


SECTION 1: OVERALL PROJECT SUMMARY AND APPROACH

Communities want to be sustainable, healthy, and climate-friendly. To achieve this, local governments – particularly in Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC) – need dedicated technical assistance, capacity, and targeted connection to funding. Through this proposed Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Implementation grant, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) will provide this support. ARC seeks \$5.17 million to expand its existing Green Communities Program by hiring additional staff and updating program criteria to focus on greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. **Costing only \$0.62 per metric ton of CO2 equivalent (MTCO2e)**, this initiative prioritizes LIDAC, aiming for both short-term and lasting emissions reductions. This investment will assist the 11 counties and 75 cities in metro Atlanta to develop, adopt, and implement policies creating greener, healthier, more livable communities across the region.



Bridging Divides. Building Prosperous Communities.

ARC is dedicated to Reconnecting the Region and rectifying historical decisions that have divided our communities and hindered economic opportunities. ARC's Enhanced Green Communities program works to prioritize investments that reduce barriers to access for communities and ensure the prosperity and success of the entire Atlanta region in an uncertain, changing climate. By building better for the future, ARC can improve equity and economic outcomes.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Every day, ARC peers into the future and works with our partners to *foster thriving communities for all through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments*. With a vision of creating *One Great Region*, we bring diverse stakeholders together to address the important issues facing metro Atlanta.

ARC is the regional planning and inter-governmental coordination agency for the 11-county Atlanta region. Established by the Georgia Planning Act, it is one of 12 regional commissions across the state that help local governments with community planning. ARC's portfolio includes regional transportation planning, aging and independence services, water resources management, climate change and resilience

planning, community development, workforce development, and homeland security. ARC helps the region's leadership focus attention, collaboration, and resources on critical issues affecting our collective future.

Across metro Atlanta, communities are experiencing more frequent and intense storms, flooding, heat waves,

droughts, and other impacts of climate change¹. As the lead organization for the Metropolitan Statistical Area's (MSA) CPRG planning process, ARC takes seriously its responsibility to develop and implement climate action plans that will set up the region to best mitigate GHG emissions. These steps protect human health, increase economic mobility, and create a competitive economy that benefits everyone.

Vision

ONE **great** REGION

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments.

Values

Excellence | Integrity | Equity

Goals

-  **Healthy, safe, livable communities** in the Atlanta Metro area.
-  **Strategic investments** in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources.
-  Regional services delivered with **operational excellence and efficiency**.
-  **Diverse stakeholders engage** and take a regional approach to solve local issues.
-  **A competitive economy** that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

¹ USGCRP, 2023: Fifth National Climate Assessment. Crimmins, A.R., C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, B.C. Stewart, and T.K. Maycock, Eds. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC, USA. <https://doi.org/10.7930/NCA5.2023>

ARC'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM OVERVIEW

For 15 years, ARC has addressed sustainability and climate change through its Green Communities Program. This voluntary certification and technical assistance program for the 11-county ARC region (Figure 1) aims to:

- Encourage local governments to lessen their environmental impacts through their policies, practices, buildings, and fleets;
- Assist local governments in encouraging their populations to reduce their environmental impacts; and
- Provide public education and outreach on environmental sustainability.

The program fosters greater environmental stewardship by providing technical assistance to local governments and recognizing communities that invest in sustainability. The program spotlights best-in-class examples of sustainability and GHG emissions reduction initiatives, encourages innovation, and salutes cities and counties that make a strong commitment to environmental stewardship.

To earn Green Communities certification, cities and counties must document the implementation of **policies and practices across 10 categories:**

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Green Building | • Land Use |
| • Energy Efficiency | • Greenspace and Tree Planting |
| • Green Power | • Recycling and Waste Reduction |
| • Water Use Reduction and Efficiency | • Education and Outreach |
| • Transportation and Air Quality | • Innovation |

Each category includes government measures and community measures. **Government measures** are those strategies that local jurisdictions can implement to increase sustainability in their own facilities, fleets and practices. **Community measures** are programs that local governments can adopt to foster environmental stewardship among area residents and businesses. There are 80 measures for which local governments can earn points and four levels of certification – Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum communities. The *Green Communities Manual* details the program and measures.

The application process requires supporting documentation for each measure for which points are sought. ARC provides technical assistance to local governments, regardless of whether they are seeking certification. This support includes research, assisting in the development of policies and ordinances, providing contacts in similar communities, meeting one-on-one to assess current programs and policies, and presentations to leadership and elected officials. In addition, ARC staff review the application and visit the local government to verify the information. Jurisdictions must be recertified every four years.



Figure 1: ARC's 11-County footprint within the 29-county Atlanta MSA

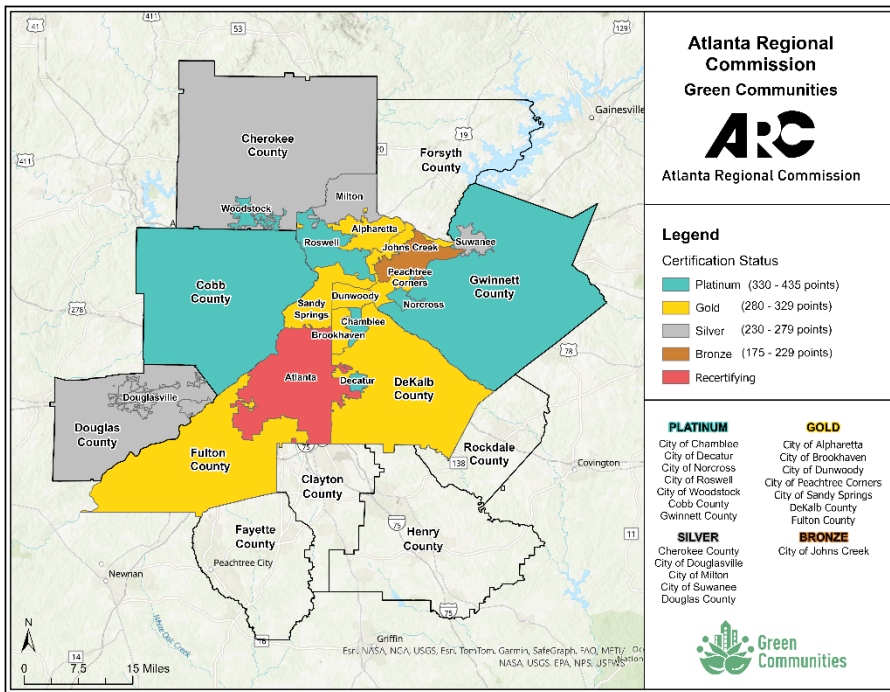


Figure 2: ARC's Certified Green Communities - Six of the region's 11 counties are certified, as well as 14 of the region's 75 cities. The City of Atlanta is currently working on its recertification.

This Program has certified 20 local governments as Green Communities (Figure 2). This success has occurred with minimal dedicated staff, and participation has mostly been among local governments already interested in sustainability. An opportunity exists to enhance the focus on emissions reductions and bring this resource to *all* communities in the region to take meaningful, equitable climate action.

ARC'S ENHANCED GREEN COMMUNITIES VISION

Local governments, citizens, businesses, and other community stakeholders in the region increasingly prioritize climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, emphasizing health,

equity, infrastructure, and ecosystem concerns. ARC's enhanced Green Communities Program will provide them new and more equitable paths to action. **With a new focus on reducing GHG emissions through local policies, ARC and local governments expect to meaningfully reduce GHG emissions by 2030, with greater results by 2050.** Funding would build capacity for city and county staff tailoring climate-mitigating ordinances and codes, seeking approvals, and implementing green projects. Green Communities is a comprehensive approach promoting multiple GHG reduction measures. The expanded Green Communities Program would allow for:

- Increased technical assistance and capacity building to local governments within the region;
- Dedicated engagement with LIDAC through staff embedded within local governments;
- Expanded education and outreach campaign, including regional conferences, summits, networking forums, information exchanges, and newsletter;
- Directed grant writing support to help local governments access state and federal funds to implement climate action plans and initiatives;
- Updated certification program that emphasizes climate mitigation impacts of each measure;
- Creation of a user-friendly, dynamic online platform rather than a static PDF manual; and
- Increased local government participation in Green Communities and national programs.

1A. DESCRIPTION OF GHG REDUCTION MEASURES

ARC will incentivize local governments to adopt and implement distinct GHG reduction measures.

1. TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND INCREASE EV INFRASTRUCTURE

Policy surrounding the electrification of fleet vehicles, including a range of vehicles and equipment, is a way local governments can reduce GHG emissions and promote a cleaner transportation system. While



ARC's Enhanced Green Communities Program

EV charging infrastructure is growing within metro Atlanta, accessibility remains limited outside major corridors. Increasing EV charger availability encourages EV adoption and allays range-anxiety.

Examples of Relevant Green Communities Measures – Existing and Proposed:

- Adopt a green fleet policy. (Existing; Update to more strongly reflect EVs)
- Require new commercial and multifamily developments to include EV charging stations within parking lots or structures. (Proposed)
- Become certified through Charging Smart (DOE) program at the Bronze level or higher. (Proposed)

Relation to Atlanta MSA PCAP: This is related to the “Electrify Fleets” measure (page 18), the “Expand EV Charging Infrastructure” measure (page 19), and the “Increase Local Government Adoption of Climate Mitigating Policies, Ordinances, and Programs” measure (page 33).

Note: The *Atlanta EV Fleet Alliance* coalition CPRG implementation grant application does not overlap with this grant measure. This Program is focused on adoption of policies, codes, and ordinances, while the coalition application is focused on implementation and physical replacement of vehicles.

2. SHIFT TRANSPORTATION MODES

Shifting from single occupancy vehicle trips to more sustainable modes of transportation, such as transit, biking, and walking, is a key method to reduce GHGs. Providing multiuse paths that link people to transit stations, neighborhoods, and retail can make it easier to choose biking or walking over a car.

Examples of Relevant Green Communities Measures – Existing and Proposed:

- Adopt an Alternative Commute Options program for employees. (Existing)
- Require end-of-trip bicycle facilities at all community facilities. (Existing)
- Become a Walk Friendly Community at Bronze level or higher. (Existing)

Relation to Atlanta MSA PCAP: This is related to the “Encourage Transportation Mode Shifts” measure (page 21), as well as the “Increase Local Government Adoption of Climate Mitigating Policies, Ordinances, and Programs” measure (page 33), which includes policies that incentivize mode shift.

3. PROTECT AND INCREASE TREES AND GREENSPACE

Trees and greenspaces provide numerous environmental benefits by sequestering carbon, mitigating the urban heat island effect, reducing energy consumption, enhancing air quality, and aiding water management. Trees and greenspaces add character and provide for recreation and social connections in cities – yielding cultural, behavioral, and community benefits.

Examples of Relevant Green Communities Measures – Existing and Proposed:

- Develop and enforce parking lot canopy standards that result in 50% canopy coverage of impervious parking surfaces within 15 years of completion. (Existing)
- Adopt a community forest master plan. (Existing)

Relation to Atlanta MSA PCAP: This is related to the “Increase Local Government Adoption of Climate Mitigating Policies, Ordinances, and Programs” measure (page 33), which includes policies that incentivize protection of trees and greenspace.

4. ADOPT MORE EFFICIENT ENERGY CODES & ELECTRIFY BUILDINGS

Energy-efficient homes and buildings use less electricity, still often derived from fossil fuels, in heating, cooling, and running appliances, which reduces GHG emissions. They are also adaptable to renewable energy like solar PV (solar panels), further cutting emissions. As more building systems switch from fossil fuels to electricity and the grid decarbonizes, they will contribute to lower emissions and cleaner air.

Examples of Relevant Green Communities Measures – Existing and Proposed:

- Become a local government ENERGY STAR Partner and develop an Energy Strategy for the Future. (Existing)
- Establish a baseline and track energy and water use across the local government's building portfolio using ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager for local government buildings. (Proposed)
- Adopt Building Performance Codes requiring commercial building owners to meet energy and water use targets through improved efficiency over time. (Proposed)
- Adopt Green Building Standards requiring new buildings be constructed and certified under one of several existing green building programs. (Proposed)

Relation to Atlanta MSA PCAP: This is related to the "Electrify Buildings" measure (page 25), the "Increase Energy Efficiency in Industrial & Commercial Buildings" measure (page 26), the "Increase Energy Efficiency in Single Family Homes" measure (page 27), and the "Increase Local Government Adoption of Climate Mitigating Policies, Ordinances, and Programs" measure (page 33).

5. INCREASE RENEWABLE ENERGY ADOPTION

Increasing the use of solar PV will significantly reduce GHG emissions in metro Atlanta. Solar power reduces strain on the grid, smooths electricity conveyance, and promotes community resiliency. Streamlining local government permitting and inspection processes reduces staff time and effort spent on permitting and technical documentation review. This decreases installation costs and makes solar power less expensive to consumers.

Examples of Relevant Green Communities Measures – Existing and Proposed:

- Support community solar power efforts by implementing best management practices to promote and facilitate rooftop solar installation. (Existing)
- Become a US EPA Green Power Partner. (Existing)
- Become certified as SolSmart community at the Bronze level or higher. (Proposed)

Relation to Atlanta MSA PCAP: This is related to the "Increase Use of Solar Photovoltaics" measure (page 28), and the "Increase Local Government Adoption of Climate Mitigating Policies, Ordinances, and Programs" measure (page 33).

6. DIVERT WASTE FROM LANDFILLS

Municipal solid waste landfills release large amounts of methane and carbon dioxide emissions; diverting waste decreases the amount released of both. Other methods of diverting waste, such as reuse, reduce GHG emissions by preventing the need to produce new products.

Examples of Relevant Green Communities Measures – Existing and Proposed:

- Become a Municipal Measurement Program participant to measure and improve your local recycling program's performance. (Existing)
- Implement a food waste collection program for composting or other beneficial uses. (Proposed)
- Adopt a Zero Waste or Waste Reduction Goal. (Proposed)



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Relation to Atlanta MSA PCAP: This is related to the “Increase Diversion of Waste from Landfills” measure (page 32) and the “Increase Local Government Adoption of Climate Mitigating Policies, Ordinances, and Programs” measure (page 33).

TASKS & MILESTONES

The Green Communities Program comprehensively engages local governments to reduce GHG emissions. Program Tasks and Milestones, the same for each measure, are identified in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Green Communities Program Timeline (Repeats Annually)

Timeframe	Tasks/Milestones
Ongoing	Technical Assistance to Create GHG-mitigating Policies, Codes, and Plans
Late May	Certification/Recertification Applications Due
June – October	Applications Reviewed
November	Notice of Certification Sent
January	Local Governments Presented Certification at ARC Board Meeting

Table 2: Expanded Green Communities Program Timeline

Timeframe	Tasks/Milestones
Oct 2024 – Mar 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire new staff & first round of 2-year Fellows Identify first set of local governments receiving Fellows Reconstitute the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for program update Update program with a climate focus RFP and contracting for program website & online application design
Apr – Sep 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train new staff & first round of 2-year Fellows Design program website and online application Hold first Green Communities climate summit Complete last round of certifications under the old program
Sep 2025 – Sep 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform ongoing outreach & education Provide ongoing technical assistance with GHG-mitigating policies Hold second Green Communities Climate Summit Make first round of certifications under the new program Collect metrics from all communities participating in the new program Hire second round of 2-year Fellows
Sep 2026 – Sep 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train second round of 2-year Fellows Perform ongoing outreach & education Provide ongoing technical assistance with GHG-mitigating policies Hold third Green Communities Climate Summit Make second round of certifications under the new program Collect metrics from all communities participating in the new program
Sep 2027 – Sep 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform ongoing outreach & education Provide ongoing technical assistance with GHG-mitigating policies Hold fourth Green Communities Climate Summit Make third round of certifications under the new program Collect metrics from all communities participating in the new program

Sep 2028 – Sep 2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform ongoing outreach & education • Provide ongoing technical assistance to support creation of GHG-mitigating policies • Hold fifth Green Communities Summit • Make fourth round of certifications under the new program • Make first round of recertifications under the new program • Collect metrics from all communities participating in the new program
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UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

The Green Communities Program comprehensively engages local governments to reduce GHG emissions. The Underlying Assumptions and Risks that may prevent progress on Measures are largely the same for each and identified in Table 3 to prevent repetition.

Table 3: Underlying Assumptions and Risks

Assumption	Risk	Possible Solution(s)
Staff hired by April 2025	Task takes longer than 6 months	Draft job announcements once award notification is received in July/August 2024. Identify other possible causes for delay and plan accordingly.
RFP and Contracting for Website Design Executed by April 2025	Task takes longer than 6 months	Draft RFP once award notification is received in July/August 2024. Identify possible causes for delay and plan accordingly.
Website and online application design	Task takes longer than 6 months	Identify possible causes for delay and plan accordingly.
Annual Green Communities Certifications – Goal: 9 - 12 annually	Local governments may be slow to adopt the GHG mitigating measures required for certification.	Staff will anticipate possible issues and will assist local governments with developing and adopting measures.
Collection of metrics from all communities participating in the new program – Goal: annually	Local governments may be slow to report metrics	New online application and reporting tool will make it easier for local governments to identify what metrics need to be reported. Staff will anticipate possible issues and will assist metrics reporting.
First round of recertifications under the new program in May 2029	Local governments participating in the old version of the program may be slow to transition to the new version and online platform.	Staff will provide education and technical assistance to each community to assist them with the transition beginning 2 years ahead of recertification deadline.

RELATIONSHIP TO CPRG GOALS

The Green Communities Program's relationship to CPRG Goals is overarching and will be the same for most measures. Program measures are described below in relation to CPRG Goals, listed in bold.

Implement ambitious measures that will achieve significant cumulative GHG reductions by 2030 and beyond. Green Communities covers 10 broad issue areas with 80 individual measures, more than half of which touch upon priority GHG reduction measures identified in the Atlanta MSA PCAP. The Program focuses on near-term adoption of sustainable, climate-mitigating policies that will reduce participating communities' GHGs now and into the future. The measures included in the PCAP were identified based upon their ability to achieve significant cumulative GHG reductions by 2030 and beyond.

Complement other funding sources to maximize these GHG reductions and community benefits. Local governments participating in Green Communities report that the program has led them to assess the



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environmental effects of every policy and helped implement sustainability across the board. With hundreds of grant opportunities available, having an established sustainability roadmap and identified climate-mitigating programs prepares communities to apply for grants as they become available. Additionally, the proposed Green Communities technical grant writer can assist local governments with the grant process, critical for communities unable to employ a grants coordinator.

Pursue innovative policies and programs that are replicable and can be “scaled up” across multiple jurisdictions. Green Communities allows governments to implement sustainable, climate-mitigating policies regardless of type (urban, suburban, rural) or size (both acreage and population.) The City of Dunwoody used the Green Communities Manual extensively as it was establishing itself as a newly incorporated city. Certified Green Communities learn from each other and share lessons with residents, elected officials, and staff from non-certified communities, spurring others to seek certification.

The program was the country's first regional “green” certification program, and other regions have since modeled it. Despite its launch during the prime recession years, cities and counties in metro Atlanta voluntarily sought Green Communities certification, finding that protecting natural resources has helped them better meet their budget goals while protecting the environment. The Program is scalable and transferable, allowing local governments to start small and increase participation as resources allow.

Pursue measures that will achieve substantial community benefits (such as reduction of criteria air pollutants (CAPs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs)), particularly in LIDAC. This goal is reflected in many Green Communities measures, as detailed below:

1) Transition to Electric Vehicles and Increase EV Infrastructure and 2) Shift Transportation Modes:

- Improved air quality: Zero tailpipe GHG emissions and zero CAPs (NO_x and PM 2.5)
- Public health benefits: Improved air quality will lead to reduced asthma, heart attacks, and strokes, especially in LIDAC communities at greater risk due to increased exposure.
- Reduced noise pollution: EVs are quieter than combustion vehicles.
- Lower lifetime costs: EVs have fewer parts than combustion vehicles, and electricity costs less than gasoline and diesel. Cost-savings can exist when shifting from driving to walking, biking, or transit.
- Access to chargers in LIDAC communities: Charger placement within LIDAC will be prioritized.

3) Protect and Increase Trees and Greenspace:

- Decreased urban heat island effect: Heat is the deadliest natural event. Ambient air temperatures are lower near trees and greenspaces. This is especially true in LIDACs with lesser tree canopies.
- Reducing energy consumption: Lower air temperatures and shade from trees decreases need to cool buildings in the summer and lowers power bills.
- Improved air quality: Trees remove pollutants such as SO₂, NO₂, CO₂, ozone, and PM2.5.
- Aiding stormwater water management: Tree roots take up water and promote infiltration, reducing flooding. LIDAC have a larger share of properties exposed to flood risks.
- Improved health: Greenspaces promote better mental health, reduced stress levels, and lower rates of obesity and chronic diseases.

4) Adopt More Efficient Energy Codes & Electrify Buildings and 5) Increase Renewable Energy Adoption:

- Improved air quality: Switching to electric systems, especially when paired with renewable energy, improves air quality for individuals working or living near fossil fuel-based systems. Solar PV has zero GHG emissions and zero CAPs (NO_x, SO_x, and PM 2.5) compared to fossil fuel sources.

- Public health benefits: Improved air quality will lead to reduced asthma, heart attacks, and strokes, especially in LIDACs who are at greater risk due to increased exposure.
- Reduced noise pollution: Electric systems tend to be quieter than fuel-based systems.
- Safer: Fewer natural gas lines to and within buildings eliminates the risks from fire, explosion, and carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Increased comfort: Insulation installed during energy retrofits can increase indoor comfort during cold and hot seasons.
- Lower energy costs: More energy efficiency and renewable energy lower electricity bills, especially in LIDAC areas with high energy burden.
- Less Load on the Electric Grid: Energy-efficiency reduces amount of electricity on the grid at one time, known as load, minimizing grid congestion and stress. Less load prevents power disruptions.
- Reduced water consumption: Solar PV does not require water to create energy, such as via steam or cooling processes. Solar panels are a long-term water-saving solution, critical in the region.
- Increased property values: Solar panels are viewed as upgrades, like a renovated kitchen or a finished basement, so purchasing a solar PV system will likely increase a building's value.

6) Divert Waste from Landfills:

- Improved air quality: Waste diversion reduces acidic gases and particulate matter made by landfills.
- Public health benefits: Improved air quality can reduce nose and throat irritation, asthma attacks, respiratory infections, and other illnesses, especially in LIDACs located near landfills.
- Extends planned life of landfills: Diverting waste from landfills saves space and prevents the need for new landfills often sited in LIDACs.
- Cost savings and local economy: Reduced tipping fees at landfills saves money, and recycling can generate revenue while benefiting local markets such as glass and aluminum recycling industries.

1B. DEMONSTRATION OF FUNDING NEEDS

Traditionally staffed by a portion of one person's time, the Green Communities Program has helped communities make great strides toward lessening their environmental and climate impacts. Currently participation is largely limited to resourced communities. With increased staff, the Program has significant room for growth, especially in the south side of the region below Interstate 20 and in smaller governments without the resources to prioritize creation of sustainability policies and plans. These same governments often serve a large percentage of LIDAC. Over the years, ARC has had interest from the cities of Clarkston, Duluth, Hampton, Hapeville, East Point, Fairburn, Forest Park, Riverdale, Smyrna, Stone Mountain, South Fulton, Tucker, and Union City, and the counties of Clayton, Henry, and Rockdale.

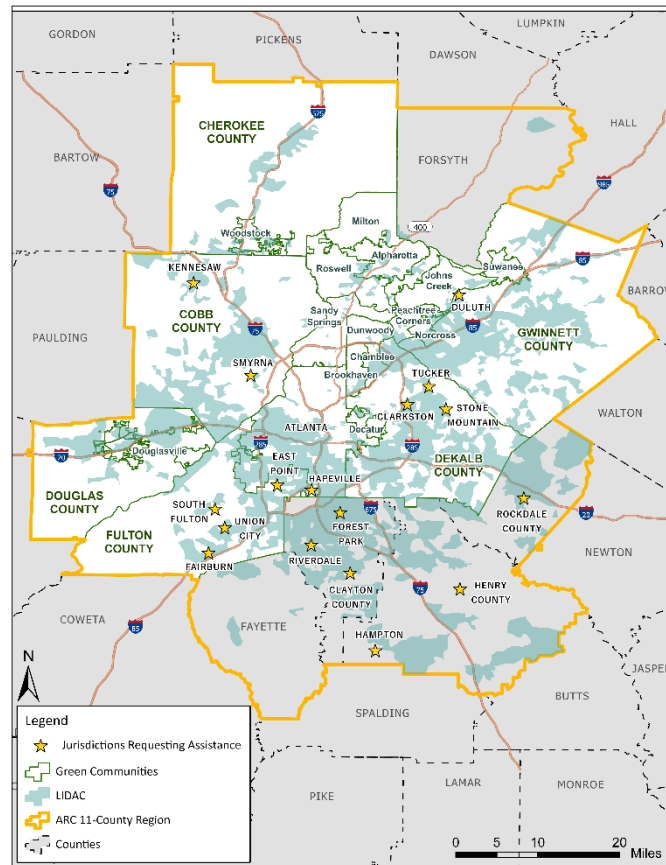
"Clayton County would love to participate in ARC's Green Communities Program, but our current resources make that difficult. As part of their CPRG application, ARC's proposed technical support will be critical to allow us to participate in the future."

David Vazquez, Chief Resilience Officer/
Director of Emergency Management,
Clayton County

These communities would like to participate, but limited resources prevent them from doing so. Figure 3 illustrates the location of the communities within the region and areas identified as LIDAC. ARC's existing

Green Communities staff person has assisted to every extent possible but does not have the capacity to provide the amount of time each local government needs. **Additional staff is needed to bring more local governments into the Program and assist communities with developing climate-mitigating policies, ordinances, and plans.**

Green Communities currently operates on a shoestring budget, and ARC has actively sought funding for several years. Unfortunately, funding for regional governments, especially from the philanthropic sector, has proven impossible to secure. Until the CPRG implementation grant, no state or federal funding source was a good fit for the Program. The funding provided through CPRG would allow ARC to reach the communities that are the most impacted by climate change and who need assistance the most. The new capacity to embed staff within local governments to create and adopt climate-mitigation standards and the provision of grant-writing assistance, will open underserved communities to available but currently untapped funding sources.



1C. TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

The Green Communities certification measures are not business as usual and were chosen for their ability to make a positive impact on metro Atlanta's environment. By choosing to seek Green Communities certification, local governments conserve energy, invest in renewable energy, conserve water, reduce waste, and protect and restore natural resources. The program requires local elected officials to adopt policies officially, making them hard to roll back and their impact long-lasting. All sustainability measures outlined in ARC's Green Communities Manual exceed Georgia's current regulations, and the Manual is revised to keep those measures more stringent than State standards. The Green Communities measures become the de facto sustainability "bar" the region's jurisdictions seek to reach.

Feedback from local officials has been positive. Several report that the Program has led them to assess the environmental effects of every policy and helped **implement sustainability across the board**. They have discovered new ways to incorporate climate mitigation into their practices, and they value learning about other local governments' implementation and best practices. For example, the City of Norcross's Unified Development Ordinance – a regulatory tool that regulates growth and marries the city's zoning ordinance to its development regulations—now includes Green Communities measures.



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Participating local governments who recertify into higher levels use the Program to develop their own clean energy and sustainability plans. These include the cities of Atlanta, Chamblee, Decatur, Dunwoody, Norcross, and Woodstock, and the counties of DeKalb and Fulton. As communities move up, they tend to include youth and business in advisory roles. This not only brings in voices often left out of local government, but it also shows participants how they may take environmental action themselves.

Green Communities **encourages involvement in other environmental certification programs**, so that local governments gain wider recognition and avoid “reinventing the wheel.” Certifications like LEED, Tree City USA, Bee City, Bicycle Friendly Community, Walk Friendly Community, Municipal Measurement Partnership, **EPA’s Green Power Partnership**, and **ENERGY STAR** are all eligible for Green Communities points. The Program also encourages participation in state and regional programs, many of which are funded by federal dollars. These include ARC’s Livable Centers Initiative, the Georgia Commute Options program, and the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority’s WaterFirst Community program.

“Working with ARC on its Green Communities program has provided us the opportunity to assure materials management remains a focus of the measures on which communities are evaluated, encouraging them to include recycling, reuse, composting and other waste reduction activities in their scope of services.”

Gloria Hardegree, Executive Director, Georgia Recycling Coalition, Founding Member, Georgia Composting Council

The Program is scalable and transferable, and it has served as a model for other regions. While this proposal is focused on the 11-county ARC region, **it could easily be expanded to the 20-county MPO or the 29-county MSA**. Other Georgia regional commissions or MPOs nationwide could also replicate it.

SECTION 2: IMPACT OF GHG REDUCTION MEASURES

The Green Communities Program incentivizes local policies to create lasting GHG reductions through changes that affect buildings, infrastructure, and residents. Changes in public policy and building codes have an enduring impact on the built environment. Once a municipality adopts a new policy, implementation becomes systemic and mitigates GHGs in the long term compared to the current status quo.

2A. MAGNITUDE OF GHG REDUCTIONS FROM 2025 THROUGH 2030

Table 4 shows the estimated reductions from the combined policies in the Program for the 11-county region for the 2025-2030 time period. The reduction from each individual measure is included as well. Note, GHG Reduction Measure 4 in Section 1a combines Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification; however, they are broken out individually below to demonstrate GHG emissions reductions from each.

Table 4: Estimated Greenhouse Gas Reductions in MTCO_{2e} from Policy Changes, 2025-2030

	Fleet Replacement & Charging Infrastructure (MTCO _{2e})	Mode Shift (MTCO _{2e})	Trees & Greenspace (MTCO _{2e})	Energy Efficiency (MTCO _{2e})	Building Electrification (MTCO _{2e})	Solar Power (MTCO _{2e})	Waste Diversion (MTCO _{2e})	Total Reduction (MTCO _{2e})
2025-2030	62,209	1,055,566	286,646	2,056,830	622,201	919,067	3,311,458	8,313,978

2B. MAGNITUDE OF GHG REDUCTIONS FROM 2025 THROUGH 2050

Table 5 shows the estimated reductions from the combined policies in the Program for the 11-county region for the 2025-2050 time period. The reduction from each individual measure is included as well. Note, GHG Reduction Measure 4 in Section 1a combines Energy Efficiency and Building Electrification; however, they are broken out individually below to demonstrate GHG emissions reductions from each.

Table 5: Estimated Greenhouse Gas Reductions in MTCO₂e from Policy Changes, 2025-2050

	Fleet Replacement & Charging Infrastructure (MTCO ₂ e)	Mode Shift (MTCO ₂ e)	Trees & Greenspace (MTCO ₂ e)	Energy Efficiency (MTCO ₂ e)	Building Electrification (MTCO ₂ e)	Solar Power (MTCO ₂ e)	Waste Diversion (MTCO ₂ e)	Total Reduction (MTCO ₂ e)
2025-2050	665,782	16,285,674	5,362,387	40,569,737	13,945,572	13,983,863	70,146,857	160,959,871

2C. COST EFFECTIVENESS OF GHG REDUCTIONS

The total requested cost for implementation is \$5,172,314 for the 2025-2030 period. With an estimated 8,313,978 MTCO₂e reduced, **the cost effectiveness is \$0.62/MTCO₂e**. This shows the significant return on investment the Program can have over the short term, and a substantially greater one by 2050.

$$\text{Cost-Effectiveness} = \frac{\$5,172,314}{8,313,978 \text{ MTCO}_2\text{e}} = \$0.62/\text{MTCO}_2\text{e}$$

This impact could be affected by factors, including a low adoption rate, slow implementation among jurisdictions, or supply chain or labor issues that make the measures like building efficiency, electrification, or solar power take longer to execute. As described in the Technical Appendix, the 2025-2030 GHG reduction impact is 50% of the maximum impact in anticipation of these short-term obstacles. The 2025-2050 reduction estimate is 80% of its maximum in anticipation of most, but not all, of these obstacles being addressed in the ensuing decades.

2D. DOCUMENTATION OF GHG REDUCTION ASSUMPTIONS

The calculations for these impacts were developed using the tools, methodologies, and assumptions from Greenlink Analytics, who developed MSA-wide GHG reductions for the Atlanta MSA PCAP. Separate calculations occurred for each GHG Measure. Main tools and data sources shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Tools and Data Sources used for GHG Measures

GHG Measure	Tools and Data Sources
EV Fleet Replacement & Charging Infrastructure	Tools: Rocky Mountain Institute's Energy Policy Simulator Data: Alternative Fuels Data Center
Transportation Mode Shifts	Tool: Rocky Mountain Institute's Energy Policy Simulator
Trees & Greenspace	Tool: Rocky Mountain Institute's Energy Policy Simulator
Building Energy Efficiency	Tool: Greenlink ATHENIA model Data: DOE (2017) Preliminary Energy Savings Analysis ANSI/ASHRAE/IES Standard 90.1-2016 , DOE (2022) Advanced Manufacturing & Industrial Decarbonization , GA Drawdown , EIA Carbon Dioxide Coefficients
Building Electrification	Tool: Greenlink ATHENIA model Data: Google Environmental Insights Explorer , GA Drawdown , EIA Carbon Dioxide Coefficients

Solar Power on Rooftops	Data: NREL , Google Project Sunroof
Waste Diversion	Tool: EPA WARM model

These GHG Measures were downscaled to the 11-county ARC region by adjusting the calculations made for the PCAP. Each Measure was based on either county-level aggregations or a population-based factor, so summing up only the 11-county region or adjusting the population factor was a straightforward approach to developing the GHG reduction estimates. More details on specific assumptions and equations are provided in the Technical Appendix.

SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS – OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

3A. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

As outlined in Section 1, the expected outputs and outcomes for the enhanced Green Communities Program - *as a whole* - funded via this grant are further described below in Table 7.

Table 7: Expected Program Outputs and Outcomes

Program Outputs	Program Outcomes
Increased ability to provide technical assistance, capacity building, and follow-up to all communities	Hire 3 fulltime staff Hire a total of 6 Fellows (3 per 2-year period) Connect with all 11 counties and 75 cities annually
Dedicated engagement of low-income and disadvantaged communities through staff embedded within local governments	3 Fellows embedded within local governments serving a high percentage of LIDACs with fulltime GC staff as advisors and additional support in years 2 through 4
Expanded education and outreach campaign, including regional conferences/summits, networking forums and information exchanges, and newsletter	Quarterly newsletter (minimum of 16) 3 Network + Knowledge webinars annually (minimum of 14) 1 Green Communities Summit annually (5 total)
Directed grant writing support to help local governments access state and federal funds to implement climate action plans and initiatives	1 GC staff dedicated to grant-writing assistance 4 grant applications written/assisted per year (total of 16)
Updated certification program that identifies the climate mitigation impacts of each measure	Reorient existing measures to emphasize climate-mitigation impacts Add at least 8 new climate-mitigating measures Assign a higher point value to measures that have high potential climate-mitigating impacts
Creation of a user-friendly, dynamic online platform rather than a static manual in PDF form	Provide an overview of each measure, explanation of climate impact, examples of the measure in action, links to additional resources, and details about documentation needed for certification, including specific metrics Provide a user-friendly way to share documentation and metrics via the online program portal Provide a way for communities to track their progress in the program, identifying which measures have earned points and which measures they plan to seek next
Increased participation of local governments in the Green Communities certification program and national programs	6 New Leaf designations annually 9 - 12 newly certified local governments annually Recertify 100% of communities in old program due to recertify in 2029 into the new program

Table 8 describes additional outputs and outcomes specific to each GHG Measure listed in Section 1.

Table 8: Expected Outputs and Outcomes by GHG Measure

GHG Measure Outputs	GHG Measure Outcomes
1) Transition to Electric Vehicles and Increase EV Infrastructure	Increased number of EVs in local government fleets Increased number of EV chargers GHG emissions reductions Reductions in co-pollutants (NOx and PM 2.5)
2) Shift Transportation Modes	Increased number of local government employees taking alternative commutes GHG emissions reductions Reductions in co-pollutants (NOx and PM 2.5)
3) Protect and Increase Trees and Greenspace	Increase in local government tree canopy and greenspace acreage GHG emissions reductions (via trees as GHG sinks) Reductions in co-pollutants (NOx, SOx, CO, ozone, and PM 2.5)
4) Adopt More Efficient Energy Codes & Electrify Buildings	Increased energy efficiency in buildings GHG emissions reductions Reductions in co-pollutants (NOx, SOx, and PM 2.5)
5) Increase Renewable Energy Adoption	Increase in number of solar PV installations GHG emissions reductions Reductions in co-pollutants (NOx, SOx, and PM 2.5)
6) Divert Waste from Landfills	Increased amount of waste diverted from landfills GHG emissions reductions

3B. PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND PLAN

The expected outputs and outcomes for the enhanced Green Communities Program detailed in the previous section will be tracked via spreadsheet. The Project Manager will note progress at least each quarter. Additionally, ARC expects that tracking outputs will become part of its agency-wide performance tracking program. Output status will be reported to EPA in each biannual report.

The to-be-developed Green Communities Online Portal will allow local governments to report each Green Communities and GHG reduction measure annually. Table 9 details some metrics to be tracked:

Table 9: Metrics Tracked by GHG Measure

GHG Measure	Metrics Tracked
1) Transition to Electric Vehicles and Increase EV Infrastructure	Number of green fleet policies adopted Number of government fleet vehicles replaced with EVs Number and location of EV chargers installed within each community Number of ordinances requiring EV chargers in commercial and multifamily parking Number of ordinances requiring single-family homes to accommodate EV chargers Number of local governments participating in the Charging Smart program GHG emissions reductions resulting from fleet transition Co-pollutants reduction (NOx and PM 2.5) resulting from fleet transition
2) Shift Transportation Modes	Number of local government employees in an alternative commute program Number of communities requiring end-of-trip bicycle facilities at community facilities Number of local governments certified Walk Friendly Community Number of local governments certified Bike Friendly Community GHG reductions resulting from local government alternative commutes Co-pollutants reduction (NOx and PM 2.5) resulting from local government employee alternative commutes

3) Protect and Increase Trees and Greenspace	Number of local government no net loss of trees policies adopted Number of parking lot tree canopy standards adopted Number of community forest master plans adopted Number of greenspace plans adopted or updated Acreage of greenspace added by local governments Number of trees planted by local governments GHG emissions reductions (via trees and greenspaces as GHG sinks) Co-pollutants reduction (NOx, SOx, CO ₂ , ozone, and PM 2.5)
4) Adopt More Efficient Energy Codes & Electrify Buildings	Number of buildings receiving energy audits or under performance contract and estimated energy savings potential Number of local government buildings tracking energy usage via ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager or similar software Number of Building Performance Codes adopted Number of Green Buildings Standards adopted Number of Energy Codes at least 10% more efficient than Georgia's code adopted GHG emissions reductions from energy efficiency improvements and codes Reductions in co-pollutants estimates from energy efficiency improvements and codes (NOx, SOx, and PM 2.5)
5) Increase Renewable Energy Adoption	Number of renewable energy projects installed at local government facilities Number of ordinances, permitting processes, inspection processes evaluated and revised for solar-readiness Number of new solar PV installations in communities Number of communities certified as SolSmart GHG emissions reductions resulting from new solar PV installations Reductions in co-pollutants from new solar PV installations (NOx, SOx, and PM 2.5)
6) Divert Waste from Landfills	Number of Municipal Measurement Partnership participants Amount of curbside recycling collected by communities Number of communities implementing food waste collection programs Amount of food waste diverted from landfills GHG emissions reductions from diverting recycling and food waste from landfills

3C. AUTHORITIES, IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE, AND MILESTONES

ARC has reviewed existing statutory and regulatory authority to implement each measure proposed in the expansion of the Green Communities program. **This program seeks no new regulatory authority.**

The Green Communities measures and relevant PCAP measures constitute a list of voluntary actions available to local governments. ARC has authority over the Green Communities program, yet it is up to local governments to implement each measure that would result in GHG emission reductions. Green Communities staff would be available to assist local government staff with each measure – from developing ordinances and identifying implementation steps all the way through to official adoption by local government elected officials, if required.

A detailed 5-year Program Timeline, inclusive of key Milestones, is provided below in Figure 4.



ARC's Enhanced Green Communities Program

ARC Enhanced Green Communities Timeline and Milestones

(Assumes grant start date of October 1, 2024. Will be adjusted based upon actual contract date.)

ACTIVITY	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5				End of Grant	
	Oct 2024	Jan 2025	Apr 2025	Jul 2025	Oct 2025	Jan 2026	Apr 2026	Jul 2026	Oct 2026	Jan 2027	Apr 2027	Jul 2027	Oct 2027	Jan 2028	Apr 2028	Jul 2028	Oct 2028	Jan 2029	Apr 2029	Jul 2029	Oct 2029	Jan 2030
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Project Management																						
Develop Quality Assurance Project Plan																						
Semi-Annual Report to EPA		*				*		*		*		*		*		*		*		*		
LIDAC Benefits Update to EPA				*												*						
Community Engagement Update to EPA				*																		*
End of Grant Report to EPA																						
Program Expansion & Maintenance																						
Hire New Staff																						
Train New Staff																						
Hire & Train Fellows - Cohort 1																						
Form Technical Advisory Group																						
Update Program Measures																						
RFP & Contracting for Automated Program																						
Automate Program (Online Program Guidance, Documentation & Metric Submission)																						
Technical Advisory Group Meetings		*						*				*				*				*		
Staff Peer-Learning Exchange					*				*				*				*					
Hire & Train Fellows - Cohort 2																						
Technical Assistance, Outreach, and Education																						
Identify Local Government Hosts for Fellows Cohort 1																						
Annual Outreach to All 11 Counties and 75 Cities																						
Newsletter					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Network + Knowledge Webinars					*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*	*		*	*
Green Communities Climate Summit				*				*				*				*				*		*
Certification Cycle																						
Last Certifications Under Old Program																						
Certifications Under New Program																						
First Recertifications Under New Program																						
Collection of Metrics from New Communities																						
Annual Recognition		*				*				*				*				*				*

Notes:

- Assumes 5 year CPRG-funded program, ending September 30, 2029
- Year 1 Annual Recognition will occur for prior year's certified local governments
- Grant funds will not be used for activities that appear beyond Year 5

Figure 4: Program Timeline and Milestones

SECTION 4: LOW-INCOME AND DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

The main goal of the enhanced Green Communities Program is to better serve LIDAC and expand program offerings to all communities within the 11-county ARC region. **Newly-hired Green Communities Fellows would work directly with and within local governments that are not already participating in Green Communities and that contain a high percentage of LIDAC**, as shown in Figure 3 in Section 1b. For technical assistance and grant-writing support, Green Communities staff will prioritize the counties highlighted in Table 10, below, including the counties of Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale, and the cities within those counties with at least 30% LIDAC populations. This will ensure that GHG reductions and associated co-benefits are targeted to LIDAC.

A complete list of LIDAC as identified by EJSscreen is listed in the Low-Income Disadvantaged Communities by Block Group "Areas" attachment.

4A. COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Communities in the region face several burdens, as indicated by EJScreen and CEJST and noted in Tables 11 and 12. Many are associated with the burning of fossil fuels and tail pipe emissions, such as diesel PM, PM 2.5, and ozone. Others are associated with the high cost of electricity and inefficient housing. Health indicators are present, such as diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and lower life expectancy. The Green Communities measures and relevant PCAP measures not only target GHG reductions but create co-benefits that help address many of

Jurisdiction Name	LIDAC Population	Total Population	% LIDAC
Cherokee	36,616	262,155	14%
Clayton	227,394	294,335	77%
Cobb	236,631	762,500	31%
DeKalb	391,558	758,634	52%
Douglas	50,448	143,520	35%
Fayette	9,571	117,828	8%
Forsyth	4,846	245,754	2%
Fulton	383,834	1,054,286	36%
Gwinnett	408,286	948,505	43%
Henry	83,596	236,615	35%
Rockdale	47,726	92,983	51%
Total	1,880,506	4,917,115	38%

Table 10: LIDAC Population Count and Percentage for the 11-County ARC Region

Through the enhanced Green Communities program, staff will establish and oversee a continuous evaluation process, working with certified communities to measure and report the ongoing benefits and potential drawbacks avoided for LIDACs due to the program's measures. The expected co-benefits are detailed in Sections 1a and 3a and are summarized below.

Improved Public Health: In a statewide survey outlined in the Atlanta MSA PCAP, respondents said that the most important benefit from potential climate actions was improved public health from decreased air pollution. Implementing many Program measures will result in lower GHG emissions and CAPs (NOx, Sox, CO, ozone, and PM2.5). These pollutants are associated with asthma, heart disease, strokes, nose and throat irritation, respiratory infections, and lowered life expectancy. Increasing trees and greenspaces within LIDACs has been shown to improve mental health, lower stress levels, and lower rates of obesity and chronic diseases. In addition, trees cool the air and can help reduce the impacts of heatwaves.

Lowered Costs and Decreased Energy Burden: Several measures, when implemented, lower the lifetime costs of operating a vehicle or building. When local governments own these, they can redirect savings to community programs or reduce local property taxes. Implementing measures in residential buildings, lowers electricity bills and decreases energy burden felt in LIDAC. Residents see lower transportation costs when other modes of transportation, such as biking, walking, or transit, are made available.

EJ Screen Supplemental Index Environmental Indicators of Burden	Percentage of Census Block Groups at or above the 90 th Percentile
Air Toxics Respiratory HI	29%
Air Toxics Cancer Risk	37%
Diesel Particulate Matter	14%
Particulate Matter 2.5 in Air	21%
Ozone	23%
Toxic Releases to Air	4%
Low Life Expectancy	6%

Table 11: Environmental Indicators of Burden for the ARC Region

Increased Access to Infrastructure: As the price of EVs declines, they become more attainable for lower income residents, but only if they can access charging infrastructure. Bike and pedestrian projects make transportation safer for all. Green Communities measures and the targeted outreach approach to LIDAC help ensure equitable access to such transportation infrastructure.

Better Quality of Life: Energy-efficient homes and buildings have been shown to increase occupant comfort. EVs are quieter than combustion vehicles, decreasing ambient noise levels. Trees and greenspace add character and identity to places, serving as space to connect with others, foster a sense of belonging, and offer a place of refuge from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. All of these are achieved through measures within the Green Communities Program and relevant PCAP measures.

Resilience to Natural Disasters: Trees and greenspaces serve as sponges to soak up heavy rainfall, helping lessen the risk of flooding, which is higher in LIDAC. Energy-efficient buildings and solar PV installations lessen the strain on the electric grid, important on high heat or very cold days when the potential for power disruptions is higher. When combined with battery storage, solar PV installations can serve as backup power during outages. Trees and energy-efficient buildings also lessen the impact of heatwaves, the number-one killer of residents among natural disasters.

Economic Development and Access to Job Opportunities: Adopting GHG mitigating technologies such as solar PV and EVs locally aligns with Georgia's clean tech industry focus. According to a recent E2 report, large-scale clean energy projects announced in Georgia in just the first year of the federal Inflation Reduction Act are projected to create or support almost 39,000 jobs and generate tens of billions of dollars in new wages, tax revenue, and economic growth.

4B. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ARC has a long-standing commitment to fostering interactive and innovative community engagement, guided by its core values of excellence, integrity, and equity. This commitment implementing meaningful public involvement strategies, particularly in LIDAC, in line with Executive Orders 14008 and 13895. In response to these directives, ARC has been proactive in tracking Justice40 initiatives across federal agencies, adopting a relationship-centered engagement approach to maximize impact and outcomes. These directives have significantly influenced both the conception and implementation of this program.

CEJST Indicators of Burden	Percentage of Census Tracts at or above the 90 th Percentile
Diabetes	9%
Asthma	5%
Life Expectancy	7%
Heart Disease	2%
Traffic Proximity & Volume	14%
Travel Barrier	12%
Diesel Particulate Matter	21%
Particulate Matter 2.5 in Air	0%
Energy Burden	6%
Indoor Plumbing	5%
Lead Paint	1%
Housing	12%
Poverty	7%
Linguistic Isolation	7%
Unemployment	8%
Low Median Household Income	9%
Wastewater Discharge	3%
Leaky Underground Storage Tanks	3%
Superfund Sites	0%
Risk Management Plan Proximity	11%
Hazardous Waste Proximity	0%

Table 12: Indicators of Burden for the 11-County ARC Region

ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAM DESIGN

To inform the creation of the PCAP, ARC used feedback from comments collected during the 2023 [Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#) (MTP) engagement process, which included climate discussions with the [Transportation Equity Advisory Group](#). In addition, a series of online stakeholder webinars, one-on-one conversations with stakeholders, existing community events, and online surveys solicited feedback that helped shape the PCAP. This process ensured a wide-ranging and inclusive approach to community engagement, reaching out to local jurisdictions, and emphasizing participation from LIDAC.

Throughout 2022 and 2023, ARC staff held conversations with local governments that expressed a desire to participate in the Green Communities Program but lacked the capacity to prepare for or go through the process of applying. These conversations with largely LIDACs helped shape the vision for an enhanced program. Please refer to letters of support from these communities in the “LOS” attachment.

These letters represent support from 11 existing Green Communities and 5 communities in need of assistance to participate, as well as a letter of support from Senator Raphael Warnock.

BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

ARC will add representatives from organizations focused on LIDAC to its internal Technical Advisory Group, which consists of subject matter experts who set measures for the program. The newly constituted group will review current measures and create a new measure to incentivize participating local governments to create a Green Communities Resident Advisory Group, with an emphasis on involving residents from LIDAC. The resident advisory group would be able to advise their local government on which program measures would be most impactful to their communities.

A TEAM FOCUSED ON EQUITABLE INVOLVEMENT

Central to this initiative is deploying specialized newly-hired Fellows who will work directly with the communities through technical support and engagement. ARC prioritizes assembling a diverse team with multilingual abilities, specifically in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese. This linguistic and cultural inclusivity breaks down barriers to participation and ensures effective communication.

The Fellows will work directly with local government staff and engage with community groups to understand their needs. They will assist in creating a Green Communities Resident Advisory Committee, a collaborative approach designed to empower these groups to advocate effectively for green policies.

ARC recognizes the dynamic nature of community needs and aims to stay responsive through a feedback and adaptive management strategy. This will create a feedback structure that captures LIDAC perspectives and experiences of the Program. By continually analyzing this feedback, ARC adjusts to evolving community needs. This cycle of feedback, evaluation, and adaptation is crucial to achieving meaningful engagement and enhancing green communities across metro Atlanta.

SECTION 5: JOB QUALITY

Implementing GHG reduction measures can create high-quality jobs and expand economic opportunity to underserved workers. ARC currently works to smooth this transition, and would leverage ARC's internal Workforce Development Department and other existing programs.



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CLEAN TECH ACADEMY PILOT

ARC has received a 5-year, \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor that will enable Goodwill to offer state-of-the-industry training for 250 people to become EV technicians. The grant will expand Goodwill's pilot Clean Tech Academy to locations across the Atlanta region, including Atlanta Technical College. The first Clean Tech Academy courses funded with the federal grant are expected to start by early summer 2024.

BUILDING GEORGIA WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

This Partnership fosters statewide collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, and the workforce training community to close the gap between the current levels of infrastructure construction employment and what will be needed for Georgia to successfully take advantage of funding provided in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Building Georgia has identified an approximate gap of 136,000 infrastructure construction job openings across the state over the 5-year lifespan of the IIJA. To address this gap, the program aims to: train labor based on industry needs assessments; match employers with job seekers; reframe and promote skilled trades to students earlier; and identify funding to support long-term efforts. The program is anticipated to launch in late fall 2024.

DEVELOPING FUTURE CLIMATE & SUSTAINABILITY PROFESSIONALS

ARC's Sustainable Connections Internship Program often sees its interns hired as full-time local government staff into new positions focused on climate and sustainability. We envision a similar outcome with the six Green Communities Fellows, who will develop the knowledge and skills needed to be hired as a climate and sustainability professional by an area local government.

Similarly, the longer a local government participates in Green Communities, the more likely it is to create a Sustainability Director position, as has occurred in Fulton and Gwinnett counties. Increased community participation could create more Sustainability Director positions over the next 5 years.

SECTION 6: PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY AND PAST PERFORMANCE

The following is provided as demonstrative evidence and to instill confidence in ARC's abilities to successfully manage and implement programs, including from federally funded grants and contracts.

6A. PAST PERFORMANCE

ARC has a rich history of excellent performance on federal grants, underscoring our commitment to project success. Through robust processes and diligent management, ARC consistently delivers successful outcomes across a diverse array of federally funded initiatives. Table 13 serves to highlight five projects, showcasing our proficiency in managing and completing federal projects.

Title	Additional Info	Brief Description	Discussion
(1) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Planning Cooperative Agreement	<i>Agreement Number</i> 5D-02D56523-0	ARC is the lead agency for the CPRG planning grant, overseeing the development of a Priority Climate Action Plan, Comprehensive Climate Action Plan, and Status update over a 4-year performance period.	Despite stringent grant deadlines, ARC has effectively managed all project facets through our internal project management team, devoted staff, and an effective project tracking system. The timely submission of the PCAP marked a successful milestone.
	<i>Funding Agency</i> - EPA 66.046		
	<i>Contact</i> Maya Odeh-Adimah (404) 562-8415 OdehAdimah.Maya@epa.gov		

(2) Economic Development Administration (EDA) FY 2023 Atlanta Regional Office Partnership Planning Program	Agreement Number - N/A	ARC is facilitating local and regional economic development planning, including implementation of the 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) action plan.	All Planning Program requirements and deliverables have been submitted and accepted during the current grant cycle. Weekly meetings ensure schedule adherence, scope management, and proactive risk mitigation.
	Funding Agency - EDA 11.302		
	Contact Jonathan Corso 404-730-3023 jcorso@eda.org		
(3) Metro Atlanta RSVP/ AmeriCorps Seniors	Agreement Number 23SRHGA002	Metro Atlanta RSVP's unique model focuses on peer-to-peer education using highly skilled older adult volunteers to deliver a wide variety of community presentations and events.	ARC has successfully managed volunteer service to the community through RSVP grants since 2008, supporting hundreds of volunteers who have provided thousands of hours of service to our region. Success is supported through procedures for timely grant administration which are followed through adopted procurement and accounting policies.
	Funding Agency - Corporation for National and Community Service (a Federal Agency of the US Government)		
	Contact Jacob Fox (202) 569-0938 Jafox@americorps.gov		
(4) Empowering Communities to Deliver and Sustain Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Programs	Agreement Number HHS-2023-ACL-AOA-FPSG-0005	Under this grant, ARC will increase participation in and access to 3 evidence-based falls prevention programs empowering individuals to reduce falls and the risk of falls and ensure the sustainability of EBFPP across our region.	ARC has exceeded goals for persons served in and individuals trained to co-lead these short-term interventions. ARC seeks to sustain program delivery by establishing contractual partnerships and sponsorship opportunities with healthcare and other organizations invested in reducing costs associated with older adult falls.
	Funding Agency- HHS 75-075		
	Contact Donna Bethge 202-795-7659 Donna.Bethge@acl.hhs.gov		
(5) Provide services for safe trips in a connected transportation network – Phase 1 (ITS4US)	Agreement Number 693JJ321C00008	ARC is developing an App that provides seamless travel for the transportation disadvantaged in metro Atlanta.	All requirements and deliverables were successfully completed, relying on a project management plan that ARC created. This plan mandated a kick-off meeting, monthly reports, and a User Needs Identification and Requirements Planning Document. Bi-weekly meetings with USDOT and weekly team meetings ensured schedule adherence, scope management, and proactive risk mitigation.
	Funding Agency DOT 20.205		
	Contact Amalia Rodezno (202) 366-0904 amalia.rodezno@dot.gov		

Table 13: Examples of Federal Grants administered by ARC

6B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

ARC has consistently met reporting requirements stipulated within grant agreements, reflecting its commitment to accountability and transparency in project execution. More details are provided below for each of the assistance agreements listed above.

(1) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant: *Through our work on the EPA CPRG, ARC is intimately familiar with EPA reporting requirements.* The first quarterly report was submitted on time in January 2024 and acknowledged and completed on time. This included an overall summary, and reporting of project progress, accomplishments, staff turnover, and fiscal information, as required by EPA. ARC deferred the first quarterly report in October 2023 because only one month had passed since the start of the agreement. EPA agreed to this deferral.



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(2) EDA FY 2023 Atlanta Regional Office Partnership Planning Program: ARC meets all reporting requirements and deadlines, including semi-annual progress and financial reports. The ARC Board reviews the annual update report and provides approval at a Board Meeting, in compliance with EDA stipulations. Grant administration follows adopted procurement and accounting policies, as detailed in Section 7, and annual audits assess grant procedures for proper controls. Overall, ARC has a long history of compliance with EDA requirements.

Quarterly Progress Report – CPRG Planning Grant Program		
Recipient Name: Atlanta Regional Commission		EPA Grant #: 5D-02D56523-0
Project Title: Climate Pollution Reduction Grant		
Project Officer: Maya Odeh-Adimah		
Reporting Period: August 28 – December 31, 2023		
Project Progress		
The project is on schedule with the workplan.		
Project Accomplishments and Results by Element		
Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP)		
Element #	Element Name	Summary of Accomplishments and Results
Element 1.1	GHG Inventory (Required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This element is in progress and on schedule.Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) was approved by RTI International on November 13 and sent to EPA Region 4 for review on November 29.Several stakeholders have presented climate action plans through direct contact and via ARC Stakeholder and Emission Reduction Strategy survey links.

Through ARC's work on the EPA CPRG, we are intimately familiar with EPA reporting requirements and have met them in a timely manner.

(3) Metro Atlanta RSVP/AmeriCorps Seniors: Progress Reports are made biannually, and reporting is completed on a timely basis. Procedures for timely grant administration are followed through adopted procurement and accounting policies.

(4) Empowering Communities to Deliver and Sustain Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Program: ARC has monthly progress meetings with the Administration for Community Living and National Council on Aging staff and submits bi-annual program reports and annual financial reports and completes required data entry into the national Healthy Aging Program Information Database. The ARC team completes reporting on a timely basis and has exceeded goals for this project.

(5) ITS4US: All interim and final deliverables were accepted and satisfied conditions. Progress reports were submitted monthly, as required by the terms of the contract, and performance was deemed satisfactory by FHWA.

6C. STAFF EXPERTISE

The enhanced Green Communities Program would combine deep institutional knowledge with new staff and Fellows to fully support the programmatic and technical activities. The following staff would play a key role in the successful implementation of the program, with support from multiple staff that compose ARC's cross-departmental Climate and Resilience Team. Resumes are included as an attachment with this application.

Crystal Jackson, Planning Manager, Climate + Sustainability: Ms. Jackson works with communities to improve the region's environmental footprint and address climate change. She currently leads climate action plan development for the Atlanta MSA under EPA's *Climate Pollution Reduction Grant* program. Through ARC's *Green Communities* program, she has assisted jurisdictions in implementing sustainability initiatives within their facilities and broader community. Prior to joining ARC's Natural Resources team, Ms. Jackson was part of the agency's Local Government Services group, where she oversaw regional leadership development programs, provided communities with management and training assistance, and coordinated the *Community Planning Academy*.

Prior to ARC, she managed Georgia Conservancy's *Blueprints for Successful Communities* program, helping Georgians create sound conservation and growth strategies. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Earth Sciences from UNC Charlotte and a Masters of City and Regional Planning with an Environmental



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concentration from Georgia Tech. She is a LEED Green Associate and graduate of the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership.

Jon Philipsborn, Climate and Resilience Manager: Mr. Philipsborn coordinates ARC's efforts to take action on climate change – through climate mitigation, decarbonization, and climate resilience initiatives. He advises local governments and regional partners on the strategic and holistic integration of climate change consideration into planning, project development, and management decisions. He is supporting the Atlanta MSA climate action planning as part of the CPRG program.

Mr. Philipsborn has gained valuable experience working across geographies for government, non-profits, and the private sector. He has collaborated with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on the Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities, and co-authored the Scorecard's Public Health Addendum. He has previously supported US Federal Agencies, including FEMA with the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program. He holds a Masters of Public Administration in Environmental Science and Policy from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and a Bachelor of Arts from Kenyon College.

Additionally, if funded, ARC plans to hire the following new positions to support the program: Project Manager and Technical Lead; Technical Grant Writer; Outreach and Education Coordinator; LIDAC Fellows (total of 6 over 2 two-year cohorts.)

ARC'S SUITE OF RESOURCES

ARC would also bring the agency's full suite of resources to this project to successfully implement the enhanced Green Communities program as described within this proposal. This includes our full human resources, financial services, and external affairs teams, as well as access to internal technical assistance as needed. Furthermore, ARC could leverage our Board, Committees, and the newly created Energy and Climate Council to help accomplish Green Communities program objectives. Our longstanding relationships with and trust of government, philanthropic, civic, academic, and business partners throughout the region would further be of value to the successful implementation of the program.

In addition, as described above, CPRG-funding would be used to hire additional staff and Fellows in support of a robust, fully operational Green Communities program.

SECTION 7: BUDGET

ARC is requesting to implement the Green Communities Program as described within this grant application. The complete budget can be seen in the Budget Narrative attachment along with additional details. As described in Section 1a, Green Communities is a comprehensive program inclusive of multiple GHG reduction measures. It is purposefully designed to allow staff – through their time, technical support, engagement, and capacity building – and programmatic activities to support local governments across all GHG measures included. As such, the proposed budget follows this approach and is provided for the staff and activities per year to successfully implement the Program as a whole.

The Enhanced Green Communities program spans six measures, all equally covered by the program costs. The cost of the program when broken down equally by GHG measure is \$862,052/measure.

7A. BUDGET DETAIL

The following line items are included in the budget and appear with more detail in the Budget Narrative.



ARC's Enhanced Green Communities Program

Personnel (\$2,233,722): Funding will support a full-time Project Manager and Technical Lead; Technical Grant Writer; Outreach and Education Coordinator; and a total of 6 Fellows (3 Fellows per 2-year cohort.) Additionally, the following staff will support the program with a portion of their time: Senior Advisor; GHG Technical Advisor; Climate and Resilience Manager; Managing Director; Deputy COO; Financial Services Administrator; Senior Financial Analyst; and Executive Assistant.

Fringe (\$1,116,861): Funding will support ARC's fringe rate of 50 percent of salary for full-time staff. Components of ARC's Fringe pool include items such as health insurance, retirement plan, Medicare expenses, and annual leave. A detailed list of fringe pool elements is included in the Budget Narrative.

Travel (\$57,254): Funding will primarily support the local travel of Green Communities staff to visit the 75 cities and 11 counties within the region. Funding will also allow for a staff peer learning-exchange to occur annually with another similar program in the US, and attendance at a national conference.

Supplies (\$22,464): Computers and docking stations for new staff will be purchased, along with annual meeting and office supplies.

Contractual (\$183,673): In Year 1, ARC will hire an external contractor to create the new Green Communities web-based platform. Additional support will be used in Years 2-5 for communications, web-based or other technical needs.

Other (\$445,947): Other budgeted items include ARC rent and IT costs, an annual Green Communities Summit hosted by ARC, national conference registration fees, as well as printing costs.

Indirect (\$1,112,393): Agency-wide central support services costs are recorded in the General Fund as indirect costs in ARC's accounting system and recovered from the grantor agencies, through the special revenue and proprietary funds based upon a predetermined indirect cost rate. The U.S. Department of Commerce has been designated as the cognizant agency for the federal government with responsibility for negotiation, approval, and audit of ARC's agency-wide central support services cost allocation plan. ARC prepared the 2024 plan and submitted it to the Interior Business Center, a shared service provider operating under the Department of the Interior. The Certificate of Indirect Cost for FY 2024 established a fixed rate of 33.2% percent of direct salaries, wages, and fringe benefits.

7B. EXPENDITURE OF AWARDED FUNDS

ARC boasts extensive experience in managing a diverse portfolio of federal funding and grants, including from EPA. With over \$92.9 million in programs under management, ARC has demonstrated its capability to administer grants efficiently and effectively and has in-depth knowledge of the requirements for proper grant administrative systems and procurement. These include procedures for timely grant administration through adopted procurement and accounting policies, using automated systems including CostPoint for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), Deltek for expense reporting and timesheet tracking, and Concur for contract and invoice approvals. Further, ARC is subject to annual audits where grant procedures are evaluated to ensure proper controls are in place.

To ensure the expenditure of funds within a specific timeframe, ARC has implemented a system of dedicated monthly reports that provide a real-time status update on expended dollars versus scheduled costs, with easy-to-understand green/yellow/red indications of where more attention may be required

(Figure 5). Additional details about grant administration can be found in the Budget Narrative Attachment.

Figure 5: Monthly Dashboards Generated by Costpoint Provide Line-by-Line Expenditure Information on a Real-Time Basis

7C. REASONABLENESS OF COSTS

The Enhanced Green Communities Program application is focused on having the staff necessary to directly support local governments

adopt and implement the GHG measures described in Section 1. As such, most of the budget is focused on personnel costs. ARC's experience in cost-efficiently managing the existing Green Communities program directly applies to the cost estimates provided here and was used as a baseline to develop the following reasonable costs, which are further detailed in the Budget Narrative. Highlights are below:

- Personnel costs were based upon our experience managing the existing Green Communities program and what support we understand local communities need. To maintain efficiency, ARC is proposing Fellows for a portion of the technical support. More details on reasonableness of staffing costs, fringe, and indirect costs are outlined in the Budget Narrative and related attachment.
- Travel and supplies are outlined in the Budget Narrative and related attachment. Funding will primarily support the local travel of Green Communities staff to visit the 75 cities and 11 counties within the region. Funding will also allow for a staff peer learning-exchange to occur annually with another similar program in the US, and attendance at a national conference for two people each year. Supplies include six computers and docking stations for new staff, along with annual meeting costs and office supplies.
- Contractual: In Year 1, ARC will hire an external contractor to create the new Green Communities web-based platform. The cost estimate of \$100,000 is based upon ARC's experience hiring contractors on similar projects with a similar level of support. Additional support will be used in Years 2-5 for communications, web-based or other technical needs. This is based on \$20,000 per year, escalated at 3% per year based upon ARC's experience on similar projects. In addition to a contractor, the work will be supported by ARC's in-house Communications and Graphics Design groups, which bill by an hourly rate and are therefore included under this line item.
- Other (\$445,947): These are further outlined in the Budget Narrative and related attachment:
 - ARC rent totals \$160,031 over five years and is the portion of ARC's determined by the number of FTEs working on this program. These costs are not included in the Indirect calculation, as they are based on square footage usage/number of employees and not on total salaries.
 - IT costs total \$219,552 over five years. ARC IT services are incurred on a per-employee basis for the FTEs working on this program. These costs are not included within the Indirect calculation, as they are based on the number of computers/number of employees and not on salaries.
 - Printing is based upon experience on similar projects and is estimated at \$1,000 in year one, escalated by 3% in future years.
 - The annual summit is based upon ARC's experience running similar programs annually.
 - National conference registration fees are \$1,500 and escalated 3% each year after year 1. These are based upon experience attending similar conferences in the past.

Actual 2024	Adopted 2024 Budget	Run/ Rate	2023 Run Rate %	Vs Benchmark 2/12 = 17%
0.16	1.47	11%	11%	-6%
0.10	0.51	20%	15%	3%

The Enhanced Green Communities program spans 6 measures, all equally covered by the program costs. The cost of the program when broken down by GHG measure is \$862,052/measure. When the total cost of the program is divided by the estimated GHG reduction, the cost is only \$0.62 per MTCO₂e, which compared to research on cost/MTCO₂e of other GHG reduction initiatives, is very reasonable.