



Leading the Way 2025-26 Tour

GREATER ATLANTA REPORT

HIGHLIGHTING WHAT WORKS

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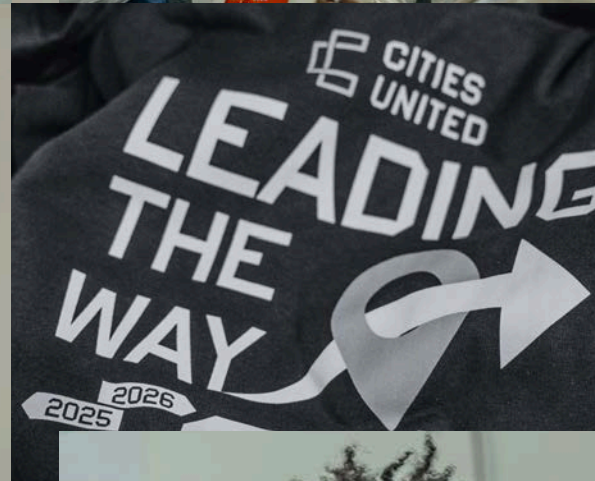
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TOGETHER WE CAN
DREAM ★ BELIEVE ★ LEAD ★ ACHIEVE



LETTER FROM CITIES UNITED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: **AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Dear Greater Atlanta Leaders, Partners, and Community Members,

On behalf of Cities United, I want to thank the Atlanta community for welcoming our team during the Leading the Way Tour. We are grateful for the time, honesty, hospitality, and leadership shared by community partners, young leaders, county representatives, public officials, hospital-based partners, diversion leaders, and organizations working every day to build safer, healthier, and more hopeful communities.

Atlanta's public safety ecosystem is shaped by deep community commitment, strong neighborhood relationships, and a clear desire to build a more coordinated regional approach to safety. Across the region, community-based organizations are supporting young people and families, hospital-based partners are meeting people at critical moments of harm and recovery, diversion partners are creating pathways to care and support, and young leaders are offering clear insight into what safety means in their daily lives.

The Leading the Way Tour affirmed that Greater Atlanta has many of the relationships, programs, and partners needed to strengthen a comprehensive public safety ecosystem.

Key community partners such as Wii Care, Circle of Safety, H.O.P.E. Hustlers and Mothers Against Gang Violence reflect the trust, credibility, and proximity that are essential to community-centered safety. These organizations are helping anchor the work in lived experience, family and community connection, and direct engagement with those most impacted by violence.

The Tour also highlighted other important assets across the ecosystem. IVYY brings a hospital-based intervention model connected to care, healing, and follow-up support. Diversion partners offer pathways that expand how the region responds to people in crisis. DeKalb County brings active planning and investment around community violence intervention. Young leaders bring lived experience, honesty, and a clear call for opportunity, accountability, and consistency.

At the same time, the Tour made clear that the Greater Atlanta area is in an important stage of alignment. The region has meaningful work underway, and those efforts now need a clearer structure to connect community, city, county, state, philanthropic, institutional, and young leadership. This is especially important in a region where safety does not stop at municipal boundaries and where young people and families move across city and county lines for school, work, housing, health care, family, and support.

This report lifts up Greater Atlanta's strengths, names the challenges that require attention, and offers recommendations to support a more coordinated public safety ecosystem. Cities United remains committed to walking alongside Greater Atlanta-area partners as they continue building a public safety approach rooted in community leadership, healing, opportunity, and shared accountability.

In solidarity,

Anthony D. Smith

Executive Director, Cities United



INTRODUCTION

In April 2026, Cities United brought its Leading the Way Tour to the Greater Atlanta area for the final stop of the tour, creating an important closing moment to listen, learn, and reflect alongside local leaders and partners. As the culminating stop, Atlanta offered an opportunity to examine how community-centered safety efforts are taking shape across a complex regional landscape, while also lifting up broader lessons emerging across the Leading the Way Tour. The engagement created space for community partners, young leaders, public officials, county representatives, hospital-based partners, diversion leaders, and system stakeholders to reflect on what is working, where coordination can be strengthened, and what support is needed to sustain and move the work forward.

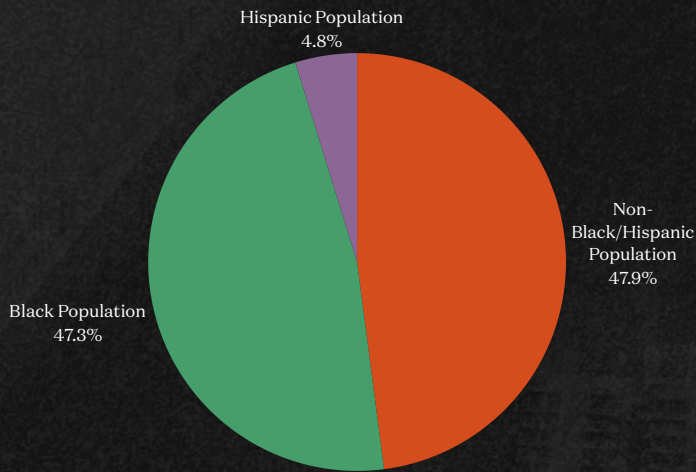
Across jurisdictions, the Leading the Way Tour is designed to highlight comprehensive public safety practices, foster cross-sector collaboration, amplify community-led solutions, enhance local capacity, evaluate progress using Cities United’s Frameworks, and strengthen meaningful young leader engagement.

In Greater Atlanta, these goals aligned closely with the region’s current moment. The city and surrounding counties have a strong base of community-led work, emerging county-level investment, hospital-based intervention infrastructure, diversion strategies, and young leaders who are ready to shape the future of safety. The region also faces a clear need for stronger coordination, shared language, role clarity, and sustained public-sector engagement.

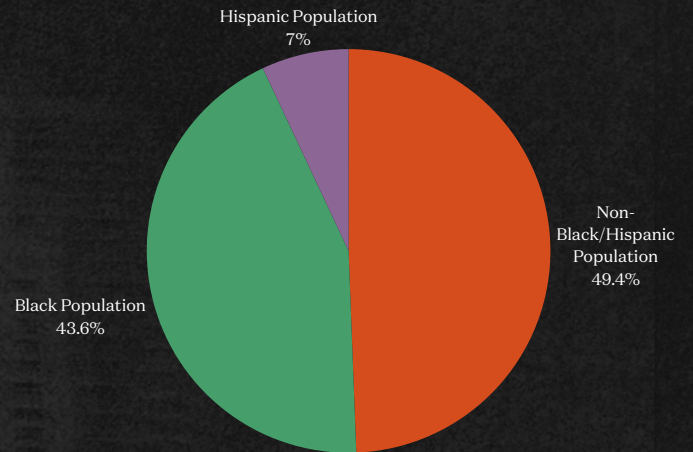
Greater Atlanta’s public safety landscape must be understood regionally. The work touches Atlanta City, DeKalb County, Fulton and South Fulton Counties, and state-level partners. Community violence, trauma, opportunity gaps, service access, and institutional responsibility all move across jurisdictional lines. A stronger public safety ecosystem will require a structure that reflects that reality.

POPULATION BREAKDOWN

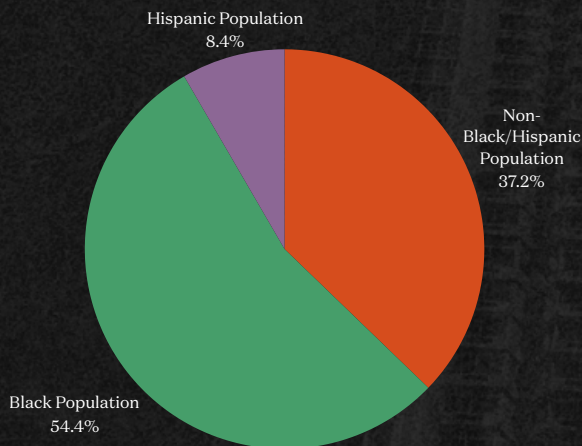
CITY OF ATLANTA



FULTON COUNTY



DEKALB COUNTY

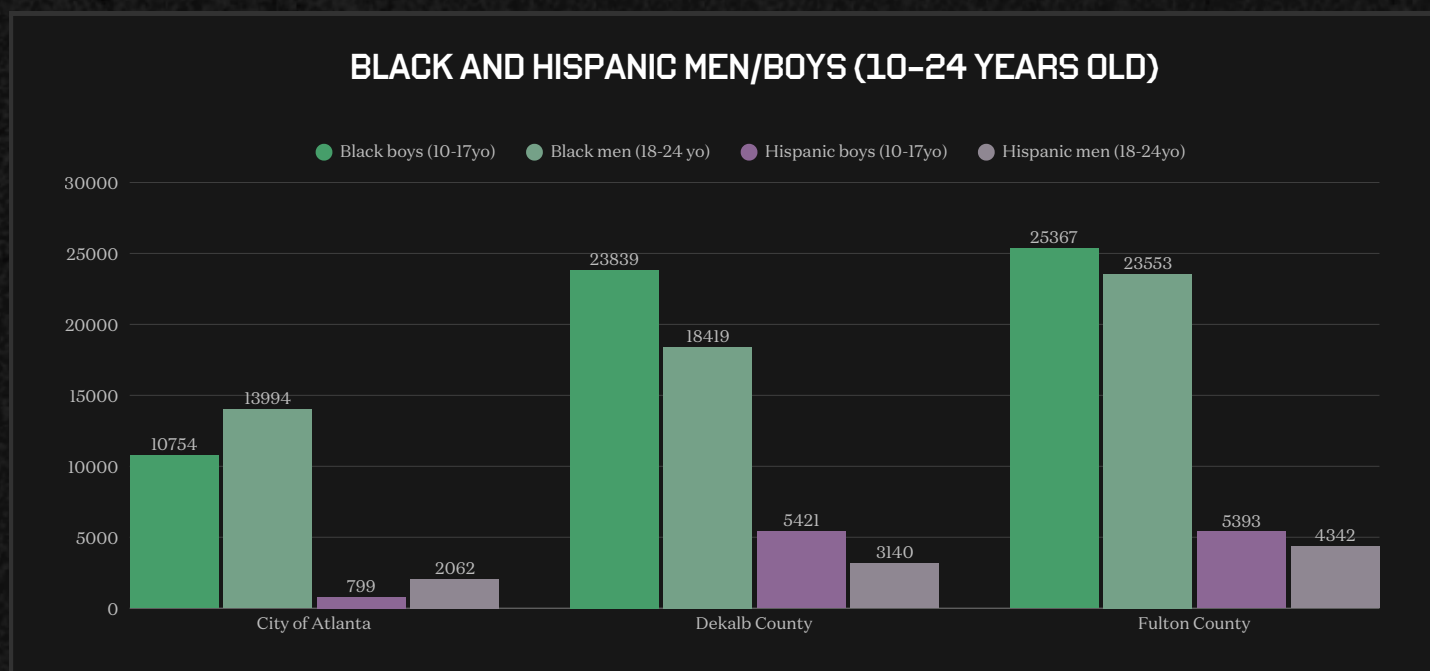


This report offers a synthesis of Greater Atlanta’s current public safety landscape, with attention to grounded strengths, persistent challenges, emerging momentum, strategic considerations, safety and equity context, and recommended next steps. Together, these sections are intended to support continued alignment among partners and identify practical ways to build a more coordinated regional safety ecosystem.

UNDERSTANDING THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE

Greater Atlanta's public safety landscape reflects a region with strong community assets and several important safety strategies already underway. Community-based organizations are working directly with young people, families, and neighborhoods. Hospital-based partners are supporting people impacted by violence at critical moments of injury, recovery, and transition. Diversion partners are expanding alternatives to arrest and creating pathways to care. County partners, particularly in DeKalb, are advancing planning and investment around community violence intervention. Additionally, The Coalition to Advance Public Safety (CAPS) initiative has provided \$500,000 in technical assistance and training to five Atlanta community-based organizations: Atlanta Victim Assistance (AVA), Circle of Safety, H.O.P.E. Hustlers, Girassol Wellness, and WiiCare Atlanta. This funding was designed to strengthen their infrastructure, coordination, and capacity by supporting areas such as staff hiring and training, fundraising, back-office development, and sustained community violence intervention programming.

The regional frame matters because the work of keeping young people safe, healthy, and hopeful extends across Atlanta City, DeKalb County, and Fulton County. Young Black men and boys are central to Cities United's mission, and the Greater Atlanta ecosystem must be organized in ways that reflect how young people move across schools, neighborhoods, services, families, and opportunities. A city-only strategy would miss key parts of the local reality.



Several core pieces of public safety infrastructure are already present. The IVYY Project serves as a hospital-based violence intervention partner connected to Grady, with a model that includes case management, coaching, violence interruption, trauma recovery, research support, physician engagement, peer support, medical care coordination, legal aid connections, transportation assistance, prescription support, wound care resources, and risk-based follow-up. This kind of infrastructure creates an important bridge between emergency care, community support, and longer-term healing.

Wii Care, Mothers Against Gang Violence (MAGV), and H.O.P.E Hustlers, adds an important community-rooted layer to Atlanta's emerging public safety ecosystem. Through connection to young people, families, and community-based healing efforts, these organizations and others, reflect the kind of trusted, relationship-centered work that helps make safety feel accessible and grounded in people's lived realities. Their roles point to the importance of culturally relevant supports, credible messengers, and community spaces that can connect residents to care, healing, opportunity, and stability before harm escalates or after violence has occurred.

Together with hospital-based intervention through IVYY and the leadership of community partners, these connected and coordinated efforts help illustrate the broader direction Atlanta can continue building toward: a comprehensive public safety ecosystem with multiple trusted entry points, varied forms of prevention and intervention, stronger referral pathways, and deeper connections to care.

DeKalb County brings additional momentum through planning around data collection, mapping, wraparound services, partnerships, and community violence intervention. DeKalb's youth-led peace campaign also reflects a commitment to centering young people, healing, and lived experience in violence prevention work.

Young leaders are also an important and growing asset within Greater Atlanta's ecosystem. During the tour, young people spoke clearly about their experiences, their needs, and their expectations for the system. Their perspectives added urgency and specificity to conversations that might otherwise remain abstract.



MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Young people connected safety to freedom of movement, trusted adults, real opportunity, and community-led support. Their reflections grounded the conversation in daily experience and reinforced the importance of designing safety strategies that young people can see, access, and trust.

Greater Atlanta's landscape is active and layered. The next phase is about making the work easier to coordinate across jurisdictions, systems, and partners. Community, city, county, state, philanthropic, hospital, institutional, and young leadership all have roles to play. A stronger regional structure can help clarify those roles and create the conditions for consistent action.

Grounded Strengths: Community Leadership, Young Leader Voice, and Emerging Infrastructure

Greater Atlanta's public safety ecosystem is grounded in committed people, trusted relationships, and meaningful work already underway across the region. Community-based organizations have deep ties to neighborhoods, young people, and families most impacted by violence. They serve as connectors, anchors, advocates, and trusted points of support for people navigating crisis, grief, conflict, opportunity gaps, and transition.

This community leadership gives Greater Atlanta a strong foundation for a broader public safety ecosystem. Local partners bring an understanding of safety that includes violence prevention, workforce development, food justice, mentoring, healing, legal support, housing stability, education, arts, advocacy, and community ownership. That broader understanding aligns with Cities United's Public Safety Redefined framework, which centers care, opportunity, coordination, and community leadership as essential parts of public safety.

Young leaders are another major strength. Young people offered clear insight into what safety means, what systems miss, and what kinds of support would make a difference. They named mentorship, financial literacy, career pathways, trade programs, mental health support, de-escalation training, community presence, and alternatives to policing as important parts of safety and opportunity. Their analysis added specificity to the work and challenged leaders and institutions to make support more visible, consistent, and practical.



MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Young leaders engaged deeply with public safety data and raised questions about whether the numbers matched what they see and experience in their own neighborhoods. Their engagement showed the importance of pairing data with lived experience and creating space for young people to help interpret what the information means

Hospital-based intervention is also a significant strength. IVYY's model brings together clinical care, violence interruption, case management, peer connection, trauma recovery, legal support, and sustained follow-up. That structure can help close the gap between the moment someone is harmed and the longer process of stabilization, healing, and reconnection. The model also reflects the importance of supporting staff wellness, peer support, and trauma-informed care within the work itself.

Circle of Safety adds another important community-rooted layer to Atlanta's emerging public safety ecosystem. As a partner space that has brought together community leaders, service providers, advocates, city and county stakeholders, and other organizations, Circle of Safety reflects the kind of connective infrastructure needed to move Atlanta from strong individual efforts toward stronger shared action. Its role points to the importance of creating trusted spaces where partners can build relationships, clarify roles, identify gaps, and strengthen referral pathways across prevention, intervention, healing, and support.

This kind of community-led coordination is especially important in a region where many partners are already doing meaningful work, but the broader ecosystem still needs clearer structure, alignment, and follow-through. Alongside hospital-based intervention, youth engagement, and other community-rooted efforts, Circle of Safety helps illustrate the direction Greater Atlanta can continue building toward: a comprehensive public safety ecosystem with trusted convening spaces, multiple entry points, stronger partner alignment, and clearer pathways to care, healing, opportunity, and long-term stability.

County-level interest, especially in DeKalb, provides another foundation for regional progress. DeKalb is helping drive this work through a DOJ Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative grant, creating an opportunity to strengthen planning, data use, mapping, partnerships, wraparound supports, and youth-led peace work as part of a broader community violence intervention strategy.

Because CVIPI is designed to support localized, evidence-informed violence prevention strategies that connect community stakeholders with public safety, public health, and victim service partners, it gives DeKalb an important platform for building the kind of coordinated infrastructure this work requires. State-level, additional county interest, including South Fulton and philanthropic interest add further potential for long-term sustainability, particularly if those investments are aligned around a shared regional strategy.

Greater Atlanta's strengths point to a region with real assets and strong potential. The work ahead is to connect these assets through a shared structure that protects community leadership and strengthens coordinated action.



PERSISTENT CHALLENGES: WHERE COORDINATION NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN

The most consistent challenge in Greater Atlanta is coordination. Many partners are active, and several important strategies are underway, but the work does not yet operate through a clear regional structure with shared roles, decision-making pathways, and accountability. This creates gaps in communication, planning, funding, and implementation.

A stronger ecosystem will require clarity about who is responsible for convening, coordinating, funding, evaluating, communicating, and sustaining the work. This includes clarifying the role of the Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction (MOVR), the role of city departments, the role of county partners, and the role of community-based organizations within a broader regional strategy. Questions around MOVR's authority, mission, staffing, budget position, and connection to prevention and intervention funding need to be addressed with care and clarity so that partners understand how the work is organized and where decisions are made.

Trust is another important challenge. Community partners emphasized the importance of follow-through, transparency, and action. Trust grows when commitments are honored, resources move clearly, and community expertise is respected. In Greater Atlanta, strengthening trust will require consistent communication, shared ownership, and visible progress.

MOMENT THAT MATTERS

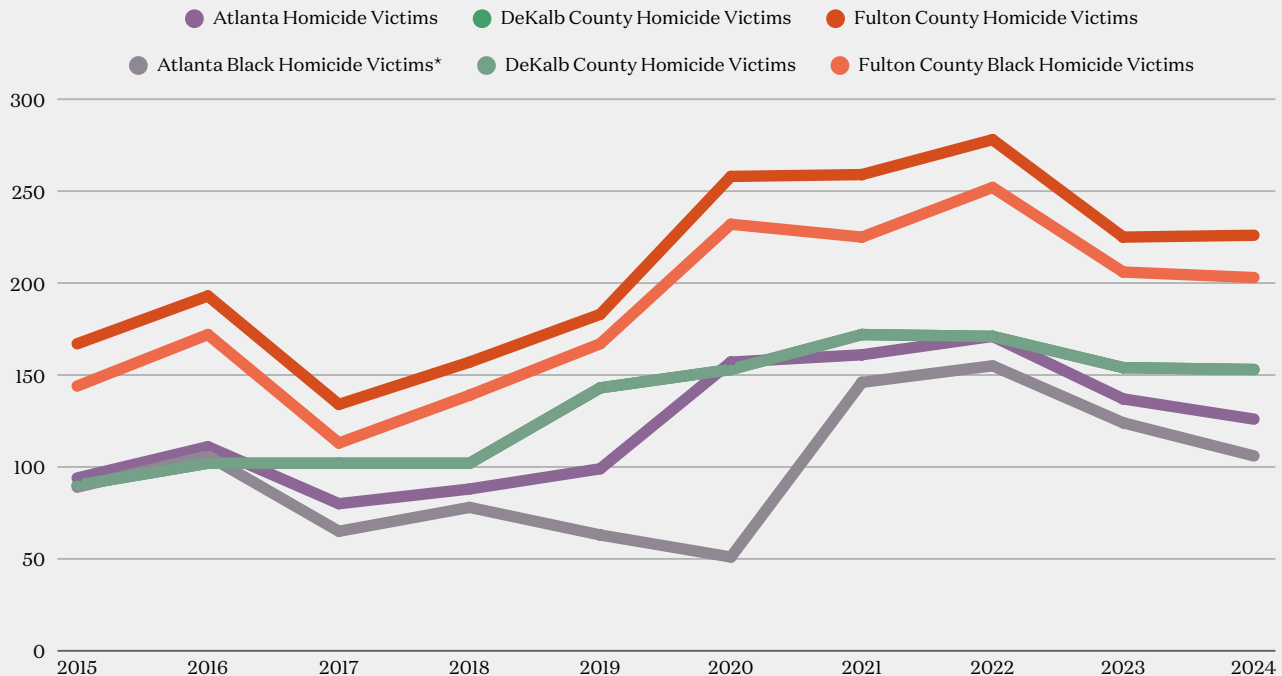
A community partner described the challenge as “trust in action.”

This phrase captures an important truth for Greater Atlanta’s next phase: trust will be built through what partners do consistently, how they communicate, and whether community priorities are reflected in decisions and investments.

Funding and sustainability also need attention. Community partners are carrying essential pieces of the public safety ecosystem, but long-term support remains uneven. A stronger funding strategy should align city, county, state, philanthropic, and institutional resources around the organizations closest to the work. Philanthropic interest and county investment create opportunity, and that opportunity needs to be organized through clear priorities, shared language, and materials that help funders understand where investment can strengthen the ecosystem.

The region’s homicide trends reinforce the need for sustained coordination. The City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, and Fulton County have each experienced significant homicide levels over the last decade, with Fulton County showing the highest overall counts in the regional comparison and Atlanta and DeKalb also carrying substantial losses. These patterns point to the importance of shared strategy across jurisdictional lines, especially when violence, services, family networks, and institutional responsibility are interconnected.

HOMICIDE TRENDS ACROSS THE JURISDICTION



Source: Atlanta Police Department Database, Police Department Annual Reports; DeKalb Medical Examiner's Annual Reports; Fulton County Medical Examiner Annual Reports

Data access and interpretation remain part of the coordination challenge. The region has important data available across city and county geographies, including population, homicide, education, work, and income indicators. The next step is making that data more accessible, more disaggregated, and more connected to community interpretation. Better data use should help partners make decisions together, see disparities clearly, and connect violence prevention with education, employment, housing, and healing strategies.

Shared language is also needed. Partners are using terms such as Community Violence Intervention (CVI), prevention, intervention, interruption, diversion, public safety, and community safety in different ways. A shared language process would help elected officials, system partners, funders, and community organizations understand how each part of the ecosystem connects.

Greater Atlanta's challenges are addressable. They point to the need for stronger infrastructure, clearer roles, deeper trust, aligned funding, accessible data, and a more coordinated regional strategy.

EMERGING MOMENTUM: A REGION READY FOR ALIGNMENT

Greater Atlanta is showing clear signs of readiness for a more aligned comprehensive public safety ecosystem. Partners understand that the work must be regional. Community leaders are active. Young leaders are engaged. DeKalb County is planning and investing. Hospital-based and diversion models are operating. Philanthropic and state-level partners are showing interest.

One of the strongest signs of momentum is the growing call for a regional table. A recurring cross-jurisdictional structure could help align community, city, county, state, hospital, philanthropic, institutional, and young leadership. This table should focus on implementation, shared learning, and follow-through.

State-level interest creates another opening. State representatives raised the importance of being included in a conversation that often focuses on city and county roles. Bringing state partners into the work could expand the resource base, strengthen policy alignment, and support a broader regional approach.



MOMENT THAT MATTERS

State representatives raised interest in being included in the public safety conversation. This creates an important opportunity to connect city, county, and state-level strategy and explore additional resource pathways.

Young leader engagement also creates momentum. Young people brought insight, urgency, and practical ideas. Their participation points toward a stronger role for young people in shaping the public safety ecosystem over time. The next step is to create sustained and clearly defined roles that allow young leaders to influence planning, data interpretation, communication, and accountability.

There is also momentum around education and shared language. Elected officials, system partners, and community organizations would benefit from a clearer understanding of CVI as one part of a comprehensive public safety ecosystem. This creates an opportunity for a shared learning series that builds common language and strengthens practice.

The education and post-graduation indicators reinforce what young leaders and partners emphasized throughout the Tour: safety strategies must connect to opportunity. Graduation, dropout, higher education, vocational training, and employment pathways are all part of the broader conditions that shape long-term safety for young people and families.

GRADUATION RATES

2023-2024 School Year Education-Related Data	Graduation Rate	Drop Out Rate	Enrolled in higher education, vocational training, or competitive job 1 year post-graduation
Atlanta Public Schools	72.15	23.00	83.06
Dekalb County	64.38	31.63	77.09
Fulton County	75.67	18.22	85.99
State	73.74	18.13	85.12

Philanthropic interest is another opening. Greater Atlanta has an opportunity to develop clear funder-facing materials that explain the ecosystem, show where investment is needed, and center community-led work. This can help move resources toward prevention, intervention, healing, young leader engagement, and coordination.

Greater Atlanta's momentum is strongest where partners are naming the need for structure. The opportunity now is to move from recognition to action.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS: **BUILDING CONTINUITY, STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE, AND ADVANCING ATLANTA'S REGIONAL VISION**

Greater Atlanta's next phase will depend on how well the region converts readiness into coordinated execution. The region has visible community leadership, active partners, and emerging public and philanthropic interest. Sustaining that momentum will require a fully implemented strategy, clearer roles, intentional relationship repair, and long-term investment in the organizations and leaders closest to the work.

A central consideration is the need for a regional coordination structure that can hold the work over time. Greater Atlanta-area partners have repeatedly named the need for a convening table that includes community, city, DeKalb County, Fulton County, and other relevant partners. A durable structure would help clarify who participates, what decisions are made, how information moves, how community partners are supported, and how public agencies remain accountable to shared priorities.

A second consideration is public-sector role clarity. MOVR, city departments, county partners, and state actors all have potential roles in the ecosystem, but partners need a clearer understanding of who has convening authority, who controls resources, who supports implementation, who communicates progress, and who is responsible for sustaining coordination. Clear role definition can reduce confusion, duplication, and stalled follow-through.

A third consideration is community ownership. Greater Atlanta’s strongest assets are rooted in trusted community relationships. Planning and funding decisions should protect that trust by compensating community expertise where appropriate, sharing credit, and ensuring that organizations closest to the work help shape priorities before decisions are finalized.



MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Concerns were raised about planning processes that move ahead without sufficient community ownership. This moment matters because formal planning is strongest when the people closest to the work help shape the strategy from the beginning.

A fourth consideration is sustainability. Community partners, hospital-based programs, diversion models, and youth-serving organizations need stable support to continue and expand their work. Long-term safety requires consistent investment, clear funding pathways, and coordinated resource development across public and philanthropic partners.

Finally, Greater Atlanta’s public safety narrative should reflect the full scope of what partners are building: community leadership, hospital-based intervention, diversion, healing, workforce, education, food justice, legal support, young leader engagement, and regional coordination. A stronger narrative can help residents, elected officials, funders, and system partners understand how the work fits together and why shared investment matters.

Together, these strategic considerations reflect a region preparing for its next stage of growth. Greater Atlanta has strong community assets and visible momentum. The next phase requires the structure, trust, and investment needed to make those assets work together across the region.

GREATER ATLANTA: SAFETY & EQUITY SNAPSHOT

Greater Atlanta's safety and equity landscape is best understood across the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, and Fulton County. The region includes large Black communities across all three geographies and a growing need for coordinated strategies that reflect how young people, families, institutions, and services move across jurisdictional lines.

Population:

- City of Atlanta: 520,066 residents
- DeKalb County: 770,307 residents
- Fulton County: 1,090,354 residents

Black Population:

- City of Atlanta: 245,922 Black residents, representing 47.3% of the population
- DeKalb County: 419,088 Black residents, representing 54.4% of the population
- Fulton County: 475,641 Black residents, representing 43.6% of the population

Hispanic Population:

- City of Atlanta: 24,833 Hispanic residents, representing 4.8% of the population
- DeKalb County: 64,549 Hispanic residents, representing 8.4% of the population
- Fulton County: 76,168 Hispanic residents, representing 7.0% of the population

Young Black Men and Boys:

- City of Atlanta includes 10,754 Black boys ages 10–17 and 13,904 Black men ages 18–24.
- DeKalb County includes 23,839 Black boys ages 10–17 and 18,419 Black men ages 18–24.
- Fulton County includes 25,367 Black boys ages 10–17 and 23,553 Black men ages 18–24.

Homicide Trend:

- City of Atlanta homicides increased from 94 in 2015 to 171 in 2022, then declined to 96 in 2025.
- DeKalb County homicides increased from 90 in 2015 to 172 in 2022, with 153 reported in 2024.
- Fulton County homicides increased from 167 in 2015 to 278 in 2022, with 226 reported in 2024.

Racial Disparity in Homicide Victimization:

In the City of Atlanta, Black residents represent 47.3% of the population, while Black victims represented 84.1% of homicide victims in 2024.

In DeKalb County, Black residents represent 54.4% of the population, while Black victims represented 94.1% of homicide victims in 2024.

In Fulton County, Black residents represent 43.6% of the population, while Black victims represented 89.8% of homicide victims in 2024.

Education

- Atlanta Public Schools graduation rate: 72.15; dropout rate: 23.00
- DeKalb County graduation rate: 64.38; dropout rate: 31.63
- Fulton County graduation rate: 75.67; dropout rate: 18.22
- State graduation rate: 73.74; dropout rate: 18.13

Post-Graduation Pathways:

- Atlanta Public Schools: 83.06% enrolled in higher education, vocational training, or competitive employment one year after graduation
- DeKalb County: 77.09% enrolled in higher education, vocational training, or competitive employment one year after graduation
- Fulton County: 85.99% enrolled in higher education, vocational training, or competitive employment one year after graduation
- Statewide: 85.12% enrolled in higher education, vocational training, or competitive employment one year after graduation

Governance & Coordination:

Greater Atlanta's ecosystem includes community-based organizations, hospital-based intervention, diversion infrastructure, county-level planning, philanthropic interest, and emerging state-level engagement. The region's next phase requires a clearer coordination structure across community, city, county, state, institutional, and philanthropic partners.

Young Leader Engagement: Young leaders are already helping define safety, identify gaps, interpret community conditions, and name the types of opportunities and support needed to reduce violence and strengthen wellbeing. The next opportunity is to grow this work through clearer roles and sustained engagement.

Community Assets:

Greater Atlanta's comprehensive public safety ecosystem includes trusted community organizations, IVYY, PAD, county partners, young people-led peace work, workforce and mentoring partners, healing-centered supports, legal aid connections, and community leaders with deep neighborhood relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

The Leading the Way Tour surfaced a focused set of priorities to help Greater Atlanta move from strong activity to stronger alignment. These recommendations reflect what Greater Atlanta partners raised most clearly: the need for a regional table, clearer public-sector roles, stronger city-community relationships, expanded young leader work, shared education around CVI and the broader ecosystem, coordinated resource development, and longer-term training capacity.

The immediate priorities focus on coordination, mapping, clarity, trust, and follow-through. The longer-term recommendations focus on building the infrastructure needed to sustain the work across the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, Fulton County, and key state, philanthropic, institutional, and community partners.

IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS (3-6 MONTH PRIORITIES)

1. ESTABLISH A CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY CONVENING TABLE

Create a consistent, action-oriented table that brings together community partners, young leaders, the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, Fulton County, surrounding jurisdictions, and other relevant public, philanthropic, institutional, and youth leadership partners. This table should be guided by the perspectives of community partners and young leaders, ensuring that those closest to the work help shape priorities, identify gaps, and define what coordinated action should look like. The table should have a clear purpose, defined membership, meeting cadence, decision-making process, and follow-up expectations so it functions as an implementation space, not just another meeting.

Why it matters: Greater Atlanta's public safety work is regional in practice. A shared table would help partners move from parallel activity to coordinated implementation and create a clearer place for alignment, problem-solving, and accountability. Centering community partner and young leader input is essential because those closest to the work can help identify what is actually happening on the ground, where gaps exist, and what supports are needed to make coordination meaningful rather than symbolic. This would also help ensure that public-sector, philanthropic, and institutional partners are responding to community-defined priorities, not setting direction without the people most impacted.

2. CONDUCT REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM MAPPING TO IDENTIFY PATHWAYS, GAPS, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALIGNMENT

Map the current public safety ecosystem across the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, Fulton County and relevant surrounding jurisdictions. This should include community organizations, hospital-based intervention, diversion pathways, county partners, city departments, youth leadership structures, philanthropic partners, HBCUs, and other institutions connected to prevention, intervention, healing, and opportunity. DeKalb County represents an important government partner in the region, with planning momentum and early public safety investments. The mapping process can help further strengthen this momentum by creating a clearer picture of existing community-led work, identifying opportunities for alignment, and supporting future planning that is more coordinated across government, community partners, and young people closest to the work.

Why it matters: A shared ecosystem map would help partners see what already exists, where residents and young people currently connect to support, where gaps or duplication appear, and where stronger coordination is needed. It would also create a practical foundation for the regional convening table and longer-term strategy.

3. BUILD CROSS-JURISDICTION BUY-IN AND ADVOCACY FROM LOCAL ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

Work through city, county and community partners to ensure that local elected and appointed officials are well versed in (and advocates for) the local public safety ecosystem; inclusive of its assets, gaps and needs. Offices like the Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction (MOVR) and efforts like DeKalb County's CVIP are only effective if both community partners and the elected and appointed officials in a jurisdiction are fully bought in.

Why it matters: Clear public-sector roles will reduce confusion and help partners understand where decisions are made, how resources move, and who is responsible for coordination.

4. STRENGTHEN CITY/COUNTY-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Create intentional opportunities for city partners, county partners and community organizations to build trust, clarify expectations, and identify practical ways to work together. This should include transparent communication, shared credit, and clear follow-through on commitments.

Why it matters: The relationship between local government systems and community partners is central to implementation. Strengthening that relationship will support more durable coordination, reduce mistrust, and create stronger conditions for shared ownership.

5. FORMALIZE YOUNG LEADER ENGAGEMENT

Create structured pathways for young leaders to remain engaged beyond one-time events or conversations. Young people should have clear roles in shaping priorities, interpreting community conditions, informing communication strategies, and advising on what safety requires in their neighborhoods.

Why it matters: Young leaders brought insight, initiative, and honesty. Formalizing their engagement would move young leader's voice from participation to influence.

6. DEVELOP SHARED EDUCATION AROUND CVI AND THE BROADER PUBLIC SAFETY ECOSYSTEM

Create practical learning opportunities for elected officials, public agencies, county partners, philanthropy, and community stakeholders. These sessions should clarify CVI as one part of a comprehensive public safety ecosystem and use Greater Atlanta-area examples such as hospital-based intervention, diversion, youth-led peace work, and community-based prevention.

Why it matters: Shared language will make it easier for partners to understand their roles, align resources, and support the full range of prevention, intervention, interruption, healing, diversion, and opportunity strategies.

7. DEVELOP A 30/60/90-DAY FOLLOW-UP PLAN

Identify a small set of achievable next steps, responsible parties, timelines, and communication pathways. The plan should focus on visible progress and include a process for reporting back to partners.

Why it matters: Greater Atlanta's next phase depends on follow-through. A short-term action plan can help partners build trust through execution and keep momentum from becoming diffuse.

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

(12+ MONTH PRIORITIES)

1. BUILD A REGIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGY FOR DEKALB COUNTY, THE CITY OF ATLANTA, FULTON COUNTY AND SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

Develop a regional public safety strategy that brings city and county partners into stronger alignment with the community-led safety work already underway. Rather than creating a new plan disconnected from existing efforts, this strategy should build on the relationships, direct services, violence prevention practices, healing work, youth leadership, and informal coordination already happening across neighborhoods.

The strategy should engage community partners, young leaders, local government, counties, philanthropy, schools, HBCUs, hospitals, and other system partners to define shared goals, priority populations, partner roles, referral pathways, funding needs, and accountability measures. Because residents and families often move across jurisdictional lines for housing, school, work, services, and support, the strategy should reflect how people actually experience the region, not just how institutions are organized.

Why it matters: A regional strategy would help DeKalb County, the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and surrounding jurisdictions move from parallel efforts to shared action. Done well, it can reduce fragmentation, prevent duplication, clarify roles, align resources, and create stronger pathways of support for young people, families, and neighborhoods most impacted by violence. Most importantly, it would allow public systems to build with the community-led safety infrastructure already in motion instead of designing around it or over it.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES UNITED SUPPORT

Cities United can support Greater Atlanta-area partners by helping translate the region's readiness into a clearer structure for coordinated action. The Tour surfaced strong community leadership, existing cross-jurisdictional relationships, and shared interest in deeper alignment. The next opportunity is to organize that momentum around practical structures that strengthen coordination, clarify roles, elevate young leader voice, and make community-led safety work easier to sustain and resource.

A central area of support is helping partners strengthen a cross-jurisdictional convening structure that builds from the coordination community partners are already leading. Rather than creating a separate table from scratch, Cities United can help bring DeKalb County, the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, philanthropy, institutional partners, and youth leadership into closer alignment with existing community-led spaces. This support could include clarifying the table's purpose, membership, meeting rhythm, decision-making processes, and follow-up expectations so the structure advances implementation and shared accountability across the region.

Cities United can also support a regional ecosystem mapping process across the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, and Fulton County. This process would help partners see the full landscape of existing programs, referral pathways, community assets, service gaps, duplication, and opportunities for stronger coordination. It would also provide a practical foundation for a regional comprehensive public safety strategy by showing how young people, families, and residents currently move through available supports and where the system needs to become more connected.

Because alignment depends on trust as much as structure, Cities United can provide facilitation and coaching to strengthen city-community relationships. This support should create space for public-sector and community partners to address expectations, communication, shared ownership, and practical next steps. The goal is not to flatten the distinct roles partners play, but to strengthen working relationships while honoring the credibility, leadership, and experience held by community-based organizations.

Cities United is also well positioned to help Greater Atlanta deepen young leader engagement. This could include supporting partners in designing clear roles for young people in planning, data interpretation, communications, implementation feedback, and accountability. Young leader engagement should move beyond participation alone and become a structured part of how the region defines priorities, tests strategies, and measures whether the work is reaching those most impacted.

Cities United can further support resource alignment by helping partners prepare for deeper engagement with philanthropy, counties, HBCUs, and other resource holders. This may include developing funder-facing materials, clarifying investment priorities, identifying gaps in support, and making community-based work more visible and easier to invest in. Stronger resource alignment would help move the ecosystem from fragmented opportunity to coordinated investment.

Conclusion:

Aligning Greater Atlanta's Regional Ecosystem for Greater Impact

Greater Atlanta moves forward from the Leading the Way Tour with strong community assets, clear urgency, and a growing recognition that the next phase of work must be regional, coordinated, and grounded in community leadership.

The region has trusted community organizations, engaged young leaders, hospital-based intervention, diversion infrastructure, county-level activity, philanthropic interest, and emerging state-level opportunity. These strengths provide a meaningful foundation for building a more connected public safety ecosystem across the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County, and Fulton County.

The next phase calls for alignment. Partners are already doing meaningful work, and the opportunity now is to make that work easier to coordinate, easier to understand, and easier to sustain. A regional convening table, ecosystem mapping, clearer public-sector roles, stronger city-community relationships, and a more coordinated resource strategy can help move the ecosystem from shared interest to shared action.

Greater Atlanta's path forward should continue centering the people closest to the work: young leaders, community-based organizations, frontline practitioners, and families most impacted by violence. Their leadership and insight are essential to building strategies that are trusted, accessible, and rooted in lived experience.

Cities United is prepared to support Greater Atlanta-area partners as they strengthen coordination, build shared language, deepen young leader engagement, and develop the infrastructure needed for long-term impact. The work ahead will require patience, clarity, and follow-through. Greater Atlanta has the people, relationships, and momentum needed to move forward. The opportunity now is to connect them through a stronger regional structure that advances safety, healing, and opportunity.





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