

**Garden City
Community Goals
Draft**

CHAPTER 3
COMMUNITY GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Community Goals Element

Garden City Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update Vision & Goals

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

- The Vision
- Goals
- Objectives

The visions, goals and objectives that emerged through the prior Garden City 2040 Comprehensive Plan process represent the voices of the community as expressed in virtual meetings, pop-up events, stakeholder input, and a survey conducted during 2020 and 2021. The goals, objectives and vision identified in this section are based on original input from outreach during Plan 2040 and have been carried forward to the Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update.

Through the Garden City Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update process community members were given opportunity to revisit and update each component. A new survey was publicized on the City's website, at community pop-ups and presentations to City officials. A Stakeholder Committee was created to review and provide insight into the update process. Input from these endeavors has been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update.

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

The Vision

Garden City is a Safe, Family-Oriented and Business Friendly Community.

The Vision paints a picture of what Garden City desires to become. The Vision statement offered below was refined through discussion with the City Council, Steering Committee, and participants. The Vision is supported by the goals created to help shape Garden City's future development.

Goals

Garden City's goals are aspirational, expressing the City's collective desires and values. The community identified a number of goals to achieve in order to make Garden City's Vision a continuing reality. The following goals represent the recurring themes, and like the

Vision Statement, were derived from a review process involving city staff, the Steering Committee, and members of the public. Garden City's future is tied to the following goals.

- Promote Retail & Diversity of Housing Types
- Implement the City's Adopted Redevelopment Plan
- Update City Codes & Ordinances
- Protect Neighborhoods from Industrial Impacts
- Create Design Guidelines for Commercial & Residential Development
- Branding the City through Marketing
- Expand Passive & Active Recreation Opportunities

Goal 1 - Promote Retail & Diversity of Housing Types

Throughout the planning process, increasing commercial and retail opportunities and providing a destination attraction for Garden City was a goal expressed by participants. Participants believed that opportunities have been lost by businesses choosing to develop in surrounding areas instead.

At the heart of this goal is economic development and building long-term prosperity for all residents. It involves actively engaging the city and its economic development partners in business attraction and retention. The benefits of this goal include a strong tax base, a stable job market, and ready access to services and goods. The City seeks to promote the workforce aspect of the economy, while attracting higher quality, sustainable retail and light commercial uses that contribute to long term economic stability and community character. In doing so, the City aims to move away from an over concentration of convenience, fast food eating establishments, and auto travel-oriented uses and instead encourage a more diverse mix of businesses that can support a broader resident population. These efforts are intended to welcome higher income earners while maintaining affordability and avoiding the displacement of existing residents.

Efforts to establish a comprehensive approach to attracting, retaining, and managing retail/commercial development include preparation of a market analysis, evaluation of market trends, and a real estate assessment. Together, these tools provide City leadership with a detailed understanding of existing conditions and inform future policy and investment decisions.

Objectives

- The City will develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Plan that takes into consideration market analysis, market trends, and real estate selection.
- The City will appropriately approve retail and commercial proposals, subject to other policies and in-depth proposal reviews, if: they are appropriate to the scale and function of the area; are compatible with land use character within the zone; are consistent with adopted strategic framework including urban design themes, traffic management arrangements; and provide for convenient pedestrian and vehicle access and linkages to adjoining commercial centers

Goal 2 - Implement the City's Adopted Redevelopment Plan

Over the past twenty years, Garden City has experienced a significant shift from residential to industrial development, attributed to the growth of the Georgia Ports Authority. This changing dynamic in development led to disinvestment in some of the older neighborhoods, encroachment of industrial uses, and declining pockets of neighborhood commercial and an increase in deteriorating buildings. The City is meeting the challenges related to housing, economic development and future development through the implementation of its Urban Redevelopment Plan.

The plan identifies three target areas, each with a unique development characteristic and varying needs as it relates to a redevelopment strategy. These include the Garden City South Target Area; West Highway 21; and West Highway 21 Residential Area. The City has established goals for housing within the redevelopment area which include:

- Eliminating substandard housing;
- Encouraging quality infill development within established neighborhoods;
- Creating affordable housing opportunities within the community; and
- Creating a diverse housing stock in terms of housing types and densities.

Additionally, the mix of commercial uses that serve a regional market is proposed for the commercial targeted redevelopment areas.

Objectives

- Approve quality infill development within established neighborhoods within the Urban Redevelopment boundaries that are consistent with the neighborhood in terms of architecture and design.
- The City will identify and protect historic resources within the Urban Redevelopment boundaries.

Goal 3 - Update City Codes & Ordinances

Garden City desires to manage growth and build a livable City with successful neighborhoods and districts. The goal of auditing and updating ordinances is to ensure residents have the opportunity to live in a safe and continually healthy community. The residents should have access to affordable homes, amenities and services, while making good use of natural resources and transportation options for all forms of travel.

The current zoning ordinance gives the City the authority to control a number of items related to development.

Objectives

- The City will update its ordinances to be user-friendly and easy to understand.
- The City's ordinances will be illustrated with graphics, diagrams and concise tables.
- The City's ordinances will allow for a streamlined development review process.
- The City's code update will be created so as to foster the desired type of redevelopment and future development with design standards and specific building material to change the aesthetics of the corridor.
- The City will consider accounting for sea level rise trends when updating City policies.

Goal 4 - Protect Neighborhoods from Industrial Impacts

Throughout the planning process, preservation of Garden City's neighborhoods was a dominant goal expressed by participants. This goal can be actualized by focusing on a balanced approach to the City's transportation system. Protecting the existing neighborhood areas from the adverse impacts of port related traffic while improving connectivity is the ultimate goal.

Objectives

- The City shall protect and improve the character and integrity of neighborhoods from negative impacts resulting from traffic related to the GPA.
- The City shall coordinate with GDOT and other relevant agencies in planning mitigation strategies where impacts are expected within Garden City.
- Garden City will explore a “Complete Streets Policy”.
- Garden City will improve connectivity throughout the City.
- Garden City will address safety and mobility issues that may arise for all road uses and users of multi-modal.

Goal 5 - Create Design Guidelines for Commercial & Residential Development

Thoughtful design components play an important role defining a community and can distinguish it as a desirable destination. Participants in the planning process recognize that design guidelines can reinforce the positive identity of a community's commercial core and contribute to neighborhood character.

Design guidelines are intended to address some of the most common, overarching challenges in planning commercial developments within Garden City.

The prime areas of opportunity for attaining high quality design in commercial projects include:

- Enhancing the quality of the pedestrian experience along commercial corridors;
- Nurturing an overall active street presence;
- Protecting and conserving the neighborhood architectural character;
- Establishing height and massing transitions between residential and commercial uses;
- Maintaining visual and spatial relationships with adjacent buildings; and
- Optimizing opportunities for high quality infill development that strengthens the visual and functional quality of the commercial environment within the context of Garden City.

Objectives

- The City will create and adopt design guidelines for commercial corridors that define key elements and determine patterns and standards that should be adhered to when developing site or building projects
- The City will create and adopt design guidelines for commercial corridors that address issues of building size and massing, definition of open spaces, site character and quality as well as access and circulations

Goal 6 - Branding the City through Marketing

Garden City takes seriously its responsibility towards building a positive image to support its vision both internally and externally and to provide a favorable experience.

Re-branding Garden City to define its culture and speak to its uniqueness is paramount. During the planning process, participants shared the need to positively change the perception and create a consistent context for marketing. Producing a positive image promotes that the City embraces its vision for a safe, family-oriented and business friendly community.

Objectives

- Garden City will develop a brand that creates an image that represents Garden City's essential identity.
- Garden City will create a consistent message for the City's economic development efforts.
- Garden City will set forth approved usage of the City's brand for communications in print, web, and electronic form.

Goal 7 - Expand Passive & Active Recreation Opportunities

Garden City desires to expand and manage passive and active recreation opportunities to provide additional outdoor and equitable access opportunities for its citizens. While the expansion of parks and open space is one opportunity, creating trails, bike lanes and multi-use paths for connectivity is a vital advancement for the community.

This goal ensures that the focused investment on a multimodal network is an equitable opportunity since it serves all users in Garden City.

Objectives

- The City shall provide parks, trails, bike lanes, and multi-use paths to meet the community's growing needs.
- The City will ensure design allows access to each type of experience for people of all abilities to the maximum extent possible.
- The City will develop parks, trails, and bike lanes, and multiuse paths in an environmentally sensitive manner.
- The City shall create a trail network and where feasible, develop interconnected trails and multi-use paths with bike lanes.

Progress Toward Goal Attainment

Since adoption of the Comprehensive Plan 2040, Garden City has experienced changes in leadership and departmental direction that have helped translate long term policy goals into measurable action. The following sections summarize key accomplishments and progress aligned with its goals.

Goal 1 - Promoting Retail and Housing Diversity

The City has taken steps to encourage a broader mix of retail uses and housing types to better serve residents, support economic vitality, and respond to changing market demands.

Goal 2 - Redevelopment Planning

A comprehensive redevelopment plan has been drafted to guide reinvestment, improve underutilized areas, and support coordinated public and private development efforts.

Goal 3 - Updates to City Codes and Ordinances

Targeted updates to City codes and ordinances have been completed to better align regulations with adopted policies, improve clarity, and support desired development outcomes. In June 2025, an update was initiated to modernize the zoning ordinance, streamline procedures, increase administrative flexibility, and update regulatory language.

Goal 4 - Protecting Neighborhoods from Industrial Impacts

The City has implemented measures to better insulate established neighborhoods from the encroachment and impacts of industrial uses, reinforcing compatibility between land uses and protecting quality of life. A six-month moratorium on acceptance of industrial project permit applications, existing requests, and parcels already zoned industrial was imposed in 5/2022 to review zoning ordinances, enhance residential construction, and update buffer zone guidelines. The moratorium was extended in 10/2022.

Goal 5 - Establishing Commercial and Residential Design Guidelines

Clear design guidelines for both commercial and residential development have been identified to promote high quality design, consistency, and a stronger sense of place. Development standards, specifically architectural and site standards for nonresidential buildings, were revised during the 2040 Plan period.

Goal 6 - City Rebranding Efforts

A coordinated rebranding effort has been undertaken to strengthen the City's identity, improve communication, and better reflect the community's vision for the future.

Goal 7 - Enhancing Recreational Opportunities

Investments have been made to enhance both passive and active recreational spaces, expanding opportunities for recreation, wellness, and community gathering.

Work Program Progress Toward Achievements				
ID	Strategy / Activity	Status	Explanation / Achievement	2045 Disposition
E.1.1	Facilitate network to align employers/training	Met	Major industrial agreements approved (e.g., CenterPoint) to expand local job base.	Modified: Focus shifting to "Port Partnership" for infrastructure funding.
E.1.2	Increase job shadowing/internships for youth	Partially Met	Youth Council established; "Lemonade Day" proclamation supporting entrepreneurship.	Retained: Continued through Youth Council programming.
E.1.3	Increase training capacity for skills/employment	Not Achieved	Determined to be a function of regional partners (WorkSource Coastal/Savannah Tech).	Dropped: City will support regional partners rather than lead.
E.1.4	Create working group for living wage/benefits	Not Achieved	No City jurisdiction; addressed via market forces and regional economic development.	Dropped: No longer a municipal strategy.
E.1.5	Advocate for policies for returning citizens	Not Achieved	No specific City program established.	Dropped: Handled by non-profit/State partners.
E.1.6	Collaboration between workforce entities	Partially Met	Supported via participation in Savannah Harbor-I-16 Joint Development Authority (JDA).	Retained: Continue JDA participation.
E.2.1	Facilitate M/WBE establishment	Partially Met	Routine business licensing; no specific M/WBE incentive policy adopted.	Dropped: Focus shifted to general small business support.
E.2.2	Remove obstacles in redevelopment areas	Partially Met	Updated URP; rezonings approved to facilitate commercial use.	Extended: Critical for Town Center assembly.
E.3.1	Connect education/trades to disadvantaged	Partially Met	Partnership with Woodville-Tompkins for facility usage supports trade connection.	Modified: Shift to "Support School Board Initiatives."
E.3.2	Support cradle-to-career pipeline	Partially Met	Ongoing support for local schools and JROTC programs.	Retained: Ongoing community support role.
E.3.3	Incentivize businesses near affordable housing	Partially Met	Approved mixed-use rezonings along Highway 80 transit corridor.	Extended: Expand focus to include Highway 17 Node development
L.1.1	Update Comprehensive Plan	Met	2040 Plan adopted.	Completed: New update underway (2045 Plan).
L.1.2	Revise zoning for mixed-use/walkability	Partially Met	Text amendments for "Mixed Use" districts approved; limited implementation.	Extended: Priority for Town Center/Hwy 17.
L.1.3	Adopt Unified Development Code (UDC)	Not Achieved	Resources prioritized for specific text amendments rather than full UDC rewrite.	Dropped: Will pursue targeted Zoning Code updates instead.
L.1.4	Create density bonuses for community benefits	Not Achieved	Not implemented during this cycle.	Extended: Reintroduced as key tool for Housing Goal 8.

Work Program Progress Toward Achievements				
ID	Strategy / Activity	Status	Explanation / Achievement	2045 Disposition
L.1.5	Standard to evaluate park/rec conditions	Met	Evaluation complete; bonds authorized for new Rec Complex construction.	Completed: Shift to Maintenance/Programming.
L.2.1	Incentivize infill development	Met	Variances granted for subdividing small residential lots (e.g., 6th St).	Extended: Ongoing policy.
L.2.2	Promote transit-oriented development (TOD)	Not Achieved	Market conditions did not support TOD during this cycle.	Modified: Folded into "Town Center" strategy.
L.2.3	Regulate retention of industrial uses	Met	Strong track record of protecting industrial zoning (CenterPoint, Dean Forest).	Extended: Core of "North/South Duality" strategy.
L.2.4	Protect encroachment on military installations	Met	Zoning map amendments coordinated with airport/military overlays.	Extended: Ongoing coordination required.
T.1.1	Maintain roadway infrastructure	Met	Annual LMIG grant usage for resurfacing (Pineland, Fall, Rommel).	Extended: New "Pavement Management System" strategy.
T.1.2	Improve freight mobility	Met	Old Louisville Rd improvements; CenterPoint agreements.	Extended: Focus on "Truck Route Enforcement."
T.1.3	Implement context-sensitive street design	Partially Met	Streetscapes discussed; no policy adopted.	Modified: Focus specifically on Hwy 17 & Town Center grids.
T.2.1	Expand public transportation (CAT)	Partially Met	Regular status updates and Board participation; no service expansion funded.	Modified: Focus on "Amenities (Shelters)" vs Service Expansion.
T.2.2	Feasibility study for high-capacity transit	Not Achieved	Not feasible due to density/cost.	Dropped: No longer a priority.
T.3.1	Expand bicycle/pedestrian network	Met	SPLOST projects for sidewalks/trails; Tide to Town support.	Extended: Focus on Town Center connectivity.
T.3.2	Adopt Complete Streets policy	Not Achieved	No resolution adopted.	Dropped: Superseded by specific "Grid Connectivity" mandate.
T.4.1	Promote alternative fuel vehicles	Met	Adopted zoning text amendment for EV Charging Stations.	Completed: Regulatory framework in place.
H.1.1	Incentivize affordable housing development	Met	Bond issuance for "Pines Acquisition"; Habitat for Humanity plats approved.	Extended: Use "Zoning Incentives" moving forward.
H.1.2	Diverse housing types (ADUs, etc.)	Partially Met	"Tiny Home" concepts discussed; standard subdivisions approved.	Extended: Critical for Goal 8 (Housing Choice).

Work Program Progress Toward Achievements				
ID	Strategy / Activity	Status	Explanation / Achievement	2045 Disposition
H.2.1	Supportive housing plan	Partially Met	Ordinance amendment to reclassify "Modular Home" to "Modular Structure"	Extended: Support a Study to evaluate how Garden City can support the unhoused and special needs in the course of future development
H.3.1	Housing rehabilitation programs	Met	"Housing Team" active; URP utilized for rehab support.	Extended: Continued URP implementation. New Partnership with Housing United/CHSA.
H.4.1	Homeless housing action plan	Partially Met	Resolution supporting Savannah-Chatham Interagency Council.	Completed: Ongoing support via partners. Folded into extended activity H.2.1.
N.1.1	Stormwater management/flooding	Met	Emergency repairs (Redmond Ave) and SPLOST drainage projects complete.	Extended: Drainage Basin Master Plan is next step.
N.1.2	Regional sea level rise plan	Partially Met	Participated in County Hazard Mitigation Plan.	Extended: City-specific "Resilience Zoning" needed.
N.1.3	Water & Sewer Master Plan	Met	Contracted Hussey Gay Bell for update.	Extended: Implementation is now the goal (South Expansion). Evaluate FLUM and zoning to align for future mixed-use/density.
N.2.1	Protect natural resources/green space	Partially Met	Community Gardens approved; industrial development impacted some greenfield.	Modified: Focus on "Conservation Overlays" for neighborhoods demonstrating clear historic development pattern
N.3.1	Increase tree canopy	Not Achieved	No funding allocated; industrial removal occurred.	Modified: "Green Infrastructure Standards" to replace generic planting goal.
N.3.2	Green infrastructure in public projects	Partially Met	Incorporated into new Gym/Rec complex design.	Extended: Ongoing activity/policy development
N.3.3	Promote energy efficiency	Met	LED street lighting agreement with Georgia Power approved.	Completed: Maintenance phase.
N.3.4	Climate change mitigation measures	Not Achieved	Addressed via "Resilience/Sea Level Rise" planning instead.	Dropped: Terminology shift to "Resilience."
Q.1.1	Improve recreational facilities	Met	Major Achievement: Built new City Gym/Rec Complex.	Completed: Goal shifts to Operations/Programming.
Q.1.2	Expand community programming	Met	Expanded sports programs and community events.	Extended: Continued growth of programming.

Work Program Progress Toward Achievements				
ID	Strategy / Activity	Status	Explanation / Achievement	2045 Disposition
Q.2.1	Support arts and culture	Partially Met	Student art contests and proclamations.	Modified: Scale back to Promote Heritage Tourism.
Q.3.1	Enhance public safety/community policing	Met	Purchased vehicles; "Chat with a Cop"; Mutual Aid.	Extended: Core service delivery.
HP.1.1	Reinstate Certified Local Government (CLG)	Not Achieved	Staff capacity limitations.	Modified: Feasibility Study first.
HP.1.2	Survey historic resources	Not Achieved	No funding available.	Extended: Seek grant funding (Goal 4).
HP.1.3	Update Historic Site Commission plan	Not Achieved	Function performed by MPC/County.	Dropped: Relies on County Commission.
HP.1.4	Outreach on historic preservation	Partially Met	Support for Homestead Association history projects.	Retained: Low-cost community engagement.
HP.2.1	Preservation & affordable housing partnerships	Met	Housing Team collaboration on rehabs.	Extended: Ongoing URP function.
HP.3.3	Reinvestment in historic places	Partially Met	2nd St Community Garden revitalization.	Extended: Targeted neighborhood investment.
HP.4.1	Historic resources in disaster planning	Not Achieved	Not integrated into current debris contracts.	Dropped: Not a current priority.
HP.5.1	Review identification practices	Not Achieved	No action.	Dropped: Low priority.
HP.5.3	Civil War Memorial Task Force	Not Achieved	No action.	Dropped: No longer a priority.