QUALITY OF LIFE ELEMENT

08

QUALITY OF LIFE

Introduction

Chatham County and Savannah seek to provide an excellent quality of life for its citizens. In an effort to maintain such a high level, the county and city have a responsibility to promote and support programs and regulations that positively impact the quality of life of their residents. The citizens of this community can only achieve a superior quality of life when a safe, active, and healthy environment exists.

This element 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

Savannah and Chatham County showcase centuries of growth and change, treasured parks and squares, valued and varied culture, and historic architecture. Historic preservation, synonymous for many with quality of life, is a valuable planning tool that is used to protect the community's historic, cultural, and archaeological resources. The preservation of these resources ensures that the history of Savannah and Chatham County is retained and honored while planning for the future.

Establishing historic districts is one of the main ways to engage in historic preservation. Savannah and Chatham County have dozens of both locally and federally recognized districts. National Register historic districts are recognized by the federal government and qualify property owners for significant tax incentives, but provide little protection of the actual resources.

Local historic districts are established by ordinance and include specific design standards. These standards ensure that rehabilitation of historic structures and new development are consistent with the historic character of the district by requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness review process.

It is important to note that historic preservation is not only a mechanism for protecting historic assets and ensuring compatible new development, but also for effecting social, demographic, and economic change in our communities.

HOMES ON FORSYTH PARK

SAVANNAH CITY MARKET

CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM

Beginnings of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation in Savannah had its official beginning in 1955, when the Historic Savannah Foundation was established. Spurred by the proposed demolition of the Isaiah Davenport House, an 1820s brick home on Columbia Square, a group of women came together to save the home. Following the loss of many significant buildings, such as the 1901 Grand Union Station and the City Market building in Ellis Square, the public began to recognize the importance of preserving architecturally and culturally significant buildings and sites. Historic preservation in Savannah and Chatham County, as it did around the country, began to be a priority.

The legacy of the Oglethorpe Plan in Savannah is evident in its unique layout and architectural diversity. In 1966, this legacy paved the way for downtown Savannah to become a designated National Historic Landmark. By 1973, a historic zoning ordinance was adopted by the Savannah City Council; as a result, thousands of resources all over the city were identified and protected. Other neighborhoods sought designation leading to 16 historic districts in the city of Savannah, six historic districts in Chatham County and numerous registered historic places and individual properties throughout the city and county today.

What is the Oglethorpe Plan?

The nucleus of the Oglethorpe Plan, created by James Edward Oglethorpe, is the ward. Each ward centers on a square of greenspace and is part of a larger integrated regional land system that originally expanded out to include five-acre garden plots and forty-five-acre farms; these were intended for each of the new members of the Georgia colony.

The plan informed the architecture and development patterns in the region for decades, with a dense urban pattern of townhouses and carriage houses in the original town and a more suburban pattern as development extends into former farm lots.

MAP OF THE OGLETHORPE PLAN

HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY

Historic Resource Survey

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

Resources Impacted by Climate Change

Due to its location on the coast of Georgia, climate and sea level rise (SLR) is an important topic when preparing for and ensuring protection of our historic and cultural resources. The first step in planning for the climate resiliency of historic and cultural resources is assessing which areas, structures, and sites are at a higher risk of impact from sea level rise, natural disasters, and other effects of climate change. Surveys in Savannah and Chatham County should focus on resources that may require adaptation or mitigation strategies in the next five to ten years. This will likely include coastal areas or areas that are more at risk of inundation, such as Skidaway, Talahi, Whitemarsh, and Wilmington Islands.

Inclusive Surveying

Historic preservation has often underrepresented or deliberately overlooked historic and cultural resources in communities of color and places associated with LGBTQ history. This leaves thousands of historic and culturally important resources at risk of being lost, increasing the threats of displacement and gentrification. Inclusive surveying in Savannah and Chatham County is a necessary step to ensuring that these groups can protect the history and culture of their community while they grow.

Historic Preservation in Chatham County

In 2005, Chatham County adopted a historic preservation ordinance and was designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG), allowing it to designate local historic districts. The County has designated two local historic districts and three local individual properties, in addition to federally recognized districts and places, such as Fort Pulaski and Wormsloe Plantation.

Since 2005, however, preservation at the county level has fallen off. In 2019, Chatham County's status as a Certified Local Government lapsed. Efforts need to be made to reinstate the County's CLG status and continue to survey and list all eligible sites, neighborhoods, and properties in Savannah and Chatham County on the local and national registers.

Historic preservation is architectural history, community planning, historical research and surveys, oral history, archaeology, economic revitalization, and so much more. Quality of life, sense of place, pride of place—it's all connected to historic preservation.
—Preservation in Pink

The Savannah Citywide Survey Project

The project idea developed after 30 eligible historic areas were identified within the city limits. These areas were identified by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and/or City Preservation Officer through the prior National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 reviews and were also (SHPO) previously identified as "historic" in the Chatham County—Savannah Comprehensive Plan. A major deciding factor was that all identified neighborhoods were over 50 years old and maintained a high level of integrity. The plan was that areas to be surveyed would be selected by the City based on an established set of criteria including interest, need, and size. The areas that have been surveyed or re-surveyed under this project include: Carver Village, Victorian Historic District, and Cuyler-Brownville Historic District (two phases). Future phases are intended for this project until all existing outdated resource surveys are updated, and new areas are complete.

Markers, Monuments & Public Art

Objects such as markers, monuments, and public art are vital cultural resources for the community, and it is critical that the surveys of such resources are kept up-to-date and accurate. In 2013, the MPC Preservation Department updated the maps and lists, which keep track of what and where these resources are. While the installation of markers, monuments, and public art continued to be approved, the catalog of these resources were not being actively updated. A comprehensive update to the maps and lists of all monuments, markers, and public art within Chatham County was completed in 2020. Moving forward, this catalog of resources should be kept actively up to date as new markers, monuments, and public art are approved.

Plan 2040 Survey

The MPC's Plan 2040 survey asked in your opinion, "What are the most important historic preservation actions?"

Forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents felt that the most important historic preservation action was the identification, assessment, and designation of historic resources, while only 6% of respondents felt that providing information about energy efficient and alternative energy sources for historic buildings was most important.

A full copy of the survey and the results can be found in the Plan 2040 Appendix.

CUYLER-BROWNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

PRESERVATION & AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Preservation in low-income communities raises concerns about fairness, affordability, and inclusion. It is imperative that preservation goals be combined with efforts to preserve affordable housing and promote economic diversity.

Old Housing is Affordable Housing

New construction can often be unaffordable and built far from city centers, disconnecting people from their communities and resources. Older and historic neighborhoods, on the other hand, are often closer to services such as shopping, public transportation, and job centers. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of housing built prior to 1950, the majority of housing in these neighborhoods, has a monthly cost of less than $1,000 *(Rypkema, The Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia)*.

Partnership between historic preservation and affordable housing efforts and organizations in Chatham County and Savannah is critical to ensuring that the existing affordable housing and neighborhoods, as well as their historic character, are preserved.

Adaptive Reuse

Historic preservation also presents an opportunity for providing new affordable housing through adaptive reuse. Redesigning historic properties into multi-family supportive and affordable housing revitalizes communities while preserving their character and avoiding displacement of existing residents.

CUYLER–BROWNVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Cuyler-Brownville was designated a National Register Historic District in 1997 and is one of Savannah's oldest continuously occupied African-American neighborhoods. This neighborhood contains a large number of one-story cottages, rowhouses, and bungalows, as well as duplex and multiple family residences. Through community partnerships with organizations such as Historic Savannah Foundation and with the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District Overlay, historic preservation efforts have been able to ensure the protection of many of these historically affordable homes.

However, in Cuyler-Brownville and other older neighborhoods in Savannah, affordability remains threatened by demolition, decrease in owner occupied units, and other processes of gentrification. Cuyler-Brownville is a neighborhood that illustrates where a local historic district ordinance alone is not able to ensure maintained affordability and avoid displacement of longtime residents. Broadening preservation efforts and partnerships is critical to this effort. This can include strategies such as reevaluating design standards, engaging with the community about tax credit opportunities and expanding partnerships with local affordable housing organizations.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Old and historic places, many of which were planned before the advent of the car, often exemplify the characteristics of healthy community design. Older neighborhoods, such as the historic districts in Savannah, are likely to be walkable with ample access to open space and healthy foods. In addition to walkability, the preservation of the community's histories also provides a host of mental health benefits. Chatham County and Savannah's historic sites, structures, and communities foster a sense of continuity and identity that is emotionally and psychologically beneficial and grounding.

People-and health-centered preservation work is vital for becoming more resilient against public health threats and fostering healthier communities overall. To ensure that preservation continues to promote community well-being, continued reevaluation of the tools and standards of historic preservation must occur.

Historic District Walk Scores

Walk scores are a common tool to measure the walkability of a neighborhood based on pedestrian friendliness and proximity to amenities, such as grocery stores. In Savannah's historic neighborhoods, examining walk scores can help to identify aspects of historic development patterns that aid in creating walkable spaces. These can then be used as tools for encouraging walkability and fostering community health in other neighborhoods. It is important to note that, while useful, walk scores are not holistic indicators of community health and do not include considerations such as access to transportation, child care, employment opportunities, or education. It is important to continue to expand the parameters by which community health scores are evaluated.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

COVID-19 officially became a pandemic in March of 2020. This global health crisis has had tremendous economic, cultural, and social impacts on all aspects of life, including historic preservation work. The mental and physical health benefits of preservation, including access to open spaces, affordable older housing, walkability, and sense of community identity, are all critical components in the needed multifaceted approach to creating healthier and more resilient communities. COVID-19 has also had operational and economic impacts on historic preservation work. New tools and contingency plans are needed in order to ensure that preservation work is accessible to the public virtually and able to be adaptable in times of community health threats.

For instance, while the Landmark Historic District is considered "Very Walkable" there are several aspects, such as lack of child care and workforce housing, that affect the community's overall health.

90 Victorian Historic—Walker's Paradise

87 Landmark Historic District—Very Walkable

87 Streetcar Historic District—Very Walkable

69 Cuyler-Brownville Historic District—Somewhat Walkable

19 Carver Village Conservation District—Car Dependent

PRESERVATION & CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Climate Resiliency

Climate scientists predict that coastal regions like Chatham County will see anywhere from 0.5 to 1.5 meters of sea-level rise by the year 2100. According to a 2012 study of the effects of one meter of sea level rise on Chatham County, the Georgia Conservancy places 94,000 buildings and 105 historic sites at risk (Georgia Conservancy, 2012). New adaptation and mitigation tools are needed to support Chatham County and Savannah in addressing the challenges of implementing climate adaptation strategies to historic buildings and sites.

Natural Disaster Preparedness

With the changing climate comes not only sea level rise, but increasingly severe natural disasters and extreme weather events. Creating a climate resiliency and natural disaster preparedness plan for the county and city's historic and cultural resources is vital to preparing for the effects of climate change, as well as preventing further impacts.

Sustainability

As architect Carl Enfante said, "The greenest building is the one that is already built." Historic preservation is an important tool for sustainable growth and development. Reusing existing buildings, with a focus on retaining historic materials, prevents millions of tons of construction debris from entering the landfill through demolition and new construction. Additionally, adaptive reuse encourages infill development while allowing for upgrades to energy efficiency in historic buildings.

As architect Carl Enfante said, The greenest building is the one that is already built.

FUN FACTS
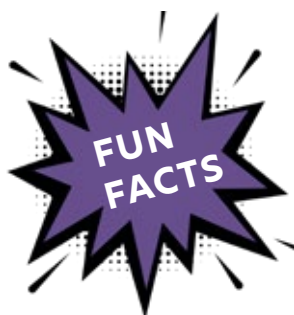
4,300
acres of landfill space saved by recycling debris and avoiding demolition*

569
million tons of construction debris was generated in 2017*

*EPA Report on Construction & Demolition Debris, 2017

FORT PULASKI

INCLUSIVE HISTORY

Building Inclusive Preservation Practices

Historic preservation is deeply linked with the stories that it tells and the histories of the people it represents. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people have often been deliberately underrepresented in preservation. Grounding historic preservation in "people over places" builds a more inclusive practice in the identification, understanding, and protection of historic places. Focusing on intangible histories, such as stories, cultural festivals, and social practices, is an important component of preserving the histories of BIPOC and LGBTQ communities in Chatham County and Savannah.

Promoting Underrepresented Stories

The creation of the Pin Point Heritage Museum was a community-led effort that resulted in a site that exemplifies the importance of recognizing and preserving intangible histories. The Heritage Museum is a physical space that houses the stories and customs of the Gullah/Geechee people, ensuring that their heritage remains grounded in the present. Recognizing sites throughout Chatham County with intangible cultural heritage like Pin Point requires expanding the criteria for what is considered historically significant and worth preserving.

Areas of Opportunity

The Chatham County and Savannah have several monuments and sites that carry complex histories, such as the confederate monuments in Savannah. The Savannah Civil War Memorial Task Force was conscripted to generally address confederate monuments, and to evaluate the path forward for the Confederate Monument in the center of Forsyth Park. They provided a series of recommendations, one of which included renaming the monument the "Civil War Memorial." Acting and expanding upon these recommendations is an important step towards more inclusive preservation practices. However, there is more work is to be done in identifying more sites with complex histories within Chatham County and developing plans for how to manage these sites moving forward.
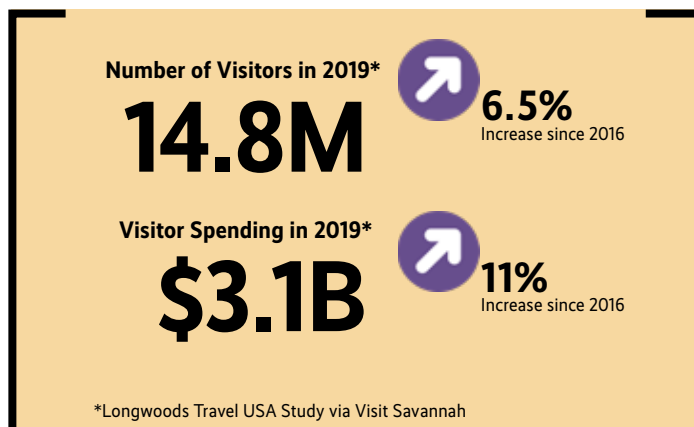
PIN POINT HERITAGE MUSEUM

HERITAGE TOURISM

Exploration of Chatham County and Savannah reveals centuries of history and culture encased in diverse architectural styles, historic sites, and design patterns. As defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, heritage tourism is traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. This includes visitation to cultural, historic, and natural resources.

Heritage Tourism & Economic Vitality

Historic places and landmarks are a huge draw for those who come to visit Chatham County and Savannah, with historic places making up 32% of visitor's activities of special interest in 2019. The rich history of Chatham County and Savannah not only provides for a varied and engaging experience for visitors but is essential to the economic development and wellbeing of the region. Between 2016 and 2019, visitors to Savannah contributed a total of $11.8 billion to the local economy.

Expanding Heritage Tourism in Chatham County

Heritage tourism in the city of Savannah provides visitors with a chance to learn more about the history of the area, while providing economic benefits to the community. Expanding upon the strategies that have contributed to Savannah's robust tourism program into Chatham County, such as promoting and identifying heritage sites, is key to bringing the economic benefits of tourism to the county, as well as ensuring that visitors receive a full history of the area.

Tourism Statistics 2019

Number of Visitors in 2019*

14.8M

↗ **6.5%**
Increase since 2016

Visitor Spending in 2019*

$3.1B

↗ **11%**
Increase since 2016

*Longwoods Travel USA Study via Visit Savannah


WORMSLOE PLANTATION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Virtually every tract of land in Chatham County has the potential to contain cultural remains from the community's prehistoric and historic past. As of 2004, 1,054 archaeological resources have been identified in Chatham County. While many sites in Chatham County and Savannah have been identified and researched, many others go undetected. Archaeological sites, like historic buildings, are considered cultural resources if they meet eligibility requirements set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act

ARCHAEOLOGY

The science that studies human cultures through the recovery, documentation and analysis of material remains and environmental data, including architecture, artifacts, bio-facts, human remains and landscapes.

Archaeology Ordinance

In 2019, the City of Savannah adopted an archaeology ordinance that requires survey, evaluation, and mitigation of potential archaeological resources for city projects/land over 1,500 square feet. However, programs and policy to support, strengthen, and promote the further survey of archaeological resources and sites within the larger Chatham County area is vital to continuing to uncover the important history that archaeological resources contain.

Additionally, the County and City should work jointly to adopt an archaeology ordinance that employs an archaeologist at the county and/or city level and expands its purview to private property in addition to public property.

FUN FACTS
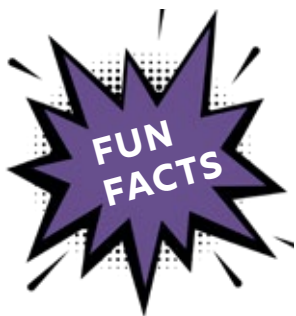
1,054

archaeological resources and sites have been identified in Chatham County as of 2004

KING GEORGE BLVD ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

Historic Districts:
National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—City of Savannah

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Savannah National Historic Landmark	1966	528.5	1,296 (2002 Survey)
Victorian	1974/82	185.2	628 (2016 Survey)
Central Georgia Railroad Shops & Terminal Facility	1976/78	41.3	16 (1978 Survey)
Laurel Grove South Cemetery	1978	38.8	Unknown
Laurel Grove North Cemetery	1983	51.5	Unknown
Ardsley Park - Chatham Crescent	1985	391.9	1,056 (1985 Survey)
Thomas Square-Streetcar	1997	322.9	1,114 (1997 Survey)
Cuyler-Brownville	1998	184.9	678 (2020 Survey)
Daffin Park - Parkside Place	1999	161.7	269 (1999 Survey)
Gordonston	2001	86.2	128 (2001 Survey)
Bonaventure Cemetery	2001	145.3	134 (2000 Survey)
Eastside	2002	156.7	459 (2002 Survey)
Fairway Oaks - Greenview	2009	111.8	207 (2009 Survey)
Kensington Park - Groveland	2014	234.8	390 (2014 Survey)
Pine Gardens	2014	128.3	516 (2014 Survey)
Carver Village	2019	108	625 (2014 Survey)
Total		2,877.8	7,516

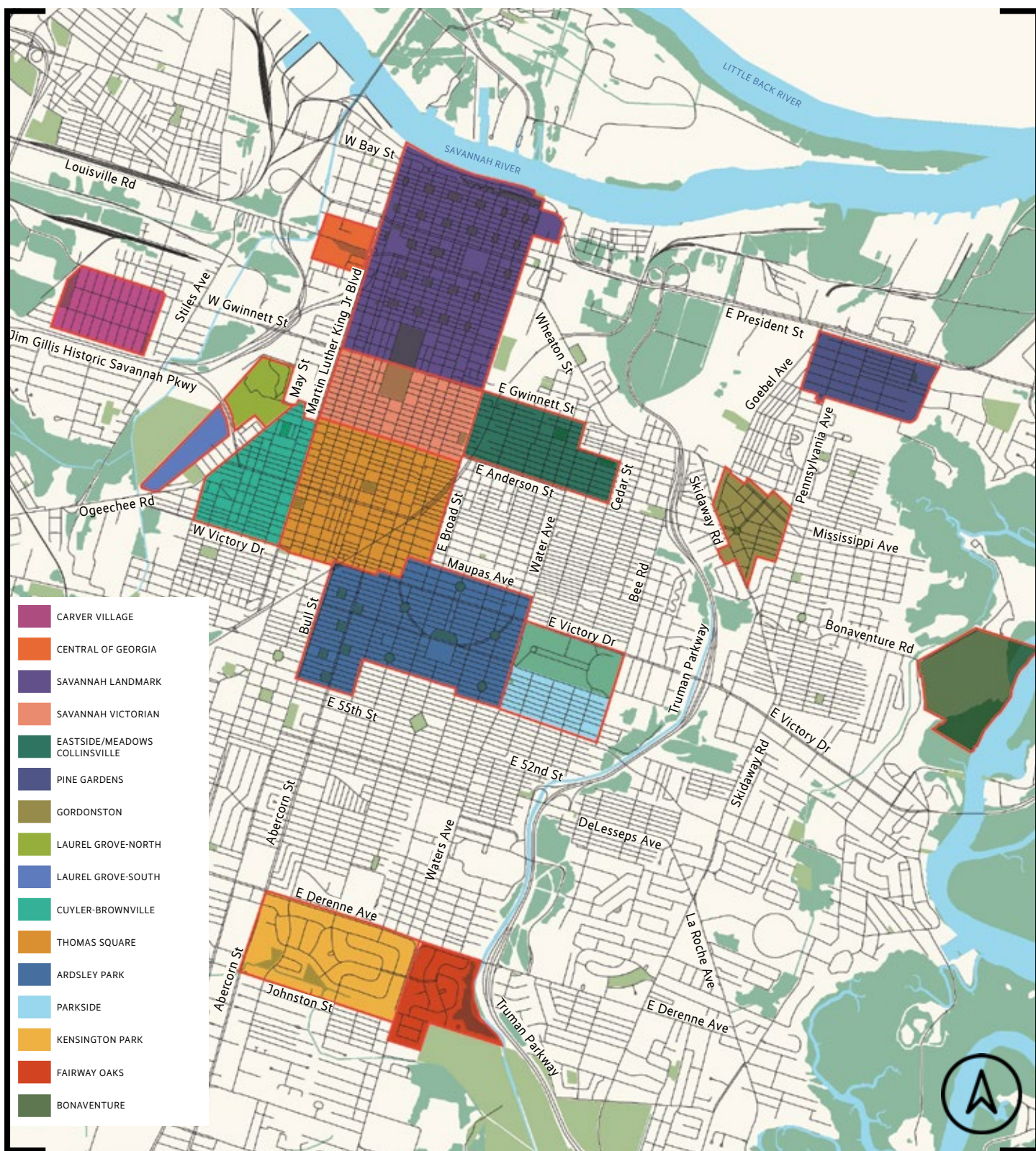**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

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

Figure 8.1–Historic Districts (NRHP)—City of Savannah

DAFFIN PARK–PARKSIDE PLACE

BONAVENTURE CEMETERY

PINE GARDENS

Legend:

- CARVER VILLAGE
- CENTRAL OF GEORGIA
- SAVANNAH LANDMARK
- SAVANNAH VICTORIAN
- EASTSIDE/MEADOWS COLLINSVILLE
- PINE GARDENS
- GORDONSTON
- LAUREL GROVE-NORTH
- LAUREL GROVE-SOUTH
- CUYLER-BROWNVILLE
- THOMAS SQUARE
- ARDSLEY PARK
- PARKSIDE
- KENSINGTON PARK
- FAIRWAY OAKS
- BONAVENTURE

Map 8.1–Historic Districts (NRHP)—City of Savannah

Individual Properties:
National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)—City of Savannah

Name	Date Listed	Address	Name	Date Listed	Address
Savannah Water Works Pump House	2021	1204 West Gwinnett Str	Hill Hall at Savannah State University	1981	3219 College St
Springfield Terrace School	2021	707 Hastings St	W.B. Hodgson Hall (GHS)	1977	501 Whitaker St
Atlantic Greyhound Bus Terminal	2016	109 MLK Jr. Blvd	Juliette Gordon Low	1965/1966	10 East Oglethorpe Ave
Central of Georgia Depot & Train shed	1976	MLK Jr. Blvd & Liberty St	Massie Common School House	1977	207 East Gordon St
Central of Georgia Railway Company Shop Property	1970	West Jones St & Louisville Rd	Owens–Thomas House	1976	124 Abercorn St
Charity Hospital	1985	644 West 34th St	Savannah Pharmacy & Fonvielle Office	2013	914-918 MLK Jr. Blvd
CSS Georgia (ironclad)	1987	Address Restricted	William Scarbrough House	1970	41 MLK Jr. Blvd
Isaiah Davenport House	1972	324 East State St	Slotin Building	1983	101 MLK Jr. Blvd
Drayton Arms Apartments	2013	102 East Liberty St	St. Philip AME Church	1984	613 MLK Jr. Blvd
Drouillard–Maupas House	1991	2422 Abercorn St	Oliver Sturges House	1971	27 Abercorn St
Federal Building & U.S. Courthouse	1974	125 Bull St	Telfair Academy	1976	121 Barnard St
First Bryan Baptist Church	1978	575 West Bryan St	Two Pierpoint Circle	1990	2 Pierpoint Circle
Green-Meldrim House	1974	14 West Macon St	U.S. Customhouse	1974	1-3 East Bay St

Figure 8.2–Individual Properties (NRHP)—City of Savannah

OWENS-THOMAS HOUSE

CENTRAL OF GEORGIA DEPOT
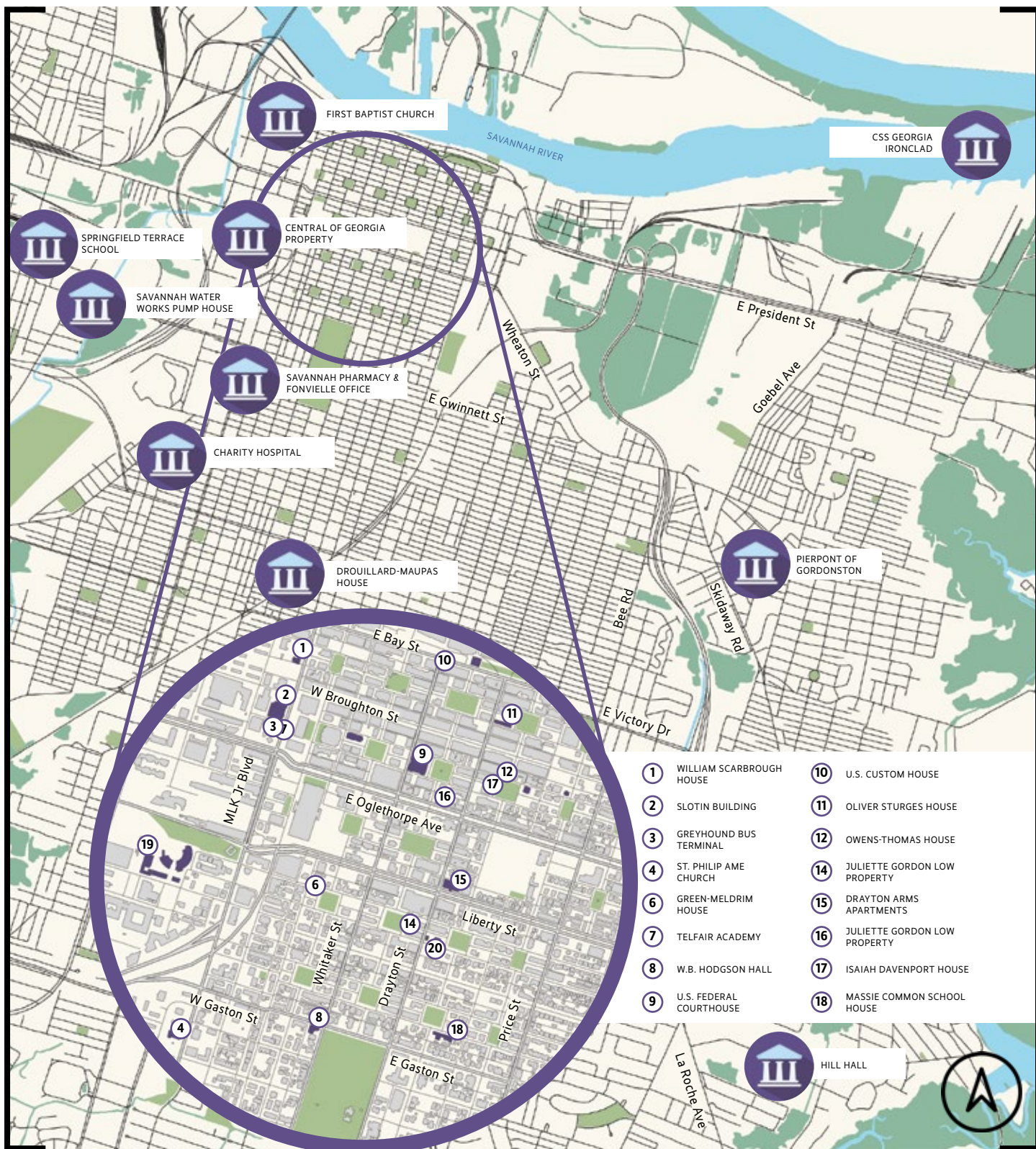
ISAIAH DAVENPORT HOUSE

Map 8.2–Individual Properties (NRHP)—City of Savannah

Map legend:

1. WILLIAM SCARBROUGH HOUSE
2. SLOTIN BUILDING
3. GREYHOUND BUS TERMINAL
4. ST. PHILIP AME CHURCH
6. GREEN-MELDRIM HOUSE
7. TELFAIR ACADEMY
8. W.B. HODGSON HALL
9. U.S. FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
10. U.S. CUSTOM HOUSE
11. OLIVER STURGES HOUSE
12. OWENS-THOMAS HOUSE
14. JULIETTE GORDON LOW PROPERTY
15. DRAYTON ARMS APARTMENTS
16. JULIETTE GORDON LOW PROPERTY
17. ISAIAH DAVENPORT HOUSE
18. MASSIE COMMON SCHOOL HOUSE

Labeled map markers:
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
CSS GEORGIA IRONCLAD
SPRINGFIELD TERRACE SCHOOL
CENTRAL OF GEORGIA PROPERTY
SAVANNAH WATER WORKS PUMP HOUSE
SAVANNAH PHARMACY & FONVIELLE OFFICE
CHARITY HOSPITAL
DROUILLARD-MAUPAS HOUSE
PIERPONT OF GORDONSTON
HILL HALL

Historic Districts:
Local—City of Savannah

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Savannah Downtown Historic District	1973	749.8	1,789 (2011 Survey)
Victorian Historic District	1980	223.9	628 (2019 Bdry Expansion)
Streetcar Historic District	2005	337.8	1,045 (2019 Bdry Expansion)
Cuyler-Brownville Historic District	1998	220.8	753 (2018–2021 Survey)
Total		1,532.3	4,215

Figure 8.3–Historic District (Local)—City of Savannah

Historic Districts:
Conservation—City of Savannah

Name	Date Listed	Address	Contributing Resources
Ardsley Park-Chatham Crescent	2018	391.9	1,056 (1985 Survey)
Ardmore	2018	117.5	Unknown
Daffin Park - Parkside Place	2019	161.7	269 (1999 Survey)
Historic Carver Village/Flatman Village	2020	121.7	636 (2019 Bdry Update)
Total		792.9	1,961

Figure 8.4–Historic District (Conservation)—City of Savannah

**LOCAL
HISTORIC DISTRICT**

As designated by the Mayor and Aldermen, local historic districts provide a procedure to protect, enhance, perpetuate, and use buildings, structures, sites, objects, or a combination thereof that have pre-historic, historic, architectural or cultural significance.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT

A Conservation Overlay District establishes a process and standards to evaluate the demolition of contributing buildings to ensure historic buildings are preserved and the character of the district is maintained.
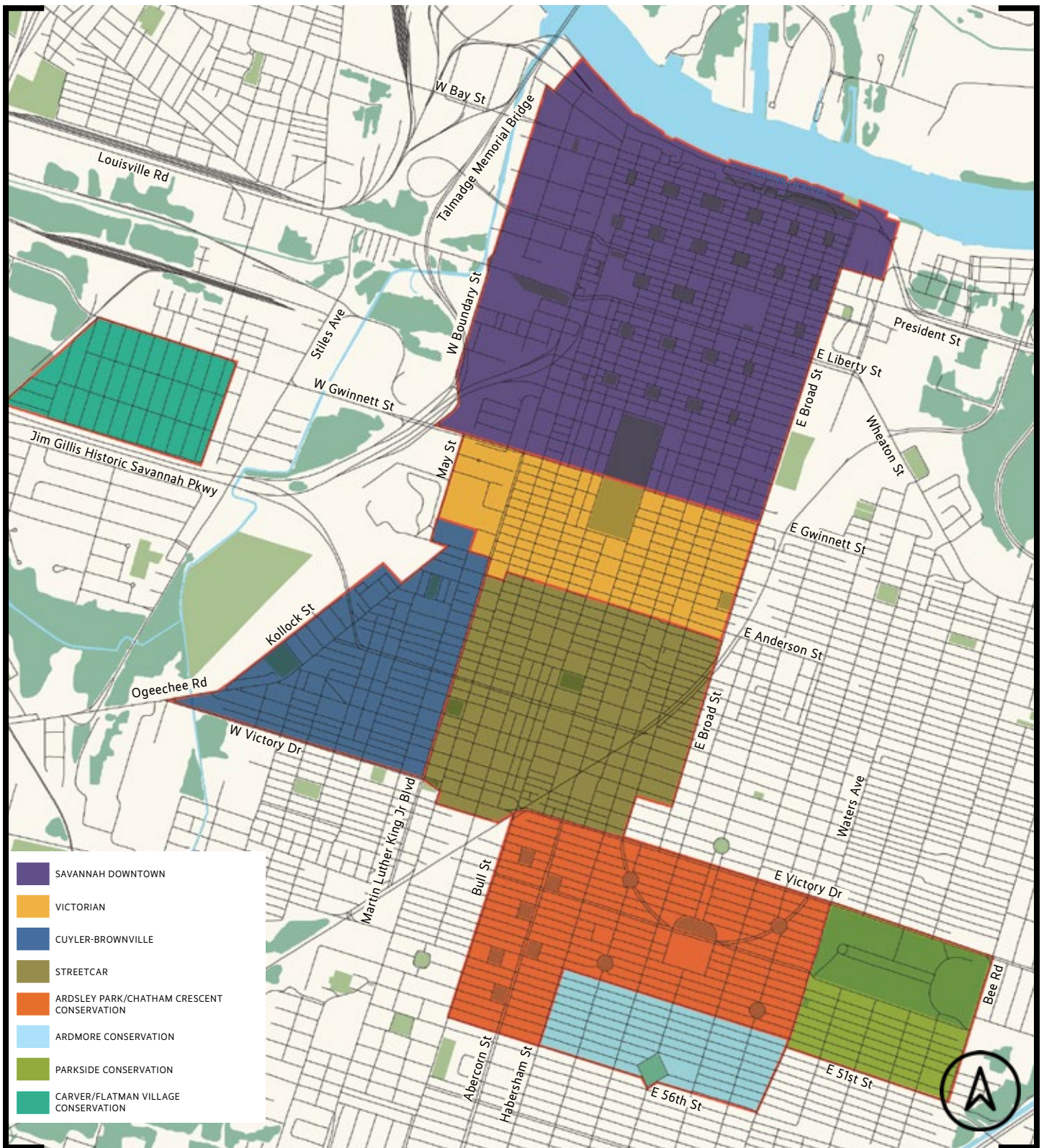

JOHNSON SQUARE

STREETCAR HISTORIC DISTRICT

ARDSLEY PARK - CHATHAM CRESCENT

Map 8.3–Historic Districts (Local & Conservation)—City of Savannah

Legend:
- SAVANNAH DOWNTOWN
- VICTORIAN
- CUYLER-BROWNVILLE
- STREETCAR
- ARDSLEY PARK/CHATHAM CRESCENT CONSERVATION
- ARDMORE CONSERVATION
- PARKSIDE CONSERVATION
- CARVER/FLATMAN VILLAGE CONSERVATION

Historic Districts:
NRHP—Unincorporated Chatham County

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Fort Pulaski National Monument	1966	571.9	7 (1996 Survey)
Wormsloe Plantation	1973	1,315.1	Unknown
Bethesda Home for Boys	1973	652.2	19 (1973 Survey)
Isle of Hope Historic District	1984	91.5	Unknown
Ossabaw Island	1996	29,284.5	227 (1996 Survey)
Savannah and Ogeechee Canal	1997	199.7	18 (1997 Survey)
Total		32,114.9	271

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

A more comprehensive history of Chatham County and Savannah, as well as more detailed information about their historic districts, can be found in the Plan 2040 appendix

Figure 8.5–Historic District (NRHP)—Unincorporated Chatham County

Individual Properties:
NRHP—Unincorporated Chatham County

Name	Date Listed	Address
Eureka Club-Farr's Point	2002	2326 East Blvd
Fort James Jackson	1970	1 Fort Jackson Rd
Lebanon Plantation	1979	5745 Ogeechee Rd
New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church	2001	751 Chevis Rd
Wild Heron Plantation	1977	2148 Grove Point Rd

Figure 8.6–Individual Properties (NRHP)—Unincorporated Chatham County

ISLE OF HOPE

BETHESDA HOME FOR BOYS

OSSABAW ISLAND

Map 8.4–Historic Districts & Individual Properties (NRHP)—Unincorporated Chatham County

Legend:
- ISLE OF HOPE
- WORMSLOE PLANTATION
- BETHESDA BOYS HOME
- OSSABAW ISLAND
- FORT PULASKI NATIONAL MONUMENT
- SAVANNAH & OGEECHEE CANAL

Map labels:
- Jasper County, SC
- Bryan County, GA
- FORT JACKSON
- LEBANON PLANTATION
- OGEECHEE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
- WILD HERON PLANTATION
- MARIDON
- Louisville Rd
- W Bay St
- E President St
- E Victory Dr
- E Derenne Ave
- Ogeechee Rd
- Dean Forest Rd
- Jim Gillis Historic Savannah Pkwy
- I-95
- Abercorn St
- Truman Pkwy
- Diamond Causeway
- SAVANNAH RIVER
- WILMINGTON RIVER
- VERNON RIVER
- LITTLE OGEECHEE RIVER
- OGEECHEE RIVER
- WASSAW SOUND
- ATLANTIC OCEAN

Historic Districts:
Local—Unincorporated Chatham County

	Date Listed	Area (In Acres)	Contributing Resources
Pin Point	2007	1,024	15
Pennyworth Island	2011	169.66	1
Total		1,193.66	16

Figure 8.7–Historic District (Local)—Unincorporated Chatham County

Individual Properties:
Local—Unincorporated Chatham County

Name	Date Listed	Address
New Ogeechee Missionary Baptist Church	2007	751 Chevis Rd
Maridon (AKA Eureka Club—Farr's Point)	2007	2326 East Blvd
Isle of Hope Missionary Baptist Church	2019	8415 Ferguson Ave

Figure 8.8–Individual Properties (Local)—Unincorporated Chatham County

HISTORY OF PENNYWORTH ISLAND

Since 1911, Pennyworth Island has remained largely undisturbed and has seen no human use or occupation. Prior to that time, the island served as a rice plantation and seasonal residence for several of its prominent owners. An archaeological survey in 1994 described Pennyworth as "one of the best represented Savannah River rice plantations in historical record" (ACOE, 1994). In January of 2011, Pennyworth Island, in recognition of its archaeological and historic significance, was listed as a local historic district in Chatham County.

MARIDON (EUREKA CLUB—FARR'S POINT)

PENNYWORTH ISLAND

NEW OGEECHEE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Legend:
- **PENNYWORTH ISLAND**
- **PIN POINT**

Map labels:
- Jasper County, SC
- SAVANNAH RIVER
- Louisville Rd
- W Bay St
- E President St
- Jim Gillis Historic Savannah Pkwy
- Dean Forest Rd
- E Victory Dr
- Ogeechee Rd
- E Derenne Ave
- Truman Pkwy
- Waters Ave
- Middleground Rd
- E Montgomery Cross Rd
- Truman Pkwy
- Diamond Causeway
- WILMINGTON RIVER
- VERNON RIVER
- LITTLE OGEECHEE RIVER

Markers:
- OGEECHEE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
- ISLE OF HOPE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
- MARIDON

Map 8.5–Historic District & Individual Properties (Local)—Unincorporated Chatham County

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

GOAL 1

Survey culturally, historically, and architecturally significant sites, buildings, and structures in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah

Historic resources surveys are one of the most critical tools for historic preservation planning, as they lay the groundwork for the identification, evaluation, and registration of historically and culturally significant sites and properties. Many resources in Chatham County and Savannah have already been identified and surveyed; however, it is important to re-survey resources every ten to fifteen years as well and surveying previously undocumented resources as they are identified. Frequent surveys ensure the protection of resources that may have been overlooked and allow for the identification of resources that have recently gained historic significance. Special attention must be paid to resources that are at-risk due to climate change, as well as resources of Black, Asian, Native, Latino, LGBTQ, and women's history that have been historically underrepresented in historic resources surveys.

CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

When a community becomes a Certified Local Government (CLG), it becomes active in the Federal Historic Preservation Program and agrees to follow required Federal and State requirements. CLG status gives governments access to funding, technical assistance, and other preservation resources.
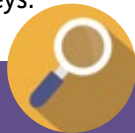
Objectives:

- Work with Chatham County to reinstate their status as a Certified Local Government
- Survey areas that have been identified as at-risk or historically underrepresented
- Update the Historic Site and Monument Commission's Master Plan and Guidelines and provide on-going updates to the maps and lists of the monuments, markers, and public art within the Chatham County and Savannah
- Establish on-going outreach initiatives to engage with and educate the community on the importance of historic preservation efforts

SURVEY OF TABBY CABINS ON OSSABAW ISLAND

GOAL 2

Incorporate affordable housing strategies into current and future preservation plans

Historic preservation can be a powerful mechanism for affecting social, demographic, and economic change, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. In recognizing this and moving towards more equitable preservation planning, cultivating partnerships between historic preservation and affordable housing efforts and organizations in Savannah and Chatham County ensures that efforts are put in place to preserve affordable housing and promote economic diversity.

Objectives:

- Broaden partnerships with community planning and housing authorities in Chatham County and Savannah to combine preservation and affordable housing efforts

- Identify where increased flexibility in preservation practices is appropriate to retain existing affordable housing and promote additional affordable housing

- Promote and educate the community about federal and state preservation tax incentives for rehabilitation

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSE

GOAL 3

Identify and address community health issues that impact historic preservation efforts and encourage healthy communities through historic preservation

Older and historic places provide a host of physical and mental health benefits, including walkability and sense of place, that make them an important component of healthy communities. Health-centered preservation work is vital to increase resiliency against public health threats and to foster healthier communities overall. To ensure that preservation promotes community well-being, continued reevaluation of the tools and standards of historic preservation must occur, such as creating plans for safe, equitable, and accessible preservation planning efforts in the event of a public health threat like COVID-19.

Objectives:

– Identify and address potential community health threats to preservation efforts

– Create contingency plans to address the economic, operational, and social impacts on historic preservation associated with a community health event

– Promote and support reinvestment in older and historic places as a key component of community health and resiliency

HISTORIC GREENSPACE

GOAL 4

Identify and address climate resiliency strategies and incorporate them into a climate resiliency plan for unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah's historic and cultural resources

Numerous cultural and historic resources are at risk due to climate change, whether in the form of sea level rise or increased natural disasters. Historic preservation itself, through adaptive reuse and retention of historic materials, is a critical component of sustainable growth and development. However, creating a climate resiliency and natural disaster preparedness plan for Chatham County and Savannah's historic and cultural resources is vital for expanding the sustainable initiatives of historic preservation planning to prepare for the effects of climate change, as well as preventing further impacts.

Objectives:

– Incorporate historic and cultural resources into disaster planning strategies

– Identify and address strategies for increasing the resiliency of historic and cultural resources

– Establish a clear process for the protection and management of historic resources in the result of a natural disaster

HURRICANE MATTHEW AFTERMATH

GOAL 5

Broaden historic preservation efforts to highlight and include historically underrepresented stories, sites, and communities

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people have been historically and deliberately underrepresented in historic preservation efforts. Historic preservation efforts in Savannah and Chatham County have often failed to incorporate intangible resources, such as stories, oral traditions, and performing arts, which are critical components of BIPOC and LGBTQ history. Grounding historic preservation in recognition of people and stories, in addition to buildings and architecture, builds a more inclusive practice in the identification, understanding, and protection of history and culture.

Objectives:

– Review and modify practices that impede the identification, nomination, and designation of historic places meaningful to underrepresented communities

– Develop and implement new tools for the identification of intangible resources

– Follow and expand upon the recommendations of the Savannah Civil War Memorial Task Force

CLUB ONE—ICONIC LGBTQ VENUE

GOAL 6

Create new and support existing heritage tourism programs in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah in order to highlight their cultural and historic heritage

Objectives:

- Expand heritage tourism programming in Chatham County
- Promote the economic and place-based benefits of heritage tourism to the public
- Balance the goals of heritage tourism with local concerns

In the city of Savannah, heritage tourism provides visitors with the opportunity to learn more about the history of the area while providing economic benefits to the community. While tourism is already a well-established industry in Downtown Savannah, attention must be paid in the future to balancing heritage tourism programming with the concerns and needs of the local community.

Expanding upon the strategies that have contributed to Downtown Savannah's tourism programming into Chatham County not only brings economic benefits to the county but provides visitors to the area a full and broadened history of Chatham County and Savannah.

HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage tourism refers to leisure travel that has as its primary purpose the experiencing of places and activities that represent the past. A principal concern of heritage tourism is historical authenticity and long-term sustainability of the attraction visited
—National Agricultural Library

OATLAND ISLAND WILDLIFE CENTER

GOAL 7

Promote the preservation and public awareness of culturally and archaeologically significant sites in unincorporated Chatham County and Savannah

It is likely that virtually every tract of land in Chatham County has the potential to contain cultural remains from the community's prehistoric and historic past. Archaeological sites, just like historic buildings, are considered cultural or historic resources if they meet eligibility requirements set forth in the National Historic Preservation Act. In addition to the 2019 Archaeology Ordinance adopted by the City of Savannah, programs and policy that support further archaeological survey on private property within city limits and throughout the county are needed to identify the important history that archaeological resources contain.

Objectives:

- Survey, identify, and protect archaeological resources through legislation and other means
- Support projects that educate the public about archaeology and important Chatham County and Savannah cultural sites and resources
- Develop partnerships with community groups to develop an ethical process for discovery, storage, and ownership of archaeological artifacts

CLUSKEY VAULTS

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EDUCATION

There is a phrase that states "Education is key." It is well known to the point it has garnered the status as a cliché. Upon further review, it is clear that education is the 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 entire 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, 7 K-8 schools, 8 middle schools, 11 high schools, and 5 charter schools. In 2018, the school district had 37,576 students enrolled with a 14:1 student to teacher ratio. Given current trends and projected forecasts, SCCPSS estimates the student population to remain consistent around 37,000 for the next five years.

According to the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, the district's overall performance is higher than 41% of other districts within the state. The district received a CCRPI (College and Career Ready Performance Index) score of 71.4, or C grading, from the Georgia School Grades Report issued by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement for the 2018-2019 school year; the same grade it received in 2018 after boosting up from a D in 2017. This score is relatively close to the average CCRPI score for the state.

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.
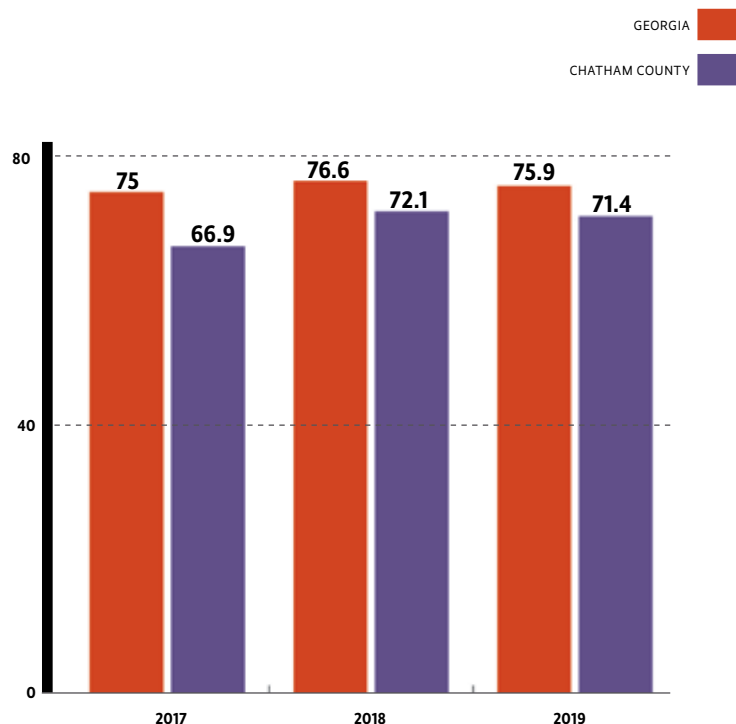
—CCRPI

60%
of Chatham County's public schools are Title 1 Schools

GEORGIA

CHATHAM COUNTY

Figure 8.9-CCRPI Single Score 2017-2019
Georgia Department of Education

Thirty-three (33) of the SCCPSS's schools are defined as Title 1 Schools. The report also noted that 40% of students who attend the SCCPSS 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 children. Being economically disadvantaged can often prove to be a large obstacle for students with academic, mental, and social challenges.

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

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

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.

Education Beyond K-12

Life after high school presents many avenues to opportunity. Some may choose college or the military, many choose trade and tech schools, and some go straight into the work world. Whatever route a newly graduate, or any adult wants to take, Chatham County–Savannah has several options to choose from in preparing one for their career moves. Keeping an eye on growing industries in the area, such as manufacturing, coding, and film production may prove to be an effective way of fostering a local workforce to support such industries in the near future.

Regarding countywide public high school graduation rates and educational attainment for adults in the city of Savannah, there has been gradual improvement. Figure 8.10 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.

Census data shown on Figure 8.11 and 8.12 reveals that the educational attainment for adults in Savannah has improved in nearly a decade with a 1% increase in adults having a bachelor's degree and a 2.3% increase in adults possessing a graduate or professional degree. The entire state has seen an upward trend in adult education as well. The educational composition of adults in Savannah and the state is relatively similar with no major differences, with the exception that the state does have a slightly larger proportion of college educated adults.
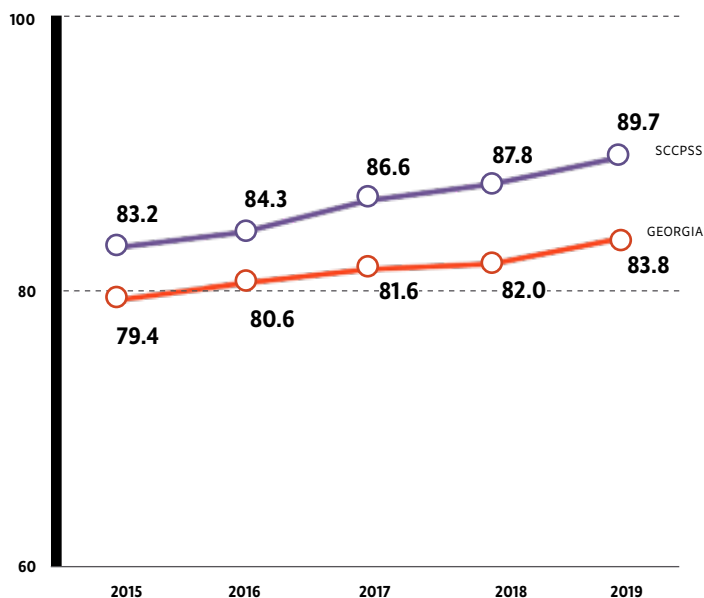
Graduation Rates, 2015–2019

Figure 8.10–Graduation Rate Trends, 2015–2019
Savannah—Chatham County Public School System

Educational Attainment, 2010

	City of Savannah (%)	State of Georgia (%)
Less than 9th grade	4.2	5.8
9-12, No diploma	10.5	9.9
High school diploma or equivalent	31.7	29.3
Some college, no degree	22.6	21
Associates degree	6.1	6.8
Bachelor's degree	16.8	17.5
Graduate or professional degree	8.1	9.8

Figure 8.11–Edu. Attainment for Population Over the Age 25
U.S. Census Bureau: 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Educational Attainment, 2019

	City of Savannah (%)	State of Georgia (%)
Less than 9th grade	3.2	4.6
9-12, No diploma	9.2	8.2
High school diploma or equivalent	26.8	27.7
Some college, no degree	25.9	20.3
Associates degree	6.7	7.8
Bachelor's degree	17.8	19.2
Graduate or professional degree	10.4	12.1

Figure 8.12–Edu. Attainment for Population Over the Age 25

Student Populations, 2017–2025

Grade	Actual 2017	Actual 2018	Actual 2019	Actual 2020	Projection				
	10th Day	10th Day	10th Day	10th Day	FY-21	FY-22	FY-23	FY-24	FY-25
Kindergarten	2,991	2,954	3,017	3,009	2,965	2,966	2,967	2,968	2,969
1st Grade	3,101	2,909	2,946	2,974	2,878	2,878	2,878	2,878	2,878
2nd Grade	3,365	3,084	2,771	2,873	2,741	2,741	2,741	2,741	2,741
3rd Grade	3,345	3,225	2,992	2,757	2,701	2,701	2,701	2,701	2,701
4th Grade	3,130	3,199	3,145	2,876	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838	2,838
5th Grade	2,951	3,002	3,116	3,126	3,135	3,136	3,137	3,138	3,139
6th Grade	2,862	2,800	2,923	2,996	2,955	2,956	2,957	2,958	2,959
7th Grade	2,626	2,720	2,628	2,845	3,009	3,010	3,011	3,012	3,013
8th Grade	2,445	2,472	2,592	2,550	2,642	2,642	2,642	2,642	2,642
9th Grade	3,218	3,116	3,068	3,143	3,130	3,131	3,132	3,133	3,134
10th Grade	2,384	2,429	2,421	2,301	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327	2,327
11th Grade	1,945	1,969	1,900	1,955	2,004	2,004	2,004	2,004	2,004
12th Grade	1,500	1,550	1,663	1,674	1,719	1,719	1,719	1,719	1,719
Pre–Kindergarten	1,355	1,341	1,362	1,379	1,379	1,379	1,379	1,379	1,379
Self Contained	619	569	646	632	632	632	632	632	632
Grand Total	37,837	37,339	37,190	37,090	37,055	37,060	37,065	37,070	37,075
Gain or (Loss) in	(275)	(498)	(149)	(100)	(35)	5	5	5	5
Enrollment from Prior Year	(0.72%)	(1.32%)	(0.40%)	(0.27%)	(0.09%)	0.01%	0.01%	0.01%	0.01%

Figure 8.13–Actual and Forecasted Student Populations
SCCPSS

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 are: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Fine Arts, Master of Architecture, Master of Arts, Master of Fine Arts, and a 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: College of Business Administration, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, College of Science and Technology, and the College of Education. Their Marine Science Program is the number one producer of both Master's of Science and Bachelor's of Science African American recipients in Marine Science. Also, SSU is home to the nation's first Homeland Security and Emergency Management program at an HBCU. The program is the only bachelor's degree program for homeland security/emergency management offered in the state of Georgia and in the region. Additionally, SSU boasts a broad athletic program which is part of SIAC, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

Georgia Southern University (GSU)

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

Georgia Tech-Savannah

In 2003, the Georgia Institute of Technology opened its satellite branch in the city of Savannah. The campus offers courses tailored to furthering the education and skills of established professionals. Programs consist of the Georgia Film Academy, K-12 programs, 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 to name a few.

South University

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

Savannah Technical College

Founded in 1929, this Savannah-based public technical college serves over 5,700 credit 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, 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

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

The Library'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. The Library is always open online at *www.liveoakpl.org*.

Live Oak Public Libraries is focused on increasing access, community engagement and organizational excellence and sustainability. The library 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

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 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 an increase in the use of digital resources, such as e-books, and an increase in library card sign-ups.

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

Impacts of COVID-19 were seen in 2020 in the libraries' visitation and internet usage

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 8.14–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 8.15–Wireless Internet Usage Trends
Live Oak Public Library

Broadband & the Library System

All 12 public library locations in Chatham County have had fiber connections for several years, and speeds increased again in July 1, 2021 under the library system's new e-rate contract, at least doubling at all locations.

In addition to more than 400 public computers in Chatham County public libraries, upgraded wireless access, which reaches not only to every area of every public library in Chatham County but into many of the library parking lots, was implemented in April 2020. The wireless is available outside most buildings after hours.

Public library wireless sessions have been increasing by as much as 50% every month for the past six months and will soon return to pre-pandemic levels.

Both wired and wireless service are critical to many residents who have no internet access or inadequate internet access. Many customers bring wireless devices such as laptops, tablets and mobile phones to use on library wireless since many cannot afford the increased costs of plans with more data.

EDUCATION GOALS

GOAL 1

Ensure equitable access of critical life skills including soft skills, financial, social, and conflict resolution skills are available to parents/legal guardians and taught to all students through the use of technology, community partnerships, and counseling

While it is extremely important for students to learn math, science, and language arts in school, it is equally important for their future successes for them to learn interpersonal and life skills. In order to be a good employee it is important to know the appropriate way to dress, act, and speak in the workplace. Knowing how to effectively manage time and how to resolve conflicts are valuable qualities as well.

Oftentimes these lessons are not taught in school because it is assumed that students will intuitively know to behave appropriately or that they will have role models in their lives who have demonstrated these skills. However, if neither is the case, they can be at a disadvantage as they enter the workforce. Providing curriculum to teach these skills to all students will allow them an easier transition into adulthood and the workforce.

Objectives:

– Create curriculum to provide parents with lessons on various soft skills. Identify the most effective ways to make lessons available to parents for their use—in-person classes, through technology, etc

– Create curriculum to educate students on soft skills necessary to be successful in life and incorporate coursework in public school requirements

– Provide counseling for parents and students in these areas as needed

GOAL 2

Implement career track, internship, and mentorship programs between employers and students while increasing leadership development programs between community organizations, businesses, and public schools to prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility

Real world work experiences such as internships and apprenticeships can help students learn new skills, gain confidence, enhance networking skills, expose them to professional workplaces, build their resumes for college applications and future employment, and give them insight into potential career paths.

Similarly, mentorship programs can help better prepare students for employment and promote upward mobility by providing them with a long-term support system to help guide them in their growth and development. Providing students with these types of tools can significantly improve the likelihood of future successes.

Objectives:

– Create intern and mentorship programs in the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools through partnerships with community organizations, business leaders, and businesses

– Identify graduates of the Savannah-Chatham County Public School system to mentor struggling students in order to show them a path to success

GOAL 3

Plan for changing populations, capacities, and overcrowding and increase the quality of education and academic performance at SCCPSS

A high-performing education system is a key ingredient for the future success of Savannah and Chatham County. Educational attainment unlocks future opportunities for personal and community growth for generations to come. As the population and demographics of our county change, we must make efforts to meet these challenges and ensure that every student receives a quality education. The provision of education to students is a vital function of local government and SCCPSS strives to improve the education system for all students in the county.

Objectives:

- Include SCCPSS school facilities staff in the review process for multifamily and subdivision projects to ensure adequate school facilities to meet the needs of future development
- Locate schools at sites appropriate to the attendees
- Limit land use and operational conflicts between school sites and adjacent uses
- Retain the vitality of neighborhoods in proximity to new school facilities
- Promote health, safety and well-being of students in their commutes to and from school
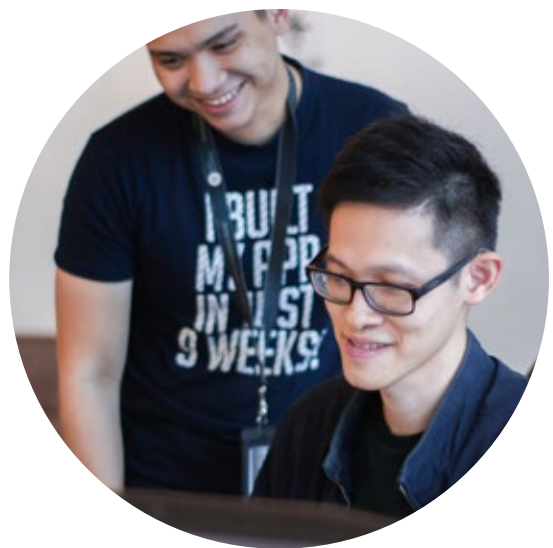
GOAL 4

Incentivize and promote parental involvement in schools by teaching parents to advocate for their child(ren), facilitating better communication between parents and school leadership, and eliminating barriers to parent engagement

Parental involvement in schools can play a significant role in the success of their children's education. Studies show that parental involvement is linked to better grades and behavior in the classroom and can improve teacher morale and communication between parents and school officials. Involved parents have a better understanding of the protocols and the organizational structure of the school system and are better equipped to advocate for their children when needed.

Unfortunately, time constraints, language barriers, and a lack of knowing how to get involved can make it difficult for parents to actively participate in their children's education. Efforts to eliminate barriers to parental involvement in schools will benefit teachers and students alike.

Objectives:

- Identify means to facilitate better communication between parents, teachers, and school leadership
- Identify barriers to parent engagement and work to eliminate them
- Consider programs to incentivize parental involvement
- Educate parents on school protocols and structures in order to make them better advocates for their children when needed

GOAL 5

Ensure families and community members have the ability to promote and reinforce literacy and numeracy instruction that takes place in a student's learning

Learning to read is one of the most important childhood skills and can provide children with a tremendous sense of enjoyment. A wealth of research has established the importance of early literacy skills for later school readiness and long-term school success. It is critical to start early in helping children develop the skills they will need to be successful. By supporting early childhood literacy, a community can make a difference in building awareness and making connections to ensure that children can be successful in school and in life.

Objectives:

– Build literacy skills
– Make access to reading materials fair, equitable, and easy for children and adults
– Encourage a lifelong love of reading

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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, which results in a stratified spectrum of community health. The following sections are some of the factors that make up or determine community health. Indicators can also include heart disease, cancer, diabetes, strokes, infant and maternal mortality, to list a few.

Obesity Rate

Obesity is the condition wherein 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 Savannah and worldwide (Plan4healthus).

In 2018, an estimated 35% of adults in Savannah were obese in comparison to 32% within Chatham County overall, both figures that have grown substantially over the years
—CGIC

HEALTHY SAVANNAH

In November of 2018, Healthy Savannah and the YMCA of Coastal Georgia, 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.

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

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 including mental health, 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.

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

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. 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.

Food Access & Nutritional Education

Taking a ride through most urban areas, it is much easier to purchase a hamburger or fried chicken than it is to find fresh produce in a grocery store. 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." On the contrary, 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 the time where the majority of people reside in urban areas and do not grow their own food; this leads most to depend on external sources for their food. Given the county's widespread development pattern, it becomes clear that there are not enough grocery stores and markets to accommodate each community. This is a strain particularly for the elderly and those with limited access to personal vehicles and public transit.

According to Federal Reserve Economic Data, 40,098 residents in Chatham County received SNAP benefits in 2018, a number that has notably dropped from previous years. Although this figure has decreased, it shows that a significant number of residents—nearly 14% of residents in Chatham County, 5% higher than the national average—still need assistance in providing foods for their households. In alignment with food access, food nutrition is just as important. If someone is gifted the option to choose between a monthly supply of sweets and potato chips or a monthly supply of dry beans, rice, and vegetables, their knowledge of food nutrition, or lack of it, will usually be the driving force behind their decision. Having access to affordable healthy food is paramount; however, so is the ability to recognize the value in it.

Nearly 14% of residents in Chatham County still need assistance in providing foods for their households, 5% higher than the national average

FOOD DESERTS

Food deserts are low-income census tracts where a substantial number of residents have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store.

—The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

FOOD SWAMPS

Food swamps are communities where fast food and junk food are overwhelmingly more available than healthy alternatives.
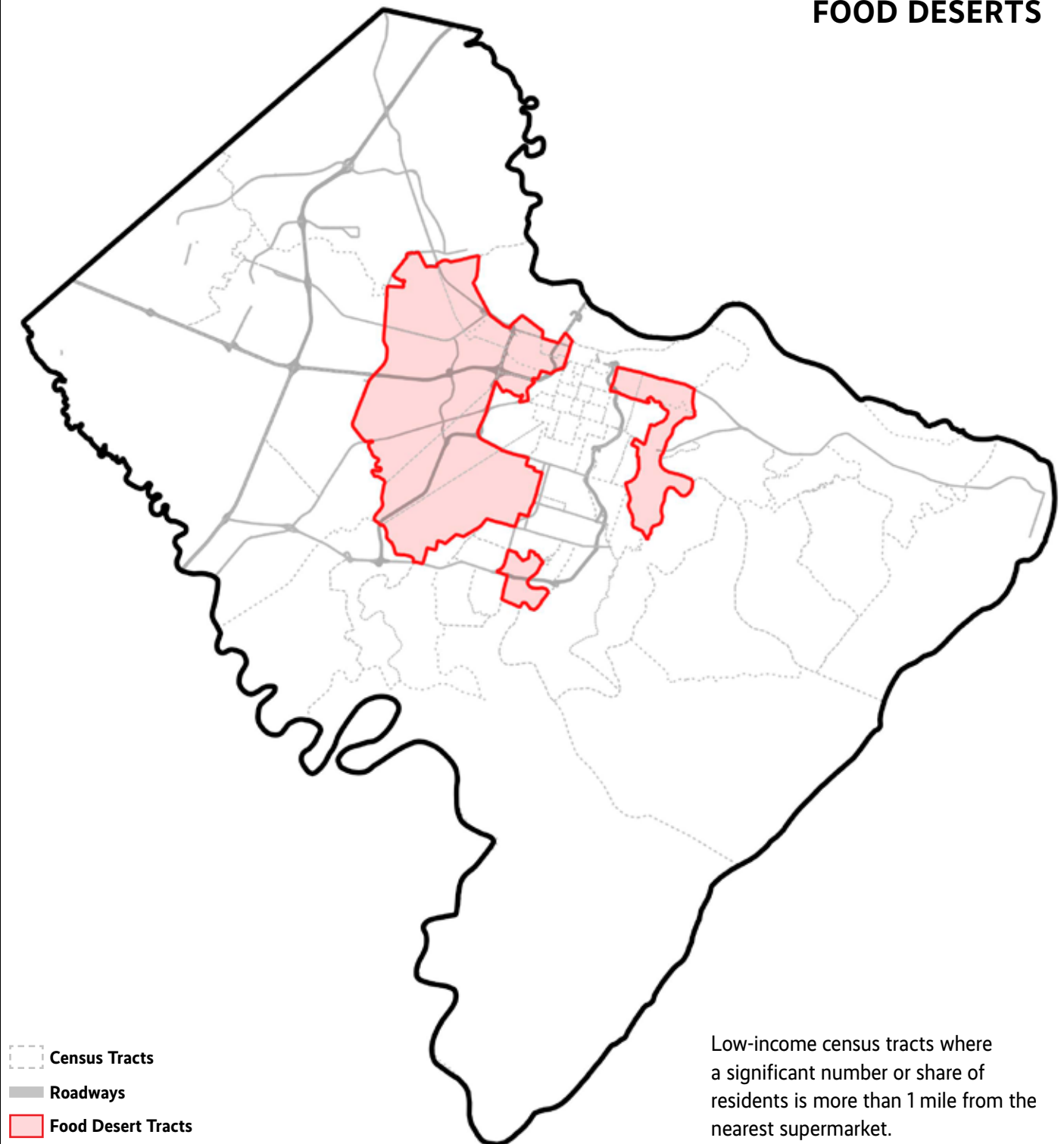
—USDA

FARM TRUCK 912

In an effort to increase the access to healthy and affordable foods, Farm Truck 912 is stationed at several different locations in the city every day of the week offering local and fresh produce for communities most in need of healthy foods.

FOOD DESERTS

Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is more than 1 mile from the nearest supermarket.

- ⬚ **Census Tracts**
- ▬ **Roadways**
- ▭ **Food Desert Tracts**

Map 8.6–Food Deserts by Census Tracts, Chatham County
USDA Economic Research Service Food Access Research Atlas, 2019

Open Space Access

Not everyone lives within close proximity to green spaces and natural areas. Some of the disparity is due to the natural location of resources, but more can be done to help ensure that residents have access to parks and green space within close proximity to where they live. In addition to the lack of parks and green space close to home, access is further constrained by the disconnected street network and by the lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities along some streets.

Healthcare Access

A 2021 article in Georgia Health News ranked Georgia "Dead Last" when it comes to access to "Health Care" and "Health Care for Seniors." Much of this reflects the shortage of "access to health care" in rural areas around the state with no significant health systems; however, we also know that Savannah has its pockets with similar issues. The need for an expansion of health services into these communities most at need should be a priority for the region as a whole.

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 aspects of life including finances, mental wellness, safety, and food security.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the unemployment rate for the city of Savannah 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 Savannah	5.9	5.1	4.2	3.8	9.1

Figure 8.16–Unemployment Rates, Chatham County & Savannah
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey

Labor Force Statistics for 2020

| Year	Month	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Rate (%)
2020	January	67,768	65,192	2,576	3.3
	February	68,281	65,816	2,465	3.3
	March	68,920	66,038	2,882	4.4
	April	67,467	55,220	12,247	15.3
	May	68,106	58,599	9,507	10.8
	June	67,430	59,168	8,262	8.6
	July	67,003	59,442	7,561	8.5
	August	66,371	59,822	6,549	6.5
	September	66,291	60,176	6,115	6.7
	October	68,566	63,332	5,234	4.7
	November	69,181	64,111	5,070	5.6
	December	69,474	64,158	5,316	5.6

Figure 8.17–Labor Force, City of Savannah, 2020
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. 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 outdoor spaces became evident. The virus has proven to be an incident that will have lasting effects moving well into the future.

As shown in Figure 8.16, unemployment began to see an increase from COVID-19 starting in March of 2020. It reached its peak rate of 15.3% in April, tapering slowly to 5.6% by the end of 2020. 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.
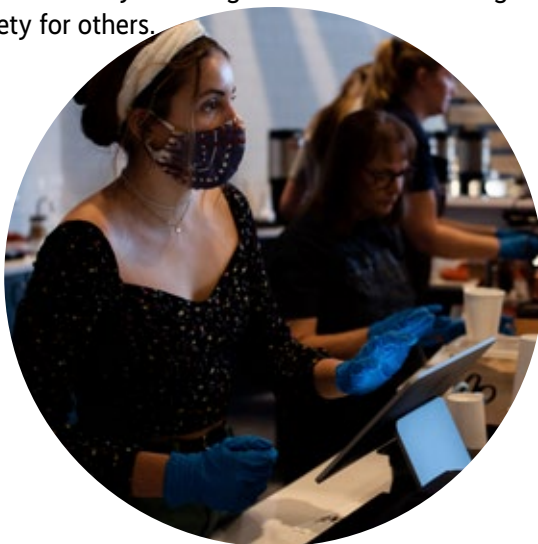
Climate Change

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. A concentrated local effort must be made to help reduce the impacts of emissions and other pollutants on Chatham County's population.

COMMUNITY HEALTH GOALS

GOAL 1

Effectively address mental health by educating the public and reducing stigma, increasing early intervention programs, removing gaps and barriers, and increasing access to treatment including returning and detained residents, children, adolescents, and the homeless

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from birth to death, and significantly impacts quality of life. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized depression as a critical public health issue, as mental illness is a leading cause of both injury and disease for people around the world. There is still much stigma to discussing mental health issues but it is necessary to increase awareness and address the mental health needs of the community in order to improve the quality of life and health of citizens.

Objectives:

- Educate the public in order to reduce stigma and increase awareness
- Increase early intervention programs and remove gaps and barriers to those programs
- Increase access to treatment particularly as it impacts incarcerated individuals, children, and adolescents
- Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services

GOAL 2

Invest in community-based health resources to increase health equity by providing access to preventive health services, health education, and strategies to encourage individuals and families to adopt healthy behaviors

Preventative healthcare reduces the risk for diseases, disabilities and death, and is much less expensive than the cost of treatment once issues have arisen. Many do not have access to or do not take advantage of (because they do not understand the importance of) available preventative healthcare services. Ensuring access to all, educating on the importance of, and encouraging the use of preventative healthcare services will improve long term healthcare, increase lifespan, reduce medical expenditures, and improve quality of life for many in the community.

Objectives:

- Invest in community-based health resources for citizens to increase health equality while optimizing their health and wellness with preventive healthcare services and health education
- Increase health education efforts to encourage the prioritization of preventative healthcare
- Identify barriers to access of preventative healthcare services and work to eliminate those barriers
- Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services

GOAL 3

Organize and promote community health services, recreational opportunities, and fitness programs in order to encourage citizens to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors

There is a community-wide need to encourage and provide opportunities to incorporate physical activity into daily routines. Physical activity has been proven to improve health and reduce the risks of several diseases; however, barriers such as lack of time or access can act as impediments to adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors. Removing barriers by providing more opportunities and easier access to health services, recreational opportunities, and fitness programs can have immediate and long term health benefits and can improve the quality of life for many in the community.

Objectives:

– Identify and make accommodations for specific needs of targeted groups such as those with special needs, elderly, and disabled in order to eliminate barriers to access and encourage use of recreational opportunities and fitness programs

– Identify opportunities to incorporate physical activities into daily lives of citizens

– Encourage mixed land uses and designs to reduce vehicle trips and accommodate walkability

TIDE TO TOWN

Tide to Town, a project to provide 30-plus miles of protected walking and bicycling trails, will connect all of Savannah from the heart of the city to its waterways and marshes, including 62 savannah neighborhoods, 30 public schools and all three major hospitals.

GOAL 4

Increase access to healthy food for populations that are most likely to be food-insecure such as older adults, children, those in poverty, and those who live in food apartheids

Access to healthy food is a major issue affecting health in the community. Good nutrition plays an important role in the growth, development, health and well-being of individuals through all stages of life. Eating a healthy diet can reduce risks of chronic diseases, improve overall health and quality of life. However, eating a healthy diet is difficult without access to affordable, nutritious food. Difficulty in accessing healthy food is oftentimes exacerbated by the higher costs associated with healthier food options when they can be found, making eating a healthy diet virtually impossible for many. Nearly 14% of residents in Chatham County need assistance in providing food for their household, which is 5% higher than the national average. Improving access and affordability of healthy food options for more members of the community is imperative in improving the health and quality of life of the community as a whole.

Objectives:
– Identify funding mechanisms to increase access to healthy food in "food deserts" within the community
– Expand community garden and urban farmer programs to encourage alternative methods to access healthy food
– Create farmer support programs
– Develop local and regional collaboration among similar organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand the continuum of services

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 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

Fire

The City of Savannah Fire and Emergency Service Department (SFD) provides fire protection and emergency response services to the businesses and households within the city of Savannah's boundaries. The city's first fire company was founded in 1759 in the wake of a historic and devastating fire. Since then, the Department has continued to grow in size along with the city; today, over 300 firefighters are stationed within 15 fire stations citywide. The department is divided into five divisions: Logistics, Investigations, Operations, Special Operations, and Emergency Preparedness.

Recently receiving recognition as one of the nation's most efficient and effective departments, the department was awarded a rating of 1 by the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) and has been accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). Only 2% of fire departments in the nation hold an ISO rating of 1 and accreditation from the CFAI.

Areas of unincorporated Chatham County are provided services by Chatham Emergency Services (CES), a community-based not for profit Fire, EMS, and Fire Watch Department.

CES, formerly known as Southside Fire Department, was founded in 1961 by a collective of volunteer firefighters. Currently, CES operates 14 stations throughout the county and has a staff of approximately 450 paid and volunteer workers.

FACT

3.57 minutes

Is the average response time for the City of Savannah Fire Department

FUN FACTS

#1

SFD is one of only 2% of fire departments in the nation to be both accredited by the CFAI and a recipient of rating 1 from the ISO

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement in the city of Savannah dates to the 1790s in the city's colonial period where a band of men served as guard and watch under the direction of a captain. The present-day police force was founded in 1854. The Savannah Police Department has continued to protect and serve the city of Savannah through notable and transformative time periods including the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement. Savannah's Police Department is divided into four Precincts, and consists of eight investigative units and 16 specialized units. The Department employs over 540 officers.

In the early 20th Century, areas outside of Savannah began to grow in population. With this influx of residents, Chatham County officially established its Police Department in 1912.

After decades of frequent and close collaboration on numerous matters, the decision was made in 2003 to merge the Savannah Police Department and the Chatham County Police Department. On January 1, 2005, the Savannah–Chatham Metropolitan Police Department (SCMPD) officially became the law enforcement for all unincorporated areas in the county and the entire city of Savannah. In 2017, after much public input and thought, the decision was made to end the contract for the merger of the two police forces.

Currently, the Chatham County Police Department employs over 120 officers and consists of a Patrol Division, Criminal Investigations Division, Forensics Unit, Neighborhood Liaison Officers, Marine Patrol Unit, SWAT Team, and the Chatham Counter Narcotics Team.

END GUN VIOLENCE PROGRAM

The End Gun Violence Program is an initiative started by the previous Savannah–Chatham Police Department in an effort to decrease the high amount of gun violence in certain areas of the community. The program's approach to gun violence is centered on public health and social services.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Savannah is among 60 Georgia cities that participate in National Night Out, an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships to build positive relationships between neighborhoods and the local police force.

—NATW

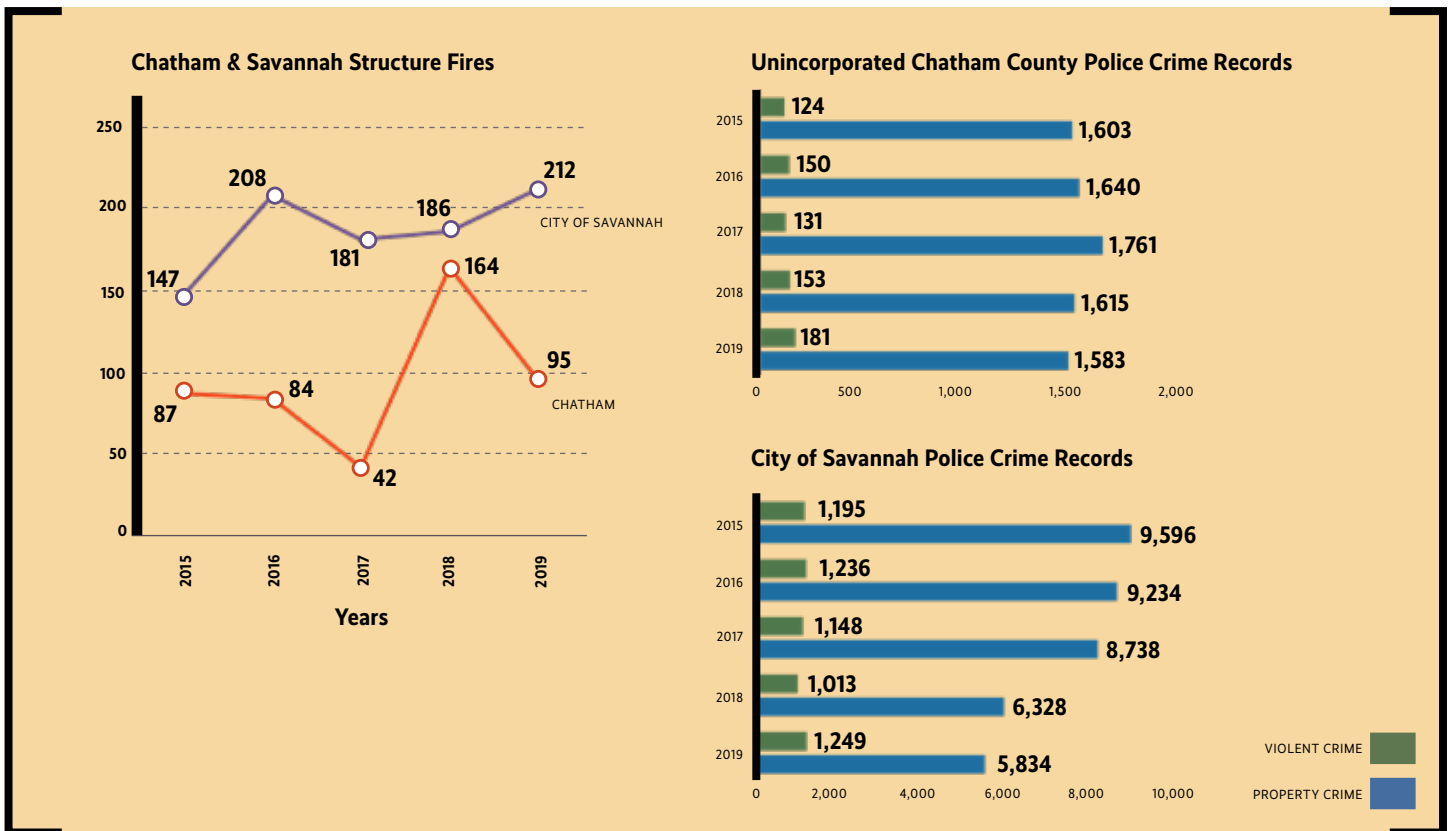## Fire & Police Statistics and Trends

The number of emergency calls received by both the City of Savannah Fire Department and Chatham Emergency Services has remained relatively consistent within the past few years. The majority of calls both departments receive are for medical emergencies.

Unincorporated Chatham County had 164 structure fires in 2018, a nearly four-fold increase from the previous year. In 2019, the city of Savannah experienced 212 structure fires, the most of any year since 2015.

Unincorporated Chatham's total reported crime remained relatively steady from 2015–2019. While consistent in number overall, property crimes have been trending downward since 2017 while violent crimes are on the rise.

The city of Savannah has witnessed a drastic decrease in overall reported crime from 10,791 reported serious crimes in 2015 to 7,083 in 2019. Most of this decrease is the result of fewer property crimes, however, while violent crime has remained constant. This trend foretells the need to address the root of violent crime in the city. Arrest records for both adults and juveniles in Savannah reflect this decrease in overall crimes reported within the five-year time span. As the number of arrests has decreased, data shows a significant number of repeat offenders who continue to be arrested for criminal activity. This information reveals two things: first, there is a need for an alternate solution to assist and redirect individuals from repeated criminal behavior; and second, fewer crimes are being committed by new offenders, especially among the juvenile population.

Fire & Police Trends

Chatham & Savannah Structure Fires

Year	City of Savannah	Chatham
2015	147	87
2016	208	84
2017	181	42
2018	186	164
2019	212	95

Unincorporated Chatham County Police Crime Records

Year	Violent Crime	Property Crime
2015	124	1,603
2016	150	1,640
2017	131	1,761
2018	153	1,615
2019	181	1,583

City of Savannah Police Crime Records

Year	Violent Crime	Property Crime
2015	1,195	9,596
2016	1,236	9,234
2017	1,148	8,738
2018	1,013	6,328
2019	1,249	5,834

RACIAL EQUITY & LEADERSHIP TASK FORCE

Savannah's REAL Task Force; REPORT TO SAPELO FOUNDATION; June 2021

REAL Task Force

The Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Savannah Task Force is a new advisory group formed in 2020 to address structural racial inequities in Savannah. The task force is led by Savannah's former mayor, Dr. Otis Samuel Johnson, and has a mandate from Savannah's current mayor, Van Johnson II, to complete an action plan that the city government can resource and help implement. The REAL Task Force is made up of multiple committees tackling different issue areas.

Health

The health team focused on the lack of access to affordable, healthy food in black and brown low-wealth communities in Chatham County. Particularly in Savannah, communities of color exist under a "food apartheid" system, whereby access to food is segregated by race and geography. This results in the concentration of unhealthy venues (e.g., fast food, liquor stores, corner stores) in majority-black and brown neighborhoods, while grocery stores with fresh produce and restaurants with healthy options flourish in more white areas of the city.

The committee established a causal relationship between systemic racism in the production, distribution and marketing of food, and poor health outcomes like obesity, malnutrition, mental health and substance abuse disorders, as well as preventable chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes. The areas most impacted by these disparities in Savannah are the 31404 and 31415 zip codes.

The committee has developed the following problem statement to guide their analysis:

In Savannah, 35,000 people live in areas without access to healthy foods. Although African Americans make up about 55% of the total population, they make up about 60–80% of the individuals living in areas without healthy food access, leading to higher prevalence of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

The committee also gathered the following data to support this correlation:

– 35,000 (24%) Savannahians live in areas without access to healthy foods
– 21,000–28,000 Savannahians, the vast majority of those living in areas without access to healthy foods, are black
– 12.6% of the population of Chatham County and 14.7% of the population of Savannah has been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes
– 38% of Chatham County's population is considered obese
– 6.7% of Chatham County's population has a chronic heart condition
– 38.8% of Chatham County's population has high blood pressure

In the next phase of planning, the committee will complete its analysis to generate recommendations for the City's work in this area.

Education

The education committee began by asserting the following principles to guide its work:

– Education is a right
– Education is a social contract with a community
– Education is a determinant of the socio–economic well–being of a community

Third grade reading performance was selected as the issue of focus for the education committee because third grade reading proficiency is a critical moment in child development and a strong indicator of longer-term educational outcomes. Even when researchers control for characteristics such as race, poverty, gender, and disabilities, third-grade reading proficiency achievement remains the strongest correlate for future student success. In Savannah, this outcome is delineated in great part by race.

The committee focused its research on the following problem statement:

Savannah Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) has 36,502 students. Of those, 21,074 (58%) are black. SCCPSS standardized test results reflect that 71.63% of third grade students read at or below third grade reading level, the majority of whom are also black.

Relatedly, many black-owned early childhood development service providers are not performing at the state's standards and therefore cannot secure state funding. Many of these providers disproportionately serve low-income black and brown children. Furthermore, many low-income black and brown families in Savannah do not have access pre-K learning at all.

The committee suggests that the local school system needs to affirmatively target black students with resources from birth through third grade to close educational gaps beyond the third grade.

The committee identified the following overarching goals for SCCPSS:

– Improve academic achievement for black students
– Increase their ability to navigate the K-12 public school system
– Improve their access to opportunities in higher education

The committee also identified the following factors in the school system's success:

– School readiness, including access to early childhood education, quality day care, books in the home, etc.
– Access to high-quality and culturally relevant teaching in primary grades, measured by teacher experience; teacher development, preparation, and retention; and curriculum quality
– Teacher bias in the classrooms
– Access to quality summer educational experiences
– Age-appropriate and equitable disciplinary practices
– Access to quality after-school programs
– Reimagined school-parent partnerships
– Access to technology in the school and home

Lastly, the committee decided that reforming the public education funding formula is necessary over the long-term to disrupt systemic inequities. The formula is currently tied to property values, while federal, state and local housing policies have systematically devalued properties within black communities. The formula dictates the per-pupil expenditure rate at the school district level. Title I federal funding for "disadvantaged" schools is intended to narrow the funding gap; however, these funds are limited and their applications often stigmatize students. When comparing SCCPSS's 3rd grade per-pupil expenditure rate with more affluent school districts of similar size in Georgia and in other states, the funding disparities are evident. Thus, as a long-term goal, the committee will explore strategies to address this foundational inequity and its negative effects on educational opportunities for Savannah's black students.

Public Safety

As it relates to law enforcement, African Americans are impacted at rates so disproportionate that nearly one in three black men will have some experience with the criminal justice system in their lifetime. The REAL Task Force also noted a correlation between poverty and the probability of involvement with the criminal justice system.

The committee defined the scope of the problem in Savannah with the following disparities:

- People of color are disproportionately arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced for low-level crimes
- Local probation and cash bail systems criminalize poverty and disproportionately impact people of color
- Lack of alternatives to jail and re-entry programs, which disproportionately impacts people of color
- Many people are involved in the local justice system due to a lack of mental health and trauma support
- Youth of color are disproportionately referred to the local juvenile justice system

The committee gathered the following data to support its problem definition:

- Only 32% of Georgians are black, yet they make up 51% of those jailed and 60% of those imprisoned
- In 2015, Chatham County was among the top 10 counties in Georgia with the highest jail admissions and placed fifth among counties for sending adults to prison
- Georgia has more people on probation than any other U.S. state and has led the nation in capital execution
- Chatham County has one of the highest referral rates to the juvenile system in the state
- In 2019, although African Americans only make up 40% of Chatham County's population, 2,791 black residents were involved in the local criminal justice system, compared with 657 white residents
- In 2020, black men made up 68% of the Chatham County jail population, despite making up only 20% of the total county population

- In 2020, 299 individuals in Chatham County were incarcerated for contempt of court (typically a failure to pay child support or other fines); 68% of these individuals were black. Over 100 people experiencing homelessness were jailed, the vast majority of whom are also black. A whopping 1,873 individuals were jailed on substance abuse charges and 1,627 on traffic-related offenses
- In 2020, 60 people of color were detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

Having defined the scope of the problem and aggregated data, the committee set the following goals:

- Redefine the city's approach to public safety to include housing and mental health services, as well as training for community-level interventions
- Revise the City of Savannah's public safety budget
- Address the trauma that the local system has inflicted on African Americans
- Eliminate Savannah's school-to-prison pipeline
- Shift the post-incarceration paradigm from disintegrating to re-integrating the formerly incarcerated
- Reform the cash bail and probation systems to decriminalize poverty
- Address ways in which the system criminalizes poverty, particularly cash-bail and probation systems
- Create a public safety review board for Chatham County and an internal body in the Chatham County District Attorney's office
- Implement an arrest diversion procedure for Chatham County and City of Savannah
- Implement local restorative justice programs and alternatives to incarceration

PUBLIC SAFETY GOALS

GOAL 1

Ensure better quality of life through multifaceted strategies of public safety. The strategies include reducing crime by focusing on asset building, meeting community needs, expanding visibility and capacity of resources and programs provided by first responders, and building trust between law enforcement and residents

Reducing crime is a top priority for the police department and many members of the community. Lower rates of crime benefit residents, businesses, and the long term development of the area. At the neighborhood level, trust between officers and citizens is an essential component of improving safety. Addressing the root causes of crime—including poverty, lack of education, and few employment and other opportunities—is vital to reducing crime in the community.

Objectives:

– Build trust between law enforcement and residents

– Focus enforcement in high crime areas

– Expand visibility of police to ensure all residents feel safe

– Identify and support programs to prevent juvenile involvement in criminal activities

– Identify and support programs to rehabilitate individuals who have been in the judicial system to break the cycle of repeat offenders

GOAL 2

Develop local and regional collaboration among organizations to improve the delivery of social services and to expand resources including but not limited to behavioral health and public health services

Ensuring access to social services and resources to those in need not only helps to reduce the suffering of the individuals and families utilizing the services, but it improves the community as a whole. Eliminating poverty, improving education and job opportunities, and providing preventative health care services are all means to reduce crime, improve the local economy, and lessen the dependence on social services in the future. All of these strategies are good for everyone in the community. Interagency and cross organization collaboration can reduce duplication of services (freeing up funds to provide additional services or improve existing services), increase the ability to reach underserved communities, and improve community health. Independently, local service providers are making a difference in many lives, but working cooperatively can help to expand their reach and make sure that the services are adequately delivered and sustained into the future.

Objectives:

– Inventory the existing social services and resources within the community and identify which organizations/agencies provide those services

– Identify needed, but not currently provided, social services and resources

– Identify funding sources to provided needed services and resources

– Identify barriers to access services and resources and work to eliminate those barriers

– Create a plan to improve collaboration among organizations/agencies to provide services in a more effectual manner

GOAL 3

Provide effective and efficient government services while ensuring that processes and procedures are planned and executed with transparency

A safe community creates better neighborhoods, economic development, and overall quality of life for all residents. It is a primary responsibility of a municipality to ensure public safety that protects and serves its residents. Chatham County and the City of Savannah coordinate their efforts to ensure that police, fire, and emergency management services are provided for all residents. It is imperative to continuously assess the efforts of the service providers, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adjust as needed.

Objectives:

- Encourage collaborative efforts between departments and jurisdictions
- Increase tax or cost for services where appropriate
- Seek funding from state and federal level
- Ensure that the hiring process selects highly qualified candidates
- Establish rapport and trust within the community

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BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS

The citizens of Chatham County understand the value of future planning, as evidenced by the county's numerous tree-lined squares, parks, and boulevards. Chatham County and the City of Savannah's concurrent fiber optic feasibility studies completed in 2017 were 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 set of 2017 surveys found that 1.7% of households in Chatham and 3.1% of households in Savannah reported not subscribing to internet services. It is important to understand the reasons why households do not subscribe to the internet, as both surveys 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 Chatham County households, an overwhelming 76.5% said the main reason they chose not to subscribe to internet service is because it is too expensive. In Savannah, 81.8% of non-subscribing households said cost was their main reason for not subscribing to service.

Nearly one out of five non-subscribing households in Chatham County said that broadband is not available at their home (17.6%); from a quality of service perspective, 5.9% of non-subscribing households said that available services are too slow or unreliable, perhaps having dropped previous service due to poor experience.

Nearly 1 out of 5 non-subscribing households in Chatham County said broadband is not available at their home
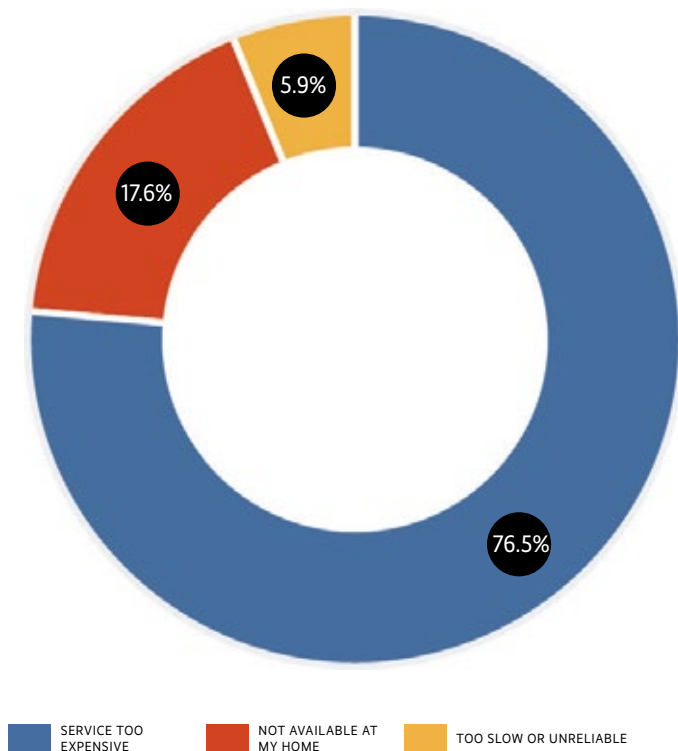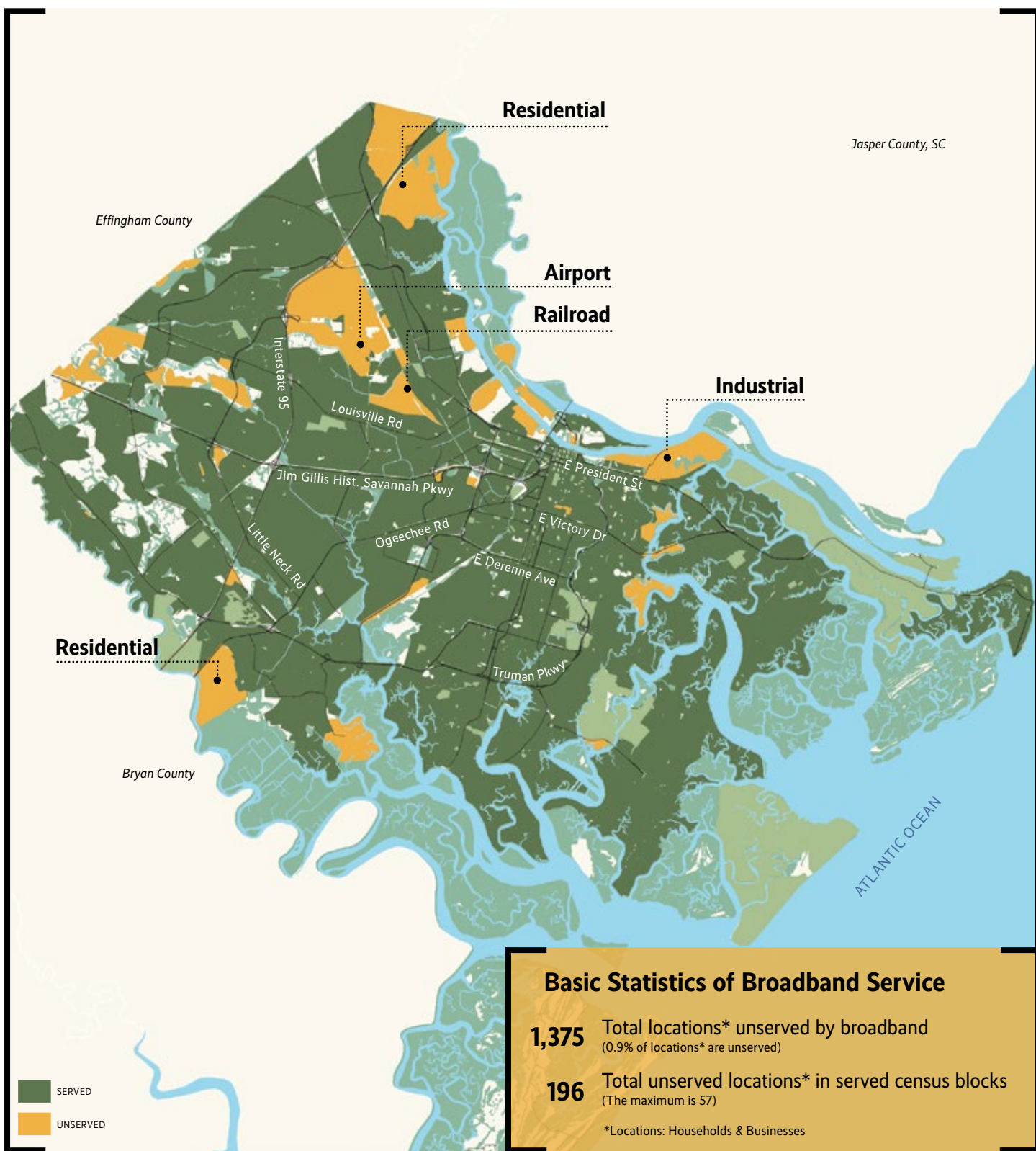
While these percentages are very telling of local broadband market conditions, both Chatham County's and Savannah's findings contradict national household averages. Recent U.S. Department of Commerce research found "no internet availability" as the primary barrier in 48% of non-subscribing households 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.

Top Reasons for Non-Subscribership

- SERVICE TOO EXPENSIVE
- NOT AVAILABLE AT MY HOME
- TOO SLOW OR UNRELIABLE

Figure 8.18–Most Important Reason for Not Subscribing to Internet, Chatham County

State of Broadband in Savannah

- **Nominally strong, but inconsistent, residential offerings, including fiber-based services**
  - Median: "up to" 300 Mbps/25 Mbps for $150/mo.
  - Minimum: 1.5 Mbps/.768 Mbps for $30
  - 75% of locations surveyed had no competitive options
- **Fewer retail offerings for business**
  - Business Median: "up to" 150 Mbps/25Mbps for $264/mo.
  - Many locations with no competitive options
  - Incumbent and independent providers offer services on an individual case basis

Map showing broadband availability with labels:

- Jasper County, SC
- Effingham County
- Residential
- Airport
- Railroad
- Industrial
- Interstate 95
- Louisville Rd
- Jim Gillis Hist. Savannah Pkwy
- E President St
- E Victory Dr
- Ogeechee Rd
- E Derenne Ave
- Little Neck Rd
- Residential
- Truman Pkwy
- Bryan County
- ATLANTIC OCEAN

Basic Statistics of Broadband Service

1,375 Total locations* unserved by broadband
(0.9% of locations* are unserved)

196 Total unserved locations* in served census blocks
(The maximum is 57)

*Locations: Households & Businesses

Legend:
- SERVED
- UNSERVED

Map 8.7–Broadband Availability Map

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.

Still, survey responses show that Chatham County households recognize a need for internet access in the home. As seen in Figure 8.19, 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

Figure 8.19–Reasons for Non-Subscribership in Chatham County
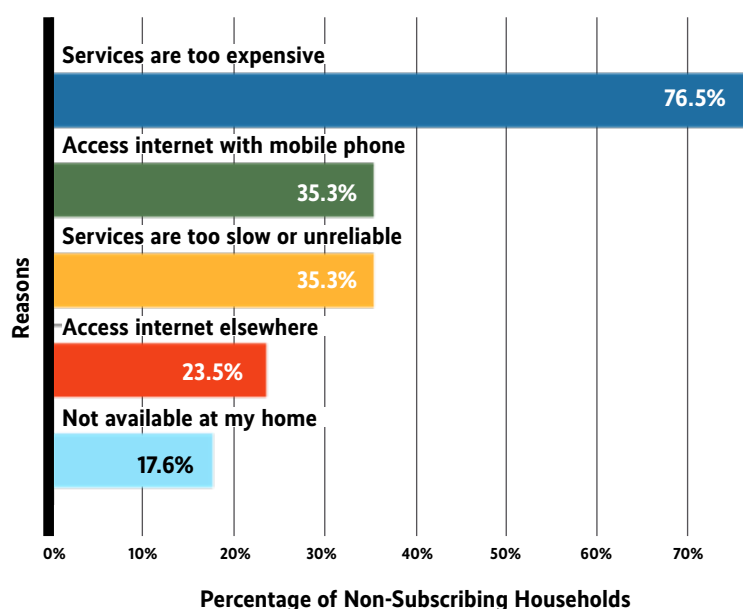
non-subscribership hint at possible workaround solutions for households that need internet access: "access internet with mobile phone" and "access internet elsewhere."

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.

Taken together, 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 two local studies, 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.
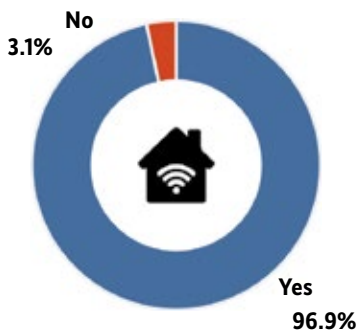
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AN ISSUE INTENSIFIED BY COVID-19

Much of our daily interaction online require a high-speed connection to the internet. As communities around the world adapted to a world with COVID-19 and state and local directives urged millions of Americans to stay at home, broadband connectivity and internet access became more critical than ever before.
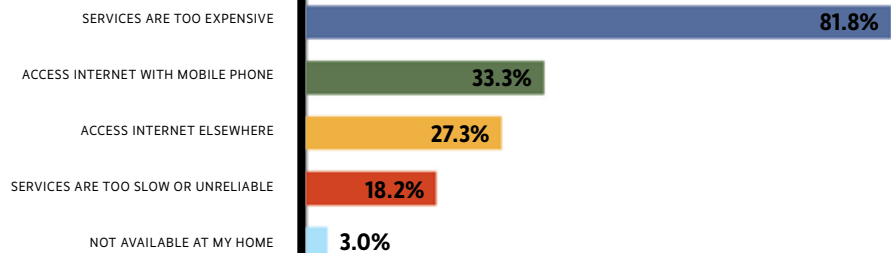
Chatham County was forced to find new ways to work, go to school, communicate, and connect during the pandemic. This was a challenge for the 9.4% of county residents with no internet access in their housing unit. According to American Community Survey microdata, 1,307 elementary school-age children (5-10 years old), 510 middle school-age children (11-13 years old), and 705 high school-age children (14-18 years old) lived in a home with no internet access.
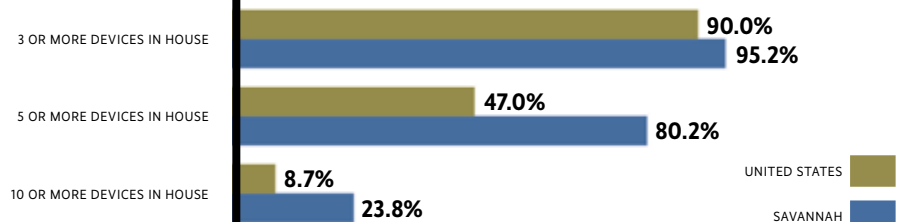
Household Survey Findings—Savannah

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%

Internet–enabled Devices in U.S. vs. Savannah Households

	United States	Savannah
3 OR MORE DEVICES IN HOUSE	90.0%	95.2%
5 OR MORE DEVICES IN HOUSE	47.0%	80.2%
10 OR MORE DEVICES IN HOUSE	8.7%	23.8%

UNITED STATES

SAVANNAH

MICROWAVE INTERNET SERVICE

Microwave radio transmission has been used for wireless data transmission since before the terms wireless broadband or Wi-Fi were commonly used. However, transmission was limited by slower data speeds, line-of-sight connections, and bandwidth issues. Microwave relay stations were often located on tall buildings and mountaintops, with their antennas installed on towers to get maximum range.

Although alternate modes of transmission are more prevalent today, some microwave systems now serve as emergency backup during emergencies or in rural areas. Microwave radio relay systems are often used today in portable radio applications. More routinely, retractable, telescoping masts with microwave dishes are used for remote broadcasts by television and news companies to transmit live video back to the studio.

While fiber will continue to be deployed, not all urban cell sites can be supported by fiber. Microwave is versatile and can support significant amounts of data, and has the advantage of immediacy of deployment, a moderate cost profile, and accessibility

Summarized from Techwalla.com

Microwave Pros

- Lower Initial Costs
   - » The costs of installing a microwave tower are significantly less than those of installing traditional buried cable systems, such as DSL or cable.

- Mobility
   - » Mobile microwave networks, such as Cellular on Wheels (COW) systems, have a range of about 2.5 miles and provide greater flexibility due to their mobility. These networks are used locally during high-wireless usage events such as St. Patrick's Day, where the population grows dramatically within a small area of the city.
   - » Portable cellular sites can provide temporary network and wireless coverage to locations where cellular coverage is minimal or compromised, like after major storms or hurricanes. This allows for continuity and resilience planning to not be reliant on just one technology for internet access in these situations.
   - » Microwave systems can also be placed permanently so they become possible alternatives for underserved areas and communities where infrastructure is lacking.

Microwave Cons

– Interference

  » Microwave radio frequency transmissions can be adversely affected by weather conditions and terrain. Temperature, humidity, precipitation, and wind can all cause interference with microwave radio frequency communications. Terrain features like hills can reflect or block signals, and the density and height of nearby trees and buildings will also affect reception, sometimes creating a "shadow" or dead zone nearby. Additionally, rivers and other water features are extremely reflective to radio transmissions.

– Shared Bandwidth

  » All connections within range of a tower share the same bandwidth, which can significantly reduce connection speeds as more and more users connect to the network. Speed also decreases the farther one is from the tower. Ultimately, these issues with shared bandwidth and the widespread adoption of the internet precipitated the move away from microwave internet service and toward broadband.

BROADBAND & FIBER OPTICS GOALS

GOAL 1

Ensure all of Chatham County has access to broadband service

Internet is critical in today's world for both households and businesses. Areas of Chatham County still experience gaps in cellular coverage and have limited access to high-speed internet service even though multiple providers exist. Internet providers are working to extend fiber and new 5G wireless technology; however, some rural areas in the county are experiencing a reduction in coverage as these new technologies are implemented.
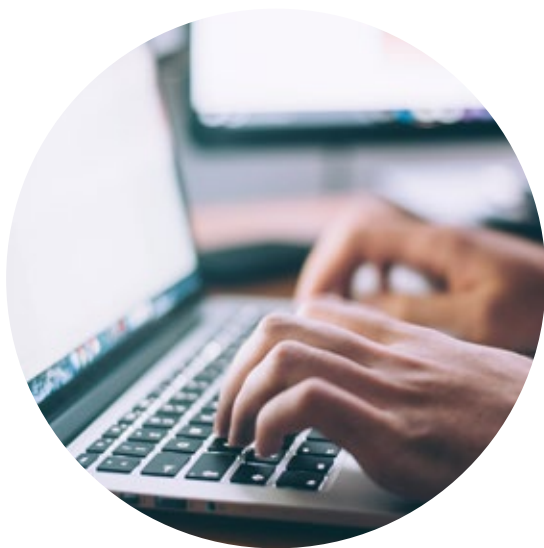
Objectives:

- Develop applicable codes and ordinances to phase in the requirement for all newly built residences have broadband connections installed
- In underserved areas where fiber installation is cost or location prohibitive, analyze the feasibility of using microwave systems to provide alternative coverage
- Work with local providers to develop and implement an outreach campaign to educate the general population on low-cost/affordable internet service program options
- Develop a plan and program to provide innovative solutions to access Wi-Fi throughout the county, such as in municipal parks, squares, and street corridors, in addition to CAT bus stops
- Explore technology spaces that offer creative opportunities such as virtual reality labs, music studios, and interactive technology

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