

Housing is Economic Development

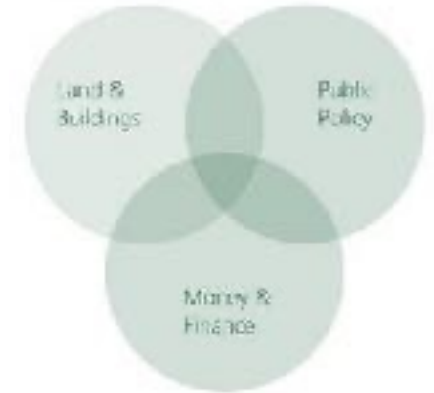
*Why Communities Can't Recruit
Jobs Without Homes*

KB | ADVISORY GROUP



Meet Your Presenters

Based in Atlanta, Georgia, **KB Advisory Group** has provided real estate and economic development consulting services to cities, counties, developers, community districts, nonprofits, and design firms throughout the Southeast for 25 years.



Gabrielle Oliverio, AICP

*Senior Manager
KB Advisory Group*



Trevor Butler, AICP

*Senior Consultant
KB Advisory Group*

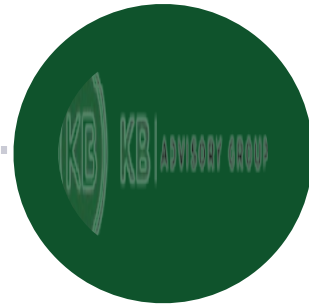
Session Topic Overview



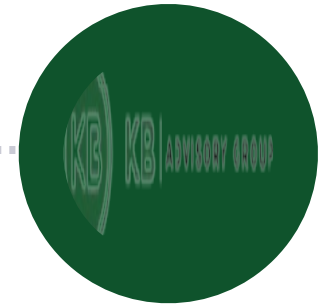
**Uncovering the
Linkage**



**Interplay in
Georgia**



**Spotlight: Augusta
Region**



Q&A

Uncovering the Linkage

A Tale of “Two” Questions

Historically, housing (as a subset of community development) and economic development planning centered on solutions to different questions.



HOUSING

“What kind of housing do we want in our community/How do we preserve our existing residential areas?”



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“How do we attract and retain industry/employers and grow the tax base?”

Comparative Lens



Why the Divide?

Mechanics

Dollars “flow” through different programs, are administered by different departments/entities, and have different eligibility requirements

Players & Constituents

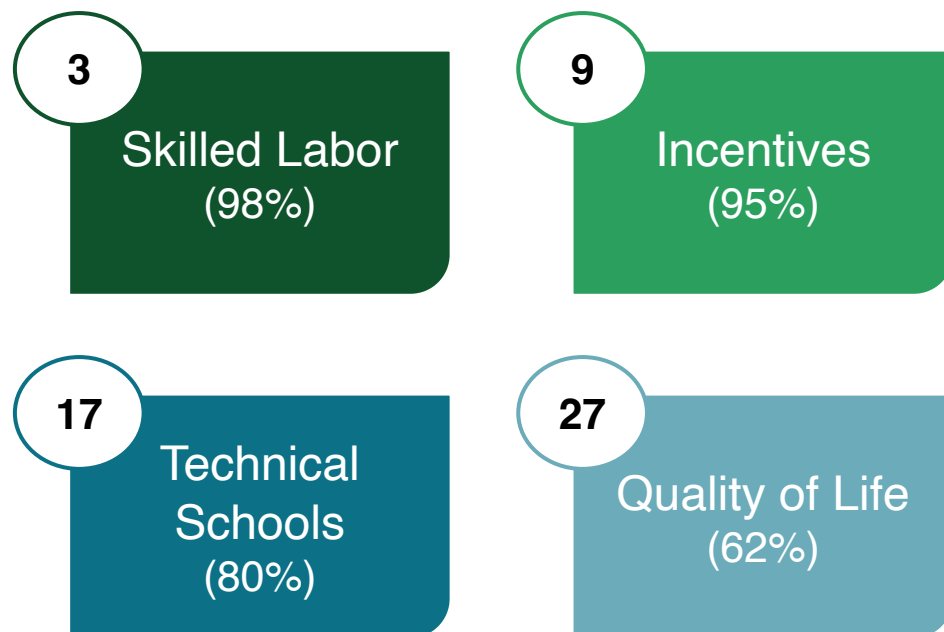
Historically, efforts have operated in separate lanes with different coalitions, partner networks, and main constituent bases

Success Metrics

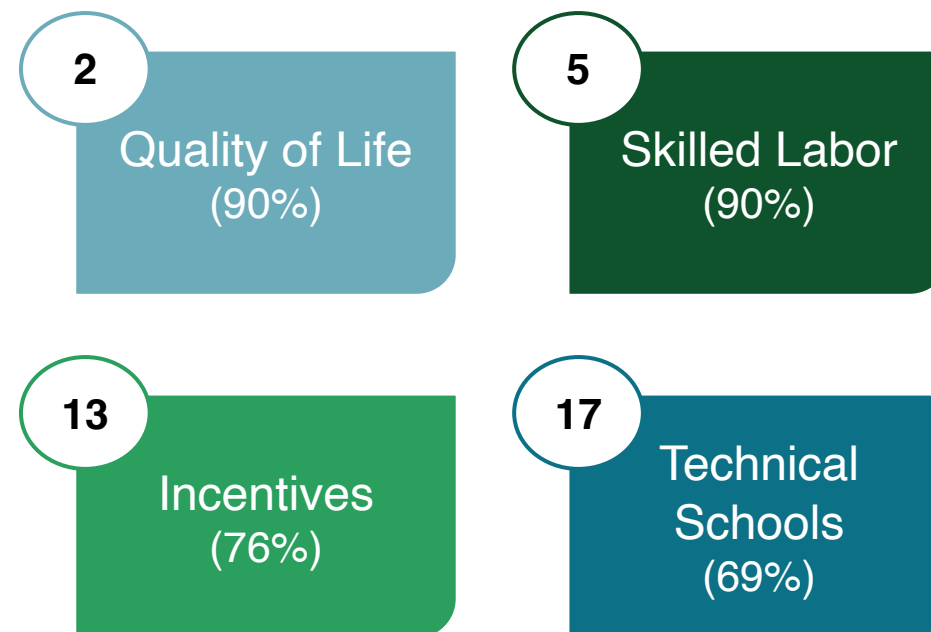
With differing lanes, involved parties, and programming, success metrics have historically had less overlap

Shift in the Site Selection Search

Site Consultants Survey (2025)



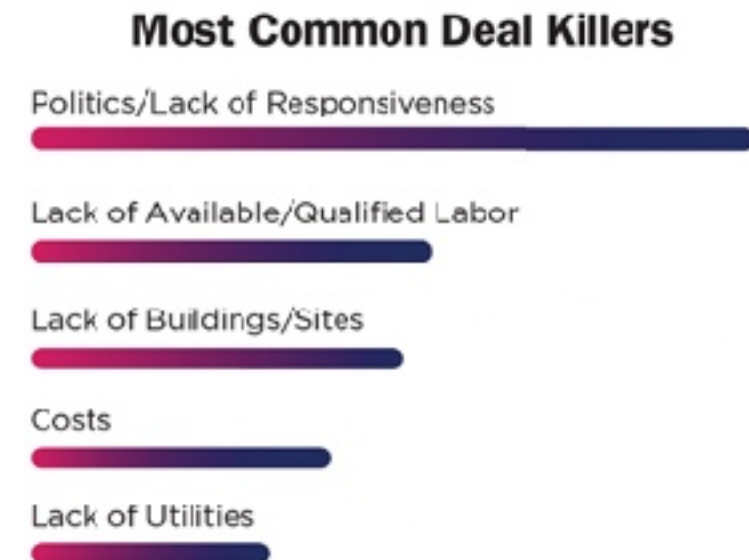
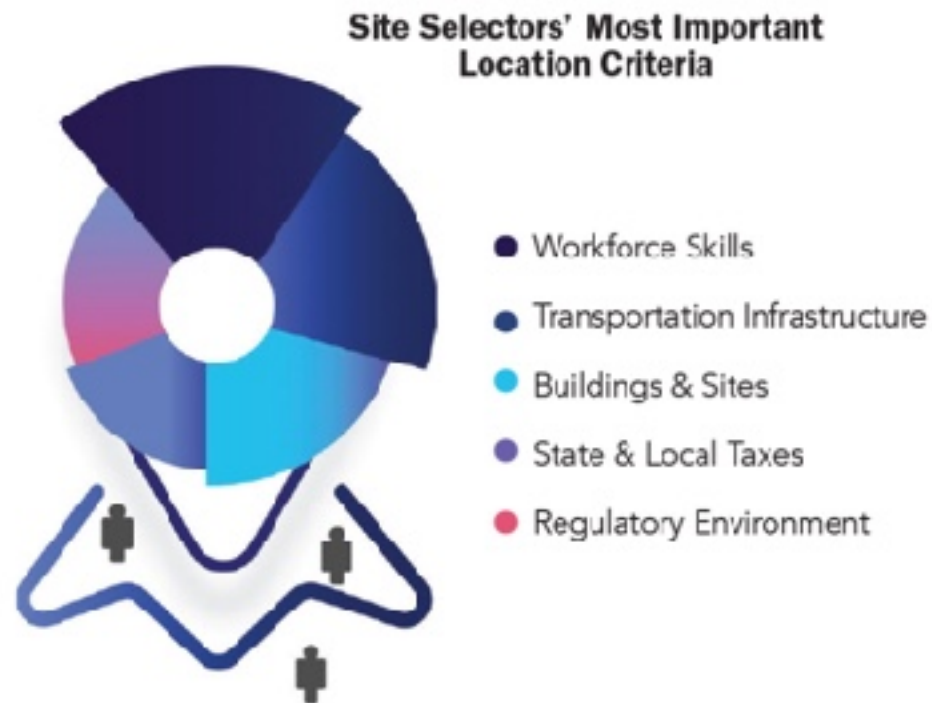
Corporate Survey (2025)



Source: Area Development 39th Annual Corporate & 21st Annual Consultants Survey

Train the Talent

- Workforce was the top factor driving corporate location decisions
- Part of a growing trend as site selectors reported challenges identifying enough workers with needed skillsets



Source: Site Selection, "Show Me the Workforce" (2019)

Attract and Retain the Talent

“Today, it is all about your workforce strategy. You have to treat talent attraction and quality of life as inseparable.”

— Jennifer Rohen, Principal, CLA St. Louis

Cities that are relatively affordable, have outdoor amenities, and high quality of life are having greater success with talent attraction

What falls under Quality of Life?



Affordability



Schools



**Mobility/
Commutin
g**



**Housing
Availability**



**Community
Amenities**



Safety

Source: Site Selection, “QUALITY OF LIFE: How Quality of Life Is Shaping Site Selection”
(2026)

Workforce (Development) as the Link



“Shrinking the Talent Pipeline”

When wages do not keep up with housing costs, less workers will live close to where they work



“The Commute and Productivity Penalty”

Longer commutes risk high levels of absenteeism and productivity



“Accelerating Employee Turnover”

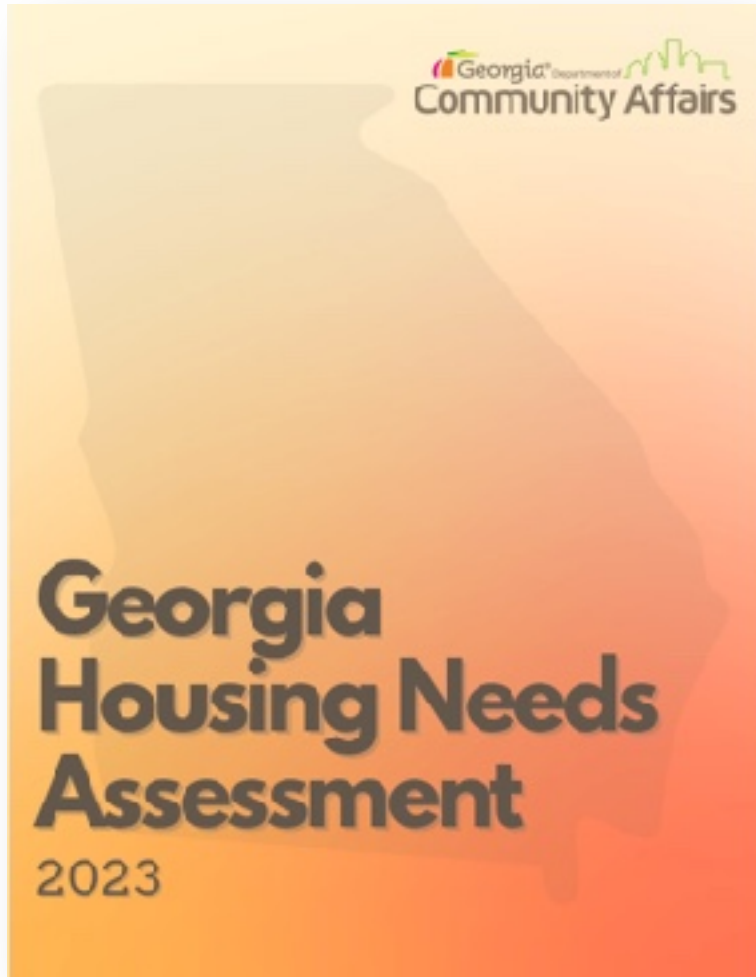
More workers will look for higher-paying jobs in the same area or move to a more affordable region

Source: National League of Cities, “The Invisible Tax: How Housing Unaffordability Stalls Workforce Development” (2026)



Interplay in Georgia

State Leadership Recognition



“Georgia has been blessed to experience incredible growth in recent years, with record jobs and investment coming to communities across our state.

This has led to increased need for workforce housing to meet the needs of employees in rural communities.

This program is an important step towards meeting that need and ensuring workers are able to live in the communities where they work. I look forward to remaining engaged with our local partners on this issue in the coming months and years.”

~ Gov. Brian Kemp, 2023 State of the State Address

Continued Affordability Risks



By Matt Reynolds
Aug 7, 2025

Estimates of the national units, as high as 7 million.

A new report from Moody's of census tracts — the show which are underse

The analysis, "Bringing t deficit of 2 million home most acute shortages, ar

Foundations for Growth: Rural Mayors Take on Georgia's Housing Shortage

November 11, 2025



Keys to Housing A COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

The Challenge: Data and Long-term Trends

Georgia has been named the best state in which to do business for a 12th year in a row.

In the last year, the state has experienced 423 facility expansions and new locations, which represent more than \$26.3 billion in investment and 23,200 jobs in the coming years.

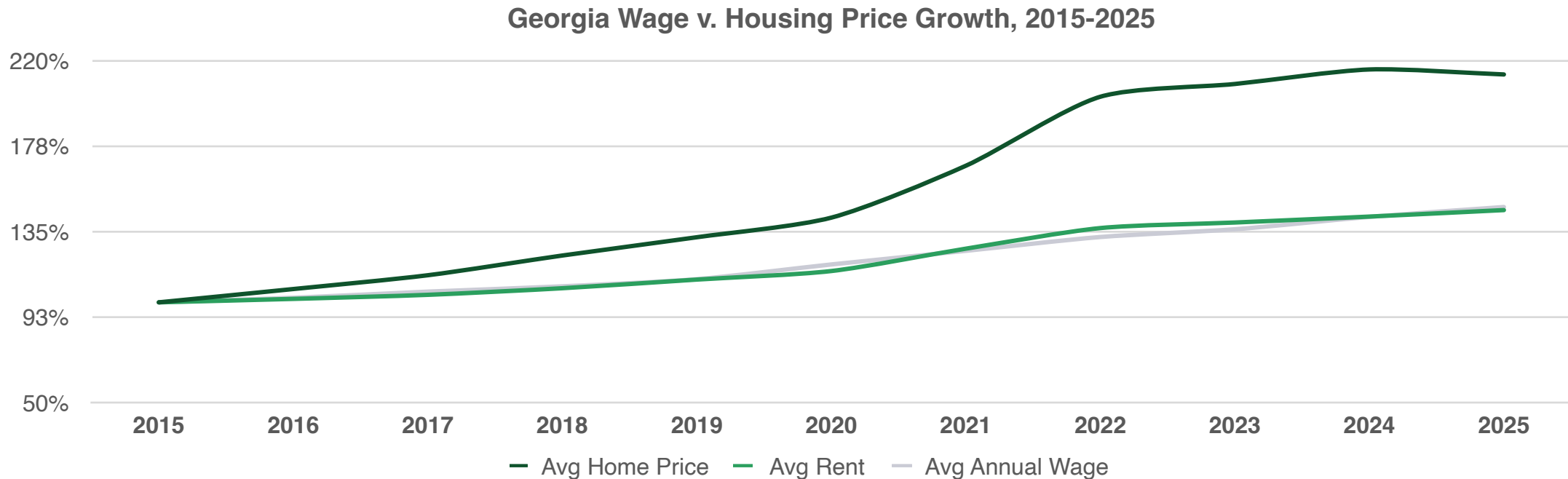
This incredible success means communities across the state of Georgia are facing unique challenges that must be met with innovative solutions to capitalize on the economic opportunity fully. Many Georgians are not able to work in the community they call home, and consistently, Georgia businesses report that the lack of attainable housing is impacting their talent pipeline. For three consecutive years, Georgia CECs ranked access to housing as one of the top two issues affecting their ability to recruit, develop, and retain employees. Furthermore, the state's homeownership rate peaked in 2002 and has declined 7% since then.

The state's housing crisis has developed out of multiple factors interacting over a long period of time. First, Georgia has grown substantially in recent years. Since 1980, the state has added more than one million new residents per decade, meaning the population has nearly doubled. Simultaneously, housing development has not kept pace. The number of building permits issued in Georgia, according to Census Bureau data, crashed during the Great Recession and has yet to fully recover despite sustained, rapid population growth.

Source: Atlanta Journal Constitution, Georgia Municipal Association, Georgia Chamber Foundation, Georgia Housing Access and Affordability Task Force

Georgia in the Numbers

- Statewide, wages have not kept up with the increases in home prices.
- Given this barrier, rental housing has become relatively more accessible.
- However, differences exist the more local you look.

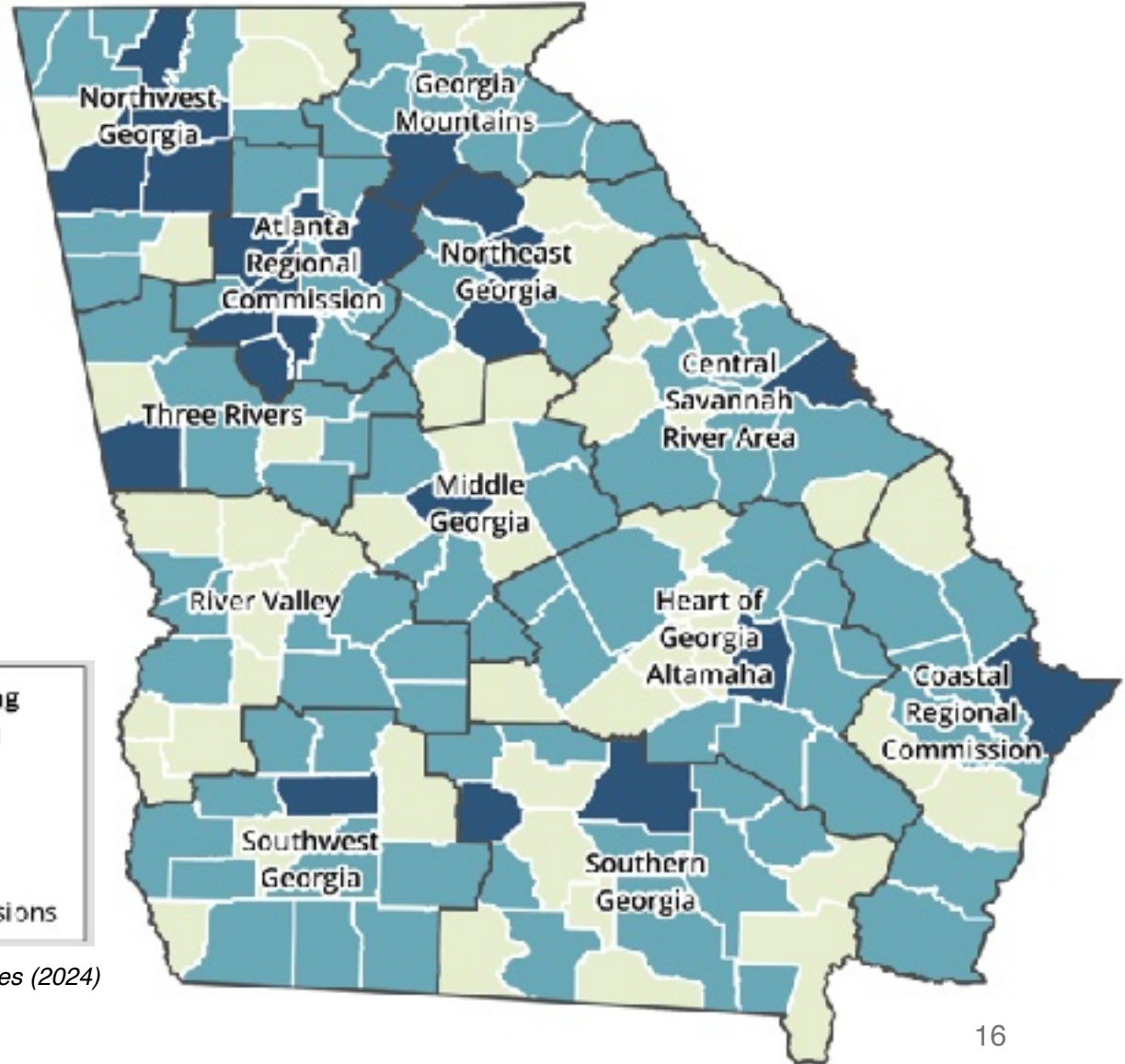
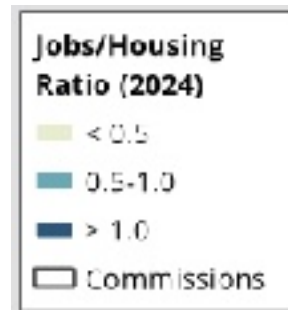


*Nominal
Source: KB Advisory Group with data from Zillow, BLS

Where Can Workers Both Live and Work?

- The jobs/housing ratio measures how many housing units there are for every job.
- A value higher than 1 indicates that there are more jobs than existing housing inventory – **pushing more workers outside of counties in which they work.**
- While there is a concentration of counties with a higher ratio closer to Atlanta, several exist elsewhere in the state, including:

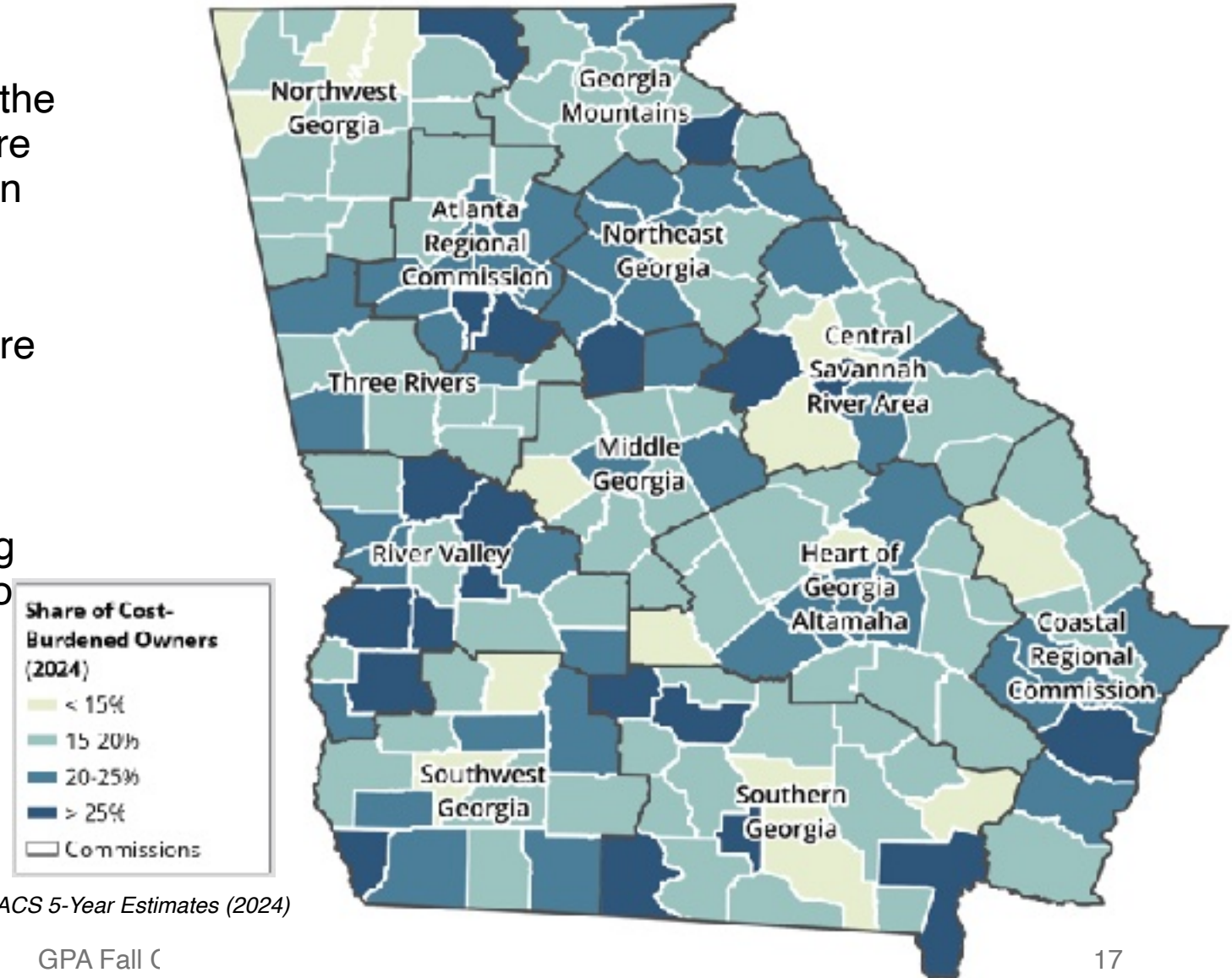
- Richmond
- Bibb
- Toombs
- Chatham
- Coffee
- Tift
- Dougherty
- Whitfield



Source: KB Advisory Group with data from GDOL, U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates (2024)

Can Owners Afford to Remain?

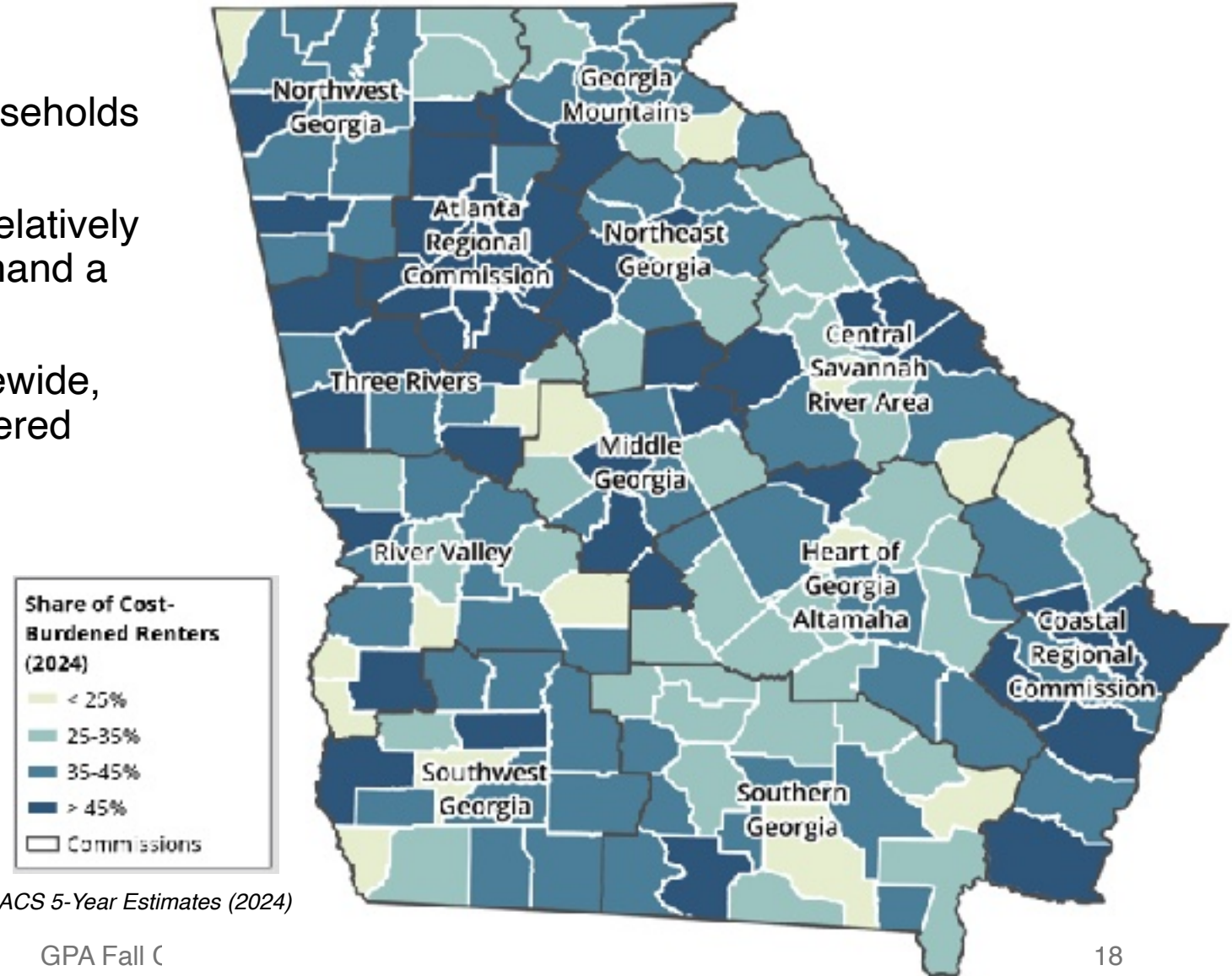
- For every two in five counties across the State, at least 20% of homeowners are cost-burdened (or spending more than 30% of their household income on housing).
- The largest share of these counties are in the River Valley area followed by Northeast Georgia and the Atlanta region.
- This means a decent share of existing homeowners are feeling pressures from housing costs.



Source: KB Advisory Group with data from U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates (2024)

Can Renters Afford to Remain?

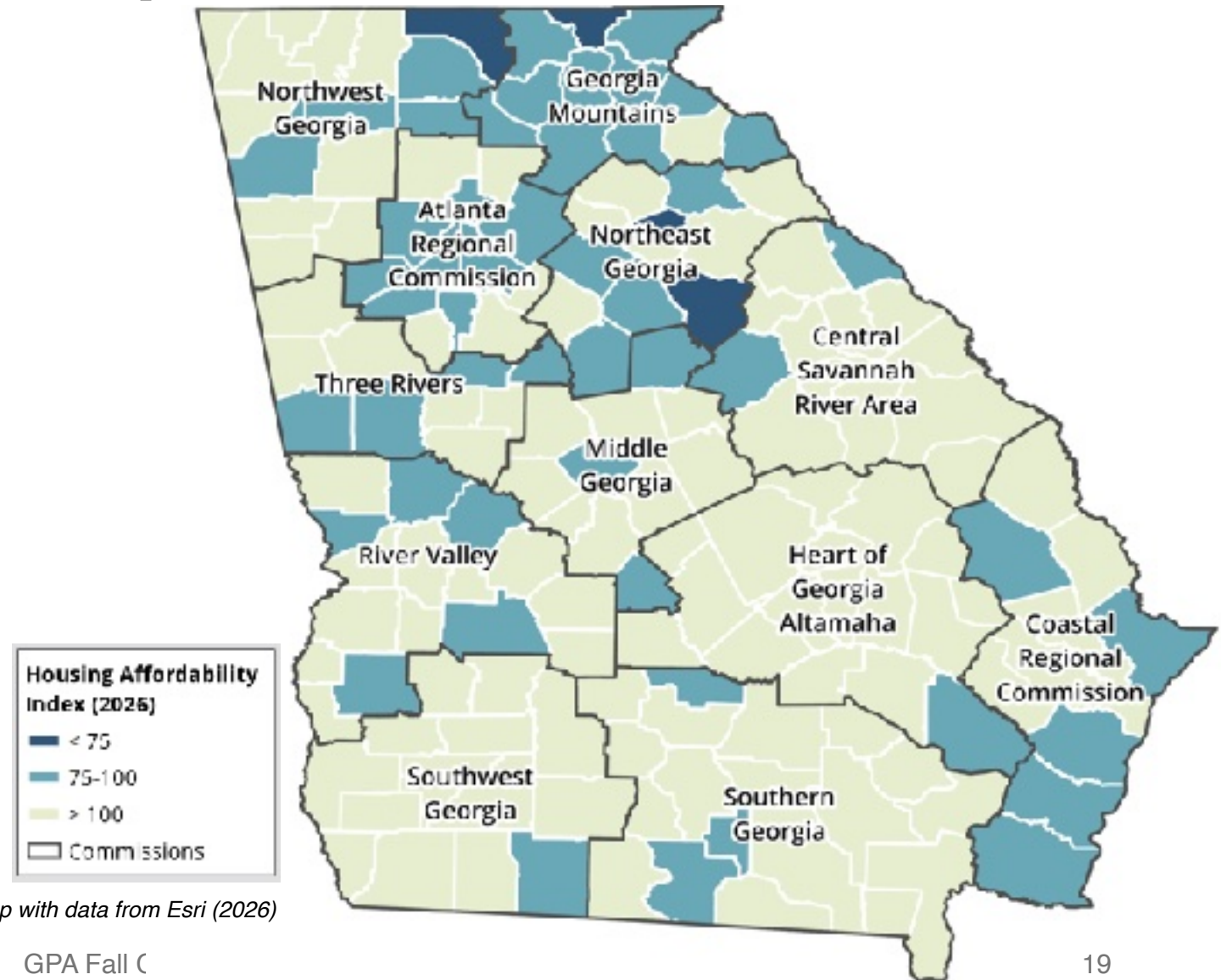
- The situation is starker for renter-households across the State.
- Even though wages have grown on relatively on par with rental rates, they still demand a large portion of household income.
- In approximately 2/3 of counties statewide, more than 35% of renters are considered cost-burdened.



Source: KB Advisory Group with data from U.S. Census ACS 5-Year Estimates (2024)

Wage v. Homeownership Mismatch

- Based on Esri's Housing Affordability Index, in approximately 30% of counties, the median household income is insufficient to purchase a median priced home in that same county.
- So even if current homeowners are not feeling as squeezed from housing costs, the barrier for **NEW** homeowners is disproportionately higher in different areas across the State.
- This underscores the importance of both encouraging housing supply and also ensuring new (and existing) job opportunities are offering higher than average wages.



Source: KB Advisory Group with data from Esri (2026)

Linkage Takeaways



1.

The growth and maintenance of our communities will continue to be shaped by factors that cross planning siloes

2.

Workforce and talent will likely only grow as a driving force for economic development specifically

3.

The question is no longer just can we attract and retain businesses, but can our communities also attract and retain workers?

4.

Housing attainability is central to successfully answering this question

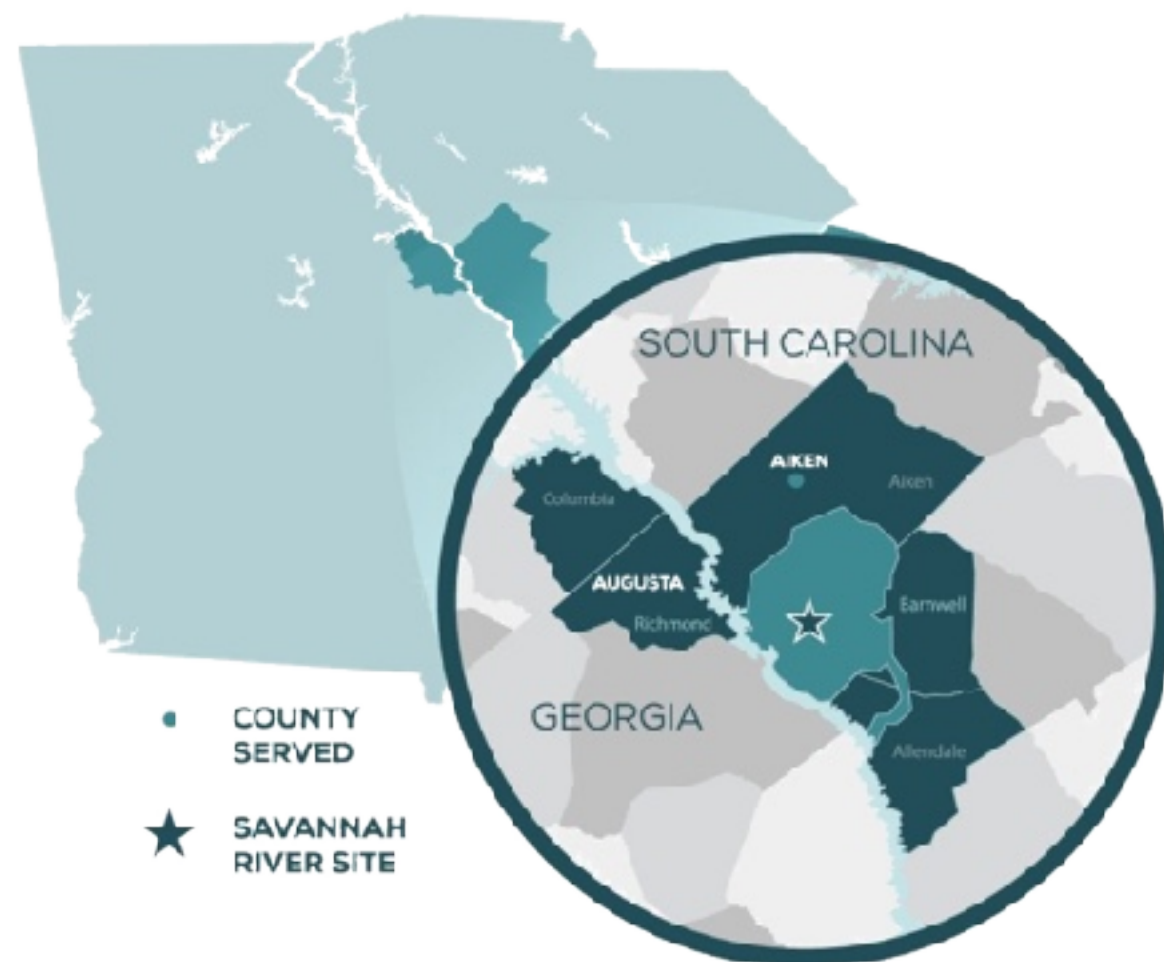


Spotlight: Augusta Region

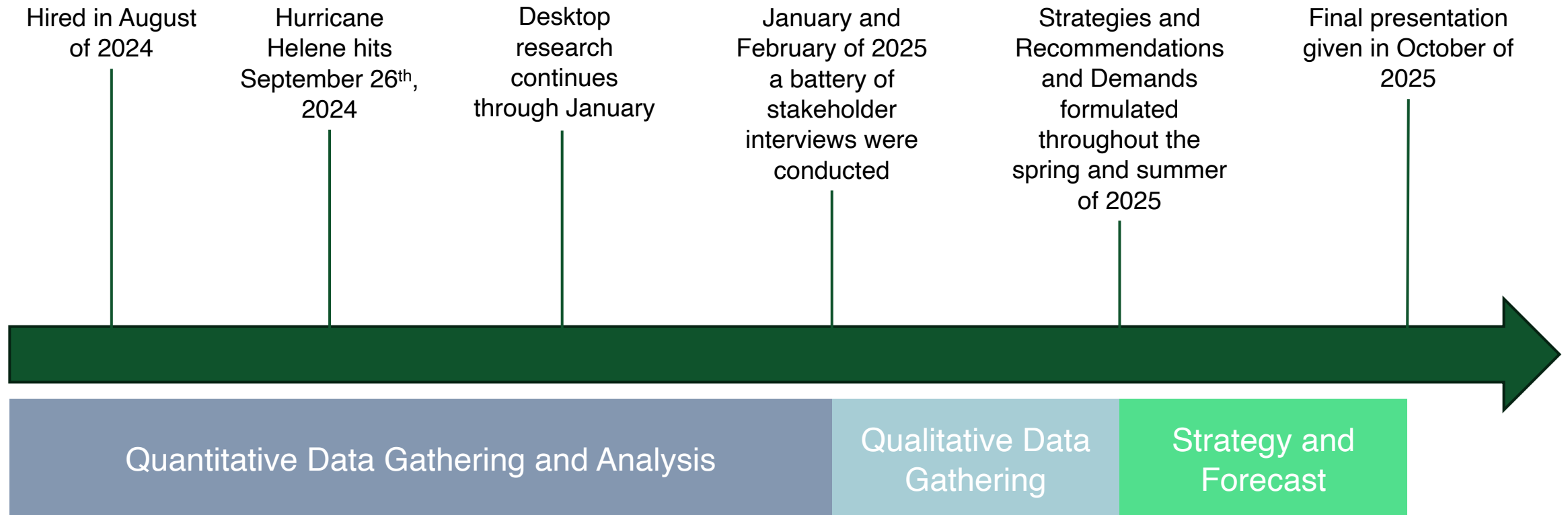
Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO)

OUR MISSION

We strengthen and connect the Savannah River region through collaboration, advocacy, and education — connecting communities, industry, educators, and the Savannah River Site to expand opportunity, strengthen talent pipelines, and inspire the next generation of innovators. Together, we invest in people and partnerships that ensure our region's continued leadership in nuclear advancement and shared success.



Project Timeline



Defining a Region

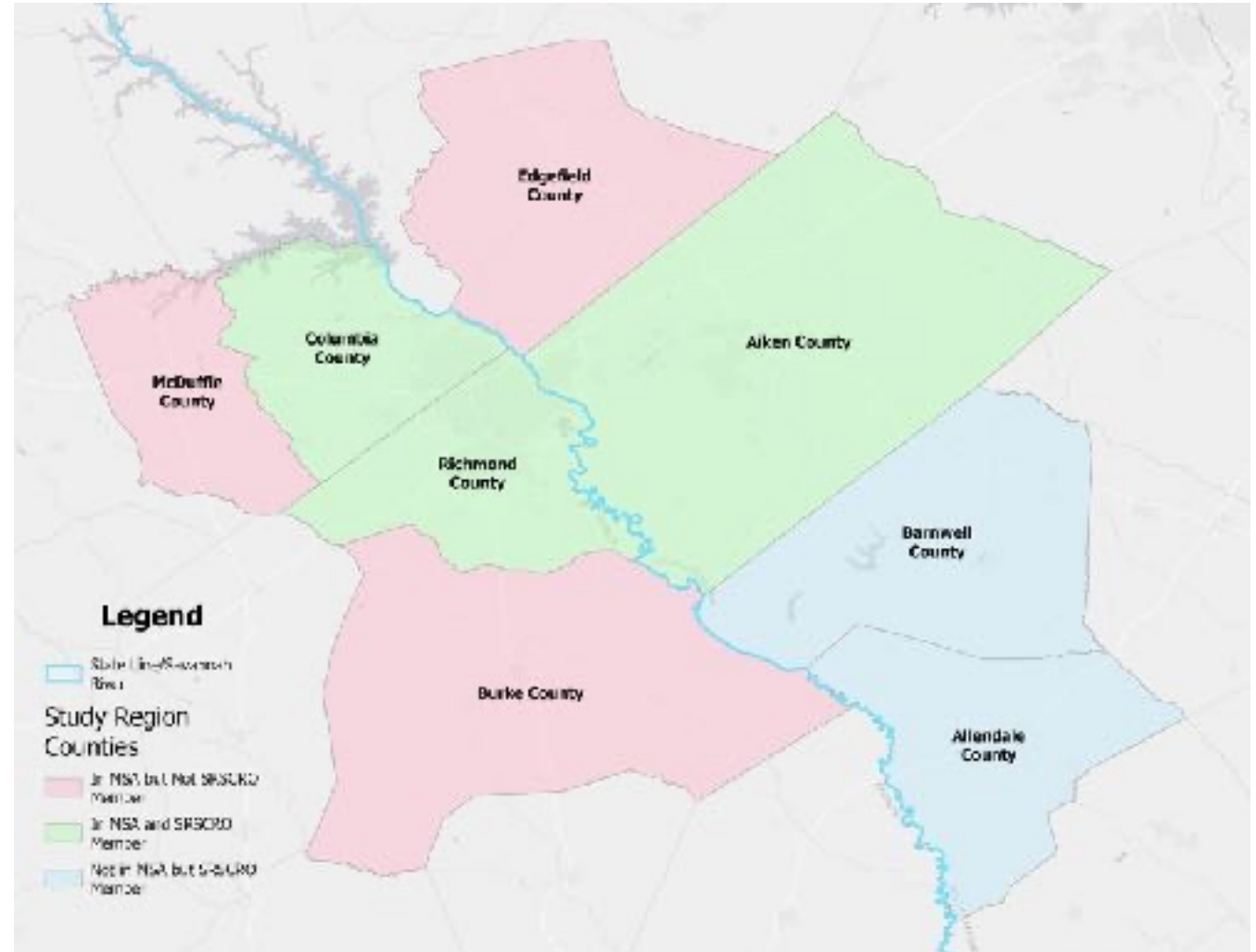
The region we studied has a diverse set of communities that experience the full range of housing and economic development related problems



Defining a Region

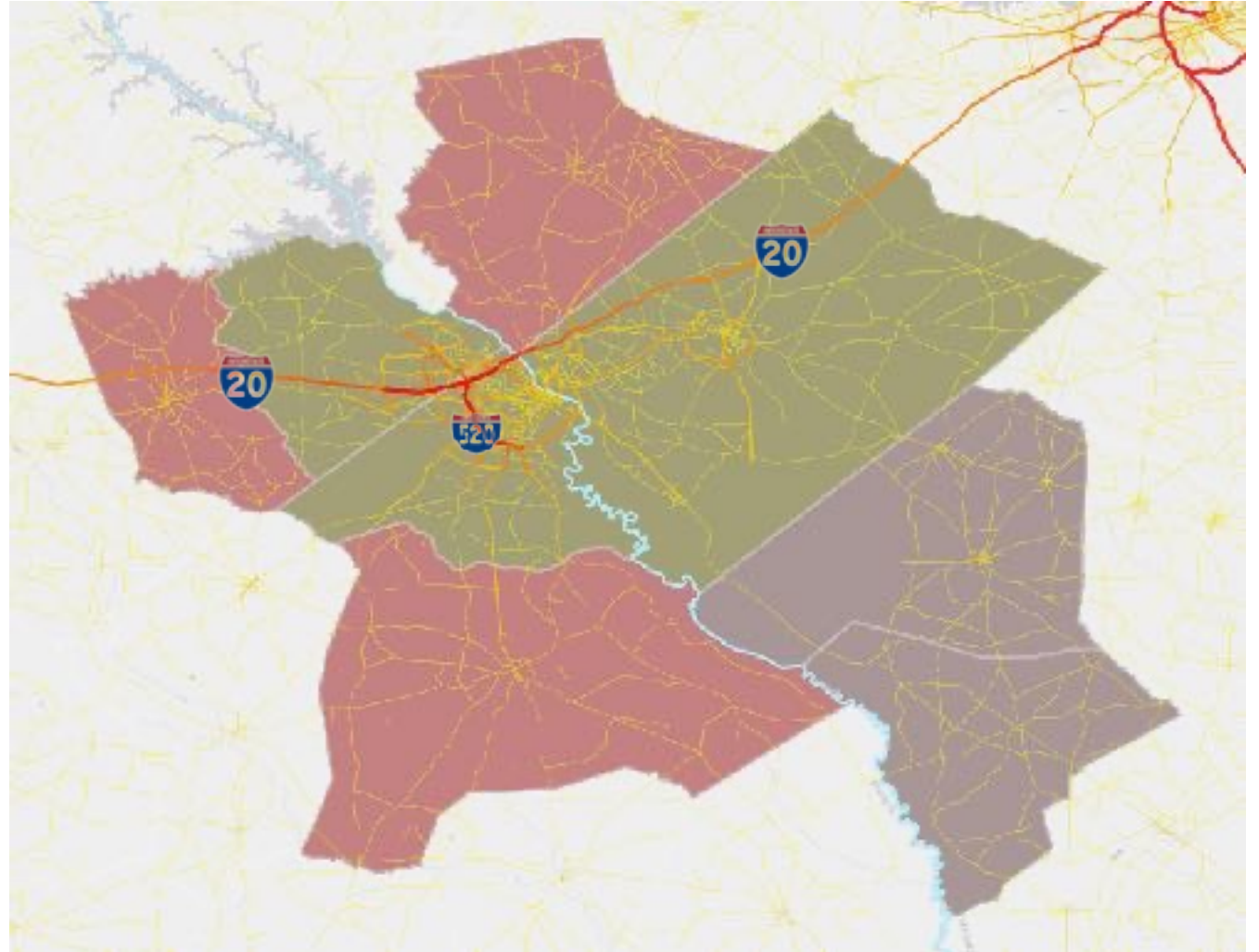
- The study region crosses state lines and exceeds the bounds of both the established MSA and the SRSCRO service area
- The first question we needed to answer was:

“How do we talk about communities as different as Allendale and Columbia as belonging to the same region?”



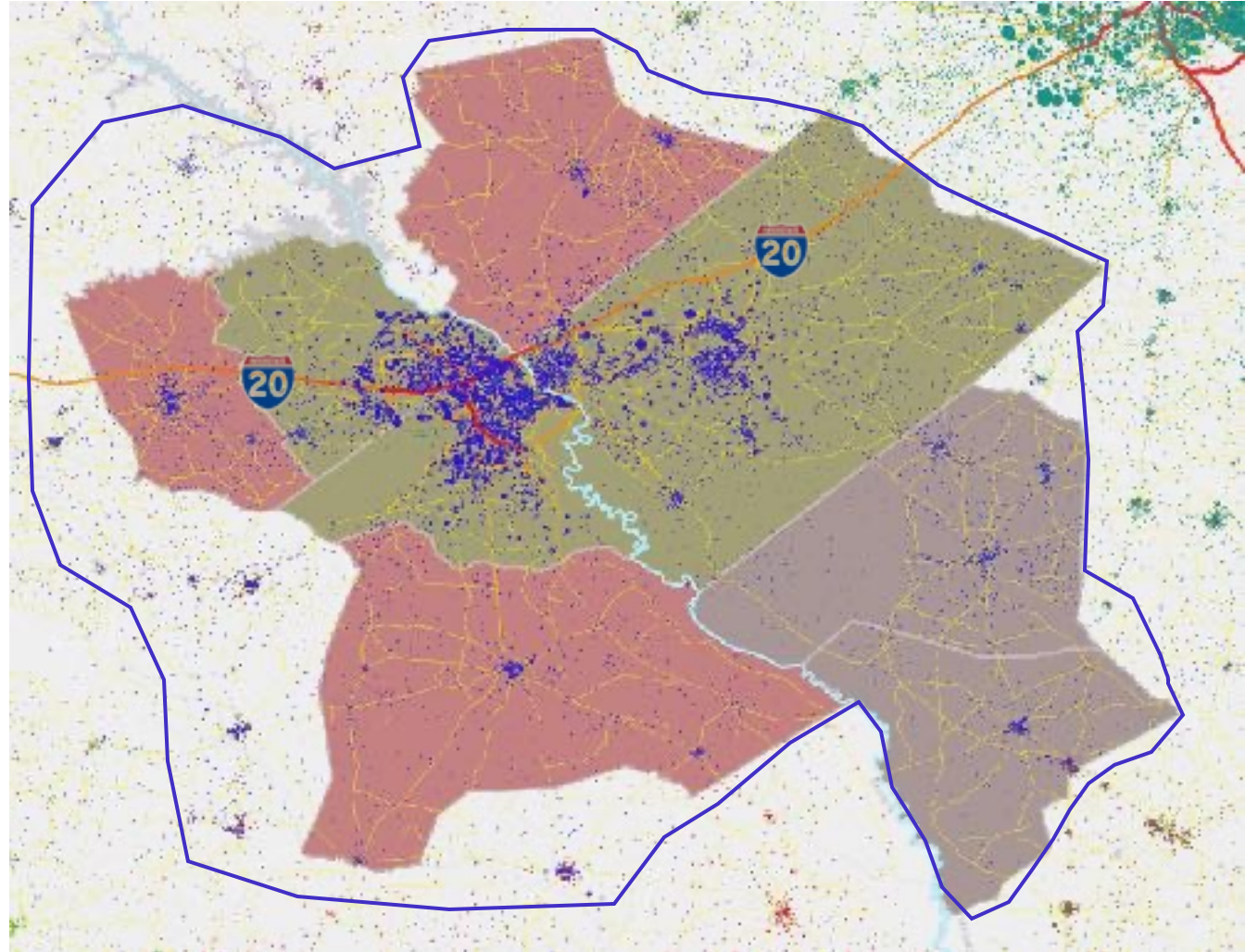
Defining a Region

- Connectivity to the region is strongest along the I-20 and I-520 corridors
- Burke County, Barnwell County and Allendale County all have significant locational disadvantages



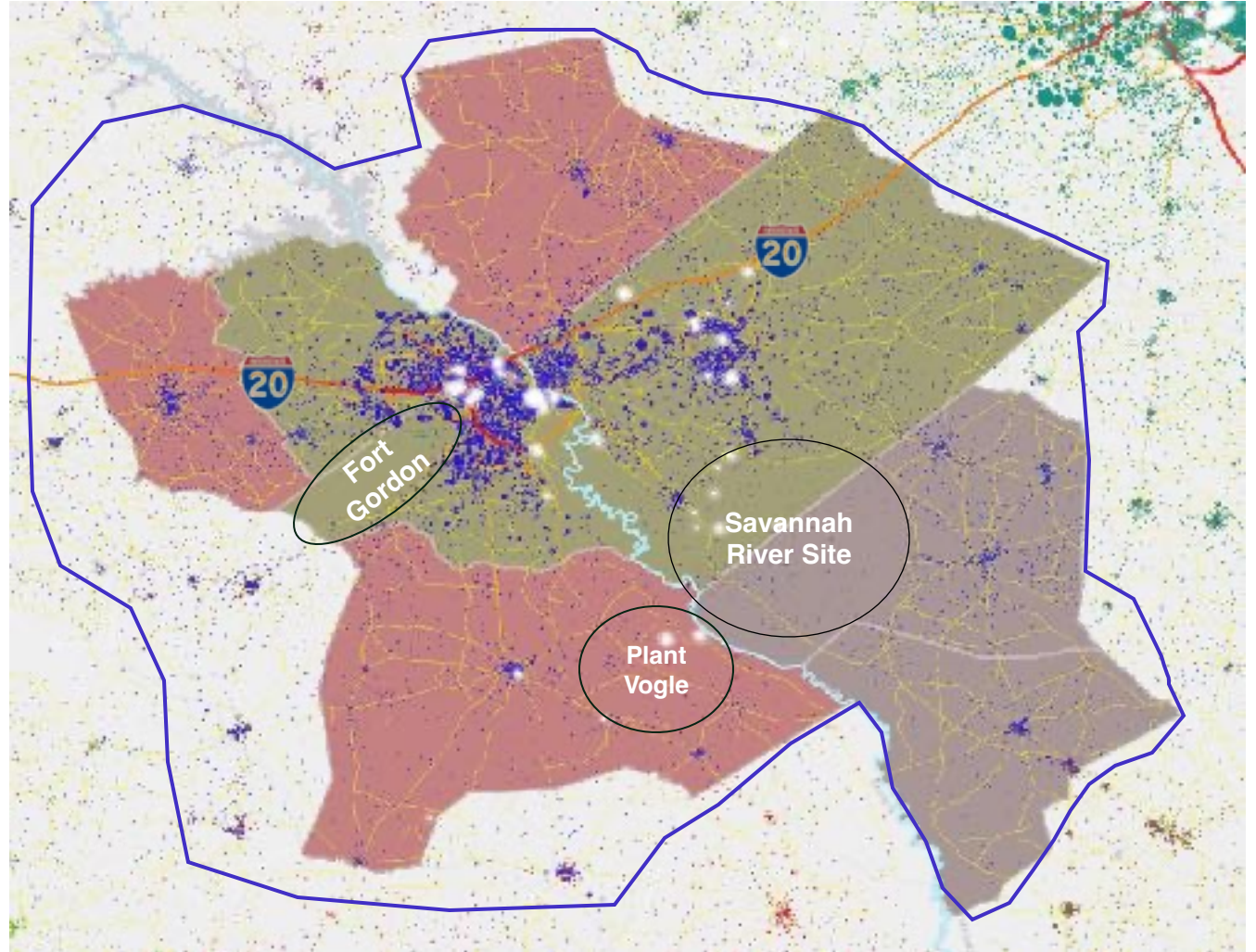
Defining a Region

- While Burke, Barnwell and Allendale are further away from the center, an analysis of commute sheds reveals that these counties are still tied to the more central parts of the region through employment



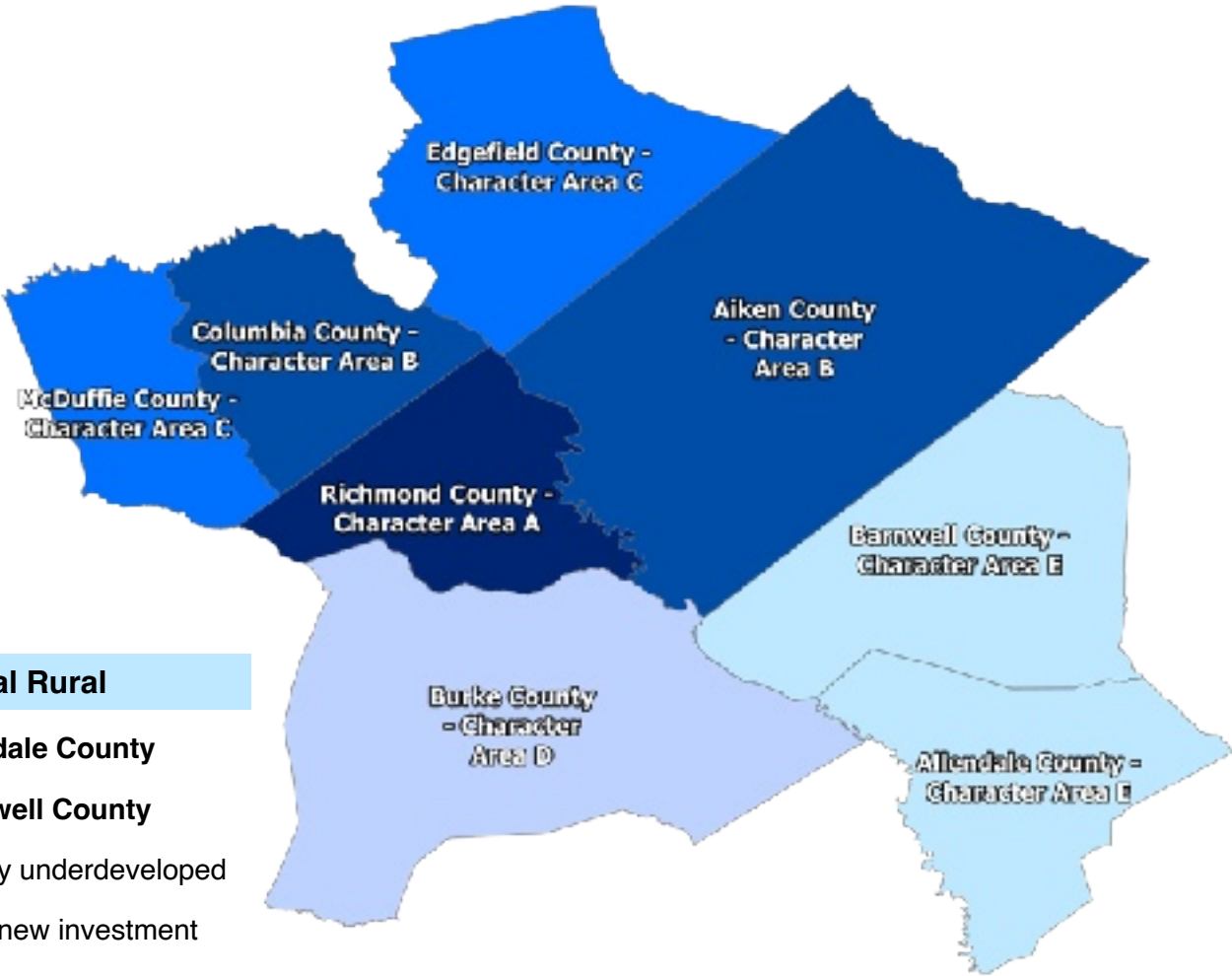
Defining a Region

- The region's primary job centers where regional workers are commuting to are located in Augusta-Richmond County, with smaller concentrations in Aiken County and Columbia County
- The Savannah River Site is a major employer but can also act as a wall to those in Barnwell and Allendale
- Employment at Fort Gordon is difficult to capture and doesn't appear in public datasets



Defining a Region

A) Urban Core	C) Exurban
Richmond County • Large supply of aging housing units • Steady residential deliveries • Concentration of lower-income households	Edgefield County McDuffie County • Historically underdeveloped • Lack of infrastructure • Increasing demand due to locational advantages
B) Suburban Core	D) Emerging Rural
Aiken County Columbia County • High share of the region’s newest housing inventory • High household incomes • High demand markets due to amenities and schools	Burke County • Historically underdeveloped • Significant economic assets • Low recurring demand due to infrastructure constraints and locational disadvantages



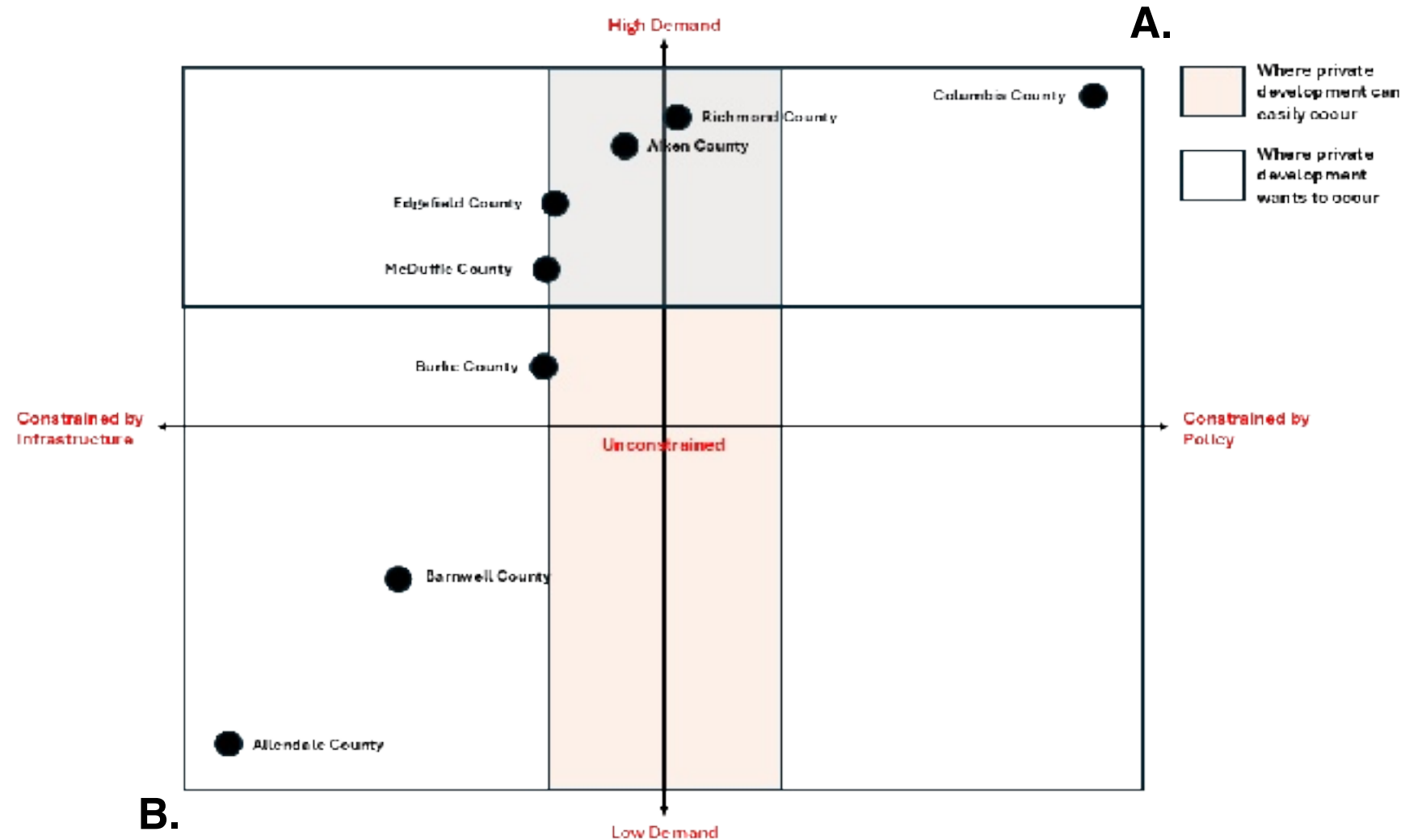
Setting the Baseline

A lack of housing production in the face of economic and population growth has different implications for different parts of the region.

Market demand and development constraints both impact housing production.

A. High-Demand Markets
facing policy constraints

B. Low-Demand Markets
facing infrastructure constraints



Setting the Baseline

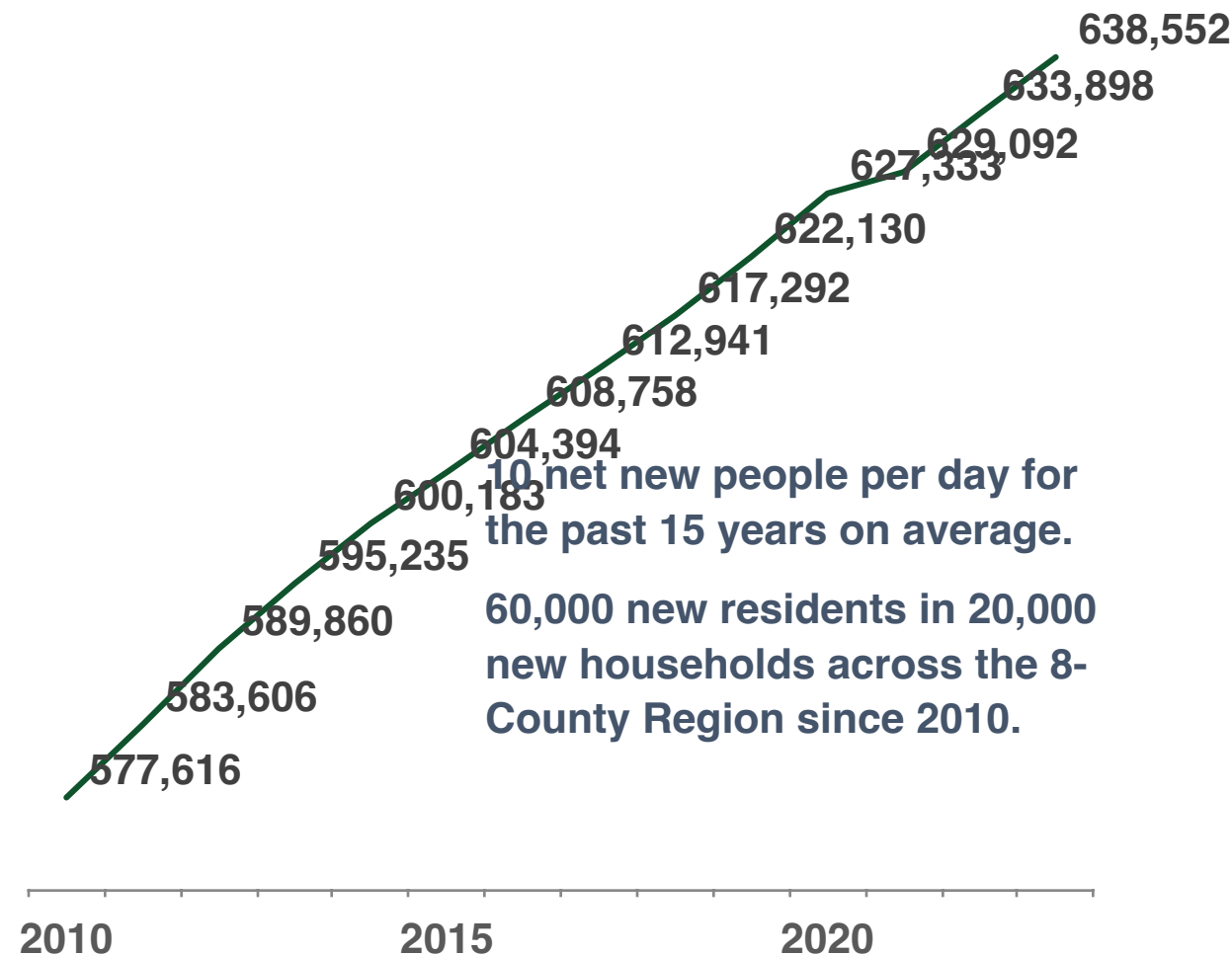


14,500 Total New Jobs Since
2020
16,300 New Jobs Expected
Over the Next Five Years

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

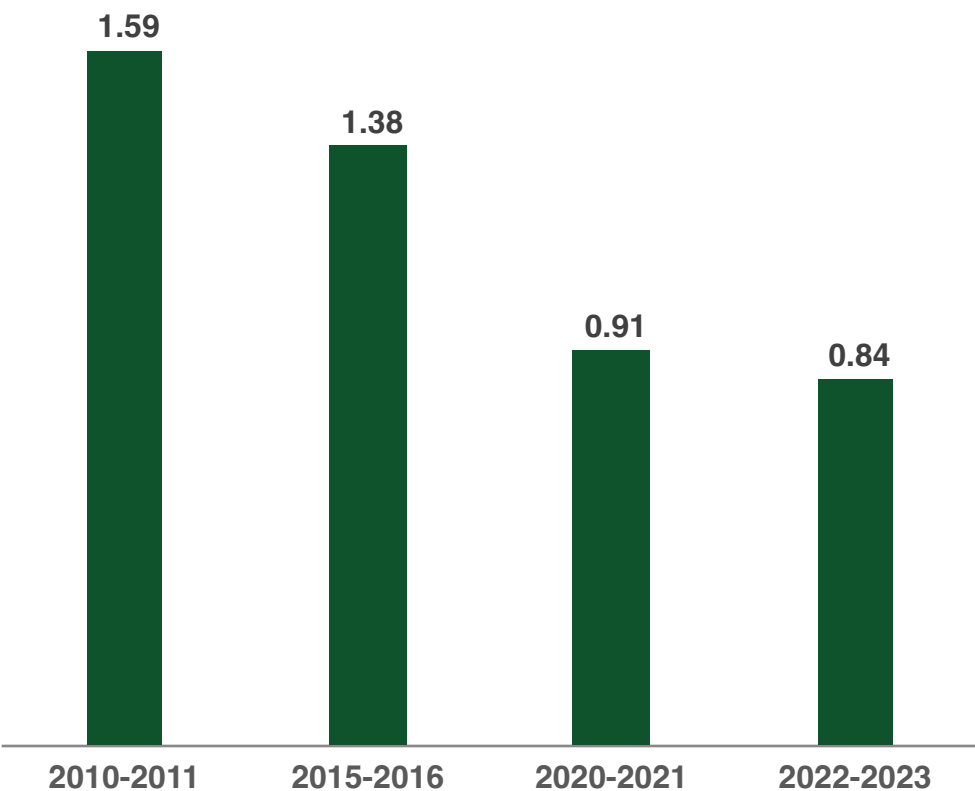
Setting the Baseline

Regional Population Growth, 2010 - 2023



In recent years, housing production has slowed below household growth rates.

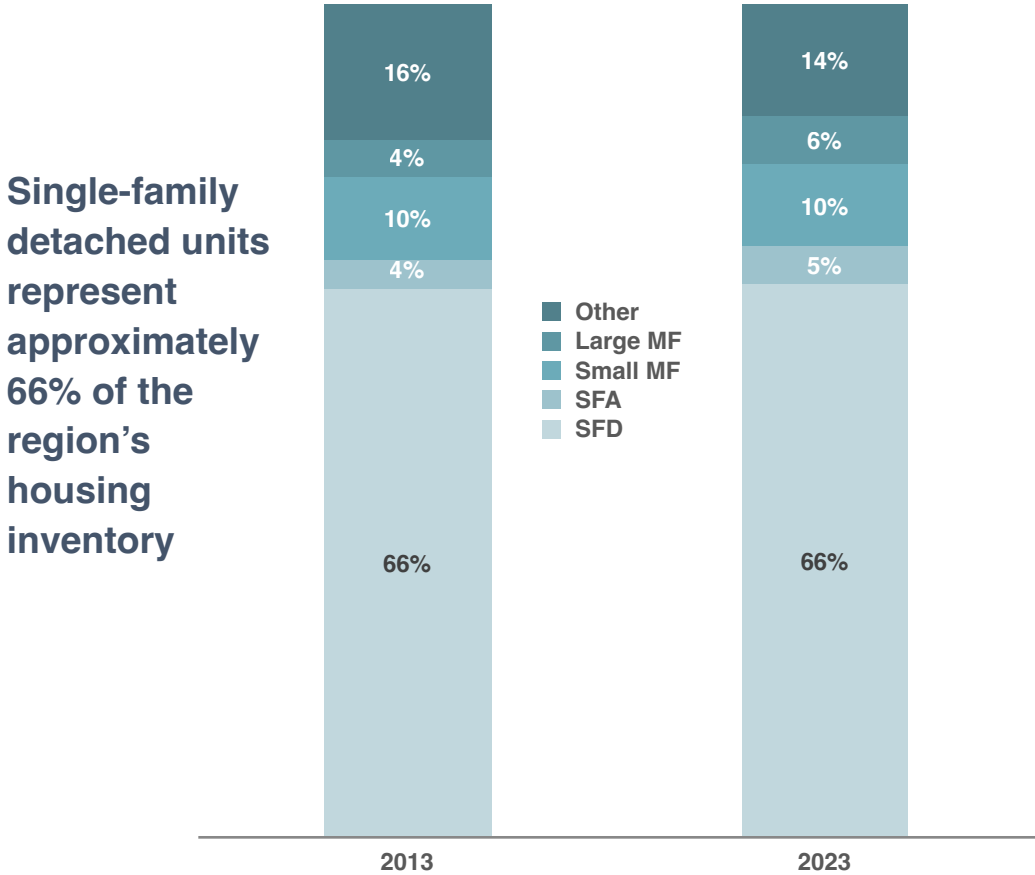
Ratio of New Housing Units to New Households, 2010 - 2023



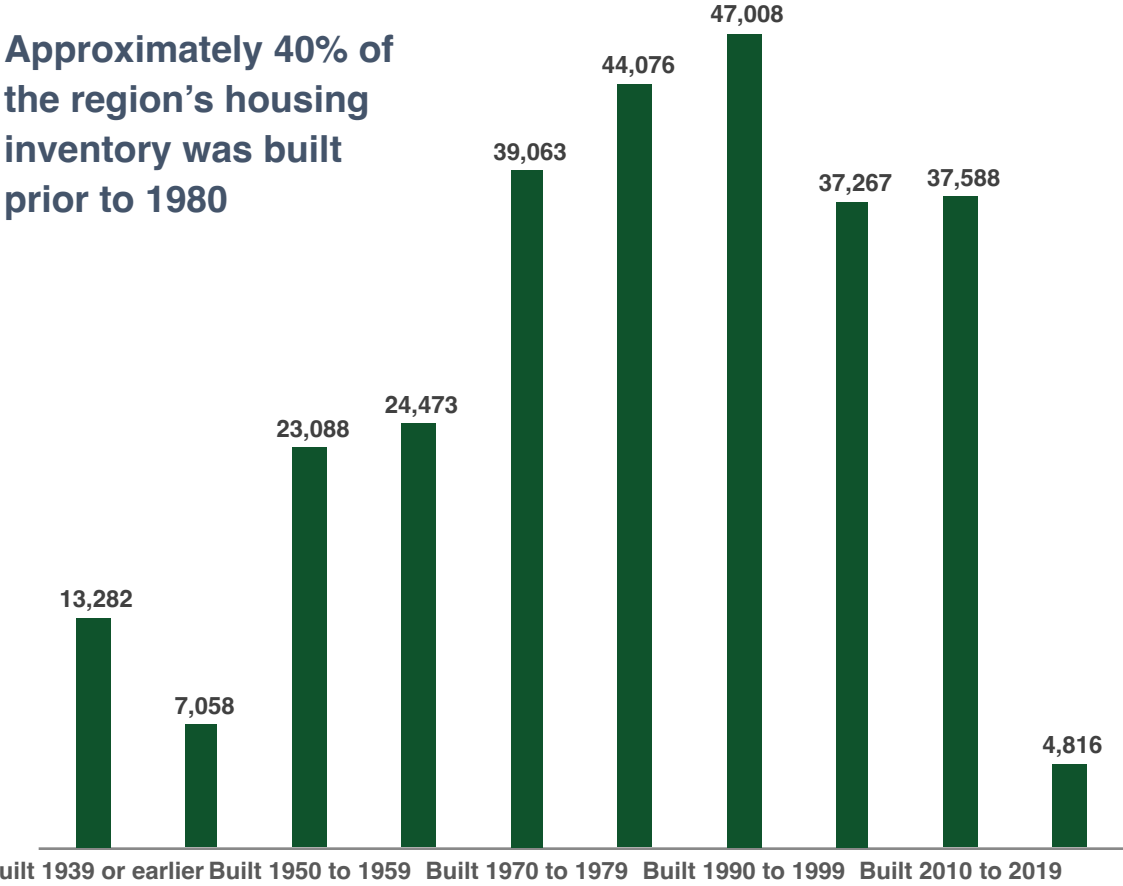
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Setting the Baseline

Regional Housing Inventory by Housing Type, 2013 - 2023



Distribution of Regional Housing Units by Decade Produced



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Setting the Baseline

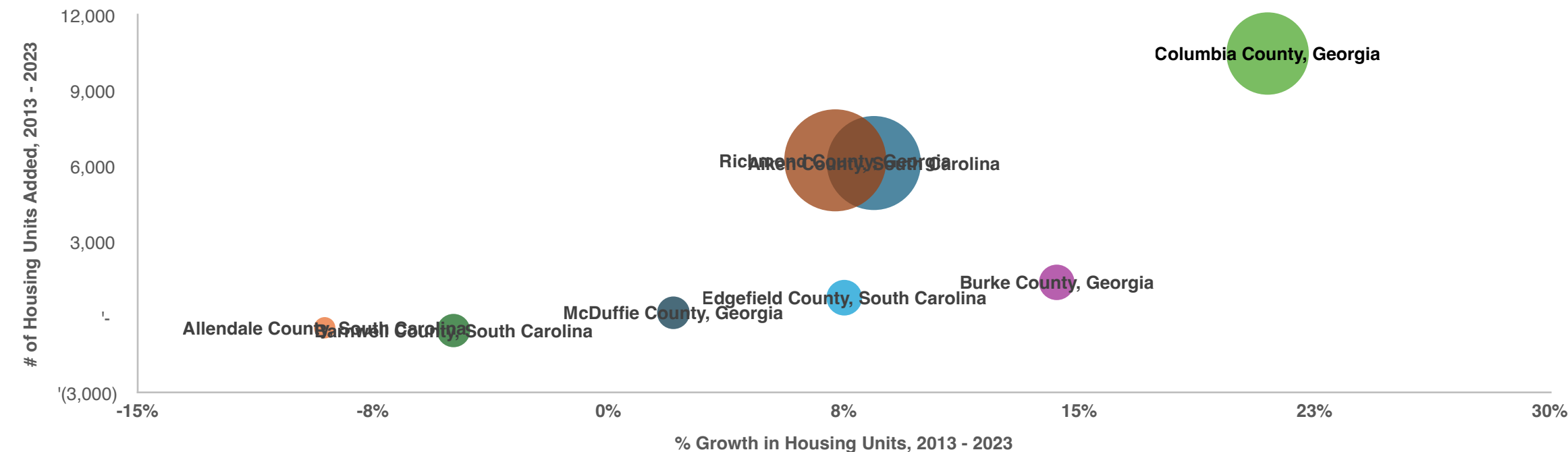
The region’s new housing has predominantly been built in three counties.

Columbia (+10,486 units), Richmond (+6,245), and Aiken (+6,138) captured almost all production.

Elsewhere, gains were small:

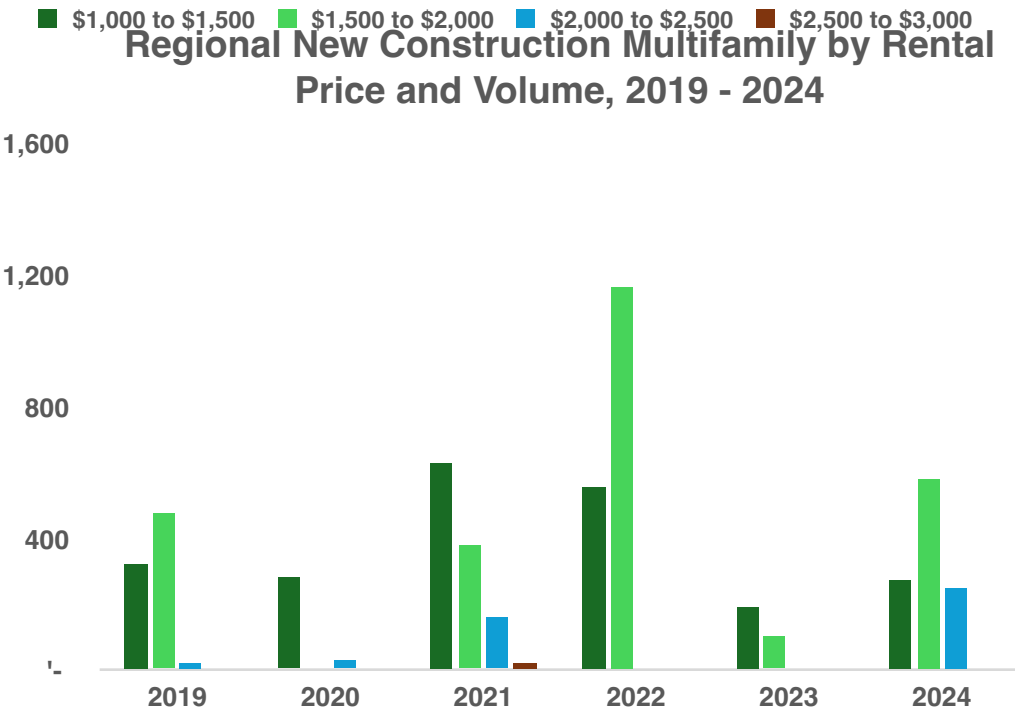
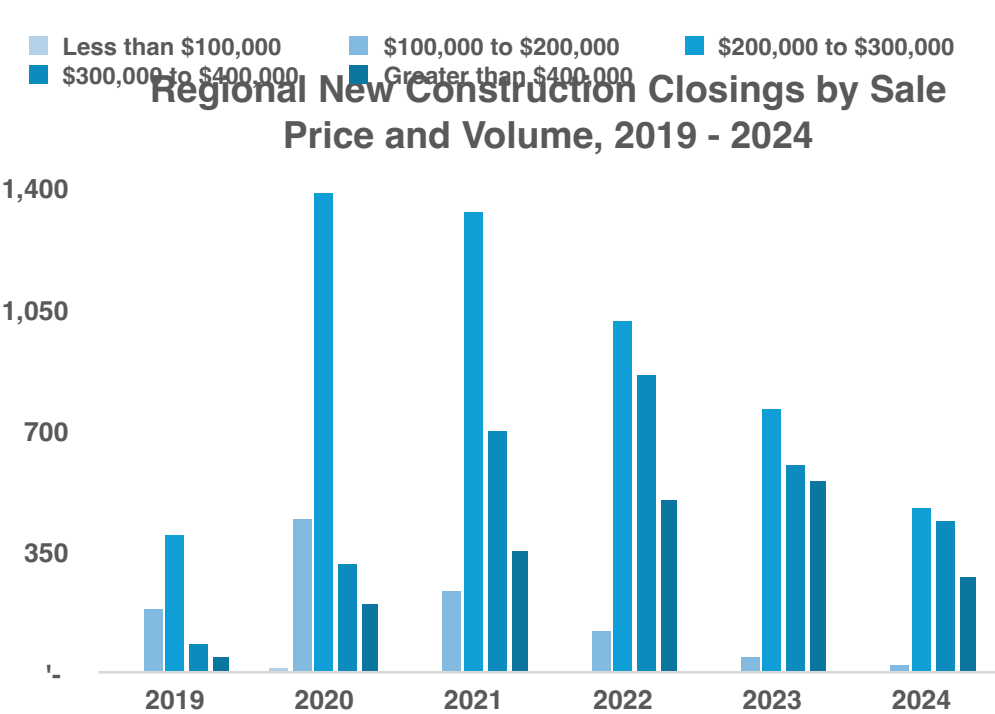
Edgefield (+791, largely north of I-20 Exit 5) and McDuffie (+192). Two counties lost housing: Barnwell (–5% of stock) and Allendale (–9%).

Housing Unit Growth by County, 2013 - 2023



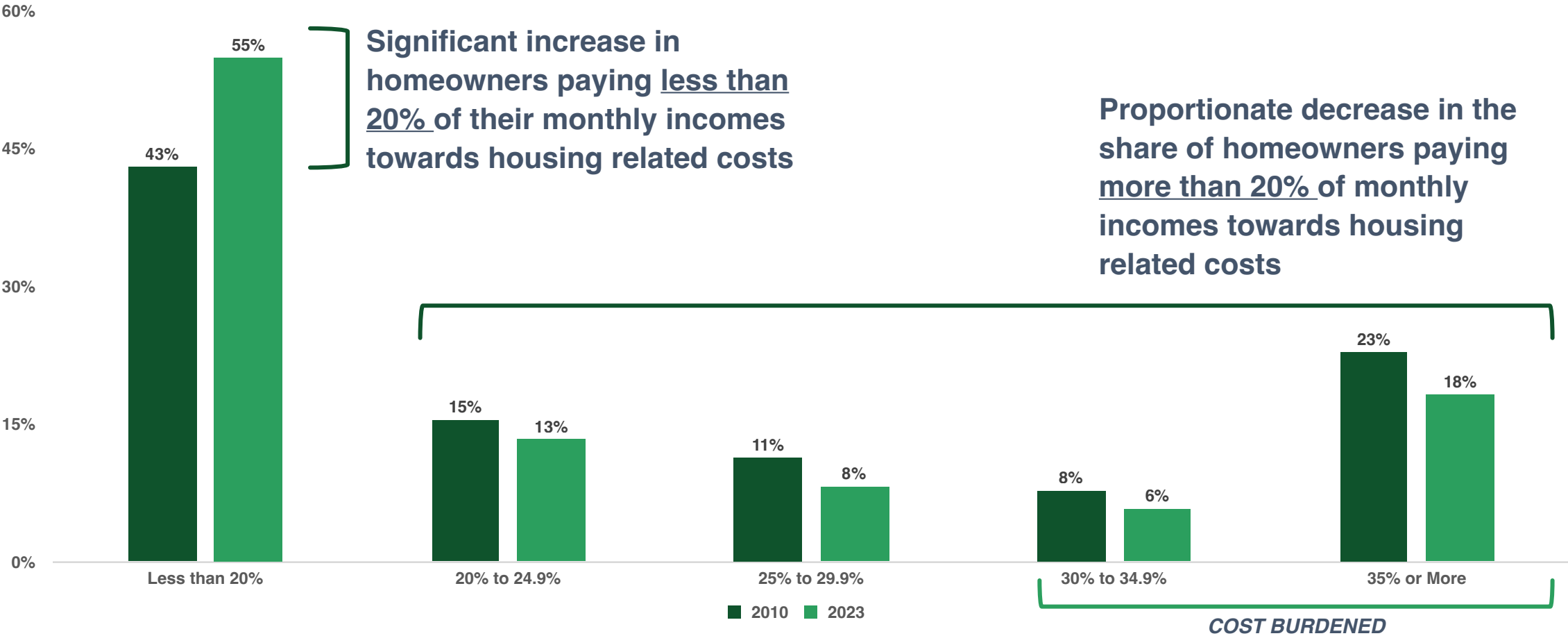
Setting the Baseline

The region’s tenure split is also about 68/32, but **most renters live in single-family homes rather than apartments.**



Setting the Baseline

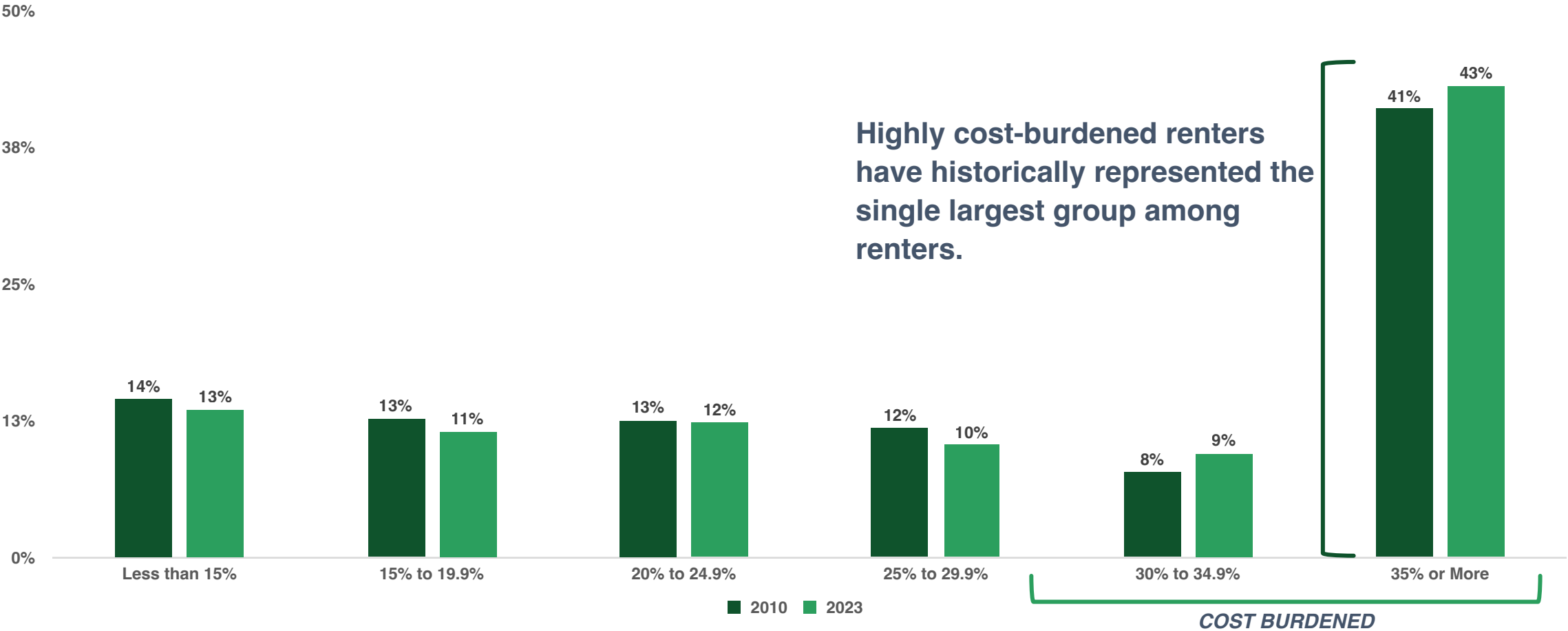
Regional Homeowner Cost Burden, 2010 vs. 2023



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Setting the Baseline

Regional Renter Cost Burden, 2010 vs. 2023



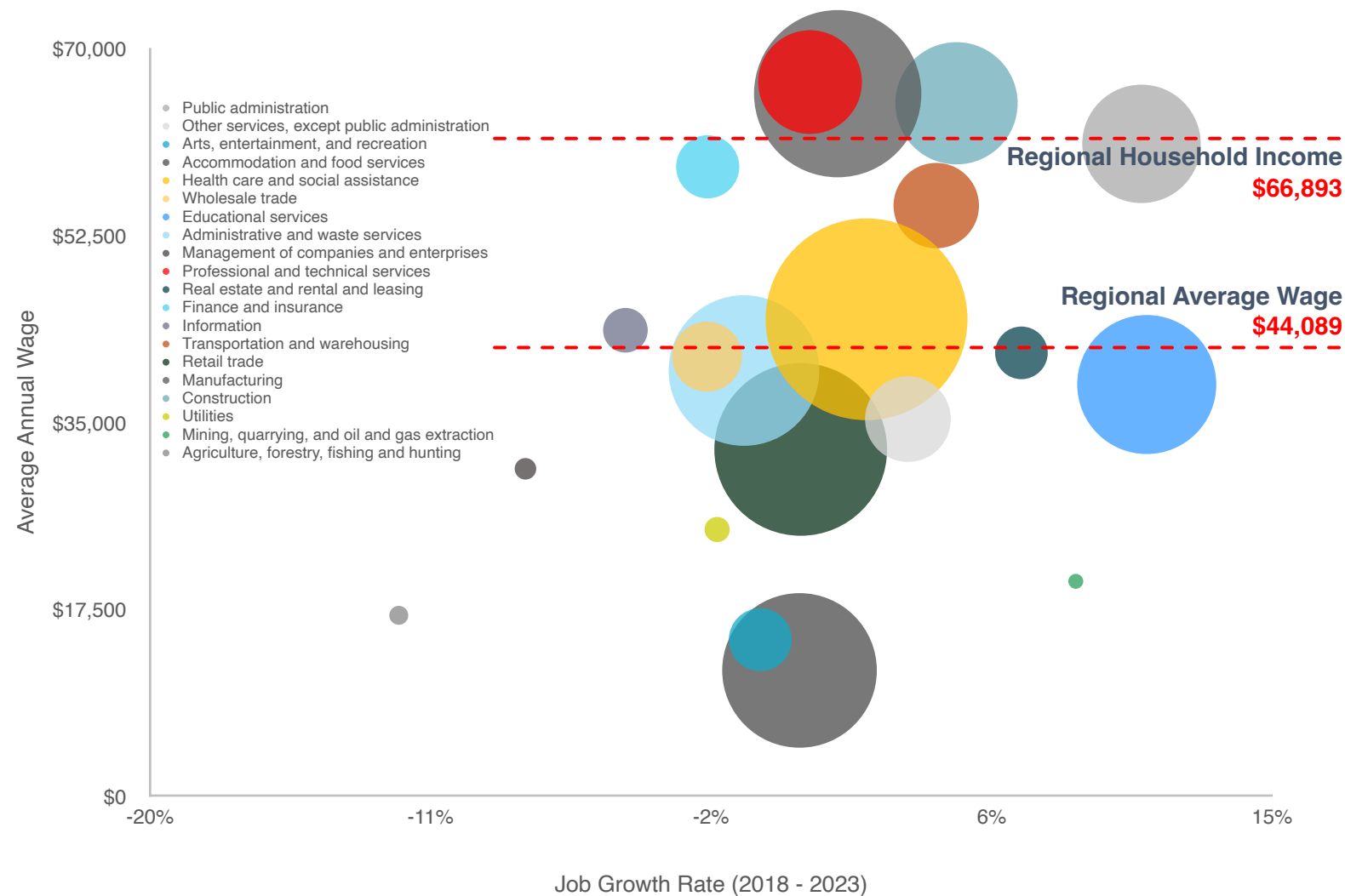
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Setting the Baseline

Regional Employment Sectors by Historic Growth Rate, Average Wage, and Job Count

Earnings and wages set the boundaries of housing choice linking the labor market to the housing market.

Wages are the answer to the question: Affordable to Whom?



Assessing Market Demand & Gaps

SUPPORTING DATA SOURCES



ACS
5-Year Estimates



BLS



SmartRE



CoStar



GA & SC
Revenue Depts.

Assumptions

Wages earned through employment are the primary way in which households access housing

Changing positions for existing employees drive turnover and upper-market demand

Older households represent a significant non-wage driven source of demand in the region

It is more beneficial to counties for their local workforce to be housed within the county in which they work.

Forecast Process

Historic wage and employment trends were studied, adjusted and forecasted over the next five years

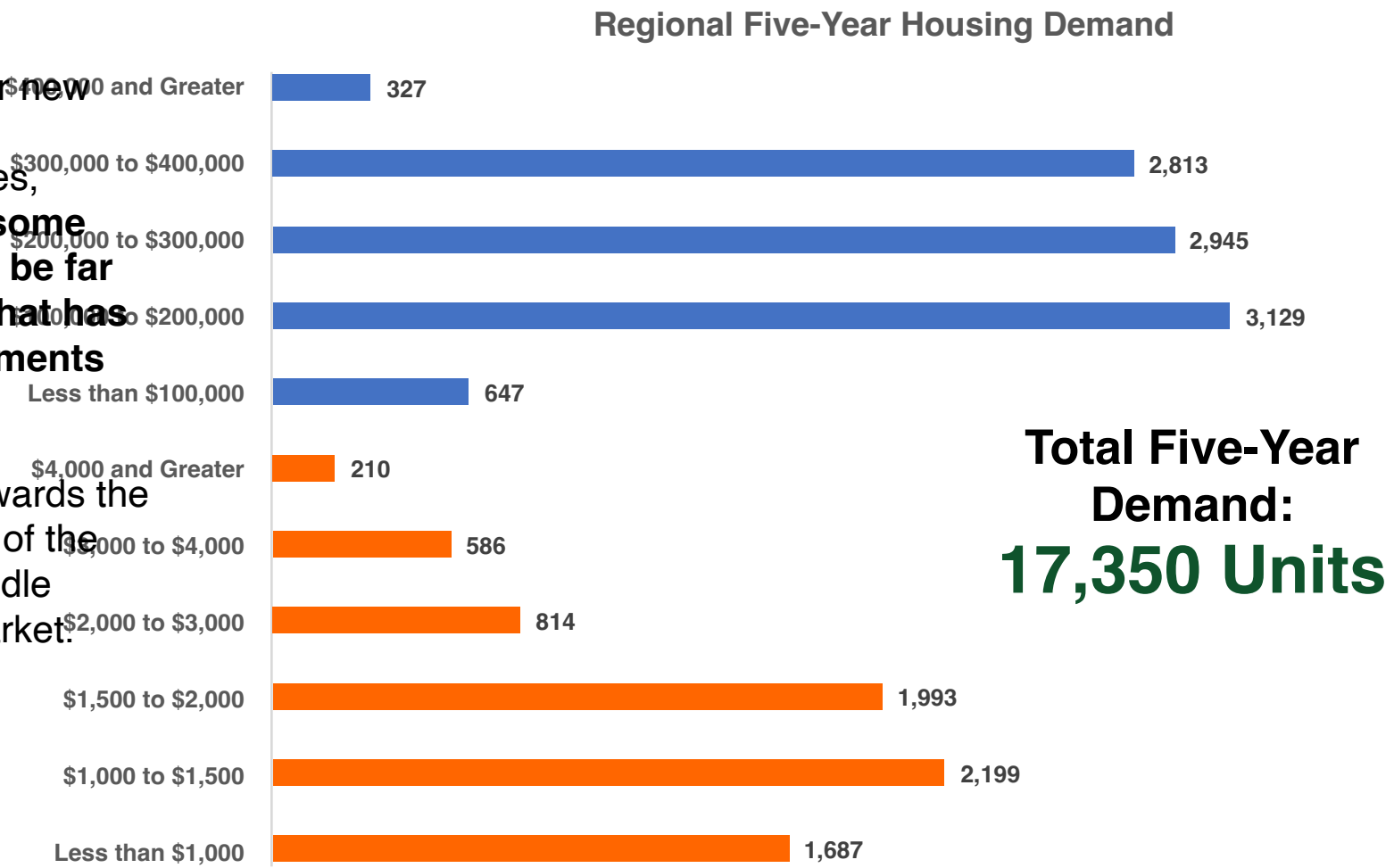
Purchasing power for each industry's workforce was calculated

ACS data on tenure, income and household composition were used to segment demand

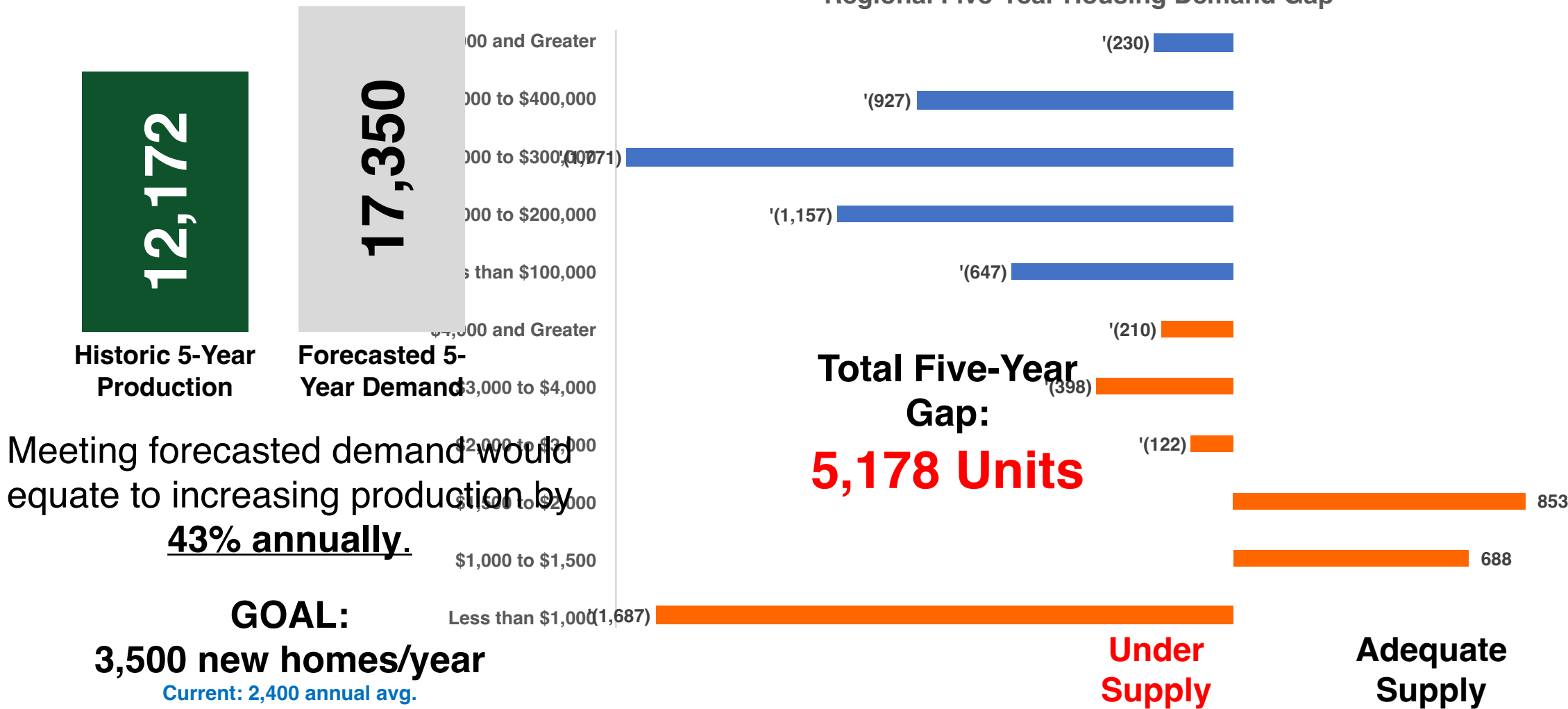
Historic supply trends were measured against forecasted demand to produce a gap by segment for each county in the region

Forecasted Demand

- In many cases, demand for new housing units in the region resembles historic deliveries, however the **demand for some segments is projected to be far greater than the supply that has been added in these segments over the last five years.**
- Demand is concentrated towards the lower and middle segments of the rental market and in the middle segments of the for-sale market.



Forecasted Demand



Strategies & Recommendations

5 Key Regional Strategies

Increase Development Density

Re-examine Zoning Codes
Promote Innovative Housing Types
Target Redevelopment
Provide Incentives to Support Targeted Redevelopment

Prioritize Downtown Development

Mixed-Use Development
Adaptive Reuse & Historic Preservation
Housing Opportunities Downtown
Public-Private Partnerships

Improve & Expand Critical Infrastructure

Water & Sewer for Growth Areas
Regional Transportation Connectivity
Broadband Expansion

Address Housing as Critical Infrastructure

Housing Trust Funds
Land Banking
Public Lands for Housing Development

Recenter Regional Employment Spatial Distribution

Industry Attraction & Expansion
Invest in Human Capital
Living Wage Policies
Economic Development Hubs

Project Takeaways



1.

Even where housing is relatively plentiful, wages are not keeping up with housing costs, making housing and economic development two sides of the same coin

2.

Without a regional view, regional coordination in execution and regional accountability, solving housing problems will result in unnecessary fiscal burdens for cities and counties

3.

Taking responsibility for housing problems often doesn't win elections and sprawl is what happens when we keep passing the buck

4.

The auto-centric transportation regime in this country has left many of our rural communities behind economically

Q&A



KB Advisory Group

Gabrielle Oliverio, AICP
gabrielle@kbagroup.com

Trevor Butler, AICP
trevor@kbagroup.com

999 Peachtree St NE, Suite 400
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

www.kbagroup.com

THANK YOU!