



Innovative Approaches to Community-Led Implementation in Local Food System Planning

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PRESENTERS



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FROM PLAN TO PRACTICE: TODAY'S CONVERSATION

- ❖ **FWA & ARC Partnership:** *Reimagining What a Food System Can Do*
- ❖ **Local Food System Program History:** *7 Communities, 1 Evolving Model*
- ❖ **Community Engagement:** *From Lived Experience to Planning Strategy*
- ❖ **Implementation:** *Building a Model for Local Action*
- ❖ **Long-Term Sustainability:** *Case Study - City of Alpharetta*
- ❖ **Key Takeaways:** *What We've Learned & What's Next*

WHAT WE HOPE YOU LEARN FROM US TODAY

PLAN	INSTITUTIONALIZE	INVEST	INTEGRATE	CONNECT
Build from Community Assets to Address Community Needs	Implementation Needs an Owner	Pair Policy and Funding with Programming	Food Belongs in the Comprehensive and Other Planning Conversations	Plan Locally, Connect Regionally

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FWA & ARC PARTNERSHIP

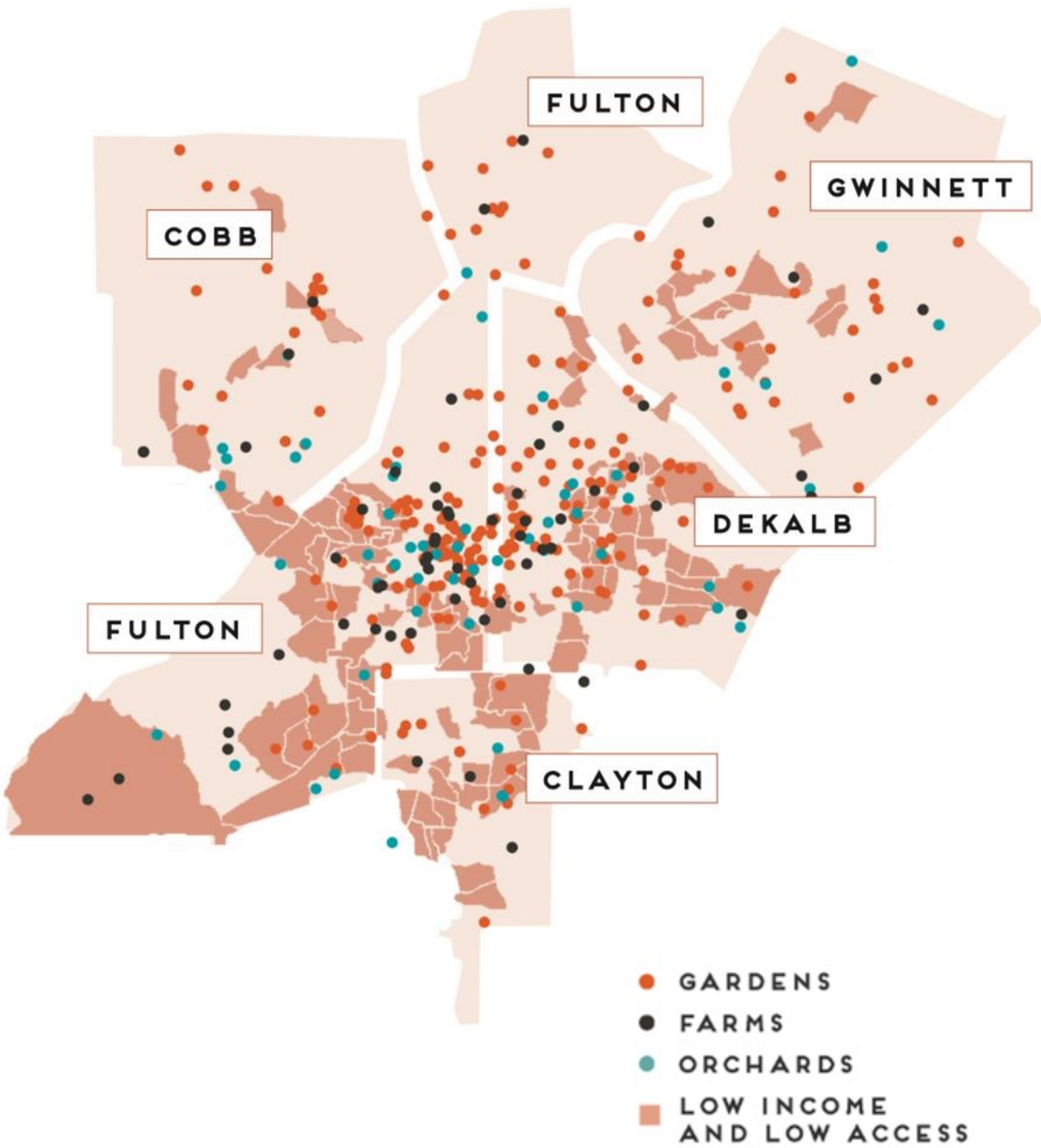
Reimagining What a Local Food System Can Do

WHAT IS A LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM PLAN?

A set of policy and program recommendations for a city to strengthen their local food system over the next 3-5 years.



WHY FOOD WELL ALLIANCE?



MISSION

Provide resources and support to local growers to connect and build healthier communities.

Grower Resources

We provide centralized access to funding, volunteers, technical assistance, compost, and tools to help gardens and farms grow more food for their communities.

Local Food System Planning

We empower local governments to develop inclusive policies and plans that include resources for gardens and farms, like compost and land, to ignite a regional coalition for urban agriculture.

WHY ARC? ALIGNMENT WITH REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Vision

ONE **great** REGION

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Values

Excellence | **Integrity** | **Equity**

Goals



Healthy, safe, livable communities in the Atlanta Metro area.



Strategic investments in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.



Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.



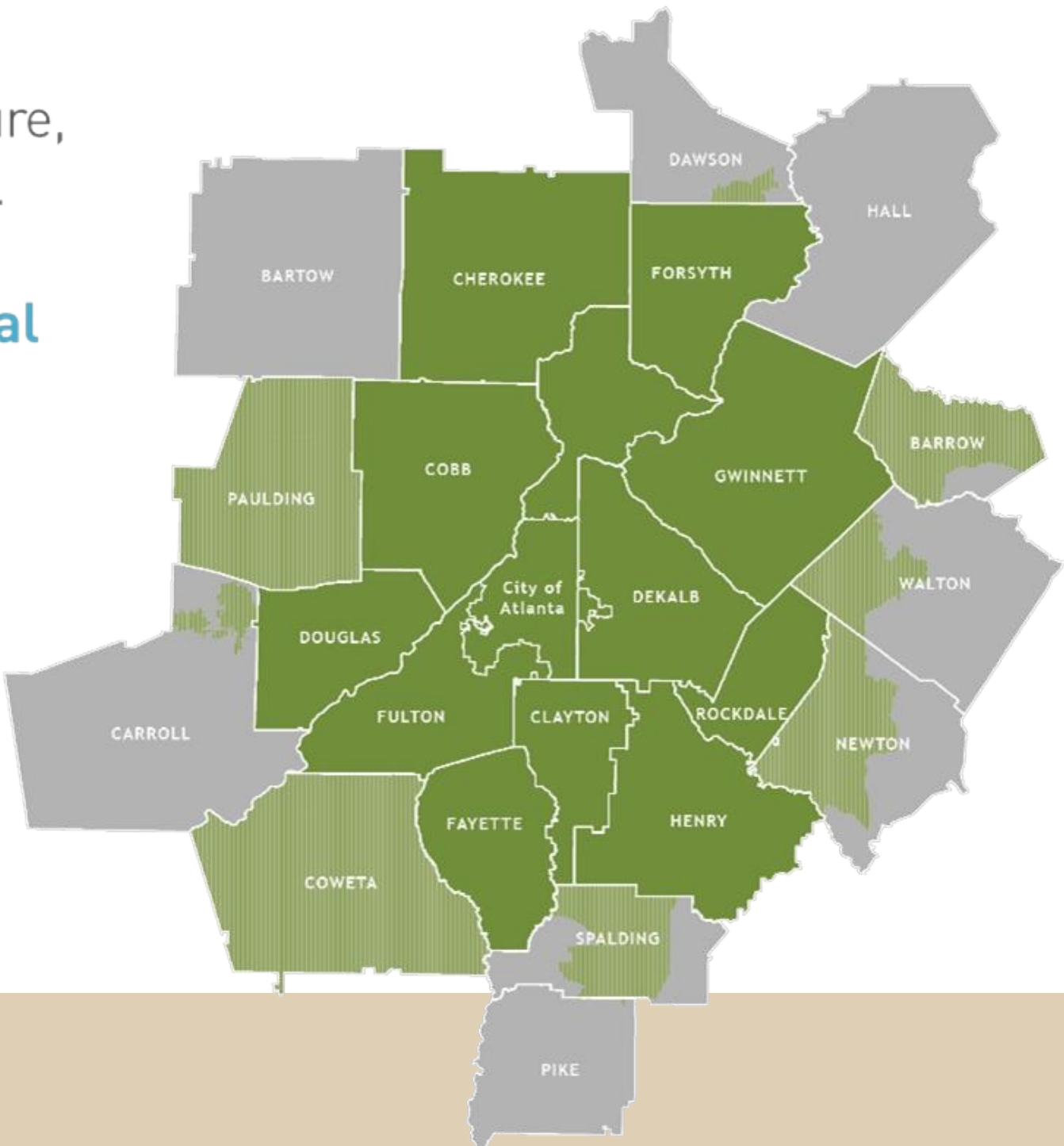
Diverse stakeholders engage and take a regional approach to solve local issues.



A competitive economy that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.



Atlanta Regional Commission



WHY IS ARC INVOLVED IN LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING?

ARC develops and updates the **Regional Development Plan**, a long-range blueprint that documents the region’s assets and challenges, goals, and investments needed to ensure metro Atlanta’s future success and improve the region’s quality of life. As a part of this long-range plan, ARC develops a **Regional Resource Plan** to protect and manage metro Atlanta’s natural and cultural resources. Local Food System Planning aligns with two key policies outlined in the adopted **Regional Resource Plan**. Creating and protecting space for urban farms, gardens, and orchards fulfills the plan’s objectives to preserve passive greenspaces as well as to preserve areas for local food production activities.

WHY LOCAL FOOD BELONGS IN PLANNING

- **Economy:** Supports local businesses, producers and markets
- **Land:** Protects and activates productive land
- **Access:** Connects residents to healthy, affordable food
- **Resilience:** Builds local capacity to respond to disruption
- **Community:** Creates places and partnerships that connect people

Local food is not a separate planning issue.

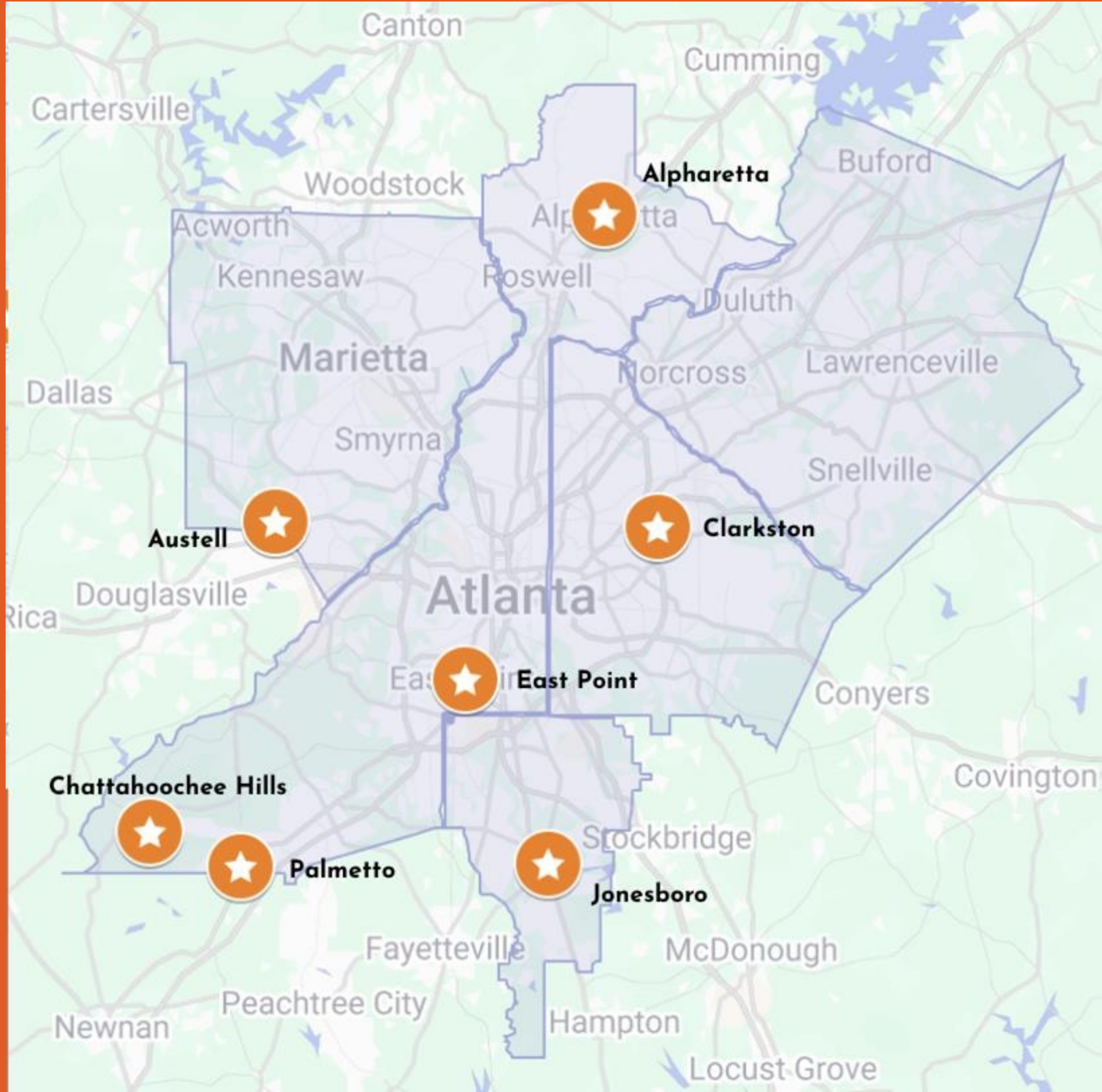
It is a lens through which we can see how our community systems work together.



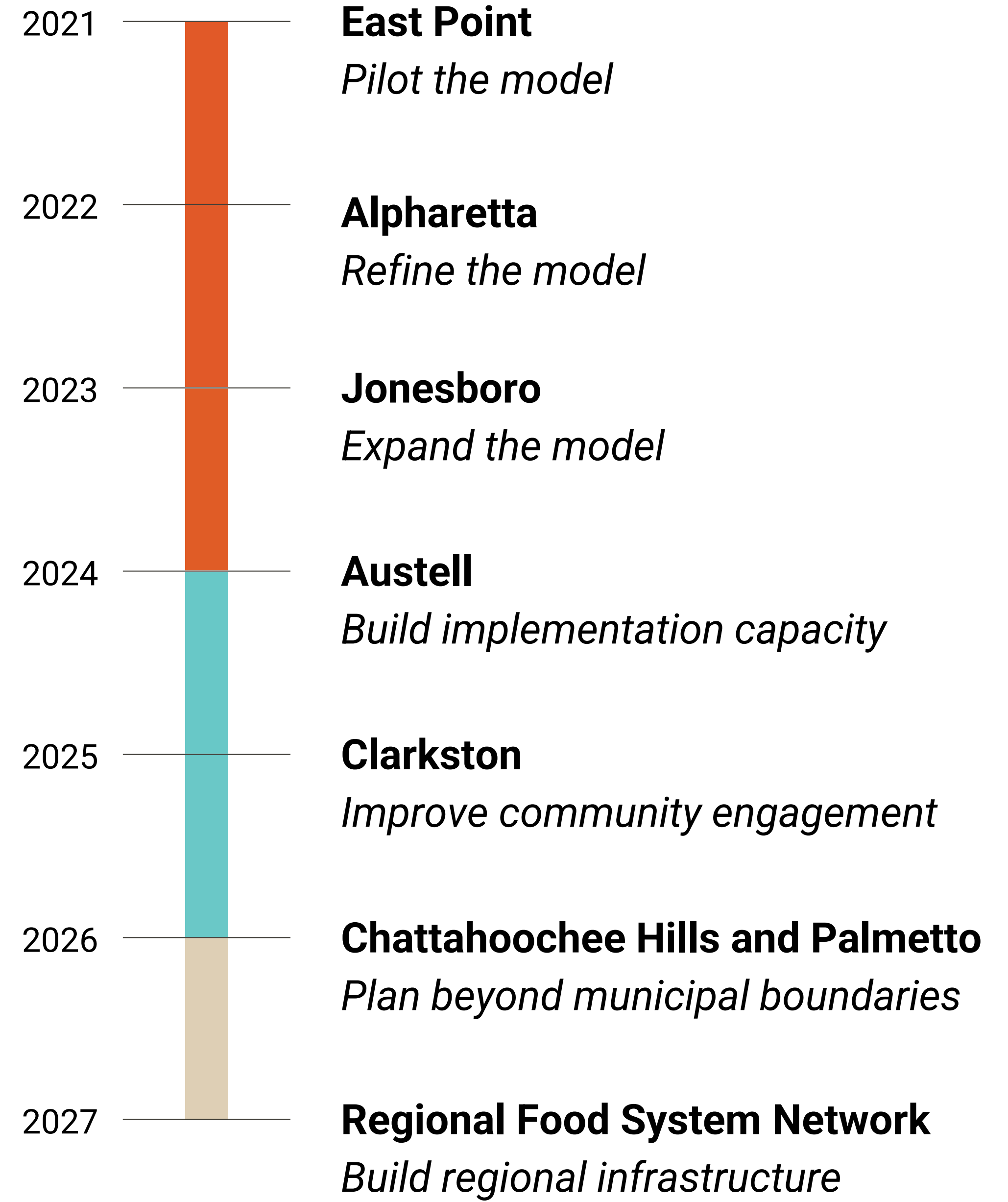
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PROGRAM HISTORY

7 Communities, 1 Evolving Model



PLANNING IN METRO ATLANTA



7 YEAR IMPACT IN METRO ATLANTA 2019-2026

5

City Agriculture Plans Adopted
**Chattahoochee Hills & Palmetto in development*

5,400+

Metro Atlanta Residents Reached in
Community Engagement

4

Food & Agriculture Policy
Committees Formed

\$1,922,687

Cash & In-Kind Support Invested

16,800+

Metro Atlanta Residents Reached in
Implementation

217

Implementation Projects

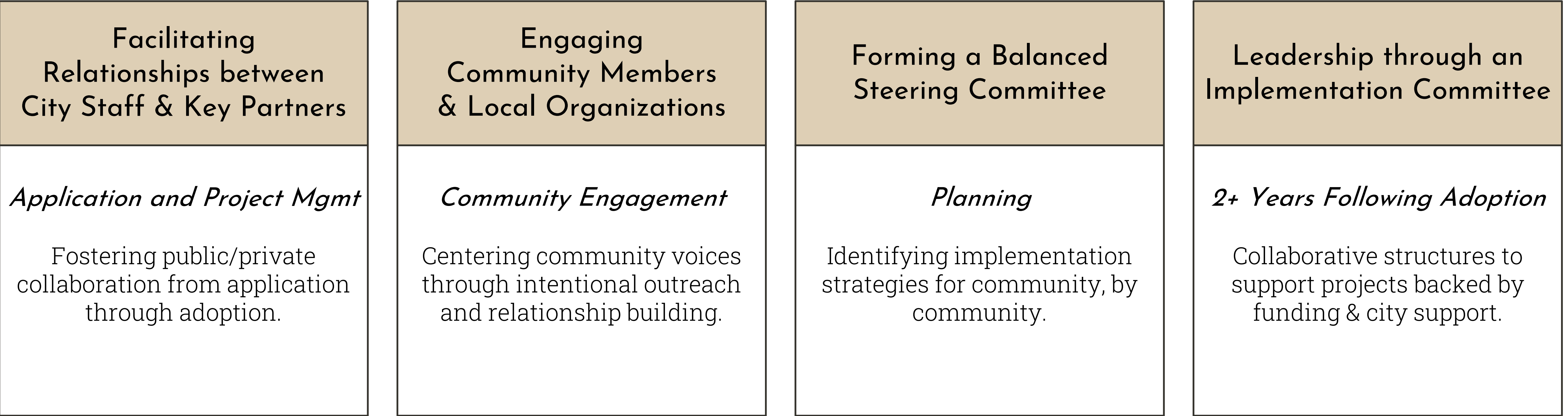


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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From Lived Experience to Planning Strategy

ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY COLLABORATION THROUGH FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING



INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT METHODS FOR ACTIONABLE OUTCOMES

FRAMEWORK: Community-Based Participatory Research

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METHODS	OUTREACH & COLLABORATION	CLOSING THE LOOP
METHODS Survey Focus Groups Interviews Intercept & Snowball Sampling	PROCESS Utilizing local experts and existing networks Culturally relevant / responsive outreach Collaborative analysis	SHARED FINDINGS Publicly available data Transparent communication Inviting community feedback Centering actionable recommendations

OUTCOMES: Community Asset-Mapping, Strong Private/Public Partnerships, Key Stakeholder Involvement, Community-Driven Plans



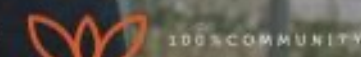
INCORPORATING COMMUNITY VOICE INTO CITY POLICY AND INITIATIVES





CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN

City of Austell
Community Garden Volunteer
GROWN IN CITIES



100% COMMUNITY

City of Austell

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

All city residents are invited to share their vision! Join us at one of our community conversations to discuss what issues and opportunities need to be addressed in the plan and play a role in the future of Austell's development.

Tuesday 4.09 6:00 - 7:30pm	Frog Rock Brewing Company 2764 Broad St Austell, GA 30106	Sunday 4.28 1:00 - 2:30pm	The Alchemist Den 2740 Broad St Austell, GA 30106	Sunday 5.19 1:00 - 2:30pm	Pat Maxwell's 2710 Jefferson St Austell, GA 30168
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Culture supports policies & legislation

Supporting Local Growers

Policy Advocacy & legislation

Use Regulation to support desired activities

Increasing Caring

Volunteers and Service Hour Needs

68.4% of respondents do not know where to access local food

Grower fatigue

"Aware of a garden and a few home growers but engagement and visibility is lacking"

Destination for local food and agriculture enthusiasts

CSA

Communication and Information Sharing

80.7% of people want more Expanded Farmers Market Access - additional days, locations, or longer market season.

Creating Additional Income For Participants

Terrell Garden and greenhouse

MOU for Terrell Garden

73.4% of respondents reported growing their own food, however only 32.4% of respondents identified as growers

Leave town to get food and goods

54.3% of people want more local food options in grocery stores.

Groves Library like Book Library for Supply

45.9% of people grow food at home.

60% of people want year-round or extended growing opportunities.

36.7% of people compost at home.



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PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Building a Model for Local Action



STEP 1: BUILD THE COALITION

Don't create a food-system plan in the planning department alone.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

Implementation needs an owner.

STEP 3: PAIR EXTERNAL FUNDING WITH LOCAL INVESTMENT

Outside funding gets the work started.
Local investment makes it sustainable.

FWA: \$100K grant package

CITY: \$75K match

TOTAL PLAN SUPPORT: \$175K+

PATHWAYS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

CITY-LED

- Ordinance revision
- Policy creation
- Capital investment
- Staff position

PARTNER-LED

- Community programming
- Farmers market support
- Community garden expansion
- Produce networking

SHARED

- Grant program
- Public/private partnership
- Institutional procurement
- Education/outreach

REGIONAL

- Shared infrastructure
- Coordinated policy
- Producer/market connections
- Regional planning

PATHWAYS FOR IMPLEMENTATION: PLANNED CITY EXAMPLES



EAST POINT *CITY-LED*

- Urban Agriculture Ordinance
- Local marketing brand “East Point Grown”
- Part-time position of Urban Agriculture Manager



CLARKSTON *PARTNER-LED*

- \$30k+ for food distributions paired with culturally relevant nutrition and cooking classes



JONESBORO *SHARED*

- Jonesboro Community Garden, run by the Jonesboro Police Dept.
- 3-year city agreement to restart the Jonesboro Farmers and Artisans Market with 20+ vendors



AUSTELL *REGIONAL*

- Non-profit partnership for a community compost program with the neighboring city of Mableton



LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

CASE STUDY: CITY OF ALPHARETTA



ALPHARETTA

Alpharetta has multiple Community Agriculture staff members within their Parks and Recreation department that run programming and production at Old Rucker Farm on city-owned land.

The city matched their \$75k FWA implementation grant with equal city funds and expanded their reach over the two-year grant period.

- **Hosted significant community education opportunities**
 - Average of 84 workshops/trainings annually
 - Current partnerships with 14 local schools, including an agribusiness program with a CSA, a culinary program, and 12 school gardens
- **Promoted sustainable practices and healthy soils**
 - Community compost program with 86 households enrolled
 - Native plant & pollinator habitat certification program for homeowners
 - Organic seed library with multiple locations
- **Increased equitable local food access**
 - SNAP/EBT accepted and doubled at the Alpharetta Farmers Market
 - 5,000 lbs of produce donated to local food bank annually
 - Homegrown Harvest Program enrolls residents to grow at home and donate directly to the food pantry.
- **Improved community farm infrastructure**
 - New greenhouse for seed starting and season extension
 - Converting house on property into a community education center



- **Align LFSP with Overall City Plan and Vision**
 - Park Landscaping
 - Wills Park Rec Center
 - North Park Adult Activity Center
 - New Development and HOA Program
 - The Atley (2023)
 - The Gathering (2026)
 - Bee Friendly Planting
 - HOA Garden and Habitat Program
 - Community Partnerships
 - Schools
 - Georgia Native Plant Society
 - North Fulton Master Gardeners
 - UGA Extension
 - Alpharetta Business Association
 - Alpharetta Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - North Fulton Young Farmer



- **Create Opportunities for Meaningful Engagement**

- Volunteer activities 4-5 days/week
 - Corporate groups
 - School service days
 - 3,000 Annual Hours (2025)
 - 820 Individuals (2025)
- Connect community members to something bigger than a one-time work day; they become part of a big system that they can touch locally
- Daytime, evenings, weekends
 - 135 Volunteer events





- **Community First Approach**
 - Continue to add programs, opportunities, and features based on community needs, feedback, and interests.
 - Solicit feedback annually, at minimum



Love the People and the Work.



The background of the slide is a photograph of young green plants, likely seedlings, growing in a black plastic nursery tray. The plants have two leaves and are spaced out in the tray. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a soft, natural feel. An orange horizontal band is superimposed over the middle of the image, containing the title text.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED *AND WHAT'S NEXT*

FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS

PLAN

**Build from
Community Assets
and Experts to
Address
Community Needs**

INSTITUTIONALIZE

**Implementation
Needs an Owner**

INVEST

**Pair Policy and
Funding with
Programming**

INTEGRATE

**Food Belongs
in the
Comprehensive
Planning
Conversation**

CONNECT

**Plan Locally,
Connect
Regionally**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARTNER SUPPORT



- ❖ **Community assets and experts** are best situated to address community needs.
- ❖ Utilize community-based organizations and other groups already doing the work!
- ❖ Private partnerships may be hard to find, but can quickly elevate an initiative.



COMMITTEES OR COMMISSIONS: IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS AN OWNER



Who is owning the work?

- Build in structures that support plan implementation – these can take on multiple forms! **Be responsive.**
- Implementation has moving parts – check to see who has the **knowledge, capacity, and support.**
- Implementation groups can continue to grow relationships created during planning and strengthen partnerships.

- ❖ **Pairing policy and funding** initiatives with existing programs allows for integrated approaches to advocate, expand, and enhance existing frameworks.
- ❖ **Plan programming can influence policy.**
Programs can be viewed through policy-lenses. If a city has a high-priority policy agenda, look at programming that strengthens that initiative.



TAPPING INTO STATE-MANDATED INITIATIVES & OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

Food belongs in the comprehensive planning conversation.

Every local government is required to have a Comprehensive Plan that guides growth and development throughout the community.

Tying a focused effort, such as local food system planning, to the overall growth strategy for the community not only strengthens support for the effort but also ensures forward momentum.

The opportunity for external financial and organizational support becomes stronger, allowing a community to become more resilient and healthier.



PLAN LOCALLY, CONNECT REGIONALLY



First Multi-City Plan: Chattahoochee Hills and Palmetto

- **Sometimes the most strategic planning boundary isn't the municipal boundary.**
- Complementary producer/consumer assets and needs create a stronger regional strategy than either city could develop alone.
- Balancing differing identities and ensuring equity across recommendations.

Atlanta Regional Food System Network

- **Convene and connect:** Build trusted relationships for regional collaboration.
- **Share what works:** Spotlight and scale proven, effective food and ag. policy & community based programming.
- **Build capacity for action:** Equip partners with practical tools for success.



QUESTIONS?

For more information on Local Food System Planning visit:
<https://www.foodwellalliance.org/local-food-system-planning>

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