

UNC DEPARTMENT OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

DECEMBER 2022

OAKS AND SPOKES

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT REPORT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a non-profit advocacy organization, Oaks and Spokes aims to create people powered places in a sustainable and equitable way. Recently, the organization has been working to engage a wider variety of communities in advocacy efforts in order to create more equitable programming.

From August to December 2022, our workshop team at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill developed an outreach and engagement plan to support Oaks and Spokes' advocacy efforts.

First, we sought to understand who Oaks and Spokes' members are, where they live, and why they ride their bikes. We distributed a membership survey to understand bicycling behavior among members. Additionally, spatial analysis on demographic information and member location provided insight into who Oaks and Spokes' members are.

Through an equity lens, we focused on engagement strategies that could strengthen Oaks and Spokes' outreach efforts. We connected with peer organizations from across the country to learn how others are engaging with their current members and attracting new ones, and used this information to develop measures of success related to **community**, **advocacy**, and **capacity**.

SURVEY + MAPPING FINDINGS

- Many areas that are less affluent and more diverse lack representation in Oaks & Spokes membership.
- There is a gap in membership for those who are reliant on bicycling or other alternative modes of transportation.

PEER OUTREACH FINDINGS

- The prioritization process should start with demographics and communities most harmed by traffic violence.
- Successful partnerships have come from a wide variety of public and private actors.
- Funding for consistent community engagement is difficult to find, but that continuity is the key to change.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF CURRENT MEMBERS

WE COMPLETED A SPATIAL ANALYSIS TO ANALYZE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF OAKS & SPOKES MEMBERS AND THEIR SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

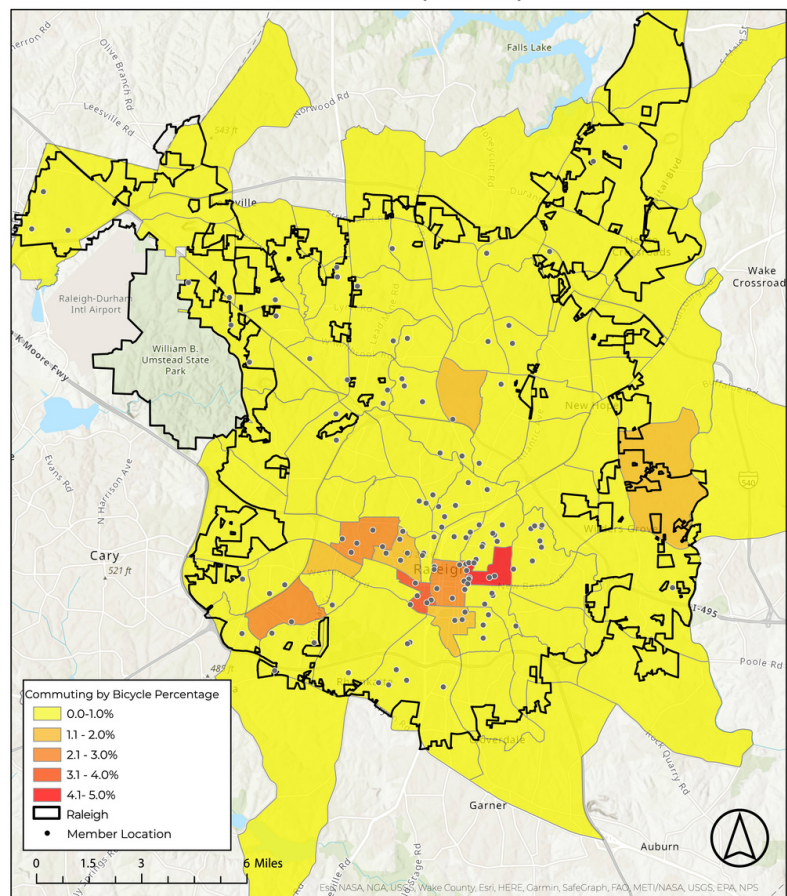
Purpose

- The maps will support Oaks & Spokes outreach efforts since the organization can use the maps in their membership reports and emails. The maps can be used to determine **where future outreach efforts should be targeted.**
- The maps will inform Oaks & Spokes Staff about current member characteristics and who is not being represented within the membership base. The staff can use this information as they plan to **expand their number of members.**

Findings

- The majority of Oaks & Spokes Members are located in areas that are more affluent, less diverse, and primarily commute by car. Most members ride bikes for recreation rather than commuting.
- Many areas that are less affluent, more diverse, and in greater need of alternative commuting methods lack representation in Oaks & Spokes. These areas should be targeted as Oaks & Spokes continues efforts to grow their membership base.

Commuting by Bicycle and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



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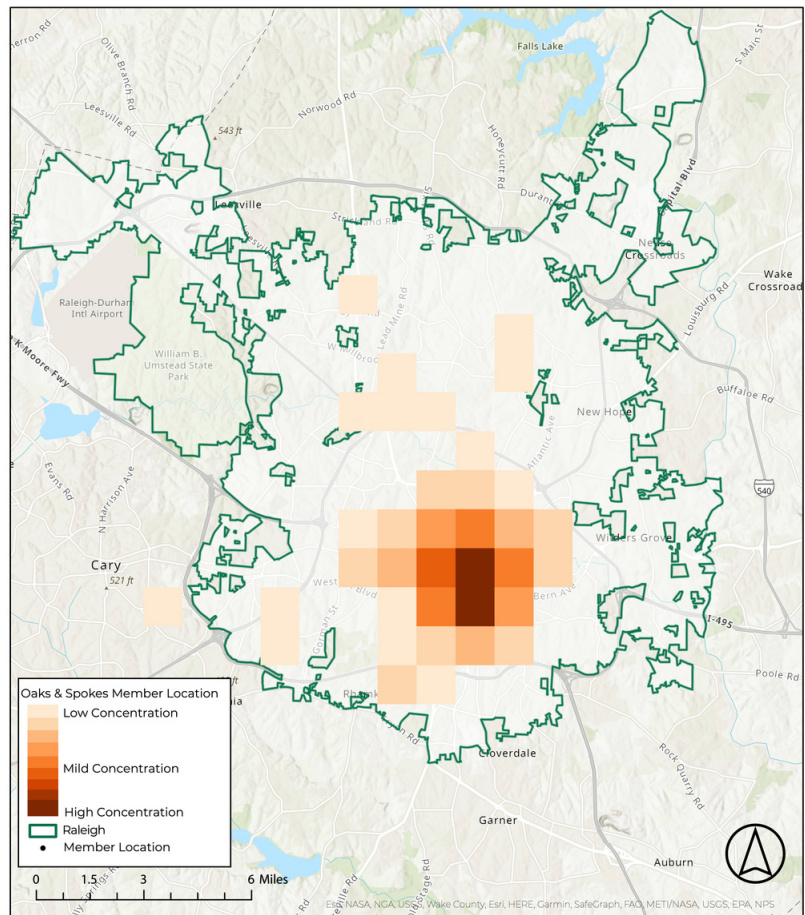
Data Used In Analysis:

- 2019 ACS 5-year Census Data at the Census Tract Level
 - Average Commute Times
 - Commuting Methods
 - Commute by Car
 - Commute by Transit
 - Commute by Bike
 - Median Household Income
 - Percentage of Minorities
- Oaks & Spokes Members Location Data

Methods

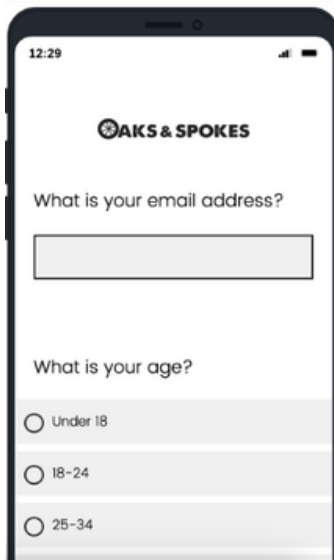
- The data were analyzed at two scales:
 - Wake County Level
 - City of Raleigh Level
- Types of Maps Created:
 - A hot spot map to visualize where Oaks Spokes Members are and are not concentrated
 - Census data maps with member locations overlaid to visualize the background characteristics of where members are and are not located

Where Oaks & Spokes Members are Concentrated in Raleigh, NC



MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

TO ASSESS GAPS IN MEMBERSHIP, WE CONDUCTED A BRIEF SURVEY OF OAKS AND SPOKES MEMBERS ON DEMOGRAPHICS AND TRAVEL CHOICES.



Questions included on the survey:

- What is your email address?
- What is your age?
- What is your gender identity?
- Which vehicles are typically available for you to use?
- Which type of destinations do you bike to at least once a week?

25%

Target Response Rate

30%

Actual Response Rate

64

Total Responses

2

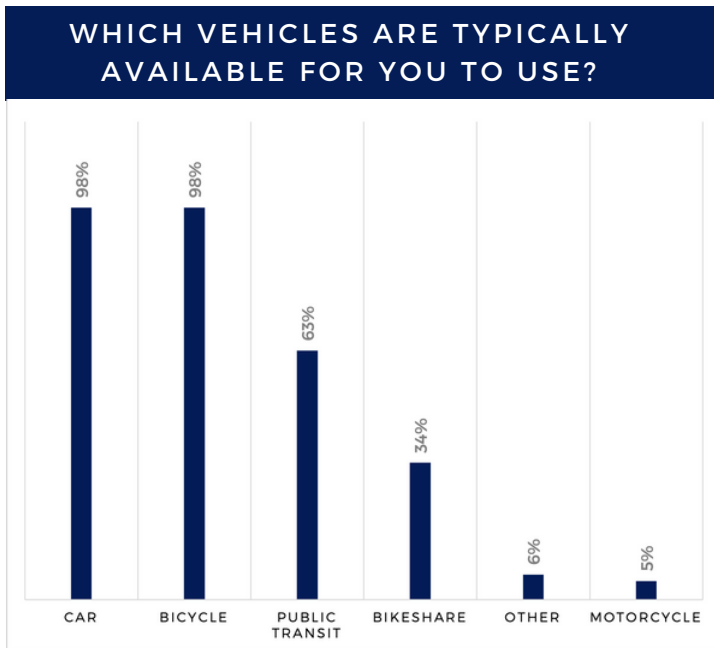
Weeks of Survey Collection

WHAT ABOUT BOTS?

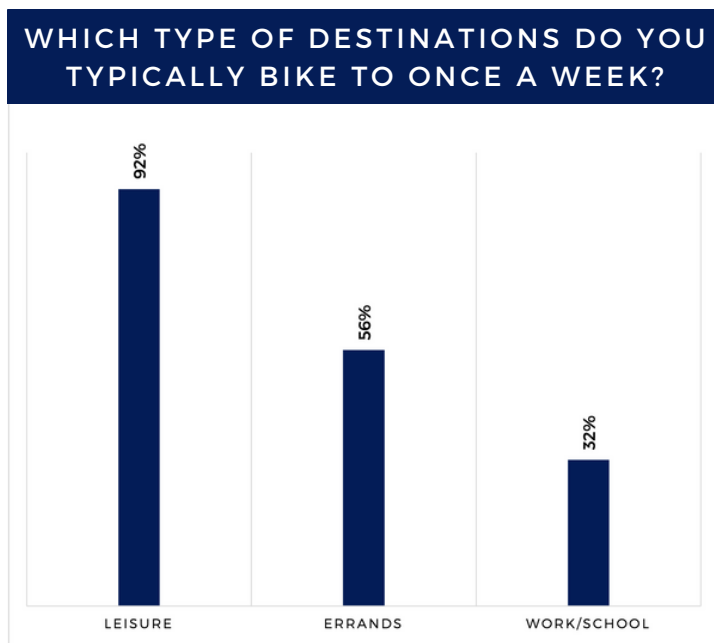
The survey was distributed to the newsletter listserv and was posted to Oaks and Spokes social media accounts. Over the course of two weeks, the survey gathered over 2,000 bot responses. This presented difficulties in data quality control and analysis. Despite using spam protection settings in Qualtrics, these bot responses were likely caused by advertising a gift card incentive for completing the survey. While survey incentives can generate more survey responses, we recommend that future surveys not be distributed via social media or advertised with a chance to win a gift card. The analyzed results only include filtered responses from Oaks and Spokes members.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY FINDINGS

THE RESULTS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY HELP ILLUSTRATE WHO OAKS AND SPOKES MEMBERS ARE AND WHY THEY BIKE.



Whether they own their a car or not, a vast majority of respondents have regular access to a car. Additionally, a vast majority of respondents have their own bicycle, Fewer respondents live near public transit facilities or have access to a bikeshare program. Very few respondents own motorcycles or other forms of transportation.



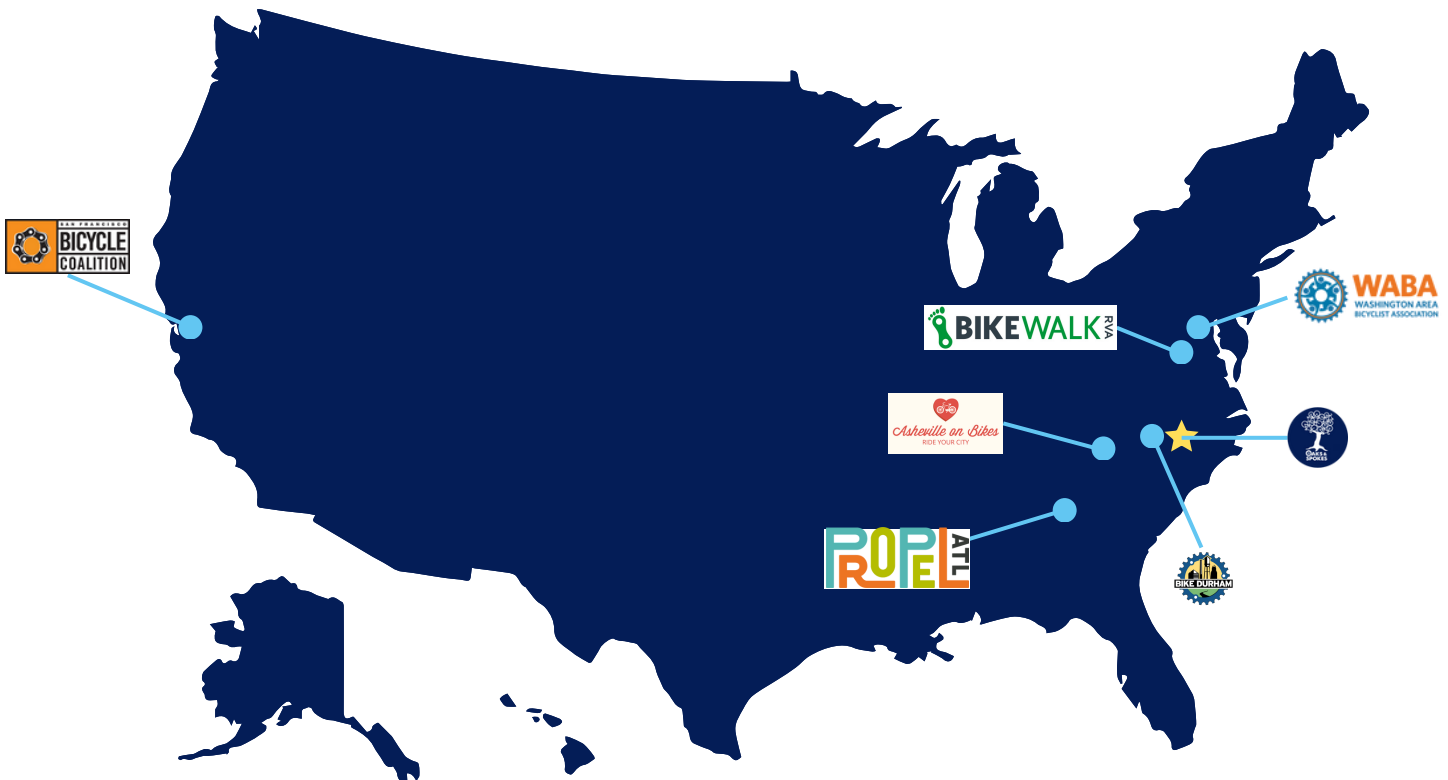
Most survey respondents regularly bike to leisure-related destinations. Fewer respondents bike for errands, and even fewer bike as a form of commute to work or school.

The findings from these responses suggest that **Oaks and Spokes members tend to bike for recreation rather than out of necessity.**

This indicates a **potential gap in membership for people who are reliant on bicycling as their primary means of transportation.**

PEER OUTREACH: INTERVIEWEES

WE SPOKE TO PEER ORGANIZATIONS OF VARYING SIZES TO IDENTIFY PROMISING ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES.



To develop recommendations for the outreach and engagement plan, we spoke to 6 peer organizations across the country, primarily located in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. These were: **San Francisco Bicycle Coalition**, **Propel ATL**, **Washington Area Bicyclist Association**, **BikeWalk RVA**, **Asheville on Bikes**, and **Bike Durham**.








The goal of these 30-60 minute virtual interviews was to uncover existing promising practices for intentional engagement and policy advocacy. Through these conversations, we also found that bike advocacy organizations are grappling with similar questions and challenges as they work to center equity in their programming.

PEER OUTREACH: TOPICS COVERED

WE ASKED PEER ORGANIZATIONS ABOUT PROGRAMMING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND WHO IS MISSING FROM CURRENT BIKE ADVOCACY.

We covered a wide variety of topics in our conversations with these six peer organizations, and are very grateful for their time and participation. During these interviews, we discussed:

- What makes an event and/or campaign successful
- Partnerships with government agencies, community organizations, peer groups, and others
- Barriers to implementing desired programming
- The organization's role in policy change at various levels
- Community engagement strategies and tools
- The role of their Board
- Typical membership profiles
- Common community concerns or pushback
- Upcoming programming

							
LOCATION	RALEIGH, NC	SAN FRANCISCO, CA	ATLANTA, GA	WASHINGTON, DC	RICHMOND, VA	ASHEVILLE, NC	DURHAM, NC
YEAR EST.	2012	1971	1991	1972	2012	2007	2013
CITY POP.	469K	815K	496K	713K	227K	94K	286K
STAFF (INCL. PART TIME)	4	20	6	26	22	2	4
BOARD	11	15	17	11	28	9	15

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

WE FOUND THAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ARE USING THESE METRICS TO ASSESS PROGRESS TOWARD THEIR GOALS

COMMUNITY

Membership

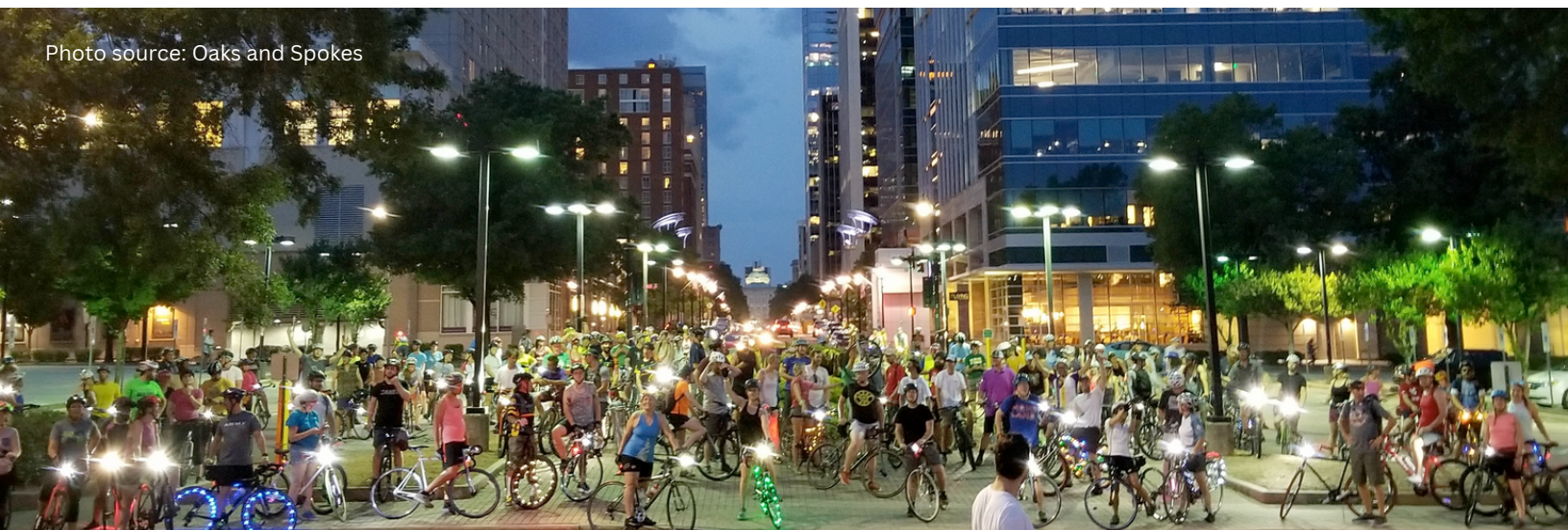
- Number of members
- Engagement and share of members who are not a “typical” member— diversity in race, gender, age, income, and intensity of bike use

Engagement

- Number of people at meetings, actions, and events
- Number of events across the city
- Geographic diversity of event location

Organizations generally measured their membership goals similarly to Oaks & Spokes, with a desire to recruit **additional and more diverse** members. Some organizations, recognizing that individuals may be involved in the work without being members, measured growing attendance at their signature events as a sign they were reaching community engagement goals.

Photo source: Oaks and Spokes



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

ADVOCACY

Infrastructure

- Miles of protected bike lanes built
- Number of bike racks installed

Safety

- Number of bike crashes (ideally controlled for number of bikers or miles traveled)
- Perception of bike safety

Policy

- Did they achieve the specific policy they advocated for - closing road to cars, road diet for a corridor, etc.
- \$ of funding to bike projects (infrastructure and plans)
- % of legislatures committed to mission

Advocacy goals had the most **quantitative** measures of success. Organizations measured physical infrastructure built, plans and funding for new infrastructure and programs, how safe the city is for cyclists, and the extent to which their specific policy goals were reached.

However, some organizations feel these numbers don't reflect their changing missions to center **mobility justice and transportation equity**. One said "If a community has no bike lanes, building ten miles is not the first step. How do we better shape the objectives to meet the needs of communities?"



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

CAPACITY

People

- Hiring desired staff positions
- Number and level of involvement of trained "lay leader" volunteers

Money

- Increased business membership
- \$ of grant money

As small advocacy non-profits, all the interviewed organizations were constrained by a lack of **time and money**. Being able to hire desired positions, such as a development coordinator or community organizers, was a sign of success. These organizations are largely grant funded, so securing grants is also key to operations. However, some interviewees noted that those contracts should support the organization's existing goals and mission, not expand its scope.



EMERGENT INTERVIEW THEMES

COMMUNITY BUILDING INTENTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Themes

- The prioritization process should start with demographics and communities most harmed by traffic violence.
- Shifting organizational priorities (centering anti-racism, deprioritizing traffic enforcement, hosting events in different parts of town) may push away current members. Importantly, however, that practice may deeply resonate with and reach new potential members.
- Community members want to be involved in programming. Involving members in advocacy work can push back against stereotypes that bike organizations are anti-business or elitist.
- Engagement should be consistent; it can't be a one-off experience.
- In communities of color, "show up consistently and quietly."

Promising Practices

- Address immediate community needs like crosswalks and signage within more general campaigns.
- Prioritize school-based programming - it builds the next generation of advocates.
- Use on-the-ground outreach and advocacy, especially through neighborhood events in high-crash neighborhoods.

Washington, DC

Washington Area Bicycle Association has an internal DEI plan, or framework, that guides their work. Each campaign, outreach platform, or hiring addition must assist the framework. "The plan forces us to do good outreach. Now we start by going to the neighborhood, to the cookouts, before we move forward. We can be better partners."

EMERGENT INTERVIEW THEMES

ADVOCACY ACCELERATING CHANGE

Themes

- The priority for advocating for policy change skews toward the local level. Local policy change can be most transformative and noticeable to residents, especially with limited organizational resources. Non-local advocacy often relies on statewide advocacy groups.
- Most organizations are grappling with a mission or branding that centers bikes, even when the organization now works more holistically for complete streets. Rebrands or name changes take considerable time from the organization's board.
- Successful partnerships have come from a wide variety of public and private actors

Promising Practices

- Prioritize relationship-building with council members.
- Celebrate new mobility such as e-scooters, especially with its impact on improving mobility equity.
- Use the impact of redlining or other historical inequities as themes to center advocacy around.
- Expand organizational scope to include safe and reliable transportation via any mode, regardless of level of advocacy on each.

Richmond, VA

BikeWalk RVA hosts a training program for advocates. The program focuses on leadership and relationship-building within public administration structures, not just in transportation projects. "In-the-know advocates are powerful."

EMERGENT INTERVIEW THEMES

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OUTCOMES

Themes

- Boards are generally focused on funding, relationship-building, and governance, not daily operations.
- Community members look to advocacy organizations for assistance all the time and about everything. It's vital to stick to the organizational vision, mission, and annual priorities to avoid stretching too thin.
- Funding for consistent community engagement is difficult to find, but that continuity is the key to change. "You'll never know who you'll meet on the street. The next conversation you have may be with your next neighborhood leader."

Promising Practices

- Partner with local bike shops, especially to encourage youth bike riding.
- Build up the organization's coalition over time. Set a goal of being able to sustain momentum through multiple campaigns.
- Integrate elected officials into your work by hosting social events or bike rides and recognize their contributions.

Durham, NC

Bike Durham supports bike safety education and Bike to School Days with local schools. This partnership began informally, with a school coach that was a willing partner. Currently, a contract exists that helps formalize the annual partnership and bring in additional organizations; the once simple partnership has grown.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND SOFTWARE RECOMMENDATIONS



CURRENT FOLLOWERS



~ 2,900



~ 1,969



~ 2,388

*Follower count as of December 6

Oaks and Spokes has a sizeable presence on three major social media platforms, so current strategies appear to be working. Oaks and Spokes' goal is to identify options, paid or unpaid, to increase awareness of the existence of the organization to a broader audience within Raleigh. Oaks and Spokes currently uses free software to help track member information, send emails, and schedule social media posts. While free software is preferred and the current ones are adequate, the UNC team was asked to evaluate alternative software for future use.

OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND SOFTWARE RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ARE DOING



SALESFORCE
MEMBERSHIP MANAGEMENT



CAPITAL CANARY
ADVOCACY SOFTWARE



NATIONBUILDER
ALL-IN-ONE TOOLS

During peer interviews, we asked about Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software used and conducted a brief analysis of their social media usage. Based on the interviews, three different types of software are used - **membership management**, **advocacy software**, and **all-in-one tools**. Membership Management software like **Salesforce** help track member information such as contact information, contributions, website engagement, etc. Advocacy software such as

Capital Canary is specifically designed to connect members to petitions and campaigns, and help them take action through emails to local legislators and public comments on proposed laws or ordinances. All-in-one tools like **NationBuilder** combine some of the functions of the other two into one and are designed for nonprofits, advocacy groups, and electoral candidates. Prices vary by software type, ranging from \$34 a month with NationBuilder to over \$1,000 a year for unlimited cloud capacity with Salesforce.

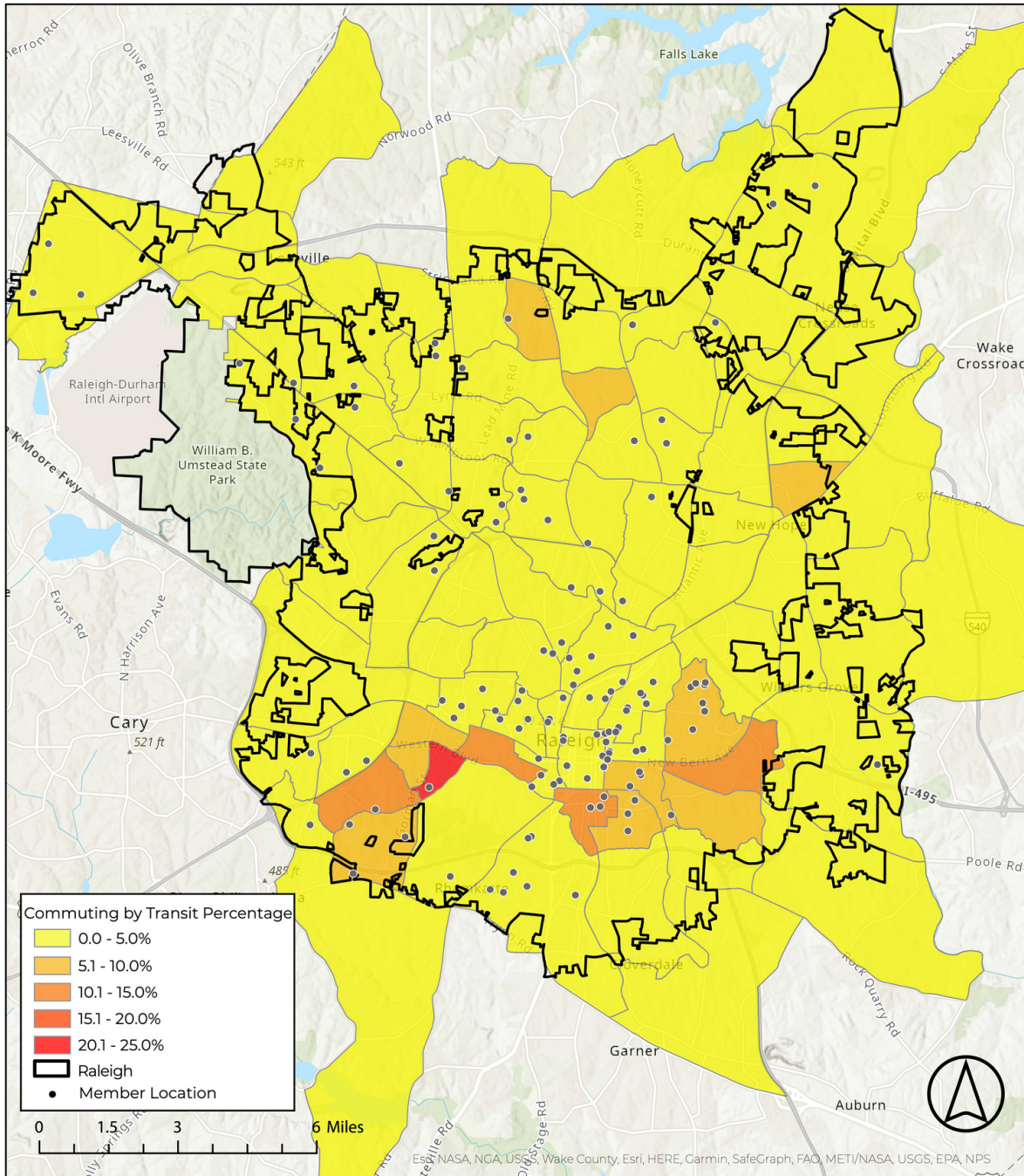
OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND SOFTWARE RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT TO CONSIDER

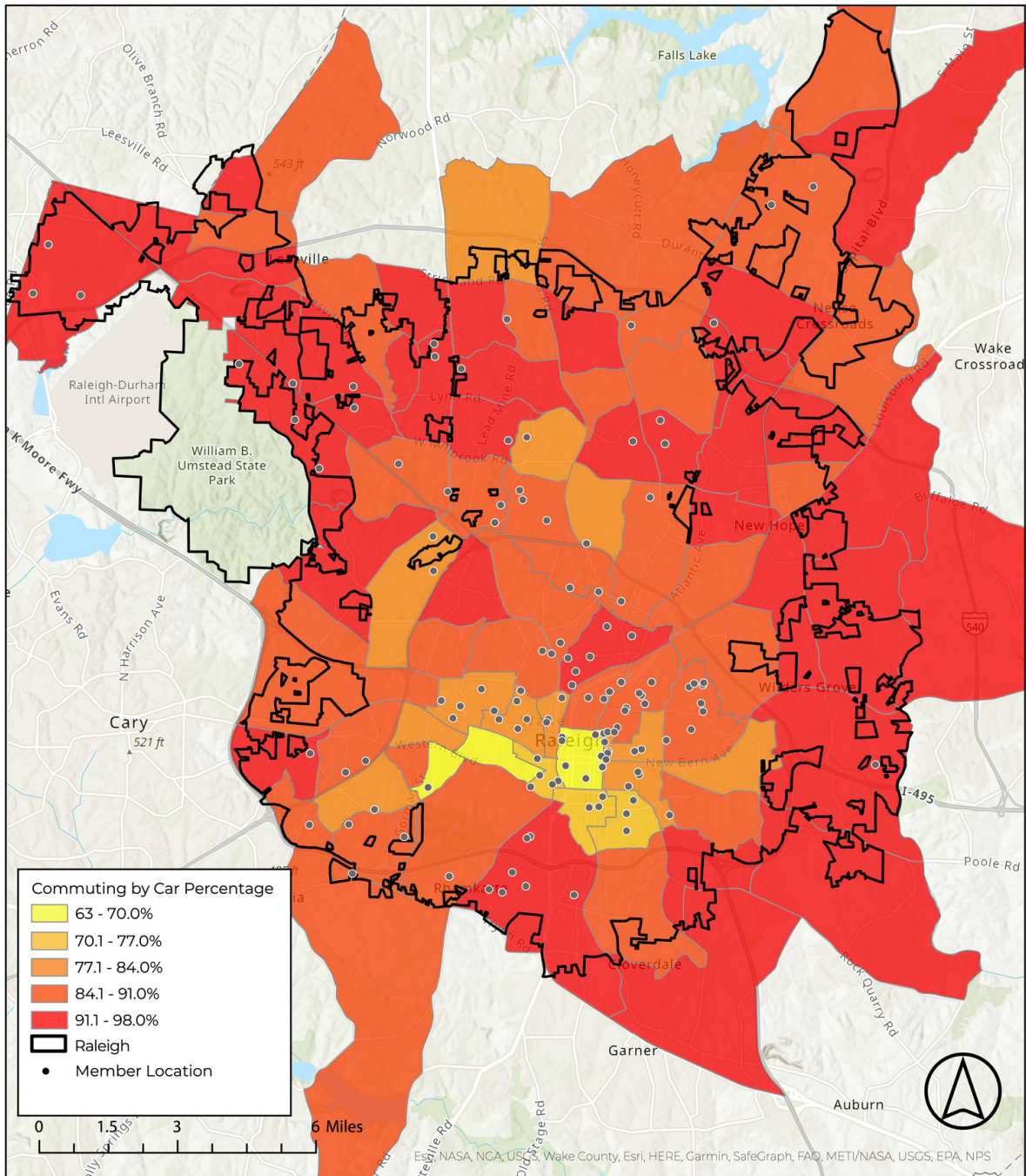
- Use paid advertisements
 - Already used for Facebook and has seen the highest following as a result.
- Post consistently
 - Doesn't have to be every day, but enough to remind users that you exist.
- Spice up the variety of content but have a strategy for each platform. For example, use:
 - Facebook for events/updates
 - Twitter for advocacy/updates
 - Instagram for photos/event recaps
- Use templates and design guidelines (Some are provided in Appendix D)
- Expansion onto new platforms is not necessary, but encouraged.
 - Most other organizations, such as the ones we interviewed, just stick to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, but Boston Cyclists Union also has a TikTok.
- Host more events
 - More opportunities for new members and followers
- Maintain a weekly or monthly newsletter
- Interact on social media
 - Responding to comments, etc.
- Look into third-party management of social media
 - Some of the organizations interviewed use a third-party advertising/marketing firm for managing social media
 - However, it can also be tasked to less-experienced interns and volunteers for cheaper.
- Experiment with new software and see which one is right for you.
 - Most software has a demo you can request or a free trial.
- CRM software to consider
 - Salesforce
 - NationBuilder
 - Capital Canary
 - Little Green Light
 - Using existing tools is okay. Some peer organizations use and recommend the same software already used by Oaks & Spokes.

APPENDIX A: MAPS

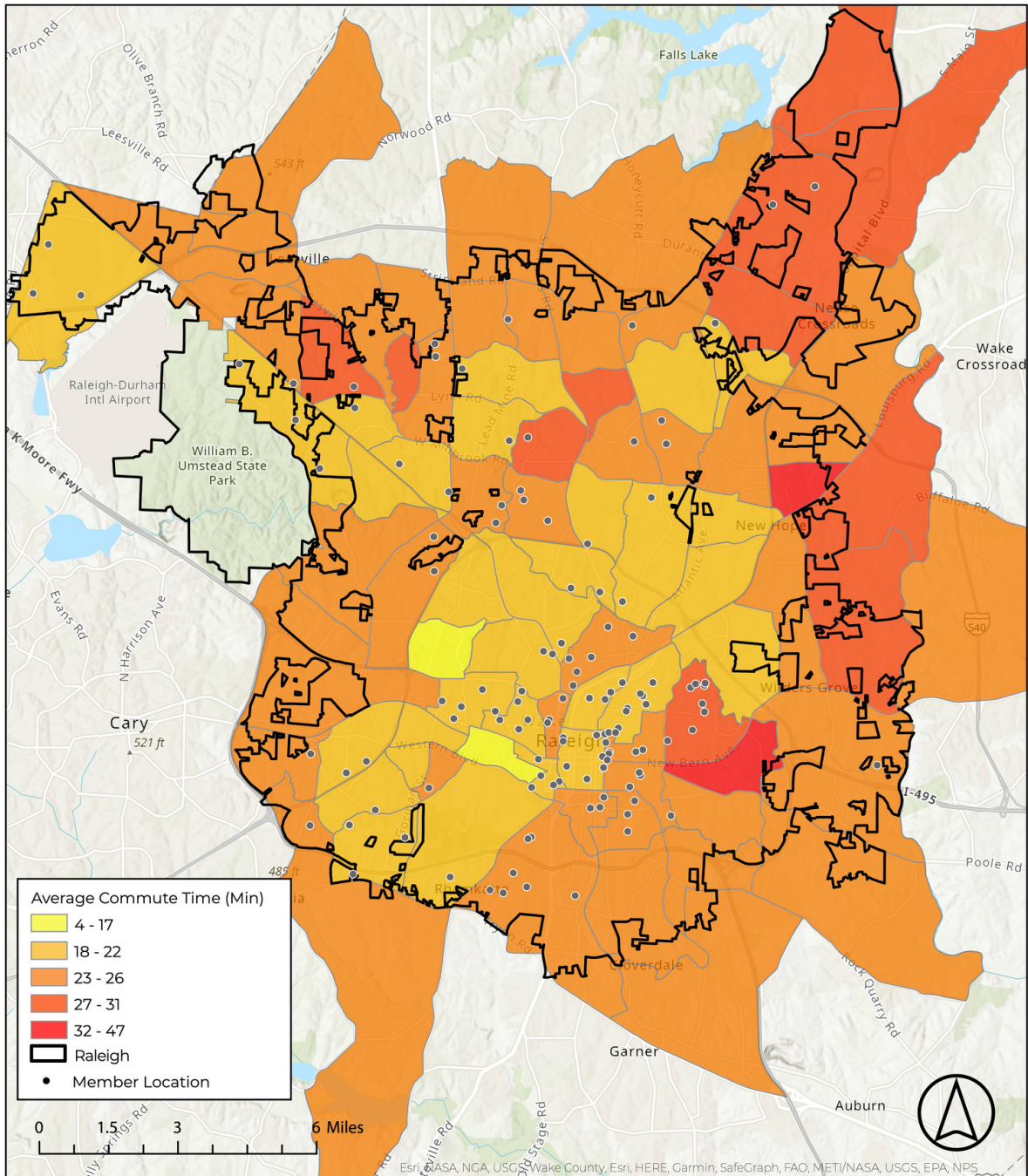
Commuting by Public Transit and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



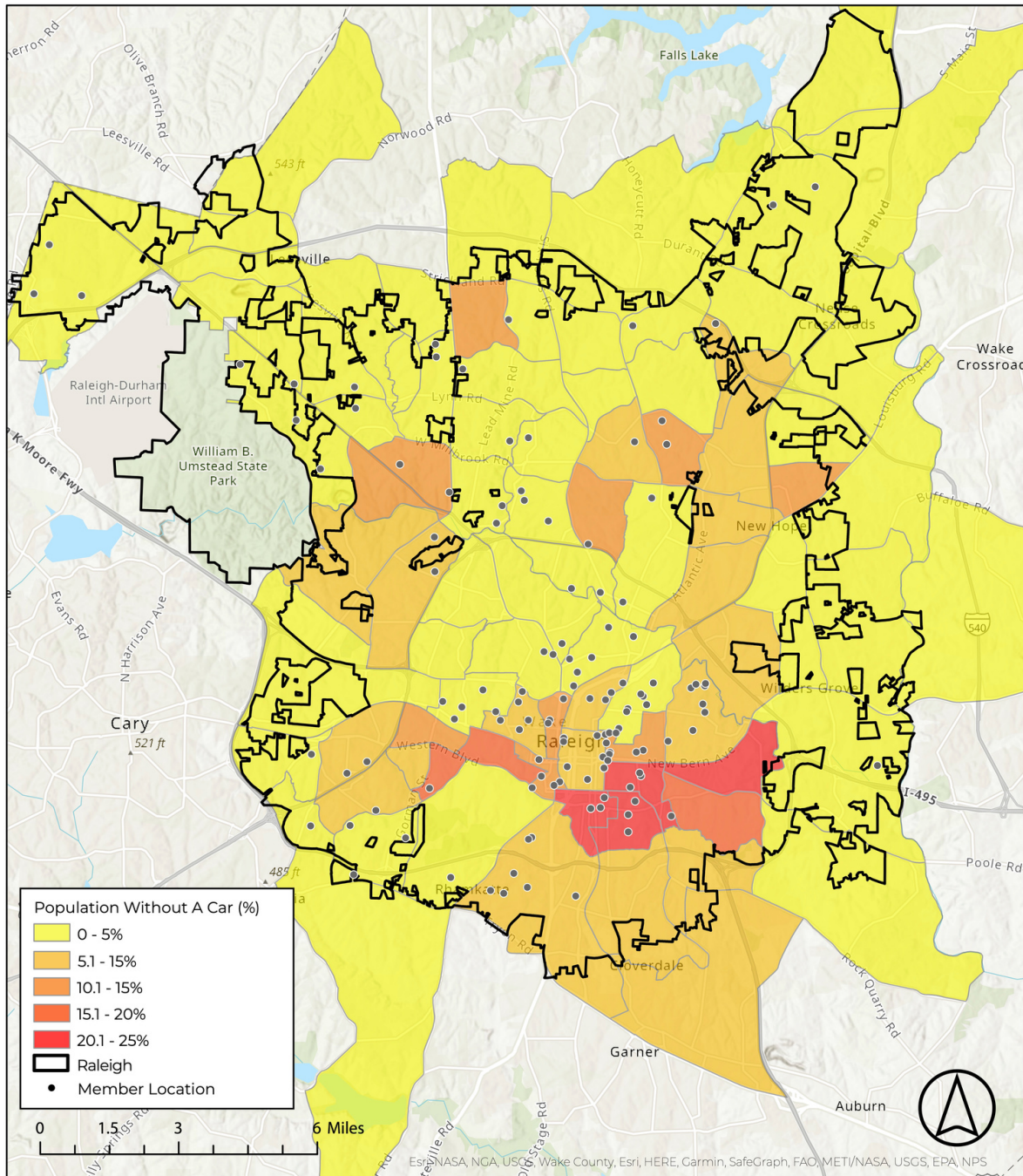
Commuting by Car and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



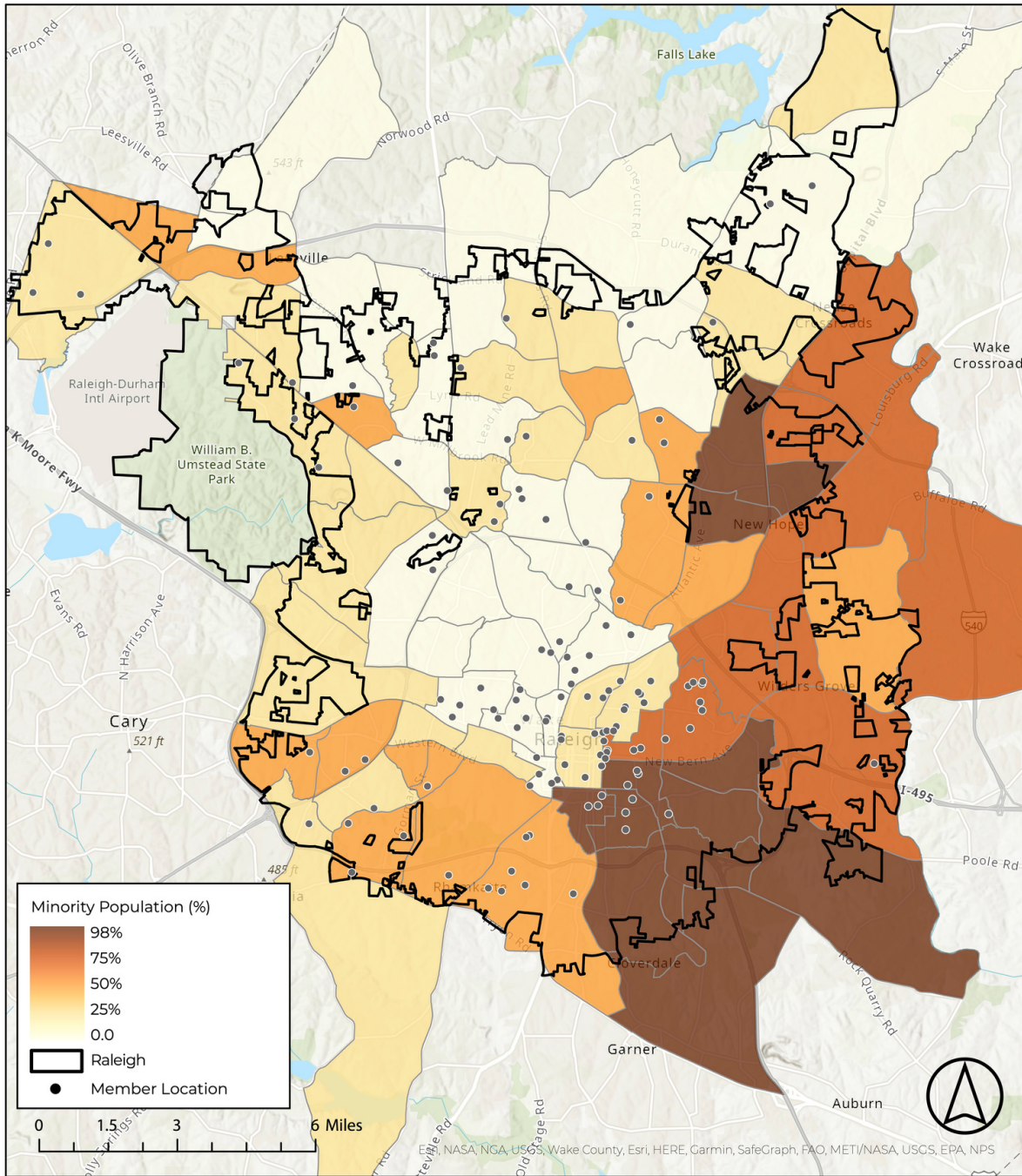
Average Commute Times and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



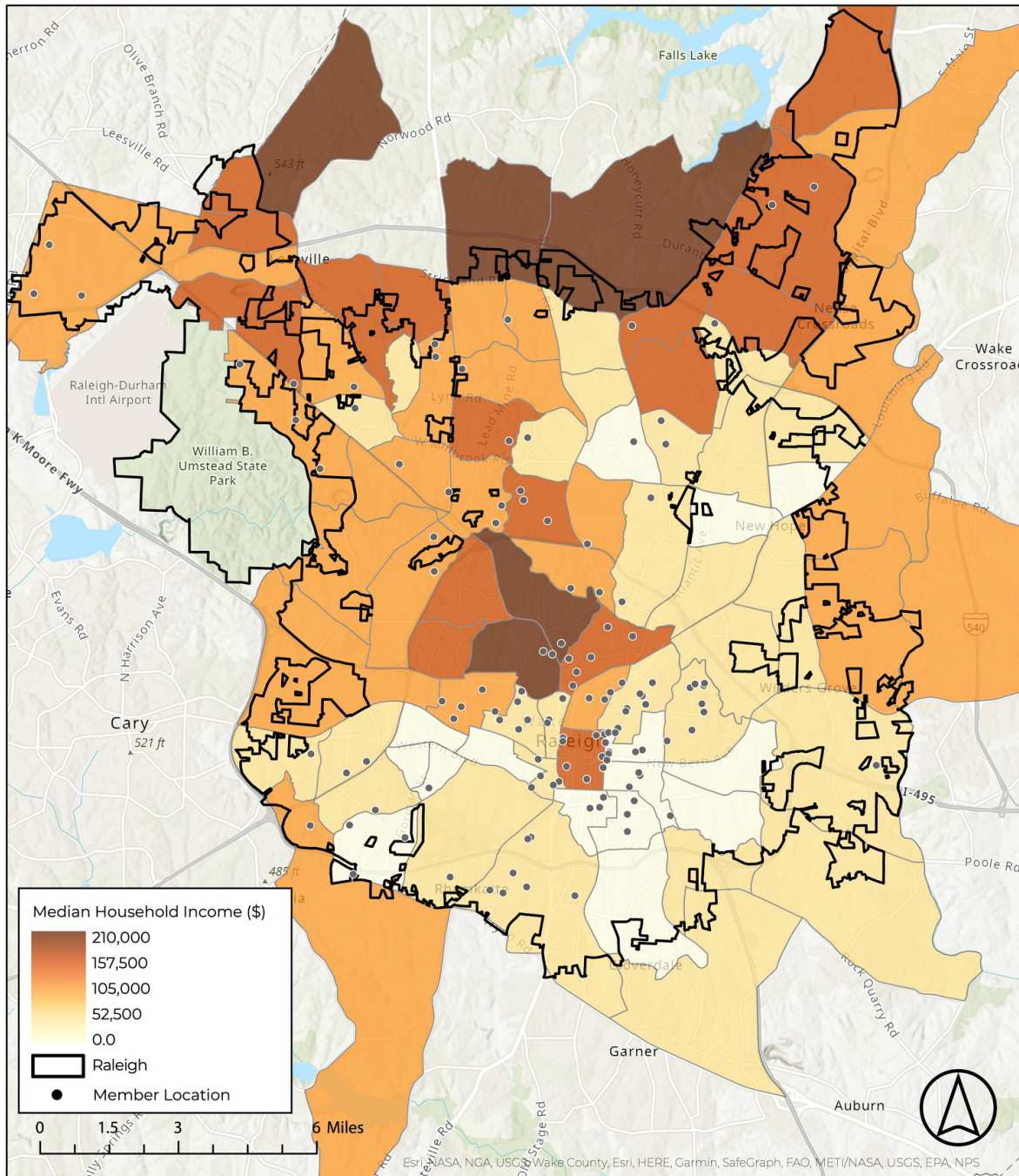
Population Without a Car and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



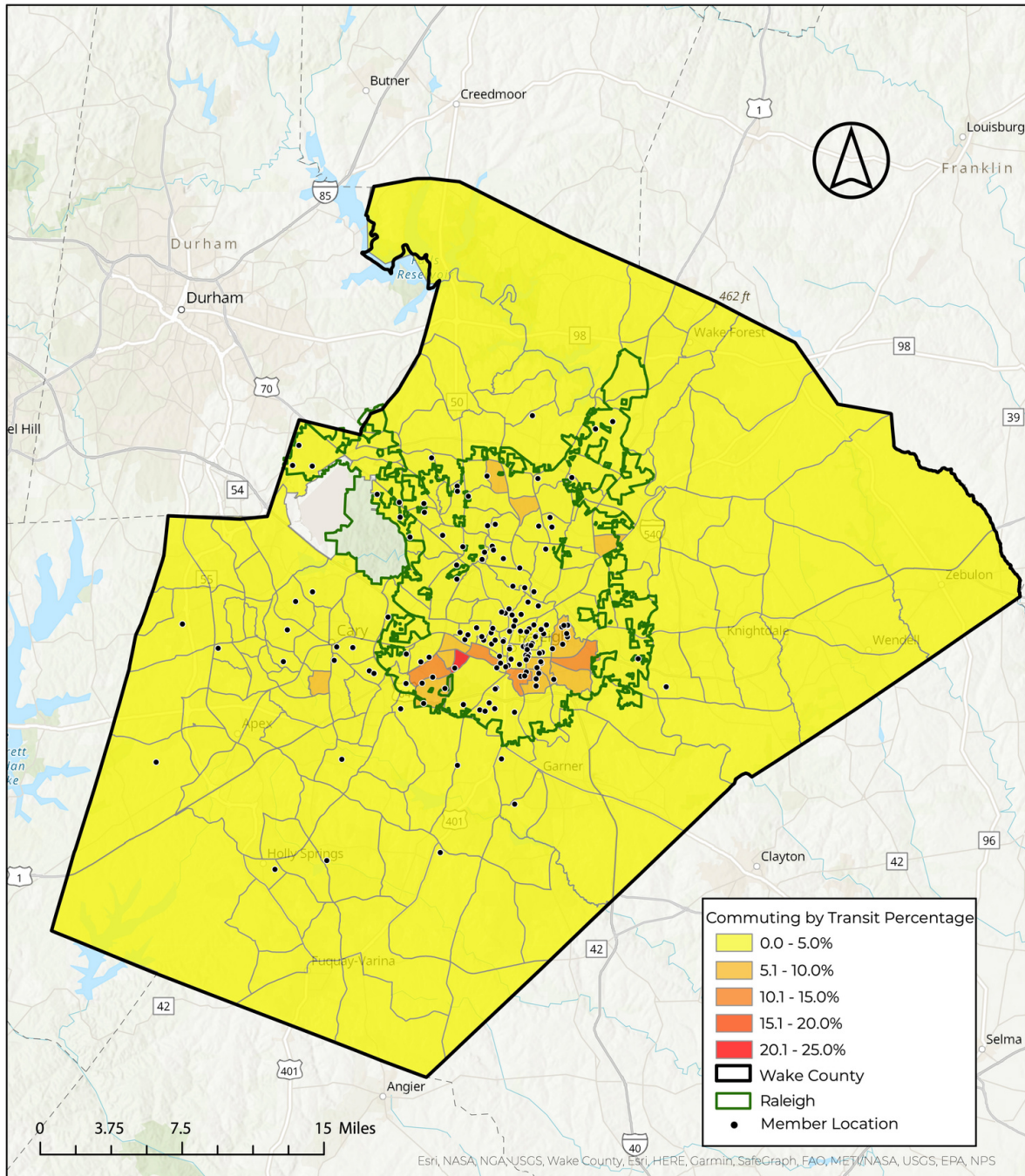
Percent Minority and Oaks & Spokes Member Location in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



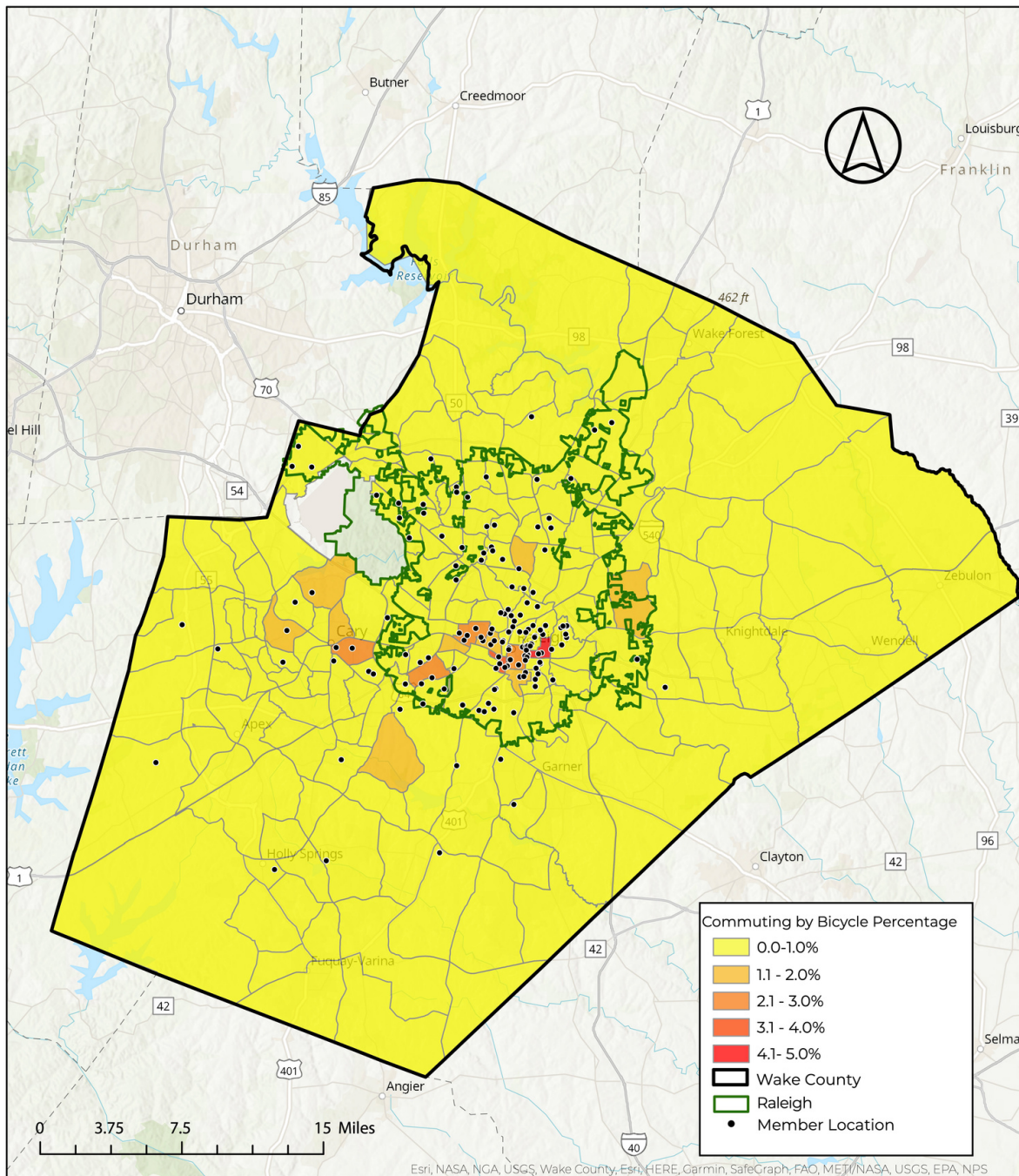
Median Household Income and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Raleigh Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



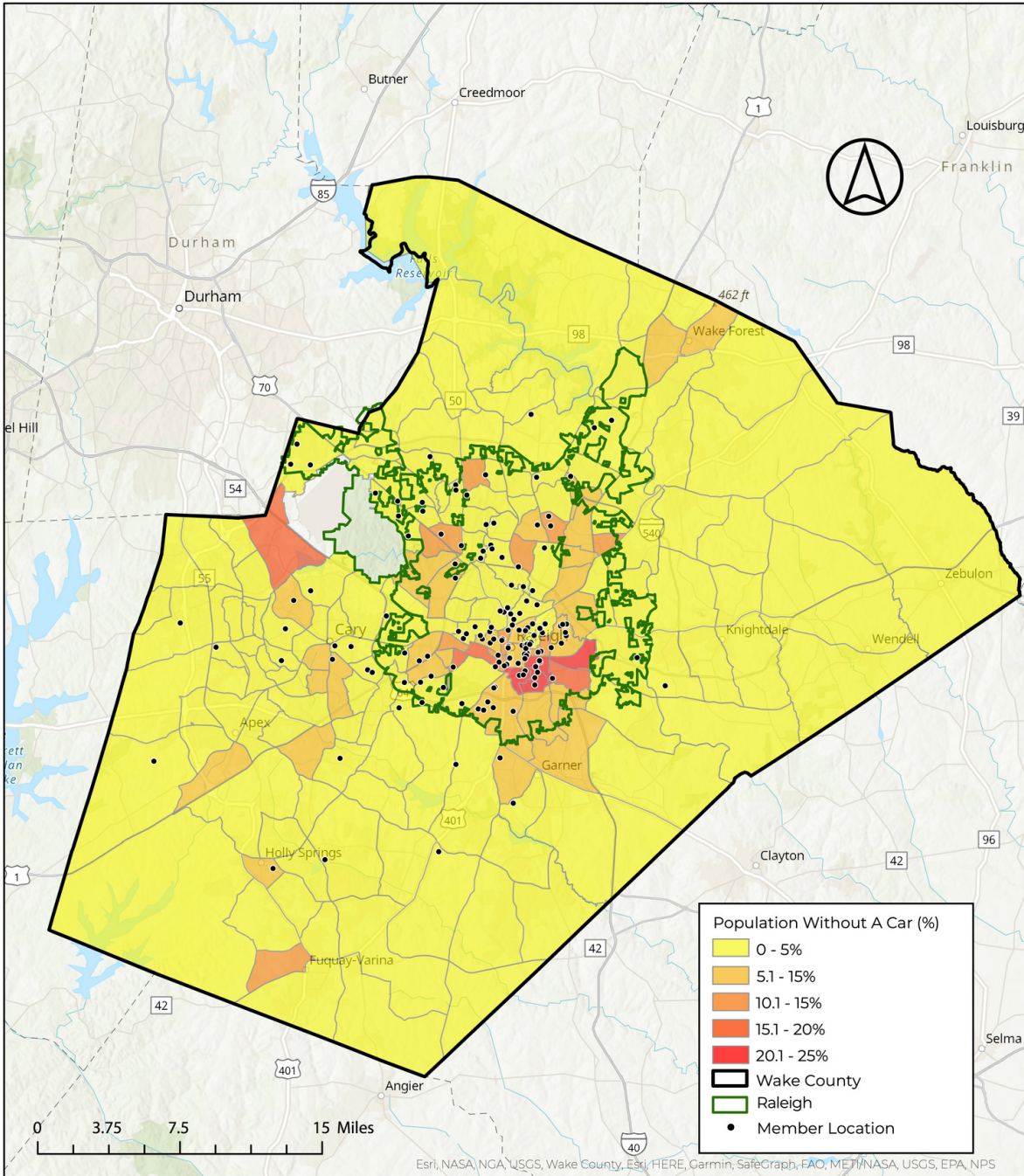
Commuting by Public Transit and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Wake County Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



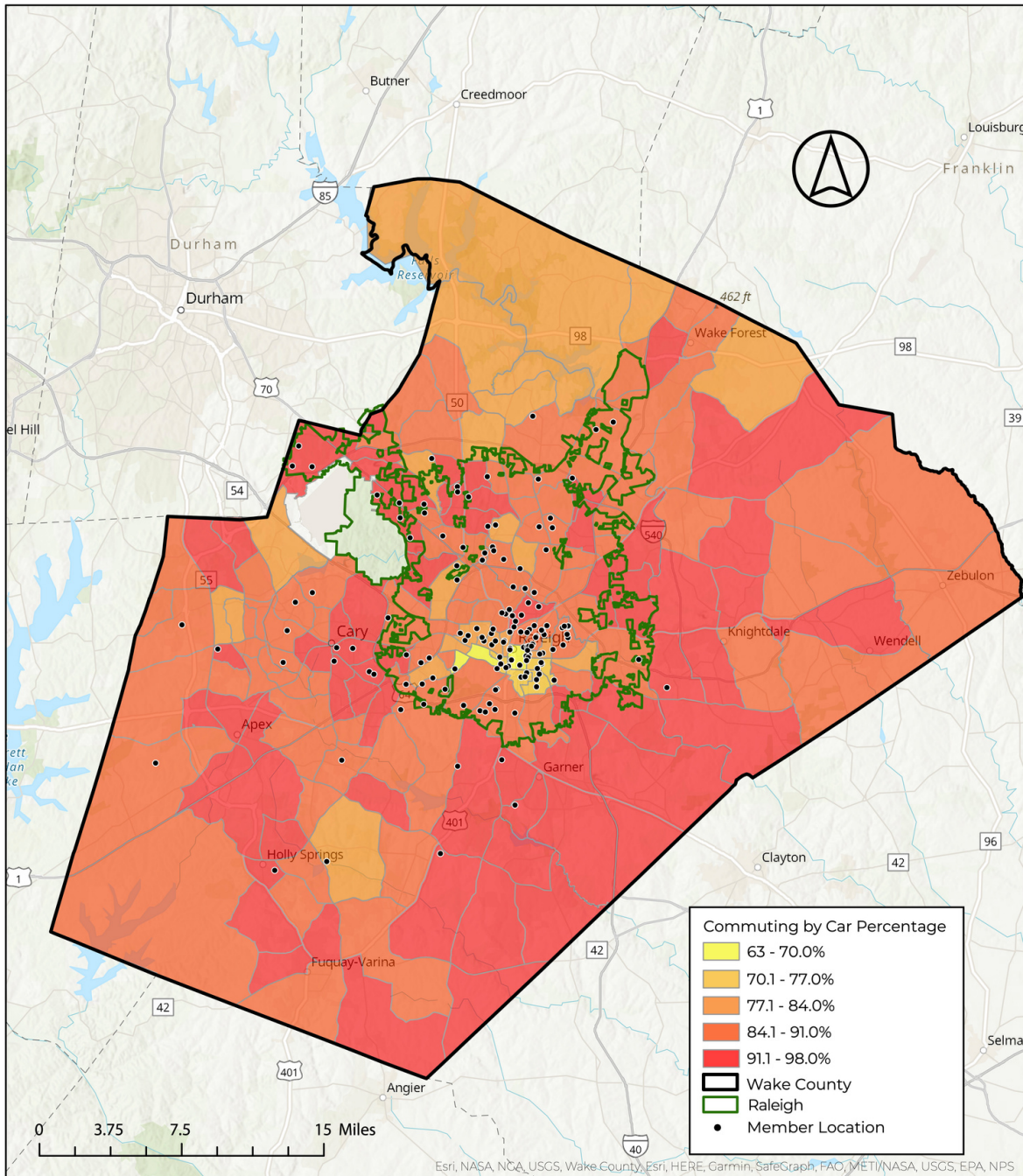
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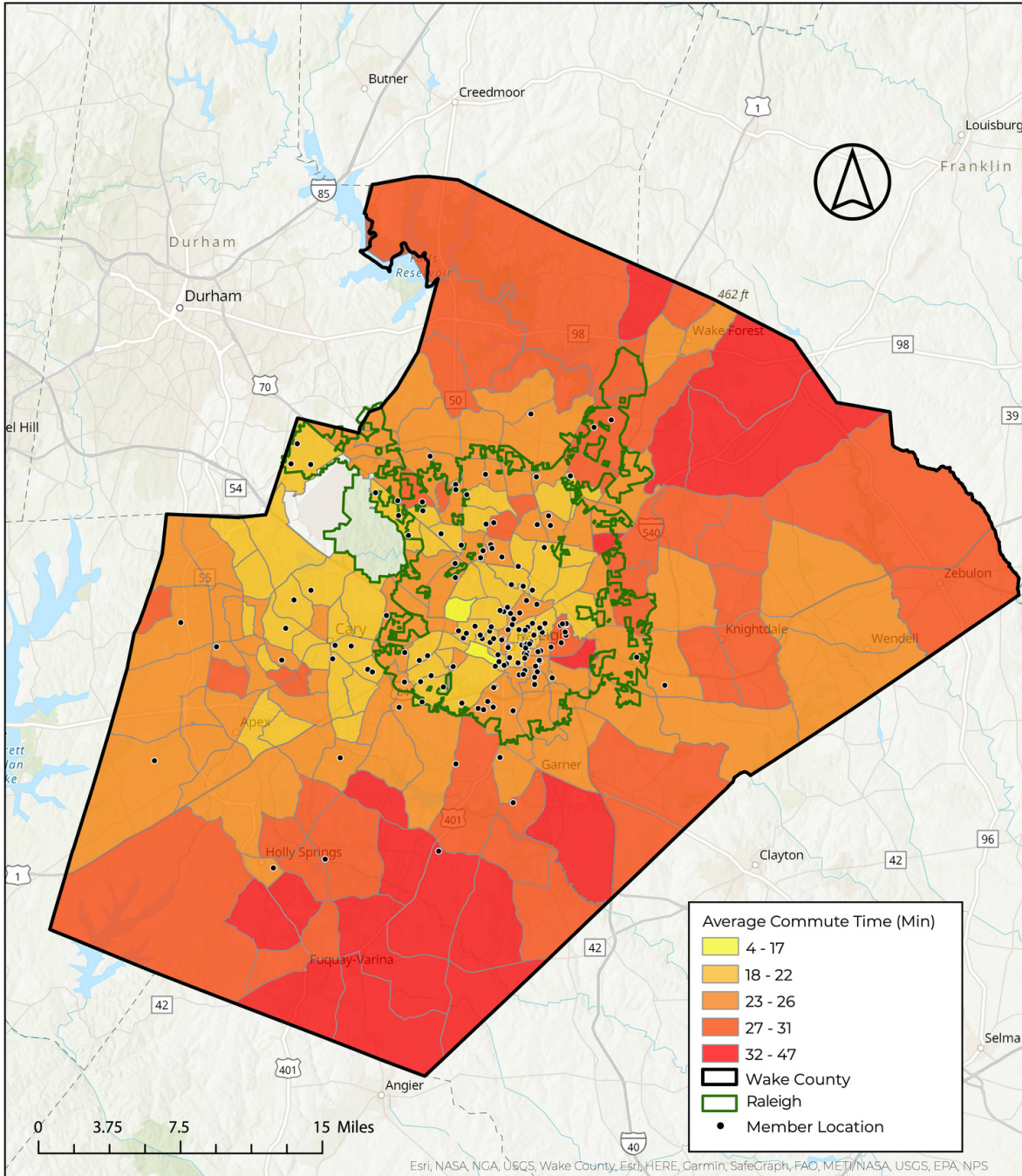
Population Without a Car and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Wake County Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



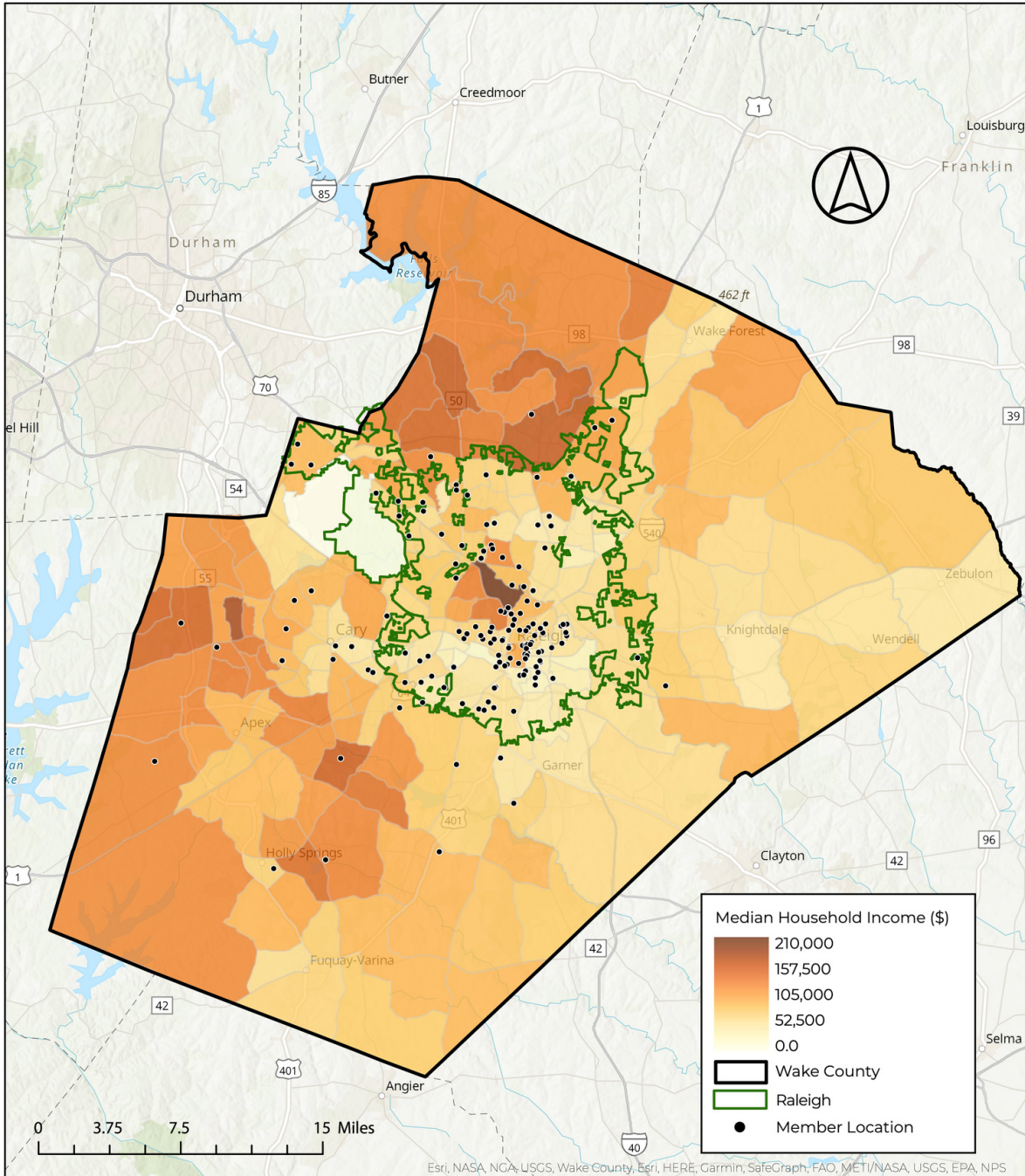
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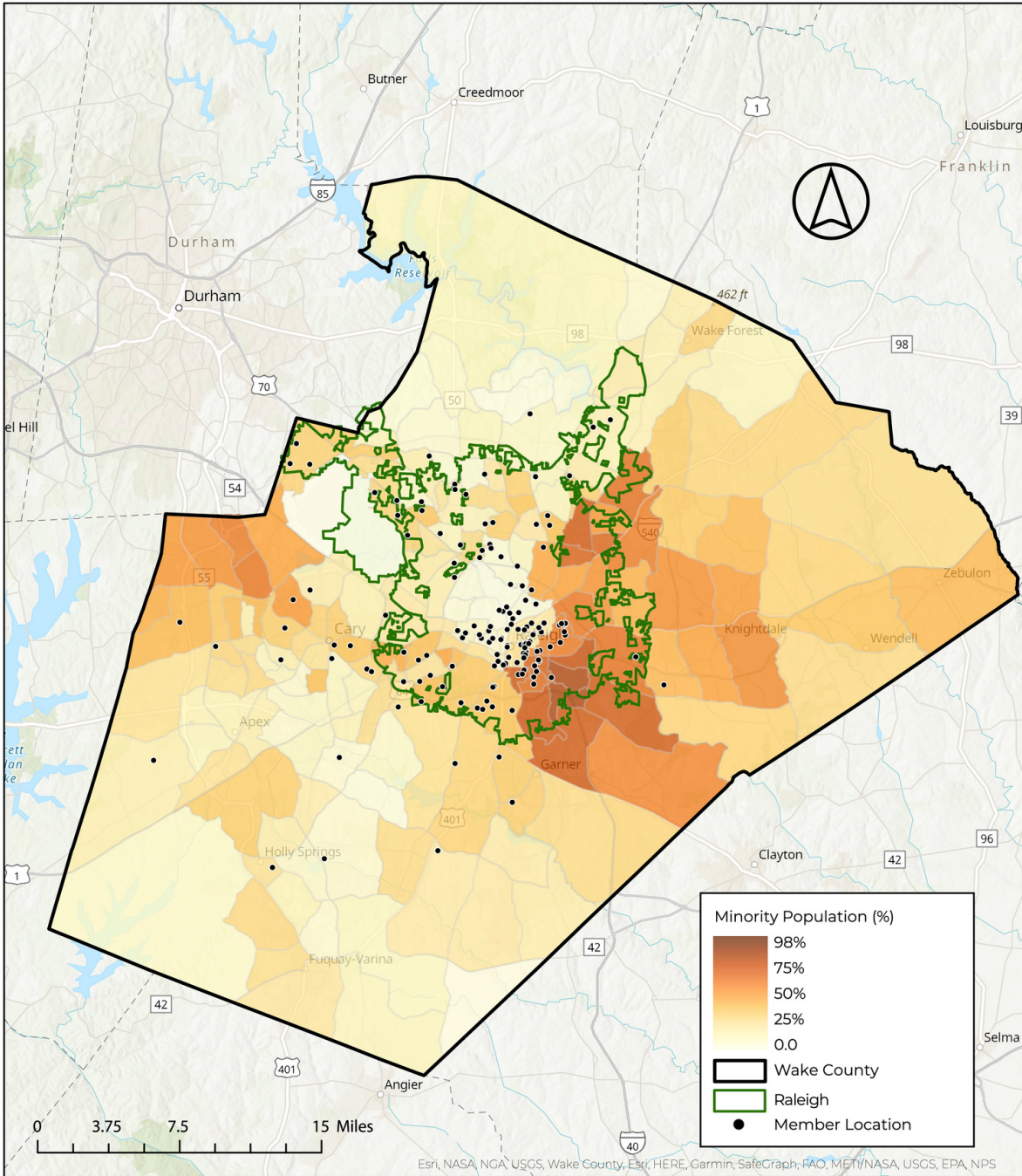
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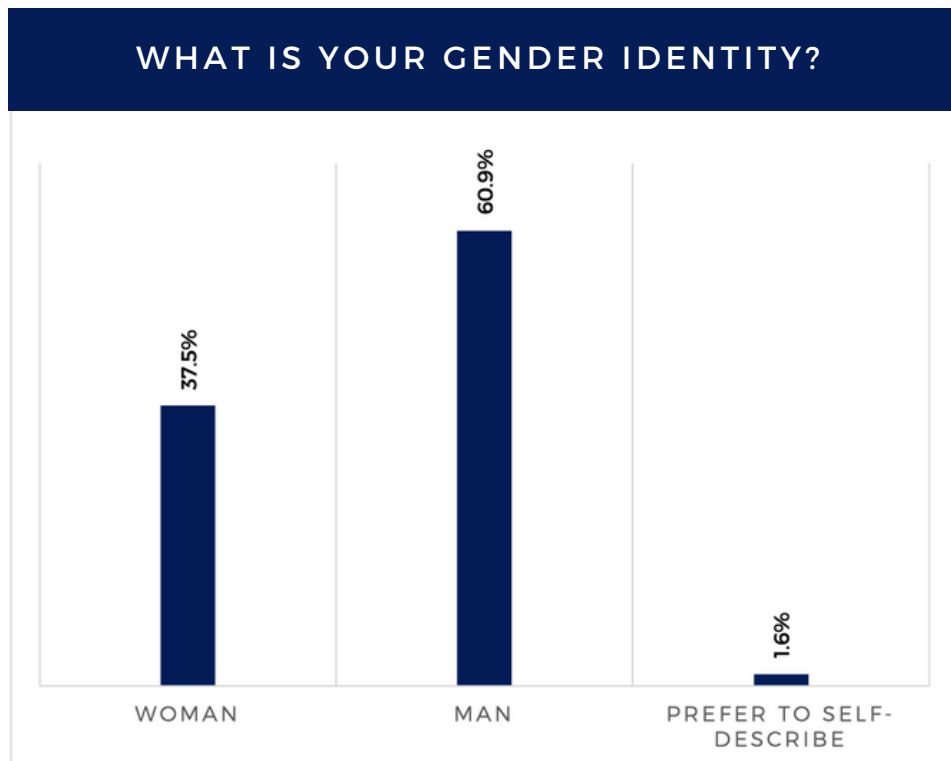
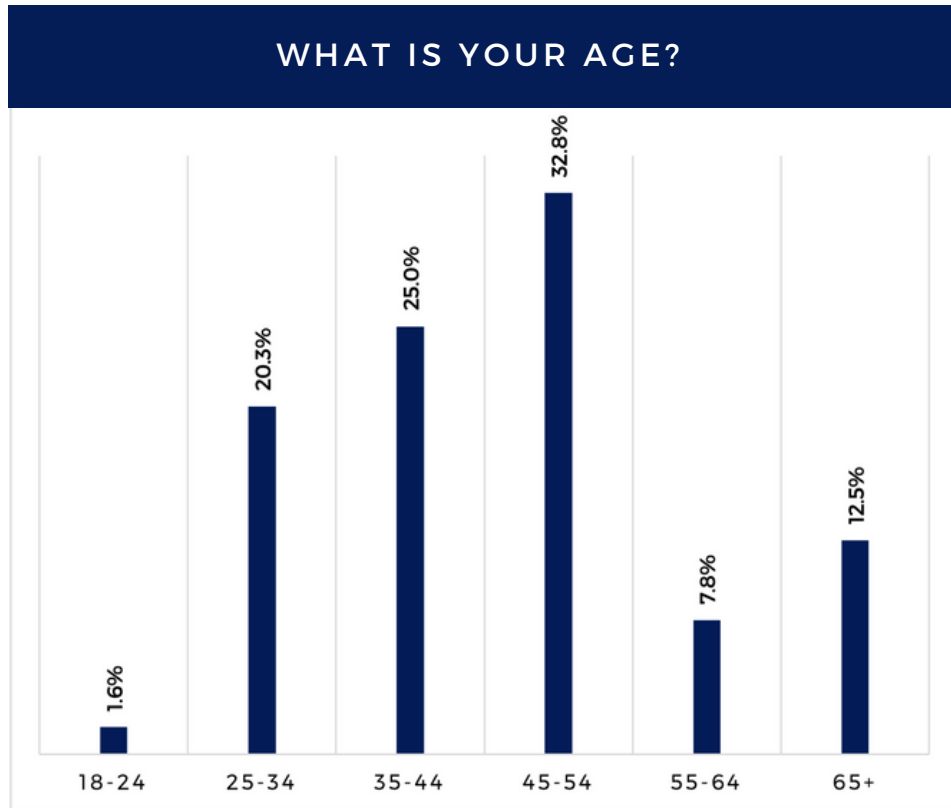
Median Household Income and Oaks & Spokes Member Locations in Wake County Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



Percent Minority and Oaks & Spokes Member Location in Wake County Census Tracts (ACS 2019)



APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL SURVEY RESULTS



APPENDIX C: PEER INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Events/Programming

1. What was one of your most successful events, initiatives, or actions, and what do you think made it successful?
 - a. Follow-up: Who did you partner with? How did this go?
2. Is there any programming (initiatives/actions/resources/etc.) you would like to do or have been asked for that you haven't been able to do yet? What must change to make this happen?
3. What role does your organization play in advocating for policy change?
 - a. Follow-up: What does this look like? Is this generally local/state/federal?

Community Engagement

1. What does community engagement, especially to those not currently represented in your membership, look like for your organization?
 - a. Follow-up: Is your board involved in any of this?
2. What is the profile of a typical member of the organization? Has that changed over the years?
3. What tools, for example CRMs like Salesforce or social media, do you use to engage with your community?
 - a. Follow-up: Which are most successful, and how do you measure that success?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. Has your organization ever faced pushback from the local community related to specific events or initiatives? (e.g. bike lanes facilitating gentrification)
 - a. How have you responded to that?
2. What system/methods do you use to receive comments/concerns from the public, take them to the local jurisdiction, and resolve them?
 - a. E.g. come to the council with a list of concerns heard from people?
3. How does jurisdiction's budget play into this?
4. How do you collect concerns from diverse populations?

APPENDIX D: SOCIAL MEDIA TEMPLATE EXAMPLE AND GUIDELINES



General Guidelines

- Keep posts short, sweet, and simple
 - Don't think too hard about the design
 - Extra details can be put in the body/description of the post.
- Make sure the design elements are context appropriate to the event that's being advertised
- It's okay to reuse graphics and designs from old posts occasionally
- Be sure to use relevant hashtags to capture extra impressions and views
 - Tag sponsors and partner organizations
- Consider your target audience!