COLUMBUS REGIONAL HOUSING STUDY

HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS +
WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

unitedcv.org/hfg

UNITED WAY

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Center for Economic Development Research

COLUMBUS REGIONAL HOUSING STUDY

HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS + WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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STUDY LINK: unitedcv.org/hfg and cedr.gatech.edu

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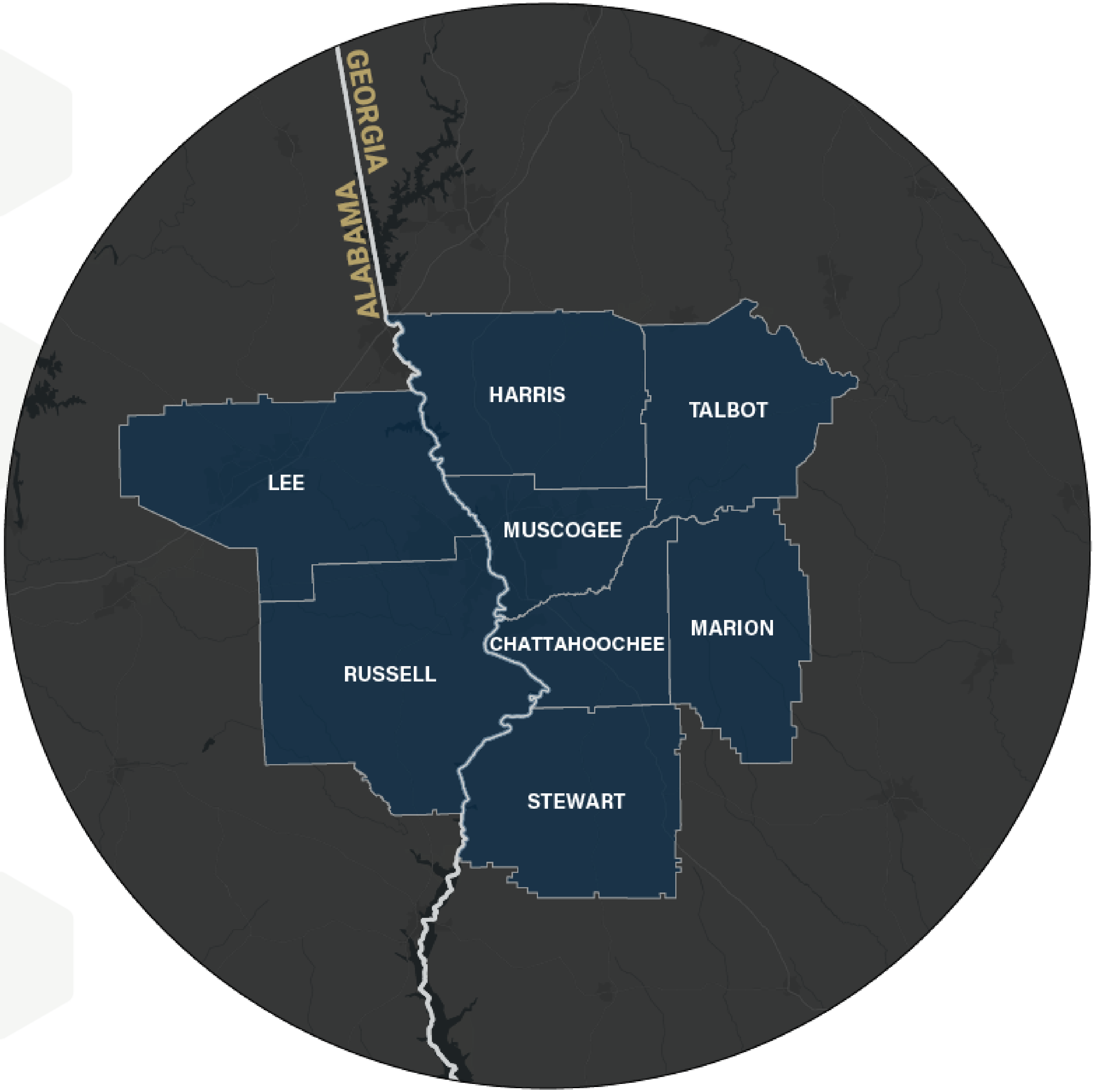
STUDY AREA



GEORGIA COUNTIES

- Chattahoochee
- Harris
- Marion
- Muscogee
- Stewart
- Talbot

ALABAMA COUNTIES

- Lee
- Russell

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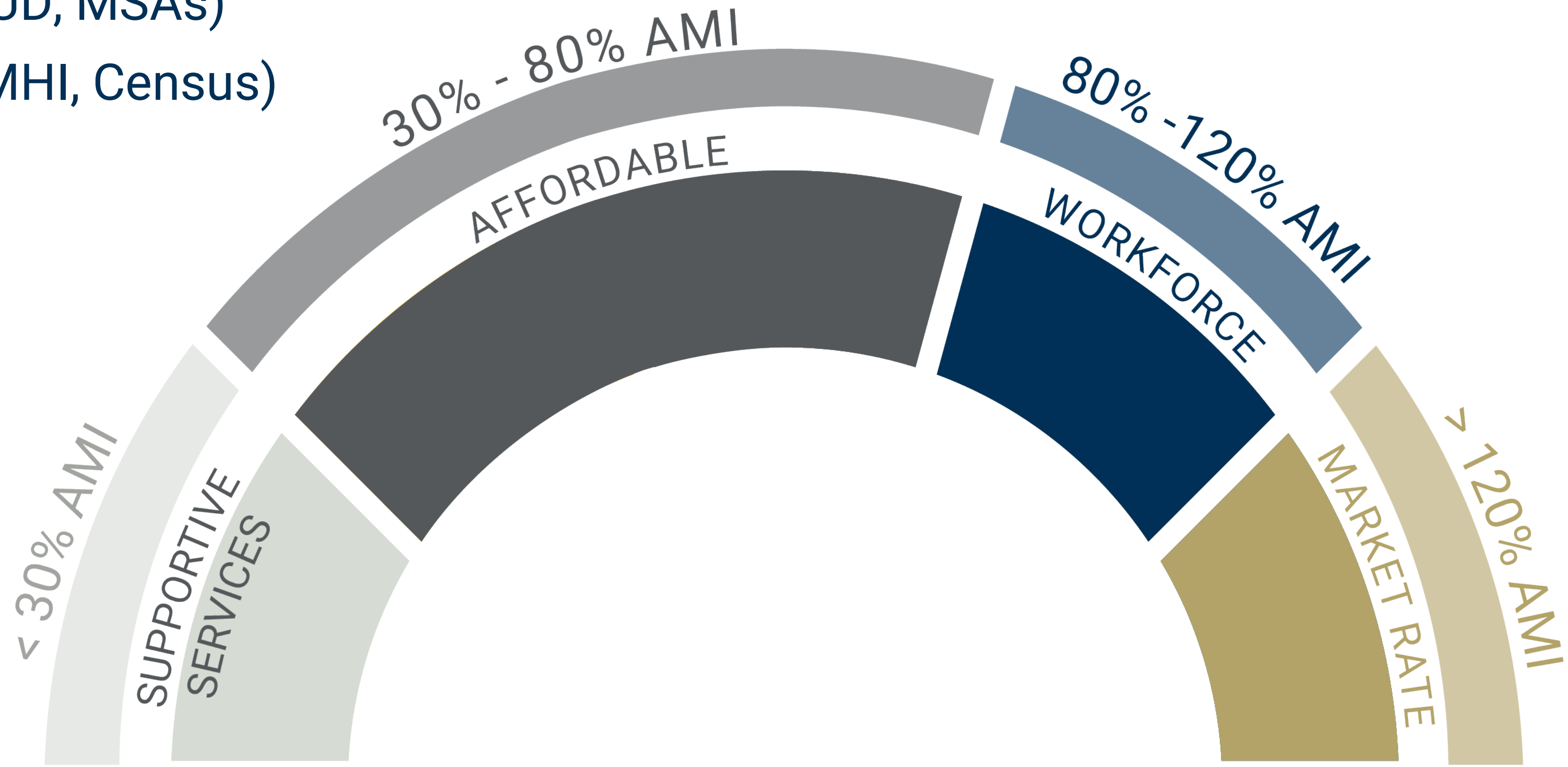
What is Workforce Housing?

- Area Median Income (AMI, HUD, MSAs)
- Median Household Income (MHI, Census)
- Renters and owners
- 80%-120% AMI
- Under 80% is subsidized



AREA MEDIAN INCOME HOUSING CATEGORIES

Who is Your Workforce?

$23,300
FAST FOOD AND COUNTER WORKER

$36,600
MATERIAL MOVERS

$39,300
PARAMEDIC

$50,700
FIREFIGHTER

$51,600
PATROL OFFICER

$59,400
SPECIAL ED TEACHER

$61,500
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

* Average wages by industry for Columbus-Muscogee 8-county region

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MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Regional Wages and Affordability

REGIONAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: $58,500

Household Income	30% of Gross Income	Affordable Monthly Spending	Affordable Home
$25,000	$7,500	$625	$62,000
$35,000	$10,500	$875	$99,000
$50,000	$15,000	$1,250	$155,000
$75,000	$22,500	$1,875	$249,000
$100,000	$30,000	$2,500	$342,000
$150,000	$45,000	$3,750	$529,000
$200,000	$60,000	$5,000	$715,000

AN AFFORDABLE MORTGAGE ASSUMES A 30% HOUSING BUDGET, A 30-YEAR MORTGAGE AT 7%, 5% DOWNPAYMENT, AND TAXES AND INSURANCE OF $2,500 PER YEAR.

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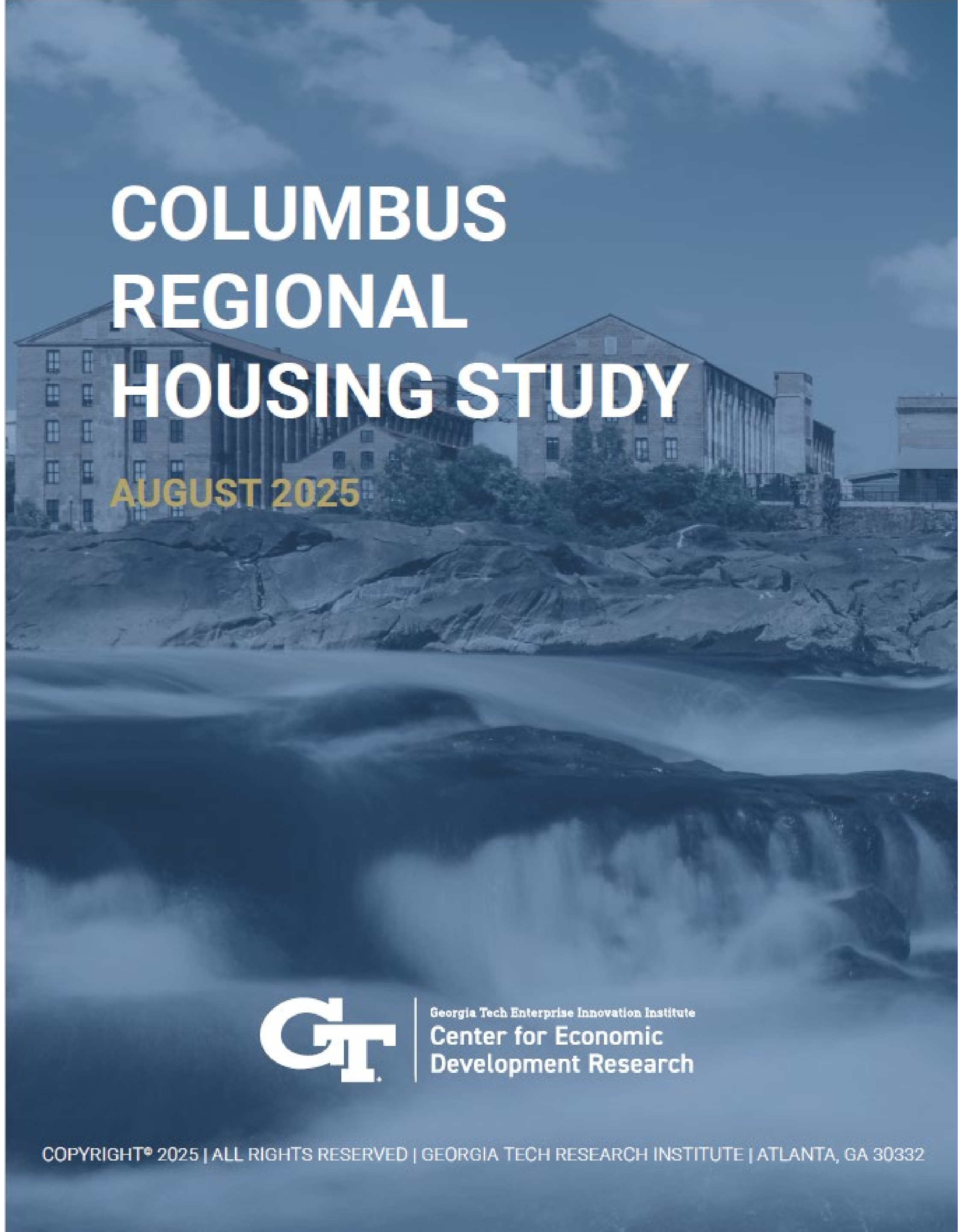
THE STUDY

HOUSING MARKET ANALYSIS + WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT



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PUBLIC **PARTICIPATION**

Online Surveys, Focus Groups + Interviews

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES: **433**

FOCUS GROUPS + INTERVIEWS: **100+**

UNITED WAY

TROY UNIVERSITY

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

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FOCUS GROUPS + INTERVIEWS

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Over 100 Interviewed
- Elected Officials
- Appointed Board Members
- Local Government Staff
- Nonprofit Leaders
- Realtors
- Real Estate Developers

STUDY FORMAT

STUDY LINK: unitedcv.org/hfg and cedr.gatech.edu

COUNTY ASSESSMENTS

The county assessments include three primary components.

01 COMMUNITY PROFILE

CEDR created a unique demographic, employment, and financial profile for each county to better understand underlying characteristics of each community. Each custom community profile is intended to establish a data baseline of information to identify economic development challenges and housing opportunities in each county.

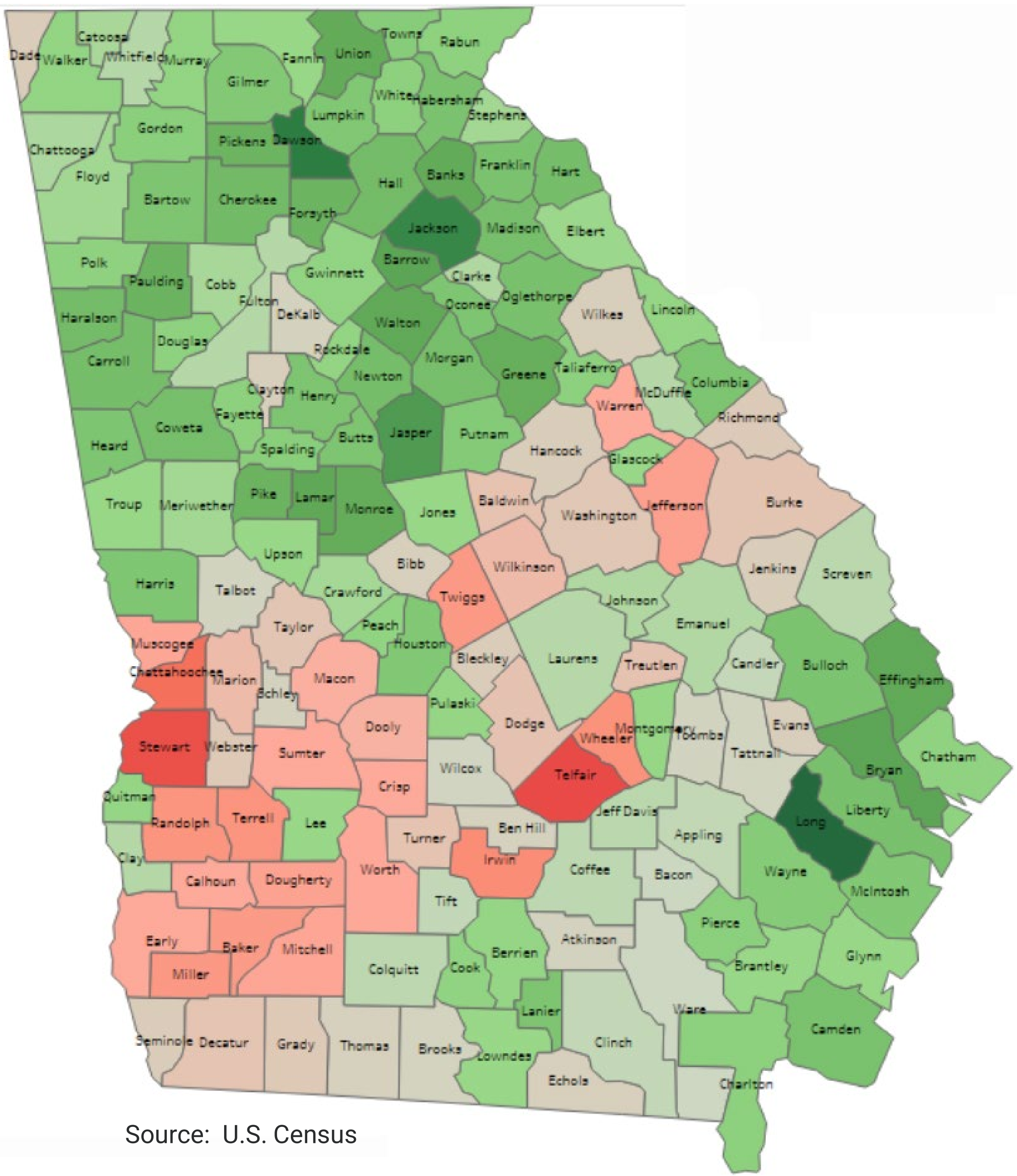
02 RESIDENTIAL MARKET ANALYSIS

Current housing trends for both rental and owner-occupied products have been analyzed including price points, vacancy rates, and tenure for each county.

03 WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Based on findings from each county's community profile and housing market analysis, the project team analyzed the availability and affordability of housing for middle-class working households who earn between 80% and 120% of the county's median household income. In areas where a housing shortfall was identified, CEDR provides recommendations on how to best address the housing mismatch and strategies to alleviate limited supply.

Georgia County Population Trends
2020- 2023



Source: U.S. Census

County % population gains and losses from July 2020 to July 2023. The higher the growth rate, the darker the green. The higher the loss rate, the darker the red.

Rank	County	2020 Population	2023 Population	Growth	Change
1	Long	16,270	19,594	20.4%	3,324
2	Dawson	27,065	31,732	17.3%	4,667
3	Jackson	76,712	88,615	15.5%	11,903
4	Jasper	14,674	16,455	12.2%	1,781
5	Barrow	84,040	92,792	10.5%	8,752
6	Bryan	45,059	49,739	10.4%	4,680
7	Lamar	18,546	20,401	10.0%	1,855
8	Walton	97,187	106,702	9.8%	9,515
9	Effingham	65,149	71,541	9.8%	6,392
10	Banks	18,087	19,789	9.4%	1,702

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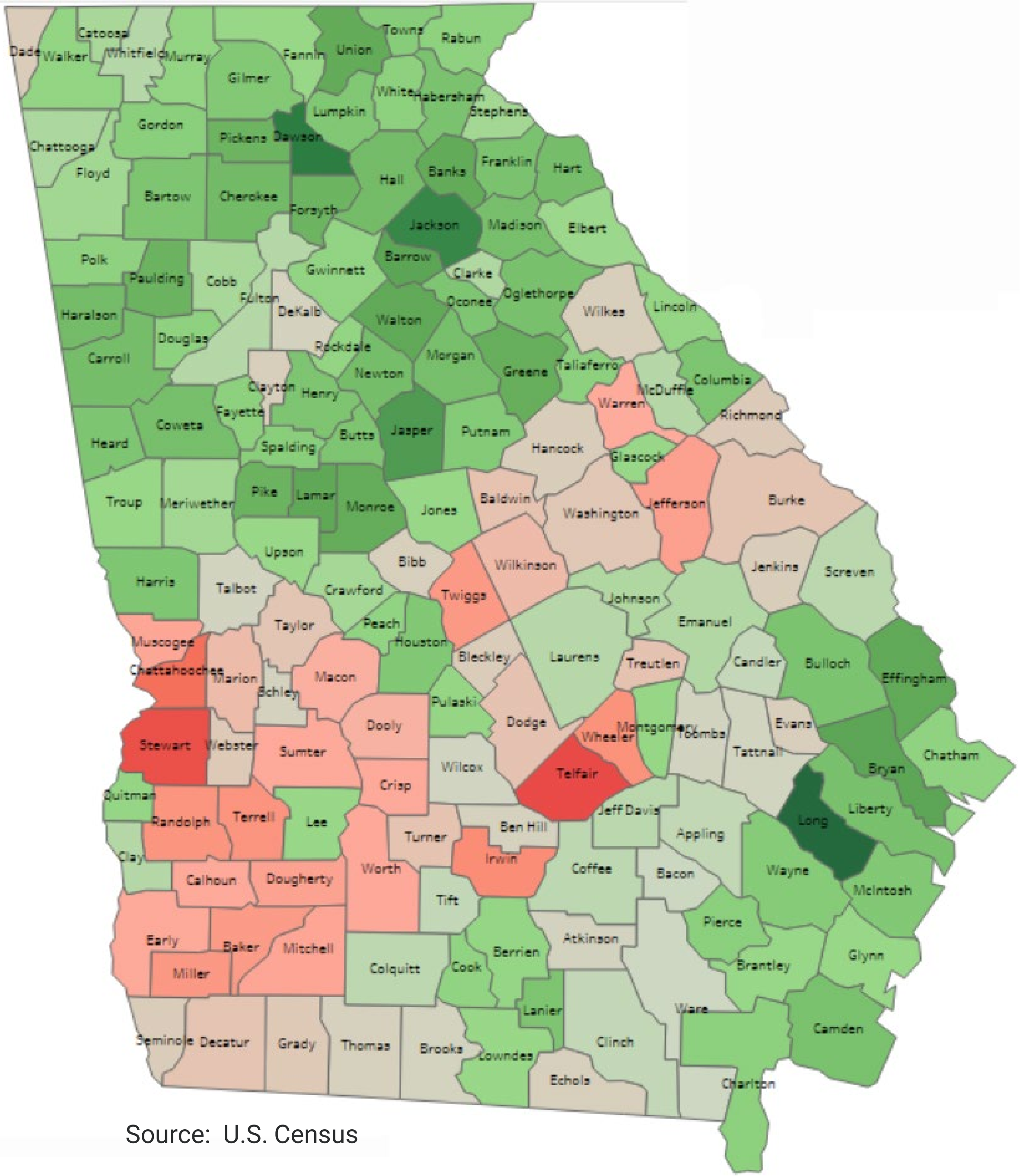
Georgia County Population Trends
2020- 2023



Source: U.S. Census

County % population gains and losses from July 2020 to July 2023. The higher the growth rate, the darker the green. The higher the loss rate, the darker the red.

Rank	County	2020 Population	2023 Population	Growth	Change
1	Telfair	12,476	10,920	−12.4%	−1,556
2	Stewart	5,307	4,674	−11.9%	−633
3	Chattahoochee	9,473	8,661	−8.6%	−812
4	Irwin	9,647	9,120	−5.5%	−527
5	Wheeler	7,449	7,081	−4.9%	−368
6	Terrell	9,134	8,718	−4.6%	−416
7	Randolph	6,370	6,078	−4.6%	−292
8	Miller	5,994	5,747	−4.1%	−247
9	Twiggs	8,012	7,691	−4.0%	−321
10	Baker	2,851	2,743	−3.8%	−108

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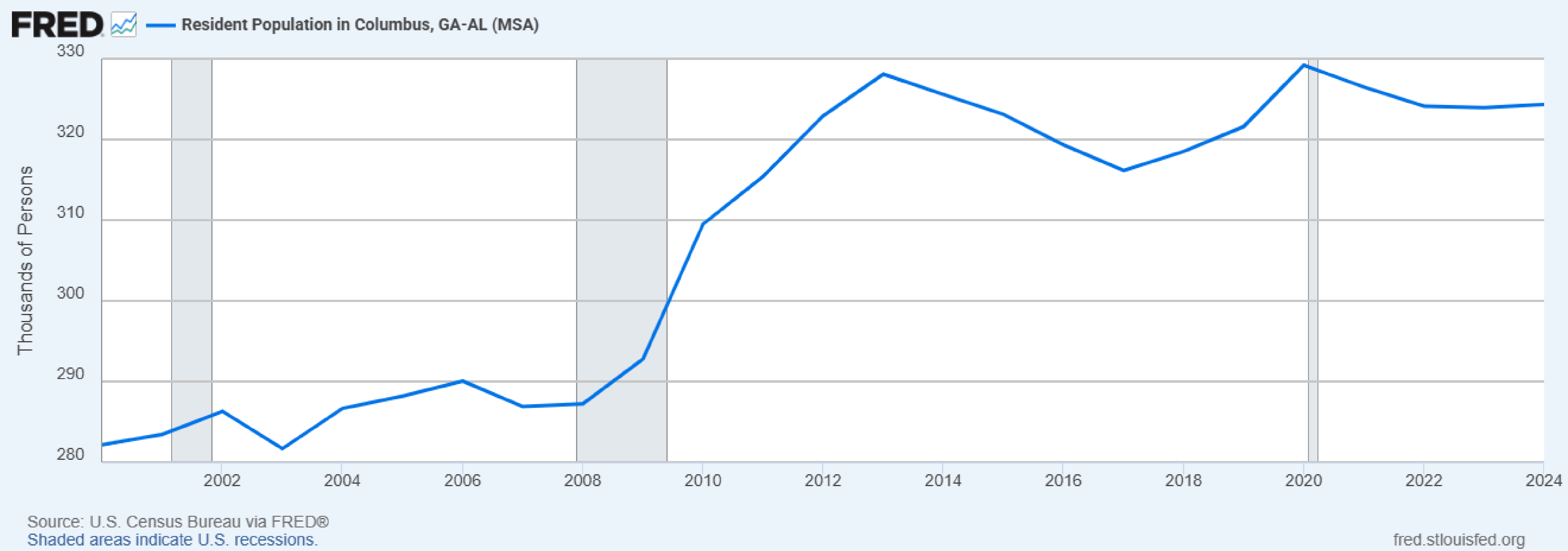
POPULATION CHANGE



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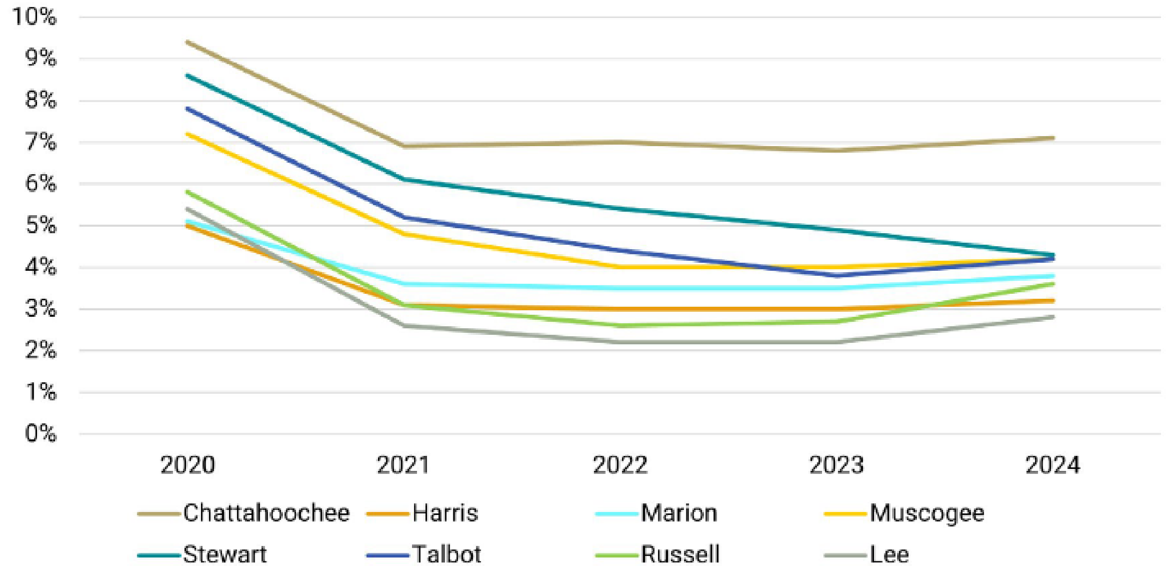
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Unemployment

Unemployment rates are lowest in Lee and Harris Counties with Chattahoochee County having the highest level at 7.1%. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, unemployment has declined throughout the region, except for a slight rise in 2023 in half of the eight counties in the study area.

CHATTAHOOCHEE	HARRIS	MARION	MUSCOGEE	STEWART	TALBOT	LEE	RUSSELL
7.1%	3.2%	3.8%	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%	2.8%	3.6%

FIGURE 6 | UNEMPLOYMENT BY COUNTY



SOURCE: BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, AUGUST 2025

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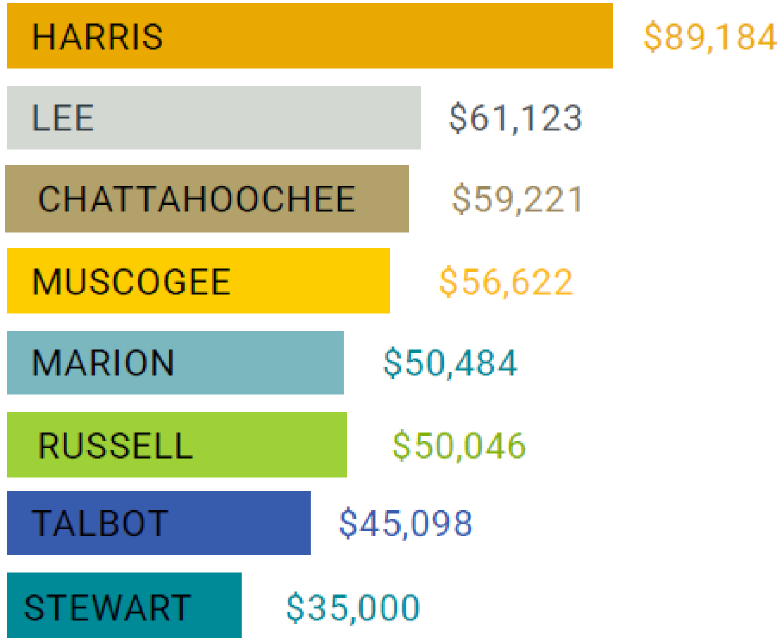
HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Income

The median household income in the region is $58,500, meaning half of households in the region earn less and half earn more. The region's median household income falls below both Alabama and Georgia state averages. Harris County leads the region with significantly higher household income levels, almost 2.5 times that of Stewart County. Across all eight counties, median household incomes vary widely from $35,000 for rural Stewart County to over $89,000 for Harris County.



$74,664
GEORGIA

$62,027
ALABAMA

$58,500
REGIONAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

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TOP REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

INDUSTRY	JOBS	AVERAGE EARNINGS
Government	64,586	$69,643
Accommodation and Food Services	22,859	$25,448
Healthcare and Social Assistance	22,224	$67,256
Retail Trade	21,082	$39,509
Manufacturing	17,889	$81,048
Admin, Support, and Waste Management Services	12,777	$40,522

SOURCE: LIGHTCAST, 2024

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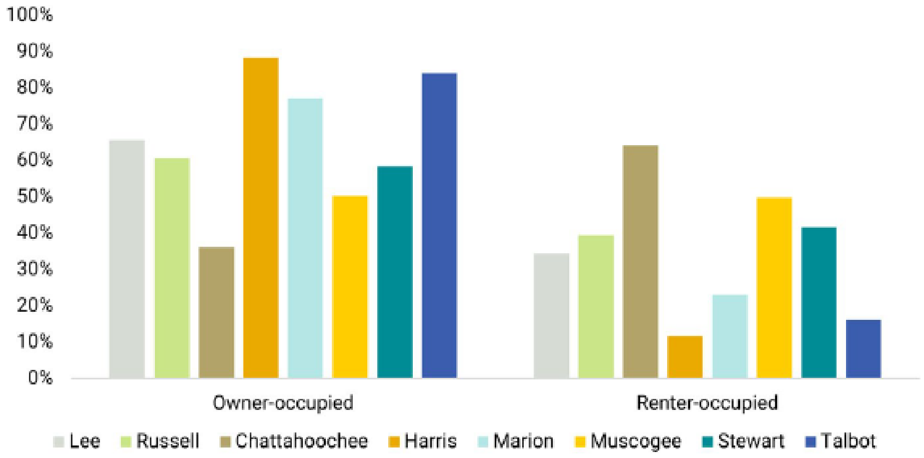
OWNERSHIP + VACANCY

FIGURE 9 | HOUSING TENURE BY COUNTY



SOURCE: ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES, 2023

FIGURE 10 | OCCUPANCY AND VACANCY RATES BY COUNTY

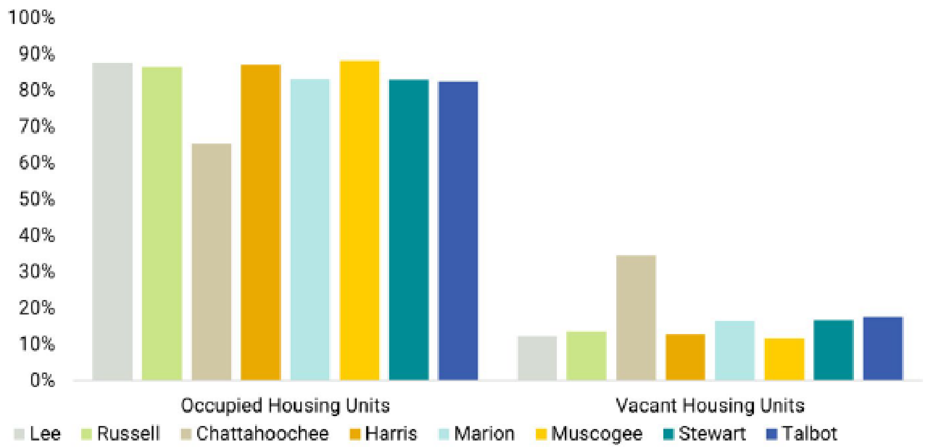
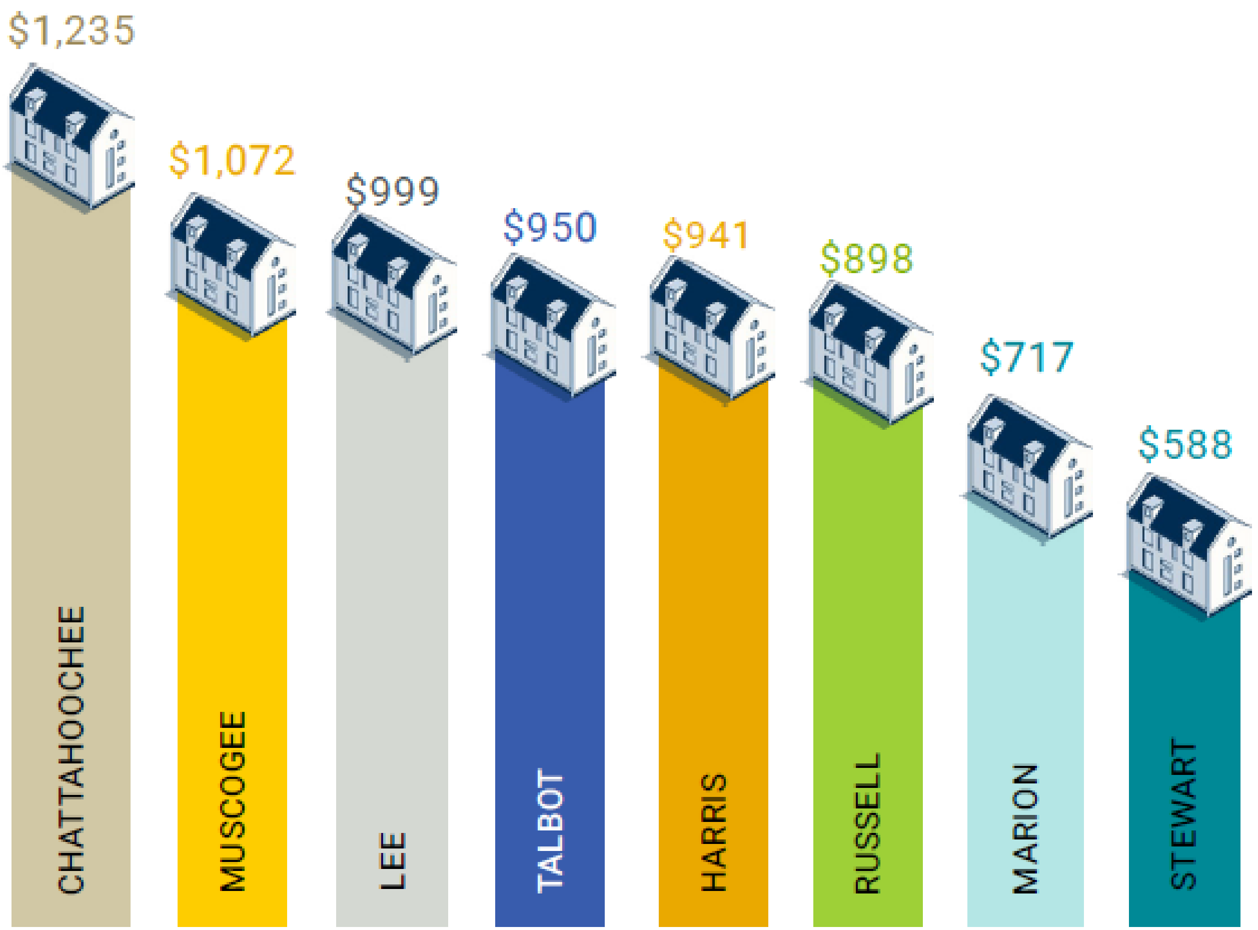


Figure 9 shows percentages of housing units that are owned or rented. Harris and Talbot Counties have the highest percentage of homeowners, exceeding 80%, which is well above the state average. Chattahoochee and Muscogee Counties have the lowest percentage of homeowners, followed by Marion County. Counties with the most renters include Chattahoochee, Muscogee, and Stewart which is expected given the rental demand around Fort Benning.

Figure 10 shows percentages of housing units in each county that are occupied or vacant. Chattahoochee County has the largest number of vacant housing units.

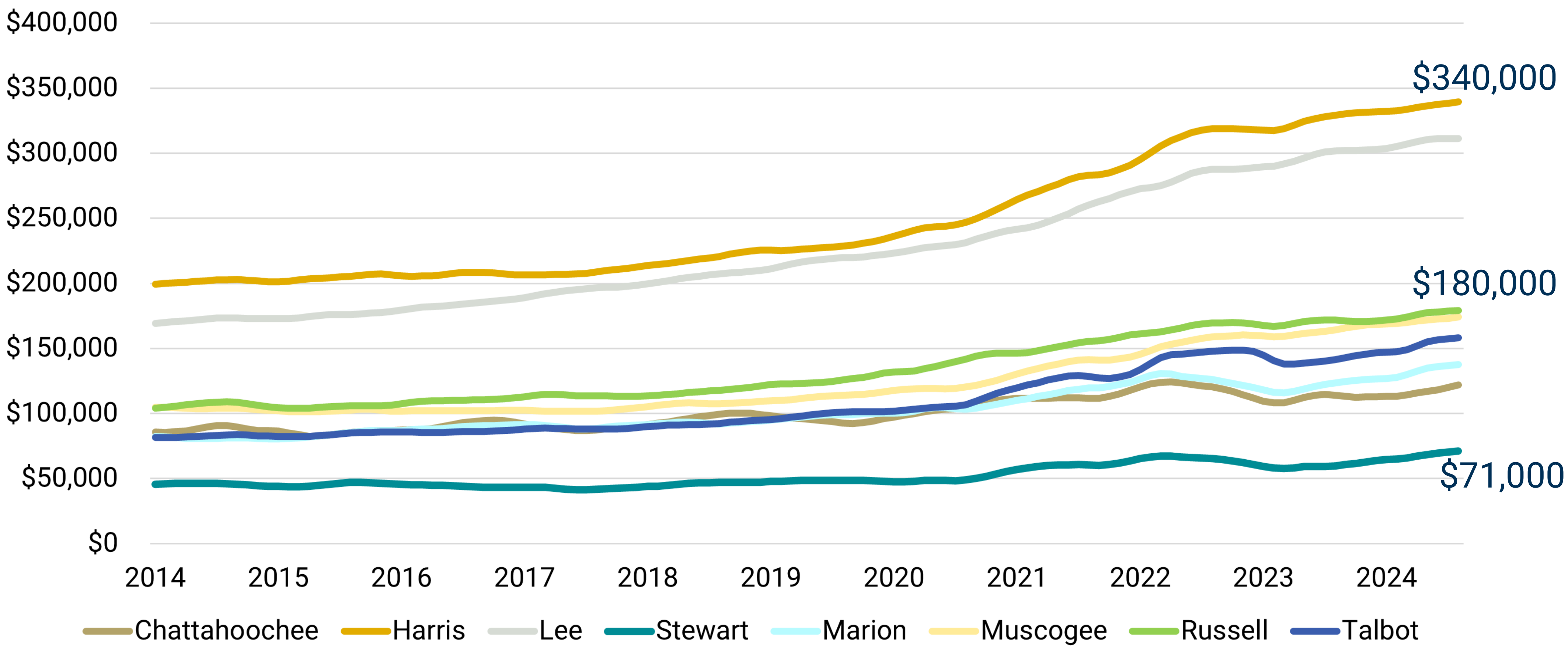
RENTAL RATES



Median Gross Rent

The least expensive median gross is in rural Stewart and Marion counties. The highest rents are in Chattahoochee County, followed by Muscogee County. This is likely due to the proximity of Fort Benning and a strong demand for rental products from military personnel.

MEDIAN HOME VALUES



STUDY LINK: unitedcv.org/hfg and cedr.gatech.edu

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HOME APPRECIATION

COUNTY HOME PRICE CHANGE	2014-2019 CHANGE	2019-2024 CHANGE
Chattahoochee	8%	23%
Harris	13%	47%
Lee	27%	42%
Stewart	6%	40%
Marion	21%	35%
Muscogee	9%	52%
Russell	17%	41%
Talbot	20%	54%

SOURCE: ZILLOW, 2024

STUDY LINK: unitedcv.org/hfg and cedr.gatech.edu

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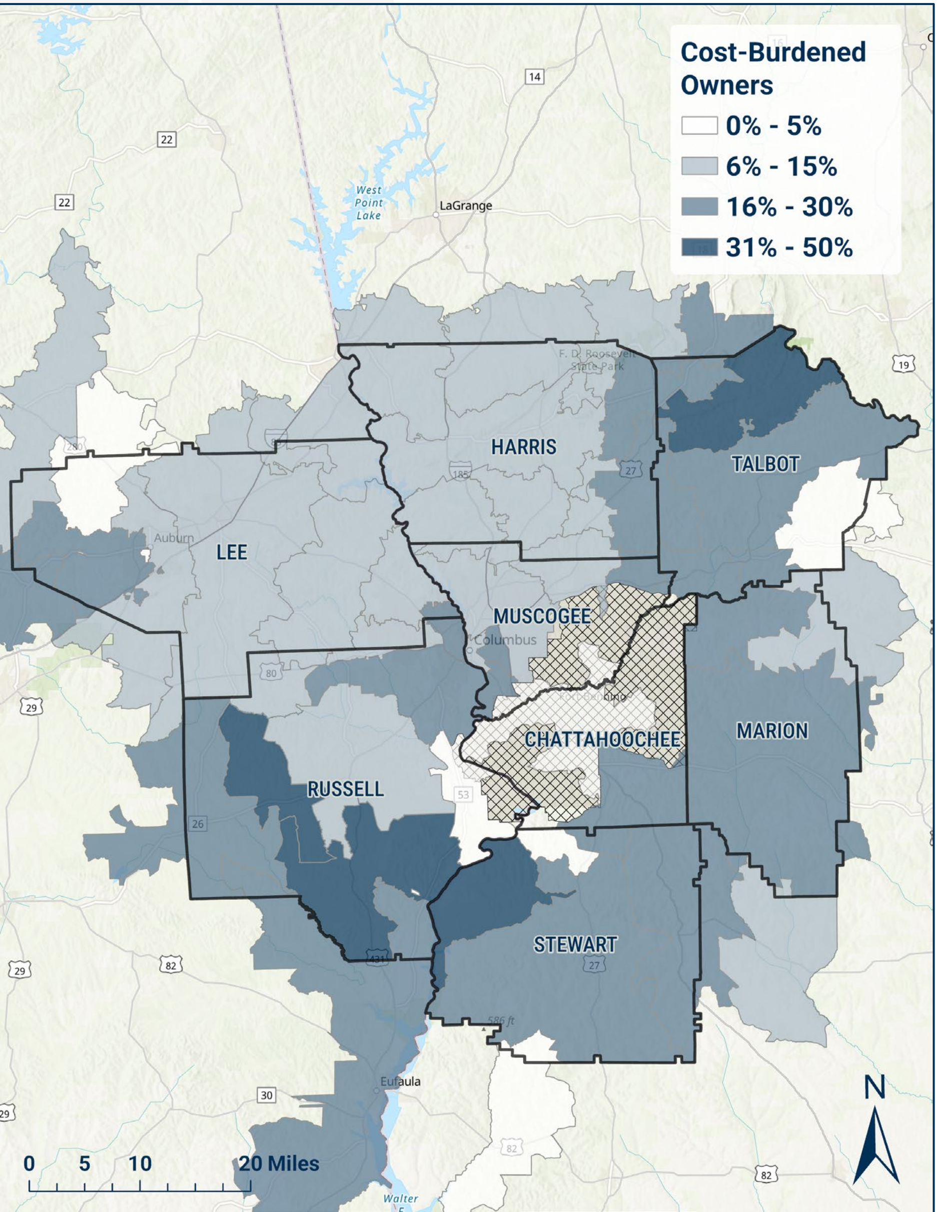
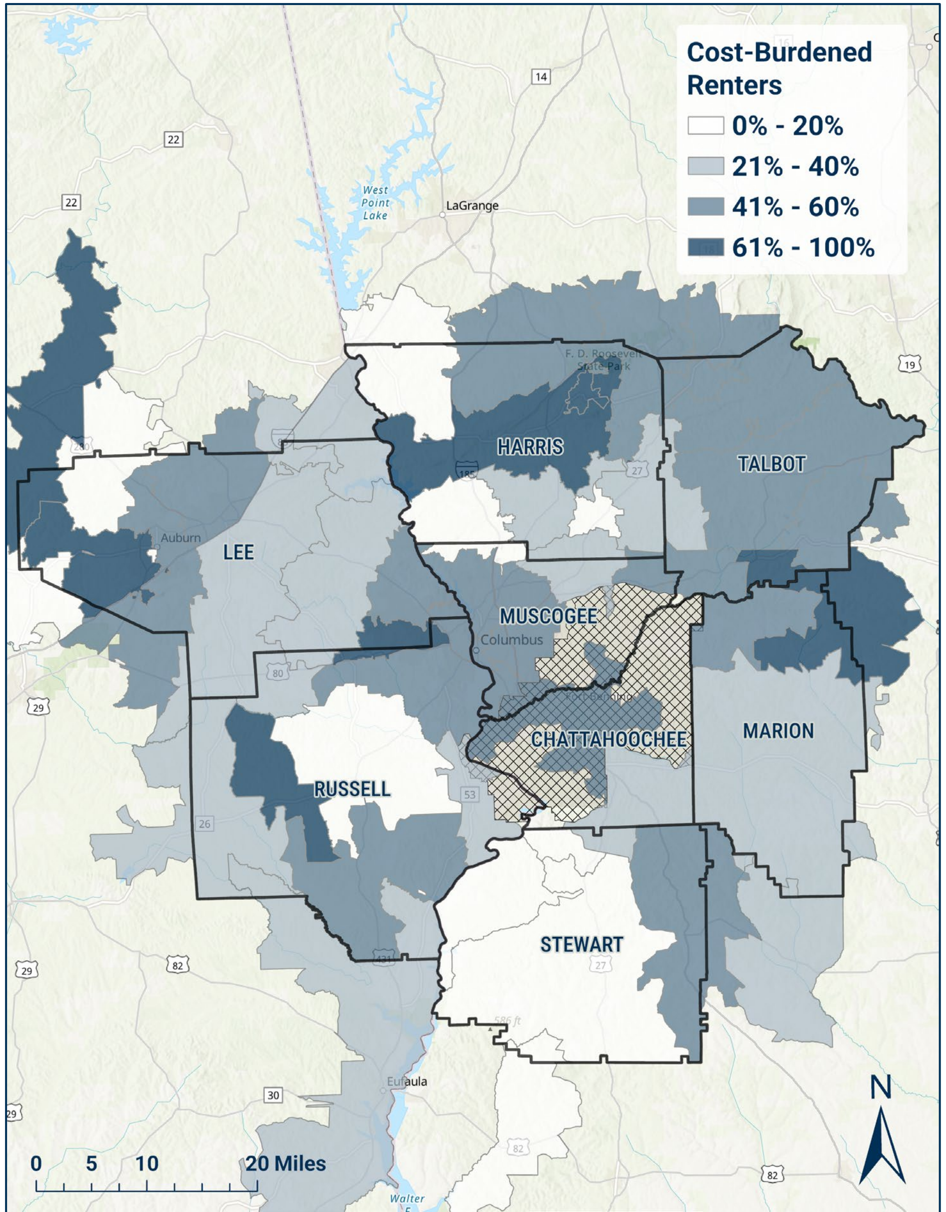
COST BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS

> 30% SPENT ON HOUSING





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FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH
2025-2035

FUTURE HOUSING DEMAND

The eight-county region is expected to grow by approximately 36,000 people between now and 2035. This anticipated reversal of regional population loss is fortunate, but it will require a coordinated effort to ensure there is enough housing, especially for those in the workforce household income range. Over 14,000 new owner-occupied and rental housing units will be needed to meet demand from this forecasted population growth.

TABLE 4 | TEN-YEAR POPULATION GROWTH FORECAST AND HOUSING NEEDS BY COUNTY

	CHATTAHOOCHEE	HARRIS	MARION	MUSCOGEE	STEWART	TALBOT	LEE	RUSSELL	Total
New Residents (2025-2035)	-544	3,503	175	7,466	146	-230	21,277	3,360	35,927
For-Sale Homes Needed	-	1,097	54	1,458	35	-	5,340	791	8,775
Rental Units Needed	-	169	16	1,575	37	-	3,187	588	5,572
Total Housing Units Needed	-	1,266	70	3,033	72	-	8,526	1,379	14,346

Next Ten Years
+36,000

New Housing Needed
+14,000

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FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH

2025-2035

Muscogee County needs to build approximately 3,033 new residential units over the next ten years. This results in an annual goal of 303 new residential units per year.

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Workforce Housing is Economic Development

Are You Ready?

Future Impact Simulation Model

Columbus-Muscogee

500 NEW JOBS

	CHATTAHOOCHEE	HARRIS	MARION	MUSCOGEE	STEWART	TALBOT	LEE	RUSSELL	Total
FIS New Population	6	63	6	371	1	5	65	44	559
FIS New Household Total	2	26	3	169	0	3	28	29	258
New Owner-Occupied Units	2	22	2	85	0	2	9	17	139
New Rental Units	0	3	1	85	0	1	17	11	118
New Daycare Students	1	5	1	34	0	1	6	6	52
New K-12 Students	2	17	2	110	0	2	18	19	168

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Workforce Housing is Economic Development

Are You Ready?

Future Impact Simulation Model

Columbus-Muscogee

5,000 NEW JOBS

	CHATTAHOOCHEE	HARRIS	MARION	MUSCOGEE	STEWART	TALBOT	LEE	RUSSELL	Total
FIS New Population	55	630	60	3,705	5	45	645	440	5,585
FIS New Household Total	20	255	30	1,690	0	25	275	285	2,580
New Owner-Occupied Units	7	224	23	845	0	21	94	174	1,388
New Rental Units	13	31	7	845	0	4	169	111	1,180
New Daycare Students	5	50	5	340	0	5	55	55	515
New K-12 Students	15	165	20	1,100	0	15	180	185	1,680

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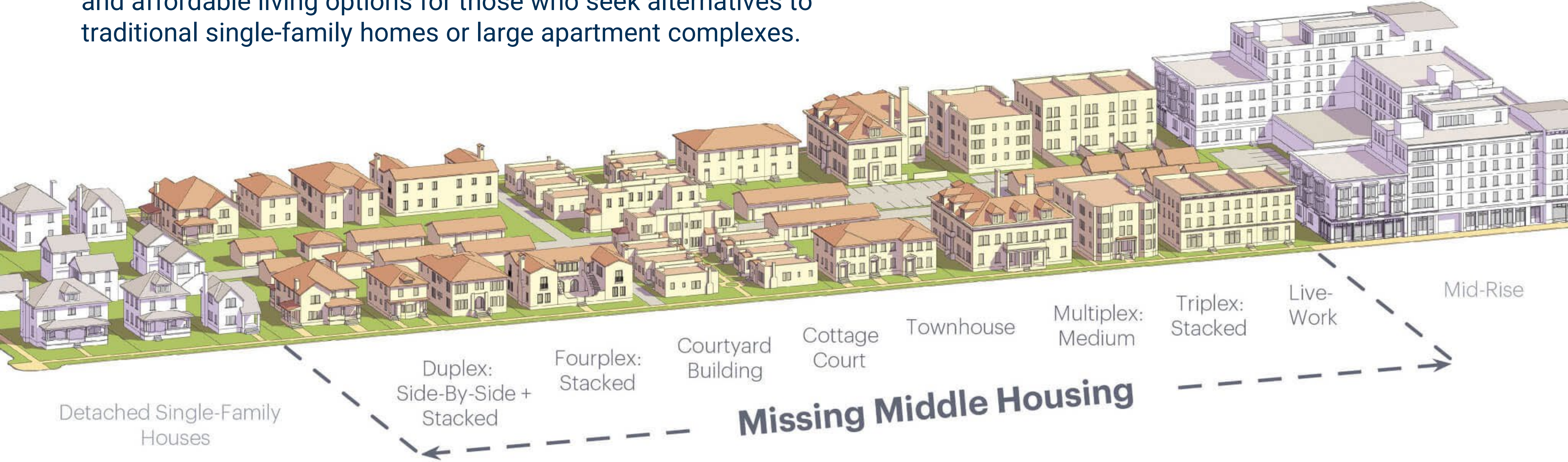
Are you Ready?
Ask the Right Questions

- How many new rooftops will we need?
- Where will we build?
- What price points?
- How much rental and how much for sale?
- How many households will have children? Do we need a new school?
- Can our water and sewer handle this much new development?
- Will we need more police or a new fire station?
- Daycares already have a waiting list, how many new preschoolers will we have?

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

ALTERNATIVE HOUSING STRATEGIES

"Missing middle" housing refers to a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types that fall between single-family homes and large apartment complexes. These include duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, and small apartment buildings with fewer than 20 units. Typically designed to blend into older residential neighborhoods in need of revitalization, missing middle housing provides more diverse and affordable living options for those who seek alternatives to traditional single-family homes or large apartment complexes.



STUDY LINK: unitedcv.org/hfg and cedr.gatech.edu

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Missing Middle Housing Examples


Small Lot Single | Portland, OR


Duplex | Atlanta, GA


Triplex | Minneapolis, MN


Fourplex | Portland, OR


Sixplex| Providence, RI


Eightplex| Toronto, ON


Townhouse| Silver Spring, MD


Stacked Townhouse | DC

Image sources (clockwise from top left): City of Portland, Avenue Realty, Bruce Brunner, City of Portland, bonstra.com, eya.com, circabuilt.com, unionstudioarch.com

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

ALTERNATIVE HOUSING STRATEGIES

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Neighborhood Revitalization

Stabilization + Crime Reduction

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Neighborhood Revitalization
Alternative to Demolition

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD PREMIUMS

In many cities, homes built before WWII in established and walkable historic districts can be worth 30-70% more than newer homes in outlying subdivisions.
(Realtor.com)

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Neighborhood Revitalization

Increase Property Values

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD PREMIUMS

In many cities, homes built before WWII in established and walkable historic districts can be worth 30-70% more than newer homes in outlying subdivisions.

(Realtor.com)

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Neighborhood Revitalization
Absentee Landlords, Foreclosures, + Tax Liens

HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD PREMIUMS

In many cities, homes built before WWII in established and walkable historic districts can be worth 30-70% more than newer homes in outlying subdivisions.

(Realtor.com)

HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIES + PARTNERSHIPS

- Redevelop obsolete/blighted commercial corridors for more housing.
- Encourage mixed-use development over single-use commercial.
- Increase rooftops and density near historic downtown areas.
- Protect and preserve greenspace in rural areas.
- Allow smaller lots and less square footage where appropriate.
- Build more missing middle and small apartment complexes instead of large suburban apartments.
- Allow flexible zoning to accommodate infill for older neighborhoods.
- Strengthen partnerships and funding for housing nonprofits.
- Make affordable housing a priority in the region.

STUDY LINK: unitedcv.org/hfg and cedr.gatech.edu

Identify Housing Locations

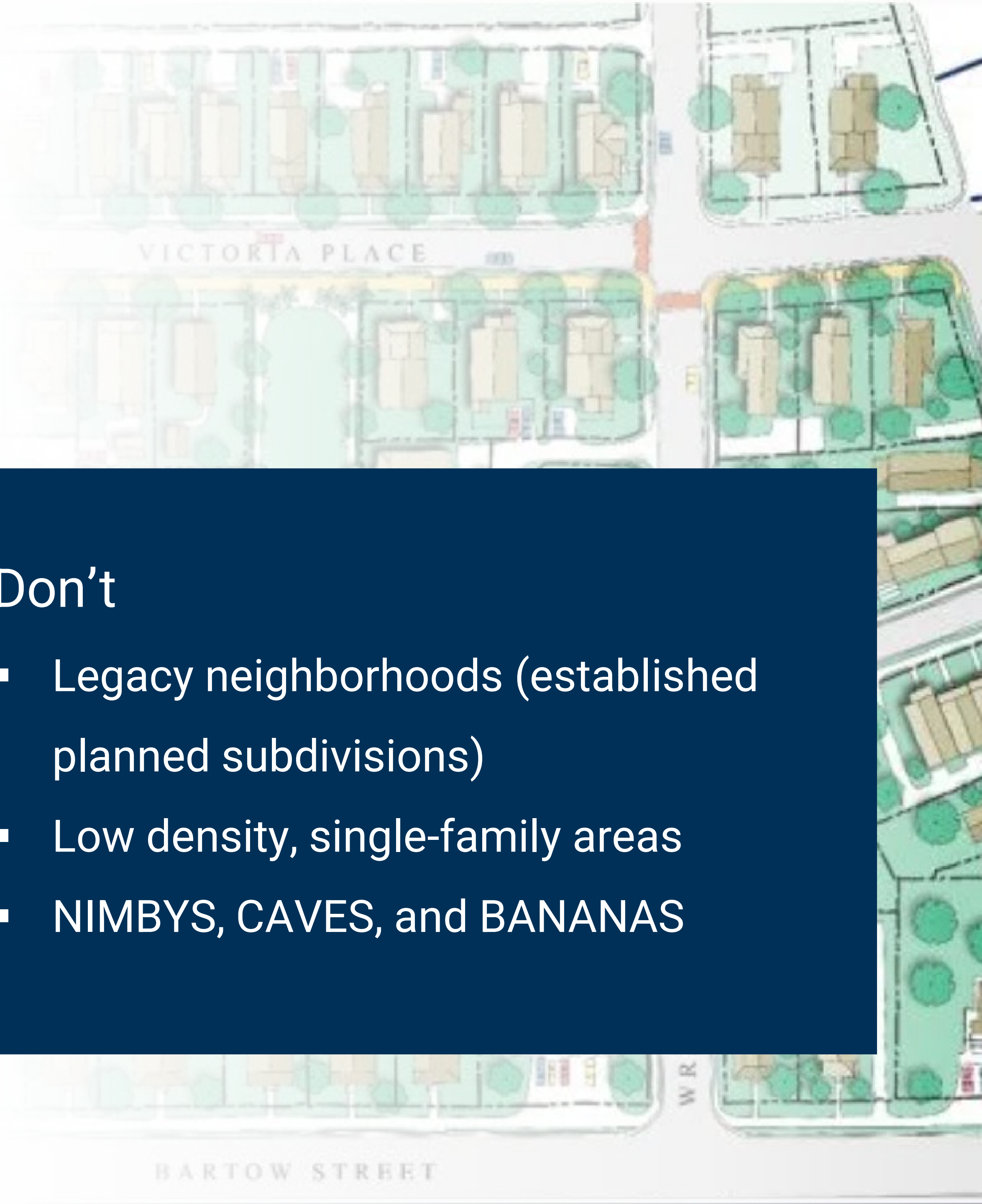
“Everything doesn’t belong everywhere,
but everything belongs somewhere.”
– Betsy McGriff

Do

- Build where infrastructure exists
- Historic downtown areas
- Neighborhood revitalization
- Blighted commercial corridors
- Redevelopment areas
- Unused public land

Don’t

- Legacy neighborhoods (established planned subdivisions)
- Low density, single-family areas
- NIMBYS, CAVES, and BANANAS



Workforce Housing Strategy
Ideal Housing Locations

Historic Downtowns

- New rooftops support retail
- Density can be appropriate
- Vacant lots and surface parking
- Condos, townhomes, mixed-use, lofts

Neighborhood Revitalization

- Eliminate slum and blight
- Infill vacant lots
- Address chronic code violations
- Missing Middle housing
- Land Trust

Workforce Housing Strategy
Ideal Housing Locations

Commercial Corridors

- Redevelop blighted highways
- Retail pruning for obsolete properties
- Create corridor redevelopment plans
- Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)
- Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)

Unused Public Land

- Intergovernmental Agreements
- Obsolete government buildings
- Vacant schools
- Vacant land

Workforce Housing Strategies
Key Takeaways

1 Workforce Housing is Economic Development

2 Allow Missing Middle + Increased Density

3 Build Variety of Home Types + Prices for Everyone

4 Build More Housing in and Around Downtown

5 Redevelop Blighted Neighborhoods + Commercial Areas

6 Update + Utilize Existing Infrastructure

Thank You

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