



**COMMUNITY
REINVESTMENT**

COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT



SOUTH COLUMBUS

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

June 2026

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Introduction

The City of Columbus is an entitlement community, receiving annual allocations of grant funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under both the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnerships Act (HOME) Program. These funds and other available resources are generally put to use in areas of low and moderate income within the city, however, this redevelopment plan for South Columbus will allow the City to target funding even more specifically to this community. South Columbus is comprised primarily of residential neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial shopping centers. Neighborhoods in the study area include South Columbus, Meeler's Hill, Wynnton Hill, Briarwood, Lindsey Creek Park/Boxwood, East Carver Heights, Carver Heights, Willett, and Avondale Heights.

The plan has been developed by Mosaic Community Planning with three sets of requirements in mind. One is HUD's standards for designating a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA); the other is the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Urban Redevelopment Plan standards. Urban Redevelopment Plans can also meet certain guidelines under the state's Low Income Housing Tax Credit program to be considered a Community Revitalization Plan (CRP). The South Columbus Redevelopment Plan is designed to simultaneously meet both standards which affords the City significant advantages and flexibility as described in the following sections.

Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) Standards

In 1996, HUD established criteria for approving locally determined strategies for revitalizing an area that is among the community's most distressed. While designating such an area is a substantial undertaking, HUD regulations provide certain benefits and flexibility in the use of CDBG funds within these areas. Importantly, HUD recognizes the necessity for partnering in problem solving to achieve greater success in urban revitalization efforts. When a neighborhood begins to fall into a state of blight and disinvestment, those effects often spill over into adjacent communities, causing those areas to begin declining as well. The tendency of blight to spread from one community to others highlights the importance of an approach that can stem the tide and cause revitalization to occur. For the revitalization of severely deteriorated neighborhoods to succeed, all the community's stakeholders must be involved. Successful neighborhood revitalization strategies are those that bring together the stakeholders within a specific neighborhood as well as partners for the community at large to forge partnerships that:

- Obtain commitments to neighborhood building;
- Make neighborhoods attractive for investment, which creates a market for profits;
- Generate neighborhood participation to ensure that the benefits of economic activity are reinvested in the neighborhood for long term community development;

- Support the use of neighborhood intermediary institutions and religious institutions to bridge the gaps between local government agencies, the business community, community groups, and residents; and
- Foster growth of resident-based initiatives to identify and address their housing, economic, and human service needs.

HUD encourages the participation of all the stakeholders, particularly the residents, in the development of a NRSA. This enhances the chances of its successful implementation by bringing all the affected parties into the process from the beginning, thus gaining participants' trust and garnering needed financial support.

The benefits of a NRSA are described in the amendments to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) regulations 24 CFR Part 91.

- **Job Creation/Retention as Low/Moderate Income Area Benefit:** Job creation / retention activities pursuant to the strategy may be qualified as meeting area benefit requirements, thus eliminating the need for a business to track the incomes of persons that take, or are considered for such jobs (24 CFR 570.208(a)(1)(vii) and (d)(5)(i));
- **Aggregation of Housing Units:** Housing units assisted as part of the strategy may be considered part of a single structure for purposes of applying the low/moderate-income national objective criteria, thus providing greater flexibility to carry out housing programs that revitalize a neighborhood (24 CFR 570.208(a)(3) and (d)(5)(ii));
- **Aggregate Public Benefit Standard Exemption:** Economic Development activities carried out under the strategy may, at the grantee's option, be exempt from the aggregate public benefit standards, thus increasing a grantee's flexibility for program design as well as reducing its record-keeping requirements (24 CFR 570.209(b)(2)(v)(L) and (M)); and
- **Public Service Cap Exemption:** Public Services carried out pursuant to the strategy by a Community-Based Development Organization will be exempt from the public service cap (24 CFR 570.204(b)(2)(ii)).

The City of Columbus proposes the South Columbus area be designated as a NRSA for a ten-year term from Program Year 2026 through Program Year 2035.

Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) and CRP Standards

Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act (O.C.G.A. 36-61-1 et. seq.) was adopted in 1955 by the Georgia General Assembly in order to access federal housing and urban renewal funds. Although urban renewal programs generally did not survive beyond the 1970s before falling out of favor as community development strategies, the Urban Redevelopment Act remains in place and continues to provide the mechanism by which many Georgia communities choose to implement place-based community revitalization projects.

The Urban Redevelopment Act gives cities broad powers to redevelop underdeveloped or threatened areas of the community. To use the redevelopment powers allowable under the Act, a local government must:

- Draft an Urban Redevelopment Plan;
- Hold a public hearing;
- Pass a resolution adopting the Urban Redevelopment Plan; and
- Appoint an organization to implement the plan.

As a prerequisite to adopting an Urban Redevelopment Plan, the city commission must adopt a resolution finding that the target area constitutes a “slum area” as required by the Act and that redevelopment of the area is “necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare” of the residents of the jurisdiction. In addition to designating by resolution an “urban redevelopment area” appropriate for redevelopment projects, the Act requires adoption by the local government of an urban redevelopment plan for the target area. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs considers URPs more than five years old to be outdated unless renewed or readopted by local government.

A current urban redevelopment plan adopted pursuant to the Act is a threshold criterion for accessing some important state economic development incentives such as higher state job tax credits and priority consideration of project sites for development of affordable housing under the State’s Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. Communities are encouraged to focus multiple resources and tools in target areas that are economically disadvantaged or held back by impediments that discourage private sector investment. This South Columbus Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the City’s 2038 Comprehensive Plan and is intended to serve as a Community Revitalization Plan (CRP) for purposes of LIHTC applications, meeting HUD and Georgia DCA standards for a targeted, housing-focused, infrastructure- assessed, and implementation-ready plan.



South Columbus Neighborhood Background

Target Area Overview

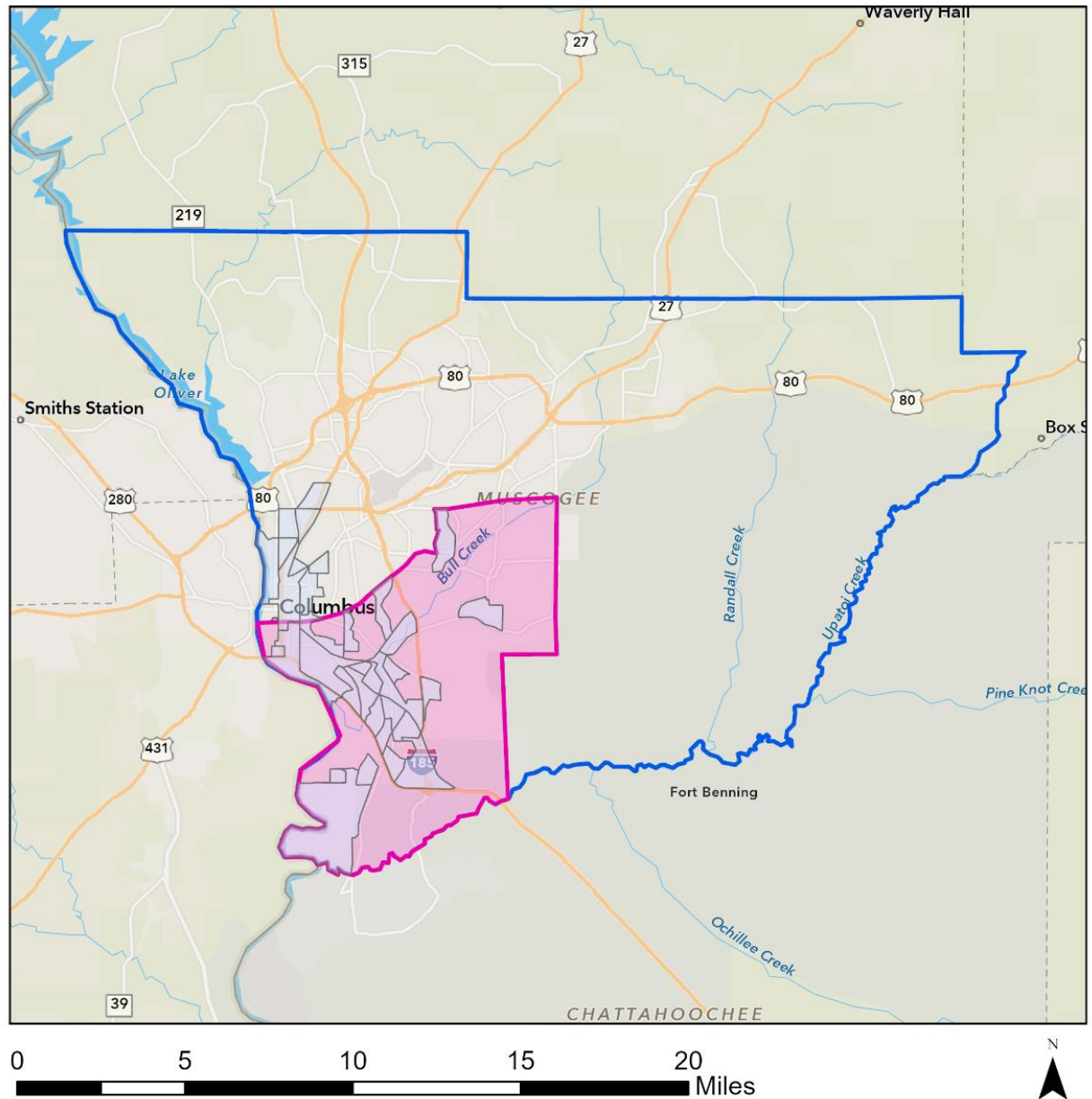
The South Columbus NRSA lies in the southwest corner of the City of Columbus, occupying all or part of 17 different census tracts [tracts 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29.01, 29.02, 30, 32, 33.01, 33.02, 24, 105.01, 106.07, 107.04, 111, 115)]. For data access and analysis in this redevelopment plan, 27 block groups contained within the tracts were taken together to make up the NRSA study area. The study area is an approximation of the actual NRSA. The NRSA boundary is outlined in the two reference maps that follow.

Most of the study area is bound by Wynnton Rd in the north and Schatuga Rd in the east, and the southwest edge of the city's boundary. The South Columbus NRSA meets HUD's NRSA criteria as a primarily residential area with a high concentration of low- and moderate-income residents, exceeding the City's upper-quartile LMI threshold. Neighborhoods in the study area include South Columbus, Meeler's Hill, Wynnton Hill, Briarwood, Lindsey Creek Park/Boxwood, East Carver Heights, Carver Heights, Willett, and Avondale Heights.

The data tables within this section provide demographic and housing data from the 2024 5-Year American Community Survey for the population residing within the boundaries of the Columbus NRSA study area and the total population of the City of Columbus.

South Columbus NRSA Location

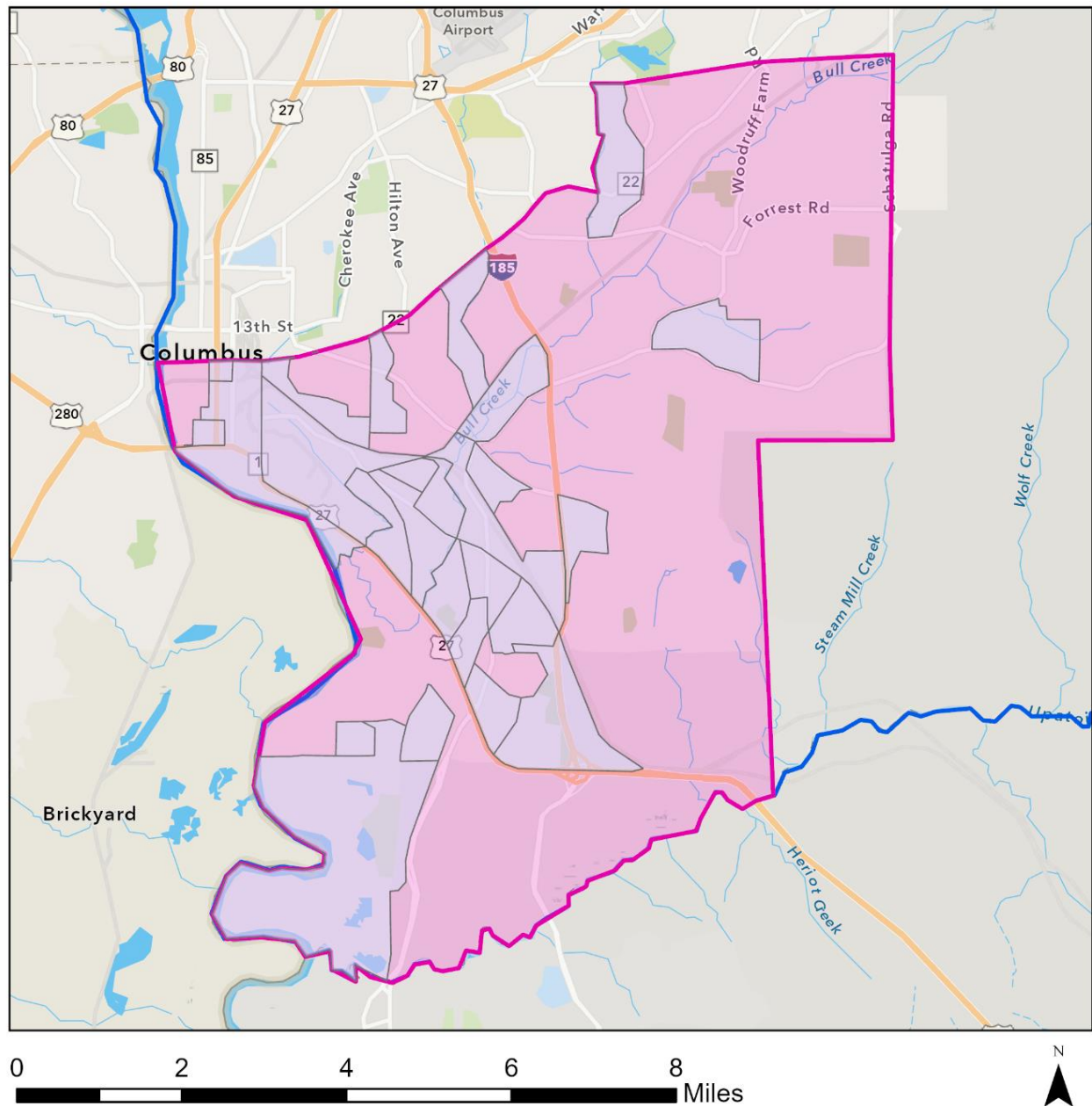
FIGURE 1: SOUTH COLUMBUS NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATION



-  South Columbus NRSA
-  Block Groups with 68.3% to 99.1% Low to Moderate Income Population (HUD)
-  Columbus

South Columbus NRSA Detail

FIGURE 2: SOUTH COLUMBUS NRSA DETAIL



-  South Columbus NRSA
-  Block Groups with 68.3% to 99.1% Low to Moderate Income Population (HUD)
-  Columbus

Population

Currently, there are an estimated 20,843 residents living within the NRSA boundary. The population that resides in the study area represents 10.2% of the total population in Columbus. The study area experienced a decrease in population (-7.9%) between 2015 and 2024, meanwhile the city saw an increase in population (1.7%).

Population	Study Area	City of Columbus
2024 ACS	20,843	203,711
2015 ACS	22,631	200,285

Data: ACS block-group level data.

Race and Ethnicity

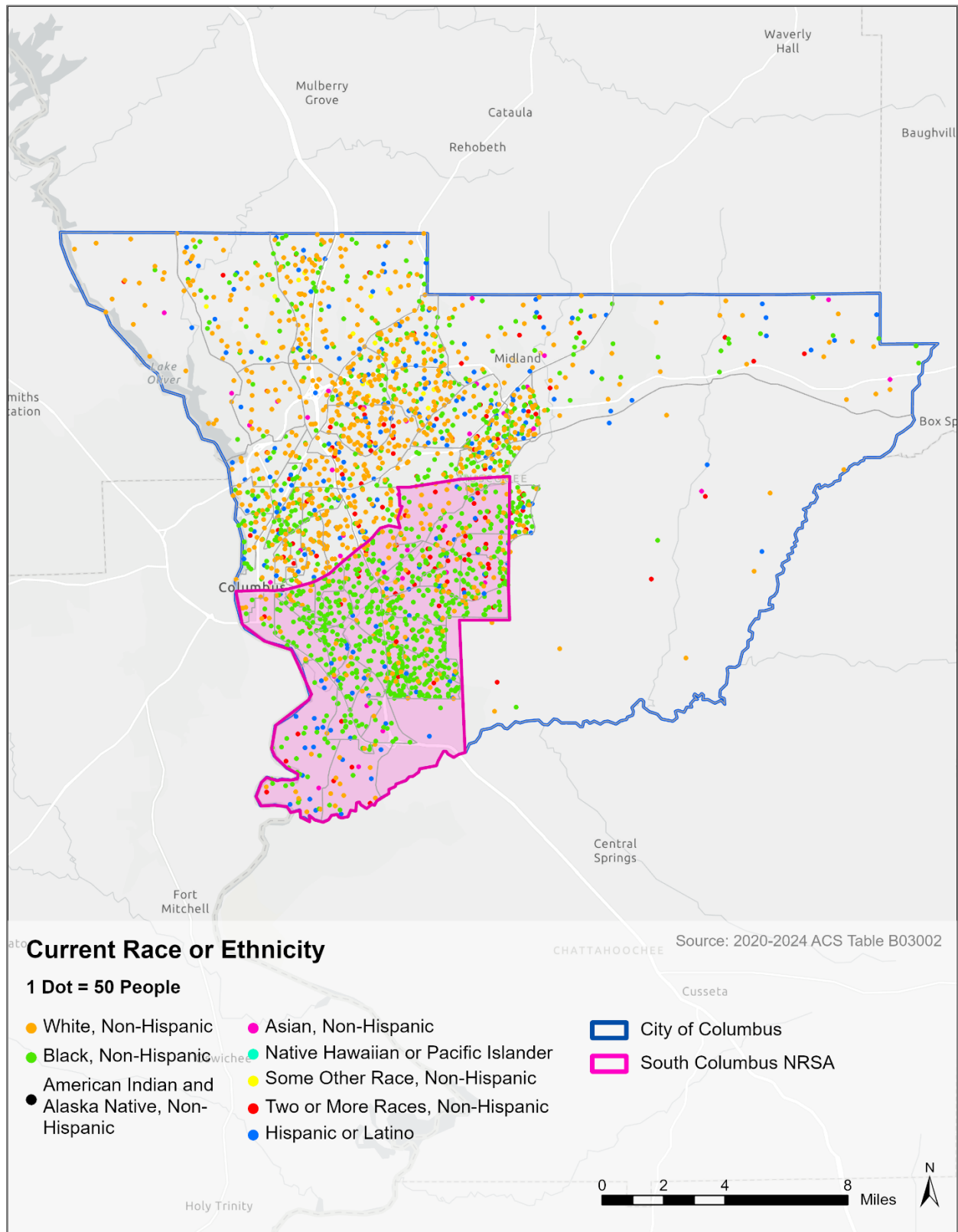
African American residents account for the largest share of the population within both the city of Columbus and the study area, (47.0% and 74.3%, respectively). However, the proportion of residents in the study area who are African American is more than three times higher compared to their share of the city’s total population. White residents comprise the next largest racial or ethnic group in the study area but only make up a small percentage of the study area’s population, (12.1%). Additionally, the share of white residents in Columbus largely exceeds their share size in the study area. Latino residents make up the third largest racial or ethnic group in the study area, followed by residents of two or more races, closely matching their share of the city’s population as a whole.

Race/Ethnicity	Study Area	City of Columbus
% African American	74.3%	47.0%
% White	12.1%	38.1%
% Two or more races	6.3%	8.1%
% Latino (of any race)	8.2%	8.5%
% Some other race	5.4%	3.8%
% Asian	1.3%	2.7%

Race/Ethnicity	Study Area	City of Columbus
% American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	0.2%
% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%

Data: ACS block-group level data.

FIGURE 3: RACE AND ETHNICITY



Low/Moderate Income Population

According to HUD’s low/moderate income data based on the 2024 ACS, nearly half (45.9%) of residents in the study area’s census tracts have low or moderate incomes. Residents with low or moderate incomes comprise a larger share in the study area compared to the overall population where roughly a third of all residents in the city have low or moderate incomes (36.8%).

Low/Moderate Income Population	Study Area	City of Columbus
Total residents 16 years and over with earnings	20,738	99,253
Low- or moderate-income residents	9,516	36,526
% Low- or moderate-income residents	45.9%	36.8%

Data: ACS tract level data.

Household Composition

Family households represent just over half of all households in the study area, (53.2%). The share of family households in the study area is smaller compared to household data in Columbus. The average household size is 3.2 for both the city of Columbus and the study area.

Households	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Family	53.2%	58.9%
% Non-family	46.8%	41.1%
Average household size	3.2	3.2

Data: ACS block-group level data.

Community Engagement Strategy and Process

The South Columbus Neighborhood Redevelopment Strategy Area Plan was developed in collaboration with a variety of community stakeholders, including residents, community



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What are the needs in your community?

YOUR thoughts and opinions matter!

Join the City of Columbus and our planning team to share your thoughts on how the City should prioritize more than \$13 million in expected federal funding to address housing, community development, and homeless needs over the coming 5 years!

Take the survey or join a meeting online:
ColumbusGAConPlan.com



ATTEND A COMMUNITY MEETING:

Tuesday, 1/13, 5:30pm
Frank Chester
Recreation Center

Wednesday, 1/14, 5:30pm
Columbus Public Library,
Synovus Room A

Thursday, 1/15, 5:30pm
Asbury United Methodist
Church

Refreshments provided and
children welcome!

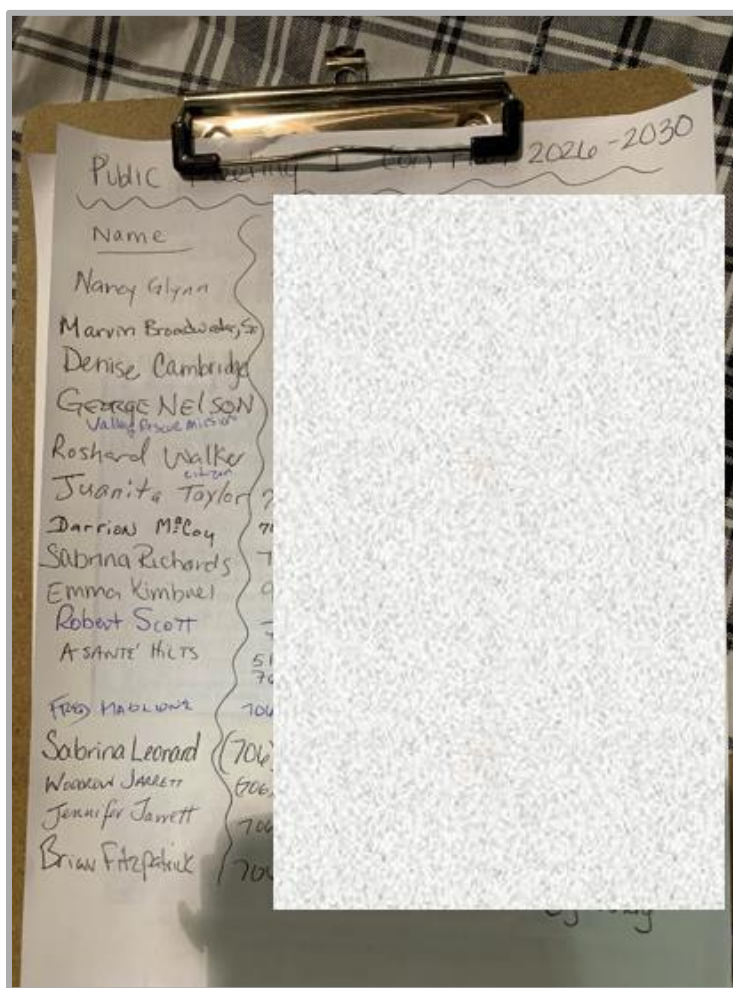


For questions or accessibility needs, contact Jeremy Gray at
Jeremy@MosaicCommunityPlanning.com.

organizations, business and property owners, nonprofit organizations, and local government agencies. These engagement activities formed the basis for the NRSA strategy

Public Meeting

About twenty (20) residents and community partners attended a public meeting to discuss neighborhood assets and opportunities. The public meeting was held on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the Frank Chester Recreation Center. To engage residents and stakeholders in the planning process, flyers were distributed to local leaders, community groups, and churches.



During the meeting, attendees identified strengths and assets in South Columbus, including those related to housing, economic development, and public facilities and infrastructure. Attendees shared concerns regarding the high rates of vacant or abandoned properties in South Columbus and a lack of accessible public transportation. In addition to physical assets, residents and stakeholders identified institutions and associations already doing work in the neighborhood in

these areas, and who might play important roles in the plan’s implementation. Other comments and concerns shared in the meeting regarding the NRSA study area included the following:

- Lack of affordable rental housing
- Rapid increase in house prices
- Poorly maintained rental units
- Transportation barriers
- Mental health support and resources needed
- Homelessness needs
- High need for programs and activities for youth and school-aged children
- Renovations and improvements needed for parks, playgrounds, recreation centers.
- Lack of walkability and safe pedestrian infrastructure due to lack of sidewalks and crosswalks
- More support needed for small businesses/economic development

Stakeholders further collaborated to identify needs and opportunities in South Columbus neighborhood and brainstorm potential solutions to identified community needs. Results of the community engagement process are discussed in the section on Community Assets, Needs, and Opportunities.

A second NRSA public meeting was held at the Frank Chester Recreation Center on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 5:30pm. During this meeting, the public shared concerns about code enforcement issues such as blight and demolition, as well as much-needed services such as youth programs and homeless services.

The public also expressed concern regarding two unique issues – the proposed NRSA boundary and city engagement with residents in the area. Many attendees shared that they felt the new NRSA boundary encompassed areas of the city that needed less investment, particularly the commercial areas at the north boundary of the NRSA. Community members also shared that they desired more engagement from the city and suggested a task force designated specifically to hear the concerns of south Columbus residents.

Date: 6/11/26 FRANK CHESTER RECREATION SIGN-IN SHEET Total: 6/11/2026

#	First, Last Name	Temp.	#	First, Last Name	Temp.
1	Marguella Scott		26	Bernice Smith	
2	Theda Ewart		27	Nancy G. Thompson	
3	Jeremy Gray		28	Denise Cambridge	
4	Ella Gray		29	Robert Turner	
5	Kim Mitchell		30		
6	Pat Ruff		31		
7	Brandi Tolbert		32		
8	Hyun Tolbert		33		
9	Shirley Worthy		34		
10	Bob DePass		35		
11	Glenn H. Housling		36		
12	Larry Bond		37		
13	Tamara D. Back		38		
14	Denise D. Back		39		
15	Nendyl Williams		40		
16	Lakisha Ashe		41		
17	Chara Richardson		42		
18	Demetrius M. S. Cole		43		
19	Michael Baker		44		
20	Patrick H. Scott		45		
21	Pat Dixon		46		
22	Jim McNeely		47		
23	Barry Cadham		48		
24	Lynnette Smith		49		
25	Bernice Smith		50		

Please Continue to the Next Page ➔

I represent and warrant that to the best of my knowledge and belief, that I am physical and mentally able to participate in the activities of the recreation center. I represent that there is no medical evidence, which would preclude me from participating in any recreational event. The Parks and Recreation Department has my permission to use my likeness, name, voice, or words in either television, radio, film, newspaper, magazine, and other media and in any form, for purpose of advertising or communicating the purposes and activities of Parks and Recreation and/or applying for funds to support those purposes and activities. If during my time at the recreation center or in the surrounding park area, I should need emergency medical, and I am not able to give consent or make my own arrangements for that treatment because of my injuries, I authorize the Parks and Recreation Department to take whatever measures are necessary to protect my health and well-being, including if necessary, hospitalization. Waiver and release claims and rights to sue the commissioners, organizers, directors, agents, and employees of Columbus Parks and Recreation and its host facilities are hereby released, acquitted, and discharged from any claim for damage or suit by reason of my injury, illness, or damage to person or property during the named participant not to file a claim or bring a suit with respect to any such injury or damage. I, the person named above, have read and fully understand the provisions of the release I am signing. I understand that by signing in on this paper, I am saying that I agree with the provisions of this release.

NRSA Meeting notes 6.11.26

- Members of the audience ask what defines the boundaries of various neighborhoods.
- Staff are asked to explain or define opportunity zones in Columbus and name the ones that exist in south Columbus.
- The audience is also concerned about the location of the new wastewater treatment plant. These details are available through the Columbus Water Works.
- There is concern about code enforcement issues in the area.
- Blighted structures may be attracting squatters. One person suggests connecting homeless individuals with rehabbed units for them to occupy.
- There are limited youth programs.
- One person suggests rezoning lots from single family to other uses.
- Several people ask if the South Columbus NRSA boundary can be changed, expressing concern that funding flexibilities will go towards areas with existing investment, and away from areas that need it most.
- One person asks if the staff will identify neighborhoods in south Columbus and meet with representatives from that neighborhood/get a tour.
- The CDAC board chair shares that the CDAC board can be engaged to communicate with local neighborhood groups.
- Audience members asked about demolishing units that are severely blighted. Staff shared that this information needs to be shared with the Inspections and Codes department.
- One person asked about having a task force for the area focused on south Columbus issues.
- The audience feels a lot of mistrust and is worried that their concerns will be written down but not addressed. Staff encouraged the audience to submit their comments so that they can be documented and addressed if possible.

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the public meeting, the planning team conducted in-depth individual interviews with key stakeholders working in housing, economic development, and planning. Organizations and agencies that participated in the stakeholder interviews included the City of Columbus Planning Department, Columbus Fire and EMS, Columbus-Muscogee County Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Housing Authority of Columbus Georgia, the Muscogee County School District, and local and regional nonprofit organizations. Local religious leaders, community spokespersons, and business owners were also interviewed.

Media Coverage

There was considerable media coverage of the City's 2026-2030 Consolidated Plan which included the NRSA Community Consultation process. It was the headline news story on WTVM, Columbus' major television channel. (<https://www.wtvm.com/video/2026/01/14/columbus-holds-public-meeting-five-year-consolidated-plan/>) As a result of the media coverage additional local residents emailed and phoned to provide input.





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Community Assets, Needs, and Opportunities

Overview

An assessment of community assets, needs, and opportunities provides a background for the development of revitalization goals, tools, and strategies for the South Columbus NRSA. The needs assessment combines community knowledge regarding economic development, housing, and public facilities and infrastructure needs and opportunities in the neighborhood with local-level data on key indicators of housing, economic development, and public infrastructure needs.

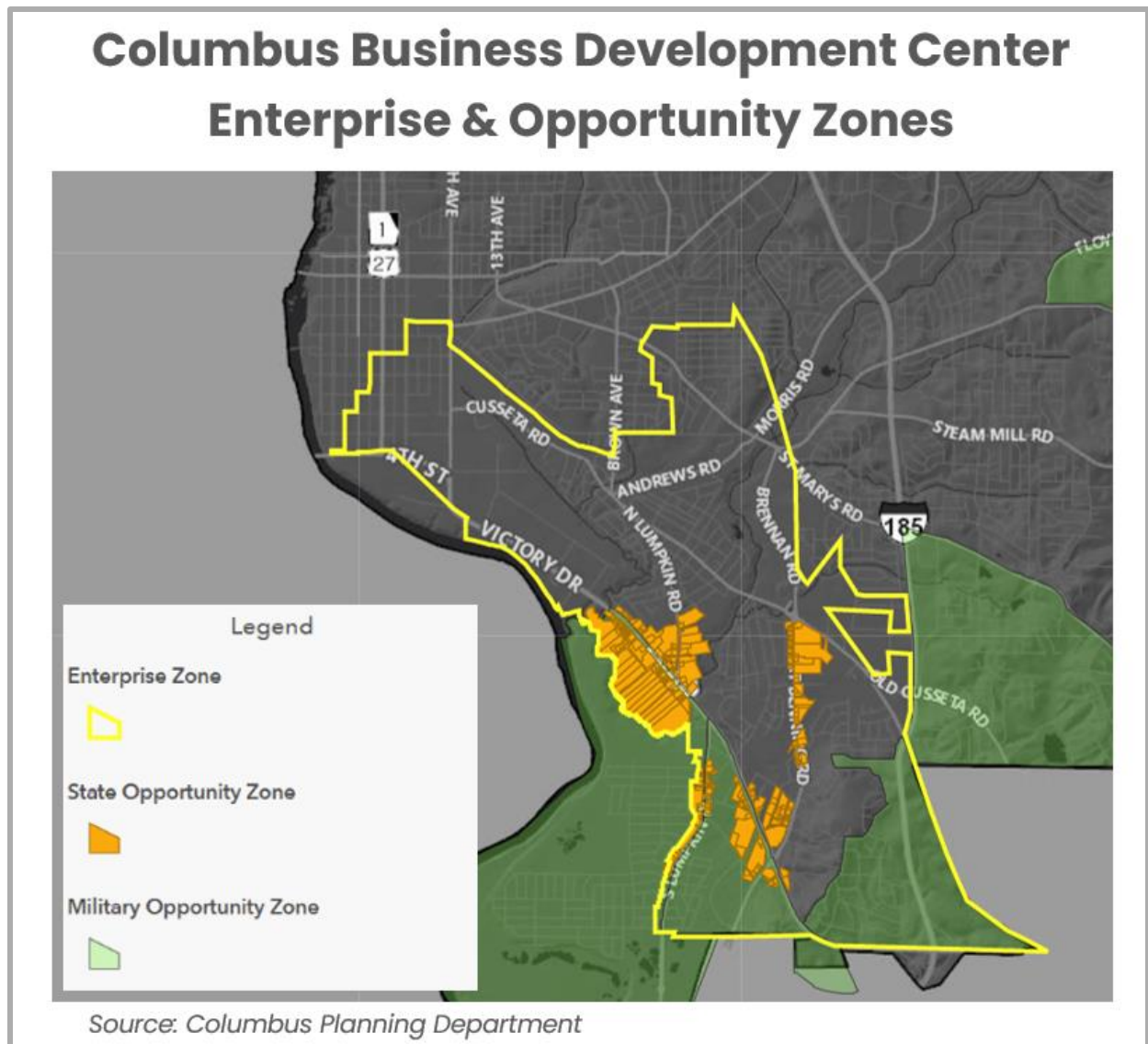
Economic and Workforce Development Assets and Needs

Economic development in South Columbus continues to be shaped by regional workforce initiatives, major institutional anchors, and the neighborhood's proximity to Fort Benning. The River Valley Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy remains a guiding framework, emphasizing investment in workforce development, education, and infrastructure. These priorities align closely with community feedback gathered in 2026, which highlighted both persistent challenges and new opportunities for economic revitalization.

Workforce development assets remain strong. WorkSource Georgia–Lower Chattahoochee continues to provide career counseling, on-the-job training, youth internships, adult literacy, and occupational skills training. Columbus State University and Columbus Technical College offer academic and workforce programs that prepare residents for high-demand industries. However, residents and business owners emphasized that transportation barriers, low wages, and limited job diversity continue to constrain economic mobility.

South Columbus benefits from a concentration of major employers, schools, government facilities, and retail centers, including the City Service Center, Columbus Public Library, Columbus Aquatic Center, and the Midtown Shopping Center. Fort Benning remains the region's largest employer and a significant economic driver. Yet, despite these assets, residents and small business owners consistently described South Columbus as overlooked, under-resourced, and lacking the business mix and amenities found in other parts of the city.

FIGURE 1



Columbus has made good use of other redevelopment tools and designations to attract jobs and economic development investments to South Columbus. Portions of the South Columbus NRSA are contained in an existing Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone, and three different Tax Allocation Districts. Enterprise and Opportunity Zones are designed to spur economic development in economically distressed communities by providing tax benefits to investors whereas a Tax Allocation District (TAD) provides a source of funding for redevelopment and improvement within a designated area, harnessing future incremental increases in property tax collection resulting from the redevelopment efforts to repay the improvement costs. The City's Midtown

East, Midtown West, and Fort Benning Technology Park TADs are all located at least partially within the South Columbus NRSA. These TADs are integral tools in the toolbox for making area redevelopment efforts work.

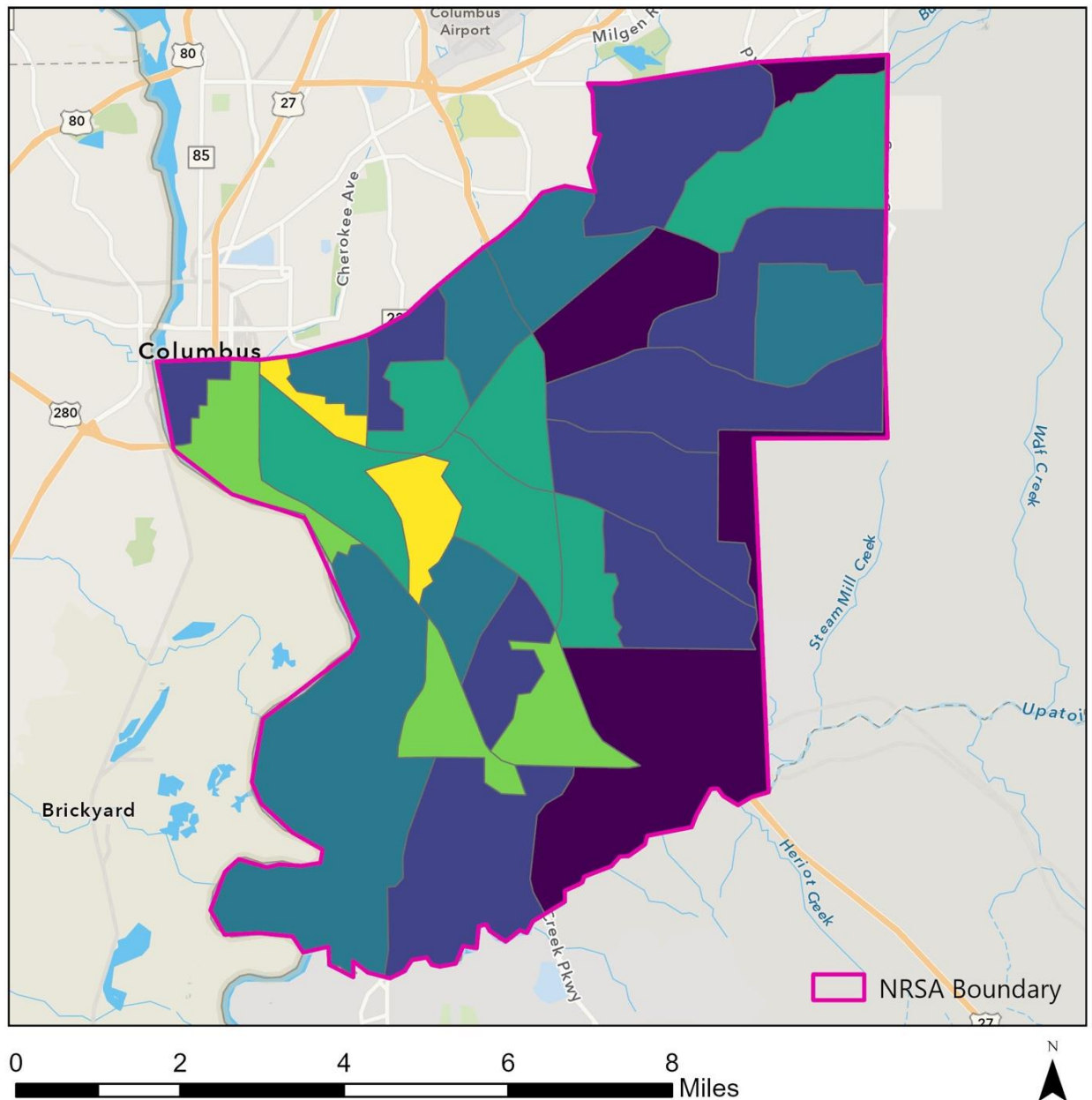
Poverty Level

The poverty rate within the study area has dropped in recent years but still remains higher than that of Columbus as a whole. 58% of Columbus’s impoverished population is located within the study area. Figure 2 shows that, in particular, the west and central portions of the study area have the highest rates of poverty, with two census tracts having poverty rates over 50% and three having rates between 40 and 50%.

Poverty Level	Study Area	City of Columbus
Population below poverty level	21,912	37,734
% Below poverty level	21.7%	19.0%

FIGURE 2

Poverty Rate



Household Income

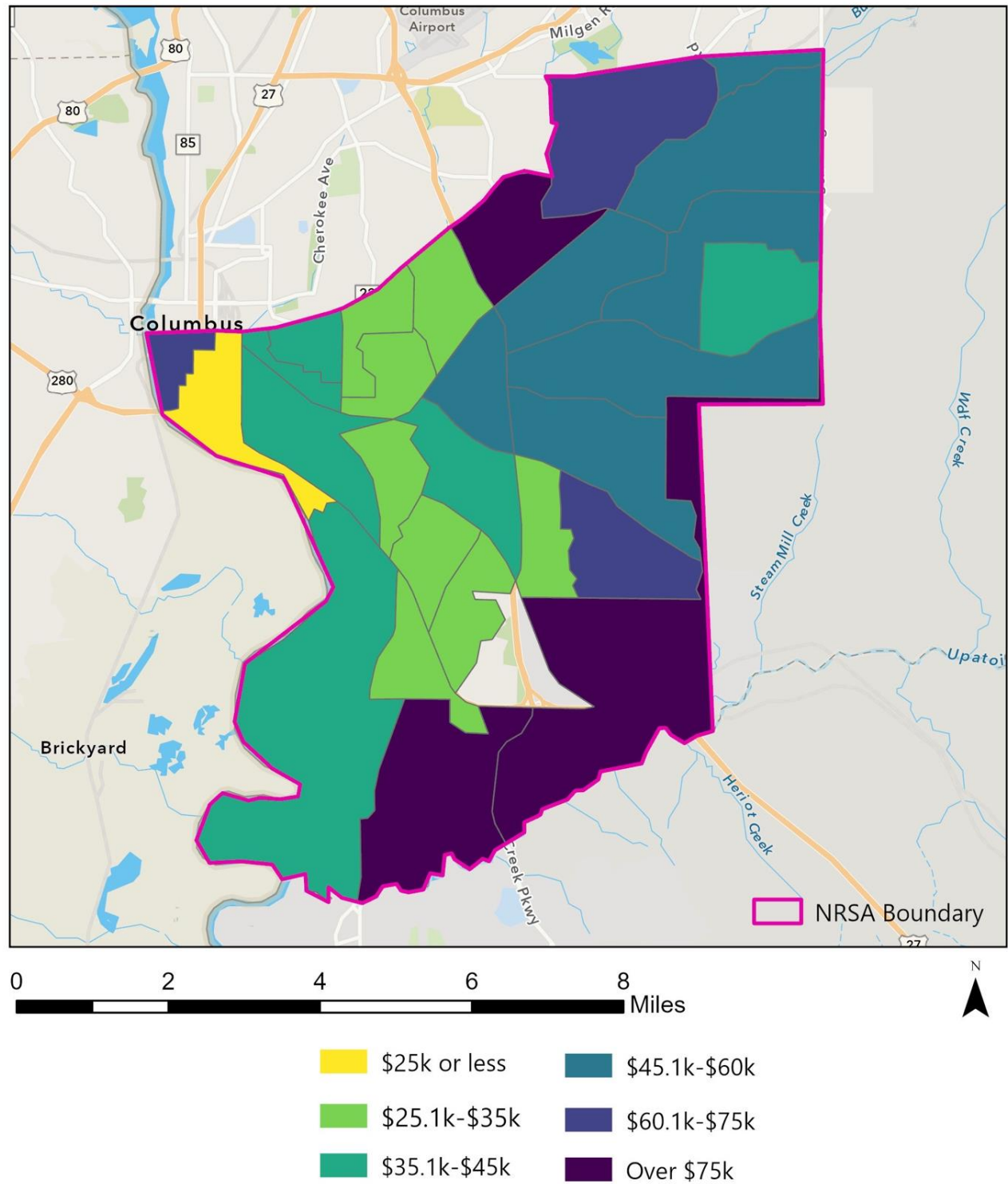
The median household income in the study area is nearly 40% lower than the median household income for Columbus as a whole. The study area also has 22% more households earning under \$15,000 a year and 21% more households earning between \$15,000 and \$25,000 per year than the City overall.

As shown in Figure 3, median incomes are lowest in the western half of the study area, which lies within central Columbus. The study area contains one census tract where median incomes are \$25,000 or less and eight tracts where median incomes are between \$25,000 and \$35,000. Note: one tract had no median income data available and is depicted as blank.

Household Income	Study Area	City of Columbus
Median household income	\$35,005	\$58,073
% Households with income under \$15,000	16.5%	13.5%
% Households with income \$15,000- \$24,999	9.9%	8.2%

FIGURE 3

Median Household Income



Employment and Labor Force

High levels of unemployment in some of the census tracts contribute to the disproportionate poverty and low incomes found within the study area. While unemployment levels within the study area have dropped in recent years, two census tracts in the southern central portion of the study area have unemployment rates over 20%. Unemployment levels within the study area are 19% higher as a whole than unemployment levels in overall Columbus.

Labor force participation rates of populations residing in the study area show slightly lower levels of engagement with the labor market compared to the City as a whole. As shown in Figure 4, one tract within the study area has a labor force participation rate of 25% or less. This is unusual for the area, as all but four other tracts have a participation rate of 50% or more, and of the remaining four all have participation rates of between 40 and 50%. Notably, the tract with unusually low labor force participation rates also has very low unemployment rates. As unemployment rates only measure people who are actively seeking work, a low labor force participation rate combined with a low unemployment rate typically indicates that people who are not participating in the labor force are also not seeking work. Reasons for this may include an aging population, a large population still in school, or a discouraged workforce, among others.

Employment Data	Study Area	City of Columbus
Unemployment rate	7.5%	6.3%
Labor force participation rate	57.9%	60.8%

FIGURE 4

Unemployment Rate

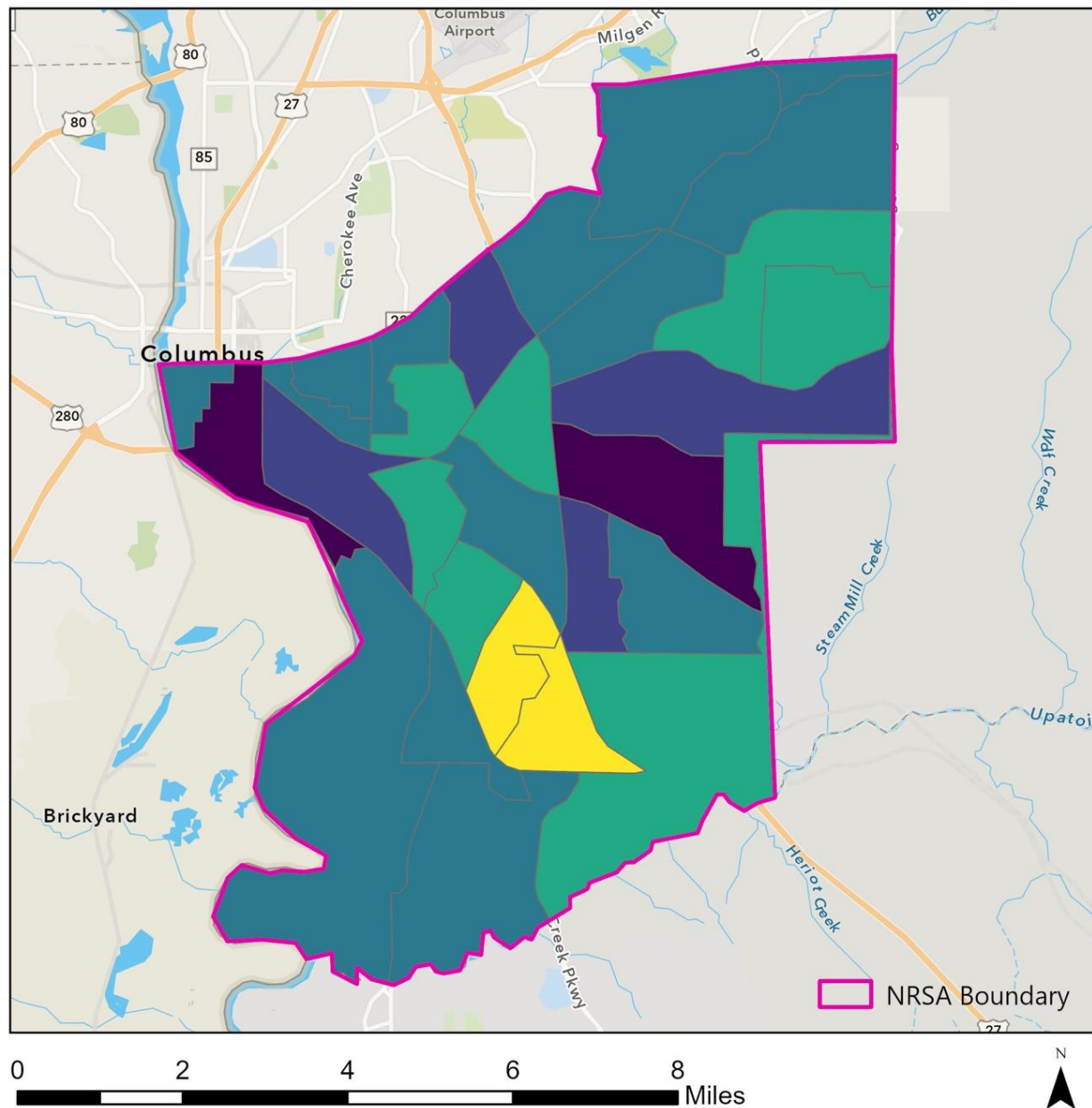
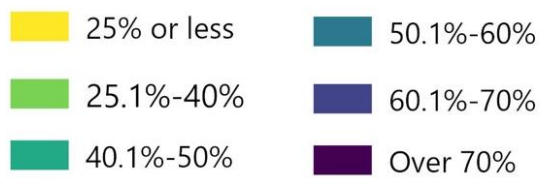
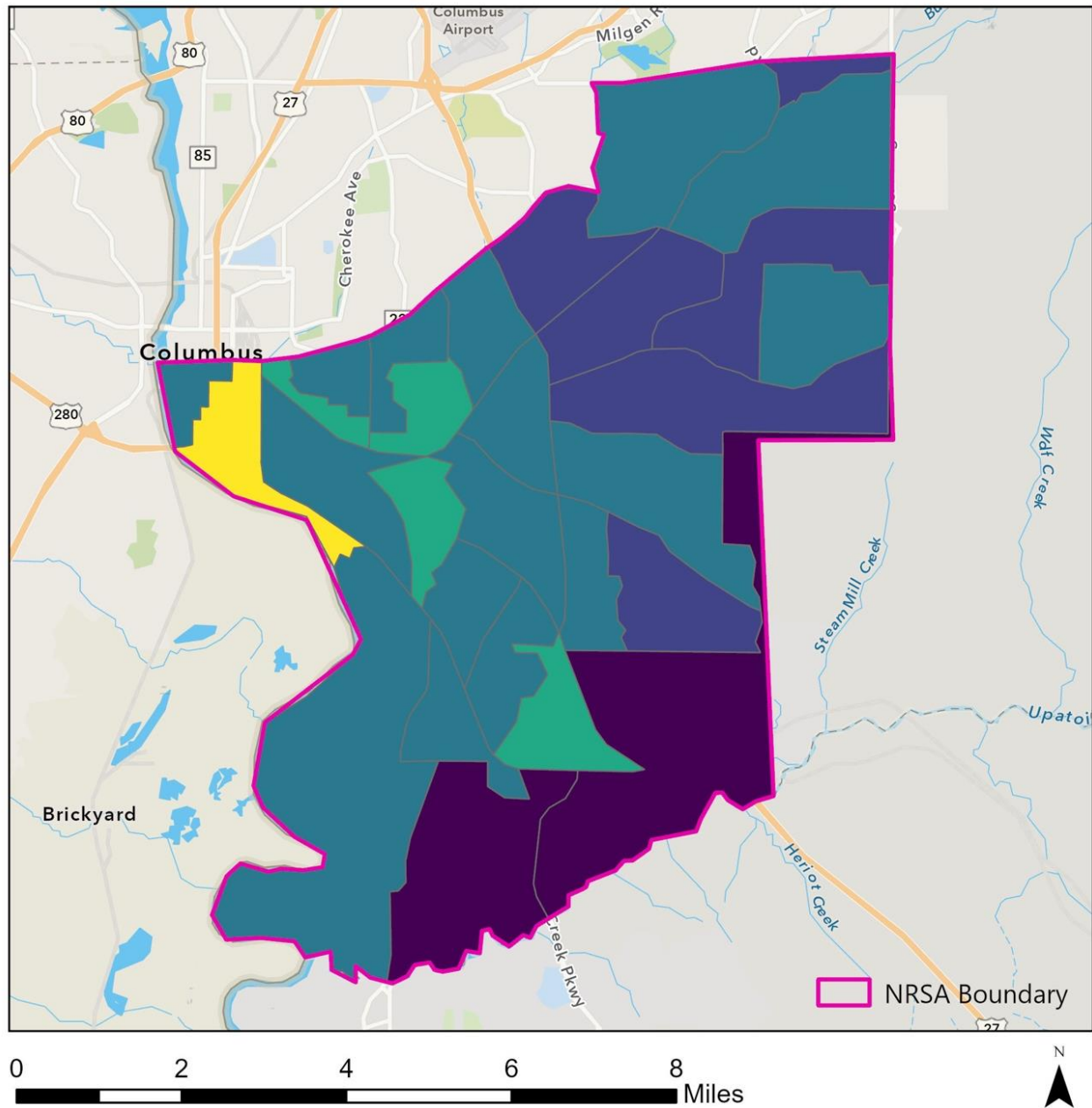


FIGURE 5

Labor Force Participation Rate



Economic Development Needs and Opportunities

Public engagement in 2026 reinforced many of the needs identified in 2021 while adding new themes related to affordability, communication, and small business support. Key needs and opportunities include:

- Beautification and corridor revitalization remain top priorities. Residents emphasized the need for improved landscaping, lighting, façade improvements, and consistent maintenance to attract investment and restore neighborhood pride.
- Support for small businesses is urgently needed. Business owners described challenges accessing capital, navigating licensing and permitting, and competing with national chains and one-off events that pull market share established local businesses depend on. Many expressed the need for:
 - Small-scale grants rather than loans
 - A one-stop business resource center
 - Workshops on marketing, bookkeeping, licensing, and compliance
 - Better communication from the City about programs and opportunities
- Job creation and job diversity are critical. Residents noted that available jobs are often low-wage or concentrated in warehousing and industrial sectors. They expressed a desire for jobs in technology, hospitality, financial services, and creative industries.
- Youth employment and workforce readiness are major concerns. Business owners participating in the 2026 focus group described inconsistent work readiness among youth interns, transportation barriers, and the need for mentorship programs and soft-skills training.
- Residents and business owners emphasized the need for stronger youth employment pathways, soft-skills development, and mentorship. While the NRSA does not create standalone youth programs, it supports the City's broader workforce development initiatives by improving access to facilities, strengthening partnerships with local employers, and aligning with WorkSource Georgia and Muscogee County School District programs that provide training and paid work experiences for youth.
- Safety and crime reduction remain essential for economic stability. Residents noted that crime and fear of retaliation deter investment and discourage customers.
- Entrepreneurship and business education are needed to help residents start and sustain businesses. Residents requested training in business planning, marketing, and financial management.

- Vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial sites present opportunities for redevelopment, including manufacturing, small business incubators, and mixed-use development.
- Marketing Columbus to external audiences was identified as a missing strategy. Business owners noted that the city invests little in promoting local businesses or attracting visitors, despite assets like the National Infantry Museum and proximity to Fort Benning.
- Improved coordination across City departments is needed. Business owners described inconsistent communication, unclear processes, and logistical issues during events that negatively impact business operations.
- More restaurants, retail, and family-friendly amenities are desired. Residents expressed strong interest in sit-down restaurants, grocery options, clothing stores, and entertainment venues such as bowling alleys and skating rinks.

Housing Assets and Needs

South Columbus continues to offer a diverse housing stock, including mid-century homes, senior housing, and newer developments such as Arbor Pointe. Residents value the neighborhood's diversity, proximity to major roads, and strong sense of community. However, the 2026 engagement process revealed escalating housing challenges driven by rising rents, investor purchases, aging housing stock, and limited affordable homeownership opportunities.

Residents reported that typical rents have increased sharply—from around \$850 to \$1,300 or more for a modest apartment—placing significant strain on low- and moderate-income households. Strict rental screening criteria, including high credit score requirements and income thresholds, further limit access to quality housing. Many residents described hazardous living conditions, including mold, leaks, pest infestations, and inadequate maintenance by landlords.

The Housing Authority of Columbus, Georgia (HACG) continues to provide a range of assisted housing options, including public housing, LIHTC units, RAD conversions, PBRA/PBV units, HOME units, and Housing Choice Vouchers. However, wait times for public housing remain long (3–5 years), and the remaining public housing stock requires substantial rehabilitation.

While residents expressed concerns about homelessness, reentry housing, and the need for supportive services, these issues are addressed primarily through the City's ESG program, Continuum of Care partners, and the 2026–2030 Consolidated Plan. The NRSA focuses on neighborhood-scale housing quality, affordability, and reinvestment, while broader homelessness strategies will continue to be implemented through citywide programs and partnerships.

The following sections detail key features of housing stock in the study area and the City of Columbus, including housing types, age of housing stock, housing values, tenure, rental rates, and housing cost burden. The section concludes by examining opportunities noted for improving housing quality and affordability of neighborhoods in the study area.

Housing Types

Detached single-family homes comprise nearly two-thirds of all housing stock in both the study area and the City of Columbus. The proportion of 2 to 9-unit housing structures in the study area is slightly higher compared to the City. Large multifamily housing structures (10+ units) are slightly less coming within the study area than the City as a whole, while the share of mobile homes is higher in the study area.

STRUCTURE TYPE	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Single-family detached	65.4%	65.7%
% Single-family attached	3.5%	2.9%
% 2 to 9 unit structures	17.3%	16.4%
% 10+ unit structures	11.3%	13.4%
% Mobile homes	2.4%	1.6%

Age of Housing Stock

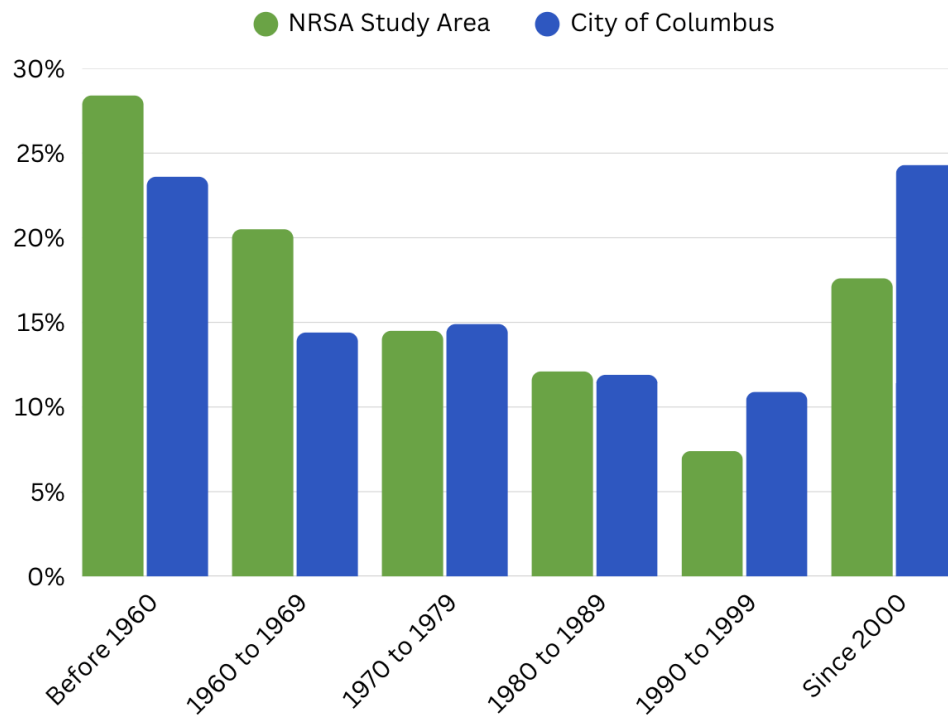
Housing stock in the study area is significantly older than the City's housing stock – the median age of housing in the study area is 12 years older than that in the City as a whole. Housing built prior to 1980 is of particular concern, as it is at increased risk of lead-based paint hazards. Nearly two-thirds (63.4%) of the study area's housing was built before 1980, meaning that 20% more of the study area's housing stock is at risk of lead-based paint hazards than the overall City's. In total, 62% of Columbus's at-risk housing stock is located within the study area.

AGE OF HOUSING	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Built before 1960	28.4%	23.6%
% Built 1960 to 1969	20.5%	14.4%
% Built 1970 to 1979	14.5%	14.9%

% Built 1980 to 1989	12.1%	11.9%
% Built 1990 to 1999	7.4%	10.9%
% Built since 2000	17.6%	24.3%
Median year built	1974	1986

FIGURE 6

Age of Housing by Year Built



Housing Value

Median housing values in the study area are 23% lower than those in the City overall. 84% of Columbus homes worth \$100,000 or less are located within the study area and comprise 28.3% of all homeowner-occupied housing in the area. Conversely, only 26% of Columbus's housing stock worth \$300,000 or more is located within the study area. As shown in Figure 8, median home values are highest along the western edge of the study area and lowest in the center. Note: median home values were not available for some census tracts within the study area, which appear blank.

HOUSING VALUE	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Less than \$50,000	6.6%	4.7%
% \$50,000 - \$100,000	21.7%	12.6%
% \$100,000 - \$199,999	43.0%	34.7%
% \$200,000-\$29,999	15.5%	23.6%
% \$300,000 or more	13.3%	24.5%
Median home value	\$150,000	\$193,900

Note: data presented is for homeowner-occupied housing.

FIGURE 7

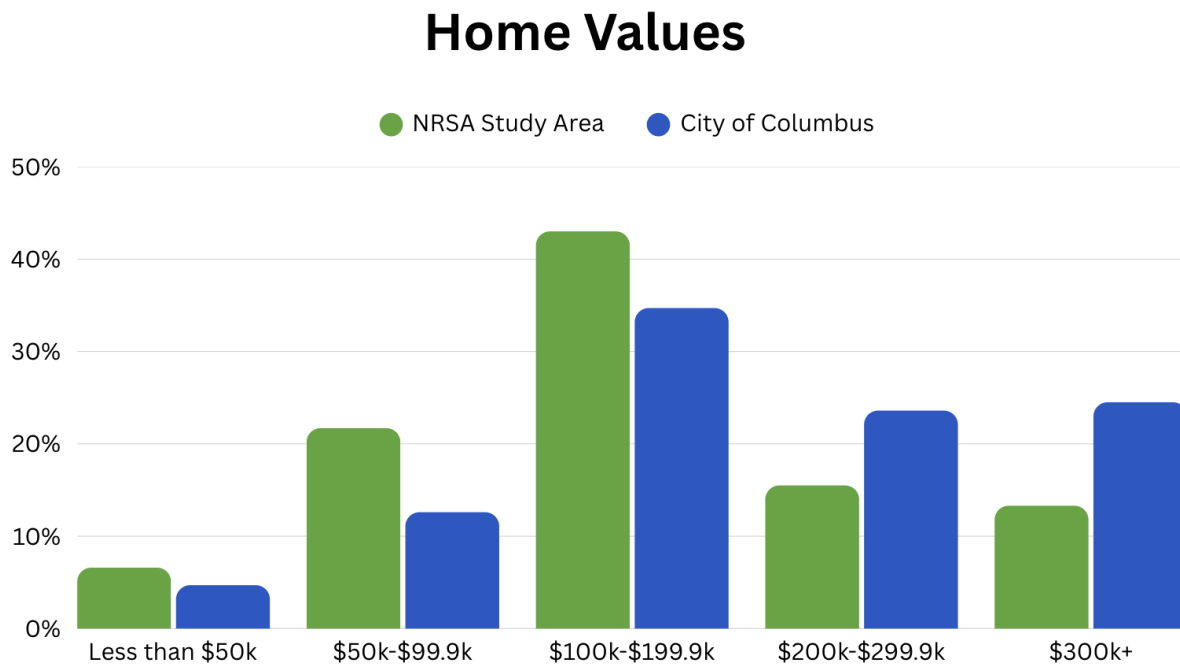
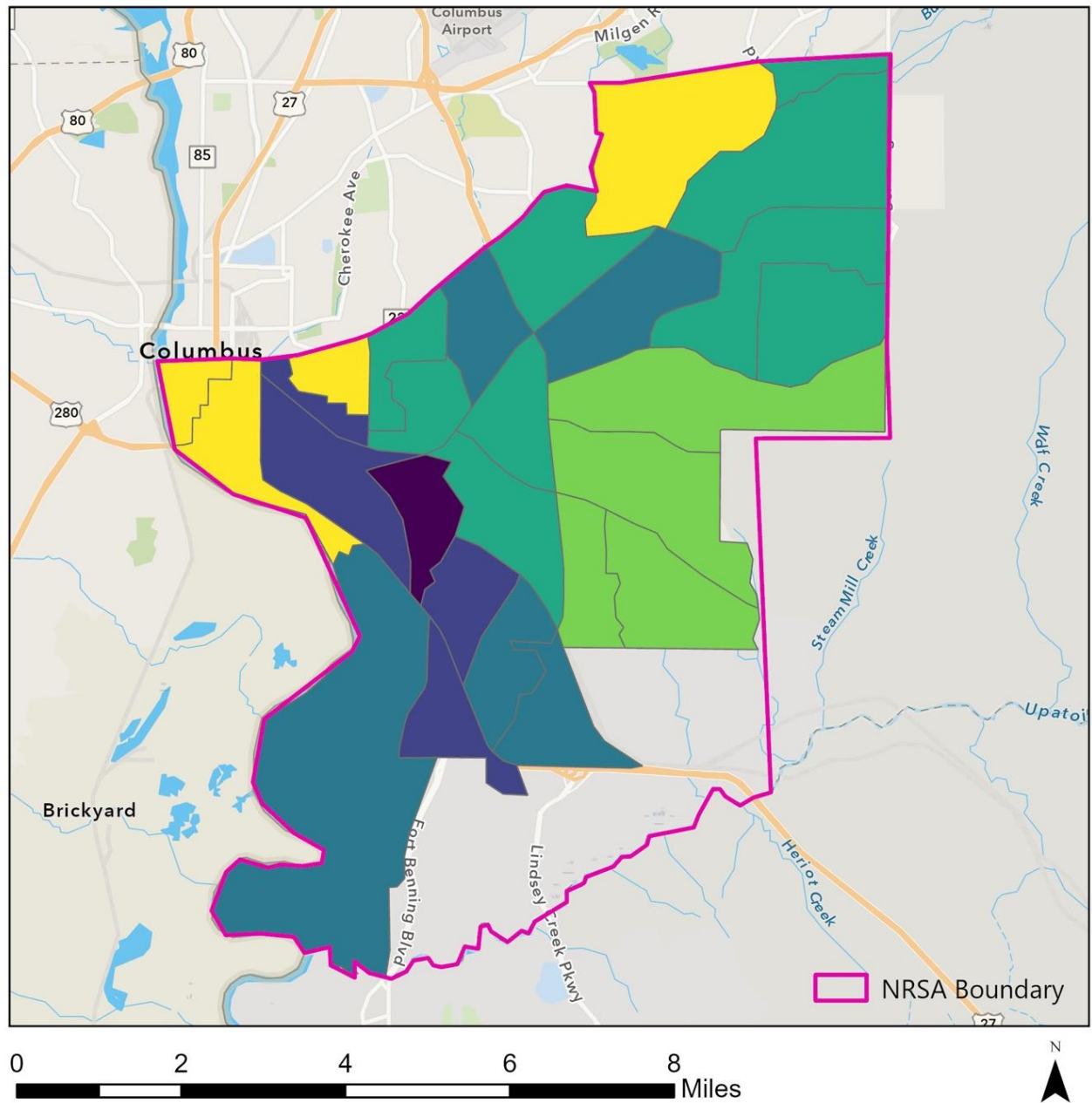


FIGURE 8

Median Home Value



Tenure

While Columbus as a whole has slightly more homeowners than renters, the study area favors renters with a slightly higher discrepancy. As shown in Figure 10 homeownership rates are lowest in the southern half of the study area, especially along the eastern border where 90% or more of households rent.

TENURE	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Owner occupied	47.8%	50.8%
% Renter occupied	52.2%	49.2%

Rent and Affordability

Median contract rent in the study area is \$505, significantly lower than the City's median contract rent of \$1,106. As shown in Figure 11, rents are highest in the southeastern portion of the study area. This may be of particular concern, as this is also an area where a significant majority of the population rents; however, when compared with median household incomes depicted in Figure 3, this area also has significantly higher income levels than the majority of the study area.

FIGURE 9

Monthly Rent

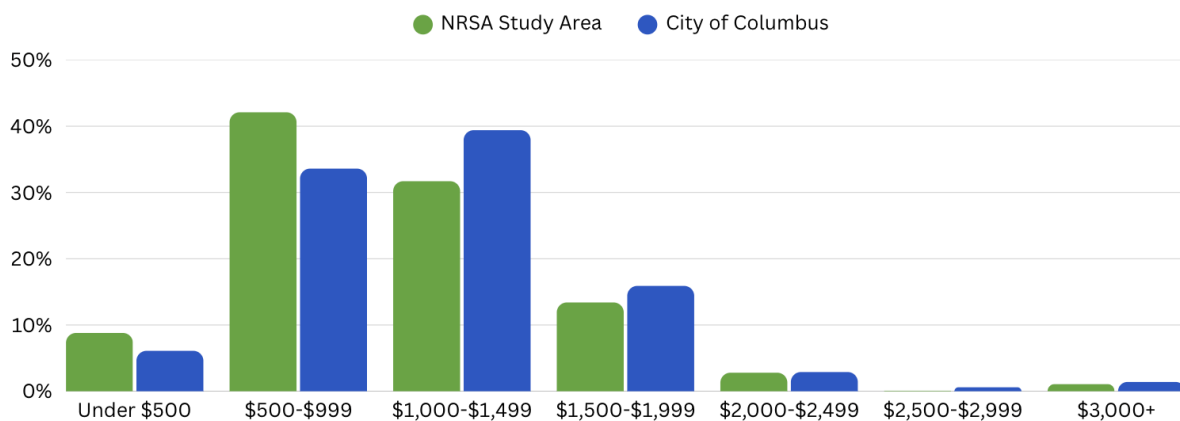


FIGURE 10

Percent of Households who are Renters

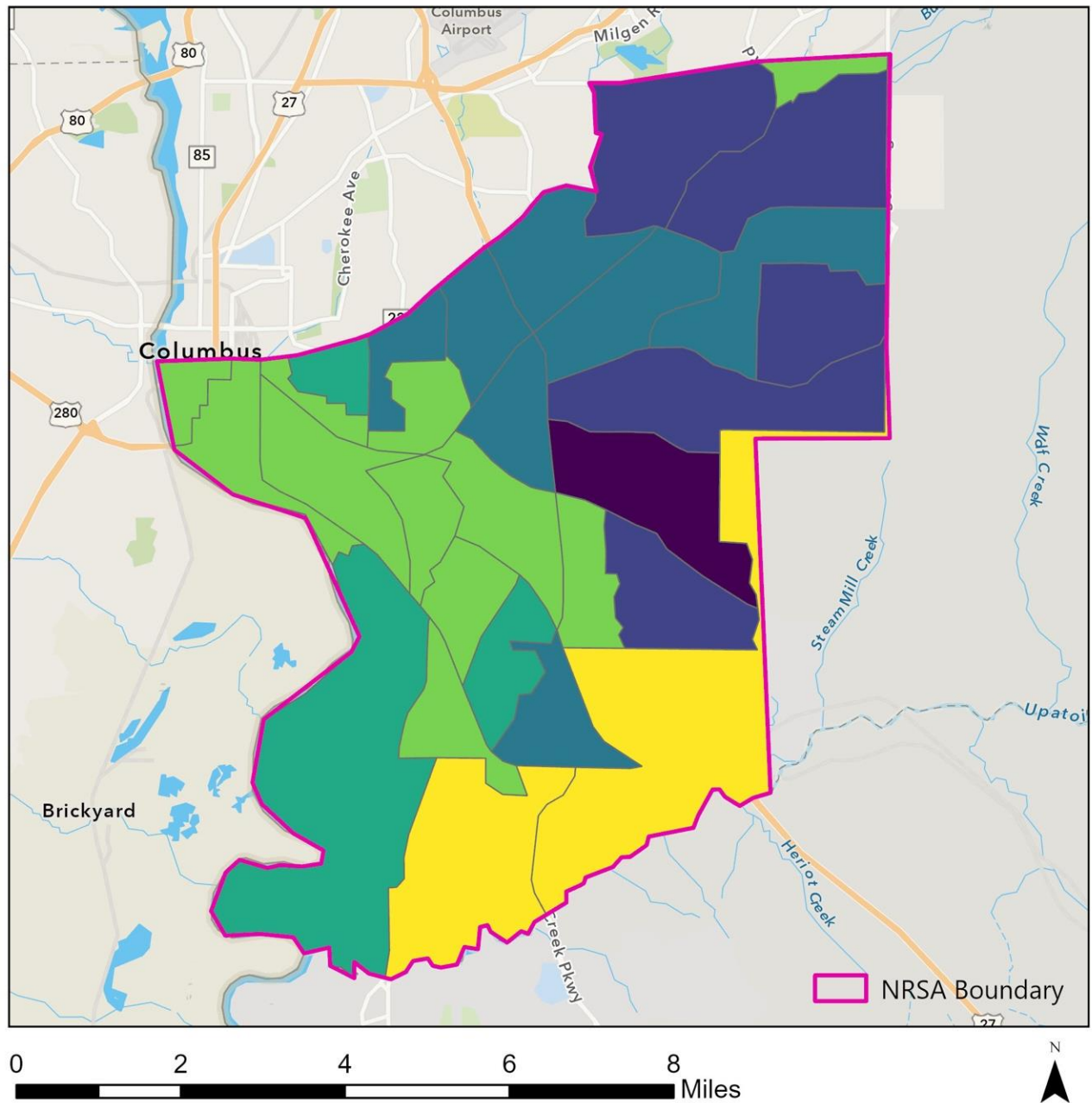
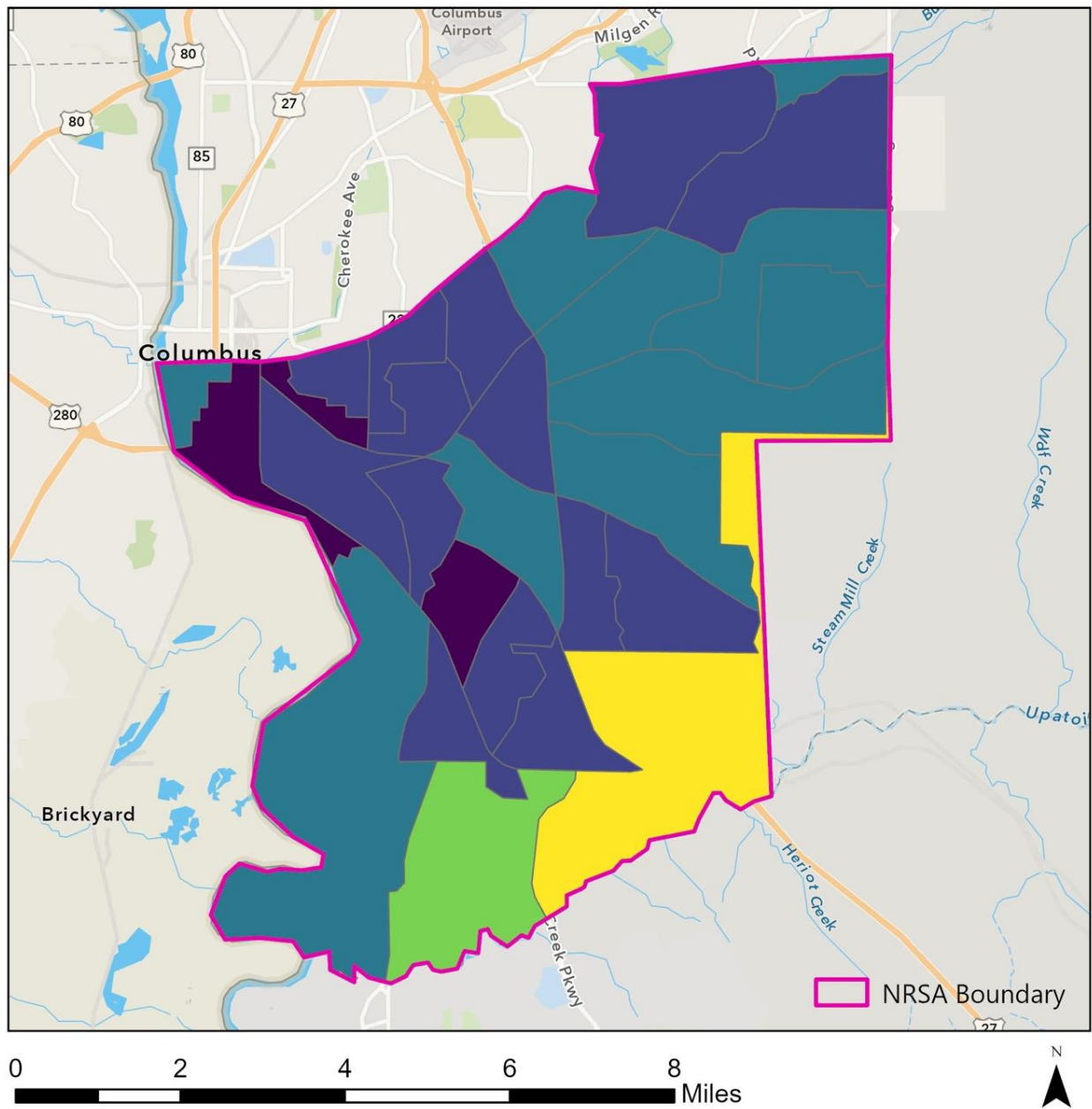


FIGURE 11

Median Rent



Housing Needs and Opportunities

Community engagement in 2026 identified the following priority needs:

- Affordable rental housing is the most urgent need. Residents emphasized the lack of units affordable to households earning \$25,000–\$50,000 annually.
- Affordable homeownership opportunities are limited. Residents noted that new construction is priced far above what average workers can afford, and there is little inventory for first-time homebuyers.
- Home repair and rehabilitation assistance is needed to help elderly and long-time homeowners remain in their homes. Residents requested more outreach, one-on-one counseling, and accessible application processes.
- Vacant and abandoned homes present opportunities for reinvestment. Residents strongly prefer that these properties be rehabilitated and offered to neighborhood residents rather than investors.
- Stronger code enforcement and landlord accountability are needed to address blight, unsafe rental conditions, and absentee ownership. Residents propose demolition of unsafe structures and structures that attract squatters.
- Supportive housing and services are needed for seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals transitioning from homelessness or incarceration.
- Education on tenant rights, home maintenance, and homeownership is needed. Residents suggested training for voucher holders on property upkeep and being good neighbors.
- Rent stabilization or protections were frequently mentioned as a response to rising rents and evictions.
- Zoning and land use reforms—including ADUs, mixed housing types, and redevelopment of large lots—were identified as opportunities to expand affordable housing options.
- Transportation access must be considered in housing development. Residents emphasized the need for housing near transit routes, jobs, and services.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

South Columbus benefits from a range of public facilities, including parks, schools, health centers, and civic buildings. However, residents consistently reported disparities in maintenance, investment, and access compared to other parts of the city. The 2026 engagement process highlighted both longstanding and emerging needs related to recreation, transportation, safety,

and neighborhood infrastructure. Key public facilities located in South Columbus are described below.

Community and Civic Facilities

A large cluster of community facilities is located on Macon Road, just west of I-185. These include the City Service Center, the Columbus Public Library, Columbus Aquatic Center, and the Muscogee County Tag Office. These facilities not only offer easy access for South Columbus residents to civic and community resources but also draw other residents to South Columbus from across the City.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

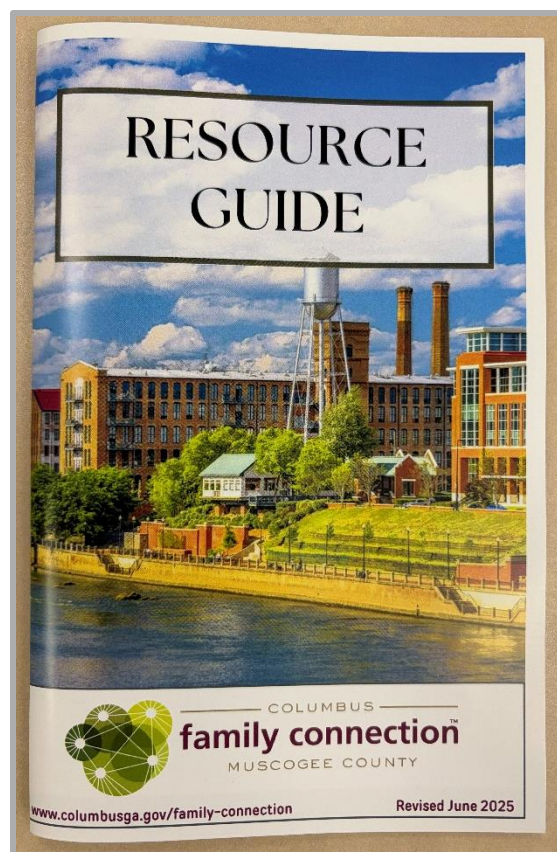
Healthy, accessible, and attractive parks and open spaces are essential for vibrant communities. South Columbus has several parks, but these tend to be smaller, neighborhood-focused facilities rather than large regional facilities. These include Ardahlia Mack Park, J. Fluellen Park, South Columbus Park, and South Lawyers Lane Park. The state-of-the-art Columbus Aquatic Center on Macon Road offers an indoor Olympic-sized swimming pool along with fitness and wellness programming.

Educational Facilities

Educational facilities within the wider South Columbus area include Carver High, Spencer High, Baker Middle, Eddy Middle, Dorothy Heights Elementary, Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary, Rigdon Road Elementary, South Columbus Elementary, and the Rainey-McCullers School of the Arts.

Health Facilities

Valley Healthcare operates a multi-specialty health care facility in South Columbus. Services offered at the site include primary care, behavioral health, dental and vision care, and a pharmacy. As a nonprofit federally-qualified health center, Valley Healthcare provides services to patients regardless of their financial circumstances. Columbus Regional Hospital, a member of the Piedmont Healthcare System, is located two miles from the South Columbus NRSA, offering an emergency department and a full spectrum of medical specialty options. Midtown Pharmacy



serves the South Columbus area, as well as the Walmart Pharmacy in the southern portion of the neighborhood.

Public Transportation

Public transportation in Columbus is provided by METRA, a bus system operated by the Columbus Consolidated Government. Seven METRA bus routes (numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 12) serve parts of the South Columbus NRSA. Fixed route and Dial-A-Ride bus service is presently offered Monday through Saturday from 4:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

The City of Columbus collaborates with Chattahoochee and Harris County in Georgia, Phenix City, AL and portions of Lee and Russell Counties in Alabama through the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This planning document identifies improvements to the region's transportation infrastructure that will be needed over a 25-year period. Ongoing implementation of LRTP initiatives is guided by individual Policy, Technical, and Citizens Advisory Committees of the Columbus-Phenix City MPO. In addition to outlining plans for future transportation projects, the LRTP contains an inventory of existing transportation conditions in the region.

Transportation infrastructure is further assessed through the Columbus Consolidated Government's 2038 Comprehensive Plan. That plan identifies the following transportation needs facing Columbus:

- Existing transportation facilities are aged and decaying
- Congestion is not an issue in Columbus but has the potential to increase quickly
- Complete transportation is still lacking in Columbus
- High speed rail will open Columbus to economic development
- The proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport hurts the viability of the Columbus Airport
- Autonomous vehicle technology is expanding and Columbus may not be ready for it

Residents identified irregular bus schedules, limited route coverage, and lack of shaded bus stops as barriers to employment, education, and services. While the Community Reinvestment Department does not lead transit operations, the NRSA supports improved mobility by coordinating with METRA, the Columbus-Phenix City MPO, and the City's transportation planning efforts to identify priority stop improvements and pedestrian connections within the NRSA.

Public Infrastructure

Drinking water and wastewater treatment for Columbus is provided by Columbus Water Works. The City's Comprehensive Plan reports that the capacity of these systems is adequate to meet current and projected community needs. As of the date of that report, the average daily filtration demand was 35.18 million gallons per day (MGD) and the peak filtration demand was 51.10 MGD, considerably less than the system's total permitted capacity of 98 MGD. The City's water and

sewage facilities are reported to be in good condition and service has not been constrained by inadequate facility capacity.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure Needs and Opportunities

Key needs identified through 2026 engagement include:

- Reinvestment in parks and recreation facilities is a top priority. Residents noted that some facilities have closed or fallen into disrepair, including a neighborhood pool that never reopened after a leak. They expressed strong interest in splash pads, updated playgrounds, walking trails, and intergenerational recreation programs.
- More community centers and youth facilities are needed. Residents described a loss of neighborhood gathering spaces and requested new or revitalized centers offering afterschool programs, life-skills classes, and family activities.
- Improved public transportation is essential. Residents cited irregular bus schedules, long wait times, and the need for shaded bus stops and routes closer to residential areas.
- Pedestrian safety and walkability require significant improvement. Residents reported missing sidewalks, unsafe intersections, inadequate lighting, and recent pedestrian injuries.
- Street and road maintenance is needed, including pothole repair, striping, and traffic calming.
- Stormwater infrastructure improvements are needed, particularly on Foye Avenue where homes are flooding.
- Enhanced public safety and crime prevention are priorities. Residents expressed interest in community watch programs, increased police presence, and programs addressing drugs and violence.
- Improved sanitation and litter control are needed. Residents reported inconsistent trash pickup, illegal dumping, and insufficient public trash cans.
- Stronger Code Enforcement is needed to address blight, enforce maintenance standards, and require adequate dumpsters for multifamily properties.
- Access to healthcare remains limited. Residents expressed interest in satellite health facilities, mobile health services, and intergenerational health programs.
- Food access is a major concern. Residents described the area as a food desert and requested grocery options, food pantries, and community gardens.
- Facilities for people experiencing homelessness are needed, including improved shelter space, hygiene facilities, and a better facility for the Homeless Resource Network.

- Community cohesion and engagement opportunities are desired, including family events, festivals, and volunteer-based neighborhood improvement programs.



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Neighborhood Revitalization Goals

The analysis of community assets, needs, and opportunities in the previous section supports a variety of goals for economic development, housing, public facilities and infrastructure, and land use. This section combines goals within these key areas from other local and regional planning efforts with the needs assessment to develop goals specific to South Columbus. The plan's implementation section further details strategies, timelines, responsible parties and partners, and funding sources for the goals identified in this section.

Economic Development Goals

Economic development goals for the City of Columbus are detailed in the City's 2026-2030 Consolidated Plan, the River Valley Regional Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2018-2035), and the Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan. Actions for each goal provide additional detail regarding specific steps for achieving economic development goals in South Columbus, with a specific focus on increasing opportunities for small businesses and unemployed, underemployed, and low-wage workers.

Plan	Economic Development Goals
City of Columbus Consolidated Plan (2026-2030)	• Support and Sustain Businesses Serving LMI Communities
River Valley Regional Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2018-2035)	• Provide quality, genuine places and experiences for visitors. • Assist the workforce of the region gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for regional jobs in the 21st Century. • Support the recruitment, retention and expansion of businesses in the region. • Assist the region in sustaining and improving quality of life. • Foster community leadership. • Support agriculture. • Improve infrastructure. • Support main street and downtown improvements. • Improve housing stock. • Maintain environmental integrity in the region.

Plan	Economic Development Goals
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	• Columbus must align local businesses with the local school system. • Columbus must retain its best and brightest workers. • Attract talented individuals to Columbus. • Columbus must grow and expand existing businesses. • Columbus must recruit new firms and investments. • Columbus must pursue special opportunities for growth and diversification. • Columbus must advocate for economic growth. • Columbus must strengthen the culture of entrepreneurship. • Columbus must expand resources to open up entrepreneurship as a possibility for all residents. • Columbus must establish a unifying community brand. • Columbus must be promoted to external audiences. • Columbus must maximize the impact of the region’s greatest natural resource – the Chattahoochee River. • Columbus must promote vibrant and attractive neighborhoods, corridors, and activity centers. • Columbus must connect people and places with expanded opportunities for walking, biking, and transit use. • Columbus must promote civic improvement efforts as a tool of economic development.

Based on economic development assets, needs, and opportunities identified in the needs assessment and goals identified in these plans for Columbus and the wider region, specific economic development goals for the South Columbus NRSA include:

1. Support neighborhood revitalization; clean up and beautify blighted commercial areas.

2. Ensure South Columbus residents have the skills and connections needed to obtain employment in high-demand positions that pay living wages while coordinating youth workforce readiness activities through WorkSource Georgia, MCSD, and citywide workforce programs.
3. Support entrepreneurs and encourage the expansion of existing businesses in South Columbus that provide living wage jobs and meet key community needs.

Key actions for implementation of these goals are detailed in the implementation section.

Housing Goals

Housing goals for the City of Columbus are detailed in the City’s Consolidated Plan and Comprehensive Plan. These goals largely align with opportunities for South Columbus identified by residents and stakeholders through the assessment of community assets, needs, and opportunities.

Plan	Housing Goals
City of Columbus Consolidated Plan (2026-2030)	• Protect and Preserve LMI Household Assets • Expand Access to Sustainable, Affordable Housing
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	• Columbus must improve access to affordable, quality housing. • Columbus must remove slum and blight. • Columbus must increase efforts to promote economic opportunity and reduce poverty. • Columbus must increase efforts to provide public services. • Columbus must increase efforts to create and/or expand housing and services to homeless persons. • Columbus must maintain or expand planning and administration. • Ensure that senior housing is located within multi-modal transportation areas with excellent access to commercial businesses and healthcare services.

Based on housing assets, needs, and opportunities identified in the needs assessment and goals identified in these plans for the wider city, housing goals for South Columbus include:

1. Support the development of new high-quality affordable housing for both rental and homeownership
2. Rehabilitate existing single-family housing for affordable homeownership.
3. Support new well-kept multifamily rental housing for low- and moderate-income households, including seniors.
4. Provide navigation assistance to residents seeking information on available housing programs.

Key actions for implementation of these goals are detailed in the implementation section. Issues related to homelessness and supportive housing will continue to be addressed through the City's ESG program, HOME-ARP investments, and the regional Continuum of Care.

Public Facility and Infrastructure Goals

Most infrastructure projects in the city of Columbus are not limited to a specific neighborhood but are designed and intended to serve the broader city. However, many of the City's ongoing and future projects will directly affect South Columbus. Infrastructure needs in the NRSA and throughout the city are outlined in the Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan and, to a lesser degree, in the City's Consolidated Plan. The primary goals of infrastructure projects planned for South Columbus are to improve and repair roads, pedestrian infrastructure, and park and recreation facilities. Goals related to these public facility and infrastructure initiatives are listed below:

Plan	Public Facility and Infrastructure Goals
City of Columbus Consolidated Plan (2026-2030)	• Expand Access to Recreation and the Arts • Enhance the Built Environment and Reduce Environmental Hazards
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	• Columbus must pursue park renovations / additions when economically feasible. • Columbus must reinstitute a government-wide maintenance / replacement plan for vehicles and equipment. • Columbus must maintain and follow its Capital Outlay Plan.

Plan	Public Facility and Infrastructure Goals
	• Columbus must protect the Chattahoochee River and its subsidiaries to ensure water quality. • Columbus must preserve or enhance existing transportation facilities. • Columbus must pursue efforts to relieve congestion. • Columbus must expand the ideals of complete transportation. • Columbus must implement plans for high-speed rail connection to Atlanta. • Columbus must development and maintain the Columbus Airport. • Columbus must prepare the community and update infrastructure for driverless vehicles. • Columbus must identify future transportation projects and complete existing transportation projects.

Based on public facilities and infrastructure assets, needs, and opportunities identified in the needs assessment and goals identified in these plans for the city, public facilities and infrastructure goals specific to South Columbus include:

1. Provide well-maintained parks and community recreation spaces for South Columbus residents.
2. Improve pedestrian connectivity to create safe, walkable environments.
3. Ensure all city services, such as code enforcement, trash collection, and bus transportation are provided equally and at comparable levels of service throughout the city.

Key actions for implementation of these goals are detailed in the implementation section.

Land Use Goals

The City of Columbus developed and adopted the Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan in October 2018; this South Columbus Redevelopment Plan is consistent with that Comprehensive Plan. Portions of the Comprehensive Plan regarding land use are

reviewed in this section to identify existing land use objectives for the city, including the South Columbus area.

Plan	Land Use Goals
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	• Columbus must eliminate sprawl and slow greenfield development. • Columbus must introduce new zoning regulations, techniques, and concepts to reintroduce into the urban core. • Columbus must create a determined focus on sustainability. • Columbus must annually review the Land-Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and identify potential adjustments to meet modern day development patterns and use changes. • Columbus must research and implement new concepts regarding land-use and development. • Columbus must promote mixed-use development. • Columbus must offer incentives for adaptive reuse. • Columbus must create a neighborhood identity program.

Exceptions that could potentially be needed to existing development regulations

The City should continually review and coordinate any housing ordinances and standards that encourage and allow for affordable housing. It is important that ordinances avoid creating additional barriers to housing. Sometimes, it is not what is in the codes or ordinances, but what is not included. Zoning is a tool that local government officials can use to manage land uses in a community so that developments in the neighborhoods reflect the values and preferences of their residents. Zoning, if utilized properly, can promote the expansion of affordable housing and exclude development that increases the cost of housing.



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Tools and Strategies

This section discusses redevelopment tools and strategies that may be employed to implement the plan. Required under Georgia’s Urban Redevelopment Act, these include a description of land parcels to be acquired, structures to be demolished or rehabilitated, and the strategy for relocating any residents that may be displaced because of the plan’s implementation.

Parcels to be Acquired

The City of Columbus continues to identify properties in its portfolio that can be surplus and conveyed as affordable housing or other beneficial uses for the community. Additionally, the Columbus Land Bank Authority has a stated goal of providing land to be used in the creation of affordable housing and jobs for LMI citizens through residential, commercial, and industrial development.

Structures to be Demolished or Rehabilitated

The City proactively works with property owners to demolish severely blighted structures in connection with infill activities where the demolition is necessary to remediate a blighting condition and to make way for site redevelopment for another use. The City expects to continue using CDBG and other resources toward strategic demolitions, however there are currently no specific sites or structures designated for demolition. The Center for Community Progress published a memorandum for the City of Columbus providing an analysis of legal and policy tools available in Columbus to guide housing and building code enforcement and address vacant properties¹.

Additionally, the City funds homeowner repair and rehabilitation activities citywide that may include properties located within the South Columbus NRSA. The Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity launched a new program in 2024, known as the Homeowner Accessibility Rehabilitation Program (HARP), a continuation of the Continuing Hope Program, which assists income eligible homeowners with much needed repair, maintenance, weatherization, safety, and beautification of homes. Through other organizations, the City funds accessibility upgrades and lead-based paint testing in association with housing rehabilitation projects. Generally, housing rehabilitation applications are submitted by homeowners and are considered as they are received by the corresponding program or subrecipient organization; the City itself does not target or otherwise identify structures for rehabilitation.

¹ Center for Community Progress, Housing and Building Code Enforcement and Vacant Properties, 2019. Retrieved from: <https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2019-09-Housing-and-Building-Code-Enforcement-and-Vacant-Properties-TA-Report.pdf>

Relocation Strategy

The City of Columbus has no current plans to relocate residents because this plan will focus on the redevelopment of empty, uninhabitable structures or vacant land. Should the relocation of residents be deemed necessary in the future, the City of Columbus will follow the relocation standards of the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Properties Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and other applicable state and federal regulations.

Covenants and Restrictions

Covenants and restrictions placed on specific properties might include use restrictions (commercial, residential, etc.), specific development standards, minimum landscape standards, and others. Changes will be administered under existing municipal planning and zoning procedures.



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Implementing the Plan

Implementation Strategy

This Implementation Strategy outlines the goals, recommended activities, responsible parties, and funding sources for the South Columbus NRSA as part of the South Columbus Redevelopment Plan. The strategy tables below reflect priorities identified through 2026 community engagement, the 2026–2030 Consolidated Plan, and current conditions within the NRSA boundaries. Together, these elements establish a coordinated framework for directing public investment, leveraging private capital, and achieving measurable neighborhood improvement outcomes over the 10-year plan period.

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
Economic Development Goals			
Revitalize blighted commercial corridors and strengthen neighborhood commercial identity.	• Support strategic commercial infill and mixed-use development on vacant or underutilized parcels within designated Enterprise and Opportunity Zones. (Ongoing, 2026) • Fund neighborhood beautification mini-grants for block-level cleanups, landscaping, and public art installations. (Ongoing, 2026) • Prioritize investment areas with ongoing guidance from community members. (Ongoing, 2026) • Launch a South Columbus Commercial Corridor Improvement Program with targeted façade grants, signage upgrades, and streetscape improvements along Victory Drive and Macon Road. (2027)	• Columbus Planning Department • Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • Chamber of Commerce • South Columbus Business Owners	• CDBG • Enterprise Zone / Opportunity Zone tax incentives • Georgia Cities Foundation resources • Private investment

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
Expand workforce development pipelines and connect residents — especially youth and young adults — to living-wage employment.	• Coordinate with WorkSource Georgia–Lower Chattahoochee to host quarterly job fairs in South Columbus with on-site hiring by regional employers and military contractors. (Ongoing, 2026) • Partner with Columbus Technical College and Columbus State University to offer satellite workforce-readiness workshops (resume writing, interview skills, digital literacy) at South Columbus community sites such as Frank Chester Recreation Center and the South Columbus Public Library. (2026) • Launch a Youth Workforce Readiness Initiative providing paid internships, summer employment, and pre-apprenticeship pathways, focusing on high-demand sectors: healthcare, logistics, skilled trades, and information technology. (2027) • Establish an adult education and GED completion campaign with evening and weekend programming at accessible neighborhood locations. (2027)	• Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • WorkSource Georgia–Lower Chattahoochee • Columbus Technical College • Columbus State University • Muscogee County School District	• CDBG • WIOA funds • Georgia Department of Labor grants • Public-private partnerships • Philanthropic foundations
Strengthen small business ecosystem and expand access to capital for South	• Establish a South Columbus Small Business Resource Hub in a visible, accessible location offering one-on-one counseling, business plan development, and connections to Startup Columbus and the Cunningham Center. (2027)	• Columbus Consolidated Government	• CDBG

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
Columbus entrepreneurs.	• Create a neighborhood-focused microloan and pre-seed grant program targeting minority-owned and multigenerational businesses for renovation, expansion, and working capital. (2027) • Launch a "Buy South Columbus" campaign to encourage local patronage and connect neighborhood businesses to nearby institutional and military customer bases. (2028) • Facilitate commercial lease negotiations and tenant improvements for entrepreneurs seeking storefront space in underutilized shopping centers. (Ongoing, 2027)	• Startup Columbus • Cunningham Center for Leadership Development • Local banks and CDFIs • SBA Georgia District Office • MidTown, Inc. • Private investors	• SBA Microloans and Community Advantage Loans • CDFI Fund awards • Local revolving loan fund • Private and philanthropic capital • New Markets Tax Credits
Housing Goals			
Increase the supply of high-quality affordable housing for homeownership and rental.	• Catalyze development of new mixed-income housing on vacant lots and Land Bank-held parcels. (Ongoing, 2026) • Expand down-payment assistance and homebuyer education programs, including bilingual outreach, to increase homeownership rates among South Columbus renters. (Ongoing, 2026) • Prioritize investment areas with ongoing guidance from community members. (Ongoing, 2026)	• Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • Columbus Planning Department • Columbus Land Bank Authority	• HOME • CDBG • Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) • Private development capital

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
	• Partner with CHDOs and Habitat for Humanity to construct infill single-family homes priced for purchase by low- and moderate-income households. (2027) • Support development of affordable senior housing near transit routes and healthcare facilities. (2028)	• Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity • NeighborWorks Columbus • CHDOs	
Rehabilitate existing housing stock and eliminate blighted residential properties.	• Expand the Continuing Hope Program to serve additional income-eligible homeowners with repair, weatherization, accessibility modifications, and lead-based paint remediation. (Ongoing, 2026) • Establish a Vacant Property Redevelopment Pipeline: identify, acquire, and demolish/rehab at least 25 abandoned residential structures that constitute neighborhood nuisances and safety hazards. (2027) • Implement a targeted code enforcement strategy for the NRSA with dedicated inspectors, proactive sweeps, and a landlord accountability database tracking compliance and repeat violations. (2027) • Create a Homeowner Maintenance Education Program offering free workshops on basic home repair, yard maintenance, and tenant responsibilities to promote neighborhood upkeep. (2027)	• Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • Inspections and Code Enforcement Department • Columbus Land Bank Authority • Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity • Access to Independence • NeighborWorks Columbus	• CDBG • CCG General Funds • Code enforcement fee revenue • GEFA weatherization grants • Philanthropic sources

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
Support well-maintained multifamily rental housing for low- and moderate-income households, including seniors and veterans.	• Develop new affordable rental units, including dedicated senior and veteran housing, prioritizing locations near METRA routes and healthcare facilities. (Ongoing, 2026) • Connect elderly and disabled residents to accessibility modification programs and tenant-based rental assistance programs. (Ongoing, 2026)	• NeighborWorks Columbus • Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • Planning Department • METRA Transit • Veterans service organizations (DAV, VFW) • Housing Authority of Columbus Georgia	• HOME • LIHTC • Georgia DOT (transit-oriented development) • FHWA • Private investment
Provide navigation assistance and connect residents to housing resources.	• Host quarterly housing resource fairs at accessible community locations with representatives from Habitat, NeighborWorks, lending institutions, and City departments. (Ongoing, 2026) • Utilize CDAC board to inform neighborhoods of resources and public engagement opportunities. (Ongoing, 2026)	• NeighborWorks Columbus • Columbus Community Reinvestment Department	• CDBG • CCG Staff Time • HUD Housing Counseling grants • Philanthropic sources

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
	• Expand publicity of housing programs through local radio, TV (CCG Channel 80), social media, churches, grocery stores, and community centers, targeting hard-to-reach populations. (Ongoing, 2026) • Establish a South Columbus Housing Resource Navigator position through the City or a partner organization to provide one-on-one counseling on available programs, foreclosure prevention, homebuyer education, and rental assistance. (2027)	• Local churches and civic organizations • Local media outlets • Financial counseling agencies	• Volunteer/in-kind contributions
Public Facilities and Infrastructure			
Restore, expand, and maintain parks, recreation centers, and community gathering spaces.	• Ensure a formal Parks Maintenance and Refurbishment Plan is in place and covers all existing South Columbus facilities, with defined maintenance and improvement schedules. (Ongoing, 2026) • Prioritize investment areas with ongoing guidance from community members. (Ongoing, 2026) • Reopen and upgrade existing neighborhood amenities (including Ardahlia Mack Park and Benning Hills Park) with programming for youth, families, and seniors. (2027) • Consider opportunities for a new community park or splash pad in the Winterfield neighborhood. (2028)	• City Manager's Office • Parks and Recreation Department • Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • Muscogee County School District	• CDBG • SPLOST • CCG General Funds • Georgia DNR Recreation Grants • Philanthropic and corporate sponsors

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
		• Nonprofit service providers • Neighborhood associations	
Improve pedestrian safety, transit access, and multimodal connectivity.	• Continue implementation of the City’s Complete Streets policy requiring bicycle lanes, pedestrian-friendly shoulders, or parallel multi-use paths on all collector and arterial roads during widening and new construction projects. (Ongoing, 2026) • Prioritize investment areas with ongoing guidance from community members. (Ongoing, 2026) • Initiate a Sidewalk Connectivity and Repair Program prioritizing gaps within a half-mile of schools, parks, transit stops, and key facilities (library, natatorium, civic commons), with ADA-compliant upgrades. (2027) • Coordinate with METRA to improve bus service in the NRSA: increase route frequency, improve last-mile service options, install shaded bus shelters, and improve route signage. (2027)	• Engineering Department • Public Works Department • METRA Transit • Planning Department • Columbus-Phenix City MPO • Georgia DOT • PATH Foundation	• CDBG • Georgia DOT Transportation Alternatives Program • FHWA • Surface Transportation Block Grants • FTA Section 5307 / 5339 (Transit Capital) • Columbus-Phenix City MPO allocations

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
	• Install pedestrian-scale lighting, crosswalks, and traffic-calming measures on Victory Drive and Macon Road to improve safety. (2028)		
Invest in stormwater infrastructure and critical utility improvements.	• Coordinate with Columbus Water Works on water and sewer line assessments and replacements in aging sections of the NRSA. (Ongoing, 2027) • Design and construct stormwater drainage improvements on Foye Avenue and other flood-prone streets, incorporating green infrastructure elements where practical. (2028) • Pursue Environmental Impact Bonds (EIBs) to fund green stormwater infrastructure, modeled on Atlanta's Westside EIB program. (2028)	• Public Works Department • Engineering Department • Columbus Water Works • Columbus Community Reinvestment Department • Georgia Environmental Finance Authority	• CDBG • GEFA water/ sewer/ stormwater loans • Environmental Impact Bonds • CCG General Funds / Capital Improvement Program • EPA Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) • ARPA remaining allocations

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
Ensure equitable delivery of city services across South Columbus.	• Improve trash collection reliability — enforce schedule adherence, address missed pickups, and expand dumpster access for multifamily properties. (Ongoing, 2026) • Establish formal levels-of-service benchmarks for code enforcement, trash collection, street maintenance, and bus service, comparing South Columbus to citywide averages and publishing annual equity reports. (2027) • Assign dedicated Code Enforcement officers to the NRSA with proactive inspection authority and updated ordinance tools giving officers stronger enforcement power for repeat violators. (2027) • Implement a neighborhood watch and community ambassador program modeled on Winterfield's existing volunteer ambassador model, including partnerships with police for community-oriented policing. (2027)	• City Manager's Office • Inspections and Code Enforcement Department • Public Works Department (Sanitation) • Columbus Police Department • METRA Transit • Neighborhood civic associations	• CCG General Funds • Code enforcement fee revenue • Staff Time • CDBG
Land Use			
Promote strategic redevelopment of vacant, abandoned, and underutilized properties.	• Conduct a comprehensive vacant property inventory and GIS mapping exercise for the NRSA, categorizing parcels by redevelopment potential (residential infill, commercial reuse, community space, demolition). (2027)	• Planning Department • Columbus Community	• CDBG • TAD revenues

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
	• Streamline Land Bank property disposition processes to accelerate conveyance of city-held parcels to qualified developers, CHDOs, and community land trusts for affordable housing and commercial use. (2027) • Utilize Urban Redevelopment Act powers to assemble land, fund site preparation, and provide gap financing for catalytic projects. (2027)	• Reinvestment Department • Columbus Land Bank Authority • CCG Economic Development • Private developers • CHDOs	• Urban Redevelopment Act incentives • New Markets Tax Credits • Opportunity Zone incentives • Private development capital
Adopt land use policies that support walkable, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development patterns	• Consider adopting a zoning overlay for key corridors (Victory Drive, Macon Road) encouraging mixed-use development, ground-floor retail, residential density near transit, and design standards that reinforce neighborhood identity. (2028) • Amend zoning regulations to remove barriers to affordable housing construction, including support for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), reduced minimum lot sizes, and flexible parking requirements near transit stops. (2028) • Establish a South Columbus Neighborhood Identity Program with gateway signage, wayfinding, and	• Planning Department • Engineering Department • CCG City Council • Columbus-Phenix City MPO • METRA Transit • MidTown, Inc.	• CCG General Funds • Staff Time • Georgia DCA Planning grants • APA Community Planning Assistance grants • TAD revenues

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
	streetscape standards reflecting the area's character and heritage. (2028)	• Neighborhood stakeholder groups	

Funding

A wide range of funding sources will be required to implement the strategies outlined in this plan. The following subsections describe potential funding mechanisms for economic development, housing, public facilities, infrastructure, land use, and neighborhood revitalization activities in South Columbus. These sources reflect both traditional tools and new opportunities that align with the needs and priorities identified through the 2026 engagement process.

Revolving Loan and Micro-Grant Programs

Revolving loan programs remain a viable tool for supporting small business development, commercial rehabilitation, and housing repair. These programs can be capitalized through federal, state, and local government funds, as well as private lenders, foundations, and corporate partners. Loan repayments replenish the fund and support future lending.

However, input from entrepreneurs in Columbus made clear that micro-grants are often more appropriate for small businesses, creatives, and early-stage entrepreneurs in South Columbus. Micro-grant programs can be funded through:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) economic development funds
- Philanthropic foundations
- Corporate sponsorships
- Local business improvement initiatives
- Public-private partnerships

Micro-grants may support façade improvements, equipment purchases, marketing, licensing, and startup costs.

Workforce Development Programs

Workforce development initiatives may be funded through:

- CDBG public services funding
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds
- Partnerships with Columbus Technical College, Columbus State University, and WorkSource Georgia
- Corporate and philanthropic workforce development grants
- Employer partnerships for job training and transportation assistance

Funding may support youth workforce readiness, soft-skills training, apprenticeships, and transportation solutions for workers without reliable access to jobs.

Residential and Commercial Repair Programs

Housing rehabilitation and commercial repair programs may be supported by:

- CDBG housing rehabilitation funds
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- State housing trust funds
- Tax abatements for low-income homeowners making documented improvements
- Nonprofit partners such as Habitat for Humanity and NeighborWorks Columbus

These programs may include sliding-scale repair assistance, 0% interest loans, weatherization support, and accessibility modifications.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is a primary financing tool for producing and preserving affordable rental housing in the South Columbus CRP area. LIHTC provides equity for new construction and substantial rehabilitation, enabling developers to deliver high-quality units that remain affordable to low- and moderate-income households over the long term. Because this Redevelopment Plan meets Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) standards for a Community Revitalization Plan (CRP), LIHTC applications within the South Columbus area may receive competitive scoring advantages.

LIHTC resources can be paired with CDBG, HOME, and local infrastructure investments to support mixed-income redevelopment, senior housing, and the rehabilitation of aging multifamily properties. Recent projects such as Miles Crossing and Providence Pointe demonstrate how LIHTC can leverage local commitments to expand affordable housing options for families and seniors. As the City advances its housing goals, LIHTC will continue to serve as a central tool for transforming underutilized sites, stabilizing older rental stock, and increasing the supply of safe, affordable housing in the NRSA.

Blight Elimination and Vacant Property Reinvestment

Blight elimination and redevelopment of vacant properties can be funded through:

- CDBG acquisition and demolition funds
- Local general fund allocations
- Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) revenue
- Bonds issued for blight remediation

- Land Bank Authority funding
- Blight taxes or enhanced millage rates for vacant and abandoned properties
- “Round-up” donation programs on utility bills

Funding may support demolition, stabilization, acquisition, and redevelopment of vacant homes and commercial buildings, with a priority on **resident-first disposition** to prevent speculative investor purchases.

Code Enforcement and Rental Housing Quality

Strengthening code enforcement and improving rental housing conditions may be supported through:

- CDBG code enforcement funding
- Fines and fees from non-compliant properties
- Local general fund allocations
- Partnerships with legal aid organizations for tenant rights education
- Funding for proactive rental inspection programs

These resources can support enforcement, inspections, landlord accountability, and tenant education.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Public facility and infrastructure improvements may be funded through:

- CDBG public facilities funds
- Local capital improvement funds
- Tax Allocation District (TAD) revenues
- State and federal transportation funds
- Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) loans for water, sewer, and stormwater projects
- Environmental Impact Bonds for green infrastructure
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) BRIC grants for flood mitigation

These sources may support parks, recreation centers, sidewalks, lighting, stormwater improvements, and ADA accessibility.

Transit and Mobility Improvements

Transit improvements, including expanded service hours, shaded bus stops, and improved route coverage, may be funded through:

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 and 5339 funds
- State transit grants
- Local match contributions
- Partnerships with METRA
- Employer-sponsored transportation programs
- Mobility-focused philanthropic grants

Funding may also support safe pedestrian routes to transit, crosswalk improvements, and first-mile/last-mile solutions.

Supportive Housing and Homelessness Services

Supportive housing, homelessness services, and facility improvements may be funded through:

- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds
- Continuum of Care (CoC) funding
- State housing trust funds
- Philanthropic homelessness initiatives
- Hospital community benefit dollars
- Partnerships with faith-based organizations

Funding may support shelter improvements, hygiene facilities, case management, reentry housing, and domestic violence protections.

Food Access and Community Health

Food access initiatives—including community gardens, food pantries, and healthy food retail—may be funded through:

- USDA Community Food Projects grants
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)
- SNAP-Ed partnerships
- Corporate grocery partnerships
- Local nonprofit and philanthropic support

These resources can help address food deserts and improve access to healthy, affordable food.

Neighborhood Cleanups and Beautification

Neighborhood cleanups, beautification projects, and community-led maintenance efforts may be funded through:

- Neighborhood associations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Corporate sponsorships
- Philanthropic foundations
- CDBG public services funding
- Volunteer-driven initiatives supported by small grants

These programs may include litter removal, landscaping, community gardens, and public art.

Potential Challenges

This redevelopment strategy reflects the assets, needs, and priorities identified by South Columbus residents, business owners, service providers, and institutional partners. As the City moves into implementation, several challenges may affect the pace, scope, and sustainability of progress:

- **Evolving Community Needs:** Economic conditions, housing markets, and neighborhood priorities continue to shift rapidly. Rising rents, increased investor activity, and changing workforce demands may require the City to adapt programs and funding allocations over time.
- **Capacity Constraints Among Partners:** Many of the organizations critical to implementation—including small businesses, nonprofits, neighborhood associations, and faith-based partners—operate with limited staff and financial capacity. Sustained collaboration will require technical assistance, clear communication, and predictable funding.
- **Resource Limitations:** Federal, state, philanthropic, and corporate funding sources fluctuate year to year. Competition for grants is increasing, and some funders have reduced capacity following the pandemic. The City may need to combine multiple funding sources to support long-term revitalization.
- **Infrastructure and Maintenance Backlogs:** Deferred maintenance in parks, recreation centers, sidewalks, stormwater systems, and transit infrastructure may slow

implementation or increase project costs. Addressing these backlogs will require coordination across multiple City departments.

- **Housing Market Pressures:** Investor purchases, rising rents, and aging housing stock create challenges for preserving affordability. Without strong code enforcement and targeted reinvestment, displacement pressures may increase.
- **Transportation Barriers:** Limited transit frequency, irregular schedules, and gaps in sidewalk connectivity continue to restrict access to jobs, services, and community amenities. These barriers may limit participation in new programs unless addressed concurrently.
- **Community Trust and Engagement:** Residents expressed frustration with inconsistent communication, limited visibility of programs, and uneven service delivery. Successful implementation will require transparent communication, ongoing engagement, and visible early wins.
- **Interdepartmental Coordination:** Economic development, housing, transportation, code enforcement, and public works activities intersect in South Columbus. Effective implementation will require coordinated planning, shared timelines, and consistent messaging across City departments.

These challenges underscore the importance of flexible, community-responsive implementation strategies and strong partnerships across the public, private, nonprofit, and neighborhood sectors.

Performance Measures

The City of Columbus will track progress toward the goals of the South Columbus Redevelopment Plan using measurable benchmarks over a 10-year period. These benchmarks reflect both the scale of available resources and the priorities identified through the 2026 engagement process. Annual progress reports will document accomplishments, identify barriers, and adjust strategies as needed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BENCHMARKS	Quantity (10-Year Target)
Small businesses assisted (grants, technical assistance, façade improvements)	Businesses assisted: 20
Entrepreneurs supported through training, workshops, or resource navigation	Public service activities (Non-LMH): 150 persons assisted

Jobs created/retained through small business support	40 jobs
Commercial properties improved or activated	Façade Treatment/Business Building Rehab: 10 businesses

HOUSING BENCHMARKS	Quantity (10-Year Target)
New affordable rental units constructed	20 housing units
New affordable homeowner units constructed	20 housing units
Owner-occupied homes rehabilitated	100 housing units
Rental units rehabilitated or improved	150 housing units
Down-payment assistance provided	75 households
Vacant/abandoned homes acquired & rehabbed for resident ownership	25 housing units
Seniors/disabled households assisted with modifications	75 housing units

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BENCHMARKS*	Quantity (10-Year Target)
Parks or recreation facilities improved	5 facilities
Miles of new or improved sidewalks, crosswalks, or pedestrian lighting	8 miles
Bus stops improved with shelters, shade, or accessibility upgrades	25 stops

Stormwater improvements completed in priority areas (e.g., Foye Avenue)	3 projects
Vacant and/or abandoned properties cleared through demolition or stabilization	40 buildings
Community gardens, food access sites, or neighborhood service hubs established	6 sites

*Includes Public Facilities, Infrastructure, and Land Use



COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT

COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT



Conclusion

The South Columbus Redevelopment Plan reflects a comprehensive, community-driven effort to understand neighborhood conditions, identify shared priorities, and chart a practical path toward revitalization. Throughout this process, residents, business owners, nonprofit partners, and public agencies contributed detailed insights about the strengths of South Columbus and the challenges that continue to shape daily life. Their input, shared through public meetings, stakeholder interviews, surveys, and informal conversations, was essential in grounding this plan in lived experience rather than assumptions. The themes that emerged from this engagement are clear: residents want safe and well-maintained housing, stronger commercial corridors, more opportunities for small businesses and youth, improved public spaces, and equitable access to city services. These priorities directly informed the goals and implementation strategies contained in this plan.

The plan also draws on extensive data analysis, including demographic trends, housing conditions, economic indicators, and infrastructure needs. Together, the data and community input paint a consistent picture of a neighborhood with significant assets but also one facing persistent disinvestment, aging housing stock, limited retail and employment options, and infrastructure gaps. The strategies outlined in this plan respond directly to these conditions, focusing on achievable, neighborhood-scale improvements that align with broader citywide initiatives.

Importantly, this document is structured to meet the requirements of three complementary planning frameworks. As a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA), the plan satisfies HUD's criteria for a contiguous, primarily residential area with a high concentration of low- and moderate-income households. It includes a clear assessment of economic conditions, identifies opportunities for revitalization, outlines actions to expand economic opportunity, and establishes measurable performance outcomes. These elements position the City to take advantage of the regulatory flexibilities available within an NRSA, particularly for economic development, housing activities, and public services delivered through qualified community-based organizations.

As a Community Revitalization Plan (CRP), the document meets Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) standards by delineating a targeted area, establishing housing as a central goal, assessing existing infrastructure, and identifying specific implementation measures. This designation strengthens the competitiveness of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) applications within the South Columbus area and supports the City's broader efforts to expand affordable housing options.

Finally, as an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) under Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Act, the plan provides the necessary foundation for the City to designate the area as an Urban Redevelopment Area, adopt the required findings regarding blight and public welfare, and

appoint an implementing entity. These elements ensure that the City can access state redevelopment tools and incentives to support revitalization efforts.

While the plan is ambitious, it is also grounded in practical implementation steps. The strategies emphasize coordination across City departments, partnerships with nonprofit and private organizations, and alignment with existing programs such as CDBG, HOME, ESG, LIHTC, and local capital investments. The Community Reinvestment Department will lead implementation, supported by partners with expertise in housing, economic development, workforce training, and infrastructure planning. The performance measures included in the plan provide a clear framework for tracking progress and adjusting strategies as conditions evolve.

Revitalization is a long-term effort, and no single plan can resolve every challenge facing South Columbus. However, this document establishes a strong foundation for coordinated action, informed by the people who know the neighborhood best. By combining community insight, data-driven analysis, and the tools available through NRSA, CRP, and URP designations, the City is well-positioned to make meaningful, sustained improvements in housing quality, economic opportunity, and neighborhood conditions. The work ahead will require persistence, collaboration, and continued engagement with residents—but the path forward is clear, and the commitment to South Columbus is strong.