

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

CHATHAM COUNTY—SAVANNAH

2020 UPDATE



**Adopted by Savannah City Council**

October 14, 2021

**Adopted by Chatham County Commission**

October 22, 2021



**PLAN  
2040**

**ADVANCING TOGETHER,  
REDEFINING TOMORROW.**

STATE OF GEORGIA  
COUNTY OF CHATHAM

RESOLUTION NO. 21- **CP1**

CHATHAM COUNTY SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN  
PLANNING COMMISSION

TRANSMITTAL OF THE DRAFT PLAN 2040 - CHATHAM COUNTY-  
SAVANNAH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO THE COMMISSIONERS OF  
CHATHAM COUNTY AND THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE  
CITY OF SAVANNAH

**WHEREAS**, the Commissioners of Chatham County and the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah directed the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission to prepare an update of the Comprehensive Plan for Unincorporated Chatham County and the City of Savannah in accordance with Rules of the Department of Community Affairs Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (Chapter 110-0-12-1); and

**WHEREAS**, the Metropolitan Planning Commission staff met regularly over a 10-month period with representatives of the MPC Steering Committee and other agencies affiliated with governments of Chatham County, the City of Savannah, and the State of Georgia as well as the citizens of the City and the County to solicit their input in preparing the goals, objectives, and strategies to guide the future of the community, and

**WHEREAS**, the Metropolitan Planning Commission staff assembled the recommendations of the MPC's Steering Committee as well as the governmental agencies, and members of the public, and prepared such other documents in the format required by Department of Community Affairs Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (Chapter 110-0-12-1), and

**WHEREAS**, Chapter 110-12-1 of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Local Planning Requirements requires that Commissioners of Chatham County and the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah approve submittal of the draft Comprehensive Plan prior to forwarding it to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center, and

**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Plan was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, and established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, and the required public hearing was held by the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission on October 13, 2020, March 16, 2021, and June 29, 2021, and

**NOW THEREFORE, LET BE IT RESOLVED** that Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission hereby approves transmittal of the draft Plan 2040 Comprehensive Plan to the Commissioners of Chatham County and the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah.

ADOPTED this 29<sup>th</sup> day of June 2021.

By:

  
Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman

Date

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Attest:

  
Melanie Wilson, Executive Director

Date

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

\_\_\_\_\_

**RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION  
BY THE CHATHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**Whereas**, the last full Comprehensive Plan was developed in 2006 and then updated in October 2016; and

**Whereas**, since the issues and challenges facing the community continue to change from when the Goals and Objectives were updated in the last 2016 Comprehensive Plan; and

**Whereas**, community input was gathered by the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission through virtual meetings, community events, social media, websites, a public online and written survey, and other channels to gauge the public's priorities for Chatham County; and

**Whereas**, the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission developed a new Comprehensive Plan in coordination with the Chatham Community Blueprint to address economic development, community health, education, public safety, and quality of life; and

**Whereas**, those Goals and Objectives have been incorporated into the Work Program of the Comprehensive Plan for Chatham County, Georgia; and

**Whereas**, the Department of Community Affairs requires written notice that the Comprehensive Plan for Chatham County was adopted;

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Chatham County Board of Commissioners does hereby adopt the Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan and authorizes the County Manager to transmit the Resolution of Adoption to the Coastal Regional Commission and Department of Community Affairs as required by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Adopted this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of October 2021

By:



Chester A. Ellis, Chairman

Date: 10/22/2021

Attest:



Janice B. Bocook, Clerk

Date: 10/22/2021





**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING  
THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH, GEORGIA  
TO ADOPT THE CHATHAM COUNTY - SAVANNAH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**WHEREAS**, the last full Comprehensive Plan was developed in 2006 and then updated in 2016; and

**WHEREAS**, since the issues and challenges facing the community continue to change when the Goals and Objectives were updated in the last 2016 Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, community input was gathered by the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission through virtual meetings, community events, social media, e-survey, a public online and written survey, and other channels to gauge the public's priorities for the region; and

WHEREAS, the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Comprehensive Plan to address economic development, land use, transportation, and quality of life elements; and

**WHEREAS**, those Goals and Objectives have been incorporated into the Work Program Comprehensive Plan for Savannah, Georgia; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Community Affairs requires written notice that the Comprehensive Plan for Savannah, Georgia was adopted;

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Mayor and Aldermen hereby adopt the Ham County - Savannah Comprehensive Plan and authorize the City Manager to transmit the Resolution to Adoption to the Coastal Regional Commission and Georgia Department of Community Affairs as required by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

ed this 14th day of October, 2021.



ATTEST:

Mark Massey  
Clerk of Council

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Introduction

Plan 2040 is the culmination of collaboration over this past year and would not have been possible without the time, knowledge and energy of those persons listed and to the hundreds of community members who came to events, participated in virtual public meetings, attended steering committee meetings, answered our survey, and provided their invaluable input.

### **Chatham—Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission Board**

**Joseph Welch**—*Chairman*

**Karen Jarrett**—*Secretary*

**Eula Parker**—*Treasurer*

**Loreen Boles**

**Travis Coles**

**Elizabeth Epstein**

**Joseph Ervin**

**Ruel Joyner**

**Wayne Noha**

**Dwayne Stephens**

**Dr. Malik Watkins**

**Tom Woiwode**

**Lee Smith**—*Chatham County Manager*

**Michael Brown**—*Interim City Manager*

### **Mayor & Alderman The City of Savannah**

**Van R. Johnson II**—*Mayor*

**Kesha Gibson-Carter**—*Post 1, At-Large*

**Alicia Miller Blakely**—*Post 2, At-Large*

**Bernetta B. Lanier**—*District 1*

**Detric Leggett**—*District 2*

**Linda Wilder-Bryan**—*District 3*

**Nick Palumbo**—*District 4*

**Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz**—*District 5*

**Kurtis Purtee**—*District 6*



## Chatham County Board of Commissioners

**Chester A. Ellis**—Chairman  
**Helen L. Stone**—District 1  
**Larry "Gator" Rivers**—District 2  
**Bobby Lockett**—District 3  
**Patrick K. Farrell**—District 4  
**Tanya Milton**—District 5  
**Aaron "Adot" Whitely**—District 6  
**Dean Kicklighter**—District 7  
**Kenneth A. Adams**—District 8

## Subcommittee Members

**Laureen Boles**—MPC, Civil Engineer/ City Planner  
**Travis Coles**—MPC, Business Operator/Real Estate  
**Dwayne Stephens**—MPC, Development/Construction  
**Dr. Malik Watkins**—MPC, Education  
**Ruel Joyner**—MPC (Alternate), Small Business Owner

## Special Thanks

**Patty McIntosh, AICP**—Contract Planner  
**Center for a Sustainable Coast**  
**Chatham Area Transit**  
**Clean Coast**  
**Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition**  
**Savannah Economic Development Authority**

## Technical Assistance

### Chatham—Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission Staff

**Melanie Wilson**—Executive Director MPC  
**Pamela Everett**—Assistant Executive Director  
**Jackie Jackson**—Director of Advance Planning  
**Lara Hall**—Director of SAGIS  
**Marcus Lotson**—Director of Development Services  
**Leah G. Michalak**—Director of Historic Preservation  
**Mark Wilkes**—Director of Transportation

**David Ramsey**—Information Services & Mapping  
**Debbie Burke**—Natural Resource Planner  
**Nic Fazio**—Senior Planner  
**Kait Morano**—Planner  
**Aislinn Droski**—Assistant Planner  
**Asia Hernton**—Assistant Planner  
**Kiakala Ntemo**—Contract Planner

### Governing Authority Technical Assistance

**Chatham County Engineering**  
**Chatham County & Savannah Fire Departments**  
**Chatham County & Savannah Police Departments**  
**Chatham Emergency Management Agency**  
**Savannah Chatham County Public School System**  
**Savannah Housing and Neighborhood Services**  
**Savannah Office of Sustainability**  
**Savannah Planning, Zoning, & Urban Design**

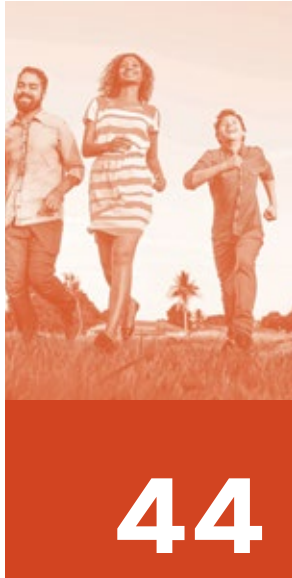


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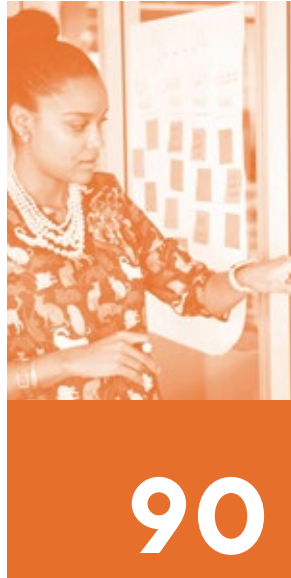
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## COMMUNITY PROFILE



## COMMUNITY GOALS



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## LAND USE



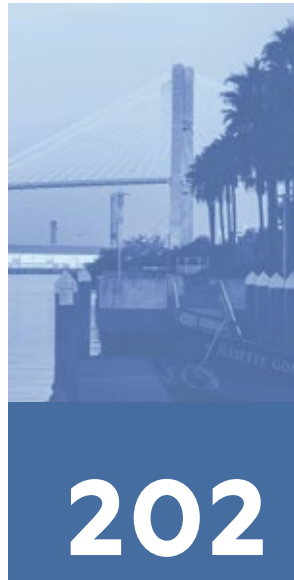
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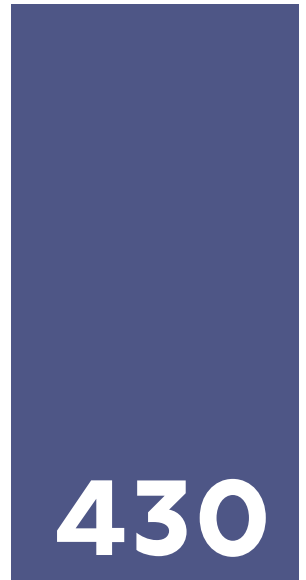
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# WELCOME LETTERS

## LETTER FROM THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN



**Chester A. Ellis, Chatham County Chairman**

It is my pleasure to introduce Plan 2040, the updated Chatham County Comprehensive Plan. This update includes new strategies and actions gathered from nearly 2,500 ideas shared by thousands of people since the Community Plan was last adopted in 2016.

These periodic Plan updates are one of the many important ways we demonstrate Chatham's commitment to being an inclusive and equitable community as it offers new and traditionally underserved community members an equal opportunity to have input on the ways we act to bring our vision to life. The update process also ensures we're incorporating the most up-to-date approaches and information as the County evolves over time.

I also want to acknowledge the unique moment in which we're releasing this Plan update. Most of the ideas were conceived at a time when a global pandemic was the furthest thing from anyone's mind. What we learned is that people value and take solace in our long-term vision. Chatham will keep moving forward and we will rebound. It is now more important than ever to build an inclusive, engaged, and prosperous community...together.

On behalf of the entire Chatham County Commission, I want to express our gratitude and reaffirm our support as we continue to move Chatham forward together.

## LETTER FROM THE MAYOR OF SAVANNAH



**Van Johnson, Mayor of Savannah**

This update is the product of a multitude of different types of public engagement endeavors and careful consideration by City staff and our City Council. An approved update is critically needed to ensure Savannah is able address the challenges and opportunities that we face today.

We recognize that in a time of crisis, such as COVID-19, while tracking and responding to immediate needs, considering the broader goals and vision of the City is challenging. Hence, the Plan 2040 Comprehensive Plan will serve as that reminder and guide, as we all come together to work toward a more equitable and resilient City than ever before.

Public engagement has been a hallmark of the Comprehensive Plan update process. Through various engagement events and venues, the MPC, as the agent for this update process, has heard from thousands of residents and stakeholders.

The update that we submit to you today reflects the best analysis, policies, and actions that will prepare Savannah to manage the change ahead with an eye toward equity, resilience, and shared prosperity. On behalf of the entire City Council, I want to express our gratitude and reaffirm our support as we continue to move Savannah forward together.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Plan 2040

Plan 2040 is unincorporated Chatham County-Savannah's Comprehensive Plan and principal guiding or “vision” document—designed to formulate a coordinated, long-term planning program to maintain and enhance the health and viability of the jurisdictions. The Comprehensive Plan lays out the desired future for Unincorporated Chatham-Savannah, and relates how that future is to be achieved. The plan serves as a resource to both the public and private sectors by projecting how land will develop, how housing will be made available, how jobs will be attracted and retained, how open space and the environment will be protected, how public services and facilities will be provided, and how transportation facilities will be improved. In short, the Unincorporated Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide for consistent policy direction.

The Chatham County Commission, City of Savannah, City Council and local community leaders will use the Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan in the following ways:

### **The Future Land Use Map shall be referenced in making rezoning and capital investment decisions:**

It provides a representation of the community's vision, helping to guide development based on community preferences and also indicates character areas where various types of land uses should be permitted.

### **The Comprehensive Plan provides policies that help guide day-to-day decisions:**

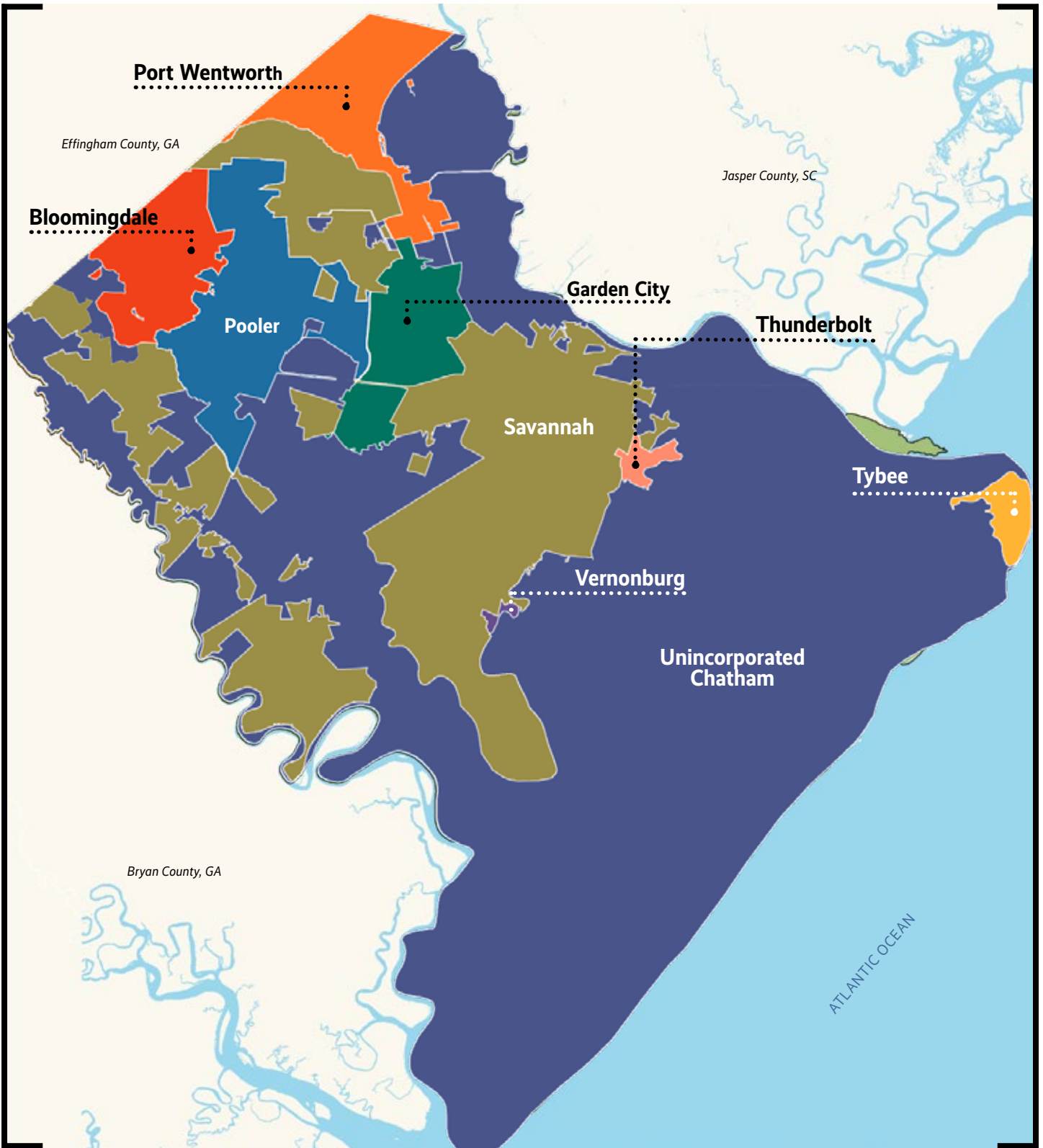
These policies are reflections of community values identified through public outreach efforts. These policies will be used as guidelines in the analysis of rezoning decisions and other development and capital investment decisions.

### **The Comprehensive Plan includes an Implementation Program that will direct public investment and private initiative:**

Plan implementation is carried out through the adoption and revision of regulations, including zoning and development codes, and through the completion of projects and programs outlined in the Community Goals and Community Strategic Plan and Work Program. The Comprehensive Plan is a living document and should be updated regularly as conditions change and shifts occur in public policy.

The following pages describe the results of public participation that informed and guided the development of this planning document.





# WHY DO WE PLAN?

The Georgia Planning Act requires that cities and counties maintain comprehensive plans that help shape future growth. These plans generally recognize the physical, economic, social, political, and aesthetic factors of a community and are developed in a process that includes thoughtful analysis and robust public engagement.

Plan 2040 serves as the comprehensive plan for Chatham County and Savannah. The plan follows the minimum standards and procedures for local government planning set out in O.C.G.A. 50-8-71(b), reflecting the principles of partnership and the unique needs, conditions, and aspirations of the community.

To ensure that public participation in the planning process will result in meaningful implementation through zoning and other administrative mechanisms, a policy of "consistency" was discussed at public meetings. This proposed policy was strongly endorsed by the public. The policy of consistency requires that policies adopted in Plan 2040 will be reviewed and amended prior to amending zoning or other implementing ordinances. In other words, official policy established in Plan 2040 will become the basis for zoning amendments.

The six planning elements shown below are the fundamental components of Plan 2040.

- Quality of Life
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Housing
- Transportation
- Natural Resources



# COMPONENTS OF PLAN 2040

Plan 2040 is to be a tool used in evaluating future proposals and policy changes to ensure consistent decisions are made. Each element is comprised of a vision statement, goals, objectives, and strategies to accomplish the vision. These terms, often used to describe policy recommendations, are described below:

**ELEMENT:**

These are the primary elements that must be included, at a minimum, in each community's Comprehensive Plan

## VISION:

Each element contains a vision statement that is supported by multiple goals. A vision statement can become a compass, pointing the way to a common direction.

## GOAL:

General overarching, broad statements describing the direction that a community wants to go.

## OBJECTIVES:

Express the kinds of action that are necessary to achieve the stated goals without assigning responsibility to any specific action.

## STRATEGIES:

Statements of specific actions that should be taken, identifying the responsible party/parties, the time frame within which the action should occur, and other details needed for implementation to occur.



## HOUSING

### In 2040...

*Chatham County and Savannah achieves affordable, diverse and safe housing for its residents through efficient and effective policies and programs.*

## GOAL:

1. Improve neighborhood stability where all residents, regardless of income, can occupy, maintain, and improve their homes without undue financial hardship

## Objectives:

- i. Assist households annually avoid eviction, foreclosure, property loss or homelessness.

## Strategy:

1. Survey and designate historically significant industrial buildings, complexes, and other at-risk infrastructure.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following words shall have the meaning as contained herein unless the context does not permit such meaning.

	Definitions
<b>Character Areas</b>	<p>A specific geographic area or district within the community that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced,</li> <li>• Has Potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance of future development,</li> <li>• Requires special attention due to unique development issues.</li> </ul> <p>Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more detailed, small-area planning and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the Community Goals</p>
<b>Community</b>	Local jurisdiction (county or municipality) or group of local jurisdictions (in the case of a joint plan) that are preparing a local plan
<b>Comprehensive Plan</b>	<p>A plan meeting the Minimum Standards and Procedures.</p> <p>The comprehensive plan must be prepared pursuant to the Minimum Standards and Procedures for preparation of comprehensive plans and for implementation of comprehensive plans, established by the Department in accordance with O.C.G.A. 50-8-71(b) and 50-8-72</p>
<b>Comprehensive Planning Process</b>	Planning by counties or municipalities in accordance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures in O.C.G.A. 50-8-71(b) and 50-8-72
<b>Conflict</b>	<p>Any conflict, dispute, or inconsistency arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between or among plans, or components thereof, for any counties or municipalities, as proposed, prepared, proposed to be implemented, or implemented</li> <li>• Between or among plans for any regions, as proposed, prepared, proposed to be implemented, or implemented</li> <li>• Between or among plans, or components thereof, for any counties or municipalities and plans for the region which include such counties or municipalities, as such plan are proposed, prepared, proposed to be implemented, or implemented</li> </ul>

Terms not defined in these rules but defined in O.C.G.A. 50-8-1, et seq, shall have the meanings contained therein.

	Definitions
<b>Core Elements</b>	<p>Community, Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and Community Work Program.</p> <p>These are the primary elements that must be included, at a minimum, in each community's comprehensive plan</p>
<b>County</b>	Any county of this state
<b>Days</b>	Meaning calendar days, unless otherwise specified
<b>Density</b>	An objective measurement of the number of people or residential units allowed per unit of land, such as dwelling units per acre
<b>Department</b>	Department of Community Affairs established under O.C.G.A.50-8-1
<b>Governing Body</b>	Board of Commissioners of a county, sole commissioner or a county, council, commissioners, or other governing authority of a county or municipality
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Man-made structures which serve the common needs of the population, such as: sewage disposal systems; potable water systems; potable water wells serving a system; solid waste disposal sites or retention areas; stormwater systems; utilities; piers; docks; navigation channels; bridges; roadways
<b>Qualified Local Government</b>	Any county, municipality, or other political subdivision of the state
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Planning Organization, a federally designated agency created in urban areas containing more than 50,000 people that are charged with conducting comprehensive, coordinated planning processes to determine the transportation needs of their respective constituencies, and prioritizing and programming projects (bicycle and pedestrian projects) for federal funding
<b>Minimum Standards and Procedures</b>	Minimum Standards and Procedures, including the minimum elements which shall be addressed and included, for preparation of comprehensive plans, for implementation of comprehensive plans, for updates of comprehensive plans including update schedules, and for participation in the coordinated and comprehensive planning process



## Definitions



## Precedents



## PLAN 2040 Survey



## Facts

	Definitions
<b>Mediation</b>	The process to be employed by the Department and Regional Commissions for resolving conflicts which may arise from time to time in the comprehensive planning process. Procedures and guidelines to govern mediation are as established by the Department pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-8-7. I(d)
<b>Municipality</b>	Any municipal corporation of the state and any consolidated government of the state
<b>Plan</b>	The comprehensive plan for any county or municipality
<b>Plan Amendment</b>	A change to the adopted plan that occurs between plan updates. Amendments of the adopted plan are appropriate when the conditions, policies, etc., on which the plan is based, have significantly changed so as to materially detract from the usefulness of the plan as a guide to local decision making, or when required by the Department as a result of changes to the Minimum Standards and Procedures
<b>Plan Update</b>	A more or less complete re-write of the plan, which shall occur approximately every five years, in accordance with the recertification schedule maintained by the Department
<b>Planning</b>	The process of determining actions which state agencies, Regional Commissions, and local governments propose to take
<b>Qualified Local Government</b>	A county or municipality that adopts and maintains a comprehensive plan as defined in the Minimum Standards and Procedures.
<b>Regional Commission</b>	A Regional Commission established under O.C.G.A 50-8-32
<b>Regional Plan</b>	The comprehensive plan for a region prepared by the Regional Commission in accordance with the standards and procedures established by the Department

	Definitions
<b>Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria</b>	Those standards and procedures with respect to natural resources, the environment, and vital areas of the state established and administered by the Department of Natural Resources pursuant to O.C.G.A. 12-2-8, including, but not limited to, criteria for the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountains and protected river corridors.
<b>Service Delivery Strategy</b>	The intergovernmental arrangement among municipal governments, the county government, and other affected entities within the same county for delivery of community services, developed in accordance with the Service Delivery Strategy law. To ensure consistency between the plan and the agreed upon strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The services to be provided by the local government, as identified in the plan, cannot exceed those identified in the agreed upon strategy</li> <li>The service areas identified for individual services that will be provided by the local government must be consistent between the plan and Strategy</li> </ul> As provided in Code Section 36-70-28 (b)(1), Service Delivery Strategies must be reviewed, and revised if necessary, in conjunction with county and municipal comprehensive plan updates
<b>Supplemental Planning Recommendation</b>	The supplemental recommendations provided by the Department to assist communities in preparing plans and addressing the Minimum Standards and Procedures. The plan preparers and the community are encouraged to review these recommended best practices where referenced in the Minimum Standards and Procedures and choose those that have applicability or helpfulness to the community and its planning process.
<b>Update Schedule</b>	The schedule or schedules for updating comprehensive plans on an annual or five-year basis as provided for in paragraph (2)(b) of Section 110-12-1-.04. The term "Update Schedule" also means an additional schedule for the review of Service Delivery Strategy agreements by counties and affected municipalities on a ten-year basis in conjunction with comprehensive plan updates

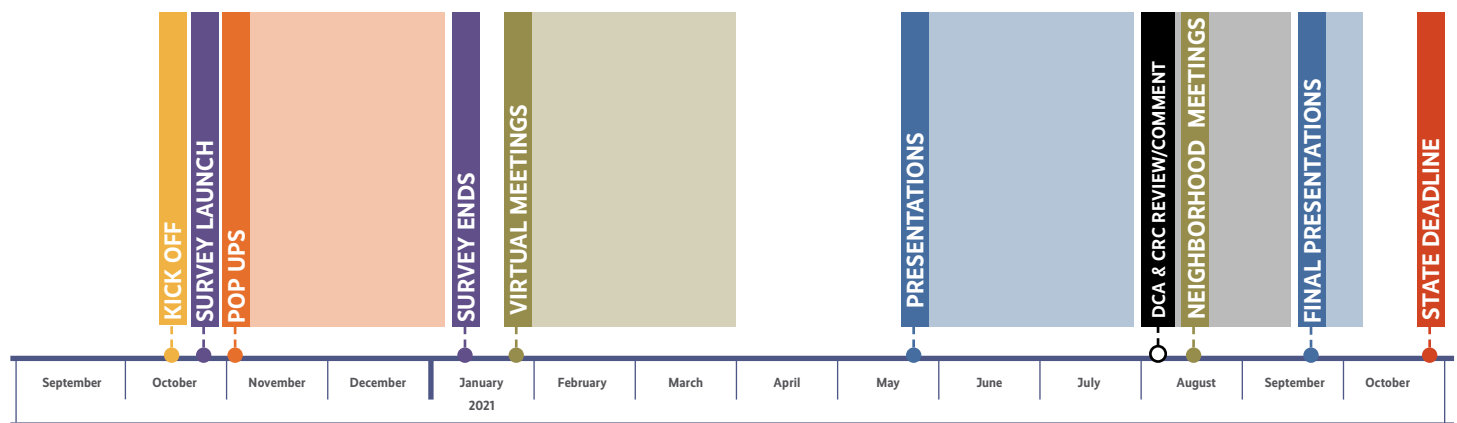


# PLAN SCHEDULE

The comprehensive planning process required approximately eighteen months to complete. From March 2020 to October 2021, the MPC worked closely with county and city planning staff, a planning committee, the Chatham County Commission, Savannah City Council, and citizens of Chatham County and Savannah to identify issues, share strengths and develop visions, goals, and strategies for this Plan.

The Planning Committee along with various stakeholders regularly reviewed planning concepts, and provided feedback on critical issues.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PHASE



### UNDERSTAND & EXPLORE

- Project Launch & Work Plan
- Background Review & Research
- Survey Launch
- Comment Mapper Launch
- Pop-ups Begin

### ENGAGE & DEVELOP

- Draft Element Visions & Goals
- Draft Short Term Work Programs
- Public Engagement Evaluation
- Virtual Meetings
- Subcommittee Meetings

### REFINE & FINALIZE

- Draft Plan Development
- Plan Refinement
- Draft Presentations
- DCA & CRC Review
- Final Presentation & Adoption

### FINAL PLAN

## PLANNING PHASES



