

CHATHAM COUNTY
— **Community** —
Greenspace Program



Prepared and Revised
by the
Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

MARCH 2003

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Foreword

This program, originally submitted by the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) in the Fall of 2000, has been revised by the MPC for the purpose of re-applying to the Georgia Community Greenspace Program to receive greenspace grant funds for fiscal years 2003 and 2004. The program outlined herein is also a plan of action to continue development and implementation of the Chatham County Community Greenspace Program over a 50 year planning horizon. This program has been reformatted to comply with the requirements outlined in the State's revised program template dated November 5, 2002. The term "greenspace," is used in this program to refer to permanently protected land that exists primarily in its undeveloped natural state to further one or more of the Greenspace Goals established by the State and is synonymous with the State definition of greenspace set forth at Rule 391-1-4.02.

1. Executive Summary

- a. The mission of the Chatham County Community Greenspace Program (CGP) is to provide a mechanism for permanently protecting the many valuable natural, recreational, and historic resources that Chatham County has to offer.
- b. Chatham County and all eight municipalities within the County have joined together to implement this unified CGP. The MPC has been designated as the coordinating body for administration of the CGP. The Chatham County Finance Department will administer the Greenspace Community Trust Fund for all jurisdictions. This CGP is *coordinated and consolidated* in a manner consistent with, and even exceeding, the Rules adopted by the Georgia Community Greenspace Commission. It also provides a level of *independence* for each participating unit of government. The MPC staff role is essential to the “coordinated” and “consolidated” facet of the CGP structure, especially in view of the individualized allocation of funds to the County and the municipalities.
- c. Chatham County and the municipalities are committed to promoting the permanent protection of at least 20 percent of the specified geographic area of the County, or 188,670 acres, as greenspace. This translates to a goal of preserving at least 37,734 acres of greenspace. Currently, almost 20,000 acres of greenspace are permanently protected in the County as envisioned by the Georgia Community Greenspace program. Therefore, an additional 18,000 acres will need to be protected to meet a 20 percent greenspace preservation goal. Chatham County and the participating municipalities propose to achieve this goal by 2050.

The County and participating municipalities propose to protect a variety of land types, with the foremost goal of acquiring greenspace that will protect water quality. Land types proposed for protection include marsh hammocks; lands located within the 100-year floodplain; historic resources; passive use parks; wildlife habitat; greenways; isolated and freshwater wetlands; riparian buffers; and greenspace associated with conservation subdivisions

- d. The County and municipalities will utilize a variety of tools to preserve greenspace, including the purchase of development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants, and deed restrictions. Existing tools for protecting greenspace will be strengthened, and the County and municipalities will incorporate new standards into existing ordinances and comprehensive plans to protect greenspace. A variety of other strategies, as outlined in this program, will also be utilized to protect greenspace.
- e. Implementing the program outlined herein, however, will not be an easy task. Many legal and structural barriers, ranging from inadequate protection of greenspace in existing ordinances to lack of funds to acquire greenspace, must be addressed and resolved to successfully implement this CGP. Therefore, this CGP sets forth a variety of strategies that can and will be utilized to address and overcome these barriers.

2. Introduction

- a. Chatham County is marbled with valuable natural, recreational, and historic resources that are a vital part of the area's community character. However, Chatham County is the most populous county in coastal Georgia, and the region's major commercial and industrial hub. Increasing land development now threatens the very resources that make the County such an ideal place to live. As evidenced by a recent poll conducted to assess community priorities, preservation of greenspace¹ is vitally important to Chatham County citizens.

Chatham County and all eight municipalities within the County have joined together to implement a countywide greenspace planning program, hereafter referred to as the Chatham County Community Greenspace Program (CGP), to provide a mechanism for permanently protecting the many valuable natural, recreational, and historic resources this area has to offer. Chatham County and its citizens have long recognized the need for such a program, as evidenced by the preparation of the 1996 Open Space Plan, the ongoing development of the Coastal Georgia Greenway (a network of greenways and bikeways that extend through the six coastal counties, including Chatham County), development of numerous community plans, and greenways planning activities. The creation of the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, and the subsequent creation of the Chatham County CGP, is timely in that it provides a comprehensive planning program to unify and implement these various planning efforts as well as a viable funding mechanism. Through implementation of this program, citizens and government staff will work together to preserve greenspace for the continued enjoyment of local residents, businesses, and visitors, as well as future generations.

- b. The 2000 greenspace program and this subsequent revision were developed by the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC). The MPC has been designated by Chatham County and the eight participating municipalities as the coordinating body for administration of the CGP. The chief point of contact for general administration of the program is:

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Chatham County and all eight municipalities within Chatham County, including the Cities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Savannah, Tybee, and the Towns of Thunderbolt and Vernonburg, have elected to participate in a unified CGP. Continuation of a unified CGP is vitally important because it optimizes leveraging of local funds; encourages planning coordination between the municipalities and unincorporated area; pools resources for acquisition of larger or more significant sites; and streamlines program

administration so that it is more efficient and less burdensome for participating jurisdictions.

The County and municipalities have agreed to establish a two-year budget plan to manage State greenspace funds received for fiscal years 2003 and 2004. Greenspace funds awarded by the State during this timeframe will be managed in a single Community Greenspace Trust Fund administered by the Chatham County Finance Department.

The County and municipalities have agreed to centralize program planning and coordination with the MPC. In addition to general program coordination, the MPC will take primary responsibility for the following activities associated with the CGP:

- Acting as a clearinghouse for overall program coordination;
- Distributing annual and biennial program guidelines issued by the State;
- Compiling information provided by the County and municipalities and submitting the annual and biennial reporting documentation and program revisions required by State;
- Reviewing County and municipal site acquisition priorities, establishing a protocol for citizens to nominate greenspace, and establishing a county-wide site priority list;
- Overseeing the Greenspace Advisory Committee; and
- Educating the community, government staff, and local elected officials about the value of greenspace and providing opportunities for related educational outreach activities.

Each jurisdiction will have two options for utilizing their proportionate share of State greenspace funds: 1) use proportionate share of funds to acquire greenspace, or 2) pool funds with other jurisdictions to acquire sites of regional significant and/or larger sites that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive given the relatively small amount of State greenspace funds allocated to some jurisdictions and rising land acquisition costs.

The Greenspace Advisory Committee will assist with prioritizing potential inter-jurisdictional acquisitions. Membership of the Greenspace Advisory Committee, which was initially established in 2000 to assist with development of the CGP, will be reconfigured to reflect the program's new direction. Chatham County and the City of Savannah will appoint four members to the body of the Greenspace Advisory Committee and all other jurisdictions will appoint one member each. This strategy was established to ensure fair representation of jurisdictional representatives in relation to the amount of State greenspace funds that are awarded to each jurisdiction. In addition, the MPC will appoint five members to the Greenspace Advisory Committee. These members will be representatives from environmental organizations and other local organizations that have an interest in greenspace preservation as well as citizens that are strong advocates of the CGP.

The MPC and Advisory Committee rankings are non-binding to the County and municipalities, but may serve to inform and influence local decisions about

greenspace acquisitions. The County and eight municipalities have agreed to these consolidated processes and the goals of the program as described in this report.

3. County Description

a. Physical Characteristics

- i. Chatham County is marbled with a variety of natural, recreational, and historic resources that are vital components of the area's community character. The marshlands, estuaries, freshwater wetlands, tidal creeks, streams, rivers, beaches, and other ecologically sensitive areas and wildlife habitats of the rich eastern coastal areas are valuable natural resources that benefit the primarily residential communities of this area as well as the entire County and region. Approximately 83,000 acres of coastal marshland are present within Chatham County, which is equivalent to 26 percent of the County's total acreage. Coastal waters occupy an additional 37,000 acres, or 12 percent, of the County.

Another unique aspect of the eastern coastal areas is the presence of several large, undeveloped barrier islands and associated hammocks that are permanently protected as greenspace, including the Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge, the Ossabaw Island Wildlife Management Area, and the Little Tybee and Cabbage Island Natural Area. Owned and protected by either the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), these areas afford citizens and visitors an opportunity to view and appreciate the raw scenic beauty of coastal Georgia in a natural, undeveloped setting. The Savannah National Wildlife refuge and the Oatland Island Education Center, located in the northern and eastern area of the County, respectively, serve to protect large expanses of wildlife habitat as well as provide educational opportunities for the local community. Larger tracts of undeveloped land, including agricultural lands, are present in the western portion of the County.

The area also offers many opportunities to enjoy historic resources. These include such notable sites as Fort Jackson, Fort Screven, Wormsloe State Historic Site, Forsyth Park, the Fort Pulaski National Monument, Bonaventure Cemetery, and numerous park squares and historic neighborhoods located in the City of Savannah as well as the many other historic sites present throughout the County.

Recreational parks such as Forsyth Park, Lake Mayor, Daffin, and many others are peppered throughout the area. An abundance of moss-draped live oak trees and lush gardens further beautify the area and make it a truly unique place to live and visit.

- ii. See Chapter 3, Sections a.i. and b.i. for a description of existing patterns of land use.
- iii. Not Applicable.

b. Rapid-growth Areas

- i. The most rapidly growing areas of the County are: a) the eastern coastal communities of Tybee Island and the unincorporated islands communities,

which include Wilmington Island, Talahi Island, and Whitemarsh Island; b) the southside of Savannah and adjacent unincorporated areas of the southeast; c) western areas in the vicinity of the Savannah International Airport; and, to a lesser extent, d) historic Savannah.

Growth in the coastal communities is now largely infill development, and it is occurring increasingly in the form of higher density multi-family and commercial uses. The growth is occurring as a result of an appreciation of the natural beauty and recreational opportunities afforded by the coastal environment.

Growth in the southside is characterized by intensive commercial development in the Abercorn commercial corridor, with single-family and medium-density multi-family development on adjacent tracts. The Coffee Bluff area, which is located in the southwestern side of the City of Savannah, is experiencing residential growth. Although the increase in population of the area appears modest, the subdivision of large tracts in Coffee Bluff, a historic neighborhood that has been in existence almost from the founding of Savannah in 1733, has increased the pressure for road and utility improvements that threaten the natural and historic resources that attracted growth in the first place.

Residential growth has also occurred in the southeast section of the County, particularly at The Landings on Skidaway Island, a golf course development of 4,200 homes that is largely built out. The Landings was conceived as a retirement community, but increasingly, the development has become a commuter bedroom community. The popularity of the development for commuters has increased the pressure for road improvements that will increase the pressure to develop commercial corridors in a largely undeveloped and environmentally sensitive area of the County.

Other areas in western Chatham County, mainly near the airport and west of Interstate 95, are showing signs of an impending take-off in growth. . Development in this area is chiefly single-family residential, office parks, and retail centers. For example, the development of the Crossroads Business Park adjacent to the airport in the northwestern part of the County is the impetus for new residential and commercial development. The completion of Jimmie DeLoach Parkway, a connector between U.S. Highway 21 (which serves the Georgia Ports Authority) and Interstate 95, will increase the demand for warehouse and related light industrial development in the Business Park. The Technology and Engineering Campus Collegiate Center, a high-tech research facility and business incubator under construction in the Business Park, is expected to increase the demand for residential and service facilities in the area. The Savannah Airport has recently been renamed The Savannah-Hilton Head Airport which indicates its regional significance. Several hotels have been constructed on airport property and an eighteen-hole golf course was recently completed. New freight-handing facilities are currently under construction. Developers of Godley Station, a planned community west of the airport, anticipate 5,000 residential units, 700 acres of commercial area, 225 acres of light industrial area, and 500 acres of open space at build-out. In addition, several gated residential communities

are planned west of I-95. The recent announcement that Daimler-Chrysler may construct a manufacturing plant in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Interstate 95 and Interstate 16 identifies west Chatham County as the rapid growth area of the future.

In the case of historic Savannah, which is experiencing a mix of commercial and residential infill development, preservation of greenspace is a high priority in areas that are in the path of growth and redevelopment. These areas were not part of the original Oglethorpe Plan or its extensions. As the locus of redevelopment grows outward, those areas will require permanently protected greenspace. While the City of Savannah has done a remarkable job of preserving its urban forest in road corridors and residential neighborhoods in these areas, many other redeveloping sections are relatively devoid of greenspace.

The coastal communities of Tybee Island, the unincorporated islands communities, and southeast Chatham County are areas with a high percentage of open water and coastal marsh. Preservation of greenspace in these areas is a high priority because of the need to provide open space for the growing population, and also to protect water quality and wildlife habitat. Preservation of greenspace is likewise critical in southeast Chatham County (Skidaway) where large road projects currently under construction or in the planning stage will increase the pressure for commercial and residential development. Development of several large tracts in the Coffee Bluff area will result not only in the loss of wildlife habitat and degradation of water quality, but in pressure to widen existing roads destroying the tree canopy that defines the character of the area.

Areas in the western part of the County, by contrast, are less ecologically significant but are likely to need open space set aside as growth intensifies. Establishment of defined commercial areas separated by permanent greenspace will reduce the pressure to develop commercial corridors that characterize urban sprawl. For example, the Master Plan for Godley Station incorporates buffers along road systems that reduce the potential for aesthetic and environmental degradation due to sprawl. This pattern of land use could be utilized throughout the developing areas in west Chatham if funds were available to purchase greenspace adjacent to the roadways. Therefore, the participation of Bloomingdale, Pooler, and Port Wentworth, in the greenspace program is vital to the future of the area.

- ii. See 3.b.i. for a discussion of land-use changes that are occurring within areas experiences rapid growth.

- c. The following table provides the percentage of State greenspace fund allocations (based on population) for the County and each participating municipality in alphabetical order:

Population of County and Participating Municipalities²

| Jurisdiction | 2000 Census | % of County (2000 Census) |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Unincorporated Chatham County | 71,199 | 30.68 |
| City of Bloomingdale | 2,665 | 1.15 |
| Garden City | 11,289 | 4.86 |
| City of Pooler | 6,239 | 2.69 |
| City of Port Wentworth | 3,276 | 1/41 |
| City of Savannah | 131,510 | 56.67 |
| Town of Thunderbolt | 2,340 | 1.01 |
| City of Tybee | 3,392 | 1.46 |
| Town of Vernonburg | 138 | 0.06 |
| Totals | 232,048 | 100% |

- d. Future Land Use Maps for Chatham County and municipalities are located in Appendix E. These maps were adopted with the 1993 Comprehensive Plans for Chatham County and all municipalities with the exception of the City of Tybee.

The 1993 Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan is currently being revised. As part of the revision, the following inconsistencies have been identified between the future land use maps included in the 1993 plan and the future pattern of greenspace foreseen in this program. The future pattern of greenspace foreseen in this program will be incorporated in the revised Comprehensive Plan. Municipalities will also be encouraged to incorporate greenspace goals and strategies outlined in this program into their comprehensive plans.

- a) The greenspace plan identifies in greater detail the smaller islands and hammocks in the eastern, coastal areas that are shown as marsh on the Chatham County Future Land Use Map.
- b) Areas shown as residential (yellow and orange) on the future land use maps do not indicate open space and wetlands within those areas, even though the potential greenspace in those areas constitute a significant portion of the County's greenspace. The next generation of future land use maps will be refined to indicate such areas when they are more than a few acres.
- c) The large, westernmost industrial area along the Savannah River may be targeted for protection rather than development. The Mulberry Grove and Oak Grove tracts, in particular, are likely to be ranked highly for protection, given their natural and historic assets.
- d) The Savannah, Ogeechee, Little Ogeechee, Forest, and Vernon Rivers show greater intrusion of development than is now envisioned following the 1996 Open Space Plan and the current greenspace planning.

4. Statement of Vision and Goals

- a. Through the actions described in this program submittal, Chatham County and the participating Cities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Savannah, Tybee, and the Towns of Thunderbolt and Vernonburg commit to promote the permanent protection of at least 37,734 acres of greenspace, which constitutes 20 percent of the geographic area of the county. Chatham County and the participating municipalities propose to achieve this goal by 2050.
- b. The following figures were used to estimate Chatham County’s 20 percent greenspace preservation goal:

Calculation of County’s Greenspace Goal³

| Factor | Acres |
|---|--------------|
| Total county acreage | 314,550 |
| Less military bases | 5,418 |
| Less the part of the surface of each lake larger than 500 acres | 0 |
| Less area of coastal marshlands | 83,170 |
| Less area of coastal waters | 37,292 |
| Equals base acreage for greenspace goal calculation | 188,670 |
| Base acreage times 20% equals the county’s minimum goal | 37,734 |

- c. The County and participating municipalities will strive to protect 37,734 acres of greenspace by taking the action steps described in this program. This long range 20 percent greenspace goal is based on a 50 year planning horizon. While this is a longer planning horizon than is typically employed in this Country, it is appropriate for a goal that will so positively affect the quality of life of both current and future generations. It is also a goal that requires realism, as the cost of acquiring the necessary acreage to reach the goal may average millions of dollars per year.

Attaining the 2050 goal will not only provide recreational greenspace for future generations in the form of amenities such as passive parks and hiking trails, but will save enough habitat to fulfill a vision of the county as both a regional center of population and commerce and an area enjoyed for its natural, recreational, and historic resources-in other words, a thriving green community.

- i. The County and participating municipalities propose to protect a variety of land types, with the foremost goal of acquiring greenspace that will protect water quality. Land types proposed for protection include marsh hammocks; lands located within the 100-year floodplain; historic resources; passive use parks; wildlife habitat; greenways⁴; isolated and freshwater wetlands; riparian buffers; and greenspace associated with conservation subdivisions. A table listing these land types, estimated acreage, percentage, greenspace goals, and methods of permanent protection is set forth below. A map illustrating the types of lands proposed for greenspace protection is set forth in Appendix F.⁵ Many of these land types overlap and therefore are not mutually exclusive; for example, riparian buffers may be protected through the preservation of marsh hammocks and passive use parks that are intersected by tidal creeks and streams. Similarly, protecting many of these land types will also afford other positive benefits, such as the preservation of wildlife

habitat. The preservation goals listed in this paragraph and in the table below are considered flexible planning tools to provide a framework for implementation of the CGP.

- ii. As identified in the County's greenspace inventory table set forth in Chapter 5, Section c, approximately 20,000 acres of the County are currently protected as greenspace. To protect at least 20 percent of the County's base acreage as greenspace (i.e., 37,734 acres), nearly 18,000 acres of additional land will need to be protected as greenspace. The amount of estimated protected acreage and percentage estimate for each land type is listed in the table below based on the need for this additional 18,000 acres. It should be noted that these acreages are estimates only and that the amount of greenspace acreage protected for each land type will be dependent on many factors that cannot currently be accounted for, particularly given that this program establishes a 50 year planning horizon. For example, the type, amount, and location of undeveloped land available for greenspace preservation may change substantially with shifting land use patterns and population growth through the next 50 years. Rising land acquisition costs may also affect the types of land that may be acquired for greenspace preservation.
- iii. Five of the State's nine greenspace statutory goals are related to water quality protection. Given Chatham County's coastal location and topography, it is fitting that most of the land types proposed for protection in this CGP, including preservation of marsh hammocks, isolated and freshwater wetlands, riparian buffers, and floodplains, are driven by the ultimate goal of protecting water quality. Most of the eastern part of the County is occupied by marshlands, estuaries, freshwater wetlands, tidal creeks, streams, rivers, beaches, and other ecologically sensitive areas and wildlife habitats. In fact, coastal marshland and coastal waters make up 38 percent of the County's total geographic area. Protecting the ecological health of these complex coastal ecosystems is critical.

As in other coastal areas undergoing tremendous growth pressure, residential development of flood-prone areas occurs all too often in Chatham County. Development of floodplains incurs a host of problems that range from impairment of water quality to economic hardships for both the tax paying community and local government. Here in Chatham County, a tremendous amount of revenue is spent annually on flood control measures that must be implemented to counterbalance the development of marginal lands. For example, a significant amount of revenue from the local Special-Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) program is spent to construct drainage canals on marginal lands that, in some cases, should never have been developed in the first place. The drainage canals are constructed in accordance with engineering practices that often overlook the wisdom (and cost-effectiveness) of natural biological controls such as vegetated riparian buffers. Therefore, one of the goals of this CGP (and the Georgia Community Greenspace Program) is to preserve marginal lands (i.e., flood-prone areas) from development, thus eliminating the need for expensive man-made flood control systems that further impair water quality.

Citizens of Chatham County continually express a desire for more opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking and biking. While there are a variety of parks located throughout the County, many neighborhoods do not have access to nearby recreational facilities. In addition, the majority of parks in Chatham County focus more on active recreation than on providing opportunities for more passive activities such as hiking, off-road biking, and photography. Given the scenic beauty of this area, temperate climate, and relative abundance of green areas as compared to more metropolitan communities, providing greenspace in the form of greenways and passive parks is a realistic goal that will benefit the community as well as meet several of the State's greenspace goals, including provision of passive recreation, scenic protection, and connection of existing or planned areas that meet other greenspace goals.

The remainder of the land types proposed for protection in Chatham County (i.e., wildlife habitat, historic resources, and greenspace associated with conservation subdivisions) relate directly to State greenspace goals.

- iv. Multiple tools will be used to protect greenspace, including fee simple acquisition, conservation easements, restrictive covenants, purchase of development rights (subject to SPLOST or land conservation referendum approval), and deed restrictions required by the State when lands are purchased with State greenspace funds. Marsh hammocks that are State-owned may also be protected as State Heritage Preserves, pending future legislation. The use of these protection tools will be site-specific based on a variety of factors. Where feasible, jurisdictions will be encouraged to convey conservation easements to a third party, likely a local land trust such as the Coastal Georgia Land Trust, in addition to deed restrictions required by the State or other methods of permanent protection. Third-party evaluations of greenspace properties are important to ensure that the properties are used in accordance with State guidelines and are in compliance with the restrictions imposed by their method of permanent protection.

Lands to Receive Permanent Protection

| Land Type | Acres | Percent | Statutory Goals(a) | Tools for Protection(b) |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Historic Resources | 742 | 4.1 | F, G,H | Permanent restrictive covenants, conservation easement |
| Marsh Hammocks | 158 | 0.9 | A,B,C,D,E, F,H | State Heritage Preserve designation(c), purchase development rights, conservation easements |
| Greenways | 900 | 5 | A,B,E,F,H,I | Fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Greenspace/Conservation Subdivisions | 1,800 | 10 | A,C,D,E,F, H,I | Conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Isolated/Freshwater Wetlands | 2,700 | 15 | A,B,C,D,E, F | Purchase development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Riparian Buffers | 3,600 | 20 | A,B,C,D,E, F | Purchase development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Lands Within the 100-year Floodplain | 2,700 | 15 | A,B,C,D,E | Fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Lands Suitable for Passive-Use Parks | 5,400 | 30 | C,E,F,H,I | Fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Wildlife Habitat | (d) | (d) | All goals, depending on property type | Purchase development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants |
| Totals | 18,000 | 100 | | |

a/ A=Water quality protection for rivers, streams, and lakes; B= Flood protection; C=Wetlands protection; D=Reduction of erosion through protection of step slopes, areas with erodible soils, and stream banks; E=Protection of riparian buffers and other areas that serve as natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species; F=Scenic protection; G=Protection of archeological and historic resources; H=Provision of recreation in the form of boating, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, running, jogging, biking, walking, skating, birding, riding horses, observing or photographic nature, picnicking, playing non-organized sports, or engaging in free play; and I=Connection of existing or planned areas contributing to the goals set out in footnote.

b/Any of these land types may be protected, in lieu of or in addition to, by the deed restrictive language required by the State if acquired with State greenspace funds.

c/It is anticipated that all State-owned marsh hammocks in Chatham County (i.e., approximately 106 acres) will be designated as State Heritage Preserves. In addition, preservation of County and privately-owned hammocks will be a goal of this CGP (7 acres and 45 acres, respectively, proposed for preservation).

d/Preservation of wildlife habitat is a priority for the CGP, and will be achieved by protecting valuable habitats afforded by marsh hammocks, greenways, floodplains, riparian buffers, and other land types discussed in this table. Therefore, a separate acreage goal and percentage for this land type is not specified. Acquisitions of parcels that meet criteria for more than one goal of the CGP (i.e., property that both protects riparian buffers and protects critical wildlife habitat) will be considered a higher priority.

5. Existing Tools⁶

a. Existing Tools for Permanent Protection of Greenspace

- i. Chatham County and municipalities will use several existing tools to provide permanent protection for greenspace. These include:
 - **Fee simple acquisition of lands with funds from the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, federal Wetland Mitigation Program, and local SPLOST program.** Lands purchased with these funds, except SPLOST funds, are permanently protected because of program requirements restrictions that accompany use of the funds. Lands purchased with SPLOST funds will be permanently protected via conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants, or other similar legal methods that convey permanent protection in accordance with State requirements. Approximately \$2,200,000 in State greenspace funds from fiscal years 2001 and 2002 and \$2,000,000 in local SPLOST funds were used to acquire the Island's Nature Park (formerly referenced as the Demere Tract) for greenspace preservation. The Islands Nature Park is located on Whitemarsh Island (i.e., unincorporated Chatham County) and provides invaluable passive recreational opportunities for the eastern islands area, which is heavily developed for residential use. This property was identified as the highest priority for acquisition in the County's original greenspace program application submitted in the Fall of 2000. The property deed for this parcel has been encumbered, and Chatham County is currently evaluating the need for a conservation easement for this property. If approved, the conservation easement will likely be conveyed to a local land trust.
 - **Purchase of development rights.**
 - **Permanently protecting lands that are currently owned by local governments by encumbering the properties with conservation easements or permanent restrictive covenants that are conveyed to a third party.** Chatham County has conveyed a conservation easement to the Coastal Georgia Land Trust for a 190-acre parcel that is part of the Henderson Golf Club. Chatham County is also evaluating the possibility of encumbering several other recreational properties in the unincorporated area with conservation easements, including a 180-tract and another 35-acre tract associated with Tom Triplett Park and a 90-acre tract associated with the King's Ferry Boat Ramp. Several parcels in the unincorporated area acquired with SPLOST funds for wetlands mitigation associated with road and drainage projects may also be encumbered with conservation easements or permanent restrictive covenants in the near future.
- ii. Several existing tools for temporarily protecting greenspace until such time that permanent protection can be provided will be utilized by Chatham County and municipalities, including the following:

- **Seeking other sources of funding to augment State greenspace funds to purchase greenspace.** For the SPLOST program established for 1997-2002, Chatham County allocated nine million dollars for the preservation of open space. As discussed in Section a.i above, a significant portion of these funds were used to acquire the Islands Nature Park, the first greenspace acquisition in Chatham County to utilize State greenspace funds. The MPC is working with Chatham County and municipalities to ensure a similar allocation of SPLOST funds to the CGP for the next 5-year SPLOST program, if approved by voters. Chatham County and municipalities, with the assistance of the MPC, will be encouraged to seek other federal, state, and private sources of grant funds for greenspace preservation. See Chapter 8 for more information about funding sources and strategies.
- **Adoption of more stringent riparian buffer standards.** Chatham County adopted a 35-foot vegetated buffer requirement for redeveloped properties located on Oatland, Talahi, Whitemarsh and Wilmington Islands in 2001. Formerly, property owners were only required to maintain a 25-foot buffer on land located adjacent to Waters of the State. With the adoption of the new ordinance, properties located on these islands that are redeveloped must maintain an additional 10 feet of vegetated buffer adjacent to Waters of the State. Other areas of unincorporated Chatham County, and municipalities will be encouraged to adopt more stringent riparian buffer standards. See Chapter 7, Section i, for more information about revised buffer standards that will be recommended.
- **Dedicated greenspace required or negotiated as part of the development approval process.** For example, the environmental overlay district adopted in the Islands Community Plan for the unincorporated islands of Oatland, Talahi, Whitemarsh and Wilmington Island requires that major residential subdivisions, multi-family, and non-residential developments set aside a minimum of 30 percent greenspace. This may include common areas, areas protected by restrictive easements, or non-common areas such as buffers, parking islands, and other landscaped areas. New developments in the Islands area have already incorporated this 30 percent greenspace set aside.
- **Protection of wetlands.** For example, the master plan for Port Wentworth stipulates that an extensive area of wetlands located on private properties be reserved for protection.
- **Incorporation of buffers along road systems.** For example, the Master Plan for Godley Station requires that buffers be incorporated along road systems that reduce the potential for aesthetic and environmental degradation due to sprawl. This same strategy is increasingly utilized in other areas of the County.
- **Current greenspace standards in local ordinances.** The City of Savannah's Land Clearing and Tree Protection Ordinance, and the County's Land Disturbing Activities Ordinance, for example, require that a minimum of 20 percent of the total land area of a development be devoted to greenspace. Many other ordinances require a similar set aside of greenspace. (Please note that the definition of "greenspace" in these ordinances is not the same as the definition used in this CGP or by

the State because the term as currently used in these ordinances does not refer to permanently protected lands that meet State greenspace requirements). Such measures, however, do provide a form of protection, albeit temporary protection, to undeveloped areas.

- **Amendment to Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances, and Other Related Ordinances.** As required by the State, Chatham County commits to the following: Chatham County will amend its comprehensive plan not later than October 2008 to make said plan consistent with the Chatham County Community Greenspace Program.

The Chatham County and City of Savannah Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances are currently being updated. Three separate community plans have been, or are being, developed within unincorporated Chatham County: 1) Islands Community Plan, 2) Southeast Chatham Community Plan and 3) West Chatham Community Plan.

The Islands Community Plan has been adopted and includes a new Environmental Overlay District, as discussed above. The Southeast Chatham Plan will be completed and, hopefully, adopted in early 2003. These two communities are primarily built out. Since they are located on the coastal (eastern) side of the county, they include the vast marshlands that lie between the mainland, hammocks and barrier islands. The marshes and hammocks in the Islands and Southeast Community are addressed within their respective plans, and policies, goals, objectives and specific strategies for protecting them and other forms of greenspace are included. Development of the West Chatham Community Plan will begin in early 2003 and will cover a large portion of the County's undeveloped, and developable, upland. Natural resource protection needs and strategies, including greenspace preservation, will be an integral part of the plan and potential greenspace will be identified on the Future Land Use Map.

All three of these community plans will become fundamental building blocks for the updated comprehensive plans for Chatham County and the City of Savannah, which are due to be completed by 2008. The Natural Resource Element of the plans will include an inventory and assessment of greenspace. Goals, objectives and strategies for protecting additional greenspace will be included in the plans, as well as a detailed work program for each recommended strategy. Through this effort, existing plans and other planning initiatives that relate to greenspace preservation will be synthesized for Chatham County and the City of Savannah.

The Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances are now being updated for Chatham County and the City of Savannah, concurrent with the comprehensive plan updates. The updated ordinances and comprehensive plan updates will be consistent with one another. For example, the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances will include new administrative procedures, districts and standards to implement greenspace policies and recommendations in the comprehensive plan. Completion of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances updates is

scheduled for completion in 2004. If feasible, the Zoning, Subdivision, Land Clearing, Tree Protection, Stormwater Management and Floodplain Ordinances, or their equivalent, will be unified for Chatham County and the City of Savannah by 2008.

Comprehensive plan updates for each municipality must also be completed by 2008. The status of these updates for jurisdictions other than Chatham County and the City of Savannah is unknown at this time. However, municipalities will be encouraged to revise their comprehensive plans to make them consistent with this CGP.

A summary of permanent and temporary tools that Chatham County and municipalities are currently using, or will be encouraged to use, to protect greenspace is set forth below.

| Jurisdiction | Permanent Tool | Temporary Tool | Strategy for Acquisition/Protection |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------|---|
| Chatham County and Municipalities | Fee simple acquisition of lands with funds from the Georgia Community Greenspace Program, federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, federal Wetland Mitigation Program, and local SPLOST program | | With the exception of SPLOST funds, lands purchased with these funds are permanently protected because of program requirements restrictions that accompany use of the funds. Lands purchased with SPLOST greenspace funds will be permanently protected via conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants, or other similar legal methods that convey permanent protection. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | Purchase of development rights | | Lands for which development rights are purchased will be permanently protected from development. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | Permanently protecting lands that are currently owned by local governments by encumbering the properties with conservation easements or permanent restrictive covenants that are conveyed to a third party | | Chatham County has already conveyed a 190-acre conservation easement to a third party, and is also evaluating the possibility of encumbering several other County-owned recreational properties with conservation easements. Several parcels in the unincorporated area acquired with SPLOST funds for wetlands mitigation associated with road and drainage projects may also be encumbered with conservation easements or permanent restrictive covenants in the near future. |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Seeking other sources of funding to augment State greenspace funds to purchase greenspace | The MPC is working with Chatham County and municipalities to ensure future allocations of SPLOST funds to the CGP for the next 5-year SPLOST program, if approved by voters. Chatham County and municipalities will also be encouraged to seek other federal, state, and private sources of grant funds for greenspace preservation. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Adoption of more stringent riparian buffer standards | Chatham County and municipalities will be encouraged to adopt a 35-foot vegetated buffer requirement. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Dedicated greenspace required or negotiated as part of the development approval process | Chatham County and municipalities will be encouraged to adopt environmental overlay districts in sensitive estuarine areas that require developments to set aside greenspace. This may include common areas, areas protected by restrictive easements, or non-common areas such as buffers, parking islands, and other landscaped areas. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Protection of wetlands | Chatham County and municipalities will be encouraged to protect wetlands, including those on privately-owned lands, as greenspace. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Incorporation of buffers along road systems | Chatham County and municipalities will utilize buffer set asides for new road systems. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Current greenspace standards in local ordinances | Several existing local ordinances require that a certain percentage of a development be devoted to greenspace. Other jurisdictions will be encouraged to require a similar set aside. |
| Chatham County and Municipalities | | Amendment to Comprehensive Plans, Zoning Ordinances, and Other Related Ordinances | See discussion on page 15. |

- b. Chatham County agrees to the following, in accordance with State requirements: Chatham County commits to use the existing tools described in this community greenspace program to give permanent protection to greenspace within its jurisdictional boundaries, to the best of its ability.
- c. The following table identifies greenspace that is permanently protected in Chatham County. The locations of permanently protected greenspace, categorized by ownership, are also illustrated on the map provided in Appendix F titled “Existing Greenspace in Chatham County.”⁵

Permanently Protected Greenspace

| Name/Type | Description | Ownership | Jurisdiction | Greenspace Acreage(a) | Permanent Protection Mechanism (b) | Public Access |
|---|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| Fort Pulaski National Monument | | National Park Service | Unincorporated County | 222 | Federal National Monument | Yes |
| Savannah National Wildlife Refuge | Located in Chatham County and Effingham County, Georgia, and Jasper County, South Carolina | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Unincorporated County | 6,970 | Federal National Wildlife Refuge | Yes |
| Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge | Includes Wassaw Island, Little Wassaw Island (including Flora Hammock) and Pine Island | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Unincorporated County | 1,415 | Federal National Wildlife Refuge | Yes (by boat) |
| Skidaway Island State Park | | State of Georgia, DNR | Unincorporated County | 318(c) | State Heritage Preserve | Yes |
| Wormsloe State Historic Site | Includes Long Island | State of Georgia, DNR | Unincorporated County | 820(c) | State Heritage Preserve | Yes |
| Ossabaw Island Wildlife Management Area(d) | Includes Raccoon Key | State of Georgia, DNR | Unincorporated County | 8,996(c) | State Heritage Preserve | Limited (by boat) |
| Little Tybee and Cabbage Islands Natural Area | | State of Georgia, DNR | Unincorporated County | 988(c) | State Heritage Preserve (conservation easement held by The Nature Conservancy) | Yes (by boat) |
| Islands Nature Park(e)(f) | Formerly referenced as the Demere Tract. Located at the junction of Bryan Woods Rd. and Johnny Mercer Blvd. | Chatham County | Unincorporated County | 109 | Deed restrictions (conservation easement pending) | Not currently, but will be open to the public in the future |
| Rosewood Painted Bunting | Extension of Rosewood Avenue | City of Tybee | City of Tybee | (g) | Conservation easement held by the City of | Yes |

| Name/Type | Description | Ownership | Jurisdiction | Greenspace Acreage(a) | Permanent Protection Mechanism (b) | Public Access |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Preserve | | | | | Tybee | |
| Sally Pearce Nature Trail | Historically mapped as portion of 5th Avenue, but never developed; section of 5 th Avenue that runs between Rt. 80 and 6 th Street. Entire ROW has easement; trail is located on a portion of the ROW (from approx. 3 rd Street to Center Street) | City of Tybee | City of Tybee | (g) | Conservation easement held by the City of Tybee | Yes |
| Blue Heron Nature Park | Undeveloped natural area | City of Tybee | City of Tybee | (g) | Conservation easement held by the City of Tybee | Yes |
| Conservation Easement | | Williams, Suzanne Hill | Vernonburg | 3.51(h) | Conservation Easement with Coastal Georgia Land Trust | No (private property) |
| Conservation Easement | N/A | Jelks, Freeman N III | Vernonburg | 2.90(h) | Conservation Easement with Coastal Georgia Land Trust | No (private property) |
| Conservation Easement | N/A | Chisholm, Katherine C. | Vernonburg | 3.48(h) | Conservation Easement with Coastal Georgia Land Trust | No (private property) |
| Conservation Easement | N/A | Hungerpillar, Page A & James E | Vernonburg | 4.67(h) | Conservation Easement with Coastal Georgia Land Trust | No (private property) |
| Conservation Easement | N/A | Dunn, Thomas H. | City of Savannah | 18.15(h) | Conservation Easement with Coastal Georgia Land Trust | No (private property) |
| Conservation Easement | | Pearce, Mallory | City of Tybee | .143(i) | Conservation Easement | No (private property) |
| | | | Total | 19,871 | | |

a/Coastal Marshlands as defined in the Coastal Marshlands Protection Act must be excluded from the County's geographic area and from its area of protected greenspace (see Section 391-1-4-.04 of the Greenspace Rules). Unless otherwise noted, greenspace acreages were approximated using GIS-based tools (i.e., by overlaying the National Wetlands Inventory System maps onto permanently-protected properties and excluding the following subsystems from the acreage of each property: Estuarine Subtidal, Estuarine Intertidal, Marine Subtidal, Marine Intertidal, and Riverine Tidal.)

b/ The State requires legal, permanent protection of greenspace through the establishment of deed restrictions, conservation easements, contractual agreements, restrictive covenants, or other similar means of

protection. Refer to Rule 391-1-4-.02(n). May also include lands that have been purchased with funds from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Wetland Mitigation Program, or Land and Water Conservation Fund. c/Acreage provided by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

d/May also be referenced as the Ossabaw Island Heritage Preserve.

e/Official park name will be assigned at a later date. First greenspace acquisition acquired with State greenspace funds. Conservation easement will be established for this property in addition to existing deed restrictions pending County approval.

f/ Chatham County has established a 190-acre conservation easement for a parcel affiliated with the Henderson Golf Club. However, due to inadequate information regarding this parcel at the time of the program resubmittal, this parcel was not listed on the existing greenspace inventory.

g/ Exact acreages for these conservation easements, which total less than 5 acres, were not available as of the date of this inventory and therefore were not included in the County's greenspace acreage total. These easements are not delineated on the accompanying Greenspace Inventory Map in Appendix F due to insufficient data currently available to accurately map the easements.

h/Greenspace acreages listed reflect the acreage of the conservation easements. Acreages of conservation easements provided by the Chatham County Tax Assessor's Office.

i/Acreage estimate obtained from www.sagis.org.

- d. At present, virtually no publicly-owned land in Chatham County is protected as envisioned by the Georgia Community Greenspace Program. In general, publicly owned lands in Chatham County are not protected through conservation easements or other instruments. However, the Georgia Greenspace Program has introduced the thesis that greenspace should be permanently protected for future generations through mechanisms that cannot be reversed to meet other, perhaps relatively short-term, objectives, and thus it is a goal of this CGP to encourage permanent protection of public lands.

Chatham County is currently evaluating several parcels of publicly-owned land that may be permanently protected as greenspace. A listing of these lands is included below. The MPC has also compiled a draft list of publicly-owned properties throughout the County that would make viable greenspace acquisitions. The MPC will coordinate with Chatham County and municipalities in the future to evaluate whether permanent protection may be established for some of these lands.

Publicly Owned Greenspace That May Receive Permanent Protection(a)

| Facility Name | Ownership | Acreage(b) | Protection Method | Date to Achieve Protection | Public Access |
|--|------------------|-------------------|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 2 Parcels associated with Tom Triplett Park | Chatham County | 180 and 35 | Conservation easements under evaluation | (c) | Yes |
| Parcel associated with King's Ferry Boat Ramp | Chatham County | 90 | Conservation easements under evaluation | (c) | Yes |
| Several parcels associated with wetland mitigation projects for road/drainage projects | Chatham County | (d) | Conservation easements or permanent restrictive covenants | (d) | (d) |
| Marsh Hammocks | State of Georgia | 106 | Designation as a Heritage Preserve | Dependent on State legislation. | Variable |

a/The table set forth in Chapter 4, Section c.iv identifies 742 acres of historical resources and 7 acres of county-owned hammocks that may be protected as greenspace. The vast majority of these resources are public lands, and should be considered for preservation of greenspace. However, these lands were not included in this table because there is no firm commitment yet by jurisdictions to protect these resources.

b/Acreage estimates do not exclude coastal marshlands.

c/It is unresolved at this time whether Chatham County will commit to permanent protection of these lands.

d/Insufficient information available at this time to complete the table.

- e. The following table identifies types of privately-owned lands that this CGP proposes to permanently protect. This table is adapted from the table set forth in Chapter 4, Section c, which identifies the type and acreage of both public and privately-owned lands that are proposed for greenspace protection. As noted above, there is a potential that Chatham County and municipalities may protect some public lands as greenspace. However, the majority of land types proposed for protection in this CGP are privately-owned and this assumption is reflected in the acreage estimates provided below.

Unprotected Land Types to Receive Permanent Protection

| Land Type | Estimated Acreage | Tools for Protection(a) | Jurisdiction and Date to Achieve(b) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Marsh Hammocks | 45 | Purchase development rights, conservation easements | Chatham County-2015 |
| Greenways | 900 | Fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2030 |
| Greenspace/Conservation Subdivisions | 1,800 | Conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2050 |
| Isolated/Freshwater Wetlands | 2,700 | Purchase development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2040 |
| Riparian Buffers | 3,600 | Purchase development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2040 |
| Lands within the 100-year floodplain | 2,700 | Fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2040 |
| Lands suitable for passive-use parks | 5,400 | Fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2050 |
| Wildlife Habitat | (c) | Purchase development rights, fee-simple acquisition, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants | Chatham County-2050 |
| Totals | 17,145 | | |

a/Any of these land types may be protected, in lieu of or in addition to, by the deed restrictive language required by the State if acquired with State greenspace funds.

b/This table was completed with information for Chatham County only. Municipalities have not established acquisition timeframes categorized by land type at this time. The MPC will work with these jurisdictions in the future to obtain this information. However, long range planning of land acquisitions must be flexible to account for the many factors that cannot be foreseen at the present (i.e., shifting patterns of land development, rising land costs, etc.).

c/Preservation of wildlife habitat is a priority for the CGP, and will be achieved by protecting valuable habitats afforded by marsh hammocks, greenways, floodplains, riparian buffers, and other land types discussed in this table. Therefore, a separate acreage goal for this land use type is not specified. Acquisitions of parcels that meet criteria for more than one land type (i.e., property that both protects riparian buffers and protects critical wildlife habitat) will be considered a higher priority.

- f. The following table summarizes the current protected acreage and methods by which it is protected.

Summary of Greenspace Protection

| Current Ownership | Type of Long-term Protection | | | Row Totals | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| | Existing Permanent | Currently Designated for Permanent | Proposed for Permanent | Acreage | % of County |
| Federal | 8,607 | | | 8,607 | 4.6 |
| State | 11,122 | 106 | | 11,228 | 6 |
| Local | 109 | | 1,092(a) | 1,201 | 0.6 |
| Private | 33 | | 17,145 | 17,178 | 9.1 |
| Totals | 19,871 | 106 | 18,237 | 38,214 | 20.3(b) |

a/Includes estimated 742 acres of publicly-owned historic resources, 305 acres of lands in unincorporated County (See Chapter 5, Section d), and 45 acres of county-owned marsh hammocks.

b/Exceeds 20% goal because of inclusion of parcels listed in Chapter 5, Section d and because land type acreages were approximated.

6. Barriers to Achieving the Goal for Greenspace Protection

a. Legal Barriers

- i. The following legal barriers apply to most or all of the participating jurisdictions:
 - 1) Existing comprehensive plans, community plans, ordinances, and other planning initiatives are not consistent. Most of the jurisdictions in the County have participated in some way in the development of open space, greenway, and bikeway plans. However, it remains a challenge to bring all of these into a single CGP framework so that ordinances, comprehensive plans, community plans, and other planning initiatives are effectively coordinated with one another and greenspace preservation strategies.
 - 2) Definition of “greenspace” in local ordinances, comprehensive plans, and other planning initiatives are not consistent with definition used in this CGP and as envisioned by the Georgia Community Greenspace Program (i.e., term “greenspace” as used in existing ordinances and plans does not convey the concept of permanent protection as envisioned by the Georgia Community Greenspace Program and this CGP).
 - 3) Ease of zoning district and text amendments to the zoning ordinances without a thorough evaluation of consistency with comprehensive plans and greenspace goals of this CGP.
 - 4) Greenspace preservation is not adequately addressed within existing comprehensive plans, community plans, ordinances, and other planning initiatives.
 - 5) Inability to intensify development through high densities coupled with high greenspace ratios.
 - 6) Lack of incentives in ordinances to encourage environmentally sensitive developments.
 - 7) Inability to sever development rights from the land for purchase or transfer of density.
 - 8) State greenspace funds are awarded to jurisdictions based on population. Therefore, less densely populated areas that often have the greatest potential for greenspace preservation receive fewer funds.
 - 9) No tax incentives provided at the State level for lands that have been protected with a conservation easement or similar legal preservation tool.
- ii. Not applicable.

b. Structural Barriers

i. The following structural barriers apply to most or all of the participating jurisdictions:

- 1) Lack of sufficient funds to acquire greenspace. While State greenspace funds and SPLOST funds are available for greenspace acquisitions, these amounts pale in comparison to the tens of millions of dollars that will likely be needed to acquire enough acreage (i.e., 18,000 acres) to meet the 20 percent greenspace preservation goal. Due to the local economy and citizens' dissatisfaction with any proposed taxes, it is not certain that another 5-year SPLOST program will be approved by voters in Chatham County. Should another SPLOST program not be approved, it will be difficult if not impossible to identify comparable sources of local funding, particularly for the smaller municipalities. Closely tied to this issue is a lack of support for permanent funding mechanisms at the local level (i.e., such as a stormwater utility or real estate transfer tax).
- 2) Unwillingness of local governments to convey permanent protection to publicly-owned properties.
- 3) Lack of support from citizens and local elected officials for standards that limit ability to develop marginal yet highly-desirable lands (i.e., marsh hammocks, properties located adjacent to coastal marshlands and coastal waters, more stringent riparian buffer setbacks, etc.).
- 4) Public support is high but greenspace preservation is not a priority of elected officials and some government departments, who lack adequate knowledge of potential preservation tools, funding sources, and benefits of greenspace (including economic benefits). For example, perception exists among some elected officials that greenspace preservation results in decreased tax revenues, and past efforts to implement incentives for conservation subdivisions have met with strong resistance.
- 5) Lack of knowledge or misinformation among citizens regarding the use of permanent preservation tools for privately-owned property. For example, many citizens either are not familiar with conservation easements, or consider them to be too stringent as opposed to viewing conservation easements as flexible planning tools. Many citizens are not aware that there are federal and local tax breaks associated with conservation easements.
- 6) Too strong of emphasis on preservation of greenspace for passive recreational uses that afford visible benefits to the local community. Ecological benefits associated with preservation of properties that do not provide recreational opportunities, or that lack public access, are not always a high priority.
- 7) Lack of resources (such as GIS tools) to objectively prioritize greenspace acquisitions based on ecological and biological criteria.

- 8) Lack of staff resources to administer the unified greenspace program and lack of staff resources for greenspace planning within each jurisdiction, particularly the smaller municipalities.
- 9) Ongoing sources of funding for operations and maintenance for greenspace properties have not been secured.
- 10) There are currently no incentives set forth in the State's greenspace Rules and Regulations to encourage Counties and municipalities to participate in a unified greenspace program in lieu of operating independent greenspace programs. The State's greenspace Rules and Regulations, as currently written, make it difficult to operate a unified greenspace program for Counties and municipalities. For example, while a unified program streamlines reporting requirements for each jurisdiction and is a valuable tool for greenspace preservation on a regional level, it is difficult for the central coordinating body (i.e., the MPC, in this case) to implement a unified program and assemble existing reporting requirements on behalf of all jurisdictions.

ii. Not applicable.

7. Ten-year Strategy to Remove or Mitigate Legal and Structural Barriers

a. Legal barriers

i. A combination of some of the following strategies will be used by the County and municipalities to remove and/or mitigate the legal barriers identified in Chapter 6.

- 1) Establish this CGP as a coordination, prioritization, and implementation mechanism for an array of local plans and natural resource-related initiatives. For example, bring the 1996 Countywide Open Space Plan and greenway planning activities under the umbrella of the CGP. Encourage municipalities to amend local natural-resource related plans and initiatives to be consistent with this CGP.
- 2) Review and amend zoning and other local ordinances, comprehensive plans, community plans, and other planning initiatives to achieve consistency with one another and the goals of this CGP. Where feasible, unify Zoning, Subdivision, Land Clearing, Tree Protection, Stormwater Management and Floodplain Ordinances. See Chapter 5, Section a for a discussion of the status of ordinance updates for Chatham County and the City of Savannah.
- 3) Amend definitions for greenspace, open space, and other natural resource-related terms used in ordinances, comprehensive plans, and other planning indicatives to achieve consistency with one another. Ensure term “greenspace” refers to permanently protected lands that meet State requirements and related goals, objectives, and strategies refer to permanent protection mechanisms.
- 4) Conduct thorough evaluations of comprehensive plans and this CGP before modifying zoning districts and making text amendments to the zoning ordinances to maintain consistency.
- 5) Amend comprehensive plans, community plans, ordinances, and other planning initiatives to include new strategies, and strengthen existing strategies, for permanent preservation of greenspace. Conservation easements and/or similar tools would need to be utilized in conjunction with these strategies to establish permanent protection for greenspace. The strategies may include:

Riparian Buffer Standards: Chatham County adopted a 35-foot vegetated buffer requirement for redeveloped properties located on Oatland, Talahi, Whitemarsh and Wilmington Islands in 2001. Formerly, property owners were only required to maintain a 25-foot buffer on land located adjacent to Waters of the State. With the adoption of the new ordinance, properties located on these islands that are redeveloped must maintain an additional 10 feet of vegetated buffer adjacent to Waters of the State. Other areas of unincorporated Chatham County and municipalities will be encouraged to adopt more stringent riparian buffer standards, which may include a 35-

foot riparian buffer standard for existing developed areas and a 50-foot or greater riparian buffer standard for newly developing areas. A 100-foot buffer standard will also be adopted for certain segments of the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers by June 2003 as required by the State. Variable buffer formulas that take site-specific information into account may also be utilized. Conservation easements will be encouraged to establish permanent protection for the riparian buffers.

Conservation Subdivisions: While Chatham County does not anticipate requiring cluster development or other forms of conservation-oriented development, it may enact a program of incentives for conservation subdivisions and other environmentally sensitive developments based on recommendations in the 1996 Open Space Plan. (The City of Savannah is less likely to consider provisions for this type of development because it is highly urbanized.) The MPC will develop a set of recommendations and incentives for conservation subdivisions and other environmentally sensitive developments to be considered by the County and municipalities with rural areas as part of the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance updates.

Buffer Zones for Road Corridors: The Godley Station Master Plan recommends that buffers be incorporated along road systems that reduce the potential for aesthetic and environmental degradation due to sprawl. This same strategy could be utilized in other areas. Conservation easements or other similar tools would need to be utilized to convey permanent protection to the buffer zones.

Isolated wetlands: Isolated freshwater wetlands are not protected by existing Federal and State regulations. Zoning ordinances and other ordinances may be amended to ensure preservation of isolated freshwater wetlands in their natural, unaltered state .

Environmental Overlays: Environmental Overlay Zones will be developed for use in conjunction with zoning ordinances to protect environmentally sensitive areas. Examples of overlay standards that be adopted include more stringent standards for riparian buffers and wetlands (also discussed above); required greenspace set asides of 25 to 30 percent, restrictions for impervious surfaces, and density limits in areas where stormwater runoff would be detrimental to sensitive environmental ecosystems.

- 9) Evaluate the need for the establishment and implementation of a transferable development rights program.
- 10) Encourage the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to re-evaluate current method of allocating State greenspace funds based on population.
- 11) Encourage State legislators to provide tax incentives for conservation easements and other similar preservation tools.

ii. Not applicable.

b. Structural barriers

- i. A combination of some or most of the following strategies will be used by the County and municipalities to remove and/or mitigate the structural barriers identified in Chapter 6.
 - 1) Continue efforts to secure SPLOST allocations for the CGP. If voters do not approve another 5-year SPLOST program or if SPLOST funds are not committed to the CGP, other sources of local funding, such as a stormwater utility or real estate transfer tax, will be evaluated. Apply for other Federal, State, and private grants to aid in greenspace acquisition. See Chapter 8 for a more thorough discussion of funding strategies.
 - 2) Complete the MPC's database of public lands owned by each jurisdiction, and evaluate potential for these lands to be permanently protected as greenspace utilizing the technical assistance of the MPC and Greenspace Advisory Committee. Elected officials will be educated about the goals of this CGP and asked to commit to preserving greenspace in this manner, where feasible, in light of financial constraints posed by fee simple acquisition of lands in private ownership.
 - 3) Expand greenspace educational campaign for elected officials, government staff, and citizens through MPC staff efforts and by coordinating with the Coastal Georgia Land Trust. Focus on educating this audience about the flexible uses and federal and local tax breaks associated with preservation tools such as conservation easements, restrictive covenants, and other similar tools; types of funding that may be used in conjunction with State greenspace funds to acquire or otherwise permanently protect greenspace; value of greenspace, including a comprehensive evaluation of both the ecological and economic benefits of riparian buffers and other types of greenspace; and benefits of "cluster development" and increased high density coupled with high greenspace ratios.
 - 4) Use GIS-based evaluation tools to assist with prioritization of potential greenspace acquisitions, such as the Southeastern Ecological Framework project discussed at the State's July 25 greenspace meeting in Macon, Georgia. This GIS-based project was developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assist local governments with prioritizing land acquisitions to ensure ecological connectivity. Also utilize technical expertise of the MPC and Greenspace Advisory Committee for prioritization of potential greenspace acquisitions.
 - 5) Re-constitute membership of the Greenspace Advisory Committee to ensure that each jurisdiction is represented. As noted in Chapter 6, most jurisdictions do not have adequate staff support for greenspace planning efforts, and thus it is imperative that the Greenspace Advisory Committee serve in some capacities as a planning body for the jurisdictions while keeping the goals of this countywide CGP in mind.

- 6) Establish a community volunteer program to assist jurisdictions with maintenance of greenspace properties. Encourage jurisdictions to identify small amounts of funds that may be used for operations and maintenance costs associated with greenspace (which, compared to other types of recreational properties, are minimal) at time of acquisition.
 - 7) Encourage the DNR to provide financial incentives (such as an additional percentage of State greenspace funds) and streamline reporting requirements for counties and municipalities that establish unified greenspace programs.
- ii. Not applicable.

- c. A summary of the barriers and strategies set forth in Chapters 6 and 7 are set forth below. Timelines for the estimated date of implementation for Chatham County are set forth below. Other jurisdictions have not yet committed to which combination of these strategies will be utilized or their dates of implementation. Therefore, the MPC was unable to complete the table on behalf of the other participating jurisdictions.

Barriers, Strategies and Timeline for Accomplishment

| Barrier | Strategy to Remove Barrier | Jurisdiction and Date to Implement(a) |
|--|--|--|
| Existing comprehensive plans, community plans, ordinances, and other planning initiatives are not consistent. | Establish this CGP as a coordination, prioritization, and implementation mechanism for an array of local plans and natural resource-related initiatives. Encourage jurisdictions to amend local natural-resource related plans and initiatives to be consistent with this CGP. | Chatham County-Ongoing |
| | Review and amend zoning and other ordinances, comprehensive plans, community plans, and other planning initiatives to achieve consistency with one another and the goals of the CGP. Where feasible, unify Zoning, Subdivision, Land Clearing, Tree Protection, Stormwater Management and Floodplain Ordinances by 2008. | |
| Definition of greenspace in local ordinances, comprehensive plans, and other planning initiatives are not consistent with definition used in this CGP. | Amend definitions for greenspace, open space, and other natural resource-related terms used in ordinances, comprehensive plans, and other planning initiatives to achieve consistency with one another. | Chatham County-2008 |
| Ease of zoning district and text amendments to the zoning ordinance without a thorough evaluation of consistency with comprehensive plans and goals of this CGP. | Evaluate comprehensive plans and this CGP before modifying zoning districts and making text amendments to the zoning ordinances to maintain consistency. | Chatham County-Ongoing |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Greenspace preservation is not adequately addressed within existing plans, ordinances, and other planning initiatives. | Amend comprehensive plans, community plans, ordinances, and other planning initiatives to include new strategies, and strengthen existing strategies, for permanent preservation of greenspace. These strategies may include the establishment of more stringent riparian buffer standards; provide incentives for conservation subdivisions; incorporate buffer zones for road corridors; protect isolated wetlands; and utilize environmental overlays. | Chatham County-2008 |
| Inability to intensify development through high densities coupled with high greenspace ratios. | | |
| Lack of incentives in ordinances to encourage environmentally sensitive developments. | | |
| Inability to sever development rights from the land for purchase or transfer of density. | Evaluate the need for the establishment and implementation of a transferable development rights program. | Chatham County-2007 |
| State greenspace funds are awarded to jurisdictions based on population. Therefore, less densely populated areas that often have the greatest potential for greenspace preservation receive fewer funds. | Encourage the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to re-evaluate the current method of allocating State greenspace funds based on population. | Chatham County-2003 |
| No tax incentives are provided at the State level for lands that have been protected with a conservation easement or similar legal preservation tool. | Encourage State legislators to provide tax incentives for conservation easements and other similar preservation tools. | Chatham County-2003 |
| Lack of sufficient funds to acquire greenspace. | Continue efforts to secure SPLOST allocations for the CGP. Apply for other Federal, State, and private grants to aid in greenspace acquisition. | Chatham County-2003 for SPLOST request; Ongoing for other grant applications |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| <p>Unwillingness of local governments to convey permanent protection to publicly-owned properties.</p> | <p>Complete the MPC's database of public lands owned by each jurisdiction, and evaluate potential for these lands to be permanently protected as greenspace utilizing the technical assistance of the MPC and Greenspace Advisory Committee. Elected officials will be educated about the goals of this CGP and asked to commit to preserving greenspace in this manner, where feasible, in light of financial constraints posed by fee simple acquisition of lands in private ownership.</p> | <p>Chatham County-2004</p> |
| <p>Lack of support from citizens and local elected officials for standards that limit ability to develop marginal yet highly-desirable lands.</p> | <p>Expand greenspace educational campaign for elected officials, government staff, and citizens through MPC staff efforts and by coordinating with the Coastal Georgia Land Trust. Focus on educating this audience about the flexible uses and federal and local tax breaks associated with preservation tools such as conservation easements, restrictive covenants, and other similar tools; types of funding that may be used in conjunction with State greenspace funds to acquire or otherwise permanently protect greenspace; value of greenspace, including a comprehensive evaluation of both the ecological and economic benefits of riparian buffers and other types of greenspace; and benefits of "cluster development" and increased high density coupled with high greenspace ratios.</p> | <p>Chatham County-Ongoing</p> |
| <p>Greenspace preservation is not a priority of elected officials and some government departments.</p> | | |
| <p>Lack of knowledge or misinformation among citizens regarding the use of permanent preservation tools for privately-owned property.</p> | | |
| <p>Too strong of emphasis on preservation of greenspace for passive recreational uses.</p> | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Lack of resources to objectively prioritize greenspace acquisitions based on ecological and biological criteria.</p> | <p>Use GIS-based evaluation tools to assist with prioritization of potential greenspace acquisitions, such as the Southeastern Ecological Framework project discussed at the State's July 25 greenspace meeting in Macon, Georgia. This GIS-based project was developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assist local governments with prioritizing land acquisitions to ensure ecological connectivity. Also utilize technical expertise of the MPC and Greenspace Advisory Committee for prioritization of potential greenspace acquisitions.</p> | <p>Chatham County-2004</p> |
| <p>Lack of staff resources.</p> | <p>Re-constitute membership of the Greenspace Advisory Committee to ensure that each jurisdiction is represented. As noted in Chapter 6, most jurisdictions do not have adequate staff support for greenspace planning efforts, and thus it is imperative that the Greenspace Advisory Committee serve in some capacities as a planning body for the jurisdictions while keeping the goals of this countywide CGP in mind.</p> | <p>Chatham County-2003</p> |
| <p>Ongoing sources of funding for operations and maintenance for greenspace properties have not been secured.</p> | <p>Establish a community volunteer program to assist jurisdictions with maintenance of greenspace properties. Encourage jurisdictions to identify small amounts of funds that may be used for operations and maintenance costs associated with greenspace (which, compared to other types of recreational properties, are minimal) at time of acquisition.</p> | <p>Chatham County-At time of greenspace acquisition</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---------------------|
| No incentives have been set forth in the State's greenspace Rules and Regulations to encourage Counties and municipalities to participate in a unified greenspace program. | Encourage the DNR to provide financial incentives (such as an additional percentage of State greenspace funds) and streamline reporting requirements for counties and municipalities that establish unified greenspace programs. | Chatham County-2003 |
|--|--|---------------------|

a/2008 is the estimated date of completion for updates to Chatham County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance. "Ongoing" refers to strategies and activities that are undertaken on a routine basis to implement the greenspace program.

8. Funding

- a. No municipality within Chatham County has elected to establish a separate greenspace trust fund. Chatham County will receive the entire greenspace grant award for the current fiscal year (FY-03) and the next fiscal year (FY-04). These funds will be managed in a single Community Greenspace Trust Fund as outlined in Chapter 2 of this program.
- b. Describe sources and uses of funds to acquire property interests
 - i. Chatham County and the municipalities are committed to promoting the permanent protection of at least 20 percent of the geographic area of the County, or 188,670 acres, as greenspace. This translates to a goal of preserving at least 37,734 acres of greenspace. Currently, almost 20,000 acres of greenspace are permanently protected in the County as envisioned by the Georgia Community Greenspace program. Therefore, an additional 18,000 acres will need to be protected to meet a 20 percent greenspace preservation goal.

A variety of tools and strategies will be used to preserve additional greenspace in Chatham County for the 50 year planning horizon established by this CGP. These include fee-simple acquisitions, conservation easements, permanent restrictive covenants, and purchase of development rights. The County and municipalities anticipate that approximately 3,600 acres (20%) of greenspace will be acquired through conservation easements for privately-owned lands. Approximately 720 additional acres (4%) will be provided by establishing conservation easements, or, in some cases, permanent restrictive covenants, for public lands. Greenspace set aside for conservation subdivisions and purchase of development rights should increase greenspace by at least 3,600 acres (10% each). Approximately 106 acres (0.6%) of State-owned hammocks are anticipated to be designated as permanently protected State Heritage Preserves. This leaves 9,972 acres (55.4%) in lands to be acquired by fee-simple acquisition to reach the County's 20 percent greenspace preservation goal.

Within the next five years, 1,875 acres of greenspace would need to be obtained (either through fee-simple acquisition or using a combination of the tools discussed above) to ensure the County and municipalities are acquiring greenspace at a rate consistent with its 50 year planning horizon (i.e., an additional 18,000 acres need to be obtained with the next 48 years, which translates to 375 acres per year). Using the same methodology described above for the County's 50 year planning horizon, approximately 650 acres (34.6% of the 1,875 acres) would be obtained as greenspace through the establishment of private conservation easements, additional Heritage Preserve designations, permanently protecting public lands, and greenspace set asides in conjunction with conservation subdivisions.

It is estimated that highly-desirable, undeveloped lands currently cost about \$35,000 per acre in Chatham County. (This figure is based on the acquisition cost of the Islands Nature Park, which is located in the eastern coastal area.

Due to the prime location of this parcel, this figure represents high market value, and therefore using it should account for inflation over a 5-year planning period.) Using this figure, it is estimated that the purchase of development rights for highly-desirable lands would be equivalent to \$26,250 per acre. Therefore, the County and municipalities should expect to spend approximately 5 million dollars in the next five years to purchase the development rights for 187 acres of highly-desirable lands (10% of 1,875 acres) and less for lands that are sold at average market cost. This leaves approximately 1,040 acres that would need to be acquired through fee-simple acquisition. Realistically, the \$35,000 per acre cost described above cannot be used to estimate costs associated with fee-simple acquisition for two reasons: 1) it is not feasible that the County and municipalities would be able to secure enough funds to acquire such highly-desirable lands, and 2) some of the land types proposed for greenspace preservation are not as highly desirable and therefore will require less funds to acquire. For purposes of this evaluation, therefore, it will be estimated that the average market value for fee-simple acquisition is \$20,000 per acre.

The County and municipalities will therefore need to use discretion when evaluating potential land acquisition costs in relation to the amount of available revenue and amount of greenspace that needs acquired.

Estimated Costs to Acquire Property Interests Within 5 Years

| | Dollars |
|--|----------------|
| Purchase of development rights | \$5,000,000 |
| Establishment of private conservation easements, additional Heritage Preserve designations, permanently protecting public lands, and greenspace set asides in conjunction with conservation subdivisions | \$0 |
| Fee-simple acquisition | \$20,800,000 |
| Acquisition services (appraisals, surveys, title work, closing and attorneys' fees for donated lands as well as those acquired by purchase) –estimated at 5% of value of title acquired | \$1,290,000 |
| Total estimated cost to protect lands totaling the 5-year program goal | \$27,090,000 |

- ii. It is estimated that \$6,000,000 in State greenspace funds will be awarded for fiscal years 2003 through 2008. In addition, Chatham County has expressed support for allocating an additional \$9,000,000 in SPLOST funds to the CGP pending approval of another 5-year SPLOST program and a final determination by the County Commissioners. Combined, these programs may provide \$15,000,000 for greenspace acquisitions for the next five years. This leaves an estimated deficit of \$12,090,000, using a total estimated cost of \$27,090,000 needed to acquire greenspace.

Chatham County and participating municipalities will seek additional funds from a variety of agencies and programs, including funds from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Wetland Mitigation Program, and Land and Water Conservation Fund. A listing of other potential federal and State funding programs is set forth below. This list is not comprehensive, and the County and municipalities will need to diligently identify other sources of potential

funds, including grants that may be provided by private organizations and donors.

For the SPLOST program established for 1997-2002, Chatham County allocated nine million dollars for the preservation of open space. A significant portion of these funds were used to acquire the Islands Nature Park, the first greenspace acquisition in Chatham County to utilize State greenspace funds. Chatham County was also awarded a \$20,000 Wildlife Recreational Grant from the Georgia DNR in the Spring of 2002 to assist with the construction of nature-based amenities at the Islands Nature Park.

Federal Funding Resources

- TEA-21 Enhancement Funding. The MPC is in the final stages of preparing Countywide Bikeway and Greenway Plans for Chatham County and the City of Savannah. The plans are expected to be completed and adopted this year. The plans provide a structure for delineating and prioritizing bikeways and recreational greenways that will be linked directly to the county's transportation planning program. *Applications:* Funding from this source is currently being used to develop the county primary and secondary networks of the Coastal Georgia Greenway. This will be the primary funding source for this system over the next several years.
- Conservation and Reinvestment Act. Pending federal legislation that would provide funds to states for land acquisition. The Act would provide a total of \$450 million for this purpose, with \$10 to \$18 million going to Georgia. *Applications:* These funds would be used in conjunction with State greenspace funds and local SPLOST funds as the primary source of public funding for fee simple and development rights acquisitions.
- Better America Bonds. This program allows local government to issue bonds for conservation and water quality, among other purposes. The EPA administered program has the effect of creating zero-interest bond financing. *Applications:* To be reviewed by Greenspace Advisory Committee.
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. This program, which is aimed at rivers and river trails, may be very appropriate to Chatham County with such an abundance of rivers and estuarine systems. *Applications:* To be reviewed by Greenspace Advisory Committee.
- Conservation Reserve Program. The CRP program is administered by the Department of Agriculture through its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. The program provides farmers with annual payments over a 10-15 year period. In return, the farmer will agree to less intensive uses of the land in the future. *Applications:* To be reviewed by Greenspace Advisory Committee.
- Wetlands Reserve Program. This program provides direct payments to landowners who agree to place sensitive wetlands under permanent easements. The program can be used to permanently protect wetland

areas as open space. *Applications:* To be reviewed by Greenspace Advisory Committee.

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Grants. This program provides funding for improvements to watersheds of less than 250,000 acres. Full grants are available for flood prevention purposes; matching grants are available for some other purposes. *Applications:* To be reviewed by Greenspace Advisory Committee.

State Funding Resources

- Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (State Administered). A 50 percent matching grant program managed in Georgia by DNR. Grants are relatively small, in the \$25,000 to \$35,000 range. They are for recreational land acquisition, but could be tied to passive recreational activities allowed under the Georgia Greenspace Program. *Applications:* Primarily to be used for selected acquisitions by Chatham County Parks and Recreation; some acquisitions may be coordinated with the greenspace program.
- Regional Assistance Fund. Administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the RAP program is intended for regional economic development. However, the coastal counties have already received a \$100,000 RAP grant for the Coastal Georgia Greenway project, which links economic development with greenway recreational attractions. As the economic development aspect of the project demonstrates its viability, additional funding is likely to be available in subsequent years. *Application:* Funds are currently being used for planning the Coastal Georgia Greenway; future funding of infrastructure is anticipated based on discussions with DCA.

Estimated Total Sources of Funds

| | Dollars |
|--|---------------------|
| State greenspace funds | \$6,000,000 |
| Local governmental funds: SPLOST | \$9,000,000 |
| Federal, State, and Private Grant Funds | (a) |
| Total estimated sources to protect lands totaling the program goal | \$15,000,000 (a) |

a/The MPC is not able to estimate the amount of grant funds that may be provided by federal, state, and private sources at this time.

- c. The MPC 's Comprehensive Planning Division will be responsible for general administration of the unified program and other planning duties as described in Chapter 2 for all participating jurisdictions. MPC planning staff will conduct additional detailed planning activities on behalf of Chatham County and the City of Savannah. Funds to operate the MPC's Planning Department are jointly provided by Chatham County and the City of Savannah. In general, approximately five percent of the funds jointly provided by Chatham County and the City of Savannah to operate the MPC's Planning Department, equivalent to \$12,500 annually, is set aside to fund greenspace planning activities.

Assistance with prioritization of potential greenspace acquisitions will be provided by the Greenspace Advisory Committee, which is composed of voluntary (i.e., unpaid) members. The Greenspace Advisory Committee will meet on an as-needed basis with a minimum of four meetings per year (i.e., quarterly).

Each jurisdiction, with the exception of Chatham County and the City of Savannah (see above), will be responsible for providing and funding staff members to carry out its own planning activities.

- d. As discussed above, Chatham County recently received a \$20,000 Wildlife Recreational Grant to provide nature-based amenities for the Islands Nature Park. The grant will provide funds to construct and install an educational kiosk, signs, and a wildlife observation on the property. Existing leaf-litter walking trails extend throughout the property, and additional leaf-litter trails will be cleared by Chatham County staff to fulfill the County's obligation to provide matching grant funds. Recreational amenities, including picnic tables, restrooms, a basketball court, and a softball field, are located on a County-owned parcel immediately adjacent to the greenspace parcel and will be available to the public. The Chatham County Parks and Recreational Department will be responsible for providing any funds necessary to repair or upgrade the existing recreational amenities. The cost to repair or upgrade the existing recreational amenities is estimated to be below \$5,000. Access to the property is provided via an existing gravel road that connects the property to Johnny Mercer Boulevard. The Chatham County Public Works Department is currently responsible for trash pick-up and general cleanup at the site and will continue these responsibilities once the park is officially opened to the public. The County Police Department periodically inspects the site as part of its routine security duties and will continue to do so in the future. Parking spots are currently available, but limited, at the property. In the future, Chatham County may desire to expand parking at the Islands Nature Park. An evaluation of the cost to expand parking at the site has not yet been conducted because there are no known immediate plans to expand parking at the park.

In addition to utilizing MPC planning staff, the County is also establishing a citizen-based, voluntary advisory committee to assist with planning of future needs for the property. Currently, no other improvements, other than those that will be funded by the grant referenced above, are planned for this property.

The only other greenspace properties currently in local ownership are three small parcels owned by the City of Tybee that are used for passive recreational

opportunities and managed in their natural state. There are no known planned improvements for these properties.

- e. Below is a simplified table that identifies stewardship responsibilities and costs for greenspace acquisitions on behalf of Chatham County in the next five years.

| Activity | Responsible Party | Cost | |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Operations | Jointly managed by the Chatham County Public Works Department and Parks and Recreation Department | Maximum of \$2,500 will be annually provided by the Chatham County Public Works Department and Parks and Recreation Department | |
| Maintenance | Jointly managed by the Chatham County Public Works Department and Parks and Recreation Department | Maximum of \$2,500 annually will be annually provided by the Chatham County Public Works Department and Parks and Recreation Department | |
| Security | Chatham County Police Department | Negligible | |

9. Summary of Implementation Strategy and Schedule

- a. Chatham County expects to achieve its goal of greenspace protection in 2050.
- b. The following table summarizes the acreage expected to be under permanent protection when the County attains its goal of 20% permanently protected greenspace:

Summary of Greenspace Protection Upon Attaining the Goal

| Ownership | Acreage | % of County |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Federal | 8,607 | 4.6 |
| State | 11,228 | 6.0 |
| Local | 1,201 | 0.6 |
| Private | 17,178 | 9.1 |
| Totals | 38,214 | 20.3 |

- c. The following lands already owned by the local governments have received or may receive permanent protection (See Chapter 5, Sections c and d for more information):

Permanent Protection of Lands Currently Owned by Local Governments(a)

| Tool for Protection | Acreage | Year to Provide Protection |
|---|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Approximately 5 tracts of land in unincorporated Chatham County (see Chapter 5, Section d) may be permanently protected by conservation easements | 305(b) | Unknown at this time |
| Rosewood Painted Bunting Preserve | (c) | Currently Protected |
| Sally Pearce Nature Trail | (c) | Currently Protected |
| Blue Heron Nature Park | (c) | Currently Protected |
| Islands Nature Park | 109 | Currently Protected |
| Total | 414(b)(c) | |

a/The table set forth in Chapter 4, Section c.iv identifies 742 acres of historical resources and 7 acres of county-owned hammocks that may be protected as greenspace. The vast majority of these resources are public lands, and should be considered for preservation of greenspace. However, these lands were not included in this table because there is no firm commitment yet by jurisdictions to protect these resources.

b/ Exact acreage for wetland mitigation projects associated with road/drainage projects unknown; see table set forth in Chapter 5, Section c.

c/Exact acreages for these conservation easements, which total less than 5 acres, were not available as of the date of this inventory.

- d. The following table summarizes protection tools that will be used to acquire additional greenspace by local governments within the next five years:

Acquisition of New Lands by Local Governments

| Tool for Protection | Estimated Acreage | Year to Provide Protection |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Fee-simple acquisition | 1,040 | Fiscal Year 2007 |
| Donated conservation easements for privately-owned lands | 375 | Fiscal Year 2007 |
| Conservation easements/restrictive covenants for publicly-owned lands | 75 | Fiscal Year 2007 |
| Greenspace set-asides for conservation subdivisions | 187 | Fiscal Year 2007 |
| Purchase of development rights | 187 | Fiscal Year 2007 |
| Dedication of state-owned marsh hammocks as Heritage Preserves | 11 | Fiscal Year 2007 |
| Total | 1,875 | |

- e. The County and municipalities propose to use the following development regulations and performance-based zoning measures for greenspace protection (refer to Chapter 7 for a more comprehensive discussion of these proposed measures):

Use of Zoning and Development Ordinances for Greenspace Protection

| Tool for Protection | Year to Implement(a) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Incorporate the goals and strategies of this CGP into comprehensive plans | 2008 |
| Adopt additional riparian buffer standards as needed | 2008 |
| Develop incentive program for conservation subdivisions and other environmentally sensitive developments | 2008 |
| Require buffer zones for road projects | 2008 |
| Protect isolated freshwater wetlands via zoning incentives | 2008 |
| Develop environmental overlay zoning for sensitive estuarine areas that require greenspace set asides of 20 to 25 percent, limit impervious surfaces, and limit densities in areas where stormwater runoff would be detrimental to sensitive environmental ecosystems. | 2008 |

a/Implementation date for Chatham County only.

Footnotes

¹ The term “greenspace,” is used in this program to refer to permanently protected land that exists primarily in its undeveloped natural state to further one or more of the greenspace goals outlined by the State. Refer to State Rule 391-1-4.02 for a more comprehensive definition of greenspace.

² Table based on 2000 census data available from the U.S. Census Bureau’s website on October 28, 2002. Revised 2000 census data, as well as 2001 census data, is expected to be published by the U.S. Census Bureau in the near future. Future County and municipal allocations will be based on the most recent census data available from the U.S. Census Bureau at the time State greenspace funds are awarded. Percentages rounded to the nearest hundredth.

³ Figures used to calculate Chatham County’s 20 percent greenspace preservation goal were supplied by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

⁴ Defined as corridors of protected open space that are used for conservation, recreation, or some combination of the two. Greenways may exist in their natural state, or contain improvements for passive recreation. Greenways can provide pathways and corridors for people and wildlife as well as link and protect recreational, cultural, historic, and environmentally sensitive lands. They often follow rivers, ridges, railroad corridors, utility rights-of-way, canals, scenic roads, or other linear features.

⁵ Two maps are provided in Appendix F to illustrate the information required in the State’s revised greenspace program template dated November 5, 2002. The map titled “Potential Greenspace by Land Type” illustrates land types that are proposed for greenspace protection in Chapter 4, Section c. Please note that this map is for general informational purposes only. While specific properties may be mapped to illustrate land types proposed for protection, it should not be construed as a commitment of the County and municipalities to protect specific properties. For example, the CGP proposes to protect riparian buffers. Therefore, lands adjacent to waterways throughout the County are highlighted on the map. However, as noted in Chapter 4, Section c, the County proposes only to protect 15 percent, equivalent to 2,700 acres, of riparian buffers in the County. The category titled “Potential Parkland” identifies undeveloped lands present throughout the County. Due to mapping constraints, this category does identify some publicly-owned lands that have already been protected as greenspace at present. At this time, no publicly-owned lands have been committed for greenspace preservation, and therefore this map does not include this category.

The map titled “Existing Chatham County Greenspace” shows the locations of existing permanently protected greenspace. Existing greenspace is categorized by ownership type. Refer to the table provided in Chapter 5, Section c of this program for a more comprehensive discussion of the categories illustrated on this map.

⁶ Copies of ordinances referenced in Chapter 5 are set forth in Appendix G.

Appendix A

Insert 4 documents:

s:/Natural Resources/Greenspace Program/Reporting Requirements/Biennial Requirements/2002/Notice of Intent/Notice of Intent.doc

s:/Natural Resources/Greenspace Program/Reporting Requirements/Biennial Requirements/2002/Notice of Intent/List of Invitees.doc

s:/Natural Resources/Greenspace Program/Reporting Requirements/Biennial Requirements/2002/Public Meeting/Notice of Public Meeting.doc

s:/Natural Resources/Greenspace Program/Reporting Requirements/Biennial Requirements/2002/Public Meeting/NewspaperNotice.doc

Appendix B

Insert document located at s:/Natural Resources/Greenspace Program/Reporting Requirements/Biennial Requirements/2002/Public Meeting/Meeting Summary.doc

Appendix C

Insert copy of County resolution (resolutions not required for municipalities because they have not established separate Trust Funds). County resolution signed on November 22, 2002.

Appendix D

Chatham County and all eight municipalities within Chatham County, including the Cities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Savannah, Tybee, and the Towns of Thunderbolt and Vernonburg, have elected to participate in the unified Chatham County Community Greenspace Program. Therefore, no documentation is required for this Appendix.

Appendix E

Insert copies of future land-use maps obtained from the Graphics Department.

Appendix F

Insert 2 layouts from map located at s:/Natural Resources/Greenspace Program/Greenspace Inventory/GIS Maps/Gspace Inventory Map.

Appendix G

Insert copies of ordinances and master plans relevant to Chapter 5 discussion