

Public Hearing: YES NO

Department: Planning & Sustainability

SUBJECT:

COMMISSION DISTRICT(S): All Districts

Application of the Office of Commission District 2 to amend Chapter 27 of the Code of DeKalb County, Georgia, as revised 1988, to reduce the minimum unit size for single-family dwelling units in single-family R-75 (Residential Medium Lot-75) and R-85 (Residential Medium Lot –85) zoning districts.

PETITION NO: D2-2024-0815 TA-24-1247197

PROPOSED USE: Amendment to Chapter 27, to reduce minimum unit size for single-family dwelling units in R-75 and R-85 zoning districts.

LOCATION: County-wide

PARCEL NO. : N/A

INFO. CONTACT: Commissioner Long-Spears, District 2

PHONE NUMBER: 404-371-2863

PURPOSE:

Application of the Office of Commission District 2 to amend Chapter 27 of the Code of DeKalb County, Georgia, as revised 1988, to reduce the minimum unit size for single-family dwelling units in single-family R-75 (Residential Medium Lot-75) and R-85 (Residential Medium Lot –85) zoning districts.

RECOMMENDATION:

COMMUNITY COUNCIL: (October 2024) CC-1: Approval w/conditions; CC-2: Approval w/conditions; CC-3: Full cycle deferral; CC-4: Approval; CC-5: Approval.

PLANNING COMMISSION: (November 7, 2024) Approval.

PLANNING STAFF: No Recommendation.

STAFF ANALYSIS: See attached information from Commission District 2.

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: (November 7, 2024) Approval 6-0-0. Edward Patton moved, Jan Costello seconded for approval.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOTE/RECOMMENDATION: (October 2024) CC-1: Approval (3-0-0) with the conditions to 1) reduce the minimum house size to 1,400 square feet in R-75 zoning districts; 2) reduce the minimum house size to 1,600 square feet in R-85 zoning districts; and, 3) eliminate any variance requirements for an existing non-conforming house when increasing the house size to less than the required minimum square feet for the district. CC-2: Approval (6-2-0) with the following conditions: 1) Further reduce the R-75 house minimum from 1,400 to 1,200 square feet; and, 2) Include the R-100 zoning house minimum size from 2,000 to 1,400 square feet. CC-3: Full cycle deferral (7-0-0) to allow for the District 3 Commissioner to be seated on the Board of Commissioners after the November election; and, to allow time for the new CEO to work co-operatively with the new BoC members on housing policies. CC-4: Approval 11-0-0. CC-5: Approval 6-0-0.

AN ORDINANCE

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 27 OF
THE CODE OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, AS REVISED 1988, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES**

WHEREAS, the Governing Authority of DeKalb County is tasked with the protection of the County’s health, safety, and general welfare, and the Board of Commissioners is authorized to exercise zoning powers;

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners seeks to increase accessibility to DeKalb County’s housing supply and diversify its housing options, by providing a wider variety of unit sizes;

WHEREAS, existing minimum unit size requirements in certain single-family R zoning districts unnecessarily require new homes sized large than many potential owners want, need or can afford;

WHEREAS, reducing the minimum unit size for single-family dwelling units in certain single-family R zoning districts will help increase accessibility to and diversify the County’s housing supply, and provide a wider variety of unit sizes;

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners seeks to encourage home ownership, particularly for first-time buyers in DeKalb County;

WHEREAS, reducing the minimum unit size for single-family dwelling units in certain single-family R zoning districts will enable more compatible single-family infill development in DeKalb County’s many mid-century neighborhoods;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners that Chapter 27 of the Code of DeKalb County, as Revised in 1988, is hereby amended as follows:

PART I. ENACTMENT

By amending Section 2.2.1, Table 2.2 of Chapter 27, Article 2, Division 2, of the Code of DeKalb County, as Revised 1988, as follows:

Sec. 2.2.1. - Dimensional requirements.

Dimensional requirements, such as overall site requirements, individual lot dimensions, and setbacks for residential zoning districts are established in Table 2.2, "Residential Zoning Districts Dimensional Requirements." Residential infill development may also be subject to compatibility regulations as specified in sections [5.2.3](#) and [5.2.4](#). (Amended 3/24/15).

Table 2.2 Residential Zoning Districts Dimensional Requirements

Residential Single-Family Zoning Districts								
KEY: Housing Types: SF: Single-Family, TF: Two-Family, TRF: Three-Family, MF: Multi-Family Character Areas: RC: Regional Center, TC: Town Center, NC: Neighborhood Center, SUB: Suburban								
Element	RE	RLG	R-100	R-85	R-75	R-60	MHP	RNC*
Unit Size, heated living area (minimum)								

Unit size (square feet)	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,400 1,800	1,400 1,600	1,200; if cottage: 800-1,200	N/A	*
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* See division 10 of this article

PART II. EFFECTIVE DATE

This ordinance shall become effective immediately on the date of adoption by the board of commissioners and approval by the chief executive officer.

PART III. SEVERABILITY

Should any section or provision of this ordinance be declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the ordinance as a whole nor any part thereof other than the part so declared to be invalid or unconstitutional. All ordinances or resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict with this ordinance are repealed.

DRAFT

INFORMATION SHEET

Proposed Text Amendment – Reduction of Minimum Required Unit Size in R-75 and R-85 Zoning Districts

The intent of this text amendment is to allow for the creation of a greater variety in the size of new homes built in two common single-family zoning districts in unincorporated DeKalb County – Residential Medium Lot District R-75, and Residential Medium Lot District R-85.

The current required minimum unit (single-family home) size in the R-75 District is 1,600 square feet of heated living area. The current required minimum unit size in the R-85 District is 1,800 square feet of heated living area. This ordinance proposes reducing the minimum required unit size in the R-75 and R-85 zoning districts to 1,400 square feet of heated living area for both districts.

Other development controls (yard setbacks, maximum building height, etc.) determine the maximum unit size permissible on each individual lot. This ordinance does not change the maximum permissible unit size in either R-75 or R-85 Districts, or otherwise prevent larger homes from being built.

Rationale behind the proposed ordinance

The cost of building housing has risen sharply over the last decade. Land costs and construction costs are both substantially higher in general than just a few years ago. Property values and assessments have sharply risen in neighborhoods from southwest to north DeKalb. The result is more expensive purchase prices for single family homes, and other impacts limiting access to homeownership:

- New homes built or renovated to the existing minimum size in R-75 and R-85 are more expensive because they must be built to the required size, which is larger than necessary for a livable 2- or 3-bedroom house.
- Fewer households, especially potential first-time home buyers, are able to purchase homes in the highly competitive housing market, especially larger ones such as those currently required in R-75 and R-85 District regulations.
- The traditional homeownership pipeline is restricted, since new starter homes are often too expensive for many first-time buyers.
- The growth of household wealth and economic security through homeownership, especially for families of color in DeKalb, is also restricted because the door to homeownership is harder to unlock.
- The proposed text amendment will benefit not only low and moderate-income households by enabling access to less costly housing, but will also benefit any household seeking access to smaller and/or less costly housing for any reason such as a reduced family size, or simply a desired lifestyle change.
- The housing market is not driven by demand for a single size or type of housing, but a wide spectrum of housing wants and needs. This text amendment will allow DeKalb County to better meet demand by diversifying its housing stock and providing a wider variety of options for buyers and renters.

Additional factors for consideration:

- Demographic data shows that the average family size in DeKalb County is getting smaller, reducing the need for all new homes in R-75 and R-85 Districts to be built to the currently-required larger sizes.
- Market preference for the size of homes is also changing, with a growing preference for smaller homes among younger buyers and among those seeking to downsize to a smaller home.

- Many homes in DeKalb County's mid-century communities were built more comparable in size to the new minimum sizes proposed here. The current minimum size requirements have forced new infill homes to be built to a scale which contrasts with many of these existing homes. The proposed change will allow for new infill homes to be built to a more compatible scale with many existing homes.
- The economic benefits of higher home values associated with larger homes are no longer necessary due to the escalation of the housing market across the county. It has become increasingly important to allow for a wider variety of housing options for all types of home buyers, including the ability to build smaller homes in response to market demand.
- This text amendment **would not prevent** any developer or individual from building larger homes, such as are currently required or permitted.
- Could reduce sales points of single family homes by \$40,000-\$80,000 or more.

Year	Single Family Residential	Floor Area
1956	R-85	SINGLE FAMILY: 1. One story, 1,200 sq. ft. 2. Two story, 1,200 sq. ft. total, with not less than 900 sq. ft. located on the ground floor.
1956	R-75	SINGLE FAMILY: 1. One story, 1,000 sq. ft. 2. Two story, 1,000 sq. ft. with not less than 800 sq. ft located on the ground floor.
1999 - 2005	R-85	No less than 1,800 sq. ft.
1999 - 2005	R-75	No less than 1,600 Sq. Ft.
2008 - 2015	R-85	No less than 1,800 sq. ft.
2008 - 2015	R-75	No less than 1,600 sq. ft.

DeKalb County Housing Overview



Mike Carnathan
Manager, Research and Analytics

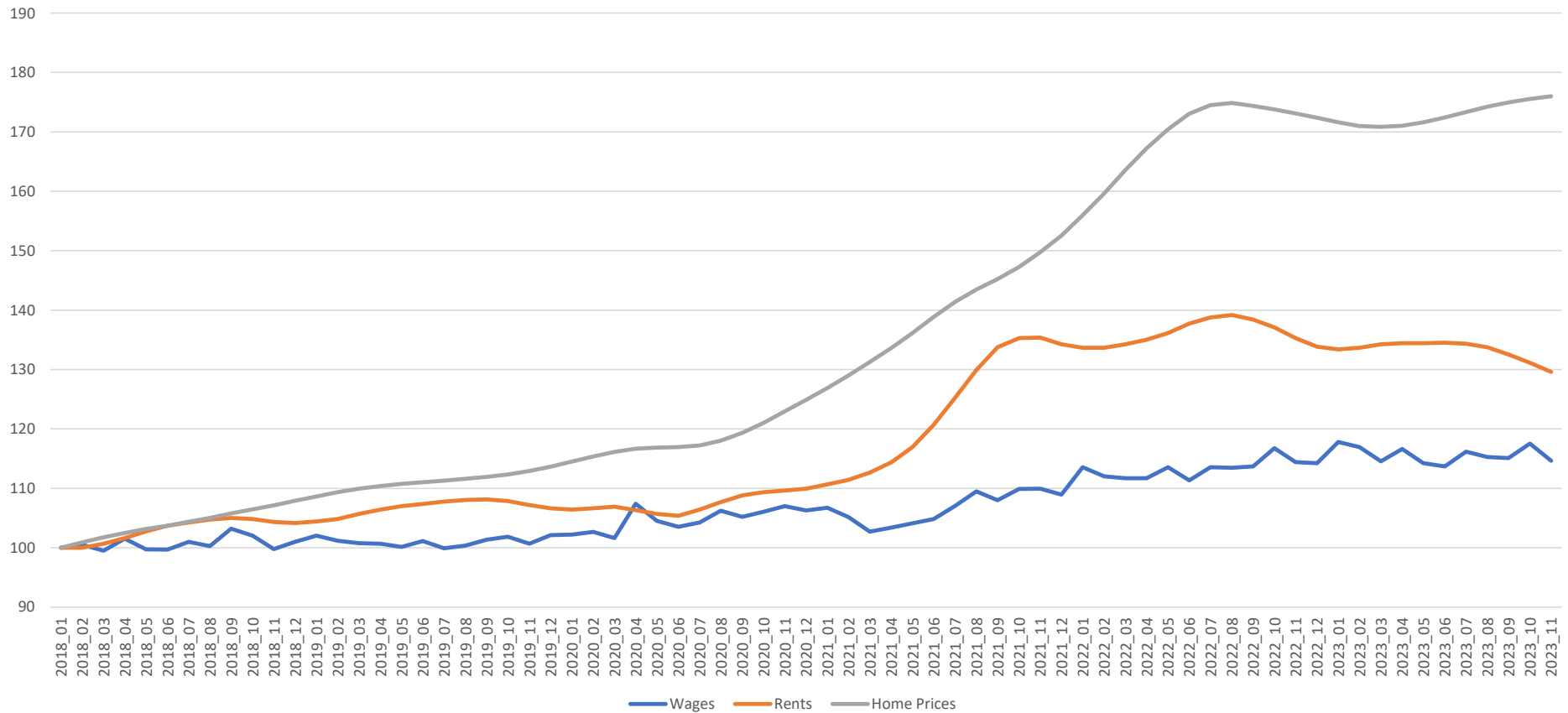


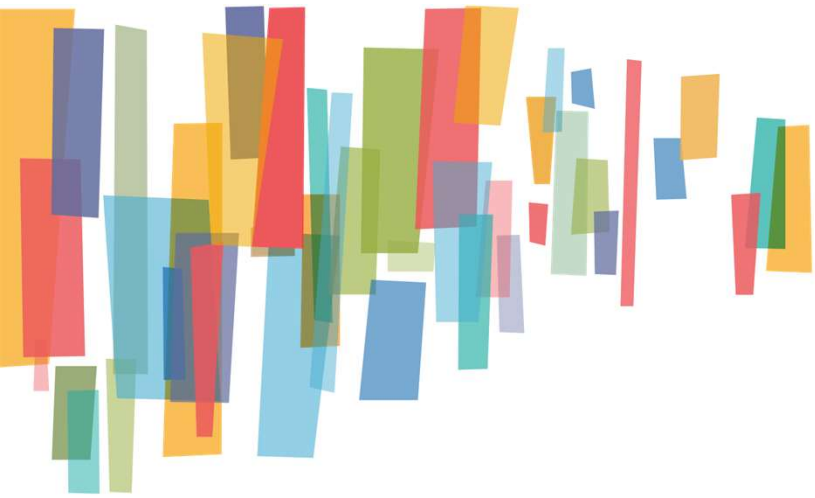
Exploring Housing Affordability (or lack thereof) in DeKalb County

*Mike Carnathan
Director, Research and Analytics
mcarnathan@atlantaregional.org*

Wages Not Keeping Up With Rent or Price Appreciation

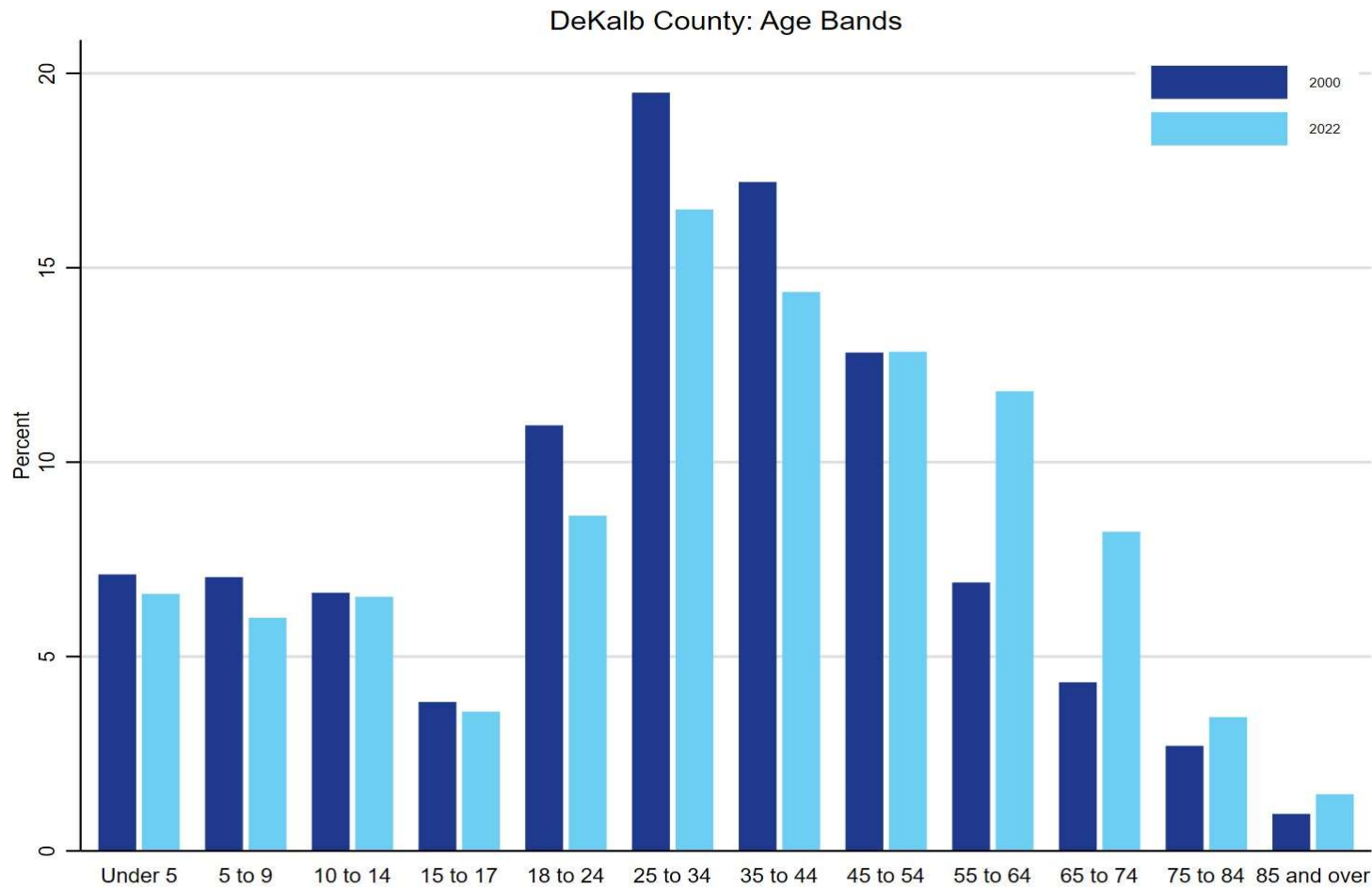
Wage, Rent and Home Price Appreciation, Indexed (Jan, 2018=100)



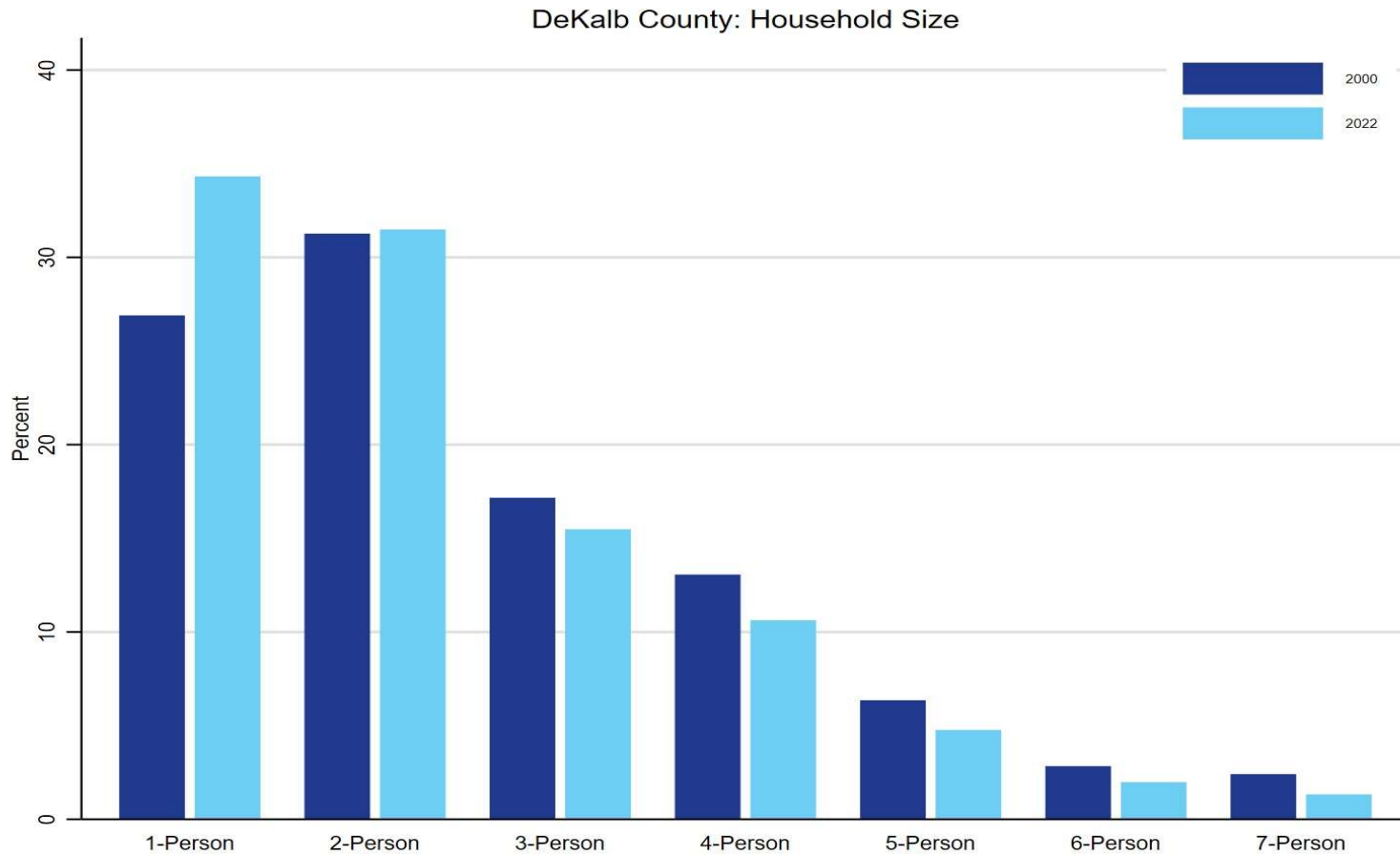


Housing Demographics

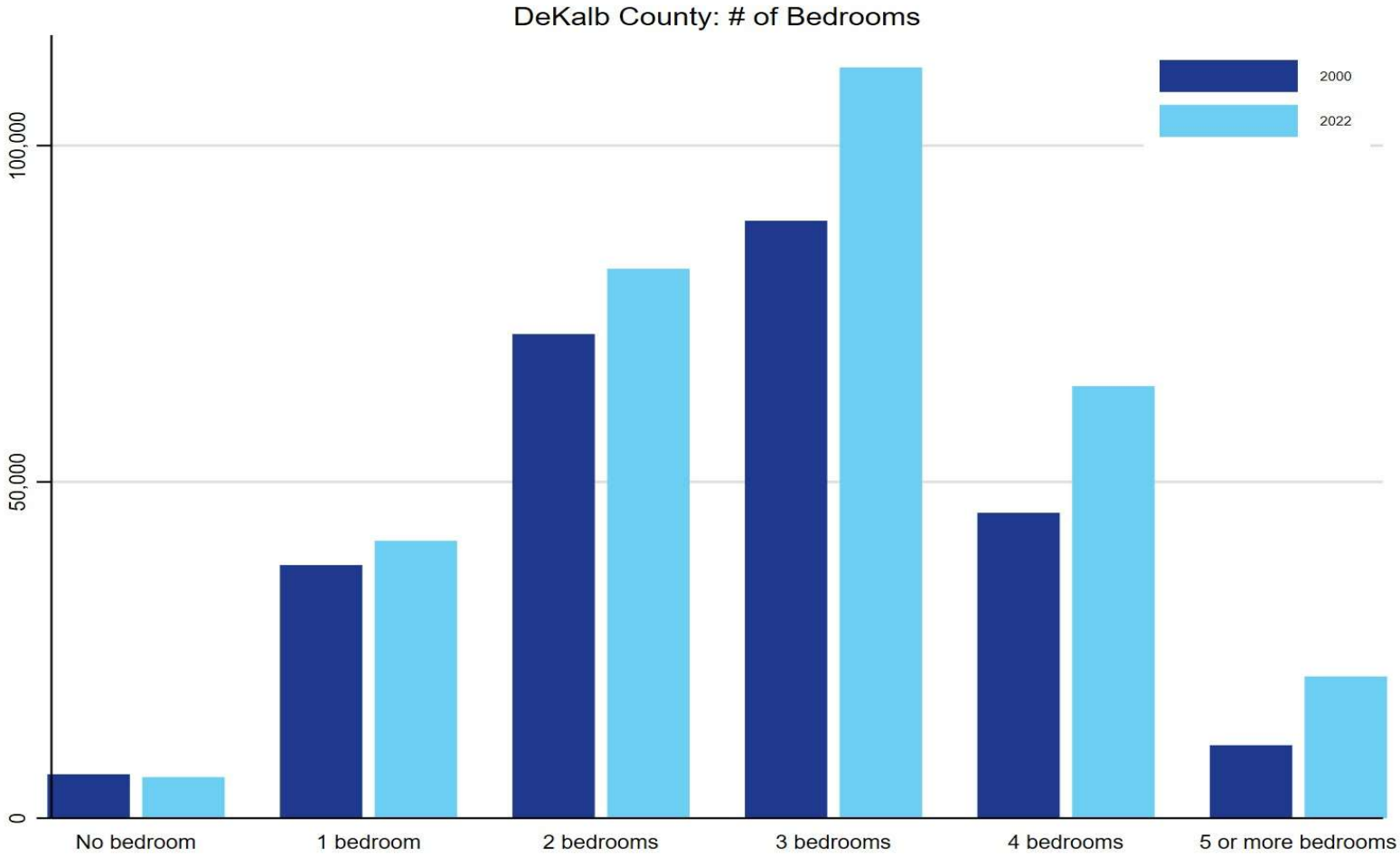
We're Getting Older...

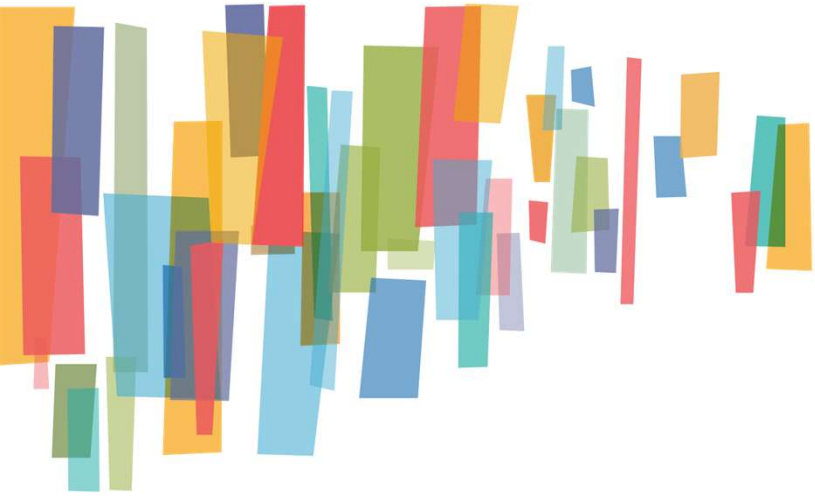


Household Sizes Getting Smaller...



Yet Houses Are Getting Bigger...





Homeownership

The Numbers

(As of February)	Clayton	Cobb	DeKalb	Fulton	Gwinnett
2019	\$ 164,788	\$ 323,153	\$ 337,891	\$ 402,227	\$ 281,134
2020	\$ 164,695	\$ 319,419	\$ 316,853	\$ 404,735	\$ 282,538
2021	\$ 182,805	\$ 347,315	\$ 347,088	\$ 422,776	\$ 310,483
2022	\$ 215,335	\$ 401,992	\$ 378,135	\$ 479,953	\$ 372,889
2023	\$ 246,527	\$ 448,621	\$ 427,348	\$ 530,989	\$ 432,218
2024	\$ 249,481	\$ 469,865	\$ 436,330	\$ 544,413	\$ 448,729
% Growth, 2019-2024	51.4%	45.4%	29.1%	35.3%	59.6%

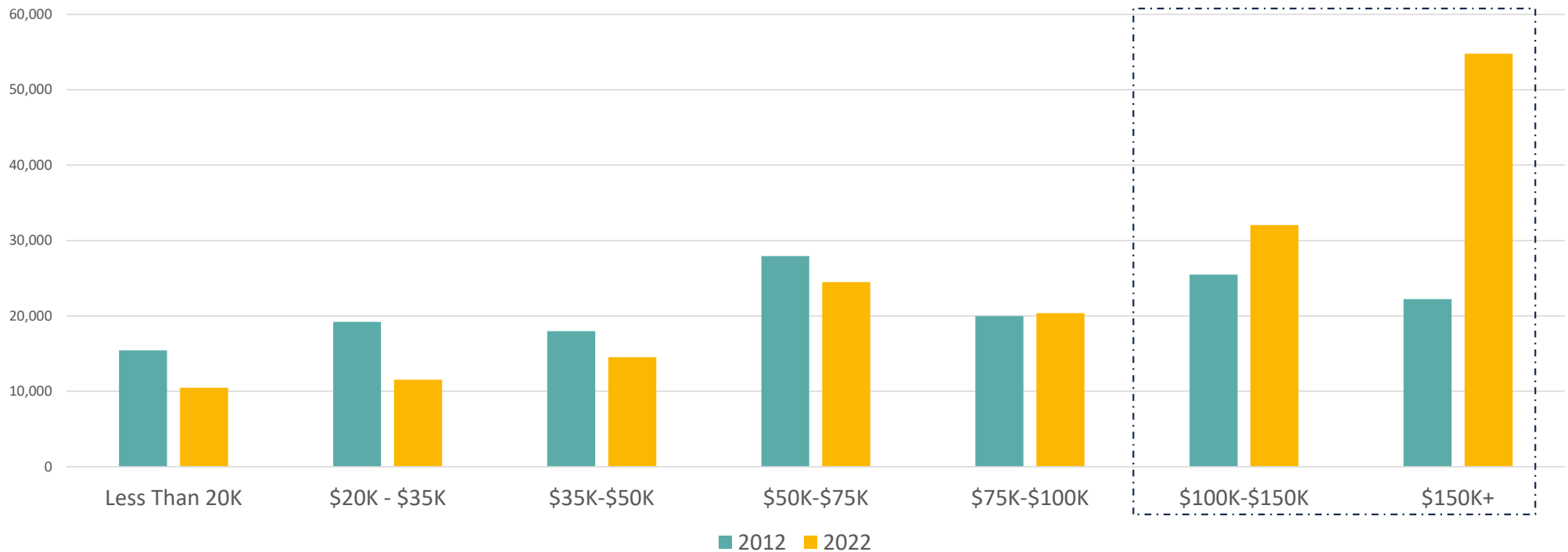
Homeownership... But For Whom?

2012 Population: 707,089

+55,700 New Residents

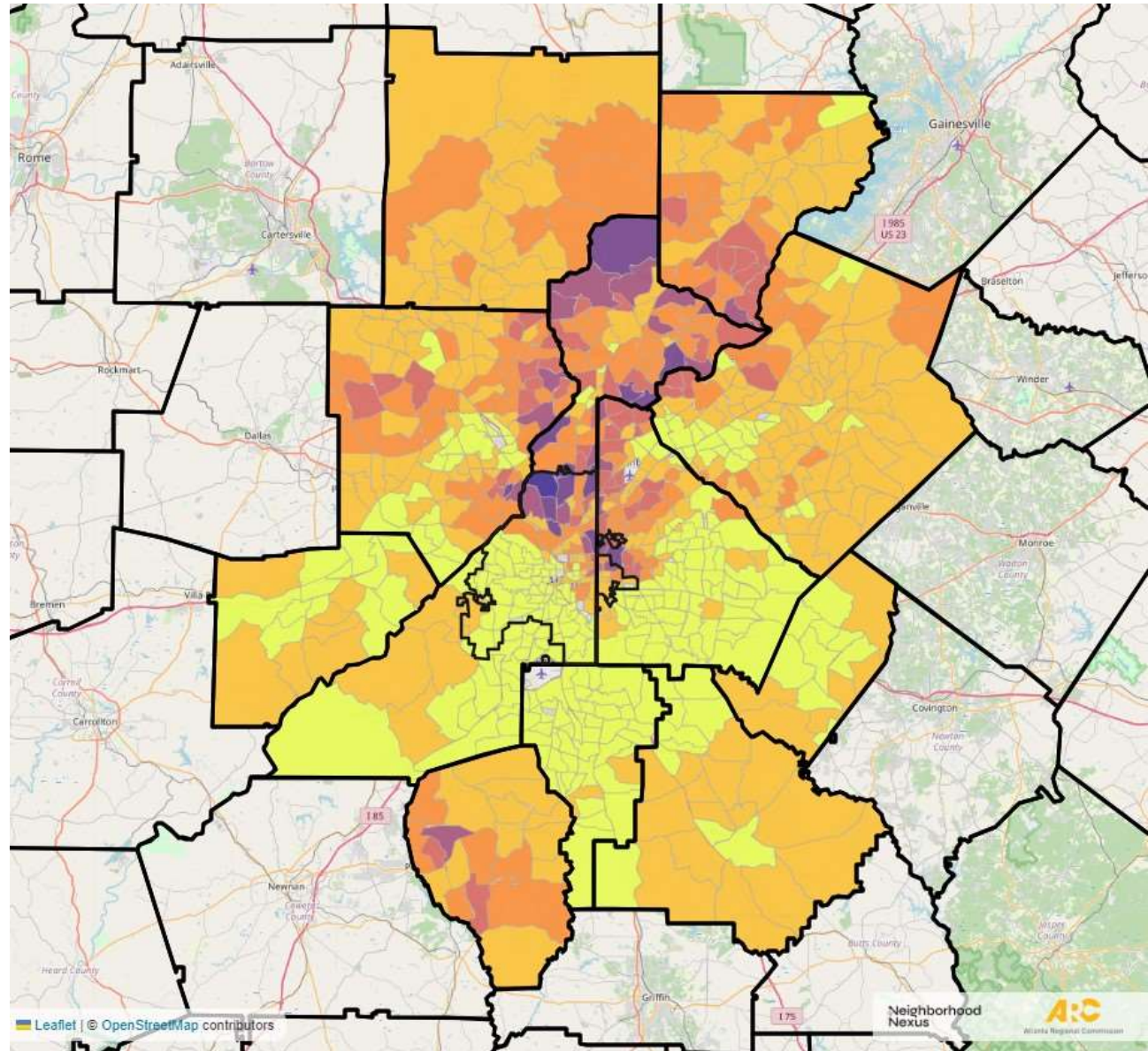
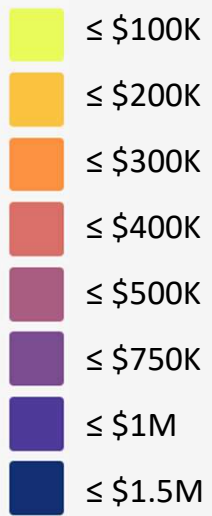
2022 Population: 762,820

Homeowners by Household Income: DeKalb



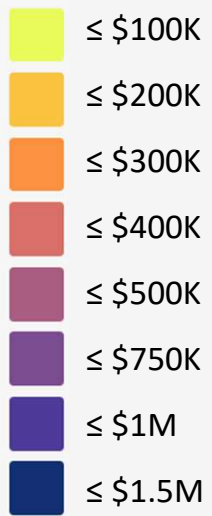
2013

Median Home Sale Price

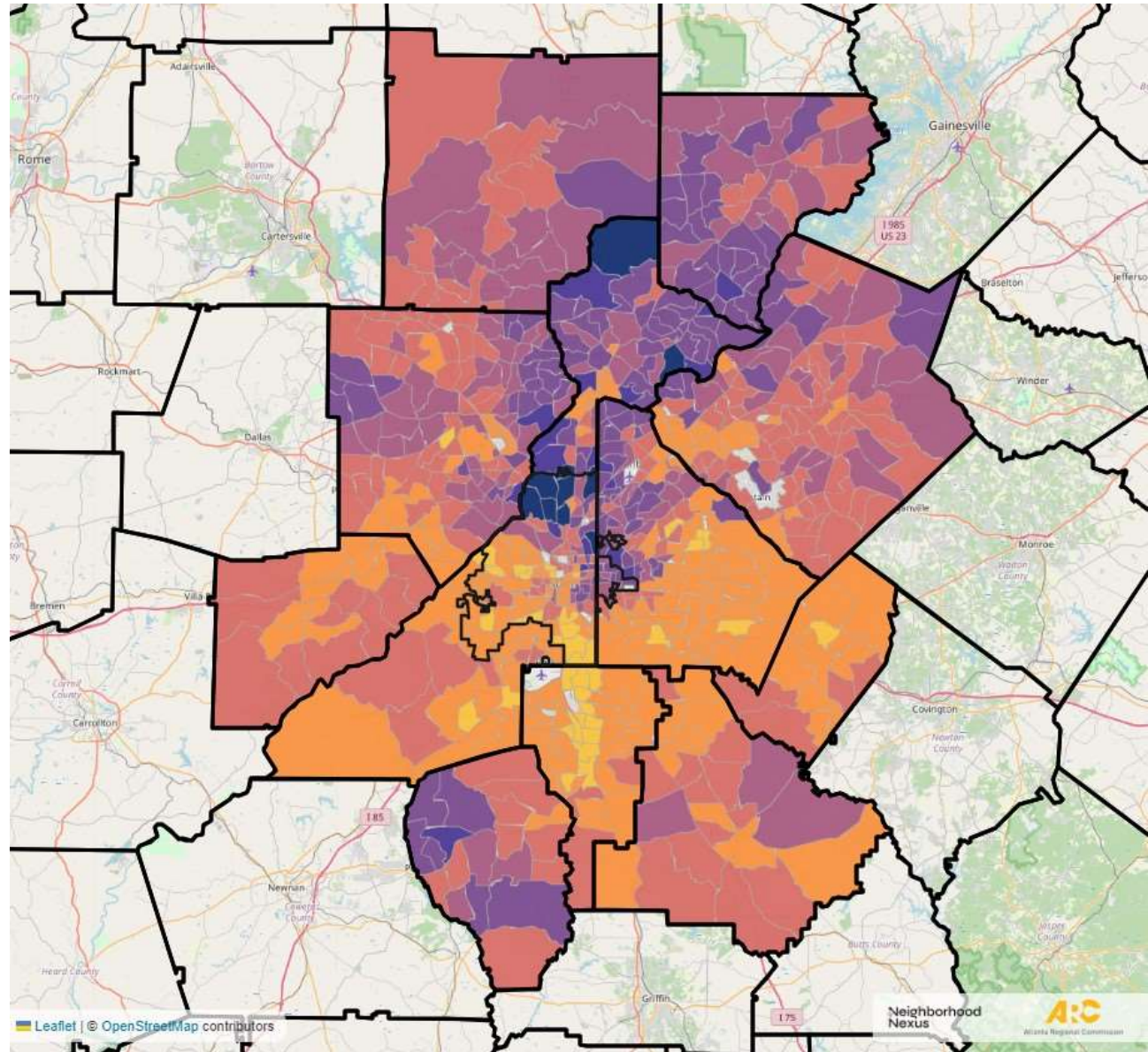


2022

Median Home Sale Price



Per Atlanta Fed: Atlanta homes considered unaffordable to average buyer



So, Who Are We Talking About Here...

Food Service
Host
\$22,547

Retail
Salesperson
\$29,411

Firefighter
\$46,696

Postal Worker
\$54,267

Elementary
School Teacher
\$67,850

Registered
Nurse
\$80,122

Extremely Low
30% AMI

Very Low
60% AMI

Low
80% AMI

Middle
100% AMI

Cashier
\$23,275

Painters,
Construction &
Maintenance
\$39,291

Paramedic
\$47,507

Food Service
Manager
\$65,250

Dental Hygienist
\$79,685