

# CLAYTON COUNTY STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

*Prepared For:*  
*Clayton County*  
*Development Authority of Clayton County*  
*Clayton County Chamber of Commerce*

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# Executive Summary

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## Overview

Clayton County has long had a robust economic development practice at both the county and city level, yet it has been over a decade since all parties in the county came together to evaluate existing practices and develop a strategic framework for implementing economic development activities. In early 2012, Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI<sup>2</sup>) signed a contract with the Development Authority of Clayton County to provide strategic planning services and develop a consensus approach to economic development among the county's many stakeholders. Funding for the project was derived from Clayton County government, the Development Authority of Clayton County, the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce, and from Georgia Tech.

## Strategic Planning Process

The Georgia Tech team used three guiding principles throughout the planning process. The first is that in-depth research would be used to gain the greatest understanding possible of the challenges and opportunities facing Clayton County. The second is that the public would be engaged throughout the entire process, and the third was that Georgia Tech would focus on identifying recommendations and priorities based on areas of broad agreement within the community.

To accomplish these goals, Georgia Tech developed an 8-step process, and worked with leadership from the county's business, political, and civic sectors each step of the way.

### 1. Facilitation of Steering Committee

A steering committee was formed to serve as the liaison between county stakeholders and the Georgia Tech team.

### 2. Kick-Off Meeting

A kick-off meeting was held on July 19, 2012 to review the strategic planning process, goals, opportunities for community involvement and the project's timeline.

### 3. Review of Recent Initiatives

Georgia Tech team members reviewed all existing strategic documents, reports, and redevelopment proposals that spoke to recent economic development efforts within the county.

### 4. Stakeholder Interviews

Georgia Tech team members conducted one-on-one, confidential interviews with over 70 community and regional stakeholders to evaluate Clayton County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

### 5. Community Forums

The public was further engaged in two facilitated community forums, designed to both update residents on the process and gather feedback for use in developing the strategic plan.

## **6. Engaging Higher Education**

Georgia Tech worked with Clayton State University and Atlanta Technical College leadership to establish goals for greater universities/community partnerships.

## **7. Target Industry Analysis**

The Georgia Tech team conducted a business opportunities assessment for Clayton County, with the goal of developing a set of industries for the county to target.

## **8. Developing the Strategic Plan**

Drawing from stakeholder interviews, community forums, industry analysis, and additional research, the Georgia Tech team worked with the steering committee to create a detailed five-year strategic plan focused on growing opportunities and sustaining economic prosperity in Clayton County.

# **Final Report**

The full economic development strategic planning report includes data and analysis from three sub-sections: (1) Community Profile; (2) Stakeholder Interview Analysis; and (3) Business Opportunities Analysis.

## **(1) Community Profile**

The Community Profile assembled and analyzed the county's key demographic and economic characteristics, as well as housing and educational trends. Demographic characteristics included population, race, ethnicity, and age, and economic trends included bankruptcies, businesses and job growth, top industries, unemployment rates, and changes in income. Housing characteristics included occupancy trends, housing tenure, rental affordability, and foreclosures. The educational data highlighted educational attainment, graduation rates, and dropout rates of the county.

## **(2) Stakeholder Interviews Analysis**

Collecting the insights and opinions of active community leaders and citizens is central to any strategic planning process. Over a two-week period the Georgia Tech team conducted over 50, one-on-one, confidential interviews with formal and informal leaders from Clayton County. The results of these interviews are presented alongside the results of the team's interviews with external stakeholder. External stakeholders were individual who had a significant impact on Clayton County's economic development opportunities, specifically business attraction. Georgia Tech spoke with representatives from several divisions of the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Power, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

## **(3) Business Opportunities Analysis**

A key component of Clayton County's economic development strategic is persuading companies from outside the county to relocate. This highly competitive process is based on a number of factors, some of which are not within Clayton County's control. The Georgia Tech team examined six economic characteristics of Clayton County and the surrounding region, paying particular attention to Clayton County's natural water supply as an untapped resource. The results of this analysis are presented in the Business Opportunities Analysis, and highlight the types of companies and industries most likely to consider Clayton County as a new business location.

## Vision for Economic Development in Clayton County

A vision for economic development in Clayton County was developed by a steering committee of Clayton County stakeholders organized to direct the strategic economic development planning effort from concept to completion. Steering committee members organized into small groups, and developed multiple Vision Statement drafts, which were later combined into the statement below. Building off of the final Vision Statement, the steering committee then then crafted a Mission Statement for economic development in Clayton County, which relates how the community would ideally move forward to achieve its vision.

### Clayton County's Vision for Economic Development

*Build upon our strengths, resources and collaborative efforts to create an environment where business and residents thrive.*

### Mission Statement for Economic Development in Clayton County

*Clayton County will advance economic development by:*

- *Working collaboratively across city and county lines to market, promote and grow business and employment opportunities;*
- *Building a supportive relationship between our public and private sector;*
- *Strengthening our educational system and workforce; and*
- *Embracing our diversity to foster an inclusive economy.*

## Recommendations

The Georgia Tech team presented the following **six overarching recommendations** to the steering committee as their primary suggestions for advancing economic development in Clayton County. Recommendations were developed only after the Georgia Tech team had collected, analyzed and discussed all quantitative and qualitative data with community partners, and identified areas with broad agreement and widespread support.

Long-Term Goals		Recommendations
I.	Improve the internal and external image of Clayton County.	Develop formal agreement and approach between cities and county to collectively shape a positive image for Clayton County ( <i>separate from marketing for business recruitment</i> ).
II.	Develop better and broader relationship between the private and public sector in Clayton County.	Elevate importance of retaining and expanding existing industry in Clayton County. Broaden number of people formally involved in the effort to visit, retain and expand existing industry.
III.	Create more opportunities for Clayton County residents to find and retain employment.	Prioritize workforce development as a key economic development tool for improving family self-sufficiency and reducing unemployment.
IV.	Refine targeted industry sectors for business recruitment ( <i>action steps forthcoming</i> ).	Target business sectors based on the <i>Business Opportunities Assessment</i> and broad community support.
V.	Recognize the importance of entrepreneurship and small businesses in Clayton County.	Build upon existing activities that promote entrepreneurship and strengthen the small business community in Clayton County.
VI.	Grow the impact of Public Higher Education Institutions on Clayton County's economic development.	Develop a framework for engagement between Clayton State University, Atlanta Technical College and community/economic development organizations within Clayton County. Develop additional partnerships between Clayton State University and Atlanta Technical College.

## Timeline, Roles and Additional Resources Required

Detailed timelines were developed for each of the six key recommendations. Specific action items were imbedded within each timeline, and all action items were envisioned to be accomplished within a five year period. Each recommendation's timeline lists the key personal and organizations suggested by the Georgia Tech team for implementing specific action items, and what, if any, additional resources would be needed to see the implementation plan move forward.

## Conclusion

Over a nine month period, at least 130 different data points were collected and analyzed, and hundreds of Clayton County residents and stakeholders participated in the strategic planning process. They attended community forums, sat through interviews, and attended presentations. Another 43 individuals went above and beyond by serving on the Steering Committee, and worked hand-in-hand with the Georgia Tech team over an entire year of preparation and implementation.

The Georgia Tech team would like to sincerely thank each of these individuals, and the broader public, for giving their time, energy and creativity, and for working tirelessly to create a promising economic future for Clayton County.



# Introduction

## Overview

In late 2011, Clayton County approached the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI<sup>2</sup>) to discuss the development of a strategic economic development plan. Clayton County had a robust economic development practice at both the county and city level, yet it had been over a decade since all parties in the county came together to evaluate existing practices and develop a strategic framework for implementing economic development activities. In early 2012, Georgia Tech's EI<sup>2</sup> signed a contract with the Development Authority of Clayton County to provide strategic planning services and develop a consensus approach to economic development among the county's many stakeholders. Funding for the project derived from Clayton County government, the Development Authority of Clayton County, the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce, and from Georgia Tech.

EI<sup>2</sup> is Georgia Tech's primary business outreach organization, and provides a comprehensive program of assistance to industry, entrepreneurs, and economic development organizations throughout the State of Georgia. EI<sup>2</sup> team members serving communities include experts in their respective fields with experience advising economic development and government leaders on how to be competitive in the ever-changing global economy.

## Strategic Planning Process

EI<sup>2</sup> developed an 8-step process to craft a strategic economic development plan for Clayton County, and worked with leadership from the county's business, political, and civic sectors each step of the way.





## 1. Facilitation of Steering Committee

A steering committee was formed and comprised of local elected officials from county and city government, economic and community development practitioners, business representatives, educational institutions, county-wide agencies and civic institutions. The committee served as the liaison between all county stakeholders and Georgia Tech. The steering committee's co-chairs were:

- (1) Larry Vincent, Chairman of the Development Authority of Clayton County
- (2) Yulonda Beauford, President and CEO of the Clayton County Chamber of Commerce

## 2. Kick-Off Meeting

A kick-off meeting was held on July 19, 2012 with over 115 community leaders, residents and other stakeholder in attendance. The kick-off meeting reviewed the strategic planning process, goals, opportunities for community involvement and project timeline.

## 3. Review of Recent Initiatives<sup>1</sup>

To ensure the project began by building upon Clayton County's previous achievements, EI<sup>2</sup> reviewed all existing strategic documents, reports, and redevelopment proposals that spoke to recent economic development efforts within the county. The Georgia Tech team reviewed 18 previously written documents.

## 4. Stakeholder Interviews

EI<sup>2</sup> conducted one-on-one, confidential interviews with over 50 community leaders to gain insight into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Clayton County's economic growth. A second round of 15 interviews was conducted with state and regional partner organizations, to capture the external perception of Clayton County's economic development potential.

## 5. Community Forums

The public was further engaged in two facilitated community forums, designed to both update residents on the process and gather feedback for use in developing the strategic plan. Forum participants were broken into small groups and asked to share their ideas around a range of economic development topics.

## 6. Engaging Higher Education

EI<sup>2</sup> worked with Clayton State University's leadership to develop recommendation on how the university could have an even greater impact on the surrounding community. EI<sup>2</sup> also worked with the leadership of Atlanta Technical College to define the college's future role within Clayton County.

## 7. Target Industry Analysis

EI<sup>2</sup> conducted a business opportunities assessment for Clayton County by building upon their existing approach and developing a promising list of industries for the county to target. The Georgia Tech team collected the most recently available information from the Georgia Department of Labor and analyzed dynamics including existing and emerging industrial strengths, regional strengths, supply chain development, workforce availability, local assets and resources.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for a table describing previously completed studies and documents pertaining to economic development in Clayton County.

## 8. Developing the Strategic Plan

Drawing from stakeholder interviews, community forums, industry analysis, and additional research, the Georgia Tech team worked with the steering committee to create a detailed five-year strategic plan focused on growing opportunities and sustaining economic prosperity in Clayton County. Key elements included:

- (1) Vision and Mission Statements
- (2) Strategic Priorities and Action Items
- (3) Roles and Responsibilities for Implementation
- (4) Timeline and Benchmarks

## Project Overview

The Georgia Tech team used two guiding principles throughout the planning process. The first is that in-depth research would be used to gain the greatest understanding possible of the challenges and opportunities facing Clayton County. The second is that the public would be engaged throughout the entire process, and that a broadest possible group of Clayton County residents would be able to share their perspectives on economic development in their community.

In addition, the Georgia Tech team focused on identifying recommendations and priorities based on areas of broad agreement within the community.

The following table displays the ways in which the public was engaged, and an overview of the data collected.

Community Engagement	Data Points Analyzed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kick-Off Meeting: 115 Participants</li><li>• Monthly Steering Committee Meetings: 20-30 Participants</li><li>• CSU Leadership Retreat: 20-30 Participants</li><li>• Stakeholder Interviews: 70+</li><li>• Community Forums: 115+ Participants</li><li>• Community Updates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kick-Off Meeting: 2</li><li>• Community Profile: 26</li><li>• Community Forum: 20</li><li>• Internal Stakeholder Interviews: 31</li><li>• External Stakeholder Interviews: 11</li><li>• Target Industry Analysis: 40</li></ul> <p><b>Total Data Points Analyzed = 130</b></p>

The following report includes findings from the (1) Community Profile, (2) Stakeholder Interview Analysis, and (3) Target Industry Analysis. The data collected leads to the plan's findings and conclusions within the Recommendation and Timeline sections of the report.

# Community Profile

## Demographic Characteristics

This section provides an overview of the County’s demographic characteristics, including population, race, ethnicity, and age. Like much of Georgia, particularly the Metro Atlanta area, Clayton County experienced consistent growth in people and jobs in the 1990s. However, as a result of the economic decline, the in-migration of people slowed dramatically, and the demographic composition of the county has changed dramatically since the early 1990s.

## Population Change

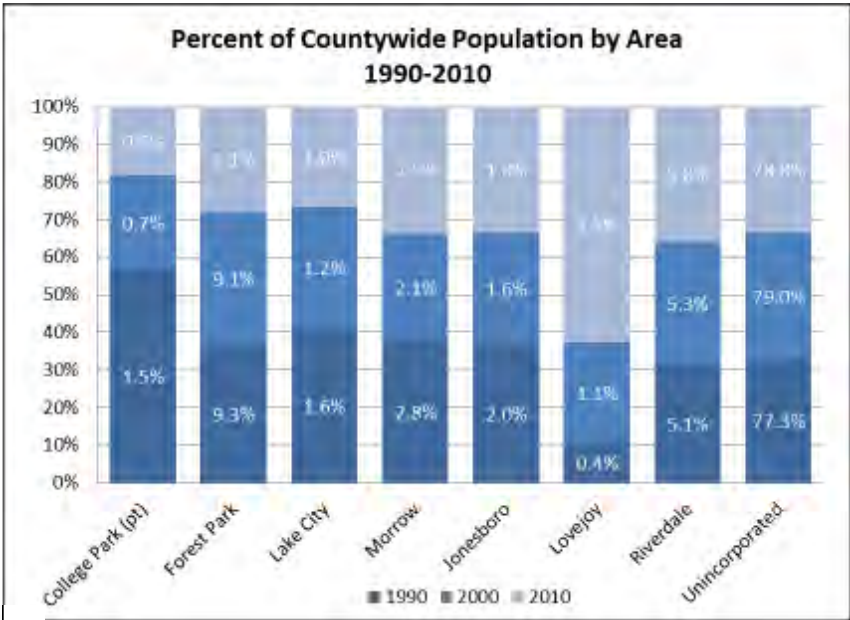
From 1990 to 2011, nearly 80,000 additional people claimed Clayton County as their home. The population grew at a rate of 43.7 percent from 1990 to 2011, while the state’s population increased by 51.5 percent during the same time period. The influx of people moving into Clayton County has slowed down more recently. The growth rate declined to 9.6 percent compared to the state’s rate of 16.6 percent in the following decade (2000-2011).

Total Population	1990	2000	2011	1990-2000 Percent change	2000-2011 Percent Change	1990-2011 Percent Change
Clayton County	182,052	236,517	261,532	29.9%	9.6%	43.7%
Georgia	6,478,216	8,186,453	9,815,210	26.4%	16.6%	51.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Population Distribution in Clayton County

The majority of Clayton County’s population lives within unincorporated areas. In 2010, 78.8 percent of Clayton County’s population was located in the unincorporated areas, just slightly down from 79 percent in 2000, but an increase from 77.3 percent in 1990. The percent of residents living in the incorporated areas accounted for 21.2 percent in 2010, down slightly from the 22.7 percent in 1990.



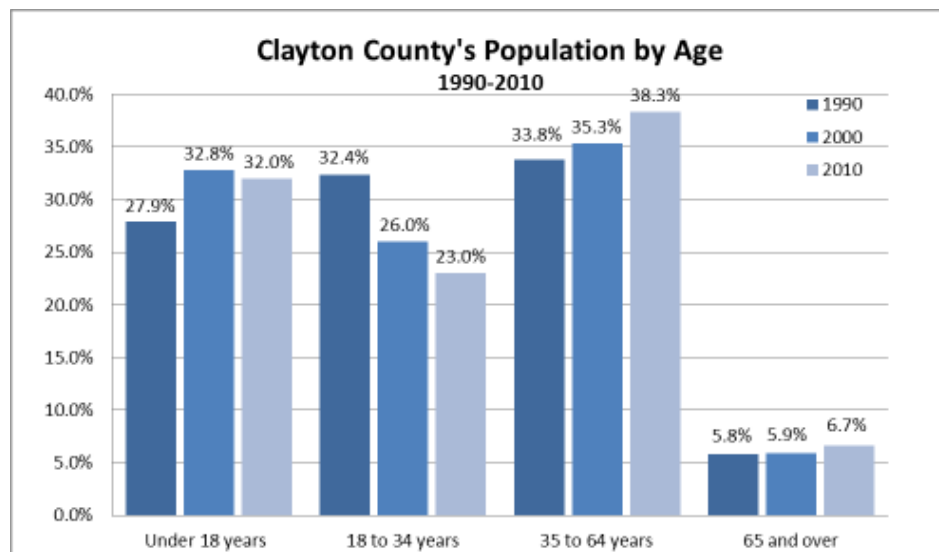
## Race & Ethnicity

Clayton County's racial composition shifted dramatically in the last two decades, especially in comparison to the state. In 1990, the white population constituted 71.3 percent of the population in Clayton County and 70.1 percent of Georgia's population, whereas in 2010 those figure had fallen to 14.1 and 55.9 percent, respectively. During that time period, the black and Hispanic populations began to represent a larger share of the population in the county. From 1990 to 2010, the black population increased from 23.6 to 65.2 percent of the population and the Hispanic population increased from 2.1 to 13.7 percent.

Racial Composition		Percent of Total 1990	Percent of Total 2000	Percent of Total 2010	Difference in Percent of Total 1990-2010
Clayton County	White	71.3%	34.9%	14.1%	-0.572
	Black	23.6%	51.1%	65.2%	0.415
	Hispanic	2.1%	7.5%	13.7%	0.116
	Asian	2.7%	4.5%	4.9%	0.023
	Other	0.3%	2.0%	2.1%	0.018
Georgia	White	70.1%	62.6%	55.9%	-0.142
	Black	26.8%	28.5%	30.0%	0.032
	Hispanic	1.7%	5.3%	8.8%	0.071
	Asian	1.1%	2.1%	3.2%	0.021
	Other	0.2%	1.5%	2.0%	0.018

## Age Distribution

The population group of 18 to 34 years old declined significantly between 1990 and 2010. This age group was 32.0 percent of total the population in 1990. In 2010, it had declined to 23.0 percent of the total population. The age group of 35 to 64 year olds grew the most from 1990 to 2010, increasing from 33.8 percent in 1990 to 38.3 percent in 2010.

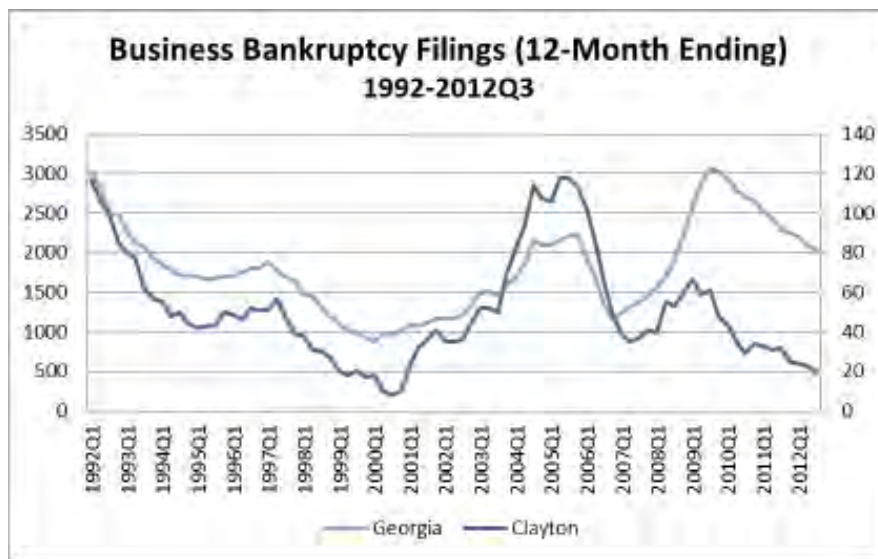


## Economic Characteristics

This section provides an overview of economic characteristics in Clayton County as compared to the state. The characteristics reviewed include bankruptcies, growth in businesses and jobs, top industries, unemployment, total personal income, per capita personal income, average weekly wage, and median household income. Over the past two decades, Clayton County grew in terms of jobs and wages, but at a slower rate than the State of Georgia. In addition, the recession has had a greater negative effect on the county relative to the state.

### Business Bankruptcies (12-month ending)

The number of business bankruptcy filings in Clayton County fell ten out of the previous twelve quarters. Business bankruptcies in the most recent quarter for which data is available (2012 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter) is down 17.4 percent from the previous quarter. Compared to the same quarter a year ago, business bankruptcies have decreased 40.6 percent.



### Job and Business Growth

Clayton County's total employment decreased by 13.0 percent between 2000 and 2011. This was a much larger decrease than the state average decline of 2.4 percent.

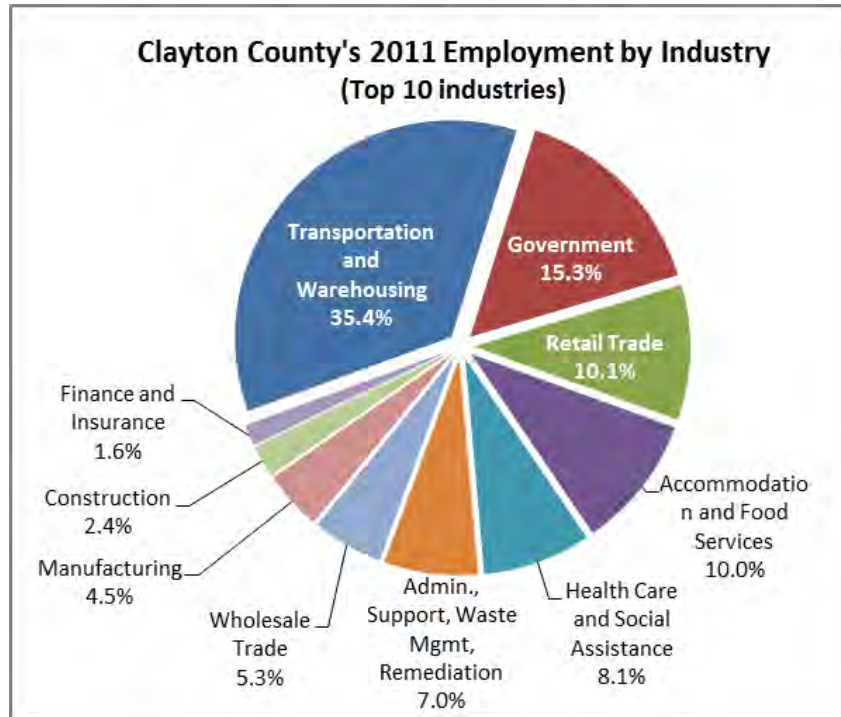
Employment	2000	2005	2011	Percent Change 2000-2011
Clayton County	116,474	108,751	101,366	-13.0%
Georgia	3,884,388	3,931,719	3,791,948	-2.4%

Although total employment fell, the number of establishments (businesses) in Clayton County rose by 1.1 percent from 2000 to 2011. During that same period of time, the number of establishments in Georgia increased by 17.8 percent.

Establishments	2000	2005	2011	Percent Change 2000-2011
Clayton County	4,232	4,376	4,279	1.1%
Georgia	228,356	256,787	269,011	17.8%

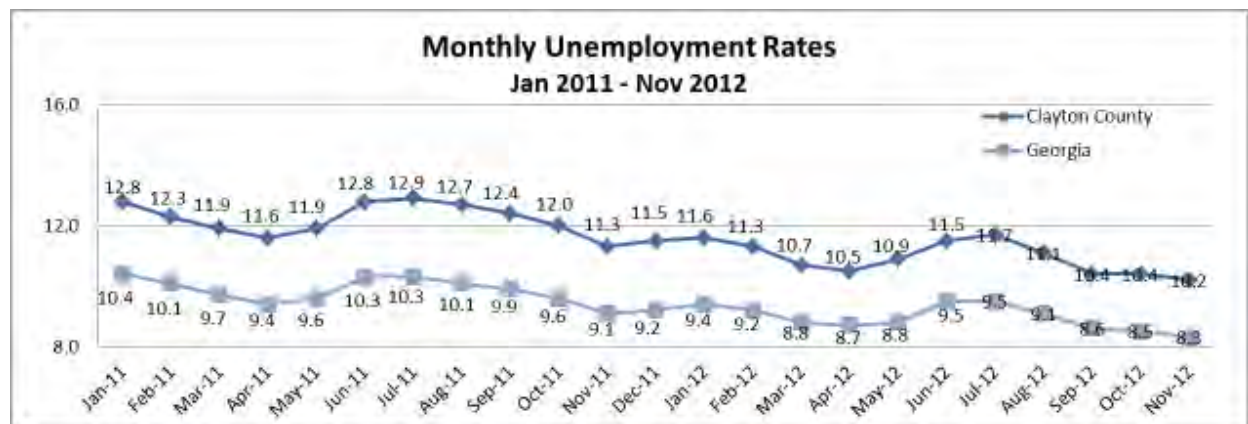
## Top Industries

Logistics-related industries play an integral role in Clayton County's economy. In 2011, 35.4 percent of the total jobs in the county were in the Transportation and Warehousing sectors. Rounding out the top three industries in 2011, as measured by their share of total jobs, were Government (15.3 percent) and Retail Trade (10.1 percent).



## Unemployment

Clayton County's unemployment rate peaked at 12.5% in 2010. The rate has been in a downtrend since then, reaching 10.2 percent in November 2012. The County's unemployment rate has followed the state's overall trend, but has consistently been 2 – 3 points above the state's average rate.





## Personal Income

Total personal income is the sum of all income received by all citizens from all sources. Though Clayton County's income increased by 71.9 percent from 1990 and 2000, given the economic turmoil experienced across the nation during the latter 2000s, it is not surprising that the growth rate slowed to only 27.3 percent between 2000 and 2010. In Georgia, total personal income grew at a much faster rate over the last two decades, increasing by 195 percent from 1990 to 2010.

Total Personal Income	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 2000-2010	Percent Change 1990-2010
Clayton County	\$3,055,488,000	\$5,252,684,000	\$6,684,109,000	71.9%	27.3%	118.8%
Georgia	\$114,381,505,000	\$234,813,754,000	\$337,467,540,000	105.3%	43.7%	195.0%

## Per Capita Personal Income

The County's per capita personal income (the personal income of the county's residents divided by the county's population) increased by 54 percent between 1990 and 2000, nearly half the state's growth rate of 97.8 percent.

Per capita personal income	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 2000-2010	Percent Change 1990-2010
Clayton County	\$16,718	\$22,063	\$25,744	32.0%	16.7%	54.0%
Georgia	\$17,563	\$28,541	\$34,747	62.5%	21.7%	97.8%

## Average Weekly Wage

Average weekly wage measures the amount of income employees, salaried and hourly, earn on average each week. Clayton County's average weekly wage rates increased by 16.1 percent between 2000 and 2011, lower than the state growth rate of 31.8 percent during the same period.

Average Weekly Wages	2000	2005	2011	2000-2005	2005-2011	2000-2011
Clayton County	\$707	\$756	\$821	7%	8.6%	16.1%
Georgia	\$658	\$752	\$867	14%	15.3%	31.8%

## Median Household Income

Between 1990 and 2000, Clayton County's median household income increased by 27.6 percent. This positive growth was followed by a downward trend in the following decade, when the county's median household income dropped by 16.5 percent.

Median Household Income	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 2000-2010
Clayton County	\$33,472	\$42,697	\$35,672	27.6%	-16.5%
Georgia	\$29,021	\$42,433	\$46,430	46.2%	9.4%

## Housing Characteristics

Housing in Clayton County benefited from the significant increase in population over the past two decades. However, this sector was greatly affected during the recession in the late 2000s, and individuals and families across the country found homeownership to be a significant burden on their household budgets. This section provides an overview of housing characteristics in Clayton County that have been benchmarked to the state averages where appropriate. Characteristics reviewed include total households, housing occupancy, housing tenure, rental affordability, and foreclosures.

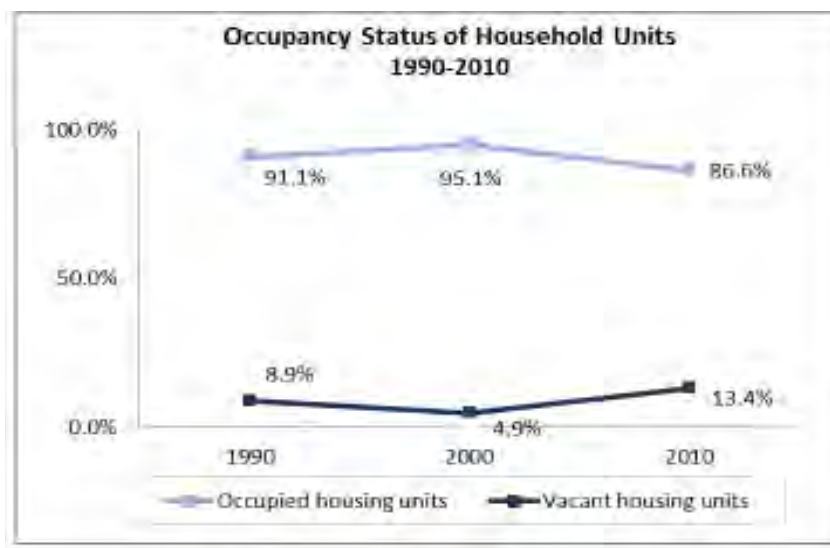
### Total Households

The increase in total number of households in Clayton County from 1990 to 2000 followed the increase in population during that same period. During the ten-year span, households increased by 25.5 percent, slightly lower than the 27.0 percent increase experienced statewide. However, household formation grew at a slower pace during the most recent decade, an increase of 10.2 percent to reach an estimated 90,633 households in Clayton County in 2010.

Households	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change 1990-2000	Percent Change 2000-2010	Percent Change 1990-2010
Clayton County	65,523	82,243	90,633	25.5%	10.2%	38.3%
Georgia	2,366,615	3,006,369	3,585,584	27.0%	19.3%	51.5%

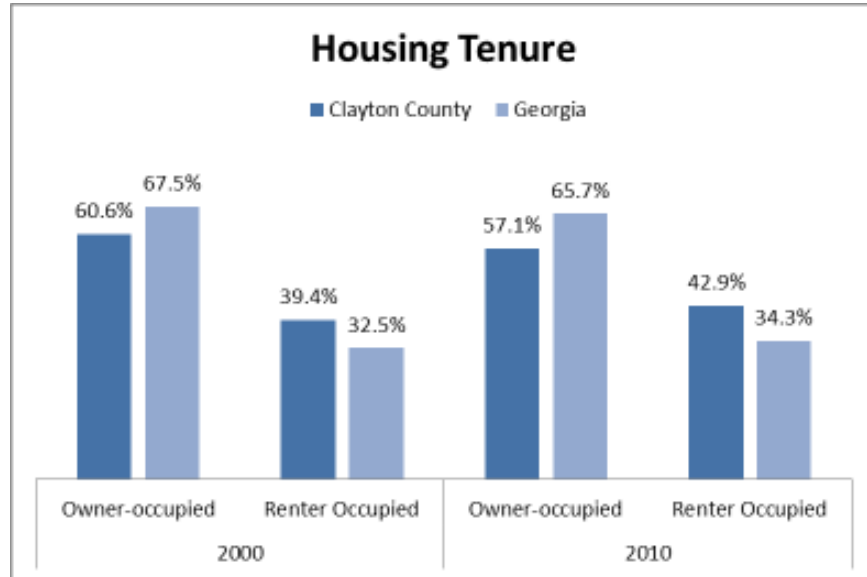
### Housing Occupancy

The number of total housing units, which is comprised of both occupied and vacant housing units, grew simultaneously with the influx of new residents in the County, increasing 45.6 percent from 1990 to 2010. There was a slight increase in the number of occupied housing units between 1990 and 2000, but the trend moved downwards in the last decade as result of the weaker economy. The rate of occupied housing units dropped from 95.1 percent in 2000 to 86.6 percent in 2010. As the number of occupied units fell, the number of vacant housing units increased. In 2010 there were 14,072 vacant housing units in Clayton County, an increase of 233.6 over the past decade.



## Housing Tenure

Comparing the number of occupied housing units in Clayton County that are either owner-occupied or renter occupied shows marginal change from 2000 to 2010. The percent of owner-occupied units dropped from 60.6 percent in 2000 to 57.1 percent in 2010. The percentage of renter-occupied units increased slightly from 39.4 percent in 2000 to 42.9 percent in 2010.



The table below depicts the percentage of owner-occupied and renter occupied units in Clayton County's cities from 2000 to 2010. In percentage terms, the shift in owner-occupied units was the greatest in Lovejoy and Lake City, 32.8 and 18 points respectively. The greatest numeric change occurred in Forest Park, which decreased from 3,730 in 2000 to 2,798 in 2010.

2000 and 2010 Housing Tenure in Cities in Clayton County				
City	Owner-occupied		Renter Occupied	
	2000	2010	2000	2010
College Park (pt)	15.9%	15.1%	84.1%	84.9%
Forest Park	54.5%	46.2%	45.5%	53.8%
Lake City	62.9%	44.9%	37.1%	55.1%
Morrow	60.1%	55.4%	39.9%	44.6%
Jonesboro	53.2%	53.6%	46.8%	46.4%
Lovejoy	88.0%	55.2%	12.0%	44.8%
Riverdale	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%

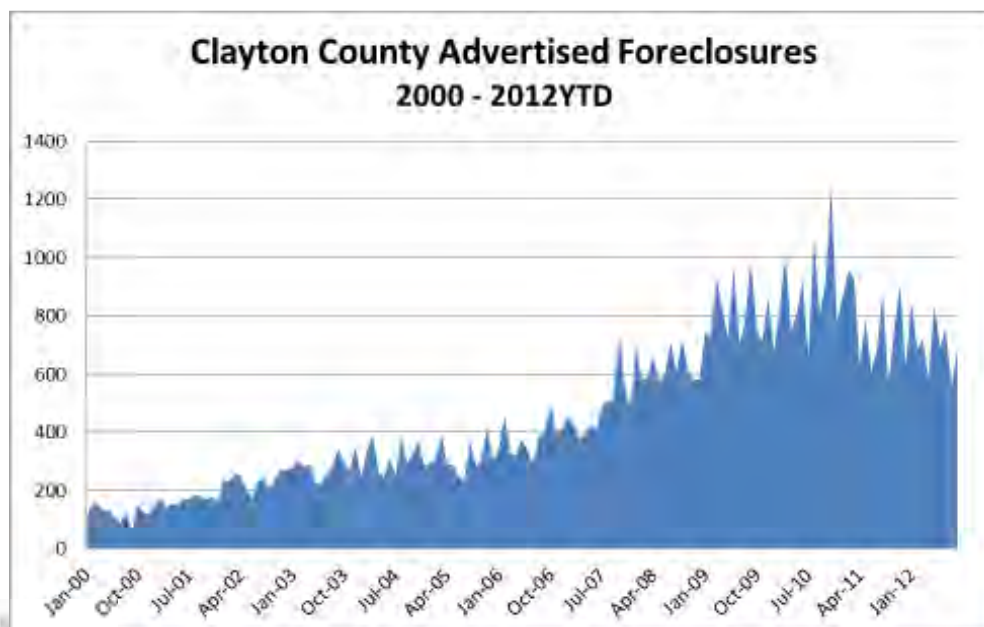
## Rental Affordability

From 2000 to 2010 there were large increases in the fair market rents for efficiencies, one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartment units in Clayton County. Three-bedroom units increased only 8 percent and rates for four-bedroom units actually decreased. Though the rents in the county did not increase as significantly as the state average during that 10-year time period, the actual rental rates were much higher than the state's average.

Housing Affordability: Fair Market Rent		2000	2012	Percent Change 2000-2012
Clayton County	Zero-Bedroom	\$549	\$699	27%
	One-Bedroom	\$611	\$757	24%
	Two-Bedroom	\$712	\$842	18%
	Three-Bedroom	\$949	\$1,025	8%
	Four-Bedroom	\$1,148	\$1,118	-3%
Georgia	Zero-Bedroom	\$329	\$504	53%
	One-Bedroom	\$387	\$547	41%
	Two-Bedroom	\$466	\$630	35%
	Three-Bedroom	\$612	\$803	31%
	Four-Bedroom	\$703	\$905	29%

## Foreclosures

As the economy deteriorated and local jobs were lost, more and more people found it difficult to continue making monthly mortgage payments. This problem plagued the nation as a whole, but was particularly acute in Metro Atlanta, which had been dependent upon the growing construction industry for decades. In Clayton County, advertised foreclosures peaked in November of 2010 and have slowly trended downward. In 2011, advertised foreclosures totaled 9,193, a drop of 12.0 percent from the previous year. Year-to-date foreclosure data in 2012 (through September) is down 7.8 percent from the same period of time (January – September) in 2011.



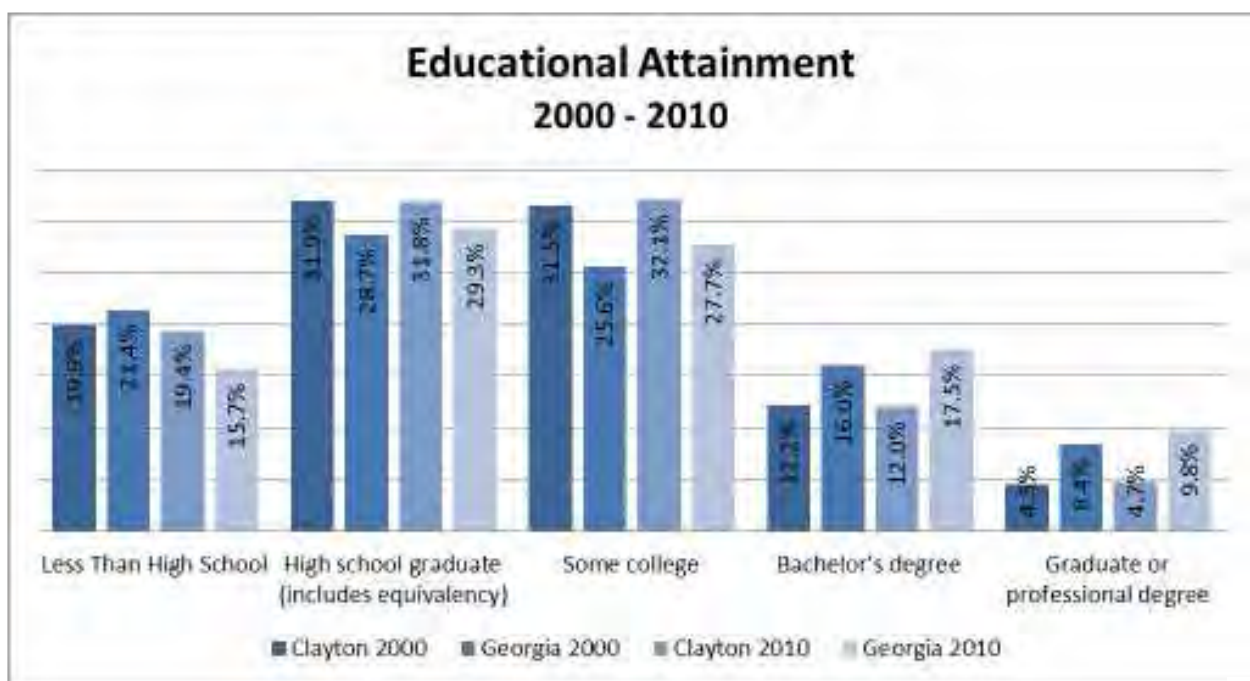
## Educational Characteristics

The purpose of this section is to review Clayton County educational characteristics and compare them to the state when appropriate. Three educational characteristics were analyzed, including educational attainment, graduation rates, and dropout rates. Over the past two decades there has been an increase in the percent of county residents who attended had some college. A newly implemented formula for calculating graduation and dropout rates has made it more difficult to compare the changes overtime for those two metrics.

## Educational Attainment

The percent of Clayton County residents (25 years old and over) who did not have a high school diploma decreased over the last two decades. In 1990, 22.8 percent of persons over 25 in Clayton County had less than a high school education, which was lower than the state average of 29.1 percent. Although the percent of residents without a high school diploma decreased to 19.4 percent in 2010, it was higher than Georgia's reported 15.7 percent. Of all educational attainment levels, the percent of Clayton County residents with some college increased the most, rising 5.4 percentage points from 1990 to 2010. This growth was in line with the state as the number of Georgians with some college increased by 5.7 percent during the same time period. The percent of residents in the county with bachelors or graduate degrees remained relatively flat between 2000 and 2010.

Educational Attainment	1990		2000		2010	
	Clayton	Georgia	Clayton	Georgia	Clayton	Georgia
Persons 25 years and over:	110,326	4,023,420	141,554	5,185,965	156,597	6,235,623
Less Than High School	22.8%	29.1%	19.9%	21.4%	19.4%	15.7%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	35.8%	29.7%	31.9%	28.7%	31.8%	29.3%
Some college	26.7%	22.0%	31.5%	25.6%	32.1%	27.7%
Bachelor's degree	10.3%	12.9%	12.2%	16.0%	12.0%	17.5%
Graduate or professional degree	4.5%	6.4%	4.5%	8.4%	4.7%	9.8%



## Graduation Rates

The number of students graduating from Clayton County's school system during the 2005/2006 school year was 3,005 -- a rate of 69.3 percent, just slightly lower than the state average of 70.8 percent. The graduation rate for both Clayton County and Georgia increased for the 2010/2011 school year to 80.2 and 80.9 percent, respectively. These rates were calculated using the Leaver method -- the previous formula used by all of the educational districts across the state to calculate graduation rates. According to the Georgia Department of Education, beginning in 2011, districts in Georgia began calculating graduation rates using the cohort method so as to adhere to a 2008 update of federal education regulations. Although the new formula allows states to uniformly compare graduation rates, it may also show dramatic differences from the rate reported using the old method. The new approach is calculated using the number of freshmen who graduate within four years and includes adjustments for student transfers. Previously, districts were able to count students who took longer than four years to graduate.

Graduation Rates <sup>1</sup>	2005-2006 school year		2010-2011 school year	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Clayton County	3,005	69.30%	4,209	80.20%
Georgia	102,372	70.80%	131,012	80.90%
<sup>1</sup> These graduation rates were calculated using the previous method (Leaver method)				

Graduation Rates Using Cohort Method	2010-2011 school year	
	Number	Percent
Clayton County	4,209	51.50%
Georgia	131,012	67.50%

While the actual number of students who graduated remains unchanged for the 2010/2011 school year, using the new cohort method resulted in a downward revision of the graduation rate in Clayton County. The revised graduation rate for 2010/2011 was 51.5 percent, which was much lower than Georgia's reported average rate of 67.5 percent.

Within the various subgroups, the county's graduation rates are lower than those of the state. Students with Disabilities have the lowest graduation rate in the county. During the 2010/2011 school year, students within this subgroup graduated at a rate of 18.7 percent, 11.1 percentage points lower than the state's graduation rate for students within the subgroup.

Graduation Rates by Subgroup <sup>1</sup>	2005-2006				2010-2011			
	Clayton		Georgia		Clayton		Georgia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	1,447	64.2%	51,148	67.0%	2,133	45.4%	66,707	63.3%
Female	1,558	73.9%	51,224	74.5%	2,076	57.8%	64,305	71.8%
Students with Disabilities	341	26.4%	10,442	32.4%	438	18.7%	14,041	29.8%
Students without Disabilities	2,664	74.7%	91,930	75.1%	3,771	55.3%	116,971	72.0%
Limited English Proficient	73	47.9%	2,065	39.5%	184	26.1%	3,397	32.1%
Economically Disadvantaged	1,675	68.8%	33,532	61.5%	3,111	50.1%	61,370	59.4%
Not Economical Disadvantaged	1,330	69.8%	68,840	75.3%	1,098	55.3%	69,642	74.6%
Migrant	-	-	164	32.3%	-	-		50.0%
<sup>1</sup> Unlike the rates shown for the 2005-2006 school year, 2010-2011 school year rates were calculated using the newly implemented cohort calculation method.								



## Dropout Rates

The dropout rate for the 2005/2006 school year in Clayton County was 1.1 percent, lower than the state's average rate of 4.7 percent.

The county's rate increased to 5.3 percent for the 2010/2011 school year, while the state's decreased to 3.7 percent. However, the discrepancy in the dropout rates for the two school years could be related to the new

formula implemented by the Georgia Department of Education. Under the new formula, schools must count students as a dropout when the school cannot verify that the student left their system and enrolled in another.

Much like graduation rates, Students with Disabilities had the highest rate of dropout, 8.4 percent for the 2010/2011 school year. Further, for the 2010/2011 school year, Clayton County had a higher dropout rates than the state in every subgroup with the exception of the Limited English Proficient subgroup.

Drop Out Rates <sup>1</sup>	2005-2006 school year		2010-2011 school year	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Clayton County	16,461	1.10%	15,759	5.30%
Georgia	499,000	4.70%	520,245	3.70%

<sup>1</sup>Rates for the 2010-2011 school year were calculated using the newly implemented cohort calculation method.

Drop Out Rates by Subgroup <sup>1</sup>	2005-2006				2010-2011			
	Clayton		Georgia		Clayton		Georgia	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	8,223	1.5%	252,071	5.6%	8,061	5.9%	264,652	4.3%
Female	8,238	0.7%	246,929	3.8%	7,698	4.7%	255,593	3.0%
Students with Disabilities	1,925	1.8%	56,553	6.1%	1,976	8.4%	59,041	5.8%
Students without Disabilities	14,536	1.0%	442,447	4.5%	13,783	4.9%	461,204	3.4%
Limited English Proficient	540	1.7%	14,105	6.6%	662	5.0%	13,975	5.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	10,684	1.2%	197,458	4.9%	12,250	5.1%	261,982	3.6%
Not Economical Disadvantaged	5,777	0.9%	301,542	4.5%	3,509	6.2%	258,263	3.7%
Migrant	-	-	931	8.5%	-	-	773	3.1%

<sup>1</sup>Rates for the 2010-2011 school year were calculated using the newly implemented cohort calculation method.

# Stakeholder Interview Analysis

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## Overview

Central to any strategic planning process is the gathering of insights from community leaders and active citizens. Leadership exists across all sectors in Clayton County, including government, civic organizations, the business community, the educational system and other key institutions. Over a two-week period the Georgia Tech team conducted over 50, one-on-one, confidential interviews with formal and informal leaders from Clayton County. The interviews were primarily conducted face-to-face in Clayton County<sup>2</sup>, although some stakeholders unavailable during that two-week period were rescheduled for phone interviews the following week.

Each interviewee was asked a series of 31 questions, designed to collect their opinions and insights on the following eight topics:

1. Awareness & Expectations for Economic Development
2. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (S.W.O.T.)
3. Priorities for Economic Development
4. Attraction/Retention of Industry
5. Tourism
6. Retail
7. Entrepreneurship
8. Implementation of Strategic Plan

In addition to conducting interview with community stakeholders, the Georgia Tech team spoke with 15 external stakeholders. External stakeholders are individual who have an impact on Clayton County's economic development opportunities, specifically business attraction. Georgia Tech spoke with representatives from several divisions within the Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Power, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and others. Many of the interviewees play a day-to-day role in the attraction of industrial prospects to the State of Georgia, and were asked to share their thoughts on Clayton County's strengths and weaknesses, as they pertain to economic development opportunities. The results of those interviews are included alongside responses from community stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> The Georgia Tech team would like to offer a special thanks to the City of Morrow and staff of the Morrow Center, who graciously offered to provide space where in-person confidential interviews could take place.

## Awareness and Expectations

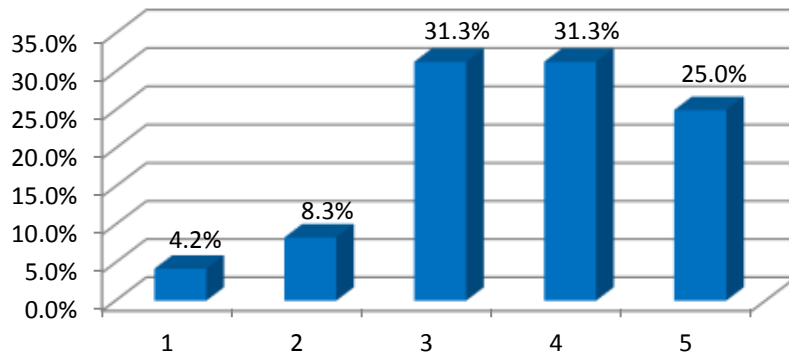
The first question asked community stakeholders to state how familiar they were with Clayton County's economic development programs.

A response of 1 meant that you had very little familiarity, and a response of 5 meant that you were very familiar with the county's economic development activities and programs.

Most community stakeholders were at

least somewhat familiar with Clayton County's economic development programs and activities, reflecting the level of involvement that most interviewees had with public affairs in Clayton County.

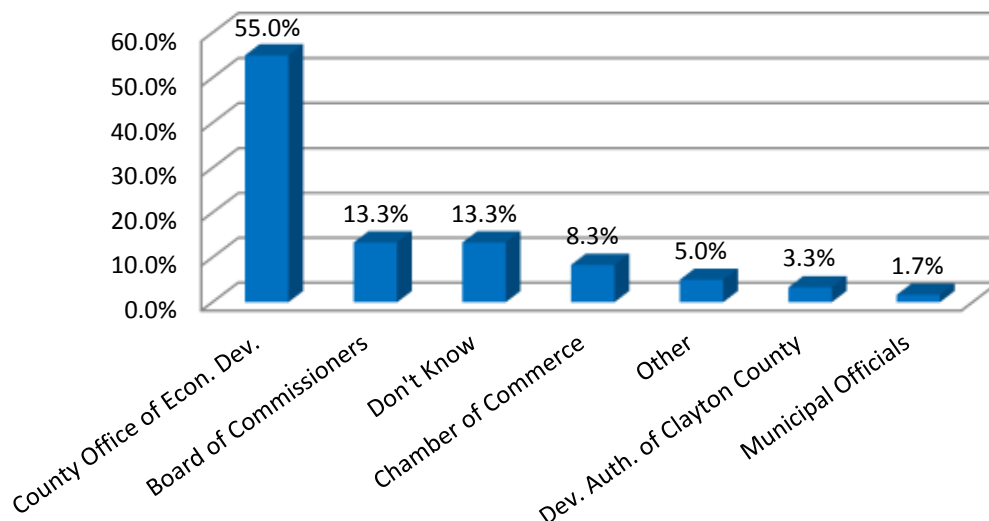
On a scale of 1 – 5 (1 = lowest and 5 = highest), how familiar are you with Clayton County's economic development program?



*External Stakeholders indicated that they were slightly less familiar with Clayton County's economic development program, with just over 73% of external stakeholders responding with a score of 3 or higher.*

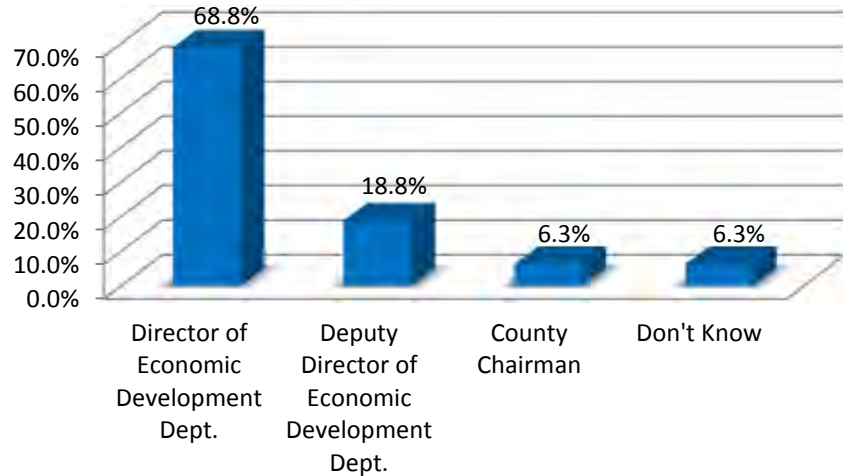
Interviewees were asked to name Clayton County's primary point of contact for economic development, as a way to measure whether differences existed in who the county's leadership turned to for economic development information or insight. While there was some variation in the organizations identified, the county's Office of Economic Development was recognized as the primary point of contact by over half of the interviewees.

### Point of Contact for Economic Development in Clayton County



While 55.0 percent of internal stakeholders identified the Clayton County Economic Development Office as the primary point of contact for economic development in Clayton County, 87.6 percent of external stakeholders identified that

**Who is the primary point of contact for economic development in Clayton County (external stakeholders)?**



department as their primary point of contact for economic development related matters. The difference comes from the role that each stakeholder plays. While local leaders have a wide variety of concerns pertaining to economic development in Clayton County, most statewide officials are focused on industry recruitment and retention, which falls within the purview of the county's Office of Economic Development. It is a positive sign that such a high percentage of external stakeholders identified that office as their point of contact with Clayton County.

Interviewees were asked to identify key responsibilities for advancing economic development in Clayton County. Responses to this question varied from specific economic development tasks to overarching concerns such as communication and marketing. The following list shows the wide set of expectations that community leaders had, and demonstrates why the need exists for developing specific roles and responsibilities for various components of economic development in Clayton County.

1. Strategic and Comprehensive Economic Development Activities
  - Recruitment and relocation of businesses, industry, and investment, small business assistance and workforce development, use of incentives, land-use planning and redevelopment.
2. Communication
  - Coordination with cities, local departments, state agencies, and other stakeholders to ensure cohesion, providing answers and information to potential, new, and existing businesses, and focusing on relationship building.
3. Awareness
  - Maintaining awareness of trends across the larger region, identifying the issues specific to Clayton County, and communicating what is happening in Clayton County to the larger business community.
4. Outreach
  - Promotion, marketing, and public relations, traveling to trade shows to promote the county, and maintaining a local, regional, national, and international focus.
5. Focus on advancing specific industries or projects
  - Film Industry, Aviation Museum, Airport as Logistics Hub, and Tourism.

In addition to identifying a primary point of contact for economic development, **community leaders identified a broad array of other actors within Clayton County who should play some role in advancing economic growth.** The Chamber of Commerce and municipalities were listed more than any other entity. Several specific individuals were listed once, and comprise the “other” category.

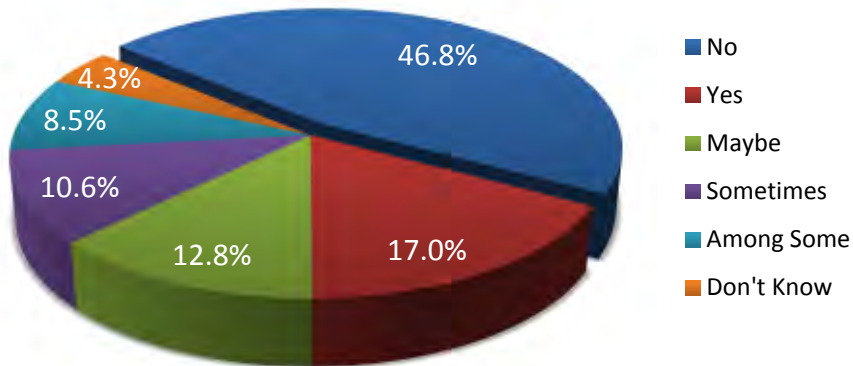
Economic Development Actors	Percent of Responses
Chamber of Commerce	14.3%
Municipalities	12.1%
Municipal Economic Development Departments	8.6%
Development Authority	7.1%
Clayton County Office of Economic Development	6.4%
Board of Commissioners	5.7%
Clayton State University	5.0%
Clayton County Public Schools	4.3%
Georgia Power	3.6%
Clayton County Water Authority	2.9%
Business Community	2.9%
None	2.1%
Don't Know	1.4%
Other	23.6%

A key reason to identify economic development actors in Clayton County is to assess potential collaborations and partnerships. Economic development is a “team” sport, and requires cooperation among a large number of government officials, including those with oversight of land-use, zoning and community development decisions.

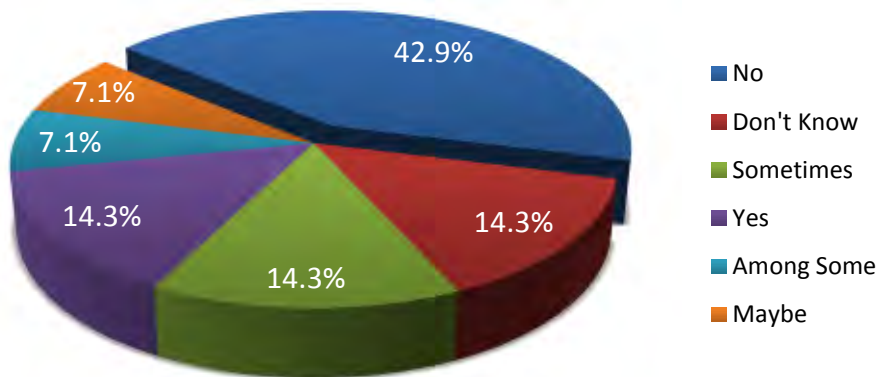
**The Georgia Tech team asked both community leaders and external stakeholders to evaluate current levels of coordination among the individuals and organizations engaged in furthering Clayton County’s economic development goals.**

The subsequent pie charts show that both internal and external stakeholders shared a very similar view regarding whether different groups and key individuals in Clayton County worked in a coordinated fashion to promote economic development. Almost half, 46.8, of internal community leaders said no. The view among external stakeholders was very similar, as 42.9 percent of those interviewed said no to the same question. Only 12.8 percent of internal stakeholders, and 14.3 percent of external stakeholders, said that economic development entities worked in a coordinated manner to promote economic development. Other interviewees said that some groups worked together while other did not, or that groups worked with one another on occasion.

**Do you believe there is a coordinated effort amongst all the individuals and organizations you listed (internal)?**



**Do you believe there is a coordinated effort amongst all the individuals and organizations you listed (external)?**





One of the foremost reasons to engage in strategic planning is to assess whether a community-wide consensus exists regarding overall economic development goals. There are many community interests in Clayton County that are working on worthwhile causes related to community and economic development. **The Georgia Tech team asked community and external stakeholders to identify Clayton County's economic development goals (not what they *should* be, but what they *actually are*).**

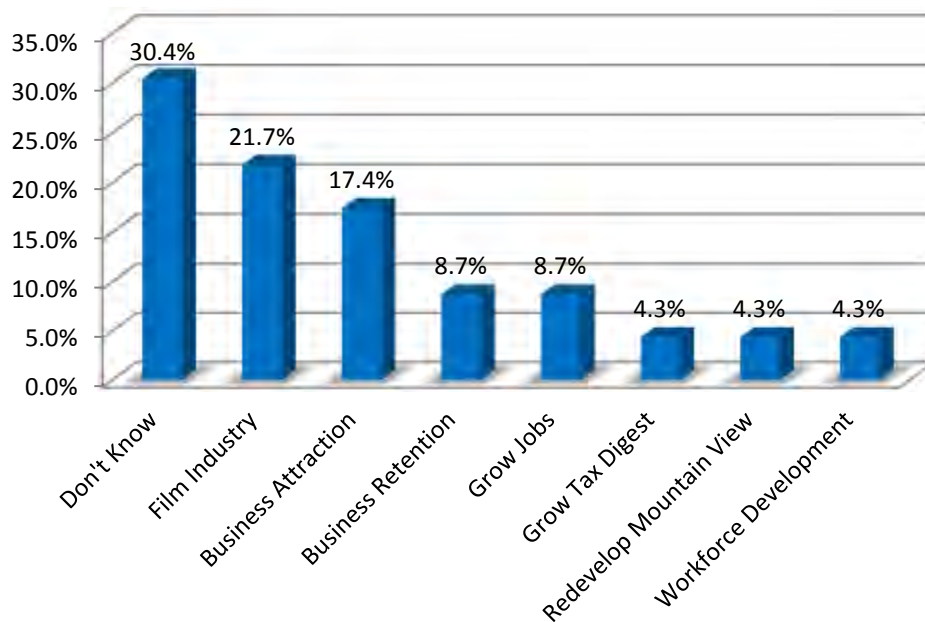
Approximately 55.0 percent of community stakeholders, and 30.4 percent of external stakeholders, could not identify the county's current economic development goals.

Of those interviewees who believed they were familiar with the county's existing goals, the top responses included:

1. Attracting New Businesses; including in the areas of logistics and aviation, film, and the creation of an aviation museum
2. Sustaining and Retaining Existing Businesses
3. Retaining and Creating Jobs
4. Improving Transportation and Infrastructure
5. Increasing Housing Opportunities

*External stakeholders shared a similar mix of responses, as seen in the following chart. Several external stakeholders specifically pointed to the county's efforts to attract the film industry.*

**What are the overall goals of economic development in Clayton County (external stakeholders)?**



## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T) Analysis

Community stakeholders were asked to list all of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats they could identify for Clayton County. The responses were not limited to economic development related topics, but to anything they perceived as essential towards Clayton County’s progress. Strengths and threats were defined as existing items, while opportunities and threats were based on future concerns.



Across all community stakeholder interviews, a total of 698 responses were shared. Response types ranged from physical features, such as transportation networks and the county’s water system, to more abstract concepts, such as leadership and external perception of the community.

Strengths tended to be physical attributes, such as the county’s proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and downtown Atlanta, or physical features within the county such as Clayton State University, the Clayton County Water Authority and the county’s recreational amenities. Weaknesses were broader in scope, and focused on overarching concerns such as leadership, internal and external perception of the county, governance and real estate trends.

Community stakeholders identified opportunities that would address some of their key concerns, such as a new willingness to collaboration stemming from new leadership within the county. However, most responses identified additional opportunities that were specific and physical in nature, such as redeveloping Fort Gillem and building upon the recent Porsche development. Long-term threats were more closely linked with existing weaknesses, highlight a lack of optimism that the county’s existing challenges would be resolved in the near future.

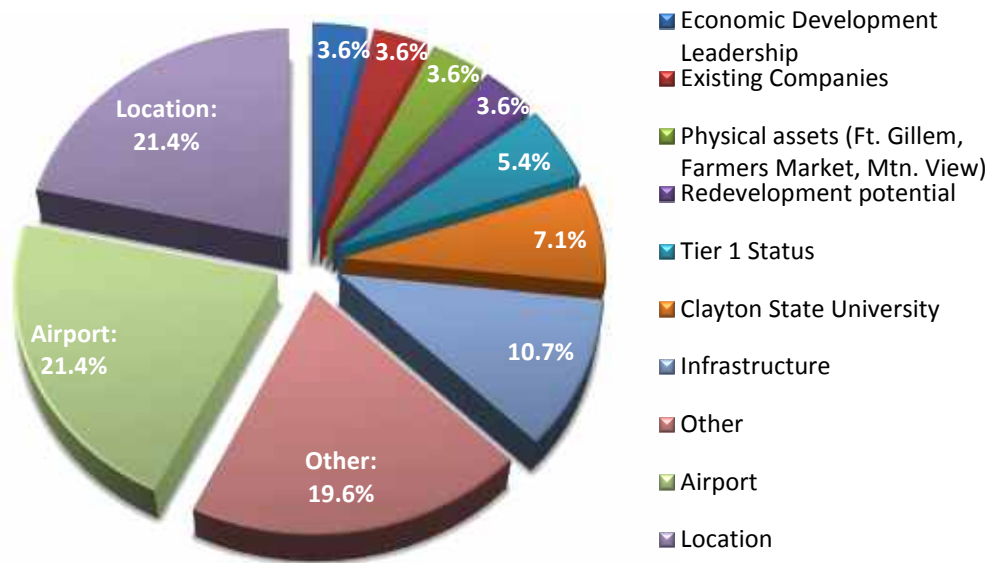
The following table shows the top 10 responses given by community stakeholders when asked to name Clayton County's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Rank	Strength	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
1	Airport	Perception (Internal and External)	Leveraging the Airport	Perception (Internal and External)
2	Transportation Infrastructure	Leadership	Capitalizing on Location	Out-Migration
3	Clayton State University	Local Governance	Improving and Promoting Transportation	Intergovernmental Relationships
4	Water Authority	K-12 Education	Fort Gillem Development	Leadership
5	Location	Planning and Growth Management	Building upon Porsche Development	Housing Market
6	Health Care	Transportation	Strengthening and Diversifying Economic Base	School System
7	Cost of Living	Fiscal/Tax Base	Working Together/ Collaboration	Crime
8	Development and Redevelopment Potential	Perception of K-12 Education	New Leadership Emerging	Fiscal/Tax Issues
9	Parks and Recreation	Board of Education	Promoting Community Amenities	School System Accreditation
10	Existing Industry	Real Estate Market	Improving Education	Board of Education

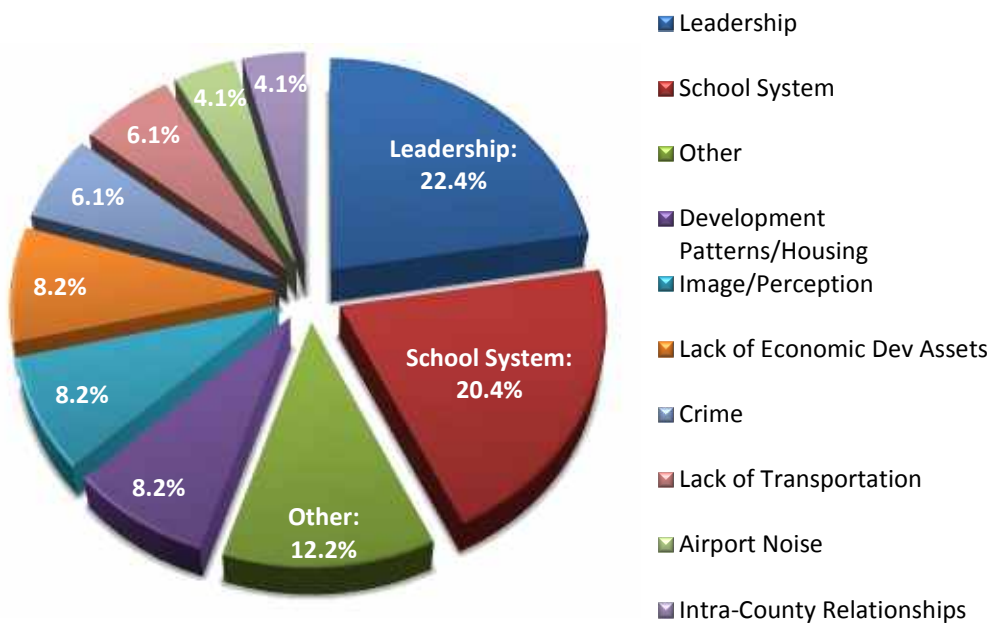
External stakeholders had a different view of strengths and weaknesses within Clayton County. Each external stakeholder was asked to consider their answers solely within the context of advancing economic development in Clayton County. It is also important to note that most of the individuals interviewed in this group focus on business attraction, and specifically industrial attraction. For example, multiple external stakeholders identified Clayton County's Tier 1 job tax-credit status as a strength for economic development, but that particular tax-credit is only applied in very specific circumstances, and would not be something highlight as a strength by those living within the community.

The following charts should be reviewed within this context, and used a guide to better understand the thinking of statewide agencies that play an integral role towards promoting Clayton County to prospective companies.

### Clayton County's Key Strengths for Economic Development



### Clayton County's Key Economic Development Weaknesses



## Priorities for Economic Development

Community stakeholders were asked to weigh the importance of different economic development activities against one another. While the first set of questions were designed to measure each interviewee's awareness and expectations for economic development in Clayton County, the remainder of the interview asks them to consider specific programs within the context of Clayton County's fiscal resources.

**This question asked community stakeholders to rank eight different economic development activities in order of importance (1 through 8), based on how the county (including all cities and unincorporated areas) should invest their time, money and personnel resources.** The eight listed activities are the most common components of local economic development programs in cities and counties within the State of Georgia. A rank of 1 indicated the highest level of importance an interviewee could assign, and a rank of 8 indicated the lowest level of importance. The table below shows each economic development activity on the left. The size of each circle represents the frequency in which that response was given by community stakeholders. The bigger the circle, the more people ranked the activity at that number.

Most community stakeholders ranked recruiting new industry and helping sustain/expand existing industry as a 1 or 2, demonstrating the importance of those two goals to Clayton County. Redeveloping blighted commercial areas was also ranked relatively high by most community stakeholders, whereas promoting tourism, maintaining and enhancing downtown areas, and supporting the arts, environment and cultural amenities were most frequently ranked as a lower priority. Supporting entrepreneurs and developing a quality workforce had a wide degree of variety in how they were ranked by community stakeholders, and were generally considered mid-level priorities for economic development in Clayton County.

Economic Development Priorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Recruiting new industry to move to your community	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●
Helping local businesses sustain and expand their operations	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-
Developing a quality workforce	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Redeveloping blighted commercial areas	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Supporting entrepreneurs/fostering business start-up activity	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maintaining and enhancing vibrant downtowns and community centers	●	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Supporting and enhancing the arts, environment, and other cultural amenities	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
Promoting tourism opportunities in the county	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●



## Economic Development Activities

In addition to asking community stakeholders to prioritize economic development activities, the Georgia Tech team posed a series of questions to better understand the community’s perspective on many of those specific topics. External stakeholders were also asked to provide their insight on some of these topics, although primarily on business recruitment activities.

### Business Attraction

Clayton County has a large and diversified array of assets that contribute towards attracting business to the community. The county’s proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and to the rest of metro Atlanta is a key locational advantage. The county’s physical transportation infrastructure, from direct access to the airport for freight cargo, to the extensive freeway and rail networks, contribute to the attraction and retention of logistics-centered business. However, the county also has several attributes that set it apart from other metro Atlanta communities. Chief among these is the county’s water resources, managed by the Clayton County Water Authority. Clayton State University, as a growing four-year public university, also provides an important human capital resource not found in all of metro Atlanta’s surrounding counties. **The adjacent**

County Assets for Business Attraction	Rank
Location	1
Interstate Access and Infrastructure	2
Water System	3
Incentives and Taxes	4
Airport	5
Arts & Culture	6
Low Real Estate Costs	7
Clayton State University	8
Land Availability	9
Workforce	10
Rail Access	11
State Farmers Market	12

**table shows the most frequently mentioned assets that contribute towards attracting business to Clayton County.**

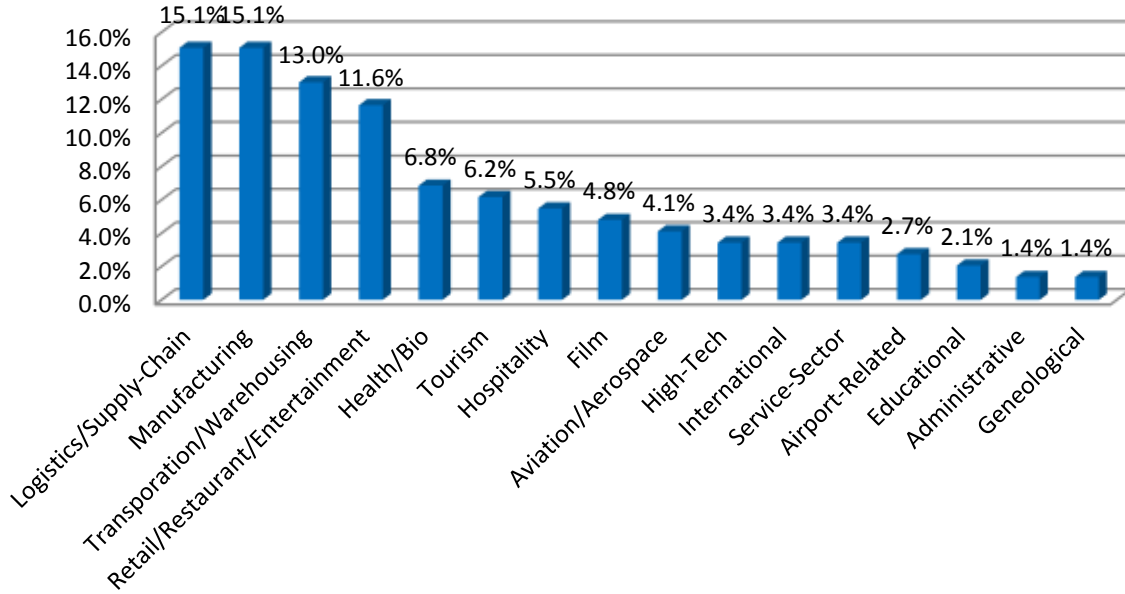
Clayton County has a large private sector, and has been working to attract companies over the past two decades. However, those efforts have not remained consistent over the years. As one interviewee stated:

*“The County has a wide variety of industries they’ve attracted, but it’s been scatter-shot, and not based on a concerted plan.”*

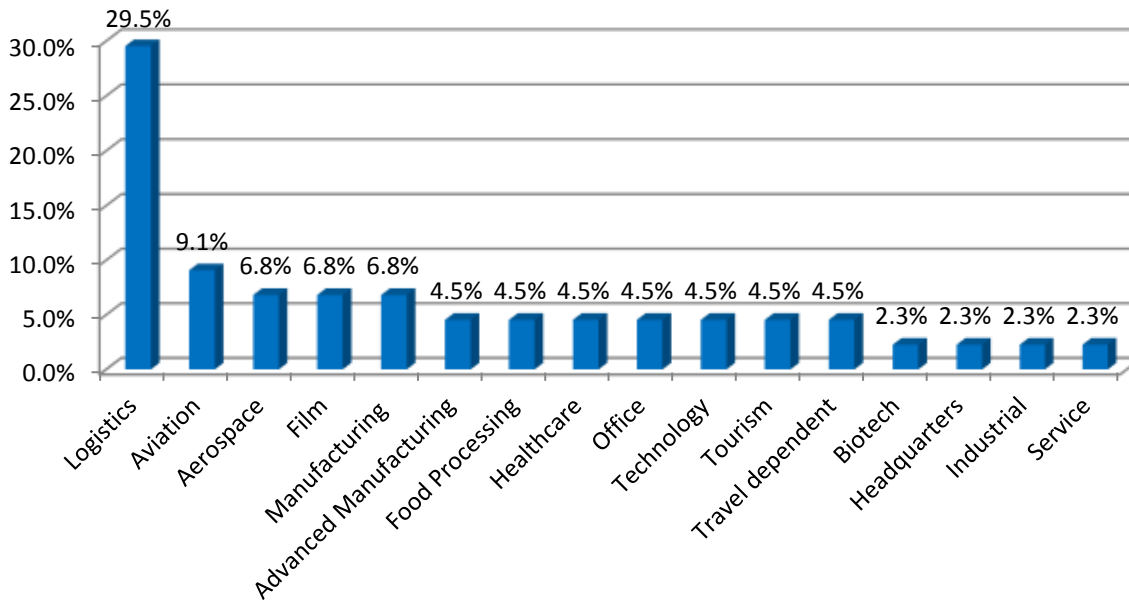
The work of attracting companies to a community in Georgia is typically conducted as a partnership between local economic development organizations and various state departments. **As observed in the following two charts, both community and external stakeholders see opportunities for a variety of business types that could be attracted to Clayton County.**

Key differences exist between the perspective of community and external stakeholders. While community stakeholder listed manufacturing as an industry they believe makes sense for Clayton County to try and attract, state partners viewed manufacturing as a very low possibility. External stakeholders viewed Clayton County as best suited to attract companies from the logistics industry. Working with external stakeholders to attract non-logistics related companies is an important task for county leaders going forward.

**What industries and types of companies make sense for Clayton County to try and attract (internal)?**



**What industries and types of companies make sense for Clayton County to try and attract (external)?**



**Community stakeholders were asked which actions the county or cities could take to smooth the process of recruiting and retaining industry to Clayton County.** Their responses recognized that the county had many of the physical attributes needed to attract industry. Areas for improvement focused on communication, cooperation, and working collaboratively to eliminate obstacles. The following five categories summarize the most frequent responses.

1. Funding and Resources
  - Finding access to capital, creating more funding opportunities for businesses, and looking for opportunities to increase resources.
2. Clarify and Unite
  - Clarify the vision and business opportunities that exist in the county, as a means to sell the county and be truthful about challenges and plans to overcome them. Put emphasis on strategic planning, coordination, clarification, improving accessibility to information, and the unification of services.
3. Cooperation and Communication
  - Emphasizes collaboration, cohesion, and providing a single-source for information and answers.
4. Public Relations and Outreach
  - Have a dedicated PR person for the county, and spearhead the development of a coordinated marketing effort.
5. Eliminate Obstacles and Create Opportunities
  - Allow for ease of conducting business in the county, including streamlining licensing and permitting services.

## **Economic Development Activities: Tourism, Retail & Entrepreneurship**

Broad consensus exists within Clayton County to emphasize business attraction and retention, but there is less agreement around the role of tourism, retail redevelopment and entrepreneurship promotion as economic development strategies. Each of these areas already play a critical role in Clayton County, but more discussion will need to occur around each of them in order to create a consensus viewpoint that the majority of community leaders and stakeholders can embrace.

### **Tourism**

The concept of tourism as an economic development strategy drew a sharply divided set of opinions. Community stakeholders named a large variety of attractions and events that draw people into the county from elsewhere. The National and State Archives, Road to Tara Museum, Clayton State University sporting events, Clayton County Water Authority wetlands, Spivey Hall, and Arts Clayton were all frequently mentioned as activities that draw in tourists from around the metro Atlanta region. Opinion on how aggressively the county should promote these amenities remains divided. The following two quotes provide an example of the different viewpoints heard during the community stakeholder interviews.

*“If people come to Atlanta and go to the History Center, or want to learn about the civil war, we have to let them know that their journey is not complete without a visit to Clayton County.”*

*“Tourism should be a third tier economic development strategy, not the primary goal. No one can define tourism in Clayton County in a digestible way. It doesn't resonate with anyone. The focus should be on things that build neighborhoods, not trying to draw people.”*

Despite the lack of consensus, dollars drawn in from outside the community do provide a greater economic impact than circulating dollars from current community residents. An overall vision and approach to tourism attraction and promotion needs to be developed before the community will fully embrace the implementation of a coordinated strategy.

## Retail

Unlike tourism, the loss of retail is unanimously recognized to have harmed Clayton County's economy over the past decade. Asked to rate the current performance of the retail sector in Clayton County on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest), not one community stakeholder gave above a three. Opinions on how to best address this change in the local economy were divided, reflecting its mid-level priority ranking for economic development in the county.

The most frequent suggestions for improving the retail landscape in Clayton County included:

1. Improving Aesthetics
  - Includes renovating building facades, adding landscaping, and creating additional green-space.
2. Focusing on Infrastructure
  - Improving security in the Mt. Zion Road and Tara Boulevard areas and adding traffic-calming measures.
3. Repurposing for Reuse
  - Consider areas for mixed-use developments, commercial or flexible business spaces. Recognize that at least some of previous retail centers are now functionally obsolete, and may need to be demolished.

The concept of repurposing or removing the total amount of retail space available in the county, had support from the majority of community stakeholders. Over 70 percent of interviewees said the county should at least consider different uses, including mixed-use residential and industrial.

## Entrepreneurship

There was more consistent support among community stakeholders for encouraging, supporting and providing funding for entrepreneurship-related economic development activities in Clayton County. Community stakeholders displayed interest in implementing several strategies. The most frequently suggested strategies included:

1. Promoting Current Programs
  - Raise awareness of Clayton State University's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and promote other resources through Chamber of Commerce, College Park's Club E, other resources at Clayton State University.
2. Reform the Process
  - Suggestions included a joint effort between the Chamber, SBDC, and economic development community to create an entrepreneur friendly environment, streamlining the process of working with county departments, and collaboration between the cities and county.
3. Education
  - Offer assistance in person and online with developing business plans and securing business loans, helping small business owners think through the risks of entrepreneurship, creating a mentoring program and working with the Clayton County school system to include curriculums on encouraging the growth of ideas and creativity.

4. Incubation
  - Work with developers to provide new shared spaces for entrepreneurs and small businesses.
5. Strengthen Commitment to Local Business
  - Utilize local businesses for contracting purposes and create buy-local campaigns.

Many community stakeholders made a connection between vacant retail spaces and the need to promote entrepreneurship in the county. They focused on the need to add a different type of retail space in the county, and on finding new ways to fill vacant store fronts. The following quote is an example of that sentiment:

*“There are some illustrations of communities that use what amounts to retail incubation – support for artists and other selected vendors to be able to use some square footage in places like underutilized or abandoned strip malls with modest investments and cosmetic features for those activities. Subsidize support for those individuals, [and provide] business support activities to help individuals who are not always well informed about traditional business practices. Pop-up retail combined with a modified business incubator guided towards retail trade.”*

## Strategic Plan Implementation

Community stakeholders consistently stated their desire to see the strategic plan implemented, but also expressed doubt regarding how fully the plan would be embraced. Asked what would advance implementation, community stakeholder offered a wide variety of suggestions. The most frequently discussed approaches are listed below, organized into five broad categories.

1. Partnerships as Critical to Success
  - Partnerships across a multitude of entities and organizations were considered instrumental to seeing the plan implemented. These included countywide partnerships and collaboration, partnerships among the broader public and partnerships with the business community.
2. Sustainability and Governance
  - The plan should be adopted by county and city governments so that regardless of the office-holder it can move forward. The plan will need a key driver to ensure forward progress.
3. Develop Short, Medium and Long-Term Tasks
  - The implementation plan will need to spell out specific tasks, and assign roles and responsibilities. Timelines and accountability measure need to be built into the implementation plan. Immediate deliverable that can be accomplished within 3-6 months should also be identified.
4. Communication
  - Communicate regularly with all community stakeholders on the plan’s progress and challenges being implemented.
5. Tracking Progress, Successes & Reporting
  - Recognizing accomplishments, regardless of scope or size, should a component of implementing the strategic plan.