



Growing Together for 2050

Inside the 2026 ARC Regional Development Plan and What It Means for Communities

Fall 2026 Georgia Planning Association Conference

Atlanta Regional Commission

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Vision

ONE **great** REGION

Mission

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

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.

Values

Excellence – A commitment to doing our best and going above and beyond in every facet of our work allowing for innovative practices and actions to be created while ensuring our agency's and our colleague's success.

Integrity – In our conduct, communication, and collaboration with each other and the region's residents, we will act with consistency, honesty, transparency, fairness and accountability within and across each of our responsibilities and functions.

Equity – We represent a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends.



The 2026 Regional Development Plan for the 11-county Atlanta region — adopted August 2026, looking to 2050.

Where We're Going

- 1 What the 2026 RDP Is
- 2 Who Shaped the Plan
- 3 The Conditions It Responds To
- 4 The Growth Framework: The UGPM
- 5 What Your UGPM Designation Means
- 6 Goals and Policies
- 7 What ARC Will Do
- 8 What Local Governments Must Do
- 9 Key Dates, Resources, Takeaways
- 10 Q&A

Section 1

1

What the 2026 RDP Is

The statutory frame, the One Great Region foundation, and how the plan is organized.

The Statutory Frame, Briefly

-  Georgia Planning Act of 1989
-  Georgia DCA Rules Ch. 110-12-6
-  Five-year update cycle
-  Approved by DCA in July 2026
-  Adopted by ARC Board in August 2026

FIVE REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- 1 Needs & Opportunities
- 2 Regional Goals
- 3 Regional Future Land Use (UGPM)
- 4 Regionally Important Resources
- 5 Five-Year Work Program

Everything sits on this five-element spine — including some elements that make this plan different.

What ARC Built on That Frame

Growing Together for 2050: Metro ATL Development Strategy — the first ARC Regional Development Plan built on the One Great Region vision.

EXISTING PLANS INTEGRATED INTO A SINGLE POLICY FRAMEWORK



One plan, not five conversations: the same growth framework now connects the ways that ARC talks about jobs, water, travel, climate, and aging.

Section 2 · Lauren Blaszyk, AICP

2

Who Shaped the Plan

Engagement that reached beyond public hearings — and the plan content it changed.

Built over years, not for this plan alone: Community Forums, community-centered design cohorts, and an engagement fellow.

Who Steered It

Through the first half of 2025, two standing committees sharpened what the plan should be and do, and what local governments should do with it.

Internal — 7 ARC departments

- Community Development
- Transportation Planning
- Mobility Services
- Natural Resources
- Aging & Independence Services
- Research & Innovation
- Workforce Solutions

External — 16 regional organizations

- Aerotropolis Alliance
- Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP)
- Atlanta Region Transit Link Authority (ATL)
- Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) Atlanta
- Council for Quality Growth
- Dashboard
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Georgia Conservancy
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Georgia Planning Association
- Georgia Power
- Georgia State University Urban Studies Institute
- Georgia Tech School of City & Regional Planning
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)
- Partnership for Southern Equity
- Urban Land Institute (ULI) Atlanta

Bridging for the Future

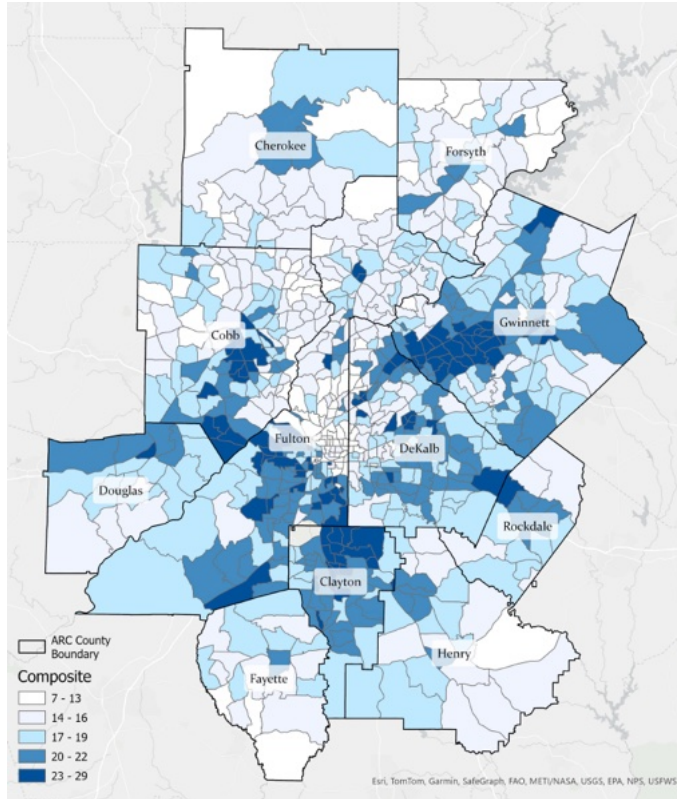
A joint land-use and transportation forum with planning staff from all 11 counties, GDOT, MARTA, and other regional partners.

Three Board members as plan champions

Co-led a Board engagement session on what the region should grow, invest in, and protect — and named the hard parts, including political will for transit.

Where the Data Said to Show Up

Hearings and committees reach the already-engaged — so equity data, not habit, set where ARC showed up in person.



What the score combines

Overlapping factors — environmental justice, age, race and ethnicity, foreign-born status, disability, language, and income — combined into one equity score per tract.

Where it sent us

The bluest tracts set the schedule — concentrating in-person work in Gwinnett, Rockdale, DeKalb, and Fulton communities.

What we heard there: housing stability, walkability, and fear of losing cultural anchors — recurring themes across all three in-depth workshops.

Mapping Our Future

Seniors at the Olivia Haydel Senior Center, Rockdale County · with civic facilitator Charity Hamidullah



WHAT HAPPENED

A two-part project: storytelling first, then collaborative making, with seniors at the center they already gather in.

Personal narratives became one shared quilt — a collective picture of what to protect and what to grow.

WHAT WE HEARD

● No transit, no sidewalks

Getting anywhere depends on a caregiver or the center's van. Walkability is absent here — and named as the thing most wanted.

● Preserve what already works

The senior center is infrastructure. Seniors also asked for senior housing to stay in the community they know.

● Protect the trees

Chemical spills and tree clearing for commercial gas stations came up unprompted, as losses already felt.

● Space for every age

Walking trails, bike routes, pools for children, and somewhere for teens to go.

Aging in place is a land use question — Live Beyond Expectations meeting the UGPM.

Chapter 2 · Community Engagement

A Movable Mural

Housing-insecure youth at drawchange · with civic facilitator Emida Roller



WHAT HAPPENED

Over three days, young people imagined their neighborhoods in 2050 — some answering in words, most in drawing, color, and paint. The pieces became a movable mural.

WHAT WE HEARD

● What they asked for

Sports and recreation, greenspace, parks, playgrounds — and neighborliness.

● Where they feel safe

Home and school, and anywhere they know there are people who will protect them.

● Where joy is

The park, playing outside, school, exercising, and granny's house — a map of a connected community.

● What home requires

Stable housing, a place to play, family, friends and pets, healthy food, and a bed.

Asked what would improve their lives, these youth named stable housing first — and a place to play second.

Chapter 2 · Community Engagement

What Home Means

Mothers and children from Sequoyah Middle School, Doraville · three sessions with civic facilitator Monica Campana



Each family hand-built a ceramic plaque for their own front door.

17

participants

8–53

age range

3

sessions

WHAT WE HEARD

● Home as the only safe space

Most participants named home as the one place they feel safe and at ease. Some reported feeling unsafe there too, because of displacement and deportation.

● Belonging is not commercial

Family, friends, and church were named far more often than civic or retail spaces. Gathering places sustain these families.

● Fear of erasure

Anxiety about losing Latino cultural spaces — and the organizations that support them — ran through every session.

● What needs investment

Schools, streets, transit, and public space. Many rely on transit and worry about both safety and access.

More than an art activity: participants used the time to build community. Every one of them asked for more.

Chapter 2 · Community Engagement

The Broad-Reach Layer



Metro Atlanta Speaks (MAS)

ARC's annual regional survey



Growing Together Website

Interactive mapping and feedback tool, open throughout the process



Regional Assembly

Elected officials and regional leadership convened



Two public hearings

The statutory floor — necessary, not sufficient



Online UGPM feedback tool

Shared directly with local government planners

4,000+

MAS survey responses

219

Growing Together website comments

125+

elected officials at the Regional Assembly

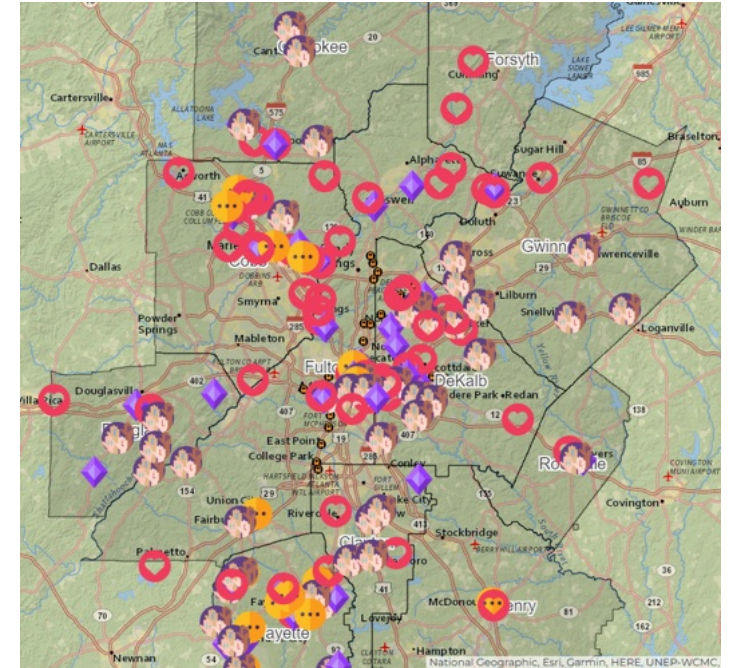
255

UGPM comments from 45+ local governments across all 11 counties

The Mapping Tool

An ArcGIS StoryMaps site where anyone could drop a pin and say why that place mattered — open throughout the process.

- **Place I Love**
Places that are meaningful to you and that you want to keep.
- **Community Gems**
Places, resources, or assets the community wants to keep.
- **Places That Need Help**
Areas that need more love and attention.
- **Other**
Anything missing.



219 responses, region-wide · map snapshot, Dec. 2025

What the Region Said

Printed in the plan's Executive Summary — all four pointing to unevenly distributed access to opportunity.

Housing & Stability

Affordable housing named the top priority. Anti-displacement, missing-middle, and workforce housing near jobs.

Connectivity & Mobility

The most common daily frustration. More transit, safer streets, first- and last-mile connections.

Community Assets

Residents love what makes their communities distinctive and fear losing it to rapid growth — a consistent priority in all 11 counties.

Economic Opportunity

Career pathways, workforce training, and investment in historically underserved communities.

Not just economic growth at the aggregate level, but growth that reaches everyone.

What the region asked for

The Receipts: Engagement That Became Content

An Economic Mobility Strategy

Added to the 2027–2031 work program, mirroring the community's top ask.

Housing and anti-displacement

Elevated to explicit regional commitments in Chapter 5.

The four themes

Carried into the plan as its organizing through-line, not a summary of findings.

Input directly guided the work program.

Section 3

3

The Conditions the Plan Responds To

From Chapter 3, Assets and Challenges, and the Executive Summary's key conditions.

Growth, Mobility, and Opportunity

GROWTH

-  1M+ additional residents expected by 2050
-  Trillions in new infrastructure required to serve them
-  Population 65 and older nearly doubling by 2050

MOBILITY & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

-  Among the five most congested U.S. metros, with heavy rail in just 2 of 11 counties
-  Over half of workers cross county lines for their jobs
-  Last among the 50 largest metros for economic mobility
-  187,000 youth in poverty — a generation's opportunity, diminished early

1M+

new residents by 2050

Top 5

most congested U.S. metros

\$400K

median home price

Last

for economic mobility, of 50
largest metros

Environment, Infrastructure, and Assets

PRESSURES

-  Tree canopy declining in rapidly developing suburbs
-  Impervious surface growing
-  Data center proliferation creating significant new water and energy demand

ASSETS TO BUILD ON

-  15+ Fortune 500 headquarters
-  The world's busiest airport
-  \$168B in planned MTP investment
-  The Water District's governance framework — per-capita water use down 27% since 2001

The Water District is the region's proof that shared governance produces measurable results — per-capita water use is down 27% since 2001.

Why the accountability architecture in Chapter 7 looks the way it does

Section 4

4

The Growth Framework: The 2026 UGPM

Local future land use visions, consolidated into one regional framework with seven area types.

What the UGPM Is

Local future land use visions, consolidated into one regional framework — reflecting both the current development landscape and the region's aspirations for its future.

 Where urban intensity should deepen

Capacity to absorb growth, with infrastructure to match.

 Where suburban communities should evolve

Infill and redevelopment as the growth mechanism, not greenfield.

 Where rural landscapes should be protected

Growth management and conservation as the default posture.

Your comprehensive plan's future land use is the UGPM's raw material. The designation your community carries is built from your own vision, blended with those of your neighbors, plus regional policy.

The practical point for local governments

The Seven Area Types

Each carries distinct policy expectations for land use mix, development intensity, infrastructure investment, environmental protection, and transportation connectivity — detailed in the companion Regional Development Guide.

1 Regional Core

Densest hub — absorbs the most intense development.

2 Regional Employment Corridors

Second-densest; transit right-of-way preservation expected.

3 Maturing Neighborhoods

Infill pressure on older, mostly built-out areas.

4 Established Suburbs

Recently built out — redevelopment is the focus.

5 Developing Suburbs

Greenfield growth — sequencing infrastructure is critical.

6 Developing Rural

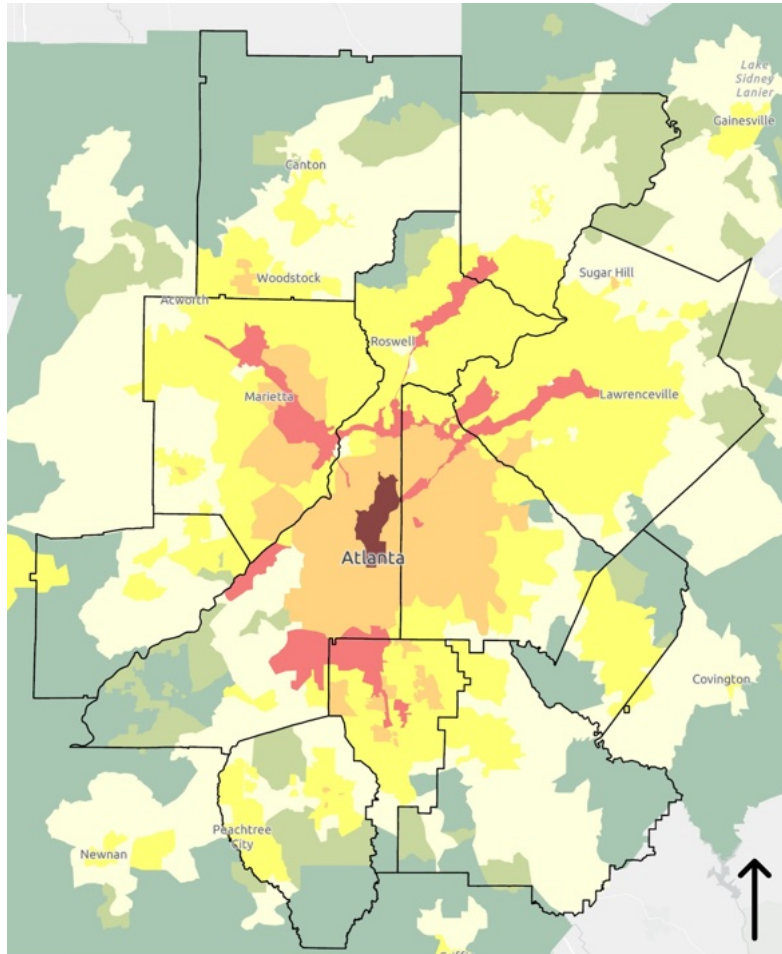
The transition edge: rural character under pressure.

7 Rural Areas

Protect working lands, natural systems, rural character.

Grow where infrastructure is already paid for and multimodal access exists (types 1–5); protect what is sensitive, vulnerable, historic, or rural (types 6–7).

The Map Itself



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission. July 2026.

SEVEN AREA TYPES, ONE MAP

Every parcel in the study area carries one of the seven designations. Most jurisdictions carry several — which is why “what is my area type” is usually the wrong question, and “where do my boundaries fall” is the right one.

FIND YOUR JURISDICTION

The interactive UGPM map zooms to parcel level — the version to use when someone asks where their boundary falls.

The RDP also flags Areas Requiring Special Attention — mixed-use centers, corridors, and economic hubs that need coordinated attention across jurisdictions.

Section 5

5

What Your UGPM Designation Means

The policy chain: what LCI eligibility, DRI review, and MTP consistency mean for your jurisdiction.

How Your Designation Matters

The UGPM helps determine:

LCI funding eligibility

Where Livable Centers Initiative studies can be located, and where they can evolve — which shapes who can compete for LCI dollars.

DRI review scrutiny

Which proposed developments receive additional regional review as Developments of Regional Impact.

MTP consistency findings

Which transportation investments are identified as consistent — or inconsistent — with regional growth objectives.

Informally, it also shapes how ARC staff advise on land use and comp-plan reviews, and how the region competes for federal discretionary funding.

A designation is a policy decision with impacts — not a mapping exercise.

What to Do With This

1 Know your area type or types

Most jurisdictions carry more than one. Find yours on the interactive UGPM map.

2 Read the Regional Development Guide

Check its expectations before your next comprehensive plan update or a substantial or consequential rezoning.

3 Engage ARC early on designation changes

It is a policy decision with funding consequences. Bring it to ARC before it is on an agenda, not after.

Monday morning: pull up the map, find your designation, and read the Regional Development Guide section.

Section 6

6

Goals and Policies

Seven planning elements, with economic mobility and access to opportunity running through all of them.

The Seven Planning Elements

Economic mobility and access to opportunity run through all seven as foundational commitments.

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| 1 | Economy & Workforce | A top global metro for prosperity, innovation, and workforce opportunity — with economic mobility as an agency priority. |
| 2 | Water Resources | Protect river systems and water supply, manage demand growth, sustain a six-basin green infrastructure network. |
| 3 | Transportation & Mobility | A safe, multimodal network connecting every resident to opportunity: Vision Zero, transit expansion, technology-enabled mobility. |
| 4 | Housing & Community | Affordable, diverse, stable housing near jobs and services, with anti-displacement as an explicit regional commitment. |
| 5 | Land Use & Development | Growth directed through the UGPM: compact centers, LCI communities, protection of rural and natural lands. |
| 6 | Environment & Natural Systems | Tree canopy, parks and greenspace access, climate resilience — net-zero by 2050 through MACAP. |
| 7 | Access, Opportunity & Resilience | Close the 25-year life-expectancy gap across ZIP codes; build community resilience; ensure every resident can participate. |

Genuinely new since 2021: built on One Great Region, economic mobility as a driving priority running through all seven elements, and data centers addressed head-on as a regional water and energy question.

Section 7



What ARC Will Do

The 2027–2031 Work Program: 34 projects, five goals, and an annual update cycle.

How the Work Program Is Built

34

projects in the 2027–2031 work program

5

ARC Strategic Framework goals organizing them

11

regional priority issues from Chapter 3, each keyed to projects

Every project carries a responsible department, a timeframe, and a cost estimate.

This is the plan functioning as ARC's internal prioritization tool: if a project doesn't advance a goal or address a priority issue, it isn't in the program.

Reviewed annually, not left untouched for five years: of the 2021 program's 28 projects, 21 are complete, 3 underway, 4 dropped or absorbed.

Highlights by Goal

Livable Communities · 14

Adopt and implement the Regional Housing Strategy · Launch Local Housing Studies for member jurisdictions · Develop a Regional Homelessness Strategy · Expand the LCI Pilot Implementation Program

Strategic Investments · 8

MTP update, adopted 2028 · Transportation Resilience Plan · Chattahoochee RiverLands implementation · Three regional trail plans

Competitive Economy · 6

CEDS update, adopted 2027 · Economic Mobility Strategy · Building Georgia infrastructure-workforce initiative · Aerotropolis economic development

Engagement & Operations · 6

Annual Regional Assembly and Metro Atlanta Speaks · 2030 Census coordination · Federal policy monitoring · 2027–2031 ARC Strategic Plan

For local governments, this is a menu of ARC resources coming your way — housing studies, LCI pilots, technical assistance, data products. Knowing the timeframes tells you when to raise your hand.

Section 8

8

What Local Governments Are Asked to Do

Chapter 7, Part A: 33 Foundation Standards, two tracks, and a December 2029 deadline.

The Premise

Local decisions in county commission meetings and city halls — about zoning, infrastructure, housing, and community investment — determine whether the goals of the Regional Development Plan are realized.

Chapter 7 · Planning Together

● Regional Planning Foundation

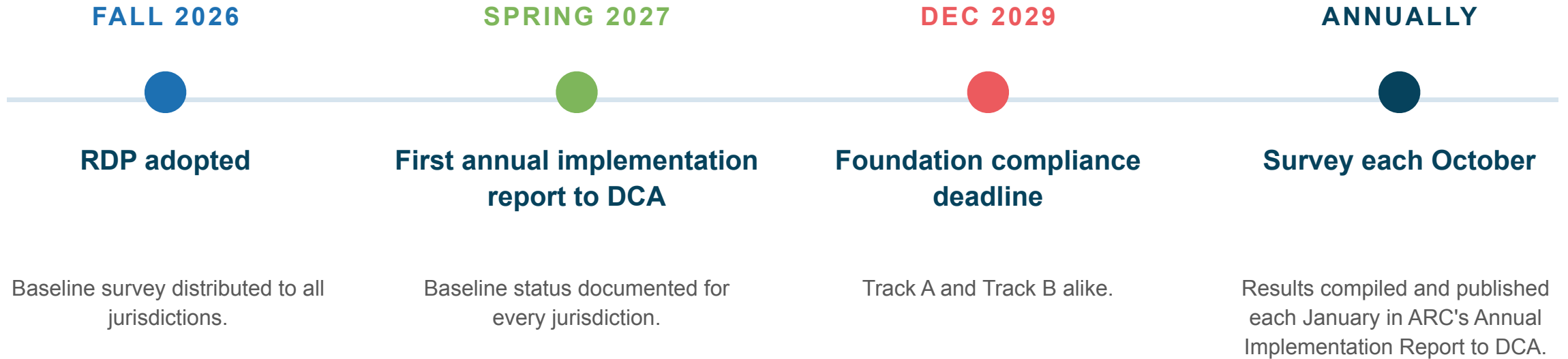
The DCA Minimum Standard. 33 specific, surveyable actions — the non-negotiable baseline for consistency with the 2026 RDP, with ARC technical assistance available to help every jurisdiction get there.

● Regional Leadership Practices

The DCA Excellence Standard. A voluntary menu of 22 practices with no required minimum — earning recognition in ARC's annual report and priority consideration in competitive ARC assistance programs.

Two tracks, scaled to capacity, same deadline: Track A (all counties and municipalities of 10,000+) covers all 33 standards; Track B (municipalities under 10,000) covers 15 starred standards. Both are due December 2029.

The Compliance Timeline



No penalties — but consistency with the RDP is required to remain eligible for CDAP and LCI programs. Assistance to get compliant; recognition and competitive priority for going beyond.

Monday morning: find your track, self-score against the standards, flag your gaps, and ask ARC for help closing them.

Section 9



Key Dates, Resources, and Takeaways

What to put on the calendar, where to find things, and the three things to remember.

Put These on the Calendar

● Fall 2026	Baseline survey distributed to all jurisdictions
● Spring 2027	First published compliance results
● 2028	MTP adoption
● December 2029	Foundation Standards compliance deadline
● Every October	Annual compliance survey

The one date that matters most: December 2029. Everything else is a checkpoint on the way there.

Where to find things: the plan and interactive UGPM map, the Regional Development Guide, and ARC technical assistance — all starting at atlantaregional.org/regional-development-plan.

Three Takeaways

1

Your designation means funding and support.

It shapes LCI funding, DRI review, and MTP consistency. Know yours and use it.

2

Self-score now — most of you are closer than you think.

Work the 33 standards, ask ARC for help on the gaps, and beat December 2029.

3

Progress is documented every year.

ARC grades itself the same way. This plan holds both sides accountable.

THANK YOU! QUESTIONS?

What could this mean for your community?

Growing Together for 2050 · atlantaregional.org/regional-development-plan

