QUALITY OF LIFE
ELEMENT

08

QUALITY OF LIFE

Introduction

The Quality of Life element of Pooler 2040 seeks to present goals and recommendations for establishing historic preservation activities within Pooler in order to preserve and recognize its historic, cultural, and archaeological resources.

This element also includes an inventory and assessment of the following quality of life aspects: Historic and Cultural Resources, Education, Health, Public Safety, and Broadband.

Historic Resources

Education

Community Health

Public Safety

Broadband

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

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

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the United States federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed worthy of preservation for their historical significance.

There has been substantial interest in pursuing historic preservation in Pooler, however preservation efforts have been limited. The last known historic resource survey was completed in 1992/1993 by the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) staff. This survey identified 38 resources in an area bounded by Collins Street, Chestnut Street, Holly (Traver) Street, and Read Street. The 2016–2036 Comprehensive Plan incorporated and expanded upon this original survey area for the establishment of a Historic District Character Area.

Goals pertaining to this character area included the establishment of a historic preservation ordinance, design standards, and an architectural review committee. However, no up-to-date survey has been taken of either this area or the city of Pooler generally, and no further preservation efforts have been established.

1993

When the last known historic resource survey was conducted by the MPC

POOLER CITY HALL

MIGHTY EIGHTH AIRFORCE MARKER

POOLER CABOOSE

POOLER HISTORY

Indigenous History

The area now known as Pooler was likely occupied by Native peoples from the Yamassee Nation and/or the Mvskoke (Muscogee/Creek) Nations prior to the arrival of British colonist in the mid-1700s. This land was ceded in the Savannah Treaty of 1733 between the Trustees for the Colony of Georgia and the Chief Men of the nation of the Lower Creeks *(Georgia Treaties, 1733–1763, Vol. XI).*

Central of Georgia Railroad Station Stop No. 1

Until the mid-1800s, the land that would become Pooler remained relatively undeveloped. In 1838, Station Stop No. 1 was established by the Central of Georgia Railroad, contributing greatly to the economic, social, industrial, and transportation development in the area. This station was named for Robert W. Pooler, born in 1796, who was a prominent figure in Savannah and instrumental in the railroad route itself. Robert W. Pooler deeded a large piece of land to the Central of Georgia Railroad Co. as a right-of-way. Pooler, with his plan for the Georgia railroad route, went in person to each county the railroad line was to run through, and arranged for the purchase of rights-of-way. Before the larger formation of the town itself, a portion of the land was sold by the railroad and became part of the residential area around the station. The Pooler station was the last stop in the connection route before reaching Savannah.

The Civil War at Pooler Station

On Friday, December 9, 1864, the more than 11,000 troops of the 17th Corps approached and made camp at Pooler Station No. 1 on the Central Railroad. The next morning, General Sherman rode forward on Louisville Road with his staff to get a closer look at the Confederate line. In a dense wood of the modern day Tom Triplett Community Park, Sherman and the troops stopped to assess and strategize their eventual siege of Savannah. From December 10th to 15th, the troops set up camp in these woods, where hundreds of small mounds, made by Federal soldiers to keep belongings out of water, can still be found. The marker in the photo below was erected by the Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails in Tom Triplett Park and describes a more detailed history of this event.

MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE MUSEUM

The Beginnings of Pooler

At the time of Sherman's encampment in Pooler, less than 200 people lived in the isolated Pooler community. Following the siege of Savannah, residential development in Pooler was spurred by a man named Ben Rothwell. Rothwell, of the Rothwell Brick and Manufacturing Company, purchased several hundred acres for locals to build homes in order to make the area a lasting community.

When Pooler officially incorporated in 1907, the population had grown slightly to 337 people. Later, in 1923, the first Pooler Town Hall was built. During this time, dairies made up the majority of the local economy, with some small shops and businesses springing up later. In 1928, the paving of Highway 80 allowed residents of Pooler easy access to Savannah.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force

The Eighth Air Force of the United States Army Air Corps was known as the most effective bomber force of World War II and was monikered the "Mighty Eighth." Activated in January of 1942 at the nearby Savannah Army Airbase (also known as Hunter Army Airfield), the Eighth's forces grew in numbers such that by November 1944, the 5,000th airplane was sent to England from Hunter Army Airfield. This plane was a B-17G named City of Savannah, as it had been bought with half a million dollars donated by the people of Savannah and surrounding areas.

Planning for a museum to honor the Mighty Eighth began in 1983 by Major General Lewis E. Lyle and other war veterans. The City of Pooler offered land for the museum, and in May of 1996 the museum officially opened its doors. The B-17 Flying Fortress City of Savannah is currently being restored to its full combat configuration and is on display within the museum.

The City of Pooler

Development in Pooler began to pick up in the 1950s with the construction of I-95. Businesses began to develop at the intersection of I-95 and Highway 80. However, for the remainder of Pooler, growth was slow until the 1990s, when development demands began to move west from Savannah. Pooler began to grow, with new subdivisions and businesses going up at a rapid rate. The Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport, followed by the completion of the Pooler Parkway in 2000, have contributed to the city being recognized as one of the fastest growing communities in Georgia. Development pressure continues in Pooler. With this rapid growth, older and affordable houses in the historic portion of Pooler can often come under threat of demolition.

EXISTING HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

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

The last known historic resources survey to take place in Pooler was in 1992/1993, in which 38 resources in an area bounded by Collins Street, Chestnut Street, Holly (Traver) Street, and Read Street were surveyed. Of these 38, two were determined to potentially meet the criteria for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (indicated as "Yes" in chart below). Six others were identified as needing more information to determine eligibility.

Historic Places:
National Register Eligibility—Pooler

	Address	Year Built	NR Eligible
1	Fox Field Cemetery—0 Brooklyn Way	1933	More Info
2	Newton Family Cemetery—0 Cemetery Road	1888	More Info
3	321 E Collins Street	1900	No
4	425 East Collins Street (205 S. Skinner Avenue)	1888	N/A
5	Withington House—117 West Collins Street	1885	No
6	215 West Collins Street	1900	No
7	Milan House—305 West Collins Street	1920	No
8	Wright Cemetery—0 Dot Barn Road	1903	More Info
9	108 Morgan Street	1890	N/A
10	111 Morgan Street	1888	N/A
11	112 Morgan Street	1900	No
12	115 Morgan Street	1890	No
13	116 Morgan Street	1890	No
14	119 Morgan Street	1930	No
15	John Smith House—116 Newton Street	1887	No
16	W.B. Biddenbach House—120 Newton Street	1888	Yes
17	Baker Sisters House—205 Newton Street	1890	No
18	209 Newton Street	1890	N/A
19	213 Newton Street	1890	No

	Address	Year Built	NR Eligible
20	Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery—480 Pine Barren	1885	More Info
21	Halliday Cemetery—890 Pine Barren	1848	More Info
22	Ennis Cemetery—1485 Pine Barren	1895	More Info
23	Tyner House—5230 Old Louisville Road	1900	N/A
24	139 Read Street	1933	N/A
25	Richard Turner Masonic Lodge—108 N Rogers	1900	No
26	119 North Rogers Street	1890	N/A
27	120 North Rogers Street	Unknown	N/A
28	Nungazer House—121 North Rogers Street	1880	No
29	Adams House—129 North Rogers Street	1890	No
30	130 North Rogers Street	1890	No
31	Forehand House—133 Rogers Street	1900	No
32	134 North Rogers Street	1890	No
33	205 North Rogers Street	1900	No
34	Lindermann House—219 North Rogers Street	1890	No
35	Wallace House—230 Rothwell Street	1890	No
36	108 Symons Street	1900	No
37	104 East US Highway 80	1900	No
38	204 West US Highway 80	1900	Yes

Figure 8.1–Historic Places, Pooler

DEMOLISHED; THIS IDENTIFICATION IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE

NEWTON STREET

NEWTON FAMILY CEMETERY

MORGAN STREET

RECOMMENDED HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

Updating and expanding the historic resources survey ensures that those resources which are vital to the history of Pooler are known and potentially protected. Without this knowledge, further preservation efforts cannot be pursued. Moving forward, areas of Pooler that would be appropriate for a new or updated historic resources survey must be identified. Neighborhoods and other areas over 50 years old, which maintain a high level of integrity, should be evaluated based on interest from the community, threat of loss, and size of area to identify places that may benefit from historic resources surveys.

RECOMMENDED HISTORIC SURVEY AREA

The 1993 survey area bounded by Collins Street, Chestnut Street, Holly (Traver) Street, and Read Street, as well as the expanded boundaries identified in the 2016–2036 Comprehensive Plan should be utilized to create updated boundaries for an area in which new and renewed historic resources survey efforts should take place. The following map is a recommendation for the boundaries for a historic resources survey area based on the previous 1992/1993 survey.

RECOMMENDED HISTORIC SURVEY AREA

Map 8.1–Recommended Historic Resources Survey Area

EDUCATION

Education is key to attracting residents to a community to live; education is key in building and sustaining an advancing workforce; and education is key in ushering in future generations of well informed, respectful, and engaging residents.

Public schools throughout the Chatham County are managed and operated by the Savannah—Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS). As of 2020, the school system consists of 24 elementary schools, seven K-8 schools, eight middle schools, 11 high schools, and five charter schools. In 2018 the school district had 37,576 students enrolled with a 14:1 student to teacher ratio. In Pooler there are three schools, Pooler Elementary, West Chatham Elementary, West Chatham Middle School. The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) scores have been provided below for each school in Pooler for the 2018–2019 school year.

- Pooler Elementary School received a CCRPI score of 68.8, or D grading for the 2018–2019 school year.
- West Chatham Elementary School received a CCRPI score of 60.4, or D grading for the 2018–2019 school year.
- West Chatham Middle School a CCRPI score of 71.3, or C grading for the 2018–2019 school year.
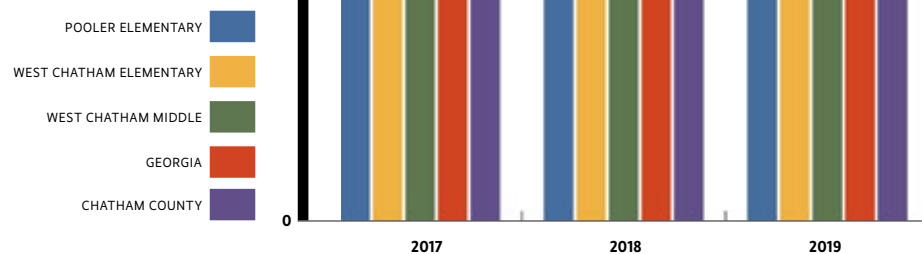
CCRPI

The College and Career Ready Performance Index is a comprehensive school improvement, accountability, and communication platform for all education stakeholders that helps to promote college and career readiness for all Georgia public school students.

—CCRPI

POOLER ELEMENTARY
WEST CHATHAM ELEMENTARY
WEST CHATHAM MIDDLE
GEORGIA
CHATHAM COUNTY

Figure 8.2–CCRPI Single Score 2017–2019
Georgia Department of Education

SCCPSS reports that 40% of students who attend SCCPSS Title 1 schools are economically disadvantaged, meaning that they either live in a family unit receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, or have been identified as homeless, unaccompanied youth, foster, or migrant. Thirty-three (33) of the SCCPSS's schools are defined as Title 1 Schools in which children from low-incomes families make up 40% of enrollment. Being economically disadvantaged can often prove to be a large obstacle for students with academic, mental, and social challenges.

A current trend that is aiding in the development of focus and improved behavior in students is mindfulness. Across the nation, many school boards have been introducing mindfulness to students. Mindfulness is a state of being that teaches one to live in the present and how to experience enjoyment with what is going on in the current moment. This can be taught through different measures such as: conscious breathing, sensory stimulation, guided imagery/meditation, and mindfulness through body movement. Schools in SCCPSS (Woodville Tompkins) have introduced yoga and mindfulness courses into their curriculums.

With the challenges and stressors many SCCPSS students may be facing stemming from their family lives at home, mindfulness can serve as a remedy teaching students to handle their lives in a healthy, constructive manner, which can ultimately improve school performance. In addition to mindfulness, there are a number of things that can be taught to students to help them better navigate through life now and moving forward into the future.

TITLE 1 SCHOOLS

Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40% of enrollment are eligible to use Title 1 funds to operate school wide programs that serve all children in the school in order to raise the achievement of the lowest-achieving students.

—Department of Education

Teaching mindfulness to grade school children is a new trend that has shown to improve behavior and self-esteem

Education Beyond K-12

Life after high school presents many avenues to opportunity. Some may choose college or the military, many choose trade and technical schools, and some go straight into the workforce. Whatever route a new graduate, or any adult, wants to take, Pooler has several options to choose from in preparing residents for their career moves. Attention to growing industries in the area—including manufacturing, coding, and film production—can help ensure the workforce has the skills needed to support the local economy.

Regarding countywide public high school graduation rates and educational attainment for adults, there has been gradual improvement in the past five years. Figure 8.3 shows that the high school graduation rate in the county has increased over 6% in the past five years; this calculation only reflects the students who graduated within four years.

In Pooler, most people over age 25 held a high school diploma (including high school equivalency degree) or higher in 2014–2018 (91.4%), while 37.1% held a bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree.

These percentages are down slightly from 2009–2013, when an estimated 94.2% of residents had at least a high school diploma and an estimated 39.4% had a bachelor's degree or higher. Figure 8.4 below illustrates the breakdown of educational attainment in Pooler.
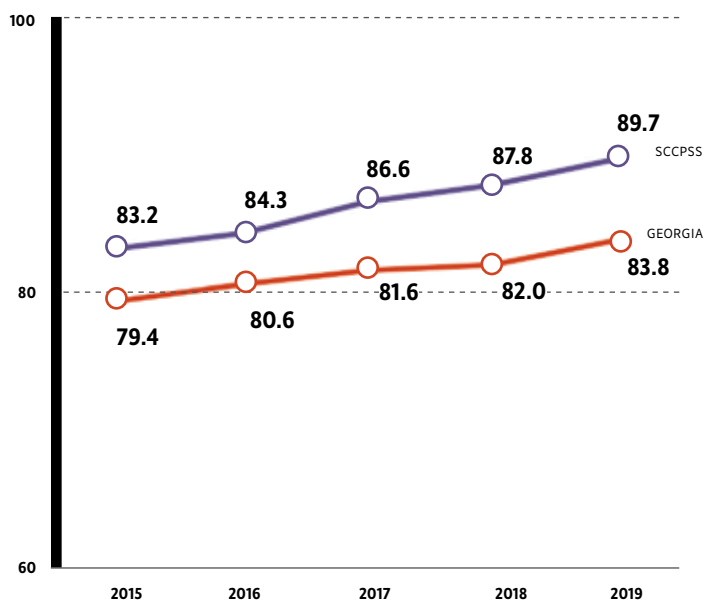
Graduation Rate Trends, 2015–2019

Figure 8.3–Graduation Rate Trend Chart 2015–2019
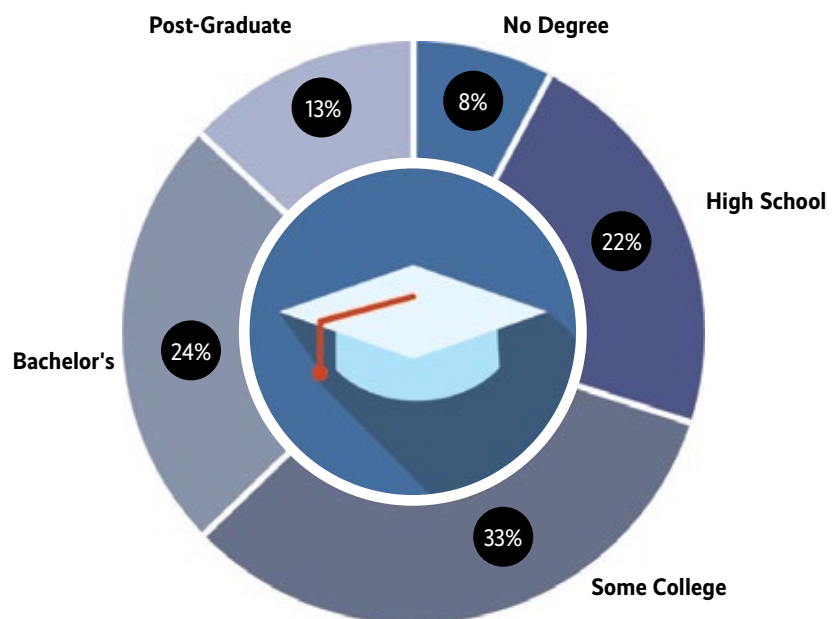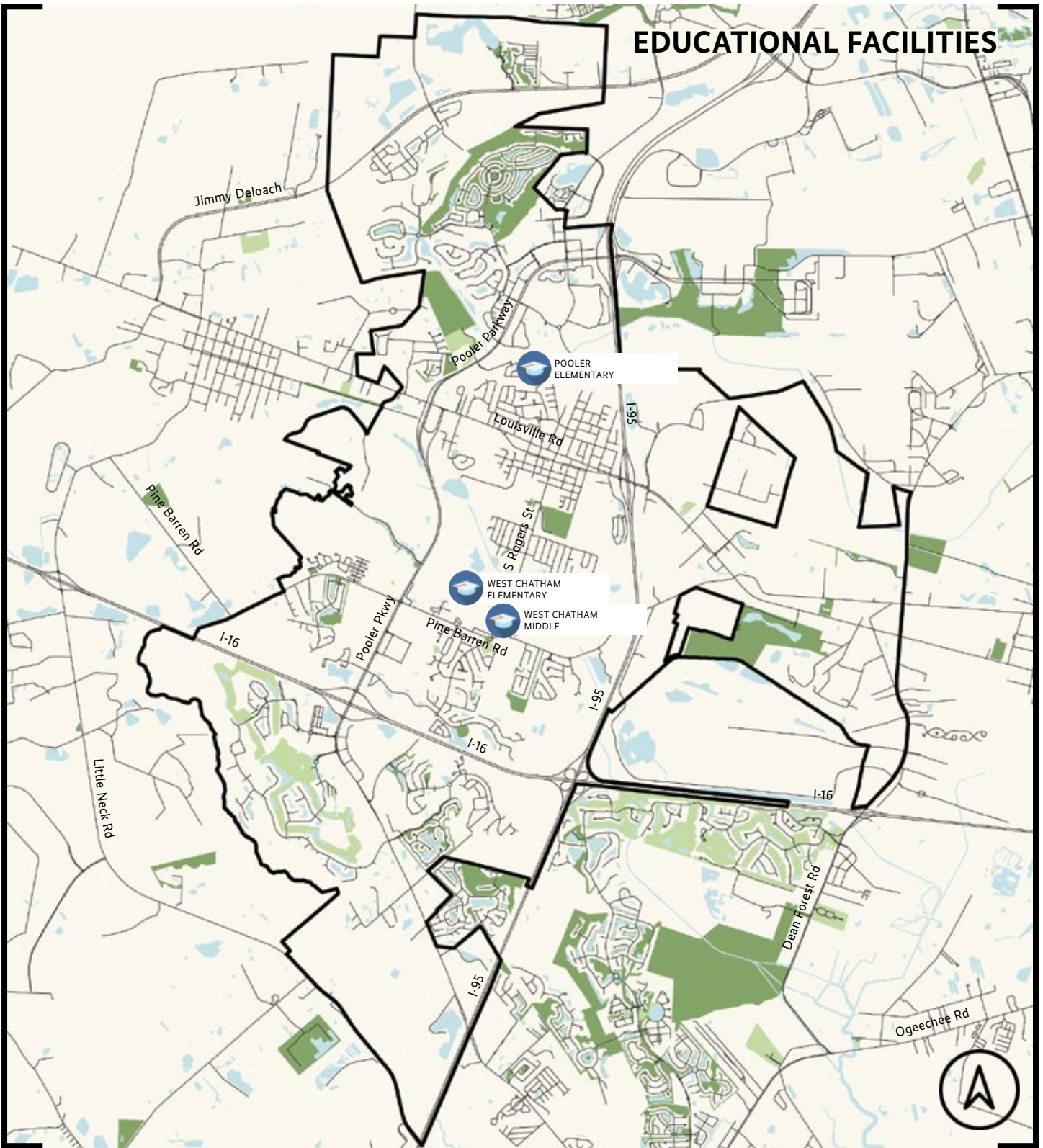Savannah—Chatham County Public School System

Educational Attainment, 2014–2018

Figure 8.4–Educational Attainment, Pooler
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Map 8.2–Educational Facilities, Pooler

Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)

SCAD is a private, nonprofit institution founded in 1978 in the city of Savannah. Currently the school has numerous buildings and facilities located in different areas throughout the city serving its 15,000 students. SCAD has more than 40 majors and 75 minors, more than any other art and design university in the country. Degrees offered include: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Architecture, Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, and Master of Urban Design. The most highly enrolled majors in Fall 2017 were animation, fashion, film and television, illustration and interior design.

SCAD

SCAD celebrates cinematic creativity from both award-winning professionals and emerging student filmmakers. Each year, more than 63,000 people attend the eight-day SCAD Savannah Film Festival. The festival is host to a wide variety of competition film screenings, special screenings, workshops, panels, and lectures.

Savannah State University (SSU)

Known as Georgia's oldest historically black college or university (HBCU), Savannah State was founded in 1890. This public university is located in Savannah on a 201-acre campus, and offers 30 baccalaureate majors and degrees and five graduate degrees to its approximate 4,500 students. These majors are housed within four colleges: the College of Business Administration, the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, the College of Science and Technology, and the College of Education.

SSU awards more Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Marine Science to African Americans than any other program in the country. Also, SSU is home to the nation's first Homeland Security and Emergency Management program at an HBCU. The program is the only bachelor's degree program for homeland security/emergency management offered in the state of Georgia and in the region. Additionally, SSU boasts a broad athletic program, which is part of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Georgia Southern University (GSU)

This public university, once known as Armstrong State University, recently consolidated with Georgia Southern University based in Statesboro to become the Armstrong Campus of Georgia Southern University. The campus, located in the southside of Savannah, is attended by nearly 6,500 students and offers over 50 majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels. GSU's Waters College of Health Professions is one of the school's premier programs, having long been a top producer of undergraduate health professionals in Georgia.

Georgia Tech-Savannah

In 2003, the Georgia Institute of Technology opened its satellite branch in the City of Savannah. The campus offers courses tailored to furthering the education and skills of established professionals, including the Georgia Film Academy, K-12 programs, leadership training, and military programs. In addition to providing opportunities for career advancement and education for professionals, Georgia Tech-Savannah has numerous partnerships within the region, providing assistance to budding tech-entrepreneurs and manufacturing and logistics guidance for large corporations.

South University

South University was founded in Savannah in 1899 as Draughan's Practical Business College. Throughout the years the school has transformed into a larger university, developing satellite locations spanning across several states as well as offering online courses to more than 3,500 students. South University offers nine programs awarding degrees at the associate, undergraduate, and graduate levels in fields such as nursing, pharmacy, public health, and more.

Savannah Technical College

Founded in 1929, this Savannah-based public technical college serves more than 5,700 students and is a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia. The college offers both credit and non-credit programs designed to provide a skilled workforce to area employers. It awards certificate, diploma, and associate degrees in five academic divisions: Aviation Technology, Business and Professional Services, General Studies, Health Sciences, and Industrial Technology. The college's Economic Development division provides non-credit programs such as high school equivalency preparation, English as a Second Language (ESL), various workforce development programs for individuals, and corporate contract training. Savannah Tech has been ranked as the best community/technical college for active-duty military, their spouses, and veterans for many years.

SAVANNAH TECH

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

GEORGIA TECH-SAVANNAH

Live Oak Public Libraries

The Live Oak Public Libraries system provides programs and services in Chatham, Effingham, and Liberty Counties through 16 library locations and community outreach. There are 12 libraries in Chatham County, with one of those located in Pooler.

The library system's mission is to provide excellent, responsive service to enrich people's lives, support lifelong learning and build and enhance communities. Live Oak is creating tomorrow's library today to educate, inform, entertain and enrich the community.

Live Oak Public Libraries is focused on increasing access, increasing community engagement and increasing organizational excellence and sustainability. The network believes that libraries are at the heart of every community, and strong libraries help create and sustain strong communities. Library services support early learning/literacy, educational success, economic opportunity and quality of life.

Live Oak Public Libraries is a member of PINES, the statewide network of public library systems serving Georgia. PINES (Public Information Network for Electronic Services), connects more than 300 public libraries in 54 partner library systems across 146 counties and gives library card holders access to more than 11 million books and materials plus online resources such as the GALILEO system, Georgia's virtual library. The portal gives users access to thousands of resources such as periodicals, scholarly journals, government publications, and encyclopedias among several other resources.

The aim of GALILEO is to provide equal access to information for all Georgia's residents —Live Oak Public Libraries

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Benefits of the Library System

- – Libraries are open to everyone
- – Libraries support lifelong learning
- – Libraries offer access to technology
- – Libraries are community spaces
- – Libraries are wherever you are
- – Libraries are community partners

One of the city of Pooler's main capital projects to be completed in the next five years is the construction of a new full service library to be overseen by the Live Oak Public Library System.

Public Library Visits

Locations	2018	2019	2020
Bull Street Library	222,799	210,171	144,833
Carnegie Library	40,470	22,319	17,125
Forest City Library	17,486	16,654	10,521
Garden City Library	54,676	48,420	30,507
Islands Library	124,863	111,133	42,993
Oglethorpe Mall Library	134,877	110,791	74,207
Pooler Library	**68,422**	**73,835**	**55,970**
Port City Library	37,649	35,983	22,607
Southwest Chatham Library	183,372	133,178	93,165
Tybee Library	18,521	19,529	16,972
W.W. Law Library	52,143	42,666	23,729
West Broad Library	22,225	15,484	14,642
Total	977,503	840,163	547,271

Figure 8.5–Library Visit Trends

Live Oak Public Library

Public Library Wireless Internet Use

Locations	2018	2019	2020
Bull Street Library	14,166	85,440	78,884
Carnegie Library	3,557	14,300	13,077
Forest City Library	1,680	2,628	4,482
Garden City Library	5,833	12,940	10,963
Islands Library	7,742	23,380	5,521
Oglethorpe Mall Library	11,309	9,032	22,093
Pooler Library	**4,979**	**14,312**	**9,281**
Port City Library	2,352	2,832	8,767
Southwest Chatham Library	22,632	39,684	28,618
Tybee Library	1,376	956	2,708
W.W. Law Library	1	1,708	1,796
West Broad Library	249	336	2,448
Total	75,876	207,548	188,638

Figure 8.6–Wireless Internet Usage Trends

Live Oak Public Library

COVID-19 PANDEMIC EFFECTS

In calendar year 2020, with complications due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the library system saw reduced statistics compared to normal times but libraries still saw active use and patron engagement both in-person and online.

Libraries were closed briefly but then reopened to the public with safety measures in place to protect visitors and staff. Customers were able to browse and borrow items, use computers and internet, and enjoy virtual programs. The year 2020 saw and increase in the use of digital resources, such as e-books, and an increase in library card sign-ups.

In 2020, the impacts of COVID-19 were seen in the libraries' in-person engagement and use of digital resources.

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Health

Health is a term that is often associated with an individual and their lack of sickness or disease; the same thought concept can be carried over to a large grouping or area of people within their neighborhoods.

Community health is determined by the wellness of the residents of a particular area along with the aptitude of the environment to promote health and necessary resources. Most urban areas consist of a diverse population of residents resulting in a stratified spectrum of community health. The following sections are all factors that make up or can determine community health.

Obesity Rate

Obesity is the condition when an individual has excessive body fat that presents itself as a risk to their health. This condition has been shown to lead to more chronic ailments such as heart disease and stroke, the leading causes of death in Pooler and worldwide *(Plan4healthus)*.

The prevalence of obesity has continued to rise due to an increasing sedentary lifestyle, lack of nutritional health understanding, and oversaturating of fast-foods and processed foods, which numerous studies have shown are related to numerous health issues including obesity.

To help reduce the risk of being obese and developing diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and various other diseases associated with a sedentary lifestyle, investments into our transportation infrastructure, parks and recreation, and healthy food retail can positively impact our ability to increase physical activity though the built environment.

HEALTHY SAVANNAH

In November of 2018, Healthy Savannah, and the YMCA of Coastal Georgia, was awarded a five year, $3.4 million grant to undertake a REACH project from the CDC. REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health).

The primary goal of the REACH grant is to reduce health disparities among African American and Hispanic/Latino Americans in low-income Chatham County neighborhoods.

Mapping areas with a lack of pedestrian mobility (such as sidewalks), access to parks and recreation, and locating food deserts can begin the process to creating more equitable and healthier communities.

Mental Wellness

Although a controversial topic, mental illness is a common reality many people live with. Mental illness can simply be defined as a wide range of conditions that affect mood, thinking, and behavior.

Numerous factors contribute to mental illness such as genetics, societal influences, and physical environment. A SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) survey conducted between 2009 and 2013 revealed that nearly 40% of adults in the State of Georgia were living with some form of mental illness. In response to this figure and other health related matters, Chatham County partnered with the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition (CGIC) and developed strategic pathways to address community health issues, mental health being included, further ensuring that communities in Chatham County foster wellness.

It is a common occurrence for an individual suffering with a mental health condition to be confronted by law enforcement when their condition presents a challenge.

Instead of mental health workers addressing the matter, law enforcement, many of whom are not properly trained for mental health situations, often intervene in these scenes. In events like this, it is common for law enforcement officers to arrest the individual and bring them to an emergency room (ER). This creates a strain not only on the individual suffering through their mental health crisis, but also on the system of law enforcement and emergency medical service workers. The number of officers dispatched and number of ER rooms available to those in need are greatly impacted by the lack of structure and guidance regarding the process to assisting those in need of mental health services.

This Continuum of Care (CoC) process is in need of improvement to ensure patients are being tracked and provided with the services needed. This secures better outcomes for patients over time while adapting to their changing needs.

According to a SAMHSA survey, conducted between 2009 and 2013, nearly 40% of adults in the State of Georgia were living with some form of mental illness „

Food Access & Nutritional Education

The foods available to a community have a direct impact on its overall health. When an area is devoid of fresh and healthy foods it is considered a "food desert." Contrarily, the term "food swamp" is used to describe areas that are over saturated with options of fast foods, processed foods, and junk foods. We live in a time where the majority of people reside in urban areas and do not grow their own food; this leads many to depend on external sources for their food.

According to the American Community Survey, an estimated 526 households in Pooler received SNAP benefits in 2014–2018

This is more than double the 238 households that received SNAP benefits in 2009–2013. Furthermore, roughly 80% of SNAP households today have children under the age of 18. In alignment with food access, food nutrition is just as important. If someone is gifted the option to choose between a monthly supply of processed convenience foods or a monthly supply of dry beans, rice, and vegetables, their knowledge of food nutrition (or lack thereof) will usually be the driving force behind that decision. Having access to affordable healthy food is paramount; however, the ability to recognize the value in it is as well.

Pooler's evaluation of areas not having a grocery store within a one mile radius reveals that for the most part, Pooler is food rich with a diverse range of healthy food options. While it is a food rich community overall, there are two areas in particular that lack healthy food access: the Pine Barren Road and southern Quacco Road corridor, and the northern most area of the city along Jimmy Deloach Parkway.

POLK'S ON THE GO

In an effort to increase access to healthy and affordable foods, Polk's On the Go, has a delivery service called "Fresh to Your Door." Delivery boxes start at $20 and contain four veggie types, three fruit types, and tomatoes. You can also add-on eggs and meat from local vendors.

While this might draw some concern for Pooler, these two identified areas of Pine Barren Road and Jimmy Deloach Parkway are still developing and will attract future commercial development as more residential households are constructed. Currently, Pooler has approved the coastal region's first Costco, which will be located on Pooler Parkway and will have a positive effect on food access on the Pine Barren Road area.

POLK'S PLUS PRODUCE
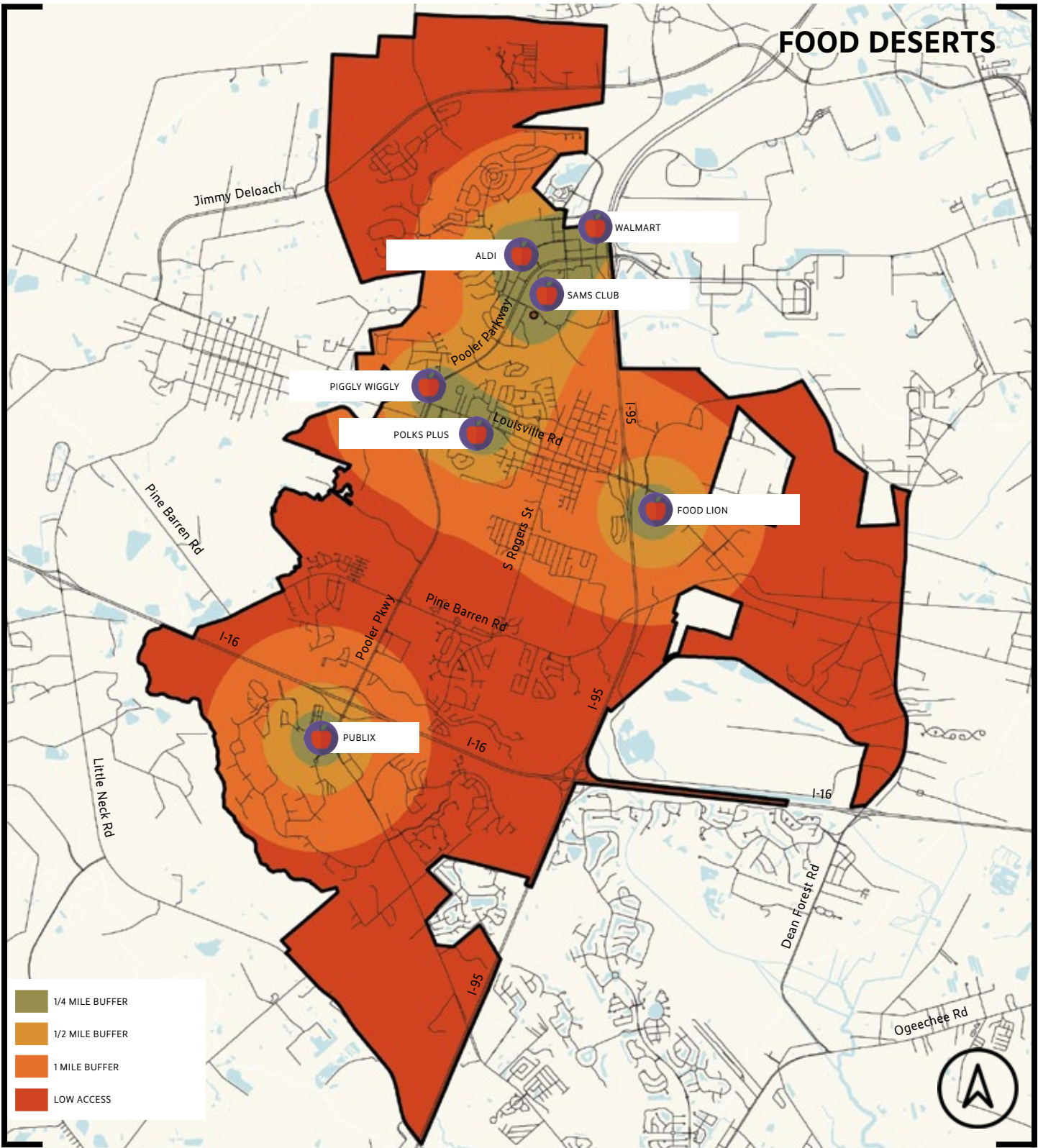
Map 8.3–Food Deserts, Pooler

Unemployment & Poverty

Unemployment does not merely mean 'one without a job'. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployed citizens are individuals who are jobless and actively seeking work. Those who are not working and not seeking work are not considered to be in the labor force. When individuals struggle to find work, it puts a strain on myriad areas in life including finances, mental wellness, safety, and food security.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that the unemployment rate for the city of Pooler was on a gradual decline until 2020 when the pandemic occurred.

Unemployment Rates 2016–2020

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Chatham County	5.3	4.5	3.8	3.4	7.6
City of Pooler	**4.5**	**3.7**	**3.7**	**2.7**	**5.9**

Figure 8.7–Unemployment Rates, Chatham County & Pooler
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

COVID-19

As a nation, we were unaware of the dire impacts that COVID-19 would have on us all. As cases and fatalities continued to increase in 2020, many went into a state of paranoia and panic. Questions such as, "what exactly is this virus", "how can I properly protect myself and family from it" and "how long will it last" came across the minds of virtually every person in this country. As of April 2021, Chatham County has had more than 20,000 cases and 417 deaths due to COVID-19. In response to the pandemic, virtually every public and private space had to alter how human activity existed within their vicinities and the need for more accessible open and open outdoor spaces became evident. The virus has proven to be an incident that will have lasting effects moving well into the future.

Unemployment began to see an increase from COVID-19 starting in March of 2020 as it reached its peak at rate of 15.3% in April. It tapered down slowly until it reached a rate of 5.6% by the end of 2020. Concerns with facing grave fears of death, eviction/foreclosure due to loss of income, drastic changes to household dynamics, and shortages of food, heightened the mental health challenges many were already suffering with and created a large splinter of anxiety for others.

Annual Average Employment Statistics

Year	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Rate (%)
2013	10,214	840	11,054	7.6
2014	10,667	749	11,416	6.6
2015	11,134	653	11,787	5.5
2016	11,797	555	12,352	4.5
2017	12,225	471	12,696	3.7
2018	12,560	399	12,959	3.1
2019	13,501	379	13,880	2.7
2020	12,856	810	13,666	5.9

Figure 8.8–Annual Average Employment Statistics, Pooler
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about unemployment please check our Economic Development Element.

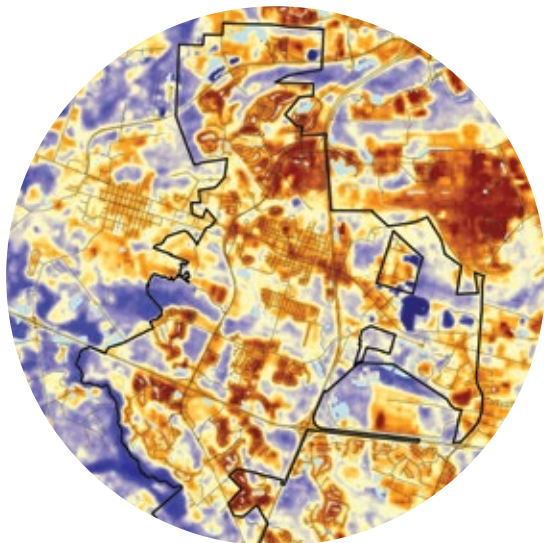**Check it out on page 72!**

Climate Change

As the nation continues to experience drastic changes in weather patterns due to climate change, the consequences will be felt by individuals, economies, and governments alike.

More frequent and intense heat episodes have increased the number of emergency room visits for strokes, dehydration, and other heat-related illnesses. Studies have also revealed the correlation between excessive heat and violent crimes, which are especially linked in low-income areas *(The Urban Crime and Heat Gradient in High and Low Poverty Areas | NBER)*. At the same time, extreme cold temperatures decrease the amount of time people spend outside, which in turn lowers levels of vitamin D and results in weaker immune systems as well as depression.

In the spring of 2020, large-scale weather patterns exposed some areas of the country that normally do not experience hard freezes to severe cold temperatures. Many states and local governments were ill-prepared for this, as the effects of the weather interrupted power sources and destroyed infrastructure. This event—and others like it—highlighted the need to assist and protect our most vulnerable populations and communities.

It is known that renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, help to reduce the human impact on climate change by reducing noxious emissions from coal-fired power plants.

Research also shows that implementing renewable energy policies have the added benefit of improving public health as well. A concentrated local effort must be made to help reduce the impacts of emissions and other pollutants on Pooler's population.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about the urban heat island effect please check our Natural Resource Element.

Check it out on page 190!

PUBLIC SAFETY

Public Safety

It is the responsibility of local government to serve and protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens and businesses. The safety of a community is fundamental to the wellbeing and longevity of its residents and economy.

In today's world, there are critical threats that communities must continuously monitor: domestic and international terrorism, drastic shifts in weather patterns, rising sea levels, and pandemics such as COVID-19. In response to these threats, a successful government employs departments and passes ordinances to sustain the safety and health of its community. Even in less intense moments of day-to-day life, it is the responsibility of the local government to aid in incidents such as criminal activity, car accidents, house fires, and downed power lines. Generally, for municipalities and local governments, public safety includes fire protection, emergency management services, and law enforcement.

Emergency Management

Chatham County Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) services all of Chatham County and its municipalities and is responsible for the welfare of the county in the midst and aftermath of major disasters and emergencies.

CEMA has developed a Disaster Recovery Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, and Hazard Mitigation Plan to proactively provide protection and courses of action in response to a number of different hazards and emergencies. In the Hazard Mitigation Plan, CEMA has listed severe weather, extreme heat, and flooding as the most likely hazards to impact the county.

HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

Hazard mitigation planning reduces loss of life and property by minimizing the impact of disasters. Mitigation plans are key to breaking the cycle of disaster damage and reconstruction.

—FEMA

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement in Pooler provides full service public safety and law enforcement services to its citizens and visitors. The city of Pooler's Police Department employs 42 sworn officers.

The Pooler Police Department's mission is to protect life and property through the maintenance of peace and order, and the provision of law enforcement services.

Police Statistics and Trends

While the city of Pooler has grown and the number of service calls have increased, part I crimes—which include offenses such as homicide, aggravated assault, robbery, larceny, and automobile theft—have decreased steadily over the past three years.

Although part I crimes are decreasing, traffic accidents and hazards associated with vehicles on Pooler's roadway systems have surged in recent years. According to Pooler police data, there were a total of 2,541 vehicle wrecks from January 1, 2014 to September 24, 2019.

This information reveals one major thing: there is a need for an alternate solution to accommodate traffic and congestion in Pooler's roadways. While public safety is most often a reactive measure to an issue, solving the problem of traffic—and, in turn, traffic accidents—will require a proactive approach in which Pooler rethinks its roadway design, transportation planning, and land use.
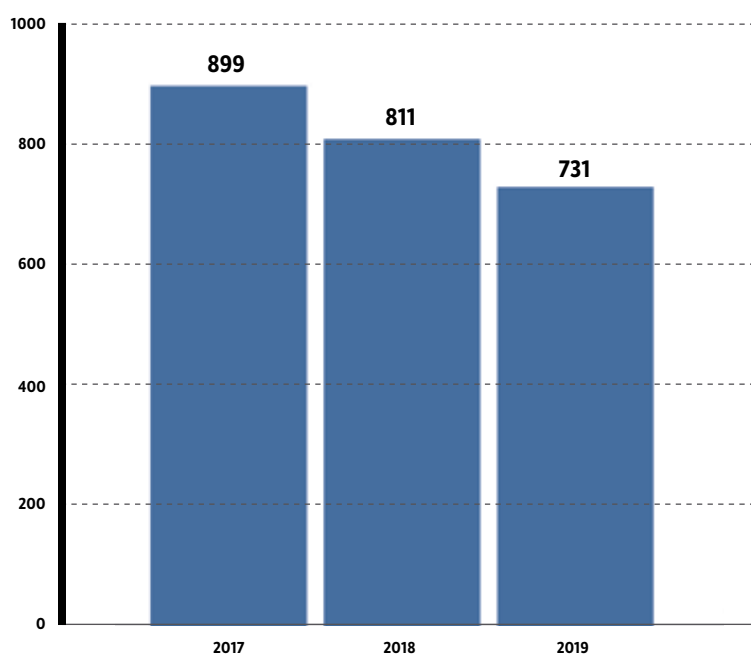
Part I Crime Records

Figure 8.9–Part I Reported Crime Records, Pooler
Pooler Police Department

Fire

The City of Pooler's Fire-Rescue Department stands committed to the core values of integrity, valor, loyalty, professionalism, and dedication.

The City of Pooler and the unincorporated fire district have a combined population of more than 26,000 and encompass an area of 30 square miles. During the day, the population can swell to greater than 50,000 people thanks to Interstate 95 and interstate 16, which collectively bring over 45 million vehicles through the city each year. There are just over 8,000 occupied dwellings, roughly a third of which are rental units. There are also more than 1,000 commercial/industrial buildings in this area.

The City of Pooler's Department of Fire-Rescue provides fire protection and emergency response services to the businesses and residences within Pooler and the greater Savannah area upon request. The Fire-Rescue Department is comprised of 57 firefighters and 4 fire stations that provide fire suppression, rescue, prevention services to the city.

Firefighters making up the operational staff of Pooler's Fire-Rescue Department are uniformed members of the International Association of Fire Fighters, representing the Professional Firefighters Association of Pooler, Local 574.

Although Pooler currently does not have a fire fee, the City should evaluate the need to establish a fire fee as a financing option to provide an equitable, stable and dedicated revenue source to support fire services well into the future.
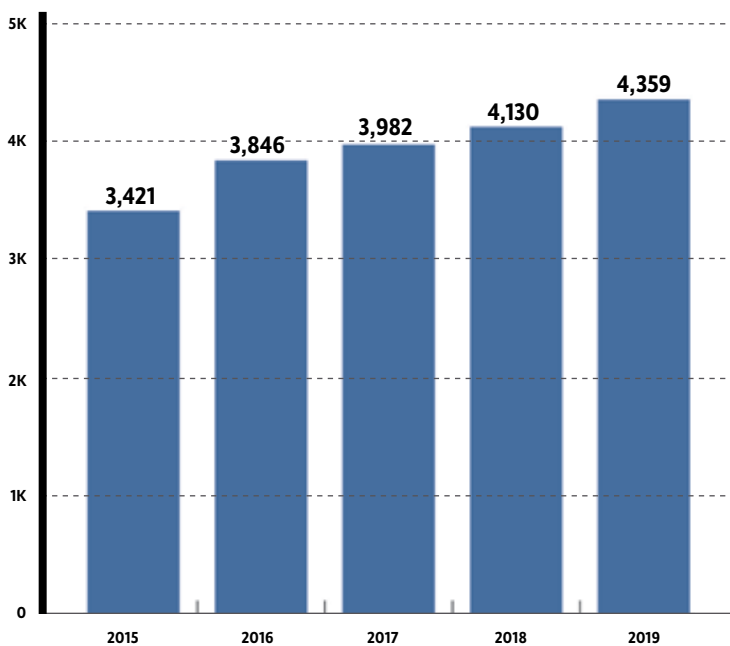
Total Fire Calls

Figure 8.10–Total Fire Calls, Pooler
Pooler Fire Department
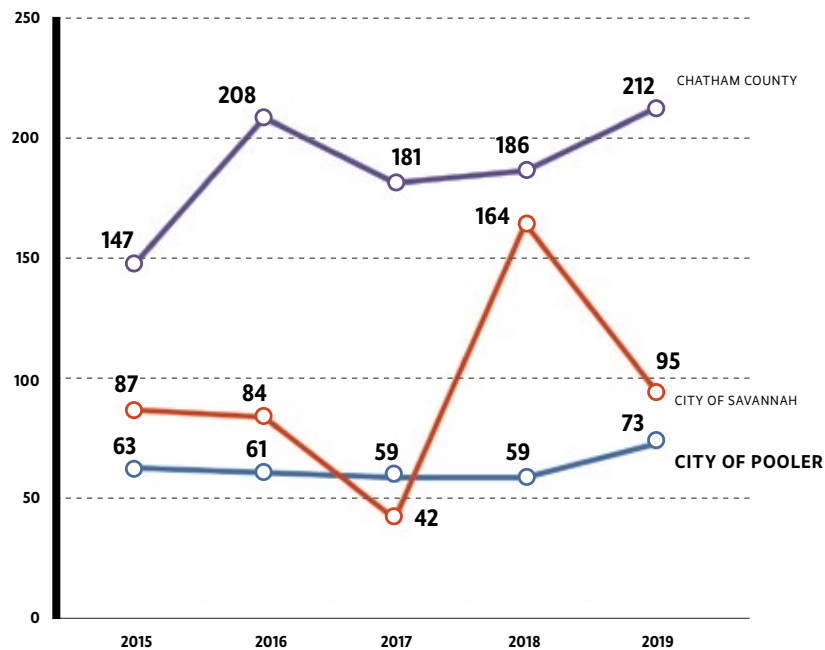
Structure Fires

Figure 8.11–Structure Fires, Pooler
Pooler Fire Department

BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS

The citizens of Chatham County understand the value of future planning, as evident by the County's numerous tree-lined squares, parks, and boulevards. Chatham County's fiber optic feasibility study completed in 2017 was another contribution to the community's tradition of forethought.

In the past, housing, public spaces, transportation, and water were critical for community viability. Today, competitiveness, prosperity, and quality of life are determined by bits and bytes, code and data, networks, "smart" systems, and software applications. Indeed, digital technology has become the key to effectively managing and using conventional resources. It is creating new possibilities for business, commerce, education, healthcare, governance, public safety, and recreation. All of this depends on bandwidth and internet connectivity—the ability to move information quickly and flexibly from and to most anywhere.

The vast array of devices that permeates Chatham County is only going to increase in volume moving forward. Those devices enable people to greatly improve and transform how they live, work, and play by connecting them to each other and giving them access to valuable information. Citizens can and will continue to use digital technology to interact with each other in unprecedented, highly informed, easier, and more dynamic ways.

Broadband has become essential to business, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Unfortunately, high-speed internet access remains out of reach for Georgians in many communities. Local governments are responding with new investments in technology. Building, running, and even using fiber-optic infrastructure is not a short-term endeavor. These activities demand a clear vision for current and future

citizens' expectations and requirements, require substantial input from local business and civic leaders, and benefit from principled thinking about the role of local government.

In summary, digital infrastructure can be used to deliver essential community services, enable a modern, connected economy, and support a higher quality of life.

Broadband has become essential to business, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Unfortunately, high-speed internet access remains out of reach for Georgians in many communities.

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Network Technology

Broadband refers to high-speed internet services, which provide online content—websites, television shows, video conferencing, cloud services, or voice conversations, for example—to be accessed and shared via computers, smartphones, and other devices. The Federal Communications Commission defines broadband to be at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) downstream to the device, and 3 Mbps upstream, though demands are increasing. There are multiple broadband delivery systems, though mainly cable, DSL, fiber, and wireless connect devices to the internet.

Fiber-optic cables—or just "fiber"—are considered the gold standard for supporting broadband, and are essential for fast, reliable connections. Fiber is a strand of glass the diameter of a human hair that carries waves of light. Using photons across glass, as opposed to traditional electrons across copper wire, fiber has the capacity to carry nearly unlimited amounts of data across long distances, literally at the speed of light.

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

Infrastructure that is aging and built on older technologies results in slower, less reliable access to internet content. Due to capacity limits of this infrastructure, companies

INTERNET ACCESS

The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of having reliable internet access at home. Many Chatham County residents depend on the internet to work and learn remotely, purchase essential items, access telehealth services, and connect with friends and family from afar.

cannot reliably provide high speeds, and often limit the amount of data consumers can use. Fiber provides the robust infrastructure that connects telephone and cable infrastructure between communities and around the world. It was originally used by telecommunication utilities for their core infrastructure, to connect their major switching centers, and was only available to their biggest corporate and institutional customers. Today, fiber is in homes and businesses throughout the world providing telephone and television as well as internet services.

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

Barriers to Household Internet Subscribership

A 2017 survey found that 1.7% of households in Chatham County reported not subscribing to internet services. It is important to understand the reasons why households do not subscribe to the internet, as the survey found strong support for the idea that internet access is essential: across all surveyed households, none reported that they chose not to subscribe because they do not need the internet.

Among non-subscribing households in Chatham County, an overwhelming 76.5% said the main reason they chose not to subscribe to internet service is because it is too expensive. Nearly one in five households (17.6%) that do not subscribe to broadband said that broadband is not available at their home.

From a quality of service perspective, 5.9% of non-subscribing households say that available services are too slow or unreliable, perhaps dropping service from poor previous experience. However, every household responding to a 2016 survey recognized a need for the internet.

Nearly 1 out of 5 non-subscribing households in Chatham County said broadband is not available at their home
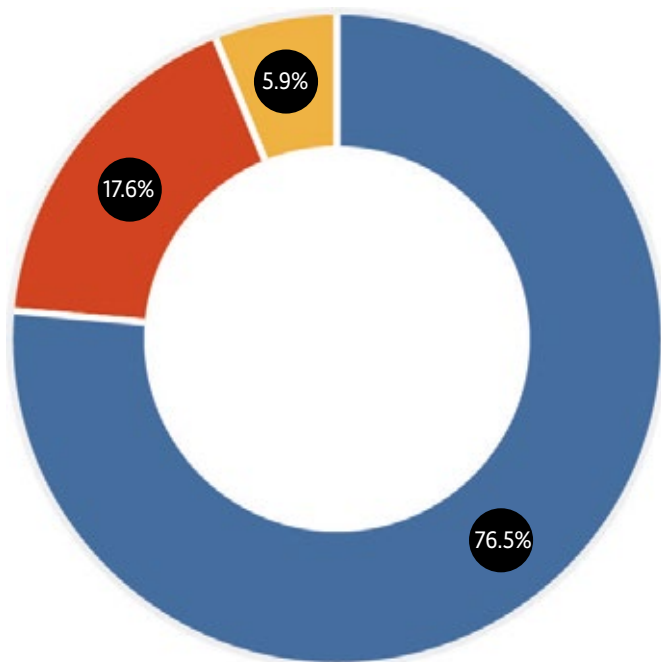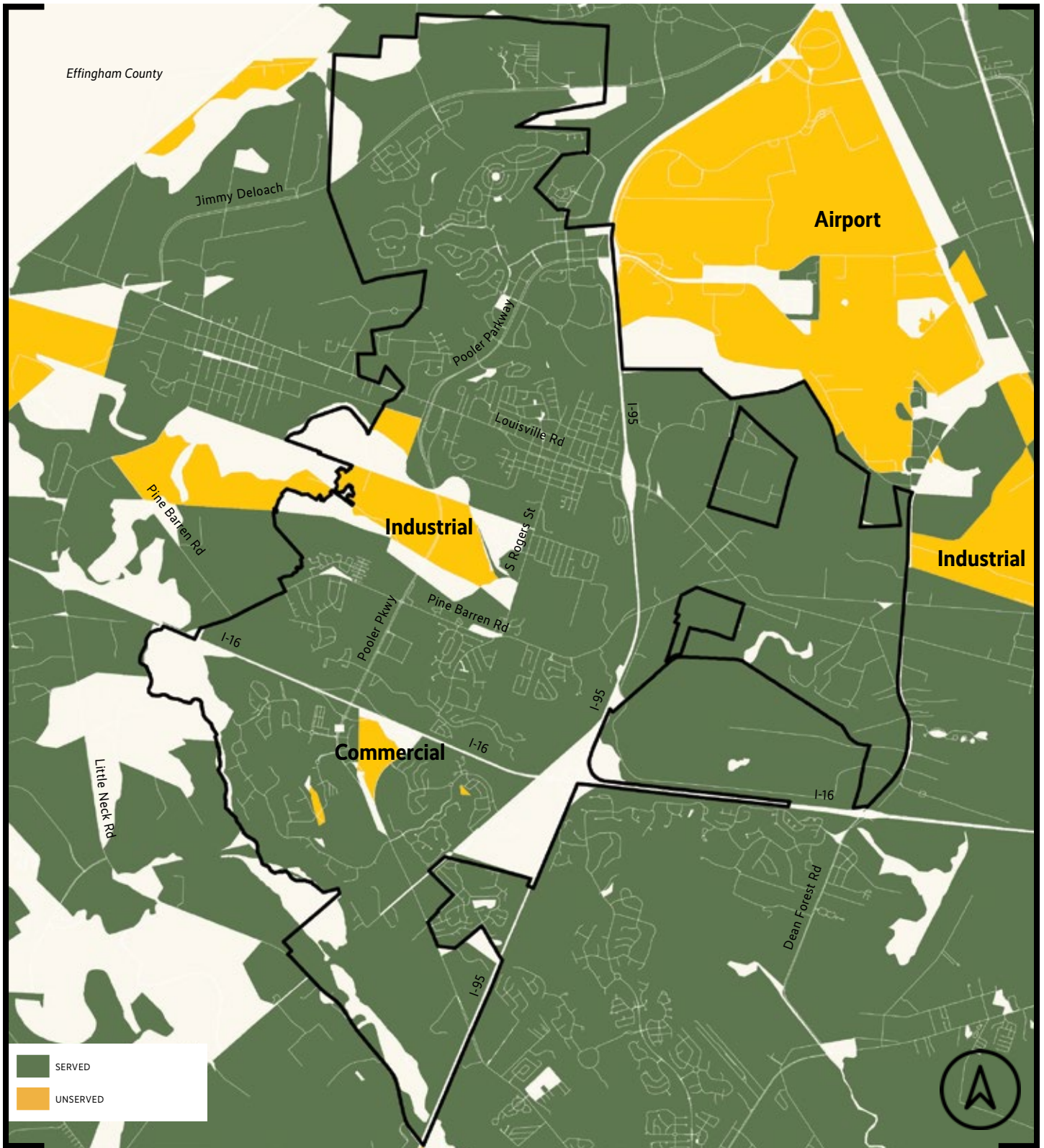
While these percentages are very telling of local broadband market conditions, Chatham County's findings contradict national household averages. Recent U.S. Department of Commerce research found "no internet availability" as the primary barrier in 48% of non-subscribing households nationally and "expensive service" as the primary barrier in 28% of non-subscribing households. These findings illuminate issues beyond simply having access to the internet and reveal the digital divide in Chatham County is based more on cost of services rather than availability.

This could be an indication that current service providers are charging too much for service, but may also be the result of poor economic conditions of some households in the county. Indeed, the threshold for a good or service being "too expensive" is relative, as what is out of financial reach for some households and income levels could be considered discretionary spending for others.

Top Reasons for Non-Subcribership

Figure 8.12–Most Important Reason for Not Subscribing to Internet

SERVICE TOO EXPENSIVE

NOT AVAILABLE AT MY HOME

TOO SLOW OR UNRELIABLE

Map 8.4–Broadband Availability Map, Pooler

Legend:
- SERVED
- UNSERVED

Map labels: Effingham County, Jimmy Deloach, Pooler Parkway, Louisville Rd, Pine Barren Rd, S Rogers St, Industrial, Airport, I-95, I-16, Pooler Pkwy, Little Neck Rd, Commercial, Dean Forest Rd

Still, survey responses show that Chatham County households recognize a need for internet access in the home. As seen in Figure 8.12, when asked why the household did not subscribe to household internet services, an overwhelming number of households reported that services are too expensive (76.5%), while roughly a third (35.3%) rely on their mobile devices, and one quarter (23.5%) rely on access to the internet outside the home. Outside the home could mean at work or school, the library, or even public Wi-Fi locations around town. Lastly, and not insignificantly, 17.6% of county households report that the internet is not available at their home.

Some important observations can be drawn from this data. First, given high cost of service is the result of market conditions in Chatham County, two additional reasons for non-subscribership hint at possible workaround solutions for households that need internet access: "access internet with mobile phone" and "access internet elsewhere."

Reflecting a national trend, internet-enabled mobile devices are emerging as a necessary substitute for home internet access. A remarkable 35.3% of non-subscribing households report their mobile phone as a reason their household does not subscribe to internet services. These homes do not willingly choose mobile over wired connections; they use their mobile phones out of necessity because wired residential service is too expensive. Where cost is an issue, if given the choice between wired home internet access or inferior and costly mobile internet access, most will choose mobile wireless because of the voice and mobility aspects. Likewise, no non-subscribing Chatham County households say they do not subscribe to services because they access internet elsewhere. Yet when given the opportunity for multiple responses, that response increases to 23.5% of households that access the internet outside the home, possibly at work, school, or a public place such as a library or a restaurant likely because they have no affordable choice for their household.

To get an idea of how many non-subscribing Chatham County households would subscribe to services if given the opportunity, a series of questions in the same 2017 survey gauged how much the internet is a part of their household functions.

Overall, the survey of non-subscribing households clearly indicates that Chatham County residents recognize the importance of the internet to their household and would likely adopt services if available at an affordable price.

Summarized from Chatham County, Georgia Fiber-Optic Feasibility Study (May 2017 Magellan Advisors), as well as the City of Savannah Municipal Fiber Feasibility Study (May 2017 Magellan Advisors)
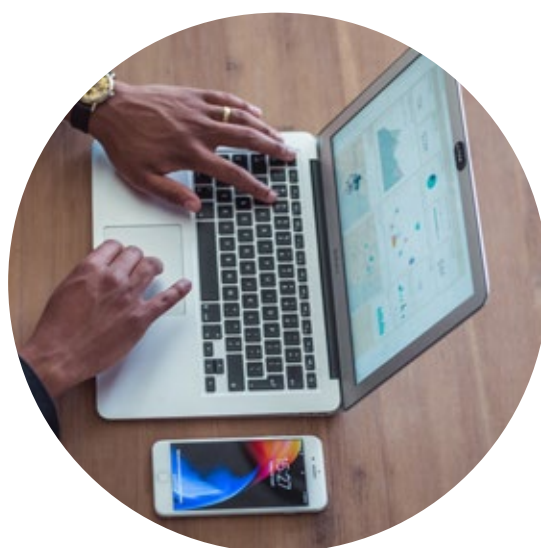
Next Steps

Drawing on recommendations from the local study, the next steps move Chatham County toward developing and realizing county-wide fiber-optic infrastructure goals. Many of these recommendations center around forming local collaborations to aggregate demand and formalize broadband-friendly policies across the county. Many of the next steps are low-cost, organizational, and policy-oriented measures that will lead to a broader fiber-optic partnership and county-wide fiber-optic deployment.

These findings shine a light on issues beyond access to the internet and reveal the digital divide in Chatham County is based more on cost of services.

AN ISSUE INTENSIFIED BY COVID-19

All learning, services, commerce, most workplaces and daily interactions online require a high-speed connection to the internet. As communities around the world adapted to a world with COVID-19, broadband connectivity and access became more critical than ever before.

Chatham County was forced to find new ways to work, go to school, communicate, and connect. In the United States alone, state and local directives urged millions of Americans to stay in and, when possible, work from home.

It is possible that at the end of the COVID-19 crisis, the future will look different from the world we left when the crisis began in 2019.

Household Survey Findings

Households with Internet Access

No 3.1%
Yes 96.9%

Reasons for not having Internet Access

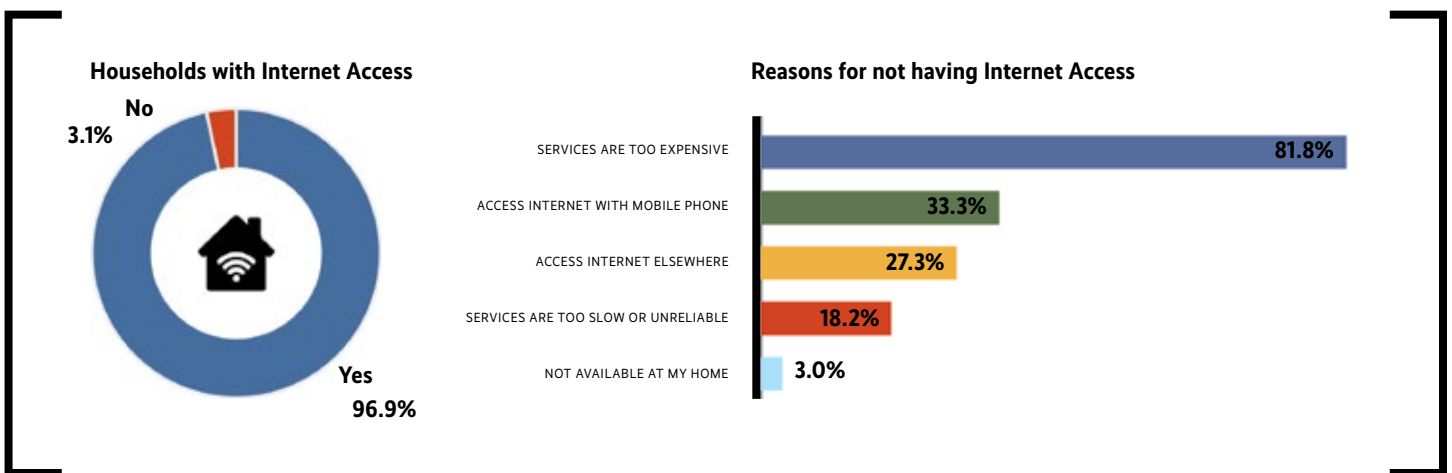|	
SERVICES ARE TOO EXPENSIVE	81.8%
ACCESS INTERNET WITH MOBILE PHONE	33.3%
ACCESS INTERNET ELSEWHERE	27.3%
SERVICES ARE TOO SLOW OR UNRELIABLE	18.2%
NOT AVAILABLE AT MY HOME	3.0%

Figure 8.13–Household Survey Findings