



## Changing the Odds: Progress and Promise in Atlanta

### About the Report

- The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Changing the Odds: Progress and Promise in Atlanta* shows how community leaders and organizations are successfully working to establish more equitable pathways to education, housing, income and careers.
- It is a follow-up to the 2015 *Changing the Odds: The Race for Results in Atlanta* report, which explored how families in Atlanta were faring by many indicators, including education, housing and employment.
- The report shows that Atlanta simultaneously has one of America's fastest-growing economies, while also leading the nation in income inequality. African-American communities along and below I-20 face some of the most persistent poverty rates in the country.
- Instead of simply calling out disparities, *Changing the Odds: Progress and Promise in Atlanta* highlights promising policies and approaches that build on and invest in the talents and strengths of all residents.
- Atlanta is one of two civic sites, along with Baltimore, where the Annie E. Casey Foundation has a special connection and long-term commitment to child and family well-being.
- The Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site primarily focuses on six surrounding neighborhoods — Adair Park, Capitol Gateway, Mechanicsville, Peopletown, Pittsburgh and Summerhill — located just south of downtown, in Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V).

### Key Data Points

- African Americans experience an unemployment rate nearly five times higher than white city residents and have incomes that are one-third of what their white counterparts make.
- Despite a \$3,000 increase in the median annual household income in Atlanta, African-American (\$28,567) and Latino (\$44,505) households still earn much less than their white counterparts (\$86,678).
- Though the percentages of children living in high-poverty areas declined for all racial and ethnic groups over the last few years, they remain highest for African-American and Latino kids — 76 percent and 40 percent, respectively, compared to just six percent for white youth.

- Whites are far more likely than African Americans to own their homes in Atlanta: the ownership rate is 57 percent for whites and 32 percent for African Americans.
- Amid persistent challenges, there has been progress. The high-school graduation rate for African-American and Latino students has risen by 21 and 20 percentage points, respectively, since 2014.
- On average, minority-owned firms hire people of color at triple the rate of white-owned firms.
- Research confirms that when children in Atlanta receive the education and support they need to read proficiently by third grade, the gap in graduation rates between white and black students shrinks significantly.

### What's Working

- Recognizing the importance of resident voice and action, Housing Justice League (HJL), an Atlanta-based nonprofit, collects and analyzes data, including surveys and interviews, to equip community members to advocate for anti-gentrification and anti-displacement policies. For example, HJL started the Renter's State of Emergency campaign in 2016 to document the impact of new development projects, such as the Atlanta BeltLine and former Turner Field.
- Working alongside the Atlanta Public Schools district, the Southern Education Foundation is building the capacity of community members to hold public-school leaders accountable to greater equity goals. They are countering the overrepresentation of students of color in special education, discipline and alternative schools and the underrepresentation of students of color in gifted and talented and Advanced Placement courses. Currently, the foundation is focusing its efforts in several Southside schools that serve nearly 10,000 students, 90 percent of whom are children of color from low-income families.
- The Partnership for Southern Equity launched a nine-month leadership program in 2018 to help residents effect positive neighborhood-level change. Called Resident Leaders for Equity, the program enables individuals living in the city's Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V) to learn about racial equity, displacement and gentrification, and equips them with tools and resources to strengthen their own community organizing and mobilization skills.
- The Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative (AWBI), a diverse partnership of stakeholders from the public, private and philanthropic sectors, is working to address the city's severe racial and socioeconomic inequities by expanding business opportunities for entrepreneurs of color in rapidly gentrifying areas along the BeltLine. AWBI's members have committed \$2.9 million in direct and indirect capital to support a multipronged strategy that includes worker-owned cooperatives; land acquisition to develop affordable, community-controlled properties; technical assistance and training; peer learning networks; and flexible financing options, including loans, guarantees and grants.

- Atlanta CareerRise is an innovative funding collaborative focused on strengthening workforce development practices to equip residents with the necessary skills to secure careers in high-growth industries. Since its launch in 2011, Atlanta CareerRise reports that its partners have enrolled more than 900 people, 90 percent of whom completed training programs and earned more than 2,200 industry-recognized credentials combined. Data show that these graduates were hired more often, remained on the job longer and received better earnings when compared to demographically matched trainees in comparable programs funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- In January 2018, the nonprofit Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) released an ambitious \$1 billion investment plan for the state of Georgia. Called People-Powered Prosperity, it promotes putting people first to create a stronger, fairer economy. The plan outlines four strategic goals for the state — educated youth, skilled workers, thriving families and healthy communities — and recommends policy changes to achieve each of them. GBPI has helped to secure key legislative changes that will strengthen the state's workforce and create more equitable policies for children and families not just in Atlanta, but statewide.