# **Equitable Growth Profile of the Piedmont Triad Region**

# Summary







Communities of color are driving the Piedmont Triad's population growth, and their ability to participate in the economy and thrive is central to the region's economic success now and in the future. The region's slow economic recovery – combined with rising inequality and wide racial gaps in income, education, and opportunity – place the region's economic future at risk.

Inclusive growth is the path to economic prosperity in the Triad. By growing good jobs, investing in its increasingly diverse workforce, and infusing economic inclusion into its economic development and growth strategies, the region's leaders can put all of its residents on the path toward reaching their full potential and secure a bright economic future for the region.

### **Foreword**

Equity and inclusion have become the guiding pillars of the Piedmont Together plan to build a resilient, prosperous economy and a better quality of life for all of the Piedmont Triad's residents.

The Piedmont Together effort is led by a diverse team of community stakeholders working to find solutions to the region's challenges. Broad resident engagement in the planning process has been a priority from the beginning. Our region has not included the voices of all residents, especially marginalized groups, in planning processes. We knew that deep, meaningful engagement was critical to build trust and create a plan that truly reflects the diverse communities of our region.

Yet, after the first rounds of engagement it became clear that seeking input from traditionally underserved groups was essential but insufficient. We also needed to build a shared narrative about why inclusion matters to the region's future, and specific strategies to ensure that the plan steered regional growth and development toward truly equitable outcomes.

This Equitable Growth Profile represents that new approach. Developed in partnership with PolicyLink and the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), it tells the story of how our region is growing and why equity is our path to broadly shared prosperity. It points to what we need to do to ensure that all of our residents can access the resources and opportunities they need so they, and all of us, can thrive in the coming decades. We hope that you join us in building this more equitable and sustainable future for all in the Triad.

Mark E. Kirstner
Director of Planning
Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation

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### **Overview**

Across the country, communities are striving to put plans, policies, and programs in place that build healthier, more prosperous regions that provide opportunities for all of their residents to participate and thrive.

Equity – full inclusion of all residents in the economic, social, and political life of the region, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, neighborhood of residence, or other characteristics – is essential for regional prosperity. As the nation undergoes a profound demographic transformation in which people of color are quickly becoming the majority, ensuring that people of all races and ethnicities can participate and reach their full potential is more than just the right thing to do – it is an absolute economic imperative.

In the past, equity and growth have often been pursued on separate paths, now it is becoming increasingly clear that they must be pursued together. The latest research on national and regional economic growth, from economists working at institutions including the International Monetary Fund and Standard and Poor's, finds that inequality hinders economic growth and prosperity, while greater economic and racial inclusion fosters greater economic mobility and more robust and sustained growth.<sup>1</sup>

Embedding equity into local and regional development strategies is particularly important given the history of metropolitan development in the United States. America's regions are highly segregated by race and income, and these patterns of exclusion were created and maintained by public policies at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. In the decades after World War II, housing and transportation policies incentivized the growth of suburbs while redlining practices and racially restrictive covenants systematically prevented African Americans and other people of color from buying homes in new developments while starving older urban neighborhoods of needed reinvestment. Many other factors - continued racial discrimination in housing and employment, exclusionary land use practices that prevent construction of affordable multifamily homes in more affluent neighborhoods, and political fragmentation – have reinforced geographic, race, and class inequities.

Today, America's regions are patchworks of concentrated advantage and disadvantage, with some neighborhoods home to good schools, bustling commercial districts, services, parks, and other crucial ingredients for economic success, and other

neighborhoods providing few of those elements. The goal of regional equity is to ensure that all neighborhoods throughout the region are communities of opportunity that provide their residents with the tools they need to thrive.

The Equitable Growth Profile of the Piedmont Triad region examines demographic trends and indicators of equitable growth, highlighting strengths and areas of vulnerability in relation to the goal of building a strong, resilient economy. It was developed by PolicyLink and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) to help Piedmont Together, advocacy groups, elected officials, planners, business leaders, funders, and others working to build a stronger Piedmont Triad.

This summary document highlights key findings from the profile along with policy and planning implications.

### **Equitable Growth Indicators**

This profile draws from a unique Equitable Growth Indicators Database developed by PolicyLink and PERE. This database incorporates hundreds of data points from public and private data sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. The database includes data for the 150 largest metropolitan regions and all 50 states, and includes historical data going back to 1980 for many economic indicators as well as demographic projections through 2040. It enables comparative regional and state analyses as well as tracking change over time.

### **Defining the Piedmont Triad Region**

For the purposes of this profile, we define the region as the 12-county area served by the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation. All data presented in the profile use this regional boundary. Minor exceptions due to lack of data availability are noted in the "Data and methods" section of the complete profile.

### **Profile Highlights**

# The region is undergoing a major demographic shift

The Piedmont Triad is a growing region whose demographics are quickly changing. Since 1980, its population has climbed from 1.1 million to 1.6 million. During the same time period, the share of residents who are people of color has risen from 20 to 33 percent. By 2043, when the nation is projected to become majority people of color, 53 percent of the region's population will be people of color.

Communities of color – including Latinos, Asians, African Americans, and people of other and mixed racial backgrounds – are driving population growth and contributed 84 percent of net population growth over the last decade. Latinos were the fastest growing group, increasing 96 percent and gaining nearly 70,000 residents, followed by Asians, with an 81 percent growth rate and net gain of about 15,000 residents. The region's black population will remain about a fifth of the population for the foreseeable future.

The region's demographic shift is taking place throughout its 12 counties. Between 2010 and 2040, people of color will contribute all of the net population growth in every county except Stokes and Davie.

Youth are at the forefront of the region's changing demographics, and the Piedmont Triad's young residents are much more diverse than its seniors. Today, 44 percent of youth are people of color, compared with 17 percent of seniors. This 27 percentage point racial generation gap between young and old has risen very quickly and ranks 51st among the largest 150 regions. This gap presents a potential economic risk for the region because a large racial generation gap often corresponds with lower investments in the educational systems and

community infrastructure needed to support the economic participation of youth.

# Stronger and more inclusive growth is the key to the region's future prosperity

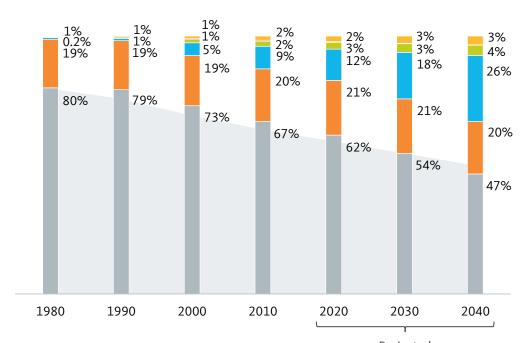
The Piedmont Triad region has struggled to recover from the Great Recession, with its GDP and job growth lagging behind national averages. The Greensboro-High Point area, which encompasses the eastern part of the region, ranks in the bottom third of the nation's 100 largest metro areas on economic recovery, according to a Brookings Institution analysis.<sup>2</sup> And while the region's unemployment rate has declined from more than 12 percent in 2010 to 6.6 percent today, the number of people participating in the labor force is also decreasing. Since the working-age population is growing, this suggests that job growth isn't keeping pace with population growth.

In addition to these trends of slow growth in jobs and economic activity, the region faces several other challenges to long-term growth and prosperity. Inequality is on the rise and racial gaps in education, employment, income, and opportunity are wide and persistent. As the region grows more diverse, these inequities become even more serious threats to economic strength and competiveness. Below are several key challenges

The share of people of color is projected to increase through 2040

### Racial/Ethnic Composition, 1980-2040





Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Woods & Poole Economics, Inc.

Projected

the region will need to address to ensure a strong economy:

### A potential skills gap

A skilled workforce is central to economic competitiveness in today's knowledge- and technology-driven economy, but a large and growing segment of the Piedmont Triad's workforce lacks the education needed for the jobs of the future. According to the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, 42 percent of all jobs in North Carolina will require an associate's degree or higher by 2020. Today, only 39 percent of whites, 27 percent of U.S.-born Latinos and blacks, 10 percent of Latino immigrants, and 19 percent of Native Americans in the region have that level of education. The achievement gap has deep roots in public education systems, and looking at the share of youth without a high school diploma in the region, we see that African American, Native American, and Latino youth, particularly immigrants, are much less likely to have high school degrees than whites.

#### Rising inequality and a shrinking middle class

A strong middle class is the foundation for a strong regional economy, but the Piedmont region's middle class is being squeezed while inequality is on the rise. These trends are partly due to the region's changing economic structure: since 1990, the region has been losing middle-wage jobs while it has grown low-wage jobs and, to a lesser extent, high-end ones. Between 1990 and 2010, the region experienced an 11 percent decline in middle-wage jobs in industries like textile, furniture, and tobacco manufacturing. During the same time period, it gained low-wage jobs (25 percent increase) and high-wage jobs

(15 percent increase). The loss of middle-wage jobs is particularly harmful for the region's less educated residents as well as African Americans and other people of color since these jobs have traditionally served as the pathways by which they have been able to achieve financial security and become a part of the middle class. Another challenge is that low-wage jobs don't only pay too little, but wages are stagnant, only increasing one percent over the past two decades. This also has a disproportionately negative impact on people of color since they are more likely to work in low-wage jobs.

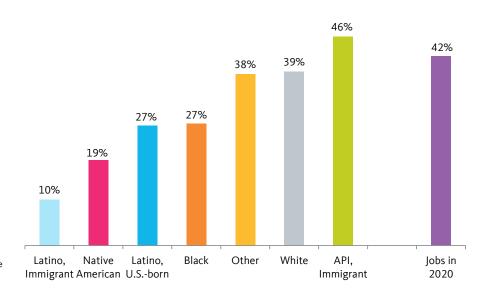
### Racial economic gaps

Across a host of indicators including employment, wages, poverty, working poverty, and access to "high-opportunity" occupations, people of color fare worse in the Piedmont Triad labor market than their white counterparts. These racial economic gaps remain even after controlling for education, which reveals the persistence of racial barriers to economic opportunity – including overt discrimination as well as more subtle forms of exclusion that are embedded into institutions and systems.

While overall unemployment in the Piedmont Triad region is on par with the national average, African Americans, Asians, and people of other and mixed races have much higher rates of unemployment. The region's African American workers face higher unemployment rates than their white and Latino counterparts at every education level, and both black and Latino residents earn lower wages than whites at every education level. Wage disparities persist even among highly educated

Raising educational attainment among the region's communities of color is critical to building a prepared workforce

Share of Working-Age Population with an Associate's Degree or Higher by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, 2010 and Projected Share of Jobs that Require an Associate's Degree or Higher, 2020



Sources: Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce; IPUMS. Universe for education levels of workers includes all persons ages 25 through 64. Note: Data for 2010 by race/ethnicity/nativity represents a 2006 through 2010 average and is at the regional level; data on jobs in 2020 is at the state level for North Carolina.

workers, with college-educated people of color earning \$6/hour less than their white counterparts.

Poverty and working poverty (working full-time for an income below 150 percent of the poverty level) are both on the rise in the region and are most severe for communities of color. One in three Latinos and one in four African Americans and people of other and mixed races now live below the poverty level, compared to one in ten whites. The region's Latinos and Asians are more than four times as likely to be working poor than whites. The location of poverty is also changing, with fast growth in poverty and high-poverty neighborhoods outside the cities of Winston-Salem and Greensboro, according to a Brookings Institution analysis.

### Disconnected youth

Race/Ethnicity, 2010

Less than a

**HS** Diploma

The region's future quite literally depends on the ability of its youth to power its economy in the years to come. Although the fact that more of the region's youth are getting high school degrees than in the past is a positive sign, the number of "disconnected youth" who are neither in school nor working is also on the rise. In the region, 27,000 youth are currently disconnected (13.7 percent of the total youth population), and a disproportionate share of them are youth of color. The region

has the 54th largest share of disconnected youth out of the nation's 150 largest metropolitan areas.

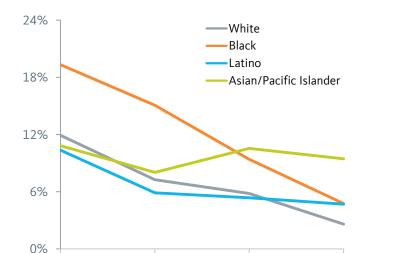
### Housing and transportation challenges

Housing and transportation matter a great deal when it comes to connecting to economic opportunity, but many residents in the Triad struggle or are unable to meet these basic needs, and communities of color often lack access to reliable transportation and homes located in "high-opportunity" neighborhoods with good schools near job centers. Many of the Piedmont region's low-income workers and workers of color pay a disproportionate share of their incomes for housing, transportation, or both. According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, housing and transportation costs combined should not exceed 45 percent of income, but the average costs in the region are between 54 and 57 percent. Transit access is also a challenge. Households of color are less likely to own cars than whites: the region's black households are three times more likely to be carless than its white households.3 And there are few alternatives to driving for many residents: only 43 percent of residents in the Greensboro-High Point area live near a transit stop, compared to the national average of 69 percent.<sup>4</sup> Access to rental housing in good neighborhoods is also a challenge. The region's fair housing assessment found

At every education level, the region's African Americans and Latinos earn lower wages than whites and African Americans experience higher unemployment

**BA** Degree

or higher



**Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment and** 

### Source: IPUMS. Universe includes the civilian non-institutional population ages 25 through 64. Note: Data represents a 2006 through 2010 average.

More than

**HS** Diploma

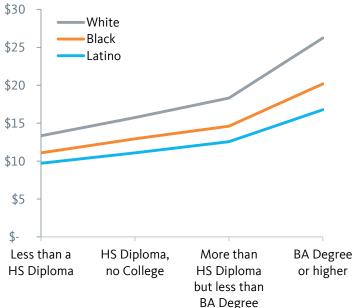
but less than

**BA** Degree

HS Diploma,

no College

# Median Hourly Wage by Educational Attainment and Race/Ethnicity, 2010



Source: IPUMS. Universe includes civilian non-institutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64. Note: Data represents a 2006 through 2010 average.

that residents of color continue to face discrimination in the rental housing market.<sup>5</sup>

### Lack of access to financial services

Lack of access to traditional banking services is a challenge in many parts of the region. Six of the counties have a higher share of the "underbanked" – defined by the Corporation for Enterprise Development as those relying on financial services from sources other than traditional banks – than the statewide average. Twenty-four percent of households in Caswell County, for instance, use services like check cashing and payday loans. National data show the high cost of these services: a household with a net income of \$20,000 may pay as much as \$1,200 annually for alternative banking service fees. People and families with lower incomes and less education as well as immigrants and people of color are more likely to be underbanked. The fair housing assessment for the region also showed that access to mortgages is also a challenge for the many communities of color.

# Racial economic inclusion would strengthen the economy

The Piedmont Triad region's rising inequality and racial gaps are not only bad for communities of color – they hinder the whole region's economic growth and prosperity. According to our analysis, if there were no racial disparities in income, the region's GDP would have been \$9.5 billion higher in 2012.

Unless racial gaps are closed, the costs of inequity will grow as Piedmont Triad becomes more diverse.

### **Implications**

The Piedmont Triad's growing, diverse population is a major economic asset that will help the region compete in the global economy – if the region's leaders invest in ensuring all of its residents can connect to good jobs and contribute their talent and creativity to building a strong next economy. The region's public, private, and community sectors are already taking steps to connect its communities of color to educational and economic opportunities, and these efforts must continue. Our analyses suggest focusing on seven priority goals to spur more equitable growth in the Piedmont Triad. Below we describe each goal and share strategies that regional leaders might pursue to advance these goals.

### Grow good jobs

A robust strategy for growing new good jobs is critical for the Triad's future economic prosperity. One way to do this is to focus local economic and workforce development efforts on the sectors and occupations that show signs of strength and pay living wages. This can help create the "high-opportunity" jobs that anchor a broad middle class. Piedmont Together, the comprehensive regional plan intended to guide growth in the area, suggests several possible strategies:

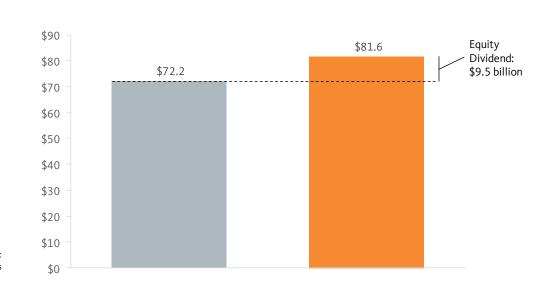
• Establish a customer service training center for event and

The Piedmont Triad Region's GDP would have been \$9.5 billion higher in 2012 if there were no racial disparities in income.

# Actual GDP and Estimated GDP without Racial Gaps in Income, 2012

■ GDP in 2012 (billions)

■ GDP if racial gaps in income were eliminated (billions)



Sources: Bureau of Economic Analysis; IPUMS. Note: "Equity dividend" may not match difference in values reported in chart due to rounding.

- facility management, restaurant management, and call center operations.
- Encourage rural areas to evaluate their potential for tourism and home food processing.
- Retool manufacturing facilities to be part of the green industry, making wind, solar, and biomass technologies.
- Better utilize the Piedmont Triad International Airport and advancing the region's role as a freight transportation and logistics hub so that infrastructure supports industrial growth.
- Make broadband more accessible, which can support the development of local businesses.

### Raise wages and increase financial security

Policies that ensure strong and rising wages, especially for lowwage earners, can reduce working poverty and increase financial security, while bolstering the economy by increasing household incomes and spending. At \$7.25 per hour, North Carolina's minimum wage is the same as the federal minimum, and conservative estimates suggest that North Carolina families need more than twice that much to make ends meet.9 North Carolina's local governments can pass living wage laws to ensure that city and county governments pay their employees enough to cover their basic expenses, and seven localities have done so.<sup>10</sup> Durham's law, for example, sets the minimum wage at 7.5 percent above the poverty level, currently \$12.17 per hour. 11 Local governments can also incentivize companies doing business with them to pay living wages by including a living wage as one of the criteria they use to award contracts. And they can require that employers receiving economic development subsidies pay a living wage.

Municipalities in the Triad should consider using these tools to raise the floor for its low-wage workers and ensure employers it does business with are providing good jobs. Additionally, there are several other tools they could apply to boost financial security, such as providing children's savings accounts that give low-income children a way to save for college or retirement, or ensuring all families have access to a mainstream bank account.

## Infuse economic inclusion into all economic development and growth strategies

Given the unemployment and labor force participation gaps by race that exist in the region, its job creation and economic development efforts need to be inclusive, creating opportunities that are accessible to communities of color. Planners and policymakers can infuse economic inclusion into regional growth strategies in the following ways:

- Leverage the economic power of regional anchor institutions, like hospitals and universities. These institutions are major economic actors: they employ many people and spend millions of dollars on products and services. To foster inclusive growth, anchors can hire jobseekers who face barriers to employment and support local- and minority-owned businesses.
- Help minority-owned businesses expand. Economic development strategies can emphasize local business development by increasing access to capital, providing technical assistance, and connecting local chambers of commerce and small business networks in communities of color.
- Target public investments. By directing funds to underinvested areas, all of the above elements can be linked to maximize job creation. Goals should include hiring locally and creating supply-chain opportunities for minority-owned businesses.

### Bridge the racial generation gap

Bridging the racial generation gap between youth of color and a predominantly white senior population will help build a strong workforce in the Piedmont Triad, since seniors need to support the strong public schools and community infrastructure needed to prepare the workforce for the jobs of tomorrow. Another way to build bridges is to plan for multigenerational communities, which allow the elderly to age in place while providing safe and healthy environments for families to raise children. <sup>12</sup> Investments in multigenerational community facilities and public spaces in the Piedmont Triad (for example, schools that include facilities for seniors) can encourage social interaction between residents of all ages.

### Reduce racial barriers and increase access to opportunity

Regional development patterns should ensure that all neighborhoods located throughout the region provide their residents with the ingredients they need to thrive, and also open up opportunities for low-income people and people of color to live in neighborhoods that are already rich with opportunity (and from which they've historically been excluded). Coordinating transportation, housing, and economic development investments is critical to foster more equitable development patterns and healthy, opportunity-rich neighborhoods across the region. The region also needs to expand transportation access and affordability, and to do so in ways that increase mobility for low-income, transit-dependent residents. Addressing lingering racially discriminatory housing and lending practices and enforcing fair housing laws is also

important to open up opportunity to all. 13

### Build education and career pathways for all youth

Ensuring that all youth in the Triad, including African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and immigrants, can access a good education that leads to a career, is critical to develop the human capital to power the region's economy in the future. The rising number of disconnected youth not in school or work and high shares of immigrant youth without high school degrees signals the need for intentional strategies to ensure young people have the supports they need to successfully complete high school and enter college or another training program that leads to a job. Replacing overly harsh "zero tolerance" school discipline policies with strategies focused on positive behavior support and restorative justice can work to lower suspension and expulsion rates and reduce the number of disconnected youth. Increasing the availability of apprenticeships, career academies, and other education and training supports that provide work experience and connections can also keep more youth on the track to graduation, college, and careers. Strengthening the K-12 public school system by ensuring sufficient and equitable funding for schools attended by lower-income students is also essential to build a vital workforce. Bilingual education and other language access strategies can help youth who are English language learners excel in school. And it is not enough to only address in-school time: high-quality afterschool and youth development activities that provide learning opportunities outside of the school day are also critical ingredients for academic success. Finally, these investments in educational success should follow children throughout their lifespan, from cradle to college. The research shows that balanced investments spread throughout the lives of vulnerable children reap the greatest rewards. 14

### Ensure diverse civic participation and leadership

Given the region's rapid demographic shifts, public sector leaders should continue to take steps to ensure active engagement by all racial and ethnic communities in local and regional planning processes and create pathways to government jobs and leadership positions. The public, private, and philanthropic sectors should increase their support to help neighborhood, organizational and civic leaders build their leadership and capacity. Youth's leadership development is particularly important. Building strong multicultural and multiracial regional leadership is critical to the region's future. One step to do this is to create a durable regional equity network that can work together to advance a multi-issue agenda for equitable growth.

<sup>1</sup> Andrew G. Berg and Jonathan D. Ostry, *Inequality and Unsustainable Growth: Two Sides of the Same Coin?*, Staff Discussion Note (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2011)

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- <sup>8</sup> Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 2011 FDIC Survey of Banks's Efforts to Serve the Unbanked and Underbanked (Washington, DC: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 2012)

http://www.fdic.gov/unbankedsurveys/2011survey/2011report.pdf.

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Equitable Growth Profiles are products of a partnership between PolicyLink and PERE, the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California.

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