

The Atlanta BeltLine Project:

Analyzing its impact on residents economic well-being



Background:

The Atlanta Beltline is an infrastructure project started in 2006 aimed at increasing the quality of life and mobility of Atlanta residents. It aims to convert a former railway corridor that circles the city into a multi-purpose trail that will rejuvenate areas through green space, public parks, and greater connection of neighborhoods. At the same time, there are serious concerns that the BeltLine Project will exacerbate the problems of income inequality and gentrification within the city. Neighborhoods close to the BeltLine trail have seen their property value increase sharply and have had residents displaced from their homes.

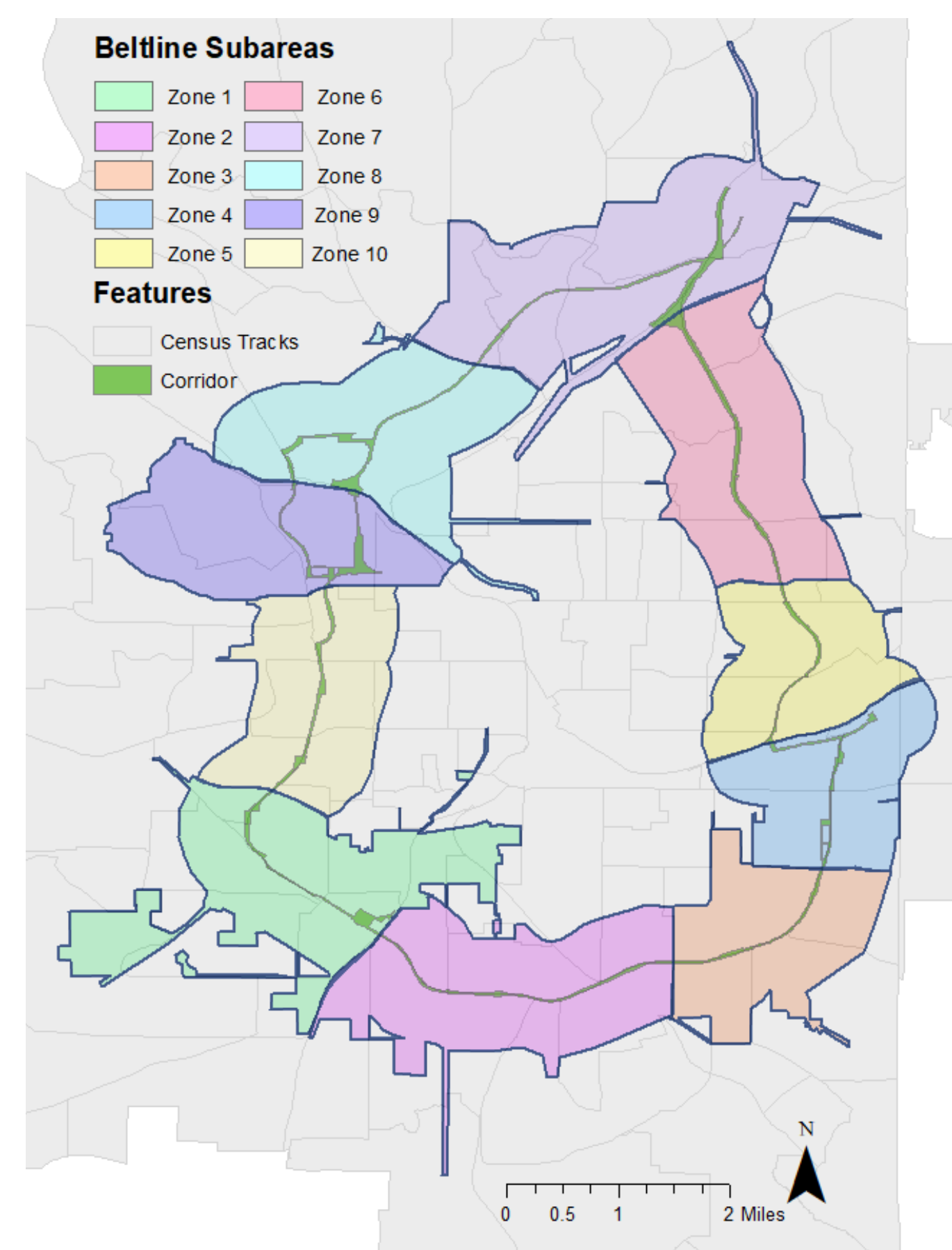
By creating a geospatial vulnerability assessment, this project aims to see which subareas of the BeltLine project have been negatively affected and in need of greater support from the City of Atlanta.

Methodology:

To assess whether the Beltline Project has alleviated or exacerbated economic conditions, an impact assessment was created based on data collected at the census track level.

The impact assessment was created with six factors given scores via Jenks natural breaks: *population with rent over 30% of income, median housing value, number of people who've moved homes within their county, median income, changes in poverty level, and change in income.*

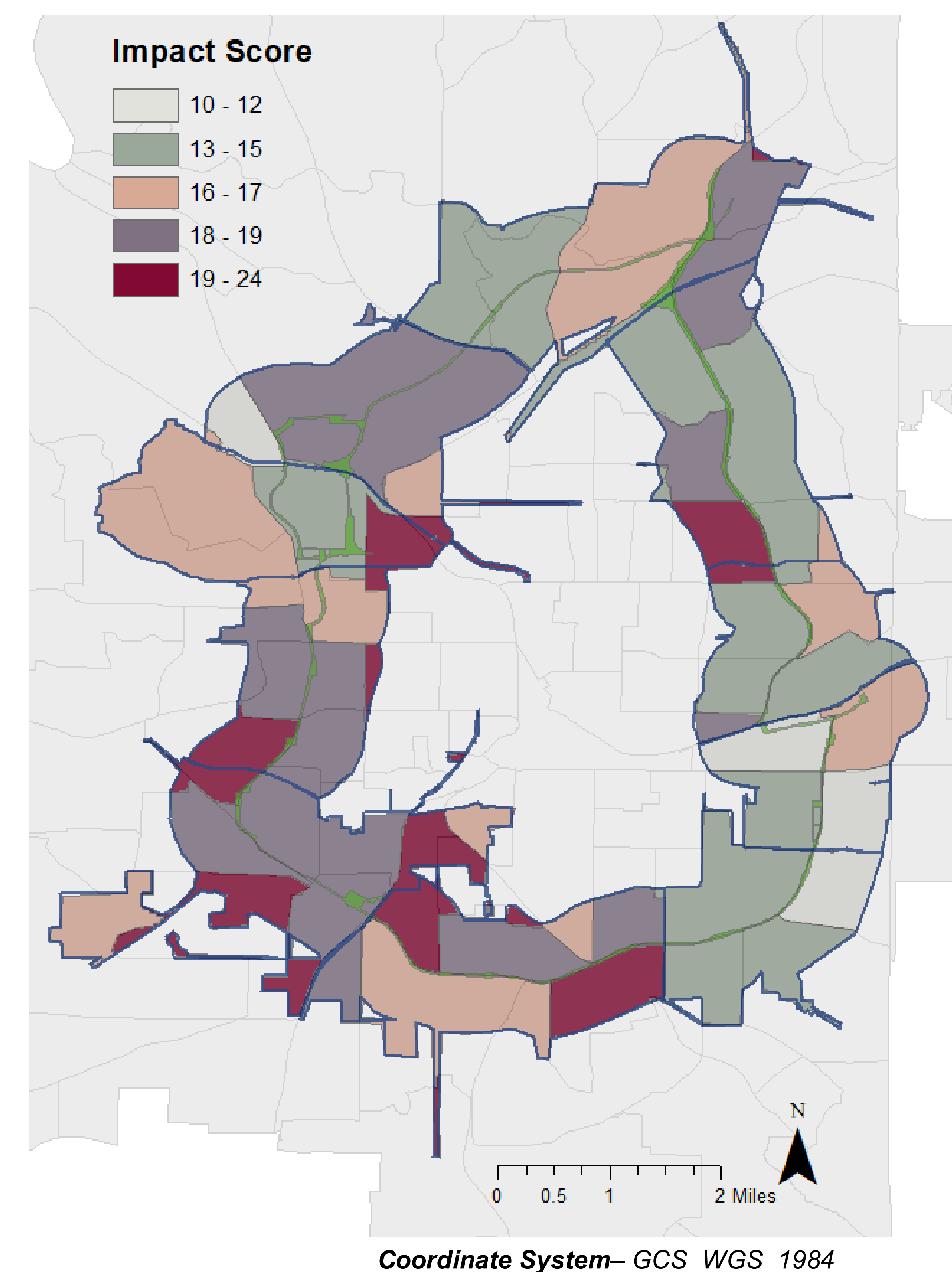
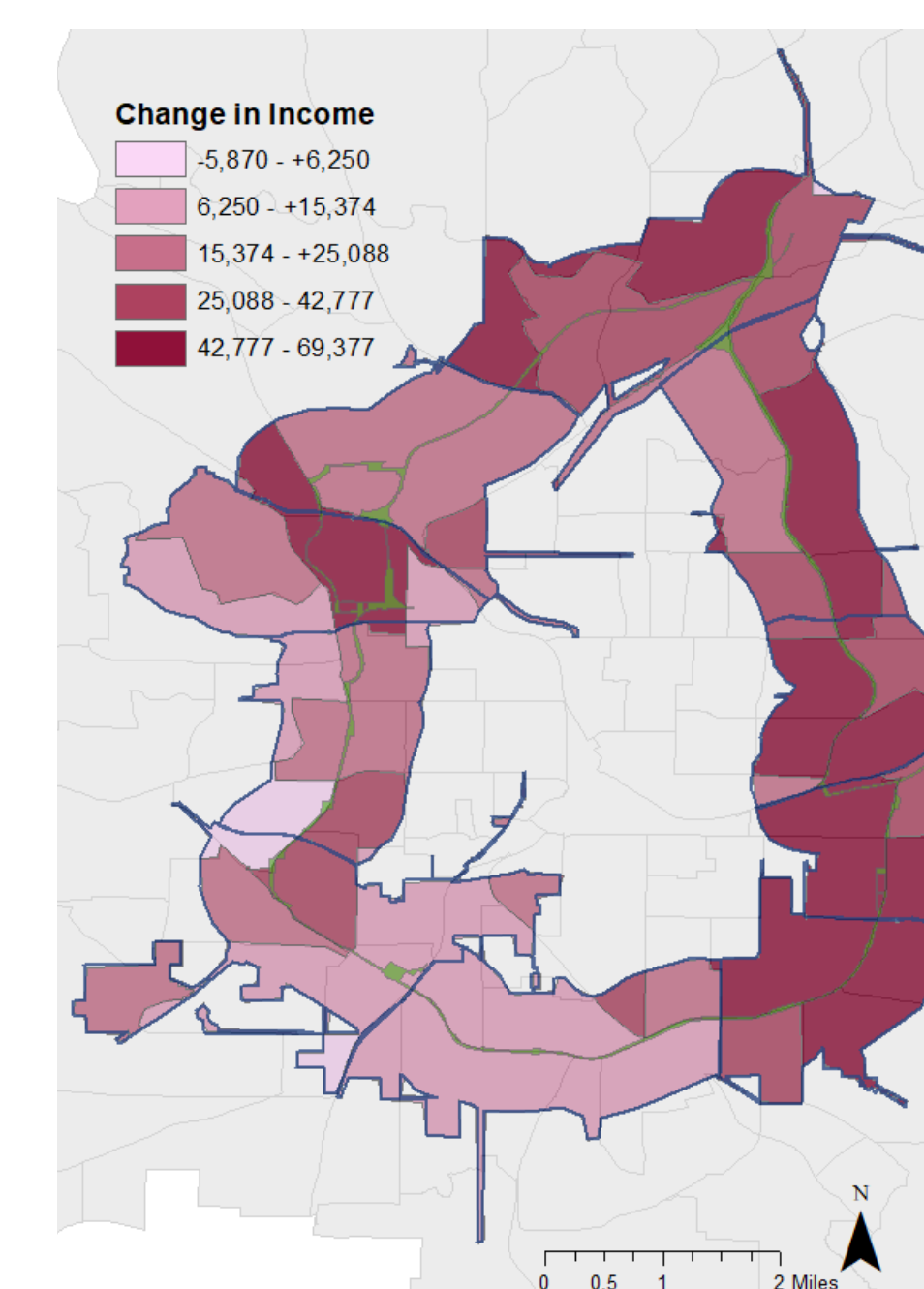
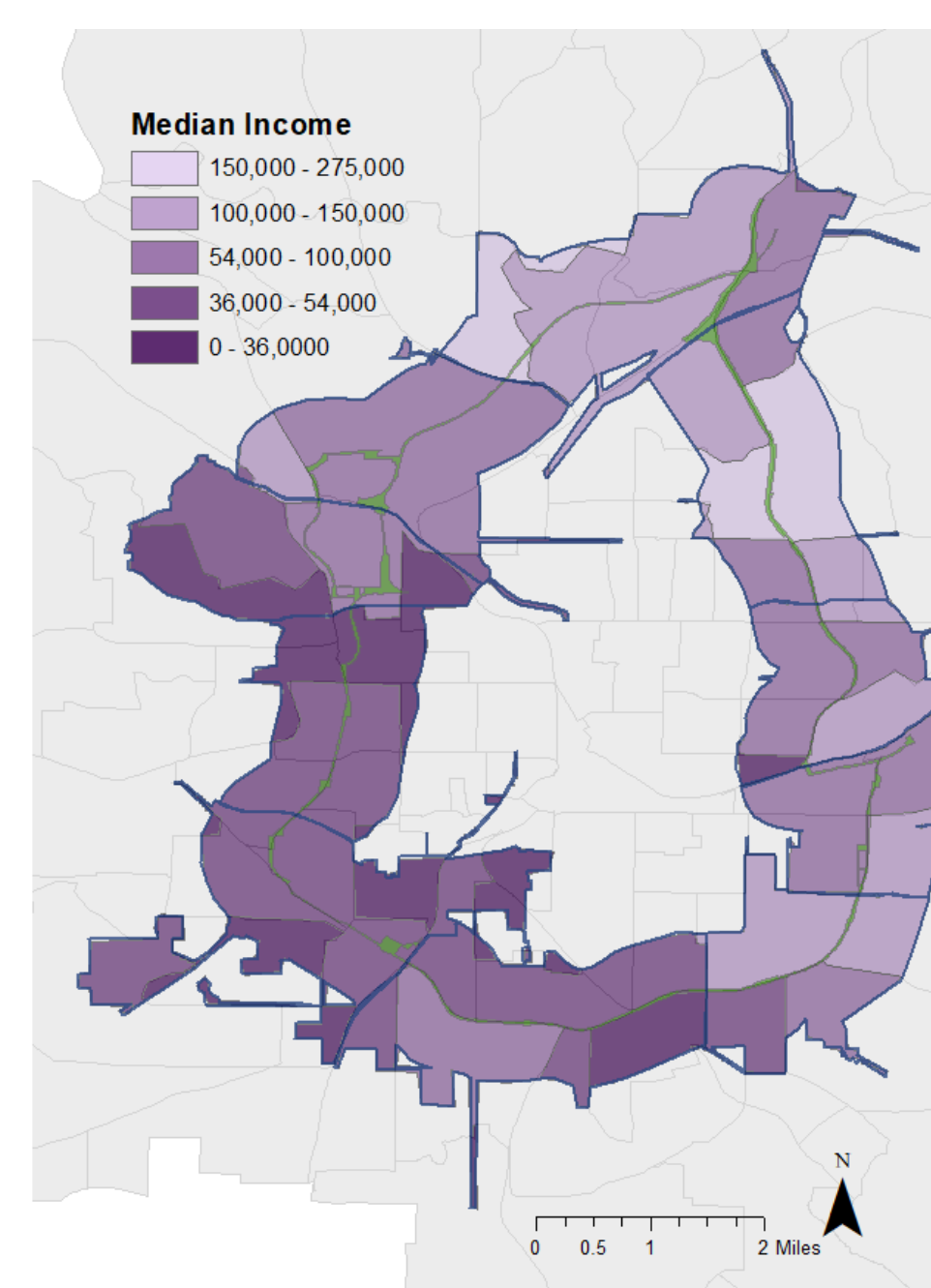
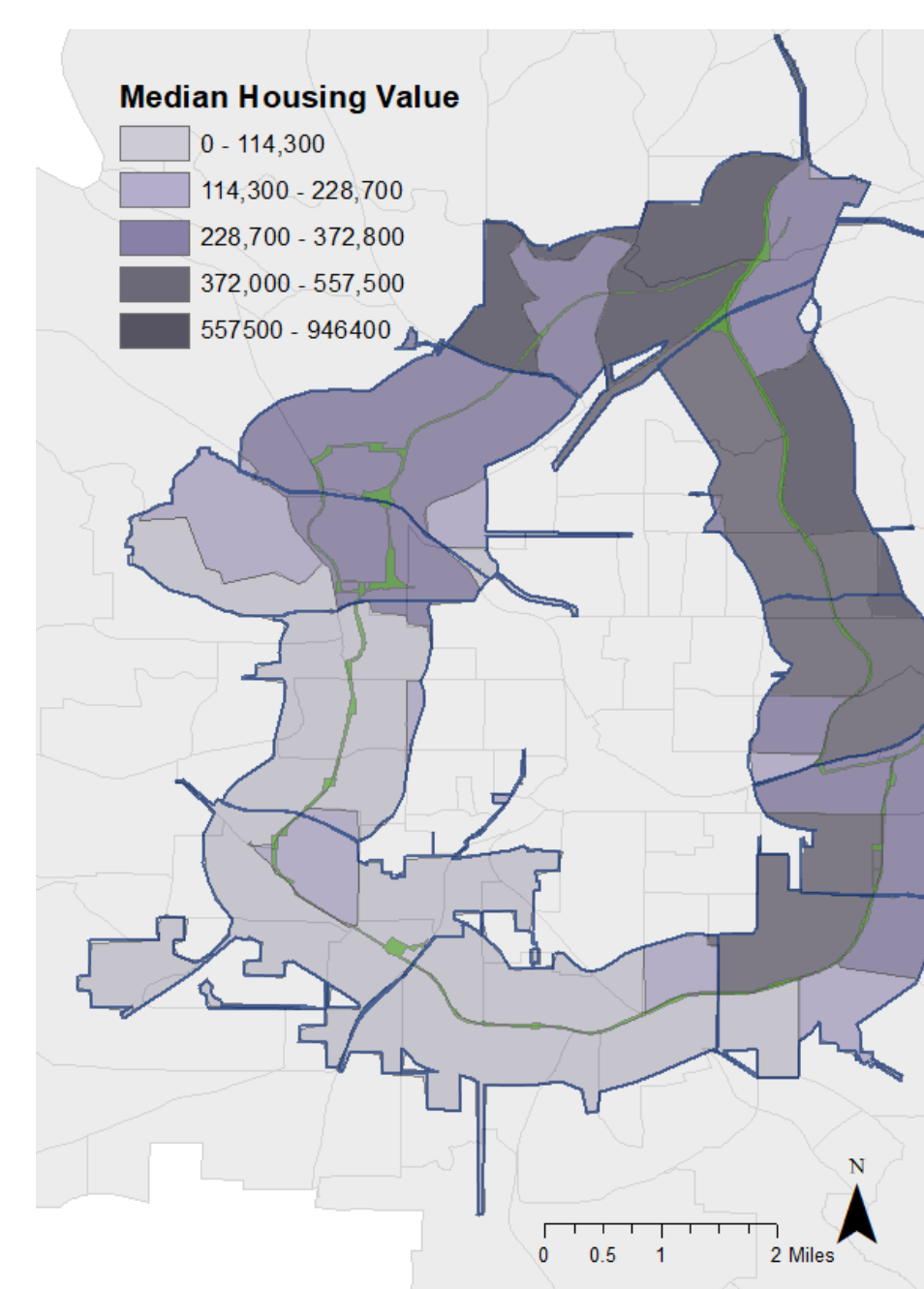
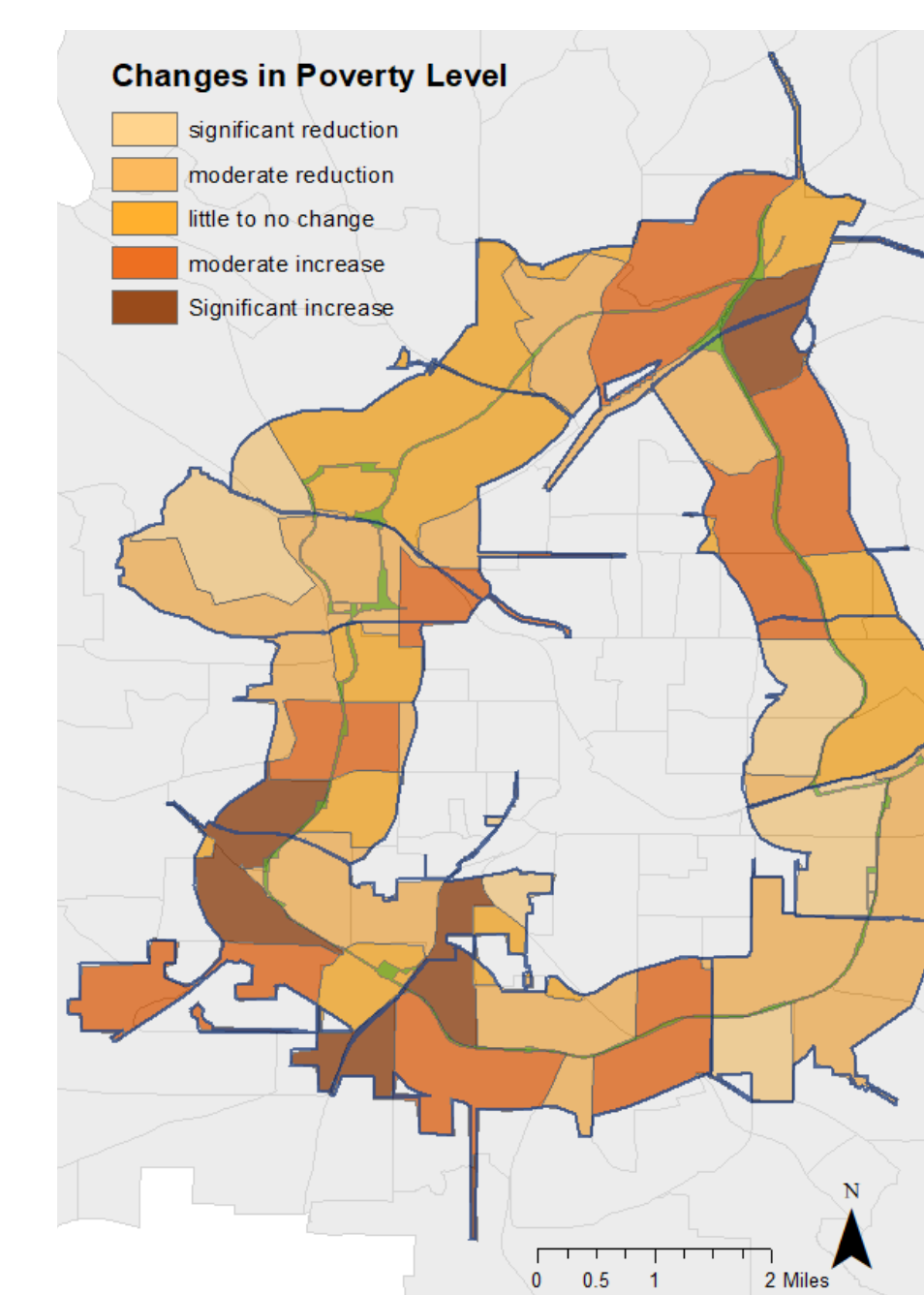
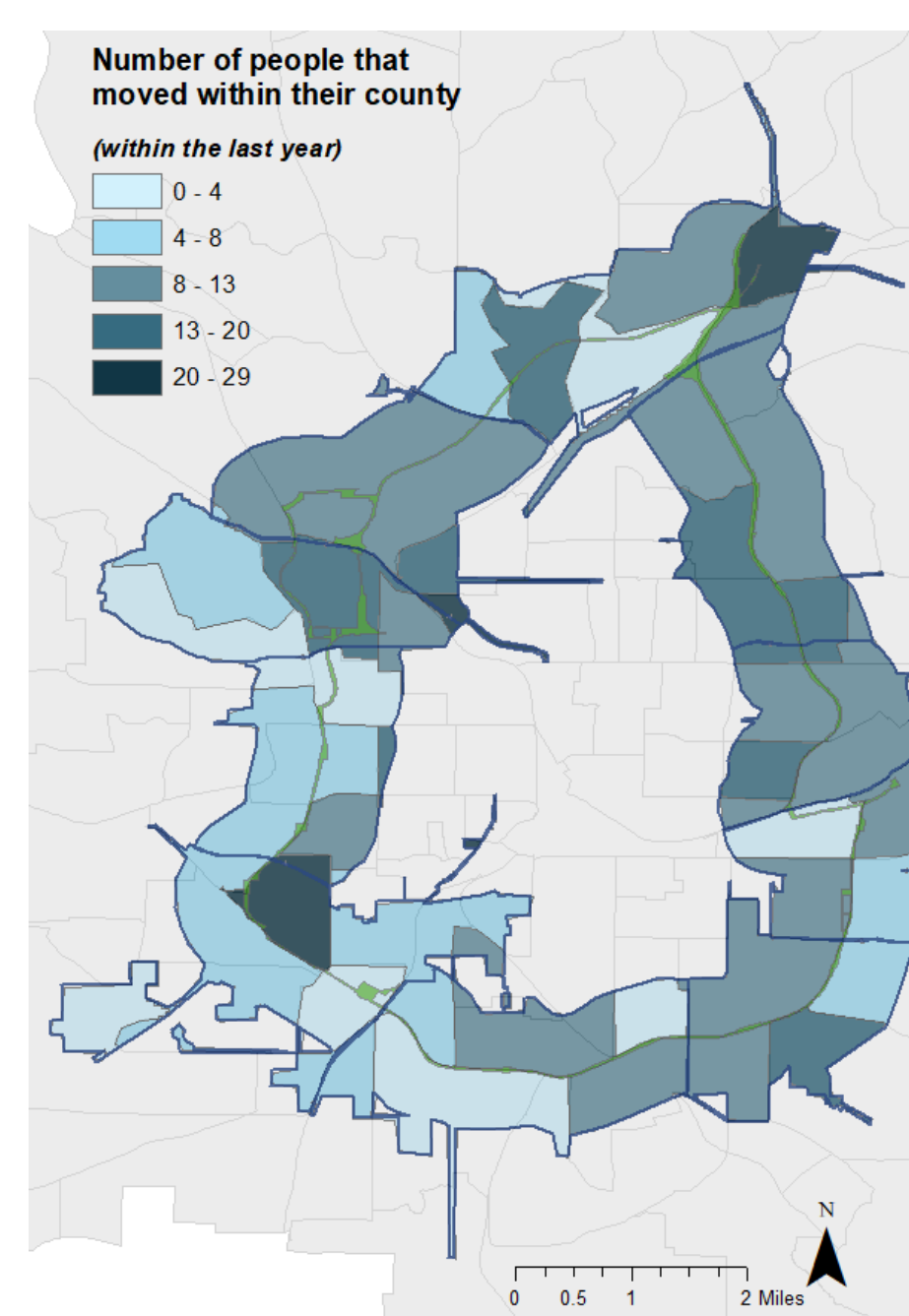
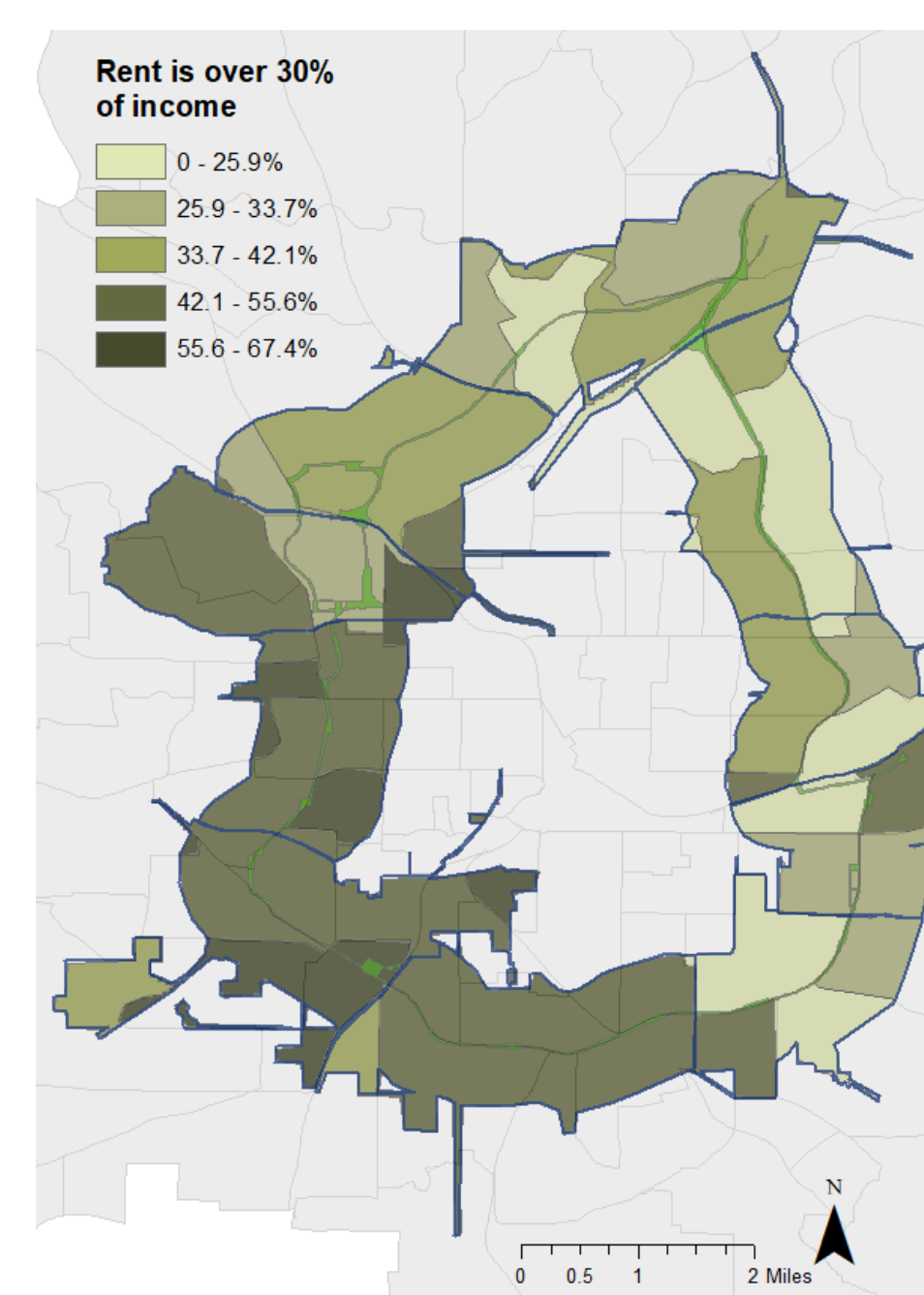
Assessment scores were aggregated into a final map that indicates which sections of the Beltline Subareas have been hurt the most by the project.



Results:

Based on the impact assessment, it's clear that the BeltLine Project has not succeeded in its mission of creating across the board prosperity for Atlanta residents.

Economic benefits are limited to the Eastern half of the city whereas residents in the Southwest have experienced a reduction in overall quality of life. Residents in Eastern Atlanta have had their income increase dramatically with little increase of their rent. It's clear that the City of Atlanta must increase measures to protect residents living in Subareas 1, 2, 8, and 10. This could take the form of increased construction of affordable housing units or rent controls.



Limitations:

The time range of certain data made it difficult to assess the BeltLine's impact as scores were evaluated on comparisons of 2000 to 2017 vs 2006 to 2017. Additionally, since data was collected at the census track level the impact assessment can't evaluate the BeltLine's impact at a smaller neighborhood level. This results in the assessment being affected by the modifiable areal unit problem which produces statistical biases and in turn affects accurate analysis.

Morgan Choi,
GIS 101 - Introduction to GIS
Professor Rebecca Shakespeare

Tufts University | School of Arts and Sciences

Sources: Atlanta Fulton County, Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Journal Constitution