

Community Participation Program



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

In 2014, Chatham County initiated the first ever county-wide strategic planning process that led to the development of the *Chatham Community Blueprint*. As this effort fell within the timeline for completion of the update to the Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan, approval was given by the Department of Community Affairs to allow the County and city of Savannah to align all of the community outreach and feedback efforts of the countywide *Blueprint* with the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, both the details of the community participation plan for the Comprehensive Plan as well as the *Blueprint* are detailed here.

Chatham County – Savannah Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan ultimately belongs to the citizens of Savannah and Chatham County. MPC planning staff sought to gather the community's opinions, priorities, and visions about the future of the area. An intensive public engagement effort was made in the months leading up to the draft of the Comprehensive Plan. This effort built off previous community outreach activities performed for the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC), Savannah Consolidated Housing & Community Development Plan (HCD Plan), the Total Mobility Plan / 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and various neighborhood plans. Specifically, this community participation effort sought to engage the public on issues which are addressed primarily in the comprehensive plan.

The goal of the community participation program was to guide and inform the visions, goals, and strategies. The program used two primary mechanisms to collect public input: a survey and open house meetings. Planning staff intended to create two instruments which facilitated honest communication of diverse viewpoints on topics of particular interest to the comprehensive plan. In addition, there have been opportunities for public comment on the comprehensive plan at a variety of meetings of the MPC, City Council, and County Commission.

STAKEHOLDERS AND STEERING COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS

Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC):

Tanya Milton, MPC Chairman *

James Overton, MPC Board *

Lee Smith, Chatham County Manager/MPC Board *

Tom Thomson, MPC Executive Director *

Jackie Jackson, MPC Director of Comprehensive Planning *

Jack Butler, MPC Staff

Debbie Burke, MPC Staff *

Sara Farr, MPC Staff

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Lara Hall, SAGIS Director *

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**Steering Committee Member*

Chatham County:

Al Scott, Chairman Chatham County Commission
Lee Smith, County Manager *
Linda Cramer, Assistant Chatham County Manager *
Michael Kaigler, Assistant Chatham County Manager
Suzanne Cooler, Chatham County Assistant County Engineer
Jefferson Kirkland, Chatham County Engineering
**Steering Committee Member*

City of Savannah:

Eddie DeLoach, Mayor *
Bill Durrence, Alderman *
Brian Foster, Alderman
Julian Miller, Alderman
Martin Sullivan, Chief of Staff
Patty McIntosh, Savannah Department of Community Planning and Development *
Chief Middleton, Savannah Fire Chief
Chief Handy, Savannah Fire Department *
**Steering Committee Member*

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Planning staff developed a survey instrument in June 2016. In the interest of gathering a wide range of input, the survey was intended to be completed in approximately five minutes. The survey covered a wide range of topics including future land use preferences, housing, community goals, infrastructure priorities, quality of life programs, and sea level rise. The 11-question survey had nine multiple choice items and two open response items. All MPC staff were invited to comment on initial drafts of the survey.

The survey was available online and in paper format. The goal of the survey was to gather results from a diverse cross-section of the Savannah – Chatham County community. Staff determined that a sample of 385 valid results would yield a statistically relevant result.

The survey was distributed through a wide variety of channels. The following list summarizes the primary distribution methods which were employed:

- Newsletter articles/highlights (over 3000 recipients)
- Radio advertising for a 2-week period
- Prominent placement on the MPC, City of Savannah and Chatham County webpages
- Posters placed in city-owned parking garages (16)
- Posters placed in Broughton Street kiosks (4)
- Posters and questionnaires placed at MPC office and near MPC Hearing Room
- Email notification to MPC email list serve
- Email notification to all neighborhood associations (over 30)
- MPC social media distribution (2 websites)
- Presentations at neighborhood association meetings during the survey window
 - Metropolitan Community Organization, Inc. (6/22)
 - West Savannah Neighborhood Association (6/28)
 - Parkside Neighborhood Association (6/28)

- Paper survey distribution at Live Oak Public Library branches
 - Bull Street (6/30)
 - Southwest Chatham (7/5)
 - Islands (7/6)
 - Garden City (7/7)
- Phone call notification to all faith communities listed on the Savannah Morning News Church Database (over 400)
- Newspaper articles
 - Savannah Morning News (6/14)
 - Savannah Tribune (6/29)
 - Savannah Business Journal (7/5)
 - Connect Savannah (7/13)
- Flyers advertising the survey posted at the following locations
 - Chatham County Community Center & Chatham County Aquatic Center
 - City of Savannah Community Centers
 - Live Oak Public Library branches
 - Grocery stores, cafes, and other community bulletin boards (18)
 - Housing Authority of Savannah
 - United Way of the Coastal Empire
 - Chatham Area Transit
- Email and social media distribution by external groups
 - Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition
 - Healthy Savannah
 - Savannah Bicycle Campaign
 - Step Up Savannah

The survey was open from June 13 to July 15, 2016. The highest periods of activity for the survey were the first and final weeks – this may be due to the fact that the Independence Day holiday was in the middle of the survey period. The majority of responses were submitted online.

In total, 855 responses were received to the survey. Of these, 750 were from residents of the City of Savannah or Unincorporated Chatham County. The remaining 155 lived in other jurisdictions in Chatham County (62), outside the County (31) or did not respond (12). Based on the current population, this sample size allows us to claim a 3.57% margin of error for the results of this survey.

All survey results reflect those provided by residents of the City of Savannah and Unincorporated Chatham County only.

Question 1

Please state if you would like more, less, or about the same amount of the following land uses in our community.

	More	About the Same	Less	Not Sure / No Opinion
Residential - Single Family	35%	53%	8%	4%
Residential - Multifamily	28%	37%	31%	4%
Senior / Assisted Living Housing	40%	42%	6%	13%
Mixed Use	51%	26%	18%	5%
Light Industrial / Manufacturing	24%	37%	31%	9%
Grocery Stores	43%	45%	10%	2%
Retail Stores	30%	49%	18%	3%
Hotels / Motels	8%	31%	57%	4%
Professional Office	20%	57%	15%	7%
Service Businesses	40%	49%	9%	2%
Parks	70%	27%	3%	1%
Protected Natural Areas	76%	19%	3%	2%
Agriculture	39%	39%	10%	12%

Question 2

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree	Not Sure / No Opinion	Disagree
The current park system is adequate.	40%	14%	46%
The current community facilities are adequate.	31%	17%	52%
New development should be required to protect environmentally critical areas.	85%	7%	9%
Long range policies should focus on natural resource sustainability.	84%	8%	8%
Roads should be designed for pedestrians and bicycles as well as cars.	84%	6%	10%
The current public transportation system is adequate.	19%	22%	60%
The design and character of new buildings should match the design and character of the neighborhood.	72%	11%	18%
The current availability of healthy food is adequate.	30%	17%	53%
The current availability of high paying jobs is adequate.	8%	18%	74%
The current educational opportunities are adequate.	23%	17%	60%

Question 5

How important is it to have housing that is:

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Sure / No Opinion
Affordable	75%	21%	2%	2%
Market Rate	48%	42%	4%	5%
Luxury	16%	41%	38%	4%
First Time Homebuyers	45%	42%	8%	5%
Seniors	46%	42%	6%	5%
People with Disabilities	59%	33%	4%	4%

Question 6

Do you support more, less, or about the same level of investment in the following infrastructure projects:

	More	About the Same	Less	Not Sure / No Opinion
Parks & Open Space	70%	26%	4%	1%
Community Facilities	60%	30%	8%	1%
Sidewalks & Trails	78%	18%	4%	1%
Road Maintenance	73%	24%	2%	1%
Road Expansion	37%	34%	28%	2%
Public Transportation	58%	27%	10%	5%
Flood Prevention / SWM	67%	30%	1%	2%
Drinking Water Supply	59%	37%	1%	3%
Public Access to the Internet	48%	33%	10%	8%

Question 7

Please state if you support more, less or about the same level of public backing for the following quality of life initiatives:

	More	About the Same	Less	Not Sure / No Opinion
Walking and Bicycling	70%	21%	7%	1%
Recycling	72%	20%	5%	2%
Green Infrastructure	69%	18%	9%	3%
Tree Canopy	75%	19%	4%	1%
Litter Reduction	70%	26%	2%	2%
Commuting Options	60%	27%	10%	3%
Composting	53%	31%	8%	8%
Energy Efficiency	70%	21%	5%	3%
Historic Preservation	63%	25%	8%	3%
Water Conservation	69%	27%	3%	1%
Community Gardens	70.7%	20%	6%	3%
Renewable Energy	71.6%	20%	5%	3%

Question 8

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
Our community should discourage future development and redevelopment of areas vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards.	73%	11%	16%
Our community should encourage conservation of land vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards.	80%	8%	11%

Question 9

(Optional) Please share any other thoughts you have regarding the future of Chatham County and Savannah.

(265 written responses received)

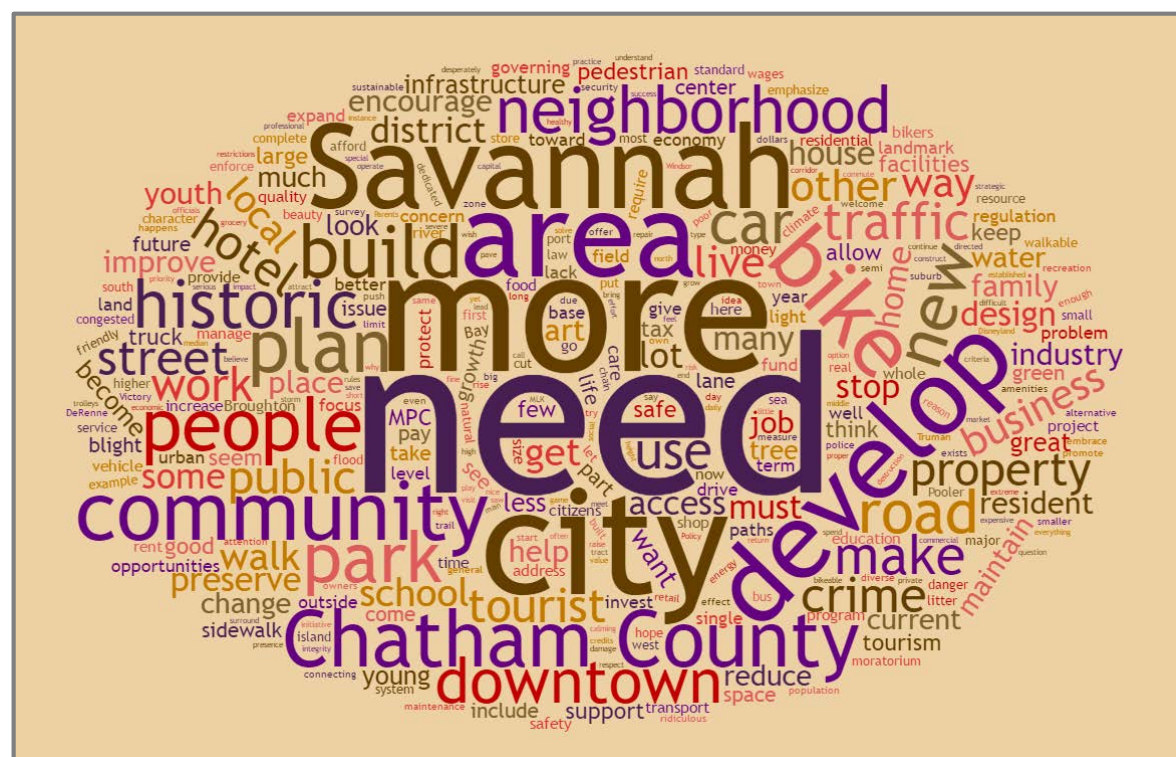


Figure 2.0 Word Cloud of open responses with the larger the word, the more frequently that word was used in responses.

Question 10

Where do you live?

City of Savannah	70%
Unincorporated Chatham County	17%
Other Jurisdiction in Chatham County *	7%
Outside Chatham County	4%
Unspecified	1%

* Other Jurisdictions in Chatham County include Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, Port Wentworth, Town of Thunderbolt, and Tybee Island.

Question 11

What is your age?

Under 20	1%
20-39	31%
40-54	27%
54-74	35%
Over 74	4%
Unspecified	2%

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Land Use: Widespread support was found for increasing the amount of land for “Parks” and “Protected Natural Areas” – 70% and 76% respectively. Other land uses which were supported broadly included “Mixed Use” (51%) and “Grocery Stores” (43%). The only category with a majority of opposition was “Hotels/Motels” with over half (57%) of respondents indicated a desire for fewer.

Community Goals: The respondents indicated consensus around several questions. 85% agreed with the statement “New development should be required to protect environmentally critical areas.” 84% agreed with the following two statements: “Long range policies should focus on natural resource sustainability” and “Roads should be designed for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as cars.”

Housing: Over half (55%) of respondents stated they believed the existing housing options do not meet the community’s need. Over three-quarters (75%) of respondents indicated they felt affordable housing was “very important.” An open-response question with 300 responses revealed a common sentiment that the housing needs of low-income families and homeless people were not being met.

Infrastructure: Respondents indicated broad agreement for increased investment in the following types of public infrastructure projects: “Sidewalks and Trails” (78%), “Road Maintenance” (73%), “Parks & Open Space” (70%), and “Flood Prevention / Storm Water Management” (67%). The infrastructure category with the least support was “Road Expansion” with only 37% of respondents favoring increased investment.

Quality of Life: Respondents were asked whether they would favor more or less public backing for a range of programs. While all items had over 50% of respondents favoring more public support, the most popular were “Improve & Protect the Tree Canopy” (76%), “Recycling” (72%) and

“Renewable Energy” (72%). Additionally, the following three programs had over 70% of respondents favoring more public support, “Community Gardens,” “Walking and Bicycling,” and “Litter Reduction.”

Sea Level Rise: A large majority of respondents favored policy responses to address sea level rise and flooding. Four-fifths (80%) agreed that “our community should encourage conservation of land vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding & other coastal hazards.” Conversely, three-quarters of respondents (73%) agreed that “our community should discourage future development and redevelopment of areas vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding and other coastal hazards.”

Open Response: Respondents were given the opportunity to share any other thoughts regarding the future for Chatham County and Savannah – 265 responses were provided. Most of the themes mirrored the results of the survey. Popular topics which were not addressed elsewhere in the survey included tourism, education, crime, archeology, and art.

Two final public open house meetings were held on July 14, 2016 to gather final comments and ideas from members of the community. The first meeting was held from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm, forty-seven (47) people attended. The second was held from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm, twenty-nine (29) people attended. Both meetings took place at the MPC Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room at 110 E. State St., Savannah, Georgia.

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Attendees at each meeting could provide input in a variety of ways. Laptop computers were set up to allow people to take the survey if they had not already done so. Sticky notes and pencils were available for people to make comments about specific items on posters and maps. Four discussion tables were set up to hold conversations about topics of special interest. Each discussion was

moderated by MPC or city of Savannah staff and focused on one of the four topics: affordable housing, commercial corridor redevelopment, sea level rise, and public transportation.

Each discussion lasted 12 to 15 minutes. Many attendees participated in multiple discussion tables and also provided feedback via the survey or sticky notes. A thematic analysis of the discussion notes yielded the following common themes:

- Affordable Housing
 - Allow and incentivize a mix of housing types, land uses, incomes, and home sizes.
 - Create access to transportation networks including walking, biking and public transit, consider reduced parking requirement.
 - Promote in-fill housing, “tiny homes”, and pre-fabricated/container housing.
 - Ensure that property is maintained in good condition and fits with the community’s character.
- Commercial Corridor Redevelopment
 - Improve multi-modal transportation options with sidewalk networks, bike paths, and transit connections.
 - Allow a mix of land uses based around resident needs
 - Create incentives to promote redevelopment and reduce regulatory barriers
 - Preserve the unique history and enhance the aesthetic qualities of corridors.
 - Ensure public safety.
- Sea Level Rise
 - Discourage development in flood prone areas.
 - Create green infrastructure such as permeable pavement, green roofs, and strategically placed conservation lands.
 - Create a stormwater utility to incentivize low impact development.
 - Educate the public and developers about the impacts of sea level rise.
- Public Transportation
 - Ensure that transit is frequent and reliable.
 - Add maps & schedules to stops and provide real-time data on bus location online.
 - Improve bus stop quality by adding shelters, benches, and lighting.
 - Connect frequent transit to downtown parking garages and dense neighborhoods.
 - Partner with industries, institutional employers so residents can access areas that are not served by current public transit provider.

Chatham Community Blueprint

In 2014 Chatham County engaged the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (“CGIC”) to lead the development of the *Chatham Community Blueprint*. The Blueprint is a long-term plan for the Community. It will strategically move the Chatham community towards the accomplishment of specified goals in four key theme areas: Economy, Education, Health and Quality of Life. By focusing on the Community’s interests and concerns, the Blueprint serves as a catalyst for improvement.

Community members have identified all of the plan’s components, indicating that they have embraced the process and support resource allocation toward each area. The Community will need to collaborate across public sector entities, non-profit groups, and private industry to take ownership of listed Strategies and coordinate necessary Action steps for each identified item. The Blueprint proposes a Timeline in which to implement each Strategy over the next twenty years through 2035. Performance metrics will be used to monitor accomplishment of stated Goals.

The choice of CGIC as the project leader was a natural one. CGIC had already been monitoring community indicators, performance measures and trend data at the local level. CGIC’s membership reflects an array of community interests. Many of CGIC’s members and sponsors had been working separately within the same community toward similar goals for years. By combining resources and objectives, more could be accomplished.



1. Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC) Background

1.1. History:

Over the past few years there has been a growing awareness of the need to integrate community indicators and performance measurement efforts at the local level. This integration leads to a better assessment of the community; defining the current position and progress needed. Integration allows for higher levels of engagement with citizens and stakeholders working with governmental, business, and non-profit organizations to increase

quality of life through the development and use of community indicators and performance measures.

The City of Savannah, Chatham County, and United Way of the Coastal Empire (UWCE) partnered in 2008 to evaluate and address community needs. These efforts were undertaken to identify significant issues of importance to community stakeholders. *The Savannah Chatham Community Indicators* project was established to monitor the current state of progress on priority areas of public interest in the City of Savannah and Chatham County. The indicators were grouped into four categories of primary interest: education and youth development, health and wellness, economic independence, and regionalism. In each of these four sections there was a collection of baseline measurements. For the first couple of years the data was observed to define conditions and characterize trends. The trend data was helpful in guiding funding decisions for the three charter organizations.

In 2012 after interest from the local hospital systems, St. Joseph/Candler and Memorial the coalition expanded to support the collection of local data and completing a community needs assessment to be in compliance with federal requirements. The larger group with an array of representatives became the Community Indicators Coalition (CIC). This expansion also widened the role of the coalition. In addition to reviewing and analyzing data, CIC now advocates for data driven decision among local leadership for greater community impact.

Under the leadership of the CIC the “project” expanded beyond its charter organizations to include community partners and sponsors.

Although a formal agreement was put in place in 2008 among the charter organizations, as the interest of other community partners began to grow there was a need for a more formal agreement for sharing of information and collaboration. While many of the Coalition sponsors have worked in the same community and toward similar goals for years, the idea of working side-by-side and agreeing to focus on the same outcome and the idea of leveraging funds to support community wide projects was an innovative idea. Savannah is known for its historic preservation and its ability to attract visitors, however the concept of “change” is difficult for some to accept. Individuals working in non-profit, government and social services often change, causing barriers to consistent messaging, working through long-term commitments, and building of trustful relationships. These challenges led the newly expanded group of concerned advocates to develop an Executive Partnership Agreement.

The Coalition Executive Partnership Agreement (Appendix 9.1) outlines a formalized structure. The initial agreement was signed in December 2012. While this provided some structure for the group, it was quickly noted that standard procedures needed to be implemented to outline how additional organizations became part of the Coalition, how the Coalition would be organized and more specifically, the ultimate goal of the Coalition.

Leaders researched other communities with similar projects and met with other cities where a variety of formats were considered. The group also contracted with America Speaks to assist in the development of the organizational work plan, but it wasn't until a trip to Jacksonville, Florida and discussion with staff of Jacksonville Community Council, Incorporated (JCCI) that the group realized it had more structural work to do before the collaborative building experience could be successful.

After much consideration, the group agreed that while data was important, it was not the only purpose of working together. Therefore the Standard Operating Procedures incorporated the Executive Partnership Agreement defining the administrative role of United Way along with levels of sponsorship, the purpose and goal. At the same time, the group became members of the International Community Indicators Consortium which provided an even wider view of how communities work together and approached opportunities for capacity building as well as leveraging of resources.

The purpose of the Community Indicators Coalition is to *improve community well-being* by engaging and leading the community to work collectively in its development of strategic priorities that guide policy, programs, and resource allocation. The Coalition is comprised of community members and advocates working together through a comprehensive, coordinated approach for planning and accountability while serving as a resource for agencies addressing overall health and well-being through leveraging of resources for community initiatives.

While working to strengthen capacity of the Coalition in Chatham County is a priority, the group has also been working to increase partnerships and diversify network members across a four county sub-region. The charter organizations were Chatham County based but when the Coalition decided to expand there were members representing public health and postsecondary education who had interest in enlarging geographically with data.

Based on feedback from JCCI, the Coalition decided to work in sub-groups to review the enormous amount of data, gather community input and engage with various populations.

In 2013 the Coalition began hosting neighborhood forums to increase awareness of the community indicators work and gathered insight from residents regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. All of this information was compiled and presented back to the community in a summit in 2014. Much of the resident feedback was consistent with the data. While the Coalition had much information, there were still areas with limited data. Coalition leaders began exploring options of a community wide survey which would “fill in the gaps” and allow for a comparison to previous survey work.

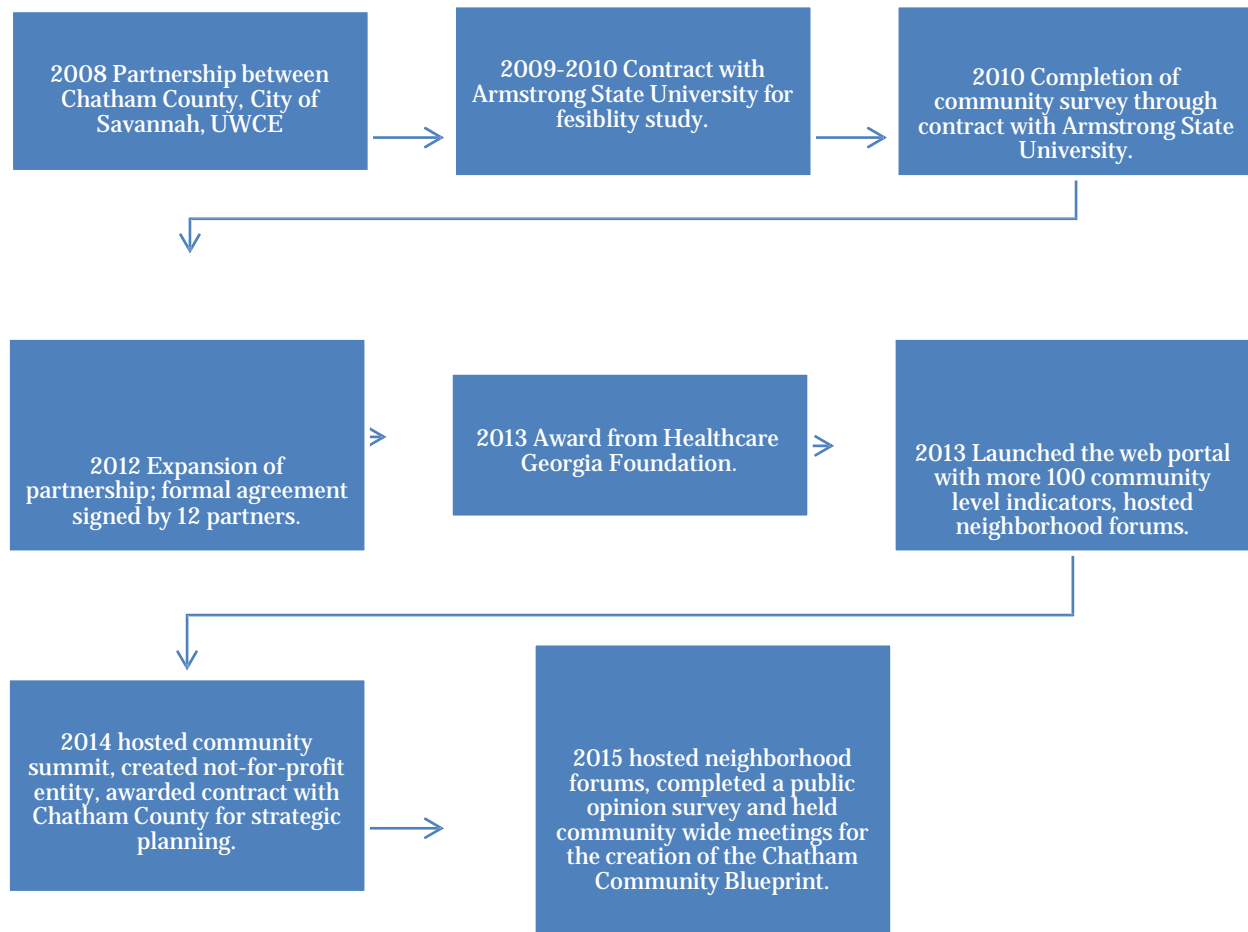
The Coalition continued to work through committees and was afforded an opportunity to apply to serve as the oversight group for developing a strategic plan with Chatham County. In 2014 the Coalition completed paperwork required for creation of a not-for-profit entity in order to submit a proposal to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners for the development of a community strategic plan. The contract was awarded and the CGIC began work with Chatham County late 2014 with expectations of launch in early 2015. A Steering Committee was created to help guide the strategic planning process and build advocates to encourage and diversify community participation.

2015 provided an array of opportunities to affirm community and stakeholder concerns, validate data, and complete a public opinion survey. The community assessment process was then used to facilitate community meetings where opportunities were discussed and prioritized. All of the meetings were open to the public and planning documents were made available through the coalition website. The creation of the Chatham Community Blueprint; a strategic plan which outlines the vision, goals, strategies, and metric for work specific to health and human services in Chatham County for the next years has been completed. Once

the Chatham Community Blueprint outline has been established, project teams will be convened to discuss and sketch an implementation plan.

Although the Coalition has grown from the original three charter organizations to approximately twenty (20), the efforts to expand beyond Chatham County are still in progress. Through strong, on-going relationships in Bryan, Effingham and Liberty County's we continue to provide access to data, encourage open lines of communication, and explore sub-regional projects when appropriate.

Planning Process Timeline



1.2. Governance Structure

Although the Coalition began in 2012 as a meet and confer group, as partners continued to increase and areas of interest turned into "projects"; it was noted that we need to become more organized with committee structure and bylaws. Committees were created as work groups to ensure an open, transparent process but also to ensure that certain activities were accomplished. Bylaws were created which defined the roles and responsibilities of sponsors and partners, delegated votes and outlined reporting and accountability of staff and the Executive Leadership.

In 2014 the coalition decided to become a standalone not-for-profit organization. This decision was made after much conversation among charter organizations and funders as well as legal investigation. Services for application were completed by Russ Simpson on behalf of the Coalition. During this same time members of the Coalition felt that there needed to be a formalized name of the group which would identify who they were, interest of membership and the geographic area represented. As a result of this discussion Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC) was formed.

1.3. Funding

Thanks to leadership of the three Charter Organizations (City of Savannah, Chatham County and United Way of the Coastal Empire); it was decided that organizations and/or individuals wishing to be included in the decision making process and guide the direction of coalition needed to make a monetary investment. The annual budget was drafted, potential sponsors were identified, and initial financial commitments were made in the fall of 2012.

Financial reports were reviewed through the year along with review and approval of an annual operating budget. As the work of the coalition grew the need for additional funds increased. It was the decision of the leadership to explore one-time grants for start-up funds, but the ultimate goal is for the organization to become self-sufficient.

In the fall of 2012, a proposal was submitted and awarded by the Healthcare Georgia Foundation to create a user-friendly community indicator web portal so that members would be using the same set of data when making decisions while being open to the public and being updated as new information became available with access to promising practices and funding opportunity notifications. CGIC was awarded \$60,000 over a twelve-month time frame to convene the group, create and release the web portal, along with hosting community meetings to gather input from the people.

United Way of the Coastal Empire (UWCE) served as the lead agency, providing designated staff to convene interested parties and facilitate the work of the coalition. As of December 2015 UWCE continues to serve as the fiscal agent for CGIC providing not only accounting services but also acting as the conduit for contracted staff. In December 2014, CGIC secured a full-time staff.

1.3.1. Sponsors and Partners:

Although the coalition began as a project between three entities there is now an array of sponsors and partners. Sponsors are those who provide monetary contribution toward the work of the coalition; partners are those which provide in-kind services and other supports. There are signed Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding (Appendix 9.2) on file with each organization. The following is a listing of the various sponsors and or partners:

- 1.3.1.1. Armstrong State University (Research Center & Savannah Graduates)
- 1.3.1.2. City of Savannah
- 1.3.1.3. Chatham County Commission
- 1.3.1.4. Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

- 1.3.1.5. Chatham County Safety Net Planning Council
- 1.3.1.6. Coastal Health District (Chatham County Health Department)
- 1.3.1.7. Effingham Chamber of Commerce
- 1.3.1.8. Effingham Family Connection
- 1.3.1.9. Georgia Regents University (Previously known as Medical College of Georgia)
- 1.3.1.10. Housing Authority of Savannah
- 1.3.1.11. Memorial Health University Medical Center
- 1.3.1.12. Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
- 1.3.1.13. Savannah Business Group
- 1.3.1.14. Savannah Chatham County Public School System
- 1.3.1.15. Savannah-Chatham Youth Futures Authority
- 1.3.1.16. Savannah Economic Development Authority
- 1.3.1.17. Savannah State University
- 1.3.1.18. Savannah Technical College
- 1.3.1.19. St. Joseph's/Candler Health System
- 1.3.1.20. Step Up Savannah
- 1.3.1.21. United Way of the Coastal Empire



1.3.2. Resources, Consultants and Contracts

1.3.2.1. Healthy Communities Institute (HCI)

CGIC contracted with (HCI) for the embedded web portal. This system includes county and selected sub-county level data as compared to state and national data. Beginning in 2013 the indicators project expanded from the original 20 indicators (maintained by Armstrong State University – Research Center and reported annually) to more than 100 indicators and

growing; from three sponsor organizations to at least eight sponsors and or partners. The annual cost of HCI is included in the annual operating budget of the coalition.

1.3.2.2. Expanded relationships with Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) The charter organizations had already identified JCCI as a potential “mentor” when exploring a community-indicators project in 2007. At that point a few staff from Jacksonville visited with local, Chatham-based, leaders to discuss how the project was started and JCCI made some suggestions regarding a feasibility study. In the fall of 2013, prior to the neighborhood forums, the coalition took about 15 leaders to speak with JCCI once again regarding potential expansion. In the fall of 2015, once CGIC was awarded a contract with Chatham County, a contract was executed between JCCI and CGIC for technical assistance in the planning process and implementation of a community needs assessment.

1.3.2.3. Staffing

United Way of the Coastal Empire (UWCE) served as the lead entity and fiscal agent since the initial indicators project began and as of December 2015 still serves as the fiscal agent. UWCE assigned staff to work on the project along with other tasks for the first few years. As the project grew it was obvious that dedicated staff would be necessary for a successful project. In the fall of 2012 there was discussion of hiring staff for the coalition but due to funding limitations it was not possible. However upon receipt of funds from Chatham County for a community wide strategic plan UWCE and CGIC signed an agreement for an individual to serve as full-time director to the coalition using UWCE as the payroll administrator.

1.3.2.4. Additional Support

CGIC also has contracts with a variety of individuals and companies for technical support, marketing and outreach services. These contracts are reviewed annually and revised as needed on a case by case basis.

2. Community Assessment (Web portal, Neighborhood Forums, Summit)

2.1. History of Planning

In 2013, following a presentation to Healthcare Georgia Foundation there was some inquiry as to the difference of the current project from that of a similar project conducted under the leadership of Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce in the late 1980’s. Due to limitation with technology this was difficult to research, but thanks to some historians the Coalition was able to locate *“Blueprint for Action Vision 20/20”* a report to the community presented in January 1992.

The report outlined an implementation plan across thirteen different focal points to include:

- housing
- economic development

- environmental protection
- public facilities, recreation
- public safety
- education and more.

This “blueprint” provided background information gathered through community meetings, identified action steps, and outlined goals and strategies for each focus area. Community “champions” were self-selected or appointed to address specific pieces of the blueprint and the community was called to action. While the report was comprehensive in many ways it lacked baseline data and measurement tools. The implementation plan also lacked an identified staff person who would serve as the “point” person for documentation, tracking and accountability. Although there is evidence that much of the plan has been implemented there are a few areas of interest that have not been successfully tackled.

These are specific to education and health; with a focus on the lack of a comprehensive plan for the coordination of health and human services.

The review and assessment of the *Blueprint for Action* encouraged the Coalition to continue to focus on health and human services and to work toward a comprehensive, coordinated approach for planning and accountability with the goal of improving the communities’ well-being. The Coalition compiled a document to show measurements and accomplishments of the *Blueprint for Action* in comparison to the Savannah County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission’s (MPC) Comprehensive Plan for Savannah and the unincorporated areas of Chatham County. Review of this document showed some positive improvements had been accomplished while also showing that there are still areas that need improvement and require community leaders to work together for continued success.



2.2 History of Data Collection & Reporting

From 2008 through 2012 on an annual basis the data collected from the American Community Survey, local opinion surveys, data provided by public organizations and data compiled from local non-profit public service were presented in a bound notebook to community leaders and made available online through Armstrong State University’s website. As the Coalition began to explore ways in which data should be used for community planning and allocation, the leadership was excited about an opportunity to embed more than 100

indicators (data sets) in a live, up-to-date site through a contract with Healthy Communities Initiatives (HCI). Data available on the site is provided through an array of public entities with at least two years of comparison information. Through the generous support of local sponsors and a grant received from the Healthcare Georgia Foundation the information is now provided in a user-friendly website with live, up-to-date, concise data across multiple areas such as:

- education,
- economic development,
- quality of life, and
- health, for improved community-wide evaluation and planning.

2.1.1. Web Portal

The web portal was originally embedded within the United Way of the Coastal Empire website when released in 2013 with links to partner and sponsor organizations. While much of the indicator data is imported through a contract; the upload of local reports and updates regarding the work of the Coalition is managed by staff and local contractors. As of December 2014, CGIC created a standalone website known as www.coastalgaindicators.org. All of the embedded data and resources were transitioned to the new site which allowed CGIC to market the site with opportunities to be more specific to the local work and provide access for collection and sharing of data. The website provides an array of information and resources free and open to the public.

This includes more than 100 indicators with two to three years of data, and a visual perception of our current status as compared to either other Georgia counties or counties nationally.

Data can be broken-out and sorted specific to race, age, gender and geographic location with the ability to compare various selections. Disparities are highlighted for each indicator and individuals can query the site for comparison of indicators along with promising practices specific to the desired outcome along with funding opportunities within a focused area. Archived coalition documents are available on the website along with a calendar specific to CGIC events and call-to-action options for individuals. The site provides a brief history of the coalition along with active planning documents for review and input from community advocates. In addition, the portal has access to the local public school data along with reports produced by local post-secondary schools and the Metropolitan Planning Commission.



2.1.2. 2013 Neighborhood Forums

In 2013, the Coalition hosted sixteen (16) neighborhood forums two in each of the eight county commission districts over a twelve week time span. Events were held at community centers, churches and schools. Through support of community partners, the coalition solicited and trained more than forty (40) individuals to serve as Community Facilitators. These individuals completed a seven hour training session and then agreed to serve as a facilitator for at least two events. Promotion of the events was provided by the Marketing and Outreach Committee through public television and social media in conjunction with the downtown Savannah Neighborhood Association. Unfortunately, participation in the forums was lower than anticipated, but the information gained from “followers” and the identification of other potential partners was beneficial. Although less than 100 attended the forums, the individuals confirmed the data and affirmed what the leaders felt were concerns within each community.

While some residents identified neighborhood-specific issues (such as unavailable bus routes and crime), most residents presented concerns related to jobs and education.



2.1.3. 2014 Community Summit

Information gleaned from the neighborhood forums was then added to the work already done by the coalition members within each topic area and presented to the larger community at the Community Summit on March 1, 2014. Although still challenged to incorporate participation representative of all demographics across a community of more than 250,000

people the leadership was pleased with the specific effort to include stakeholders in the Summit.

The Coalition engaged more than 100 stakeholders and solicited support in determining priorities within each topic area. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 75 with the highest percentage age group represented being 45-59. The group was made up of 60% women, 40% male; this break down included: 49% White, 40% African- American, 7% Asian, 1% Hispanic and 3% other. Each Chatham County district had representation with some participants living outside the County. More than 65% of participants indicated homeownership while more than 70% were currently employed.

It was noted that 90% had an educational level of bachelor's degree or higher with less than 2% having less than high school degree. 57% signified an annual income of more than \$50,000.

Participants were led through a series of facilitated small group discussions to narrow the focus within each of four themed areas. Some data and background information was provided but the true unmeasured success was the conversations that took place within each small group. Results of those dialogues provided approximately twelve or so issues separated by topic area.

1. Economy: vocational pathways and job training, solid jobs for solid wages, affordable housing for rental and ownership.
2. Education: increased parental and community involvement in schools, increased access to high-quality, affordable child care, provide coordinated-consistent resources for all schools, and offer parent skills classes.
3. Health: expand and sustain programs that promote healthy lifestyles, access to preventive education, care and services and increased education around healthy lifestyles.
4. Quality of Life: promote positive youth involvement, crime prevention and reduction, solutions for neighborhood safety.



CGIC Committees

2.2. The Coalition utilizes participating Charter Organizations, Sponsor Organizations and Partner Organizations to provide an organizational structure that consists of an Executive Leadership, various committees, the community advisory council and the Director.

The Executive Leadership is responsible for the short-term and long-term oversight of the Coalition. The Executive Leadership shall: (a) Support the Coalition's vision, mission, and purpose. (b) Approve the strategic direction of the organization and ensure effective organizational planning to achieve the Coalition mission. (c) Hire, supervise and evaluate the Director/Project Manager. (d) Recommend for approval, the Coalition's annual budget, provide financial oversight and ensure there are adequate resources to implement the Coalition's mission. (e) Determine, monitor, and strengthen organizational programs and services. (f) Enhance the organization's public standing. (g) Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability. (h) Make decisions on behalf of the Coalition as deemed appropriate. The Executive Leadership is composed of the following positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Past Chair and should consist of at least one representative from each Charter Organization, as appointed by the Elected Body or Senior Management of that Organization.

3. Strategic Planning Contract with Chatham County

3.1. Purpose & Intent of the Blueprint

3.1.1. Elected Officials

Chairman Al Scott was elected to office in November 2012. During his campaign he ran on the platform of developing and implementing a community strategic plan through community engagement to set a vision for the local community. Mr. Scott is known for his visionary approach to leadership and government. Prior to his current position, he had served in both Houses of State Legislature, and as Georgia's Labor Commissioner.

Scott has previously served on the State Board of Education, where he held meetings throughout the First Congressional District to try and learn how he could help local school systems by eliminating red tape. Scott served as Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chairman of the Georgia Ports Authority, and was responsible for staff implementing several reforms, including creating a Five Year Strategic Plan.

3.1.2. Strategic Planning Impacts Funding Decision

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners expressed interest in the development of a long-range strategic plan that would directly and indirectly guide priorities of the Commission as well as other community stakeholders. Once the Strategic Plan has been presented to the Board of Commissioners, it will be used as

the guideline by which funding decisions are aligned. The intent is to use the Chatham Community Blueprint along with other historical and existing planning documents for guiding internal work plans and discretionary funding as deemed appropriate. The Blueprint should serve as a consensus plan – keeping leaders accountable for what the residents deem important.

3.2. Role of CGIC

In recognition of the strong relationships, community engagement, and extensive work performed by CGIC between 2008 and 2014 the Coalition was selected to serve as the management team for the planning project to create a community wide strategic plan, with responsibilities which include oversight and implementation of the final adopted Chatham Community Blueprint.

It is the intention of the Coalition to serve as the responsible third party for the initial purpose of creating a community long-range strategic plan for Chatham County and surrounding areas which is to be known as the Chatham Community Blueprint. Upon presentation of the Blueprint, the Coalition will serve as the implementing organization to include: activating project teams for each theme area, identifying a reporting matrix for each strategy and activity, continuing to seek community input and exploring diverse funding options to support the Blueprint. One of the major tasks will be the coordination of services and supports within each themed area both across and among the areas as well as the geographic area.

3.3. Project Approach

3.3.1. Project Framework

The Coalition designed a project framework utilizing sub-contractors and creating the Community Steering Committee with leadership to ensure structure for long- range impact. This process not only explored historical and recent endeavors, but it also serves as a roadmap to guide the future of the project, focusing on implementation and sustainability.

3.3.2. Document Scan

JCCI conducted a scan of existing and relevant planning documents located through both online research and input received from the Steering Committee. This scan includes vision statements and planning documents from local governments, service providers, advocacy groups, and more. This scan allowed the planning process to build on, rather than replace, existing efforts to improve the quality of life in Chatham County.

JCCI reviewed 92 documents, which included 331 vision or goal statements. These statements were then catalogued into 17 areas, such as land use, economy, natural resources, infrastructure, and transportation to name a few.



3.3.3. Communication & Outreach

In order to increase visibility and broaden community engagement, the Coalition has a contract with a local public relations firm to assist the Outreach Committee with ongoing marketing and communication of the progress through a variety of sources.

3.3.3.1. CGIC has an identifiable logo which has been and will continue to be a consistent image on all information and material. The logo shows the desire to move indicators and measurements from red (at the bottom) toward green (at the top) along with the image of a lighthouse which not only reflects the coast of Georgia but also serves as reminder that lighthouse symbolic of guidance and direction. The slogan; “Lighting the way to a better community” was added.

3.3.3.2. Web Site: CGIC launched a standalone website in December 2014. The site as previously mentioned provides a matrix of community level indicators,

best practice models, funding opportunities, a photo gallery, a community events calendar, historical and current reports as well as access to the planning process.

3.3.3.3. Electronic Newsletters: Using a list serve of active Coalition sponsors and partners, interested individuals from various meetings and those who self-selected, a monthly electronic newsletter is submitted to more than 400 people with updates on activities, community news, sponsor highlights, and much more.

3.3.3.4. Awareness and Engagement: Print materials have been created at every stage of the process and shared with media partners as well as delivered to stakeholders. (Appendix 9.5) Early in the process, media packets were mailed to 75 neighborhood association leaders though Chatham County. The coalition has also created a Facebook page and a Twitter account to increase communication with younger populations. In addition, CGIC worked with Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD) volunteer students to interview and produce a promotional video using members/students of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Savannah and the West Broad YMCA. This 30 second public service announcement (PSA) was then provided to all local media outlets for the promotion of community-wide events.



3.3.4. Community Engagement

3.3.4.1. 2015 Neighborhood Forums

CGIC hosted 14 neighborhood forums; with at least one meeting in each of the 8 county districts. Building upon what was learned from the initial forums in the fall of 2013 and input from the summit in the spring of 2014, we listened intently and asked more specific questions to ensure that key information was not missed.

Events were conducted at public libraries and/or government facilities during early evening hours or on the weekend when deemed most appropriate. There were over 400 participants in the forums with each Chatham County zip code represented along with attendees of Bryan and Effingham counties. While the 31415 zip code had the most attendees, there was a close tie between 31401, 31419 and 31406; with the lowest participation in 31407 and 31408. It should be noted that 8.9% of attendees were residents outside Chatham County. Over half of the participants were female at 61.2%. Similar to the Savannah MSA (metro static area), attendees were diverse in race/ethnic group with 55.2% Caucasian, 32.4% African American, 7.6% Hispanic, 2.8% Asian and other.

The majority of attendees were representative of the 54-65 age range (22.8%) followed by 35-44 (19.5%) and then 45-54 (17.1%).

The format of the forums included a brief introduction to CGIC and the strategic plan. A brief highlight of the four themed areas was presented and participants were asked to affirm what data indicated was a concern within each area or add to the list of concerns. While many things were mentioned, all individuals were encouraged to share thoughts, insights, frustrations, and opportunities. The top concerns are as follows:

- Economy: Vocational-training, poverty, affordable housing, higher paying jobs.
- Education: Vocational-training, cultural-diversity, inequality and basic/life skills.
- Health: Need for more, diverse mental health providers, healthy eating and prevention.
- Quality of Life: Crime, recreation, diverse, wide-spread transportation, transparent-effective government.



3.3.4.2. 2015 Community Conversations

CGIC took the information from the neighborhood forums along with data of various indicators and created a schedule that included specific conversations for topic areas of high interest. As a result, 12 conversations were hosted with seven different topics discussed to include:

- Economy,
- Education,
- Health,
- Housing,
- Natural Resources,
- Transportation and Safety.

Specific information within each topic area was presented to attendees and conversations were facilitated around the following questions; (a) what concerns were missing, (b) what is currently working and (c) what do we want our community to be like in twenty years specific to the topic. While much of this was consistent with previous meetings; it did allow for a more forward- thinking process and provided individuals with the chance to think of greater possibilities.



The Outreach team worked with local collaborative groups and partner agencies to promote the events. While some of the participants had previously attended neighborhood forums; it was noted that many of these participants were also those who worked in the field or held a vested interest in the topic being discussed.

Secondly, we convened government staff to glean insight and determine if their perception was similar to the general residents. What was also learned is that the awareness of the problems was similar, but they also provided some insight into what was currently being planned within the boundaries of their individual department or unit of government.

In addition, two conversations with outlying counties were hosted to ensure more regional approach. While there were some differences because of geographic boundaries, there were

still concerns about mental health, transportation and the need for more diverse jobs opportunities. This allowed for other conversations related to potential cross-county projects to begin.

Finally, local youth groups were visited to gather insight and discuss opportunities for improvement. While many young people are concerned with the immediate problems such as passing class and having enough money for socialization with peers; the students also shared some of the same ideas for their future. Each of them want a job that pays enough so that they can make personal choices of where to live, what to eat and what clothes to buy. They expressed concern with the recent crime rates and growth of gang activity but also conveyed that they feel the new leadership will help improve the situation. As a result of this work along with feedback gathered, we were able to create vision statements for each of the themed areas along with a listing of potential goals.

3.3.4.3. 2015 Public Opinion Survey

As a part of community assessment, in September 2014 CGIC contracted with the Public Research Service Center at Armstrong State University (PRC ASU) to distribute a public opinion survey to approximately 30,000 houses in Chatham County in 2015. Although previous surveys had been done in 2010 and 2012 with plans to reassess again in 2014. The timeline was delayed so that we could be more thoughtful of the survey content to meet needs of a community wide strategic plan.

Previous surveys were done by random sampling but specific by county commission districts. Project objectives for the 2015 survey included a random sampling of the 205,121 adult population as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and then stratified by the eight Chatham County commission districts.

The survey instrument was substantially expanded and re-designed by the Data, Evaluation and Survey Committee of CGIC and Professional Resource Center of ASU staff. Objectives of the community wide survey included assessing citizens' satisfaction with various aspects of their neighborhoods in Chatham County and seeking input from respondents regarding their insight into community challenges, both now and in the future. The survey instrument consisted of 57 closed-ended questions, 13 demographic questions, and three open-ended questions regarding "the big picture".

The results of the survey can be used to monitor progress towards improving the well-being of community life in a number of major areas. The survey results supplement the information gathered from neighborhood forums and focus groups held by CGIC between February and April of 2015.

Outreach specific to survey completion was divided into three parts and promoted with incentives. The first step involved mailing postcards to the randomly selected residents, informing them of the survey, and it's identified objectives. The individuals were mailed the actual survey along with return envelopes. Individuals were given the option of completing

the survey online using a unique token code or via paper. As incentives for completing the surveys, the token numbers were entered in a random drawing for six cash prizes.

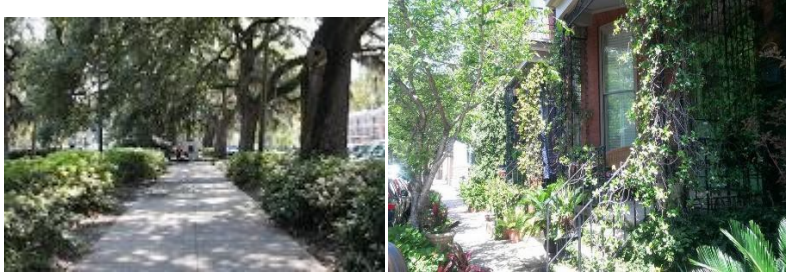
The PRC of ASU received a total of 1927 completed surveys; 29% via web and 71% paper. Responses from the Chatham County Commission Districts range from a low of 159 from District 8 to 332 from District 1. Crime, educational concerns, economic concerns (employment/income) and local government were among the top four issues written in as problems facing our County today. Additionally these were the top four issues residents would like to change over the next 10 years, and are willing to engage in to improve the concerns. (Complete report in appendix 9.7)



3.3.4.4. 2015 Community Wide Meetings

Three community-wide meetings were held between August and October 2015 in order to further develop the content for the Blueprint. The results of the document scan, all work performed to date, and information from the community survey informed the first community meeting with the intent of presenting the vision statements, prioritizing and refining the goals for each vision, and orienting the public to the process and the project's roadmap.

Participants of previous forums, focus groups and conversations were encouraged to attend all of the meetings, as each built off the work from the previous meeting. In addition, the Outreach Committee made contact with each individual through phone calls, emails or personal visits. The results of each meeting were then posted online to ensure community transparency as well as take additional comments.



4.3.5.4.1. Meeting 1:

The first community-wide meeting was held on August 19, 2015 at the Armstrong Center of Armstrong State University. Approximately 240 people attended. A brief overview of the Chatham Community Blueprint process and purpose was provided. CGIC history, community planning back ground and work done to date by the coalition was reviewed to provide context of the work. JCCI staff presented the Blueprint process using a diagram to illustrate the process' trajectory from vision through to action (vision – goal – strategy – action). Each phase of the project was then explained as linking to the process diagram. Susan explained that at each one of the three community-wide meetings, the Blueprint's content would be added to and refined even further so that action becomes meaningful and efficient. The role of the meeting participants was explained – prioritization and feedback as the content gets more and more specific. The four vision statements were presented, and it was explained that these vision statements are a result of the Phase I work.

Individuals self-selected the theme of their choice. Attendees participated in two interactive exercises. The first exercise asked each participant to prioritize their theme's goal statements by selecting which were the most important to them using three dot stickers. At the end of the exercise each table had to arrive at the top three collectively. This information was then used to format the second exercise.



Economy

- Link curriculum (education) with the needs of employers
- Reduce poverty throughout the county
- Promote and encourage small business growth and support of local business

Education

- Incentivize and promote parental involvement and responsibility
- Facilitate partnerships between businesses and educational institutions (work-based learning opportunities)
- Ensure that life skills and conflict resolution are being taught to students

Health

- Address mental health issues and the related stigma in specific populations (e.g. youth, prison population)
- Increase access to healthy food
- Instill health in schools
- Quality of Life
- Reduce crime to ensure all residents feel safe
- Promote and provide use of sidewalks, bike paths, crosswalks, trails, and greenways
- Develop collaboration, a network, among similar organizations to improve efficiency of social services

For the second exercise, participants were asked to review the prioritized goal statements for their theme area, and through consensus at their table, decide how to make each goal more relevant for Chatham County, specifically with regards to location, target population, and institution or organization involvement. The table scribe recorded the group's decisions.

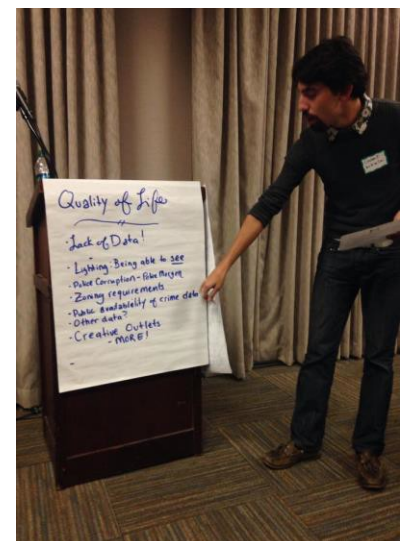
It was noted that this information will be reviewed and provided back to the group at the future meeting where we will continue to refine the blueprint.

4.3.5.4.2. Meeting 2:

The second community wide meeting was held on Saturday September 26, 2015 at Savannah Technical College – Eckburg Auditorium.

Approximately 110 people attended. A brief explanation of the work done to date was provided with emphasis on the community engagement efforts. The blueprint process was reviewed using a diagram to illustrate the process' trajectory from vision through action. It was noted that at each community wide meeting, content is added and refined so that the action becomes more meaningful and efficient.

Attendees participated in two interactive group exercises. Each small group was asked to select and weight top three metrics for each vision based on the list of community level indicators provided for each themed area. The second exercise allowed individuals to transition to another theme area and work in small groups to brainstorm strategies for each goal. Through consensus, small groups were tasked with identifying at least



one strategy per goal that involves (a) individual involvement and (2) institutional involvement.

It was noted that the planning process is intended to be as transparent as possible. Attendees were encouraged to participate in the upcoming meeting.

4.3.5.4.3. Meeting 3:

The final Chatham Community Blueprint community-wide meeting was held on Wednesday evening, October 21, 2015 at Savannah State University. Approximately 84 people attended. As attendees began to arrive at 4:30pm, CGIC members and Blueprint Steering Committee members served as volunteers to welcome them and instructed them to walk around the room and comment on the different goals and strategies that were placed on large sheets of paper around the room. This exercise provided an opportunity for both networking and for public comment on the various goals and strategies.

A brief explanation of the Phase I work performed to date, including the document scan, neighborhood forums, neighborhood focus groups, survey, and data analysis was reviewed. Emphasis was placed on all of the community engagement efforts performed to date. The process trajectory was reviewed, followed by review of the four vision statements and the prioritized goals. Participants were encouraged to revise and rework the strategies, and come to consensus around detailed strategies. Following this exercise, participants were asked to switch tables, moving to a different goal and strategy set and repeating the first exercise. Everyone had the opportunity to work through this process twice. Then attendees were encouraged to make a personal and organizational commitment. Lee Smith, Chatham County Manager, presented and shared his personal and organizational (County) commitments. He explained the importance of committing to action at both the individual and institutional level.

It was noted that the next step in the process will include prioritization of goals and action steps followed by completion of logic model through project teams consisting of subject matter experts, advocates and stakeholders. Everyone was encouraged to stay involved in the process.

