

Clarkston Speaks

the City listens

Prepared by the School of City and
Regional Planning at the Georgia Institute
of Technology, under the direction of
Dr. Anna Joo Kim

Commissioned by the City of Clarkston

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- Kitty Murray, Refuge Coffee
- Katelyn Cole, Clarkston resident and volunteer
- Mayor Ted Terry and the Clarkston City Council



Contributors

- Ashley Bozarth
- Anindya Debnath
- Richard Duckworth
- Emily Estes
- Ryan Fleming
- Margaret Kent
- Kevin Mara
- Dr. Anna Joo Kim, Professor of City and Regional Planning
- Phoebe Mayor
- Grant Patterson
- Austin Shelton
- Deepti Silwal
- Cole Smith
- Nene Igietseme

As a Welcoming City, Clarkston has made many strides towards uniting residents of all backgrounds from across the city – and has welcomed more refugees than any place in Georgia. And yet, immigrant civic engagement and participation at the city and county level remain ongoing challenges for many cities like Clarkston. More than 75% of Georgia’s total foreign born population locate in suburbs within the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area, and because demographic change has occurred so rapidly, many of those same suburbs lack in-language or culturally appropriate access to city services.

It is suburban places, nationwide, that experience the most immigrant-driven growth and population change (Wilson and Svajlenka, 2014). For many recently arrived immigrants, smaller suburban areas outside of major cities are the first points of arrival into the United States. Places like Clarkston (pop: 13,000) are where new immigrants learn to be new Americans. Thus, it’s important for planners to learn our lessons from the towns and places across the country that are living these changes, and that are welcoming people with open hearts.

As the instructor of the Clarkston studio, I received a contract from the City of Clarkston to guide a city-wide survey of Clarkston’s residents with a team of graduate city planning students who specialize in land-use planning, transportation, environmental planning, and economic and community development. We worked closely with a local mosque and churches, a state-wide refugee resettlement agency, immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations, and the City Mayor and City Council to make our recommendations for improvements to communication and services within the city. We would like to thank Mayor Ted Terry, City Manager Keith Barker, and City Council members Beverly Burks, Awet Eyasu, Mario Williams, Ahmed Hassan, Robert Hogan, and Dean Moore for their support of this project.

Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta coordinated communications with four other ethnic nonprofit organizations representing Northeast African and Southeast Asian immigrant and refugee communities, and also provided translation and interpretation of survey and outreach materials. New American Pathways coordinated focus groups with recently resettled youth, parents, and workers across the city and region, who participate regularly in afterschool programs, vocational counseling, and parent liaison programs.

Our partnerships were critical in reaching those communities whose members may not feel comfortable coming to public meetings, have difficulty accessing city services, or simply lack the linguistic skills or cultural understanding of the American political system to fully engage in the process. The outreach efforts of Advancing Justice and New American Pathways brought the city closer to immigrant and refugee communities - to their homes, places of worship, and cultural centers - and opened up new lines of communication. This project brought together the interests of the university (the Georgia Institute of Technology), the community (Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta and New American Pathways), and the City of Clarkston, in working towards a more equitable and accessible city for all.

We hope that “Clarkston Speaks” has helped to build stronger bridges between and across the many diverse groups of Clarkston, and that the connections made here will be utilized for years to come.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anna Joo Kim

School of City & Regional Planning

Georgia Institute of Technology

anna.kim@gatech.edu



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Anna Joo Kim
Georgia Institute of Technology
245 Fourth St, NW
Atlanta, GA 30332
anna.kim@coa.gatech.edu

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The small suburban city of Clarkston, GA has garnered national attention as “The Most Diverse Square Mile” in America. Over the last decade, it has become a resettlement point for refugees and immigrants from all over the world – in 2015 more than 58% of city residents were born outside the United States. This shift has undoubtedly changed the culture of the town, impacting both the socioeconomic make-up of Clarkston and the way the city government interacts with its residents.

City leaders officially have aligned Clarkston with the Welcoming America network, but the local government has encountered challenges both in meeting the needs of these new Americans and engaging them in civic processes. In Fall 2016, the City of Clarkston partnered with the School of City and Regional Planning (SCARP) at the Georgia Institute of Technology (GT) to better understand its constituents through an extensive study and outreach campaign dubbed “Clarkston Speaks.” New American Pathways (New AP), a refugee resettlement agency, also partnered with SCARP to evaluate and suggest improvements to services offered to refugees and immigrants. Over four months, GT researchers surveyed 636 city residents and conducted focus groups and interviews with 76 New AP program participants and 3 mentors. The results of the study have implications for how the local community engages in planning and for how the city attempts to connect with Clarkston’s refugee and immigrant populations.

Key Findings

While ethnic groups tend to live in concentrated pockets of the city, Clarkston is small enough that transportation is convenient and accessible for most residents, as indicated in the survey. Linguistic barriers and cultural differences, on the other hand, are stumbling blocks for engagement and collaboration across native-born and immigrant communities. These same issues also combine with limited educational attainment to hinder upward socio-economic mobility for many foreign-born and also some native-born residents.

Low-performing schools and limited employment opportunities incentivize residents to leave Clarkston. Close to 70% of survey respondents indicated they disliked the schools in Clarkston, and many move to better school districts when they are able. Likewise, Clarkston’s existing business community is vital to the success of the city, but provides few employment opportunities compared to surrounding towns. While foreign-born individuals are underrepresented among business owners, 44% of total respondents (43% foreign-born and 46% native-born) indicated that they were interested in starting their own business, suggesting untapped potential in the community.

Language barriers are a key deterrent to successful civic engagement, but foreign-born

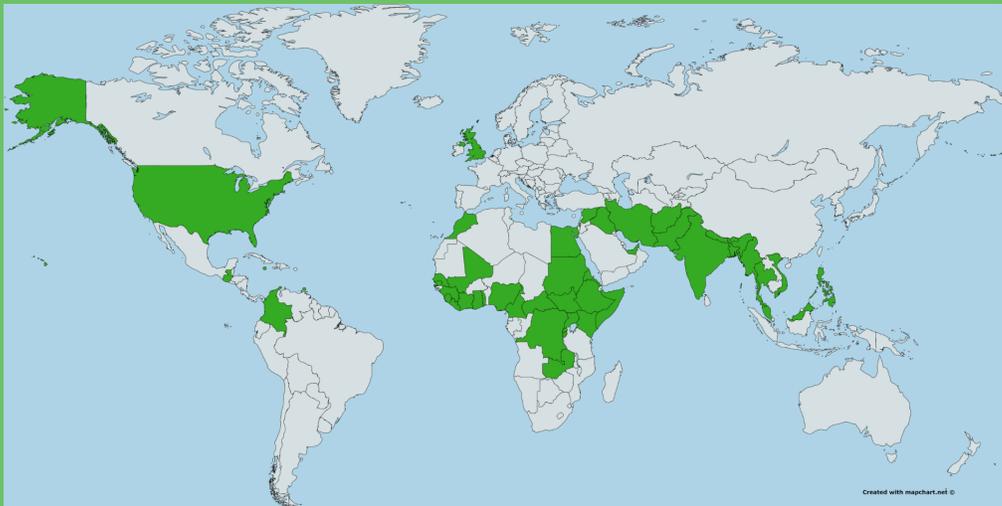
and native-born residents alike are interested in knowing their government better. A quarter of foreign-born survey respondents indicated that limited English proficiency prevented them from attending city events. However, 34% of foreign-born and 44% of native-born respondents (36% overall) expressed interest in getting to know city officials better.

The interests and needs of immigrant and non-immigrant residents are aligned. Native-born and foreign-born residents of Clarkston receive public assistance at roughly comparable rates, are more likely to rent rather than own their homes, and expressed concerns about policing and public safety.

Primary Recommendations for the City of Clarkston

- Reach out to existing community organizations and explicitly engage current residents to strengthen civic engagement and build upon the network of existing resources.
- Build regional networks with other Welcoming Cities to share best practices and expand upon existing refugee support and integration initiatives.
- Create a “language assistance plan” and offer additional translation resources to break down language barriers.
- Incorporate affordable housing strategies into future plans for growth.
- Increase transparency of and accessibility to the city’s police force to increase feelings of safety and comfort.
- Declare Clarkston a sanctuary city.

Study Participant Countries of Origin





Background & History

Section Contents

Welcoming Cities: a discussion of refugee resettlement and the Welcoming America network

Context: history, demographics, and recent tensions in the city

Welcoming Cities

Clarkston is one of a growing number of cities throughout the United States experiencing changes in their resident base. This is the result of movement among existing and past residents, as well as the movement of immigrants and refugees who find themselves in cities like Clarkston due to either voluntary migration or refugee resettlement. Although such patterns of immigration and resettlement have been prevalent since the 1970s, the landscape and scope of this migration have shifted and grown in recent years. Welcoming America, a nonprofit nonpartisan organization, launched in 2009 as a response to these changes happening in communities across America. Attention to this important topic has grown since then, evidenced by the Obama administration establishing the White House Task Force on New Americans in 2014.

In June 2016, the White House Task Force on New Americans released a report, "Bright Spots in Welcoming and Integration," that identifies the following categories as defining features of Welcoming Cities: building welcoming communities, naturalization and civic engagement, economic integration, and linguistic integration and education. Cities like Dayton, Ohio and Decatur, Georgia are highlighted for exemplary work in building welcoming communities. Detroit, Boston and Charlotte, among others, are recognized for doing effective work in economic integration. The report also references several other cities for best practices in each of these categories. While Clarkston is not cited in this 2016 report, it is home to existing efforts and community assets that position the city to achieve similar regard if the residents and local government continue to build on these inclusive and creative strategies.

Clarkston is currently one of four cities in Georgia to have joined the Welcoming America network. Welcoming America aims to nurture “a culture and policy environment that makes it possible for newcomers of all backgrounds to feel valued and to fully participate alongside their neighbors in the social, civic, and economic fabric of their adopted hometowns”.¹ There are currently over 50 Welcoming Cities, which are connected to Welcoming America’s network of resources. In 2014, Clarkston became the 29th city in the nation to join Welcoming America’s Welcoming Cities and Counties Initiative. It is not enough just to be a Welcoming City, however. The platform must be used to inspire meaningful action that builds truly inclusive communities with equitable access to essential services. Support beyond local government can greatly impact the success of these efforts. While there has been legislation proposed in Georgia that suggests hostility towards immigrant and refugee communities, there have also been actions supporting and welcoming these new Americans. For example, in 2015, the City of Atlanta launched the Office of Immigrant Affairs to implement recommendations gathered by the Welcoming Atlanta Working Group. “Clarkston Speaks” will demonstrate the importance of incorporating the voice of *all* residents, immigrant, refugee, and native-born, into planning for the future of cities in Georgia and beyond.

¹ <https://www.welcomingamerica.org/about/faq>

Context



Clarkston is a suburban city located east of Atlanta in DeKalb County. Founded in 1882 as a railroad town, it has since been absorbed into the sprawling metro area that has been one of the fastest growing in the nation for over a decade. Once a small town, the city has continued to grow in the recent years with annexations increasing its total land size by close to one third.

Today, Clarkston benefits from its proximity to the metro area's transportation network including the major highway interchange of I-285 and Stone Mountain Parkway as well as two MARTA bus lines that connect residents to nearby rail stations. A freight railroad also runs diagonally through the city center, separating a downtown district from residential neighborhoods.

Demographics

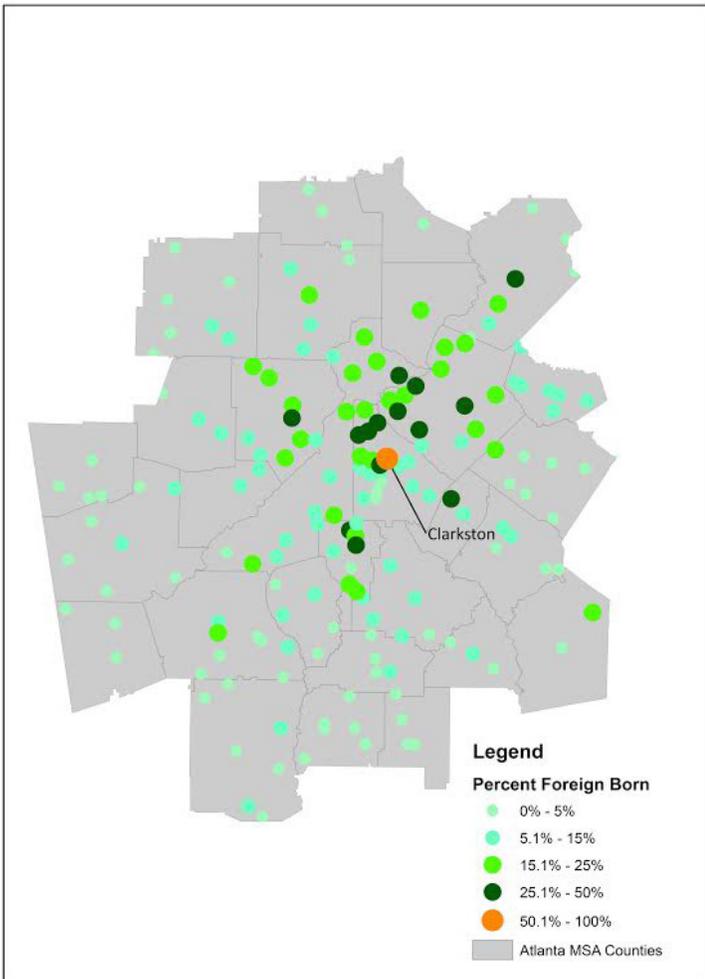
Clarkston's population has changed drastically in the past decade, with an increasingly diverse ethnic make-up distinct from other Metro Atlanta suburbs. From 2009 to 2014, the population shifted from 77% to 52% Black or African American, while the percent of Asian residents increased from 4% to 31%. The most recent Census estimate reported that the City of Clarkston has a population of 11,990 residents, although this number is closer to 13,000 today because of recent annexations.

Language Spoken at Home	City of Clarkston	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell MSA
Speak Only English	41%	83%
African Languages*	20%	1%
Other Indic Languages*	13%	0%
Other Asian Languages*	11%	1%
Vietnamese	4%	1%
Other and Unspecified Languages*	2%	0%
Serbo-Croatian	2%	0%
Other Indo-European Languages*	2%	0%
Arabic	2%	0%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	1%	9%

Source: American Community Survey 2010-2014 5-Year Estimates: Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for Population 5 Years and Over

*"Other" indicates languages not specified in the American Community Survey

“The most diverse square mile in the United States”



Of this population, 41% reported speaking English only at home, compared to 83% of residents in the whole metro area.

Clarkston's population change is largely due to the increase in immigrant and refugee residents; between 2009 and 2014 alone, the foreign-born population rose by 58%. The Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Atlanta, on the other hand, saw an increase of only 5%. The map to the left illustrates the percent of foreign-born residents across different cities in the Metro Atlanta region. Notably, Clarkston is the only city where the percent of foreign-born residents exceeds half the population.

Annexations

The City of Clarkston recently has expanded due to two annexations. In 2015, Clarkston annexed land to the northeast, extending east past Brockett Road, but remaining bordered by Stone Mountain Parkway to the north and E. Ponce de Leon Avenue to the west. In 2016, Clarkston extended southwest past I-285. Accounting for the 435 total annexed acres, the area of Clarkston now encompasses 1.78 square miles, or approximately 1,140 acres.

Recent City Tensions

With rapidly changing demographics come new challenges faced by the city and residents alike. Minority populations now comprise the majority population and the dynamic between city officials and the community has shifted, with tensions emerging due to recent city policies. These conflicts, discussed on the following page, emphasize the importance of residents understanding how to, being able to, *and* actively deciding to engage in civic processes as the city plans its vision for the future.

Context

“The whole moratorium issue – it sort of treat[ed] a city boundary as if there was a moat and a wall around it...we might have Bhutanese moving into Clarkston, Clarkstonians moving to Minnesota, so these migrations are happening whether we try to stop them or not.”

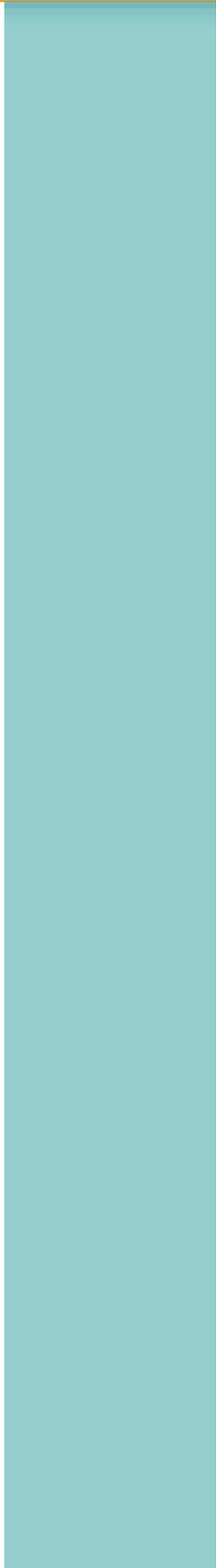
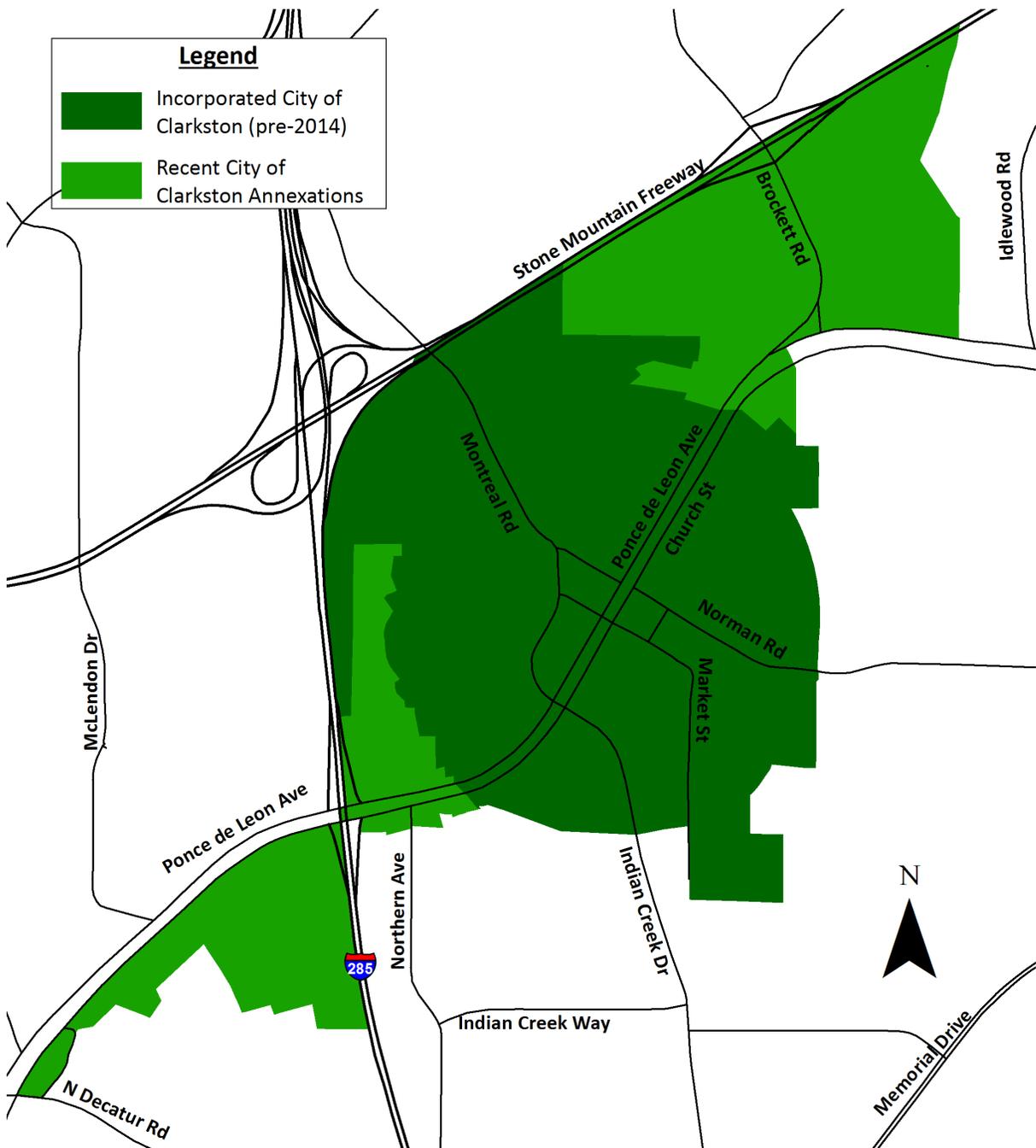
Mayor Ted Terry

Refugee Resettlement

From 2011 to 2013, Clarkston experienced a decline in refugee resettlement placements, by request of local elected officials. CEO of New American Pathways, Ms. Paedia Mixon, noted, “A moratorium was requested by the State of Georgia after elected officials from Clarkston met with Governor Deal to request a pause in Clarkston resettlement.” Because refugees cannot legally be prohibited from reuniting with family members, a reduction in new refugee placements was granted instead. This reduction caused complications for resettlement agencies, as well as for immigrants already living in the city. Resettlement agencies struggled to find adequate housing for newly arrived refugees, leaving many with deficient options. Furthermore, even when agencies found homes for refugees outside of Clarkston boundaries, many would move to Clarkston within the year. Shortly afterwards, in 2014, Clarkston City Councilmembers passed and adopted both a Compassionate City and a Welcoming City resolution (City of Clarkston Resolution, March 2014).

Non-Smoking Ordinance

In 2016, the City of Clarkston adopted the Clean Indoor Air Act, which prohibits smoking inside all public buildings and workplaces. Though a grandfather clause exempted businesses that primarily sell tobacco products from the smoking ban until 2019, a handful of ethnic businesses offering hookah services were not initially exempted since they are listed as restaurants. Ethiopian and Eritrean business owners spoke at a Clarkston City Council meeting in October 2016, arguing that the bill disproportionately burdened residents who deeply value a long-held social and cultural practice of smoking hookah. The Mayor and City Council members contended that the ordinance would promote the health, safety, and welfare of all city residents. They also argued that if immigrant business owners had engaged in the working sessions leading up to the ordinance’s passage, the owners would have had the opportunity to suggest that their restaurants be included in the grandfather clause. In November 2016, after extensive discussion, the city acknowledged the ordinance had the “unintended consequence of disproportionately hurting certain restaurant businesses” and thus granted a temporary grandfathering of indoor smoking in some affected businesses until December 31, 2018 (City of Clarkston Amended Clean Indoor Air Act, November 2016).





Clarkston Speaks

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Study Introduction: the importance of a mixed methods approach and challenges with official demographic data

Methodology: survey and focus group methodology

Key Findings:

- Who is Clarkston?
- Strengths and barriers to making Clarkston home
 - Housing
 - Transportation
 - Social Services
 - Governance
 - Voices of Clarkston

Study Introduction

Responding to its continuously changing population, the City of Clarkston collaborated with Georgia Tech's graduate planning studio in Fall 2016 to obtain current and potentially more accurate data about Clarkston residents for planning and refugee integration purposes. "Clarkston Speaks" thus emerged as a four-month research study allowing for extensive engagement between the researchers and the Clarkston community.

"Clarkston Speaks" is a mixed methods study consisting of two elements. The first is a survey of Clarkston residents to supplement existing census data on demographics, housing, and employment. The second is a series of focus groups held with refugees participating in New American Pathways programs and interviews with New AP program volunteers in the Clarkston area. Secondary data from the US Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) and the proprietary Dun & Bradstreet business database were also analyzed to gain additional insights.

Advantages of "Clarkston Speaks" – Mixed Methods Approach

The "Clarkston Speaks" survey allowed GT researchers to reach traditionally undercounted, under-sampled immigrant and refugee populations through a mix of in-person street intercept and community-based survey techniques. Intercept survey methods were chosen over mail and phone survey techniques used in other studies seeking to reach vulnerable population groups (Barajas et al., 2016). In addition to the 56-question survey used to collect quantitative data, researchers gathered qualitative data through one-on-one interviews and focus groups ranging from three to ten individuals. Taken together, these two forms of research gave a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the lives of Clarkston residents. The survey produced statistical support for the personal experiences shared through the focus groups and interviews, while the qualitative data provided the context and narratives to illuminate statistical findings.



The Need for “Clarkston Speaks” – Challenges with Official Demographic Data

The city’s most recent comprehensive plan, Clarkston 2040, presents aggregate demographic data for the City of Clarkston. Pre-annexation population estimates appear to have been obtained from Nielson, a market research firm, but other sources of demographic and socioeconomic data are not clearly cited in the plan. Even if the Clarkston 2040 data had been derived from a US Census Bureau dataset, city officials have called into question the currency and accuracy of census data for a refugee-serving city such as Clarkston.

Concerns about the accuracy of census data for small areas and specific subpopulations are grounded in the literature about the prevalence of non-response error in the Census. The 2010 Decennial Census is the most current source of data that enumerates all individuals in the City of Clarkston. However, the decennial census has been shown in previous decades to undercount minorities, renters, individuals living in poverty, and linguistically isolated households (Bruce & Robinson, 2003). These disproportionate outcomes are in addition to trends in falling response rates to both mail and telephone surveys (Smith, 1995). For immigrants who do respond to the census, the data have been found to contain three common errors: foreign-born respondents who do not report their country of birth, misreport their citizenship status, or misreport whether they are native- or foreign-born (Warren & Passel, 1987). Since the census does not collect information about an immigrant’s legal status or admission category, it is difficult to analyze data for refugees specifically, without cross-referencing other data sources such as Immigration and Naturalization Services records and making gross assumptions (Newbold, 2002; Warren & Passel, 1987).

More recent data come from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS), which replaces the decennial census as the main source of socioeconomic and housing data. However, as a survey sample instead of an enumeration, the ACS can have high sampling error—discrepancy between survey estimates and values that would have been obtained from the entire population—for subpopulations such as ethnic minorities in areas with less than 20,000 people (Williamson, 2008). Like the decennial census, the ACS is also prone to non-response error among those initially contacted or non-response for individual questions on completed surveys (US Census Bureau, 2015). The PUMS dataset comes from the ACS sample, but it consists of untabulated records for individual ACS survey respondents, allowing for a more detailed view into the lives of specific people. The responses can be weighted to be representative of the population, but results must still be used with awareness of possible sources of error.

Methodology



Surveying at Clarkston Food Truck Fest

Who Took the Survey?

Total of 636 surveys.

Foreign-born: 74%
Native-born: 26%

Sex:

Female: 46%
Male: 54%

Age:

18-24: 24%
25-34: 26%
35-44: 24%
45-64: 21%
65+: 4%

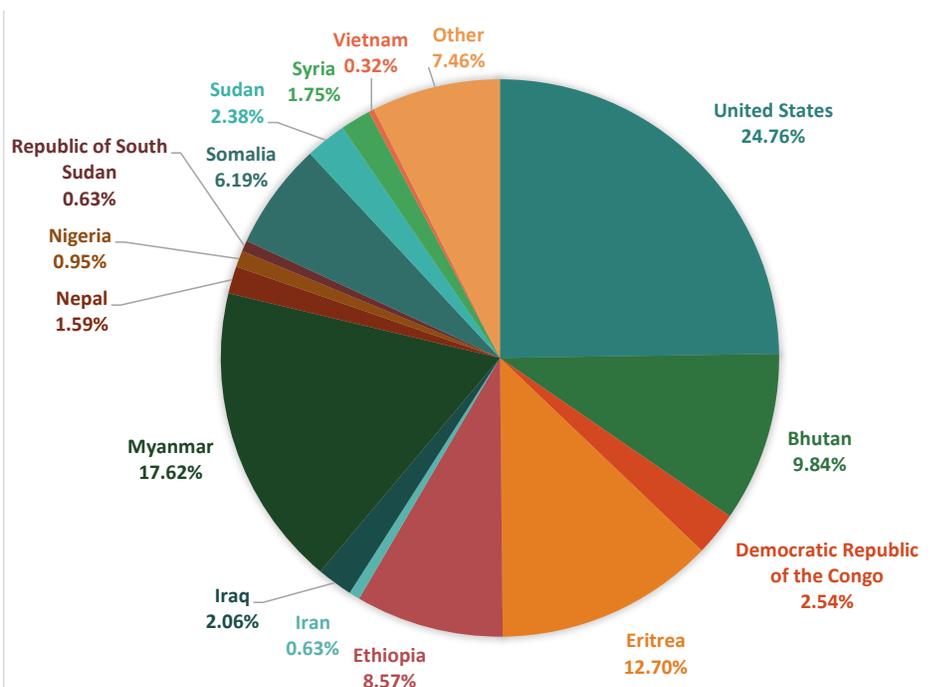
Survey Methodology

The Clarkston Speaks survey provides a comprehensive look at the lives of Clarkston residents, with special attention to the city's large immigrant and refugee populations who tend to have lower participation rates in the U.S. Census.

Survey Design:

Questions for the "Clarkston Speaks" survey were available in English and six other languages (Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Karen, Nepali, Tigrinya). A pilot of the English survey was administered to help refine questions. GT researchers conducted street intercept surveying at various locations throughout Clarkston, during different times of day and days of the week between October 8th and November 13th, 2016. Anyone who approached one of the surveyors was given an opportunity to take the survey if they were Clarkston residents and at least 18 years old. Only one survey per household was allowed to prevent oversampling on household- and family-related questions. Community partners, including the Somali American Community Center, the Eritrean-American Community Association of Georgia, the Bhutanese Community Association of Georgia, Javeria Jamil (Advancing Justice Atlanta), and Alice Mawi also helped administer surveys.

Survey Respondents



Focus Group and Interviews Methodology

Georgia Tech researchers conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews to assess services and programs provided by New American Pathways for the refugee population in and around Clarkston. This information was collected in an effort to gain insight into experiences of new American clients using these services and to improve the current programs administered by local resettlement agencies.

Focus Group and Interview Design:

GT researchers reviewed three New AP programs: Education and Youth, Vocational Counseling, and Family Engagement. All interviews and focus groups were conducted between October and November of 2016.

Education and Youth: One-on-one interviews were conducted with 55 refugee students in New American Pathways afterschool programs at two elementary schools and one middle school. There was also a cognitive mapping exercise designed to supplement information gathered through the interviews (see an example of the exercise below).

Vocational Counseling: GT researchers conducted a focus group session with vocational services participants of a GRE preparation class. The participants filled out a questionnaire that addressed the GRE course, as well as other vocational courses. To create a more robust data set and gain multiple perspectives, researchers also administered individual interviews with three mentors from the vocational program.

Family Engagement: Three separate focus groups were conducted with a total of 11 parents who take part in the School Liaison program. The focus groups consisted of Burmese, Nepalese and Afghani parents with children enrolled in the New American Pathways afterschool program.

Programs:

Education and Youth
Vocational Counseling
Family Engagement

Number of sessions:

10

Total Number of interviews:

79

Interviewees:

32 Elementary school students
23 Middle school students
10 Vocational counseling participants
3 Vocational counseling mentors
11 School Liaison participants



Example of cognitive mapping exercises done with kids at Jolly Elementary School

Who is Clarkston?

Challenging conceptions of the global city

Street Survey Respondents

Foreign-born Asian	58	17%
Foreign-born Black	113	33%
Foreign-born Middle Eastern	11	3%
Foreign-born other race	19	6%
Native-born Black	86	25%
Native-born White	41	12%
Native-born other race	16	5%
Unknown Nativity	3	
Total	347	100%

US Census Bureau Estimates (2010-2014)

	Race	
	Population	Percent
Black alone	14,015	56%
Asian alone	6,110	25%
White alone	3,509	14%
Other race	1,244	5%
Total	24,878	100%
	Nativity	
	Population	Percent
Native-born	12,760	51%
Foreign-born	12,118	49%
Total	24,878	100%

30021 ZIP Code Tabulation Area

Data Source: Social Explorer Tables: ACS 2014 (5-Year Estimates) (SE); US Census Bureau

National Origins & Race

The US Census Bureau estimates that almost 25,000 people live in Clarkston's 30021 ZIP code, an area that extends beyond the borders of the incorporated City of Clarkston and reflects the "Clarkston Speaks" survey definition of a "Clarkston resident." These estimates indicate that the extended population is split almost evenly between people born inside the United States and immigrants, with the largest foreign-born groups coming from Asia and Africa.

"Clarkston Speaks" conducted 347 surveys in public spaces in Clarkston. This is not a carefully weighted sample of the entire study area population, but it does reflect the people one would encounter on the streets of Clarkston in the fall of 2016. It also addresses some of the issues with Census Bureau estimates discussed previously, which have been shown to undercount minorities and linguistically isolated populations. The street survey reached 42% native-born and 58% immigrant respondents, a slightly higher proportion of foreign-born residents than the Census estimate. Further separated into racial groups, the largest groups encountered were Black immigrants, Black non-immigrants, Asian immigrants, White non-immigrants, and Middle Eastern immigrants. Street survey respondents represented 38 countries. After the United States, commonly-encountered origins were Ethiopia, Myanmar and Eritrea.

Five community organizations conducted an additional 289 surveys that targeted specific immigrant groups. These surveys supplemented the data collected on the street, bringing the total pool of survey respondents to 636. The robust sample enables nuanced comparisons between different groups of people living in Clarkston. Community partners specifically targeted their surveys towards participants of the same or similar ethnic background (i.e. Bhutanese Community Association of Georgia surveying Bhutanese). These surveys added significant numbers of respondents from Myanmar, Eritrea, Bhutan, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Refugees

Clarkston is well known for its diverse population, largely due to its many distinct refugee communities. Almost one third of the respondents to the street survey confirmed

that they came to the US as refugees. Researchers further explored the experiences of this population through the focus groups conducted with refugee clients of New American Pathways, a nonprofit refugee resettlement agency located just north of Clarkston in Northlake, GA. The agency provides initial resettlement services as well as longer-term self-sufficiency services to approximately 4,000 refugees per year.

Refugees are under extreme pressures upon arrival, including the need to quickly adapt to US life. As detailed on New AP's website, "[w]ithin a few short months, they are expected to speak English, find sustainable employment, enroll their children in school, and understand the complexities of the American health care system, government programs, the school system, and social services." Agencies such as New AP assist refugees through this process by providing programs and services such as: cultural orientation, health care navigation, and English language assistance.¹

The refugee youth experience involves many additional layers, some more complicated and challenging than others. New AP addresses this by providing services specific to "Education and Youth." The focus groups included school-aged children to gain insight into this perspective (unlike the survey, which only included residents at least 18 years old). Youth participants expressed concerns not encountered in engagement with adults, such as significant crime presence in Clarkston. Elementary and middle school aged children are a particularly difficult population to reach for research of this kind, but they are vitally important. Ideas about Clarkston from younger generations will have a greater impact on the city's trajectory than any other group. Clarkston cannot plan for its future without listening to the voices of its youth.

Household Size and Location

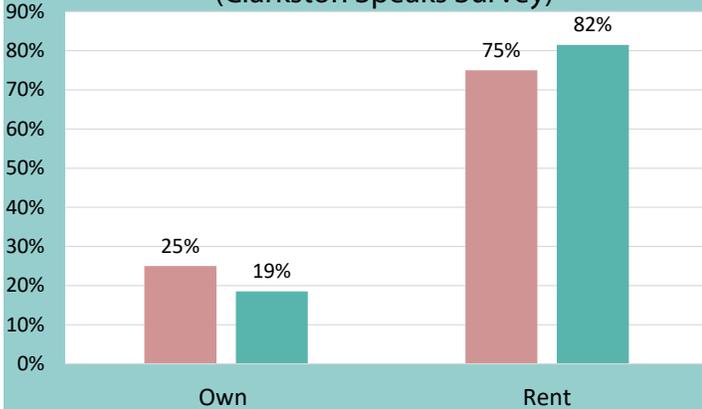
Many of the issues explored in this report occur at the household level. "Clarkston Speaks" survey data reveal that many foreign-born residents live in much larger households relative to native-born households. Non-immigrant household respondents averaged 2.9 members, while immigrant household respondents averaged 4.9. Over one fifth of foreign-born respondents reported living in households with six or more members, compared to only 6% of native-born respondents.

The survey also asked residents to indicate in which of seven geographic zones they live. For the most part, race and national origin groups are not strongly segregated along the geographic divisions in the survey map but there are a few noted concentrations. A high proportion of native-born white respondents reported living in the southern zone (E), which includes a relatively large stock of detached, owner-occupied homes. The large sample of foreign-born Asians are more concentrated outside the incorporated City of Clarkston (zone G) relative to other groups. Finally, black respondents of both native and foreign origin are clustered in the three zones north of Ponce de Leon Avenue (A, B & C).

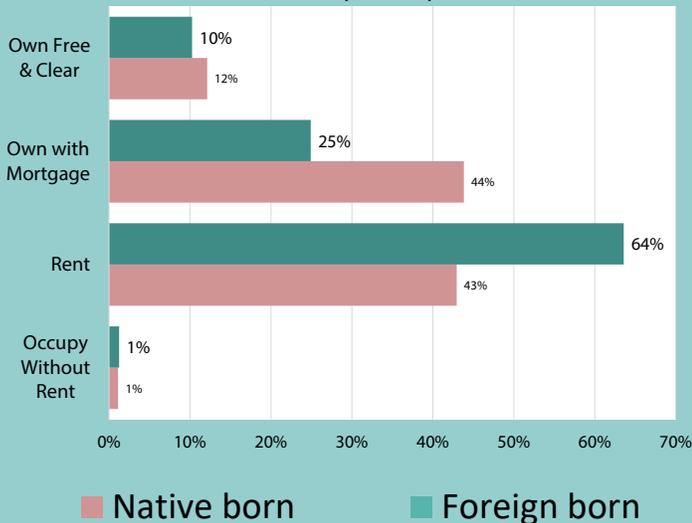
1 <http://newamericanpathways.org/what-we-do/pathways-solid-ground/>

Housing

Tenure: Foreign Born vs. Native Born
(Clarkston Speaks Survey)



Tenure: Foreign Born vs. Native Born
(PUMS)



US Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data are the only census data available consisting of records for individual respondents. To safeguard their privacy, the smallest geographic unit of analysis is the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA). The Clarkston area PUMA encompasses Clarkston, Stone Mountain, and Tucker. The studio team analyzed PUMS data for 2012 – 2014 to supplement the "Clarkston Speaks" survey results.

Rental-Dominated Housing Market

Clarkston stands out in the Metro Atlanta area for its concentration of rental housing. The US Census Bureau estimates that 77% of the households in Clarkston's 30021 ZIP code rent, compared to only 36% in the metro area. While both immigrants and non-immigrants are more likely to live in apartments and rent, the relatively large stock of apartment housing is one of the primary reasons Clarkston is an appealing location for refugee resettlement.

Over 75% of total survey respondents are renters, with over 70% of respondents living in multifamily housing rather than single-family homes. Data for the Clarkston-Tucker-Stone Mountain PUMA confirmed that foreign-born residents are more likely to be renters. Native-born residents are homeowners at higher rates, but more likely to carry the burden of a mortgage. The "Clarkston Speaks" survey found that there is interest in homeownership among a large majority (74%) of both immigrant and non-immigrant renters in Clarkston. While Clarkston's majority rental housing market allows for affordability, it also reduces the potential for the stronger locational ties usually fostered by homeownership.



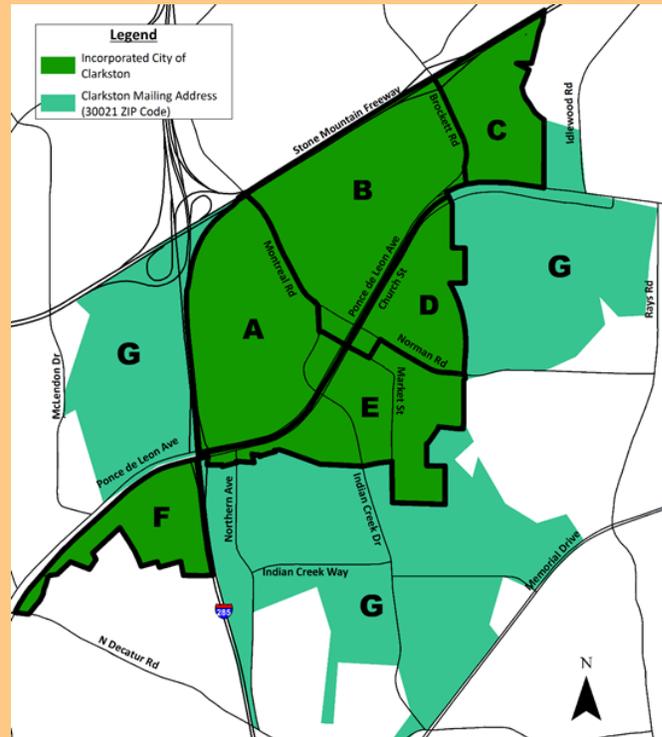
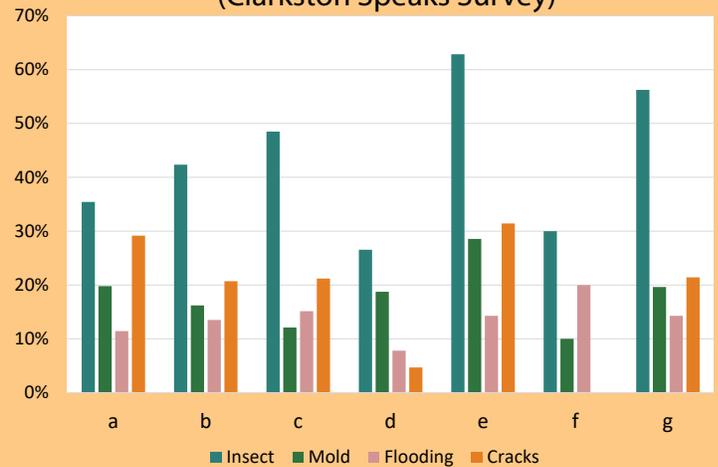
Crowding

Crowding in housing units appears to be an issue among the foreign-born population. According to the survey, immigrant households are more likely to inhabit apartments than non-immigrant households despite having larger household sizes. Further, the average size of immigrant households does not vary between those that live in apartments and those that live in detached houses. This finding points to more restricted housing choices among the foreign-born population.

Housing Quality

The results of the survey revealed insect infestation, mold, flooding, and structural issues to be among the most significant housing problems in Clarkston. Renters expressed having issues with insects and mold in their homes at a higher rate than homeowners, while renters and owners expressed issues with flooding and structural problems at similar rates. The housing issues reflect a spatial pattern as well: residents living in an area bounded by Montreal Road, Ponce de Leon Avenue and the I-285 Perimeter (Area A) have relatively higher rates of insect and mold problems than survey respondents from other areas of Clarkston, although insect infestation is noted to be a major issue in most areas. Residents living south of Montreal Road (Areas A and E) also experience higher rates of building cracks and other structural problems than residents from other areas of Clarkston. The southeastern quadrant (Area E) is predominantly inhabited by native-born residents in single-family homes; structural issues in the housing stock are likely related to the age of the homes.

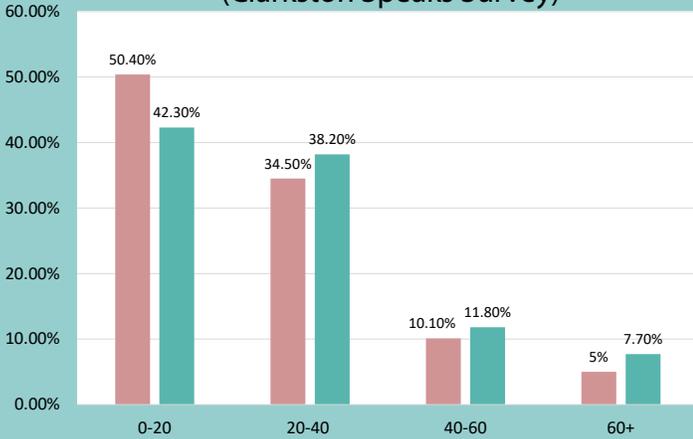
Reported Housing Issues: Spatial Distribution (Clarkston Speaks Survey)



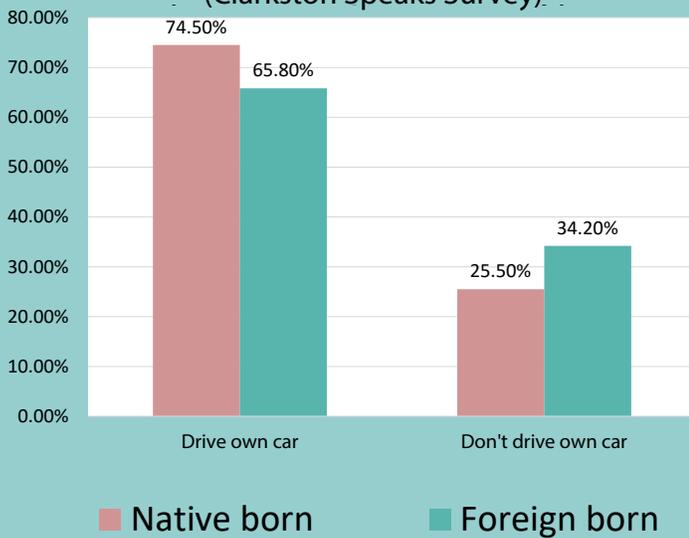
The map of Clarkston, showing the city's different zones, as it appeared in the "Clarkston Speaks" Survey. Respondents identified the zone in which they live.

Transportation

Travel time (minutes): Native Born vs. Foreign Born
(Clarkston Speaks Survey)



Clarkston Drivers vs. Non-Drivers
(Clarkston Speaks Survey)



Transportation Convenience

Transportation ranked highest out of the nine quality-of-life factors rated in the survey including proximity to family, to cultural community, and to places of worship, housing affordability, food access, public safety, government services, and school quality. Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents agreed that transportation is convenient in Clarkston, likely due to its accessibility to Interstate 285 and State Highway 78, two MARTA bus routes, and fairly walkable town center. This infrastructure could make Clarkston an ideal place for residents who depend on other means of transportation besides a personal vehicle.

Foreign-born respondents were slightly more likely than native-born respondents to agree that transportation is convenient in Clarkston (70% versus 65%). The difference was more pronounced between recent foreign-born arrivals (individuals who have been living in Clarkston for less than a year) and recent US-born arrivals (70% versus 60%). For some refugees, daily travel in Clarkston may be more convenient than it was in their countries of origin.

On the other hand, lack of access to a driver's license or vehicle may hinder daily travel for recent immigrants. Overall, foreign-born respondents are less likely to drive their own vehicle for daily travel, relying instead on transit, carpooling, and vanpools. These findings are consistent with data from the US Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), which showed that large carpools (6 to 10 people) are used almost exclusively by foreign-born residents as the means of transportation to work in the Clarkston-Tucker-Stone Mountain area. Though less than 3% of all residents in the area commute via 6+ person carpools, 90% of these carpools are foreign-born. Recent immigrants (those who moved to the Clarkston PUMA

directly from a foreign country between 2011 and 2013) disproportionately travel to work in 8+ person carpools (34% of all recent immigrants), compared with just 6% of recent secondary migrants and 5% of all immigrants in general. These findings reflect the tendency for recent immigrants to rely on organized vanpools to get to places of work such as poultry processing plants. However, non-recent immigrants' means of transportation to work are more similar to that of native-born residents, suggesting that immigrants are able to gain access to a personal vehicle after settling in the Clarkston area.

The survey data show that foreign-born respondents were more likely to face longer travel times to work. PUMS data support this finding and reveal that recent immigrants have the longest average commute time, at 48 minutes. Native-born white individuals have the shortest commute time on average (27 minutes), whereas both native-born minorities and foreign-born residents travel over half an hour on average. Though immigrants in Clarkston objectively have a greater transportation burden compared to non-immigrants and especially US-born whites, survey findings suggest that immigrants still perceive transportation more positively. It is likely that other burdens such as housing and employment are relatively more pressing.

Another group facing transportation burdens is senior citizens, especially those with mobility limitations. Although senior citizens were likely underrepresented in the survey, informal conversations during survey outreach exposed the need for alternatives to MARTA's paratransit service.



“We need more handicapped accessible senior transportation. People can’t get to meetings because they have limited mobility.”

Clarkston Resident

Social Services

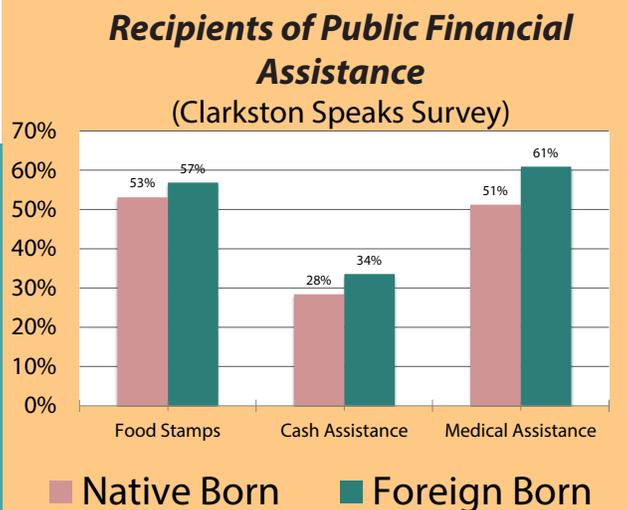
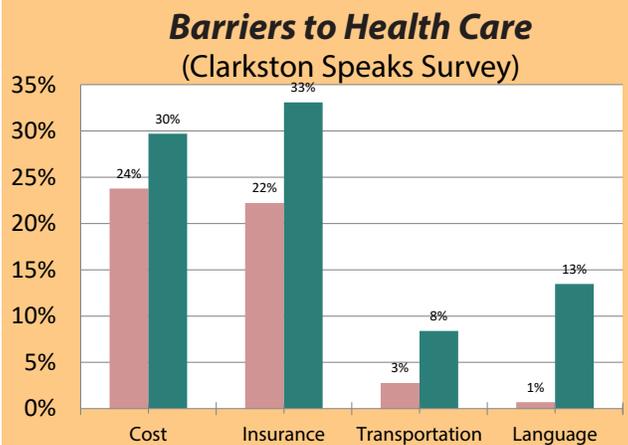
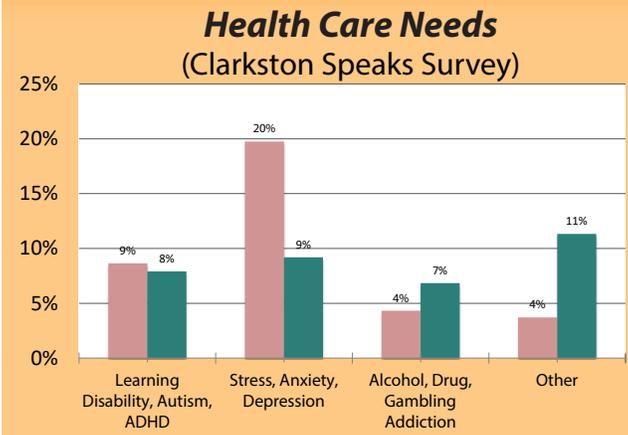
Clarkston residents' current needs regarding health care, financial management, green card/citizenship applications, education and employment provide opportunities for the City of Clarkston to consider improved access to quality social services that facilitate social and economic mobility.

Access to Services

Approximately 20% of US-born respondents reported that they or family members have issues with stress, anxiety, or depression. More foreign-born respondents reported problems with addiction and other medical issues like high blood pressure. It is not clear if these variances are due to differences in the issues themselves or the willingness to report these issues. What is clear, however, is the gap between health care needs and access to health care services for many Clarkston residents.

Barriers to accessing health care include limited English proficiency and transportation for foreign-born respondents. Although half of US-born respondents indicated they do not have difficulty accessing health care, cost and insurance are noteworthy barriers for all Clarkstonians, regardless of origin.

Over half of all respondents or their families receive or recently received food stamps and/or medical assistance, including Medicaid, Medicare, or Refugee Medical Assistance. Likewise, one third receive or recently received some kind of cash assistance,



including TANF, SSI, or Refugee Cash Assistance. These findings show that the number of native-born and foreign-born respondents are almost equally reliant on public financial resources, despite the common perception that immigrants put a disproportionate burden on such social systems.

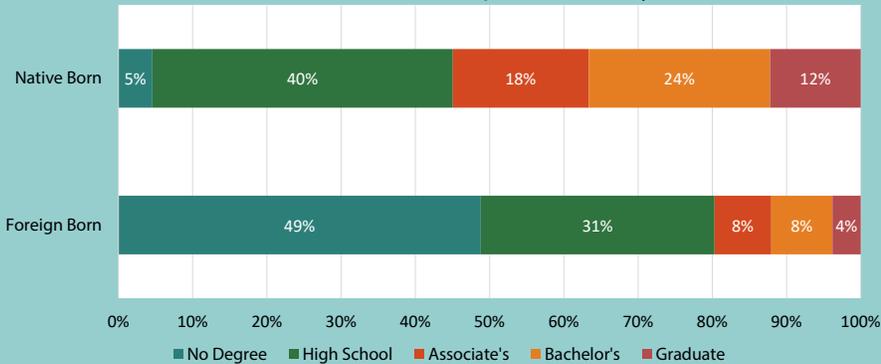
Foreign-born respondents indicated greater need for financial literacy and help opening a bank account. Most respondents have a checking account, and almost half a savings account, but fewer foreign-born respondents use the latter method to manage money. Although very few respondents reported using a “check into cash” system (4%), the majority who did are foreign born. Lastly, one third of foreign-born respondents need assistance with green card and citizenship applications.

Education and Employment

Large numbers of Clarkston’s foreign-born residents endure low levels of educational attainment. Many came to this country as refugees, with limited English and little or no formal education. In the “Clarkston Speaks” survey, nearly half of the foreign-born respondents over 24 years old lack a high school diploma, a much higher proportion relative to the native-born population. Additionally, 42% of the foreign-born respondents reported they do not speak English well. Data from the Census Bureau indicate that immigrants who have been in the US a longer period of time are more likely to attain at least a basic level of education. This supports survey findings that, among foreign-born respondents, Ethiopians and Eritreans, many of whom have been in the US for years, have relatively higher levels of educational attainment. Given Clarkston’s status as a common first stop for newly-arrived refugees, the immigrant population is especially challenged by a lack of educational credentials.

Other refugees were professionals in their home countries and experience underemployment, as they are unable to transfer their degrees or skill sets to access comparable work in the United States. Examples researchers encountered include a currently-unemployed former official in the Afghani Ministry of Women’s Affairs and a trained pharmacist now working in a coffee shop. Unemployment in the female foreign-born population is noticeably higher: 49% of women are unemployed, half of whom are looking for a job. As a result of these obstacles, a significant income disparity exists between the US-born and foreign-born populations. Among immigrant survey participants, nearly one third have family incomes under \$1,200 per month. For comparison, only 16% of native-born respondents reported incomes below this level.

Education Attainment of Respondents Over 24
(Clarkston Speaks Survey)



Social Services

Social and Economic Mobility

Education and employment barriers, compounded by limited access to services, impede social mobility for refugee populations in Clarkston. Within three months of arrival, refugees are expected to support themselves with full-time employment. Resettlement agencies assist their clients in finding an initial job, but available positions are limited and often low wage. In Clarkston some of the go-to locations are poultry processing plants, which are always hiring and require little English. About 10% of foreign-born survey respondents work in poultry processing, and residents have formed vanpools for the hours-long commute to some of these plants. Refugee job seekers universally identified English proficiency as a barrier to employment mobility. Adult focus group participants expressed concern that potential employers discriminate against them due to their accents, even if they are fluent in English. Many also indicated that while they have no problem communicating in writing, they feel less confident in face-to-face interviews and had little faith in online job applications. However, elementary and middle school focus groups revealed that most refugee children speak English confidently, indicating that in the future language barriers may be less of an issue.

In the US, networking is often the most effective way to find a job. However, interviews with refugees and US-born professionals that are part of a New AP mentorship program suggest refugees have so far met little success. This may be due to the foreignness of the professional networking concept to many new arrivals; some even noted that such a system would be considered “corruption” in their home countries. Mentors reported unexpectedly low levels of understanding regarding business etiquette and resume writing. Mentees expressed the desire that American mentors go with them to interviews to provide support or act as a cultural go-between to ensure they are understood by employers.

Finally, the relatively low quality of schools limits education advancement not just for refugee youth, but all young Clarkstonians. The two elementary schools and middle school in the Clarkston school district ranked in the bottom 15th percentile of all Georgia schools in 2015 (SchoolDigger, 2016), and 70% of survey respondents indicated they disliked the schools in Clarkston. Families with the means to do so often move to surrounding areas, such as Gwinnett County, to access better schools districts.

“I have no job and I have four children. I would like to buy a house, but I know I won’t have enough money.”

Clarkston Resident, Syrian

“These are mid-career folks. They’ve got families, and I hate to see them having to spend more money and more time to get more credentials when they’ve got a lot of credentials and great experience already.”

New American Pathways Refugee Career Mentor

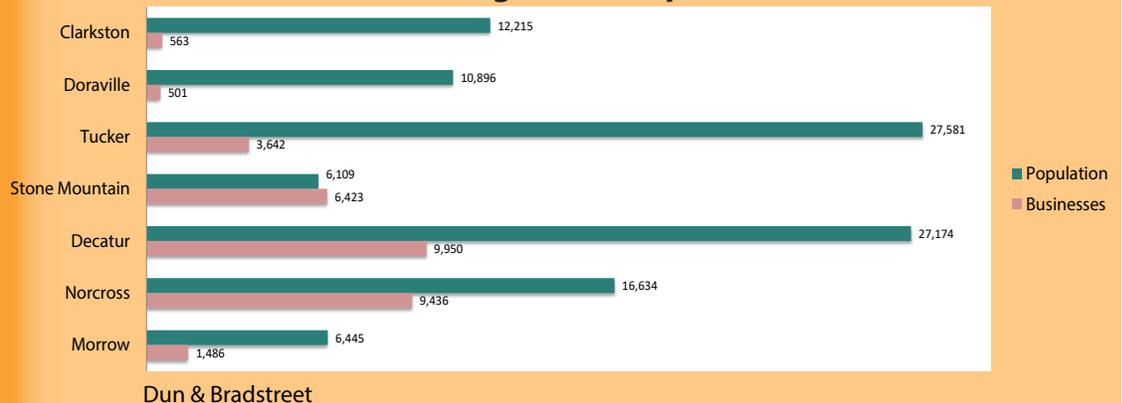
Businesses

The current business climate in Clarkston curbs the potential for economic mobility among unemployed and low-income residents. There are 563 businesses with Clarkston addresses – about one business for every twenty residents. This is much less than many other similarly-sized cities in the metro region. Business sales per capita are also far lower than most other comparison cities. An estimated 27% of these businesses are “ethnically owned,” meaning that the surnames of the owners identify them as likely members of a recent migrant group. This percentage is relatively small, given that new Americans comprise over half the total population. The low ratio of businesses to residents combined with the fact that 44% of all survey respondents indicated interest in starting a business suggest a course of action that will encourage local entrepreneurship, especially among more vulnerable populations.

“I only moved to Snellville for the schools. When my daughter finishes high school next year, I want to move back to Clarkston immediately. It’s much better - closer to everything. We never would have left if not for the schools.”

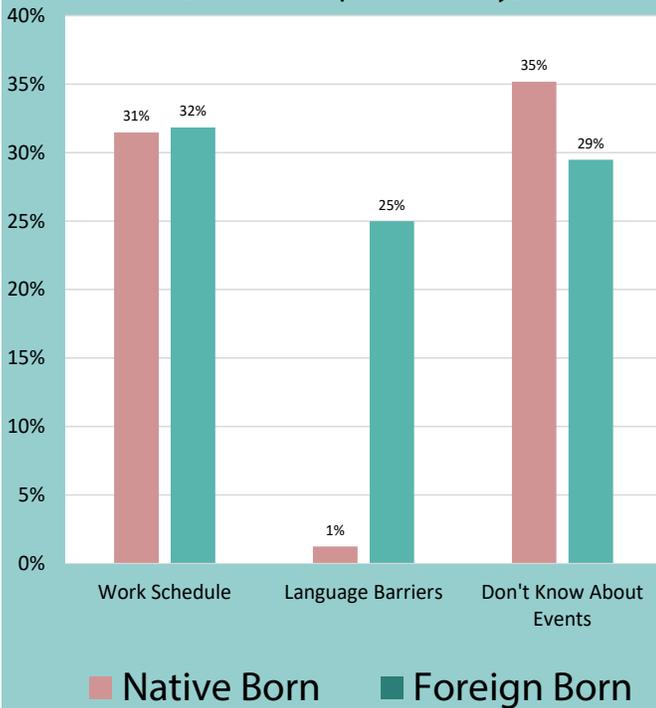
Former Clarkston resident, Eritrean

Clarkston and Surrounding Cities: Population and Businesses



Governance

Barriers to Attending City Events
(Clarkston Speaks Survey)



“Everyone spends time in their own groups in Clarkston, but these groups never come together. We need to do more to get people together.”

Clarkston resident

The Clarkston City Council is composed of both native-born and foreign-born individuals with a variety of backgrounds. Despite diverse council representation, City Council meetings are often poorly attended, especially by immigrant and refugee residents. Low levels of civic engagement can exacerbate conflict, as seen in the debate about an indoor smoking ordinance. Looking forward, good governance and active civic engagement can only occur when people feel both connected to the people and places around them and safe in their community.

Civic Engagement

Limited civic engagement can be the result of a number of factors. Native-born and foreign-born residents both indicated that work schedules and being unaware of events were barriers to attending public events and meetings.

Additionally, one quarter of foreign-born respondents noted that limited English proficiency hindered attendance. Yet, there is clear interest in improving connections between residents and city officials. For example, 44% of native-born residents and 34% of foreign-born residents expressed interest in getting to know city officials. Future Additionally, 250 survey respondents opted into receiving text messages and/or emails about city events and meetings. This messaging system will reach 250 households in the community, and can be continuously grown to reach new residents. However, for the city to capitalize on this resource, its communications practice must include managing the contact information of those who opted-in through a well-designed database, with systems in place to update future opt-ins as well as opt-outs. Finally, “Clarkston 101” sessions could be targeted towards specific organizations (business, ethnic, cultural) because roughly one third of residents indicated they are interested in a class about Clarkston government.

The Public Meeting

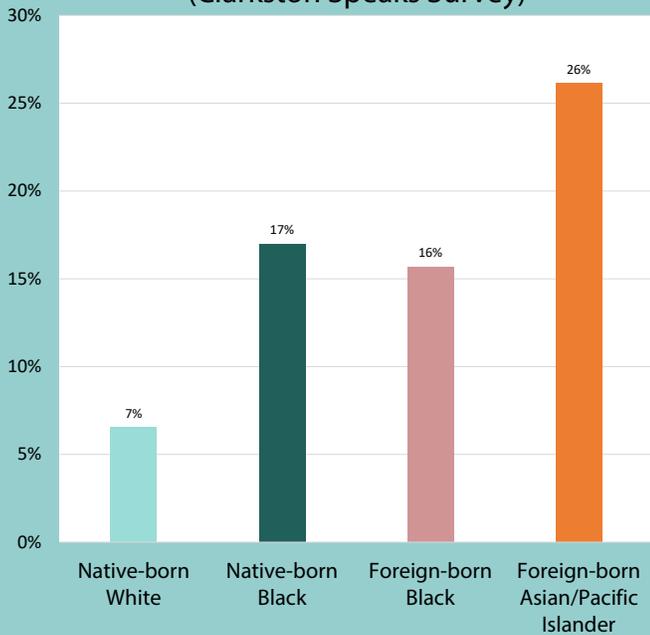
How do governments make public decisions when large groups of the population are not engaged in public comment? With the intention of providing a healthy environment for its residents, in the fall of 2016 the city proposed an indoor non-smoking ordinance and discussed the potential ordinance at regularly scheduled months of public meetings. Additionally, the Mayor and City Council members reached out to individual business owners about the impact of the ordinance, but this was challenging due to the fragmented social connections between city officials and business owners of various ethnic groups. The ordinance passed in August 2016. Tensions were high during the October City Council meeting as patrons and attorneys representing business owners of affected restaurants debated with the Mayor and City Council members about the intention of the ordinance. Civic trust had been lost, despite the government's best intentions to include the diverse opinions of its citizenry. As aforementioned, the ordinance was amended soon after to provide more flexibility for business owners. This debate, which ultimately ended in a reasonable compromise, should spur more open and ongoing communication between the city and community groups.

"As we mentioned at the last meeting, it is much more difficult to come back and change an ordinance after we had months back to back of meetings, and I'm very sorry that not everyone that wanted to participate in those discussions was not able to participate. They were available, we thought that we provided ample advertising and notification to all the people that would be affected by this and encouraged them to come out. And I appreciate all the people that have come here today."

Mayor Ted Terry, City Council Meeting, October 4, 2016

Governance

Residents Not Comfortable Calling the Police
(Clarkston Speaks Survey)



“They have holes on the street, and bad guys who shoot guns. We made a secret hiding place with sharp things to keep the bad guys out. That’s why I have these scratches on my hands. There are ten bad guys.”

Elementary School Student, Refugee

“Since [the kids] are in the afterschool program, they don’t have time to hang out with the bad kids.”

Refugee Parent

Safety

Disconnected businesses and social groups not only affect civic engagement but also the health, safety, and welfare of the community. In an interview with researchers, Mayor Ted Terry shared his sentiments about the fragmentation of the community stating that in the schools “you have ‘African American gangs’ and ‘Asian-American gangs’ and then ‘African-African gangs’ separating to protect themselves – a matter of survival. [Public safety] is probably the biggest impediment to creating a welcoming community.”

Improving civic engagement can only occur once people feel they are part of a safe and vibrant community. Many Clarkston residents expressed concerns about the safety of their community. Only 46% of residents surveyed agree with the statement that “[Clarkston] is a safe place to live.” Safety and crime was a primary theme that emerged from interviews with both parents and children within the community, who cited fear about gang violence.

Perception of an unsafe living environment may stem from lack of comfort interacting with police. Almost one out of five survey respondents indicated they are not comfortable calling the police for help, although this rate varied by demographic group. Native-born white respondents reported the least hesitancy with calling the police (7% are not comfortable), while 26% of foreign-born Asian respondents and 16% of all black respondents expressed discomfort with calling the police.

Mobility

Representing constituent needs can be difficult if certain demographic groups are planning on moving out of Clarkston in the near future. Survey results and conversations indicate that roughly half of residents want to stay in Clarkston, while the other half has plans to move out of the city.

Age was found to be a critical determinant for potential movers. Slightly more than half of younger respondents (age 18-44) are interested in moving away from Clarkston, while roughly one third of older respondents (45+) are considering leaving.

Where a resident is born had no bearing on the interest in moving. Native-born and foreign-born respondents expressed similar rates of interest in moving out of or staying in Clarkston.

Looking forward, the city government and community should focus on feasible improvements to make Clarkston a safer place to live, increase civic engagement, and promote the city's diversity as a valuable asset to attract and retain residents.



“We lived in Lake Claire for many years but moved to Clarkston because it wasn’t diverse enough for us there. There was just old hippies, young hippies; here there’s real diversity. I’ll never have enough money to travel the world so I moved here.”

Clarkston resident, US Born

Age of Potential Movers

Age	Interested in Moving Out	Planning to Stay in Clarkston
18-24	53%	47%
25-34	51%	49%
35-44	53%	47%
45-64	34%	66%
65+	28%	72%
Total	48%	53%

Voices of Clarkston

Although the survey was effective at collecting extensive information about a wide array of Clarkstonians, the standardized and pre-conceived questions left room for only one type of expression. Informal conversations that occurred during survey outreach provided deeper insight into the lives of Clarkston residents. The following selection includes a set of quotes from Clarkstonians encountered throughout the “Clarkston Speaks” process.



“I lost driver’s license. I lost everything... Nobody speak my language.”

This man lost his home and possessions during his time in prison. He is stigmatized on multiple levels due to his homelessness, unemployment, and mental health needs. In addition to being a refugee, he is also part of a minority ethnic group in his country of origin. Due to the latter issue, he lacks access even to the support structures of cultural associations formed by majority ethnic groups in the Clarkston community.

“I spent a lot of time doing this survey because I am concerned. The police, they seem to target us. They give us really expensive tickets. One time I got three tickets at once. The officer didn’t want to listen.”

Several foreign-born residents expressed frustration with the perception that police officers were using traffic citations as a way to generate revenue for the city. Whether this suspicion is accurate or not, there are negative perceptions and feelings of marginalization that need to be addressed.

“We need representation in Clarkston for those people [putting arms around his friend, an immigrant youth]...us people, foreigners.”

Even though Clarkston’s city council is perhaps more diverse and representative than the average small town local governing body, citizens’ perceptions can facilitate or hinder their desire to engage in public processes.

“I would have bought a house here if I could find one, but it wasn’t possible. It was easier in Stone Mountain.”

Several immigrant residents who wanted to stay in Clarkston were constrained in some cases by their difficulty in purchasing a home. One particular respondent wished for community partners to ask the City Council to offer micro-loans, so that they could purchase homes.

“Young people that are leaving, thank you for coming to the council session. You had an issue that you wanted to find out more about. Council sessions are designed to know what the issues are, how they came about, why they came about, so everyone can have a complete understanding of how they start and how they complete. So if you can take anything home this evening, I’d like you to take home that you can be part of the city, to be a part of the work session, and city council. I hope you will consider coming back here again. Whatever issues you have, your community may have, come to city hall. You have the opportunity to describe what’s on your mind.”

A Clarkston City Council member showed appreciation about the burgeoning civic engagement among young residents.

“I do not want to move out of Clarkston. Whenever I leave, I say, ‘Lord, when am I going to get back?’”

Many residents of and visitors to Clarkston expressed an overwhelming amount of enthusiasm and local pride during informal conversations throughout the “Clarkston Speaks” study.





Recommendations & Conclusions

Section Contents

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Recommendations

Conclusions

SWOT Analysis

The Clarkston 2040 planning process incorporated public engagement, with one introductory and two follow-up public meetings with 40, 60, and 40 attendees respectively. This type of traditional planning engagement is unlikely to capture the full range of potential input, especially in a community as diverse as Clarkston. This report attempts to identify gaps in public representation of the city’s refugee and immigrant communities throughout the 2040 planning process. This is especially important as “public engagement informed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to Clarkston” identified in the planning process (Clarkston 2040, 2015). The Clarkston 2040 plan presented its public engagement results in an “Issues and Opportunities” section, which the GT researchers re-categorized into a more traditional, strengths,

Clarkston 2040 Plan Reframing

Strengths	Weaknesses
Most diverse square mile	Low median household income
House prices lower than most of the metro region	Clarkston workers travel outside of Clarkston for work
Food diversity	High unemployment rate
Existing restaurants focused on current clientele -> Potential perception of exclusivity	Struggling public schools
Transportation convenience	Inconsistent sidewalk network
	Large, disconnected street network
	Safety concerns and distrust of the Police
	Limited civic engagement
	Restricted housing choice / housing overcrowding
	Poor housing standards
	Limited access to social services
	Underemployment of refugee professionals

weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) framework. Naturally some “issues” could be viewed as either a strength or a weakness, depending on the resident’s perspective and background. For example, the issue of “House prices lower than most of the metro region” may be viewed as a strength to someone looking to purchase an affordable home, but may be viewed as a weakness to someone trying to sell a home. Existing issues or opportunities identified in the 2040 plan that have been re-categorized by GT researchers are in **bold**.

Additionally, the results from “Clarkston Speaks” community engagement allowed for additions to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that were not captured in the Clarkston 2040 plan. New findings are included and highlighted in **green**.

<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Transient population -> potential for improvement	Gentrification without justice (displacement)
Affordability of existing housing stock -> Desire to become homeowners	Fear of future development disturbing wildlife in natural areas
Spaces available for pop-up businesses, shared office, incubators, and light industrial	Development happening elsewhere
Growth of TV & Film industry	Federal and State political climate
Disconnected bicycle system -> Projects to improve bike path safety with LCI plan	
No town center or public space -> Potential for Downtown Core redevelopment with LCI plan	
Lack of transportation to desired places -> Recent passage of City of Atlanta MARTA & TSPLOST	

TSW (2016) Clarkston 2040: City of Clarkston 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendations

Surveys, focus groups, interviews, and informal conversations all gave insight into both the strengths and weaknesses of Clarkston, as well as opportunities for city officials to make Clarkston a better home for everyone. The following section combines key findings from “Clarkston Speaks” with best practices from Welcoming America and the White House Task Force to promote inclusivity for all Clarkstonians. These recommendations build off current planning processes as well as propose complementary policies for the City of Clarkston.

Explicitly engage current residents and stakeholders in efforts to build a culture of welcoming.

Almost 350 residents were willing to spend 20 or more minutes filling out the survey on the streets of Clarkston, and in some cases, to openly discuss their perspective of Clarkston. This suggests a huge potential for increased civic engagement and involvement in integration initiatives.

- For instance, the City of Dayton, Ohio’s Welcome Belmont Pilot Program pairs immigrant students with US-born students as “cultural collaborators” to help youth assimilate and gain confidence in the American academic system. The City of Clarkston could implement a similar structure and expand it to offer an adult ambassador program, another model implemented by the City of Dayton. The adult ambassador program would provide a space not only for cross-cultural exchange and support, but also leadership and civic engagement opportunities for new Clarkstonians (White House Task Force, 2016).

Reach out to existing community organizations to strengthen civic engagement.

The Mayor and City Council members currently do a good job of informally attending city-wide events, as well as welcoming citizens to their official meetings and working sessions at City Hall. However, as tensions from the indoor smoking ordinance revealed, public meeting attendance on the part of citizens tends to be reactive rather than proactive. City officials must continuously chip away at barriers between them and constituents who may not understand, be aware of, or have faith in responsible city governance. Rather than waiting for the community to come to City Hall, bring governance to the community. Examples include:

- Speaking with leaders of existing cultural, faith-based, and nonprofit groups to find out the specific needs and opinions of various ethnicities.
- Holding City Council working sessions in different locations around the community at cultural centers, churches, mosques, and apartment complexes.
- Improving upon and providing ongoing “Clarkston 101” classes. The City of New Orleans’ Civic Leadership Academy provides residents with a semi-annual eight-week course that teaches participants about government processes through hands-on demonstrations, tours, and presentations (White House Task Force, 2016). Creative engagement techniques redefine city governance as an inclusive and effective tool shaped by the culture and values of its constituents.

Build upon the network of existing resources to connect residents to available services and fill in the gaps where needed.

There are currently a multitude of nonprofit organizations in the area that provide various health care, language, pedagogic, and workforce training services to Clarkston area residents. However, without a comprehensive listing of what exists, it is difficult to know what is missing.

- The City of Clarkston should continuously update the website's community resource guide and make sure it is easily accessible to organizations to help them to share resources, connect clients to other programs, and work together to create new programs that fill current voids in services. Administrators should send the guide to all currently listed organizations to ensure it is up-to-date and to see if those organizations know of others to add. Users of the guide may find it more helpful if organized by topic area or need and if the online version is interactive and searchable rather than static. Having it translated into key languages and distributing printed copies would increase the guide's utility.
- Creating a "Clarkston business association" would not only provide a space for collaboration and collective marketing, but would also facilitate communication between local business leaders and city officials. The association could also coordinate networking events and ongoing programs to assist residents seeking employment or career advancement. Foreign-born residents who are worried about language skills or accents impeding access to job opportunities would benefit from this sort of local support structure. The Old Fourth Ward Business Association¹ in Atlanta is well-organized, highly efficient, and a good model to follow.

Develop cross-regional collaborations and partnerships to learn and share best practices.

The City of Atlanta, with its own goals to enhance its status as a Welcoming City, may be a viable partner for Clarkston. Partnering more intentionally allows for the opportunity to share ideas and build upon existing initiatives.

- For instance, Atlanta successfully applied for a grant that helped incorporate financial literacy programs into adult ESL courses offered at Atlanta Public Schools. Participants in the Atlanta program learned about managing household expenses, saving, borrowing, and fraud. This could be an implementable program in other Welcoming Cities like Clarkston.
- Clarkston, Atlanta, and other Metro Atlanta municipalities could also collaborate to connect the region's naturalization service providers so that resources are shared more efficiently. The Baltimore Citizenship Coalition not only provides this intermediary service, but also has established a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) to provide green card and citizen applicants with financial resources (White House Task Force, 2016).

Create a "language assistance plan" to break down language barriers.

The City of Clarkston's website offers translation in 56 languages through Google Translate. While this is an expansive list, some of the most prevalent languages spoken in and around Clarkston aren't represented.

- A "language assistance plan" (LAP) is something organizations create based on federal

1 <http://www.o4wba.com/>

Recommendations

guidelines to ensure that those with limited English proficiency can be included in planning processes. While requirements are aimed at agencies running federally funded programs, developing a LAP ensures that the city also remains in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (US Department of Justice, 2002). The first step of this plan is to determine the most widely-spoken languages in Clarkston and then prioritize translation and interpretation for such languages.¹

- Of the six languages researchers identified as necessary for survey translation – Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Karen, Nepali, Tigrinya – Arabic is the only one offered on the website. Translations of some of Clarkston's highest-need languages could be provided through Google Translate at no cost. Community members and local organizations offer another accessible source for translation and interpretation services.

Incorporate affordable housing strategies into future plans for growth.

Both the survey and informal conversations supported the Clarkston 2040 conclusion that the aging multifamily housing stock remains affordable, but is largely in need of repair and upgrades. Several former residents of Clarkston explained they would have preferred to remain residents in the city, but could not find available and affordable homes for sale. As Clarkston considers annexing adjacent land, city officials should consider ways to preserve and expand affordable rental housing and ownership opportunities without hindering new development projects.

- Responding to concern about gentrification brought up in the Clarkston 2040 plan, inclusionary zoning policies that require developers to include affordable units in new market-rate real estate projects could ensure long-term affordability. To make sure these policies are economically feasible, the city could offer incentives such as tax abatements to offset the cost of the subsidized units.
- Establishing a community development corporation (CDC), per the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) idea, would provide diverse housing options through programs such as a land bank and community land trust (Jacobus, 2015). Increased tax revenue and land from future annexation would provide the city with resources to finance such initiatives.
- The CDC should be led by community members that represent various ethnicities, races, ages, and local organizations. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), a nonprofit in Boston, Massachusetts that established a nationally-renowned community land trust, provides a good model for equitable community-based planning.² The DSNI Board of Directors is comprised of 35 members, a portion of which are divided equally among the community's four main ethnic groups. Slots are also reserved for youth, small business owners, religious organization members, and nonprofit leaders.

Increase transparency of and accessibility to the city's police force to increase feelings of safety and comfort.

Comprehensive trust in and respect for the city's police force are crucial components of an effective Welcoming City. Each individual interaction between resident and police officer has the potential to either strengthen or break down the system intended to keep residents safe.

¹ A self-assessment and planning tool is available at <https://www.lep.gov/selfassesstool.htm>

² <http://www.dsni.org/>

While officers do engage with community members, there is much potential to reinforce these relationships.

- A police department policy of providing warnings to first-time traffic offenders rather than expensive tickets may help to alleviate suspicion by foreign-born residents that they are being targeted by police in order to generate revenue for the city.
- It is important for residents to recognize the police officers working in Clarkston. Bios with accompanying translations and photos of each officer would be a helpful addition to the Clarkston Police Organizational Chart on the city's website.

Declare Clarkston a sanctuary city.

Following the example of many other cities and counties around the US, this means that local police officers do not explicitly ask residents about immigration status, thereby limiting cooperation with federal immigration officials.

- This declaration is especially pertinent given the federal administration's recent executive order temporarily suspending all refugee admissions and banning entrance from seven specific countries, which sent the message to the world that foreign-born immigrants – documented or not – are unwanted and unwelcome. The threat under the Trump administration to revoke federal funding from Sanctuary Cities understandably deters localities, especially small cities with limited resources like Clarkston, from declaring themselves as such. However, given that the constitutionality of the threat is under legal scrutiny, the Executive Office may very well lack the authority to carry out such actions.
- Cities should adopt specific policies to ensure the "sanctuary" proclamation goes beyond being a symbolic gesture and has real, legal implications. In addition to limiting communication between local police and federal immigration enforcement, sanctuary city legislation should prohibit city employees and local law enforcement from inquiring into the immigration status of any resident, except in very specific circumstances. Seattle's 2003 ordinance offers guidance to such legislation (City of Seattle, 2003).
- Sanctuary declaration may also have positive social and economic impacts. A recent study revealed that crime is lower and economies are stronger in Sanctuary Counties; the difference was particularly apparent in smaller counties (Wong, 2017).
- Upon declaring Cincinnati, Ohio as a Sanctuary City in January 2017, Mayor John Cranley affirmed, "This city stands with immigrants... We have put the whole world on notice that we intend to live up to the Statue of Liberty ideals."¹ While numerous cities and counties around the US have made similar proclamations, Mayor Reed of Atlanta stated that he wasn't prepared to make a judgment about Atlanta being a Sanctuary City. Declaring Clarkston as such sets a precedent for Atlanta, and for other cities around Georgia, the southeast, and even the country to follow.
- *For more information on policy considerations for cities claiming to be "sanctuary," please read the "Expanding Sanctuary" 2017 report : <http://mijente.net/2017/01/27/sanctuary-report/>*

1 <http://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/2017/01/30/cranley-announce-cincinnati-sanctuary-city/97240174/>

Conclusions

“Clarkston Speaks” was a singular undertaking for the Georgia Tech School of City and Regional Planning. Over the course of four months, thirteen researchers conducted extensive fieldwork and community outreach to understand the needs and experiences of a population that is traditionally among the least counted and most poorly understood. The team connected with individuals representing 42 different countries of origin and speaking more than seven native languages. The team exceeded its goal of surveying 500 residents by 27%, collecting a total of 636 surveys. Researchers heard directly from refugees, immigrants, and native-born Americans alike about their concerns, challenges, and ambitions. Not least among these privileged interactions were individual interviews with almost 60 refugee children. The support of a dozen different partner organizations, and their role as gatekeepers to the community, was invaluable; without them this work would not have been possible.



Many refugees arrive to the US with close to nothing but the clothes on their backs. It is difficult to imagine the complexity of starting over, in a new place with a strange culture, in a new language, and with only the bare bones of a social safety net. The problems of poverty, so familiar to many Americans, combine with limited English proficiency and lack of cultural context to touch

every part of their lives. Beyond the tropes of learning how to use a stove and pay the rent are thornier questions: How does a person improve their economic prospects when his or her previous education and experience means little to nothing to employers in the United States? How can parents help their children succeed in school, much less navigate a public school bureaucracy, when they themselves have little formal education?

The political climate of 2016 and beginning of 2017 has been characterized by rising vitriol against refugees and immigrants within many American communities, and deep divisions exist over whether this nation has an obligation to accept those fleeing other parts of the world. Cities are at the forefront of this issue, with many taking principled stands in favor of this obligation. In the face of many state governments and the new federal administration that have positioned themselves against refugee resettlement,

multiple cities have explicitly declared they are places that welcome refugees, despite the threat of losing federal funding.

The challenges these populations face can turn people inward, especially in a small town like Clarkston. Though it is trumpeted as the most diverse square mile in the world, refugee residents of Clarkston remain socially isolated within their own language and ethnic groups. For every immigrant rising to a position on city council, there are many more poultry factory workers whose voices may never be heard. People isolate themselves because it is easier, because it is more comfortable, and because they can – true for both native-born Clarkstonians and for their new neighbors. The city can call itself “welcoming” through an accident of demographics and the efforts of committed individuals, but provide little for the highly specific needs of its refugee population. Including refugees in planning processes matters, because isolation breeds stagnation. A city and its people cannot reach their potential when over half of residents feel that they have no stake in the place where they live.

Elected officials’ and city planners’ efforts shape governmental priorities over decades, but when certain groups are continually left out of the process, purposefully or not, the plans they create cannot be seen as legitimate. Clarkston’s remarkable diversity highlights weaknesses in the methods local governments use to engage with their communities, but this is just as true in cities like Miami, Los Angeles, New York, and Houston. The conventional methods of participatory planning like public meetings and project websites are not enough when the affected populations do not speak English or may not even know what planning is. Refugee and immigrant populations are spatially and culturally fragmented, such that it is impossible to rely on a stock set of engagement tools. Public administrators and planners need to make extra efforts to break down linguistic and cultural barriers to really get to know the places where they are working. They can do this through the practice of plural planning, connecting with local leaders of organizations to obtain input from disparate groups in ways that move beyond standard operating procedure. Without truly understanding who is in the community, city officials cannot really serve the community.

Being a “Welcoming City” means more than accepting new arrivals. It means creating a strategy and meeting people where they are, so that their needs can be met and their talents tapped. It means focusing on equity more than equality. It means that everyone, and especially vulnerable populations, has the right to influence decisions about how their government functions and what happens in their home. How cities like Clarkston engage with their refugee residents is a statement about the kind of places they want to be. At their best, America’s cities are inclusive, diverse, and welcoming.

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Who Took the Survey

Total of 636 surveys:

- Foreign-born: 74%
- Native-born: 26%

Sex:

- Female: 46%
- Male: 54%

Age:

- 18-24: 24%
- 25-34: 26%
- 35-44: 24%
- 45-64: 21%
- 65+: 4%

Question Categories

- Basic Information
- Demographics
- Transportation
- Housing
- Education
- Employment
- Services
- Civic Engagement

Survey Languages

- English
- Amharic
- Arabic
- Burmese
- Karen
- Nepali
- Tigrinya

Eligibility

- 18 years old+
- Clarkston Resident
- 1 per household

Survey Methods

Survey Administration

A pilot of the English language survey was administered on September 23rd, 2016 to gauge how long the survey would take respondents to complete and to help the GT researchers trim and edit questions. Surveying was done at various locations throughout Clarkston, during different times of day and days of the week between October 8th and November 13th, 2016. Surveyors made an effort to approach all potential respondents entering, exiting, or passing by the survey locations. Anyone who approached one of the surveyors was given an opportunity to take the survey if they were Clarkston residents and at least 18 years old. Only one survey per household was allowed to prevent oversampling on household- and family-related questions.

Community partners, including the Somali American Community Center, the Eritrean-American Community Association of Georgia, the Bhutanese Community Association of Georgia, Javeria Jamil (Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta), and Alice Mawi helped administer surveys. They collected 289 surveys.

GT researchers also collected 347 surveys using a street- and public-space intercept method. This method was used instead of random sampling (such as mail surveys or random-digit telephone dialing) to reach vulnerable and often under-sampled population groups. To determine locations for administering surveys, the GA Tech team examined demographic and housing data at the census-tract level from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey and consulted with community groups and partners.

The locations for surveys administered by the GT team fell into four main categories: public space, shopping centers, small businesses, and miscellaneous.

Each surveyor carried English and translated versions of consent forms. These forms outlined the purpose of the survey, explained that taking the survey was voluntary and that responses would be confidential, and provided contact information for Dr. Anna Joo Kim. The English survey and consent forms, along with all translations, received approval from the Georgia Institute

of Technology's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to survey administration. All surveyors were required to complete Georgia Tech IRB CITI training prior to surveying.

Sources of error:

1. Like all surveys, these results contain some degree of sampling error since they measure only a subset of the Clarkston population. Because of the large number of surveys conducted by community partners, immigrants and refugees of certain origins were overrepresented. Therefore, for some analyses, only the street survey responses were used (n=347). For all other analyses, the entire dataset was used (n=636).
2. Almost three quarters (72%) of the surveys were administered in English. Although there were six translations (Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Karen, Nepali, Tigrinya), more translations were needed. As a result, Clarkston residents who only spoke languages such as Chinese, Farsi, Kunama, Urdu, and Vietnamese could not take the survey. Additionally, surveys completed in English by respondents who would have preferred a translation may contain errors due to miscomprehension of questions or answers.
3. Since the survey was administered by 13 different GA Tech team members, as well as community partners, variation in the individual demeanor, appearance, and familiarity of survey administrators could have biased the results.
4. Questions in the survey relating to housing conditions, help with legal services, and help with psychological wellbeing did not include a Not Applicable (N/A) option. As a result, those who purposefully left the questions blank were not distinguishable from those who do not need help, unless they wrote "N/A," "No," "Not Applicable," etc., next to the question.
5. To get a comprehensive look at the lives of Clarkston residents, the survey consisted of 56 questions. Likely due to the length of the survey, a small number of survey respondents left questions blank, particularly towards the end in the Civic Engagement section.

Data Management:

GT researchers manually entered responses from each of the 636 surveys into Excel. The dataset was cleaned by team members and reviewed for coding errors. The Excel spreadsheets were then converted into a database for statistical software analysis.

Write-in responses in languages other than English and Nepali were sent back to community partners for translation. One member of the survey team is fluent in Nepali, wrote the Nepali survey translation, and could translate write-in answers.

Write-in employment responses were coded using the US Census Bureau's 2012 industrial codes found in its ACS Public Use Microdata Sample 2010-2014.

Survey respondents had the option of writing their emails and/or cell phone numbers to receive messages about city events and meetings. To ensure anonymity, all identifying information was inputted and stored separately from survey data.