

The Visions and Goals that emerged through the Chatham County Blueprint and the Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan represent the voices of the Community as expressed in meetings and surveys conducted during 2014, 2015 and 2016. The results below describe our community vision and goals for the next twenty years.

Economic Development:

Vision: Chatham County anchors a thriving, business-friendly, regional economy in which all workers are prepared for quality jobs, and residents feel empowered to attain a high quality of life

Goals:

- Develop apprenticeship and vocational programs based on the needs of Chatham County employers
- Increase access to employment opportunities for young adults, the working poor, ex-offenders, and people with mental illness
- Guide entrepreneurial growth through the enhanced presence of small business support resources, and facilitate collaboration among local businesses to promote innovation
- Foster a local business community that is inclusive and provides diverse opportunities
- Facilitate the establishment of physically attractive and economically viable commercial corridors
- Establish transparent processes and procedures for the delivery of effective and efficient economic development policies

Land Use:

Vision: Chatham County and Savannah are healthy and safe places to live, work, play and raise a family, and its social and economic values integrate the area's history, natural resources, efficient government and public mobility system.

Goals:

- Incorporate multi-modal transportation options including walking, bicycling, and transit, into land use patterns
- Ensure that expansions to the downtown area match the scale and urban design of the Oglethorpe Plan
- Establish transparent processes and procedures for the delivery of effective and efficient land use policies
- Provide an accessible system of public open spaces and natural areas, including parks for passive recreation activity
- Prioritize and then establish neighborhood plans that work to better specific communities by involving the neighborhood's residents in the process

Transportation:

Vision: Chatham County and Savannah prioritize safe mobility for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists; offers efficient mobility options to support economic vitality; provides infrastructure that is sensitive to unique local characteristics; connects neighborhoods to education, employment, and services; and sustains environmental quality with clean mobility modes.

Goals:

- Extend neighborhood connectivity through development of a safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation system that serves all modes of travel including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists
- Offer a regional public transportation system that provides all residents access to employment centers, institutions, commercial areas, recreational facilities, and other destinations regardless of their age, income, or disability
- Maintain and preserve transportation infrastructure in a manner that protects unique regional characteristics
- Maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure that supports regional economic vitality

Housing:

Vision: Chatham County and Savannah achieve affordable, diverse and safe housing for its residents through efficient and effective policies and programs.

Goals:

- Improve neighborhood stability where all residents, regardless of income, can occupy, maintain and improve their homes without undue financial hardship
- Provide affordable housing for all levels of income within the community, including the homeless, disabled & elderly
- Improve coordination and delivery of housing services
- Integrate housing, transportation, and land use planning to create healthier communities and connected neighborhoods

Quality of Life:

Vision: Chatham County citizens achieve a superior quality of life within a safe, active and healthy environment inclusive of the area's history, natural resources, public mobility and efficient government.

The Quality of Life section includes five focus areas:

- Community Health
- Education
- Public Safety
- Natural Resources
- Historic & Cultural Resources

Community Health:

Vision: Chatham County has a culture of health including equal access to quality and affordable healthcare, chronic disease prevention, health inclusive policies and environmental design.

Goals:

- Organize, promote, and ensure access to community health services, recreational opportunities and fitness programs to accommodate the special needs of families, the obese, the elderly, and disabled citizens to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors
- Effectively address mental health by educating the public and reducing stigma, increasing early intervention programs, removing gaps and barriers, and increasing access to treatment particularly as it impacts incarcerated individuals, children, and adolescents
- Instill healthy practices in schools by providing comprehensive health education, nutrient-rich foods, opportunities for physical activity, and prevention education including, but not limited to violence prevention
- Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services
- Increase access to healthy food for populations most likely to experience food-insecurity through community gardens and alternative distribution methods (i.e. farmer's markets)

Education:

Vision: From early childhood education through post-secondary achievement, Chatham County's innovative and inclusive educational systems are a model of academic excellence that enable students to have the knowledge, skills and ability to succeed at chosen pathways.

Goals:

- Ensure that financial skills, social skills, and conflict resolution skills are being offered to parents and taught to all students through the use of technology, community partnerships, and counseling for both parents and children
- Implement mentorship programs between employers and students; while increasing leadership development programs between community organizations and public schools to prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility
- Incentivize and promote parental involvement in schools by teaching parents to advocate for their child(ren), facilitating better communication between parents and school leadership, and eliminating barriers to parent engagement

Public Safety

Vision: Chatham County and Savannah provide a community that is a safe place to live, work, and raise a family, and within which protection of residents is considered an integral part of its social and economic values.

Goals:

- Reduce crime, particularly abuse and violence, by building trust between law enforcement and residents, focusing enforcement in high crime areas, and expanding the visibility of police to ensure all residents feel safe
- Integrate environmental design elements which discourage criminal behaviors into the planning and construction of public space

Natural Resources

Vision: Chatham County and Savannah are enhanced by the protection and maintenance of natural resources and ecosystems.

Goals:

- Incorporate natural resources into appropriate development standards and review procedures
- Expand the preservation of natural areas and open spaces to provide for wildlife habitat, the continuation of ecosystem services, and public recreational opportunities
- Maintain adequate and open floodplains to prevent property damage from floodwaters and natural shoreline migration due to sea level rise
- Develop a time-based and spatial context for climate adaptation and sea-level rise adaptation planning
- Preserve existing trees and accelerate the planting of new trees.
- Improve and expand solid waste management to include additional opportunities for recycling and composting
- Protect and improve the air quality in Chatham County
- Protect the quality and supply of drinking water in Chatham County to include both surface and groundwater sources
- Factor sea level rise into land use and transportation & infrastructure planning
- Establish transparent processes and procedures for the delivery of effective and efficient natural resources policies.

Historic & Cultural Resources

Vision: Chatham County and Savannah's historical and emerging cultural resources provide unique advantages to balance preservation with development and economic growth.

Goals:

- Preserve culturally and historically significant buildings, landscapes and sites throughout Chatham County
- Establish transparent processes and procedures for the delivery of effective and efficient historic and cultural resources policies
- Promote the community's historic character as an important element of its residential quality of life
- Maintain a historic preservation process that is comprehensive, continuous, planned and funded
- Promote tourism development and economic development while considering and supporting the needs of existing residents and businesses