



LAND USE ELEMENT

04



LAND USE

Introduction

The Land Use Element of Plan 2040 defines the community's existing physical form and development patterns and presents a set of recommendations and strategies as a framework for responsible growth. This element provides specific visioning for unincorporated areas of Chatham County and for the city of Savannah, as well as recommendations for streamlining future land use policies and development patterns across municipal boundaries.

This element includes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and a Character Area Map (CAM), which work together to create a cohesive countywide guide for future growth and development. In addition to these components, this element includes a summary of physical context, regional growth, existing land uses, and historical development patterns, as well as an overview of issues and opportunities for Chatham County and the city of Savannah.

PURPOSE & INTENT

Chatham County is a unique coastal community in Georgia, with a wide range of land uses from untouched and environmentally sensitive natural areas to highly developed, mixed-use urban areas. In both the city of Savannah and the county, this diversity requires character-based land use categories, consistent with the approach encouraged by the Department of Community Affairs (Minimum Standards that became effective in May 2005).

The land use information, recommendations, and strategies contained in this element are intended to provide guidance for the location and intensity of land uses to support Chatham County and the City of Savannah in future land use policy decisions.

The sections on regional context, historical development patterns, and employment centers provide important background information on land use in the county

Additionally, the Future Growth Strategies and Growth Areas sections identify areas of the county where further studies and more specific growth strategies may be appropriate.

The Character Area Map (CAM) identifies the character vision for all of Chatham County. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) provides direction for zoning decisions based on specific land use categories for the city of Savannah and unincorporated Chatham County. Together, the FLUM and the CAM are intended to guide the character and direction of land use decisions in the county.

The Issues & Opportunities section of the Land Use element examines existing and future needs and challenges related to growth and development across Chatham County. This section is intended to provide specific information and strategies regarding land use issues such as sea level rise and conflicts with existing regulatory frameworks.

These associated components of the Land Use element are intended to establish a vision for how the county should develop. It also lays out the methods for managing growth and determining the appropriateness of proposed development. Land use is a critical element in creating a sustainable, healthy, and equitable future for Chatham County.



SANBORN MAP, DOWNTOWN SAVANNAH



RIVER STREET



GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY



REGIONAL CONTEXT

Physical Context

Chatham County is the northernmost county on the Georgia coast, bounded by the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers, Effingham County, and Atlantic Ocean. Much of Chatham County is comprised of open water, tidal creeks, or estuarine marsh. Early development was located on coastal ridges and bluffs; more recent development, however, has occurred on barrier islands, back barrier islands, and lowlands vulnerable to flooding, including hurricane inundation.

Chatham County encompasses 522 square miles of land, marsh, and water. Figures 4.1 & 4.2 contain detailed information on land use in unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. Much of the remaining undeveloped land is poorly drained and not suitable for on-lot wastewater disposal. Expansion of private or public water and sewer service would increase development potential in such areas, but could also compromise natural floodplain functions and threaten sensitive coastal resources. Upland areas are interspersed with forested and vegetated isolated wetlands, which are not currently protected by local, state or federal law and are frequently targeted for development.

Regional Growth

Chatham County is the most urbanized and populous county in the 200-mile coastal area between Charleston, South Carolina and Jacksonville, Florida. It serves as an economic, cultural, and governmental hub, as well as an international focal point for trade for a six county, bi-state region.

The region has seen a high rate of growth over the past 25 years and is expected to continue at or slightly above this level as the attractiveness of the region to retirees and second home residents increases. Economic growth in the region is also expected to remain strong, supporting forecasts for continued population growth at or above the current level.

Within Chatham County, unincorporated areas east of Savannah experienced high growth rates during the 1980s and 1990s. As those areas approached build-out, growth moved to the western areas of the county, including unincorporated Chatham County and the municipalities of Bloomingdale, Garden City, Pooler, and Port Wentworth. These portions of the county continue to experience a significant share of the area's growth. The City of Savannah, with its capacity to supply drinking water, annexed nearly 8,000 acres of unincorporated western Chatham County in 2004 and 2005.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

You can find more statistics and information under the Community Profile Element on page 44



The city of Savannah has preserved the role of its vibrant downtown as the nucleus of regional activity. The city's historic downtown and urban neighborhoods are an exceptional example of colonial-era town planning that have survived for centuries and thrive today. For that reason, downtown Savannah maintains a high-quality pedestrian environment.

Areas lying to the east of Savannah are extensively developed, and further development is limited by physical and zoning constraints. Areas lying to the west of the city were once largely areas of agriculture but have undergone and continue to see rapid development.

Transportation facilities strongly influenced, and continue to impact, growth and land use patterns in the county. Major facilities include the Port of Savannah, Savannah International Airport, road, and rail networks serving extensive industrial districts associated with airport and seaport functions, Hunter Army Airfield, Interstates I-16 and I-95, and the Truman Parkway.



CHATHAM COUNTY

Annexations & Municipal Boundaries

The City of Savannah incorporated in December 1789; throughout its history, the city has gradually increased its borders through annexation. An early map, circa. 1790, shows the primary boundaries of the city of Savannah as being the Savannah River to the north, Oglethorpe Avenue to the south, Lincoln Street to the east, and Jefferson Street to the west. Since this time, the City has incorporated large swaths of land to the east, west, and south of the original borders into its jurisdiction.

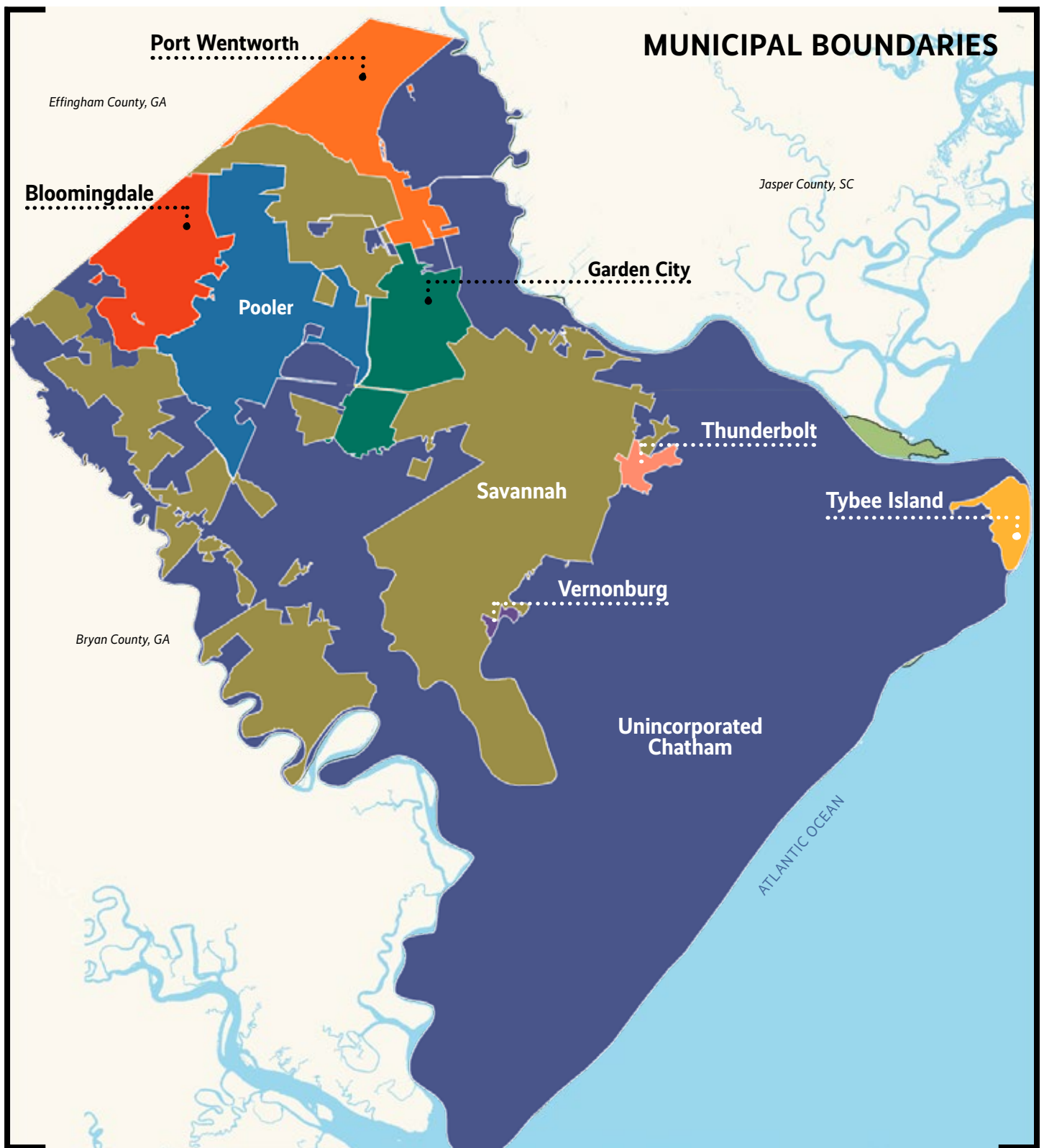
The City of Savannah continues to annex areas of unincorporated Chatham County into its jurisdiction, followed by major sewer and water expansions. However, no comprehensive list of past annexations currently exists nor is there a program for future annexations to be completed by the City or other municipalities. Coordination among the City of Savannah, Chatham County, and the seven other municipalities within the county is needed to develop a countywide record of annexation and a growth management plan. To prevent urban sprawl and unmanaged expansions, future annexation areas should be identified and prioritized and should remain predominately undeveloped until land areas within existing municipal boundaries are more fully utilized and before new, undeveloped areas are cited for construction.

Chatham County Municipal Boundary Map

Seven other municipalities incorporated within Chatham County following the City of Savannah in 1789:

- Thunderbolt (1856)
- Vernonburg (1866)
- Tybee Island (1887)
- Pooler (1907)
- Garden City (1939)
- Port Wentworth (1957)
- Bloomingdale (1974)

Map 4.1 illustrates the boundaries for all municipalities within Chatham County. The municipal boundaries map serves as a tool for placing growth strategies within the context of the county as a whole.



Map 4.1—Municipal Boundaries, Chatham County



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Development Patterns

Following is describes an abridged version of the eras of development that shaped the landscape of Savannah and Chatham County.

Planned Town Era (1733–1869)

The physical plan for the City of Savannah was created by its founder, James Oglethorpe, and centered around the concept of a ward. The ward consisted of 10 residential lots, four tything lots, four trust lots, and a central civic square—the effect of which was to create a walkable yet uncrowded town. From the wards, the plan expanded out to include five-acre garden plots and forty-five-acre farms for each of the new settlers of the colony. While Oglethorpe himself only laid out the first six wards, by 1856, Savannah had grown to 24 wards all laid out in accordance with “The Oglethorpe Plan,” as it is known. Today, this area is known as the Downtown or Landmark Historic District. During the Planned Town Era, the city was a compact focal point for trade and local commerce.

Streetcar Era (1869–1920)

The city’s Victorian District was the first area that grew rapidly as a result of the new accessibility created by horse-drawn streetcars, which appeared in 1869. Development in this area still largely followed the growth patterns established by the Oglethorpe Plan. However, between 1890 and 1920, the advent and expansion of electric streetcars led to the development of the current Thomas Square Streetcar Historic District, immediately south of the Victorian District, as well as areas adjacent to the city. This growth resulted in the rapid expansion of city limits.

Early & Modern Automobile Era (1920–Present)

Greater mobility offered by automobiles resulted in a second ring of suburban growth. Large lots with houses set back farther from the street, as well as more separation between commercial and residential uses, characterized these areas. By 1946, automobile dependence was commonplace. Post-World War II prosperity, along with federal housing and highway policies, led to rapid suburban expansion. Commercial districts, such as those along Abercorn Street Extension, became larger and distinctly separate from residential areas.

Amenity Community Era (Present–Future)

Recently, a new era of reduced automobile dependence and increasing mobility options emerged and produced alternative forms of development, including neo-traditional development, conservation subdivisions, high-amenity communities, and town centers. These types of development created new land use patterns distinct from earlier suburban patterns and offered more options for walking, bicycling, and transit as well as shorter automobile trips to obtain goods and services. Many of these communities, however, have greatly impacted the county’s natural resources with the expansion into previously undisturbed, undeveloped areas.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For a full version of the city and county’s history, see the Plan 2040 Appendix

EXISTING LAND USE

The Existing Land Use Map for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah is based on recent tax records provided by the Chatham County Board of Tax Assessors. Where multiple uses are found on a single parcel, the dominant land use (by area) has been assigned. Conventional land use categories are used to describe existing land use patterns, whereas a character-based classification system is used in discussing and planning future land use.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 compare land use in unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. The character of each of these areas varies greatly as a result of distinctly different land use patterns, which have remained essentially the same since the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update.

Existing Land Use Classifications, 2018

LAND USE CLASS	ACRES	PERCENT (%)
Single Family	15,093	7.11
Multi-Family	209	.10
Commercial (Includes Office)	2,100	.99
Industrial	8,469	3.99
Unimproved Properties	7,176	3.38
Open Space (Undeveloped, Wetlands, Marsh, Parks, Conservation Lands)	127,603	60.07
Water	51,739	24.36
Total	212,389	100
Total Excluding Water	160,650	75.64

Figure 4.1–Land Use Classification, Unincorporated Chatham

The city of Savannah is highly urbanized with large areas of mixed-use development. The city is chiefly growing through annexation (see page 60 for more information regarding annexation and municipal boundaries). However, urban neighborhoods that have declined in population, former industrial lands, and vacant or under-performing commercial centers represent opportunities for internal growth in the form of infill and adaptive reuse development, thereby conserving undeveloped natural areas.

To the east, Chatham County is developed at low densities and its character is strongly influenced by its setting amid marshes and tidal creeks. To the west, the county has a higher proportion of undeveloped area; however, as the city of Savannah and unincorporated eastern Chatham have built out, the western portion of Chatham County is emerging as a high growth area.

LAND USE CLASS	ACRES	PERCENT (%)
Single Family	8,934	12.03
Multi-Family	583	.79
Commercial (Includes Office)	2,242	3.02
Industrial	13,726	18.48
Unimproved Properties	3,746	5.04
Open Space (Undeveloped, Wetlands, Marsh, Parks, Conservation Lands)	43,621	58.74
Water	1,415	1.91
Total	74,267	100
Total Excluding Water	72,854	98.10

Figure 4.2–Land Use Classification, Savannah

EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

This component highlights some areas of Chatham County that influence land use patterns as areas with existing and projected job growth. Employment centers have been identified based on a concentration of one or more of the following employment sectors: hospitality, industrial/manufacturing, tourism, retail, health care, educational/public services, and other. Individual employers that have a large impact on land use have been identified as well.

Below are some areas of Chatham County that may influence future land use patterns as areas with existing and projected job growth.

1. West Chatham Aviation

- » The West Chatham Aviation employment center is situated between Augusta Road and I-95 and is comprised of the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport and the bulk of the operations of Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation in Chatham County.

This area provides employment opportunities in operation and management of the airport, and the design, manufacturing, and marketing of aircraft. Commuters traveling to and from this area typically travel by automobile.

2. Georgia Ports Authority

- » The Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) employment center consists of the Garden City and Ocean Terminal, operated by the GPA. This area provides employment opportunities in marine transportation and logistics.

3. Downtown Savannah

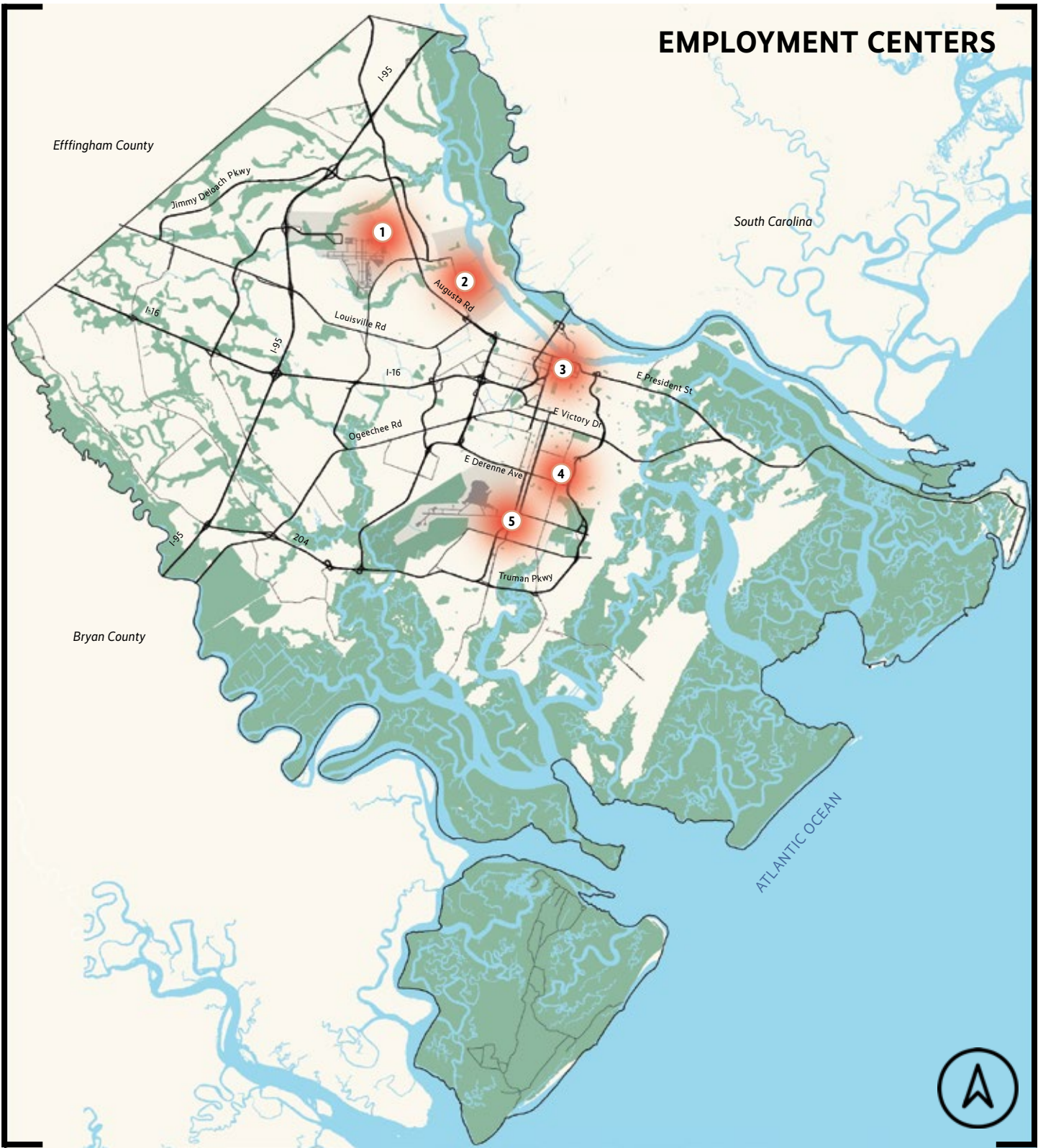
- » Downtown Savannah is a major employment hub that provides jobs in many sectors including tourism, hospitality, retail, and educational/public services. This area sees a high number of commuters each day, many of whom utilize modes of transportation other than a car, such as walking, bicycling, or public transit.

4. South Savannah Medical

- » This employment area is located along DeRenne Avenue near the Truman Parkway, and consists of several large medical facilities and offices, including Memorial Health University Medical Center and Candler Hospital. Downtown residents can access this area by bus; however, most commuters use automobiles.

5. Abercorn Extension Commercial Corridor

- » This area is located along the Abercorn Street Extension, which serves as a centerline for regional commercial activity on either side. This employment corridor is home to many businesses, including some of the county's largest employers such as Walmart, Kroger, and Georgia Southern University (Armstrong). This is a high traffic area, with both commuters and shoppers traveling primarily by automobile, with some utilizing the public bus system.



Map 4.4—Employment Centers, Chatham County

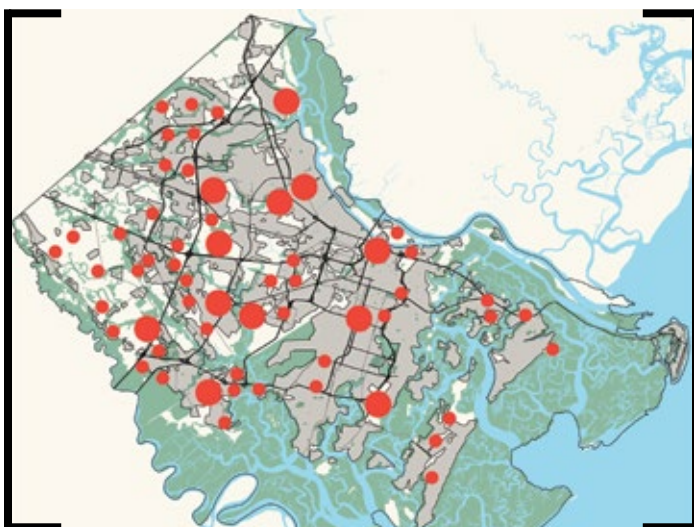


FUTURE GROWTH STRATEGIES

Options for the Future

Over the next 20 years, various mechanisms can be used to manage growth and promote sustainable development within the county. Three alternative approaches were presented to the public and stakeholders for feedback during development of the Comprehensive Plan in 2020: Business as Usual, Strong Corridor, and Compact Growth.

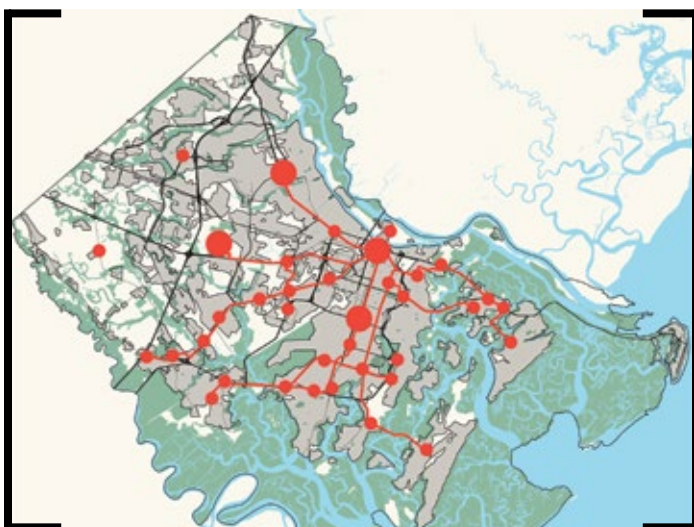
The intent was to allow the public to visualize different potential directions growth could take over the next 20 years and gauge the desirability of each.



Business as Usual

The Business as Usual approach consists of continued outward development in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah between 2020 and 2040.

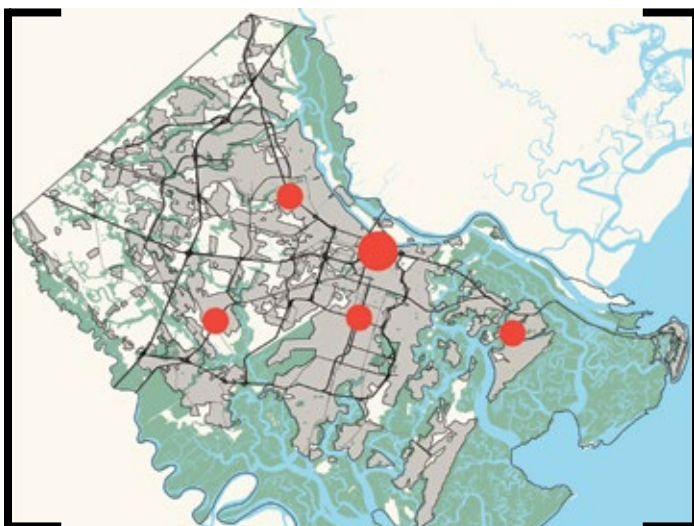
This strategy is based on existing development patterns, residential densities, future land uses, and infrastructure investments.



Strong Corridors

The Strong Corridors approach focuses on reinvestment strategies along existing multi-modal transportation nodes and corridors in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah.

This strategy incorporates efficient, mixed-use development, and density around transit hubs.



Compact Growth

The Compact Growth approach is based on reinvestment strategies into existing town centers, utilizing vacant lands and derelict or underperforming properties where possible.

The strategy primarily focuses on efficient development, infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse within existing development boundaries.



Preferred Growth Strategy: Strong Corridors

Given the choice of three scenarios in an online public survey, unincorporated Chatham and Savannah residents supported the "Strong Corridors" option: Forty-four percent (44%) of survey respondents chose this strategy as their first preference. Under the Strong Corridor Scenario the following activities and concepts become the main focus for future decision making:

- More managed growth of development
- Focus on urban rehab and infill of existing developed areas
- Priority for mixed-use zoning
- Interest in diversity of housing choices
- Concentrate development at existing transportation nodes
- Prioritize land for parks, trails & natural areas
- Manage land for conservation & preservation
- Regional cooperation between municipalities
- Preserve undeveloped natural resource areas
- Brownfield redevelopment

With continued growth pressure in Chatham and Savannah, a coordinated growth strategy across the nine jurisdictions will be critical. The adoption and successful implementation of a coordinated, regional growth policy can aid in the mitigation of the negative externalities of growth—such as traffic congestion, air pollution, and loss of tree canopy—and will help to promote sustainable and equitable development countywide.

The Strong Corridor scenario became the basis for developing the Growth Centers Map, identifying Character Areas, and updating the Future Land Use Map found on the following pages.



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GROWTH CENTERS

Purpose

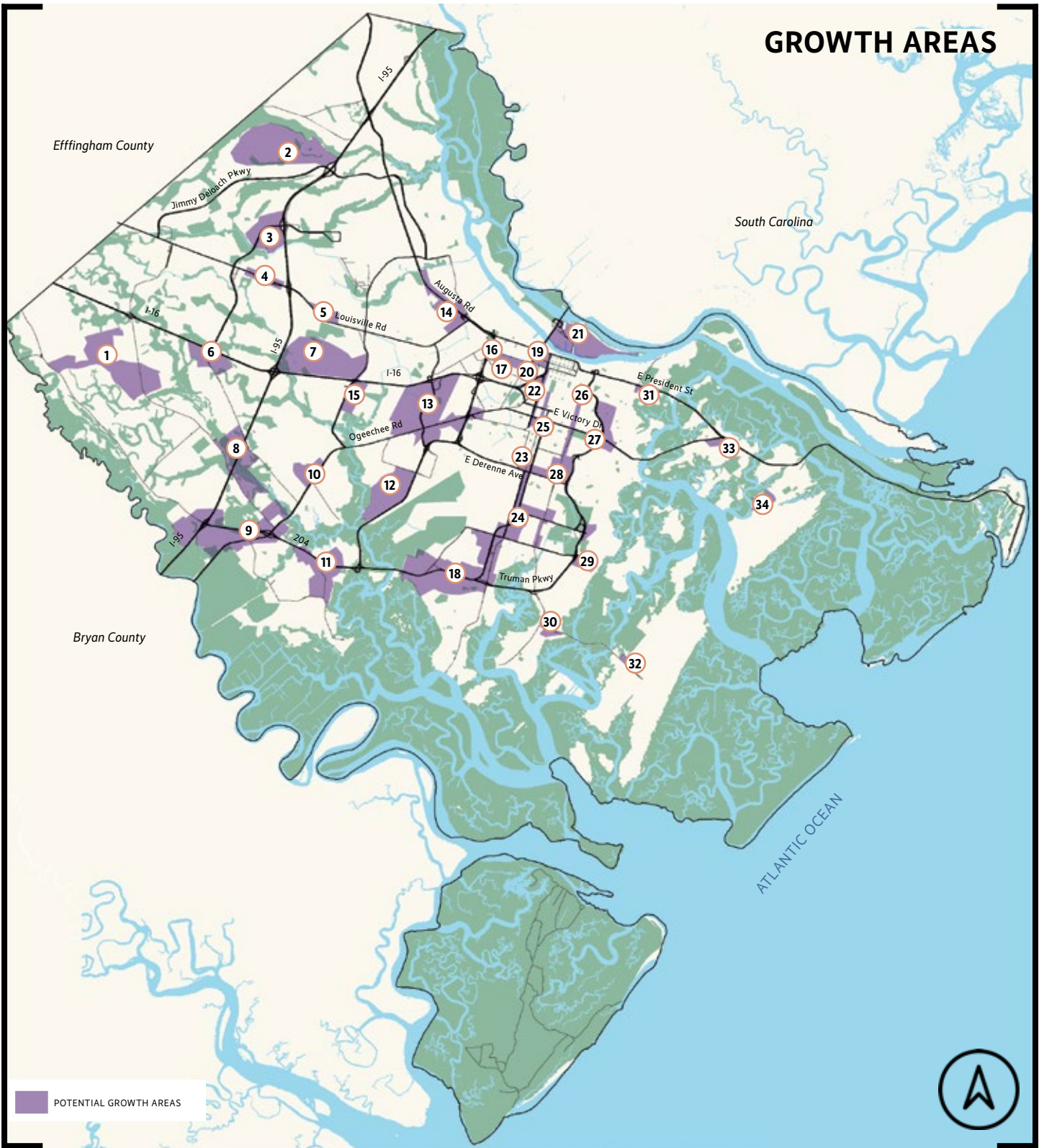
The intent of the Growth Centers Map is to highlight areas of unincorporated Chatham and Savannah that may be suited to accommodate future development or redevelopment/infill efforts. These areas include suburban, commercial, or employment centers that should be studied to determine what type of redevelopment and/or infill development would be most appropriate. Due to their proximity to major road systems and potential sites of public transit expansion, transit-oriented (TOD), traditional neighborhood (TND), and mixed-use development should be a priority focus of these studies. More generally, the identification of growth areas that may support new development has implications in guiding future land use decisions.

The Growth Centers Map is not a zoning map and is primarily intended to guide local decision makers on locations that should receive further study. The Growth Centers Map defines the prioritization of lands for development to maximize areas that already have public investment (water, sewer, utilities, roadways, and services). Also taken into consideration is historic development patterns, existing land use, employment centers, service areas, existing transportation nodes, and flood zones. For those areas not already fully developed, consideration must be given to public safety, road, and open space enhancements.

Areas of Further Study

Below is a list of potential Growth Areas identified through the prioritized land analysis and preferred growth strategy. The listing below is in no particular order and does not indicate the level of importance or priority of one area over another.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. New Hampstead | 19. Yamacraw Village |
| 2. Highlands | 20. Canal District |
| 3. Godley Station | 21. Hutchinson Island |
| 4. Historic Mainstreet | 22. Kayton-Frazier |
| 5. US 80 Corridor | 23. Derenne Ave Corridor |
| 6. Quacco Corridor | 24. Oglethorpe Mall |
| 7. Megasite | 25. Abercorn Corridor |
| 8. Hopeton | 26. Waters Ave Corridor |
| 9. Fort Argyle | 27. Victory Square/Olympus |
| 10. Berwick | 28. Medical Arts |
| 11. Georgetown | 29. Sandfly |
| 12. Rockingham Farms | 30. Marshpoint |
| 13. Chatham Parkway | 31. Beech & Capital |
| 14. Highway 21 | 32. Skidaway |
| 15. Garden City South | 33. Whitemarsh Island |
| 16. West Savannah | 34. Wilmington Island |
| 17. Tremont | |
| 18. Savannah Mall | |
| GSU-Armstrong Vicinity | |



Map 4.6-Potential Growth Areas, Chatham County



POTENTIAL WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE GROWTH

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is defined as a moderate- to high-density mix of uses—such as residences, retail shops, offices, and civic and entertainment spaces—located within one-half mile of a transit station and designed to encourage transit use. The typical “station area” is within a half-mile radius, which is considered to be an acceptable 10-minute walking distance for most transit users if the area contains a destination, provides dedicated walking routes, is safe, and is visually appealing. Within the U.S., TOD is typically associated with rail transit; however, TOD could occur with other fixed guideway transit services, such as bus rapid transit, if facilities and service levels similar to rail transit are provided.

- Implementation of a TOD ordinance can help ensure that the investments made in regional transit systems would be continual and that related codes and processes would be supported and utilized to their full extent.

Benefits of a TOD Ordinance include:

- » Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- » Increasing transit ridership
- » Increasing pedestrian access
- » Providing long-term return on investment for property owners
- » Providing easy access to goods and services for families, seniors, and people with disabilities
- » Creating vibrant centers and corridors for pedestrians

- Possible incentives for developers could include the following:
 - » Fast track development review (expedited review process)
 - » Incentives for constructing multi-unit housing projects with 25 or more units
 - » Prohibiting certain uses within one-quarter mile of existing or proposed bus nodes to enable and promote more pedestrian oriented development

Cluster Development

Cluster development is a land development design tool that provides a means of both preserving open space and allowing development to be directed away from natural and agricultural resources considered important for protection. It is often best applied in suburban landscapes with larger undeveloped parcels.

Cluster development regulations are implemented through municipal zoning, subdivision, and land development ordinances in order to provide applicants with appropriate design standards and municipalities with adequate information on development plans.

- Allow as a permitted use “by right”
- Density incentive
- Possible requirement for subdivisions with parcels larger than a certain number of acres

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinances can involve development of a previously undeveloped area or construction on vacant or undeveloped parcels within an already developed community. Though this method is often driven by the private sector, TNDs are regulated by the zoning, subdivision, and land development ordinances of local governments for those planned growth areas.

Town Center (TC) Overlay

The Town Center (TC) Overlay districts are intended to be developed based on standards consistent with the community character of the surrounding neighborhood. This type of center is to be low in scale, not exceeding two stories in height (unless greater height is allowed on an incentive basis), and emphasizes landscaping and pedestrian access.

Planned Development (PUD/PD)

Conventional ordinances are often to blame for the automobile oriented subdivisions that have taken claim to many landscapes. A planned unit development (PUD) or planned development (PD), however, can provide the flexibility needed for a TOD and, more generally, encourage innovative site planning and lot design. A PUD allows a local government to control the development of individual tracts of land by specifying the permissible form of development in accordance with the local ordinance. However, care should be taken to protect and preserve natural resource areas during the design and planning process of PUDs.

Suburban Retrofit

While suburban locations will always exist in a community's landscape, the principles of urbanism can be introduced to sprawling suburban communities as well. Retrofitting is simply a reconfiguration of existing uses and building types to create a more typical urban environment. The elements of suburban retrofit include:

- Creating a street grid
- Rezoning single use commercial to mixed-use
- Creation of public spaces
- Developing missing middle housing
- Preservation of wetlands & marshlands

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is when existing older buildings are repurposed for new uses. While the practice is commonly associated with historic preservation, the term can be used to encompass any structure that is underused, abandoned, vacant, obsolete, and/or dilapidated. While adaptive reuse is a tool to conserve energy and waste, it also supports economic development and enhances community character.

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Missing middle housing describes a range of multi-family or clustered housing types that are compatible in scale with single-family or transitional neighborhoods.

—Optics Design



CHARACTER AREAS

Character Areas

The Character Area Map (CAM) identifies the land use character vision for Chatham County. The intent of the CAM is to work in partnership with the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to set a cohesive countywide vision for responsible growth over the next twenty years.

Plan 2040 is meant to guide decision-making within unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah; the CAM is not intended to deviate from the land use goals of other municipalities within Chatham County that maintain separate planning programs. Rather, this countywide visioning effort looks to support these goals and acknowledge the ways in which development patterns influence each other across municipal boundaries. To the extent possible, the CAM seeks to align land use policies throughout the county, while focusing more specifically on areas within unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah.

The CAM is not intended to represent or guide future zoning; however, it should be considered in tandem with the FLUM when policymakers consider land development inquiries or requests.

The character areas seek to capture the diversity of Chatham County and to expand upon the single-use land categorization present in the FLUM. Character areas are places that may contain a variety of different land uses, but share defining characteristics, such as development intensity or available resources. Identifying community character across Chatham County is an important step in making compatible future land use decisions.

Development Factors

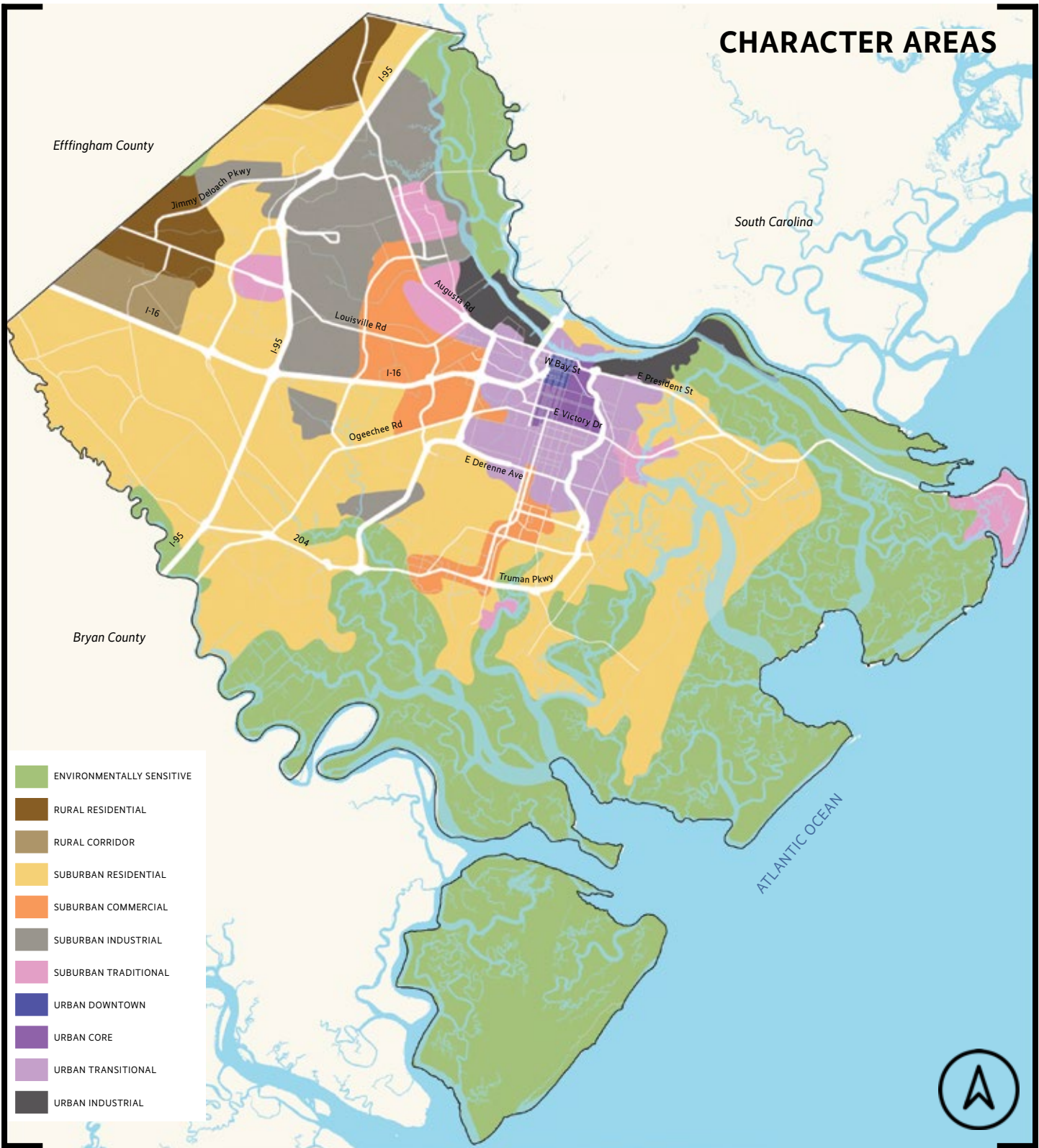
The character areas were developed by examining existing community character and future growth trends in order to ensure compatible and responsible future land use patterns. The following development factors are used to describe each character area:

- Primary & secondary uses
- Average density
- Transportation & roadway classification
- Parking & utilities
- Open space

Character Areas

The following primary character areas are discussed in the following pages:

- Environmentally Sensitive
- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban



Map 4.7—Potential Character Areas, Chatham County



CHARACTER AREA DEFINITIONS

Character Area Map

The CAM on the previous page illustrates the location of each potential character area throughout Chatham County. The general characteristics and analysis of development factors for each character area are described below and on the following pages.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE CHARACTER

Environmentally Sensitive character areas include areas set aside for preservation or conservation, or contain natural features such as rivers or wetlands making them vulnerable to the effects of development. Areas such as Ossabaw Island, Wormsloe Historic Site, and Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge are protected perpetually at the state or national level as heritage sites and nature preserves. This character area additionally includes marsh, wetland, and woodland habitats, particularly along major rivers such as the Moon, Ogeechee, and Savannah Rivers.

The negative consequences of development affect not only natural resources, but also the quality of life of residents by exacerbating environmental hazards such as flooding, polluted waterways, temperature extremes, and extreme weather events. Efforts to further protect these areas should be pursued. Any development cited in and around an Environmentally Sensitive character area should have measures in place to protect natural features and vulnerable resources.

RURAL CHARACTER

Rural character areas are categorized by low-intensity development with large lots, low pedestrian orientation and access, and a sizeable amount of open space. Rural areas are often closely associated with agriculture, and though there are some working farms in Chatham County, it is not widely prevalent in the community. Land in this area is likely undeveloped or facing development pressures for lower density residential development, light industrial development, or medium/higher density PUDs.

Services in rural areas are often individual or community water and sewer systems such as wells and septic tanks. The future of this character area looks to maintain low developmental densities, with special attention paid to availability of services and infrastructure as well as preserving open space.

SUBURBAN CHARACTER

Suburban character areas are lower density areas, characterized by the prevalence and accommodation of the automobile. Residential areas are generally separated from other land uses, such as commercial and industrial, and typically feature detached single-family homes; however, attached single-family residential and smaller multi-family apartments are often present as well. Commercial uses, including retail and office clusters, feature large surface parking lots and are located along major thoroughfares and highway interchanges.

Suburban character areas include many locations that are expected to see continued population growth and development, such as large swaths of unincorporated West Chatham. Future development in this character area should look to ensure public realm enhancements, efficient use of existing infrastructure, and connectivity with the surrounding context.

URBAN CHARACTER

Urban character areas are places with higher density and established mixed-use, residential, commercial, and industrial areas, or future opportunities for critical transportation hubs. The Urban character areas for Chatham County are located entirely within the limits of the city of Savannah, and include the historic downtown, urban neighborhoods, port industrial sites, and transitional areas towards the edge of downtown.

These areas are poised to receive a large portion of the county's projected population growth, as they have the greatest number of urban amenities, including convenience to employment, schools, and retail. The future of this character area looks to infill development in the Urban Core, and redevelopment and growth in the Urban Transitional areas.

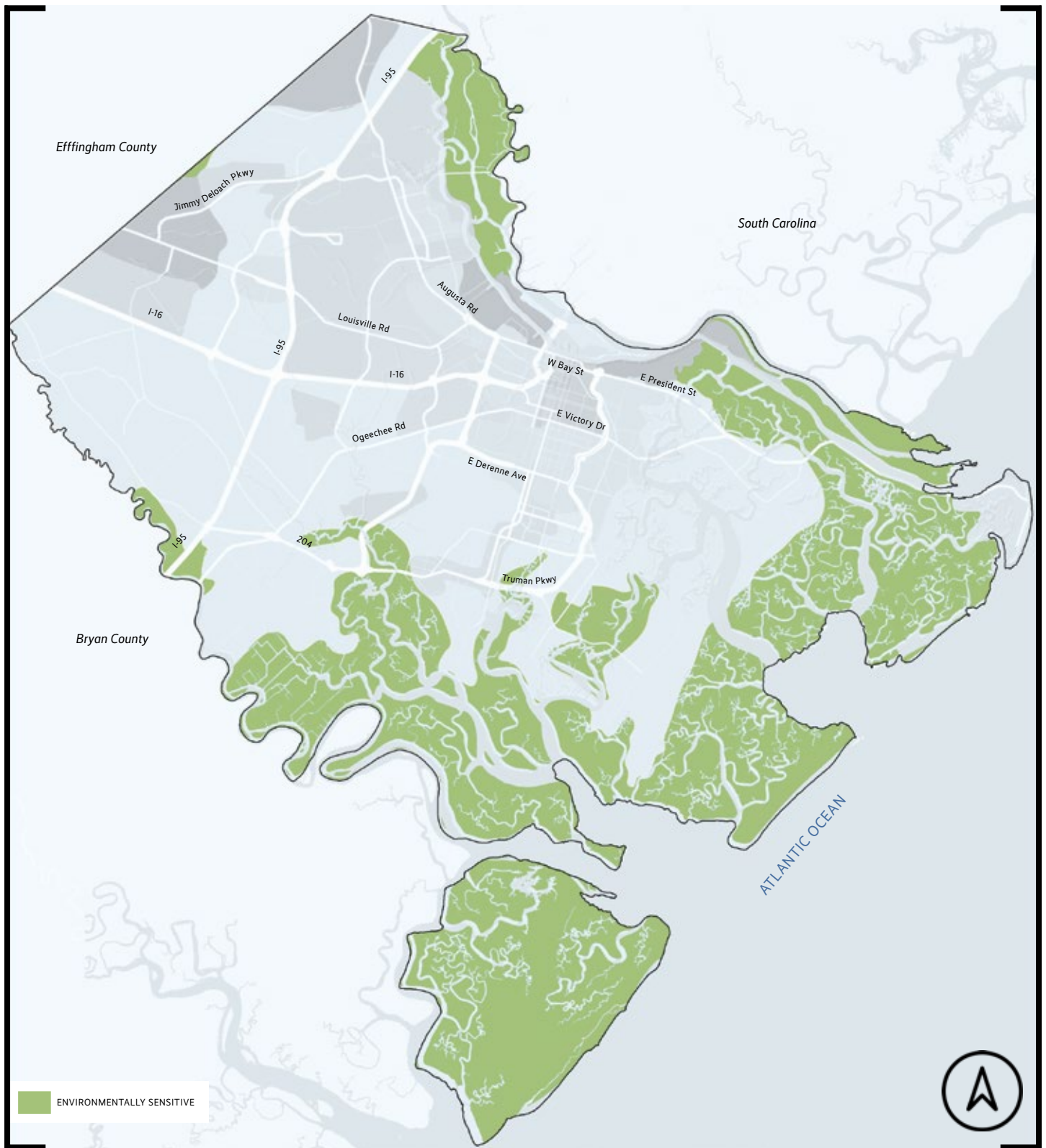


ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE CHARACTER

Environmentally Sensitive character areas are open space areas that offer opportunities for limited to no development that is well-integrated with the natural landscape system.

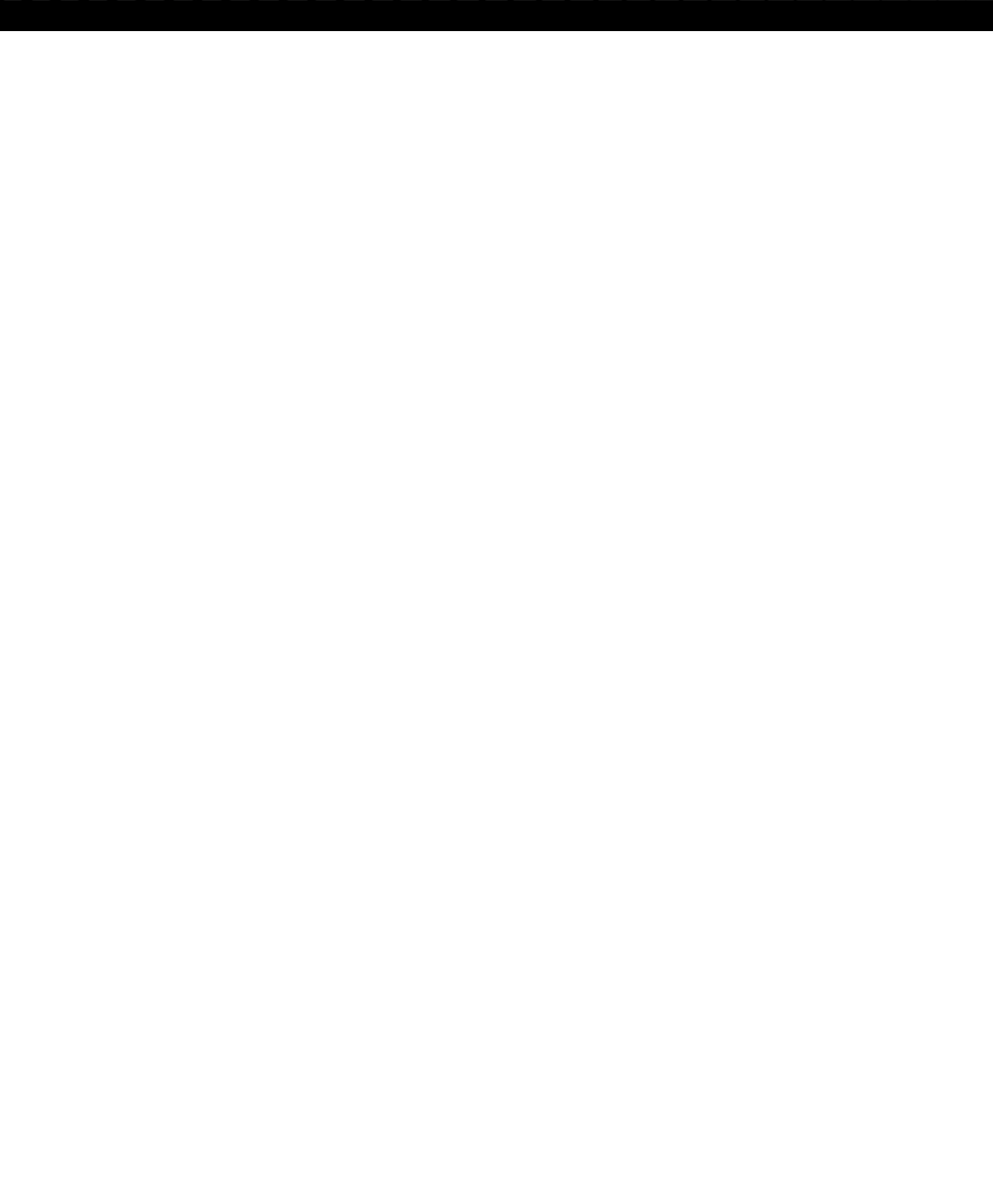
Areas included in the Environmentally Sensitive are Ossabaw Island, Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge, Wormsloe Historic Site, Little and Ogeechee River, Savannah, and Wilmington River Corridors. It is important to note that many parks and open spaces are embedded in the context of other Character Areas.

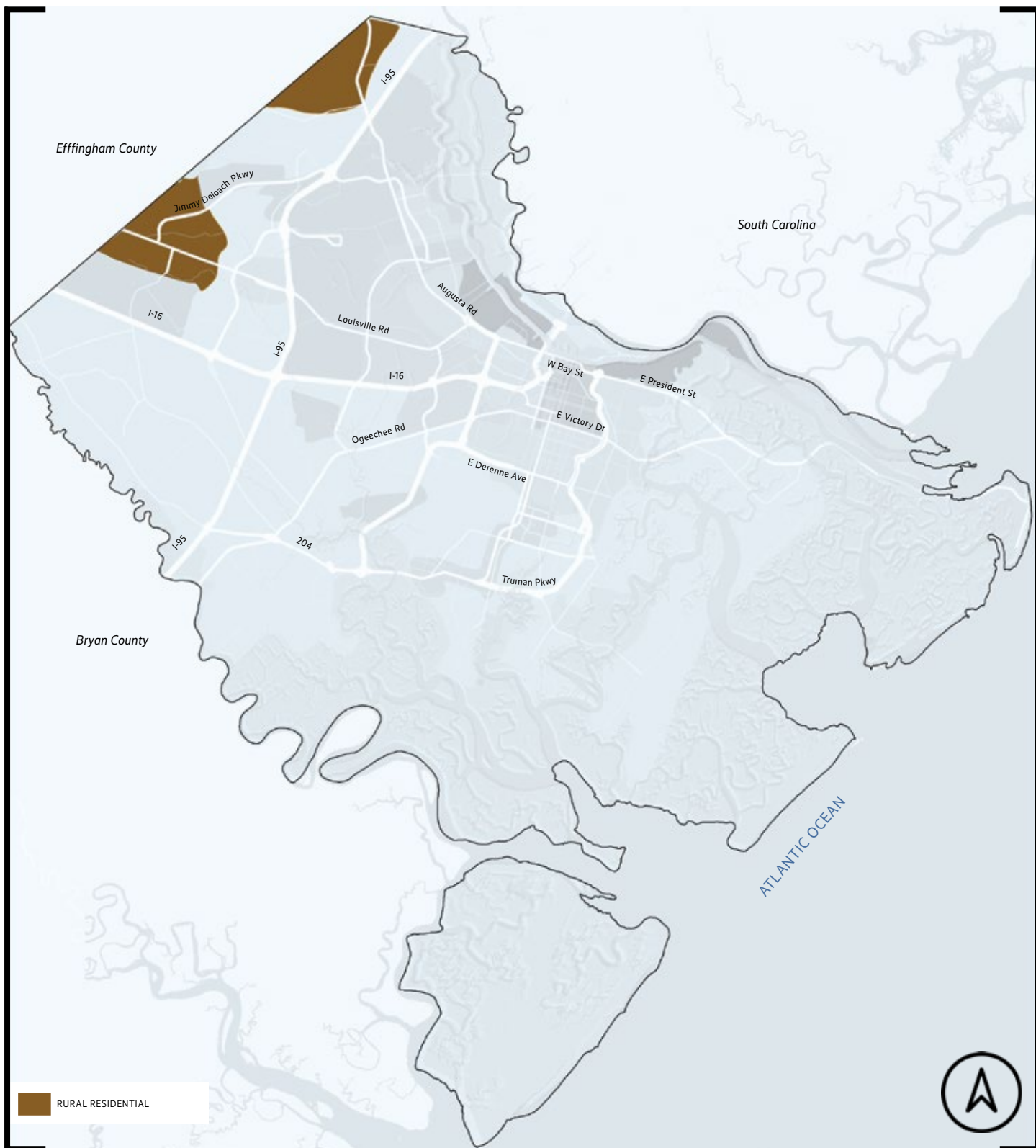




Map 4.8—Environmentally Sensitive Character Area, Chatham County







Map 4.9-Rural Residential Character Area, Chatham County

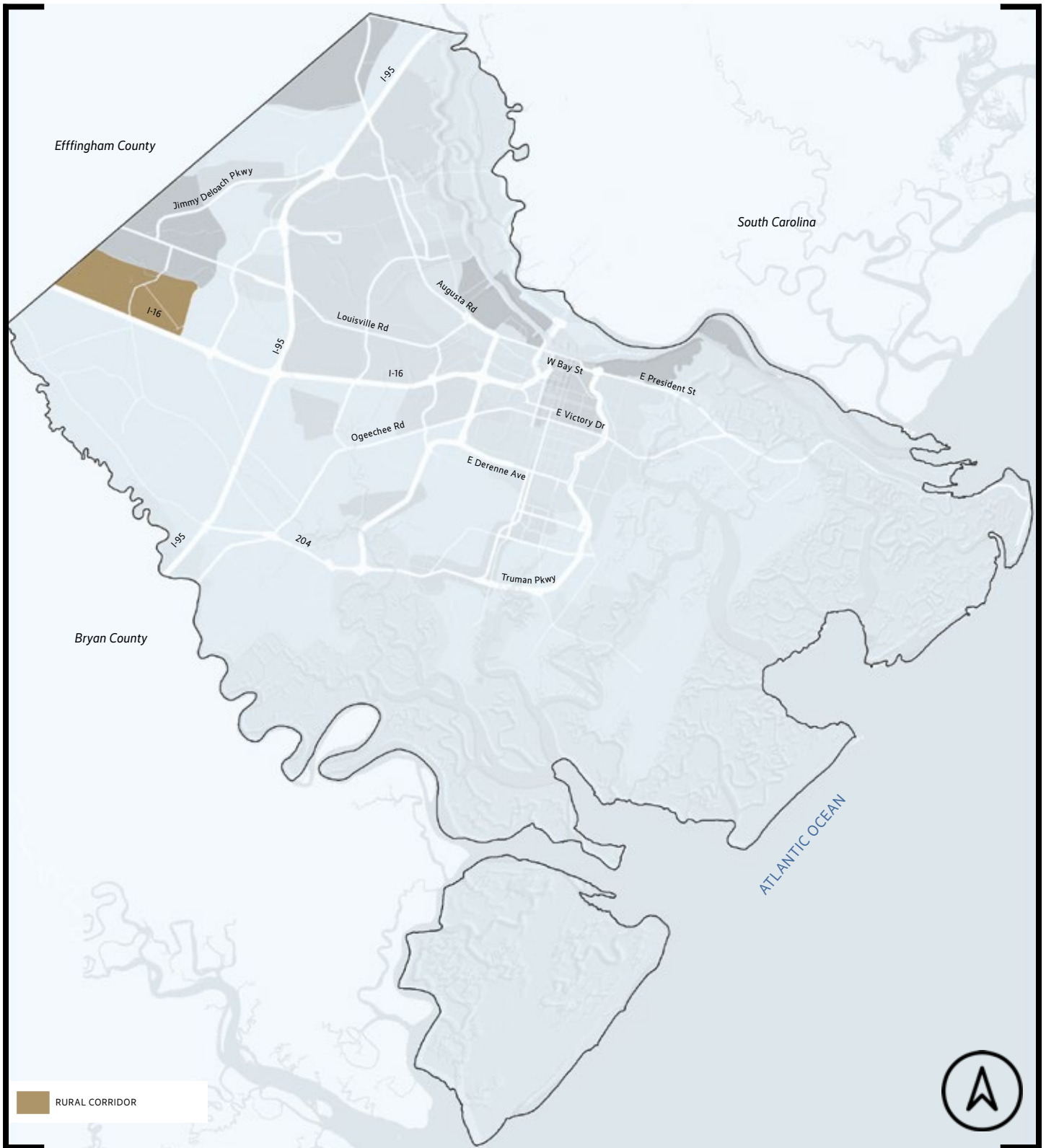


RURAL CORRIDOR

The Rural Corridor character areas contain a mix of lower density light industrial, warehousing, or service uses. This character area is located along Interstate 16, which connects it to denser suburban and urban areas.



PRIMARY USES	Light Industrial, Warehousing
SECONDARY USES	None
DENSITY	N/A
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented, large blocks, no public transit
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Interstate (I-16), local roads
PARKING	Surface parking
UTILITIES	Individual water & septic; Unlikely to be serviced in the next 10 years
OPEN SPACE	Natural areas, undeveloped land



Map 4.10-Rural Corridor Character Area, Chatham County



SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

Suburban Residential character areas include low and medium density developments; generally, this character area features either single-family structures on large lots or medium-lot residential subdivisions with relatively uniform housing types and densities. However, multi-family apartments and attached single-family residential subdivisions are also prevalent in this area. Local streets are laid out in curvilinear patterns, with occasional cul-de-sacs and limited sidewalks. Suburban Residential areas adjacent to Suburban Commercial character areas should, to the extent possible, be designed as cohesive, connected neighborhoods. Alternative types of housing options should be encouraged in suburban areas to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Single-family (detached & attached) Residential
SECONDARY USES	Small scale commercial & apartment buildings, civic & institutional facilities, neighborhood parks
DENSITY	Low; 3-5 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented, limited public transit
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collectors, arterials
PARKING	Off-street parking, private driveways, garages
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities, some individual/community utility systems
OPEN SPACE	Community & regional parks, neighborhood greenspaces, waterways, golf courses

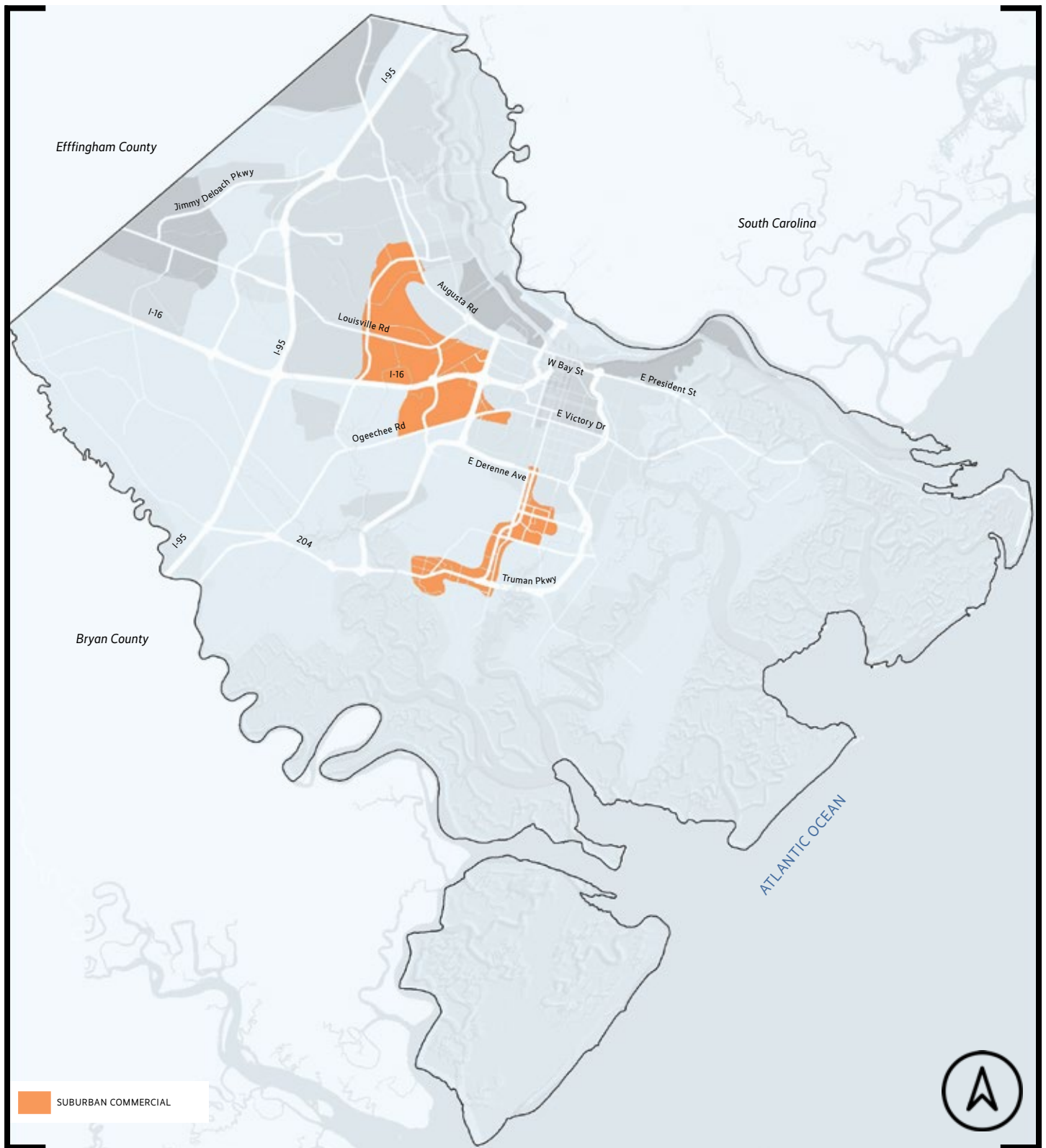
SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL

Suburban Commercial character areas are automobile-oriented commercial centers that contain community and regional shopping and service needs. This character area encompasses and is located along several major thoroughfares (arterials) and highways, such as the Abercorn Street Extension, U.S. 80, and I-16. Commercial development such as malls, office buildings, and big box stores are located along these major transportation hubs and feature large, front-facing parking lots. Residential activity in this character area is located behind the commercial frontage; however, mixed-use development should be encouraged in this area in the future.

New and redeveloping commercial centers should be encouraged to use innovative site design to minimize the visual impact of expansive parking areas (e.g., placing parking on the interior of the site), provide open space, and better accommodate all mobility options. Additionally, as shopping and other types of commercial centers age out, they could become candidates for adaptive redevelopment into denser mixed-use centers, especially where access to public transit is currently available or slated for the future.



PRIMARY USES	Regional Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial
SECONDARY USES	Small scale apartment buildings, single-family residential, office, civic & institutional facilities
DENSITY	Low; 3–12 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collectors, arterials, expressways
PARKING	Off-street, surface parking
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities, some individual/community utility systems
OPEN SPACE	Community & regional parks



Map 4.12-Suburban Commercial Character Area, Chatham County



SUBURBAN INDUSTRIAL

Suburban Industrial character areas generally contain large-footprint buildings and businesses that accommodate warehousing, light industrial, manufacturing, office spaces, and other uses such as airports and landfills. All of these uses come with unique needs and building forms. A large extent of the Suburban Industrial character area is located between I-95 and Dean Forest Road from I-16 north to the Savannah River. Large surface parking lots and truck loading bays are common in this area. Suburban Industrial areas should look to landscaping requirements in order to screen development from the right-of-way and neighboring properties. Additionally, as these areas often contain large employment centers, special attention should be paid to transit connectivity—particularly links to urban and suburban residential areas.



PRIMARY USES	Warehouse, Light Industrial, Manufacturing, Landfill
SECONDARY USES	Commercial, aviation facilities
DENSITY	N/A
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collectors, arterials, expressways
PARKING	Off-street, surface parking
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities, private utility systems
OPEN SPACE	Undeveloped greenspace, waterways

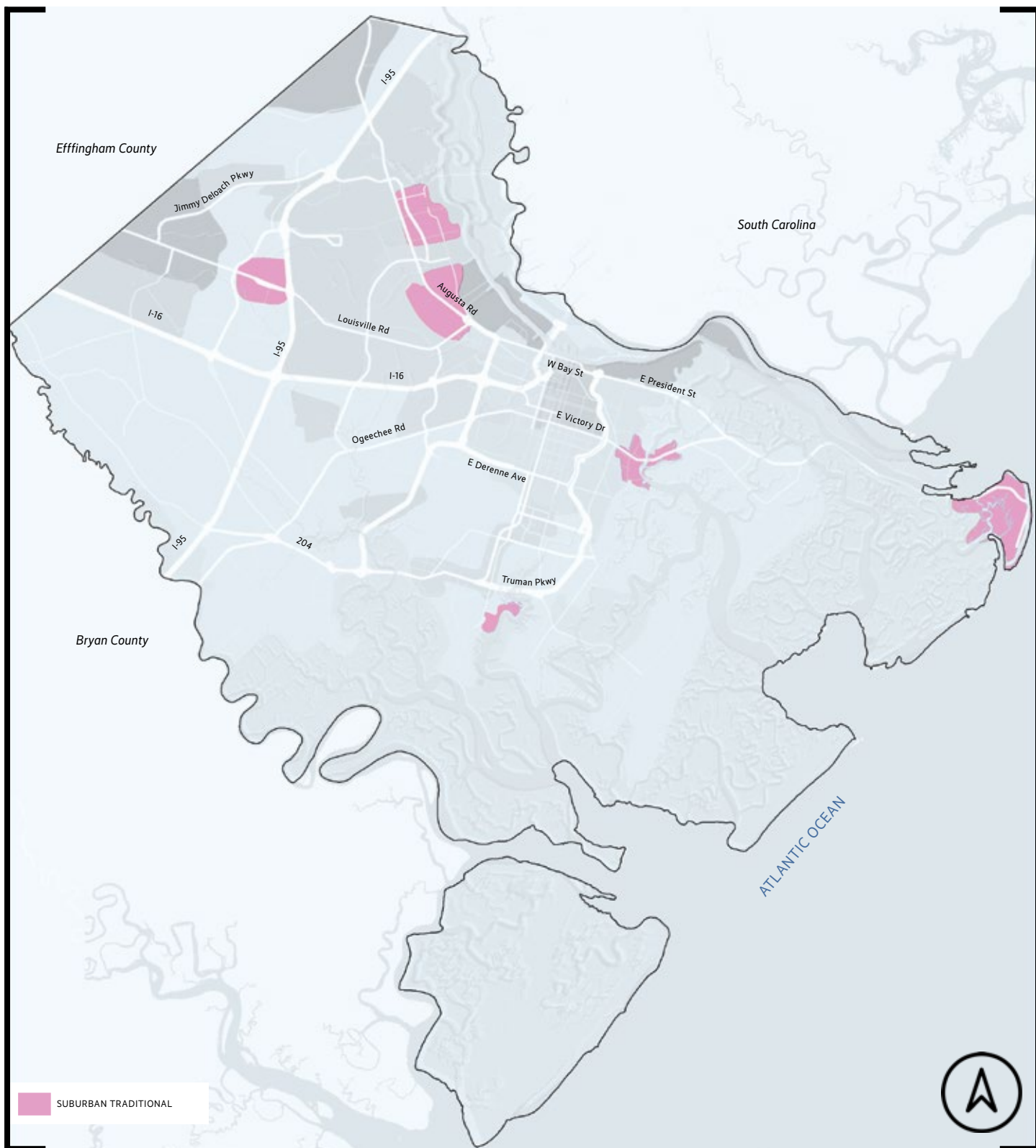
SUBURBAN TRADITIONAL

Suburban Traditional neighborhoods include Thunderbolt, Tybee Island, downtown Garden City, Vernonburg, and downtown Pooler. Suburban Traditional character areas have a more “urban” style of development, with gridded/interconnected street patterns, attached buildings, and sidewalks. Homes in this character area are primarily early- and mid-twentieth century single-family homes, with some blocks including small-scale apartment buildings and townhouses. Existing housing stock—older homes in particular—should be preserved and improved. Older, underutilized sites could be candidates for reuse and redevelopment with improved access management, site design, and pedestrian friendliness. Infill and redevelopment should be of a compatible scale and character with surrounding buildings. Additional types of housing options, including accessory dwelling units (ADUs), should be encouraged to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, small families, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Single-family (attached & detached) Residential
SECONDARY USES	Small scale commercial, office, civic & institutional facilities
DENSITY	Low-medium; 6–20 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented, interconnected street, no public transit
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collectors, arterials, expressways
PARKING	Off-street & on-street parking, private driveways, garages
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Neighborhood parks, beaches/waterways, city parks





Map 4.14-Suburban Traditional Character Areas, Chatham County



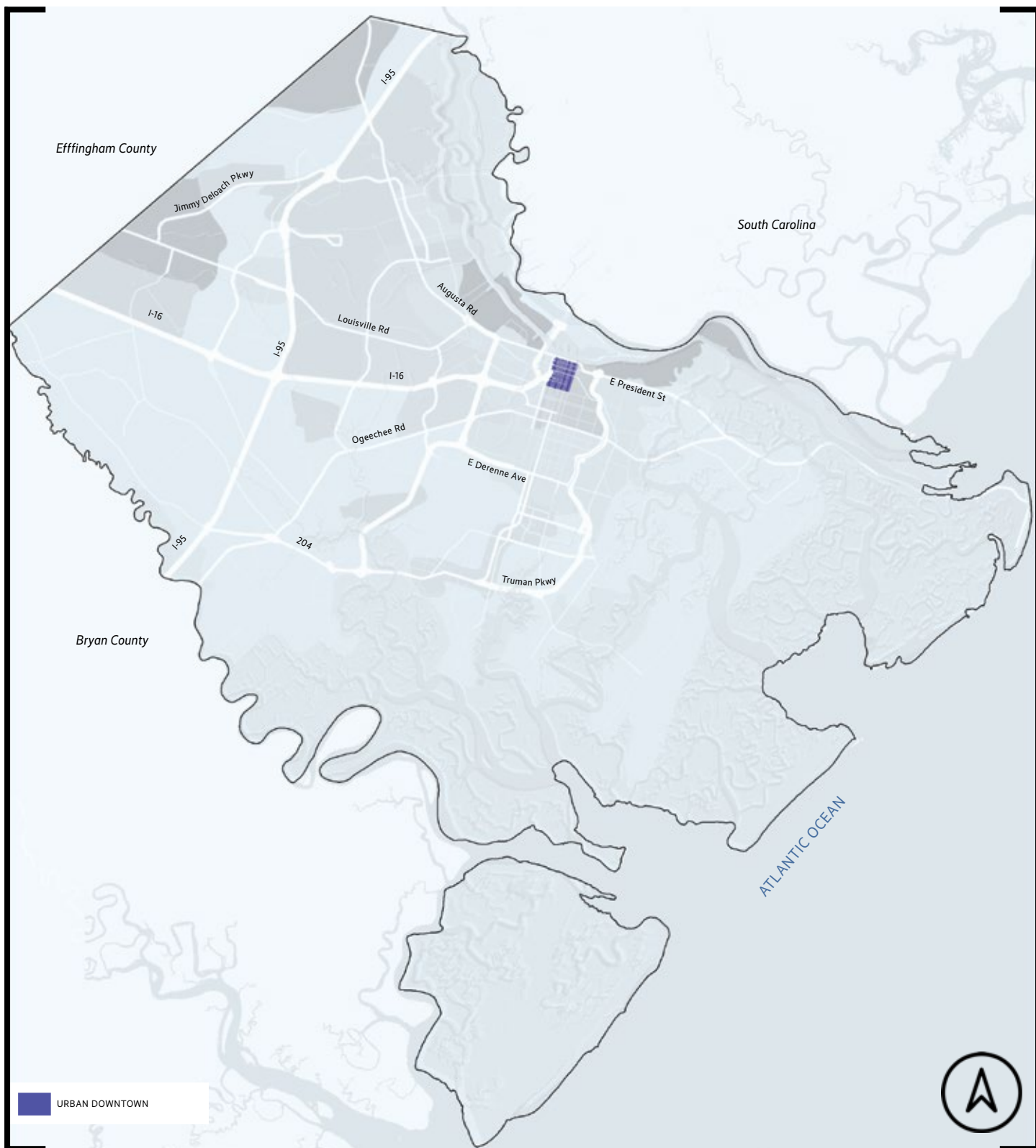
URBAN DOWNTOWN

The Urban Downtown character area consists of the local and National Register Landmark Historic Districts. The Oglethorpe Plan (see the appendix for a full history of Savannah and Chatham County) established the grid network, which still guides development patterns today. The Urban Downtown area is identifiable by mixed-use, mid-rise buildings and attached single-family homes (townhomes & rowhomes). This area is also identified by multi-modal transportation, walkable densities, historic squares and greenspaces, and historic, mid-size single- and multi-family buildings. While decreasing in availability, there are infill and redevelopment opportunities within the Urban Downtown. All future development is subject to review by the Metropolitan Planning Commission's Historic Preservation Department, which administers the historic district ordinances to ensure compatibility with the character of the area.



PRIMARY USES	Attached & detached Residential, Mid-Rise, Mixed-Use, Commercial, Parks
SECONDARY USES	Civic & institutional, office, parking structures, short-term rentals
DENSITY	High; 20–40 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
PARKING	On-street parking, parking structure, private garages
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Municipal parks, squares, waterfront, cemeteries, limited private yard space



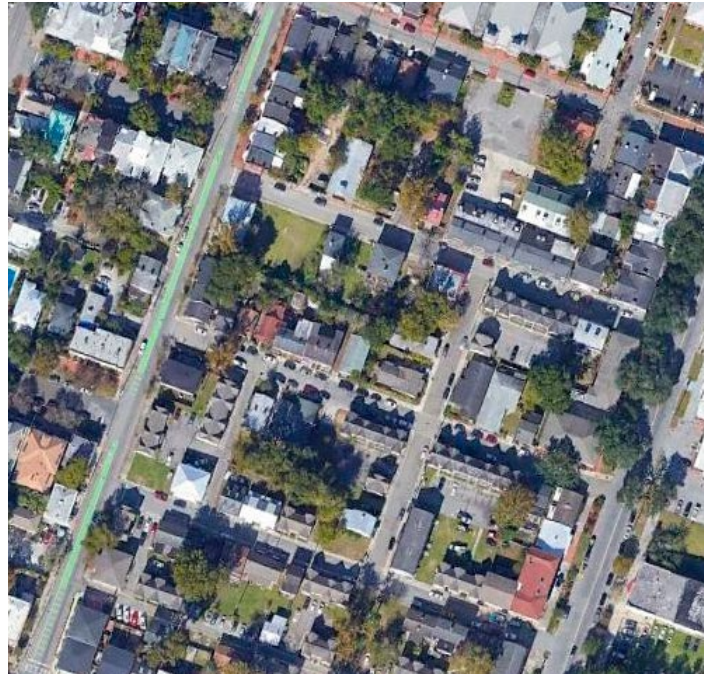


Map 4.15—Urban Downtown Character Area, Chatham County



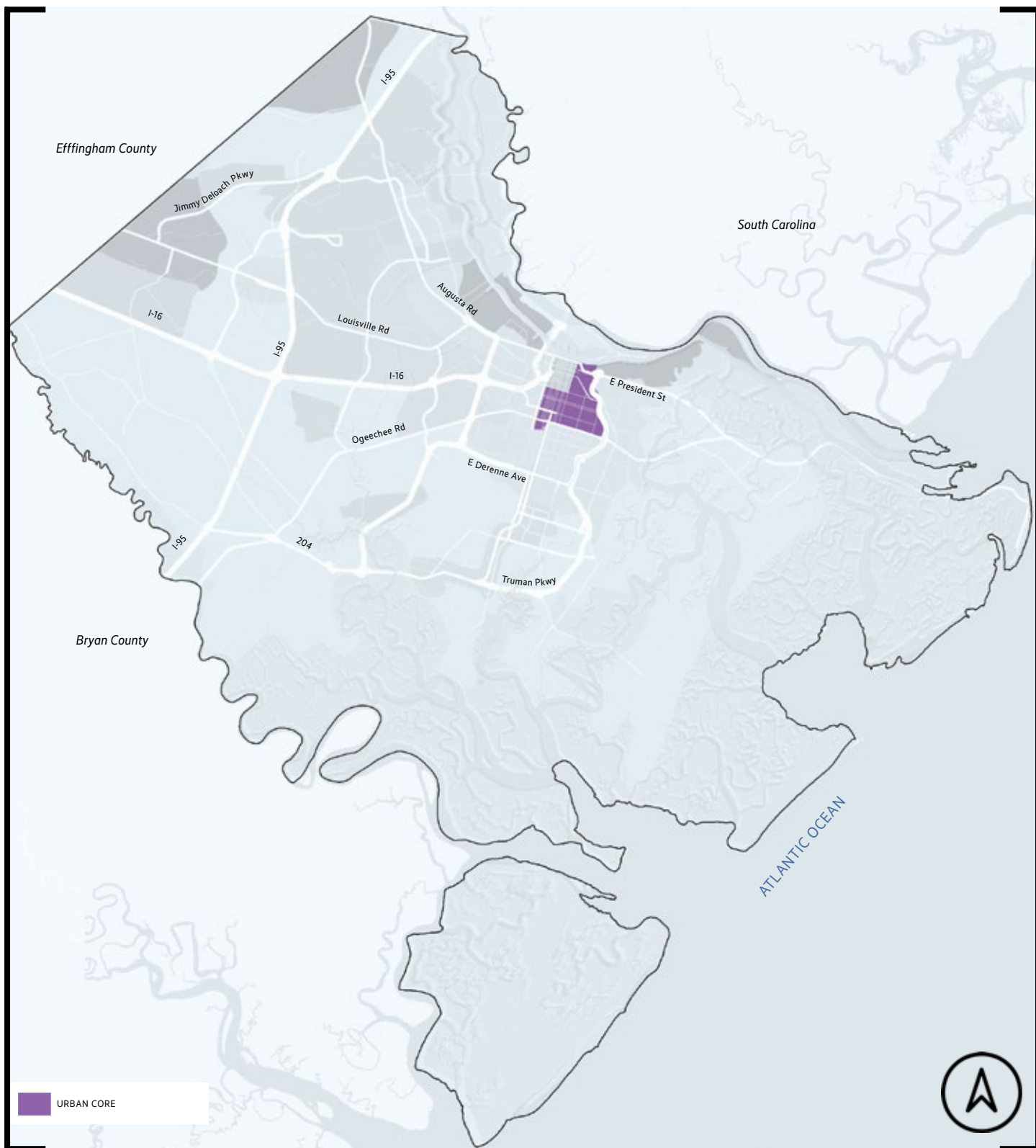
URBAN CORE

The Urban Core character area contains the local and National Register Victorian and Streetcar Historic Districts, as well as the Eastside neighborhoods in the city of Savannah. This area is characterized by a mix of detached and attached single-family homes, mid-size multi-family buildings, and smaller-scale, neighborhood commercial. Urban Core areas are walkable with a well-connected sidewalk network and street grid. Lot sizes are larger and building heights lower (around 2-4 stories) than in the Urban Downtown. Infill and redevelopment opportunities are more widely available in the Urban Core; any future development should maintain the walkable densities and be compatible with the community character. A range of housing options should be encouraged in the Urban Core to accommodate workers, students, small families, seniors, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Attached & detached Residential, Multi-Family
SECONDARY USES	Commercial, mixed-use, civic & institutional, short-term rental
DENSITY	Medium-high; 6–20 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
PARKING	On-street, off-street, limited surface, private driveways
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Municipal parks, squares, cemeteries, waterfront



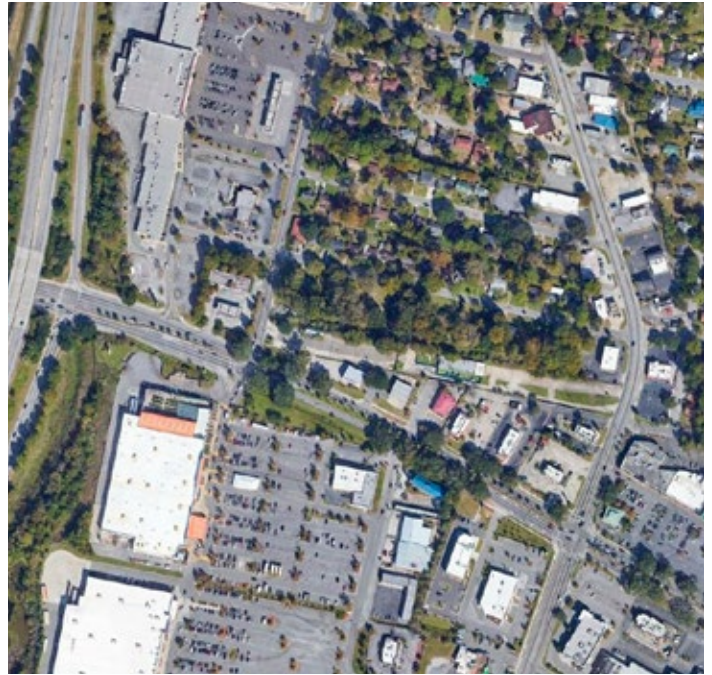


Map 4.16–Urban Core Character Area, Chatham County



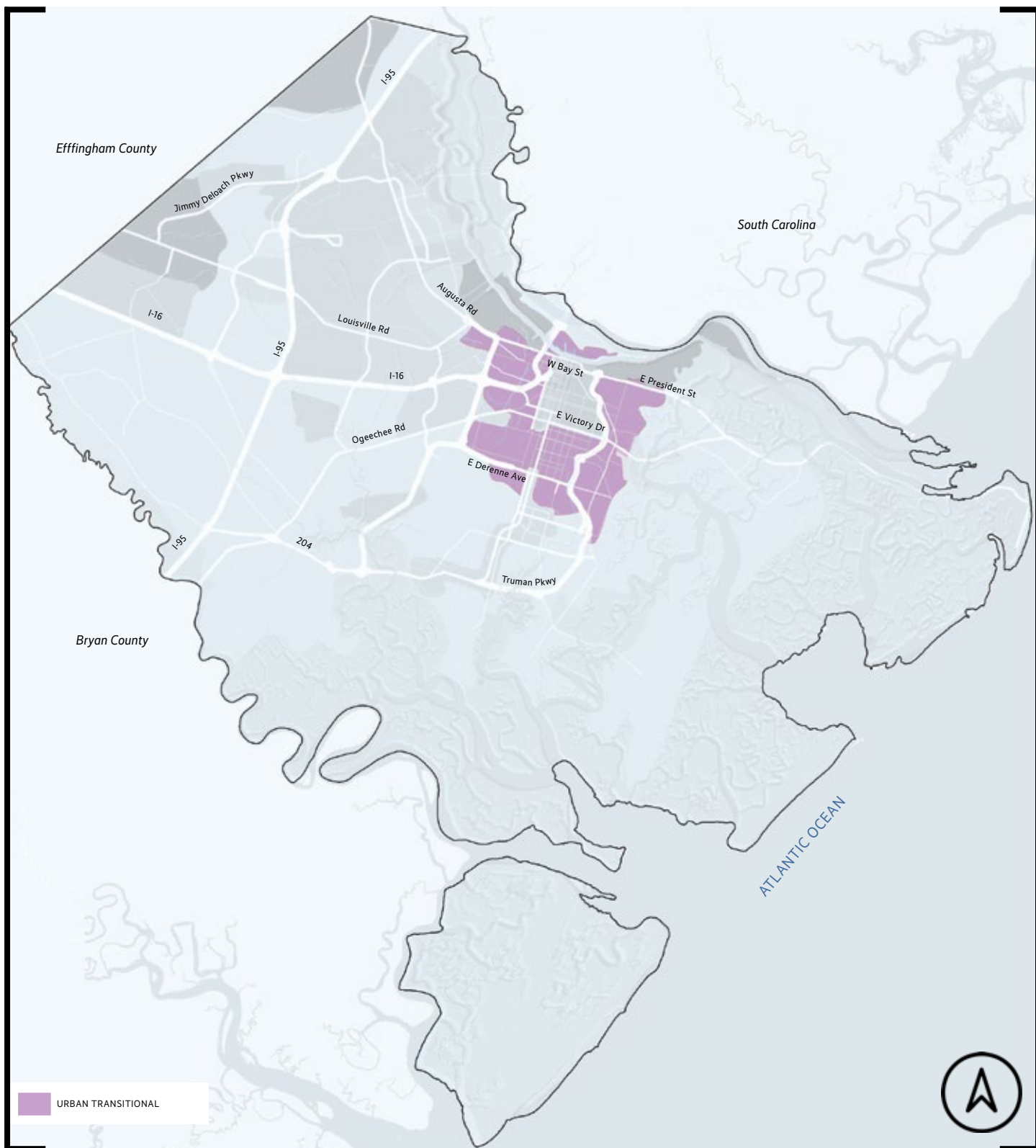
URBAN TRANSITIONAL

Urban Transitional character areas are those that are sometimes classified as “urban edge” or “urban expansion.” This character area includes the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, established neighborhoods such as Ardsley Park and Victory Heights, and commercial corridors on Abercorn Street and Victory Drive. Urban Transitional areas are identifiable by more automobile-oriented, suburban style residential areas that still provide access to urban amenities and public transit. Most of these neighborhoods are also pedestrian-oriented with well-used sidewalks, parks, and open spaces. Redevelopment and infill development opportunities are prevalent in this character area, and special attention should be paid to corridors suited for TOD.



PRIMARY USES	Attached & detached Residential
SECONDARY USES	Commercial, civic & institutional
DENSITY	Medium-high; 6–20 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
PARKING	On-street, off-street, surface, private driveways
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Municipal parks, schools, historic Grayson Stadium





Map 4.17—Urban Transitional Character Area, Chatham County

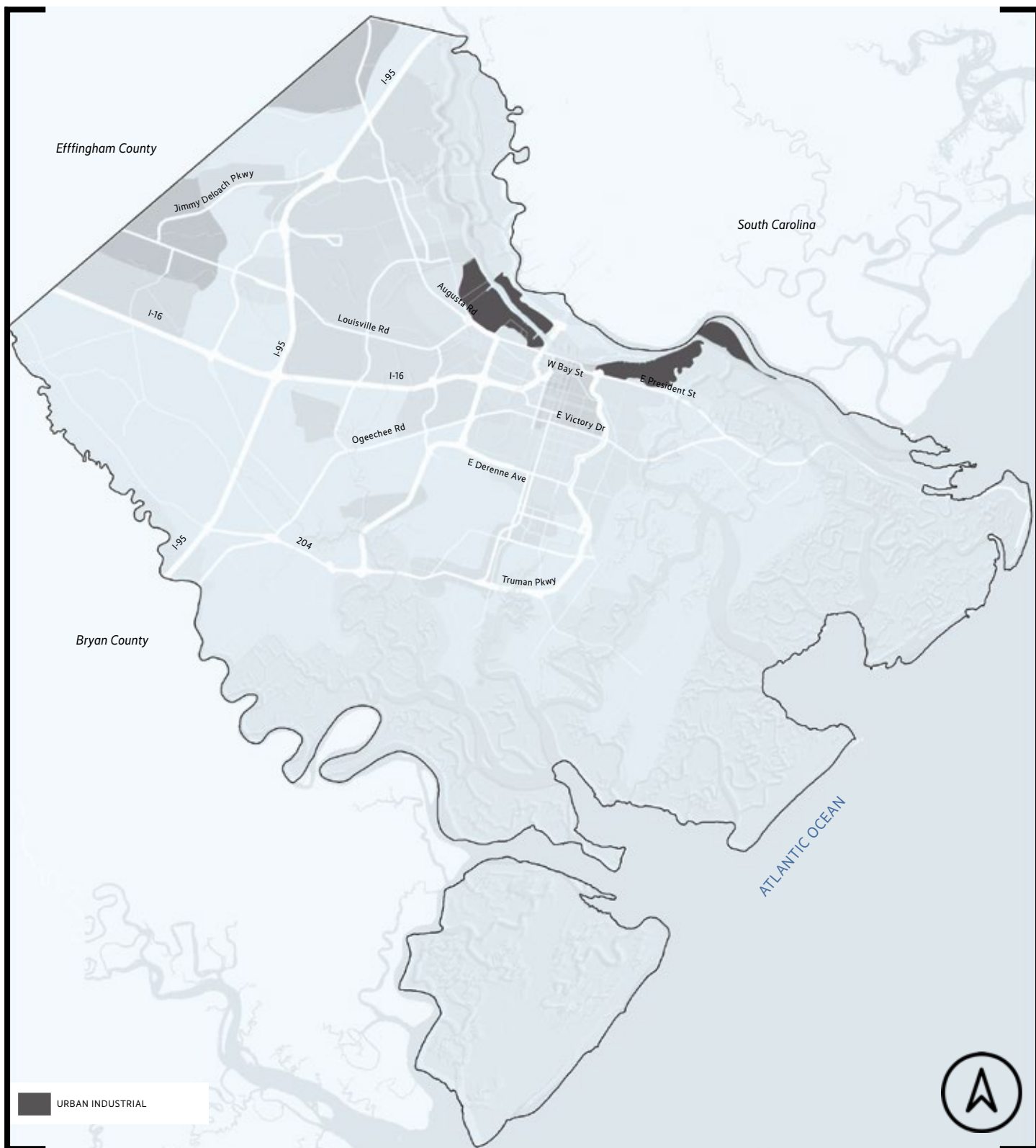


URBAN INDUSTRIAL

The Urban Industrial character area identifies those areas near the Urban Downtown and Core that have higher intensity uses, such as light and heavy manufacturing, warehouses, and ports. These uses tend to generate noise, particulate matter, fumes, and/or other nuisances that are not contained on site. These areas are directly connected to many urban neighborhoods and contain several employment centers. Attention should be paid to increasing public transportation access to this character area to reinforce its status as an urban employment hub. While these areas are largely built out and will remain industrial in character, encouraging site design that softens or shields the view of buildings and parking lots, loading docks, etc., will enhance the quality of the sites.



PRIMARY USES	Heavy & Light Manufacturing, Warehouse, High Intensity
SECONDARY USES	Commercial
DENSITY	N/A
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented, limited multi-modal transportation
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Arterials
PARKING	Surface parking
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Undeveloped area, no intentional open space



Map 4.18—Urban Industrial Character Area, Chatham County

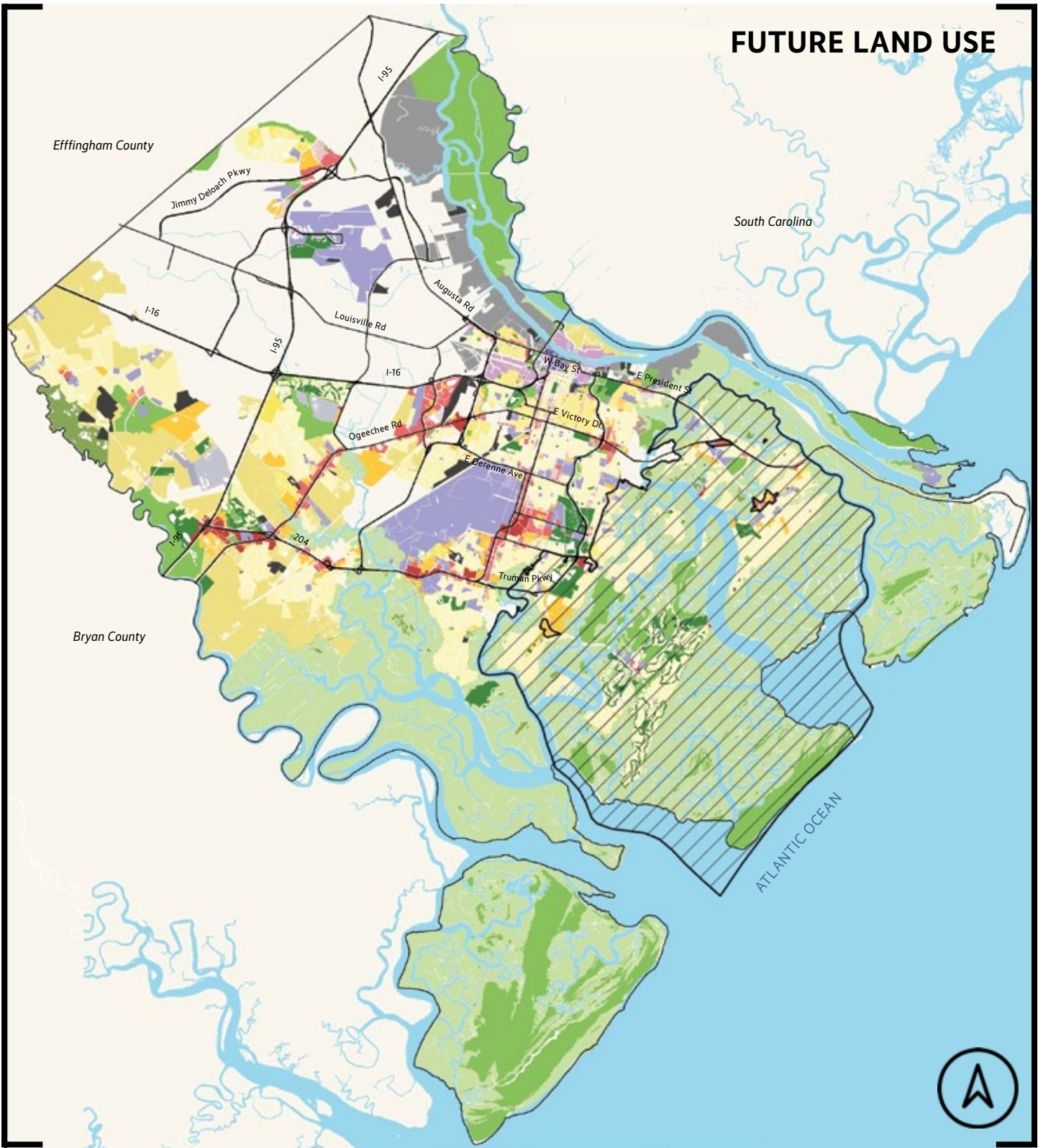


FUTURE LAND USE

Plan 2040 sets out a vision for the community and its future land use decisions. In addition to the CAM, this element includes a FLUM to present information, strategies, and recommendations to guide future land use policies and decisions. The FLUM and the CAM envision future land uses with attention to the interconnected elements of community character, development patterns, transportation infrastructure, equity, and natural resources.

The FLUM serves to give direction for zoning decisions through specific land use categories for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah. The CAM identifies the character vision for all of Chatham County. In partnership with one another, the FLUM and the CAM are intended to guide the character and direction of land use decisions in the county with the goal of furthering consistent uses and character.

Future land use patterns for unincorporated Chatham County and the city of Savannah are shown on the FLUM. The FLUM contains land use and overlay categories, which visually represent the land uses that serve as a guide for future zoning and development policy decisions. Land use categories are defined in detail on the following pages. Interpretation of the FLUM should be considered along with all zoning requests, local policy reviews, recommendations, and decisions when policymakers consider land development questions or requests.



Map 4.19-Future Land Use, Chatham County



LAND USE CATEGORIES

MAP COLOR					
LAND USE	Downtown	Downtown Expansion	Traditional Commercial	Traditional Neighborhood	Civic/Institution
DEFINITION	The traditional Central Business District, including retail, office, entertainment, institutional, civic, and residential uses that are integrated into the walkable urban fabric.	Areas in close proximity to the Central Business District that are identified for growth of retail, office, entertainment, open spaces, institutional, civic, and residential uses. This area is intended to be compatible and interconnected with the Downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods, while also accommodating new forms of urban development.	Business areas in close proximity to Downtown Savannah or in outlying historically settled areas. This category includes commercial uses that should be compatible with the character and scale of adjacent neighborhoods, most often found along collectors and arterials. Characteristics include walkability, limited or on street parking, and multi-tenant retail.	Residential areas in close proximity to downtown or in outlying historically settled areas. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character of neighborhoods.	Areas that consist of educational, religious, medical, and/or public uses, which may be in a campus setting and may include private or public open space. Such areas may include schools, places of worship, hospitals, libraries, public recreation, municipal facilities, or uses of a similar nature.
	Commercial Neighborhood	Commercial Suburban	Commercial Regional	Commercial Marine	Industry Light
	Nodal and multi-tenant retail areas that are within predominately residential areas and are developed at a scale and intensity compatible with adjacent residential uses. These neighborhoods are typically auto-dependent.	Business areas supporting shopping centers and corridor commercial uses.	Business areas supporting most retail, service, office, and institutional uses. Large-scale commercial uses such as shopping malls and lifestyle centers are appropriate. These destinations are typically only accessible by vehicle.	Land dedicated to marina operations including ancillary uses that are both marine-related and an integral part of the marina complex.	Areas supporting warehouses, wholesale facilities, and the manufacturing, assembly, or production of parts and products, which may require intensive truck traffic and outdoor storage but do not produce noise, odor, dust, or contaminants above ambient levels.

MAP COLOR					
LAND USE	Industry Heavy	Residential General	Single Family	Suburban Single Family	Planned Development
DEFINITION	Areas supporting uses that are involved in the large-scale freight, operation, demolition, surface mining, and production of materials and may produce noise, odor, dust, and contaminants measurable above ambient levels.	Areas with a wide range of residential uses—including multi-family dwellings, attached dwellings, small lot single-family dwellings, and mixed-use with upper story residential—at densities greater than 10 units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.	Areas identified for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed eight (8) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.	Areas identified for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed five (5) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.	Master planned areas accommodating cluster development, neo-traditional development, or mixed residential, commercial, or civic uses. Such developments are characterized by internal or external linkages among residential, commercial, institutional, or recreational use components. This category includes Amenity Communities, Village Centers, Town Centers, and existing PUDs.
	Agricultural/Forestry	Trans/Comm/Utility	Parks & Recreations	Conservation	Conservation Residential
	Areas principally used for farming, silviculture, dairy or livestock production, and resource extraction. This category also includes single-family detached dwellings not to exceed one-half (0.5) unit per gross acre.	Areas dedicated principally to railroad facilities, airports, cell towers, sub stations, solar farms and similar uses that produce intensive or obtrusive activities that are not readily assimilated into other districts.	Land dedicated to open space that is accessible to the public or areas dedicated to sports, exercise, or other types of leisure activities.	Land that is publicly or privately held and designated for preservation in a natural state or for use for passive recreation (e.g., fishing, hiking, camping). This category also includes all back barrier islands consisting of less than two acres of contiguous uplands.	This category is for back barrier islands that are in private ownership and have uplands exceeding two acres on a contiguous land mass. Such areas shall observe conservation principles, but may be developed for residential use at low densities.



LAND USE CATEGORIES

MAP COLOR					
LAND USE	Tidal Marsh	Environmental Overlay	Airport Overlay	Arterial Corridor Overlay	Landfill
DEFINITION	Areas of estuarine influence that are inundated by tidal waters on a daily basis and are characterized by Spartina (cord grass) habitat.	The island, estuarine, and marsh areas of unincorporated Chatham County, to include back barrier islands, hammocks, and other environmentally sensitive areas and/or habitats. The Environmental Overlay is used as a supplemental zoning tool implemented through standards meant to restrict the intensity of development in areas where such development would negatively impact the health and/or vitality of the area.	Areas adjacent to airport facilities that are within Clear Zones, Accident Potential Zones, and Noise Zones where day-night averages are greater than 65 decibels, or similar zones of influence. This designation shall be applied to areas with the flexibility to plan future development in a manner that will place compatible uses in appropriate locations and at appropriate densities.	Areas having established residential character that, due to their arterial location, are confronted with potential commercial intrusion. Within this overlay, rezoning petitions may proceed where the combined lot width of property is equal to or greater than 175 feet along the arterial street.	A land depository or excavation area operated in a controlled manner for the dumping of debris or inert material; or a disposal site operated by means of compacting and covering solid waste with an approved material. This term is intended to include both debris landfills and sanitary landfills.
	Surface Mining				
	Areas constituting all or part of a process for the removal of minerals, ores, or other solid matter for sale or for consumption.				

PLAN CONSISTENCY

The FLUM and the CAM are based on the policies and assumptions contained in the Comprehensive Plan and the forecasted growth and character for Chatham County and Savannah. The FLUM shows the general land use recommended and corresponds to a range of potentially appropriate functions and intensities within each land use category. The CAM shows the general character and centers of activity for the county and corresponds to a wide range of land uses.

While the FLUM and CAM will influence future zoning, they do not alter current zoning or affect the rights of property owners to use the land for its purpose as zoned at the time of this Plan's adoption. The designation of an area with a particular land use category or character area does not mean that the most intensive zoning district is automatically recommended; the FLUM and the CAM document the general recommended future use for each designated area. A variety of factors and site characteristics, such as infrastructure availability, should also be considered. Additionally, other types of uses beyond those suggested by the FLUM and the CAM may be considered compatible and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The future land use categories and character areas should not be interpreted to support nor preclude developments without consideration of the policies and intent of the Comprehensive Plan. Determination of the conformance of a proposed use or zoning request with the Comprehensive Plan should include, but is not limited to, consideration of the following questions:

1. Is the proposal consistent with the vision, themes, and policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan?
2. Is the proposed use being considered specifically designated on the FLUM in the area where its location is proposed?
3. Does the CAM indicate that the character of the proposed use is appropriate?



ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

With Chatham County's growth and development come issues and opportunities. Identifying these issues and opportunities is an essential step in ensuring responsible existing and future land use policies and programs. After careful review and public input, the following list was created to highlight critical issues that may need careful attention and consideration in the future:

Consistency

Chatham County Zoning Ordinance

The Chatham County Zoning Ordinance was last amended in 2009 and has not been updated since. The ordinance is fairly simple and does not contain any character-based zoning districts.

City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance

On July 18, 2019, the City of Savannah adopted a new zoning ordinance—Savannah's Zoning Ordinance (previously known as NewZO)—which was created in an effort to better recognize the modern and historic development patterns of the city. The zoning ordinance addressed many of the previous inconsistencies between land use policy and the Comprehensive Plan. However, constant re-evaluation of the consistency between zoning ordinance and all other forms of land use policies in the city with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan is vital. Future land use policy should utilize not only the future land use and growth patterns as identified in this element, but include at a minimum the additional elements of the Comprehensive Plan that are integral and connected to land use, including housing, economic development, and natural resources.

Gentrification

As the historic districts and neighborhoods in Savannah continue to draw in visitors and investment, many people and legacy businesses are becoming displaced as property taxes, rent, and home prices rise. This displacement first began in the Landmark Historic District and has since moved to the Victorian and Streetcar Historic Districts. While the economic impact of increased investment is substantial, the land use and affordability changes in these areas have disproportionately impacted people of color and elderly longtime residents. The Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, as well as eastside neighborhoods outside of downtown, are likely to begin to see more gentrification as the downtown districts become more built out and unaffordable. Important considerations should be made regarding the current locations of those impacted by gentrification—especially minority groups—and future policy and procedures for equitably relocating those who wish to do so.

Redevelopment

As the downtown area becomes more built out, the City of Savannah should look to redevelopment opportunities in the Downtown Expansion areas, as well as areas that could be reconfigured to present more sustainable modes of growth and development. As highlighted in the Growth Centers section of this element, TOD should be prioritized as a strategy. While the Downtown Expansion areas have been identified in the zoning ordinance and FLUM as areas where new development can and should occur, there are several areas outside of downtown Savannah that should be studied to assess whether transit-oriented and mixed-use development would be appropriate.

Annexation

The City of Savannah, as well as the municipalities of West Chatham, are continually annexing lands in unincorporated Chatham County. Currently, there is not a comprehensive list of past annexations nor a unified program for future annexations by any municipality. Coordination among the City of Savannah, Chatham County, and the seven other municipalities within the County is necessary to develop a countywide record of annexation and a comprehensive growth management plan. Approaches that provide for more compact and orderly growth and better coordination of land development with infrastructure and public facilities are critically needed. Future annexation areas should be identified and, if not already developed, should remain predominately undeveloped until land areas within municipal boundaries are more fully utilized.

Regional Coordination

The effects of climate change, countywide commuting patterns, and shifting economies require planning at a regional scale. While each municipality maintains its own planning program and land use regulations, ensuring the economic, environmental, and social welfare of the entire county requires intergovernmental cooperation in the planning and provision of public services. The Land Use element looks to provide visioning for countywide character growth through the Character Growth Model. However, more work is needed to cooperate and plan regionally in Chatham County. While the Metropolitan Planning Commission provides a regional approach to planning in Chatham County, in order for future smart growth to occur, all municipal planning programs must incorporate a unified regional plan.

Natural Resources

The high rate of growth and development that has already taken place—and is predicted to continue into the foreseeable future—throughout Chatham County necessitates a proactive, focused effort by the County and municipalities to protect the varied natural resources within their jurisdictions. The negative consequences of development affect not only natural resources, but also the quality of life of residents by exacerbating environmental hazards such as flooding, polluted waterways, temperature extremes, and extreme weather events. Efforts to protect our natural resources through responsible land use measures will aid in increasing community resilience from catastrophic events while lessening the negative impacts associated with sea level rise and climate change.

Preserving and Enhancing the Public Realm

While Tybee Island and areas of unincorporated Chatham County are known for their natural features such as beaches, marshes, and waterways, downtown Savannah is recognized internationally for the quality of its historic buildings, parks, and public realm. The downtown area owes this distinction to the original town plan, to the preservation of the integrity of that plan, and to new expressions of the plan during later periods of growth. Downtown Savannah's green element—squares, parks, landscaped medians, and tree lawns—combined with other elements of the public realm such as sidewalks and historic buildings, contribute to a unique, inviting environment for the enjoyment of those who live, work, recreate, and visit the area.

The preservation of the public realm in downtown Savannah is crucial to the continuation of the success of the area as a vibrant, active, and welcoming destination. While not as prevalent as in downtown Savannah, there are other great public spaces throughout Chatham County that are valuable assets and worthy of stewardship. It is essential to learn from the mistakes of the past, such as the suburbanization of codes and ordinances, as well as urban renewal, to ensure that no further damage is done to the public realm by those types of policies.



LAND USE GOALS

GOAL 1

Establish growth policies for the City of Savannah to guide development and redevelopment in a responsible manner, encouraging compact/mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, increased connectivity, and open space preservation

Creating an attractive and livable community requires the development of a comprehensive community vision as well as policies and regulations that will guide growth to occur in a manner that is consistent with that vision. Without appropriate policies and regulations in place, development and redevelopment will occur in a disjointed and incompatible manner to the detriment of the community's quality of life.

Objectives:

- Review zoning regulations and other ordinances to identify standards that do not support the community vision
- Assess the development review process to identify ways to expedite and/or reduce fees for infill and grayfield projects
- Incentivize projects that are located in areas with existing infrastructure and within close proximity to services, making greenfield development less attractive and economical
- Prioritize the preservation and enhancement of the existing public realm and encourage the incorporation of public realm spaces and elements in new developments
- Prioritize land acquisition for open space and conservation
- Decrease development pressures on environmentally sensitive lands

GOAL 2

Identify and prioritize future annexations that are regionally coordinated, and that promote responsible growth

Coordination among municipalities within the region is crucial to plan for annexation and ensure growth occurs only in appropriate areas. These areas should have existing infrastructure to accommodate development that is compatible with the character of the surrounding area in both intensity and density. Proactively coordinating with the county to identify future annexation targets and agree upon responsible growth principles for those areas will result in an improved quality of life for all communities.

Objectives:

- Establish criteria for determining the appropriateness and readiness of development, including budgetary and other impacts
- Identify areas where future annexations would be appropriate and prioritize only those that promote responsible, compatible growth
- Develop protocol to analyze annexation requests to determine appropriateness of the annexation



GOAL 3

Utilize small area and corridor plans as a means to protect the character of existing areas and ensure new development is compatible

Small area and corridor plans are effective tools to provide more localized guidance for land use decision-making. They can be used to address current conditions and issues, and ensure that future growth and development is consistent with existing development patterns and the character of the area. Such plans proactively address the needs of the community at a level of specificity that cannot be achieved through community-wide land use plans or zoning ordinances.

Objectives:

- Update existing small area plans and develop new small area plans as appropriate
- Develop criteria for identifying and prioritizing small area planning needs for areas where growth and development pressures are high
- Develop criteria for identifying and prioritizing corridor plans for areas where growth and development pressures are high or specialized protections are needed
- Identify corridors that could support TOD and create corridor plans to allow for and encourage TOD in an appropriate manner

GOAL 4

Continue to create innovative ways to connect people with places

Land use and transportation policies and objectives are inevitably connected, and it is necessary to acknowledge and consider this relationship when making planning decisions in order to safeguard against unintended consequences. Transportation policies can undermine land use objectives and vice versa; it is necessary, therefore, to ensure that their respective efforts consider the impacts of one on the other to guarantee a positive outcome in both regards.

Objectives:

- Consider the impacts of all transportation decisions, strategies, and investments on surrounding existing land uses and the public realm, and potential deviations from land use objectives
- Encourage land use patterns that reduce distances between residences and services
- Increase opportunities for mass transit and other mobility options (walking, biking, etc.) through proper planning of the land use pattern



GOAL 5

Enhance the character and image of major corridors that implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes

Create a series of new and enhanced public spaces—including parks, plazas, green spaces, and pocket parks—throughout the city, and particularly in mixed-use areas, to improve the experience for residents who gather and interact in these locations. Incorporate active programming and elements such as public art, trees and other plantings, seating, and water features to enhance the appeal of these spaces.

Objectives:

- Implement the design and construction of safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes that project a positive image while encouraging walking
- Incorporate distinctive pavement textures and colors in streetscape designs, particularly in areas with high levels of pedestrian and commercial activity
- Research and pursue opportunities to relocate overhead power lines underground, particularly on major commercial corridors



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