Financial Resilience for Atlanta's Westside

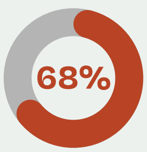
This brief is for community leaders, faith communities, and other local stakeholders working on the frontlines of the Westside's economic future. It draws on key findings and lessons from the Julian Bond Institute Report, "*Credit for the Westside: Building Financial Resilience in Atlanta's English Avenue and Vine City Neighborhoods*," and offers community-driven solutions you can put to use right away.

Atlanta's English Avenue and Vine City neighborhoods have a rich history of Black entrepreneurship, civic leadership, faith institutions, and community resilience. Yet decades of disinvestment and economic exclusion have created persistent barriers to financial stability and wealth-building.

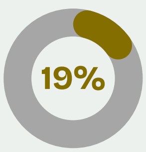
To understand these challenges firsthand, the report's authors spoke directly with the people who live there. Their research combined a survey of English Avenue and Vine City residents with interviews and focus groups, capturing not just the obstacles households face, but their aspirations for the future

Key Findings: By the Numbers

Among survey respondents:

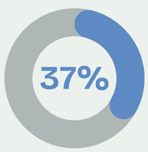


of Westside residents used at least one alternative financial service in the past year, e.g., payday loan apps, car title loans, credit card cash advances, and Buy Now Pay Later.

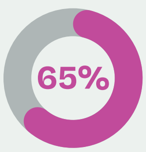


of Westside residents earning less than $25,000 annually could cover an emergency expense of $500 or more.

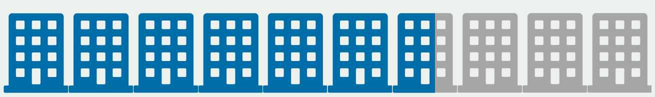
said credit barriers were preventing them from building wealth.



used a high-interest lender because they believed a bank or credit union would not approve them.



identified housing as one of their top three sources of financial stress.



67% of renters identified rising rents as a financial challenge.

78% of homeowners identified rising property taxes or insurance costs as a challenge.

Five Lessons from the Westside

Access to financial services is not enough—the quality and design of access matter.

Recommendation: Expanding Inclusive Banking Pathways

Limited income and financial reserves leave households exposed to financial shocks.

Recommendation: Building Financial Resilience Pathways

Debt and credit barriers can reinforce a cycle of financial vulnerability.

Recommendation: Creating Affordable Credit Pathways

Different groups experience financial vulnerability in distinct ways.

Recommendation: Designing Targeted Financial Mobility Pathways

Housing is both a source of financial strain and a pathway to wealth.

Recommendation: Promoting Housing Stability and Broader Wealth Pathways

What We Can Do Together

No single organization can address these challenges alone. Faith communities, neighborhood organizations, nonprofits, employers, financial institutions, philanthropy, government, and residents all have a role in building a stronger financial mobility ecosystem. Below are community-based solutions for nonprofits, faith communities, and other local organizations. For additional recommendations, please see the full report at: **julianbondinstitute.org/reports/westside**.

Financial Education & Coaching

- Host on-site financial coaching sessions covering credit, interest rates, budgeting, and debt management
- Launch women's financial resilience programming focused on savings, credit-building, and wealth accumulation
- Offer plain-language investment education alongside access to low-barrier investment opportunities

Employment & Income Growth

- Connect residents to higher-wage career pathways, workforce training, and credentialing programs
- Partner with workforce agencies or training providers to bring these opportunities on-site or via referral

Public Benefits Navigation

- Help residents identify and enroll in benefits programs they're eligible for
- Provide guidance on navigating the "benefits cliff" so residents understand how increased earnings may affect assistance eligibility

Emergency Financial Support

- Explore partnerships with local employers to establish emergency assistance funds for employees facing short-term disruptions
- Develop or support community-based stabilization funds to cover one-time needs like utilities, medical bills, and transportation

Debt & Legal Support

- Connect residents to legal aid for personal debt matters.
- Refer residents to responsible, affordable debt management counseling services
- Partner with consumer protection and legal service organizations to educate residents on their debt-related rights

Senior-Focused Services

- Deliver fraud and scam prevention education directly within senior living communities
- Coordinate in-person banking assistance/services at senior communities
- Expand access to free estate planning, wills, and heirs' property/title assistance

Housing & Household Stability

- Increase access to affordable home repair, energy efficiency programs, tax preparation assistance, and insurance guidance
- Expand financial assistance programs for rent, utilities, deposits, and other short-term housing costs
- Promote affordable homeownership through mortgage-readiness coaching, credit and debt support, and down-payment assistance

View the Full Report:
julianbondinstitute.org/reports/westside

About JBI: The Julian Bond Institute for Financial Equity Research is a nonprofit research organization housed at the Center for Responsible Lending. Named for civil rights leader Julian Bond, JBI produces nationally representative research on racial and generational disparities in financial access and wealth building.

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