

# Responding to the Public Health Emergency in South Fulton

Fulton County  
March 2026

#26-0156

# A Public Health Emergency in Fulton County

In 2022, Wellstar Health System closed two hospitals in Fulton County, triggering a public health emergency that left hundreds of thousands of residents without access to critical healthcare services.

## Atlanta Medical Center South

Closed May 2022. The sole acute care facility in South Fulton was forced to limit offerings to urgent care and rehabilitation services.

## Atlanta Medical Center

Closed November 2022. A 460-bed hospital in Central Fulton that had served the community for over 100 years was permanently shuttered.

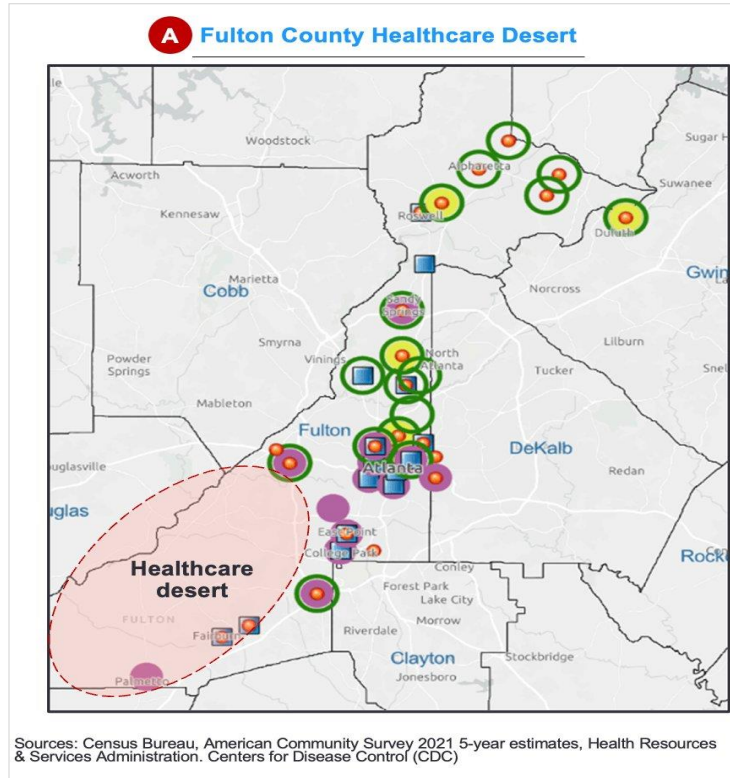
## Immediate Impact

- AMC primarily served Central and South Fulton, with a large share of medically, economically, and socially underserved populations.
- Limited communication on how patients could seek care after closure resulted in community unrest and disruption.
- With little notice, local hospitals, clinics, FQHCs and physician practices were required to absorb the patient volume.

In collaboration with experts in the field, Project Care was launched to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and develop a healthcare delivery plan to address the gaps.

# Project Care: What the Assessment Revealed

In 2023, Fulton County undertook a 7-week analysis leveraging analytics, primary research, and secondary research to determine the state of healthcare across the county.



## Healthcare Access

- 12 zip codes are medically underserved; 8 of 12 are within 5 miles of the closed hospitals
- No acute care or ER in South Fulton; residents travel ~30 minutes to reach acute care
- South Fulton has fewer than 10 sites of care per 100,000 residents vs. 28 in Central Fulton

## Health Outcomes

- Life expectancy in Central and South Fulton is 5 years lower than North Fulton (77 vs. 82 years)
- Lack of specialists (incl. Cardiology, Pulmonology, Infectious disease) leads to decreased life expectancy
- South Fulton: Higher chronic care admissions

## Social Determinants

- ~50% of county residents lack a college degree; ~70% in South Fulton
- ~14% of Fulton County residents live in poverty; higher in South (16%) and Central (17%) Fulton
- Limited public transportation infrastructure; connectivity to care services extremely limited

Project Care concluded that South Fulton was a documented healthcare desert requiring urgent intervention - and called for new facilities and services to close the gaps.

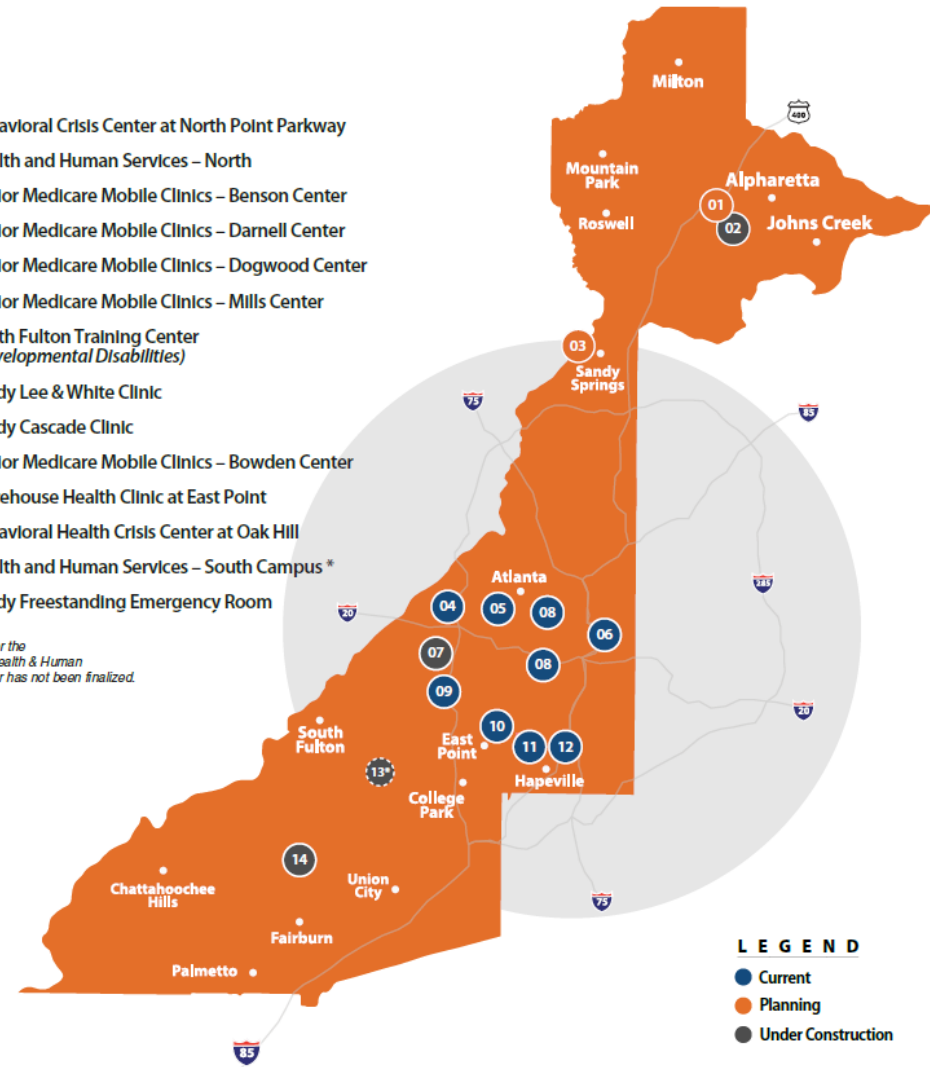
# Closing Immediate Gaps: Fulton County Investments



**Together** for a  
safer, healthier  
**Fulton**  
Highlight of Facilities and Investments

1. Behavioral Crisis Center at North Point Parkway
2. Health and Human Services – North
3. Senior Medicare Mobile Clinics – Benson Center
4. Senior Medicare Mobile Clinics – Darnell Center
5. Senior Medicare Mobile Clinics – Dogwood Center
6. Senior Medicare Mobile Clinics – Mills Center
7. South Fulton Training Center  
(Developmental Disabilities)
8. Grady Lee & White Clinic
9. Grady Cascade Clinic
10. Senior Medicare Mobile Clinics – Bowden Center
11. Morehouse Health Clinic at East Point
12. Behavioral Health Crisis Center at Oak Hill
13. Health and Human Services – South Campus\*
14. Grady Freestanding Emergency Room

*\*The location for the South Fulton Health & Human Services Center has not been finalized.*



**LEGEND**

- Current
- Planning
- Under Construction



# Closing Immediate Gaps: Grady's Response

While planning the South Fulton campus, Grady moved immediately: expanding inpatient capacity downtown, opening two new clinics south of I-20, and securing a landmark county funding agreement.



## Inpatient Bed Expansion

Downtown Campus | \$130M ARPA Funding | 166 New Beds

In September 2022, Governor Kemp directed \$130M in federal ARPA funds to Grady to permanently expand inpatient capacity following the Wellstar AMC closure. Grady added 166 new beds including 52 critical care beds in the expansion completed in just 12 months.



## Cascade Outpatient Center

3355 Cascade Rd | Opened July 2023 | 9,258 SF

Grady's first new ambulatory site south of I-20 since the Wellstar closures. Primary care, dermatology, HIV services, outpatient rehab, behavioral health, mammography, pharmacy, lab, and x-ray.



## Lee + White Outpatient Center

1000 White St SW | Opened Sept 2024 | 16,000 SF

20 exam rooms, on-site pharmacy, two mammography rooms, and full lab. Primary care, geriatric and orthopedic care, HIV services, and behavioral health. MARTA-accessible.

## Renewed County Partnership

Landmark Operating Agreement | Signed December 2024

Fulton County, DeKalb County, and the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority signed a new operating agreement with Grady - the first comprehensive renegotiation in decades. **\$43.3M** Fulton County | **\$19.1M** DeKalb County | **6-year term** with option for two 2-year renewals (up to 10 years) | Annual increases tied to utilization and Medical CPI (~3%)

# Grady's Response: A Two-Pronged Strategy

Grady Health System is answering Fulton County's call to action. As Metro Atlanta's primary safety-net and Level I trauma provider, Grady is uniquely positioned to fill the healthcare void in South Fulton - while strengthening the entire system.

## Build a Healthcare Campus in South Fulton

Position Grady as the anchor health provider in a high-need, low-access region

- Bring emergency, inpatient, and specialty care to over 360,000 underserved residents
- Redirect volume and reduce throughput stress at Grady's downtown campus
- Improve health outcomes while growing market share with new patients
- Create a sustainable clinical and financial hub linking ambulatory, urgent, and inpatient care

## Preserve Capacity Downtown

Continue investing in the downtown campus to deliver incomparable, compassionate care

- Expand ambulatory access for service line growth and long-term sustainability
- Enhance efficiency and throughput for tertiary and trauma services
- Leverage existing staff, resources, and referral patterns with minimal disruption
- Create space for future inpatient expansion by relocating non-acute services

# A Phased Approach to Restoring Care

The South Fulton campus will be developed in three strategic phases - planting a presence, building community trust, and scaling to full hospital operations.

## Phase 1 Freestanding Emergency Department

**Opening: 2nd Half of 2026**

**Investment: \$38 million**

- Projected Volume: 24,000 annual visits at full capacity
- Diverts ~15,000 visits from Grady's downtown ED annually
- Fills the gap between urgent care and a full hospital - true emergency services where residents need them
- 3 in 4 surveyed residents said they would use a new Grady location in their neighborhood

## Phase 2 Medical Office Building

**Opening: 2027/2028**

**Investment: \$75 million**

- Consolidates primary care, specialty care, imaging, labs, and rehab in one location
- Includes 4-OR surgery center, infusion center, and retail pharmacy
- Dedicated space for CHOA pediatric services including behavioral health
- Builds medical staff, referral pathways, and community trust ahead of hospital opening

## Phase 3 Acute Inpatient Hospital

**Opening: 2030/2031**

**Investment: \$900 million**

- Full-service acute care hospital restoring inpatient capacity to South Fulton for the first time since 2022
- Frees capacity at the main campus to focus on higher-margin tertiary and trauma services
- Seamless referral pathways from outpatient to hospital-based services

# Envisioning the South Fulton Campus



## Campus Highlights

- Freestanding Emergency Department serving 24,000 annual visits
- Medical Office Building with imaging, surgery center, specialty clinics, pharmacy, and rehab
  - Dedicated CHOA pediatric space for behavioral health, primary, and specialty care
- 200-bed acute inpatient hospital with critical care, intermediate care, and acute care units
- Full campus designed to integrate seamlessly with surrounding community and transportation infrastructure

**Total Investment: \$1B+**

**Jobs Created: 2,000+**

**Full Campus Operational: 2030/2031**

# Transforming South Fulton: Community Impact

The South Fulton campus directly addresses every priority area identified by Project Care, while creating significant economic impact for the community.

**2,000+**

New Jobs Created

**\$1B+**

Total Campus Investment

**360,000**

Residents Gaining Local Access

## Alignment with Project Care Transformation Priorities

### Redistribute assets to enhance health access

Adds provider capacity within the healthcare desert and brings specialty care, imaging, surgery, and emergency services to South Fulton.

### Enhance care delivery efforts

Consolidates primary care, specialty care, and diagnostics into an integrated campus model anchored in whole-patient care.

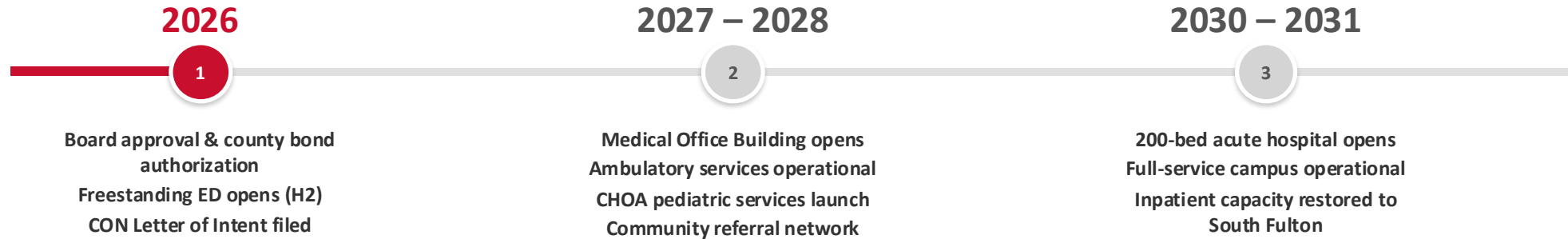
### Reduce financial barriers

Grady's safety-net mission ensures care regardless of ability to pay. Proximity reduces transportation costs and lost wages from long travel.

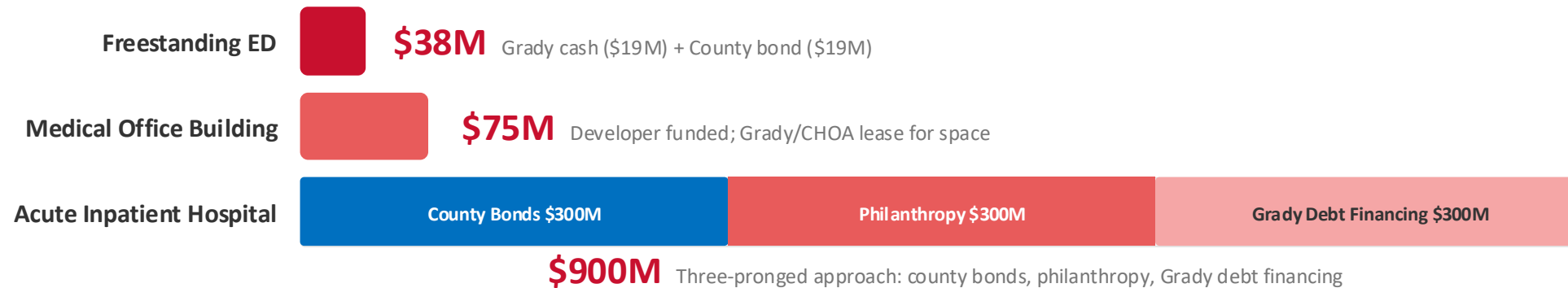
### Economic Development

Creates 2,000+ local jobs including physicians, nurses, and community health workers, building a workforce that reflects the community it serves.

# Path Forward: Timeline and Investment



## Total Campus Investment: ~\$1B+



*Grady Health System is committed to transforming South Fulton from a healthcare desert into a thriving healthcare destination - fulfilling the promise of Project Care and advancing health access for all Fulton County residents.*