



SOUTH COLUMBUS

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

AUGUST 2021

Revised August 2025

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT DEPARTMENT

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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 Wynnton, Willett, and Avondale Heights.

The plan has been developed by Mosaic Community Planning and Hall Consulting with two 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. 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 term of ten years to focus current and leverage future investment directed at revitalization efforts.

Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) 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.

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 nine different census tracts [tracts 20 (partial), 22 (partial), 27 (partial), 28 (partial), 30, 32, 33.02 (partial), 34, and 107.03 (partial)]. For convenience of data access and analysis in this redevelopment plan all nine complete tracts, taken together, make up the NRSA study area. The study area is an approximation of the actual NRSA. The South Columbus NRSA is located within the designated study area, but the study area extends beyond the NRSA in places to encompass the full geography of the census tract. The NRSA boundary is outlined in the two reference maps that follow.

Most of the study area is located west of Interstate 185 roughly bound by Brown Avenue, Lumpkin Road, and Weracoba Creek on the west, State Spur 22 in the north, and Fort Benning in the south. The study area east of Interstate 185 is bound by St. Marys Road in the north and Fort Benning in the south. The study area is comprised primarily of residential neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial shopping centers. Neighborhoods in the study area include Wynnton, Willett, and Avondale Heights.

The data tables within this section provide demographic and housing data from the 2019 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

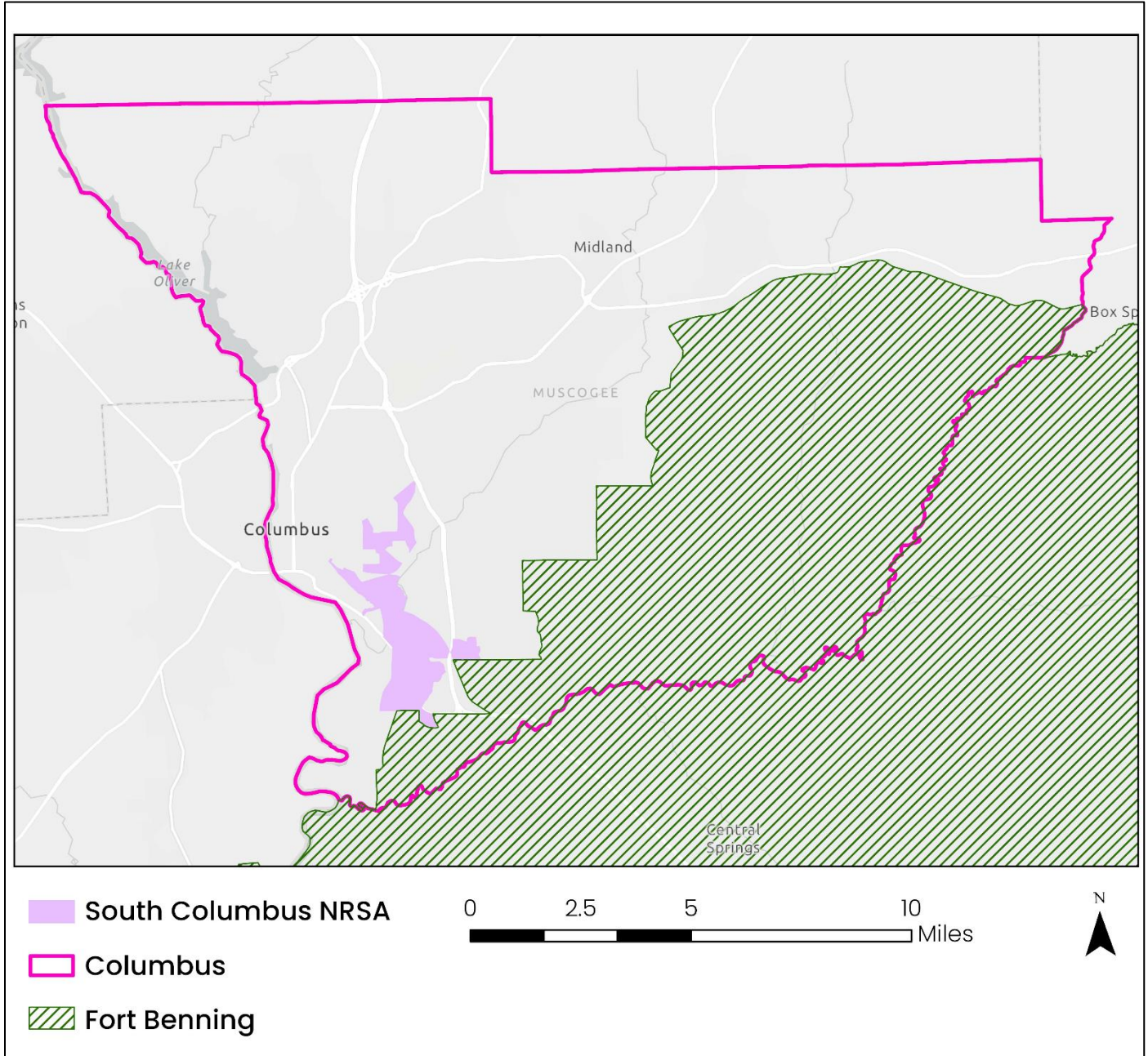


FIGURE 1: SOUTH COLUMBUS NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATION

South Columbus NRSA Detail

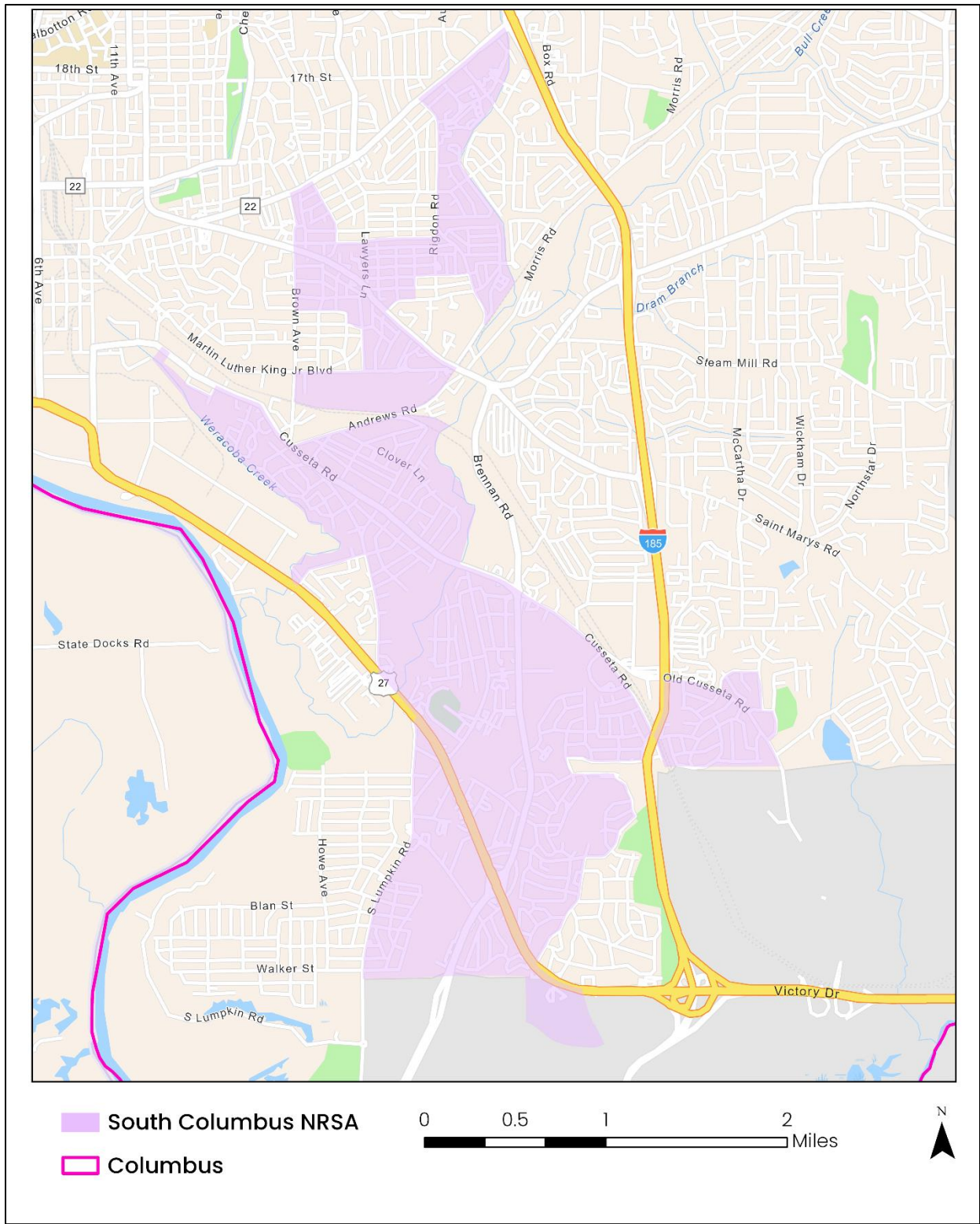


FIGURE 2: SOUTH COLUMBUS NRSA DETAIL

Population

The population that resides in the study area represents 10.8% of the total population in Columbus. The study area experienced a higher growth rate (10.3%) compared to the city (6.3%) between 2010 and 2015. However, both experienced population decline between 2015 and 2019 with the study area losing population at a much faster rate (-14.4%) than that of the city (-2.3%).

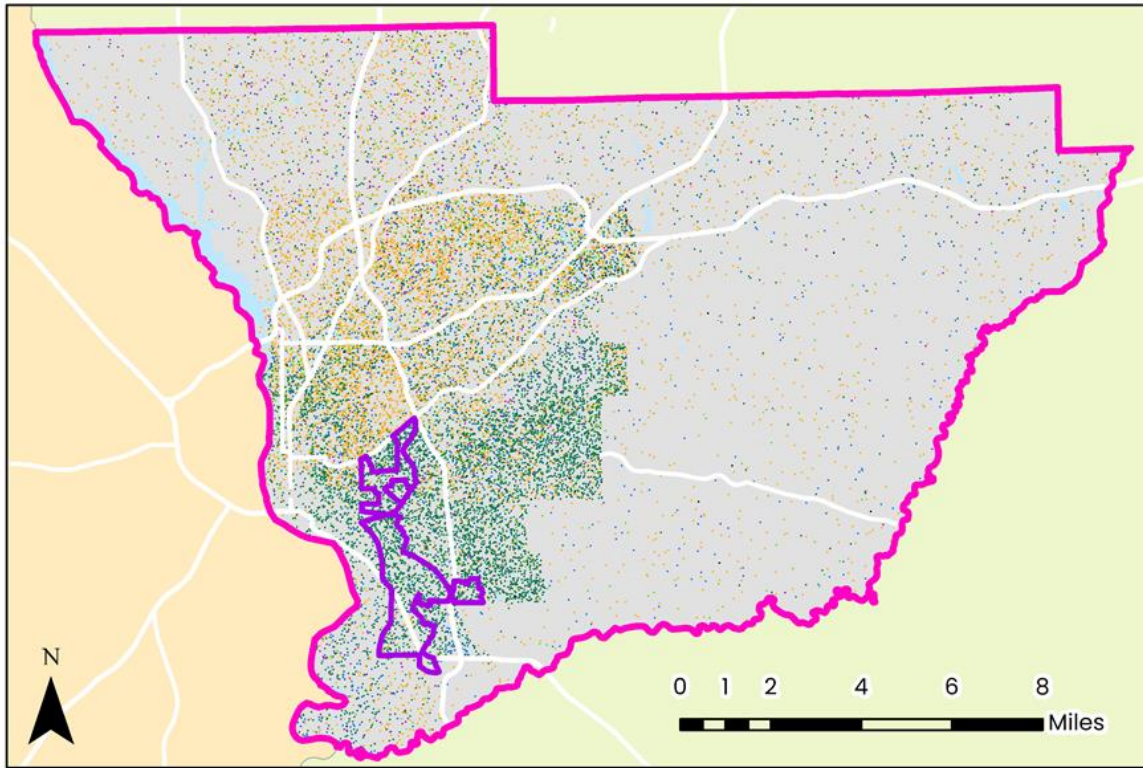
Population	Study Area	City of Columbus
2019 ACS	21,236	195,739
2015 ACS	24,303	200,285
2010 Census	21,806	187,629

Race and Ethnicity

African American residents comprise a significant majority in the study area. The proportion of residents in the study area who are African American is significantly higher compared to the city of Columbus as a whole. 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. The share size of White residents in Columbus comprising nearly half of the total population is significantly larger compared to the study area. Latino residents make up the third largest racial or ethnic group in the study area, while residents that identify as two or more races is the fourth largest in the city.

Race/Ethnicity	Study Area	City of Columbus
% African American	91.1%	46.3%
% White	5.9%	43.3%
% Two or more races	1.4%	4.6%
% Latino (of any race)	3.1%	2.3%
% Some other race	1.0%	2.7%
% Asian	0.3%	2.5%
% American Indian and Alaska Native	0.3%	0.4%
% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%

Race and Ethnicity



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

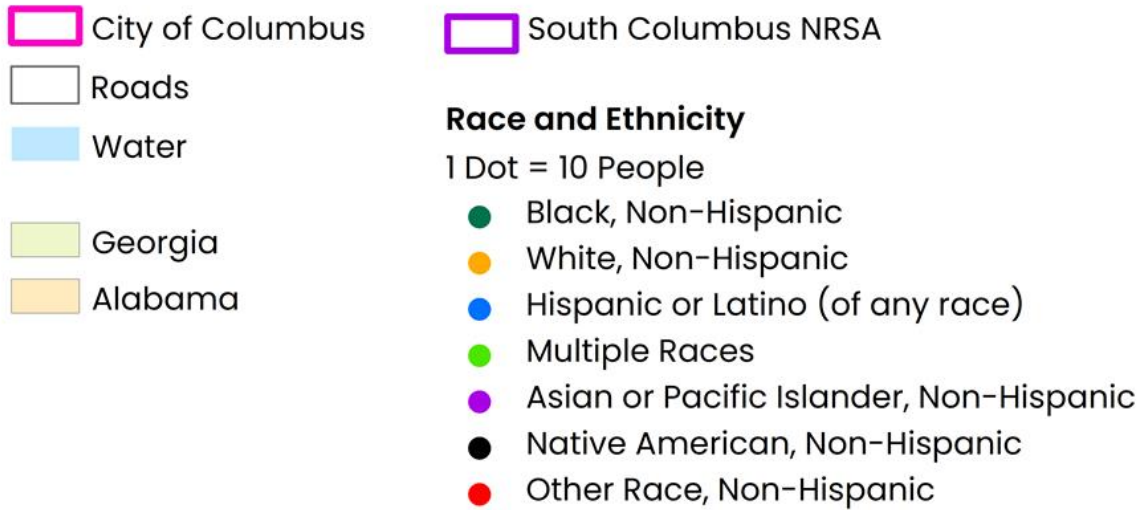


FIGURE 3: RACE AND ETHNICITY

Low/Moderate Income Population

According to HUD’s low/moderate income data based on the 2015 ACS, nearly three quarters (72.0%) of residents in the study area have low or moderate incomes. Residents with low or moderate incomes comprise a significantly 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 (39.9%).

Low/Moderate Income Population	Study Area	City of Columbus
Total residents	24,303	200,285
Low or moderate income residents	17,495	79,895
% Low or moderate income residents	72.0%	39.9%

Household Composition

Family households represent just over half of all households in the study area. The share of family households in the study area is smaller in the study compared to household data in Columbus. Average household size for both the study area and Columbus are the same.

Households	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Family	54.7%	61.6%
% Non-family	45.3%	38.4%
Average household size	3.4	3.4

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 organizations, business and property owners, nonprofit organizations, and local government agencies.

**SOUTH COLUMBUS RESIDENTS
YOU'RE INVITED!**

Please join us for a community meeting about redevelopment opportunities in the South Columbus Area.

As an active resident, we need to hear from you!

- What types of new development would you like to see?
- What strategies could bring more business and jobs to the area?
- What opportunities exist to increase housing options?

Join us for a virtual conversation

**Wednesday,
June 2
6:30pm**

Join online:
<https://zoom.us/j/94790580842>

Or by phone:
Dial: 929-205-6099
Meeting ID: 947 9058 0842



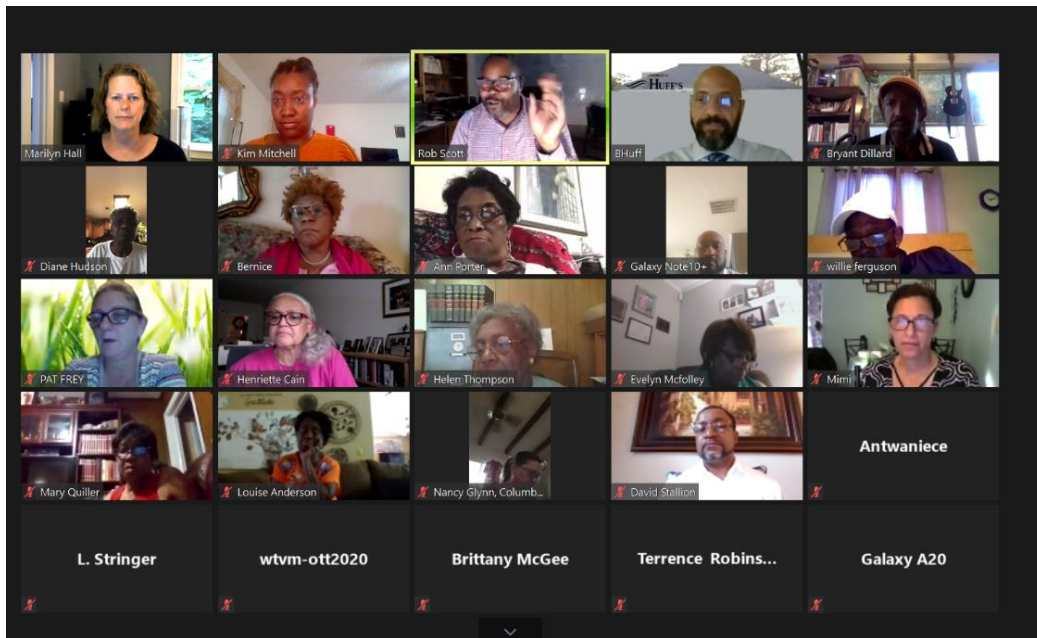
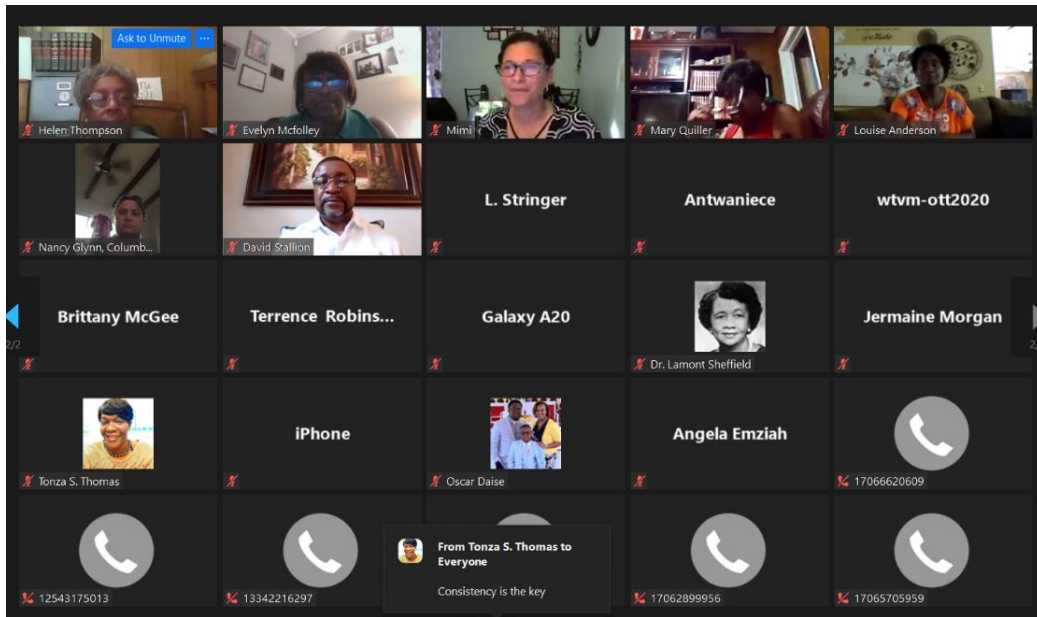
The City of Columbus is currently developing its 5-Year Consolidated Plan to assess the City's housing and community development needs for 2021-2025. The Plan will guide how the City spends funding received from HUD to address community needs. A second study, the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice is also being conducted to examine barriers to equal housing and access to jobs, schools and transportation across the City. For more information about the project, please contact Jeremy Gray, Mosaic Community Planning, at 470-435-6020 or info@mosaiccommunityplanning.com.



Public Meeting

About fifty (50) residents and other stakeholders attended a virtual public meeting to discuss neighborhood assets and opportunities. The virtual public meeting was Wednesday, June 2, 2021 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. To engage residents and stakeholders in the planning process, flyers were distributed to local leaders, community groups, and churches.

During the meeting, stakeholders identified strengths and assets in South Columbus, including those related to housing, economic development, and public facilities and infrastructure. 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.



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.

Stakeholder Interviews

In addition to the virtual meetings, 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, Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, elected officials, and Midtown Inc./Chamber of Commerce. Local religious leaders, community spokespersons, and business owners were also interviewed.

Media Coverage

There was considerable media coverage of NRSA Community Consultation process. It was the headline news story on WTVM, Columbus' major television channel. (<https://www.wtvm.com/2021/06/03/south-columbus-residents-discuss-development-ideas-during-virtual-meeting/>) As a result of the media coverage additional local residents emailed and phoned to provide input.



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

Several factors shape economic development in the city of Columbus. In particular, the region's River Valley Regional Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy details goals for investing in workforce development and education. Investments in these high-priority areas will help to address the city's workforce development, job creation, and infrastructure needs.

Workforce development programs in Columbus focus on training workers in high-demand, well-paying industries and connecting job seekers with regional employers in these sectors. WorkSource Georgia-Lower Chattahoochee provides career counseling and assessment, exploration of training/educational needs, on-the-job training for adults and dislocated workers, internships for in-school youth, internship and placement services for out-of-school youth (ages 18-24), work reintegration and placement services for adults and dislocated workers, remedial and adult literacy, and occupational skills/classroom training. Columbus State University and Columbus Technical College offer academic degrees, certificates, and workforce training opportunities.

A number of major economic development assets are located within and near the South Columbus neighborhood, including large employers, schools, government facilities, small businesses, grocery and drug stores, neighborhood retail, health care facilities, arts and culture, and the sprawling Fort Benning. Although its northwestern edge only abuts the southern boundary of the NRSA, Fort Benning is a strategic military facility of national importance and is the city's largest employer, counting nearly 35,000 jobs according to 2015 data contained in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The influence of Fort Benning on South Columbus and its economic and workforce development prospects is substantial.

In the Midtown area within the NRSA are significant City and County facilities, including the City Service Center, the Columbus Public Library, Columbus Aquatic Center, and the Muscogee County Tag Office. Educational facilities within the wider South Columbus area include Spencer High, Baker Middle, Eddy Middle, Dorothy Heights Elementary, Rigdon Road Elementary, South Columbus Elementary, and the Rainey-McCullers School of the Arts. A variety of neighborhood and national chain retail outlets are also present, including those in the Midtown Shopping Center and the Walmart Super Center on Victory Drive.

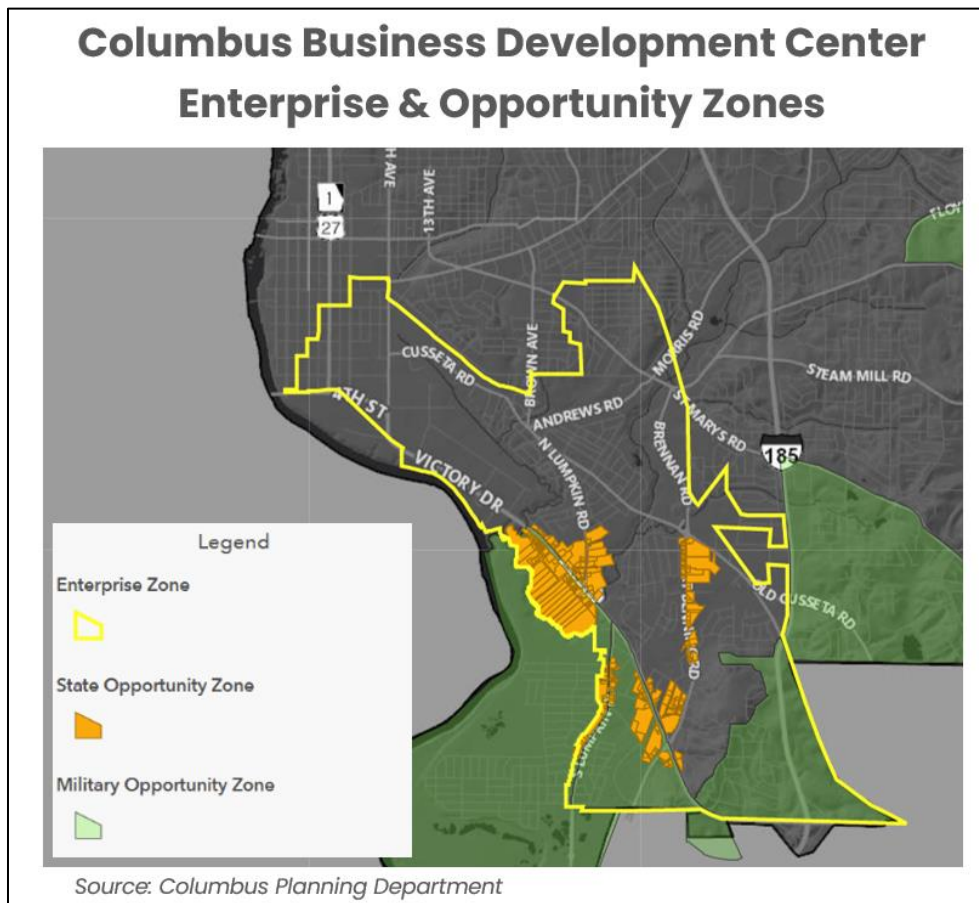


FIGURE 5: ENTERPRISE AND OPPORTUNITY ZONES PROVIDE TAX BENEFITS TO INVESTORS.

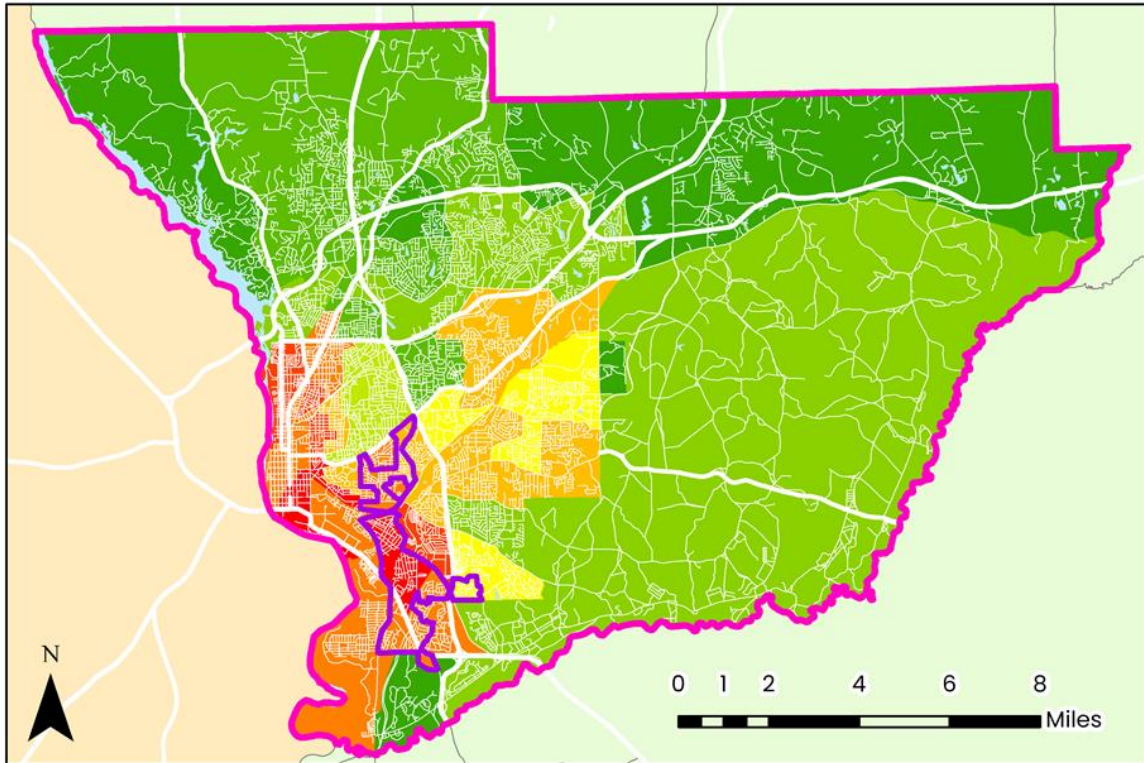
Additionally, Columbus has made good use of other redevelopment tools and designations to attract jobs and economic development investments to South Columbus. Portions of the South Columbus NRSA are contained in an existing Enterprise Zone, Opportunity Zone, and three different Tax Allocation Districts. 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

One-third of the population in the study area is below poverty level. The proportion of residents below poverty level in the study area is approximately 13 percentage points higher compared to the city of Columbus. Areas with the highest percentage of residents below poverty level are concentrated in the Avondale Heights neighborhood.

Poverty Level	Study Area	City of Columbus
Population below poverty level	21,105	39,001
% Below poverty level	33.5%	20.7%

Poverty Rate



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Percent of Population Below Poverty Level in Past 12 Months

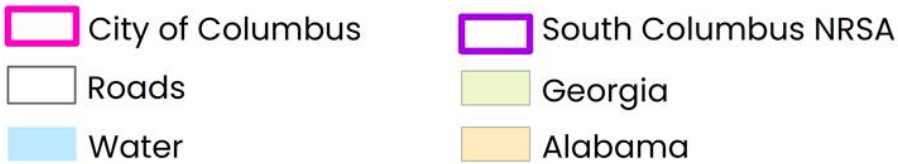


FIGURE 6: PERCENT OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LEVEL, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

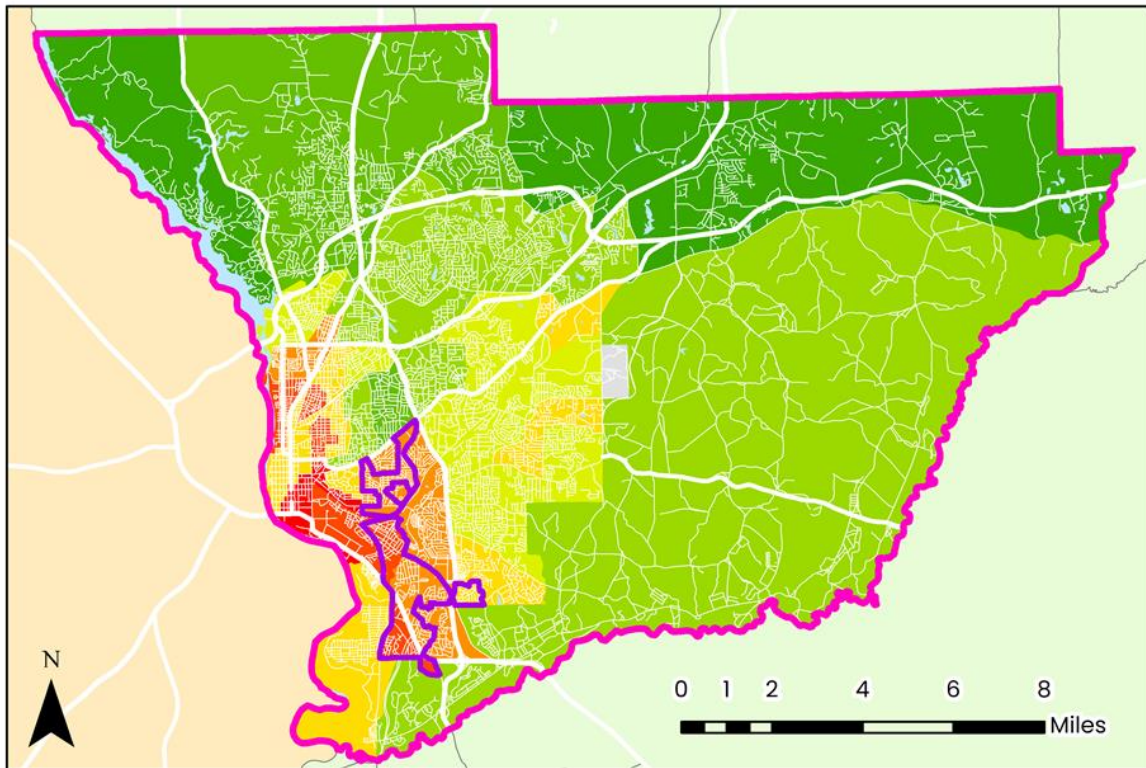
Household Income

The median household income in the study area is less than half the median household income of all households in the city of Columbus. Nearly a third of all households in the study area have incomes less than \$15,000, almost double the proportion of households in the city.

According to the data visualized in Figure 7, residents with low incomes are primarily concentrated in the southwest region of the city. Median household incomes of census tracts within the study area mostly range from \$15,000 to \$30,000. Neighborhoods along the northern border of Columbus have the highest median household income.

Household Income	Study Area	City of Columbus
Median household income	\$21,542	\$46,408
% Households with income under \$15,000	29.1%	16.4%
% Households with income \$15,000- \$24,999	18.9%	12.1%

Median Household Income



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Median Household Income

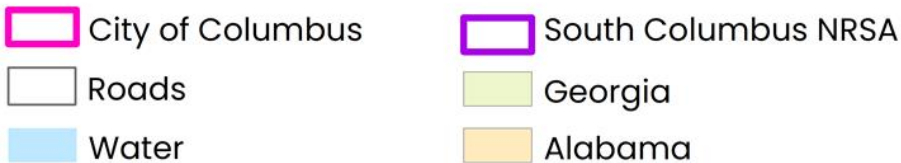


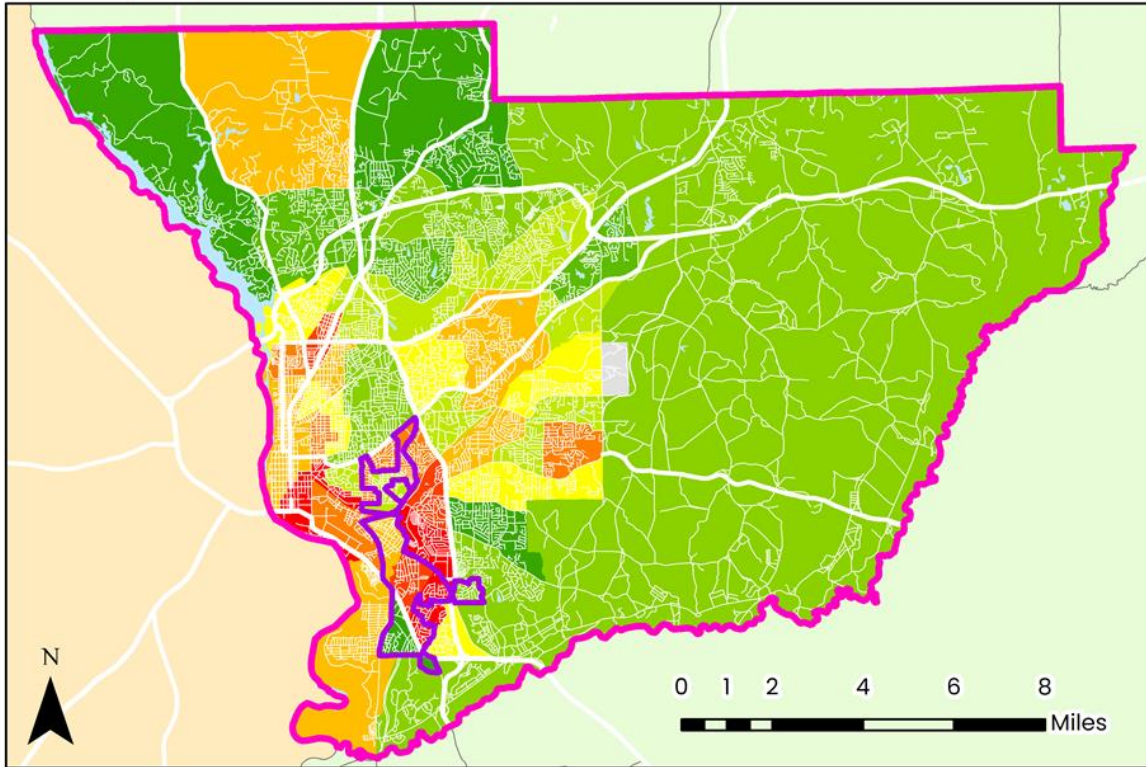
FIGURE 7: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

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. Nearly one-third of the population residents in the census tract 33.02 of the study area are unemployed. This is the highest unemployment rate among all study area census tracts and is more than triple the unemployment rate of Columbus as a whole (9.2%). The second highest unemployment rate of 21.9% is found in a neighboring census tract. Five of eight census tracts have unemployment rates higher than the city. Figure 8 shows that areas with the highest unemployment rates are located within and around the study area.

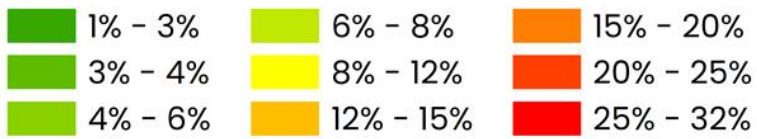
Labor force participation rates of populations residing in the study area show lower levels of engagement with the labor market compared to the city as a whole. All census tracts within the study area have labor force participation rates lower than the 60.6% labor force participation rate of Columbus with the lowest rate of 48.8% found in census tract 22. Labor force participation rates are relatively uniform throughout the study area with rates of all study area census tracts hovering around the 50% mark.

Unemployment



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Unemployment Rate for Population Aged 16+



Data Unavailable

City of Columbus

South Columbus NRSA

Roads

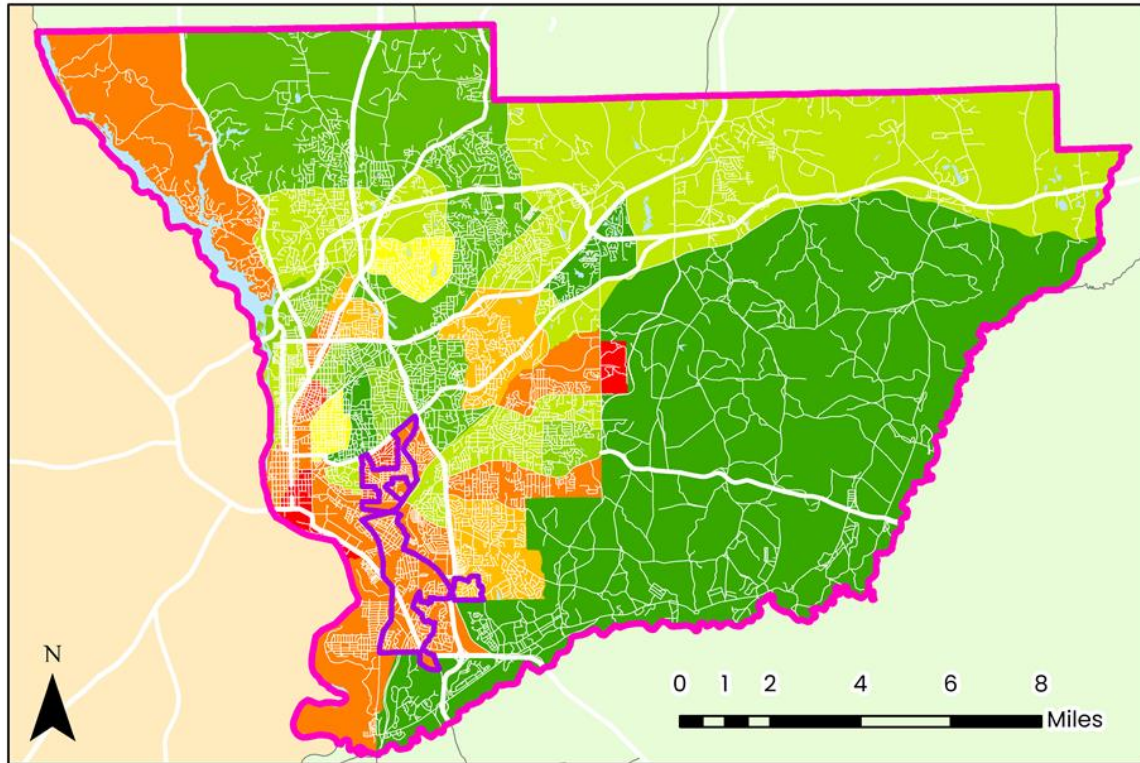
Georgia

Water

Alabama

FIGURE 8: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

Labor Force Participation



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Percent of Population Aged 16+ in Labor Force

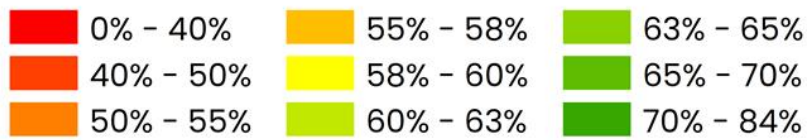


FIGURE 9: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

Food Access

Compared to Muscogee County, the study area has a higher proportion of residents who have low incomes and live more than half a mile from a supermarket.

Food Access	Study Area	Muscogee County
Share of population that are low income individuals beyond 1/2 mile from supermarket	44.5%	30.4%

Source: United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. (2015). Food Access Research Atlas. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/download-the-data/>

Economic Development Needs and Opportunities

Residents and stakeholders who participated in this planning process noted several economic development needs and opportunities, including:

- To encourage economic development, the neighborhood needs beautification and a facelift. For example, the corner store needs to be held accountable for trash accumulation.
- There is need to support small local businesses and bring back sense of pride in the neighborhood. Local people go to North Columbus to shop instead of shopping in South Columbus.
- There is a need for the City to use its media resources to promote local events and businesses. Local businesses cannot afford to join the Chamber of Commerce to get promoted.
- There is a need to improve safety and reduce crime. Residents may know who commits crimes but are afraid to say anything.
- There is a need to educate residents on how to open a business and be entrepreneurs. This could bring businesses back to the area. The programs should teach business plan creation, effective marketing and advertising strategies and development of sustainability and business growth.
- There is a need to eliminate the stigma that prevents businesses, organizations, and individuals from investing in the area.
- There are a lot of small businesses in the area and they need assistance to keep up with places like Walmart and Family Dollar. Façade improvements and the ability to increase salaries would help the community. Multigenerational minority owned businesses in need of funding to renovate, rehabilitate and expand their current businesses should be identified and notified of funding opportunities.
- More employment opportunities are needed for youth and young adults to reduce crime and improve livelihoods. Prisoners do the trash pickup and maintenance. They do not do a good job, and this is entry level work that paid workers should be doing instead. Young people don't have access to jobs, so they sell drugs instead.
- Nearby attractions like the National Infantry Museum, Westville, CSU, and Ft. Benning provide an opportunity to bring customers to restaurants and stores.

- The community needs sit-down restaurants and more opportunities for shopping. Nice shopping facilities like Costco and Target are possible and desirable. The infrastructure is here already.
- The area needs job diversity. There are industrial and warehousing jobs, but not very many.
- There is a need for job training and jobs within the neighborhood that pay a living wage. Commuting to a low-paying job elsewhere does not help the individual or neighborhood.
- Vacant and underutilized industrial sites provide opportunities for jobs. For example, a prefab housing manufacturer could build housing parts and assemble them in the neighborhood to provide low/mod income housing.
- Need more office spaces to attract a variety of businesses such as financial and technology. These businesses would help raise average incomes.
- There is a need to connect business owners with existing resources like Startup Columbus and the Cunningham Center.
- The community needs a structure for a strong champion organization. South Columbus is part of the MidTown Inc. area, but it is not their focus.
- Having more middle-income and affordable housing in Columbus would help attract businesses to the City.
- The area needs modernization and beautification. For example, landscaping, the exterior of buildings, increased lighting, widened ADA accessible spaces and sidewalks.
- There is a need to attract diverse industries such as grocery, restaurant, hospitality, technology and entertainment that combine to create a thriving and self-sufficient neighborhood ecosystem as opposed to one that perpetuates a cycle of obesity and poverty.

Housing Assets and Needs

In combination with economic development, housing quality and affordability are important components to supporting neighborhood revitalization and meeting community needs. Stakeholders and residents cited several assets in the neighborhood relating to housing.

- There are a lot of beautiful mid-century homes.
- The neighborhood is diverse with many retirees, young families, and singles.
- There is a lot of love and comradery that has developed over the years.
- The community still has long-standing neighborhoods where many retired military choose to live.
- The neighborhood is close to I-185 and everything you need. (Alabama, doctors, 15-20 minutes from everything)
- There are assets in the neighborhood like the new high school and new ball fields.
- Homes that used to house military families are still in good shape, but other areas are blighted.
- There is senior housing west of Fort Benning Rd. near Levy Dr.
- Old trailer parks were cleaned out and the remaining two are in decent condition.
- Habitat for Humanity has built homes in the area.

- Baker Village was transformed to Arbor Pointe to provide low- and moderate-income housing. Arbor Point is nice and well kept. Elderly people live there, and the community needs more like it.

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) makes up roughly 14% in both the Enterprise area and throughout the city. The share of mobile homes is higher in the study area.

STRUCTURE TYPE	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Single-family detached	61.6%	65.0%
% Single-family attached	0.7%	2.1%
% 2 to 9 unit structures	21.1%	16.8%
% 10+ unit structures	14.0%	14.8%
% Mobile homes	2.5%	1.3%

Age of Housing Stock

Housing stock in the study area is much older than the city’s housing stock. Housing units built before 1960 comprise over one-third of all housing stock in the study area. In comparison, less than one-quarter of the housing stock in Columbus was built before 1960. The proportion of housing units built before 1960 is nearly double the share size of housing units built since 2000 in the study area; a stark contrast to the composition of new and old housing stock throughout the city as a whole.

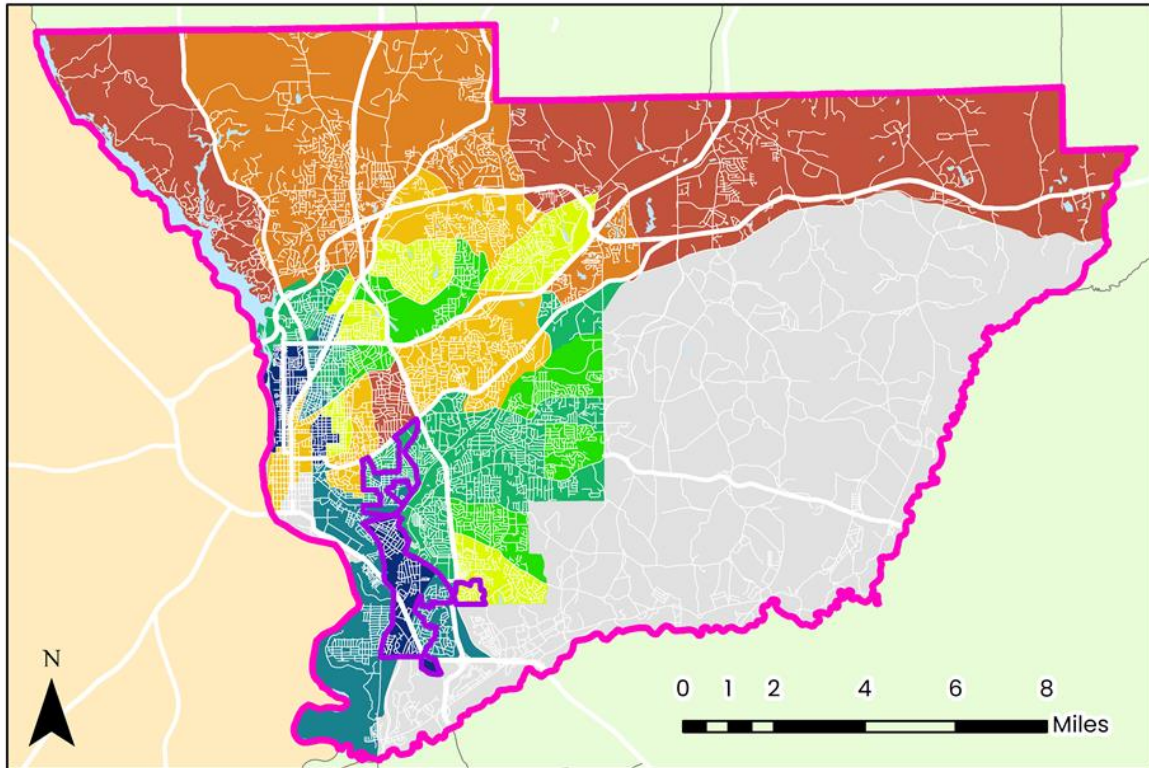
AGE OF HOUSING	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Built before 1960	37.0%	23.9%
% Built 1960 to 1969	17.6%	14.9%
% Built 1970 to 1979	13.4%	15.2%
% Built 1980 to 1989	7.7%	11.7%
% Built 1990 to 1999	6.1%	12.8%
% Built since 2000	18.2%	21.5%

Housing Value

Housing values in the study area are significantly lower than those in the city overall. Nearly one quarter of owner-occupied homes in the study area have values below \$50,000, compared to just 8.0% of homes citywide. The majority of homes in the city are valued over \$100,000, while most homes in the study area are valued below \$100,000. The median home value of homes in Columbus is more than double the median home value in the study area. Home values are the highest in the northern region of the city. According to Figure 10, some of the census tracts with the lowest median home values are located within the study area.

HOUSING VALUE	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Less than \$50,000	22.3%	8.0%
% \$50,000 - \$100,000	37.6%	23.6%
% \$100,000 - \$299,999	39.4%	57.1%
% \$300,000 or more	0.7%	11.3%
Median home value	\$58,700	\$141,300

Median Home Value




Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Median Home Value for Owner-Occupied Units

 \$32,000 - \$50,000	 \$125,000 - \$150,000
 \$50,000 - \$75,000	 \$150,000 - \$200,000
 \$75,000 - \$100,000	 \$200,000 - \$250,000
 \$100,000 - \$125,000	 \$250,000 - \$420,000

 Data Unavailable

 City of Columbus

 South Columbus NRSA

 Roads

 Georgia

 Water

 Alabama

FIGURE 10: MEDIAN HOME VALUE, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

Tenure

The ratio of owner to renter households in the study area is relatively balanced with owners representing 40.1% of all households and the majority skewing towards renters. The proportions of owner and renter households throughout the city is nearly balanced but still slightly favors renters. Census tracts located in the Avondale Heights neighborhood of the study area have high proportions of renter-occupied units.

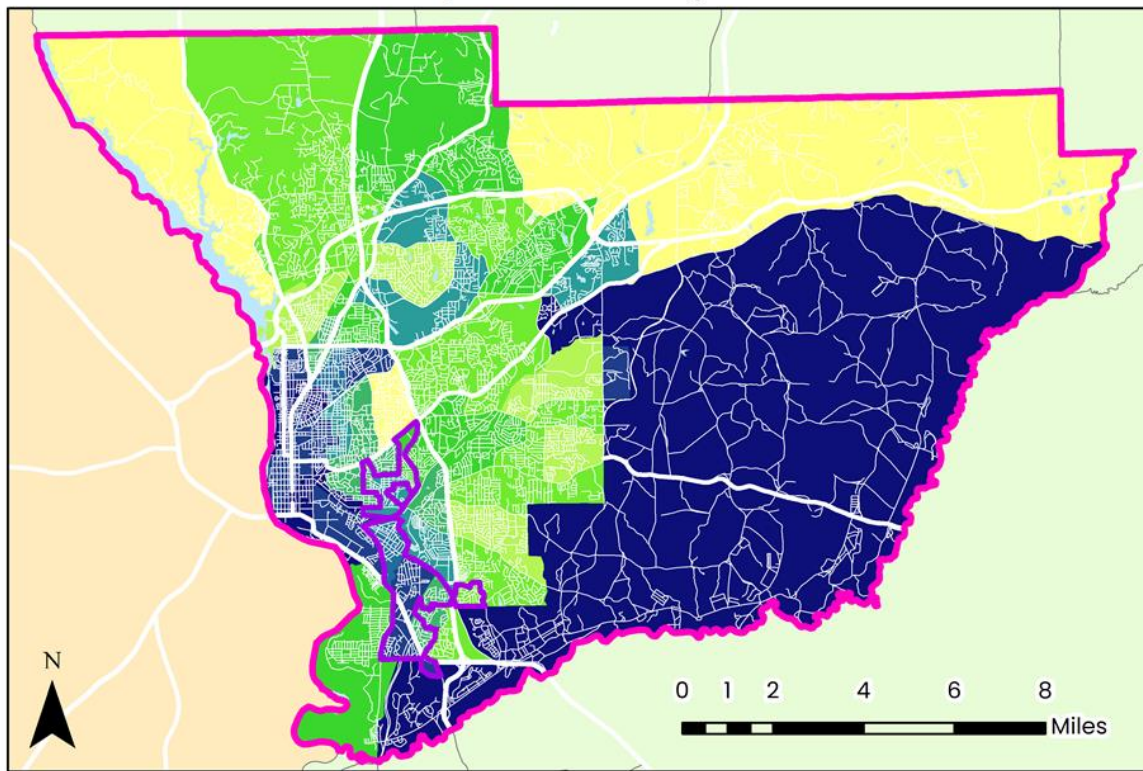
TENURE	Study Area	City of Columbus
% Owner occupied	40.1%	48.0%
% Renter occupied	59.9%	52.0%

Rent and Affordability

Median contract rent in the study area is \$469, significantly lower than the city’s median contract rent of \$710. The lowest median contract rent of \$364 in the study area is found in census tract 28. The study area’s highest median contract rent of \$616 is found in census tract 107.03. Figure 12 shows the range of median contract rent in comparison to the rest of Columbus.

While rents in the city tend to be relatively low, residents may still spend a high proportion of their incomes on housing costs. Households spending 30% or more of income on housing costs are considered housing cost burdened, and those spending 50% or more of income on housing costs are considered severely housing cost burdened. In the study area, 64.0% of renter households spend 30% or more of median household income on gross rent. The proportion of housing cost burdened residents is smaller with only 50.5% of renter households experiencing cost burdens in the city. Figure 13 shows residents in the study area possibly spend the highest percent of median household income on housing costs.

Percent Renter-Occupied Housing Units



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Percent Renter-Occupied Housing Units

 9% - 15%	 45% - 55%	 70% - 75%
 15% - 35%	 55% - 65%	 75% - 85%
 35% - 45%	 65% - 70%	 85% - 100%






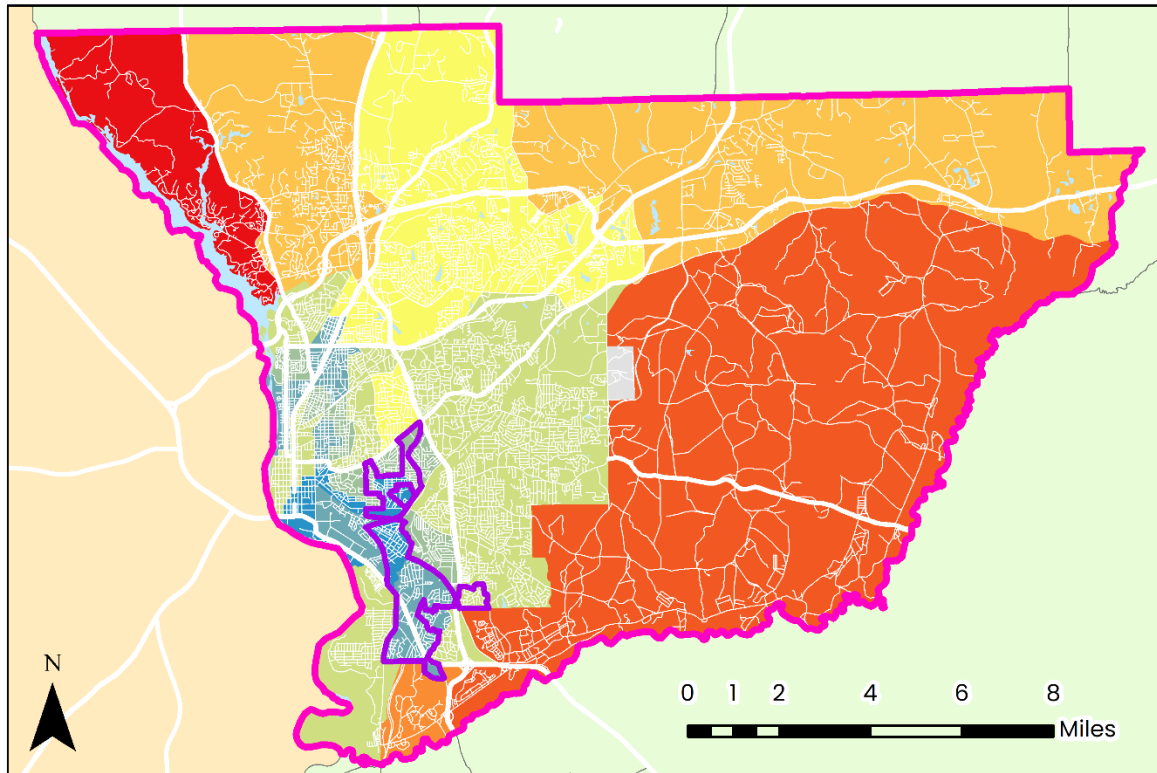
 City of Columbus	 South Columbus NRSA
 Roads	 Georgia
 Water	 Alabama

FIGURE 11: PERCENT RENTER-OCCUPIED, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

Median Contract Rent



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Median Contract Rent

\$250 - \$400	\$600 - \$800	\$1,200 - \$1,500
\$400 - \$500	\$800 - \$1,000	\$1,500 - \$1,800
\$500 - \$600	\$1,000 - \$1,200	\$1,800 - \$2,600

Data Unavailable

City of Columbus

South Columbus NRSA

Roads

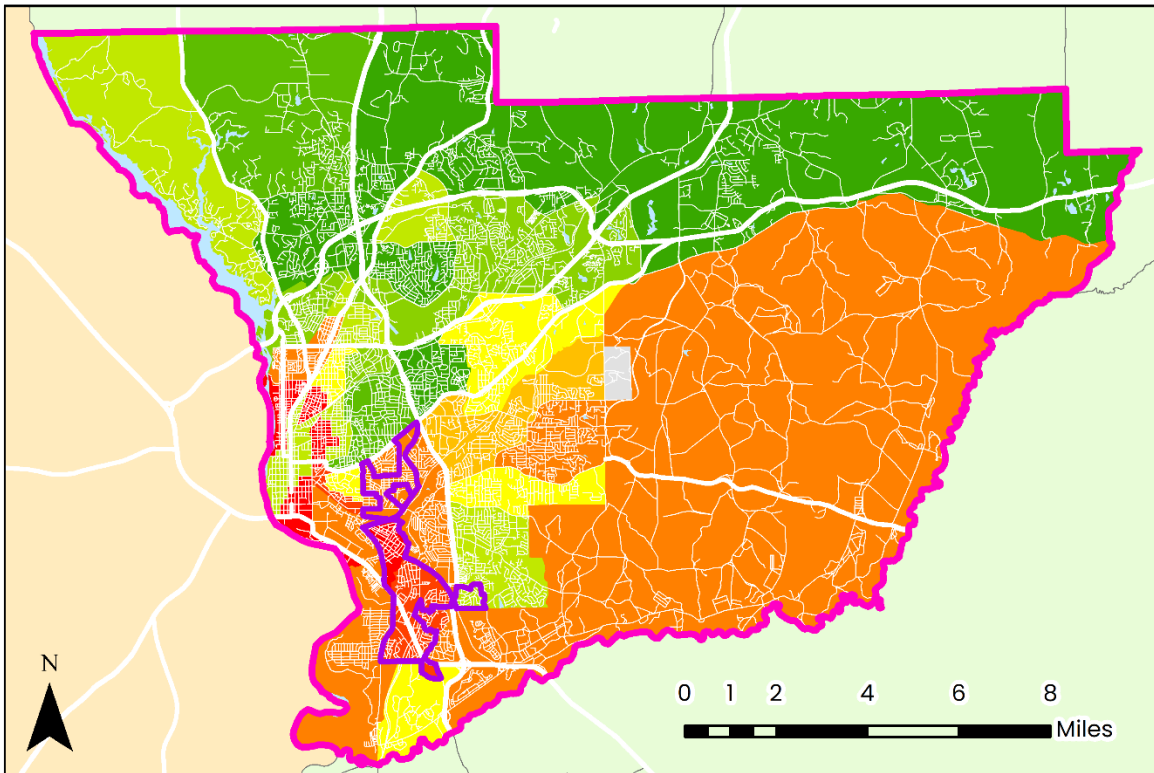
Georgia

Water

Alabama

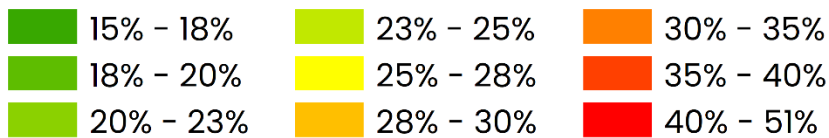
FIGURE 12: MEDIAN CONTRACT RENT, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

Median Gross Rent as Percent of Median Household Income



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

Median Gross Rent as Percent of Median Household Income



Data Unavailable

City of Columbus

South Columbus NRSA

Roads

Georgia

Water

Alabama

FIGURE 13: GROSS RENT AS PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME, STUDY AREA AND CITY OF COLUMBUS

Housing Needs and Opportunities

Meeting attendees and stakeholders interviewed during this planning process noted the following housing needs and opportunities for improving housing in South Columbus.

- There is a need raise awareness and to educate residents on what assistance is available and how they can get the help they need. This could provide original homeowners, mostly elderly and senior citizens, the ability to remain in their homes as homeowners instead of being forced to surrender their homes which will turn into rental properties. To accomplish this, additional outreach is needed. Residents suggested:
 - Conduct community engagement sessions on how to apply for the grant funding at well-known centralized locations such as Spencer High School, Baker Middle School and Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church,
 - One-on-one appointments with counselors about available funding options under the programs,
 - Increased visibility through public announcements on local radio, TV, and news stations, including local government channel (CCG Channel 80), and neighborhood churches (regardless of size or denomination).
 - Post funding advertising in well-traveled and heavily populated areas such as grocery stores, outdoor markets, community centers, civic organizations, and social media outlets.
- The neighborhood needs beautification, a facelift. Bring back “Yard of the Month”.
- There is an opportunity to reinvest in deteriorating vacant homes. A lot of older people have died, and the houses are now vacant.
- There is a need to reduce crime to improve the neighborhood.
- There is a need for landlords to ensure their properties are maintained. Investor accountability is needed. Tenants are not taking pride in the property. They leave out trash, and do not maintain things.
- There are a lot of apartments, there is a need for affordable single family, owner-occupied housing.
- There is a need for affordable home-ownership opportunities. There is no inventory for households making \$30,000-\$40,000 per year. There is nothing but rental housing and expensive homes. The neighborhood needs more single-family homes that are affordable, not \$180K and above. And an educational program on how to manage your home.
- The area needs safe and affordable housing for seniors. They are living in deteriorating homes because they can’t afford to live elsewhere. There are people in the neighborhood who already work in eldercare. Having the jobs in the neighborhood is an opportunity.
- There are many abandoned homes that provide the opportunity for reinvestment. These homes should be offered to people in these neighborhoods – not provided to investors.
- There is a need for a homeless shelter and a place for people released from jail.
- There is a need for tree root control because housing foundations are being ruined.

- There is a need to teach residents how to maintain their own rental units. Housing vouchers have replaced public housing and tenants move into housing without regular maintenance. Tenants don't know what to do or how to do it. Vouchers should come with training on how to be a good neighbor. For example, cut your grass, put out trash, how to maintain your property, and who to call for help. Properties should be inspected.
- There is a need for a rent stabilization policy. Tenants are being evicted by landlords because the rent gets too high and tenants are unable to pay.
- There is a need to address blight. Many property owners are from out of town. Demolition, cleanup, and salvage of these sites would help.
- There is a need to break the rental/public housing cycle. Barriers are low incomes and lack of information on how to become a homeowner. More programs are needed that walk people through the steps to home ownership.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

A variety of public facilities provide services and resources within or adjacent to the South Columbus NRSA, including parks, education institutions, health facilities, and community service facilities, among others. 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 size 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.

Public Infrastructure

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 at an alarming rate and Columbus is not ready for it

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

Residents and stakeholders who participated in this planning process noted the following public facilities and infrastructure needs and opportunities in the South Columbus neighborhood:

- The community needs things for families to do, like a splash pad. There is a pool in the neighborhood, but it closed because of a leakage issue. It never reopened. Other pools have opened and are properly maintained in other areas of the city. There is a need to reinvest in public parks and recreational facilities in South Columbus.
- There is a need for an intergenerational health program that seeks to overcome the prevalent health disparities found in minority communities.
- The community needs access to healthcare. A satellite health facility would be helpful.
- The community need better bus service to access necessities like grocery stores. There is a good fleet of buses, but their schedule is irregular. Also, bus stops need shade.
- There is a need to bring neighborhood rec centers back, a place for families and youth to play games. There used to be things like that in the neighborhood. They were community gathering places for families and community building.
- There is a need for greenspaces and parks that encourages a walkable environment and district.
- The community needs resources to address drugs and crime, crime prevention strategies that work. More pride in the community and more police presence could help.
- There is a need for the City to focus more of its maintenance resources on South Columbus. Residents feel that their neighborhood is neglected, and the city does not cut the grass and maintain things as well as in other areas of the City. The community needs reinvestment from the City before private redevelopment will happen.
- The neighborhood needs a robust beautification program.
- There is a need for Code Enforcement to enforce the law with tenants and landlords need to provide more dumpsters. Code Enforcement should hold people accountable.
- The community needs programs for people recently released from institutions.
- The community needs a state-of-the-art nursing home. There are a lot of retirees and veterans.
- There is a need for more family events to build community and provide things to do for families. There is an opportunity to engage with military families.
- There is a need for safer sidewalks. One respondent provided an example of a pedestrian who was hit by a car while walking on the sidewalk.
- The streets in the area need attention. The streets have potholes and are not striped correctly.
- There is a need for more regular trash pickup in the neighborhood. They skip houses, miss weeks, and when they spill trash, they just leave it there.
- There is a need to update the Code of Ordinances to give Code Enforcement Officers more enforcement power.

- There is a need for “Satellite Homes”. They would function like local branches of the library, but not be called “libraries”. They would provide a refuge for kids and provide services that are desperately needed like classes for resume writing, computers, parenting, life skills, etc. The Boys and Girls club function like this but the neighborhood needs more, localized resources.
- There is a need to connect needy people to existing services. For example, Mercy Med, Open Door Community House, Homeless Resource Network, the DAV, and VFW.
- The community needs new parks and better maintenance of the parks that exist. The park at Benning Hills needs a lot of work and the Winterfield neighborhood needs a park.
- There is a need to invest in stormwater infrastructure on Foye Avenue. People’s homes are flooding.
- The community needs a better facility for the Homeless Resource Network.
- The neighborhood needs a citizen watch program. For example, a house in the neighborhood where a person could stand watch. It could be a citizen, veteran, or police. It would be a safe place for a child to make a report. Winterfield has a model of this idea. There are “ambassadors” on each street that keep an eye on the neighborhood.
- There is an opportunity for more community involvement. For example, a homeowner’s associations without dues. If your grass isn’t cut, don’t pay a fine, instead send a community cleaning party of volunteers.
- There is a need for both the Gang Taskforce and local recreation facilities, not just one or the other. Rec centers closed to fund the Gang Taskforce.
- There are some nice facilities in the area, and they need pedestrian accessibility. For example, the natatorium, library, and civic commons.
- There is a need to find the solution to the trash problem. There are litter cleanups, but there is more trash than they can keep up with.
- There is a need to improve access to healthy food. The community is a food desert. There is a Wal-Mart and just a couple of other choices that aren’t very good.
- The community needs a food pantry.

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 2021–2025 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 (2021–2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Services: provide services through nonprofit organizations that benefit low-income residents such as homeless, youth, disabled, elderly, and other special populations.
River Valley Regional Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2018–2035)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.**
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 (2021-2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of Affordable Housing Supply: develop new single-family and multifamily affordable housing units for both homeownership and rental, to include elderly housing units and units produced by qualifying Community Housing Development Organizations. Offer supportive programs and services to increase housing access and safety, including accessibility modifications to existing homes, down-payment assistance, tenant-based rental assistance, and lead-based paint testing. • Housing Rehabilitation: rehabilitate homeowner housing to benefit extremely low-, low-, and moderate-income households. • Blight Removal: demolish uninhabitable structures in older neighborhoods to improve community aesthetics and reduce crime. • Fair Housing: provide services to residents and housing providers to advance fair housing.
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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 (2021-2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and Public Facility Improvements: promote quality of life and neighborhood revitalization through improvements to current public infrastructure and facilities.
Columbus Consolidated Government 2038 Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 constantly 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 afford housing and exclude development that increases the cost of housing.

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.

Additionally, the City funds homeowner repair and rehabilitation activities citywide that may include properties located within the South Columbus NRSA. Known as the Continuing Hope Program (formerly Project Care), the rehabilitation program will assist 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 does not itself target or otherwise identify structures for rehabilitation.

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.

Implementing the Plan

Implementation Strategy

This section outlines strategies to address economic development, housing, public facilities and infrastructure, and land use goals for the South Columbus NRSA. Each goal contains a list of recommended activities and timeframes, responsible parties and partners, and funding opportunities.

Goal	Recommended Activities and Timeframes	Responsible Parties and Partners	Funding
Economic Development Goals			
Support neighborhood revitalization; clean up and beautify blighted commercial areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen older commercial corridors and nodes by strategically encouraging commercial infill and mixed-use development. (Ongoing, 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Columbus Planning Department Columbus Community Reinvestment Department MidTown, Inc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various public and private sources
Ensure South Columbus residents have the skills and connections needed to obtain employment in high-demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a comprehensive cradle-to-career (C2C) partnership to align education, training, business, and social services around increasing talent levels in Greater Columbus. (2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Columbus 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various public and philanthropic sources Public-Private Partnerships

<p>positions that pay living wages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a broad-based adult education campaign to connect individuals who did not complete high school or college coursework with opportunities for advancement and employment. (2021) 		
<p>Support entrepreneurs and encourage the expansion of existing businesses in South Columbus that provide living wage jobs and meet key community needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a physical, flexible, and professionally staffed "center of gravity" for entrepreneurial activities in a highly visible location. (2021) • Expand capital availability for individuals who lack access to traditional capital with a pre-seed microloan program. (Ongoing, 2021) • Launch a pilot "economic gardening" program to help second-stage firms grow in Greater Columbus (2021) • Develop the proposed Benning Technology/Business Park to "become the ultimate workplace solution for military contractors and consultants desiring close proximity to Fort Benning and the Maneuver Center" creating a secure, fully-serviced employment and commercial environment (Ongoing, 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columbus 2025 • Columbus Consolidated Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private investors • Public-Private Partnerships • Local banks and financial institutions • Philanthropic foundations and donors
<p>Housing Goals</p>			
<p>Support the development of new high-quality affordable housing for both rental and homeownership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalyze the development of new housing options in core neighborhoods (Ongoing, 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columbus 2025 • Planning Department • Community Reinvestment Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCG General Funds • Staff Time

Rehabilitate existing single-family housing for affordable homeownership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist income eligible homeowners with much needed repair, maintenance, weatherization, safety, and beautification of homes through the Continuing Hope Program (2022). • Acquire and/or rehabilitate single-family homebuyer properties (2022) • Utilize the Land Bank to purchase property for redevelopment purposes, particularly in blighted communities. (2021) • Establish funds and procedures to acquire, demolish and redevelop vacant housing units that are so under-maintained that they have become neighborhood nuisances and safety hazards. (2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Reinvestment Department • Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity • Inspections and Code Enforcement Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDBG • CCG General Funds • Possible grants • Staff Time
Support new well-kept multifamily rental housing for low- and moderate-income households, including seniors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop affordable rental and elderly units • Ensure that senior housing is located within multi-modal transportation areas with excellent access to commercial businesses and healthcare services. (Ongoing, 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborworks Columbus • Community Reinvestment Department • Planning Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various public sources • HOME • Georgia DOT • FHWA
Provide navigation assistance to residents seeking information on available housing programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and publicize availability of affordable credit counseling for elderly and other homeowners who are facing foreclosure or first-time homebuyers. (Ongoing 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborworks Columbus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Time
Public Facilities, Infrastructure, and Land Use			
Provide well-maintained parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to pursue additional revenue sources that are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Manager's Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Time • CDBG

<p>and community recreation spaces for South Columbus residents.</p>	<p>needed to staff, operate, and maintain public facilities. (Ongoing, 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a formal and detailed maintenance and replacement program for all City Facilities. (2021) • Improve recreational facilities in low-to-moderate income census tracts. (2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Reinvestment Department 	
<p>Improve pedestrian connectivity to create safe, walkable environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance on-going and develop future efforts to improve walking and biking connectivity. (Ongoing, 2021) • Initiate a Sidewalk Connectivity program to fill identified gaps in the pedestrian network, placing priority on projects within a half mile of schools, parks, and transit stops. (Ongoing, 2021) • Develop a formal policy to expand alternative transportation opportunities by adding bicycle lanes, bicycle friendly shoulders, or parallel multi-use paths to roadways during all widenings and new construction projects for all collector or arterial streets. (Ongoing 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columbus 2025 • Columbus Consolidated Government • Planning Department • Engineering Department • Public Works Department • C-PC MPO • Georgia DOT • PATH Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various public and private sources
<p>Ensure all city services, such as code enforcement, trash collection, and bus transportation are provided equally and at comparable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish levels of service for all major facilities and services (e.g. number of parks per person, libraries per person, etc.). Part of this process should also include identifying areas where service deficiencies or excess 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Manager's Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Time

<p>levels of service throughout the city.</p>	<p>service capacity exist. (Ongoing, 2021)</p>		
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Funding

As detailed in the table of implementation strategies, a variety of funding sources may be used to support the development and maintenance of the strategies and programs contained in this plan. These sources are detailed further below.

Revolving Loan Programs

Revolving loan programs can be funded through a combination of public sources, such as the local, state, and federal governments, and private sources, such as financial institutions, foundations, and partnerships with corporate funders. These programs are often funded by an initial grant and sustained by utilizing interest and principal payments on old loans to issue new ones.

Workforce Development Programs

Workforce development programs may also be funded through a combination of public sources, such as Community Development Block Grants, and private sources, such as foundations and partnerships with corporate funders. Key partnerships with local workforce development boards, universities, and school systems may also provide connections to funding for workforce development programs.

Residential and Commercial Repair Programs

Residential and commercial repair and restoration projects can be funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds, as well as through tax abatements for low-income property owners who make and document certain improvements to their properties.

Community development corporations and nonprofits such as Columbus Area Habitat for Humanity, Access 2 Independence, and NeighborWorks may also be able to fund or finance repairs for low-income homeowners. For example, some Habitat for Humanity affiliates offer programs to make repairs on a sliding fee scale while providing 0% financing on loans, with loan payments based on homeowner income and expenses.

Blight Elimination

Bonds are one strategy that has successfully funded blight elimination efforts. For example, the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority issued a \$14 million bond to the Macon-Bibb County Commission to support blight remediation efforts. Each of the city’s nine commissioners received \$1 million to address blight, and \$5 million supported other neighborhood improvement projects.

Local option sales tax revenue is another potential funding source. Bibb County has allocated approximately \$11 million in special purpose local option sales tax revenue. Dollars from City and County general funds may also be used to address blight. Bibb County has used about \$300,000 from County general fund for blight remediation.

Another option for funding blight reduction efforts is adding an option on utility or other bills in which residents can opt into having their bill rounded up to the next dollar amount and donating the funds to blight reduction efforts.

Code Enforcement

Code enforcement can be funded through City and County budgets. Fees collected from non-compliant properties and property sales can be used to fund code enforcement efforts and sustain enforcement efforts into the future.

Public Facilities and Infrastructure

Federal, state, and local funding, including such diverse sources as Community Development Block Grant funds, funds from the City's general fund, and Tax Allocation District funds, can support the city in implementing public facilities and infrastructure strategies.

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) operates several loan programs to assist municipalities in financing water, wastewater, and solid waste infrastructure projects such as placing water and sewer lines, stormwater control projects, and wastewater treatment facilities.

Environmental Impact Bonds are an approach being tested in cities across the country to fund green stormwater infrastructure. They are form of pay-for-success debt financing in which investors purchase a bond, the repayment of which is linked to the achievement of an environmental outcome, such as reducing flooding and combined sewer overflows. These bonds allow cities to make investments in cost-saving strategies that will save money in the long term. For example, Atlanta's publicly offered EIB will fund approximately \$12.9 million worth of green infrastructure projects in the city's flood-prone Westside neighborhoods, reducing the costs associated with chronic flooding.

Neighborhood Cleanups

Neighborhood cleanups may be funded by neighborhood organizations, nonprofit organizations, or other local groups, with support from foundations, corporate funders, or other philanthropic groups. Federal, state, or local funding may also be used to support these programs.

Potential Challenges

This redevelopment strategy was developed in collaboration with neighborhood residents and stakeholders and therefore reflects the assets, needs, and opportunities noted by residents and stakeholders. Challenges associated with implementation of the plan may include:

- There will be a need to consider the shifting needs of local business owners, property owners, and residents resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Corporate, nonprofit, philanthropic, and other funders will likely have reduced capacity to make investments in programs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, increased funding may be available to the City through the CARES Act and other federal sources.
- Community engagement around plan implementation during and following the COVID-19 pandemic will be shifted online, and capacity of residents and stakeholders to participate may be limited.

These challenges are important for the City to consider as the plan is implemented. The plan goals and actions are broad in order to support funding for a variety of needed programs and services.

Performance Measures

Based on the assessment of community assets, needs, and opportunities and the formation of neighborhood revitalization goals through this planning process, the City of Columbus has set the following 10-year benchmarks for implementation of the South Columbus Redevelopment Plan. The City will annually assess its progress toward meeting these goals. The accomplishments anticipated by the goals outlined here will depend upon sustained investment of not just the City’s CDBG and HOME entitlement funds, but the active participation and investment of other partners as well.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BENCHMARKS	Quantity
Businesses Assisted	2 businesses

HOUSING BENCHMARKS	Quantity
New Housing Units Constructed (with Affordability for Low- and Moderate-Income Households)	12 housing units
Homeowner Housing Rehabilitated	48 housing units

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BENCHMARKS*	Quantity
Vacant and/or abandoned properties cleared through demolition	20 properties

*Land Use and Infrastructure

Conclusion

The needs assessment and planning process for the South Columbus Redevelopment Plan demonstrated a variety of assets, needs, and opportunities in the South Columbus area. The goals, actions, and funding strategies included in this plan provide a strategic approach to addressing key community needs by building upon existing community assets through key opportunities. Targeting of City and other resources to the South Columbus Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area will support improvements to public facilities and infrastructure; rehabilitation of housing and commercial areas; new commercial and residential development, including affordable housing; job creation through development and support of small businesses; and workforce development programs, among other strategies. Leadership from and collaboration with residents, community organizations, stakeholders, and local government will be key to successful implementation of best practices for economic development, housing, public facilities and infrastructure, and land use to support neighborhood revitalization in South Columbus.