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LETTER FROM BRUCE CAMPBELL, MAYOR

GARDEN CITY, GEORGIA

This Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update is the product of a multitude of public engagement endeavors, contributions and careful consideration by City staff and our City Council. Building on the previous Plan 2024, an approved Comprehensive Plan update maintains our Qualified Local Government status, enabling access to State assistance, and provides every day decision making guidance by our City Council and other community leaders.

The Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update serves as a guide to work toward an increasingly equitable and resilient City. Public engagement has been a hallmark of the Comprehensive Plan update process. Through various engagement events and venues, the Chatham County Metropolitan Planning Commission, as the agent for this update process, has incorporated perspectives from residents and a wealth of stakeholders, and together, critical consensus issues and goals for our community have been identified. Implementation of the Plan updates will assist Garden City in navigating these critical issues and opportunities while outlining a practical means to move forward toward the realization of the unique vision for our future.

The Comprehensive Plan Update that we submit to you today reflects the best analysis, policies, and actions that will prepare Garden City to manage the change ahead with an eye toward equity, resilience, and shared prosperity. We have incorporated a more deliberate approach towards growth management emphasizing compact, connected, walkable communities concentrated in strategic nodes and corridors based on infrastructure capacity, transportation connectivity, environmental constraints, compatibility, and coastal hazard risk. This more targeted approach protects and preserves natural systems, our historic neighborhoods, cultural resources and environmental quality while promoting identified redevelopment opportunities and enriched equitable access to employment, services, housing and community assets across neighborhoods throughout our City.

On behalf of the entire City Council, I want to express our gratitude and reaffirm our support as we continue to move Garden City forward together.

Sincerely,

Mayor Bruce Campbell

Garden City 2026

Comprehensive Plan Update:

Building toward 2045

Five-Year Update to the
2040 Comprehensive Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building Toward 2045

The Garden City 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update: Building Toward 2045 provides a focused framework for guiding growth, reinvestment, public investment, and community decision making over the next five years while maintaining 2045 as the City's long range planning horizon.

Garden City is a compact municipality with a development pattern and economic role that extend well beyond its population size. Its location within the Savannah Chatham region, proximity to the Port of Savannah, major freight and transportation corridors, established neighborhoods, commercial areas, civic facilities, and redevelopment opportunities create a planning context unlike that of many similarly sized communities.

The 2026 update builds on the direction established in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan rather than replacing it. It recognizes progress made during the previous planning period, responds to current development conditions and community needs, and focuses implementation on a smaller number of actions that are realistic, measurable, and directly connected to the City's goals.

Garden City Today

Garden City has experienced significant change since adoption of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Population growth, continued industrial and logistics investment, redevelopment activity, infrastructure expansion, housing needs, and changing transportation patterns are all shaping decisions about how the City should grow.

The City's population increased from approximately 8,600 residents in 2020 to more than 10,400 in 2024, while Garden City continued to serve as an important employment and logistics center within the larger Savannah region. Recent land use activity has reinforced that role, with industrial development accounting for the majority of newly approved development acreage during the planning period.

At the same time, Garden City continues to balance regional economic activity with the needs of established neighborhoods and residents. Housing affordability and choice, commercial reinvestment, pedestrian connectivity, freight movement, stormwater and flood resilience, recreation, community identity, and access to services all remain important components of the City's future.



Community input gathered through public meetings, outreach, and the community survey reinforced many of these issues. Although survey participation was limited, recurring concerns included truck traffic and railroad crossings, housing choice and affordability, growth management, access to jobs and local businesses, recreation, public safety, community services, and resilience.

Together, these conditions point to a central planning challenge for Garden City: how to support continued economic activity and reinvestment while improving the everyday experience of residents.

The update responds by placing greater emphasis on compatibility, targeted redevelopment, neighborhood stability, infrastructure coordination, and practical implementation.

Executive Summary

From Progress to Priorities

The 2026 planning process included a review of the activities established through the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Many actions were completed, while others became part of normal City operations, established partnerships, or ongoing regulatory responsibilities.

That review was important for more than documenting progress. It also helped distinguish between activities that should be closed out and those that still require focused attention. Rather than carrying forward a long list of broad or recurring responsibilities, the 2026 update narrows the next work program to actions that can move Garden City toward measurable outcomes over the next five years.

This approach allows the City to build on previous investments while avoiding unnecessary duplication. It also creates a clearer relationship between the community vision, the seven updated goals, and the projects, studies, partnerships, and regulatory actions needed to advance them.

A Refined Vision for Garden City

Community Vision
Garden City will be a safe, connected, and welcoming community where neighborhoods are protected, families and businesses can thrive, and growth is managed in a way that strengthens quality of life while supporting the City’s important role in the regional economy.

The 2026 update carries forward the core direction of the 2040 plan while organizing the City’s priorities around seven updated goals: Growing Opportunity, Strengthening Neighborhoods, Shaping Quality Growth, Balancing Industry and Community, Enhancing Community Life, Building Resilience and Strengthening Connections.

These goals are intentionally broad enough to guide long range decisions, but each is tied to specific implementation milestones in the 2027–2031 Community Work Program. Together, they provide the bridge between the City’s long range vision and the actions that can be advanced within the next five years.



Guiding Growth and Reinvestment

Land use remains one of the most important components of the update because Garden City contains very different development environments within a relatively small geographic area. The 2026 update retains the City’s Character Area framework while refining the names and narratives so they more clearly describe the intended character and function of each area.

The Character Areas provide place based guidance for development, redevelopment, reinvestment, conservation, infrastructure, and compatibility decisions. They work together with the zoning ordinance, existing Future Land Use Map, redevelopment plans, and other adopted policies.

Garden City continues to use its existing Future Land Use Map, but the map predates this update and is being reevaluated. Preparation and adoption of an updated FLUM is therefore included as a specific action in the 2027–2031 Community Work Program.

Executive Summary

Moving from Plan to Action

The 2027–2031 Community Work Program translates the plan into 16 implementation milestones organized around the seven community goals. Several actions are carried forward or modified from the 2040 Work Program, while others respond to current conditions and priorities identified through this update.

The work program emphasizes a manageable set of actions, including an updated Future Land Use Map, housing analysis, redevelopment and reinvestment strategies, targeted zoning updates, parks and recreation planning, historic preservation efforts, resilience and drainage priorities, pedestrian improvements, and regional coordination.

Approximately \$875,000 in planning level costs are identified for these activities, in addition to staff time, partner resources, private investment, and project costs that cannot yet be reliably quantified. These estimates are intended to support work programming and funding decisions and may change as project scopes, partnerships, and funding opportunities are refined.

The result is a more focused implementation framework than the previous work program. It emphasizes specific milestones over broad recurring activities and creates a clearer basis for tracking progress over the next five years.

Looking Ahead to 2045

The Garden City 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update does not attempt to predict every decision that will occur between now and 2045. Instead, it establishes a clear direction for the City and identifies the work needed during the next five years to move that direction forward.

The update recognizes Garden City’s important role in the regional economy while placing equal emphasis on neighborhood quality, housing, community services, redevelopment, infrastructure, resilience, and connectivity.

Building Toward 2045 is ultimately about managing change deliberately: supporting investment where it benefits the community, protecting the places residents value, and directing public and private resources toward a stronger, more connected, and more resilient Garden City.



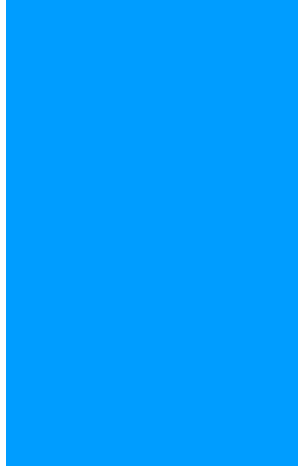
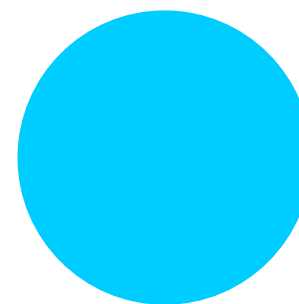
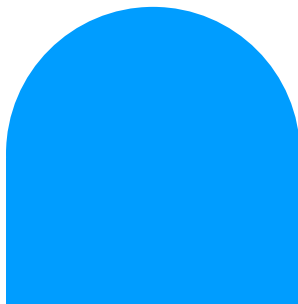
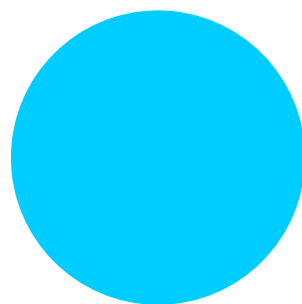
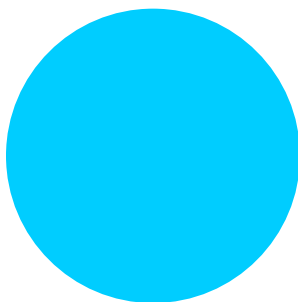
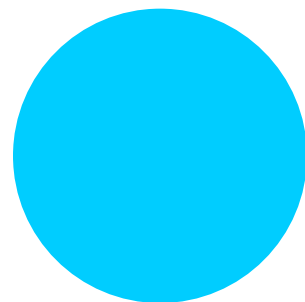
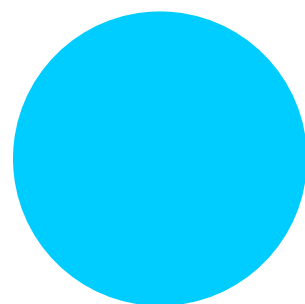
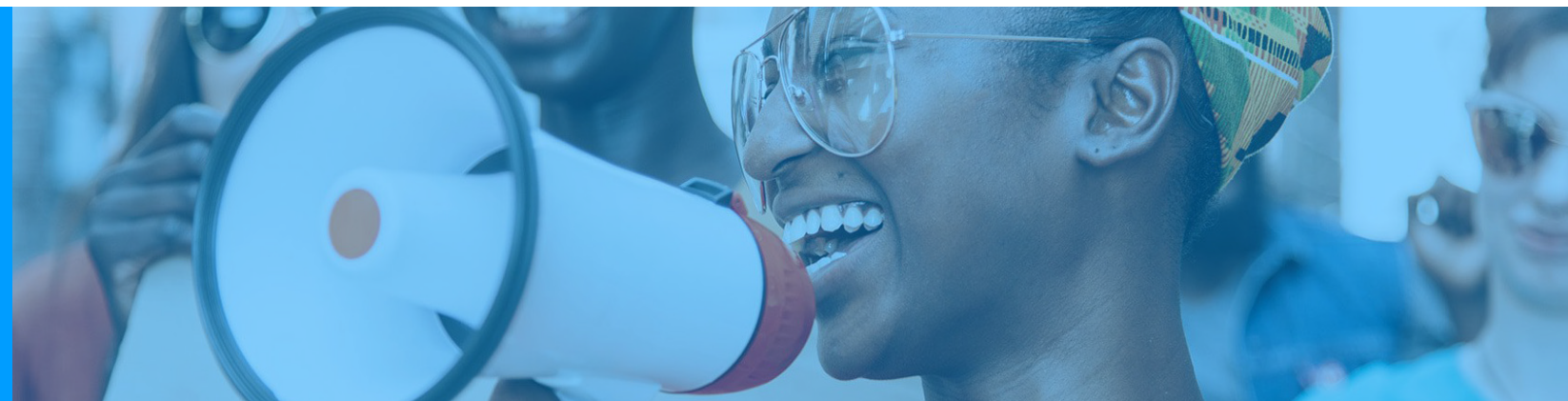
Table of Contents

i	Transmittal Letter	
ii	Cover Page	
iii	Executive Summary	Pg 6
iv	Table of Contents	Pg 12
01	Introduction	Pg 14
	- Community Participation	Pg 18
02	Community Profile	Pg 20
	- Needs & Opportunities	Pg 28
03	Community Goals & Vision	Pg 36
	- Report of Accomplishments	Pg 46

04	Economic Development	Pg 58
05	Land Use	Pg 86
	- Character Areas	Pg 90
06	Transportation	Pg 116
07	Housing	Pg 136
08	Natural Resources	Pg 168
09	Quality Of Life	Pg 214
	- Community Work Program 2027-2031	Pg 256
v	Acknowledgements	Pg 262

01

INTRODUCTION



Planning for Garden City

Garden City is a compact, strategically located municipality whose development pattern and economic role extend well beyond what its population alone might suggest. Its location within the Savannah and Chatham County region, proximity to major freight and transportation corridors, concentration of industrial and employment uses, established residential neighborhoods, and opportunities for redevelopment create a distinctive planning context.

Because of this, the comprehensive plan must do more than describe existing conditions. It must help the City determine where different types of development are appropriate, how neighborhoods and employment areas can coexist, where reinvestment should be encouraged, and how transportation, infrastructure, environmental conditions, and community services should support future development.

This update is therefore organized around the issues most directly affecting Garden City and the tools the City can use to respond to them.

About This Update

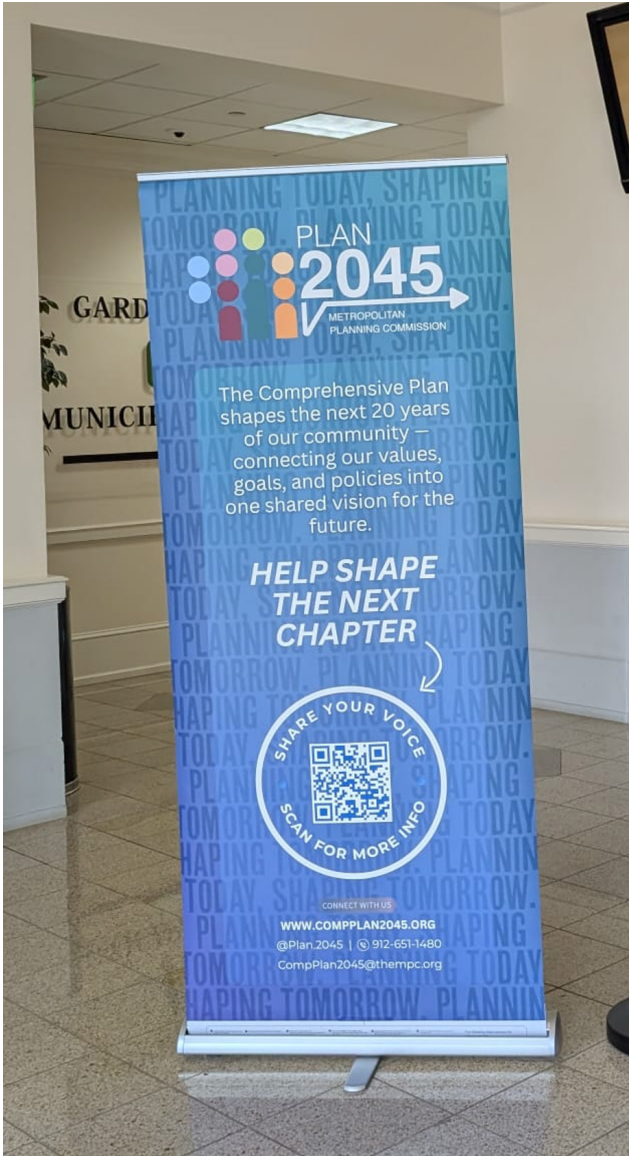
The Garden City 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update: Building Toward 2045 provides an updated framework for guiding growth, development, investment, and public decision-making in Garden City. It builds on the City’s previously adopted comprehensive plan and reflects changing conditions, current community priorities, and the actions needed to support Garden City’s continued development.

This document is a five-year update, not a completely new comprehensive plan. It revisits the City’s existing planning framework, identifies areas where conditions or priorities have changed, and updates the policies and implementation measures that will guide the next phase of work.

Building Toward 2045

The 2026 update builds on Garden City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan while looking slightly beyond the original planning horizon to 2045 for long range context and focusing more directly on the decisions and actions needed during the next five years.

Rather than treating the update as a restart, the planning process evaluates what has changed since the previous plan, what remains relevant, and what requires renewed attention. Existing goals, policies, development guidance, and implementation measures have been reviewed and refined where necessary to better reflect current conditions and priorities. The result is intended to be a more focused and usable planning document; one that connects Garden City’s long-range direction with near term actions that can be advanced through local decision making, partnerships, funding, and future planning initiatives.



How This Update Was Developed

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update was developed through coordination among Garden City officials and staff, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, stakeholders, and members of the public. The planning process included review of existing conditions and previous planning documents, community engagement, development of goals and priorities, preparation of updated planning elements, and refinement of the Community Work Program.

Public participation was incorporated throughout the process through meetings, survey opportunities, community outreach, and required public hearings. The information received through these activities was considered alongside technical analysis and existing plans to identify needs and opportunities and to inform the City’s goals, policies, and implementation priorities.

The update also considers relevant local, county, regional, and state planning initiatives where they affect Garden City’s future growth, infrastructure, transportation, natural resources, economic development, and quality of life.

Community Participation and Input

Community participation was incorporated throughout the development of the Garden City 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update through a combination of public meetings, community outreach, and an online survey. These opportunities were intended to give residents and stakeholders multiple ways to learn about the planning process, raise concerns, and share priorities for Garden City’s future. The planning process also included coordination with City officials, staff, steering committee members, and community stakeholders.

Public engagement included a Public Input Meeting on April 30, a Districts 3, 4 and 5 Town Hall Meeting on May 13, 2026, and a Comprehensive Plan Open House on June 2, 2026. The June open house provided an additional opportunity for participants to review and comment on draft comprehensive plan updates. Together, these events supplemented the online survey and other outreach conducted during the planning process.

The community survey addressed housing, land use, transportation, economic development, quality of life, natural and historic resources, public services, and future growth. Fifteen Garden City residents responded to the survey, although participation varied by question and several questions received substantially fewer responses.

For that reason, the survey results are not intended to represent the views of the entire Garden City population. Instead, they provide one source of community input that was considered alongside public meetings, existing conditions, previous planning efforts, and technical analysis.



Despite the limited response level, several recurring issues emerged. Participants raised concerns about the effects of truck traffic and railroad crossings on daily travel, expressed interest in a broader range of housing choices and affordability, supported thoughtful management of growth and land use, and identified workforce development, access to jobs, and support for local businesses as important economic considerations. Responses also addressed parks and recreation, public safety, community services, natural-resource protection, flood resilience, and historic preservation.

These findings were considered as part of the broader planning process and provide additional context for the Needs and Opportunities and Community Vision and Goals presented in this update.

How To Use This Plan

The comprehensive plan is intended to function as a practical guide for future decisions rather than simply as a record of existing conditions.

The Community Profile and Community Participation sections establish the context for the plan by identifying current conditions, trends, and community input. The Needs and Opportunities section identifies the issues and opportunities that warrant continued attention. These findings inform the Community Vision and Goals, which establish the City’s desired direction.

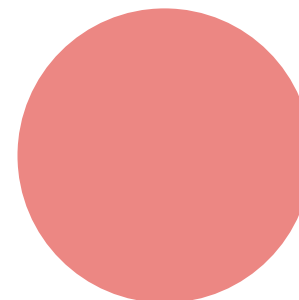
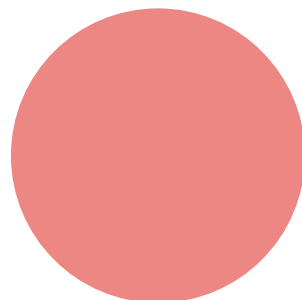
The Character Areas and Land Use sections provide place-based guidance for future development, redevelopment, and investment. Supporting elements address major topics such as transportation, economic development, housing, natural and cultural resources, and quality of life.

The Report of Accomplishments evaluates progress made on the previous Community Work Program, while the 2027–2031 Community Work Program identifies the specific actions Garden City intends to pursue during the next five years.



02

COMMUNITY PROFILE



Community Profile

Garden City is a full-service municipality located within Chatham County and the Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area. Since its incorporation in 1939, the City has developed a distinctive mix of residential neighborhoods, commercial activity, industrial development, transportation infrastructure, and municipal services.

Garden City provides police and fire protection, water and sewer service, solid waste collection, street and drainage maintenance, recreational programs and facilities, code enforcement, and other municipal services. The City operates under a council-manager form of government with a mayor, one at-large council member, and five district-elected council members. Municipal services are supported through a combination of property taxes, sales taxes, user fees, and other revenue sources.

Population and Growth

Garden City has experienced notable population growth in recent years. Between 2020 and 2024, the City’s population increased from 8,597 to 10,426, representing growth of approximately 21.2 percent. Garden City accounts for approximately 3.5 percent of Chatham County’s population and is the fourth-largest incorporated municipality in the county.

Growth throughout the Savannah metropolitan area is expected to continue through 2045. Chatham County is projected to remain the region’s largest population center, while neighboring Bryan and Effingham counties are expected to grow at faster rates. Across the Savannah MSA, population is projected to increase by approximately 25.3 percent between 2025 and 2045, while Chatham County is projected to grow by approximately 14.2 percent during the same period.

These regional trends reinforce Garden City’s position within a growing metropolitan area and the need to coordinate future land use, transportation, housing, infrastructure, and economic development decisions with broader regional change.

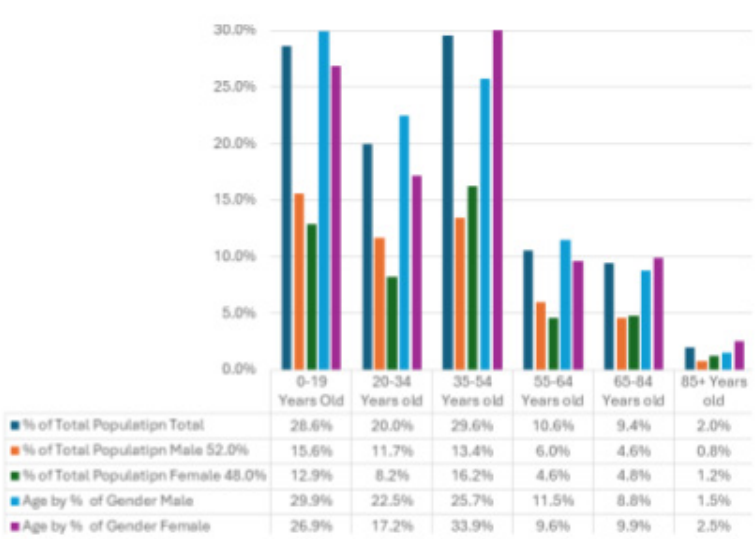
Population 2020-2024				
County	Jurisdiction	2020	2024	% Change
Chatham County	City of Savannah	145,492	149,465	2.7%
	Unincorporated Chatham	93,478	90,834	-2.8%
	City of Pooler	24,575	28,466	15.8%
	Port Wentworth	8,886	12,892	45.1%
	Garden City	8,597	10,426	21.2%
	Tybee Island	3,094	3,123	0.9%
	Bloomington	2,801	3,007	7.4%
	Town of Thunderbolt	2,638	2,533	-4.0%
	Vernonburg	88	133	51.1%
Effingham County		62,241	69,143	11.1%
Bryan County		38,321	48,263	25.9%

Figure 2.1 – Population Savannah MSA 2020-2024

Population Characteristics

Garden City has a relatively young population. The median age is 35.7 years, compared with 37.1 years in Chatham County and 37.4 years statewide. The City’s largest age cohort is residents ages 35 to 54, representing nearly 30 percent of the population, followed closely by residents age 19 and younger at approximately 29 percent. Residents age 65 and older comprise approximately 11.3 percent of the population, a smaller share than in Chatham County overall.

The City’s population is also racially and ethnically diverse. Black or African American residents represent the largest racial group, followed closely by White residents. Since 2020, Garden City has experienced increases among residents identifying as Some Other Race and Two or More Races. The Hispanic or Latino population has also increased during the planning period. Approximately 13.7 percent of Garden City residents are foreign-born, compared with 8 percent in Chatham County. The majority of Garden City also falls within the highest diversity-index category used in the staff analysis, reflecting the City’s varied racial and ethnic composition.



Savannah MSA Population Projections				
County	2025	2040	2045	% Change 2025-2045
Chatham County	310,554	346,708	354,532	14.2%
Effingham County	64,769	97,004	104,577	61.5%
Bryan County	52,282	70,188	76,838	34.3%
Total	427,585	513,900	535,947	25.3%

Figure 2.2 –Savannah MSA Population Projections

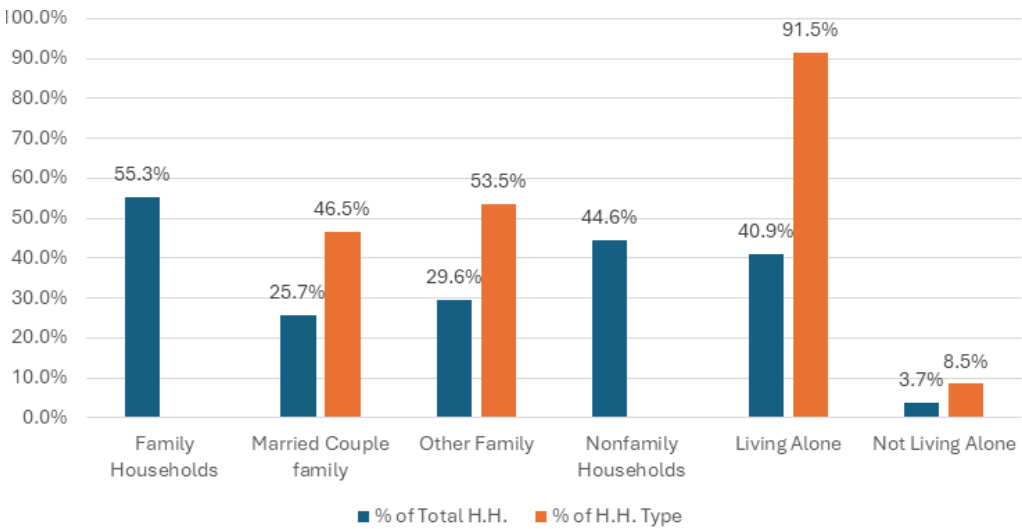
Households and Demographic Characteristics

Households and Housing

Garden City has an average household size of 2.36 persons and an average family size of 3.11 persons. Nearly one-third of households include children, a share that is higher than in Chatham County and the City of Savannah. Family households remain the predominant household type, although nonfamily households also represent a substantial share of the City’s households.

Housing tenure in Garden City differs from Chatham County overall. Approximately 43.7 percent of households are owner-occupied, meaning renter-occupied households comprise the majority of occupied units. This pattern is more similar to the City of Savannah than to Chatham County as a whole.

Recent residential construction has been limited and uneven, with most new units concentrated in a single multifamily development rather than sustained annual housing production. The relatively modest pace of housing production reinforces the importance of providing a range of housing types and price points as Garden City continues to grow.



Income and Economic Conditions

According to the 2023 American Community Survey five-year estimates, Garden City’s median household income is approximately \$41,735, compared with \$69,575 in Chatham County and nearly \$75,000 statewide. Approximately 15 percent of Garden City residents live below the poverty level. This rate is lower than in the City of Savannah but higher than the county and statewide rates presented in the staff analysis.

These conditions highlight the importance of considering household income, housing costs, access to employment, transportation, and community services together when evaluating future growth and investment priorities.

Household Size and Presence of Children			
Jurisdiction	Average Household Size	Average Family Size	Households with Children
Georgia	2.64	3.25	32.1%
Garden City	2.36	3.11	31.0%
Chatham County	2.41	3.05	26.0%
City of Savannah	2.35	3.12	24.5%

Figure 2.3 - Household Size and Presence of Children

Household Size by Tenure		
Household Size	% of Tenure	% of Total H.H.
Owner occupied:		43.7%
1-person household	53.2%	23.3%
2-person household	24.7%	10.8%
3-person household	9.0%	3.9%
4-person household	7.9%	3.5%
5-person household	4.2%	1.9%
6-person household	0.0%	0.0%
7-or-more person household	0.9%	0.4%
Renter occupied:		56.3%
1-person household	31.2%	17.6%
2-person household	18.9%	10.6%
3-person household	28.9%	16.3%
4-person household	17.0%	9.6%
5-person household	3.1%	1.8%
6-person household	0.0%	0.0%
7-or-more person household	0.8%	0.5%

Source: 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimate B25009

Figure 2.4 -Garden City Household Size by tenure

Median Household Income and Poverty			
	Median Household Income	% of Population in Poverty	% of Families in Poverty
Georgia	\$74,664	13.50%	9.90%
Chatham County	\$69,575	14.50%	9.80%
Savannah	\$56,782	19.50%	13.20%
Garden City	\$41,735	15.0%	12.3%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates (S2503, S1701, S1702)

Figure 2.5 -Median Household Income and Poverty

Education and Workforce

Educational attainment in Garden City differs from Chatham County overall. Approximately 16 percent of Garden City residents age 25 and older hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with nearly 37 percent in Chatham County. Garden City also has a higher share of residents without a high school diploma than the county as a whole.

Labor force participation is comparable to Chatham County. Approximately 64.4 percent of Garden City residents age 16 and older participate in the labor force. The unemployment rate reported in the staff analysis is approximately 7 percent, slightly higher than the Chatham County rate of 6.1 percent.

Garden City’s workforce is strongly represented in several sectors, including construction; professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste-management services; retail trade; and transportation, warehousing, and utilities. Together, these industries account for approximately 58 percent of employed Garden City residents, compared with 39.5 percent in Chatham County.

The prominence of construction, transportation, warehousing, utilities, and related industries reflects Garden City’s relationship to the Port of Savannah and the broader regional logistics economy.

Employment by Industry			
Sector	Employment	Percent	Weekly Wage
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	48,410	24.2%	\$1,118
Accommodation & Food Services	28,201	14.1%	\$583
Health Care & Social Assistance	27,742	13.9%	\$1,253
Manufacturing	24,642	12.3%	\$1,803
Retail Trade	23,422	11.7%	\$794
Government	24,927	12.5%	\$1,291
Professional & Business Services	21,818	10.9%	\$1,063
Education & Training	3,987	2.0%	\$1,471
Construction	9,432	4.7%	\$1,403
Finance & Insurance	3,065	1.5%	\$1,926

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile for Savannah MSA (December 2025)

Figure 2.6 -Employment by Industry

Educational Attainment		
Educational Attainment	Chatham County	Garden City
Population 25 years and over	%	%
Less than 9th grade	2.9%	5.4%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	5.8%	9.6%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	24.6%	38.1%
Some college, no degree	22.4%	25.4%
Associate's degree	7.4%	5.4%
Bachelor's degree	22.0%	11.4%
Graduate or professional degree	14.7%	4.7%
High school graduate or higher	91.2%	85.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	36.8%	16.1%

Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates (S1501)

Figure 2.7 -Educational Attainment

Population Density and Development Pattern

Garden City has an average population density of approximately 796 persons per square mile, lower than Chatham County overall. Density varies substantially within the City, however. Areas closest to major industrial and port-related activity have densities exceeding 2,000 persons per square mile, while portions of northern and western Garden City have substantially lower densities.

This variation reflects Garden City’s mixed development pattern and reinforces the importance of considering neighborhood conditions, industrial activity, transportation access, and redevelopment opportunities at a more localized scale.

What the Profile Tells Us

Several trends stand out from Garden City’s current demographic and economic conditions:

- Garden City is growing faster than Chatham County overall.
- The City has a relatively young and diverse population.
- Renter occupied housing represents the majority of occupied households.
- Household incomes remain below county and statewide levels.
- Residential construction has been limited relative to recent population growth.

- The local workforce is strongly connected to construction, logistics, transportation, warehousing, retail, and related industries.
- Population density and development patterns vary significantly across the City.

These conditions provide important context for the Needs and Opportunities, Community Goals, Character Areas, Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Economic Development, and Community Work Program sections that follow.

Data Sources

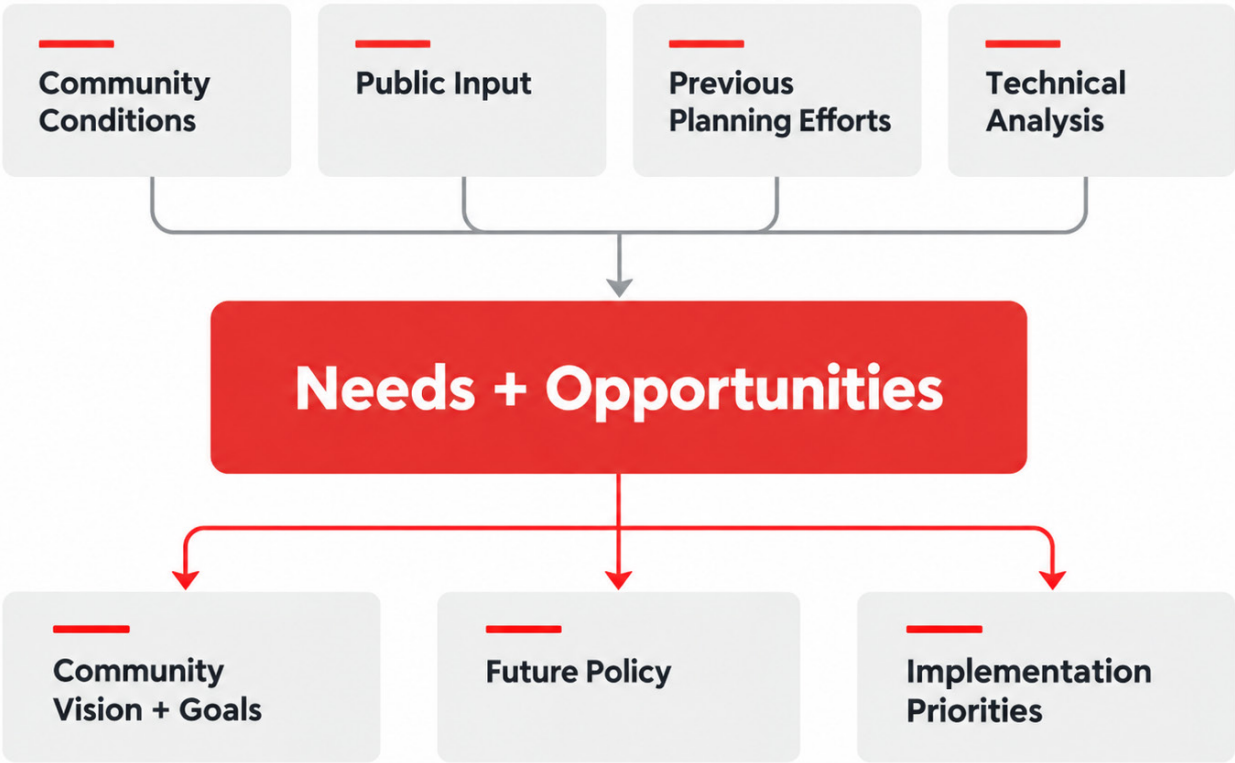
Unless otherwise noted, demographic, housing, and economic data used in this Community Profile are drawn from U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year estimates for the 2019–2023 or 2020–2024 periods, as presented in the staff draft. Population projections are based on projections prepared by the Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget.

Needs and Opportunities

Garden City’s needs and opportunities were identified through a review of community conditions, public input, previous planning efforts, technical analysis, and stakeholder discussions. Together, these sources helped identify the issues and opportunities most likely to influence the City’s growth, investment, and quality of life over the next five years.

The needs and opportunities below are intentionally broad. They establish the foundation for the Community Vision and Goals and help connect current conditions to future policy and implementation priorities.

How Needs and Opportunities Inform the Plan



Growth and Land Use

Needs

- Manage continued industrial and logistics growth while reducing conflicts with established neighborhoods.
- Maintain clear and practical land use guidance as development patterns continue to change.
- Address incompatible transitions between industrial, commercial, and residential areas.
- Coordinate growth with water, sewer, transportation, drainage, and other infrastructure.
- Update the Future Land Use Map to better reflect current development patterns and long-range priorities.

Opportunities

- Use the Character Area framework to guide development and redevelopment decisions.
- Focus reinvestment within established redevelopment areas and major commercial corridors.
- Support mixed use and infill development where infrastructure and surrounding development patterns are appropriate.
- Use targeted zoning and development standards to improve compatibility without creating unnecessary regulatory complexity.
- Coordinate land use planning with major regional partners, including the Port, Airport, Chatham County, and transportation agencies.



Housing and Neighborhoods

Needs

- Expand the range of housing types available to meet the needs of families, seniors, smaller households, and the local workforce.
- Address housing affordability and the condition of older housing stock.
- Protect established neighborhoods from incompatible development and freight impacts.
- Support reinvestment in neighborhoods experiencing disinvestment or development pressure.

Opportunities

- Encourage compatible infill and rehabilitation within established neighborhoods.
- Use redevelopment programs, partnerships, and available funding to support housing reinvestment.
- Evaluate current housing conditions and needs to guide future policy and investment decisions.
- Direct new housing toward locations with adequate infrastructure and access to employment, services, and transportation.



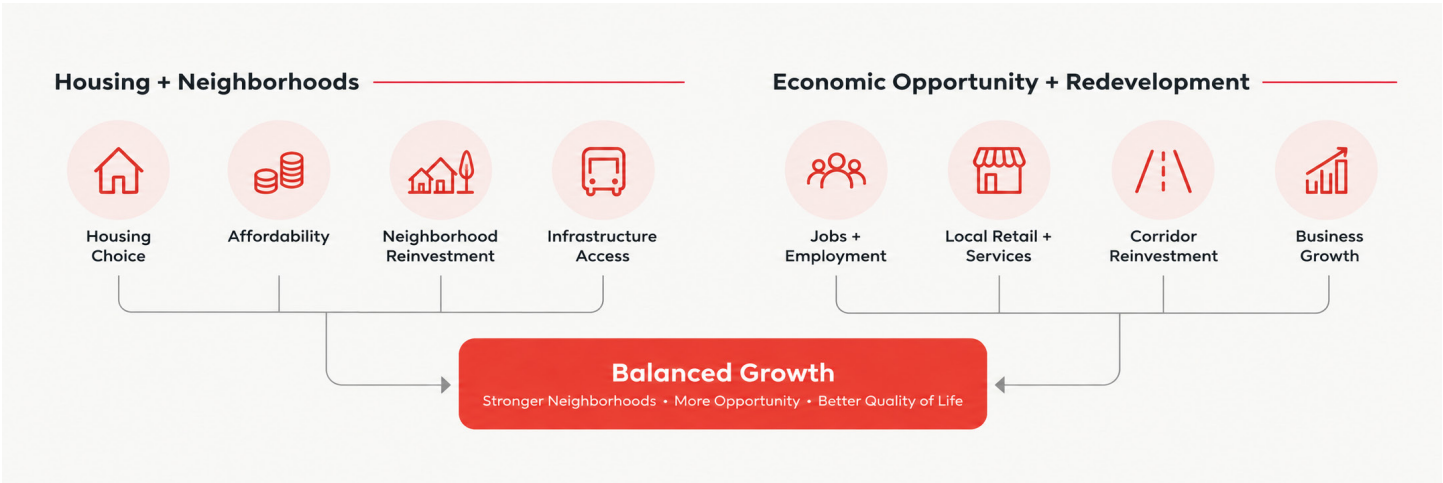
Economic Opportunity and Redevelopment

Needs

- Strengthen the connection between Garden City’s employment base and economic opportunities available to residents.
- Increase local serving retail, services, and commercial activity.
- Continue reinvestment along aging or underperforming commercial corridors.
- Support businesses and redevelopment without relying solely on industrial growth.

Opportunities

- Encourage compatible infill and rehabilitation within established neighborhoods.
- Use redevelopment programs, partnerships, and available funding to support housing reinvestment.
- Evaluate current housing conditions and needs to guide future policy and investment decisions.
- Direct new housing toward locations with adequate infrastructure and access to employment, services, and transportation.



Economic Opportunity and Redevelopment

Needs

- Strengthen the connection between Garden City’s employment base and economic opportunities available to residents.
- Increase local serving retail, services, and commercial activity.
- Continue reinvestment along aging or underperforming commercial corridors.
- Support businesses and redevelopment without relying solely on industrial growth.

Opportunities

- Build on Garden City’s proximity to the Port, regional transportation network, and major employment centers.
- Implement targeted business, redevelopment, and infill incentives.
- Support local businesses and workforce partnerships that connect residents to regional employment opportunities.
- Advance the Town Center and other redevelopment areas as locations for commercial, residential, civic, and mixed-use investment.



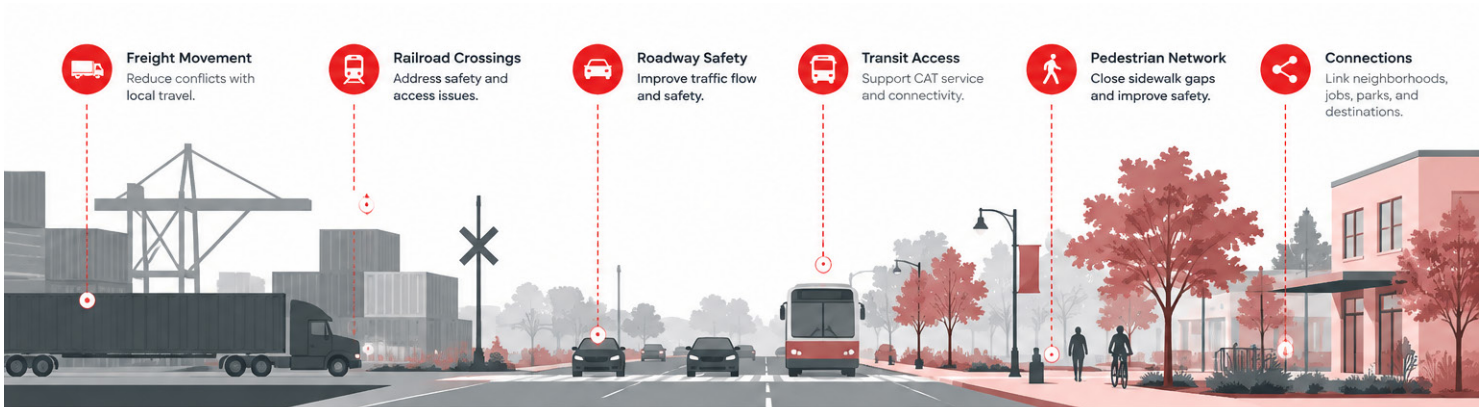
Transportation and Connectivity

Needs

- Reduce conflicts between freight movement and local neighborhood travel.
- Improve pedestrian safety and close gaps in the sidewalk network.
- Address traffic, railroad crossings, and access issues affecting residents and businesses.
- Improve connections between neighborhoods, employment areas, commercial corridors, parks, and civic destinations.

Opportunities

- Coordinate with regional transportation agencies on freight, roadway, transit, and safety improvements.
- Prioritize pedestrian improvements in locations with the greatest connectivity and safety benefits.
- Continue working with Chatham Area Transit on service and access needs.
- Coordinate land use and transportation decisions so that new development supports local access and connectivity.



Infrastructure and Resilience

Needs

- Maintain and improve infrastructure as the City continues to grow and redevelop.
- Address drainage, stormwater, flooding, and long term infrastructure vulnerability.
- Ensure infrastructure investments keep pace with development intensity and changing land use patterns.
- Maintain emergency preparedness and regulatory compliance.

Opportunities

- Build on completed utility, drainage, and infrastructure planning efforts.
- Pursue grants and outside funding for flood mitigation, stormwater, resilience, and infrastructure improvements.
- Coordinate capital planning with redevelopment and land use priorities.
- Incorporate resilience considerations into future development and infrastructure decisions.



Community Life and Identity

Needs

- Maintain recreation facilities and programming as the population grows.
- Preserve historic and cultural resources where feasible.
- Continue improving communication and engagement with residents.
- Support community services and amenities that reinforce Garden City as a safe and welcoming place to live.

Opportunities

- Complete the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update and use it to guide future investment.
- Build on the City’s existing historic preservation framework and pursue additional grant opportunities where appropriate.
- Use community events, public spaces, heritage, and placemaking to strengthen civic identity.
- Continue established partnerships with schools, community organizations, regional agencies, and service providers.

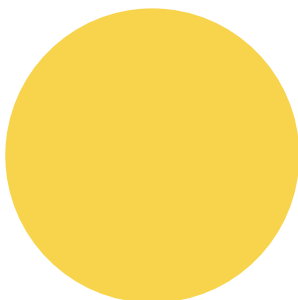
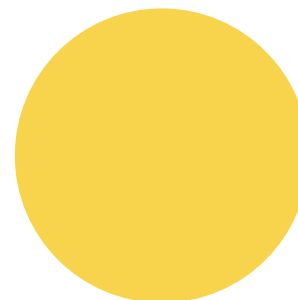
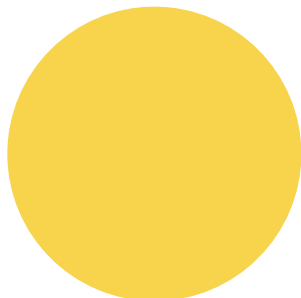
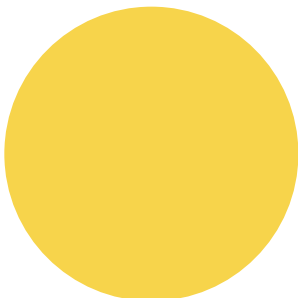
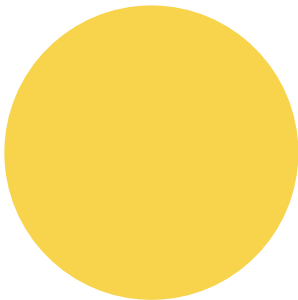


From Needs and Opportunities to Community Goals

The needs and opportunities identified above provide the foundation for Garden City’s updated Community Vision and seven Community Goals. The goals organize these issues into a clear policy framework, while the Character Areas and 2027–2031 Community Work Program translate that direction into place-based guidance and specific implementation actions.

03

COMMUNITY VISION & GOALS



Garden City Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update Vision & Goals

The Vision

Garden City will be a safe, connected, and welcoming community where neighborhoods are protected, families and businesses can thrive, and growth is managed in a way that strengthens quality of life while supporting the City’s important role in the regional economy.



Goals At A Glance

Garden City’s 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update carries forward the core direction of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan while refining the goals to reflect current conditions, recent development activity, community input, and emerging priorities. The revised framework retains seven broad goal areas, providing continuity with the previous plan while better aligning the City’s long-range direction with the issues it faces today.

1. Growing Opportunity
2. Strengthening Neighborhoods
3. Shaping Quality Growth
4. Balancing Industry and Community
5. Enhancing Community Life
6. Building Resilience
7. Strengthening Connections

The goals that follow establish broad direction for Garden City. Each identifies why the issue matters, the conditions it is intended to address, and strategies that can help move the City toward implementation.

Goal #1 Growing Opportunity

Strengthen Garden City’s economy by supporting local businesses, revitalizing commercial corridors, attracting new investment, and leveraging the City’s regional employment and logistics role to create broader opportunities for residents.

Why It Matters

Economic development has remained a consistent priority since the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, which emphasized retail growth, economic diversification, and stronger access to goods and services within Garden City. The current update expands that direction to include commercial corridor revitalization, Town Center development, workforce opportunity, and stronger connections between regional economic activity and local community benefit.

What It Addresses

Commercial revitalization, local business development, retail and service gaps, workforce opportunity, Town Center investment, redevelopment, and public-private partnerships.

Strategies for Achievement

- Encourage mixed-use and commercial reinvestment along targeted corridors and within the Town Center.
- Support existing businesses, entrepreneurship, and locally serving retail and services.
- Coordinate economic development initiatives with workforce partners and major employers.
- Use redevelopment tools, grants, incentives, and public-private partnerships to advance strategic investment.



Goal #2 Strengthening Neighborhoods

Reinvest in established neighborhoods, expand housing choice, preserve neighborhood character, and support redevelopment that improves housing quality, stability, and affordability.

Why It Matters

Neighborhood reinvestment was a central component of the 2020 plan and remains important as Garden City addresses aging housing, limited new residential construction, redevelopment opportunities, and the effects of nearby industrial activity. The updated goal strengthens the connection between housing choice, neighborhood stability, historic character, and targeted reinvestment.

What It Addresses

Housing choice, affordability, rehabilitation, infill development, neighborhood stability, historic character, redevelopment areas, and residential compatibility.

Strategies for Achievement

- Encourage context-sensitive infill and redevelopment within established neighborhoods.
- Expand housing options where infrastructure and land-use conditions support additional housing types.
- Support rehabilitation and preservation of existing housing.
- Use redevelopment programs and targeted investment to address blight and strengthen neighborhood stability.



Goal #3: Shaping Quality Growth

Guide development through clear, modern, and predictable land-use regulations that support compatible growth, quality design, and the desired character of Garden City.

Why It Matters

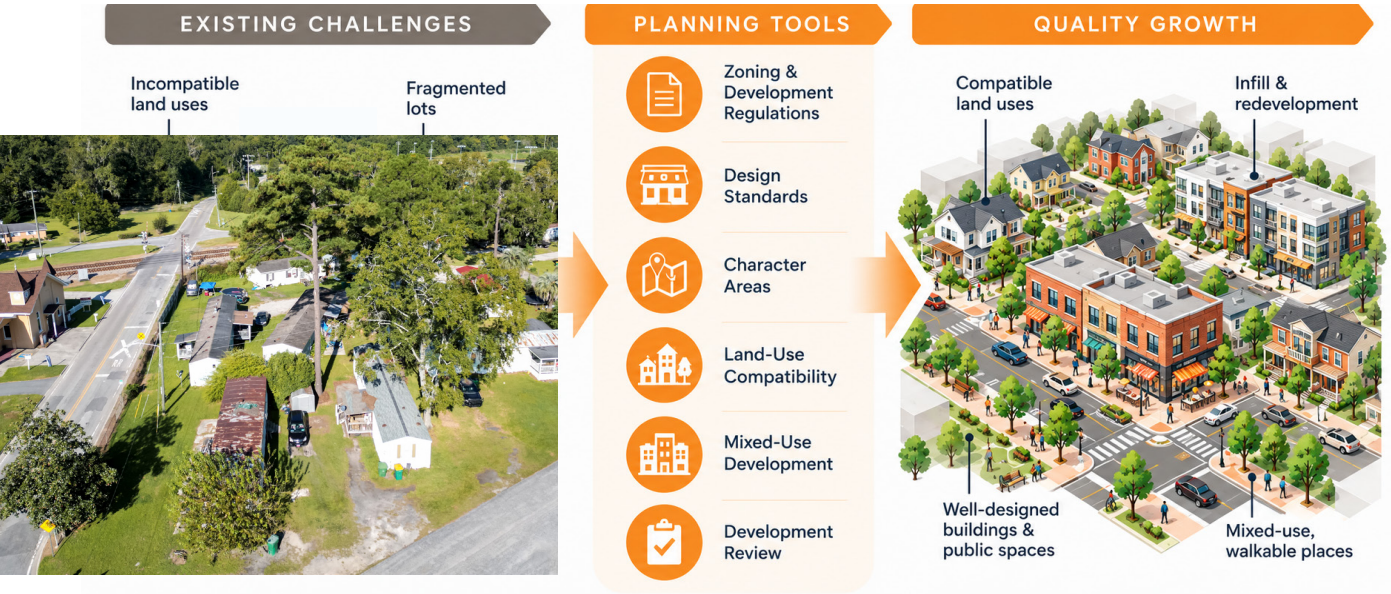
The 2020 Comprehensive Plan called for updated development regulations and stronger design guidance. Since then, Garden City has continued to confront redevelopment pressures, land-use transitions, mixed-use opportunities, and compatibility issues between residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

What It Addresses

Zoning, development regulations, design standards, Character Areas, land-use compatibility, mixed-use development, redevelopment, and development review.

Strategies for Achievement

- Continue modernization of zoning and development regulations.
- Align development standards with the Character Area framework and future land-use direction.
- Establish clear design expectations for commercial, residential, mixed-use, and redevelopment areas.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment in locations where infrastructure and service capacity can support growth.



Goal #4: Balancing Industry and Community

Support Garden City’s role as an industrial and logistics center while protecting neighborhoods from incompatible land uses, freight impacts, and transportation conflicts

Why It Matters

Protecting neighborhoods from industrial impacts was one of the clearest priorities in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. That issue remains central as Port-related logistics, warehousing, truck traffic, rail crossings, and industrial development continue to influence Garden City’s transportation system and neighborhood conditions.

What It Addresses

Industrial compatibility, Port-related activity, truck traffic, freight routing, rail crossings, neighborhood protection, transportation safety, and land-use transitions.

Strategies for Achievement

- Direct intensive industrial and logistics activity to locations suited to freight access and infrastructure capacity.
- Strengthen buffering and transition standards between industrial and residential areas.
- Coordinate with regional transportation and freight partners on routing, mobility, and infrastructure improvements.
- Improve local safety and reduce conflicts where freight movement intersects with neighborhoods and community travel.



Goal #5: Enhancing Community Life

Strengthen Garden City as a safe, welcoming, and family-oriented community through recreation, community amenities, cultural resources, civic identity, and opportunities for residents to connect.

Why It Matters

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan emphasized recreation and community identity. The current update broadens that direction to include community programming, local history, public gathering spaces, family-oriented amenities, and opportunities for stronger civic connection.

What It Addresses

Parks, recreation, community programming, cultural resources, local identity, public gathering spaces, family-oriented amenities, and civic participation.

Strategies for Achievement

- Improve and expand parks, trails, recreation facilities, and community gathering spaces.
- Support programming for youth, families, seniors, and other community groups.
- Incorporate arts, history, and local identity into placemaking and community development.
- Strengthen partnerships with schools, civic organizations, and community groups.



Goal #6: Building Resilience

Improve Garden City’s long-term resilience through stronger infrastructure, stormwater management, environmental protection, hazard preparedness, and coordinated emergency response.

What It Addresses

Stormwater, drainage, flooding, infrastructure capacity, hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness, environmental protection, and critical services.

Why It Matters

Resilience has taken on greater importance as Garden City addresses flooding, stormwater, aging infrastructure, emergency preparedness, environmental conditions, and the need to maintain critical services during disruptive events. The staff update also identifies these issues as increasingly important to long-term community stability.

Strategies for Achievement

- Prioritize drainage, stormwater, and infrastructure improvements in areas with recurring needs.
- Integrate flood risk and resilience into land-use and development decisions.
- Coordinate emergency preparedness and hazard mitigation with county and regional partners.
- Use green infrastructure, tree canopy, and natural systems where appropriate to support environmental resilience.



Goal #7: Strengthening Connections

Improve physical, digital, and civic connections by expanding technology access, strengthening partnerships, and improving communication among residents, businesses, institutions, and public agencies.

What It Addresses

Broadband, technology, public communication, civic engagement, intergovernmental coordination, institutional partnerships, and collaborative implementation.

Why It Matters

Broadband access, technology, civic engagement, and formalized partnerships represent newer priorities within Garden City’s planning framework. These tools can strengthen communication, improve access to services, support public safety, and expand the City’s capacity to implement projects through partnerships.

Strategies for Achievement

- Support reliable and affordable broadband access throughout the community.
- Use technology to improve communication, service delivery, and public engagement.
- Strengthen coordination with regional agencies, employers, schools, nonprofits, and service providers.
- Expand opportunities for residents and stakeholders to participate in planning and implementation.



From Goals to Implementation

These seven goals establish the policy direction for the Garden City 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Character Areas, land-use guidance, supporting plan elements, and Community Work Program translate this direction into place-based policies, partnerships, investments, and implementation actions.

Report of Accomplishments

The Report of Accomplishments evaluates the actions identified in the Garden City 2040 Comprehensive Plan Work Program and documents progress made during the previous planning period. Each action has been assigned a status of Completed, Underway, Postponed, or Not Accomplished, consistent with Georgia Department of Community Affairs requirements.

The Next Step column identifies how each activity will be treated moving forward. Some completed actions have become part of routine City operations or ongoing partnerships, while others are being closed out, modified, or considered for incorporation into the 2027–2031 Community Work Program. This approach allows Garden City to recognize work already completed while focusing the next work program on specific, achievable priorities.

Transportation

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
T.1	Implement a Road Asset Management and Maintenance System	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal pavement maintenance and capital programming.
T.2	Implement Impact Fees for Infrastructure Installation	Not Accomplished	No Carry Forward. The activity did not receive sufficient support to advance.
T.3	Apply for Funding for Streetscape Projects Along Major Roadways	Completed	Close Out. Funding was pursued. Future streetscape improvements should be addressed through specific corridor or capital projects.
T.4	Set Council Priorities for Local Transportation Investment and Public Transportation	Completed	Routine Coordination. Continue transportation and transit coordination through normal City and regional planning activities.
T.5	Improve or Install Sidewalk Connections Along Major Corridors	Underway	Modified for Carry Forward. Continue through specific pedestrian and corridor improvement projects.
T.6	Establish a Communitywide Pedestrian Network	Underway	Modified for Carry Forward. Remaining connectivity needs should be addressed through targeted pedestrian projects.
T.7	Work with CAT to Expand Services to Targeted Areas	Completed	Routine Coordination. Garden City worked with CAT to pursue expanded service. Continue coordination as appropriate.

Economic Development

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
E.1	Expand Relationships with the CVB to Promote Garden City	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal pavement maintenance and capital programming.
E.2	Adopt Incentives for Desirable Redevelopment and Infill Projects	Underway	No Carry Forward. The activity did not receive sufficient support to advance.
E.3	Complete an Economic Development Plan and Targeted Marketing Strategy	Completed	Close Out. Funding was pursued. Future streetscape improvements should be addressed through specific corridor or capital projects.

Land Use

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
LU.1	Adopt Design Guidelines for Commercial and Industrial Areas	Underway	Modified — No Direct Carry Forward. Future design or code updates should be targeted, practical, and readily administered without creating wide-spread nonconformities.
LU.2	Pursue Funding to Extend Water to Highway 17	Completed	Close Out. Funding was pursued. Future construction needs should be addressed through specific infrastructure projects.
LU.3	Identify Areas of Blight and Determine Activities and Funding to Address Blight	Completed	Close Out. Priority areas and redevelopment strategies were identified through the Urban Redevelopment Plan.
LU.4	Demolish Abandoned Structures	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal code enforcement and property maintenance activities.
LU.5	Review and Implement Safe Growth Audit Recommendations	Underway	Modified — No Carry Forward. The review was completed; remaining issues can be addressed through updated land use, development, and resilience policies.
LU.6	Develop an Airport Land Use Coordination Strategy	Underway	Carry Forward in Modified Form. Continue coordination on compatible development with Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport.
LU.7	Implement Activities Proposed in the Urban Redevelopment Plan	Underway	Modified for Carry Forward. Continue through specific redevelopment actions rather than carrying forward the broad implementation statement.
LU.8	Develop Overlay Districts and Design Guidelines for Commercial Target Areas	Underway	Modified for Carry Forward. Address remaining needs through targeted zoning and development regulation updates.

Housing

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
H.1	Complete a Housing Study to Identify Needed Affordable Housing Types	Not Accomplished	Carry Forward. Prepare a more focused housing assessment addressing current housing needs, conditions, affordability, and housing choice.
H.2	Review Codes Related to Vacant Structures	Completed	Routine Code Administration. Continue through normal enforcement and code maintenance activities.
H.3	Implement Mechanisms to Rehabilitate Older Homes	Completed	Routine Program and Partnership. Continue housing rehabilitation through existing programs and partnerships.
H.4	Expand Senior Housing and Affordable Housing	Completed	Close Out. Future housing actions should address current needs through more specific strategies.
H.5	Participate in the Chatham County/Savannah Land Bank Authority	Completed	Routine Partnership. Continue participation as appropriate.

Natural Resources

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
NR.1	Evaluate Water Quality BMPs Around Salt Creek and Pipe-makers Canal	Completed	Close Out. Future water quality measures can continue through stormwater planning and implementation.
NR.2	Improve Greenspace, Parks, and Public Facilities	Completed	Close Out. Future improvements should be addressed through specific capital and recreation projects.
NR.3	Perform a Tree Inventory in Public Rights of Way and City Parks	Not Accomplished	No Carry Forward. Funding was not available during the planning period.
NR.4	Update Stormwater Ordinances and Design Standards	Completed	Modified and Completed. Policies and BMPs were updated. No direct carry forward is needed.

Quality of Life and Historic Preservation

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
Q.1	Complete a Historic Resources Survey	Not Accomplished	No Carry Forward. Funding was not available during the planning period.
Q.2	Create a Historic Preservation Commission	Completed	Close Out. A Historic Preservation Commission exists.
Q.3	Create a Local Historic Preservation Ordinance	Completed	Close Out. A historic preservation ordinance is in place, although it is not structured at the neighborhood level.
Q.4	Apply for and Achieve Certified Local Government Status	Completed	Close Out. Garden City has maintained Certified Local Government status since 1996.
Q.5	Apply for Grants for Remaining Areas Not Previously Surveyed	Underway	Carry Forward if Needed. Continue grant pursuit where additional survey work remains appropriate.
Q.6	Create a Plan to Market the City's Historic Resources	Completed	Implementation Pending. The plan was created. Any future implementation should be treated as a new action rather than continuation of the original planning task.

General Government

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
GG.1	Expand and Improve Communication with Residents	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue town halls, public meetings, and other outreach activities.
GG.3	Improve Existing Broadband Service for Residents and Businesses	Completed	Routine Operations and Coordination. Continue addressing technology needs as appropriate.
GG.4	Plan and Implement Solar Powered Lighting Opportunities for Main Roadways	Completed	Close Out.
Q.5	Apply for Grants for Remaining Areas Not Previously Surveyed	Underway	Carry Forward if Needed. Continue grant pursuit where additional survey work remains appropriate.
Q.6	Create a Plan to Market the City's Historic Resources	Completed	Implementation Pending. The plan was created. Any future implementation should be treated as a new action rather than continuation of the original planning task.
GG.5	Install Additional Street Lighting Throughout the City	Completed	Routine Capital Improvements. Address future needs through normal capital programming.
GG.6	Update the Noise Ordinance	Completed	Routine Code Administration. The ordinance was updated in May 2024 to address amplified noise from open air vehicles and events.
GG.7	Complete a Staff Compensation Evaluation Every Three Years	Completed	Routine Administration. Continue as a recurring internal management function.
GG.8	Complete a Residential Customer Service Survey	Completed	Routine Operations. The survey is now incorporated as an ongoing City activity.
GG.9	Review and Implement Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Recommendations	Underway	Modified - No Carry Forward. Selected recommendations were implemented through intentional replacement of City vehicles with electric vehicles. Future fleet and environmental decisions can continue through normal capital planning.

Public Safety

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
PS.1	Increase Neighborhood Police Patrols	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal Police Department operations.
PS.2	Increase Police Traffic Enforcement	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal Police Department operations.
PS.3	Apply for Grants to Install Police Surveillance Cameras	Completed	Close Out.
PS.4	Install Police School Zone Cameras	Completed	Routine Public Safety Operations.
PS.5	Update and Enhance Public Safety Staff Recruitment	Completed	Routine Operations. Recruitment is now an ongoing departmental function.
PS.6	Implement Citizen Engagement and Public Safety Outreach Programs	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through community policing and outreach.
PS.7	Update and Enhance Police Crime Prevention Programs	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal Police Department programming.

Public Works

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
PW.1	Develop a Plan to Improve Ditch and Right of Way Maintenance	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal Public Works activities.
PW.2	Conduct a Utility Rate Study	Completed	Routine Utility Administration.
PW.3	Complete Citywide Water and Wastewater System Modeling	Completed	Close Out. Future improvements should be guided by current utility planning and capital needs.
PW.4	Improve the Water System Based on Completed Studies	Completed	Routine Capital Programming. Address future improvements through specific utility projects.
PW.5	Purchase a New Street Sweeper	Completed	Close Out.
PW.6	Complete an Update to the Stormwater Drainage Basin Master Plan	Completed	Close Out.
PW.7	Review Data and Models to Determine Sea Level Rise Impacts	Completed	Close Out. Future resilience needs should be addressed through new targeted actions as appropriate.
PW.8	Develop a Citywide Pavement Management System	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through normal pavement maintenance and capital programming.
PW.9	Continue Water and Wastewater Expansion South of I-16	Completed	Close Out. Future utility improvements should be addressed through specific infrastructure projects as needed.

Recreation

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
REC.1	Update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan	Underway	Carry Forward in Modified Form. Complete the plan update and use it to guide future facilities, programming, and investment.
REC.2	Expand and Improve Recreation Facilities in Neighborhoods	Completed	Close Out. Future needs should be addressed through specific recreation or capital projects.
REC.3	Construct a New Recreation Complex	Completed	Close Out.
REC.4	Increase Recreation Staffing	Completed	Routine Operations. Future staffing needs should be addressed through normal budgeting and personnel processes.
REC.5	Implement After School Programs	Completed	Routine Operations. Continue through regular recreation programming.
REC.6	Identify Property for Acquisition as Community and Pocket Parks	Completed	Close Out. The property identification activity was completed.
REC.7	Implement Senior Citizen Pick-up and Drop Off Service	Completed	Routine Partnership. Service is provided through coordination with the County shuttle program.
REC.8	Construct Additional Parking at Bazemore Park	Not Accomplished	No Carry Forward. Funding limitations prevented implementation.
REC.9	Rehabilitate the Garden City Gym and Stadium	Not Accomplished	Modified — No Carry Forward. A new recreation facility was constructed, changing the original need. Future efforts will focus on maintenance and upkeep of existing facilities.

Ongoing Activities

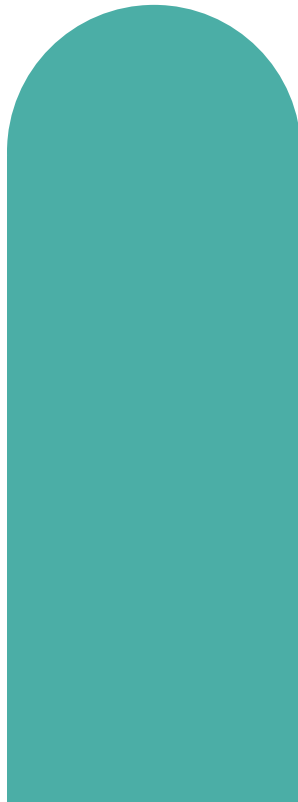
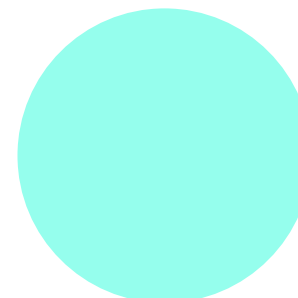
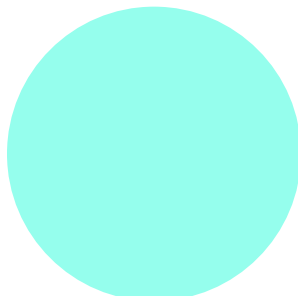
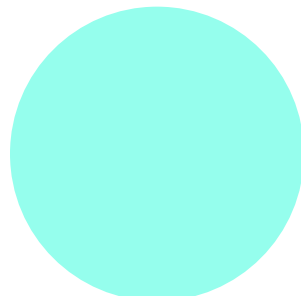
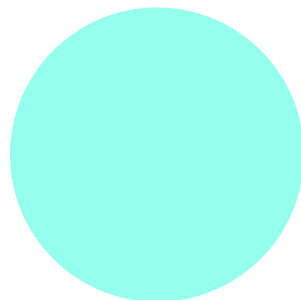
The 2040 Comprehensive Plan included a separate set of activities identified as ongoing responsibilities rather than time limited projects. They are included in this Report of Accomplishments to account for the full 2040 Work Program and document how those

responsibilities have been addressed during the planning period. Most have now been incorporated into normal City operations, departmental programs, regulatory responsibilities, or established partnerships and therefore do not need to be carried forward as separate actions in the 2027–2031 Community Work Program.

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
OG.1	Deter Development Within Regulated High Risk Flood Zones	Completed	Incorporated into ongoing floodplain administration and land use regulation.
OG.2	Improve Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Around Arterials and State Routes	Completed	Continue through specific transportation and capital improvement projects as needs arise.
OG.3	Implement the City's Comprehensive Capital Improvement Program	Completed	Incorporated into the City's annual budgeting and capital planning process.
OG.4	Coordinate with the Housing Team to Restore and Rehabilitate Neighborhoods	Completed	Continue through established housing and redevelopment partnerships.
OG.5	Educate Residents About Regulated and High Risk Flood Areas	Completed	Incorporated into floodplain and emergency preparedness outreach.
OG.6	Participate in Disaster Preparedness Exercises with CEMA and Neighboring Jurisdictions	Completed	Continue through established emergency management coordination.
OG.7	Improve Fire Service to Maintain or Improve the ISO Rating	Completed	Incorporated into ongoing Fire Department operations.
OG.8	Maintain the MS4 in Accordance with the Phase I NPDES Permit	Completed	Incorporated into ongoing Public Works and Stormwater regulatory responsibilities.

04

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Economic Development in the Regional Context

Purpose

The Economic Development Element provides a comprehensive overview of Garden City’s economic landscape, with particular attention to the infrastructure, labor force, and industry drivers that sustain the community over time. The purpose of this element is to offer a clear, fact-based resource for residents, businesses, and partner agencies, as well as a practical decision-making guide for elected officials and staff.

This element builds on the foundation established in the Plan 2040 while incorporating updated data, regional trends, and emerging economic drivers documented through the 2025–2026 period. It explains how Garden City’s economy is shaped by forces that extend beyond its municipal boundaries, and it identifies where local policy choices can influence outcomes, particularly in land use, workforce development, transportation, and redevelopment. In doing so, the Economic Development Element is intended to be both descriptive and strategic: it documents current conditions and also frames the key questions that Garden City must address as it plans for long-term economic resilience and inclusive growth.

Regional Role and Coordination

As a critical node within the Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Garden City serves a specialized role as the industrial and logistics hub for the Port of Savannah, concentrating port-adjacent freight activity, trucking operations, and warehouse capacity in a compact geography. While Garden City is a distinct municipality with its own governance, zoning authority, and public service responsibilities, its economic health is heavily influenced by regional assets, most notably the Georgia Ports Authority’s Garden City Terminal and the interstate corridors of I-95 and I-16 that connect the port to inland markets. The City’s industrial districts, rail spurs, and highway interchanges are part of a larger network that moves goods between global origins and destinations and distributes them throughout the Southeast.

This regional interdependence means that Garden City’s economic development goals cannot be pursued in isolation. Freight flows, workforce commuting patterns, and investment decisions by major employers are shaped by regional housing markets, transportation investments, and education and training systems. In turn, the region depends on Garden City to maintain efficient port operations, provide well-located industrial land, and manage local impacts such as traffic, noise, and land use transitions near neighborhoods.

Consistent with the Plan 2040 methodology, this update uses an asset-based approach that starts with Garden City’s existing strengths and then considers how to address constraints and emerging risks. The framework identifies local resources that give the City its economic identity, particularly its strategic port adjacency, freight infrastructure, and established industrial base, and develops strategies that accentuate these strengths while mitigating environmental, infrastructure, housing provision and quality-of-life challenges.

The planning framework also reflects the structural shifts documented in the Savannah–Chatham County Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update, including the logistics boom of the early 2020s, the arrival of the Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant and its supplier network, and the resulting increase in demand for technical skills and industrial land. These regional forces have heightened pressure on housing and transportation systems and increased the stakes for decisions about where and how Garden City grows. Within this context, the Economic Development Element is organized to move from regional conditions to local implications.

Garden City depends on strong partnerships with Chatham County, neighboring cities, the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPO), the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA), the Georgia Ports Authority, and State agencies to align land use, infrastructure, and workforce strategies. This element recognizes those interdependencies and emphasizes coordination as a core principle of Garden City’s economic development approach.

Regional Economy : The Savannah MSA

Regional Economic Structure

Garden City sits at the center of an integrated regional economic system that has experienced significant growth and diversification since the initiation of Plan 2040. The Savannah MSA is characterized by a high concentration of transportation, warehousing, and logistics activities anchored by the Port of Savannah, complemented by a growing advanced manufacturing sector, a robust tourism and visitor economy, a large healthcare system, and a stable military and government presence. This diversified structure has helped the region maintain stability and provides a strong foundation for future growth. The Savannah Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), comprised of Chatham, Bryan, and Effingham counties, supported a population of approximately 431,589 residents in 2024, making it Georgia’s third-largest metropolitan area after Atlanta and Augusta.

The region has demonstrated sustained population growth of about 1.8% per year, driven by in-migration of working-age adults and families attracted by employment opportunities and quality of life. Regional employment reached 199,762 jobs in the second quarter of 2025, with expansion concentrated in trade, transportation, and utilities; accommodation and food services; healthcare and social assistance; and manufacturing. As of the second quarter of 2025, the Savannah MSA unemployment rate stood at approximately 3.1%, and the average weekly wage reached \$1,184, a 4.3% increase over the prior year, signaling a competitive labor market that is favorable for workers but challenging for some employers.

Employment by Industry			
Sector	Employment	Percent	Weekly Wage
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	48,410	24.2%	\$1,118
Accommodation & Food Services	28,201	14.1%	\$583
Health Care & Social Assistance	27,742	13.9%	\$1,253
Manufacturing	24,642	12.3%	\$1,803
Retail Trade	23,422	11.7%	\$794
Government	24,927	12.5%	\$1,291
Professional & Business Services	21,818	10.9%	\$1,063
Education & Training	3,987	2.0%	\$1,471
Construction	9,432	4.7%	\$1,403
Finance & Insurance	3,065	1.5%	\$1,926

Source: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile for Savannah MSA (December 2025)

Figure 4.1 -Employment by Industry

Garden City’s Competitive Regional Position

Within this regional economy, Garden City possesses several competitive advantages that position it well for continued investment and job creation. The City remains a Tier 1 community for State job tax credits under Georgia’s Military Zone designation, which allows eligible businesses to receive up to \$3,500 per job created. This incentive can be especially powerful for logistics, manufacturing, and technology employers that need to assemble large workforces and that benefit from being near the Port.

Garden City’s Military Zone status is complemented by its official recognition as a Broadband Ready community, signaling that the City has put streamlined processes and policies in place to make broadband investment easier, and is recognized by the State as being proactive on preparation for installation of digital infrastructure (see Quality of Life Element).

Garden City’s most significant structural advantage is its direct adjacency to the Garden City Terminal and its position at the convergence of Interstate 95, Interstate 16, and major rail corridors operated by CSX and Norfolk Southern. This combination of deep-water port access, on-dock rail capacity, and interstate connectivity gives businesses in Garden City an uncommon ability to move goods efficiently across domestic and international markets.



At the regional scale, Chatham County functions as the primary employment engine, with roughly 170,424 jobs across approximately 11,012 establishments as of first quarter 2025 (Bureau of Labor Statistics QCEW). This place-of-work total significantly exceeds the number of employed residents in the county, confirming its role as a job center that imports workers daily from neighboring areas. Garden City is one of the high-intensity nodes within this network, with employment density far out of proportion to its small residential population, particularly in industrial and port-adjacent areas in the eastern portion of the City.

The City’s competitive position therefore depends not only on maintaining a business-friendly regulatory environment but also on ensuring that industrial and logistics expansion is balanced with neighborhood protection, environmental stewardship, and support for local-serving commercial development, including expanding opportunities for workforce housing in strategic mixed-use redevelopment, creative residential product infill and rezoning of remaining residentially zoned lands, primarily in the R-A districts, to higher-intensity product types. The City should explore incentives and assistance measures to facilitate the provision of workforce and middle-income housing to retain workers and reduce outflow to adjacent jurisdictions.

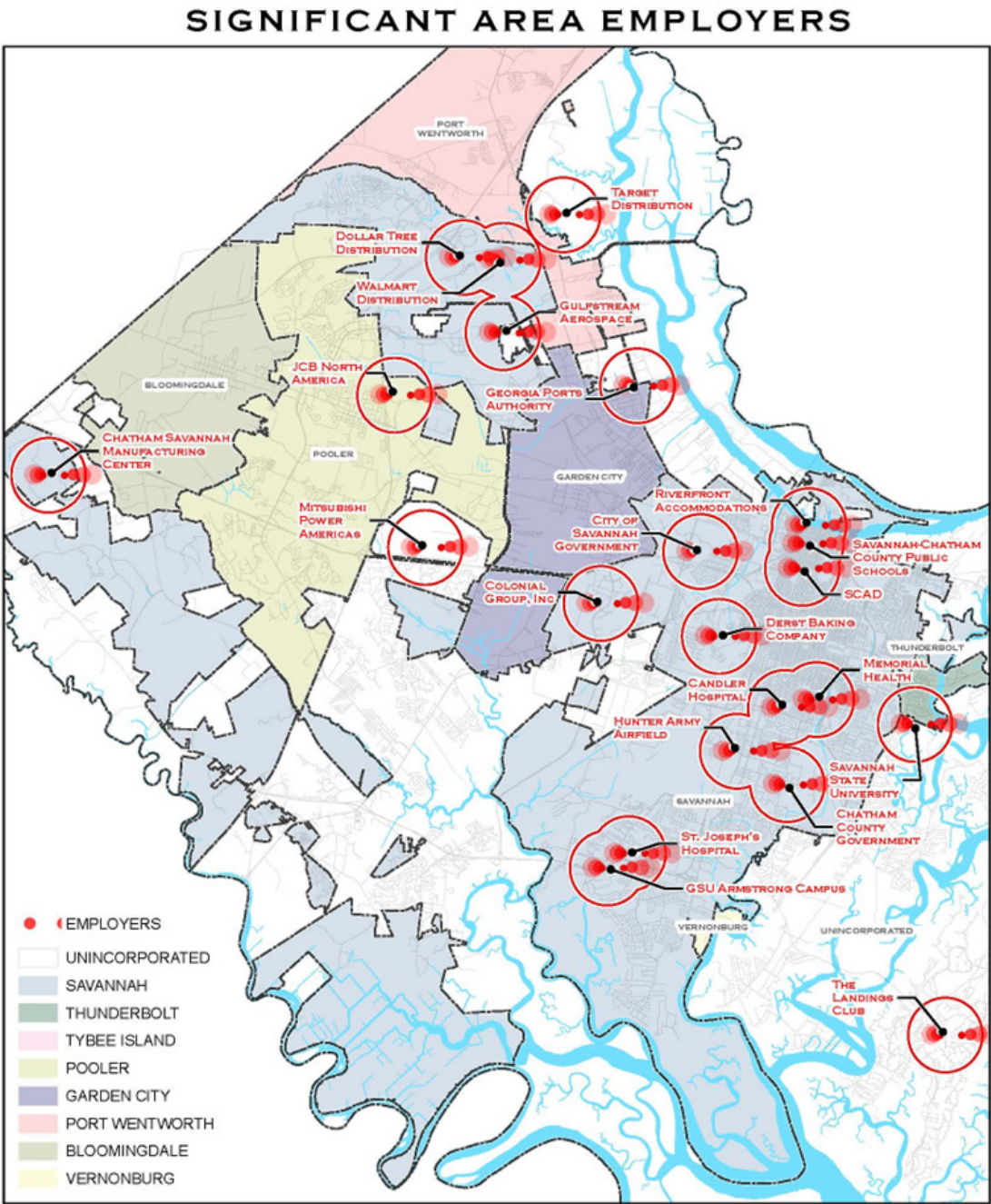


Exhibit 4.1 -Significant Area Employers

Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery

The Savannah MSA has demonstrated strong economic resilience in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, regional unemployment briefly spiked above 6%, and total employment declined by roughly 4.2% as lockdowns and public health measures curtailed travel, disrupted supply chains, and slowed consumer spending. However, the region’s diversified economic base helped moderate the severity and duration of the downturn. By 2021 and 2022, employment rebounded by approximately 5.8%, driven by the reopening of businesses, rapid growth in e-commerce logistics, and a resurgence in tourism.

Between 2023 and 2025, the region entered a phase of sustained expansion, with unemployment normalizing in the 3% range and total employment surpassing pre-pandemic levels by an estimated 8%. The hospitality sector, initially the hardest hit, achieved full recovery by late 2022 and has since exceeded previous visitor totals.

At the same time, manufacturing remained comparatively stable, and healthcare continued to expand in response to demographic change. The logistics sector experienced accelerated growth as companies reconfigured supply chains and increased inventory levels, while government and military employment provided a stabilizing backbone for incomes and local spending.

For Garden City, regional trends translate into a labor market where demand for skilled workers in transportation, warehousing, and manufacturing remains consistently high, and employers face ongoing competition for talent. The City’s industrial base benefits from the logistics boom and the acceleration of e-commerce, but also faces new pressures related to warehouse vacancy and tenant leverage as the market adjusts from earlier rapid build-out. In this environment, long-term economic resilience for Garden City will depend on maintaining efficient freight operations, diversifying beyond bulk warehouse development, and ensuring that residents can access education and training pathways that position them for the higher-skill roles emerging in advanced logistics, manufacturing, and healthcare.

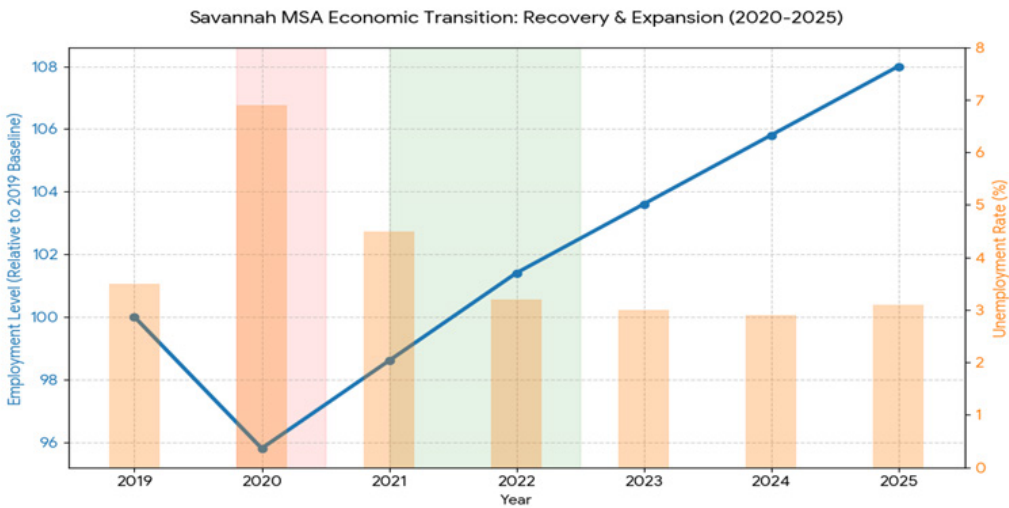


Figure 4.2 -Regional Employment and Unemployment Trends, 2019–2025

Commuting Patterns and Labor Inflow/Outflow

Garden City’s commuting patterns highlight its role as both a regional employment hub and a small bedroom community tied into wider labor markets. The City is a net importer of labor, in which more people commute into the City for work than commute out to jobs elsewhere.

According to OnTheMap and Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD) data, nearly 96% of workers employed within Garden City live outside the City limits, travelling along Highway 21, Highway 80, and key interstate corridors to reach the Garden City Terminal, nearby logistics parks, and industrial facilities.

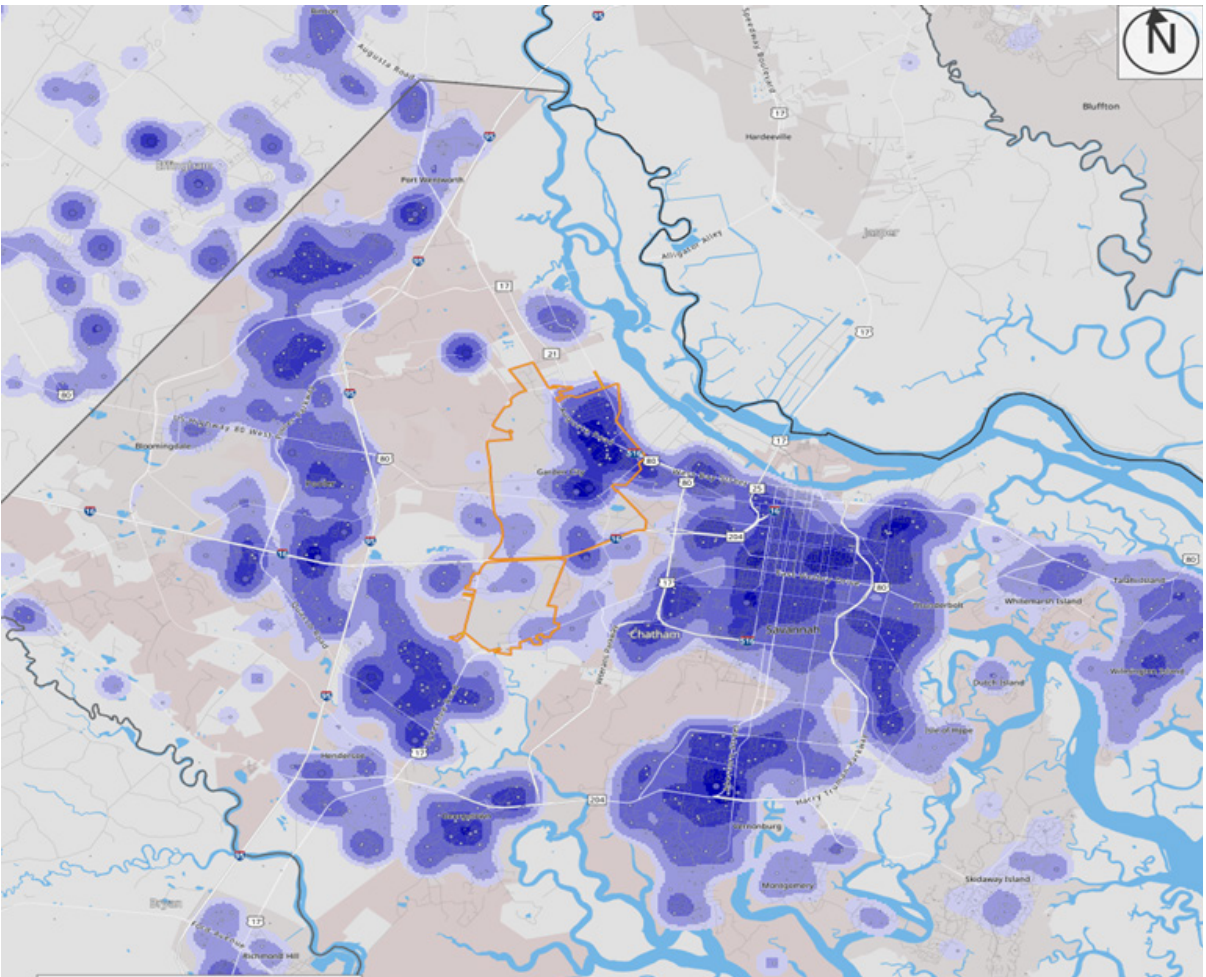


Exhibit 4.2 -In-Bound Workforce to Garden City

Conversely, approximately 93% of Garden City’s working residents commute to jobs outside the City, primarily in Savannah, Pooler, other parts of Chatham County, and increasingly in the Bryan County manufacturing corridor anchored by the Hyundai Metaplant. Average commute times for Garden City residents generally fall between 18 and 20 minutes one way, a reasonable distance that nevertheless reflects the necessity of cross-jurisdictional travel to access employment.

This high volume of in-and-out commuter traffic contributes to notable peak-hour congestion on local and regional routes and places additional wear on Garden City’s roadway network. However, while the City hosts a large employment base and absorbs the impacts of freight and commuter traffic, a substantial portion of the wage income and retail spending occurs in other jurisdictions where workers live.

Capturing even a modest share of the in-commuter workforce as residents, through expanded housing options, improved neighborhood amenities, and enhanced quality of life, would increase local consumer spending, strengthen the City’s tax base, and reduce regional vehicle miles traveled. From a planning perspective, these commuting patterns emphasize the need for Garden City to coordinate land use, transportation, and housing policies with regional partners. They also argue for economic development strategies that seek not just to create jobs, but to align local education and training with the higher-skill positions in logistics, manufacturing, and services that are already present in the City. By doing so, Garden City can improve economic outcomes for its current and future residents while maintaining the efficient operations that make it a vital node in the Savannah region’s economy.

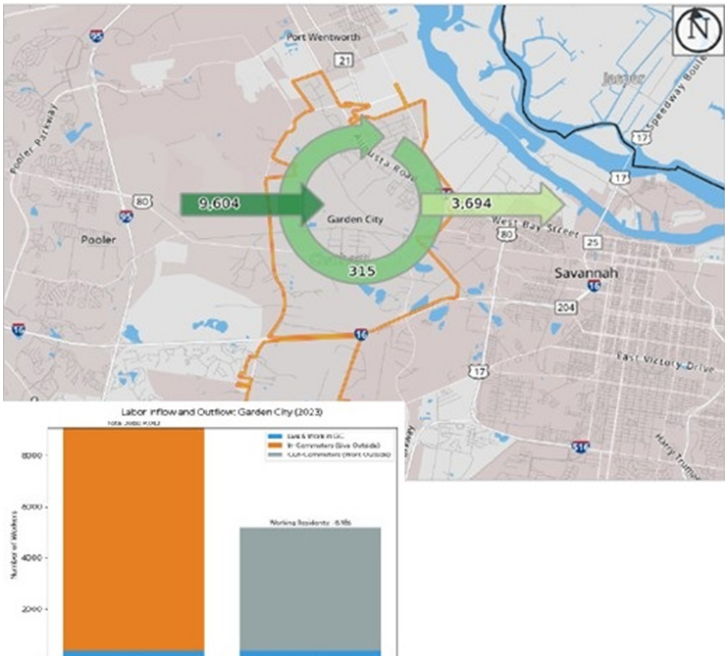


Exhibit 4.3 - Worker In and Out Flows (To/From Garden City)

Labor Force Characteristics

Garden City’s labor force reflects its dual identity as a small residential community and a major industrial employment center.

Key Socio-Economic Characteristics			
Key Characteristic	Garden City (Local)	Chatham County (Regional)	% / Comparison to County
Population	10,375	298,143	3.5%
Households	3,350	109,868	3.1%
Total Employment	9,082	169,483	5.4%
Average Weekly Wage	\$1,023	\$1,099	93.1%
Unemployment Rate	5.5%	7.4%	
Drove Alone to Work	76.0%	76.8%	
Carpooled to Work	19.2%	9.6%	Twice as likely to carpool to work
Mean Travel Time (Min)	19.7	22.4	
Median Household Income	\$42,013	\$57,739	72.8% of County
Per Capita Income	\$22,713	\$33,106	68.6% of County
Uninsured Rate	29.5%	14.0%	More than twice as likely to be uninsured
Poverty Rate (All People)	17.6%	14.4%	More likely for income below poverty level
Sources: Georgia Department of Labor, Area Labor Profile for Savannah MSA (December 2025); U.S. Census Bureau, ACS DP03, DP05 2019–2023 5-Year Estimates; BLS QCEW 2023 US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application 2023 LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics			

Figure 4.3 – Key Socio-Economic Characteristics Chatham County & Garden City

Labor Force and Unemployment

Historically, Garden City’s unemployment rate has tended to track just above the regional average due to its concentration in trade-sensitive industries; as global trade volumes and regional logistics demand have normalized following the pandemic, this gap has narrowed. Even with current low unemployment, the structure of Garden City’s labor market presents important considerations for policy.

Many jobs located in the City are filled by non-residents who commute from surrounding jurisdictions, while a majority of working residents travel to jobs outside the City limits. The challenge for Garden City is not simply creating jobs but improving the match between local residents and higher-quality positions. Achieving this alignment will require investments in education, technical training, and supportive services, coordinated land use and housing policies allowing more workers to live closer to their jobs.

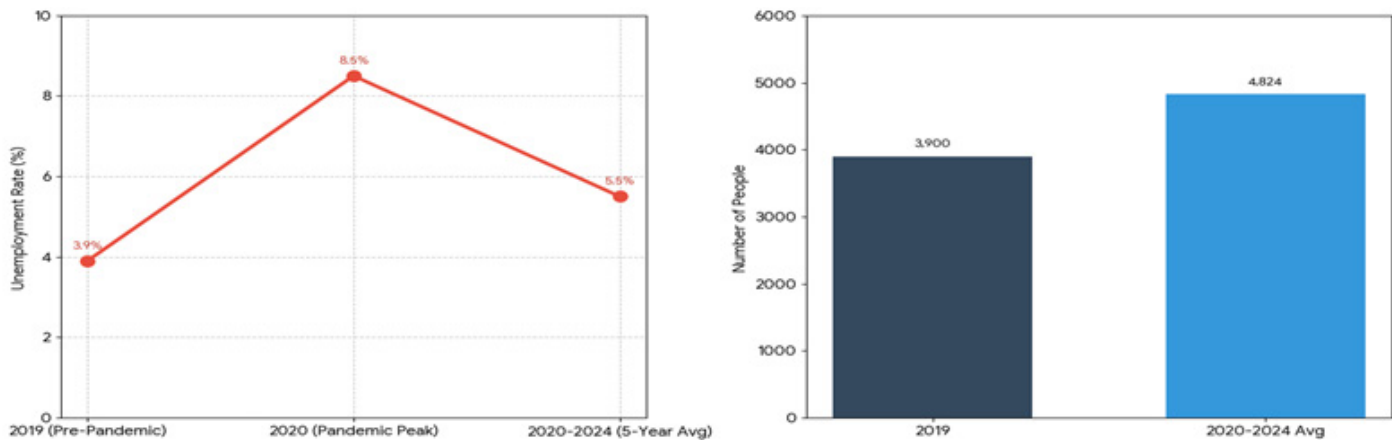


Figure 4.4 -Garden City Unemployment Rate Trend and Growth in Labor Force

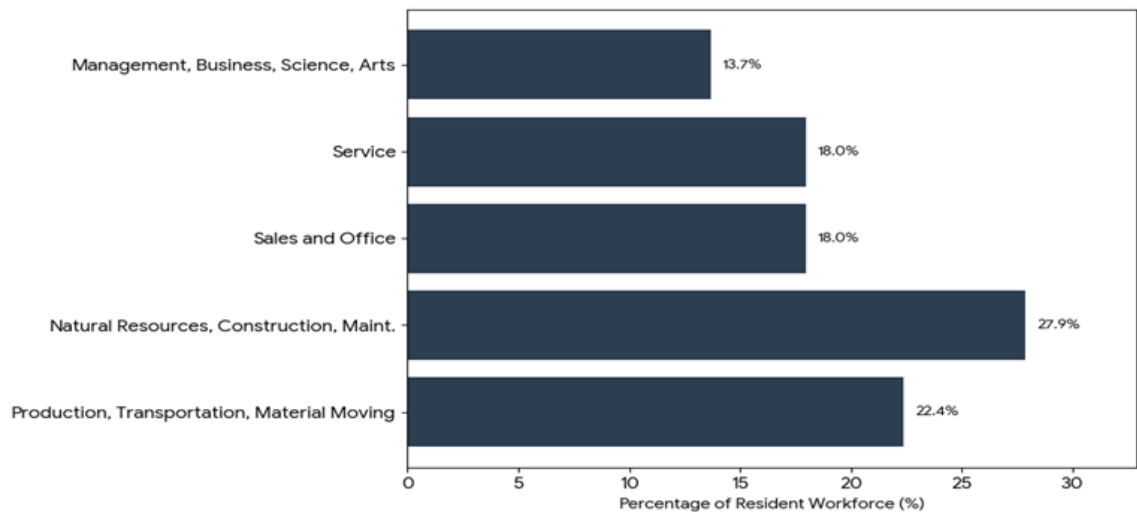


Figure 4.5 – Occupational Breakdown of Garden City Residents

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a key determinant of Garden City’s ability to attract and retain higher-value industries and to ensure that residents can access the full spectrum of regional employment opportunities. The City has made steady progress in high school completion, reflecting improvements in the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) and heightened regional focus on graduation outcomes. However, there remains a notable gap between Garden City and the broader County and MSA in terms of post-secondary credential attainment, particularly at the bachelor’s level. Approximately 85.0% of Garden City residents aged 25 and older have a high school diploma or GED equivalent, a rate that signals strong participation in basic education but also leaves a remaining share of adults without a secondary credential. By comparison, roughly 91.2% of adults in Chatham County hold at least a high school diploma.

At the post-secondary level, an estimated 16.1% of Garden City residents aged 25 and older hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, a figure substantially lower than the approximately 36.8% county-wide and regional share. This pattern suggests that Garden City’s workforce is more heavily represented in occupations that rely on technical training, certifications, and on-the-job experience, rather than four-year degrees, aligning with the City’s industrial profile. Regionally, four-year institutions, including Savannah State University, Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus, and SCAD, collectively support roughly 78,000 student enrollments annually and provide a steady pipeline of graduates in fields such as engineering, health professions, business, and the arts. While these institutions are not located within Garden City’s boundaries, their graduates contribute to the broader talent pool available to employers in the City and offer advancement pathways for residents who choose to pursue bachelor’s or graduate degrees. For many Garden City residents, however, cost, time, and transportation constraints make two-year programs and technical certifications a more accessible initial route into higher-skill jobs.

Educational Attainment		
Educational Attainment	Chatham County	Garden City
Population 25 years and over	%	%
Less than 9th grade	2.9%	5.4%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	5.8%	9.6%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	24.6%	38.1%
Some college, no degree	22.4%	25.4%
Associate's degree	7.4%	5.4%
Bachelor's degree	22.0%	11.4%
Graduate or professional degree	14.7%	4.7%
High school graduate or higher	91.2%	85.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	36.8%	16.1%

Source: ACS 2023 5-Year Estimates (S1501)

Figure 4. 6 - Educational Attainment

Economic Base and Industry Drivers

Major Employment Sectors Savannah MSA		
Major Employment Sector (% of MSA Employment)	Major Employers Chatham County Exclusively	Description of Activity
Logistics, Warehousing, Retail Trade, Transportation & Utilities 24.2%	Georgia Ports Authority	Seaport terminal operations; largest single-terminal container facility in North America.
	Target Distribution Center	Import warehousing and regional retail distribution.
	Walmart Distribution Center	Regional distribution hub for retail goods.
	Colonial Group, Inc.	Diversified energy, chemicals, and logistics; headquarters operations.
	Dollar Tree Distribution	Large-scale retail distribution logistics.
Education & Health Services Medicine, Higher Ed 13.9%	Memorial Health (HCA)	Region's largest private employer; Level 1 Trauma Center & Teaching Hospital.
	St. Joseph's / Candler	Health system specializing in cardiac, cancer, and outpatient services.
	Savannah-Chatham Co. Public Schools	Public K-12 education system (Largest county-wide employer).
	Savannah College of Art & Design	Private university for creative careers; major real estate holder.
Leisure & Hospitality Tourism, Dining, Accommodations 14.1%	The Landings Club	Private luxury golf and country club community operations.
	Various Hotel Groups	(Marriott, Westin, etc.) Supporting 17.3+ million visitors annually.
Manufacturing Aerospace, Industrial 12.3%	Gulfstream Aerospace	Jet aircraft manufacturing, R&D, and maintenance (Largest mfg. employer).
	JCB North America	Manufacture of construction and agricultural heavy equipment (HQ).
	International Paper	Paper products, linerboard, and pulp production.
	Mitsubishi Power Americas	Manufacture of gas turbines and power generation equipment.
	Derst Baking Company	Large-scale commercial bakery (Nature's Own, Sunbeam).
Government Federal, Local, Defense 12.5%	Hunter Army Airfield	Military airfield, training, and logistics support (Part of Ft. Stewart complex).
	City of Savannah	Municipal services, police, fire, water, and administration.
	Chatham County Government	County administration, sheriff, courts, and engineering.
Source: Georgia DOL Area Labor Profile MSA, Parker College of Business, Georgia Southern, Savannah Chamber of Commerce		

Figure 4.7 – Major Employment Sectors

Regional Top Ten Employers		
Rank	Employer	Estimate of Employees *
1	Gulfstream Aerospace Corp.	13,144
2	Savannah-Chatham County Public School System	5,882
3	St. Joseph's/Candler Health System	5,553
4	Memorial University Medical Center (HCA)	4,400
5	Walmart (Retail)	2,750–5,000
6	Chatham County Government	2,403
7	Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD)	2,320
8	City of Savannah Government	2,310
9	Georgia Ports Authority	1,790
10	SNF Chemicals (Located in Liberty Co., but a regional major employer)	1,766
*2025 Data/2026 Report Source: Parker College of Business, Georgia Southern, via Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce		

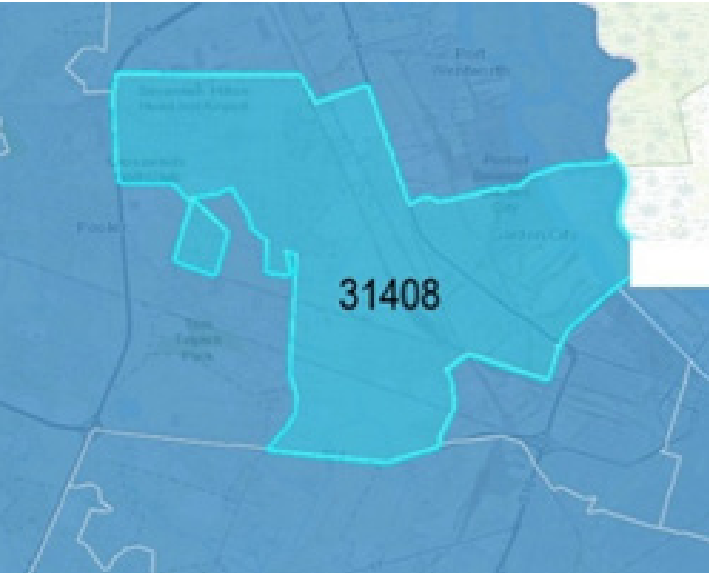
Figure 4.8 – Regional Top 10 Employers

The Regional Port and Logistics Cluster

The Georgia Ports Authority’s Garden City Terminal’s scale and efficiency shapes both Garden City’s tax base and day-to-day conditions on the ground, supporting jobs directly at the terminal and indirectly through trucking, freight forwarding, customs brokerage, equipment maintenance, container storage, and an array of logistics and support services.

Location quotient analysis confirms that Garden City’s economic structure is far more heavily concentrated in logistics than the Savannah MSA as a whole, with ZIP code 31408 showing logistics and freight-related employment densities well above national averages. Industrial land in the City has been steadily absorbed by large-scale distribution centers, cross-dock facilities, container yards, and truck terminals, creating a land use pattern dominated by port-supporting functions. This specialization has historically provided a stable and growing tax base and consistent job creation, but also makes Garden City more sensitive to fluctuations in global trade volumes, shipping patterns, and national trade policy than more diversified communities, as well as land use inconsistencies and quality of life impacts.

The Port of Savannah’s capital investments reinforce the long-term importance of Garden City’s logistics cluster. Deepening of the Savannah Harbor to 54 feet at high tide allows larger Neo-Panamax vessels to call more frequently, while the Mason Mega Rail Terminal provides unmatched on-dock rail capacity, connecting Garden City directly to Atlanta, the Midwest, and other inland markets. Additional capacity projects and inland port initiatives, such as the Blue Ridge Connector near Gainesville, extend the port’s reach and are expected to generate additional container volumes that move through Garden City. These projects collectively ensure that the City’s role in global supply chains will continue to be central to the region’s economy for decades, even as logistics operators adapt to changing technologies and market conditions.



Manufacturing and Emerging “Meta-Pro” Sector

Garden City is increasingly tied into a regional transition toward advanced manufacturing and clean energy. The Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant in neighboring Bryan County represents a multi-billion-dollar investment that has elevated manufacturing’s share of regional GDP and spurred the announcement of dozens of supplier facilities across the Savannah MSA. As production ramps up through the mid-2020s, this cluster is reshaping land demand, commuting patterns, and workforce needs throughout the region.

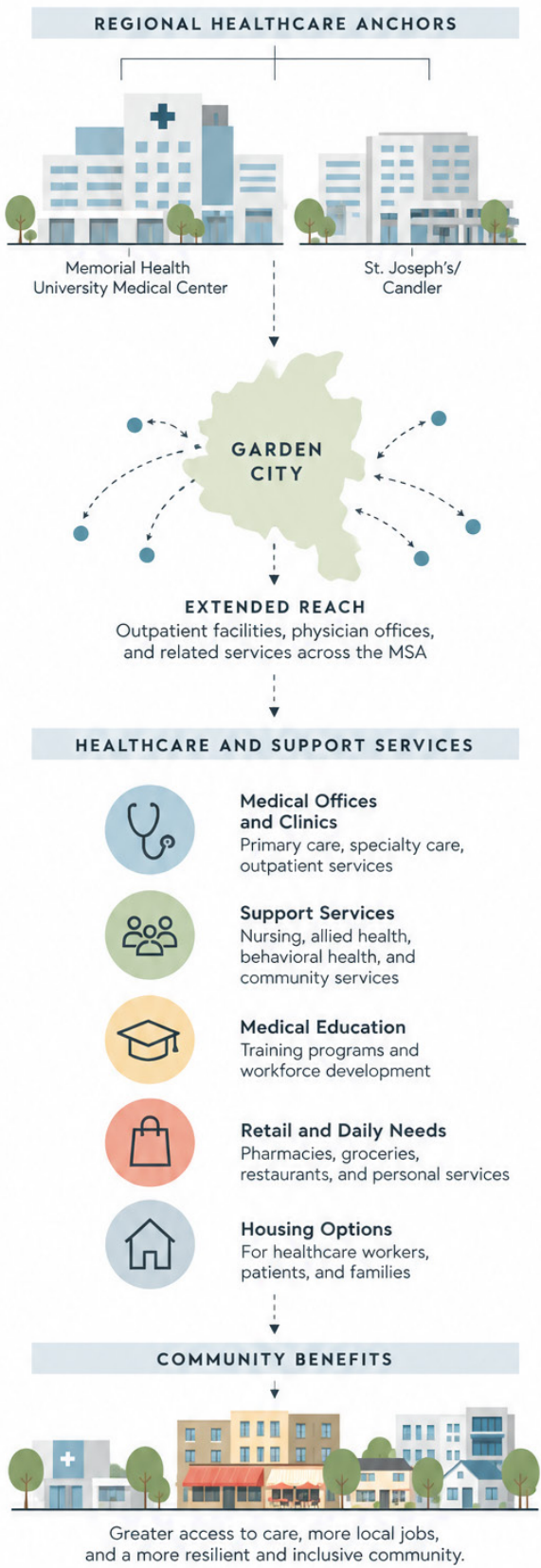
For Garden City, Hyundai’s impact is most immediately felt through supply-chain and logistics roles rather than direct production. Components, raw materials, and finished vehicles moving between the Metaplant, its suppliers, and global markets rely on the Port of Savannah and the trucking and warehousing infrastructure concentrated in Garden City. This positions the City as a key logistics and inventory management hub for the emerging electric vehicle ecosystem, with opportunities for local firms to provide higher-value services such as just-in-time delivery, specialized handling, and logistics technology solutions. As regional manufacturing now accounts for roughly 18–19% of economic output, Garden City has a strategic opportunity to evolve from a pure freight-handling center to a node where component assembly, light manufacturing, and advanced logistics co-locate.

This shift is creating demand for a “meta-pro” workforce: workers who combine technical skills in automation, quality control, and equipment maintenance with logistics and digital competencies. For Garden City residents, these roles offer higher wages and more stable career paths than many traditional warehouse positions. State and regional programs such as Savannah Technical College’s precision manufacturing and industrial systems technology programs, the Regional Industry Support Enterprise (RISE) initiative, and Georgia Quick Start provide structured pathways for upskilling existing logistics workers into advanced manufacturing and technical roles. Aligning local workforce strategies with these programs will be critical to capture a meaningful share of the new jobs associated with the Hyundai supply chain rather than serving solely as a pass-through for freight.

Healthcare and Institutional Drivers

Healthcare and social assistance constitute one of the Savannah MSA’s largest employment sectors, providing nearly 14% of total jobs and above-average wages relative to many service industries. Major institutions such as Memorial Health University Medical Center and St. Joseph’s/ Candler anchor this sector, offering a full range of acute care, specialty services, and medical education programs. While these flagship hospitals are located in Savannah, their reach extends across the MSA, including Garden City, through outpatient facilities, physician offices, and associated service providers.

For Garden City, healthcare functions both as an employer for residents and as an essential local service. Many residents work in regional hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities, accessing career ladders in nursing, allied health, and support roles. Locally, facilities such as the Good Samaritan Clinic provide primary care and preventive services to uninsured or under-insured residents, illustrating the importance of institutional partners in addressing health equity and workforce readiness. As the region’s population ages and healthcare demand grows, Garden City’s commercial corridors present opportunities for additional medical offices, outpatient clinics, and supportive services that can diversify the local economic base while improving access to care. character rather than replicating generic retail models.



Retail, Services, and Small Business

Garden City’s retail and service economy is concentrated along major transportation corridors, including Highway 21, Highway 80, and south-side arterial streets, that connect neighborhoods, industrial areas, and regional roadways. These corridors host a mix of small, locally owned businesses and regional chains providing convenience retail, restaurants, personal services, automotive services, and neighborhood-scale professional offices. For residents and workers, these businesses supply day-to-day goods and services and contribute to the City’s social and cultural fabric.

Despite this activity, recent trends show that Garden City continues to experience significant retail leakage to larger shopping and entertainment destinations in Pooler, west Chatham, and downtown Savannah, as well as to online commerce. While industrial demand has been largely self-sustaining, requiring relatively limited public incentive to attract large projects, larger commercial and mixed-use developments face higher perceived risk. Sites envisioned for catalytic projects, particularly in the southern corridors and potential Town Center area, often require infrastructure upgrades, site assembly, or environmental remediation that the private market is reluctant to undertake alone. In response, the City is exploring targeted tools such as Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), strategic capital improvements, and streamlined permitting to help bridge these gaps and make non-industrial projects more competitive.

At the same time, there is emerging interest in heritage entrepreneurship and place-based businesses that reflect Garden City’s industrial history, cultural traditions, and evolving community identity. Opportunities exist to support small manufacturers, food and beverage concepts, logistics-adjacent services, and creative enterprises that can anchor future mixed-use nodes. As the City looks toward a long-term Town Center concept, nurturing these homegrown businesses can help differentiate Garden City from regional competitors and ensure that new development builds on local character rather than replicating generic retail models.



Business Profile and Market Trends

Local Business License Data

Local business license data points to a steadily expanding commercial base in Garden City, with a large share of firms remaining active and only a modest number of closures relative to total licenses on file. As of 2026, the City’s business license database lists more than 800 active establishments, compared with just over 100 businesses recorded as closed, suggesting a net gain in licensed enterprises rather than simple turnover. Monthly tracking sheets for 2026 also show a consistent trickle of new business licenses and name changes throughout the year, indicating ongoing small-scale investment and business evolution rather than a one-time spike.

The mix of business names points to a local economy anchored by transportation and logistics, auto-related services, construction and trades, and industrial support firms, complemented by a thinner but visible band of personal services, small retail, and financial and property-related services that support residents and the industrial workforce. License data indicates activity is dispersed along Garden City’s primary industrial and commercial corridors rather than concentrated in a single node, reinforcing that the City is adding and maintaining businesses at a rate that supports continued absorption of both industrial and commercial space.

Industrial vs. Commercial Land Absorption

Development activity in Garden City over the last several years has been dominated by industrial projects tied to port logistics, even as a steady stream of smaller commercial applications has come before the City Council. A review of land development approvals and building permits between 2020 and 2025 shows that industrial projects account for the overwhelming share of both total capital investment and land absorption, reflecting strong private-market confidence in logistics and warehouse uses. In contrast, commercial projects typically occupy smaller sites and represent more modest individual investments, resulting in a land use pattern where industrial footprints far exceed commercial footprints.

This disparity indicates that the private market is effectively meeting industrial demand without requiring extensive local incentives, relying instead on Garden City’s inherent locational advantages and regional port growth. However, it also reveals that larger, transformative commercial and mixed-use projects face larger challenges. Developers perceive elevated risk for non-industrial investments because of factors such as competition from nearby retail destinations, uncertainty about tenant demand, aging corridor aesthetics, and the need for public infrastructure upgrades. To address this imbalance, the City is evaluating targeted public tools, such as TADs, special assessment districts, or focused infrastructure improvements, that can reduce upfront costs, enhance site readiness, and make strategic commercial locations more attractive to investors.

Regional Logistics Market

As of early 2026, the regional logistics market appears to be moving out of a phase of perceived undersupply. Years of rapid speculative warehouse construction following the pandemic e-commerce boom have produced a substantial inventory of modern distribution space across the Savannah MSA. Recent market data from the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce indicates that logistics vacancy rates have increased to around 10.6%, the highest level in several years, as new buildings come online faster than they can be fully absorbed by tenants. This new phase does not necessarily signal a lack of demand, but it does represent a more balanced or even a tenant-favorable market environment than the conditions experienced during the Plan 2040 early 2020s period. For Garden City, this shift has several implications.

- First, industrial tenants now have greater negotiating power on lease terms, concessions, and site selection, meaning that local governments must be more strategic about where and how they accommodate additional logistics development.
- Second, the era of “easy” industrial growth is likely concluded in the near term. New bulk speculative projects carry higher absorption risk and may face longer lease-up periods.

- Third, the abundance underscores the importance of diversifying the industrial base toward more specialized, higher-value activities such as coldstorage, value-added logistics, light assembly, and logistics technology operations less commodity-like than bulk distribution.

In this context, Garden City’s economic development focus is expected to shift from simply facilitating more warehouse square footage toward curating the mix and quality of industrial uses. This may involve encouraging projects through outreach efforts that provide higher wages, invest in automation and technology, or integrate training partnerships, as well as protecting key sites for future port and rail needs. It also reinforces the argument for using some of the City’s remaining redevelopment capacity to support commercial, mixed-use, and employment types that are currently underrepresented. A more novel concept for the City to consider in redevelopment efforts is adaptive reuse of aging and underutilized industrial facilities, particularly those with adjacencies to residential areas, to mixed-use or creative residential types such as lofts or work-live suites.

Business Environment and Support

Garden City maintains a business-friendly environment that combines state-level incentives with local regulatory tools. All businesses operating in the City are required to obtain an Occupational Tax Certificate (business license) annually, which helps the City monitor business activity, ensure zoning and code compliance, and maintain updated contact information for outreach and emergency communications.

The City recognizes that neighborhood-serving businesses often face different challenges than large industrial firms. Small retailers, personal service providers, and local restaurants can struggle with limited access to capital, older building stock requiring upgrades, and competition from larger regional centers. To support these enterprises, Garden City is working to streamline permitting, clarify development standards, and, where feasible, connect local businesses to technical assistance resources offered by regional partners such as SEDA, the Small Business Development Center, and nonprofit organizations.

These efforts are intended to complement the City’s strong industrial base by strengthening a small-business ecosystem that enhances quality of life and helps retain more household spending within Garden City.

Top Employers - 2025*

TEN LARGEST EMPLOYERS

Savannah, GA MSA

Candler Hospital, Inc.

FedEx

Gateway Terminals, LLC

Gulfstream Aerospace Corp

Gulfstream Services Corporation

Publix Super Markets, Inc.

Savannah College of Art and Design

Savannah Health Services, LLC

St. Joseph’s Hospital, Inc.

Walmart

*Note: Represents employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Data shown for the Second Quarter of 2025. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Growth Industries				
Industry	2024 Employment	Projected 2030	Growth	Annual
Healthcare & Social Assistance	27,742	31,200	3,458	2.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	28,201	29,800	1,599	1.1%
Manufacturing	24,642	27,500	2,858	2.2%
Construction	9,432	10,500	1,068	2.3%
Professional & Business Services	21,818	23,400	1,582	1.4%
Government	24,927	25,600	673	0.6%
Note: Projections based on Georgia Department of Labor industry trends, HMGMA ramp-up, and regional growth patterns. Actual outcomes are dependent on trade policy, interest rates, and infrastructure investments.				

Figure 4.9 – Growth Industries

Growing and Declining Industries

Growing Sectors

The Savannah MSA’s growth trajectory through the early to mid-2020s has been defined by a combination of logistics expansion, advanced manufacturing investment, healthcare growth, and the steady evolution of creative and technical services. Within this regional pattern, Garden City’s economic opportunities lie both in reinforcing its existing strengths and in capturing emerging niches that build on those strengths rather than attempting to replicate sectors better suited to other parts of the region.

Advanced manufacturing and clean energy represent one of the most significant growth opportunities. The Hyundai Metaplant and its supplier network have cemented manufacturing as a primary regional growth driver, increasing manufacturing employment and raising average industrial wages. This dynamic is expected to generate sustained demand for logistics, component warehousing, and specialized transportation services that directly benefit Garden City. At the same time, it creates opportunities for local firms that adopt automation, quality control, and supply-chain technology to plug more deeply into multi-tier manufacturing supply and resource chains

Logistics and supply-chain technology are also evolving rapidly. While speculative construction of standard warehouse space has slowed, there is a clear shift toward “technology-ready” supply chains that rely on robotics, real-time data, and AI-driven inventory management. Companies are investing in systems that require technicians, programmers, and operators who can manage automated equipment and complex software, shifting labor demand from exclusively general laborers toward hybrid technical roles. For Garden City, this means the logistics sector can continue to provide substantial employment, but the mix of required skills will change, reinforcing the need for digital literacy and technical training among residents.

Healthcare and specialized services are expected to remain resilient growth sectors, driven by demographic trends and continued capital investment in facilities and medical education. As new outpatient centers, urgent care facilities, and specialty practices locate throughout the region, Garden City’s commercial corridors can capture some of this growth by offering accessible sites for clinics, therapy practices, and related services. Additionally, Georgia’s position as the nation’s top destination for film production supports an ongoing niche in film and digital media, with the Savannah region hosting productions that generate high-wage temporary jobs and demand for logistics, hospitality, and local services. While most film infrastructure is concentrated in Savannah, Garden City benefits indirectly through service contracts and the potential reuse of industrial spaces for production support activities.

Sectors in Decline or Facing Challenges

Even as the regional economy grows, several sectors are experiencing flat or declining employment due to technological change, shifting consumer behavior, and long-term structural trends. These impediments are important for Garden City because they influence which legacy uses may become candidates for redevelopment and which skill sets may require transition support.

Traditional paper and timber industries, once central to the coastal Georgia economy, face some of the most significant challenges. The 2025 closure of International Paper’s pulp and paper mills in Savannah and Riceboro led to the loss of hundreds of high-wage industrial jobs and disrupted the regional timber supply chain, raising questions about the long-term viability of similar facilities. While Garden City does not host these specific plants, the broader regional impact is a reminder that older, commodity-based industrial sectors can contract quickly when exposed to global competition and evolving environmental standards.

Speculative bulk industrial development also appears to be entering a more constrained phase. The oversupply of large, generic warehouse buildings delivered in recent years has pushed vacancy rates higher, and the market has become more cautious about financing additional such projects. This does not imply that industrial development will cease; rather, it suggests that future projects will need to be more targeted, aligned with specific tenant needs, or differentiated through function (e.g., cold storage, specialized logistics, or value-added processing).

Similarly, traditional brick-and-mortar retail trade continues to feel pressure from e-commerce and regional competition. Older strip centers and highway commercial properties that lack strong anchors or updated formats struggle to maintain occupancy, contributing to corridor underperformance and deferred maintenance in visible locations.

For Garden City, these trends point to the need for proactive planning around legacy sites and at-risk properties. Industrial parcels tied to declining sectors may become opportunities for reinvestment or repurposing into new logistics formats or mixed employment uses. Aging retail segments along key corridors may require a combination of zoning flexibility, façade improvements, access management, and public realm upgrades to attract reinvestment. By recognizing where challenges are strongest, the City can prioritize intervention in locations where market forces alone are unlikely to deliver desired outcomes, and where strategic action can reposition corridors and districts for the next generation of economic activity.

Key Economic Challenges



Regional Educational Infrastructure

Garden City’s workforce is supported by a broad regional education network that includes K–12 systems, technical colleges, and four-year universities, all of which play distinct roles in preparing residents for logistics, manufacturing, healthcare, and service-sector careers. The Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) has made steady gains in graduation outcomes, achieving a district-wide graduation rate of 87.2% in the 2024–2025 school year and consistently exceeding both state and comparison-group averages. A total of 2,229 students graduated, with some schools, such as Savannah Early College High and Woodville–Tompkins, achieving 100% rates. These improvements strengthen the foundation for post-secondary training and employment readiness for Garden City’s youth. At the post-secondary level, Savannah Technical College is the primary provider of technical education in the region and an especially important partner for Garden City. The college offers programs in logistics, commercial truck driving, industrial systems, precision manufacturing,

welding, construction trades, aviation technology, and healthcare support; fields that align closely with the industrial, trucking, and service employers that operate in and around Garden City. Nearby four-year institutions, including Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong Campus, Savannah State University, and the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), add capacity in engineering, health professions, business, marine science, and creative disciplines, collectively generating tens of thousands of enrollments and graduates annually for the regional labor market.

For Garden City, the key challenge is not just the presence of regional educational institutions but the alignment between program offerings and the skills demanded by local employers. In logistics and manufacturing, employers increasingly seek workers who combine basic academic proficiency with technical certifications, safety training, and digital literacy. By coordinating with Savannah Technical College and regional universities on curriculum, internships, and work-based learning placements, the City can help ensure that programs reflect current industry needs and that residents are aware of the pathways available to them.

Program Highlights of Technical School Graduates			
Program	Graduates	Trend	Employment Alignment
Welding	495	↑ Growing	Manufacturing, Construction
Nursing Assistant	161	↑ Growing	Healthcare
HVAC Technician	105	↑ Growing	Construction, Facilities
Aircraft Maintenance	60	↑ Growing	Aerospace, Aviation
Commercial Truck Driver	160	→ Stable	Logistics, Transportation
Cosmetology	142	→ Stable	Hospitality, Services
Heating/AC/Refrigeration	105	↑ Growing	Construction, Facilities

Source: Technical College System of Georgia via GDOL MSA Labor Profile

Figure 4.10 – Program Highlights of Technical School Graduates

The RISE Initiative and Advanced Manufacturing

The region’s shift toward advanced manufacturing, driven most visibly by the Hyundai Motor Group Metaplant and its suppliers, has prompted new efforts to coordinate workforce strategy across multiple counties. The Regional Industry Support Enterprise (RISE) initiative is designed to align state economic development resources with sector-specific training needs, focusing on manufacturing competency, automation skills, and career pathways that connect entry-level positions to higher-skilled roles. RISE and similar initiatives build on Georgia’s long-standing emphasis on workforce readiness as a core economic development asset.

For Garden City, programs like RISE offer a framework to transition existing logistics and warehouse workers into higher-skill manufacturing and component-assembly roles without requiring residents to leave the region. Many “meta-pro” positions in advanced manufacturing and logistics technology draw on skills that can be developed incrementally through short-term certificates, stackable credentials, and on-the-job learning, making them accessible to workers with high school diplomas and some technical training. By promoting awareness of these pathways and partnering with employers to support tuition assistance, flexible scheduling, and transportation solutions, Garden City can help residents move up the wage ladder while also supplying the talent needed to sustain regional industrial growth.

Beyond degree and diploma programs, the Savannah region offers several specialized training resources that directly support Garden City’s economic base. The Georgia Quick Start Program provides customized, no-cost workforce training for eligible companies locating or expanding in Georgia, with particular strength in manufacturing, logistics, and biotech. This program is instrumental in helping large employers ramp up operations quickly while ensuring that workers are prepared for specific production processes and equipment.

Garden City also benefits from specialized logistics and maritime training tied to Port operations. Training in crane operation, yard management, hazardous materials handling, and heavy equipment operation supports the unique skill sets required at the Garden City Terminal and nearby industrial facilities. At the K–12 level, SCCPSS continues to expand Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) pathways, introducing students to logistics, engineering, construction, and healthcare concepts before graduation.

These pathways, combined with initiatives like Youth Apprenticeship, Junior Achievement, and Step Up Savannah’s Chatham Apprentice Program (CAP), provide early exposure to career options and soft-skill development, which local employers consistently cite as crucial.

Programs such as WorkSource Coastal and EmployAbility complement this landscape by offering job training, placement, and support services for adults, dislocated workers, veterans, youth, and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. For Garden City, these organizations represent important partners in expanding labor force participation, addressing barriers to employment, and ensuring that economic growth is inclusive across age, ability, and background.

Workforce Preparedness Challenges

- Post-Secondary Attainment Gap: Many residents lack formal credentials beyond high school relative to the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), restricting access to higher-wage technical and professional roles.
- “Soft Skills” Deficiencies: Employers report ongoing concerns about essential skills like dependability, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.
- Housing and Transportation Constraints: Rising regional housing costs and transportation difficulties make it hard for workers, especially lower-wage households, to live near training centers and major job sites.

Digital Divide Risk:

- As logistics and manufacturing become more technology-dependent, a lack of targeted efforts in broadband access, digital skills, and adult on-ramp programs risks leaving some residents behind as employers modernize.

Required Action:

- Addressing these challenges necessitates coordinated action across education providers, employers, workforce agencies, and local governments.
- For Garden City, this means prioritizing education and training as central to economic development and integrating workforce considerations into decisions about transportation, housing, and land use.

05

LAND USE



Garden City’s Land Use

Garden City’s land use pattern is shaped by its location within the Savannah–Chatham region and its close relationship to the Port of Savannah, major freight corridors, and regional employment centers. The City functions as an important industrial and logistics hub while also containing established residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors, civic uses, and areas targeted for reinvestment and mixed-use development.

This combination creates a distinctive planning challenge. Garden City must continue to support industrial and freight-related activity that contributes to the regional economy while protecting neighborhoods from incompatible land uses, truck traffic, noise, and other impacts associated with intensive development. At the same time, the City is working to strengthen commercial corridors, expand housing choice, improve connectivity, and create more attractive mixed-use and civic destinations.

The Land Use Element provides the framework for balancing these competing needs. It guides the location, type, intensity, and character of future development and reinvestment while supporting neighborhood stability, economic opportunity, infrastructure coordination, and environmental resilience.

Evolution of the Development Pattern

Garden City’s present land use pattern reflects decades of change from a primarily residential community to one increasingly shaped by industrial, logistics, and Port related development. Established neighborhoods and older commercial areas remain within a development pattern that now includes large industrial sites, freight corridors, and regional transportation infrastructure. This evolution has strengthened Garden City’s economic role while also creating land use compatibility, transportation, infrastructure, and neighborhood reinvestment challenges that continue to shape planning decisions today.



Recent Growth and Development Trends

Development activity since adoption of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan has reinforced Garden City’s role as a major industrial and logistics center. Between 2020 and 2025, approximately 95 percent of newly approved development acreage was associated with industrial uses. Large-scale logistics investment, including development along Dean Forest Road, has increased demand for freight access, infrastructure capacity, and stronger transitions between industrial and residential areas.

Commercial development has continued along major corridors, particularly U.S. Highway 80 and S.R. 21, with activity focused on retail, fuel, service, and freight-support uses. At the same time, the City has pursued opportunities to diversify its housing stock and encourage infill and redevelopment in areas with existing infrastructure.

These trends point to several ongoing land use priorities:

- Concentrating industrial and logistics activity in locations suited to freight access and infrastructure capacity;
- Protecting established neighborhoods from incompatible development and freight impacts;
- Encouraging reinvestment along commercial corridors and within the Town Center;
- Supporting infill and a broader mix of housing types where appropriate; and
- Coordinating land use decisions with transportation, infrastructure, environmental, and redevelopment priorities.



Character Areas

Character Area Framework

Garden City’s Character Area framework provides a place-based guide for future development, redevelopment, reinvestment, and conservation. Character Areas recognize that different parts of the City have distinct development patterns, functions, infrastructure conditions, and relationships to surrounding uses.

The legacy of this era is a land use pattern that is relatively efficient in its use of infrastructure and that reflects community values around walkability and neighborhood identity.

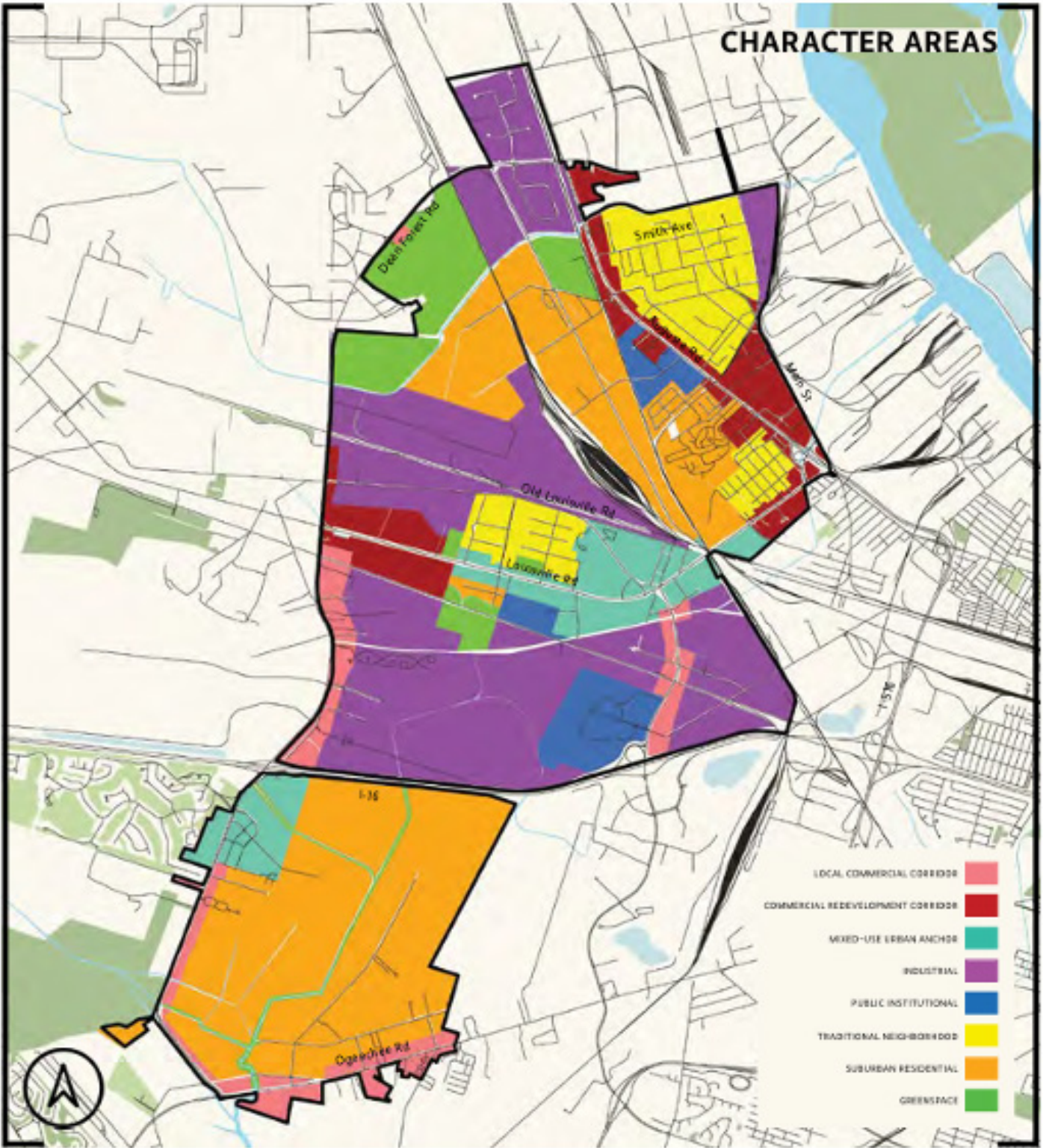


Exhibit 5.1 – Character Areas Garden City

Character Areas

Neighborhood Services Corridor

Local Commercial Corridor

Desired Character

Neighborhood Services Corridors are intended to provide small-scale retail, services, offices, restaurants, and other daily needs close to established neighborhoods. Development should remain lower in intensity than Garden City's major commercial corridors and should reinforce neighborhood compatibility, walkability, and a more attractive street environment.

Development should support a neighborhood-serving character through appropriate scale, building placement, access, landscaping, signage, and pedestrian connections.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include neighborhood retail, personal and professional services, small offices, restaurants, limited mixed-use development, and other locally serving commercial uses.

Existing zoning includes R-I-N, C-1, C-2, C-2A, C-2A(B&W), M, and P. Future zoning should favor neighborhood-commercial and mixed-use classifications consistent with the intended scale of the corridor.

Development Considerations

- Neighborhood compatibility
- Building orientation and parking placement
- Access management
- Pedestrian and ADA connectivity
- Streetscape and visual quality

Implementation Strategies

- Evaluate rezoning where existing zoning conflicts with neighborhood-serving commercial intent.
- Apply corridor-specific design and development standards.
- Improve shared access, driveway consolidation, and pedestrian connections.
- Support façade improvement, adaptive reuse, and small-business reinvestment.
- Coordinate streetscape improvements with future public and private investment.

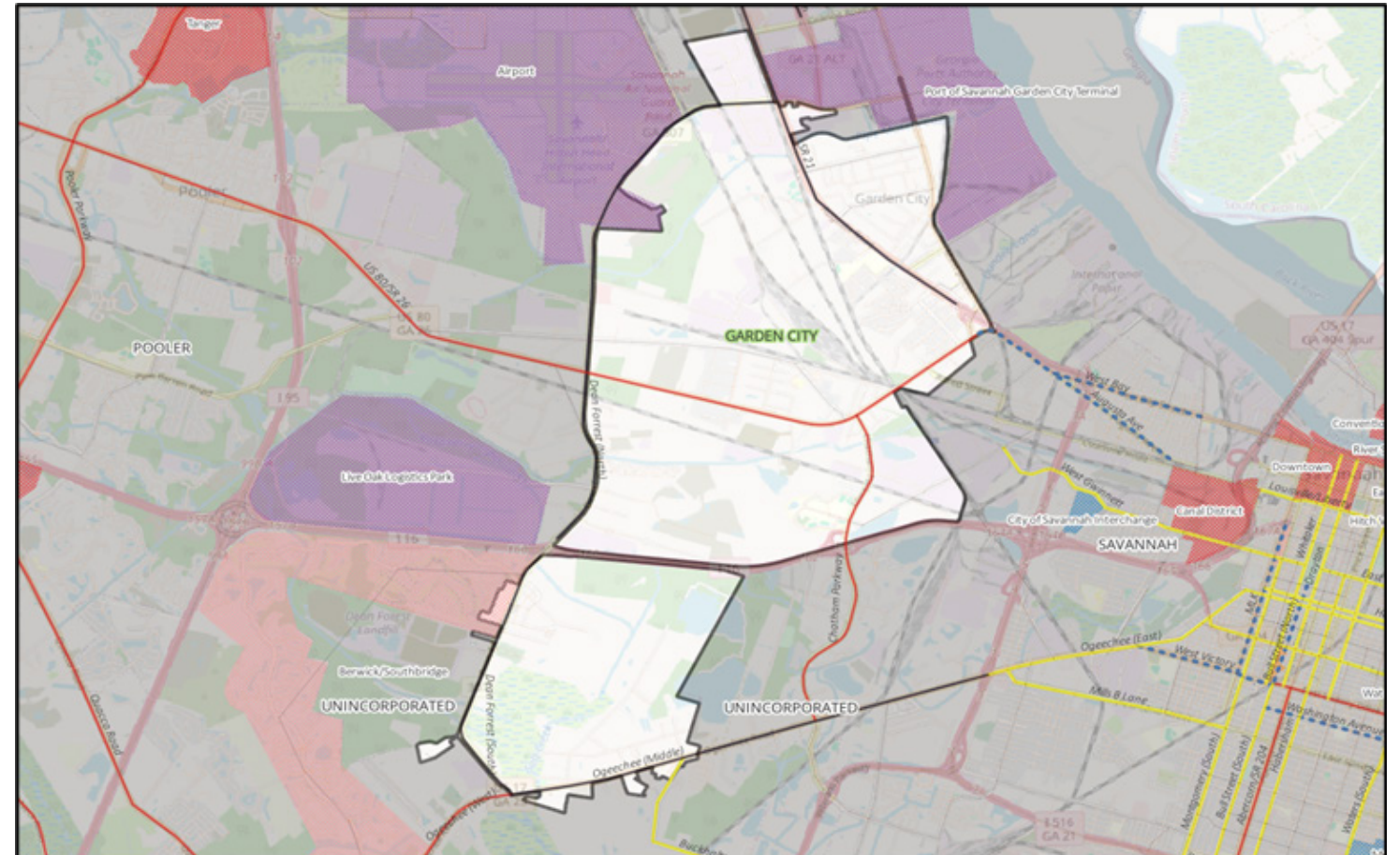


Exhibit 5.2 –Regional Location

Character Areas

Gateway & Reinvestment Corridor

Commercial Redevelopment Corridor

Desired Character

Gateway & Reinvestment Corridors are Garden City’s most visible commercial corridors and represent major opportunities for reinvestment, improved design, and stronger connections between commercial activity and nearby neighborhoods. These corridors should evolve from aging, automobile-oriented development patterns toward more attractive, functional, and multimodal destinations.

S.R. 21, U.S. Highway 80, and U.S. Highway 17/ Ogeechee Road are identified as primary redevelopment corridors.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include commercial, service, office, mixed-use, light industrial where compatible, and higher-density residential or multifamily development where infrastructure and surrounding conditions support it.

Existing zoning includes **R-I-N, C-1, C-2, C-2A, C-2A(B&W), M, and P.**

Development Considerations

- Gateway identity
- Neighborhood transitions
- Access and traffic management
- Mixed-use and residential infill
- Pedestrian and multimodal access
- Redevelopment potential

Implementation Strategies

- Establish corridor-specific design or overlay standards.
- Encourage redevelopment and adaptive reuse of underperforming properties.
- Consolidate curb cuts and improve internal circulation.
- Allow mixed-use and higher-density residential development where appropriate.
- Coordinate sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, stormwater, and streetscape investments.



Character Areas

Town Center & Mixed-Use Core

Mixed-Use Urban Anchor

Desired Character

The Town Center & Mixed-Use Core is intended to function as Garden City’s civic, commercial, and mixed-use focal point. Development should create a walkable, connected environment where residential, retail, office, civic, recreational, and public uses reinforce one another.

The Highway 80 corridor between Alfred Street/8th Street and S.R. 21, along with the Main Street area, are key locations for this type of development.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include mixed-use development, multifamily and attached housing, retail, restaurants, offices, civic uses, recreation, public gathering spaces, and complementary services.

The primary existing zoning identified is **M – Mixed Use**.

Development Considerations

- Human-scale development
- Active street edges
- Walkability and connectivity
- Mixed-use intensity
- Civic and public-space integration
- Neighborhood transitions

Implementation Strategies

- Rezone strategic parcels to Mixed Use where appropriate.
- Establish form-based or design standards for building orientation, streetscape, and block structure.
- Encourage compact mixed-use development and diverse housing.
- Require strong pedestrian connections to nearby neighborhoods and public facilities.
- Incorporate plazas, parks, and gathering spaces into redevelopment.

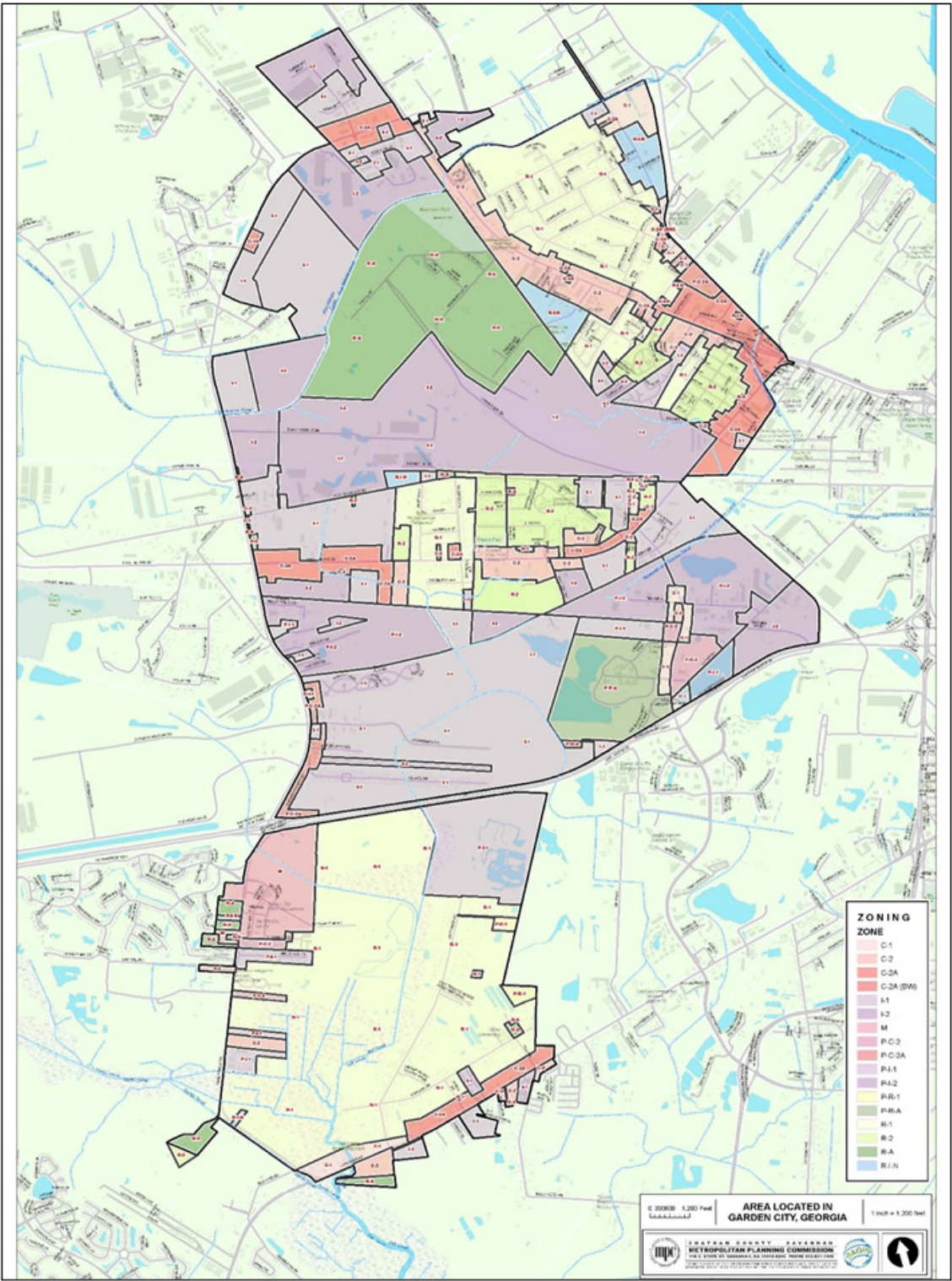


Exhibit 5.3 –Current Land Use

Character Areas

Industry & Logistics District

Industrial

Desired Character

The Industry & Logistics District supports Garden City’s regional role in freight, warehousing, logistics, manufacturing, and Port-related activity. These areas should remain focused on employment and industrial uses while improving operational efficiency, infrastructure capacity, environmental performance, and compatibility with surrounding areas.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include logistics, warehousing, manufacturing, industrial services, freight-support uses, and compatible commercial support uses. Existing zoning identified includes **C-2, C-2A, C-2A(B&W), I-1, and I-2.**

Development Considerations

- Freight and truck access
- Neighborhood transitions
- Buffers and screening
- Stormwater and environmental impacts
- Road and rail capacity
- Large-site circulation

Implementation Strategies

- Preserve appropriately located industrial lands.
- Differentiate light-industrial and heavy Port-oriented operations through zoning where appropriate.
- Strengthen buffering and transition standards near neighborhoods.
- Coordinate freight, road, and rail improvements with regional partners.
- Apply stormwater, noise, landscaping, and other mitigation measures to reduce impacts.



Character Areas

Port Operations & Transition Area Development Considerations

Georgia Ports Authority

Desired Character

The Port Operations & Transition Area recognizes the unique land-use relationship between Garden City and the Georgia Ports Authority. This area is intended to support Port-related offices, services, and operational functions while providing an appropriate transition between intensive Port activity and nearby community uses.

This area is primarily comprised of corporate offices and support facilities associated with the Georgia Ports Authority.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

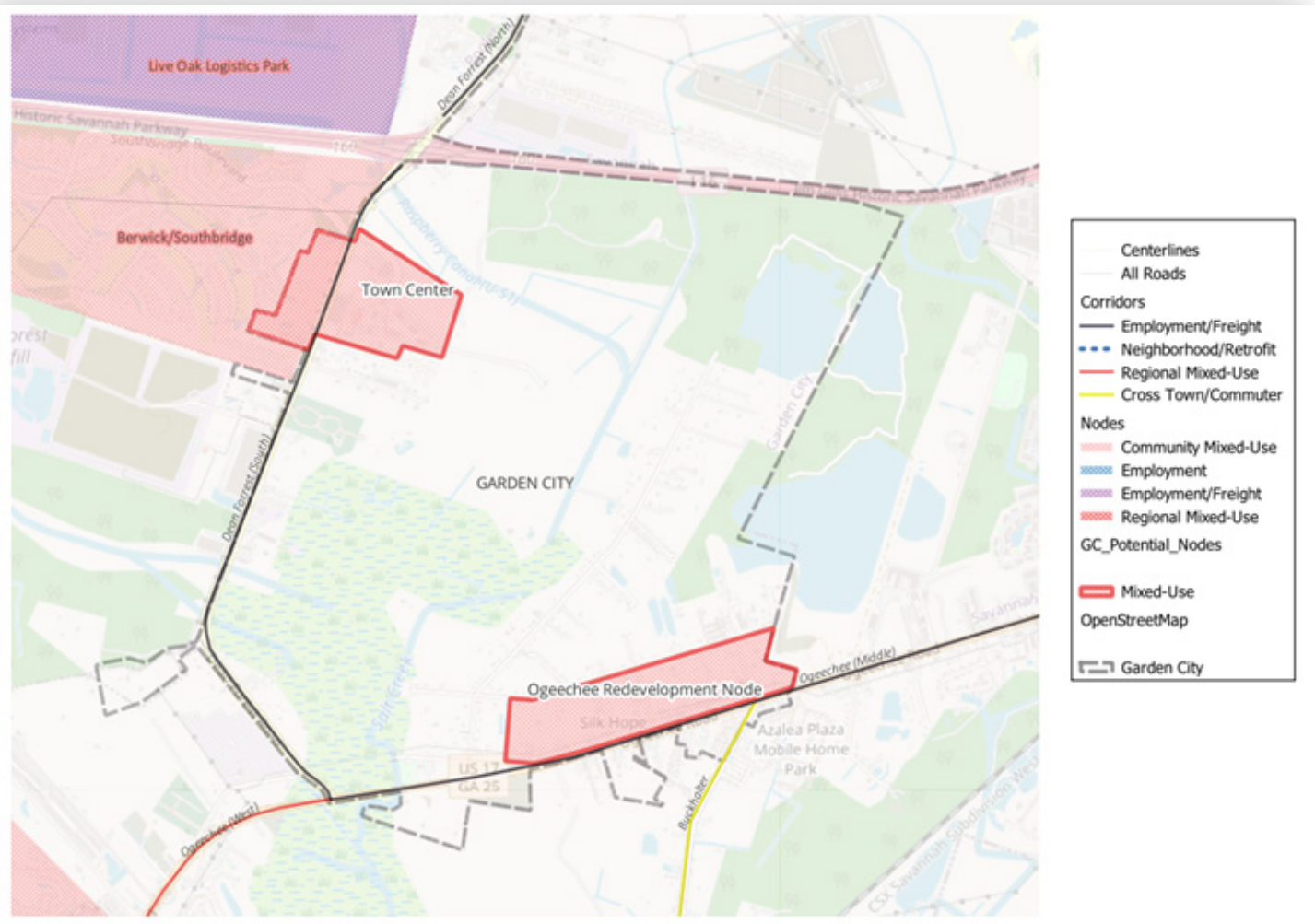
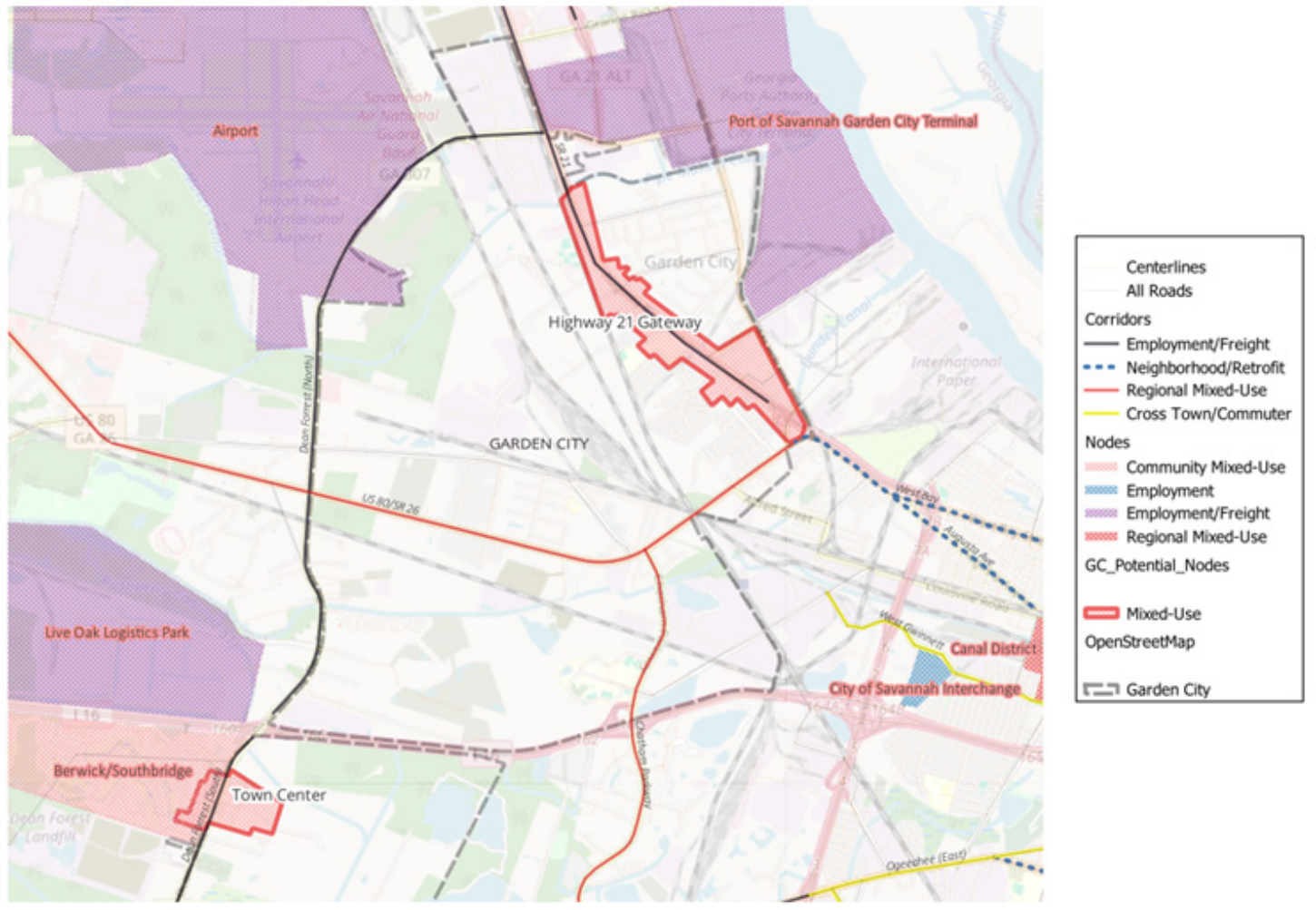
Appropriate uses include office, institutional, Port-support, and small-scale commercial uses that are compatible with surrounding development. Existing zoning includes **C-1** and **R-I-N**.

- Transition from Port activity
- Freight and employee access
- Compatibility with nearby uses
- Building scale and site design
- Landscape buffering and visual quality

Implementation Strategies

- Maintain zoning that supports office and Port-support functions.
- Use compatible commercial or institutional uses as transitions where appropriate.
- Coordinate access and infrastructure needs with the Georgia Ports Authority.
- Strengthen buffering and site-design standards at neighborhood edges.





Exhibits 5.4 –Strategic Nodes and Corridors

Character Areas

Civic & Community Services Area

Public / Institutional

Desired Character

Civic & Community Services Areas accommodate public facilities and institutions that support residents and contribute to community identity. These areas should be accessible, well-connected, visible, and integrated with surrounding neighborhoods and activity centers.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include schools, government buildings, emergency services, libraries, parks, community centers, utilities, and other civic or institutional facilities.

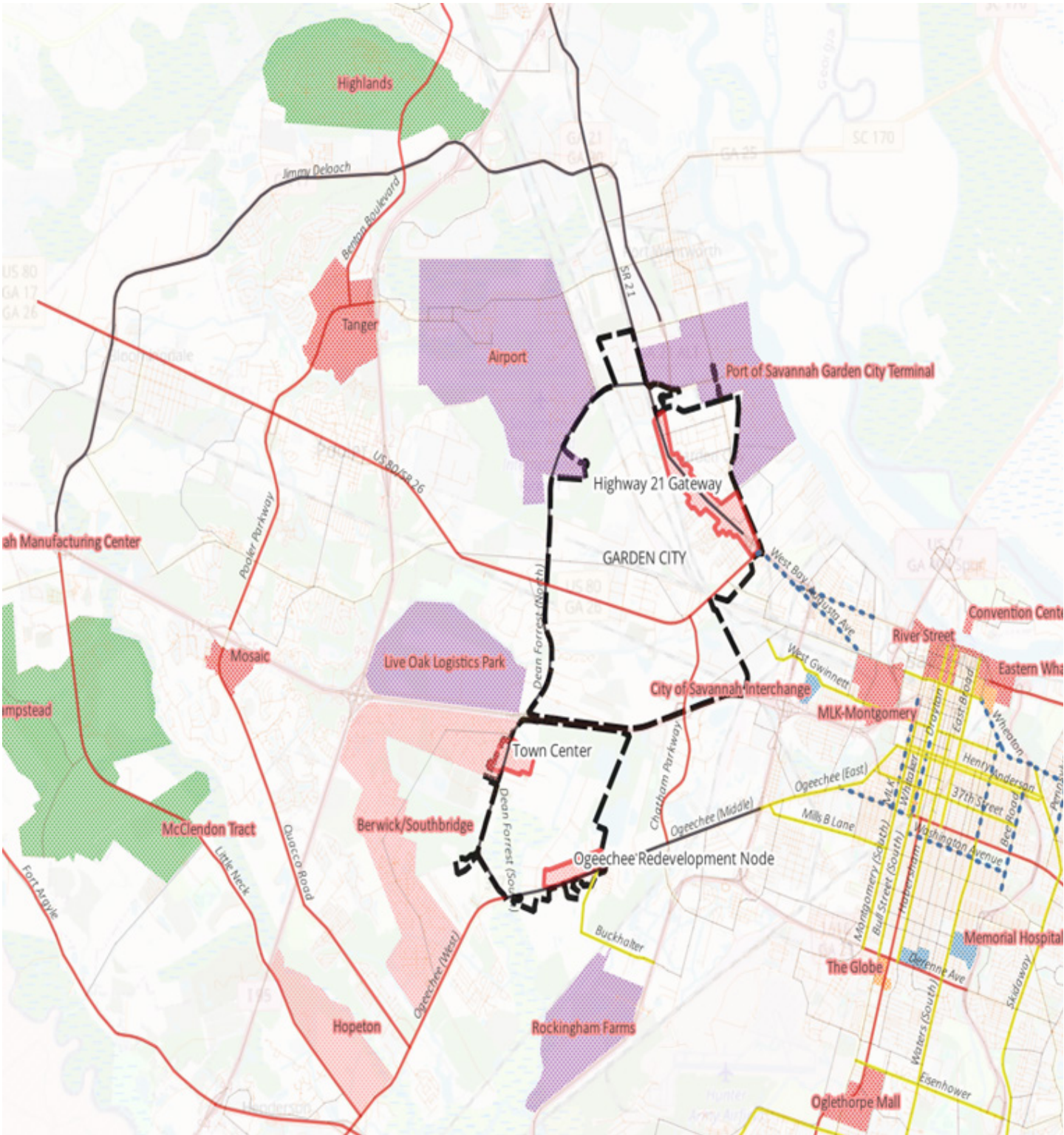
Existing zoning includes R-1, R-2, R-A, R-I-N, and P.

Development Considerations

- Access and service coverage
- Pedestrian connectivity
- Facility capacity
- Emergency access
- Hazard exposure
- Shared-use opportunities

Implementation Strategies

- Evaluate long-term facility and service needs as Garden City changes.
- Coordinate facility investment with growth and redevelopment priorities.
- Encourage shared-use and multi-purpose civic facilities where feasible.
- Locate critical facilities with consideration for flood and hazard risks.
- Improve pedestrian access and visibility of civic facilities.



Exhibits 5.5 –Garden City Growth Areas Throughout Chatham County

Character Areas

Legacy Neighborhoods

Traditional Neighborhood

Desired Character

Legacy Neighborhoods represent Garden City’s established residential areas and reflect some of the City’s strongest historic development patterns. These neighborhoods are characterized by modest homes, walkable street grids, sidewalks, mature development patterns, and a strong sense of neighborhood identity.

Specifically, Rossignol Hill, Sharon Park/Old Louisville/Woodlawn, and Historic Garden City are important traditional neighborhood areas.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include single-family residential, compatible small-scale housing types, neighborhood-serving uses in appropriate locations, parks, civic uses, and context-sensitive infill.

Existing zoning includes **C-1** and **R-I-N**.

Development Considerations

- Neighborhood scale
- Architectural compatibility
- Industrial and commercial encroachment
- Housing rehabilitation and infill
- Historic-resource preservation
- Aging infrastructure

Implementation Strategies

- Protect established neighborhoods from incompatible industrial and commercial expansion.
- Support rehabilitation and context-sensitive infill housing.
- Maintain and extend the traditional street grid where feasible.
- Develop design or preservation standards for historically significant areas.
- Improve sidewalks, lighting, stormwater, and other neighborhood infrastructure.
- Support homeowner repair and neighborhood reinvestment programs.



Character Areas

Parks, Greenways & Natural Areas

Parks / Greenspace

Desired Character

Parks, Greenways & Natural Areas encompass public parks, open space, wetlands, floodplains, wooded areas, and other lands that provide recreational, environmental, scenic, and resilience benefits. These areas should be protected and connected where possible to support stormwater management, recreation, habitat, and quality of life.

Appropriate Uses / Zoning

Appropriate uses include parks, trails, passive recreation, conservation lands, greenways, stormwater facilities, and environmentally sensitive open space.

R-A is the primary existing zoning associated with this Character Area.

Development Considerations

- Floodplain and wetland protection
- Public access
- Greenway connectivity
- Stormwater function
- Tree canopy and habitat
- Buffering opportunities

Implementation Strategies

- Strengthen conservation protections for environmentally sensitive lands.
- Integrate open-space preservation into site and subdivision review.
- Expand greenway and trail connections where feasible.
- Use green infrastructure to support stormwater management and resilience.
- Identify priority natural areas, parks, trail gaps, and ecological connections for future investment.



Future Land Use Map Update

Garden City currently relies on its adopted Character Area framework to guide land-use and development decisions. The City’s existing Future Land Use Map predates this update and is being reevaluated to better reflect current development patterns, infrastructure conditions, redevelopment priorities, and the updated Character Area framework. Preparation and adoption of an updated Future Land Use Map is included in the 2027–2031 Community Work Program. Until that work is completed, the Character Area Map, defining narratives, zoning ordinance, existing Future Land Use Map, and other adopted policies should be considered together when evaluating future land use decisions.

Redevelopment Focus Areas

Garden City’s redevelopment strategy continues to build on the framework established through the City’s Urban Redevelopment Plan and the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Those efforts identified targeted areas where reinvestment, infrastructure improvements, housing stabilization, commercial revitalization, and coordinated public-private action could have the greatest impact.

The 2026 update carries forward three primary redevelopment focus areas identified as the Highway 21 Gateway, the West Highway 21 Residential Area, and Garden City South. Each represents a different development context and requires a tailored approach to reinvestment.

Highway 21 Gateway

The Highway 21 Gateway remains one of Garden City’s most visible commercial corridors. Existing conditions include auto-oriented commercial development, vacant or underutilized properties, and opportunities for infill and adaptive reuse. Future efforts should focus on improving corridor appearance, access management, pedestrian conditions, redevelopment quality, and the overall gateway experience.

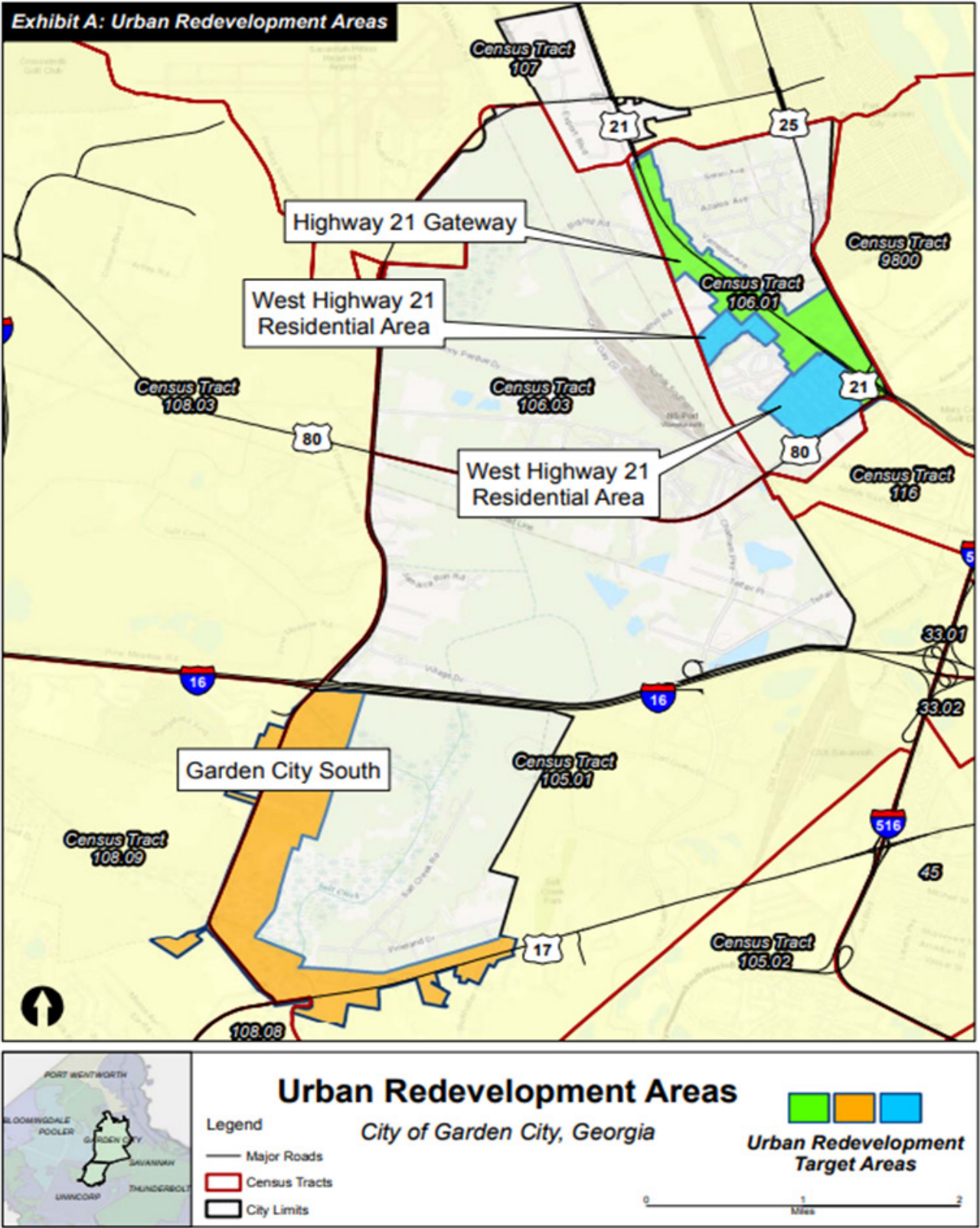
West Highway 21 Residential Area

The West Highway 21 Residential Area includes established neighborhoods and community assets where reinvestment should focus on neighborhood stability, housing rehabilitation, compatible infill, property maintenance, infrastructure improvements, and protection from incompatible surrounding uses.

Garden City South

Garden City South contains a mix of residential, commercial, light industrial, civic, and emerging mixed-use activity. The area presents opportunities for coordinated redevelopment, infrastructure improvements, housing development, commercial reinvestment, and continued implementation of the Town Center vision.

Together, these focus areas provide a practical framework for targeting redevelopment resources, coordinating infrastructure investment, and supporting private reinvestment in locations where change can reinforce Garden City’s broader land use goals.



Exhibits 5.6 – Urban Redevelopment Areas

Relationship to Zoning and Development Decisions

The Comprehensive Plan establishes long-range policy direction for growth, redevelopment, conservation, and investment, but it does not replace Garden City’s zoning ordinance or development regulations.

The Character Area Map and defining narratives describe the desired development pattern and character of different parts of the City. The Future Land Use Map provides additional guidance regarding intended future land use. The zoning ordinance and official zoning map remain the regulatory tools used to determine permitted uses, development standards, and approval requirements for individual properties.

These planning and regulatory tools should be considered together when evaluating rezoning requests, development proposals, infrastructure investments, and public improvements. Where existing zoning does not fully align with the desired Character Area or future land use direction, the Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance for evaluating whether future amendments may be appropriate.

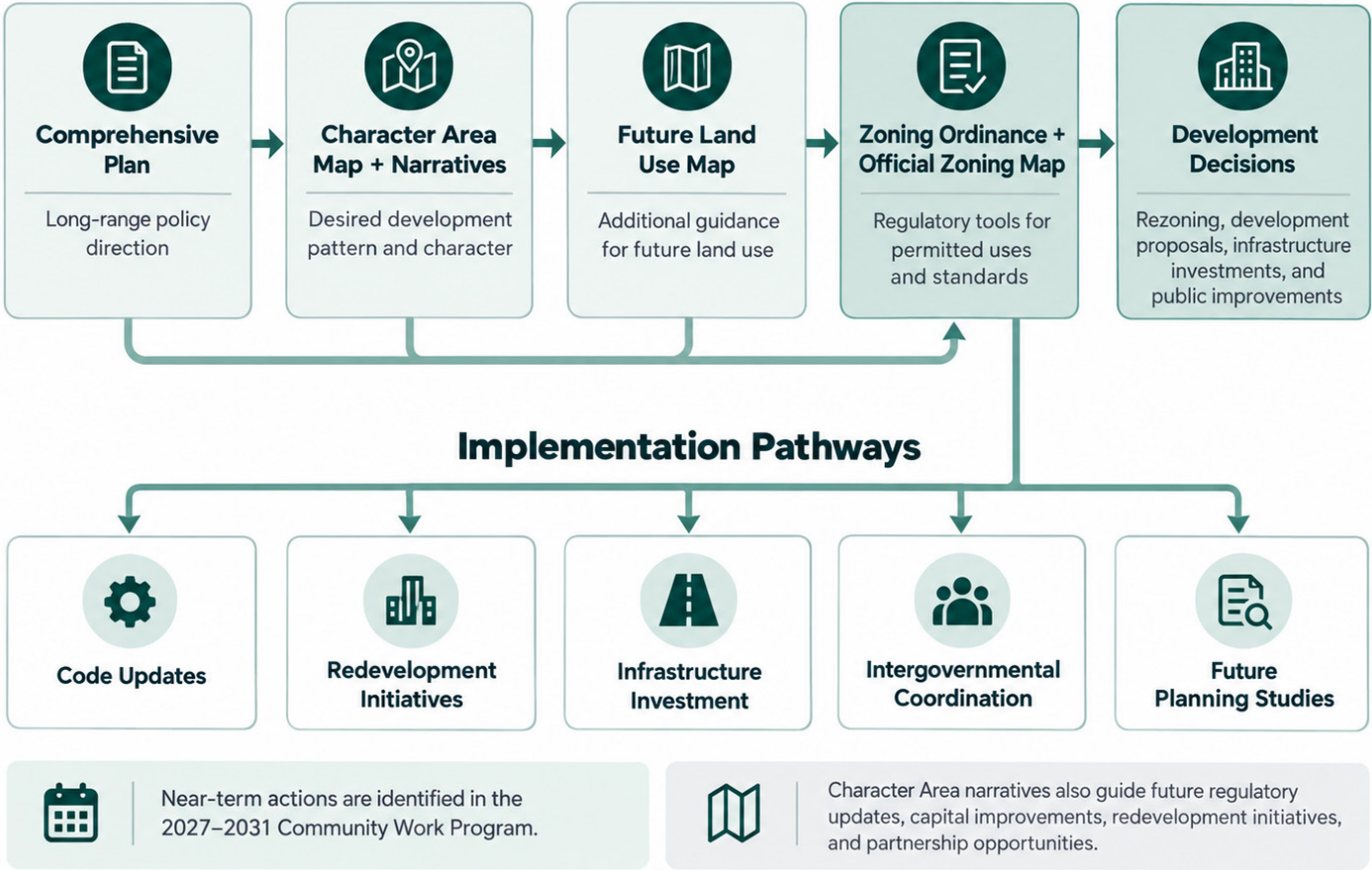
This approach allows Garden City to respond to changing development conditions while maintaining consistency with the long-range vision established in this update.

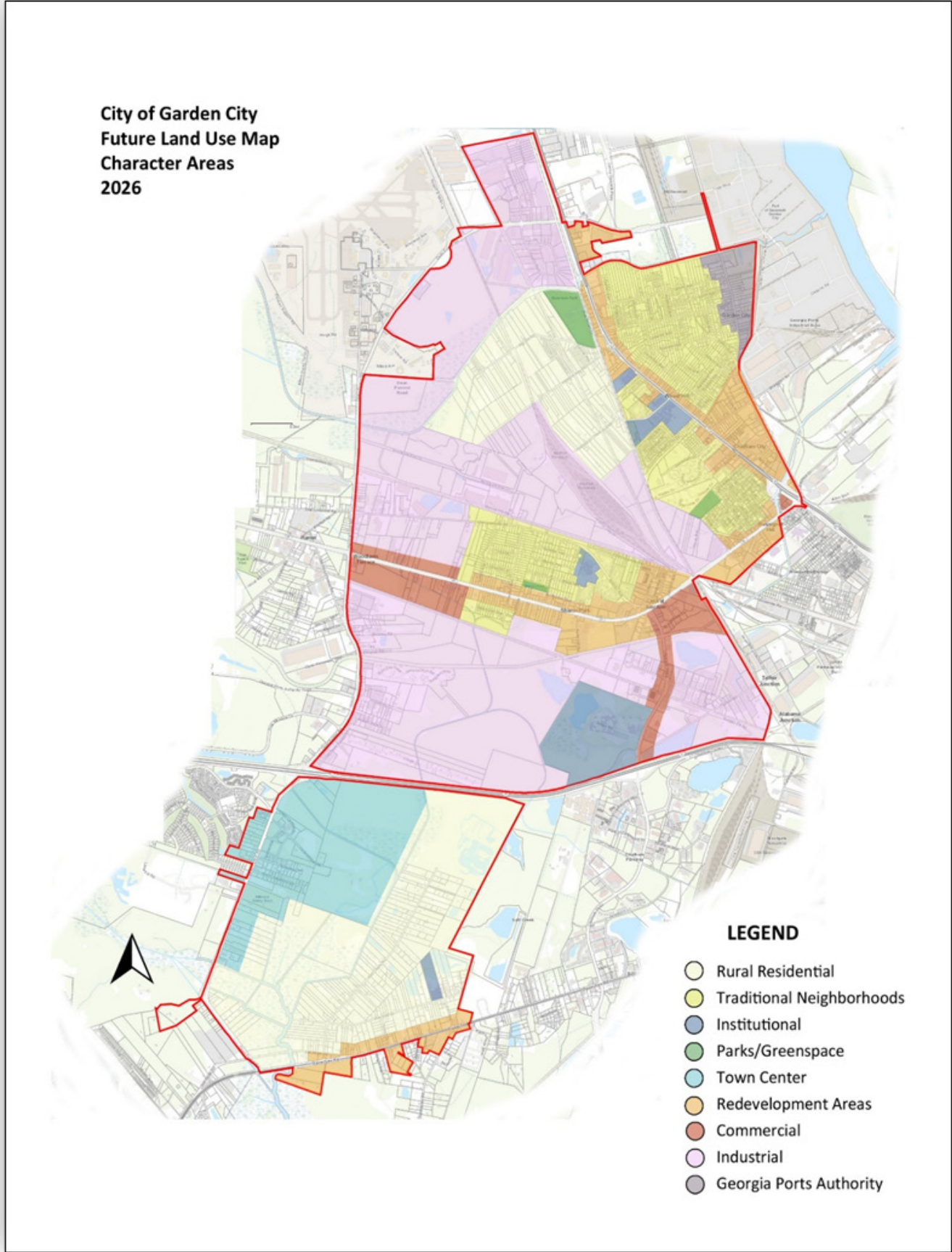
Moving from Land Use Policy to Implementation

Implementation of the Land Use Element will occur through a combination of zoning and development-code updates, redevelopment initiatives, infrastructure investment, intergovernmental coordination, and future planning studies.

Near-term actions associated with this element, including preparation and adoption of an updated Future Land Use Map, are identified in the 2027–2031 Community Work Program. Additional implementation measures identified within the Character Area narratives should guide future regulatory updates, capital improvements, redevelopment initiatives, and partnership opportunities as resources become available.

From Policy to Development Decisions





The Land Use Element guides both short-term decisions (zoning amendments, site plan reviews, capital improvements) and long-term strategic initiatives (comprehensive zoning updates, infrastructure projects, redevelopment partnerships). Implementation occurs through:

- Zoning and Development Code Decisions**
Day-to-day review of rezoning requests, variances, and site plans with reference to the FLUM and CAM
- Capital Improvements Programming**
Alignment of public infrastructure investments with identified growth areas and priority nodes
- Partnership and Incentive Programs**
Use of Urban Redevelopment Plan authority, Tax Allocation Districts, and workforce partnerships to facilitate strategic redevelopment
- Periodic Plan Update and Monitoring**
Regular review of land use trends, development activity, and changing market conditions to inform plan refinements

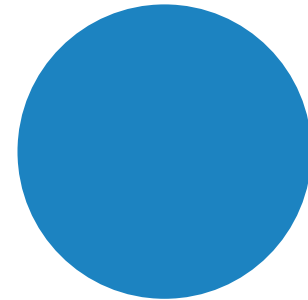
The City recognizes that successful implementation requires sustained commitment, adequate resources, and ongoing coordination among city staff, elected officials, planning commissions, and community partners. The Short-Term Work Program (a separate document updated annually) identifies specific actions, timelines, and responsible parties for implementing plan strategies.

Garden City possesses several competitive advantages that position it well for continued investment and job creation:

- Tier 1 community status for state job tax credits under Georgia’s Military Zone designation, allowing eligible businesses to receive up to \$3,500 per job created.
- Broadband Ready community recognition is possible, signaling that the city’s regulatory framework is favorably postured toward modern, technology-enabled operations.
- Strategic adjacency to the Garden City Terminal and convergence with Interstate 95, Interstate 16, and major rail corridors operated by CSX and Norfolk Southern, enabling efficient movement of goods across domestic and international markets.
- Georgia’s repeated ranking as the #1 state for infrastructure based on port capacity, highway quality, and freight logistics

06

TRANSPORTATION



CORE MPO

Garden City is a member of the Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO) and relies on the MPO for transportation planning and major transportation infrastructure improvements.

CORE MPO is a regional transportation policymaking and planning body with representatives of elected and appointed officials from Chatham County and its municipalities, including Garden City, Bryan County and Richmond Hill, Effingham County and its municipalities, as well as modal representatives and executives from local, state and federal agencies.

CORE MPO updated its Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary in February 2024 which was subsequently approved by the Governor of Georgia. CORE MPO follows the 3-C transportation planning process: comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative. Through this planning process the MPO coordinates regional policies, corridor studies, and plans and programs such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

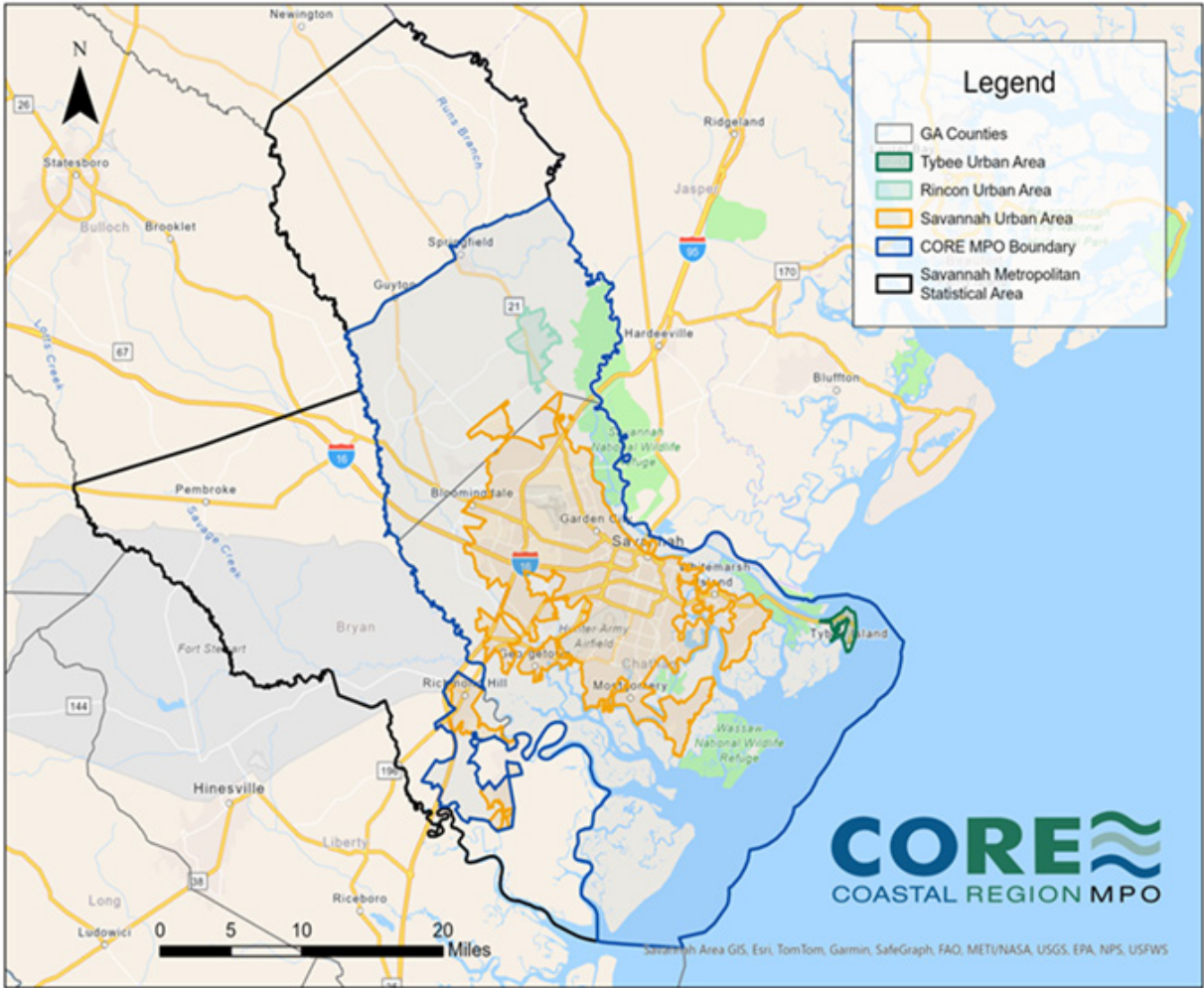


Exhibit 6.1 –CORE MPO Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary 2024

Regional Commuting Patterns

Chatham County and Garden City are regional hubs for employment and other economic generators. In particular, Chatham County and Garden City are home to the Port of Savannah, which is the largest single container terminal in North America, the second busiest container exporter in the United States, and major economic engine for the region. Many residents of neighboring counties commute into Chatham County for work, passing through or working in Garden City, greatly impacting the traffic patterns and overall efficiency of the transportation network. Commuting traffic in and around Garden City heavily utilizes major thoroughfares including SR 21, US 80, I-16, and US 17.

Regional Commuting Patterns		
Location	Work in County of Residence %	Work Outside County of Residence %
Chatham	92.8%	4.7%
Savannah	94.1%	3.7%
Garden City	91.3%	8.7%
Bryan	29.8%	67.5%
Effingham County	36.3%	58.8%
Bulloch	68.6%	29.7%
Liberty	75.2%	23.7%
Jasper, SC	40.3%	59.7%
Beaufort, SC	94.5%	4.0%
Source: ACS 2022 5-Year Estimates (S0801)		

Figure 6.1 –Garden City: Regional Commuting Patterns

Local Commuting Patterns

Nearly 93% of Garden City residents commute outside the City for work, while nearly 96% of people employed in Garden City live outside of the City, highlighting its role as a major job center, with significant ties to the Georgia Ports Authority and industrial support businesses, as discussed in the Economic Development Element. A typical commute to work is 19 minutes each way.

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 available. Alternatives include driving alone, taking transit, walking, bicycling, work at home, carpool and other.

Most work trips in Garden City are by automobile: 71.7% of workers drive alone and 22.5% carpool, higher than Chatham County overall at 10.7%. While there is transit service coverage available in Garden City, it makes up less than 1% of the commuting type. About 3.7% of residents work from home, 1.5% walk, and less than 1% bike or use other means.

It is important to note that reported travel behavior does not necessarily reflect the choices people would make if different transportation options were available at a safe and feasible level. While historic transportation policy, funding, and design decisions promoted auto travel and initially advanced mobility, unintended environmental, social, and financial consequences have also transpired as a result.



The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a multimodal plan based on the socio-economic development of the CORE MPO region and is intended to provide efficient transportation services to all residents in this area. Its multimodal 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. It is updated every five years, based on review, revision, and recalibration of the travel demand model with updated demographic and socioeconomic characteristics as well as incorporating results of new or ongoing studies and any changes to federal regulations and guidance.

The 2045 MTP (Mobility 2045) was in place when the 2040 Plan was adopted in October 2021. Since then, CORE MPO has adopted a new MTP – Moving Forward Together 2050. The 2050 MTP, inclusive of its amendments and addenda, is the most up to date and comprehensive plan governing regional transportation issues in Garden City, found at: <https://www.thempc.org/Core/Mtp2050#gsc.tab=0>.



Moving Forward Together 2050

CORE MPO adopted the latest MTP – Moving Forward Together 2050 (2050 MTP) – in August 2024. The 2050 MTP 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. CORE MPO is committed to investing in the regional 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 into the 2050 MTP through a diverse and wide-ranging process, including an assessment of transportation needs in coordination with the future regional growth and anticipated future trends, as well as giving more emphasis on resiliency and equity of the transportation system.

2050 MTP Goals

The overall goal of the 2050 MTP is to continue moving the regional transportation planning process beyond the singular focus of moving motor vehicles and consider transportation issues from a comprehensive perspective that incorporates community values, needs, land use, modal alternatives, system resiliency and equity. The goals and objectives are targeted to ensure that the transportation system helps the CORE MPO region attain its overall vision for the future. Through public involvement, stakeholders and citizens helped identify and refine these goals, which provide the framework for the provision of a safe, secure, and efficient multimodal transportation network that meets the mobility needs of both people and freightneeds of both people and freight.

	Moving Forward Together 2050 Goals
Safety & Security: Provide a safe and secure transportation system for all users	
Performance and Reliability: Enhance transportation system efficiency and freight movement	
Access & Connectivity: Enhance mobility by improving access to opportunities and multimodal options	
Stewardship: Strategically maintain and improve the transportation system through coordination, economic competitiveness, and resource management	
System & Environmental Preservation: Maintain and preserve the transportation system and natural environment	

Figure 6.2 –Garden City: 2050 MTP Goals

2050 MTP Investments and Performance

The 2050 MTP provides a financially balanced list of projects where the aggregate project costs must not exceed the \$2.179 billion anticipated funding for the 26-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 the Georgia’s motor fuel tax funds. Transportation funds are also generated by local sources, which come from local governments’ general funds, including: 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 \$1.86 billion available in highway funds and \$315 million in transit funds over the life of the plan. The highway investments include specific project improvements

and revenue set-asides for four category projects: Maintenance; Operational Improvements; Transit Set Aside; and Non-Motorized Set Aside. Specifically, 93.2% of project funds are allocated for highway safety and 30.7% for transit safety, aligning with the Vision Zero goals. Focused 2050 MTP investments also address freight (78.6%), congestion management (93.7%), and pavement and bridges (32.1%) safety. ITS, maintenance, electric charging projects, transit and non-motorized projects all help to improve air quality (43.0%). In addition to enhancing transit safety, the FTA and FHWA sourced transit improvements foster achievement of transit asset management goals (14.5%).

Transportation Improvement Program

To implement the highest priority MTP projects, a subset, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is developed, serving as the MPO’s short-range programming document, covering a four-year planning period. It lists the multi-modal projects to be funded with federal revenues and regionally significant projects. Development phases (preliminary engineering (PE), right-of-way (ROW), utility relocation (UTL), and construction (CST)), funding sources and implementation schedules are established and documented.

When the 2040 Plan was adopted, the FY 2021–2024 TIP was in place, superseded by the FY 2024–2027 TIP adopted in November 2023, followed by the FY 2027–2030 TIP, adopted in 2026, which will serve as a baseline for transportation implementation strategies.

The TIP information can be found on the CORE MPO website at: <https://www.thempc.org/Core/Tip#gsc.tab=0>.



Through TIP programming, various projects included in the MTPs have been implemented since 2021, including the following ones that are under construction or are completed. These projects all have impact on Garden City’s transportation system.

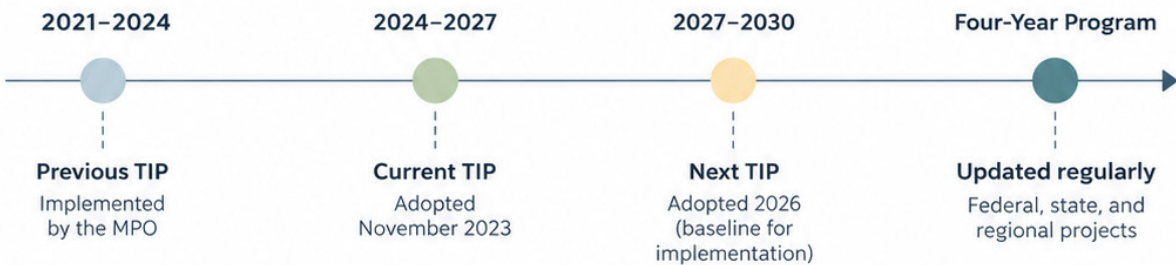
- PI# 0012757, I-16 from I-95 to I-516 (including PI# 0012758, I-95/I-16 Interchange Reconstruction
- PI# 0013727, I-16 @ SR 307 (Diverging Diamond Interchange)
- PI# 0006328, Brampton Road Connector from Foundation Drive to SR 21/SR25/US80
- Repairs on Chatham Parkway Bridge over I-16
- Various operational and maintenance lump sum projects

The MTP projects impacting Garden City that are in the pipeline for implementation through TIP include the following:

- PI# 0020351, I-16 from W Gwinnett St. to Chatham Pkwy – NEVI Charging Station
- PI# 0020282, SR 307 from Garden City #635909H to Old Louisville Road – Grade Separation
- Various operational and maintenance lump sum projects

Transportation Improvement Program

PROGRAM TIMELINE



TYPES OF PROJECTS



EXAMPLE PROJECTS IN GARDEN CITY



Local Projects

Besides MTP and TIP, the Garden City Public Works Department works on preservation of City streets, ditches, street signs, and sidewalks as well as removal of storm debris. Garden City has implemented the following transportation improvement projects with local funds since October 2021:

- Removal of debris from Hurricane Helene
- Street Maintenance – citywide

Garden City has programmed the following transportation improvement projects for implementation in the next five years:

- Street Resurfacing and Paving (SPLOST 8)
- Sidewalk Rehabilitation (SPLOST 8)



Highway Functional Classification

There are approximately 2,940 miles of public roadways in the Savannah MSA region divided into various functional classifications: Local; Minor and Major Collectors; Minor and Principal Arterials; Freeway/Expressway; and Interstate Highway. Approximately 60 miles of these roadways are located in Garden City, including:

- A 3.5-mile stretch of I-16 that crosses through the City.
- SR 21, consisting of 3.5 miles of roadway, serves as the main north-south arterial in the City, providing localities north of Garden City a direct connection to downtown Savannah with subsequent high traffic volumes.
- A 3.6-mile length of US 80 crosses through the middle-to-southern portion of the City.
- US 17 acts as the southern boundary of the City
- The remainder of the City consists of primarily local roads with collectors providing access to the major transportation routes in the City.

The highway functional classification (FC) is updated every 10 years with the decennial census. The majority of the FC does not change. In November 2024, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Georgia Division approved the updates to the Highway Functional Classification System in the CORE MPO region. One of them, re-classifying Pine Meadow Drive from a Local to a Major Collector, is near Garden City.

Bridges

In relation to the waterways and topography, there are 311 bridges and 96 box culverts in the CORE MPO region. It is important to have a good understanding of the bridge locations and conditions to monitor safety, congestion and freight movement. There are 16 bridges within the City limits of Garden City, consisting of highway and railroad overpasses, and small crossings over creeks and canals.

Freight mobility may be impacted if a facility does not have sufficient vertical clearance (generally 26.5 feet), resulting in diversion to less efficient routes. In general, bridges with less than 16.5 feet of vertical clearance can impose significant challenges to the movement of goods. There is one bridge in Garden City that does not meet the current standard for minimum vertical clearance: Structure No. 5101560 - Chatham Parkway over I-16. The insufficient height has resulted in damage to the bridge when a vehicle towing an excavator crashed into the overpass in 2024. In 2025, GDOT repaired the damage, however, a long-term solution to raise the vertical clearance is needed.

Pavement Conditions

Roadway pavement conditions can impact the cost and safety of passenger and freight travel, causing wear and tear on vehicles and damaging the transported goods, as well as impacting travel time-based performance measures. Pavement conditions impact safety performance,

and are sorted into three categories: good, fair and poor. About 84% the CORE MPO region's roadway network has pavements are rated good to fair condition.

Garden City's proximity to the Georgia Ports Authority's Garden City Terminal and associated industrial areas generate a significant volume of freight traffic on SR 21 and portions of SR 307/ Bourne Avenue within or close to the City, which significantly impacts pavement conditions. More information on the Highway Functional Classification, Bridges and Pavement Conditions in the CORE MPO region can be found in the CORE MPO Regional Freight Transportation Plan at <https://www.thempc.org/Core/Fp#gsc.tab=0>.

Intermodal Transportation

Intermodal describes the mass transportation of freight or human passengers, usually over long distances, via more than one mode of transportation.

Port of Savannah

The Port of Savannah and the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) continue to be a major transportation hub and economic engine for both the CORE MPO region and Garden City. The Port of Savannah is the largest and fastest growing container terminal in America and the 3rd busiest

container port complex in U.S., and a major distributor of agricultural products.

The Port is comprised of two deep water terminals. The Garden City Terminal handles container traffic and both Norfolk Southern (NS) and CSX Transportation operate at the Mason Mega Rail Terminal. The Ocean Terminal has on-dock rail access via NS and CSX and handles breakbulk, roll-on/roll-off, and container traffic. This facility is being converted to primarily handle containers. Several projects in the pipeline include:

- Ocean Terminal @ CS 2356/Louisville Road & @ SR 25/US 17 Ramp,
- SR 404 Spur/US 17 @ Savannah River Crossing, and
- Port of Savannah Renewable Fuel Project.

In 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic's substantial disruption of national and international supply chains, GPA handled 41.6 million tons of trade including 5.6 million twenty-foot equivalent container units (TEUs). The total TEU varied in later years - 5,892,131 in 2022, 4,927,654 in 2023, and 5,545,557 in 2024. The 2025 TEU reached 5,251,850 in January to November and is expected to exceed the 2024 volume when the December data is available. The newly completed Savannah Harbor Expansion Project supports jobs and commerce throughout the nation. The project allows newer larger freighters to navigate the river with greater flexibility. The total economic impact of Georgia's deep-water ports on Georgia's economy is \$84 billion. GPA supports more than 369,000 jobs and approximately \$20.4 billion in personal income annually.

Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport

Garden City is in close proximity to the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV) which is a commercial and military-use airport in Savannah, Georgia. The Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport (SAV), the second busiest in Georgia, is a commercial and military-use airport owned by the City of Savannah and managed by the Savannah Airport Commission. SAV serves as the chief commercial airport for Savannah, the Coastal Empire region of southeast Georgia and the Lowcountry of South Carolina. The Hilton Head, S.C. resort accounts for 40% of total airport passenger traffic.

SAV is currently served by eight SAV is second only to the Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport as Georgia’s busiest commercial airport. SAV is currently served by eight passenger carriers and serves as the world headquarters for Gulfstream Aerospace. The Georgia Air National Guard’s 165th Airlift Wing is also based at SAV. The only regional public airport handling cargo, it accommodates five dedicated cargo carriers, with 138,000 square feet of public and private on-site air cargo warehouse space in two structures. In 2024, SAV handled 2,063,282 enplanements, 2,071,099 deplanements, and 13,514.60 tons of air cargo. Cargo handling facilities are sited along Bob Harmon Road, accessed by SR 307/Dean Forest Road. As air cargo is typically interchanged with highway freight, SAV impacts these and surrounding roadways by generating truck traffic to and from its air cargo facilities.

SAV Improvement Projects 2021-2026	
Completed Projects	Current Projects - 2026
Security Checkpoint Expansion	Fuel Storage Facility
	Air Cargo Facility
Construct Auxiliary Parking	Terminal Concourse Expansion
Demo Quail Run Lodge	Taxiway G & Bridge
	Demo Air Cargo Phase 1B.

Figure 6.3 –SAV Improvement Projects 2021-2026

Freight Rail Service

Within the CORE MPO region, 278.9 miles of freight network exist. Two Class I railroads, Norfolk Southern (NS) and CSX Transportation, carry long-distance freight into other regions of the United States or internationally into Canada and Mexico. Seven Class III railroads provide direct, last-mile connections to key destinations in the freight network, including ports, industrial facilities, and warehousing and distribution centers. The major commodities transported by these integrated rail systems are pulp and paper, furniture, fixtures, tobacco products, rubber and plastics, leather, clay, concrete, glass or stone products, fabricated metal products, non-electrical and electrical machinery, and scrap metals.

Garden City contains roughly 56 miles of railroads owned and operated by CSX Transportation and Norfolk Southern, primarily related to the transport of commodities to and from the Georgia Ports Authority. Two rail intermodal terminals are components of the freight rail system in the region, including the Mason Mega Rail Terminal adjacent to the Port of Savannah’s Garden City Terminal that opened at full capacity in 2022.

Freight Intensive Land Use

Freight intensive land uses, typically warehouses and distribution centers, are generally concentrated along the Savannah River and I-95 north of Louisville Road. The numerous warehouses and distribution centers are an important consideration when discussing intermodal transportation. The freight intensive land uses in Garden City are located near major freight generators such as the Port of Savannah and the freight rail terminals.

Truck Parking

Freight intensive land uses in and around Garden City mean that truck parking is a critical consideration. Of the total 22 truck parking facilities in the CORE MPO region, three commercial parking facilities are located in Garden City.

Railroad Crossings

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. At-grade rail crossings represent points where the highway and rail systems interact and have the potential for conflict, posing safety hazards. In total, there are 192 public at-grade rail crossings in the CORE MPO region. Of the 10 busiest public at-grade rail crossings, three are located in Garden City:

- NS at Big Hill Road (Near Charlie Gay Dr.)
- CSX at Nelson Avenue (Near SR 25),
- CSX at SR 307/Bourne Avenue (Near SR 21).

Chatham County secured a Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant in 2023 and is conducting the Multimodal Community Improvement Project in coordination with Savannah, Garden City, Port Wentworth, GPA, CSX, and Norfolk Southern. The findings from this study will be incorporated into the next Freight Plan update.

More information on GPA, SAV, Freight Rail System, Freight Intensive Land Use, Truck Parking Inventory, and Railroad Crossings can be found in the CORE MPO Regional Freight Transportation Plan at <https://www.thempc.org/Core/Fp#gsc.tab=0>



Non-Motorized Transportation

While the automobile is the primary mode of transportation in the CORE MPO region, bicycling and walking are important modes. CORE MPO and Garden City have a strong commitment to provision of safe and connected facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. Since October 2021, CORE MPO has undertaken various planning efforts regarding non-motorized transportation which will impact the City of Garden City, including the following.

- CORE MPO updated the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. The plan identified: needed improvements for the non-motorized modes; areas for amenities to help create a human-scale environment that encourages use of physically active modes; and prioritized improvements and identified funding opportunities.
- CORE MPO is conducting the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study with completion slated in March 2027. The study will: create a bike and pedestrian facility inventory; conduct a comprehensive regional non-motorized needs assessment; and provide recommendations for improvements that can be incorporated into the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and local plans for implementation.

CORE MPO and Garden City have worked on implementing non-motorized projects with or without federal funds since October 2021. The included projects from the 2014/2020 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and ones implemented by Garden City’s Public Works Department.

Transit Systems

Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT)

The Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) is the agency responsible for the provision of transit services to the Savannah area, specifically the City of Savannah, the unincorporated Chatham County, and portions of Garden City and Port Wentworth, providing a combination of bus and ferry service.

CAT Mobility provides paratransit transportation for people with disabilities. People can use this service to travel anywhere in Chatham County, including Garden City. CAT operates three fixed routes that service Garden City.

In June 2023, CAT expanded services into Garden City by adding six new ADA-accessible bus stops with shelters along SR 21, including locations at: Priscilla D. Thomas Way & Augusta Ave; Varnedoe Ave & Augusta Ave; and Smith Ave & Augusta Ave (inbound/ outbound). Garden City funded the expansion through an agreement with CAT, paying from the City’s general fund. The expansion aims to improve access to employment (e.g. the growing port/warehouse community), grocery stores, medical facilities, and educational opportunities for Garden City residents.

Average Annual Passengers Per Hour By Route						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
3 WEST CHATHAM	14.8	13.7	9.4	7.6	8.0	12.8
3B AUGUSTA AVENUE	23.3	20.6	14.4	12.4	16.2	22.5
17 SILK HOPE	17.2	16.2	13.0	9.3	10.5	16.5

Figure 6.4 – Average Annual Passengers Per Hour by Route

Figure 6.4 –Average Annual Passengers per Hour By Route

CAT Planning and Programming

CAT continues to evaluate system coverage and operation and analyze ridership to ensure an efficient and reliable transit system is in place for the community. Since October 2021, CAT has completed various planning efforts, including the following.

- Master Transit Plan: Outlines a strategic plan for the future of mobility (beyond 5 years) and positions CAT to respond to opportunities created through local and regional growth, new transportation technologies, and lessons learned about travel needs and patterns.
- Comprehensive Operational Analysis and Transit Development Plan: It provides an analysis of current services and a guide for improvements over the next 5 years. The recommended changes are primarily focused on service changes to the fixed routes and the introduction of new complimentary micro-transit services to best respond to growing and changing customer needs.
- Bus Stop Inventory Study: Assesses the 1,000+ bus stops using a GIS database for location and condition, focusing on safety, lighting, accessibility (ADA), and stop amenities.

CAT has identified the following capital improvements to provide more efficient and accommodating services and to meet the future needs of the growing community, including Garden City.

CAT Improvement Projects	
Short Term (TIP Years)	Long Term
Transit ITS	Vehicle Replacement/Expansion - Fixed Route
Preventative Maintenance	Vehicle Replacement – Paratransit
Facility Enhancements and Rehabilitation	Intelligent Transit System (ITS)
Vehicle Replacement/Purchase	Upgraded Farebox and Payment System
Ferry Boat Rehab, Purchase and Construction	Electric Vehicle Infrastructure
Paratransit Maintenance Facility	Passenger Amenities
Bus Stop Improvement Program	Facility Improvement Project – ITC
Gillig Zero Emission Buses (35-ft)	Facility Improvement Project – Gwinnett

Figure 6.5 –CAT Improvement Projects

CAT has identified the following operational improvements that will impact Garden City.

- Introduced new services like Route 5 and SMART Microtransit for broader connectivity in West Chatham, including Garden City.
- Discussing transportation solutions for workers commuting to the new Hyundai plant.

CAT Improvement Projects	
Short Term (TIP Years)	Long Term
Infrastructure & Depot Charging	Vanpool Capital
	Park & Ride Capital
	Facility Construction - Ferry Maintenance Facility
	Facility Construction - Ferry Dock
	Ferry Boat Construction

Figure 6.6 –CAT Improvement Projects

Coastal Regional Commission

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, including Garden City. 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 Savannah UZA.

In 2024, CRC and GDOT completed the Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) for the Coastal Georgia Region. The plan is a guide for CRC and its 10 member counties, along with their implementation partners, to advance a regional transit system that aligns with community based regional transit vision and goals. The plan provides robust documentation of regional mobility conditions and contributing context and identities next steps to advance specific transit service recommendations. Where relevant, the plan identifies alternative service options that advance long-term transit goals but require further regional consideration. The overarching goal of the Regional TDP is to facilitate public transit accessibility to all community members in the region with particular focus on residents who are transit dependent.

Transportation Technology

Innovations in transportation technology are often born out of three necessities: efficiency, ease, and safety. Further exploration of transportation related technology in the Garden City includes but is not limited to: automated vehicle technology; autonomous vehicles; traffic operational improvements for its 13 signalized intersections; ride sharing; and bike/scooter options.



TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGY

 Automated Vehicle Technology Support for emerging autonomous vehicle technology	 Intersection Improvements Traffic operations technology for 13 signalized intersections	 Ride Sharing Expanded transportation options	 Bike and Scooter Options Support for micromobility to improve first/last mile access	 Efficiency, Ease and Safety Use of technology to create a more efficient and safer transportation system
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07

HOUSING



Introduction

Garden City’s housing needs are evolving as population growth, economic expansion, and industrial development place increasing pressure on the local housing market. The Housing Chapter provides an inventory and assessment of the City’s existing housing stock and examines current and future housing issues affecting Garden City residents. The chapter further identifies key housing challenges, evaluates future housing demand, and outlines strategies to guide housing development in a manner that supports safe, decent, and affordable living environments. Emphasis is placed on coordinating local, state, and federal housing policies and programs to respond effectively to changing community needs.

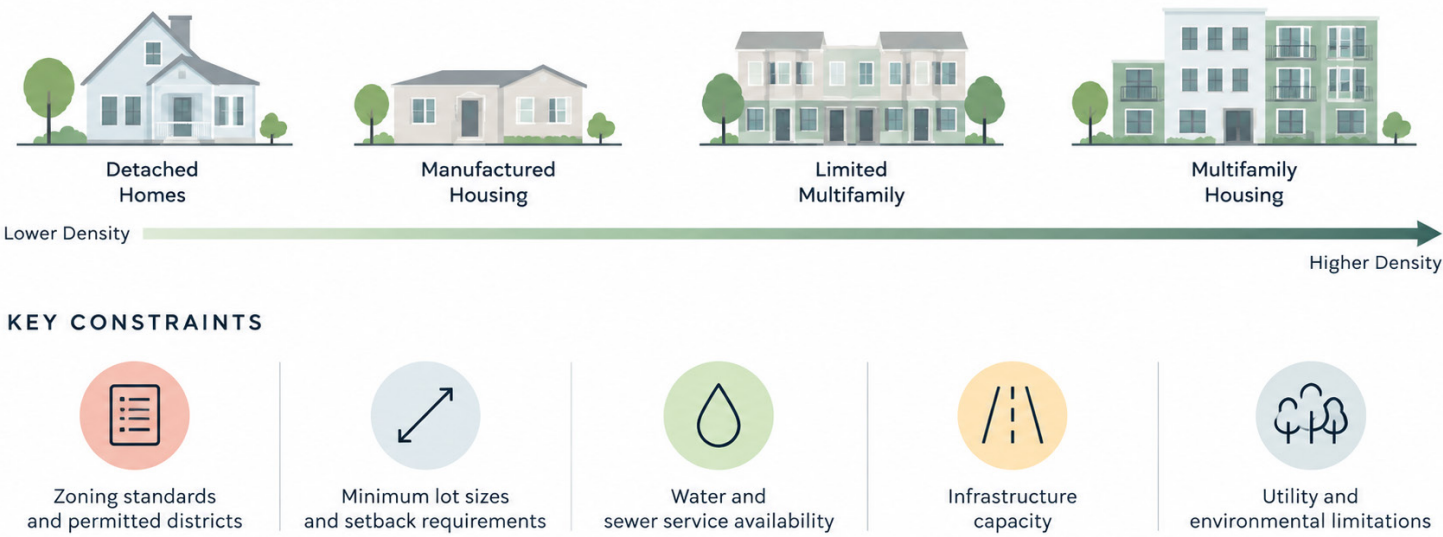
To support a stable and socioeconomically diverse community, Garden City must provide a range of housing types and affordability levels. Population projections are used to estimate overall housing demand as well as the need for specific housing forms, including multifamily housing, affordable housing, and housing for special-needs populations



The State of Housing

Regulatory Context and Infrastructure Constraints

Garden City’s zoning ordinance allows a range of residential forms, including detached homes, manufactured housing, and limited multifamily development; however, actual housing outcomes are strongly shaped by dimensional standards, permitted districts, and infrastructure availability. Much of the City’s residential development pattern reflects lower-density forms, influenced by minimum lot sizes, setback requirements, and the availability of water and sewer service. Higher-density and multifamily housing is generally limited to areas served by adequate utilities and appropriately zoned districts. Overall, Garden City’s housing structure reflects a regulatory approach that balances housing provision with service capacity and industrial land use compatibility. Expanding housing diversity and affordability will require targeted zoning flexibility paired with infrastructure investment in suitable locations.



Housing Structure and Form

Garden City’s housing stock reflects a diverse but transitional structure mix, shaped by historic development patterns and recent incremental growth. Single-unit detached homes comprise the largest share of housing units at 45.6%, a decline from nearly 50% in the Plan 2040 period. Small-scale multifamily housing plays a significant role, with three- to nine-unit structures comprising almost 24% of the housing stock, showing notable increases over time. Larger multifamily structures remain limited, representing just over 1% of total units.

Mobile homes continue to represent a substantial component at almost 20%, reflecting Garden City’s historically naturally affordable and lower-density housing options. Currently, the majority of housing areas are allocated for single-family, detached housing, but there is a rising interest in higher density multifamily unit complexes and medium density multifamily housing types. Overall, the data indicates a gradual shift away from exclusively single-family development toward smaller multifamily formats, while maintaining a predominantly low- to moderate-density housing profile.

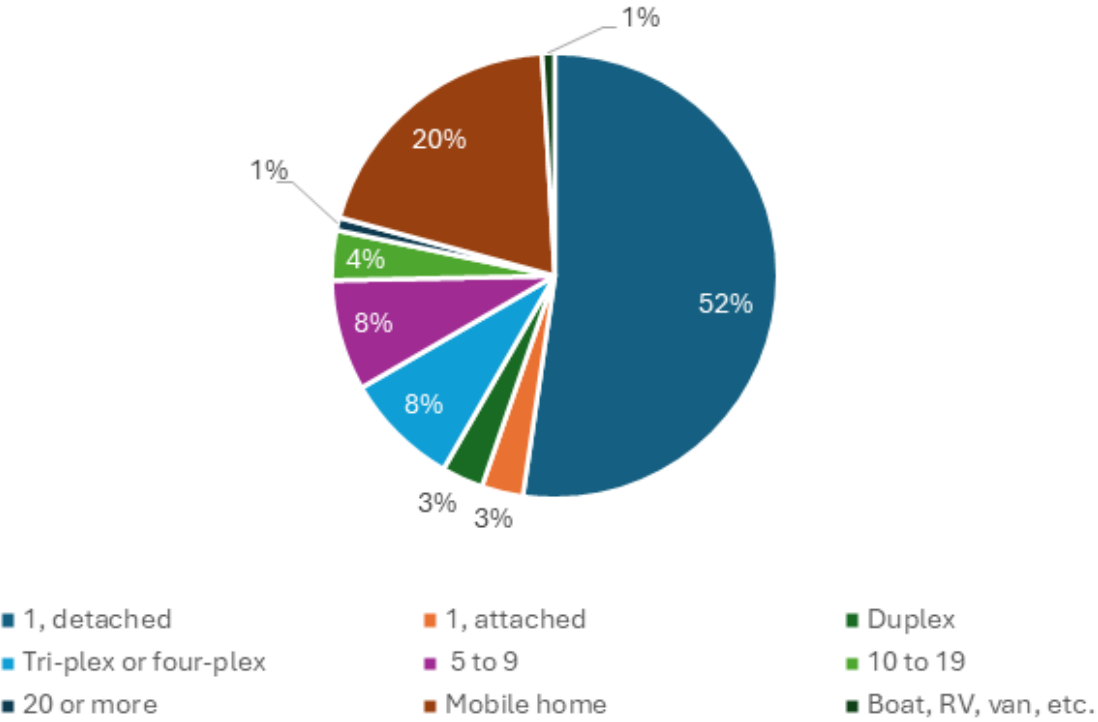


Figure 7.1-Garden City: Housing Unit Type

Age of Housing Stock and Condition

Garden City’s housing stock is predominantly older, with a large concentration of units built prior to 1990 and relatively limited recent construction. Industrial City Gardens, created in 1939, was the first planned subdivision in the City, conceptualized during the Depression to provide affordable homes with gardens for industrial workers at the new factories and chemical plants being established just west of Savannah. This neighborhood significantly contributes to the number of dwelling units constructed in the period between 1940 to 1950 and served as the City’s residential foundation for official charter in February 1939.

Nearly one-half of all housing units were built before 1980, with the largest single cohort dating to the 1970–1979 period (23.1%). Housing built between 1950 and 1979 alone accounts for more than 46% of the total stock, underscoring the prevalence of aging structures that are more likely to face maintenance, energy efficiency, and resilience challenges. In contrast, recent housing production has been minimal: fewer than 4% of units were built after 2010, and just over 2% were constructed since 2020. This age profile highlights the importance of housing rehabilitation, reinvestment, and modernization strategies, as well as the need to ensure that older homes remain safe, energy-efficient, and affordable for long-term and fixed-income residents.

There also have been shifts in older housing cohorts, particularly declines in detached single family type pre-1960 units reflecting gradual replacement, redevelopment, or reclassification of zoning category of aging structures pending property resale. This age profile suggests that maintenance, rehabilitation, and energy efficiency upgrades will remain critical for housing policy considerations, especially as Garden City plans for population growth and increased housing demand tied to regional economic expansion.



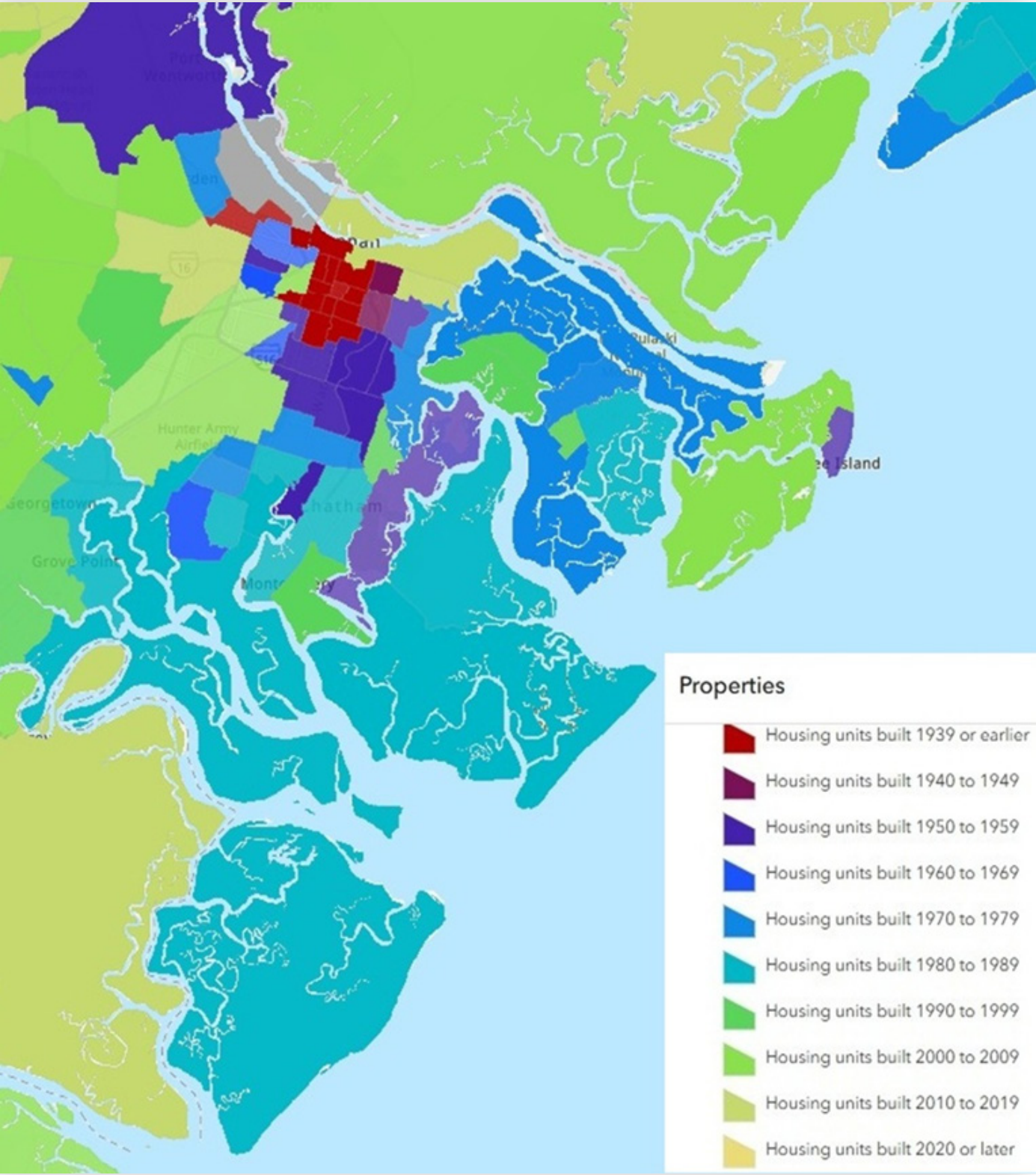


Exhibit 7.1–Garden City: Year Housing Unit Built

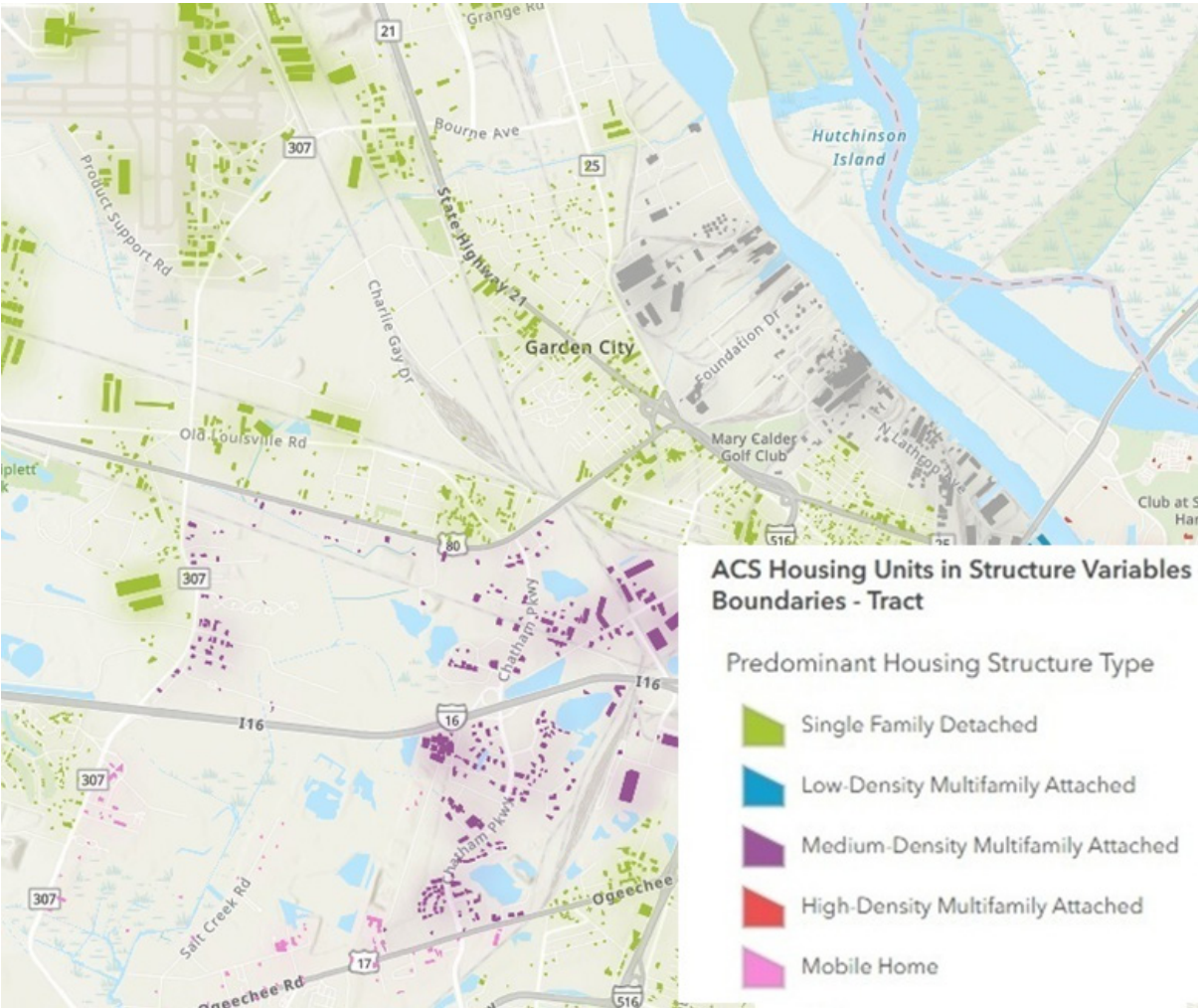


Exhibit 7.2–Garden City: Housing Unit Types

Year Housing Built		
Year Built	Rationale	% Units
Built 2020 or later	Limited post-pandemic production; minimal contribution to housing supply	2.1%
Built 2010–2019	Very small cohort reflecting slow recovery-era growth	1.8%
Built 2000–2009	Modest expansion period; smaller-scale infill and suburban development	12.1%
Built 1990–1999	Aging systems; increasing rehabilitation needs	17.7%
Built 1980–1989	Energy, plumbing, and roof upgrades increasingly needed	10.7%
Built 1970–1979	Largest cohort; high retrofit and resilience potential	23.1%
Built 1960–1969	Aging infrastructure; moderate unit sizes	12.7%
Built 1950–1959	Smaller units; maintenance- and efficiency-intensive	10.2%
Built 1940–1949	Often historic or <u>near-historic</u> ; reinvestment sensitive, maintenance intensive	9.2%
Built 1939 or earlier	Preservation and rehabilitation priority	0.4%

Figure 7.2–Garden City: Year Housing Built

Housing Infrastructure and Basic Services

Housing quality indicators remain generally strong but reveal localized vulnerabilities. Less than 1% of occupied units lack complete plumbing facilities, indicating that basic housing infrastructure is largely intact. However, the presence of any plumbing deficiencies combined with the age profile of the housing stock signals an ongoing need for rehabilitation and repair assistance to prevent deterioration, particularly for lower-income and mortgage-free households living in older homes. As well, households without a vehicle, likely dependent on public transportation or alternate forms of transportation, suggests that attention to CAT routes and pedestrian/bicycle linkages is important

Heating fuel data indicate that Garden City’s housing stock remains predominantly electric, serving as the primary heating source for approximately 65% of occupied units. While electric heating remains dominant, the share of homes using utility gas increased from 25% in 2014–2018 to just over 31% in 2019–2023, reflecting incremental system upgrades and limited diversification of energy sources rather than a full electrification shift.

This pattern is consistent with Garden City’s older housing stock, where wholesale system conversions are less common and retrofits tend to be incremental. These conditions highlight the importance of targeted energy-efficiency and weatherization programs that reduce operating costs while supporting long-term resilience goals. Access to communication services continues to improve, but affordability-related gaps persist.

Approximately 2.3% of households report no telephone service, an increase from the prior period. While this share remains relatively small, it underscores broader affordability and access challenges affecting lower-income households. Reliable communication access is critical for employment, education, healthcare, and emergency response, reinforcing the need to integrate digital access considerations into housing rehabilitation, affordability, and supportive housing strategies in Garden City.

The City of Savannah will continue to update land use and zoning policies to expand housing choice and affordability by permitting diverse housing types, promoting infill and mixed-use development, supporting adaptive reuse and strengthening connectivity and neighborhood compatible design. Specialized and group living arrangements such as senior housing, single room occupancy units, shelters, and recovery facilities are incorporated into the zoning ordinance through tailored standards related to management, separation, and buffering.

Collectively, these regulatory provisions support housing diversity, infill opportunities, adaptive reuse, and incremental density while maintaining neighborhood character. They position Savannah to address affordability, aging-in-place, and housing stability challenges through flexible use of its existing and future housing stock.

However, there is a finite amount of land in the vicinity surrounding downtown that is currently zoned to accommodate the development of missing middle and multifamily product types. Even accounting for the amendments in the zoning Code which facilitate the provision of more diverse housing typologies, upper-story residential and mixed-use projects will not enable enough housing along commercial corridors to meet the demand for more affordable subsidized and market rate housing types.

Newly annexed outlying lands are predominantly zoned for single-family detached housing. A more granular neighborhood level analysis of these recently annexed areas, in conjunction with the proposed Nodes and Corridors FLUM map, it is recommended to determine if rezoning portions of the land is warranted to accommodate assisted and more naturally occurring housing types for middle and lower-income households.

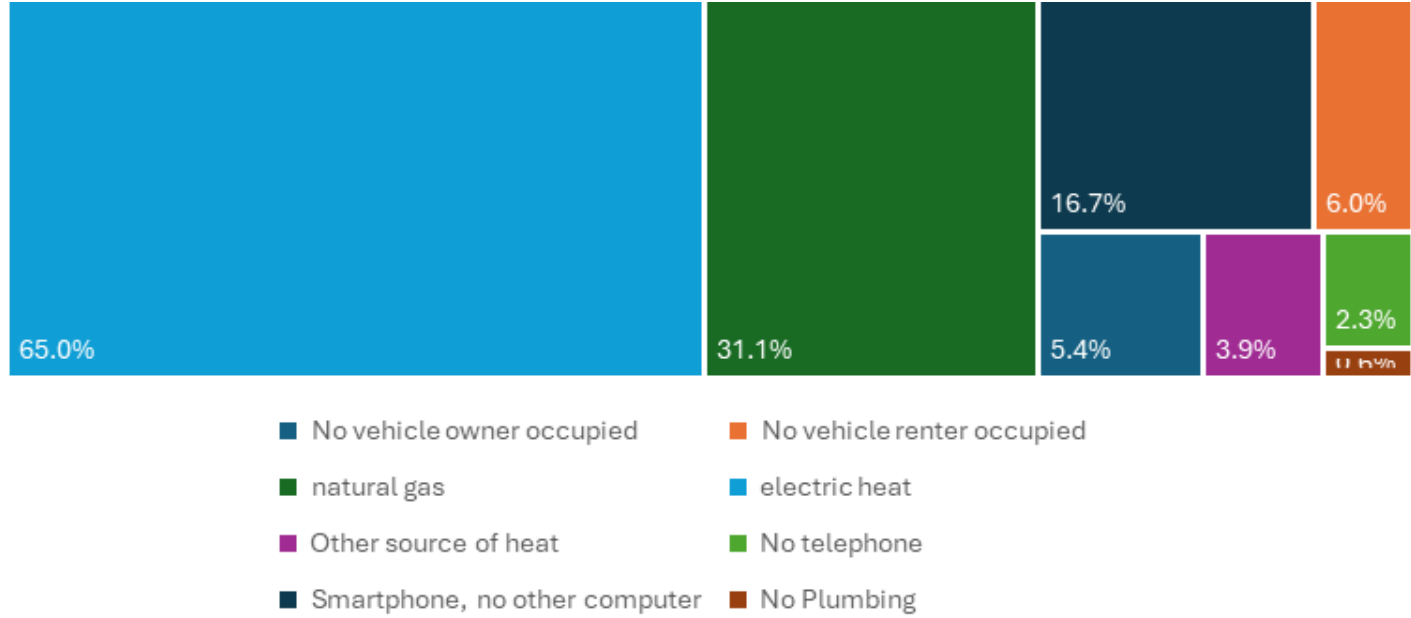


Figure 7.3–Garden City Housing Infrastructure and Basic Services Indicators

Housing Statistics

Housing Tenure

In Garden City, renter-occupied housing continues to represent the majority of occupied units. Recent data indicates a modest shift toward homeownership, with the share of owner-occupied units increasing from 35% to just over 40%, with corresponding decreases in renter-occupied units. However, Garden City remains a renter-majority community, reflecting the City’s historically middle and lower-income household base, and conversion of single-family units to rental property investments. As well, there is a more transient workforce associated with industrial and logistics-based employment base in the City, supported by ACS 2024 5-Year Estimate statistics which disclose that renters move more often than homeowners. While 15% of total households moved within a one-year time period, 86% of those were renter households, the majority of which were intra-county moves.

Tenure by Unit Type

As shown in Figure 7.4 – Garden City: Tenure by Housing Type, the greater portion (76.5%) of ownership units are single-family units and mobile homes (21.4%), with a few duplex units. Single-family detached and attached homes are also the most predominant rental option, followed by small multifamily complexes and mobile homes, reflecting the distribution of unit types in the City. Large apartment complexes represent only a small portion of the rental stock in Garden City, as they represent only 4.6% of total housing inventory.

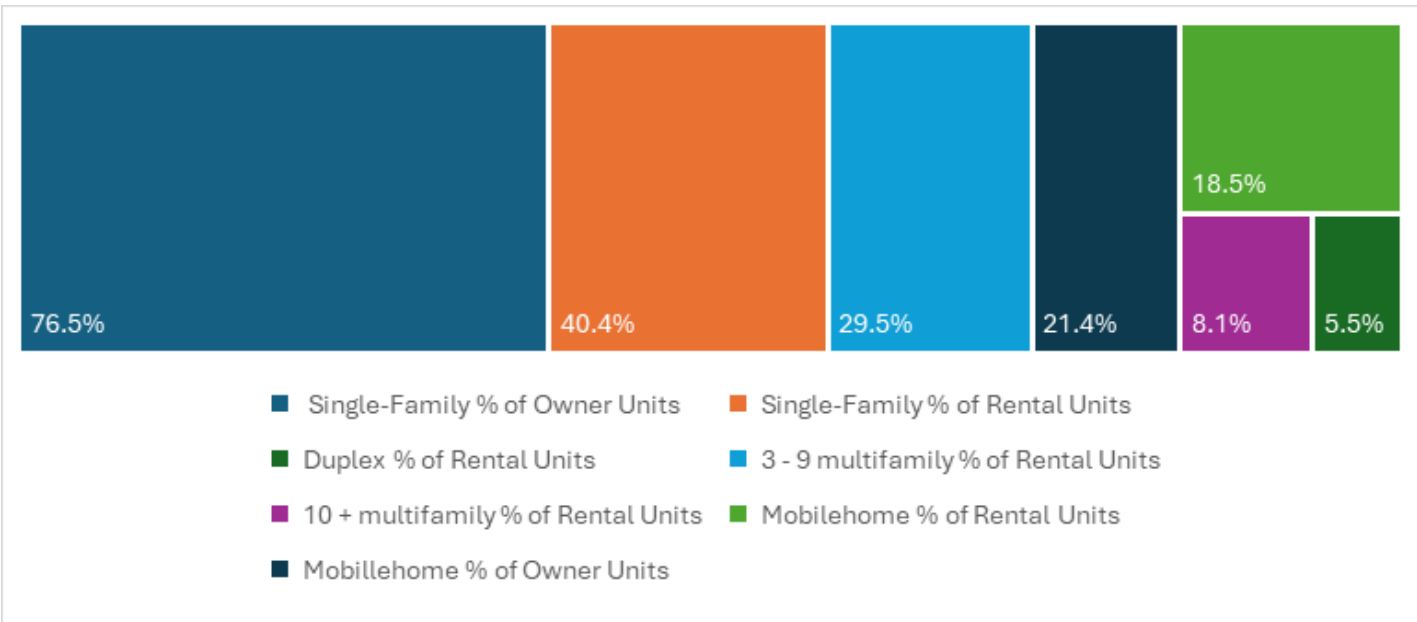


Figure 7.4-Garden City: Tenure by Housing Unit Type

Occupancy Patterns by Race and Ethnicity

Occupancy patterns also differ by race and ethnicity, based on proportional presence in Garden City, as discussed in the Community Profile chapter. The majority of homeowners are White, residing in 64% of ownership units. In comparison, one-quarter of ownership residents are Black-African American. In terms of rental units, more than one-half of renter-occupied units are inhabited by Black-African American households compared to 30% occupied by White households. However, as shown previously on Figure 7.4 – Garden City: Tenure by Housing Unit Type, 40.4% of rental units in the City are single-family, and 18.5% are mobile homes; therefore, there exists a range of diverse rental options for all renters. Households identifying as Hispanic or Latino origin, which may be of any race category but tend to identify as “another race” or “two races” are slightly more heavily renters.

Owner-occupied households are disproportionately older, with most homeowners age 45 and over and a significant share age 65+, reflecting long-term tenure, mortgage-free ownership, and aging in place on fixed or limited incomes. In contrast, renter households are substantially younger, concentrated under age 45, particularly under age 35, and experience higher mobility, lower incomes, and greater housing cost burden. This divide highlights a growing generational imbalance in which older residents remain housing-stable but financially vulnerable to rising operating costs, while younger residents face more limited rental affordability and constrained pathways to homeownership.

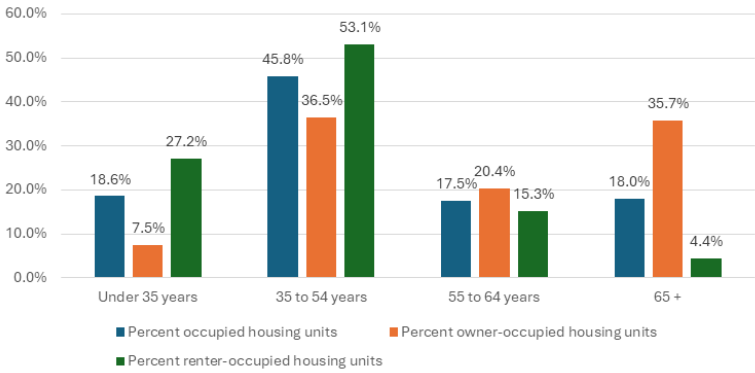


Figure 7.6-Garden City: Age of Householder by Tenure

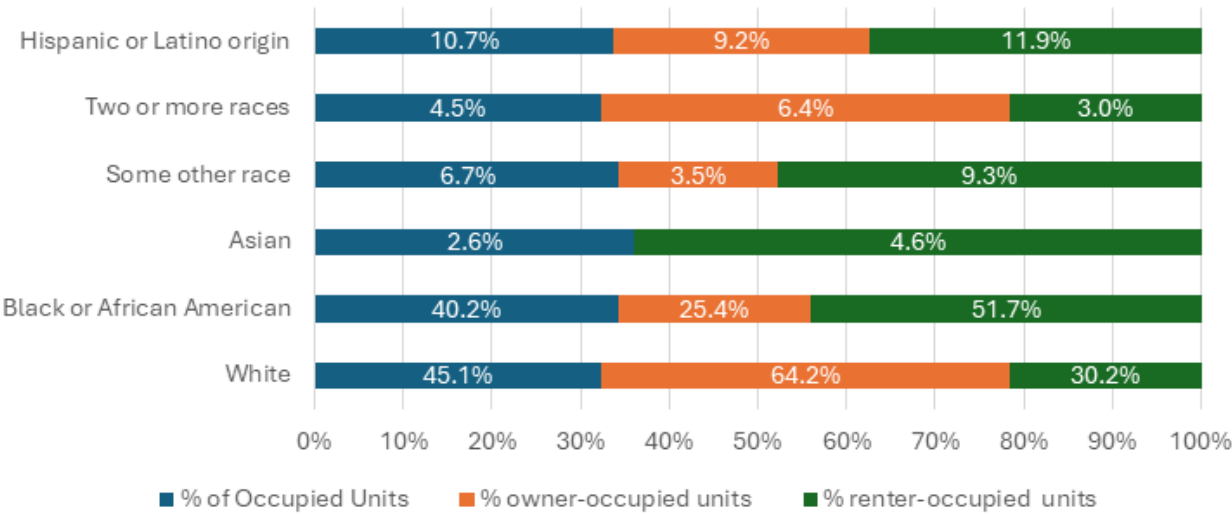


Figure 7.5-Garden City: Tenure by Race and Ethnicity

Household Composition

Household composition in Garden City is increasingly characterized by smaller households, with nonfamily, single parent and single-person households making up a growing share. Average household size has declined from 2.67 persons to 2.39 persons. According to 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, two person households constitute 21.4% of the total households, 20.2% are three person households, and only 17.7% include four or more persons. While there has been a decrease in size of renter households, they continue to be larger than homeowner households, particularly in three-and-four-person family units.

As shown in the figure – Garden City: Household Composition, while family households remain the majority at 55.3% of total household formations, married-couple households constitute only one-quarter of the City’s households. Roughly one-third of married couple families include children under 18 years of age, contributing to a portion of households with 3 or more persons. Other family households, predominantly single parent headed households, comprise more than one-half of total family household types. Of single parent households, almost three-quarters are single female headed households, and the greater portion of these families (85%) include children under 18 years of age.

While single male headed households represent a smaller proportion of other family households, 76% of this family type report the presence of children under age 18. Over 66% of married couple households reside in single family detached structures, almost 24% in multifamily, and 9% in mobile homes. The mix of tenure status among married couple families is almost equal, with just 1% gap between owners and renters. Of the single parent household group, almost 64% reside in single family dwellings, and 24% in mobile homes, with only 10% in multifamily units, possibly in relation to family size and restricted availability of multifamily units with a larger number of bedrooms. Over 83% of female headed households are renters, suggesting that a large portion of this family type reside in single-family homes. In contrast, single male headed households display a higher ownership rate, at over 44%, with almost 63% of this family type residing in mobile homes.

Nonfamily households, the majority of which are persons residing alone, comprise almost 45% of total households. However, only a small share of persons living alone are seniors, at only 9.6% of total households. Slightly over 53% of homeowners are persons living alone, compared to 31% of renters. The high proportion of non-traditional family units likely reflects the transient nature of logistics, freight and manufacturing employment associated with the Port and its associated business partners, which may attract younger, unmarried individuals. In addition, the relatively large proportion of mobile homes, which are more naturally occurring lower cost housing options, may attract lower to moderate-income households, many of which may be single parent or single person households.

Concurrently with this shift in household formation, the City’s housing supply remains dominated by older, detached single-family units, with limited new production serving smaller households, seniors, or lower-income residents. With smaller household formation, single wage earner households may face increased housing cost pressures within the rental market. This disparity between household needs and available housing underscores the need for missing-middle, smaller-scale ownership and rental options, and accessible housing, rather than reliance on market correction alone.

Household Size by Tenure		
Household Size	% of Tenure	% of Total H.H.
Owner occupied:		43.7%
1-person household	53.2%	23.3%
2-person household	24.7%	10.8%
3-person household	9.0%	3.9%
4-person household	7.9%	3.5%
5-person household	4.2%	1.9%
6-person household	0.0%	0.0%
7-or-more person household	0.9%	0.4%
Renter occupied:		56.3%
1-person household	31.2%	17.6%
2-person household	18.9%	10.6%
3-person household	28.9%	16.3%
4-person household	17.0%	9.6%
5-person household	3.1%	1.8%
6-person household	0.0%	0.0%
7-or-more person household	0.8%	0.5%

Source: 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimate B25009

Figure 7.7–Garden City: Household Size by Tenure

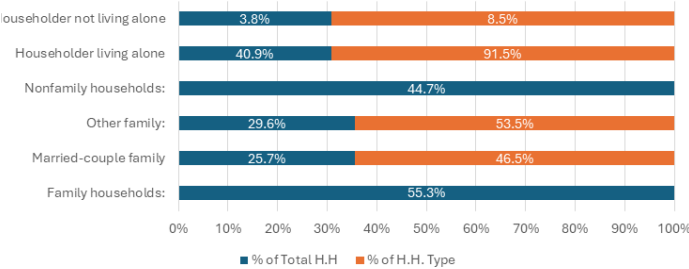


Figure 7.8–Garden City: Household Composition

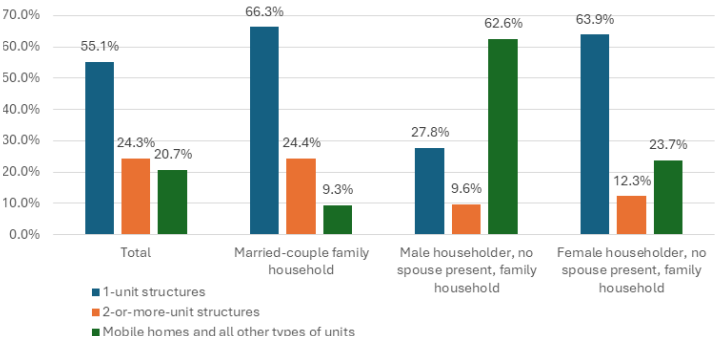


Figure 7.9–Garden City: Unit Type by Family Composition

Housing Type and Occupancy Trends

Housing occupancy levels remain relatively strong in Garden City compared to larger urban jurisdictions, but signs of emerging imbalance are present. As of the most recent estimates, Garden City has approximately 93.3% occupied and 6.7% vacant housing units, indicating that most housing units are actively inhabited. Of the vacant units:

- 32% are actively for rent
- 28% are rented but not occupied
- Roughly 16% are for sale
- The remainder are classified as “other”

In comparison to nearby Pooler and Unincorporated Chatham County to the west, Garden City’s vacancy levels suggest growing sensitivity to market shifts tied to regional growth, industrial expansion and intrusion on quality of life, and affordability pressures. During the Plan 2040 period, less than 40 single-family detached residential units were constructed, as well as Garden City Townhomes, a 136 attached single-family unit complex constructed between 2022 and 2024.

While vacancy has not reached destabilizing levels, continued monitoring is warranted to ensure that future housing growth translates into stable occupancy meeting the needs of residents rather than speculative or underutilized supply.

Housing Values

Between 2020 and 2024, Garden City experienced a measurable upward shift in owner-occupied home values, reflecting broader regional housing market pressures while remaining more affordable than much of Chatham County. Median home values increased from approximately \$129,800 to \$169,400, indicating steady appreciation rather than short-term volatility. The distribution of home values shows a clear movement toward mid-range units. The share of owner-occupied homes valued below \$100,000 declined with many units previously under \$50,000 moving into the \$50,000 to \$99,999 price point.

Only 6% of the units in the \$100,000 to \$149,999 price range remained in 2024. Homes in the \$150,000 to \$299,999 range comprised roughly 50% of the available ownership units in 2024, a significant increase from just under 17% in 2020. Homes valued between \$300,000 and \$499,999 accounting for a small share of the stock, many of which are new builds on infill lots or sites where an older unit has been demolished, based on permit records. Homes above \$500,000 are nearly absent.

This pattern indicates that rising values are driven primarily by appreciation and replacement costs rather than the introduction of higher-end housing. Mortgage status data suggests a relatively stable but financially constrained homeowner population. Slightly less than half of owner-occupied units are owned free and clear, reflecting long-term residency, aging households, and potentially realization of generational wealth, although this proportion has decreased over the Plan 2040 period.

The homeowner is still responsible for property taxes, maintenance, insurance and utilities. Approximately 54% of owners carry a mortgage, exposing a substantial share of households to interest rate fluctuations, insurance increases, and property tax pressures. While Garden City remains a comparatively attainable ownership market, continued appreciation narrows affordability for first-time buyers and workforce households without targeted policy intervention.

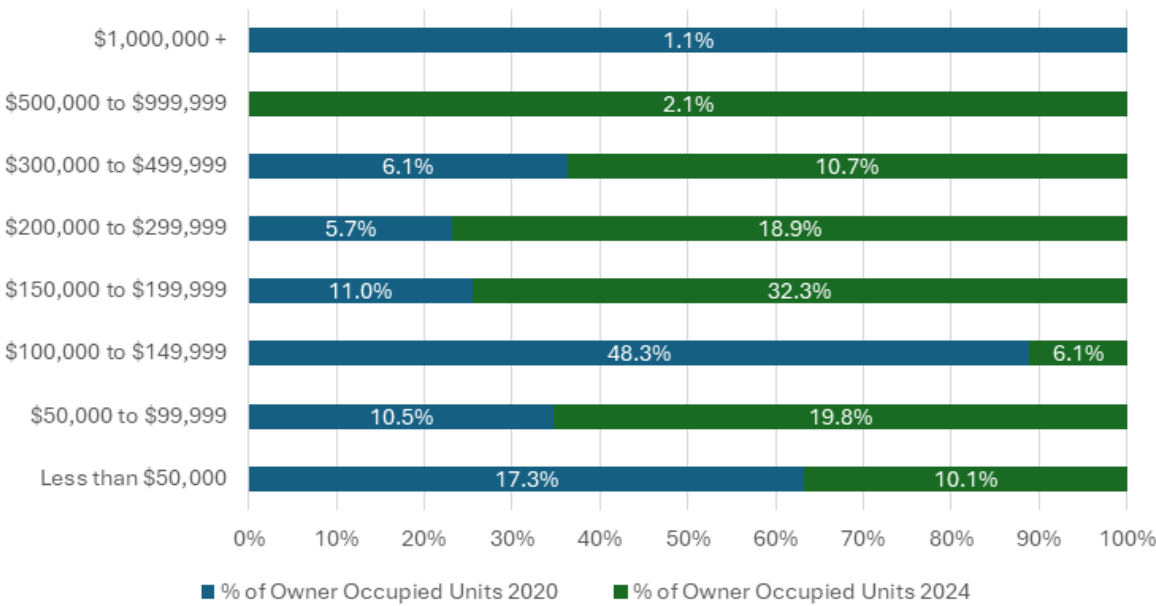


Figure 7.10-Garden City: Owner-Occupied Housing Values

Household Income and Housing Affordability

Owner-occupied households

Owner-occupied housing in Garden City remains relatively affordable in absolute dollar terms compared to the broader region, but the data reveal growing affordability stress and financial vulnerability, particularly when household income is considered alongside ownership costs and housing values. For homeowners with a mortgage, monthly owner costs increased over the 2040 Plan period. Almost 60% of mortgaged households pay between \$500 and \$999 per month.

While the proportion of homeowners paying between \$1,000 to \$1,499 decreased, homeowners paying over \$1,500 increased significantly, with a small percentage responsible for monthly payments over \$2,500 per month when none existed in this cost bracket in 2020. The median monthly owner cost rose from approximately \$802 to \$892.

This shift likely reflects refinancing at higher rates, increased taxes and insurance, rising resale prices, and purchases of new homes, although entry into ownership remains at lower price points relative to Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County.

Mortgage-free homeowners (46% of homeowners), represent a large and economically important segment of Garden City’s housing stock, reflecting a substantial population of long-term residents and seniors, many of whom are fixed-income households. Mortgage-free homes in Garden City are overwhelmingly modest in value. Nearly 90% are valued below \$300,000, with a median value of approximately \$170,000, and virtually none exceed \$500,000. While the absence of mortgage debt and lower monthly costs may provide greater housing stability, it does not eliminate affordability risk; often older units that carry ongoing maintenance, insurance, taxes and utility costs.

Monthly Homeowner Costs		
Monthly Payment	2020 % of Units	2024 % of Units
Housing Units With a Mortgage		
Less than \$500	1.4%	0.0%
\$500 to \$999	55.8%	59.5%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	36.9%	22.3%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	5.9%	15.6%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	0.0%	0.0%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0.0%	1.7%
\$3,000 or more	0.0%	1.0%
Median (dollars)	\$802	\$892
Housing Units Without a Mortgage		
Less than \$250	11.00%	11.6%
\$250 to \$399	48.10%	15.5%
\$400 to \$599	31.20%	40.6%
\$600 to \$799	9.70%	24.9%
\$800 to \$999	0.00%	7.4%
\$1,000 or more	0.00%	0.0%
Median (dollars)	\$373	\$469

Source: ACS 2020 and 2024 5-Year Estimates

Figure 7.11-Garden City: Monthly Homeowner Costs

Renter-occupied households

Rental affordability represents the most acute housing challenge in Garden City. Between 2020 and 2024, rental housing costs increased steadily, with a clear shift toward higher rent categories. The share of rental units priced below \$1,000 per month significantly declined, while higher-cost units expanded. Roughly 56% of renters now pay \$1,000 or more per month, and the share paying \$1,500 to \$1,999 more than quadrupled. Median rent for one- and three-bedroom units, at \$1,314 and \$1,4040 respectively, exceeded the median rent for two-bedroom units, at \$1,075. Median gross rent overall increased from approximately \$942 to \$1,282, confirming sustained rent escalation rather than short-term fluctuation. Fair Market Rent is used primarily to determine the payment standard for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV). These are gross rent estimates, inclusive of utilities, based on 40th percentile rents for standards market rate rental housing units, by number of bedrooms.

Only 1.1% of total rental units are studios, and all of them fall under the FMR, with the majority under \$500 per month. Approximately 11.9% of the rental units in the City are one-bedroom, even though almost 41% of households are single persons living alone. Based on HUD 2024 FMRs, 16.2% of the one-bedroom rentals in Garden City fall under the FMR, with 82.0% between \$1,000 to \$1,499; therefore a portion of the one-bedroom units in this range would be eligible for HCVs. Two-bedroom unit are the most common, and 71% of these rentals fall within the region’s FMR threshold. Three-bedroom rental units, which are typically found in older single-family housing stock, comprise almost 40% of the total rental inventory, with over one-half falling within the FMR threshold. A portion of the units with rents of \$1,500 and above may also lay below the FMR, as 44.4% of the three-bedroom rentals fall within this price point.

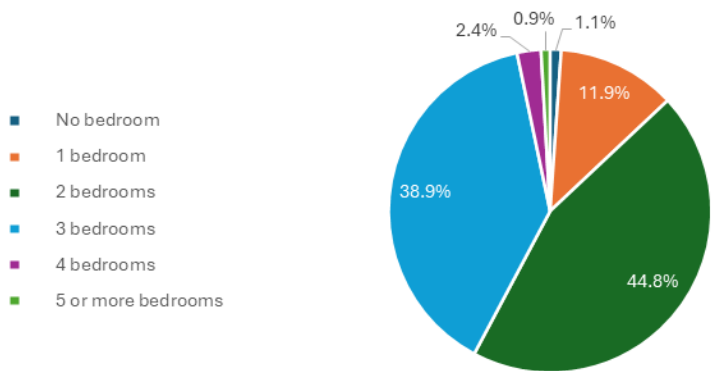


Figure 7.13-Number of Bedrooms in Rental units

Monthly Rent Costs		
Monthly Cash Rent	2020	2024
Up to \$499	26.1%	13.0%
\$500 to \$999	55.5%	31.7%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	16.8%	44.7%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	1.6%	9.7%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	0.0%	0.8%

Source: ACS 2024 5-Year Estimates B25056

Figure 7.12-Garden City: Monthly Rent Costs

2024 FMR	
\$1,191	studio
\$1,287	1 bd
\$1,445	2 bd
\$1,967	3 bd
\$2,306	4 bd

Affordability and Cost Burden

The availability and affordability of housing countywide is connected to nearly every other element of the Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update. Rising housing costs are outpacing increases in household income and many residents are left unable to afford a home, given the 30% housing costs to gross income ratio typically used to determine cost burden. 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 cost burden is defined as paying more than 50% of one’s income on household costs. While a small proportion of residents may choose to pay a higher percentage of income on housing for specific amenities, unit or lot size, or location, cost burden is often a significant concern in order to find suitable housing for each households’ unique needs. Housing cost burden increased substantially among mortgaged homeowners during the Plan 2040 period, from 16% to 28%.

The share of households spending less than 30% of income on housing declined sharply in the income categories under \$75,000 annually, while the proportion of homeowners with incomes above \$75,000 paying less than 30% of their income on housing increased. In contrast, whereas 10.4% of the homeowners paid between 30% and 49% in 2020, 21% were cost burdened in 2024, particularly in the income categories below \$35,000 annually. The proportion of homeowners that are severely cost burdened in 2024 tripled over the 2040 Plan period for households with incomes below \$20,000; however, within the \$20,000 to \$34,999 income classification, the proportion of severely cost burdened households declined. This indicates that income growth has lagged behind housing-related expenses, including insurance, taxes, utilities, and maintenance, even as nominal mortgage payments declined.

Close to 53% of mortgage-free homeowners earn less than \$50,000 annually, and the median household income for this group is approximately \$38,902, encompassing the income categories in which the most noticeable changes occurred. The value-to-income ratio further illustrates risk: while about 39% of mortgage-free homeowners occupy homes valued at less than twice their annual income, almost 33% live in homes valued at four times or more their income, a pattern typical of long-term residents whose incomes have not kept pace with rising property values.

Monthly housing costs for mortgage-free households are relatively low but not negligible. Most pay less than \$600 per month, with a median cost of approximately \$469, driven by property taxes, insurance, utilities, and upkeep. Importantly, affordability varies sharply by income. Among mortgage-free households earning less than \$20,000, nearly 16% are cost burdened; as are almost 6% of those earning \$20,000–\$34,999. Taken together, these data show that homeowner affordability challenges in Garden City are increasingly driven by operating and carrying costs rather than purchase prices alone. Mortgage-free ownership provides stability but not financial security for many low-income and fixed-income residents.

Renter cost burden intensified significantly over the same period. Almost 32% of renter households are cost burdened, and 17% are severely cost burdened. This represents a notable increase from the prior period and reflects rents rising faster than incomes for low- and moderate-income households. Unlike homeowners, particularly mortgage-free owners, renters have no insulation from market volatility. They are directly exposed to rent increases, competition from higher-income households, and the limited supply of lower-cost units. Given Garden City’s relatively high poverty rate and modest renter incomes, this level of cost burden increases the risk of housing instability and displacement.

Cost Burdened Renters and Homeowners 2020 and 2024						
Homeowners						
Monthly Cost as % of Income	Less Than 30%		30% - 49%		Above 50%	
Income	2020	2024	2020	2024	2020	2024
Less Than \$10,000	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	2.0%	1.4%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	3.0%	0.9%	7.7%	4.8%	0.0%	4.6%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	13.0%	10.0%	2.4%	9.1%	3.6%	0.4%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	30.6%	18.9%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.3%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	14.1%	8.5%	0.3%	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	7.6%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$100,000 +	13.4%	17.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Renters						
Less Than \$10,000	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	2.6%
\$10,000 - \$19,999	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	0.0%	4.1%	0.9%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	4.9%	2.5%	12.2%	13.4%	6.2%	12.5%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	5.5%	4.3%	6.9%	17.2%	0.0%	1.0%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	23.9%	8.5%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	5.5%	19.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
\$100,000 +	12.8%	10.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
* 7.3% of renter households not computed in 2020 **5.8% of renter households not computed 2024						
Source: ACS 2020 and 2024 5-Year Estimates, B25074 and B25095						

Figure 7.14–Garden City: Cost Burdened Homeowners and Renters 2020 and 2024

Implications of Cost Burden

Collectively, these data show that housing affordability pressures are structural and affect both renters and homeowners. Rising home values, increasing ownership costs, including mortgage-free homeowners, and high rent burdens indicate that current market conditions are not aligned with housing need.

The highest concentration of cost burdened households is found in two census tracts. In Census Tract 106.1, directly adjacent to the Port of Savannah operations to the west, and transected by SR 21, almost 46% of all households are cost burdened. The Esri Demographics 2025 Housing Affordability Index for this tract is 62, meaning the median income is insufficient to purchase a median valued home in this tract.

Portions of Census Tract 105.04 are included in the southern portion of the City, which also contains a high proportion (42.5%) of cost burdened households, primarily renters. However, the majority of residential units are actually within the City limits of Savannah; therefore it is difficult to determine the specific proportions of cost burdened households in the Garden City.

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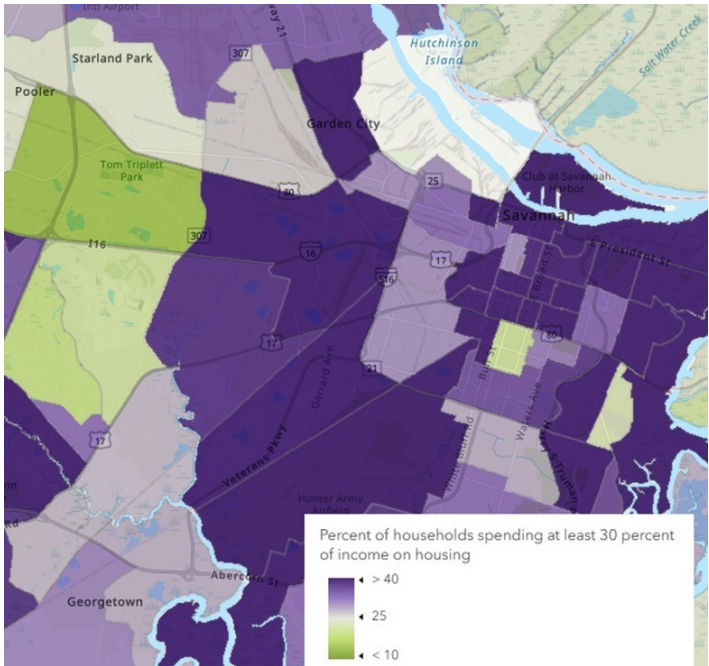


Exhibit 7.3- Garden City: Cost Burdened Households

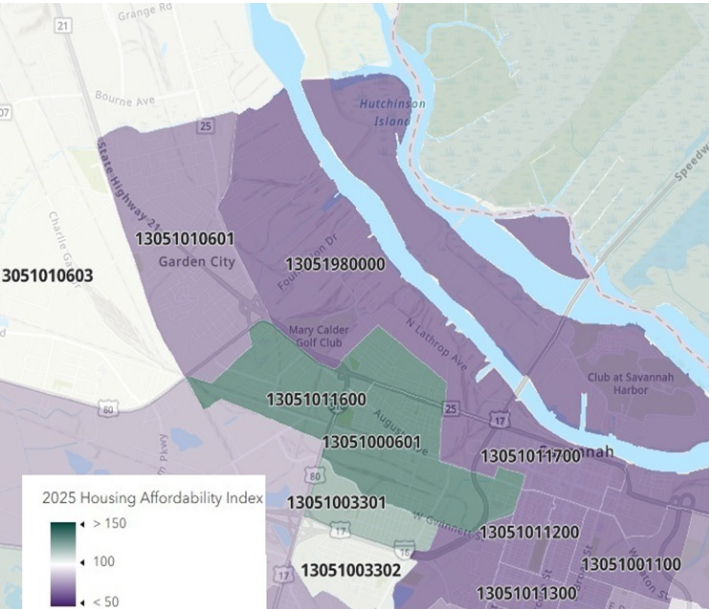


Exhibit 7.4- Garden City: Affordability Index by Census Tract

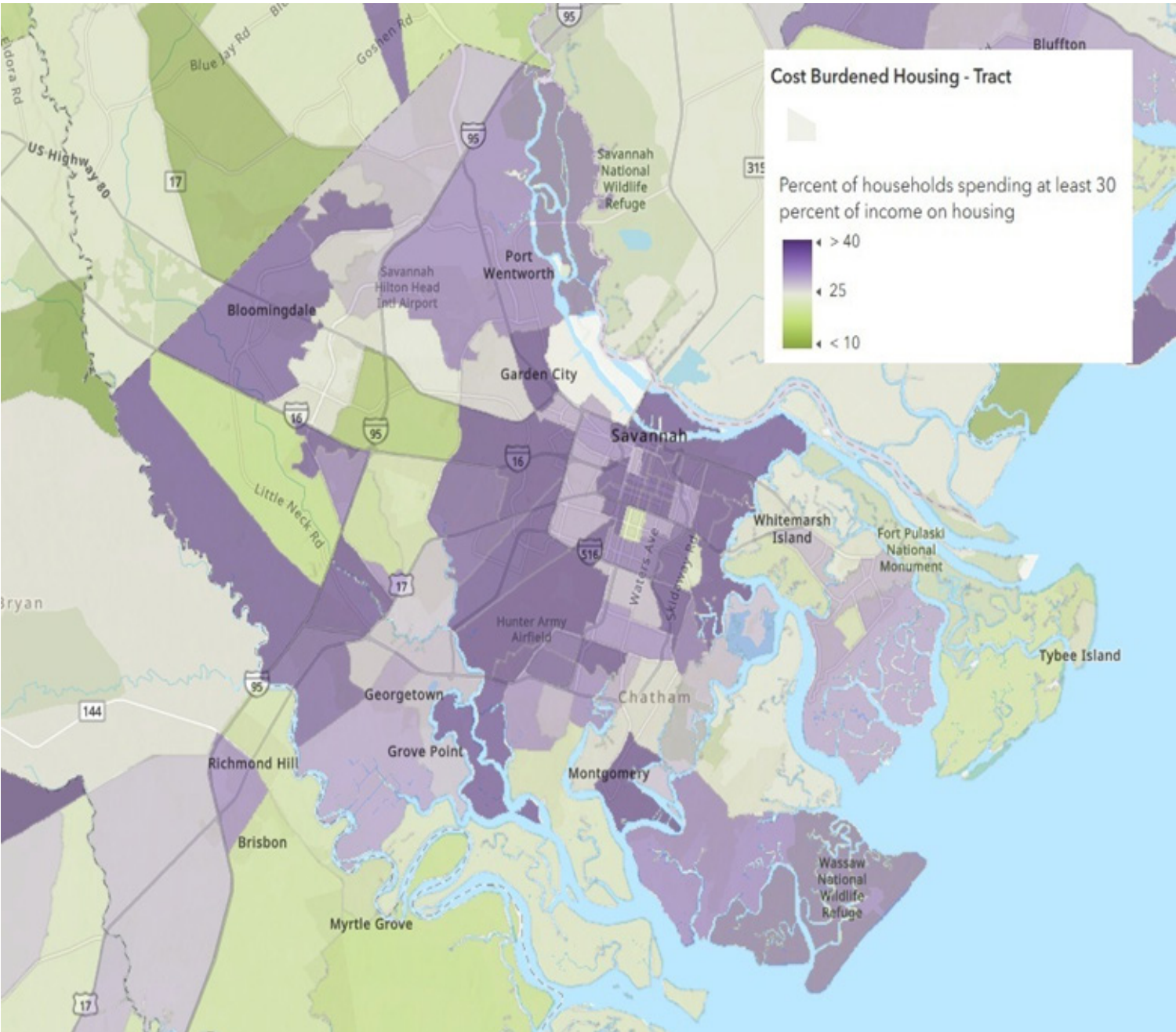
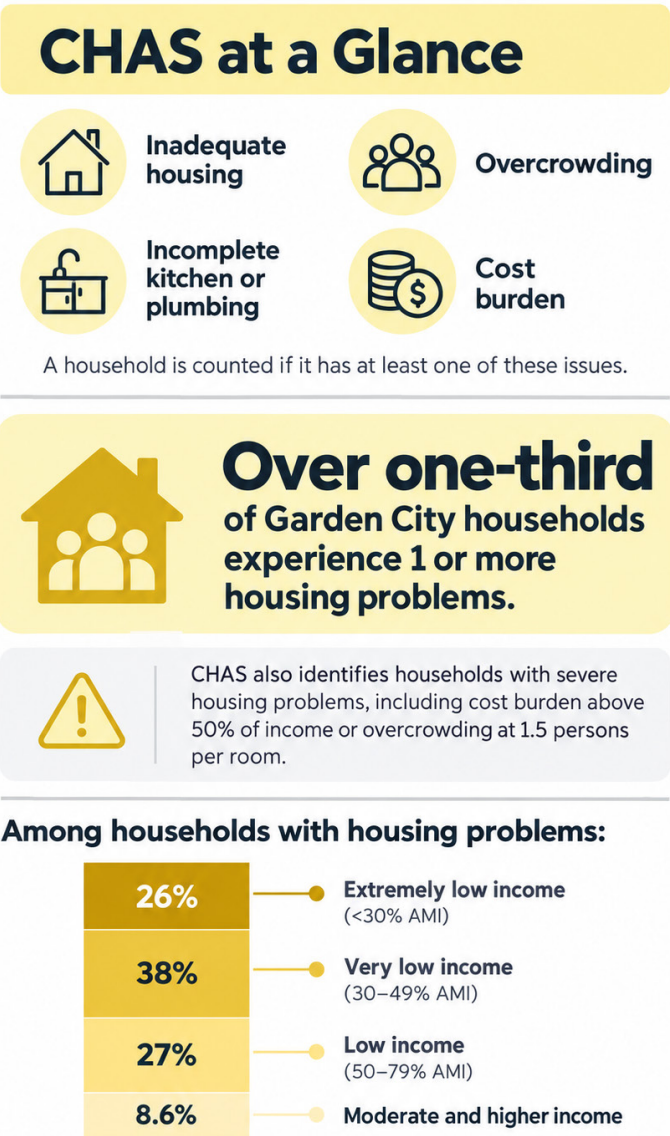


Exhibit 7.5- Chatham County: Cost Burdened Households

Consolidated Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

The CHAS evaluates households experiencing “1 of 4 housing problems” This means the home is inadequate, overcrowded, or unaffordable. It indicates the household has at least one of these issues: incomplete kitchen (lacking a sink, stove, or refrigerator); incomplete plumbing (lacking hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, or a bathtub/shower); more than 1 person per room; or cost burden. It also reports households experiencing “1 in 4 severe housing problems”, in which the cost burden exceeds 50% of monthly income, and/or overcrowding occurs at a rate of 1.5 persons per room.

The CHAS also cross tabulates households by income category and housing problems to provide a more in-depth account of populations at risk of displacement. Just over one-third of the households in Garden City experience one or more housing problems. Of those households experiencing problems, approximately 26% fall in the extremely low-income category (less than 30% of AMI), almost 38% are classified as very low income (30–49% AMI), and low-income households (50 to 79% AMI) comprise 27%. An additional 8.6% of households in the moderate- and higher-income categories also experience a housing problem.



Renters experience housing problems at a higher incidence than homeowners, at 44% and 27.7% respectively. It is noteworthy that 15.8% of total homeowners facing one or more housing problems have extremely low incomes, compared to 6.7% of renters. In contrast, 20.3% of total renter households in the very low-income category experienced a housing problem, compared to only 4.3% of the total homeowners facing a housing problem in this income tier; with another 12.4% of total renters with a housing problem falling into the low-income category, compared to 6.6% of homeowners in the same income group.

From a planning perspective, these conditions support policies that expand lower-cost housing through missing-middle and smaller-scale development, increase the production and preservation of affordable rentals, pair homeownership with cost-stabilization tools such as tax relief and rehabilitation assistance, and treat housing affordability as a system-wide issue rather than one limited to low-income renters to ensure that future housing supply aligns with local income levels, while considering attraction of a proportion of higher-end market products to align with changing economies and industries in the area.

CHAS Income Category by Housing Problems				
Income by Housing Problems	Household has at least 1 of 4 Housing Problems		Household has none of 4 Housing Problems or Cost Burden N/A	
	% of Owners	% of Renters	% of Owners	% of Renters
Household Income <= 30% AMFI (ELI)	15.8%	6.7%	1.0%	2.9%
Household Income 30% to 49% HAMFI (VLI)	4.3%	20.3%	14.2%	8.2%
Household Income 50% to 79% HAMFI (LI)	6.6%	12.4%	22.8%	13.2%
Household Income 80% to 99% HAMFI (MOD)	0.0%	1.3%	8.3%	8.6%
Household Income >100% HAMFI (AMOD)	1.0%	3.3%	25.7%	22.9%
Total	27.7%	44.0%	72.0%	56.0%
Source: HUD User 2018 - 2022 CHAS				

Figure 7.15–Garden City: CHAS Income Category and Housing Problems by Occupancy Type

Public Housing

Public housing in Garden City includes both government-owned or operated units and privately subsidized housing serving low-income households that have difficulty affording market-rate housing, despite the inventory of more moderately priced housing in the City compared to Savannah and other localities in Chatham County. The City currently has three public housing complexes that provide subsidized dwellings for residents in need. In addition to these fixed-site developments, the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program (formerly Section 8) is a key strategy for expanding affordable housing options. Voucher-based assistance allows eligible households to access housing across a wider range of neighborhoods and housing types, improving flexibility of unit type and stability for low-income residents.

From a planning perspective, the location of public and subsidized housing remains critical to long-term outcomes. Housing is most effective when placed in areas that provide access to employment, food, transit, and educational opportunities, particularly in a community shaped by industrial and Port-related land uses. Garden City also benefits from regional coordination, with Chatham County providing access to transitional housing, shelters, and specialized housing for seniors, the unhoused, and other vulnerable populations. Locally, the Garden City Housing Team, a nonprofit partner, supports housing stability by rehabilitating older homes and assisting residents on fixed incomes, helping prevent displacement and further deterioration of the housing stock.

Homelessness

Between 2020 and 2025, Garden City experienced housing instability associated with broader regional trends in homelessness rather than a large, independently documented homeless population. The City participates in countywide homelessness planning and response efforts coordinated through Savannah–Chatham County agencies. In the early 2020s, economic disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, rising housing costs, and limited availability of affordable rental units increased the risk of homelessness for low-income households, particularly renters and individuals living in asset poverty. In response, the Garden City Mayor and Council formally supported the Savannah–Chatham County Interagency Council’s Five-Year Strategic Plan to Address and End Homelessness, aligning the City with a regional framework emphasizing prevention, housing stability, and supportive services.

Garden City’s Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update includes objectives focused on preventing eviction, foreclosure, and property loss, reflecting an emphasis on homelessness prevention rather than reliance on emergency shelter capacity within the City. Community-based initiatives such as food and clothing distributions, participation in Operation Feed the City, and partnerships with regional service providers have played an important role in meeting immediate needs and connecting residents to resources.

Residents also benefit from access to regional transitional housing, domestic violence shelters, workforce development programs, and youth intervention services located elsewhere in Chatham County. While public engagement has shown strong support for senior and moderate-income housing, the needs of households experiencing homelessness have been recognized as an ongoing concern, particularly in areas where informal camping and loitering have been reported. Overall, Garden City’s approach reflects a combination of regional coordination, preventative planning, and community outreach aimed at reducing the risk of homelessness rather than managing large concentrations of unsheltered individuals within City limits.

Regional Consistency of Planning for Housing

Housing conditions and affordability challenges in Garden City are closely tied to regional growth dynamics, workforce demand, and infrastructure systems that extend beyond municipal boundaries. As a small but strategically located jurisdiction within the Savannah–Chatham County region, Garden City relies on coordinated intergovernmental planning, shared regulatory frameworks, and regional partnerships to address housing stability, affordability, and resilience. The City’s housing strategies are intentionally aligned with countywide and regional efforts, recognizing that housing markets, labor mobility, and homelessness function at a regional scale.

Key Regional and Intergovernmental Housing Efforts

Strategic and Regional Planning

- Garden City’s Comprehensive Plan 2040 is prepared in coordination with the Chatham County–Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC).
- Local housing and land use policies align with: Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Regional monitoring of housing inventory, workforce needs, and affordability gaps.

- The City supports the regional Strong Corridors strategy emphasizing:

1. Infill development
2. Mixed-use zoning
3. Redevelopment along existing transportation corridors
4. Reduced sprawl and infrastructure costs

Workforce and Economic Growth Coordination

- Housing planning reflects Garden City’s proximity to regional employment centers, including Port-related, industrial, and logistics jobs.
- Rezoning actions and residential projects (townhomes, multifamily, mixed-use) support workforce housing needs across the Savannah–Chatham County area.
- Housing supply decisions consider regional labor demand rather than only local employment.

Infrastructure and Regulatory Alignment

- Garden City coordinates with Chatham County, FEMA, and the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) on floodplain management standards affecting residential development.
- Local regulations align with regional safety and resilience goals through:
 1. Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance updates
 2. Manufactured housing standards
 3. Energy-efficiency incentives
- Zoning and development standards are structured to maintain consistency with neighboring jurisdictions.

Property Acquisition and Development Tools

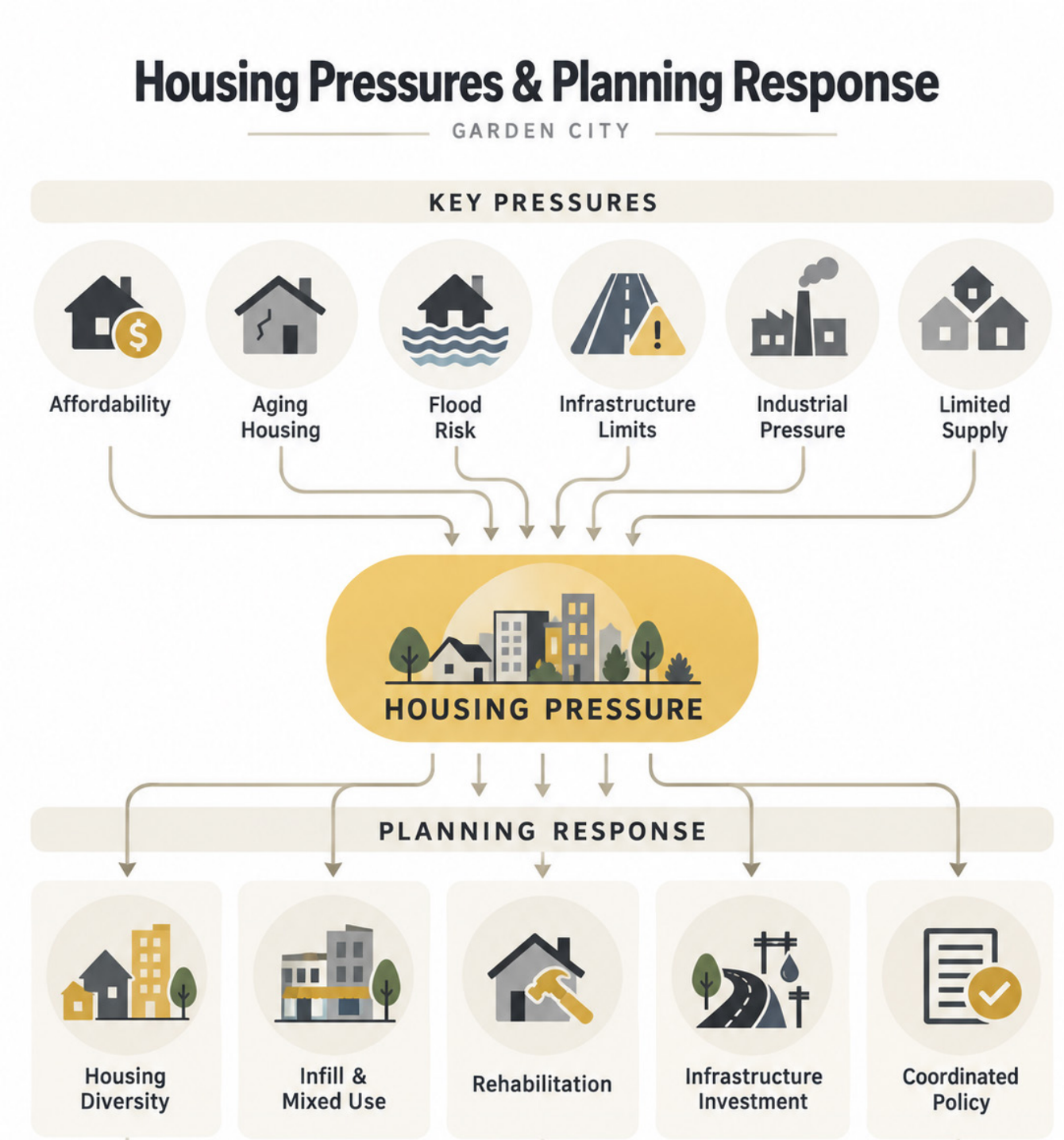
- Garden City participates in the Chatham County–Savannah Land Bank Authority to support:
 1. Acquisition of vacant and tax-delinquent properties
 2. Redevelopment for housing and neighborhood stabilization
- The Urban Redevelopment Plan guides targeted infill, rehabilitation, and mixed-use development in coordination with regional revitalization efforts.

Homelessness and Supportive Housing Coordination

- The Mayor and Council adopted a resolution supporting the Savannah–Chatham County Interagency Council’s Five-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.
- Garden City relies on regional systems for:
 1. Emergency shelter
 2. Transitional housing
 3. Supportive housing services
- Local planning policies emphasize:
 1. Housing stability
 2. Eviction and displacement prevention
 3. Expanded housing type diversity as preventative strategies

Funding, Grants, and Partnerships

- Housing rehabilitation and neighborhood stabilization are supported through:
 1. Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) funding
 2. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Partnerships with Habitat for Humanity and the Garden City Housing Team leverage public and nonprofit resources.
- Participation in the Coastal Empire Resilience Network (CERN) integrates housing planning with:
 1. Climate resilience
 2. Flood risk reduction
 3. Long-term housing protection



Planning for Improving Housing

When household trends, housing stock conditions, affordability indicators, and local policy actions are evaluated together, the data indicate that Garden City faces a structural housing imbalance rather than a temporary market fluctuation. Housing pressures are driven by sustained affordability gaps, a mismatch between household composition and available housing types, land and infrastructure constraints, and rising non-housing costs such as insurance and transportation.

Economic conditions between 2020 and 2025 intensified these pressures. Housing costs increased rapidly while income growth lagged, particularly for renters and lower-wage workers. A significant share of Garden City renters are cost-burdened, and affordability challenges extend to homeowners aging in place on fixed or declining incomes. For low- and extremely low-income households, even though housing in Garden City is generally less costly than in neighboring Savannah and other locations in Chatham County, the supply of affordable and available units remains limited, reinforcing housing instability.

Household composition trends further highlight the mismatch between demand and supply. Garden City is increasingly characterized by smaller households, single parent headed households, nonfamily households, and aging residents, as well as workforce participants with more transient lifestyles, while the housing stock remains dominated by older single-family detached units and limited multifamily or missing-middle options.

New residential development has begun to introduce townhomes and multifamily units, but overall production has not yet scaled to meet the needs of renters, young workers, seniors, or downsizing households. As well, data supports a sizeable transient workforce largely characterized by a high-turnover, project-based labor pool, driven by proximity to the Port of Savannah and heavy industrial activity. This population is composed of temporary workers, logistics personnel, and seasonal employees who fill roles in warehousing, construction, and transportation, often residing in the area on a short-term basis.

Vacancy patterns do not indicate excess housing supply. Vacancies are concentrated in smaller-scale or rental units and reflect turnover, affordability stress, and limited housing choice rather than surplus. Rising vacancy has not translated into improved affordability, underscoring that availability alone does not ensure access. From a land use and infrastructure perspective, Garden City faces competing pressures between residential neighborhoods and industrial expansion, particularly related to Port activity and logistics corridors. Infrastructure capacity, floodplain constraints, and the need for buffering between industrial and residential uses limit where new housing can be located and the density that can be achieved. Older housing stock further elevates rehabilitation needs and operating costs, especially for low-income households.

In response, Garden City has increasingly relied on intentional housing policy interventions, including mixed-use rezoning, redevelopment planning, housing rehabilitation programs, affordability incentives, and regional coordination. These actions reflect recognition that market forces alone will not resolve housing challenges. Housing affordability in Garden City intersects directly with transportation access, workforce stability, neighborhood protection, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Climate-related risks further compound housing pressures. Floodplain regulations, elevation requirements, marsh buffers, and rising insurance costs increase the cost of constructing, rehabilitating, and maintaining housing, particularly in older neighborhoods and manufactured housing areas. These constraints reduce developable land and disproportionately affect naturally affordable housing, accelerating displacement risk. From a planning perspective, climate resilience is a core housing issue in the City and larger region requiring coordinated land use, infrastructure investment, and targeted assistance.

Collectively, demographic trends, affordability data, vacancy patterns, and policy responses confirm the need for deliberate, coordinated housing strategies in Garden City. Future housing success will depend on expanding housing types at attainable price points, aligning density with infrastructure and transit access, preserving existing affordable units, and managing growth pressures associated with regional employment centers. Without sustained policy intervention, rising costs, land constraints, and climate impacts will continue to limit housing access and stability.

08

NATURAL RESOURCES



Introduction

Garden City is shaped by the coastal environment that defines much of Chatham County. Tidal rivers, marshlands, wetlands, and low-lying coastal landscapes influence local development patterns, environmental conditions, and community character. These natural systems provide important benefits, including flood protection, water quality protection, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. As regional growth continues, protecting natural resources within Garden City remains essential to public safety, environmental stability, and long-term community resilience.



Coastal Resources

Garden City is influenced by coastal resources that define this portion of Georgia, particularly marshlands, tidal waterways, and nearby barrier island systems. Coastal marshes support fisheries, improve water quality, absorb storm impacts, and reduce flooding during high tides and severe weather events. These systems also contribute to the regional economy by supporting tourism, recreation, and the natural setting that attracts residents and businesses.



Water Resources

Water Supply Watersheds

Garden City is located within the Atlantic Coastal Flatwoods region and is influenced by watershed systems connected to the Savannah and Ogeechee River Basins. Local water resources are linked to the Lower Savannah, Lower Ogeechee, and Ogeechee Coastal watersheds, which influence drainage, surface water movement, and water quality.

The Ogeechee River Basin begins in central and southeastern Georgia and extends southeast to the Atlantic coast. Covering approximately 5,540 square miles, the basin contributes to regional hydrology and the formation of coastal barrier islands, including Wassaw Island, Ossabaw Island, St. Catherines Island, Blackbeard Island, and Sapelo Island. The Savannah River Basin covers approximately 10,577 square miles and originates in the Blue Ridge region of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The Savannah River forms the state boundary before flowing southeast to the Atlantic Ocean near Savannah and remains the region’s primary surface water source for municipal, industrial, and ecological needs.

Public Water Supply Sources

Garden City relies primarily on groundwater drawn from the Floridan Aquifer, one of the most productive aquifer systems in North America and the primary source of drinking water throughout coastal Georgia. The Floridan Aquifer underlies approximately 100,000 square miles across southern Alabama, southeastern Georgia, southern South Carolina, and all of Florida. The depth to the top of the aquifer varies across the region, ranging from less than 150 feet in coastal South Carolina to more than 1,400 feet in parts of coastal Georgia.

Most households in Garden City are served by centralized municipal water and wastewater systems connected to this groundwater supply. Access to complete indoor plumbing is nearly universal. According to the 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Garden City contains an estimated 4,708 housing units, of which 4,652 units, or approximately 98.8%, have complete plumbing facilities defined as hot and cold running water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower. An estimated 56 housing units lack complete plumbing facilities.

These data indicate that centralized utility service reaches nearly all residential areas within the City. Continued maintenance and modernization of water and sewer infrastructure remain important to protecting public health, maintaining service reliability, and reducing vulnerability associated with flooding, aging facilities, and future demand.

Public Water Supply Issues and Long-Range Management

Groundwater withdrawals across coastal Georgia have altered water levels, affected recharge and discharge patterns, and changed groundwater flow within the Floridan Aquifer. These conditions increase the risk of saltwater intrusion, particularly near the Savannah Hilton Head Metropolitan Area where freshwater and coastal influences intersect.

Because Garden City depends on the Floridan Aquifer for public water supply, long term water management requires continued coordination among local governments, utility providers, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and regional stakeholders. Protecting groundwater availability will remain important as residential demand, industrial activity, and economic growth continue across the region.

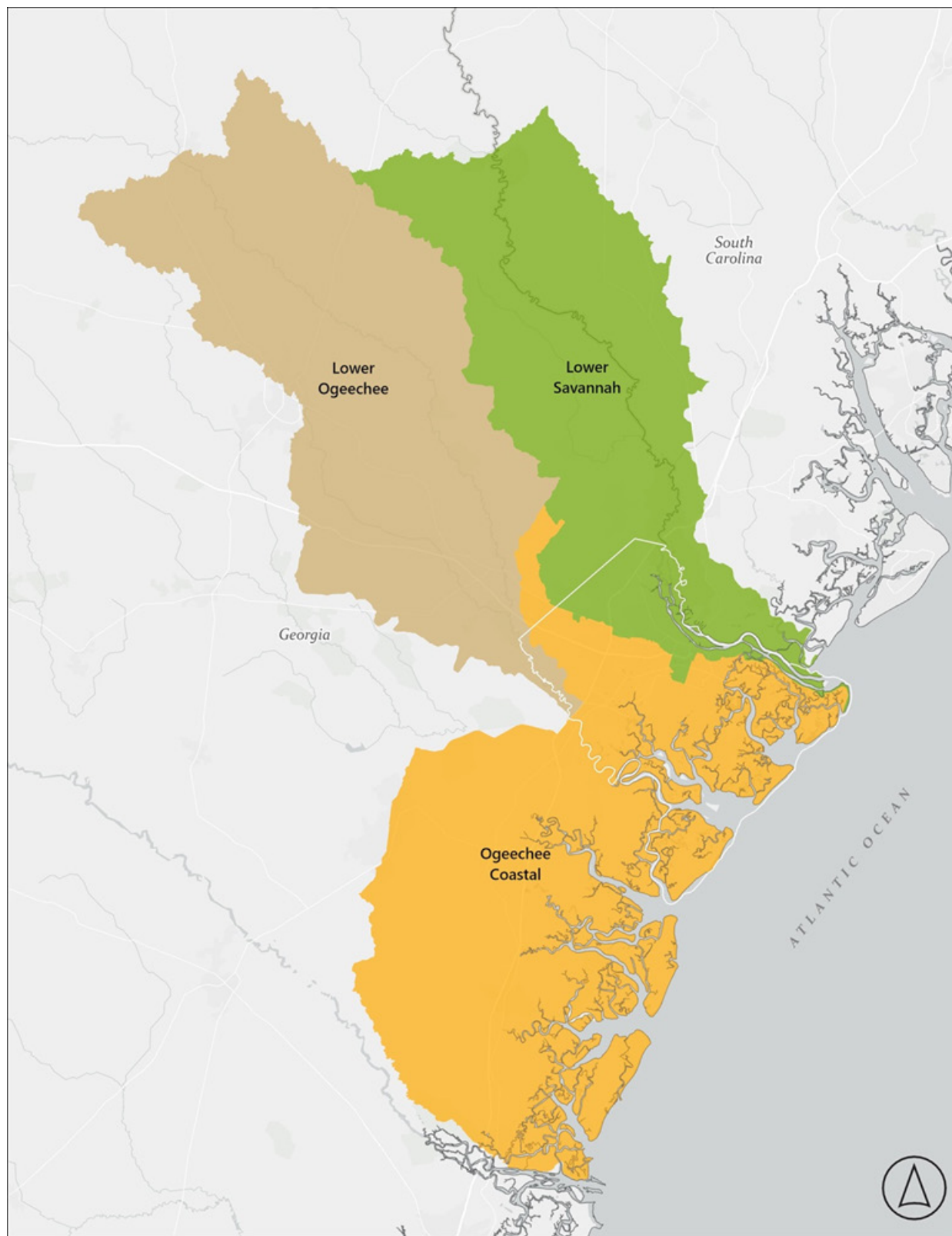


Exhibit 8.1-Regional Watersheds

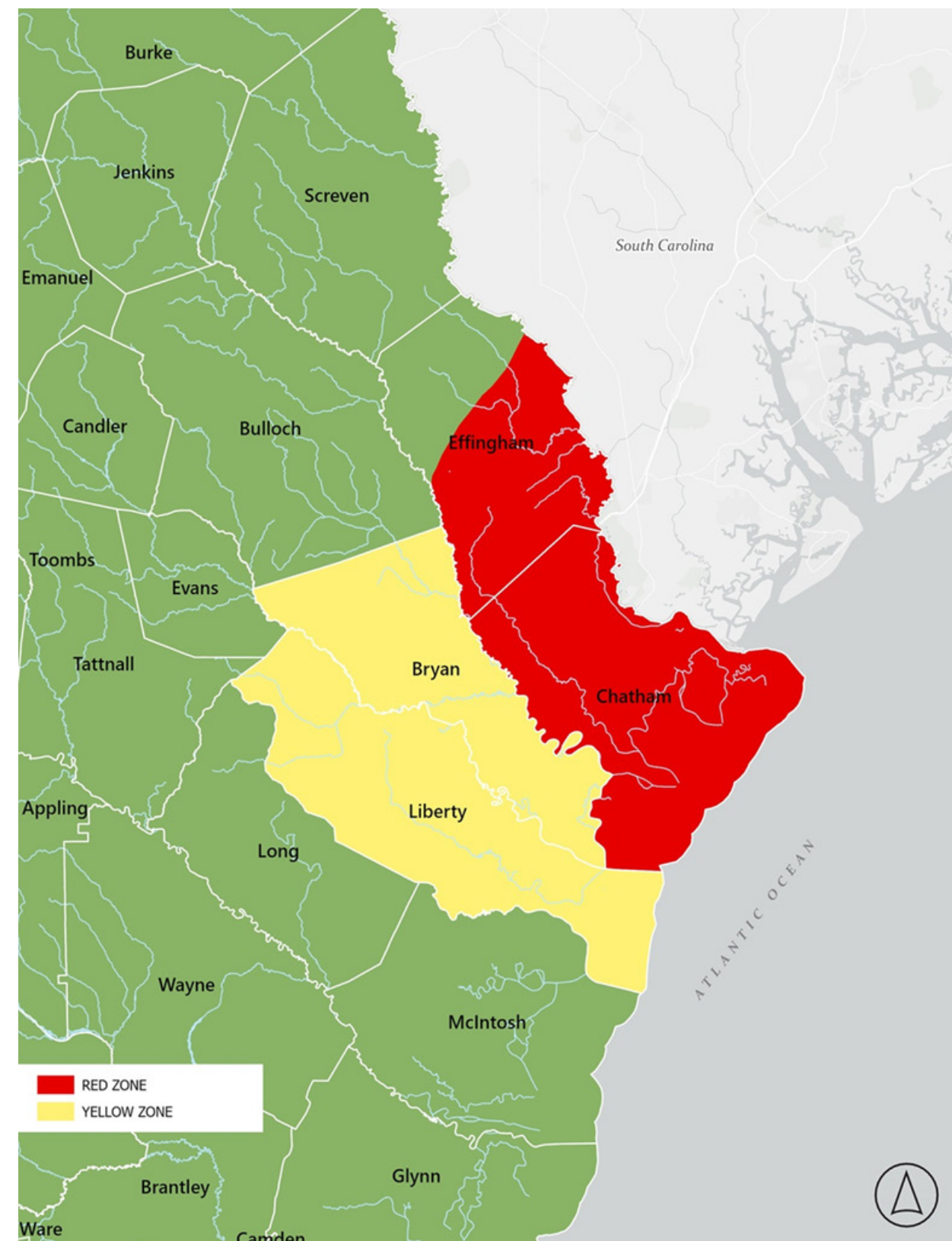


Exhibit 8.2-Regional Pump Zones

Groundwater Recharge Areas & Pollution Susceptibility

Groundwater recharge areas are locations where water enters the soil and moves downward to replenish underground aquifers. This process occurs more readily in porous materials such as sand, gravel, sandstone, and limestone, while denser materials such as clay, shale, and granite slow infiltration. Although the principal recharge zone for the Floridan Aquifer is located approximately 100 miles northwest of Savannah near the Fall Line, smaller recharge areas also occur within Chatham County in the Miocene and Pliocene Recent unconfined aquifer system.

These localized recharge areas are generally concentrated on Wilmington Island, Skidaway Island, and portions of the Abercorn Street corridor in Savannah rather than within Garden City itself. Even so, groundwater quality in Garden City remains directly connected to regional aquifer conditions because the City relies on the Floridan Aquifer for public water supply.

Contamination within recharge areas can introduce hazardous substances into groundwater, creating long term risks for drinking water quality. Once groundwater is contaminated, remediation is difficult and costly. For this reason, wellhead protection measures and stormwater controls remain important throughout the County to reduce the risk of pollutants entering the groundwater system.

Groundwater protection in Chatham County is supported through land use regulations that limit activities involving hazardous materials in sensitive areas and apply development standards where recharge conditions are present. Before issuing building or demolition permits, local officials evaluate whether a site is located within a groundwater recharge area identified by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Areas identified as having elevated pollution susceptibility require additional attention during development review to protect long term groundwater quality.

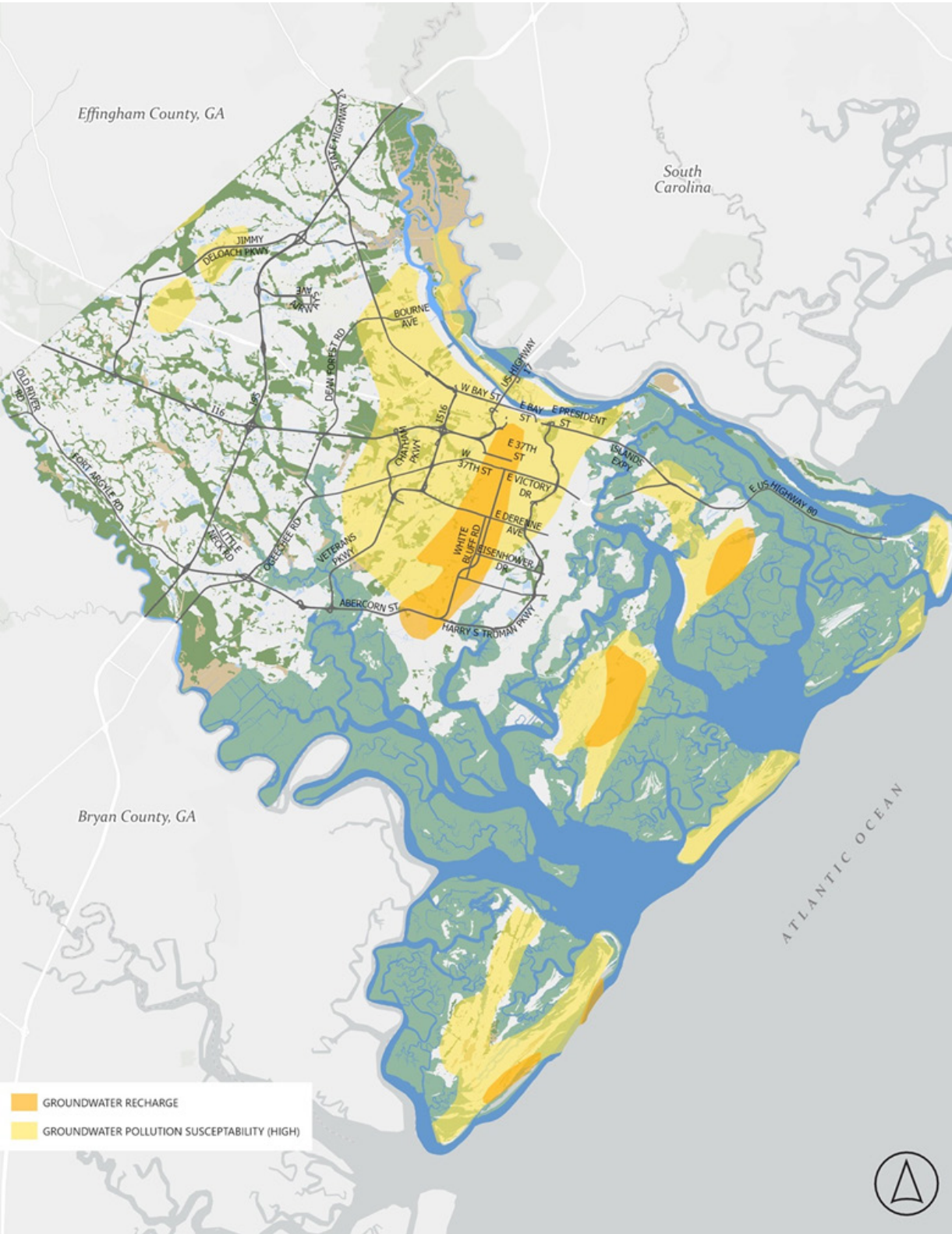


Exhibit 8.3-Chatham County Groundwater Recharge Areas

Impaired Waterbodies

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. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division has a complete “303(d) list” for the State of Georgia and Chatham County. Currently, there are a number of impaired waterways within Chatham County that are currently being monitored and investigated for measures to improve the water quality. The current list can also be found on the EPD’s website.

Within Chatham County, impaired waterways are monitored to address pollutants, habitat conditions, and other factors affecting water quality. Because Garden City is closely connected to regional industrial corridors, Port related activity, and tidal drainage systems, impaired water conditions in nearby waterways have direct implications for stormwater management, ecological health, and long term environmental planning.

- The 2024 impaired waters list identifies the following nearby waterbodies of significance to Garden City:
- Savannah River / Front River / Harbor
- Salt Creek
- Pipemakers Canal

Continued coordination with state and regional agencies will remain important to improving water quality and reducing impacts associated with stormwater runoff, industrial discharge, and land disturbance. The most current impaired waters data is maintained by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division through its statewide water quality monitoring program.

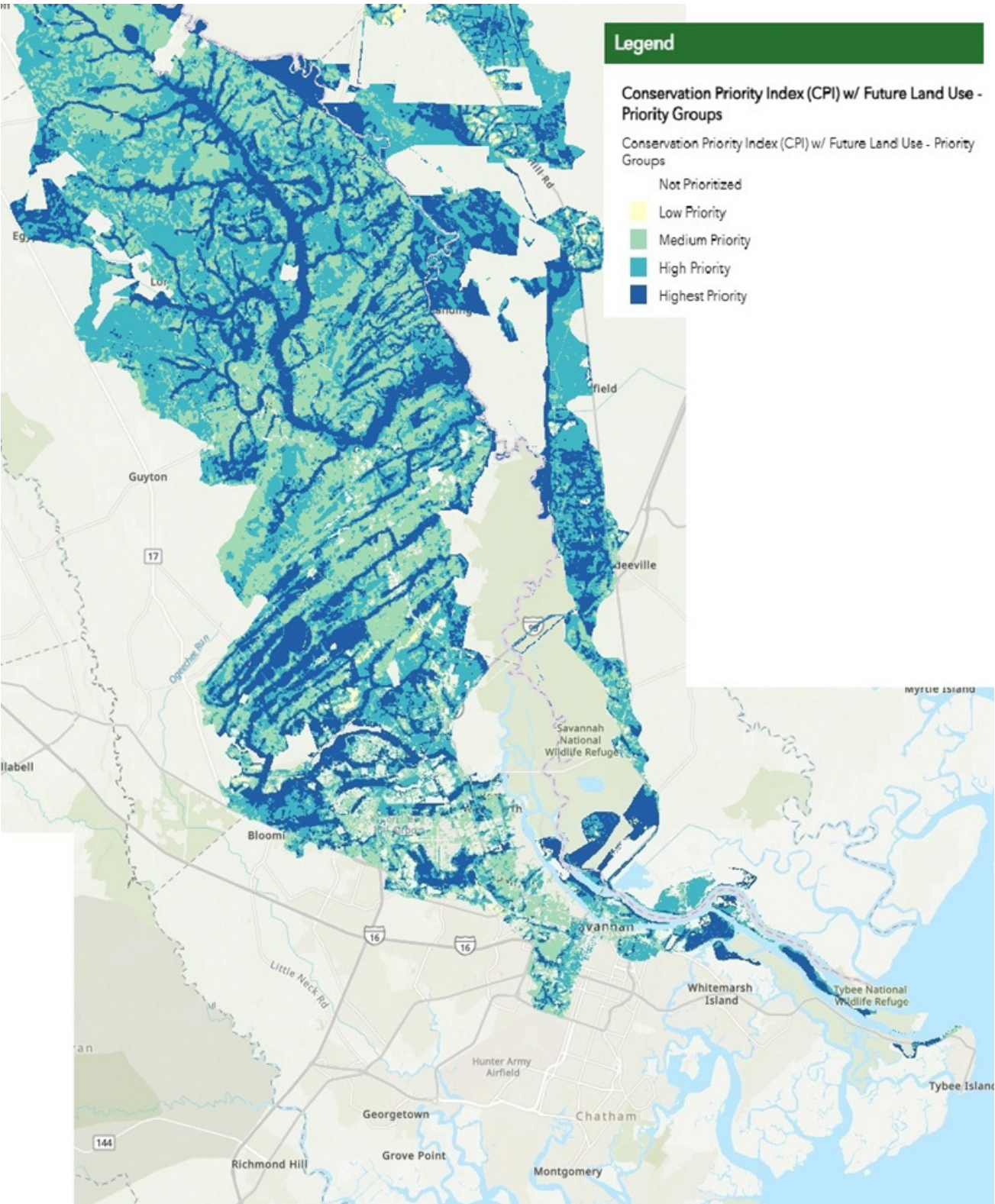


Exhibit 8.4-Conservation Priority Index

Wetlands

Over the past several decades, wetlands in Georgia, particularly freshwater wetlands within the Coastal Plain, have been altered by development, infrastructure expansion, and industrial land use. In Garden City, where flat topography, shallow groundwater, and interconnected drainage systems are common, wetland disturbance has reduced natural flood storage capacity and increased vulnerability to rainfall driven flooding. These changes affect more than ecological conditions by contributing to localized flooding, infrastructure stress, and water quality concerns in low lying and industrial areas. Wetland protection in Garden City is carried out through federal, state, and local development regulations. Projects that contain or adjoin wetlands must identify and delineate wetland boundaries using accepted federal methods prepared by qualified professionals, with review coordinated through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

At the local level, floodplain management standards, stormwater requirements, and development review procedures require wetlands and associated buffers to be preserved wherever practical, with disturbance limited to permitted areas. Garden City’s stormwater planning framework also supports wetland protection by requiring development and redevelopment to manage runoff in ways that protect natural drainage systems and reduce downstream impacts. During site review, wetland boundaries, buffer requirements, grading limits, and drainage controls are evaluated together with erosion and sediment measures. Best management practices such as vegetated buffers, bioretention systems, detention facilities, and water treatment features are used to slow runoff, improve water quality, and reduce stress on drainage infrastructure.

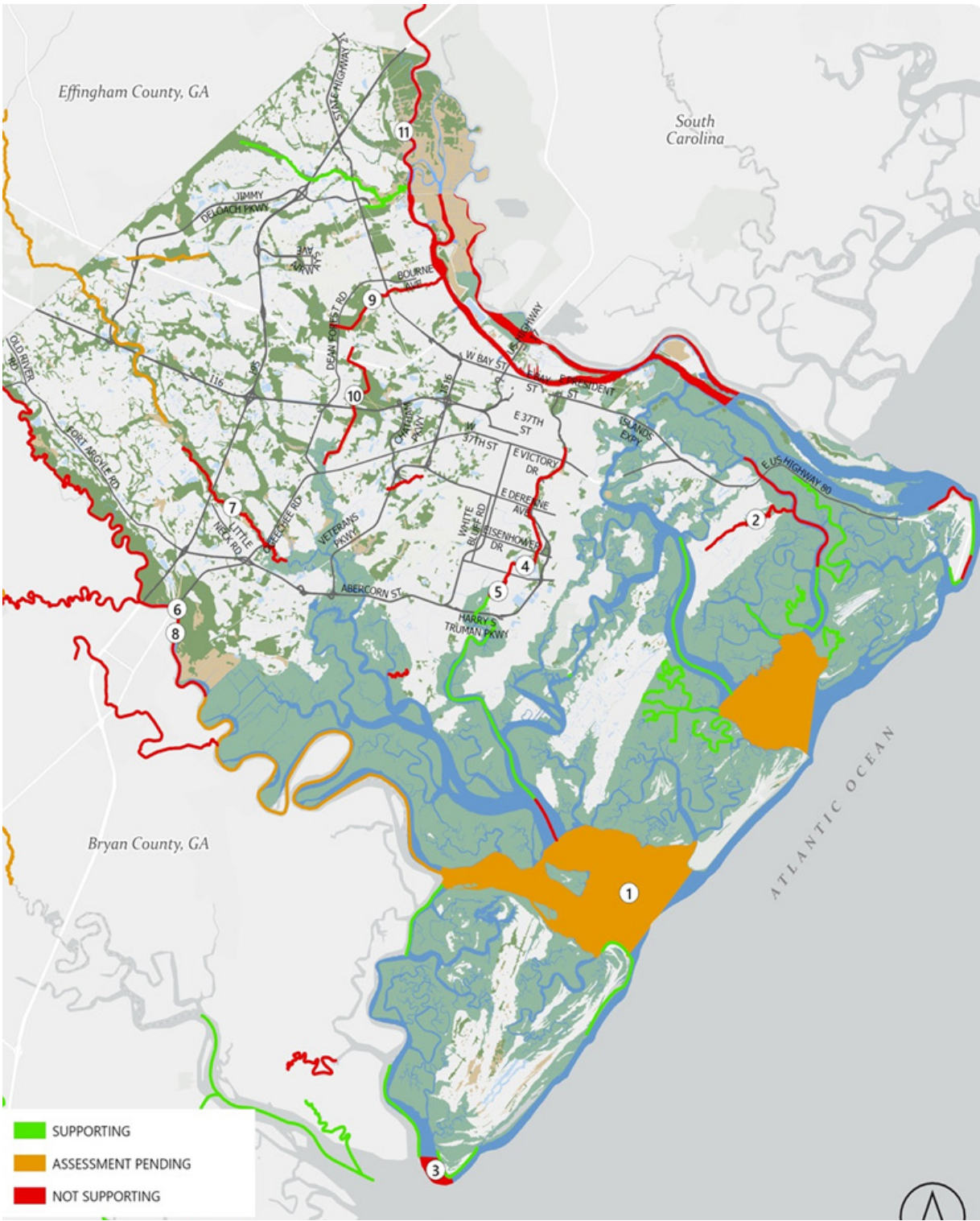


Exhibit 8.5-Chatham County Impaired Waterbodies

Because wetlands function as part of the City’s broader drainage network, preserving existing wetland areas supports flood management, protects water quality, and reduces long term infrastructure demands as industrial activity and redevelopment continue.

NOAA Coastal Change Analysis Program land cover data indicate that Chatham County experienced substantial land cover change between 1996 and 2021, driven largely by continued development and urbanization. Because Garden City is part of this regional growth pattern, these changes provide important context for local land use and environmental planning. During this period, high intensity developed land increased by approximately 15.1 square miles and low intensity developed land increased by about 10.3 square miles, reflecting continued conversion of natural and rural land to residential, commercial, industrial, and infrastructure uses.

Forested and wetland systems also declined during the same period. Forest land decreased by approximately 22.6 square miles, while woody wetlands declined by about 10.4 square miles, reducing natural flood storage capacity, habitat continuity, and ecosystem function. Emergent wetlands increased by approximately 3.6 square miles, likely reflecting hydrologic change, restoration activity, or shifts in coastal conditions rather than a broad gain in wetland resources. These trends reinforce the importance of wetland protection, forest conservation, and coordinated land use decisions as Garden City continues to accommodate redevelopment and industrial activity

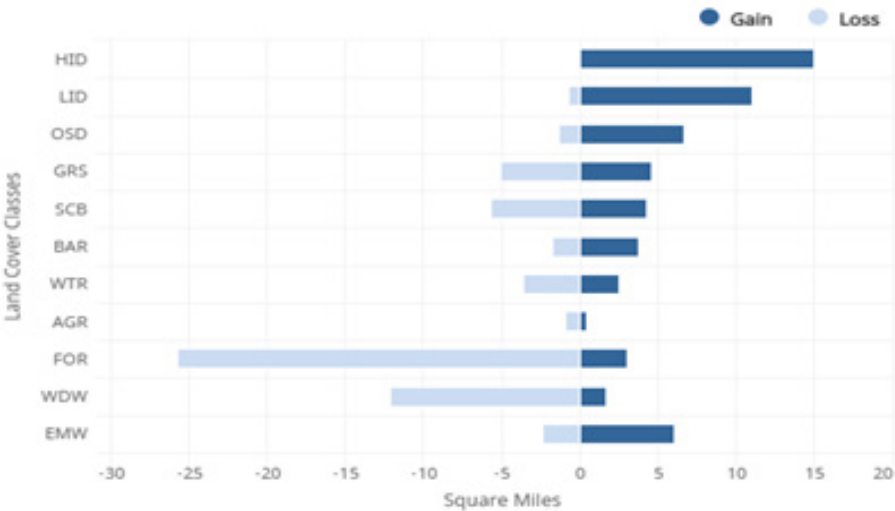


Figure 8.1-Distribution of Change by Land Cover

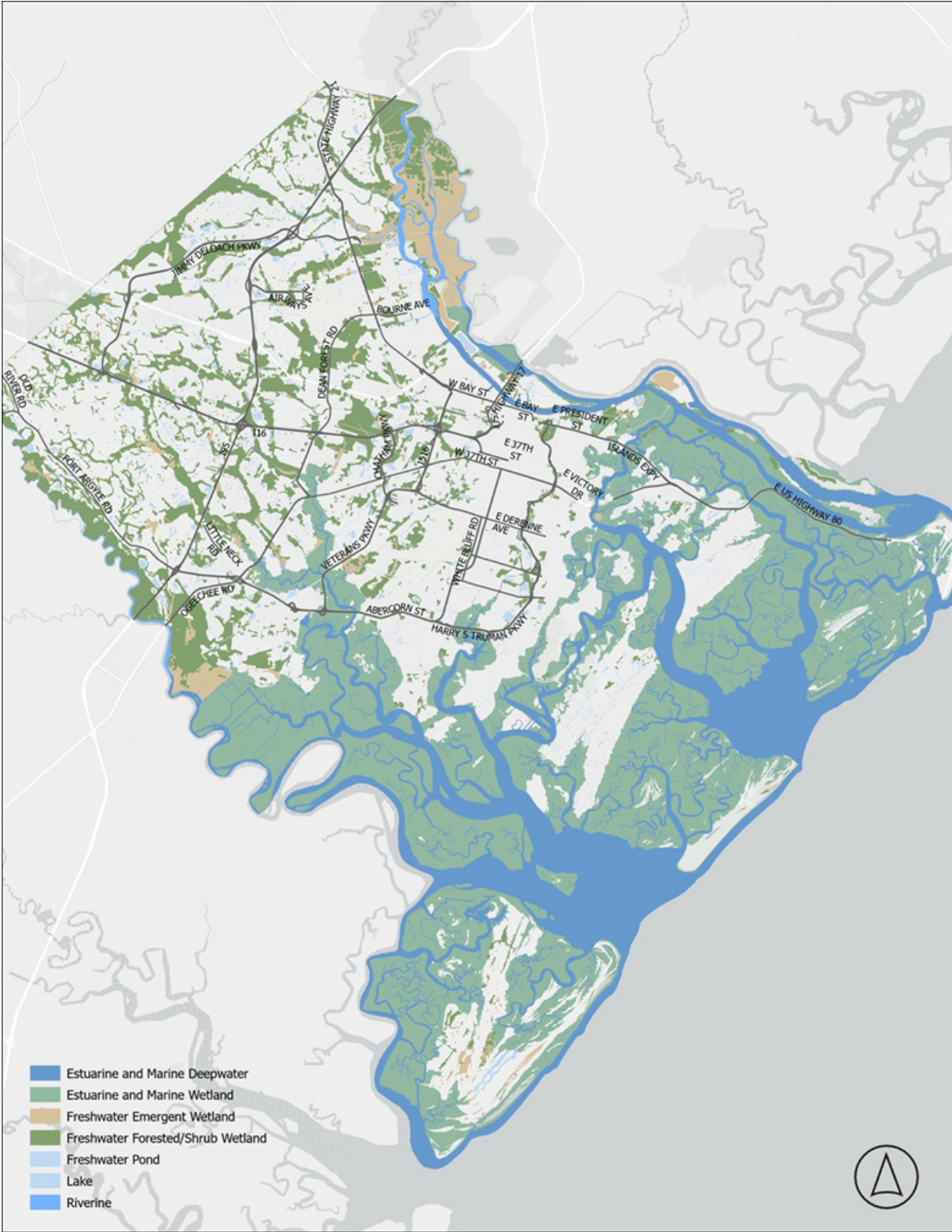


Exhibit 8.6-Chatham County Wetlands

Distribution of Change (Losses and Gains) By Land Cover						
Land Cover Class	1996 Area (sq. mi.)	Area Lost (sq. mi.)	Area Gained (sq. mi.)	2021 Area (sq. mi.)	Net Change (sq. mi.)	Percent Change
HID (High Intensity Developed)	19.15	0	15.06	34.21	15.06	78.7%
LID (Low Intensity Developed)	38.14	-0.73	11.01	48.42	10.28	26.9%
OSD (Open Space Developed)	22.31	-1.33	6.71	27.68	5.38	24.1%
GRS (Grassland/Herbaceous)	8.36	-5.05	4.57	7.88	-0.48	-5.8%
AGR (Agriculture)	3.54	-0.94	0.49	3.09	-0.45	-12.8%
FOR (Forest)	89.97	-25.7	3.1	67.37	-22.6	-25.1%
SCB (Scrub / Shrub)	8.76	-5.64	4.33	7.45	-1.31	-14.9%
WDW (Woody Wetlands)	78.04	-12.13	1.7	67.6	-10.44	-13.4%
EMW (Emergent Wetlands)	155.91	-2.4	6.05	159.55	3.64	2.3%
BAR (Barren Land)	9.09	-1.68	3.75	11.16	2.07	22.8%
WTR (Open Water)	199.03	-3.64	2.5	197.88	-1.14	-0.6%
Source: NOAA Coastal Change Analysis Program						

Figure 8.2-Distribution of Change (Losses and Gains) By Land Cover

Protected Rivers and Corridors

Georgia requires local governments to identify and protect critical natural resources, including major rivers and river corridors. Although the coastal region does not contain protected mountain resources, river systems remain among the most important natural features affecting long term environmental conditions in Garden City.

River corridors support wildlife habitat, provide recreational value, improve water quality, reduce erosion, and help absorb floodwaters during major storm events. In coastal areas, these corridors also allow floodwaters to shift naturally as tidal conditions and sea level patterns change.

Riparian buffers are especially important because they slow stormwater runoff, reduce sediment and pollutant movement, protect stream temperatures, support wildlife habitat, and strengthen the visual character of adjacent developed areas. Maintaining these buffer areas remains an important part of protecting water resources throughout Garden City and the surrounding region.

Floodplains

Floodplains are low lying areas adjacent to rivers, wetlands, and drainage systems that periodically store floodwaters during major rainfall events and coastal flooding. In Garden City, floodplain function is especially important because flat topography, tidal influence, and developed industrial areas can limit natural drainage capacity.

Exhibit – Chatham County Floodplains
Preserving floodplain storage helps protect life, property, infrastructure, and water quality. Undeveloped floodplain areas also support wetlands, habitat systems, and other ecological functions that contribute to overall environmental stability.

Regional floodplain regulations adopted by nearby jurisdictions, including Savannah and Chatham County, increasingly recognize sea level rise and the movement of coastal floodwaters. Continued attention to floodplain protection, drainage planning, and development standards will remain important as Garden City addresses future flooding risks associated with changing coastal conditions.

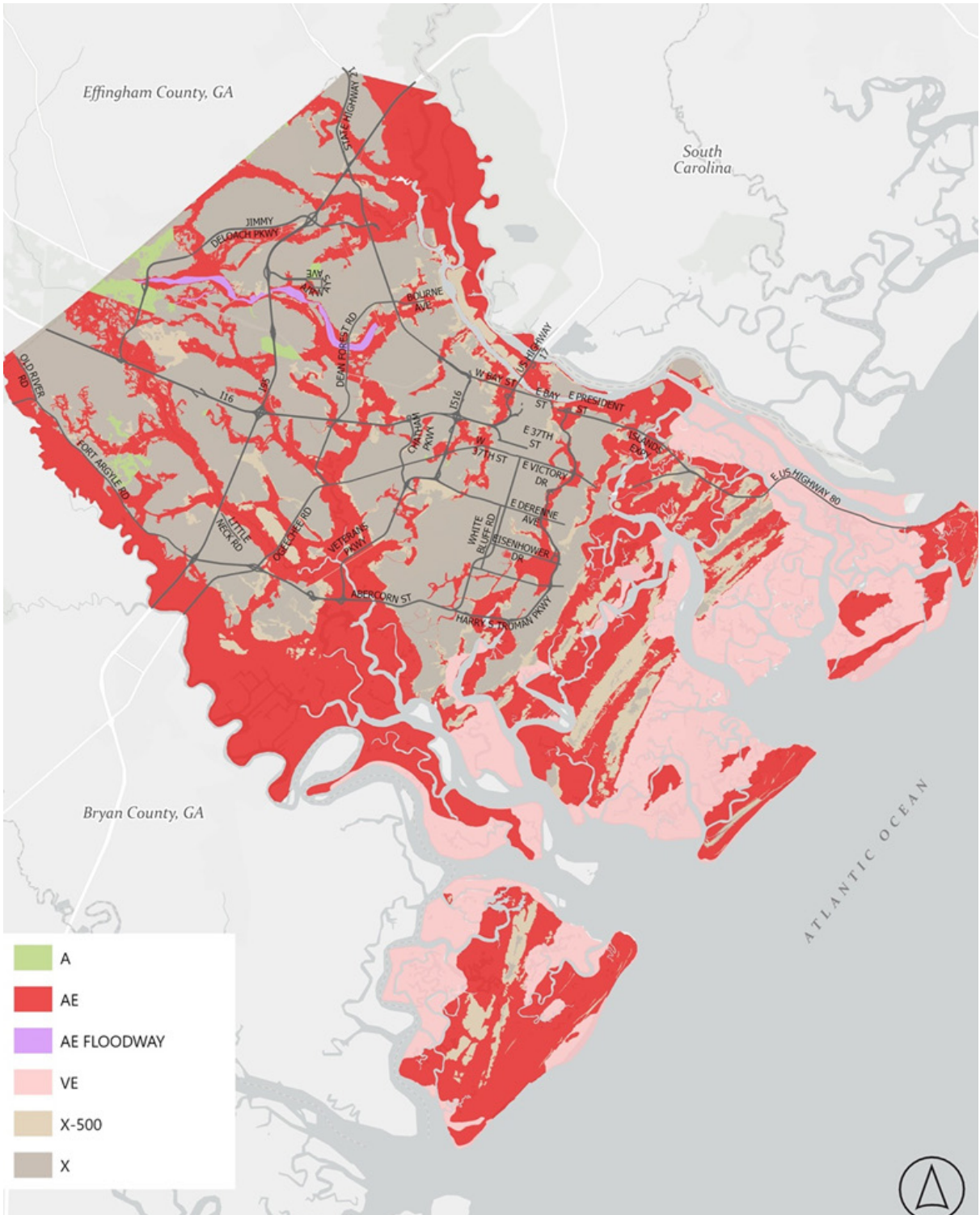


Exhibit 8.7–Chatham County Floodplains

Geology and Soil Types

Garden City is located within the Atlantic Coastal Flatwoods region of Georgia, an area defined by nearly level topography and poorly drained soils formed from marine sands, loams, and clays. Elevation across the region is generally low, and drainage occurs slowly through canals, streams, and tidal systems before reaching larger waterways.

Local soils are predominantly classified as Hydrologic Soil Group D, which has a high runoff potential because of shallow water tables and low infiltration capacity. These soils commonly contain clay loam, silty clay loam, sandy clay, or clay and tend to remain saturated when thoroughly wetted. Because infiltration is limited, soil conditions in Garden City directly affect stormwater performance, flood risk, and site development design. The countywide National Commodity Crop Productivity Index average soil rating is 47, reflecting generally low agricultural productivity and reinforcing the importance of drainage management in land development decisions.

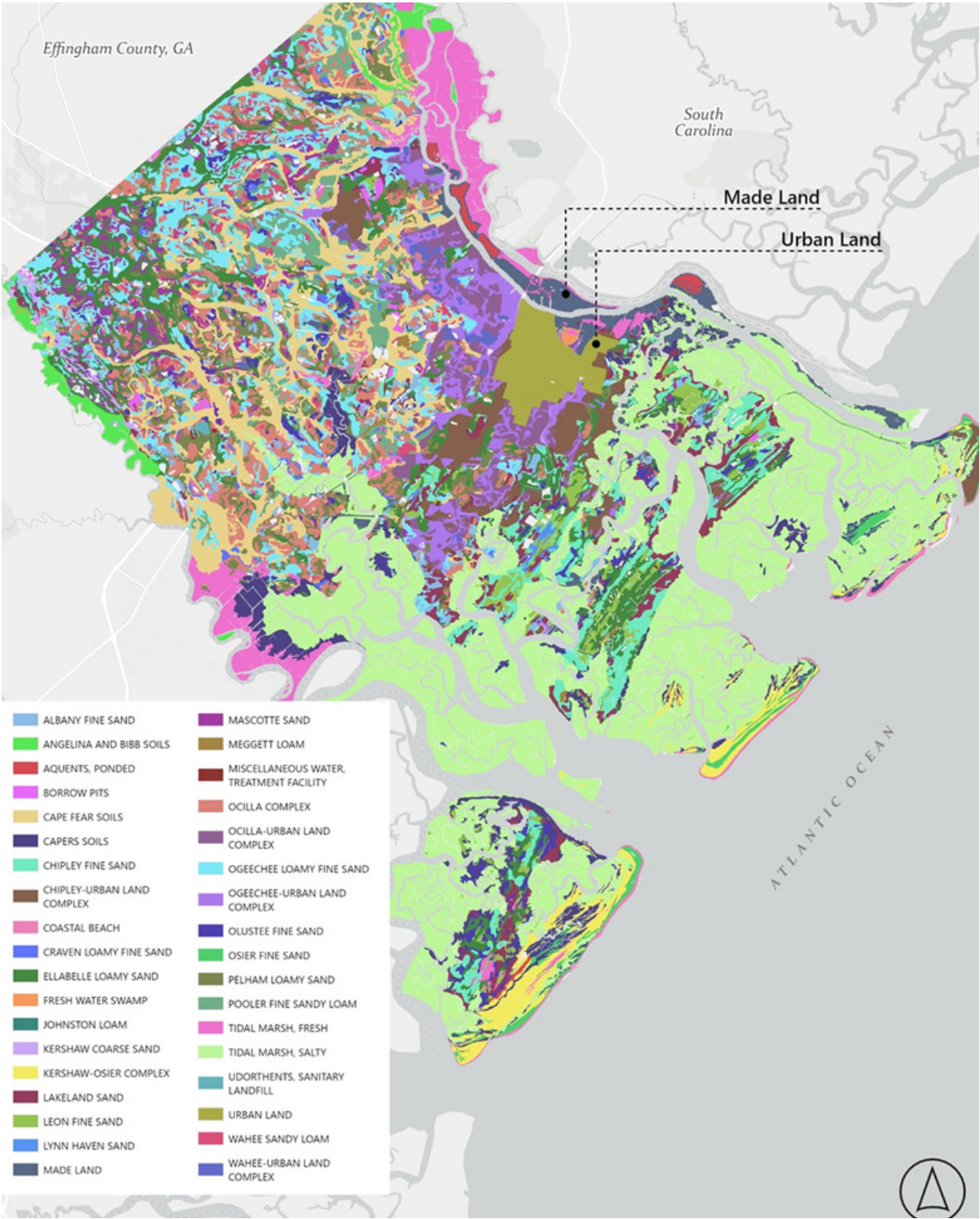


Exhibit 8.8-Chatham County Soil Classifications

Coastal Resource Management

Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff in Garden City is generated when rainfall flows across streets, parking areas, rooftops, and other impervious surfaces without infiltrating the ground. As runoff moves through developed areas, it can carry sediment, oils, chemicals, trash, and other pollutants into nearby waterways, affecting local drainage systems and coastal water quality.

Stormwater discharges are regulated through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, which requires municipal separate storm sewer systems to operate under state issued permits. Garden City manages its stormwater system under a Phase I Medium MS4 permit issued by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division under Permit No. GAS000208. The permit requires implementation of a stormwater management program that includes illicit discharge detection, construction runoff controls, post construction standards, municipal maintenance practices, public education, and annual reporting.

Like other jurisdictions in Chatham County, Garden City has adopted the Coastal Stormwater Supplement to the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual, which promotes site design practices that reduce runoff and protect natural drainage systems. Because stormwater crosses jurisdictional boundaries, continued regional coordination remains important, particularly where industrial watersheds and transportation corridors extend across municipal lines. Watersheds with increasing impervious cover require additional attention, since stream quality commonly declines when impervious surfaces exceed 10% and severe degradation often occurs beyond 25%.



Major Park, Recreation and Conservation Areas

Garden City benefits from access to regional natural and recreational resources throughout Chatham County while also maintaining a local system of neighborhood parks, athletic facilities, and community open spaces. As development continues across the region, preserving open space and maintaining recreational access remain important to supporting community health, neighborhood quality, and long-term land use balance.

In addition to maintaining adequate park acreage and facility types, equitable access remains an important planning consideration. Parks, recreation areas, sidewalks, trails, bicycle routes, and other non-vehicular connections help ensure that residents can reach recreational spaces without depending entirely on personal vehicles.

Open space includes land used for active recreation, passive recreation, natural resource protection, and public benefit. Within Chatham County, conservation and recreation lands are managed through federal, state, local, and nonprofit ownership, providing regional environmental and recreational value. Although many major conservation lands are located outside Garden City, they contribute to the broader open space network available to City residents.

Federal

- Fort Pulaski National Monument
- Savannah Coastal National Wildlife Refuge
- Tybee National Wildlife Refuge
- Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway
- Wassaw Island National Wildlife Refuge

State

- Little Tybee Island / Cabbage Island
- Skidaway Island State Park
- Ossabaw Island Wildlife Management Area
- University of Georgia Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant
- Wormsloe Historic Site

Local/Non-Governmental Organizations

- Bazemore Park
- Salt Creek Boat Ramp Park
- Sharon Park
- Griffin Neighborhood Playground
- Garden City Stadium
- Volunteer Park

Local park facilities in the City are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9–Quality of Life.

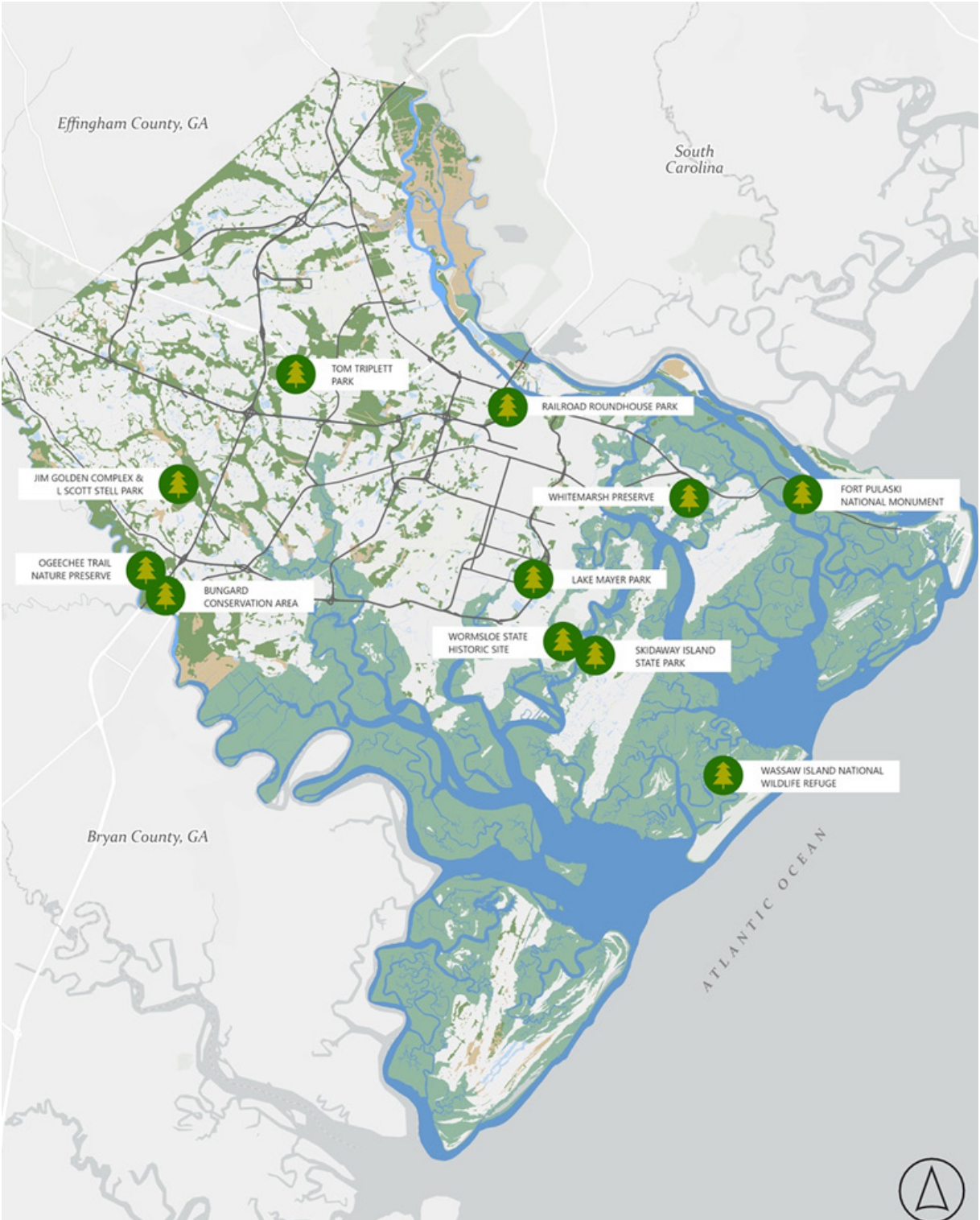


Exhibit 8.9–Chatham County: Major Park, Recreation and Conservation Areas

Prime Agricultural and Forest Land

Although Garden City is highly urbanized and industrial in character, countywide agricultural and forest land trends remain relevant because they affect regional open space, stormwater absorption, air quality, and food system resilience. Across the country, agricultural and forest land continues to be converted to residential, commercial, and industrial uses, increasing impervious surface coverage and reducing natural environmental functions.

In Chatham County, agricultural activity has changed in both scale and structure over the past decade. According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, the number of farms declined from 67 in 2017 to 41 in 2022, while total farmland increased to 7,742 acres, resulting in an average farm size of 189 acres. This pattern reflects consolidation rather than growth in farm numbers. Small and specialty operations remain significant, with approximately 61% of farms under 50 acres and 17% selling directly to consumers.

Although limited agricultural land remains within Garden City, preservation of forest cover and open land continues to support flood reduction, environmental quality, and land use balance as redevelopment and industrial expansion continue.

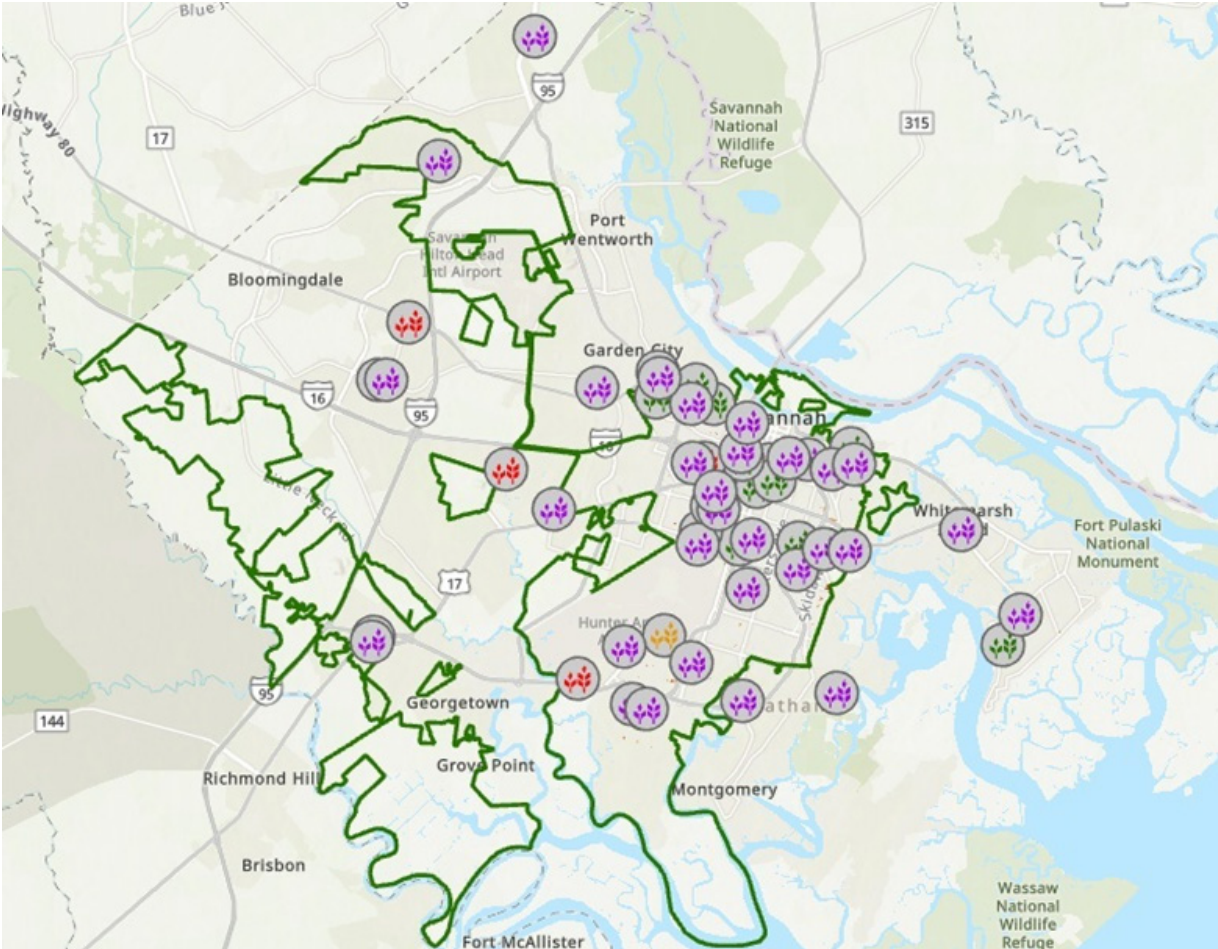


Exhibit 8.10-Chatham County: Agriculture and Forest Land

Tree Canopy

The most comprehensive local assessment of tree canopy conditions in Chatham County remains the 2020 canopy analysis prepared by Savannah Tree Foundation, which documented vegetation change between 2014 and 2020 using high resolution aerial imagery.

For Garden City, tree canopy increased from 53% in 2014 to 66% in 2020, representing an estimated gain of approximately 1,207 acres. This was one of the largest percentage increases among municipalities in the County and exceeded the countywide average increase of 7%.

More recent modeled estimates from the United States Forest Service and National Land Cover Database indicate that canopy conditions continue to face pressure from industrial and logistics related development, particularly near transportation corridors and Port influenced areas. Although Garden City’s residential population has remained relatively stable, continued warehouse, freight, and infrastructure expansion has resulted in localized canopy loss where site clearing occurs.

Long term canopy management remains important because mature trees reduce heat exposure, improve stormwater absorption, and help offset the effects of extensive impervious surfaces. Aging canopy also presents a long-term management issue across the region, as many established urban trees approach the end of their typical lifespan and require systematic replacement

Tree canopies can greatly assist in lowering the temperatures and overall “heat stress” in communities dealing with known heat island effects. 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, particularly in downtown Savannah. The majority of Savannah’s downtown tree canopy was planted in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Most urban planted live oaks are anticipated to live an average of 150 years, which indicates they will be aging out by roughly 2040. To ensure that a consistent tree cover continually remains intact, each jurisdiction will need to ensure that funds are programmed, trees are systematically replanted, and strict protection and planting ordinances are in place. Major factors in canopy reduction are increased occurrences of pests and disease alongside climate change.



Tree Canopy Change Over Time (2014–2020)				
Municipality	2014 % Vegetation	2020 % Vegetation	% Change	Estimated Acreage Change
Unincorporated Chatham County	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
Countywide Average	34%	41%	7%	23,757
Source: Savannah Tree Foundation, 2020 Tree Canopy Assessment				

Figure 8.3–Chatham County and Garden City: Tree Canopy Change

Solid Waste Management

Solid waste management in Garden City remains closely tied to regional landfill capacity and disposal systems serving Chatham County. As available landfill capacity becomes more limited and disposal costs rise, long term waste handling will increasingly depend on regional transport and external disposal agreements.

Garden City provides residential refuse collection and curbside single stream recycling through a contract with Waste Management. The recycling program has helped divert recyclable materials from landfills, although market instability and fluctuating material values continue to affect program efficiency.

Future waste reduction efforts should continue emphasizing material reuse, household waste reduction, and public education alongside recycling participation.

Renewable Energy

Renewable energy expansion is becoming increasingly important across coastal Georgia as communities work to reduce emissions, improve air quality, and strengthen long term resilience. Regional progress in solar generation, energy efficiency, and cleaner infrastructure is creating new opportunities that affect Garden City through both public investment and nearby industrial development.

Nearby jurisdictions, including Savannah, have adopted formal clean energy goals that support municipal solar deployment, energy efficiency upgrades, and long-term emissions reduction. These regional efforts help establish broader energy trends that influence surrounding municipalities.

Solar Energy

Chatham County expanded solar deployment through a municipal solar program launched in 2023, installing systems at four County facilities through a long-term procurement agreement that required no upfront capital cost. These installations now provide a portion of facility electricity demand while reducing operating costs and emissions. Although Garden City has not yet developed a comparable municipal scale solar program, regional investment in solar infrastructure provides a model for future energy planning at local public facilities.

Renewable Energy at Port of Savannah

The nearby Port of Savannah continues to expand equipment electrification and cleaner operations, directly affecting Garden City because of the City’s location adjacent to Port terminals, rail corridors, and freight routes.

Recent investments by the Georgia Ports Authority include replacement of diesel equipment with hybrid electric rubber-tired gantry cranes, reducing emissions and improving operational efficiency. Additional efforts include idle reduction measures, expanded rail use, and equipment modernization, all of which contribute to lower emissions in port adjacent areas. Continued coordination between Garden City, regional partners, and Port operators remains important to address transportation related air quality and environmental conditions.

Electric Vehicles

Electric vehicle adoption continues to expand across Georgia through public investment, private charging infrastructure, and federal incentives. These changes support reduced transportation emissions and influence fleet planning throughout the Savannah region. For Garden City, electric vehicle growth is most relevant through freight movement, municipal fleet transition, and nearby industrial investment tied to vehicle manufacturing and supply chains. Regional economic activity associated with electric vehicle production is expected to continue shaping employment, freight demand, and infrastructure planning across coastal Georgia.

Renewable Energy Recommendations	
Priority Area	Garden City Focus and Key Actions
Clean Energy Workforce Development and Job Creation	• Partner with regional technical colleges, Port related employers, and logistics firms to support workforce training in energy efficiency, electric vehicle maintenance, and industrial electrification • Support apprenticeships and credential programs aligned with clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and Port adjacent industries • Coordinate with regional workforce initiatives to connect residents to infrastructure and clean energy employment.
Energy Efficiency Programs	• Promote energy efficiency upgrades in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, particularly older housing and warehouse facilities • Encourage weatherization, HVAC replacement, efficient lighting, and equipment upgrades through available federal and state incentives • Expand access to efficiency programs for low- and moderate-income households and small businesses.
Solar Installations and Community Solar	• Encourage rooftop solar on suitable commercial, industrial, and municipal facilities • Explore participation in community solar programs for properties without viable rooftop conditions • Streamline permitting where feasible and expand public outreach to reduce adoption barriers.
Energy Storage and Grid Resilience Infrastructure	• Coordinate with utilities to support substation upgrades, transmission resilience, and smart grid technologies serving industrial and Port adjacent areas • Encourage battery storage at municipal facilities and critical infrastructure • Evaluate solar plus storage and microgrid opportunities at emergency facilities.
Electric Vehicle Adoption and Fleet Electrification	• Support gradual electrification of municipal fleets through scheduled vehicle replacement • Encourage EV charging infrastructure at municipal sites, employment centers, and freight support areas • Coordinate with regional partners to support private fleet electrification, including logistics and Port related operations.

Figure 8.4--Renewable Energy Resources

Climate Resiliency and Preparedness

Natural Disasters and Climate Challenges

Hurricanes

Hurricane season extends from June 1 through November 30, with peak activity typically occurring in early to mid-September. Along the Southeast coast, warmer ocean temperatures, rising sea levels, and changing atmospheric conditions have increased the likelihood of stronger storms, rapid intensification, and more damaging coastal flooding. Recent research indicates that Southeast Atlantic hurricanes have become more frequent and storms may continue to strengthen more quickly under warmer sea surface conditions.

Between 2016 and 2024, Garden City experienced impacts from Hurricanes Hermine, Matthew, Irma, Michael, Dorian, Isaias, and Helene. Although some storms remained offshore, local effects included tidal flooding, roadway inundation, wind damage, debris accumulation, and temporary disruptions to transportation and utility systems.

Sea level rise is already affecting coastal Georgia. Long term tide records at Fort Pulaski National Monument show a steady increase in mean sea level, raising baseline tidal elevations and increasing storm surge impacts during coastal events. This trend has increased flood exposure in low lying marsh edges, tidal creek systems, filled estuarine land, and developed waterfront areas.

Because Garden City is influenced by marsh systems, freight corridors, and low elevation drainage networks, storm preparedness remains closely tied to both natural and built infrastructure. The City participates in regional disaster exercises, follows the Federal Emergency Management Agency compliant debris management framework adopted through County coordination, and continues expanding response capacity through measures such as drone-based damage assessment and temporary debris staging.

The six coastal Georgia counties with the highest storm surge evacuation risk are Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty, and McIntosh. Population growth and continued development have increased evacuation complexity across the region, particularly where transportation routes serve both residents and freight activity.

Future planning in Garden City should continue incorporating updated sea level projections, storm surge mapping, and flood risk analysis. Protecting floodplains, improving drainage systems, elevating critical facilities, and limiting new vulnerability in the most exposed areas will remain central to long term resilience.

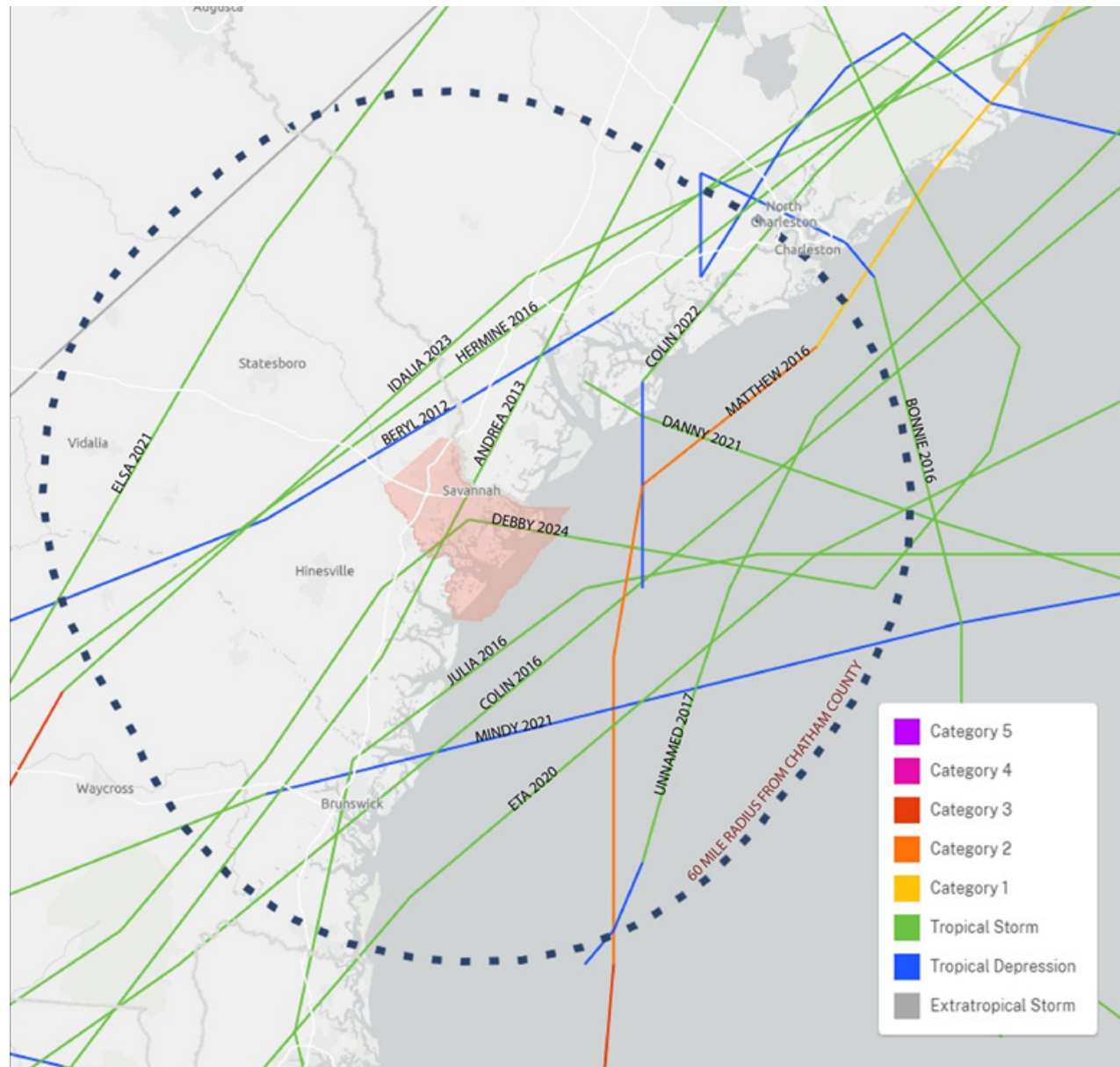


Exhibit 8.11-Chatham County: Hurricane History 2010 – Present

Sea Level Rise

Sea level rise is an increasing planning concern for Garden City because higher baseline water levels increase flood risk, reduce drainage efficiency, and place public infrastructure at greater long-term risk. Identifying vulnerable areas and evaluating the severity of future impacts remain important to guiding land use decisions, capital investment, and infrastructure design.

Measures that reduce long term exposure include limiting new public investment in highly vulnerable areas, protecting flood prone land, and incorporating sea level rise projections into infrastructure planning. Elevating roads, lift stations, and other critical facilities may reduce future disruption where existing assets cannot be relocated. Because retrofitting developed areas is typically more expensive than avoiding new vulnerability, future capital projects should evaluate sea level rise over their expected service life.

Long term tide records at Fort Pulaski National Monument continue to show a measurable rise in relative sea level, providing the primary regional indicator used in coastal planning.

Regional planning efforts completed since 2020, including the Coastal Watershed Management Plan and stormwater vulnerability assessments led by Chatham County and partner jurisdictions, identify growing risks to drainage systems, canals, and tidally influenced outfalls serving Garden City. These studies document existing tidal backwater effects and increasing pressure on gravity-based drainage systems as water levels rise. Garden City's ongoing stormwater and floodplain planning reflects this regional framework by prioritizing drainage upgrades, floodplain protection, and resilience considerations in land use and capital planning.

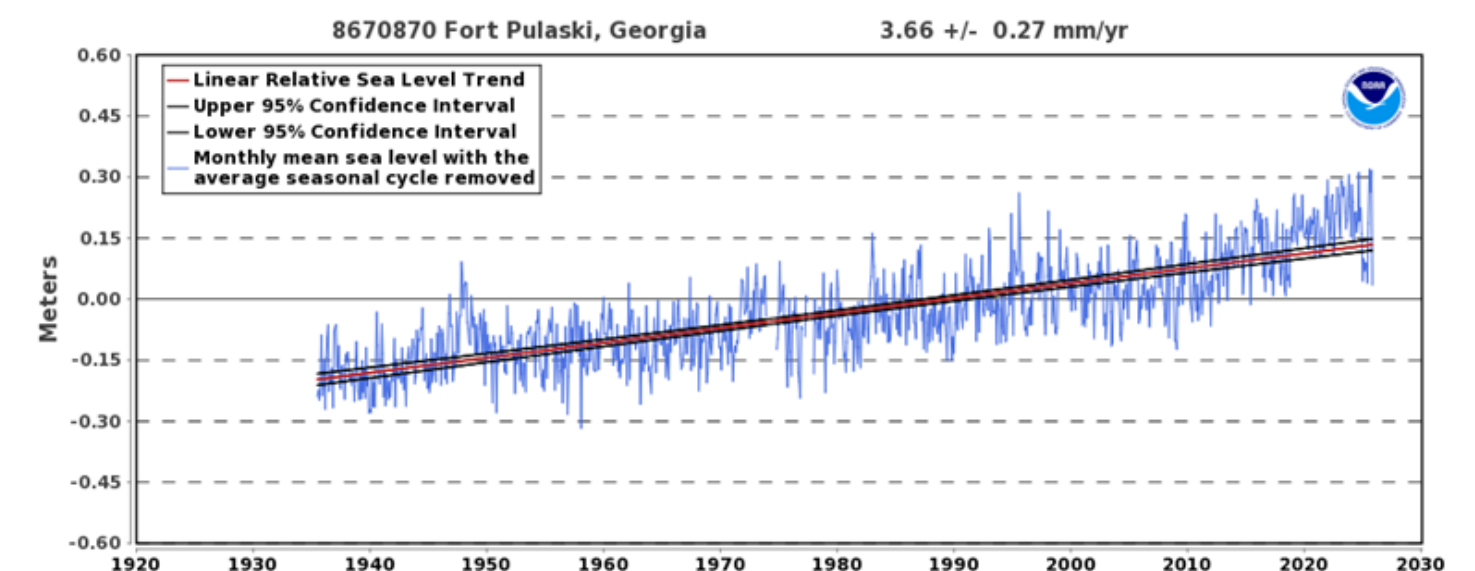


Figure 8.5-Relative Sea Level Trends

Flood Inundation

Tidal Flooding

Tidal flooding has become more frequent across coastal Georgia as sea level rise raises normal water levels and increases the number of days when high tides exceed drainage thresholds. At Fort Pulaski National Monument, high tide flooding has increased substantially since the early 2000’s, with recent years often recording more than ten flood days annually and some years exceeding twenty.

Seasonal flooding is most common during late summer and fall, when higher astronomical tides and elevated baseline water levels combine to increase tidal impacts. For Garden City, repeated tidal flooding reduces drainage efficiency by creating backflow in canals and stormwater networks, increasing stress on pumps, drainage structures, and low elevation transportation routes. These conditions support continued evaluation of tide control measures, pump improvements, and updated design standards for infrastructure exposed to tidal influence.

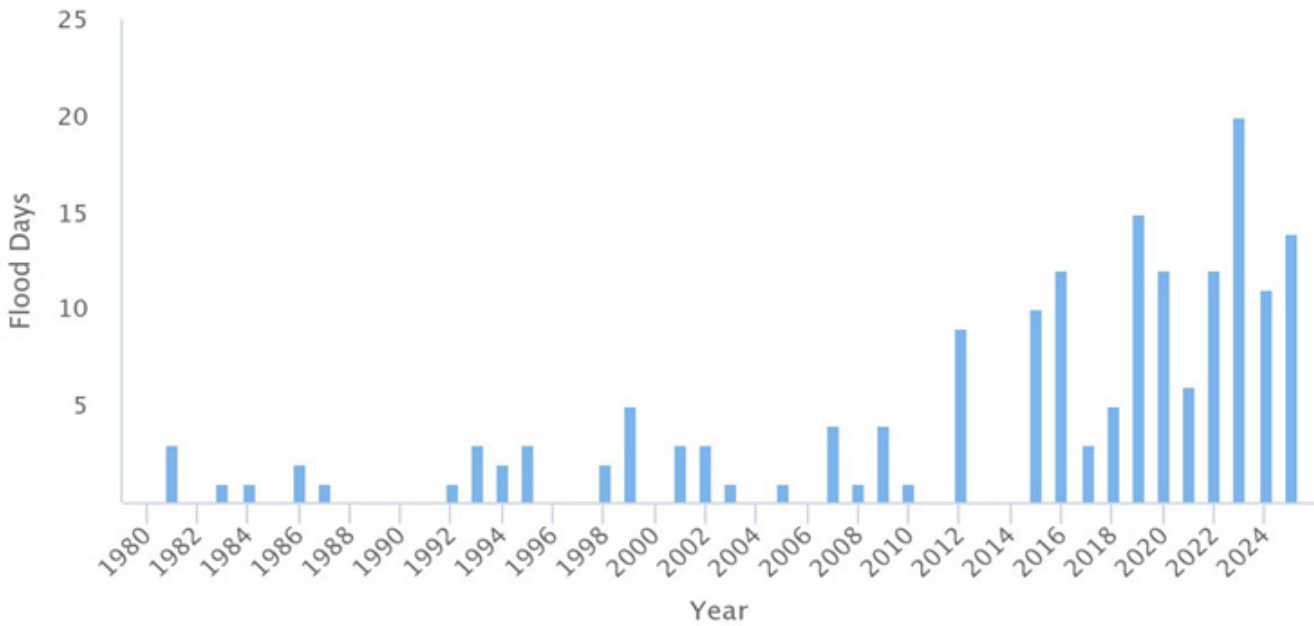
Pluvial and Fluvial Floods

In Garden City, flood impacts are also driven by intense rainfall and limited drainage capacity. Flat topography, poorly draining soils, shallow groundwater, and interconnected drainage basins increase the likelihood that heavy rainfall will overwhelm canals, ditches, and stormwater systems, including areas outside mapped floodplains.

Flooding is especially significant where industrial land patterns, transportation corridors, and developed surfaces concentrate runoff and reduce infiltration. Local impacts commonly affect roads, utilities, industrial access, and adjacent neighborhoods.

Garden City addresses these risks through floodplain regulation, stormwater system maintenance, MS4 permit requirements, and drainage planning coordinated with regional flood studies and transportation modeling. Continued capital investment, drainage maintenance, and site level runoff controls remain important as rainfall intensity increases.

1980-2026 Annual Flood Days at 8670870, Fort Pulaski GA
Threshold: 1.94 feet above MHHW



NOAA/NOS/Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services

Figure 8.6 –Annual Flood Days at Fort Pulaski

Climate Change and Vulnerability Index

Climate change affects Chatham County through rising temperatures, more frequent extreme heat events, changing rainfall patterns, stronger coastal storms, saltwater intrusion, and increasing flood exposure associated with sea level rise and recurrent tidal flooding. These conditions place growing pressure on infrastructure, natural systems, public safety, and long-term public investment.

According to the Georgia Climate Project, as many as 178,787 people statewide could face sea level rise related impacts by 2100, while a three-foot rise in sea level could result in the loss of approximately 36 square miles of salt marsh across Georgia. Along the coast, these changes are expected to alter ecosystems, shift species distribution, and affect services that support habitat, fisheries, water quality, flood storage, erosion control, and recreation. The resulting economic impacts include higher infrastructure protection costs and increased risk to industries that depend on coastal environmental conditions.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency Climate Vulnerability Index shows that climate risk across Chatham County extends beyond shoreline exposure. Most census tracts rank in upper national percentiles for climate impacts and extreme events, reflecting vulnerability to intense rainfall, flooding, heat, and storm disruption in both inland and coastal areas.

For Garden City, this is especially relevant because flood exposure intersects with industrial land patterns, transportation dependence, and areas of limited drainage capacity. Index indicators also show that climate hazards often overlap with health, social, and economic vulnerability, particularly in Garden City, Port Wentworth, western Savannah, and nearby unincorporated areas.

Lower household income, transportation limitations, housing cost burdens, and concentrations of renters, seniors, and medically vulnerable residents can increase recovery challenges when flooding disrupts housing, roads, utilities, or employment access. These patterns support resilience strategies that prioritize drainage improvements, transportation reliability, green infrastructure, and targeted investment where physical risk and social vulnerability overlap.

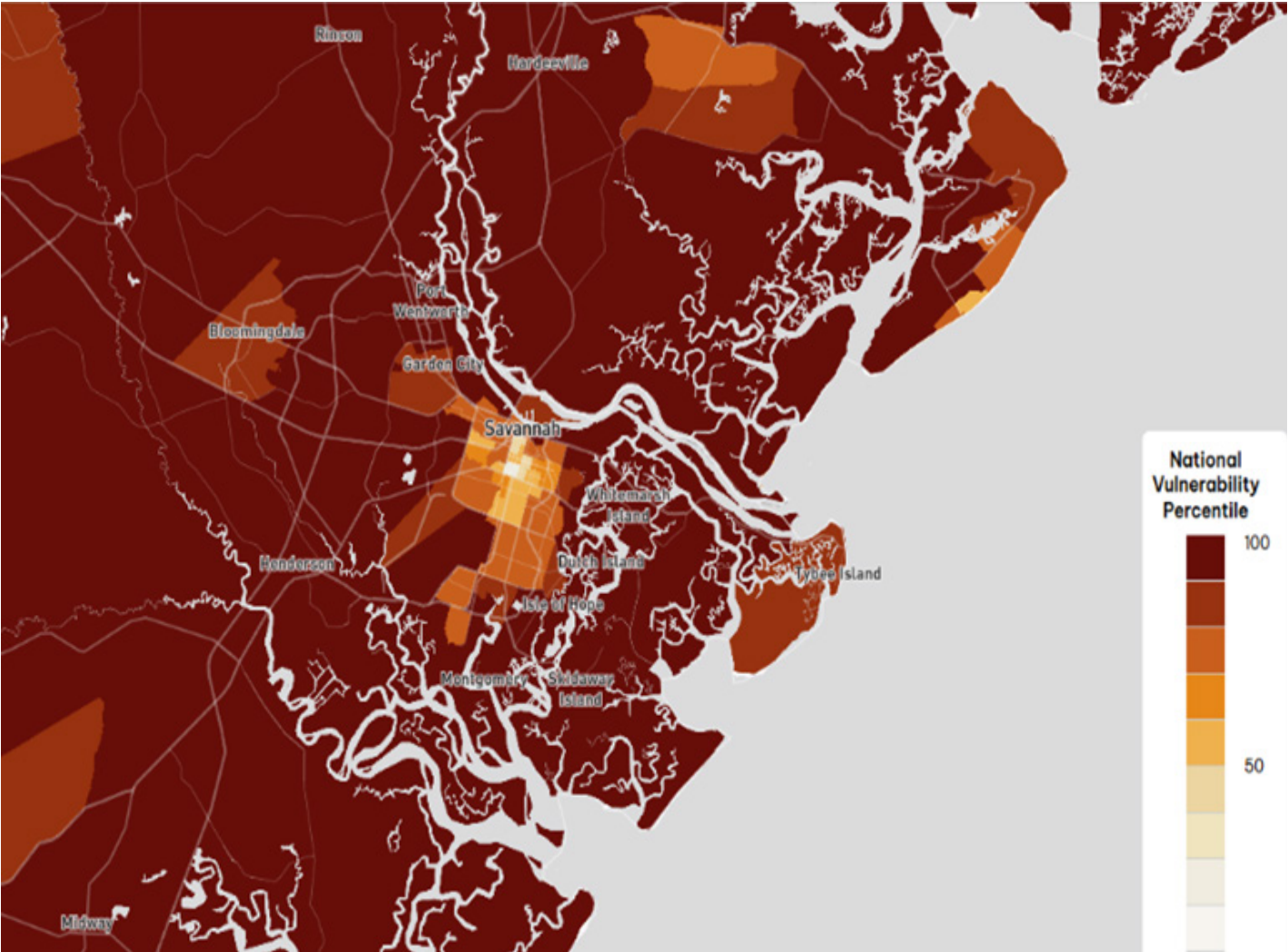


Exhibit 8.12–Climate Vulnerability Index

Climate and Resilience Challenges

The most significant climate related challenges affecting Garden City and the surrounding Chatham County involve infrastructure exposure, flood risk, ecosystem change, economic disruption, and unequal community vulnerability. These challenges often overlap, increasing long term pressure on public systems and local decision making:

Infrastructure Vulnerability and Public Health Risks

Roads, drainage systems, utilities, and public facilities face increasing stress from extreme heat, heavier rainfall, flooding, and prolonged storm impacts. Rising temperatures also increase heat related health risks, particularly for children, seniors, outdoor workers, and residents with limited access to cooling resources.

Increasing Flood Risk in Coastal and Low-lying Areas

Sea level rise, tidal flooding, and more intense rainfall continue to increase flood exposure in developed and low elevation areas. These conditions affect homes, businesses, transportation corridors, and critical infrastructure, particularly where drainage systems already operate near capacity

Transformation and Loss of Natural Ecosystems

Wetlands, forests, estuaries, and other natural systems continue to experience stress from changing rainfall patterns, stronger storms, and rising water levels. Reduced ecosystem function weakens flood storage, habitat support, and water quality protection

Economic Impacts and Workforce Vulnerability

Regional industries, including logistics, manufacturing, tourism, fishing, and Port related activity, are increasingly affected by flood disruption, extreme heat, and changing coastal conditions that influence operations, labor productivity, and transportation reliability.

Water Resource and Saltwater

Changing hydrologic conditions and rising coastal water levels increase long term pressure on freshwater systems, groundwater quality, and water supply reliability.

Equity, Health, and Community Resilience Challenges

Climate impacts are not distributed evenly. Households with lower incomes, limited transportation access, higher housing cost burdens, or greater medical vulnerability often face greater difficulty preparing for and recovering from disruptionss

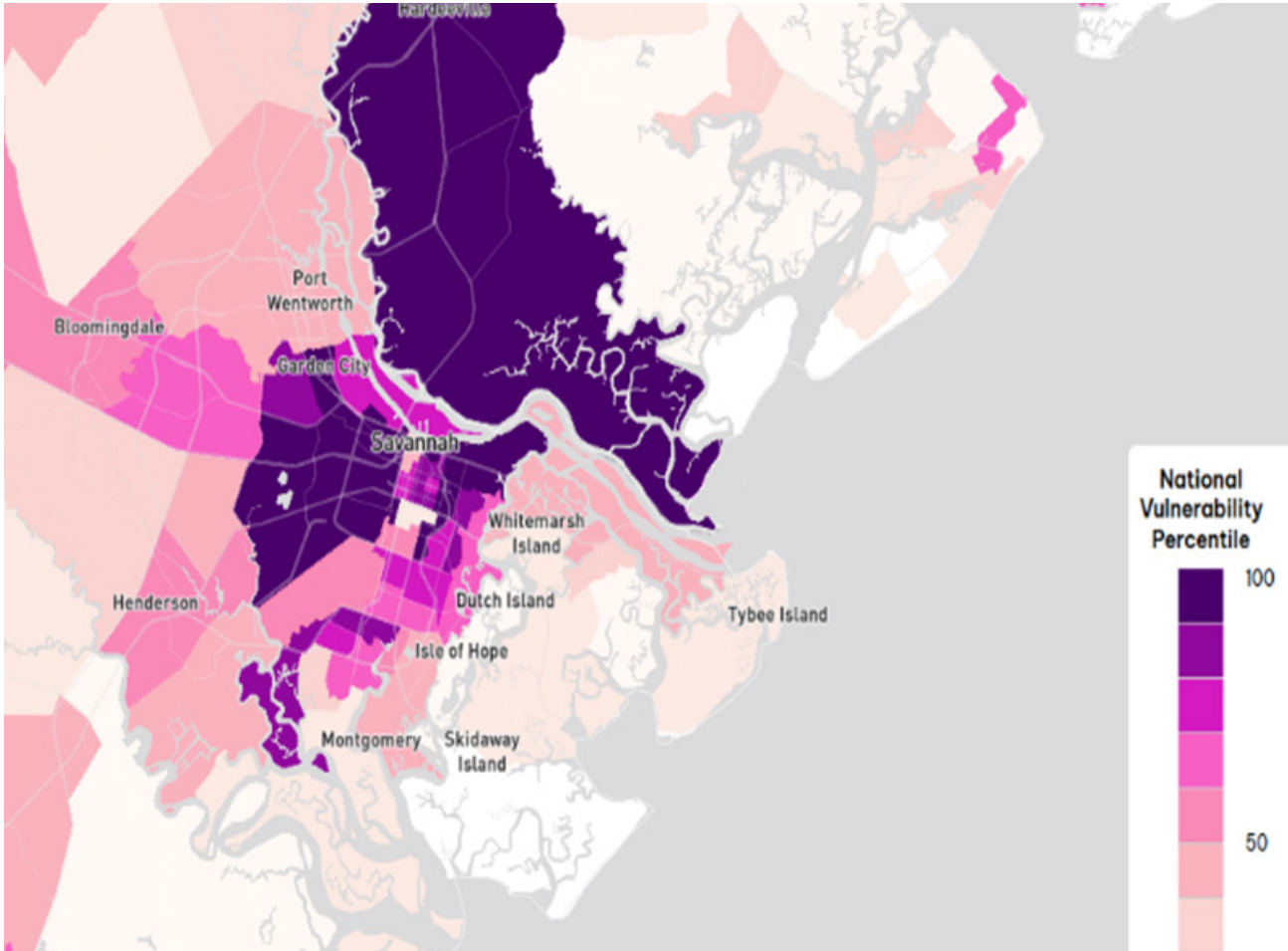


Exhibit 8.13- Community Baseline

Planning Capacity, Insurance, and Implementation Constraints

Flood insurance affordability, evolving regulatory requirements, and limited technical and financial capacity continue to challenge long term adaptation and redevelopment decisions. Because many of these pressures interact, future resilience efforts in Garden City will require coordinated planning, targeted infrastructure investment, and policies that reduce both physical and social vulnerability.

Coastal Empire Resilience Network

The Metropolitan Planning Commission began expanding regional resilience planning in 2020 through the creation of the Coastal Empire Resilience Network, developed in partnership with University of Georgia, Georgia Sea Grant, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division, and local jurisdictions. The network now serves as an active regional collaboration focused on resilience planning, data sharing, education, and coordination across coastal Georgia. Its work supports local governments, including Garden City, by strengthening technical capacity and integrating resilience, equity, and environmental justice into long term planning.

Smart Growth and Climate Change

Smart growth strategies help communities both reduce emissions and improve resilience to changing climate conditions. For Garden City, these strategies are especially relevant because land use decisions influence flood exposure, transportation demand, infrastructure costs, and energy use. Smart growth can also improve affordability by reducing transportation costs, improving infrastructure efficiency, and protecting environmental resources that support long term resilience.

Mitigation

Development and redevelopment patterns directly affect greenhouse gas emissions. Communities can reduce emissions by:

- Compact building and using energy efficient construction methods
- Reusing existing infrastructure and buildings where practical
- Locating housing, employment, services, and public spaces closer together
- Preserving green space and directing growth toward previously developed areas
- These approaches also reduce infrastructure costs, improve mobility options, and help protect natural systems that absorb heat and stormwater.

Adaptation

Climate related impacts are already affecting coastal communities and are expected to intensify over time through stronger storms, heavier rainfall, rising temperatures, sea level rise, and more frequent flooding. In Garden City, adaptation planning should focus on reducing future vulnerability while strengthening infrastructure, land use decisions, and environmental systems that support long term resilience. Smart growth strategies that support adaptation include:

- Directing growth toward areas that are connected to existing development and less vulnerable to flooding, storm surge, and future climate impacts
- Discouraging new development in areas with higher long term flood exposure
- Preserving large, connected areas of open space that support flood storage and ecosystem function
- Coordinating land use and transportation decisions with climate projections
- Encouraging water efficient and energy efficient buildings
- Upgrading stormwater systems and expanding green infrastructure
- Increasing tree cover, parks, and other cooling elements that reduce heat exposure
- Designing buildings and infrastructure to perform under future climate conditions

Communities that incorporate long term climate adaptation into everyday planning decisions will be better positioned to protect residents, maintain infrastructure performance, and reduce future public costs.

**Environmental Planning
Criteria, Planning Issues, and
Opportunities**

Chatham County and its municipalities, including Garden City, apply environmental planning criteria required by state law to protect water resources, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, and river corridors. These criteria are implemented through zoning, development review, floodplain standards, and stormwater regulations and are increasingly informed by updated flood and climate resilience studies.

**Wetlands and River Corridor
Protection**

Wetlands and river corridors are protected through local ordinances that coordinate federal permitting with development review. These areas function as natural infrastructure by storing floodwaters, reducing erosion, protecting water quality, and supporting habitat systems. Vegetated buffers remain important along rivers, streams, and drainage corridors to reduce development impacts and maintain floodplain function. Standards governing crossings, hazardous materials, septic systems, and construction activities support long term protection of these areas.

**Growth Management and Natural
Resource Conservation**

Environmental protection remains closely tied to growth patterns and land use decisions. Sensitive coastal and marsh adjacent areas across the County require continued use of buffers, setbacks, and development standards to limit environmental loss. For Garden City, growth pressures are most closely associated with redevelopment, industrial expansion, and the need to preserve remaining tree canopy, drainage corridors, and open space where practical. Conservation tools may include zoning, easements, targeted acquisition, and site level stormwater controls.

**Stormwater, Flooding, and Climate
Resilience**

Stormwater capacity, land use decisions, and transportation planning to address non-tidal and compound flooding risks should be an integrated countywide approach. Continued implementation of stormwater Best Management Practices, including Low Impact Development strategies, is essential. Shared design standards, evaluation of stormwater utility models, and aligned capital investments present key opportunities to improve system performance. Additionally, planning and regulatory updates are needed to ensure that building standards, zoning, stormwater and drainage infrastructure design systems account for long-term climate conditions

Heat Islands

While an area’s heat trends are primarily determined by its latitude, exposure to sunlight, elevation, and climate, there are a number of other factors that can exacerbate the effects of heat across an area, creating what are known as heat islands. Daytime maximum temperatures within a heat island can vary by as much as 7 degrees from the surrounding neighborhood or city, and more importantly these areas have a notable ability to retain heat through the nighttime, greatly increasing the cost of cooling for homes and businesses located. Common causes of the heat island effect include, but are not limited to:

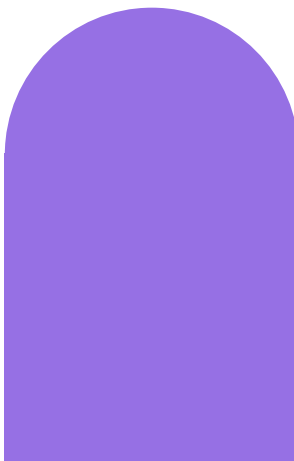
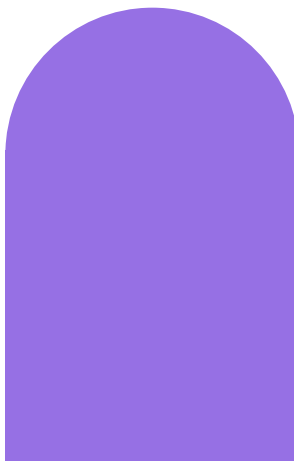
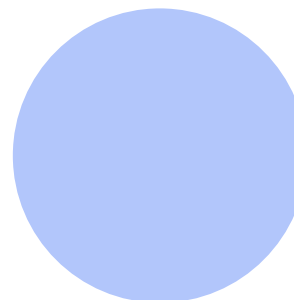
- Neighborhood construction materials
Manmade materials such as asphalt, concrete, and glass trap and reflect heat, causing heat to radiate in areas that are densely built up with these materials even after sunset.
- Development layout
The way buildings are arranged and spaced across an area can create pockets of insulation that trap heat and prevent airflow that would release it, exacerbating heat in the process.
- Distance to water and vegetation
Unlike manmade materials, trees, plants, and bodies of water absorb heat from sunlight and even reduce the surrounding air temperature. Areas that are far from both water and vegetation are more likely to experience heat island effects.

- Human activities
Operating vehicles, use of air-conditioning, and industrial activities all release heat as a by-product, which means that areas where these activities are abundant will experience more severe heat island effects

Heat can pose threats to health and human safety such as fatigue, heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat cramps. During a heat wave, “feels like” temperatures can also reach levels that cause hospitalization and even death for certain individuals.

09

QUALITY OF LIFE



Introduction

The Quality of Life element of Garden City Comprehensive Plan 2040 Update includes an inventory and assessment of the following quality of life aspects: Historic and Cultural Resources, Education, Health, Public Safety, and Broadband. One of the major focuses of this element is analysis leading to recommendations for establishing historic preservation activities within Garden City in order to preserve and recognize its historic, cultural, and archaeological resources.



Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is a valuable planning tool that can be used to protect buildings, objects, landscapes, and other artifacts of historical, cultural, and archaeological significance and in many circumstances can influence quality of life. Historic preservation work can take many forms; however, the main two ways to preserve buildings locally are through federal registration as a National Landmark or District on the National Register of Historic Places and local protection through establishing historic districts and/or preservation ordinances.

The National Register of Historic Places is a federal program that allows for individual or a group of structures/sites to be officially recognized as historically significant. This provides opportunities for preservation tax incentives but otherwise may not offer protection of the resource when it comes to demolition or significant alterations. Local historic districts are comprised of a group of historic structures/sites deemed significant to a municipality’s cultural fabric and are more often protected through a public review process established by a preservation zoning ordinance.

Preservation efforts in Garden City have been limited; the last known historic resources survey was conducted in 1993 by Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) staff. The Dotson House was identified as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. However, the house was moved from its original location to the town center and then later demolished in 2020.

A few of the strategies and activities included

in the Garden City 2040 Work Program were partially implemented. No major local historic preservation efforts were pursued during this time period, although the intent to undertake historic preservation will be extended into the 2045 initiatives.

Evolution of Industrial City Gardens to Garden City

In 1863, freed enslaved families relocated to Pipemakers Canal from the plantations and established settlements in the land along the present Augusta Road from Rossignol Hill. The major trades in the area at the time were farming and milling. The descendants of these first families witnessed new residential development spurred by Lewis Hampton Smith in the 1930s. He began to develop Industrial City Gardens, as it was first called, in a triangular wooded area bounded by what is now Smith Avenue, Georgia Highway 21 and U.S. 17, with the intention to provide affordable lots that were large enough for a vegetable garden and livestock. On February 8, 1939, the residents of Industrial City Gardens were granted a charter of municipal incorporation by the Superior Court of Chatham County. Two years later, a new charter was enacted changing the name to Garden City, as many residents felt that the name was too long and implied a mill town. The original Industrial City Gardens gates were identified at 30 Main Street by the 1992 historic resources survey, but have since been removed.

Existing Historic Resources Survey

A historic resources survey collects and records information about historic buildings, structures, sites, landscapes, and objects, collectively known as resources, within a given area and provides detailed information through photographs and field notes. Historic resources surveys are vital to the planning and preservation process and promote awareness of a community’s historic and cultural resources.

The last known historic resources survey was conducted in 1992/1993, in which 36 resources were surveyed and considered for National Register eligibility. Only one building was identified as being potentially eligible for registration in the National Register of Historic Places. However, it has been since demolished. The following chart lists the 36 resources that were surveyed in Garden City with 2026 updates showing sites that are no longer extant:

Historic Places: National Register Eligibility - Garden City		
	Address	Year
	4016–18 1st Street	19
	4022 1st Street	19
	4024 1st Street	19
	4019 3rd Street	19
	4025 3rd Street	19
	Rossignol–Minis House—4026 3rd Street	18
	4106 3rd Street	19
	George Dotson House—4912 Augusta Road	18
	Clifton Baptist Church—100 Big Hill Road	19
	Oak Grove Brampton Road	18
	Brampton Cemetery—2 Brampton Road	17
	52 Brampton Road	19
	64 Brampton Road	19
	68 Brampton Road	19
	216 Davis Avenue	19
	413 Davis Avenue	19

Historic Places: National Register Eligibility - Garden City		
	Address	Year Built
17	Frank F. Baker Masonic Lodge—131 Rommel Avenue	1941
18	11 Smith Avenue	1920
19	39 Smith Avenue	1935
20	51 Smith Avenue	1935
21	80 Smith Avenue	1939
22	4602 Old Louisville Road	1860
23	Oak Grove Baptist Church—4617 Old Louisville Road	1915
24	4806 Old Louisville Road	1870
25	4906 Old Louisville Road	1900
26	Thompsons' Tourist Home—28 Main Street	1937
27	Industrial City Garden Subdivision Gate—30 Main Street	1932
28	33 Main Street	1925
29	35 Main Street	1935
30	Good Shepherd Lutheran Church—41 Main Street	1937
31	Chapel in the Gardens Presbyterian—93 Main Street	1941
32	120 Main Street	1910
33	125 Main Street	1930
34	2607 13th Street	1915
35	Live Oak Grove—2613 13th Street	1800
36	2617 13th Street	1920
	Demolished or under review; this identification is not exhaustive	

Figure 9.1 – Garden City: Historic Resources Inventory

Figure 9.1 –Garden City: Historic Resources Inventory

Recommended Historic Resources Survey

The 1992/1993 survey area, roughly bounded by U.S. Highway 80 to the east and south, Pipemakers Canal to the west, and Main Street to the north, should be utilized to create updated boundaries for new and renewed historic resources survey efforts. The following map is a recommendation for the boundaries for a historic resources survey area based on the previous 1992/1993 survey.

Since the original survey, a number of homes, churches and other structures that were not eligible for consideration for registration in the National Register have met and exceeded the 50 year mark. The majority of potentially eligible properties are discussed in the Garden City 50th Anniversary Book. Updating and expanding the historic resources survey ensures that those resources which are vital to the history of Garden City are known and potentially protected. Without this knowledge, further preservation efforts cannot be pursued. As identified previously in Garden City 2040, areas of Garden City that would be appropriate for a new or updated historic resources survey must be identified. Neighborhoods and other areas over 50 years old, which maintain a high level of integrity, should be evaluated based on interest from the community, threat of loss, and size of area to identify places that may benefit from historic resources surveys.

The 1992/1993 survey area (roughly bounded by U.S. Highway 80 to the east and south, Pipemaker’s Canal to the west, and Main Street to the north) should be utilized to create updated boundaries for new and renewed historic resources survey efforts, as shown.

Promoting Garden City’s History

In a smaller municipality such as Garden City, where historic preservation efforts are less established, preserving the area’s history may not always occur through listing locations in the National Register of Historic Places or seeking to incorporate historic preservation standards into an ordinance. The preservation of important historic resources in Garden City can also be achieved through the promotion of the stories and sites which make up its history. For instance, even as the largest, fully excavated site in Georgia, little is known widely about the work at Irene Mounds and the women who completed it.

The promotion of histories such as the Irene Mounds, the beginnings of the incorporation of the subdivision Industrial City Gardens in 1939, and other historical and cultural touchstones of the area can be done through a variety of means. Educational markers placed near historic sites, as well as promotional materials such as brochures, webpages, and driving tours, are methods of engaging the community and encouraging residents and visitors alike to recognize important historic, cultural, and archaeological resources throughout the area. For example, in 2020, a historical marker was installed at the Georgia Ports Authority commemorating 75 years in operation of what is now the third busiest container port in the United States.

Establishment of a Historic Preservation Commission whose authority includes reviewing applications for modifications to historic structures for issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness; review of demolition permit applications for properties within the Historic District; and review and recommendation to City Council for adoption of Historic District Design Guidelines and Development Standards is recommended.



Exhibit 9.1 –Garden City: Recommended Historic Resources Survey Area

Education

Education is a foundational component of community quality of life, workforce readiness, and long-term economic stability. Access to high-quality educational opportunities influences residential choice, supports labor force development, and shapes future civic and economic outcomes. In Garden City, educational planning intersects closely with land use decisions, transportation access, housing stability, and workforce development initiatives.

Garden City does not operate its own independent school system and is served by the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. Educational facility planning for Garden City residents is therefore addressed through districtwide capital investment strategies, rather than through school construction within Garden City limits. Recent ESPLOST-funded modernization and replacement projects serve students from Garden City alongside those from surrounding jurisdictions.

From a planning perspective, Garden City’s educational facility needs are shaped by regional access, transportation connectivity, and coordination with workforce development efforts, particularly given the city’s proximity to major employment centers associated with port operations, logistics, and industrial uses. Continued reinvestment in existing SCCPSS facilities, combined with regional transportation planning and workforce-aligned programming, ensures that residents maintain access to modern educational environments without necessitating new school construction within industrial areas.

K-12 Public Schools

Public schools throughout Chatham County are managed and operated by the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS). In 2025 the school district had 35,362 students enrolled with a student to teacher ratio between 13:1 and 15:1. District enrollment has remained relatively stable in recent years, reflecting broader demographic trends such as slower household growth, declining birth rates, and increased participation in school choice options.

Current district projections indicate that enrollment is expected to remain generally stable in the near term, rather than experiencing significant growth. As of 2025, the school system consists of twenty-three elementary schools, eight K-8 schools, eight middle schools, eleven high schools, and five charter schools. It also includes a virtual academy, alternative learning centers, and an adult learning center. A new, major K-12 multi-campus was completed in Garden City for enrollment in the 2025/2026 school year on the former Groves High School site, with capacity for 2,400 students.

The Davis-Edwards-Harris Educational Complex combines Groves High School, Mercer Middle School, and Gould Elementary School into one large, modern facility. Featured are state-of-the-art technology and digital media lab, two gyms, and athletic complex, 750-seat auditorium, two cafeterias, and specialized Career & Technical Education (CTE) spaces for programs like maritime logistics and aviation.

Garden City Elementary also continues to serve the Garden City population. Other school replacements, including Bloomingdale Elementary, were completed or reached operational status in late 2025.

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.

The College and Career Ready Performance Index scores have been provided below for each school in Garden City for the 2024/2025 school year. The College and Career Ready Performance Index is a

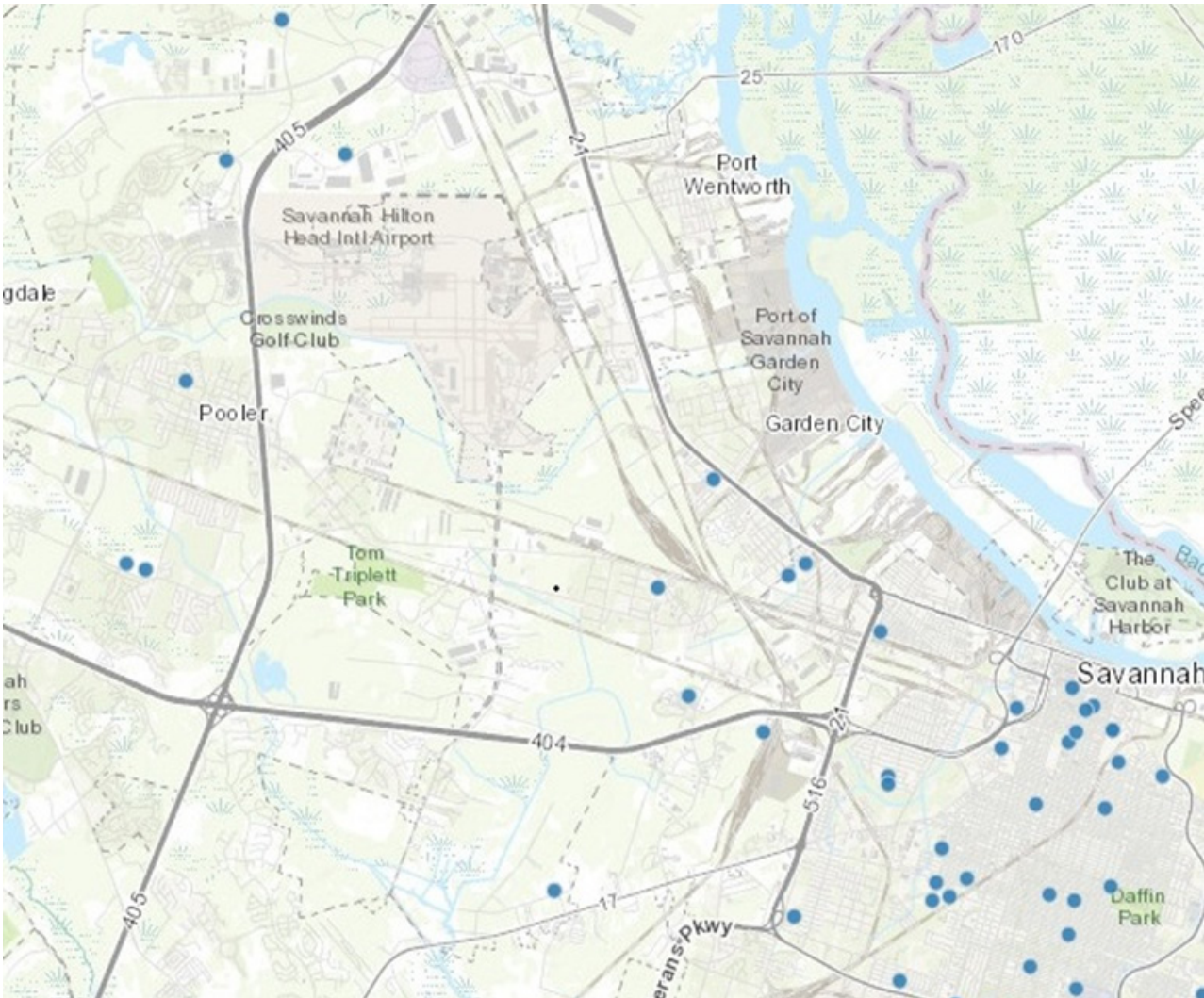


Exhibit 9.2 –Garden City: Educational Facilities

Garden City Elementary received a CCRPI score of 83.5, a B grading for the 2024/25 school year. The demographic composition of students within this attendance boundary are predominantly ethnic:

- 60.5% identify as Hispanic, corresponding to 56.6% categorized as English learners;
- 30.1% identify as Black.
- Almost 88% are economically disadvantaged.

Gould Elementary, part of the Davis-Edwards-Harris Educational Complex, received a CCRPI score of 80.4, or B grading for the 2024/2025 school year. The demographic composition of students within this attendance boundary are predominantly ethnic:

- 40.5% identify as Hispanic, corresponding to 36.1% categorized as English learners;
- 39.3% identify as Black.
- Approximately 78.9% are economically disadvantaged.
- The proportion of students with a disability is relatively high at 16.2%.

Mercer Middle School, part of the Davis-Edwards-Harris Educational Complex, received a CCRPI score of 47.3, or F overall school score grading for the 2024/2025 school year. The demographic composition of students within this attendance boundary are predominantly ethnic:

- 34.8% identify as Hispanic, corresponding to 28.5% categorized as English learners;
- 3.6% identify as Multi-Racial, and 54.9% identify as Black.
- Approximately 88.3% are economically disadvantaged.
- The proportion of students with a disability is relatively high at 19.0%.

Groves High School, part of the Davis-Edwards-Harris Educational Complex, received an overall CCRPI score of 52.6, or F grading for the 2024/2025 school year. The demographic composition of students within this attendance boundary are predominantly ethnic:

- 25.9% identify as Hispanic, corresponding to 15.3% categorized as English learners;
- 4.4% identify as Multi-racial, and 59.4% identify as Black.
- Approximately 71.4% are economically disadvantaged.
- The proportion of students with a disability is relatively high at 14.0%.

Economically disadvantaged students within the Garden City schools 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.

Being economically disadvantaged can prove to be a large obstacle for students on the academic, mental, and social challenges. 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.

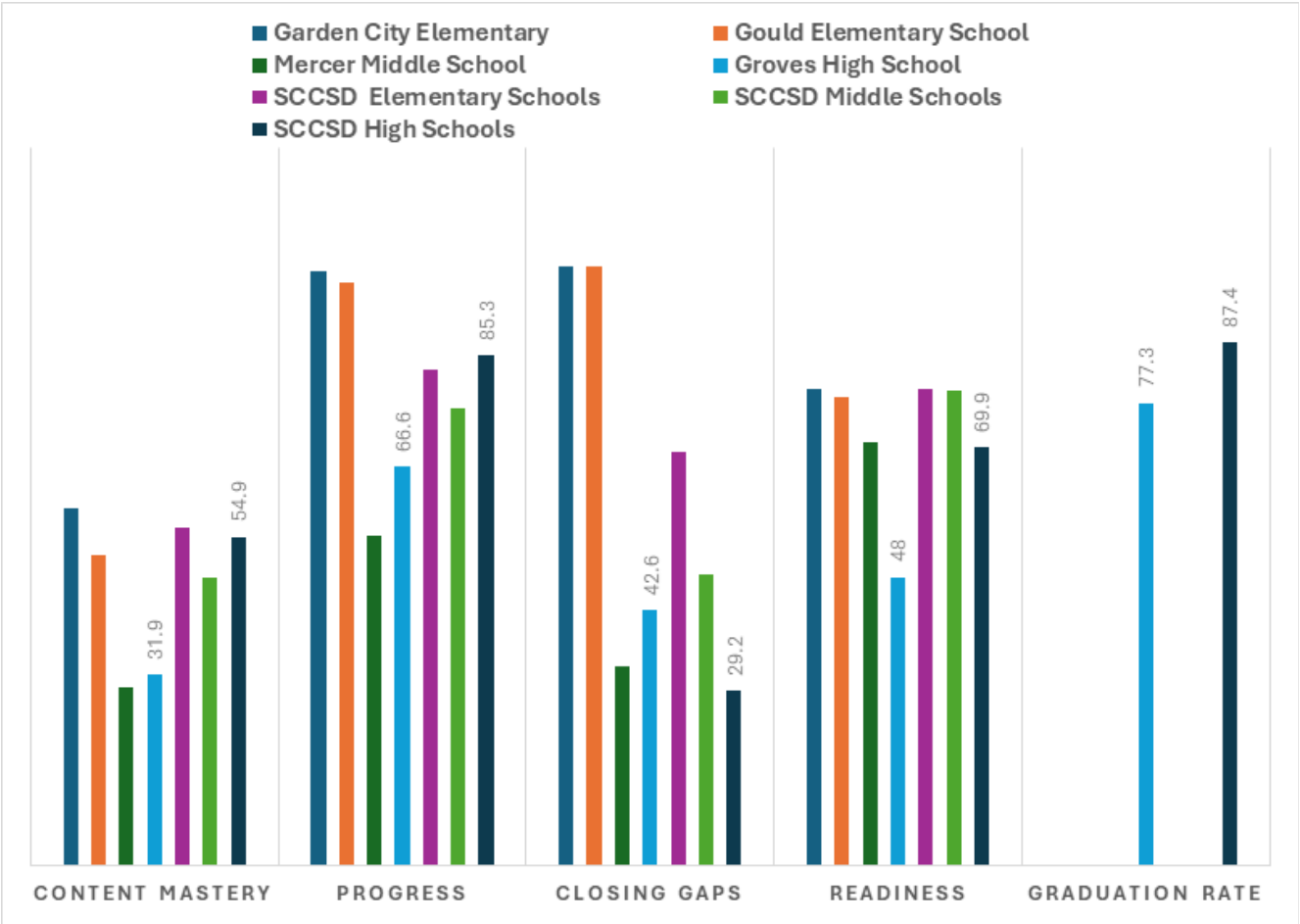


Figure 9.2 –Garden City and Chatham County School District Readiness Scores 2025

Charter, Private, and Alternative Education

In addition to traditional public schools, SCCPSS authorizes and oversees multiple charter schools, which operate as tuition-free public schools with independent nonprofit governance. Charter schools contribute to programmatic diversity and parental choice while remaining subject to academic, financial, and operational accountability standards.

The region also includes a substantial number of private and parochial schools, which serve a smaller share of total enrollment but influence district enrollment patterns and facility utilization. School choice options have contributed to redistribution of enrollment rather than overall growth, reinforcing the importance of system-level planning rather than new school expansion.

Facilities and Capital Investment

Many school facilities within the SCCPSS were constructed decades ago and require continued reinvestment to meet current educational, safety, and resilience standards. In recent years, capital investment has been driven less by enrollment growth and more by the need to modernize aging campuses, address deferred maintenance, and adapt facilities to evolving instructional and workforce preparation needs.

Over the past five years, voter-approved Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) programs have funded major renovation, replacement, and system upgrade projects throughout the district.

Charter Schools		
Charter School	Educational Focus	Charter Term
Oglethorpe Charter School	Classical curriculum emphasizing literacy, history, and structured academic progression	July 2025 – June 2030
Savannah Classical Academy	Classical education model with emphasis on core academics and character education	July 2019 – June 2027
Susie King Taylor Community School	Community-centered education emphasizing leadership, civic engagement, and inclusive learning	July 2024 – June 2029
Tybee Island Maritime Academy	Maritime, coastal, and environmental studies integrated with core curriculum	July 2025 – June 2030
Coastal Empire Montessori Charter School	Montessori instructional model emphasizing self-directed learning and developmental pacing	July 2026 – June 2028
Source: SCCPSS		

Figure 9.3 –SCCPSS Charter Schools

These investments have focused on extending the useful life of existing schools while improving learning environments, operational efficiency, and campus safety. Projects have included building renovations, classroom reconfigurations, and upgrades to mechanical, electrical, plumbing, technology, and security systems, as well as phased improvements to accessibility and building envelopes.

ESPLOST funding has also supported expanded and enhanced academic and career-focused facilities, particularly at the high school level. Investments at sites such as Windsor Forest High School, which was replaced and modernized to address long-standing facility deficiencies, and Groves High School and the GHS Industrial Academy, where career and technical education spaces have been upgraded, reflect the district’s emphasis on workforce-aligned instruction in fields such as aviation, logistics, cybersecurity, and advanced manufacturing. At the elementary and K–8 level, improvements at schools such as Hesse K–8 demonstrate a continued focus on upgrading neighborhood schools through targeted renovations rather than expanding physical footprints.

From a comprehensive planning perspective, educational facility needs in Chatham County are defined by systematic reinvestment and modernization of existing assets, rather than the construction of new schools. Continued coordination between SCCPSS, local governments, and regional planning efforts will be essential to ensure future capital improvements support safe access, resilience objectives, workforce alignment, and efficient use of public resources.

Mindfulness

A current trend that is aiding in the development of focus and improved behavior in students is mindfulness. 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. With the challenges and stressors many students may be facing stemming from their family lives, introducing yoga, mindfulness and other courses into Garden City school curriculums that assist students in dealing with daily challenges may ultimately improve school performance.

High School Graduation Rates

Statistics from SCCPSS reporting overall countywide public high school graduation rates and the two high schools in Garden City, (data unavailable during the 2020 and 2021 COVID period), indicates that the countywide public high school graduation rate has consistently performed an average of 10% higher than Garden City, with rates in the high 80th percentile in comparison to rates in the high 70th percentile in Garden City. The countywide rate has remained fairly steady, with a gradual improvement in performance post COVID, decreasing to a rate slightly below 2019 by 2025. A similar pattern is evident for students at Groves High School in Garden City, which peaked in 2023 and returned to pre-COVID graduation rates in 2025, although a slight improvement over 2019 rates is shown. In contrast, the graduation rates at Woodvale-Thompkins Technical and Career High School have remained consistent at a 100% graduation rate.

According to the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates, approximately 80.2% of the labor force in Garden City falls between the ages of 25 to 65 years. In total, around 85% of residents in the labor force aged 25–65 held a high school diploma/GED and above.

In 2023 roughly 21.5% of the workforce held a bachelor’s, graduate, or professional degree, compared to 12.7% in 2018. While this data indicates that the workforce in Garden City is becoming more educated, it is lower than almost 90% countywide, indicating a need for focused attention for job training and furthering of educational opportunity, particularly for lower income individuals remains.

Analysis of educational attainment among the labor force aged population suggests a correlation with rate of poverty. Although an increase from 82.7% in 2018,. Within the labor force:

- 53.1% of the population have either not completed, or have a high school or GED only, with 32.9% of this category falling below the poverty line.
- 29.8% have completed an associate degree or some college, with a 12.6% rate of poverty,
- 16.1% have attained a bachelor’s degree and above with 2.4% of this category below poverty.

Education Beyond K-12

Residents of Garden City are supported by a diverse network of higher education institutions, technical colleges, and workforce training providers that collectively serve a regional labor shed extending well beyond municipal boundaries. Higher education institutions and technical colleges in the Savannah region provide critical training capacity, particularly in engineering, healthcare, logistics, aviation, and skilled trades. Georgia Southern University, Savannah Technical College, and other regional institutions collectively graduate thousands of students annually, including approximately 330 engineering graduates per year, yet demand for engineering, industrial maintenance, and technical supervision continues to exceed local supply.

The workforce studies emphasize that high school graduates, technical college completers, and credentialed trainees represent the most immediate and scalable solution to the region’s industrial labor gap. Without earlier exposure to career pathways and industry-aligned training, many students are unaware of local employment opportunities in manufacturing, logistics, and skilled trades. Higher education facilities in the region are summarized below

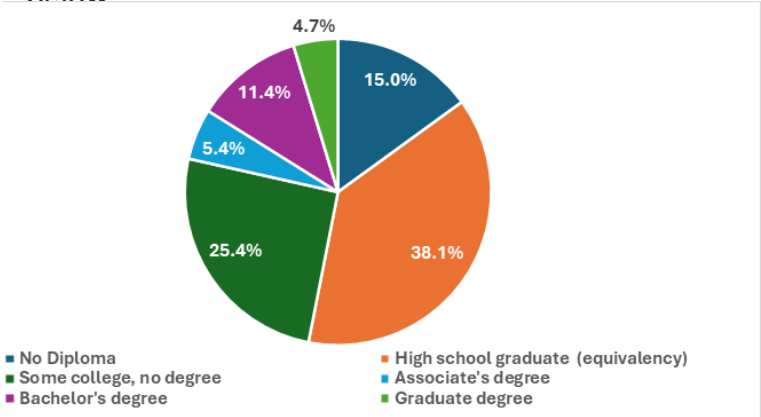


Figure 9.4 –Garden City: Educational Attainment 2023, Age 25-65

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 over 15,000 students. SCAD has more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degree 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. New offerings in the 2024/25 year included: a B.A. in Game Development; M.A. in Cinematography/Editing; and M.B.I. in Creative Business Leadership/Design Management/Service Design. For the 2025–26 academic year, SCAD introduced a new Bachelor of Design in Applied AI major, which is expected to be a relevant, popular program. The most highly enrolled majors in Fall 2025 were animation, fashion, film and television, and user experience (UX) design, followed by visual and performing arts, communications, and business creative fields.

Savannah State University (SSU)

Known as the oldest historically black college or university (HBCU) in Georgia, 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 five 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. SSU’s Marine Science Program

is the number one producer of both Master of Science and Bachelor 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.



Figure 9.5 –Garden City: Graduation Rates 2019-2025

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 130 degree programs at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels. The university’s Waters College of Health Professions is one of the school’s premier programs, having long been the largest producer of undergraduate health professionals in Georgia. Popular majors include nursing, psychology, biology, and business administration.

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, Digital Media, Manufacturing, Mathematics, Computing, Business, Occupational Safety and Health, Supply Chain and Logistics, Engineering, Leadership Training, and Defense Technologies. In addition to providing opportunities for career advancement and education for professionals, Georgia Tech–Savannah maintains numerous partnerships within the region providing training, reskilling and management assistance to tech-entrepreneurs, including providing manufacturing and logistics guidance for large corporations.

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 4,500 students. South University offers nine programs with degrees at the associate, undergraduate, and graduate levels in nursing, pharmacy, and public health.

Savannah Technical College

Founded in 1929, this Savannah-based public technical college serves more than 5,700 students and is a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia. The college offers nearly 150 credit and non-credit market driven 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 Economic Development division provides non-credit programs: high school equivalency preparation, English as a Second Language, workforce development programs for individuals, and corporate contract training. Savannah Tech has been ranked the best community/technical college for active-duty military, their spouses, and veterans for years.

Medical College of Georgia - Savannah, Georgia

Augusta University’s Medical College of Georgia brought a campus to Savannah in July 2024. Students have been doing 4- to 6-week clinical rotations at St. Joseph’s/Candler Health System since 2007 and a residential campus was established there, a year ahead of schedule, in 2011. In addition to growth in the sheer number of students, educational opportunities are also expanding. The campus sits on Georgia Southern University’s Armstrong campus which is just down the road from St. Joseph’s Hospital. That’s where many students get to learn one-on-one with doctors.

Mercer School of Medicine, Savannah Campus

What began as a clinical partnership with Savannah’s Memorial Health in 1996 expanded into a full campus in 2008, when Mercer University School of Medicine launched a four-year MD program at this location. The Savannah campus is based at Memorial Health University Medical Center, the region’s leading teaching hospital. Programs offered: Doctor of Medicine, MD; Biomedical Sciences, PhD; Family Therapy, and MFT.

Workforce Demand Characteristics

Recent workforce studies conducted for the Savannah Harbor–Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority indicate that the region is experiencing structural labor supply constraints rather than short-term workforce shortages. Unemployment rates across the regional labor shed have remained historically low, generally ranging between 1.4% and 2.9% while demand for industrial and logistics employment continues to accelerate. The studies find that approximately 84% of new hires in high-demand industries require no more than a high school diploma, highlighting the critical role of K–12 completion, career and technical education pathways, and postsecondary credentials.

Industrial occupations including production workers, assemblers, logistics operators, maintenance technicians, machinists, and truck drivers are projected to account for over 80% of new labor demand through 2027, while entry-level production wages have increased by approximately 20% over a two-year period, reflecting intense competition for labor. Collectively, these trends indicate that regional workforce challenges are driven less by a lack of educational institutions and more by misalignment between educational pipelines and the scale, timing, and occupational composition of labor demand.

Regional Coordination and Governance

Regional workforce development in the Savannah–Chatham County area is driven by a network of multi-county collaboratives that align government agencies, educational institutions, nonprofits, and private industry to sustain a competitive labor pool. These partnerships operate across jurisdictional boundaries to address labor shortages, improve workforce readiness, and respond to the demands of large-scale industrial and logistics growth in the Savannah metropolitan region.

Workforce Coastal

A primary coordinating entity is WorkSource Coastal, which serves a ten-county workforce development area that includes Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, and Screven counties. Funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and overseen by the Coastal Workforce Development Board (CWDB), WorkSource Coastal provides workforce training, job placement, and education services for priority populations, including veterans, youth ages 16–24, dislocated workers, and adult job seekers. The CWDB administers the Workforce Development Area 19 Local/Regional Plan, which identifies five target industry sectors for the region: logistics and warehousing, healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality, and construction.

Coastal Regional Commission (CRC)

The CRC plays a complementary planning role as the Economic Development District for the coastal region. Through its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, the CRC integrates workforce priorities with state and regional economic development goals and ensures consistency with workforce investment strategies. The CRC also operates Coastal Regional Coaches, a rural public transit program serving multiple coastal counties, which provides essential transportation for job seekers traveling between rural communities and employment centers outside the Savannah urbanized area.

Specialized Workforce Collaboratives

Several specialized collaboratives support sector-specific workforce development and innovation. The Savannah Logistics Technology Corridor (SLTC), approved by the Georgia Legislature in 2018, brings together business, government, and educational partners to advance logistics and manufacturing technology along the Interstate 95 and Interstate 16 corridors. Key initiatives include the development of a proposed Logistics Tech Academy and innovation incubators designed to strengthen collaboration between industry, the Savannah Advanced Manufacturing Center, and local colleges. In addition, the City of Savannah has participated in Sector Partnerships Grant initiatives that focus on understanding and responding to labor needs in high-demand industries through employer-driven strategies.

Workforce development efforts also include labor- and community-based collaboratives. The Savannah Regional Central Labor Council partners with local governments to host union job fairs and apprenticeship pipelines that connect residents to skilled trades and unionized career pathways. Programs such as Step Up Savannah, through its Chatham Apprentice Program (CAP), provide unemployed and under-employed adults with job readiness training, financial literacy, and professional networking opportunities. Other targeted programs address barriers to employment for at-risk youth, justice-involved individuals, and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Educational and Institutional Partnerships

Educational and institutional partnerships form a critical component of the regional workforce ecosystem. The Bridge to Success Student Internship Program, established through a memorandum of understanding between the City of Savannah, Savannah State University, Georgia Southern University, and Savannah Technical College, creates structured internship opportunities that connect students directly to local government and employer needs. The region also leverages a network of higher education institutions—including Savannah Technical College, Savannah State University, Georgia Southern University, and Georgia Tech–Savannah—to support workforce pipelines for major employers such as Gulfstream Aerospace, the Georgia Ports Authority, and healthcare systems. Career and Technical Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs, youth apprenticeships, and Junior Achievement initiatives further support early exposure to career pathways for middle and high school students.

Regional Workforce Training Initiatives

Several broader regional initiatives reinforce these efforts. The Savannah Harbor–Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority (JDA) coordinates workforce planning related to large-scale industrial projects, including the Hyundai Mega site, which is projected to generate more than 11,000 jobs and place sustained pressure on the regional labor pool. In response to projected labor supply constraints, the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA) is advancing a broader multi-state regional coalition spanning portions of Georgia and South Carolina to coordinate long-term workforce development strategies. Local strategic efforts such as Vision 2033, a tricentennial initiative led by Chatham County, the City of Savannah, and SEDA, focus on preparing middle and high school students for anticipated industrial and logistics employment growth.

Despite the breadth of existing programs, both the Savannah JDA Workforce Study and the associated Workforce Development Plan conclude that the region’s primary challenge is coordination rather than capacity. While educational institutions, workforce agencies, and employers are individually active and well-resourced, the absence of a centralized coordinating framework limits the collective effectiveness of these efforts. The studies recommend the establishment of a regional workforce development collaborative, led by economic development leadership and supported by education, transportation, housing, and childcare stakeholders, to better align training pipelines with infrastructure investment, land use planning, and long-term economic growth.

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 two of those located in Garden City. The Libraries’ mission is to provide excellent, responsive service to enrich people’s lives, support lifelong learning and build and enhance communities, focusing on increasing access, community engagement, and organizational excellence and sustainability. By mid-2025, the Library hosted more than 650,000 visitors, checked out nearly a million items, answered almost 200,000 questions, registered more than 1.2 million computer sessions, and presented programs to about 80,000 patrons. Library services support early learning/literacy, educational success, economic opportunity and quality of life. However, feedback from the community during the Library Strategic Plan process indicated that the organization can improve advertising contributions to the community.

2025-2030 LOPL Strategic Plan

Live Oak Public Libraries prepared a 2025–2030 Strategic Plan which outlined organizational and structural changes to better serve the community. Takeaways from the plan include:

- The Libraries’ ability to serve as a cultural and community center is high.
- Patron satisfaction of the staff, materials and resources is strong across all demographic groups.
- Improving literacy rates are a top priority for Libraries’ stakeholders; library reading programs are highly regarded and appreciated.
- The system should prepare for continued rapid population growth in its service area with additional support for English Second Language readers.

There is an opportunity to increase the availability and diversity of materials and collections. Printed materials remain important, but new digital resources are increasingly important. The challenge is funding, which is below U.S. public libraries serving similarly sized populations. While many utilize library resources as a critical component of their well-being, community members may be unaware of all that LOPL has to offer.

Between the end of COVID and 2025, attendance at the library facilities in Garden City increased by 13.6%, significantly more than countywide growth at 2.0%, although the countywide figure reflects the closure of the Carnegie (Savannah) location due to its closure for major repairs after Tropical Storm Debby, and the digitization of law materials reducing attendance at the WW Law location.

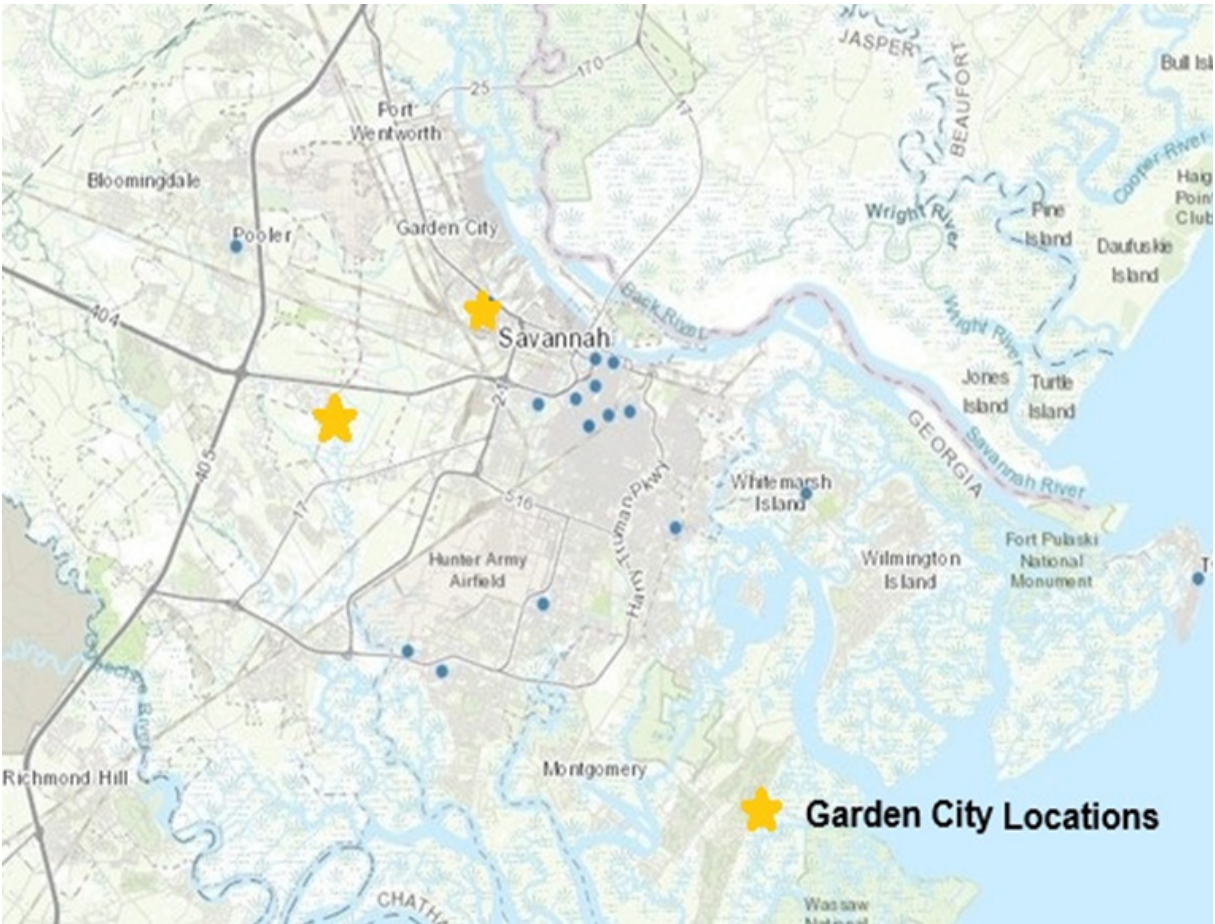


Exhibit 9.3 –Garden City: Live Oak Public Library Locations

Live Oak Public Library Visitors 2023-2025			
Location	2023	2024	2025
Bull Street	91,415	81,009	111,913
Carnegie	14,463	20,284	2,513
Forest City	12,116	13,399	14,664
Garden City	23,152	26,440	26,311
Islands	74,300	75,085	75,330
Oglethorpe Mall	58,723	56,217	57,499
Pooler	47,415	46,609	47,426
Port City	18,399	19,918	21,767
Southwest Chatham	74,001	85,224	76,049
Tybee	19,964	19,065	22,199
WW Law	21,225	12,850	9,659
West Broad	14,357	9,710	13,697
Total	469,530	465,810	479,017

Figure 9.6 – Garden City: Live Oak Public Library Visitors 2023 -2025

Broadband & the Library System

Live Oak Public Libraries is a member of PINES, the statewide network of public library systems serving Georgia. (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 Libraries are always open online at www.liveoakpl.org.

The Live Oak Public Libraries system currently provides more than 460 public computers across its 16 locations. All of the public library locations in Chatham County have had fiber connections for several years, and speeds increased in July 2021 under the library system’s new e-rate contract, at least doubling at all locations and extending into parking lots and outside of buildings after hours.

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. Chromebooks and hotspots are also available for checkout. In person computer sessions in Garden City have remained stable between 2023-2025 even though decreasing countywide.

In contrast, wireless sessions increased by 90.4% between 2023 and 2025 countywide, with Garden City increasing three-fold post COVID. Many of the areas with significant increases are noted for being high-density, lower-income, or working-class residential areas with a high renter population, some of the characteristics found in Garden City, substantiating that cost is a factor influencing internet subscription.

The library system provides a service termed Ready Resources to assist in continuing education, professional development opportunities and assisting with job search, separated into databases by topic and supported by webinars and online courses.

LOPL Library Computer Sessions			
Location	2023	2024	2025
Bull Street	21,780	16,975	24,137
Carnegie	4,819	6,779	1,022
Forest City	12,116	3,588	6,779
Garden City	3,248	3,219	3,224
Islands	5,080	5,371	5,832
Oglethorpe Mall	14,003	12,283	13,669
Pooler	6,570	5,595	5,760
Port City	5,513	5,213	5,196
Southwest Chatham	11,703	11,868	9,578
Tybee	1,263	944	1,022
WW Law	1,817	1,846	1,868
West Broad	2,088	2,952	2,538
Total	92,023	76,633	80,625

Figure 9.7 – Garden City Library Computer Sessions

LOPL Library Wireless Sessions			
Location	2023	2024	2025
Bull Street	148,408	177,406	342,126
Carnegie	23,633	34,038	4,888
Forest City	15,316	27,348	25,685
Garden City	15,765	26,131	64,341
Islands	32,302	51,621	150,226
Oglethorpe Mall	33,442	64,786	87,007
Pooler	24,845	72,663	40,186
Port City	24,845	38,515	37,895
Southwest Chatham	37,595	115,983	134,756
Tybee	10,965	16,413	66,138
WW Law	21,292	23,135	34,459
West Broad	10,052	16,903	23,987
Total	400,483	664,942	1,011,694

Source: Live Oak Library System 1/2026

Figure 9.8 – Garden City Wireless Internet Usage Trends

Community Health

Overview

Community health is determined by the wellness of the residents of a particular area. It focuses on the physical, mental and social well-being of the population within individual neighborhoods, racial or culturally defined localities, and larger geographical regions. In the Savannah-Chatham County urbanized area, residents exhibit a range of attributes, which often results in underserved localities and disparities of health indicators. The approach to preventing disease and reducing health disparities includes addressing environmental, social, and economic factors at a comprehensive level. While specific data for Garden City is not available, according to County Health Rankings 2024, Chatham County overall reflects a fairly high health and well-being ranking. However, 17% of adults in Chatham County reported that they consider themselves in fair or poor health. Several factors affect collective health status:

- Geography, physical development, and environmental conditions
- Socio-cultural factors and economic status
- Community organization underlying healthcare, education, and accessibility to resources and services
- Individual behaviors and chronic health conditions

In May 2025, the African American Mayors Association (AAMA) and the American Beverage Foundation for a Healthy America (ABFHA), in partnership with American Beverage, named Savannah as a recipient of a \$125,000 grant to advance essential programs that improve community health. A 5-year, \$3.4M CDC Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant was awarded in November of 2018 to Healthy Savannah and the YMCA of Coastal Georgia, to reduce health disparities among African American and Hispanic/Latino Americans in low-income Chatham County neighborhoods. A second 5-year, \$5.1M REACH grant was awarded in 2023 to continue addressing health disparities in Chatham County, inclusive of Garden City.

Obesity Rate

Obesity is a disease defined as abnormal or excess body fat accumulation that presents a health risk. According to the Cleveland Clinic and CDC, the benchmark for obesity is a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or higher, although more recent studies also consider other health indicators that may be present with BMIs lower than the clinical definition. This condition has been shown to lead to more chronic ailments such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, liver disease, high cholesterol and stroke, some of the leading causes of death.

Based on 2022 CDC data reported by Data Commons, an estimated 40.5% of adults in Garden City were obese, ranked as having the highest obesity rate among cities in Chatham County overall at 36.1%. Disparities in rates of obesity have been shown to be associated with race and ethnicity, with the highest rates among Black/ African Americans and individuals identifying as Hispanic. Obesity reportedly decreases as education levels rise and increases in response to identified food deserts.

Key environmental factors affecting the prevalence of obesity are those that limit the availability of healthy and sustainably-produced food at locally affordable prices, lack of nutritional health understanding, opportunities for physical activity and the absence of access to an effective health system. Obesity may also be linked to inherited, physiological and environmental factors. As shown in Exhibit 9.4, the majority of Garden City, inclusive of older residential neighborhoods and transportation through routes adjacent to the Port, is identified as exhibiting the highest level of need to address health concerns, with southern portions exhibiting moderate health concerns.

To help reduce the risk of obesity and various other diseases, investments in transportation infrastructure, parks and recreation amenities, and access to healthy food can positively impact the community’s ability to foster community health through the built environment

Additionally, obesity and other health concerns are factors increasing healthcare costs and lost earnings. Overall, the objective is to decrease obesity through a cohesive strategy to not only reduce socioeconomic factors contributing to the disease and improve healthy lifestyle education, but also to address land use and zoning patterns that have contributed to a proliferation of unhealthy food resources and food deserts.

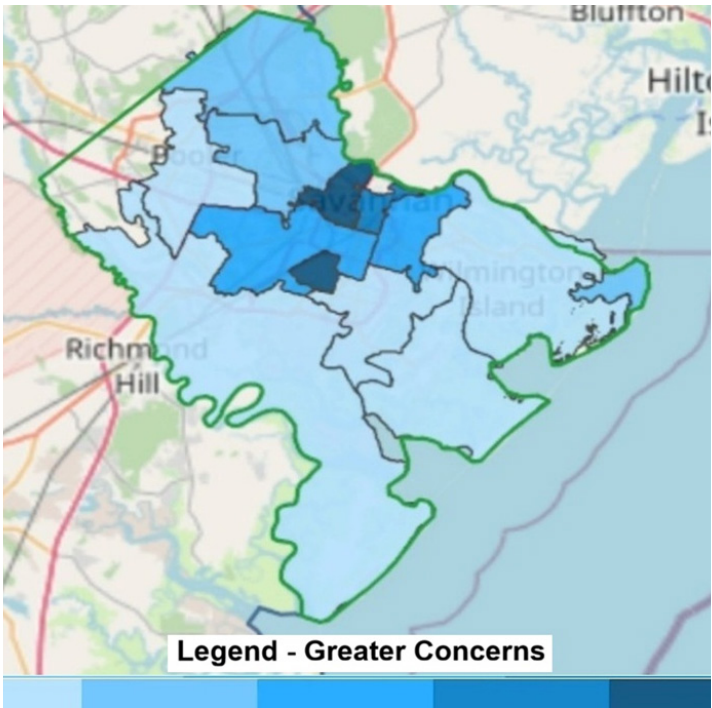


Exhibit 9.4 – Garden City: Community Health Concerns

Access to Healthcare Institutions

An evaluation of Chatham County health needs was conducted in 2025 by St. Joseph’s/Candler Hospital through collaborative efforts with non-profit organizations, businesses, churches, community leaders, and social service agencies. According to the assessment, access to quality healthcare is vital to overall community welfare, as regular health screenings can help diagnose health issues earlier and contribute to better outcomes. They considered three specific health care specialties: primary care physicians, mental health providers, and dentists. According to the ACS 2024, 10.0% of City residents between 25 and 65 lack health insurance coverage.

Of the total covered population, 51.8% rely on private insurance, either employer based, military, or private provider, alone or in combination with a secondary provider; and 38.3% rely on public health providers, alone or in combination with a secondary resource. Of those on public health plans, 37.5% are covered by Medicare, and 69.3% are on Medicaid, either alone or in combination with Medicare or VA coverage. Approximately 14.4% of the City population is on Medicare, while 95% of residents over 65 are on Medicare, and almost 62% of children under age 19 are on Medicaid. More than one-half (53.7%) of those on public insurance fall below 138% of the poverty threshold, whereas 36.4% of the population with private insurance is below 138% of poverty level. Clearly, there is a division between the types of insurance coverage and income, shaped by factors such as employment status, age, poverty, and military history.

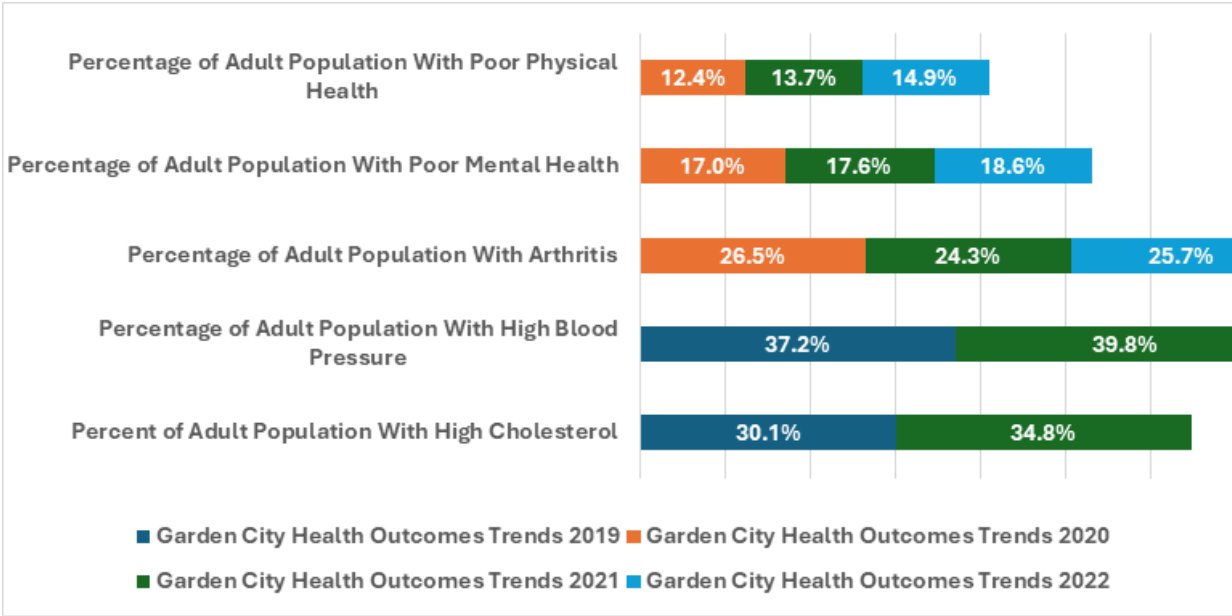


Figure 9.9 – Garden City: Health Outcome Trends

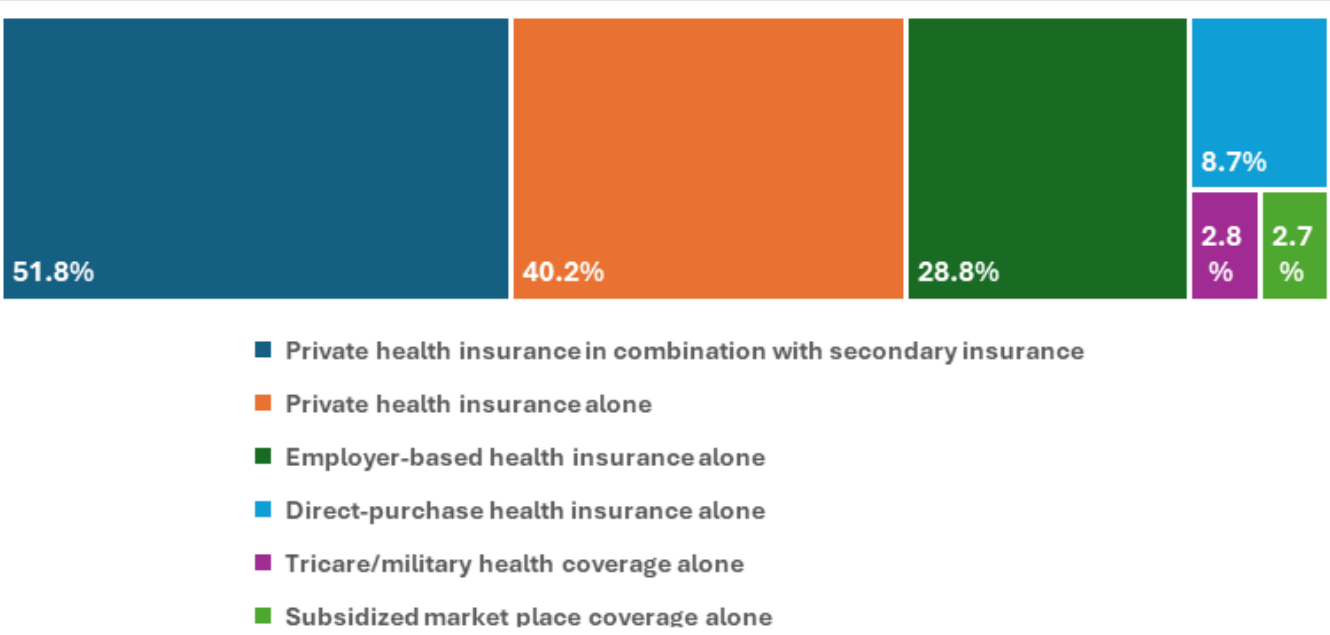


Figure 9.10 – Garden City: Private Insurance Coverage % of Total Population

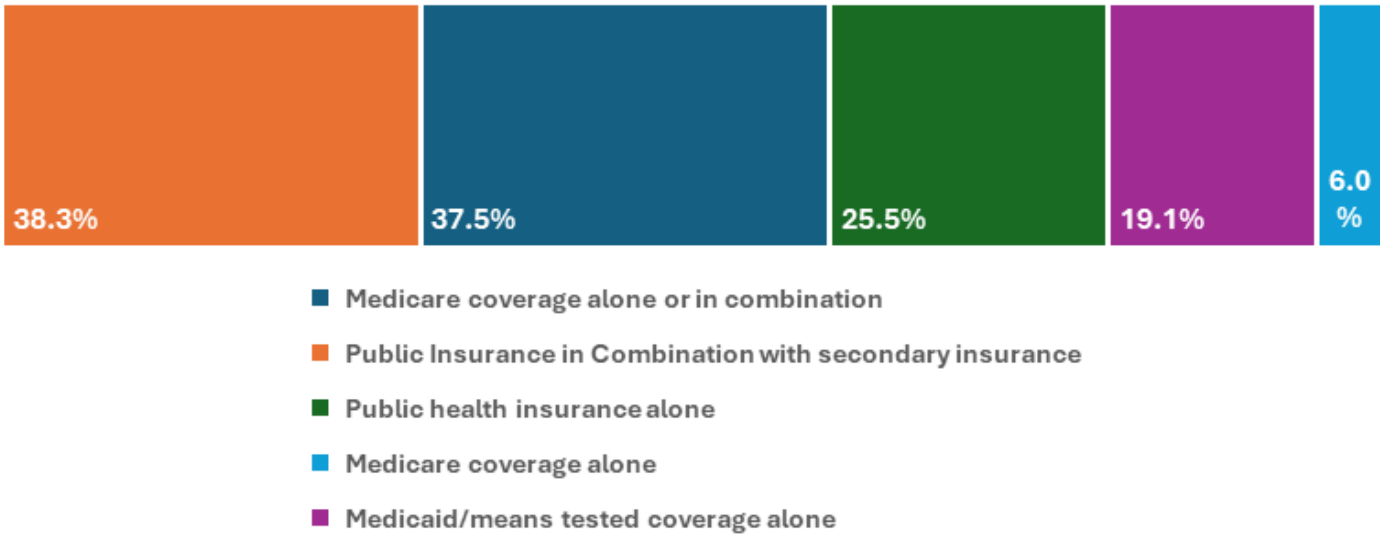


Figure 9.11 – Garden City: Public Insurance Coverage % of Population

Mental Wellness

Mental wellness is defined a positive state of thriving, beyond just the absence of illness, characterized by the ability to cope with stress, realize potential, work productively, contribute to the community, and find purpose, involving an active, ongoing process of building resilience and balance through self-care and healthy habits. Conversely, mental health disorders are defined as a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior, particularly in a way that has an undesirable impact on some aspect of their life. Numerous factors contribute to mental illness such as genetics, societal influences, and physical environment.

A 2023 SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) survey revealed that within the southeastern coastal region, 23.5% of persons over 18 experienced some form of mental illness (compared to Statewide 25%), with 6.9% reporting serious mental illness (compared to Statewide 5.8%). Approximately 8.5% experienced co-occurring substance abuse disorder and mental illness, compared to 9.0% Statewide. As shown by Figure 6.9, 18.6% of Garden City residents report poor metal health, which has been a slowly increasing trend since 2020. Chatham County has been partnered with the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC) to develop strategic pathways to address community health issues including mental health, further ensuring that communities in Chatham County, inclusive of Garden City, foster wellness.

Individuals suffering with a mental health condition have often been subject to confrontation by law enforcement when their condition presents a challenge, leading to arrests and abandonment at a hospital ER. This historically impacts both the individual and the law enforcement and emergency medical service workers systems. Public safety reform in the Continuum of Care (CoC) has involved shifting from a police-centric response to a broader, health-focused system, integrating mental health, housing, and social services with law enforcement to divert people from the justice system, especially for crises, and improve outcomes through community responders, crisis teams, and better coordination. Key reforms focus on prevention, early intervention, specialized crisis response, and collaborative data sharing across agencies. Initiatives include:

- Diversion & Deflection: Creating “no wrong door” systems and referral pathways to keep individuals with unmet needs out of jails and prisons, connecting them to treatment and services.
 - Data & Collaboration: Sharing data across justice, health, and social service systems to understand needs, track outcomes, and coordinate care effectively.
- The goal is to reduce arrests, recidivism, and reliance on incarceration by addressing root causes of homelessness and behavioral health issues. In April 2025, the Garden City Police Department (GCPD) officially launched a new mental health co-responder program. The GCPD partners with trained licensed clinicians to provide specialized responses to mental health-related calls, aiming to provide on-scene support, de-escalation, and resources, rather than immediate incarceration. As well, Chatham County has a Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) that focuses on identifying individuals and families whose behavioral issues are related to mental health or substance use, aiming for treatment over arrest.

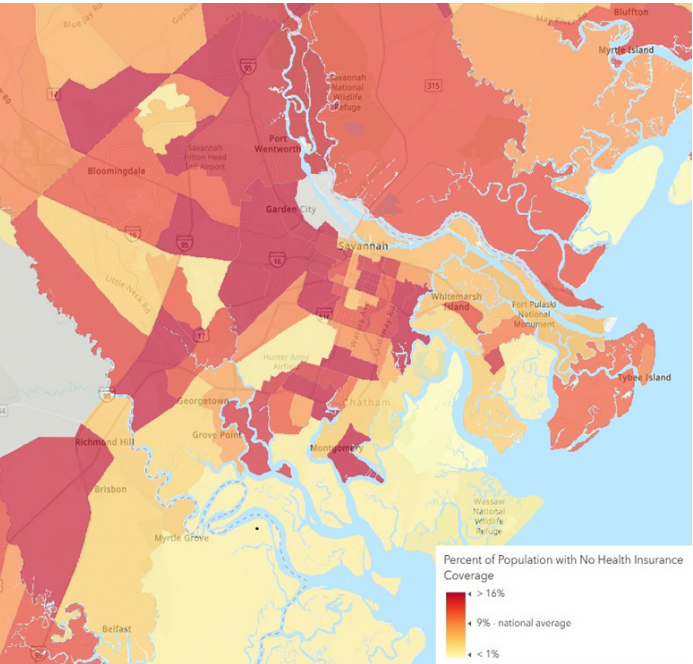


Exhibit 9.5 – Garden City: No Insurance Coverage

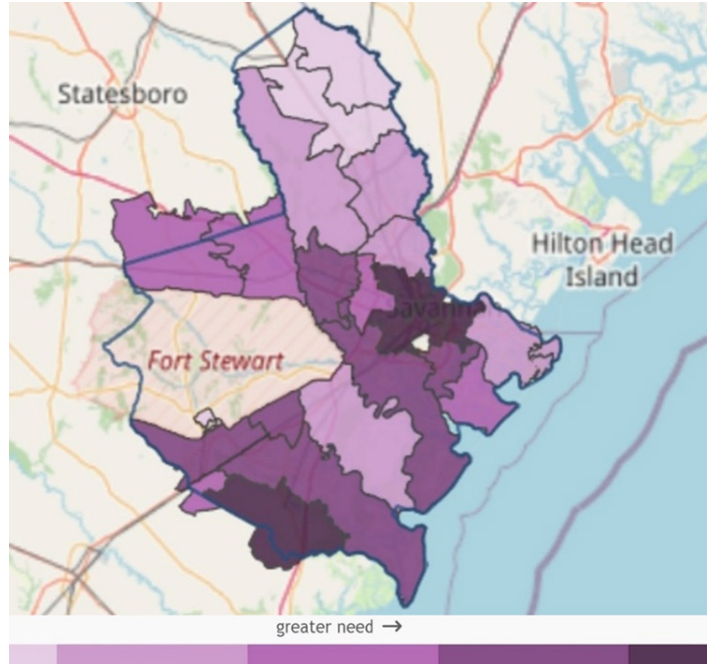


Exhibit 9.6 – Garden City: Need for coverage

- Expanding Community Responders: Dispatching civilian teams (mental health professionals, social workers) to 911 calls for behavioral health, substance use, or quality-of-life issues, often alongside or instead of police.
- Crisis Response Networks: Developing crisis lines, mobile crisis units, and stabilization centers for immediate, non-police intervention, using funds like federal relief to create 24/7 services with trained specialists.
- Housing & Support Integration: Linking housing assistance (HUD’s CoC Program) with public safety efforts to reduce homelessness.

Food Access & Nutritional Education

The foods available to a community have a direct impact on its overall health. When an area is devoid of fresh and healthy foods, often coupled with high rates of poverty or a predominance of lower income households, it is considered a “food desert.” In contrast, the term “food swamp” is used to describe areas that are over saturated with options of fast foods, processed foods, and junk foods typically available at convenience stores, dollar discount stores and drive-through eating establishments.

Fast food and chain restaurants in the region typically are more concentrated along major commercial corridors off of interstate and County routes, which in Garden City includes Augusta Road, State Route 80 (within the City limits and outside of the City to the west at the junction of I-95 and SR-80), and in close proximity to the south outside of the City limits at the junction of State Route 17 with I-516. Garden City may be considered a “food swamp” based on the predominance of fast-food establishments, discount retailers, and convenience stores within and in near proximity to the City boundaries, which serve the through traffic from the north to Savannah and employees in the freight and logistics industries associated with the Port and manufacturing establishments in the City and outlying Chatham County areas.

There are three grocery stores located within the Garden City limits – Food Lion on Minus Avenue, Ebenezer Discount Grocery Plus within one block of Food Lion on Main Street, and Pa’Latinos Supermarket on Augusta Rd. Ebenezer Discount Grocery is primarily a package good store however,

it does stock refrigerated items and meats, frozen foods and limited dairy products, although fresh produce is limited or not carried. A fourth grocery market, Cuevas Grocery, is no longer in operation. However, while there are two grocery stores just outside of the southern city boundaries in Savannah that may serve residents in the vicinity, residents in the northern portions of the City must drive to a market at the south end of Garden City, to Pooler, or unincorporated areas of the County for groceries.

Based on Exhibit 9.7 it becomes clear that there are not enough grocery stores and markets to accommodate the distribution of the population of the City, as all of the markets are located off Augusta Road in close proximity to one another. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, updated 2/20/2025, the majority of Garden City has been designated a “food desert”. These tracts display a relatively high percentage of households without vehicles that are more than ½ mile from a supermarket. As well, in two of the four census tracts/partial census tracts within Garden City identified as a “food desert”, approximately 50% of the households fall within the Low Income and Very Low Income categories, with between roughly 12% and 32% of the population living below the poverty threshold. The lack of accessible food markets is considered a strain, particularly for the elderly, lower-income households, and those with limited access to personal vehicles and public transit.



Exhibit 9.7 – Garden City: Major Roadway Retail Food Establishments

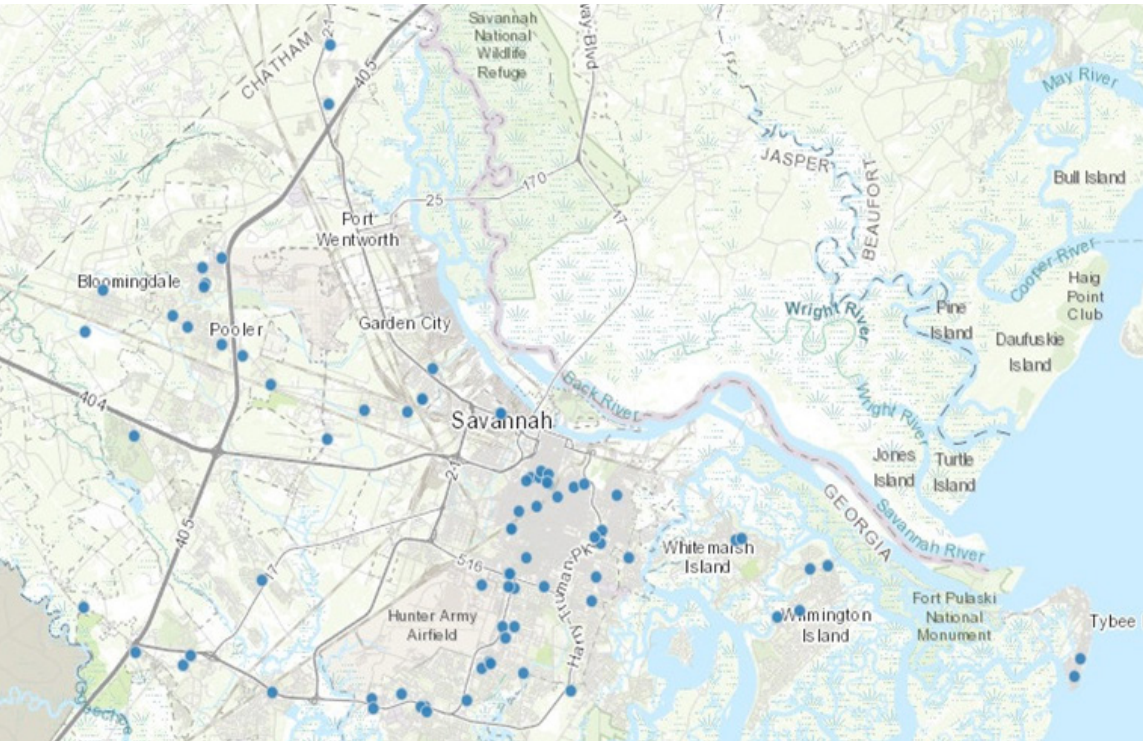
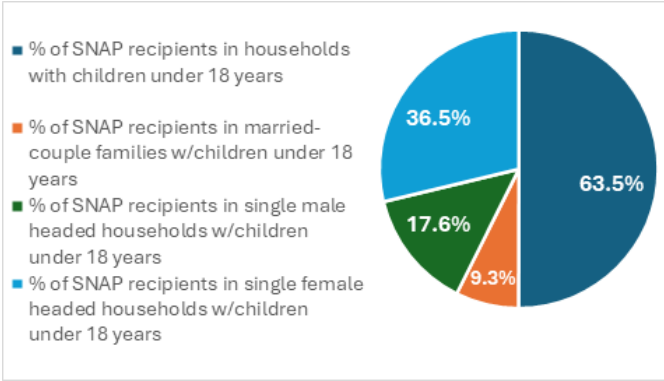


Exhibit 9.8 – Garden City: Grocery Stores

Food Stamps/SNAP Benefits

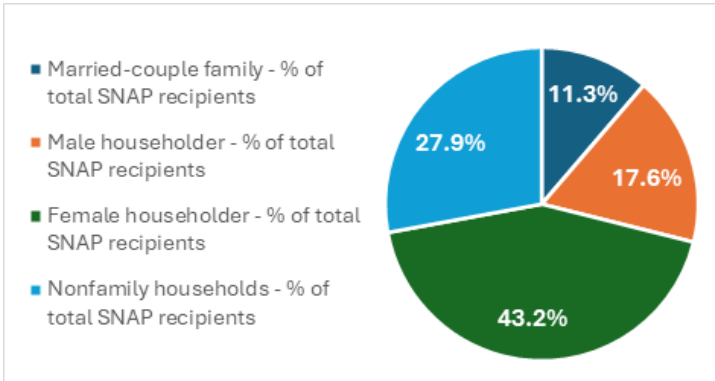
According to 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 14% of households in Garden City receive food stamps/ SNAP benefits. Almost one-third of the households receiving SNAP benefits include one person over age 60, the remainder have younger members. One quarter of SNAP recipients have incomes below the poverty level, and almost 38% include a family member with a disability.

Single female headed households comprising 21.5% of the total households in the City, are the largest group of SNAP recipients. Nonfamily households, comprising roughly 45% of total households, are recipients of almost 28% of the SNAP benefits. Married couples, at one-quarter of total households, comprise about 11% of total recipients. The remainder of SNAP recipients are single male headed families, which, while representing 8.1% of the total households in the City, include close to 18% of those needing assistance in providing food for their families.



Review of data reporting the proportion of SNAP recipients by households with children provides a more in-depth view of those in need. Almost two-thirds of SNAP recipients include children under 18 years of age. The majority of single female headed families receiving benefits also include children. All of the single male headed families receiving SNAP benefits include children, and the majority of married couple families in need of assistance also have children.

The higher proportion of single-headed households (both single person headed families or nonfamily households, the majority of which are single persons living alone) receiving SNAP assistance correlates to these household types having a single wage earner, have children, are seniors, or in some cases have no source of labor force income and may be dependent on fixed income sources.



The St. Joseph’s/Candler Hospital needs assessment surveyed shopping activities of SNAP recipients. The proportion of SNAP respondents increased in 2024 over prior years, although lower than 60% in 2022. The majority reported using them at large supermarkets and local grocery stores. An average of 50% ate vegetables and fruit daily, although if the products were fresh or canned is not specified, indicating a slight increase from 2022. However, almost a quarter reported challenges affording fruits and vegetables a few times a month or more and 25% reported having to cut meals a few times a month or more due to not having money for food.

Families who meet the income eligibility requirements or who receive SNAP benefits can apply through their children’s school to receive free meals. The federal Free Lunch Program ensures that students have access to at least one nutritious meal during the school day. Approximately 86% of students at Garden City Elementary School qualify for the FLP, indicating that a significant segment of the population still need assistance in providing sustenance for their households. In alignment with food access, knowledge of food nutrition is just as important, and many people may not recognize the relationship between nutritional value and health conditions. Education and outreach is important to assist both the provision and quality of food resources.

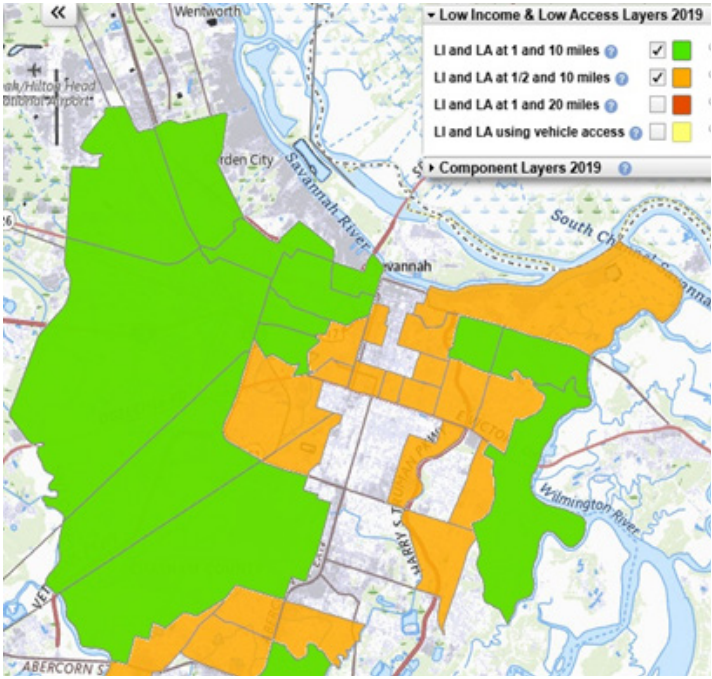


Exhibit 9.9 – Garden City: (L) Tracts With a High Proportion of Residents With No Vehicles & No Markets Within ½ Mile - (R) Tracts Without Markets Within 1 and ½ Mile

Food Nutrition Education

In alignment with food access, food nutrition is just as important. Knowledge of food nutrition, or lack of, will usually be the driving force behind a food choice decision. There have been several newly implemented local resources that provide ongoing food assistance in and around Garden City:

- “Without Walls” Farmers Market: This new initiative, which launched in July 2025, is held on the fourth Saturday of every month at 4704 Augusta Road. It offers farm-to-table food at affordable prices and has the ability to double SNAP benefits, making healthy, local produce more accessible.
- Redeem Fellowship International: This organization operates a food pantry every Wednesday, offering free groceries to those in need at 206 Oak Street, Garden City, GA 31408.
- Second Harvest Food Bank of Coastal Georgia: This is a major regional food bank that partners with many local pantries and agencies in the area, including those in Garden City. Their online food finder or direct phone number provide information on specific distribution sites and times.
- The Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) implemented the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for the 2025-2026 school year, providing free breakfast and lunch to all students enrolled in its schools, regardless of family income.

- TEFAP: The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides emergency food commodities to low-income individuals through local food pantries and soup kitchens.

Farm Truck 912 is a mobile farmers’ market program in the local area, run by the Forsyth Farmer’s Market that brings fresh, local produce to underserved food desert communities, accepting and doubling SNAP/EBT benefits to improve healthy food access and affordability for low-income residents, often partnering with health organizations for “food as medicine” initiatives. While Farm Truck 912 has expanded its operations along Augusta Road on a temporary basis in the north section of Garden City, there is still a gap in coverage. The opportunity for partnering with a non-profit for establishment of a farmer’s market or attracting a full-service supermarket in the western portion of Garden City should be explored.



Open Space Access

As open space in Garden City is reduced primarily as a result of the impacts of development, it is imperative to explore all available means for land conservation. 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. The City has implemented zoning amendments focused on open space preservation through mixed-use district creation, enhanced buffer requirements, and focus on targeting development based on a nodes and corridors land use strategy. In 2022, the City imposed an industrial rezoning moratorium to focus on provision of housing and management of greenfield transition. These measures aim to protect residential areas, increase accessible public space, and create pedestrian-friendly environments while managing rapid industrial development

In addition to providing an adequate quantity and type of open space, it is important to endeavor to ensure equity to all residents. It has been found that proximity to green space within a 10-minute walk (roughly one-half mile) results in higher life satisfaction. All residents should have access to a variety of parks, recreation, and open space within close proximity to their residence. Trails, bikeways, pedestrian paths as well as other non-vehicular paths should be incorporated to, and into such areas to provide access for those without personal transportation. Proximity to green places has been linked to an increase in physical activity.

Regular physical activity health benefits include weight control, muscle and bone strengthening, improved mental well-being, opportunity for social interaction, and improved life expectancy, as well as reduction in the risk of type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and some cancers.

In 2025, 89.3% of the population countywide has access to a park, trail, or recreation facility, an increase over 2020. However, many of Garden City’s residential neighborhoods do not have access to a park or recreation facility within a half mile distance, although a significant portion of the original Industrial City Garden neighborhoods east of SR 21 were laid out on large lots designed for home based agriculture, integrating greenspace into the lot. Access in Garden City is further constrained by a disconnected street network, lack of interconnected sidewalk infrastructure and dedicated bicycle facilities along many streets in the City. Often the right of way of roads leading to popular open space areas are narrow and winding, with limited space for pedestrians and cyclists, and in portions of Garden City with lower densities, park and open space amenities may be distanced too far from residential areas to be safely walkable for most of the population. The issue most often cited by survey respondents is that access to the parks and open space amenities which might provide internal pedestrian and bicycle paths, is limited to auto travel.

Garden City offers access to open spaces, parks, and recreational facilities, including community parks, sports complexes, tennis courts. Park and recreation facilities in Garden City include:

Garden City: Parks, Recreation and Open Space				
Locator	Name	Address	Type of Facility	Acres
1	Bazemore Park	1 Bud Brown Dr.	Community park & playground	49.6
2	Garden City Rec Center	160 Priscilla Dr.	Sports and recreation	6.3
3	Sharon Park	525 Sharon Dr.	Community park & playground	6.3
4	Griffin Playground	Griffin Ave @13 th St.	Community park & playground	0.36
5	Volunteer Park	Augusta Rd.	Public Greenspace	0.84
6	Cooper Center	700 Davis Ave.	Youth first program	0.55
7	Senior Center/Tennis	78 Varnedoe Ave.	Senior center & tennis courts	1.74

Figure 9.12 – Garden City: Parks, Recreation and Open Space

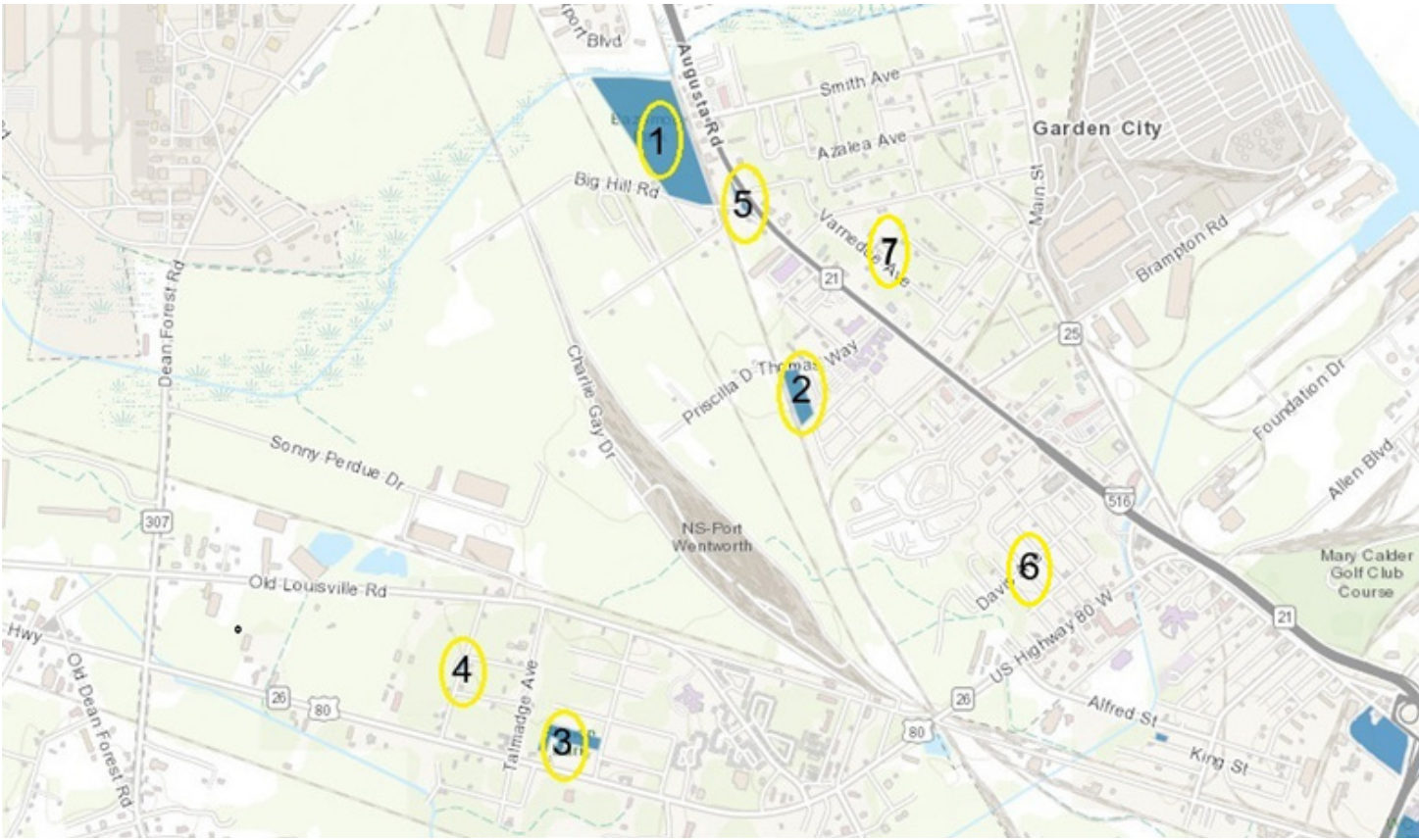


Exhibit 9.10 – Garden City: Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Dilapidated Housing

Dilapidation occurs in a neighborhood when homes or empty lots are abandoned and begin to show signs of disrepair and neglect. This is not only a visual effect on the neighborhood, but often times an unspoken invitation for unlawful activities. Dilapidated properties are known to bring down the property value in their neighborhoods, discourage the desire to invest, and decrease the perceived safety of the area. Neighborhoods that are well lit, have well-kept properties, and functional communal amenities such as parks, walking paths, and benches encourage physical activity and social connections among residents.

A 2016 Housing Survey indicated that the Rossignol Hill Community had a large number of homes in need of repair, as well a older neighborhoods. While the survey was conducted a decade ago, and some of the homes in need of repair and rehabilitation may have been demolished or have undergone rehabilitation, it is important to note that this community also has a greater concentration of homes that are National Register Eligible. Review of Code Enforcement Department records discloses that the majority of violations cited for condition over the past five years generally correspond to neighborhoods identified as having deteriorated structures in the 2016 Survey, and also include properties in the Azalea Avenue neighborhood.

Residential Demolitions in last 5 years due to unsafe structures include:

- 4017 3rd St (2024)
- 4019 3rd St (2024)
- 701 Davis Ave (2021)
- 409 Davis Ave (2021)
- 153 Varnadoe Ave (2021)
- 302 Oak St (2021)
- 707 Davis Ave (2021)

The majority of these structures were located in the Rossignol Hill neighborhood where a proportion of the original Industrial City Gardens residences were constructed.

Garden City residents have access to home repair assistance programs for dilapidated or unsafe conditions. Key options include the CHSA Home Repair Assistance Program for exterior/system repairs to roofs, HVAC systems, plumbing, and exteriors to ensure safety. and the Garden City Housing Team, Inc., a volunteer-driven organization that repairs homes for eligible low-income, disabled, or elderly resident. There have been a few homes upgraded through CHIP grants via state funding for major rehabilitations, in partnership with the Home Depot in the City

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 areas in life including finances, mental wellness, safety, and food security. ACS 2020-2024 5-Year Estimates data show that the unemployment rate for Garden City has increased significantly from 2020 to a level commensurate with post pandemic levels; in comparison to Chatham County, which decreased during the pandemic, and has jumped in 2024, similar to Garden City, yet remains at a lower rate.

Based on 2024 economic data for Georgia and the surrounding coastal region, the elevated unemployment in Garden City may be driven by a slowdown in key industries, higher interest rates curbing growth, and a normalization of the labor market following post-pandemic highs. While Georgia’s overall unemployment rate remained relatively low (around 3.6% in late 2024), specific sectors and regions, including the Coastal region, experienced tighter conditions. Garden City’s economy is heavily reliant on construction, retail trade, and administrative services. A tightening of the national economy can cause these specific sectors to slow down, impacting local job opportunities.

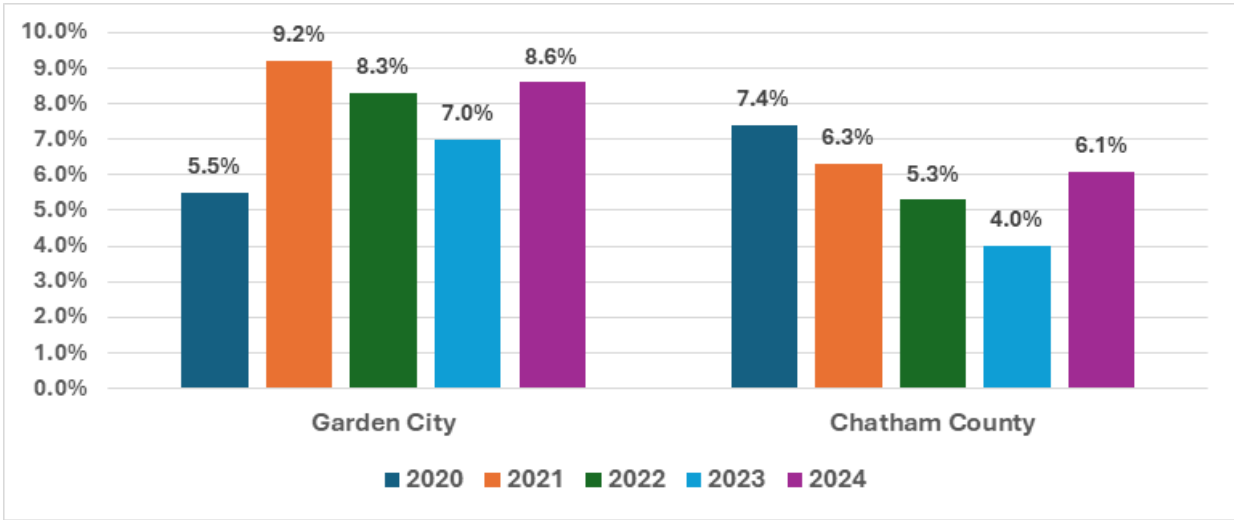


Figure 9.13 – Garden City and Chatham County: Unemployment Rate 2020 – 2024

Community Work Program 2027-2031

The Community Work Program identifies the actions Garden City intends to advance over the next five years to implement the goals and policies of the Garden City 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update.

The program focuses on specific activities that can be advanced through City resources, partnerships, capital investment, and outside funding during the five year planning period.

Several actions from the 2040 Work Program remain relevant and have been incorporated into this Community Work Program in a revised or more targeted form. The Origin column identifies whether an activity is New, a Carry Forward from the previous work program, or a Modified Carry Forward that has been refined to reflect current conditions, priorities, and implementation needs.

Activities that were completed, incorporated into normal City operations, or closed out through the Report of Accomplishments are not repeated here.

The 2027–2031 Community Work Program is intentionally more focused than the previous work program. Rather than listing routine municipal responsibilities or broad ongoing activities, it emphasizes projects, studies, regulatory actions, partnerships, and investments that require focused implementation during the next five years.

All activities are expected to require some level of staff involvement. Cost estimates are planning level estimates and may change as project scopes are refined, funding opportunities become available, and implementation responsibilities are established.

Activity	Origin	Timeframe	Responsible Party	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
GROWING OPPORTUNITY					
Develop and implement targeted incentives for commercial redevelopment, infill, local business investment, and reinvestment in priority areas.	Modified Carry Forward — E.2	2027–2029	Executive; Planning & Zoning	\$25,000	General Fund; Grants; Private Investment
Implement priority actions from the City’s completed economic development planning efforts that support local business development, commercial investment, workforce connections, and targeted recruitment.	New	2027–2031	Executive; Economic Development Partners	\$25,000	General Fund; Grants; Partner Resources
STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS					
Complete a housing conditions and needs assessment addressing housing quality, affordability, housing choice, rehabilitation needs, and opportunities for infill.	Carry Forward — H.1	2027–2028	Executive; Planning & Zoning; Housing Partners	\$50,000	General Fund; Grants
Use the housing assessment and existing redevelopment tools to identify priority housing rehabilitation, infill, and neighborhood reinvestment initiatives.	New	2028–2030	Executive; Planning & Zoning; Housing Partners	\$25,000	General Fund; Grants; Housing Programs
SHAPING QUALITY GROWTH					
Update and adopt the Future Land Use Map to reflect current development patterns, Character Areas, redevelopment priorities, infrastructure conditions, and long range growth objectives.	New	2027–2028	Planning & Zoning; MPC	\$50,000	General Fund; Planning Funds; Grants
Advance priority redevelopment activities within the Highway 21 Gateway, West Highway 21 Residential Area, and Garden City South.	Modified Carry Forward — LU.7	2027–2031	Executive; Planning & Zoning; Development Partners	\$50,000	General Fund; Grants; Redevelopment Funds; Private Investment
Review and update targeted zoning and development standards to improve land use compatibility, support redevelopment, and implement the Character Area framework.	Modified Carry Forward — LU.1 / LU.8	2028–2030	Planning & Zoning; MPC	\$50,000	General Fund; Grants
BALANCING INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY					
Continue coordination with Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport regarding compatible land use and development in areas of mutual planning interest.	Modified Carry Forward — LU.6	2027–2031	Executive; Planning & Zoning; Airport	Staff Time	General Fund; Partner Staff Time
Review targeted standards for transitions, buffering, access, and compatibility where industrial and logistics activity interfaces with established neighborhoods and community uses.	Modified Carry Forward — LU.1 / LU.8	2028–2029	Planning & Zoning; MPC	\$25,000	General Fund; Planning Funds

Figure 9.14 – 2027–2031 Community Work Program

ENHANCING COMMUNITY LIFE					
Complete the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update and identify priority facility, programming, maintenance, and neighborhood recreation improvements.	Carry Forward — REC.1	2027–2028	Executive; Parks & Recreation	\$100,000	General Fund; SPLOST; Grants
Pursue grant funding for additional historic resource survey, documentation, or preservation activities.	Carry Forward — Q.5	2027–2031	Executive; Planning & Zoning; MPC	\$5,000	General Fund; Historic Preservation Grants
Identify opportunities to implement the City’s existing historic resources marketing plan through community identity, heritage, tourism, and placemaking initiatives.	New — Builds on Completed Q.6	2028–2030	Executive; Planning & Zoning; Community Partners	\$20,000	General Fund; Grants; Partner Resources
BUILDING RESILIENCE					
Identify and prioritize stormwater, drainage, flood resilience, and infrastructure improvements using current basin planning, hazard information, and completed technical studies.	New	2027–2029	Public Works; Stormwater	\$50,000	Stormwater Utility; General Fund; Grants
Pursue funding and implementation opportunities for priority drainage, flood mitigation, and resilience projects identified through City and regional planning efforts.	New	2028–2031	Executive; Public Works; Stormwater	\$100,000	Stormwater Utility; Grants; SPLOST; State and Federal Funds
STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS					
Identify and implement priority sidewalk connections that close gaps and improve access between neighborhoods, commercial corridors, parks, civic destinations, and Town Center.	Modified Carry Forward — T.5 / T.6	2027–2031	Executive; Public Works; Planning & Zoning	\$250,000	General Fund; SPLOST; Grants; Transportation Funds
Coordinate with regional transportation partners on projects that improve community access, freight movement, roadway safety, and connections between Garden City neighborhoods and employment areas.	New	2027–2031	Executive; Public Works; Planning & Zoning; Regional Partners	\$50,000	General Fund; Transportation Funds; Grants; Partner Resources

Ongoing Activities

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan included a separate set of activities identified as ongoing responsibilities rather than time limited projects. They are included in this Report of Accomplishments to account for the full 2040 Work Program and document how those responsibilities have been addressed during the planning period. Most have now been incorporated into normal City operations, departmental programs, regulatory responsibilities, or established partnerships and therefore do not need to be carried forward as separate actions in the 2027–2031 Community Work Program.

Task	2040 Action / Strategy	Status	Next Step
OG.1	Deter Development Within Regulated High Risk Flood Zones	Completed	Incorporated into ongoing floodplain administration and land use regulation.
OG.2	Improve Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Around Arterials and State Routes	Completed	Continue through specific transportation and capital improvement projects as needs arise.
OG.3	Implement the City’s Comprehensive Capital Improvement Program	Completed	Incorporated into the City’s annual budgeting and capital planning process.
OG.4	Coordinate with the Housing Team to Restore and Rehabilitate Neighborhoods	Completed	Continue through established housing and redevelopment partnerships.
OG.5	Educate Residents About Regulated and High Risk Flood Areas	Completed	Incorporated into floodplain and emergency preparedness outreach.
OG.6	Participate in Disaster Preparedness Exercises with CEMA and Neighboring Jurisdictions	Completed	Continue through established emergency management coordination.
OG.7	Improve Fire Service to Maintain or Improve the ISO Rating	Completed	Incorporated into ongoing Fire Department operations.
OG.8	Maintain the MS4 in Accordance with the Phase I NPDES Permit	Completed	Incorporated into ongoing Public Works and Stormwater regulatory responsibilities.

Community Work Program
Budget Summary

The 2027–2031 Community Work Program includes 16 implementation milestones with approximately \$875,000 in identified planning level costs, in addition to staff time, partner contributions, private investment, and project costs that cannot yet be reliably quantified.

The estimates below are intended to support work programming and funding decisions. They are not commitments to expend a specific amount. Actual costs will depend on final project scope, procurement, available grants, partner participation, capital programming, and other funding opportunities.

Goal	Implementation Milestones	Estimated Cost	Primary Funding Sources
Growing Opportunity	2	\$50,000	General Fund; Grants; Private Investment; Partner Resources
Strengthening Neighborhoods	2	\$75,000	General Fund; Grants; Housing Programs
Shaping Quality Growth	3	\$150,000	General Fund; Planning Funds; Grants; Redevelopment Funds; Private Investment
Balancing Industry and Community	2	\$25,000 + Staff Time	General Fund; Planning Funds; Partner Staff Time
Enhancing Community Life	3	\$125,000	General Fund; SPLOST; Grants; Historic Preservation Grants; Partner Resources
Building Resilience	2	\$150,000	Stormwater Utility; General Fund; Grants; SPLOST; State and Federal Funds
Strengthening Connections	2	\$300,000	General Fund; SPLOST; Grants; Transportation Funds; Partner Resources
TOTAL	16	\$875,000 + Staff Time	Multiple Local, Partner, Grant, and Private Sources

Understanding the Estimates

All Community Work Program activities are expected to require some level of City staff involvement. Staff time is not included in the \$875,000 total unless it is specifically incorporated into an estimated project cost. Likewise, private investment, partner contributions, and unscoped capital construction costs are excluded from the numeric total where a reliable estimate is not yet available.

Funding sources shown in the Community Work Program identify potential sources rather than guaranteed funding commitments. Garden City may adjust project timing, scope, or funding strategies as opportunities become available during the five-year implementation period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Stakeholders and Steering Committee



List of Meeting Attendees



Date	Meeting/Event	Attendees
July 2, 2026	Resolution to transmit to Coastal Regional Commission and Department of Community Affairs	City Council members
June 2, 2026	Open House- Comprehensive Development Plan 2045	Melanie Wilson- Executive Director & CEO- Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) Pamela Everett- Assistant Executive Director, Compliance & Operations Wykoda Wang- Director, Transportation & Administration Caitlin Chamberlin- Director, Historic Preservation Asia Hernton – Senior Planner Ely Zarka – Senior Planner Jodi Brown -Principal Planner Alexander Merced – Planner Rohan Urs- Assistant Planner Alex Merced, Historic Planner DeAndrae Spradley, Senior Planner Sarah Greenbush, Administrative Assistant Sana Collins - Resident Mustafa Cunningham- Resident John Gilbert - Resident William Frazier - Resident

Date	Meeting/Event	Attendees
		Jim Hundsrucker - Resident Evan Lasute - Resident Cooper More - Resident Valerian Sottile – Resident Jerome Elder, Architect Nykobe Richardson, Resident Taylor Stew - Resident Josh Ward – Resident Dr. Otis Johnson, Former Mayor Dr. Jamal Ture Subhashi Karuntahne, Planner Jeff Nortica, MPC Board Member Jeremiah Murrell, Intern
May 13, 2026	Town Hall Public Meeting	Natalyn Morris- President of Council District 003 Chris Figiel – Council Member District - 005 Richard Lassiter Jr.- Council Member District- 004 DeAndrae Spradley, Senior Planner, MPC Members of the public (no sign in sheet provided by Garden City)
April 17, 2026	Garden City Stakeholders Meeting II	Bruce Campbell -Mayor Garden City, Georgia Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles -City Manager

Date	Meeting/Event	Attendees
		Carlos Navarez -Planning Director Kefi Maxwell -Planner Judy Maldonado -Planning Commissioner Michael Bruner - City Council District 1 Representative Don Bethune- Resident Donna Williams- Resident
February 24, 2026	Garden City Stakeholders Kickoff Meeting	Bruce Campbell -Mayor Garden City, Georgia Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles -City Manager Carlos Navarez -Planning Director Kefi Maxwell -Planner Judy Maldonado -Planning Commissioner Michael Bruner - City Council District 1 Representative Don Bethune- Resident Donna Williams- Resident
October 13, 2025	City Council Workshop	Melanie Wilson, MPC Edward Morrow, MPC Bruce Campbell -Mayor

Date	Meeting/Event	Attendees
		Garden City, Georgia Rhonda Ferrell-Bowles -City Manager Carlos Navarez -Planning Director Kefi Maxwell -Planner John Thomson, Planner Judy Maldonado -Planning Commissioner Michael Bruner - City Council District 1 Representative Don Bethune- Resident Donna Williams- Resident