

Georgia Planning Association Fall Conference 2026

Building Housing Better Intersecting Programming, Zoning, and Comprehensive Planning

September 24, 2026



DeKalb County
GEORGIA

Agenda

- 3 INTRODUCTION
- 5 OFFICE OF HOUSING & PROGRAMS
- 19 ZONE DEKALB
- 31 COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING PLAN
- 45 PANEL DISCUSSION
- 46 AUDIENCE Q&A



Today's Presenters



Long-Range Planner
Eva Chauveau



Planner/Outreach Specialist
Madison Davis, AICP



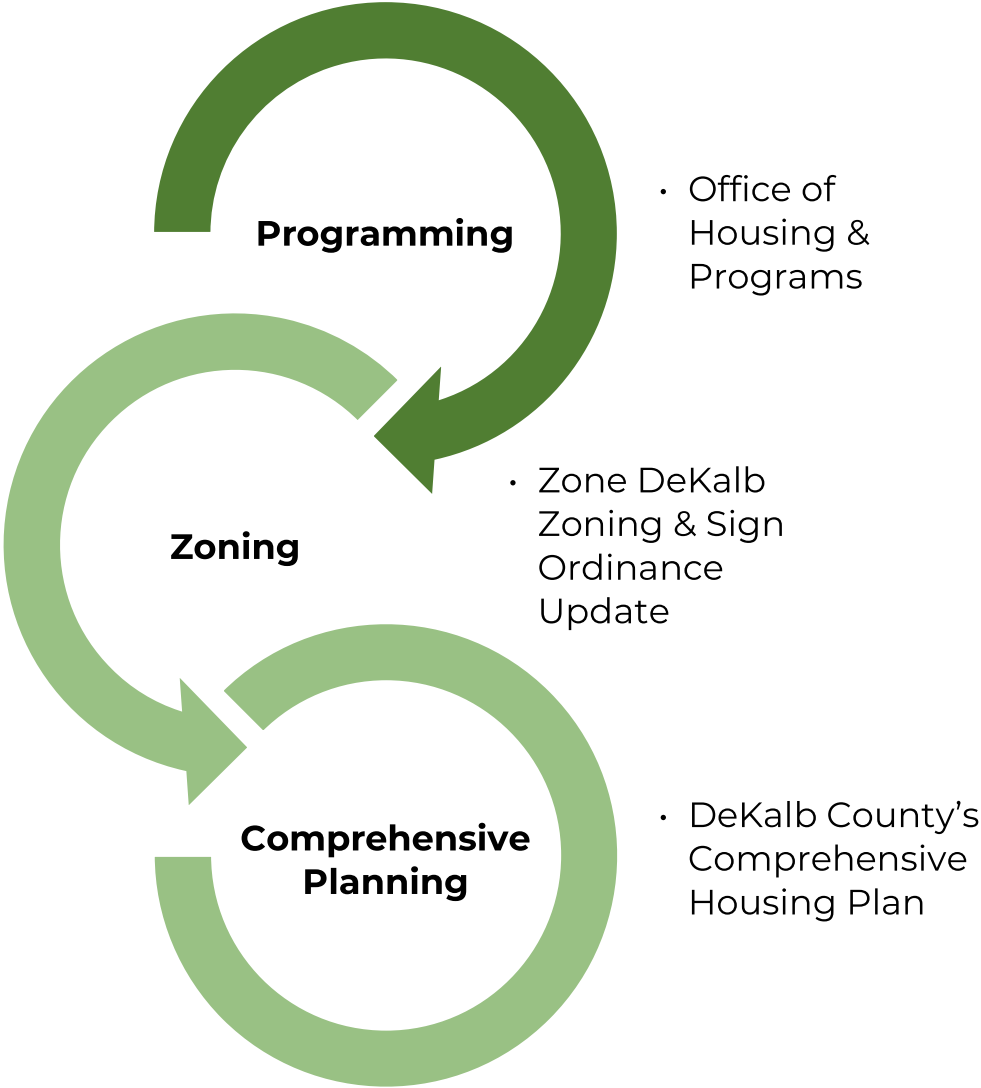
Project Manager
Paige Mitchell



Special Projects Manager
Yvonne Trammell



Collaborating & Building for Better Outcomes





OFFICE OF HOUSING & PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

“For every person deserves, not just a roof — but a place to call home.”

PRESENTED BY

Paige Mitchell

More access.

More choice.

Stronger communities

DeKalb County
Housing Vision 2026

Housing as a platform for
**stability, opportunity, and
resident empowerment**



Expand Housing Access and Supply

Increase

production and
preservation of
affordable and
attainable housing

Activate

County-owned and
underutilized
properties

Invest

local resources,
including **Housing
Investment Bond**

Preserve

existing affordable
housing to
prevent loss



Why the Office of Housing Exists

CORE MANDATE

Established within the Office of the CEO to unify fragmented municipal efforts, deploy dedicated capital, and lead a proactive countywide response to DeKalb's housing crisis.

KEY HOUSING CHALLENGES IN DEKALB COUNTY

- 01 Supply & Income Deficit**
Incomes lagged rising prices; new supply remains below pre-2008 levels.
- 02 Displacement & Aging Stock**
Rising gentrification risks alongside deteriorating rental properties.
- 03 Extended-Stay Reliance**
High dependence on motels as informal, unstable permanent housing.
- 04 Fragmented Efforts**
Siloed municipal strategies and persistent financing resource gaps.

GUIDED BY A THEORY OF CHANGE



Connection

Aligning efforts across County departments, municipal cities, and community partners.



Capacity

Strengthening internal municipal expertise and nonprofit developer capacity.



Creation

Producing and preserving housing through land disposition, finance, and development.

Core Functions

What the Office of Housing does for DeKalb County



Strategic Planning

Countywide housing framework & strategy



Policy Development

Initiatives for affordability, workforce housing, and homelessness



Stakeholder Engagement

Communities, developers, and advocates



Policy Advocacy

Advance DeKalb's housing priorities



Resource Management

Secure grants, bonds, and partnerships



Program Implementation

Deliver and measure outcomes across HIP programs



Cross-Sector Collaboration

Align with County departments and external partners

Office of Housing — Structure & Team



Alan Ferguson, Sr., Ph.D. Chief Housing Officer

The Chief Housing Officer leads DeKalb County's comprehensive housing strategy, focusing on expanding housing supply, reducing homelessness, and driving equitable community development.

Ife Jacobs Executive Support Assistant

The Executive Support Assistant coordinates daily operations, scheduling, and administrative workflows and executive communications to maximize leadership efficiency.

Paige Mitchell Project Manager

The Project Manager coordinates the execution and oversight of DeKalb County's housing investment programs, ensuring alignment across multi-agency partners, project timelines, and strategic county goals.

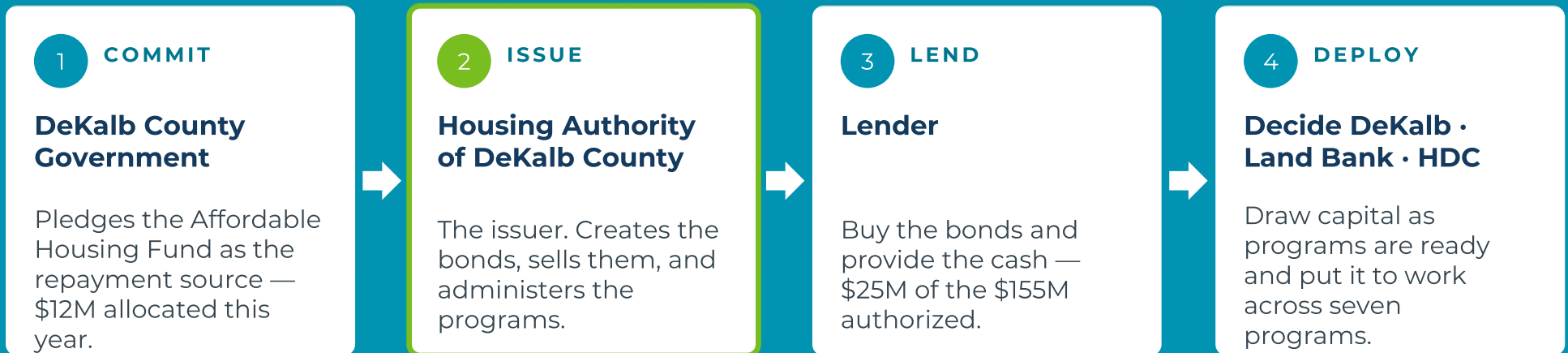
The background features decorative wavy lines in shades of green and blue, positioned in the top right and bottom left corners.

HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

How the Bond Works

\$155M taxable, draw-down bonds · Flexible use of proceeds · Leverages private and institutional capital

WHY THIS STRUCTURE: Broad eligibility for uses · Immediate capital availability · Simplified administration



← **Repaid over time: the County covers debt service from the Affordable Housing Fund, repaying bondholders.**

WHAT “ISSUER” ACTUALLY MEANS

To issue a bond is to create and sell it. The issuer handover a written promise to repay and receives cash in return. The Housing Authority issues, investors lend, the County repays.

HIP Structure & Roles

Debt service Strategy Oversight	DeKalb County Government
Funding source	Affordable Housing Fund
Bond issuer Primary program administrator	Housing Authority of DeKalb County
Subordinate program administrators	Decide DeKalb DeKalb Regional Land Bank Housing Development Corporation

Housing Investment Programs



Multifamily Acquisition
& Preservation



Housing Catalyst Gap
Financing Fund



HomeStart Down
Payment Assistance



BrighterHome
Homeowner Rehab



Transitional
Housing &
Homelessness



Capacity
Building Seed
Fund



Revive DeKalb

HIP Program Leads

Decide DeKalb Development Authority

- BrighterHome OOR
- HomeStart DPA
- Housing Capacity Seed Fund
- Housing Catalyst Multifamily Gap Financing

Housing Development Corporation

- Transitional Housing & Unhoused Program
- Multifamily Acquisition & Preservation Fund

DeKalb Regional Land Bank

- Revive DeKalb Blighted Property & Redevelopment Program

Program Matrix

Program terms reflect guidelines as currently drafted and are subject to final program guidelines.

Program	What It Provides	Who It's For	Key Terms	Administrator	Status
HomeStart Down Payment Assistance \$2.25MM	Deferred-payment assistance toward down payment, eligible closing costs, and interest rate buy-downs.	First-time homebuyers, renters ready to purchase, workforce households, and buyers relocating to DeKalb County.	Up to \$20K (at or below 100% AMI); up to \$15K (101-120% AMI); additional \$5K county employee incentive to 140% AMI. \$25K maximum. Housing costs limited to 30% of income. Purchase price limit aligned with Georgia Dream.	Decide DeKalb	This fall
BrighterHome Homeowner Rehab \$2.25MM	Forgivable loans for critical health, safety, accessibility, and system repairs — keeping homes safe, warm, dry, and accessible.	Income-qualified legacy homeowners who own and occupy the home as a primary residence.	Up to \$30K per home; up to \$44K layered with the County's Special Purpose Program. Households earning at or below 80% AMI. No age requirement. Minimum 10-year ownership and residency requirement. Loan is fully forgiven if the homeowner keeps the home as their primary residence for 10 years after repairs are completed.	Decide DeKalb	This fall
Transitional Housing & Homelessness \$2.75MM	Transitional housing and shelter created through hotel and facility conversions, paired with supportive services.	Households experiencing homelessness, including families needing non-congregate shelter.	Housing-first stabilization model with day service centers and pathways to permanent housing. Accessed through Housing Authority and Community Development referral, not direct public application.	HADC / HDC / Community Development	In development

Program Matrix

Program terms reflect guidelines as currently drafted and are subject to final program guidelines.

Program	What It Provides	Who It's For	Key Terms	Administrator	Status
Housing Catalyst Gap Financing Fund \$6MM	Flexible subordinate financing to close funding gaps in affordable and mixed-income multifamily rental developments, including LIHTC and non-LIHTC projects.	Multifamily developers and investors building or preserving affordable and workforce housing.	Up to \$100K/unit (<60% AMI); \$75K/unit (60–80% AMI); \$50K/unit (81–120% AMI, workforce). Max loan \$2.5M. Rate up to 4.5% based on underwriting. Term and amortization up to 45 years; interest-only periods available. Right of first refusal applies.	Decide DeKalb	Open now
Multifamily Acquisition Fund \$6MM	Acquisition capital to preserve, stabilize, and convert existing multifamily rental properties into long-term, mixed-income housing under public or mission-driven ownership.	The Housing Authority and mission-driven owners; benefits residents of existing workforce housing.	The portfolio is split across three affordability tiers: 20% at 60% AMFI (low-income/essential workers), 50% at 80% AMFI (workforce housing), and 30% at 120% AMFI (middle-income/attainable). Within Tier 1, a subtarget of 10% of total units is reserved at or below 30% AMFI, subject to voucher availability. Transitional units are incorporated where project circumstances support them.	HADC / HDC	In development
Revive DeKalb \$3MM	Acquisition, assemblage, and repositioning of blighted, vacant, or underutilized property to facilitate housing development.	Developers and builders acquiring through Land Bank disposition; neighborhoods with concentrated blight.	Delivered through the Land Bank disposition process. Supports affordable homeownership development and neighborhood revitalization.	DeKalb Regional Land Bank	In development
Capacity Building Seed Fund \$750K	Predevelopment grants, technical assistance, and project readiness support to move projects from concept to feasibility.	Nonprofits, faith institutions, small and emerging developers, residents and community groups, DeKalb's cities, and anchor institutions.	Delivered through three initiatives: DeKalb Land to Legacy (faith-based cohort), NSIDE DeKalb (neighborhood-scale incremental development), and the Land Bank Capacity Building Initiative.	Decide DeKalb	In development



DeKalb County

GEORGIA

Dr. Alan Ferguson, Sr., Chief
Housing Officer
Manuel J. Maloof Center, Decatur,
GA
404-371-2746 |
aferguson@dekalbcountyga.gov

Paige Mitchell, Project Manager
Manuel J. Maloof Center, Decatur,
GA
404-371-2000 |
pmitchell@dekalbcountyga.gov



DeKalb County Zoning & Sign Ordinance Update

Presented by Yvonne Trammell



ZONE DEKALB

- **Purpose: Update Chapter 21 (Signs) and Chapter 27 (Zoning)**
- **Duration: 2.5 years**
- ***1 year completed***
- **Current Phase: Phase 2 -Visioning & Code Drafting**
- **Stakeholders: Community, Sign Businesses, Developers**
- **Project Team: DeKalb County, Kimley Horn, Blue Cypress**





DEKALB COUNTY ZONING & SIGN ORDINANCE UPDATE

Let's plan DeKalb's future, together.

DeKalb County is updating its Zoning Ordinance for the first time in a decade — and the Sign Ordinance for the first time in 20 years! As change and growth are imminent in the County, it's important to **revisit our priorities and ensure our ordinances support the needs and desires of the community.**

PROJECT TIMELINE



PHASE 1
SEP 2025 - MAR 2026

Code Assessment &
Needs Identification



PHASE 2
MAR 2026 - JAN 2027

Visioning &
Code Drafting



PHASE 3
FEB - DEC 2027

Code Refinement
& Adoption

Community Engagement (ongoing)

SHARE YOUR IDEAS

Join us at an upcoming event and subscribe to Engage DeKalb's newsletter to stay in the know about future input opportunities.



Scan the QR code to visit the project webpage and learn more!

Get In Touch



Questions or comments? Email us at zonedekalb@dekalbcountyga.gov.

LEARN MORE | engagedekalb.dekalbcountyga.gov/ZoneDeKalb





ZONING 101

What is zoning and how does it impact you? ■■■

WHAT

WHAT IS THE DEKALB COUNTY ZONING CODE?

Zoning regulates the built environment and how a property can be developed.

Zoning decisions shape long-term community growth and influence what the county will look like in the future.

Zoning impacts...

- Where **development** type (housing, retail, restaurants, offices, parks, etc.) location, and design
- Housing **affordability**
- **Connectivity** and **walkability**
- **Access** to jobs, schools, and parks (sidewalks, bike lanes, parking)
- **Environmental quality** (trees, stormwater, open space)
- Neighborhood **character** and **design**
- ... and more!

WHY

WHY UPDATE THE ZONING CODE NOW?

The County's 2050 Unified Plan sets the community's vision for future development and for how the county wants to grow and evolve over the next 20 years.

The **zoning ordinance** is the tool that implements that vision, turning goals and policies into regulations for development.

This update aims to:

- Address current **housing, environmental, and economic needs**
- **Align with** the County's long-term **land use plan** (2050 Unified Plan) and **recent small area plans**
- Reflect **community priorities**
- **Modernize standards** and **simplify regulations** and make the code easier to understand and implement

HOW

HOW DOES THE ZONING CODE AFFECT ME?

- If you're a **property owner**—It affects how you can use and develop your land.
- If you're a **homeowner**—It affects what improvements you can make to your home or property.
- If you're a **business owner**—It affects where you can locate or expand your shop, restaurant, or office.
- If you a **community advocate** and/or care about **sustainability or transportation**—It affects how walkable, green, and connected your community can be.
- If you **walk, bike, roll, take transit, or drive**—It affects your trips and access to roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, and parking.

Will my property be rezoned?

No. No rezonings are proposed as part of this Zoning Ordinance Update. Existing, lawfully granted approvals and entitlements remain in effect.

Does my Zoning District affect my taxes?

No. Zoning controls how a property may be used and developed, but it does not determine property taxes or the tax rate.

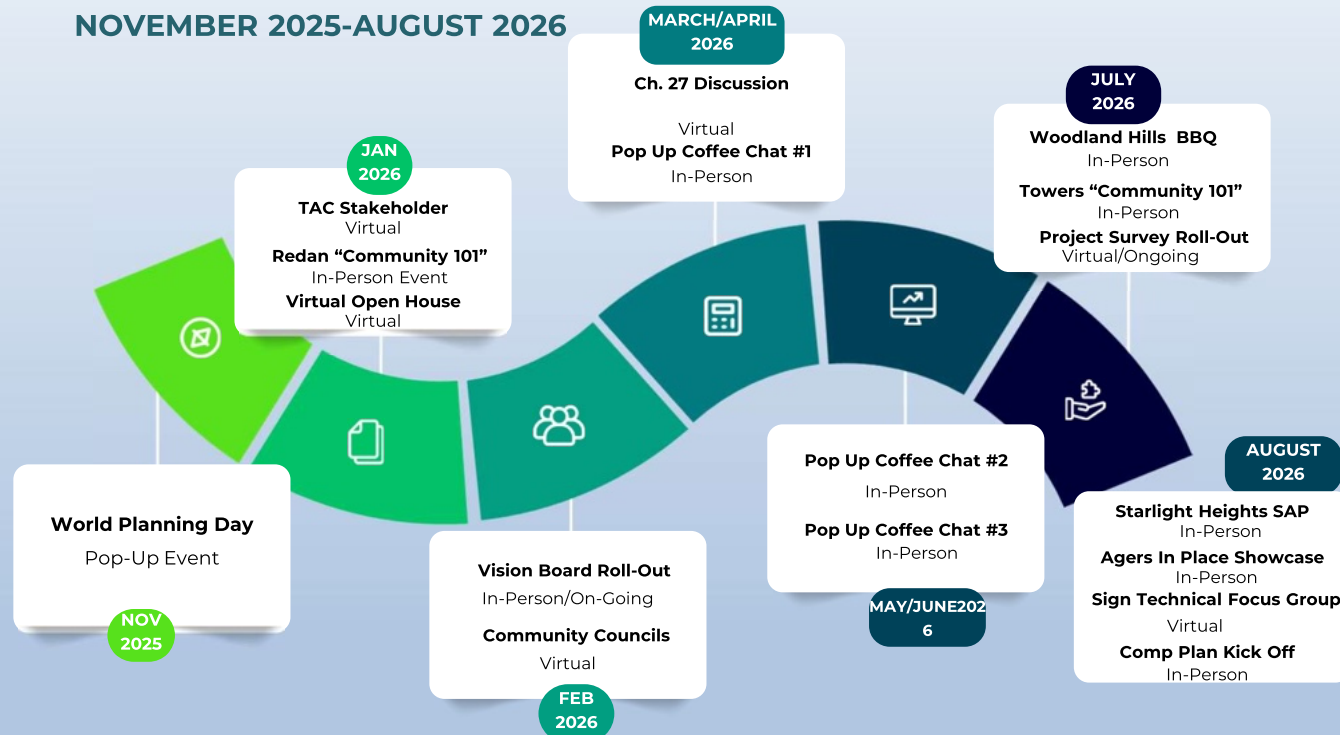
LEARN MORE:
Scan the QR code to visit
the project webpage.





ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

NOVEMBER 2025-AUGUST 2026





FUTURE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMBER 2026 - FEBRUARY 2027



Community Workshop

9/23 @5pm

**DeKalb County Government Service Center (178 Sams St, Decatur,
GA 30030)**

Meeting Rooms 1201A & 1201B

Purpose of the Community Workshop

Four Interactive Activities

The community workshop will use a series of visual exercises to gather feedback on key topics being addressed through the zoning ordinance update.

Participants will provide input on:

- Housing Types
- Buffers and Screening
- Sign Regulations
- Permitted Uses

The activities are designed to make zoning topics more visual, understandable, and accessible while helping staff understand community preferences and priorities.

Housing Types

Housing Type Activity

Participants will review examples of different housing types and place color-coded dots on a map to identify where they believe each housing type may be appropriate. The activity includes:

- Single-Family Housing
- Townhomes
- Low-Rise Multi-Family (3-5 stories)
- Mid-Rise Multi-Family (5-8 stories)
- High-Rise Multi-Family (8+ stories)

Existing Use	Dot Color	Description
		1 Dwelling Unit Detached
		Dwelling Units sharing a wall
		3-5 Stories
		5-8 Stories
		8+ Stories

Buffer and Screening

Buffer & Screening Activity

Participants will compare different combinations of existing and proposed development types and vote on the level of buffering they feel is appropriate between uses. Example pairings include:

- Single-Family ↔ Townhomes
- Single-Family ↔ Multi-Family
- Residential ↔ Commercial
- Residential ↔ Office
- Residential ↔ Industrial
- Commercial ↔ Office/Industrial Housing

Buffer and Screening

BUFFER TYPE	PLANTING STANDARDS PER 100 LINEAR FEET	SECTION VIEW (AT MATURITY)
TYPE A LANDSCAPE YARD BUFFER (LOW INTENSITY) No fence or berm required Minimum width: 5 feet	• 3 Canopy Trees • 5 Understory Trees • 20 Shrubs Opacity at maturity: 25 - 40%	
TYPE B ENHANCED LANDSCAPE BUFFER (MODERATE INTENSITY) No fence or berm required Minimum width: 10 feet	• 4 Canopy Trees • 6 Understory Trees • 30 Shrubs Opacity at maturity: 50 - 60%	
TYPE C OPAQUE FENCE BUFFER (HIGH INTENSITY) 6-foot opaque fence required Minimum width: 15 feet	• 4 Canopy Trees • 8 Evergreen Trees • 30 Shrubs • 6' Opaque Fence Opacity at maturity: 90 - 100%	
TYPE D BERMED LANDSCAPE BUFFER (HIGH INTENSITY) Berms required Minimum width: 20 feet Minimum berm height: 3 feet	• 5 Canopy Trees • 8 Evergreen Trees • 35 Shrubs • 3' Minimum Berm Opacity at maturity: 75 - 90%	
TYPE E HIGH IMPACT COMPATIBILITY BUFFER (VERY HIGH INTENSITY) Wall and berm required Minimum width: 25 feet Minimum wall height: 6-8 feet Minimum berm height: 3-4 feet	• 6 Canopy Trees • 12 Evergreen Trees • 40 Shrubs • 6'-8' Masonry Wall • 3'-4' Minimum Berm Opacity at maturity: 100%	

NOTES: 1. All trees shall be a minimum 2 1/2" caliper at installation. 2. Evergreen trees shall be a minimum 6' in overall height. 3. All planting required within the buffer.

Existing Use	Buffer voting	Proposed Use

Sign Regulations Exercise

Sign Regulation Comparison Activity

Participants will compare examples from the existing sign ordinance with the proposed sign regulation format and graphics.

The exercise focuses on:

- Whether sign types are clearly distinguished
- Whether the graphics improve understanding
- Whether the proposed organization is easier to navigate
- Whether any sign situations are unclear or missing
- Whether the new format supports easier

administration and interpretation

Wall Signs		
		
Standard	Residential Districts	Non-Residential (Commercial) Districts
Maximum Sign Area (Per Sign)	Maximum of six (6) square feet per sign.	Thirty (30) square feet or four (4) square feet per linear foot of wall, whichever is greater; up to a maximum of one hundred fifty (150) square feet for buildings under twelve (12) stories, and up to five hundred (500) square feet for buildings twelve (12) stories or greater.
Aggregate Sign Area	Lots used for residential purposes (excluding apartments, condominium, mobile home, or townhouse developments) shall not have an aggregate sign area greater than twenty-four (24) square feet per lot. Flags and banners shall not be included in the aggregate sign area calculation.	N/A
Illumination	Illumination is prohibited.	Permitted unless otherwise restricted. (Not explicitly regulated in this section.)
Number of Signs	Limited to one (1) wall sign per primary facade and one (1) wall sign per secondary facade.	Limited to one (1) projecting sign per primary facade and one (1) projecting sign per secondary facade.
Projection from Structure	Canopy signs may not project more than six (6) feet from a structure.	Projecting signs may not project more than six (6) feet from a structure.
Vertical Placement Limitation	No wall sign exceeding one hundred fifty (150) square feet may be placed below the twelfth (12th) story.	

Use Table Exercise

How the Activity Works

Participants receive cards representing different land uses and vote on how those uses should be considered within the zoning ordinance. Ballot boxes will correspond to the following approval categories:

- Permitted By Right
- Special Administrative Permit
- Special Land Use Permit
- Not Permitted

What We Hope to Learn

- Which uses the community generally supports
- Which uses may warrant additional review
- Which uses generate concern or require limitations
- How community expectations compare to the existing ordinance framework



DeKalb County's Comprehensive Housing Plan

DeKalb County's Comprehensive Housing Plan

Presented by Eva Chauveau & Madison Davis



What is a Comprehensive Housing Plan?



Actionable, living **document** that:

- Guides the County in future decision-making around **tools, resources, policies, programs, & ecosystem building**
- Brings County leaders and stakeholders together around a **clear, shared vision & goals**
- Process designed to **increase the capacity** of the housing ecosystem

MORE THAN A HOUSING STUDY/ASSESSMENT

Two-Phase Approach

Phase 1: Discovery

Unearth community housing opportunities & needs

Scan of existing DeKalb County housing initiatives & tools

Assessment of demographic & economic data

Housing inventory

Residential market analysis

Phase 2: Planning for Action & Measurable Impact

Vision & goal-setting

Strategy development

Implementation roadmap

Key metrics

Engagement

Discovery

- **Winter 2025/2026:**

- Developed Public Involvement Plan
- Convened stakeholder groups
- Presented to PECS committee
- Launched project website

- **Spring 2026:**

- Hosted Community Conversations
- Toured county with stakeholders

Planning for Action & Measurable Impact

- **Summer 2026:**

- Conducted resident focus groups
- Held stakeholder work sessions
- Hosted Community Showcase Town Hall

- **Fall 2026:**

- Conducting implementation work sessions
- Present final plan to PECS committee



CHP Vision

A DeKalb County where **everyone** has access to **safe, stable, quality housing** that fosters **community** and creates **pathways to success**.

4

Guiding Values

4

Implementation
Principles

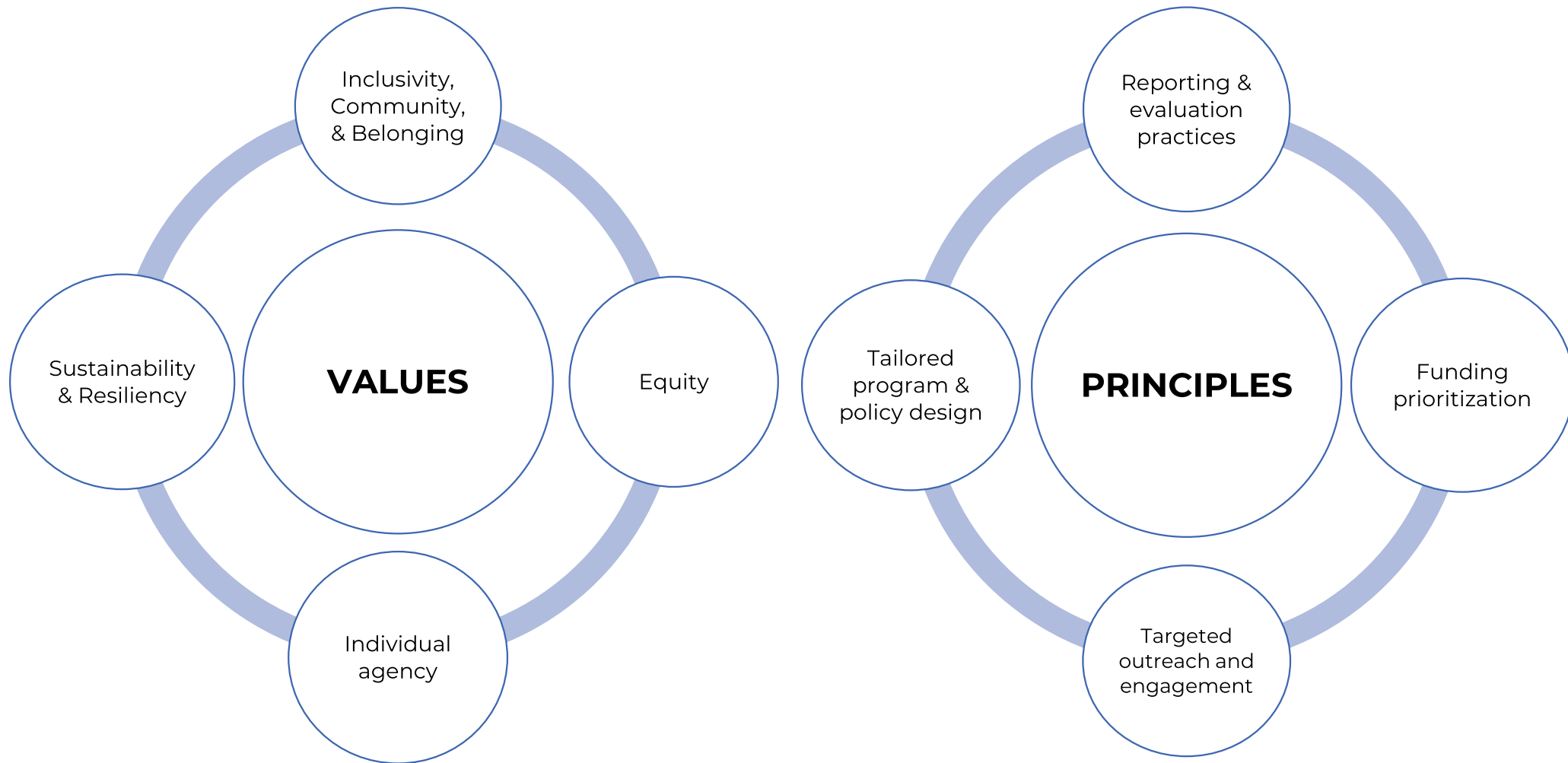
5

Comprehensive Goals

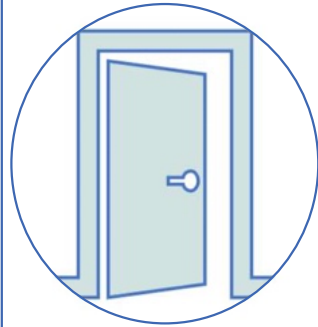
39

Strategic Actions

CHP Values, & Principles



CHP Goals



Make homelessness rare, temporary, and non-recurring

- 5 Strategic Actions Planned



Facilitate more quality rental housing that meets the needs of DeKalb County residents

- 6 Strategic Actions Planned



Support more attainable and lasting homeownership

- 8 Strategic Actions Planned



Strengthen housing development relationships, systems, and processes

- 10 Strategic Actions Planned



Optimize and increase resources to sustain housing production and preservation

- 10 Strategic Actions Planned



Strategic Actions



Make homelessness rare, temporary, and non-recurring

- Increase rapid re-housing, transitional housing, and non-congregate shelter
- Identify sustainable funding for emergency financial assistance (i.e., rental, utility, foreclosure)
- Increase access to financial counseling
- Continue to support and expand legal resources for renters
- Utilize hotels/motels and other underutilized properties to increase availability of deeply affordable housing opportunities

Strategic Actions



Facilitate more quality rental housing that meets the needs of DeKalb County residents

- Explore launching a local rental assistance program
- Increase incentives for private landlords to rent at affordable rates and/or reduce barriers to access
- Develop an acquisition/disposition strategy that prioritizes properties where affordability can be preserved
- Support conversion for the remaining public housing units in the county
- Pilot funding for middle housing types
- Explore policies that improve rental housing conditions in the context of state/federal enabling environments

Strategic Actions



Support more attainable and lasting homeownership

- Scale homebuyer counseling and education
- Scale training and counseling for new/current homeowners
- Scale owner-occupied rehab & rebate programs, including for home-hardening/resiliency improvements
- Invest in foreclosure prevention services and supports, with particular emphasis on preserving homeownership for households on fixed incomes
- Deploy funding to support development of for-sale housing
- Expand down payment assistance program
- Increase access to estate planning services
- Expand resources relating to heirs properties

Strategic Actions



Strengthen housing development relationships, systems, and processes

- Resource a permanent DeKalb County Housing Council
- Work with community partners and use County communication platforms to increase awareness of rights & existing resources for residents
- Facilitate a series of community forums to build understanding of housing opportunities & challenges
- Launch Housing Innovation Fund in coordination with cross-sector working group
- Launch faith-based development initiative (Land to Legacy)
- Organize and launch a Master Review Team and hire project managers to improve communication and expedite permitting
- Launch AI-assisted permitting platform as a centralized and transparent information collection system

Strategic Actions



Strengthen housing development relationships, systems, and processes

- Implement permitting timeframes as prescribed in SB 447 complemented by renewed enforcement of six-month open permitting limitations
- Align development fees with regional competitiveness and incorporate a community benefits-based fee reduction incentive
- Amend the zoning ordinance to establish a clear and predictable pathway for eligible nonconforming properties to achieve compliance

Strategic Actions



Optimize and increase resources to sustain housing production and preservation

- Revise land use policy to allow for greater housing supply and greater housing choices, especially in areas with the greatest connectivity and access to services/resources
- Adopt pre-approved architectural plans for the most needed housing types
- Develop and implement a strategy to optimize land banking powers
- Pilot funding for middle housing types
- Explore proactive targeted inclusionary zoning near major public investments
- Explore additional County revenue sources to sustain housing-related activities
- Attract more regional/national private & philanthropic funders to support housing-related activities
- Convene CDFIs to sustainably support revolving loan fund
- Create inventory of publicly-owned land and identify land suitable for residential development
- Create and analyze inventory of vacant and abandoned properties to inform activation strategy

CHP Plan Contact

Eva Chauveau
Planner/Project Manager
DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability
Email: emchauveau@dekalbcountyga.gov



engagedekalb.dekalbcountyga.gov/DCCHP



PANEL DISCUSSION

Audience Q&A

What are **your questions**
for our panelists about
today's presentation or
related topics?