

# CHAIRMAN OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chester A. Ellis  
Chairman



Chatham County Courthouse  
Post Office Box 8161  
Suite 210 - 124 Bull Street  
Savannah, Georgia 31412

(912) 652-7950  
(912) 652-7880 - fax  
[Chairman@chathamcounty.org](mailto:Chairman@chathamcounty.org)

August 2, 2021

Coastal Regional Commission  
Attn: Aaron Carpenter  
1181 Coastal Drive SW  
Darien, Georgia 31305

RE: Chatham County Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Dear Mr. Carpenter,

Chatham County has completed an update of its current comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) and the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating the County's Comprehensive Plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), the County's designated planning agency, with specific questions or comments. The contact information is provided below.

Melanie Wilson, Executive Director  
Chatham County – Savannah  
Metropolitan Planning Commission  
110 East State Street  
Savannah, Ga. 31401  
[wilsonw@thempc.org](mailto:wilsonw@thempc.org)  
912-651-1440

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chester A. Ellis".

Chester A. Ellis, Chairman  
Chatham County Commission

Encl: Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan





## Office of the Mayor Savannah, Georgia

**Van R. Johnson, II**  
**Mayor**

July 26, 2021

Coastal Regional Commission  
Attn: Eric Landon  
1181 Coastal Drive SW  
Darien, Georgia 31305

RE: City of Savannah Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Dear Mr. Landon,

The City of Savannah has completed an update of its current comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) and the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating the City's Comprehensive Plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact the Chatham County – Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), the City's designated planning agency, with specific questions or comments.

Melanie Wilson; Executive Director  
Chatham County – Savannah  
Metropolitan Planning Commission  
110 East State Street  
Savannah, Ga. 31401  
[wilsonw@thempc.org](mailto:wilsonw@thempc.org)  
912-651-1440

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Van R. Johnson, II".

Van R. Johnson, II  
Mayor

Encl: Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040

CHATHAM COUNTY—SAVANNAH

2020 UPDATE

**DRAFT 08.04.2021**



**Adopted by Savannah City Council**  
October 31st, 2021

**Adopted by Chatham County Commission**  
October 31st, 2021





DRAFT

PLAN  
2040



**ADVANCING TOGETHER,  
REDEFINING TOMORROW.**

**DRAFT**



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:

*Joseph T. Welch*  
Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman

*6/29/2021*  
Date

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Attest:

*Melanie Wilson*  
Melanie Wilson, Executive Director

*6/29/2021*  
Date

Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission



**DRAFT**



**RESOLUTION OF TRANSMITTAL  
BY THE CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSION**

**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 updated the Comprehensive Plan to address economic development, land use, transportation, housing, and quality of life elements; and

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

**Whereas**, the Georgia Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs must review Chatham County's draft Comprehensive Plan to ensure consistency with neighboring jurisdictions, consistency with Region 12's adopted regional plan, and verify compliance with Georgia's Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning;

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED** that the Chatham County Commission does authorize the transmittal of the draft Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan for review by the Coastal Regional Commission and Department of Community Affairs as required by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.

Adopted this 30<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2021

CHATHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA

By: Chester Ellis

Chester Ellis, Chairman

Date: July 30, 2021

Attest: Janice E. Bocook

Janice Bocook, Clerk

Date: July 30, 2021



DRAFT



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

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

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah authorize the transmittal of the draft Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan for review by the Coastal Regional Commission and Department of Community Affairs as required by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989.



Van R. Johnson, III  
Mayor

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 committees, 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 Environmental 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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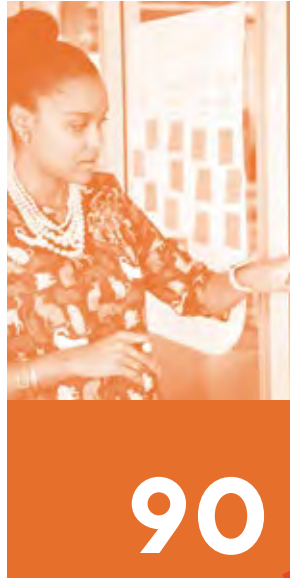
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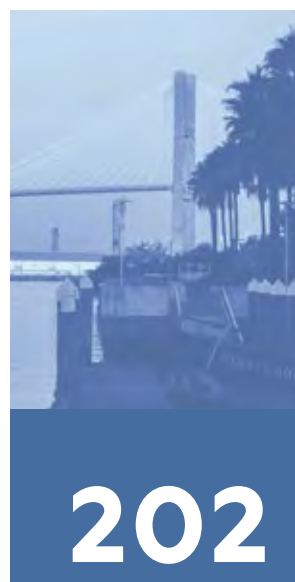
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DRAFT



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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

The Unincorporated Chatham County—Savannah Comprehensive Plan is the community’s 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 sector 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:**

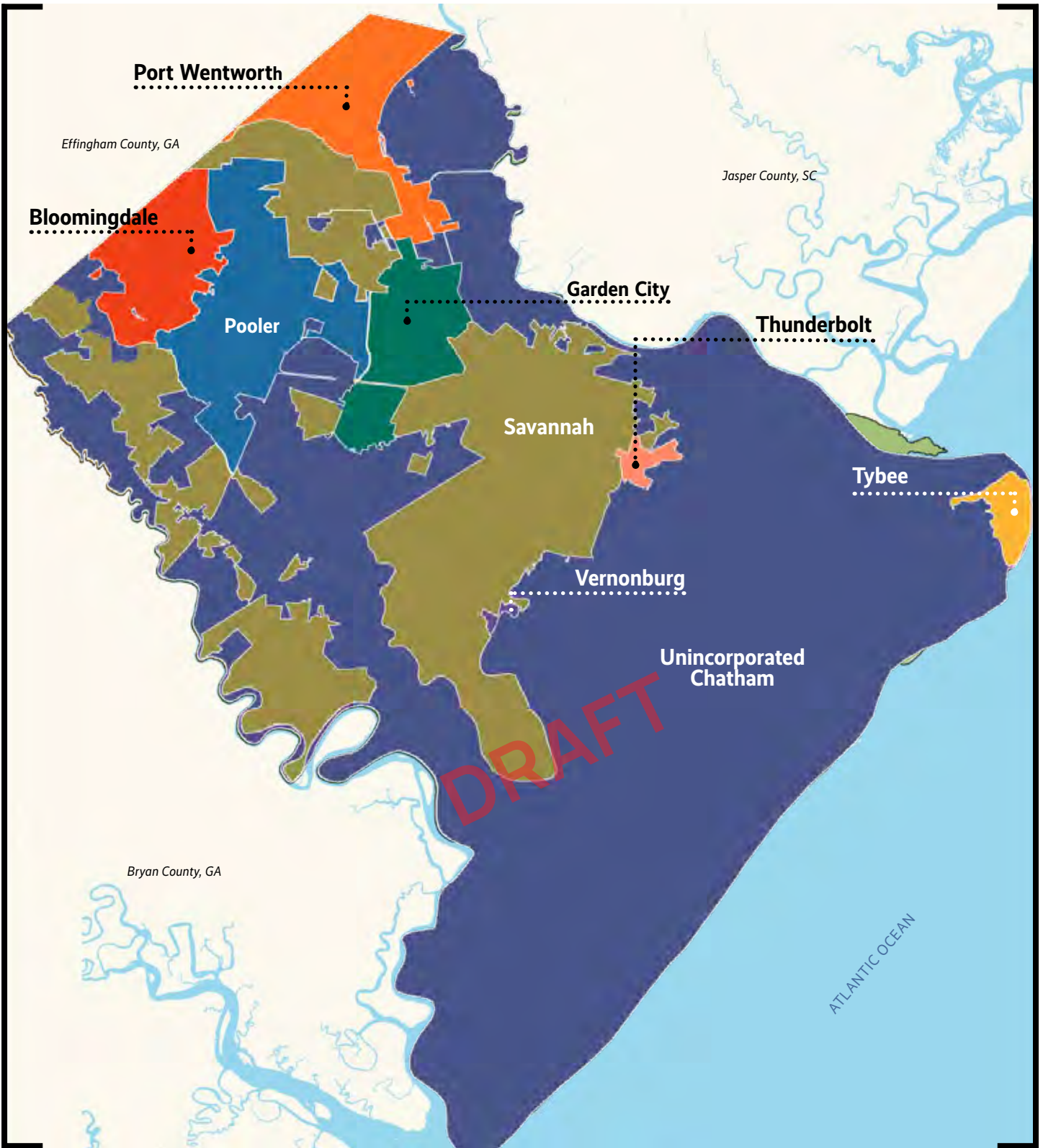
These policies are reflections of community values identified through public outreach efforts. These policies will be used as guidelines in the analysis of rezoning decisions and other capital investment decisions.

### **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 this planning document.







# WHY DO WE PLAN?

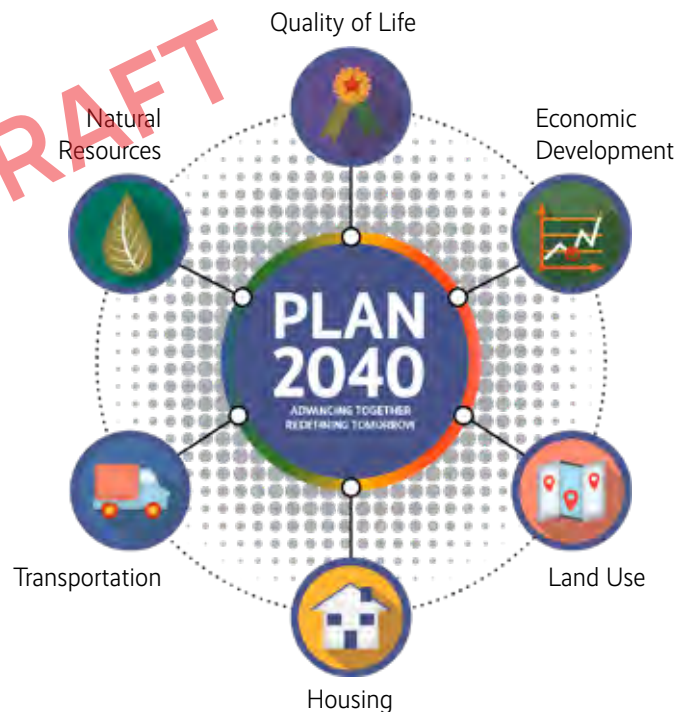
The Georgia Planning Act requires that cities and counties maintain comprehensive plans that help shape future growth. These plans generally recognize the physical, economic, social, political, and aesthetic factors of a community and are developed in a process that includes thoughtful analysis and robust 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 highlights 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 that responsible party/parties, the time frame within which the action should occur, and other details for implementation of 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

For the purpose of these rules, 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>• 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 these Minimum Standards and Procedures. 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>
<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>

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 that 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 these 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 comprehensive plan updates
<b>Supplemental Planning Rec.</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 of these Rules. 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



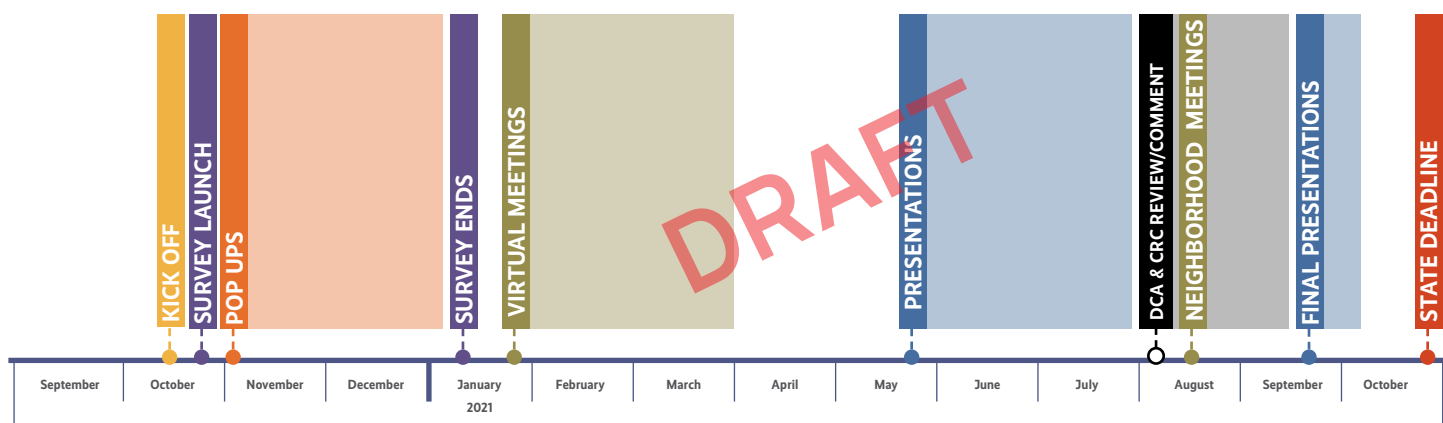


# PLAN SCHEDULE

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

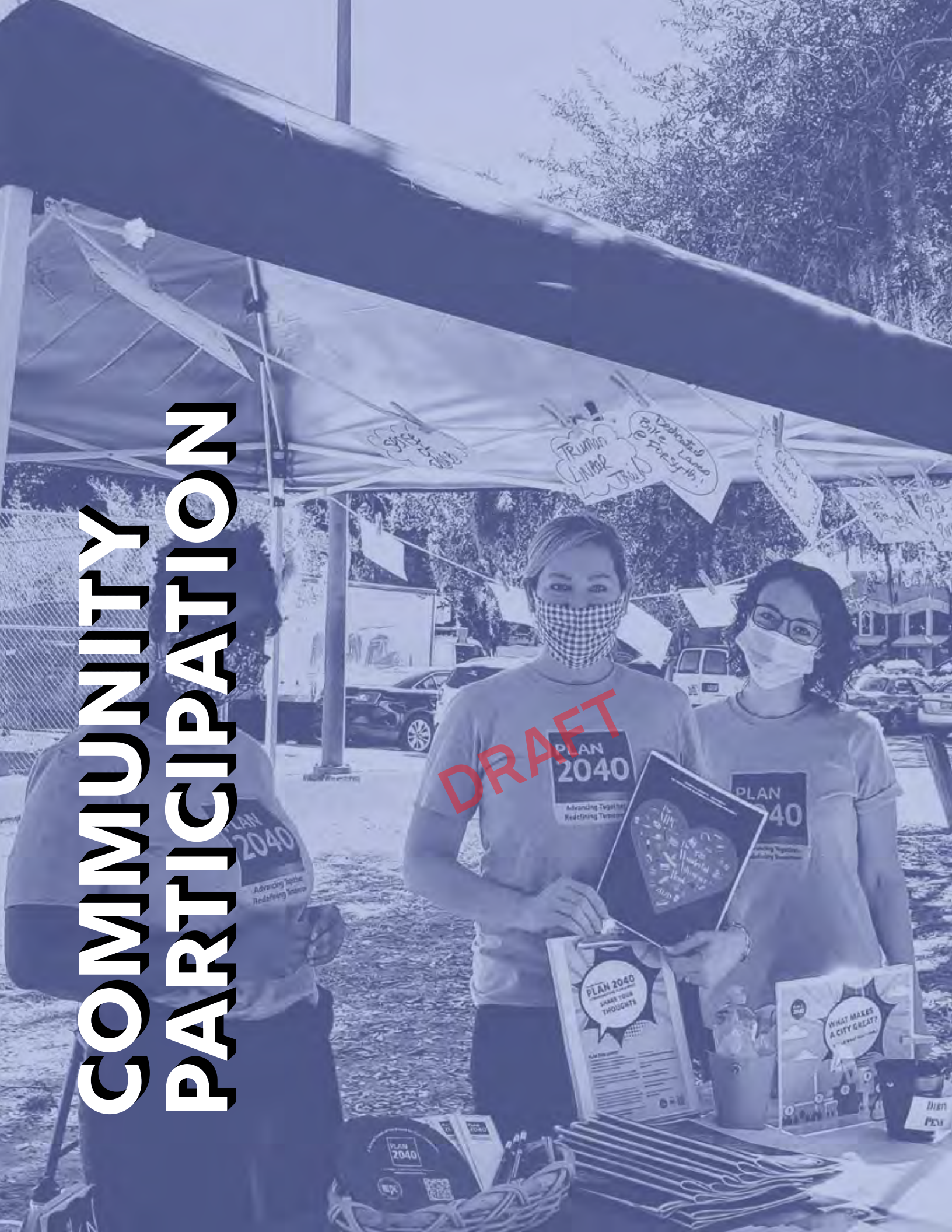
## PLANNING PHASES



Acknowledgements  
**PLAN 2040 XXI**



# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION







# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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## Introduction

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Plan 2040 ultimately belongs to the citizens of unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah.

Through the Community Participation Plan Element, the Plan 2040 team sought to gather the community's opinions, priorities, and visions about the future of the area. An in-depth public engagement effort was made in the months leading up to the draft of Plan 2040, and included a public survey, pop-up events, and virtual meetings.

Specifically, this community participation plan sought to engage the public on issues which are addresses primarily in the comprehensive plan.



# COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

The vision for Plan 2040 represents the voice of our community. Through the two-year planning process, Chatham County–Savannah community members shared their unique perspectives on what makes their community great and their suggestions for improvements. The goal of the engagement process was to bring as many voices into the planning effort as possible to get a wide range of ideas and perspectives and build a broad base for implementing Plan 2040.

The Plan 2040 process collected valuable input from diverse platforms, community members, and stakeholders to shape the Plan's vision and goals. The outreach process involved a variety of different approaches, which are listed below:

- 5 Subcommittee Meetings
- 14 Virtual Public Meetings
- 30 Internal Meetings
- 10 Email Blasts (Over 1,500 Email Recipients)
- 6 Quarterly Newsletters
- 1 MPC Annual Report
- Press Releases (Traditional Media Interviews)
- City of Savannah Online Promotional Video (2.8K Views)
- Online Interactive Comment Mapper (~300 Comments)
- 8 Community Pop-up Events
- Social Media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook)
- Utility Bill Messages
- Dedicated Plan 2040 Website
- Online Survey (1,406 Participants)

DRAFT









# COMMUNITY SURVEY

## Survey Overview

MPC staff developed a survey aimed at collecting a wide range of input. The survey was intended to be more in depth than previous comprehensive plan updates and took approximately 25 minutes to complete. The survey aimed to collect a wide range of input and covered various topics including:

- Quality of Life
- Housing
- Land Use
- Natural Resources (Sea Level Rise)
- Transportation
- Economic Development

The 24-question survey consisted of multiple choice and open-ended response questions. The MPC staff participated in the survey and made suggested changes prior to publication. The survey was available online and in print versions, and was offered in Spanish for communities where English is not the primary language.

The survey was open from October 23, 2020 to January 19, 2021. A total of 1,406 responses were received, with 989 responses received from Savannah and 417 responses received from unincorporated Chatham County.





To get a better understanding of the citizens that participated in the Plan 2040 Survey, additional information about each respondent was requested.

- What is your race/ethnicity?
- What is your age?
- What housing category describes you?
- What is your highest level of education?
- What is your primary mode of travel?

The Plan's Subcommittee participated in an exercise analyzing issues and opportunities in Chatham-Savannah.

Subcommittee input helped determine the needs and opportunities as part of the comprehensive planning process. The results are incorporated into the body of the plan. On pages 42 and 43 are the results of the Subcommittee's Needs and Opportunities analysis.

**RACE/ETHNICITY**

- 73%—White or Caucasian
- 11%—Black or AA
- 1%—Asian
- 13%—Prefer not to answer
- 2%—Other
- 3%—Hispanic or Latinx

**AGE**

- 0%—Under 18
- 14%—18–34
- 28%—35–49
- 26%—50–64
- 30%—65 and Older
- 3%—Prefer not to answer

**HOUSING OWNERSHIP**

- 85%—Homeowner
- 14%—Renter
- 5%—Rental property owner
- 1%—STVR owner
- 2%—Other

**EDUCATION**

- 0%—Less than High School
- 4%—High School Diploma
- 16%—Some College
- 33%—Bachelor's Degree
- 44%—Graduate Degree
- 4%—Prefer not to answer

**MODE OF TRAVEL**

- 84%—Drive alone
- 3%—Carpool
- 2%—Bus
- 9%—Bike/Walk
- 0%—Rideshare
- 2%—Other



# PLAN 2040 SURVEY QUESTIONS

## Quality of Life

1. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about the quality of life topics?
2. Please rate your satisfaction with the following public amenities and services in your community?
3. In your opinion, what are the most important historic preservation actions?
4. Do you have any additional comments about quality of life?

## Housing

5. Which categories describes you?
6. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about housing topics?
7. Please rank the following housing options in order of how they should be prioritized in the next 5 years, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest?
8. In your opinion, do we need more, less, or about the same of the following housing types?
9. Do you have any additional comments about housing?

## Land Use

10. Compared to recent trends, do you think we should encourage the following types of development more, less, or about the same over the next 10 years?
11. Please rank the following growth scenario in terms of your preference. On each map below, Chatham County's existing populated areas are shown in orange and possible areas of new growth under that scenario are shown in yellow.
12. Do you have any additional comments about land use?

## Natural Resources

13. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about natural resources?
14. How important are the following objectives to you?
15. Which of the following strategies would you support to protect resources from hazards related to climate change?
16. Do you have any additional comments about natural resources?

## Transportation

17. What is your primary mode of travel?
18. How strongly do you agree with the following statements about transportation?
19. Do you have any additional comments about transportation?

## Economic Development

20. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most negative and 5 being the most positive, how would you rate the general growth in the past 5 years?
21. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about economic development?
22. How important are the following objectives to you?
23. Do you have any additional comments about economic development?
24. Are there other priorities or issues not covered in this survey that you think are important to consider as part of the Comprehensive Plan?





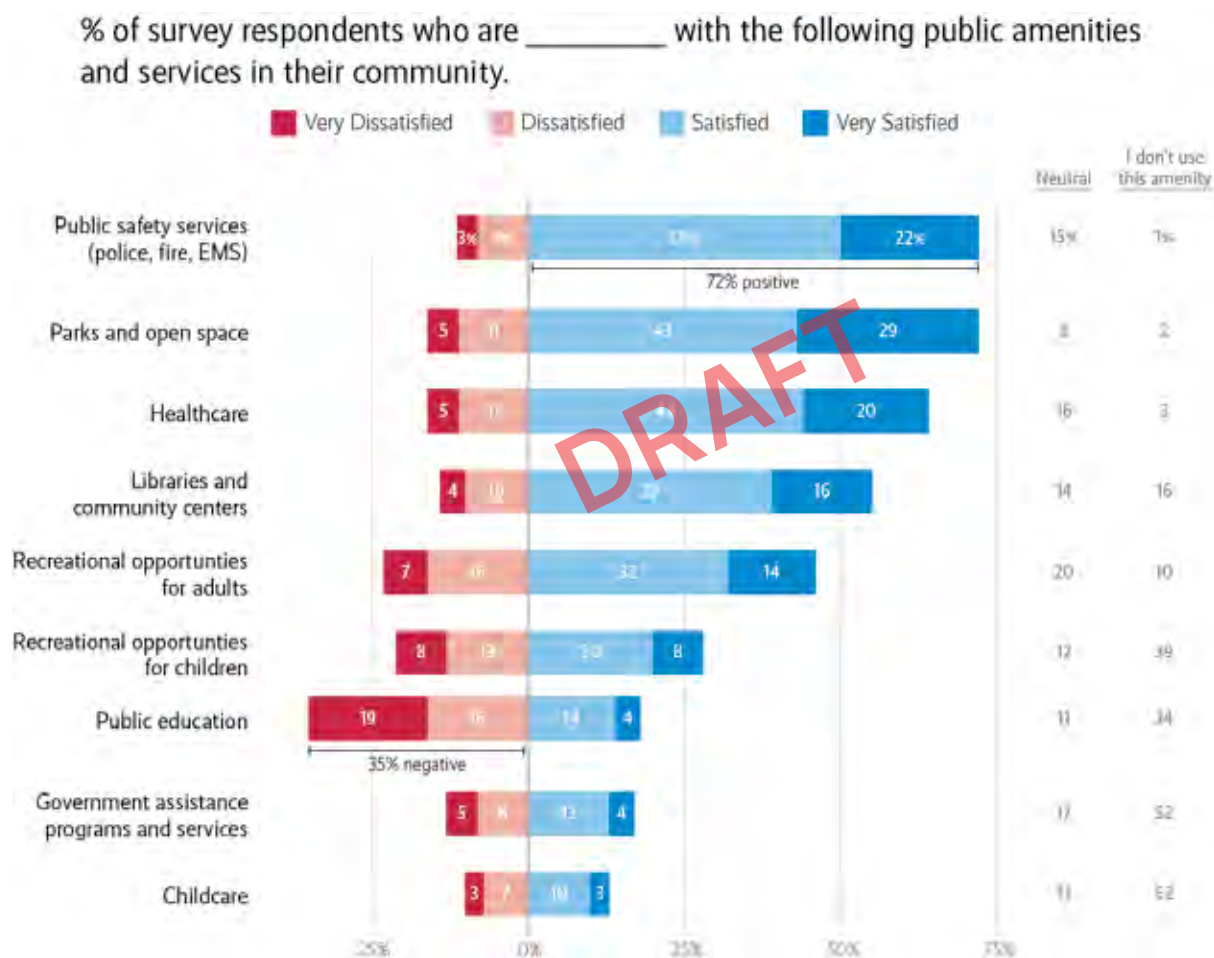
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## Quality of Life

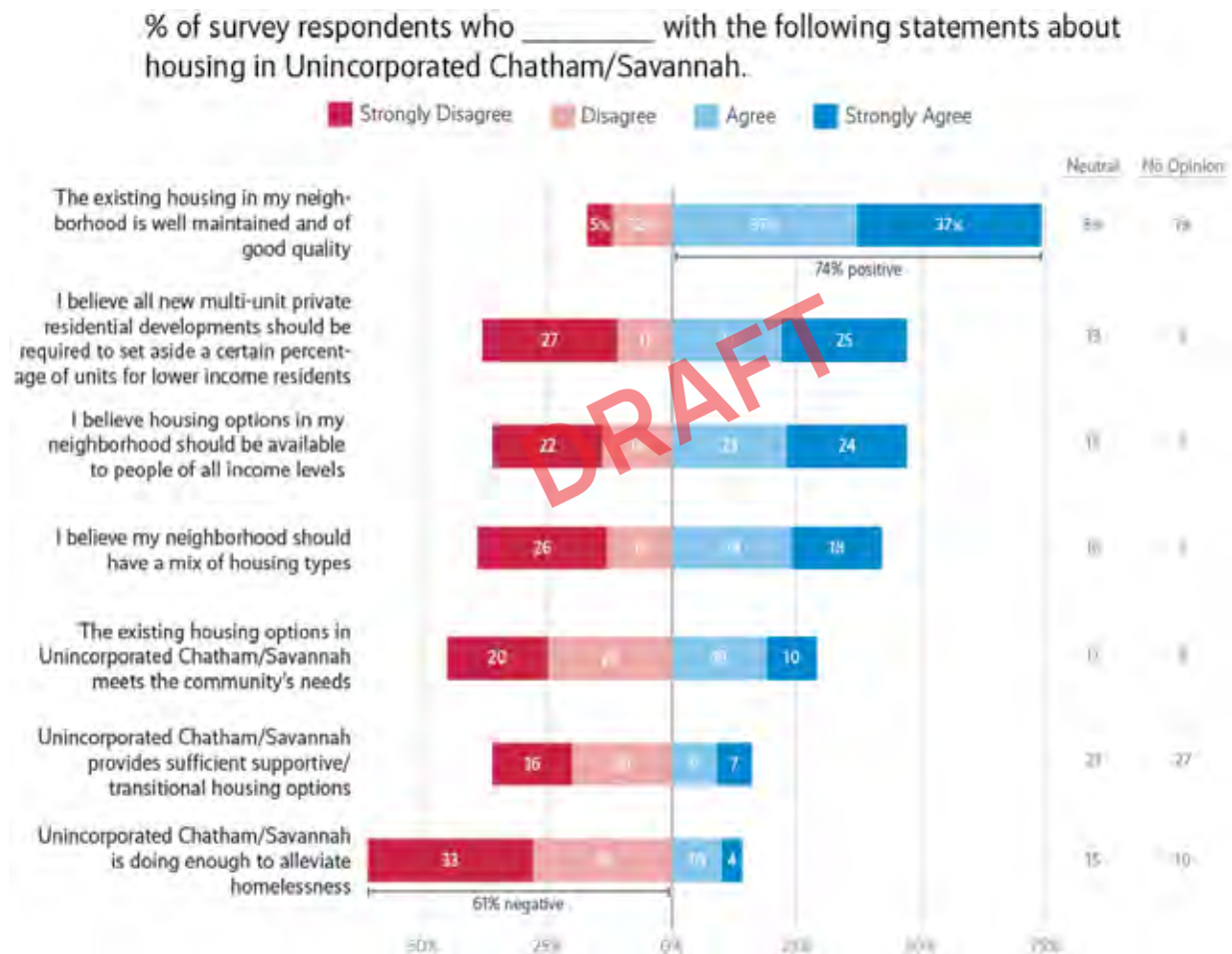
1. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about the quality of life topics?
2. **Please rate your satisfaction with the following public amenities and services in your community?** (Results Below)
3. In your opinion, what are the most important historic preservation actions?
4. Do you have any additional comments about quality of life?





## Housing

1. Which categories describes you?
2. **How strongly would you agree with the following statements about housing topics?** (Results Below)
3. Please rank the following housing options in order of how they should be prioritized in the next 5 years, with 1 being the highest priority and 5 being the lowest?
4. In your opinion, do we need more, less, or about the same of the following housing types?
5. Do you have any additional comments about housing?





## Land Use

1. Compared to recent trends, do you think we should encourage the following types of development more, less, or about the same over the next 10 years? (Results Below)
2. Please rank the following growth scenario in terms of your preference. On each map below, Chatham County's existing populated areas are shown in orange and possible areas of new growth under that scenario are shown in yellow.
3. Do you have any additional comments about land use?

% of survey respondents who think the following types of development should be encouraged more, less, or about the same over the next 10 years.

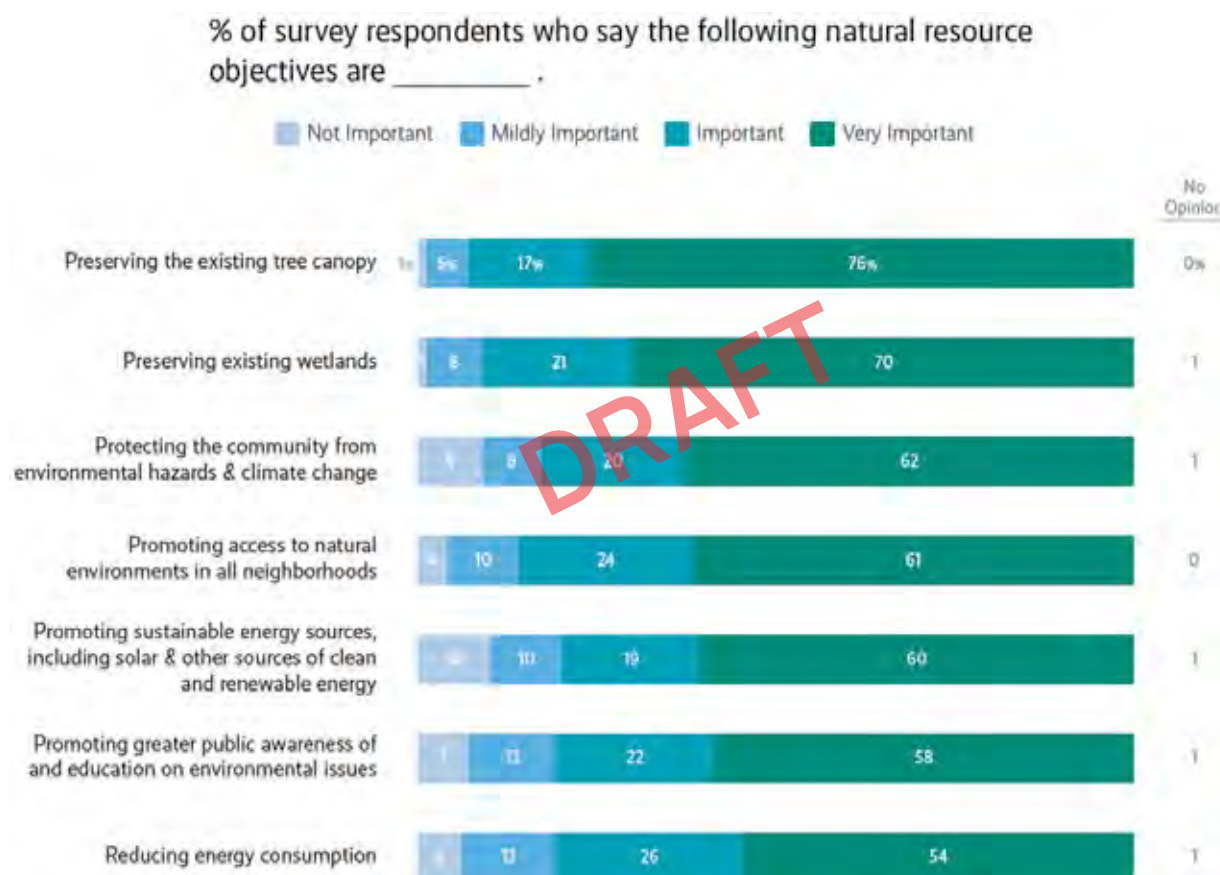
Encouraged more Encouraged the same amount Encouraged less No opinion





## Natural Resources

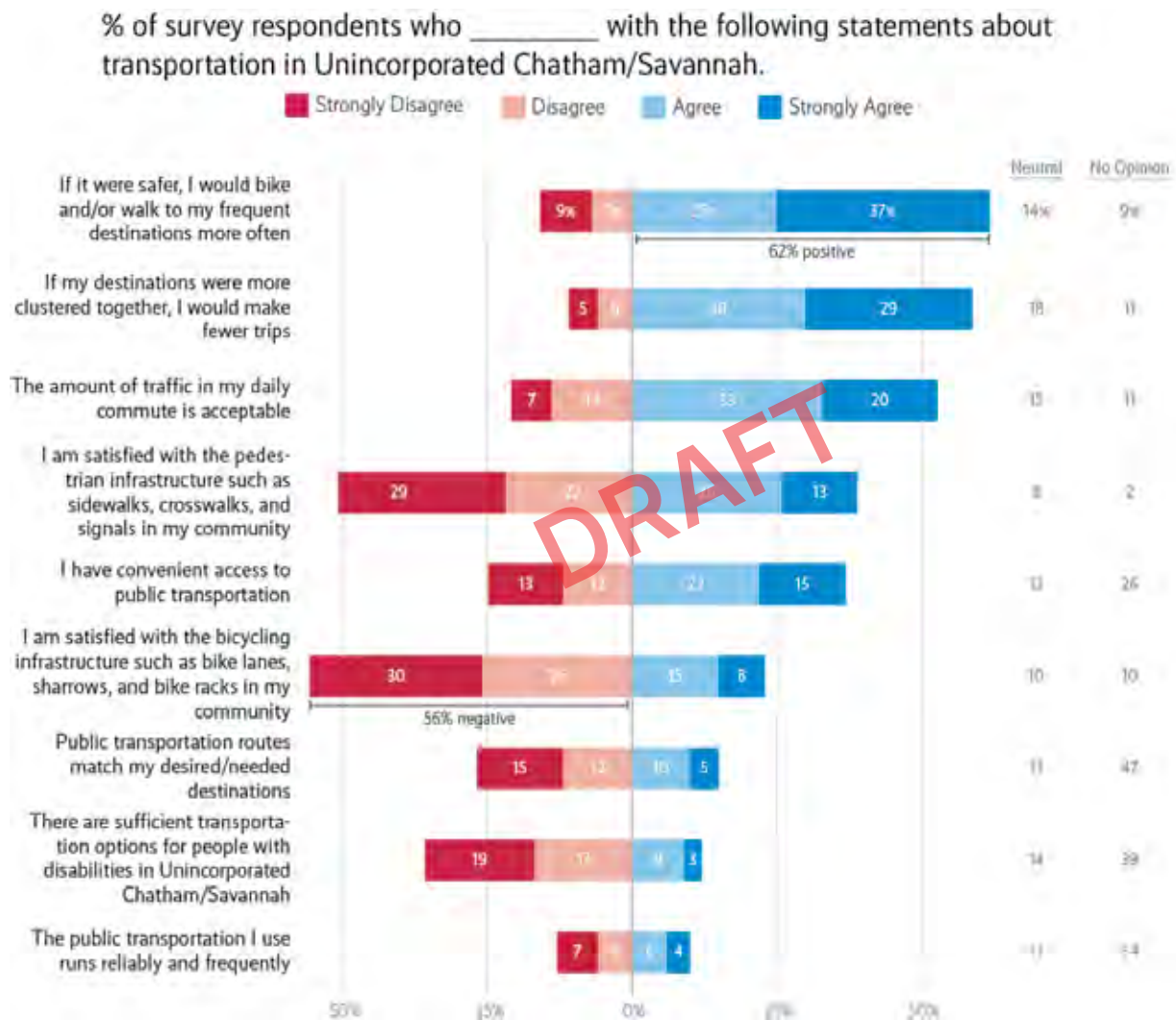
1. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about natural resources? (Results Below)
2. How important are the following objectives to you?
3. Which of the following strategies would you support to protect resources from hazards related to climate change?
4. Do you have any additional comments about natural resources?





## Transportation

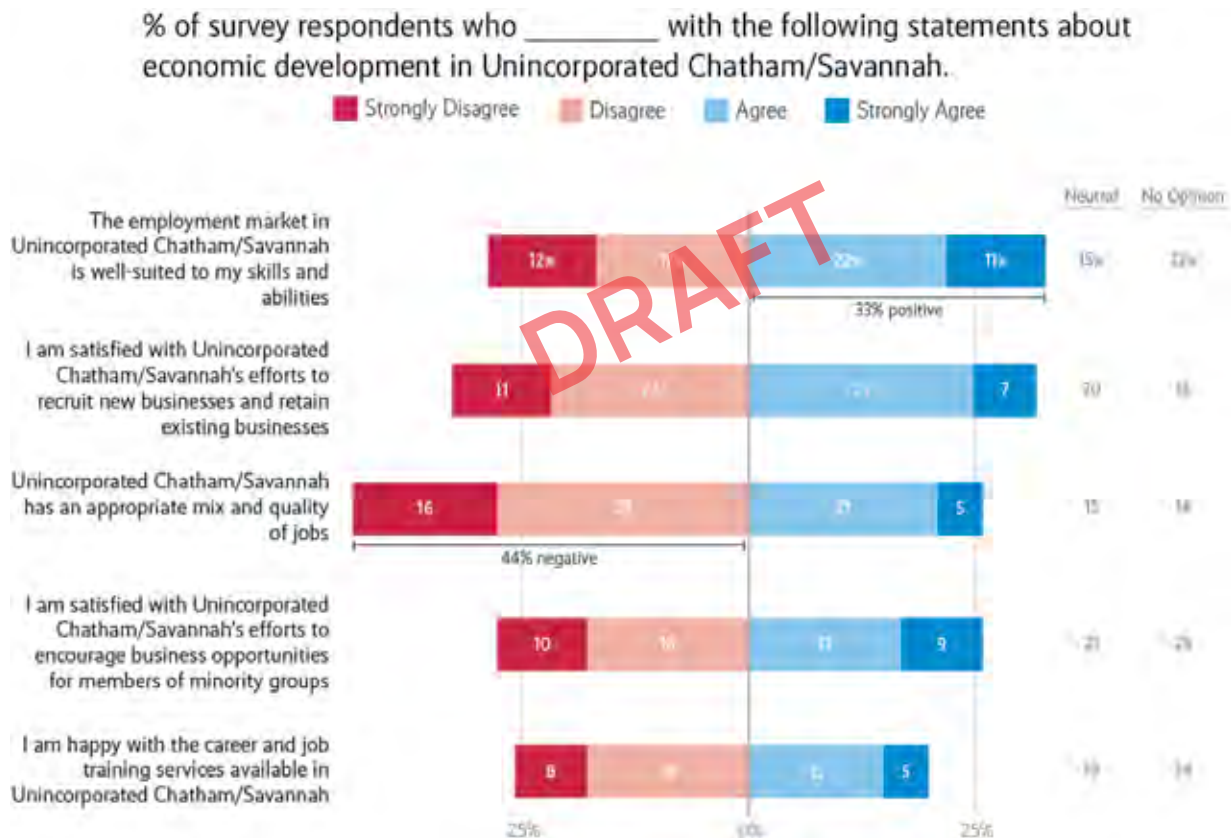
1. What is your primary mode of travel?
2. How strongly do you agree with the following statements about transportation? (Results Below)
3. Do you have any additional comments about transportation?





## Economic Development

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most negative and 5 being the most positive, how would you rate the general growth in the past 5 years?
2. How strongly would you agree with the following statements about economic development? (Results Below)
3. How important are the following objectives to you?
4. Do you have any additional comments about economic development?
5. Are there other priorities or issues not covered in this survey that you think are important to consider as part of the Comprehensive Plan?



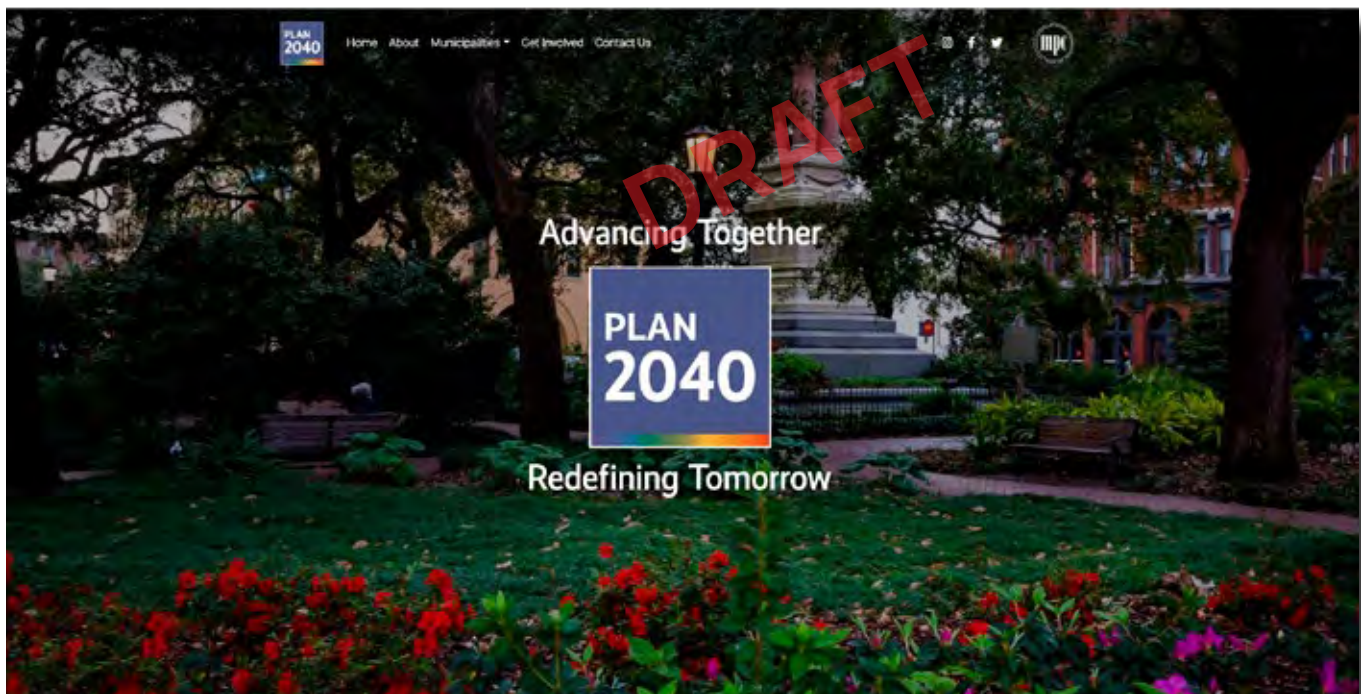


# WEB PAGE

## Web Page Overview

To engage the community further, the Plan 2040 team designed and maintained a web page to be a dedicated platform for all planning, public outreach and social media information.

The web page was set up and designed to be user friendly, easily read and interactive for all users. The page included a diverse mix of information including a project summary, history, a virtual meeting library, comment mapper, draft chapters, and a bulletin board of upcoming events.





# SOCIAL MEDIA

## Social Media Overview

While the web page served as a platform for all of the planning documents, the social media page served as an advertising platform to engage the public on upcoming events, meetings, pop-up events and announcements. The social media platforms used to advertise Plan 2040 included Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.





# COMMENT MAP

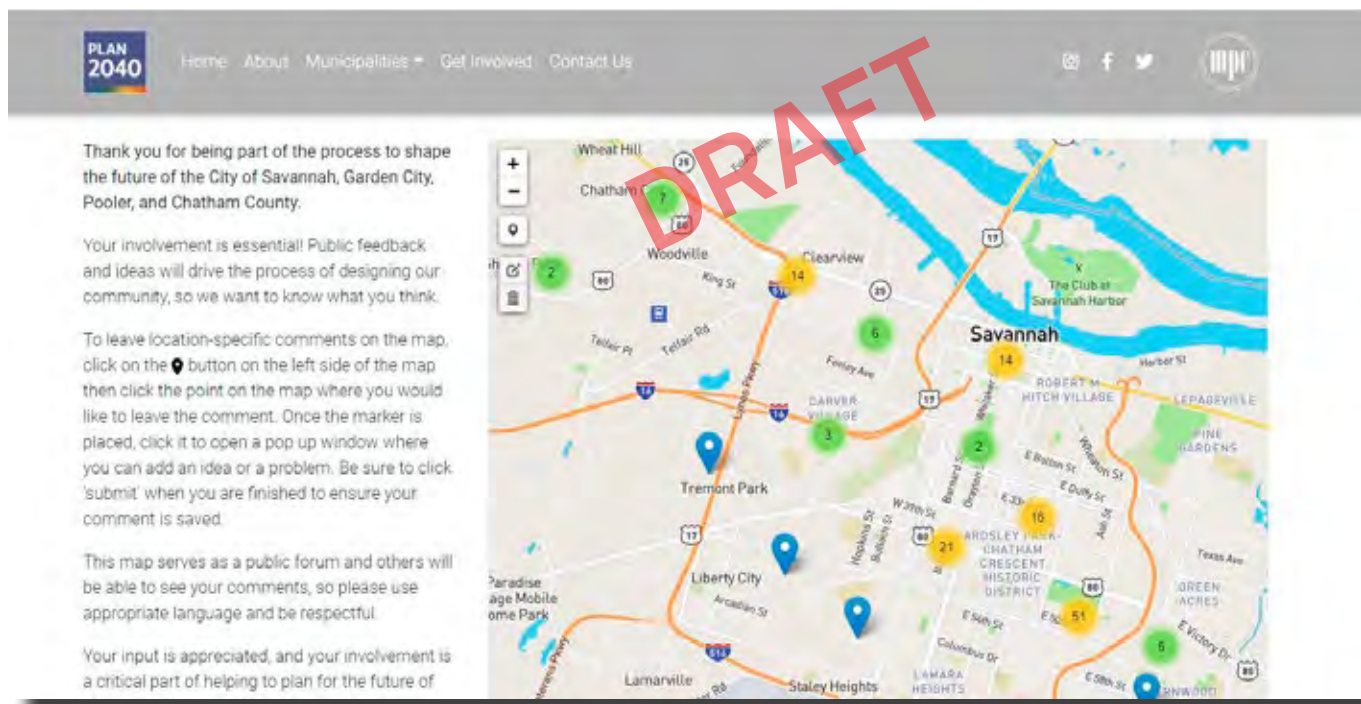
## Comment Map Overview

To ensure that the Plan 2040 public outreach methods were widespread and equitable, the Plan 2040 team created a comment mapping tool to collect additional feedback. This technique was a new tool that allowed the community members to anonymously geolocate "Ideas" and "Problems" in their community.

The collection process revealed opportunities in the community and provided insights into where future neighborhood plans and corridor studies might be needed. It also served as a starting point for future public outreach.

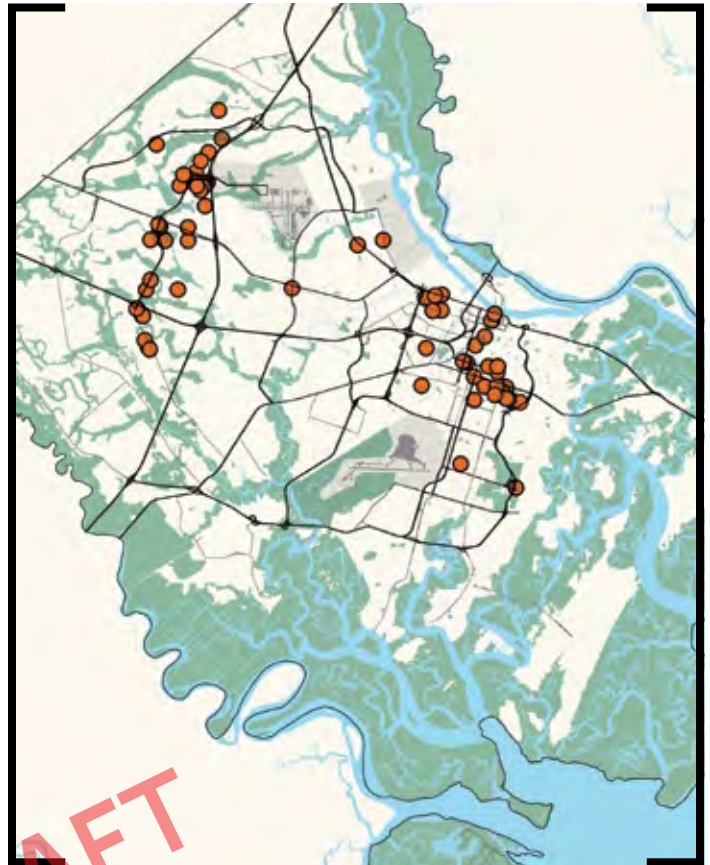
The major "Ideas" and "Problems" that were uncovered with the comment mapper revealed that food insecurity, neighborhood trash/maintenance, and walkability are hindering the quality of life of the citizens of both unincorporated Chatham and Savannah alike.

The data represented next is from October 23, 2020 to June 10, 2021. This resource will remain active and will be used as an additional method of public comment for future Plan 2040 engagement opportunities.





## Response Locations



## What We Heard

### IDEAS

- Grocery Store
- Community Center
- More Sidewalk Connections
- Mixed Use Housing
- Street Lighting
- Dog Park
- Bike Lanes
- Movie Studio
- Pocket Parks
- Community Beautification Projects

### PROBLEMS

- CAT Bus Stops Needed
- Traffic Congestion
- Public Restrooms Needed
- Flooding
- Excess Trash & Litter
- Lack of Housing Options
- Incomplete Sidewalk Connections
- More Tree Canopy
- Major Ditch & Canal Drainage Improvements Needed



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH POP-UPS

## Community Outreach Overview

The Plan 2040 team conducted a series of nine community pop-up events throughout Chatham County and the city of Savannah. The pop-up events were held at various times to reach as many residents as possible across the County.

Following CDC recommended COVID-19 safety measures, the Plan 2040 team also offered virtual meetings to supplement the community outreach effort.

There were seven rounds of virtual meetings that included an overview of Plan 2040, polls, and opportunities for community feedback on progress. In addition, virtual "Town Talks" were held to specifically focus on reaching neighborhood associations and faith-based community.



These events were advertised and offered to community or faith-based organization responding to email blasts and other communications.

- Chatham Recycles—"Haunted Recycling" (October 24, 2020)
- Starland Yard—"Mini-Market" (October 28, 2020)
- Forsyth Park—"Farmer's Market" (November 21, 2020)
- Forsyth Park—"Farmer's Market" (December 21, 2020)
- Kiwanis—"TOWN Talks" (March 4)
- Colonial Village Community—"TOWN Talks" (April 12)
- Cann-Jackson Park—"TOWN Talks" (April 1)
- Ardsley Park—"Pop-up Park" (April 14)
- Edgemere Sackville—"TOWN Talks" (April 21)
- Rotary Club—"TOWN Talks" (June 15)
- Neighborhood Meeting 1—"TOWN Talks<sup>2.0</sup>" (August 10)
- Neighborhood Meeting 2—"TOWN Talks<sup>2.0</sup>" (August 17)
- Neighborhood Meeting 3—"TOWN Talks<sup>2.0</sup>" (August 24)

Over 1,170 participants attended these pop-ups, neighborhood and virtual meetings and provided over 1,000+ comments.



# MEETINGS

## Internal Meetings & Committee Meetings

- Georgia Coastal Indicators Coalition—(August 19, 2020)
- TCC & CAC— (August 20, 2020)
- ACAT—(August 24, 2020)
- CORE MPO—(August 26, 2020)
- Georgia Coastal Indicators Coalition—(October 7, 2020)
- MPC Board—(October 12, 2020)
- UGA Graduate Studies Class—(October 14, 2020)
- TCC & CAC—(December 3, 2020)
- ACAT—(December 7, 2020)
- CORE MPO—(December 9, 2020)
- TCC—(February 18)
- CORE MPO—(February 24)
- Georgia Coastal Indicators Coalition—(March 5)
- County Commission Meeting—(March 26)
- PLAN 2040 Subcommittee—(April 8)
- PLAN 2040 Subcommittee—(May 6)
- Historic Site and Monument Commission—(May 6)
- Savannah Historic District Board of Review—(May 12)
- PLAN 2040 Subcommittee—(May 20)
- Savannah Historic District Board of Review—(May 26)
- Savannah City Council—(May 27)
- Georgia Coastal Indicators Coalition—(June 2)
- PLAN 2040 Subcommittee—(June 3)
- County Commission Meeting—(June 11)
- PLAN 2040 Subcommittee—(June 17)
- MPC Board—(June 29)
- Savannah City Council—(July 8)
- County Commission Meeting—(July 16)
- Savannah City Council—(September TBD)
- County Commission Meeting—(September TBD)

## Public Meetings

- Virtual Meeting Round 1—(January 26)
- Virtual Meeting—(January 27)
- Virtual Meeting Round 2—(February 22)
- Virtual Meeting—(February 23)
- Virtual Meeting Round 3—(March 30)
- One-to-One Citizen Meeting—(April 7)
- Virtual Meeting—(April 9)
- MPC Board—(June 29)
- Savannah City Council—(July 8)
- County Commission Meeting—(July 16)
- Virtual Meeting "TownTalks 2.0"—(August 31)



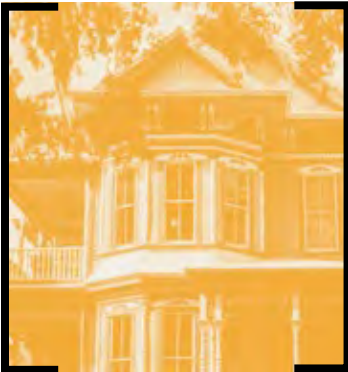


# NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES



## QUALITY OF LIFE

- Lack of Visual Police Presence
- Trash, Litter, Illegal Dumping Everywhere
- Noxious Smells from Local Industry
- Panhandling, Vagrancy & Homelessness
- More Farmer's Markets, Grocery Stores & Healthy Food Options
- Obnoxious Traffic Sounds & Noise
- Concerns About Crime
- Unequal Quality of Life between Neighborhoods
- Stricter Code Enforcement
- More Services for Homeless
- Improve Lighting in Parks
- Concern with Food Insecurity
- Preservation of Heritage Sites



## HOUSING

- Mixed Use Housing
- More Workforce Housing
- Higher Density Housing Closer to Employment Centers
- Housing Cost is Too Expensive for Locals
- Restriction on Short Term Vacation Rentals
- More Senior Housing
- Increase the Quality of Public Housing
- Housing Options for Transitional Housing
- Tiny Home Options for Veterans
- By Right Accessory Dwelling Units
- More Equitable Housing Options
- Require Developers to Provide Affordable Units in Developments



## LAND USE

- More Parks, Trails & Green Space
- More Complete Sidewalks
- More Walk/Bike Infrastructure
- Restrict Additional Hotels
- Not Enough Public Spaces
- Too Many Chain Retailers
- More Detailed Neighborhood Plans





#### NATURAL RESOURCES

- Protection of the Existing Tree Canopy
- More Trail Systems that Interconnect
- Neighborhood Parklets
- More Dog Parks
- Better Maintenance for Parks
- Open Space Master Plan
- More Recycling & Green Initiatives
- Preserve our Wetlands & Marshes
- Drainage Issues and Flooding



#### TRANSPORTATION

- Accessibility to Bus Stops
- Bus Stops Should be Sheltered
- Large Employers Should Share Costs for Roadway Improvements
- Gaps in CAT Bus Service
- Impractical Bus Frequencies
- Traffic Congestion Due to City Growth
- Consider Designated Busway Lanes
- Reverting One Ways back to Two way Streets
- Protected Bike Lanes
- Consider Transit Oriented Development



#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Need Higher Paying Jobs
- Less Focus on Tourism and More On Local Residents
- Providing More Programs for Youth
- More Community Events
- More Investment into Our Schools
- More Career Opportunities outside of Tourism
- Neighborhood Beautification
- Diversify our Economy



A photograph of three people—a man, a woman, and a boy—running joyfully through a grassy field under a bright, hazy sky. The man on the left is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and jeans. The woman in the center is wearing a striped dress. The boy on the right is wearing a patterned shirt and jeans. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

# COMMUNITY PROFILE ELEMENT

# 01





# COMMUNITY PROFILE

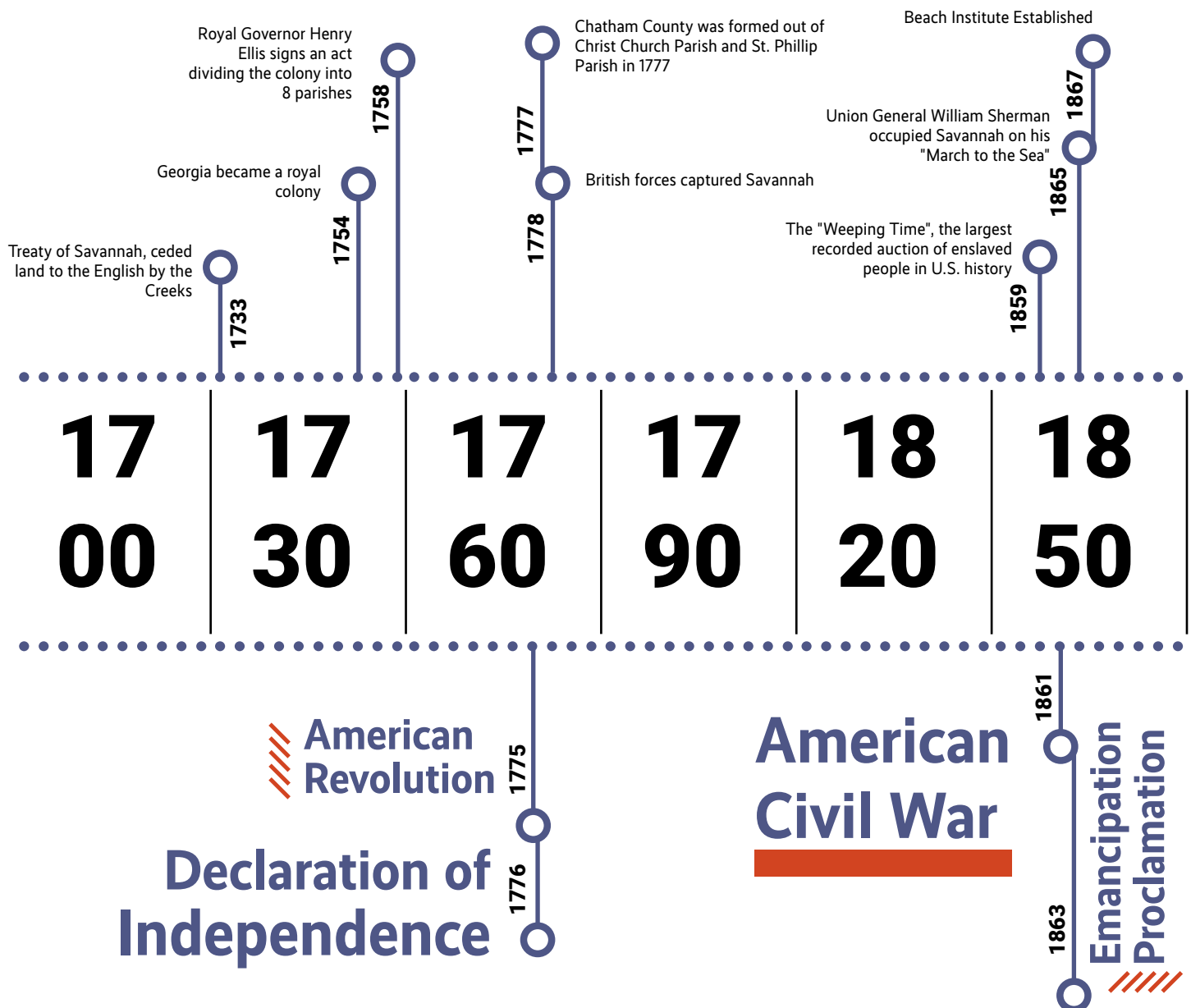
## Introduction

Chatham County was established in 1777 as one of the original counties of Georgia. It is the most urbanized county in the 200-mile coastal area between Charleston, South Carolina and Jacksonville, Florida, and the most populous county in Georgia outside the Atlanta region. The County serves as an economic, cultural, and governmental hub for a six county, bi-state region, as well as an international focal point for trade.

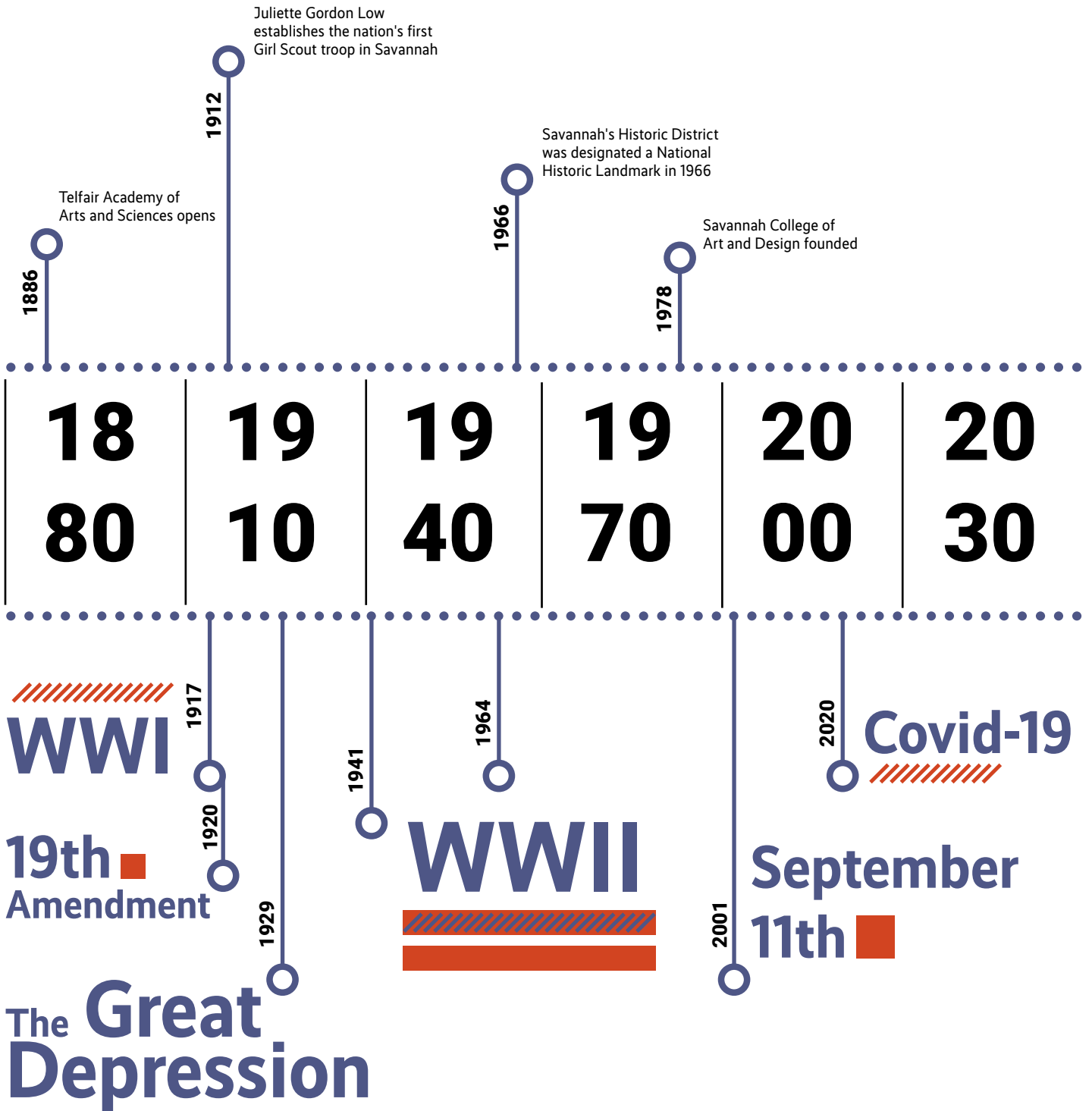
Chatham County has grown considerably since the start of the 20th Century. With one exception, the County's rate of population growth has remained above 5% in each decennial Census since 1900. This stability has insulated the area from the perils of "boom and bust" development that have adversely affected long-term planning efforts in many other communities. Chatham County has a long tradition of planning, and the community intends to maintain its historic character and natural resources while welcoming new residents, many of whom become the strongest advocates of local planning.



# CHATHAM COUNTY & SAVANNAH HISTORY









# REGIONAL POPULATION

## Savannah MSA

Chatham County is the largest county in the Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which also includes Bryan and Effingham counties. The Savannah MSA, together with Bulloch, Liberty, Long, and Wayne Counties, comprises the larger Savannah–Hinesville–Statesboro Combined Statistical Area (CSA). The Savannah–Hinesville–Statesboro CSA is bordered by the Hilton Head Island–Bluffton MSA to the north and the Brunswick MSA to the south.

Throughout the past 100 years, the population of the region has grown as a result of several technological advances. The invention of air conditioning and widespread mosquito control practices were precursors to expansive development in the Savannah area and across much of the Southeast. These technologies made life in the region far more comfortable, convenient, and safe. Alongside these advances that improved the quality of life in Savannah, the area's economy has grown to serve regional, national, and international markets in a variety of sectors. Today, the Port of Savannah is the fourth busiest container port in the country, behind only Los Angeles, CA, Long Beach, CA, and New York, NY.

Historically, Chatham County and the city of Savannah have served as the region's largest population center, commercial core, and industrial hub. While this remains true today, suburbanization has led to significant population increases in Effingham and Bryan counties over the past 50 years. A growing network of highways and relatively inexpensive land have accelerated this move away from the denser urban core, a trend that is projected to continue in the coming decades.

### METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA)

A metropolitan statistical area is a region consisting of a city and surrounding communities that are linked by social and economic factors, as established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB).



Figure 1.1–Savannah MSA







HISTORIC LUCAS THEATER





## Population Growth

Figure 1.2 illustrates the historical population growth and future projections for each county in the Savannah MSA. While Chatham County is expected to retain its status as the largest population center in the metropolitan area, its neighboring counties are forecast to experience a greater rate of growth in the coming years.

*By 2040, the population of Chatham County is expected to grow 15.5% to 335,000 residents*

By 2040, the population of Chatham County is predicted to be approximately 335,000 residents and the population of the Savannah MSA is predicted to be approximately 500,000. This equates to a population increase of approximately 15.5% in Chatham County over the next 20 years and an increase of approximately 27% in the Savannah MSA.

*These population projections were prepared by the Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) using a standard cohort component demographic methodology. This approach models population change as a function of initial population estimates broken down by age and sex, fertility, mortality, and migration.*

### Population Projection, 1900–2040

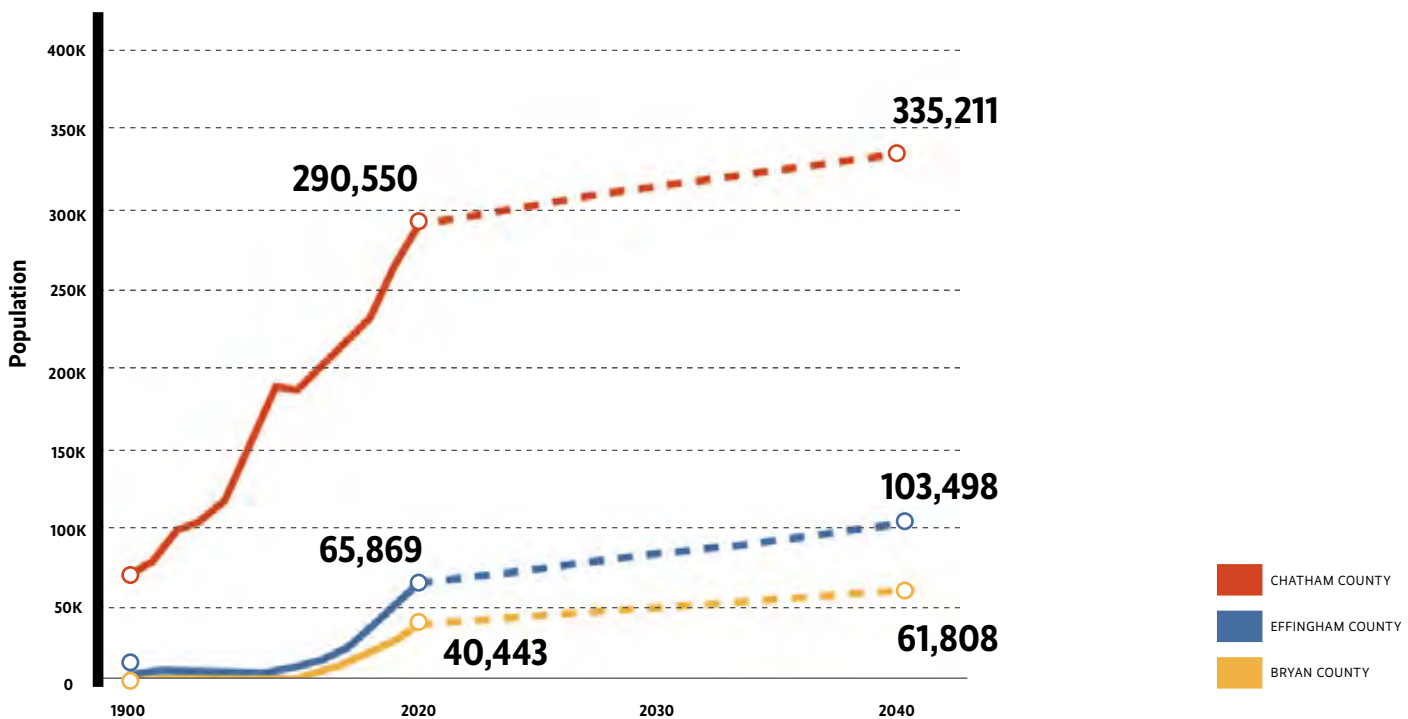


Figure 1.2–Savannah MSA Population Projection  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



The net effect of regional development on the population of Chatham County and the city of Savannah can be considered in broad categories:

### THE SERVICE ECONOMY

- » The manufacturing economy that drove early regional growth has been surpassed by the service economy. The service economy includes health and medical facilities, retail, hospitality, and business services such as insurance, banking, and advertising

### TRANSIENT POPULATION

- » A significant share of the population within Chatham County at any given time is not included in official population counts. This transient population includes workers who live outside of Chatham County but commute in for work; second-home owners who spend only part of the year in the county; students at local universities; military personnel who are stationed in the region temporarily; and tourists visiting the area

### GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

- » Nearly one in ten residents of Chatham County have moved here within the past year from other counties, states, and countries. Many of these individuals are retirees who have settled in unincorporated areas of the county and tend to be older and more affluent than the average county resident. This is evident when comparing the median age, income, and poverty rates between unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah





# CHATHAM COUNTY & SAVANNAH

## The Region

Chatham County encompasses of eight incorporated municipalities—the cities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Savannah, and Tybee Island, and the towns of Thunderbolt and Vernonburg—and a large unincorporated area. The geographic focus of this section of Plan 2040 is unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah.

## Residential Population

As of 2018, unincorporated Chatham County had an estimated population of 93,155, with a population density of 281 people per square mile. U.S. Census records show population in the unincorporated area decreased from 1970–1980 but has grown significantly in the past 40 years. In fact, much of the county’s overall population increase in that time period occurred in the unincorporated areas to the east and southwest of Savannah as larger neighborhoods and subdivisions were developed. Estimates for unincorporated Chatham County were calculated by subtracting the sum of the incorporated municipalities’ values from the total value for Chatham County as a whole.

The city of Savannah had an estimated population of 145,342 in 2018, with a population density of 1,302 people per square mile. The city’s population increased rapidly from 1970–1980 but has remained fairly stable in the last 40 years.

*As of 2018, the unincorporated areas and the city of Savannah made up 83.1% of the total population of Chatham County.*

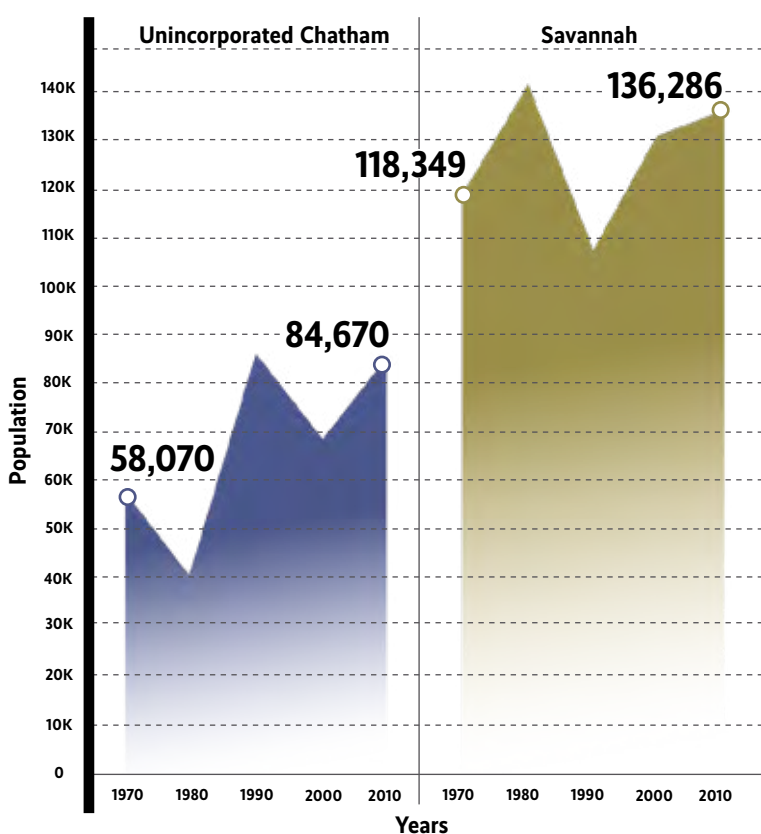


Figure 1.3—Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah Populations, 1970–2010  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Tourism Impacts on Population

Because Chatham County is a well-known tourist destination, a substantial proportion of the population on any given day is only temporary. According to the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce's Savannah Economic Trends Brochure (2020), the area saw 14.5 million visitors in 2018 alone. While tourism brings many benefits to the local economy and culture, such large day-to-day population increases can also present challenges from a planning perspective, particularly those related to infrastructure. When planning for the future, it is important to consider the "worst case scenario" to ensure that the community's roads, bridges, and utility systems will remain functional.

## Demographic Characteristics

Unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah are growing—between 2010 and 2018, their populations grew by 7.0% and 6.6%, respectively. Both experienced faster population growth than that of Georgia as a whole. While notable demographic differences exist between the residents of unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah today, the composition of the community's population will continue to change as new residents move into the area.





## Sex & Age

Of the 93,155 people living in unincorporated Chatham County in 2014–2018, 51.9% were female, and 48.1% were male. In Savannah, 52.4% of the 145,342 residents were female and 47.6% were male.

Overall, county residents were significantly older than those in the city—the median age in the unincorporated area was 39.6 years compared to 32.4 years in Savannah. Children under the age of 18 made up 22.0% of the population in unincorporated Chatham County, and 17.8% were 65 years or older. In Savannah, roughly one fifth of residents were under the age of 18 (20.8%) and nearly one in eight were over age 65 (12.9%).

The population in both areas has been slowly growing older over the past five years. This trend is projected to continue for at least the next 20 years and should be planned for at the local level as the aging population lives longer and more retirees move to the coast.

## Sex Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:

**44,807**  
Males  
(48.1%)



**48,347**  
Females  
(51.9%)

### City of Savannah:

**69,182**  
Males  
(47.6%)



**76,159**  
Females  
(52.4%)

## Age Distribution, 2014–2018

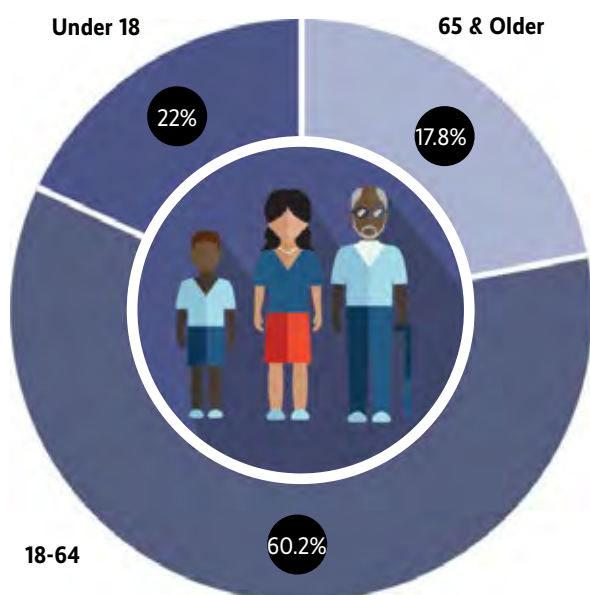


Figure 1.4—Age Distribution, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

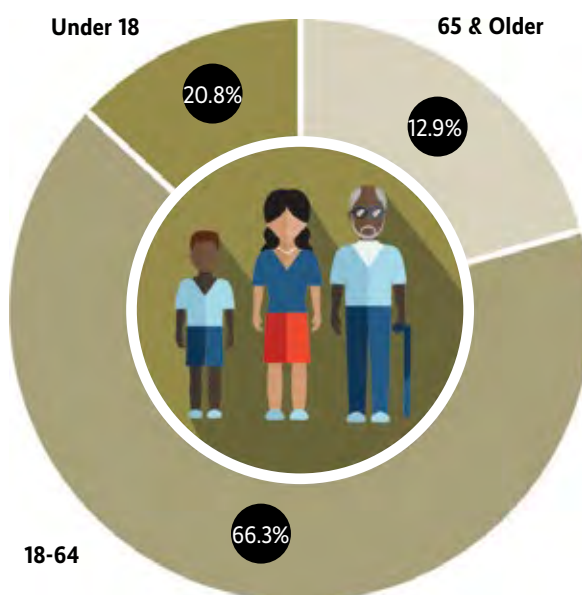


Figure 1.5—Age Distribution, Savannah



## Age Characteristics, 2014–2018

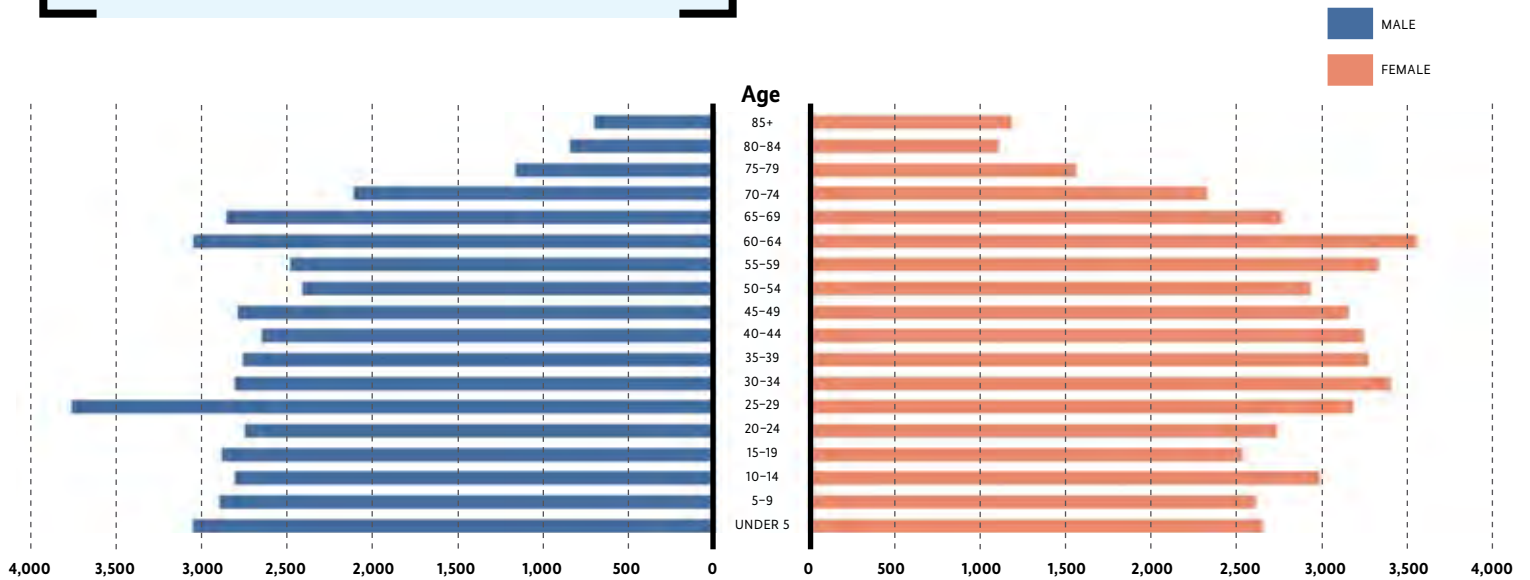
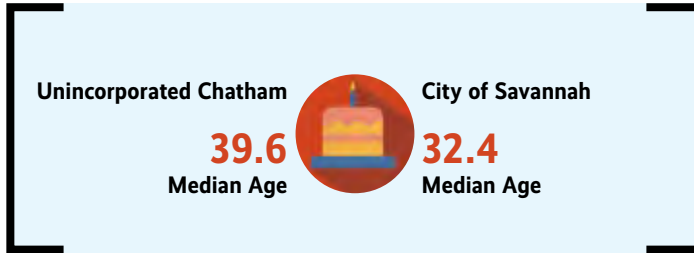


Figure 1.6–Population Pyramid, Unincorporated Chatham

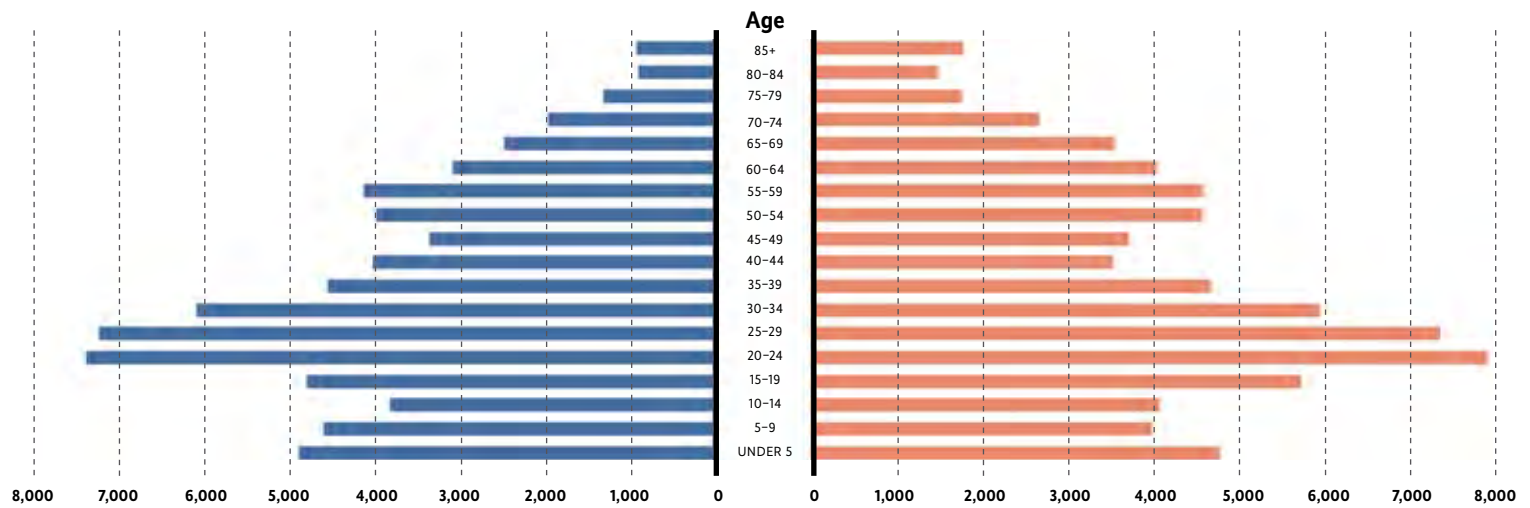


Figure 1.7–Population Pyramid, Savannah

U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Race & Ethnicity

Perhaps the most pronounced demographic difference between unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah in 2014–2018 was the racial makeup of their residents. The largest racial group in unincorporated Chatham County was white (69.3%), with 6.5% of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino.

The racial breakdowns show people who reported only one race (aside from the “two or more races” category), while the People of Hispanic origin may be of any race(s). The white share of unincorporated Chatham’s population reached its peak in 1980 at 85.9%. Conversely, the majority of Savannahians were black or African American (54.4%), with 5.1% of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino.

The populations of both unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah have been growing more diverse since the 1980s. In the past forty years, the non-white share of unincorporated Chatham’s population has more than doubled from 14.1% in 1980 to 30.7% in 2018. In the city of Savannah in 1980, half of all residents were white (49.4%), and half were non-white (50.6%). Since then, the share of Savannah’s population comprised of people of color has grown by 15.8 percentage points.

## Racial Majority Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**69.3%**  
White Alone

### City of Savannah:



**54.4%**  
Black or African American Alone

## Ethnicity, 2014–2018

Unincorporated Chatham

**5.1%**

Hispanic or Latino



City of Savannah

**6.5%**

Hispanic or Latino





# Population by Race, 2014–2018

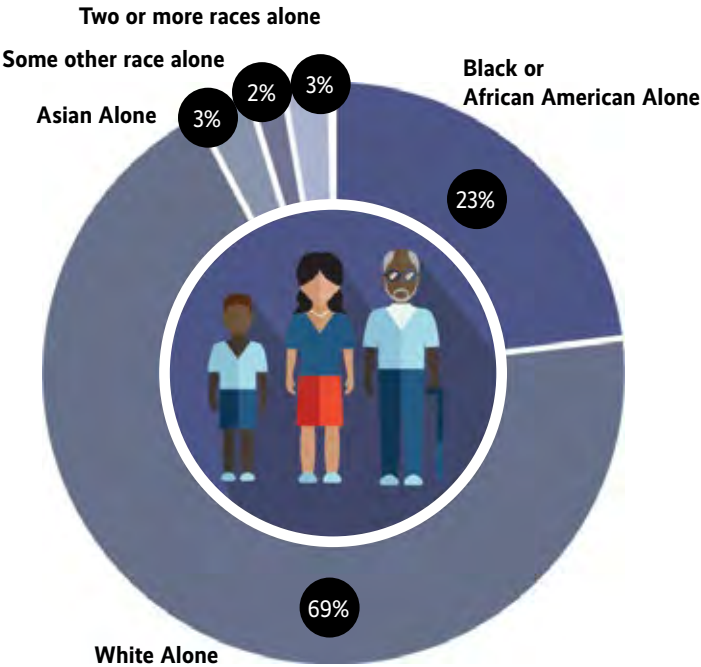


Figure 1.8–Population by Race, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

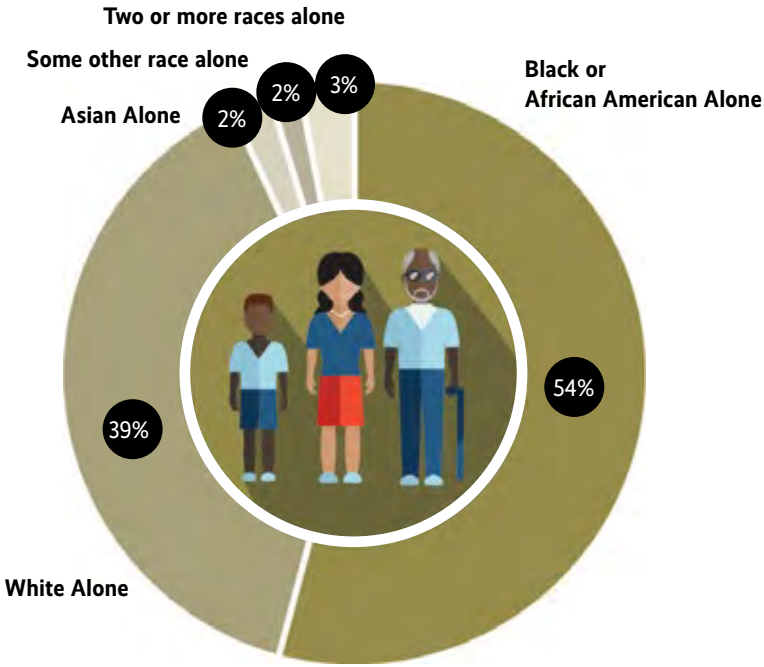


Figure 1.9–Population by Race, Savannah



## Diversity Index

The diversity index determines the likelihood that two people chosen at random from a given area will be from different racial or ethnic groups. Higher values indicate more diversity in an area, and lower values indicate less diversity.

On Map 1.1, block groups with high racial and ethnic diversity index scores are shown in shades of blue. These calculations are based on the methodology described in “Mapping the USA’s diversity from 1960 to 2060” in USA TODAY.

## Economic Mobility

While job growth and rising median income are important indicators of a community’s economic health, they do not necessarily translate into economic success for every individual and family who live there. For example, Chatham County as a whole has experienced a higher rate of job growth recently than nearly three-quarters of counties across the country and median household income has increased roughly \$10,000 over the past decade. At the same time, the percent of residents in poverty has decreased by only three percentage points and approximately one in six residents still lives below the poverty line today. The recent growth has clearly not translated into economic success for all members of the community. Economic mobility—a child’s chance of moving up the income ladder relative to the household in which they grow up—can offer greater insight into the long-term economic opportunities available in a given community.

In Chatham County, kids raised in low-income households, regardless of race or gender, have only a 4.7% chance of becoming wealthy adults when they grow up. This upward mobility rate ranks among the lowest in the entire U.S. and is lower than any developed country in the world. Children raised in high-income households in the county, on the other hand, are nearly five times more likely to become high-income adults.

While upward mobility for kids raised in low-income households across Chatham County is generally poor, considerable variation exists between neighborhoods within the county as well. Indeed, research has shown that the neighborhood in which a child grows up significantly impacts their ability to climb the income ladder later in life. This means that a child who grows up on a particular block can have a vastly different economic outcome later in life than his/her friend raised in a similar household/socioeconomic circumstances just a few blocks away.

This local variation is illustrated in Map 1.2, which shows the average household income in adulthood of children who grew up in comparable low-income families in different areas across Chatham County. The neighborhoods of Cann-Jackson Park and Chatham Crescent lie on opposite sides of Bull Street in midtown Savannah, yet children raised in similar households within these neighborhoods experience vastly different economic outcomes. A kid born into a low-income family in Chatham Crescent has a 19% chance of becoming a wealthy adult, but if that child were born into a low-income family in Cann-Jackson Park that chance drops to 1.2%.

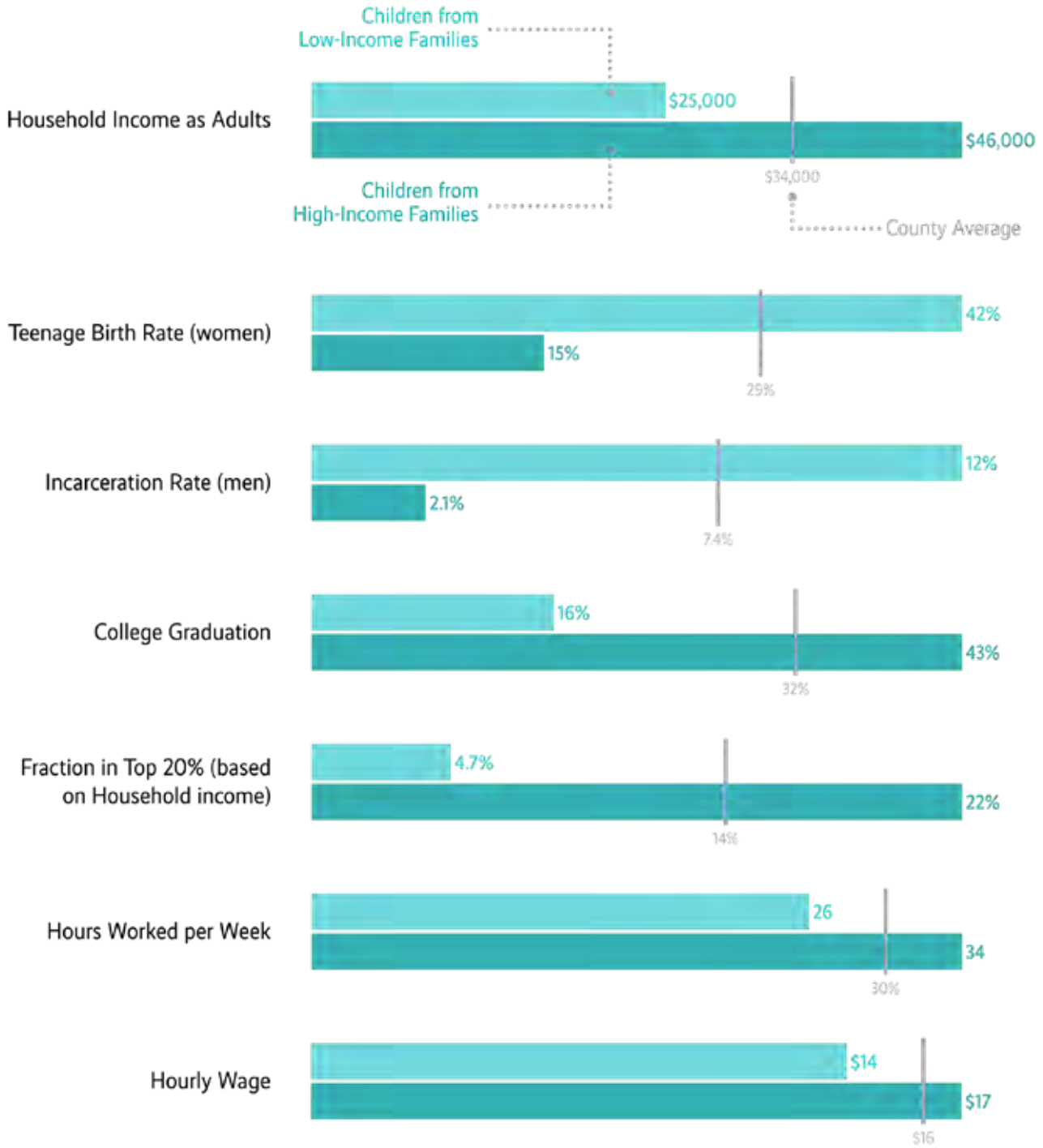
## Economic Mobility by Race, 2018

	Black	White	Hispanic
Household Income as Adults	\$24,000	\$47,000	\$37,000
Household Income as Adults for Kids in Low-Income Families	\$22,000	\$33,000	\$31,000
Household Income as Adults for Kids in Middle-Income Families	\$27,000	\$41,000	\$36,000
Household Income as Adults for Kids in High-Income Families	\$32,000	\$52,000	\$42,000
Upward Mobility Rate (Top 20% of Household Income)	3.8%	24%	13%
Teenage Birth Rate for Women	15%	52%	40%
Incarceration Rate (Men)	44%	15%	22%
College Graduation Rate	15%	1.9%	4.2%
Hours Worked per Week	16%	44%	36%
Hourly Wage	\$14	\$17	\$18

Figure 1.10—Economic Mobility by Race, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



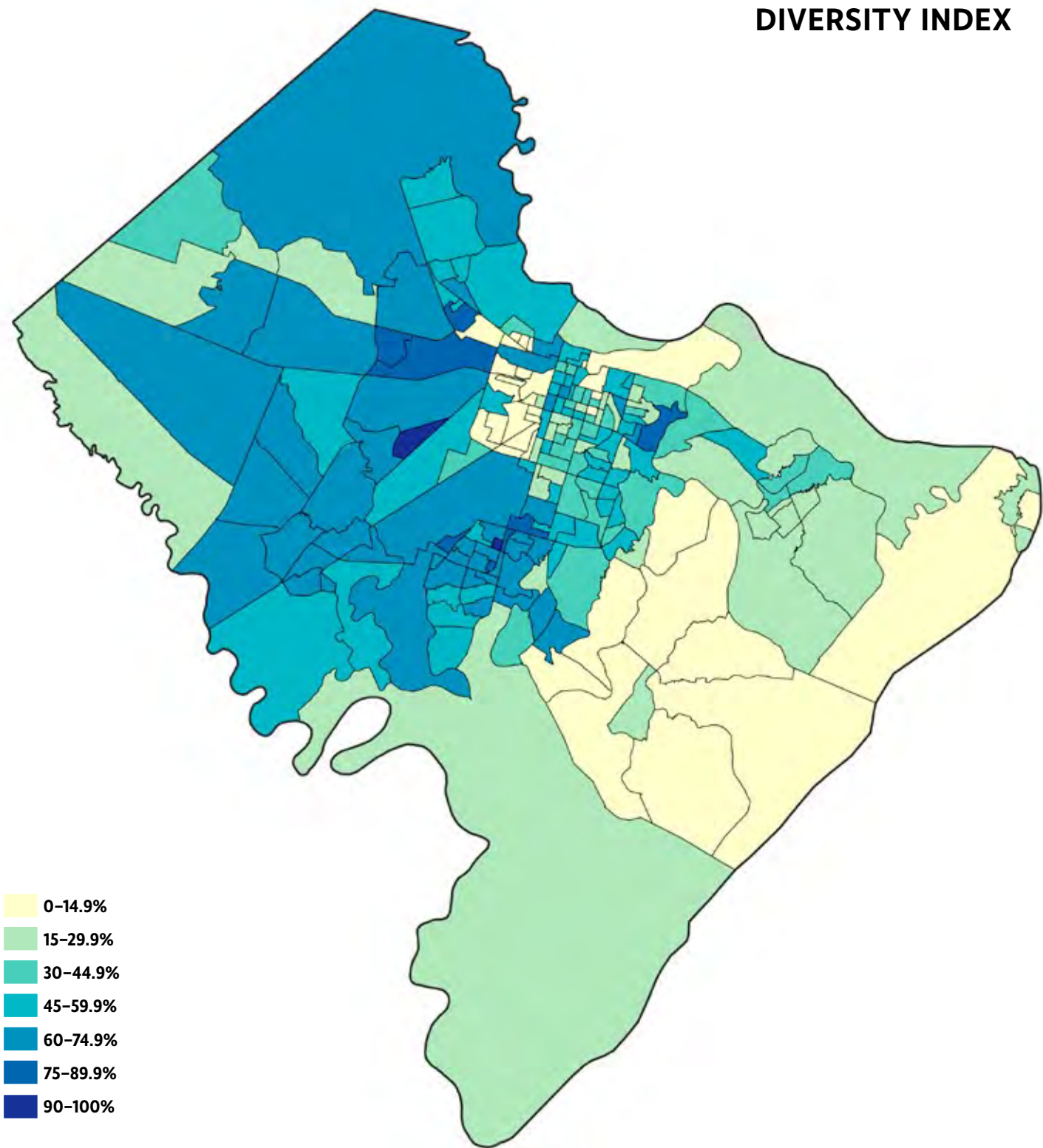
## ECONOMIC MOBILITY



**Figure 1.11—Economic Mobility, Chatham County**  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



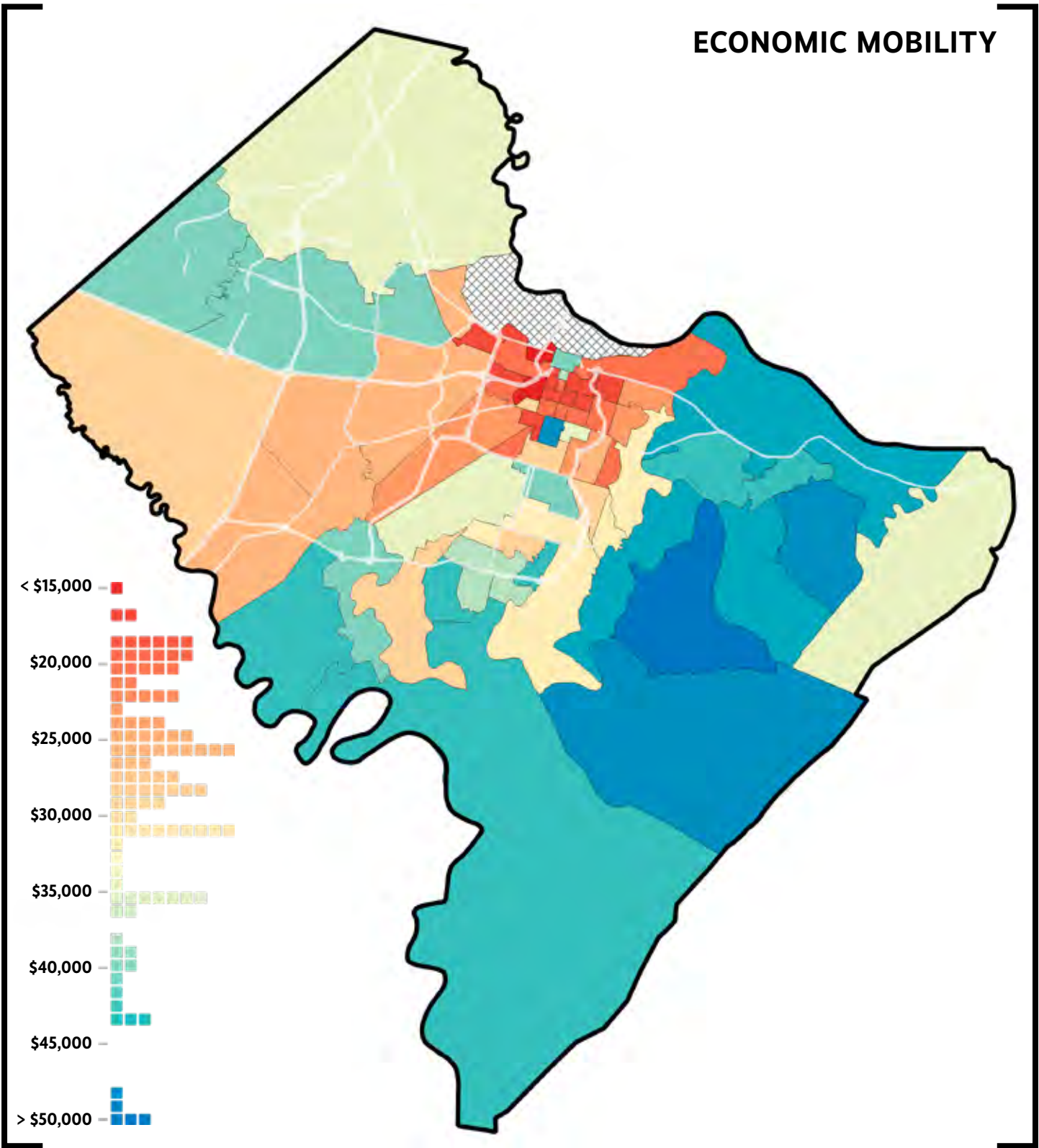
DIVERSITY INDEX



Map 1.1-Diversity Index by Block Group, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



# ECONOMIC MOBILITY



Map 1.2—Household Income at Age 35 for Children of Low Income Parents by Census Tract, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Employment

In 2018, unincorporated Chatham County, 59.1% of people 16 years and older were employed in the civilian labor force and 1.3% of people were in the armed forces; 35.7% of residents over 16 were not in the labor force. An estimated 81.0% of employed people in unincorporated Chatham County were private wage and salary workers; 14.6% work in federal, state, or local government; and 4.4% were self-employed in their own (not incorporated) business.

In 2018, the city of Savannah, 56.1% of people 16 years and older were employed in the civilian labor force and 1.3% of people were in the armed forces; 36.3% of residents over 16 were not in the labor force (2014–2018). The largest class of employed people were private wage and salary workers (80.8%); 13.8% worked in federal, state, or local government; and 5.5% were self-employed in their own (not incorporated) business. These values for both the county and the city are generally consistent with the national numbers.

The unemployment rate in Chatham County had been declining steadily from mid-2011 until March 2020, when the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt across the country. In April 2020, the monthly unemployment rate skyrocketed to 16.5%, higher than the rates of both Georgia (12.2%) and the United States (14.8%).

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

See the Economic Development Element for more detailed discussion on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on area employment.



## Unemployment Rate, 1992–2019

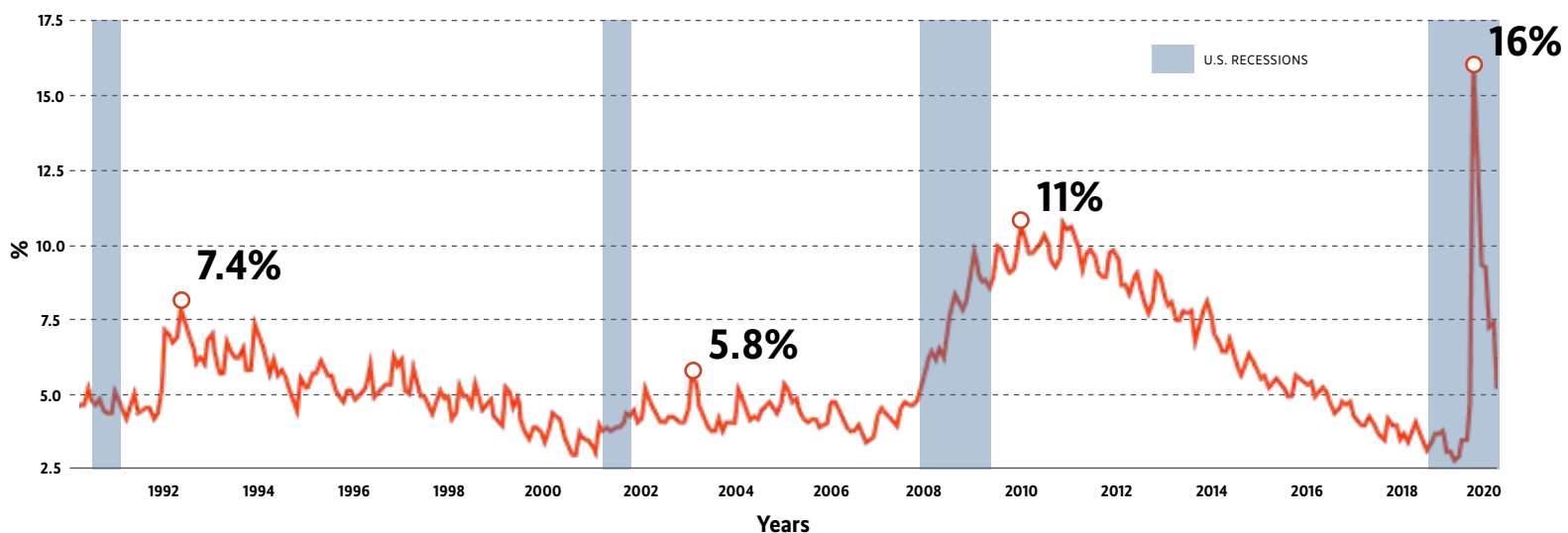


Figure 1.12–Unemployment Rate Over Time, Chatham County  
Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED)







## Industry

In unincorporated Chatham County, the three largest industries by employment in 2014–2018 were educational services, health care and social assistance (11,953 employees); retail trade (5,026); and arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (4,399). For comparison purposes, these industries added nearly 3,000 jobs from 2009–2013, two-thirds of which were in the educational services, health care and social assistance industry. The transportation and warehousing, and utilities industry saw the greatest growth in employment during that time, increasing by 39.8%.

In Savannah, the three largest industries by employment in 2014–2018 were educational services, health care and social assistance (15,554 employees); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (11,093); and retail trade (8,930). Each of these industries saw moderate growth in employment from 2009–2013, adding more than 4,500 jobs in total.



## Largest Industries by Employment, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**11,953**

Educational Services, Healthcare, & Social Assistance



**5,026**

Retail Trade



**4,399**

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Accommodation and Food Services

### City of Savannah:



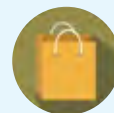
**15,554**

Educational Services, Healthcare, & Social Assistance



**11,093**

Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, & Accommodation and Food Services



**8,930**

Retail Trade



Location quotient (LQ) is a measurement of how concentrated a particular industry is in an area relative to the nation as a whole. It compares the industry's share of local employment to the U.S. average. A LQ of 1 indicates an industry is providing the same share of jobs locally as it is nationally, a LQ above 1 indicates a higher-than-average concentration locally, and a LQ below 1 indicates jobs in that industry are less concentrated locally than the national average. The LQ for industries in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah are shown below.

In unincorporated Chatham County, the transportation and warehousing, and utilities industry was about 1.5 times more concentrated than the national average in 2014–2018. The 3,417 jobs in this sector made up 7.7% of the area's workforce. The same year, Savannah's most concentrated industry was arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services, which accounted for nearly twice the share of employment in the city as it did nationally. The 11,093 jobs in this sector made up 16.8% of the city's workforce.

## Industry Concentration, 2014–2018

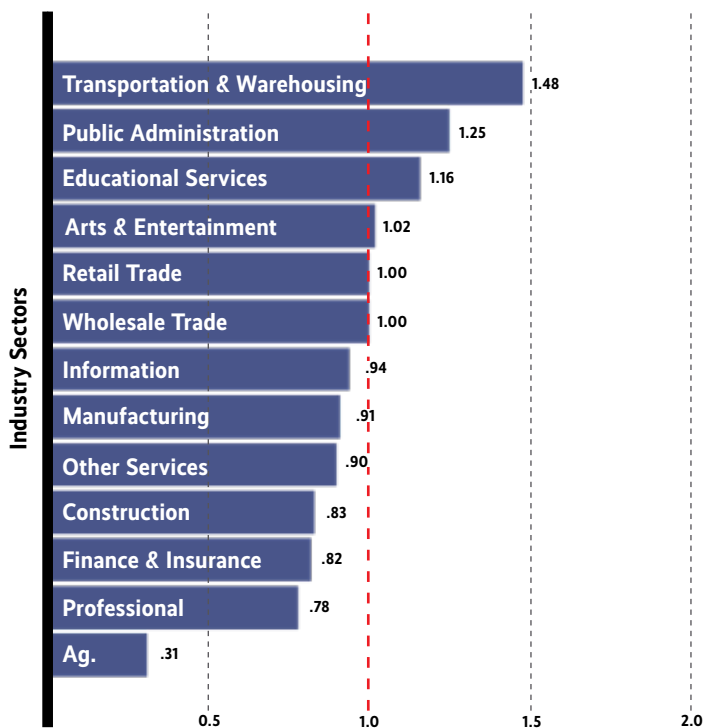


Figure 1.12–Industry Location Quotient, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

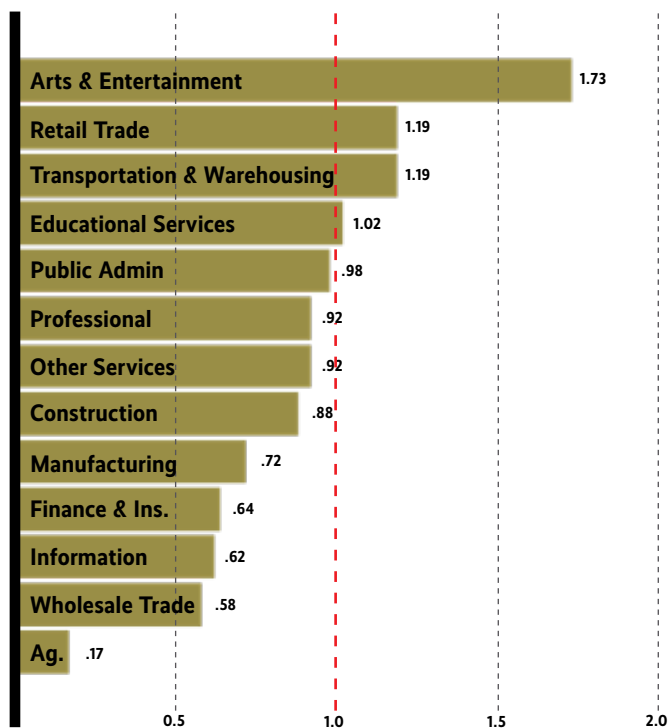


Figure 1.13–Industry Location Quotient, Savannah



## Income & Poverty

In 2014–2018, the median household income in unincorporated Chatham County was \$67,404; in Savannah it was \$41,093. The distribution of household incomes in the county and city provides a more comprehensive understanding of the income differences between residents of the two areas. In unincorporated Chatham, nearly one in three households (31.3%) had an annual income of \$100,000 or more; in Savannah, the same percentage of households (31.2%) had an income of less than \$25,000 a year.

An estimated 8.6% of people in unincorporated Chatham County lived below the poverty level in 2014–2018 compared with 22.9% in Savannah. Children under 18 were the most likely age group to be in poverty in both places: in the county, roughly one in eight children lived in poverty (12.6%) versus nearly one in three in Savannah (32.8%). Likewise, females were overrepresented in the population living below poverty level in both the unincorporated areas of the county and the city. In unincorporated Chatham, 7.3% of households received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in the past 12 months compared with 19.7% in the city of Savannah.

## Poverty & Income Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**8.6%**

Poverty Level

**\$67,404**

Median Household Income

### City of Savannah:



**22.9%**

Poverty Level

**\$41,093**

Median Household Income



## Poverty Status by Age, 2014–2018

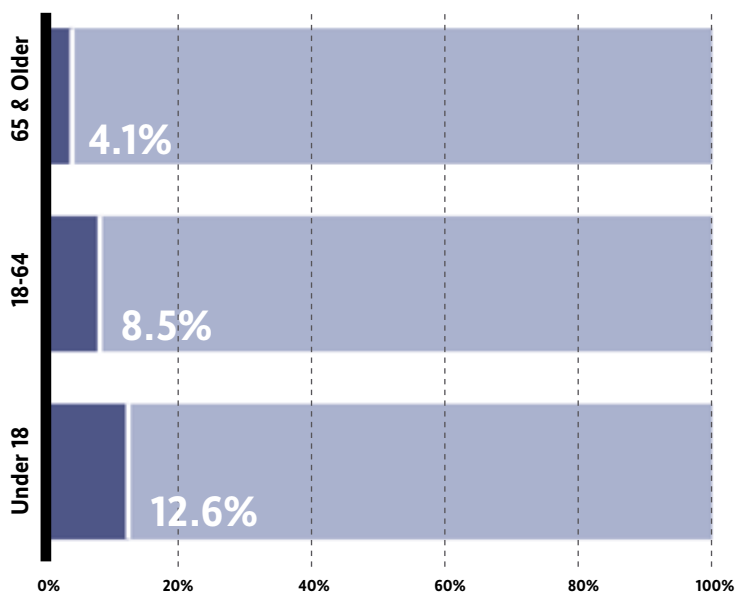


Figure 1.14–Poverty Status by Age, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

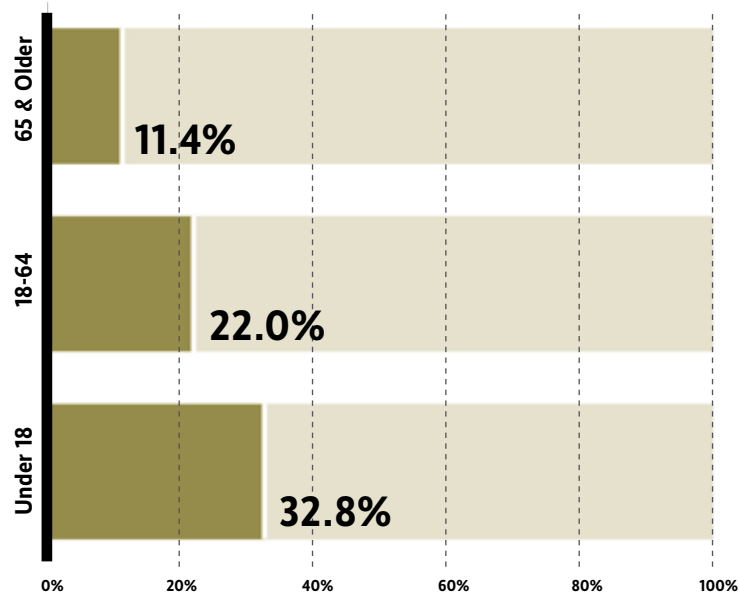


Figure 1.15–Poverty Status by Age, Savannah

## Median Household Income, 2014–2018

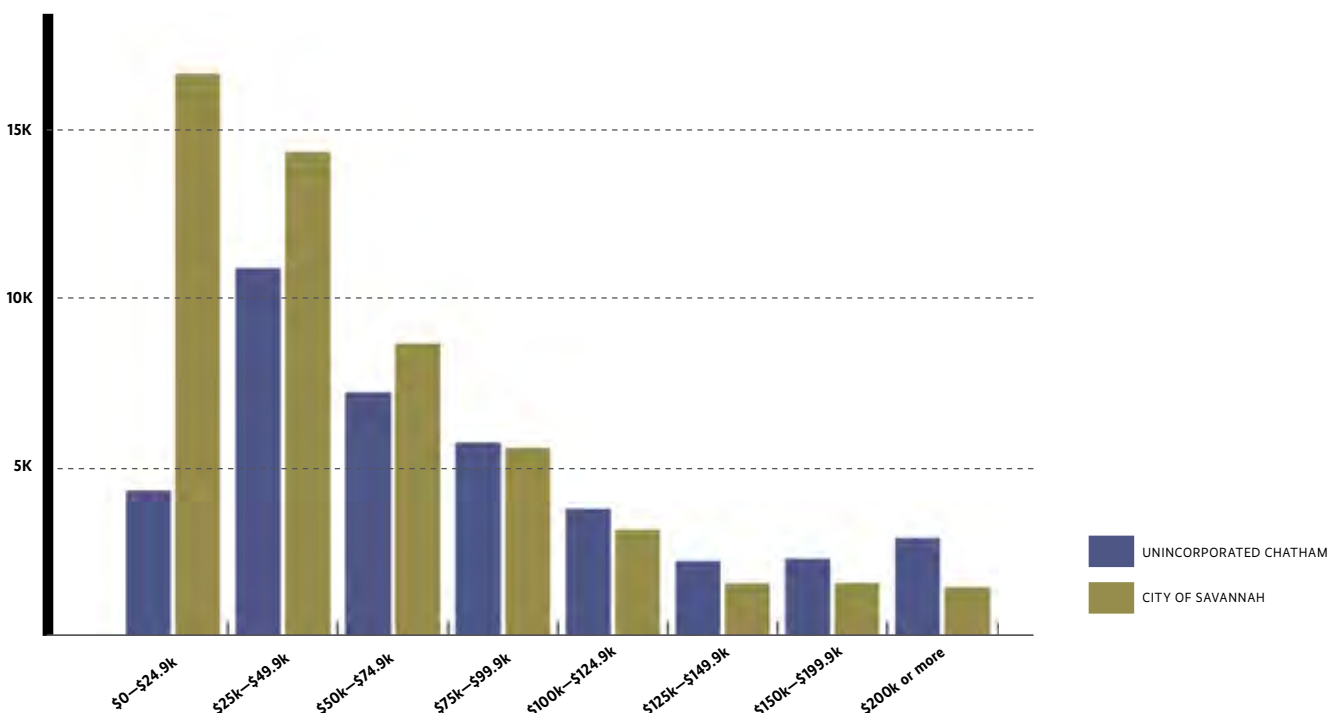
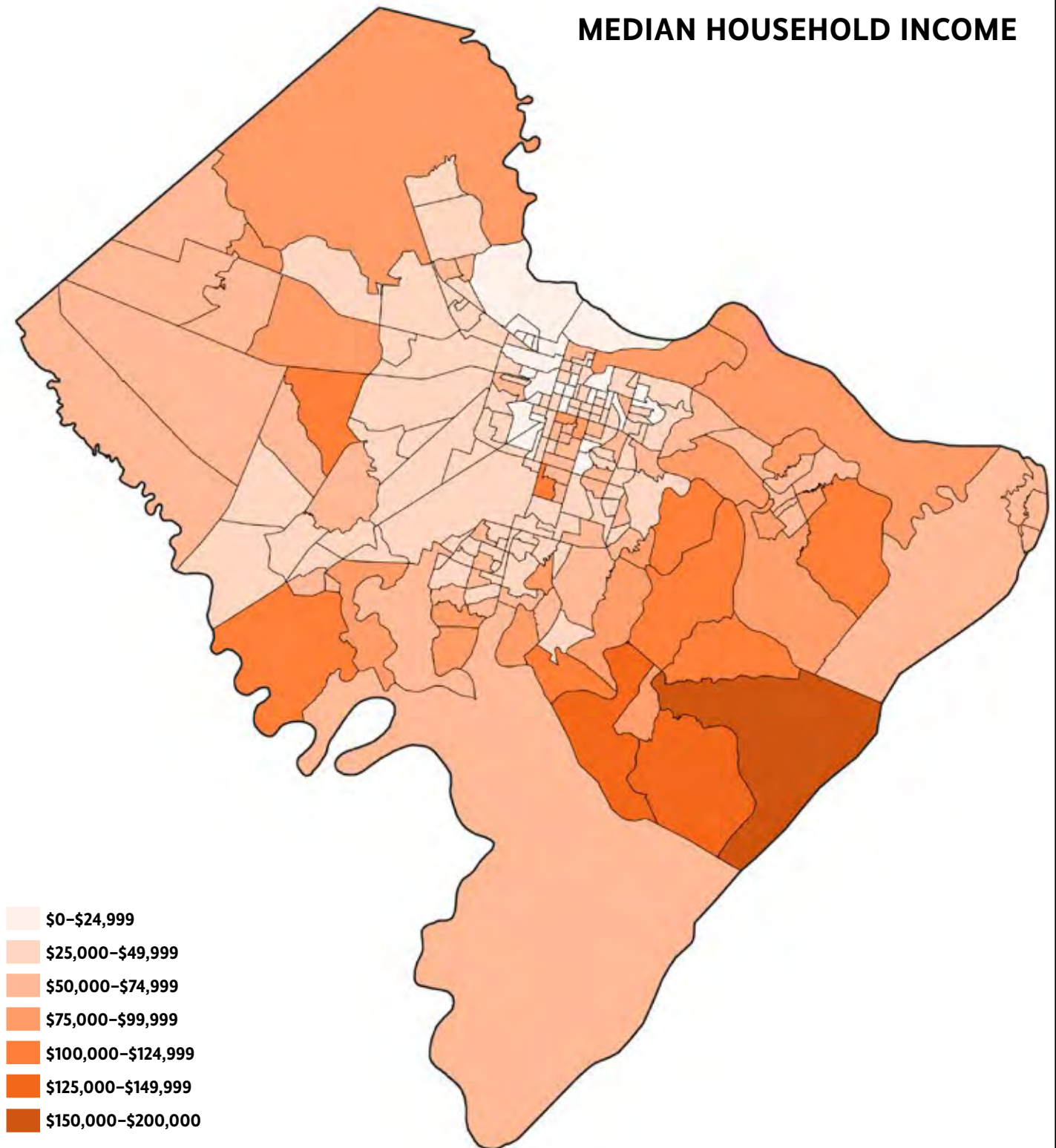


Figure 1.16–Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (2018 Inflation-Adjusted)  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





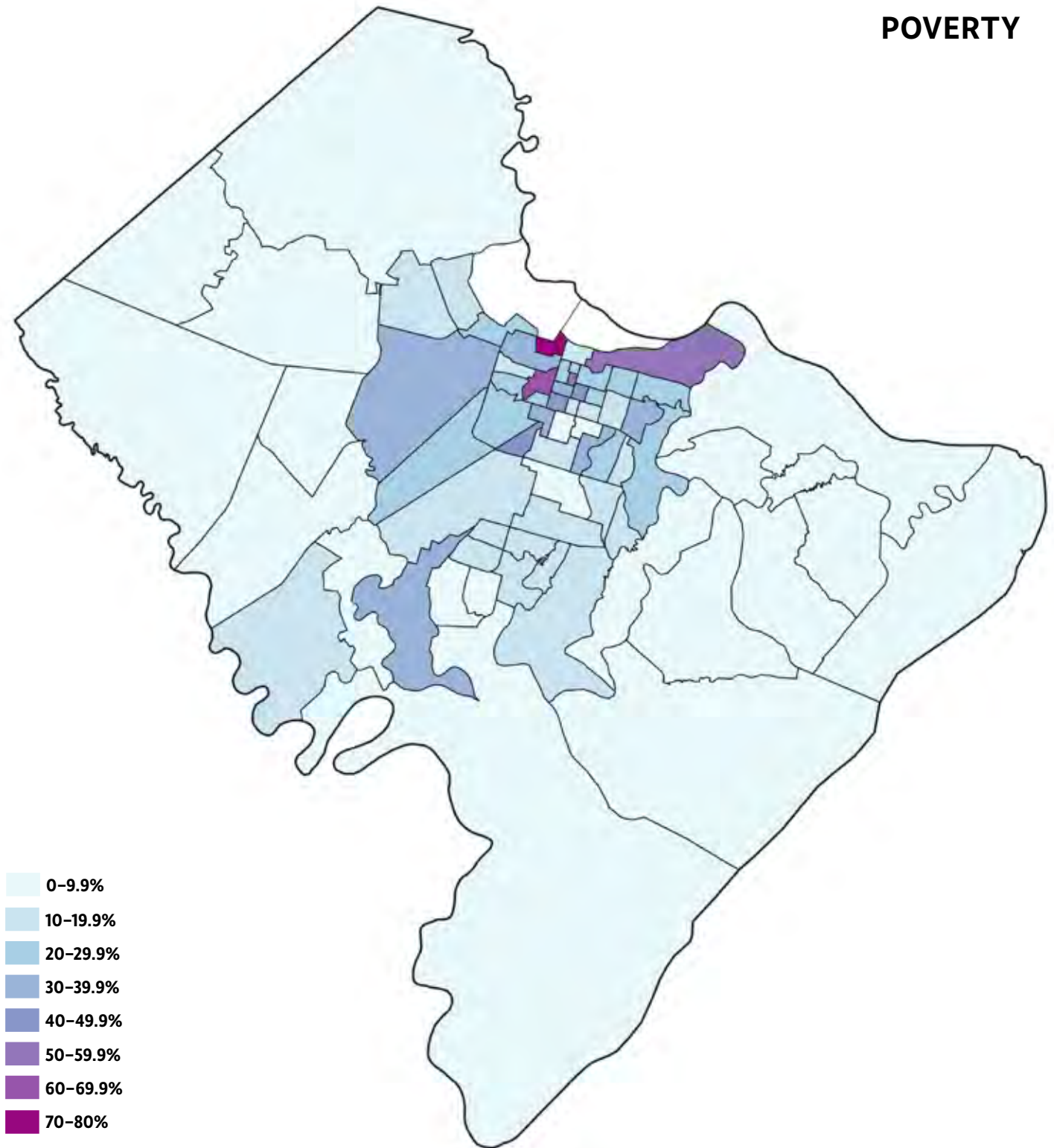
## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Map 1.3–Median Household Income by Block Group, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



# POVERTY



Map 1.4—Percent of People in Poverty by Tract, Chatham County  
 U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Households & Families

From 2000–2010, the average household size in Chatham County shrunk slightly from 2.49 to 2.45 people. This is in line with national trends throughout the 20th Century that saw a long-term decline in household size as families had fewer and fewer children over time. Since 2010, however, average household size in both the county and the country as a whole has increased. In 2014–2018, the average household size in Chatham County was 2.54 people. This rise is likely driven by changes in household composition in recent years; although families are postponing childbearing and having fewer children overall, the share of young adults living with their parents has increased at a greater pace, as has the share of multigenerational households.

In 2014–2018, there were an estimated 36,394 households in unincorporated Chatham County and 53,187 in the city of Savannah. In unincorporated Chatham, families made up 67.6% of households, while 32.4% were people living alone or with other non-family members. Savannah had a lower percentage of family households (56.6%), and one-third of households (33.6%) were made up of people living alone.

## Household Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**36,394**  
Total Households

### City of Savannah:



**53,187**  
Total Households

## Population by Household Type 2014–2018

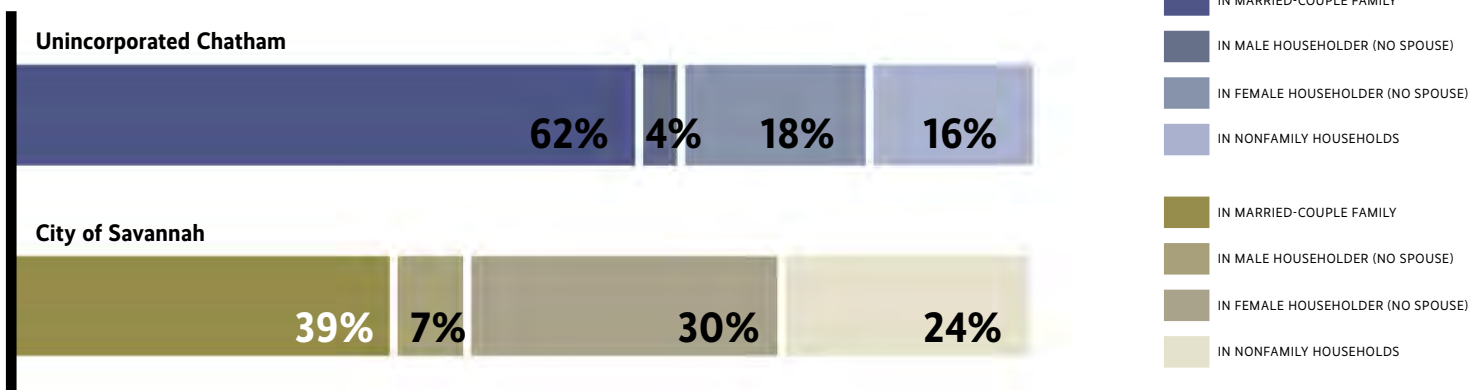
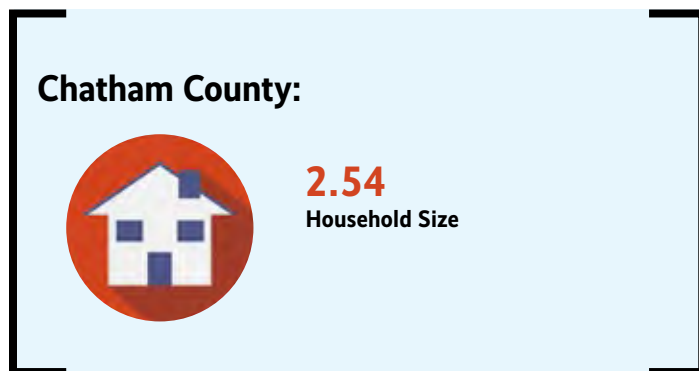


Figure 1.17–Population by Household Type, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Household Size, 2014–2018



## Marital Status, 2014–2018

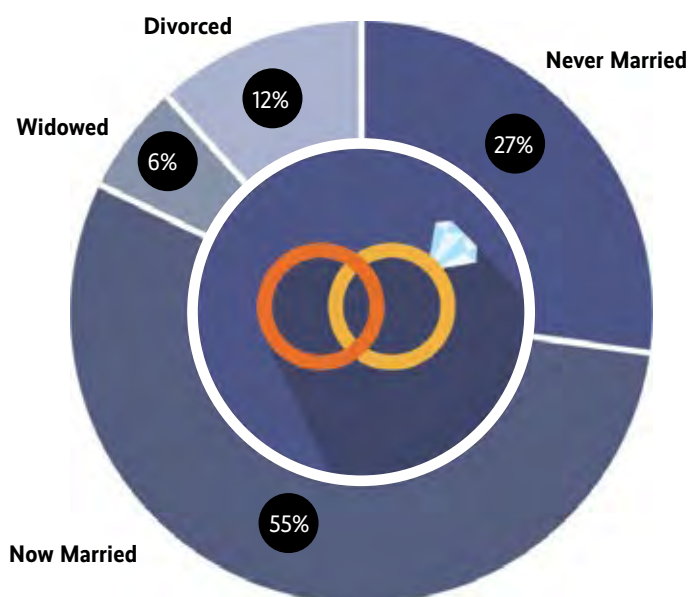


Figure 1.18—Marital Status, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

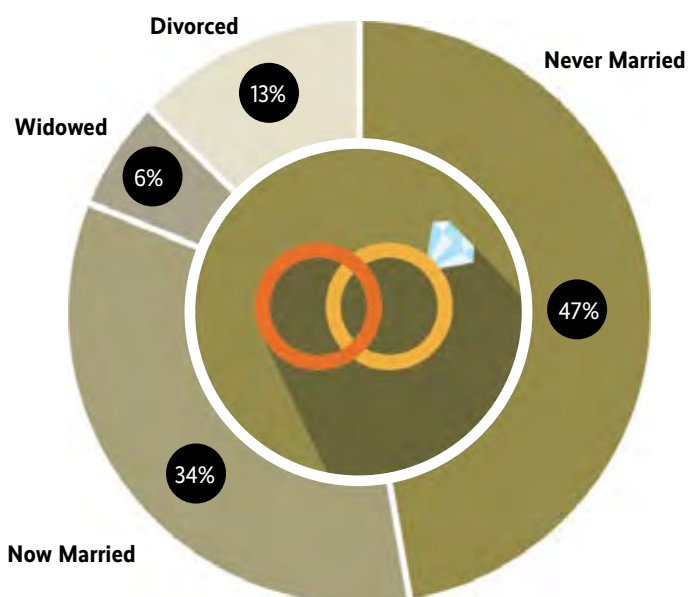


Figure 1.19—Marital Status, Savannah





## Housing Units, Ownership, & Tenure

There were an estimated 40,159 housing units in unincorporated Chatham County in 2014–2018. Over 90% of units were occupied, primarily by homeowners (68.3%), with renters inhabiting one out of every three occupied housing units. The estimated rental vacancy rate, or amount of rental stock that is vacant for rent, was 7.5% while the homeowner vacancy rate was just 1.9%. For comparison, the national rental and homeowner vacancy rates for the same year were 6.0% and 1.7%, respectively.

In the city of Savannah, there were 62,236 total housing units in 2014–2018, most of which were single-family houses (62.4%) including both detached and attached residences (i.e., townhouses). Approximately 85.5% of housing units were occupied, with renters making up the majority of occupied housing units (56.1%) compared to homeowners (43.9%). While the rental vacancy rate in Savannah (7.2%) is slightly lower than that of unincorporated Chatham County, the homeowner vacancy rate is much higher at 3.2%.

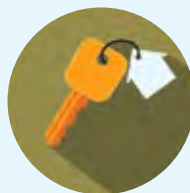
## Housing Units, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**40,159**  
Total Housing Units

### City of Savannah:



**62,236**  
Total Housing Units

## Housing Tenure & Vacancy, 2014–2018

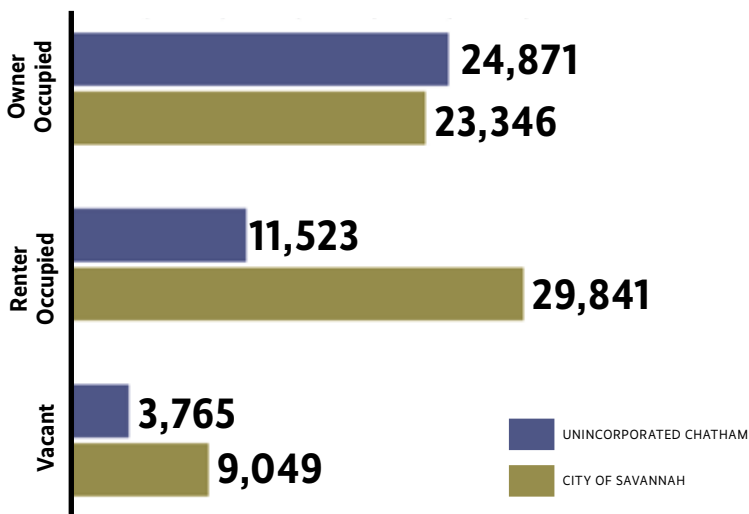


Figure 1.20–Housing Tenure & Vacancy  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Housing Occupancy

As more people have moved into the Chatham County area, the number of housing units has been increased along with the population.

In unincorporated Chatham County, there are an estimated 40,000 housing units according to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, with an occupancy rate of over 90 percent and a vacancy rate of 9%. In the city of Savannah, there are an estimated 62,000 housing units, 85.5% of which are occupied while 14.5% are vacant. The percentage of occupied and vacant housing units has remained consistent since the year 2000.

### Housing Types, 2014–2018

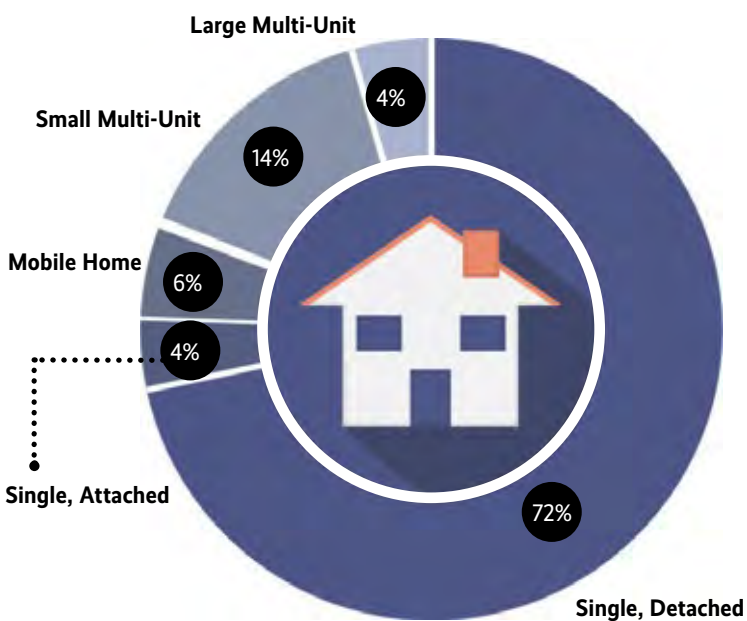


Figure 1.21–Housing Type, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

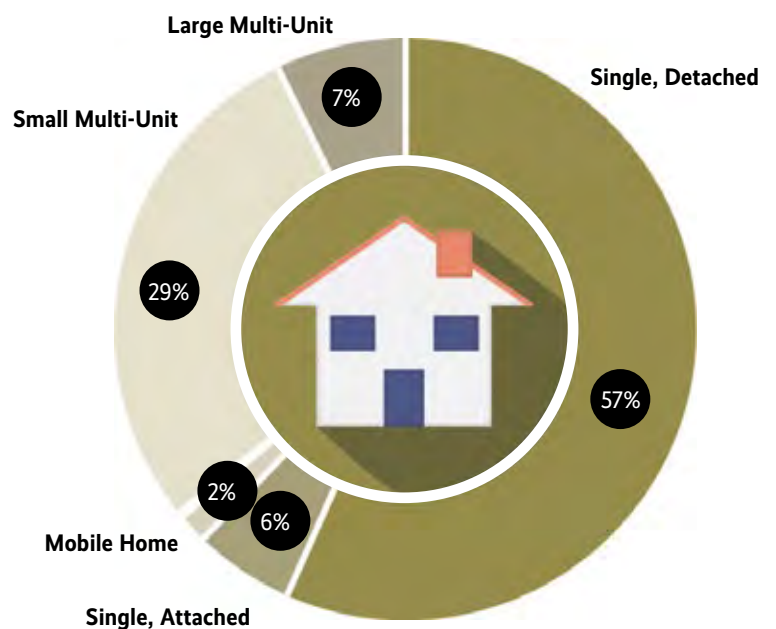
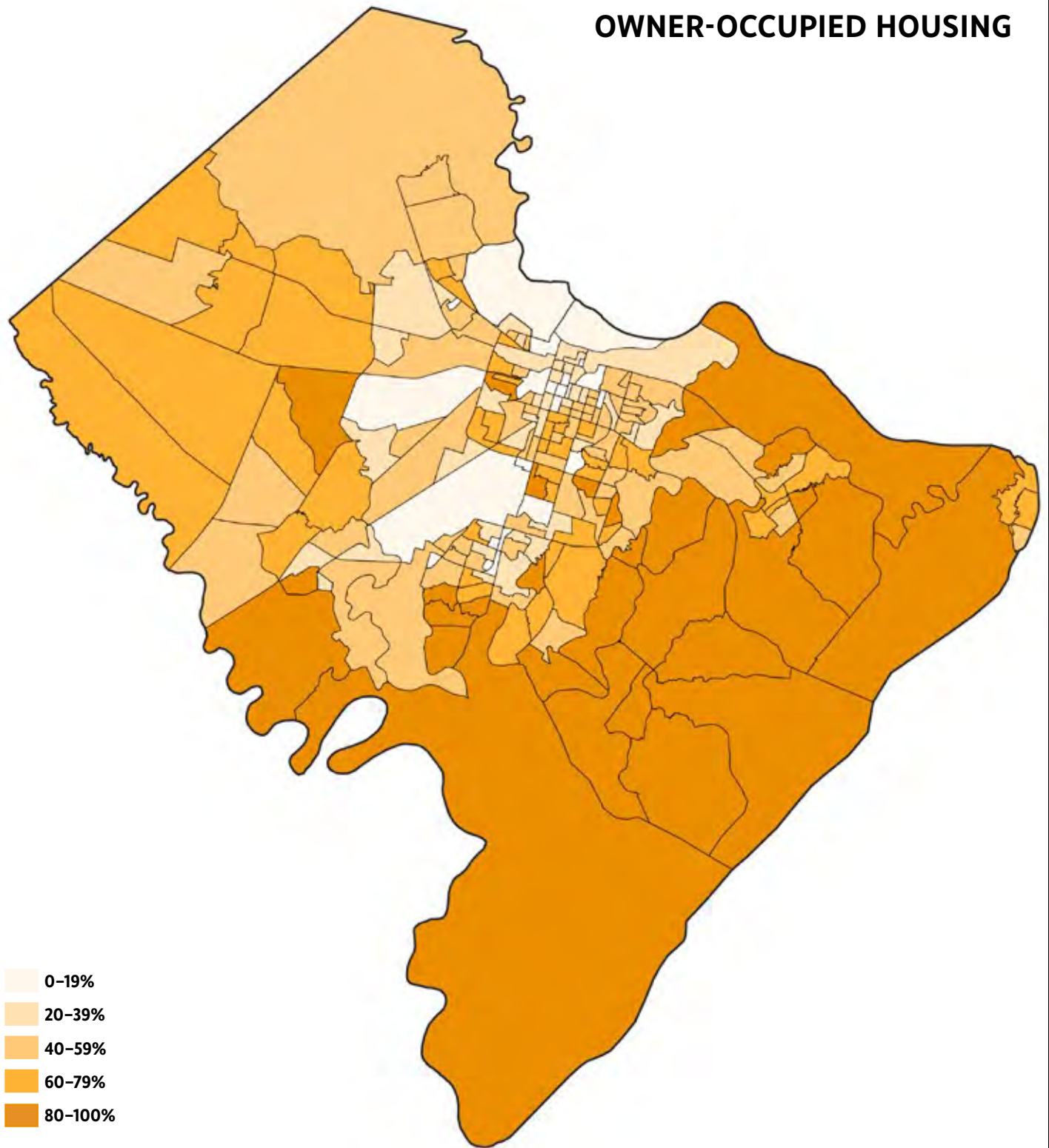


Figure 1.22–Housing Type, Savannah





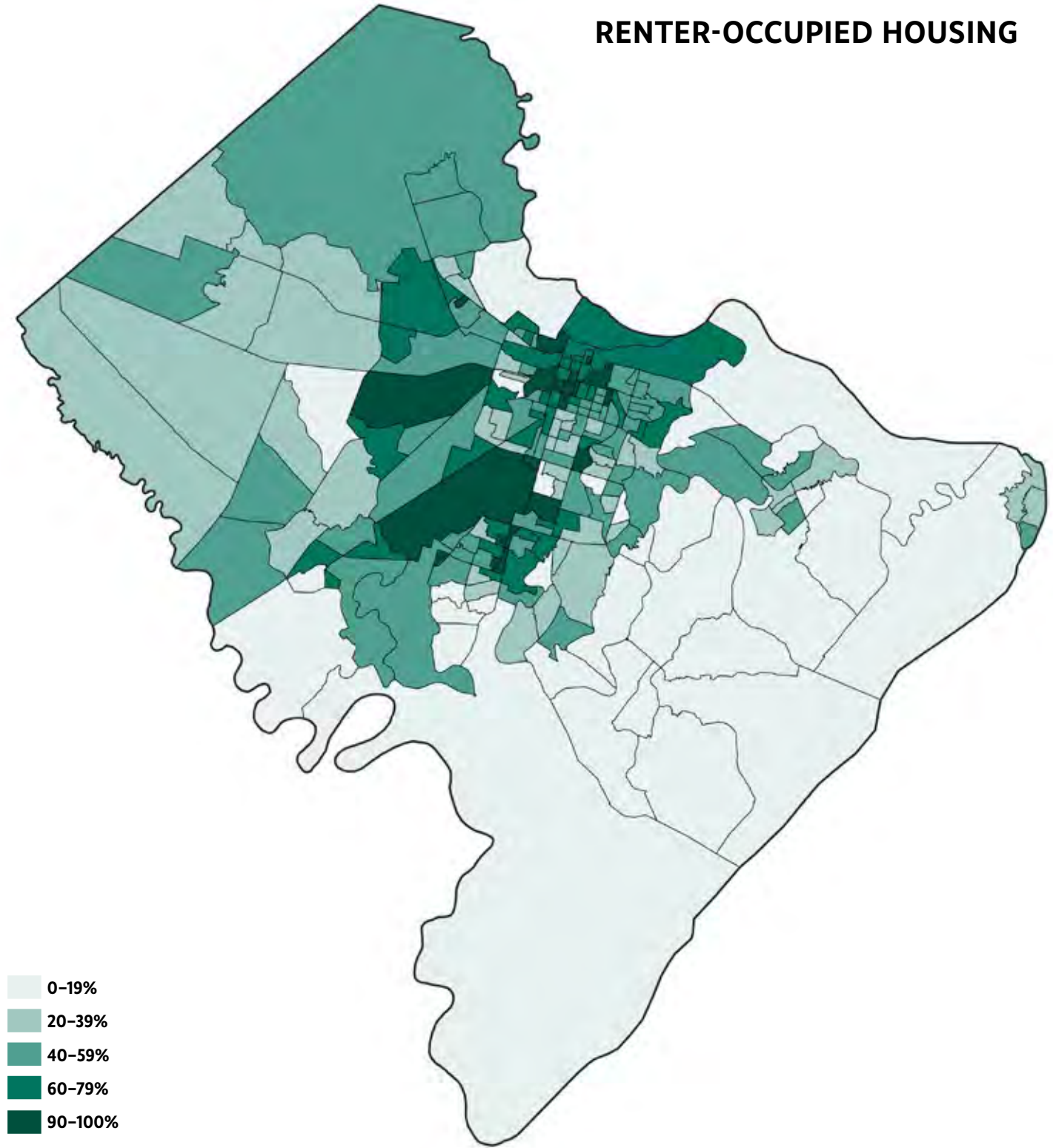
## OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING



Map 1.5—Percentage Owner-Occupied Housing by Block Group, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



RENTER-OCCUPIED HOUSING



Map 1.6—Percentage Renter-Occupied Housing by Block Group, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Housing Value & Costs

In 2014–2018, the median property value of owner-occupied residences in unincorporated Chatham County was \$221,446; in the city of Savannah it was \$151,000. In unincorporated Chatham, the two-thirds of owner-occupied units that had a mortgage typically spent roughly \$1,596 per month on housing costs, while those without a mortgage spent \$658 per month. Of households with a mortgage, 27.3% were considered cost-burdened, paying at least 30% of their monthly income toward housing expenses. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, cost-burdened households “may have difficulty affording [other] necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.” This is a sizeable decrease from 2009–2013, when 36.6% of households with a mortgage were cost burdened.

For renters in unincorporated Chatham County, the median gross rent was \$1,170 in 2014–2018, and 42.8% of rental households were cost-burdened, down 7.6 percentage points from the share of cost-burdened renters in 2009–2013. In Savannah, the 64.5% of owner-occupied households that had a mortgage typically spent about \$1,312 per month on housing costs compared with \$448 for households without a mortgage. One in three owner-occupied households (33.5%) was considered cost-burdened, down from 42.8% in 2009–2013. The median rent in 2014–2018 was \$977, and more than half of all rental households in the city were cost-burdened (55.4%), down from 60.4% in 2009–2013.

The proportion of cost-burdened homeowners and renters in Savannah is an indication that local wages are not keeping pace with rising housing costs (and likely cost of living) in the area, and that housing affordability is an issue for renters in particular.

## Housing Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**\$221,446**  
Median Housing Value  
**\$1,170**  
Median Gross Rent

### City of Savannah:

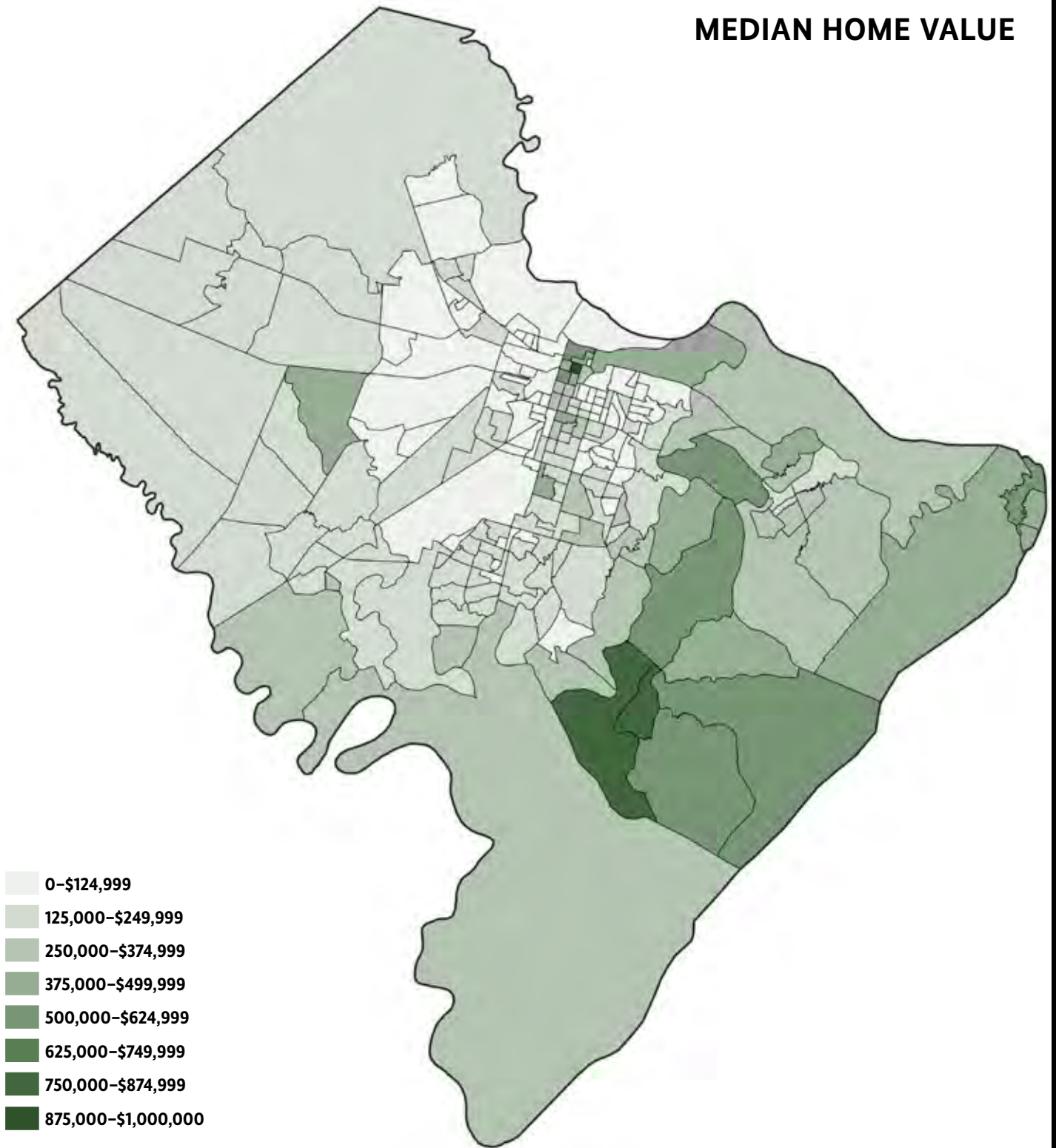


**\$151,000**  
Median Housing Value  
**\$977**  
Median Gross Rent





## MEDIAN HOME VALUE



Map 1.7-Median Home Value by Block Group, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Residential Construction

The construction of residential buildings is generally a good indicator of a community's growth. There has been a steady pace of building in both Chatham County and the city of Savannah in recent years, with the majority of new construction being single family detached homes.

Figure 1.25 shows the recent residential construction trends in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah. Estimating the population based on the number of building permits is useful in planning for roads, parks and other amenities, schools, etc. or infrastructure, utilities, and services.

### Residential Construction Permit Trends, 2018–2020

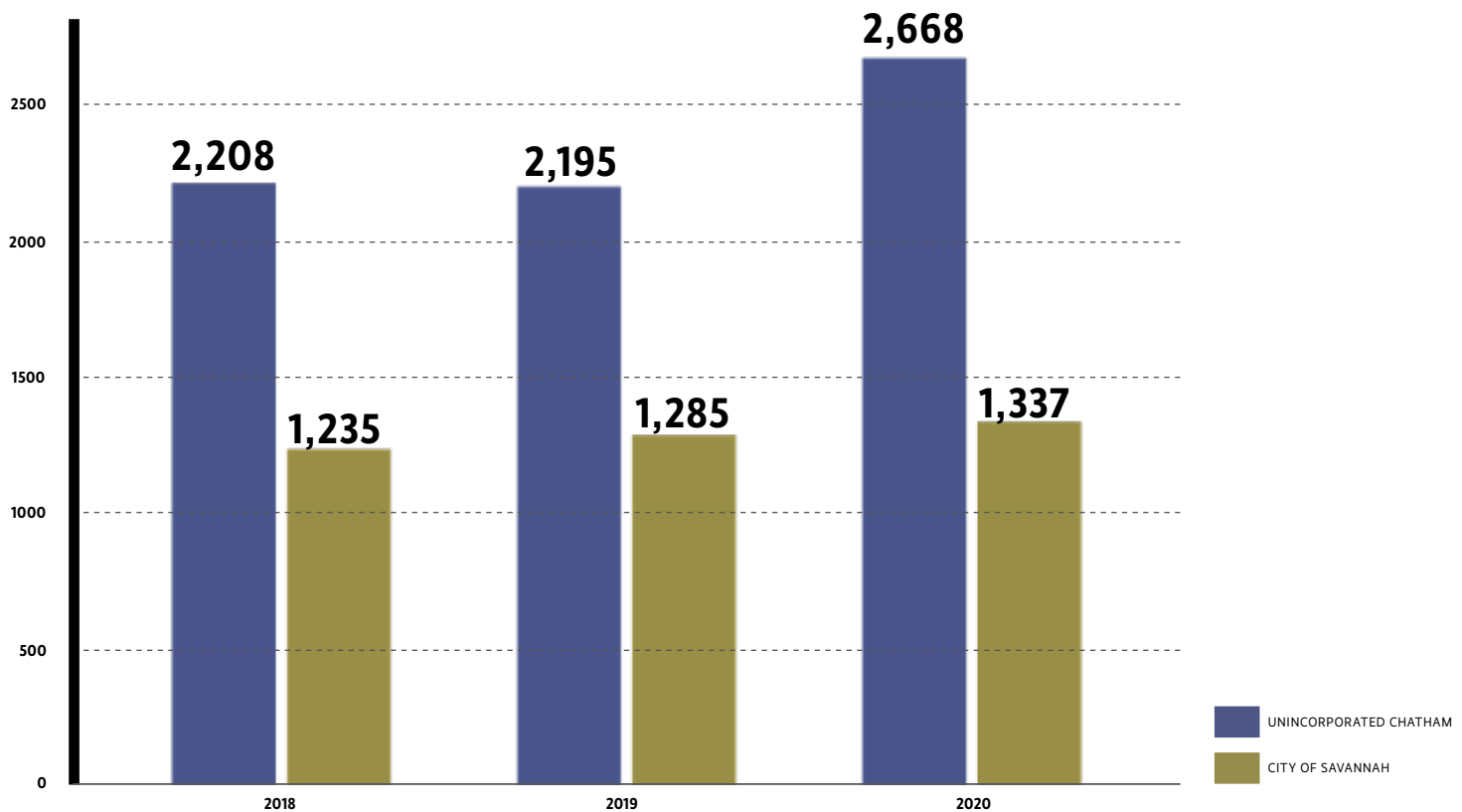
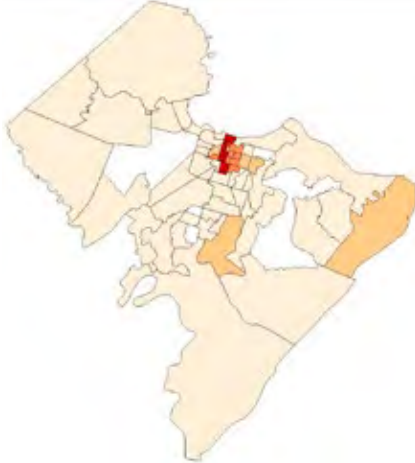


Figure 1.25–Residential Construction Permits, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
Chatham County Building Safety & Regulatory Services



# RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

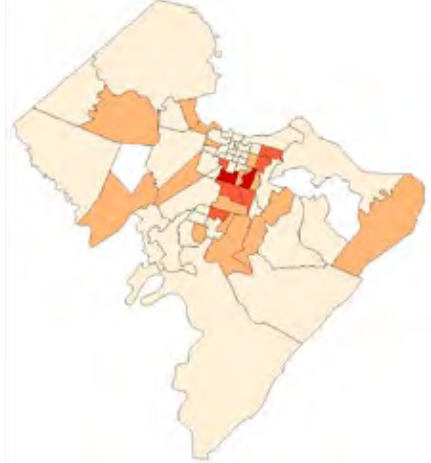
Residential Construction Pre-1940s



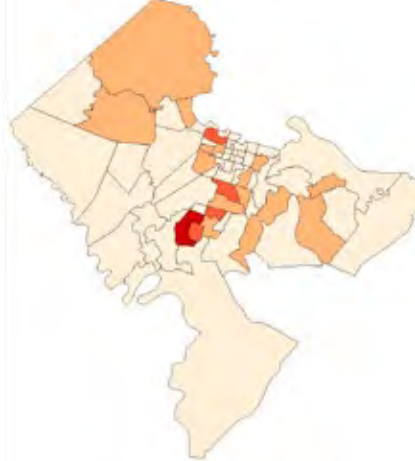
Residential Construction 1940s



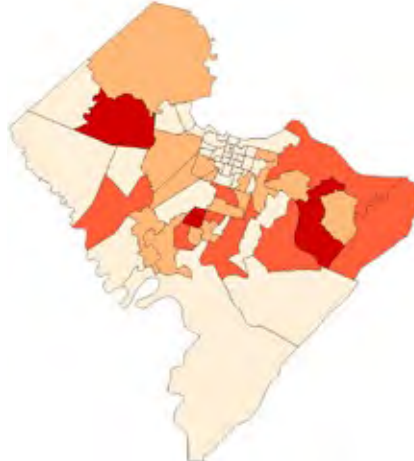
Residential Construction 1950s



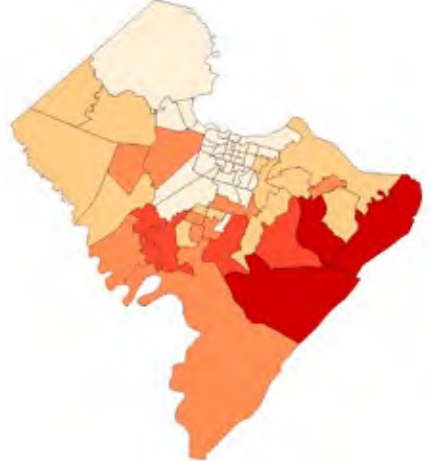
Residential Construction 1960s



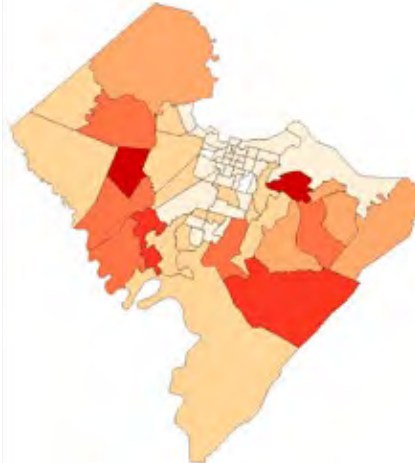
Residential Construction 1970s



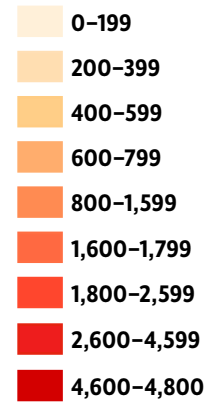
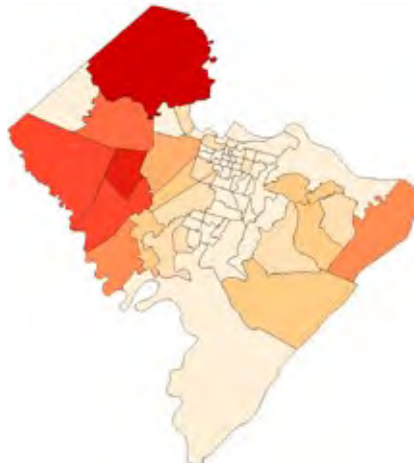
Residential Construction 1980s



Residential Construction 1990s



Residential Construction 2000s





## Educational Attainment

People over age 25 in unincorporated Chatham County had a higher level of educational attainment than the average U.S. resident in 2014–2018. 93.0% of residents had at least a high school diploma or high school equivalency, and 41.7% held a bachelor's degree or higher. This is about the same proportion as in 2009–2013, when 92.8% of residents had a high school diploma and 39.3% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

In the city of Savannah, most people over age 25 were high school graduates (87.0%), while 28.1% of residents held a bachelor's degree or higher. Figure 1.26 & 1.27 illustrates the breakdown of educational attainment in unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah. These percentages are roughly the same as in 2009–2013, when 85.6% of residents were high school graduates and 26.1% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

## Educational Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**93%**

At Least a High School Diploma

**41.7%**

Bachelor's Degree or Higher

### City of Savannah:



**93%**

At Least a High School Diploma

**41.7%**

Bachelor's Degree or Higher

## Educational Attainment, 2014–2018

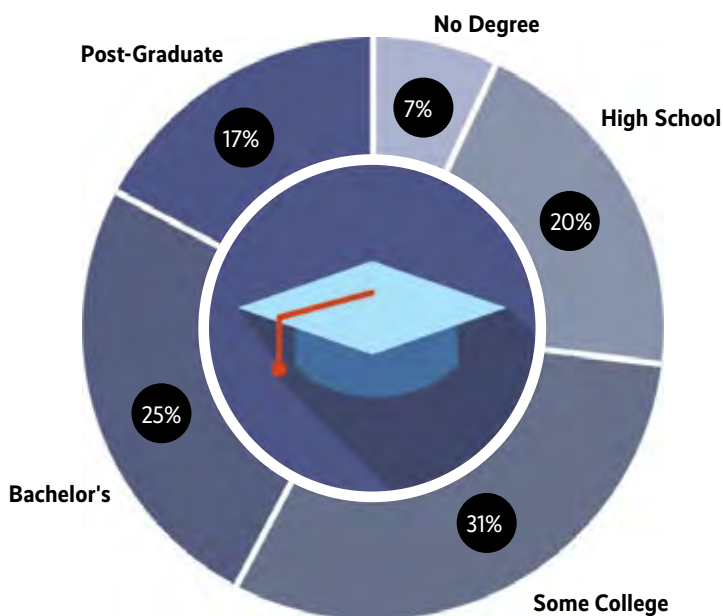


Figure 1.26—Educational Attainment, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

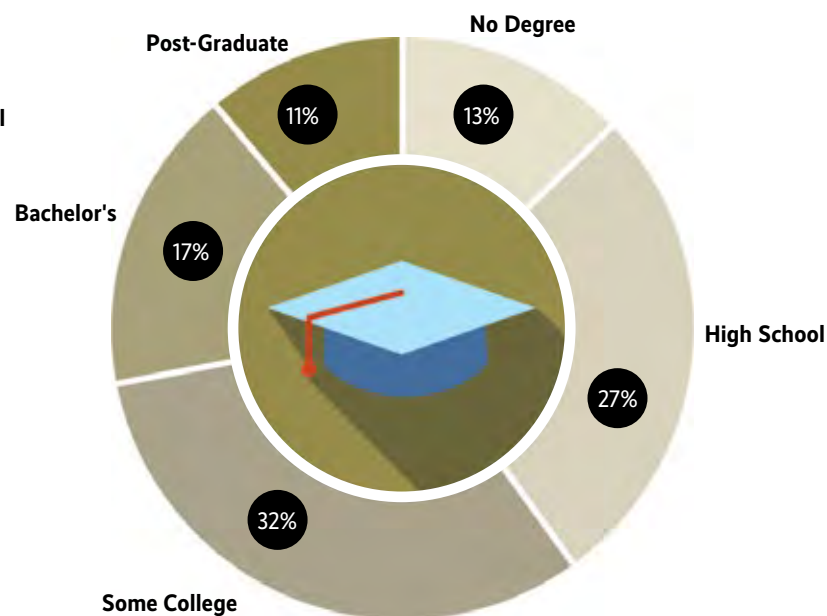
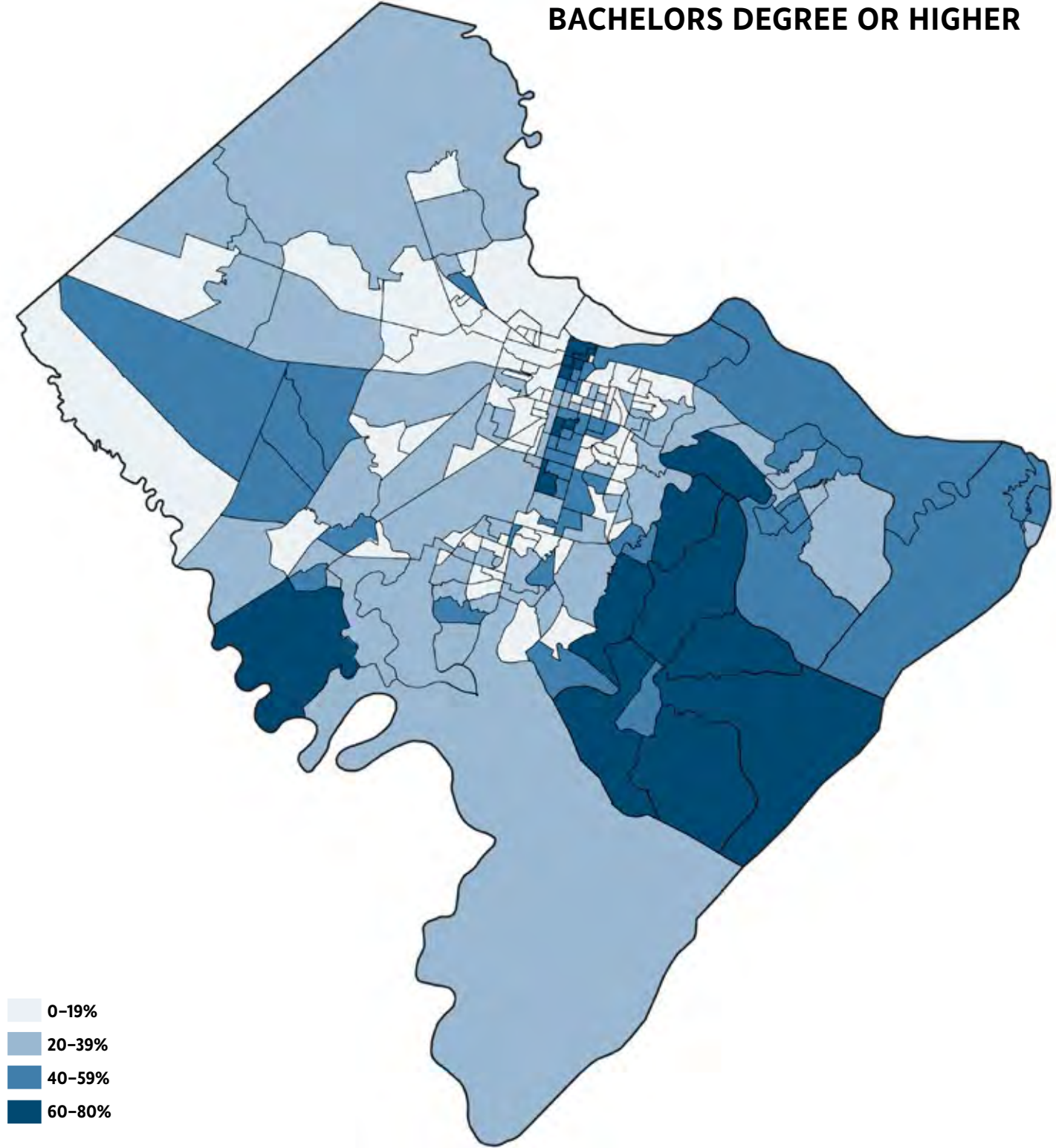


Figure 1.27—Educational Attainment, Savannah



**BACHELORS DEGREE OR HIGHER**



Map 1.8—Percentage Bachelors Degree or Higher by Block Group, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Nativity

In 2014–2018, 94.0% of the population in both unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah were U.S. natives and 6.0% were foreign-born. Of those residents born outside the United States, almost three quarters came from Asia and Latin America (including the Caribbean, Central America, and South America). This was also true in 2009–2013, though immigrants in 2014–2018 were much more likely to be from Asia and less likely to be from Latin America compared to 2009–2013. Figure 1.28 shows the region of birth for foreign-born residents in more detail.

## Place of Birth for Foreign Born, 2014–2018

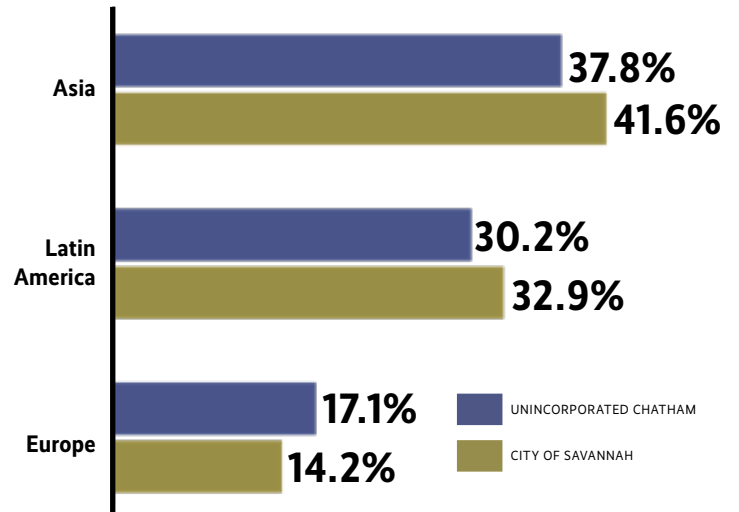


Figure 1.28–Foreign Born Place of Birth  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Languages Spoken at Home, 2014–2018

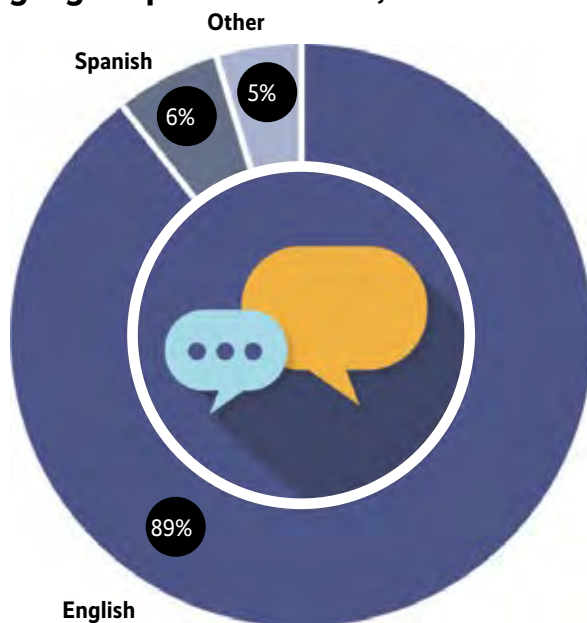


Figure 1.29–Language Spoken at Home, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

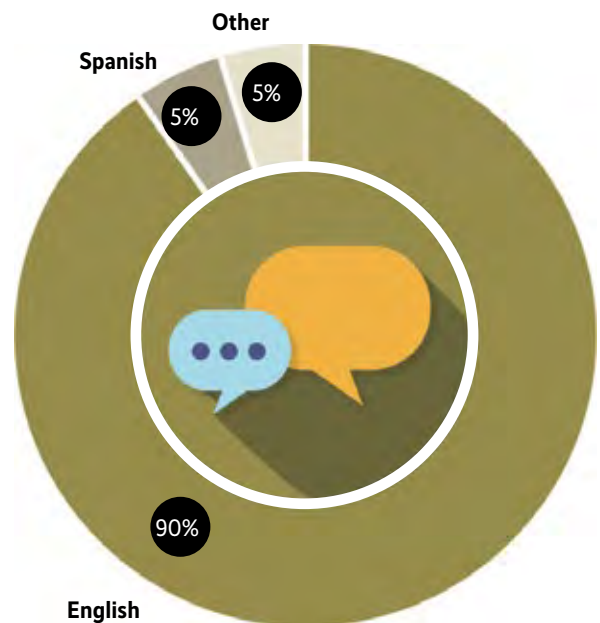


Figure 1.30–Language Spoken at Home, Savannah



## Veteran Status

In 2014–2018, approximately 11.3% of adults living in unincorporated Chatham County and 8.8% of adults living in Savannah were veterans. Both areas had a larger proportion of veterans than the state of Georgia (8.2%) and the country as a whole (7.5%). Additionally, local veterans are younger than the national average 53 years old compared to 58 years old and have served in the military more recently. The period of military service for veterans living in unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah is shown in Figure 1.31.

Note that Veterans may have served in more than one of the periods listed, percentages in the graphs represented may not sum to 100%.

## Veteran Characteristics, 2014–2018

### Unincorporated Chatham:



**22,982**  
Total Veteran Population

### City of Savannah:



**9,916**  
Total Veteran Population

## Military Service for Adult Veterans

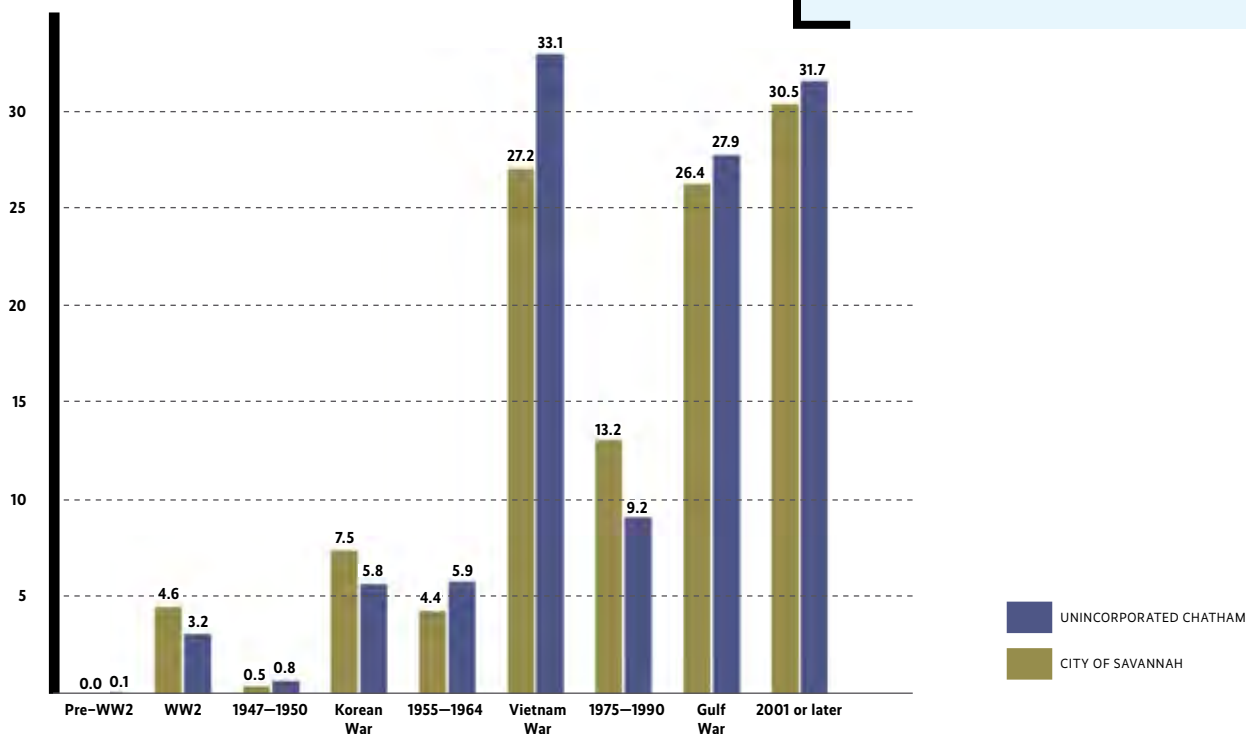


Figure 1.31–Period of Military Service for Adult Veterans, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah

U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





# CHATHAM COUNTY & SAVANNAH GROWTH

## Planned Town Era

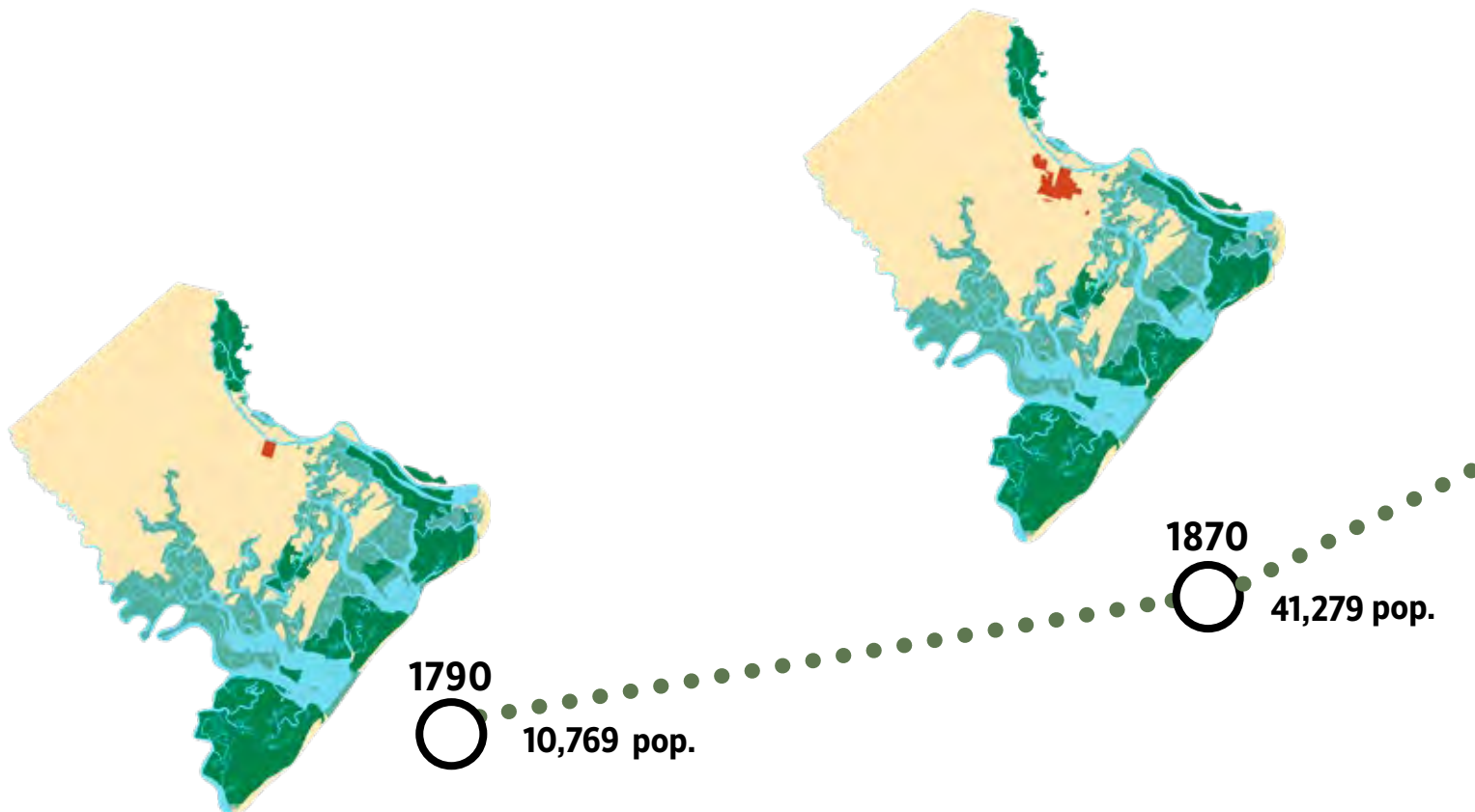
1790—Oglethorpe's Grid

The city of Savannah was created around a system of wards, which were part of a larger integrated regional land system. Each ward included a central square surrounded by building lots for residences and trust lots reserved for public buildings. The result was a dense urban pattern that was centered around walkability.

## Streetcar Era

1870—The First Ring Suburb

The introduction of the streetcar in the late 1800s had an enormous impact on the growth of the city, resulting in new development patterns that shaped the city's "first ring" suburbs. Lot sizes doubled, the public realm shrank, and the ward structure changed to one composed of rectangular blocks.

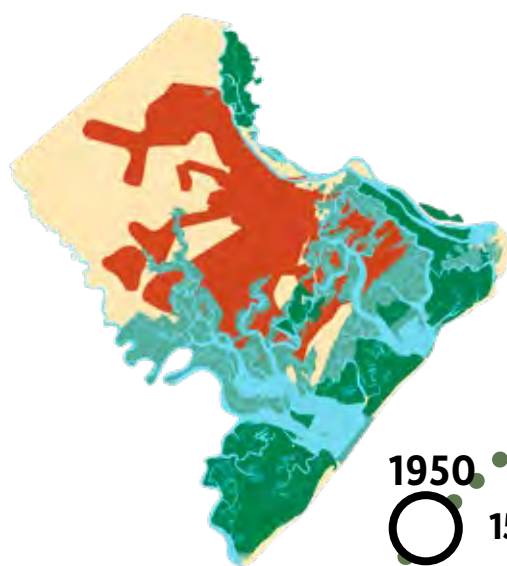




## Modern Automobile Era

1950—Automobile Dependence

By the 1950s, automobile dependence was in full effect. People relied on their automobile to travel to work and for accessing goods and services. This post-war era gave rise to the Baby Boom, which spurred a great economic and development expansion. This fueled the suburbs rapidly, reaching out farther and farther from the original core.



1950

151,481 pop.

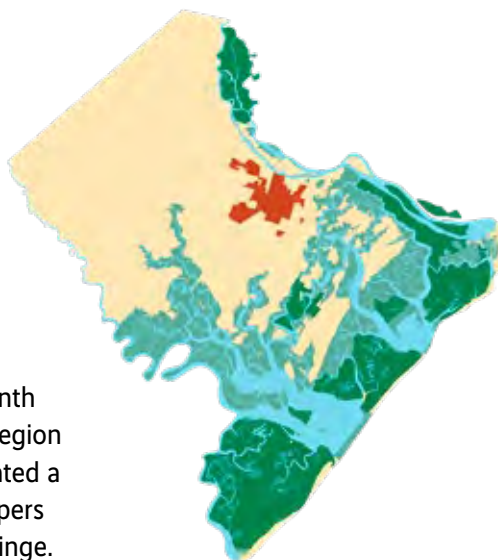
1940

100,032 pop.

## Early Automobile Era

1940—Post-War Expansion

While automobiles were introduced late in the nineteenth century, their impact on development patterns in the region was not felt until the 1920s. As the automobile stimulated a “Second Ring” suburb, greater mobility offered developers far more opportunities to develop beyond the urban fringe.



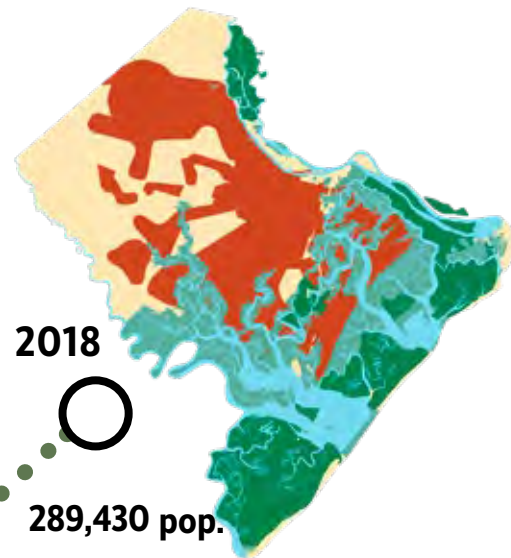
2018

289,430 pop.

## Amenity Community Era

2018—Quality of Life

A new era of reduced automobile dependence and increasing mobility options is slowly emerging and producing alternative forms of development, including neo-traditional development, conservation subdivisions, high-amenity communities, and town centers. Combinations and reformulations of these types of development will likely create new land use patterns distinctly different from earlier suburban patterns.





## COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 has touched nearly every aspect of the community and residents' lives in the past year. Chatham County, like every county in the country, suffered the economic, social, educational, and health consequences of the pandemic that, at the time of this writing, has killed over 569,000 Americans. As of April 5, 2021, Chatham County had a total of 19,608 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 394 confirmed deaths, and 1,561 hospitalizations due to COVID-19. At the time these data were acquired, there were an additional 24 probable deaths due to COVID-19 in Chatham County as well.

As of February 2021, the employment rate in the county had decreased 5.8% compared to January 2020. These job losses have been concentrated primarily in low and middle wage jobs; in fact, the employment rate among workers in the top wage quartile has been above January 2020 levels since statewide “stay at home” orders were lifted on April 30, 2020. Workers in the bottom wage quartile, however, have remained hardest hit; between mid-March and mid-April 2020, the employment rate for low wage jobs dropped nearly 45%.

Unemployment claims in the County reached their peak the first full week of April 2020, when roughly 14,500 people filed an initial claim for unemployment benefits. This corresponds to a rate of 10.4 claims per 100 people in the labor force. The number of unemployment claims has generally been decreasing since then as of the week ending October 31, 2020, there were 0.88 unemployment claims per 100 people in the County's labor force.

Small businesses have also been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As of February 2021, 33% fewer small businesses were open in Chatham County compared to January 2020, and total small business revenue had decreased by 38.5%. By mid-March 2021, however, total consumer spending in Chatham County had nearly rebounded back to pre-pandemic levels.

Overall, Chatham County residents spent 5% less time away from home in April 2021 compared to the start of last year when the pandemic began. When people did leave their residence during this time, the average amount of time spent elsewhere varied significantly depending on their destination, with the most dramatic increase seen in outdoor activity.

- The total time spent at grocery stores increased 2.9%
- Total time spent in parks increased 64.7%
- Total time spent at retail and restaurant locations increased 1.6%
- Total time spent at transit locations decreased 24%
- Total time spent in the workplace decreased 29.6%





## Percent Change in Employment

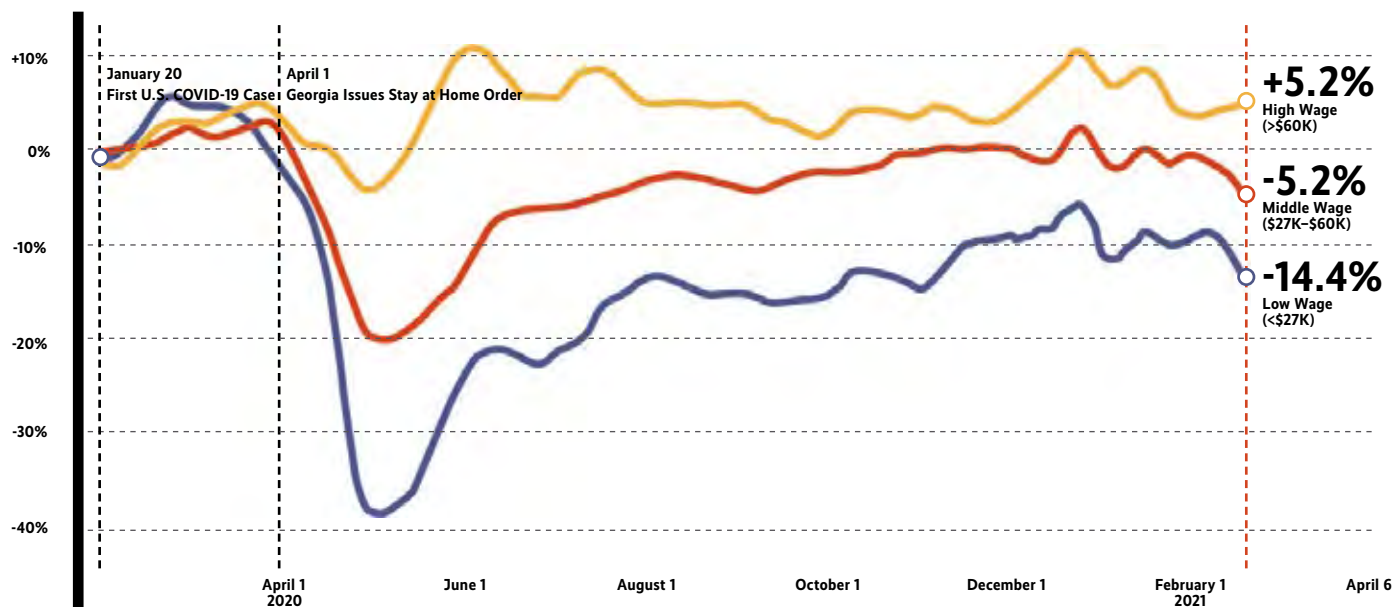


Figure 1.32—Percent Change in Employment, Chatham County

Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker; Earnin; Intuit; Kronos; Paychex

## Time Spent Outside Home

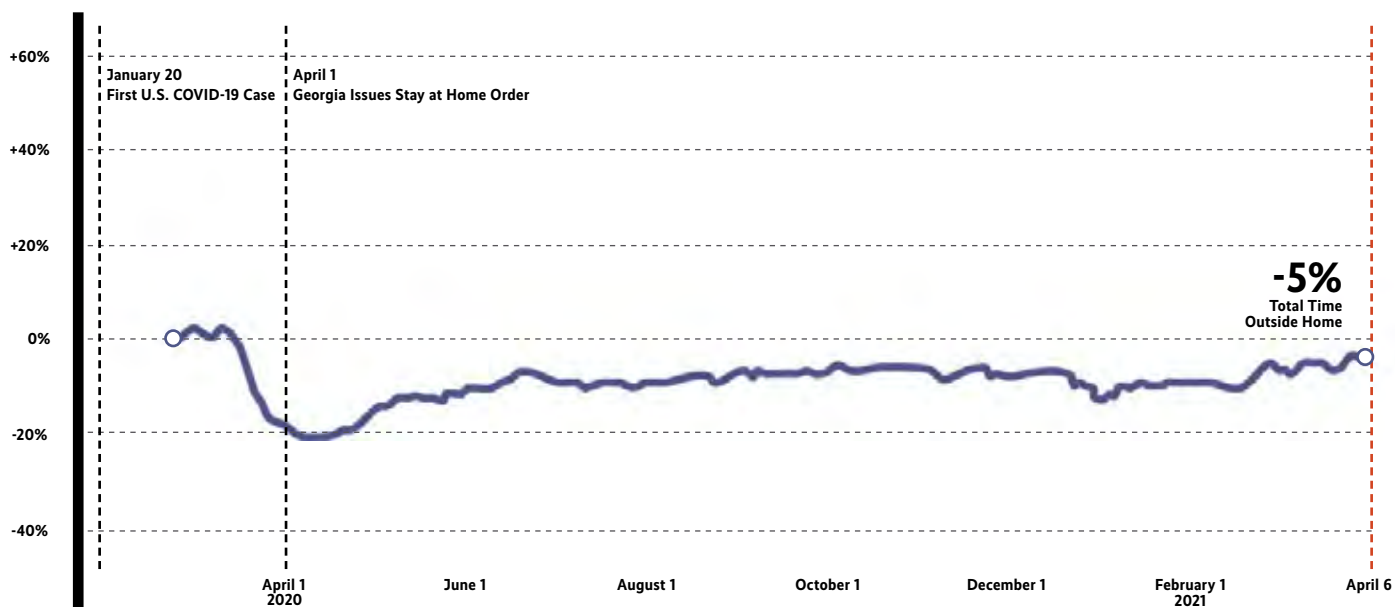


Figure 1.33—Percent Change in Time Spent Outside Home, Chatham County

Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker; Google: COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports





## Data & Calculations

All data presented in the Community Profile are for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah unless otherwise noted. Most of these data are from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) multiyear estimates covering the 2014–2018 period (the most current publicly available ACS multiyear data at the time of access). ACS 5-year estimates represent data collected over a period of 60 months, and describe the general social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics of a geographic area over that entire period of time. These multiyear estimates offer the additional benefit of having smaller margins of error and being more statistically reliable than the single-year estimates also published by the ACS. The 2018 ACS 5-year estimates in the Plan 2040 Community Profile are based on municipal boundaries as of January 1, 2018. To better understand trends within the county, it is important to only use non-overlapping periods of the ACS multiyear estimates. Therefore, the 2013 5-year ACS data covering the years 2009–2013 is used throughout the chapter to compare data over time.

The Census Bureau publishes ACS 5-year data for multiple different geographies, including counties, cities/towns, census tracts, and block groups (among many others). While ACS data for the city of Savannah were obtained directly from the Census Bureau, estimates for Unincorporated Chatham County—a non-standard geographic area for which ACS data are not explicitly published—had to be derived separately. Typically, this is done by aggregating data for smaller geographic units such as tracts up to the desired geographic level. In Chatham County, however, this method was not suitable because municipal boundaries do not line up with the boundaries of any smaller geographic units.

In general, most of the statistics for unincorporated Chatham County were calculated using the following steps:

1. Data was downloaded for each of the eight municipalities in Chatham County as well as for Chatham County as a whole
2. The data was summed across all of the municipalities
3. The sum for the municipalities was subtracted from the value for Chatham County as a whole

Additional statistical calculations were completed to obtain margins of error for all derived estimates. For more information about this process, or any other calculations in the Community Profile, please contact the Advance Planning Department of the Chatham County—Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission.

*Other key data sources include: U.S. Census Bureau (Decennial Censuses, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, Population Estimates Program), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Opportunity Insights, as well as several departments and offices of the state of Georgia.*





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A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a patterned dress and a multi-strand pearl necklace, is looking down at a board covered with sticky notes. The image has an orange tint. The text 'COMMUNITY GOALS' is written vertically on the left side, and 'ELEMENT' is written vertically below it. A large '02' is at the bottom right, and a 'DRAFT' watermark is in the center.

# COMMUNITY GOALS ELEMENT

DRAFT

# 02





# COMMUNITY GOALS

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## Introduction

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The visions and goals that emerged through the Plan 2040 comprehensive planning process represent the voices of the community as expressed in virtual meetings, pop-up events and a survey conducted during 2020 and 2021.

The following results describe our community vision and goals for the next twenty years

DRAFT



# PLAN 2040

## VISION & GOALS

### Introduction

The Vision and Goals are the product of public involvement and identify Plan 2040's direction for the future and are intended to serve as a guide to unincorporated Chatham and Savannah officials in day-to-day decision making. They are the product of public involvement and the following components:

Each of these components was previously established in the county and city's prior Comprehensive Plan, however, through the Plan 2040 update process, community members were given an opportunity to revisit and update each component.

### The Vision

The Vision paints a picture of what Chatham County and Savannah desires to become. The Vision statements being offered were refined through discussions with the MPC subcommittee, stakeholders, and participants.

The vision statements are supported by the goals created to help shape Chatham County and Savannah's future development.

### Goals

Goals are long-term outcomes the county and city hopes to achieve by implementing the Comprehensive Plan. They are aspirational, expressing Chatham and Savannah's collective desires and values for the future.

The community identified a number of goals to achieve in order to make Chatham and Savannah's vision a continuing reality. The following goals represent the recurring themes, and like the vision statement, were derived from a review process involving county and city staff, the community advisory committee, and members of the public.

DRAFT









## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah 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:

1. Using accurate and reliable data, link current and projected needs of employers through the development of apprenticeship and vocational programs for the placement of individuals with quality employment leading to self-sufficiency
2. Foster a positive environment that provides opportunities for all businesses
3. Increase economic mobility by reducing barriers and creating opportunities for quality employment for young adults, the economically disadvantaged, justice involved, and individuals with behavioral health needs
4. Implement outreach and programming that leads to economically inclusive entrepreneurial growth and innovation through the enhanced presence of small business support services and collaboration among local businesses
5. Become a community with economically vibrant, safe neighborhoods and commercial centers



## LAND USE

In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & 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:

1. Establish growth policies for the city of Savannah which seek to guide development and redevelopment in a responsible manner, encouraging compact development, walkable neighborhoods, increased connectivity, and open space preservation
2. Identify and prioritize future annexations which are regionally coordinated, promote responsible growth
3. Utilize small area and corridor plans as a means to protect the character of existing areas and ensure new development is compatible
4. Continue to create innovative ways to connect people with places
5. Enhance the character and image of major corridors that Implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that project a positive image while encouraging walking





## TRANSPORTATION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah prioritizes safe mobility for all users; 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:

1. Support safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation designs and improvements that enhance neighborhood connectivity for all modes of travel including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists
2. Improve accessibility to employment centers, institutions, commercial corridors, and recreational facilities equitably through multi-modal connections, bikeways, trails and greenways
3. Maintain and preserve transportation infrastructure in a manner that protects unique regional characteristics, quality-of-life, and the environment
4. Maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure that supports and enables local, regional and global economic vitality and competitiveness, productivity and efficiency
5. Promote and provide equitable neighborhood connectivity and built environments that encourage active and healthy lifestyles through the strategic placement of bicycle and pedestrian pathways, public parks, enforcement of road regulations, and education about health benefits



## HOUSING

### In 2040...

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

### GOALS:

1. Improve neighborhood stability where all residents, regardless of income, can occupy, maintain, and improve their homes without undue financial hardship
2. Increase supportive housing for special needs populations, such as individuals who are homeless, mentally ill, disabled, and residents in drug recovery
3. Increase affordable housing stock
4. Decrease homelessness







## NATURAL RESOURCES

In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah is enhanced by the protection and maintenance of natural resources and ecosystems*



## QUALITY OF LIFE

In 2040...

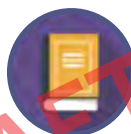
*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah citizens achieve a superior quality of life within a safe, active, and healthy environment inclusive of the area's history, natural resources, public mobility, and efficient government*

### GOALS:

1. Protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents from flood hazards
2. Enhance water, flooding, and hazard related public education and outreach efforts
3. Monitor projections for changing future conditions and implement plans, policies, and property protection to reduce potential damages
4. Preserve and protect potable water sources to ensure adequate drinking water supplies for existing and future residents
5. Protect and preserve existing tree canopy and require planting of additional native trees during the development process to mitigate negative impacts of stormwater runoff and the heat island effect of large areas of impervious surfaces, in addition to improving air quality
6. Increase communities' adaptive capacity and resiliency
7. Manage the impacts of climate change as it relates to land use and development through mitigation and adaptation measures
8. Proactively manage stormwater runoff
9. Plan for the mitigation and redevelopment of brownfields for productive uses



## HISTORIC RESOURCES



## EDUCATION



## COMMUNITY HEALTH



## PUBLIC SAFETY



## BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS





## HISTORIC RESOURCES

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah as historical and emerging cultural resources provide unique advantages to balance preservation with development and economic growth*

### GOALS:

1. Survey culturally, historically, and architecturally significant sites, buildings, and structures in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah
2. Incorporate affordable housing strategies into current and future preservation plans
3. Identify and address community health issues that impact historic preservation efforts and encourage healthy communities through historic preservation
4. Identify and address climate resiliency strategies and incorporate them into a climate resiliency plan for unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah's historic and cultural resources
5. Broaden historic preservation efforts to highlight and include historically underrepresented stories, sites, and communities
6. Create new and support existing heritage tourism programs in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah in order to highlight their cultural and historic heritage
7. Promote the preservation and public awareness of culturally and archaeologically significant sites in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah



## EDUCATION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah has innovative and inclusive educational systems, and are a model of academic excellence that enable students to have the knowledge, skills and ability to succeed at chosen pathways*

### GOALS:

1. Ensure equitable access of critical life skills including soft skills, financial, social, and conflict resolution skills are available to parents/legal guardians and taught to all students through the use of technology, community partnerships, and counseling
2. Implement career track, internship, and mentorship programs between employers and students; while increasing leadership development programs between community organizations, businesses, and public schools to prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility
3. Plan for changing populations, capacities, and overcrowding and increase the quality of education and performances at SCCPSS
4. 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
5. Ensure families and community members have the ability to promote and reinforce literacy and numeracy instruction that takes place in a student's learning







## COMMUNITY HEALTH

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah has a culture of health including equal access to quality and affordable healthcare, chronic disease prevention, health inclusive policies, and healthy environmental design*

### GOALS:

1. Effectively address mental health by educating the public and reducing stigma, increasing early intervention programs, removing gaps and barriers, and increasing access to treatment including returning and detained residents, children, adolescents, and the homeless
2. Invest in community-based health resources to increase health equity by providing access to preventive health services, health education, and strategies to encourage individuals and families to adopt healthy behaviors
3. 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
4. Increase access to healthy food for populations that are most likely to be food-insecure such as older adults, children, those in poverty, and those that live in food apartheid



## PUBLIC SAFETY

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & 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:

1. Insure better quality of life through multifaceted strategies of public safety. The strategies include reducing crime by focusing on asset building; meeting community needs; expanding visibility and capacity of resources and programs provided by first responders; and building trust between law enforcement and residents
2. Develop local and regional collaboration among organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand resources including but not limited to behavioral health and public health services
3. Provide effective and efficient government services while ensuring that processes and procedures are planned and executed with transparency





## BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah has closed the digital divide to ensure access to fast affordable, and reliable broadband while acquiring world class broadband network capabilities to accelerate high-tech business development*

### GOALS:

1. Ensure all of Chatham County has access to broadband service

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The background of the slide is a faded, green-tinted photograph of a city skyline. In the foreground, a river flows. On the left, a bridge with multiple arches spans the water. In the center and right, several tall buildings are visible. The most prominent building on the right is a large, classical-style structure with a prominent dome and a clock face, topped with a flagpole flying a flag. Other buildings of varying heights and architectural styles fill the rest of the skyline under a cloudy sky.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

DRAFT

# 03





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Introduction

The Economic Development Element of Plan 2040 is an inventory and assessment of the community's economic base, labor force characteristics, and economic development opportunities and resources. The goal of this element is to explain the foundation of the Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), and provide a complete picture of the area's employees, the largest industries, and the possible future direction of the economy. It is a forecast of the community's needs and goals in light of population trends, natural resources, housing, and land use in order to develop a strategy for the economic well-being of the community.

The economic development policies and activities of Chatham County and city of Savannah are intended to encourage development and expansion of businesses and industries that best serve the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.



# REGIONAL ECONOMY

## Savannah MSA

The Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is comprised of Chatham County, Effingham and Bryan counties. The jurisdictions, employees, and employers within the MSA all have an impact on each other. For example, many residents live in Pooler and work in Savannah and vice versa. Being the third largest MSA in Georgia (behind the Atlanta MSA and Augusta MSA), the Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area is home to a variety of industries and an estimated population of over 400,000 people.

The Economic Development element will discuss data and trends based on the Savannah MSA, which includes communities adjacent to the city of Savannah, such as Pooler, Garden City, and unincorporated Chatham County.



### METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA)

A MSA is a geographical region with a relatively high population density at its core and close economic ties throughout the area. The city of Savannah acts as an anchor to other communities throughout Chatham, Effingham, and Bryan counties.

—Census Bureau



Figure 3.1–Savannah MSA



# LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS



## Labor Force Participation

The Savannah MSA has consistently had a slightly higher labor force participation rate than the city of Savannah. For both the city of Savannah and the Savannah MSA as a whole, the labor force participation rate has increased over the years.

## Employment

The Savannah MSA has a labor force of almost 189,000 people, with an unemployment rate that typically hovers around 3%. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the unemployment rate skyrocketed to over 15% in April of 2020 and settled to an unemployment rate of 5.6% in December of 2020.

Before the Pandemic, the unemployment rate had been consistently declining. In December of 2019, the unemployment rate shrunk to 2.7% according to the Georgia Department of Labor.

Prior to the decline in the economy caused by the Pandemic, Savannah's economy showed consistent improvement, with the number of employed residents in the area steadily increasing since 2009, while the unemployment rate consistently decreased during that same period. It is anticipated that the unemployment rate will again show a decrease once the economy begins to recover from the worldwide impacts of COVID-19.

*Before the global COVID-19 Pandemic, the unemployment rate shrunk to 2.7%*  
—Georgia Department of Labor



### LABOR FORCE

The labor force is defined as all people above the age of 16 who are working or actively looking for work. This section will specifically address the key characteristics of the Savannah MSA's labor force.

—Bureau of Labor Statistics



## Labor Force Participation Rate

			%
Year	City of Savannah	Savannah MSA	
2010	58.8	63.7	
2014	61	63.6	
2018	63.7	65.5	

Figure 3.2—Average Unemployment Rates, Savannah MSA  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Table S2301)

## Average Unemployment Rates

Year	Average Unemployment Rate	Year	April Unemployment Rate
2010	9.8%	2010	9%
2011	9.9%	2011	9.2%
2012	9.0%	2012	8.8%
2013	8.0%	2013	7.5%
2014	7.0%	2014	6.5%
2015	5.7%	2015	5.4%
2016	5.2%	2016	4.8%
2017	4.4%	2017	4.2%
2018	3.6%	2018	3.4%
2019	3.2%	2019	2.9%
2020	6.9%	2020	15.3%

Figure 3.3—Average Unemployment Rates, Savannah MSA  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Table S2301)





## Educational Attainment

Education is an important factor in the economy as it can provide insight into the skill base of the labor force. Understanding the skillset of the population can lead to creating better strategies for attracting industries or identifying a gap in skills that can be filled through education programs. For example, if it is found that a large portion of the labor force has a degree in engineering, the community will be better able to attract engineering firms that can then hire that employment base.

Conversely, if there is a lack of technology skills in the labor force, prioritizing tech programs and training can increase the labor base, and thereby contribute to attracting more technology-based businesses.

## High School

For the 2019–2020 school year, the Savannah Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) statistics show that

*Chatham County had a high school graduation rate of 89.7%, with 1,984 students graduating during this same period*

### Key Points: SY 2019–20 Graduation Rate

- SCCPSS achieved a graduation rate of 89.7%. This represents a gain of nearly two points compared with the previous year and establishes a new record high for the District
- The District has consistently improved the graduation rate since SY 2014–15 and exceeded the 2019–20 annual target rate of 85.7%

For the sixth consecutive year the district exceeded both the state and the comparison group graduation rates. In 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years, SCCPSS earned the highest graduation rate within the comparison group.

It should be noted that these statistics are only for the Chatham County public school system (SCCPSS), and do not reflect Effingham or Bryan County's schools, which are also within the Savannah MSA.

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For more information see the Quality of Life Element under Education on page 376





## Four-Year Education Focus Areas

According to the 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year estimates, around 35% of adults aged 18–64 in the Savannah MSA have a bachelor’s degree or higher. There are a variety of majors available at the many higher education institutions in the area, and the breakdown of the college majors students selection, reflect that variety.

*The most common major for residents 25 or older is in Science and Engineering followed closely by Business, Arts, Humanities, and Others*

The third most popular major is Business. The majors that have the highest share of students also reflect some of the current businesses and institutions that make up the Savannah MSA economy. For example, there is a large presence of healthcare and aerospace businesses, which could explain why the Science, Engineering, and related fields have a higher share of students and vice versa.

The presence of an internationally recognized art institution, the Savannah College of Art and Design, as well as the growing entertainment industry, could contribute to the Arts, Humanities, and Others field also having a high share of students.

*Around 35% of adults aged 18–64 in the Savannah MSA have a bachelor's degree or higher*  
—American Community Survey

## First College Major for Residents 25 or Older

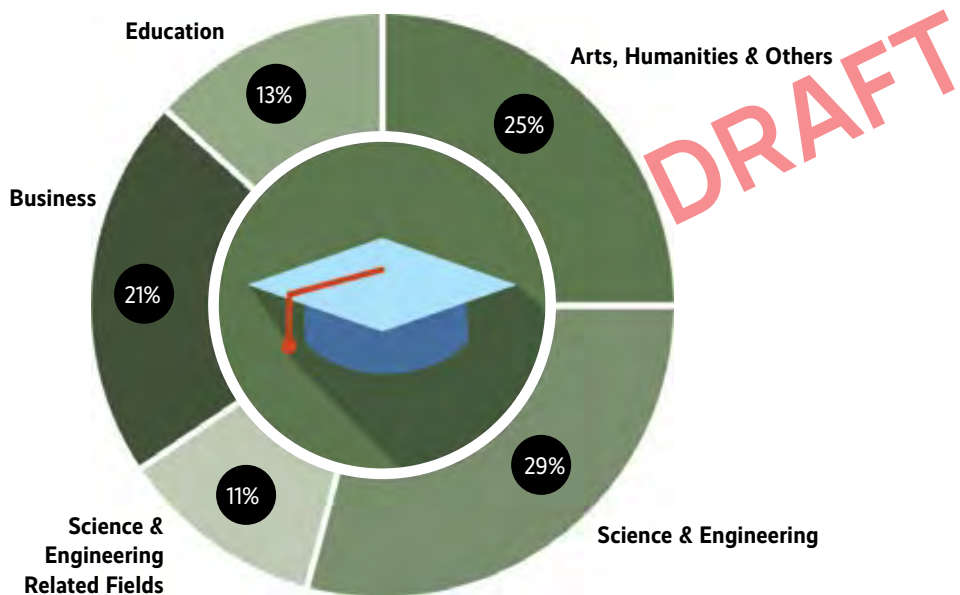


Figure 3.4—First College Major for Savannah MSA Residents 25 or Older  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Two-Year Technical College Focus Areas

A technical school or college is a form of higher education that offers two-year degrees. This form of degree program is beneficial as it provides attendees a more flexible and often a less expensive way to further their education compared to a four-year institution. Additionally, technical schools offer very specialized occupational schooling so students can gain specific skills that can be applied directly to the local workforce.

One of the major technical colleges in the area is Savannah Technical College. Savannah Tech offers a diverse selection of technical degrees, with some degree fields growing more than others. Broadly speaking, the programs experiencing the most growth are manufacturing, drafting technician, and healthcare related programs. Similar to the four-year college majors discussed above, the largest programs also reflect the existing economy, in which healthcare, manufacturing, engineering, and construction have a strong presence.

Savannah Tech is seeing a decline in Mechanical CAD Drafters and Nursing Aides graduates. This could suggest that there are changes in these job fields influencing students to change direction and pursue specific programs over others.

One field that has seen a decline in the number of students within the technical program yet has seen growth locally and continues to benefit the overall economy is Cinematography and Film/Video Production. Not only is this field growing, it also has a large presence in the Chatham County area, as Georgia is the #1 state in the US where studios choose to film. Because more studios choose to film in Savannah, it has been identified as a growing economic driver by the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA).

This field has the potential to bring more capital into the economy and provide high paying, skilled jobs. According to the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, direct spending from the film industry was \$2.9 billion in 2019. Additionally, trends suggest that the surrounding schools of all levels with film related programs should consider promoting and growing these programs.

DRAFT

### Plan 2040 Survey

Fifty-one percent (51%) of the respondents felt that developing a skilled work force through training programs, recruitment, and continuing education was very important.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.





## Technical Programs with the Highest Growth in Graduates

Program	TOTAL GRADUATES		PERCENT CHANGE 2018–2019
	2018	2019	%
Airframe Mechanics and Aircraft Maintenance Technology/Technician	50	94	88.0
Barbering/Barber	5	13	160.0
CAD/CADD Drafting and/or Design Technology/Technician	8	18	200.0
Construction Management	22	43	95.5
Criminal Justice/Police Science	25	42	68.0
Drafting and Design Technology/Technician, General	8	12	50.0
Food Preparation/Professional Cooking/Kitchen Assistant	60	81	35.0
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	14	23	64.3
Machine Shop Technology/Assistant	21	29	38.1
Medical Insurance Coding Specialist	32	48	50.0
Medical/Clinical Assistant	7	10	42.9
Solar Energy Technology/Technician	28	39	39.3
Truck and Bus Driver/Commercial Vehicle Operator and Instructor	167	227	37.1

Figure 3.5–Technical Program Growth Rates, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)

## Technical Programs with the Highest Decline in Graduates

Program	TOTAL GRADUATES		PERCENT CHANGE 2018–2019
	2018	2019	%
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	34	22	-35.3
Autobody/Collision and Repair Technology/Technician	16	3	-81.3
Cinematography and Film/Video Production	49	22	-55.1
Electrical, Electronic and Communications Engineering/Technician	10	6	-40.0
Fire Science/Firefighting	16	11	-31.3
Fire Services Administration	5	1	-80.0
Hospitality Administration/Management/Personnel Administration	7	3	-57.2
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	80	52	-35.0
Legal Assistant/Paralegal	10	6	-40.0
Mechanical Drafting and Mechanical Drafting CAD/CADD	5	2	-60.0
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	319	158	-50.5
Teacher Assistant/Aide	3	2	-33.3

Figure 3.6–Technical Program Decline Rates, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL)





# EDUCATION & LOCAL JOB ENVIRONMENT

Education is a powerful tool for economic advancement. It is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty and increase earnings. For example, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, people with more education tend have a higher weekly income and lower unemployment. While there are still economic issues related to education, such as student loans and a lack of access due to price for lower income residents, it demonstrates that having more education opens the door for more job opportunities. Because of this, investment in education programs, especially those that are relevant to the local job market, is a necessary strategy to reducing the ever-present state of high poverty in the area.

Savannah Tech is an example of an institution that is offering degree programs in industries that exist locally, including the newly created Logistics degree program.

## Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment in the U.S., 2020

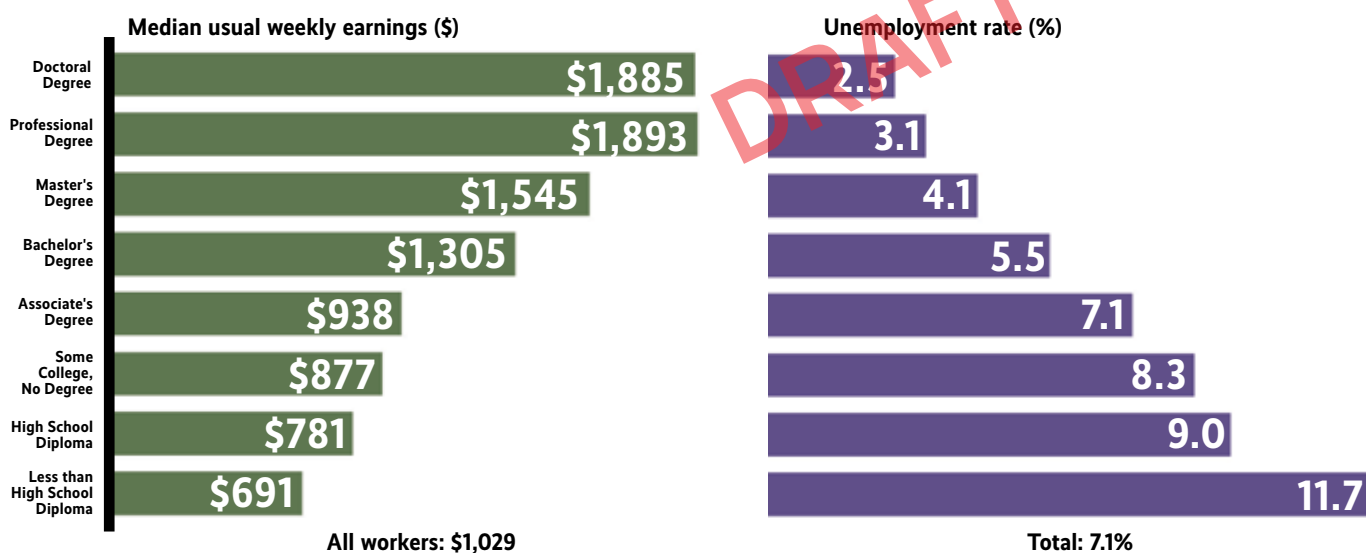


Figure 3.7—Earnings & Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, 2020  
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



# ECONOMIC BASE

The city of Savannah and Chatham County have a diverse economic base similar to that of many other coastal cities. Employment is highest in the service, retail trade, and manufacturing sectors. The largest manufacturing facilities in the city and county produce textiles, paper products, chemicals, transportation equipment, and food products. Retail trade establishments are located throughout downtown Savannah and in pockets throughout the county, to provide for the daily needs of area residents. Regional shopping areas that attract customers from throughout the southeast can be found in West Chatham and Downtown Savannah and sprinkled throughout the county.

Major employers in the service sector include the health care industry, the tourism industry, and educational institutions. St. Joseph's/Candler and Memorial Hospitals are the most visible components of the city's health care industry. Additional health care jobs are provided at clinics, nursing homes, laboratories, and the offices of doctors, dentists, and other health care practitioners. The healthcare field will continue to grow in the Chatham County region as the aging population continues to rise.

Major educational institutions providing employment include the Savannah State University (SSU), South University, Georgia Southern University's Armstrong Campus, Savannah Technical College, Savannah College of Art and Design, and the Chatham County Board of Education. Major businesses providing support for the tourism industry include hotels, restaurants, gift shops, and museums.



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# MAJOR ECONOMIC DRIVERS

## Georgia Ports Authority & Logistics

Due to its coastal location and direct access to port, rail, airway, and interstate transport systems, Chatham County is often the first choice for international operations looking to locate in the United States. Proactive organizations such as the World Trade Center Savannah (WTCSav) and Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA), aid in connecting international companies to contacts, programs, and potential sites, thereby driving growth within the region.

Goods entering the Port of Savannah can be shipped quickly to other nearby large metropolitan areas, thereby contributing to the growing hauling industry.

*The Port of Savannah is the largest single-terminal container facility of its kind in North America (from GPA), accounting for 21.6% of container trade on the east coast, and 12.2% of all container exports in the United States*

The steady growth of the Port of Savannah has had a tremendous impact on the area economy with no slowdowns predicted for the near future.

Additionally, major towns across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina are all within a five-hour drive. This short journey is good for tourism, trade and the growing logistics industry as a shorter commute is less expensive, quicker, and less strenuous on drivers and systems. Additionally, as rail transport improves through the GPAs Mason Mega Rail expansion project, more convenient and far-reaching transportation opportunities will arise.



### IMPACTS OF GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY

- Garden City Terminal is the third busiest and fastest growing container handling facility in the US
- The Port of Savannah handled 41.27 million tons of cargo in 2018
- In May 2021, the largest ship to ever dock on the east coast, the CMA GGM Marco Polo, docked at the Port of Savannah. The ship is 1,299 ft long
- Port of Savannah is the top US port for agriculture exports. In 2019, agriculture accounted for 60% of Savannah's exports





## Manufacturing

Chatham County and Savannah enjoy a diversified manufacturing base. Products range from paper and forest products to chemicals, from construction equipment to food processing, and from corporate jets to drill bits. The significance of the manufacturing segment of the local economy cannot be overstated. Some of the largest employers and highest wage-earning workers are within the manufacturing segment. According to the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, manufacturing firms accounted for 19% of the area's gross domestic product (GDP). This already significant industry within the economy is set to grow more in the future.

*Manufacturing expansion by companies like Medline Industries, Anatolia Tile+Stone, Plastics Express, A&R Logistics, and others will add at least 1,050 jobs to the region in the coming years*

## Aerospace

Aerospace manufacturing has been a key industry in Savannah since Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation planted roots in 1967. As the largest aerospace manufacturer in the Southeast, Gulfstream employs nearly 10,000 workers locally. In addition, more than 30 aerospace-related companies are located in Savannah, making the area a true aerospace supply cluster. Savannah's aerospace industries enjoy the same benefits as other businesses in the MSAs advanced manufacturing sector, including state and local incentives, easy access to the Port of Savannah, the adjacent Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport and nationally recognized workforce training programs, among others (Savannah Economic Development Authority). As with many of the larger economic drivers in the region, the trend for growth in the aerospace industry seems certain.





## Creative & Technical Businesses

A burgeoning group of small to large creative and technical firms have chosen Chatham County and Savannah for their office locations. To support and encourage this growth, organizations such as the Creative Coast were formed through collaborative private and public partnerships to leverage the area's unique blend of bright talent, leading-edge technologies, and exceptionally high quality of life—all to stimulate the growth of entrepreneurial, creative, and technical business in the area.

Since the development of the Creative Coast in 1997, numerous organizations and efforts have come together to better meet the needs of Savannah's creative community. By focusing on creative entrepreneurialism, technology, new media, art, music, and food culture, these groups are helping to support and shape the future of Savannah. Additionally, the Creative Coast and others continue to market and bring in high tech and knowledge-based businesses to the area as highly technical jobs have been identified as a needed resource to improve economic growth in the region.

*In 2020, Governor Brian P. Kemp announced that Georgia had been ranked as the Number #1 State for Film Production and prior to the global COVID-19 Pandemic, was on pace for another record-setting year*

The film industry has an established and continually growing presence in Chatham County. This is due to tax credits being offered at both the state and local level as well as the diverse site locations being offered, ranging from natural to architectural resources. With sites such as beaches to marshland to historic houses, squares, and parks, Chatham County has numerous possibilities for filming. One of the more recent productions filmed in Savannah was Disney's live action "Lady and the Tramp," which alone brought a direct spending impact of \$51 million to the Savannah region.

The Savannah Regional Film Commission, an AFCL certified Film Commission, is the central point of contact for entertainment production in the Chatham County region. The Film Commission promotes the Savannah region as a premier film destination for motion picture, television, and commercial productions. The Film Commission functions as a liaison between film companies and the municipalities in the Chatham County region, in addition to providing location assistance and coordination with local crew and support services. The Film Commission is a division of the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA). In addition to the state of Georgia's tax incentives, the Savannah Regional Film Commission offers a local entertainment production rebate available for qualified productions. Undoubtedly, this area is one that our local governments should continue expanding to reap the benefits in the coming years.





## Military & Government

The Fort Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF) military complex is a major sector in Savannah and Chatham County's economy. Hunter Army Airfield is the sister Installation to Fort Stewart and located within the Savannah city limits. Its mission is to provide air transport to Fort Stewart, home of the 3rd Infantry Division, located on more than 285,000 acres nearby. Hunter Army Airfields 5,400 acres centrally located in Savannah, plays a critical role in the Installation's deployment capabilities as a power projection platform with access to rail, port operations, and a major interstate road network. With the longest Army runway on the east coast, the largest military aircraft can land at Hunter, load the biggest equipment in the Army inventory, and then deploy both equipment and soldiers within an 18-hour wheels-up timeline anywhere in the world.

Just 40 miles from Savannah, Fort Stewart is located in Liberty, Bryan, and portions of Evans, Long, and Tattnall Counties. Fort Stewart and HAAF together are one of Coastal Georgia's largest employers. The ratio of military to civilian employees is approximately five to one, with 20,850 officers and enlisted military and 4,153 civilians employed at both Installations. With a total of 25,000 people employed, Fort Stewart and HAAF account for nearly three-fourths of the military employment in the area. Total payroll for both bases is estimated at well over \$1 billion dollars and with an annual financial impact of \$4–\$5 billion dollars.

The direct spending from military operations, staff, and residents helps to sustain local communities by creating employment opportunities across a wide range of sectors, both directly and indirectly. Active duty and civilian employees spend their military wages on services such as retail, food service, real estate, and education. The Savannah MSA also benefit from defense contracts with private companies for equipment, supplies, construction, and various services such as health care and information technology.

*Ft. Stewart and Hunter AAF have an annual financial impact of \$4.9 billion —Savannah Chamber of Commerce*

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## Higher Education

Higher education institutions, such as the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), have a large presence in the community and are among the top ten largest employers in the region. There are multiple other education institutions in the area, such as Savannah State University, South University, Savannah Tech, Strayer University, and the Georgia Institute of Technology's Pooler campus that all have an impact on the economy. These colleges allow for an ever-growing skilled workforce to attract a variety of businesses and institutions to the growing Savannah MSA region.

As more individuals are drawn to the area for both educational purposes and to tap into a diverse, higher skilled workforce that graduates nearly 10,000 students a year, a large majority of graduates currently leave the area after graduation. Efforts to retain these graduates and ensure their placement in the Savannah MSA should be expanded.

## Healthcare

As the population of the area ages, access to healthcare will become increasingly more crucial. This sector already comprises a large portion of the economy, as it is one of the top 10 employment segments in the area. According to the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, the healthcare industry generated \$1.5 billion in the Savannah MSA in 2019.

The two major hospitals within this industry are Memorial Health University Medical Center (MHUMC) and St. Joseph's/Candler Health System (SJ/C). Memorial Health University Medical Center has been investing in adding to and updating its facilities, and expanding health care for children, people with disabilities, and mental health services. MHUMC includes the region's only Level 1 trauma center, the region's only children's hospital and the Savannah campus of Mercer University School of Medicine. The St. Joseph's/Candler Health System is also expanding its reach. In addition to constructing a new campus in Pooler to serve the western Chatham area in 2019, the health system will be building a new medical campus just minutes over the bridge in Bluffton, South Carolina.

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## Tourism

Tourism is a major economic driver in the area. Since the beginning of the preservation movement in the 1950s, the preservation of Savannah's historic and natural resources has helped to preserve the renowned Oglethorpe Plan that gives Savannah its distinctive qualities, attracting visitors from all over the world and creating a robust tourism industry.

Aesthetically pleasing architecture, culture, activities, and the beautiful natural environment brings an increasing number of visitors each year. The impact of tourism in 2019 generated \$3.1 billion in direct spending and \$27.7 million in tax revenue with most being spent on lodging, followed by food and beverage. The majority of travel to Savannah is leisure while an ever-growing portion is for business travel.

According to Visit Savannah, a major economic driver in the tourism industry is the Savannah Convention Center, hosting more than 160 events and 200,000 tourists annually. The economic impact the convention center has on our MSA and state economics is immense, providing \$1.4 billion in economic impact over that past twenty years, \$13.5 million raised in state and local government tax revenues annually, and supporting 28,000 tourism and hospitality jobs.

While COVID-19 temporarily affected these numbers, tourism is beginning to recover and is expected to continue growing to meet and possibly exceed the figures the industry had seen before the Pandemic's disruption.

Since tourism is already a major economic driver in the area, the tourism industry should continue to be supported by the city and county to ensure that the historic and natural resources are maintained and protected.

## Total Overnight Spending by Sector

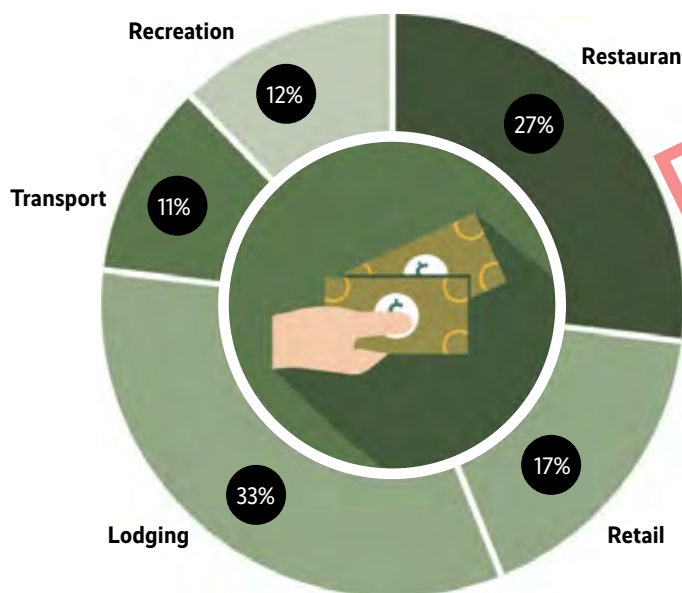


Figure 3.8–Total Overnight Spending by Sector, Savannah MSA  
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce 2019



# SAVANNAH MSA BUSINESS PROFILE

## MSA Profile

The community understands that businesses, most notably small businesses, are the backbone of what keeps the US economy thriving. Throughout Chatham County there are numerous resources and organizations specifically dedicated to assisting existing and prospective businesses both small and large by providing education, networking, and growth opportunities.

The majority of businesses in Savannah employ fewer than 5 people, but 21% of the workforce is employed by companies with fewer than 20 employees, suggesting that the Savannah MSA small business infrastructure and programs support a strong business environment.

Based on Georgia Department of Labor data, the largest employers in the Savannah MSA are listed below (in alphabetical order). Service industry employers, such as hospitals, retail, and grocery stores, represent the bulk of these major employment centers.

- Candler Hospital Inc.
- Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation
- Gulfstream Services Corporation
- Marine Terminals Corporation–East
- Savannah College of Art and Design
- Savannah Health Services, LLC
- Sitel Operation Corporation
- St. Joseph's Hospital, Inc
- The Kroger Company
- Walmart

*Of the documented 158,399 individuals working in Chatham County, 77% work for businesses and companies with 20+ employees while the remaining 23% work for companies with fewer than 20 employees*

## Business Employment, 2018

ESTABLISHMENT SIZE	ESTABLISHMENTS	PERCENT	EMPLOYEES	PERCENT
0–4	5,973	57.78%	8,301	5.24%
5–9	1,714	16.58%	11,319	7.15%
10–19	1,232	11.92%	16,855	10.64%
20–49	895	8.66%	26,517	16.74%
50–99	287	2.78%	19,358	12.22%
100–249	182	1.76%	27,128	17.13%
250–499	30	0.29%	10,322	6.52%
500–999	12	0.12%	8,630	5.45%
1000 and Over	12	0.12%	29,969	18.92%

Figure 3.9–Business Employment Based on Size  
Georgia Department of Labor 2018



## Per Capita Income

Per capita income refers to the average income earned per person in a given area over a specified year.

*The average income of employees per capita income in the Savannah MSA has increased almost \$6,000 since 2015, from \$42,357 to \$48,139 in 2019*

*—U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis*

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## Average Yearly Residential Per Capita Income

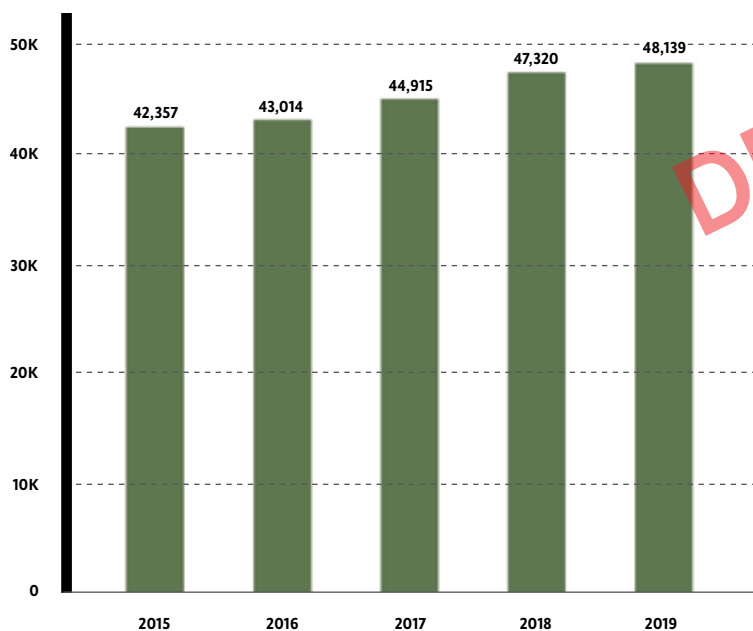
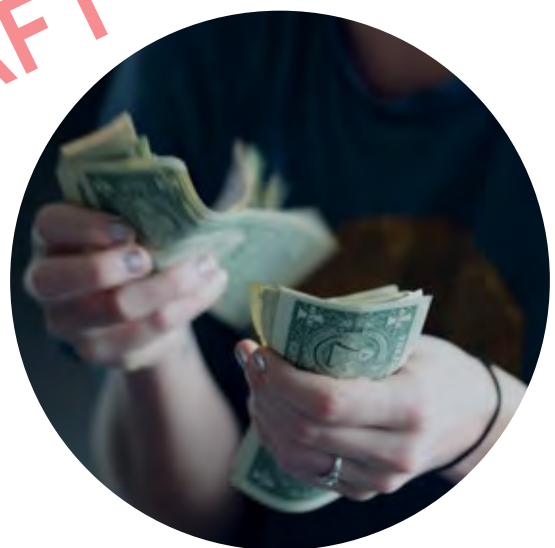


Figure 3.10—Average Yearly Income, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor 2015–2018





## Wages and Employment

The overall average weekly wage in the Savannah MSA is \$921, which is a 3.1% increase between 2019 to 2020 according to the Georgia Department of Labor.

*The average hourly wage in the Savannah MSA is \$21.92 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

These wages can vary by industry or job field, with some industries having a far higher average wage than others.

The majority of residents within the Savannah MSA work in the Service industry (69.5%), followed by the Goods-Producing industry (15.8%), and Government (14.5%). The Goods-Producing industry is defined as a field that produces a physical product, whereas the Service-Providing industry is a field in which the product is the service itself.

As shown in the corresponding Figures, Goods-Producing jobs on average have a higher average wage than both Service-Providing and Government jobs. Within the Service industry, food service has the lowest average weekly wage among all of the job fields listed.

It is important to note that these numbers are from 2020 and were impacted by COVID-19 and will likely change in the future as the Pandemic subsides.

## Industry Breakdown

The majority of residents within the Savannah MSA work in the Service Industry (69.5%), followed by the Goods-Producing Industry (15.8%), and then Government (14.5%). The Goods-Producing industry is defined as a field that produces a physical product, whereas the Service-Providing industry is a field in which the product is the service itself.

As shown in Figures 3.12, 3.13, and 3.14, Goods-Producing jobs have a higher average wage than both Service-Providing and Government jobs. Within the Service industry, food service has the lowest average weekly wage among all of the job fields listed below. It is important to note that these numbers are from 2020 and were impacted by COVID-19 and will likely change in the future as the pandemic subsides.

## Employees by Industry, 2020

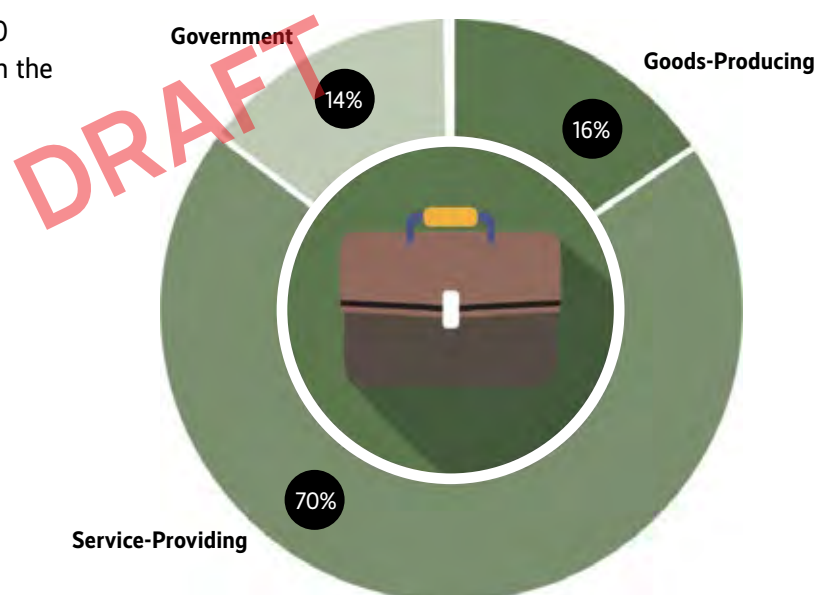


Figure 3.11—Percentage of Employees by Industry, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor, 2020



## Goods-Producing Industry

The highest wages within the Goods-Producing field are in Transportation Equipment, with a weekly wage of \$1,892. The lowest paying goods-producing jobs are in Printing and Related Support Activities, with a weekly wage of \$634.

*The average wage within the Goods-Producing field is \$1,399*

### Savannah MSA Goods-Producing Wages, 2020

INDUSTRY	GOODS-PRODUCING SUB-CATEGORY	AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting		\$797
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction		\$1,004
Manufacturing		\$1,569
	Beverage and Tobacco Product	\$837
	Chemical	\$1,364
	Fabricated Metal Product	\$1,244
	Food	\$1,298
	Furniture and related Product	\$878
	Machinery	\$1,063
	Misc.	\$927
	Nonmetallic	\$1,141
	Paper	\$1,419
	Petroleum and Coal Products	\$1,422
	Plastics and Rubber Products	\$869
	Printing and Related Support Activities	\$634
	Textile Mills	\$1,073
	Textile Product Mills	\$900
	Transportation Equipment	\$1,892
	Wood Product	\$960

Figure 3.12–Goods-Producing, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor, 2020

## Service-Providing Industry

The highest paying jobs in the Service field are in Finance and Insurance, with a weekly wage of \$1,669, while the lowest wages are in food service and accommodations, with a weekly wage of \$346.

*The average wage within the Service-Providing field is \$808, while the average weekly wage in the Government sector is \$1,025*

### Savannah MSA Service-Providing Wages, 2020

INDUSTRY	AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE
Utilities	\$1,369
Wholesale Trade	\$1,227
Retail Trade	\$641
Transportation and Warehousing	\$884
Information	\$1,069
Finance and insurance	\$1,669
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$863
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$1,126
Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$1,287
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$606
Educational Services	\$1,133
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$1,006
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$552
Accommodation and Food Services	\$346
Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$757

Figure 3.13–Service-Providing Wages, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor, 2020

### Savannah MSA Government Wages, 2020

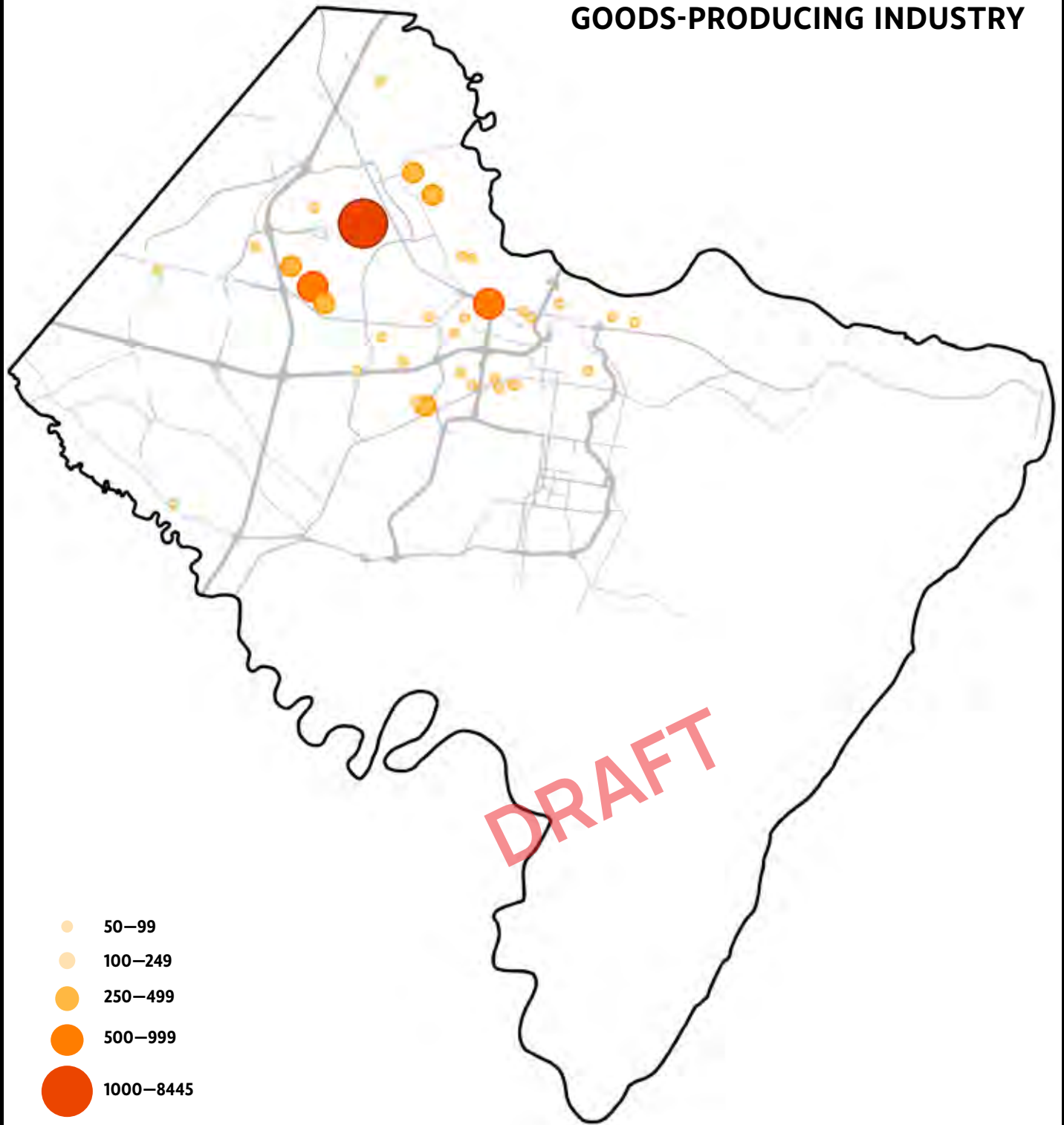
	AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE
Federal Government	\$1,466
State Government	\$1,110
Local Government	\$918

Figure 3.14–Government Wages, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Labor, 2020





## GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRY

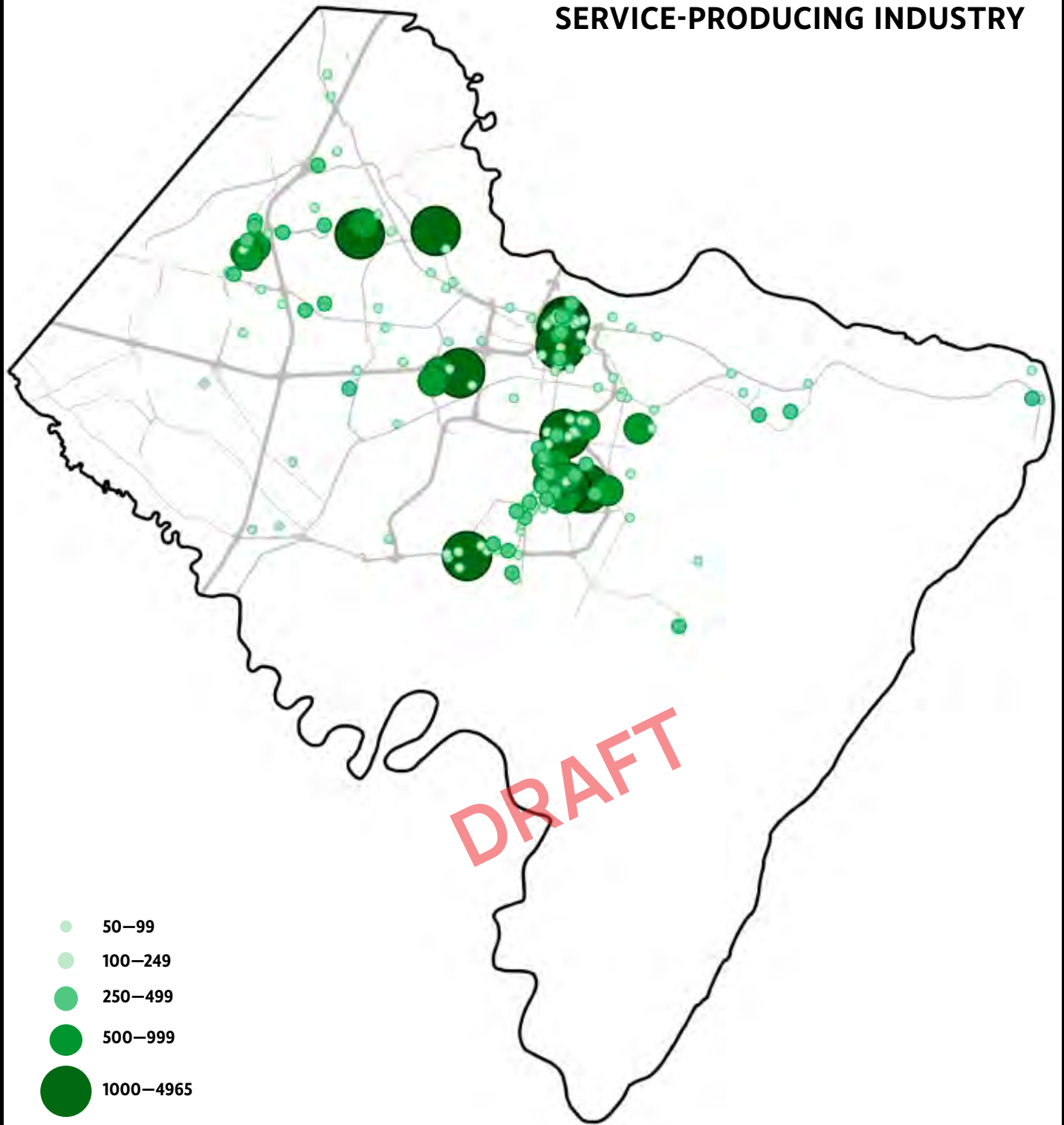


Map 3.1—Goods-Producing Industry Concentrations, Number of Employees, 2020

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (2002–2018)



## SERVICE-PRODUCING INDUSTRY



Map 3.2—Service-Providing Industry Concentrations, Number of Employees, 2020

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (2002–2018)





# GROWING INDUSTRIES

## Which Industries are Growing?

Not only is the healthcare industry already one of the largest employment sectors in the area, but it is also forecasted to continue growing due to the increasing number of seniors living longer, healthier lives. Healthcare services such as ambulatory services, hospitals, and nursing homes are set to significantly increase over the next few years.

Ambulatory services providing outpatient healthcare services will experience the largest growth in the number of employees between 2016–2026 with an almost 30% increase in the number of jobs

The industry sector predicted to grow the most is the “Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation” sector, which is projected to grow by almost 35%, adding over 900 new jobs to the Savannah MSA region. “Construction of Buildings” will also experience large growth, with an increase of almost 30% or 800 new jobs being added to the region between 2016 and 2026.

Even though the almost 33,000 jobs within the Food Service category have some of the lowest weekly wages, this industry is still projected to grow over the next few years, highlighting the need to reassess the hourly wage for the sector with the most employees in the Savannah MSA.

## Targeted Growth Industries

According to SEDA, there are five major industries that are likely to increase economic growth if they are invested in at the local level:

- Manufacturing/Ports/Logistics
- Tourism
- Education
- Government/Military
- Healthcare
- Retail Logistics

### MANUFACTURING, PORTS, AND LOGISTICS

This industry has grown 24% between 2007 to 2017. With a growing logistics industry based around expanding port operations, investing in the manufacturing, ports, and logistics industry should continue bringing higher paying jobs to the Savannah MSA.

*The average yearly wage for Manufacturing, Ports, and Logistics jobs was \$55,115 in 2017*  
—SEDA

”



## CREATIVE AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

While creative and technical services have decreased over the last decade, there is still opportunity to increase growth and retain the highly skilled graduates that often leave Chatham County after college. Additionally, creative, and technical jobs, such as software and video game design, often have higher wages.

By expanding partnerships between businesses and educational facilities to include SCAD, GSU, and other universities, highly skilled workers can be more easily retained, and the industry will have a greater ability to expand.

## TECHNOLOGY

Regional initiatives such as the Savannah Logistics Technology Corridor (SLTC) have helped to expand the tech scene. Established in 2018 to help cement Chatham County's place in the technology industry as well as encourage and grow investment, SLTC is already having a positive impact on the local industry.

The SLTC is an initiative comprised of business, government, education, and community stakeholders committed to the advancement of Georgia and the Savannah area through the development of a technology corridor that supports logistics technology development through innovation and investment. The corridor was approved in 2018 by the Georgia Legislature after looking for incentives for technology growth and locations for technology corridors.

The designation creates a geographically defined area where businesses can locate and be close enough to each other to encourage collaboration and innovation. The updated 2019 corridor boundaries cover a portion of Interstates 95 and 16, the Savannah River and U.S. Highway 17 and provide opportunities for Savannah and Chatham County, as well as other areas such as Bryan and Effingham counties.

The following efforts are the current focus of the SLTC:

- Expand the corridor to include the Savannah Advanced Manufacturing Center, Georgia Southern Armstrong Campus, and Savannah Tech
- Fund the development of a "Logistics Tech Academy" following the model being used in other regions (Cyber Academy and FinTech Academy)
- Fund the development and operations of an innovation center/incubator, following the model being used in other areas of the state (TechSquare in Atlanta and Cyber Center in Augusta)
- Create Cluster Grants dedicated to the corridor to enable new ideas, better education, improved cooperation between entities all dedicated to Logistics Technology
- Create a student loan repayment program, similar to that used to attract doctors, to attract experienced technologists to the corridor
- Create a program where corridor-based companies can sell their R&D credits or financial losses to raise capital
- Increase funding for the Angel tax credit and dedicate that increase to corridor-based companies



## ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION

*The entertainment industry experienced a significant amount of growth between 2007 and 2017, with a 275% 10-year growth rate as cited by SEDA*

The entertainment production industry has major potential to bring new opportunities to Chatham County. Not only have numerous movies been filmed in the area, but there is also a potential talent base in SCAD and Savannah Tech graduates, who have majored in subjects such as film, sound design, on-set production, and visual effects.

## HEALTHCARE

The healthcare industry continues to be a major source for high paying jobs in Chatham County. With Georgia Southern University, South University, Savannah Tech, Mercer School of Medicine, and others offering health programs, continuing to emphasize the health care industry's impacts and needs in Chatham County will help to attract and keep highly trained graduates in the area.

*The healthcare industry grew 20% between 2007 and 2017*  
—SEDA



## Projected Employment Growth, 2016–2026

Industry Title	2016 Base Year Employment Staff	2026 Projection Year Employment Staff	Total Change in Employees	Percent Change in Employment	Projected Annual Growth Rate (%)
Ambulatory Health Care Services	12,050	15,610	3,560	29.55%	2.62%
Educational Services	25,370	28,690	3,320	13.09%	1.24%
Administrative and Support Services	15,350	17,850	2,500	16.25%	1.52%
Food Services and Drinking Places	30,920	32,840	1,920	6.21%	0.60%
Hospitals	12,560	14,140	1,580	12.58%	1.19%
Support Activities for Transportation	5,800	7,130	1,330	23.05%	2.10%
Social Assistance	4,660	5,890	1,230	26.18%	2.35%
General Merchandise Stores	7,460	8,510	1,050	14.12%	1.33%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	7,750	8,750	1,000	12.90%	1.22%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	4,020	4,980	960	23.94%	2.17%
Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	10,940	11,890	950	8.67%	0.83%
Amusement, Gambling, and Recreation Industries	2,650	3,580	930	34.89%	3.04%
Federal Government, Excluding Post Office	10,120	11,000	880	8.77%	0.84%
Construction of Buildings	2,760	3,580	820	29.75%	2.64%
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	4,370	5,140	770	17.54%	1.63%
Accommodation, including Hotels and Motels	7,890	8,630	740	9.40%	0.90%
Specialty Trade Contractors	6,260	6,970	710	11.31%	1.08%
Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	5,660	6,320	660	11.79%	1.12%
Repair and Maintenance	3,250	3,840	590	17.99%	1.67%
Merchant Wholesalers, Durable Goods	3,840	4,400	560	14.70%	1.38%

Figure 3.15–Projected Employment Growth within the Savannah MSA by Sector

Georgia Department of Labor, 2016–2026



## RETAIL LOGISTICS

Amazon has announced a new fulfillment center, dubbed the “Pooler Megasite,” to be built at a central point between unincorporated Chatham, city of Savannah, city of Pooler, and Garden City. The project is expected to be complete in the second half of 2022, and is predicted to add 1000 jobs to the economy. This fulfillment center is a part of a larger trend of the growing foothold of the logistics industry in the area. The facilities’ location creates the opportunity for multiple jurisdictions to participate and work in this job system.





# DECLINING INDUSTRIES

## Which Industries are Shrinking?

Paper Manufacturing is predicted to experience the highest decline in employees with an estimated 200 fewer jobs between 2016 and 2026. Publishing Industries are set to experience the biggest percentage decline in base employment, with a third of jobs expected to be lost in an ever-declining small industry.

## Projected Employment Decline, 2016–2026

Industry Title	2016 Base Year Employment Staff	2026 Projection Year Employment Staff	Total Change in Employees	Percent Change in Employment	Projected Annual Growth Rate (%)
Paper Manufacturing	3,100	2,900	-200	-6.55%	-0.67%
Publishing Industries (except Internet)	450	280	-170	-37.53%	-4.60%
Postal Service	1,060	950	-110	-10.33%	-1.08%
Health and Personal Care Stores	1,980	1,890	-90	-4.94%	-0.51%
Forestry and Logging	300	240	-60	-20.46%	-2.26%
Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	210	170	-40	-17.22%	-1.87%
Textile Product Mills	100	80	-20	-16.00%	-1.73%
Printing and Related Support Activities	470	460	-10	-2.75%	-0.28%
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing	1,450	1,460	10	0.28%	0.03%
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	180	190	10	6.21%	0.60%
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	1,590	1,600	10	0.63%	0.06%
Rail Transportation	800	810	10	1.63%	0.16%
Data Processing, Hosting and Related Services	50	60	10	28.00%	2.50%
Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing	120	140	20	16.26%	1.52%
Water Transportation	230	250	20	7.73%	0.75%
Broadcasting (except Internet)	410	440	30	7.26%	0.70%
Furniture and Related Product Manufacturing	180	220	40	19.78%	1.82%
Telecommunications	860	910	50	4.98%	0.49%
Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	330	390	60	17.74%	1.65%

Figure 3.16–Projected Employment Decline within the Savannah MSA by Sector

Georgia Department of Labor, 2016–2026



# ECONOMIC GROWTH CHALLENGES

While the Savannah MSA has many assets with the potential to drive economic growth, there are some challenges that may prevent employers and employees alike from planting their roots in the area.

## QUALITY OF LIFE IMPACTS:

- According to a survey conducted by SEDA, many residents believe that the quality of education in the area is a problem. Respondents also believed that crime was a major deterrent in the city of Savannah. The existence and perception of these issues can negatively impact economic growth, as employers and skilled employees may steer clear of the Savannah MSA to avoid these issues.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:

- A significant portion of residents in Savannah are cost burdened by housing. Far more people rent homes than own them. The lack of accessibility to home ownership can prevent possible new employees from moving to the region due to cost concerns.

## WORKFORCE SKILL SHORTAGE:

- Both at the national level and more specifically via a study conducted locally by SEDA, business owners have voiced that the pool of new, younger candidates are lacking the basic “soft skills” needed for long-term success in the job force.



### SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills are abilities that relate to how one works and interacts with others. Employers look for soft skills in candidates because these skills are hard to teach and are important for long-term success. Examples of Soft Skills are listed below:

—Indeed

- Dependability
- Effective Communication
- Open-Mindedness
- Teamwork
- Creativity
- Problem-Solving
- Critical Thinking
- Organization
- Willingness to Learn

Chatham County’s planning efforts have identified key initiatives that can advance the economic and physical success of the Savannah region in the next 20 years. The challenge becomes how best to grow denser, become more diverse, and yet maintain a sense of place that draws people to the region





# SWOT ANALYSIS

The Savannah Economic Development Authority's (SEDA) SWOT Analysis below identifies some of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) associated with our local economy for the year 2020.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Logistics Infrastructure: Port of Savannah, rail, interstate</li> <li>– Diverse economic drivers (manufacturing, logistics, tourism, health-care, education, government, military)</li> <li>– Higher education</li> <li>– Military assets</li> <li>– Favorable cost of living compared to other national MSAs</li> <li>– Historical preservation and cultural richness</li> <li>– Ability to draw people back after years away</li> <li>– Quality of life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Persistently high poverty rates</li> <li>– Underperforming K-12 schools</li> <li>– Crime</li> <li>– Inadequate skilled workforce/lack of soft skills</li> <li>– Capital is limited for small business community/entrepreneurs</li> <li>– Small number of headquarters leading to few corporate leaders active in community and economic development</li> <li>– Limited opportunities for young professional's career advancement</li> <li>– Limited public-owned land available to attract high wage projects</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Retain and attract more talent</li> <li>– Further diversify economic base</li> <li>– Continue efforts to attract affluent visitors, lengthen visitor stays and increase spending</li> <li>– Grow entrepreneurial resources and support entrepreneurship</li> <li>– Increase air service and lower costs</li> <li>– Invest in GSU as the regional university with the greatest potential to achieve a high level of talent</li> <li>– Develop infrastructure and ecosystem as well as local and regional support for the entertainment production industry</li> <li>– Leverage World Trade Center Savannah and other assets to increase international trade and investment</li> <li>– Continue to partner with SCAD to advance technology industries and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lack of coordination between governmental entities</li> <li>– Perception of crime and public education limits progress</li> <li>– Limited public transportation for workforce</li> <li>– Companies unable to scale in Savannah</li> <li>– Environmental threats</li> <li>– Status quo bias</li> <li>– Land assets not always developed for highest and best use from an employment perspective (i.e., high wage companies)</li> <li>– Shortage of teachers and principals</li> <li>– Trade wars and other temporary global economic challenges arise</li> </ul>

Figure 3.17–SEDA SWOT Analysis for the Local Economy, 2020  
Savannah Economic Development Authority



# WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT

The goal of work force development programs is to provide resources that residents can tap into to aid in their professional, educational, and/or career development. These programs offer an array of resources that include educational workshops, apprenticeships, internships, networking workshops, and job shadows. Efforts should be made to continue funding and expanding the reach and capabilities of similar organizations.

## **STEP UP SAVANNAH: CHATHAM APPRENTICE PROGRAM (CAP)**

- The goal of this program is to help unemployed and under-employed residents improve their economic health by offering sessions on business, budgeting, and networking. The program is open to Chatham County residents 18 and older

## **SAVANNAH IMPACT PROGRAM (SIP)**

- This program is designed for at-risk youth and high-risk offenders to prevent the possibility of re-offending. SIP provides supervision, job readiness skills, and mental health resources, so youth who have previously committed a crime can re-enter society

## **WORKSOURCE COASTAL**

- This economic development program serves multiple coastal counties, including Bulloch, Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, and Screven counties. The program has resources including training and workforce education for veterans, adult and dislocated workers, youth, and employers

## **JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT (JA) OF GEORGIA**

- This teacher and volunteer driven program provide activities for K-12 students focused on career readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. JA works to empower the next generation with the knowledge, capacity, and motivation to thrive and build a better future for themselves

## **YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP**

- This program is designated for junior and senior high school students and aims to prepare them for the workforce by providing apprenticeships

## **EMPLOYABILITY**

- This organization's goal is to empower those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Some of the services offered include job placement, career development, resume development, and ongoing job support so those with IDD can find and keep employment





# AUTOMATION, LOGISTICS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Automation is expected to change the employment landscape. As machines become more able to perform tasks typically done by humans, there will be a major shift in the job market. An example of automation that we are seeing currently are self-checkouts in stores and ordering kiosks in fast food restaurants. These technologies reduce the need for cashier positions. While this may be more visible in service positions, there is also increasing automation in manufacturing and transportation industries. With the rise of self-driving cars, AI technology, self-service technology, and businesses operated entirely online, the economy as we understand it may change completely over the next few decades. This brings the possibilities of less jobs as automated machines increasingly can do them more efficiently than humans. The plan for economic development must also consider a future with less jobs or new innovative roles.



Entrepreneurship has always been an important factor in the overall economy. With the rise of the internet, there are a variety of new ways that individuals can pursue self-employment and small business startup. The majority of businesses in Savannah are small, so it is necessary to be able to support this section of the economy, while also helping people wanting to start businesses enter the field.

The economy is changing, with many people being unable to afford to live off of one job. Because of this, there has been an increase in the gig economy, which is defined as temporary, short term, or small task jobs that are more flexible than getting a second job. People also can have gig jobs as their main source of income because of its flexibility. Gig jobs include driving for Uber and Lyft, and food delivery services like GrubHub and Instacart. Streamlining the entrepreneurship process can make this form of labor participation more accessible to local residents, and provide more economic opportunities

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## Plan 2040 Survey

Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents felt that supporting local entrepreneurship, especially small business and home business was very important.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.





# THE IMPACT OF GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

In migration refers to the people moving in or within a county. According to the American Community Survey, 10% of in-migration moves involved people moving into Chatham County from outside of the county. Another 12% moved within the county. These moves can be an indicator of the economic situation within the area. While there has been major growth in the Savannah MSA, the persistent poverty rate and low economic mobility suggests that this job growth is more beneficial to new residents of the Savannah MSA than local residents. So, economic growth within itself is not necessarily beneficial to the local population if they do not too get to benefit from that growth through job access. The people living within the Savannah MSA should have access to the same economic opportunities than newcomers receive.

## Plan 2040 Survey

According to the Plan 2040 survey, investment into local businesses and residents is important to the majority of respondents. For example, over 90% of respondents felt it was important or very important to develop a skilled workforce through training programs, recruitment, and continuing education

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.

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# ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The impact of COVID-19 on communities throughout the country has increased discussions on how to make the economy more resilient. Savannah lost 14.3% of its jobs due to the COVID-19 induced recession.

*Unemployment claims skyrocketed during the pandemic in 2020, going from 600 per month to 60,000, 35% of which were filed by those employed in a regional tourism industry*

Most of the job loss occurred in the following industries: Leisure and Hospitality, Information, and State and Local Government.

Although much of that job loss was recovered, the unemployment rate still remains higher than it was in 2019. Trends show that the economy will bounce back in 2021, including the hardest hit industries, such as tourism and leisure and hospitality.

This bounce back in tourism numbers will likely fuel a much-needed increase in revenue for hotels, restaurants, and other surrounding businesses and in turn bring more business to the leisure and hospitality industry.

## ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Economic resilience refers to the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock all together.

—U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)



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As the economy recovers, it is important to consider the specific impacts from the COVID-19 Pandemic and needed methods to reduce any future impacts and improve the resilience of our economy.

## TRENDS

- The COVID-19 Pandemic accelerated the practice of remote working for most organizations. Businesses have invested in employee and customer safety, restaurants and retail have pivoted to providing outdoor services and options for online commerce, and the Pandemic may have accelerated the adoption of virtual healthcare

## EQUITY

- Multiple racial and ethnic groups were disproportionately impacted by unemployment in 2020. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Black or African Americans jumped from 6% to 16.7% between February and May 2020 before dropping to 9.9% in December. By contrast, seasonal unemployment for white individuals grew from 3.0% to 12.3% in the same period and dropped to 6.0% by December 2020 ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov))
- It is estimated that COVID-19 will have disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned small businesses. A recent report from the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) notes that Black and Hispanic business owners were more likely to apply for forms of financial assistance than white business owners but less likely to receive it, and more likely to report negative business impacts as a result of remote work measures compared with white-owned businesses

A report from the Federal Reserve Banks shows that BIPOC-owned businesses were nearly twice as likely to be classified as “at risk” or “distressed” in 2019, pointing to structural barriers that influence issues such as financial health and if a business is able to accumulate significant cash reserves

- The following section identifies some points that should be evaluated and implemented to ensure the community is planning for and implementing economic resilience through the integration of specific goals and actions to bolster the long-term economic durability of the Chatham County region.

*According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Black or African Americans jumped from 6% to 16.7% between February and May 2020 before dropping to 9.9% in December*

—Bureau of Labor Statistics

”





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Using accurate and reliable data, link current and projected needs of employers through the development of apprenticeship and vocational programs for the placement of individuals with quality employment leading to self-sufficiency*

Ensuring that Chatham County has an educated, skilled workforce available for existing and potential future employers benefits employers, job seekers, the economy, and the quality of life for the county residents. A key component to the success and growth of business and the overall economy, as well as the ability to entice new business/industry, is the availability of qualified workers to meet the needs of employers. Without suitable employees, no new businesses will come and existing businesses will shutter, and the economy and quality of life of the community will suffer. It is imperative to the success of the economy to develop programs that will guarantee the local labor force is adequately educated.

### Objectives:

- Create a network of employers and training providers through incentives to align training programs with opportunities for jobs
- Increase the number of opportunities for job shadowing, apprenticeship programs, and internships to include “green” careers, particularly targeted to youth and young adults
- Increase capacity and opportunities for individuals to receive skills that lead to employment
- Develop apprenticeship and vocational programs based on the needs of Chatham County employers

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## GOAL 2

*Foster a positive environment that provides opportunities for all businesses*

Exposing young people to opportunities such as job shadowing, internships and apprenticeships can help them learn new skills, gain confidence, build their resumes for college applications and future employment, and give them insight into potential career paths. Providing students with these types of tools can significantly improve the likelihood of future successes. Investing in programs to promote such opportunities will benefit both employers and young people in the community.

### Objectives:

- Streamline the business application process
- Collaborate with organizations like Creative Coast and SEDA to create entrepreneurship programs
- Prioritize growing local businesses as much as attracting new businesses
- Increase number of opportunities for youth and young adults to access job shadowing, apprenticeship programs, and internships to include “green” careers

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## GOAL 3

*Increase economic mobility by reducing barriers and creating opportunities for quality employment for young adults, the economically disadvantaged, justice involved, and individuals with behavioral health needs*

Employment is more than simply a means to meet (pay for) the basic human needs of survival (food and shelter), although those needs overshadow all the others. Employment has been shown to be important to improving mental health, enhance self-esteem, reducing recidivism in those previously incarcerated, and connecting people to society. Under- and unemployment oftentimes correlates to poorer mental health and well-being. The ability to work and fully use one's skills and abilities improves mental health, making it all the more important to increase access to employment opportunities for those that are at most risk of being under- or unemployed.

### Objectives:

- Improve access to education and trades to help the working poor, ex-offenders, and those with mental illness by providing a community-based scholarship program or similar incentive to help those who cannot afford educational programs
- Increase capacity of case management to provide employment, wrap-around and supportive services for families; and provide case management with education regarding best practices on the provision of services
- Increase awareness and use of tax incentives for employers serving and employing specific populations
- Explore funding mechanisms in order to provide more financial support to a more diverse economy and establish action steps that will promote regional innovation
- Increase efficiency of permitting and licensing policies for businesses through streamlining procedures, educating about the process, and potentially matching county and municipality requirements
- Expand capacity of formal and informal support system to sustain and expand current, growing business throughout the county while considering the establishment of a program for existing business to mentor start-ups



## GOAL 4

*Implement outreach and programming that leads to economically inclusive entrepreneurial growth and innovation through the enhanced presence of small business support services and collaboration among local businesses*

Inclusivity and diversity in the local business community benefits the business, employees, and the community. For businesses, diversity can be a great source of creativity and innovation, potentially resulting in increased productivity. Inclusion can expand target markets and increase profitability. Employees oftentimes feel a sense of belonging, are more comfortable and happier in diverse and inclusive work environments. When employees feel more connected at work, they are more apt to work harder and stay longer at the job. Communities that are diverse and inclusive are stronger, more resilient, and are more competitive in the global economy.

### Objectives:

- Continue to facilitate the establishment of minority and women-owned businesses (M/WBE) as defined by the United States Small Business Administration Federal Contract Program
- Identify and remove obstacles to existing and proposed businesses in targeted redevelopment areas

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## GOAL 5

*Become a community with economically vibrant, safe neighborhoods and commercial centers*

Creating an attractive commercial environment that fosters an appealing sense of place enhances the quality of life of residents that encountering the area and benefits the overall economy and the businesses located in the corridor. Investing in the beautification of these corridors; establishing development standards that ensure the architectural vision of the corridor is upheld; providing trails, open spaces, and public gathering places throughout the corridor; and making these corridors accessible via multiple means of transportation are all effective means for creating a place where people want to spend time and money.

### Objectives:

- Promote mixed-use development where appropriate
- Propose a policy to prioritize active transportation infrastructure to facilitate walking, biking, and transit to commercial corridors
- Evaluate a policy to reduce regulatory barriers for new businesses by establishing "code-light zones"
- Evaluate flexible corridor-specific design standards to create attractive, functional, and harmonious buildings and public space

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# LAND USE ELEMENT

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# 04





# LAND USE

## Introduction

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The Land Use Element of Plan 2040 defines the community's existing physical form and development patterns and presents a set of recommendations and strategies as a framework for responsible growth. This element provides specific visioning for unincorporated areas of Chatham County and for the city of Savannah, as well as presenting a set of recommendations for streamlining future land use policies and development patterns across municipal boundaries.

This element includes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and a Character Area Map (CAM) that work together to create a cohesive countywide guide for future growth and development. In addition to these components, this element includes a summary of physical context, regional growth, existing land uses, and historical development patterns, as well as an overview of issues and opportunities for Chatham County and the city of Savannah.



# PURPOSE & INTENT

Chatham County is a unique coastal community in Georgia, with a wide range of land uses from untouched and environmentally sensitive natural areas to highly developed, mixed-use urban areas. In both the city of Savannah and the county, this diversity requires character-based land use categories, consistent with the approach encouraged by the Department of Community Affairs (Minimum Standards that became effective in May 2005).

The land use information, recommendations, and strategies contained in this element are intended to provide guidance for the location and intensity of land uses to support Chatham County and the City of Savannah in future land use policy decisions.

*The sections on regional context, historical development patterns, and employment centers provide important background information on land use in the county*

Additionally, the Future Growth Strategies and Growth Areas sections identify areas of the county where further studies and more specific growth strategies may be appropriate.

The Character Area Map (CAM) identifies the character vision for all of Chatham County. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) provides direction for zoning decisions based on specific land use categories for the city of Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County. Together, the FLUM and the CAM are intended to guide the character and direction of land use decisions in the county.

The Issues & Opportunities section of the Land Use element examines existing and future needs and challenges related to growth and development across Chatham County. This section is intended to provide specific information and strategies regarding land use issues such as sea level rise and conflicts with existing regulatory frameworks.

These associated components of the Land Use element are intended to establish a vision for how the county should develop. It also lays out the methods for managing growth and determining the appropriateness of proposed development. Land use is a critical element in creating a sustainable, healthy, and equitable future for Chatham County.





SANBORN MAP, DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH



RIVER STREET



GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY





# REGIONAL CONTEXT

## Physical Context

Chatham County is the northernmost county on the Georgia coast, bounded by the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers, Effingham County, and Atlantic Ocean. Much of Chatham County is comprised of open water, tidal creeks, or estuarine marsh. Early development was located on coastal ridges and bluffs; more recent development, however, has occurred on barrier islands, back barrier islands, and lowlands vulnerable to flooding, including hurricane inundation.

Chatham County encompasses 522 square miles of land, marsh, and water. Figures 4.1 & 4.2 contain detailed information on land use in unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. Much of the remaining undeveloped land is poorly drained and not suitable for on-lot wastewater disposal. Expansion of private or public water and sewer service would increase development potential in such areas, but could also compromise natural floodplain functions and threaten sensitive coastal resources. Upland areas are interspersed with forested and vegetated isolated wetlands which are not currently protected by local, state or federal law and are frequently targeted for development.

## Regional Growth

Chatham County is the most urbanized and populous county in the 200-mile coastal area between Charleston, South Carolina and Jacksonville, Florida. It serves as an economic, cultural, and governmental hub, as well as an international focal point for trade for a six county, bi-state region.

The region has seen a high rate of growth over the past 25 years and is expected to continue at or slightly above this level as the attractiveness of the region to retirees and second home residents increases. Economic growth in the region is also expected to remain strong, supporting forecasts for continued population growth at or above the current level.

Within Chatham County, unincorporated areas east of Savannah experienced high growth rates during the 1980s and 1990s. As those areas approached build-out, growth moved to the western areas of the county, including unincorporated Chatham County and the municipalities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, and Port Wentworth. These portions of the county continue to experience a significant share of the area's growth. The City of Savannah, with its capacity to supply drinking water, annexed nearly 8,000 acres of unincorporated west Chatham County in 2004 and 2005.

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

You can find more statistics and information under the Community Profile Element on page 44





The City of Savannah has preserved the role of its vibrant downtown as the nucleus of regional activity. The city's historic downtown and urban neighborhoods are an exceptional example of colonial-era town planning that have survived for centuries and thrive today. For that reason, downtown Savannah maintains a high-quality pedestrian environment.

Areas lying to the east of Savannah are extensively developed, and further development is limited by physical and zoning constraints. Areas lying to the west of the city were once largely areas of agriculture but have undergone and continue to see rapid development.

Transportation facilities strongly influenced, and continue to impact, growth and land use patterns in the county. Major facilities include the Port of Savannah, Savannah International Airport, road, and rail networks serving extensive industrial districts associated with airport and seaport functions, Hunter Army Airfield, Interstates I-16 and I-95, and the Truman Parkway.





# CHATHAM COUNTY

## Annexations & Municipal Boundaries

The City of Savannah incorporated in December 1789; throughout its history, the city has gradually increased its borders through annexation. An early map, circa. 1790, shows the primary boundaries of the city of Savannah as being the Savannah River to the north, Oglethorpe Avenue to the south, Lincoln Street to the east, and Jefferson Street to the west. Since this time, the City has incorporated large swaths of land to the east, west, and south of the original borders into its jurisdiction.

The City of Savannah continues to annex areas of unincorporated Chatham County into its jurisdiction, followed by major sewer and water expansions. However, no comprehensive list of past annexations currently exists nor is there a program for future annexations to be completed by the City or other municipalities. Coordination among the City of Savannah, Chatham County, and the seven other municipalities within the county is needed to develop a countywide record of annexation and a growth management plan. To prevent urban sprawl and unmanaged expansions, future annexation areas should be identified and prioritized and should remain predominately undeveloped until land areas within existing municipal boundaries are more fully utilized and before new, undeveloped areas are cited for construction.

## Chatham County Municipal Boundary Map

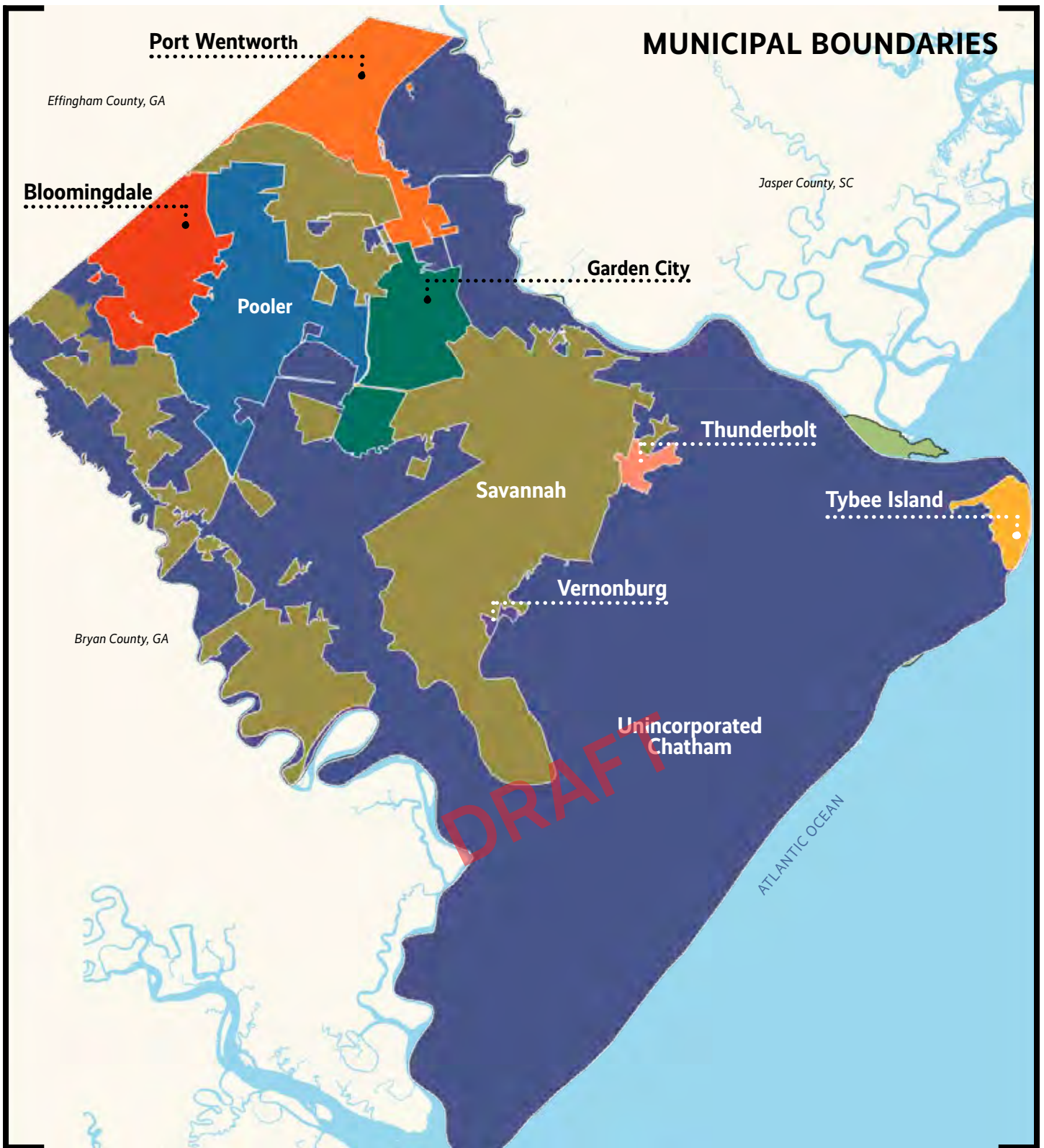
Seven other municipalities incorporated within Chatham County following the City of Savannah in 1789:

- Thunderbolt (1856)
- Vernonburg (1866)
- Tybee Island (1887)
- Pooler (1907)
- Garden City (1939)
- Port Wentworth (1957)
- Bloomingdale (1974)

Map 4.1 illustrates the boundaries for all municipalities within Chatham County. The municipal boundaries map serves as a tool for placing growth strategies within the context of the county as a whole.

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Map 4.1–Municipal Boundaries, Chatham County





# HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

## Development Patterns

This section describes an abridged version of the eras of development that shaped the landscape of Savannah and Chatham County.

### Planned Town Era (1733–1869)

The physical plan for the City of Savannah was created by its founder, James Oglethorpe, and centered around the concept of a ward. The ward consisted of 10 residential lots, four tything lots, four trust lots, and a central civic square—the effect of which was to create a walkable yet uncrowded town. From the wards, the plan expanded out to include five-acre garden plots and forty-five-acre farms for each of the new settlers of the colony. While Oglethorpe himself only laid out the first six wards, by 1856, Savannah had grown to 24 wards all laid out in accordance with “The Oglethorpe Plan,” as it is known. Today, this area is known as the Downtown or Landmark Historic District. During the Planned Town Era, the city was a compact focal point for trade and local commerce.

### Streetcar Era (1869–1920)

The city’s Victorian District was the first area that grew rapidly as a result of the new accessibility created by horse-drawn streetcars, which appeared in 1869. Development in this area still largely followed the growth patterns established by the Oglethorpe Plan. However, between 1890 and 1920, the advent and expansion of electric streetcars led to the development of the current Thomas Square Streetcar Historic District, immediately south of the Victorian District, as well as areas adjacent to the city. This growth resulted in the rapid expansion of city limits.

### Early & Modern Automobile Era (1920–Present)

Greater mobility offered by automobiles resulted in a second ring of suburban growth. Large lots with houses set back farther from the street, as well as more separation between commercial and residential uses, characterized these areas. By 1946, automobile dependence was commonplace. Post-World War II prosperity, along with federal housing and highway policies, led to rapid suburban expansion. Commercial districts, such as those along Abercorn Street Extension, became larger and distinctly separate from residential areas.

### Amenity Community Era (Present–Future)

Recently, a new era of reduced automobile dependence and increasing mobility options emerged and produced alternative forms of development, including neo-traditional development, conservation subdivisions, high-amenity communities, and town centers. These types of development created new land use patterns distinct from earlier suburban patterns and offered more options for walking, bicycling, and transit as well as shorter automobile trips to obtain goods and services. Many of these communities, however, have greatly impacted the county’s natural resources with the expansion into previously undisturbed, undeveloped areas.

#### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For a full version of the city and county’s history, see the Plan 2040 Appendix







# EXISTING LAND USE

The Existing Land Use Map for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah is based on recent tax records provided by the Chatham County Board of Tax Assessors. Where multiple uses are found on a single parcel, the dominant land use (by area) has been assigned. Conventional land use categories are used to describe existing land use patterns, whereas a character-based classification system is used in discussing and planning future land use.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 compare land use in unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. The character of each of these areas varies greatly as a result of distinctly different land use patterns, which have remained essentially the same since the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update.

## Existing Land Use Classifications, 2018

LAND USE CLASS	ACRES	PERCENT (%)
Single Family	15,093	7.11
Multi-Family	209	.10
Commercial (Includes Office)	2,100	.99
Industrial	8,469	3.99
Unimproved Properties	7,176	3.38
Open Space (Undeveloped, Wetlands, Marsh, Parks, Conservation Lands)	127,603	60.07
Water	51,739	24.36
Total	212,389	100
Total Excluding Water	160,650	75.64

Figure 4.1–Land Use Classification, Unincorporated Chatham

The city of Savannah is highly urbanized with large areas of mixed-use development. The city is chiefly growing through annexation (see page 60 for more information regarding annexation and municipal boundaries). However, urban neighborhoods that have declined in population, former industrial lands, and vacant or under-performing commercial centers represent opportunities for internal growth in the form of infill and adaptive reuse development, thereby conserving undeveloped natural areas.

To the east, Chatham County is developed at low densities and its character is strongly influenced by its setting amid marshes and tidal creeks. To the west, the county has a higher proportion of undeveloped area; however, as the city of Savannah and unincorporated eastern Chatham have built out, the western portion of Chatham County is emerging as a high growth area.

LAND USE CLASS	ACRES	PERCENT (%)
Single Family	8,934	12.03
Multi-Family	583	.79
Commercial (Includes Office)	2,242	3.02
Industrial	13,726	18.48
Unimproved Properties	3,746	5.04
Open Space (Undeveloped, Wetlands, Marsh, Parks, Conservation Lands)	43,621	58.74
Water	1,415	1.91
Total	74,267	100
Total Excluding Water	72,854	98.10

Figure 4.2–Land Use Classification, Savannah







# EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

This component highlights some areas of Chatham County that influence land use patterns as areas with existing and projected job growth. Employment centers have been identified based on a concentration of one or more of the following employment sectors: hospitality, industrial/manufacturing, tourism, retail, health care, educational/public services, and other. Individual employers that have a large impact on land use have been identified as well.

Below are some areas of Chatham County which may influence future land use patterns as areas with existing and projected job growth.

## 1. West Chatham Aviation

- » The West Chatham Aviation employment center is situated between Augusta Road and I-95 and is comprised of the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport and the bulk of the operations of Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation in Chatham County.

This area provides employment opportunities in operation and management of the airport, and the design, manufacturing, and marketing of aircraft. Commuters traveling to and from this area typically travel by automobile.

## 2. Georgia Ports Authority

- » The Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) employment center consists of the Garden City and Ocean Terminal, operated by the GPA. This area provides employment opportunities in marine transportation and logistics.

## 3. Downtown Savannah

- » Downtown Savannah is a major employment hub that provides jobs in many sectors including tourism, hospitality, retail, and educational/public services. This area sees a high number of commuters each day, many of whom utilize modes of transportation other than a car, such as walking, bicycling, or public transit.

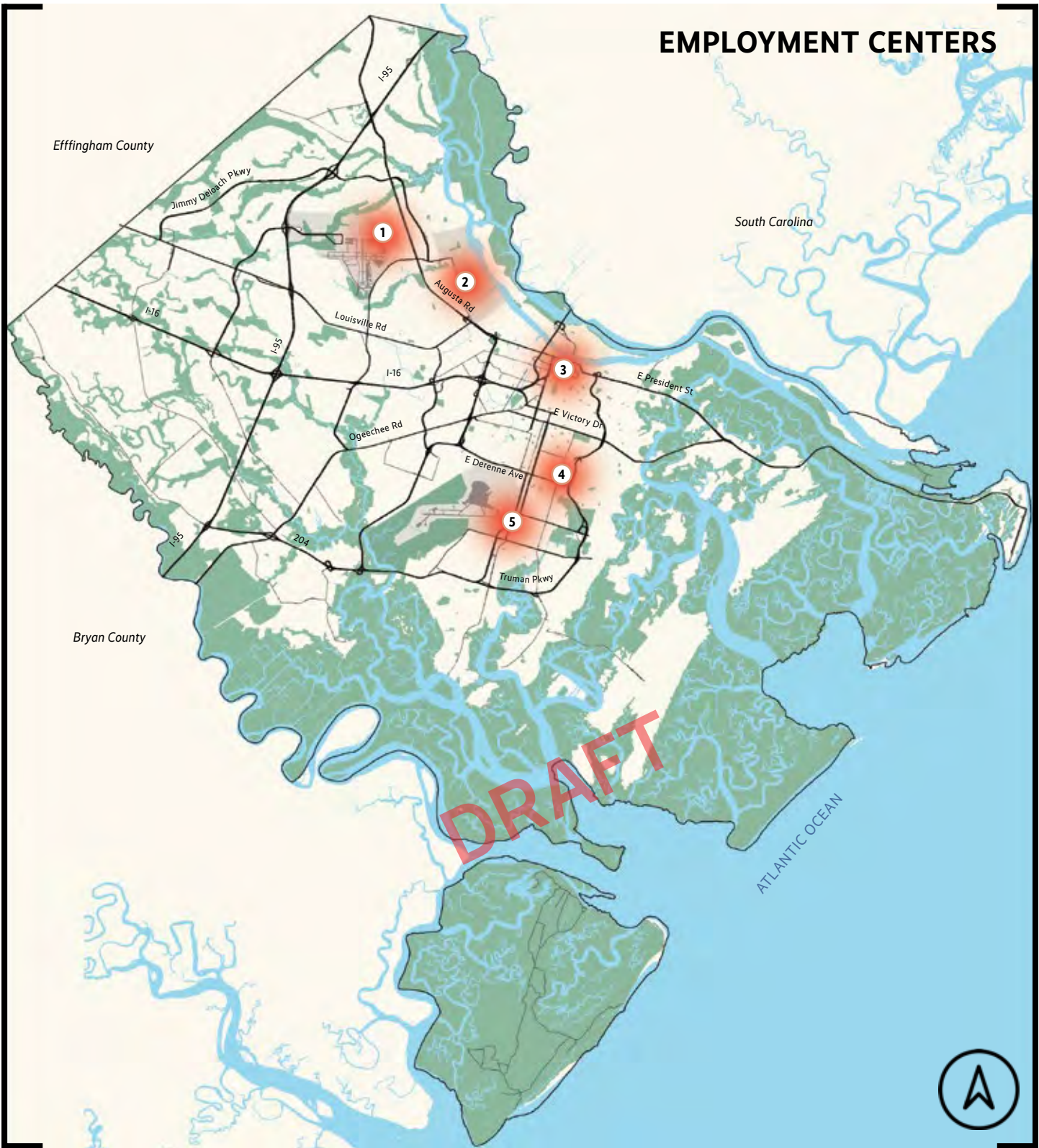
## 4. South Savannah Medical

- » This employment area is located along DeRenne Avenue near the Truman Parkway, and consists of several large medical facilities and offices, including Memorial Health University Medical Center and Candler Hospital. Downtown residents can access this area by bus, however, most commuters use automobiles.

## 5. Abercorn Extension Commercial Corridor

- » This area is located along the Abercorn Street Extension, which serves as a centerline for regional commercial activity on either side. This employment corridor is home to many businesses, including some of the county's largest employers such as Walmart, Kroger, and Georgia Southern University (Armstrong). This is a high traffic area, with both commuters and shoppers traveling primarily by automobile, with some utilizing the public bus system.





Map 4.4—Employment Centers, Chatham County





# FUTURE GROWTH STRATEGIES

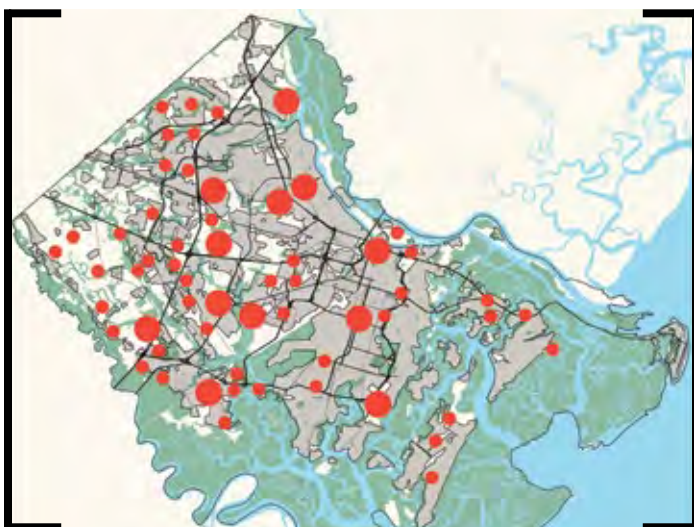
## Options for the Future

Over the next 20 years, various mechanisms can be used to manage growth and promote sustainable development within the county. Three alternative approaches were presented to the public and stakeholders for feedback during development of the Comprehensive Plan in 2020: Business as Usual, Strong Corridor, and Compact Growth.

The intent was to allow the public to visualize different potential directions growth could take over the next 20 years and gauge the desirability of each.

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## Business as Usual

The Business as Usual approach consists of continued outward development in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah between 2020 and 2040.

This strategy is based on existing development patterns, residential densities, future land uses, and infrastructure investments.



## Strong Corridors

The Strong Corridors approach focuses on reinvestment strategies along existing multi-modal transportation nodes and corridors in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah.

This strategy incorporates efficient, mixed-use development and density around transit hubs.



## Compact Growth

The Compact Growth approach is based on reinvestment strategies into existing town centers, utilizing vacant lands and derelict or underperforming properties where possible.

The strategy primarily focuses on efficient development, infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse within existing development boundaries.





## Preferred Growth Strategy: Strong Corridors

Given the choice of three scenarios in an online public survey, unincorporated Chatham and Savannah residents supported the "Strong Corridors" option: Forty-four percent (44%) of survey respondents chose this strategy as their first preference. Under the Strong Corridor Scenario the following activities and concepts become the main focus for future decision making:

- More managed growth of development
- Focus on urban rehab and infill of existing developed areas
- Priority for mixed-use zoning
- Interest in diversity of housing choices
- Concentrate development at existing transportation nodes
- Prioritize land for parks, trails & natural areas
- Manage land for conservation & preservation
- Regional cooperation between municipalities
- Preserve undeveloped natural resource areas
- Brownfield redevelopment

With continued growth pressure in Chatham and Savannah, a coordinated growth strategy across the nine jurisdictions will be critical. The adoption and successful implementation of a coordinated, regional growth policy can aid in the mitigation of the negative externalities of growth—such as traffic congestion, air pollution, and loss of tree canopy—and will help to promote sustainable and equitable development countywide.

The Strong Corridor scenario became the basis for developing the Growth Centers Map, identifying Character Areas, and updating the Future Land Use Map found on the following pages.





**PREFERRED GROWTH STRATEGY**

Effingham County

South Carolina

Bryan County

ATLANTIC OCEAN

**DRAFT**

Legend:

- MAJOR NODES
- MINOR NODES

Map Labels:

- 19A
- 19B
- 19C
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# GROWTH CENTERS

## Purpose

The intent of the Growth Centers Map is to highlight areas of unincorporated Chatham and Savannah that may be suited to accommodate future development or redevelopment/infill efforts. These areas include suburban, commercial, or employment centers that should be studied to determine what type of redevelopment and/or infill development would be most appropriate. Due to their proximity to major road systems and potential sites of public transit expansion, transit-oriented (TOD), traditional neighborhood (TND), and mixed-use development should be a priority focus of these studies. More generally, the identification of growth areas that may support new development has implications in guiding future land use decisions.

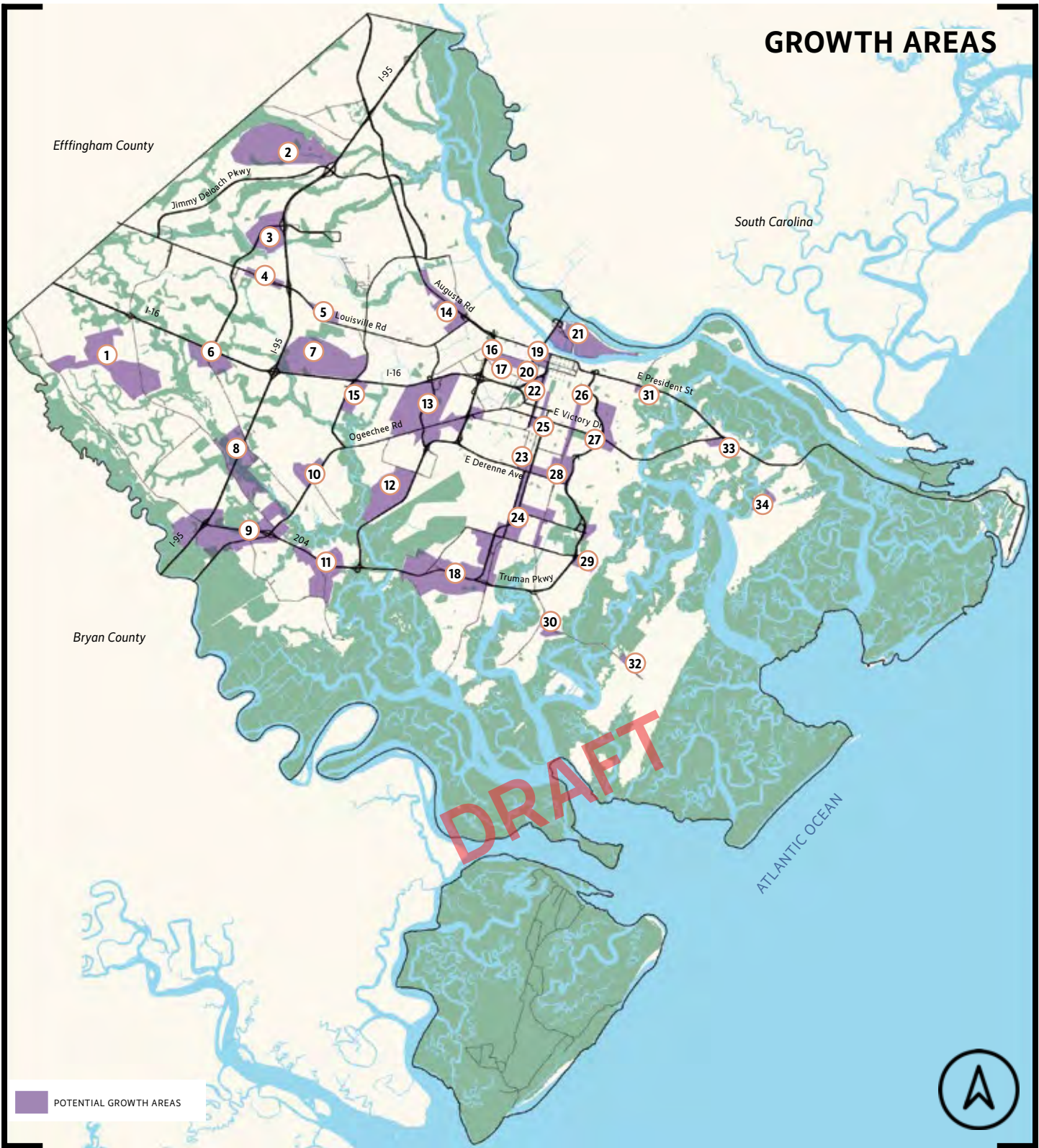
The Growth Centers Map is not a zoning map and is primarily intended to guide local decision makers on locations that should receive further study. The Growth Centers Map defines the prioritization of lands for development to maximize areas that already have public investment (water, sewer, utilities, roadways, and services). Also taken into consideration is historic development patterns, existing land use, employment centers, service areas, existing transportation nodes, and flood zones. For those areas not already fully developed, consideration must be given to public safety, road, and open space enhancements.

## Areas of Further Study

Below is a list of potential Growth Areas identified through the prioritized land analysis and preferred growth strategy. The listing below is in no particular order and does not indicate the level of importance or priority of one area over another.

1. New Hampstead
2. Highlands
3. Godley Station
4. Historic Mainstreet
5. US 80 Corridor
6. Quacco Corridor
7. Megasite
8. Hopeton
9. Fort Argyle
10. Berwick
11. Georgetown
12. Rockingham Farms
13. Chatham Parkway
14. Highway 21
15. Garden City South
16. West Savannah
17. Tremont
18. Savannah Mall  
GSU-Armstrong Vicinity
19. Yamacraw Village
20. Canal District
21. Hutchinson Island
22. Kayton-Frazier
23. Derenne Ave Corridor
24. Oglethorpe Mall
25. Abercorn Corridor
26. Waters Ave Corridor
27. Victory Square/Olympus
28. Medical Arts
29. Sandfly
30. Marshpoint
31. Beech & Capital
32. Skidaway
33. Whitemarsh Island
34. Wilmington Island





Map 4.6-Potential Growth Areas, Chatham County





# POTENTIAL WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE GROWTH

## Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is defined as a moderate- to high-density mix of uses—such as residences, retail shops, offices, and civic and entertainment spaces—located within one-half mile of a transit station and designed to encourage transit use. The typical “station area” is within a half-mile radius, which is considered to be an acceptable 10-minute walking distance for most transit users if the area contains a destination, provides dedicated walking routes, is safe, and is visually appealing. Within the U.S., TOD is typically associated with rail transit; however, TOD could occur with other fixed guideway transit services, such as bus rapid transit, if facilities and service levels similar to rail transit are provided.

- Implementation of a TOD ordinance can help ensure that the investments made in regional transit systems would be continual and that related codes and processes would be supported and utilized to their full extent.

Benefits of a TOD Ordinance include:

- » Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- » Increasing transit ridership
- » Increasing pedestrian access
- » Providing long-term return on investment for property owners
- » Providing easy access to goods and services for families, seniors, and people with disabilities
- » Creating vibrant centers and corridors for pedestrians

- Possible incentives for developers could include the following:
  - » Fast track development review (expedited review process)
  - » Incentives for constructing multi-unit housing projects with 25 or more units
  - » Prohibiting certain uses within one-quarter mile of existing or proposed bus nodes to enable and promote more pedestrian oriented development

## Cluster Development

Cluster development is a land development design tool that provides a means of both preserving open space and allowing development to be directed away from natural and agricultural resources considered important for protection. It is often best applied in suburban landscapes with larger undeveloped parcels.

Cluster development regulations are implemented through municipal zoning, subdivision, and land development ordinances in order to provide applicants with appropriate design standards and municipalities with adequate information on development plans.

- Allow as a permitted use “by right”
- Density incentive
- Possible requirement for subdivisions with parcels larger than a certain amount of acres



## Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinances can involve development of a previously undeveloped area or construction on vacant or undeveloped parcels within an already developed community. Though this method is often driven by the private sector, TNDs are regulated by the zoning, subdivision, and land development ordinances of local governments for those planned growth areas.

## Town Center (TC) Overlay

The Town Center (TC) Overlay districts are intended to be developed based on standards consistent with the community character of the surrounding neighborhood. This type of center is to be low in scale, not exceeding two stories in height (unless greater height is allowed on an incentive basis), and emphasizes landscaping and pedestrian access.

## Planned Development (PUD/PD)

Conventional ordinances are often to blame for the automobile oriented subdivisions that have taken claim to many landscapes. A planned unit development (PUD) or planned development (PD), however, can provide the flexibility needed for a TOD and, more generally, encourage innovative site planning and lot design. A PUD allows a local government to control the development of individual tracts of land by specifying the permissible form of development in accordance with the local ordinance. However, care should be taken to protect and preserve natural resource areas during the design and planning process of PUDs.

## Suburban Retrofit

While suburban locations will always exist in a community's landscape, the principles of urbanism can be introduced to sprawling suburban communities as well. Retrofitting is simply a reconfiguration of existing uses and building types to create a more typical urban environment. The elements of suburban retrofit include:

- Creating a street grid
- Rezoning single use commercial to mixed-use
- Creation of public spaces
- Developing missing middle housing
- Preservation of wetlands & marshlands

## Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is when existing older buildings are repurposed for new uses. While the practice is commonly associated with historic preservation, the term can be used to encompass any structure that is underused, abandoned, vacant, obsolete, and/or dilapidated. While adaptive reuse is a tool to conserve energy and waste, it also supports economic development, and enhances community character.

### MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Missing middle housing describes a range of multi-family or clustered housing types that are compatible in scale with single-family or transitional neighborhoods.

—Optics Design





# CHARACTER AREAS

## Character Areas

The Character Area Map (CAM) identifies the land use character vision for Chatham County. The intent of the CAM is to work in partnership with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to set a cohesive countywide vision for responsible growth over the next twenty years.

Plan 2040 is meant to guide decision-making within unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah, and the CAM is not intended to deviate from the land use goals of other municipalities within Chatham County that maintain separate planning programs. Rather, this countywide visioning effort looks to support these goals and acknowledge the ways in which development patterns influence each other across municipal boundaries. To the extent possible, the CAM seeks to align land use policies throughout the county, while focusing more specifically on areas within unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah.

The CAM is not intended to represent or guide future zoning; however, it should be considered in tandem with the FLUM when policymakers consider land development inquiries or requests.

The character areas seek to capture the diversity of Chatham County and to expand upon the single-use land categorization present in the FLUM. Character areas are places that may contain a variety of different land uses, but share defining characteristics, such as development intensity or available resources. Identifying community character across Chatham County is an important step in making compatible future land use decisions.

## Development Factors

The character areas were developed by examining existing community character and future growth trends in order to ensure compatible and responsible future land use patterns. The following development factors are used to describe each character area:

- Primary & secondary uses
- Average density
- Transportation & roadway classification
- Parking & utilities
- Open space

## Character Areas

The following primary character areas are discussed in the following pages:

- Environmentally Sensitive
- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban







# CHARACTER AREA DEFINITIONS

## Character Area Map

The CAM on the previous page illustrates the location of each potential character area throughout Chatham County. The general characteristics and analysis of development factors for each character area are described below and on the following pages.

### ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE CHARACTER

Environmentally Sensitive character areas include areas set aside for preservation or conservation, or contain natural features such as rivers or wetlands making them vulnerable to the effects of development. Areas such as Ossabaw Island, Wormsloe Historic Site, and Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge are protected perpetually at the state or national level as heritage sites and nature preserves. This character area additionally includes marsh, wetland, and woodland habitats, particularly along major rivers such as the Moon, Ogeechee, and Savannah Rivers.

The negative consequences of development affect not only natural resources, but also the quality of life of residents by exacerbating environmental hazards such as flooding, polluted waterways, temperature extremes, and extreme weather events. Efforts to further protect these areas should be pursued. Any development cited in and around an Environmentally Sensitive character area should have measures in place to protect natural features and vulnerable resources.

### RURAL CHARACTER

Rural character areas are categorized by low-intensity development with large lots, low pedestrian orientation and access, and a sizeable amount of open space. Rural areas are often closely associated with agriculture, and though there are some working farms in Chatham County, it is not widely prevalent in the community. Land in this area is likely undeveloped or facing development pressures for lower density residential development, light industrial development, or medium/higher density PUDs.

Services in rural areas are often individual or community water and sewer systems such as wells and septic tanks. The future of this character area looks to maintain low developmental densities, with special attention paid to availability of services and infrastructure as well as preserving open space.

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## SUBURBAN CHARACTER

Suburban character areas are lower density areas, characterized by the prevalence and accommodation of the automobile. Residential areas are generally separated from other land uses, such as commercial and industrial, and typically feature detached single-family homes; however, attached single-family residential and smaller multi-family apartments are often present as well. Commercial uses, including retail and office clusters, feature large surface parking lots and are located along major thoroughfares and highway interchanges.

Suburban character areas include many locations that are expected to see continued population growth and development, such as large swaths of unincorporated West Chatham. Future development in this character area should look to ensure public realm enhancements, efficient use of existing infrastructure, and connectivity with the surrounding context.

## URBAN CHARACTER

Urban character areas are places with higher density and established mixed-use, residential, commercial, and industrial areas, or future opportunities for critical transportation hubs. The Urban character areas for Chatham County are located entirely within the limits of the city of Savannah, and include the historic downtown, urban neighborhoods, port industrial sites, and transitional areas towards the edge of downtown.

These areas are poised to receive a large portion of the county's projected population growth, as they have the greatest number of urban amenities, including convenience to employment, schools, and retail. The future of this character area looks to infill development in the Urban Core, and redevelopment and growth in the Urban Transitional areas.





## ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE CHARACTER

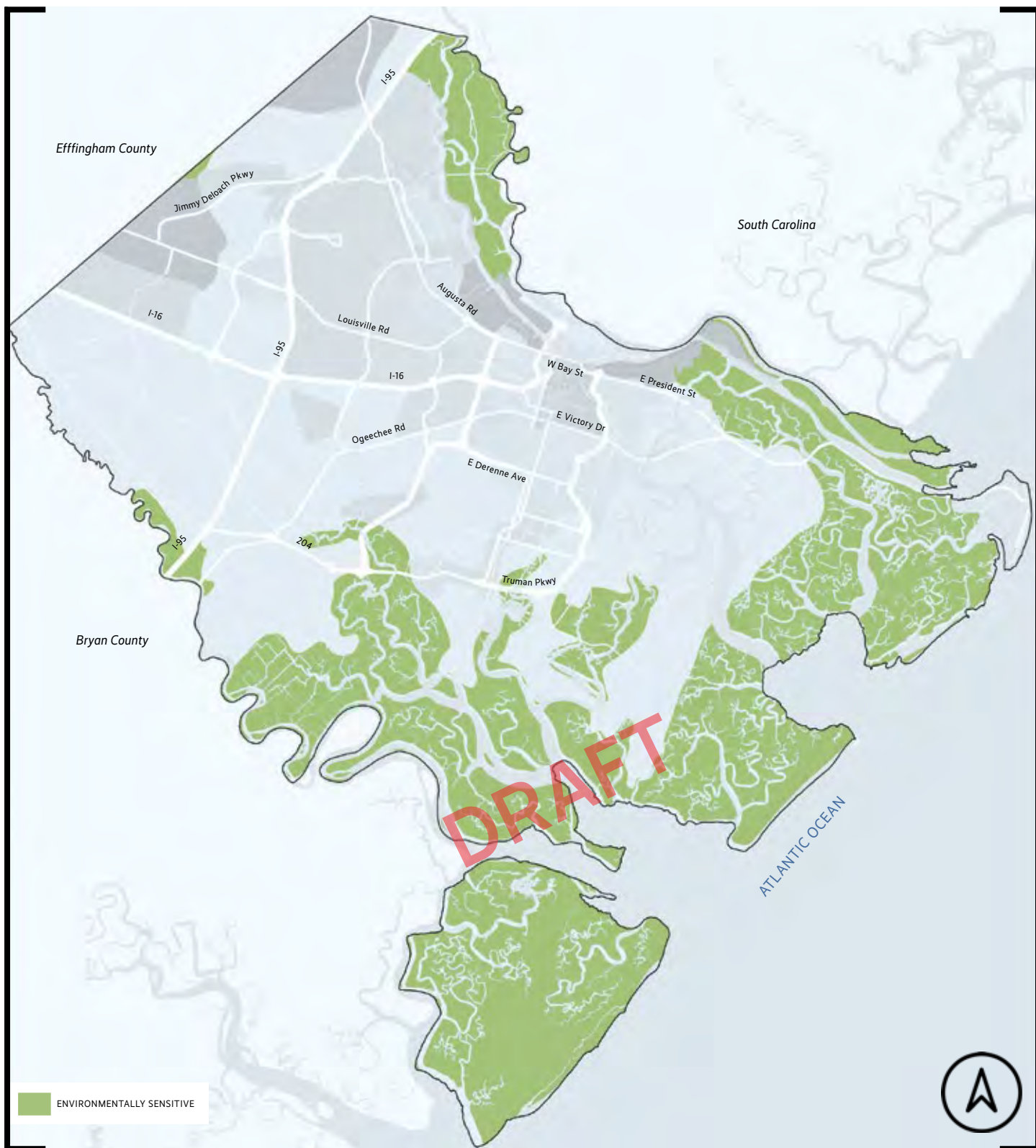
Environmentally Sensitive character areas are open space areas that offer opportunities for limited to no development that is well-integrated with the natural landscape system.

Areas included in the Environmentally Sensitive are Ossabaw Island, Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge, Wormsloe Historic Site, Little and Ogeechee River, Savannah, and Wilmington River Corridors. It is important to note that many parks and open spaces are embedded in the context of other Character Areas.



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Map 4.8—Environmentally Sensitive Character Area, Chatham County





## RURAL RESIDENTIAL

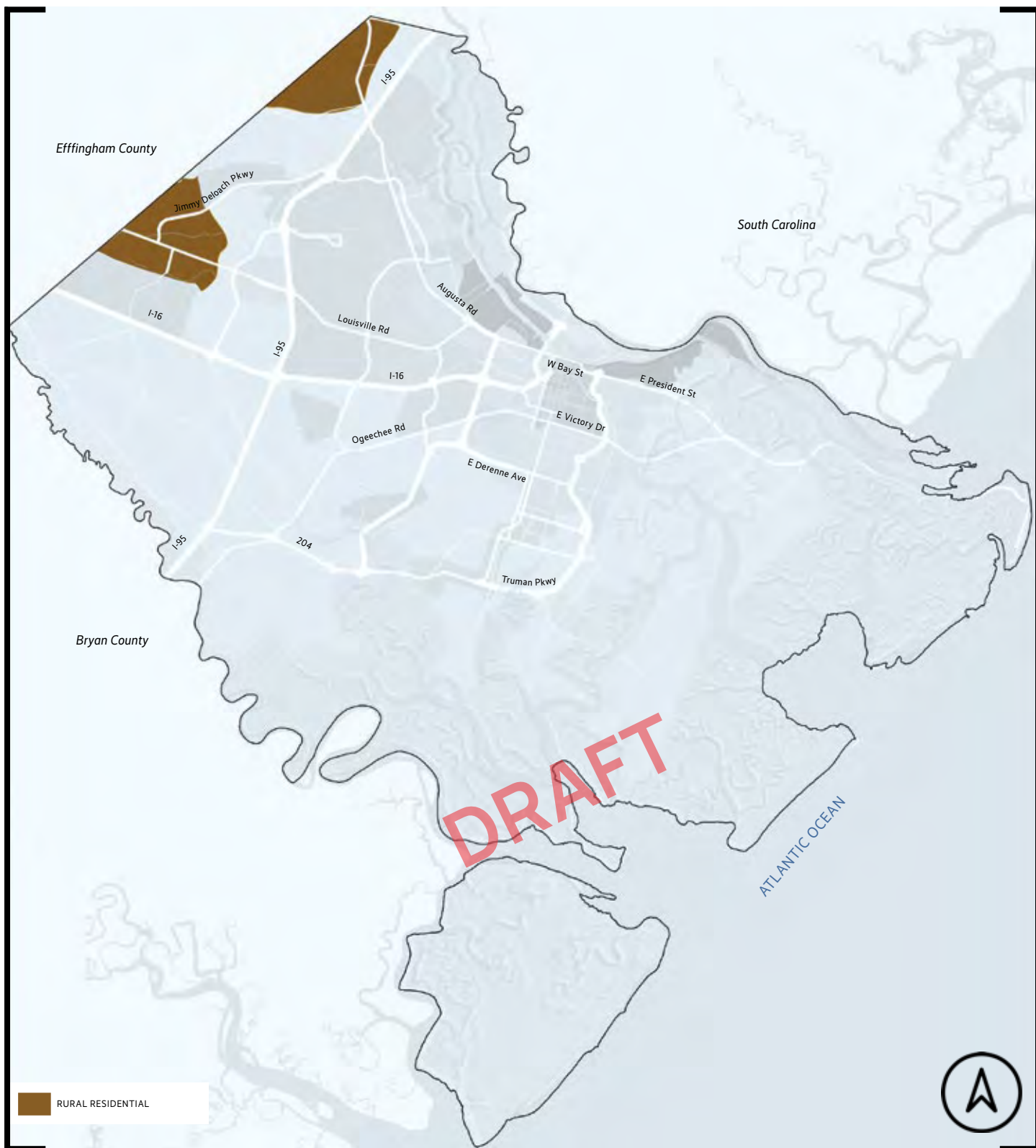
Rural Residential character areas are transitional areas that offer opportunities for low-intensity development that is well-integrated with the natural landscape and agricultural uses. Residential development may occur as individual single-family structures on large lots or clusters of homes designed to preserve large amounts of open spaces. PUDs within Rural Residential character areas may also contain a mix of commercial and residential uses, but should be designed with attention to available infrastructure and services and maintaining the rural character.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Single-family Residential, Open Space
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Neighborhood commercial, schools & civic facilities
<b>DENSITY</b>	Low; 1–2 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented, large blocks, no public transit
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collectors, minor arterials
<b>PARKING</b>	Off-street parking, private driveways, garages
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Individual water & septic; Unlikely to be serviced in the next 10 years
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Neighborhood parks, rails-to-trails, farmland, natural areas







Map 4.9-Rural Residential Character Area, Chatham County





## RURAL CORRIDOR

The Rural Corridor character areas contain a mix of lower density light industrial, warehousing, or service uses. This character area is located along Interstate 16, which connects it to denser suburban and urban areas.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Light Industrial, Warehousing
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	None
<b>DENSITY</b>	N/A
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented, large blocks, no public transit
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Interstate (I-16), local roads
<b>PARKING</b>	Surface parking
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Individual water & septic; Unlikely to be serviced in the next 10 years
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Natural areas, undeveloped land







Map 4.10-Rural Corridor Character Area, Chatham County





## SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Suburban Residential character areas include low and medium density developments; generally, this character area features either single-family structures on large lots or medium-lot residential subdivisions with relatively uniform housing types and densities. However, multi-family apartments and attached single-family residential subdivisions are also prevalent in this area. Local streets are laid out in curvilinear patterns, with occasional cul-de-sacs and limited sidewalks. Suburban Residential areas adjacent to Suburban Commercial character areas should, to the extent possible, be designed as cohesive, connected neighborhoods. Alternative types of housing options should be encouraged in suburban areas to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, and others.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Single-family (detached & attached) Residential
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Small scale commercial & apartment buildings, civic & institutional facilities, neighborhood parks
<b>DENSITY</b>	Low; 3-5 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented, limited public transit
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collectors, arterials
<b>PARKING</b>	Off-street parking, private driveways, garages
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities, some individual/community utility systems
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Community & regional parks, neighborhood greenspaces, waterways, golf courses









## SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL

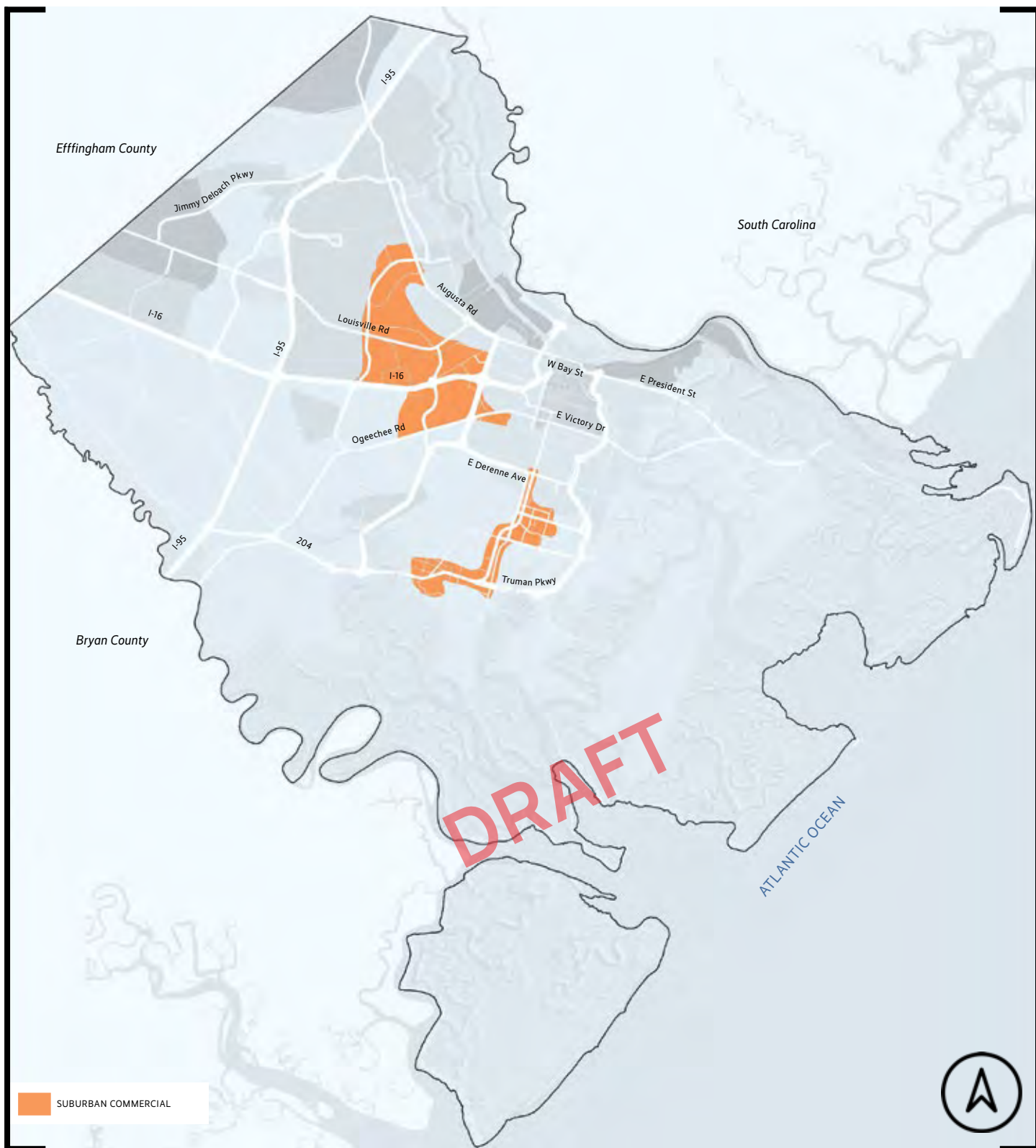
Suburban Commercial character areas are automobile-oriented commercial centers that contain community and regional shopping and service needs. This character area encompasses and is located along several major thoroughfares (arterials) and highways, such as the Abercorn Street Extension, U.S. 80, and I-16. Commercial development such as malls, office buildings, and big box stores are located along these major transportation hubs and feature large, front-facing parking lots. Residential activity in this character area is located behind the commercial frontage; however, mixed-use development should be encouraged in this area in the future.

New and redeveloping commercial centers should be encouraged to use innovative site design to minimize the visual impact of expansive parking areas (e.g., placing parking on the interior of the site), provide open space, and better accommodate all mobility options. Additionally, as shopping and other types of commercial centers age out, they could become candidates for adaptive redevelopment into denser mixed-use centers, especially where access to public transit is currently available or slated for the future.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Regional Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Small scale apartment buildings, single-family residential, office, civic & institutional facilities
<b>DENSITY</b>	Low; 3–12 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collectors, arterials, expressways
<b>PARKING</b>	Off-street, surface parking
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities, some individual/community utility systems
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Community & regional parks





Map 4.12-Suburban Commercial Character Area, Chatham County





## SUBURBAN INDUSTRIAL

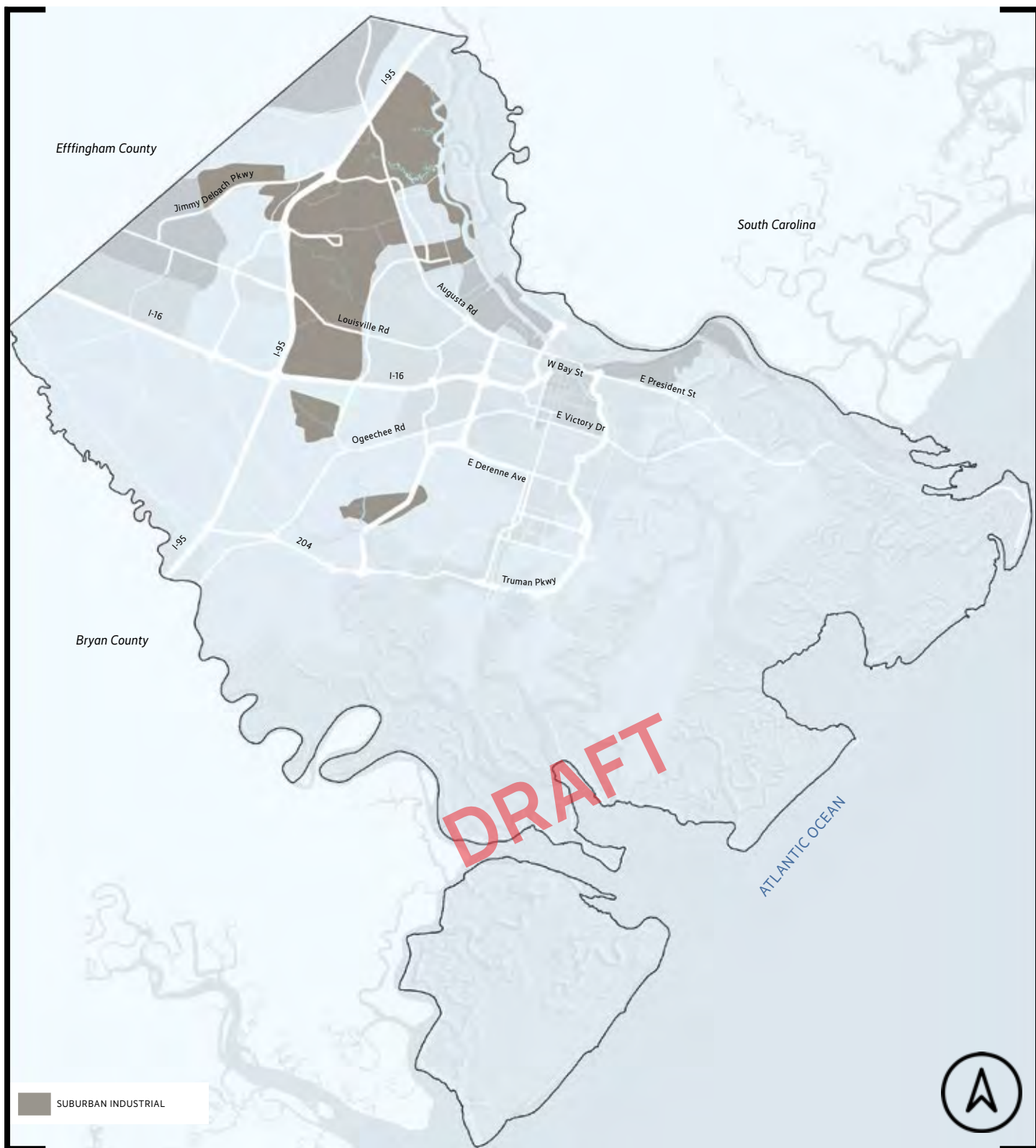
Suburban Industrial character areas generally contain large-footprint buildings and businesses that accommodate warehousing, light industrial, manufacturing, office spaces, and other uses such as airports and landfills. All of these uses come with unique needs and building forms. A large extent of the Suburban Industrial character area is located between I-95 and Dean Forest Road from I-16 north to the Savannah River. Large surface parking lots and truck loading bays are common in this area. Suburban Industrial areas should look to landscaping requirements in order to screen development from the right-of-way and neighboring properties. Additionally, as these areas often contain large employment centers, special attention should be paid to transit connectivity—particularly links to urban and suburban residential areas.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Warehouse, Light Industrial, Manufacturing, Landfill
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Commercial, aviation facilities
<b>DENSITY</b>	N/A
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collectors, arterials, expressways
<b>PARKING</b>	Off-street, surface parking
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities, private utility systems
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Undeveloped greenspace, waterways







Map 4.13-Suburban Industrial Character Area, Chatham County



## SUBURBAN TRADITIONAL

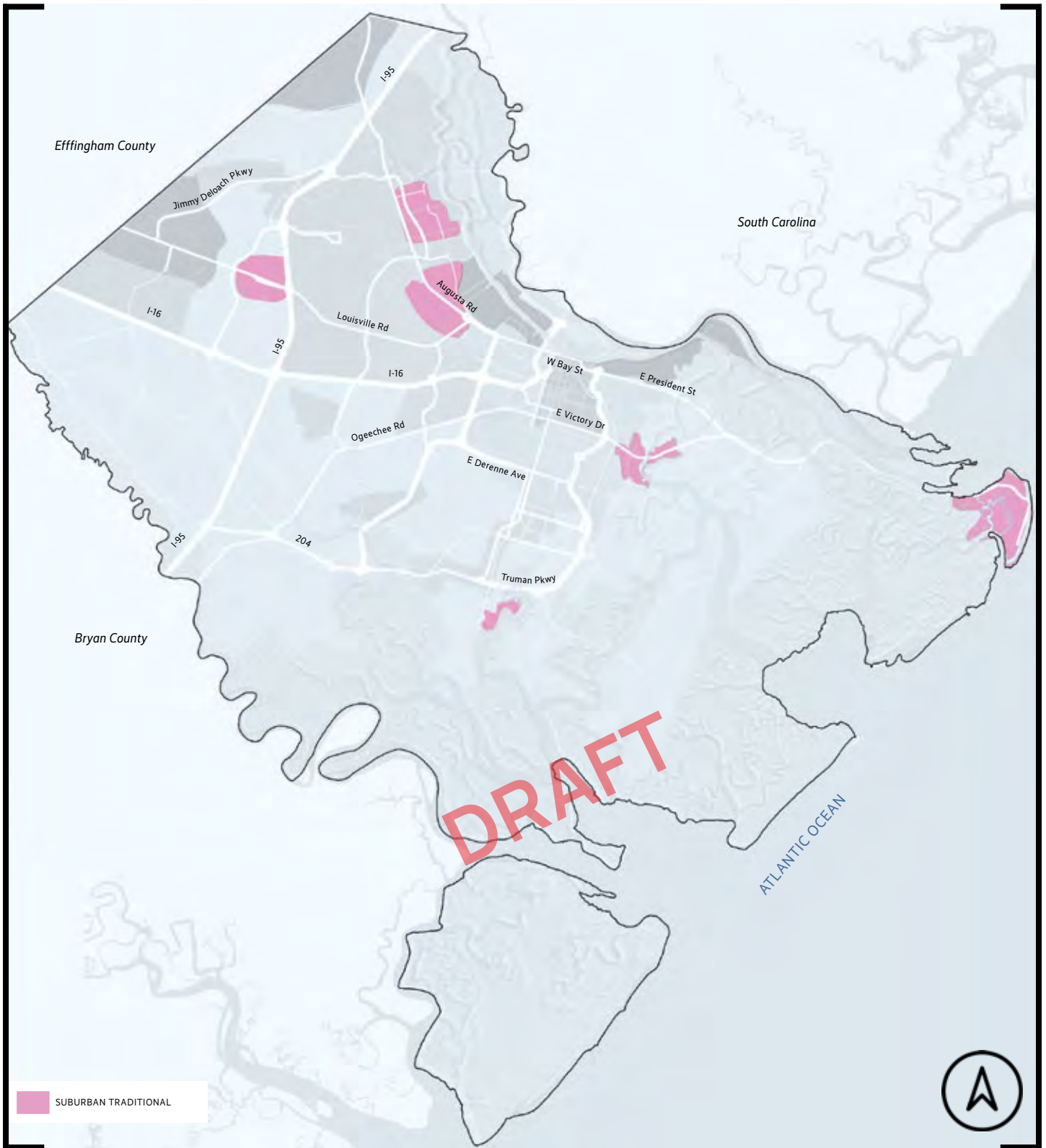
Suburban Traditional neighborhoods include Thunderbolt, Tybee Island, downtown Garden City, Vernonburg, and downtown Pooler. Suburban Traditional character areas have a more “urban” style of development, with gridded/interconnected street patterns, attached buildings, and sidewalks. Homes in this character area are primarily early- and mid-twentieth century single-family homes, with some blocks including small-scale apartment buildings and townhouses. Existing housing stock—older homes in particular—should be preserved and improved. Older, underutilized sites could be candidates for reuse and redevelopment with improved access management, site design, and pedestrian friendliness. Infill and redevelopment should be of a compatible scale and character with surrounding buildings. Additional types of housing options, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs), should be encouraged to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, small families, and others.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Single-family (attached & detached) Residential
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Small scale commercial, office, civic & institutional facilities
<b>DENSITY</b>	Low-medium; 6–20 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented, interconnected street, no public transit
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collectors, arterials, expressways
<b>PARKING</b>	Off-street & on-street parking, private driveways, garages
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Neighborhood parks, beaches/waterways, city parks









## URBAN DOWNTOWN

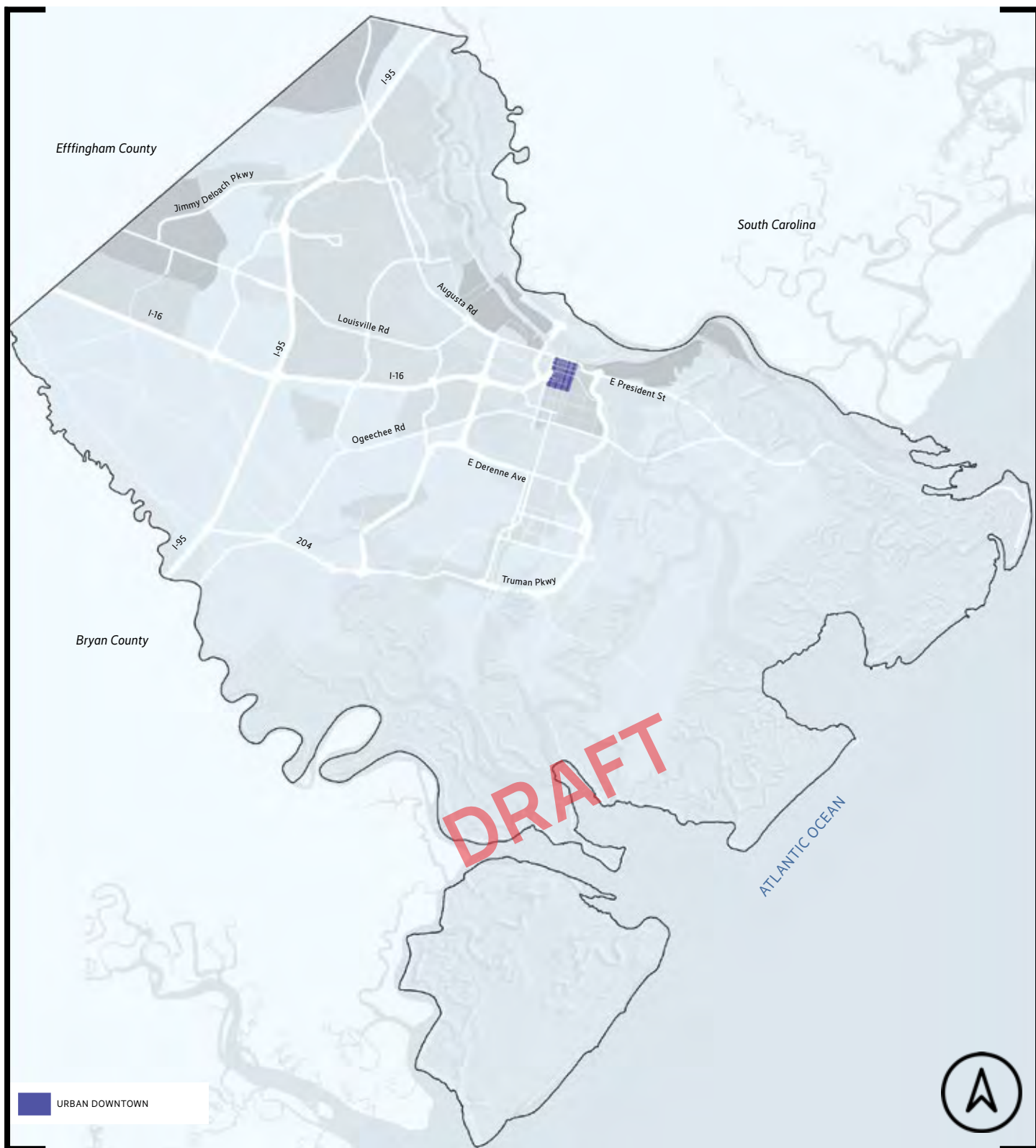
The Urban Downtown character area consists of the local and National Register Landmark Historic Districts. The Oglethorpe Plan (see the appendix for a full history of Savannah and Chatham County) established the grid network, which still guides development patterns today. The Urban Downtown area is identifiable by mixed-use, mid-rise buildings and attached single-family homes (townhomes & rowhomes). This area is also identified by multi-modal transportation, walkable densities, historic squares and greenspaces, and historic, mid-size single- and multi-family buildings. While decreasing in availability, there are infill and redevelopment opportunities within the Urban Downtown. All future development is subject to review by the Metropolitan Planning Commission's Historic Preservation Department, which administers the historic district ordinances to ensure compatibility with the character of the area.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Attached & detached Residential, Mid-Rise, Mixed-Use, Commercial, Parks
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Civic & institutional, office, parking structures, short-term rentals
<b>DENSITY</b>	High; 20–40 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
<b>PARKING</b>	On-street parking, parking structure, private garages
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Municipal parks, squares, waterfront, cemeteries, limited private yard space







Map 4.15–Urban Downtown Character Area, Chatham County





## URBAN CORE

The Urban Core character area contains the local and National Register Victorian and Streetcar Historic Districts, as well as the Eastside neighborhoods in the city of Savannah. This area is characterized by a mix of detached and attached single-family homes, mid-size multi-family buildings, and smaller-scale, neighborhood commercial. Urban Core areas are walkable with a well-connected sidewalk network and street grid. Lot sizes are larger and building heights lower (around 2-4 stories) than in the Urban Downtown. Infill and redevelopment opportunities are more widely available in the Urban Core; any future development should maintain the walkable densities and be compatible with the community character. A range of housing options should be encouraged in the Urban Core to accommodate workers, students, small families, seniors, and others.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Attached & detached Residential, Multi-Family
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Commercial, mixed-use, civic & institutional, short-term rental
<b>DENSITY</b>	Medium-high; 6-20 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
<b>PARKING</b>	On-street, off-street, limited surface, private driveways
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Municipal parks, squares, cemeteries, waterfront



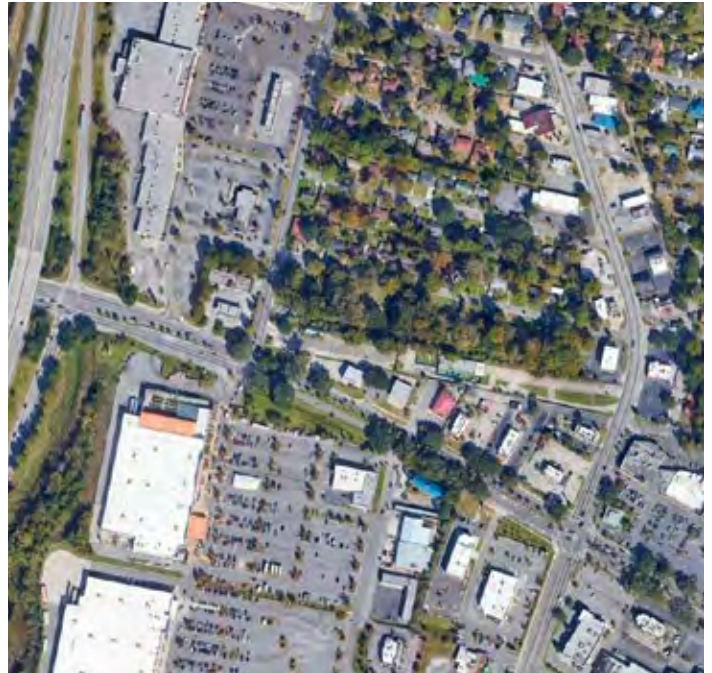






## URBAN TRANSITIONAL

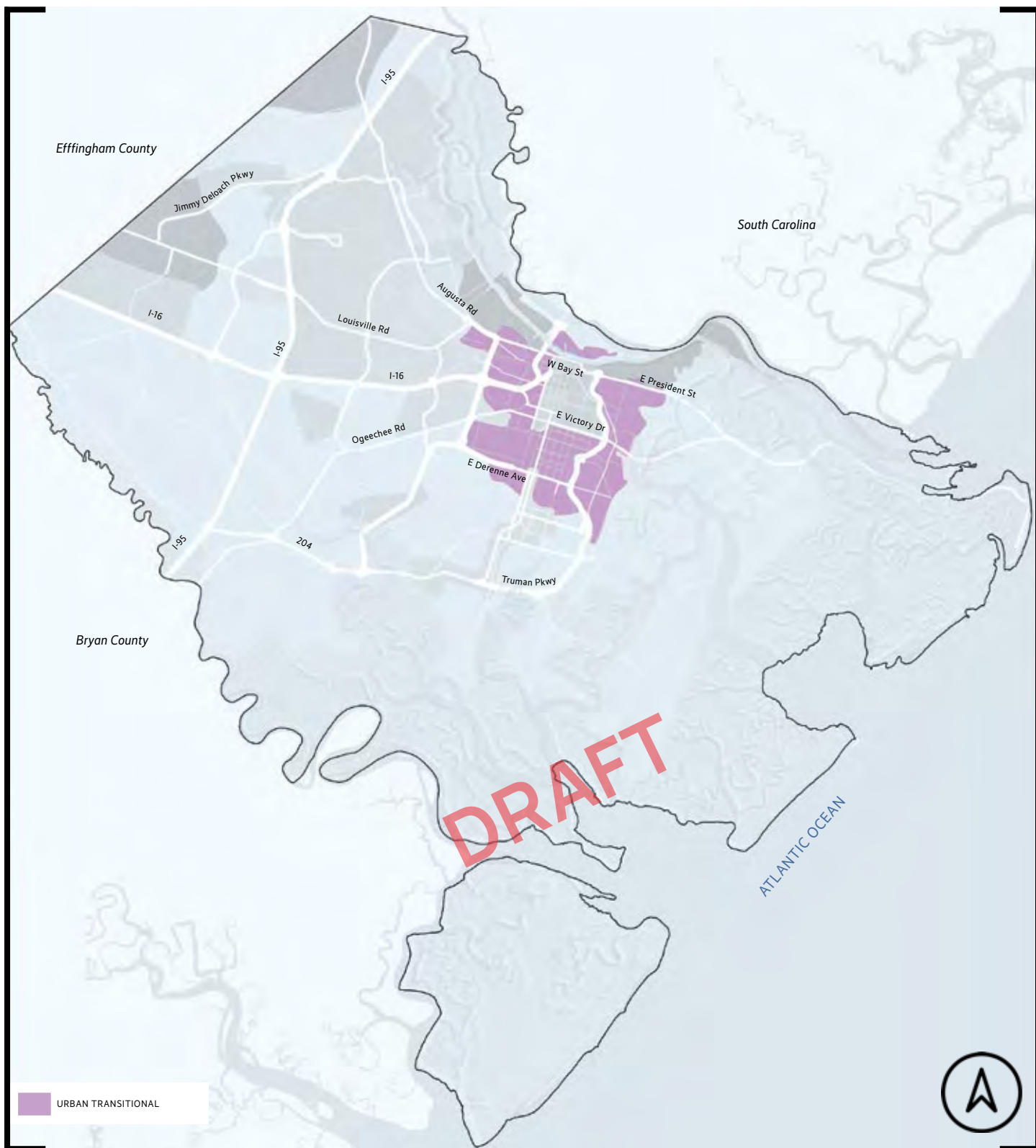
Urban Transitional character areas are those that are sometimes classified as “urban edge” or “urban expansion.” This character area includes the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, established neighborhoods such as Ardsley Park and Victory Heights, and commercial corridors on Abercorn Street and Victory Drive. Urban Transitional areas are identifiable by more automobile-oriented, suburban style residential areas that still provide access to urban amenities and public transit. Most of these neighborhoods are also pedestrian-oriented with well-used sidewalks, parks, and open spaces. Redevelopment and infill development opportunities are prevalent in this character area, and special attention should be paid to corridors suited for TOD.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Attached & detached Residential
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Commercial, civic & institutional
<b>DENSITY</b>	Medium-high; 6–20 units per acre
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
<b>PARKING</b>	On-street, off-street, surface, private driveways
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Municipal parks, schools, historic grayson stadium







Map 4.17–Urban Transitional Character Area, Chatham County





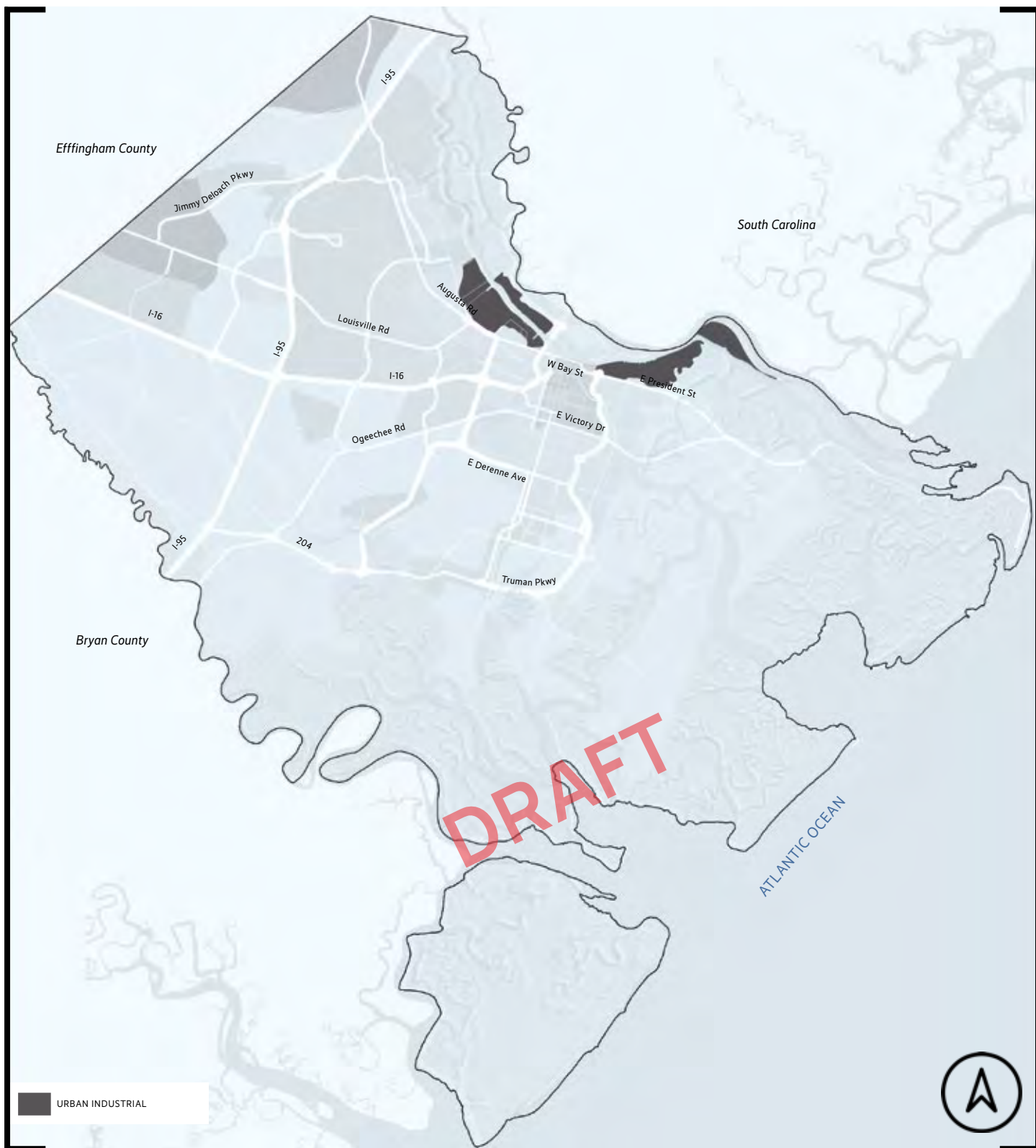
## URBAN INDUSTRIAL

The Urban Industrial character area identifies those areas near the Urban Downtown and Core that have higher intensity uses, such as light and heavy manufacturing, warehouses, and ports. These uses tend to generate noise, particulate matter, fumes, and/or other nuisances that are not contained on site. These areas are directly connected to many urban neighborhoods and contain several employment centers. Attention should be paid to increasing public transportation access to this character area to reinforce its status as an urban employment hub. While these areas are largely built out and will remain industrial in character, encouraging site design that softens or shields the view of buildings and parking lots, loading docks, etc., will enhance the quality of the sites.



<b>PRIMARY USES</b>	Heavy & Light Manufacturing, Warehouse, High Intensity
<b>SECONDARY USES</b>	Commercial
<b>DENSITY</b>	N/A
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Automobile-oriented, limited multi-modal transportation
<b>ROAD FUNCT. CLASS</b>	Arterials
<b>PARKING</b>	Surface parking
<b>UTILITIES</b>	Supported by existing municipal utilities
<b>OPEN SPACE</b>	Undeveloped area, no intentional open space





Map 4.18—Urban Industrial Character Area, Chatham County





# FUTURE LAND USE

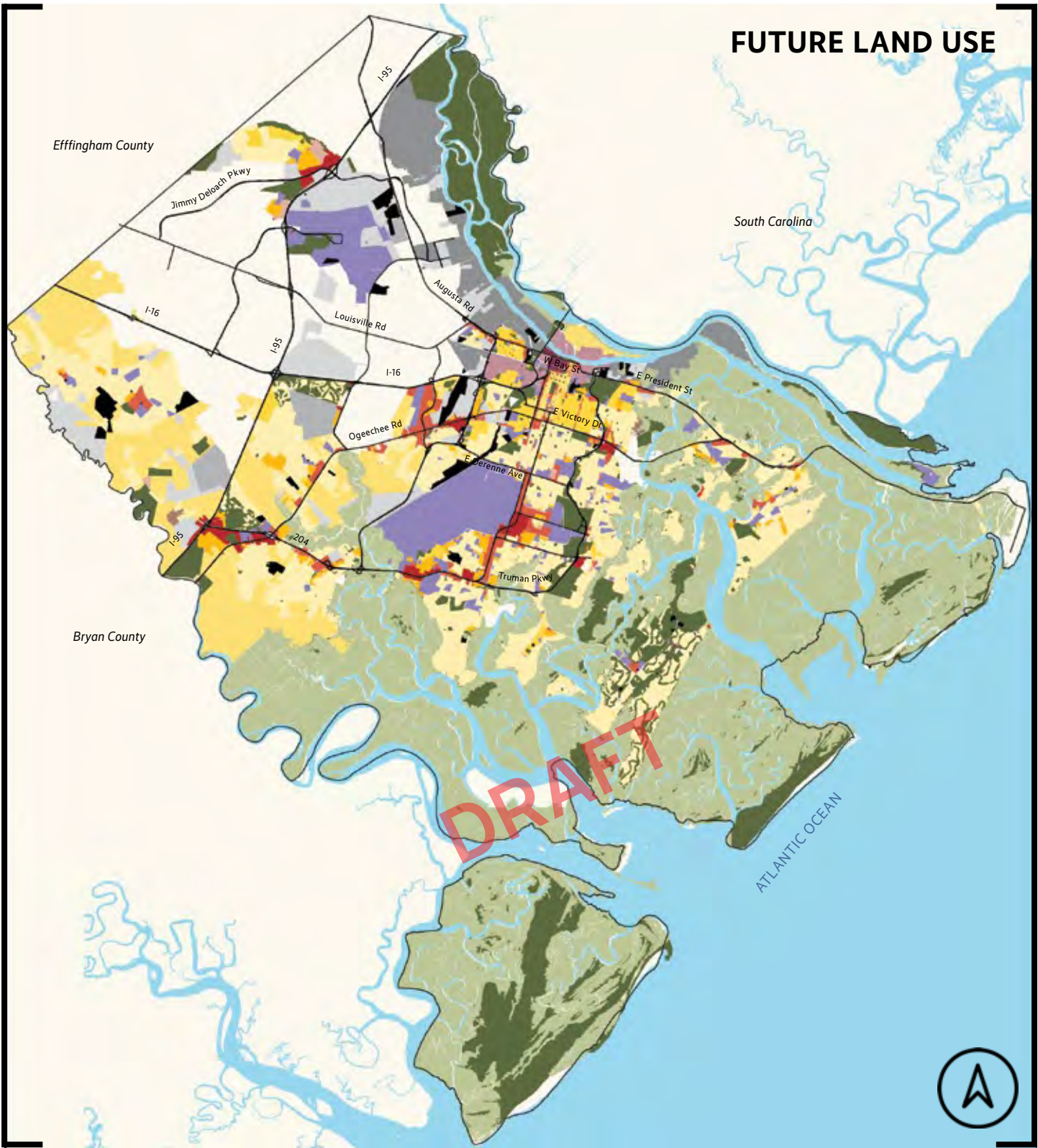
Plan 2040 sets out a vision for the community and its future land use decisions. In addition to the CAM, this element includes a FLUM to present information, strategies, and recommendations to guide future land use policies and decisions. The FLUM and the CAM envision future land uses with attention to the interconnected elements of community character, development patterns, transportation infrastructure, equity, and natural resources.

The FLUM serves to give direction for zoning decisions through specific land use categories for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. The CAM identifies the character vision for all of Chatham County. In partnership with one another, the FLUM and the CAM are intended to guide the character and direction of land use decisions in the county with the goal of furthering consistent uses and character.

Future land use patterns for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah are shown on the FLUM. The FLUM contains land use and overlay categories, which visually represent the land uses that serve as a guide for future zoning and development policy decisions. Land use categories are defined in detail on the following pages. Interpretation of the FLUM should be considered along with all zoning requests, local policy reviews, recommendations, and decisions when policymakers consider land development questions or requests.

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Map 4.19-Future Land Use, Chatham County





# LAND USE CATEGORIES

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MAP COLOR					
LAND USE	Industry Heavy	Residential General	Single Family	Suburban Single Family	Planned Development
DEFINITION	Areas supporting uses that are involved in the large-scale freight, operation, demolition, surface mining, and production of materials and may produce noise, odor, dust, and contaminants measurable above ambient levels.	Areas with a wide range of residential uses—including multi-family dwellings, attached dwellings, small lot single-family dwellings, and mixed-use with upper story residential—at densities greater than 10 units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.	Areas identified for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed eight (8) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.	Areas identified for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed five (5) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.	Master planned areas accommodating cluster development, neo-traditional development, or mixed residential, commercial, or civic uses. Such developments are characterized by internal or external linkages among residential, commercial, institutional, or recreational use components. This category includes Amenity Communities, Village Centers, Town Centers, and existing PUDs.
	Agricultural/Forestry	Trans/Comm/Utility	Parks & Recreations	Conservation	Conservation Residential
	Areas principally used for farming, silviculture, dairy or livestock production, and resource extraction. This category also includes single-family detached dwellings not to exceed one-half (0.5) unit per gross acre.	Areas dedicated principally to railroad facilities, airports, cell towers, sub stations, solar farms and similar uses that produce intensive or obtrusive activities that are not readily assimilated into other districts.	Land dedicated to open space that is accessible to the public or areas dedicated to sports, exercise, or other types of leisure activities.	Land that is publicly or privately held and designated for preservation in a natural state or for use for passive recreation (e.g., fishing, hiking, camping). This category also includes all back barrier islands consisting of less than two acres of contiguous uplands.	This category is for back barrier islands that are in private ownership and have uplands exceeding two acres on a contiguous land mass. Such areas shall observe conservation principles, but may be developed for residential use at low densities.



# LAND USE CATEGORIES

MAP COLOR					
LAND USE	Tidal Marsh	Environmental Overlay	Airport Overlay	Arterial Corridor Overlay	Landfill
DEFINITION	Areas of estuarine influence that are inundated by tidal waters on a daily basis and are characterized by spartina (cord grass) habitat.	The island, estuarine, and marsh areas of unincorporated Chatham County, to include back barrier islands, hammocks, and other environmentally sensitive areas and/or habitats. The Environmental Overlay is used as a supplemental zoning tool implemented through standards meant to restrict the intensity of development in areas where such development would negatively impact the health and/or vitality of the area.	Areas adjacent to airport facilities that are within Clear Zones, Accident Potential Zones, and Noise Zones where day-night averages are greater than 65 decibels, or similar zones of influence. This designation shall be applied to areas with the flexibility to plan future development in a manner that will place compatible uses in appropriate locations and at appropriate densities (see Compatible Use Guidelines in Fort Stewart-Hunter Army Airfield Joint Land Use Study).	Areas having established residential character that, due to their arterial location, are confronted with potential commercial intrusion. Within this overlay, rezoning petitions may proceed where the combined lot width of property is equal to or greater than 175 feet along the arterial street.	A land depository or excavation area operated in a controlled manner for the dumping of debris or inert material; or a disposal site operated by means of compacting and covering solid waste with an approved material. This term is intended to include both debris landfills and sanitary landfills.

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# PLAN CONSISTENCY

The FLUM and the CAM are based on the policies and assumptions contained in the Comprehensive Plan and the forecasted growth and character for Chatham County and Savannah. The FLUM shows the general land use recommended and corresponds to a range of potentially appropriate functions and intensities within each land use category. The CAM shows the general character and centers of activity for the county and corresponds to a wide range of land uses.

While the FLUM and CAM will influence future zoning, they do not alter current zoning or affect the rights of property owners to use the land for its purpose as zoned at the time of this Plan's adoption. The designation of an area with a particular land use category or character area does not mean that the most intense zoning district is automatically recommended; the FLUM and the CAM document the general recommended future use for each designated area. A variety of factors and site characteristics, such as infrastructure availability, should also be considered. Additionally, other types of uses beyond those suggested by the FLUM and the CAM may be considered compatible and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The future land use categories and character areas should not be interpreted to support nor preclude developments without consideration of the policies and intent of the Comprehensive Plan. Determination of the conformance of a proposed use or zoning request with the Comprehensive Plan should include, but is not limited to, consideration of the following questions:

1. Is the proposal consistent with the vision, themes, and policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan?
2. Is the proposed use being considered specifically designated on the FLUM in the area where its location is proposed?
3. Does the CAM indicate that the character of the proposed use is appropriate?





# ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

With Chatham County's growth and development come issues and opportunities. Identifying these issues and opportunities is an essential step in ensuring responsible existing and future land use policies and programs. After careful review and public input, the following list was created to highlight critical issues that may need careful attention and consideration in the future:

## **Consistency**

### **Chatham County Zoning Ordinance**

The Chatham County Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 2009 and has not been updated since. The ordinance is fairly simple and does not contain any character-based zoning districts.

### **City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance**

On July 18, 2019, the City of Savannah adopted a new zoning ordinance—Savannah's Zoning Ordinance (previously known as NewZO)—which was created in an effort to better recognize the modern and historic development patterns of the city. The zoning ordinance addressed many of the previous inconsistencies between land use policy and the Comprehensive Plan. However, constant re-evaluation of the consistency between zoning ordinance and all other forms of land use policies in the city with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan is vital. Future land use policy should utilize not only the future land use and growth patterns as identified in this element, but include at a minimum the additional elements of the Comprehensive Plan that are integral and connected to land use, including housing, economic development, and natural resources.

## **Gentrification**

As the historic districts and neighborhoods in Savannah continue to draw in visitors and investment, many people and legacy businesses are becoming displaced as property taxes, rent, and home prices rise. This displacement first began in the Landmark Historic District and has since moved to the Victorian and Streetcar Historic Districts. While the economic impact of increased investment is substantial, the land use and affordability changes in these areas have disproportionately impacted people of color and elderly longtime residents. The Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, as well as eastside neighborhoods outside of downtown, are likely to begin to see more gentrification as the downtown districts become more built out and unaffordable. Important considerations should be made regarding the current locations of those impacted by gentrification—especially minority groups—and future policy and procedures for equitably relocating those who wish to do so.

## **Redevelopment**

As the downtown area becomes more built out, the City of Savannah should look to redevelopment opportunities in the Downtown Expansion areas, as well as areas that could be reconfigured to present more sustainable modes of growth and development. As highlighted in the Growth Centers section of this element, TOD should be prioritized as a strategy. While the Downtown Expansion areas have been identified in the zoning ordinance and FLUM as areas where new development can and should occur, there are several areas outside of downtown Savannah that should be studied to assess whether transit-oriented and mixed-use development would be appropriate.



## Annexation

The City of Savannah, as well as the municipalities of West Chatham, are continually annexing lands in unincorporated Chatham County. Currently, there is not a comprehensive list of past annexations nor a unified program for future annexations by any municipality. Coordination among the City of Savannah, Chatham County, and the seven other municipalities within the County is necessary to develop a countywide record of annexation and a comprehensive growth management plan. Approaches that provide for more compact and orderly growth and better coordination of land development with infrastructure and public facilities are critically needed. Future annexation areas should be identified and, if not already developed, should remain predominately undeveloped until land areas within municipal boundaries are more fully utilized.

## Regional Coordination

The effects of climate change, countywide commuting patterns, and shifting economies require planning at a regional scale. While each municipality maintains its own planning program and land use regulations, ensuring the economic, environmental, and social welfare of the entire county requires intergovernmental cooperation in the planning and provision of public services. The Land Use element looks to provide visioning for countywide character growth through the Character Growth Model. However, more work is needed to cooperate and plan regionally in Chatham County. While the Metropolitan Planning Commission provides a regional approach to planning in Chatham County, in order for future smart growth to occur, all municipal planning programs must incorporate a unified regional plan.

## Natural Resources

The high rate of growth and development that has already taken place—and is predicted to continue into the foreseeable future—throughout Chatham County necessitates a proactive, focused effort by the County and municipalities to protect the varied natural resources within their jurisdictions. The negative consequences of development affect not only natural resources, but also the quality of life of residents by exacerbating environmental hazards such as flooding, polluted waterways, temperature extremes, and extreme weather events. Efforts to protect our natural resources through responsible land use measures will aid in increasing community resilience from catastrophic events while lessening the negative impacts associated with sea level rise and climate change.

## Preserving and Enhancing the Public Realm

While Tybee Island and areas of unincorporated Chatham County are known for their natural features such as beaches, marshes, and waterways, downtown Savannah is recognized internationally for the quality of its historic buildings, parks, and public realm. The downtown area owes this distinction to the original town plan, to the preservation of the integrity of that plan, and to new expressions of the plan during later periods of growth. Downtown Savannah's green element—squares, parks, landscaped medians, and tree lawns—combined with other elements of the public realm such as sidewalks and historic buildings, contribute to a unique, inviting environment for the enjoyment of those who live, work, recreate, and visit the area.

The preservation of the public realm in downtown Savannah is crucial to the continuation of the success of the area as a vibrant, active, and welcoming destination. While not as prevalent as in downtown Savannah, there are other great public spaces throughout Chatham County that are valuable assets and worthy of stewardship. It is essential to learn from the mistakes of the past, such as the suburbanization of codes and ordinances, as well as urban renewal, to ensure that no further damage is done to the public realm by those types of policies.





# LAND USE GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Establish growth policies for the City of Savannah to guide development and redevelopment in a responsible manner, encouraging compact/mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, increased connectivity, and open space preservation*

Creating an attractive and livable community requires the development of a comprehensive community vision as well as policies and regulations that will guide growth to occur in a manner that is consistent with that vision. Without appropriate policies and regulations in place, development and redevelopment will occur in a disjointed and incompatible manner to the detriment of the community's quality of life.

### Objectives:

- Review zoning regulations and other ordinances to identify standards that do not support the community vision
- Assess the development review process to identify ways to expedite and/or reduce fees for infill and grayfield projects
- Incentivize projects that are located in areas with existing infrastructure and within close proximity to services, making greenfield development less attractive and economical
- Prioritize the preservation and enhancement of the existing public realm and encourage the incorporation of public realm spaces and elements in new developments
- Prioritize land acquisition for open space and conservation
- Decrease development pressures on environmentally sensitive lands

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## GOAL 2

*Identify and prioritize future annexations that are regionally coordinated, and that promote responsible growth*

Coordination among municipalities within the region is crucial to plan for annexation and ensure growth occurs only in appropriate areas. These areas should have existing infrastructure to accommodate development that is compatible with the character of the surrounding area in both intensity and density. Proactively coordination with the county to identify future annexation targets and agree upon responsible growth principles for those areas will result in an improved quality of life for all communities.

### Objectives:

- Establish criteria for determining the appropriateness and readiness of development, including budgetary and other impacts
- Identify areas where future annexations would be appropriate and prioritize only those that promote responsible, compatible growth
- Develop protocol to analyze annexation requests to determine appropriateness of the annexation

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## GOAL 3

*Utilize small area and corridor plans as a means to protect the character of existing areas and ensure new development is compatible*

Small area and corridor plans are effective tools to provide more localized guidance for land use decision-making. They can be used to address current conditions and issues, and ensure that future growth and development is consistent with existing development patterns and the character of the area. Such plans proactively address the needs of the community at a level of specificity that cannot be achieved through community-wide land use plans or zoning ordinances.

### Objectives:

- Update existing small area plans and develop new small area plans as appropriate
- Develop criteria for identifying and prioritizing small area planning needs for areas where growth and development pressures are high
- Develop criteria for identifying and prioritizing corridor plans for areas where growth and development pressures are high or specialized protections are needed
- Identify corridors that could support TOD and create corridor plans to allow for and encourage TOD in an appropriate manner

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## GOAL 4

*Continue to create innovative ways to connect people with places*

Land use and transportation policies and objectives are inevitably connected, and it is necessary to acknowledge and consider this relationship when making planning decisions in order to safeguard against unintended consequences. Transportation policies can undermine land use objectives and vice versa; it is necessary, therefore, to ensure that their respective efforts consider the impacts of one on the other to guarantee a positive outcome in both regards.

### Objectives:

- Consider the impacts of all transportation decisions, strategies, and investments on surrounding existing land uses and the public realm, and potential deviations from land use objectives
- Encourage land use patterns that reduce distances between residences and services
- Increase opportunities for mass transit and other mobility options (walking, biking, etc.) through proper planning of the land use pattern

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## GOAL 5

*Enhance the character and image of major corridors that implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes*

Create a series of new and enhanced public spaces—including parks, plazas, green spaces, and pocket parks—throughout the city, and particularly in mixed-use areas, to improve the experience for residents who gather and interact in these locations. Incorporate active programming and elements such as public art, trees and other plantings, seating, and water features to enhance the appeal of these spaces.

### Objectives:

- Implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that project a positive image while encouraging walking
- Incorporate distinctive pavement textures and colors in streetscape designs, particularly in areas with high levels of pedestrian and commercial activity
- Research and pursue opportunities to relocate overhead power lines underground, particularly on major commercial corridors

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# TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

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# 05





# TRANSPORTATION

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## Introduction

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Topics discussed in each of the individual elements of Plan 2040 are interconnected. As a result, transportation conditions in the future will be affected by policy recommendations located in other elements of the plan.

Of these, the Land Use element will have a particularly strong impact on transportation. Through its placement of commercial centers and residential areas, the Future Land Use Map will help determine the County's future spatial pattern, which in turn will affect road connectivity for example. Furthermore, the density of those developments will help determine the future viability of other modes of transportation, such as bus, bike, and rail.



# TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS & TRENDS

Savannah and Chatham County have long served as the regional center for Coastal Georgia and the Lowcountry of South Carolina for employment, shopping and recreation. In addition to serving as the regional center for residents, Savannah, with its Historic Landmark District, is host to over 14.8 million visitors each year spending \$3.1 billion. It has become one of the top tourist destinations, both nationally and internationally, according to Longwoods Travel USA Study via Visit Savannah.

Chatham County is also home to the Port of Savannah, which is the largest and fastest growing single-operator container terminal in North America and the fourth largest in total volume, according to Georgia Ports Authority.

The port is a major economic engine for the region, as well as the State of Georgia. The Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization region is also home to a number of other regional employment centers, including medical, military and educational institutions, port-related industries, and manufacturing centers.

An efficient transportation system that effectively provides for the movement of people and goods is critical to the continued economic vitality of the County and the region.



## METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is responsible for developing a regional transportation vision, direct planning and implementation of projects, allocated federal funds, and gather input from the public and stakeholders.

—Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

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## Coastal Region CORE MPO

The CORE MPO is a transportation policy-making and planning body with representatives of elected and transportation authorities from Chatham County and its municipalities, Bryan County, Effingham County, and executives from local, state and federal agencies.

The CORE MPO is comprised of a policy board known as the Executive Board and four advisory committees including the Technical Coordinating committee (TCC), the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT), and the Economic Development and Freight Advisory Committee (EDFAC).

The CORE MPO follows the 3-C planning process of transportation, comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative. Through this planning process the MPO coordinates policies, corridor studies, and plans such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

### METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), is a long-range planning document that sets future goals and identifies transportation deficiencies, strategies, and projects over the next two decades.

—CORE MPO

## CORE MPO Statistics

Total Population in MPO\*

**276,406**

Land Area (Square Miles)\*

**651**

Year Established\*

**1983**

\*Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Database



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# TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

## Regional Commuting Patterns

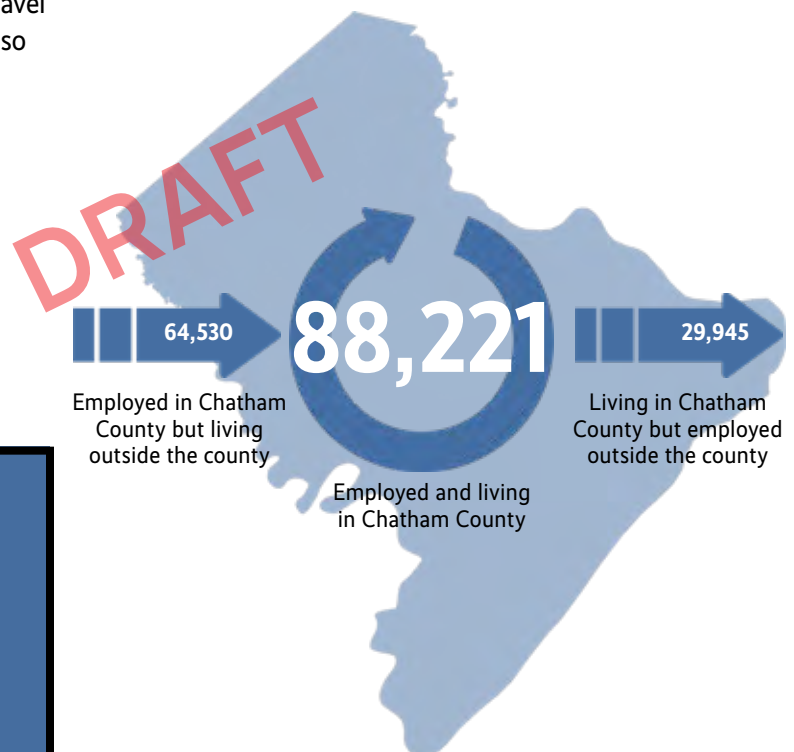
Chatham County and the city of Savannah are regional hubs for employment, shopping, recreation, medical and educational institutions, and other economic generators. Many residents of neighboring counties commute into Chatham County for work each day, greatly impacting the traffic patterns and overall efficiency of the transportation network.

The neighboring counties of Bryan and Effingham both have over 64% of their residents commuting outside the County for work each day and 72% of Richmond Hill residents travel outside Bryan County for work. Other nearby counties also experience a significant out-commuting pattern. Liberty County has 18.6% and Bulloch County has 24% of their population working outside of their county, and those workers have a typical commute time of about one hour each way.

## Commuting Patterns

	Work in County of Residence	Work Outside County of Residence
Chatham County	92.2%	4.9%
Savannah	94.1%	3.6%
Richmond Hill	26.2%	72.1%
Bryan County	27.5%	69.7%
Effingham County	31.1%	64.4%

Figure 5.1—Regional Commuting Characteristics  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



Map 5.1—Regional Commuting Pattern Flow into Chatham County, 2018  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey

### COMMUTING PATTERN

A commuting pattern is the journey to work and refers to groups of workers in a region, and the distances and directions they travel from home to work.

—Census Bureau



## Commute Mode Share

The proportion of travelers using a given method of transportation is called the "mode share" or the "mode split." Mode share is influenced by the types of facilities or services that have been emphasized in the past (i.e. provision of more and wider roadways and "free" parking, rather than transit service, bikeways, or sidewalks).

Data available from the U.S. Census Bureau regarding the various ways people choose to travel (e.g., driving, taking transit, walking, etc.) focuses on the trips to and from work, as this is one of the most predictable trip purposes. The picture of travel activity implied by this data is also limited by the fact that trips involving multiple modes are counted under whichever mode was used for most of the trip distance (e.g., a commute involving a short bicycle trip to and from the bus stop and longer ride on the bus is counted only as a bus commute).

As captured in Figure 5.2 on the following page, most work trips in Chatham County are by automobile, as is the case for the State and Country overall. Workers living within the city of Savannah are slightly more likely to use alternatives to driving alone, compared to the overall county and state. This is related to certain characteristics of the more urbanized Savannah area: higher densities, mixed-uses, and jobs/housing balance means more workers have shorter trips; transit service is present and has more route coverage; and bicycle and pedestrian facilities are more consistently present.



### MODE SHARE

Mode Share (also called mode split, modes-share, or modal split) is the percentage of travelers using a particular type of transportation or number of trips using said trip.

—CORE MPO

According to the American Community Survey estimates for 2018, shown in Figure 5.2, the city of Savannah is estimated to have had 73.6% of its workers driving to work alone and 78.5% of the workers in Chatham County drove alone to work, as compared to 79.5% in the state and 76.4% in the U.S., Effingham and Richmond Hill have about 85% of their workers driving alone. Percentages of carpooling, transit, biking and walking in both Chatham County and the city of Savannah were higher compared to both the state and US percentages. The city of Savannah also exhibits a high percentage of walking (4.2%) and biking (2.1%).

Over time, the percentage of those driving alone increased, which could be attributed to the growth in the suburban western areas of the county. However, the transit, walking and biking percentage remained relatively stable.

It is important to note that today's observed travel behavior does not necessarily reflect the choices people would make if different transportation options were available and at a level to make them safe.





Transportation policy, funding, and design decisions in support of automobile travel initially created great gains in mobility most notably (for the middle and upper classes), but have also resulted in some unintended, negative consequences for individuals and society, such as pollution, contributions to the atmospheric greenhouse effect, contributions to obesity, damage to the natural environment and to community social fabric, as well as a high cost for individuals to enter fully into the normal activities of society (i.e., the need to buy a car to reliably get to a job).

In other words, although most people in the region today go everywhere by private automobile, there are good reasons to encourage interest in other modes within the community.

*Most People in Savannah drive alone to work, with only 26% of people carpooling, taking transit, walking, biking, or telecommuting for their commute*

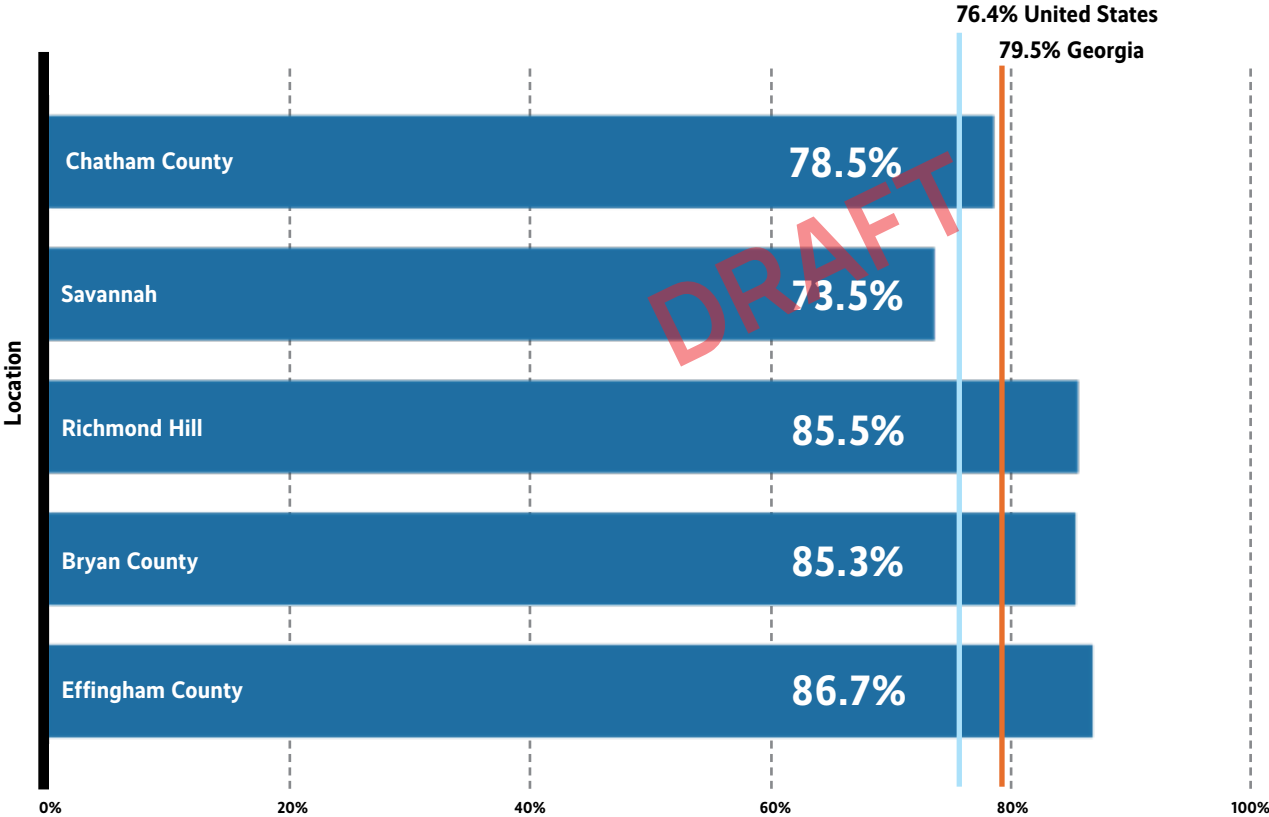


Figure 5.2–Percentage of Commuters Who Drive Alone to Work  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





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# METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a multi-modal plan that is based on the socio-economic development of the Savannah region and is intended to provide efficient transportation services to all the residents in this area. Its multi-modal approach incorporates highway development, transit service, bike/pedestrian improvements, and other related transportation investments.

The MTP identifies the vision, goals and objectives, strategies and projects that promote mobility for both people and goods. The MTP is updated every five years, at which time the MPO reviews, revises, and recalibrates the travel demand model with updated demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Updating the plan also allows for the MPO to incorporate results of any new or ongoing studies and any changes to federal regulations and guidance.

## Mobility 2045

The Mobility 2045 Plan emphasizes a multi-modal performance-based approach to transportation planning to meet the travel demands over the next 26 years, while taking into consideration the region's goals and financial capacity. Traditional transportation planning has focused on how quickly and efficiently vehicles can move from point to point. This approach typically has not considered the impacts on and relationships to land use, community character, and the quality-of-life.

The MPO is committed to wisely investing in the transportation network to address the growth of the area while enhancing mobility for people and goods and ensuring a sustainable future. This commitment is incorporated in Mobility 2045 through a diverse and wide-ranging process, including an assessment of transportation needs in coordination with the future regional growth and anticipated future trends.

## Mobility 2045 Goals

The overall goal of the Mobility 2045 Plan is to continue moving the planning process beyond a singular focus on moving motor vehicles and consider transportation issues from a comprehensive perspective that incorporates community values, needs, land use, and modal alternatives.

*The Mobility 2045 Plan considers transportation issues from a comprehensive perspective that incorporates community values, needs, land use, and modal alternatives*

Mobility 2045 goals and objectives are targeted to ensure that the transportation system helps the region attain its overall vision for the future. Through public involvement, stakeholders and citizens helped identify these goals and objectives, which provide the framework for the provision of a safe, secure, and efficient, multi-modal transportation network that meets the mobility needs of both people and freight (Figure 5.3).





Figure 5.3–Mobility 2045 Goals, CORE MPO



# TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT

Mobility 2045 provides a financially balanced list of projects where the aggregate project costs must not exceed the \$1.8 billion anticipated funding for the 25+ year planning period.

Federal funds provide the largest share of funding for transportation improvements in the CORE MPO Metropolitan Planning Area, followed by State funds. State funds mostly come from Georgia's motor fuel tax and House Bill 170 funds. Transportation funds are also generated by local sources. The local revenues come from local governments' general funds, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), transit sales tax, transit fare box receipts, and transit district tax.

It is estimated there will be approximately \$1.8 billion available in highway funds and \$221 million in transit funds over the life of the plan. Projects totaling over \$670 million are currently under development and will continue to move forward with Mobility 2045, leaving approximately \$1.1 billion (of the \$1.8 billion) to fund new projects.

Projects identified as "needs" but not included in Mobility 2045 are incorporated into the Vision Project List, an unfunded project list. Subsequent plan updates will utilize the Vision Plan for projects to include when funds become available.



## Total Funding Based on Project Type

### Highway (\$1.1 B)

- Roadway Widening (\$470)
- Interchanges (\$417.5)
- New Roadway (\$155.3)

### Preservation, Maintenance & Opt (\$553 M)

- Maintenance (\$232)
- Operations & Road Improvements (\$161)
- Bridges (\$160)

### Non-Highway (\$262 M)

- Transit Priority Projects (FHWA & FTA Funds) (\$240)
- Non-Motorized (\$22.4)



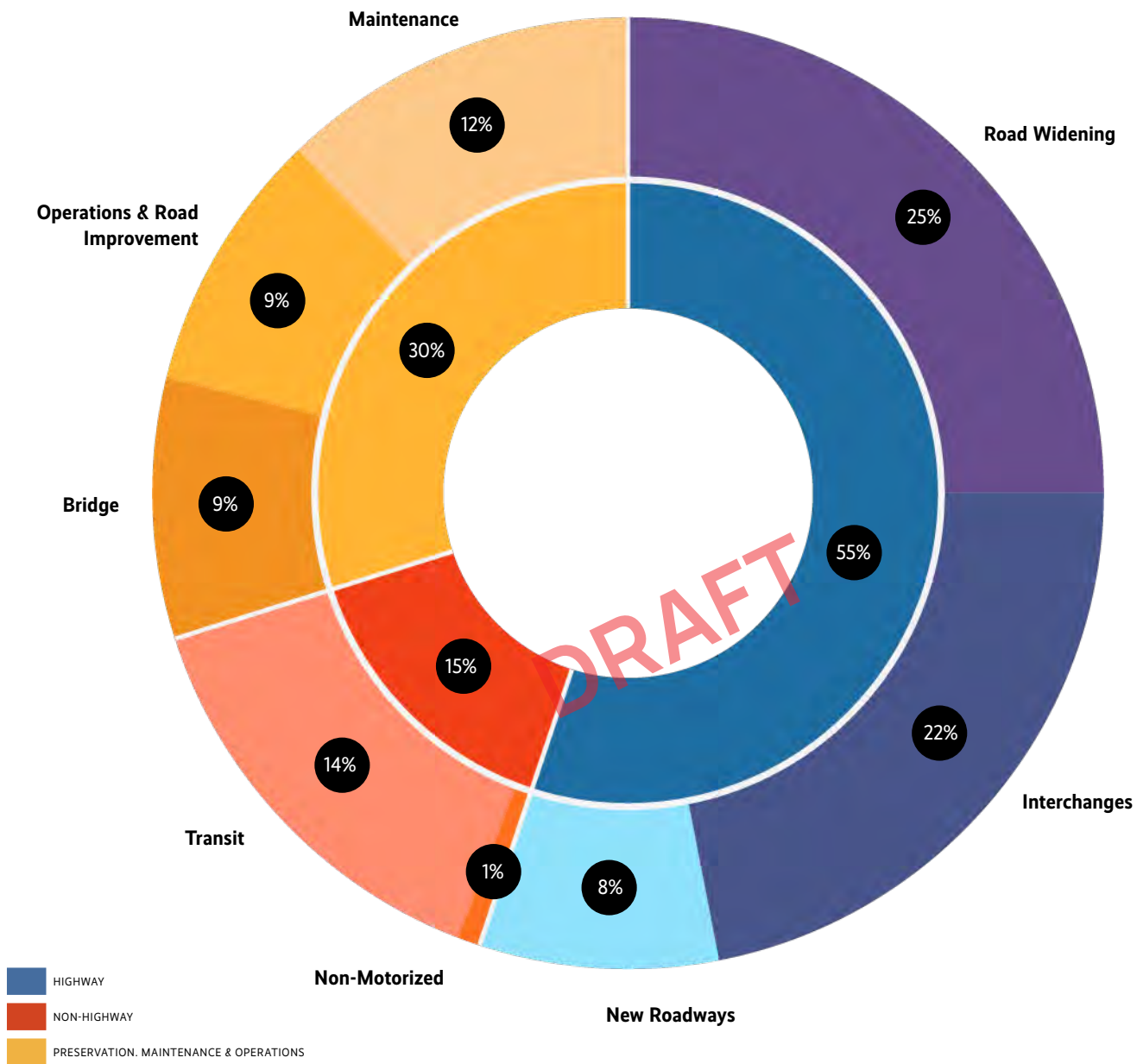


Figure 5.4—Funding Breakdown for Transportation Projects  
Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)



# ROAD NETWORKS

The Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is comprised of Bryan, Chatham, and Effingham Counties and has a total of more than 2,490 miles of roadways. These roadways are categorized by their use and the amount of traffic carried. These categories, as defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are described on the facing page.

Roadways in the region serve multiple purposes and accommodate different types of travel. Roadways range from local streets, which are designed for direct access to homes and businesses, to interstate highways, which are primarily for mobility and long distance travel.

Map 5.2 depicts the functional classification of the roadway network in the Savannah MSA while Map 5.3 shows the roadway classification for Chatham County. Local roads make up almost 70% of the total miles in the area, and collectors make up about 12.7% of the total roadway miles.

The interstates, freeway and arterials, though comprising only 17.28% of the total roadway mileage, carry most of the traffic. The interstates, freeways and principal arterials (about 9.49% of the total roadway mileage) also carry most of the freight traffic in the area.

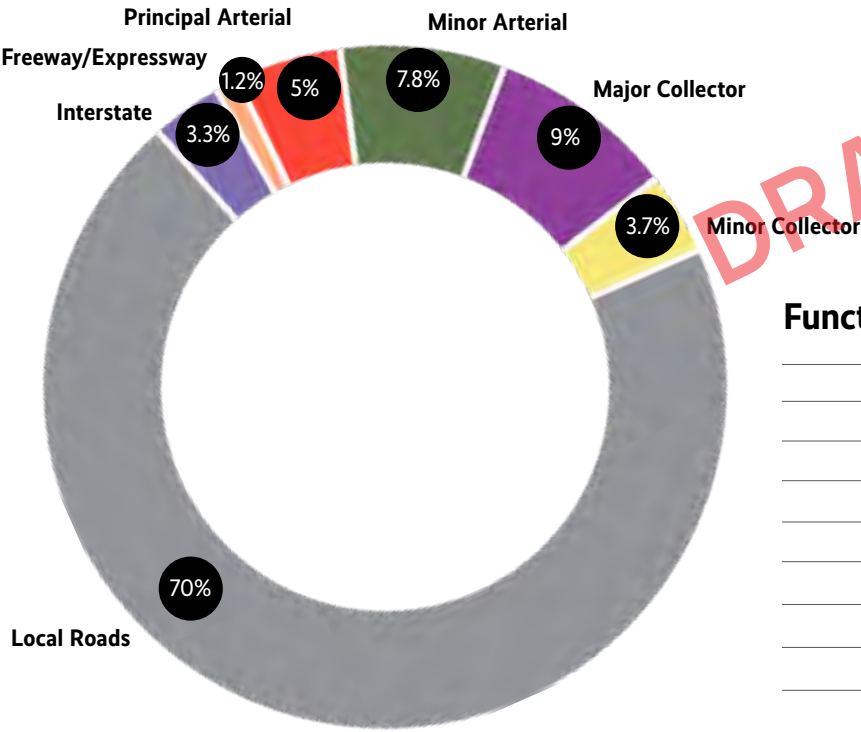


Figure 5.5–Percentage of Roadway in Region by Functional Classification  
Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)

Functional Classification

	Miles
Interstate	97.52
Freeway/Expressway	34.06
Principal Arterial	147.27
Minor Arterial	229.14
Major Collector	263.29
Minor Collector	108.83
Local Roads	2060.44
Total	2940.55

Figure 5.6–Miles of Roadway in Region, by Functional Classification



## DEFINING OUR ROADWAY NETWORK



### Interstate/Freeway

Roads that are fully accessed controlled and are designed to carry large amount of traffic at a high rate of speed; Examples include roadways such as I-16 and Harry Truman Parkway.

### Arterials

Roads that are designed to carry large amounts of traffic at a relatively high speed, often over longer distances. Often some degree of access management is incorporated; examples of arterials include Islands Expressway, SR 204 and U.S. 80.

### Collectors

Roads that are designed to carry less traffic at lower levels of speed for shorter distances. These roadways typically “collect” traffic from the local roadways and provide access to arterials. Examples of collectors include Habersham Street, LaRoche Avenue; and Old Louisville Road.

### Local Roadways

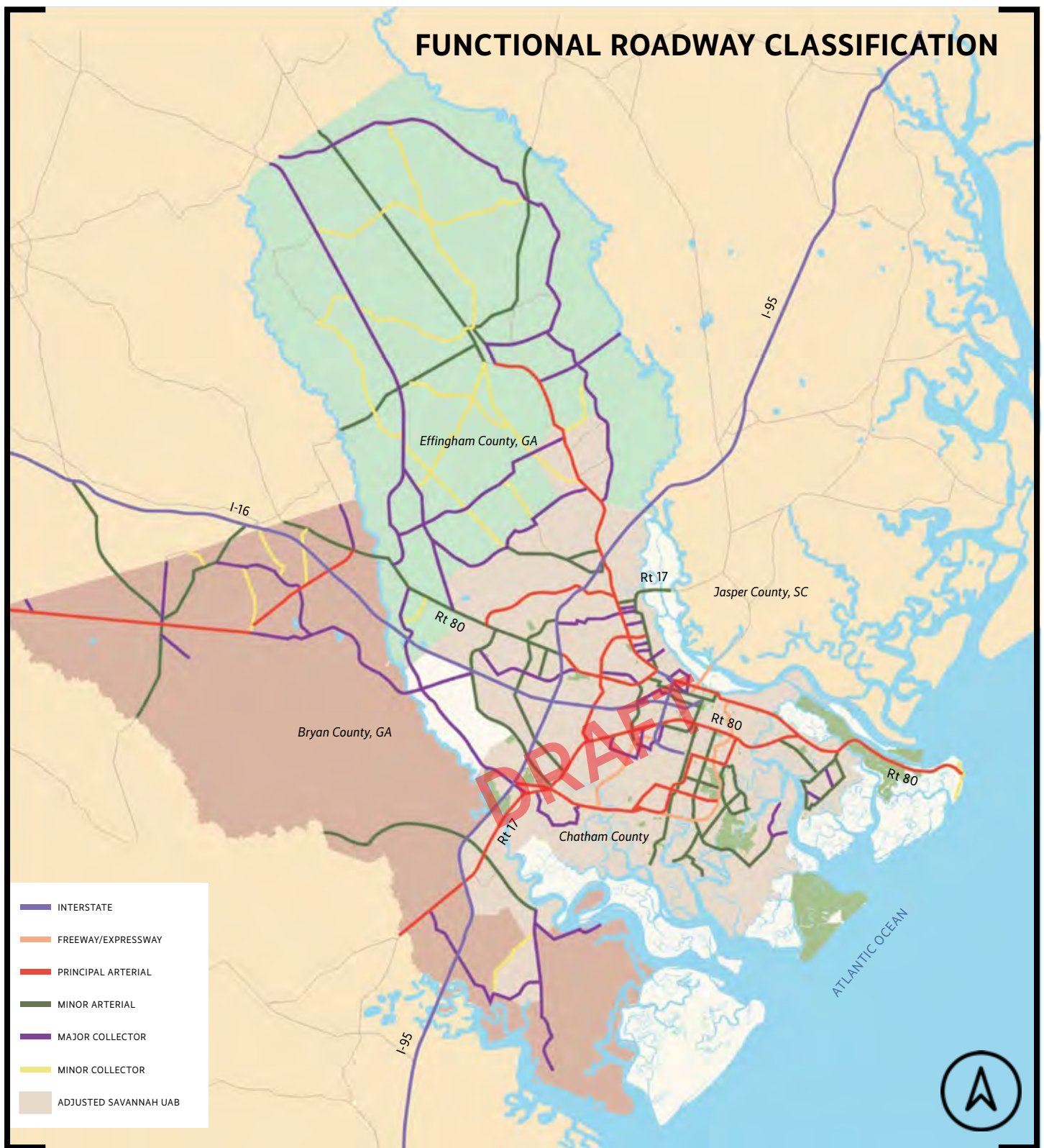
Local roadways are those not otherwise classified and tend to serve short, local trips or connect with the collectors to access the broader roadway network.

—CORE MPO

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Map 5.2–Functional Roadway Classification, Savannah MSA  
Georgia Department of Transportation, 2015





Map 5.3-Functional Roadway Classification, Chatham County  
Georgia Department of Transportation, 2015



## Bridges

Due to the geography of Chatham County, it is important to have a good understanding of bridge conditions. This consideration is necessary for safety, congestion and freight movements performance measures. Map 5.4 shows an inventory and conditions of the bridges in the area.

The status of these bridges are described as structurally deficient (SD) or functionally obsolete (FO). A bridge with fatigue damage may restrict what vehicle types and weights may cross it safely. A bridge with a “posted for load” posting has a weight limit capacity. All (SD) bridges are posted, but not all posted structures are (SD). A bridge is “load posted” when its capacity to carry heavy loads is diminished.

As seen in Map 5.4, the vast majority of bridges are in acceptable conditions with less than 10 deemed as structurally deficient (SD).

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

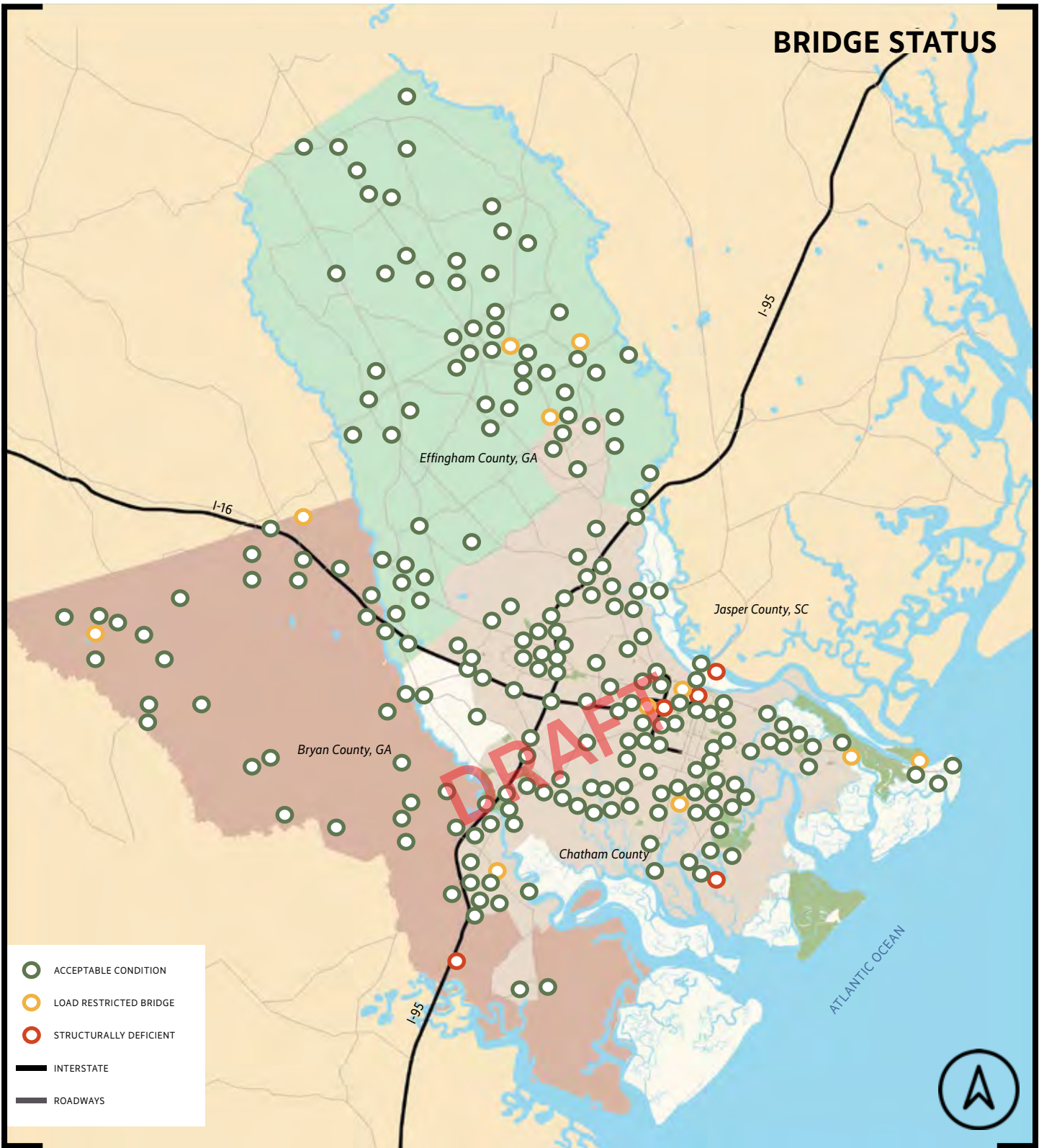
More information on bridges can be found in the U.S. 80 Bridges Study.

See...

<https://www.thempc.org/Core/Studies#gsc.tab=0>







Map 5.4—Bridge Locations and Conditions, Savannah MSA  
 Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)



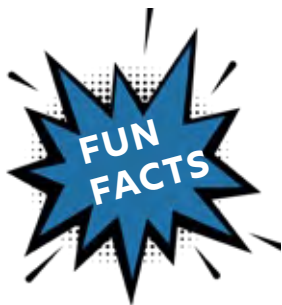


# INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION

## Port of Savannah

Chatham County has two modern, deepwater terminals on the Savannah River that are collectively known as the Port of Savannah: Garden City Terminal and Ocean Terminal. Both facilities are run by the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA), which is a state-level quasi-governmental organization. The Port of Savannah is the largest single container terminal in North America and the fourth busiest container exporter in the United States, moving 4.5 million twenty-foot container units in FY 2019.

Ocean Terminal, Savannah's dedicated breakbulk and Roll-On / Roll-Off facility, covers 200.4 acres and handles forest and solid wood products, steel, automobiles, farm equipment, and heavy-lift cargoes. The Port is a major economic engine for the County, as well as the State of Georgia.



## 4th

Busiest Container Gateway in the Nation

### INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION

The term "Intermodal" is used to describe the mass transportation of freight or human passengers, usually over long distances, and via more than one mode of transportation. There are three types of intermodal facilities are discussed in this section: ports, railroads, and airports.

—CORE MPO

The Port of Savannah is currently in the final phases of the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project. This project supports jobs and commerce throughout the nation, and allows newer, larger freighters to navigate the river with greater flexibility.

As one of the state's largest public employers, the GPA directly employs almost 1,000 trained logistics professionals. The GPA, however, is responsible for generating far more employment throughout the state.

The total economic impact of Georgia's deep water ports on Georgia's economy is \$84 billion. The GPA supports more than 369,000 jobs and approximately \$20.4 billion in personal income annually.

As Port operations grow and intensify, the surrounding transportation infrastructure throughout the County will need to support that growth. Mobility 2045 includes numerous projects that will help support port operations.



## Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport

Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport is a commercial and military-use airport positioned between Savannah, Garden City and Pooler. Owned by the City of Savannah and managed by the Savannah Airport Commission, the airport is also located about eight miles northwest of the Savannah Historic District.

The Airport's passenger terminal is directly accessible to Interstate 95 between Savannah and the city of Pooler. Savannah/Hilton Head International is the chief commercial airport for Savannah, the Coastal Empire region of southeast Georgia and the Lowcountry of South Carolina, where the resort town of Hilton Head accounts for some 40% of total airport passenger traffic.

It is second only to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport as Georgia's busiest commercial airport. The Airport is currently served by Delta (and Delta Connection carrier Shuttle America), JetBlue, United Airlines, American Airlines, Air Canada, Allegiant Air, Frontier, Southwest, Silver Airways and Sun Country Airlines.

In 2017, the first regularly scheduled international flight by a major air carrier launched when Air Canada began service to Toronto. The Airport also serves as world headquarters for Gulfstream Aerospace and the Georgia Air National Guard's 165th Airlift Wing is also based at Savannah/Hilton Head

International.

In 2018, the Airport handled a record 2,799,526 commercial airline passengers (1,395,040 enplanements and 1,404,486 deplanements), a 13.4% increase over 2017. The Airport began a comprehensive capital expansion program with the construction of a new Federal Inspection Station, a terminal apron expansion and the southeast quadrant redevelopment project and began design on a new air cargo complex; all scheduled for completion in the coming years.





## Hunter Army Airfield

Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF) is Chatham County's other major airport facility. Hunter AAF is a sub-installation to nearby Fort Stewart, and provides operational support to the Army's 3d Infantry Division as well as numerous other non-divisional and tenant units. It is estimated that Fort Stewart and Hunter AAF together generate more than \$1 billion annually for the regional economy, with more than 19,500 military personnel stationed at the two bases and more than 3,700 civilian jobs.

Noting that certain types of land uses adjacent to military bases cause conflicts and can result in a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC). Diligent land use planning is one of the primary tools that local government can use to help ensure the continued operation of this important military installation.

Preventing the introduction of incompatible uses adjacent to military bases can help prevent BRAC. Much of the land to the immediate east of Hunter is developed with commercial uses, most of which are compatible with nearby military operations. However, much of the land to the west of Hunter is currently being developed for commercial/industrial uses or is undeveloped requiring careful consideration before development occurs.

### HUNTER ARMY AIRFIELD (HAAF)

As the Army's premier power projection platform on the Atlantic coast, FS/HAAF boasts an excellent road and rail network to airports and major deep water ports along the eastern seaboard, allowing the rapid deployment of assigned forces. HAAF possesses the Army's longest runway and is a primary Aerial Port of Embarkation and Debarkation for worldwide force deployment.

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

More information on Intermodal Transportation can be found in CORE MPO's Freight Transportation Plan...

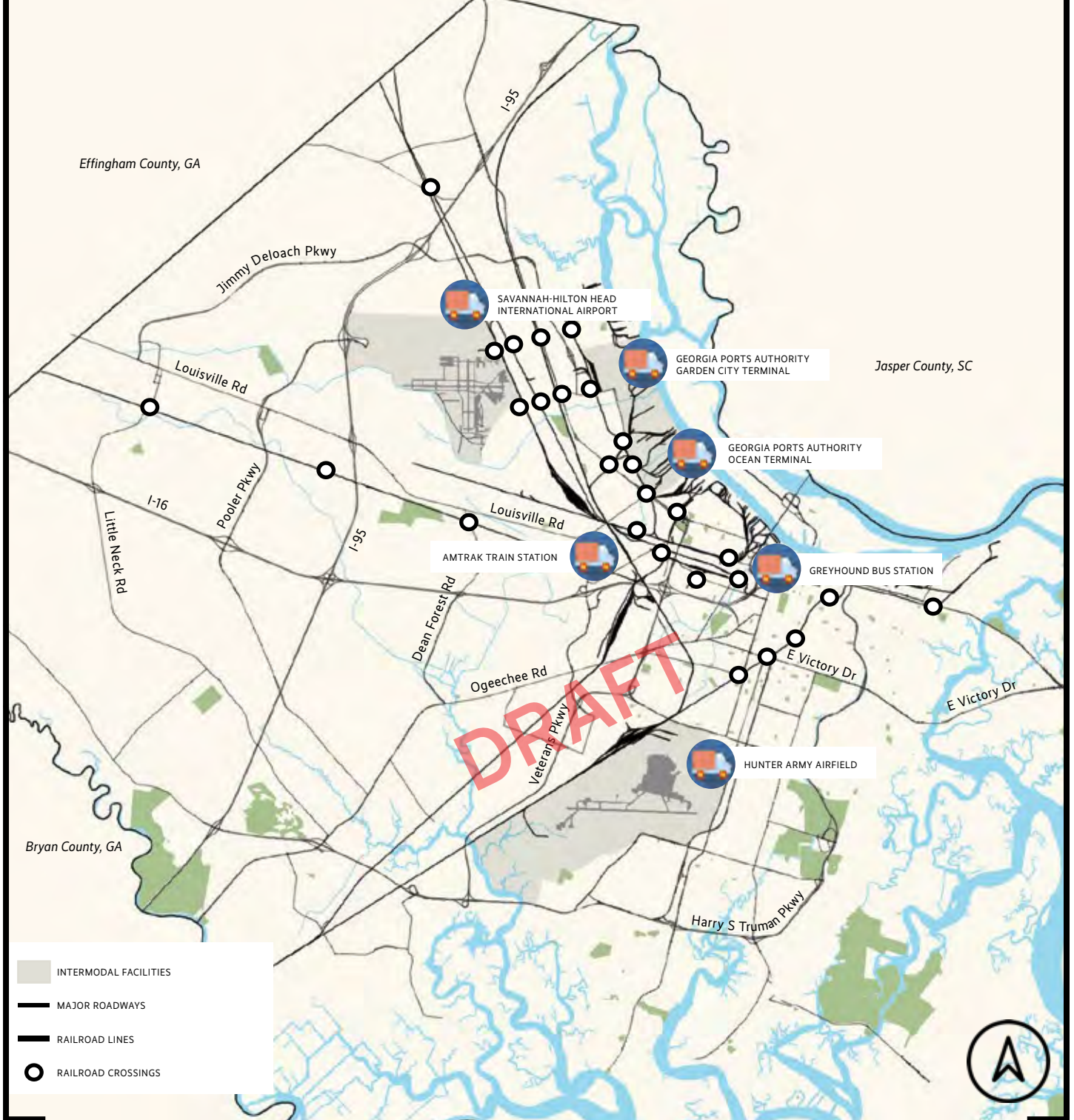
<https://www.thempc.org/docs/lit/corempo/plans/freighttransportation/edfac/policy/phase1.pdf>

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# INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES



Map 5.5—Intermodal Transportation Facilities  
Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)



## **Intercity Passenger**

There are two primary passenger intercity transportation services offered to and from Savannah: Amtrak Rail service and Greyhound Bus service.

## **Passenger Rail**

Amtrak Silver Service provides intercity passenger rail service to and from Savannah at its train station in Savannah. The trains provide direct service between Miami and New York as well as daily connections to the national Amtrak network and connecting bus service to other destinations in the region.

## **Passenger Bus**

Greyhound Bus Lines offer intercity bus service between Savannah and other cities within the United States. The terminal is in Savannah located at the Joe Murray Rivers Jr. Intermodal Transit Center at 610 Oglethorpe Avenue. There are over 30 departures daily at this station. This station also serves as a transit center for the public CAT system.

## **Freight Rail Service**

Although the roadway network is the primary backbone of the freight movement, the region is also served by about 170 miles of rail freight facilities, of which CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern provide the major intermodal services.

The major commodities transported by these rail systems are pulp and paper, furniture or fixtures, tobacco products, rubber and plastics, leather, clay, concrete, glass or stone products, fabricated metal products, non-electrical and electrical machinery, and scrap metals.

## **Railroad Crossing**

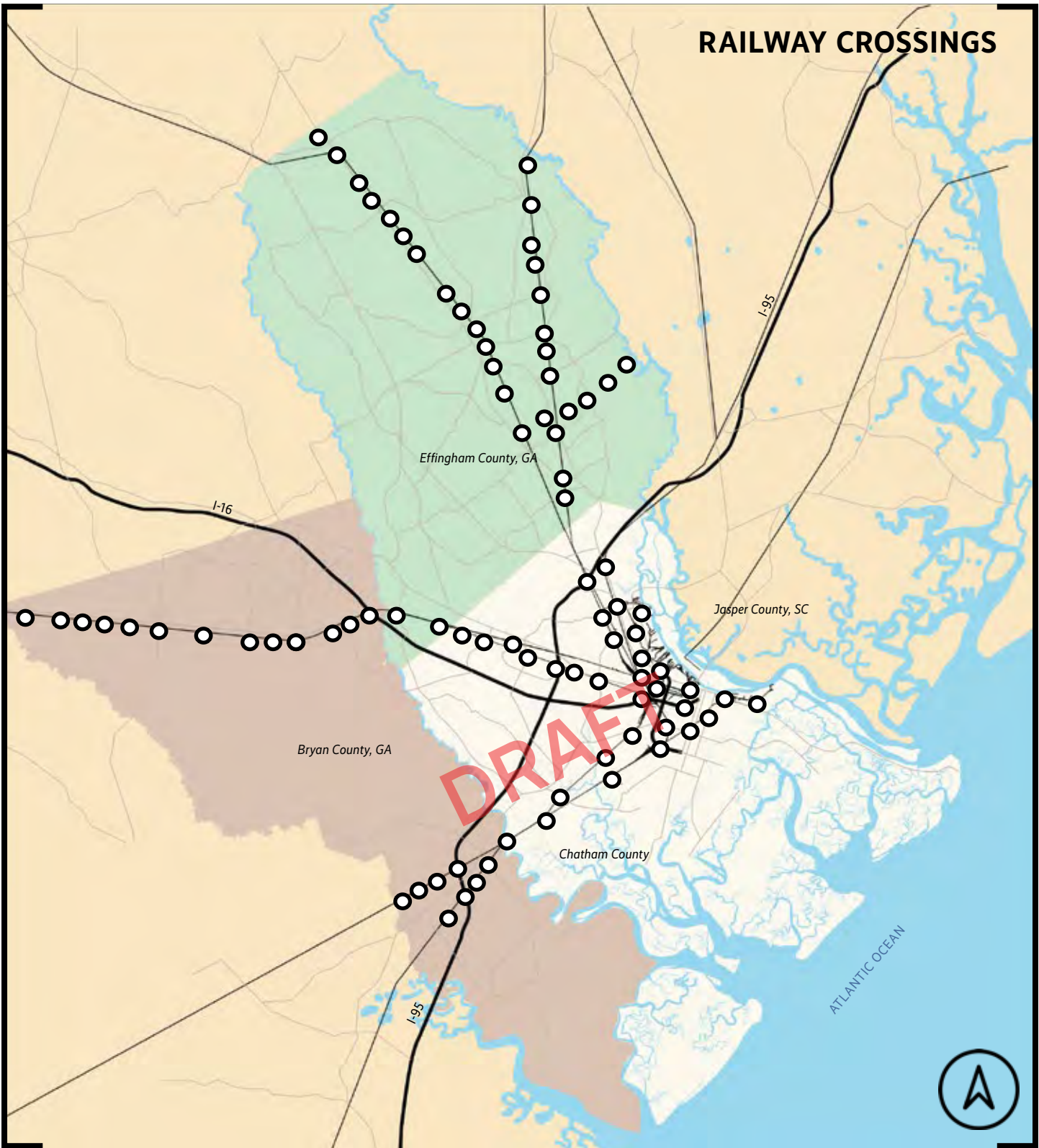
Rail crossings can be at-grade or grade separated. Grade separation refers to a crossing in which the roadway and rail are at different elevations. The presence of railroad crossings (i.e., at-grade) on roadways presents potential safety and/or operational concerns to motor vehicles utilizing such roadways. Map 5.6 shows the railroad crossings in the Chatham County area. There are a total of 317 at-grade crossings.

According to the Federal Railroad Association (FRA) and National Transportation Atlas Database (NTAD) there are 49 at-grade crossings in Bryan County, 199 in Chatham County and 69 in Effingham County.

## **Freight Intensive Land Uses**

The numerous warehouses and distribution centers within Chatham County are an important consideration when discussing intermodal transportation. The Georgia Statewide Freight and Logistics Action Plan included a survey of motor carriers serving the Port that determined their origins and destinations. The results indicated that 63% of trucks had trip origins within Chatham County with the vast majority of those trip origins occurring within a few miles radius of the Port of Savannah. This demonstrates that the vast majority of truck trips from the Port of Savannah are shorter-distance truck trips to/from the warehouse areas nearby to the Port.





Map 5.6-Railway Crossings  
 Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)





# NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

While the automobile is the primary mode of transportation in the area, bicycling and walking are also important modes. The CORE MPO and the other local jurisdictions have a strong commitment to the provision of safe, connected facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. There are several bicycle facilities, both lanes and trails that have been recently completed or are underway. In addition, there is a robust sidewalk network, particularly in the City of Savannah.

The Non-motorized Transportation Plan, as part of Mobility 2045, is a plan that addresses the needs of pedestrians and other self-powered travelers. The Plan:

- Identifies needed improvements for the non-motorized modes
- Identifies areas for amenities to help create a human-scaled environment that encourages use of physically active modes
- Prioritizes improvements and identifies funding opportunities

## Pedestrian Network

CORE MPO adopted the Non-motorized Transportation Plan in 2014 and later updated it in 2020. CORE MPO's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan contains extensive lists of recommended pedestrian and bicycle projects, which may be implemented with or without federal funds. The plan was developed using several methods of public participation: public mapping exercises, public online surveys, and periodic presentations of draft networks and lists.

Map 5.7, from the MPO-adopted plan, shows existing and recommended improvements to the city of Savannah's bicycle facilities.

### NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Non-motorized transportation includes walking or using a wheelchair, bicycling, skating, and using pedicabs.

—CORE MPO



### CHECK OUT CORE MPO'S INTERACTIVE MAP

For more details about individual projects on the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan follow this link...

[www.thempc.org/Core/Bpp#gsc.tab=0](http://www.thempc.org/Core/Bpp#gsc.tab=0)

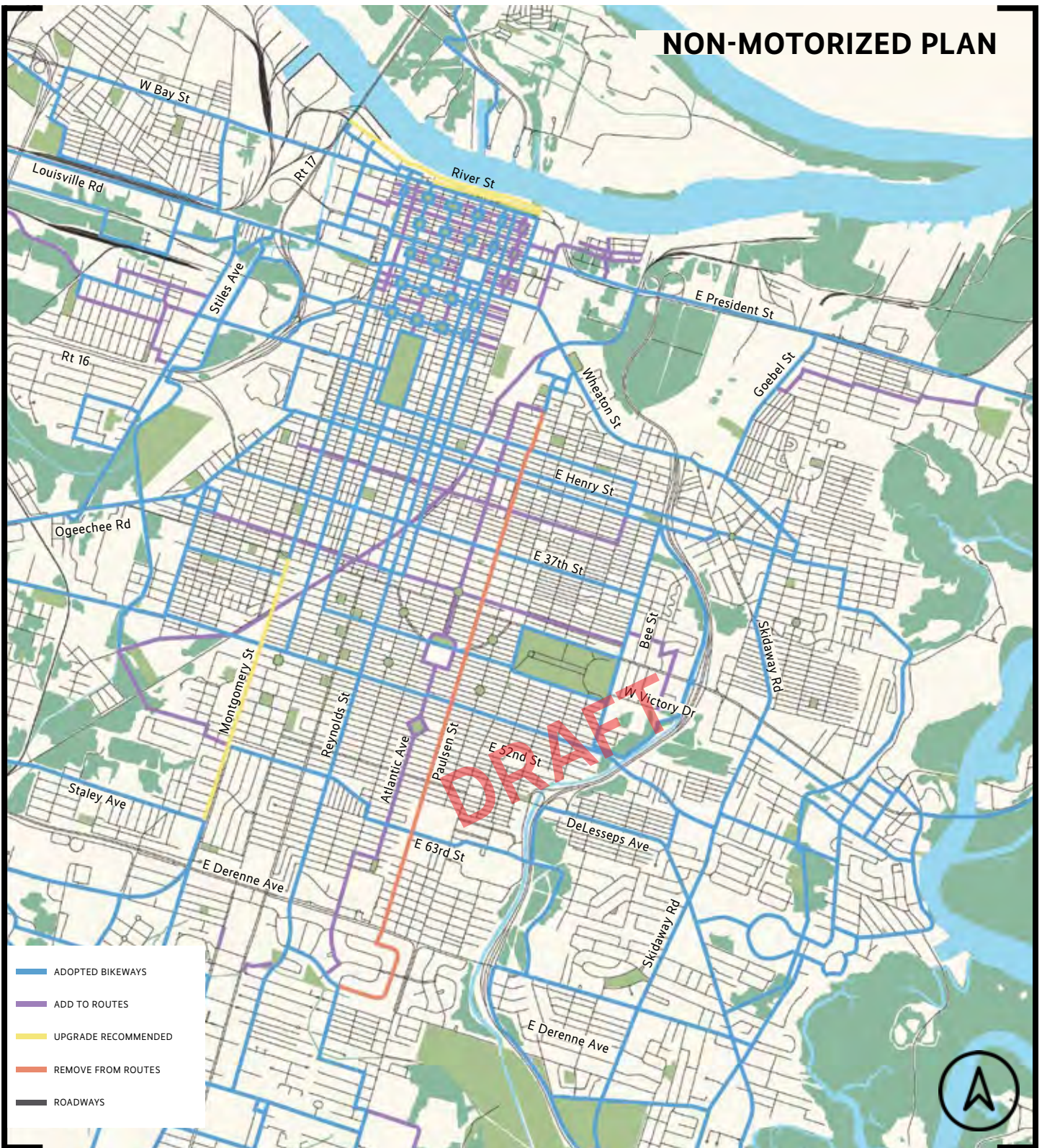
## Priority National & Regional Non-Motorized Projects

Various studies or plans developed by CORE MPO, partner agencies, or informal groups since 2014 have included proposals that affect bicycle and pedestrian networks (e.g., Chatham County Greenways Implementation Plan, Parking Matters, streetscape plans; Downtown Master Plan update). In addition, there are three new routing concepts in the region, Tide to Town, East Coast Greenway, and US1.

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## NON-MOTORIZED PLAN



Map 5.7—Recommended Bicycle Facilities Amendments. 2020  
Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO)



## Tide to Town

Following the lead of many communities across Georgia, Friends of Tide to Town, a coalition of citizens in Savannah, is coordinating an effort to create a branded urban trails system, "Tide to Town." Like Atlanta's Beltline and Carrollton's Greenbelt, Tide to Town will be a network of protected walking and bicycling facilities connecting all of Savannah's neighborhoods.

Tide to Town will link together existing and planned projects, including the Truman Linear Trail and the Springfield Canal Trail. The core of the system is a 30-mile route that encircles the city. Additional miles of connector paths will connect to priority neighborhoods as the system grows. Spur trails to popular destinations will also be added as the system expands outside of the city of Savannah.

The system maximizes existing public rights-of-way along streets and canals, which significantly reduces the cost of implementation. The coalition formed in 2017 to lead the development of Tide to Town. The Tide to Town trail system has quickly become a regional priority and has garnered additional support through the special-purpose local-option sales tax (SPLOST) passed in 2019.



## East Coast Greenway

The 2014 Non-Motorized Plan also includes the Coastal Georgia Greenway that co-locates in many areas with the East Coast Greenway, an envisioned 3,000 mile network of trails spanning from Key West, Florida to Calais, Maine. The East Coast Greenway is designed to transform the 15 states and 450 communities it connects through active and healthy lifestyles, sustainable transportation, community engagement, climate resilience, tourism, and more. The Greenway offers a safe place for bicyclists, walkers, and runners of all ages and abilities to commute, exercise, and visit new destinations.

The non-profit East Coast Greenway Alliance leads the development of the trail network working in collaboration with hundreds of volunteers, partner organizations, and officials at the local, state, regional and national level to continue moving more of the route onto protected paths. The trail system connects people to nature and communities via a safe, accessible Greenway.

The network links towns, attractions, recreational sites, historic and cultural sites, waterways, and natural habitats of the coast. The route consists of 165 miles, 14 of which are protected greenway. The Greenway will follow various north-south routes, including the U.S. Highway 17 corridor, abandoned rail lines, and historic canal corridors, from which visitors can sample coastal imagery.

Most of the Georgia route is still on road, but a growing number of volunteers and municipal officials are working diligently to make an off-road trail a reality.



## United States Bicycle Route System-US1

The United States Bicycle Route System (USBRS) is the national cycling route network of the United States. It consists of interstate long-distance cycling routes that use multiple types of bicycling infrastructure, including off-road paths, bicycle lanes, and low-traffic roads. The USBRS is intended to eventually traverse the entire country.

Communities in Chatham County committed to the US1 cycling route by passing a resolution in support of the national cycling route's development in 2019. The route generally follows along Highway 17, leading through Savannah's historic downtown district, then along Louisville Road before heading out Highway 25.



### GREENWAYS

A greenway is a linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or overland along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, scenic road or other route.



### Plan 2040 Survey

Thirty-percent (30%) of the respondents strongly disagree that the bicycling infrastructure such as bike lanes, sharrows, and bike racks in their community are satisfactory. A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.



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# TRANSIT SYSTEMS

## Chatham Area Transit Authority

Chatham Area Transit (CAT) is the agency responsible for the provision of public transit services to the Savannah area, including fixed route and paratransit. CAT currently operates four ferries, sixty-five fixed route buses, six of which are electric, and forty-two paratransit vehicles. The CAT service area includes unincorporated Chatham County, the city of Savannah and portions of Garden City.

The CAT bus network has served the region since 1987. To provide more efficient and accommodating services, CAT has been working towards a full system redesign with the following near term priorities:

- Vehicle Replacement/Expansion—Fixed Route
- Vehicle Replacement/Expansion—Paratransit
- Intelligent Transit System (ITS)
- Upgrade Farebox and Payment Systems
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure
- Improve Passenger Amenities
- Facility Improvements at Downtown Intermodal Facilities
- Facility Improvements at Gwinnett Street Location
- Initiate Vanpool/Carpool Program
- Initiate Park and & Ride
- Facility Construction for Ferry Maintenance and Ferry Docks

To meet the future needs of the growing community, CAT must look beyond the five-year planning horizon to identify projects and innovations that will provide access and opportunity for all. Some of these long-term projects include:

- Establish region-wide park and ride network
- Work with local partners on projects that incorporate Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles
- Explore partnerships with fixed route cost benefits while serving private industry needs for transportation
- Coordinate with state and local government agencies to implement commuter services through dedicated or limited public access lanes for transit vehicles
- Work with surrounding county agencies to streamline passenger experience across multiple service alternatives
- Complete fleet conversion to low-no emissions vehicles
- Funding for bus replacements secured and incorporated into planning process
- Work with housing and other community partners to develop joint FTA/HUD grant funded projects
- Leverage improved cash position by becoming stronger financial partner for public/private ventures with focus on long term revenue producing opportunities
- Identify and develop satellite facilities to accommodate system growth
- Work with the agency partners to implement fixed guideway services

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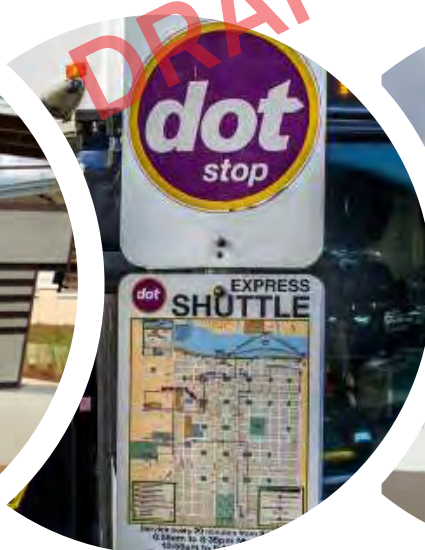


### TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

A transit-oriented development is a type of urban development that maximizes the amount of residential, business and leisure space within walking distance of public transportation.

It promotes a symbiotic relationship between dense, compact urban form and public transport use.

—Transit Oriented Development Institute





## Routes and Facilities

CAT currently operates 16 routes, including one express route, as shown in Figure 5.10. The express route recently discontinued in March of 2021 provided service from the Savannah Hilton Head International Airport to the transit center in downtown Savannah.

CAT also operates three free shuttle services. The Downtown Loop and the Forsyth Loop, which are funded by the City of Savannah, the Senior Circulator, and the Savannah Belles Ferry, a ferry service across the Savannah River between the Savannah Convention and Trade Center to downtown Savannah. See Map 5.9.

The Joe Murray Rivers, Jr. Intermodal Transit Center, a downtown intermodal facility, was completed in 2013 and accommodates both CAT and Greyhound buses.

## Average Annual Passenger per Hour by Route

Route/Year	2013	2014	2015	2017	2018
100X Airport Express	3.8	3.0	3.0	2.7	2.7
3X W. Chatham	18.1	18.3	16.4	16.1	15.1
3BX Augusta	22.6	24.6	25.6	24.3	24.1
4X Barnard	13.2	13.5	12.2	12.1	11.6
6X Town	11.5	12.5	11.6	11.2	10.2
10X E. Savannah	20.2	19.4	19.7	17.9	10.2
11X Candler	10.6	11.8	9.2	7.0	7.0
12X Henry	13.8	12.9	11.6	10.4	11.0
14X Abercorn	27.1	28.8	27.4	25.0	25.0
17X Silk Hope	18.0	19.2	17.6	17.1	17.2
20X Skidaway/Coffee Bluff	3.9	4.7	5.2	4.1	3.9
25X Westlake	19.3	19.6	18.6	17.6	17.1
27X Waters	21.2	22.4	21.8	20.6	20.0
28X Waters	22.5	23.1	22.8	22.2	21.4
29X W. Gwinnett	16.4	16.7	15.0	14.4	14.4
31X Skidaway/Sandfly	26.1	24.6	24.0	22.6	21.4

Figure 5.10–Average Annual Passenger Per Hour by Route, 2013–2018  
Chatham Area Transit 2013–2018

## Ridership

One measure of transit performance is the sheer volume of ridership it attracts. As shown in Figure 5.10, the highest ridership occurs on:

- North–south routes between downtown, the Oglethorpe Mall area, and Georgia Souther University
- Near hospitals, universities and malls, in general
- Augusta Road as far as Brampton Road
- Skidaway Road and Pennsylvania Ave., from DeRenne to E. President Street
- Savannah’s DOT Forsyth Shuttle

CAT continues to evaluate system coverage concepts and analyzes ridership to ensure an efficient and reliable transit system is in place for the community.

### CHECK OUT CAT'S INTERACTIVE MAP

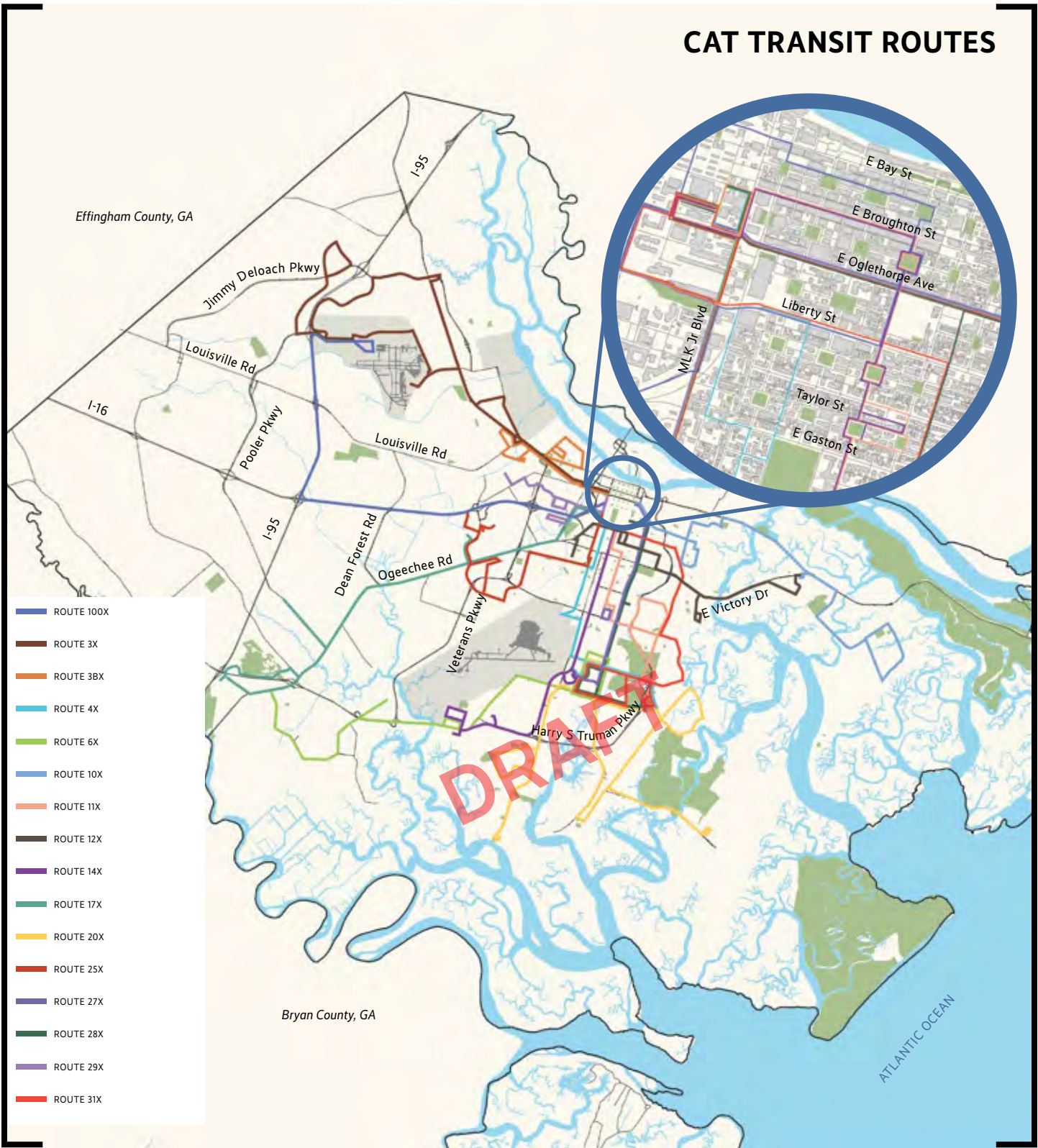
For more details about CAT's Bus System and Routes...

<https://www.catchacat.org/current-schedules/>





CAT TRANSIT ROUTES



Map 5.8-CAT Transit Routes, 2020  
Chatham Area Transit System Map



## Ferry Ridership

The Savannah Belles Ferry provides a water crossing over the Savannah River from downtown Savannah to the international Trade and Convention Center on Hutchinson Island. The ferry service is funded by the Savannah Trade Center and includes four ferries and three docks with a fourth dock planned for construction.

As shown in Figure 5.11, ferry ridership has increased by 44% since 2009. Ridership typically increases due to events and tourism in March with the St. Patrick's Day Parade and continues to be strong until August. Ridership peaks in June and July before slowing down during months of less tourism with the exception of November when there is a jump in ridership for the Rock and Roll Marathon.

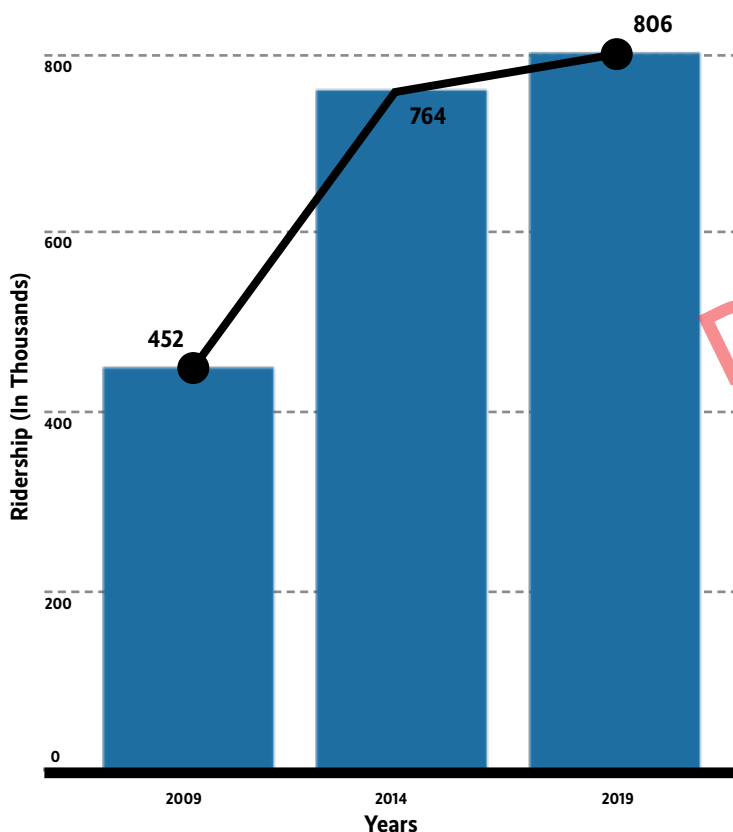


Figure 5.11—Annual Ferry Ridership Savannah Belle  
Chatham Area Transit (CAT)

## Coastal Regional Commission Coaches

The Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) operates the Coastal Regional Coaches which is part of the regional rural public transit program that provides general public transit service in the ten coastal Georgia counties including Bryan, Chatham and Effingham. This demand-response, advance reservation service is available to anyone, for any purpose, and to any destination in the Coastal Region.

The (CRC) service must have either origin or destination outside of the Savannah Urbanized Area (UZA) and it supplements the CAT service which is mostly within the (UZA). CRC also operates a private shuttle service from downtown Savannah to Tybee Island twice a day six days a week.

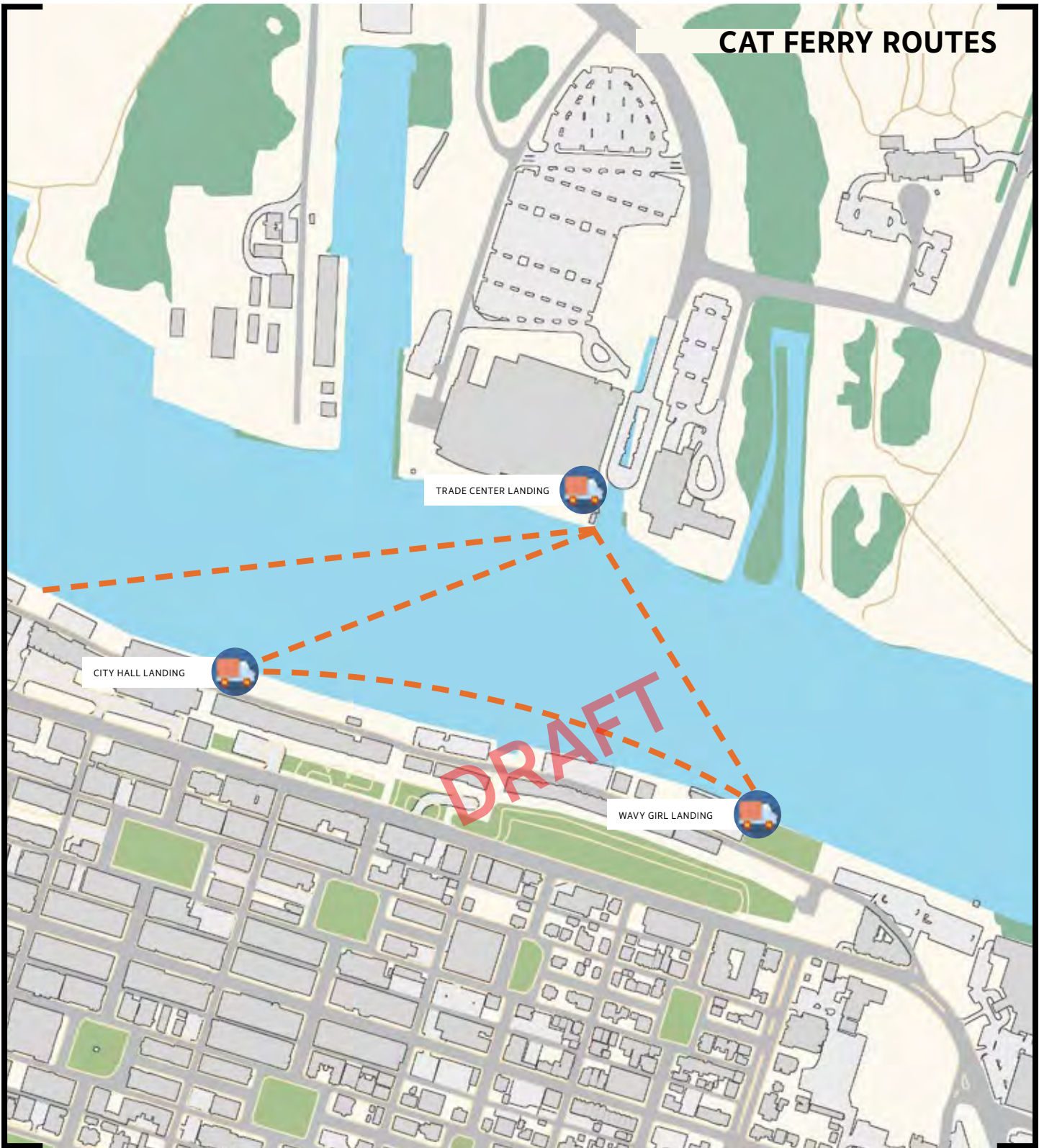
*In 2019, water ferry ridership was up 44% from 2009...*

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Map 5.9-CAT Ferry Routes, 2020  
Chatham Area Transit System Map



# TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGY

Innovations in transportation technology are often born out of three necessities: efficiency, ease, and safety. Chatham County is positioning itself to be at the forefront of this technology.

## Automated Vehicle Technology

Automated Vehicle Technology has made changes to intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and will likely continue to do so in the future. ITS helps advance safety and mobility by integrating communications technology into transportation infrastructure and vehicles. Automated vehicles communicate to other vehicles and infrastructure through ITS. This emerging technology has prompted the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to release a policy statement providing guidance on implementation. The USDOT promotes research and has made recommendations on achieving safe operations during testing. However, predicting any unintended consequences of this emerging technology on the transportation system, infrastructure, and society is difficult.

The automated nature and vehicle-to-vehicle communications could increase capacity of a given number of lanes by reducing average following distance between vehicles (currently needed for human reaction time), while still improving safety. The increased capacity also has negative impacts as it requires more maintenance, installation, and redesign of infrastructure to accommodate the increase and technology required.

## Traffic Operations

Transportation improvements that focus on operations and technology can maintain and even restore the performance of the existing transportation system before extra capacity is needed. The goal is to get the most performance out of existing transportation facilities. Operations projects may enable transportation agencies to “stretch” their funding to benefit more areas and customers.

The benefits of operations projects can include:

- Improved quality of life
- Smoother and more reliable traffic flow
- Improved safety
- Reduced congestion
- Less wasted fuel
- Cleaner air
- Increased economic vitality
- More efficient use of resources (facilities, funding)

Traditionally, congestion issues were primarily addressed by funding major capital projects, such as adding lanes or building new interchanges and roads, to address physical constraints, such as bottlenecks.

Today, transportation agencies are facing trends, such as increased urbanization, that create a growing demand for travel with less funding and space to work with. As a result, communities can no longer build their way out of congestion. Trends seen today include:



- Limited funds–The primary source of federal funding for the U.S. highway system is the federal gas tax, which has not changed since 1993. Since that time, the financial constraints for public agencies have increased
- Inflation–The cost to build roads and bridges has increased
- Fuel efficiency–Vehicles today can travel farther with fewer trips to the gas pump, decreasing revenue. The growing use of electric and plug-in hybrid cars has also reduced the purchase of fuel
- Advances in Technology–Transportation agencies can leverage technology to develop solutions to address congestion issues. However, given the advancement in consumer technologies (smart phones, apps, GPS, etc.), privately owned mobility services (Uber, Lyft, etc.), and the availability of more information, the traveling public expects that the products they use and the technologies they encounter will be "smart" and will ultimately improve their travel experience. They also expect that the information received will be accurate and reliable. This creates an added responsibility for the transportation community to provide the best customer service. Technology will likely have an even greater impact on the transportation network in the future with automation, connectivity, and big data

Operational projects provide agencies with the tools to manage and operate what they already own more efficiently and effectively before making additional infrastructure investments.

The city of Savannah has an operations center that is active primarily during commuting and daylight hours from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. During major events such as the St. Patrick's Day Parade the center is manned 24 hours.

The city currently has access to 109 cameras that can be monitored and also provide recording to review incidents. The city of Savannah and Chatham County also benefit from a regional traffic operations program sponsored by Georgia Department of Transportation.

GDOT has expanded the Regional Traffic Operations program to the Savannah area. This was the agency's first expansion outside the Atlanta area. The Savannah Regional Traffic Operations Program (SRTOP) is managed by GDOT and is a regional effort including the City of Savannah, Chatham County and local jurisdictions. The program provides:

- Weekly AM, Midday, and PM drive-through of a number of corridors to monitor signal timing adjustment needs, congestion, and any other traffic operation deficiencies
- Routine preventative maintenance (PM) activities to ensure all equipment and communications are operational
- Upgraded traffic signal software to current statewide platform. The new software provides more functionality as well as remote monitoring capabilities
- Assisted managing traffic operations during St. Patrick's Day festivities
- Responded to emergency situations that required signal timing adjustments to accommodate shift in traffic patterns
- Monitor operations after storms to ensure signals are operational
- Repaired items, such as, malfunctioning detection (vehicle, pedestrian), pull boxes, replaced cabinets, etc.





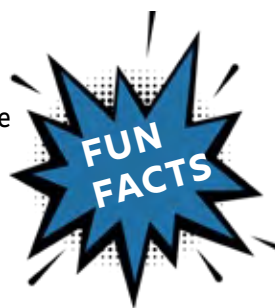
Currently the Savannah Regional Traffic Operations Program (SRTOP) has been implemented on the following corridors:

- SR 25/Ogeechee between Canebreak Road to Stiles Ave
- Chatham Parkway between Police Memorial Drive and I-16/SR 404 and Carl Griffin Drive
- SR 26/Victory Drive between Hopkins Street and River Drive
- Johnny Mercer Boulevard between Whitemarsh Island Drive and Penn Waller Road
- SR 26/US 80/1st Street/Butler Ave between Johnny Mercer Boulevard and 14th Street

The long range expansion of the SRTOP program may include additional locations on Islands Expressway, Bay Street to the western city limits, and the SR 21 corridor to the Chatham County line at Effingham County.

## Autonomous Vehicles/Driverless Cars

Autonomous Vehicles (AV) or Driverless cars are still, an emerging technology, and it is still difficult to determine how they will affect the transportation system and when. The state of Georgia has passed legislation allowing driverless cars to operate in the state. Georgia's new law defines fully autonomous vehicles as a vehicle that can drive itself without any human intervention, provided that it is operating in an environment in which it is designed to drive.



# 3rd

As of 2017, Georgia is the third state to allow for the operation of AVs without human operators present in the vehicle

At this time there are only programs testing AV technology in the Atlanta area. There is potential for the application of automated vehicles in Savannah, especially for the trucking industry. As a large trucking region this could provide Savannah the opportunity to serve as a testing ground for the advancement of this technology.

Another area that is often discussed as potential focus areas are driverless cars with private companies such as Uber or Lyft offering rideshare services.

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## Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) Ride-Hailing/Ride Share

Ridesharing services use apps and websites to connect passengers with drivers to provide rides in their personal vehicles. Companies such as Uber and Lyft currently service the Savannah area. These types of services offer the potential to expand transportation choices, increase carpooling and reduce vehicle miles traveled as well as car ownership. This type of trip is more likely to be made by segments of the population who are comfortable with smart phones, new mobile applications, and who have credit cards. Thus it does not necessarily fill a gap for the traditionally underserved populations (low income, disabled, elderly).

Ridesharing may reduce parking but may increase air pollution because in practice rideshare drivers are may be frequently circulating (similar to taxi operations) in hopes of grabbing a trip assignment via the mobile application. The use of ridesharing may also require infrastructure and streetscape redesign since there will be a higher demand for pick-up and drop-off areas.

There are signs that ridesharing can also compete with public transit and may unfortunately provide an inequitable service due to costs. Smart phone applications are also changing the way parking is managed and used. Additionally, ridesharing services are already exploring the use of driverless cars.





## Bike & Scooter Share

Bike and scooter share systems offer fleets of bicycles and scooters for short term rental within a defined service area. Since the introduction of this shared micromobility system, cities have encountered challenges with maintenance and safety. Some cities have found that without docking stations, scooters and other shared-use electric devices are often abandoned by users on streets, sidewalks, and other public places. The scooters can then become hazards for motorists and pedestrians.

After seeing some of the challenges stemming from the introduction of these devices in other cities, the City of Savannah established guidance and regulation for their use. In 2018 the Savannah City Council approved an ordinance that prohibits any shared mobility device from being placed in the public right-of-way, on public property, or offered for use anywhere in the city. The ordinance is intended to be a short-term response, allowing city Staff and the community to work together to develop a long-term solution. Currently the only micromobility share service in the region is offered exclusively to SCAD students. CAT previously operated a station-based bicycle system but has since discontinued the service.

## SCAD's Bee Line

The Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) enrolls approximately 15,000 students annually. The college currently operates its own separate transit system for SCAD students known as the Bee Line. In addition to the Bee Line transit service, SCAD also operates its own bike share and car share programs for students.



### SHARED MICROMOBILITY

Shared Micromobility refers to any small, human or electric-powered transportation solution such as bikes, e-bikes, scooters, e-scooters or any other small, lightweight vehicle that is being used as a shared resource between multiple users.

—NACTO

Photo Credit: SCAD District



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## Parking

Parking is a challenge for downtown and other dense areas. To address parking challenges, in 2015 and 2016, CORE MPO and the City of Savannah executed a study that resulted in the development of a strategic plan for parking and mobility in Savannah, called Parking Matters. The report evaluated potential needs for capital investment (such as additional garages), transit service revisions, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements for downtown Savannah. The report encourages a “park once” behavior with the intent to reduce auto trips and parking demand within the downtown area.

The study found that garages are often underutilized, because they are not priced competitively with on-street parking. Competition for on-street parking is strong in the core of downtown. The study also showed that on-street parking is more readily available on the periphery of the study area.

As an example of actual capacity, on a Saturday in April 2015, one of the two utilization analyses was performed finding overall utilization levels of on-street and off-street parking combined in the entire study area were at a high of just over 50%, in the 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. time frame. Some recommendations highlighted in the Parking Matters report include:

- Downtown should have a tiered pricing structure of three parking zones, to simplify the variety of rates and time limits
- The core would have a higher price and no time limit; a second zone would have a lower price and no time limit, and a third zone would have no price but time limits between two and four hours
- Mobility and Parking Services should be able to manage the system more dynamically-e.g., change rates in response to data, without needing to get approval from City Council every time
- Revise and rebrand shuttle services to increase utilization of the parking capacity farther from the core
- Improve infrastructure and facilities for walking and biking, in order to reduce desire to drive short distances between multiple downtown destinations
- Revise zoning ordinances to reduce off-street parking requirements, where appropriate, by allowing shared parking, remote parking, and on-street parking credit
- Plan for new garages and other parking expansions as part of future development (e.g. at the edges of downtown)



### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Want to know more about The Parking Matters Parking and Mobility Study?

Check it out at...  
[www.thempc.org/Core/Pm](http://www.thempc.org/Core/Pm)





# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

## Public Health & Mobility

The approach to community and public health spans a number of disciplines including transportation planning especially as it relates to policy and infrastructure.

The considerations for public health in transportation planning should include:

- The promotion of active transportation and ensuring that the necessary facilities are in place
- Developing strategies and projects to enhance the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists
- Reducing the negative impacts on the environment by increasing the number of active transportation users

The CORE MPO recognizes and has implemented strategies and plans to promote a healthy community. The development of non-motorized and thoroughfare plans, the long standing commitment to complete streets and context sensitive design principles, and a focus on accessible transportation for all populations provides the policy framework for the promotion of health considerations in transportation planning.

The region is cognizant of the interconnectedness between land use and public health. Additionally, bus transit systems are often routed through areas challenged with high poverty, unemployment, or low workforce participation rates. As such, programs and policy changes will continue to be implemented to improve public health and economic mobility show commitment to continuing these efforts into the future.

## Climate Change, Sea Level Rise, & Resiliency

A highly discussed topic at the national and regional level is climate change and its effects—which include sea level rise and nuisance flooding—and how to become more resilient to these events. There has been an increased focus at the federal level, with the Federal Highway Administration completing research and providing best practices for MPOs to develop policies and strategies that address impacts from the changing climate.

The exceptionally high tide events that Chatham County has seen impact access to the islands, particularly Tybee Island and U.S. 80, the only roadway connecting the islands to the mainland. The impact of these high tide events can lead to highway closures, essentially cutting off the island's residents for approximately 24 hours at a time.

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### Plan 2040 Survey

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the respondents strongly agree that if it were safer, they would bike/walk to frequent destinations more often.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.



## Stormwater Management

Stormwater has long been a concern in the County due to its negative impacts on water quality in Savannah. Efforts to deal with stormwater impacts as they relate to the transportation system have mainly focused on protecting water quality and road or roadway runoff. Roadways move goods, people, and services but also can carry stormwater runoff pollutants from the vehicles traveling on them and adjacent land—including heavy metals from tires, brakes, and engine wear, and hydrocarbons from lubricating fluids.

If pollutants are not properly managed they can cause water to no longer support its designated uses and biotic communities.

In recent years stormwater management efforts have expanded due to increased frequencies of extreme weather events, resulting in impassible roadways. Efforts are underway to protect transportation systems from the negative impacts of stormwater and to improve resiliency during these extreme events.

## Accommodating Growth Around Transit

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is defined as a moderate-to high-density mix of uses—such as residences, retail shops, offices, and civic and entertainment uses—located within one-half mile of a transit station and designed to support transit use. The typical “station area” is considered to be a half-mile radius, which is an acceptable 10-minute walking distance for most transit users if the area contains a destination, provides dedicated walking routes, and is safe and visually appealing. Within the U.S., TOD is typically associated with rail transit; however, locally, TOD could occur with other fixed guideway transit services, such as bus rapid transit, if they provide facilities and service levels similar to rail transit.

- Implementation of a transit-oriented development ordinance can help ensure that the investments made in regional transit systems would be continual and that related codes and processes would be supported and utilized to their full extent. Benefits of a TOD Ordinance include:
  - » Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
  - » Increasing transit ridership
  - » Increasing pedestrian access
  - » Providing long-term return on investment for landowners
  - » Providing easy access to goods and services for families, seniors, and people with disabilities
  - » Creating vibrant centers and corridors for pedestrians



# TRANSPORTATION GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Support safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation designs and improvements that enhance neighborhood connectivity for all modes of travel including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists*

Investing in transportation improvements that encourage connectivity and multi-modal travel can significantly improve the lives of residents. Making it easier to reach nearby destinations and encouraging alternative modes of transportation reduces the negative environmental and health impacts associated with increased motor vehicle use and the dangers associated with conflicts between motorists and pedestrians/cyclists.

Additionally, creating safe, connected transportation networks provides opportunities for residents to exercise, potentially improving their overall health.

### Objectives:

- Minimize frequency and severity of vehicular accidents
- Minimize conflicts and increase safety for non-motorized users
- Promote projects which aid in hurricane evacuation
- Implement green infrastructure to reduce the region's stormwater impacts from a changing climate
- Eliminate at-grade railroad crossings

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## GOAL 2

*Improve accessibility to employment centers, institutions, commercial corridors, and recreational facilities equitably through multi-modal connections, bikeways, trails and greenways*

Accessibility and connectivity are key components to creating a successful, equitable community for all residents. Accessing jobs, needs, and services is often a challenge for those who are unable to drive or do not have access to a vehicle, such as members of low-income households, individuals with disabilities, and older adults. Such barriers to job and educational opportunities, healthcare services, and healthy food options exacerbate existing inequalities.

The ability to reach everyday destinations safely, reliably, and conveniently through multi-modal connections can significantly improve the overall economic, health, and social well-being of all residents, particularly those with limited resources and limited mobility.

### Objectives:

- Provide local connections by clustering, bus stops, bike infrastructure, placemaking and wayfinding devices in strategic locations along commercial corridors
- Advocate for more frequent and reliable transit service to accommodate additional ridership in more locations
- Promote transportation projects around existing and emerging employment centers, institutions, commercial corridors, and recreational facilities
- Promote and prioritize greenway corridors, trails, and other non-motorized transportation projects





## GOAL 3

*Maintain and preserve transportation infrastructure in a manner that protects unique regional characteristics, quality-of-life, and the environment*

Providing a transportation network that efficiently moves people and products from one location to another is vital to the prosperity of a community; efficiency should not be the sole consideration, however, when designing and locating transportation elements. The placement and design of transportation infrastructure can significantly impact the surrounding environment and community if the unique characteristics of the area are not considered in the planning process.

Savannah and Chatham County are renowned for their historic charm and natural beauty. Protecting the distinctive attributes that distinguish the area from the rest of the country should be equal in priority to cost and efficiency in the decision-making process. Creating a balance between form and function, the natural and built environment, and vehicle and human needs should be the goal in all transportation design.

### Objectives:

- Enforce Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach to help develop transportation projects that serve all users and are compatible with the surroundings
- Monitor vulnerable infrastructure through visual and other inspection methods
- Protect wetlands, historic resources, neighborhoods, recreational facilities and other important resources
- Support infill development along existing infrastructure
- Supporting "Eco-armoring" or utilizing creative methods of protection





## GOAL 4

*Maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure that supports and enables local, regional and global economic vitality and competitiveness, productivity and efficiency*

The ability to transport people and products efficiently makes modern civilization possible. A strong network of transportation infrastructure fosters long term economic growth by making the transportation system more efficient and reliable and can expand economic opportunities beyond local borders, making the region more attractive to businesses and industry that serve global customers.

With a transportation network that covers land, air and sea, Savannah and Chatham County have long served as the regional center for Coastal Georgia and the Lowcountry of South Carolina. In order to continue the role as regional hub, maintenance and enhancement of existing transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of future demands will be key.

### Objectives:

- Develop an intermodal transportation system that sustains economic activity by linking trucking facilities, rail terminals, airports, and seaports with limited access roads
- Encourage the development of a regional multi-modal transportation system as new and emerging growth centers
- Promote projects that provide the maximum travel benefit per cost
- Minimize work trip congestion





# HOUSING ELEMENT

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06





# HOUSING

## Introduction

The Housing Element of Plan 2040 is an inventory and assessment of the community's housing stock as well as a discussion of housing issues and associated needs within unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. This chapter identifies major housing challenges, outlines current housing strategies and programs, determines future housing needs, and sets out goals and objectives for meeting these needs and managing housing development in the future.

The range of housing issues addressed in this element include the demand for various housing types, housing affordability, housing resilience to changing climatic conditions, homelessness, special needs housing, and Savannah's historic housing inventory. The Housing Element also outlines current housing strategies and programs and highlights the need for coordination of housing policies at the local, state and federal levels in order to ensure that every resident has a safe and decent place to live within a satisfactory environment.



# THE STATE OF HOUSING

## Housing Occupancy

As more people have moved into the Chatham County area, the number of housing units has been increased along with the population.

In unincorporated Chatham County, there are an estimated 40,000 housing units according to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, with an occupancy rate of over 90% and a vacancy rate of 9%. In the city of Savannah, there are an estimated 62,000 housing units, 85.5% of which are occupied while 14.5% are vacant. The percentage of occupied and vacant housing units has remained consistent since the year 2000.

As shown in Figure 6.1, the number of housing units in unincorporated Chatham has been consistently increasing since 2010, while the number of housing units in the city of Savannah has remained roughly the same.

## Number of Housing Units, 2010–2018

	2010	2014	2018
Unincorporated Chatham	36,149	38,128	40,159
City of Savannah	62,303	61,753	62,236

Figure 6.1–Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah

U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## 3-Year Housing Market Demand Forecast

	Sales Units	Rental Units
Savannah HMA	Total Demand	3,875
	Under Construction	950

Figure 6.2–Market Demand, Savannah HMA

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 2019

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# FOUR MAJOR HOUSING PROBLEMS

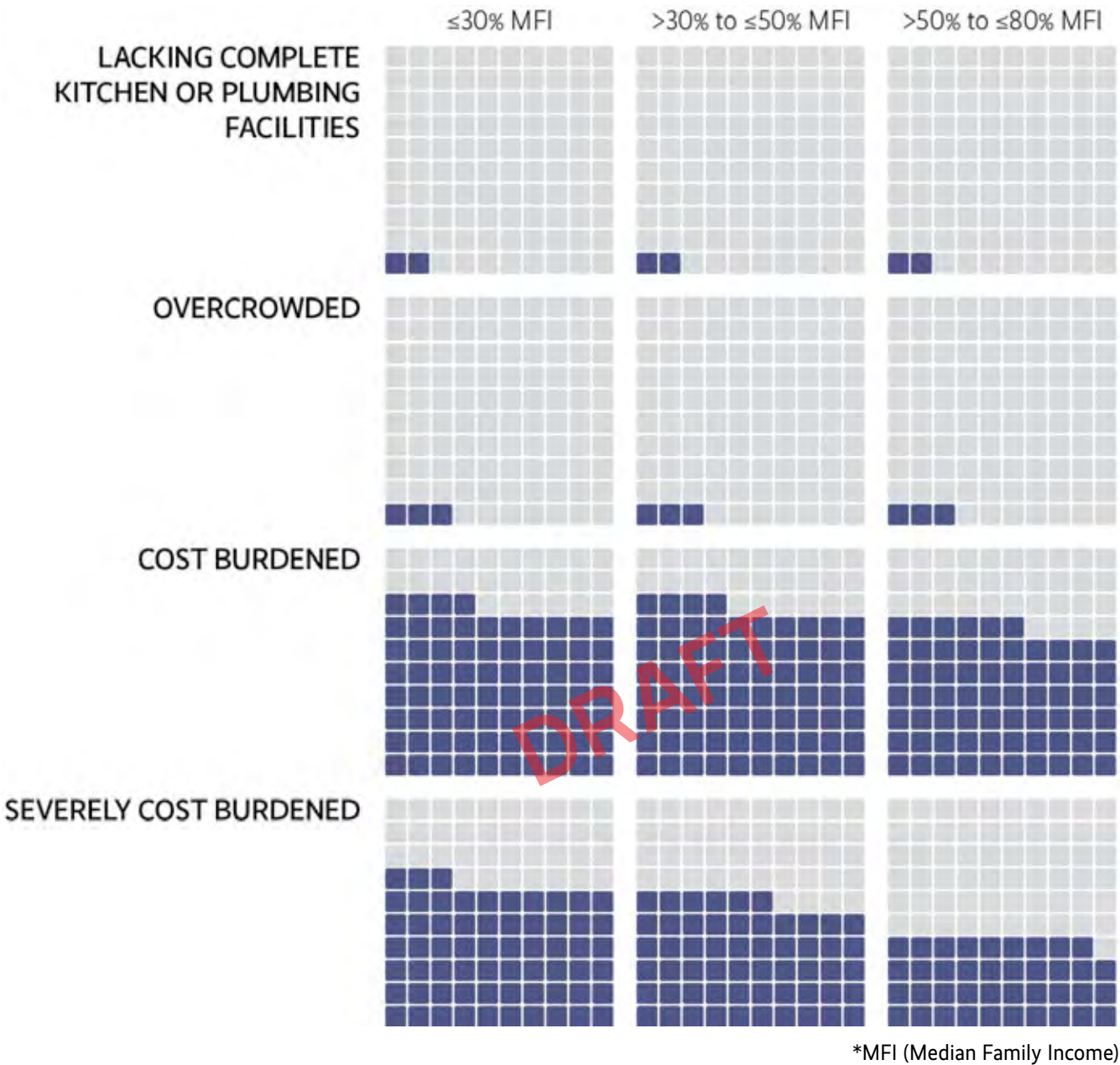


Figure 6.3—Four Major Housing Problems, Chatham County  
 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy



### Vacancy Rates

According to the 2014–2018 5-year ACS, rental vacancy much higher than homeowner vacancy in both unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah. Vacancy rates can be indicative of housing availability and affordability. For example, rental vacancy rates could indicate a lack of affordable rental units in the area. It is necessary to reduce vacancy, as vacant homes are at a higher risk of dilapidation.

As demonstrated in Figure 6.4, the vacancy rate has been decreasing for both homeowner and rental units since 2010.

### Vacancy Rates, 2010–2018

	2010	2014	2018
Homeowner	5.5%	3.5%	3.2%
Rental	10.4%	8.0%	7.2%

Figure 6.4–Housing Vacancy, City of Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### Housing Occupancy, 2018

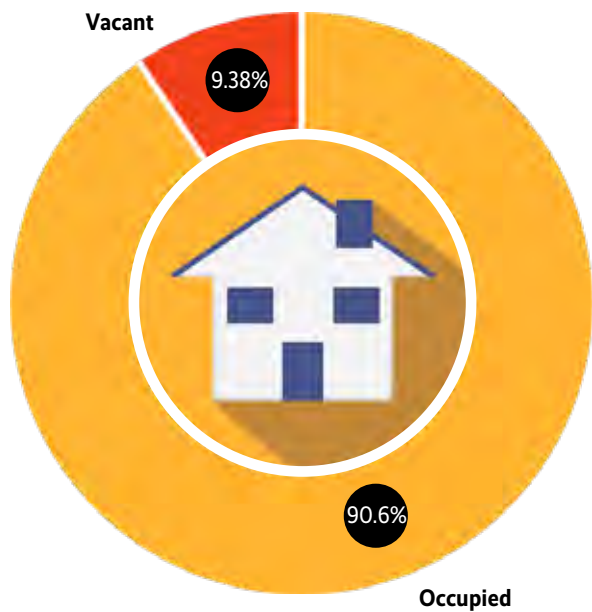


Figure 6.5–Housing Occupancy, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

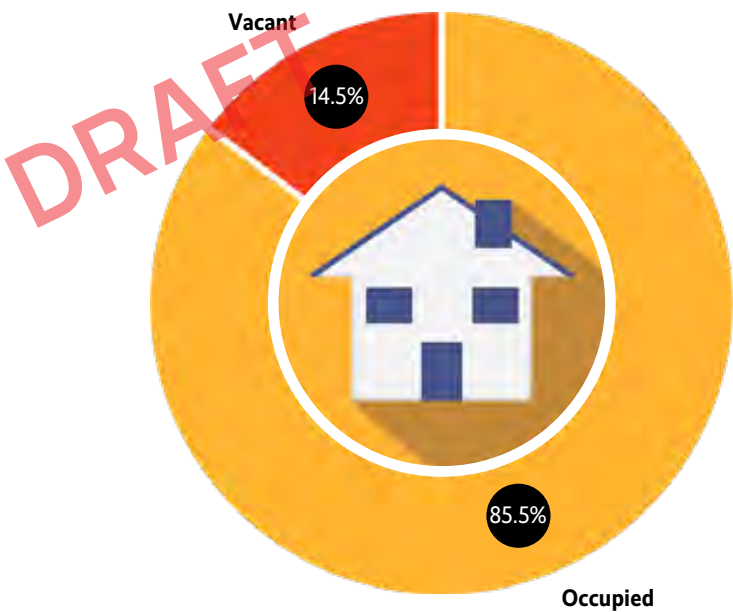


Figure 6.6–Housing Occupancy, City of Savannah





### Plan 2040 Survey

The MPC's Plan 2040 survey asked in your opinion, "Do we need more, less or about the same of the following housing types?"

- Single-family
- Townhouses
- Apartments
- Duplexes
- Accessory dwelling units
- Mobile homes
- Transitional housing
- Nursing or retirement homes

Forty-four percent (44%) of the respondents felt that there needed to be more single-family housing, with only 13% of respondents selecting more apartment housing.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.





## Housing Types

Maintaining a mix of housing types is one of the most important housing strategies. It helps to boost a socially and economically diverse community by providing viable housing options for residents across the full spectrum of personal needs, preference and economic buying power.

The majority of houses in the county are single-family detached homes. This is similar for both unincorporated Chatham County in which approximately 72% of housing is single-family detached and to a lesser extent, the city of Savannah, in which 56.8% of housing is single-family detached. In both jurisdictions, there are varying amounts of other forms of housing, such as attached single-family, multi-family, mobile homes, and liveaboard boats.

Two primary factors influence the different types of housing units built in unincorporated Chatham County: zoning, which specifies the types and density of units developers are permitted to build, and market demand, which dictates the types of housing units people want to buy. Currently, the vast majority of residential areas in unincorporated Chatham and Savannah are zoned for single-family, detached housing.

The future market demand for specific types of units will depend upon the future demographic changes, wants, and needs of the various population groups. Additionally, speculation is a housing market driver, as real-estate investors can create fluctuations in home prices and demands by guessing on the future value of certain homes based on their investments.

As shown in Figure 6.7, while the majority of houses are single-family in unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah, there is a higher variety of housing available in the city of Savannah compared with unincorporated Chatham County.

*In unincorporated Chatham County, almost 72% of all housing is single-family detached, while in the city of Savannah only 57% is single-family detached*  
—American Community Survey, 2018

## Housing Types, 2014–2018

Housing Type	UNINCORPORATED CHATHAM		CITY OF SAVANNAH	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
1-unit, detached	28,783	71.67	35,381	56.85
1-unit, attached	1,577	3.93	3,483	5.60
2 units	322	0.80	4,343	6.98
3 or 4 units	1,011	2.52	5,528	8.88
5 to 9 units	2,114	5.26	4,806	7.72
10 to 19 units	2,362	5.88	3,169	5.09
20 or more units	1,759	4.38	4,453	7.16
Mobile home	2,213	5.51	1,042	1.67
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	18	0.41	31	0.05
Total	40,159	100%	62,236	100%

Figure 6.7–Housing Types, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Age of Housing

In unincorporated Chatham County, the majority of people live in a house built between 1990 and 1999. In contrast, the age of housing units in the city of Savannah varies more widely, with considerably more people living in older housing compared with residents of unincorporated Chatham County. For example, a large number of residents in Savannah live in housing built before 1940 (17%) while just 2% of residents in unincorporated Chatham live in housing that old.

The age of Savannah's housing stock reflects the area's early development and commitment to preserving historic homes. According to the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) data, around 47% of housing in unincorporated Chatham and 76% of housing in the city of Savannah are over the age of 30. Homes that are more than 30 years old is generally at the greatest risk of being substandard and/or subject to deterioration associated with improper maintenance and repair.

The highest rehabilitation need usually occurs in communities with a concentration of the following characteristics: an older housing stock; non-subsidized rental housing; and low-income households. All of these characteristics could apply to the city of Savannah at one point in time.

Generally speaking, the majority of units that are 50 years old or older are concentrated in Savannah's various historic neighborhoods (see additional discussion in the Historic Resources Element).

*Around 47% of housing in unincorporated Chatham and 76% of housing in the city of Savannah are over the age of 30*  
—American Community Survey, 2018



## Year Housing Structure Built, 2014–2018

Year Built	UNINCORPORATED CHATHAM		CITY OF SAVANNAH	
	Number	%	Number	%
Built 2014 or later	514	1.28	1,045	1.68
Built 2010 to 2013	1,231	3.07	2,337	3.76
Built 2000 to 2009	9,670	24.08	6,931	11.14
Built 1990 to 1999	9,840	24.50	4,489	7.21
Built 1980 to 1989	8,323	20.73	6,074	9.76
Built 1970 to 1979	5,588	13.91	8,059	12.95
Built 1960 to 1969	2,063	5.14	8,261	13.27
Built 1950 to 1959	1,683	4.19	9,120	14.65
Built 1940 to 1949	385	0.96	5,325	8.65
Built 1939 or Earlier	862	2.15	10,595	17.02
Total	40,159	100%	62,236	100%

Figure 6.8—Age of Housing Structure, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





## Housing Tenure

In unincorporated Chatham County, 68% of all households are owner-occupied. This is a substantially higher prevalence of owner occupancy than in the city of Savannah (44%). Over the last 30 years, owner occupancy rates countywide, as well as in the city of Savannah, and unincorporated areas have remained fairly stable, with slight decreases over time. Prior to the year 2000, the majority of homes in Savannah were owner-occupied, and now that trend has essentially flipped with more homes and units being rented than owned.

The construction of numerous apartment complexes during the 1980s pushed the percentage of renter-occupied units up with the renter-occupancy rate steadily increasing ever since. Figure 6.9 summarizes housing occupancy in unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah.

## Housing Tenure, 2010–2018

	UNINCORPORATED CHATHAM		
	2010	2014	2018
Owner-Occupied	74.20%	70.79%	68.34%
Renter-Occupied	25.80%	29.21%	31.66%

	CITY OF SAVANNAH		
	2010	2014	2018
Owner-Occupied	47.43%	45.01%	43.89%
Renter-Occupied	52.57%	54.99%	56.11%

Figure 6.9–Housing Tenure, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Housing Tenure, 2014–2018

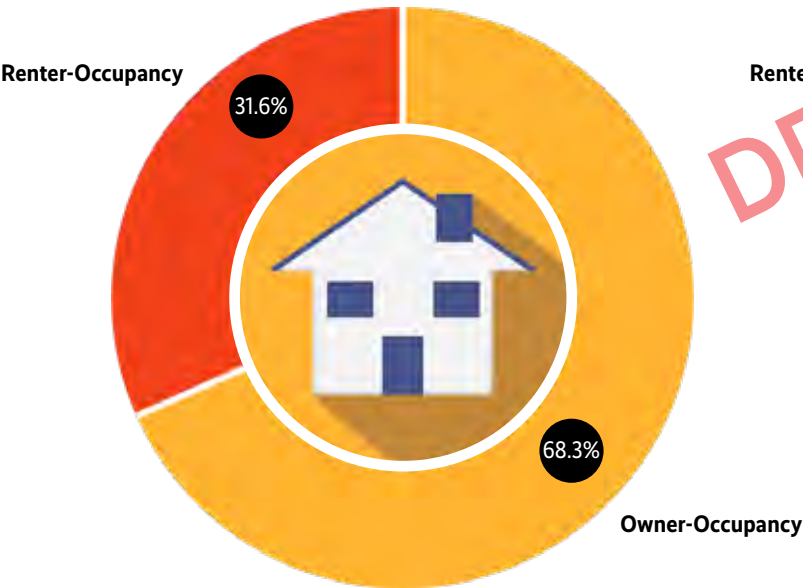


Figure 6.10–Housing Tenure, Unincorporated Chatham  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

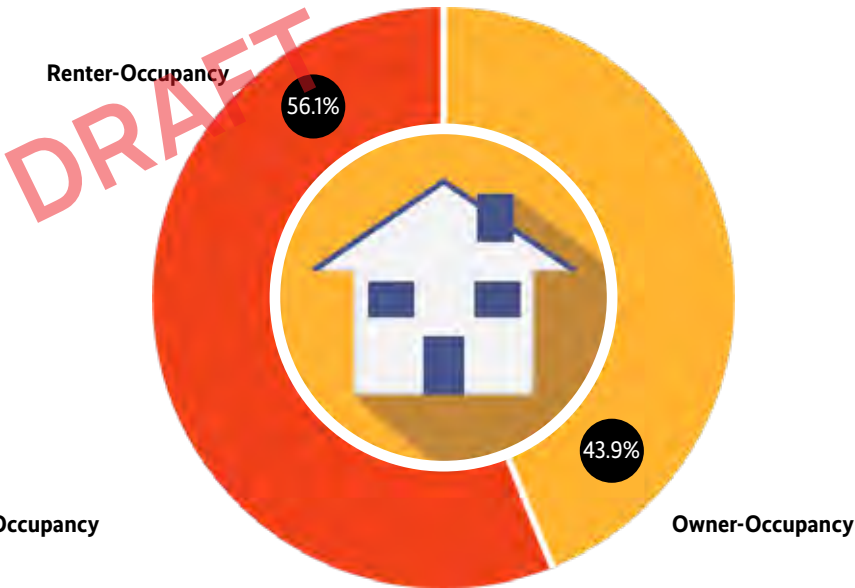


Figure 6.11–Housing Tenure, City of Savannah



### Households by Income Distribution and Tenure

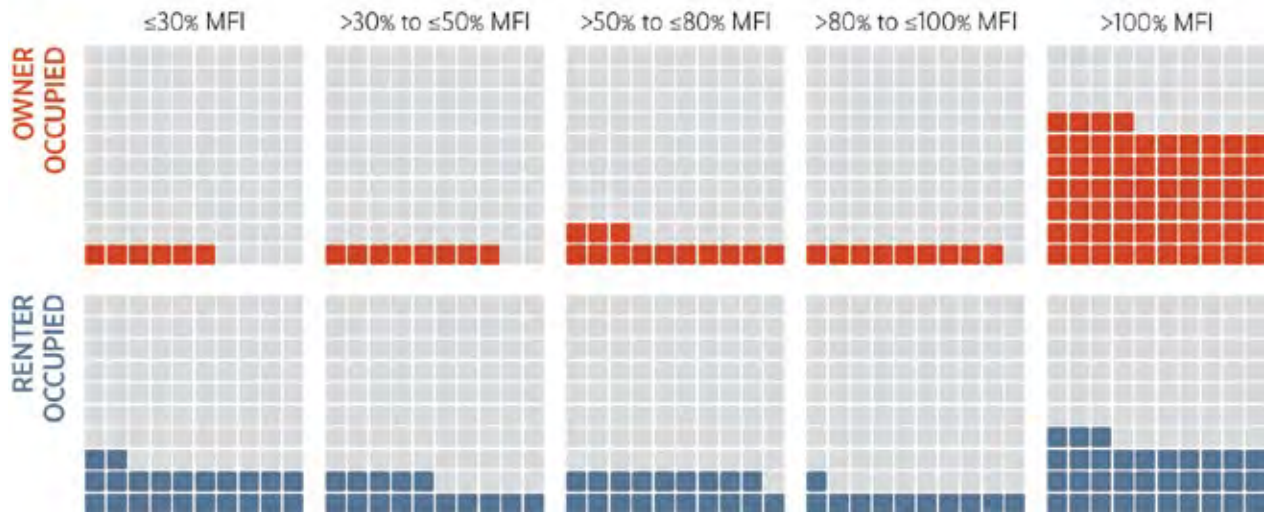


Figure 6.12–Housing Income & Tenure Distribution, Chatham County  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy

### Households with at least 1 of the 4 housing problems



Figure 6.13–Housing Income & Tenure Distribution, Chatham County  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy



## Housing Values

Overall, home values have been steadily increasing in both unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah alike for the past two decades. In 2000, 27% of homes in unincorporated Chatham County had a value between \$50,000 to \$99,999 the percentage of housing stock in this range has since dropped dramatically, to less than 6%. As of 2018, the majority of homes in unincorporated Chatham County are now valued between \$200,000 to \$299,999, as shown in Figure 6.14.

### Home Values, 2000–2018

	UNINCORPORATED CHATHAM			
	2000		2014–2018	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
Less than \$50,000	292	1.51	1,154	4.63
\$50,000 to \$99,999	5,198	27.12	1,414	5.69
\$100,000 to \$149,999	5,123	26.73	3,430	13.79
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2,810	14.66	4,078	16.40
\$200,000 to \$299,999	2,603	13.58	5,501	22.12
\$300,000 to \$499,999	2,099	10.95	5,138	20.66
\$500,000 to \$999,999	882	4.60	3,466	13.94
\$1,000,000 or More	162	0.85	690	2.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,169</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24,871</b>	<b>100%</b>

	CITY OF SAVANNAH			
	2000		2014–2018	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
Less than \$50,000	4,177	17.79	1,513	6.48
\$50,000 to \$99,999	12,698	54.09	5,024	21.52
\$100,000 to \$149,999	3,928	16.73	4,964	21.3
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,240	5.28	4,462	19.11
\$200,000 to \$299,999	737	3.14	4,089	17.51
\$300,000 to \$499,999	457	1.95	2,232	9.56
\$500,000 to \$999,999	185	0.79	815	3.46
\$1,000,000 or More	53	0.23	247	1.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,475</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>23,346</b>	<b>100%</b>

In Savannah, the majority of houses (54%) were valued between \$50,000 to \$99,999 that percentage has since decreased to 21.5% of housing units. Median home values increased 93% since the year 2000, from a median of \$78,500 to \$151,500.

The increase in home values is incredibly beneficial as it increases the wealth of homeowners. However, there are some drawbacks. For example, as home values increase, those trying to buy a home, especially first-time home buyers, may not be able to afford the ever-increasing pricing of housing. Additionally, rent is simultaneously rising, so, many people may not be able to afford to buy or rent a home.

*Median home values in the city of Savannah have increased 93% since the year 2000 —American Community Survey, 2018*



Figure 6.14–Housing Values, Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



## Monthly Mortgage

In unincorporated Chatham, close to one-third of the population pays \$1,000 to \$1,499 in monthly mortgage payments, while another third pay \$2,000 or more. Monthly mortgage costs have generally been increasing since 2000.

The median monthly mortgage in the city of Savannah has continually increased over the last two decades, rising 51% since 2000, from \$867 per month to \$1,312 per month.

## Monthly Rent

Monthly rent in unincorporated Chatham has changed over time, with more people paying higher rent costs since 2000. The majority of renters in Savannah currently pay \$1,000 to \$1,499 in monthly rent.

*Median gross rent is \$977 in the city of Savannah, representing a 73% increase since 2000*

*—American Community Survey, 2018*



## Monthly Mortgage Costs, 2000–2018

	UNINCORPORATED CHATHAM			
	2000		2014–2018	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
Less than \$500	232	1.61	58	0.36
\$500 to \$999	5,275	36.67	2,197	13.46
\$1,000 to \$1,499	4,816	33.47	5,170	31.67
\$1,500 to \$1,999	2,010	13.97	3,837	23.51
\$2,000 or More	2,054	14.28	5,062	31.00
Total	14,387	100%	16,324	100%

	CITY OF SAVANNAH			
	2000		2014–2018	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
Less than \$500	1,543	10.20	3,856	20.59
\$500 to \$999	8,020	53.02	3,672	19.60
\$1,000 to \$1,499	4,035	26.68	5,382	28.74
\$1,500 to \$1,999	1,032	6.83	3,571	19.07
\$2,000 or More	495	3.27	2,248	12.00
Total	15,125	100%	18,729	100%

Figure 6.15—Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Monthly Rent Costs, 2000–2018

	UNINCORPORATED CHATHAM			
	2000		2014–2018	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
Less than \$500	958	14.13	580	5.29
\$500 to \$999	4,676	68.96	3,150	28.71
\$1,000 to \$1,499	579	8.54	5,153	46.96
\$1,500 to More	568	8.38	2,090	19.05
Total	6,781	100%	10,973	100%

	CITY OF SAVANNAH			
	2000		2014–2018	
	Number of Units	%	Number of Units	%
Less than \$500	9,494	39.00	3,067	10.81
\$500 to \$999	13,582	55.80	11,945	42.12
\$1,000 to \$1,499	832	3.43	10,481	36.96
\$1,500 to More	431	1.77	2,867	10.11
Total	24,339	100%	28,360	100%

Figure 6.16—Unincorporated Chatham & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





# AGE & HOUSING DEMAND

## Aging

A major factor in estimating the need for various housing types available is the age distribution of the population. Age is a major factor in housing choice because populations within a given age group tend to share various characteristics. Individuals in their early twenties are more likely to rent an apartment than buy a house because younger residents tend to have fewer financial resources than an older population, and they also tend to move more often.

Individuals and families in their working years are likely to choose to live in single-family homes because they tend to have more capital and are likely to be raising children. People who are retired may opt for a simpler lifestyle, which may involve selling their single-family home and moving into a townhouse, garden apartment, or other type of multi-family unit or a smaller single-family home or an ADU associated with a single-family home. Not everyone wants or needs to live in multi-family. An area's age distribution, along with its wealth and cultural characteristics, is therefore a major factor in determining that area's demand for various types of housing units.

The aging of the overall population is a nationwide trend as the "Baby Boomer" generation approaches retirement and the generation of the "Baby Bust" that follows it is significantly smaller. In the U.S., some also called "Generation Xers" the "baby bust" generation because of the drop in the birth rate following the baby boom. This nationwide aging trend will be even more pronounced in the South, which continues to be a retirement destination.

The local effect in Chatham County will likely be even more pronounced because of its desirable coastal location, warmer climate, and the close proximity to resorts and retirement communities.

As shown in Figure 6.19 Chatham County's population is projected to grow significantly over the next 10 years with the largest population gain being seen in the older age groups. The effect will be increasingly pronounced among the oldest age groups, with the number of 45 to 54-year-olds is projected to increase 5.8% from the 2010 counts, 55 to 64-year-olds increasing 18.1% and individuals who are over 65 increasing by over 70%. Younger age groups, by contrast, are projected to experience either very modest growth or slight reductions from current and previous levels.

As people grow older many find it advantageous to relocate from single-family homes to multi-family dwellings, making it likely that an increase in demand for multi-family units will accompany the larger aging population. The future demand for multi-family units will also continue to rise because of the projected increase in the population of college students.

Although Chatham County's total year-round population of young adults living within the county is projected to decrease slightly by the year 2030, it is expected that the County's population of college students residing in Chatham County part of the year will increase as Chatham County's major institutions of higher learning continue to expand and attract students from outside the county. This trend also supports the finding that the market could support more multi-family units within Chatham County.



### Households containing at least one child age 6 or younger

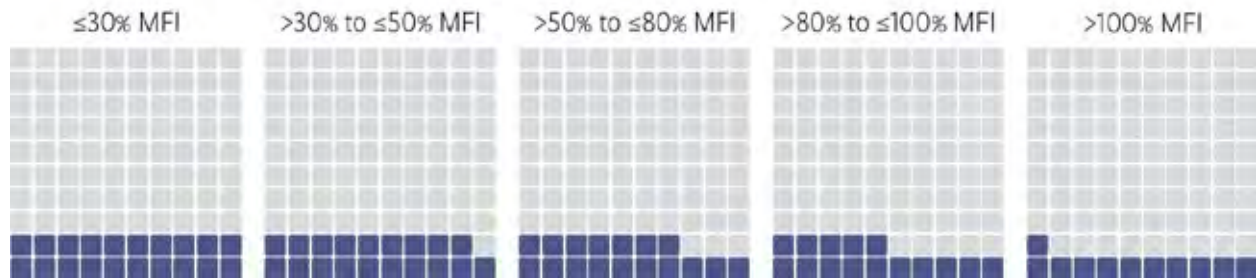


Figure 6.17–Households with Children Age 6 or Younger, Chatham County

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy

### Households containing at least one person age 62-74 and 75 or older

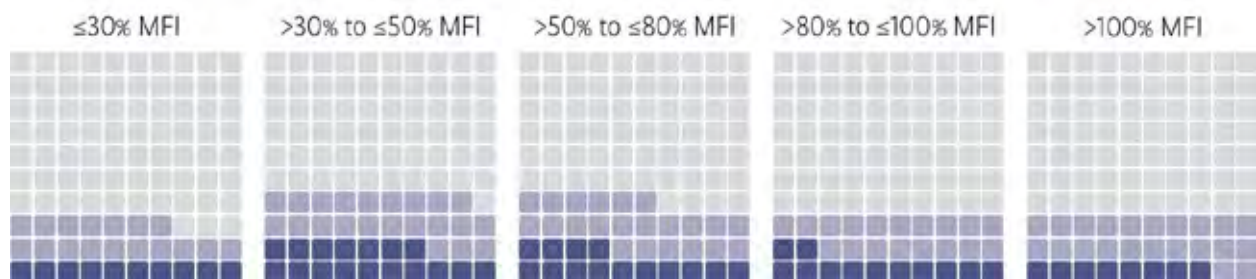


Figure 6.18–Elderly Households, Chatham County

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy

DRAFT

### Projected Age Distribution, 2010–2030

Age	2010	2020	2030	%Chge. 2010-2030
Under 5	17,219	17,442	17,514	1.7%
5 to 14	34,008	34,911	35,141	3.3%
15 to 24	33,666	35,056	35,221	0.5%
25 to 34	35,959	34,690	35,354	-1.7%
35 to 44	35,318	35,370	34,949	-1.0%
45 to 54	35,318	35,370	37,340	5.8%
55 to 64	29,466	35,494	34,789	18.1%
Over 65	33,772	48,040	57,696	70.8%

Figure 6.19–Chatham County Population Projections by Age Cohort





# COST-BURDEN

## Housing Costs

As discussed earlier in the element, home values, monthly mortgage payments, and monthly rent have been increasing in both unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah. The issue of cost-burden must be closely monitored.

As shown in Figures 6.20 and Figure 6.21, the percentage of people cost burdened by housing payments increased around 2010 but has since declined over the past decade. This pattern is true for both renters and homeowners in unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah. Still, the percentage of people cost burdened has still not returned to its lowest levels.

The cost-burden for renters has been consistently higher than cost-burden for homeowners, especially in Savannah where cost-burden spiked to 61% before falling to 55% according to the 2018 5-year ACS.

### COST-BURDENED

Cost-burdened families are those “who pay more than 30% of their income for housing” and “may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.” Severe rent burden is defined as paying more than 50% of one’s income on rent.

—HUD

*Cost-burden for renters has been consistently higher than cost-burden for homeowners, especially in Savannah*  
—American Community Survey, 2018

## Rent Cost-Burden, 2000–2018

Year	Unincorporated Chatham	City of Savannah
2000	40.04%	52.93%
2010	51.62%	61.13%
2014	50.03%	59.80%
2018	42.77%	55.39%

Figure 6.20–Rent Cost-Burden

U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Mortgage Cost-Burden, 2000–2018

Year	Unincorporated Chatham	City of Savannah
2000	20.08%	26.57%
2010	38.13%	42.76%
2014	34.94%	41.24%
2018	27.32%	33.53%

Figure 6.21–Mortgage Cost-Burden

U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates





### AFFORDABLE HOUSING DIFFICULTY

In summary, being able to afford housing for many in both unincorporated Chatham and Savannah becomes difficult when:

- Rents/mortgages exceed \$400 monthly per working adult household member.
- Households earn less than \$50,000 annually or \$24 hourly full-time.
- Households rely on \$7.25 minimum wage jobs and have to work 90 to 140 hours weekly.
- Housing is located away from places of employment or public transit-adding to costs.

Because cost burden has been such a persistent issue, strategies must be developed and deployed to increase the affordable housing stock.

DRAFT





# AFFORDABLE HOUSING

## Affordable Housing

The definition of affordable housing is often assumed to refer to low-income housing. However, in this document, “Affordable Housing” and “Low Income Housing” are two different categories, with an affordable housing referring to people who make a moderate income (police officers, teachers, social workers) and low income referring to people who live below the poverty line.

Projecting the future demand for affordable housing is challenging because the affordable housing market is dependent upon economic conditions, which are difficult to forecast. Affordable housing is also a relative issue; all housing is “affordable” to somebody. There is no one solution to making housing affordable to everyone; however, a possible tool, from a regulatory standpoint, is to require new housing developments to provide a range of housing types and sizes, in various locations, to help ensure a diverse housing stock and maximize housing choices for every individual.

The City of Savannah’s Housing and Neighborhood Services Department and partners have been working on this issue for years. In 2008 the Savannah Affordable Housing & Regulatory Reform Task Force release a report detailing the status of affordable housing in Savannah.

The Task Force defined affordable housing as: “Privately or publicly owned housing, in good condition, for households who generally earn less than \$48,000 a year and who pay no more than 30% of their gross household income to rent or purchase a dwelling.”

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUND

The Savannah Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) was established by resolution of the Mayor and Alderman of the City of Savannah on November 11, 2011. The Fund was established to serve as a:

“Complementary finance tool allowing for maximum flexibility and local control, leveraging private and other investment, attract investors, fund construction and rehabilitation of housing, provide technical assistance to and provide capacity building for local developers, and provide a revolving loan fund.”

—City of Savannah





The Task Force created several recommendations to increase the affordable housing stock in the city. The recommendations included:

- Establishing a local affordable housing fund to help subsidize the production and maintenance of affordable housing
  - » The City of Savannah established the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) at the end of 2011. The City's annual contribution to the fund reached \$500,000 in 2021
- Provide the City of Savannah and Chatham County funding acquisition, demolition, and infrastructure improvements in support of affordable housing
  - » The City of Savannah has used about \$1M of SPLOST funds annually to make infrastructure improvements and \$10M of SPLOST funds to establish the 1K-in-10 initiative which it intends to bring about the acquisition and redevelopment of 1,000 blighted, abandoned, properties in 10 years
- Establish county and school board support for Enterprise Zone Incentives
- Establish employer assisted housing programs such as that established by St. Joseph's/Candler Health Systems and Memorial Health
- Establish a public/private steering committee
- Design smaller, more energy efficient, and greener starter housing
  - » Zoning laws have been updated to allow for smaller housing and accessory dwelling units to be built



#### SOME BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Utility companies prefer unpaved areas to save money and reduce disruptions when utilities must be repaired and therefore resist proposals to reduce the width of rights-of-way and setbacks
- Emergency responders prefer wide streets and large setbacks for convenient access for fire trucks and ambulances
- Some traffic engineers insist that wide streets and clear rights-of-way reduce accidents
- Local government officials prefer larger setbacks along major roads to reduce acquisition costs when road widening becomes necessary
- Zoning laws favor single-family, detached housing, which tend to be more expensive than multi-family housing
- Low incomes, high housing costs, and local investments in the Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future to close the gap between the two

*Housing is generally not affordable to residents who make less than \$23 per hour, working 40 hours a week*





## Housing Affordability

The availability and affordability of housing in Chatham County affects the entire community and is connected to nearly every other element of Plan 2040. The local economy, transportation systems, land use, quality of life, and the natural environment are all impacted when a housing market does not meet the needs of area residents. In Chatham County, rising housing costs are outpacing increases in median household income and many residents are left unable to afford a home (a home is considered affordable if a household spends no more than 30% of its income on housing expenses).

Housing affordability disproportionately impacts low income residents in the county, as does the availability of affordable homes. A home is considered available for households of a specific income group if the home is currently vacant or is occupied by a household at or below that income group threshold. Coupled together, the shortage of affordable and available housing is a particularly acute issue for the lowest-income families in our community.

## Who Can Afford to Buy a Home in Chatham County?



In Chatham County, the median sales price of a single family home in May 2021 was \$265,000 and the average sales price was \$343,088.

These calculations assume a 5% down payment on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage at 3.5% interest, with 1.29% annual property taxes, \$1,500 (median) or \$1,800 (average) annual homeowners insurance, 1% Private Mortgage Insurance, & a 36% debt-to-income ratio.

Figure 6.22–Housing Affordability, Chatham County

U.S. Census Bureau: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Georgia Association of Realtors



## Gentrification

An additional important factor in affordable housing is gentrification. Gentrification refers to the process of higher income people moving into a low-income area, leading to the displacement of long-time established residents due to increased cost of living. There are multiple areas within Chatham County that are that are experiencing gentrification, such as in downtown Savannah. While gentrification is often thought of as synonymous with displacement, there are ways to prevent established residents from being pushed out. Strategies to reduce the displacement of poorer residents include providing tax breaks for longtime residents or home buyer programs for local renters. This way, these residents will not have to keep up with rising property taxes and rent. This is especially important for senior and disabled residents, who are often on a fixed income.

*For every 100 extremely low income renter households in Chatham County, there are only 28 affordable and available housing units.*  
—Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, 2017



## Availability of Affordable Homes, 2017

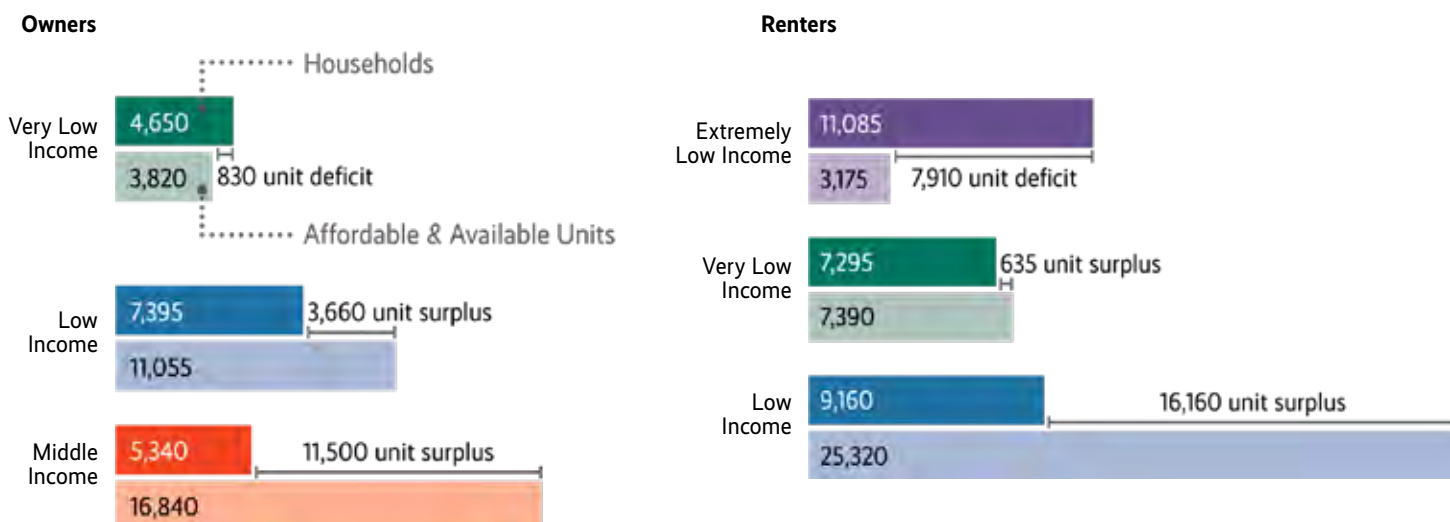


Figure 6.23—Affordable & Available Housing Units, Chatham County  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy





# NEWZO

## City of Savannah's Zoning Ordinance (NewZO)

After the adoption of the city of Savannah's New Zoning Ordinance (NewZO) on September 1, 2019, there were several notable changes specific to housing in Savannah. One major change reflected in NewZO was the reduction of the minimum lot size requirements in single family residential areas. This not only opened new opportunities for constructing smaller and more affordable housing, it also allowed previously nonconforming, existing houses on smaller lots to now be conforming. For example, many existing residential lots within the Historic District were small and nonconforming under the previous zoning code due with lot sizes under 6,000 square feet. With the adoption of NewZO, lot sizes are now permitted to be small as 4,000 to 5,000 square feet, allowing smaller homes to conform and legally fit within the size and character of the neighborhood.

NewZO also instituted reforms to Savannah's off-street parking regulations providing more predictable standards for many uses and more flexibility in meeting those requirements. Recognizing that minimum parking requirements are a significant component of residential affordability, NewZO reduced parking minimums to one space per unit, regardless of size. This in turn, encouraged alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, biking, and public transportation. Additionally, lessening space dedicated to parking surfaces, promotes reduced housing costs for many new developments and redevelopments.

Some additional key revisions of NewZO that positively affect housing development and other interrelated processes include:

- Reduced and simplified the range of zoning districts into a handful of higher-level groupings for business, residential, office-institutional, downtown, historic residential, historic commercial, and conservation
- Created dedicated districts for downtown and historic neighborhoods to better reflect their unique situations
- Dramatically simplified, rationalized, and updated the zoning map
- Allow mixed-use by right in commercial districts
- Updated development standards to better accommodate existing development patterns
- Encouraged better urban design with specific standards for parking lots, lot coverage and lot frontage, among others
- Reduced parking requirements where reasonable and provided more flexibility in meeting those requirements through off-site, shared, bicycle or other forms of parking
- Reduced the number of variance and rezoning requests
- Improved procedural clarity for all zoning and variance actions
- Made all requirements easier to understand, implement and enforce



# HOUSING STRATEGIES & PROGRAMS

## Housing Strategies

Currently, there are conversations locally and nationally, on the topic of housing affordability. The smaller units that are now allowed tend to be less expensive than larger housing units. NewZO is a great step in the right direction in terms of allowing for smaller, and thus less expensive housing.

Affordable housing is a complex topic, as housing affordability and needs differ among all people. Therefore, a variety of strategies are needed to address the diverse needs of local residents. One example of innovative ideas with affordable housing is the Tiny House Project, which houses veterans in permanent, affordable homes.

There is also innovation in the language of affordable housing, to make distinctions in the type of housing needed. For example, the definition of affordable housing can differ, with some defining it as housing affordable to low-income residents, while others define it as affordable to the general population. Terms like "Missing Middle" (which will be discussed in detail later in the element) and Workforce housing demonstrates how people of a variety of income levels struggle to secure affordable housing. These language distinctions reflect the variety of housing and strategies that must be implemented to increase the affordable housing stock.

Notably, after 12 months of work, the Housing Savannah Task Force completed and submitted its Housing Savannah Action Plan to City officials in July 2021 that outlines 5 primary strategies and 43 action items.





## Housing & Neighborhood Services Office

Savannah's Housing and Neighborhood Services Department identified housing costs, expendable funds, and a lack of affordable housing as some of the main causes of cost burden. In response to this, several programs were instituted within the city of Savannah to ease the cost burden that many residents face.

- Down Payment Assistance—This program provides down payment assistance to qualified low-and moderate-income households purchasing a home for the first time

Established in 2011, the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF), leverages donations from banks, businesses, nonprofits, and the local government to provide loans and down payment assistance for home buyers. Additionally, the SAHF finances house construction and repairs, thereby investing in the economic development of the city. Under SAHF, the Employer Assisted Home Purchase Program was created, in which employees of the city of Savannah, Memorial Health Hospital, and St. Joseph/Candler Hospital can receive down payment assistance.

- Rental Property Repair and Development —This program provides assistance to investors-owners to rehabilitate rental units for occupancy by low-income households

The Community Housing Services Agency (CHSA) also funds a rental property repair program, in which landlords can receive loans to repair their properties and then rent them to residents who make 80% or less than the median income.

- Abandoned Property Redevelopment —This program funds the construction or reconstruction of new homes for low-and moderate-income households occupying severely deteriorated units

The CHSA, the city of Savannah, and Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) have supported multiple low income housing tax credit and bond issues that have resulted in the renovation and construction of an average of 200 rental dwellings annually since 2000.

An important affordable housing program was implemented in 2020 to target vacant structures for redevelopment. This “1K-in-10” Abandoned Property Acquisition and Redevelopment initiative is funded by a portion of Savannah’s Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST).

This program will aid in increasing the housing stock through the allocation of \$10 million for the purchase of 1,000 dilapidated and abandoned/vacant residential properties. Some acquired structures will be renovated while others will be demolished to make way for the construction of new homes that will be made available for rent or purchase by those in need of affordable housing. While increasing the housing stock, it will also improve the neighborhood.

- Ordinances—Policy is the foundation that can ultimately lead to an increase in the supply of housing at a wider range of price-points thereby making more housing more affordable to a wider range of potential buyers

Policy and ordinances such as zoning ordinances can often be helpful in facilitating an increase in the number of affordable housing units. The City of Savannah’s New Zoning Ordinance (NewZO) adopted in 2019 led to changes that permit smaller lots for residential single-family homes than previously required, thereby permitting residents to build smaller, often more affordable homes in certain areas. Carriage houses, garage apartments and other types of secondary structures can also provide vital income to homeowners and increase density in neighborhoods that have experienced population loss.



These recent changes within NewZO now also provide new flexibility for developers and property owners to construct accessory dwelling units (ADUs), also known as carriage houses, garage apartments, and mother-in-law suites in certain areas of the city. ADUs are a secondary house or apartment that shares the building lot of a larger, primary house. The flexible spaces are a viable option for housing, especially when considering space for aging family members, young adults, students, or someone in need of less space than a typical single-family home offers.

Because low-income, special needs, and elderly populations often have a higher reliance on public transportation than other sectors of the population, zoning ordinances should encourage affordable housing units in walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods with convenient access to reliable public transit. Additionally, a walkable development pattern can reduce dependency on automobiles making the provision of mass transit more effective and feasible for special needs populations who either cannot afford a vehicle or are physically unable to drive.

The HNSD and partners have supported and implemented strategies identified by the 2008 Affordable Housing & Regulatory Reform Task Force. They expect to do the same for strategies and action items that will be identified in the 2021 Housing Savannah Task Force report. Resolving Savannah's housing affordability challenges will require increased incomes, decreased housing costs, funding the gap between the two or, more likely, a combination of the three.



#### SAVANNAH GARDENS

The redevelopment of Strathmore Estates Apartments into Savannah Gardens began in 2007 after being acquired by local non-profit housing organization CHSA Development, Inc. Before its redevelopment, the community experienced a steep decline in residents, with an eventual occupancy rate of only 37%. Due to high vacancy rates, dilapidation of the structures also became a prominent issue along with crime. The neighborhood was essentially fading as more people moved away due to the declining environment.

The redevelopment project aimed to bring life back to the neighborhood by offering quality affordable housing, greenspace and other amenities in the creation of a mixed-use, mixed-income community. By the time Savannah Gardens is complete, it will include approximately 625 dwellings — 525 apartments and 100 single family homes sold to first time buyers. The occupancy rate for the apartments is about 98% and the single family houses are attractive to first time buyers seeking affordable homes.





## Missing Middle Housing

The term "Missing middle" describes a range of housing types between single-detached houses and apartment buildings that have gone 'missing' from many of our cities. The referenced housing types are compatible in scale with single-family homes yet are denser and can fit seamlessly into existing residential neighborhoods they can include duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, rowhouses, and townhouses, cottages, ADUs, studios. While the missing middle refers to a range of housing types, the popularity of the term has grown alongside the housing challenges facing middle-income households. Increasingly, middle income households throughout Chatham County are experiencing difficulty finding housing that suits their needs and budgets. Accordingly, the term "missing middle" is used to describe the lack of available and affordable housing options for middle-income households, both in the ownership and private rental sectors. In fact, much housing that falls under the category of "missing middle" is unaffordable to households across the income spectrum.

*While the majority of housing in both unincorporated Chatham and the city of Savannah is single-family and detached, some "missing middle" housing exists in both jurisdictions. Currently, a little over 7% of housing in unincorporated Chatham and 11% of housing in Savannah, falls into the "missing middle" housing category.*

As discussed earlier, both cost-burden and affordable housing are issues in the area. Investing in more missing middle housing has the potential to reduce housing costs as these units tend to be smaller than the traditional single family residence.

Savannah's 2019 New Zoning Ordinance (NewZO) has created an opportunity to create more "Missing Middle" housing. The updated ordinance now promotes accessory dwelling units (ADUs), often also known as carriage houses, garage apartments, and mother-in-law suites, in certain zoning districts that exhibit a historic pattern of these uses and in other areas where lot sizes can easily accommodate the additional density. ADUs are smaller, independent residential units that are located on the same lot as the principal dwelling.

Another quintessential form of missing middle housing that is now permitted in certain areas is live-work housing in which residents can live above a commercial business. This encourages mixed-use development where two different types of land uses are existing in the same space.





## Micro Apartments

As stated in the previous section, smaller housing has a tendency to cost less, making micro apartments a viable option for increasing the affordable housing stock. Micro apartments are a form of housing that tend to be under 350 square feet. For reference, many studio apartments in the Chatham area are 600 square feet. Because micro apartments are so small, a much larger number of them can be built. Additionally, rent costs for these apartments tends to be less expensive. This housing can help young professionals have access to housing they can afford on their own, near major job sectors within the area.

## Extended Stay Hotels

Extended stay hotels can offer many a flexible way to have longer term lodging for business trips, vacations, and more. However, they can also highlight a lack of affordable housing, as many residents throughout the country use them as a permanent living space when there is no inexpensive housing available in the area. While no Savannah specific data exists, there is a possibility that some residents may use these hotels for housing because they cannot afford or get approved for any other form of housing. Living in a hotel also offers less protections to the residents, as they can be more easily expelled from the hotel for a lack of money.

### WORK FORCE HOUSING

Workforce Housing is housing affordable to households earning between 60 and 120% of area median income (AMI). Workforce housing targets middle-income workers which includes professions such as police officers, firefighters, teachers, healthcare workers, and retail workers.

—Urban Land Institute (ULI)

### SCAD SERVE

SCAD has made a commitment to the City of Savannah as part of their SCAD Serve Initiative, to help close the gap on affordable housing options in the city. Slated for Spring 2021, SCAD will convert historic Pulaski House, a three story residence hall, into a 22 workforce housing units. Students, alumni, and faculty from the School of Building Arts will contribute to this SCAD SERVE assignment focused on shelter.





# SAVANNAH'S PUBLIC HOUSING

## Housing Authority of Savannah

According to the Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) there are eight public housing complexes within the city of Savannah that serve all populations to including the elderly, disabled, and low income. HAS functions as a developer and landlord of housing programs for Savannah's low-income residents as well as provides leadership and advocates for public housing, sets policies, and ensures operation within the law. With such a significant portion of Savannah living in poverty (22.9%), publicly funded housing is critical to ensure residents have safe and secure housing.

According to HAS, all of its public housing developments are situated in convenient areas, near public transportation, schools, and shopping centers. In addition to public housing, HAS offers rental assistance for housing, contributing to the creation of mixed-income communities such as Sustainable Fellwood.

HAS created a five-year plan with goals of making several improvements for public housing options. For example, over 300 mixed income units are planned for construction within the next 10 years in the Savannah East Gateway Area along the Wheaton Street corridor between East Broad Street and the Truman Parkway. HAS plans to subsidize 94 of the units and will continue to provide more housing and rental assistance options for low-income residents. This is a part of a larger plan to deconcentrate poverty, by bringing higher income public housing households into lower income communities and vice versa. There are also plans for those public housing communities over 20 years old will be updated in accordance with HAS's FY 2020–2024 Capital Fund Program Five Year Plan.

The city of Savannah has had a persistently high unemployment rate for years, with 23% of residents currently living below the poverty level. With such a high level of poverty, a variety of housing strategies must be employed, including offering a higher variety of housing that is also affordable. Programs such as Section 8 could be a pertinent tool in offering that housing variety while also ensuring that poverty is not concentrated into one area.

In addition to providing affordable housing, a variety of programs support HAS in providing and maintaining (as in, repairing housing units and ensuring that they are in good quality) dwelling units. For example, the Housing Choice Voucher Program (also known as Section 8) provides low income, elderly, and disabled residents the opportunity to choose housing in the private market, expanding options in available housing. This is necessary as the public housing community method of providing low income housing is not always the best or singular way to address affordable housing. Other methods can be beneficial, as they reduce the concentration of poverty and increase the affordable housing stock.

Because the county has a persistently high poverty rate, there is a need for increased public housing. This public housing, whether it be through housing projects or Section 8 voucher programs, must be placed in an area near economic and educational opportunities. That way, low-income people will have greater access to jobs and economic opportunities.





### PUBLIC HOUSING

Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from scattered single-family houses to high rise apartments for elderly families.

—HUD

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# HOMELESSNESS

## Chatham Savannah Authority

In 2019, the Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless (CSAH) identified 678 chronically homeless individuals. This one-night count primarily captures those individuals living in homeless camps, on the streets, and in emergency shelters.

This count does not include the more than 800 students enrolled in the Savannah Chatham Public School System who are experiencing homelessness. CSAH was founded by the State of Georgia and acts as the coordinating and leadership body for homeless services in Chatham County. Through its Continuum of Care (CoC) program and partnerships, the organization served 4,641 individuals in 2018. A CoC is a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) nationally funded program that seeks to improve services for homeless people by coordinating funding, housing, and service programs.

Homelessness not only impacts individual men and women, but also entire families, and children. Within Chatham County, many homeless persons take refuge in one of the 35 unregulated camps in the area, while others sleep in motels, in their cars, or “couch surf” to avoid sleeping outside. While emergency homeless shelters are helpful in shielding individuals and families from exposure, the CSAH recognizes that it is not the only method needed to help people. The CSAH’s Continuum of Care Five Year Plan CoC (2020-2025) sets out to serve the diverse needs of the homeless population.

There are five goals identified within the CoC that will be focused on through the year 2025:

- **Goal 1:** Homelessness Prevention through Enhancing the Crisis System - In this method, providing chronically homeless individuals with permanent supportive housing is helpful. For non-chronic homeless individuals, establishing an eviction prevention fund can prevent homelessness in the first place
- **Goal 2:** Create, grow, and maintain affordable housing for at risk households
- **Goal 3:** Youth Homelessness—the Savannah Chatham County Public School System identified 1,001 homeless students in 2017. Because of this, the CSAH seeks to develop programs and services for youth who experience homelessness to prevent them from becoming the next generation of homeless adults
- **Goal 4:** Improve the sanitation and public health issues in the County’s unregulated camps
- **Goal 5:** Cross-System Integration and Redesign—Create a healthy, efficient, and cost-effective nonprofit service system for the homeless population



1 out of 17

Homeless People in Chatham County are Veterans



### WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS?

In Georgia, a person is considered homeless if they do not have access to traditional or permanent housing that is safe, sanitary, decent, and affordable. Individuals and families who are living on the streets or in homeless camps, shelters, motels, or their vehicles are all considered homeless.

### TINY HOUSE PROJECT

In November of 2019, CSAH formally completed the Tiny House Project community, called the Cove at Dundee, a permanent supportive housing community housing and serving 71 homeless veterans; the first of its kind in Georgia. The community is in phase 2 of development, hoping to add 24 more permanent homes in 2021 for United States military veterans, with plans for 2 clubhouses for laundry, community meetings, with access to classes and supportive services, a tiny medical clinic, and gardens in the future.

## Homelessness By The Numbers



**678**

#### HOMELESS

The number of chronically homeless individuals identified in Chatham County during the 2019 point-in-time count



**4,641**

#### USING RESOURCES

The number of homeless individuals (unduplicated) served by the Continuum of Care partners in 2018



**280**

#### VETERANS

The number of homeless veterans living in Chatham County



**35**

#### UNREGULATED CAMPS

The number of unregulated homeless camps that are currently active within Chatham County





# SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

## Special Needs Housing

Individuals 75 years and older tend to have higher rates of disabilities and from this, we can deduce that as the senior population in Chatham County and Savannah continue to rise, the need for more housing that disabled individuals can comfortably live in will also increase. This requires housing with wider hallways, wide doors, handrails, and ramps for wheelchair access while other disabled residents, such as individuals with cognitive difficulties, may require long-term residential care.

Both Chatham County and Savannah have an array of services to help its residents. For example, domestic violence shelters offer safe and private housing for victims of intimate partner violence and their families. Additionally, rehabilitation centers for individuals recovering from drug addiction and mental illness, residential facilities for people with developmental disabilities, and transitional housing for homeless families and individuals are also available. Further, a number of agencies provide subsidized or affordable housing for older adults as well as hospice residences for patients with terminal illness.

*Around 16% of the population in Savannah has a disability*

*—American Community Survey, 2018*

### WHAT IS DISABILITY?

A disability is defined as one of six disability types: hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty, and independent living difficulty.

—CDC

*Almost 7% of Savannah residents have a difficulty living independently*

*—American Community Survey, 2018*





Although not all-inclusive, Figure 6.24 below displays the percentage of residents within Chatham County and Savannah with a disability as defined by the American Community Survey (2018) that may have special housing needs.

## Disabled by Age Group, 2014–2018

	Chatham	Savannah
Age	%	
Under 5 Years	2.9	2.3
5 to 17 Years	6.6	8.1
18 to 34 Years	8.7	10.4
35 to 64 Years	16.9	19
65 to 74 Years	22.2	27
75 Years and Over	58.3	59.8

Figure 6.24–Percent Disability by Age, Chatham County & Savannah  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Disability Type, 2018

	Chatham
Disability Type	%
Hearing Difficulty	4
Vision Difficulty	2.6
Cognitive Difficulty	6.5
Ambulatory Difficulty	8.6
Self-Care Difficulty	2.4
Independent Living Difficulty	6.3

Figure 6.25–Percent Disability Type, Chatham County  
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



### THE PHOENIX HOUSE

Through Union Mission, the Phoenix House is a 10-bed housing program for people living with HIV/AIDS that also offers short-term rental and utility assistance. Residents work with a case manager to develop an Individualized Service Plan that will guide them into independent living. Services include HIV/AIDS healthcare assessment and treatment, peer education, resource coordination, support groups, and substance abuse treatment.



### SAVANNAH CENTER FOR BLIND & LOW VISION

Today Savannah CBLV provides service in the home or in its center promoting independence and dignity for people with vision loss throughout coastal Georgia.

Savannah Center for Blind and Low Vision opens its doors to anyone with visual impairment and currently serves over 200 students each year.



# RESILIENCE & HOUSING

## Resiliency Planning

Resiliency planning is a way to reduce indirect vulnerabilities by improving the long-term conditions that can leave communities exposed to hazards. There are six core sectors around which communities can plan for resiliency. These are:

- Community
- Economic
- Health and Social
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Watersheds and Natural Resources

These six sectors are broad lenses through which a community can examine the impacts, identify stresses, or weaken their ability to respond, and strategically plan to address these upsets. Integration of activities across each sector is key to developing a resilient community. These sectors are interdependent, yet many strategies are likely to have a cross-sector impact. With the rise in extreme weather events, many communities are looking for ways to prepare for disasters that accompany the changing climate. New studies, regulations, and design practices are helping to address current and future needs.

Additionally, low-income communities are often disproportionately affected by weather- and climate-related disasters, such as built-up in areas that are vulnerable to flooding. Resilient design can offer solutions to dangerous disruptions while alleviating long-term costs.

Emergency preparedness also builds pathways to make a difference not only for the built environment but also for residents within vulnerable communities.

Much of Chatham County is a flat coastal plain, making it susceptible to flooding, especially during the springtime and hurricane season. As the impact of climate changes compound and grow, not only will flooding issues worsen but higher temperatures will most likely continue to threaten residents and vulnerable populations during the hot summer months.

To alleviate these threats, it is recommended that any new housing developments, most notably affordable housing developments, be built outside of flood zones and with a higher, more sustainable design in mind. It is essential that residents living in high-impact flood zones understand how to protect themselves and their homes during rainy and hurricane seasons.

Lastly, the further people live from their jobs, schools, and services, the longer they spend commuting in cars, which creates more greenhouse gas emissions. When people have affordable options for housing close to where they work, they can spend less time commuting and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, building affordable places to live in close proximity to public transit options is an effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



# HISTORIC HOUSING INVENTORY

## Historic & Cultural Resources

The greatest numbers of identified historic resources in the city of Savannah are located within neighborhoods that are listed on, or are eligible for National Register of Historic Places listing.

Ninety-two percent of these resources are residential structures. These pedestrian-oriented, urban residential neighborhoods offer numerous advantages for rehabilitation such as established shade trees, paved streets, sidewalks, water and sewer, trash pick-up and public transportation. It makes more economic sense to maintain and upgrade older neighborhoods than to further expand suburban construction, which places new demands on transportation and other infrastructure systems.

Savannah's historic housing stock provides opportunities for a variety of housing types. The quality of materials, craftsmanship, and detail would be prohibitively expensive to duplicate today. Listing on the National Register qualifies these houses for various federal and local rehabilitation tax incentive programs.

Historic preservation is a pertinent tool in increasing affordable housing, as newer housing units tend to be more expensive. It can also involve creative solutions, such as adapting and reforming a historic, non-housing structure, into inexpensive housing. This subject is explained in greater detail in the Historic Preservation element. Repairing and repurposing historic housing is one of the many necessary strategies to increase the affordable housing stock, and thus should receive more research and backing.

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

In the Quality of Life Element of Plan 2040, you can find more information about advantages and challenges facing historic neighborhoods on page 346





# DILAPIDATION & HOUSING

## Dilapidated Housing

Dilapidation refers to a structure in a state of disrepair. As stated earlier in the element, a significant portion of housing is 30 years old or older. This puts these structures at a greater risk of deterioration and eventual dilapidation. Vacant properties are also at an increased risk of becoming dilapidated.

The Chatham County / City of Savannah Land Bank Authority (LBA) is tasked with acquiring vacant properties that can be renovated or developed with new housing. The LBA sells or otherwise makes acquired properties available to parties who are able and willing to improve the properties with results that include new quality affordable housing and improved neighborhoods, property values and quality of life. The 1K-in-10 program, as discussed earlier in the element, is one of the programs currently supporting the effort to reduce dilapidated and vacant housing in the area.

In 2019, there were an estimated 4,286 vacant dwellings in the area. Because of their vacancy, these structures are at a higher risk of dilapidation. According to a 2020 document the Savannah government created in collaboration with Georgia Tech, the city has 3 methods to address dilapidation:

- Non acquisition-based: improve and assist in the retention of affordable housing. This is to ensure that affordable housing can be maintained, to prevent dilapidation
- Acquisition-based: obtain abandoned properties and return them to productive societal use. This method directly addresses existing dilapidated housing
- Post-acquisition: focused on housing affordability and stable tenure. This method ensures that housing is affordable enough



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to remain occupied, and thus maintained

According to a document by the Housing & Neighborhood Services, currently, the 1K-in-10 has two strategies when acquiring properties: a single property strategy and a multiple property strategy.

- Single Property Strategy: Facilitates the acquisition and/or redevelopment of a single, dilapidated, abandoned, property located within a block of housing that, for the most part, is in otherwise good condition anywhere within the city
- Multiple Property Strategy: Facilitates the acquisition and/or redevelopment of multiple dilapidated, abandoned properties located near one another within a portion of a neighborhood with the expectation that such investment here will pave the way for future redevelopment in other parts of the neighborhood

Acquiring properties through eminent domain is considered a last resort. Properties acquired this way will be transferred to the Land Bank Authority. The heirs of the property will be given the first opportunity to acquire the property if they have the intention to renovate it or construct new housing.

Considering the number of sub-standard units and some of the older traditional neighborhoods that are in danger of more gentrification and further demise, the eradication of blight should be at the forefront of the city and county's focus moving forward.

#### LAND BANK

The Chatham County/City of Savannah Land Bank Authority was created to acquire vacant, abandoned, tax delinquent properties in the county and city to assist in the return of the properties to a productive use.





# RACE EQUITY & LEADERSHIP TASK FORCE

## REAL Taskforce

The Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Savannah Taskforce was a new advisory formed in 2020 to address structural racial inequities in Savannah. The taskforce is led by Savannah's former mayor, Dr. Otis Samuel Johnson, and has a mandate from Savannah's current mayor, Van Johnson II, to complete an action plan that the city government can help resource and implement.

## Housing

While Savannah is still majority Black, several areas of the city- downtown, midtown, Thomas Square, etc., have shifted over the last two decades. Race is one factor; place is the other. Savannah's African American population has only decreased by 1.5% since 2010, but if you look more closely at the census tract level, there's a story- not just about race, but about racial and economic segregation. For example, between 2000 and 2010, census tract 114, just south of Forsyth Park, lost half its black population- almost 800 residents, and added 500 white residents. Next to it is census tract 113 which lost about 600 black residents and gained almost 7,000 white residents during the same period. A demographic shift of this proportion didn't result from natural migration, or even from wealthier white buyers displacing poorer black residents. This is the result of state abdication, prolonged disinvestment that left many Black communities in a state of arrested development only to be "revitalized" by a private market that further privileges white wealth. This story was lifted up in every committee in our time together. It weaves every issue area of the REAL Taskforce into a cohesive narrative, that the fate of the city is inextricable to the deliberative expansion of opportunity for its black residents.

The committee identified the following underlying drivers of racial disparities in Savannah's housing market:

- Multi-generational income and wealth disparities between races in Savannah's population
- An exceedingly inflated housing market, pressured by a steady growing population, particularly in the middle to upper-middle income range
- A housing shortage, caused by the aging and abandonment of existing properties, coupled with the rising cost of labor and materials
- Discrimination and structural barriers in the mortgage industry
- Multi-generational loss of land and poverty, particularly among African Americans, resulting in a disparity in knowledge and comfort with the home buying process

The following data supports these determinants of Savannah's racial home affordability gap:

- Those earning 120% or less than the area median income in Savannah are cost-burdened, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their gross monthly income on housing. It is believed that the vast majority of this segment of the population are people of color
- Home values in Savannah have increased by 7.3% over the past year and are forecast to rise another 10.1% in the next 12 months
- Savannah has the second highest cost of rent in Georgia, leaving 55% of renters spending more than 30% of their household income on rent and utilities



- Over the past 10 years, the Savannah metropolitan area has added nearly 100,000 new residents. In the next five years, the city of Savannah is forecast to gain about 6,000 new residents to its current population of 145,500
- There are over 9,000 families on the waiting list for affordable housing at the Housing Authority of Savannah, 76% of which earn less than \$12,500. The waiting list has been closed since 2013
- African Americans account for 55% of Savannah but 96% of Housing Authority of Savannah tenants
- There are over 2,600 properties in Savannah that are currently unlivable and in need of repair and rehabilitation. Property owners find that deflated property values in low-wealth communities prevent home repair loans
- The legacies of redlining and other segregating forces have limited Black borrowers' access to traditional credit and exposed them disproportionately to predatory lending sources
- 21.9% of the home ownership gap can be explained by differences in FICO score distribution between black and white Americans
- In 2019, 62% of mortgage applications submitted by Black residents of Chatham County were denied, compared to only 26% denied to white applicants. Only 1,160 Black households applied for mortgages, compared to 4,882 submitted by white households
- The rate of land ownership among African Americans has steadily declined since it peaked in 1910 through systematic stealing, loss of title, denial of federal aid and prohibitive laws
- In Savannah, 71% of white residents are homeowners and 48.8% of Black residents are homeowners

- A recent Northwestern University study found that racial gaps in mortgage loan denial in the U.S. have only declined slightly in the last 30–40 years. An MIT study calculated that the annual difference of \$743 in mortgage interest payments, \$550 in mortgage insurance premiums and \$390 in property taxes between Black and white borrowers, when invested over 30 years results in lost retirement savings of \$67,320 for Black homeowners

These compounding challenges were summarized by the following problem statement:

In Savannah, wages are not keeping up with the increasing cost of housing, demand for housing is outpacing affordability and the racial makeup of home ownership does not reflect the racial makeup of our city.

By scanning the city's existing landscape of resources and a series of discussions about realistic alternatives to the status quo, the committee explored the following strategies to ameliorate the core problem. Each strategy can be implemented alone or with one or both the other strategies.

1. The implementation of racial equity metrics in current housing programs in Savannah
2. The expansion of existing home ownership programs at Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS)
3. Creation of a joint Chatham County & City of Savannah online developer's toolkit
4. Incorporate density bonuses into the city zoning code in areas already slated for substantial growth by the City of Savannah

*Savannah's REAL Taskforce; REPORT TO SAPELO FOUNDATION; June 2021*





# HOUSING GOALS

## GOAL 1

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

Dilapidated and abandoned properties-structures and lots negatively impact neighborhoods and residents including quality of life, marketability and property values. They encourage disinvestment and criminal behavior that can lead to gentrification. Existing homeowners and other property owners are unable to secure financing to improve property. The conditions help strip value and generational wealth from existing property owners who maintain their property in good condition. They make attracting new homebuyers, renters, and investment difficult.

Modest and low incomes of some homeowners and renters adds to the difficulty of maintaining and improving property. Many elderly homeowners living on fixed incomes find it difficult to afford home improvement loans. Many renters with low income find it difficult to afford rents that are required to cover the debt service associated with renovated or new rental housing.

These challenges are sometimes compounded as neighborhood marketability and values begin to increase-leading to gentrification. Striking a delicate balance that results in socio-economic diversity, rather than wholesale gentrification, could be beneficial to existing neighborhood property owners and residents as well as new members of the neighborhood.

### Objectives:

- Maintain, improve, construct, and development quality affordable housing in existing neighborhoods
- Enforce housing and property maintenance codes
- Renovate or redevelopment blighted, abandoned, properties with new affordable housing
- Provide affordable home repair, construction, development, and purchase options
- Prevent wholesale gentrification as neighborhood conditions and marketability improve





## GOAL 2

*Increase supportive housing for special needs populations, such as individuals who are homeless, mentally ill, disabled, and residents in drug recovery*

Shelter is a basic human need, but for too many it is not a need that it is being met. For those in the most vulnerable communities such as people with drug addiction, mental illness, chronic health conditions, or disabilities, having a safe, stable home is fundamental in ensuring adequate treatment and recovery. In many instances these individuals are also struggling with long-term poverty and may experience periods of homelessness, interrupting treatment and constraining recovery efforts creating a vicious cycle that causes them to spiral further into poverty and poor health.

Providing supportive housing for special needs populations is a key component to breaking the cycle, reducing incarcerations and the use of emergency services by vulnerable individuals, and assisting in their becoming active members of the community.

### Objectives:

- Support local, state and federal policy and legislation benefitting those with special housing needs including those that help prevent housing discrimination
- Significantly increase and expand local investments in the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund and additional leveraged investments for the retention, improvement, construction, and development of affordable housing for special needs populations and that help prevent housing discrimination
- Increase partnerships and capacity of those needed to produce and maintain affordable housing for special needs populations

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## GOAL 3

### *Increase affordable housing stock*

The cost of housing has increased disproportionately to wages, resulting in a lack of affordable housing options for renters and potential homeowners alike. The absence of sufficient affordable housing negatively impacts the entire community, not only those struggling to find housing or to pay for their current housing. Insufficient affordable housing effects employers in recruiting and retaining employees, impacts the economy through a decrease in discretionary spending, increases social costs associated with evictions and public assistance, reduces the health of citizens who cannot afford to access preventative health services, and overall decreases the quality of life of many in the community.

Working to increase the supply of quality housing that is affordable to all persons, but especially to those with modest and low incomes, is critical. The Housing Savannah Task Force estimates that in 2021 Savannah household most likely in need of quality housing they can afford are those making less than \$50,000 annually. Too often, affordable housing is associated with only the very lowest income members of a community.

### **Objectives:**

- Develop public policy/legislation, ordinances, zoning and subdivision regulations, building designs, construction methods/materials that help reduce housing costs without sacrificing quality and that facilitate increasing affordable housing availability
- Acquire property necessary to provide additional affordable housing in existing neighborhoods, near public transportation, and near employment centers, and to help limit gentrification
- Significantly increase and expand local investments in the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund and additional leveraged investments for the retention, improvement, construction, and development of affordable housing for the homeless, renters, homeowners and homebuyers
- Sustain and increase participation in the 9% and 4% low income housing tax credit program, and in the issuance of Housing Authority of Savannah bonds, for the renovation and/or development of affordable rental housing
- Increase partnerships and capacity of those needed to produce and maintain additional affordable housing



## GOAL 4

### *Decrease homelessness*

Homeless describes a person lacking a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. Poverty, unemployment, mental health issues, and lack of affordable housing are common causes of homelessness. Once homeless, factors such as the lack of access to proper healthcare, sanitation, jobs, and educational opportunities can make it difficult to overcome homelessness, however by providing assistance, many homeless persons can become active members of their communities again.

Implementing prevention programs aimed at providing affordable housing, improving access to proper mental health and healthcare services, and providing financial safety nets for those without one are key to efficiently and effectively decreasing homelessness. Interventions to prevent homelessness are more cost effective than addressing issues after someone is already homeless.

### **Objectives:**

- Support local, state and federal policy and legislation benefitting the homeless and those in need of transitional housing
- Provide eviction and foreclosure prevention assistance to those in danger of losing their home and becoming homeless
- Develop new and innovative approaches and models for housing the homeless and those in transition out of homelessness
- Significantly increase and expand local investments in the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund and additional leveraged investments for the retention, improvement, construction, and development of affordable housing for the homeless and those in need of transitional housing
- Increase partnerships and capacity of those needed to produce and maintain affordable housing for the homeless and those in need of transitional housing





# NATURAL RESOURCE ELEMENT

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# NATURAL RESOURCES

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## Introduction

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Chatham County is home to exceptional natural resources vitally important to the quality of life, resilience, health, and economy of the region. The county therefore has an interest in promoting, developing, sustaining, and protecting its natural resources for current residents and future generations.

This element of Plan 2040 includes an existing conditions assessment of specific natural resources and natural resource issues found in Chatham County as well as specific goals and objectives for the management and protection of these resources for the next 20 years.



# NATURAL RESOURCES

Not many landscapes can match the beauty and romance of the coastal environment. Since the earliest times of Oglethorpe, people have wanted to live near the water.

Coastal Georgia's streams, rivers and marshes are now more attractive than ever as a place to live and visit. Tide, climate, and geology all shape the unique relationship between land and water along the coastline. The region continues to grow as people leave colder climates to live near the beautiful oak trees and sandy beaches. With population growth, however, comes many other elements of development.

The vision of a community that is a healthy place to live, work, and raise a family—where the protection of natural resources is considered an integral part of social and economic values—can be accomplished when forethought and reverence for the environment is considered. To effectively manage the development of Georgia's coastal areas, residents and local governments must continue in their efforts to protect and be good stewards of the community's natural resources. With proper planning, Chatham County will remain a place of beauty for centuries to come.



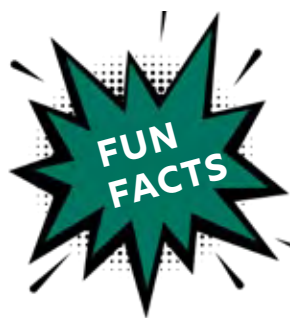




## Coastal Resources

Georgia's coastal marshlands and beaches are seen as one of the state's greatest resources and a defining feature of Chatham County. The beaches draw new residents and tourists to the area, while the marshlands are an essential ecosystem for many plant and animal species and also protect coastal residents from the impacts of storms and higher-than-normal tides. The landscape along the Georgia coast is also dotted with marsh hammocks—back barrier islands or small upland areas surrounded by tidal waters and marshes—that provide a haven for wildlife.

As the state's coastal population grows and development pressures threaten Georgia's coastal resources, public policies protecting and conserving coastal lands must be implemented. Preservation of the region's coastal resources through land use regulations and land acquisition programs is essential to the resilience of the community and the local economy, and the quality of life for its residents.



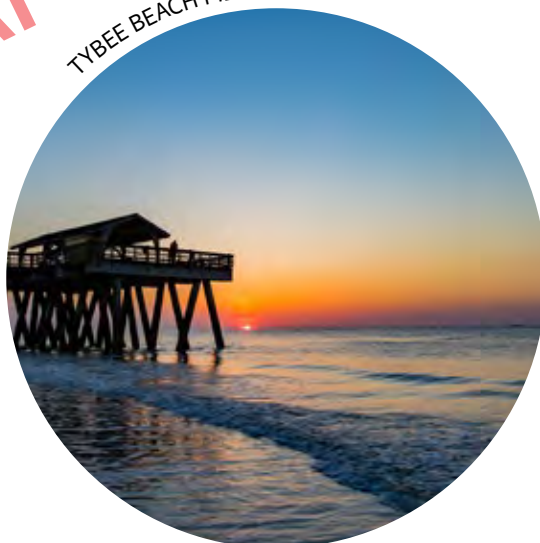
# 23%

of land in Chatham County is classified as Marsh\*

\*Savannah Tree Foundation, Tree Canopy Assessment 2020

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TYBEE BEACH PIER





# WATER RESOURCES

## Water Supply

Chatham County is located within the Atlantic Coast Flatwoods area of the state within both the Savannah and Ogeechee River Basins and, more specifically, within the boundaries of the Lower Savannah, Lower Ogeechee, and Ogeechee Coastal Watersheds.

The Ogeechee River Basin headwaters are located in mid-to southeastern Georgia and are flanked by the Altamaha and Oconee River Basins to the west and the Savannah River Basin to the east. The headwaters are located in the southeastern edge of the Piedmont province, and the basin continues southeastward to the Atlantic Ocean, draining approximately 5,540 square miles of land area. The river basin is located entirely in the State of Georgia and played a significant role in forming Wassaw, Ossabaw, Saint Catherine's, Black Beard, and Sapelo islands off the coast of Chatham County.

The Savannah River Basin is a 10,577 square mile watershed whose headwaters originate in the Blue Ridge Province of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The Savannah River forms the boundary between South Carolina and Georgia as it flows southeast to the Atlantic Ocean at Savannah. The Savannah River is the most extensively used surface water source in the Savannah River Basin.

### WATERSHEDS

A watershed is a land area that channels rainfall and snowmelt to creeks, streams, and rivers, and eventually to outflow points such as reservoirs, bays, and the ocean.

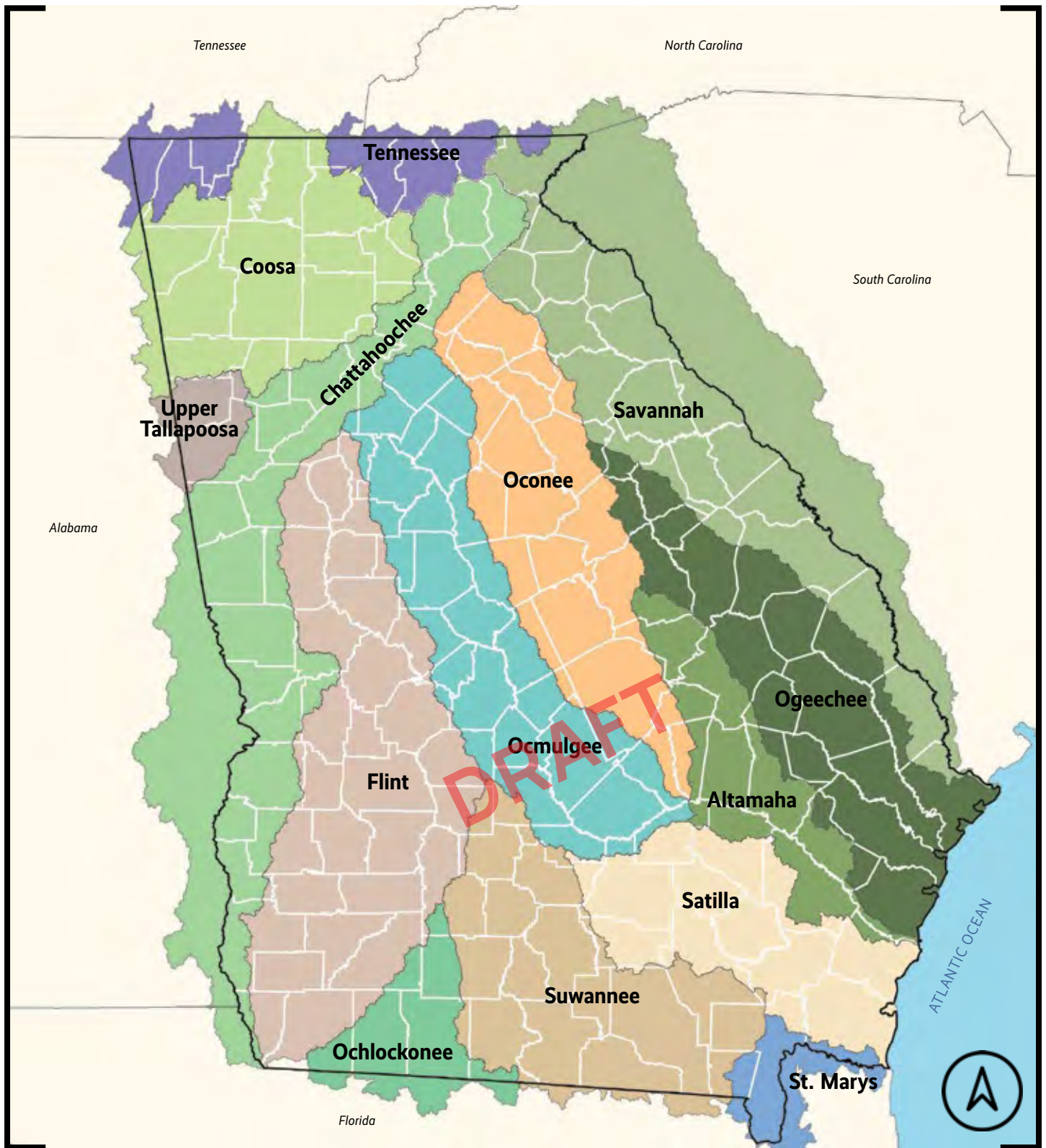
—USGS



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Map 7.1—Georgia River Basins





## Public Water Supply Sources

The groundwater resources of Coastal Georgia—and the Floridan Aquifer system in particular—are recognized as some of the most productive in North America. This particular system underlies an area of about 100,000 square miles in southeastern Mississippi, southern Alabama, southeastern Georgia, southern South Carolina, and all of Florida. The depth below the ground surface to reach the top of the Floridan Aquifer increases from less than 150 feet in coastal South Carolina to more than 1,400 feet in Glynn and Camden counties in Georgia.

Approximately 95% of the population of Chatham County is served by municipal or community water systems (Chatham County Comprehensive Water Supply Management Plan (2000 Update)); 98% of the water provided by these systems is pumped from the Floridan Aquifer and meets or exceeds drinking water standards. Water is pumped directly into the distribution system with chlorine and fluoride being the only treatment necessary.

## Public Water Supply Issues

As a result of extensive pumping in much of the developed areas of Savannah and in the adjacent coastal areas in Georgia and South Carolina, the aquifer has experienced changes in the groundwater levels, rates and distribution of recharge and discharge, rates and direction of groundwater flow, and overall water quality in the aquifer system. As population growth increases the demand for drinking water, a reduction in groundwater usage becomes necessary to prevent saltwater intrusion into these critical water supplies.

Measures to reduce the amount of groundwater pumped from the Floridan Aquifer were instituted in 1995 when the Comprehensive Water Supply Management Plan for Chatham County was adopted. The Plan was the result of a cooperative effort by the local municipalities, major domestic water companies, and major industrial water users to reduce groundwater pumping.

Saltwater intrusion into the Floridan aquifer in the Savannah area threatens the continued viability of the region's primary drinking water supply source. In 1997, the State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) limited the amount of groundwater that could be withdrawn from the Floridan Aquifer.

The EPD previously capped the amount of groundwater that could be withdrawn from the Aquifer and mandated a 10 million gallon reduction in pumping by 2005. The moratorium on additional groundwater withdrawal was viewed as a temporary measure pending a study to measure saltwater intrusion into the groundwater supply. This study, called the Sound Science Initiative, was completed in May 2010 and led to a multi-step approach to managing groundwater withdrawals along the coast.



Map 7.2—Floridan Aquifer System





Map 7.3-Chatham's Large Watersheds



## Red Zones

The Chatham and southern Effingham County region, classified as the “Red Zone,” has experienced significant reductions to each county’s groundwater withdrawal permit limits to help prevent impacts to the Floridan Aquifer system. Subsequent analysis of pumping indicated that the permit restrictions, conservation measures, and additional management strategies were proving effective. In October 2015, EPD again mandated a reduction in pumping from all groundwater withdrawal permittees within the Red Zone with reduction milestones for 2020 and 2025 included. In general, most of the 2015 permit limits for Red Zone users were reduced by 22% for 2025.

In light of the new directives from EPD, the municipal water providers within Chatham County and southern Effingham County continue to explore opportunities to coordinate water supply management and conservation efforts for the long-term.

The issues affecting groundwater quality (domestic, industrial, and agricultural pumpage, and vertical and horizontal migration of saltwater into the aquifer) must continue to be addressed on a regional basis because groundwater withdrawal in one area affects the piezometric pressure throughout the aquifer, and saltwater intrusion in one part of the aquifer may eventually contaminate the entire aquifer system.

### SALTWATER INTRUSION

Saltwater intrusion occurs when too much groundwater is pumped from coastal aquifers and saltwater migrates inland, contaminating the water supply.

—USGS

### MANAGING SALTWATER INTRUSION

Chatham County and the southern portion of Effingham County (south of GA Hwy 119) were identified in the 2006 Coastal Georgia Water and Wastewater Permitting Plan for Managing Saltwater Intrusion as having the highest vulnerability for the groundwater cone of depression that extends into South Carolina, where saltwater intrusion has already occurred.

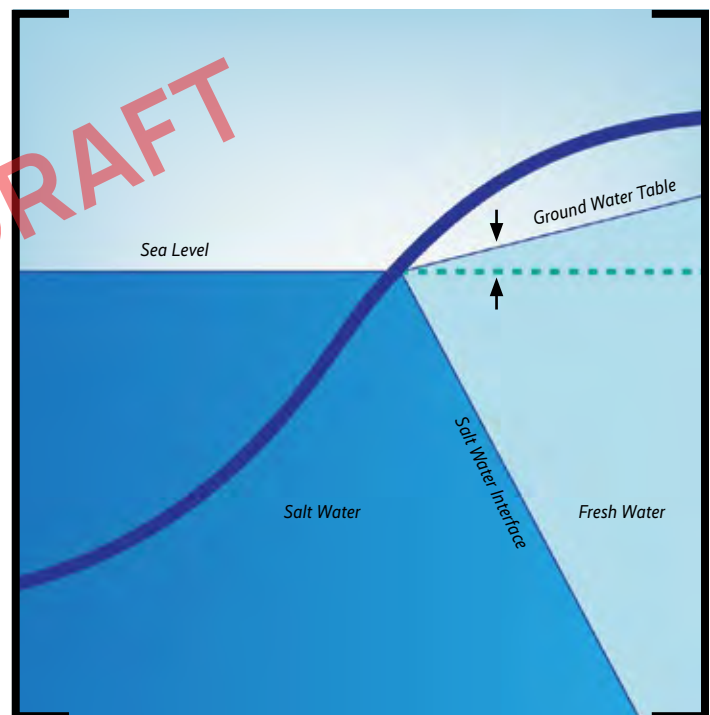
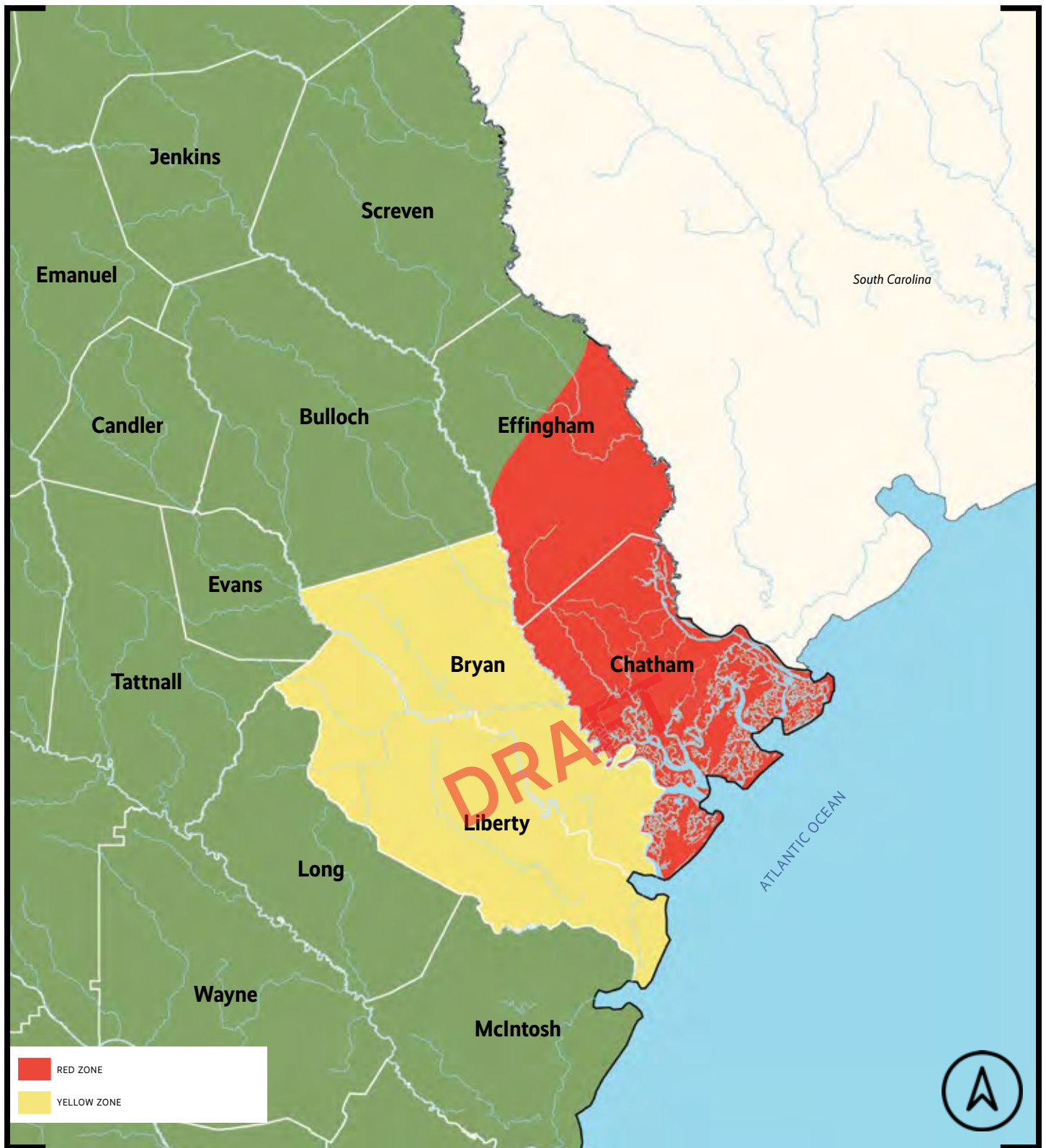


Figure 7.1–Aquifer Impact Diagram





Map 7.4-Chatham "Red Zone" Water Management Area



## Groundwater Recharge Areas

A groundwater recharge area is the land where the water that eventually seeps down into an aquifer first enters the ground. Groundwater can move readily through soils and rocks that have large pore spaces (porous) such as sand, gravel, sandstone, or limestone. However, soils and rocks with small pore spaces (non-porous) such as clay, shale, or granite, hinder water movement. The principal aquifer recharge zone for the Floridan Aquifer system is located approximately 100 miles northwest of the city of Savannah where the upper boundary of the aquifer's confining layer outcrops at the surface near the Fall Line separating the Piedmont province from the Coastal Plain. Smaller areas of groundwater recharge are specifically located in the Miocene/Pliocene-Recent unconfined aquifer system within Chatham County. These local recharge areas are generally located on Wilmington Island, Skidaway Island, and along the Abercorn Street corridor in Savannah.



## Groundwater Pollution Susceptibility

If hazardous or toxic substances pollute the water that seeps into the ground in a recharge area, these pollutants are likely to be carried into the aquifer and contaminate the groundwater, ultimately effecting a community's drinking water source. Once polluted, it is almost impossible for a groundwater source to be cleaned up. For this reason, a local wellhead protection ordinance was passed, and the City routinely performs inspections of community wells to prevent wellhead contamination and to address any stormwater pollutants that have the potential to impact groundwater quality through the wellhead.

In Chatham County and Savannah, the protection of groundwater recharge areas is also overseen by restricting land uses that generate, use, or store pollutants within groundwater recharge areas and by establishing minimum sizes for lots within groundwater recharge areas that are served by on-site sewage management systems. Prior to the issuance of a building permit or a demolition permit, the Zoning Administrator assesses whether the proposed activity is located within a groundwater recharge area as identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR). All lands identified as groundwater recharge areas are subject to restrictive development standards.

Specific areas adjacent to Chatham County have also been deemed to have a higher pollution susceptibility. Careful consideration should be taken within these areas when deciding on land uses and new development to protect the area's groundwater system.





Map 7.5-Chatham County Groundwater Recharge and Groundwater Pollution Areas





## Impaired Water Bodies

Under related environmental protection measures, section 303(d) of the 1972 Clean Water Act mandates that all states develop lists of impaired waters within their jurisdiction. Impaired waters have been identified as polluted and are not currently or are not expected to meet applicable water quality standards. The GA EPD has a complete “303(d) list” for Chatham County and Savannah. Currently, there are a number of impaired waterways within Chatham County that are currently being monitored and investigated for measures to improve water quality

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The most current 303(d)list can be found for the State of Georgia and Chatham County at the link below...

<https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/watershed-planning-and-monitoring-program/water-quality-georgia>

## Impaired Waters 305(b)/303(d) List 2020

	Name
1	Little Ogeechee River
2	Ogeechee River
3	Savannah River/Front River/Harbor
4	Betz Creek
5	Casey Canal
6	Hayners Creek (known upstream as Casey Canal)
7	Salt Creek
8	Pipe Makers Canal
9	Ossabaw Sound
10	Kings Ferry County Park Beach
11	St. Catherines Sound

Figure 7.2–Impaired Water Bodies







Map 7.6—Chatham County Impaired Water Bodies



# STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater runoff is generated from rain that flows over land or impervious surfaces, such as paved streets, parking lots, and building rooftops, and does not soak into the ground. The runoff picks up pollutants like trash, chemicals, oils, dirt, and sediment that can harm our rivers, streams, lakes, and coastal waters. To protect these resources, communities, construction companies, industries, and others, use stormwater controls, known as best management practices (BMPs). These BMPs filter out pollutants and/or prevent pollution by controlling pollutants at their source.

The State and Local National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater programs regulate stormwater discharges through municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). Depending on population size, operators of the MS4s are required to obtain an NPDES permit before they can discharge stormwater. This permitting mechanism is designed to prevent stormwater runoff from washing harmful pollutants into local surface waters ([www.EPA.gov/npdes/npdes-stormwater-program](http://www.EPA.gov/npdes/npdes-stormwater-program)).

Stormwater Management Programs (SWMP) have been adopted by each municipality in Chatham County as a requirement of the NPDES administered by the GA DNR. The County and Savannah are both considered Medium Phase I MS4 Permittees. The jurisdictions' management plans include routine water quality sampling and testing; calculation of pollutant loads; identification and elimination of illicit discharges; training, preparation of annual reports to GA EPD; and education and public awareness programs.

## Municipal Stormwater Programs & Permits

	MS4 Permit Number	Location
1	GAS000205	Savannah
2	GAS000206	Chatham County
3	GAS000207	Bloomington
4	GAS000208	Garden City
5	GAS000209	Pooler
6	GAS000210	Port Wentworth
7	GAS000211	Thunderbolt
8	GAS000212	Tybee Island

Figure 7.3–Phase I MS4s in Chatham County



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## Coastal Stormwater Supplement

All of the jurisdictions within Chatham County have adopted the Coastal Stormwater Supplement to the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (CSS). The CSS is a tool intended to provide Georgia's coastal communities with comprehensive guidance on an integrated, green infrastructure-based approach to natural resources protection, stormwater management, and site design.

As water flows across municipal boundaries and stormwater management efforts (or lack thereof) impact neighboring jurisdictions, the County and all of the municipalities within it should work towards addressing stormwater issues collectively. The creation of a Regional Stormwater Committee or Commission should be considered to ensure that efforts being made are as efficient and effective as possible.

Statistically, most stream quality indicators decline when watershed impervious cover exceeds 10%, with severe degradation expected beyond 25%. In Chatham County, the majority of growth is targeted to western areas of the county. It is likely that future stream health indicators (e.g., biological health, stream bank stability) will be impacted in watersheds that have a substantial amount of land development. Several of these watersheds may transition over to an Impacted category. As a result, these impacted watersheds are excellent target areas for advanced stormwater management, riparian buffer management, and development principles that protect water quality, such as low-impact development (LID).

### STORMWATER RUNOFF

Stormwater runoff is rainfall that flows over the ground surface. It is created when rain falls on roads, driveways, parking lots, rooftops and other paved surfaces that do not allow water to soak into the ground.

—Center for Watershed Protection



# #1

Stormwater runoff is the number 1 cause of stream impairment in urban areas\*

\*Center of Watershed Protection, 2006



## Coastal Stormwater Supplement to the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual

First Edition  
April 2009





# GEOLOGY & SOIL TYPE

All of Chatham County is within the Atlantic Coast Flatwoods area of Georgia. The Atlantic Coast Flatwoods area occurs along the seaward portion of Georgia and is characterized by nearly level topography and poorly drained soils that are underlain by marine sands, loams, and/or clays. A series of marine terraces, roughly paralleling the coast, extends inward from sea level to an elevation of approximately 100 feet. The lower lying flat terraces do not have well-defined drainage systems and runoff moves slowly into slow-moving canals, streams, rivers, and finally into the ocean.

Chatham County and Savannah's soils tend to predominantly fall into the D-type category of soils, with shallow water tables that make infiltration difficult. Group D soils are clay loam, silty clay loam, sandy clay, silty clay, or clay. This Hydrologic Soil Group has the highest runoff potential. They have very low infiltration rates when thoroughly wetted and consist chiefly of clay soils with a high swelling potential, soils with a permanent high-water table, soils with a claypan or clay layer at or near the surface and shallow soils over nearly impervious material (<https://engineering.purdue.edu>). The average soil rating in Chatham County, as measured by the National Commodity Crop Productivity (NCCPI), is 47.



## NATIONAL COMMODITY CROP PRODUCTIVITY

The National Commodity Crop Productivity Index (NCCPI) is a model that uses inherent soil properties, landscape features and climatic characteristics to assign ratings for dry-land commodity crops such as wheat, cotton, sorghum, corn, soybeans and barley.

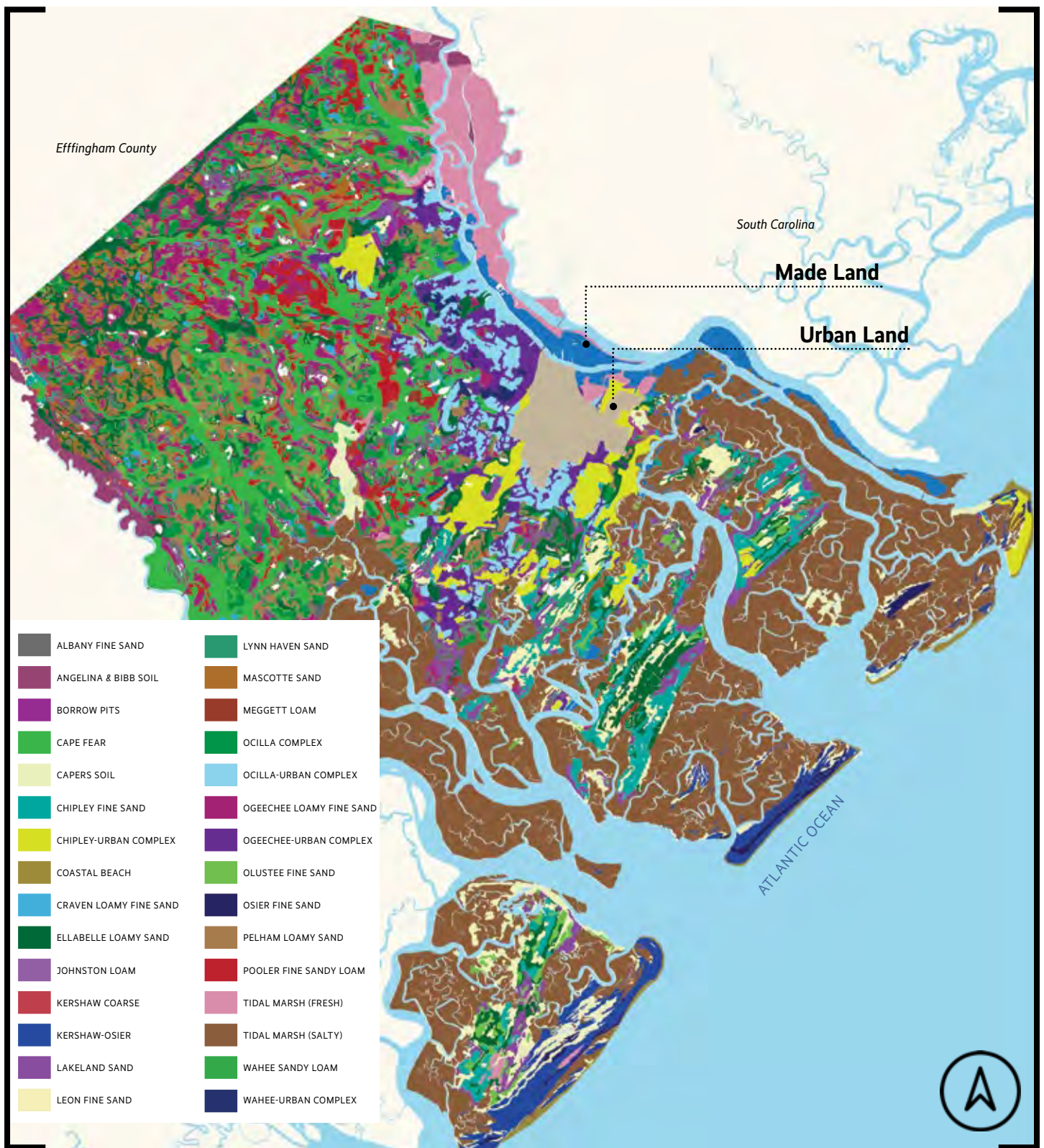
The value of ranges is from 0 to 100, 100 being the best

—USDA

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Map 7.7-Chatham County Soil Types



# WETLANDS

Wetlands are vital features in the region's landscape that provide benefits for people and wildlife. Wetlands are able to improve our water quality, provide natural habitat, and store floodwaters. A wide variety of amphibians, animals, plants, and microbes inhabit wetlands, making them some of the most productive ecosystems in the world.

Over the past 60 years, many wetlands in Georgia have been altered and converted to other uses due to development; many of these conversions were of freshwater wetlands on the coastal plain. Conversion rates in Georgia have accelerated due to changing demands for agricultural and forest products, population growth, and urban expansion in the Piedmont, mountains, and along the coast. This has had a distressing effect on not only the natural environment, but also the human environment as flooding increases in frequency and magnitude with nowhere for floodwaters to go.

*Over the past 60 years, many wetlands in Georgia have been altered and converted to other uses due to development; many of these conversions were of freshwater wetlands on the coastal plain.*

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”

## BENEFITS OF WETLANDS

Among the numerous functions of wetlands, the following items are the most critical:

- » Flood control,
- » Water quality and availability,
- » Erosion control,
- » Fish and wildlife habitat,
- » Recreation and aesthetics.

—US EPA







Map 7.8—Chatham County Wetlands



Directly related to the need for wetland conservation, under the Part V Environmental Planning Criteria requirements, both Chatham County and Savannah have adopted a Wetland Protection Ordinance that provides a procedure to coordinate federal wetlands permitting with local permitting. This ordinance provides a regulatory framework by which potential wetland impacts are evaluated before local permits for land disturbance and building are issued.

The future of wetlands is closely linked to land use decisions made not only by local governments but by private landowners as well, since regulations are inexpensive relative to acquisition and can provide substantial protection for wetlands. Incentive-based programs—including non conventional development standards such as subdivision regulations, stormwater management ordinances, and floodplain ordinances—are other means of protecting wetlands that have been implemented locally.

#### ZONING TO REGULATE WETLANDS

Unincorporated Chatham County has a zoning requirement for a 35-foot marsh buffer setback that is intended to,

- » protect and enhance community character; and
- » to protect environmental quality, especially the estuarine system surrounding the community.

#### FUN FACTS

# 228

square miles of wetlands exist in Chatham County\*

\*Savannah Tree Foundation, Tree Canopy Assessment 2020



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Stormwater management ordinances such as those implemented by all of the jurisdictions within Chatham County can be used to protect wetlands as a means of reducing non-point source pollutants and to create artificial wetlands for the treatment of surface runoff. In addition, pollution controls may be used to prohibit discharges into area wetlands.

According to NOAA's Office of Coastal Management (NOAA OCM) CCAP Land Cover data, 8.54% of total area in Chatham County changed land cover from 1996–2016. This includes a net loss of 5.5 square miles of wetlands and 15.9 square miles of forested land, and a net gain of 23.9 square miles of developed land over the last 20 years.

#### PLANNING CRITERIA

To ensure continuous protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, and river corridors, specific environmental planning criteria have been developed and discussed throughout this section of the Comprehensive Plan as required. These include:

- » Criteria for water supply watersheds
- » Criteria for protection of groundwater recharge areas
- » Criteria for wetlands protection
- » Criteria for river corridor protection

## Land Cover Changes Over Time

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Land Cover Categories	1996 Area (sq. mi.)	Area Lost (sq. mi.)	Area Gained (sq. mi.)	2016 Area (sq. mi.)	Percent Change	Net Change (sq. mi.)
Developed (High Intensity)	19.15	0.00	8.95	28.10	46.73%	8.95
Developed (Low Intensity)	38.14	-0.34	10.00	47.80	25.32%	9.66
Developed (Open Space)	22.31	-1.02	6.35	27.63	23.87%	5.32
Grassland	8.36	-4.90	1.99	5.45	-34.74%	-2.90
Agriculture	3.54	-0.67	0.74	3.61	1.98%	0.07
Forested	89.97	-19.36	3.46	74.07	-17.67%	-15.90
Scrub/Shrub	8.76	-5.30	4.15	7.61	-13.10%	-1.15
Woody Wetland	78.04	-9.07	1.63	70.60	-9.54%	-7.44
Emergent Wetland	155.91	-2.13	4.06	157.84	1.23%	1.93
Barren Land	9.09	-1.06	2.59	10.62	16.76%	1.52
Open Water	199.03	-2.25	2.19	198.97	-0.03%	-0.05

Figure 7.4–Chatham County Land Cover Changes, 1996–2016





# FLOODPLAINS & FLOOD ZONES

## Floodplains

Floodplains are flat or lowland tracts of land adjacent to lakes, wetlands, and rivers that are typically covered by water during a flood. The ability of the floodplain to carry and store floodwaters should be preserved in order to protect human life and property from flood damage. Moreover, undeveloped floodplains also provide many other natural and economic resource benefits.

Floodplains often contain wetlands and other areas vital to a diverse and healthy ecosystem. By making wise land use decisions in the development and management of floodplains, beneficial functions are protected and negative impacts to the quality of the environment are reduced. Both Chatham County and the City of Savannah have updated their Floodplain Protection Ordinance to begin addressing sea level rise and the natural migration of waters along the coast; however, more attention must be given, and measures must be enacted in the near future to allow for further protection of the coastal community from rising waters due to changes in the environment.

### FLOOD ZONES

Flood zones are a geographic areas that the FEMA has defined according to varying levels of flood risk. These zones are depicted on a community's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) or Flood Hazard Boundary Map. Each zone reflects the severity or type of flooding in the area.

—FEMA

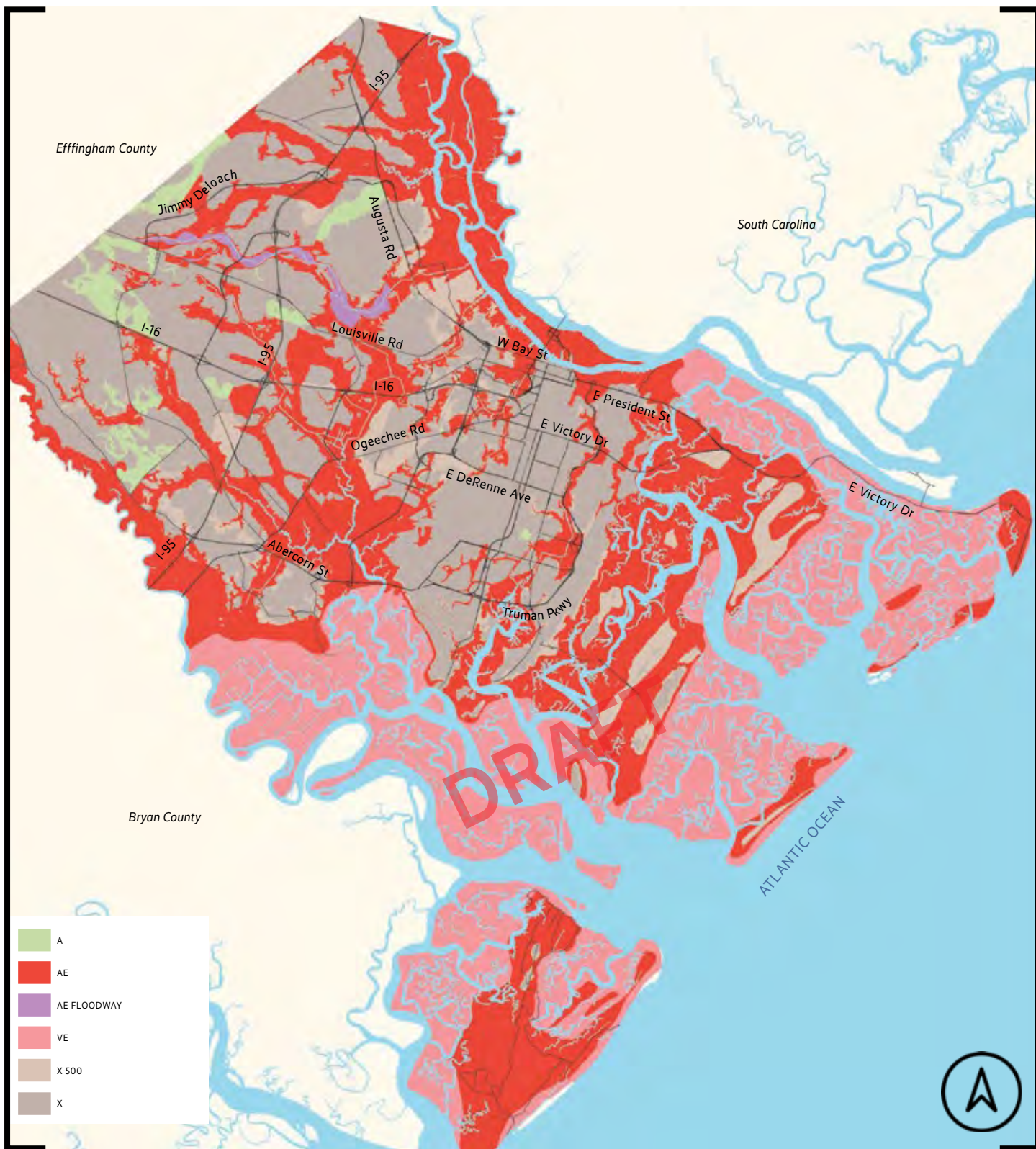
## Flood Zones

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is tasked with creating Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) that determine flood zone designations for properties. Flood maps offer useful information and represent the official depiction of flood hazards for a community. Flood zone designations, coupled with local policies and the efforts of municipal floodplain managers, impact the flood insurance rates of individual properties.

It is important for property owners to know what their property's flood zone designation is in order to fully understand the potential risks their home, business, or land faces. This information can aid in making decisions regarding investments or alterations to property that will minimize possible risks, when making preparations for potential flooding events, and in determining if flood insurance is necessary.







Map 7.8—Chatham County Flood Zones



# PARKS, RECREATION, & CONSERVATION AREAS

The natural and scenic amenities of Chatham County offer many recreational and cultural opportunities. As open space in the city continues to be lost to development, it is imperative to explore all available means for land conservation before it is too late. Land acquisition programs such as the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission should be funded and utilized in conjunction with land use regulations to ensure the open space needs of the region will continue to be met.

In addition to providing an adequate quantity (acres) and type (ballfields, wildlife habitat) of open space, it is important to work to ensure equity to all residents. All residents should have access to a variety of parks, recreation, and open space within close proximity to their residence. Trails, bikeways, and pedestrian paths, as well as other non-vehicular paths should be incorporated into such areas to provide access for those without personal transportation.

“Open space” is an area that is valued for active and passive recreation and protection of natural resources (including natural processes and wildlife), provides public benefit, and is part of one or more of the following categories: developmentally difficult lands, natural resource areas, commercially used natural resources areas, natural amenity areas, recreational areas and urban form areas”. Under this definition, there are five areas under Federal jurisdiction and five areas under State jurisdiction within Chatham County that fall within this title of conservation/recreation areas.

Additionally, there are a number of recreational and conservation areas within Chatham County that are not under state or federal jurisdiction.

Some of the conservation and recreational areas within Chatham County include the following sites:

## Federal Jurisdiction

	Site Name
1	Fort Pulaski National Monument
2	Savannah Coastal National Wildlife Refuge
3	Tybee National Wildlife Refuge
4	Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway
5	Wassaw Island National Wildlife Refuge

## State Jurisdiction

	Site Name
6	Little Tybee/Cabbage Island
7	Skidaway Island State Park
8	Ossabaw Island Wildlife Management Area
9	University of Georgia Marine Extension Center
10	Wormsloe Historic Site

## Local/NGO Jurisdiction

	Site Name
11	Oatland Island Education Center
12	McQueen's Island Trail
13	Bacon Park
14	Lake Mayer
15	L. Scott Stell Community Park / The Jim Golden Complex
16	King's Ferry Park
17	Tom Triplett Park
18	Savannah Ogeechee Canal Trail
19	Whitemarsh Preserve
20	Lower Ogeechee Conservation Corridor
21	Pennyworth Island

Figure 7.5–Chatham County Parks, Recreation, and Conservation Areas





Map 7.9—Chatham County Parks, Recreation, and Conservation Areas



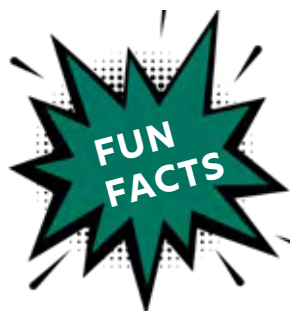


# PRIME AGRICULTURAL & FOREST LAND

The loss of agricultural and forest land is not only a local issue, but is taking place across the country. More and more land that was once farmland or forest is being developed for residential subdivisions or commercial uses. The loss of these lands negatively impacts the environment in multiple ways: by increasing impervious surfaces resulting in flooding and nonpoint source pollution; by reducing air quality through the elimination of trees that filter pollutant gases; and by increasing energy consumption due to the additional miles traveled transporting crops and livestock. The loss of agricultural land can also make residents reliant on other states or countries for their food supplies.

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (USDA), between 2012 and 2017 there was a 91% increase in the number of farms in Chatham County from 35 to 67 farms totaling 4,677 acres. Chatham County's average farm area in 2017 was 70 acres. The number of farms in the county has been trending upward for the first time in almost 20 years, most likely due to the increasing movement of growing and sourcing local foods such as berries, honey, meat, and eggs from nearby nurseries and small farms.

Now more than ever, the implementation of land use regulations and incentive-based programs to prevent the loss of agricultural and forest lands is pertinent.



## 41%

of land in Chatham County is classified as Vegetation\*

\*Savannah Tree Foundation, Tree Canopy Assessment 2020

## Tree Canopy

The Savannah Tree Foundation's 2020 Tree Canopy Assessment provided a bird's eye view and illustrated general trends in tree loss and gain countywide.

## Major Takeaways

- While the county has gained tree quantity, it has lost quality trees
- The impacts of not having or not enforcing tree ordinances are evident
- Large-scale clear cutting associated with industrial construction is having the most noticeable impact on the county's tree canopy

## Tree Canopy Change Overtime

Municipality	2014 Percent Vegetation	2020 Percent Vegetation	Percent Change	Acreage Change
Unincorporated	25%	32%	7%	14,655
Savannah	39%	49%	10%	7,137
Garden City	53%	66%	13%	1,207
Pooler	62%	63%	1%	204
Bloomingtondale	83%	83%	0%	-5
Tybee Island	7%	15%	8%	168
Thunderbolt	17%	31%	14%	146
Port Wentworth	66%	73%	8%	812
Vernonburg	73%	83%	10%	26
Overall	34%	41%	7%	23,757

Figure 7.6–Chatham County Tree Canopy Change



## Challenges Ahead

### GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT:

Sustained regional growth and industrial expansion will continue to drive the reduction in tree canopy with fewer trees being replanted versus what is being removed during construction.

### AGING TREE CANOPY:

Chatham County is dealing with an aging tree canopy, especially in downtown Savannah. The majority of Savannah's downtown tree canopy was planted in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Most urban live oaks will live to be about 150 years old, which means many local trees will age out around 2040. To ensure that a consistent tree cover remains intact at all times, the City will need to make certain that dollars are programmed, trees are systematically replanted, and strict protection and planting ordinances are strengthened.

### INCREASED OCCURRENCES OF PESTS AND DISEASE:

Increased globalization means that pests and disease travel quicker and further. For example, the adjacent city of Savannah has already lost more than 1,000 Sugarberry trees to an unknown disease and the Asian Longhorned Beetle—whose larvae feed on hardwoods and have led to large-scale destruction of trees elsewhere in the U.S.—was recently found nearby in South Carolina.

## Impacts of a Changing Climate

The coastal area has begun to see scattered “ghost forests” that represent the extent of coastal trees lost to sea level rise and saltwater intrusion over the last several decades. By naturally absorbing large amounts of stormwater and helping to mitigate any flood impacts from increased sea levels, trees are a powerful resource for the local environment. However, a negative consequence of saltwater infiltration and storm surge can often be seen after storms and recurrent flooding: the rising waters cause saltwater intrusion into freshwater habitat, often gradually killing or severely damaging coastal trees from the roots up leading to their expensive removal later. Additionally, tree canopies can greatly assist in lowering the temperature and overall “heat stress” in communities, especially those dealing with known heat island effects.





# PROTECTED MOUNTAINS, RIVERS, & CORRIDORS

The State of Georgia requires every community to identify and put mechanisms in place to protect specific critical resources such as mountains, rivers, and river corridors that flank major rivers. The coastal region does not contain any protected statewide mountain areas; however, the coast's beautiful rivers and corridors are not only critical ecosystems, but they are paramount to the community's future growth and sustainability.

These river corridors are of vital importance because they help preserve those qualities that make a river suitable as a habitat for wildlife, a site for recreation, and a source for clean drinking water. River corridors also allow the free movement of wildlife from area to area within the state, help control erosion and river sedimentation, help absorb floodwaters during natural events, and allow the natural migration of floodwaters due to sea level rise.

In an effort to protect the Savannah River corridor, Savannah and Chatham County adopted the Georgia Coastal Regional Commission's (CRC) 2003 Regional River Corridor Protection Plan for the Savannah River. The maintenance of a 100-foot natural vegetative buffer, often referred to as a "riparian buffer", on both sides of the river is part of the Plan.

Similarly, under the State of Georgia Erosion and Sedimentation Act, a requirement is in place that land-disturbing activities shall not be conducted within 25 feet of the banks of any State waters.

## RIVER CORRIDOR

Corridors include an expanded channel width to help preserve the qualities that make a river or stream suitable as a habitat for wildlife, a site for recreation, and a source for domestic and other water uses.

—FEMA

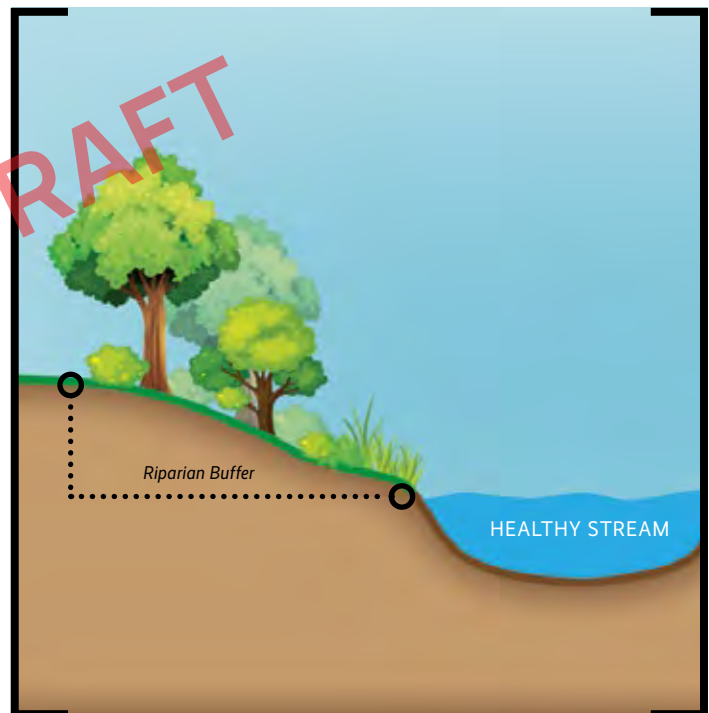


Figure 7.7–Riparian Buffer



Riparian buffers are of particular importance to the overall protection of water quality and habitat within the Lowcountry and coastal areas of Georgia. Scientific research has found many reasons for riparian buffers, including:

- to reduce the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff in order to protect the hydrological profiles of surrounding waterways;
- to reduce sediment and pollutants going into open water;
- to provide upland wildlife habitat areas;
- to help maintain in-stream temperatures provided by shade within the tree canopy of the buffer system;
- buffering adjacent neighborhoods; and
- enhancing community appearance.

#### RIPARIAN BUFFER

A riparian buffer or stream buffer is a vegetated area (a buffer strip) near a stream, usually forested, which helps shade and partially protect the stream from the impact of adjacent land uses.

—EPA





# RENEWABLE ENERGY

A community's dependence on non-local fossil fuels as an energy source has many far-reaching consequences. Extracting these resources negatively impacts the environment, while burning fossil fuels contributes to poor air quality which can lead to respiratory disease and other ailments. The culmination of these actions depletes the atmosphere and exacerbates climate change.

Facing the challenge to accelerate the development and deployment of clean, renewable energy sources to respond to the negative impacts of burning fossil fuels while also protecting the natural resources and unique community character is a daunting endeavor. But it is one that must be made a priority in order to protect the environment and the quality of life of Chatham County's residents.

Fundamentally, some basic goals which should be a focus include:

- Develop and adaptively refine a measurable working definition of "sustainability"
- Improve energy-efficiency to reduce power consumption
- Transition to clean energy
- Improve the diversity, equity, and stability of employment and investment in the green energy economy
- Reduce dependency on power sources that emit greenhouse gases
- Improve the ability to monitor and evaluate the parameters of "sustainability" in general, as well as the effects of policies, practices, and actions/projects initiated in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan

## Savannah's 100% Clean Energy Resolution

The City of Savannah has taken a major first step in addressing the issue of climate change in the region by adopting a resolution committing that 100% of electricity consumed in the city will be generated from safe, clean, and renewable sources by 2035, and all other energy needs will be generated from safe, clean, and renewable sources by 2050. This resolution is a much-needed platform from which to launch meaningful programs and policies focused on reducing the greenhouse gases that accelerate climate change. The City, in making this resolution, has created an opportunity for economic development and job creation while increasing the city's resilience and reducing costs associated with mitigating damage to public health and safety.

Areas of expansion for the City's commitment should include:

- The support and expansion of clean energy jobs both internal and external to the city's operations related to:
  - » Energy efficiency
  - » Renewable energy
  - » Energy grid and storage
  - » Clean vehicles
  - » Fuels



# SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Historically, the method for handling solid waste in Chatham County has been primarily through the disposal of solid waste in area landfills. This arrangement has been satisfactory from the standpoint of the landfill operators who enjoy the benefits of the profits generated and their customers who enjoy the relatively inexpensive disposal fees. However, because of the high land costs in Chatham County, it is unlikely that land will be available to construct new landfills when existing ones reach capacity, at which time county residents may be required to pay additional transportation costs to new landfills in other counties. In addition, it is likely that surrounding counties will demand a premium to accept waste generated outside of their area.

The City of Savannah successfully started a curbside single-stream recycling program in 2008 and Chatham has had drop-off facilities/transfer stations since before 2008. Both recycling programs are popular with residents and have proven to be successful in removing materials from the waste stream prior to disposal in area landfills. The cheap cost of certain raw materials in comparison to the cost incurred to recycle that material continues to be a challenge in making recycling even more successful. In addition, recent

years have seen adjustments in the recycling industry due to global market changes, leaving some materials unable to be recycled at all. Education campaigns should be adjusted to emphasize the need to reduce consumption and reuse materials where possible.

*Chatham County's two landfills will reach capacity between the next 3-9 years.*  
—Georgia EPD

Preserving the capacity of the landfills by reducing the amount of waste generated, as well as recycling, composting, and mulching of yard waste should be a priority of the County. The city of Savannah is currently planning for expansion of its Dean Forest Landfill, however, as shown by the number of operating years remaining for each of the two area landfills, and because the management of solid waste requires a long-term perspective, a regional outlook and discussion on solid waste management is warranted.

## Solid Waste Facilities

Facility	Facility Description	Average Daily Tons	Net Volume per Year	Rate of Fill (yd <sup>3</sup> /day)	Years Remaining	Estimated Fill Date	Operating Days per Year
Savannah—Dean Forest Rd (SL)	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	276	109,415	329	3	06.01.2024	333
Superior Landfill & Recycling Center 2 MSWL	Municipal Solid Waste Landfill	2,463	766,270	2,737	9	10.09.2030	280

Figure 7.8—Chatham County Permitted Landfills





# CLIMATE CHANGE

It is widely recognized that shifts in large scale weather patterns—known as climate change—are already impacting residents in Chatham County. Negative impacts of climate change experienced locally include extreme heat, changes in the amount of annual rainfall, warmer ocean waters that feed and strengthen hurricanes, beach erosion, saltwater encroachment upon drinking water sources and natural habitats, infrastructure damage, loss of property, and more frequent flooding in the region due to sea level rise. The effects of climate change negatively impact the quality of life of residents in addition to causing irreparable damage to the natural and built environment.

*Up to 178,787 people in Georgia could be at risk of sea level rise impacts by 2100, many of whom are from socially vulnerable populations—Georgia Climate Project*

Changes occurring on Georgia's coast due to climate change are expected to redistribute species and greatly modify ecosystems. Local ecosystems provide animal habitat and recreational opportunities, improve water quality, provide seafood, reduce erosion, minimize flooding impacts, and aid in the carbon sequestration process. These potential changes will come at a great cost financially, in the form of both tax dollars spent to mitigate impacts and the loss of revenue by small, local businesses that rely on fishing or working the land for their livelihood, in addition to the cost to the natural environment of such a loss of habitat (US Global Change Research Program, Fourth National Climate Assessment).



## CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change includes both global warming driven by human emissions of greenhouse gases and the resulting large-scale shifts in weather patterns.

Climate change efforts can be in the form of mitigation—reducing activities that add to climate change—and adaptation—adapting to the changes in the climate that are currently occurring. Both mitigation and adaptation efforts will need to be implemented to protect the region from the impending negative impacts of climate change.

The way communities are developed has significant impacts on greenhouse gas emissions. Fundamental to this is for both Chatham County and Savannah to support and require Smart Growth measures to manage the impacts of climate change as it relates to land use and development. This can be done through both mitigation and adaptation measures to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from development and redevelopment projects.

Some mitigation efforts include preserving greenspace (particularly ecologically valuable land), preserving existing trees and/or requiring the planting of new trees, limiting the amount of impervious surfaces permitted, transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable and clean energy sources, and implementing land use regulations and capital improvement plans that limit development and infrastructure in areas at risk of sea level rise. All new infrastructure should be designed with climate change in mind.



Chatham County and the city of Savannah are already seeing the effects of climate change, and these effects are projected to become more pronounced in the coming decades. Impacts will include more and stronger storms, more drought, more frequent extreme heat events, rising sea levels, and more localized flooding. Recognizing what specific changes might be projected for the city is essential to planning the community's future land use.

Adaptation efforts include elevating roads, lift stations, drinking water and other facilities where feasible, building flood defenses, preparing for reduced water availability, and planning for heat waves. It is a delicate balancing act to attempt to protect natural resources, public safety, and the economic stability of the community while implementing efforts to address climate change. Successful outcomes will depend on multi-jurisdictional cooperation in the development and implementation of policies that incorporate mitigation and adaptation measures.

The implementation of smart strategies can help the community adapt to these changes as well as other challenges that could arise regardless of climate change.

Five main challenges facing Chatham County include:

#### URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND HEALTH RISKS:

Chatham County is particularly vulnerable to climate change compared with cities in other regions, with expected impacts to infrastructure and human health. The vibrancy and viability of this area, including the people and critical regional resources located within, are increasingly at risk due to heat, flooding, and vector-borne disease brought about by a changing climate (<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/19/>). Chatham County is rapidly growing and offers opportunities to adopt effective adaptation efforts to prevent future negative impacts of climate change.

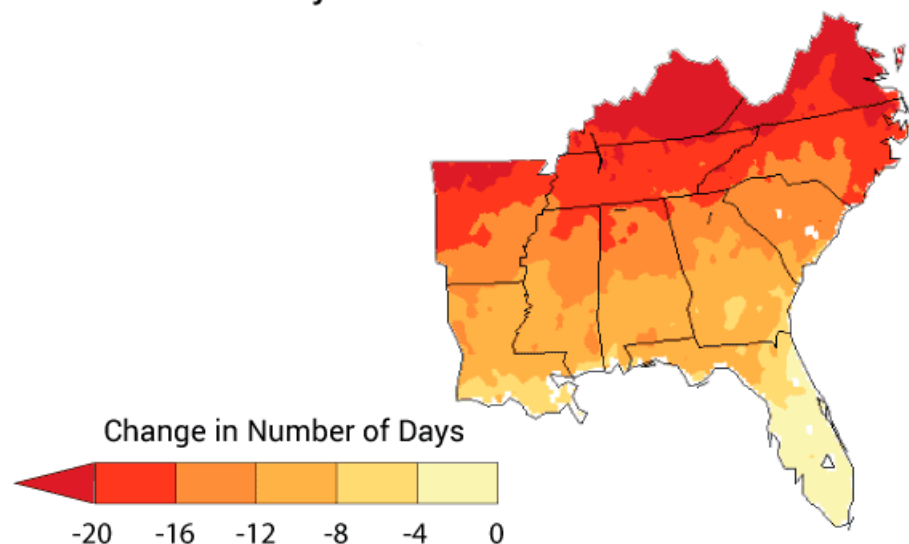
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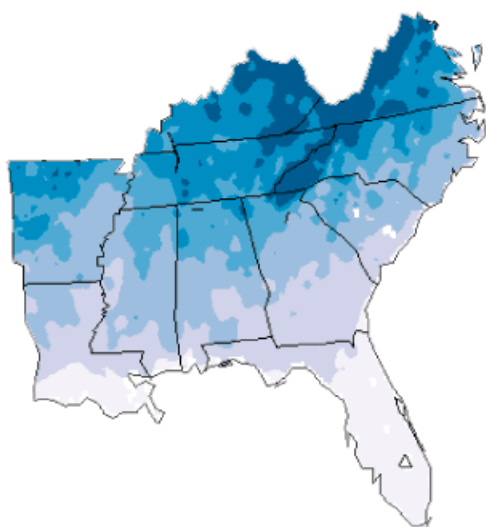


## Projected Change in Number of Nights Below 32°F

Projected Difference from Historical Climate



Historical Climate (1971-2000)



Projection (2041-2070)

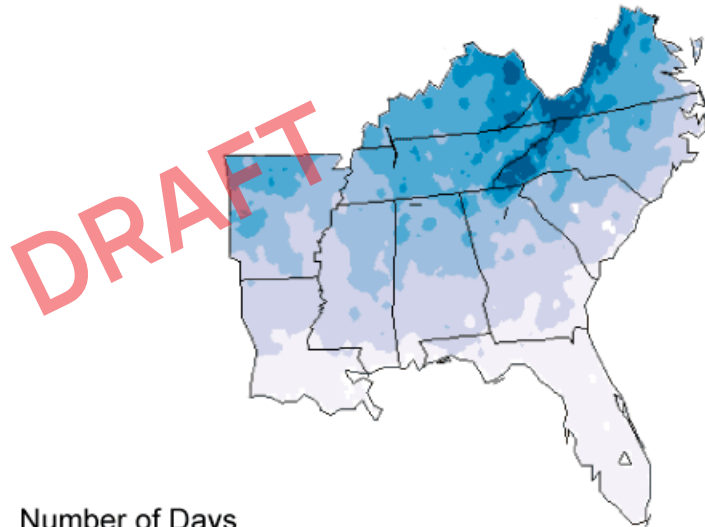


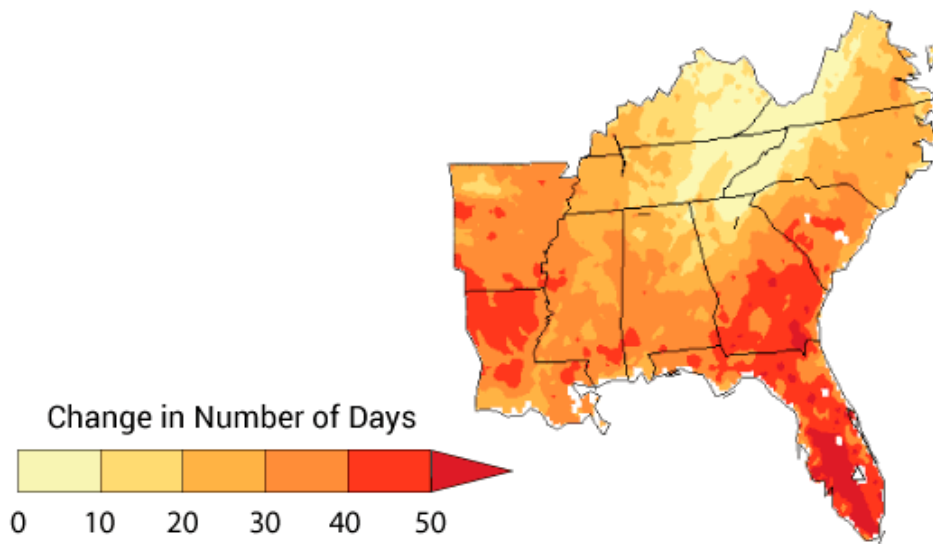
Figure 7.9—Projected Change in Number of Nights Below 32° F

Kenneth E. Kunkel, Cooperative Institute for Climate and Satellites - NC

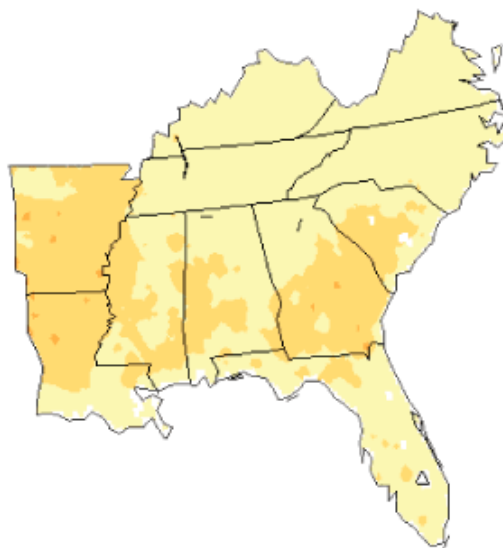


## Projected Change in Number of Days Over 95°F

Projected Difference from Historical Climate



Historical Climate (1971-2000)



Projection (2041-2070)

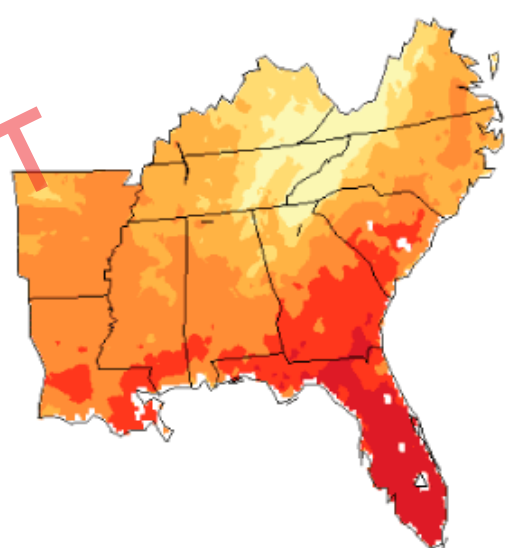


Figure 7.10—Projected Change in Number of Days Over 95°F  
Kenneth E. Kunkel, Cooperative Institute for Climate and Satellites - NC



## HEAT-RELATED STRESSES:

Heat-related stresses are presently a major concern for the community, with future temperature increases expected to continue to pose challenges for human health. While recent regional temperature trends for Chatham County have not shown the same consistent rate of daytime maximum temperature increase as observed in other parts of the United States, this is possibly due to the moderating influence of the Atlantic Ocean on coastal temperatures. Climate model simulations strongly suggest that daytime maximum temperatures are likely to increase as humans continue to emit greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Figure 7.11, sourced from the Third National Climate Assessment, shows the observed annual average and projected temperatures for the southeast United States. Temperatures are expected to continue to rise into the future, however the magnitude of warming depends on greenhouse gas emissions (<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/19/>).

The resulting temperature increases are expected to add to the heat-health burden in both the more rural and more urbanized areas of Chatham County. Additionally, drought has been a recurrent issue affecting our community's water resources. With rapid growth in population and overall water demand, drought is increasingly a concern for local jurisdictions' water resource managers, as well as the region's ecosystems and energy producers.

## ECONOMIC AND HEALTH RISKS FOR MORE RURAL AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES:

More frequent extreme heat episodes and changing seasonal climates are projected to increase exposure-linked health impacts and economic vulnerabilities in the manufacturing, fishing, and shrimping sectors. Projected warming ocean temperatures, sea level rise, and ocean and coastal acidification are raising concern over future harvests. By the end of the century, nationally, over one-half billion labor hours could be lost from extreme heat-related impacts. Such changes would negatively impact the region's labor-intensive occupations and compound existing social stresses in our low-income areas.

While adaptation and resilience can help to moderate climate change impacts, areas of the County facing other stressors, such as poverty and limited access to healthcare, will be less resilient and will have a harder time coping with these climate-related challenges.

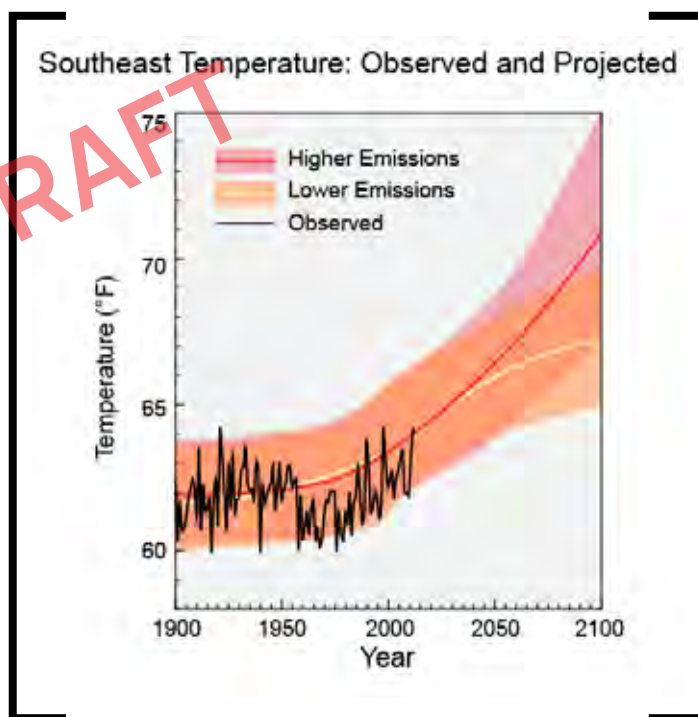


Figure 7.11–Southeast Temperature: Observed & Projected  
Regional Climate Trends and Scenarios for the U.S. National Climate Assessment: Part 2. Climate of the Southeast U.S. NOAA Technical Report 142-2



## FLOOD RISKS IN COASTAL AND LOW-LYING REGIONS:

Chatham County's coastal plain and inland low-lying regions support a rapidly growing population, a tourism economy, critical industries, and important cultural resources that are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. The combined effects of extreme rainfall events and sea level rise are already increasing flood frequencies, which impacts property values and infrastructure viability. Without the implementation of significant adaptation measures, this area is projected to experience daily high tide flooding by the end of the century (<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/19/>).

*As sea levels rise and weather patterns change, flood risks will increase. Approximately 50,028 properties are already at risk in Chatham County, and within 30 years, about 56,841 will be at risk*  
—FloodFactor

## NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS WILL BE TRANSFORMED:

Chatham County's diverse natural systems, which provide many benefits to our society, will be transformed by climate change. Changing winter temperature extremes, wildfire patterns, sea levels, hurricanes, floods, droughts, and warming ocean temperatures are expected to redistribute species and modify ecosystems. As a result, the ecological resources that our community depend on for livelihood, protection, and well-being are increasingly at risk, and future generations can expect to experience and interact with natural systems that are much different than those we see today.

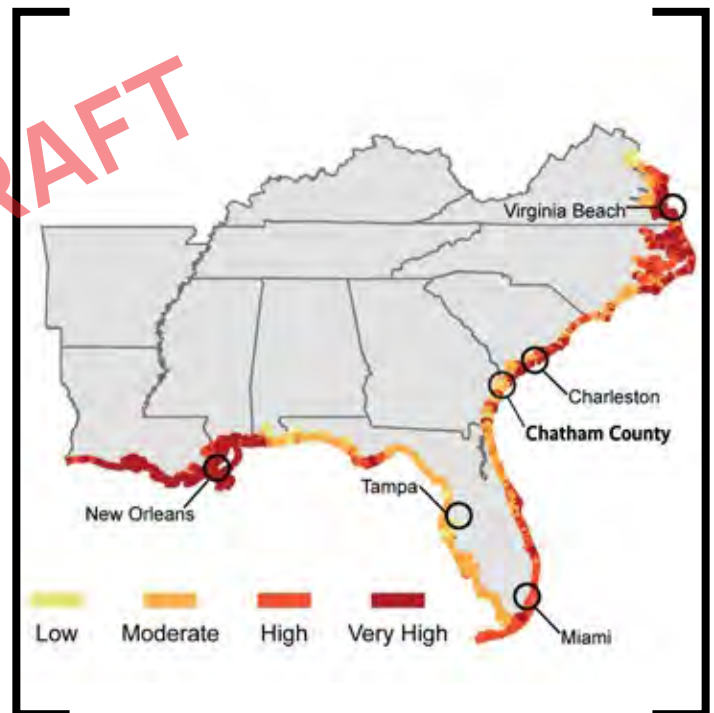


Figure 7.12—Coastal Sea Level Rise Vulnerability

Adapted from National Assessment of Coastal Vulnerability to Future Sea-Level Rise: Preliminary Results for the US Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf of Mexico Coasts. US Reports 99-593, 00-178, and 00-179





# HEAT ISLANDS & CLIMATE CHANGE

As new development occurs to accommodate the county's population influx, the built environment will be altered in a way that significantly affects the natural environment surrounding it. The replacement of open, vegetated land with the dark, impervious surfaces that characterize cities modifies the local temperature and moisture characteristics, contributing to a climatological phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect.

*The urban heat island effect can cause cities to have temperatures up to 10°F hotter than their more rural surroundings*  
—UCAR Center for Science Education

Generally, heat islands are grouped into two distinct categories: surface heat islands and atmospheric heat islands. Surface heat islands are simply the elevation in temperature of surfaces in urban areas over surfaces in the surrounding rural areas, while atmospheric heat islands directly impact the thermal comfort and health of people and animals in an area. Surface heat islands are present at all times, but are often most intense during the day when urban materials receive the most solar radiation. Additionally, surface heat islands are not heavily influenced by the anthropogenic heat sources that affect the air temperature of a city, such as transportation vehicles or heating and cooling units.

## URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

Heat islands are urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures than outlying areas. Structures such as buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit the sun's heat more than natural landscapes such as forests and water bodies.

—EPA

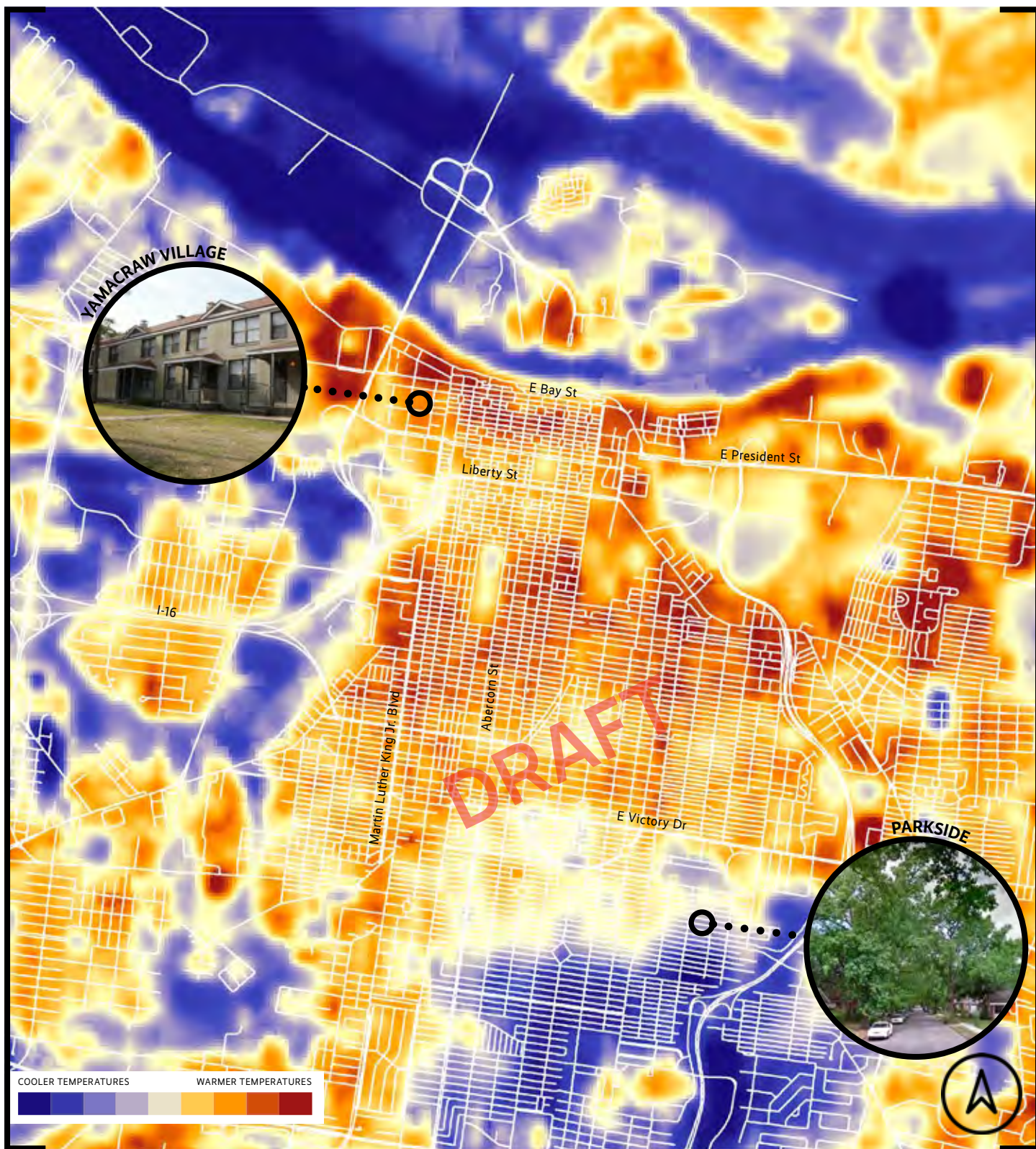
Additionally, surface heat islands are not heavily influenced by the anthropogenic heat sources that affect the air temperature of a city, such as transportation vehicles or heating and cooling units. Temperatures vary within cities, too. Areas that are well-shaded or have ample green space are cooler than areas covered with asphalt or concrete. Historically, neighborhoods with little or no vegetation have been inhabited by minority groups and those with low socioeconomic status, exposing them to increased heat and the negative consequences associated with it. Land surface temperatures for a portion of Chatham County are shown in Map 7.11.

Areas along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. stand out as having hotter surfaces than wealthier neighborhoods such as Parkside, a traditional residential neighborhood. Parkside is shown to have cooler surfaces than areas just north of E. Victory Dr., such as Victory Manor. It is important to understand and consider these environmental inequalities when working to make the community resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.



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Map 7.11—Land Surface Temperatures, Savannah



# SMART GROWTH & CLIMATE CHANGE

Smart growth policies contribute to both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Mitigation strategies reduce greenhouse gas emissions from development, and adaptation strategies make communities more resilient to the effects of a changing climate.

Smart growth strategies also bring environmental benefits and provide economic advantages to local governments and the private sector. In addition, they can save people money on energy and transportation, which is particularly important for low-income residents, and help protect human health.



## Mitigation

The way communities are developed has significant impacts on greenhouse gas emissions. Communities can reduce greenhouse gas emissions from development and redevelopment if they:

- Build compactly and use energy-efficient, green building techniques, which reduce emissions from both electricity generation and transportation
- Reuse existing infrastructure and buildings to take advantage of previous investments and the energy already used to build them
- Put homes, jobs, stores, parks, schools, and other destinations close to each other so that people can easily walk, bike, use public transit, or drive shorter distances
- Preserve green space, which can sequester CO<sub>2</sub>, by conserving ecologically valuable land and promoting development in previously developed areas, which helps reduce pressure to build on undeveloped land

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The most current information about smart growth strategies and their environmental benefits can be found at the link below...

<https://www.epa.gov>



## Adaptation

As discussed earlier, the effects of climate change are already being seen, and these effects are projected to become more pronounced in the coming decades.

Smart growth strategies could help the community adapt to these changes, as well as natural disasters, economic changes, and other challenges that could arise regardless of climate change. Some strategies we should consider include:

- Determine which areas are both well-connected to existing development and less vulnerable to current and projected climate change impacts such as sea level rise and higher storm surges, and riverine flooding, and encourage growth in these areas.
- Discourage building in areas that are currently or are projected to be more vulnerable to climate change-related impacts. Making it easier to build in safer areas can help relieve pressure to develop in more vulnerable areas
- Preserve large, contiguous areas of open space to better protect ecosystems that might be under pressure from the changing climate. Open space preserved along water bodies can also absorb flood waters and reduce flooding in developed areas
- Coordinate land use and transportation infrastructure decisions, and incorporate climate change projections into these decisions
- Encourage water- and energy-efficient buildings and land use patterns so that communities can continue to thrive if energy prices rise. This strategy can also help communities and their residents better cope with drought and extreme heat

- Upgrade stormwater systems to better manage heavier storm flows and use green infrastructure to reduce the amount of runoff from paved surfaces
- Encourage green roofs, parks, street trees, and other elements that can reduce ambient air temperatures and filter pollutants from stormwater runoff and the air
- Design buildings with adaptation and resilience in mind

Communities that recognize the long-term challenges associated with climate change and take proactive steps to adapt will be much better prepared to retain population while moving residents away from danger.



Photo Credit: Cody Thomas





# SEA LEVEL RISE

Concerns of sea level rise and the negative impacts associated with it are resulting in many coastal communities considering implementing measures to reduce risks to private property owners and public investments. It is important to identify what areas are at risk and gauge the level of risk, or severity of impacts, for each area in order to determine the most appropriate means to protect it. It is more costly to mitigate than to prevent development in areas that are at a higher risk. All future capital improvement projects should include an assessment of potential sea-level rise impacts through the expected life cycle design of the projects.

In an effort to have the information necessary for making decisions about future needs and infrastructure investments, Chatham County and the City of Savannah collaborated to assess the vulnerability of the region's stormwater management system to future changes due to sea level rise. The Stormwater System Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Coastal Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) was completed in 2020 and provides actionable information for Chatham County, the city of Savannah, and other jurisdictions to use in developing plans and implementing appropriate capital improvement projects that can increase the resilience of the regional stormwater system to future conditions.

According to the CWMP, sea level data recorded at the tide gauge at Fort Pulaski begins in 1935 and indicates a historic sea level rise trend of approximately one foot over 100 years. More recent global data and local data from Fort Pulaski suggest that this rate is accelerating, although there remains a high degree of uncertainty within the future projections.

The results of the vulnerability assessment indicate that up to 3% of inland stormwater drainage structures in unincorporated Chatham County are currently vulnerable to daily tidal inundation, while 8% are currently vulnerable to inundation at least once a year during the year's highest annual tide (HAT).

The vulnerability assessment for 2100 indicates that up to 19% of structures in unincorporated Chatham County would be vulnerable to daily tidal inundation, with 30% being vulnerable to inundation at least once a year. Results for the city of Savannah indicate that approximately 0.3% of stormwater inlets are vulnerable to daily tidal inundation, with 1% vulnerable at least once a year during the year's highest annual tide event.





By 2100, these results would increase to 9% of inlet structures being vulnerable to tidal flooding on a daily basis, and 15% being vulnerable at least once a year during the highest annual tide. Based on the assessment, extensive measures that would likely include a combination of shoreline elevation, extensive tide gates, installation of pumps, and strategic disinvestment within areas that may be deemed infeasible to protect would be required for adaptation to the 2100 sea level rise condition.

#### PLAN 2040 SURVEY

The MPC's Plan 2040 survey asked how important was "Protecting the community from environmental hazards and climate change?"

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the respondents felt that this objective was either very important, important, or mildly important for the County to work on.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.

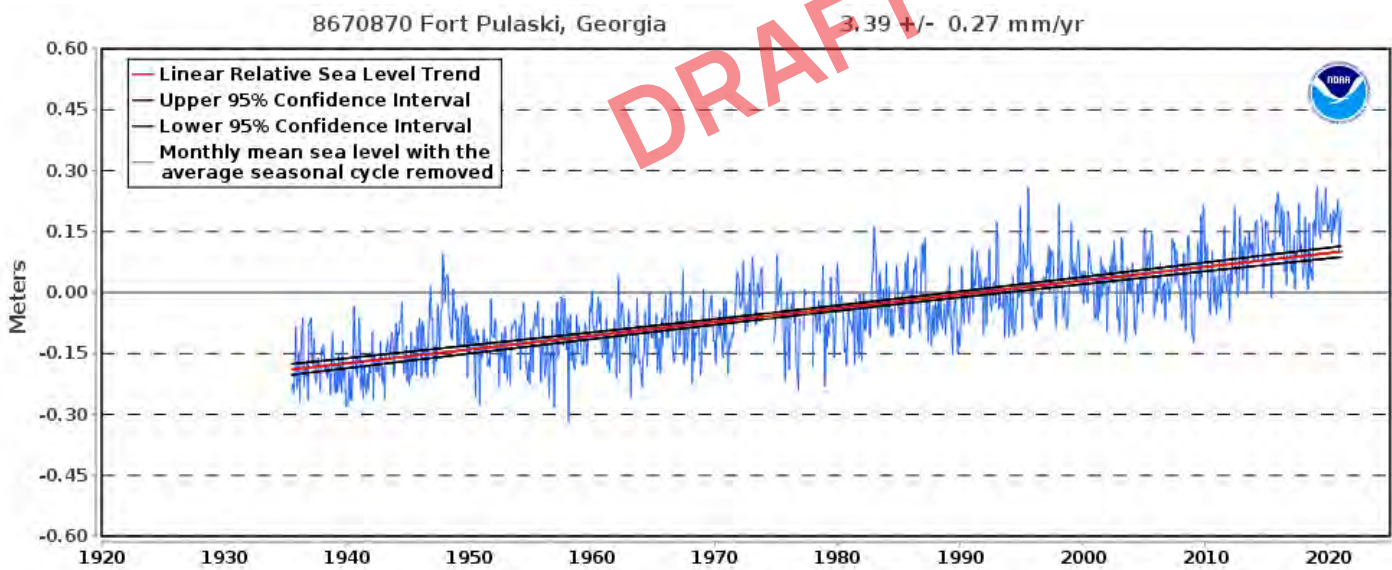


Figure 7.13–Local Sea Level Trend



# RESILIENCE & LOCAL PREPAREDNESS

All communities are vulnerable to the potential impacts of an event such as a hurricane, pandemic, or infrastructure failure that can cripple the routine of residents, businesses, industry, infrastructure, and government services. Community resiliency includes implementing safeguards so that all members of the community are better prepared for such events, ensuring that all of the community will bounce back and flourish as quickly as possible following the event.

Community resilience also protects against more common occurrences such as sea level rise, sunny day flooding, and severe economic inequities. Building a strong network focused on addressing equity gaps and elevating vulnerable populations is necessary to create a truly resilient community.

## Temperature & Precipitation Projections

Increase in Extremely Hot Days\*

**82%**  Within 25 Years

Increase in Days with Heavy Precipitation \*

**2%**  Within 25 Years

\*Headwaters Economics





## Coastal Empire Resilience Network

The Metropolitan Planning Commission began work in 2020 to expand previous work done around sea level rise impacts along Chatham County's coast. The MPC began partnering with Chatham County, the City of Savannah, University of Georgia, Georgia Sea Grant, Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division, and others to develop a Coastal Empire Resilience Network (CERN).

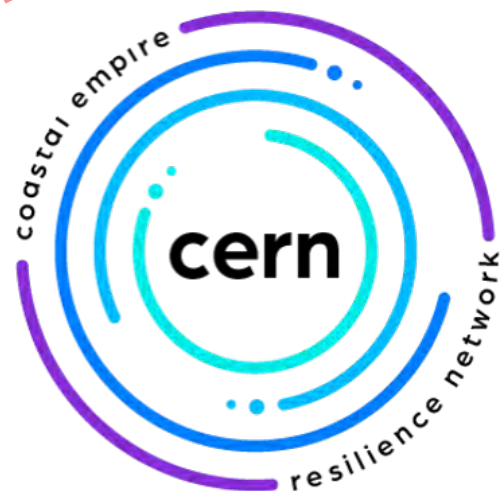
CERN will engage regional community partners, municipal staff, and policy makers to coordinate strategies to address the physical, economic, and social challenges that the region faces due to climate change and other hazards. Also included will be an effort to ensure all local level policy makers have adequate education on climate change and sea level rise. CERN will work to align regional strategies, share resources, and advocate for collective action to improve the resilience of the coastal region.

### CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Climate resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate. Improving climate resilience involves assessing how climate change will create new, or alter current, climate-related risks, and taking steps to better cope with these risks.

—Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

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Hurricanes

Hurricane season officially runs from June 1 through November 30, with the peak period for hurricane development in early to mid-September. Over the last decade there has been an increase in both frequency and intensity of storms during hurricane season due to warming ocean temperatures. In addition, rising sea level has resulted in higher storm surges during these storm events, most recently in 2016 with Hurricane Matthew (category 2 off the Chatham coast), Hurricane Michael in 2018 (category 1 and tropical storm in Georgia), and Hurricane Dorian in 2019 (category 3 off the Chatham coast).

The six coastal counties at highest risk of evacuation because of storm surge are Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, and McIntosh. The hurricane threat in Chatham County is high since Georgia’s coastline is impacted from tropical systems from both the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.


Population growth along the coast has complicated the evacuation and sheltering process. Millions of residents and tourists from Georgia and its neighboring states of Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina jam highways in search of safety and shelter when evacuation orders are issued. And often, just the threat of a hurricane is enough to put voluntary and mandatory evacuation orders into effect.

Improved forecasting and warning capabilities have diminished hurricane-related deaths in the 20th century; however, damage to property has increased with the rapid growth along the coast. For this reason, population growth, flood plain management, and housing development issues are carefully monitored by government agencies to ensure that all coastal communities and their inhabitants are safe for years to come.

COVID-19 Impacts

COVID-19’s impact on the environment has been mixed. Although the pandemic resulted in improved environmental conditions, there have been other negative effects, some of which are obvious, others less so.

In short, the positive effects have been reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improved water quality, reduced noise pollution, improved air quality and in some cases, wildlife restoration. However, some negative effects have also increased such as the amount of medical waste, haphazard disposal of PPEs (i.e., face masks), increased municipal waste and reduced recycling efforts. Building back with sustainability in mind will be critical for our future success (<https://www.bdo.global>).



### HURRICANES

A hurricane is a type of storm called a tropical cyclone that forms over tropical or subtropical waters. When a storm's maximum sustained winds reach 74 mph, it becomes a hurricane. The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale gives the storm a 1 to 5 rating, or category, based on the hurricane's maximum sustained wind.

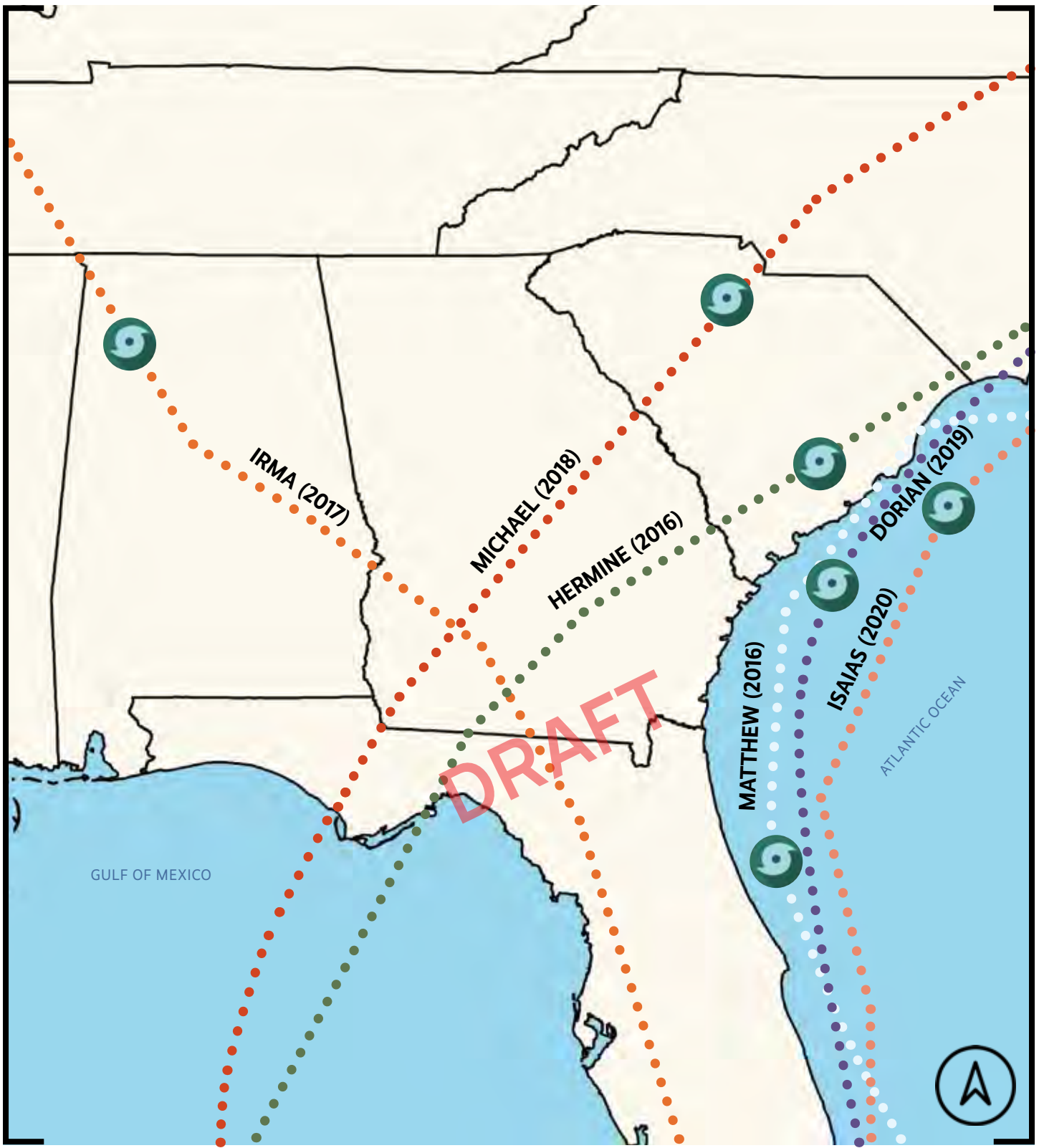
—NOAA

Hurricane List 2016–2020

Storm Name	Date Range	Max Wind Speed	Min Pressure	Max Category
Hurricane Hermine	8.28.16–9.08.16	70 mph	981 mb	1
Hurricane Matthew	9.28.16–10.10.16	145 mph	934 mb	5
Hurricane Irma	8.30.17–9.13.17	155 mph	914 mb	5
Hurricane Michael	10.06.18–10.15.18	140 mph	919 mb	5
Hurricane Dorian	08.24.19–09.09.19	160 mph	910 mb	5
Hurricane Isaias	7.23.20–7.05.20	75 mph	987 mb	1

Figure 7.14–Hurricanes Affecting Chatham County





Map 7.12-Hurricane & Tropical Storm Tracks





# PLANNING ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

In order to determine the adequacy of existing natural resource policies and programs, a thorough assessment of both is needed. This will ensure that resources are utilized, developed, managed, and preserved wisely for maximum long-range benefits for each community within Chatham County.

After careful review, the following list was created to highlight the points that will need careful attention in the future.

## COASTAL RESOURCES:

The islands and southeast areas of Chatham County are environmentally unique in that they are marsh-side communities. Some features that need increased protection within these communities are the hammocks, wetlands, and back barrier islands as well as the individual marsh buffers and setbacks on each site. More intense local programs and development standards for marsh, wetland, and island protection need to be established, implemented, and maintained. There is also a strong need for natural resource sites in need of protection to be identified and ultimately “protected” through a number of means: possible acquisition using SPLOST funds, zoning, conservation easements, and donation, to name a few. Also in need of continued protection are coastal species of flora and fauna in danger of population decline and extinction. The previously active Chatham County Resources Protection Commission (CCRPC) was a viable mechanism for this type of protection effort; however, due to discontinued funding, the program has stalled as of 2021.

## LOCAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

COVID-19’s impact on the environment has been mixed. Although the pandemic resulted in improved environmental conditions, there have been other negative effects, some of which are obvious, others less so.

In short, the positive effects have been reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, improved water quality, reduced noise pollution, improved air quality and in some cases, wildlife restoration. However, some negative effects have also increased such as the amount of medical waste, haphazard disposal of PPEs (i.e., face masks), increased municipal waste and reduced recycling efforts. Building back with sustainability in mind will be critical for our future success (<https://www.bdo.global>).



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### **EFFICIENT LAND USE:**

Maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and minimizing the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community should continue. This is achieved by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community and focused around transportation; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning investment in public infrastructure; and maintaining open space and conservation uses. Enhancements to existing regulations to require and/or incentivize open space preservation are needed. Both data and public feedback have shown that the community is calling for development that minimizes the amount of land consumed and allows for more open space to be set aside for public use as parks, greenways, and wildlife corridors.

### **PARK, RECREATION, AND CONSERVATION AREAS:**

State and federal laws provide some protection and management for these resources, but too often these laws are not sufficient to protect sites from adjacent development impact. More restrictive zoning regulations and buffer requirements may be needed in the future to limit or prohibit certain uses in these areas. In addition, the CCRPC program cited above could be a possible viable mechanism for increasing the number of permanently protected areas within the county should funding again become available.

### **WEST CHATHAM COUNTY GROWTH:**

Rapid growth in western Chatham County has led to separate, unique challenges. A program for natural resource protection is strongly needed to ensure that the area's isolated wetlands, tree canopies, and greenspace are not lost due to the rapid development this area is experiencing.





## **BROWNFIELDS:**

A brownfield is an abandoned or underused industrial or commercial property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant ([www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields)).

While traditionally seen as an urban issue, brownfields exist in suburban and more rural areas as well. Consider the former gas station, dry cleaners, landfill, an old rail yard or abandoned junk yard. Soil, water, and air contamination can be caused by many different land use activities.

Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties can increase the local tax base, facilitate job growth through job creation, utilizes existing infrastructure, takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, both improves and protects the environment, and by removing blighted property, builds ties among residents, businesses, and all parties involved.

There are programs at both the Federal and State level that may be able to support revitalization efforts by funding environmental assessment, cleanup, and job training activities for the community to encourage redevelopment of these underutilized properties.

To date, there has not been a comprehensive effort to survey, assess, and inventory properties that may qualify as brownfields. However, the city of Savannah has begun a brownfield program within the City's Sustainability Office and is currently targeting sites for initial assessments along the Martin Luther King, Jr/Montgomery Street corridor from Bay Street to 52nd Street. The importance of using these properties throughout the county as a strong redevelopment tool cannot be understated and similar efforts should be expanded countywide.

## **STORMWATER:**

Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as Low Impact Development (LID) strategies that reduce stormwater runoff must continue to be implemented throughout the county to lessen the impacts of runoff on the coastal environment. There is also a need countywide to determine whether stormwater utilities are feasible for the continued maintenance, management, and treatment of the area's stormwater systems. Additionally, all of the jurisdictions within Chatham County need to discuss stronger, more unified options for handling stormwater and flood waters related to growth on a countywide scale.

## **SALTWATER INTRUSION:**

Saltwater intrusion into the Floridan Aquifer system needs to continue being addressed regionally to ensure the protection of the coastal area's groundwater source of drinking water. An update of the Red Zone Water Management Plan needs to be completed to determine total usage and the region's capacity for growth.

## **SOLID WASTE:**

Solid waste control and disposal need to be evaluated and addressed on a regional basis to allow for a more thorough approach to management, reduction, and continued capacity for the coastal areas. This effort should include the reduction of waste streams through recycling, composting, and mulching of yard waste.

## **SEA LEVEL RISE:**

Chatham County and the City of Savannah need to evaluate and update current building standards, zoning code, and related regulations to ensure the adequate protection of the existing built environment, the design of future construction, and the resiliency of the natural environment to periodic and permanent inundation over time due to sea level rise.



## LOCAL PREPAREDNESS:

Chatham County's Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP), overseen by the Chatham Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), is a multi-phase effort to help the County address the complications that can arise following a disaster as the community attempts to rebuild and recover. The DRP is a tool that can identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. Additionally, the countywide Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) outlines specific hazards and highlights areas being focused on to become a more resilient community. Continued efforts are needed around planning for infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, hospitals, housing) to pinpoint where to direct new growth.

## RACIAL DISPARITIES:

Environmental racism refers to the disproportionate exposure to and impact of environmental harm on people of color (POC). POC-majority neighborhoods are often more likely to be exposed to these harms due to previous redlining and development policies that segregated their communities into specific areas. These areas are often more likely to be near pollutant-heavy industries and/or traffic-heavy roads, lack foliage and contain a large amount of asphalt, impacting how hot the neighborhood is for residents. Summertime temperatures in neighborhoods containing fewer trees are often more than five degrees hotter than in a tree-heavy neighborhoods. Furthermore, redlined neighborhoods tend to be low-lying neighborhoods that experience recurring flooding.

These environmental impacts may increase health problems such as asthma, cancer, and heat-related illness. Stronger policy action—such as reducing pollution, reducing segregation, enhancing the tree canopy, and investing in flood protection—is necessary to improve the environmental health of these communities.





# NATURAL RESOURCE GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents from flood hazards*

Protecting all residents from flood hazards is a vital step in creating a more resilient and equitable community. The low-lying elevation of the region has left many residents and properties vulnerable to the threats of flood hazards, with the frequency, quantity and financial impacts of flood waters increasing with the addition of impervious surfaces associated with development and the rise in sea levels due to climate change. Historically, the negative impacts of flooding have been disproportionately felt by low-income and minority communities that were developed on the lowest lying lands in the area.

As sea levels rise and changes in climate bring increases in precipitation and in the frequency and intensity of storms, the flooding that has plagued low-lying areas will continue to be a chronic issue impacting more residents and properties.

### Objectives:

- Work at a regional level to address and mitigate impacts of flooding and sea level rise
- Implement policies and standards to prevent future development and infrastructure in areas susceptible to flooding
- Prioritize conservation of undeveloped lands and dedication of open space to reduce impervious surfaces in the region





## GOAL 2

### *Improve public education and outreach efforts related to water, flooding, and hazards*

Public education and outreach efforts can be a key to the success of public programs put in place to protect residents and property from the impacts of flooding and hazard related issues, as well as programs to protect the water quality of the region. Such efforts help garner support for these programs and generate understanding of the benefits to the community. They can also be effective in teaching residents how to comply with any associated regulations.

Public education can create a partnership between the government and residents in furthering the goals of public programs. Education can empower residents to be good stewards of the community and educate others on the importance of the programs, as well as publicly supporting or advocating for policies and regulations associated with efforts.

### **Objectives:**

- Create a series of training programs to educate the public on water, flooding, and hazard related issues impacting the community
- Develop partnerships with schools, churches, and other civic organizations to broaden public education and outreach efforts





## GOAL 3

*Implement plans, policies, and property protection to reduce potential damages from climate change*

Environmental conditions are continuously changing, and it is imperative that local plans, policies, and regulations are cognizant of and evolve with the changes as needed. As science, technology and building standards improve or real-world conditions and future projections change, the guiding documents of the community should also progress in order to best protect residents and property from potential damages and mitigate other negative impacts.

Efforts to proactively prevent potential damages to future public and private investments must be of paramount importance in the development of plans, policies, and regulations. Growth and new development should be directed away from current or future high-risk areas and encouraged in more appropriate areas.

### Objectives:

- Evaluate existing plans, policies, and regulations to ensure that they are utilizing the most up to date data and projections and are consistent with current best practices
- Routinely monitor new technologies and practices for areas of improvement in existing guiding documents
- Identify areas most at risk of potential damages and implement policies and standards that prevent private or public investments in such areas

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## GOAL 4

*Conserve and protect potable water sources to ensure adequate drinking water supplies for existing and future residents*

Water is a finite resource and although water covers approximately 70% of the earth's surface, the majority of that is saltwater. Freshwater is far less abundant and is a precious resource because water suitable for drinking is a basic necessity for survival. It is essential to preserve and protect any potable water sources from overuse, pollutants, and saltwater intrusion.

The Floridan Aquifer system is the coastal area's groundwater source of drinking water. If hazardous or toxic substances pollute the water that seeps into the ground, it is possible that those pollutants can contaminate the groundwater and render it useless. Extracting too much water from the aquifer can result in saltwater intrusion, reducing the amount of potable water for future use.

### Objectives:

- Address drinking water source protection and conservation efforts regionally
- Explore and prioritize land conservation efforts that preserve and protect potable water sources
- Evaluate existing policies, plans, and regulations to ensure that they are consistent with best management practices in regards to water usage and the protection of water sources during site development





## GOAL 5

### *Preserve and enhance scenic views*

Chatham County and Savannah are known for their natural beauty and scenic views. They improve the quality of life of residents that are lucky enough to enjoy them as a part of their daily lives and draw tourists who dream of moss covered trees and Spartina filled marshes to the area. Development pressures have resulted in the loss of some of these cherished views, diminishing the aesthetic pleasures for all that live and visit the area. Without adequate land use and buffer controls, the likelihood of these scenic areas to be impacted will increase and long term loss will occur.

#### **Objectives:**

- Create criteria for what constitutes a scenic viewshed worthy of preservation and/or enhancement
- Identify scenic viewsheds to be protected
- Partner with nonprofits and other agencies to identify funding sources and other methods to preserve/enhance identified viewsheds
- Review existing ordinances and policies for amendments to better protect viewsheds
- Include viewshed analysis in the development process for developments that may negatively impact identified viewsheds

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## GOAL 6

*Conserve existing tree canopy and require planting of additional native trees during the development process to mitigate negative impacts of stormwater runoff, heat islands, reduced air quality, and loss of tree species from rising ambient temperatures*

Trees and their canopy play an important role in the quality of life and protection of natural resources in the region. In addition to the aesthetic qualities of trees, they play an active role in reducing temperatures by providing shade, improving air quality through filtering out pollutants, and alleviating the impacts of stormwater runoff by capturing rainfall and allowing for better infiltration of water into the ground. The loss of existing tree canopy during the development process negatively impacts the community in a variety of ways. Protecting and preserving existing tree canopy during the development process, as well as into the future, is vital. When not possible it is critical to require the planting of native trees as replacements for those lost.

### Objectives:

- Inventory existing tree canopy in each jurisdiction and establish programs to ensure a minimum tree canopy is maintained countywide.
- Engage with property owners to educate on the importance of trees to the community and their role as private property owners to protect the region's tree canopy.



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## GOAL 7

*Improve the ability of our community to adapt to changing natural and built environments*

A resilient community has strategies in place to respond, adapt, and prosper in the face of changing conditions. It is important for a community to be able to withstand disruptions created by not only natural disasters and the changing climate but also due to shifts in demographics, changes in the economy, and impacts to its infrastructure. Increasing the communities' ability to adapt and be more resilient benefits all residents by improving the quality of life, allowing for healthy growth, providing durable systems, and conserving resources for current and future generations.

### Objectives:

- Review development regulations, policies, plans and incentive programs to identify means to better prepare for potential events that will create disruptions, and develop measures that allow for action in the face of uncertainty or unexpected events
- Enact policies and regulations that will reduce impacts of human activities that intensify climate changes
- Identify strategies and create networks to provide support and safety nets for the most vulnerable residents in the community that have the least resources to adapt and be resilient in the face of disruptions

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## GOAL 8

*Manage the impacts of climate change as it relates to land use and development through mitigation and adaptation measures*

Climate change is the long-term change in average weather patterns and it has a broad range of observed effects. Coastal Georgia is facing many of the impacts of climate change. Sea levels are rising, weather patterns are less predictable, storms are increasing in frequency and intensity, temperatures are rising, drought conditions are lasting longer, air quality is declining, transmitted mosquito-borne disease rates are increasing, and natural ecosystems are being destroyed. In addition to environmental impacts, climate change has financial and societal costs, and those in poverty suffer the harshest consequences with the least ability to cope.

Land use and development decisions can significantly impact climate change, either by exacerbating conditions or providing proactive measures to prevent further impacts and mitigate existing conditions. The status quo is no longer a viable option. Now is the time to implement bold solutions to address the changing climate.

### Objectives:

- Coordinate land use and transportation infrastructure decisions, and incorporate climate change projections into these decisions
- Review and amend policies and regulations as necessary to remove barriers to mixed uses within close proximity of each other in order to reduce vehicle trips
- Evaluate existing policies, plans, and regulations to ensure that they are consistent with best management practices in regards to smart growth, energy efficiency, and reduction of emissions





## GOAL 9

### *Plan for the mitigation and redevelopment of brownfields for productive uses*

Brownfields are an untapped resource. They are properties, once developed, that now sit vacant and often are considered blighted or contaminated. Redeveloping and cleaning up brownfield sites promotes community revitalization, creates employment opportunities, increases tax revenue, potentially reduces community exposure to hazardous contaminants, and alleviates pressure to develop green spaces. The mitigation and redevelopment of brownfields for productive uses is the epitome of Smart Growth.

#### **Objectives:**

- Identify all potential brownfields and their potential contaminants
- Explore grants and other funding sources to assist in the cleanup and/or redevelopment of brownfield sites
- Review and amend policies and regulations as necessary to remove barriers to the redevelopment of brownfields and identify means to incentivize their redevelopment

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PLANT RIVERSIDE REDEVELOPMENT





## GOAL 10

### *Proactively manage stormwater runoff*

Stormwater runoff is when rain cannot infiltrate into the ground because of impervious surfaces and instead flows into storm drains and nearby water ways. In times of heavy rainfall, stormwater can be a nuisance, causing flooding resulting in property damage. It can also carry pollutants into nearby water bodies, degrading the water quality for humans and other species.

Proactively managing stormwater runoff protects the environment, financial investments of the community (private and public), quality of life of residents, and public health.

#### **Objectives:**

- Address stormwater runoff management efforts regionally
- Evaluate existing policies, plans, and regulations to ensure that they encourage low impact development principles and are consistent with best management practices in regards to stormwater runoff
- Review and amend policies and regulations as necessary to remove barriers to innovative and creative solutions to manage stormwater runoff
- Identify funding sources and other mechanisms to conserve properties in open space as part of the community stormwater management system

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## GOAL 11

### *Implement a municipal clean energy action plan*

The use of fossil fuels creates pollution that puts the community's health at risk, exacerbates the negative impacts of climate change, and reduces the resiliency of the community by diverting limited resources from investing in efforts to create a more resilient community instead to combating the increasing dangers of climate change. Proactively making the shift from fossil fuels to clean energy now, rather than waiting until they eventually run out, protects the environment and the community, and encourages the creation of new jobs and innovation. Implementing a municipal clean energy action plan is an important step in working towards a healthier, safer future for all residents.

#### **Objectives:**

- Establish Clean Energy Action Plan committee
- Identify community partners and state agencies to participate in the process
- Develop an energy vision
- Assess the current energy profile
- Develop energy goals and strategies
- Identify and prioritize actions
- Identify funding sources to implement the plan
- Develop a blueprint for implementation

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# QUALITY OF LIFE ELEMENT

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# QUALITY OF LIFE

## Introduction

Chatham County seeks to provide an excellent quality of life for its citizens. In an effort to maintain such a high level, the county has a responsibility to promote and support programs and regulations that positively impact the quality of life of its residents. The citizens of this community can only achieve a superior quality of life when a safe, active, and healthy environment exists.

This element includes an inventory and assessment of the following quality of life aspects: Historic and Cultural Resources, Education, Health, Public Safety, and Broadband.



**Historic Resources**



**Public Safety**



**Education**



**Broadband**



**Community Health**



# HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Savannah and Chatham County showcase centuries of growth and change, treasured parks and squares, valued and varied culture, and historic architecture. Historic preservation, synonymous for many with quality of life, is a valuable planning tool that is used to protect the community's historic, cultural, and archaeological resources. The preservation of these resources ensures that the history of Savannah and Chatham County is retained and honored while planning for the future.

Establishing historic districts is one of the main ways to engage in historic preservation. Savannah and Chatham County have dozens of both locally and federally recognized districts. National Register historic districts are recognized by the federal government and qualify property owners for significant tax incentives, but provide little protection of the actual resources.

Local historic districts are established by ordinance and include specific design standards. These standards ensure that rehabilitation of historic structures and new development are consistent with the historic character of the district by requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness review process.

It is important to note that historic preservation is not only a mechanism for protecting historic assets and ensuring compatible new development, but also for effecting social, demographic, and economic change in our communities.







## Beginnings of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation in Savannah had its official beginning in 1955, when the Historic Savannah Foundation was established. Spurred by the proposed demolition of the Isaiah Davenport House, an 1820s brick home on Columbia Square, a group of women came together to save the home. Following the loss of many significant buildings, such as the 1901 Grand Union Station and the City Market building in Ellis Square, the public began to recognize the importance of preserving architecturally and culturally significant buildings and sites. Historic preservation in Savannah and Chatham County, as it did around the country, began to be a priority.

The legacy of the Oglethorpe Plan in Savannah is evident in its unique layout and architectural diversity. In 1966, this legacy paved the way for downtown Savannah to become a designated National Historic Landmark. By 1973, a historic zoning ordinance was adopted by the Savannah City Council; as a result, thousands of resources all over the city were identified and protected. Other neighborhoods sought designation leading to 16 historic districts in the city of Savannah, six historic districts in Chatham County and numerous registered historic places and individual properties throughout the city and county today.

## What is the Oglethorpe Plan?



The nucleus of the Oglethorpe Plan, created by James Edward Oglethorpe, is the ward. Each ward centers on a square of greenspace and is part of a larger integrated regional land system that originally expanded out to include five-acre garden plots and forty-five-acre farms; these were intended for each of the new members of the Georgia colony.

The plan informed the architecture and development patterns in the region for decades, with a dense urban pattern of townhouses and carriage houses in the original town and a more suburban pattern as development extends into former farm lots.

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# HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY

## Historic Resource Survey

A historic resource survey collects and records information about historic structures, sites, landscapes, and objects within a given area and provides detailed information through photographs and field notes. Historic resource survey are vital to the planning and preservation process and promote awareness of a community's historic and cultural resources.

## Resources Impacted by Climate Change

Due to its location on the coast of Georgia, climate and sea level rise (SLR) is an important topic when preparing for and ensuring protection of our historic and cultural resources. The first step in planning for the climate resiliency of historic and cultural resources is assessing which areas, structures, and sites are at a higher risk of impact from sea level rise, natural disasters, and other effects of climate change. Surveys in Savannah and Chatham County should focus on resources that may require adaptation or mitigation strategies in the next five to ten years. This will likely include coastal areas or areas that are more at risk of inundation, such as Skidaway, Talahi, Whitemarsh, and Wilmington Islands.

## Inclusive Surveying

Historic preservation has often underrepresented or deliberately overlooked historic and cultural resources in communities of color and places associated with LGBTQ history. This leaves thousands of historic and culturally important resources at risk of being lost, increasing the threats of displacement and gentrification. Inclusive surveying in Savannah and Chatham County is a necessary step to ensuring that these groups can protect the history and culture of their community while they grow.

## Historic Preservation in Chatham County

In 2005, Chatham County adopted a historic preservation ordinance and was designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG), allowing it to designate local historic districts. The County has designated two local historic districts and three local individual properties, in addition to federally recognized districts and places, such as Fort Pulaski and Wormsloe Plantation.

Since 2005, however, preservation at the county level has fallen off. In 2019, Chatham County's status as a Certified Local Government lapsed. Efforts need to be made to reinstate the County's CLG status and continue to survey and list all eligible sites, neighborhoods, and properties in Savannah and Chatham County on the local and national registers.

*Historic preservation is architectural history, community planning, historical research and surveys, oral history, archaeology, economic revitalization, and so much more. Quality of life, sense of place, pride of place—it's all connected to historic preservation.*

*—Preservation in Pink*



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## The Savannah Citywide Survey Project

The project idea developed after 30 eligible historic areas were identified within the city limits. These areas were identified by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or City Preservation Officer through the prior National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 reviews and were also (SHPO) previously identified as “historic” in the Chatham County—Savannah Comprehensive Plan. A major deciding factor was that all identified neighborhoods were over 50 years old and maintained a high level of integrity. The plan was that areas to be surveyed would be selected by the city based on an established set of criteria including interest, need, and size. The areas that have been surveyed or re-surveyed under this project include: Carver Village, Victorian Historic District, and Cuyler-Brownville Historic District (two phases). Future phases are intended for this project until all existing outdated resource surveys are updated, and new areas are complete.

## Markers, Monuments & Public Art

Objects such as markers, monuments, and public art are vital cultural resources for the community, and it is critical that the surveys of such resources are kept up-to-date and accurate. In 2013, the MPC Preservation Department updated the maps and lists, which keep track of what and where these resources are. While the installation of markers, monuments, and public art continued to be approved, the catalog of these resources was not being actively updated. A comprehensive update to the maps and lists of all monuments, markers, and public art within Chatham County was completed in 2020. Moving forward, this catalog of resources should be kept actively up to date as new markers, monuments, and public art are approved.



### Plan 2040 Survey

The MPC's Plan 2040 survey asked in your opinion, "What are the most important historic preservation actions?"

Forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents felt that the most important historic preservation action was the identification, assessment, and designation of historic resources, while only 6% of respondents felt that providing information about energy efficient and alternative energy sources for historic buildings was most important.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.

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CUYLER-BROWNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT





# PRESERVATION & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Preservation in low-income communities raises concerns about fairness, affordability, and inclusion. It is imperative that preservation goals be combined with efforts to preserve affordable housing and promote economic diversity.

## Old Housing is Affordable Housing

New construction can often be unaffordable and built far from city centers, disconnecting people from their communities and resources. Older and historic neighborhoods, on the other hand, are often closer to services such as shopping, public transportation, and job centers. 57% of housing built prior to 1950, the majority of housing in these neighborhoods, has a monthly cost of less than \$1,000 (*Rypkema, The Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia*).

Partnership between historic preservation and affordable housing efforts and organizations in Chatham County and Savannah is critical to ensuring that the existing affordable housing and neighborhoods, as well as their historic character, are preserved.

## Adaptive Reuse

Historic preservation also presents an opportunity for providing new affordable housing through adaptive reuse. Redesigning historic properties into multi-family supportive and affordable housing revitalizes communities while preserving their character and avoiding displacement of existing residents.



### CUYLER-BROWNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Cuyler-Brownville was designated a National Register Historic District in 1997 and is one of Savannah's oldest continuously occupied African-American neighborhoods. This neighborhood contains a large number of one-story cottages, rowhouses, and bungalows, as well as duplex and multiple family residences. Through community partnerships with organizations such as Historic Savannah Foundation and the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District Overlay, historic preservation efforts have been able to ensure the protection of many of these historically affordable homes.

However, in Cuyler-Brownville and other older neighborhoods in Savannah, affordability remains threatened by demolition, decrease in owner occupied units, and other processes of gentrification. Cuyler-Brownville is a neighborhood that illustrates where a local historic district ordinance alone is not able to ensure maintained affordability and avoid displacement of longtime residents. Broadening preservation efforts and partnerships is critical to this effort. This can include strategies such as reevaluating design standards, engaging with the community about tax credit opportunities and expanding partnerships with local affordable housing organizations.

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# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Old and historic places, many of which were planned before the advent of the car, often exemplify the characteristics of healthy community design. Older neighborhoods, such as the historic districts in Savannah, are likely to be walkable with ample access to open space and healthy foods. In addition to walkability, the preservation of the community's histories also provides a host of mental health benefits. Chatham County and Savannah's historic sites, structures, and communities foster a sense of continuity and identity that is emotionally and psychologically beneficial and grounding.

People-and health-centered preservation work is vital for becoming more resilient against public health threats and fostering healthier communities overall. To ensure that preservation continues to promote community well-being, continued reevaluation of the tools and standards of historic preservation must occur.

## Historic District Walk Scores

Walk scores are a common tool to measure the walkability of a neighborhood based on pedestrian friendliness and proximity to amenities, such as grocery stores. In Savannah's historic neighborhoods, examining walk scores can help to identify aspects of historic development patterns that aid in creating walkable spaces. These can then be used as tools for encouraging walkability and fostering community health in other neighborhoods. It is important to note that, while useful, walk scores are not holistic indicators of community health and do not include considerations such as access to transportation, child care, employment opportunities, or education. It is important to continue to expand the parameters by which community health scores are evaluated.

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 officially became a pandemic in March of 2020. This global health crisis has had tremendous economic, cultural, and social impacts on all aspects of life, including historic preservation work. The mental and physical health benefits of preservation, including access to open spaces, affordable older housing, walkability, and sense of community identity, are all critical components in the needed multifaceted approach to creating healthier and more resilient communities. COVID-19 has also had operational and economic impacts on historic preservation work. New tools and contingency plans are needed in order to ensure that preservation work is accessible to the public virtually and able to be adaptable in times of community health threats.

For instance, while the Landmark Historic District is considered "Very Walkable" there are several aspects, such as lack of child care and workforce housing, that affect the community's overall health.

- 90 Victorian Historic—Walker's Paradise
- 87 Landmark Historic District—Very Walkable
- 87 Streetcar Historic District—Very Walkable
- 69 Cuyler-Brownville Historic District—Somewhat Walkable
- 19 Carver Village Conservation District—Car Dependent





# PRESERVATION & CLIMATE RESILIENCY

## Climate Resiliency

Climate scientists predict that coastal regions like Chatham County will see anywhere from 0.5 to 1.5 meters of sea-level rise by the year 2100. According to a 2012 study of the effects of one meter of sea level rise on Chatham County, the Georgia Conservancy places 94,000 buildings and 105 historic sites at risk (Georgia Conservancy, 2012). New adaptation and mitigation tools are needed to support Chatham County and Savannah in addressing the challenges of implementing climate adaptation strategies to historic buildings and sites.

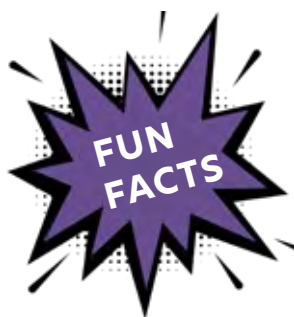
## Natural Disaster Preparedness

With the changing climate comes not only sea level rise, but increasingly severe natural disasters and extreme weather events. Creating a climate resiliency and natural disaster preparedness plan for the county and city's historic and cultural resources is vital to preparing for the effects of climate change, as well as preventing further impacts.

## Sustainability

As architect Carl Enfante said, “The greenest building is the one that is already built.” Historic preservation is an important tool for sustainable growth and development. Reusing existing buildings, with a focus on retaining historic materials, prevents millions of tons of construction debris from entering the landfill through demolition and new construction. Additionally, adaptive reuse encourages infill development while allowing for upgrades to energy efficiency in historic buildings.

*As architect Carl Enfante said, The greenest building is the one that is already built.*



**4,300**

acres of landfill space saved by recycling debris and avoiding demolition\*

**569**

million tons of construction debris was generated in 2017\*

\*EPA Report on Construction & Demolition Debris, 2017

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FORT PULASKI



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# INCLUSIVE HISTORY

## Building Inclusive Preservation Practices

Historic preservation is deeply linked with the stories that it tells and the histories of the people it represents. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people have often been deliberately underrepresented in preservation. Grounding historic preservation in "people over places" builds a more inclusive practice in the identification, understanding, and protection of historic places. Focusing on intangible histories, such as stories, cultural festivals, and social practices, is an important component of preserving the histories of BIPOC and LGBTQ communities in Chatham County and Savannah.

## Promoting Underrepresented Stories

The creation of the Pin Point Heritage Museum was a community-led effort that resulted in a site that exemplifies the importance of recognizing and preserving intangible histories. The Heritage Museum is a physical space that houses the stories and customs of the Gullah/Geechee people, ensuring that their heritage remains grounded in the present. Recognizing sites throughout Chatham County with intangible cultural heritage like Pin Point requires expanding the criteria for what is considered historically significant and worth preserving.

## Areas of Opportunity

The Chatham County and Savannah have several monuments and sites that carry complex histories, such as the confederate monuments in Savannah. The Savannah Civil War Memorial Task Force was conscripted to generally address confederate monuments, and to evaluate the path forward for the Confederate Monument in the center of Forsyth Park. They provided a series of recommendations, one of which included renaming the monument the "Civil War Memorial." Acting and expanding upon these recommendations is an important step towards more inclusive preservation practices. However, there is more work to be done in identifying more sites with complex histories within Chatham County and developing plans for how to manage these sites moving forward.

PIN POINT HERITAGE MUSEUM





# HERITAGE TOURISM

Exploration of Chatham County and Savannah reveals centuries of history and culture encased in diverse architectural styles, historic sites, and design patterns.

As defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, heritage tourism is traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. This includes visitation to cultural, historic, and natural resources.

## Heritage Tourism & Economic Vitality

Historic places and landmarks are a huge draw for those who come to visit Chatham County and Savannah, with historic places making up 32% of visitor's activities of special interest in 2019. The rich history of Chatham County and Savannah not only provides for a varied and engaging experience for visitors but is essential to the economic development and wellbeing of the region. Between 2016 and 2019, visitors to Savannah contributed a total of \$11.8 billion to the local economy.

## Tourism Statistics 2019

Number of Visitors in 2019\*

**14.8M**



**6.5%**

Increase since 2016

Visitor Spending in 2019\*

**\$3.1B**



**11%**

Increase since 2016

\*Longwoods Travel USA Study via Visit Savannah

## Expanding Heritage Tourism in Chatham County

Heritage tourism in city of Savannah provides visitors with a chance to learn more about the history of the area, while providing economic benefits to the community. Expanding upon the strategies that have contributed to Savannah's robust tourism program into Chatham County, such as promoting and identifying heritage sites, is key to bringing the economic benefits of tourism to the County, as well as ensuring that visitors receive a full history of the area.

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WORMSLOE PLANTATION





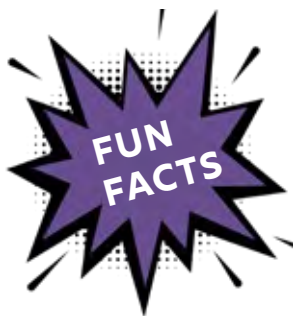
# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Virtually every tract of land in Chatham County has the potential to contain cultural remains from the community's prehistoric and historic past. As of 2004, 1,054 archaeological resources have been identified in Chatham County. While many sites in Chatham County and Savannah have been identified and researched, many others go undetected. Archaeological sites, like historic buildings, are considered cultural resources if they meet eligibility requirements set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act

## Archaeology Ordinance

In 2019, the city of Savannah adopted an archaeology ordinance that requires survey, evaluation, and mitigation of potential archaeological resources for city projects/land over 1,500 square feet. However, programs and policy to support, strengthen, and promote the further survey of archaeological resources and sites within the larger Chatham County area is vital to continuing to uncover the important history that archaeological resources contain.

Additionally, the county and city should work to adopt an archaeology ordinance that employs an archaeologist at the county and/or city level and expands its purview to private property in addition to public property.



# 1,054

archaeological resources and sites have been identified in Chatham County as of 2004



## ARCHAEOLOGY

The science that studies human cultures through the recovery, documentation and analysis of material remains and environmental data, including architecture, artifacts, bio-facts, human remains and landscapes.

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## Historic Districts: National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—City of Savannah

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Savannah National Historic Landmark	1966	528.5	1,296 (2002 Survey)
Victorian	1974/82	185.2	628 (2016 Survey)
Central Georgia Railroad Shops & Terminal Facility	1976/78	41.3	16 (1978 Survey)
Laurel Grove South Cemetery	1978	38.8	Unknown
Laurel Grove North Cemetery	1983	51.5	Unknown
Ardsley Park - Chatham Crescent	1985	391.9	1,056 (1985 Survey)
Thomas Square-Streetcar	1997	322.9	1,114 (1997 Survey)
Cuyler-Brownville	1998	184.9	678 (2020 Survey)
Daffin Park - Parkside Place	1999	161.7	269 (1999 Survey)
Gordonston	2001	86.2	128 (2001 Survey)
Bonaventure Cemetery	2001	145.3	134 (2000 Survey)
Eastside	2002	156.7	459 (2002 Survey)
Fairway Oaks - Greenview	2009	111.8	207 (2009 Survey)
Kensington Park - Groveland	2014	234.8	390 (2014 Survey)
Pine Gardens	2014	128.3	516 (2014 Survey)
Carver Village	2019	108	625 (2014 Survey)
Total		2,877.8	7,516



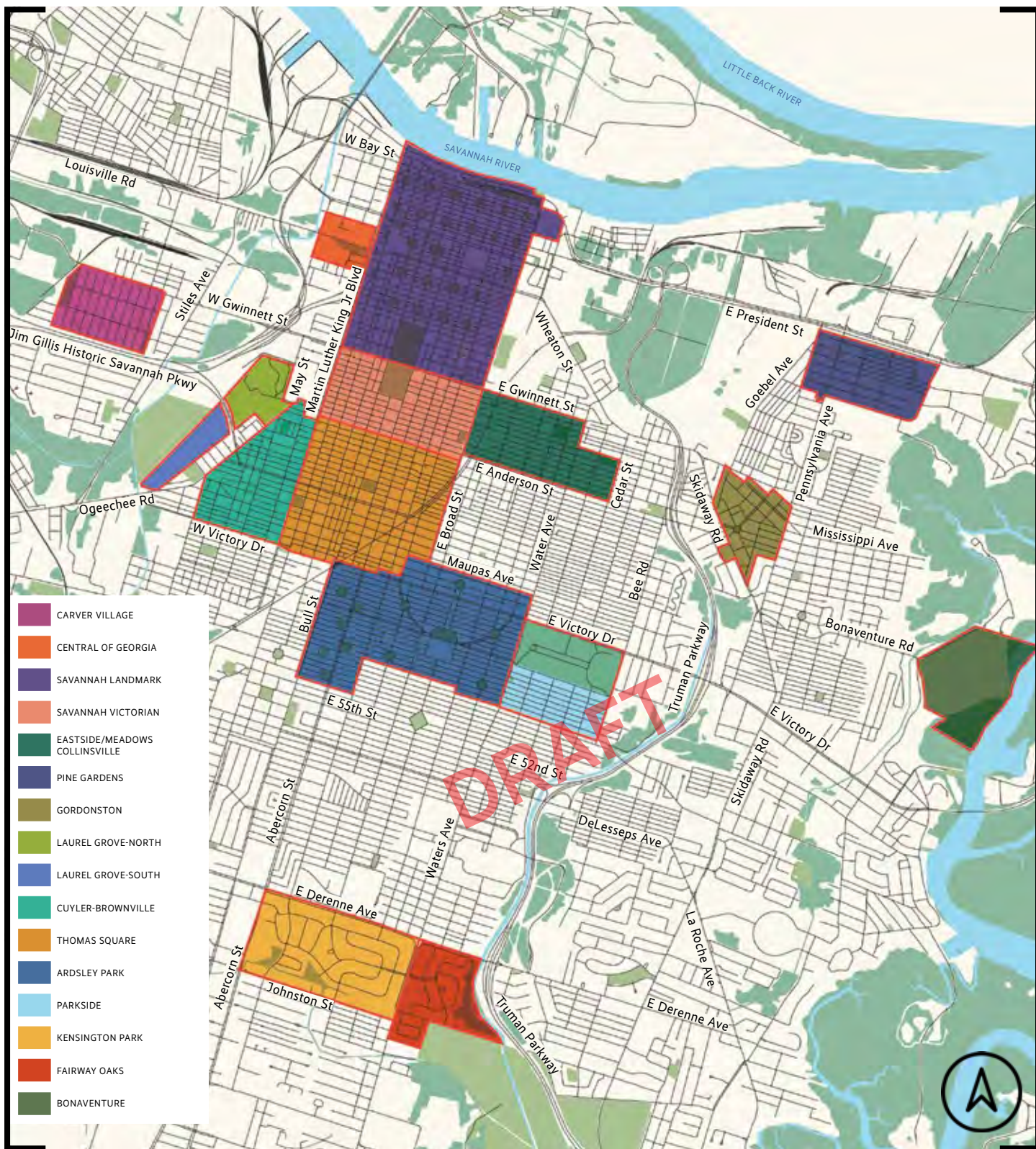
### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the United States federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worth of preservation for their historical significance.

Figure 8.1—Historic Districts (NRHP)—City of Savannah







Map 8.1—Historic Districts (NRHP)—City of Savannah



## Individual Properties: National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—City of Savannah

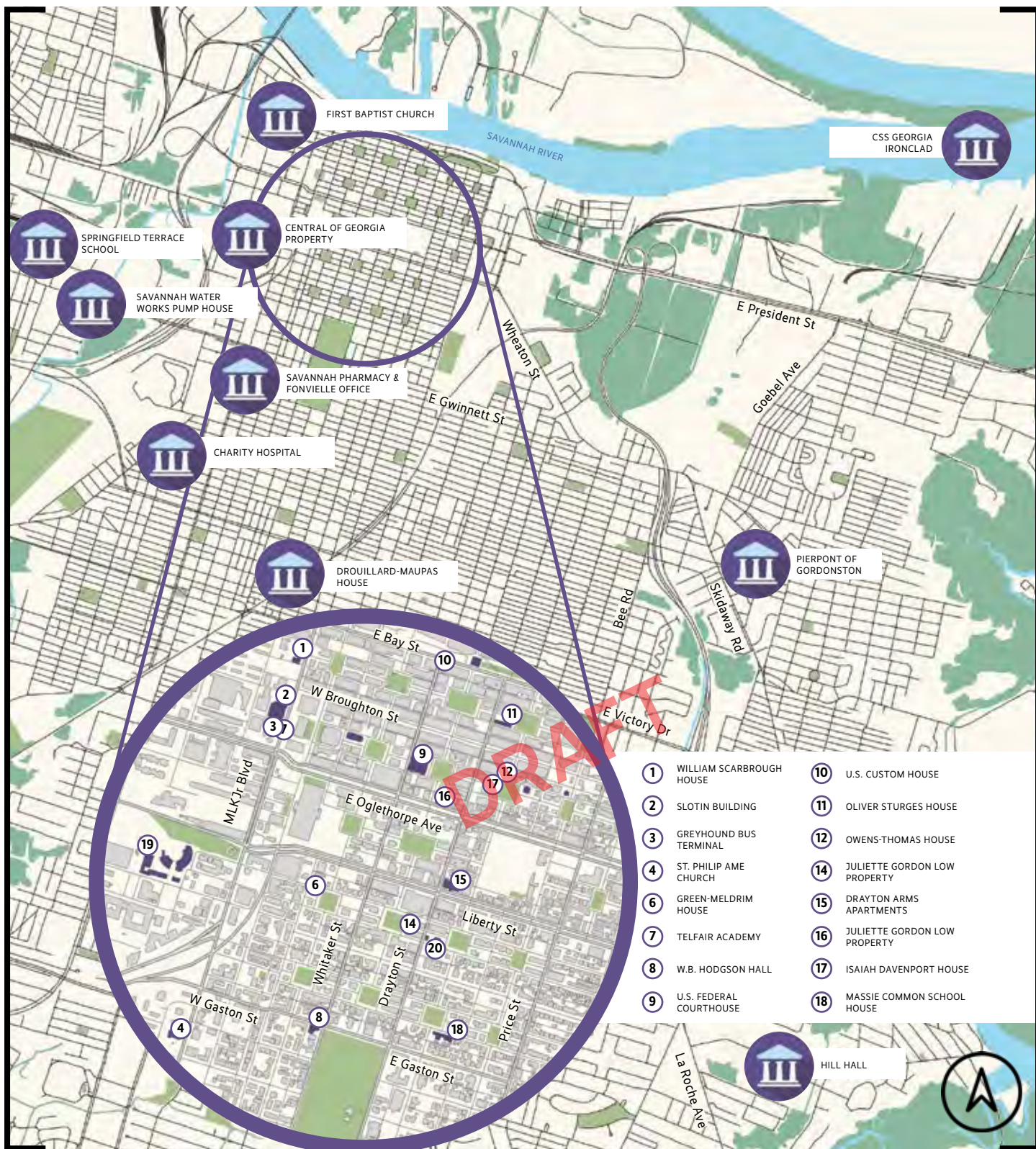
Name	Date Listed	Address
Savannah Water Works Pump House	2021	1204 West Gwinnett Str
Springfield Terrace School	2021	707 Hastings St
Atlantic Greyhound Bus Terminal	2016	109 MLK Jr. Blvd
Central of Georgia Depot & Train shed	1976	MLK Jr. Blvd & Liberty St
Central of Georgia Railway Company Shop Property	1970	West Jones St & Louisville Rd
Charity Hospital	1985	644 West 34th St
CSS Georgia (ironclad)	1987	Address Restricted
Isaiah Davenport House	1972	324 East State St
Drayton Arms Apartments	2013	102 East Liberty St
Drouillard–Maupas House	1991	2422 Abercorn St
Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse	1974	125 Bull St
First Bryan Baptist Church	1978	575 West Bryan St
Green-Meldrim House	1974	14 West Macon St

Name	Date Listed	Address
Hill Hall at Savannah State University	1981	3219 College St
W.B. Hodgson Hall (GHS)	1977	501 Whitaker St
Juliette Gordon Low	1965/1966	10 East Oglethorpe Ave
Massie Common School House	1977	207 East Gordon St
Owens–Thomas House	1976	124 Abercorn St
Savannah Pharmacy & Fonvielle Office	2013	914-918 MLK Jr. Blvd
William Scarbrough House	1970	41 MLK Jr. Blvd
Slotin Building	1983	101 MLK Jr. Blvd
St. Philip AME Church	1984	613 MLK Jr. Blvd
Oliver Sturges House	1971	27 Abercorn St
Telfair Academy	1976	121 Barnard St
Two Pierpoint Circle	1990	2 Pierpoint Circle
U.S. Customhouse	1974	1-3 East Bay St

Figure 8.2—Individual Properties (NRHP)—City of Savannah







Map 8.2—Individual Properties (NRHP)—City of Savannah



## Historic Districts: Local—City of Savannah

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Savannah Downtown Historic District	1973	749.8	1,789 (2011 Survey)
Victorian Historic District	1980	223.9	628 (2019 Bdry Expansion)
Streetcar Historic District	2005	337.8	1,045 (2019 Bdry Expansion)
Cuyler-Brownville Historic District	1998	220.8	753 (2018–2021 Survey)
Total		1,532.3	4,215

Figure 8.3—Historic District (Local)—City of Savannah

## Historic Districts: Conservation—City of Savannah

Name	Date Listed	Address	Contributing Resources
Ardsley Park-Chatham Crescent	2018	391.9	1,056 (1985 Survey)
Ardmore	2018	117.5	Unknown
Daffin Park - Parkside Place	2019	161.7	269 (1999 Survey)
Historic Carver Village/Flatman Village	2020	121.7	636 (2019 Bdry Update)
Total		792.9	1,961

Figure 8.4—Historic District (Conservation)—City of Savannah



### LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

As designated by the Mayor and Aldermen, local historic districts provide a procedure to protect, enhance, perpetuate, and use buildings, structures, sites, objects, or a combination thereof that have pre-historic, historic, architectural or cultural significance.

### CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A Conservation Overlay District establishes a process and standards to evaluate the demolition of contributing buildings to ensure historic buildings are preserved and the character of the district is maintained.

JOHNSON SQUARE



STREETCAR HISTORIC DISTRICT

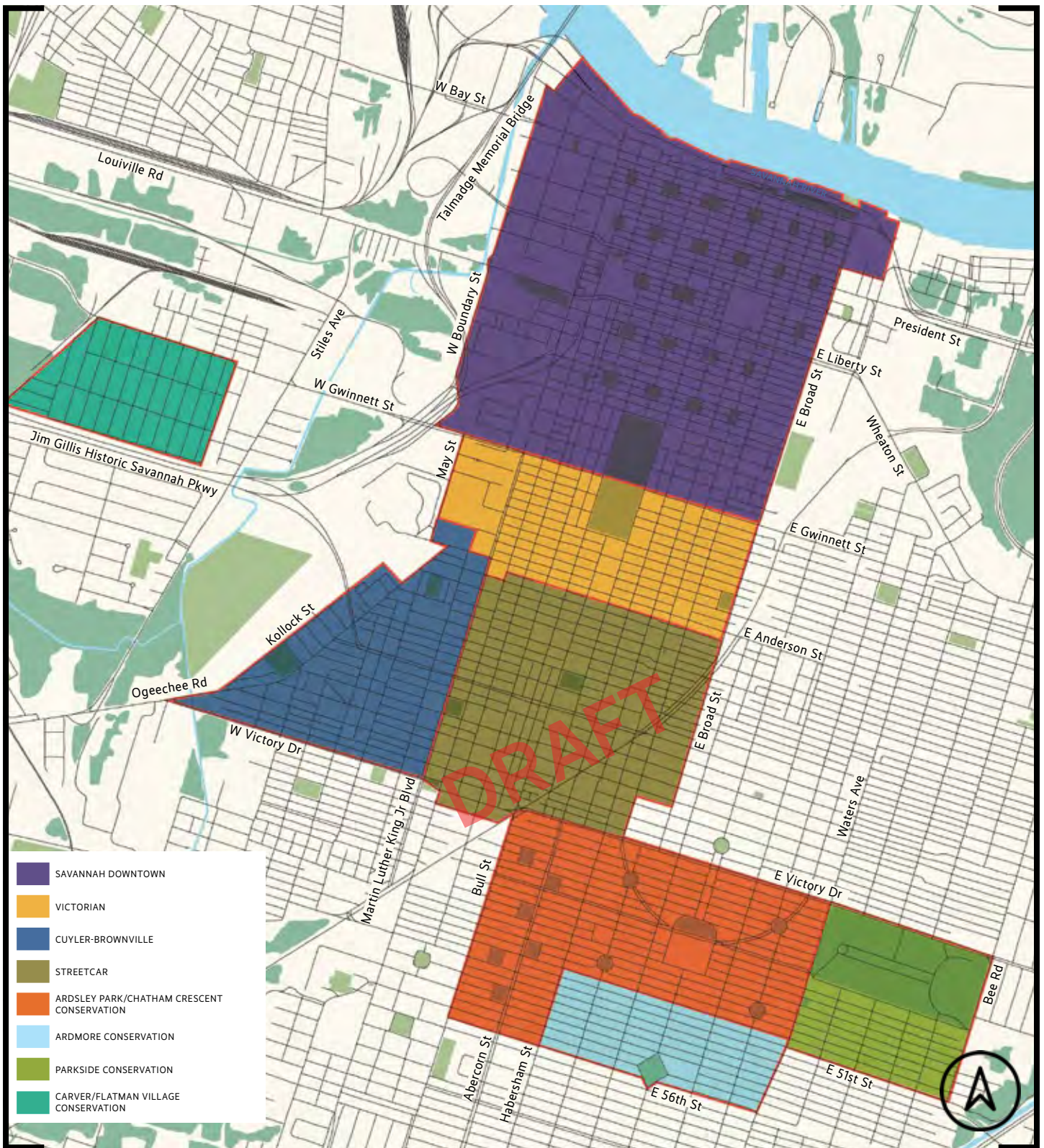


ARDSLEY PARK - CHATHAM CRESENT



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Map 8.3—Historic Districts (Local & Conservation)—City of Savannah



## Historic Districts: NRHP—Unincorporated Chatham County

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Fort Pulaski National Monument	1966	571.9	7 (1996 Survey)
Wormsloe Plantation	1973	1,315.1	Unknown
Bethesda Home for Boys	1973	652.2	19 (1973 Survey)
Isle of Hope Historic District	1984	91.5	Unknown
Ossabaw Island	1996	29,284.5	227 (1996 Survey)
Savannah and Ogeechee Canal	1997	199.7	18 (1997 Survey)
Total		32,114.9	271

### LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

A more comprehensive history of Chatham County and Savannah, as well as more detailed information about their historic districts in the Plan 2040 appendix

Figure 8.5—Historic District (NRHP)—Unincorporated Chatham County

## Individual Properties: NRHP—Unincorporated Chatham County

Name	Date Listed	Address
Eureka Club-Farr's Point	2002	2326 East Blvd
Fort James Jackson	1970	1 Fort Jackson Rd
Lebanon Plantation	1979	5745 Ogeechee Rd
New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church	2001	751 Chevis Rd
Wild Heron Plantation	1977	2148 Grove Point Rd

Figure 8.6—Individual Properties (NRHP)—Unincorporated Chatham County







Map 8.4—Historic Districts & Individual Properties (NRHP)—Unincorporated Chatham County



### Historic Districts: Local—Unincorporated Chatham County

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Pin Point	2007	1,024	15
Pennyworth Island	2011	169.66	1
Total		1,193.66	16

Figure 8.7–Historic District (Local)—Unincorporated Chatham County

### Individual Properties: Local—Unincorporated Chatham County

Name	Date Listed	Address
New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church	2007	751 Chevis Rd
Maridon (AKA Eureka Club—Farr’s Point)	2007	2326 East Blvd
Isle of Hope Missionary Baptist Church	2019	8415 Ferguson Ave

Figure 8.8–Individual Properties (Local)—Unincorporated Chatham County



#### HISTORY OF PENNYWORTH ISLAND

Since 1911, Pennyworth Island has remained largely undisturbed and has seen no human use or occupation. Prior to that time, the island served as a rice plantation and seasonal residence for several of its prominent owners. An archaeological survey in 1994 described Pennyworth as “one of the best represented Savannah River rice plantations in historical record” (ACOE, 1994). In January of 2011, Pennyworth Island, in recognition of its archaeological and historic significance, was listed as a local historic district in Chatham County.







Map 8.5—Historic District & Individual Properties (Local)—Unincorporated Chatham County



# HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

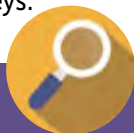
## GOAL 1

*Survey culturally, historically, and architecturally significant sites, buildings, and structures in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah*

Historic resources surveys are one of the most critical tools for historic preservation planning, as they lay the groundwork for the identification, evaluation, and registration of historically and culturally significant sites and properties. Many resources in Chatham County and Savannah have already been identified and surveyed; however, it is important to re-survey resources every ten-fifteen years as well and surveying previously undocumented resources as they are identified. Frequent surveys ensure the protection of resources that may have been overlooked and allow for the identification of resources that have recently gained historic significance. Special attention must be paid to resources that are at-risk due to climate change, as well as resources of Black, Asian, Native, Latino, LGBTQ, and women's history that have been historically underrepresented in historic resources surveys.

### CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

When a community becomes a Certified Local Government (CLG), they become active in the Federal Historic Preservation Program and agree to follow required Federal and State requirements. CLG status gives governments access to funding, technical assistance, and other preservation resources.



### Objectives:

- Work with Chatham County to reinstate their status as a Certified Local Government
- Survey areas that have been identified as at-risk or historically underrepresented
- Update the Historic Site and Monument Commission's Master Plan and Guidelines and provide on-going updates to the maps and lists of the monuments, markers, and public art within the Chatham County and Savannah
- Establish on-going outreach initiatives to engage with and educate the community on the importance of historic preservation efforts

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SURVEY OF TABBY CABINS ON OSSABAW ISLAND





## GOAL 2

### *Incorporate affordable housing strategies into current and future preservation plans*

Historic preservation can be a powerful mechanism for affecting social, demographic, and economic change, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. In recognizing this and moving towards more equitable preservation planning, cultivating partnerships between historic preservation and affordable housing efforts and organizations in Savannah and Chatham County ensures that efforts preserve affordable housing and promote economic diversity.

### **Objectives:**

- Broaden partnerships with community planning and housing authorities in Chatham County and Savannah to combine preservation and affordable housing efforts
- Identify where increased flexibility in preservation practices is appropriate to retain existing affordable housing and promote additional affordable housing
- Promote and educate the community about federal and state preservation tax incentives for rehabilitation

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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSE





## GOAL 3

*Identify and address community health issues that impact historic preservation efforts and encourage healthy communities through historic preservation*

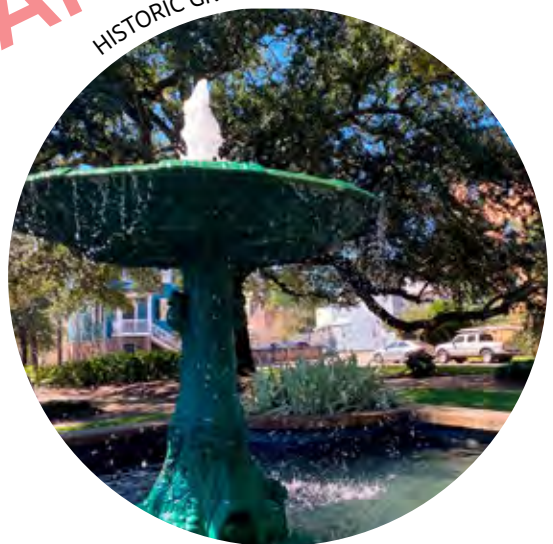
Older and historic places provide a host of physical and mental health benefits, including walkability and sense of place, that make them an important component of healthy communities. Health-centered preservation work is vital to increase resiliency against public health threats and to foster healthier communities overall. To ensure that preservation promotes community well-being, continued reevaluation of the tools and standards of historic preservation must occur, such as creating plans for safe, equitable, and accessible preservation planning efforts in the event of a public health threat like COVID-19.

### Objectives:

- Identify and address potential community health threats to preservation efforts
- Create contingency plans to address the economic, operational, and social impacts on historic preservation associated with a community health event
- Promote and support reinvestment in older and historic places as a key component of community health and resiliency

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HISTORIC GREENSPACE





## GOAL 4

*Identify and address climate resiliency strategies and incorporate them into a climate resiliency plan for unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah's historic and cultural resources*

Numerous cultural and historic resources are at risk due to climate change, whether in the form of sea level rise or increased natural disasters. Historic preservation itself, through adaptive reuse and retention of historic materials, is a critical component of sustainable growth and development. However, creating a climate resiliency and natural disaster preparedness plan for the Chatham County and Savannah's historic and cultural resources is vital for expanding the sustainable initiatives of historic preservation planning to prepare for the effects of climate change, as well as preventing further impacts.

### Objectives:

- Incorporate historic and cultural resources into disaster planning strategies
- Identify and address strategies for increasing the resiliency of historic and cultural resources
- Establish a clear process for the protection and management of historic resources in the result of a natural disaster

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## GOAL 5

*Broaden historic preservation efforts to highlight and include historically underrepresented stories, sites, and communities*

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people have been historically and deliberately underrepresented in historic preservation efforts. Historic preservation efforts in Savannah and Chatham County have often failed to incorporate intangible resources, such as stories, oral traditions, and performing arts, which are critical components of BIPOC and LGBTQ history. Grounding historic preservation in recognition of people and stories, in addition to buildings and architecture, builds a more inclusive practice in the identification, understanding, and protection of history and culture.

### Objectives:

- Review and modify practices that impede the identification, nomination, and designation of historic places meaningful to underrepresented communities
- Develop and implement new tools for the identification of intangible resources
- Follow and expand upon the recommendations of the Savannah Civil War Memorial Task Force

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CLUB ONE—ICONIC LGBTQ VENUE





## GOAL 6

*Create new and support existing heritage tourism programs in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah in order to highlight their cultural and historic heritage*

In the city of Savannah, heritage tourism provides visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the history of the area while providing economic benefits to the community. While tourism is already a well-established industry in Downtown Savannah, attention must be paid in the future to balancing heritage tourism programming with the concerns and needs of the local community.

Expanding upon the strategies that have contributed to Downtown Savannah's tourism programming into Chatham County not only brings economic benefits to the county but provides visitors to the area a full and broadened history of Chatham County and Savannah.

### Objectives:

- Expand heritage tourism programming in Chatham County
- Promote the economic and place-based benefits of heritage tourism to the public
- Balance the goals of heritage tourism with local concerns

#### HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage tourism refers to leisure travel that has as its primary purpose the experiencing of places and activities that represent the past. A principal concern of heritage tourism is historical authenticity and long-term sustainability of the attraction visited

—National Agricultural Library



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## GOAL 7

*Promote the preservation and public awareness of culturally and archaeologically significant sites in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah*

It is likely that virtually every tract of land in Chatham County has the potential to contain cultural remains from the community's prehistoric and historic past. Archaeological sites, just like historic buildings, are considered cultural or historic resources if they meet eligibility requirements set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act. In addition to the 2019 Archaeology Ordinance adopted by the city of Savannah, programs and policy that support further archaeological survey on private property within city limits and throughout the county are needed to identify the important history that archaeological resources contain.

### Objectives:

- Survey, identify, and protect archaeological resources through legislation and other means
- Support projects that educate the public about archaeology and important Chatham County and Savannah cultural sites and resources
- Develop partnerships with community groups to develop an ethical process for discovery, storage, and ownership of archaeological artifacts

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# EDUCATION

There is a phrase that states “Education is key.” It is well known to the point it has garnered the status as a cliché. Upon further review, it is clear that education is the key to attracting residents to a community to live; education is key in building and sustaining an advancing workforce; and education is key in ushering in future generations of well-informed, respectful, and engaging residents.

Public schools throughout the entire county are managed and operated by the Savannah—Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS). As of 2020, the school system consists of 24 elementary schools, 7 K-8 schools, 8 middle schools, 11 high schools, and 5 charter schools. In 2018, the school district had 37,576 students enrolled with a 14:1 student to teacher ratio. Given current trends and projected forecasts, SCCPSS estimates the student population to remain consistent around 37,000 for the next five years.

According to the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, the district’s overall performance is higher than 41% of other districts within the State. The district received a CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) score of 71.4, or C grading, from the Georgia School Grades Report issued by the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement for the 2018-2019 school year; the same grade it received in 2018 after boosting up from a D in 2017. This score is relatively close to the average CCRPI score for the state.



## 60%

of Chatham County's public schools are Title 1 Schools

### CCRPI

The College and Career Ready Performance Index is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all education stakeholders that helps to promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students.

—CCRPI

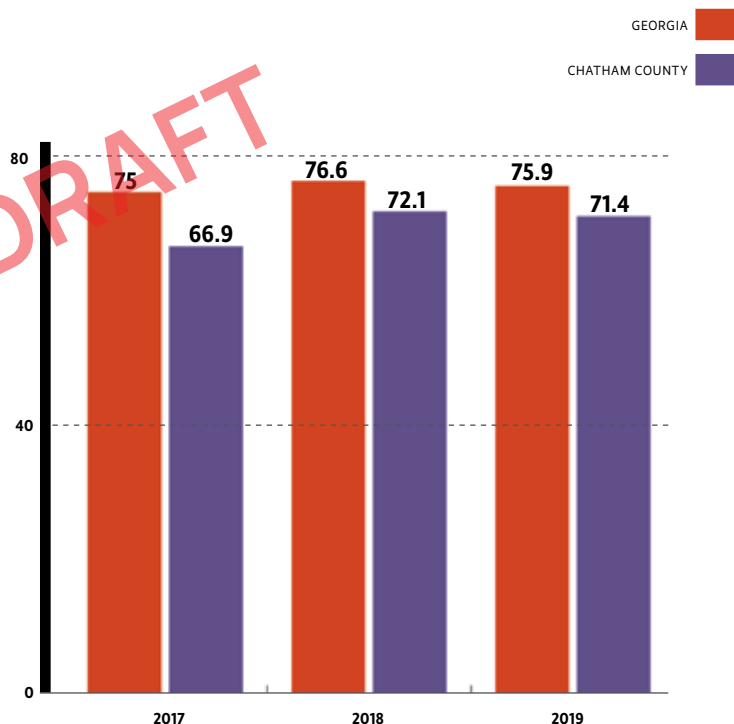
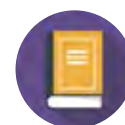


Figure 8.9—CCRPI Single Score 2017–2019  
Georgia Department of Education





Thirty-three (33) of the SCCPSS's schools are defined as Title 1 Schools. The report also noted that 40% of students who attend the SCCPSS are economically disadvantaged, meaning that they either live in a family unit receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, or have been identified as homeless, unaccompanied youth, foster, or migrant children. Being economically disadvantaged can prove to be a large obstacle for students on the academic, mental, and social.

*Teaching mindfulness to grade school children is a new trend that has shown to improve behavior and self-esteem*



#### TITLE 1 SCHOOLS

Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40% of enrollment are eligible to use Title 1 funds to operate schoolwide programs that serve all children in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students.

—Department of Education

A current trend that is aiding in the development of focus and improved behavior in students is mindfulness. Across the nation, many school boards have been introducing mindfulness to students. Mindfulness is a state of being that teaches one to live in the present and how to experience enjoyment with what is going on in the current moment. This can be taught through different measures such as: conscious breathing, sensory stimulation, guided imagery/ meditation, and mindfulness through body movement. Schools in SCCPSS (Woodville Tompkins) have introduced yoga and mindfulness courses into their curriculums.

With the challenges and stressors many SCCPSS students may be facing stemming from their family lives at home, mindfulness can serve as a remedy teaching students to handle their lives in a healthy, constructive manner which can ultimately improve school performance. In addition to mindfulness, there are a number of things that can be taught to students to help them better navigate through life now and moving forward into the future.





## Education Beyond K-12

Life after high school presents many avenues to opportunity. Some may choose college or the military, many choose trade and tech schools, and some go straight into the work world. Whatever route a newly graduate, or any adult wants to take, Chatham County—Savannah has several options to choose from in preparing one for their career moves. Keeping an eye on growing industries in the area, such as manufacturing, coding, and film production may prove to be a safe way of fostering a local workforce to support such industries in the near future.

Regarding countywide public high school graduation rates and educational attainment for adults in the city of Savannah, there has been gradual improvement. Figure 8.10 shows that the high school graduation rate in the county has increased over 6% in the past five years; this calculation only reflects the students who graduated within four years.

Census data shown on Figure 8.11 and 8.12 reveals that the educational attainment for adults in Savannah has improved in nearly a decade with a 1% increase in adults having a bachelor's degree and a 2.3% increase in adults possessing a graduate or professional degree. The entire state has seen an upward trend in adult education as well. The educational composition of adults in Savannah and the state is relatively similar with no major differences, with the exception that the state does have a slightly larger proportion of college educated adults.

### Graduation Rates, 2015–2019

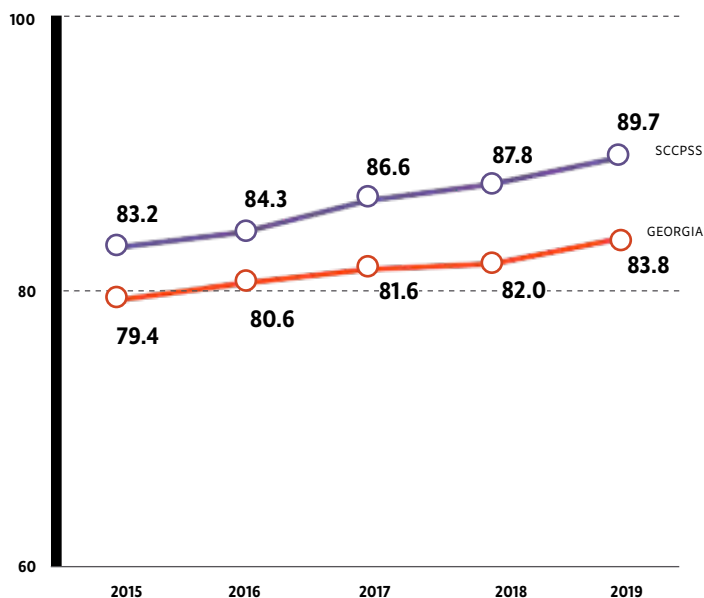


Figure 8.10—Graduation Rate Trends, 2015–2019  
Savannah—Chatham County Public School System





## Educational Attainment, 2010

	City of Savannah (%)	State of Georgia (%)
Less than 9th grade	4.2	5.8
9-12, No diploma	10.5	9.9
High school diploma or equivalent	31.7	29.3
Some college, no degree	22.6	21
Associates degree	6.1	6.8
Bachelor's degree	16.8	17.5
Graduate or professional degree	8.1	9.8

Figure 8.11–Edu. Attainment for Population Over the Age 25

U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Educational Attainment, 2019

	City of Savannah (%)	State of Georgia (%)
Less than 9th grade	3.2	4.6
9-12, No diploma	9.2	8.2
High school diploma or equivalent	26.8	27.7
Some college, no degree	25.9	20.3
Associates degree	6.7	7.8
Bachelor's degree	17.8	19.2
Graduate or professional degree	10.4	12.1

Figure 8.12–Edu. Attainment for Population Over the Age 25

## Student Populations, 2017–2025

Grade	Actual 2017	Actual 2018	Actual 2019	Actual 2020	Projection				
	10th Day	10th Day	10th Day	10th Day	FY-21	FY-22	FY-23	FY-24	FY-25
Kindergarten	2,991	2,954	3,017	3,009	2,965	2,966	2,967	2,968	2,969
1st Grade	3,101	2,909	2,946	2,974	2,878	2,878	2,878	2,878	2,878
2nd Grade	3,365	3,084	2,771	2,873	2,741	2,741	2,741	2,741	2,741
3rd Grade	3,345	3,225	2,992	2,757	2,701	2,701	2,701	2,701	2,701
4th Grade	3,130	3,199	3,145	2,876	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838
5th Grade	2,951	3,002	3,116	3,126	3,135	3,136	3,137	3,138	3,139
6th Grade	2,862	2,800	2,923	2,996	2,955	2,956	2,957	2,958	2,959
7th Grade	2,626	2,720	2,628	2,845	3,009	3,010	3,011	3,012	3,013
8th Grade	2,445	2,472	2,592	2,550	2,642	2,642	2,642	2,642	2,642
9th Grade	3,218	3,116	3,068	3,143	3,130	3,131	3,132	3,133	3,134
10th Grade	2,384	2,429	2,421	2,301	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327
11th Grade	1,945	1,969	1,900	1,955	2,004	2,004	2,004	2,004	2,004
12th Grade	1,500	1,550	1,663	1,674	1,719	1,719	1,719	1,719	1,719
Pre-Kindergarten	1,355	1,341	1,362	1,379	1,379	1,379	1,379	1,379	1,379
Self Contained	619	569	646	632	632	632	632	632	632
Grand Total	37,837	37,339	37,190	37,090	37,055	37,060	37,065	37,070	37,075
Gain or (Loss) in	(275)	(498)	(149)	(100)	(35)	5	5	5	5
Enrollment from Prior Year	(0.72%)	(1.32%)	(0.40%)	(0.27%)	(0.09%)	0.01%	0.01%	0.01%	0.01%

Figure 8.13–Actual and Forecasted Student Populations

SCCPSS





## Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)

SCAD is a private, nonprofit institution founded in 1978 in the city of Savannah. Currently the school has numerous buildings and facilities located in different areas throughout the city serving its 15,000 students. SCAD has more than 40 majors and 75 minors, more than any other art and design university in the country. Degrees offered are: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Architecture, Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, and a Master of Urban Design. The most highly enrolled majors in Fall 2017 were animation, fashion, film and television, illustration and interior design.

## Savannah State University (SSU)

Known as the Georgia's oldest historically black college or university (HBCU), Savannah State was founded in 1890. This public university is located in Savannah on a 201-acre campus, and offers 30 baccalaureate majors and degrees and 5 graduate degrees to its approximate 4,500 students. These majors are housed within four colleges: College of Business Administration, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Science and Technology, and the College of Education. Their Marine Science Program is the number 1 producer of both Master's of Science and Bachelor's of Science African American recipients in Marine Science. Also, SSU is home to the nation's first Homeland Security and Emergency Management program at an HBCU. The program is the only bachelor's degree program for homeland security/emergency management offered in the state of Georgia and in the region. Additionally, SSU boasts a broad athletic program which is part of SIAC, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

## Georgia Southern University (GSU)

This public university, once known as Armstrong State University, recently consolidated with Georgia Southern University based in Statesboro, to become the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern University. The campus is located in the southside of Savannah, is attended by nearly 6,500 students, and offers over 50 majors at undergrad and graduate levels. The university's Water's College of Health Professional is one of the school's premier programs, having long been the largest producer of undergraduate health professionals in Georgia.

### SCAD

SCAD celebrates cinematic creativity from both award-winning professionals and emerging student filmmakers. Each year, more than 63,000 people attend the eight-day SCAD Savannah Film Festival. The festival is host to a wide variety of competition film screenings, special screenings, workshops, panels, and lectures.



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## Georgia Tech-Savannah

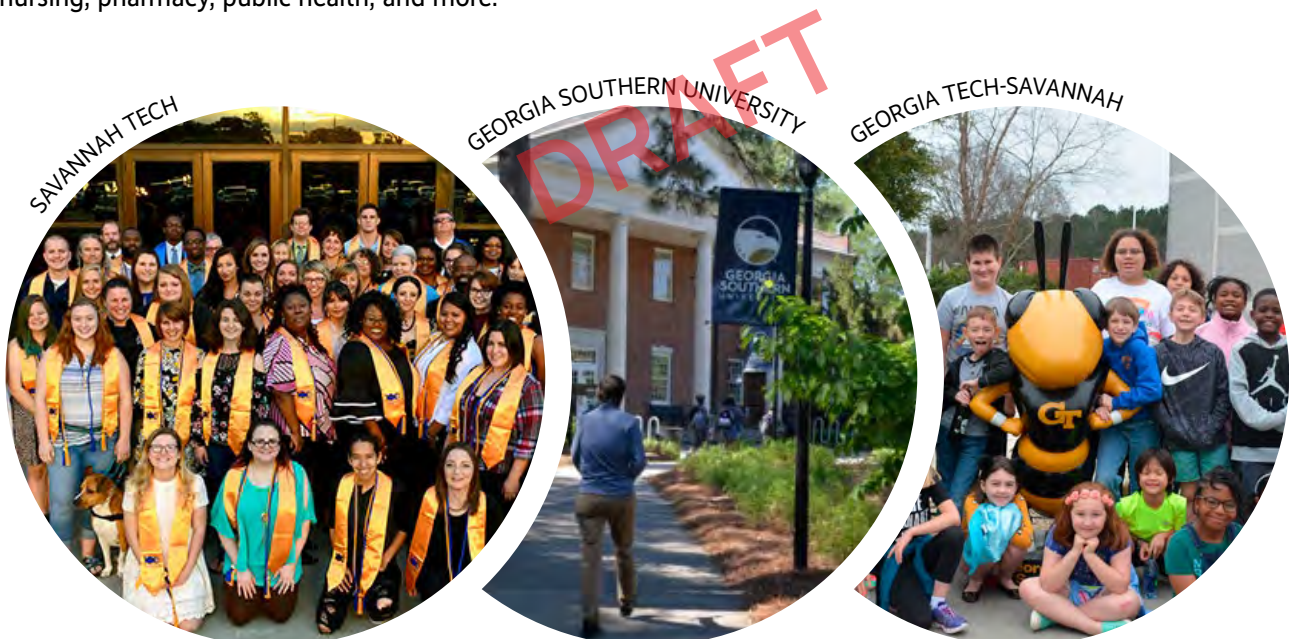
In 2003, the Georgia Institute of Technology opened its satellite branch in the City of Savannah. The campus offers courses tailored to furthering the education and skills of established professionals. Programs consist of the Georgia Film Academy, K-12 programs, Leadership Training, and Military programs. In addition to providing opportunities for career advancement and education for professionals, Georgia Tech-Savannah has numerous partnerships within the region providing assistance to budding tech-entrepreneurs and manufacturing and logistics guidance for large corporations to name a few.

## South University

South University was founded in Savannah in 1899 originally as Draughan's Practical Business College. Throughout the years the school has transformed into a larger university developing satellite locations spanning across several states as well as offering online courses to over 3,500 students. South University offers 9 programs which awards degrees at the associate, undergraduate, and graduate levels in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, public health, and more.

## Savannah Technical College

Founded in 1929, this Savannah-based public technical college serves over 5,700 credit students and is a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia. The college offers both credit and non-credit programs designed to provide a skilled workforce to area employers. It awards certificate, diploma, and associate degrees in five academic divisions: Aviation Technology, Business and Professional Services, General Studies, Health Sciences, and Industrial Technology. The college's Economic Development division provides non-credit programs such as high school equivalency preparation, English as a Second Language, various workforce development programs for individuals, and corporate contract training. Savannah Tech has been ranked as the best community/technical college for active-duty military, their spouses, and veterans for many years.





## Live Oak Public Libraries

Live Oak Public Libraries provides programs and services in Chatham, Effingham, and Liberty Counties through 16 library locations and community outreach. There are 12 libraries in Chatham County, with eight of those located in Savannah and one in unincorporated Chatham County.

The Library's mission is to provide excellent, responsive service to enrich people's lives, support lifelong learning and build and enhance communities. Live Oak is creating tomorrow's library today to educate, inform, entertain and enrich the community. The Library is always open online at [www.liveoakpl.org](http://www.liveoakpl.org).

Live Oak Public Libraries is focused on increasing access, community engagement and organizational excellence and sustainability. The library believes that libraries are at the heart of every community, and strong libraries help create and sustain strong communities. Library services support early learning, literacy, educational success, economic opportunity and quality of life. Live Oak Public Libraries is a member of PINES, the statewide network of public library systems serving Georgia. PINES (Public Information Network for Electronic Services), connects more than 300 public libraries in 54 partner library systems across 146 counties and gives library card holders access to more than 11 million books and materials plus online resources such as the GALILEO system, Georgia's virtual library. The portal gives users access to thousands of resources such as periodicals, scholarly journals, government publications, and encyclopedias amongst several other resources.

*The aim of GALILEO is to provide equal access to information for all Georgia's residents—Live Oak Public Libraries*

”



### COVID-19 PANDEMIC EFFECTS

In calendar year 2020, with complications due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Library system saw reduced statistics compared to normal times but still saw active use and patron engagement both in-person and online.

Libraries were closed briefly but then reopened to the public with safety measures in place to protect visitors and staff. Customers were able to browse and borrow items, use computers and internet, and enjoy virtual programs. The year 2020 saw an increase in the use of digital resources, such as e-books, and an increase in library card sign-ups.

### Benefits of the Library System

- Libraries are open to everyone
- Libraries support lifelong learning
- Libraries offer access to technology
- Libraries are community spaces
- Libraries are wherever you are
- Libraries are community partners

*Impacts of COVID-19 were seen in 2020 within the libraries' visitors and internet usage*



## Public Library Visits

Locations	2018	2019	2020
Bull Street Library	222,799	210,171	144,833
Carnegie Library	40,470	22,319	17,125
Forest City Library	17,486	16,654	10,521
Garden City Library	54,676	48,420	30,507
Islands Library	124,863	111,133	42,993
Oglethorpe Mall Library	134,877	110,791	74,207
Pooler Library	68,422	73,835	55,970
Port City Library	37,649	35,983	22,607
Southwest Chatham Library	183,372	133,178	93,165
Tybee Library	18,521	19,529	16,972
W.W. Law Library	52,143	42,666	23,729
West Broad Library	22,225	15,484	14,642
<b>Total</b>	<b>977,503</b>	<b>840,163</b>	<b>547,271</b>

Figure 8.13–Library Visit Trends

Live Oak Public Library

## Public Library Wireless Internet Use

Locations	2018	2019	2020
Bull Street Library	14,166	85,440	78,884
Carnegie Library	3,557	14,300	13,077
Forest City Library	1,680	2,628	4,482
Garden City Library	5,833	12,940	10,963
Islands Library	7,742	23,380	5,521
Oglethorpe Mall Library	11,309	9,032	22,093
Pooler Library	4,979	14,312	9,281
Port City Library	2,352	2,832	8,767
Southwest Chatham Library	22,632	39,684	28,618
Tybee Library	1,376	956	2,708
W.W. Law Library	1	1,708	1,796
West Broad Library	249	336	2,448
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,876</b>	<b>207,548</b>	<b>188,638</b>

Figure 8.14–Wireless Internet Usage Trends

Live Oak Public Library

## Broadband & the Library System

All 12 public library locations in Chatham County have had fiber connections for several years, and speeds are increasing again July 1, 2021 under our new e-rate contract, at least doubling at all locations.

In addition to more than 400 public computers in Chatham County public libraries, upgraded wireless access which reaches not only to the every area of every public library in Chatham County but into many of the library parking lots was implemented in April 2020. The wireless is available outside most buildings after hours.

Public library wireless sessions have been increasing by as much as 50% every month for the past 6 months and will soon return to pre-pandemic levels.

Both wired and wireless service are critical to many residents who have no internet access or inadequate internet access. Many customers bring wireless devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones to use on library wireless since many cannot afford the increased costs of plans with more data.



# EDUCATION GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Ensure equitable access of critical life skills including soft skills, financial, social, and conflict resolution skills are available to parents/legal guardians and taught to all students through the use of technology, community partnerships, and counseling*

While it is extremely important for students to learn math, science, and language arts in school, it is equally important for their future successes for them to learn interpersonal and life skills. In order to be a good employee it is important to know the appropriate way to dress, act, and speak in the workplace. Knowing how to effectively manage time and how to resolve conflicts are valuable qualities as well.

Often times these lessons are not taught in school because it is assumed that students will intuitively know to behave appropriately or that they will have role models in their lives who have demonstrated these skills. However if neither is the case, they can be at a disadvantage as they enter the workforce. Providing curriculum to teach these skills to all students will allow them an easier transition into adulthood and the workforce.

### Objectives:

- Create curriculum to provide parents with lessons on various soft skills. Identify most effective ways to make the lessons available to parents for their use-in person classes, through technology, etc
- Create curriculum to educate students on soft skills necessary to be successful in life and incorporate coursework in public schools requirements
- Provide counseling for parents and students in these areas as needed





## GOAL 2

*Implement career track, internship, and mentorship programs between employers and students; while increasing leadership development programs between community organizations, businesses, and public schools to prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility*

Real world work experiences such as internships and apprenticeships can help students learn new skills, gain confidence, enhance networking skills, expose them to professional workplaces, build their resumes for college applications and future employment, and give them insight into potential career paths.

Similarly, mentorship programs can help better prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility by providing them with a long-term support system to help guide them in their growth and development. Providing students with these types of tools can significantly improve the likelihood of future successes.

### Objectives:

- Create intern and mentorship programs in the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools through partnerships with community organizations, business leaders, and businesses
- Identify graduates of the Savannah—Chatham County Public School system to mentor struggling students in order to show them a path to success





## GOAL 3

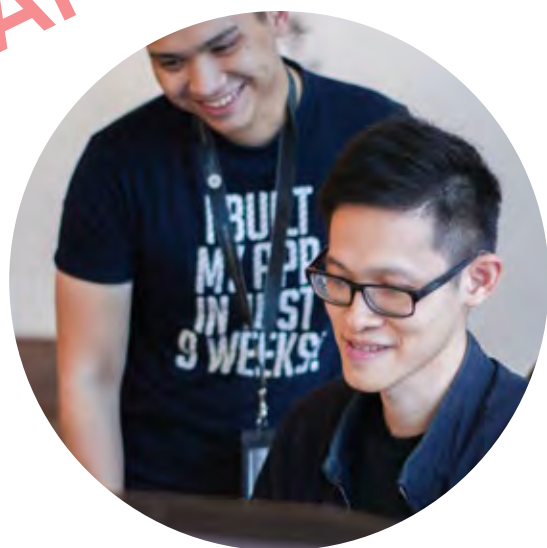
*Plan for changing populations, capacities, and overcrowding and increase the quality of education and performances at SCCPSS*

A high-performing education system is a key ingredient for the future success of Savannah and Chatham County. Educational attainment unlocks future opportunities for personal and community growth for generations to come. As the population and demographics of our county change, we must make efforts to meet these challenges and ensure that every student receives a quality education. The provision of education to students is a vital function of local government and SCCPSS strives to improve the education system for all students in the county.

### Objectives:

- Include SCCPPSS school facilities staff in the review process for multifamily and subdivision projects to ensure adequate school facilities to meet the needs of future development
- Locate schools at sites appropriate to the attendees
- Limit land use and operational conflicts between school sites and adjacent uses
- Retain the vitality of neighborhoods in proximity to new school facilities
- Promote health, safety and well-being of students in their commutes to and from school

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## GOAL 4

*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*

Parental involvement in schools can play a significant role in the success of their children's education. Studies show that parental involvement is linked to better grades and behavior in the classroom and can improve teacher morale and communication between parents and school officials. Involved parents have a better understanding of the protocols and the organizational structure of the school system and are better equipped to advocate for their children when needed.

Unfortunately, time constraints, language barriers, and a lack of knowing how to get involved can make it difficult for parents to actively participate in their children's education. Efforts to eliminate barriers to parental involvement in schools will benefit teachers and students alike.

### Objectives:

- Identify means to facilitate better communication between parents, teachers, and school leadership
- Identify barriers to parent engagement and work to eliminate them
- Consider programs to incentivize parental involvement
- Educate parents on school protocols and structures in order to make them better advocates for their children when needed





## GOAL 5

*Ensure families and community members have the ability to promote and reinforce literacy and numeracy instruction that takes place in a student's learning*

Learning to read is one of the most important childhood skills and can provide children with a tremendous sense of enjoyment. A wealth of research has established the importance of early literacy skills for later school readiness and long-term school success. It's critical to start early in helping children develop the skills they will need to be successful. By supporting early childhood literacy, a community can make a difference in building awareness and making connections to ensure that children can be successful in school and in life.

### Objectives:

- Build literacy skills
- Make access to reading materials fair, equitable, and easy for children and adults
- Encourage a lifelong love of reading

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# COMMUNITY HEALTH

## Health

Health is a term that is often associated with an individual and their lack of sickness or disease; the same thought concept can be carried over to a large grouping or area of people within their neighborhoods.

Community health is determined by the wellness of the residents of a particular area along with the aptitude of the environment to promote health and necessary resources. Most urban areas consist of a diverse population of residents which result in a stratified spectrum of community health. The following sections are some of the factors that make up or determine community health. Indicators can also include, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, strokes, infant and maternal mortality to list a few.

## Obesity Rate

Obesity is the condition when an individual has excessive body fat which presents itself as a risk to their health. This condition has been shown to lead to more chronic ailments such as heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death in Savannah and worldwide (Plan4healthus).

*In 2018, an estimated 35% of adults in Savannah were obese in comparison to 32% within Chatham County overall, both figures that have grown substantially over the years—CGIC*



### HEALTHY SAVANNAH

In November of 2018, Healthy Savannah, and the YMCA of Coastal Georgia, awarded a five year, \$3.4 million grant to undertake a REACH project from the CDC. REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health).

The primary goal of the Project HOPE grant is to reduce health disparities among African American and Hispanic/Latino Americans in low-income Chatham County neighborhoods.



The prevalence of obesity has continued to rise due to an increasing sedentary lifestyle, lack of nutritional health understanding, and oversaturation of fast-foods and processed foods which numerous studies have shown are related to numerous health issues, including obesity.





## Mental Wellness

Although a controversial topic, mental illness is a common reality many people live with. Mental illness can simply be defined as a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior.

Numerous factors contribute to mental illness such as genetics, societal influences, and physical environment. A SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) survey conducted between 2009 and 2013 revealed that nearly 40% of adults in the state of Georgia were living with some form of mental illness. In response to this figure and other health related matters, Chatham County partnered with the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC) and developed strategic pathways to address community health issues mental health, further ensuring that communities in Chatham County foster wellness.

It is a common occurrence for an individual suffering with a mental health condition to be confronted by law enforcement when their condition presents a challenge.

Instead of mental health workers addressing the matter, law enforcement, many of whom are not properly trained for mental health situations, often intervene in these scenes. In events like this, it is common for law enforcement officers to arrest the individual and bring them to an emergency room. This creates a strain not only on the individual suffering through their mental health crisis, but also on the system of law enforcement and emergency medical service workers. The number of officers dispatched and number of ER rooms available to those in need are greatly impacted by the lack of structure and guidance regarding the process to assisting those in need of mental health services.

*According to a SAMHSA survey, conducted between 2009 and 2013, nearly 40% of adults in the State of Georgia were living with some form of mental illness*



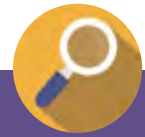


## Food Access & Nutritional Education

Taking a ride through most urban areas, it is much easier to purchase a hamburger or fried chicken than it is to find fresh produce in a grocery store. The foods available to a community have a dire impact on its overall health. When an area is devoid of fresh and healthy foods it is considered a “food desert.” On the contrary, the term “food swamp” is used to describe areas that are over saturated with options of fast foods, processed foods, and junk foods. We live in the time where the majority of people reside in urban areas and do not grow their own food; this leads most to depend on external sources for their food. Given the county's widespread development pattern, it becomes clear that there are not enough grocery stores and markets to accommodate each community. This is a strain particularly for the elderly and those with limited access to personal vehicles and public transit.

According to Federal Reserve Economic Data, 40,098 residents in Chatham County received SNAP benefits in 2018, a number that has notably dropped from previous years. Although this figure has decreased, it shows that a significant number of residents-nearly 14% of residents in Chatham County, 5% higher than the national average-still need assistance in providing foods for their households. In alignment with food access, food nutrition is just as important. If someone is gifted the option to choose between a monthly supply of sweets and potato chips or a monthly supply of dry beans, rice, and vegetables, their knowledge of food nutrition, or lack of, will usually be the driving force behind their decision. Having access to affordable healthy food is paramount; however, so is the ability to recognize the value in it.

*Nearly 14% of residents in Chatham County, still need assistance in providing foods for their households, 5% higher than the national average*



### FOOD DESERTS

Food deserts are low-income census tracts where a substantial number of residents have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store.

—The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

### FOOD SWAMPS

Food swamps are communities where fast food and junk food are overwhelmingly more available than healthy alternatives.

—USDA



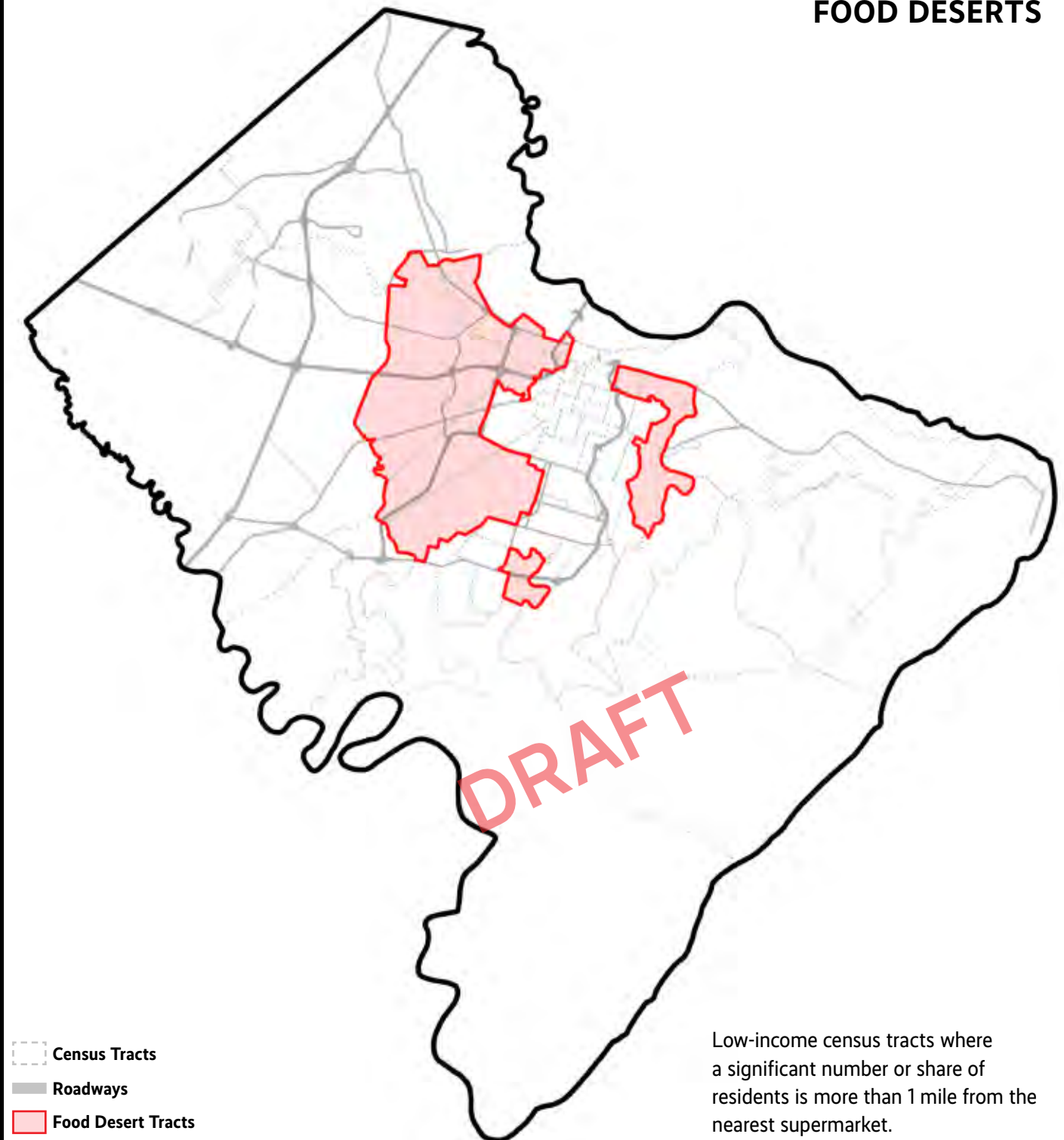
### FARM TRUCK 912

In an effort to increase the access to healthy and affordable foods, Farm Truck 912 is stationed at several different locations in the city every day of the week offering local and fresh produce for communities most in need of healthy foods.





## FOOD DESERTS



Map 8.6—Food Deserts by Census Tracts, Chatham County  
USDA Economic Research Service Food Access Research Atlas, 2019



## Open Space Access

Not everyone lives within close proximity to green spaces and natural areas. Some of the disparity is due to the natural location of resources, but more can be done to help ensure that residents have access to parks and green space within close proximity to where they live. In addition to the lack of parks and green space close to home, access is further constrained by the disconnected street network and by the lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities along some streets.

## Healthcare Access

A 2021 article in Georgia Health News ranked Georgia “Dead Last” when it comes to access to “Health Care” and “Health Care for Seniors”. Much of this reflects the shortage of “access to health care” in the rural areas around the state with no significant health systems, however, we also know that Savannah has its pockets with similar issues. The need for an expansion of health services into these communities most at need should be a priority for the region as a whole.



## Unemployment & Poverty

Unemployment does not merely mean ‘one without a job’. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployed citizens are individuals who are jobless and actively seeking work. Those who are not working and not seeking work are not considered to be in the labor force. When individuals struggle to find work, it puts a strain on myriad aspects of life including finances, mental wellness, safety, and food security.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the unemployment rate for the city of Savannah was on a gradual decline until 2020 when the pandemic occurred.

## Unemployment Rates 2016–2020

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Chatham County	5.3	4.5	3.8	3.4	7.6
City of Savannah	5.9	5.1	4.2	3.8	9.1

Figure 8.15–Unemployment Rates, Chatham County & Savannah  
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

## Labor Force Statistics for 2020

Year	Month	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Rate (%)
2020	January	67,768	65,192	2,576	3.3
	February	68,281	65,816	2,465	3.3
	March	68,920	66,038	2,882	4.4
	April	67,467	55,220	12,247	15.3
	May	68,106	58,599	9,507	10.8
	June	67,430	59,168	8,262	8.6
	July	67,003	59,442	7,561	8.5
	August	66,371	59,822	6,549	6.5
	September	66,291	60,176	6,115	6.7
	October	68,566	63,332	5,234	4.7
	November	69,181	64,111	5,070	5.6
	December	69,474	64,158	5,316	5.6

Figure 8.16–Labor Force, City of Savannah, 2020  
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



## COVID-19

As a nation, we were unaware of the dire impacts that COVID-19 would have on us. As cases and fatalities continued to increase in 2020, many went into a state of paranoia and panic. Questions such as, “what exactly is this virus”, “how can I properly protect myself and family from it” and “how long will it last” came across the minds of virtually every person in this country. As of April 2021, Chatham County has had more than 20,000 cases and 417 deaths due to COVID-19. In response to the pandemic, virtually every public and private space had to alter how human activity existed within their vicinities and the need for more accessible open and open outdoor spaces became evident. The virus has proven to be an incident that will have lasting effects moving well into the future.

Unemployment began to see an increase from COVID-19 starting in March of 2020 as it reached its peak at rate of 15.3% in April in Figure 8.16. It tapered down slowly until it reached a rate of 5.6% by the end of 2020. Concerns with facing grave fears of death, eviction/foreclosure due to loss of income, drastic changes to household dynamics, and shortages of food, heightened the mental health challenges many were already suffering with and created a large splinter of anxiety for others.



## Climate Change

As the nation continues to experience drastic changes in weather patterns due to climate change, the consequences will be felt by individuals, economies, and governments alike.

More frequent and intense heat episodes have increased the number of emergency room visits for strokes, dehydration, and other heat-related illnesses. Studies have also revealed the correlation between excessive heat and violent crimes, which are especially linked in low-income areas (*The Urban Crime and Heat Gradient in High and Low Poverty Areas / NBER*). At the same time, extreme cold temperatures decrease the amount of time people spend outside, which in turn lowers levels of vitamin D and results in weaker immune systems as well as depression.

In the spring of 2020, large-scale weather patterns exposed some areas of the Country that normally do not experience hard freezes to severe cold temperatures. Many states and local governments were ill-prepared for this, as the effects of the weather interrupted power sources and destroyed infrastructure. This event—and others like it—highlighted the need to assist and protect our most vulnerable populations and communities.

It is known that renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, help to reduce the human impact on climate change by reducing noxious emissions from coal-fired power plants. Research also shows that implementing renewable energy policies have the added benefit of improving public health as well. A concentrated local effort must be made to help reduce the impacts of emissions and other pollutants on Chatham County's population.





# COMMUNITY HEALTH GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Effectively address mental health by educating the public and reducing stigma, increasing early intervention programs, removing gaps and barriers, and increasing access to treatment including returning and detained residents, children, adolescents, and the homeless*

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from birth to death, and significantly impacts quality of life. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized depression as a critical public health issue, as mental illness is a leading cause of both injury and disease for people around the world. There is still much stigma to discussing mental health issues but it is necessary to increase awareness and address the mental health needs of the community in order to improve quality of life and public health of the citizens.

### Objectives:

- Educate the public in order to reduce stigma and increase awareness
- Increase early intervention programs and remove gaps and barriers to those programs
- Increase access to treatment particularly as it impacts incarcerated individuals, children, and adolescents
- Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services

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## GOAL 2

*Invest in community-based health resources to increase health equity by providing access to preventive health services, health education, and strategies to encourage individuals and families to adopt healthy behaviors*

Preventative healthcare reduces the risk for diseases, disabilities and death, and is much less expensive than the cost of treatment once issues have arisen. Many do not have access to or do not take advantage of (because they do not understand the importance of) available preventative healthcare services. Ensuring access to all, educating on the importance of, and encouraging usage of preventative healthcare services will improve long term healthcare, increase lifespan, reduce medical expenditures, and improve quality of life for man in the community.

### Objectives:

- Invest in community-based health resources for citizens to increase health equality while optimizing their health and wellness with preventive healthcare services and health education
- Increase health education efforts to encourage the prioritization of preventative healthcare
- Identify barriers to access of preventative healthcare services and work to eliminate those barriers
- Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services

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## GOAL 3

*Organize and promote community health services, recreational opportunities, and fitness programs in order to encourage citizens to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors*

There is a community-wide need to encourage and provide opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily routines. Physical activity has been proven to improve health and reduce the risks of several diseases, however barriers such as lack of time or access can act as impediments to adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors. Removing barriers by providing more opportunities and easier access to health services, recreational opportunities, and fitness programs can have immediate and long term health benefits and can improve the quality of life for many in the community.

### Objectives:

- Identify and make accommodations for specific needs of targeted groups such as those with special needs, elderly, and disabled in order to eliminate barriers to access and encourage use of recreational opportunities and fitness programs
- Identify opportunities to incorporate physical activities into daily lives of citizens
- Encourage mixed land uses and designs to reduce vehicle trips and accommodate walkability

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#### TIDE TO TOWN

Tide to Town, a project to provide 30-plus miles of protected walking and bicycling trails, will connect all of Savannah from the heart of the city to its waterways and marshes, including 62 savannah neighborhoods, 30 public schools and all three major hospitals.



## GOAL 4

*Increase access to healthy food for populations that are most likely to be food-insecure such as older adults, children, those in poverty, and those that live in food apartheid*

Access to healthy food is a major issue affecting health in the community. Good nutrition plays an important role in the growth, development, health and well-being of individuals through all stages of life. Eating a healthy diet can reduce risks of chronic diseases, improve overall health and quality of life. However, eating a healthy diet is difficult without access to affordable, nutritious food. Difficulty in accessing healthy food is often times exacerbated by the higher costs associated with healthier food options when they can be found, making eating a healthy diet virtually impossible for many. Nearly 14% of residents in Chatham County need assistance in providing food for their household, which is 5% higher than the national average. Improving access and affordability of healthy food options for more members of the community is imperative in improving the health and quality of life of the community as a whole.

### Objectives:

- Identify funding mechanisms to increase access to healthy food in “food deserts” within the community
- Expand community garden and urban farmer programs to encourage alternative methods to access healthy food
- Create farmer support programs
- Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services





# PUBLIC SAFETY

## Public Safety

It is the responsibility of local government to serve and protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens and businesses. The safety of a community is fundamental to the wellbeing and longevity of its residents and economy.

In today's world, there are critical threats that communities must continuously monitor: domestic and international terrorism, drastic shifts in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and pandemics such as COVID-19. In response to these threats, a successful government employs departments and passes ordinances to sustain the safety and health of its community. Even in less intense moments of day-to-day life, it is the responsibility of the local government to aid in incidents such as criminal activity, car accidents, house fires, and downed power lines. Generally, for municipalities and local governments, public safety includes fire protection, emergency management services, and law enforcement.

## Emergency Management

Chatham County Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) services all of Chatham County and its municipalities and is responsible for the welfare of the county in the midst and aftermath of major disasters and emergencies.

CEMA has developed a Disaster Recovery Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan to proactively provide protection and courses of action in response to a number of different hazards and emergencies. In the Hazard Mitigation Plan, CEMA has listed severe weather, extreme heat, and flooding as the most likely hazards to impact the county.

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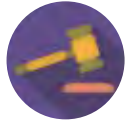
### HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

Hazard mitigation planning reduces loss of life and property by minimizing the impact of disasters. Mitigation plans are key to breaking the cycle of disaster damage and reconstruction

—FEMA







## Fire

The City of Savannah Fire and Emergency Service Department (SFD) provides fire protection and emergency response services to the businesses and households within the city of Savannah's boundaries. The city's first fire company was founded in 1759 in the wake of a historic and devastating fire. Since then, the Department has continued to grow in size along with the city; today, over 300 firefighters are stationed within 15 fire stations citywide. The department is divided into five divisions: Logistics, Investigations, Operations, Special Operations, and Emergency Preparedness.

Recently receiving recognition as one of the nation's most efficient and effective departments, the department was awarded a rating of 1 by the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) and has been accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). Only 2% of fire departments in the nation hold an ISO rating of 1 and accreditation from the CFAI.

Areas of unincorporated Chatham County are provided services by Chatham Emergency Services (CES), a community-based not for profit Fire, EMS, and Fire Watch Department.

CES, formerly known as Southside Fire Department, was founded in 1961 by a collective of volunteer firefighters. Currently, CES operates 14 stations throughout the county and has a staff of approximately 450 paid and volunteer workers.

**FUN FACTS**

# 3.57 minutes

Is the average response time for the City of Savannah Fire Department

**DRAFT**



**FUN FACTS**

# #1

SFD is one of only 2% of fire departments in the nation to be both accredited by the CFAI and a recipient of rating 1 from the ISO





## Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement in the city of Savannah dates to the 1790s in the city's colonial period where a band of men served as guard and watch under the direction of a captain. The present-day police force was founded in 1854. The Savannah Police Department has continued to protect and serve the city of Savannah through notable and transformative time periods including the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. Savannah's Police Department is divided into four Precincts, and consists of eight investigative units and 16 specialized units. The Department employs over 540 officers.

In the early 20th Century, areas outside of Savannah began to grow in population. With this influx of residents, Chatham County officially established its Police Department in 1912.

After decades of frequent and close collaboration on numerous matters, the decision was made in 2003 to merge the Savannah Police Department and the Chatham County Police Department. On January 1, 2005, the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department (SCMPD) officially became the law enforcement for all unincorporated areas in the county and the entire city of Savannah. In 2017, after much public input and thought, the decision was made to end the contract for the merger of the two police forces.

Currently, the Chatham County Police Department employs over 120 officers and consists of a Patrol Division, Criminal Investigations Division, Forensics Unit, Neighborhood Liaison Officers, Marine Patrol Unit, SWAT Team, and the Chatham Counter Narcotics Team.



### END GUN VIOLENCE PROGRAM

The End Gun Violence Program is an initiative started by the previous Savannah-Chatham Police Department in an effort to decrease the high amount of gun violence in certain areas of the community. The program's approach to gun violence is centered on public health and social services.



### NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Savannah is among 60 Georgia cities that participate in National Night Out, an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships to build positive relationships between neighborhoods and the Savannah police force.

—NATW

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Fire & Police Statistics and Trends

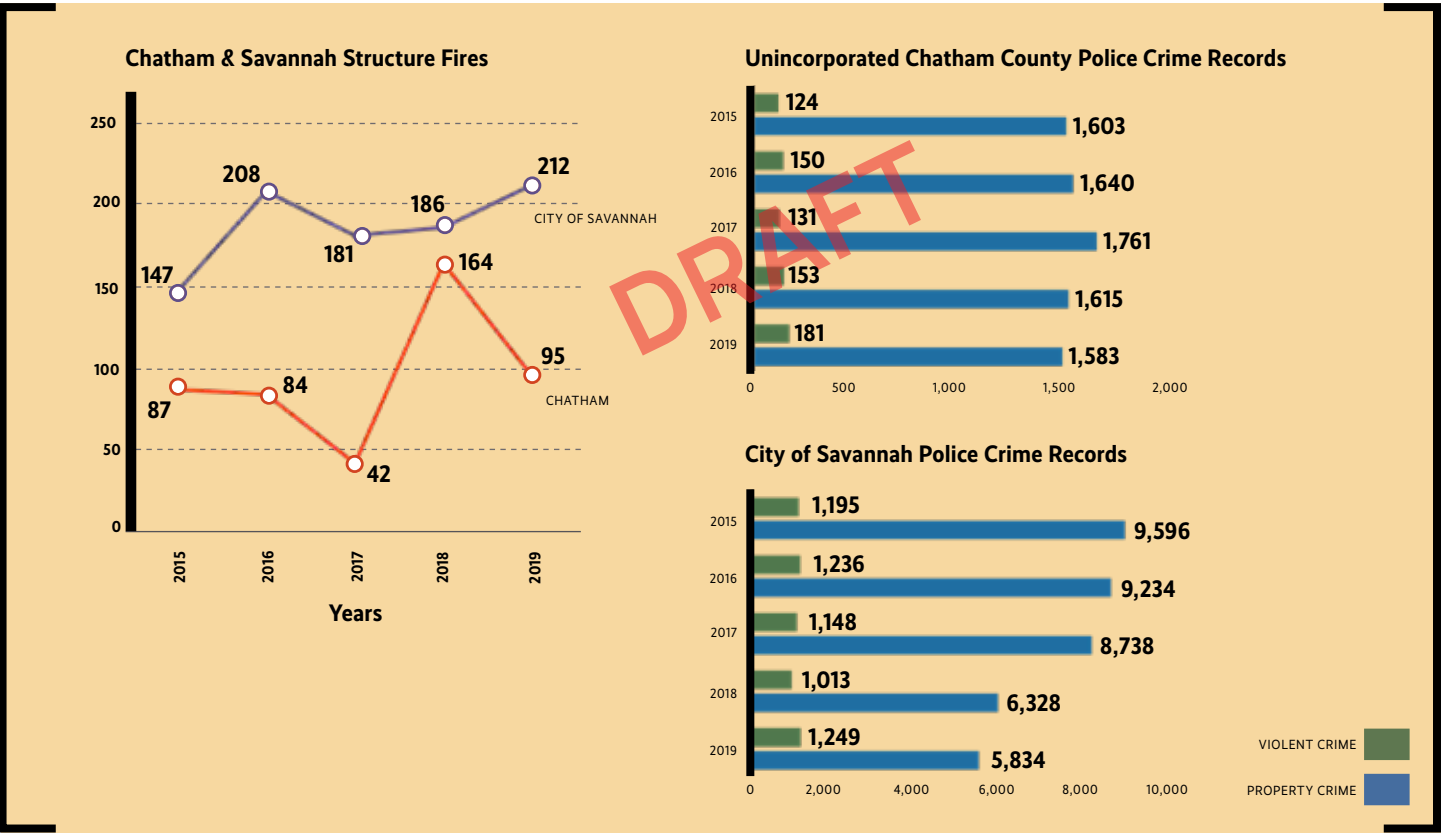
The number of emergency calls received by both the City of Savannah Fire Department and Chatham Emergency Services has remained relatively consistent within the past few years. The majority of calls both departments receive are for medical emergencies.

Unincorporated Chatham County had 164 structure fires in 2018, a nearly four-fold increase from the previous year. In 2019, the city of Savannah experienced 212 structure fires, the most of any year since 2015.

Unincorporated Chatham's total reported crime remained relatively steady from 2015–2019. While consistent in number overall, property crimes have been trending downward since 2017 while violent crimes are on the rise.

The city of Savannah has witnessed a drastic decrease in overall reported crime from 10,791 reported serious crimes in 2015 to 7,083 in 2019. Most of this decrease is the result of fewer property crimes, however, while violent crime has remained constant. This trend foretells the need to address the root of violent crime in the city. Arrest records for both adults and juveniles in Savannah reflect this decrease in overall crimes reported within the five-year time span. As the number of arrests has decreased, data shows a significant number of repeat offenders who continue to be arrested for criminal activity. This information reveals two things: first, there is a need for an alternate solution to assist and redirect individuals from repeated criminal behavior; and second, fewer crimes are being committed by new offenders, especially amongst the juvenile population.

Fire & Police Trends





# RACE EQUITY & LEADERSHIP TASK FORCE

## REAL Task Force

The Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Savannah Task Force was a new advisory group formed in 2020 to address structural racial inequities in Savannah. The task force is led by Savannah's former mayor, Dr. Otis Samuel Johnson, and has a mandate from Savannah's current mayor, Van Johnson II, to complete an action plan that the city government can resource and help implement. The REAL Task Force is made up of multiple committees tackling different issue areas.

## Health

The health team focused on the lack of access to affordable, healthy food in black and brown low-wealth communities in Chatham County. Particularly in Savannah, communities of color exist under a "food apartheid" system, whereby access to food is segregated by race and geography. This results in the concentration of unhealthy venues (e.g., fast food, liquor stores, corner stores) in majority-black and brown neighborhoods, while grocery stores with fresh produce and restaurants with healthy options flourish in more white areas of the city.

The committee established a causal relationship between systemic racism in the production, distribution and marketing of food, and poor health outcomes like obesity, malnutrition, mental health and substance abuse disorders, as well as preventable chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes. The areas most impacted by these disparities in Savannah are the 31404 and 31415 zip codes.

The committee has developed the following problem statement to guide their analysis:

In Savannah, 35,000 people live in areas without access to healthy foods. Although African Americans make up about 55% of the total population, they make up about 60–80% of the individuals living in areas without healthy food access, leading to higher prevalence of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

The committee also gathered the following data to support this correlation:

- 35,000 (24%) Savannahians live in areas without access to healthy foods
- 21,000–28,000 Savannahians, the vast majority of those living in areas without access to healthy foods, are black
- 12.6% of the population of Chatham County and 14.7% of the population of Savannah has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes
- 38% of Chatham County's population is considered obese.
- 6.7% of Chatham County's population has a chronic heart condition
- 38.8% of Chatham County's population has high blood pressure

In the next phase of planning, the committee will complete its analysis to generate recommendations for the City's work in this area.



## Education

The education committee began by asserting the following principles to guide its work:

- Education is a right
- Education is a social contract with a community
- Education is a determinant of the socio-economic well-being of a community

Third grade reading performance was selected as the issue of focus for the education committee because third grade reading proficiency is a critical moment in child development and a strong indicator of longer-term educational outcomes. Even when researchers control for characteristics such as race, poverty, gender and disabilities, third-grade reading proficiency achievement remains the strongest correlate for future student success. In Savannah, this outcome is delineated in great part by race.

The committee focused its research on the following problem statement:

Savannah Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) has 36,502 students. Of those, 21,074 (58%) are black. SCCPSS standardized test results reflect that 71.63% of third grade students read at or below third grade reading level, the majority of whom are also black.

Relatedly, many black-owned early childhood development service providers are not performing at the state's standards and therefore cannot secure state funding. Many of these providers disproportionately serve low-income black and brown children. Furthermore, many low-income black and brown families in Savannah don't access pre-K learning at all.

The committee suggests that the local school system needs to affirmatively target black students with resources from birth through third grade to close educational gaps beyond the third grade.

The committee identified the following overarching goals for SCCPSS:

- Improve academic achievement for black students
- Increase their ability to navigate the K-12 public school system
- Improve their access to opportunities in higher education

The committee also identified the following factors in the school system's success:

- School readiness, including access to early childhood education, quality day care, books in the home, etc.
- Access to high-quality and culturally relevant teaching in primary grades, measured by teacher experience; teacher development, preparation, and retention; and curriculum quality
- Teacher bias in the classrooms
- Access to quality summer educational experiences
- Age-appropriate and equitable disciplinary practices
- Access to quality after-school programs
- Reimagined school-parent partnerships
- Access to technology in the school and home





Lastly, the committee decided that reforming the public education funding formula is necessary over the long-term to disrupt systemic inequities. The formula is currently tied to property values, while federal, state and local housing policies have systematically devalued properties within black communities. The formula dictates the per-pupil expenditure rate at the school district level. Title I federal funding for “disadvantaged” schools is intended to narrow the funding gap, however these funds are limited and their applications often stigmatize students. When comparing SCCPSS’s 3rd grade per-pupil expenditure rate with more affluent school districts of similar size in Georgia and in other states, the funding disparities are evident. Thus, as a long-term goal, the committee will explore strategies to address this foundational inequity and its negative effects on educational opportunities for Savannah’s black students.

## Public Safety

As it relates to law enforcement, African Americans are impacted at rates so disproportionate that nearly one in three black men will have some experience with the criminal justice system in their lifetime. The REAL Task Force also noted a correlation between poverty and the probability of involvement with the criminal justice system.

The committee defined the scope of the problem in Savannah with the following disparities:

- People of color are disproportionately arrested, prosecuted and sentenced for low-level crimes
- Local probation and cash bail systems criminalize poverty and disproportionately impact people of color
- Lack of alternatives to jail and re-entry programs, which disproportionately impacts people of color
- Many people are involved in the local justice system due to a lack of mental health and trauma support
- Youth of color are disproportionately referred to the local juvenile justice system

The committee gathered the following data to support its problem definition:

- Only 32% of Georgians are black, yet they make up 51% of those jailed and 60% of those imprisoned
- In 2015, Chatham County was among the top 10 counties in Georgia with the highest jail admissions and placed fifth among counties for sending adults to prison
- Georgia has more people on probation than any other U.S. state and has led the nation in capital execution some years
- Chatham County has one of the highest referral rates to the juvenile system in the state
- In 2019, although African Americans only make up 40% of Chatham County’s population, 2,791 black residents were involved in the local criminal justice system, compared to 657 white residents
- In 2020, black men made up 68% of the Chatham County jail population, despite making up only 20% of the total county population



- In 2020, 299 individuals in Chatham County were incarcerated for contempt of court (typically a failure to pay child support or other fines); 68% of these individuals were black. Over 100 people experiencing homelessness were jailed, the vast majority of whom are also black. A whopping 1,873 individuals were jailed on substance abuse charges and 1,627 on traffic-related offenses
- In 2020, 60 people of color were detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Having defined the scope of the problem and aggregated data, the committee set the following goals:

- Redefine the city's approach to public safety to include housing and mental health services, as well as training for community-level interventions
- Revise the city of Savannah's public safety budget
- Address the trauma that the local system has inflicted on African Americans
- Eliminate Savannah's school-to-prison pipeline
- Shift the post-incarceration paradigm from disintegrating to re-integrating the formerly incarcerated
- Reform the cash bail and probation systems to decriminalize poverty
- Address ways in which the system criminalizes poverty, particularly cash-bail and probation systems
- Create a public safety review board for Chatham County and an internal body in the Chatham County District Attorney's office
- Implement an arrest diversion procedure for Chatham County and City of Savannah
- Implement local restorative justice programs and alternatives to incarceration

DRAFT

*Savannah's REAL Task Force; REPORT TO SAPELO  
FOUNDATION; June 2021*





# PUBLIC SAFETY GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Insure better quality of life through multifaceted strategies of public safety. The strategies include reducing crime by focusing on asset building, meeting community needs, expanding visibility and capacity of resources and programs provided by first responders, and building trust between law enforcement and residents*

Reducing crime is a top priority for the police department and many members of the community. Lower rates of crime benefit residents, businesses, and the long term development of the area. At the neighborhood level, trust between officers and citizens is an essential component of improving safety. Addressing the root causes of crime—including poverty, lack of education, and few employment and other opportunities—is vital to reducing crime in the community

### Objectives:

- Build trust between law enforcement and residents
- Focus enforcement in high crime areas
- Expand visibility of police to ensure all residents feel safe
- Identify and support programs to prevent juvenile involvement in criminal activities
- Identify and support programs to rehabilitate individuals that have been in the judicial system to break the cycle of repeat offenders

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## GOAL 2

*Develop local and regional collaboration among organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand resources including but not limited to behavioral health and public health services*

Ensuring access to social services and resources to those in need not only helps to reduce the suffering of the individuals and families utilizing the services, but it improves the community as a whole. Eliminating poverty, improving education and job opportunities, and providing preventative health care services are all means to reduce crime, improve the local economy, and lessen the dependence on social services in the future. All of these strategies are good for everyone in the community. Interagency and cross organization collaboration can reduce duplication of services (freeing up funds to provide additional services or improve existing services), increase the ability to reach underserved communities, and improve community health. Independently, local service providers are making a difference in many lives, but working cooperatively can help to expand their reach and make sure that the services are adequately delivered and sustained into the future.

### Objectives:

- Inventory the existing social services and resources within the community and identify which organizations/agencies provide those services
- Identify needed, but not currently provided, social services and resources
- Identify funding sources to provided needed services and resources
- Identify barriers to access services and resources and work to eliminate those barriers
- Create a plan to improve collaboration among organizations/agencies to provide services in a more effectual manner





## GOAL 3

*Provide effective and efficient government services while ensuring that processes and procedures are planned and executed with transparency*

A safe community creates better neighborhoods, economic development and overall quality of life for all residents. It is a primary responsibility of a municipality to ensure public safety that protects and serves its residents. Chatham County and the City of Savannah coordinate their efforts to ensure that police, fire, and emergency management services are provided for all residents. It is imperative to continuously assess the efforts of the service providers, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adjust as needed.

### Objectives:

- Encourage collaborative efforts between departments and jurisdictions
- Increase in tax or cost for services where appropriate
- Seek funding from state and federal level
- Ensure that the hiring process selects highly qualified candidates
- Establish rapport and trust within the community

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# BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS

The citizens of Chatham County understand the value of future planning, as evidenced by the county's numerous tree-lined squares, parks, and boulevards. Chatham County and the City of Savannah's concurrent fiber optic feasibility studies completed in 2017 were another contribution to the community's tradition of forethought.

In the past, housing, public spaces, transportation, and water were critical for community viability. Today, competitiveness, prosperity, and quality of life are determined by bits and bytes, code and data, networks, "smart" systems, and software applications. Indeed, digital technology has become the key to effectively managing and using conventional resources. It is creating new possibilities for business, commerce, education, healthcare, governance, public safety, and recreation. All of this depends on bandwidth and internet connectivity—the ability to move information quickly and flexibly from and to most anywhere.

The vast array of devices that permeates Chatham County is only going to increase in volume moving forward. Those devices enable people to greatly improve and transform how they live, work, and play by connecting them to each other and giving them access to valuable information. Citizens can and will continue to use digital technology to interact with each other in unprecedented, highly informed, easier, and more dynamic ways.

Broadband has become essential to business, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Unfortunately, high-speed internet access remains out of reach for Georgians in many communities. Local governments are responding with new investments in technology. Building, running, and even using fiber-optic infrastructure is not a short-term endeavor.

These activities demand a clear vision for current and future citizens' expectations and requirements, require substantial input from local business and civic leaders, and benefit from principled thinking about the role of local government.

In summary, digital infrastructure can be used to deliver essential community services, enable a modern, connected economy, and support a higher quality of life.

*Broadband has become essential to business, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Unfortunately, high-speed internet access remains out of reach for Georgians in many communities.*

”







## Network Technology

Broadband refers to high-speed internet services, which provide online content—websites, television shows, video conferencing, cloud services, or voice conversations, for example—to be accessed and shared via computers, smartphones, and other devices. The Federal Communications Commission defines broadband to be at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream to the device, and 3 Mbps upstream, though demands are increasing. There are multiple broadband delivery systems, though mainly cable, DSL, fiber, and wireless connect devices to the internet.

Fiber-optic cables—or just “fiber”—are considered the gold standard for supporting broadband, and are essential for fast, reliable connections. Fiber is a strand of glass the diameter of a human hair that carries waves of light. Using photons across glass, as opposed to traditional electrons across copper wire, fiber has the capacity to carry nearly unlimited amounts of data across long distances, literally at the speed of light.

Broadband is deployed throughout communities as wires that carry digital signals to and from users. The content comes into the local community from around the world via global, national, and regional networks. The local infrastructure is built, connected, and operated by internet and telecommunications companies that own the physical wires to each household.

Infrastructure that is aging and built on older technologies result in slower, less reliable access to internet content. Due to capacity limits of this infrastructure, companies

### INTERNET ACCESS

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of having reliable internet access at home. Many Chatham County residents depend on the internet to work and learn remotely, purchase essential items, access telehealth services, and connect with friends and family from afar.

cannot reliably provide high speeds, and often limit the amount of data consumers can use. Fiber provides the robust infrastructure that connects telephone and cable infrastructure between communities and around the world. It was originally used by telecommunication utilities for their core infrastructure, to connect their major switching centers, and was only available to their biggest corporate and institutional customers. Today, fiber is in homes and businesses throughout the world providing telephone and television as well as internet services.

In summary, digital infrastructure can be used to deliver essential community services, enable a modern, connected economy, and support a higher quality of life. The end goal is for all of Chatham County to help its citizens achieve better connectivity and increased bandwidth, while meeting its internal technology needs. Every jurisdiction in Chatham County should invest in fiber-optic infrastructure and related facilities to better serve its citizens, enhance quality of life and quality of place, and spur sustainable economic growth all while ensuring it is economically feasible, fiscally responsible, and practical.





## Barriers to Household Internet Subscribership

A set of 2017 surveys found that 1.7% of households in Chatham and 3.1% of households in Savannah reported not subscribing to internet services. It is important to understand the reasons why households do not subscribe to the internet, as both surveys found strong support for the idea that internet access is essential: across all surveyed households, none reported that they chose not to subscribe because they do not need the internet.

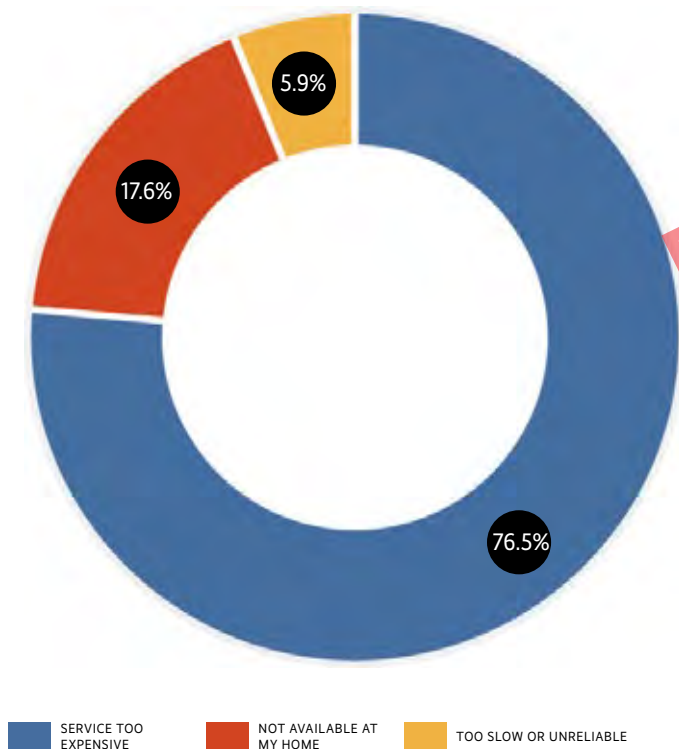
Among non-subscribing Chatham County households, an overwhelming 76.5% said the main reason they chose not to subscribe to internet service is because it is too expensive. In Savannah, 81.8% of non-subscribing households said cost was their main reason for not subscribing to service.

Nearly one out of five non-subscribing households in Chatham County said that broadband is not available at their home (17.6%); from a quality of service perspective, 5.9% of non-subscribing households said that available services are too slow or unreliable, perhaps having dropped previous service due to poor experience.



Nearly 1 out of 5 non-subscribing households in Chatham County said broadband is not available at their home

## Top Reasons for Non-Subscribership



While these percentages are very telling of local broadband market conditions, both Chatham County's and Savannah's findings contradict national household averages. Recent U.S. Department of Commerce research found "no internet availability" as the primary barrier in 48% of non-subscribing households nationally and "expensive service" as the primary barrier in 28% of non-subscribing households. These findings illuminate issues beyond simply having access to the internet and reveal the digital divide in Chatham County is based more on cost of services rather than availability.

### State of Broadband in Savannah

- **Nominally strong, but inconsistent, residential offerings, including fiber-based services**
  - Median: "up to" 300 Mbps/25 Mbps for \$150/mo.
  - Minimum: 1.5 Mbps/768 Mbps for \$30
  - 75% of locations surveyed had no competitive options
- **Fewer retail offerings for business**
  - Business Median: "up to" 150 Mbps/25Mbps for \$264/mo.
  - Many locations with no competitive options
  - Incumbent and independent providers offer services on an individual case basis

Figure 8.17–Most Important Reason for Not Subscribing to Internet, Chatham County



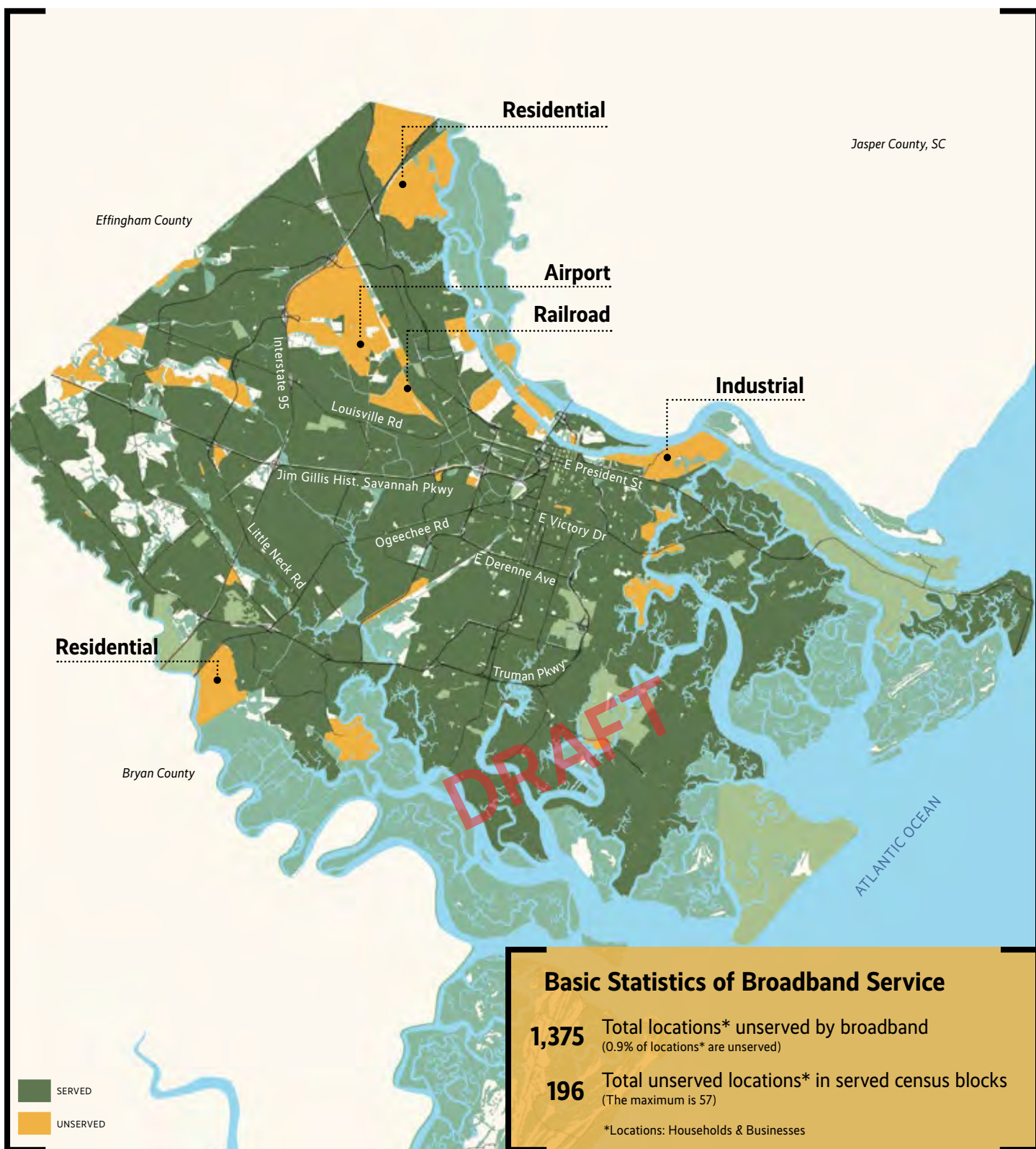


Figure 8.18–Broadband Availability Map

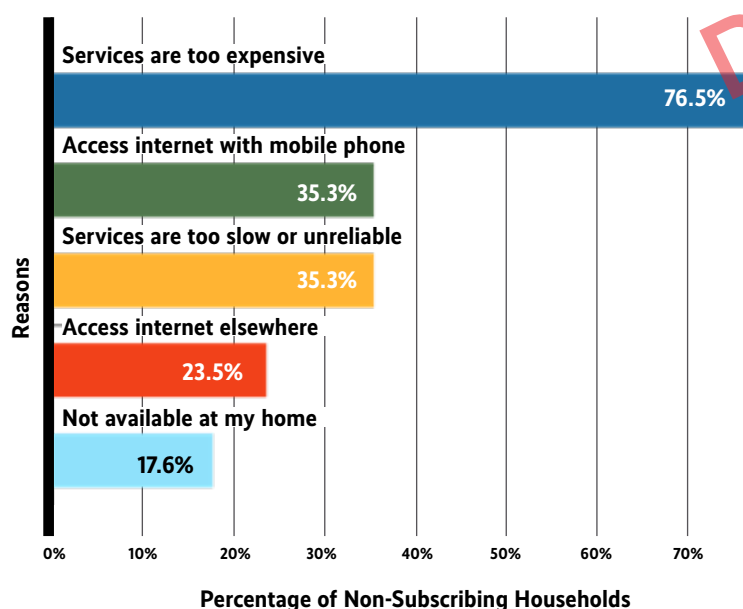


This could be an indication that current service providers are charging too much for service, but may also be the result of poor economic conditions of some households in the county. Indeed, the threshold for a good or service being "too expensive" is relative, as what is out of financial reach for some households and income levels could be considered discretionary spending for others.

Still, survey responses show that Chatham County households recognize a need for internet access in the home. As seen in Figure 8.19, when asked why the household did not subscribe to household internet services, an overwhelming number of households reported that services are too expensive (76.5%), while roughly a third (35.3%) rely on their mobile devices, and one quarter (23.5%) rely on access to the internet outside the home. Outside the home could mean at work or school, the library, or even public Wi-Fi locations around town. Lastly, and not insignificantly, 17.6% of county households report that the internet is not available at their home.

Some important observations can be drawn from this data. First, given high cost of service is the result of market conditions in Chatham County, two additional reasons for

Figure 8.19—Reasons for Non-Subscribership in Chatham County



non-subscribership hint at possible workaround solutions for households that need internet access: "access internet with mobile phone" and "access internet elsewhere."

Reflecting a national trend, internet-enabled mobile devices are emerging as a necessary substitute for home internet access. A remarkable 35.3% of non-subscribing households report their mobile phone as a reason their household does not subscribe to internet services. These homes do not willingly choose mobile over wired connections; they use their mobile phones out of necessity because wired residential service is too expensive. Where cost is an issue, if given the choice between wired home internet access or inferior and costly mobile internet access, most will choose mobile wireless because of the voice and mobility aspects. Likewise, no non-subscribing Chatham County households say they do not subscribe to services because they access internet elsewhere. Yet when given the opportunity for multiple responses, that response increases to 23.5% of households that access the internet outside the home, possibly at work, school, or a public place such as a library or a restaurant likely because they have no affordable choice for their household.

To get an idea of how many non-subscribing Chatham County households would subscribe to services if given the opportunity, a series of questions in the same 2017 survey gauged how much the internet is a part of their household functions.

Taken together, the survey of non-subscribing households clearly indicates that Chatham County residents recognize the importance of the internet to their household and would likely adopt services if available at an affordable price.

*Summarized from Chatham County, Georgia Fiber-Optic Feasibility Study (May 2017 Magellan Advisors), as well as the City of Savannah Municipal Fiber Feasibility Study (May 2017 Magellan Advisors)*



## Next Steps

Drawing on recommendations from the two local studies, the next steps move Chatham County toward developing and realizing county-wide fiber-optic infrastructure goals. Many of these recommendations center around forming local collaborations to aggregate demand and formalize broadband-friendly policies across the county. Many of the next steps are low-cost, organizational, and policy-oriented measures that will lead to a broader fiber-optic partnership and county-wide fiber-optic deployment.

*These findings shine a light on issues beyond access to the internet and reveal the digital divide in Chatham County is based more on cost of services.*



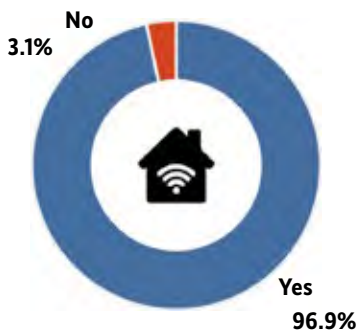
### AN ISSUE INTENSIFIED BY COVID-19

Much of our daily interactions online require a high-speed connection to the internet. As communities around the world adapted to a world with COVID-19 and state and local directives urged millions of Americans to stay at home, broadband connectivity and internet access became more critical than ever before.

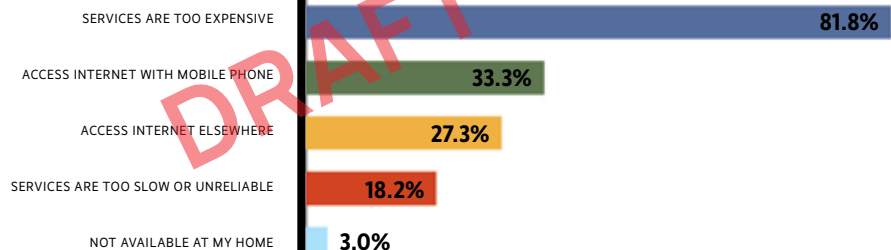
Chatham County was forced to find new ways to work, go to school, communicate, and connect during the pandemic. This was a challenge for the 9.4% of county residents with no internet access in their housing unit. According to American Community Survey microdata, 1,307 elementary school-age children (5-10 years old), 510 middle school-age children (11-13 years old), and 705 high school-age children (14-18 years old) lived in a home with no internet access.

## Household Survey Findings—Savannah

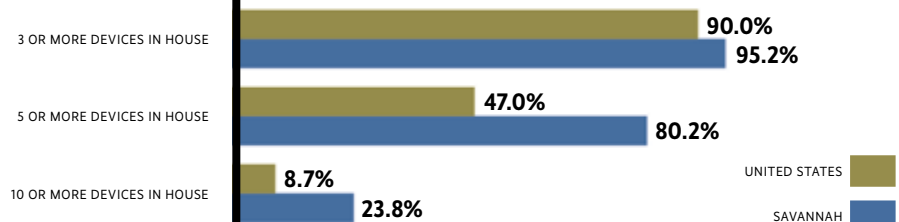
Households with Internet Access



Reasons for Not Having Internet Access



Internet-enabled Devices in U.S. vs Savannah Households





# MICROWAVE INTERNET SERVICE

Microwave radio transmission has been used for wireless data transmission since before the terms wireless broadband or Wi-Fi were commonly used. However, transmission was limited by slower data speeds, line-of-sight connections, and bandwidth issues. Microwave relay stations were often located on tall buildings and mountaintops, with their antennas installed on towers to get maximum range.

Although alternate modes of transmission are more prevalent today, some microwave systems now serve as emergency backup during emergencies or in rural areas. We often see microwave radio relay systems being used today in portable radio applications. More routinely, retractable, telescoping masts with microwave dishes are used for remote broadcasts by television and news companies to transmit live video back to the studio.

While fiber will continue to be deployed, not all urban cell sites can be supported by fiber. Microwave is versatile and can support significant amounts of data, and has the advantage of immediacy of deployment, a moderate cost profile, and accessibility

*Summarized from Techwalla.com*

## Microwave Pros

- Lower Initial Costs
  - » The costs of installing a microwave tower are significantly less than those of installing traditional buried cable systems, such as DSL or cable.
- Mobility
  - » Mobile microwave networks, such as Cellular on Wheels (COW) systems, have a range of about 2.5 miles and provide greater flexibility due to their mobility. These networks are used locally during high-wireless usage events such as St. Patrick's Day, where the population grows dramatically within a small area of the city.
  - » Portable cellular sites can provide temporary network and wireless coverage to locations where cellular coverage is minimal or compromised, like after major storms or hurricanes. This allows for continuity and resilience planning to not be reliant on just one technology for internet access in these situations.
  - » Microwave systems can also be placed permanently so they become possible alternatives for underserved areas and communities where infrastructure is lacking.

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## Microwave Cons

- Interference
  - » Microwave radio frequency transmissions can be adversely affected by weather conditions and terrain. Temperature, humidity, precipitation, and wind can all cause interference with microwave radio frequency communications. Terrain features like hills can reflect or block signals, and the density and height of nearby trees and buildings will also affect reception, sometimes creating a "shadow" or dead zone nearby. Additionally, rivers and other water features are extremely reflective to radio transmissions.
- Shared Bandwidth
  - » All connections within range of a tower share the same bandwidth, which can significantly reduce connection speeds as more and more users connect to the network. Speed also decreases the farther one is from the tower. Ultimately, these issues with shared bandwidth and the widespread adoption of the internet precipitated the move away from microwave internet service and toward broadband.





# BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS GOALS

## GOAL 1

*Ensure all of Chatham County has access to broadband service*

Internet is critical in today's world for both households and businesses. Areas of Chatham County still experience gaps in cellular coverage and have limited access to high-speed internet service even though multiple providers exist. Internet providers are working to extend fiber and new 5G wireless technology; however, some rural areas in the county are experiencing a reduction in coverage as these new technologies are implemented.

### Objectives:

- Develop applicable codes and ordinances to phase in the requirement for all newly built residences have broadband connections installed
- In underserved areas where fiber installation is cost or location prohibitive, analyze the feasibility of using microwave systems to provide alternative coverage
- Work with local providers to develop and implement an outreach campaign to educate the general population on low-cost/affordable internet service program options
- Develop a plan and program to provide innovative solutions to access Wi-Fi throughout the county, such as in municipal parks, squares, and street corridors, in addition to CAT bus stops
- Explore technology spaces that offer creative opportunities such as virtual reality labs, music studios, and interactive technology



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# SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

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09





## SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM

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### Introduction

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The Short Term Work Program Element consists of projects that are ongoing or should be launched over the next five years to further the goals of the plan. The STWP is organized by element and lists the time line, lead partner, funding sources, and general cost estimates.

A Report of Accomplishments is also included in this element and tracks the progress on activities and goals established and will be reported on an annual basis.



# GLOSSARY

The following symbols and terms are used in the Short Term Work Program; please refer back to this page with questions.

Cost Estimate	Range
ST	Staff Time
\$	Under \$100,000
\$\$	\$100,000—\$1,000,000
\$\$\$	\$1,000,000—\$10,000,000
\$\$\$\$	Over \$10,000,000

Abbreviation	Organization
BWS	Bike Walk Savannah
CAT	Chatham Area Transit Authority
CCCS	Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Savannah
CCDA	Chatham County District Attorney
CCSD	Chatham County Sheriff Department
CEMA	Chatham Emergency Management Agency
CGIC	Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
CHD	Coastal Health District
CHSA	Community Housing Services
COC	Chamber of Commerce
CSAH	Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless
CWDB	Coastal Workforce Development Board
DCA	Georgia Department of Community Affairs
DCH	Georgia Department of Community Health
DDS	Georgia Department of Driver Services
DECAL	Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
DOL	Georgia Department of Labor
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
EOA	Equal Opportunity Authority

Abbreviation	Organization
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
FD	Fire Departments (Multi-Jurisdictional)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FG	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOF	Friends of Forsyth
GA	State of Georgia
GADNR	Georgia Department of Natural Resources
GAEPD	Georgia Environmental Protection Division
GC	Georgia Conservancy
GCSB	Gateway Community Service Board
GDCS	Georgia Department of Community Supervision
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
GEMA	Georgia Emergency Management Agency
GFC	Georgia Forestry Commission
GLT	Georgia Land Trust
GPA	Georgia Ports Authority
GSU	Georgia Southern University
HAS	Housing Authority of Savannah
HS	Healthy Savannah
HSF	Historic Savannah Foundation
HPD	DCA Historic Preservation Division
JA	Junior Achievement
LBA	Chatham County Land Bank Authority
LG	Local Government (Multi-Jurisdictional)
LH	Local Hospitals
LIB	Local Libraries



Abbreviation	Organization
LIFE	Living Independence for Everyone
MPC	Metropolitan Planning Commission
NPS	National Park Service
N/A	Non-Applicable
PD	Police Departments (Multi-Jurisdictional)
SACC	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
SBA	Savannah Business Alliance
SBAC	Small Business Assistance Corporation
SBDC	Small Business Development Center
SBEN	Small Business Entrepreneurial Network
SBHU	Savannah Behavioral Health Unit
SCCPSS	Savannah Chatham County Public School System
SEC	Savannah Entrepreneurial Center
SEDA	Savannah Economic Development Authority
SFC	Savannah Film Commission
	Georgia State Historic Planning Organization
SN	Safety Net Planning Board
SSU	Savannah State University
STC	Savannah Technical College
STF	Savannah Tree Foundation
SU	Step Up Savannah
UGAE	University of Georgia Extension Agency
USDOT	United State Department of Transportation
UWCE	United Way of the Coastal Empire



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## VISION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah 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:

1. Using accurate and reliable data, link current and projected needs of employers through the development of apprenticeship and vocational programs for the placement of individuals with quality employment leading to self-sufficiency
2. Foster a positive environment that provides opportunities for all businesses
3. Increase economic mobility by reducing barriers and creating opportunities for quality employment for young adults, the economically disadvantaged, justice involved, and individuals with behavioral health needs
4. Implement outreach and programming that leads to economically inclusive entrepreneurial growth and innovation through the enhanced presence of small business support services and collaboration among local businesses
5. Become a community with economically vibrant, safe neighborhoods and commercial centers

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**GOAL 1**

*Using accurate and reliable data, link current and projected needs of employers through the development of apprenticeship and vocational programs for the placement of individuals with quality employment leading to self-sufficiency*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.1.1	Facilitate a network to align employers, training providers, and job seekers through incentives to connect training programs with living wage career opportunities	2022-2023	CGIC, CWDB, SACC, STC, SU	LG, Grants	ST
E.1.2	Increase the number of opportunities for job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeship programs, to meet the demand of Coastal Georgia, particularly targeted to youth and young adults	2022-2023	ASU, CGIC, CWDG, LG, SACC, SEDA	LG, Grants	ST
E.1.3	Increase capacity and opportunities for individuals to receive training to develop skills that lead to employment or entrepreneurship	2022-2026	CGIC, STC, EOA, SU	LG, Grants	\$
E.1.4	Create a working group of employers in support of employees being paid a living wage and having access to benefits	2022-2023	CGIC, CWDB, SACC, STC, SU, LG	LG, Grants	ST
E.1.5	Advocate for policies and programs to increase employment opportunities for returning citizens and implement strategies that promote hiring of people impacted by the criminal justice system	2022-2026	CGIC, CWDB, SACC, STC, SU, LG, CCSD, PD	LG, Grants	ST
E.1.6	Increase and improve broader collaboration between workforce development entities to link jobs to employees by using clearinghouse of apprenticeship and internship opportunities	2022-2023	CGIC, CWDB, SACC, STC, SU, LG	LG, Grants	ST

**GOAL 2**

*Foster a positive environment that provides opportunities for all businesses*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.2.1	Continue to facilitate the establishment of minority and women-owned businesses (M/WBE) as defined by the United States Small Business Administration Federal Contract Program	2022-2026	LG, SACC, SEDA, SBA, SBAC, SBDC, SBEN	N/A	ST
E.2.2	Identify and remove obstacles to existing and proposed businesses in targeted redevelopment areas	2022-2023	LG, SACC, SEDA, SBA	N/A	ST





**GOAL 3**

*Increase economic mobility by reducing barriers and creating opportunities for quality employment for young adults, the economically disadvantaged, justice involved, and individuals with behavioral health needs*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.3.1	Provide connections to education and trades to help the economically disadvantaged, justice involved, and individuals with behavioral health needs by providing a community-based scholarship programs or similar incentives	2022-2023	CGIC, SACC, SEDA, SU, GDSCS, LG	LG, Grants	\$
E.3.2	Increase capacity of case management and mentorship to provide employment, wrap-around and support services for families	2025-2026	CGIC, HAS, SU, UW, LG	LG, Grants	\$\$
E.3.3	Increase awareness and use of tax incentives for employers serving and employing those who qualify under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit	2022-2023	CGIC, LG, SACC, SEDA	N/A	ST
E.3.4	Prioritize and implement meaningful action with the entire community that addresses patterns of racial and ethnic inequities in housing, nutrition, healthcare, economic mobility, and wealth building	2022-2023	CGIC, SEC, SACC, SEDA, LG	N/A	\$
E.3.5	Provide employers with best practices to increase retention and reduce turnover	2022-2023	CGIC, SEC, SEDA, SACC; LG	LG, Grants	\$
E.3.6	Increase awareness about, and access to, financial support services available to those living in the greatest impoverished zip codes	2022-2023	CGIC, HAS, SU, UW, LG	LG, Grants	\$
E.3.7	Increase programming for returning citizens including connections to mental health, housing, workforce development, and basic transitional needs; especially those at high risk to re-offend	2022-2026	CGIC, HAS, SU, UW, LG, PD, DJJ	LG, Grants	\$\$
E.3.8	Provide case management with education regarding best practices on the provision of services	2025-2026	CGIC, CWDB, HAS, SACC, STC, SU, LG	LG, Grants	\$\$
E.3.9	Explore funding mechanisms to provide additional financial support to a more diverse economy and establish action steps that will promote regional innovation	2022-2023	CGIC, SEDA, SACC, LG	LG, Grants	ST
E.3.10	Expand the local film industry	2022-2023	SEDA, SFC, LG	Private Partners, LG, Grants	\$\$



**GOAL 4**

*Implement outreach and programming that leads to economically inclusive entrepreneurial growth and innovation through the enhanced presence of small business support services and collaboration among local businesses*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.4.1	Increase efficiency of permitting and licensing policies for businesses through streamlining procedures and creating matching county and municipality requirements	2026	LG	LG	\$
E.4.2	Increase employee up-skilling opportunities for career progression	2022-2023	LG, SEDA, SBAC, SBDC, SBEN	LG	ST
E.4.3	Develop policy including incentives for start-up of small and existing businesses	2022-2023	LG, SBAC, SBDC, SBEN	LG	ST

**GOAL 5**

*Become a community with economically vibrant, safe neighborhoods and commercial centers*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.5.1	Promote mixed use development where appropriate with densities higher than 25 units per acre to encourage safe, sustainable neighborhoods that also reduce dependency on vehicular transportation that generates greenhouse-gas emissions	2022-2023	MPC	N/A	ST
E.5.2	Propose a policy to prioritize active transportation infrastructure to facilitate walking, biking, and transit to commercial corridors	2022-2023	MPC, LG, CAT	LG	ST
E.5.3	Evaluate a policy to reduce regulatory barriers for new businesses by establishing "code-light zones."	2022-2023	MPC, LG	LG, Grants	ST
E.5.4	Evaluate flexible corridor-specific design standards to create attractive, functional, and harmonious buildings and public space	2025-2026	MPC, LG	N/A	ST





# LAND USE



## VISION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & 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:

1. Establish growth policies for the city of Savannah which seek to guide development and redevelopment in a responsible manner, encouraging compact development, walkable neighborhoods, increased connectivity, and open space preservation
2. Identify and prioritize future annexations which are regionally coordinated, promote responsible growth
3. Utilize small area and corridor plans as a means to protect the character of existing areas and ensure new development is compatible
4. Continue to create innovative ways to connect people with places
5. Enhance the character and image of major corridors that Implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that project a positive image while encouraging walking

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**GOAL 1**

*Establish growth policies for the city of Savannah which seek to guide development and redevelopment in a responsible manner, encouraging compact development, walkable neighborhoods, increased connectivity, and open space preservation*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
L.1.1	Ensure zoning ordinances provide for pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development, and a mix of housing types	2022-2023	LG	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnerships	ST
L.1.2	Refine ordinances to reduce on-site parking requirements and enhance walking and bicycling infrastructure that will help reduce emission-generating reliance on vehicles	2022-2023	MPC, LG	N/A	ST
L.1.3	Refine policies and ordinances to extend Complete Streets design principles into land development plans	2022-2023	MPC, LG	N/A	ST
L.1.4	Assemble stakeholders within neighborhoods and develop action plans to inform land use, housing, transportation, and economic development priorities emphasizing (1) the improvement of energy efficiency, (2) boosting the use of clean energy, and (3) reducing greenhouse-gas emissions	2022-2023	MPC, LG	N/A	ST
L.1.5	Develop a standard to evaluate public park and recreational area conditions and align efforts with the Forsyth Park Master Plan and the Chatham County Master Recreation Plan	2022-2023	CGIC, LG, BWS	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnerships	\$

**GOAL 2**

*Identify and prioritize future annexations which are regionally coordinated, promote responsible growth*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
L.2.1	Establish new public realm in areas adjacent to downtown Savannah	2022-2026	MPC, LG	SPLOST, Bonds, Grants	\$\$\$
L.2.2	Implement urban development plans for areas affected by the removal of the I-16 flyover and the construction of a new arena	2025-2026	CORE MPO, MPC, LG	SPLOST, Bonds, Grants	\$\$\$
L.2.3	Coordinate land use and transportation policies to ensure that transportation decisions, strategies, and investments are in support of land use objectives	2022-2023	CORE MPO, MPC, LG	SPLOST, Bonds, Grants	ST
L.2.4	Review land use policies and regulatory frameworks and update to ensure consistency with the community vision and compatibility with the referenced surrounding area	2025-2026	CORE MPO, MPC, LG	SPLOST, Bonds, Grants	\$
L.2.5	Develop an intergovernmental coordination plan/strategy with Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SHHIA) to ensure that the near term and long-term development plans of Chatham County/Savannah and the SHHIA are compatible	2022-2023	CORE MPO, MPC, LG	SHHIA Staff, LG	ST





**GOAL 3***Utilize small area and corridor plans as a means to protect the character of existing areas and ensure new development is compatible*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
L.3.1	Develop a set of criteria to determine which neighborhoods can benefit from action plans that address issues such as housing, vacant property, transportation, and quality of life	2022-2023	MPC, LG	N/A	ST
L.3.2	Assemble stakeholders within neighborhoods and develop action plans to inform land use, housing, transportation, and economic development priorities	2022-2023	MPC, LG	N/A	ST

**GOAL 4***Continue to create innovative ways to connect people with places*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
L.4.1	Create a Public Art Plan for the city and integrate permanent or rotating public art into the design of streetscapes and other public spaces	2022-2023	MPC, LG	LG	\$
L.4.2	Pursue opportunities for creative placemaking, including the use of vacant storefronts for temporary installations	2024-2026	MPC, LG	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$
L.4.3	Pursue opportunities to relocate overhead power lines underground, particularly on major commercial corridors	2022-2023	LG	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$\$

**GOAL 5***Enhance the character and image of major corridors that Implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that project a positive image while encouraging walking*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
L.4.1	Incorporate distinctive pavement textures and colors in streetscape designs, particularly in areas with high levels of pedestrian and commercial activity	2026	MPC, LG	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$
L.4.2	Conduct a neighborhood-by-neighborhood assessment of streetscape conditions and develop a plan with costs to improve the visual quality along street systems	2025-2026	LG	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$







# TRANSPORTATION



## VISION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah prioritizes safe mobility for all users; 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:

1. Support safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation designs and improvements that enhance neighborhood connectivity for all modes of travel including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists
2. Improve accessibility to employment centers, institutions, commercial corridors, and recreational facilities equitably through multi-modal connections, bikeways, trails and greenways
3. Maintain and preserve transportation infrastructure in a manner that protects unique regional characteristics, quality of life, and the environment
4. Maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure that supports and enables local, regional and global economic vitality and competitiveness, productivity and efficiency
5. Promote and provide equitable neighborhood connectivity and built environments that encourage active and healthy lifestyles through the strategic placement of bicycle and pedestrian pathways, public parks, enforcement of road regulations, and education about health benefits



**GOAL 1**

*Support safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation designs and improvements that enhance neighborhood connectivity for all modes of travel including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
T.1.1	Identify opportunities to create multi-modal transportation that links employees to employers	2025-2026	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, MPC	SPLOST, LG	\$
T.1.2	Evaluate opportunities for road diets and traffic calming on existing streets and implement cost-feasible projects	2022-2026	LG, CAT, CORE, MPO, MPC, GDOT	LG	\$\$
T.1.3	Propose a policy to prioritize pedestrian infrastructure improvements (such as sidewalks and crosswalks) near homes, schools, bus stops, and commercial corridors	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT, MPC	SPLOST, LG	\$

**GOAL 2**

*Improve accessibility to employment centers, institutions, commercial corridors, and recreational facilities equitably through multi-modal connections, bikeways, trails and greenways*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
T.2.1	Work with municipalities to explore funding options to expand public transportation for Chatham County	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO	LG	ST
T.2.2	Identify funding to provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle access from public transportation termini to employment centers, institutions, commercial areas, schools, and recreational facilities	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT	N/A	ST
T.2.3	Refine policies to accommodate people with disabilities on all sidewalks and crosswalks	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO	LG	\$
T.2.4	Evaluate enhancing the transit system to increase frequency and reliability on corridors with high densities of residents and jobs	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT	CAT, LG	\$\$\$
T.2.5	Prioritize the placement of bus route and schedule information digitally at every stop and provide real-time bus location and arrival information online	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO	CAT, LG	\$
T.2.6	Identify funding to enhance the usefulness and appearance of bus stops by adding shelters, lighting, benches, wastebaskets, and other amenities	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO	CAT, LG, Grants	\$\$
T.2.7	Evaluate new partnerships to expand transit service beyond current district and ridership	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG	ST





**GOAL 3**

*Maintain and preserve transportation infrastructure in a manner that protects unique regional characteristics, quality-of-life, and the environment to include the reduction greenhouse gas emissions*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
T.3.1	Establish criteria to evaluate road construction projects to ensure they are compatible with local characteristics with particular attention for historic areas and transportation amenity corridors	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO	LG	ST
T.3.2	Evaluate the impact of Sea Level Rise on proposed transportation systems, particularly relating to improvements of existing roads, bridges and related infrastructure	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG	\$
T.3.3	Consider policy and infrastructure recommendations from the Freight Transportation Plan to enhance safety and efficiency	2022-2023	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG	\$
T.3.4	Provide tax incentives for businesses that convert to using low-emission vehicles	2026	LG, CAT, CORE MPO, GDOT, COC, SEDA	LG, Public/Private Partnerships	\$

**GOAL 4**

*Maintain and enhance transportation infrastructure that supports and enables local, regional and global economic vitality and competitiveness, productivity and efficiency*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
T.4.1	Implement policies that maintain and enhance an intermodal transportation system that sustains economic activity by linking trucking facilities, rail terminals, airports, and seaports with limited access roads	2026	LG, MPC, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG, SPLOST	\$
T.4.2	Incorporate shared vehicle ownership and the related infrastructure as an alternative mode of transportation including community storage/coral, charging stations, preferred parking for shared vehicles, etc.	2024-2026	LG, MPC, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$



## GOAL 5

Promote and provide equitable neighborhood connectivity and built environments that encourage active and healthy lifestyles through the strategic placement of bicycle and pedestrian pathways, public parks, enforcement of road regulations, and education about health benefits

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
T.5.1	Adopt or update ordinances countywide, to include “Complete Streets” and Savannah’s Zoning Ordinance to meet national standards, giving all people safe, comfortable, convenient, and equitable access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, moving actively with assisting devices, or taking public transportation	2022-2023	CGIC, MPC, CORE MPO, BWS, CAT, LG	LG	ST
T.5.2	Work with Chatham Area Transit, municipalities, community organizations, and neighborhood associations to develop new routing plans that equitably and efficiently expand transit opportunities across Chatham County	2022-2023	CGIC, MPC, CORE MPO, BWS, CAT, LG	LG, CAT	\$
T.5.3	Provide public/private incentives to encourage an array of transit opportunities to include carpool, park and ride sites, public transit, and cycling for Chatham County residents who do not have access to personal motor vehicle transportation	2025-2026	CGIC, MPC, CORE MPO, BWS, CAT, LG, COC, SEDA	LG, CAT	\$\$
T.5.4	Develop a standard to evaluate public park and recreational area opportunities to provide high need communities with equitable, more efficient, safe, and access	2022-2023	CGIC, MPC, LG, BWS, PD, GLT	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$
T.5.5	Explore alternate routes for heavy equipment, trucks, and those carrying hazardous material countywide	2025-2026	CORE MPO, LG, CEMA, DOT	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$
T.5.6	Complete the primary loop (30 miles) of the Tide to Town Urban Trail System, including Truman Linear Park Trail and Springfield Canal Path/Heritage Trail, and expand the Tide to Town system plan to include countywide connectivity via implementation of the Chatham County Greenway Plan	2025-2026	CGIC, CORE MPO, BWS, LG	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$\$
T.5.7	Increase driver education regarding non-motorized transportation users, including people biking and walking. Provide consistent bicycle and pedestrian safety education	2022-2023	DDS, BWS, CAT	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$
T.5.8	Strengthen ordinance regarding planting and replacement of trees; work to increase green space countywide	2022-2023	LG, MPC, STF, GLT, GC	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$
T.5.9	Provide or allocate funding to support the creation of places to bike or walk for people of all ages and abilities	2022-2026	CORE MPO, LG, GDOT	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$\$
T.5.10	Establish goals, metrics, and benchmarks for equitable access to places to bike, walk, use public transportation, and access greenspace	2022-2023	CGIC, MPC, CORE MPO, BWS, CAT, LG, GDOT	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	ST





# HOUSING



## VISION

### In 2040...

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

## GOALS:

1. Improve neighborhood stability where all residents, regardless of income, can occupy, maintain, and improve their homes without undue financial hardship
2. Increase supportive housing for special needs populations, such as individuals who are homeless, mentally ill, disabled, and residents in drug recovery
3. Increase affordable housing stock
4. Decrease homelessness

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

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
H.1.1	Refine policies and ordinances to encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing units prioritizing improvement of energy-efficiency and conversion to clean-energy sources	2022-2023	LG, CHSA, HSF, HAS	LG, User Fees	ST
H.1.2	Gather information on best practices to encourage and improve housing counseling programs and ordinances	2022-2023	LG, CHSA, HAS, HSF	N/A	ST
H.1.3	Evaluate and consider policies that increase the range of approved home occupations	2022-2023	MPC, LG	N/A	ST

**GOAL 2***Increase supportive housing for special needs populations, such as individuals who are homeless, mentally ill, disabled, and residents in drug recovery*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
H.2.1	Develop a supportive housing plan for special needs populations	2022-2023	LG, CHSA, HAS, LIFE	LG, Grants	\$





**GOAL 3***Increase affordable housing stock*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
H.3.1	Develop a regional housing plan, prioritizing improvement of energy-efficiency and conversion to clean-energy sources	2022-2023	LG, CHSA, HAS	LG, Grants	\$
H.3.2	Evaluate an inclusionary zoning policy as a way to increase the supply of affordable housing	2022-2023	MPC, LG	LG	ST
H.3.3	Adopt policies and ordinances to allow for a wider variety of housing types to be built in existing neighborhoods	2022-2023	MPC, LG	LG	ST
H.3.4	Evaluate policies and ordinances that allow infill development using unconventional housing styles such as "tiny homes", storage containers, and prefabricated homes	2022-2023	MPC, LG, HAS	LG	ST
H.3.5	Reduce housing vacancy and dilapidation conditions of housing stock	2022-2023	MPC, LG, HAS	LG, Grants	\$
H.3.6	Evaluate the vulnerability of proposed residential and commercial developments to increased flooding due to sea-level rise and other impacts of climate disruption, such as increased storm-intensity, storm-surge, and higher temperatures.	2022-2023	LBA, LG, CHSA	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$
H.3.7	Expand the amount of affordable housing options for the growing number of seniors	2022-2023	MPC, LG, HAS	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$\$

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## GOAL 4 *Decrease homelessness*

STRATEGY	PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
H.4.1 Adopt a formal strategic homeless housing action plan	2022-2023	LG, CSAH, CHSA, HSF, HAS, LBA	LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$
H.4.2 Encourage local leaders to publicly commit to and coordinate efforts on ending chronic homelessness	2022-2023	LG, CHSA, HSF, HAS	N/A	ST
H.4.3 Increase outreach, in-reach, and engagement efforts to link homeless individuals to the housing and service interventions available in the community	2022-2023	CSAH, LG, CHSA, HAS, LH, PD, EMS, FD	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
H.4.4 Implement a housing-first system orientation and response	2025-2026	CSAH, LG, CHSA, HAS	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
H.4.5 Prioritize housing placement for homeless veterans	2022-2023	CSAH, LG	LG, Public/Private	\$\$\$

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# NATURAL RESOURCES



## VISION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah is enhanced by the protection and maintenance of natural resources and ecosystems*

## GOALS:

1. Protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents from flood hazards
2. Improve public education and outreach efforts related to water, flooding, and hazards
3. Implement plans, policies, and property protection to reduce potential damages from climate change
4. Conserve and protect potable water sources to ensure adequate drinking water supplies for existing and future residents
5. Preserve and enhance scenic views
6. Conserve existing tree canopy and require planting of additional native trees during the development process to mitigate negative impacts of stormwater runoff, heat islands, reduced air quality, and loss of tree species from rising ambient temperatures
7. Improve the ability of our community to adapt to changing natural and built environments
8. Manage the impacts of climate change as it relates to land use and development through mitigation and adaptation measures
9. Develop brownfields for productive uses
10. Proactively manage stormwater runoff
11. Implement a municipal clean energy action plan



**GOAL 1***Protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents from flood hazards*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.1.1	Strengthen policies and ordinances limiting allowable impervious coverage for new development	2025-2026	LG, MPC	N/A	ST
N.1.2	Develop a long-range regional plan for sea level rise which evaluates multiple adaptation and mitigation methods with short, medium, and long-term goals for implementation	2025-2026	LG, MPC, CEMA, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.1.3	Prevent damage to existing development and infrastructure from the impacts of sea level rise and consider sea level rise in future infrastructure investments and site development	2024-2026	LG, MPC, CEMA, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$\$
N.1.4	Retrofit and/or protect critical and essential facilities and infrastructure from flood damage	2022-2026	LG, MPC, CEMA, CORE MPO, GDOT	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$\$
N.1.5	Implement more stringent development standards to conserve undeveloped land and preserve open space areas, especially sensitive natural areas, to prevent impacts from flood waters and rising sea levels	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.1.6	Facilitate mitigation actions on flood prone properties and Special Flood Hazard Areas by leveraging local, state, and federal grant funding	2022-2026	LG	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
N.1.7	Amend floodplain ordinances to add standards to prevent fill and drainage of wetland portions of the floodplain	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG	ST
N.1.8	Amend subdivision and planned unit development codes to encourage clustering of buildings on upland sites and to require dedication or permanent preservation of wetland areas	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG	ST
N.1.9	Amend the Savannah building code to provide a higher standard of flood protection by requiring an additional 1 foot of freeboard above the base flood elevation (BFE) in flood prone areas	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG	ST
N.1.10	Amend building codes to control and strengthen development on hydric soils and in flood hazard areas	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG	LG
N.1.11	Plan and direct new infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, hospitals, housing) only in areas where new growth is appropriate	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG	LG





**GOAL 2***Improve public education and outreach efforts related to water, flooding, and hazards*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.2.1	Identify funding for the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission and its land conservation efforts that include protecting high priority habitats	2025-2026	LG, MPC, GADNR	SPLOST, Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership	\$
N.2.2	Develop a plan to repurpose publicly owned natural areas and open spaces to provide permanently protected habitat areas and public recreational spaces	2025-2026	LG, MPC, GC, GLT, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.2.3	Expand the city's flood hazard communication and outreach program	2022-2023	LG, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.2.4	Encourage residents to undertake mitigation projects on individual properties by utilizing education and outreach tools	2022-2023	LG, GA, STF, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.2.5	Develop partnerships with schools, churches, and community organizations to broaden public education and outreach efforts on flooding and natural hazards	2022-2023	LG, GA, FEMA, GAEPD, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.2.6	Educate the public on the stormwater management techniques and the benefits of acknowledging water as a critical resource to be protected and managed	2022-2023	LG, GA, GAEPD, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.2.7	Develop and expand educational outreach materials to non-English speaking populations	2022-2023	LG, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$

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**GOAL 3***Implement plans, policies, and property protection to reduce potential damages from climate change*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.3.1	Develop policies to facilitate coastal ecosystem migration through the maintenance and restoration of open space	2023-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.3.2	Utilize the most current data and projections to evaluate existing plans, policies, and regulations to ensure that they are up to date and consistent with current best practices	2023-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.3.3	Implement policies and standards that prevent private or public investments in areas most at risk of damage	2024-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.3.4	Identify new mitigation measures, technologies, and practices for mitigating and adapting to climate change at the local level	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.3.5	Incorporate climate change into the everyday review, design, and planning process with regards to potable water, wastewater, stormwater, comprehensive planning, transportation, and emergency management.	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.3.6	Prioritize critical facilities and infrastructure with projected sea level rise impacts for elevation and/or relocation	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.3.7	Develop and implement growth management policies to guide new development away from current or future high-risk areas	2025-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.3.8	Monitor shorelines and wetlands to identify and mitigate erosion hotspots	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.3.9	Improve capabilities and coordination to implement hazard mitigation projects, programs, and activities	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.3.10	Develop and implement an Open Space Plan for each jurisdiction as well as a countywide Open Space Plan building on the jurisdictional plans	2026	LG, MPC, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.3.11	Enhance and update existing regulations to require and/or incentivize open space preservation	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$





**GOAL 4***Conserve and protect potable water sources to ensure adequate drinking water supplies for existing and future residents*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.4.1	Develop a regional long-range regional plan for sea level rise that evaluates multiple adaptation methods for potable water source protection and conservation	2022-2023	LG, GAEPD, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
N.4.2	Update the Red Zone Water Management Plan to determine total usage and the region's capacity for growth	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.4.3	Reinstitute and dedicate funding for the Chatham County Resources Protection Commission (CCRPC) to prioritize land conservation for the protection of the potable water sources	2026	LG, MPC, GADNR, GA, GLT	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
N.4.4	Update plans, policies, and regulations to adopt stringent best management practices regarding water usage and the protection of water sources during site development	2025-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$

**GOAL 5***Preserve and enhance scenic views*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.5.1	Conduct study of scenic views in the city and county to inform associated green space protection	2022-2023	LG, GA, GAEPD, GADNR, DCA	LG	\$
N.5.2	Partner with the National Park Service to conduct a planning study that identifies opportunities to significantly improve access to the River, canals as well as trave and greenway connections	2025-2026	LG, GA, GAEPD, GADNR, DCA	LG	\$
N.5.3	Partner with the National Park Service to pursue federal funding (such as a Federal Lands Access Program grant) to support implementation of trail connections to and along the historic areas of the County with connections to existing and future trails	2025-2026	LG, GA, GAEPD, GADNR, DCA	LG	\$



**GOAL 6***Conserve existing tree canopy and require planting of additional native trees during the development process to mitigate negative impacts of stormwater runoff, heat islands, reduced air quality, and loss of tree species from rising ambient temperatures*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.6.1	Develop policies and procedures to improve tree preservation and replanting during development	2022-2023	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG	ST
N.6.2	Propose a No Net Loss policy to protect existing tree canopy	2022-2023	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG	ST
N.6.3	Implement tree canopy coverage standards for new development and internal practices	2022-2023	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG	\$
N.6.4	Complete a tree canopy inventory in each jurisdiction	2022-2026	LG, STF, GFC	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.6.5	Develop and implement urban forest management plans	2024-2026	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.6.6	Develop a program to reclaim lost tree lawns to start planting tomorrow's tree canopy	2024-2026	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$

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**GOAL 7***Improve the ability of our community to adapt to changing natural and built environments*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.7.1	Identify ways to prepare for disruptive events and develop strategies for action in the face of uncertainty or unexpected events	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.7.2	Enact policies to reduce carbon footprints	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.7.3	Increase the use of renewable energy sources—solar, wind, hydropower, geothermal heat, and biomass	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$\$
N.7.4	Acquire open space parcels of all sizes to convert to public parks, greenways, and conservation areas	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$\$
N.7.5	Improve data collection, dissemination, and redundancy use of critical systems and services use to reduce hazard impacts	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
N.7.6	Promote less energy-intensive industries, cleaner fuels, technologies, and building strong energy-efficient policies	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.7.7	Introduce and support new work habits for municipal staff, like full or partial remote work mode, as well as promoting a healthy and green way of life in society	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.7.8	Evaluate and address solid waste control and disposal on a regional basis to allow for a more thorough approach to management, reduction, and continued capacity for the coastal areas	2022-2023	LG, GA, Private Partners	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$



STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.7.9	Explore composting alternatives for institutional, commercial, and residential areas	2022-2023	LG, GAEPD, Private Partners		
N.7.10	Enact policies to reduce carbon footprints	2022-2023	LG	LG	ST
N.7.11	Implement best practices to reduce air pollution	2022-2023	LG, EPD	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$

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**GOAL 8***Resist the Impacts of climate change as it relates to land use and development through mitigation and adaptation measures*

STRATEGY	PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.8.1 Discourage building in areas that are currently or are projected to be more vulnerable to climate change-related impacts. Making it easier to build in safer areas can help relieve pressure to develop in more vulnerable areas	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.8.2 Coordinate land use and transportation infrastructure decisions and incorporate climate change projections into these decisions	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GDOT, CORE MPO	LG	ST
N.8.3 Ensure that public infrastructure is not designed for or constructed in areas prone to flooding or projected for future flooding	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GDOT	LG	ST
N.8.4 Reduce vehicle traffic by amending policies and regulations to remove barriers to movement between mixed uses in proximity of each other	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GDOT	LG	ST
N.8.5 Ensure that existing policies, plans, and regulations are consistent with best management practices of Smart Growth, energy efficiency and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. This can also help communities and their residents better cope with economic resiliency, drought, and extreme heat	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.8.6 Support compact and energy-efficient, green building techniques, which reduce emissions from both electricity generation and transportation	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GAEPD, DCA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	ST
N.8.7 Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and buildings while minimizing the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of a community	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GDOT	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.8.8 Preserve green space and large, contiguous areas of open space, which can sequester CO <sub>2</sub> , by conserving ecologically valuable land and promoting development in previously developed areas, which helps reduce pressure to build on undeveloped land	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$



STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.8.10	Restore and preserve wetlands to act as a buffer and allow for infiltration and runoff storage thus protecting areas from flooding	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.8.11	Maintain adequate and open floodplains to prevent property damage from floodwaters and natural shoreline migration due to sea level rise	2022-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$

## GOAL 9 *Develop brownfields for productive uses*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.9.1	Integrate brownfields into infill and new development	2024-2026	LG, SEDA, Private Development	SEDA, Private Development	N/A
N.9.2	Define appropriate, productive reuse options ranging from open space to mixed use developments, that meet the needs of existing residents	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SEDA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	ST
N.9.3	Develop plan/strategy to identify all existing or potential brownfields	2022-2025	LG, GAEPD, SEDA, MPC	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants, GA	\$\$
N.9.4	Find funding sources to assist in the assessment, cleanup and/or redevelopment of brownfield sites	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SEDA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	ST
N.9.5	Remove barriers to the redevelopment of brownfields and encourage their redevelopment in ways that meet the needs of existing residents and promote a healthy community and vibrant economy	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SEDA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	ST





**GOAL 10***Proactively manage stormwater runoff*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.10.1	Manage stormwater runoff on a regional basis	2022-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.10.2	Implement a stormwater utility for the continued maintenance, management, and treatment of its stormwater system	2025-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GAEPD	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.10.3	Remove barriers to innovative and creative solutions to manage stormwater runoff	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GAEPD	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.10.4	Coordinate local Open Space Plans with regional Green Infrastructure Plans	2025-2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$
N.10.5	Upgrade stormwater systems to better manage heavier storm flows and expand the use of green infrastructure to reduce the amount of runoff from paved surfaces	2022-2026	LG, GAEPD	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$\$
N.10.6	Raise stormwater systems to appropriately plan for future sea level rise projections	2026	LG, GAEPD	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$\$
N.10.7	Implement incentives to protect wetlands from development and promoting the expansion and reclamation of existing wetlands	2026	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.10.8	Gather data and implement best practices to reduce illegal dumping and the related point source pollution throughout Chatham County	2022-2023	LG, PD, GAEPD	LG	ST



**GOAL 11***Implement a municipal clean energy action plan*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
N.11.1	Implement policy to prohibit single use plastics within all municipally owned properties	2022-2023	LG	N/A	ST
N.11.2	Evaluate municipal buildings for clean-energy retrofits	2022-2023	LG	LG, Grants	\$
N.11.3	Prioritize resources to train and hire local residents to participate in the energy conservation, energy efficiency and clean energy workforce	2022-2023	LG, SEDA, STC	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.11.4	Facilitate energy efficiency upgrades	2022-2026	LG, GA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
N.11.5	Evaluate and implement opportunities for clean transportation	2022-2026	LG, GDOT, GA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$
N.11.6	Prioritize and fund clean energy retrofits/installations in low-income communities	2025-2026	LG, GA	LG, Public/Private Partnership, Grants	\$\$\$
N.11.7	Gather information on incentives to support energy efficiency and natural resource protection in new construction	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GAEPD, GADNR, DCA	LG	ST
N.11.8	Assess existing local and state policies to identify and address policy barriers and gaps to supporting municipal clean energy	2022-2023	LG, MPC, GA, GA PSC	LG	\$\$
N.11.9	Implement local policies that support municipal clean energy plan	2022-2026	LG, MPC	LG	ST





# QUALITY OF LIFE



## VISION

### In 2040...

*Unincorporated Chatham County & Savannah 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*



**Historic Resources**



**Education**



**Community Health**



**Public Safety**



**Broadband & Fiber Optics**

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## HISTORIC RESOURCES

### GOAL 1

*Survey culturally, historically, and architecturally significant sites, buildings, and structures in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.1.1	Work with Chatham County to reinstate their status as a Certified Local Government	2022-2023	LG, MPC	LG, Grants	\$
HP.1.2	Complete surveys in areas that have been identified as at-risk or historically underrepresented	2024-2026	LG, MPC, SHF	LG, Grants	\$
HP.1.3	Update the Historic Site and Monument Commission’s Master Plan and Guidelines and provide on-going updates to the maps and lists of the monuments, markers, and public art within the Chatham County and Savannah	2022-2024	LG, MPC	LG, Grants	\$
HP.1.4	Establish on-going outreach initiatives to engage with and educate the community on the importance of historic preservation efforts	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SHF	LG, Grants	\$
HP.1.5	Align City of Savannah historic protection efforts with the Forsyth Master Plan	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SHF, FOF	LG, Grants Public/Private Partnerships	\$

### GOAL 2

*Incorporate affordable housing strategies into current and future preservation plans*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.2.1	Broaden partnerships with community planning and housing authorities in Chatham County and Savannah to combine preservation and affordable housing efforts	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HAS, CHSA, LBA, SHF	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$
HP.2.2	Identify where increased flexibility in preservation practices is appropriate to retain existing affordable housing and promote additional affordable housing	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HAS, CHSA, LBA, SHF, HPD	LG, Grants, GA, Public/Private Partnerships	\$





**GOAL 3***Identify and address community health issues that impact historic preservation efforts and encourage healthy communities through historic preservation*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.3.1	Identify and address potential public health threats to preservation efforts	2025-2026	LG, MPC, HAS, CHD, SHF	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$\$
HP.3.2	Create contingency plans to address the economic, operational, and social impacts on historic preservation associated with a public health emergency event	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HAS, CHSA, LBA, SHF	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$
HP.3.3	Promote and support reinvestment in older and historic places as a key component of community resiliency	2022-2026	LG, MPC, HAS, HPD, SHF	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$

**GOAL 4***Identify and address climate resiliency strategies and incorporate them into a climate resiliency plan for unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah's historic and cultural resources*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.4.1	Incorporate historic and cultural resources into disaster planning strategies	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HPD, SHF, CEMA	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$
HP.4.2	Identify and address strategies for increasing the resiliency of historic and cultural resources	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HAS, HPD, SHF, CEMA	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$\$
HP.4.3	Establish a clear process for the protection and management of historic resources in the result of a natural disaster	2022-2023	LG, MPC, CEMA	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$

**GOAL 5***Broaden historic preservation efforts to highlight and include historically underrepresented stories, sites, and communities*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.5.1	Review and modify practices that impede the identification, nomination, and designation of historic places meaningful to underrepresented communities	2022-2026	LG, MPC, HPD, SHF	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	ST
HP.5.2	Develop and implement new tools for the identification of intangible resources	2023-2026	LG, MPC, HPD	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$
HP.5.3	Follow and expand upon the recommendations of the Savannah Civil War Memorial Task Force	2022-2023	LG, MPC	GA, LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$



**GOAL 6**

Create new and support existing heritage tourism programs in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah in order to highlight their cultural and historic heritage

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.6.1	Expand heritage tourism programming in Chatham County	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SHF, COC, SEDA	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$
HP.6.2	Promote the economic and place-based benefits of heritage tourism to the public	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HPD, SHF, COC, SEDA	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$
HP.6.3	Align with the vision of the Savannah Ogeechee Canal Trail to expand the site's heritage tourism and preservation program	2022-2026	LG, MPC, HPD, SHF, COC	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$

**GOAL 7**

Promote the preservation and public awareness of culturally and archaeologically significant sites in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
HP.7.1	Survey, identify, and protect archaeological resources through legislation and other means	2025-2026	LG, MPC, SHF, HPD	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$\$
HP.7.2	Develop partnerships with community groups to develop an ethical process for discovery, storage, and ownership of archaeological artifacts	2022-2023	LG, MPC, SHF, HPD	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$
HP.7.3	Develop interpretive and educational materials, programs, and signage for identified cultural landscapes, prioritizing those that lack interpretive elements to include smartphone applications	2022-2023	LG, MPC, HPD, SHF	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnerships	\$





## EDUCATION

### GOAL 1

*Ensure equitable access of critical life skills including soft skills, financial, social, and conflict resolution skills are available to parents/legal guardians and taught to all students through the use of technology, community partnerships, and counseling*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.1.1	Integrate financial literacy into curriculum throughout all aspects of learning to include schools, clubs, and youth serving organizations	2022-2023	SCCPSS, JA, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.1.2	Facilitate comprehensive child development skills from birth through age five	2022-2026	DECAL, CGIC, SCCPSS	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$\$
E.1.3	Expand Georgia's BEST curriculum (incorporation of soft skills, communication, and leadership skills) in all middle and high schools and consider expansion into post-secondary education courses	2022-2026	DOL, SCCPSS, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$\$
E.1.4	Implement school safety curriculum (including conflict resolution, peer mediation, bullying, social media, and cyber safety) across the school district	2024-2026	SCCPSS, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.1.5	Reduce discipline referrals resulting in out-of-school suspensions and address the racial disparity in out-of-school suspensions by utilizing peer mediation referrals	2022-2023	SCCPSS, CGIC, DJJ	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.1.6	Expand conflict resolution and peer mediation in all schools for students and teachers	2022-2023	SCCPSS, DJJ, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.1.7	Provide equitable access to continuous education	2022-2023	SCCPSS, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.1.8	Offer budgeting and financial management courses to adults	2022-2023	CCCS, UGAE	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$



**GOAL 2**

*Implement career track, internship, and mentorship programs between employers and students; while increasing leadership development programs between community organizations, businesses, and public schools to prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.2.1	Increase number of opportunities for youth and young adults to access job shadowing, apprenticeship programs, and internships to include “green-friendly” approaches to agriculture and infrastructure	2022-2023	SCCPSS, JA, CGIC, UGAE, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	ST
E.2.2	Expand and enhance the mentorship programs (peer mentors and adult mentors)	2022-2023	SCCPSS, JA, CGIC, COC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	ST
E.2.3	Explore and encourage expansion of classroom lab opportunities for hands-on experience in middle and high school, to ensure equal opportunities at all campuses	2022-2023	SCCPSS	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.2.4	Maintain at least 17 career clusters/pathway models of training opportunities that align with career demand and career occupations for all middle and high school students	2025-2026	SCCPSS, CGIC, SEDA, COC	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$\$
E.2.5	Establish method and process for volunteer engagement with public schools	2022-2023	SCCPSS	SCCPSS	ST

**GOAL 3**

*Plan for changing populations, capacities, and overcrowding and increase the quality of education and performances at SCCPSS*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.3.1	Work with local governments and local planning agencies to ensure new development and expansion of schools are strategically developed with future growth in mind	2022-2023	SCCPSS	N/A	ST
E.3.2	Increase teacher funding and support	2022-2023	SCCPSS	SCCPSS, GA, Private/Public Partnership	\$\$
E.3.3	Increase standards for teachers seeking licenses and raise standards in areas where student outcomes are lowest	2022-2023	SCCPSS	SCCPSS, GA, Private/Public Partnership	\$





**GOAL 4***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*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.4.1	Increase understanding and diversification of parental engagement to include assessment of family needs and resources	2022-2023	SCCPSS	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.4.2	Coordinate service and resources between youth serving organizations for better integration and reduce silos	2022-2023	SCCPSS, UWCE	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.4.3	Increase parental understanding of school attendance and ensure enforcement of truancy policies and facilitate broad awareness of barriers to school attendance	2022-2023	SCCPSS, DJJ	SCCPSS	ST
E.4.4	Encourage employers to provide incentives such as transit vouchers, paid “leave” time for parents to attend/participate in school functions	2022-2023	SCCPSS, UWCE, COC, SEDA, LG	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.4.5	Assess and expand resource allocation to increase access to affordable quality childcare	2022-2026	SCCPSS, UWCE, DECAL	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA, DECAL	\$\$
E.4.6	Expand and maintain cultural diversity, equity and inclusion training and practices	2022-2026	SCCPSS, UWCE	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.4.7	Create parental support groups within community and faith-based organizations	2022-2023	SCCPSS, UWCE	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$

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**GOAL 5***Ensure families and community members have the ability to promote and reinforce literacy and numeracy instruction that takes place in a student's learning environment*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
E.5.1	Promote early reading and vocabulary development beginning at birth	2022-2023	SCCPSS, UWCE, DECAL	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.5.2	Promote reading and numeracy achievement on grade level through early intervention and comprehensive development	2022-2023	SCCPSS, LIB, LH, UWCE	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.5.3	Increase availability of children's books that promote reading and numeracy in health care settings, faith-based organizations, non-profit settings, and neighborhoods	2022-2023	SCCPSS, UWCE, LH, LIB, COC, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
E.5.4	Provide access for early childhood professionals to utilize community resources for reading and numeracy	2022-2026	SCCPSS, UWCE, LIB, LG	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$

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## COMMUNITY HEALTH

### GOAL 1

*Effectively address mental health by educating the public and reducing stigma, increasing early intervention programs, removing gaps and barriers, and increasing access to treatment including returning and detained residents, children, adolescents, and the homeless*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
C.1.1	Expand network of providers to meet regularly and provide better coordination of services and leveraging of resources	2022-2023	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST
C.1.2	Increase access to recovery and crisis services and increase capacity of service providers to provide for those who lack resources	2022-2023	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
C.1.3	Advocate for high quality transitional care management services, and advocate for expanded health insurance funding to equip supportive and rehabilitation housing services	2022-2026	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST
C.1.4	Integrate behavior health screening with primary care assessments and services	2022-2023	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.1.5	Enhance accessibility to behavioral health services by developing community-based and school-based behavioral health/counseling centers that operate on a sliding fee scale	2025-2026	SCCPSS, UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.1.6	Identify an organization with a steward who will create and maintain an online resource directory specific to behavioral health services	2022-2023	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
C.1.7	Increase employer and employee awareness and training regarding health insurance coverage to facilitate a broader understanding benefits of behavioral health services and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources	2022-2023	UWCE, COC, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST
C.1.8	Increase suicide prevention efforts to include safety and resilience training	2022-2023	UWCE, CGIC, LH, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.1.9	Advocate increased access to health care through a variety of resources	2022-2023	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST



**GOAL 2**

*Invest in community-based health resources to increase health equity by providing access to preventive health services, health education, and strategies to encourage individuals and families to adopt healthy behaviors*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
C.2.1	Expand availability of preventative services while including screening tests, counseling services, preventative medicine, and treatment that medical providers employ to identify and prevent illness before symptoms or problems associated with the illness occur	2022-2026	DCH, CHD, HS, CGIC, LH, LG, UWCE	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
C.2.2	Improve access to and enrollment in affordable health insurance, including Peach Care and Medicaid, and connection with primary care providers	2022-2023	DCH, CHD, HS, CGIC, LH, LG, UWCE	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.2.3	Assist healthcare providers and patients with opportunities for successful implementation of clinical guidelines to prevent and manage chronic illness; including but not limited to cancer, diabetes, weight management, heart disease, asthma and other significant community illnesses and diseases	2022-2026	CHD, HS, CGIC, LH, LG, UWCE	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
C.2.4	Provide consumer preventive education programs free (participatory education) including tele-medicine programs at school-based health centers and facilitate public recognition of success stories to encourage and motivate others to provide incentives	2022-2023	CHD, HS, SCCPSS, CGIC, LH, LG, UWCE	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$

**GOAL 3**

*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*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
C.3.1	Provide health and wellness educational programming specific to adolescents regarding risky behaviors	2023-2024	SCCPSS, HS, UWCE, CHD	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
C.3.2	Implement 30 minutes a day of physical exercise that fosters leadership, sportsmanship, and social skills for all students	2024-2026	SCCPSS, HS, UWCE, CHD	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.3.3	Request employers to provide health enrichment and wellness programs to all employees	2022-2023	SCCPSS, HS, UWCE, CHD, COC, LG, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST
C.3.4	Increase healthy snack options at public and private school events	2022-2023	SCCPSS, HS, UWCE, CHD	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$





**GOAL 4**

*Increase access to healthy food for populations that are most likely to be food-insecure such as older adults, children, those in poverty, and those that live in food apartheid*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
C.4.1	Explore policy and funding mechanisms to eliminate food apartheid via a rotating schedule	2022-2023	SCCPSS, HS, UWCE, CHD, LG, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.4.2	Create farmer support programs to support and expand community gardens, urban farmers, and educational programming for residential sharing, cooking, learning, etc.	2022-2023	HS, CHD, UGAE, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
C.4.3	Provide educational programming and nutritional counseling specific to healthy cooking (serving sizes, use of local-home ground foods and herbs), health eating habits	2022-2023	SCCPSS, HS, UGAE, CHD, LH, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.4.4	Create incentives with local grocery and convenience stores regarding product placement of healthy food options	2022-2023	HS, UGAE, CHD, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.4.5	Request local institutions to examine their procurement policies to create a long-range plan for buying and using local produce	2022-2023	SCCPSS, HS, CHD, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST
C.4.6	Create and expand community gardens, education, and programing for the residential sharing, learning, cooking, etc	2022-2023	HS, UGAE, CHD, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
C.4.7	Expand urban agriculture to promote healthy eating as well as to encourage personal sustainability	2022-2023	HS, UGAE, CHD, LG	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$

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## PUBLIC SAFETY

### GOAL 1

*Ensure better quality of life through multifaceted strategies of public safety. The strategies include reducing crime by focusing on asset building; meeting community needs; expanding visibility and capacity of resources and programs provided by first responders; and building trust between law enforcement and residents*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
PS.1.1	Increase capacity of “diversion” programs across all jurisdictions in Chatham County for first-time offenders to reduce case load, providing case management, restorative justice programs, and wrap around services via community partners	2025-2026	PD, DJJ, GA, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.1.2	Provide continuous evaluation on enhanced trainings and screenings for First Responders in all jurisdictions specific to trauma responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, confidentiality, and behavioral health, as well as ensuring these processes/procedures are made transparent to the community	2022-2023	PD, FD, EMS, LH, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST
PS.1.3	Expand, market, and engage community-based organizations with police actively through citizen engagement programming. Develop opportunities for law enforcement and families/children to interact peacefully at community events	2022-2026	PD, UWCE, CCSD, LG, CGIC	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
PS.1.4	Re-institute waiting periods to purchase guns, limit local gun shows, and explore gun buy-back programs to reduce access to guns	2022-2023	PD, GA, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.1.5	Implement Project Step Forward (taking guns off the streets, breaking up gangs and groups).	2025-2026	PD, GA, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.1.6	Explore and develop criteria and implement recognition and award programs to further incentivize law enforcement who complete additional training towards best practices including categories such as de-escalation, implicit bias, trauma responsiveness, and other emerging fields	2022-2023	PD, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants	\$
PS.1.7	Develop domestic violence case worker teams so that social workers respond to domestic violence calls with law enforcement	2022-2023	PD, BHU, FD, EMS, LH, DJJ, DFACS, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.1.8	Increase capacity to improve re-entry programs including expungement, housing, employment, behavioral health services, and connection to additional wrap-around services	2022-2026	PD, DJJ, GA, CCSD, LG, HAS, DOL, UWCE, CGIC	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$



STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
PS.1.9	Explore and expand victim, witness, and whistle blower programs to meet evidence-based practices ensuring information is confidential and those who report information feel safe	2022-2026	PD, FD, EMS, LH, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
PS.1.10	Hold continuous community education and feedback sessions regarding the ongoing process of enhanced trainings and screenings for First Responders, where community members are able to be forthcoming about whether or not these trainings and screenings are effective	2022-2023	PD, CCSD, FD, EMS, LG, CGIC	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
PS.1.11	Assess external and internal public safety policies with community input that can be created, reviewed, changed, and/or removed at the local level to ensure policies are implemented through an equitable lens	2022-2023	PD, DJJ, GA, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$
PS.1.12	Implement a pre-trial release texting service to ensure a return to court to end unnecessary stays in jail	2022-2023	CCDA, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
PS.1.13	Audit the internal culture within law enforcement/emergency management agencies for best policies and incentivize first responders into complying with those policies	2022-2023	PD, FD, EMS, DJJ, GA, CCSD, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
PS.1.14	Integrate environmental design elements that discourage criminal behaviors into the planning and construction of public space	2022-2023	PD, MPC, LG	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	ST



**GOAL 2**

*Develop local and regional collaboration among organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand resources including but not limited to behavioral health and public health services*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
PS.2.1	Provide additional resources for residents with a behavioral health disorder through a continuum of care facility rather than jail	2025-2026	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.2.2	Consider development of new and existing community-based facilities for use of a multi-agency resource centers to include behavioral health, wellness, adolescent development, learning center, computers, and senior activities	2026	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.2.3	Develop a community information exchange between mental health, healthcare, public safety, and social services for clear collaboration	2025-2026	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$\$
PS.2.4	Locate and maintain community centers in low wealth and under served districts with expanded operating hours, diverse services, and resources	2026	UWCE, CGIC, LG	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
PS.2.5	Host an annual meeting of local funders and community residents to review community needs and outcomes	2022-2023	LG, UWCE, CGIC	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$
PS.2.6	Create a community resource and common platform for funders, to ensure accessibility for organizations	2026	UWCE, CGIC, LH, LG, PD, SBHU, DJJ, CCSD, BHU, GCSB	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$\$
PS.2.7	Establish working relationships between planning departments of neighboring jurisdictions to ensure alignment on long term projects and goals	2022-2023	MPC, CORE MPO, LG, PD	LG	ST

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**GOAL 3***Provide effective and efficient government services while ensuring that processes and procedures are planned and executed with transparency*

STRATEGY		PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
PS.3.1	Create clearer processes of the use of SPLOST funding regarding neighborhood improvements, infrastructure, parks, and community centers	2022-2023	LG, CGIC	LG	ST
PS.3.2	Conduct a countywide review of current policies and ordinances to consolidate and update where applicable	2025-2026	LG	LG	
PS.3.3	Convene representatives of neighborhood and homeowner associations countywide semi-annually and provide consistent feedback on projects	2022-2023	LG, CGIC	LG	ST
PS.3.4	Explore innovative methods of marketing and communicating with residents; implement use of smart phone notification methods that are neighborhood and community specific	2022-2023	LG, CGIC	Grants, LG, Public/Private Partnership, GA	\$
PS.3.5	Establish an asset life cycle replacement schedule for local public entities	2022-2023	LG	LG	ST

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## BROADBAND & FIBER-OPTICS

### GOAL 1 *Ensure all of Chatham County has access to broadband service*

STRATEGY	PROJECT TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
BB.1.1 Improve broadband services in unserved Chatham County	2022-2026	LG, Public/Private Partnerships, GA	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
BB.1.2 Make the necessary investments in broadband infrastructure to address the “digital divide” so that service reliability meets or exceeds National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTA) upload and download speeds	2022-2026	LG, Public/Private Partnerships, GA	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$\$
BB.1.3 Research Public/Private Partner agreements to add small cell sites and smart city components in under served areas to improve cellphone and broadband coverage and expand digital equity	2022-2026	LG, Public/Private Partnerships, GA	Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$
BB.1.4 Incorporate Virtual and Augmented Reality planning and as-built documents into the municipal review and planning process	2024-2026	LG, Public/Private Partnerships, GA, PD, FD, EMS	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$\$\$
BB.1.5 Implement strategies to decrease costs so all households have access to broadband services	2022-2023	LG, Public/Private Partnerships	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$\$

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# ONGOING ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIES	ANNUAL TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
Continue the use of historic preservation as an economic driver	Ongoing	LG, HSF, SEDA	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	ST
Reference the Context Sensitive Design Manual when designing streets and roads	Ongoing	LG, CAT, CORE MPO	LG	ST
Allow new infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, hospitals, housing) only in areas where new growth is appropriate	Ongoing	LG, MPC	LG	LG
Educate residents on undertaking mitigation projects on individual properties	Ongoing	LG, GA, STF, GADNR	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Prevent private or public investments in areas most at risk of damage	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Guide new development away from current or future climate change high-risk areas	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$
Promote resiliency and addressing the impacts of climate change on naturally occurring hazards (i.e., hurricanes, etc.)	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Ensure that at least 45% of the tree canopy is collectively maintained in each jurisdiction within Chatham County	Ongoing	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Ensure residents and businesses plant diverse tree species to ensure tree canopy is varied to limit damage due to disease and pests	Ongoing	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Educate property owners about the importance of trees to the community, the need to protect the region's tree canopy, and their value in maintaining property values	Ongoing	LG, GFC, MPC, STF	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Reduce human activities that make effects of climate changes worse through education, policies, and regulations	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$
Provide support and safety nets for the residents with the fewest resources so they can respond and adapt to disruptions	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Public/Private Partnership	\$\$\$



STRATEGIES	ANNUAL TIMELINE	LEAD PARTNER	FUNDING SOURCE	COST ESTIMATE
Reduce heat island effect on neighborhoods	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$\$\$
Preserve and protect threatened and endangered plant and animal habitats	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$\$\$
Promote that buildings should be designed with adaptation and resilience in mind	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$
Encourage data and resource sharing across jurisdictions	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GDOT, GAEPD, DCA, CEMA	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	ST
Promote that homes, jobs, stores, parks, schools, and other destinations be placed close to each other so that people can easily walk, bike, use public transit, or drive shorter distances	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GDOT	LG	ST
Encourage green roofs, parks, street trees, and other elements that can reduce ambient air temperatures and filter pollutants from stormwater runoff and the air	Ongoing	LG, MPC, GA, GADNR, GFC, STF	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$
Support the City of Savannah's 100% Savannah Resolution	Ongoing	LG	N/A	ST
Advocate for state policies that support municipal clean energy plans	Ongoing	LG, MPC	LG	ST
Promote and educate the community about federal and state preservation tax incentives for rehabilitation	Ongoing	LG, MPC, SHF	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$
Balance the goals of heritage tourism with local concerns	Ongoing	LG, MPC, SHF, COC, SEDA	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$
Support projects that educate the public about archaeology and important Savannah and Chatham County cultural sites and resources	Ongoing	LG, MPC, SHF, COC, HPD	LG, Grants, Private/Public Partnerships	\$
Promote parental involvement in their child's education	Ongoing	SCCPSS, CGIC	Grants, Private/Public Partnership	\$
Provide for all children from birth to age five receive ample opportunities for language rich adult-child interactions for critical brain development	Ongoing	SCCPSS, UWCE, DECAL, LH, LIB	SCCPSS, Grants, Private/Public Partnership, GA	\$\$





# REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
	Promote mixed use development where appropriate with densities higher than 25 units per acre to encourage safe, sustainable neighborhoods		✓			Ongoing	
	Propose a policy to prioritize active transportation infrastructure to facilitate walking, biking, and transit to commercial corridors		✓				
	Evaluate a policy to reduce regulatory barriers for new businesses by establishing "code-light zones"		✓				
	Evaluate flexible corridor-specific design standards to create attractive, functional, and harmonious buildings and public spaces		✓				



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
	Improve access to education and trades to help the working poor, ex-offenders, and those with mental illness by providing a scholarship program or similar incentive		✓			Ongoing	
	Increase capacity of case management to provide employment, wrap-around and support services for families, and provide case management with education		✓			Ongoing	
	Increase awareness and use of tax incentives for those employers serving and employing specific populations		✓				
	Explore funding mechanisms to provide more financial support to a more diverse economy and establish action steps that will promote regional innovation		✓				
	Increase efficiency of permitting and licensing policies for businesses through streamlining procedures, education about the process		✓			Ongoing	
	Expand capacity of formal and informal support system to sustain and expand current, growing business throughout the county while considering the establishment of a program for existing business to mentor start-ups		✓			Modified to be included in similar strategy	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT							
	Create a network of employers and training providers, through incentives to align training programs with opportunities for jobs		✓				
	Increase the number of opportunities for job shadowing, apprenticeship programs, and internships to include "green" careers, particularly targeted to youth and young adults		✓			Ongoing	
	Increase capacity and opportunities for individuals to receive skills that lead to employment		✓			Ongoing	
	Continue to facilitate the establishment of minority and women-owned businesses (M/WBE) as defined by the United States Small Business Administration Federal Contract Program		✓			Ongoing	
	Identify and remove obstacles to existing and proposed businesses in targeted redevelopment areas		✓			Ongoing	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
LAND USE							
	Provide for pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development options in the Zoning Ordinance	✓				Updated Savannah Zoning Ordinance	2019
	Refine policies to reduce on-site parking requirements and enhance walking and bicycling infrastructure		✓				
	Refine policies to extend Complete Streets design principles into land development		✓				
	Implement urban development plans for areas affected by the removal of the I-16 flyover and the construction of a new arena			✓		I-16 flyover removal delayed	
	Establish new public realm, consistent with that of the town plan, in areas adjacent to downtown Savannah		✓			Ongoing	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
LAND USE							
	Review and consolidate policies, procedures where appropriate countywide		✓			I-16 flyover removal delayed	
	Consider consolidation of local government				✓	Ongoing	Removed due to insufficient support
	Use principles of ecology to establish a minimum percentage of the total land area within Chatham County to be maintained as open spaces		✓				
	Prioritize transportation projects that link parks and open spaces by walking, biking, and public transit		✓			Ongoing	
	Develop a set of criteria to determine which neighborhoods can benefit from action plans that address issues such as housing, vacant property, transportation, and quality of life		✓				
	Assemble stakeholders within neighborhoods and develop action plans to inform land use, housing, transportation, and economic development priorities		✓			Ongoing	



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
TRANSPORTATION							
	Identify opportunities to create multi-modal transportation that links employees to employers		✓			Ongoing	
	Continuously evaluate opportunities for road diets and traffic calming on existing streets and implement cost-feasible projects		✓			Ongoing	
	Propose a policy to prioritize pedestrian infrastructure improvements (such as sidewalks and crosswalks) near schools, bus stops, and commercial corridors		✓			Working on the updates to the Complete Streets Policy for Savannah that will include direction to prioritize pedestrian (and bicycle) improvements equitably and accommodations for people with disabilities, both on sidewalks/crosswalks as well as during construction phases. Savannah is working on sidewalk implementation with SPLOST funding, to include sidewalk implementation plans based around Title I schools.	
	Propose a Complete Streets policy for Chatham County	✓				Policy developed	2015



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
TRANSPORTATION							
	Work with municipalities in order to explore funding options to expand public transportation for Chatham		✓				
	Identify funding to provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle access from public transportation termini to employment centers, institutions, commercial areas, schools, and recreational facilities		✓				
	Refine policy to accommodate people with disabilities on all sidewalks and crosswalks		✓			Multi-jurisdictional funding efforts and expansion efforts being discussed	
	Evaluate enhancing the transit system to make it more frequent and reliable on corridors with high densities of residents and jobs		✓			Ongoing	
	Prioritize the placement of bus route and schedule information at every stop and provide real-time bus location and arrival information		✓			Currently in-progress by CAT	
	Identify funding to enhance the usefulness and appearance of bus stops by adding shelters, lighting, benches, wastebaskets, and other amenities		✓			Currently in-progress by CAT	
	Evaluate new partnerships to expand transit service beyond current district and ridership		✓			Currently in-progress by CAT	



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
TRANSPORTATION							
	Evaluate road construction projects to ensure they are compatible with local characteristics and transportation amenity corridors		✓			Ongoing	
	Evaluate the impact of Sea Level Rise on proposed transportation systems, particularly relating to improvements of existing roads, bridges and related infrastructure		✓			Ongoing	
	Explore alternate routes for heavy equipment, trucks and those carrying hazardous materials countywide		✓				
	Consider policy and infrastructure recommendations from the Freight Transportation Plan to enhance safety and efficiency		✓				
	Reference the Context Sensitive Design Manual when designing roadways		✓			Currently implemented by GDOT	
	Consider policies that maintain and enhance an intermodal transportation system which sustains economic activity by linking trucking facilities, rail terminals, airports, and seaports with limited access roads		✓				





TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
HOUSING							
	Refine policies to encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of existing housing units		✓				
	Gather information on best practices to encourage and improve housing counseling programs		✓				
	Evaluate and consider policies that increase the range of approved home occupations		✓				
	Develop a regional housing plan		✓			Countywide Affordable Housing Team Developed	
	Evaluate an Inclusionary Zoning policy as a way to increase the supply of affordable housing		✓				
	Propose policies to allow for a wider variety of housing types to be built in existing neighborhoods		✓				
	Evaluate policies that allow infill development using unconventional housing styles such as "tiny homes" and prefabricated homes		✓				

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
HOUSING							
	Create clearer process of use of SPLOST funding in regards to neighborhood improvements, infrastructure, parks, and community centers		✓			Ongoing	
	Adopt and implement "complete streets" ordinance to include appropriate roads (new, expanded and resurfaced) countywide restripe while adding traffic calming improvements and green space where appropriate	✓				Policy originally developed and adopted in 2015 for Savannah. Working on the updates to the Complete Streets Policy for Savannah	2015
	Provide public/private incentives to encourage an array of transit opportunities to include car pool, park and ride sites, public transit, cycling, etc		✓				
	Conduct a feasibility study in order to provide a more efficient safe, well-maintained parks and recreation facilities in all areas, with special focus on high crime areas		✓			Ongoing	
	Evaluate the vulnerability of proposed residential and commercial developments to increased flooding due to sea level rise		✓			Ongoing process development	





TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
NATURAL RESOURCES							
	Propose policies limiting allowable impervious coverage for new development		✓				
	Gather information on incentives to support energy efficiency and natural resource protection in new construction		✓			Savannah established an Office of Sustainability where information can be accessed	
	Identify funding for the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission and its land conservation efforts that include protecting high priority habitats			✓		Delayed due to funding	
	Develop a plan to repurpose publicly owned natural areas and open spaces to provide permanently protected habitat areas and public recreational areas		✓			Ongoing	
	Develop policies to facilitate coastal ecosystem migration through the maintenance and restoration of open space		✓			Ongoing	



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
NATURAL RESOURCES							
	Develop a long-range regional plan for sea level rise which evaluates multiple adaptation methods		✓			Development of a Coastal Empire Resiliency Network has begun with next steps being regional collaboration	
	Develop policies and procedures to improve tree preservation and replanting during development		✓			Ongoing	
	Propose a No Net Loss policy to improve tree preservation and replanting during development		✓				
	Develop policies to reduce the volume of waste entering Chatham County landfills through increased recycling and material use		✓			Ongoing	
	Gather data on best practices to reduce illegal dumping throughout Chatham County		✓				
	Explore feasibility of composting for institutional, commercial, and residential areas		✓			Ongoing—changes at the State/ GA EPD level are needed for larger expansion	
	Explore the feasibility of economic development that utilizes locally sourced recycled materials		✓			Ongoing	



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
NATURAL RESOURCES							
	Gather information on all sources of air pollution and best practices to reduce air pollution		✓				
	Propose policies that will protect air quality and benefit human health		✓			Ongoing—Savannah's 100% Clean Energy Policy will assist in bettering air quality for the region	
	Amend existing wetlands protection regulations to include protection for functional wetlands and functional isolated wetlands		✓				
	Gather information and best practices and procedures that integrate sea level rise into land use planning		✓				
	Propose policies and procedures that integrate sea level rise into land use planning		✓			Development of a Coastal Empire Resiliency Network has begun with related efforts to include policy recommendations	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: HISTORIC PRESERVATION & CULTURAL RESOURCES							
	Continuously identify culturally and historically significant resources		✓			Ongoing	
	Refine policies to conserve and enhance the distinguishing characteristics of historic neighborhoods, including intangible characteristics such as language, art, music, and foods		✓			Ongoing	
	Propose a policy regarding the ownership, treatment, and curation of archeological artifacts		✓			Savannah adopted and archaeology ordinance in December 2019. County Resource Protection Commission (RPC) awaiting to identify funding. RPC includes associated policy implementation efforts	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: HEALTH							
	Expand availability of preventative services while including screening tests, counseling services, preventive medicine, and treatment that medical providers employ to identify and prevent illness before symptoms or problems associated with illness occur		✓			Ongoing	
	Improve access to and enrollment in affordable health insurance, including Peachcare and Medicaid, and connection with primary care providers		✓			Ongoing	
	Assist healthcare providers and patients with promising opportunities for successful implementation of clinical guidelines for chronic illness including but not limited to cancer, diabetes, weight management, heart, respiratory and other significant community illness and diseases		✓			Ongoing	
	Develop a comprehensive parks & recreation plan that address the special needs of families, the obese, elderly, and disabled citizens while providing multi-use facilities including swimming pools, improved access to water for boating and fishing, and an improved bikeways		✓			In development	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: HEALTH							
	Encourage network of providers to meet regularly and provide better coordination of services and leveraging of resources		✓				
	Increase access to crisis services and increase capacity of service providers to provide for those who lack resources		✓			Ongoing	
	Advocate for high quality transition service for specifically targeted population, and advocate for expanded health insurance funding to equip supportive and rehabilitative housing services		✓			Ongoing	
	Integrate behavior health screening with primary care assessments and services		✓				
	Enhance accessibility to mental health services by developing community-based and/or school-based mental health/counseling centers		✓				
	Identify an organization or steward who will create and maintain an online resource directly specific to mental health services		✓			Ongoing	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: HEALTH							
	Provide health and wellness educational programming specific to adolescents regarding risky behaviors		✓			Ongoing	
	Implement 30 minutes a day or physical exercise that fosters leadership, sportsmanship, social skills for all students		✓				
	Encourage employers to provide health enrichment and wellness programs to all employees		✓			Ongoing	
	Provide additional resources for the mentally ill through a continuum of care facility rather than jail		✓			Ongoing	
	Consider community based facilities for use of a multi-agency resource center (MARC) to include behavioral health, wellness, and child development		✓				
	Expand the collaboration effort through the use of a common platform for social services registration		✓				
	Create and maintain community centers in low-income with expanded operating hours and diverse services and resources		✓			Ongoing	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: HEALTH							
	Explore policy and funding mechanisms to increase access to produce to various "food deserts" on a rotating schedule		✓			Continued expansion of Farm Truck 912 into Chatham County's jurisdictions	
	Create farmer support programs to support and expand community gardens, urban farmers, and educational programming for residential sharing, cooking, learning, etc.	✓				The local Chatham County UGA Extension Agency has developed supportive programs specific to farmers, cooking, and home gardens	2016
	Provide educational programming and nutritional counseling specific to healthy cooking (serving sizes, use of local-home ground foods and herbs), health eating habits		✓			Ongoing	
	Propose policy to support the development and maintenance of community gardens and reduce regulatory barriers to urban agriculture	✓				Chatham County and Savannah's policies allow for community gardens	Savannah last updated in 2012



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: EDUCATION							
	Integrate financial literacy into curriculum throughout all aspects of learning to include schools, clubs and youth serving organizations		✓			Ongoing	
	Facilitate comprehensive child development from birth through age three		✓			Ongoing	
	Expand Georgia's BEST curriculum in all middle and high schools, and consider expansion into postsecondary education courses		✓			Ongoing	
	Implement school safety curriculum (include conflict resolution, bullying, social media safety)		✓			Ongoing	
	Reduce discipline referrals resulting in out-of-school suspensions and address the racial disparity in out-of-school suspensions		✓			Ongoing	
	Promote reading and numeracy achievement on grade level		✓			Combined with similar strategy	
	Increase number of opportunities for youth to access job shadowing, apprenticeship programs, and internships to include "green" careers		✓			Ongoing	
	Promote early reading and vocabulary development		✓			Combined with similar strategy	



TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: EDUCATION							
	Increase understanding and diversification of parental engagement and involvement to include assessment of family dynamic and supports needed		✓				
	Coordinate service and resources between youth serving organizations for better integration and reduce silos		✓			Ongoing	
	Increase parental understanding of school attendance and ensure enforcement of truancy policies and facilitate broad awareness of barriers to school attendance		✓			Ongoing	
	Encourage employers to provide incentives such as transit vouchers, paid "leave" time for parents to attend/participate in school functions		✓				
	Increase and diversify use of alternative methods of communication with parents; implement use of smart phone notification methods to all parents - school specific		✓			Ongoing	

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TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: PUBLIC SAFETY							
	Increase capacity of "diversion" program for first-time offenders to lower case load; providing case management, restorative justice program and wrap around services via community partners and/or multi-agency resource center (MARC)		✓			Ongoing	
	Provide training for law enforcement specific to cultural diversity confidentiality and sensitivity to reporting as well as to mental and behavioral health issues in the community		✓			Ongoing	
	Expand market and engage community based organizations with police activity through programs such as: Citizens Academy; Police Activity League. Develop opportunities for law enforcement and families/children to interact peacefully		✓			Ongoing	
	Reduce access to guns by re-instituting waiting periods for purchase, limited local gun shows, explore gun buy-back programs		✓				
	Implement Project Step Forward (taking guns off the streets, breaking up gangs and groups)		✓			The "Show Us Your Guns" program, being developed by the Chatham County District Attorney's Office is set to be funded in 2021	





TASK NUMBER	ACTION/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	COMPLETED	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	NOT ACCOMPLISHED	EXPLANATION	COMPLETION DATE
QUALITY OF LIFE: PUBLIC SAFETY							
	Implement environmental design practices shown to discourage criminal activities		✓			Ongoing	

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