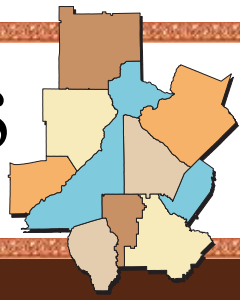


# GLOBAL ATLANTA SnapSHOTS

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



## E A S T A F R I C A N S

Global Atlanta Snapshots, a component of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Global Atlanta Works program, help foster understanding among the rich ethnic and cultural diversity across the Atlanta region. Members of Atlanta's ethnic communities are recent arrivals or long-time residents and may have cultures and customs different from others in the region. But what they share with others who call the region home is that they all contribute to its success. Global Atlanta Snapshots introduce ethnic communities by exploring their backgrounds, customs and cultures, documenting their roles in the regional economy and highlighting available resources.



### Who are the East Africans\*?

The region of northeast Africa that juts eastward into the Arabian Sea – The Horn of Africa – consists of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia. Some who study the region also include within it the neighboring countries of Sudan and Kenya. As of mid-2006, this part of the world is making more than its share of international headlines, from the recent upsurge in fighting in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, to the ongoing campaign of violence and humanitarian crises taking place in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

In 2000, the Atlanta region was home to nearly 12,000 residents originally from these eastern and northeastern African countries, which include Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya. Others, in smaller numbers, may be from Djibouti, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and the island nation of Madagascar. Many of them came to the U.S. as refugees, the result of earlier waves of man-made and natural disasters including civil wars, droughts, floods and famine. *This Snapshot focuses on Atlanta's immigrants from Somalia and Sudan.*

#### Somalia

There are various theories about the origins of the Somali people. All involve interaction between people from the north, whether from Mesopotamia, Egypt or Southern Arabia, and black Africans, including Bantu-speaking people to the south. Over time, the Somalis became a relatively homogeneous population, by the standards of neighboring countries.

In the 10th century the population was converted to Islam, and that is the predominant religion of Somalia today. In the following centuries the land was loosely organized into Islamic states, until Europeans with colonizing aims took an interest in the region. In 1884, the northern portion of the land became a British Protectorate, named Somaliland. The southern portion soon came under the control of Italy, which established Italian Somaliland. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia was launched in 1936 and Somaliland, together with Ethiopia and Eritrea, became the colony of Italian East Africa.

The post-World War II period brought movement toward independence. The British and Italian colonies were united and the Somali Republic was created on July 1, 1960. Life as an independent nation has been marked by internal conflict, political assassination and, in the early 1990s, a devastating famine. Various tribal warlords loosely control portions of the country, which lacks an effective central government. A low point for the U.S. involvement in the region came in 1993, when Marines were killed in the downing of several helicopters and the resulting engagement was chronicled in the bestselling book and motion picture "Black Hawk Down."

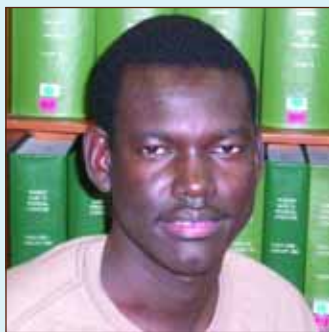
Prior to 1990 there were few Somalis in the U.S. As civil war intensified and famine took hold in the 1990s, refugees began to be resettled both in Europe and the U.S. Some 36,000 people of Somali ancestry live in this country, according to the 2000 Census.

*Continued inside*

**CONTENTS:** Who are the East Africans? • East Africans in the Atlanta Economy • Life in Atlanta for East Africans  
Two "Lost Boys" of Sudan – A Personal Story • Somali and Sudanese Customs and Culture • Celebrated Holidays • Resources



## A PERSONAL STORY



Abraham Manguak and Jacob Magot

*The following is based on an interview conducted at Georgia Perimeter College with two of Atlanta's "Lost Boys," Jacob Magot and Abraham Manguak. Magot was one of four boys whose journey from war-torn Sudan to Atlanta was chronicled by Atlanta Journal-Constitution reporter Mark Bixler in his book, "The Lost Boys of Sudan."*

In order to escape the war raging around him, Magot made the trek from his home in Sudan to Ethiopia and on to Kenya. Magot and other boys were taken out of the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya after representatives of a refugee resettlement program offered him the opportunity to resettle in the U.S. In all, between 3,400 and 3,800 "Lost Boys" were brought to the U.S. After spending one night in New York, Magot was flown to Atlanta.

Magot is from the town of Bor in southern Sudan and a member of the Dinka tribe. Like most of the "Lost Boys" he is a Christian, although Sudan is a predominantly Muslim country. He left Sudan in 1987 and believes he was between five and eight years old, though he has no birth certificate or similar documentation. Magot was given a birth date (1982) when he arrived in Atlanta in 2001, which makes him approximately 24. There are about 150 to 170 "Lost Boys" in Atlanta, all living in the Clarkston area. Two of the boys he lived with when he arrived are no longer in Atlanta – one is in Iowa studying to become a minister and the other is working in Texas.

"It is not easy leaving home when you are that young," Magot said. "To leave the comfort of your parents and live by yourself for years is not an easy thing to do." He was separated from his parents in 1987 and he does not know what happened to them. He has one brother and two sisters, whom he stays in regular contact with. His older sister lives in Kakuma and his younger siblings are in high school in Uganda.

One of Magot's friends since their time together at the Kakuma refugee camp is Manguak, who is also a Dinka from Bor. He estimates his age as 26. Manguak has three brothers and a sister. Two brothers and his sister are in Uganda with their mother, whom he is still in contact with. One brother is in Sudan. Manguak's father died in Kenya in 1992. When asked about leaving Sudan and trekking across Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya, Manguak said, "It was rough. War is not enjoyment... (it was) the only option I had at the moment." He has been away from Sudan for 19 years.

**In 1987, civil war drove an estimated 20,000 young boys from their families and villages in south Sudan. Most just six or seven years old, they fled to Ethiopia to escape death or induction into slavery and the northern army. They walked more than a thousand miles, half of them dying before reaching a Kenyan refugee camp. The survivors of this tragic exodus became known as the "Lost Boys of Sudan." In 2001, close to 4,000 "Lost Boys" came to the U.S. seeking peace, freedom and education. Some 120 of these young men resettled in the Atlanta area with the IRC's help.**

From the International Rescue Committee's website, [www.theirc.org](http://www.theirc.org).

Manguak notes that although it was not easy to get used to new things, he knew enough English to get by. He arrived in May 2001 and worked sorting merchandise at a warehouse. A year later, he moved to Washington, D.C. and earned his GED through the Job Corps. He returned to Atlanta and began school in the fall of 2005, currently taking his core classes. In addition, he is again working full time at the warehouse.

Magot's assigned birthday on his arrival in the U.S. made him exactly 18 years old, too old under Georgia law to attend high school. Although he went to school in Kenya, spoke some English and was close to completing his high school certificate there, everything in the U.S. was new and different. Magot said he had to find the means to finish his GED, took tests and benefited from the assistance of volunteers. He passed

the tests on the first try, except for literature interpretation – particularly challenging for someone without a background in American culture or slang terms. He later mastered the literature section and completed his GED.

Magot now attends the Clarkston campus of Georgia Perimeter College, where he is pursuing an Associate's Degree in Business, which he expects to finish in 2006. He would then like to work on a bachelor of arts degree in business.

Magot said the biggest success of the "Lost Boys" in Atlanta has been the number of them who completed college degrees. Most are thinking of ways to help people back home and "the cause that created the 'Lost Boys,'" he said. They are also trying to educate Americans about the events in Sudan – "The Lost Boys made the problem known in the U.S. and the U.S. is more involved than before because of that," Magot added. Manguak noted that attention to the plight of "The Lost Boys" helped raise funds for medical and clean water efforts in Sudan.





## By the Numbers: East Africans\* in the Atlanta Region

Cherokee: 15	Fayette: 11
Clayton: 380	Fulton: 615
Cobb: 985	Gwinnett: 707
DeKalb: 4,217	Henry: 38
Douglas: 56	Rockdale: 30

Total 10-county region – 7,054

According to the 2000 Census:

**DeKalb County** is home to the largest population of East Africans, by far, with 4,217. **Cobb County** is next with 985.

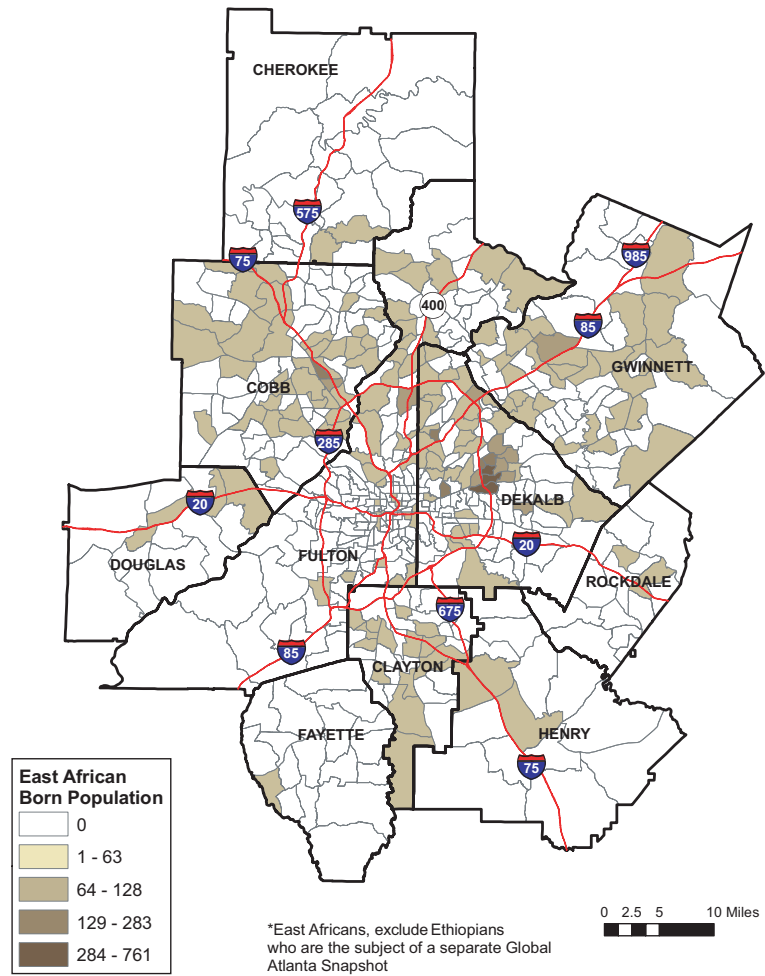
**DeKalb County** is home to **60 percent** of the East Africans in the Atlanta region and **52 percent** of the East Africans living in Georgia.

The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately **42 percent** of **Georgia's total population**, but represents **87 percent** of the state's **East Africans population**.

The largest concentrations of East Africans are found in DeKalb County along I-285 in Clarkston.

\*Ethiopians are not included here – see separate Ethiopian/Eritrean Snapshot. The referenced numbers represent those populations from several other East African countries, including Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya.

## EAST AFRICAN\* POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



(Source: 2000 Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Country or Area of Birth)



## East Africans in the Atlanta Economy

Upon arrival in Atlanta, the refugees typically take whatever employment they can find, or that resettlement agencies can locate for them. The jobs are likely to be entry-level ones in factories, warehouses or retail outlets; bagging groceries at supermarkets; and positions with cleaning and janitorial services.

Once getting established, East Africans are likely to take jobs similar to the patterns observed in the 2000 Census, though that data is limited in its ability to shed light on specific employment of Somalis and Sudanese and is based on patterns for sub-Saharan Africans and less clearly-defined groups. East African men often find employment in transportation-related

occupations (16.8 percent), office and administrative work (14.7 percent), sales and related work (14.5 percent) and production-related jobs (10.5 percent).

East African women are most noticeably represented (22.1 percent) in professional fields. Census data indicate that 11.5 percent work in health care occupations, with a concentration of registered nurses. Other areas include office and administrative positions (17.2 percent), sales (13 percent), production (11.5 percent) and services, in particular food preparation (9.1 percent).





## Who are the East Africans? (continued)

COMMUNITY LEADERS DESCRIBE A NEED TO CREATE MORE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ADDRESS PROBLEMS THE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO FACE SUCH AS LEGAL ISSUES, SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND JOBS.

This immigrant group lives in several major cities, with larger concentrations in New York, Washington, D.C., Boston, Los Angeles, San Diego, Detroit and Atlanta. More recent events in Somalia, including the news that the group known as the Islamic Militia has captured control of Mogadishu from other tribal warlords, and ongoing violence that may involve neighboring nations, suggest that there may additional refugees in the future.

Somalia's population in 2000 was estimated at 8.78 million. More than one million people live in the capital city of Mogadishu. While the people of Somalia are highly homogeneous, with 98 percent of Somali ethnicity, there are some minorities, including one percent Somali Bantu and one percent Arab. Many of the refugees resettled in Atlanta are from the Somali Bantu community. The national language is Somali, an Afro-Asiatic tongue with some borrowed Arabic words; Arabic is also used as an official language. As a remnant of the country's colonial past, both English and Italian are also widely spoken.

### Sudan

Sudan, with a land area of nearly one million square miles, is Africa's largest country. For the past half century, it has also been among the continent's most troubled nations. Emerging from British colonial rule, Sudan became an independent republic on Jan. 1, 1956. The following decades were marked by military coups, unstable governments and turmoil.

Twenty years of civil war have left dead some two million people. The southern region was devastated and its population reduced to subsistence. Some of the youngest victims of the violence in Sudan's southern region have come to be known as the "Lost Boys of

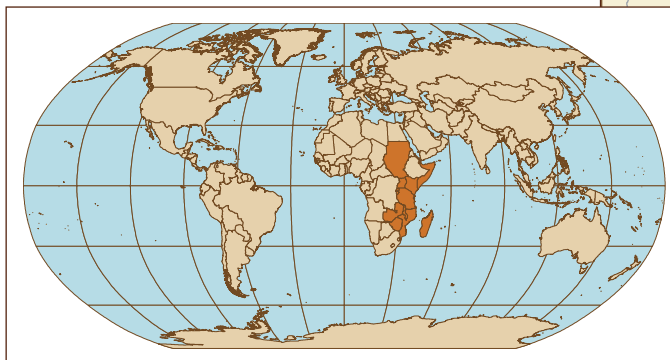
Sudan," about 150 of whom eventually came to the Atlanta region. Peace efforts related to the warfare in the south were looking positive in 2003. Then an upsurge in violence overtook the western province of Darfur, which borders the neighboring country of Chad. This new wave of killings and torture has displaced some two million people, many now living in refugee camps along the Chad-Sudan border.

Under these turbulent conditions, it is difficult to have verifiable population data for Sudan. In 2000, when the country's population was estimated at 29.9 million, Sudan had the world's largest internally displaced population at four million people.

The various ethnic groups that make up the Sudanese population reflect the merging of Arab and sub-Saharan peoples in this region of Africa. About 39 percent of the Sudanese are of Arab ethnicity and are found in the north of the country. Also found in the north are Nubian tribes, which account for eight percent of the population. The Dinka people represent the largest ethnic grouping in the south.

While Arabic is the official language, Nubian and other local dialects are spoken along with English. The choice of language has been one of the dividing lines in Sudanese society. The use of English, more prevalent in the south, was seen as non-Arab. Conversely, the use of Arabic was seen as staking out one's identity as pro-Islamic.

About 70 percent of the country's people are Sunni Muslim. Another 5 percent, concentrated in the south and in the Khartoum area, are Christians. The remaining 25 percent hold to indigenous, animistic faiths.



## Celebrated Holidays

In addition to other Western holidays, Somalis may celebrate the following:

### Islamic Holidays (2006 and 2007)

Muharram (Islamic New Year)  
Jan. 31, 2006, Jan. 20, 2007

Mawlid al-Nabi (Muhammad's Birthday)  
April 11, 2006, March 31, 2007

Ramadan (month of fasting)  
Sept. 24 - Oct. 24, 2006  
Sept. 13-Oct. 13, 2007

Eid al-Adha (Festival of Sacrifice)  
Dec. 31, 2006, Dec. 20, 2007

Note: Islamic holidays vary according to the lunar calendar. Sudanese in Atlanta will observe Christian holidays and May 16 as a memorial day.



Somali-Bantu

## Life in Atlanta for Somalis, Sudanese, and Other East Africans

Some 11,400 East Africans lived in the Atlanta region in 2000. About 4,350 were Ethiopians; the remaining 7,050 were from several East African countries, including Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya. In addition, based on ancestry data, about 560 with Sudanese lineage resided in the region. As displayed on the accompanying map, these East Africans were more likely to be found in DeKalb County, with particular concentrations in Clarkston, Decatur and Stone Mountain. This concentration in DeKalb was further reinforced in the post-2000 period, when new refugees from Somalia and Sudan were resettled in the area.

Local Somalis have begun to organize themselves and develop the beginnings of a community infrastructure. Some integrated into the broader community by becoming U.S. citizens, advancing their education and becoming home owners. Somalis are also participating in citizenship classes and opening mini markets in shopping centers. Community leaders describe a need to create more social and cultural organizations to address problems the community continues to face such as legal issues, social adjustments, affordable housing and jobs. Somalis maintain connections with the community locally and abroad through websites, radio, and community newspapers and through agencies such as the Somali Bantu Community Organization and the Multicultural Center for Wellness, Peace and Development, Inc. Community organizations provide refugee and immigrants with resources, referrals, education and guidance required for building successful and self-sufficient lives. But finding financial assistance to continue providing these types of services is a major concern.

The Sudanese community, much smaller in number than the Somali, has yet to organize. Life for "The Lost Boys," in particular, usually involves the combination of a full-time job and schooling. While the need to interact with the resettlement agencies that arranged for Sudanese refugees to locate in Atlanta is sometimes a hindrance, those organizations and church affiliations are the principal connections to the larger community.

## What are Somali Customs and Culture?

Ethnically and culturally, Somalia is one of the most homogeneous countries in Africa. Somalia has its minorities: There are people of Bantu descent living in farming villages in the south, and Arab enclaves in the coastal cities. A small number of Europeans, mostly Italians, live on farms in the south. But the great majority of the people are ethnic Somalis who speak dialects of the same language (Somali) and who practice the same religion (Islam). Another manifestation of cultural ties to Somalia is the traditional clothing worn, particularly by women in the Somali Bantu community. Religion and family ties are at the center of Somali culture. Muslim holidays are celebrated at such places as Atlanta's Al-Mumin Mosque and community banquet halls.

## What are Sudanese Customs and Culture?

The stories of Magot and Manguak suggest how these Sudanese hold on to their heritage in their new American culture. Although they left Sudan at an early age, they live as Dinkas and retain their culture and way of life. There are no Dinka rituals or holidays but there are significant dates for Sudanese in general that they commemorate. Most important is May 16, which commemorates the day in 1983 when the Sudanese took arms against the government for being mistreated. On this date, Sudanese "sit together in memory of brothers, sisters, parents lost...to remember them and our country." Although we live in the US, we're still Sudanese who think about our people and our country," Magot said. In addition, they celebrate Christian holidays.

"Our culture is who we are," Manguak said. "What you know as a child remains with you your whole life. What you learn as an adult you may forget."



# East African Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with the Somali and Sudanese communities. Additional resources are available at [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com).

## REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

### Catholic Social Services

680 West Peachtree St.  
Atlanta, GA 30308  
404-881-6571  
[www.cssatlanta.com](http://www.cssatlanta.com)  
Note: Contact main office for services and outreach center locations

### International Rescue Committee

Kensington Office Park  
4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 201-C  
Decatur, GA 30032  
[www.theirc.org/atlanta](http://www.theirc.org/atlanta)  
404-292-7731

### Jewish Family & Career Services

4549 Chamblee-Dunwoody Road  
Atlanta, GA 30338  
770-677-9300  
Email: [info@jfccs-atlanta.org](mailto:info@jfccs-atlanta.org)  
[www.jfccs-atlanta.org](http://www.jfccs-atlanta.org)

### Lutheran Services of Georgia

1330 West Peachtree Street  
Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30309  
404-875-0201  
[www.lsga.org](http://www.lsga.org)

### Refugee Family Services

5561-H Memorial Drive  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
Contact: Allen Shaklan, Exec. Director  
Email: [ashaklan@refugeefamilyservices.org](mailto:ashaklan@refugeefamilyservices.org)  
404-299-6717 (phone) 404-299-6218 (fax)  
[www.refugeefamilyservices.org](http://www.refugeefamilyservices.org)

### Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta (RRISA)

4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 205D  
Decatur, GA 30032  
404-622-2235  
[www.rrisa.org](http://www.rrisa.org)  
Email: [info@rrisa.org](mailto:info@rrisa.org)

### Bridging the Gap Project, Inc.

77 Forsyth Street SW, Suite 100  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
404-581-0044  
[www.btgonline.org](http://www.btgonline.org)

### World Relief Atlanta

655 Village Square Drive  
Stone Mountain, GA 30083  
Contact: Kim Kimbrell, Community Relations/Volunteer Coordinator  
404-294-4352, ext. 231  
Email: [kkimbrell@wr.org](mailto:kkimbrell@wr.org)  
[kkimbrell@wr.org](mailto:kkimbrell@wr.org)

## ASSOCIATIONS

### Georgia Somali Community

3662 Market Street, Suite 213  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
Contact: Ali Omar, Executive Director  
404-292-1113  
Email: [gsc8563@bellsouth.net](mailto:gsc8563@bellsouth.net)

### Multicultural Center for Wellness, Peace and Development, Inc.

5668 Cedar Croft Lane  
Lithonia, GA 30058  
Contact: Abdirahim Haji, Exec. Director  
678-768-0102  
Email: [safow313@yahoo.com](mailto:safow313@yahoo.com)

### Somali Bantu Community Organization

964 N. Indian Creek Drive, Suite A-2  
P.O. Box 411  
Clarkston, GA 30021  
404-216.1606 (phone)  
404-508.0226 (fax)  
Contact: Abdullahi Abdullahi, Exec. Director  
Email: [abdullahi5@hotmail.com](mailto:abdullahi5@hotmail.com)  
[www.somalibantu.com](http://www.somalibantu.com)

### Somali Brava and Hinterland Community Association of Atlanta

4515 Parkview Walk Drive  
Lilburn, GA 30047  
Contact: Dr. Mustafa Noor, Vice President  
678-357-1066 (phone)  
404-298-9832 (fax)  
Email: [mnoor@lsga.org](mailto:mnoor@lsga.org)  
[www.lsga.org](http://www.lsga.org)

### The Lost Boys of Sudan

International Rescue Committee  
Kensington Office Park  
4151 Memorial Drive, Suite 201C  
Atlanta, GA 30032  
404-292-7731

### United Somali Community of Georgia

1416 Grayton Woods Drive  
Tucker, GA 30084  
770-912-9802  
Email: [abdialiabdi@hotmail.com](mailto:abdialiabdi@hotmail.com)

## EDUCATION

### Open Campus High School

2415-A North Druid Hill Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-3298  
Contact: Lettie Love  
770-593-1006

## MEDIA

### Qaran Radio

Email: [imabukar@yahoo.com](mailto:imabukar@yahoo.com);  
[mhasson2@spsu.edu](mailto:mhasson2@spsu.edu);  
[www.qaranradio.com](http://www.qaranradio.com)

## RELIGIOUS

### Majid Al-Muminun

1127 Hank Aaron Drive, SW  
Atlanta, GA 30315  
404-586-9562

## Contact:

E-mail: [globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com](mailto:globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com)

Order printed copies from the ARC Information Center at 404-463-3102 or download free from the ARC website at [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com)

Atlanta Regional Commission • 40 Courtland St., NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.463.3100 • [www.atlantaregional.com](http://www.atlantaregional.com)

Charles Krautler, Executive Director

Darlene Daly, Project Coordinator

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 62 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of regionwide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • [www.atlcf.org](http://www.atlcf.org)

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