Georgia Systemic Change Alliance

Savannah Report by

The Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force

Submitted to the

Mayor and City Council
of Savannah, Georgia

What is the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance?

During the summer of 2020, in response to the COVID-19 crisis that deepened existing racial, social, and environmental disparities, The Sapelo Foundation launched a special two-year, $800,000 grant initiative in Georgia. Through ongoing and new partnerships, The Sapelo Foundation, one statewide network based in Atlanta, and three local networks based in Savannah, Brunswick, and Albany, all united to launch the Georgia Systemic Change Alliance. Though each network was at a different stage in its lifecycle and had a unique history and vision, they were all bound by their commitments to make change, learn together, and advance three common goals for their communities:

Recovering, rebuilding, and reimagining systems and policies post-COVID. Advancing the movement for black lives and broader racial justice across systems and policies. Building internal muscle and infrastructure of networks for the short-term and long-term.

Together, the four place-based networks included more than 100 social, environmental, and racial justice organizations across the state of Georgia. They also included leaders of faith, government, and business.

- **Albany Network – "Reimagine Albany" – is a nonprofit network led by the United Way of Southwest Georgia.**
- **Brunswick Network – "Community First Planning Commission" – is faith-based network by a long-standing collaboration of 18 black churches and allies called Community First. They have been convening for over a decade and deepened their efforts in the wake of the murder of Mr. Ahmaud Arbery.**
- **Savannah Network – "Racial Equity and Leadership [REAL] Task Force" – is a public-private partnership led by the Mayor's Office. During the summer of 2020, Savannah Mayor, Van Johnson, announced the Task Force and appointed former Savannah Mayor, Dr. Otis Johnson, as Chair.**
- **Statewide Network – "Just Georgia Coalition" – is an advocacy network led by the NAACP of Georgia and includes formal partnerships with Black Voters Matter, New Georgia Project, Southern Center for Human Rights, Working Families, Malcom X Grassroots Movement, and Black Male Voter Project.**

In year one, concluding in summer 2021, all networks would complete a year of planning. Specifically, each of the three local networks would complete a Network Report, with recommendations for their given community. Additionally, all four networks would complete an Alliance Case Study about the work behind the scenes during a critical year with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. In year two, starting in summer 2021, all networks would implement their plans. Together, the four networks and The Sapelo Foundation collectively selected Georgia-based Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) to manage and coordinate activities, provide technical assistance, and help write the local Network Reports and Alliance Cases Study.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is twofold: 1. To provide a living document for the Racial Equity and Leadership Task force (REAL) seated by Mayor Van R. Johnson in operationalizing its vision for dismantling racial inequities in Savannah, Georgia; and 2. To provide The Sapelo Foundation, as the funder of this initiative, with an account of the network's progress. As the designated technical assistance provider, the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) helped the REAL Task force clarify its priorities and goals.

SEEING SAVANNAH THROUGH A RACIAL EQUITY LENS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Equity is the only acceptable goal

– Paul Farmer

INTRODUCTION

Savannah, like hundreds of cities around the world, responded to the murder of Mr. George Floyd on May 25, 2020. A large rally was held on Sunday, May 31, 2020. The march from Johnson Square to City Hall was spirited and peaceful. Savannah Mayor Van R. Johnson II spoke to the crowd and expressed to them that it was not enough to just have a moment (a demonstration), but it was necessary to create a movement (sustained effort) to right the wrongs that kept Savannah from being "The Beloved Community" that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. envisioned. The mayor pledged to appoint a group of citizens that would take on the task of using data to identify racial inequities in Savannah and to make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on how to reduce or eliminate them. Mayor Johnson asked former Mayor Otis S. Johnson to work with him to identify citizens from the public sector, the private sector, and community representatives to serve on what would become the Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force. A list was carefully developed and on July 23, 2020, Mayor Van Johnson appointed 45 volunteer members to the REAL Task Force. REAL held its first meeting in August 2020 with a mandate to provide the Mayor and City Council an action plan in August of 2021. It was a very challenging year to do planning because the COVID-19 pandemic forced all meetings of REAL to be held virtually.

Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens presents data on racial inequities being experienced by citizens of Savannah and Chatham County. The data is primarily pre-COVID-19. The report seeks to answer the question of whether the racial differences identified in the community and documented in the report are disparities. Racial disparities are the result of conditions not caused by unfair conditions or racial inequities caused by unfair conditions due to the unfair distribution of social, economic, political, and environmental resources based on race. REAL used the concept of a racial equity lens to guide its work and focused on race looking for patterns in the community that demonstrate the evidence of racial inequities. REAL studied six issue areas that determine the quality of life in every community. They are criminal justice, economic mobility, education, environmental justice, health, and housing.

Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens is a report designed to encourage the Mayor and City Council of Savannah, Georgia, and the citizens of Savannah-Chatham County to support action to address the serious levels of racial inequities that exist in the community. These racial inequities are denying people of color the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential in life. Going forward the leadership role of REAL is to organize "courageous conversations" by the public sector, private sector, faith-based organizations, and the community at-large regarding actions we can take to eliminate, or at least reduce the inequities documented in the report. REAL's first assignment was to uncover and present the facts. Now the question is: "What action is the community going to take now that it knows the facts?"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, Savannah Mayor Van R. Johnson II fulfilled one of his campaign promises to engage more of the local community in decision-making, particularly around some of the city's toughest challenges. He formed eight task forces to work on issues like affordable housing, policing, homelessness, and LGBTQ+ rights. Mayor Johnson identified citizens from the public sector, the private sector, and community representatives to serve on what would become the Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force. On July 23, 2020, he appointed 45 volunteer members to the REAL Task Force. REAL held its first meeting in August 2020. The mission of REAL is to advocate for racial equity in Savannah, Georgia by identifying the systemic and structural barriers caused by racism that make it difficult for people of color to achieve their maximum potential. REAL used a racial equity lens approach to identify and analyze data on local racial disparities. The report of REAL's findings, Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Lens was designed to encourage the Mayor and City Council of Savannah, Georgia, and the citizens of Savannah-Chatham County to support action to address the serious levels of racial inequities that exist in the community. REAL studied six issue areas that determine the quality of life in every community. They are:

- **Criminal Justice**
- **Economic Empowerment and Wealth Development**
- **Education**
- **Environmental Justice**
- **Health**
- **Housing**

Each committee was charged with developing an analysis of core problems of the City of Savannah and to recommend effective and feasible policy alternatives to the status quo. Highlights of the six reports are listed below.

Criminal Justice

The theme of the report is "Our Criminal Justice System Criminalizes Black People." Recommendations include:

- **Adopt a City and County Cash Bail Ordinance.**
- **Create a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee.**
- **Create, Enhance and Expand Community-Based Detention, Sentencing, and Re-entry Programs.**
- **Implement Implicit Racial Bias Accountability Mechanisms.**
- **Create a Standardized Data Collection System.**
- **Create a Commission to Address Racial Disparity in Juvenile Justice.**

Economic Empowerment and Development

The emphasis of the report is on (1) Income Mobility for African American, Single Head of Households/Childhood Poverty. (2) Wealth Building and Increasing African American Owned Businesses. The committee wants to document the differences between the White and Black economic experience in the greater Savannah Area.

Recommendations include:

- **Identify and allocate funding for the creation of substantial bridging capital across the existing social safety net for families falling off the benefits cliff.**
- **Using a Housing Voucher program to assist in moving families out of low-wealth communities.**
- **Incentivizing Social Capital that includes elevated peer networks, coaching, and support cohorts.**
- **Develop alternative methods for accessing benefits such as community-based group care with a portable health benefit product.**
- **Develop and Incentivize asset building programs.**
- **Increase transportation routes from highest impoverished zip codes into logistics and manufacturing areas of the county.**
- **Collaborate with local community leaders at the city and county level to establish a data-driven systems change and policy agenda that supports the economic mobility of Savannah families.**
- **Collaborate with local workforce development programs and colleges to increase and incentivize post-secondary opportunities and employment pathways with stackable credentials and education as a means for economic mobility.**
- **Decrease or eliminate zoning restrictions that make home-based business less accessible. The removal of licensure barriers not only unlocks employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the poor in low-skill occupations but also lowers prices in service driven economies.**
- **Increase Quality daycare providers and access to daycare.**
- **Focus equity investments in neighborhoods that are community-driven and supported such as co-ops.**
- **Develop and Implement a network of early learning centers.**
- **Partner with local business leaders to support and advocate for livable wages within the city limit > $12.32 per hour.**
- **Increase affordable housing availability.**
- **Increase funding for and expand access to existing effective programs.**

Wealth-Building | African American Owned Business Recommendations

Appoint a City Staff member whose primary role is to ensure the growth and acceleration of African American owned Businesses. This individual will assure the following action plan:

- **Develop and implement a business accelerator and incubation model for African American owned entrepreneurs and business owners.**
- **Use dedicated programing from the entrepreneurial center and SCORE, create a 12-week curriculum that culminates with micro-lending and grants to seed and support African American businesses.**
- **Identify key areas of industries and opportunities through gap analysis and scale programing to meet this demand.**
- **Provide a means test and performance score of existing programs aimed at Minority Business Enterprise growth to determine program efficacy and effectiveness annually. Address all gaps.**
- **Integrate Minority Business Enterprise expansion into all aspects of the City's economy.**
- **Participate in negotiations with enforcement authority to ensure equitable distribution of business and contracts.**
- **Collaborate with Savannah Economic Development Authority to develop a program that incentivizes African American business involvement to include, but not limited to:**
- **Purchasing and business programing that target minority-owned business and procurement.**
- **Participate in a city-wide racial equity program.**
- **Incentivize minority leadership in key roles and training programs. Incentivize second chance hiring.**

Education

The emphasis of the Education Committee was:

- **Education is a right.**
- **Education is a social contract with a community.**
- **Education is a determinant of socioeconomic well-being and health of a community.**

The Committee focused on the research which showed that third grade reading scores are a key predictor for school success. Using a racial equity framework, a focus was placed on the learning pathway of Black children spanning birth through the first year of post-secondary education.

Education recommendations include:

The formation of four (4) working groups to organize the following topics in the focal learning pathway:

- **Early Childhood and School Readiness: Family Learning 0-3, Preschool and Pre-K programs.**
- **Academic Success and Instructional Effectiveness: Academic Success Measures, Instruction (curricular materials, culturally relevant learning, bias), Teacher Preparation and Training.**
- **Out-of-School Learning: Afterschool and Summer Learning.**
- **School Success: Parent-School Partnerships, Discipline Policies, and Technology.**

Focused on relevant topic areas, each working group will continue the data-driven inquiry process to identify racial inequities and the underlying causes. They will research and catalog national and local research, examples, and best practices. Additionally, working group members will collaborate to document the current operations and policy landscape for their topics with consideration of availability, access, quality, relevance, participation, and impact.

Environmental Justice

In keeping with the evolution of the greater environmental justice movement, the committee applied this holistic paradigm to their analysis. In other words, they seek strategies that:

- **Affect change at a policy level.**
- **Reduce single, multiple, and cumulative risks.**
- **Improve public health for the most vulnerable populations.**
- **Enhance public participation in decision making.**
- **Promote community engagement and empowerment.**
- **Build infrastructure for healthy and sustainable communities.**
- **Employ innovative public and private partnerships.**

The committee chose to focus on three areas of inequity that impact communities of color in Savannah:

- **Air pollution**
- **Lead exposure, and**
- **Energy inefficiency**

Committee's recommendations are:

- **Conduct a full study conducted by the City of Savannah, followed by developing a cross-sector air pollution action plan with the local industrial sector and the Board of Education.**
- **Distribute air monitors, humidifiers, and air purifiers to families in affected areas of the city through community health workers.**
- **In-service training on identifying respiratory conditions to medical and school staff.**
- **Partner with the local food bank to provide food that reduces asthma to affected families.**
- **Establish a Childhood Asthma Registry.**
- **Implement state guidelines of one lead test at 20 micrograms per deciliter.**
- **Emphasize lead hazard reduction techniques over total abatement per HUD recommendations through the City's code enforcement.**
- **Integrate the new standard of checking for lead hazards in pre-1978 rental properties to allow lead hazard reduction techniques to be used with yearly monitoring of the property into code compliance.**
- **Develop a residential weatherization program that prioritizes the highest energy burdened households.**
- **Develop a program to help residents convert to using energy efficient HVAC, lighting, appliances, roofing, etc., prioritizing households with the highest energy burden.**
- **Develop a public warning, communication, and backup energy system to continue operation of critical infrastructure for residents with the highest energy burden.**
- **Integrate maternal, infant, and mental health into existing City of Savannah initiatives addressing climate change and energy efficiency.**
- **Implement a policy that assists energy efficiency improvements and other weatherization updates on the homes of vulnerable households.**
- **Increase access to perinatal health and mental health care, with targeted resources to children, families, caregivers, and pregnant and postpartum people living in climate-affected areas of Savannah.**
- **Integrate a heat vulnerability index in the City of Savannah's emergency management system to protect vulnerable residents against extreme heat.**
- **Expand the City of Savannah's community mental health infrastructure to provide outreach, training, and services to residents in need.**

Health

The Health Committee focused on the problem of "Food Apartheid" in Savannah. In Chatham County, specifically Savannah, certain communities are faced with a lack of healthy food options including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and quality, lean meat. Until recently, these communities have been referred to as "Food Deserts". To broaden the understanding of the realities that exist in many low-wealth communities of color, many activists and community organizers now use the term "Food Apartheid".

In Savannah, communities most impacted by food apartheid are low-wealth Black neighborhoods on the east and west sides of Savannah, specifically in census tracks within the 31404 and 31415 zip codes.

Recommendations:

- **Evaluate the viability of Savannah opening supermarkets sustained by the local community (co-op) or a non-profit organization.**
- **Incorporate food placement strategies in food retail stores to improve dietary related behaviors.**
- **Increase the availability of healthy food in existing corner stores.**
- **Expand of the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) incentives for fresh produce.**
- **Create initiatives focused on reducing the price of healthy food in existing stores.**

Housing

Housing affordability is already a top priority for the City of Savannah, so Mayor Van R. Johnson formed a Housing Savannah Task Force separate from the REAL Task Force, to develop strategies for improving access to affordable housing. Thus, the housing committee on the REAL Task Force was charged with identifying points of racial disparity within the city's affordability crisis.

- **Build cooperation with Chatham County Commission to expand the City of Savannah ordinance to be applied countywide.**
- **Adoption of state legislation by Savannah City Council, to include all properties, including owner-occupied properties.**
- **Create an accountability measure for landlord refusal to rent to families with children.**

Recommendations:

- **Implement racial equity metrics across all City of Savannah divisions by executive order because the data tracking system should be commensurate and centralized across all departments to have maximum impact and efficiency.**
- **Establish a data-sharing agreement with Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) and local housing nonprofits to build a culture that values the practice of tracking data on race.**
- **Although HAS does not have the ability to scale up its Housing Choice homeownership program, its potential for converting larger numbers of low-income residents into homeowners is compelling. It is a strong recommendation that Housing Choice ownership be studied further to determine the feasibility of the City of Savannah replicating it in partnership with a local community development corporations.**
- **The homeownership program currently for public housing residents can and need to be expanded in partnership with the City of Savannah. This expansion would only cost approximately $100,000 annually to cover personnel expenses, as the program uses a case management model.**
- **The committee believes that residents must be the primary beneficiaries of a housing services one-stop shop. Whether it's brick-and-mortar or virtual, it must be able to assist both potential homeowners and home developers. A strong local example of an in-person social support one-stop shop is St. Joseph's African American Health Information & Resource Center.**
- **City of Savannah Department of Planning, Zoning and Urban Design would conduct a case study that includes a cost-benefit analysis of providing density bonuses in the areas that are gentrifying rapidly and that can absorb more residential density with little opposition or impact on infrastructure.**

Data Walk REAL Talk

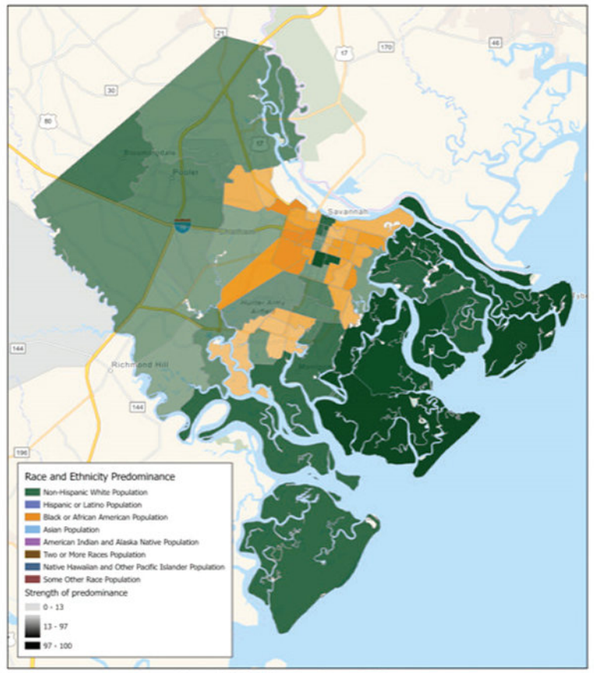
The work of REAL was handicapped by the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted public gatherings for most of the planning year. However, an opportunity to get community input presented itself after the Coronavirus vaccine became widely available. The REAL Task Force partnered with Parent University on July 31, 2021, to engage community members at the Kingdom Life Christian Fellowship. The activity, titled Data Walk REAL Talk, was designed to engage community members in a discussion about data collected by the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC) six issue area committees. There were approximately 120 in attendance: 97 registered attendees and 10 facilitators plus Parent University and church staff. Age-appropriate activities were provided for children who came with adults. Breakfast and lunch was provided to everyone.

Participants were asked to review data displayed on the walls of the church's gymnasium. The data was organized in the six issue areas that are the focus of REAL's work. Participants had time to walk around and view the data and to select data points that meant the most to them. Participants were asked to go to breakout rooms for facilitated REAL talk about what they learned about racial equity in Savannah and how they felt about the racial inequities documented by the data. A summary of information collected from participants is presented in the report. The Savannah Racial Disparity Index is the data shared at the Data Walk REAL Talk event.

Acknowledgements

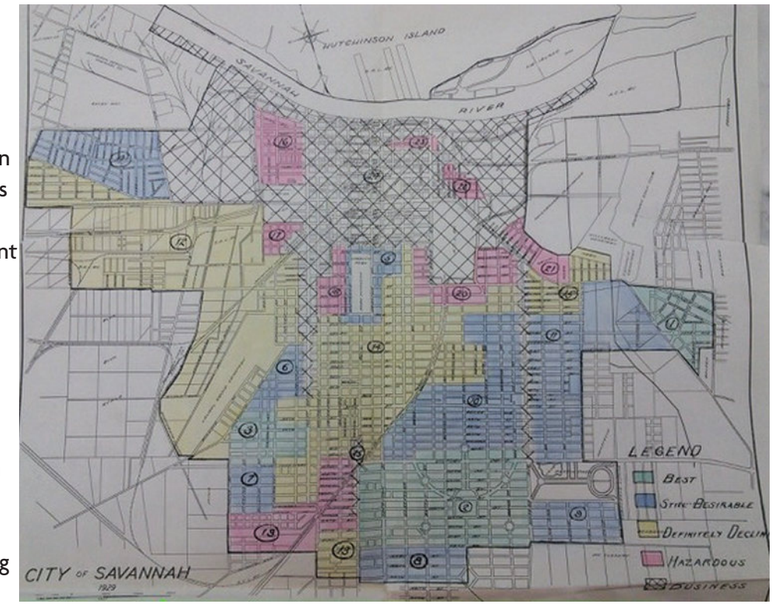
There are many people who gave their time and talent over the course of a year to do the work that REAL was tasked to do. Each of them has a stake in the report and the recommendations it makes to improve racial equity in Savannah. The report acknowledges them and encourages the community to say, "Thank you for your hard work and commitment to racial equity in Savannah!"

Chatham County Race and Ethnicity Predominance



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Creation of the Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force brought together 45 citizens of the Savannah-Chatham County community to take on one of the most important assignments ever given to a volunteer group. If inequities were found, REAL's assignment was to make recommendations to the Savannah Mayor and City Council on how to reduce or eliminate them. Members of REAL were chosen to represent public and private agencies, and members of the community at-large. While most members knew each other by reputation because of their community leadership, the normal dynamics involved in forming a working group was made difficult because of public health rules prohibiting in-person gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Remarkably, the work of REAL was conducted entirely virtually.

Savannah's racial social structure was established shortly after the founding of the British Colony of Georgia in 1733. The Trustees under the leadership of James Oglethorpe banned slavery in 1735. However, the settlers soon decided that slavery was essential to building the city of Savannah with its squares, and the emerging labor-intensive agricultural economy based on rice, indigo and cotton. Settlers ignored the ban and started importing enslaved people from South Carolina. Responding to the protests of the, settlers the ban on slavery was overturned by royal decree in 1751. By the time the ban was lifted, there were nearly 400 enslaved people in Georgia. Savannah became a major port of entry for enslaved African people. By the eve of the American Revolution, Georgia had 16,000 slaves.[1] A racial hierarchy based on White supremacy was established during the colonial period and continues to negatively influence the opportunity structure of African Americans to the present time.[2]

The majority of African Americans in Savanah are living in a situation where their socioeconomic status does not appear to improve. This is shown by two maps in this section of the report. Savannah has a population of 147,780 (2020). African Americans are 53.93% and Whites 38.88% of the population.[3] One map shows redlining in 1929. The other map shows the current demographic distribution in the city. African Americans inhabit primarily the same neighborhoods that they did in 1929. The story of the African American in Savannah continues to be one of spatial and economic segregation. The metaphor of the tale of two Savannahs, one part of the population enjoying historic White economic and social privilege and the Black population experiencing intergenerational poverty, discrimination and circumscribed life chances, is real.

The name Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force acknowledges Savannah's need to examine where it stands on the issue of racial equity. It was vital for REAL to be clear on how we understand the concept of equity and how

[1]Leslie M. Harris & Daina Ramey Berry (Eds) Slavery and Freedom in Savannah. Athens, GA. University of Georgia Press, 2014.
[2]Isabell Wilkerson. Caste The Origins of Our Discontents. New York. Random House, 2020.
[3]United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/quickfasts/savannahcitygeorgia.
[4]Annie E. Casey Foundation. Equity vs. Equality and Other Racial Justice Definitions. Blog Post Updated on April 14, 2021, and originally posted on August 24, 2020. aecf.org.
[5]Grantcraft. Grant Making with a Racial Equity Lens. www.grantcraft.org. Retrieved: June 15, 2020.

the task force would use it to measure equal opportunity in Savannah. REAL held its first meeting in August 2020 and began a discussion about the difference between equality and equity. The two concepts are sometimes conflated in discussions about race, class, and gender. The Annie E. Casey Foundation provided a useful definition of equality:

> **Equality** aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Equality promotes fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same things.[4]

It was evident that racial equality did not exist in Savannah, because everyone starts from a different place. Therefore, equity was the precise term to use in the name of the task force.

With the help of a grant from The Sapelo Foundation, REAL had consultants, The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE), to facilitate the work of REAL. PSE aided REAL to:

- **Facilitate its meetings.**
- **Develop a shared understanding of equity and why it matters to the work of the REAL Task Force in Savannah.**
- **Examine the data and circumstances that perpetuate inequities.**
- **Learn the important role history plays in understanding the root causes of inequities.**
- **Assist in the preparation of a final report to the Savannah Mayor and Council, and the Sapelo Foundation.**

PSE provided two definitions that REAL would use as it went forward in its work.

Equity

Just and fair inclusion. An equitable society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential. In short, equity creates a path from hope to change.

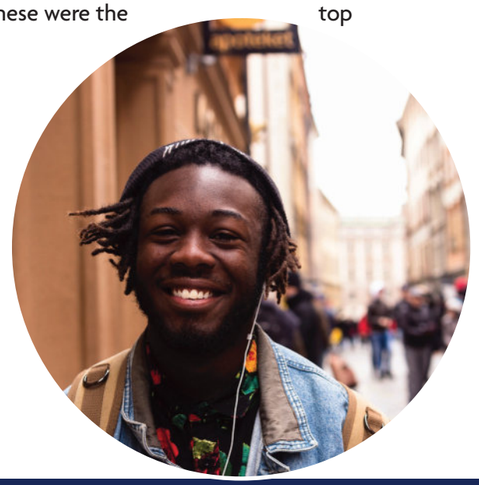
Racial Equity

What a genuinely non-racist society would look like. In a racially equitable society, the distribution of society's benefits and burdens would not be skewed by race. In other words, racial equity would be a reality in which a person is no more or less likely to experience society's benefits or burdens just because of the color of their skin.

PSE facilitators enabled REAL members to deepen their understanding of the concept of racial equity through interactive exercises that allowed participants to share their ideas about what inequities exist in Savannah and what factors contribute to those inequities. An exercise on how moments in history either advanced equity or hindered equity allowed participants to think about how racism is a social determinant. The United States' history of structural racism and exploitation is embedded in how the social system of Savannah functions and has resulted in the inequities documented in ***Seeing Savannah Through a Racial Equity Lens.***

Among the first activities that PSE facilitated for REAL was a "headline exercise" in which members were asked to develop a news headline from the future that reflected their success, and these were the top headlines:

- **Savannah school achievement is up, no disparities along race or neighborhood lines.**
- **Savannahians living below poverty level continues to decline.**
- **Savannah voter participation reaches 95%.**
- **Black wealth grows in Savannah.**
- **Savannah is a model for community housing.**



From these aspirational thoughts, REAL developed Vision and Mission statements.

REAL SAVANNAH
Racial Equity and Leadership TASKFORCE

REAL Vision Statement

Savannah, Georgia is an inclusive city where racial and ethnic differences are valued and respected. REAL is committed to developing social, economic, education and political opportunities for all, where diverse leadership and innovative solutions meet the needs of the citizens.

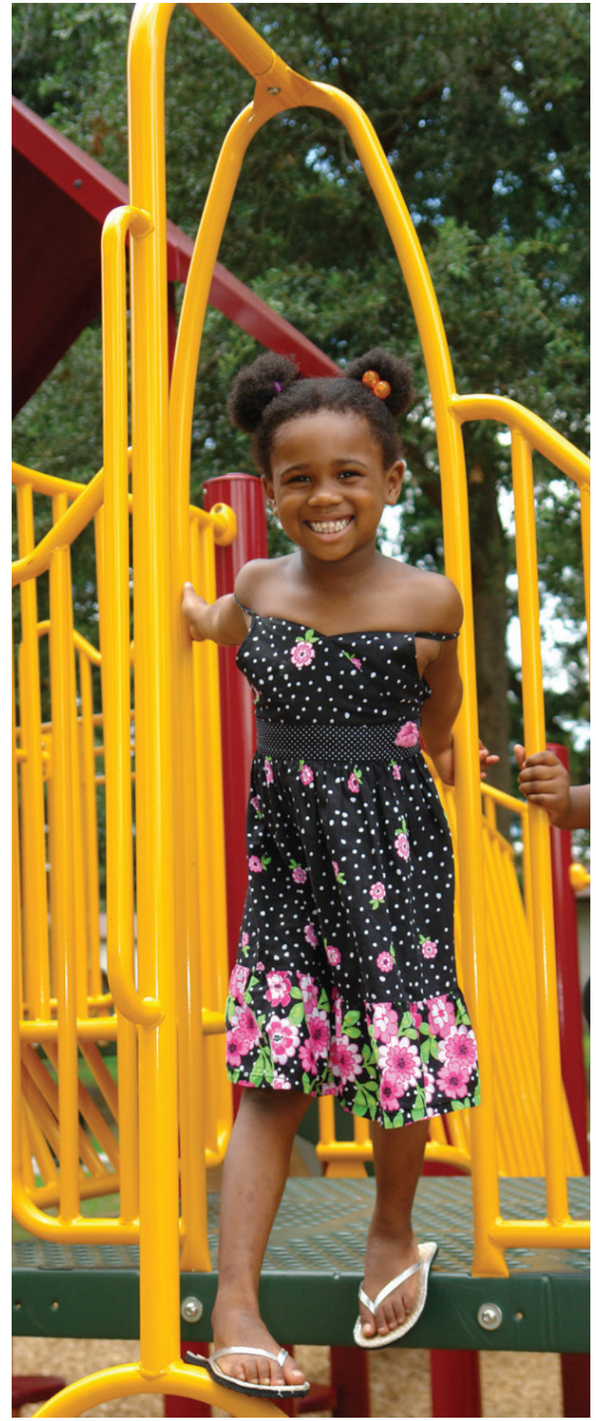
REAL Mission Statement

The mission of the Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Task Force is to advocate for racial equity in Savannah, Georgia. REAL will identify the systemic and structural barriers caused by racism that make it difficult for people of color to achieve their maximum potential.

REAL organized its work to examine six issue areas that represent some of the major social institutions that provide the foundation of a community:

- **Criminal Justice**
- **Economic Empowerment and Wealth Development**
- **Education**
- **Environmental Justice**
- **Health**
- **Housing**

It is the efficient and effective functioning of these social institutions that determine the quality of life in a community. The pages that follow are REAL's look at Savannah using a racial equity lens[5] to see just how well it is meeting the needs of all its citizens.



The Criminal Justice Committee

Lloyd Johnson, Convener
Ronald Flagg, Co-Convener
Kate Blair
Maxine Bryant
Jill Cheeks
The Hon. Shalena Cook Jones
Dare Dukes
Todd Martin
Jennifer Messner
Roy Minter
Madison Y. G. Orr
Coco Pappy
Robert Pawlicki
Nicole Sherman
Julia Sullivan
Ned Williams

The Problem

OUR Criminal Justice System Criminalizes Black People

It is well documented that our criminal justice system criminalizes Black people and, by extension, is responsible for the mass incarceration of Black people.[1] Scholars trace these conditions to our legacy of enslaving Black people.[2] [3] Consider the following facts. The United States incarcerates five times as many people as any other country in the world.[4] Black people constitute 13.5% of our population but make up 40% of our prison population. Nationally, in state prisons, Black people are incarcerated five times the number of White people.

Statewide

Racial inequality rules Georgia's criminal justice system. Black people, both adults and juveniles, are overrepresented in Georgia's prisons and jails.[5] Blacks comprise 32% of Georgia's overall population, yet they comprise 51% of our local jail population and 60% of our state prison population.[6] Georgia has our nation's fifth largest prison system and leads our nation in persons under correctional supervision.[7]Georgia also leads the nation in the rate of persons imprisoned per 100,000.[8] Over one half million Georgians are either in jail, prison, on parole, or probation, far surpassing the national average.[9] Of that number 61.21% are Black people.[10]

Chatham County/Savannah

Racial disparities in Chatham County mirror those on the state level. Black males constitute 20% of Chatham County's overall population but they comprise 68% of the Chatham County Detention Center (CCDC) inmate population).[11] [12]

In 2015, the CCDC admitted 15,548 inmates,[13] making it one of the top ten for jail admissions of Georgia's 159 counties.[14]

Presently more than 71 inmates, overwhelmingly Black, have been detained at the CCDC for over 1,000 days (averaging 2.7 years) awaiting trial and presumed innocent, arguably in violation of the Speedy Trial Clause the U.S. Constitution.[15]

Savannah's poverty rate of 31.9%, exceeds the Georgia average and is double the national poverty rate.[16] Black people dominate this figure in Savannah and so disproportionately bear the brunt of systemic wealth based racial inequities in our criminal justice system, such as cash bail, fines, fees, court costs, and electronic monitoring.

Juveniles

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "minority youth disproportionately outnumber those who are white at every stage in the nation's juvenile justice system."[17] Georgia's own Criminal Justice Coordinating Council reports that minority youth disproportionately outnumber those who are white at every stage of its juvenile justice system.[18]

Chatham County's juvenile justice system shares a common trait with its adult counterpart: Black children are disproportionate represented, relative to their presence in the overall community. Black youth under 18 years of age represent 20.4% of Savannah's population and 20.8% of the population of Chatham County.[19] Yet they are 76% of the county's juvenile justice system[20,21]

In brief, the criminal justice system of Chatham County, and by extension, the City of Savannah, criminalizes Black people juveniles and adults, alike.

Chatham County easily outpaces all other Georgia counties in the rate of juveniles involved in its juvenile justice system.[22]

I. Strategies For Change (Adults)

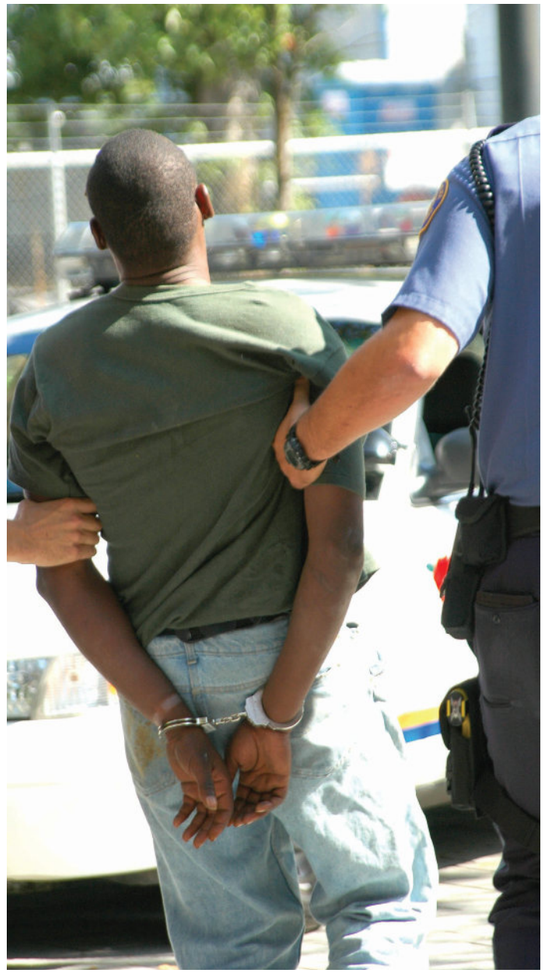
Our recommendations for changes strike a balance of both practical and the fierce urgency of now to address racial inequality in our criminal justice system. These first steps will both establish a strong vision based on the values of racial equity and social justice. Our recommendations allow Savannah to rethink the social calculus that will determine what public safety is and create localized ordinances and policy changes at the City and municipal level, which will hopefully lead to adoption by Chatham County. We urge the City of Savannah to adopt – and financially support -- the following recommendations that creates a realistic path forward to achieve racial equity.

a. Adopt a City and County Cash Bail Ordinance

b. Create a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee

c. Create, Enhance and Expand Community-Based Detention, Sentencing, and Re-entry Programs

d. Implement Implicit Racial Bias Accountability Mechanisms in Criminal Justice System



A. Create a Local Cash Bail Ordinance and Encourage the use of Bail Alternatives

Recommendation: Create a local cash bail ordinance at both the city and county level for offenses within the purview of local government, review the current bond schedule for offenses that could be reclassified, and encourage the use of pretrial alternatives to bail.

Cash bail is intended to ensure that persons accused of a crime appear at future court appearances. The cash bail system allows the court to determine the amount of money a defendant must pay to secure release from detention. The cash payment serves as collateral in order to ensure the defendant appears in court for their trial.[23] Almost one-half million Americans, legally innocent, are held in jail daily simply because they cannot afford bail.[24]

Nationally, pretrial detainees make up approximately 70 percent of the jail population 25 percent of Inmates are unable to make bail are at risk of losing their jobs, custody of their children, and intense domestic disruption, and relapse to substance abuse. The emotional, mental and physical health trauma often lasts a lifetime. Tying freedom to financial ability to pay rips lives and tears families apart while perpetuating racial and economic disparities.[26]

Some jurisdictions have ended the use of cash bail for the low-level offender. Others have given judges the discretion to release defendants unable to afford bail as long as they periodically meet with a social worker and complete regular phone check-ins. Others have eliminated bail for most misdemeanors, most nonviolent felonies. In some programs, judges must either release defendants on their own recognizance or find another non-monetary alternative. Currently, stakeholders at the District Attorney's Office, Deep Center, Chatham County, and The Bail Project are pushing forth a localized ordinance for review that carves out the scope of misdemeanors that account for about 5% of arrests.

Early results from these innovations have shown no negative effect on appearance rates of courtroom appearances. This finding is consistent with the non-profit organization. The Bail Project,[27] that uses charity funds to pay bail and then uses reminders and support to ensure that defendants show up on trial dates. Trial compliance, in their data, is as high as or higher than the collateral effect of cash bail.

Responsibility for the bail system in Chatham County rests with the judiciary who, we understand, are actively considering modifications in our cash bail system.[28] We applaud such leadership and urge the perusal of such policy without undue delay. We encourage collaboration and input from the public officials who make decisions regarding the arrest and prosecution of our citizens, such as the district attorney, police and sheriff departments, public defender's office, judges, and our state local legislators.

Fiscal Note: *After a person is arrested, a judge can set bail/bond at whatever amount they deem reasonable under the law. To be released, a person must post that amount with the sheriff in its entirety. Should someone not be able to afford this amount, they can pay a bonding company a non-refundable fee of 10-15% of the bond amount to put up the cash for them. Once a person's court case is over, the cash will be returned to whomever plus forfeited.*

B. Create A Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee

Recommendation: Create a local criminal justice coordinating committee to identify, analyze, and solve or manage system issues, such as data collection, budget and resource prioritizing, jail crowding, resource reductions, case processing inefficiencies, law enforcement accountability, and disproportionately impacted populations. This committee should also act as a data collection hub and could be a combined effort of previous committees already in existence (i.e., CARES committee).

Throughout this process, members of the subcommittee have been challenged by the ease of accessing readily important data from governmental entities necessary to complete its mission. A "silo" system exists in terms of data-collection and agency coordination not only in Savannah, but Chatham County, the state of Georgia, and nationally. For example, four separate data-collection systems are used by the police, sheriff, district attorney, and the courts. A well-known maxim warns, "if you can't measure it", you can't improve it. By that reckoning, those trying to better the criminal justice system is often flying blind or piecing together.

Using data to inform policy decisions must continue to gain momentum and exists to:

- **Collect data and analyze the factors driving prison growth and costs.**
- **Develop and adopt policies addressing these factors.**
- **Measure the impact of policy changes.**

What's A Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee?

Criminal Justice Coordinating Committees (CJCCs) are the forum through which elected and appointed executive-level policymakers in local jurisdictions, and sometimes states, convene to collaboratively address issues facing the justice system and its constituent agencies. These CJCCs typically have staff support from one or more criminal justice planners and often use a data-guided and structured planning process to identify, analyze, and solve or manage system issues, such as jail crowding, resource reductions, case processing inefficiencies.[29] Most states and localities operate criminal justice entities at the county level, but they are uncoordinated, have unique issues and needs, and varying resources and support. Each department of the criminal justice system, from police to parole, is individually funded with its impact and success defined within the narrow scope of each organization. Criminal justice coordinating councils (CJCCs) offer a way for these agencies to collaboratively address county and local criminal justice issues.[30]

Best Practices & Guidelines

Guidelines for establishing a local CJCC have been set by the National Institute of Criminal Justice and can be found in the resources.[31]

Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council[32]

Created by the Georgia General Assembly in 1981 as an executive branch agency, the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) is a statewide body established to build consensus and unity among the State's diverse and interdependent criminal justice system components. It is charged with twelve areas of criminal justice coordination. Among those responsibilities is to serve as the statewide clearinghouse for criminal justice information and research, develop criminal justice legislative and executive policy proposals, and serve in an advisory capacity to the governor on issues impacting the criminal justice system. Georgia does not have the data-collection, coordinating system described in the opening paragraph.

Fiscal Note: *Most of the expense associated with local justice system coordination comes from maintaining the levels of staffing required to support the CJCC's work. Budgeting for staff is relatively simple: Funding for personnel (e.g., salary and benefits) and operational costs (e.g., office supplies, software, training expenses) is typically sufficient for the staff position(s). The total costs for planning staff are relatively low compared to other locally funded justice system functions (e.g., jails, law enforcement, prosecution, justice services) because fewer personnel are needed to complete the function. Additionally, over time the cost savings to local government can be significant; jurisdictions that allocate funding for planning functions, including staff, rather than directing the funding toward increasing the existing operational infra- structure (e.g., more jail facilities, law enforcement, prosecutors, or judges) often discover that they have more flexibility and are more effective in allocating limited government funds. A few hundred thousand dollars spent on strategic planning and coordinating infrastructure can save millions of dollars annually.*

When determining salary, sufficient funding should be available to recruit and retain qualified staff who can support the CJCC's different types of initiatives. Because the position is both highly administrative and technical, and because staff performance partially depends on the quality of the relationships between staff and the various members of the CJCC, the jurisdiction should structure salary and benefits to attract and keep the best staff available. Incentives for advancement and career development will help lure persons with more talent and professionalism. For example, some jurisdictions have been able to hire entry-level criminal justice planning staff at salary levels comparable to that of a senior zoning or land-use planner, senior accountant or budget analyst, or mid-level county attorney.

Most jurisdictions fund planning staff out of the county general fund. When the county funds staff positions, they are relatively stable, the overall planning and coordination effort itself becomes more solidified as a local governmental function, and the county government can demonstrate its commitment to systemic planning and coordination within its justice system.

C. Create, Enhance and Expand Community-Based Detention, Sentencing, and Re-Entry Programs

The purpose of the Chatham County Detention Center (CCDC) is to protect the public and to ensure that its detainees appear at future court appearances. Three facts have been apparent in our work. First, the CCDC's population of about 1,400 inmates is overwhelmingly Black. Second, the base majority of these detainees do not present a threat of imminent danger to the Savannah community. They tend to be low-level none-violent offenders. Third, there are other less restrictive, less traumatic, less costly alternatives to the existing system.

These racial inequities speak for themselves. Hence the growing call for reform of our existing treatment of nonviolent misdemeanor offenders and wealth-based cash bail practices.

Spending even a single hour, much less, days, weeks, months in jail is too much. It's an unnecessary annual cost to taxpayers of almost $26,000 per person. The vast majority of jail detainees, 76% of whom are Black, pose no threat to public safety, no flight risk, and enjoy strong community ties. They live, work, attend school, and perhaps raise families in their neighborhoods. In the 'hood, they're simply "away." It's that common in the 'hood. They are simply unable to raise cash bail.

They risk losing their jobs and falling behind on child support payments.

Other Less Restrictive Community-Based Alternatives

In addition to the above significant cost-savings, enhanced utilization of community based alternatives can include, but is certainly not limited to: home confinement, alternative education, family preservation, mentoring, victim-offender meditation, restitution, community services, respite care, and day and evening reporting centers with educational, recreational and counseling opportunities. It applies to all, not limited to adults or juveniles. It applies to detainees and re-entry programs. See Sentencing Alternatives in Georgia.[33] [34]

Studies have also shown that jail sanctions are no more effective than community-based sanctions.[35]

Community-based programs are not new. Other less restrictive, community-based alternatives can and should be considered in lieu of the Chatham County Detention Center and other secure detention facilities. They have, with some variants, been applied throughout the nation. On the federal level, they began with the Bureau of Prisons then-innovative Pre-Release Guidance Centers during the Kennedy Administration and, on the juvenile level, during that same period, with the Wiltwyck School for Boys' Floyd Patterson House in New York City.

Change, if it is to occur, begins, not only with the presumption of innocence, but that it's in the public interest for the accused to await his day in court in his community. See "Project Guide: Alternatives to Incarceration of Offenders."[36] See also, "Alternatives to Incarceration in a Nutshell"[37]

We Recommend:

1. Adoption of a robust Pre-trial assessment services program, in which trained social work personnel assess the likelihood of the accused to appear at trial, the accused's community ties, employment, education, etc. Representatives are encouraged. Makes recommendation to Master who considers a range of options, other than secure detention, pending judicial action. Montgomery County, Maryland's Pre-Trial Assessment program had a 97% court appearance rate in 2021, up from 96.7% in pre-pandemic 2019.[38]
2. Electronic monitoring, where appropriate, at public expense. Electronic initiating devices also come with user fees, driving persons still further into debt. Many persons, otherwise unable to benefit from electronic monitoring are unable to do so because of costs associated with the program.
3. Small group facilities, comparable to halfway houses or group home, situated in the community, in which detainees, under supervision work, pursue employment of education programs of participates in substance abuse and mental health programs.
4. Finally, we urge the reopening of the Savannah Impact Program. We understand the mayor and council support this action. We urge immediate action.

FISCAL NOTE

Costs of the doubt pre-trial services and small community-based could be met through annual cost-savings of almost $26,000 for upkeep of each detail.

D. Implement an Implicit Racial Bias Accountability Mechanisms

Recommendation: Institute a city and county wide system of accountability that 1) audits arrests, charges, sentencing, and all other critical stages of process to ensure a fair, equitable, and race-neutral treatment of parties; 2) creates implicit racial bias testing, training, and accountability of all decision-makers in the criminal justice system.

Systemic racial bias permeates American life, according to a recent study of the Brookings Institute.[39] Racism has been an integral part of our history since 1619. So it should come as no surprise that implicit racial bias is embedded in our criminal justice system.[40] Racial bias in the criminal justice field has been well documented.[41] See, "Unconscious Bias in the Criminal Justice System".[42] See also, "Stereo typicality Bias in the Criminal Justice System."[43] While implicit racial bias, unlike consciously explicit racial bias, is unconscious, it nevertheless impacts our attitudes and decision-making process. Accordingly, understanding and affirmatively mitigating implicit racial bias – and its adverse impact upon Black people - who disproportionately populate our criminal justice system - is critical if we are to achieve racial equity in our criminal justice system. Interestingly, while "traditional" conscious overt racism has declined significantly in recent decades, research suggests that "implicit attitudes may be better at predicting and/or influencing behavior than self-reported explicit attitudes."[44]

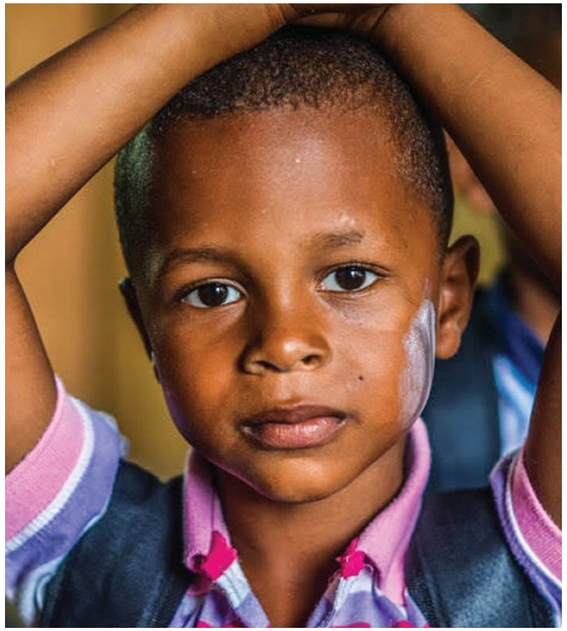
When looking at the myriad of powerful ways in which implicit bias can harm stereotypical people, Black people, in the criminal justice system. Judges possess considerable discretion in the legal process from setting bail to sentencing. One study documented the nature and extent of judicial bias against Jews and Asian-Americans, and favored White Christians.[45]

Implicit racial bias in our criminal justice system does not lessen its deleterious impact on Black people. It fosters mass incarceration, promotes racial inequality, and contributes to our criminalization of Black people. It permeates all levels of our criminal justice system - from the uniformed patrol officer's decision to handle an errant citizen's conduct by a verbal warning, issuance of a citation, or an arrest, through all levels of our criminal justice system up to and including sentencing by trial judges.[46] This despite the judicial prohibition against bias.[47]

There are anecdotal, but no known documented studies of implicit racial bias in the Chatham County or Savannah courts. There is no reason to believe that Chatham County or the City of Savannah are exceptions to the general rule of implicit racial bias in our criminal justice system. (See The Problem, above.)

In the Courtroom

White judges are half as likely as Black judges to find in favor of plaintiffs in employment discrimination cases, perhaps because of the strong likelihood that Black judges have themselves experienced some form of racial discrimination. Implicit racism, exists in one of the most interesting places, the judiciary. Bias manifests itself in many other ways in the courtroom, notwithstanding the judicial prohibition against bias. Jury selection is a common area in which, for example, prosecutors often



try to systematically exclude Blacks from jury trials.[48] Implicit racial bias permeates courtrooms across the United States.[49] Studies have shown that judges (and other key decision-makers in the criminal justice system) are no exception to the general rule, most white people harbor unconscious racial bias toward Black people and accounting for disproportionately adverse outcomes in cases involving Black defendants.[50]

Most judges believe that our criminal justice system suffers from racism.[51] Exploring these two questions in a multi-part study involving a large sample of trial judges drawn from around the country, the results, which are both discouraging and encouraging, raise profound issues. The researchers find that judges harbor the same kinds of implicit biases as others; that these biases can influence their judgment.

Seeking Change

What can be done in Chatham County and Savannah courts to combat implicit racial bias in our criminal justice system? See resources.[52] For a detailed guide on options for addressing implicit bias in the criminal justice system, particularly among judges, lawyers, and courtroom staff, see exhaustive study and action guide conducted by the National Center for State Courts.[53] [54] See also "Toolbox" on de-biasing the courtroom.[55]

We recommend the following:

1. Bias testing and training of all decision-makers in the criminal justice system — from the beat police through trial judges.
2. Audits of arrests, charges, sentencing, and all other critical stages of process to ensure a fair, equitable, and race-neutral treatment of parties.
3. Transparency; public disclosure of results.
4. Racial equity begins in judges' chambers. Diversity of judges, professional staff.
5. Appointment of Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission whose responsibilities would include evaluate progress, or lack thereof in achieving racial equality in the courthouse.
6. Conduct public hearings on racial equity in the criminal justice system and report findings and recommendations to the Mayor and Council.

Fiscal Note: *Racial bias testing and training is a multi-billion-dollar industry, in both the public and private sectors, not to mention the criminal justice system.[56] There are those who contend that racism is so imbued in our lives that training seminars will have little effect on changing behavior.*

We do not entirely agree. We believe that it is possible, as others have done elsewhere, to measure manifestations of systemic racism in our criminal justice system, to publicize such findings, and hold decision-makers accountable.

II. Strategies For Change (Juveniles)

Juveniles Should Be Treated Differently by The Justice System

This report is submitted by the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee of the REAL Task Force announced Savannah Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, in late July 2020. The recommendations and commentary contained in this report are based on the premise that issues involving criminal justice and juvenile justice, while analogous, do not share the same solutions or the same goals.

The goal of the juvenile justice system is to help youth to avoid future delinquency and mature into responsible adults; whereas the goal of the criminal justice system is to deliver justice and control and prevent crime. As a result of these differences, the laws underpinning the

juvenile justice system are based on classification by age and maturity; not just the existence of an alleged unlawful act.

The difference also requires a rehabilitative rather than punitive approach to issues involving juveniles. Research suggests that diversion is more effective overall in creating positive outcomes, such as increasing prosocial activities and behaviors for youth or reducing recidivism, rather than focusing solely on rescuing children from the juvenile justice system.

Problem Statement

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice, "In most jurisdictions, disproportionate juvenile minority representation is not limited only to secure detention and confinement; it is evident at nearly all contact points on the juvenile justice system continuum." Chatham County, Georgia is no different. Black youth represent 76% of the youth in the county's juvenile justice system. Across the system, at all decision points, Black youth are more likely to experience a negative outcome, such as detention, commitment, or confinement, at much higher rates than their white counterparts. This holds true both at the local and state level, where Chatham County (except for diversion rates) outpaces statewide averages at nearly every turn.

Discussion

"Measure what can be measured and make measurable what cannot be measured." -- Galileo Galilei

1. Need For Standardized Data Collection

Over the course of researching the core problem, the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee learned that no comprehensive data collection system, process, or procedure exists for tracking data related to youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Our community is limited in its ability to address both the racial equity implications around and the actual needs of our juvenile justice-involved youth, because much of the information currently collected is siloed. Current data can only be analyzed in a fragmented fashion, which means that we have been unable to develop a full picture of what is happening across agencies and to make recommendations accordingly.

The Juvenile Justice Subcommittee, therefore, recommends that the City of Savannah prioritize taking youth-related data in a way that puts our community in a better position to understand the depth, extent, and impact of racial inequity in the system (and, by association its ripple effects throughout the community), so that we can develop meaningful and targeted strategies for juvenile justice-involved youth. One way for the City of Savannah to fulfill this recommendation would be to require racial impact statements for all City-proposed policies, procedures, or projects impacting youth. Another strategy would be to add language to City contracts or grants requiring tracking and reporting on juvenile justice system involvement for youth receiving services through City-supported programs. One of the benefits of requiring racial impact statements and/or the reporting language is that it incentivizes the taking of data and underscores the importance of using data as a decision-making tool.

2. Form A Commission to Address Racial Disparity in Juvenile Justice

We propose the creation of a joint city-county commission tasked with collaboratively addressing issues facing the juvenile justice system and its constituent agencies. The commission's core charge would be to regularly examine data around the juvenile justice involved youth population and to implement evidence-based and data-driven solutions designed to meaningfully address how children become involved in the juvenile justice system and to direct children away from the juvenile court as frequently as possible.

We propose that the commission function similarly to the State of Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), but on a local level. This permanent commission would:

- **Collect and examine city and county data related to youths involved in the juvenile justice system.**
- **Retain regional and national experts on juvenile justice to interpret the data collected to identify trends, problems, and solutions based on that data.**
- **Develop juvenile justice-related legislative and executive policy proposals to reduce racial disparities for youths involved in the juvenile justice system; and**
- **Identify and propose programs/community resources and partner with agencies that would provide direct services to youth and their families to fill the gaps (need for association, recreation, education, life skill building, etc.) that if left unfilled may lead youth down the road of delinquency.**

The proposed Commission represents a natural progression of work already taking place in Savannah. For example, the Chatham County Juvenile Court has successfully implemented diversionary programs to decrease the number of court-involved youth over time. Then, Chief Judge LeRoy Burke, III led quarterly Juvenile Court Stakeholders meetings and oversaw a collaboration with The Annie E. Casey Foundation that created Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goals for the court. These meetings helped create community resources such as The Front Porch, the Work Readiness Program, and Restorative Conferencing. Further, on May 25, 2021, the Chatham County Juvenile Court adopted a Juvenile Fine and Supervision Fee Assessment Collection, and Discharge Policy as one of its Standard Operating Procedures.

The policy discontinues the utilization of juvenile fines and supervision fees and to create a process for discharging outstanding general discretionary juvenile fines and supervisors fee debt. Since such fees, fines, and costs tend to disproportionately impact poor families in poverty, this represents a significant step towards reducing racially disparate impacts of court policy within the larger community.

The proposed Commission formalizes and extends this existing work in our community. The permanent commission will be created by city and county ordinance. Commission members should be demographically representative of the city and county and should include both community residents and representatives from youth-involved agencies, such as law enforcement, the Juvenile Court, the school system, and others. Commission members should demonstrate a commitment to racial equity principles and have some professional or personal relationship to juvenile justice work where possible and be prepared to meet monthly during the first 1-2 years of operation. It may be feasible to move to a bi-monthly or quarterly meeting model later.

Goals: Year 1

Once formed, the Commission should develop clear objectives around planning, analysis, and coordination activities based on the recommendations in this report. Credibility, objectivity, and stability should be core values of the Commission. One of the first areas for the Commission to tackle would be the data collection recommendation made above. Organizations such as the National League of Cities or the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), among others, have resources available to assist our community in developing an effective data collection system.

The Commission must develop an estimated budget, plan for obtaining funds to support the Commission's work, and staffing needs. The City and County would likely need to dedicate staff to assist the Commission in developing a budget until funding can be identified and resource allocation and staffing needs are better understood. The number of staff members and their qualifications will be determined by the types of planning, analysis, and coordination activities the Commission undertakes. Initially, the Commission is likely to need one of the staff members with skills in the following areas: analytical skills and experience; practical experience and an understanding of juvenile justice system agencies and processes; and political, managerial, and administrative capacities to collaborate with Commission members and juvenile justice agencies.

Goals: Year 2

We envision the Commission rolling out a data collection model during Year 2 and to begin taking data using the chosen model. Year 2 should be spent reviewing and analyzing the effectiveness of the data collection model with the assistance of the organization or entity that assists it in developing the model.

Goals: Year 3

Once good data collection systems are in place, the Commission is expected to gain a basic understanding of numbers, trends, and makeup of our juvenile justice-involved youth population. With that information in hand, we envision this Commission continuing to work on designing and implementing strategies to reduce racial disparities for juvenile justice-involved youth based on the data collected and to reduce the number of juvenile court-involved youth overall.

Because the work of the Commission will be data-driven, specific initiatives will be dictated by the data collected and timelines for future action will be determined by the Commission. There remains much we do not yet understand quantitatively about what is happening in and around juvenile justice-involved youth in our community. Until we can systematically collect and analyze data on this population (and related stakeholders), it would be irresponsible to recommend more specific programmatic interventions. The data will lead the Commission where it needs to go.

References

[1]Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stoney the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow.
[2]Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in The Age of Color-Blindness (2010).
[3]Richard Rothstein, The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America (2017)
[4]PrisonPolicy.org. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/
[5]Georgia Incarceration Rates by Color & Ethnicity (2010). The Prison Policy https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/GA.html
[6]Incarceration Rates in Georgia. The Vera Institute. https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-georgia.pdf
[7]Racial & Ethnic Disparities in State Prisons. The Sentencing Project. https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Color-of-Justice-Racial-and-Ethnic-Disparity-in-State-Prisons.pdf
[8]Criminal Justice Facts: State-by-State Data. The Sentencing Project https://www.sentencingproject.org/the-facts/#detail?state1Option=U.S.%20Total&state2Option=Georgia
[9]Georgia Incarceration Rate (2018) https://patch.com/georgia/atlanta/georgia-incarceration-rate-see-how-it-stacks-other-states
[10]Prison Policy Initiative. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/GA.html
[11]Communication from Todd Martin, Chief Public Defender. May 25, 2021.
[12]Savannah (145,000) has half the population of Chatham County (290,000), but, according to the Chief Public Defender, the overwhelming majority of the CCDC inmates are Savannah residents.
[13]https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-georgia.pdf
[14]https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-georgia.pdf
[15]Lloyd A. Johnson, "Chatham County Commissioners Should Invest in DA's Rocket Dockett" Savannah Morning News. June 21, 2021
[16]Baltimore, Maryland Poverty Rate. https://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Baltimore-Maryland.html
[17]See National Conference of State Legislatures, Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System, available at https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-the-juvenile-justice-system.aspx (last visited May 30, 2021).
[18]https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-the-juvenile-justice-system.aspx
[19]U.S. Census, Quick Facts, Savannah, Georgia, available at https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chathamcountygeorgia,savannahcitygeorgia/PST045219 (last visited, May 30, 2021). It is important to note that the numbers from Chatham County may be inclusive of the numbers for the City of Savannah, being that the City of Savannah is in Chatham County, Georgia.
[20]See https://juveniledata.georgia.gov/node/22 (last visited, May 30, 2021).
[21]For purposes of this report, we refer to the juvenile justice system to include not only the Chatham County Juvenile Court, but also the Savannah Police Department, Chatham County Police Department, the Savannah Chatham County Public School System, and any related entities serving court-involved youth, unless otherwise indicated.
[22]Disproportionate Contact in Georgia's Juvenile Justice System. Georgia CJCC https://cjcc.georgia.gov/sites/cjcc.georgia.gov/files/2018%20DMC%20Assessment%20-%206.26.18.pdf
[23] https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/16/magazine/the-bail-trap.html?referringSource=articleShare
[24] https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/reports/2020/03/16/481543/ending-cash-bail/
[25] The Bail Project fact sheet, bailproject.org
[26] The Bail Project fact sheet, www.bailproject.org
[27] bailproject.org
[28] https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/11/06/progressive-approach-to-criminal-justice-reformpropels-shalena-cook-jones-to-chatham-da/114718868
[29] https://nicic.gov/criminal-justice-coordinating-committees
[30] https://icjia.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/collaboration-in-criminal-justice-a-review-of-the-literature-on-criminal-justice-coordinating-councils
[31] https://www.in.gov/idoc/files/Guidelines-for-Developing-a-Criminal-Justice-Coordinating-Committee.pdf
[32] https://cjcc.georgia.gov/organization/criminal-justice-coordinating-council
[33] https://dcs.georgia.gov/offender-supervision-0/sentencing-alternatives
[34] https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/alternatives-incarceration
[35] Wardahl et. al Criminal Justice Policy Review.,Russell Sage Foundation (2019) https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0887403419870848?journalCode=cjpa k
[36] National Institute of Corrections (2019). https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/altincarceration.pdf
[37] Families Against Minimum Sentences https://famm.org/wp-content/uploads/FS-Alternatives-in-a-Nutshell.pdf
[38] https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/basisoperating/Common/Program.aspx?ID=42D&PROGID=P42P02
[39] Allen, John, Systemic Racism and America Today (June 11, 2020) Brookings Institute. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/06/11/systemic-racism-and-america-today/
[40] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/02/24/researchers-have-discovered-a-surprising-racial-bias-in-the-criminal-justice-system/
[41] Maryfield. "Implicit Racial Bias" (2014) Justice Research and Statistics Association. https://www.jrsa.org/pubs/factsheets/jrsa-factsheet-implicit-racial-bias.pdf
[42] https://courts.delaware.gov/supreme/docs/WareUnconsciousDiscrimination.pdf
[43] https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2016-44850-024
[44] "Implicit Bias." Truth and Justice. https://trustandjustice.org/resources/intervention/implicit-bias
[45] Levison, Bennett and Hioki. "Judging Implicit Bias: A National Empirical Study of Judicial Stereotypes." 69 Florida Law Review 63 (2017) https://scholarship.law.ufl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1345&context=flr
[46] Marsh, The Lens of Implicit Bias. https://libguides.law.uconn.edu/implicit/courts
[47] American Bar Association. Model Code of Judicial Conduct. Canon 2. Rule 2.3.
[48] Donald Nugent, Judicial Bias. 42 Cleveland. St. L. Rev. 1 (1994) pp 45-48. https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/clevstlrev/vol42/iss4/6
[49] Kang, et.al., "Implicit Bias in the Courtroom". 59 UCLA L. Rev. 1124 (2012)
[50] Rachlinski, Johnson, Wistrich, Guthrie, "Does Unconscious Racial Bias Effect Trial Judges" (2009) Corbels Law Faculty Publications. https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1691&context=facpubv
[51] Firth. National College of Judges, July 14, 2020. https://www.judges.org/news-and-info/most-judges-believe-the-criminal-justice-system-suffers-from-racism/
[52] "Fighting Implicit Bias in the Justice System", Judicial Division. ABA Journal. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/judicial/committees/fighting_implicit_bias
[53] "Bias in the Court! Focusing on the Behaviors of Judges, Lawyers, and Court Staff in Court Interactions." National Council of State Court's. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/173729NCJRS.pdf
[54] How to Confront Bias in the Criminal Justice System. https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/publications/youraba/2019/december-2019/how-to-confront-bias-in-the-criminal-justice-system/
[55] ABA Litigation Section. "Implicit Bias Initiative" (Apr 10, 2020) https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/initiatives/task-force-implicit-bias/implicit-bias-toolbox/
[56] https://www.marketplace.org/2020/06/02/police-officers-implicit-bias-training/

The Economic Empowerment and Wealth Development Committee

Alicia M. Johnson, Convener
Moncello Stewart, Co-Convener
Robert James
Tom Kohler
Jeff Kole
Jennifer Messner
Richard Shinhoster
Elder Ned Williams

The following assessment is a partial analysis of demographic and well-being data that reflect community conditions related to racial equity in the areas of economic mobility and wealth building in Savannah. Commissioned by the Mayor's REAL Task Force, the economic mobility and wealth building subcommittee reviewed data from several sources to include:

- Prosperity Now;
- National Equity Index;
- United Way of Coastal Empire Report: GSU Poverty in Chatham County and Savannah 2005-2017;
- City of Savannah 2016 Disparity Study;
- Step Up Savannah Data and Reports; and,
- American Community Survey Data from US Census.
- City of Savannah Assessment of Fair Housing Report by Mosaic Community Planning, Revised May 2017

"We keep going back, stronger, not weaker, because we will not allow rejection to beat us down. It will only strengthen our resolve. To be successful there is no other way."

–Earl G. Graves, Sr.
Founder of Black Enterprise Magazine

The subcommittee wants the data gathered to help foster greater familiarity and understanding of the differences between the White and Black economic experience in the greater Savannah Area. When weighed with other areas such as education, housing, and health, the subcommittee intends that data points will inform the design of programs and policies that will increase community conditions for improved quality of life. Additionally, it is necessary to point out that data highlighted in our report should not be taken in isolation, nor are the points made in our review sufficient on their own to describe or substantiate all the economic equity challenges and well-being indicators in the Savannah Community. While the subcommittee firmly believes that economic disenfranchisement is the substratum of all other well-being indicators and must be thoroughly examined, it is necessary to trend the data across the city and county longitudinally over the last two to three decades. Using key areas such as the nine opportunity zones, the fifteen census tracts with the highest rates of impoverishment, and the city's economic incubation and stewardship of African-American businesses and entrepreneurship can build on this data review to accurately represent the economic inequities that continue to persist in our community.

Although the data contained in this report is comprehensive and contextual, there is significantly more that can be discovered to measure community conditions qualitatively relative to economic equity. Because the subcommittee areas are broad and inter-related, the subcommittee's work focused on the contextual aspects of these conditions produced by economic disenfranchising. Further, because the issues are not only broad but persistent, the subcommittee provided recommendations to 1) provide a starting point to acknowledge the existing gaps and need for change; 2) use of existing best practice solutions modeled in similar areas and 3) to galvanize existing resources to ensure that barriers to initiation of the project would be overcome. Moreover, we highlighted key data points as quality indicators as they represented two subsets of the community that could increase economic mobility and wealth. These two subsets were African-American Women, Single Heads of Household, and African-American Business Owners. The focus on the subsets was revealed in the data and the qualitative measures themselves: Economic Mobility and Wealth Building.

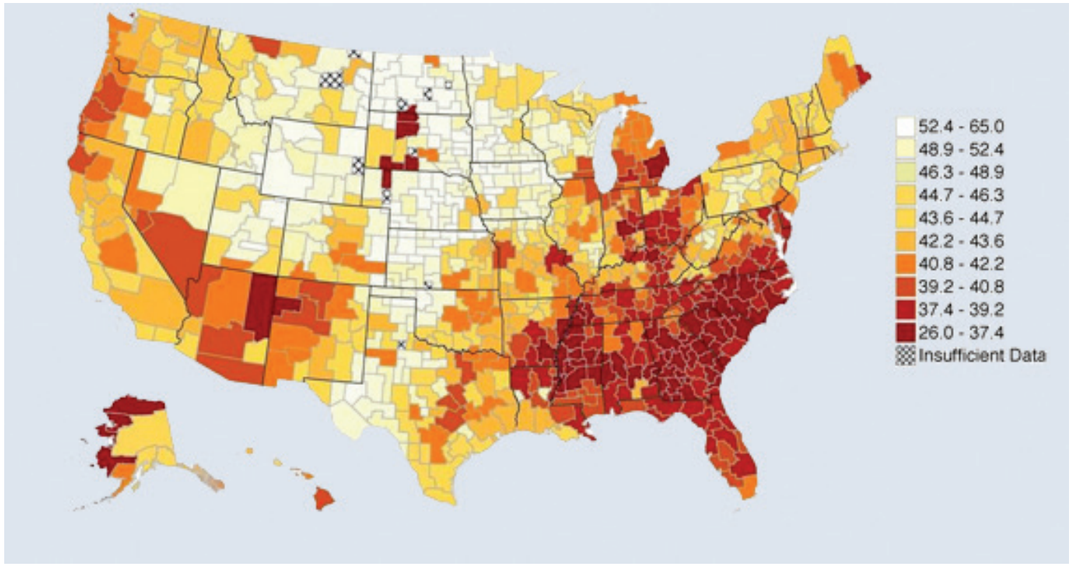
Economic mobility is the ability of a person or group to improve their economic status over time and is primarily measured by income over their life span. Primary indicators of economic mobility include location, education, self-sufficiency, and criminal background. On the other hand, wealth is focused on acquiring durable assets through existing economic engines that can be passed on generationally, such as entrepreneurship, investing, savings accounts, life insurance, income-generating assets such as businesses, homes, or land acquisitions. The subcommittee aims to distinguish these two different measures of economic equity and quality of life as they inherently led to the subcommittee's recommendations for the two community subsets.

The Problem by the Numbers

For every dollar owned by the average White family in the United States, the average family of color has less than one dime (Percheski & Gibson-Davis, 2020)[1] . This wealth gap or divide is further exacerbated by growing barriers to economic mobility in the United States. The National Poverty Center reports that the 26 million people (58%) represented as America's poor are ethnic minorities. Most of those who are economically disenfranchised live in the country's southern region, where there is a traditionally high African-American population. Economic mobility and wealth indicators highlight the economic equity issues along the lines of color, with African-Americans being impacted at exponentially greater rates than any of their counterparts, creating in essence what W.E. Dubois called "a poor race in a land full of dollars."

Moreover, regionally Georgia ranks the lowest in economic mobility compared to its counterparts such as Tennessee and North Carolina. Georgia ranks 45th on the prosperity of its residents compared to the 50 states and the District of Columbia (Prosperity Now, 2021)[2] . This rank is based on states' performances on economic measures for all residents but also accounts for racial disparities. Relative to other states, Georgia ranks in the bottom five for residents overall, but the gap between White residents and residents of color is narrower. However, the disparities by race are still significant and have negative implications for the people and prosperity of Georgia. For example, the homeownership rate of White households is 75% compared to 47% for Black households (Prosperity, Now, 2021).

This broader picture is essential to point out as the data reviewed sees Savannah on par as a microcosm of this stark economic equity reality.



Source: Economic mobility, the opportunity for children born in poverty to achieve the American Dream, varies across the United States. Image courtesy of Raj Chetty, The Equality of Opportunity Project

[1] Percheski, C., & Gibson-Davis, C. (2020). A Penny on the Dollar: Racial Inequalities in Wealth among Households with Children. Socius. https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023120916616

[2] https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/data-by-location#state/ga

Savannah's Problem

- 36% of Savannahians are asset poor and 30% of the households of color have a net worth of zero (Prosperity Now, 2020).
- 25.6% of Savannah, GA families of color live in income poverty. This is income below the federal poverty threshold (Prosperity Now, 2020).
- 7.8% of all workers of color in Savannah, GA are unemployed as compared to their White counterpart at 5.1% and as compared to the state rate of 3.7% (GDOL, 2021).
- 38.6% of the people of color in Savannah are homeowners as compared to their White counterparts proportion of 50.8% (ACS, US Census).
- The median income of African-Americans in Savannah ($31,184) is 58% less than that of their White counterparts ($54,242). (ACS, US Census).
- 75% of the families living in poverty are led by African-American Single Females. (ACS, US Census).
- African-American females are paid 62 cents for every dollar paid to White males in Savannah (ACS, US Census).
- African-American women in Savannah earned a median income of $26,537 in 2019 (ACS, US Census).
- Median household income for White households is 2 times that of Black households in Savannah (ACS, US Census).
- Firms owned by African Americans are less likely to have served as prime contractors for City Contracts (2016 City of Savannah, Disparity Study).
- Savannah's population is made up of over 54% African-Americans, but only 36% of the city's businesses are Black-owned (ACS, US Census).
- White-owned businesses are worth nearly 16x the worth of Black-owned businesses (ACS, US Census).

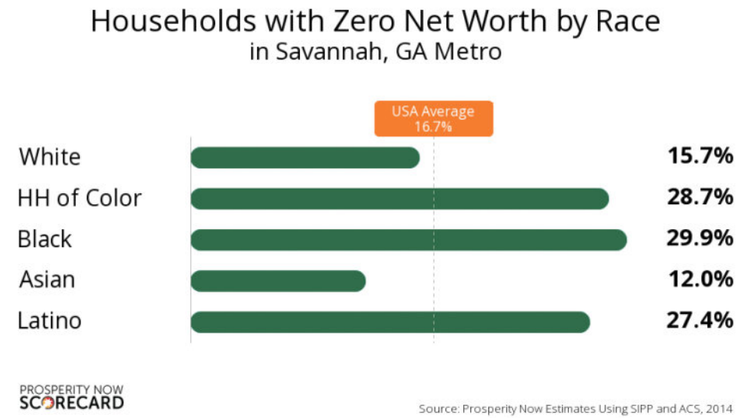
While Savannah is a city rich in human, natural, and creative resources, thousands of its residents—at least 22% of the city's residents live in income poverty (Prosperity Now, 2020). Georgia's asset poverty rate is 27.3 percent, while the national rate is 24.1 percent (Prosperity Now, 2020). Comparing this to Savannah's asset poverty rate of 35.5 percent means that more than one in three Savannah households is without sufficient net worth to navigate the loss of a job (Prosperity Now, 2020). Black household asset poverty rate is 29.9% as compared to their White counterparts at only 15.7%. Citizens in Chatham County are more likely to be asset-poor than the average Georgian and are less able to respond to unexpected events such as sudden loss of income or unforeseen medical expenses. COVID-19 has only exacerbated these growing inequities. Many of our residents who are low-wage working families are unable to take advantage of asset-building opportunities such as obtaining higher paying jobs, having savings, buying a home, or obtaining postsecondary credentials. While the median income in Georgia is $58,700, the median income for Savannah is $36,628, 38% less (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The income poverty rate for African-Americans in Savannah is 26.1% as compared to their White counterparts at 7.2%. Moreover, the labor market engagement and jobs proximity index indicate that African-Americans in Savannah are least successful in accessing employment. On average they live in neighborhoods with a 10-point gap in job proximity and a 17-point gap in labor market engagement as compared to their White counterparts (City of Savannah Assessment of Fair Housing, 2017)[3]. Asset Poverty, Income Poverty, Wage Inequity and Unemployment are real challenges for many in our community. Under-employment and crime are of equal concern.

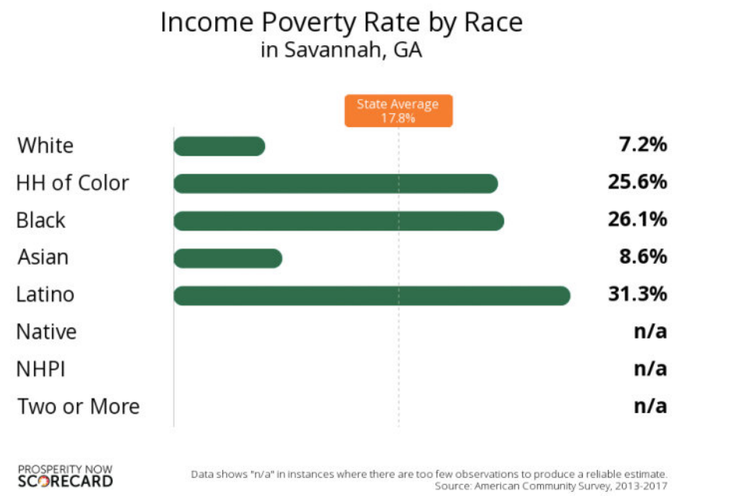
[3]https://www.savannahga.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10596/City-of-Savannah-Assessment-of-Fair-Housing?bidId=

- Asset Poverty: Asset poverty is having insufficient net worth – this includes durable assets such as savings, a home, or business – to cover three months of living expenses without income.
- Income Poverty: Income Poverty is when a family's total income is less than the family's federal threshold. When this happens the family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty definition used by the US Census is the money and income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

An additional barrier to economic mobility in Savannah is affordable housing. In Chatham County, 39.18% of households are cost-burdened renters. Savannah, the largest city in the county, has nearly 50% (46.9%) of households that are cost-burdened renters, paying over 30% of their income for housing (2017, ACS). Additionally, Chatham County has an overall food insecurity rate of 17.6%, with 67% of those falling at or below 185% of the federal poverty line guideline for the last four years

(2018, Feeding America). Approximately 64.57% of Savannah/Chatham County School District 2018-2019 enrolled students are economically disadvantaged (Georgia Department of Education).





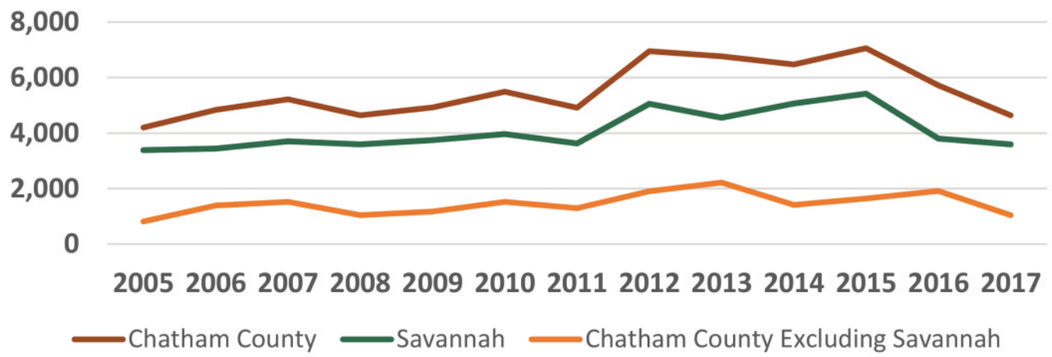
Economic Mobility of Children in Poverty in Savannah

Opportunity Insights Economic Mobility Tracker		
Tract	Sample Savannah Neighborhood	Projected Income of Children by Age 35, ($k)
13051001100	Eastside	19
13051002100	Benjamin Van Clark Park	19
13051002700	Midtown	21-23
13051000601	Westside	21
13051000100	Yamacraw Village	19
13051001200	Kayton/Frazier	16
13051011400	Metro Savannah	19
13051010501	Tremont Park	17

Source: National Equity Atlas and Equality of Opportunity Project Economic Tracker

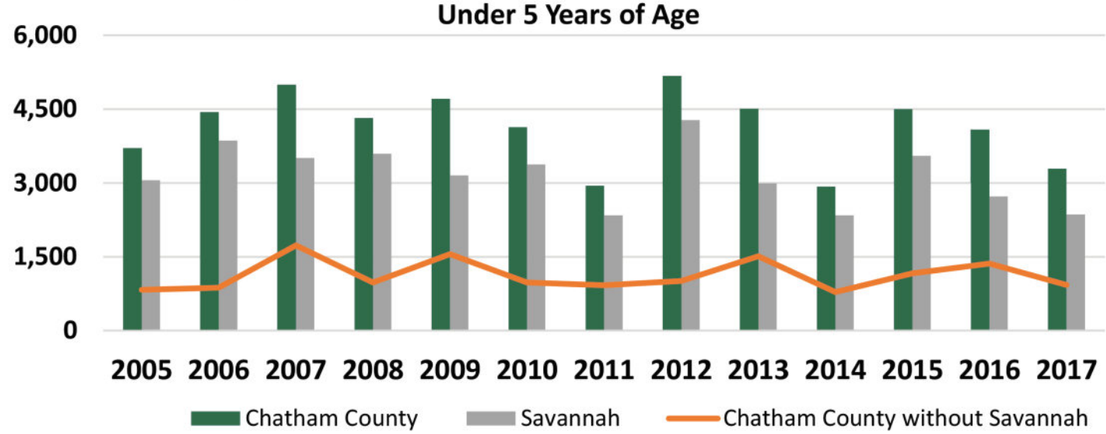
United Way of Coastal Empire, GSU Poverty in Chatham County and Savannah 2005-2017

Figure 1: Number of Female-Headed Families, No Husband Present for 2005 – 2017



Source: U.S. Census, B17010

Figure 11: Female-Headed Families Numbers of Children Under 5 Years of Age



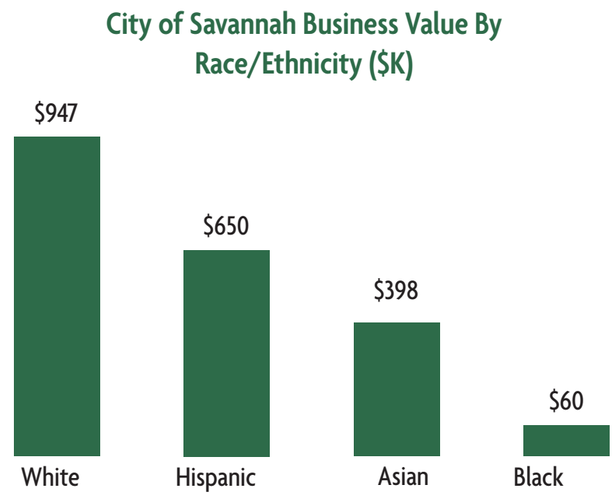
Source: U.S. Census B17006

Table 10: Savannah Female-Headed Families with Children Under-Age 5

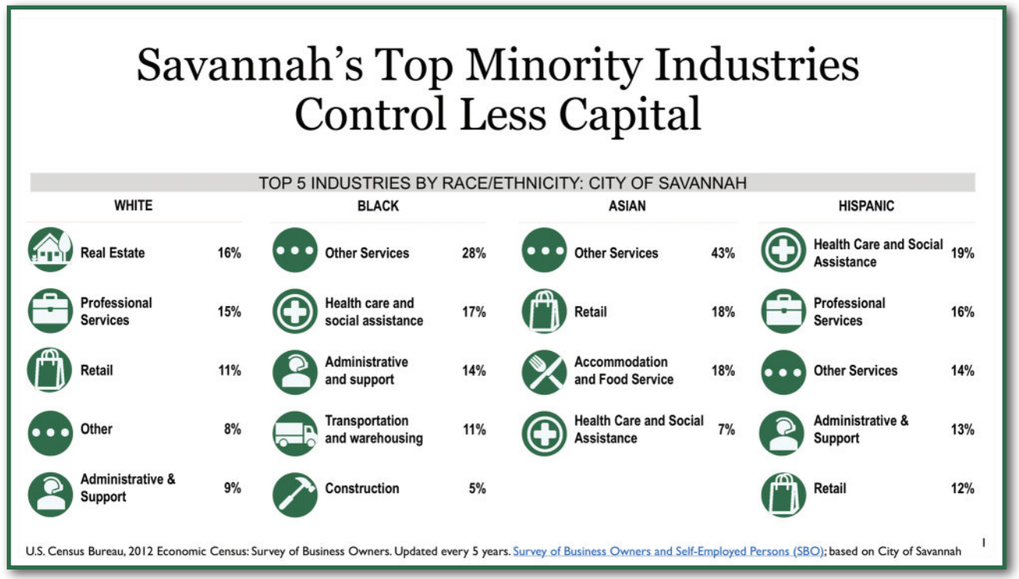
Area	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
White	7%	7%	6%	9%	11%	11%	12%	12%	7%
Black	91%	90%	92%	86%	85%	84%	86%	83%	89%
Hispanic or Latino	1%	2%	2%	4%	4%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Some Other Race Alone	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Two or More Races	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%

Source: U.S. Census 5-year estimates, B17010H, B17010B, B17010I, B17010F, B17010G

Black-Owned Business Data



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 Economic Census: Survey of Business Owners. Updated every 5 years. Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons (SBO); City of Savannah data. Value calculated by dividing Sales, receipts, or value of shipments of firms with or without paid employees by Number of firms with or without paid employees

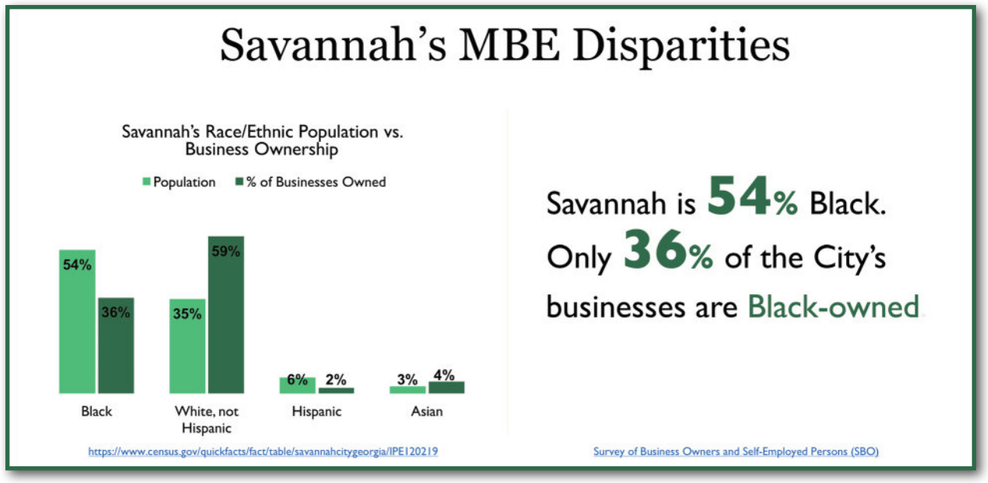


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 Economic Census: Survey of Business Owners. Updated every 5 years. Survey of Business Owners and Self-Employed Persons (SBO)

Recommendations

Economic Mobility |African American, Single Head of Households| Childhood Poverty

- **Identify and allocate funding for the creation of substantial bridging capital across the existing social safety net for families falling in the benefits cliff.**
  - Using a Housing Voucher program to assist in moving families out of low-wealth communities.
  - Incentivizing Social Capital that includes elevated peer networks, coaching, and support cohorts.
  - Development of alternative methods for accessing benefits such as community-based group care with a portable health benefit product.
  - Develop and Incentivize asset building programs.
- **Increase transportation routes from highest impoverished zip codes into logistics and manufacturing areas of the county.**
- **Collaborate with local community leaders at the city and county level to establish a data-driven systems change and policy agenda that supports the economic mobility of Savannah families.**
- **Collaborate with local workforce development programs and colleges to increase and incentivize post-secondary opportunities and employment pathways with stackable credentials and education as a means for economic mobility.**
- **Decrease or eliminate zoning restrictions that make home-based businesses less accessible. The removal of licensure barriers not only unlocks employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the poor in low-skill occupations but also lowers prices in service-driven economies.**
- **Increase Quality-Rated daycare providers and access to daycare.**
- **Equity-focused investments in neighborhoods that are community-driven and supported such as co-ops.**
- **Develop and implement a network of early learning centers**
- **Partner with local business leaders to support and advocate for livable wages within the city limits ($12.32 per hour).**
- **Increase affordable housing availability.**
- **Increase funding for and expand access to existing effective programs.**



Wealth-Building African-American Owned Business

- Appoint a City staff member whose primary role is to ensure the growth and acceleration of African-American owned Businesses. This individual will assure the following action plan:
  - Develop and implement a business accelerator and incubation model for African-American owned entrepreneurs and business owners.
    - Using dedicated programing from entrepreneurial center and SCORE, create a 12-week curriculum that culminates with micro-lending and granting to seed and support African-American businesses.
  - Identify key areas of industries and opportunities through gap analysis and scaling programing to meet this demand.
  - Provide a means test and performance score of existing programs aimed at MBE growth to determine program efficacy and effectiveness annually. Address all gaps.
  - Integrate MBE expansion into all aspects of the City's economy.
  - Participate in negotiations with enforcement authority to ensure equitable distribution of business and contracts.
  - Collaborate with SEDA to develop a program that incentivizes African-American business involvement to include, but not limited to:
    - Purchasing and business programing that target minority-owned business and procurement.
    - Participating in a city-wide racial equity program.
    - Incentivize minority leadership in key roles and training programs.
    - Incentivize second-chance hiring.

The Education Committee

Amanda Hollowell, Co-Convener
Gwendolyn Jordan, Co-Convener
Molly Lieberman, Co-Convener
Dr. Kimberly Ballard-Washington
Dr. Connie Cooper
Christy Edwards
Dr. Catherine Gayle
Dr. M. Ann Levett
Thomas Oxnard
Dr. Joseph Silver

Consultants

Shykeria Edwards, Savannah State
Erika D. Tate, PhD,
Founder of Bluknowledge LLC

Purpose

We, the Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Education Committee, have convened as a sub-committee of the REAL Task Force Savannah, which is charged to investigate racial disparities in Savannah, Georgia and to use data to identify, prioritize, and tackle these issues.

For the past year, we have engaged in thoughtful, data-driven discussions about Black children and their opportunities for success in our local school system, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS), and in higher education. We have considered factors that have been proven to support school success, such as: access to early education, the quality of reading instruction, the presence of qualified teachers, and the availability of high-quality afterschool learning.

This report is an invitation and a resource for our community to pursue educational equity for Black children. As committed learners, parents, educators, and advocates, we established guiding principles that reiterate the importance of education in our community. We articulated a racial equity framework to inform our problem statement and support our data inquiry and a theory of change for increasing racial equity in education in Savannah-Chatham County. The close of this document launches the REAL Education Committee Working Groups with a plan of action that includes guiding questions, suggested data inquiry, and timeline to urge action. Together, we will plan strategically, generate solutions, and create opportunities for Black children to thrive!

Guiding Principles

The Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Education Committee believes that

- **Education is a right.**
- **Education is a social contract with a community.**
- **Education is a determinant of the socioeconomic well-being and health of a community.**

Racial Equity Framework

The REAL Education Committee applies a lens of racial equity to its inquiry into the educational experiences and outcomes of Black children in Savannah-Chatham County. We have articulated a racial equity framework that has informed our focus, data selection and analysis, and determination of the most impactful factors affecting Black children's success in education. Figure 1 presents the five elements of our racial equity framework (e.g., acknowledges and addresses structural racism) and exemplifies how the REAL Education Committee applies each element (e.g., operates from the assumption that Black children are curious about the world and want to learn). We recommend the REAL Education Committee Working Groups apply this framework as they continue to pursue data-driven inquiry into policies and processes that facilitate or limit racial equity in education in Savannah-Chatham County.

Figure 1: The Racial Equity Framework Applied by the REAL Education Committee

Elements	How does the REAL Education Committee apply a racial equity lens?
Acknowledges and addresses structural racism in pursuit of institutional and systemic change	The REAL Education Committee **investigates how Black children have been educationally disadvantaged within and outside the local public school system** (SCCPSS) and before, during, and after their K-12 schooling experience, with consideration of the impact race and other intersectional factors (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status) have on observed or measured education-related outcomes.
Centers inquiry on the experiences of Black children and families and embodies an assets-based approach	The REAL Education Committee places **Black third graders at the center of our inquiry. We operate from the assumption that Black children are curious about the world and want to learn**, and that Black families desire and attempt to support their children's learning in and out of school.
Highlights racial inequities using local, historical data (Cheatham, Baker-Jones, and Jordan-Thomas, 2020)	The REAL Education Committee uses **national, state, and local data disaggregated by race or proxies for race** (e.g., neighborhoods, socioeconomic levels) to problematize education for Black students in Savannah-Chatham County, Georgia.
Makes explicit a theory of change that identifies factors or levers that can limit or facilitate racial equity (Cheatham, Baker-Jones, and Jordan-Thomas, 2020)	Based on current research and an examination of best practices, the REAL Education Committee recommends targeting resources and supports to create quality learning opportunities for Savannah-Chatham County Black students from birth through early post-secondary; then, we will close K-12 education gaps between Black and White students and ensure academic success for SCCPSS students and access to higher education. Specifically, the REAL Education Committee focuses on resources and supports related to **school readiness, out-of-school learning, school success**, and **instructional effectiveness**, with consideration of **availability, access, quality, relevance, participation**, and **impact**.
Recommends anti-racist, inclusive, and strategic pathways for change that address structures, systems and stakeholders to achieve racial equity (Cheatham, Baker-Jones, and Jordan-Thomas, 2020)	The REAL Education Committee puts forth a set of anti-racist, strategic action steps that detail participatory methods, data-driven inquiry, and process and policy changes that lead to more equitable experiences and outcomes in education for Black children in Savannah-Chatham County (e.g., closing the achievement gaps between Black and White students in early learning, K-12 schooling, and higher education).

Problem Statement

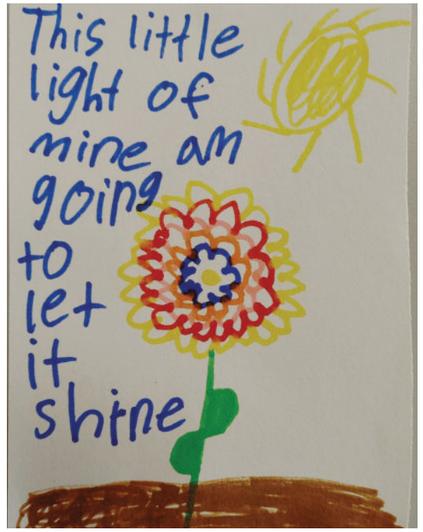
Research and policy tout third grade reading proficiency scores as a key indicator and predictor for school success (e.g., Fiester, L., 2010; Goldhaber et al, 2015). In the third grade, instruction shifts from learning to read to reading to learn. For students and parents, reading proficiency scores offer individual measures of how well a student has learned to read; and based on their reading levels, how prepared they are to successfully learn in the next grade. For schools and districts, these scores act as performance measures for the quality of education provided to a community; and when a racial analysis is applied, whether this provision of education is equitable.

At the end of the 2018-19 academic year, SCCPSS reported that 28.3% of its third-grade students achieved reading scores of proficient or above on the state standardized test, the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS). Only 14.8% of Black third graders scored proficient or above compared to 52.5% of White students (GOSA, 2020).

Given this data and current research, the REAL Education Committee places the third-grade Black student at the center of our work in educational equity. We seek to identify equity-driven interventions designed to (a) improve educational experiences and outcomes for Savannah-Chatham County Black students and (b) close the achievement gap between Black and White students in early learning, K-12 schooling, and higher education.

Data Inquiry and Selection

DATA RESEARCH AND REQUESTS: Applying our racial equity framework, we researched national and state-level data and policy reports and requested historical data from our local public school system on student outcomes and demographics, teacher demographics and quality measures, school readiness, and out-of-school learning contexts.



FOCAL LEARNING PATHWAY AND DATA: Applying our racial equity framework, we focused our inquiry on the learning pathway of Black children spanning birth through the first year of post-secondary education. Figure 3 organizes the resources and supports (e.g., school readiness, instructional effectiveness) that we identified as levers for closing the achievement gap into four learning phases: Early Literacy (0 through pre-Kindergarten), Learning to Read (K-3), Reading to Learn (3-12), and Learning to Succeed (post-secondary). For each set of resources and supports and academic measures, we offer a non-exhaustive list of data to collect or analyze. In the plan of action section, we provide the REAL Education Committee Working Groups with more specific suggestions to guide further data inquiry.

Figure 3: The REAL Education Committee's Focal Learning Pathway and Data

Early Literacy	Learning to Read	Reading to Learn	Learning to Succeed
Early Childhood	Grades K-2	Grade 3	Grades 4-12	Post Secondary
School Readiness: opportunities for family learning with children ages 0-3; access to high-quality, affordable preschool and pre-K programs; readiness measures			
	Academic Success: reading proficiency scores, attendance, high school graduation, student success rates in first year (post-secondary), first-year mentoring/support or intervention program data (post-secondary)		
	Instructional Effectiveness: reading instruction (K-2); teacher quality and demographics, professional learning (K-12), bias, teacher preparation program data (post-secondary)		
	Out-of-school Learning: availability, access, and quality of afterschool and summer learning partnerships		
	School Success: parent-school partnerships, disciplinary policies and practices, technology		

DATA INQUIRY: RACIAL ANALYSIS: We investigated racial inequities in student academic success: reading proficiency scores, high school graduation rates, and enrollment in post-secondary institutions. In alignment with our racial equity framework, we generated evidence of local, historical data to ground our work and prompt questions for further data inquiry and the prioritization of next steps.

1: Overall Reading Proficiency by School: In Figure 4, we organized the SCCPSS elementary, K-8, and charter schools by the percentage of Black students to visualize any patterns in GMAS reading proficiency scores overall. We also compared the school's overall scores to the district reading proficiency scores overall and for Black and White students.

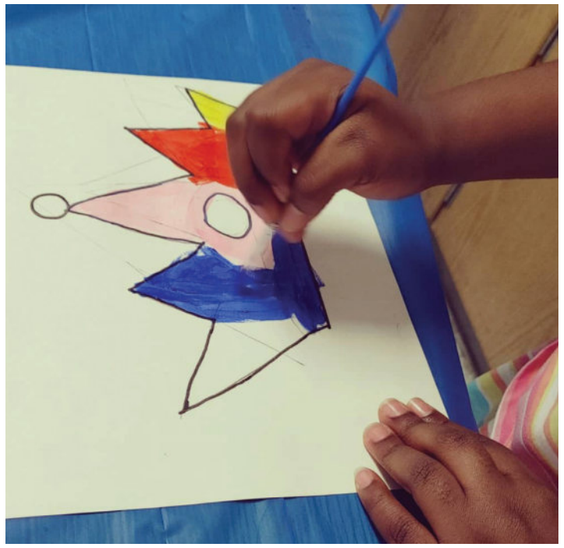


Figure 4: 3rd Grade Overall GMAS Reading Proficiency by School 2019
Sorted by % Black Students in School

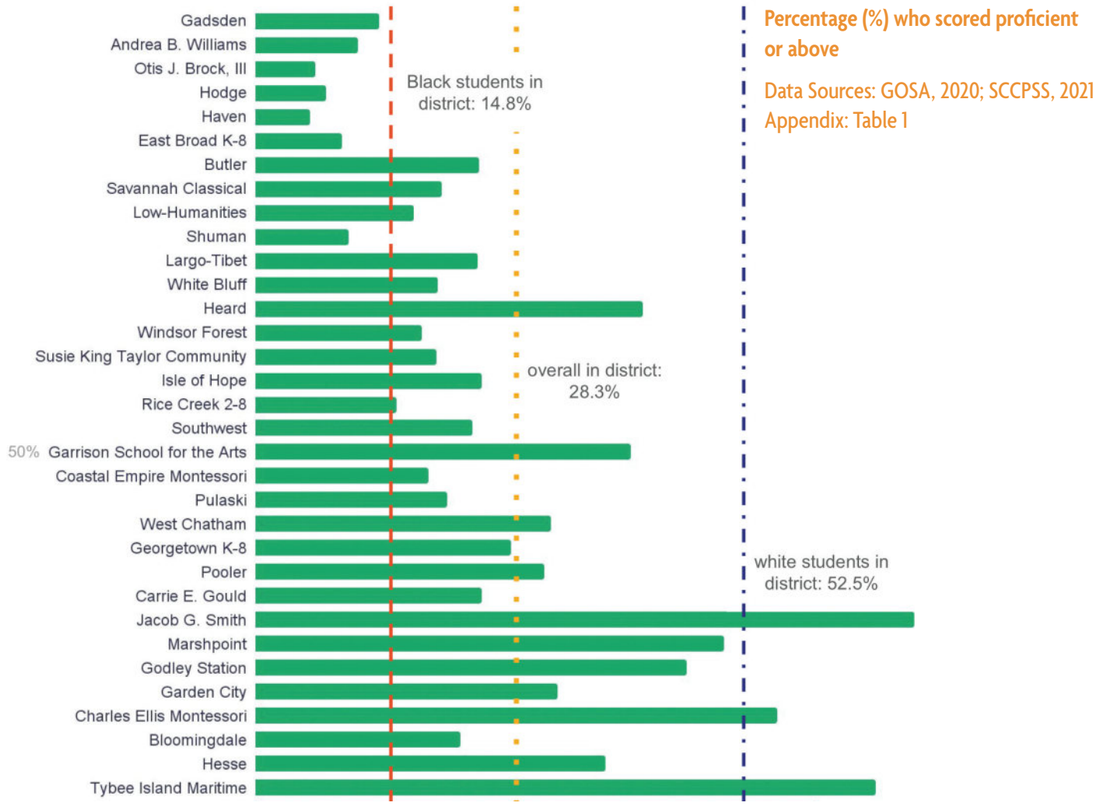
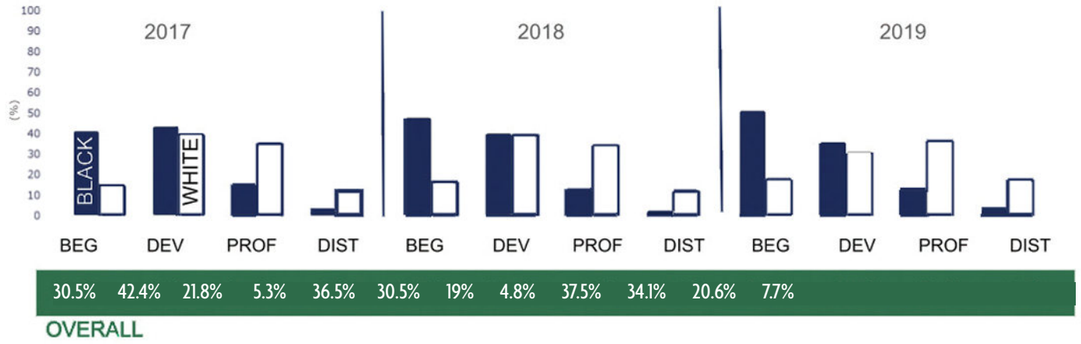


Figure 5: 3rd Grade SCCPSS Reading Proficiency Scores by Race, 2017-2019



KEY: BEG: Beginning; DEV: Developing, PROF: Proficient, DIST: Distinguished

Data Source: GOSA, 2020
Appendix: Table 2

This analysis reveals racial inequities: Only one of the 18 schools with 51% or more Black students met or exceeded the district's overall percentage of students who scored proficient or above on GMAS reading (28.3%). A proficient score means that students are prepared to be successful in the next grade level. Eleven of the 16 schools with 50% or less Black students met or exceeded the district's overall percentage.

These findings prompted the following questions: How does the instruction differ among schools? How is instruction adjusted to meet the needs of learners in each school? What interventions are in place to raise reading proficiency scores?

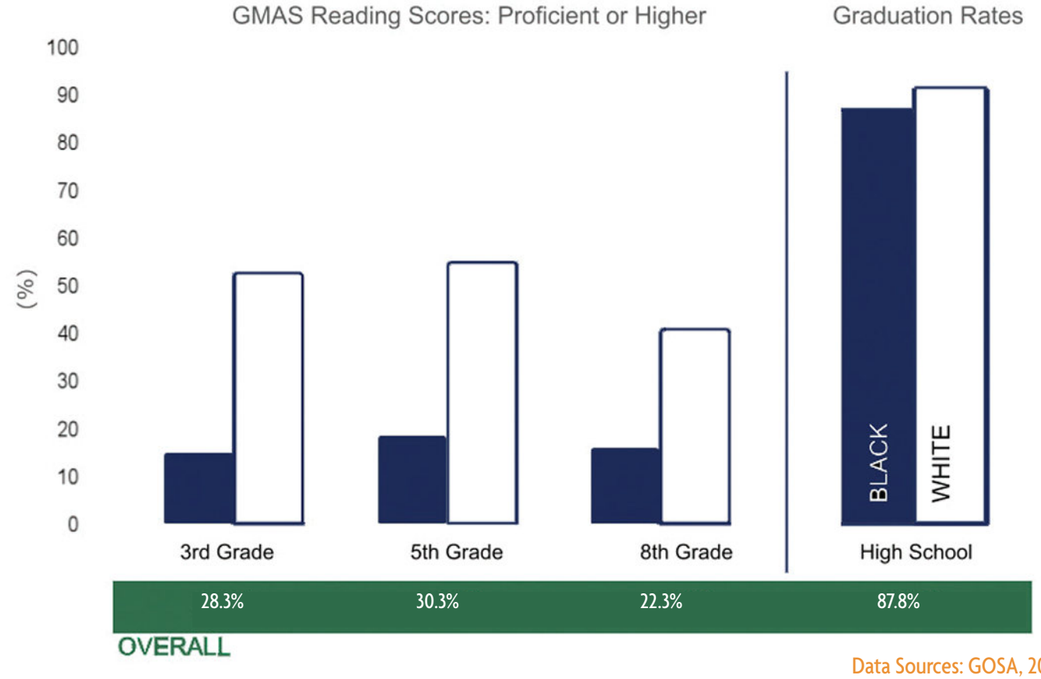
2: District Reading Proficiency Scores by Year: In Figure 5, we graphed the SCCPSS GMAS ELA score categories (beginning, developing, proficient, and distinguished) by race for 2017-2019 to visualize distribution and history of student performance consistent with the previous racial analysis at the district-level, Black and White students performed very differently in years 2017-19. The beginning category comprised 26.1%, 30.9%, and 33% more Black students than White students in 2017, 2018, and 2019, respectively. In contrast, 20.2%, 21.5%, and 23.8% more White students than Black students comprised the proficient category. A similar percentage of Black and White students scored developing, meaning they need additional support in order to be successful in the next grade level.

These findings prompted the following questions: What type of interventions are available at the school and district levels to ensure that students can make progress toward grade-level learning expectations? Are there disparities in availability, access, quality, relevance, participation, and impact of these interventions among Black and White students?

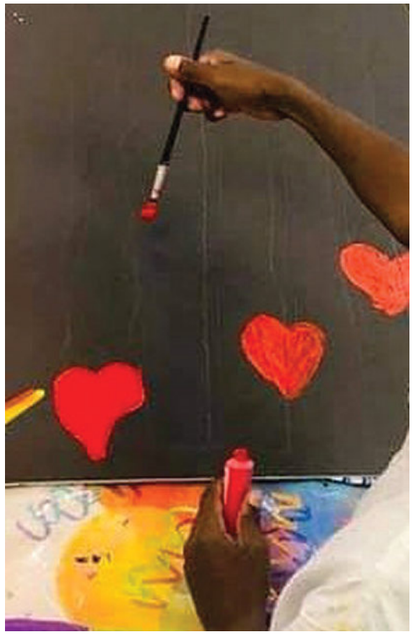
3: District Measures of Student Achievement: In Figure 6, we graphed "snapshots" of student achievement during the SCCPSS K-12 learning pathway to visualize differences in GMAS reading proficiency in 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade and high school graduation rates among Black and White students.

Note: This is not a cohort analysis; this data represents different sets of students.

Figure 6: SCCPSS Measures of Student Achievement 2019 by Race, 3rd, 5th, and 8th Grade + High School



Data Sources: GOSA, 2020
Appendix: Table 3 and Table 4

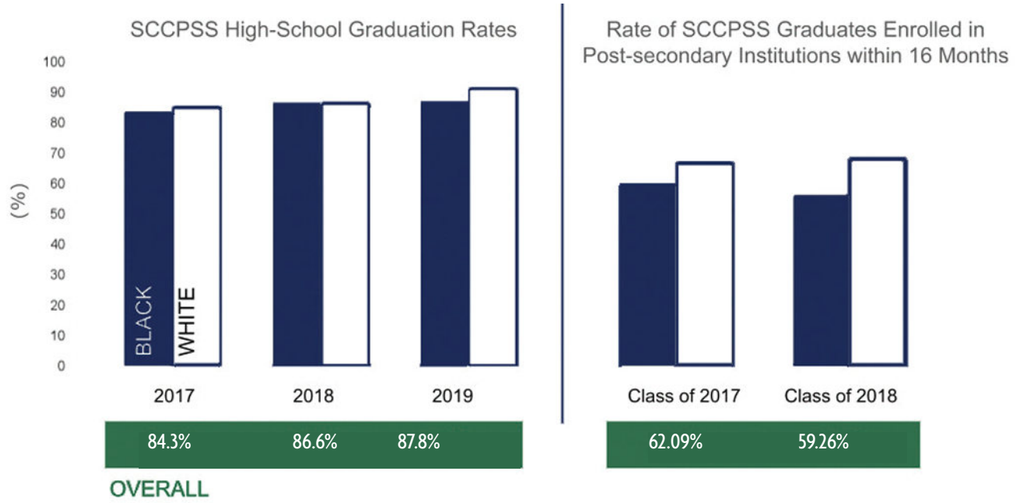


The racial analysis for the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade reveals consistent, large differences of 37.5%, 36.32%, and 24.7%, respectively, between Black and White students. Yet, there is a limited difference in graduation rates (4.41%) between the two student groups. We acknowledge that graduation rates are a different measure of achievement than the GMAS reading proficiency scores.

These findings prompted the following questions: What are additional measures of student academic success in grades 9-12? What interventions are in place to support students to increase their academic success in high school? What are the high school dropout rates for Black and White students? Do Black and White students experience similar success after high school?

4: District High School Graduation and Post-Secondary Enrollment by Class: In Figure 7, we graphed the SCCPSS high school graduation rates from 2017-2019 and the rates of SCCPSS graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions within 16 months for the classes of 2017 and 2018. This analysis offers a local, historical perspective on early post-secondary success and the opportunity to investigate any racial inequities among Black and White high-school graduates.

Figure 7: SCCPSS and Post-Secondary Measures of Student Achievement 2017-2019 by Race, High School Graduation + Enrollment in Post-Secondary Institutions



Data Sources: GOSA, 2019; GOSA, 2020
Appendix: Table 5 and Table 6

Similar to previous analysis, limited differences existed in graduation rates among Black and White graduates in years 2017-19. For the classes of 2017 and 2018, 7.13% and 11.89% more White students enrolled in post-secondary institutions within sixteen months.

These findings prompted the following questions:
What are other success factors in high school that can provide more insights into the potential post-secondary success of high school graduates? What is the student success rates among Black and White students in their first year at local post-secondary institutions? What post-secondary interventions are available to first-year students to facilitate their success?
Note: This data inquiry focuses on reading proficiency and additional measures of student achievement as evidence for the problem statement, to underscore the importance of ongoing racial equity analysis, and to compel community members to action. The racial equity framework, theory of change, and plan of action offer a broader perspective and context to consider this data and reiterate that the necessary work extends beyond K-12.

Theory of Change

Based on current research and an exploration of best practices, the REAL Education Committee asserts that if resources and supports are targeted to create quality learning opportunities for Savannah-Chatham County Black students from birth through early post-secondary; then, we will close K-12 education gaps between Black and White students and ensure academic success for SCCPSS students and access to higher education. Our focal resources and supports include **school readiness** (family learning ages 0-3, preschool and pre-K programs), **instructional effectiveness** (classroom instruction, teacher preparation/training), **out-of-school learning** (afterschool and summer learning), and **school success** (family-school partnerships, discipline policies, and technology).

School Readiness

Due to systemic racism, opportunity gaps exist for Black children. It is imperative for Black families to have access to high-quality early childhood education and care opportunities as a "pathway to success" into their K-12 education (The Education Trust, 2014). Quality early childhood programs can decrease the school readiness gap and increase assistance with the development of language skills that will provide a foundation to achieving reading proficiency (Musen, 2010, p.4). Many working families have difficulty accessing quality early childhood education programs due to the high costs associated with enrolling their children. In Georgia, infant care averages $8,327 per year, which is nearly as expensive as public college tuition, which is $8,573 on average (National Black Child Development Institute, 2020). Other limitations, such as long waitlists and geographic proximity, decrease the number of families who can take advantage of high-quality early childhood education and care (Georgia Early Education Alliance For Ready Students, 2019). Policymakers must ensure equitable access to funding for early childhood programs to increase the number of available seats and locations that are convenient and easily accessible by public transportation. In addition, Black families will benefit from expanded financial assistance (e.g., American Families Plan, CAPS program) and universal preschool and pre-Kindergarten.

Instructional Effectiveness

The Black-White achievement gap has been well documented (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress, The Education Opportunity Project), and racial inequities in reading proficiency have been deemed unacceptable and harmful by the National Institutes of Health (National Reading Panel, 2000). Multiple factors contribute to student academic success, including the quality of teacher preparation and training and classroom instruction. A review of traditional teacher education programs in colleges and universities revealed that only 53% of programs provide sufficient coverage of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension (NCTQ, 2020). Recent research reports that out of 180 classroom hours in each core subject during the school year, students spent only 47 hours on assignments that were grade appropriate (TNTP, 2018). In addition, schools with teachers that hold strong pro-White/anti-Black bias show larger gaps in standardized test scores for Black and White students (Chin et al, 2020). To narrow the achievement gap, university programs must improve their instructional resources and practices to ensure that teachers are well-prepared to provide effective, grade-level instruction. Districts must implement hiring practices that increase the diversity of teachers and school leaders and address structural racism that contributes to implicit bias (Chin et al., 2020). Teachers must also have opportunities to participate in high-quality professional learning that supports them in providing culturally relevant and responsive instruction that appreciates and builds upon students' prior knowledge and cultural and linguistic experiences (e.g., Ladson-Billings 1995; Gay, 2010; Paris, 2017).

School Success: Discipline

There is no evidence that Black children misbehave more frequently or intensely than others (GAO, 2018). Yet, racial disparities in discipline exist, including harsh discipline like suspension, expulsion, and even corporal punishment (Meek et al., 2020). Black children comprise only 15% of K-12 students in the United States, and 36% of them have been suspended at least once (US DOE, 2017). Suspensions and expulsions result in the loss of instructional time and can compromise student academic success. At the secondary level, Black students miss 103 days per 100 students due to out-of-school suspensions, compared to White students who miss 21 days per 100 students (Losen and Martinez, 2020). Implicit bias (e.g., Black children perceived as older, more aggressive, or deserving of harsher punishment) and a lack of consistent, appropriate policies on local, state, and federal levels contribute to this disciplinary gap and eventually the achievement gap. Recommendations to close these gaps include (a) federal and state policies that prohibit suspension and expulsion in early childhood and limit it thereafter and (b) professional training for early childhood and K-12 educators that "replace punitive discipline with supportive and inclusive responses", such trauma-informed, restorative, and culturally responsive practices (Losen and Matinez, 2020, p.47; Meek et al., 2020; NBCDI, 2020).

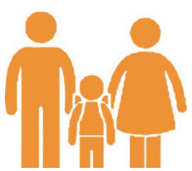
School Success: Technology

The digital divide negatively impacts the learning of up to one-third of public school children in the United States. In Georgia, 32% of students are without an adequate high-speed internet connection (at least 25/3 Mbps) and 23% are without a digital learning device (e.g., desktop computer, laptop, or tablet) (Chandra, 2020; Ali et al., 2021). Disconnected and under-connected families are disproportionately Black; an estimated 30 percent of Black households are without broadband connection

compared to 18 percent of White households (US Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2017). The lack of availability, affordability, and adoption of these digital learning resources create a "homework gap", potentially limiting Black students' academic success. Research shows that students with high-speed internet connections participate in more educational activities online and away from school, have higher GPAs (+-0.4), and more digital skills (Hampton et al., 2019). Recent increases in funding, expansions of broadband infrastructure, and procurement of digital devices have begun to narrow the digital divide. But many of these efforts are temporary and expire in the next 1-3 years. To permanently close the technology and achievement gaps, (a) partnerships across public, private, and social sectors must be established, (b) state-wide broadband strategies must be developed and assessed through a racial equity lens, and (c) districts must provide outreach to their families to support the adoption and effective use of digital learning resources (Ali et al., 2021).

School Success: Parent and Family Engagement

Black parents often feel excluded from their children's education (National Black Child Development Institute, 2020). There are instances where schools have discouraged parental involvement when teachers and staff have pessimistic perspectives about parents' attitudes and values or their children's academic potential (Cooper et. al, 2010, p. 18). When families and schools collaborate, children have better educational outcomes (National Black Child Development Institute, 2020). Less involvement at school can cause less communication with school personnel, which leads to parents lacking vital information about their children's performance and progress, tools to reinforce learning at home, and other essential school services and resources (Cooper et. al, 2010, p.19). Parent volunteers are often required to take time off work and pass a criminal background check, which can pose challenges for some families. Districts should ensure that their volunteer processes and policies are equitable and inclusive. To increase parental involvement, school districts can cooperate with families to encourage reading in the home, provide access to reading materials, and facilitate library visits (Musen, 2010, p. 6). Furthermore, educators must be prepared and trained to create and maintain positive learning environments for Black children and engage parents as active partners in their children's education (National Black Child Development Institute, 2020).



Out-of-School Learning

Limited availability of afterschool and summer learning programs creates an unmet demand, which is highest among traditionally underserved communities (e.g., Black, Latinx, and low-income). Afterschool and summer learning programs offer students opportunities for academic enrichment, tutorials, arts and cultural experiences, and physical and social activities. "High-interest activities involving reading for young children after school and over the summer can prevent reading loss and sometimes even result in reading gains" (Musen, 2010, p.5). These out-of-school learning programs also provide safe, supervised environments for children when parents are working. In Georgia, for every child in an afterschool program, there are two children on the waiting list (AfterSchool Alliance, 2020). Black parents are more likely than White parents to report that their children do not have safe and reliable transportation to and from afterschool programs. Program hours of operation and location also present challenges for parents. To minimize unmet demand, increased funding is needed to expand current programming, create new program offerings, increase affordability, and provide safe transportation. Strong partnerships between school districts and out-of-school learning programs can support district achievement goals and program development in academic priority areas (AfterSchool Alliance, 2020).

Our Plan of Action

The REAL Education Committee recommends the formation of four (4) working groups that welcome the voices, experience and expertise of Savannah educators, parents, youth and community leaders. We recommend broadening participation to include: non-educator parents with children enrolled in SCCPSS; district staff, principals, teachers, and parent facilitators; community-based organization leaders and staff; youth leaders, and early learning directors and teachers. The working groups will be organized around the following topics in the focal learning pathway.

- **Early Childhood and School Readiness:** Family Learning 0-3, Preschool and Pre-K programs
- **Academic Success and Instructional Effectiveness:** Academic Success Measures, Instruction (curricular materials, culturally relevant learning, bias), Teacher Preparation and Training
- **Out-of-School Learning:** Afterschool and Summer Learning
- **School Success:** Parent-School Partnerships, Discipline Policies, and Technology

Focused on relevant topic areas, each working group will continue the data-driven inquiry process to identify racial inequities and the underlying causes. They will research and catalog national and local research, examples, and best practices.

Additionally, working group members will collaborate to document the current operations and policy landscape for their topics with consideration of availability, access, quality, relevance, participation, and impact. Figure 8 models a set of questions that the Early Childhood and School Readiness working group might pursue when investigating current early learning policies and processes. These questions are informed by the racial equity framework.

Figure 8: Examples of questions to consider when investigating current policies

SCCPSS currently operates a pre-K lottery. Accepted families can enroll their children in free, public pre-Kindergarten classes.

- **Access and Availability:** How many classes are available? What is the current and forecasted funding for this program? How many classes are required to serve the needs of Savannah-Chatham children, especially those with the most need?
- **Participation:** What are the demographics (racial, socioeconomic, and neighborhood) for accepted and non-accepted students? What is the process for appeal? Does a lottery process address the overwhelming need to improve school readiness among Black children?
- **Quality and Relevance:** How effective is instruction (e.g., learning materials, teacher qualifications and preparation, instructional and assessment strategies)? Is the curriculum culturally relevant for Black children and are the teachers aware of and addressing bias in their instruction and relationship-building?
- **Impact:** How is student academic success measured in pre-K? How does student academic success (early reading and skills) compare among (a) students who attended SCCPSS pre-K, private pre-K, and no pre-K and (b) Black and White students?

In alignment with our racial equity framework, each working group will put forth a set of anti-racist, strategic action steps that will lead to closing the achievement gap between Black and White students from K-12 and ensure academic success for Savannah-Chatham Public School students and access to higher education. These strategic actions must focus on process or policy changes, broaden participation to include stakeholders often unheard or ignored in the decision-making that affects their lives, and include measurable criteria to determine success, effectiveness, or impact.

We recommend the REAL Education Committee working groups broaden participation to include non-educator parents with children enrolled in SCCPSS; district staff, principals, teachers, and parent facilitators; community-based organization leaders and staff; and early learning directors and teachers. The closing section suggests next steps in terms of guiding questions and data inquiry.

Early Childhood & School Readiness

- Questions: What is the quality and impact of early learning programs and outreach initiatives that are centered around family engagement and early literacy activities? What sources of funding are available to increase accessibility and affordability for local early learning programs?
- Suggested data inquiry: Early Childhood Education (ECE) benchmark and assessment data from Head Start and other early learning programs; availability and utilization of financial assistance programs (e.g., CAPS) for early learning; budgets or financial documents of preschools and pre-Ks that receive state and federal funding; evaluation data on outreach initiatives that encourage family engagement and early literacy activities

Academic Success & Instructional Effectiveness

- Questions: How are teachers prepared and trained to leverage the prior knowledge and linguistic or cultural resources students bring to school? What academic interventions are in place to support students who need it throughout their K-12 experience? To what extent does the local teacher workforce represent the diversity of their students?
- Suggested data inquiry: student attendance; teacher experience, racial demographics, and preparation/ training; implementation of multi-tiered interventions (e.g., MTSS, RTI); review of curricular materials and instructional alignment to grade-level standards; role of implicit bias in instruction and relationship-building

Out-of-School Learning

- Questions: What types of partnerships does SCCPSS have in place for afterschool and summer learning? What is the current process for becoming an after school or summer learning partner with SCCPSS or the City of Savannah? What is the availability, affordability, and quality of out-of-school learning in Savannah-Chatham County?
- Suggested data inquiry: documentation of application and funding processes and partnerships (e.g., district, school, non-profit, community, and university) and program types (e.g., enrichment, tutorial, cultural); evaluation data of out-of-school learning programs; budgets or financial documents for programs that receive Title 1 and 4 funding for out-of-school learning

School Success

- Questions: How are educators engaging parents and families as active partners in their child's learning? What specific discipline "reform" efforts or policies have been implemented in SCCPSS? What partnerships, policies, and funding have been implemented by SCCPSS and the City of Savannah to increase the availability and access to technology (broadband, digital devices)?
- Suggested data inquiry: discipline policies (e.g., code of conduct); out-of-school suspensions and expulsion data; parental involvement initiatives (e.g., Operation Beacon, Title 1 Family Engagement, PTA); number and location of households with access to broadband internet; number of devices provided students by schools or district

We recommend the following timeline to underscore the urgency of advancing racial equity and improving the educational experiences and outcomes of Black children in Savannah-Chatham County:

- No later than three (3) months after this plan of action is approved, the working groups will be established and engaged in the necessary data inquiry.
- No later than six (6) months, the working groups will have completed their data inquiry and outlined the historical and current programmatic and policy landscape relevant to their topic.
- No later than twelve (12) months, the working groups will recommend anti-racist, strategic changes to policies and processes that will lead to closing the achievement gap between Black and White students from K-12 and ensure academic success for Savannah Chatham Public School students and access to higher education.

References

AfterSchool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM: *Demand Grows, Opportunity Shrinks.* http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2020/AA3PM-National-Report.pdf

Ali, T., Chandra, S., Cherukumilli, S., Fazlullah, A., Hill, H., McAlpine, N., McBride, L., Vaduganathan, N., Weiss, D., Wu, M. (2021). Looking back, looking forward: What it will take to permanently close the K–12 digital divide. Common Sense Media. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/final_-_what_it_will_take_to_permanently_close_the_k-12_digital_divide_vfeb3.pdf

Chandra, S., Chang, A., Day, L., Fazlullah, A., Liu, J., McBride, L., Mudalige, T., Weiss, D., (2020). Closing the K–12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning. Common Sense Media. https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/common_sense_media_report_final_7_1_3pm_web.pdf

Cheatham, J.P., Baker Jones, T., & Jordan-Thomas, Erica. (2020). Note on Racial Equity in School Systems. Public Education Leadership Project at Harvard University. https://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/files/pelp/files/pel096p2.pdf

Children's Equity Project. (2020). Addressing Harsh Discipline and Disparities: What We Know, What We Don't Know, and What We Should Do About It. Child and Family Success. https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-07/CEP-discipline-pullout-070620-FINAL.pdf

Cooper, C. E., Crosnoe, R., Suizzo, M. A., & Pituch, K. A. (2010). Poverty, race, and parental involvement during the transition to elementary school. Journal of family issues, 31(7), 859-883.

Dhaliwal, T. K., Chin, M. J., Lovison, V. S., & Quinn, D. M. (2020, July 20). Educator bias is associated with racial disparities in student achievement and discipline. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/07/20/educator-bias-is-associated-with-racial-disparities-in-student-achievement-and-discipline/

The Education Trust. (2014). Young Learners, Missed Opportunities. https://s3-us-east-2.amazonaws.com/edtrustmain/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/05162154/Young-Learners-Missed-Opportunities.pdf

The Educational Opportunity Project at Stanford University. https://edopportunity.org/

Fiester, L. (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. KIDS COUNT Special Report. *Annie E. Casey Foundation.*

Gay, G. (2010). Culturally Responsive Teaching. Multicultural Education Series. Teachers College Press.

Georgia Early Education Alliance For Ready Students. (2019). Advancing Opportunity: Parents' Solutions to Georgia's Child Care Challenges. http://geears.org/wp-content/uploads/Advancing-Opportunity-FINAL-1.pdf

Government Accountability Office (2018). Discipline disparities for Black students, boys, and students with disabilities. https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/690828.pdf.

Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). (2020, February 24). Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG) Assessments (by grade) 2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017.

Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). (2019, December 2). Graduation Rate (4-Year Cohort) 2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017

Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). (2020). Post-Secondary C11 Report 2019-2020, 2018-2019

Hampton, K. N., Fernandez, L., Robertson, C. T., & Bauer, J. M. (2020). Broadband and Student Performance Gaps. https://quello.msu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Broadband_Gap_Quello_Report_MSU.pdf

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. American educational research journal, 32(3), 465-491

Lieberman, M. (2020, December 3). Internet access is a civil rights issue. Education Week. https://www.edweek.org/technology/internet-access-is-a-civil-rights-issue/2020/09.

Losen, D. J., & Martinez, P. (2020). Lost opportunities: How disparate school discipline continues to drive differences in the opportunity to learn. https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/lost-opportunities-how-disparate-school-discipline-continues-to-drive-differences-in-the-opportunity-to-learn/Lost-Opportunities-REPORT-v17.pdf

Madda, M. J. (2021, June 14). *Millions of students are still without Wi-Fi AND tech-why Haven't Policymakers stepped up?*. EdSurge. https://www.edsurge.com/news/2021-06-11-millions-of-students-are-still-without-wifi-and-tech-why-haven-t-policymakers-stepped-up.

Meek, S., Iruka, I. U., Allen, R., Yazzie, D. A., Fernandez, V., Catherine, E., McIntosh, K., Gordon, L., Gilliam, W., Hemmeter, M. L., Blevins, D., & Powell, T. (2020). Fourteen priorities to dismantle systemic racism in early care and education. Children's Equity Project. Retrieved from: https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/cep

Musen, L. (2010). Early Reading Proficiency. Leading Indicator Spotlight. *Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (NJ1).*

National Assessment of Educational Progress. (2020). Achievement Gaps. https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/studies/gaps/

National Black Child Development Institute. (2020). State of the Black Child Report Card: Georgia. https://14fa0901-9eea-4ca1-9c3e-7e5e03166776.filesusr.com/ugd/20bc2e_50c91ae86d2e49769377c20c66573d03.pdf

National Reading Panel (US), National Institute of Child Health, Human Development (US), National Reading Excellence Initiative, National Institute for Literacy (US), United States. Public Health Service, & United States Department of Health. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel:* Teaching children to read: *An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction:* Reports of the *subgroups.* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world.* Teachers College Press.

Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. (2021). *SCCPSS third grade students by ethnicity.*

TNTP. (2018). The opportunity myth: What students can show us about how school is letting them down - and how to fix it. https://tntp.org/publications/view/studentexperiences/the-opportunity-myth

U.S Department of Education. (2017). Civil Rights Data Collection. https://ocrdata.ed.gov/

U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee. (2017). *America's Digital Divide.* https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ff7b3d0b-bc00-4498-9f9d-3e56ef95088f/the-digital-divide-.pdf

Appendix

Data Tables for Figures 4-7

Table 1: 3rd Grade Overall GMAS Reading Proficiency by School 2019 (GOSA, 2020; SCCPSS, 2021)

School	Total # of Students	Total # of Black Students	PCT-Black	Total # of Students Tested	Total # of Students Proficient and Above	PCT-Overall Proficient and Above
Gadsden	99	97	98	90	12	13.33
Andrea B Williams	95	92	97	81	9	11.11
Otis J Brock III	93	89	96	77	5	6.49
Hodge	75	72	96	65	5	7.69
Haven	80	76	95	67	4	5.97
East Broad K-8	55	51	92	43	4	9.3
Butler	92	82	89	75	18	24
Savannah Classical	37	32	86	35	7	20
Low Humanities	130	112	86	111	19	17.12
Shuman	132	111	84	110	11	10
Largo-Tibet	110	83	75	96	23	23.96
White Bluff	119	84	71	92	18	19.57
Heard	104	70	67	96	40	41.67
Windsor Forest	91	60	66	84	15	17.86
Susie King Taylor Community	39	23	59	36	7	19.44
Isle of Hope	96	57	59	86	21	24.42
Rice Creek 2-8	173	102	59	144	22	15.28
Southwest	141	75	53	120	38	23.33
Garrison School for the Arts	62	31	50	62	25	40.32
Coastal Empire Montessori	50	24	48	43	8	18.6
Pulaski	122	57	47	92	19	20.65
West Chatham	148	67	45	135	43	31.85
Georgetown K-8	83	36	43	69	19	27.54
Pooler	70	28	40	58	18	31.03
Carrie E Gould	143	57	40	123	30	24.39
Jacob G Smith	76	30	39	72	51	70.83
Marshpoint	134	45	34	119	60	50.42
Godley Station	213	68	32	179	83	46.37
Garden City	90	25	28	83	27	32.53
Charles Ellis Montessori	60	13	22	57	22	56.14
Bloomingdale	63	11	17	59	12	22.03
Hesse	156	23	15	141	53	37.59
Tybee Island Maritime	51	5	10	48	32	66.67
May Howard	92	8	9	86	52	60.47

Table 2: 3rd Grade District Reading Proficiency Scores by Race, 2017-2019 (GOSA, 2020)

Score	Beginning						Developing					
Race	2019		2018		2017		2019		2018		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Overall	1103	37.5	1187	36.7	1008	30.5	1003	34.1	1275	39.5	1400	42.4
Black	824	50.3	885	46.9	761	40.5	573	35	741	39.2	809	43.1
White	134	17.3	127	16	134	14.4	233	30.1	307	38.8	365	39.2
Score	Proficient						Distinguished					

Race	2019		2018		2017		2019		2018		2017	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Overall	607	20.6	615	19	722	21.8	227	7.7	154	4.8	175	5.3
Black	195	11.9	231	12.2	271	14.4	47	2.9	32	1.7	37	2
White	276	35.7	267	33.7	322	34.6	130	16.8	91	11.5	109	11.7

Table 3: SCCPSS Reading Proficiency Scores 2019 by Race and Grade Level (3rd, 5th, and 8th Grade) (GOSA, 2020)

Grade Level	Total # of Black Students Tested	Total # Black Students Proficient and Above	% Black Students Proficient and Above	Total # of White Students Tested	Total # of White Students Proficient and Above	% White Students Proficient and Above	Total # of Students Tested	Total # of ALL students Proficient and Above	% Overall District Proficient and Above
3rd Grade	1639	242	14.77	773	406	52.52	2940	834	28.3
5th Grade	1773	329	18.56	727	399	54.88	3078	933	30.3
8th Grade	1259	202	16	285	116	40.7	1890	421	22.3

Table 4: SCCPSS High School Graduation Rates 2019 (GOSA, 2020)

Total # of Black Students	Total # of Black Graduates	% Black Students	Total # of White Students	Total # of White Graduates	% White Students	Total # of Graduates	Total # of Students	% Overall
1432	1240	86.59	578	526	91	2,060	2,346	87.8

Table 5: SCCPSS High School Graduation Rates 2017-2019 (GOSA, 2019)

Year	Total # of Black Students	Total # of Black Graduates	% Black Students	Total # of White Students	Total # of White Graduates	% White Students	Total # of Graduates	Total # of Students	% Overall
2017	1329	1110	83.52	603	511	84.74	1886	2237	84.3
2018	1391	1199	86.2	544	468	86.03	1939	2240	86.6
2019	1432	1240	86.59	578	526	91	2060	2346	87.8

Table 6: SCCPSS High School Graduates Enrolled in Post-secondary Institutions within 16 Months (GOSA, 2020)

Year	Total # of Black College Students	Total # of Black Graduates	% Black Students	Total # of White College Students	Total # of White Graduates	% White Students	Total # of Graduates	Total # of College Students	% Overall
Class of 2017	644	1084	59.41	342	514	66.54	1865	1158	62.09
Class of 2018	674	1204	55.98	319	470	67.87	1939	1149	59.26

The Environmental Justice Committee

Dr. Mildred McClain, Convener
Tami Burton
Nick Deffley
Dr. Erica Hollman
Azania Heyward James
Asia Hernton - Young
Kasantha Moodley
Suzi Ruhl
Dr. Fatima Shafei
Dr. Sacoby Wilson
George Wyeuth

Over the past few decades, front-line and fence-line communities, including those in coastal Georgia, redefined the conditions of our natural environment to take on a more holistic meaning, to encompass the health and sustainability of our communities, and they have built their power to change both health and environmental policies.

In keeping with the evolution of the greater environmental justice movement, the committee applied this holistic paradigm to their analysis. In other words, they seek strategies that:

- Affect change at a policy level;
- Reduce single, multiple and cumulative risks;
- Improve public health for the most vulnerable populations;
- Enhance public participation in decision making;
- Promote community engagement and empowerment;
- Build infrastructure for healthy and sustainable communities, and
- Employ innovative public and private partnerships.

The environmental justice committee has articulated the scope of its research to determine:
"The extent to which inequities exist in environmental conditions and exposure to environmental pollutants in Savannah neighborhoods."

Importantly, the committee's approach was first designed by Dr. Mildred McClain, who serves as the committee's convener. This approach was first presented by Harambee House, an organization she founded, at the inaugural ACA NET roundtable hosted by Spelman College in 1994 and has quietly shifted power toward impacted communities across the world over 27 years.

The committee chose to focus on three areas of inequity that impact communities of color in Savannah:

- Air pollution
- Lead exposure
- Energy inefficiency

Air Pollution

While coastal cities tend to have cleaner ozones because they are closer to an ocean, the high presence of manufacturing and cargo industries in coastal Georgia has polluted the air more than other parts of the nation. Exposure to polluted fine particulate matter in the air is the largest environmental health risk in the U.S. African-Americans experience greater adverse health risks associated with chronic poor air quality and air pollution. While air pollution is defined as harmful substances in the air, such as vehicle and industrial emissions, families living in high traffic zones and cigarette smoke are common contributors to the incidence of childhood asthma. Relatedly, children living in these high traffic zones experience greater exposure to air pollution, causing a high frequency of asthma attacks.

Poor air quality has also been associated with poor maternal health outcomes such as low birthweight, gestational diabetes and maternal morbidity. Racial disparities in maternal health outcomes persist even after controlling for poverty, education, and unemployment, particularly in the American South.

While there are multiple factors, the association of place and exposure is most prevalent, and communities of color continue to experience the adverse impact of air pollution as an externality of race-based policies like redlining and the proximity of "affordable" housing to high polluting industries. Similarly, air pollution has been linked with key risk factors for respiratory and heart disease, cancer, depression and chronic stress.

The air quality in Savannah is considered "moderate" today, but 12% of residents are experiencing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a chronic inflammation of the lungs, which is primarily caused by smoking but secondarily caused by poor air quality and long-term exposure to fumes. About 15% of Savannah residents with COPD work in industries associated with a higher COPD risk. One census tract in the city ranks in the 95th percentile of prevalence nationally.

From there, the committee developed problem statements supported by data.

The committee is considering the following strategies to improve air quality in Savannah:

1. A full study conducted by the City of Savannah, followed by the development of a cross-sector air pollution action plan with the local industrial sector and the Board of Education. The study should provide analysis in the following areas for decision makers:
   - Number of households affected by asthma by neighborhood or zip code
   - Schools within affected neighborhoods/zip codes and schools with a high population of students with asthma
   - Hospitals with high admission rates due to asthma related illnesses/emergencies
   - Cost of the incidence of asthma to the City of Savannah
   - Immediate, no cost and low-cost actions that can be taken by City of Savannah
   - Impact of no action taken by City of Savannah on affected populations
   - An assessment of ambient indoor air quality
2. Distribute air monitors, humidifiers and air purifiers to families in affected areas of the city through community health workers.
3. Provide in-service training on identifying respiratory conditions to medical and school staff.
4. Form a partnership with the local food bank to provide food that aids in reducing asthma to affected families.
5. Establish a Childhood Asthma Prevention Registry.

Lead Exposure

Protecting children from exposure to lead is essential to their healthy development. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified, and low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement. Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust are the most widespread and hazardous sources of lead exposure for young children in the United States. Savannah has one of the highest concentrations of pre-1950 residential housing in the state of Georgia. Children that reside in zip codes 31415, 31401, 31404 and 31405 are at extremely high risk for lead poisoning due to living in pre-1978 housing.

In 2008, the Harambee House, based in Savannah, partnered with the Centers for Disease Control, the Georgia Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and the Chatham County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program for three years to bring awareness to vulnerable communities, increase lead testing for their children, and ensure the enforcement of the Savannah lead law. As a result, lead testing increased in target areas in Chatham County. Harambee House also provided lead abatement training for local Savannah residents and integrated prevention health messages into the trainings.

The State of Georgia has legislation to enforce lead hazard abatement, however, the city of Savannah currently upholds lead poisoning legislation in the form of a local ordinance and has yet to adopt the Georgia law. The local legislation focuses on the presence of lead hazards and not of elevated blood lead levels in children caused by older housing. Conversely, the strength of the ordinance is that it requires abatement of lead for all buildings that are covered by lead-based paint, but only within in the city of Savannah. Countywide coverage would be more effective to address landlords who refuse to rent to families with children to avoid lead abatement obligations.

The committee is considering the following strategies to improve lead exposure in Savannah:

- Build cooperation with Chatham County Commission to expand the City of Savannah ordinance to be applied countywide.
- Adoption of state legislation by Savannah City Council, to include all properties, including owner-occupied properties.
- Create an accountability measure for landlord refusal to rent to families with children.
- Implement state guidelines of one lead test at 20 micrograms per deciliter
- Emphasize lead hazard reduction techniques over total abatement per U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommendations through the City's code enforcement.
- Integrate the new standard of checking for lead hazards in pre-1978 rental properties to allow lead hazard reduction techniques to be used with yearly monitoring of the property into code compliance, regardless of the age of the tenants.

Energy Efficiency

Savannah's lower-income, underserved communities tend to pay a higher percentage of their household income on energy than state or national averages because, as with many cities, their homes have sub-standard insulation and are thus less energy efficient. These communities become more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as repairs on homes are put off.

There are also negative, disproportionate effects of our reliance on fossil fuels on people of color and poor people who are more likely to live near power plants. Our communities suffer from the conspicuous consumption of nonrenewable energy of others. The carbon emitted from the production of fossil fuel energy causes globally rising temperatures, which in turn contributes to health risks like pre-term birth and low-birth weight that our communities suffer from at greater rates, while not reaping the benefits. The only way to mitigate this injustice is to implement solutions to the current climate crisis that prioritize communities of color. While the REAL Savannah Task Force fully supports the City of Savannah's "100% Savannah" pledge to move to clean and renewable energy by 2035/2050, some discreet racial equity measures are needed to address disparities in climate change causes and impacts.

Based on its research to date, the environmental justice committee recommends the following strategies for the City of Savannah:

- Develop a residential weatherization program that prioritizes the highest energy-burdened households.
- Develop a program to help residents convert to energy efficient HVAC, lighting, appliances, roofing, etc., prioritizing households with the highest energy burden.
- Develop a public warning, communication and backup energy system to continue operation of critical infrastructure for residents with the highest energy burden.
- Integrate maternal, infant and mental health into existing City of Savannah initiatives addressing climate change and energy efficiency.
- Implement a policy that assists energy efficiency improvements and other weatherization updates on the homes of vulnerable households.
- Increase access to perinatal health and mental health care, with targeted resources to children, families, caregivers, and pregnant and postpartum people living in climate-affected areas of Savannah.
- Integrate a heat vulnerability index in the City of Savannah's emergency management system to protect vulnerable residents against extreme heat.
- Expand the City of Savannah's community mental health infrastructure to provide outreach, training and services to residents in need.

Next Steps

Below we have projected the recommendations from the task force's analyses on affordable housing and environmental justice that can be achieved in the first year of implementation. Recommendations for all committees will be added to this time frame as analyses are completed.

Affordable Housing

- The implementation of racial equity metrics in current housing programs in Savannah.
- Creation of a joint Chatham County & City of Savannah online developer's toolkit.

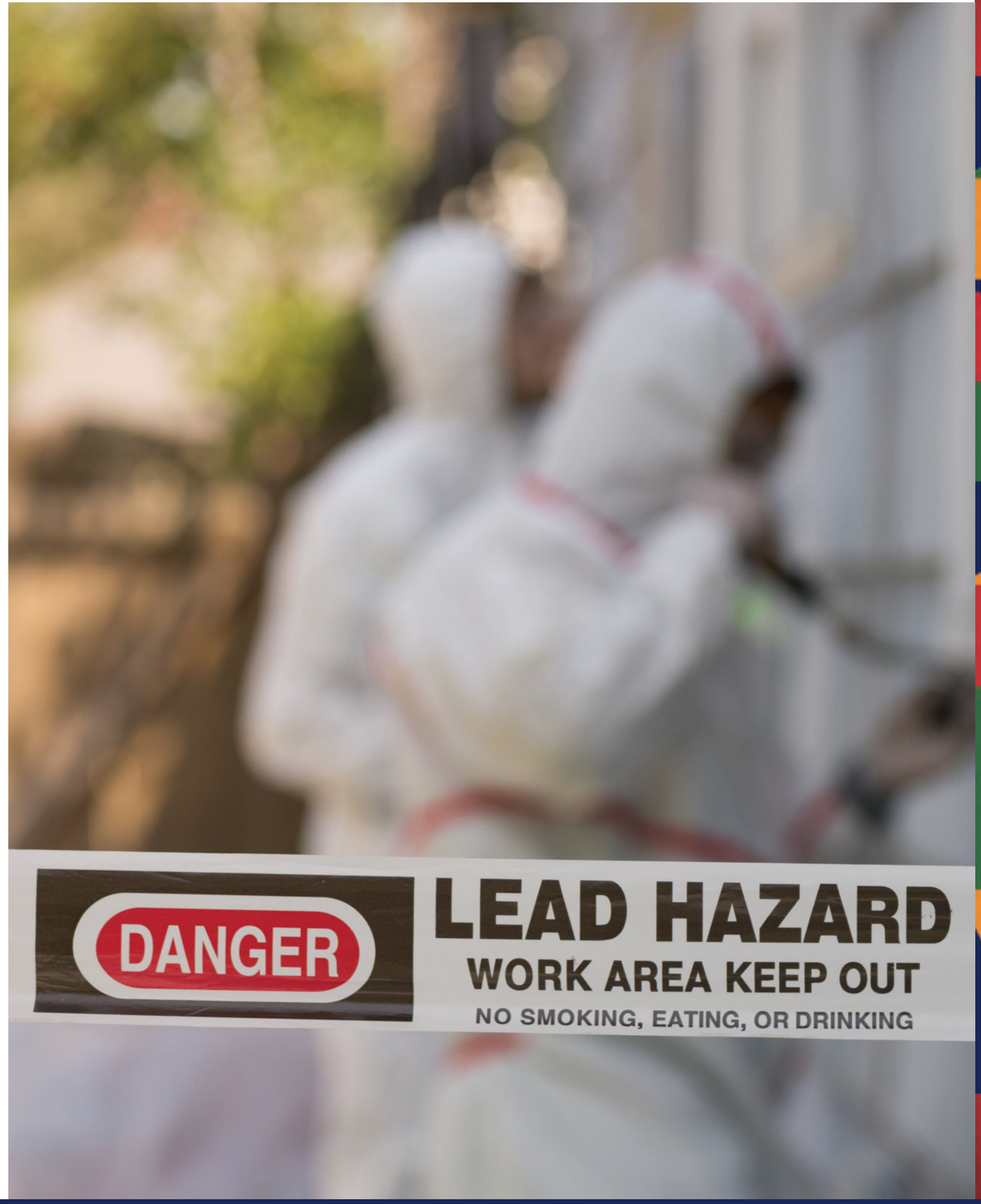
Environmental Justice

- Integrate maternal, infant and mental health into existing City of Savannah initiatives addressing climate change, energy efficiency and weatherization.
- Implement a policy that assists energy efficiency improvements and other weatherization updates on the homes of vulnerable households.
- Integrate a heat vulnerability index in the City of Savannah's emergency management system to protect vulnerable residents against extreme heat.

For the rest of the year, the task force has committed to:

- Submitting a report of final recommendations to Mayor Johnson;
- Producing an action plan upon completion of the planning process; and
- Transitioning the task force into a permanent body for overseeing implementation.

The report submitted to Mayor Johnson will include a budget to support the administration of the task force, as well as an operational budget for the City of Savannah to implement recommendations. The report will be shared with The Sapelo Foundation, and the operational budget will also serve as the budget submitted to The Sapelo Foundation and other funders for additional funding.



The Health Committee

Tiffany Pertillar, Co-Convener & Lead Writer
Armand Turner, Co-Convener
Lillian Grant-Baptiste
Aleena Bubb
Linda James
Paula Kreissler
Dr. Nandi Marshall
Ashley Rainge
Lizann Roberts

Augeda Dudley-Berrios, Research Analyst

Health Team Report: Food Apartheid In Savannah, GA

Health equity, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, means that every person has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Achieving it requires the removal of obstacles to health such as poverty and discrimination; and addressing the lack of access to healthy foods and safe environments, good jobs with fair pay, and quality education, health care, and housing[15] Systemic racism has, for centuries, played a major role in the health and well-being of African Americans across the country[16]. In 1906, W. E. B. Du Bois wrote about the association between racism, poverty, and health inequities. In his book, The Health and Physique of the Negro American, he wrote "The Negro death rate and sickness are largely matters of social and economic condition and not due to racial traits and tendencies" [17]. This structural and systemic racism that has been pervasive in this country since its foundation, continues to create health inequities that negatively impact health outcomes for African Americans, contributing to disparities in chronic disease burden, higher mortality rates, and lower quality of life[16]. To make equity in health a reality for all people, racism must be declared a public health crisis and health should be examined through a racial equity lens to better understand how the concepts of race and racism contribute to the inequities that have led to health disparities and poor health outcomes in Black communities across the country.

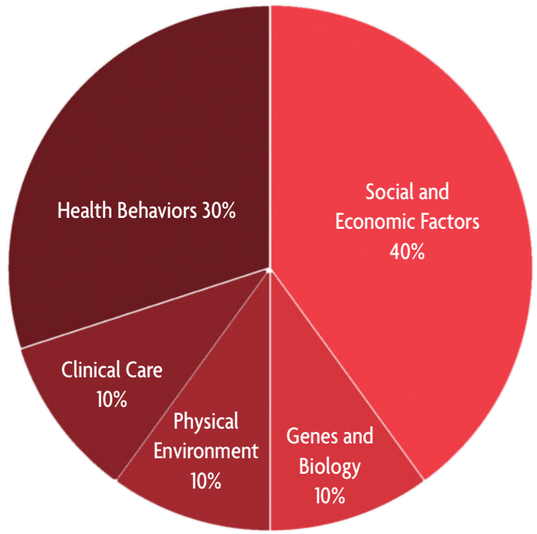
In Chatham County, specifically Savannah, certain communities are faced with a lack of healthy food options including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and quality lean meat. Until recently, these communities have been referred to as "Food Deserts" and described as having little to no access to grocery stores, with a high concentration of fast food, liquor stores, and corner stores/bodegas. To broaden the understanding of the realities that exist in many low-wealth communities of color, many activists and community organizers now use the term "Food Apartheid" because it brings attention to the social inequities, specifically in Black and Latinx communities where destructive food, predatory marketing, systemic racism, and discriminatory corporate controlled systems lead to poor health outcomes like obesity and other forms of malnutrition, mental health and substance abuse disorder; and preventable chronic conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease.

Without access to healthy and affordable foods, African American and Latinx communities are at a higher risk of chronic disease. Addressing the inequitable disease burden in these communities is close to impossible without addressing the social and economic factors that produce them. In Savannah, communities most impacted by food apartheid are low-wealth Black neighborhoods on the east and west sides of Savannah, specifically in census tracks within the 31404 and 31415 zip codes.

There are 35,000 Savannahians living in areas without access to healthy foods due to factors such as income, distance to grocery stores, and lack of transportation options. Although African Americans make up nearly 41% of the total Savannah population, they make up the majority--about 60-80%--of the individuals living in areas without healthy food access, which, as previously stated, is associated with higher rates of incidence, prevalence, and mortality related to chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

According to Tarlov, Kindif, and Booske (1999), social and economic factors determine about 40% of a person's health. Other factors include physical environment, genes/biology, clinical care (access to quality and culturally relevant health services), and health behaviors. However, because health begins where you live, work, play, and pray, it is important to understand health in the context of social and economic factors like education, neighborhood and environment, economic stability, food access, chronic stress, and racism--also known as the Social Determinants of Health[18].

Determinants of Health

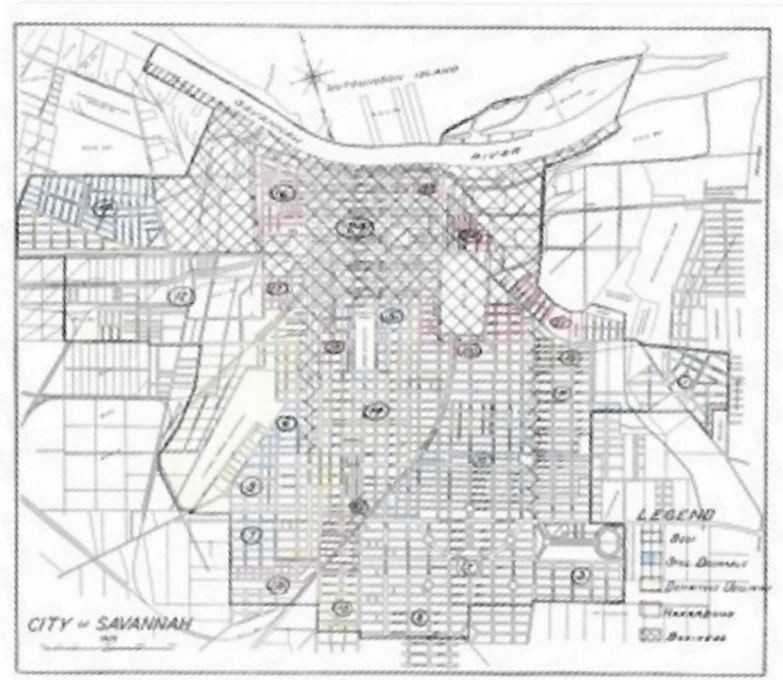


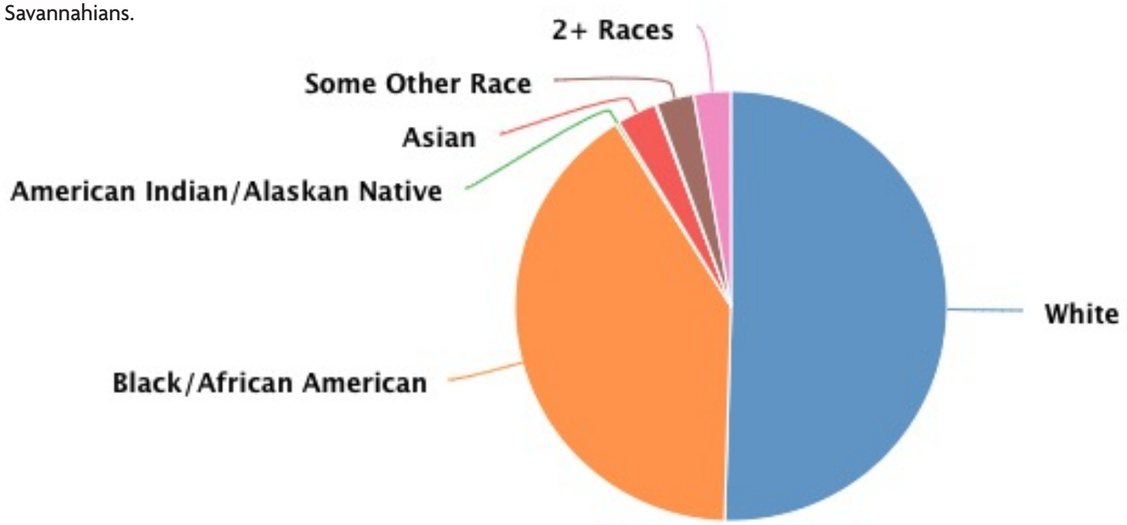
Determinants of Health Model based on frameworks developed by: Tarlov AR. Ann N Y Acad Sci 1999; 896: 281-93; and Kindig D, Asada Y, Booske B. JAMA 2008; 299(17): 2081-2083

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined that food insecurity has been associated with chronic health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, asthma, arthritis, chronic bronchitis, coronary heart disease and emphysema[19]. Similarly, processed foods are associated with elevated blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. The people who consume them on a regular basis are at higher risk for developing chronic conditions[20]. In low wealth Black communities in Savannah's 31404 and 31415 zip codes, corner stores, gas stations, liquor stores, fast food restaurants, and stores such as Dollar Tree and Dollar General are highly prevalent and extremely accessible--both in location and affordability--to the people who reside there. As a result of years of systemic racism, and arguably by intentional design, several communities in Savannah are deeply segregated with many low wealth Black Savannahians living in concentrated areas of poverty, food insecurity, disinvestment, and a disproportionate rate of chronic disease burden and mortality.

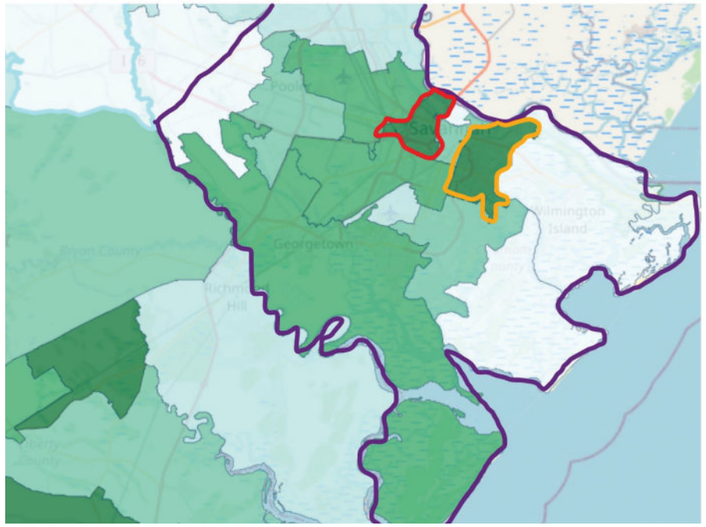
To fully understand food apartheid within the context of systemic racism, it is important to examine the role of racism in policy decisions dating back nearly 100 years and how those historical policy decisions are impacting people's realities today. Redlining, for example, played a pivotal role in Black Savannahians ability to purchase property in Savannah's more desired neighborhoods. Redlining is defined as the discriminatory pattern of disinvestment and obstructive lending practices that act as an impediment to home ownership among African Americans and other people of color[21]. Banks used the concept to deny loans to Black homeowners and would-be homeowners who lived in these neighborhoods. Below is a picture of Savannah GA in 1929 according to the HOLC (Homeowners Loan Corporation). Areas shaded in red and yellow were areas where disinvestment, high mortgage loans, and other discriminatory practices took place. Today parts of zip codes 31404 and 31415, where there is a high concentration of food insecurity and prevalence of chronic disease, are found in what used to be "hazardous" or "definitely declining" areas according to this historical map.

Redlining prohibited Black people from purchasing property in desired Savannah neighborhoods. Homeownership is a vehicle used by many White Americans to accumulate wealth. Black Savannahians were excluded from this opportunity and therefore found themselves occupying the only spaces that were made available to them, in the undesired communities within Savannah's corridor, which is where many still reside to this day. In the 1920's, redlining was the clear pathway to poverty for many Black Savannahians, and although it was declared unconstitutional in 1968, today, in 2021, the impact of those systemic racist policies on the lives of Black people living in Savannah are still widely felt. As with nearly all major cities across the country, redlining in Savannah led to disenfranchisement, disinvestment, and dispossession in Black communities. The poverty that stemmed from this disinvestment and disenfranchisement has contributed to food insecurity and poorer health outcomes for Black Savannahians.

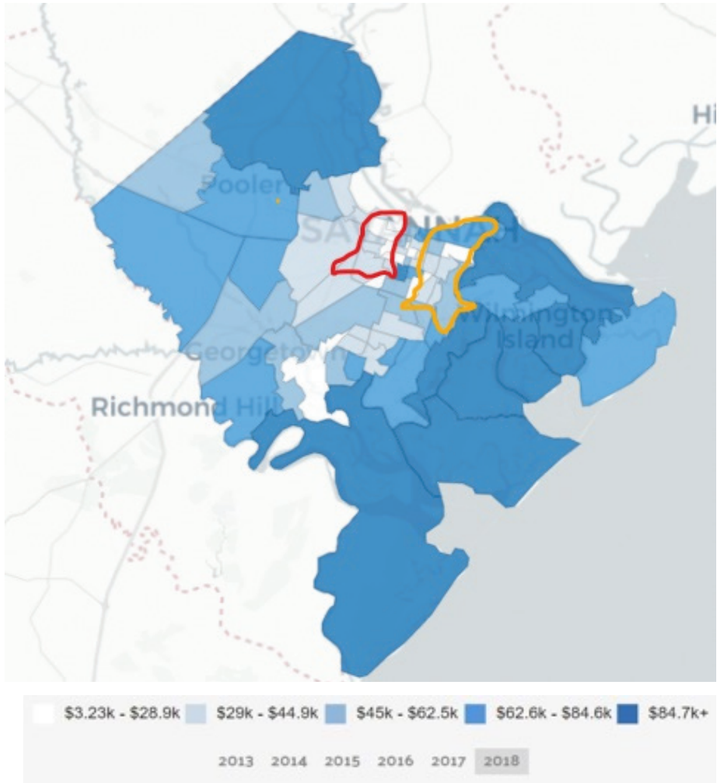




The image to the right shows most Black residents in Chatham County (outlined in purple), live within zip codes 31415 (outlined in red) and 31404 (outlined in orange). Both zip codes are in the category of 55-87% Black - the highest concentration category in Chatham County and the whole of Savannah. When compared to the redlining map on the previous page, the places that were previously redlined, where Black Savannahians were forced to live in the early 1900s, still have the same demography with a high concentration of Black residents.



Percentage of population that is Black image taken from: **Coastal Georgia Indicators**



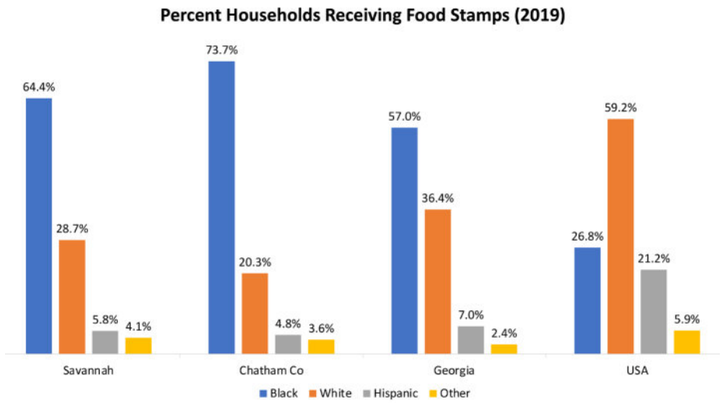
Median Household Income. Image taken from: **Chatham County, GA**

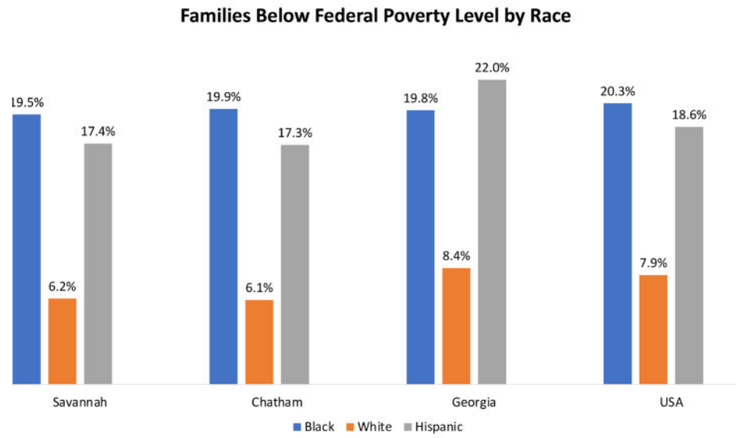
Income/Wealth/Poverty:

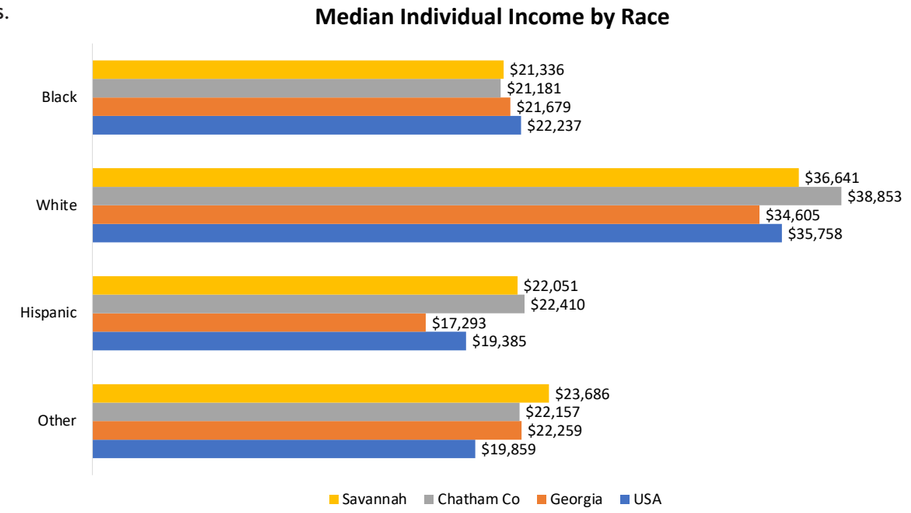
In addition to geographic location, redlining also had a direct impact on Black wealth. The map to the left depicts the median household income for Chatham County in 2018. When comparing this map to the redlining map on the previous page, the lowest household incomes (outlined in red--31415 and orange--31404) rest within the areas previously identified as hazardous and undesirable according to the HOLC, and where there are high concentrations of Black residents. Data shows that both zip codes have median household incomes of $44.9k and below - the two lowest income brackets in the county. Note: The lighter the blue, the lower the median income.

The charts on this page are further evidence of the disparity in wealth among Savannahians. Nearly 20% of the Chatham County families living below the poverty line are Black. When looking at Food Stamp distribution, data shows that in Chatham County, Black Families are nearly 4 times as likely to be recipients of government assistance. The median individual income shows that on average, White residents living in Chatham County are making close to $18,000 more dollars than Black residents.

A family's inability to generate, keep, and pass on wealth is greatly determined by their ability to participate in the home-buying process. The redlining map on page 65 shows that both historically and systematically, Black Savannahians have been unjustly excluded from such a process and therefore relegated to certain neighborhoods, pushed below the poverty line at disproportionate rates and exposed to poor social conditions, such as food insecurity, that contribute to poor health outcomes and higher mortality rates.

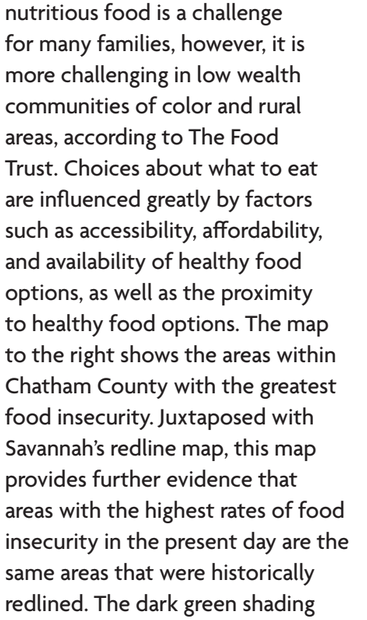


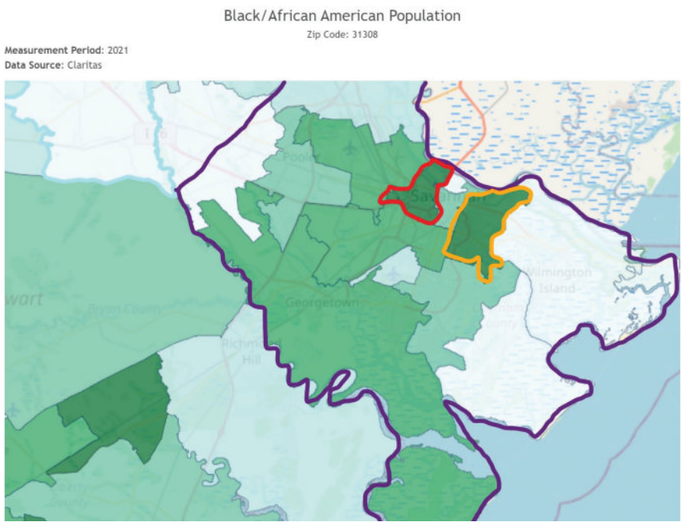




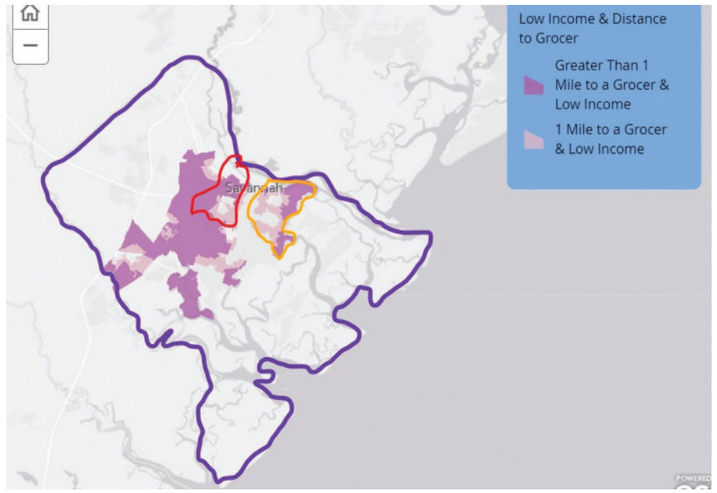
Food Access

Accessing affordable, high quality, nutritious food is a challenge for many families, however, it is more challenging in low wealth communities of color and rural areas, according to The Food Trust. Choices about what to eat are influenced greatly by factors such as accessibility, affordability, and availability of healthy food options, as well as the proximity to healthy food options. The map to the right shows the areas within Chatham County with the greatest food insecurity. Juxtaposed with Savannah's redline map, this map provides further evidence that areas with the highest rates of food insecurity in the present day are the same areas that were historically redlined. The dark green shading represents the areas of greatest need/insecurity. Zip codes 31415 (outlined in red) and 31404 (outlined in orange) are the most food insecure areas in Chatham County.





Food Insecurity Index Map taken from: **Coastal Georgia Indicators**

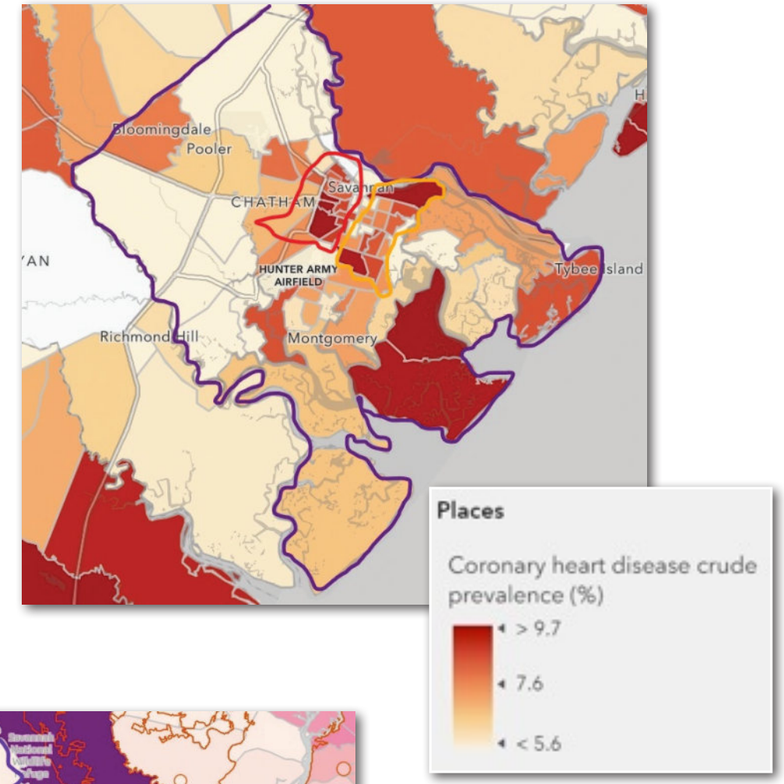


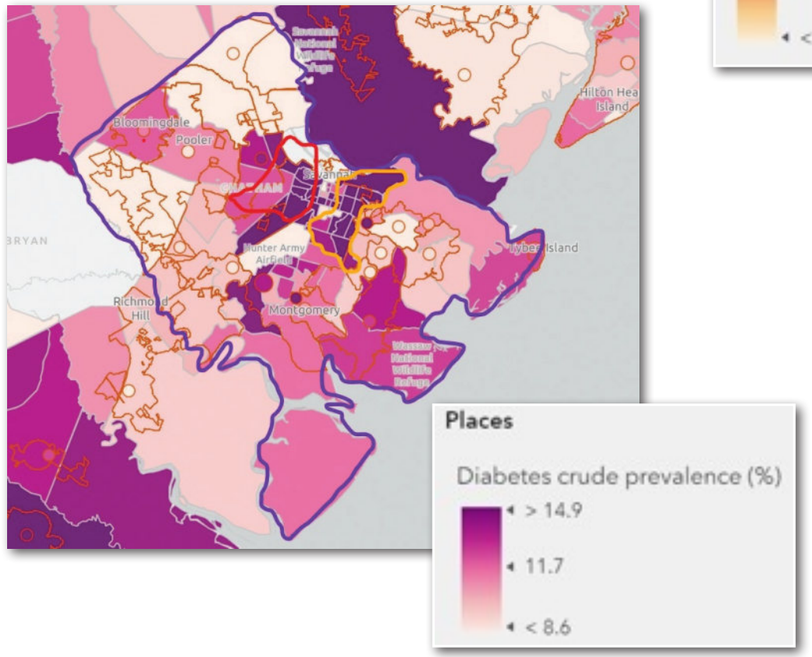
Distance to grocery store map taken from: **Healthy Savannah**

A major contributor to food insecurity is the proximity to grocery stores and the amount of time someone might have to travel to get to that store. The map above provides data on the distance Chatham County residents must travel to get to their nearest grocery store. In 31415 (outlined in red) and 31404 (outlined in orange), the distance to a grocery store, for the majority of the low income/low wealth residents, was either one mile or greater, indicated by the purple shading. The darker the purple shading, the greater the distance to a grocery store.

Chronic Disease Burden

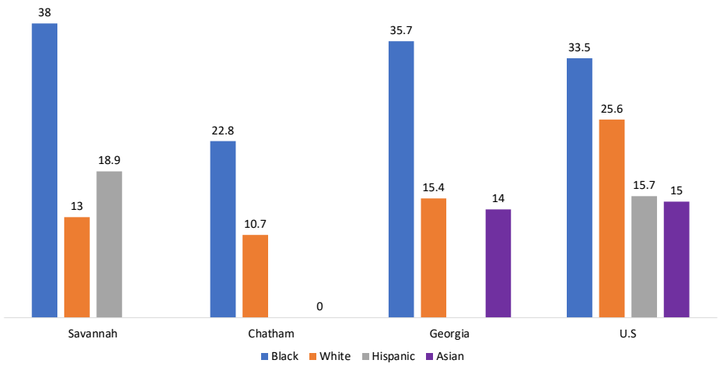
Food insecurity is a risk factor associated with chronic disease incidence, prevalence, and mortality. Below are maps of Chatham County that depict the highest concentration of coronary heart disease and diabetes. For both maps, the highest rate of chronic disease is located within zip codes 31415 (outlined in red) and 31404 (outlined in orange) --the same areas where redlining, low wealth/income Black residents reside, and where food insecurity is the greatest.



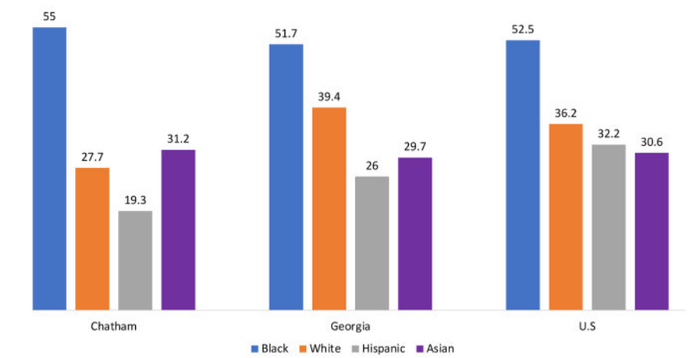


The data below provides further evidence of the health disparities within Chatham County. The following images taken from "Measuring Savannah's, GA's Racial Disparity Index 2020" depict comparison data for the age adjusted death rate due to Diabetes and Stroke, respectively. Black Savannahians are dying from Diabetes at a rate that is more than two times higher than their White counterparts. Similarly, Black Savannahians die from stroke at a rate that is almost two times higher than their White counterparts. Another indicator of chronic disease burden is hospitalizations. The data below shows that Black residents are hospitalized due to hypertension at a rate that is 2.5 times higher than their White counterparts. The last graph shows that Black Savannahians have the lowest life expectancy compared to their Hispanic and White counterparts.

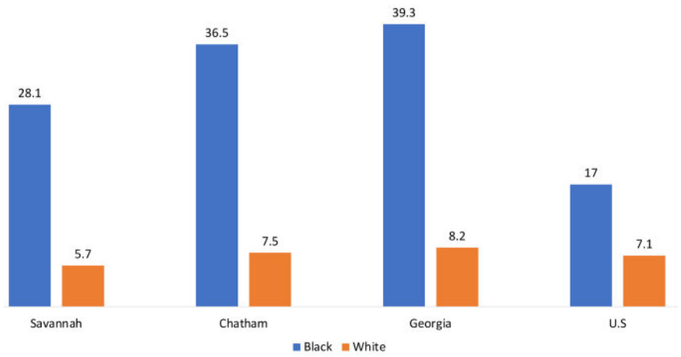
Age-Adjusted Death Rate Due to Diabetes per 100,000 (2019)



Age Adjusted Death Rate due to Stroke (2019)

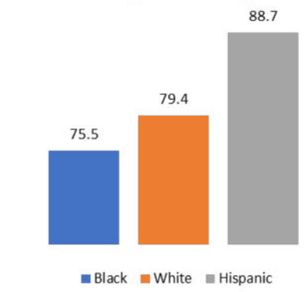


Age Adjusted Hospitalization Rate due to Hypertension (2019)

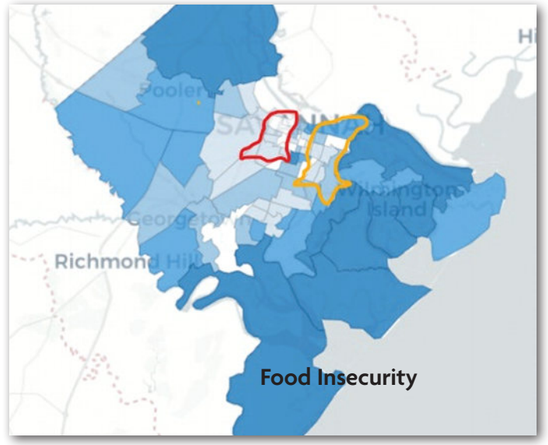


Life Expectancy in Years of Age for Chatham County by Race (2021)

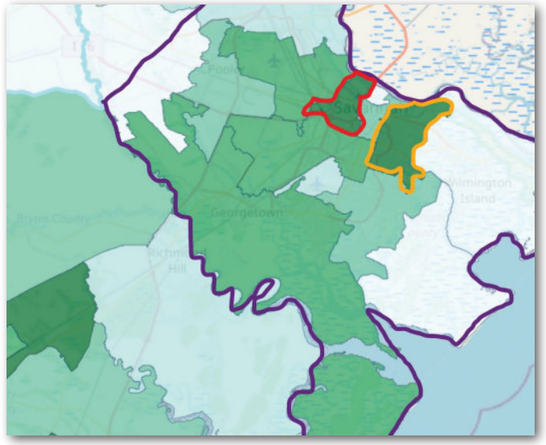
County Health Rankings



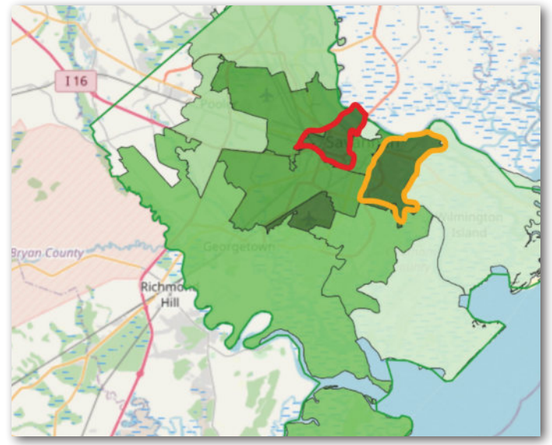
Income Level



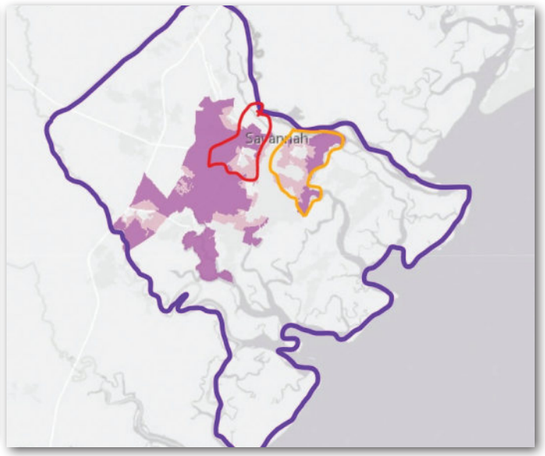
Concentration of Black population



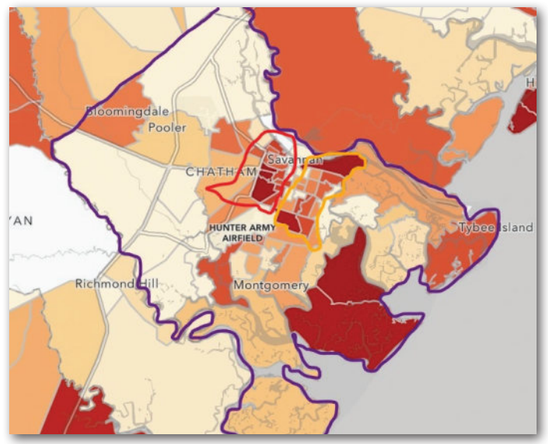
Food Insecurity



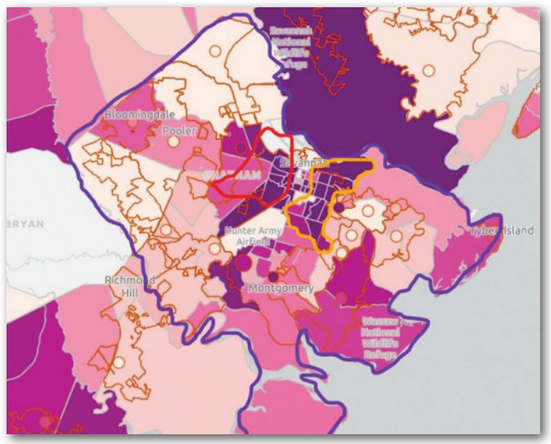
Distance to Grocery Store



Heart Disease



Diabetes



Conclusion

In conclusion, food apartheid - the result of a long history of systemic disenfranchisement and marginalization of Black communities - poses a serious threat to the health of Chatham County residents, especially Black residents in zip codes 31404 and 31415. The maps and graphs demonstrate that there is strong association between race, income, food insecurity, and chronic disease burden. Our country's history has systematically barred Black communities from building wealth, leading to chronic poverty. Poverty has been identified as a primary. The maps on the previous page show that the poorest neighborhoods in Chatham County are also the ones with the highest concentration of Black residents, and due to systematic disenfranchisement, food security is also impacted by race. Specifically, Black communities are more likely to experience food insecurity because they are more likely to experience poverty.

We know that health is impacted by a variety of factors, such as education, neighborhood and environment, economic stability, food access, chronic stress, and racism. This means that to address health outcomes, we must address more than just food apartheid. That said, interventions that address food insecurity are likely to also impact other social determinants of health. For example, if someone has enough food to feed themselves and their family, it is reasonable to believe this might decrease stress. If someone has enough healthy food and is less stressed, it is reasonable to believe that they would be better equipped to seek and obtain gainful employment or successfully pursue an education. In other words, food security is a strong foundational step toward stability - something that systemic racist practices in this country have made extremely difficult for many Black Americans, and that has had catastrophic effects on their health.

Addressing food apartheid is only one piece of the puzzle in the effort to improve the health of our communities, albeit a substantial one. Many of the recommendations we make below to address food insecurity have benefits not just for health outcomes, but also for local economies.

Best Practices

Implementation of population-level policies incorporating placement strategies in food retail stores to improve dietary-related behaviors

Neighborhoods with persons that have powerful influences (local merchants and community liaisons) should help bear the responsibility of eliminating food deserts, which are linked to obesity, high BMI measures, and Type 2 diabetes in African Americans [10]. Placement of foods in prominent locations increases the rate at which they're purchased. Neighborhoods with fewer food supermarkets were found to emphasize their junk food displays. The consumption of these foods high in sugar, fat, and salt by local customers increases their risk of chronic diseases. Studies have demonstrated that converting checkout lines to display healthy options instead would open customers' eyes to nutritious, lower-calorie foods and increase their rate of purchase.

- **Benefits:** This would be a little-to-no cost to the government intervention. In the systematic review performed, many studies showed that greater availability and more prominent positioning of healthy foods, or reduced availability and less prominent positioning of unhealthy foods, related to better dietary-related behaviors. Positioning unhealthy drinks and snacks at the ends of aisles, at checkouts, and in islands was associated with greater sales of these unhealthy items and increased BMI [11].
- **Disadvantages:** Studies conducted amongst predominantly disadvantaged groups (such as low income, high prevalence of government assistance, or deprived areas) found that healthier placement strategies were consistently associated with better diet and sales outcomes. However, the association with improved BMI outcomes was not statistically significant, but this may be influenced by the studies' limitations [11].
- **Partnerships to consider: Grocery stores, corner stores, Healthy Savannah**

Initiatives focused on reducing the price of healthy foods in existing stores

Healthy food access is influenced by several factors including availability, media/advertising, health education, and affordability. The affordability must be in the context of the price of healthy food in relation to unhealthy foods. Several studies have shown that manipulation of cost, such as reducing the prices of lower-fat items, can lead to increased healthy food consumption.

- **Benefits:** Subsidizing healthier food is an effective evidence-based intervention for modification of dietary behavior, working approximately 73% of the time to improve consumers' preventive health behavior. Simulated analyses of subsidized healthy foods revealed that a 1% price decrease in all fruits and vegetables can prevent a total of 9,680 cases of CHD and ischemic stroke. However, the benefits are lowest among low-income compared to high-income individuals [4]. Additionally, food price incentives have shown to be effective for altering the behavior of children's food and beverage intake at school.
- **Disadvantages:** Some studies have shown that subsidies on healthier foods resulted in a net increase in money spent on food overall as consumers used the savings to increase purchases of less healthy foods [5,8]. There are various study limitations, including the follow-up length and cost-effectiveness analysis that reduce the reliability of the results of these studies [5].
- **Partnerships to consider: Grocery stores, Healthy Savannah**

Expansion of the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) incentives for fresh produce

One of the many initiatives of the Savannah chapter of Georgia Food Oasis is the adoption of SNAP authorization and SNAP-doubling. This initiative entails applying a form of incentive that allows for the redemption of more product for the same price when purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables. A similar incentive program, Philly Food Bucks, found that their users were significantly more likely than non-users to report increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, including trying new items. At the market level SNAP sales more than doubled within 2 years at farmers markets in low-income areas [13]. The Atlanta community food bank also has recently started a similar program with success.

- **Benefits:** Prior similar policy initiatives have been shown to work for the targeted populations. A meta-analysis reviewing the 2009 policy changes to the SNAP and WIC packages demonstrated both an improved dietary intake of WIC participants and an increase in healthy foods and beverage availability in WIC authorized stores. Other referenced programs have previously succeeded in increasing consumer fruit and vegetable intake and purchases from local farmers. Healthy Savannah and Step-Up Savannah currently have

been successful at signing up qualified residents. Expanding on their collaboration would be beneficial for the City of Savannah on both the consumer and seller sides.

- **Disadvantages:** Though the Forsyth Farmers Market currently fundraises for the doubling of SNAP Benefits, an additional source of funding would be needed. Subsequently, the intervention would need to be further analyzed for continued feasibility and sustainability to the Savannah community. The success of the incentive also requires other Farmers' markets and retail stores to participate in the program. Furthermore, long-term health measures have not been assessed yet due to the novelty of these programs.
- **Partnerships to consider: Georgia Food Oasis, Healthy Savannah, Step Up Savannah**

Increasing the availability of healthy food in existing corner stores

The Healthy Corner Store initiative was a successful pilot program that bloomed to a citywide network in Philadelphia. Key findings from this venture were that partnering with corner stores is effective in improving healthy food access and consumption in underserved communities. It is a previously proven successful model for increasing the availability of healthy food in corner stores, through the introduction of gradual changes with support and training [12].

- **Benefits:** This program increased fresh produce sales by an average of 60% in participating corner stores and positively altered consumer habits through availability. There was a positive consumer psychosocial impact including increased food and health-related knowledge, recognition of healthy food availability, and intention to buy healthy food. Store owners tended to positively respond to the initiative for concern of the health of their communities and allowed them to either keep the same or have greater profits and customer traffic than before. Additionally, there was a positive economic impact of additional jobs, increased tax revenue, and higher property values of neighborhoods that had these "Healthy Corner Stores." Furthermore, the intervention doesn't require new builds [12].
- **Disadvantages:** Grocery stores in comparison typically sell healthier food items at a more affordable price due to their size. For the model to succeed there is a requirement of staff for implementation and willingness of the corner store owners to participate. To mitigate this, possibly create an incentive or subsidy for staff/corner store owners.
- **Partnerships to consider: The Food Trust**

Supermarkets opened by the local community (co-op) or by a non-profit organization.

In a study performed by UC Davis, it was found that of 71 supermarkets opened in food deserts since 2000, in 2019 the stores driven by government or commercial interests had mixed results while the nonprofit or community-driven stores tended to succeed widely. The co-ops tended to thrive due to the adoption of local hiring practices, payment of living wages, and trust by the citizens in the prevention of gentrification. A prime example of this is the Mandela Co-op of West Oakland, CA which is a worker-owned store focusing on purchasing from farmers and food entrepreneurs of color [1]. It is vital to have community investment for supermarket success in food deserts because the intervention is founded on store usage.

- **Benefits:** Studies have shown statistically significant improvement in citizens' perceptions of their own food accessibility thus decreased food insecurity. Additionally, there is improvement in fruit and vegetable intake with the largest impacts seen among those with the lowest baseline intakes. One specific study performed in Bronx, NY demonstrated that after the introduction of a specific supermarket, the percent of residents in <0.5-mile radius who reported always having fresh produce available in the home increased by 8.8%. Comparatively, those living >0.5 miles from the store had a 10.6% increase in reported fresh produce availability in the home. Although total purchasing for both healthy and unhealthy food items increased, reported consumption showed an increase in servings of healthy items (water, vegetables, and fruit) and a decrease in servings of unhealthy foods (soft drinks, salty snacks, and pastries). There are also positive side effects for the community itself from this intervention, including an economic boost and revitalization [2]. For every $1,000 a shopper spends at their local food co-op, $1,604 in economic activity is generated in their local economy, $239 more than would be by shopping at a conventional grocer. Co-ops specifically work with a greater number of local farmers and food producers in addition to generating significantly less waste than traditional grocery stores.
- **Disadvantages:** Geography is not the sole barrier to having better nutrition. Studies have shown that when a supermarket opens in a food desert, although the rate of food insecurity decreases in a statistically significant manner, the rate of change in dietary habits and obesity may not. However notable limitations to these studies are the small sample size and lack of long-term longitudinal follow-up analyses, making it likely underpowered [3]. The size of the store is a major factor in favorable pricing for healthier food options, regardless of neighborhood demographics (including race, median household income).
- **Partnerships to consider: Food Co-op Initiative, Co+op, Purpose Built Communities Organization**

Farm to School/Table Programs

The National Farm to School Network increases access to fresh, healthy food and local food producers by transforming food procurement practices and curricula in schools. According to 2015 USDA data there are 221 farm-to-school grants, and roughly 40% of these were used to purchase food locally for more than 40,000 separate schools and 25 million kids. A premier example of this work can be found with the State of Vermont. The Vermont Farm to School Grant Program, part of the National Farm to School Network, works to improve nutrition among Vermont's children by connecting food producers to local schools, as well as by providing enriched educational experiences and curricula. The program has reached over 30% of schools and 27,000 students in the state.

- **Benefits:** Research has shown that there has been marked improvement in K-12 healthy eating behaviors, overall academic achievement, and increased physical activity due to such programs. Farmers also reap the benefits of a 5% increase, on average, in income from selling produce to participating schools. According to the National Farm to School Network, "each dollar invested in farm to school stimulates an additional $2.16 of local economic activity."
- **Disadvantages:** These types of programs can rely very heavily on state allocation of funds, followed by the leveraging of those funds to be successful. Sustaining school gardens can also be difficult for some as a designated staff member must volunteer to lead the work over the years; however this could be mitigated if a job training program around farming is created and someone is hired to work on the school gardens full time, teaching children how to grow and cook their own food (Ex: YouthGrow).
- **Partnerships to consider: Georgia Department of Education School Nutrition, Nation Farm to School Network**

Procurement Policies

Government agencies procure, or purchase, food to provide meals to people in the major institutions that community members interact with daily, ranging from schools to senior programs and hospitals. Government departments also purchase food to sell to employees and the public in retail outlets such as vending machines, cafeterias, and concession stands on government property.

- **Benefits:** According to research from the National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, "Healthier diets alone could prevent an estimated $71 billion per year in medical expenses, lost productivity, and lost lives nationwide." This gives major public institutions at the state and local levels significant incentives to improve the health of their residents.
- **Disadvantages:** The success of the programs that result from these policies rely on the major institutions involved to trust and follow the statistics that show that they will ultimately save money by providing healthier food.
- **Partnerships to consider: Georgia Food Policy Council**

Recommendations

Short term

1. Incorporate food placement strategies in food retail stores to improve dietary related behaviors

This is recommended due to it being little-to-no cost to the government intervention. Savannah has many grocery and corner stores who would serve as good partners to implement new food placement strategies. The local non-profit, Healthy Savannah, has already been working in this arena so can help the expedition and success of this intervention.

2. Create initiatives focused on reducing the price of healthy foods in existing stores

This is recommended due to the evidence demonstrated by previous studies that cost manipulation increases healthy food purchasing and consumption. This incentive can be limited to areas who would benefit from it most, such as those who live in low-wealth or food apartheid areas within Savannah. Additionally, this incentive can be replicated in the school setting where it has also been shown to influence child behaviors, which can change their diet choices in a life-long manner.

Long term

3. Increase the availability of healthy food in existing corner stores

This is recommended due to prior statistics showing up to 60% increase in fresh produce sales at these corner stores. This strategy can be implemented through gradual changes and will have a plethora of possible partners. Additionally, there will be a positive economic and psychosocial impact to the community. The streamlining of the required permitting and licensing processes will allow vendors to stock healthy items more efficiently and increase the impact of these initiatives.

4. Expansion of the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) incentives for fresh produce

This is recommended due to abundance of evidence from prior successful programs showing users were significantly more likely than non-users to increase their fruit and vegetable consumption when given an incentive allowing for the redemption of more products for the same price. At the market level SNAP sales more than doubled within 2 years at farmers markets in low-income areas, demonstrating the additional benefit of positive economic impact. Savannah currently has a chapter of Georgia Food Oasis who has begun this work, providing a great partner for further expansion.

5. Evaluate the viability of Savannah opening supermarkets sustained by the local community (co-op) or a non-profit organization

This is recommended due to studies found in literature detailing statistically significant improvement in citizen perceived food accessibility thus decreased food insecurity from local cooperative or non-profit organization led supermarkets. It is vital to the success of these supermarkets that the establishment adopts local hiring practices, payment of living wages, and garners the community's trust thereby ensuring the community's support of the store. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the feasibility of opening this kind of supermarket in the areas affected most by food apartheid so that each viable option be explored.

In summary, there are several viable short- and long-term solutions to improving racial equity through the diminishment of food apartheids. Ideal short-term interventions include strategic placement and subsidization of healthy food options, giving more economic purchasing power and better quality of life to low-income individuals, historically people of color. An ideal sustainable long-term intervention is a multi-arm solution that includes both evaluating the viability of opening and maintaining of community-involved supermarkets in combination with public health initiatives aimed at citizens to change their purchasing habits. The two best examples of this being work towards increasing the availability of healthy food in Savannah's existing corner stores, and work towards expanding the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) incentives for fresh produce. Achieving and sustaining increased food and vegetable intake at recommended dietary levels of intake across a population cannot be achieved through behavior-based interventions or geographic-based interventions alone. Notably, there is an effect modification by neighborhood food environment (i.e., proximity to stores with healthy foods) that should be taken into consideration when designing future community-based dietary interventions [7]. Thus, efforts to combine these interventions with approaches including social marketing, behavioral economics approaches, and technology-based behavior models should be used so that goals can be met and sustained [6].

Resources

1. Brinkley, Catherine (Assistant Professor of Community and Regional Development, University of California, Davis). "Why Community-Owned Grocery Stores like Co-Ops Are the Best Recipe for Revitalizing Food Deserts." The Conversation, 11 Sept. 2019, theconversation.com/why-community-owned-grocery-stores-like-co-ops-are-the-best-recipe-for-revitalizing-food-deserts-122997.
2. Devitt, James. "What Really Happens When a Grocery Store Opens in a 'Food Desert'?" NYU, 10 Dec. 2019, https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2019/december/what-really-happens-when-a-grocery-store-opens-in-a--food-desert.html.
3. New Neighborhood Grocery Store Increased Awareness Of Food Access But Did Not Alter Dietary Habits Or Obesity Steven Cummins, Ellen Flint, and Stephen A. Matthews Health Affairs 2014 33:2, 283-291
4. Azétsop, Jacquineau, and Tisha R Joy. "Access to nutritious food, socioeconomic individualism and public health ethics in the USA: a common good approach." Philosophy, ethics, and humanities in medicine: PEHM vol. 8 16. 29 Oct. 2013, doi:10.1186/1747-5341-8-16
5. An, Ruopeng. "Effectiveness of subsidies in promoting healthy food purchases and consumption: a review of field experiments." Public health nutrition vol. 16,7 (2013): 1215-28. doi:10.1017/S1368980012004715
6. Cynthia A. Thomson, Jennifer Ravia, A Systematic Review of Behavioral Interventions to Promote Intake of Fruit and Vegetables, Journal of the American Dietetic Association, Volume 111, Issue 10, 2011, Pages 1523-1535, ISSN 0002-8223, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2011.07.013.
7. Wedick, Nicole M et al. "Access to healthy food stores modifies effect of a dietary intervention." American journal of preventive medicine vol. 48,3 (2015): 309-17. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2014.08.020
8. Finkelstein, Eric A et al. "Food prices and obesity: a review." Advances in nutrition (Bethesda, Md.) vol. 5,6 818-21. 14 Nov. 2014, doi:10.3945/an.114.007088
9. Marty L, Dubois C, Gaubard MS, Maidon A, Lesturgeon A, Gaigi H, Darmon N. Higher nutritional quality at no additional cost among low-income households: insights from food purchases of "positive deviants". Am J Clin Nutr. 2015 Jul;102(1):190-8. doi: 10.3945/ajcn.114.104380. Epub 2015 May 27. PMID: 26016868.
10. Fowler BA, Giger JN. The World Health Organization - Community Empowerment Model in Addressing Food Insecurity in Low-Income African-American Women: A Review of the Literature. J Natl Black Nurses Assoc. 2017 Jul;28(1):43-49. PMID: 29932567.
11. Nutrition Reviews, Volume 78, Issue 12, December 2020, Pages 1030–1045, https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuaa024
12. Almaguer Sandoval B., Law Y., and Young C. (2014). Healthier Corner Stores: Positive Impacts and Profitable Changes. Philadelphia, PA. The Food Trust
13. Young CR, Aquilante JL, Solomon S, Colby L, Kawinzi MA, Uy N, et al. Improving Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Among Low-Income Customers at Farmers Markets: Philly Food Bucks, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2011. Prev Chronic Dis 2013;10:120356. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.120356
14. Blackwell, Ashley. "Best Practices for Creating a Sustainable and Equitable Food System in the United States" Center for American Progress, 12 May, 2016, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/reports/2016/05/12/137306/best-practices-for-creating-a-sustainable-and-equitable-food-system-in-the-un
15. Braveman P, Arkin E, Orleans T, Proctor D, and Plough A. What is Health Equity? (2017) Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Accessed 22 July. 2021 https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html.
16. Gee, G. C., & Ford, C. L. (2011). STRUCTURAL RACISM AND HEALTH INEQUITIES: Old Issues, New Directions. Du Bois review : social science research on race, 8(1), 115–132. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X11000130
17. DuBois W. E. (2003). The health and physique of the Negro American. 1906. American journal of public health, 93(2), 272–276. https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.93.2.272
18. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Social Determinants of Health: Know What Affects Health. Accessed 22 July 22.from https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/index.htm.
19. Garcia SP, Haddix A, Barnett K. Incremental Health Care Costs Associated With Food Insecurity and Chronic Conditions Among Older Adults. Prev Chronic Dis 2018;15:180058. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd15.180058
20. Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease. Hunger, Poor Nutrition Lead to Chronic Disease. Accessed on July 22, 2021 from https://www.fightchronicdisease.org/latest-news/hunger-poor-nutrition-lead-chronic-disease.
21. "Redlining." Merriam-Webster.com Legal Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/legal/redlining. Accessed 22 July. 2021.

The Housing Committee

Erina Tandy, Convener

Earline Davis

Adam Solender

Justin West

Housing affordability is already a top priority for the City of Savannah, so Mayor Johnson has formed the Housing Savannah Task Force separate from the REAL Task Force, to develop sensible strategies for improving access to affordable housing. Thus, the housing committee of the REAL Task Force is charged with identifying points of racial disparity within the city's affordability crisis. It was quickly determined that while the market is unaffordable for most residents, intolerable racial disparities persist in both the rental and homeownership market, and though the racial affordability gap looks different in each market, they are both driven by the same systemic forces.

The committee identified the following underlying drivers of racial disparities in Savannah's housing market:

- Multi-generational income and wealth disparities between races in Savannah's population;
- An exceedingly inflated housing market, pressured by a steady growing population, particularly in the middle to upper-middle income range;
- A housing shortage, caused by the aging and abandonment of existing properties, coupled with the rising cost of labor and materials;
- Discrimination and structural barriers in the mortgage industry; and
- Multi-generational loss of land and increased poverty, particularly among African-Americans, resulting in a disparity in knowledge and comfort with the homebuying process.

The following data supports these determinants of Savannah's racial home affordability gap:

- Those earning 120% or less than the area median income in Savannah are cost burdened, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their gross monthly income on housing. It is believed that the vast majority of this segment of the population are people of color.
- Home values in Savannah have increased by 7.3% over the past year and are forecast to rise another 10.1% in the next 12 months.
- Savannah has the second highest cost of rent in Georgia, leaving 55% of renters spending more than 30% of their household income on rent and utilities.
- Over the past 10 years, the Savannah metropolitan area has added nearly 100,000 new residents. In the next five years, the City of Savannah is forecast to gain about 6,000 new residents to its current population of 145,500.
- There are over 9,000 families on the waiting list for affordable housing at the Housing Authority of Savannah, 76% of which earn less than $12,500. The waiting list has been closed since 2013.
- African-Americans account for 55% of Savannah but 96% of Housing Authority of Savannah tenants.
- There are over 2,600 properties in Savannah that are currently unlivable and in need of repair and rehabilitation. Property owners find that deflated property values in low-wealth communities prevent home repair loans.

- The legacies of redlining and other segregating forces have limited Black borrowers' access to traditional credit and exposed them disproportionately to predatory lending sources.
- 21.9% of the homeownership gap can be explained by differences in FICO score distribution between Black and White Americans.
- 2019, 62% of mortgage applications submitted by Black residents of Chatham County were denied, compared to only 26% denied to White applicants. Only 1,160 Black households applied for mortgages, compared to 4,882 submitted by White households.
- The rate of land ownership among African-Americans has steadily declined since it peaked in 1910 through systematic stealing, loss of title, denial of federal aid and prohibitive laws.
- In Savannah, 71% of White residents are homeowners and 48.8% of Black residents are homeowners.
- A recent Northwestern University study found that racial gaps in mortgage loan denial in the U.S. have only declined slightly in the last 30 – 40 years. An MIT study calculated that the annual difference of $743 in mortgage interest payments, $550 in mortgage insurance premiums and $390 in property taxes between Black and White borrowers, when invested over 30 years results in lost retirement savings of $67,320 for Black homeowners.

These compounding challenges were summarized by the following problem statement:

In Savannah, wages are not keeping up with the increasing cost of housing; demand for housing is outpacing affordability; and the racial makeup of homeownership does not reflect the racial makeup of our city.

By scanning the city's existing landscape of resources and holding a series of discussions about realistic alternatives to the status quo, the committee explored the following strategies to ameliorate the core problem. Each strategy can be implemented alone or with one or both of the other strategies.

1. **The implementation of racial equity metrics in current housing programs in Savannah. The premise of this strategy is that by documenting outcomes by race, the City has an evidentiary baseline from which to measure its progress in closing racial disparities, even in programs not controlled at the city level, but that can impact outcomes in Savannah.**

The rationale for the committee's consideration of this proposal:

- The Housing Savannah Task force has already formulated a comprehensive action plan to tackle the city's housing affordability crisis. Rather than re-create the wheel, the best value that the REAL Task force can add may be to make sure that the progress and outcomes of strategies implemented under that existing effort are tracked by race.
- Similarly, there are several private, nonprofit homeownership and rental assistance programs in Savannah that can have greater impact on racial disparities simply by applying racial equity metrics to their internal evaluations.
- It seems that while most current programs in Savannah show some efficacy, none are operating at optimal scale, and it's unclear which ones should be scaled up. Tracking outcomes by race will help decisionmakers determine which programs should be scaled up to best address racial disparities.

2. **The expansion of existing homeownership programs at Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS). HAS offers two pathways to homeownership for its clients:**
   - Homeownership training and down payment assistance in partnership with the City of Savannah's Dreamweaver down payment assistance program for public housing residents; and
   - A program that allows Housing Choice tenants to convert their voucher into a mortgage supplement.

These programs are funded by HUD and have shown high levels of success but operate at a small scale.

The rationale for the committee's consideration of this proposal:

- The program for Housing Choice tenants provides ongoing case management. Unlike other homebuyer programs which mostly focus on training, Housing Choice clients have typically been in the voucher program for several years before they participate in the homeownership program, which means there's a long-term continuum of support that other homeownership programs don't offer. Many first-time homebuyers need ongoing case management to not only buy their home but maintain it.
- Another unique feature of the Housing Choice program is that it supplements the client's mortgage payment with the client's voucher, equivalent to their previous supplement as a renter, for the first ten years of their mortgage term. There's no other homeownership program that provides this type of long-term financial support to low-income homeowners.
- Both programs achieve homeownership for individuals with incomes substantially lower than what the mortgage industry typically finances. This unique feature merits a feasibility study of each program's expansion.

3. **Creation of a joint Chatham County & City of Savannah online developer's toolkit. This online clearinghouse would give developers easy access to all the resources that City of Savannah and Chatham County have to offer, from financing and permitting incentives to zoning allowances and property maintenance assistance. It would also serve as a compendium of information on the various affordable housing efforts currently underway.**

The rationale for the committee's consideration of this proposal:

- There are currently multiple efforts underway at Chatham County, City of Savannah and the local nonprofit sector to get the housing affordability gap under control. Each one of these efforts is developing various strategies for which housing developers will be the end users. Centralizing those resources would increase and expedite their use by developers.
- While there are numerous drivers of racial disparities in housing affordability, ultimately time may be the biggest single factor, because the market can't seem to keep up with demand. This tool can help increase the overall rate of housing production in Savannah, which would also reduce racial gaps.
- In the current landscape of overlapping efforts between the County, City and private sector, some strategies have already been implemented, some have been slated for implementation, and many are still being vetted. It would be helpful to have all this information in one place, to keep all stakeholders informed on the metro area's progress.

4. **Incorporate density bonuses into the city zoning code in areas already slated for substantial growth by the City of Savannah. Density bonuses encourage the production of affordable housing by allowing developers to build more units than would ordinarily be allowed on a site by the underlying zoning code, in exchange for a commitment to include a certain number of below-market units in the development.**

The rationale for the committee's consideration of this proposal:

- The Housing Savannah Task Force action plan already recommends incentivizing density through zoning, though it doesn't cite density bonuses specifically.
- Though Savannah's population is growing, there are areas of the city, like downtown and midtown, that can thrive economically with more density. This is a zoning provision that can be limited to designated zones of the city.
- It can also be combined with other affordable housing tools, like inclusionary zoning, that's where developers are required to incorporate affordable units into their project or pay into the City's affordable housing fund, but in exchange can be permitted to increase the total number of units in their project.

Next, the committee evaluated these alternatives on their effectiveness, cost and political feasibility, with the following definitions:

Effectiveness: extent to which the strategy helps the City of Savannah reduce racial disparities in home affordability.

Cost: how much the strategy will cost the City of Savannah.

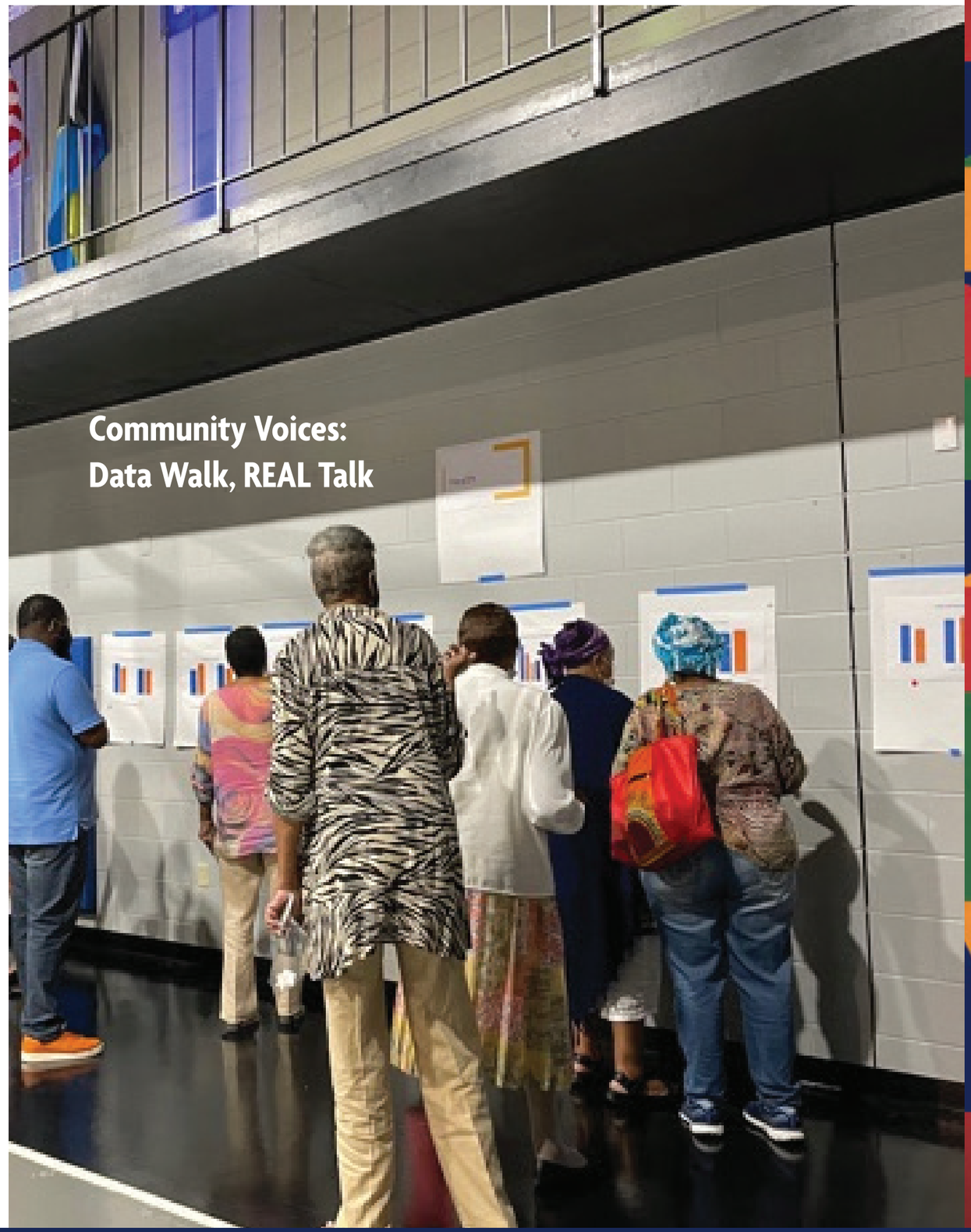
Political feasibility: whether the strategy has sufficient support from the public and essential decision makers.

The committee used a decision matrix to gauge how each proposed strategy performs on each criterion. This analysis helped the committee confront the following key trade-offs among strategies:

- HAS utilizes homeownership models that have shown to be highly effective in reducing racial disparities, but the local housing market currently doesn't have enough supply of homes at the necessary price point to significantly scale-up their homeownership programs.
- HUD has limited the number of Housing Choice vouchers that can be converted for homeownership to 200 and the number has not increased in recent years.
- Although centralizing all available incentives and other resources for developers in an online hub would be useful for developers, it wouldn't address their biggest barriers to producing more affordable housing: the rising cost of labor and materials. The concept of an online hub will likely only be as effective as the tools in it address these barriers. If county and city incentives are widely accessible and deep enough to make the development of affordable housing more financially feasible, then having them all in one place with a streamlined process would likely make a difference.
- Because the practice of measuring local government's impact by race is a relatively new development in the U.S., we were unable to find a municipality that has been doing it long enough to show its efficacy. One can reason that what gets measured gets accomplished, and thus the act of measuring impact by race across City of Savannah divisions will indeed shift internal policies and practices over time to drive more racially-equitable outcomes. However, if the City of Savannah implemented such metrics this year, it would still take several years to determine whether it makes any difference.

After discussing the trade-offs and thinking about what implementation of these strategies may look like, the committee developed the following recommendations:

1. Implement racial equity metrics across all City of Savannah divisions by executive order, because the data tracking system should be commensurate and centralized across all departments to have maximum impact and efficiency.
2. Establish a data sharing agreement with HAS and local housing nonprofits to build a culture that values the practice of tracking data on race.
3. Although Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) does not have the ability to scale up its Housing Choice homeownership program, its potential for converting larger numbers of low-income residents into homeowners is so compelling, it should be studied further to determine the feasibility of the City of Savannah replicating it in partnership with a local community development corporation.
4. The homeownership program currently for public housing residents can and should be expanded in partnership with the City of Savannah. This expansion would only cost approximately $100,000 annually to cover personnel expenses, as the program uses a case management model.
5. The committee believes that residents should be the primary beneficiaries of a housing services one-stop shop. Whether it's brick-and-mortar or virtual, it should be able to assist both potential homeowners and home developers. A strong local example of an in-person social support one-stop shop is St. Joseph's African American Health Information & Resource Center.
6. City of Savannah Department of City Planning should commission a case study that includes a cost-benefit analysis of providing density bonuses in the areas that are gentrifying rapidly and that can absorb more residential density with little opposition or impact on infrastructure.



Community Voices: Data Walk, REAL Talk

DATA WALK REAL TALK

Hosted by Parent University, the Data Walk REAL Talk was held on July 31, 2021 at Kingdom Life Christian Fellowship with 97 registered participants and 10 facilitators. Participants had the opportunity to view 62 local data points through a Data Walk where they used 6 dots and one star to rank the data for importance. The participants heard from Dr. Otis Johnson, REAL Task Force chair, Michael O'Neal and Tameka Tribble from Parent University and Alicia Johnson of StepUp Savannah prior to moving into breakout rooms to discuss the data, what stood out, and recommendations for key areas to address. Below is a brief summary of the feedback from participants.

The top 10 data points as identified by attendees include:

- Homeownership by Race (23)
- Out of School Suspension by Race (16)
- Percent of Savannah Police Dept. Interactions by Race (16)
- Percent of Children in Foster Care (13)
- Percent with Limited Access to Healthy Foods (13)
- Percent of Savannah Police Dept. Arrests by Race (13)
- High Blood Pressure Prevalence (13)
- High School Graduation Rate (10)
- Families with Children below Poverty Level by Race (10)
- Families Below Federal Poverty Level by Race (10)

There was some overlap in the areas that were ranked as the very top 4 priority with stars:

- Percent of Savannah Police Dept. Arrests by Race (6)
- Out of School Suspension by Race (4)
- Percent with Limited Access to Healthy Food (4)
- Unemployment Rates by Race (4)

Participant survey

Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on a short survey with several open-ended questions. Below is a brief summary of the responses from this survey.

Based on the data that was presented today, which of the six areas of concern - Health, housing, education, criminal justice, economic mobility, and environmental justice is the most important?

Category	%
Education	41%
Health	26%
Criminal justice	13%
Housing	8%
Economic mobility	10%
Environmental justice	3%

Participants were asked to provide examples of why they responded the way they did. Below are the responses by category. Not every respondent provided a reason why.

Criminal justice

- *Some of the way the law interacts with the people*
- *Criminal justice because I have children and I am seeing all kinds of injustice.*

Economic mobility

- *I feel it effects everything*

Education

- *Early education is critical to improve QOL outcomes and math/ CLA proficiency in early grades*
- *To improve children's education*
- *Education will knock down barriers*
- *It all comes back to educating folks. Truthfully folk's contributions to society, teaching equality.*
- *Better education — better jobs—economic security*
- *Education is the foundation for functioning in the society*

Health

- *Health because I think that we all need to worry and take health more seriously*
- *Because I have health issues*
- *Health and criminal justice*
- *Young people*
- *Because it's very important for our lives*

What is one recommendation for improving the quality of life in Savannah?

There were 67 responses, the key themes and some of the related quotes are shown below.

Engagement (12, 18%)

- *More involvement by adults*
- *To work together as a community*
- *Community engagement*
- *Speaking and listening to each other*
- *Those in authority pay more attention to low income neighborhoods*
- *Working together*
- *Speaking and listening to each other*

Youth education (10, 15%)

- *Education*
- *Get them back in school*
- *Start educating youth in pre-school*
- *The education rates*
- *More involvement in the school system*
- *Improve education*
- *Invest in young adults and their pipeline to jobs and further education*

Education, general (9, 13%)

- *More training*
- *Getting the information out*
- *Free workshops, empowerment workshops*
- *More education about structural racism*
- *Training and skill building vs college education*
- *Educate us on health and get more funding dedicated to teaching*

Affordable housing (7, 10%)

- *Affordable/Income based housing*
- *Housing- identify pathways for home ownership*
- *All above we need more housing and low-income apartments.*
- *Increase the minimum wage and have more affordable housing, especially for hospitality workers downtown.*

Other (7, 10%)

- *Offer interventions*
- *To make it equal all around*
- *Race unity*
- *Not right*
- *More support for our elderly*
- *Dynamic, proactive, structured, and positive*

Healthy food access (5, 7%)

- *Food inequalities.... Neighborhoods need help!*
- *Healthy foods*
- *More resources for fresh foods*
- *More fresh fruit, vegetables, and cheap medical*

Infrastructure (4, 6%)

- *Fixing the streets*
- *Neighborhood check or come around Savannah*
- *Capital improvements in low-income areas*

Economic stability (3, 4%)

- *Money*
- *Economic stability across the board*

Everything (3, 4%)

- *We need prayer in everything we do*
- *Everything*

Recreation (3, 4%)

- Have more recreation centers starting so people can have somewhere to go
- Have more activities for youth
- To have more recreation centers so that young people can have somewhere to go

Criminal justice reform (2, 3%)

- *Equal time for equal crime. Chief Willie Lovett got more time than Roach who first did crime*
- *Relationship building between police*

Health (2, 3%)

- *Health*
- *Free mental health*

What was your biggest takeaway from today?

There were 61 responses to this question and focused on 8 key themes. The themes and some selected quotes are shown below.

Awareness (14, 23%)

- *Knowledge*
- *Put out hire resources to help people in need*
- *Families need support*
- *Things that need to be done*
- *There needs to be a wider dissemination of information*
- *The data information presented*
- *Being open to different problems Chatham County faces and solutions presented.*
- *The community needs to be more educated about our issues and where we could help ourselves more.*

Community support (9, 15%)

- *Community partnership is important*
- *Community is engaged for a better quality of life in Savannah*
- *My biggest takeaway today was the collaborative discussion for active change*
- *Working together, we can get things done*
- *Is that we need to come together as a community and help make our community better.*

Specific data (8, 13%)

- *The percentage of suicides in Chatham County*
- *Environmental Justice*
- *Health*
- *Housing*
- *Criminal justice*

Youth education (8, 13%)

- We need to work on education for younger children
- Unequal learning (test scores) but equal graduation rates
- Education
- How to help young people
- 3rd grade test scores

Disparities (6, 10%)

- Income disparities and lack of awareness as to how to supplement it
- Inequities in criminal justice and health care among African Americans
- The data supports statements made about inequalities.
- Too many disparities

Healthy food access (3, 5%)

- Lack of healthy foods effect everyone
- Healthy foods
- How to receive fresh foods

Other (8, 13%)
- *There's hope*
- *To meet a female judge*
- *Home*
- *None*
- *To have a life*
- *The joy of seeing friends that I have not seen for a long time.*

What other data are you aware of that needs to be considered? There were 60 responses that touched on 11 themes. The responses are summarized below.

Affordable housing (11, 18%)
- *Housing Black people can afford*
- *Housing*
- *Homelessness, drug addiction*
- *Housing/education*
- *Some charts for health and housing need to be reevaluated. It did not make sense regarding what's known*

Law enforcement (9, 15%)
- *More specific data in criminal justice*
- *Criminal*
- *Police interactions*
- *Recidivism*
- *Police harassing Black people*
- *Human and drug trafficking*

Health (8, 13%)
- *Mental health*
- *Health*
- *Free mental health services*
- *Mental health, people with disabilities*

Youth (7, 12%)
- *Young adult and teenagers*
- *How to save our young Black people*
- *Out of school suspension*
- *The children of low income families*
- *If things are bad for 3rd graders how can they get better*
- *Retention rates for Blacks*

Education (5, 8%)
- *Education*
- *Sex trafficking education*

Internet access (4, 7%)
- *Actual homes of Black people who have broadband access*
- *Computer education for the illiterate*
- *Technology education*
- *Computer education*

Special populations (3, 5%)
- *Citizens of Savannah neighborhoods*
- *Data pertaining to senior citizens from advance directives to aging*

None (3, 5%)
Economics (2, 3%)
- *Income*
- *Financial literacy*

Other (8, 13%)
- *Trust*
- *People*
- *Effective*
- *Community help*
- *Voting*
- *Community help*

How can Parent University help with your concerns about the data present today? There were 59 responses that focused in 7 themes. They are summarized below.

More events (16, 25%)
- *Continue to hold the space for community voices*
- *Have more discussion groups*
- *Have another data walk to compare in a year*
- *Keep doing what they are doing*
- *More meetings*
- *Have more events to help out*
- *Have more sessions about some of the topics that were expressed today*
- *More sessions of this nature*
- *Continue to have sessions about housing etc.*
- *Continue these types of events!*

Education (11, 19%)
- *Education*
- *Spread the news*
- *More awareness about health, etc.*
- *Do more classes on the topic*
- *Taking up more classes on saving children*
- *To have a class that talks about disabled people*

Follow up (10, 17%)
- *Compile it. Present it.*
- *Address it with actions*
- *Helping conversation in groups on how to improve*
- *Help*
- *Improve ratio on disparities*
- *Keep notes*
- *Provide follow up on greatest areas of concern*

Engagement (10, 17%)
- *Share, share*
- *Coming together to discuss more*
- *Encouragement to families to strive for a better life. Start helping parents to show love*
- *Parent University can help by joining the community.*
- *Continue these types of events!*
- *To help improve things*

Broader reach (4, 7%)
- *Make these data point available to the larger community*
- *By reaching out to the teenagers*
- *Keep spreading the news.*
- *Getting into the community*

Other (8, 14%)
- *I can't answer at this time*
- *Yes*
- *None*
- *Keep doing the good work*

Other questions focused on demographic descriptions and whether participants were interested in more events like this one. Almost all (62, 95%) of the participants indicated that they wanted to have more sessions like this one.

The average age of attendees was 52, with a range of 13 to 90 years old. Most of the participants (57, 85%) indicated they were Black or African American, 3 (4%) indicated other, and 6 (9%) indicated they were White or Caucasian.

Facilitator and Breakout Group Notes

In addition to the other sources of data discussed above, there were detailed notes taken by several facilitators during the breakout group sessions. Some of the key findings from the breakout groups are shown below.

Key areas of interest
- Access to healthy food
- Health issues related to healthy food access (obesity)
- Affordable housing
- Financial literacy and economic mobility
- Criminal justice disparities
- Education disparities (including discipline)
- Teen health, particularly early pregnancies
- Bringing together engagement and accurate data
- Role of the government in addressing the issues
- Want more information about human trafficking and drug tracking/use
- Data validated a lot of concerns
- Creation of the narrative
- Want to know more about mental health data
- Want more information about the policies that impact these different areas
- Impact of technology on youth and families
- Need more data and awareness of mental health (trauma) and COVID issues
- Need more criminal justice data

Recommendations
- Work on increasing home ownership instead of renting
- Increase affordable housing closer to the jobs for people (discussion of Yamacraw)
- Eviction moratorium
- Address minimum wage and the minimum wage jobs
- Increase broadband access
- Smart buses
- Mentorship programs
- Community centers for children in neighborhoods
- Greater community engagement and participation
- Increased activities for kids and more community involvement
- More communication is needed from the city of savannah
- Job training
- Greater engagement of the faith community
- Need for more medical providers
- Black Panther Breakfast program
- Mentor programs for the youth
- Health Clinics
- Police reform
- Need to address knowledge of resources and availability of resources
- Trauma training for first responders
- Behavioral Health Unity and Juvenile Behavioral Diversion
- Because it's very important for our lives

The Road Ahead: Summary of Reports and Community Challenge[1]

The Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force has collected data and analyzed it using a racial equity lens. The findings were shared with a predominantly African-American community group to get their feedback on how they felt about what the data told them about racial equity in Savannah. The reactions of the community based on their lived experiences gave added validity to the findings of the REAL Task Force. There are systemic and structural barriers in Savannah, Georgia that prevent African Americans from achieving their maximum potential.

The existing economic and social divide, and the recent potent examples of racial injustice in the United States have combined to create a uniquely painful moment for the nation and Savannah. Transformative change is necessary for the city to move forward through these challenges.

REAL studied and highlighted the impact racial inequity has on Savannah's economic and social fabric. The recommendations put forward by REAL outlines bold, actionable ideas to tackle racial inequities head-on. REAL must now review the work of the other task forces appointed by Savannah Mayor Van R. Johnson, II to identify similar recommendations across task forces. As a guideline for future work, the Mayor and City Council need to create an infrastructure to integrate the work of the various task forces and develop an overall strategy for moving the city forward.

REAL did not address COVID-19's impact on lives and livelihoods but concentrated on pre-COVID-19 data. The COVID-19 pandemic was rapid and deeply felt across our city and region, and its impact has not been experienced equally across communities. The existing inequities in Savannah and the role those inequities play in deepening the impact of the current health crisis for many Savannahians with education, jobs, housing, food security and health care needs to be the subject of another study.

The Mayor and City Council must be forthright in declaring that challenges and recommendations coming from the various task forces need to become priories for city government. City government will have a new City Manager when REAL and most of the other task forces present their reports. It will be an opportune time to start out together on a bold agenda that acknowledges and addresses multiple challenges in Savannah and a commitment to use city government to do something about them. REAL wants a commitment from city government to organize an infrastructure to address systemic and structural inequities – including racism and gender discrimination that drive everything from one's income to one's safety to life expectancy – that diminish our city. The City of Savannah needs to look at policies that:

End Economic Hardship, and Enable Economic Security and Mobility

Tackle intergenerational poverty and widespread economic hardship that holds our city back by growing our economy inclusively rather than expecting the benefits of growth to trickle down. Look at policies that:

- **Prioritize** changes that make a meaningful impact on the economic well-being of the individuals and businesses that have been most disenfranchised.
- **Reduce** the expenses and costs of being poor, using a racial equity lens to assess how those costs manifest.
- **Dismantle** systems of development that have traditionally had politically motivated decision making.
- **Ensure** workers have access to quality jobs with the benefits they need and a safety net in times of hardship.
- **Promote** financial education and Independence.
- **Reverse** historic disinvestment in Black neighborhoods.
- **Eliminate** racial health disparities that mirror racial housing segregation patterns and are resulting in unequal life outcomes and barriers to access for Black communities.
- **Raise** the standard quality of life in underserved Black neighborhoods by ensuring access to basic resources, increasing real and perceived safety, and ensuring new residents do not displace existing families.
- **Create** more opportunities for Black small business owners to start and grow businesses.

REAL is advocating for our City Government to take the Lead in Building Public-Private Partnerships to Work Together.

It is vital for all City activities to be grounded in the vision and needs of communities to enhance the work already taking place. Specifically, policies that:

- **Include** multiple, diverse community-based organizations in citywide planning.
- **Collaborate** with existing community organizations and leverage their expertise to plan and execute recovery efforts and increase equitable access to services.
- **Implement** solutions that are derived from the input of the people most impacted.
- **Consider** who the beneficiaries of the policies will be and work to mitigate unintended consequences identified through engagement.

Suggested themes to be considered by the multiple task forces and rolled up into an agenda for the City of Savannah to have shared responsibility with public and private partners for implementing a bold community equity agenda:

- **End** Economic Hardship and Enable Economic Security and Mobility.
- **Acknowledge** and Address Racial Inequities at all levels of the community.
- **Build** and Work Together toward a city that values and practices equity.
- **Address** new and old traumas.
  - Increase access to mental and emotional health resources and services in communities.
  - Create culturally sensitive, diverse workforce.
  - Transit and Transportation inequities.
- **Improve quality of life**
  - Road repaving and sidewalks (Capital Improvements in neighborhoods.)
  - Parks and Open Spaces.
  - Education.
  - Neighborhood food insecurity.
  - Access to health food options in neighborhoods.
  - Resiliency and Sustainability– green jobs, alternative energy (solar), strategy for impacts of climate change and other disasters, transportation.
  - Everyone treated fairly and equitably (Black and Brown people, LGBT).
- **Expand economic opportunity, quality employment, and financial security.**
  - Increase ownership and employment for Black residents in technology, green jobs and construction, and contracting.
  - Reimagine the region's workforce infrastructure and create a plan to invest in displaced and young workers.
  - Create a more vibrant Small Business Black-owned community.
  - Expand relief programs and pilot innovative approaches to improve and strengthen the social safety net.

- **Build and focus on Savannah's regional strength.**
  - Transportation, distribution, and logistics by leveraging new trends in the localization of supply chains.
  - Tourism.
  - Regional partnerships – green jobs –stormwater management – resiliency.
  - Strengthen healthcare and life sciences ecosystem.
  - Build on assets – arts, food, riverfront, neighborhoods.

- **Capture opportunity created by COVID-19 and Climate Change.**
  - Cleaner Environment.
  - Prepare the city to capture specialty events.
  - Jobs in video-platform support.
  - Green jobs and resilient infrastructure.

- **Housing- workforce and innovation.**
  - Strongly consider a policy that addresses incorporation of workforce housing in industrial zones.
  - Consider innovative design on infill housing lots and partnership with neighborhood.
  - GA Legislation- inclusionary zoning, incentives, what changes are needed.

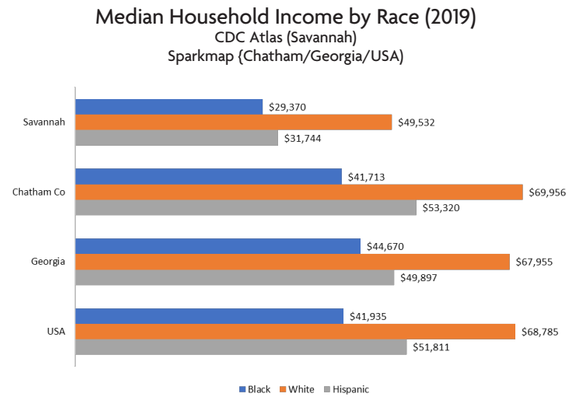
- **Reignite activity throughout the city by sharing our stories.**

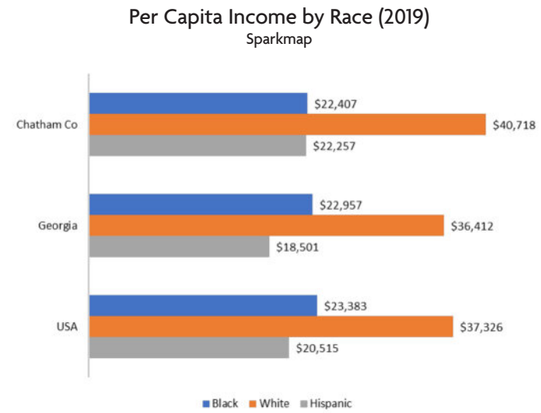
James Baldwin tells us about the road ahead:

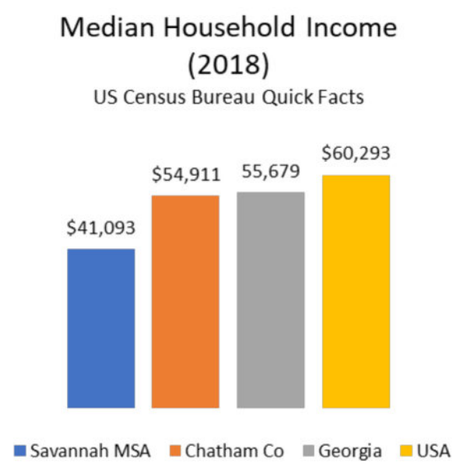
"Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

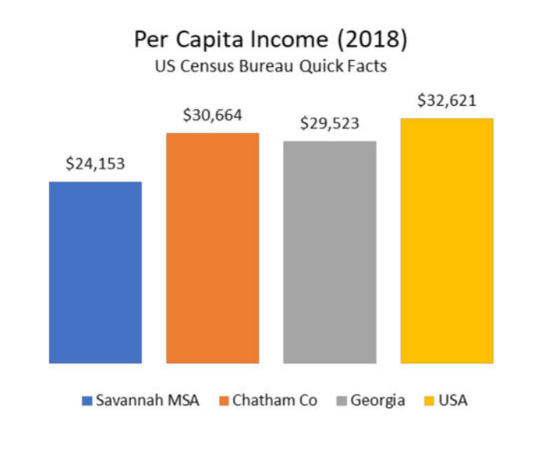
The REAL report, "Seeing Savannah, Georgia Through a Racial Equity Lens", is challenging our citizens to come face-to-face with the racial inequities that exist in Savannah. Racial inequities can be eliminated or at least reduced if faced. Given the conditions outlined in the REAL report, will the citizens of Savannah have the resolve to face the facts with the will and determination to take action to improve the state of our beloved community?

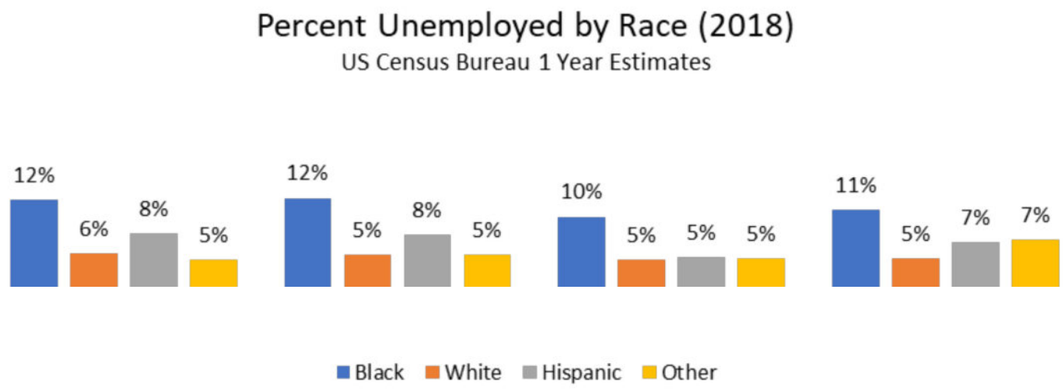
[1]This section is based on an email communique to Otis S. Johnson from Melanie Wilson. September 20, 2020.



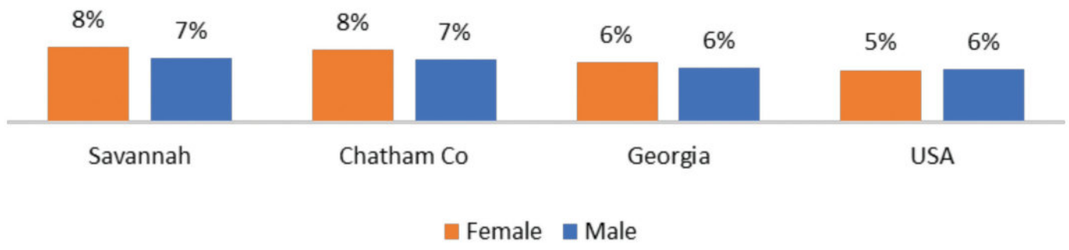






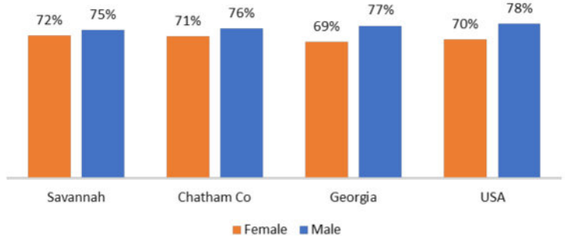


Percent Unemployed by Gender (2018)
US Census Bureau 1 Year Estimates

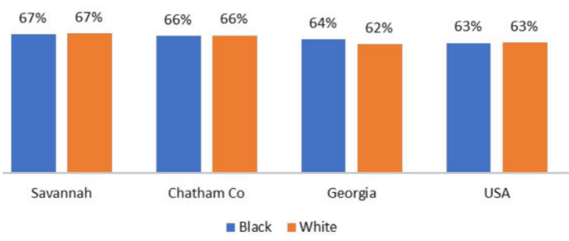


Employment/Population Ratio by Race (2018)
US Census Bureau 1 Year Estimates

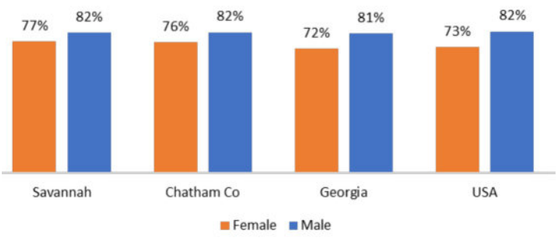
Employment/Population Ratio by Gender (2018)
US Census Bureau 1 Year Estimates



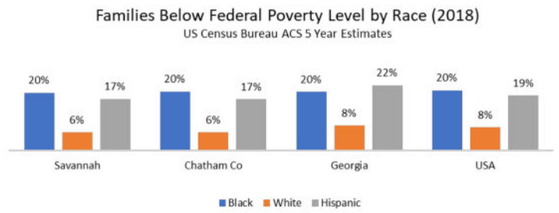
Labor Force Participation Percent by Race (2018)
US Census Bureau 1 Year Estimates



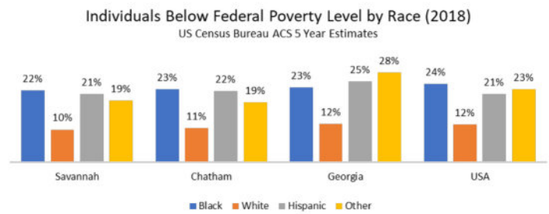
Labor Force Participation Percent by Gender (2018)
US Census Bureau 1 Year Estimates



Families Below Federal Poverty Level by Race (2018)
US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates

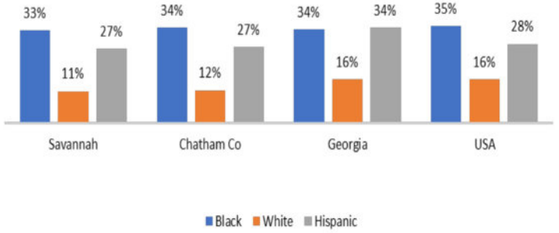


Individuals Below Federal Poverty Level by Race (2018)
US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates

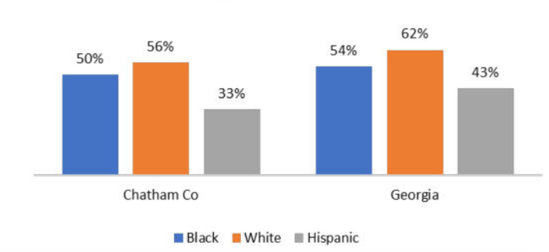


Individuals Near or Below Poverty Level by Race (2018)
US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates

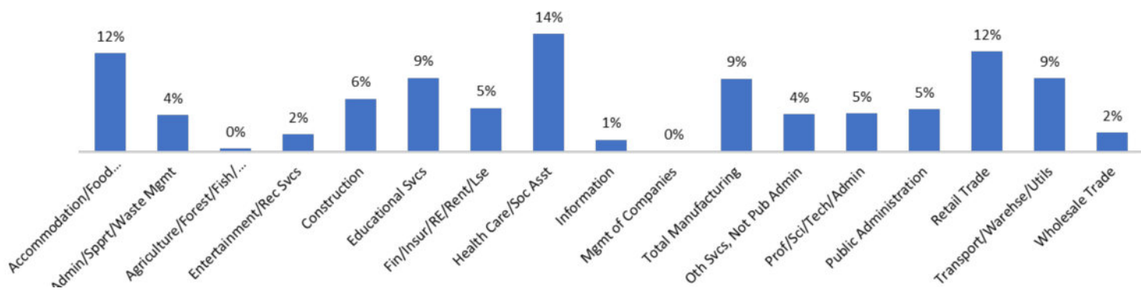
Percent of Children Below Poverty Level by Race (2018)
US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates

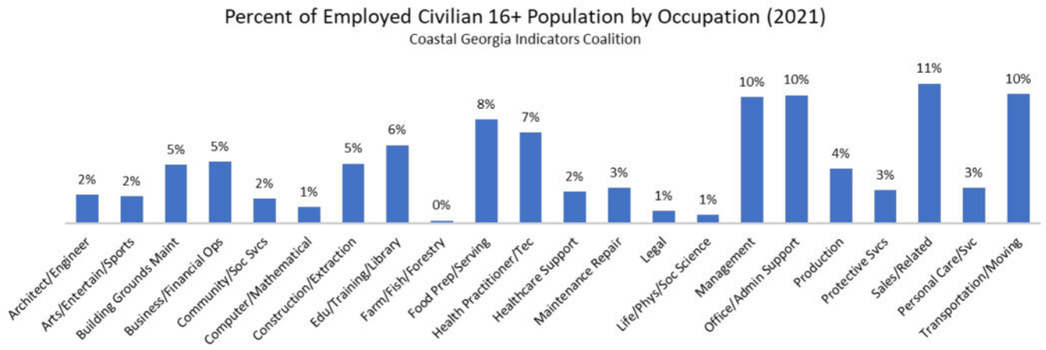


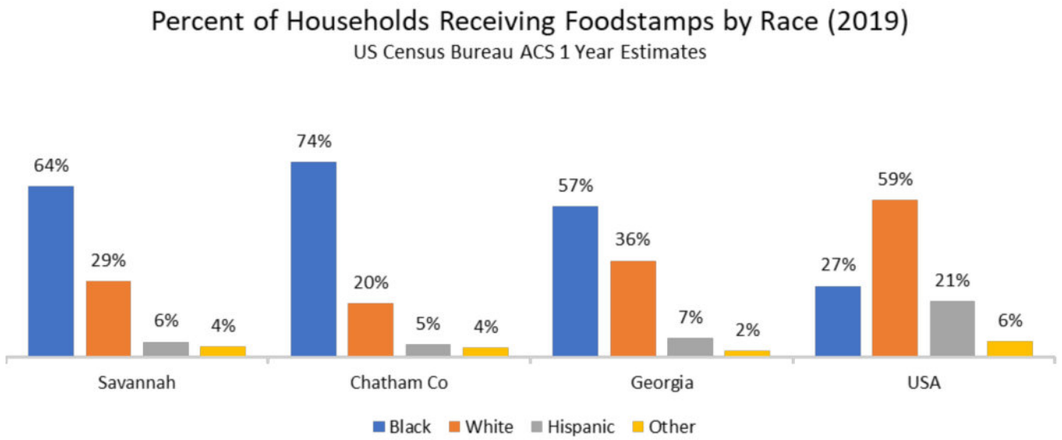
Percent of Registered Voters Who Voted in 2018 Georgia General Election by Race
Georgia Secretary of State

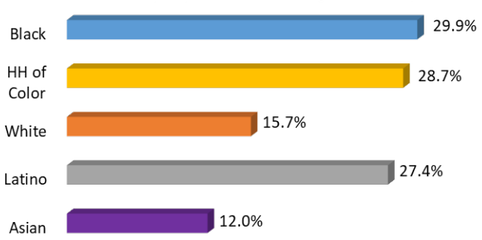


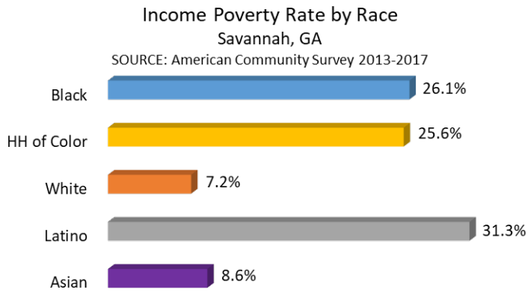
Percent of Employed Civilian 16+ Population by Industry (2021)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition

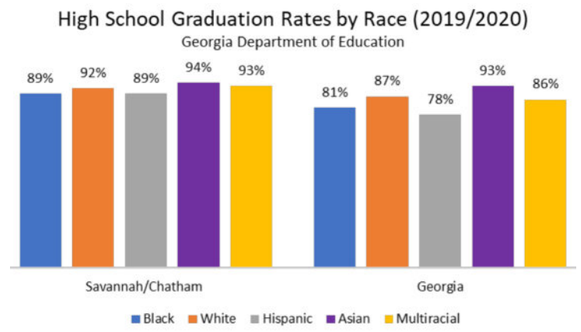


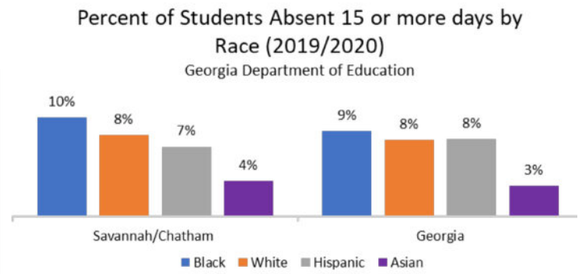

Percent of Employed Civilian 16+ Population by Occupation (2021)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
2%
2%
5%
5%
2%
1%
5%
6%
0%
8%
7%
2%
3%
1%
1%
10%
10%
4%
3%
11%
3%
10%
Architect/Engineer
Arts/Entertain/Sports
Building Grounds Maint
Business/Financial Ops
Community/Soc Svcs
Computer/Mathematical
Construction/Extraction
Edu/Training/Library
Farm/Fish/Forestry
Food Prep/Serving
Health Practitioner/Tec
Healthcare Support
Maintenance Repair
Legal
Life/Phys/Soc Science
Management
Office/Admin Support
Production
Protective Svcs
Sales/Related
Personal Care/Svc
Transportation/Moving

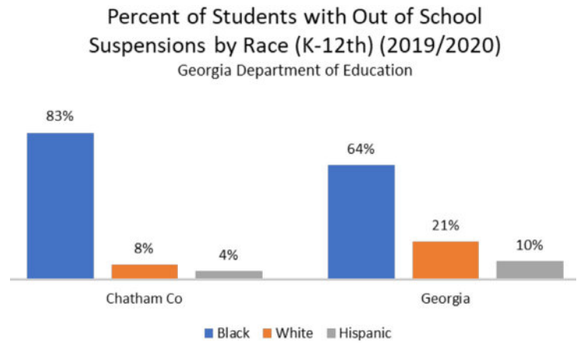

Percent of Households Receiving Foodstamps by Race (2019)
US Census Bureau ACS 1 Year Estimates
64%
29%
6%
4%
74%
20%
5%
4%
57%
36%
7%
2%
27%
59%
21%
6%
Savannah
Chatham Co
Georgia
USA
Black
White
Hispanic
Other

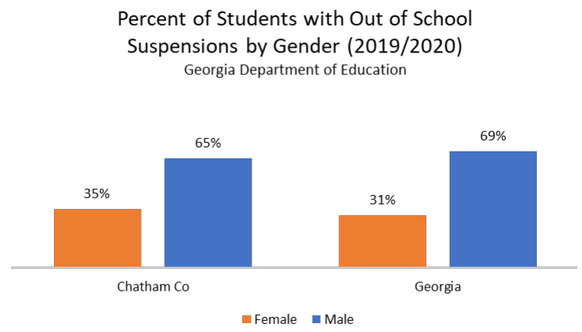

Households with Zero Net Worth by Race
Savannah, GA Metro
SOURCE: Prosperity Now Estimates using SIPP and ACS, 2014
Black
29.9%
HH of Color
28.7%
White
15.7%
Latino
27.4%
Asian
12.0%

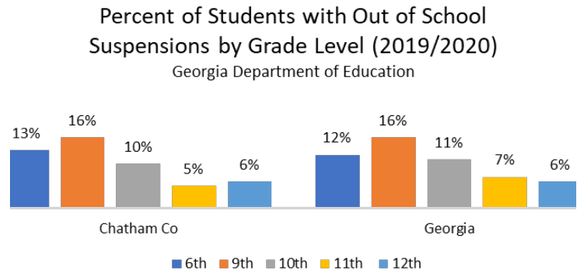

Income Poverty Rate by Race
Savannah, GA
SOURCE: American Community Survey 2013-2017
Black
26.1%
HH of Color
25.6%
White
7.2%
Latino
31.3%
Asian
8.6%

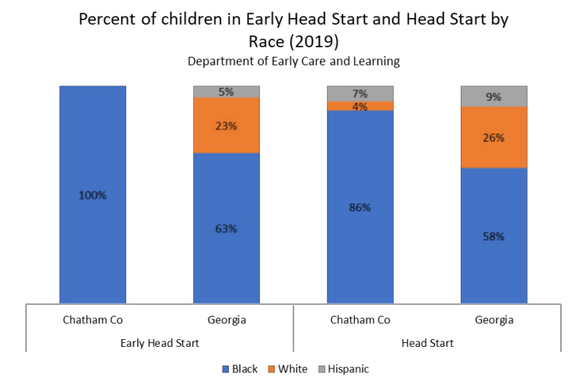

High School Graduation Rates by Race (2019/2020)
Georgia Department of Education
89%
92%
89%
94%
93%
81%
87%
78%
93%
86%
Savannah/Chatham
Georgia
Black
White
Hispanic
Asian
Multiracial

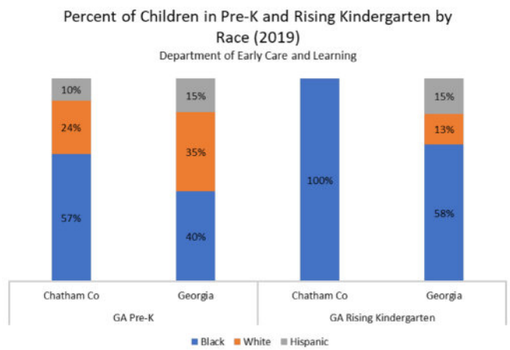

Percent of Students Absent 15 or more days by Race (2019/2020)
Georgia Department of Education
10%
8%
7%
4%
9%
8%
8%
3%
Savannah/Chatham
Georgia
Black
White
Hispanic
Asian


Percent of Students with Out of School Suspensions by Race (K-12th) (2019/2020)
Georgia Department of Education
83%
8%
4%
64%
21%
10%
Chatham Co
Georgia
Black
White
Hispanic


Percent of Students with Out of School Suspensions by Gender (2019/2020)
Georgia Department of Education
35%
65%
31%
69%
Chatham Co
Georgia
Female
Male

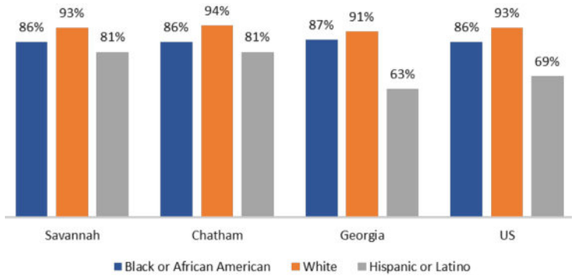

Percent of Students with Out of School Suspensions by Grade Level (2019/2020)
Georgia Department of Education
13%
16%
10%
5%
6%
12%
16%
11%
7%
6%
Chatham Co
Georgia
6th
9th
10th
11th
12th


Percent of children in Early Head Start and Head Start by Race (2019)
Department of Early Care and Learning
100%
5%
23%
63%
7%
4%
86%
9%
26%
58%
Chatham Co
Georgia
Chatham Co
Georgia
Early Head Start
Head Start
Black
White
Hispanic

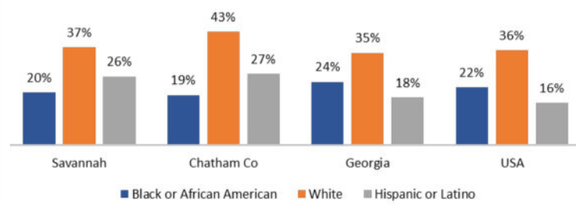

Percent of Children in Pre-K and Rising Kindergarten by Race (2019)
Department of Early Care and Learning
10%
24%
57%
15%
35%
40%
100%
15%
13%
58%
Chatham Co
Georgia
Chatham Co
Georgia
GA Pre-K
GA Rising Kindergarten
Black
White
Hispanic


Percent of Centers with Quality Rated Status (2019)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
45%
40%
Chatham Co
Georgia

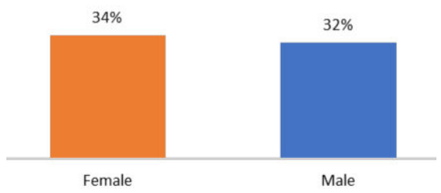
Percent of Adults 25+ with High School Degree or Higher by Race (2019)
US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates



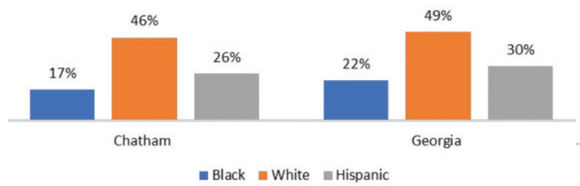
Percent of Adults 25+ with Bachelors Degree or Higher by Race (2019)
US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates



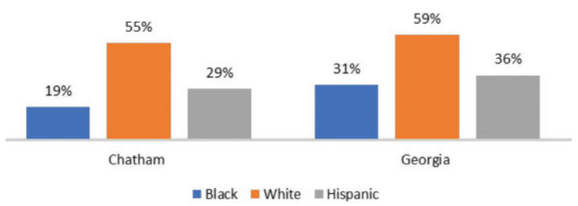
Percent of Adults 25+ with Bachelors or Higher by Gender (2015-2019)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition



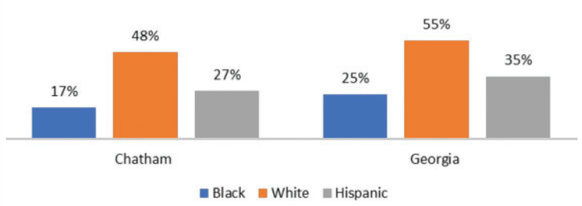
Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners ELA 3rd Grade (2019)
Georgia Department of Education



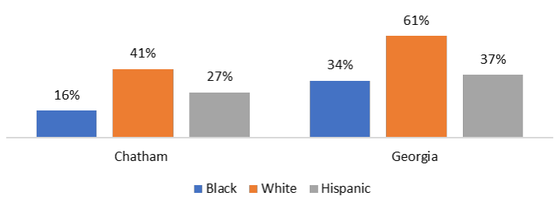
Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners in ELA 5th grade (2019)
Georgia Department of Education



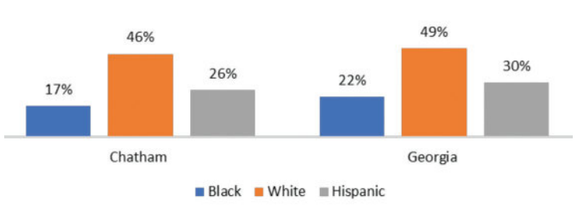
Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners Math 5th grade (2019)
Georgia Department of Education



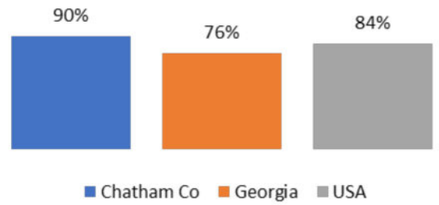
Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners ELA 8th grade (2019)
Georgia Department of Education



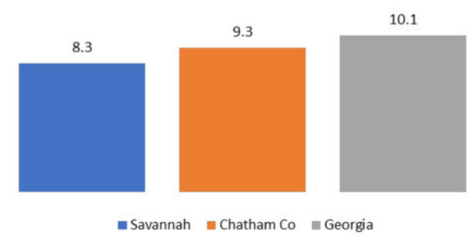
Percent Proficient/Distinguished Learners Math 8th grade (2019)
Georgia Department of Education



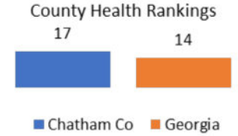
Percent of People with Access to Exercise Opportunities (2020)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition



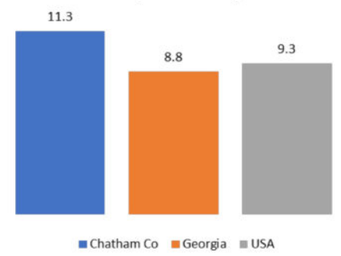
Air Pollution-Particulate Matter Rate (per cubic meter) (2017)
RWJ Places



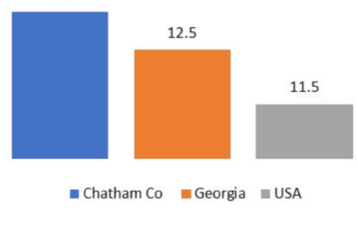
Ranking for Severe Housing Cost Burden (2020)
County Health Rankings



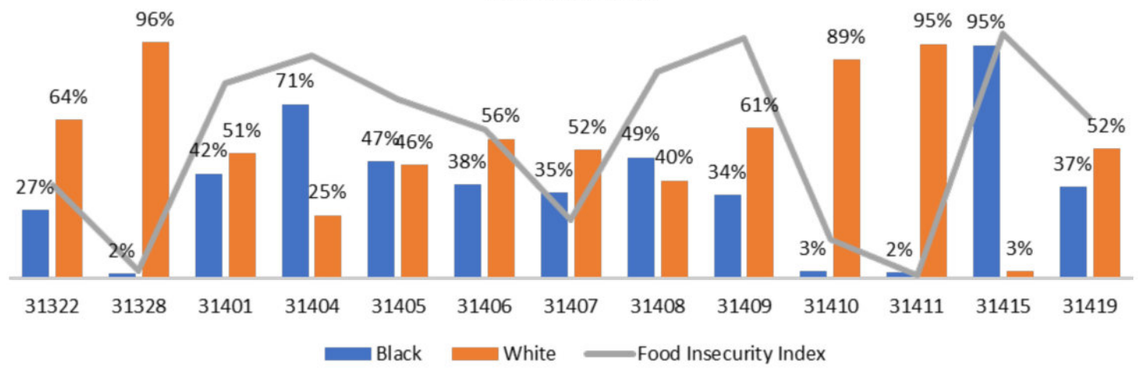
Ranking for Social Associations (2018)
County Health Rankings



Food Insecurity Rate (2018)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition

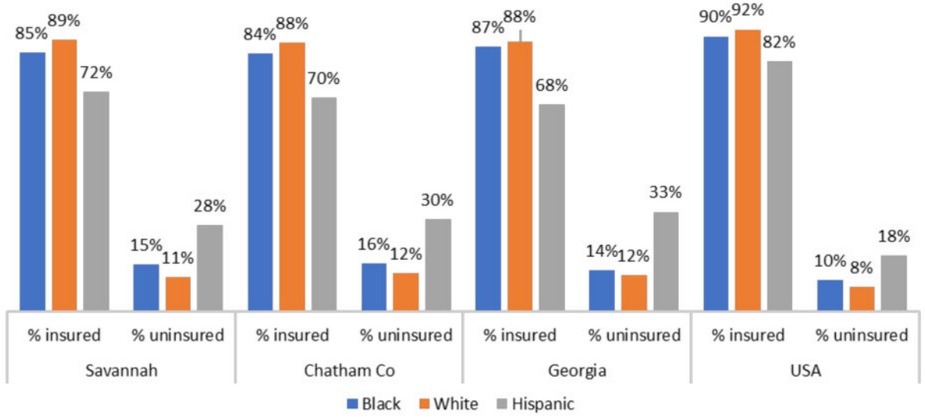


Food Insecurity Index and Race by Zip Code (2019)
Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
US Census Bureau



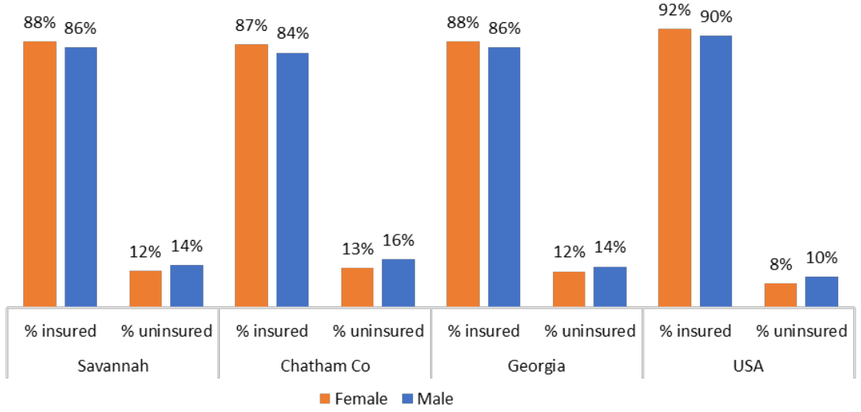
Percent Insured and Uninsured by Race (2019)

US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates



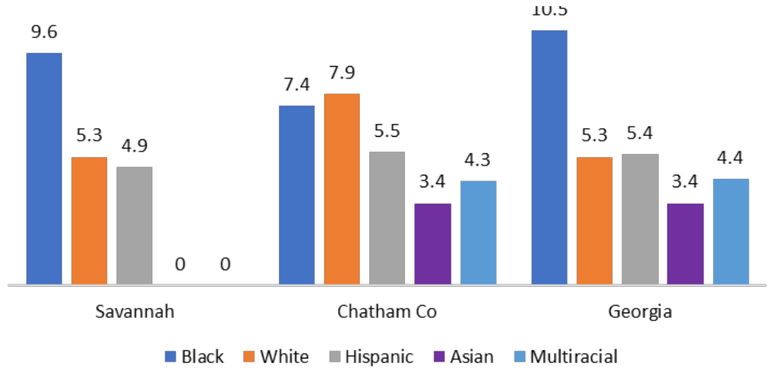
Percent Insured and Uninsured by Gender (2019)

US Census Bureau ACS 5 Year Estimates



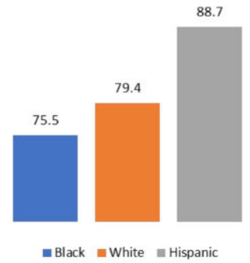
Infant Mortality Rate (Deaths per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



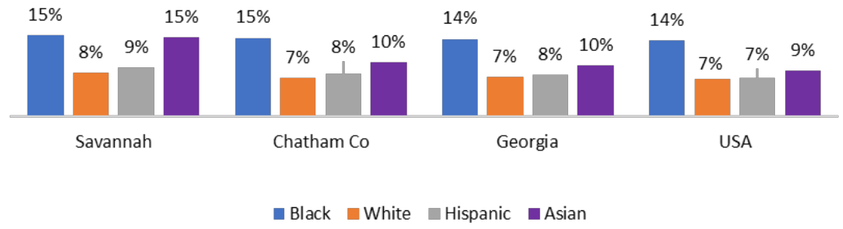
Life Expectancy in Years of Age for Chatham County by Race (2021)

County Health Rankings



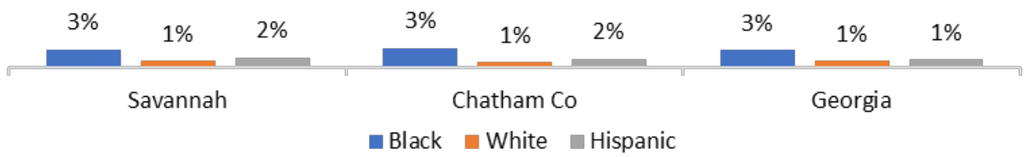
Percent of Babies With Low Birth Weight by Race (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



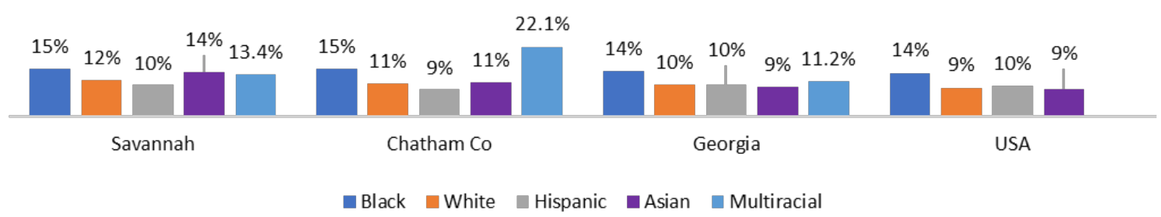
Percent of Babies with Very Low Birth Weight by Race (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



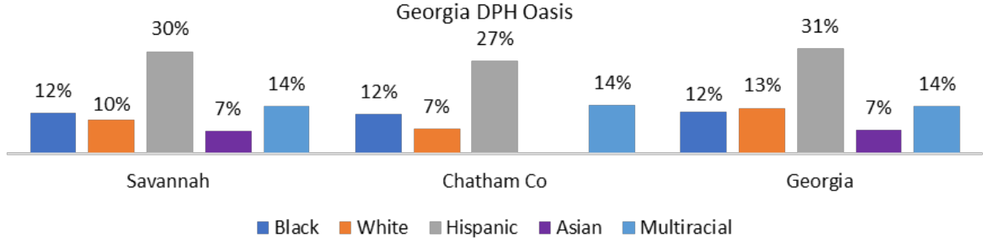
Percent of Preterm Births by Race (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



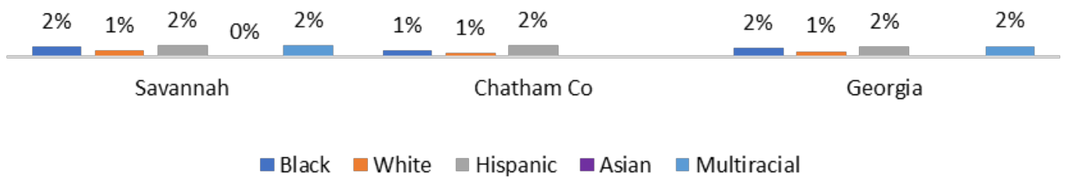
Percent of Infants Born to Mothers <12 Years Education by Race (2019)

Georgia DPH Oasis



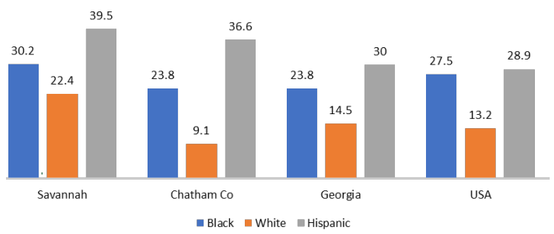
Percent of Births to Teens 10-17 (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



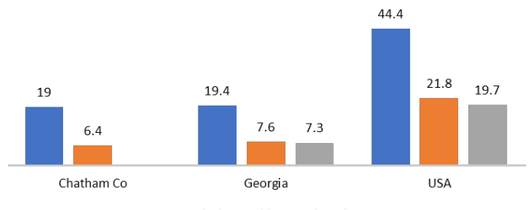
Teen Birth Rate (per 1,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



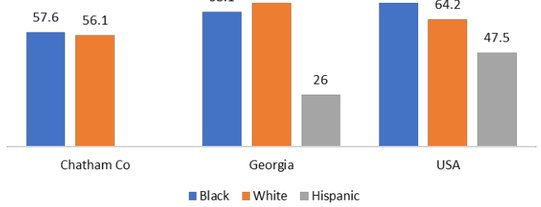
Age Adjusted Death Rate Due to High Blood Pressure by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



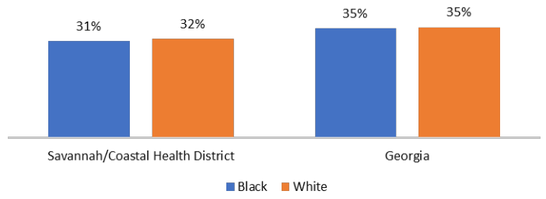
Age Adjusted Death Rate due to Obstructive Heart Diseases by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



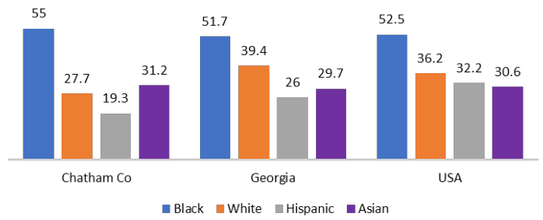
High Blood Pressure Prevalence by Race (2017)

Georgia DPH OASIS



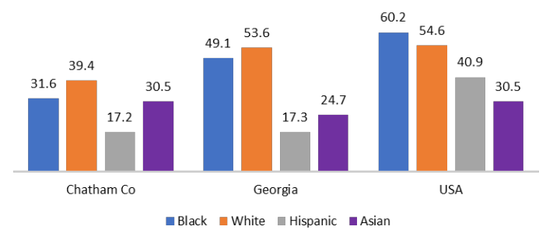
Age Adjusted Death Rate due to Stroke by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS (Chatham/Georgia)
CDC Atlas (USA)



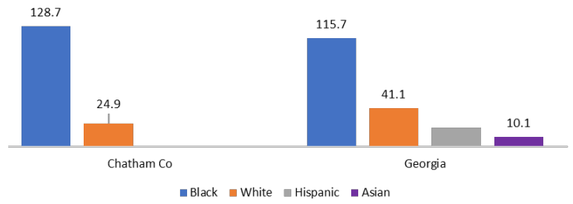
Heart Attack Death Rate by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

CDC Atlas



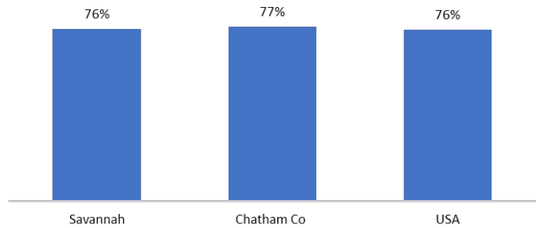
Age Adjusted ER Rate Due to Hypertension by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



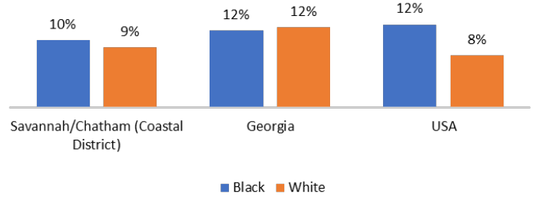
Percent of Adults Who Take Medications for High Blood Pressure (2017)

Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition



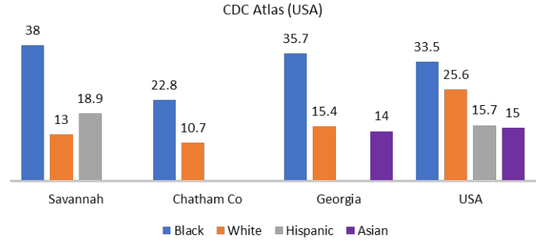
Percent of Adults with Diabetes by Race (2017)

Georgia DPH OASIS (Savannah/Chatham)
America's Health Rankings (Georgia/US)



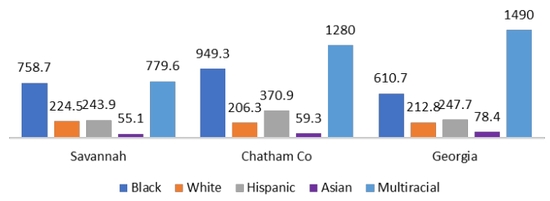
Age Adjusted Death Rate Due to Diabetes by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS (Savannah/Chatham/Georgia)
CDC Atlas (USA)



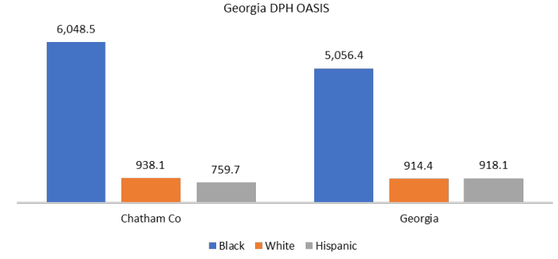
Age Adjusted ER Rate due to Diabetes by Race (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS (Savannah/Chatham/Georgia)
CDC Atlas (USA)



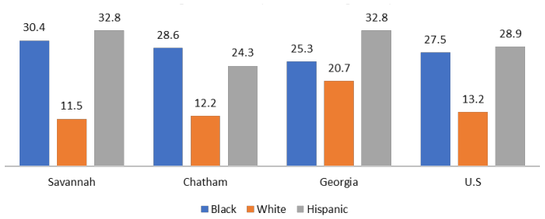
STI Rates (Ages 15-19) (per 100,000) (2019)

Georgia DPH OASIS



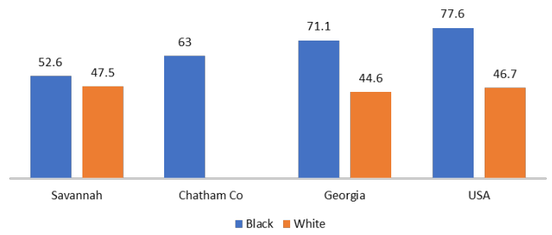
Teen Birth Rate (Ages 15-19) (per 1,000) (2017)

RWJ Places (Savannah)
Georgia DPH OASIS (Chatham/Georgia/USA)



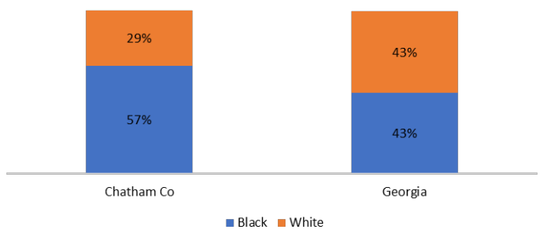
Teen Death Rate (Ages 15-19) (per 100,000) (2010)

Georgia DPH Oasis



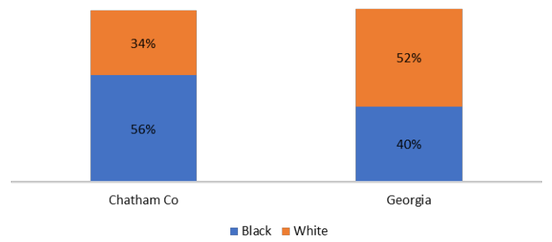
Percent of Children Served by DFCS (2020)

Georgia DFCS



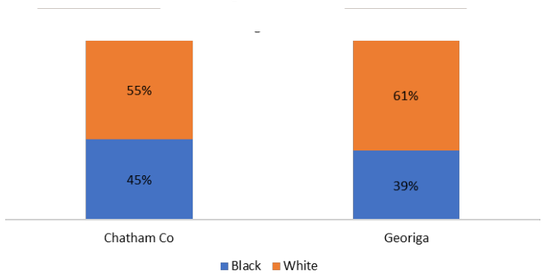
Percent of Children in Foster Care by Race (2020)

Georgia DFCS



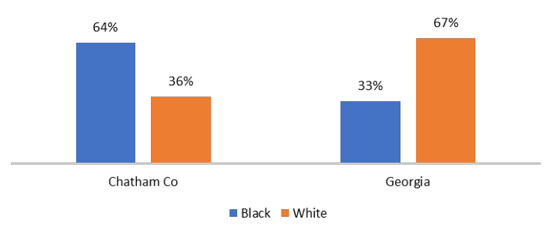
Percent of Children Available for Adoption by Race (2020)

Georgia DFCS



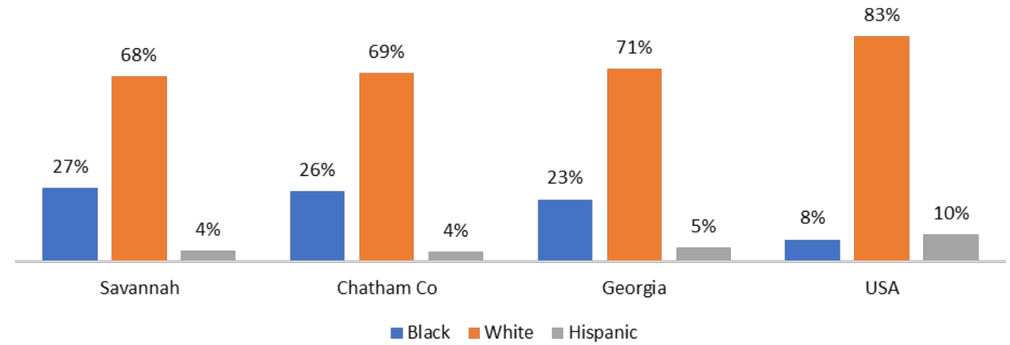
Percent of Children Adopted (2020)

Georgia DFCS



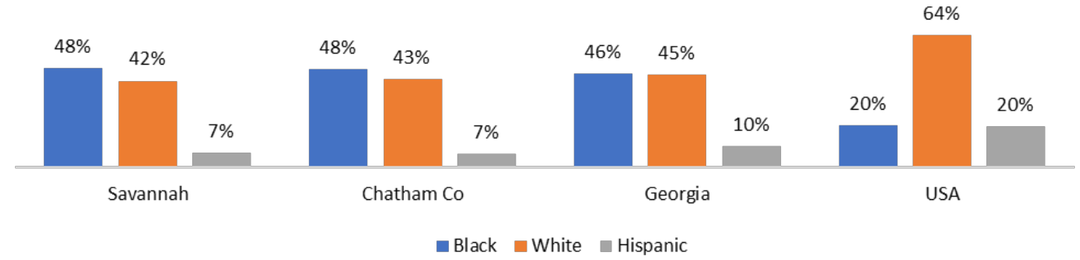
Percent of Owner-occupied Housing Units by Race (2018)

US Census Bureau ACS 1 Year Estimates



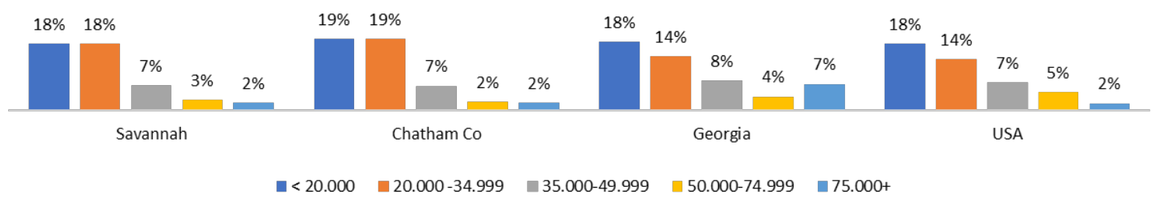
Percent of Renter-occupied Housing Units by Race (2018)

US Census Bureau ACS 1 Year Estimates



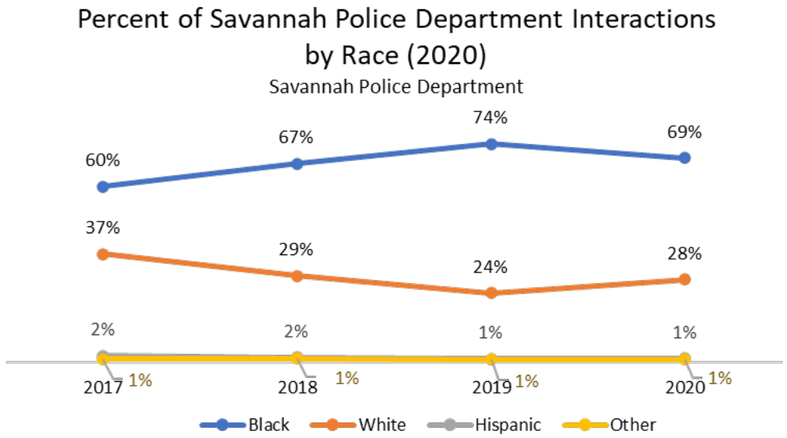
Percent of Renters Spending 30% or More of Household Income on Rent (2018)

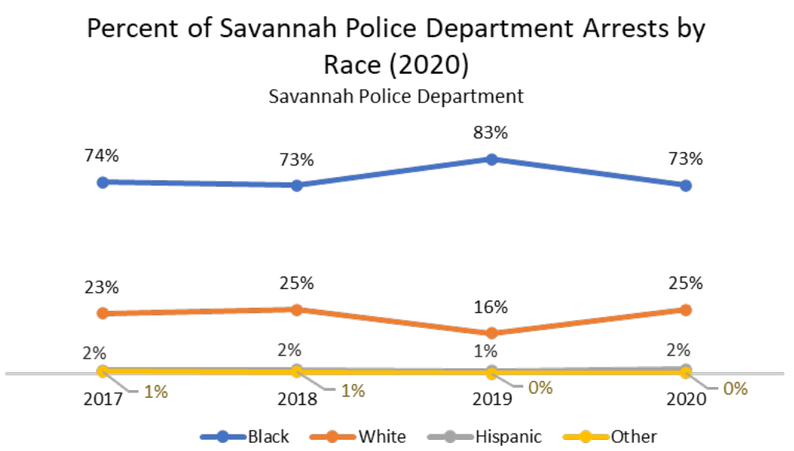
US Census Bureau ACS 1 Year Estimates

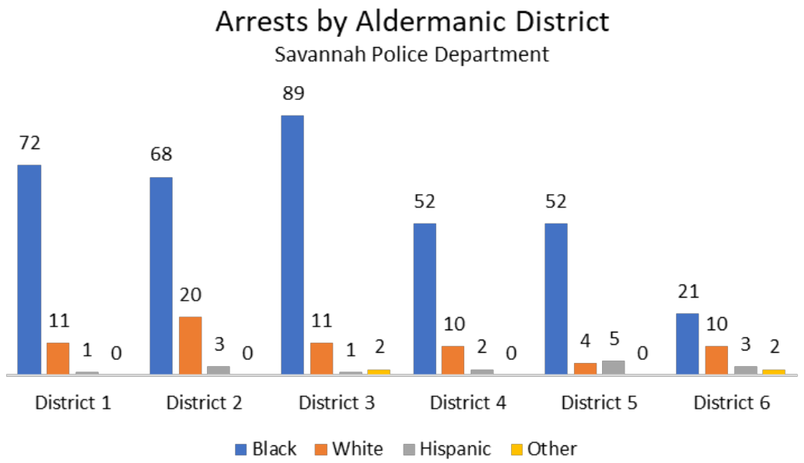


Percent of Homes with Severe Housing Problems (2020)

Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition







Acknowledgements

Seeing Savannah, Georgia Through an Equity Lens is the result of a year's work by many people committed to providing the leadership to improve racial equity in Savannah, Georgia.

For Mayor Van R. Johnson II, we are grateful for his leadership in conceiving REAL. The careful selection and appointment of members was important. This enabled the task force to quickly form into a working group committed to improving racial equity in Savannah. The members of the original group and their affiliations are listed in this section. Special thanks go to the original members that worked until the final report was produced. Additional people joined REAL in various roles along the way to get the work done.

Former Mayor Dr. Otis S. Johnson was asked by Mayor Van Johnson to Chair REAL. Mayor Van Johnson requested two city staff members, Daphanie Williams, Assistant to the City Manager and Edith Gregory, Assistant to the Mayor, to support Dr. Johnson. Ms. Williams served as an invaluable organizational assistant to Dr. Johnson. She was always available to assist with requests from Dr. Johnson or members of REAL. Ms. Williams serves on the REAL Steering Committee. Ms. Gregory served as an assistant responsible for producing outstanding detailed minutes of REAL meetings and performed other duties for the task force. We applaud Dr. Johnson for his leadership of the REAL task force and his ability to connect across all working groups to bring this report to its fruition.

Special recognition goes to Lizann Roberts, Director of the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC). She was central to the writing of the application to the Sapelo Foundation for funds to support the work of REAL and have CGIC to serve as the fiscal agent for REAL. This allowed REAL to qualify for a grant from the Sapelo Foundation. Ms. Roberts was a member of the REAL Steering Committee of Johnson, Roberts, and Williams until it was expanded to include the Conveners and Co-Conveners of the six issue area committees. Ms. Roberts organized staff and interns assigned to CGIC who helped create the Savannah Racial Equity Index and staff the Data Walk, REAL Talk with Parent University. They are Rachael McConathy, Tara Jones, Corey Spivey, Natalie Premus, Sha-Hanna Saffold and Ben Jones. A special thanks to Dr. Virginia Dick for her guidance of the data disaggregation. Most importantly, Ms. Roberts played a pivotal role in the development of REAL's report. Her calm demeanor during long and stressful hours of organizing and editing the report then getting to publication is to be admired.

The work of REAL depended on volunteers, who self-selected to be a member of one of the issue area committees. Members volunteered to assume leadership positions as the Conveners and Co-Conveners of the six issue area committees. Their pictures and a short bio are included in this report. They worked tirelessly to provide the leadership necessary to have the committees produce the reports that looked at issue areas through a racial equity lens. Committee members contributed many hours to doing data research, discussing findings, and deciding what was important to include in their committee's recommendations. All this hard work was completed virtually, which is to be applauded.

Special thanks go to the staff of the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE), Nathaniel Smith, Jessica Daniels, Rachael Carter, Tsedey Betu and Diane McCoy for the professional help they provided to REAL.

Partnership for Southern Equity
TOGETHER WE PROSPER

Nathaniel Smith – PSE CEO and Founder
Jessica Daniels – PSE Equity Consultant
Tsedey Betru – PSE Just Opportunity Director
Rachael Carter – PSE Programs and Engagement Facilitator

Otis S. Johnson, Ph.D., Former Mayor
City of Savannah, Georgia
Chair, Savannah Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force

Otis Samuel Johnson has spent a lifetime of public service in Savannah, Georgia. He started his professional career in 1965 as a Resource Guide with the anti-poverty agency, The Economic Opportunity Authority for Savannah Chatham County, Inc. (EOA). He continued his community work as a Social Planner with the Savannah Model Cities Program in 1969. Johnson was hired by Savannah State University (SSU) in 1971 to organize the undergraduate program in social work. He was elected to the Savannah City Council in 1983 and re-elected in 1986. He left SSU and resigned from the City Council in 1988 to become the Executive Director of the Chatham Savannah Youth Futures Authority (YFA). Johnson returned to SSU in 1998 as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. He retired in 2002 to prepare to run for the position of Mayor of the City of Savannah. He was elected in 2003 and re-elected in 2007. He returned to SSU in 2012 as Professor Emeritus and was Scholar in Residence until 2018. Johnson has served on numerous boards and advisory committees at the local, state, and national levels.

Johnson earned academic degrees from Armstrong State University (now merged with Georgia Southern University (A.A. 1964); University of Georgia (A.B. 1967); Clark Atlanta University (M.S.W. 1969) and Brandeis University, Heller School (Ph.D. 1980).

Amanda Hollowell is the National Organizing Director for When We All Vote. Before that she was the Director of Strategic Campaigns for Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, formerly she has been State Director of 9to5 Georgia, and Education Specialist for LifeLink of Georgia. Being a servant to her community is her passion. Her volunteer efforts include holding roles as the co-coordinator of the Savannah Black Heritage Festival Committee, Board Member of Reform Georgia, and Georgia Alliance for Social Justice, she is a member of the Savannah (GA) Chapter of The Links Incorporated, graduate of the Georgia WIN List Leadership Academy. To date, her greatest accomplishment is being the mother of her son, Joah.

Alicia M. Johnson is a native of Savannah, Georgia, where she earned dual degrees in her undergraduate and graduate work. English and Communications and master in management & organizational leadership, respectively, and is on track to complete her organizational leadership doctorate in 2023. She is also a certified grant writer and administrator and a lifetime certified facilitator for Bridges Out of Poverty. In 2006, she finished at the top of her Systematic Theology Program, an intensive Christian doctrine, receiving ministerial license and ordination. She brings over twenty-six years of progressive leadership experience in her field with specific expertise in strategic planning, leadership, program and organizational development, marketing, and communications.

Johnson is currently the executive director for Step Up Savannah, leading the strategic direction of poverty reduction initiatives. She is the first African-American and native Savannahian to have the role. Johnson recently served as the Director of Medicaid Marketing and Member Services for WellCare of Georgia, Inc., Johnson has had an expansive career in both the public and private sectors. Notably, she served as the first Public Information Officer for the first African-American DA in the eastern judicial circuit. There she made history to include leading strategic planning, writing and publishing the first-ever annual report, launching, and publishing the first interactive website. All aimed at creating community engagement and transparency for the Chatham County Community. She also scaled and provided an administrative overhaul of the Violence Intervention Program, the first forward-facing social justice program of its kind for the DA's office in Chatham County.

Johnson has also held numerous leadership roles in the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools and other local entities.

Lloyd Johnson is a 16-year resident of Savannah, a native of Roxbury, Massachusetts. He earned his undergraduate degree from Howard University and a law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center. Despite his college education, was required to take a literacy test in order to exercise his right to vote in Brooklyn, NY.

Johnson been involved with helping young and marginalized people for 65 years. His commitment to social justice is rooted in childhood conversations with his father, involvement in the civil rights movement, and 14 years as a senior staff member in the U.S. House of Representatives. Later, as a Maryland prosecutor, his practice focus was special victims, children, women and seniors.

Locally, Johnson has been a mentor to some wonderful young people, and served as president of the Savannah 100 Foundation, Inc., which uses the law to achieve social justice, and the 100 Black Men of Savannah, Inc.

His memoir, the story of his circuitous journey from a challenging childhood to becoming a servant leader, is available online at LloydAJohnson.com

Gwendolyn Jordan held senior positions in city and state government agencies in Ohio, also at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in Chicago IL. Additionally, she held leadership positions in several nonprofit organizations such as: Executive Director of the Elkhart (IN) Urban League and Director of Community Development, Community Renewal Society of Chicago, IL. At Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University, she directed in Boston Public Schools, applied research and development projects focused on promoting educational equity within US public schools. As a non-profit consultant, Mrs. Jordan's work focuses on strategic planning, diversity training and staff development.

A resident of Savannah since 2005, Mrs. Jordan held the position of Lecturer at Savannah State University, Department of Political Science and Public Affairs. Working with the nonprofit organization, Step Up Savannah, she designed the curriculum and has served as an instructor for the Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA) since 2008. Guided by a strong belief in racial justice and public service, Mrs. Jordan served on the Federal Home Loan Bank Board of Chicago, Brown University Diversity Advisory Committee, and the Mayor of Savannah's Safety and Education Task Force.

Mrs. Jordan has one daughter, Stacey, an Assistant Dean at the School of Social Work, University of Texas, Austin. A native of Akron OH, Mrs. Jordan is a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

Molly Lieberman is the Founder and Executive Director of Loop It Up Savannah, a community arts and enrichment non-profit which provides art, STEAM, yoga and mindfulness, gardening, cooking and other enrichment workshops and experiences to children and families throughout Chatham County. Loop it Up programs give young people opportunities to explore and express who they are, both as individuals and members of a community as well as fostering strong relationships, building sustainable and interconnected communities where everyday needs are met with creativity and confidence. Loop It Up programs give students opportunities to participate in a variety of creative and hands-on activities, which engage their academic knowledge, while accelerating learning through standards-based arts integration curriculum that nurtures and supports the whole child. Through partnerships with the Savannah Chatham County Public School System, the City of Savannah, Chatham County and many local non-profits, Loop It Up Savannah provides arts programming at over 30 locations and to over 10,000 students each year.

Ms. Lieberman serves on the Board of Directors for Shelter From the Rain, Dawn's Daughter, the West Broad Street YMCA, Step Up Savannah, the Edgemere Sackville Neighborhood Association, the Savannah Widows Society and One Seed Inc. She is on the Advisory Council for Brock Elementary School, Myers Middle School and Hubert Middle School and is proud to sit on the City of Savannah's Racial Equity and Leadership Task force.

Dr. Mildred McClain is a 50-year veteran of the People's Movement for Justice and Self Determination worldwide, currently serves as the Executive Director for the Harambee House / Citizens for Environmental Justice which she founded in 1990. Dr. McClain has worked in the fields of education, community development, public health, environmental justice, and people's liberation struggles for over 5 decades. She has championed youth leadership development through the Black Youth Leadership Development Institute since 1988, where over 3,000 young adults have been trained & put to work for their people.

Dr. McClain has been a human rights activist and teacher for 50 years. She has served on numerous committees, commissions, working groups and boards. She created major partnerships with the Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Centers for Disease Control, and many community based organizations, with the goals of addressing public health and environmental justice issues and concerns. Dr. Dr. McClain is considered the elder, the compass, key leader and official energizer of The Partnership for Southern Equity. She is the real time definition of PSE's mantra "Together We Prosper".

Considered an environmental justice pioneer Dr. McClain has engaged with communities all over the world, assisting in building their capacity to speak for themselves as well as participate substantively in decision-making processes that impact their daily lives.

She is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, has a Master of Education from Harvard and Antioch and a Doctorate in Education from Harvard School of Education. She is the 2017 Recipient of the Sierra Club's Robert Bullard Environmental Justice Award and the American Public Health Association's Damu Smith Environmental Health Achievement Award.

Tiffany Pertillar is a leader in the field of Public Health and a health equity subject matter expert. Her public health career has spanned 15 years working on issues related to advocacy, chronic disease prevention and health promotion. A University of Maryland trained public health social worker, Tiffany is an unapologetic social reformer and compassionate crusader for justice, whose mission is to elevate equity and promote health for all people. Not only is she co-founder and CEO of Epic Health Solutions, a small consulting firm focused on engaging, educating, and empowering this generation to incite the kind of social change that lifts up equity and upholds social justice in all ways, but she consults with national organizations such as the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, the National Parks and Recreation Association, and the Urban Land Institute on issues of chronic disease and health equity.

She's known for her thought-provoking insights into the social issues that adversely impact the health of racial and ethnic minorities throughout the United States and beyond. She has a profound ability to captivate and connect audiences in efforts to bridge the racial and wealth gaps that have both defined and divided our nation.

Ms. Pertillar received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Services from Geneva College in 2003 and Masters Degrees in Social Work and Public Health from the University of Maryland Baltimore in 2008. She is also a Certified Health Education Specialist, a Fitness Instructor, a Body Builder, and a Certified Health Coach. She is originally from Harrisburg, PA but currently resides in Savannah, Georgia with her ten-year-old maltipoo named Riesling.

Lizann Roberts has focused her professional career developing and implementing initiatives designed to improve health outcomes. She holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in health education with leadership certifications from Georgetown University's Center for Transformational Leadership, and The Center for Creative Leadership. As a public health professional with over thirty years of experience, she is a seasoned facilitator, workshop leader and coalition geek.

Prior to serving non-profits, Lizann was a faculty member of two academic institutions, created employee development and health management programs for large, multi-site organizations and designed comprehensive health improvement programs for two large health care systems. Most recently Lizann focused her career on developing public-private endeavors to improve the overall community well-being. She worked with former Mayor Otis Johnson to launch Healthy Savannah and currently serves as the Executive Director of the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition in Savannah.

Ms.Roberts currently serves on the Board of Directors for Inspire Savannah (TEDx), is a WomenHeart Champion and served on the boards of Healthy Savannah, Junior League of Savannah, Pioneering Healthy Communities Team, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, SANE Task Force, The Children's Development Board of St. Joseph's Candler Health System and The Women's Health Board of Memorial Health.

Erina Tandy

Erina Tandy is the Executive Director of Inclusion at the Savannah College of Art and Design® As the executive director of inclusion at SCAD, she knows this to be true because she sees it happening in real time and how deeply that success extends from current SCAD students to future students, businesses, and the city of Savannah itself. Before starting as executive director of inclusion at SCAD in July of 2020, she served SCAD for 17 years prior, in senior roles in external relations, giving, and community engagement. Before SCAD, Ms. Tandy was a television news reporter covering local government. Through serving in these roles she has had the opportunity to galvanize relationships in the Savannah community. In her new role, she works closely with SCAD students, faculty, and staff to ensure a culture where all members of the college community feel welcomed, valued, respected, and empowered to thrive. Inclusion — which in part means ensuring underrepresented people have a seat at the table — helps generate the fresh ideas that make an academic institution and a city thrive. Ms. Tandy is honored to be a member of the Savannah Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) task force, established by Mayor Van Johnson.

Armand Turner is from Gary, IN. After graduating from Indiana University in 2014, Armand spent the next two years working at several Parks & Recreation Departments across the states, including Denver Colorado and surrounding cities of Dallas, TX. In 2016 Armand took on the role of Recreation and Intramural Sports Coordinator at the Historically Black College of Albany State University, in Albany, GA. After 3 tremendous years working for the University, he settled in Savannah, GA in 2019 and began working with the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) Grant. Here Armand has played the role of working with African Americans within the county, who are currently low-wealth, to improve their ability to live healthier, more active lives.

Daphanie WIlliams

Daphanie A. Williams has lived in Savannah for over 30 years, earning her undergraduate degree from Savannah State University and graduate degree from Georgia Southern University, both with concentrations in Accounting. In 2018, she was licensed by the Georgia State Board of Accountancy as a Certified Public Accountant. Ms. Williams' has private sector experience working in the accounting field and made the decision to begin her public service career fourteen years ago because of her love and dedication to public service and lifelong interest in helping others and contributing to her community. In 2007, she began working for the City of Savannah. She continues her work with the City today, serving currently as the Assistant to the City Manager. In this role, she has had the opportunity to serve on the Racial Equity and Leadership Task Force and assist with the work to make Savannah a more inclusive city.

Dr. Otis S. Johnson, Committee Chair, Former Mayor City of Savannah
Dr. Kimberly Ballard-Washington, President of Savannah State University
Kate Blair, Executive Director at Savannah/Chatham CASA
Adam Van Brimmer, Savannah Morning News' editorial page editor.
Dr. Maxine Bryant, Professor of Criminal Justice and Interim Associate Provost of Diversity at Georgia Southern University
Aleena Bubb, Student, Medical College of GA
Jill Cheeks, Executive Director, Mediation Center of Savannah
Dr. Connie Cooper, School Administrator and Social Worker, Retired
Earline Wesley Davis, Executive Director, Housing Authority of Savannah
Dare Dukes, Executive Director, DEEP Center
Ronald Flagg, Associate Commissioner, Office of Children and Family Services, State of New York, Retired
Dr. Catherine Gayle, Department Chair of Social Work, Savannah State University
Lillian Grant-Baptiste, Community Leader, Trainer, Storyteller, Chair of Healthy Savannah Board
Pastor Candace Hardnett, Senior Pastor of Agape Empowerment Ministries
Rev. Billy Hester, Senior Minister of Asbury Memorial Church
Chris Howell, Health, Safety, and Environmental Manager at P&G
Amanda Hollowell, National Organizing Director for When We All Vote,
Former State Director for 9 to 5 Georgia
Linda James, Director of Center of Hope for Salvation Army
Robert James, President and CEO of Carver State Bank
Alicia Johnson, Executive Director of Step Up Savannah
Lloyd Johnson, Former President of Savannah 100 Foundation, Inc., Assistant State's Attorney, Prince George's County, Maryland - Retired.
Mayor Van R. Johnson II, 67th Mayor of the City of Savannah
Gwendolyn Jordan, Lecturer at Savannah State University

Tom Kohler, Executive Director and Coordinator of Chatham-Savannah Citizen Advocacy, retired
Jeff Kole, President of Kole Management Company
Paula Kreissler, Executive Director of Healthy Savannah, Program Manager for the Racial and Ethnic Approached to Community Health Grant
Dr. M. Ann Levett, Superintendent of Schools for Savannah Chatham County Public School System
Molly Lieberman, Executive Director of LOOP It Up Savannah
Dr. Nandi Marshall, Associate Professor &Associate Dean of Academic Affairs for the Jiann-Ping HSU College of Public Health, Ga. Southern Univ.
Dr. Mildred McClain, Executive Director of the Harambee House and Citizens for Environmental Justice
Jennifer Messner, Former Vice President of Community Investments for United Way of the Coastal Empire
Madison Orr, Savannah College of Art and Design Student
Tom Oxnard, Community Leader and Board Member of Horizons Savannah
Tiffany Pertillar, Executive Director of Epic Health Solutions
Lizann Roberts, Executive Director of Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
Daniela Rodriquez, Executive Director of Migrant Equity Southeast
Pastor Samuel Rodriquez, Pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautitsta Hispana
Richard Shinhoster, 1st Vice President of the Savannah NAACP
Dr. Joseph Silver, President of Silver and Associates
Adam Solender, Executive Director of Savannah Jewish Federation and Jewish Educational Alliance
Moncello Stewart, Community Activist and Chair of the Black Chamber of Commerce
Julia Sullivan, Attorney at Sullivan Law and Advocacy
Erina Tandy, Executive Director of Inclusion at Savannah College of Art and Design
Justin West, Sr. District Manager of JM Family Enterprise, INC
Daphanie Williams, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Savannah
Elder Ned Williams, Founder of CURE (Connecting and Understanding Race and Equity)
Melanie Wilson, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Planning Commission

For more information contact:
Daphanie Williams: DWilliams02@Savannahga.Gov
Lizann Roberts: Director.cgic@gmail.com

Partnership for Southern Equity

TOGETHER WE PROSPER

55 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd., NW - Suite 530 - Atlanta GA 30308(678) 383-7774 - info@psequity.org - www.psequity.org