

# Education-Centered Community Reinvestment in Atlanta

## Executive Summary

What opportunities exist for rethinking what schools can offer when we work collectively to better activate them as *community* resources? How can local government, schools, community groups, philanthropy, and other institutions work together to engage local residents? How can we create a community-informed vision for making our neighborhoods the best possible places to raise children?

Those are the central questions that drove a year-long design-thinking project between Reimagine America's Schools (RAS), the principal program of the National Design Alliance; Atlanta Public Schools (APS), and the City of Atlanta. Supported by Siegel Family Endowment, the initiative was centered on the Douglass Cluster, an APS attendance zone.

All told, the project involved 26 engagements, 215 participants, and 82 unique voices over the course of three phases:

- *Discovery*: conversations with community stakeholders to surface needs, goals, strengths, and challenges
- *Ideation*: design workshops for community stakeholders to collaboratively generate ideas for responding to themes emerging from the discovery phase
- *Application*: development of a set of blueprints to guide the implementation of ideas

This process yielded six areas of need and opportunity for further consideration and refinement by residents, families, students, local government, schools, and other stakeholders: community learning centers; early childhood education programs; extended learning opportunities; transportation and access; healthy food options; and STEM pipeline.

The project offers a case study of **education-centered community reinvestment**, an integrated infrastructure model that aims to improve the conditions for a community as a whole through a holistic effort to redesign infrastructure. The work is centered on the school, but is also responsive to transportation, housing, economic development, and other neighborhood needs.



The Douglass Cluster project offers important illustrations of the elements that can help propel successful education-centered community reinvestment projects. These elements include:

- Meaningful and accessible opportunities for local residents—including those who are too often excluded from the table—to engage with the process and see their contributions recognized
- Buy-in, participation, and vision from a range of institutions, including local government, schools, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, and industry partners; and individuals, including students, families, and educators
- Recognition of the time and commitment needed to establish trust and build relationships with both individual and institutional stakeholders
- A commitment to flexibility and evolution as circumstances, resources, and priorities shift

Through our case study of the RAS-led project in the Douglass Cluster, we explore the potential these elements have to empower communities, the challenges that are inherent in this work, and the role that philanthropy can play in supporting education-centered community reinvestment projects as a lever for unlocking resources to guide future work.

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Siegel Family Endowment is excited to release a complete case study of this project in late 2023. For updates on the project and to learn more about our work, visit [www.siegelendowment.org](http://www.siegelendowment.org).

