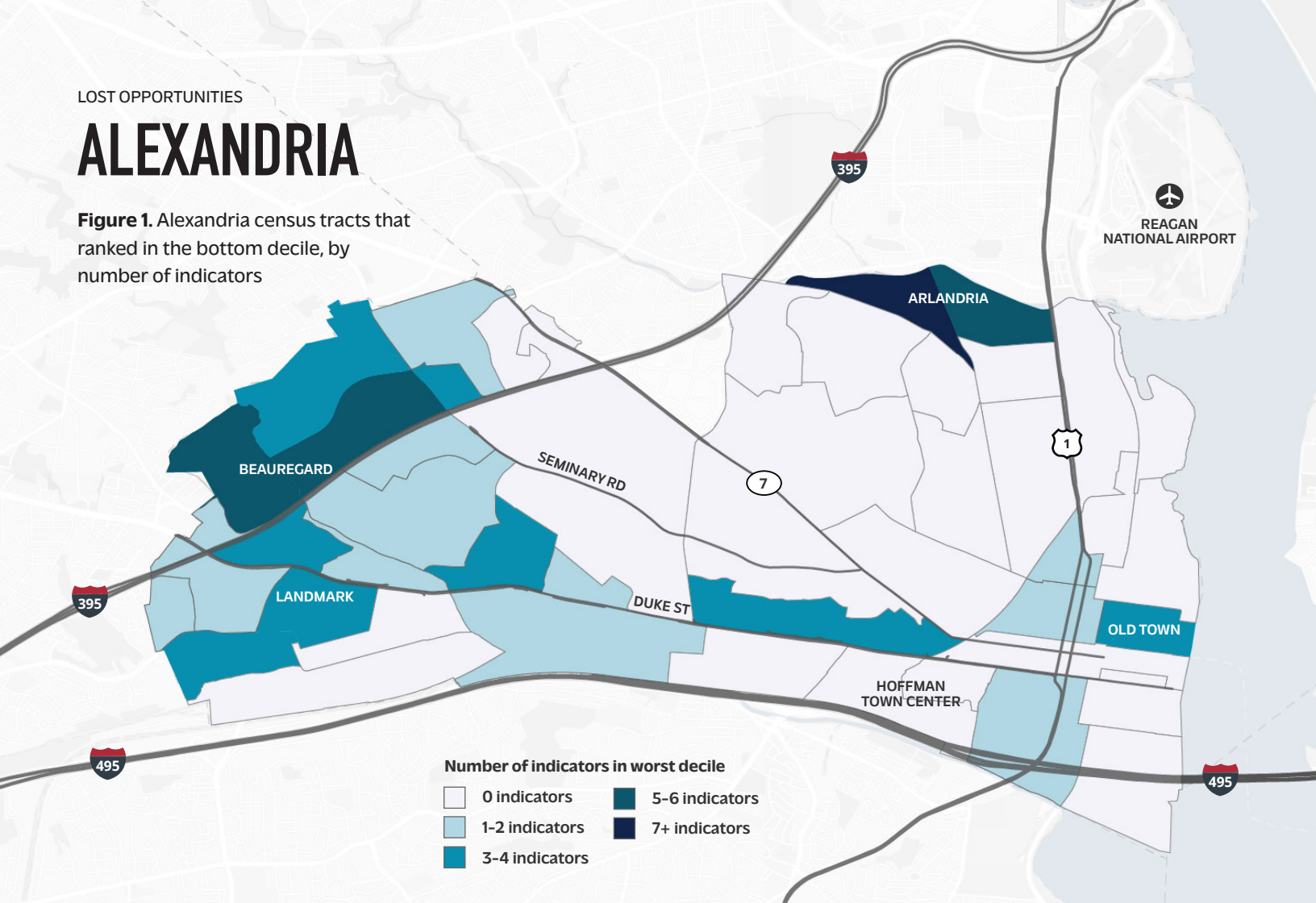


# ALEXANDRIA

**Figure 1.** Alexandria census tracts that ranked in the bottom decile, by number of indicators



## THE PERSISTENCE OF DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBORHOODS IN ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria is known for its good health, but health statistics for the city can hide stark disparities. Life expectancy varies by 11 years across the city and premature death rates vary more than 4-fold. These disparities exist largely because of differences in social and environmental conditions that affect health, from education and income to housing and transportation.

A 2017 report commissioned by the Northern Virginia Health Foundation identified “islands of disadvantage” across Northern Virginia. That report was based on census data collected over five years in 2009–2013. The foundation’s new report examines data from 2017–2021 to identify areas that have experienced progress and setbacks over the decade. The report divides the region’s tracts into deciles. Deciles were used to group data into ten equally sized groups of census tracts. For each indicator, the bottom decile represented the 10% of tracts in Northern Virginia with the worst outcomes.

The new report found that areas of concentrated disadvantage persist in Alexandria. Figure 1 highlights tracts in Alexandria that ranked among the bottom 10% on multiple indicators in 2017–2021. Tracts with the darkest shading were in the bottom decile on seven or more indicators. For example, census tract 2001.04

in the Alexandria West area along I-395, ranked among the bottom 10% on six indicators, with a poverty rate of 19%. Only 43% of adults had a Bachelor’s degree, 15% of the population lived in overcrowded housing, and 19% were uninsured. In that Alexandria West tract, 35% of the population was Black and 33% was Hispanic.\*

During this period, Alexandria became more racially and ethnically diverse. The maps in Figure 2 show which areas of the city experienced growth in each racial and ethnic group. Socioeconomic progress occurred in areas of Alexandria that were identified as “islands of disadvantage” in the Northern Virginia Health Foundation’s 2017 report. For example, census tract 2003.01 in Alexandria West, where 29% of the population was Black and 22% was Hispanic, saw its poverty rate fall from 9% to 7%. In that tract, where Francis C. Hammond Middle School is located, median household income increased from \$79,865 to \$83,250. Some of this progress may reflect efforts in Alexandria to increase investments in marginalized communities and adopt equity-oriented policies.

However, many tracts that were already struggling in 2009–2013 experienced further economic setbacks, particularly in the

Beauregard and Landmark areas. For example, in census tract 2005 in the Shirley-Duke area, the poverty rate rose from 7% to 19%, the share of adults with a Bachelor’s degree decreased from 64% to 49%, and reliance on public assistance increased from 9% to 16% (Table 1). These conditions disproportionately affected people of color. During this period, the share of that tract’s population that was Black increased from 30% to 46%.

The period examined in the new report included the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the region experienced devastating health and socioeconomic setbacks. The pandemic also brought federal, state, and local “COVID relief” programs. Low-income households experienced an increase in benefits through SNAP, Medicaid, and other federal supports that were discontinued in 2023. It is unclear whether the footprint of disadvantage in Alexandria will shift as these benefits expire.

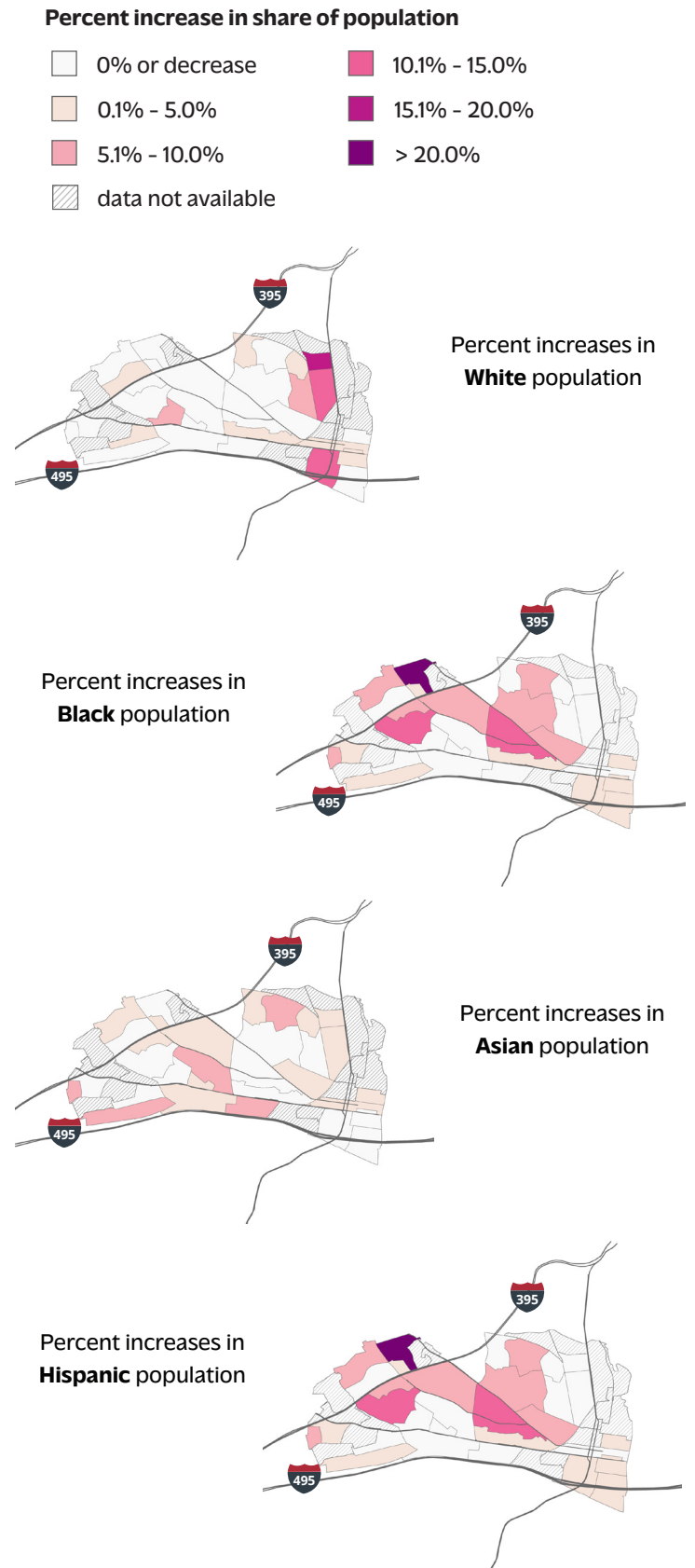
**Gentrification**

Progress in some areas likely reflected gentrification. For example, in tract 2012.04 in the Potomac Yard/Del Ray area, median household income climbed from \$82,431 to \$116,172. However, the share of the population that was White grew from 38% to 56%, while the Hispanic and Black populations declined.

The persistence of concentrated areas of disadvantage in Alexandria underscores the need for targeted investment in marginalized neighborhoods. Key priorities to expand opportunity and health across Northern Virginia include investments in education, food security, employment opportunity and benefits, affordable housing, access to health care, environmental justice, and attention to systemic racism and inclusive policies. Alexandria city government and local organizations have launched a variety of initiatives in pursuit of these goals, but more must be done. All residents of Alexandria deserve the opportunity to pursue a better life and good health.

<b>Table 1. Socioeconomic conditions in census tract 2005 (Shirley-Duke)</b>		
	<b>2009-2013</b>	<b>2017-2021</b>
High school diploma	93%	91% ↓
Bachelor’s degree	64%	49% ↓
Single-parent household	56%	64% ↑
Median household income	\$52,395	\$56,060 ↑
Poverty (all ages)	7%	19% ↑
Child poverty	2%	20% ↑
Reliance on public assistance	9%	16% ↑

**Figure 2.** Census tracts that experienced an increase in racial-ethnic composition between 2009-2013 and 2017-2021



\* All references to Asian, Black, and White populations refer to those who do not identify as Hispanic.