

**Garden City
Quality Of Life
Draft**

CHAPTER 9
QUALITY OF LIFE ELEMENT

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 Built
1	4016–18 1st Street	1920
2	4022 1st Street	1910
3	4024 1st Street	1910
4	4019 3rd Street	1910
5	4025 3rd Street	1900
6	Rossignol–Minis House—4026 3rd Street	1890
7	4106 3rd Street	1910
8	George Dotson House—4912 Augusta Road	1850
9	Clifton Baptist Church—100 Big Hill Road	1914
10	Oak Grove Brampton Road	1840
11	Brampton Cemetery—2 Brampton Road	1783
12	52 Brampton Road	1930
13	64 Brampton Road	1929
14	68 Brampton Road	1928
15	216 Davis Avenue	1930
16	413 Davis Avenue	1940

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

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 on Exhibit 9.1.



Exhibit 9.1 – Garden City: Recommended Historic Resources Survey Area

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.

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.

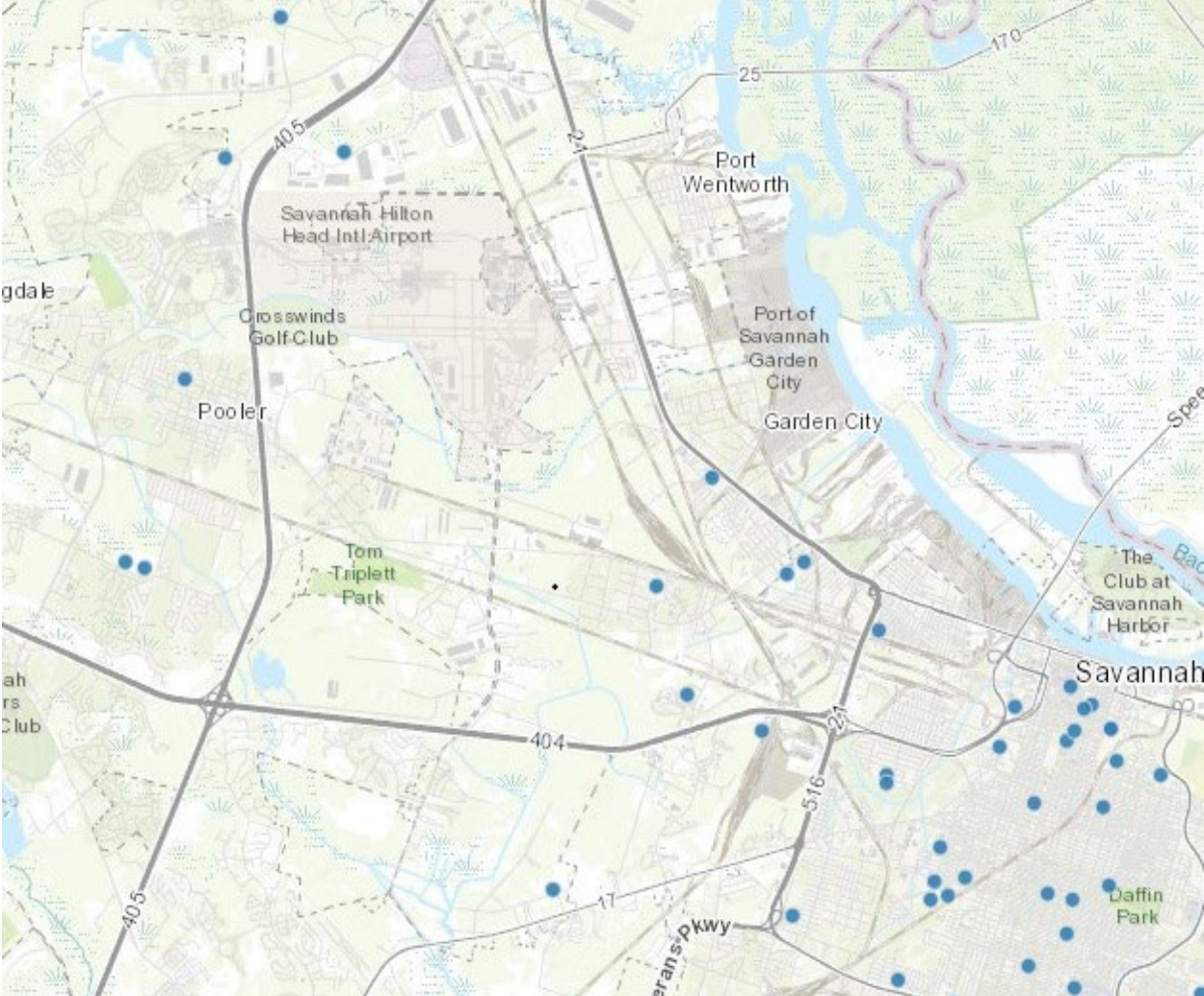


Exhibit 9.2 – Garden City: Educational Facilities

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.

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 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.

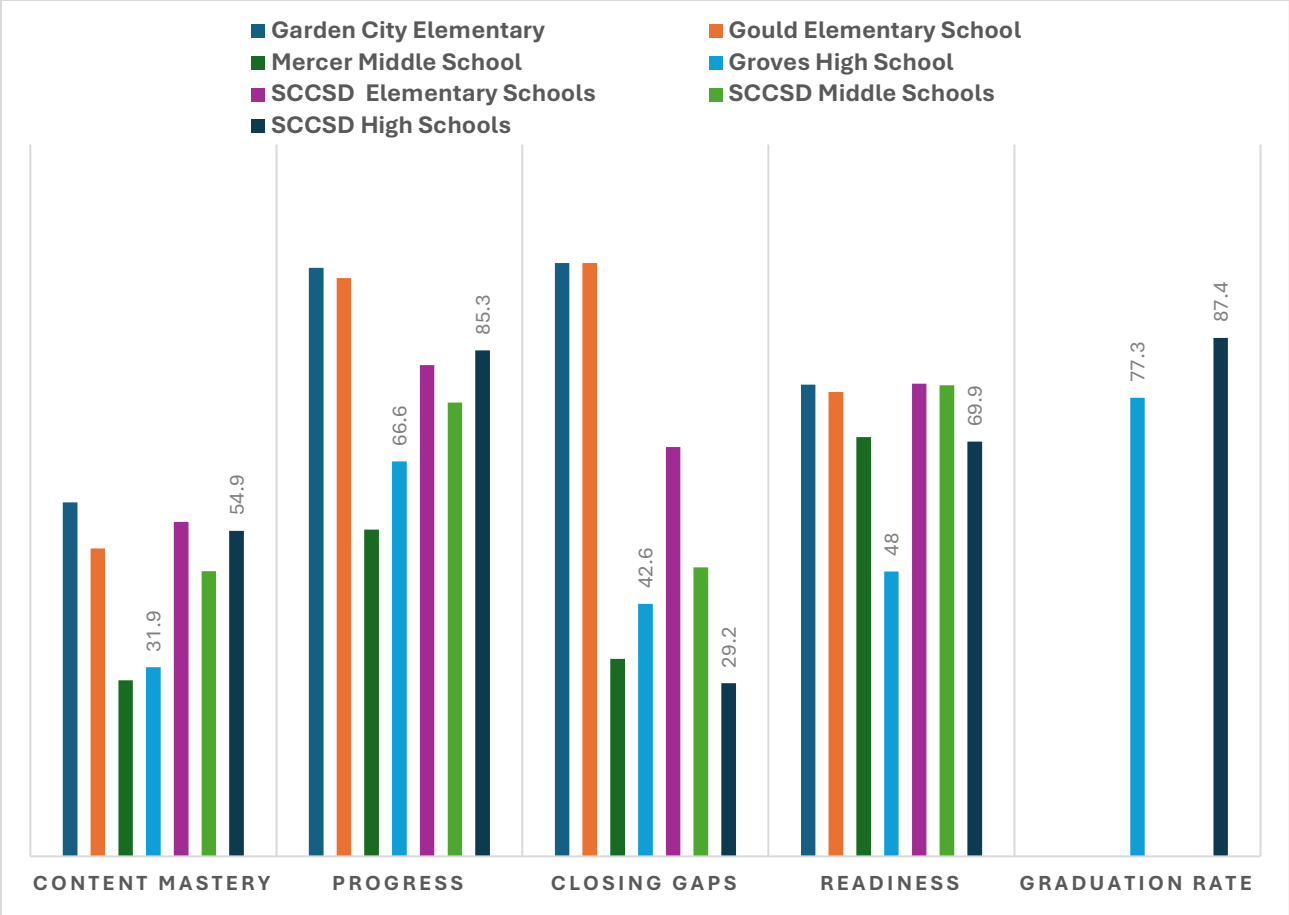


Figure 9.2: Garden City and Chatham County School District Readiness Scores 2025

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.

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.

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

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. 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.

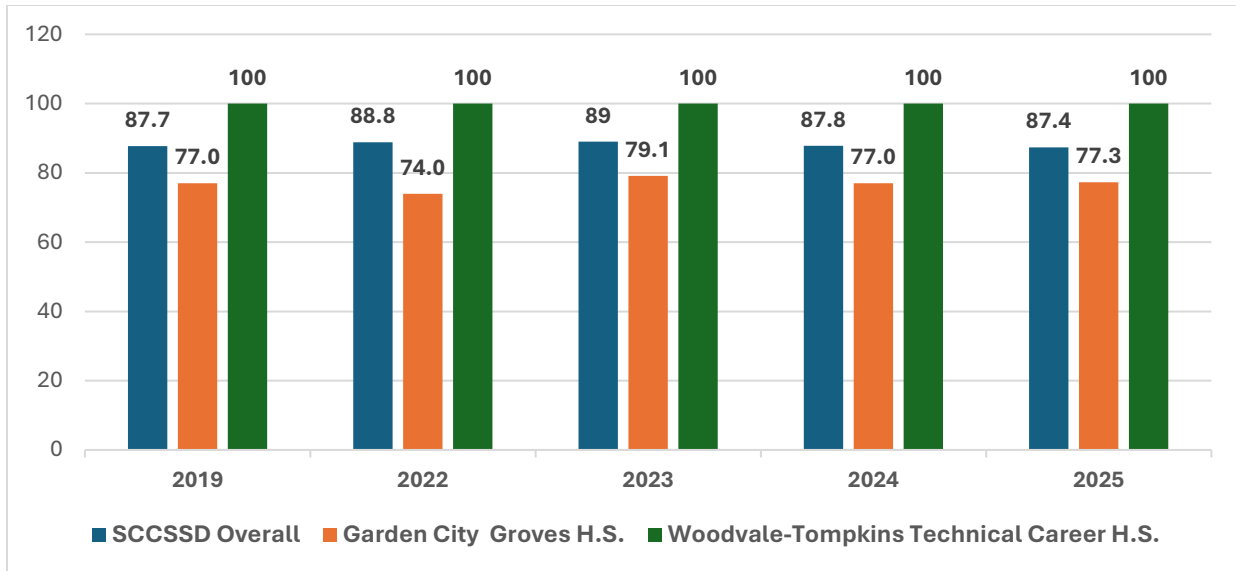


Figure 9.4 - Garden City: Graduation Rates 2019-2025

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.

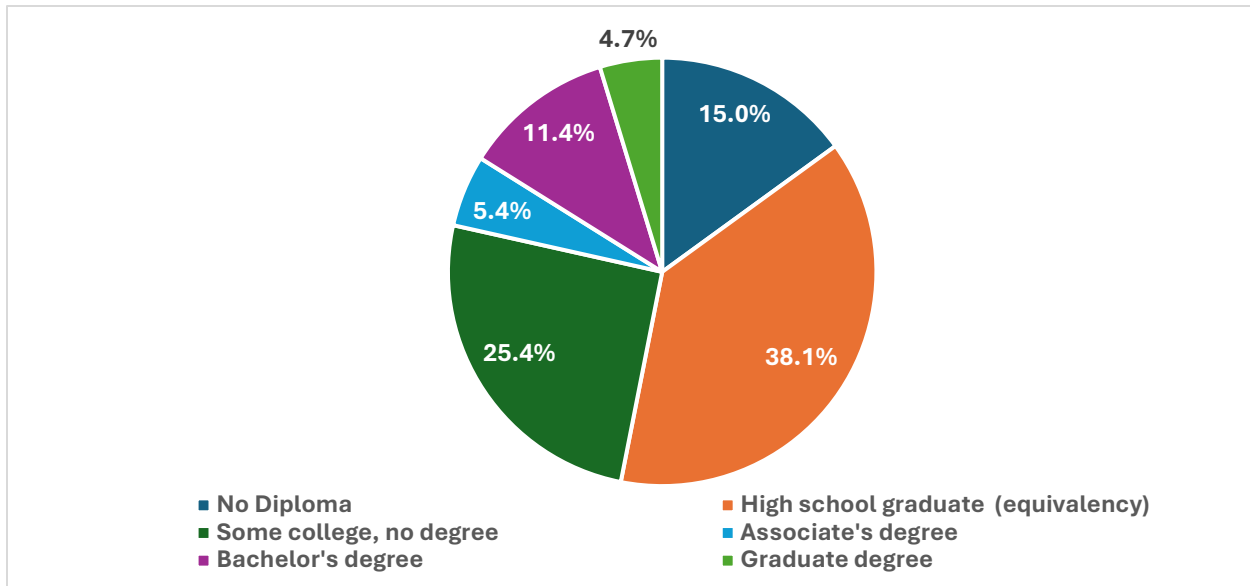


Figure 9.5 – Garden City: Educational Attainment 2023, Age 25-65

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.

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.

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.

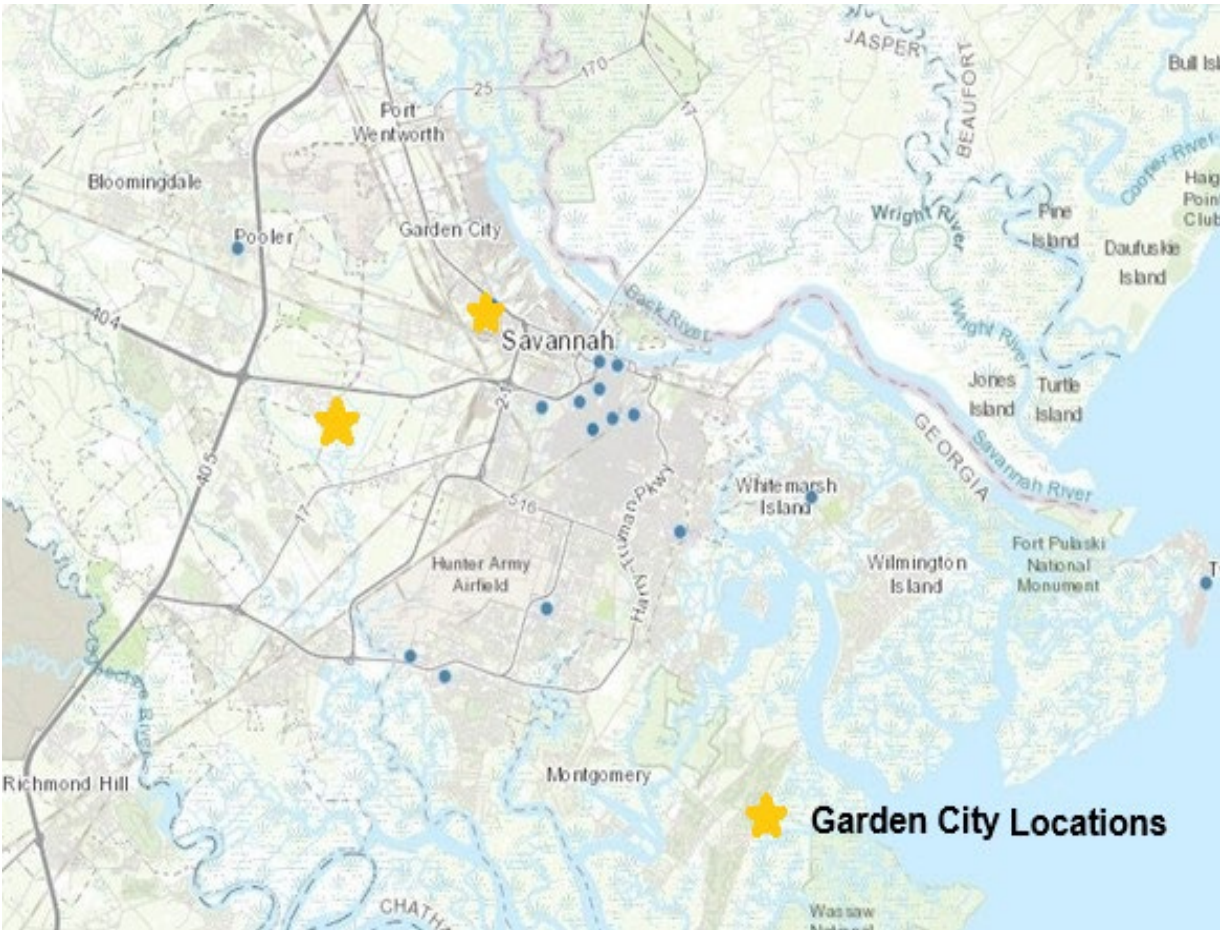


Exhibit 9.3 – Garden City: Live Oak Public Library Locations

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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.

Categories include:

Job Readiness - job search and business database with market research, employment opportunities, and more web resources to strengthen employment skills or assist with a successful job search. Includes:

- Georgia Department of Labor job search assistance, and unemployment benefits information.
- LearningExpress Library - Online practice exams, exercises, skill-building courses, and more. Includes resources in Spanish.
- Occupational Outlook Handbook - Career information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Proofreading & Editing Basics- Tip guide for writing cover letters, essays, or presentations.

- Resume Builder - Templates to help create, share, and download a resume.
- Search for Jobs - Google Search provides tips and connections to job postings from across the web.
- Tutor.com – Connections to job resources, resume help, and career coaching.
- Worksource Georgia - Job and career services as well as training and education

Health & Social Services:

- 2-1-1 / United Way of the Coastal Empire - Call or click for links to emergency assistance and community resources.
- African American Health Information & Resource Center - Health services, job training, computer assistance and more.
- H.E.R.O. Database - Health Effective Resource Organizations Database connects you to vital resources..
- America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia - Find updates about food assistance programs on their Facebook page.
- Chatham County Hurricane Registry - Qualifying residents may apply for evacuation assistance
- Chatham County Safety Net - Connections to healthcare, insurance, and other support resources.
- Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless - Help for homeless, housing, food assistance, and other basic needs.
- Deep Center Mutual Aid Toolkit - Listing of resources, policies, and practices to address the needs of the community.
- Financial & Legal Assistance - Links to financial and legal assistance plus other community resources.
- Find Help Georgia – links to find social services.
- Food Talk - University of Georgia Extension presents free ideas on how to keep families healthy on a budget!
- GeorgiaCares State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) - Free, unbiased Medicare counseling
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs - Links to info on support for basic needs and services.
- Georgia Department of Human Services - Resources and information about benefits.
- Georgia Department of Labor - Information about filing for unemployment, benefits, and job assistance.

- Georgia Division of Family & Children Services - Resources, information, and contact information about benefits.
- Georgia Family Connection Partnership - Resources and updates to keep Georgians safe, educated, and connected.
- Georgia Memory Net - Resources on Alzheimer's and dementia, with support from the Georgia Department of Human Services.
- Peach State Health Plan - Information and resources for affordable and reliable health care.
- Resilient Savannah Resource Guide - Local, state and federal resources, phone numbers, and website links.
- Salvation Army - Help with payments for rent, utilities, and basic needs.
- Step Up Savannah - Workforce development and financial education.
- UGA Public Service & Outreach - Resources and connections for nutrition, health, and wellness.

Early Literacy: Early literacy is a key component for reading readiness. The library offers resources to promote the development of language and early learning skill to help prepare children for success in school.

Student Success: Libraries support students inside and outside of the classroom with study tools, reference materials, and after-school programs that encourage creative and critical thinking. Provides homework help, reading resources, and skill-building for college and beyond.

- DigitalLearn.org - Learn computer basics with simple self-directed video tutorials.
- LearningExpress Library This link opens in a new window
- Practice tests, skill-building courses, and career help. Includes resources in Spanish.
- Niche Academy This link opens in a new window
- Video tutorials and training on how to use online resources.

WiFi Services:

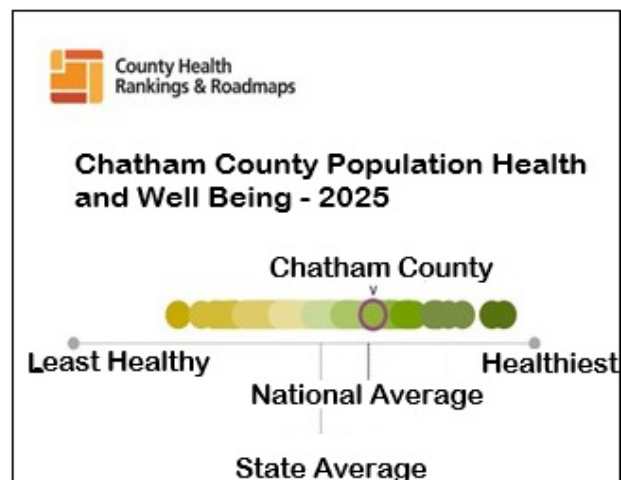
- Charter Communications - Free Spectrum Wi-Fi internet services to households with K-12 or college students.
- Comcast Internet - Complimentary "Internet Essentials" for low-income customers for 60 days with no contract.
- Hargray - Free Internet service for households with K-12 or college students.

It is clear that the library system provides a wealth of resources for career advancement, early learning, health and social services, job readiness, and student success. However, Live Oak Library Services states one of their biggest challenges is that many people are unaware of the extensive services programs and resources that are available to them as library card holders. The Live Oak Library Services District Plan has identified the need to expand their physical footprint to align with local population growth. The Plan envisions the construction of updated and expanded library facilities to replace aging structures.

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. Incidence of other health indicators some of which are associated with obesity, include:

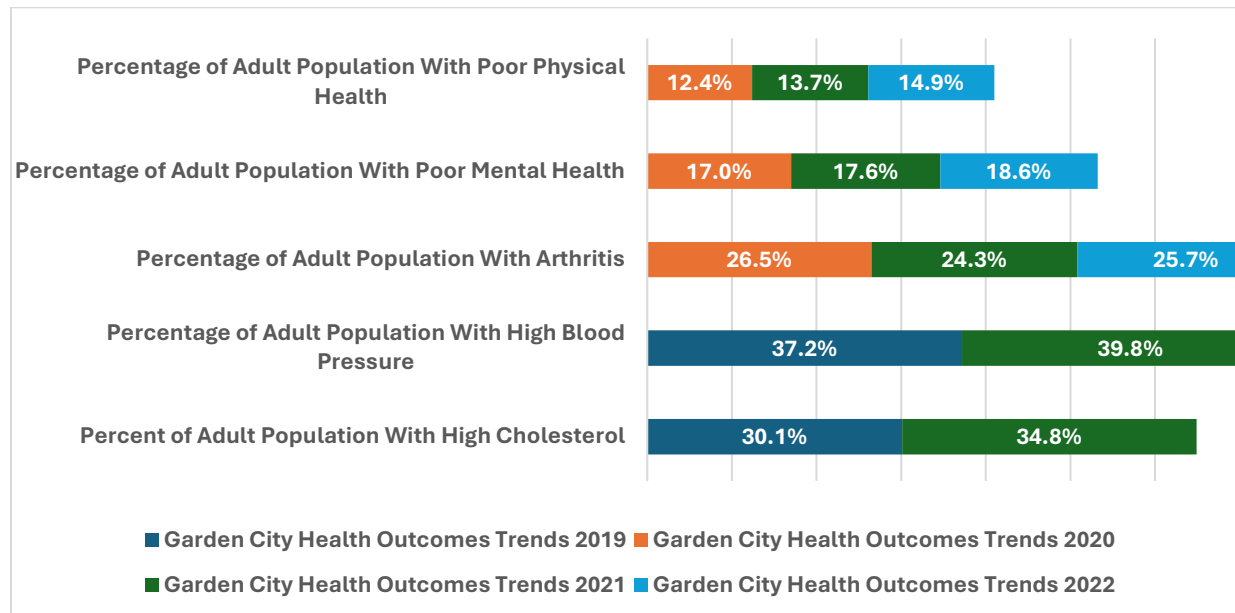


Figure 9.9 – Garden City: Health Outcome Trends

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.

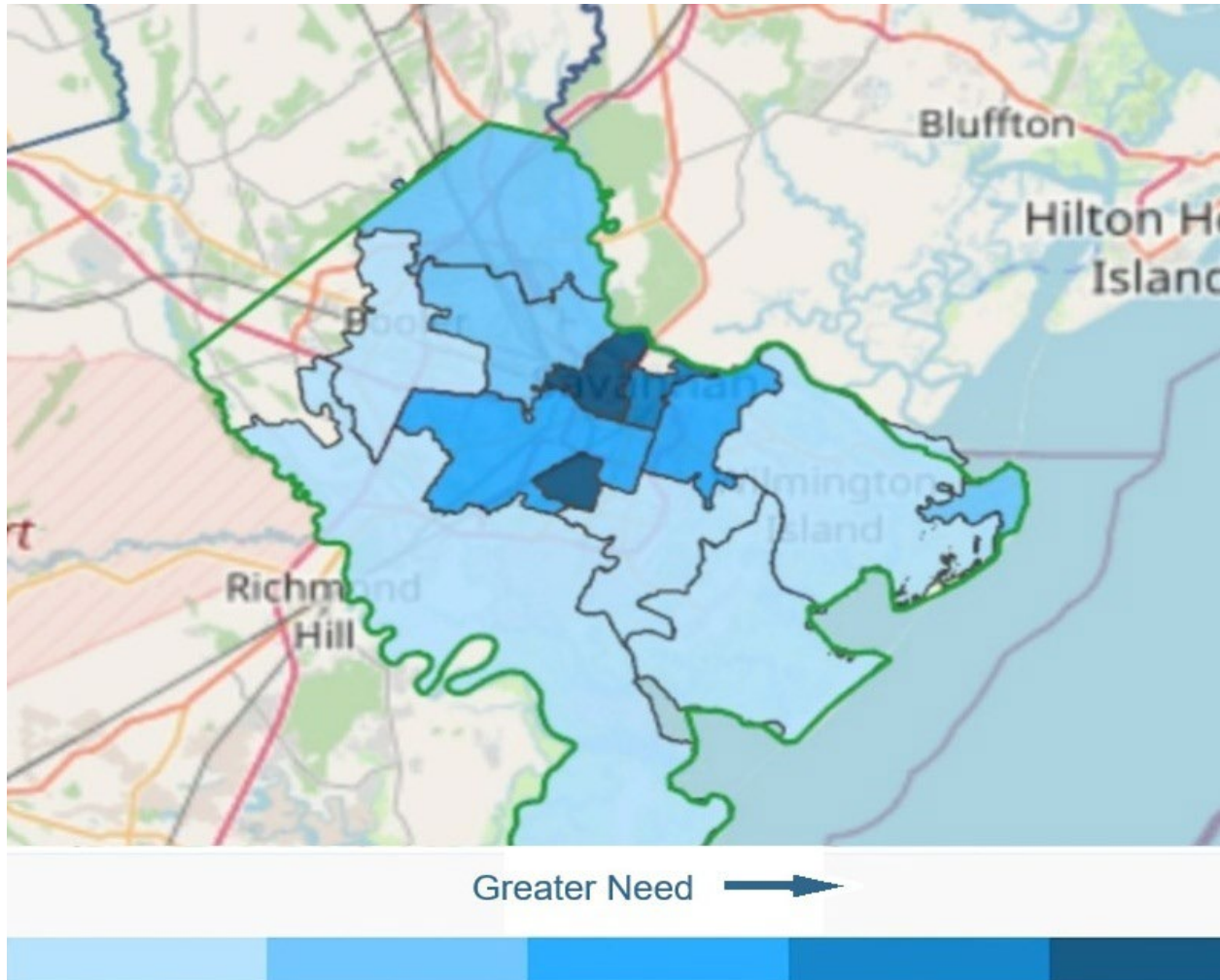


Exhibit 9.4 – Garden City: Community Health Concerns

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.

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.

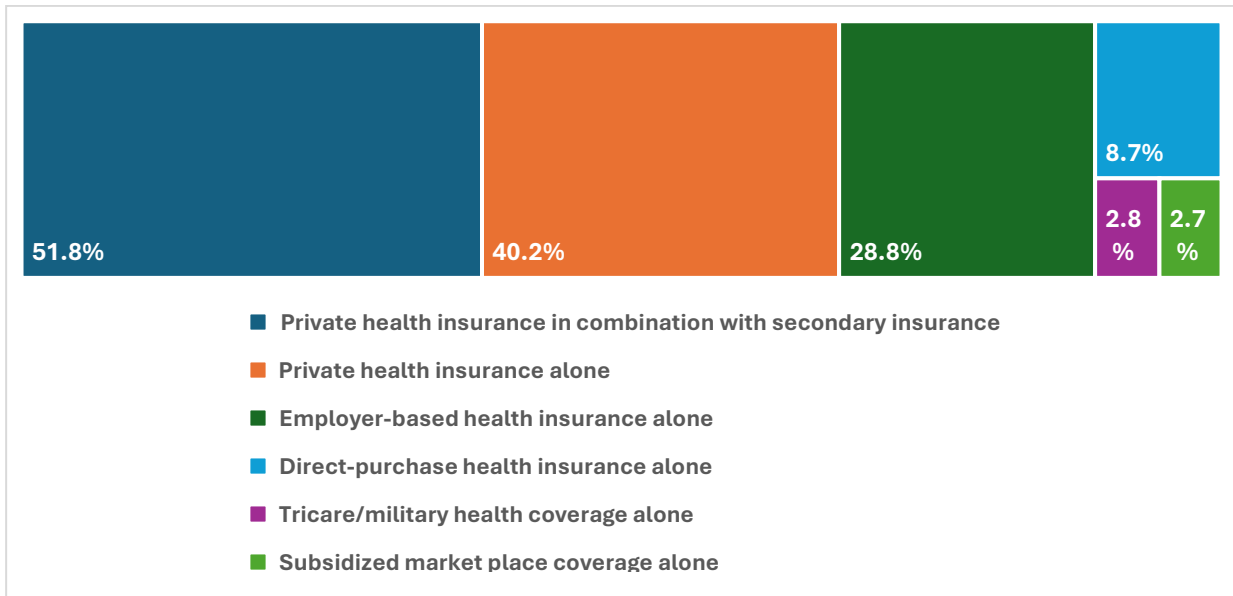


Figure 9.10 – Garden City: Private Insurance Coverage % of Total Population

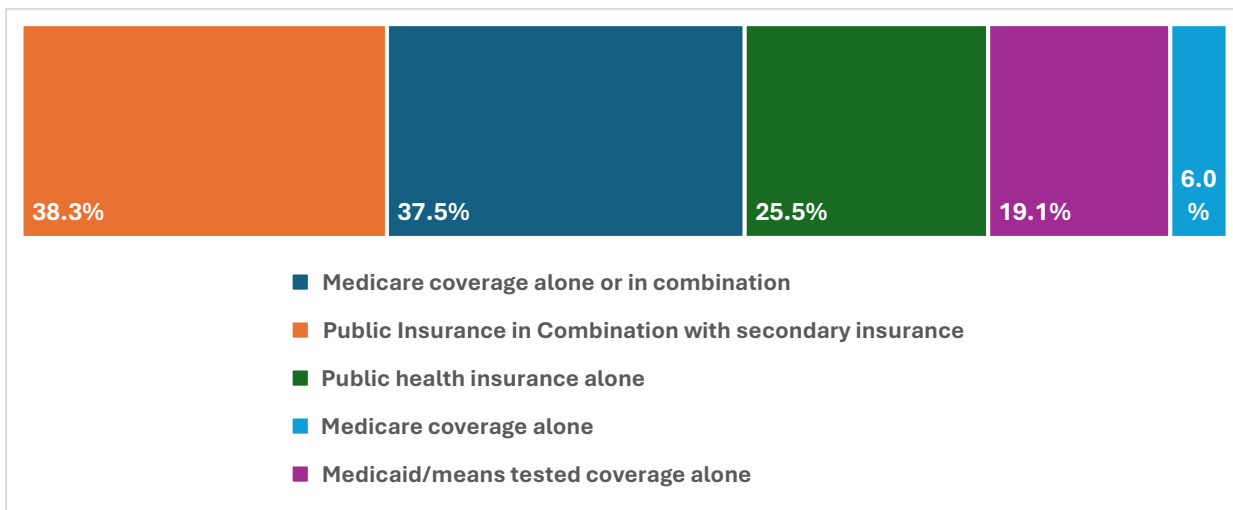


Figure 9.11 – Garden City: Public Insurance Coverage % of Population

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.

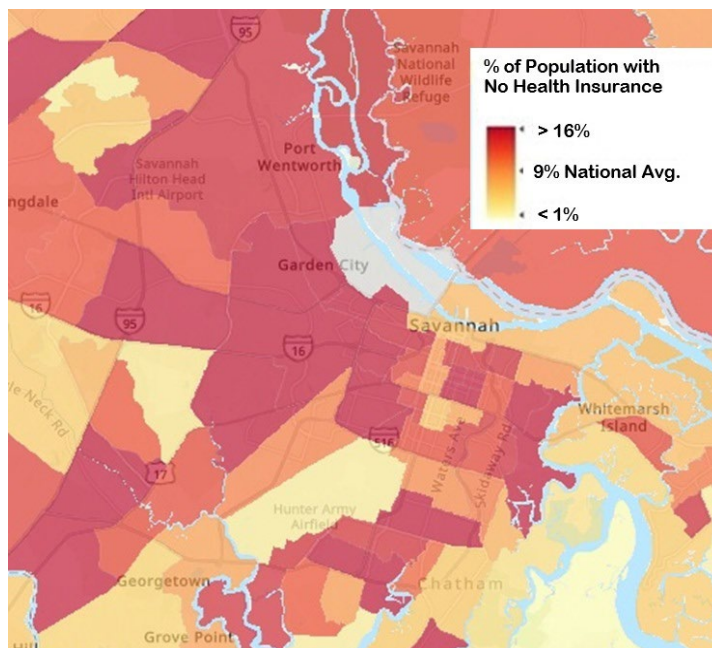


Exhibit 9.5 – Garden City: No Insurance Coverage

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:

- 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.
- 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.

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.

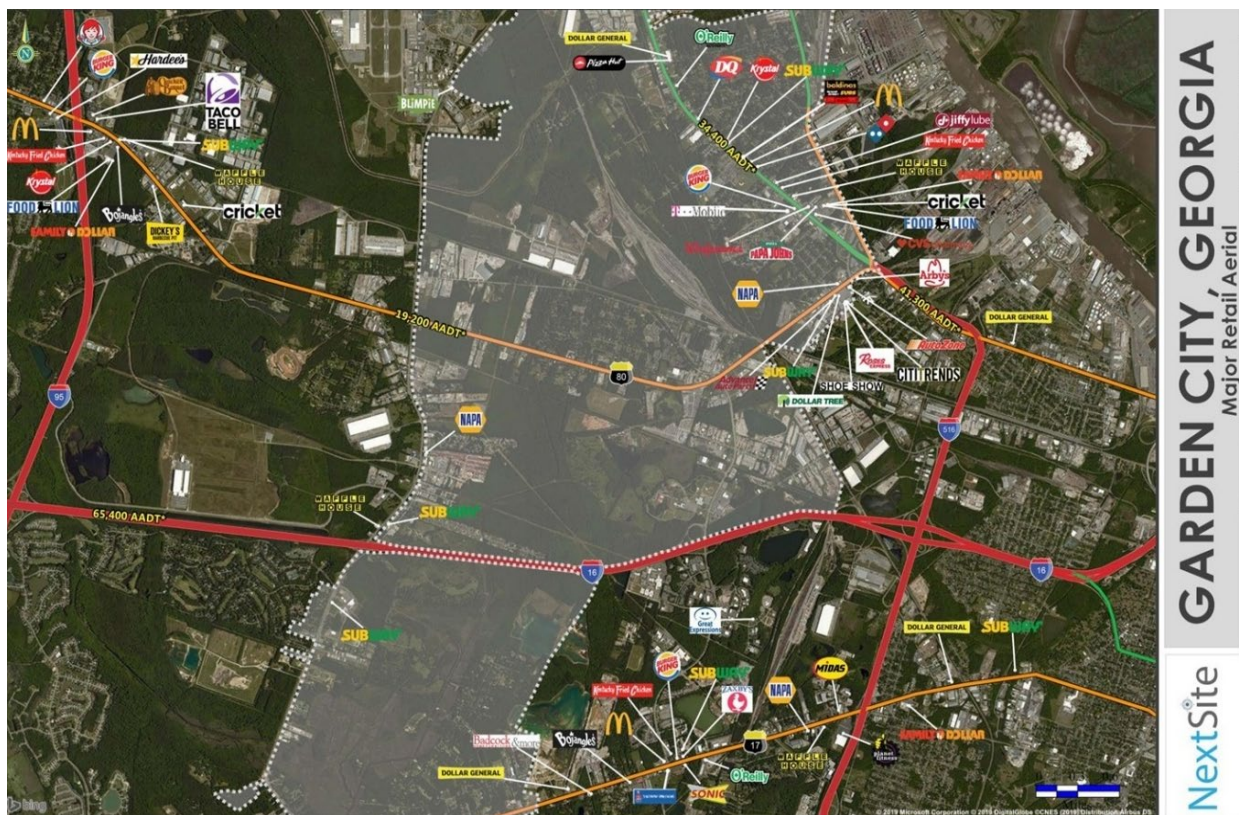


Exhibit 9.6 – Garden City: Major Roadway Retail Food Establishments

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.

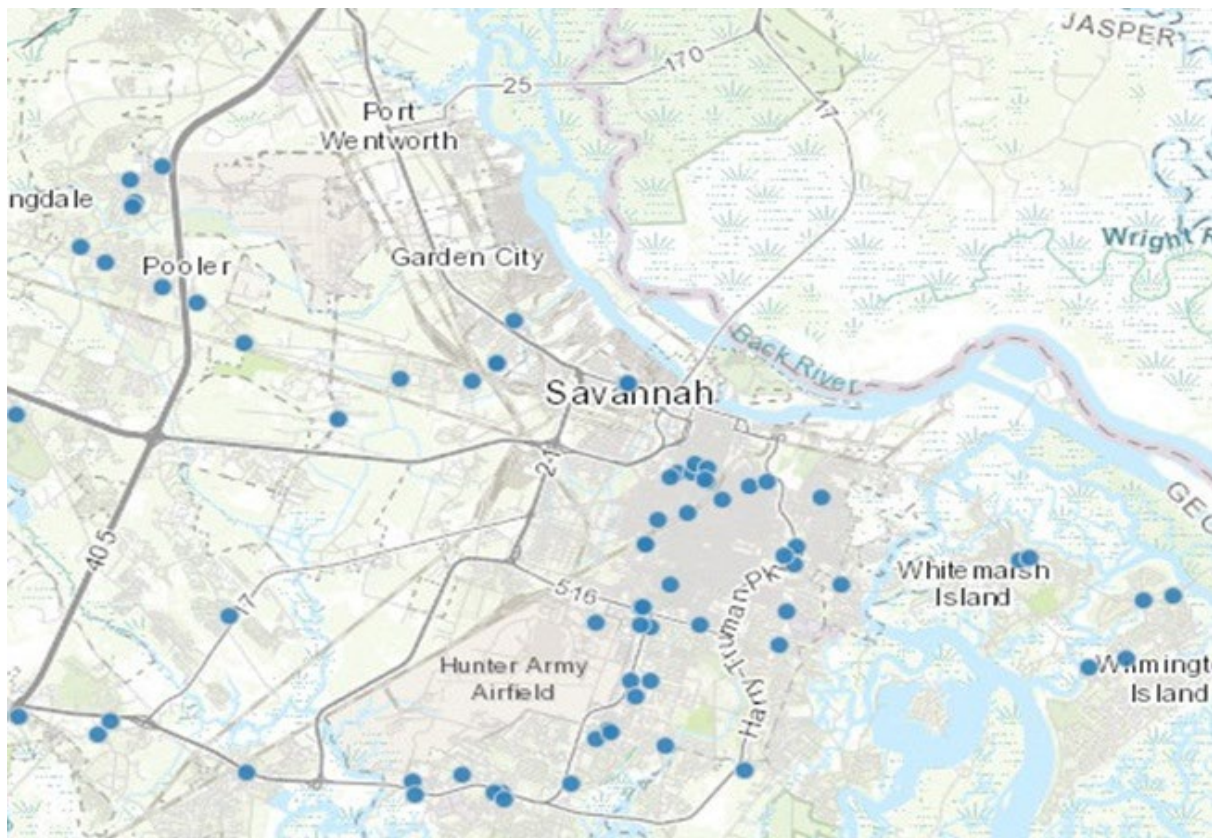


Exhibit 9.7 – Garden City: Grocery Stores

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.

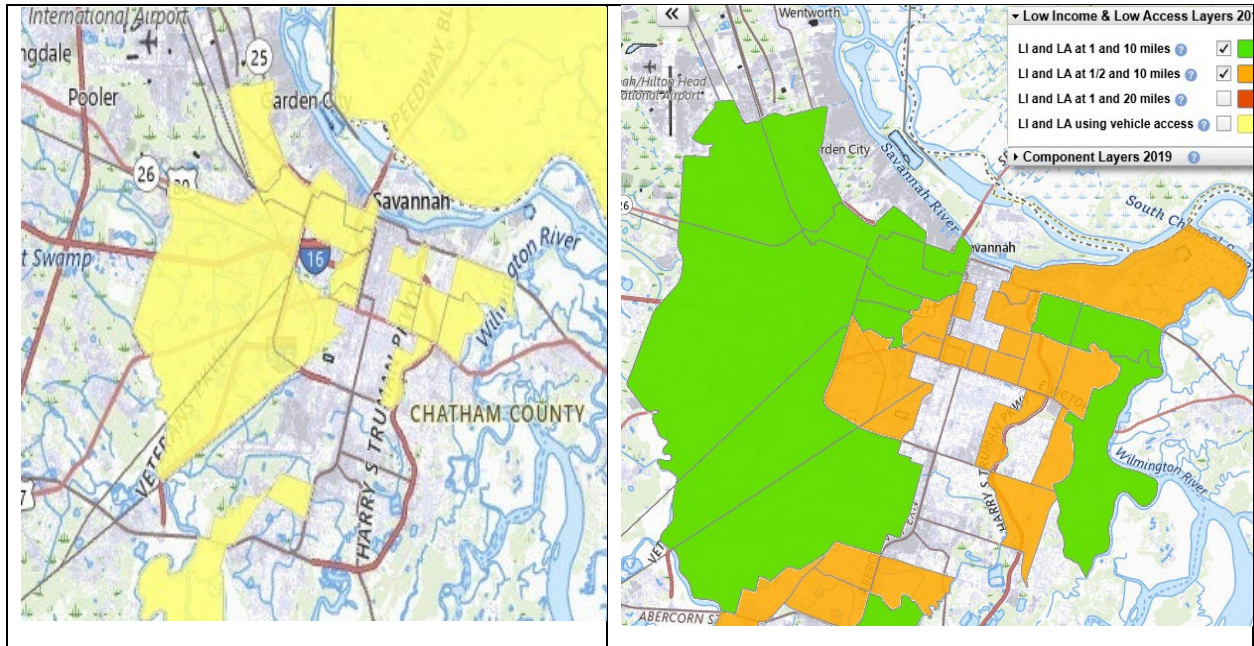
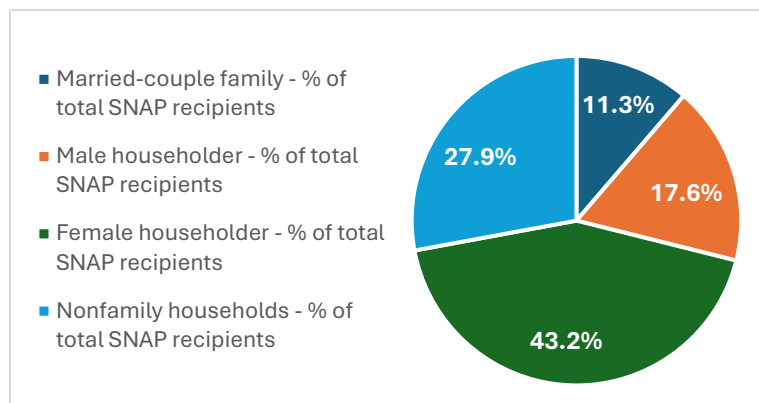


Exhibit 6.8 – Garden City: (L) Tracts With a High Proportion of Residents With No Vehicles & No Markets Within ½ Mile - (R) Tracts Without Markets Within 1 and ½ Mile

Food Stamps/SNAP Benefits

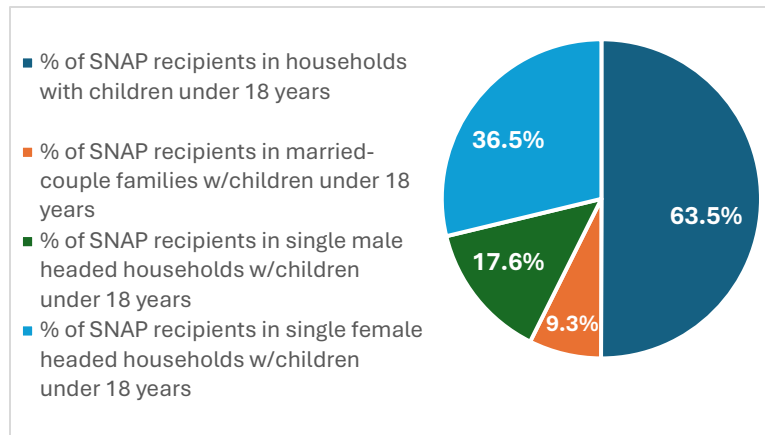
According to 2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates, 14% of households in Garden City receive food stamps/SNAP benefits. Almost one-third of the households receiving SNAP benefits include one person over age 60, the remainder have younger members. One quarter of SNAP recipients have incomes below the poverty level,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

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

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

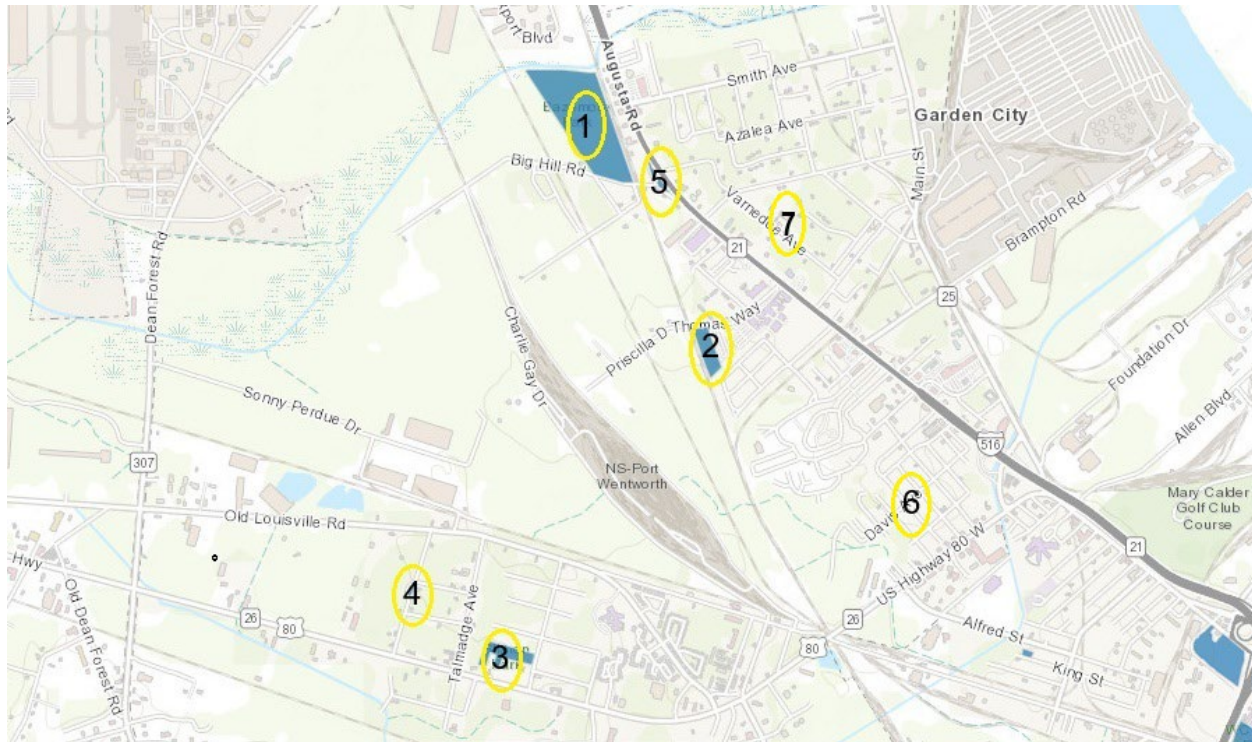


Exhibit 9.9 – Garden City: Parks, Recreation and Open Space

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.

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 as 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.

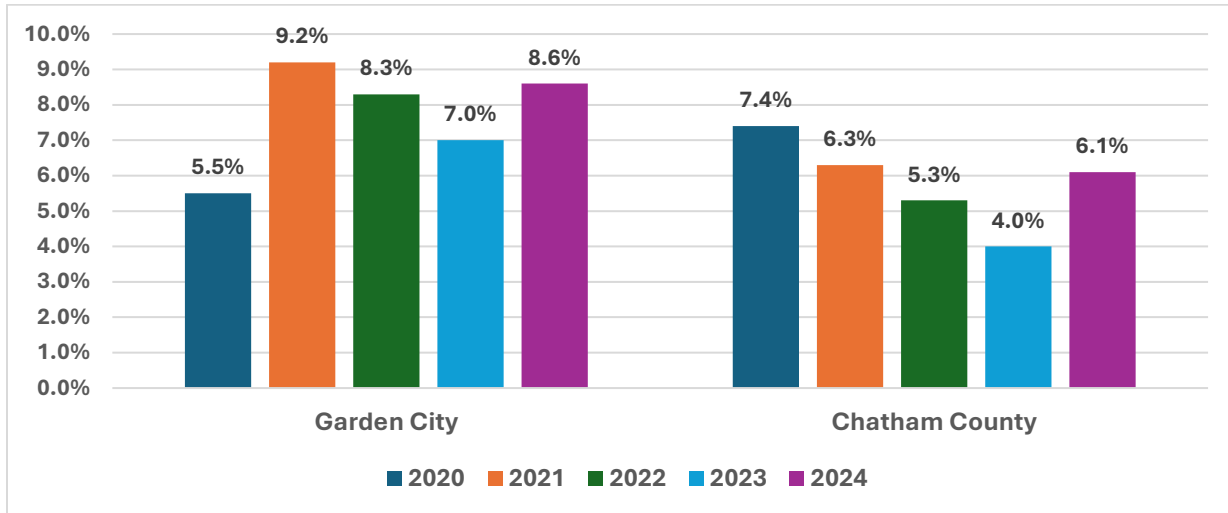


Figure 6.13 – Garden City and Chatham County: Unemployment Rate 2020 – 2024

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.

Climate Change

As the nation continues to experience negative impacts of climate change, the consequences are transforming underlying determinants of health, directly affecting health of residents, and also local economies, governments and the natural environment. Negative impacts of climate change that may affect Garden City include extreme heat, changes in the amount of annual rainfall, warmer ocean waters that feed and strengthen hurricanes, beach erosion, saltwater encroachment upon drinking water sources and natural habitats, infrastructure damage, loss of property and flooding in the region due to

sea level rise and “sunny day” flooding. More details associated with policies and actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change are examined in the **Natural Resources Element**.

Potential direct health impacts resulting from climate change may include disease, cause community disruption, and local industries relying on climate stability, including tourism, farming and fishing may experience decline. Increased costs of fresh food, or food shortages associated with either flooding, pest damage or drought may occur, particularly affecting vulnerable populations including youth, those with compromised health conditions, the elderly and even lower-income households. More frequent and intense heat episodes have increased the number of emergency room visits for strokes, dehydration, and other heat or cold related illnesses related to exposure or lack of efficient indoor temperature control, as well as outdoor workers. Air pollution events may increase, affecting those with asthma, COPD and other compromised health conditions. Warmer temperatures expand habitats for disease-carrying vectors, particularly ticks and mosquitoes prevalent in the south. Climate anxiety, grief, hopelessness, and stress have been shown to arise from experiencing disasters, dislocation, or witnessing environmental loss, potentially leading to mental health instability. Studies have also revealed a correlation between excessive heat and violent crimes, which occur more frequently in low-income areas (The Urban Crime and Heat Gradient in High and Low Poverty Areas|NBER).

Public Safety

It is the responsibility of local government to serve and protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens and businesses. The safety of a community is fundamental to the wellbeing and longevity of its residents and economy. In response to these threats, government is traditionally tasked to employ departments and pass ordinances to sustain the safety and health of its community. Even in less intense moments of day-to-day life, it is the responsibility of the local government to aid in incidents such as criminal activity, car accidents, house fires, and downed power lines. Generally, for municipalities and local governments, public safety includes fire protection, emergency management services, and law enforcement.

Emergency Management

Chatham County Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) services all of Chatham County and its municipalities and is responsible for the welfare of the County in the midst and aftermath of major disasters and emergencies. CEMA has developed a Disaster Recovery Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan to proactively provide protection and courses of action in response to a number of different hazards and emergencies. In the Hazard Mitigation Plan, CEMA has listed severe weather, extreme heat, and flooding as the most likely hazards to impact the County. Hazard mitigation planning reduces loss of life and property by minimizing the impact of disasters. Mitigation plans are key to breaking the cycle of disaster damage and need for reconstruction.

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement in Garden City provides full service public safety and law enforcement services to its citizens and visitors. Garden City's Police Department employs 40 sworn officers supported by five civilian staff.

The Garden City Police Department has been Nationally Accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc (CALEA) since 2003. The accreditation affirms their adherence to best practices in service delivery, resource management, and community advocacy. Garden City is one of only 37 city police departments in the State of Georgia to possess this prestigious award. Since the initial accreditation in 2003, the Garden City Police Department has maintained reaccreditation status confirmed by on-site assessments in 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2019 and 2023. Due to its continuous accreditation for over 15 years, the department is eligible for the Meritorious Accreditation award.

The Garden City Police Department is also State Certified by the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police (GACP). The State Certification is a program designed to improve the

administrative practices of the department and strengthen the service delivery to the community. Currently there are approximately 140 law enforcement agencies that are state certified. Only one-third of the state certified agencies also hold the CALEA accreditation.

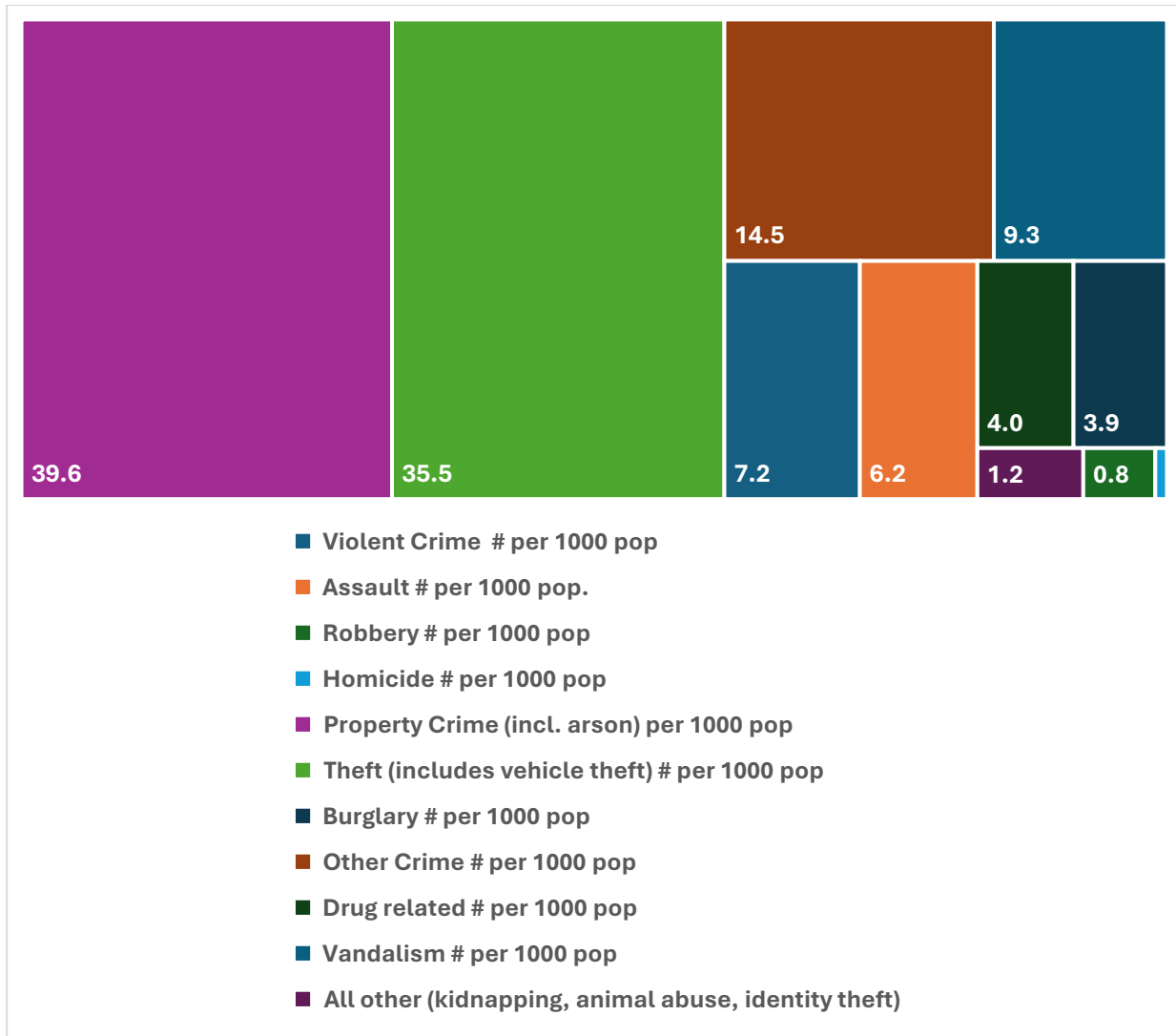


Figure 9.14 – Garden City: 2025 Crime Rates

According to CrimeGrade.org 2025 report, the overall property crime rate in Garden City is 39.6 incidents per 1,000 residents, consisting of: theft, vehicle theft, burglary and arson. Garden City residents generally consider the north part of the city to be the safest, followed by the western portion divided by Augusta Rd. and the railroad lines. The chance of property crime in Garden City varies by neighborhood – ranging from 1 in 19 per 1,000 persons in the east neighborhoods to 1 in 31 per 1,000 population in the north.

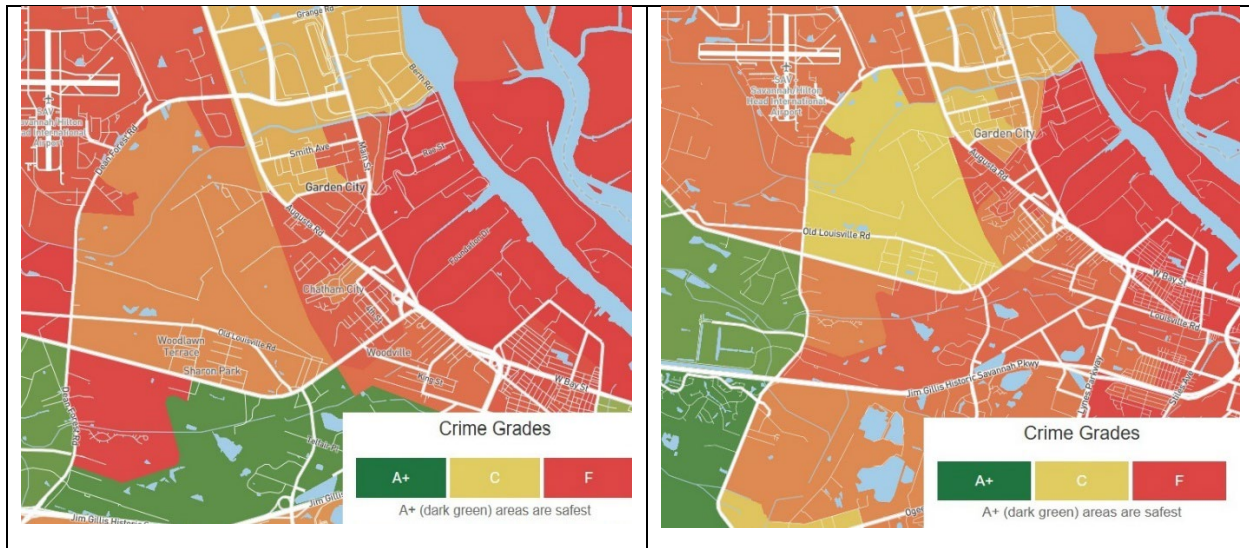


Exhibit 9.10 – Garden City: (L) Property Crimes 2025 - (R) Violent Crimes 2025

Violent crimes, inclusive of assault, rape, homicide and robbery were reported as 7.2 incidents per 1,000 population. The majority of crimes involved assault, and only 2 homicides were experienced. The Port of Savannah industrial area reflects the highest reported violent crime rates, with incidence reducing in the western and northern portions of the City. Other crimes, involving drug related, vandalism, animal abuse, identity theft and kidnapping have a 14.5 incidents per 1,000-person rate.

Fire Protection and Emergency Response

The Garden City Fire Department and Emergency Service Department provide fire protection and emergency response services to the businesses and residences within Garden City's limits. It is an ISO Class 2 Fire Department, providing rapid emergency response for fire suppression, emergency medical incidents, hazardous conditions, rescue operations, fire investigations, and disaster preparedness. Through fire inspections, code enforcement, public safety programs, smoke alarm initiatives, and community outreach, the department works proactively to reduce risk before emergencies occur. The Fire Marshal's Office partners closely with local businesses, developers, and residents to ensure buildings are safe and compliant with applicable fire and life-safety standards.

Garden City Fire Rescue has entered automatic aid agreements with Chatham County Fire Department and Port Wentworth Fire Department and Emergency Management Agency. These agreements ensure the closest and best-equipped resources respond immediately to structure fires, rescues, and serious accidents across jurisdictional lines.

Through a fire fee, Garden City's Fire Department collects revenue that can only be used for fire response and protection services to customers. The fire fee is a financing option

that provides an equitable, stable, and dedicated revenue source to support a portion of fire services. The fire fee helps the City to accomplish the following goals:

- Ensure that Garden City residents and business owners receive firefighting services at the desired service level
- Continue to fund full time firefighter positions
- Ensure that there is adequate funding for operational and training expenditures
- Enable the City to work to maintain or exceed the ISO rating of 3
- Protect the lives and property of all citizens through emergency response, education and fire prevention

As shown in Figure 9.16, responses to emergency fire department calls has escalated over the Plan 2040 period. Responses to calls have increased significantly over the past five years, driven by rapid industrial, commercial, and residential growth in the area. The surge is primarily caused by a high volume of emergency medical services (EMS), which often make up over 60% of total calls, an aging population requiring more assistance, and increased traffic accidents, corresponding to the increased freight, industrial and logistics activity in the region, and in particular the Port of Savannah.

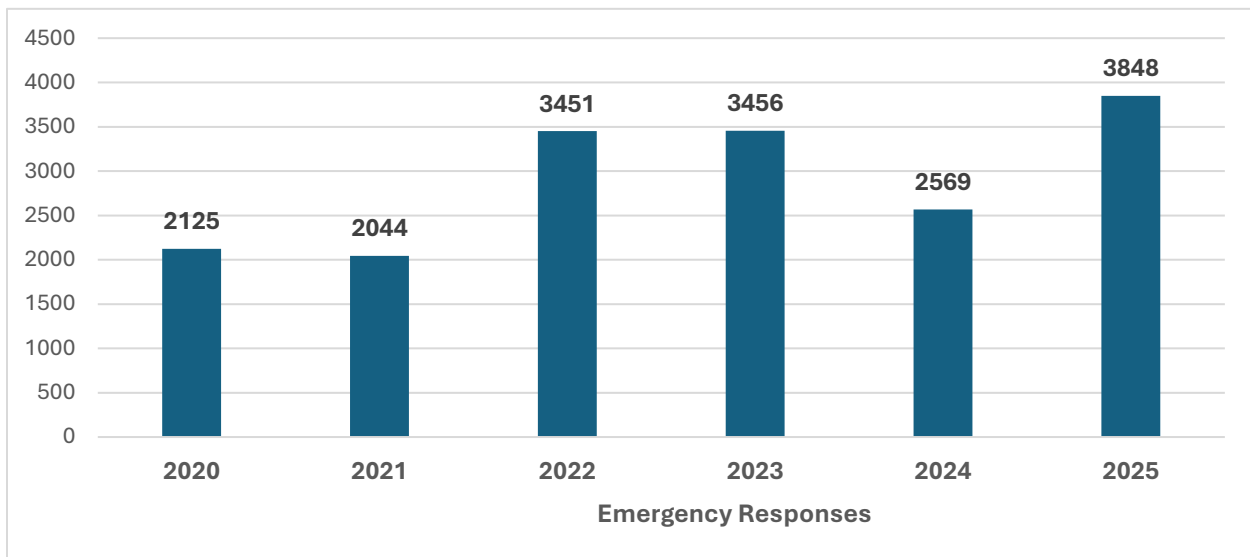


Figure 9.16 – Garden City: Responses to Emergency Fire Department Calls

Broadband And Fiber Optic

While housing, public spaces, transportation, and water are critical for community viability, digital technology has become the key to effectively managing and using conventional resources, creating new possibilities for business, commerce, education, healthcare, governance, public safety, and recreation. Citizens can and will continue to use digital technology to interact with each other and access information in highly informed, easier, and more dynamic ways. This depends on bandwidth and internet connectivity - the ability to move information quickly and flexibly from and to most anywhere.

Chatham County conducted a fiber optic feasibility study in 2017, which highlighted that high-speed internet access remained inaccessible for many residents and businesses. While local governments are responding with new investments in technology; building, running, and even using fiber-optic infrastructure is not a short-term endeavor. These activities demand a clear vision for current and future citizens' expectations and requirements, require substantial input from local business and civic leaders, and benefit from principled thinking about the role of local government and development mechanisms guiding the provision of digital infrastructure. In summary, digital infrastructure is crucial to deliver essential community services, enable a connected economy, and support a higher quality of life.

Network Technology

Broadband delivery systems include cable, DSL, fiber, and wireless connect devices to the internet. Broadband refers to high-speed internet services, which provide online content: websites, television shows, video conferencing, cloud services, or voice conversations, which are accessed and shared via computers, smartphones, and other devices. The Federal Communications Commission updated its definition of broadband in 2024 to be at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream to the device, and 20 Mbps upstream, a significant increase from the 25/3 standard established in 2015.

Broadband is deployed throughout communities as wires that carry digital signals to and from users. The content comes into the local community from around the world via global, national, and regional networks. The local infrastructure is built, connected, and operated by internet and telecommunications companies that own the physical wires to each household.

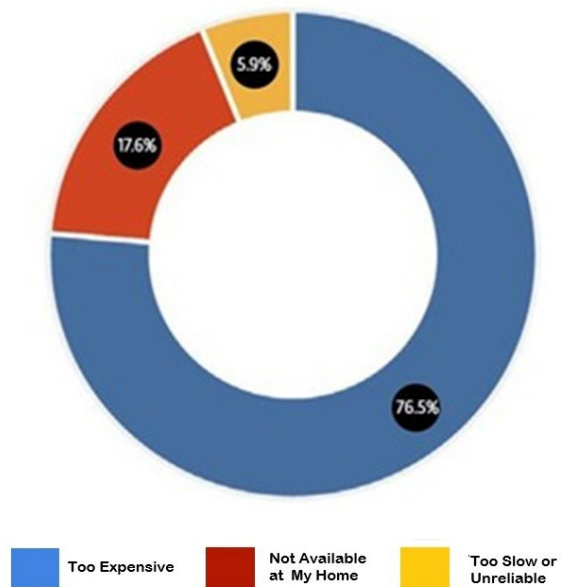
Fiber-optic cables(fiber) are the most advanced and efficient transmittal mode and essential for fast, reliable connections. Fiber is a strand of glass the diameter of a human hair that carries waves of light. Using photons across glass, as opposed to traditional

electrons across copper wire, fiber has the capacity to carry nearly unlimited amounts of data across long distances, literally at the speed of light. The capability for provision of fiber infrastructure is rapidly expanding to serve commercial “hyperscalers” and high-capacity industrial users in the region. In 2021, the state advanced plans for installing fiber conduit along major interstates, including I-16 and I-516 near Garden City.

In summary, digital infrastructure can be used to deliver essential community services, enable a modern, connected economy, and support a higher quality of life. The end goal is for Garden City is to help its citizens achieve better connectivity and increased bandwidth, while meeting its internal technology needs. This entails investing in fiber-optic infrastructure and related facilities to better serve its citizens, enhance quality of life and quality of place, and spur sustainable economic growth all while ensuring it is economically feasible, fiscally responsible, and practical.

Barriers to Household Internet Subscribership

While the 2017 survey did not specifically address data collection by jurisdiction, it found that a significant percentage of households in the County reported not subscribing to internet services. Contrary to U.S. Department of Commerce research on broadband market conditions during the same time period, where lack of service availability was almost one-half of the rationale behind non-subscription, the reasons for local non-subscribership in the Chatham County region was based more on cost of services rather than physical availability.



The threshold for a good or service being "too expensive" is relative, as what is out of financial reach for some households and income levels could be considered discretionary spending for others. Given that the median income in Garden City is substantially lower than the median income countywide, at \$41,735 compared to \$69,575; and that the percentage of households in poverty at 12.3% is above the County at 9.8%, survey responses attributing non-subscription based on economic factors appear to be supported. It is likely that alternatives to household internet services may be sought, including reliance on mobile devices, or access to the internet outside the home, at work or school, the library, or even public Wi-Fi locations around town.

According to the survey results, 17.6% of County households reported that the internet is not available at their home. Based on an inventory of local internet providers serving Garden City, there are very few portions of the City that are not covered by one or another internet provider. Currently, general fiber availability in Garden City is high, with top providers reaching between 42% and 87% of the city, while fixed internet cable/fiber hybrids cover up to 99%. According to Ready.net mapping, less than 1% of the County is underserved (1,731 addresses), and 0.1% of addresses are unserved, with 99.4% of addresses with capability to be served adequately.

Internet Providers in Garden City				
Provider	Max Download	Max Upload	Internet Connection	Coverage
Brightspeed	940 Mbps	940 Mbps	Fiber Internet and DSL Internet	99.30%
HughesNet	100 Mbps	5 Mbps	Satellite Internet and Phone	98.97%
Viasat	150 Mbps	3 Mbps	Satellite Internet and Phone	96.12%
EarthLink Fiber	5 Gbps	1 Gbps	Fiber Internet and Fixed Wireless Internet	86.99%
AT&T	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	DSL Internet and Television	86.99%
Cyberonic	11 Mbps	11 Mbps	Fiber, Cable, DSL, Copper and Fixed Wireless Internet	86.99%
Xfinity	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	Cable Internet, Television and Phone	86.08%
Hargray Communications Group	50 Mbps	20 Mbps	Fiber Internet, Cable Internet and DSL Internet	4.93%
CenturyLink	1 Gbps	1 Gbps	Fiber Internet, DSL Internet, Fixed Wireless Internet, Television and Phone	1.84%
Windstream	2 Gbps	2 Gbps	Fiber, Cable, DSL, Copper Internet, and Phone	0.72%
T-Mobile	~	~	Fixed Wireless Internet and Mobile	~
Starlink	300 Mbps		Satellite residential	99%
EIN	5000 Mbps		Fiber Internet	95%
Hotwire	10000Mbps		Fiber Internet	50%

Figure 9.17 – Garden City: Internet Providers

Reflecting a national trend, internet-enabled mobile devices have been utilized as a substitute for home internet access, with 35.3% of non-subscribing households reporting reliance on their mobile phone rather than home based internet services based on the expense of wired residential service. Although mobile internet access may be costly and inferior to wired internet alternatives, if only one option is economically feasible, mobile

wireless may be considered more versatile because of the voice and mobility aspects. Overall, the 2017 survey of non-subscribing households indicated that Chatham County residents recognize the importance of the internet to their household and would likely adopt services if available at an affordable price. Current pricing of broadband services yields mixed results. Analysis of the Federal Communications Commission’s Urban Rate Survey (Horrigan, James, Benton Institute for Broadband and Society, 1/11/2026) data from 2020 to 2025 disclosed the following:

1. The average price across all broadband plan offerings grew by 4.8% in inflation-adjusted terms from 2024 to 2025.
2. Broadband service offerings at the highest speeds are more expensive, growing in prevalence, and driving up average broadband prices. In 2025 very high-speed (2 Gbps or higher) plans nearly doubled to 16% from 9% in 2024. For plans with download speeds of 2 Gbps or more, the average price was \$179 per month, more than twice what plans between 100 Mbps and 1 Gbps cost.
3. Fiber plans are also far more common, now making up 47% of the sample compared with 23% in 2022. Fiber-optic home broadband plans have experienced 12.8% price increase in 2025 compared to 2024, and 40.1% since 2020, whereas inflation overall increased by 25.1% between 2020 and 2025.
4. Prices for mid-tier plans (100 Mbps to 1 Gbps) declined 8.5% between 2024 and 2025 and 28.9% since 2020. For lower tier plan services with download speeds of 100 Mbps or less, prices fell by 13.4% from 2024 to 2025 and 15.0% since 2020. As of January 2026, Brightspeed appears to be the least expensive internet provider in Garden City, with pricing starting at \$39.00.
5. Significantly, fixed-wireless service, an attractive option for those on a budget, declined 20.0% percent from 2024 to 2025 and 50.7% since 2020. However, there are far fewer low-cost plans available than in the recent past. When the Affordable Connectivity Program was operational, 9% percent of all service offerings were \$30 per month or less. That figure fell to just 3% percent in the 2025 data. Due to the increase in minimum download and upload thresholds, slower speed, therefore less expensive plans have become much less common.

Industrial and Commercial Infrastructure

In 2026, fiber optic provision for industrial and commercial users in Garden City, GA, is characterized by a more robust private provider coverage and major ongoing infrastructure upgrades at key industrial hubs than reported in the Garden City 2040 Plan. By 2021, Garden City and the surrounding Chatham County area was actively engaged in enhancing fiber infrastructure through state programs and local efforts, making high-speed, reliable

fiber more accessible for industrial and commercial entities. Previous limitations in data capacity and connectivity are being addressed with providers like IQ Fiber and LiveOak Fiber expanding high-speed, low-latency fiber networks, and offering symmetrical gigabit (and faster) services for enhanced productivity.

Garden City also benefits from the Georgia Department of Transportation's Statewide Broadband Initiative to install 1,400 miles of fiber conduit along interstates, including I-16 and I-516 near Savannah. A portion of this network is specifically dedicated to commercial use by "hyperscalers" and large industrial entities. By 2021, the City saw increasing fiber optic expansion, with providers like AT&T aiming for 1 Gbps+ symmetrical speeds via XGSPON, supporting industrial growth throughout the County by offering better government data capabilities and competitive telecom services, leveraging existing right-of-way access for installation, and aiming to serve businesses needing robust, reliable, cap-free connections, a significant upgrade for industrial needs.

The Georgia Ports Authority also is upgrading and installing its own high-capacity fiber optic cable infrastructure, ensuring robust connectivity for large-scale operations. In January 2026 the Ports Authority solicited bids for Garden City Terminal Fiber Construction Upgrades providers. This project provides critical data infrastructure for one of the nation's busiest industrial terminals.

At the local level, the City maintains strict permitting processes for fiber optic installation within public rights-of-way, facilitating expansion, and ensuring organized expansion of industrial-grade lines. City-level contracts are also in place for ongoing cabling projects and emergency repairs, supporting both local government and broader business needs.

Summary

The provider network, focusing on residential and business growth with high-speed, reliable connections, which is essential for modern industrial and commercial operations needing robust, scalable bandwidth for demanding applications like large data transfers and cloud services, is actively growing in the region, making them a strong candidate for industrial use.

Municipal Support: Garden City's code granted rights to telecom companies to install fiber in city rights-of-way, provided they comply with city codes, showing local support for infrastructure build-outs.

Industrial Relevance

High-Speed & Reliable: The focus on symmetrical (equal upload/download) speeds and high capacity was crucial for industrial uses like large data transfers, cloud services, and smart factory operations.

Data & Connectivity: The expansion aimed to provide better data capabilities, essential for the economic development of the region, including areas near the busy ports.

Competition & Choice: Promoting competition among providers through municipal efforts meant more options and better pricing for industrial users.

Next Steps

The next steps move Garden City toward developing and realizing local and regional fiber-optic infrastructure goals. As service capacity is not a significant barrier to the provision of home-based internet service or commercial/industrial high-speed infrastructure, the next steps are low-cost, organizational, and policy-oriented measures that will lead to a broader fiber-optic partnership and Citywide fiber-optic deployment.

The City can help residents subscribe to home-based internet through a combination of leveraging existing federal programs, coordinating with private internet service providers (ISPs) and non-profits, and investing in community infrastructure.

Garden City can ensure residents are aware of and enrolled in existing federal and private sector programs through the following measures:

- **Lifeline Program:** Promote the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC Lifeline program, which provides a discount of up to \$9.25 per month on internet or phone service for eligible low-income households.
- **Provider-Specific Plans:** Publicize low-cost internet plans offered directly by ISPs (e.g., Access from AT&T, Spectrum Internet Assist, Xfinity Internet Essentials). These plans are often available to households that meet certain income requirements or participate in federal assistance programs like SNAP or the National School Lunch Program.
- **Direct Outreach:** Conduct targeted outreach through city public information channels, social media, schools, and community organizations to inform residents likely to qualify about these programs and how to enroll.
- **Application Assistance:** Provide direct assistance to residents who may find the application and verification process challenging or confusing.

The City can implement or promote programs that directly reduce the cost for eligible residents through the following measures:

- **Promote Federal and Provider Programs:** Assist residents to enroll in existing federal programs like the Lifeline program, which offers a discount on internet or phone service for eligible low-income households. Many Internet Service Providers also have their own low-income programs, such as Access from AT&T or Xfinity Internet Essentials, that the City can promote.

- **Direct Customer Assistance:** Jurisdictions can provide their own direct subsidies to residents, although this can be a significant investment.
- **Encourage Affordable Options:** Local governments can use franchise agreements to encourage or require providers to offer a specific low-cost service tier to residents.

Local governments can form strategic partnerships to expand access and affordability and improve infrastructure.

- **Community Anchor Institutions:** Leverage public libraries, community centers, and schools as Wi-Fi hotspots and access points, providing free internet access and devices to those without home connectivity.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private ISPs to incentivize them to offer affordable rates or expand service into underserved areas.
- **Municipal Networks:** Explore the option of building or operating municipal broadband networks, which can lead to more affordable pricing and improved service quality.
- **Streamline Deployment:** Adopt policies like "dig-once" to install conduit during road construction and streamline permitting processes to reduce the cost and time for private companies to deploy new infrastructure, especially in unserved areas.

Addressing affordability also involves ensuring residents have the skills and equipment to use the internet effectively through digital inclusion and education.

- **Device Programs:** Partner with non-profit organizations, such as PCs for People or Everyone On, that offer affordable, refurbished computers and devices to eligible households.
- **Digital Literacy Training:** Establish digital skills training programs through community centers or libraries to ensure residents can leverage internet access for jobs, education, and healthcare.
- **Identify Needs:** Use local data to identify specific areas of need and tailor programs accordingly.