



# EVERY ACRE MATTERS

**GEORGIA CONSERVANCY'S PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES, AND PAST EFFORTS  
PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**





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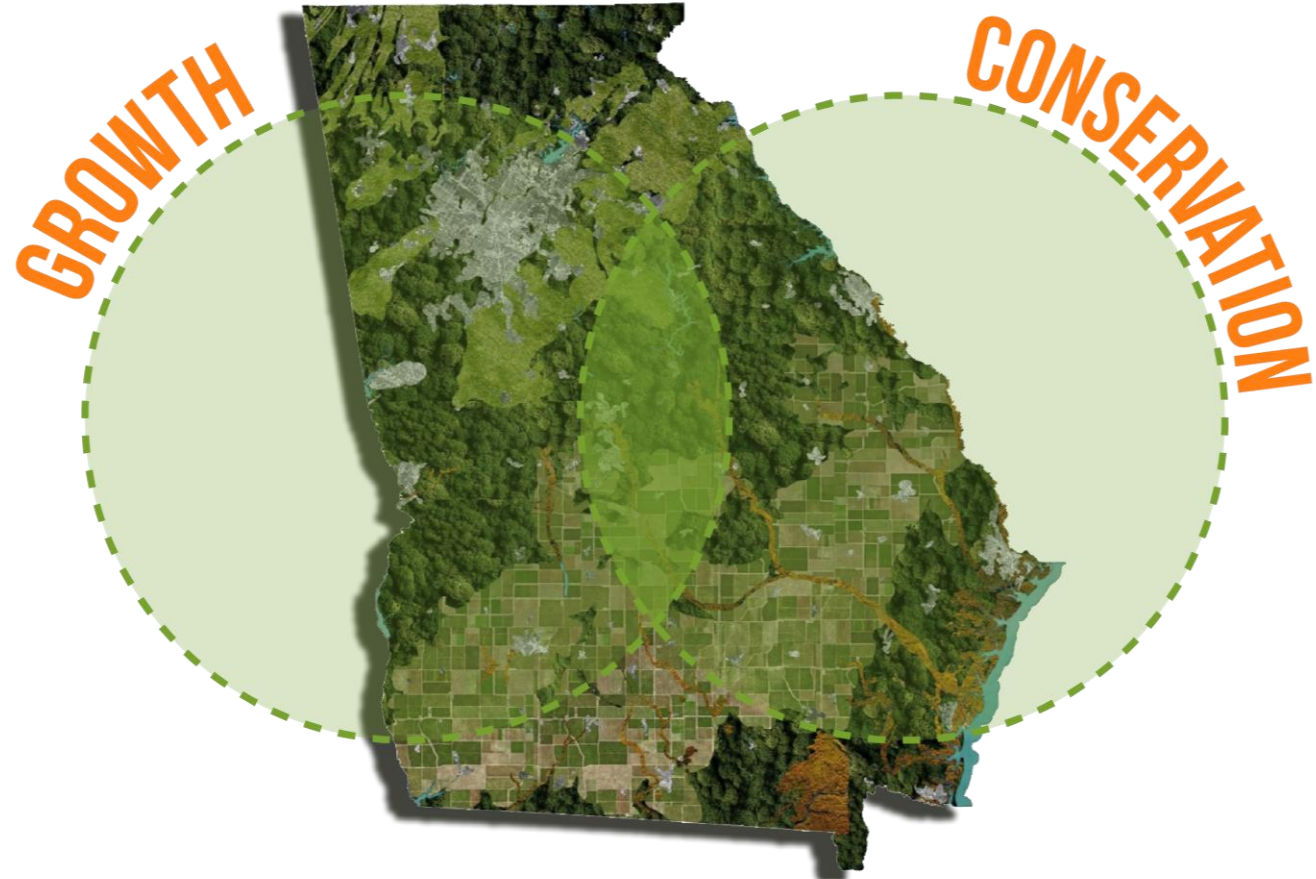
**OUR MISSION IS TO PROTECT GEORGIA THROUGH ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS FOR STEWARDSHIP, CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE LAND AND ITS RESOURCES.**





## WHO WE ARE?

We work across five program areas at the intersection of growth and conservation to conserve and sustain Georgia's land and its resources.



## DEVELOPMENT GROWTH ACROSS OUR STATE

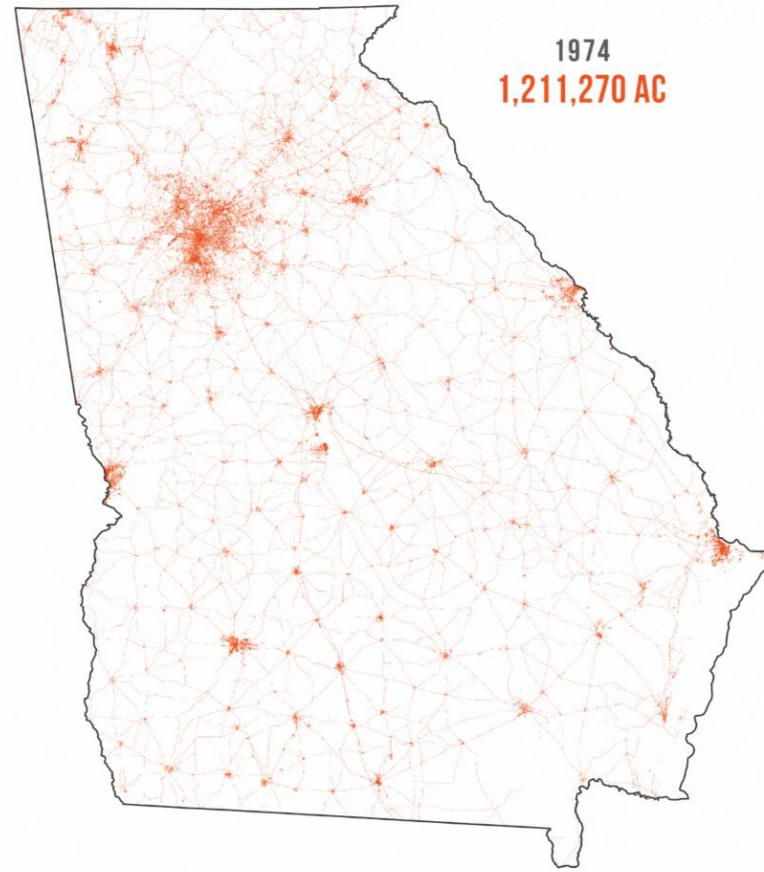
### OUR MISSION

OUR MISSION IS TO PROTECT GEORGIA THROUGH ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS FOR STEWARDSHIP, CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE LAND AND ITS RESOURCES.

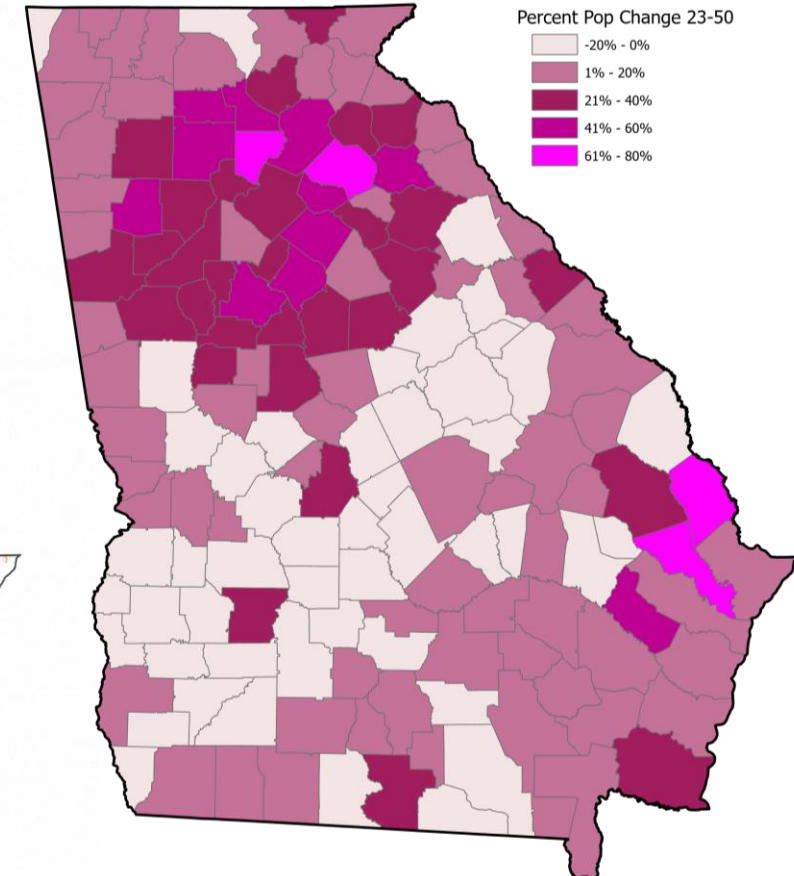
Our land must support all of our activities = land is a limited resource and how we use it matters.

A thoughtful approach to housing our growing population is essential to land conservation.

### DEVELOPED CHANGE 1974-2021



### POPULATION CHANGE (%) 2023-2050



Source(s): Governor's Office of Planning & Budget





## WHAT DO WE CONSIDER TO BE DEVELOPED LAND?

*Developed land is not just areas of intense urban development.*

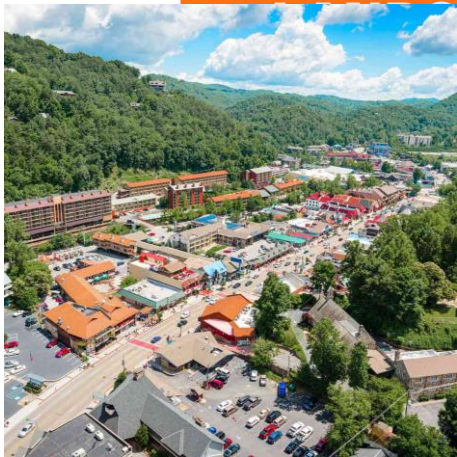


Developed areas where people reside or work in the total cover.

Urban areas, highways, parking lots, large commercial/industrial development.

Contains a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Pavement surfaces account for 79% of the land.

Major roads, dense single-family housing units, commercial development.

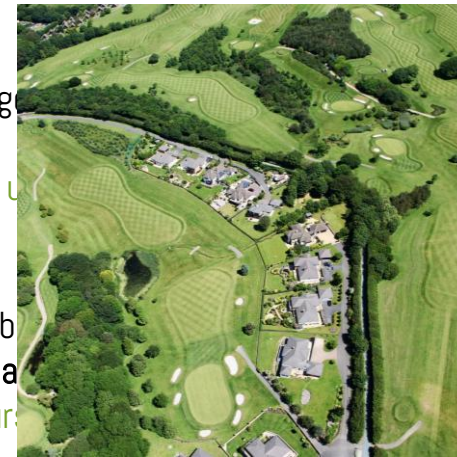


Contains a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Pavement surfaces account for 49% percent of land.

Smaller paved roads, single-family housing units, commercial development.

Contains a mixture of some constructed materials, but pavement surfaces (hardscapes) account for less than 10% of the land.

Single-family housing units, parks, golf courses, recreation, erosion control, or aesthetic purposes.





## WHY DOES A CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION WORK IN HOUSING?

Low-intensity development (e.g. sprawl) has consumed many Georgia's most precious acres

*If we can develop in a more sustainable way, we can preserve working and natural lands elsewhere*

Housing is an essential component of any community, city, and regional plan

*Where and how we live are always relevant in any conversation about growth and development*

Housing challenges are ubiquitous, not only in Georgia but nationally

*Our communities need help*



## WHAT WE DO (SUSTAINABLE GROWTH)

- Community, neighborhood, and small area plans
- Identification of priority conservation areas for growth & preservation planning
- Housing attainability and flexibility
- Placemaking
- Zoning/ordinance “audits”
- Strategic plans and policy research
- School siting





## HOUSING ATTAINABILITY & FLEXIBILITY

Georgia Conservancy has completed several housing studies or housing-focused projects

Toombs County Housing Report

Gilmer County Housing Study

Bartow County Housing Study

Jackson County Housing Assessment

Decatur NOAH Preservation Strategies  
(Current)

Cornelia Housing Assessment (Current)

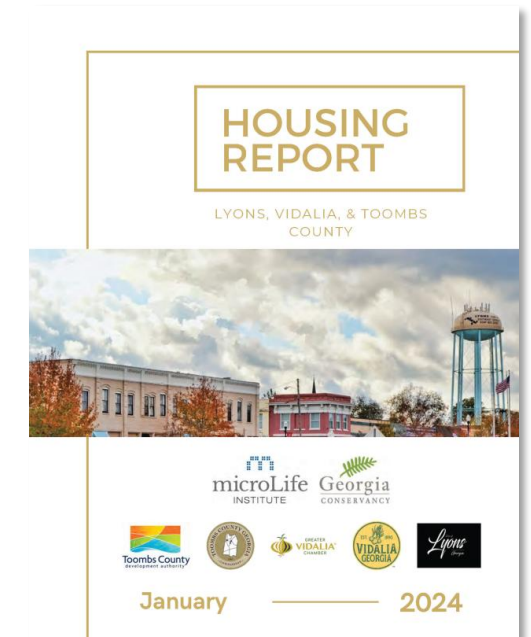
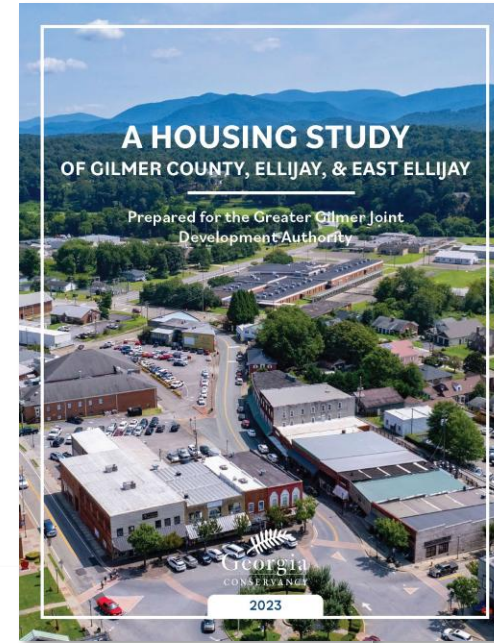


## ARE HOUSING STUDIES ALL THE SAME?

Housing studies share similarities but ultimately each housing study is unique

Housing studies can address a broad range of questions, even some that are specific to a particular community

Because housing is a core component of urban development, residential development patterns have widespread implications on other aspects of the community



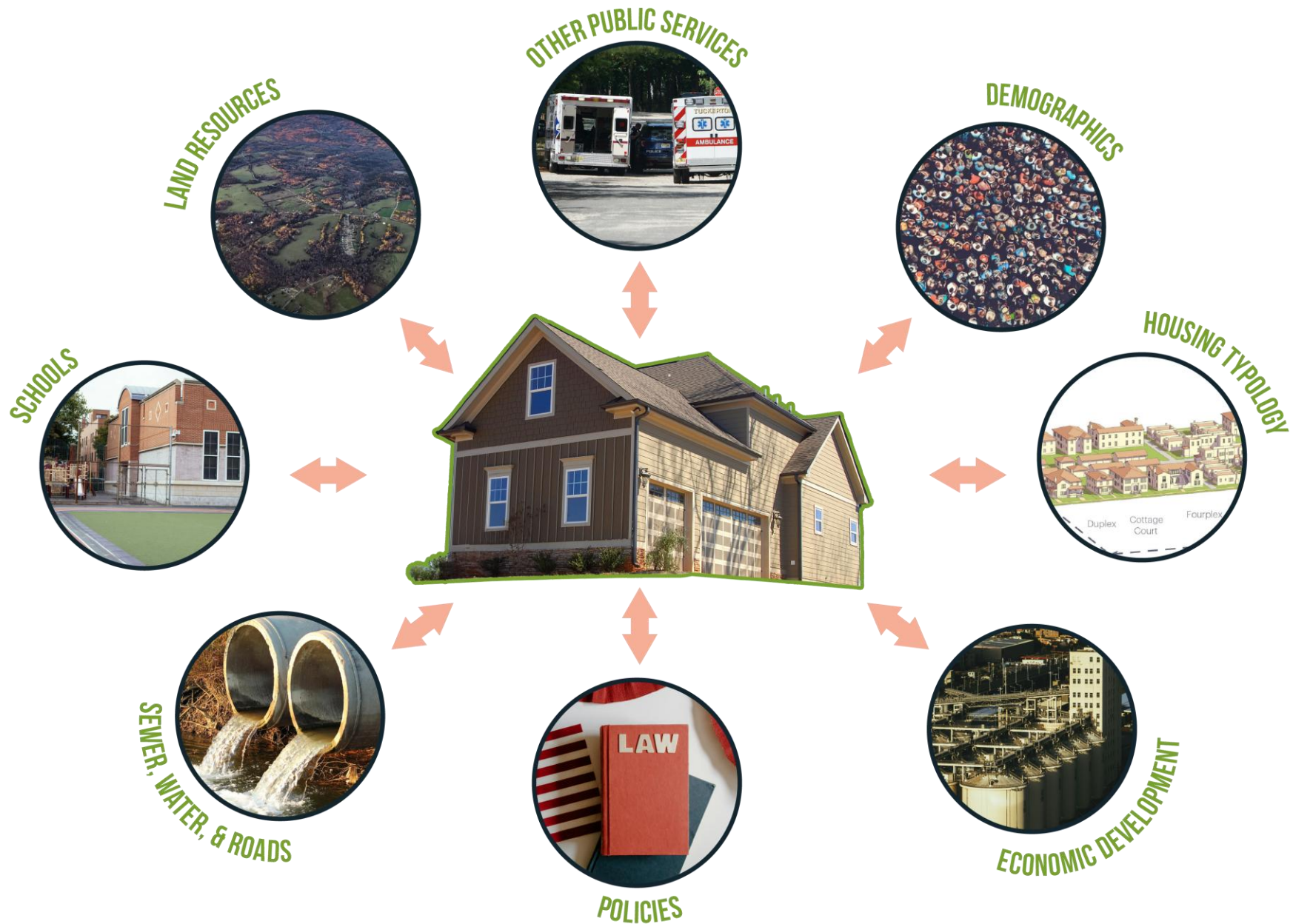
### Housing in Bartow County

An Advisory Document on Current Housing Trends, Policies, and Opportunities

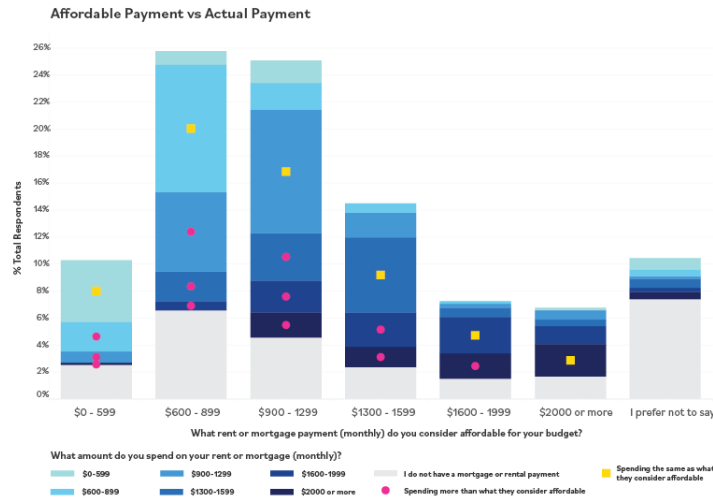
Prepared by Georgia Conservancy in collaboration with partners for the USDA's Rural Economic Development Initiative & Bartow County







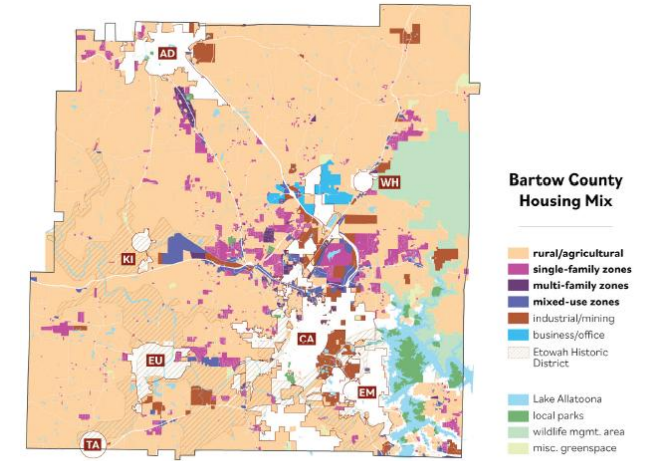
# The content, scale, and purpose of our housing studies have varied according to a diverse set of needs



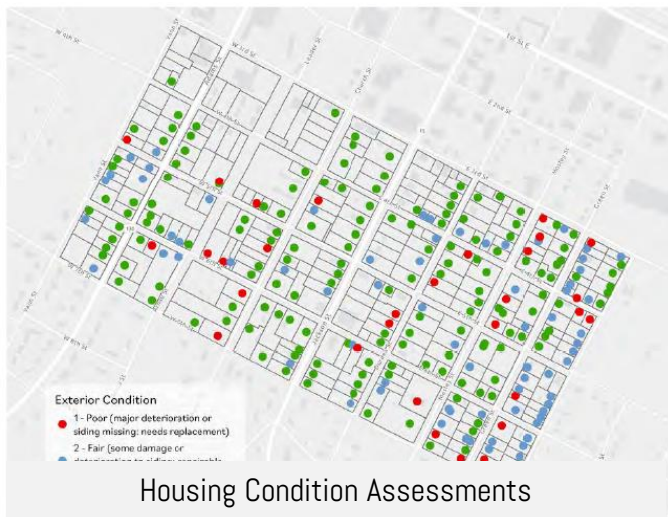
Community Polls



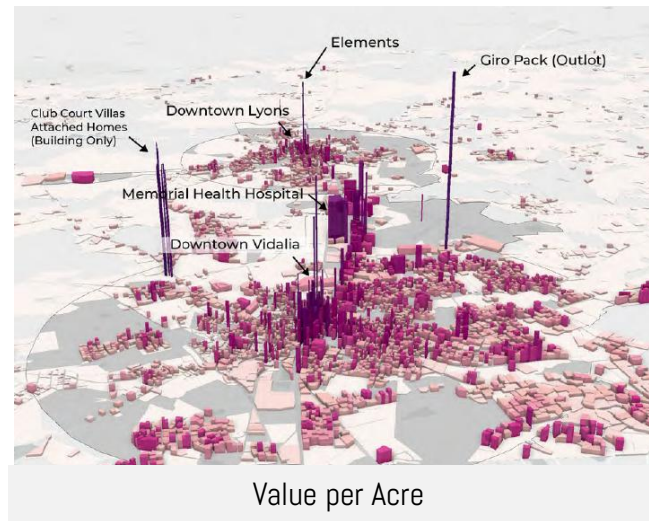
Site Plans and Visioning



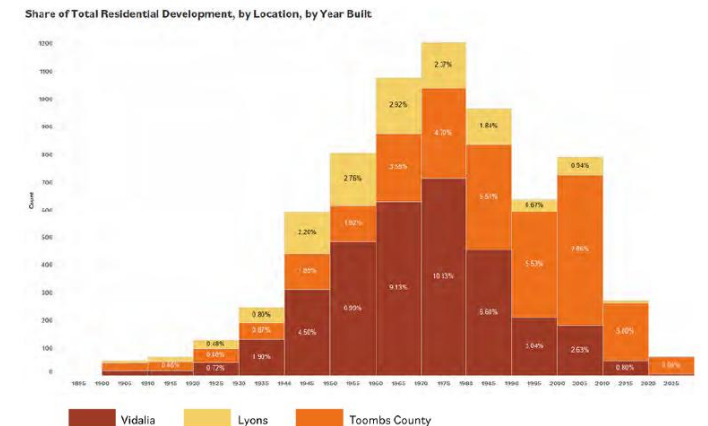
Land Use/By-Right Capacity Analyses



Housing Condition Assessments



Value per Acre



Housing Age/Development History



## **PARTS OF A HOUSING STUDY**

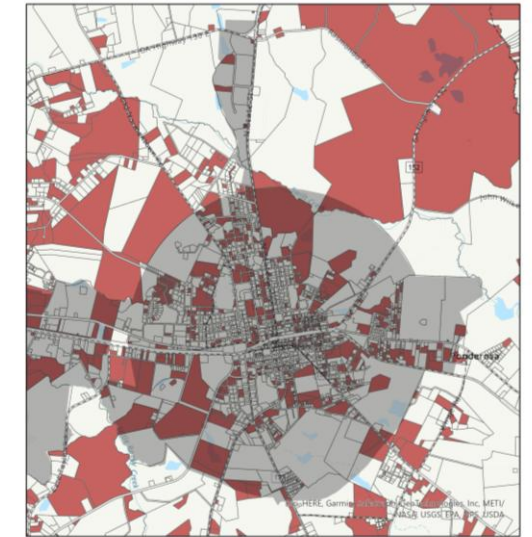
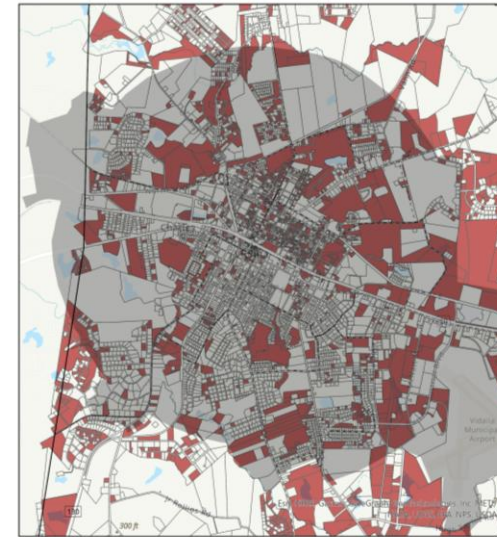
- Demographic analysis
- Housing inventory analysis
- Housing conditions assessment
- Community engagement (surveys, interviews, departmental outreach, qualitative data gathering)
- GIS & mapping
- Policy analysis (zoning, subdivision codes; development regulations)
- Community comparisons
- Needs assessment
- Action plan & recommendations



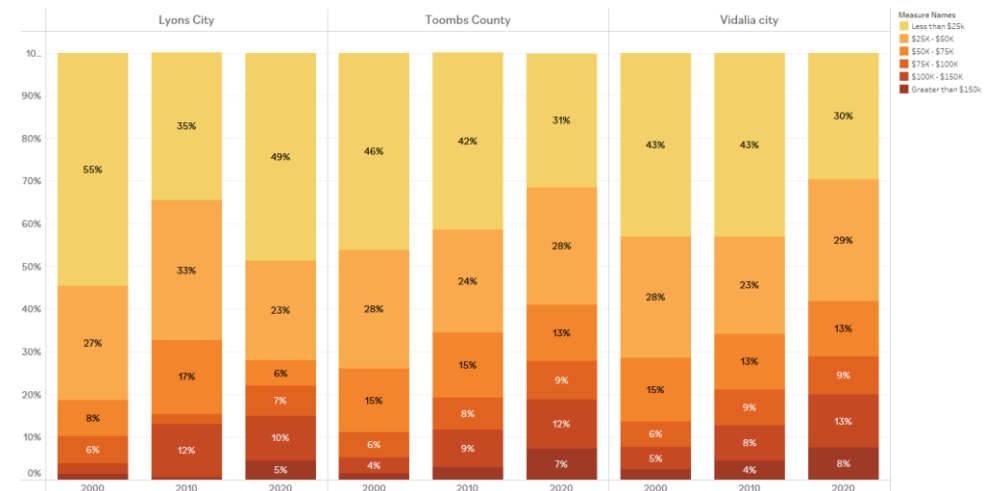
## TOOMBS COUNTY HOUSING STUDY

- Impetus was an acute workforce housing shortage, particularly affecting industries in Toombs
- Involvement between Chamber, cities of Vidalia and Lyons, and Toombs County
- In partnership with [Microlife Institute](https://www.microlifeinstitute.org/) (nonprofit housing developer)
  - <https://www.microlifeinstitute.org/>
- 10-12 month process
- Culminated in a one-day housing forum
- Microlife continued planning pilot housing development

(Above) Mapping undeveloped properties (Below) Household Income Change



Distribution of Household Income Over Time





## TOOMBS COUNTY HOUSING STUDY

- Georgia Conservancy's role
  - Demographic and housing data analysis and summaries
  - Mapping, geospatial data: identifying undeveloped parcels, land improvement ratio, water/sewer access, and more
- Housing field surveys: housing conditions field survey, housing type survey
- Stakeholder interviews
- Community engagement events



## TOOMBS COUNTY HOUSING STUDY

- Key Takeaways:
  - Housing shortage was on both ends of the spectrum, for high-earners and blue collar workforce
  - Prices increased, but not as drastically as in some other locations
    - Not enough housing supply. Labor shortage.
  - County has/had no zoning regulations but a lot of conservation use land and undeveloped lots
- Distinctly pro-housing coalition, local governments and major businesses





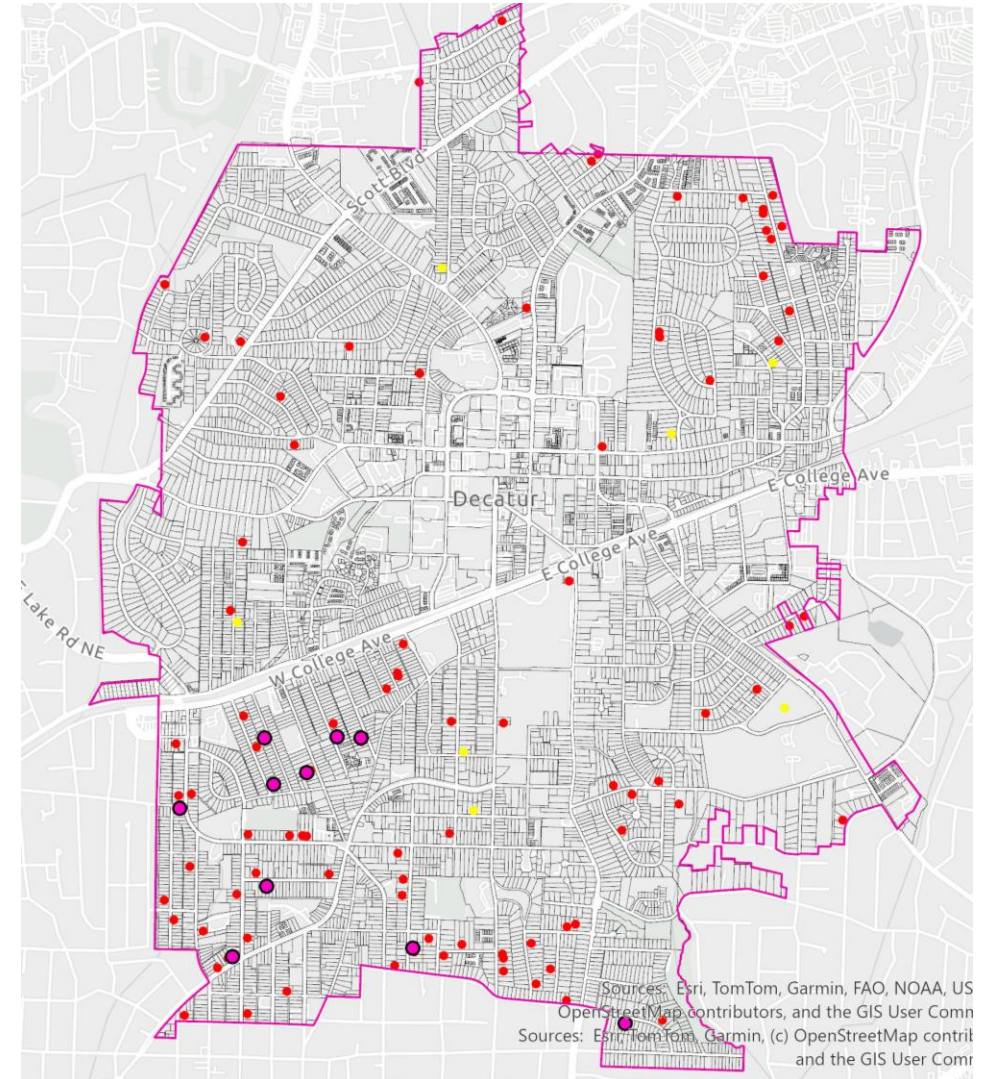
## DECATUR NOAH PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

- Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH)
  - Unsubsidized housing that is more affordable
- Usually older homes in need of rehab or located in lower cost markets. Common targets for demolition and redevelopment.
- Estimates are that 75-80% of affordable housing across the nation falls into this category
- How can NOAH housing be preserved instead of relying on new affordable units



## DECATUR NOAH PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

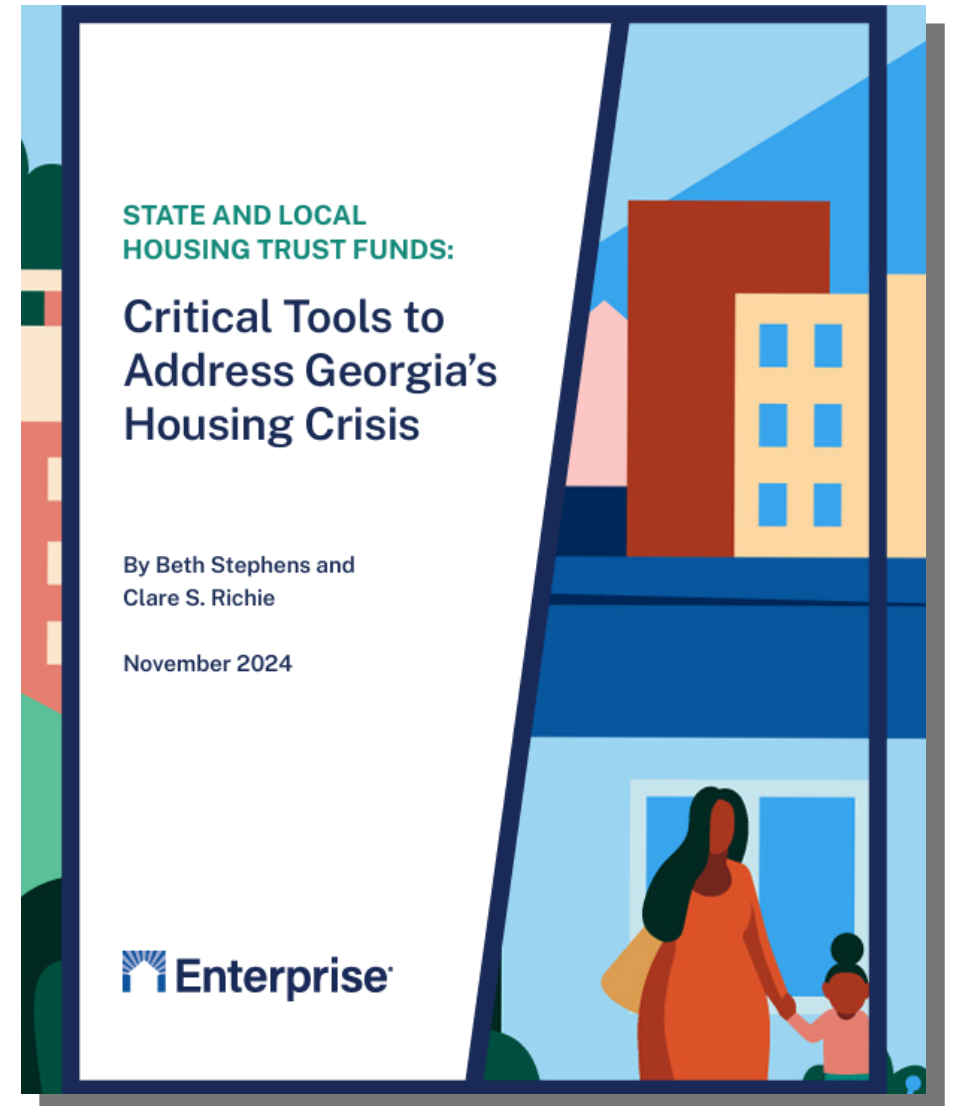
- Decatur's affordable housing efforts:
  - Inclusionary zoning policy, Decatur land trust, tax exemptions\*, MLK day of service, housing trust fund, and a previous housing taskforce
  - Missing middle housing ordinance
- Partnerships
  - Decatur Housing Authority, Decatur Land Trust, City of Decatur
- NOAH properties include some single-family and missing middle structures, but also significant for-sale and rental multifamily
- Nonetheless, rapid loss of NOAH units





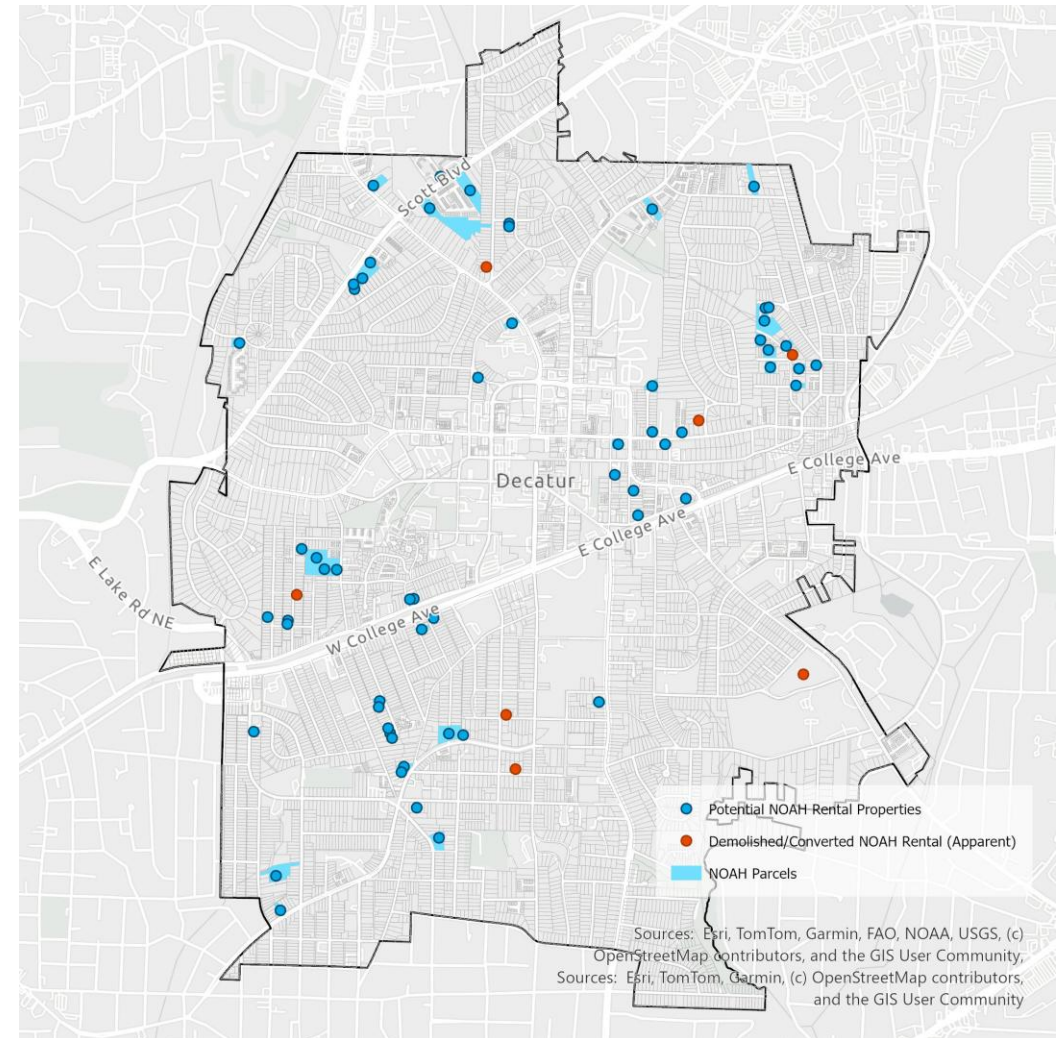
## DECATUR NOAH PRESERVATION STRATEGIES – POTENTIAL LIST

- Affordable housing trust funds
  - What are the possibilities and limitations?
  - HTF's can facilitate a host of housing programs and initiatives
- Tax abatement for affordable properties
  - How can this be facilitated under regulatory limitations in GA
- Property acquisition and management by supporting organizations (land trust, HA, etc.)
- And more:
  - Historic tax credits, rental registries & NOAH inventories



## DECATUR NOAH PRESERVATION STRATEGIES – POTENTIAL LIST

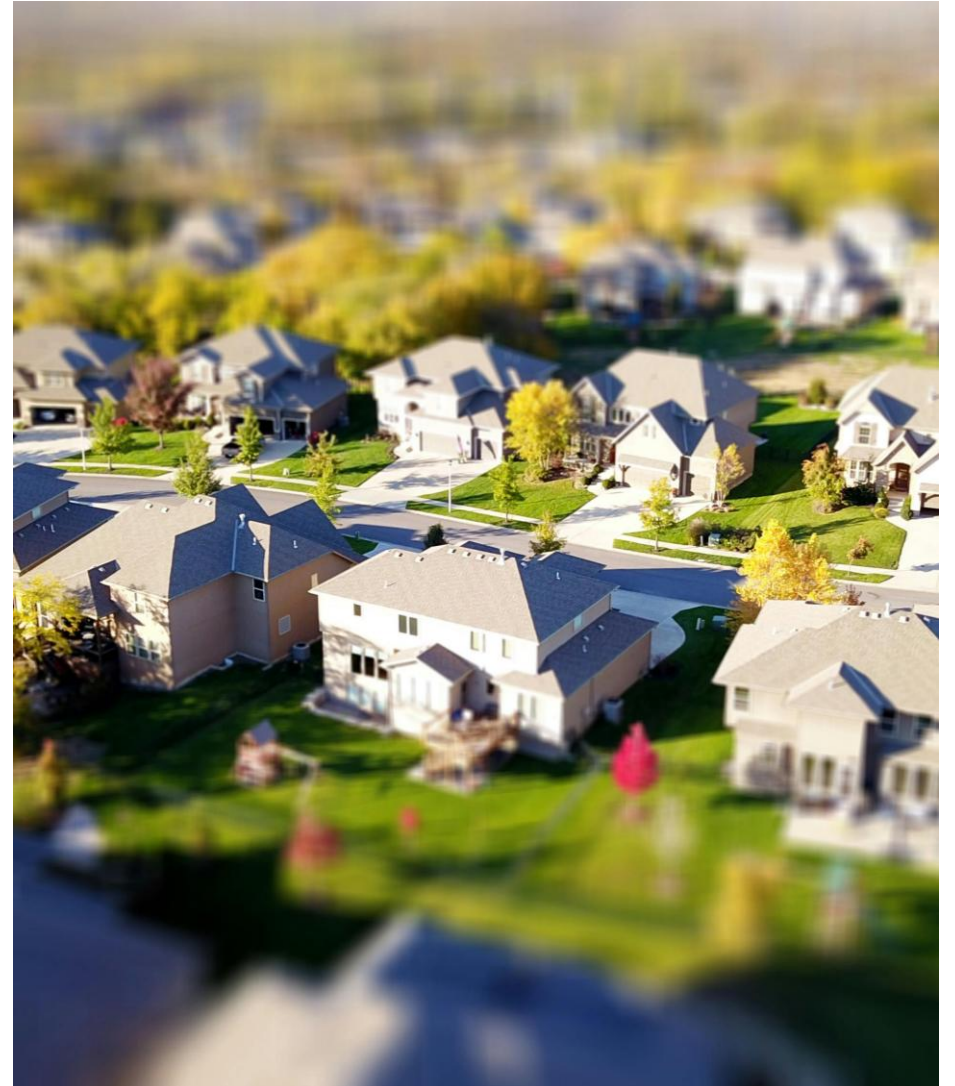
- CDAP program through ARC
- Project components
  - Update NOAH inventory
  - Identify strategies for NOAH preservation and detail challenges and opportunities
- What we've learned so far
  - Body of knowledge on preservation less robust than on providing new housing
  - Some limitations in local powers available to carry out certain strategies
    - State action required
  - Limitations when it comes to funding
  - Creative workarounds are possible!





## LEVERAGING A HOUSING STUDY

- Build community and political buy-in to productively address housing challenges (build a case for a housing-supportive goal)
  - For specific housing developments, regulatory updates, projects, initiatives, and others
- Use housing studies as supporting material to apply for grants
- Use housing studies as the starting point for a housing action plan
- Use housing studies to leverage LIHTC programs, CDBG funds, or CHIP assistance
- Understand historical growth patterns and use housing study findings to better plan the community's future, weighing costs and benefits of different growth strategies



## WHAT WE'D LIKE TO DO NEXT

- Build capacity to take on additional projects and complete housing projects efficiently
- Create summary tools/handouts that provide quick fixes
- Delve into additional data sources, if available, to get more accurate and complete information
- Continue to refine methodologies and improve our process
- Connect housing and infrastructure into broader growth & development strategies







# THANK YOU

Georgia Conservancy

Our mission is to protect Georgia through ecological and economic solutions for stewardship, conservation and sustainable use of the land and its resources.

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