Executive Summary
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Chatham County and the city of Savannah, Georgia, have prepared a new comprehensive plan document that guides the communities’ collective growth and development decisions over the course of the next 20 years. The Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan serves both participating communities as a general statement of intent regarding actions that will be taken, or policies which will be observed, to promote locally generated and preferred goals related to economic development, land use, transportation, housing, quality of life and other interrelated topics.

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

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

The Future Land Use Map shall be referenced in making rezoning and capital investment decisions: It provides a representation of the community’s vision helping to guide development based on community preferences and also indicates character areas where various types of land uses should be permitted.

The Comprehensive Plan provides policies that help guide day-to-day decisions: These policies are reflections of community values identified through public outreach efforts. These policies will be used as guidelines in the analysis of rezoning decisions and other capital investment decisions.

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

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

Parks and Natural Lands
70% and 76% of respondents support increasing the amount of land for “Parks” and “Protected Natural Areas”

Mixed Use and Grocery Stores
51% and 43% of respondents support Mixed Use land development and Grocery Stores

Hotels and Motels
57% of respondents want less Hotel and Motel development.
New development should be required to protect environmentally critical areas.

“Long range policies should focus on natural resource sustainability.”

“Roads should be designed for pedestrians and bicyclist as well as cars.”

**Transportation Networks**
60% of respondents feel the current transportation system is inadequate.

**Employment and Education**
74% and 60% of respondents feel the availability of high paying jobs and educational opportunities are not adequate within the community.

**Housing**
69% of respondents feel housing should be created to accommodate all segments of the population.
Housing

**DO YOU BELIEVE THE EXISTING HOUSING OPTIONS MEET THE COMMUNITY’S NEEDS?**

- Yes: 55%
- No: 45%

**Does current housing meet the community's needs?**

55% **NO/YES** 45%

**Is affordable housing “very important”?**

25% **NO/YES** 75%

- “The needs of low income families and the homeless are not being met.”
- “Would prefer that low income families be blended into average neighborhoods rather than separated in public housing zones”
- “There is not enough affordable and safe housing for working folks in downtown Savannah.”
**Infrastructure**

**Sidewalks, Road Maintenance, and Open Space**
Over 70% of respondents feel there should be a significant increase of investment in Sidewalks and Trails, Road Maintenance and Parks and Open Space.

**Road Expansion**
A mere 37% of respondents felt their should be an increase in road expansion.

**Internet Access**
48% of respondents feel there should be an increase in investment for public access to internet.

**No Change**
While the majority of respondents felt their should be increased investment in various types of infrastructure, nearly a third of all respondents felt the current infrastructure investments should remain the same.
Respondents were asked whether they would favor more or less public backing for a range of programs. The most popular programs were:

- Litter Reduction: 70%+ favor more
- Walking and Bicycling
- Community Gardens
- Renewable Energy
- Recycling
- Improve and Protect the Tree Canopy
Land Use

Purpose
The chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides a history of the development of Savannah and Chatham County. It provides an existing and future development patterns intended for the City of Savannah and Chatham County.

Growth
Chatham County is the most urbanized and populous county in the 200 mile coastal area between Charleston, South Carolina and Jacksonville, Florida. The County serves as an economic, cultural, and governmental hub, as well as an international focal point for trade.

The region has experienced a high rate of growth over the past 20 years, and this is expected to continue at or slightly above this level.

Existing Land Use
The City of Savannah is highly urbanized with large areas of mixed use development. The City is largely built-out and growing predominantly through annexation.

East Chatham is developed at low densities. This development pattern is influenced by its setting amid marshes and tidal creeks. West Chatham contains a high proportion of agricultural, forested, and otherwise undeveloped area. As the City of Savannah and unincorporated East Chatham have built out, West Chatham has emerged as a high growth area.

Historical Patterns
The city’s original development patterns, established by James Oglethorpe in 1733, have been remarkably resilient and adaptable. As a result, Savannah enjoys international recognition as a planned city with an enduring legacy.
Housing

Purpose
The chapter attempts to identify major housing problems, determine future housing needs, and develop a plan for managing housing development in the future. Housing strategies presented in this chapter promote coordination of housing policies and programs at the local, state, and federal levels. We have determined that affordable housing opportunities must be available throughout the County to achieve a socio-economically diverse community.

Housing Market
Zoning, which specifies the types of units developers are allowed to build, and market demand, which dictates the types of housing units people want to buy, are the primary factors that determine housing units built in Chatham County. There is a great need for multi-family, affordable, and special needs housing, in Chatham County and the City of Savannah.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Types as a Percent of Total Housing Units, 2000-2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units in Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHATHAM COUNTY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 (detached)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 (attached)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 to 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 or More</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufactured Home</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Homelessness
The Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless (CSAH) has gradually shifted away from a shelter-based approach and toward a system of providing care for the homeless by establish safe, clean and sustainable, non-traditional housing options. The Authority offers a “shelter plus care” approach where the homeless are provided with skills training and other services in addition to shelter.

Assessment of Housing
70% of the housing units in both Chatham County and the City of Savannah were constructed between 1940 and 2000. The majority of the units that are 50 years old or older are concentrated in Savannah’s various historic neighborhoods. Median home prices have increased nearly 80% from $95,000 in the year 2000 to $171,000 in 2014. During the same time frame, contract rent has increased 96% from $475 to $935.

Needs & Opportunities
In order to promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community, the comprehensive plan encourages the development of various housing types, promotes programs that provide housing for residents of all socio-economic backgrounds, and institute sustainable programs to address the issue of homelessness in the City and County.
Transportation

Purpose
Transportation policy decisions and transportation project designs can have a profound effect on things like mode choice, land uses, economic development, the natural environment, health, and general quality of life.

This chapter draws information from the Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (CORE MPO’s) 2040 Total Mobility Plan (TMP), which is the long range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for Chatham County. Based on information from the MTP, issues and opportunities are identified along with quality growth objectives.

Investment
Comprised of local governments in the metropolitan area, The Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization is the federally designated organization responsible for cooperatively planning for transportation in the region. The goals adopted for the Total Mobility Plan (TMP) focus on ensuring safety and security, maintenance and preservation, economic vitality, and mobility and sustainability of our road ways.

The Thoroughfare Plan
The CORE MPO, in conjunction with local jurisdictions, developed a Thoroughfare Plan for the region. The Thoroughfare Plan ensures accessibility, mobility, and connectivity for people and freight. It promotes safe and efficient travel for all users and creates an effective trade off between automobile capacity and multimodal design elements. Support for on-street parking, bike travel, land access, and pedestrian friendly intersections are discussed in the plan.

Public Transportation
The Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) is the agency responsible for transit services to the Savannah area. The federal and state required Transit Development Plan (TDP), maintained by CAT, provides a 5-year/10-year guide and planning tools outlining the most effective and efficient transit services for residents. According to the recently adopted TDP, CAT has identified a “Family of Services” designed to enhance ridership, the appeal of services to additional markets, and improve existing services.

Parking Matters
In 2015 and 2016, CORE MPO and the City of Savannah developed a strategic plan for parking and mobility in Savannah, called Parking Matters. To encourage a “park once” behavior and generally reduce auto trips and parking demand within downtown, the study looked at the potential needs for capital investment (such as additional garages), the possible transit service revisions, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The study found that existing parking capacity is greater than perceived by the public.

CAT’s Prioritized 5-year Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
<th>Year Four</th>
<th>Year Five</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday Span of Service</td>
<td>Sunday Span of Surface</td>
<td>Airport Express / Airport West Zonal Service</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Zonal Service 3 - Midtown</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Zonal Service 2 - Victory/Montgomery</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Effingham / Bryan Service</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Zonal Service 5 - Southside</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday Span of Service</td>
<td>New Route: 59th</td>
<td>GSU to Oglethorpe Mall</td>
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Quality of Life

Purpose
Chatham County has a responsibility to promote and support programs and regulations that positively impact quality of life for its citizens. This chapter includes an assessment of the following quality of life issues, Public Safety, Health, Education, Natural Resources, and Historic and Cultural Resources.

This chapter incorporates several items from the Chatham Community Blueprint – a strategic plan adopted by both the City of Savannah and Chatham County.

Community Health
The City of Savannah and Chatham County are aware of the interconnectedness between land use and public health. Both have instituted programs and policy changes to improve the public health of their citizens. Healthy Savannah was an initiative launched in 2007 for the purpose of bringing healthy living programs and resources to the community.

Public Safety
It is a primary responsibility of a municipality to ensure public safety that protects and serves its residents. Chatham County and the City of Savannah coordinate efforts to ensure that police, fire, and emergency management services are provided for all residents. A unanimous focus amongst the City and County is the desire to reduce crime so that all residents feel safe. Data from the Savannah Chatham Metropolitan Police Department (SCMPD) show that crime incidence are lower than the 2008’s peak, but the rate of both property and violent crime has increased since 2013. Programs such as “Citizens Police Academy,” and “Coffee with a Cop” have been enacted to build relationships between residents and law enforcement.

Education
Savannah Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS), strives to improve the education system for all students in the County. Initiatives are in place to develop financial, social and conflict resolution skills, improving upward mobility, and enhancing parental involvement amongst the community’s students.

Natural Resources
Due to the City and County’s proximity to natural coastal resources and various floodplains and marshes, specific initiatives involving state and local agencies have been implemented in an effort to preserve these natural areas. Also discussed in the chapter are efforts for addressing effective storm water and solid waste management.
Economic Development

Purpose
The economic development policies and activities of the County and City are to encourage development and expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is an inventory and assessment of the community’s economic base, labor force characteristics, and economic development opportunities and resources.

Regional Economy
Chatham County and Savannah are the hub of an 11-county region that features a diversified workforce and growing economy. The region is not only a top tourist destination but also an ideal place for businesses and families. The Region has an available workforce including more than 50,000 college students, all within an hour’s drive of the coast and exceptional training opportunities. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate in the region is higher than the national average.

Manufacturing
Some of the largest employers and highest wage earning workers are within the manufacturing segment. Chatham County and Savannah enjoys a diversified manufacturing base ranging from paper and forest products, chemicals, construction equipment, and food processing.

Port
The Port of Savannah is the largest single terminal container facility in North America and the busiest container port in the U.S. Southeast. The port contributes to over 369,000 jobs throughout the State annually and contribute $20.4 billion in income, $84.1 billion in sales and $1.3 billion in state and local taxes to Georgia’s economy. The port serves as a major distribution hub due to its access to two major interstate highways. As the Savannah Harbor deepening gets underway, the harbor will soon allow Savannah to better accommodate today’s mega-ships.

Military & Government
Together, Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Air Field (HAAF) are one of Coastal Georgia’s largest employers. The ratio of military to civilian employees is approximately six to one, with 22,422 officers and enlisted military and 3,891 civilians employed at both installations. Total payroll for both bases is estimated at well over one billion dollars with an annual financial impact of four to five billion dollars.

Tourism
The Savannah National Landmark Historic District is the largest of its kind in the United States. Savannah with its historic architecture, monuments and the coastal area’s natural beauty, drew over 13 million tourist in 2014.

Economic Base
The City of Savannah and Chatham County has a diverse economic base similar to that of many coastal cities. Employment is highest in the service, retail trade, and manufacturing sectors. The largest manufacturing facilities in the City and County produce textiles, paper products, chemicals, transportation equipment, and food products. Major employers in the service sector include health care, hospitality, and educational institutions. Candler, St. Joseph’s and Memorial Hospitals are the most visible component of the City’s health care industry. The City and County’s major educational institutions include Savannah State University, South University, Armstrong State University, Savannah Technical College, Savannah College of Art and Design, and the Chatham County Board of Education.