

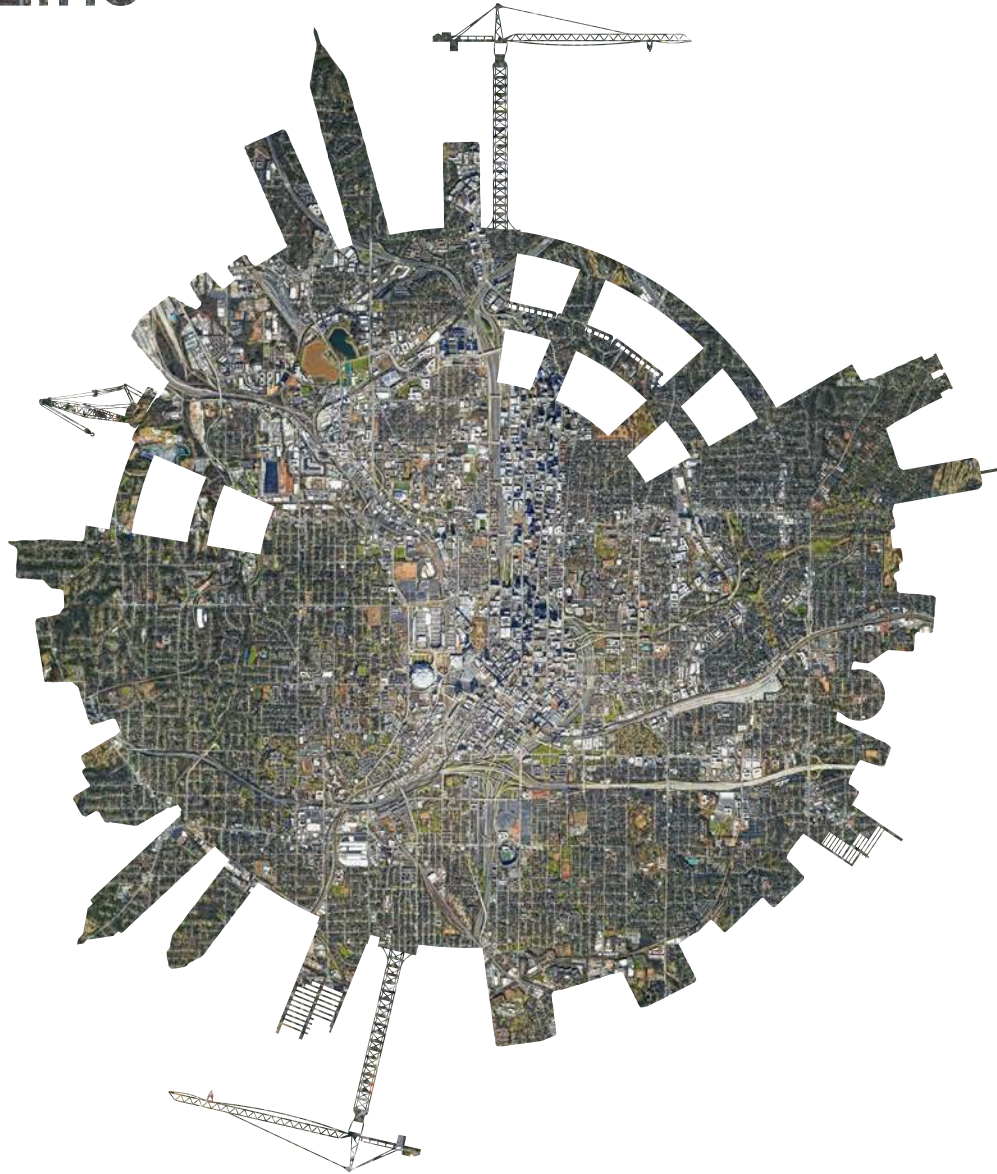


# Magazine

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How the pandemic has affected the city's homeless population

**Solving Sprawl** 10  
How we got here and how to fix the city's urban sprawl problem

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Federal COVID relief packages set precedent for school funding



# Changing City

How Atlanta is changing and adapting

# 3484 Magazine

SPRING 2021



@3484mag

## What is 3484?

3484 Magazine is a news magazine focusing primarily on politics and social issues in the Atlanta area. We dive deeply into policies in Atlanta and Georgia to investigate how they impact Georgia Tech students.

34° N, 84° W are the geographic coordinates of the City of Atlanta, rounded. We picked this name because of our focus on the Atlanta area.

When we're not working on publishing a magazine we cover events, like presidential debates and protests, on our social media accounts, @3484mag.

In the future, we will continue to cover issues that impact Atlanta and Tech students. You can expect to see a lot more on elections, healthcare, climate policy, and city planning, as we continue to explore ways policy shapes Georgia Tech students' lives.

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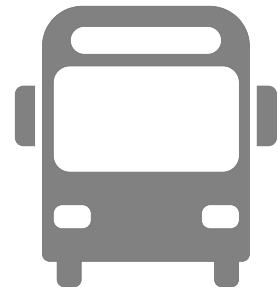
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# Transit Upgrades

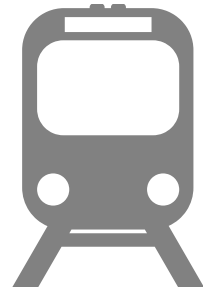
## A look at MARTA's plan for the future

SAM BASKIN, creative director



### Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit is not a typical bus service, operating similarly to rail transit. BRT is high speed, has dedicated right-of-way during peak periods, defined stations and pre-board ticketing.



### Light Rail Transit

Light rail operates on existing roadways in shared or exclusive right-of-way. It has defined stations and usually has one or two-car trains. LRT vehicles are also known as streetcars or trams.



### System Upgrades

In addition to improved bus and rail service, MARTA will be upgrading and implementing other features throughout its transit network.

#### North Ave BRT Completed by 2025

Bus rapid transit line along DL Hollowell Parkway and North Ave. The line will run from Bankhead Station to the Northeast Beltline.

1

#### Clifton Corridor Designed by 2025

A new light rail line will connect Lindbergh station to North Druid Hills. This will connect locations such as Emory University, the CDC and Clairmont Road to MARTA's rail network.

4

#### Station Upgrades Construction by 2025

Stations throughout the rail system will be improved. The plan specifically mentions access, wayfinding, operational and aesthetic upgrades.

7

#### Capitol Ave BRT Completed by 2025

Bus rapid transit line connecting the Southeast Beltline to downtown, running along Capitol Ave. This line is expected to be on the first completed in the project.

2

#### Beltline Rail Designed by 2025

A new light rail line along the eastside Beltline, connecting Ponce City Market to Lindbergh Center. Another line on the Southwest Beltline would run from Oakland City Station to Westview Drive near I-20.

5

#### Transit Hubs Unknown

Several new transit centers will serve as park and ride hubs for bus services. One will be at Greenbriar Pkwy and another will be on Moores Mill Rd.

8

#### Northside Dr BRT Unknown

Line running along Northside Dr from Atlanta Metropolitan State College to a new bus hub at I-75. This line would likely be one of the later projects.

3

#### Streetcar Extensions Construction by 2025

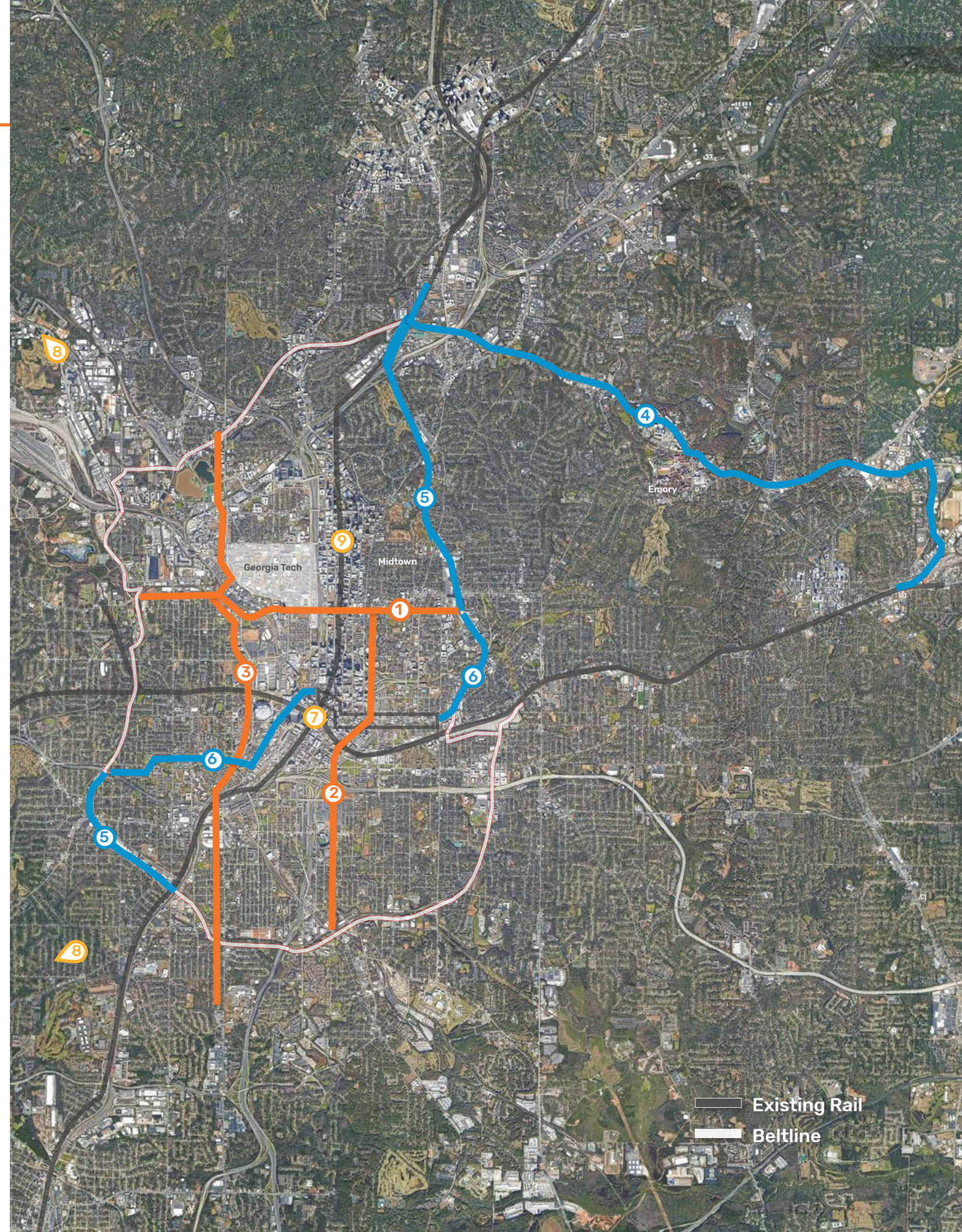
Downtown Atlanta already has some existing light rail, but MARTA plans to extend rail service, connecting to the Eastside and Southwest Beltline trails.

6

#### Arterial Rapid Transit Completed by 2025

Several arterial rapid transit bus routes will be opened across the city. ART is different from a standard bus line, as it has more frequent service, signal priority and enhanced stops.

9



# Homeless Amidst COVID

## How the pandemic affects Atlanta's homeless population

SARAH KALLIS, editor-in-chief

At least 3,200 people in Atlanta are homeless as of 2020, according to the Midtown Alliance. The number has increased since 2018, and the "Point in Time" counted has reported more people sleeping outside than previous years as well.

The official homeless count was taken in January of 2020, more than a month before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Another count has not been released yet, so it is unclear if homelessness has increased in Atlanta since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. But, it is clear that the pandemic has made homeless people's everyday lives much harder through isolation and lack of resources.

Daniel Troppy, a photographer and homelessness advocate has documented and aided the homeless population for several years. One of the biggest day-to-day struggles he sees the homeless population face is stigma.

"It really does go back to that stereotypical thing where people think that you're homeless because you either had a drug problem or an alcohol problem or both. Therefore you're not deemed respectable because of that and I think that kind of preconceived notion is the root of a lot of evil unfortunately," he said.

AddictionCenter.com says that about 38% of homeless people in the United States are alcohol-dependent, and about 26% of homeless people are dependent on some other substance. Homeless people with addiction often face stigma around addiction as well as being homeless, and Addiction Center mentions that addiction is sometimes the result of the stress of chronic homelessness.

As Troppy pointed out, not all people who are homeless are addicted to substances. "That is something that I really tried to blow up. Because that misconception and those notions are, in my opinion, they're like, the 19th century definition of a homeless person. They're not the 21st century, especially going through a pandemic, to a different environment today," he said.

Since the start of the pandemic, Troppy said he has seen many people who are college educated and employed homeless.

"I always ask people, what would you need? If you suddenly became homeless? And it's a shocking question, because you really have to go there in your head. It takes people from their comfort zone and puts them in an area of, oh, wow, okay, well, if I were homeless, I would need this. And it makes you think about it, because it could happen to any one of us," he said.

Another obstacle that homeless people in Atlanta tend to bump up against is finding a place to sleep. Troppy said he has seen homeless people displaced by anti-homeless architecture near highways, specifically under overpasses on I-20.



Photo by Daniel Troppy

"People were camping out underneath the freeway because it gave them shelter from the rain. Directly underneath the freeway now are big chunks of rock. You cannot pitch your tent there. They deliberately put the rocks directly underneath the freeways, which prevented people from seeking shelter," he said.

Troppy also mentioned that it is difficult for homeless people to stay in shelters as well. Atlanta has a higher demand for beds than its shelters can meet, leaving many people out on the streets. Troppy recalls one example of a man who needed to get into a shelter but was unable to.

"The other day I was helping a man who I would imagine he was probably in his 70s, homeless people age a little faster than sheltered people because they're exposed to rougher elements, so this man could have been 50 for all I know but he looked really old and feeble. He had been robbed, and they took his backpack that had all of his medicine. He apparently suffers from seizures and they took all of his medication, they stole his wheelchair, and he needs shelter... I call eight different shelters and organizations and out of the eight I was able to talk to three live people on the phone that all said the same thing we're sorry but we're full, and the other five messages that we got were voice messages saying you know we're full but you know call us back you

know in a couple of days. We don't really have the adequate room space in Atlanta. No matter how many shelters we have in the city, we do not have enough of them ...

## You really have to jump through so many different hoops to get into a shelter today,"

he said.

Robbery is another common obstacle that homeless people face. Troppy's non-profit often hands out tents, sleeping bags, and backpacks to homeless people in Atlanta. He says that he has had several people come to him to replace these stolen items.

"It's very common. A woman that I always check on downtown, usually, she'd tie her tent down. But when she didn't tie down, when she went to the shelter to take a shower or whatever, she would come back. Nine out of 10 times and her tents gone. Her possessions gone," he said.

Homeless people often find that reporting stolen items to the police does not help, according to Troppy.

"The cops are not going to really pay that much attention or listen to them" he said.

Police can often be a source of distress for homeless people in Atlanta, according to Troppy. Atlanta Police Department's community policing programs have been accused by homelessness advocates of targeting homeless people. Atlanta Police officials did not respond to 3484 Magazine's request for a comment.

"It's kind of brutal the way they're treated by the police, picking up their possessions, throwing them in the dumpster, then arresting people for such petty kind of crimes like jaywalking. Really, everybody jaywalks especially when you're downtown. Can you imagine if they were to do that to the white collar people? I don't see that happening for some odd reason," he said. Troppy has assisted numerous homeless people who have been arrested for jaywalking in Atlanta. Other minor crimes homeless people are frequently arrested for include public sleeping, loitering, and panhandling.

According to Troppy, Atlanta officials often tell



"Right after Tonya told me her case worker had a job interview lined up for her and that she needed an interview outfit, I got busy. I drove directly to @salvationarmy and found her an outfit (2 blouses + 1 pant). I returned to the women's day shelter immediately to give Tonya her interview outfit. She pulled out the tops & pant from the bag reached over, grabbed me and gave me one good bear hug. I told her "everyone is cheering for you to get this job". We talked for a few minutes and I told her I would come back soon to hear how the job interview went. The following week I drove up to the day shelter and saw Tonya & Beverly. I asked her how the interview went and she said "it didn't happen". Seeing the disappointment in their eyes, the loss for words they both had - I told them that I was sorry but please do not give up. I told Tonya to keep asking her case worker to get her another job interview. The important thing is not to give up, fight hard and hold tight. This was back in August 2019 and I have not seen them since. I have no idea where they both are, if they are still homeless or how Beverly's health is..... I know nothing but sure wished I did. I took this portrait using 35mm black n white film and I printed out this silver gelatin print inside the darkroom. This is an actual print photograph - not a digital one."

Photo by Daniel Troppy

homeless people to move their belongings from public areas with short notice. Officials will take their belongings if the orders are not obeyed. He recalls several instances of this interaction happening near the Atlanta Mission day shelter

**"They deliberately put the rocks directly underneath the freeways, which prevented people from seeking shelter."**

downtown.

"They closed that shelter closed at three o'clock in the afternoon, the doors were closed, and the women had to leave. Well, so as you would imagine, there were, I don't know, 20, 30 tents all lined up along the outside of the building. Filled with women, right? So they felt comfortable there, they were right there in front of the day shelter, and the city would come in. It'd be a cop car, there would be a big dump truck. And they would announce that in five minutes, everything's going. Well, if you're not your tent, everything you had in your tent was gone. Everything. And that happened. And I had kept having to replace these tents. Because they were taken by the city," Troppy said.

Troppy has also seen homeless people displaced when Presidents come to Atlanta. "When Presidents are driving through cities, and they do a sweep before that route before they're on that route because they don't want them to see them is a little on the sad, very sad, tragic side. Because

they, they're altering reality," he said.

When homeless people are arrested, they face an uphill battle with legal proceedings, as they don't have a permanent address. Often, homeless people do not have a driver's license or form of identification as well.

"The longer you become chronic homeless the longer you let things lapse, you know 'oh my id needs to be renewed, well I can't get there

so it's going to go oh this.' It's just chronic homelessness does that to people, so the longer you experience homelessness, the more chances are that you don't have a valid ID," he said.

Legal fees and bail are also problems for homeless people. Troppy used to visit a homeless couple outside of a church, and the woman was arrested and spent two months in jail.

"I went over and I would check on him. And we would use my phone to call the jail downtown and find the status of her. And she had to come up with I think it was like a \$1,300 bail, but she didn't have any money," he said.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, homeless people have faced a multitude of new problems on top of their already high-stress life.

WABE reported in April 2020 that the City of Atlanta had tested more than 2,000 people living in homeless shelters. But, tests are more difficult to access for people sleeping on the streets.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that a COVID-19 outbreak occurred in the Trinity Community Ministries homeless shelter in September 2020.

Aside from concerns about getting sick, many homeless people have also faced increasing difficulty in finding food.

“I went downtown in March of last year, and I witnessed people being really hungry because nothing was open, there was nobody downtown... [they] relied on the workers from the office buildings to give you a nickel or a quarter or \$1, and they're gone. The convenience stores were closed, the food kitchens a lot of them are closed and are still closed. I really witnessed starvation in my own country, my own city, Troppy said. He began handing out meals to homeless people shortly after.

Loneliness is a major issue among homeless people that is often overlooked, according to Troppy.

“If people weren't coming around and the sidewalks are not bustling with people anymore you're still there because you're homeless you have no one to talk to, you can slip into depression easily. That's the sad thing is that people have no idea the hunger that anyone in homelessness has experienced. I think a lot of people just don't stop and think about that. I think that's very important you know babies die if they're not held and touched humans you know there is a huge group of people on the planet today that have not been hugged in so long and they crave that and they fall into depression,” he said.

**“Another fix for the homelessness problem is a higher minimum wage, according to Troppy. He recalls a time when he met a woman working a full time job who was still homeless.”**

According to Harvard health, about a quarter to a third of all homeless people in the U.S. are struggling with a mental illness. The most common mental illnesses in homeless people are schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression.

One woman opened up to Troppy about the impacts loneliness from the pandemic had on her. “She told me on many occasions how wonderful it was for me to sit down with her

8 Spring 2021

and have a conversation because she missed interaction with people and she became somewhat depressed because of that. I think depression in that community really hits hard because you're already isolated from the world, but when you take a pandemic when you throw that into the equation you're even more isolated,” he said.

Luckily, according to Troppy there is an easy solution to the loneliness pandemic among the homeless population: talking to homeless people.

“There's millions of people out there that I bet long for a hug and just an ear to listen to their story. Give them five minutes of your time and listen to their story. I think that's that's the most important thing,” he said.

He also suggests making supply bags to keep in the car with common necessities, like toothbrushes, deodorant, energy bars, washcloths, and hand sanitizer.

Troppy is passionate about improving the lives of homeless people in Atlanta. He started a non-profit called Y.I.M.B.Y. (Yes In My Backyard) Georgia to distribute supplies and high-quality meals to Atlanta's homeless population.

“I want these people to have a good meal like they're going to a restaurant. If I had it my way and if I could hook up with all the four star restaurants and five star restaurants I would love for them to like create these gourmet meals for us and serve the people with a good healthy meal. I don't want to feed them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches because that's what everybody does and they get so bored with it. Wouldn't you be bored with that if you were homeless and that's all that came around with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?” Troppy said. His meals are made with organic produce and sustainable packaging. A mask is also included with meals.

Aside from just sustenance, Troppy's meal delivery service provides homeless people with a sense of routine and normalcy. He delivers meals about three times per week.

“I can't tell you how many times you see the gleam in their eye, you see their smile, you see them, you know, kind of pep up a little bit. And that's so important,” he says about the feeling when he first drives up to the person he is serving.

However, Troppy is adamant that meal and supply delivery is not the ultimate solution to Atlanta's homelessness problem.

“It's a band aid, it's not the cure all. If I could cure this, I would hand everyone a key to a tiny home or apartment, because that's what everybody needs. Everybody needs a roof over their head,” he said.

Another fix for the homelessness problem is a higher minimum wage, according to Troppy. He recalls a time when he met a woman working a full time job who was still homeless.

“I looked at her and I said 'are you homeless' and she said 'yeah, my daughter and I moved here and we don't enough money. We live in a shelter.' She is a driver delivering packages. Until we do two things, really pay people a literal living wage and have affordable housing, this problem will never go away. Even \$15 is not true living wage, not today.” He continued, “When I was

a kid, if my mom happened to be single she had two children, my mom could have gotten the job and kept the house and kept the car and paid the insurance and paid the food and have a little money left over at the end of the month. You can't do that today right now. Now people with two kids have to have several jobs. In my opinion, it's just corporate greed. They're not paying their employees the true living wage. People scream about, oh if we pay the workers at McDonald's more that means our hamburgers are going to go up 15 cents or 20 cents. That's just wrong.”

Troppy would also like to see more city officials have compassion and experience with homelessness. He wants more empathy training for police and city officials, and would like to see local politicians volunteer more.

**“However, Troppy is adamant that meal and supply delivery is not the ultimate solution to Atlanta's homelessness problem.”**

“I think that the next person that is running for city council or judge or, police chief, or mayor or whatever, every single person, that the candidate should be made to ride with me, or ride with any other homeless nonprofit, and see firsthand what it's all about. And not just one time, but several times. Wouldn't that be nice if we elected people who actually understood the problem and wanted to know You know, experienced that firsthand. Wouldn't that be really remarkable that if those were the people we elected to decision making?” he said.

Troppy's non-profit has several goals that it would like to accomplish, alongside meal and supply deliveries.

First, he would like to partner with local farms and chefs to deliver high-quality, healthy meals for free to homeless people.

He would also like to create a shower and laundry truck to provide those services for free.

“How do you pull yourself up when you haven't shaved or showered and your clothes are dirty to go even to look for a job?” he said.

Troppy would also like to create a thrift store to provide clothes to those transitioning out of homelessness, as well as social services.

“Once anyone who's homelessness comes in, we provide them with whatever they need. Clothes, whatever they need and then they go back to visit social services and dental care, they get whatever they need, but I want to team up with people so that they have - access to those social services,” he said, suggesting that a collaboration with Emory or Georgia State could help him with this goal.

His final goal is to team up with local churches

and build a couple of tiny homes on church grounds. The homes would serve as temporary housing to help people transition out of homelessness.

**“How do you pull yourself up when you haven't shaved or showered and your clothes are dirty to go even to look for a job?”**

He said it helps when someone “[has] a job but [doesn't] have enough money to get an apartment just yet, because like every major city it's unattainable. We're really lacking affordable housing in the city, we are lacking in affordable housing all across the country. But, if you had a tiny home that were on the grounds of the church and were monitored, we can help these people springboard from that tiny home, get them jobs, get them to save, - allow them to get phased up and have their downpayment and rent for a couple of months and then transition them out from the tiny home community. You know, just use it as a stepping stone,” he said.

Despite major ideas to help with homelessness, Troppy didn't always plan on running a non-profit. He found his passion for helping homeless people through photography.

“I actually use 35 millimeter black and white film, I go into the darkroom, I develop the rolls of film, and then I go into the darkroom and print the negatives, you know, so it's old school, it's not digital. And I started taking people's portraits and I always carry a notebook with me. So I could write down different information on people that I was interviewing and talking to, just to get a little bit of their story. And finally, after so long for doing that, I kind of shared it on my Facebook page. And you know, what's funny is that the next day after I posted my very first black and white photograph with a little bit of their stories, I received a donation from PayPal.”

Troppy said he continued to take photographs of Atlanta's homeless population, and receive donations which he used to buy supplies for homeless people. Then, Y.I.M.B.Y. was born.

Troppy continues to post photos on his Instagram and Facebook, and plans to continue to bring hope to homeless people in Atlanta. He said, “It's what is around the corner, that I always hold on for hope. And I tell that to people, you know, man, you never know what's going to happen. You might just win the lottery and become so rich that you're going to be the donor for us. And they laugh, but it could happen, right? You know, anything could happen, everything is possible. Everything is possible.”

## ATL Homelessness Statistics

# 3,200

Adults in Atlanta have been identified as homeless

# +5%

Increase in homeless counted in Atlanta since 2018

# 2:3

Homeless adults in Atlanta with a serious mental illness or substance abuse issue

# 1:10

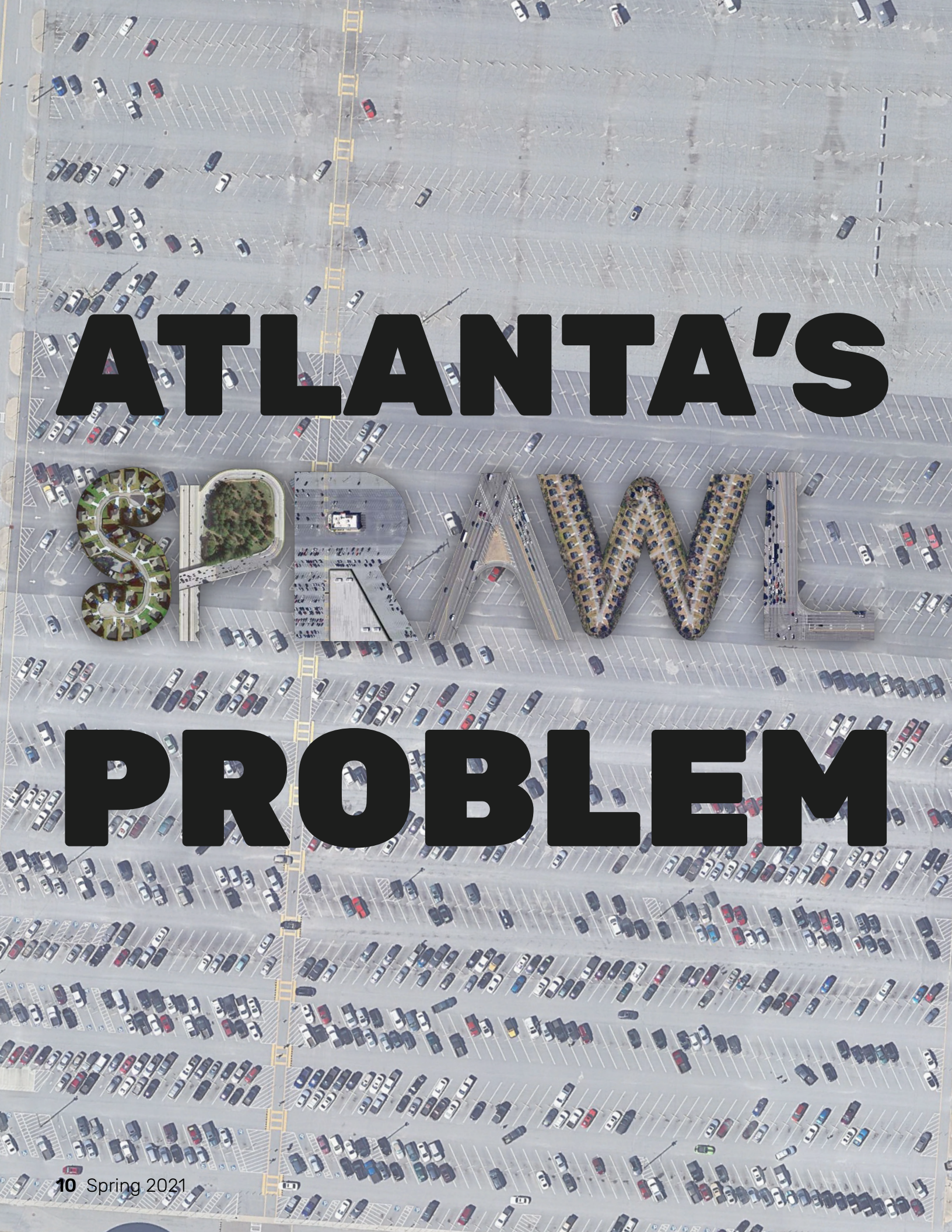
Homeless people in Atlanta are military veterans or survivors of domestic abuse

# -25%

Decrease in homeless counted since 2015

Data from the Midtown Alliance

Spring 2021 9



# ATLANTA'S

# SPRAWL

# PROBLEM

## Solving Sprawl



### Solving Atlanta's Car Dependency Problem

SAM BASKIN, creative director

Atlanta is a poster child for urban sprawl. In fact, it's number one on the list of greatest sprawl for any large metropolitan area in the country, according to a 2014 study by Smart Growth America. Atlanta's suburban population vastly outnumbers its urban core. Less than 500,000 people live in the City of Atlanta, while over 5.5 million people live in the surrounding metro area as of 2019. But how did Atlanta get to this point?

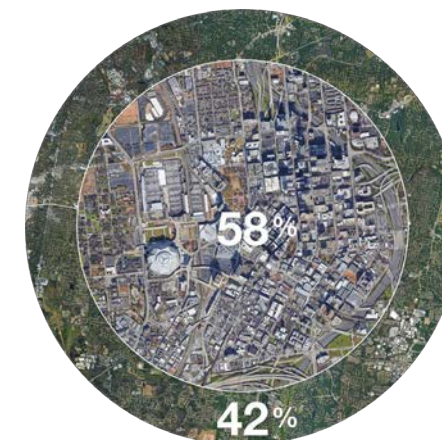
Before World War II, Atlanta was much less suburban. The city had walkable streets and a large streetcar network. Atlanta's streetcar and bus network connected the city, creating a walkable environment. The streetcar network even had lines running to Marietta, Stone Mountain, and Brookhaven. However, more people began to move to the suburbs after World War II, which was made easier by new interstates and highways.

“Atlanta is the number one most sprawling metropolitan area in the country”

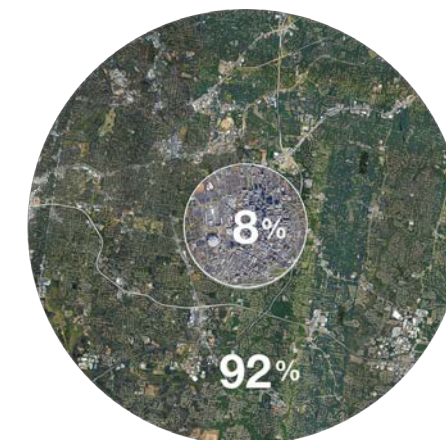
Ellen Dunham-Jones is the director of Georgia Tech's Masters in Urban Design and the author of *Retrofitting Suburbia: Urban Design Solutions for Redesigning Suburbs*. She discusses the start of sprawl, saying, “Early on, suburbanization starts in a massive way right after World War II, and then accelerated, certainly for Atlanta, with white flight in the 60s and 70s.” White flight describes the migration of many white residents from newly desegregated cities to more racially homogenous suburbs.

The 1952 “Up Ahead” plan was created by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, an early urban planning organization in Atlanta. The document outlined plans to suburbanize Atlanta. The commission expected many benefits of increasing suburbs, writing, “These trends point to a future Metropolitan Atlanta of great comfort, beauty and efficiency. That is, we can have such an area if we set out to get it. The future pattern can include 30 or more large ‘communities’ separated by free-flowing

### Share of metro population in Atlanta vs. the suburbs



1940  
pop 500,000



2019  
pop 6 Million

arterial highways. ... Each community and neighborhood can have an independence of its own—combining the benefits of small-town living with the advantages offered by a great metropolis. Population density can be low.” Planners envisioned a balanced city, offering a rural experience that was still near the opportunities of a city. Darin Givens, founder of the urbanism advocacy group ThreadATL, states, “The original design in the ... plan did call for putting some [commercial development] somewhat close to these sprawling areas of detached homes on cul-de-sacs, but that did not happen.”

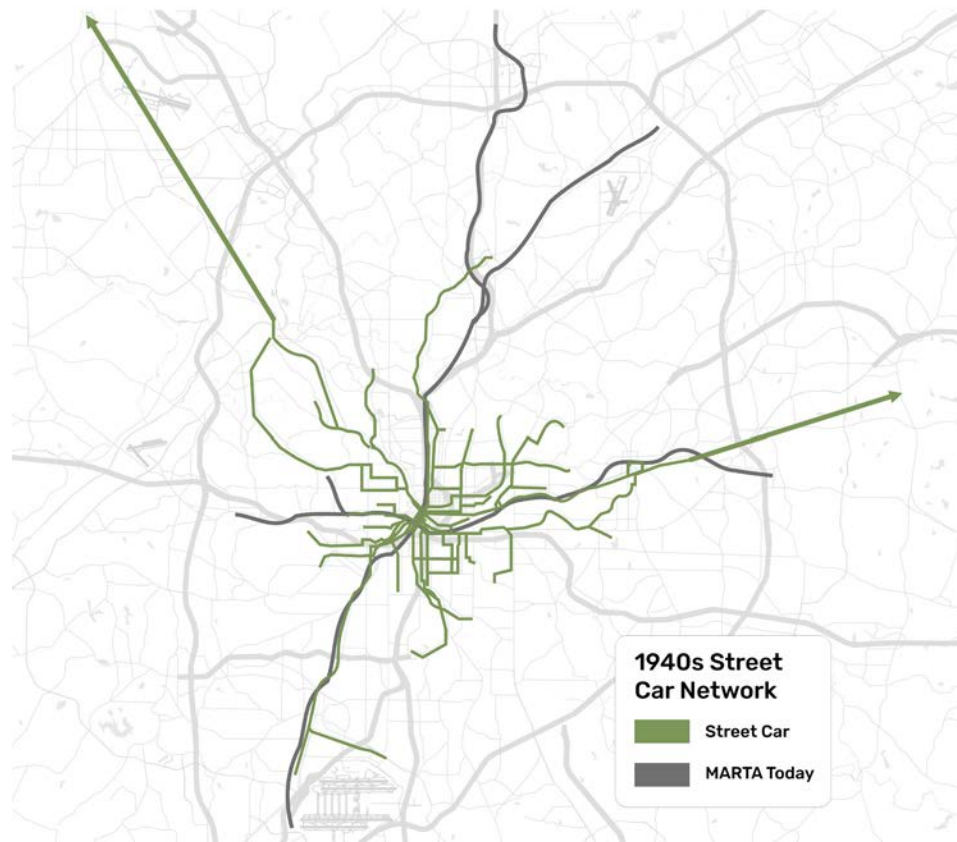
Another surprising reason for sprawl is nuclear war. The “Up Ahead” plan states, “Our target value to a potential enemy— and our chances of survival if we do get bombed - can depend on how well we scatter our plants and facilities. Defense policy and urban trends point in the same direction - outward.” The plan argued that sprawled cities would be more difficult for enemies to bomb, as key industrial sites would not be clustered together.

Across the country, suburbs began to grow. However, compared to other American cities, Atlanta's sprawl was amplified. According to Givens, Atlanta's sprawl increased due to a lack of geographic boundaries and the city's economy. Atlanta has no ocean or severe mountain ranges that would limit development.

Additionally, Givens states, “Atlanta did not experience the recession of the 1970s, like a lot of other cities did. We ended up having a lot of jobs here that other cities didn't have and we also completed interstate 75. And that combination of the economy here being a little better than it was in other cities, together with the completion of Interstate 75 really amped up sprawl - it just made for type economic infrastructure and physical infrastructure that helped propel that kind of car-based sprawl in the region.” One of Atlanta's biggest periods of growth was during a time of interstates and suburbanization.

“Before World War II, Atlanta was much less suburban. The city had walkable streets and a large streetcar network.”

This timeline explains why Atlanta has a more sprawled pattern when compared to other large cities, which grew during a time when urban spaces were designed to be more walkable.



Map of Atlanta's former street car network in the 1940s

As Atlanta continued to sprawl, its urban core began to wither. Wealth moved from the city to the suburbs. Dunham-Jones describes suburbanization as “a story of migration of wealth.”

**“As Atlanta continued to sprawl, its urban core began to wither. Wealth moved from the city to the suburbs.”**

Not only did wealth go out of the urban core, it specifically tended to go north. Dunham-Jones continues, saying, “It’s not the only divide between rich and poor, but it’s a predominant divide both racially and in class for metro Atlanta.”

The urban core of Atlanta was declining and was pushed to become more friendly for suburbanites coming into town for work. Dunham-Jones states that Atlanta “was still basically feeling that the only way the city could compete with

the suburbs was to become more and more suburban. ... The streets are designed to help suburbanites drive in, fly down the street and get into a parking deck to go to work.” Downtown Atlanta is filled with one-way streets and parking decks that aim to serve downtown office workers commuting from the suburbs. Even MARTA’s rail system is designed to help suburban workers get to jobs downtown.

The effects of urban sprawl have a large negative impact on a city. The largest problems are economic mobility, climate change, public health, and affordability.

According to a 2014 study conducted by researchers at UC Berkeley, an average suburban household produces up to four times as many carbon emissions as an average urban household. Suburbanization has increased the distance that Americans drive, which leads to more carbon emissions. From a public health standpoint, suburban lifestyles are linked to sedentary lifestyles, which can lead to obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Additionally, urban sprawl tends to create car-centric cities. It becomes a necessity for almost every citizen to own a car, which isn’t always affordable. Car-centric cities are especially harmful for poor people, as finding work becomes significantly harder without a car, which can contribute to income inequality. Atlanta is not only number one in urban sprawl, but also has the highest levels of inequality in any

American city according to “Atlanta: Scarcity and Abundance”.

It is not only an affordability problem in terms of owning a car. Sprawl is also costly to taxpayers. Suburban infrastructure is starting to require serious maintenance. Dunham-Jones describes this issue, stating, “We’re seeing a lot more maintenance issues with infrastructure that a lot of cities really can’t afford anymore. Suddenly, you’ve got all these miles of road and pipe and wire that needs maintenance after about fifty to sixty years.”

However, there are some benefits of suburbanization and urban sprawl. For example, it provides access to a middle-class lifestyle, and has also resulted in many people making money off of the increased accrued value of suburban homes. However, these benefits were not shared for all residents. Dunham-Jones states, “The benefits of sprawl and suburbia in general, tend to apply to private individuals - often really quite well, but the negatives of sprawl tend to be borne by the larger public.”

**“An average suburban household produces up to four times as much carbon emissions as an average urban household”**

However, recently that trend has started to change. Atlanta’s urban core has started to regain population. Dunham-Jones describes this shift by saying, “The tide definitely turned to where suddenly the city became the model instead of the city trying to become more suburban.” Suburbs began to try to include urban design elements such as walkable downtowns and new multi-use paths.

Even though there has been a shift towards urbanization, sprawl is still rampant in the Atlanta area. According to Givens, solving urban sprawl starts with creating good examples of urbanism in suburban areas which can then be used to gain public support. After that, zoning ordinances can be put in place that allow for more significant change. Givens states, “Most of the region is zoned for the kind of classic sprawl that we know of: detached houses on cul-de-sacs and no businesses next to them. You would have to do a major rezoning effort in counties to be able to even build something wonderful and

more walkable and compact.”

So far, the metro area does have several examples of urbanization or suburban retrofitting. One common way to create urbanism is to focus on a town’s downtown. Duluth, GA is an example of a suburban downtown that was revitalized. As the Gwinnett Place Mall started to die, the city created a new amphitheater and new shops and restaurants opened. Overall, the city created more reasons to be downtown interacting with the community. Other suburban downtowns that have had similar redevelopments throughout the metro area include Powder Springs, Sandy Springs, and Woodstock.

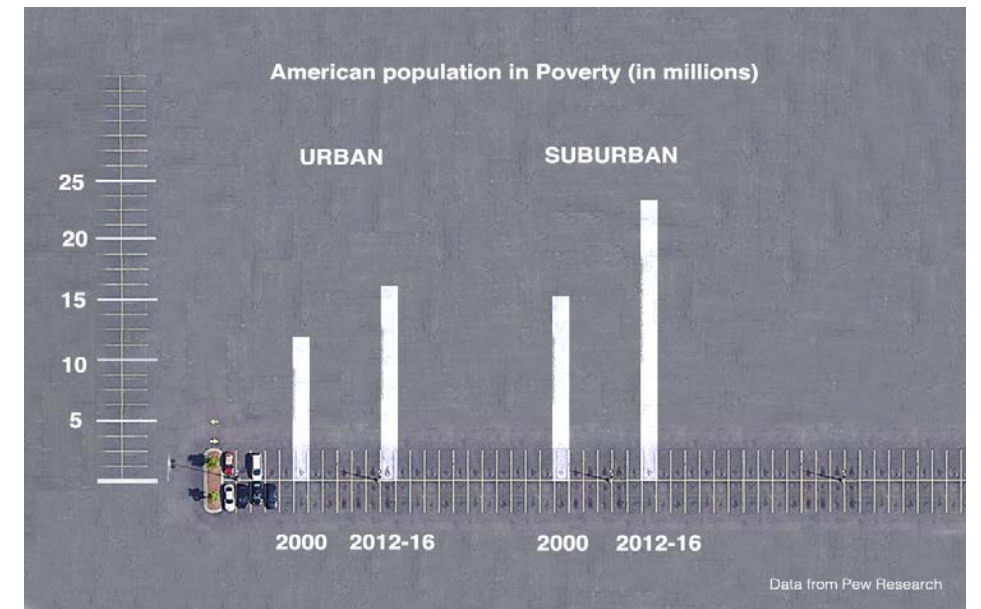
Even expansive office parks can be retrofitted. One example is Peachtree Corners, a planned community in Gwinnett county which contained a large office park with expansive parking lots and winding roads. In order to attract younger employees to the office park, Peachtree Corners became more urban. They created a new downtown area, new apartments, as well as multi-use trails which allowed employees to bike to work, reducing auto dependency.

A mall on Buford Highway was converted to Plaza Fiesta, which has become a community center for the Latino community. A former department store was converted to a 140-stall market inspired by Mexican mercados.

**“The policies ‘target structures of racism and discrimination that have limited housing affordability and exacerbated inequality in Atlanta.’”**

Additionally, it serves as a community gathering spot, with the parking lot hosting rallies to oppose anti-immigration bills proposed in Georgia.

Currently, there is an effort in the city of Atlanta to rewrite the city’s zoning code, putting an end to exclusionary zoning. Exclusionary zoning causes developers to only be able to create single family houses throughout much of the city. Mayor Bottoms issued a press release in December 2020 announcing an initiative to change zoning laws in the city. Bottoms states, “For too long, housing policies have excluded those who are most vulnerable, particularly



Suburban poverty is growing faster than urban poverty

communities of color. We are taking bold actions to reverse these policies and close the homeownership gap and rental affordability for legacy residents of Atlanta.”

The proposed policies address Atlanta’s long history of racist and discriminatory systems that increase inequality in the city. Mayor Bottoms states that the policies “target structures of racism and discrimination that have limited housing affordability and exacerbated inequality in Atlanta.”

According to the Atlanta City Design Housing Initiative’s website, “The plan calls for bold zoning reform to allow more affordable housing types and stronger neighborhoods to address issues of inequality exacerbated by the City’s zoning code.” While the city of Atlanta is making some progress, the proposed solutions do not apply to suburbs outside of city boundaries.

It is important to note that while a shift in urbanism does have benefits, suburbs are growing poorer across the nation. Increasing poverty means that cars are becoming more difficult to afford in the suburbs, and with urban housing prices skyrocketing in Atlanta, it is becoming difficult for low-income citizens in Atlanta to live in a walkable community or a community well-served by transit.

In an interview on displacement, Dr. Calinda Lee, Head of Programs and Exhibitions at the Center for Civil and Human Rights, states, “Families are getting displaced outside of the central city and they tend to get displaced south if [they] don’t have money.” She goes on to describe southern suburban areas, stating, “Those are areas where you have less access to public transportation and there are fewer jobs centered there so you don’t have what we call edge cities. If you go north to Alpharetta or Sandy Springs

or Norcross you have these edge center nodes ... where there’s actually quite a lot of commerce happening. If you can get a job there you can not only move, but also at least have relatively easy access to a lot of work options. But if you get displaced south where the rental costs are cheaper, then you also are farther removed from work and you’re also farther removed from public transportation to get to a job.” Poverty mixes very poorly with the suburbs, a place where being able to afford a car is very important.

It’s important to note that many of the mentioned suburban retrofitting solutions are primarily in wealthier northern suburbs. Less wealthy suburbs are in even greater need of urbanization projects to reduce car-dependence. Givens states, “It’s an environment that was very intentionally built at a car scale, that is hostile to walking, and that is hostile to transit. - There’s economic danger of people just not being able to access jobs if they can’t afford a car, if they’re trapped in these suburban places, and it’s a very serious problem.

“That’s one of the reasons why it is so important to think in terms of rewriting zoning codes and getting people on board with infill developments that are more focused on walking and transit, she adds.” In order to ensure that more people do not get trapped in a cycle of poverty, communities can shift away from car-dependence. By gaining public support through smaller examples of urbanism, zoning codes can be rewritten to promote greater change throughout Atlanta’s suburbs.

# QAnon & Social Media

## How Social Media Facilitated the Spread of QAnon

SARAH KALLIS, editor-in-chief

SAM BASKIN, design

“We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take this global cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles out,” Marjorie Taylor Greene said in 2018, according to the New Yorker. In August 2020, Greene, a businesswoman from Atlanta, won the Republican nomination for Georgia’s solidly conservative 14th Congressional District. Greene’s victory was historic, as she was the first candidate to win a major party ticket while openly supporting the debunked conspiracy theory movement, QAnon.

Greene is not the only person to support QAnon. It has thousands of supporters online. QAnon was developed by an anonymous source, called “Q”, claiming to be a high level government official. One of the central theories of QAnon is that there is a deep state within the government that is trying to overthrow President Donald Trump, who is seen as a hero within the QAnon community. Other aspects include the theory that the government is run by pedophiles, according to the New York Times. The theory started on 4Chan, and its roots originated in the Pizzagate conspiracy theory, according to the US Combatting Terrorism Group at Westpoint. Pizzagate is another debunked conspiracy theory that claims that government officials ran a child sex trafficking ring out of a pizza restaurant in Washington D.C, according to West Point.

QAnon thrives on the internet, and its spread has been propelled from social media. An article by Sue Greenwood published on The Conversation said that British Grannies have spread the theory through Facebook memes. Many of the memes expressed concern over the alleged pedophile rings’ threats to children. The hashtag #saveourchildren has been used by QAnon supporters to increase support and visibility for the theory. “But seeing a radical meme isn’t enough to trigger more of the same content, it’s how we interact with the content that matters to Facebook. The depth of interest needed to comment and then share a political idea will trigger more of the same and, potentially, take the user through increasing levels of radicalisation,” according to the Conversation. Greenwood said about how the theory spreads quickly through social media. #Saveourchildren refers to the facet of the theory that claims the wealthy elite is running a pedophile ring. The hashtag serves as a rallying cry to supporters, and draws in more followers. QAnon followers often compare information from Q to “the red pill,” a reference to the 1999 film “The Matrix.” In the



movie, the red pill represents seeing reality while the rest of society only sees an illusion. This meme leads followers of QAnon to believe that they have more intellect and information than the rest of society.

Social media can facilitate the spread of conspiracy theories easily, and Facebook and Youtube were some of the biggest habitats of conspiracy theories, according to a peer reviewed study published by the University of Cambridge. This particular study examined reliance on social media and belief that the COVID-19 Pandemic was false. “There was a strong positive relationship between use of social media platforms as sources of knowledge about COVID-19 and holding one or more conspiracy beliefs. In almost all cases, there was also a significant positive relationship between each individual conspiracy belief and use of each platform. YouTube had the strongest association with conspiracy beliefs, followed by Facebook,” the study noted.

QAnon originated on 4chan, and has since been popular on Facebook and Youtube as well. Youtube and 4chan have been home bases for several other major conspiracy theories, including Pizzagate. While it may seem like Youtube and 4chan’s algorithms are boosting these conspiracy theories, a recent UCLA study

has shown otherwise. Recommended videos and posts rarely favor conspiracy theories. Instead, the structure of the theories makes them spread rapidly. UCLA found that conspiracy theories’ narrative that would unravel if any singular aspect of it were removed. They are very easily disconnected. Alternatively, Snopes reported that right-wing conspiracy theories tend to lump liberals, the wealthy, and the elite into a singular “other” that to unite its followers against it.

However, QAnon follows a slightly different format. The theory originated as just a series of open-ended questions, nicknamed “breadcrumbs” by supporters. The New York Times gave an example of one of the questions Q asked. “Las Vegas. What hotel did the ‘reported’ gunfire occur from? What floors specifically? Who owns the top floors?” The New York Times article said. Devoted followers “research” the questions to form the more cohesive cluster of theories. Because of this structure, QAnon is more collaborative than other conspiracies. It also engages its followers more, and gives more of a sense of community. The New York Times also said that the breadcrumbs give followers a false sense of control over politics. “Their willingness to chase bread crumbs is a symptom of ignorance and powerlessness. There may be something to their belief that the machinery of the state is inaccessible to the people. It’s hard to blame

them for resorting to fantasy and esotericism, after all, when accurate information about the government’s current activities is so easily concealed and so woefully incomplete,” the New York Times article said. It also emphasized that Q sends messages to followers that they can be in control as well. The interactive nature of QAnon facilitates its fast spread across social media, and engages a variety of different supporters.

“ He is canonized within the theory, and is poised to be a savior that will uncover the secrets of the government ”

It is also important to acknowledge that the roots of many central QAnon conspiracy theories lie within anti-Semitic tropes. QAnon suggests that the government is run by a secret society of pedophiles that drink children’s blood. Insider points out that a similar narrative about Jewish people has dated back to the 12th century. Jewish figures like George Soros have been attacked by Q anon theorists like Marjorie Taylor Greene, according to Politico.

QAnon has also been linked to violent crimes, and is recognized as a Domestic Terror threat by the FBI, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer. The Tampa Bay Times reported that several acts of violence have been linked to QAnon in the past few years, including an Illinois woman arrested in New York in April 2020 when she was driving a car full of knives in an attempt to reach a Navy Ship housing COVID-19 patients. She made Facebook posts accusing Joe Biden of sex trafficking earlier that day, and threatened to kill him.

Although the QAnon theory is able to appeal to a wide variety of people, it is tailored to specifically engage several groups of interest. One group that seems like a logical target group is the right. The theory glorifies far right politicians, such as President Donald Trump. He is canonized within the theory, and is poised to be a savior that will uncover the secrets of the government and save the children that are allegedly being sex-trafficked. The theory also warns about a “deep state” that is intent on undermining Trump. This alleged deep state is of course, run by Democrats and establishment Republicans. According to the New York Times’ Davey Alba, Fox News Host Lou Dobbs alleged that longtime Trump Loyalist Attorney General William Barr was also part of the “deep state,” and thus persuaded to say that there was no evidence of widespread fraud in

the 2020 Presidential Election. Trump himself has also propelled the theory of the “deep state.” According to The Atlantic, Trump referred to the Department of State as the “Department of deep state” at a press conference in March. Besides undermining Trump, some QAnon followers claim there is “a 16-year plan by Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama to destroy the United States by means of mass drought, weaponized disease, food shortages, and nuclear war,” according to The Atlantic. Clinton and Obama are frequently demonized by QAnon, as they are seen as a representation of the Democratic establishment. The clear partisan divide in the conspiracy theory helps it appeal to the Right in particular. Additionally, the Right tends to be heavily Christian, another group targeted by QAnon. The hashtag, #wwg1wgo, or “Where we go one, we go all” is a direct appeal to Christians. QAnon also preaches moving towards a global government, which, according to CNN, helps draw Christians in under the guise of universal togetherness. “Q” also quotes scriptures in thousands of his online posts which also appeals to Christians, and preaches about a grand, universal separation of good and evil which closely mirrors the Biblical book of Revelations. “It’s easy for many white evangelicals to read their Bibles and connect the dots between what they read there and what they’re hearing from QAnon sources,” Kaitlyn Beaty, a journalist for the Religion News Service told NPR in an August 2020 interview. Furthermore, Q’s “save the children” pull is a direct appeal to Southern Evangelicals who preach sexual purity.

The yoga and wellness community is a much less likely target group for QAnon, but the theory has still manifested itself within the community. The New York Times reported on a Los Angeles-based yoga teacher, Seane Corne, who noticed the prominence of QAnon among yoga teachers. “Ms. Corn said that the wellness community’s emphasis on truth-seeking and self-improvement makes it particularly vulnerable to a conspiracy theory like QAnon, which is all about sowing distrust in mainstream authorities under the guise of ‘doing your own research.’ She said that QAnon’s motto — ‘where we go one, we go all’ — was classic “yoga-speak,” and that many of the QAnon-related posts she had seen, like a YouTube video that called President Trump a ‘light healer,’ seemed to have been carefully made to appeal to New Age sensibilities,” the New York Times story said. Although the theory often praises Trump, many yogi followers do not directly mention the president in their messages of support of the theory. The save the children movement within QAnon has been especially successful in luring in yogis. Pastel graphics similar to those commonly found on fitness instagram accounts pepper QAnon yogi’s feed, asking questions about child sex trafficking. According to Insider, yogi QAnon followers do not mention QAnon by name usually, but they use language like “the truth” and “the

awakening” commonly on their posts that support QAnon. They often do not self-identify as QAnon followers either. Insider pointed out that Stephanie Birch, a yoga teacher with over 50,000 followers had posted a picture with the message “We are experiencing a spiritual warfare against mastery manipulating puppets that go back years...through kill tactics of separation, delusions, safety, and survival.” She added the hashtags “great awakening,” “purpose over popularity,” and QAnon’s signature hashtag, #wwg1wga, although the latter was later deleted.

Insider reported that another yoga teacher with a large following, Bizzie Gold, has shared videos about the “satanic agenda” in the US. She has also shared videos encouraging her followers to not be manipulated by mass media.

QAnon followers also have theorized that the COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax, and that the vaccine is attempted mind control by the government. The COVID-19 conspiracies within QAnon are some of the most popular aspects of the theory within the wellness community. The anti-vaccine movement within the wellness community has been present since before QAnon, since many wellness followers have felt marginalized by the medical system and used non-conventional approaches to treat ailments. QAnon followers have come up with a multitude of theories about how the virus originated, including 5g cell towers. Another theory hypothesizes that the virus was intentionally created in a lab. The theory was coined #plandemic. A viral video with Virologist Judy Mikovits attacks Dr. Anthony Fauci and claims that the virus was created in a lab in North Carolina. This theory has been debunked, according to Science Magazine.

“ QAnon also preaches moving towards a global government, which, according to CNN, helps draw Christians in under the guise of universal togetherness. ”

Insider offers another theory about why QAnon, a right wing conspiracy theory, is so present in the overwhelmingly left wing yoga community. Dubbed the “horseshoe theory,” some political scientists believe that if you move too far to the right or to the left, you eventually begin to see intersection between the two sides. Populism



and mistrust of establishment power are two important shared points by the far right and the far left.

QAnon has heavy political implications. As stated before, it engages both the right and the left, but is much more mainstream on the right than the left. Although some people hoped that QAnon would disband after Trump lost the 2020 presidential election, the theory is still very much alive. Several right-wing politicians follow the theory, including Representative-elect Marjorie Taylor Greene from Georgia's 14th Congressional District. I reported on Greene's run in the Northwest Georgia district earlier this year, and found that voters were not as turned off by her support of the viral theory as you might expect. One Republican voter even told me that her racist remarks and support of QAnon made her more likely to vote for Greene in the primary runoff election. Trump has called Greene a "star" in the Republican party, and US Senator Kelly Loeffler endorsed her despite of her support of QAnon.

**“Some of the things we’ve just said confirms the fact that Marjorie is an opportunist - Her message is very much on brand for Trump supporters. But, is that how she actually believes or is this just one of her tactics to get elected?”**

While politicians like Trump and Greene have embraced QAnon, other Republicans that some might call the “establishment” are concerned it will become an embarrassment to the party. Greene's primary opponent, John Cowan, ran under the slogan “all of the conservative with none of the embarrassment,” referencing Greene. Greene has been publicly denounced by many Republican politicians an interest groups, including the Republican Jewish Coalition. When I spoke to Floyd County GOP Chair Luke Martin in July, he said that many of Greene's supporters were hesitant to believe that she actually supported QAnon, and thought it was a story made up by national news

media to undermine her. But, party leaders are concerned about her association with QAnon. “It's concerning in general if folks who I might classify as conspiracy theorists are running for office at the federal level, especially if it's related to QAnon,” Colt Chambers, chairman of the Georgia Young Republicans. He describes the Young Republicans as “one of the most diverse, if not the most diverse” organization within the GOP. So, Greene's remarks and support for the often racist and anti-Semitic theory was particularly salient to his organization. Martin was less likely to immediately renounce Greene's QAnon support, saying that while her claims were “a little out there,” there “may be some truth” to the deep state theory. However, he equated QAnon to the debunked conspiracy Pizzagate conspiracy theory,

In a July interview, Chambers told me that he is not entirely sure that Greene is actually a QAnon follower. “Some of the things we've just said confirms the fact that Marjorie is an opportunist,” he continued, “Her message is very much on brand for Trump supporters. But, is that how she actually believes or is this just one of her tactics to get elected?” Greene made comments in support of QAnon long before she announced a US Congress run, so it is unlikely she is only supporting the theory for political gain. Despite concerns from the Republican Party that her QAnon support would hinder her, Greene won her district's primary election and general election. She will be sworn into US Congress in January.

The most obvious and involved political figure in QAnon is President Donald Trump. He is seen as a savior within the theory, and many QAnon followers support him politically. Despite the theory being disproven, he has continued to promote elements of QAnon in his speeches and online. While Trump has never explicitly said he supports QAnon, CNN reported on December 3rd that he described QAnon as a group of people that “basically believe in good government” at a meeting on keeping the senate in Republican hands. He has not publicly condemned QAnon's extremism, and has previously said he doesn't “know much about the movement, other than I understand they like me very much, which I appreciate,” according to CNN. He also has also commented on the pedophilia conspiracy, a central pillar of QAnon. The Guardian reported that he said “What I do hear about it is they are very strongly against pedophilia, and I agree with that. I mean, I do agree with that. And I agree with it very strongly.” He did not condemn the theory that Democrats are running child sex-trafficking rings, nor did he mention that he had previously bragged about walking into undressed teenage girls' dressing rooms when they were contestants on Miss Teen USA. He has also retweeted posts QAnon accounts as much as 14 times in one day, according to Rolling Stone. QAnon and Trump

have also both supported the disbanded theory of mass election fraud in the 2020 Presidential Election. According to NBC News, Trump tweeted in mid-November that Dominion Voting Systems, a company that makes voting machines, deleted thousands of Trump votes. He likely got this information from the right-wing news channel One America News Network, NBC News reported. Chris Krebs, director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, debunked the Dominion theory. But, that did not stop QAnon for continuing to spread misinformation about voter fraud. It seems clear that QAnon will likely maintain that Trump won the election despite clear evidence he did not, proving that QAnon will unconditionally support the president. Trump gains the loyalty of thousands of followers, so it does not seem like he will condemn the theory anytime soon.

While QAnon supports the careers of some politicians, other politicians have interacted in it in other ways. US Rep. Buddy Carter attended a Save the Children rally in early 2020. A spokesperson for Carter told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution that he did not know that Save the Children was affiliated with QAnon, and does not support the theory. Although Carter claims he wasn't aware of QAnon's affiliation with Save the Children, his mishap proves that the theory has infiltrated mainstream conservative politics and is not easily sidestepped by politicians on the right.

QAnon's has created a new voting bloc within the US electorate that mostly engages Trump supporters from the right but occasionally pulls left-wing extremists as well. It is much more mainstream in Republican politics. Although it glorifies Trump as a savior, the theory will not simply disappear after he leaves office. QAnon will continue to push bizarre conspiracy theories that demonize Democratic elite and encourage citizens to distrust the government. While many long-term implications are still unknown, it is sure to have an impact on the COVID-19 pandemic. Supporters frequently deny the existence of the virus, or question its origins. Many supporters have said they will refuse to take a COVID-19 vaccine, possibly complicating immunity and vaccination rates within the US. QAnon is a movement that has impacted and changed political parties as we know them, and this shift would not have been possible without social media.

# QAnon and the U.S. Capitol Insurrection



The right-wing riot occurred on Jan. 6, 2021, and killed five people.



Multiple rioters wore a QAnon shirts or carried QAnon flags into the Capitol.



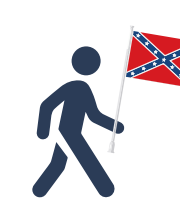
A popular photo from the riot shows a man claiming to be a “QAnon Shaman”



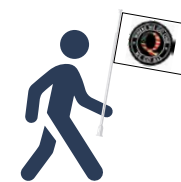
Rioters leaned into the QAnon belief that a deep state was attempting to overthrow Trump.



ABC news reported that many of the rioters arrested had ties to QAnon.



QAnon followers spread lies of mass voter fraud in the election before the riot.



Trump was seen as a hero by rioters, similar to views in QAnon.



Trump has refused to condemn QAnon, and claims not to know much about it.



Many QAnon followers were kicked off of social media sites following the riot.



# Biden's First 100 Days

## Biden's First 100 Days

### President Joe Biden's first 100 days in office

CAROLINE BREWER, writer  
MEGAN MINNEAR, design

In the digital age, it follows that we, as Americans, partake in the time-honored act of doomscrolling in periods of uncertainty. Society craves stability. We thrive in it. For many people during the first week of last November, much like during most of last year, the world stood still. We consumed online news in mass—clinging to the hope of a notification declaring the office of the Presidency for our preferred candidate. After what seemed to be a lifetime, though it was only four days, the Associated Press called the race for Joe Biden. People danced in the streets and screamed from the tops of high-rise apartments. The famous video of Kamala Harris making a phone call to her running mate to tell him the results of the election spread like wildfire. Once the noise from the initial victory parties died down, Biden and Harris quickly got to work.

**“After what seemed to be a lifetime, though it was only four days, the Associated Press called the race for Joe Biden.**

In the days leading up to his inauguration, then President-elect Biden assembled his Cabinet. One of Biden's campaign promises was to have the most diverse cabinet, and in arming himself with a cabinet where women account for forty-six percent of the makeup and nonwhite people account for fifty percent, many believe he has held true in this promise. Biden claimed to have a cabinet that reflected the composition of our country, and in terms of broader non-white and female representation, he has accomplished that. However, Biden has garnered backlash regarding the composition of the nonwhite members of his cabinet. With six Black cabinet members, four Latinx members, three Asian-American and Pacific Islander members, one Native American member, and no members of the Middle East or Northern Africa, the racial makeup of the nonwhite members is clearly skewed. Having a



Photo from PIXABAY

diverse board provides seats at the table for those whose experiences are historically marginalized. However, this diversity needs to extend itself beyond only nonwhite members on the board. The experiences of a Black man and those of an Asian-American woman are vastly different. While both are victims of white supremacy, these different experiences are especially evident in the recent attacks on Asian-American women. In such a divisive state of the nation, it is imperative that we have a cabinet composed equally of people from all major racial and ethnic backgrounds to be appropriately informed of the needs of their respective communities. Satisfying the nonwhite category alone is not enough. To combat this disparity, the Senate's only two Asian-American members, Senator Tammy Duckworth from Illinois and Senator Mazie Hirono from Hawaii, elected to block any more confirmations from the cabinet nominees until the Biden administration offered greater AAPI representation. In response, the White House released a statement stating it will create an Asian-American and Pacific Islander liaison. This will be a senior-level position. While not on the same level as the cabinet officials, this appointment has seemed to assure Duckworth and Hirono enough to continue voting on his appointments.

Critics of Biden's cabinet have grievances extending beyond the basis of race. As has been established, his cabinet is undoubtedly the most racially diverse historically, but many of his cabinet members boast high school diplomas from America's most prestigious private schools. In considering members from Antony Blinken—our newest Secretary of State, and a graduate of the Dalton School, where tuition runs \$55,210 annually, to Pete Buttigieg—our Secretary of Transportation, and a graduate of St. Joseph's school, where tuition runs \$10,260 annually, there are clear financial barriers preventing those from lower-income families from becoming among Biden's closest advisors. Biden might have afforded more opportunities to people from different backgrounds when compared to his predecessors, but there is room to grow in terms of true equality in the cabinet of the Biden administration. The effects of former President Donald Trump's creative economics will extend themselves far beyond Biden's presidency. Attempting to roll back key Trump-era policies and prepare for several painful market corrections, President Biden has unveiled several lofty economic goals—some of which he has already achieved. He came into the office with COVID-19 relief front-of-mind. In mid-March, the House



President Biden in Atlanta in March // Photo from REUTERS / CARLOS BARRIA - Adobe Stock

**“The new infrastructure program, part of Biden’s ‘Build Back Better’ plan will center around rebuilding roads, bridges and railways. ”**

Democrats approved Biden’s \$1.9 trillion relief package, with substantial propositions including extending jobless aid supplement, expanding eligibility for unemployment insurance, supplying the popular direct payments, extending the child tax credit, funding COVID-19 vaccine production, granting relief to state, local, and tribal governments, and many other provisions to offset the effects of this pandemic.

20 Spring 2021

While this provision will supply many Americans with much needed assistance, Biden has not closed the chapter on coronavirus relief. After the passage of his initial bill, White House press secretary Jen Psaki stated that another phase of Biden’s relief plan will continue in the month of April. She continued to say that this new stimulus package will be separate from the recently announced infrastructure proposition.

**“By promoting bipartisan legislation, Biden might assuage the extremists on both sides of the aisle. ”**

This new infrastructure program, part of Biden’s “Build Back Better” plan will center around rebuilding roads, bridges, and railways. Infrastructure improvement is always a necessary

provision of every level of our government, but Biden might also have ulterior motives in advancing this relief package. Democrats and Republicans alike can unite behind improving our roads. No one likes hitting a pothole or walking on cracked sidewalks. Uniting behind one particular issue might begin to reconcile the heightened tensions between the two parties that accumulated over the past four years. Political cartoons depicting less-than-flattering versions of both parties have been a staple in discourse surrounding our government since Benjamin Franklin’s *Pennsylvania Gazette*. *Saturday Night*

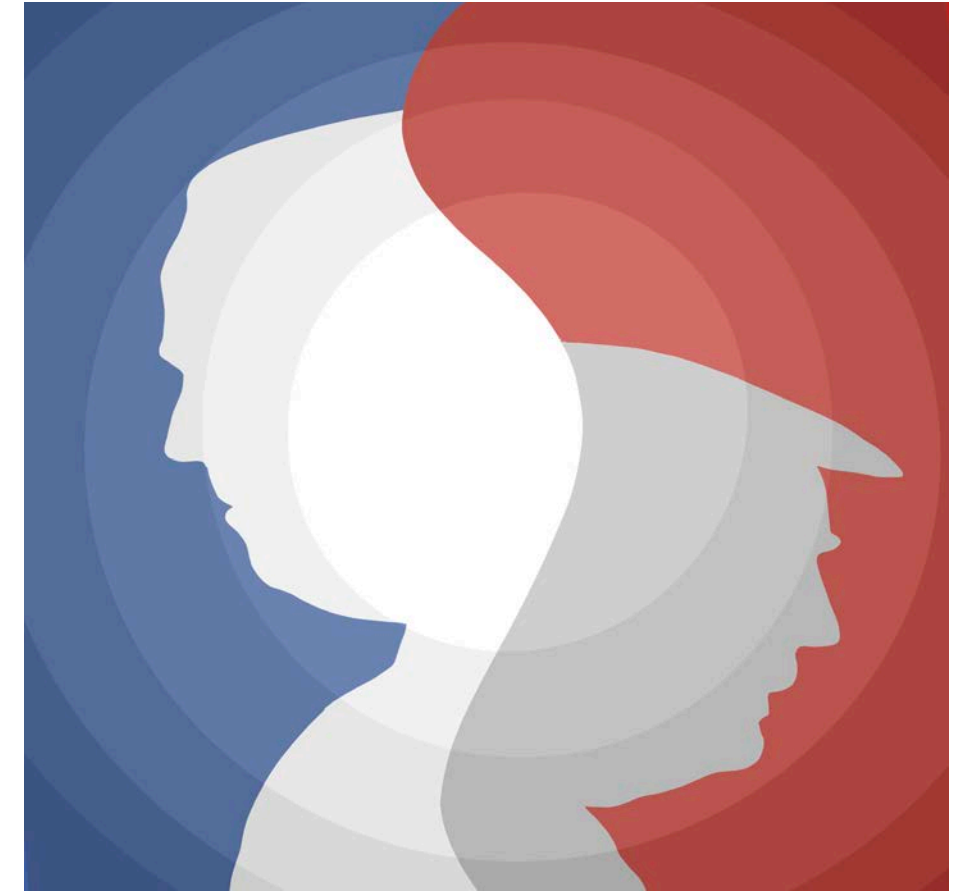


**“Immigration has surged over the past few months, and for many of these detainees, the current mishandling of the situation is deadly. ”**

Live has lampooned every President from Gerald Ford to George W. Bush to Barack Obama. However, there must be a line of civility which we cannot cross. The insurrection at the Capitol is a prime instance of this line being crossed. By promoting bipartisan legislation, Biden might assuage the extremists on both sides of the aisle. Potential good intentions of bipartisan legislation and relief victories aside, Biden has already tried to backpedal his way out of some key campaign promises and has received backlash in doing so. Entering into office touting goals of cancelling undergraduate student loans for those who attended public universities and HBCUs and cancelling a blanket \$10,000 for every student debt holder, he held a town hall fraught with mixed messages and ambiguous statements on the subject of student debt. He proposed solutions like investing in early childhood education and looking to family members to resolve debt disputes in lieu of his original plans—spurring many to speak out in opposition. Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley from Massachusetts’s 7th district released a statement regarding her own experience with student loans: she defaulted on their payments. On a more local level, a Philadelphia city council member plans to utilize the city government to call on the

**“Biden might have afforded more opportunities to people from different backgrounds when compared to his predecessors, but there is room to grow in terms of true equality in the cabinet. ”**

Biden administration to hold true on their promises regarding student debt. It would be remiss to neglect to mention Biden’s



handling of the crisis at the southern border in discussing the room for growth within the administration. Immigration has surged over the past few months, and for many of these detainees, the current mishandling of the situation is deadly. Many of the children held at the southern border have tested positive for COVID-19, as they are currently all kept in close holding facilities. When the Office of Vice President Kamala Harris was asked about her role in rectifying this situation, the office provided that Harris would focus on reducing the number of immigrants along with mitigating the key causes of this immigration. Joe Biden might have removed the word “alien” and replaced it with “non-resident” in every instance of immigration legislation, but that alone is not enough to combat the atrocities occurring so close to home for us. The Presidency of Joe Biden has provided some reassurance in the fate of the United States as a whole. Expanding on comedian John Mulaney’s popular metaphor, the horse is no longer loose in the hospital, and for many Americans, that alone is enough to cultivate some semblance of normalcy. Biden has already made strides in his short time in office, but as always, there is plenty of room to grow.



# Biden's Covid Response

## The Biden administration's healthcare & COVID plan

# COVID Response



## The Biden administration's healthcare & COVID plan

GEHNA CHAUBAL, writer / design

The first 100 days of a new president's term are an untested administration's first opportunity to set a precedent for how the rest of their four years will proceed. As such, these first few months are heavily scrutinized by the nation and by the world. In addition to this routine pressure, President Biden faces the unique responsibility of addressing a global pandemic that has permanently altered the lives of millions of Americans. Expectations are high for President Biden to take immediate and effective action regarding coronavirus.

**“Expectations are high for President Biden to take immediate and effective action regarding coronavirus.”**

Biden's health policy and decisions regarding the future of American healthcare will also contribute to cementing impressions of his presidency. Many wonder whether he will look to further the policies of former President Barack Obama, whose championing achievement was the controversial Affordable Care Act. President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris ran a successful campaign built largely upon promises to respond to the shortcomings of the previous administration, which looked to dismantle the ACA and carried out a particular COVID response questionable to many scientists, epidemiologists, and healthcare experts. These first 100 days are being watched closely to see whether President Biden will follow through on his campaign promises in terms of both healthcare policy and the response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

During his campaign, President Biden criticized Trump's reaction to COVID as a whole, acknowledging that he wasn't to blame for the virus but is responsible for how the country suffered afterwards. Biden's outlined commitments for his term include the ways in which he pledges to diverge from the Trumpian attitude when it came to the pandemic; he



Photo from REUTERS / LEAH MILLIS - Adobe Stock

promises transparency with the American people regarding trends in the virus's potency and mortality rates as well as respect for guidance from scientific officials. Dr. Lauren Silver, a Georgia Tech professor whose expertise lies in public health, characterized President Biden's take on COVID procedures as “180 degrees away from the previous administration's overall pandemic policy” due to his emphasis on “the gravity of the pandemic and our lack of preparedness – and just how real and damaging this novel coronavirus is.” Biden made clear his understanding of the pandemic's severity and asserted his prioritization of the crisis come his time in office; this alone is more than the Trump administration did since the onset of the pandemic.

In terms of health policy, the first 100 days brings the progression of a supreme court case which, as Dr. Silver explains, may “dictate much of President Biden's health care policy.” California v. Texas, by challenging “the constitutionality of the ACA on the grounds that the individual mandate is unconstitutional,” responds directly to one of the major concerns held with the ACA. Republican-backed tax overhaul legislation in 2017 eliminated the individual mandate, which was a piece of the Affordable Care Act that required all U.S. residents to either have health insurance or pay a penalty. The individual

**“The Biden administration may explore the political feasibility of passing a public option for health care coverage.”**

mandate was specifically targeted by Trump and other Republicans as part of why they wanted to repeal the ACA in its entirety, which the Trump presidency was unsuccessful in doing. As such, since the case of California v. Texas will decide the ACA's constitutionality and whether it remains intact, much of the policy the Biden administration will be capable of passing depends on this decision. Dr. Silver contends that “the Biden administration may explore the political feasibility of passing a public option for health care coverage, which is something he and former President Obama initially included in the ACA in 2010 but ultimately had to abandon” given that the court rules to confirm the constitutionality of the ACA. Another path

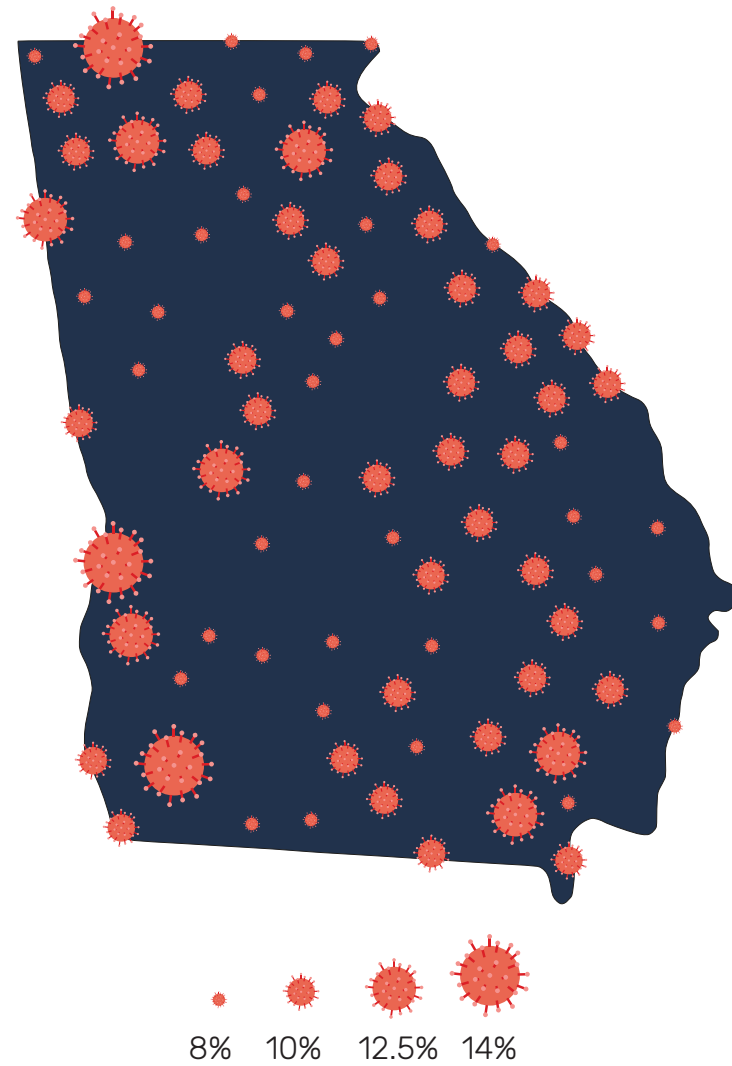
the Trump administration took in their attempt at taking apart the ACA was establishing work requirements for Medicaid coverage, meaning Medicaid beneficiaries would have to provide proof of employment or schooling. The ACA sought to expand Medicaid eligibility to families of low income who may have been excluded from the work force or from education, but legislation was passed during the Trump era that got rid of this stipulation. According to Dr. Silver, the Biden administration is “rejecting work requirements for Medicaid coverage... and, of course, doing so much more to encourage and allow individuals to enroll through the ACA marketplace.”

President Biden claims his administration will be far more effective with mounting their emergency response, citing his previous experience dealing with the H1N1 pandemic in 2009 and the Ebola epidemic in 2014 under former President Obama. His plan, as proposed in his National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness, begins with immediate improvements in public health and the economy. Specifically within the first few months of his term, Biden hopes to increase free testing availability, reduce costs for COVID-19 treatment to make it more accessible, and initiate a smooth rollout of vaccines to the public. As for the economic hardships faced by the multitude of small business owners, workers, and first responders, President Biden’s plan includes financial help and paid leave for those affected; he says his administration is committed to spending whatever it takes. The seven goals around which his plan points are centered include restoring trust with the American people, a comprehensive vaccination campaign, slowing the spread through mask enforcement and expanding access to testing and treatment, increasing emergency relief funds, safely reopening schools and businesses, placing special emphasis on inequities between different ethnic and rural/urban communities affected, and restoring US leadership globally.

Dr. Silver, when asked about President Biden’s COVID response plan and the ways in which it diverges from Trump’s previous response to COVID, said “I think it goes without saying that the Biden administration’s focus on controlling the pandemic as its top priority – that is, containing the spread, minimizing further loss of life, and quelling economic hardship simultaneously – sends a loud and clear message that this administration will assume the federal leadership role in responding to the pandemic rather than leaving that responsibility to the states like the previous administration.”

Dr. Katie Schenk, an epidemiologist at the American University, agrees specifically with the importance of federally concentrated efforts. In an op-ed for Scientific American reacting to the

## Share of population that has reported a case



Data from The New York Times / Data as of March 26, 2021

Biden COVID plan, she expresses her approval of President Biden’s centralized approach as opposed to the competing responses from different states and cities under the Trump administration. However, she pushes the Biden administration to be more ambitious and specific about addressing poor data collection technology and disconnected, underfunded local and state public health departments. Dr. Schenk identifies “a more complex underlying reality: There is no standardized secure system to communicate test results.” Another side effect of the outdated technology currently being utilized in public health departments is that patient data and infection tracking are localized and done through different means in different places, meaning that “if a New York resident is tested for COVID-19 while in Chicago, results are transferred from the Chicago healthcare provider to the Illinois health department to the New York health department for data

collection and outreach.” Due to illegible handwriting and different organization systems or codes used by different hospitals across the nation, “the localized nature of record-keeping systems tracking infections and exposures further hinders the response.” Speaking for epidemiologists across the nation, Dr. Schenk maintains that the CDC needs more funding to implement a national electronic disease surveillance network

# SHOULD 16-YEAR-OLDS BE ABLE TO VOTE?

YES  
 NO

VOTE

# Voting Age

## Should the U.S. voting age be decreased to 16?

EMILY ADAMS, writer  
SONYA YUEN, design

The voting age in the US should be lowered to age 16 because in the US 16 years olds are given many of the responsibilities and expectations of adults. They should be able to have a say in laws that will impact a greater proportion of their lives.

In the United States, the issue of voter suppression is as old as the nation itself. This country was founded on the belief that only white property owning men should be able to participate in electing their government. Obviously, that belief was bigoted, and with time, we have moved to become a more progressive society and include more and more actual members of society. Unfortunately, we haven't perfected this strategy yet, and there is still this issue of widespread voter suppression that we face, especially here in the South. However, giving more people the right and opportunity to vote, which is to participate in government here in the US, will always be a step towards improving democracy.

**“In the United States, the issue of voter suppression is as old as the nation itself.”**

Some people argue that 16 year olds don't contribute significantly to government (read: work and pay taxes). However, the labor force participation rate for all youth (16-24 year olds) was 57.3% in July 2020, a decrease of 4.5 percentage points from a year earlier according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This means in a normal year over 60% of youth are employed or actively looking for work, indicating that the majority of youth do in fact work and contribute fiscally to the government.

However, the argument that voting rights should depend on contribution is in itself flawed. The Declaration of Independence argues that “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” suggesting that the consent of the governed, not any conditional qualifications, is the basis for rights, i.e. voting rights.



Photo from CREATIVE COMMONS

Some might take this argument and say that this leaves the set age arbitrary but the age of 16 has a specific purpose. A 2011 study by Rutgers University discovered that while 14 year olds had similar intellectual maturity to adults, they did not yet have the same civic knowledge and tolerance as adults. At the age of 16, most teens are taking civics classes. The ability to form political opinions and then simultaneously learn to participate actively as a voter would be the apogee of civic education. According to Sylvia Kritzing, professor at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Vienna 16- and 17-year-olds are less well represented at the polls than the 30+ category but more likely to vote than 18-21 age group saying, “This is due to the personal upheaval at this significant age between 18 and 21, where many move out of their parents' houses”. At 16 the stability is much greater, allowing for voting to become more of a

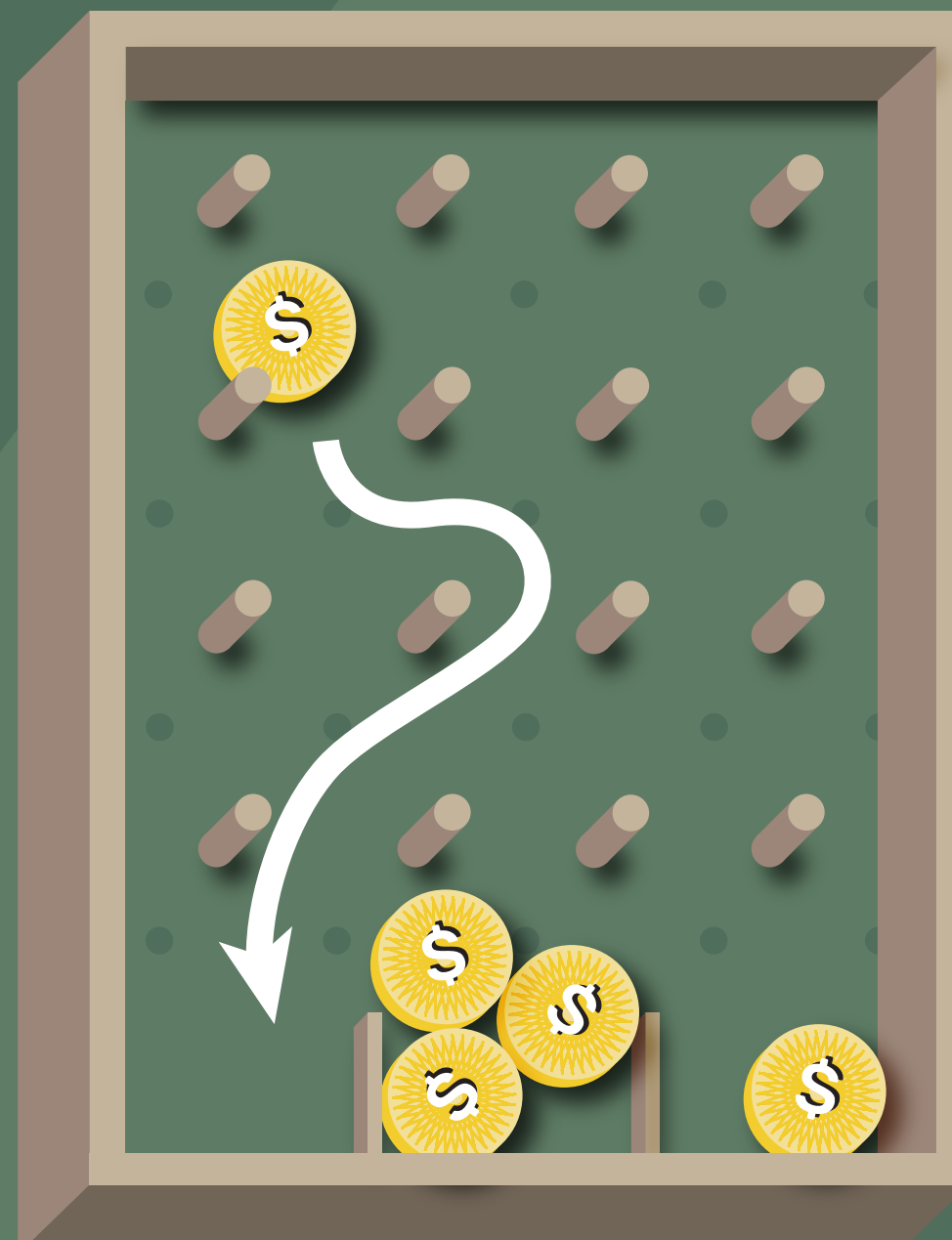
**“16- and 17-year-olds in the U.S. have the same political knowledge as adults and are intellectually mature enough to vote.”**

priority.

Many states have been suggesting bills at the state level to decrease the voting age to 16 for various qualifiers. The first notable leader in this movement was Former State Representative Phyllis Kahn (DFL-Minneapolis) who in 1989 proposed a bill to lower the voting age to 12. The bill was not passed, but she also worked on many bills over the years. Notably, she worked to lower the voting age to 17 and to lower the voting age for school board elections. Since then, bills have been proposed in many states. Studies have been conducted attempting to determine whether 16 years olds hold the cognitive and decision making capacities to rightfully participate in elections. The aforementioned 2011 study by Rutgers University in New Jersey concluded that 16- and 17-year-olds in the U.S. have the same political knowledge as adults and are intellectually mature enough to vote.

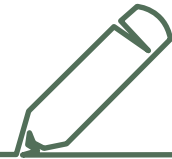
Today, there are bills to lower voting age being processed in 13 states (California, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Virginia). What we must do now is push for federal lowering of the voting age, the lack of consensus has contributed to the huge number of bills that have stalled in state congresses. The recognition of the push for change is the only the first step, but by talking about this we foster the environment for effective change.

# OPINION: Normalize Federal Relief for K-12 Schools



[ How federal COVID relief packages set precedent for future public school funding. ]

# Relief for Schools



## How federal COVID relief packages set precedent for future public school funding.

LOGAN DORRILL, writer  
MATTHEW RAESIDE, design

When the first cases of COVID-19 appeared in Fulton county last March, area schools and colleges were quick to close their doors, and, with varying levels of success, transition students to online learning. Since then policy makers have had to consider best practices for administering educational aid and, in doing so, the unique barriers that inhibit the academic performance of students.

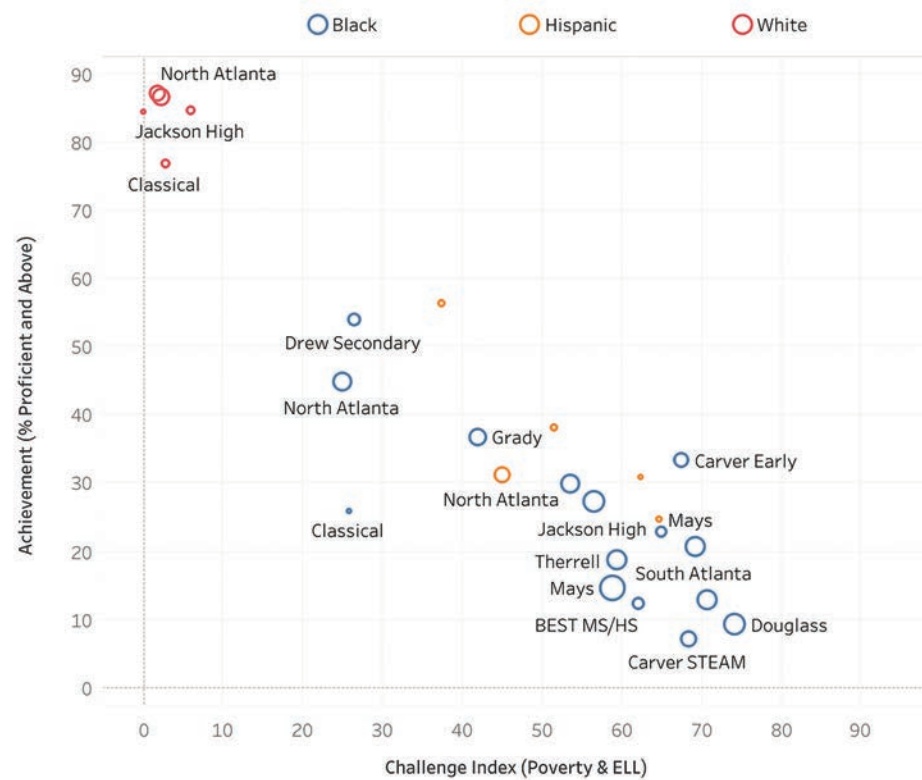
This concept of disparities in academic achievement among subgroups of students is often referred to as the achievement gap, which takes its roots in the foundation of the American public education system. From the Puritans to Ruby Bridges, blackboards to smartboards, and schoolhouses to virtual classrooms, education has been a public asset paid for with tax payer dollars. However, the types of taxes are important. The majority of school revenue comes from property taxes. Thereby, higher income neighborhoods with larger plots of more expensive land raise more money for schools than their counterparts in lower income neighborhoods.

This dichotomy is evident in Atlanta, which leads the nation in income inequality. According to the Atlanta Business Chronicle, white families in the Metro Atlanta area average an income of \$83,722 as compared to families of color who average \$28,105. The disparity translates directly to schools. Consider Heards Ferry Elementary (HFE) and Thomasville Heights Elementary (THES).

Heards Ferry is a part of the Fulton County school system and is located in an affluent, predominately white, neighborhood with nature trails and museums nearby. Thomasville Heights is a part of the Atlanta Public School system and is adjacent to a Section 8 housing development, a federal prison, and landfill. Needless to say, there's a property tax disparity here that lends itself to funding differences that create rifts in curriculum, school infrastructure, and achievement.

White families in the Metro Atlanta area average an income of \$83,722 as compared to families of color who average \$28,105.

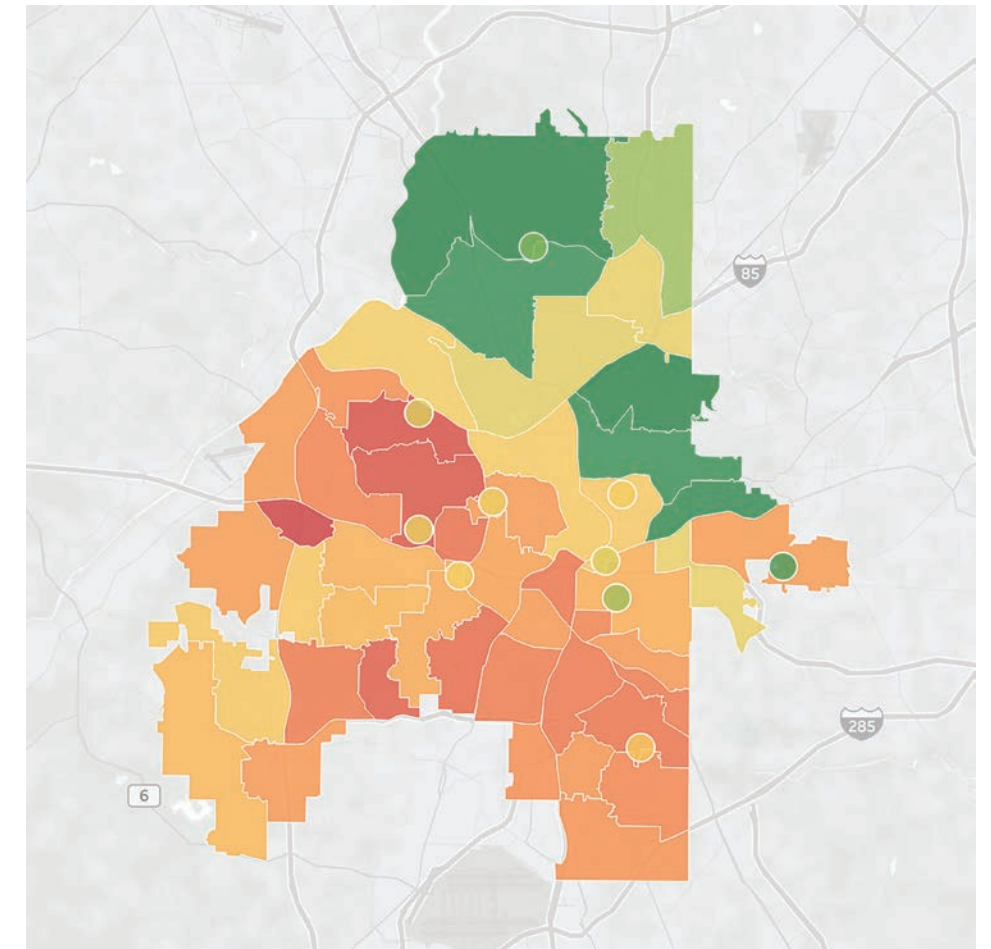
### Achievement vs. Challenge Index



Each bubble represents a school and a race/ethnicity. Achievement measured in percent proficiency for all subjects for Atlanta public high schools.

Image via APS Insights, 2019.

### Math Milestones Proficiency



The map above shows the percentage of elementary students enrolled in Atlanta public schools that scored proficient in math on the 2019 Georgia Milestones assessment. Fain, center left in dark red, scored 8.2%. Jackson, top center, scored 82.7%.

Image via APS Insights, 2019. Map via Mapbox and OpenStreetMap, 2021.

HFE ranks 40 points above the state average for math and English while THES ranks 37 and 27 points below the average respectively.

The story of these two schools is not an isolated incident but a long-founded trend for schools in many cities in the United States. Generally speaking, funding differences contribute to a lack of resources for predominately black schools which regularly underperform their predominately white counterparts. In a report titled "Student achievement by School, Poverty, and Race" by APS insights, there is a roughly 30 percent difference in the mean performance of black and white schools when assessing mastery on all content from a beginner to distinguished level.

The typical breakdown for public school funding is 45% local, 45% state and 10% federal dollars. Georgia, however, does little to change the status quo in Atlanta as most of their school zones spend less than the national average per student (\$11,841).

Most of the money that schools receive from the federal government goes towards programs like free or reduced lunch. In the wake of COVID-19, the federal government has stepped up to send more money to schools to help them weather the unique difficulties of distance learning. Together, the CARES act and December COVID relief package allocated a total of \$112.7 billion dollars for education. Of this sum, \$67.2 billion is earmarked for K-12 schools and to be distributed in schools of higher need for things ranging from teacher salary to student meals and wellness. At the time that this article is being written the US senate is set to vote on the American Rescue Plan which would include an additional \$170 billion for education.

While experts are cautiously optimistic about these grants, the role of the federal government in education has not always been a positive one.

There is a roughly 30 percent difference in the mean performance of black and white schools when assessing mastery on all content.

In the 1973 decision, *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, the Supreme Court ruled that the equal protections clause established with *Brown v. Board of Education* did not apply to housing and that it is constitutional to use property taxes to pay for schools. Federal education policy since the turn of the 21st century has largely focused on rewarding top performing schools while punishing lower achievement ones. From Bush to Obama to Trump policy has forced schools into paying for expensive standardized tests that stunt curricular priorities, required common core curriculums, and funded private and charter schools in the name of school choice.

According to The Nations Report Card these reforms have left the quality of American education stagnant and caused the test scores of the lowest performers to drop further.


We need to normalize the idea of the federal government paying more into lower income public schools and the communities that surround them. The correlation between income and performance is undeniable. Students whose families fall below the poverty line often struggle to get nutritious food, adequate healthcare, or stable housing which are obvious barriers to attention in the classroom. Furthermore, students need teachers who are paid as professionals, adequate and up-to-date school supplies, and buildings in good repair. This was true before COVID and imperative if we are to recover from it.

According to paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research, “A 20 percent increase in per-pupil spending a year for poor children can lead to an additional year of completed education, 25 percent higher earnings, and a 20-percentage point reduction in the incidence of poverty in adulthood.”

Now is the time to mobilize and rewrite the rules around education funding so these federal grants aren't a fleeting moment but rather a yearly investment into our communities.

## How Much Will Congress Spend to Shore Up Schools?

The Covid-19 relief plans before Congress all dedicate billions to stabilizing education budgets amid deep losses in state revenue, but the amounts vary.

	CARES Act Signed into Law March 2020	COVID Relief Package Signed into Law December 2020	American Rescue Plan Passed by the Senate March 2021
 Education Total	\$30.7 billion	\$82 billion	\$170 billion
K-12	\$13.2	\$54	\$130
Higher Ed	\$14	\$22	\$35
Governors	\$3	\$4	\$5

Data from FutureEd, 2021.

“ A 20 percent increase in per-pupil spending a year for poor children can lead to an additional year of completed education, 25 percent higher earnings, and a 20-percentage point reduction in the incidence of poverty in adulthood. ”







**@3484mag**