TOP 20% OF INCOME DISTRIBUTION GIVEN PARENTS IN BOTTOM 20%



Source: Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective. Chetty, Hendren, Jones, and Porter (2018).

## A cycle of poverty?

These trends contribute to an intergenerational treadmill of poverty, where the step from first income quintile to the second is increasingly steep. Slow wage growth, shifting employment sectors, and off-shoring of industry are all contributing to a stickier floor on the lowest income step. For people of color, who are already starting from behind, this cycle is especially acute. The determining factors, explored later, can create artificial hurdles (like housing cost or transportation access) that solidify one's long-term economic position.



## Focusing on Athens

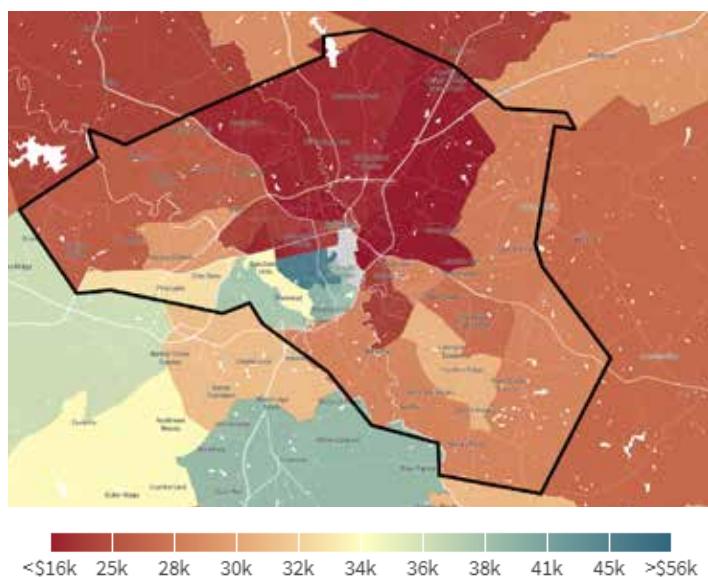
*In many ways, the story in Athens mirrors national trends. Much like the rest of the United States, Athens-Clarke County has seen decreases in economic mobility, especially among minority youth. In a community with low unemployment and a strong mix of major employers, this gap in achievement is perplexing. The following provides the key conditions and trends in Athens related to economic mobility.*

### Starting from behind...

Children from all households in Athens not making a living wage have about a 39% chance of earning a living wage in their lifetime. The greatest issue is that 57.4% of African American households and 63.5% of Hispanic households do not make a living wage, leaving these children at much higher risk of struggling through their lives, and thereby creating intergenerational poverty.

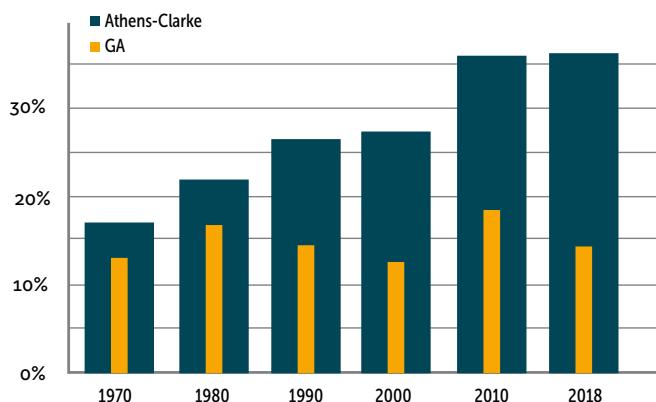
Poverty in the community is still high (37%), even when adjusted for the student population (28%). Close to 40% of children aged 5 to 17 live in poverty, an increase of more than 90% from 2000; and nearly 12% of all children live in a household where no parent has full-time, year-round employment. From 2011-2015, 40.9% of children lived in a single parent home.

#### AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR ADULTS BORN INTO LOW INCOME



Source: US Census, Opportunity Insights, "Opportunity Atlas"

#### POVERTY RATES IN ATHENS FROM 1970



Source: ACS Poverty Data Tables.

### Failure to Launch...

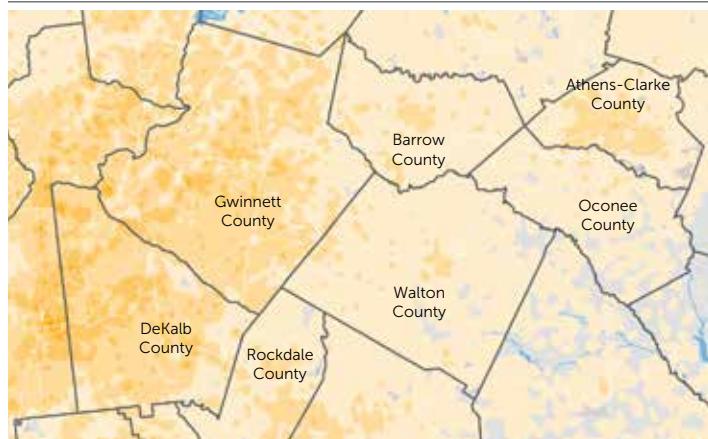
In 2018, 79% percent of CCSD students graduated from high school, compared to the state of Georgia's graduation rate of almost 81%. In Athens-Clarke County (2016), 90% of those identifying as white alone have a high school diploma or equivalent. Of those identifying as black alone, 78% have a high school diploma or equivalent.

Data reveals that around 19% of all black students in Clarke County are served through special education; and black students comprised 71% of all elementary-level students who were placed on an administrative timeout—a tool often used instead of out-of-school suspensions for younger students. At the middle and high school level, black students (49% of the student population) accounted for almost 82% of students who received an out-of-school suspension, a disciplinary tactic that can be extremely disruptive to youths learning.

## Missed Connections...

Young adults who don't seek post-secondary education often have higher levels of unemployment, and are more vulnerable to economic downturns than their college-going counterparts. In 2016, 59% of Clarke County School District (CCSD) graduates went to college/university, compared to 62% as a state average. In 2011, of CCSD students who attended, only 12.5% earned a post-secondary credential in 4 years; and 53% had not earned a credential after 5 years and were no longer enrolled. In 2015, the majority of students graduating from institutions in Athens-Clarke County were white—almost 8 times more than the next closest race/ethnicity group.

### WHERE ATHENS WORKERS LIVE

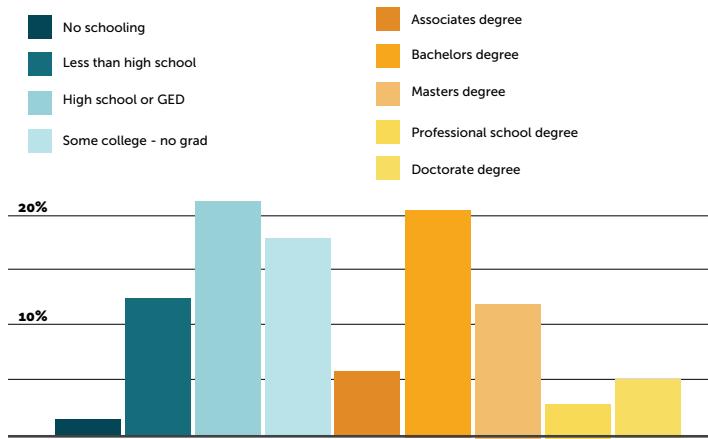


Source: On The Map Census 2015

## A struggle passed on...

In a 5-year comparison with data from 2010, there has been a statistically significant increase in Athens-Clarke County workers in service occupations (from 19.9% of the labor force to 22.2%). In 2016, 17% of paid employees worked in the accommodation and food services industry. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, accommodation and food services employees have a median income of \$19,910 to \$25,090 in the United States. Whether or not this is enough to keep a family out of poverty, depends on the size of the household. Currently, the federal poverty guideline for a family of three is \$20,780. For a family of four, the guideline is \$25,100. For a family of four, this amount of income equates to a full-time hourly salary of around \$13, however; the minimum wage in Athens-Clarke County is only \$7.25, making minimum wage job earnings significantly lower than the federal poverty lines.

### EDUCATION ATTAINMENT DETAILED COMPARISON (AGE 25+)



Source: 2017 American Community Survey

## Casting a wider net...

Despite the demand for Athenians in the workforce, Athens-Clarke County labor force participation has fallen from 64.8% (2000) to 56.3% (2016); and over 40,000 workers commute from outside communities. This inbound commuting has increased by 25 percent from 2002 and includes workers traveling more 50 miles one way. Why aren't these opportunities held by Athenians? An explanation offered by employers—local youth are not prepared for the dynamic work environment and many do not have the skills required by our local employers.

## A cycle of poverty in Athens?

Athenians who start from behind are far less likely to escape poverty in their lifetimes. Structural and inherited disadvantages lead to difficulty in achieving basic credentials and missed career connections later on. Lower wages and fewer hours coupled with rising costs of living (housing, healthcare, etc.) create significant downward pressure on low-income residents. As the data indicates, these trends disproportionately impact people of color whose odds of escaping into the top 20 percent of wage earners in their lifetime, is less than two percent. The trends, however, are not destiny. The following section focuses on the challenge through five determining factors and one crosscutting issue.

## A Way Forward

*Improving youth economic mobility in Athens-Clarke County will not be a simple or quick process. This challenge is intergenerational and will require long-term collaboration and community investment. The contributing factors to this challenge are equally diverse. Combatting the issue will mean pressing against the regional and national tide, while also evaluating barriers specific to Athens. This section introduces one way (but not the only way) of dividing the work. Youth in Athens are born into an ecosystem of systemic and environmental factors that all contribute to that individual's potential. This section and the remainder of the report focuses on each of these factors, its conditions and trends, existing programs and policies, and where the community has the opportunity to do more.*

### FAMILY SUPPORT

A stable and supportive family unit can nurture the development of a young person, helping them reach their full potential and provide more opportunities to their future children. By setting strong expectations, demonstrating important skills, and providing ongoing support and encouragement the family - whatever form it takes - is the wellspring of individual success. This determining factor includes several sub-topics outlined to the right.

#### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Family Assistance Programs
- Homelessness
- Trauma Support
- Household Types
- Mental Health Services

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Effective workforce development connects the community and individuals to a range of available and expanding employment opportunities, where full employment pays a livable wage and residents provide businesses with a needed and reliable workforce. This determining factor includes several sub-topics outlined to the right.

#### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Employment and Labor Force
- Shift in Major Employment Industries
- Poverty Rates
- Earnings
- Livable Wages

## S T A B I L I T Y

Every individual is surrounded by invisible systems that contribute to or detract from their personal prosperity and opportunity. These phenomena are not unique to Athens, but express themselves here in varying intensity. Issues related to housing, transportation, food access, and the justice system are hyper-complicated and involve a web of actors, organizations, and policies. Together they have an inordinate effect on young people as they establish, or weaken, the foundation for their growth. This determining factor includes several sub-topics outlined to the right.

## E D U C A T I O N

A college graduate can expect to earn twice as much in a lifetime than someone with a high school diploma. In Athens, only one-in-four residents born into a low-income family achieve a four-year degree. This group has lower rates of high school graduation, lower test scores through primary education, and is not generally as prepared to enter kindergarten. Advancing while still behind, students push through but are left with little opportunity at the end. This determining factor includes several sub-topics outlined to the right.

## S O C I A L C A P I T A L

A community is made up of overlapping webs of social networks. These connections are a safety net to those in need of on-going communication with those in power. Without engagement and communication, the social capital of a community is wasted or missed. This determining factor includes several sub-topics outlined to the right.

## *Crosscutting factor: Race & Equity*

Economic outcomes for Black and Hispanic / Latinx residents are worse than their White counterparts. A number of factors (especially including the five determining factors identified previously) play into this disparity. This is a crosscutting factor and is present in each of the five other determinants.

### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Housing Affordability
- Transportation
- Access to Healthy Foods
- Incarceration & the Justice Cycle

### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Early Childhood Education
- Chronic Absenteeism
- High School Graduation
- College Enrollment & Degrees

### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Civic Engagement
- Voting and Census Participation
- Crime Rates and Recidivism

### TOPICS INCLUDE

- Poverty and Earnings
- Educational Attainment
- Careers and Opportunity

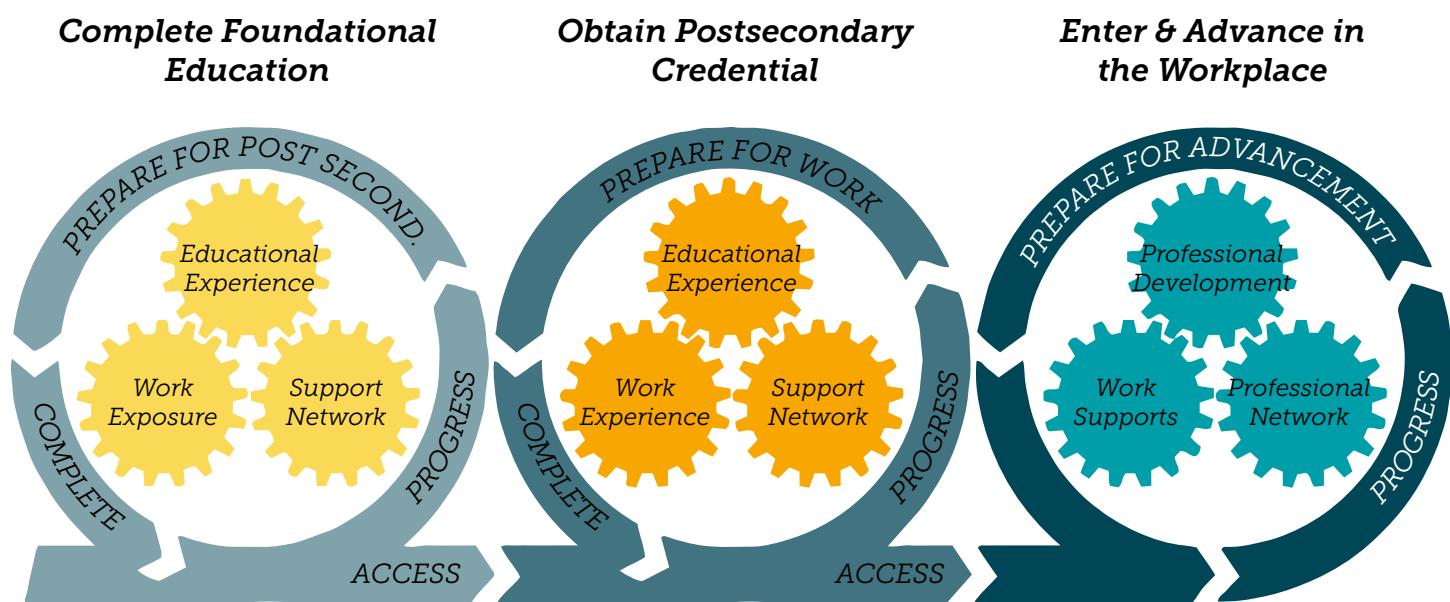


## How will change happen?

The determining factors shine light on the challenge of economic immobility, but change will come from within. As the data indicate, there is no single cause for the disparities in economic outcomes among Athenians. Because the challenge is a systemic and intergenerational, solutions must be rooted in collaboration. Luckily, Athens is home to strong and effective institutions and each will have a role to play.

### A systemic challenge

Through a new discourse focused on the issue of economic immobility the broader community can now debate the best course of action. Some of these actions will be borrowed from the best practices around the world. Others might be unique to Athens. Ultimately, the means for movement on the challenge may be just as complicated as the issue itself, requiring significant collaboration and data sharing. The diagram below illustrates the complexity of this challenge by focusing on the development of an individual from cradle to career.



Source: MDC, A Network for Southern Economic Mobility

### Start with a vision

The Team is urging the Athens community to begin a discussion around the issue of social and economic immobility. This plan does not prescribe a series of mandatory actions, but suggests projects, policies and programs that might be enabled to affect change. The community will determine the correct path through a robust debate grounded in the facts of the current condition. A full socialization of the work will help better expose the urgency of the current situation and move individuals and organizations to action. The first step is to articulate the vision. The following page establishes the team's vision in its undergirding rationale.

The Vision...

## **All youth in Athens-Clarke County have a pathway to successful education and a meaningful career.**

### **Lived Experience**

Real people experience these trends. They're not data, or graphs, but individuals and families working hard to make the best lives they can in Athens. This plan includes their stories and is built through their intuition.



### **Recommended Actions**

Rather than a single prescribed path, the team believes that effective action will be designed by the community. Action recommendations (a list of potential projects, policies, or programs) included for each determining factor represent a menu of potential strategies. The community will refine and define the appropriate tactics.

### **Data**

Numbers are important. Through its research, the team has analyzed a significant amount of existing and new data in order to better understand key conditions and trends. Additional this data can serve as a benchmark for future progress.

### **Goals**

The team defines a goal as a desired outcome expressed simply. For every determining factor, including the cross cutting factor of Race and Equity, a clear goal has been established.



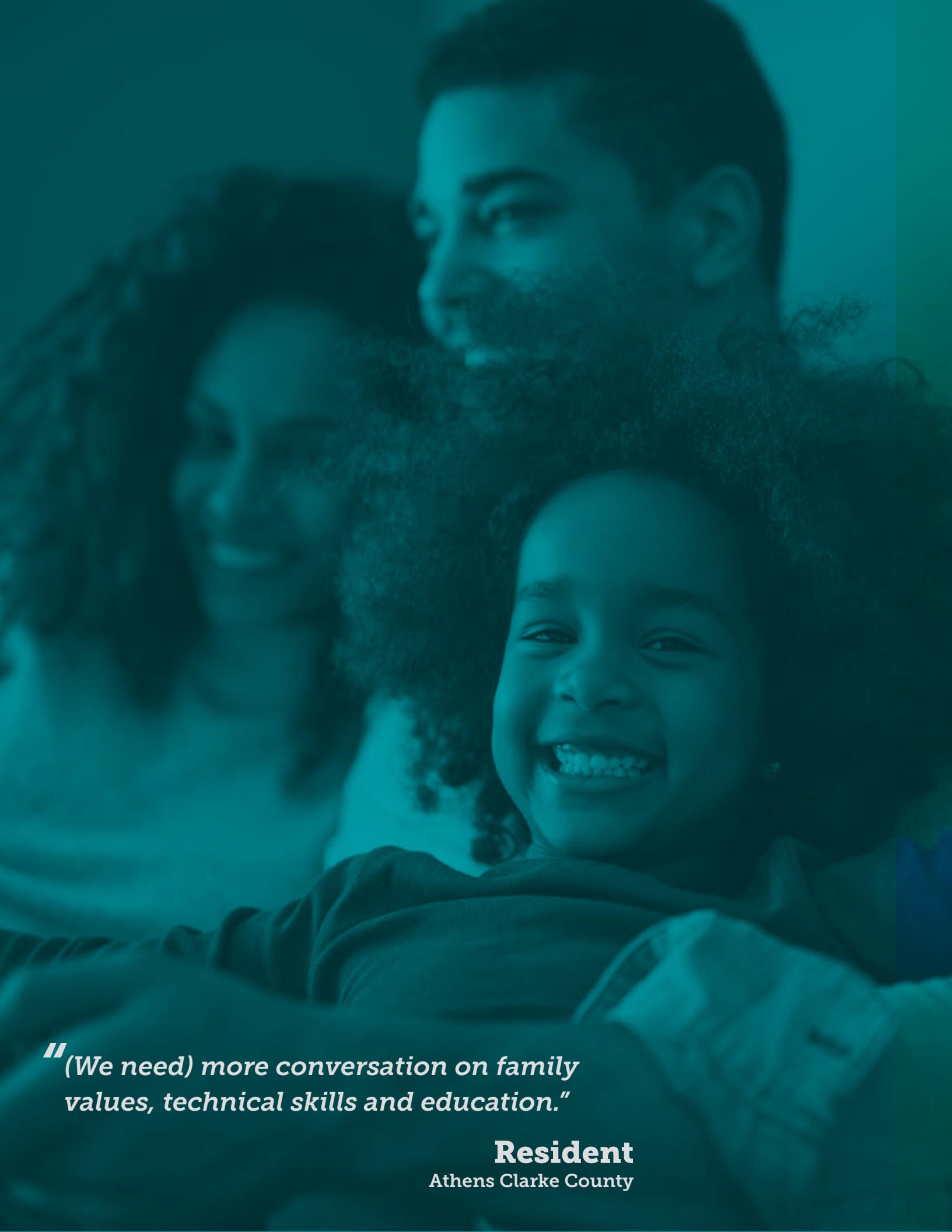
### **Action Today**

Athens is not, and has never stood still when it comes to improving the lives of citizens. This process seeks to build off of existing work and add wind to the sails of especially effective projects, programs, and policies.



### **Progress Measurement**

It is extremely important to benchmark year one of our transformation. In order to know how we're moving the needle, the community must plan to diligently track its progress from year-to-year. Economic mobility is a generational challenge and this progress will take place over decades to come. But it begins now...



**“(We need) more conversation on family values, technical skills and education.”**

**Resident**  
Athens Clarke County

# FAMILY SUPPORT

*A stable and supportive family unit can nurture the development of a young person, helping them reach their full potential and provide more opportunities to their future children. By setting strong expectations, demonstrating important skills, and providing ongoing support and encouragement the family - whatever form it takes - is the wellspring of individual success. This section highlights the major conditions and trends relating to family support, explores the programs in place today that are confronting key challenges, establishes a goal for community growth, and suggests a list potential projects, policies or programs to bend the arc of the most troubling trends.*

## The condition ...

**There is an increasing reliance on food assistance.** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called food stamps, provides food benefits to low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. Benefit recipients in Athens-Clarke county has overall consistently risen since the 1990's. In 2016 it was recorded that 30,239 of Athens-Clarke County residents are receiving SNAP benefits, compared to 5,871 residents in 2000.

**Children are one of the largest populations affected by food insecurity.** In 2013, 75% of children in Clarke County Public Schools were receiving free and reduced price lunch with each school having roughly 92% of students eligible for participation.

In 2016, the Clarke County School District became a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school system—meaning every student in the district receives free breakfast and lunch. In addition, the Seamless Summer Program continues breakfast and lunch for students in CCSD Summer programs.

**Housing resources are exhausted.** Housing vouchers (section 8 housing) is another low-income assistance program that provides rental subsidy in renting safe, decent and affordable housing in the private rental market throughout Georgia's Department of Community Affairs (DCA)'s jurisdiction. Currently, DCA is not accepting applications to its preliminary wait list for Housing Choice Vouchers. The application process was last opened on February 1, 2016 and closed on February 7, 2016.

ACC CHILDREN  
ELIGIBLE FOR FREE AND  
REDUCED LUNCH

**92%**

Compared to the national average of about 48% student eligibility.

NUMBER OF  
CURRENT ACCEPTED  
HOUSING VOUCHER  
APPLICATIONS

**0**

Due to the high demand of housing vouchers, the application window usually opens and closes within a number of days.

**Addressing the needs of the homeless is an increasing challenge.** Over the past 3 years, the number of homeless individuals in Athens-Clarke County has increased from 225 individuals to 239 individuals. In 2017 79% of those homeless were adults, 16% children, and 5% teenagers. Since 2015 the percentage of black homeless individuals has increased by 14% while white homeless individuals has decreased by 15%. Barriers to housing include chronic homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, disability, and domestic violence. There are 7 total emergency housing shelters in Athens-Clarke county, which includes 145 Year Round Beds and 35 Seasonal Beds. Overall the homeless rate is 18.6%, which is slightly higher than the national average.

**There are a variety of family household types in Athens-Clarke County.** In Athens-Clarke county there is a much lower percentage of married couple families than in both the state and nationally. Athens-Clarke county has 8% of households being led by males alone, while Georgia and the United States sit at 7%. Single female head of household is even more prevalent with Athens Clarke county comprising of 26% female head, while Georgia ia at 23% and USA at 20%. Even when single parents are able to secure work, it is usually barely enough income to pay the rent and sustain a family. Single-parent families are more than twice as likely to be low-income as two-parent families.

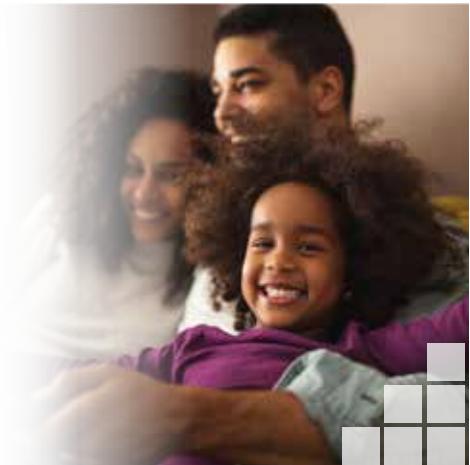
## Our approach today ...

Athens is not, and has never stood still when it comes to improving the lives of citizens. This process seeks to build off of existing work and add wind to the sails of especially effective projects, programs, and policies. Below are several, but not all, of the effective programs and organizations making difference in this area today.

<b>Family Connection of Athens</b> serves at-risk students.	<b>Prevent Child Abuse Athens</b> helps prevent child abuse in all of its forms.	<b>Project Safe</b> reduces domestic violence.	<b>Action Inc.</b> attacks poverty by offering a hands-up approach.	<b>Live Forward</b> provide secure housing and increased independence.	<b>Children First</b> promotes safe homes for children.	<b>Family Connection Strategic Action Teams</b> Various teams that ensure support to families that have children in various stages of life including: Early Care and Learning, K-12, Health and Wellness, Post secondary & Career, Safety & Community Stability, Family, Neighborhood & Community Support.
<b>Athens Nurses Clinic</b> free healthcare clinic.	<b>Athens Rescue Center for Hope</b> provides community programming for homeless families and individuals.	<b>Georgia Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program</b> helps low-income households with their home energy bills.	<b>Student Assistance Program</b> helps students and families manage the impact of personal and family problems.	<b>Athens Resource Center for the Homeless</b> identifies gaps in current homeless services.		

**Our goal for Athens...**

**Families, of all types, are able to provide a stable and lasting foundation for their children by guaranteeing basic needs are met.**



## **How can we make a difference ...**

Rather than a single prescribed path, the team believes that effective action will be designed by the community. Action recommendations (a list of potential projects, policies, or programs) included below constitute a menu of potential strategies. Through discourse and deliberation the community will refine and define the appropriate tactics.

### **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

#### **1 Increase Direct-to-Parent Support.**

**Support.** Encourage the development of parenting skills through peer framework or mutual aid framework to develop parenting skills - parenting teens, childhood development, etc. Other tactics include:

- Increasing healthy family support such as expand home visiting programs, health screenings + training to meet special needs/disabilities/hospitals are 1st contacts/low birth weight;
- Develop programs that provide comprehensive services to individual members and family units impacted by incarceration, and;
- Create or expand adult re-entry programs and provide training on record & civil rights reinstatement.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**

#### **2**

#### **Improve opportunities for parent education and advocacy.**

**Education.** Educate parents on trauma, its impact on child behavior and academic performance, and evidence-based parenting practices that can curb its effects. Other tactics include:

- Create free or affordable literacy programs for parents;
- Create a Domestic violence alternative Center for education about Domestic violence, a safe place for respite for teens who need short term respite, and a prevention of detention for low risk youth when accused of family violence;
- Provide hospitals with literature to pass to new parents on caring for their children, creating a healthy home and family life;
- Expand home visiting programs and make health screenings for parents and children more widely and easily available;
- Provide training to meet special needs of children born with physical and developmental disabilities. Work to break stigma surrounding mental illness, and;
- Educate parents on warning signs and resources available in cases of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of youth in vulnerable populations.

A young man with short brown hair is working on a server rack in a data center. He is wearing a green t-shirt and is focused on the task at hand. The server rack is filled with various cables and components. The background is blurred, showing more server racks and equipment.

*“We need a strong education system that sets as foundation to make a competent workforce.*

**RESIDENT**  
Athens Clarke County

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

*Effective workforce development connects the community to a range of available and expanding employment opportunities where full employment provides a livable wage and residents provide businesses with a needed and reliable workforce. This section highlights the major conditions and trends relating to workforce development, explores the programs in place today that are confronting key challenges, establishes a goal for community growth, and suggests a list potential projects, policies or programs to bend the arc of the most troubling trends.*

## The condition ...

**Expanding local economy; mixed local impacts.** From 2015 to 2016, employment in Athens-Clarke County, GA grew at a rate of 3.57%, from 53,354 employees to 55,261 employees. The most common employment sectors are educational services (12,075), mainly due to the proximity of University of Georgia, accommodation and food service (7,717), retail trade (6,720), healthcare and social assistance (6,055), and manufacturing (4,167). Manufacturing, although the fourth largest sector in the local economy, has seen a decline in jobs while health-care related jobs increased. Some fast-growing service-related industries

*Only 58% of Athens workers live in Athens-Clarke County*

pay higher wages than manufacturing, but require advanced education. Manufacturing jobs

are also not being promoted to young adults as a stable source of income. Staffing of manufacturing warehouses by local plants have been trying to recruit high-schoolers to help ensure a full workforce when their organizations baby boomers retire. Overall, there are around 70,000 jobs in Athens but less than 41,000 of them actually live in Athens-Clarke County. 18,000 of those Athens residents work in a different county and commute out of the city.

**Growing disparities in personal prosperity.** Athens-Clarke County's poverty rate has been increasing faster than the state since the 80's. In 2017 it was reported that Athens-Clarke county had a poverty rate of 35.2%, while Georgia had a poverty rate of 16%. In Athens-Clarke County, the poverty rate is 35.2 percent, 28.4 percent not counting

ATHENS-CLARKE  
COUNTY MINIMUM  
WAGE

**\$7.25**

This make outs to \$15,080 a year, well below the poverty level and a living wage.

SALARY OF COLLEGE  
GRAD VERSUS HIGH  
SCHOOL GRADUATE

**2X**

as college graduates in the economy is accelerating.

college students, more than triple the state's rate of 16 percent. The unemployment rate in Athens-Clarke county is 3.3%, the lowest it's been in years, peaking at 9.4% in 2010. The state of Georgia has an unemployment rate of 5.3%. Despite the impressive unemployment numbers, this does not necessarily indicate economic prosperity. While people are working, many of their jobs do not pay enough to lift them out of poverty. Low wages result in slow economic growth and higher levels of poverty. The shortage and difficulty of securing a well-paying job is what prevents wage-earners from escaping poverty.

**Difficulty securing a livelihood.** The earnings gap between college grads and non-college grads has reached its widest point on record. USCB annual Current Population Survey reported in 2017 that workers age 18 and over with a Bachelor's degree earn an average of \$67,763 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn \$38,145. Nationally, the dominance of college graduates in the economy is accelerating. The number of employed college grads has risen 21% since the recession began in December 2007, while the number of employed people with only a high school degree has dropped

nearly 8%. Behind the trend is a greater demand for educated workers, and the retirement of older Americans, who are more likely to be high school-only graduates. In Athens-Clarke County 75% of the labor force have a high school diploma, just over 60% went to college, and only 8% have post-graduate degrees. As the need for a more educated workforce continues to grow, the occupational groups that generally require education beyond high school are projected to increase, underlying the need for a prioritization of education for a thriving workforce.

**The Struggle to Achieve a Livable Wage.** In many places in the country, households fall into an income category where the American Dream is visible, but not tangible. Many families have jobs and incomes, but that may still be insufficient to secure decent housing and livelihoods in reasonable proximity to local job centers. The top 4 job classifications in Athens-Clarke County and corresponding salaries in 2016 are Retail Sales Representatives (\$22,550), Cashiers (\$18,970), Registered Nurse (\$60,900).

## Our approach today ...

Athens is not, and has never stood still when it comes to improving the lives of citizens. This process seeks to build off of existing work and add wind to the sails of especially effective projects, programs, and policies. Below are several, but not all, of the effective programs and organizations making difference in this area today.

<p><b>Employee Assistance Program</b></p> <p>helps find solutions for the everyday challenges of work and home.</p>	<p><b>Work Ready Initiative</b></p> <p>links education and workforce development</p>	<p><b>Partnering Ambassadors for Life and Service</b></p> <p>develops computer skills, GED certification, job placement, and skill training for women.</p>	<p><b>Athens Community Career Academy</b></p> <p>provides college courses and programs for CCSD students.</p>	<p><b>Great Promise Partnership</b></p> <p>empowers and equips at-risk students to complete high school while gaining real-world job skills and experience.</p>
<p><b>Experience UGA</b></p> <p>is a partnership which aims to bring every CCSD student to UGA's campus every year.</p>	<p><b>Athens Tech ManufacturREADY Program</b></p> <p>geared towards those with little or no manufacturing experience who wish to reenter the workforce with in-demand skills.</p>	<p><b>Senior Community Service Employment</b></p> <p>is a part-time community service assignments for persons with low incomes who are 55 years or older.</p>	<p><b>HOPE scholarship</b></p> <p>provides assistance towards the cost of tuition at eligible Georgia postsecondary institutions.</p>	

Our goal for Athens...

**A community where local economic progress translates to increased personal prosperity through strong connections between employers and the youth development pipeline.**



## How can we make a difference ...

Rather than a single prescribed path, the team believes that effective action will be designed by the community. Action recommendations (a list of potential projects, policies, or programs) included below constitute a menu of potential strategies. Through discourse and deliberation the community will refine and define the appropriate tactics.

### PRIORITY ACTIONS

**1 Prioritize the development of soft skills.** Access and support programs that connect employers to the table to be a part of the process of soft skills training and development. Coordinate existing programs based on locations. Identify community liaison to work with companies to identify what is needed from potential employees, pass the information along to those seeking jobs and ensure that they can meet those needs.

### ADDITIONAL ACTIONS

**2 Encourage self-exploration & career counseling.**  
Begin career aptitude testing at age 14 to encourage more consideration of career options among youth.

**3 Connect more residents to high-demand jobs.**  
Promote awareness of Georgia High Demand Career Initiative to provide better access and understanding of emerging employment sectors.

**4 Expand work-based learning opportunities.**  
Involve adolescence in the process earlier to promote and encourage healthy work ethics and expand skill sets.

**5 Promote and expand regional cooperation.**  
Promote a regional summit that involves individuals/organizations of the same discipline to meet and coordinate efforts and approaches for resolving regional conflicts.



**“It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart.”**

**Matthew Desmond**

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City

# STABILITY

*Every individual is surrounded by systems that contribute to, or detract from, their personal prosperity. These phenomena are not unique to Athens, but express themselves here in varying intensities. Issues related to housing, transportation, food access, and the justice system are hyper-complicated and involve a web of organizations and policies. Together they have an inordinate effect on young people as they establish, or weaken, the foundation for their growth. This determining factor includes several sub-topics outlined to the right. This section highlights the major conditions and trends relating to stability, explores the programs in place today that are confronting key challenges, establishes a goal for community growth, and suggests a list of potential projects, policies or programs to bend the arc of the most troubling trends.*

## The condition ...

### **Housing affordability is decreasing.**

Athens has a deficit in affordable housing options and the gap is increasing. A recent workforce housing study revealed the bulk of recent multi-family construction contributed to the student housing market and not low-income or workforce or affordable housing needs. Between 2005-2015, there were 19 apartment developments with 2,255 new units built in Athens. 67 percent of those units are considered student apartments or housing. Several factors contribute to the decrease in affordable housing options in Athens. These include the

*APD reports that buying a house at the average sales price requires an annual income of \$58,036*

county's small land area (just over 100 square miles) which drives up demand especially in close-in neighborhoods, minimal incentives for private sector

development (typically achieved through a combination of subsidy and tax credit programs), and stagnant wages. These and additional factors weigh down, especially poorer Athenians, with a higher rent/housing cost burden, meaning residents contribute a higher share of their monthly income to rent. Close to half of Athenians, 49.6 percent, who rent their housing pay more than 30 percent of the gross income in rent. While this number is relatively unchanged from 2000, it is four and five points higher than the national and state statistic. Housing costs as a percentage of total income are a critical concern with respect to stability as they're a required expense. Higher housing costs reduce the amount of discretionary income that can be spent on health care, education and/or contributed to savings.

COST BURDENED BY RENT PRICE

**50%**

Nearly half of Athens renters pay more than 30 percent of their income on rent

NEW WORKFORCE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, 2005-15

**11%**

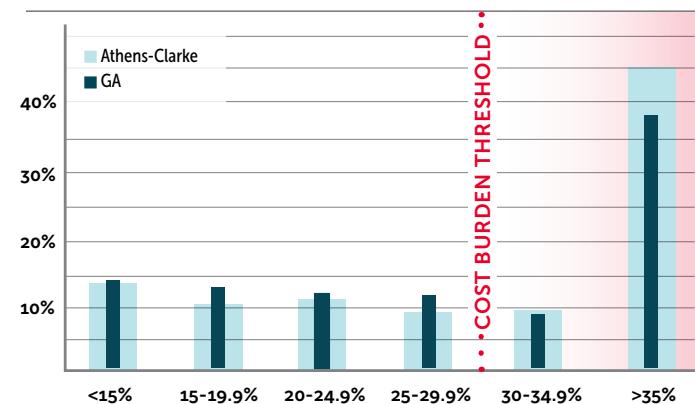
Workforce housing refers to those earning between 80 and 120 percent of AMI, the majority of growth over this period was in student, multifamily of income

**Accessing Healthy Foods.** According to the USDA, "Limited access to supermarkets, super-centers, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food may make it harder for some Americans to eat a healthy diet." This lack of access effects health outcomes and increases the costs and pressure for low-income families. The USDA's Food Access Research Atlas found a majority of census tracts and including 55,334 people in Athens have limited access to fresh food. These areas, sometimes referred to as "food deserts", may have food options close by but these are typically fast food high in sugar and poor for overall nutrition especially for young people. Households with children are more likely to face food insecurity including 16.7 percent of the overall population, and family households headed by a single woman are twice as likely, at 30.3 percent.

**Breaking out of the justice cycle.** The incarceration rate in Georgia doubled between 1990 and 2010 with a crack down on lower level drug and property crimes. At the beginning of the latest governor administration the state housed more than 56,000 people, second highest rate in America. In addition to a growing prison population, probation

periods in Georgia - seven years on average - are nearly double the U.S. average. Locally, Athens has devoted significant resources to judicial management both in terms of capital expenditures and ongoing management. Small crime, long-term incarceration and equally long probation periods, place pressure on family units both in financially and psychologically. This is especially acute among African American males, where a 2018 study by University of Georgia sociology professor Sarah Shannon found 47 percent had been to prison, and one in three hold a felony conviction.

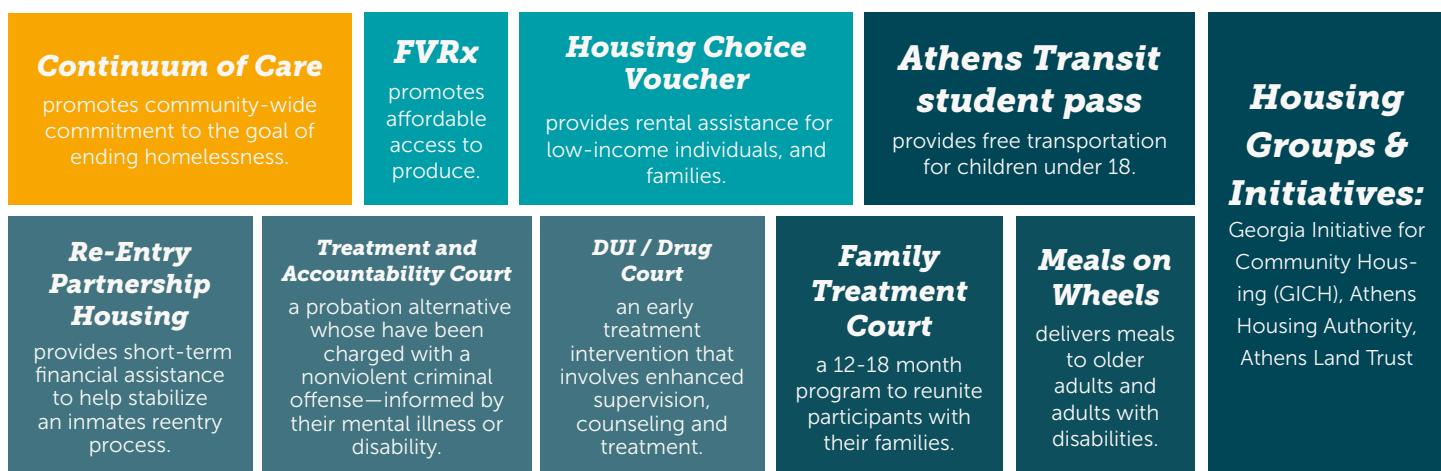
PERCENT OF INCOME SPENT ON RENT



Source: Athens Workforce Housing Study, 2016

## Our approach today ...

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**Our goal for Athens...**

# **Systems and trends that undermine the striving of individuals are identified and mitigated, providing a solid and stable environment for youth development**



## **How can we make a difference ...**

Rather than a single prescribed path, the team believes that effective action will be designed by the community. Action recommendations (a list of potential projects, policies, or programs) included below constitute a menu of potential strategies. Through discourse and deliberation the community will refine and define the appropriate tactics.

### **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

#### **1 Improve access to transportation to employers for employees.**

 Support or enhance efforts to expand transit to major employers by enhancing existing transit services and adding three new bus routes including Athena, Eastside, Caterpillar.

#### **2 Improve access to quality, affordable housing for most fragile Athenians.**

Develop a coordinated entry system that prioritizes housing availability and affordability for the most fragile residents.

#### **3 Improve opportunities for residents with criminal backgrounds.**

 Commit to supporting diversion center program to help those with criminal backgrounds reenter the workforce.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**

#### **4 Improve the stability and affordability of housing by supporting the implementation of the Athens GICH Plan.**

The Community can improve housing stability through several tactics included in the plan.

- Making independent living possible for older teens;
- Establishing a housing trust fund;
- Amend zoning ordinances that restrict affordable housing developments (GICH - residential multi-family);
- Implement voluntary inclusionary zoning policies with effective incentives in place for developers to redevelop residential multi-family properties, especially rental properties for low to moderate income residents
- Create a housing trust fund for ACC entities that are exempt from property taxes (Payment In Lieu of Taxes) and earmark it specifically for affordable housing projects
- Fund local agencies that provide home repair services for low to moderate income residents (Habitat, Action Inc, Mayor & Commission has funds for \$100k needs parameters but more flexibility - ramp for elderly, etc - Heritage Foundation to \$5,000, and;
- Provide access to credit counseling & education.

#### **5 Address food Insecurity through enhanced discourse.**

Bring all stakeholders to the table to discuss issues related to food insecurity in Athens. Build the connection between food security and youth opportunity.



***“We need a strong education system that sets as foundation to make a competent workforce.”***

**RESIDENT**

Athens Clarke County

# EDUCATION

*A college graduate can expect to earn twice as much in a lifetime than someone with a high school diploma. The path to the graduation stage can be extremely difficult however, especially for individuals born into poverty. In Athens, only one-in-four residents born into a low-income family achieve a four-year degree. This group has lower rates of high school graduation, lower test scores through primary education, and is not generally as prepared to enter kindergarten. Advancing while still behind, students push through but are left with little opportunity at the end. This section highlights the major conditions and trends relating to education in Athens-Clarke County, explores the programs in place today that are confronting key challenges, establishes a goal for community growth, and suggests a list of potential projects, policies or programs to bend the arc of the most troubling trends.*

## The condition ...

**Growing disparities in attainment.** For years, less Clarke County School District students were graduating with a high school diploma than Georgia as a whole. Recently, there has been a spike in high school graduation rates and Clarke County School district now sits on par with the state, however, the graduation rate is lower than national standards and is even lower for minority groups. Eighty percent of black students and 60 percent of Hispanic students are not on track to fulfill their professional potential. Public education in Athens-Clarke County is administered through the Clarke County school district. Of Georgia's

*In 2017, 1,775 school children were absent for more than 27 days.*

public high school 2013-2014 cohort, 72.5% students graduated. Of black public high school students, 65.2% graduated and 64% of Hispanic students graduated.

Of economically disadvantaged students, only 62.5% graduated. Several factors contribute to the lower graduation rates in Athens. Disciplinary measures often relocate students to different schools, uprooting them from existing support systems, routines, and peers. Black students represented almost 76% of discipline incidents requiring a due process discipline hearing at the district level, in general meaning these students have violated the code conduct related to weapons, battery or other serious issues and may be recommended for reassignment to an alternative school.

**Bridging the gap between education and workforce.** Overall, national labor force participation of teens has been declining since the late 1970's, and has continued into the recovery period following the latest recession.

GRADUATION RATE OF ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

**63%**

Compared to the national average of 84%.

ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY COLLEGE GRADUATION RATE

**39.5%**

Compared to the national average of 61.3%.

Labor force participation and employment rates continue to trend downward, as do median annual earnings. According to several measures, teens and young adults are still struggling to gain traction in the labor market. The decline in labor force participation and employment rates was particularly pronounced among teens, and among young adults, and those without post-secondary credentials fared the worst. In Athens-Clarke County, 29.8% of 16 to 19 year old are labor force participants, compared to 37.6% of the United States as a whole. Of 20 to 24 years old in Athens-Clarke County, 60.6% contribute to the labor force, compared to 74% of the United States as a whole.

**Increasing levels of chronic absenteeism.** In Georgia, chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason – including excused or unexcused absences, which translates into about 18 days a year. In Clarke County School District 2017-2018 data review, nearly 12% of students were absent for more than 10% of the school year compared to Georgia's 8.8% of students (2010-11). Black public high school students accounted for 59% of those who were absent for more than 10% of the year, compared to 21% Hispanic and 15% white.

**Less attending a college or university.** Compared to the State, a smaller percentage of CCSD students go to a college/university, but this number has slowly been improving. In 2015 Clarke County School district reported 53% of its students were enrolled in a college or university whereas Georgia's average was 64%. Recently CCSD has risen to 60% college enrollment while the state has declined to 62%. Clarke County school district's index has been lower than the state of Georgia as a whole for the past 3 years. College readiness index developed by state and governmental institutions measures the degree to which students are exposed to and pass some college-level material while in high school. In 2017 CCSD college readiness index was at 50% while the state of Georgia was at 61%. The college graduation rate for Athens-Clarke county is 39.5%, compared to the state 61.3%.

## Our approach today ...

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<b>U-Lead Athens</b> provides tools, resources, and a safe and nurturing environment for students with varying immigration statuses.	<b>Wee Read</b> improves children's reading.	<b>UGA Young Dawgs Program</b> designed to prepare high school students for post-secondary education.	<b>Athens Tutorial Program</b> provides academic assistance, cultural enrichment opportunities, and other basic life skill enhancement for at-risk students	<b>Clarke County Mentor Program</b> aims to increase high school graduates and prepare them for secondary jobs or education.
<b>Whatever It Takes</b> is a student-led UGA organization committed to combatting educational inequity.	<b>Chess &amp; Community</b> provides youth with real world experiences through mentoring, traveling, and community service.	<b>Books for Keeps</b> improves children's reading achievement by addressing barriers related to the accessibility.	<b>Adopt-a-School</b> strengthens schools and community ties to support students.	<b>Athens-Clarke Literacy Council</b> promotes and supports learning opportunities for adults in the community.

**Our goal for Athens...**

**An education environment  
where every student is  
prepared to pursue a post-  
secondary degree and/or a  
meaningful career following  
graduation.**



## **How can we make a difference ...**

Rather than a single prescribed path, the team believes that effective action will be designed by the community. Action recommendations (a list of potential projects, policies, or programs) included below constitute a menu of potential strategies. Through discourse and deliberation the community will refine and define the appropriate tactics.

### **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

**1 Ensure children are prepared for Kindergarten.**

Children in Athens will develop the necessary social skills to interact with students and teachers and build a strong foundation for their education and personal development.

**2 Confirm students meet reading level goals.** Students will perform up to reading grade level expectations to ensure they maintain a strong developmental momentum, especially through primary education.

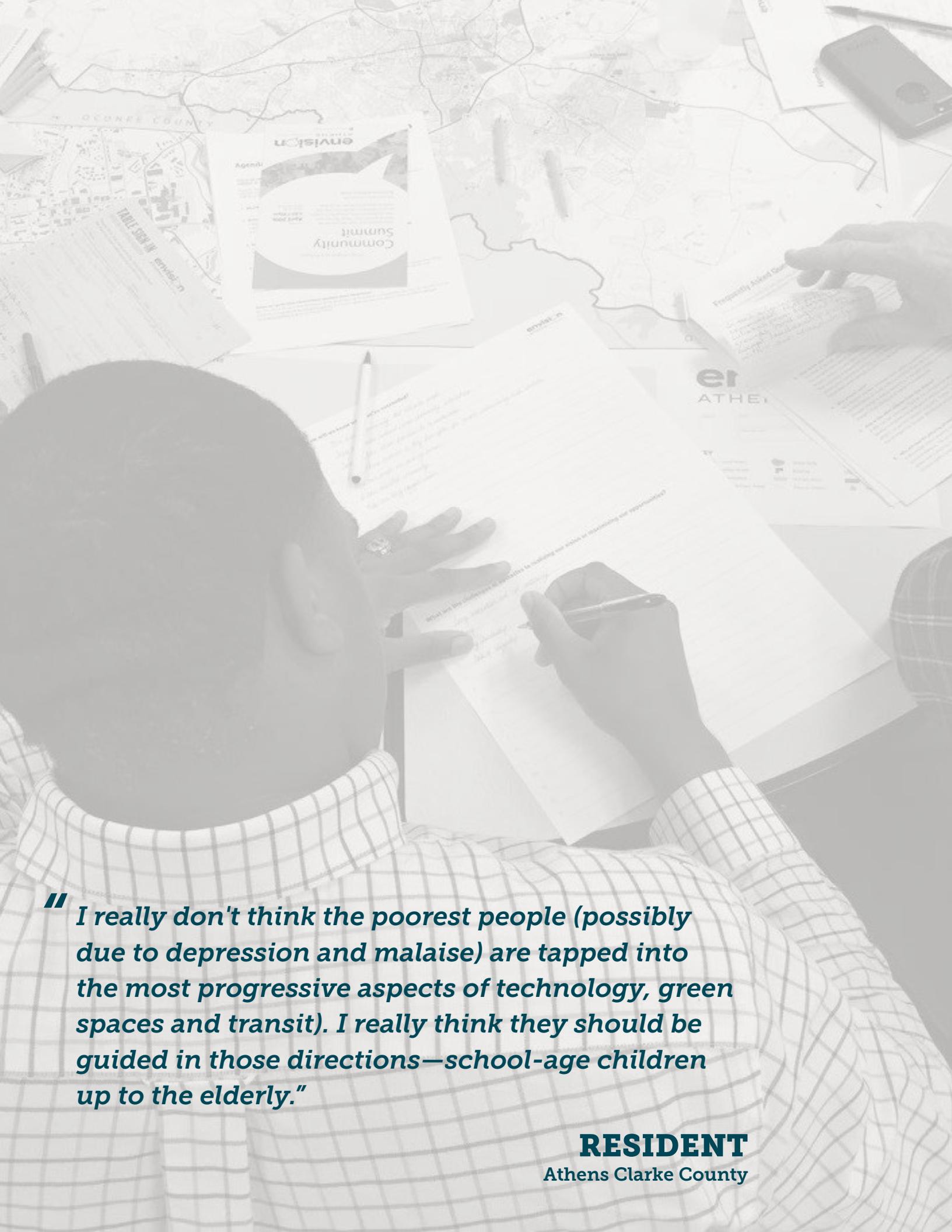
**3 Provide opportunities for students to interact with local, career options as a requirement for graduation.**

 In order to ensure exposure to all post-secondary career options and know what post-secondary education is required to meet goals set in reviewing those options, students should have access to a diverse set of exposure experiences to all forms of "after high school" options.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**

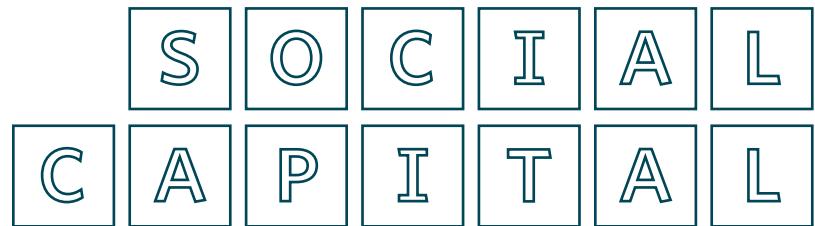
**4 Improve parent education and advocacy.** Develop or expand programs that help parents along the way to GED completion or a technical training certificates.

**5 Parent education and advocacy.** Develop programs that help students and parents develop interview skills, professional interpersonal skills, etc.



**“I really don't think the poorest people (possibly due to depression and malaise) are tapped into the most progressive aspects of technology, green spaces and transit). I really think they should be guided in those directions—school-age children up to the elderly.”**

**RESIDENT**  
Athens Clarke County



*A community is made up of overlapping webs of social networks. These connections are a safety net to those in need a feedback loop to those in power. Without engagement and communication, the social capital of a community is wasted or missed. This section focuses on the major conditions and trends relating to social capital in Athens-Clarke County, explores the programs in place today that are confronting key challenges, establishes a goal for community growth, and suggests a list of potential projects, policies or programs to bend the arc of the most troubling trends.*

## The condition ...

**Defining social capital within the Athens context.** There are a number of competing theories on the definition and importance of Social Capital, especially as it relates to youth opportunity, growth, and development. Most interpretations seek to measure the relative level of civic engagement throughout a community through a myriad of proxy indicators. These data can include items like voter turnout, number of non-profit organizations, or census return rate. Collectively, the data help to visualize the level of social engagement and (for lack of a better term) caring in a community. Relating to these measures, Athens is very unique. As a college community measures of voter turnout and census participation are quite low, not atypical of similar cities, but in terms of civic engagement the sheer number and variety of non-profit organizations paint a very different, and active picture.

**High levels of community activism in Athens reveal a community willing to engage.** Athens is home to more than 300 active non-profit organizations. These are extremely diverse and are divided by the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government into 45 categories. This high level of community activism and engagement is a strong indicator of social capital. The web or network coverage of these organizations range from fresh food access, to family support, to active transportation. A key challenge for a community with such a strong and active non-profit system, is ensuring alignment, mitigating overlap, and leveraging strengths. The Envision Athens process, completed in 2017, was one attempt by the community to provide this broader alignment and map the network of effective organizations in the community today.

TOTAL NO. OF ACTIVE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS:

**320**

ACCUG maintains a list of all the active community non-profits on its website. The 300+ are divided into 45 categories

PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED VOTER COMPARED TO ELIGIBLE POPULATION

**69%**

Among the 100,000+ residents in Athens who are eligible to vote around 70,000 were actively registered for the 2018 election.

**Voting representation varies among demographic groups.** As of the 2018 election there were just over 70,000 registered voters in Athens-Clarke County. Correcting for voters whose race was identified as unknown, the racial breakdown of black and white voters is quite similar to the census identified share for each group. Hispanic and Latinx voters, however, are greatly underrepresented among registered voters. This group accounts for 11 percent of residents in the county but only two percent of voters. Within Black registered voters, there are more than 3,000 more women compared to men. Overall, Athens' turnout for elections has outperformed the state, including in 2016 where the county counted just over 76 percent turnout compared to the state's 74 percent. Voting is one proxy for social capital as it indicates a level of engagement with local issues and engagement.

**Census participation is relatively low.** Along with voting, the decennial census is another commonly used indicator for social capital. During the 2010 census Athens performed five points worse than the country overall, returning 76 percent of its household forms compared to 81 percent nationwide. While this may be partially related to the community's high student population, it does not fully account for the discrepancy as a significant portion of this population is counted as "Group Quarters" designation.

**Why is social capital a consideration?** Building a community where people can find help or connections to opportunities is heavily reliant on relationships. The connections between people and their networks, and the ease with which these networks interact, allows for better recognition of urgent community issues and quicker, more effective connections between those in need and those who can help. Fundamentally, social capital is about ensuring these connections are made and remain strong and active.

## Our approach today ...

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<p><b>Casa de Amistad</b> works with the Latino and Hispanic population in the Northeast Georgia area providing social services, referrals, translation, education and advocacy.</p>	<p><b>Senior Hunger Coalition</b> combats senior hunger.</p>	<p><b>Families 4Change</b> seeks to reduce juvenile offenses and/or problem behaviors and truancy in school.</p>	<p><b>ACC Library</b> Athens-Clarke County public library.</p>	<p><b>United Way of Northeast Georgia</b> raises money to support 26 local human services throughout the area.</p>
<p><b>Hands On Northeast Georgia</b> creates, organizes, and leads meaningful service projects that positively impact the community.</p>	<p><b>UGA Office of Service Learning</b> supports academic service-learning and community engagement initiatives designed to enhance students' civic and academic learning.</p>	<p><b>Envision Athens</b> established a community-based vision to guide community and economic development for the next 20 years.</p>	<p><b>ReNew Athens</b> creates affordable housing options for low income individuals through adaptive reuse.</p>	

**Our goal for Athens...**

**Youth observe a pathway to a secure livelihood that is illuminated by a strong network of engaged and vested community partners.**



## **How can we make a difference ...**

Rather than a single prescribed path, the team believes that effective action will be designed by the community. Action recommendations (a list of potential projects, policies, or programs) included below constitute a menu of potential strategies. Through discourse and deliberation the community will refine and define the appropriate tactics.

### **PRIORITY ACTIONS**

**1** **Expand mentorship opportunities for youth.** It is critical to connect to forge stronger connections between local employers and the workforce development pipeline. The community can improve this connection by making stronger efforts to include children (especially those of incarcerated parents) in mentorship programs across the community and covering the breadth of opportunities and sectors.

**2** **Expand youth development programs.** Encourage collaboration between non-profit(s) and established structural youth-serving programs. This connection should lead to more community service opportunities for youth that will expose them to new opportunities and expand the capacity of these organizations.

### **ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**

**3** **Expose more ACC students to higher education.** ACC students should connect UGA undergraduates to witness post secondary opportunities and experiences while providing UGA students will mentoring and service learning opportunities.



# Crosscutting factor: Race & Equity

*The data presented thus far provides a general picture of the status of economic mobility in Athens today. What this data can hide, however, are the acute effects felt by people of color. Economic outcomes for Black and Hispanic / Latinx residents are worse than their White counterparts. A number of factors (especially including the five determining factors identified previously) play into this disparity. This section highlights the major conditions and trends relating to equity and racial disparities in Athens-Clarke County, explores the programs in place today that are confronting key challenges, establishes a goal for community growth, and suggests a list of potential projects, policies or programs to bend the arc of the most troubling trends.*

## The condition ...

In their seminal 2018 study, Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective, Raj Chetty of Stanford University and Nathaniel Hendren of Harvard University established an empirical case for economic immobility among various racial and ethnic groups. The study reached a central conclusion, mobility into and out of poverty is a central determinant of racial disparities. A Black / African American Athenian, born into the lowest economic quartile (25th percentile of employment) can expect to earn \$13,000 less than a White resident born into identical circumstances. According to 2018 data published through the US Census and the Opportunity Atlas: Mapping the Childhood roots of Social Mobility, Black children born into low income families can expect lower economic and social outcomes on nearly every metric included in the study.

**Starting from behind.** While the overall poverty rate compared to White and Black residents appears relatively similar, when adjusted for the high student population, the overall rate for Black residents, ~27 percent, is more double that of White residents. This, coupled with a lower rates of overall savings and home ownership, means less wealth is transferred between generations.

**Limited educational attainment and personal growth.** Black public high school students accounted for 59% of those who were absent for more than 10% of the year compared to 21% Hispanic and 15% white. Implications for absenteeism, among others, include decreased reading levels and overall academic performance; decreased on-time graduation rates and postsecondary enrollment, and; increased dropout rates. Of black public high school students, 65.2% graduated and 64%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS 2018

7%

Unemployment among African Americans has decreased slowly from a post recession high of 17 percent but has never been within than four points of the overall average.

AMOUNT OF POOR AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO STAY IN ATHENS-CLARKE CO

80%

Compared to 55% of white residents who move somewhere else in their lifetime.

of Hispanic students graduated. Of economically disadvantaged students, only 62.5% graduated. Several factors contribute to the lower graduation rates in Athens. Disciplinary measures often relocate students to different schools, uprooting them from existing support systems, routines, and peers. Black students represented almost 76% of discipline incidents requiring a due process discipline hearing at the district level, in general meaning these students have violated the code conduct related to weapons, battery or other serious issues and may be recommended for reassignment to an alternative school. Finally, Black students born into the lowest income quartile are less likely to achieve a college degree, 19 percent compared to 35 percent among white students and 24 percent overall.

**Barriers to career security and growth.** There is a long chain of causation leading to the economic disparities between Black residents and the overall population. Several indicators track this struggle from an employment perspective. The unemployment rate for Black residents, although declining from the recession, has been between four and ten points higher than the White rate since the recession. In 2010, the rate topped out at 16.5 percent (The White rate was 8.5 percent) its highest measured mark since 1983. For those Black residents born into the lowest income quartile, average hourly wages are \$14, \$2.6 less than White residents born into identical circumstances. When average weekly hours are included (27 hours for Black workers;

33.7 hours for White workers) Black workers earn just over \$700 less than their white counterparts, despite being born into relatively similar economic conditions. Last Black residents are far more likely to remain in the same city where they were born. Just under 80 percent of Black residents born into poverty have remained in Athens, compared to 55 percent of white residents. This indicates a barrier for Black residents to find opportunities elsewhere.

**A struggle passed on.** These statistics are indicators of an uneven playing ground, especially for those Black residents born into poverty. Identifying and addressing the barriers that contribute to this disparity in economic outcomes for residents of color will go a long way in improving economic mobility in Athens overall.

### Setting a direction ...

**The designed or inherited racial inequities that affect an individual's ability to rise out of poverty are recognized and mitigated to provide more equitable access to opportunity.**

### A Crosscutting factor

*Challenges related to Race and Equity are present throughout each of the five determining factors presented in previous sections. These strategies have been called out visually throughout the document with the scissor icon to the right. While the Team has identified a unique goal for the topic of Race and Equity, it believes its actions to address these challenges should be interwoven into determining factors.*

