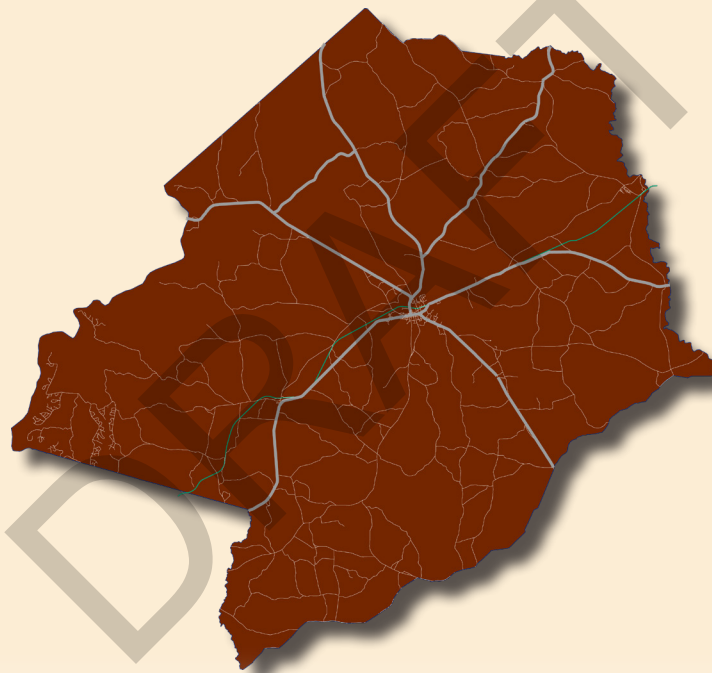




# *Hancock County*

Joint Comprehensive Plan 2021-2026



**HANCOCK COUNTY**  
— **GEORGIA** —



***Prepared for:***

The Chairman and County Board of Commissioners  
Hancock County, Georgia

The Mayor and City Council  
City of Sparta, Georgia

***Prepared by:***

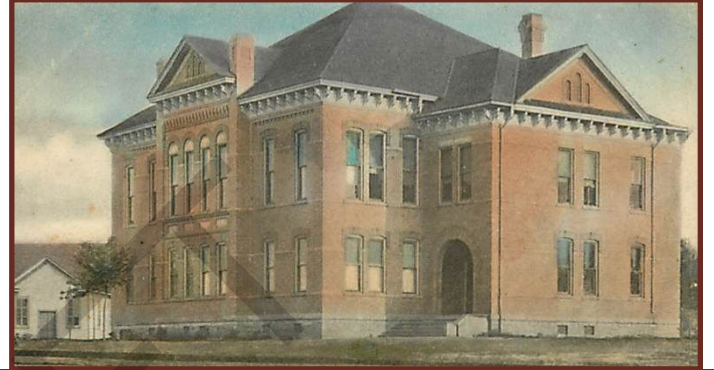
The Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission  
Augusta, Georgia

*The Chairman, Mayor, County Commissioners, and City Council  
acknowledge the input and efforts of all individuals who contributed to the  
creation of this joint comprehensive plan document.*



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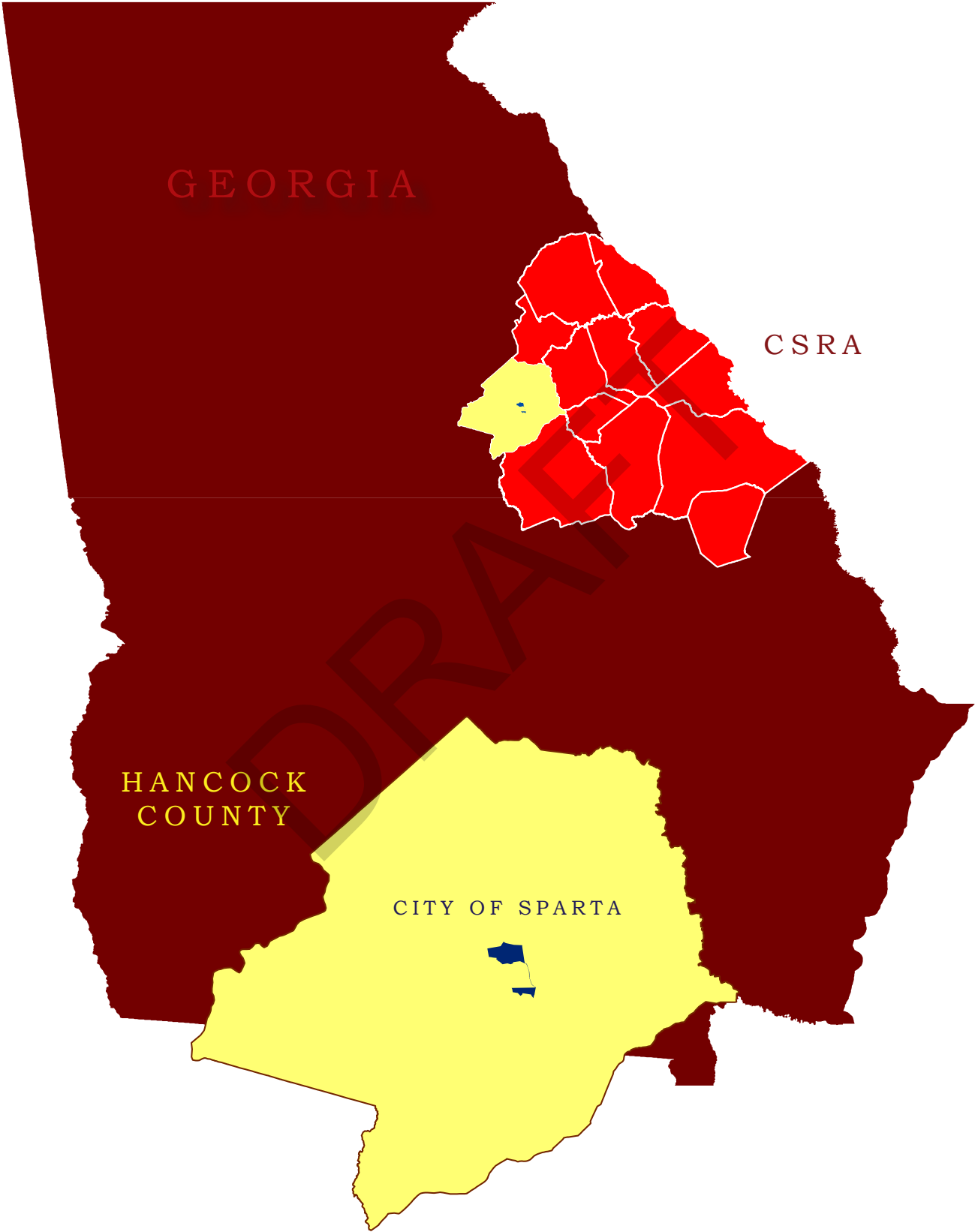




# *Chapter 1: Introduction*

Hancock County and the City of Sparta have prepared a new, joint Comprehensive Plan document for the purpose of providing a framework for the growth of their communities that reflects shifting changes in local priorities in the context of broader social and economic conditions. The Hancock County Comprehensive Plan 2021-2026 will serve to guide elected and appointed officials in development and growth decisions over the next five years and beyond.

This Joint Comprehensive Plan also serves as both general “statement of intent” regarding the policies it will observe and actions it will take in its efforts to achieve locally-generated and desired growth objectives. This document operates in concert with a number of other community plans and does not reflect all potential areas of community concern and action.





Georgia's Minimum Standards and Procedures for Planning are intended to help local governments address immediate needs and opportunities while moving toward realization of long-term goals. The Comprehensive Plan should be referenced by local elected and appointed officials when making intermediate decisions regarding land use and economic development.

## **WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?**

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that guides the future growth of Sparta and Hancock County. It is designed to facilitate a coordinated, long-term planning program which ultimately leads to desired future social and economic outcomes for both jurisdictions. It serves as a guide to both the public and private sector, providing guidance on items such as land development, housing improvements, economic development, cultural/environmental asset protection, and provision of community services and facilities. In short, the Comprehensive Plan is a unified document encouraging overarching consistency and coherence in county and municipal policies.

The Comprehensive Plan is structured as a dynamic document that should be amended when local priorities or conditions change. Periodic updates are necessary to ensure that the document's stated policies align with the needs and aspirations of residents. The previous plan for the City of Sparta was created in 1993. Since that time, local and external conditions have changed, some objectives were found to have been met, and others have changed or been overtaken by competing priorities. The current comprehensive planning effort addresses these changes and integrates new or evolving priorities among residents and community leaders.

## **HOW TO USE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

This comprehensive plan is a guide for action and is intended to serve as a reference for potential users. A member of the City Council or City Staff should refer to this plan's policies to decide on the approval of a rezoning or location of new development. Companion planning documents should be used in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan. These include but are not limited to the CSRA Regional Plan, the Hancock County Solid Waste Management Plan, the comprehensive and solid waste plans of other nearby jurisdictions, the Upper Oconee Regional Water Plan, the CSRA Regionally Important Resource Plan, the Fort Gordon Compatible Use Study, Hancock County Community Health Improvement Plan, and other local and state regulatory documents (e.g. zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations).

Unlike sector or single issue planning documents which generally refer to issues such as transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, annexation and community services, the Comprehensive Plan addresses these issues in a coordinated manner. Decisions should follow the comprehensive plan. If at some point the Comprehensive Plan no longer reflects a consensus regarding the path the City of Sparta or Hancock County wishes to take, it should be amended.

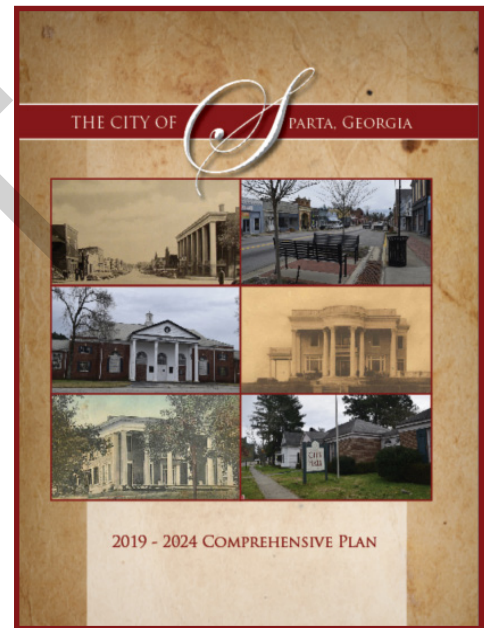
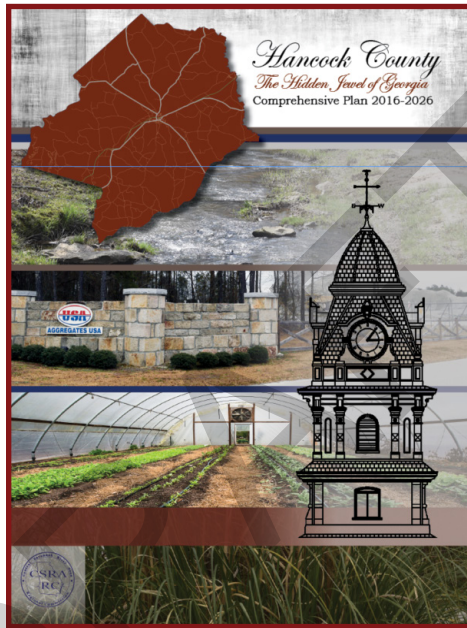
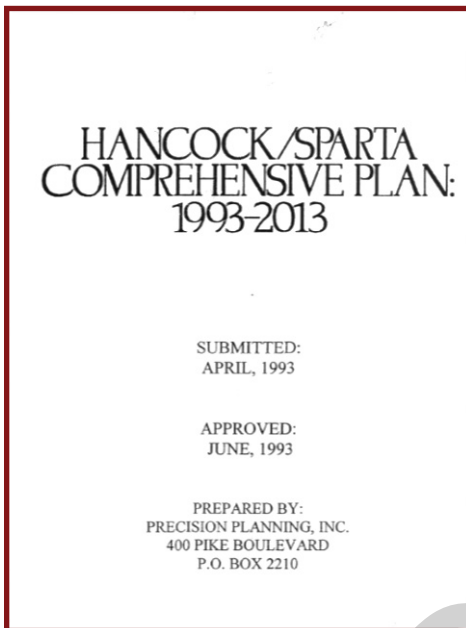
Comprehensive plans prepared in Georgia that are consistent with the DCA standards include a strategic planning component called the "community work program." The five-year community work program lists measurable projects that will be undertaken, consistent with their stated comprehensive plan goals.



# INTRODUCTION

## PRIOR PLANS

A Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic document which should be altered as community conditions change. Updates of these documents are required to ensure community needs are met. The Joint Hancock County-City of Sparta Comprehensive Plan 1993-2013 was completed by Precision Planning and adopted in May June 1993. The format of the document was consistent with the standards established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) prior to 2005. This document outlined county and municipal conditions of significance to each community and created goals with regards to economic development, natural and cultural resources, land uses, housing, and community facilities. The Comprehensive Plan was to be used by community leaders to make coordinated decisions regarding public expenditures and land uses. The ten-year update was deferred, and the subsequent 2012 work program and 2016/2018 comprehensive plan updates



were created by the CSRA Regional Commission (CSRA-RC). These documents included updates to needs, goals, and future development (land uses and/or character areas) maps.

The comprehensive plan is a living document that should be updated as the community it describes changes. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) now requires 5-year updates of the plan rather than 10 years, but the plan can also be amended at any time before that as local conditions and activities change.

## SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

The Georgia “Service Delivery Strategy Act” (O.C.G.A 36-70) was adopted in 1970 by the Georgia Assembly to require all Georgia counties and incorporated municipalities to adopt a joint “service delivery strategy” document. The purpose of this Act and the service delivery strategy document is to provide local governments the opportunity to examine public services, identify overlap or gaps in provided services, and develop a better approach to allocating delivery and funding of these services among local governments and other authorities within each county.





The service delivery strategy is an action plan supported by appropriate ordinances and intergovernmental agreements, for providing local government services and resolving land use conflicts within a county. The Hancock County service delivery strategy document has been reviewed and updated in cooperation with government officials from the City of Sparta and Hancock County during the comprehensive planning effort.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

A comprehensive plan should be composed to reflect the shared vision, goals and objectives for all communities involved in the process. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs requires the planning process for comprehensive plan to follow a set of minimum procedures to ensure that the public has the opportunity to provide input and review the comprehensive plan document as it is created.

Consistent public input is a necessary component for the creation and completion of this comprehensive plan document. One significant part of the process is forming a stakeholder committee of community members. This group of people is critical to the plan creation and informs the decision-making process. A committee of stakeholders was created and was comprised of community leaders from a cross-section of the county. The primary purpose of this committee was assuring that CSRA-RC staff reflect the aforementioned shared vision, goals, and objectives of the community.

The members of the Hancock County stakeholder committee for this planning process were:

- Sistie Hudson, Hancock County Board of Commissioners Chairman
- Allen Haywood, Mayor of Sparta; Development Authority
- Regina Butts, Family Connection Coordinator
- Griffith Polatty, Resident; Historic Preservation Commission
- Makesha Brown, Resident
- Beth Webster, Business Owner
- Faye Sherrod, Resident

Stakeholder meetings were held on the following dates to provide information, review data, and gain community perspective:

- June 3, 2021
- July 25, 2021
- August 5, 2021
- September 20, 2021

Two public hearings were also held as a part of this process on June 3rd and September 30, 2021.

New to the community planning process this iteration was an electronic survey that garnered over 270 responses. The survey responses were reviewed and used to generate new ideas and provide community confirmation of priorities created by the group. Staff compared what the stakeholder committee came up with to what survey results revealed when creating goals and work program activities to ensure that voices were being heard.



# INTRODUCTION

The CSRA-RC is the county's selected planning coordinator for the Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2021-2026. This document has been prepared to exceed the minimum requirements of Georgia Department of Community Affairs' 2014 Minimum Standards and Procedures For Local Comprehensive Planning which were became effective in March 2014.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the following state-required and elective components:

- Community Goals
- Needs and Opportunities
- Report of Accomplishments
- Community Work Program
- Community Involvement Overview
- Economic Development Element
- Land Use Element
- Housing Element
- Broadband Services
- Natural and Cultural Resources Element
- Community Facilities Element

All state-required comprehensive planning components, and additional elective elements listed are distributed throughout the Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan in different chapters and appendices.

## Plan Development Process

First Required Public Hearing: Briefs the public on the process and describes opportunities to participate

Plan Development: Includes opportunities for involvement from stakeholders and community members

Second Public Hearing: Provides an opportunity for comment on the publicly available draft plan and notifies the public of plan submittal for official review

Submittal of Draft Plan for Review: Requires a formal letter from the highest elected official to the CSRA-RC (submits plan to DCA)

Notification of Interested Parties: Provides all interested parties (other governments, state agencies, etc) the opportunity for plan for review and comment

Regional Commission & DCA Review: Includes RC review for potential conflicts and DCA review for statute compliance

Report of Findings and Recommendations: Is transmitted within 40 days after submittal

Plan Revisions: Revisions may be made to the plan to meet state requirements or address comments from interested parties

Plan Adoption: Occurs after official approval of the plan by DCA

Notification of Local Adoption: Requires the submittal of signed resolution and adopted plan to the RC within 7 days; RC forwards to DCA

Qualified Local Government Certification (QLGC): Includes a written notification from DCA that the city's QLGC has been extended

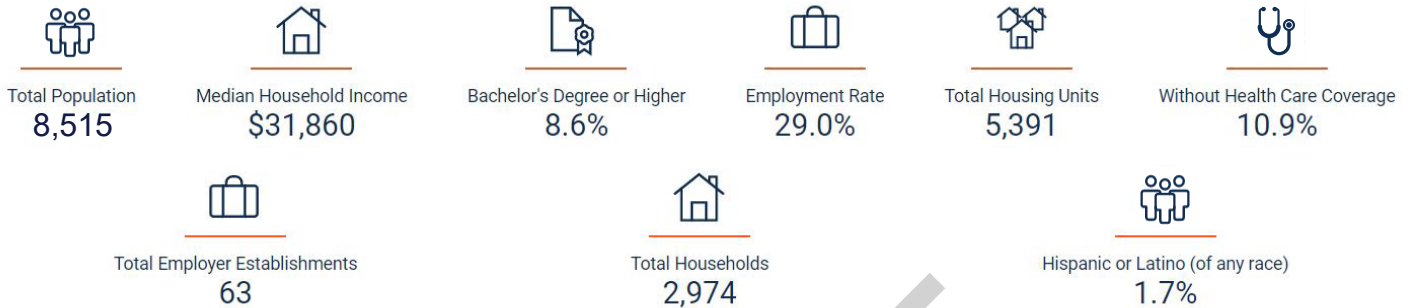
Publicizing the Plan: Occurs after plan adoption and informs citizens of final plan availability





## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT - Hancock County

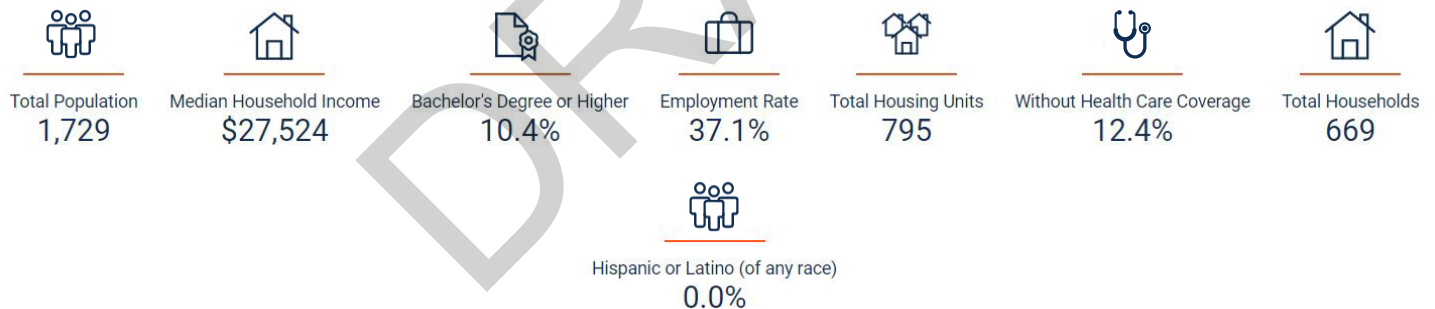
Data sources: 2015-2019 American Community Survey (2019 ACS) 5-year estimates; 2019 Economic Surveys Business Patterns | More information is available in the appendix.



Median Home Value: \$85,000 | Median Gross Rent: \$678 | Median Age: 45.6  
Homeownership Rate: 70.6% | Number of National Register Properties: 10  
Poverty Rate: 22.2%

## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT - Sparta

Data sources: 2015-2019 American Community Survey (2019 ACS) 5-year estimates  
| More information is available in the appendix



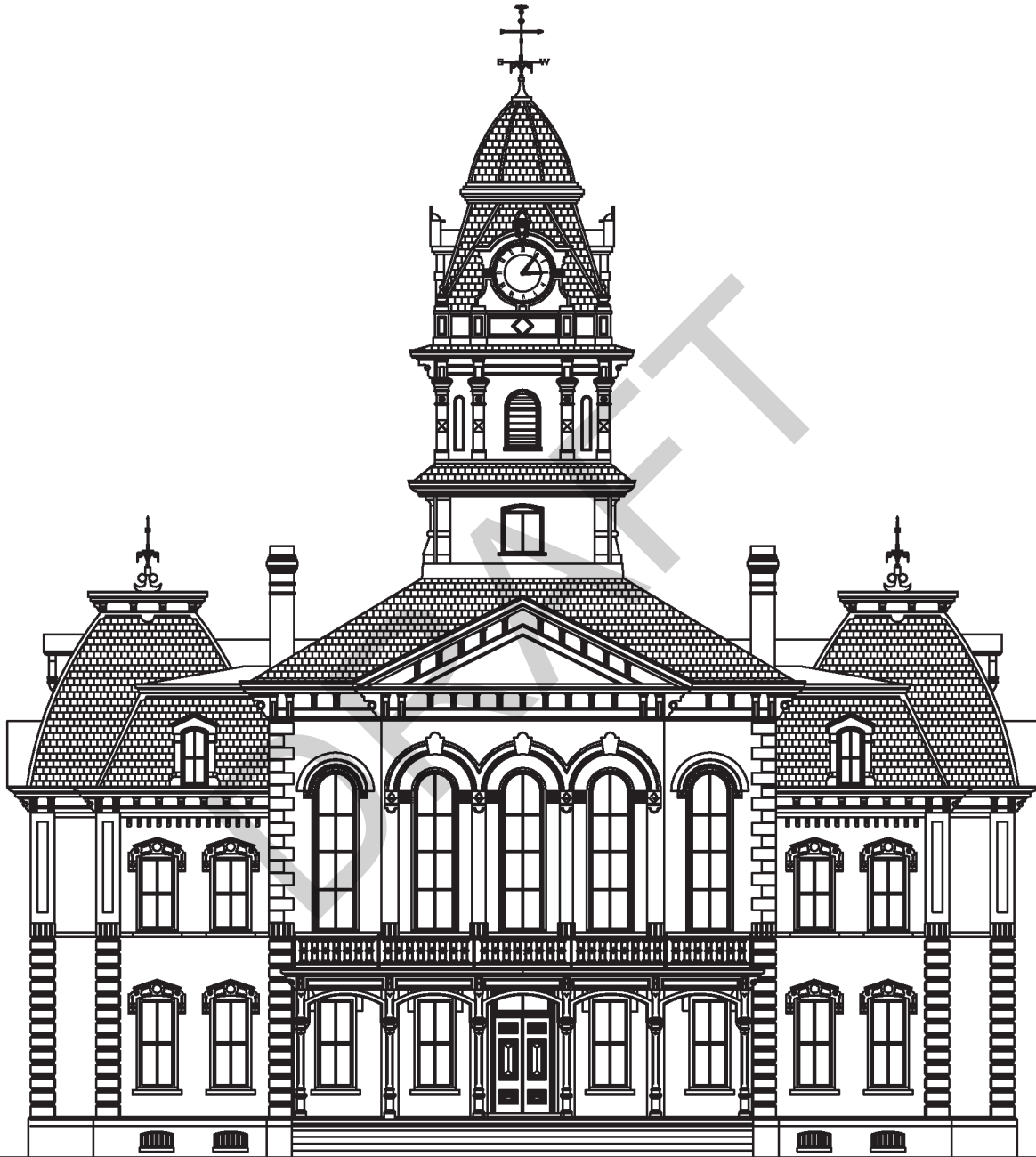
Median Gross Rent: \$560 | Median Age: 44.6 | Number of National Register Properties: 2  
Homeownership Rate: 54.7% | Poverty Rate: 36.2%

Like many rural counties in the CSRA region, Hancock County as a whole has experienced population decline over the last 20+ years. However, the City of Sparta has experienced some population increase.

Both communities are interested in and working to expand local employment and economic development opportunities (including entrepreneurship and tourism), improving community aesthetics, and increasing other quality of life areas such as access to parks/recreation.



# INTRODUCTION





# *Chapter 2:*

## *Community Vision*

This portion of the comprehensive plan contains the following:

- SWOT analysis
- Community Needs and Opportunities
- Community Goals
- Future Development Narrative and Maps

Within the future development section, Hancock County elected to retain the use of a future land use map from its previous plan, and the City of Sparta elected to retain a character area map from its previous plan. Thus these communities are presented in two different map and narrative series.

### *SWOT Analysis*

As mentioned previously, the stakeholder committee met several times over the course of the plan creation process and actively participated in facilitated discussions and group exercises to define community needs, review community goals, and create community work program activities. One key exercise was the SWOT analysis (strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats). Combined with data collected by Regional Commission staff and county staff, the SWOT analysis directly informed the crafting of the county needs and opportunities and provided support for long-term goals and policies. Additionally, the community survey contained a SWOT component, and responses from that survey were included in the SWOT summary below.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- History (structures and sites, African-American, Native American)
- Small town feel
- Low crime
- Rail is still in use
- City/County administrations work well together
- Popular hunting and fishing destination
- Good city/county leadership and staff, including certified volunteer firefighters, new city treasurer and records management
- Faith-based community
- Little traffic
- Cost of living
- Lake Sinclair and other natural areas
- The residents
- Friendly and family-oriented community
- Minimal air and water pollution
- Available land for development (commercial, residential, recreational)
- Currently updating the historic resource survey
- Popular Pews and Pulpits tour; growing heritage tourism
- Jewell wedding venue
- Proximity to Augusta, Macon and Atlanta
- Moderate pedestrian traffic downtown Sparta
- Organizations like Family Connection are working toward improving education and health in the county.
- Sparta is a designated Opportunity Zone



## WEAKNESSES

- Lack of jobs and businesses
- Few healthcare options/no hospital
- Inadequate housing (type of options; repairs needed on owner-occupied structures)
- Infrastructure needs improvements (roads, water, sewer, broadband, sidewalks)
- Lower-performing school system
- Internet access
- Limited retail and commercial options
- Insufficient communication between residents
- Insufficient community engagement from government
- Small industrial park with limited usable land
- Dilapidated structures and blighted areas
- Difficult to get volunteers for committees
- Food deserts and resident food insecurity
- Limited daycare options
- No office for the active Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)
- Some structures available for development have ground/building contamination
- Understaffed code enforcement
- Unattractive highway entrances (trash, dilapidated properties)
- Lack of lodging for hunters and other visitors
- Outdated land use ordinances
- Lack of cooperation/coordination between government and school board
- Poverty
- Lack of youth activities
- Not located close to the interstate
- No parking at the courthouse on court days





# COMMUNITY VISION

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Expanding historic/heritage and agri-tourism
- Attracting businesses to the lake area
- Infrastructure development
- Increasing investment in community youth
- Revitalizing downtown Sparta via the Dream Street Project, individual property improvements, and other growth/development initiatives
- Constructing community gardens
- Building a new fire station to help lower ISO ratings
- Expansion of the Pews and Pulpits tour
- Annexing existing water customers into the city
- Assembling land for a new industrial park
- Consolidating city/county resources
- The TSPLOST truck route off Hwy 15 (commercial development)
- Expanding and increasing parks and recreational facilities
- Developing historic homes into bed and breakfasts

## THREATS

- Competition from other areas
- Inability to secure a new healthcare facility (hospital, urgent care)
- Potential increases in crime
- Community disinvestment
- Lack of resources to implement ideas
- Ineffective/insufficient community leadership
- Continued population decline and shrinking tax base
- Aging population
- Citizen and community being job ready, lack employment skills to be ready for larger industry to come into the community
- Low participation in the 2020 Census count
- Incompatible development in certain areas
- Low COVID-19 vaccination rate
- Community apathy and/or division
- Difficulty working with GDOT, particularly around projects on state routes
- Demolition by neglect (buildings)
- Limited offerings and support from Oconee Fall Line Technical College



## *Community Needs and Opportunities*

The needs and opportunities included in this section of the plan present issues to address and possibilities to pursue across both jurisdictions. These items were generated during the 2021 comprehensive planning process utilizing: input from the stakeholder committee, the previous plan, community survey, and SWOT analysis. This plan section also informed other parts of the plan, including goals and work program activities. As a reminder, these aren't the only possible needs and opportunities, and this document is flexible to change as the community does.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Needs	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More lodging for visitors and tourists</li> <li>• Improved food access to reduce the number and size of food deserts</li> <li>• Better equipped workforce to attract companies and service local demand for jobs</li> <li>• More marketing and planning for existing and future economic development efforts</li> <li>• More employment opportunities for residents</li> <li>• Larger, more usable area for industrial park</li> <li>• More options to grow small businesses (a business incubator)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop natural resources and innovative agricultural sites into Agri-tourism products and sites</li> <li>• Expand the hunting industry</li> <li>• Utilize the Hwy 15 Coalition to promote local businesses</li> <li>• Expand the historic tourism sector and feature historic homes</li> <li>• Increase the number of occupied buildings downtown (new businesses)</li> <li>• Create a city organization to house both the Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Development Authority</li> <li>• Capitalize on moderate pedestrian activity in downtown Sparta</li> <li>• Approve commercial development along new truck route (bypass)</li> <li>• Improve county/city presence on GA Camera Ready website</li> </ul>

### **HOUSING**

Needs	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional fire station to help lower ISO ratings</li> <li>• Remove dilapidated housing</li> <li>• Review code enforcement capacity for this area</li> <li>• Additional low-income housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize state and federal funding for housing rehabilitation</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for mixed-use buildings in downtown</li> <li>• Expand housing options around Lake Sinclair</li> <li>• Become a GICH community</li> </ul>



# COMMUNITY VISION

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES	
Needs	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stronger school system and more cooperative school board</li> <li>• Greater availability of daycares and community/learning centers</li> <li>• More recreational and community event areas and social opportunities for residents.</li> <li>• Improve residential water quality in targeted areas</li> <li>• Increased roadway maintenance</li> <li>• Electronic payment options for county services such as county taxes</li> <li>• More parking at the county courthouse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing rail uses could be expanded with railroad cooperation</li> <li>• Expansion opportunities exist for areas currently not served by city/county water and/or city sewer</li> <li>• Several buildings and sites are available to create a much-desired community center and recreation facilities - is there a use for the old OFTC building? - boys and girls club</li> <li>• Pedestrian facilities along major roads</li> <li>• Acquire property to host a farmer's market and other local outdoor events downtown</li> <li>• Organizations like Family Connection are working toward improving education and health in the county.</li> </ul>
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES	
Needs	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect Lake Sinclair from inappropriate development</li> <li>• Preserve and protect existing historic and natural resources</li> <li>• Public Parks and Greenspaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize residents' who are available and willing to share knowledge of historic preservation tax credits to help others learn how to use them</li> <li>• Feature historic resources as a part of larger heritage tourism efforts</li> <li>• The ordinances and codes are able to be updated to properly address development concerns</li> </ul>
LAND USE	
Needs	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infill development in the city</li> <li>• Updated land use controls (zoning) in the city and county</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market undeveloped land</li> <li>• HPC enforcement of design standards and compatible development in the historic district</li> <li>• Expanding the Sparta historic district</li> <li>• The ordinances can be improved to address dilapidated structures.</li> </ul>





## *Community Goals & Policies*

This section of the plan, like those before it, represent both Hancock County and the City of Sparta.

### **Goals**

The goals presented herein represent broad statements of understanding and intent regarding the community's long-term growth and development vision. In addition to the list of needs and opportunities, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' "Quality Community Objectives" were reviewed in order to form these topic-specific goals which guide the implementation strategies contained in the Community Work Program.

### **Policies**

To accompany the goals, a list of supporting policies was developed, some as ongoing initiatives, maintenance, and general best practices for local action. When the opportunity presents itself, potential actions derived from the goal, policy and objective statements contained in this section of the Comprehensive Plan may be incorporated as amendments into the Community Work Program at a future date.





# COMMUNITY VISION



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Provide an economic development program that continues the development of a balanced and self-sufficient local economy that benefits all citizens.
- Increase the number of cottage industry and small businesses throughout the county.
- Have an industrial park at 100% capacity.
- Expand hunting and game-related activities for residents and seasonal visitors.
- Utilize natural and cultural resources to create heritage and agri-tourism programs.
- Ensure employment is available for all residents.
- Encourage and facilitate new businesses and restaurants within downtown Sparta.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES GOALS

- Expand water service to underserved areas of the county.
- Lower county ISO ratings in order to reduce insurance costs for all customer sectors.
- Provide sufficient parks, trails, and recreational opportunities and facilities for residents and visitors of all ages and sports leagues from other counties.
- Expand agricultural education for residents of all ages to promote local, healthy food.
- Create a “picture-perfect” urban garden for community use.
- Ensure a market is downtown to provide healthy food for city residents
- Create a community-wide wellness program.



## NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

- Preserve and protect historic resources.
- Create a City Museum and Recreation Complex

## LAND USE GOAL

- Promote appropriate development and protect resources through land use controls.





### HOUSING GOALS

- Provide safe, livable, affordable housing options for all ages.
- Present attractive housing and aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods that encourage community investment and upkeep.

### BROADBAND SERVICES GOAL

- Increase access to high-speed Internet throughout the county for residents, businesses, and institutions of various sizes.

## SUPPORTING POLICIES

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Work with the Hwy 15 coalition to promote businesses along that corridor.
- The development authority or other economic development organization, should utilize the plan when proposing new locations for commercial and industrial activity.
- Actively support efforts to reduce unemployment through partnerships with community organizations.
- Actively support local efforts to increase academic achievement.
- Maintain a list of available industrial sites and vacant commercial buildings in the city/county.
- Encourage and support redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Sparta, including commercial and residential development and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.
- Support programs for the retention, expansion, and creation of businesses.
- Target reinvestment in declining, existing neighborhoods to further encourage private sector redevelopment.
- Promote the establishment and maintenance of public gathering sites in the downtown Sparta area to serve as focal points for the city.
- Invest in new festivals to be held within the city/county to attract people to the area.
- Actively promote existing annual events, and seek cross-promotion of events in nearby counties.
- Encourage cleanup and reuse of brownfield sites.

### LAND USE

- Actively enforce established ordinances, zoning and nuisance codes.
- Require planning/code enforcement staff and planning commissioners to attend regular training.
- Keep the zoning ordinance and other development regulations up-to-date.
- Record ordinance updates with Municode.
- Encourage traditional neighborhood development.
- Promote efficient use of land by encouraging well-designed, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development patterns.
- Use the Comprehensive Plan in the review of rezoning applications and other development proposals.
- Coordinate land use decisions with transportation decisions.





## COMMUNITY VISION

- Support the redevelopment and revitalization of vacant and/or underutilized commercial and industrial areas within the downtown area.
- Support opportunities for residential and non-residential development that enhances the character of existing neighborhoods.
- Employ innovative planning concepts to achieve desirable and well-designed neighborhoods, protect the environment, preserve open space, improve traffic flow, and enhance the quality of life in Sparta.

### NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Promote local historic preservation activities and regularly publicize information about available tax credits.
- Encourage and support redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Sparta.
- Prepare and adopt DNR “Part V” environmental ordinances as applicable.
- Encourage new development in suitable locations in order to protect natural and cultural resources, and environmentally - sensitive areas.
- Periodically update historic resource surveys.
- Preserve corridors suitable for the development of multi-use trails.
- Utilize form-based codes or design guidelines to protect the design and character of historic structures while exercising flexibility in their use.
- Consider natural/cultural resources impacts when making land use or other planning decisions.
- Seek for opportunities to link natural, agricultural, and/or cultural sites together to create tourist and resident experiences.
- Identify programs, projects, and educational messages to reduce non-point source pollution to protect water quality in lakes and streams.
- Educate stakeholders in the region on the importance of water quality and managing water as a resource including practices such as water conservation and increased water efficiency.
- Encourage all new car wash establishments, regardless of size and scale, to recycle wash water to minimize the amount of potable water used during their processes and to capture and treat stormwater properly.

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

- Enhance and upgrade recreational facilities and leisure opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Pursue grants and other opportunities to assist in funding infrastructure improvements.
- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure as well as future investments and expenditures for capital improvements and long-term operation and maintenance costs.
- Coordinate public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact development.
- Protect existing infrastructure improvements by encouraging infill, redevelopment and compact development.
- Review GDOT “Complete Streets” guidance and opportunities to improve pedestrian/bicycle connections to neighborhoods in road projects.
- Create opportunities for food access in public spaces (space for farmers markets, edible plants with labeling in parks, etc.).



- Examine street networks around targeted senior centers for connectivity/walkability between the center and the surrounding area.
- Maximize infrastructure investments by promoting infill development where possible and appropriate.
- Support farmer's markets, pocket parks and community gardens.
- Improve accessibility to library services and educational programs.

### HOUSING

- Acquire and demolish vacant and dangerous buildings that do not conform to requirements.
- Exercise code enforcement for substandard and dilapidated properties.
- Actively seek appropriate state and federal grants for housing improvements.
- Encourage infill housing in existing, viable neighborhoods.
- Promote walkable, safe neighborhoods.
- Participate in CHIP, GICH, and CDBG Housing rehab programs
- Provide homeowners with information on state and federal rehab programs.
- Evaluate existing vacant structures, including historic or former industrial, as opportunities for adaptive reuse as housing or mixed developments.
- Existing housing stock should be examined and periodically inventoried.
- Encourage housing in the upper floors of downtown commercial buildings.



# HANCOCK COUNTY

## GEORGIA

### *Future Development*

#### EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE

Changing conditions sometimes lead to or require changes in land use. The understanding of established and potential future uses of land in Hancock County should be a priority to address changing conditions. Examination of zoning and land use reveals that little has changed since the last comprehensive plan. The vast majority of land in Hancock County has been and continues to be designated for agricultural and low density residential uses.

Residential land use consists of single and multi-family developments. Single-family dwellings are the predominant housing type. There is little duplex and multifamily development in the County. Single-family homes are located in five (5) major areas in the County as follows:

- 1) Around the City of Sparta.
- 2) Along County roads and State highways across the County.
- 3) County roads in selected woodland settings.
- 4) Along the shore and surrounding countryside of Lake Sinclair.
- 5) Clustered in former agricultural communities, such as Culverton and Devereux.

Very little land in Hancock County is designated for commercial uses. Small businesses operate in scattered locations throughout the county, with no centralized area. The majority of commercial buildings in the county are in incorporated Sparta.

Industrial land in Hancock County includes several quarry and mining sites and the industrial park. One industrial tenant is a small solar farm, an industry the county wants to expand.

#### FUTURE LAND USE MAP

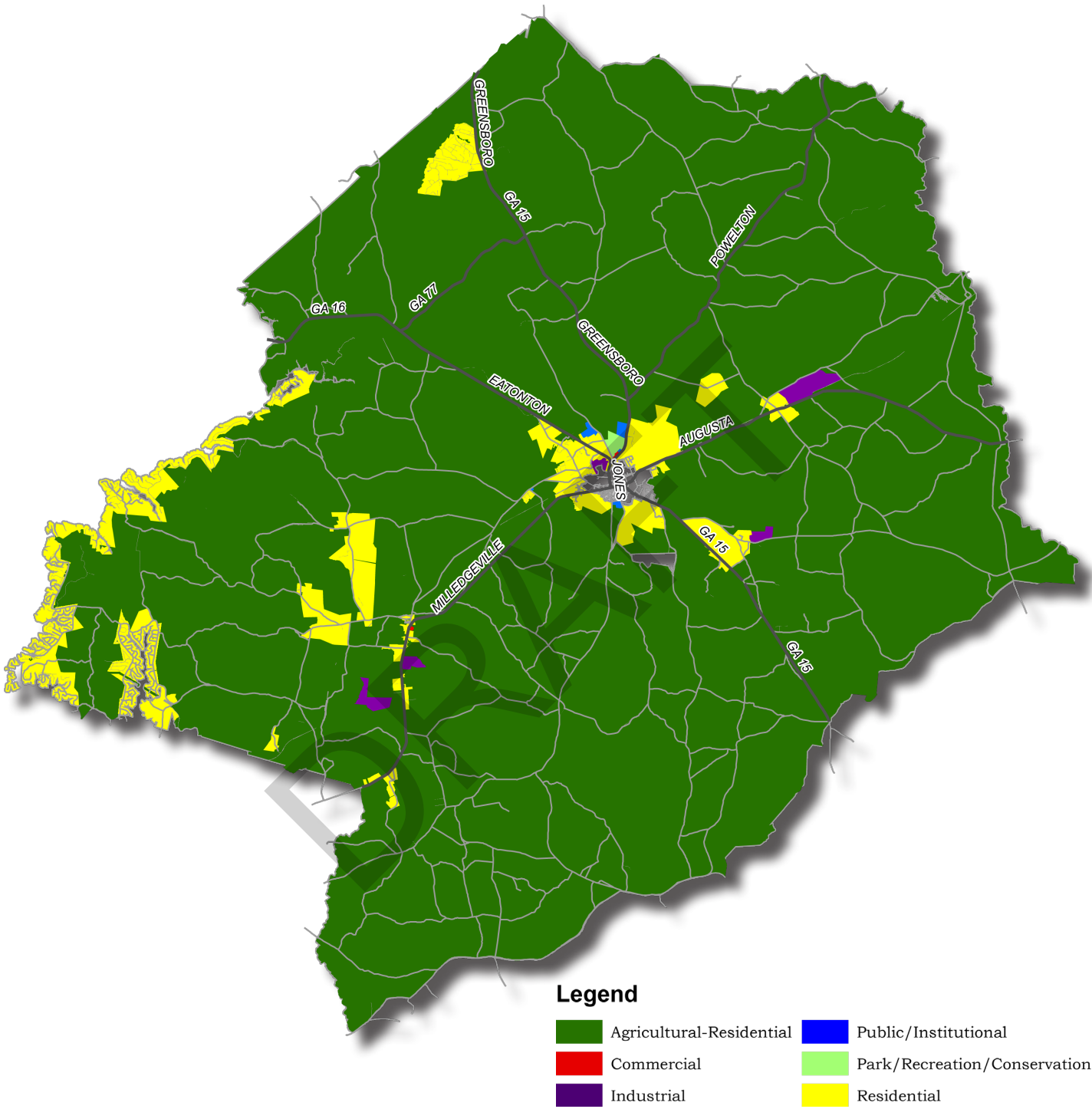
When determining how best to use the Joint Comprehensive Plan future land use maps and supporting narratives for Hancock County, the reader should be mindful of the following:

- **Boundaries:** The future land use map is parcel based and does not cross parcel lines. It also does not include the City of Sparta. Generally, a tract should develop according to the parameters established in the specific land use in which it is located. The county is strongly encouraged to initiate amendments to their Future Land Use Map whenever the community intends to promote a development pattern in an area that is contrary to the adopted map.
- **Narrative:** The included narratives correspond to the Future Land Use Map for the county and should be viewed as general policy statements - as statements of intent. Their use and applicability is similar to those other goals and policy statements found in the "Community Goals" section. They should inform future development decisions.





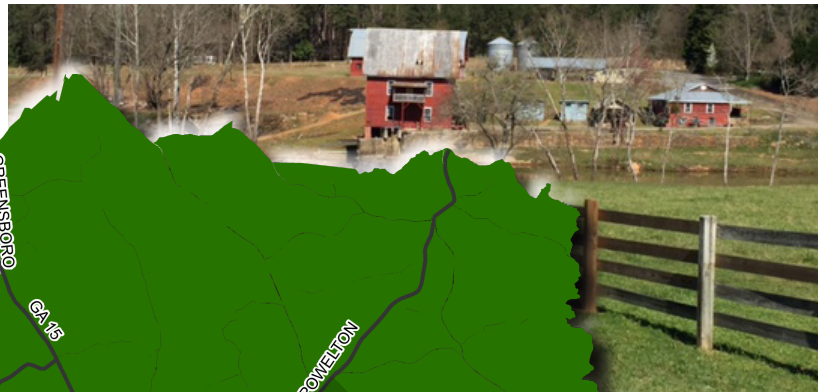
Hancock County Future Land Use



# COMMUNITY VISION

## Agricultural-Residential

This category is for land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting. Low-density single-family dwelling units are the only allowable housing type. Recreation, such as bicycle and pedestrian trails would be appropriate in this area.





**Residential**

The predominant use of land within the residential category is for single-family and multi-family dwelling units organized into general categories of net densities. Housing types and densities will vary between the lakeshore area and the other portions of the county.



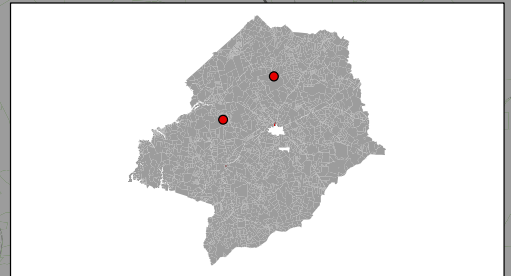
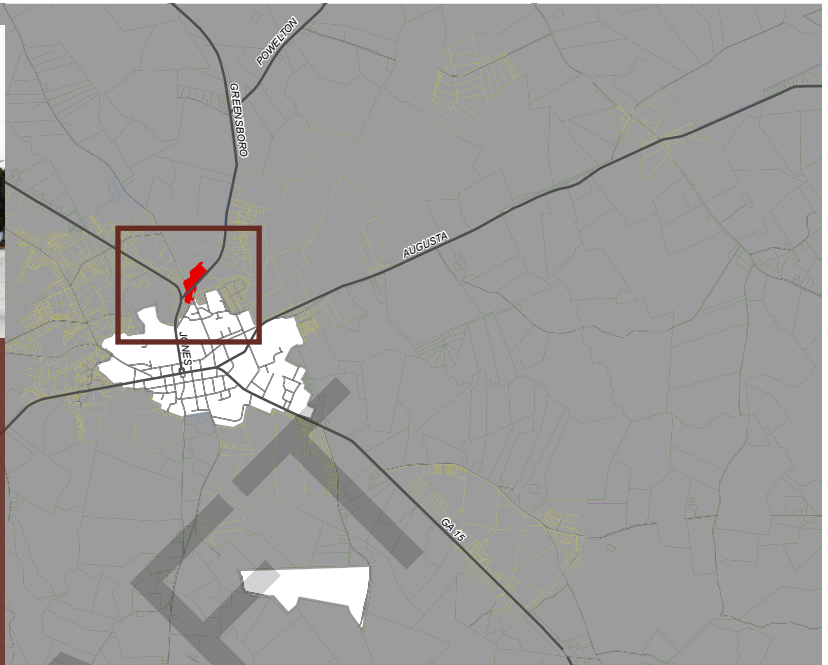


# COMMUNITY VISION

## Commercial



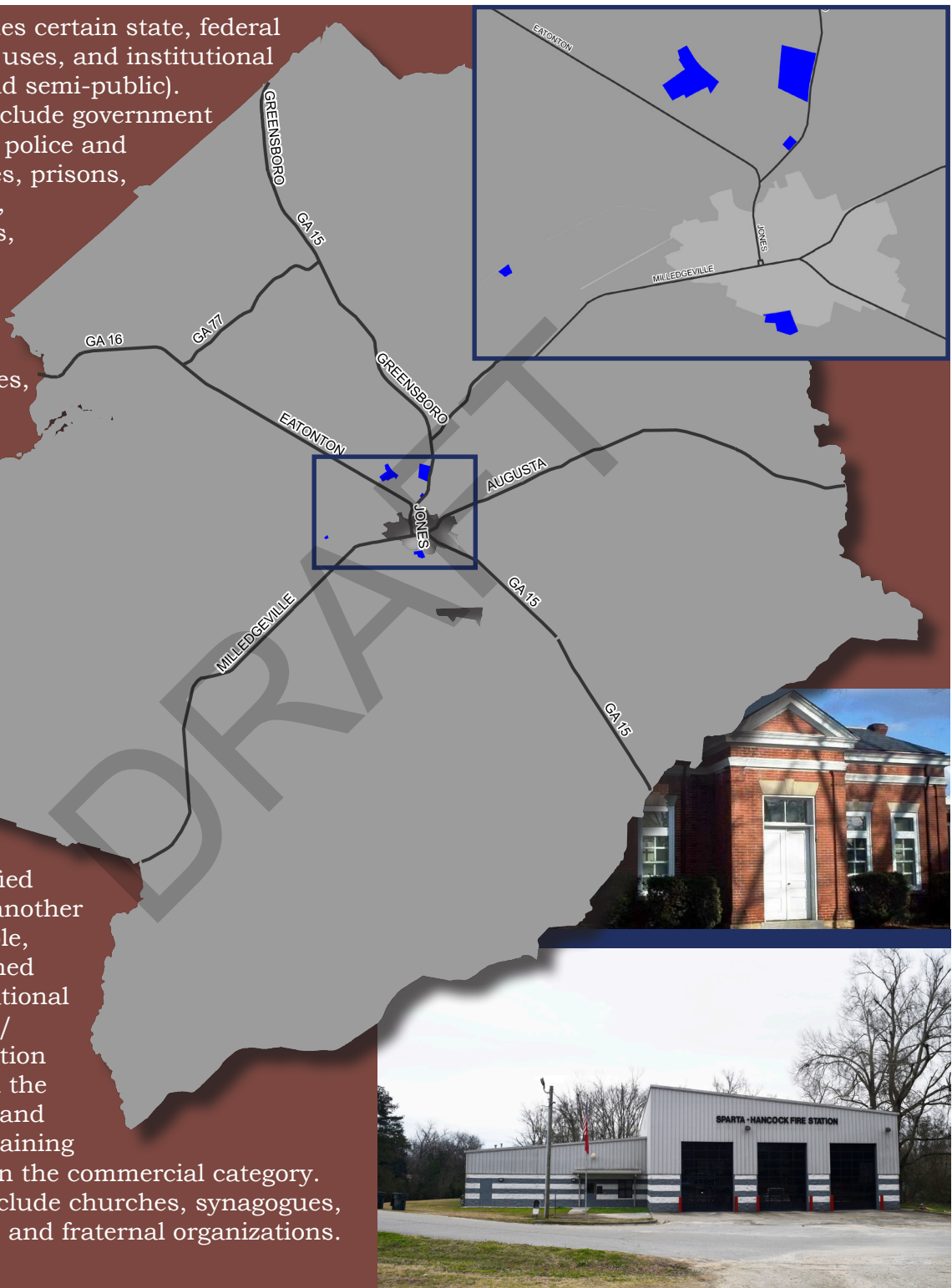
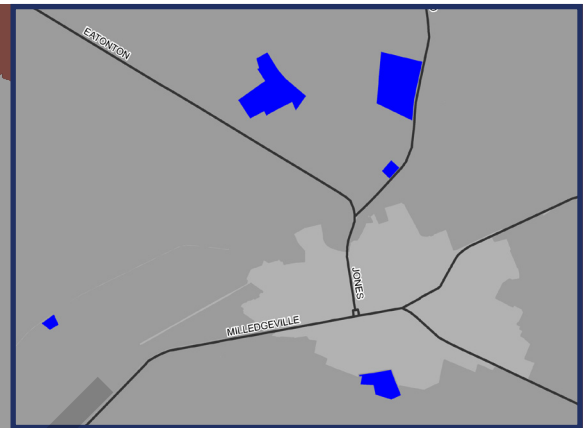
This category is for land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities, organized into general categories of intensities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building. Most commercial property in the county is currently located in Sparta.



## Public/Institutional

This category includes certain state, federal or local government uses, and institutional land uses (public and semi-public). Government uses include government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, synagogues, -clubs and fraternal organizations, etc. They do not include

facilities that are publicly owned, but would be classified more accurately in another category. For example, include publicly owned parks and/or recreational facilities in the park/recreation/conservation category; landfills in the industrial category; and office buildings containing government offices in the commercial category. Semi-public uses include churches, synagogues, as well as and clubs and fraternal organizations.





# COMMUNITY VISION

## Park/Recreation/Conservation

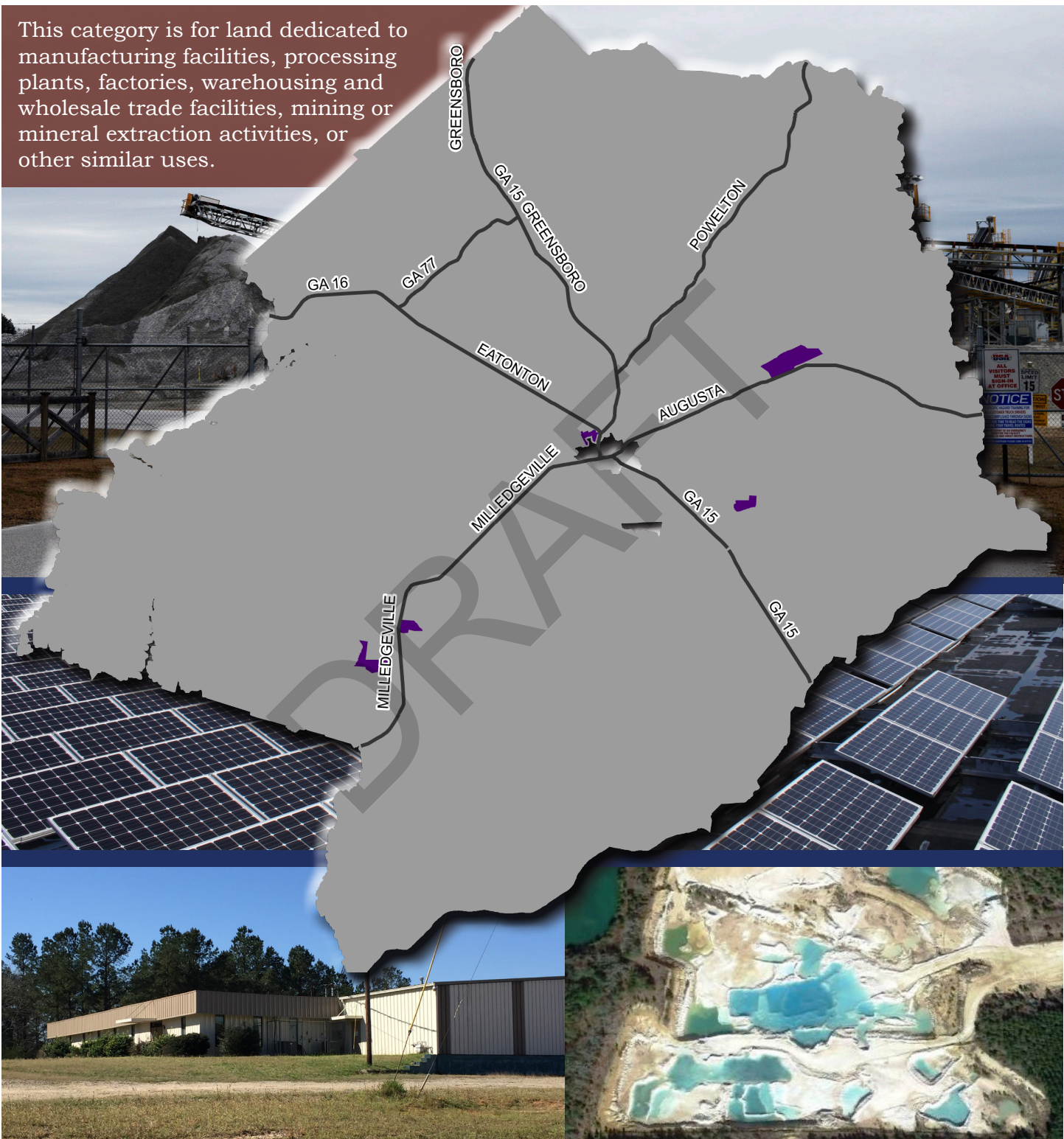
This category is for land dedicated to active and passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers or similar uses.





Industrial

This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or other similar uses.





## *Future Development*

The 2021 Joint Comprehensive Plan incorporates a Sparta Character Area Map as its principal means by which the long-term land use goals and policies of the City of Sparta are represented. The 2021 Comprehensive Plan Character Area Map includes a total of five (5) character areas which encompass the entire jurisdiction. These areas are as follows:

DOWNTOWN SPARTA | INNOVATION - HISTORICAL | INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
PERIMETER - HISTORIC | RESIDENTIAL GROWTH

Character areas developed that account for land within the municipality, remains purposely broad. With limited near-term growth prospects, Sparta stakeholders determined that more specific land use policies for areas of existing population concentrations is best addressed through corridor, district, or neighborhood-specific special area planning processes as the need arises.

Supporting character area narratives are located on the pages following. When interpreting how best to use the Comprehensive Plan's Character Area Map and supporting narratives, the reader should be mindful of the following two (2) parameters:

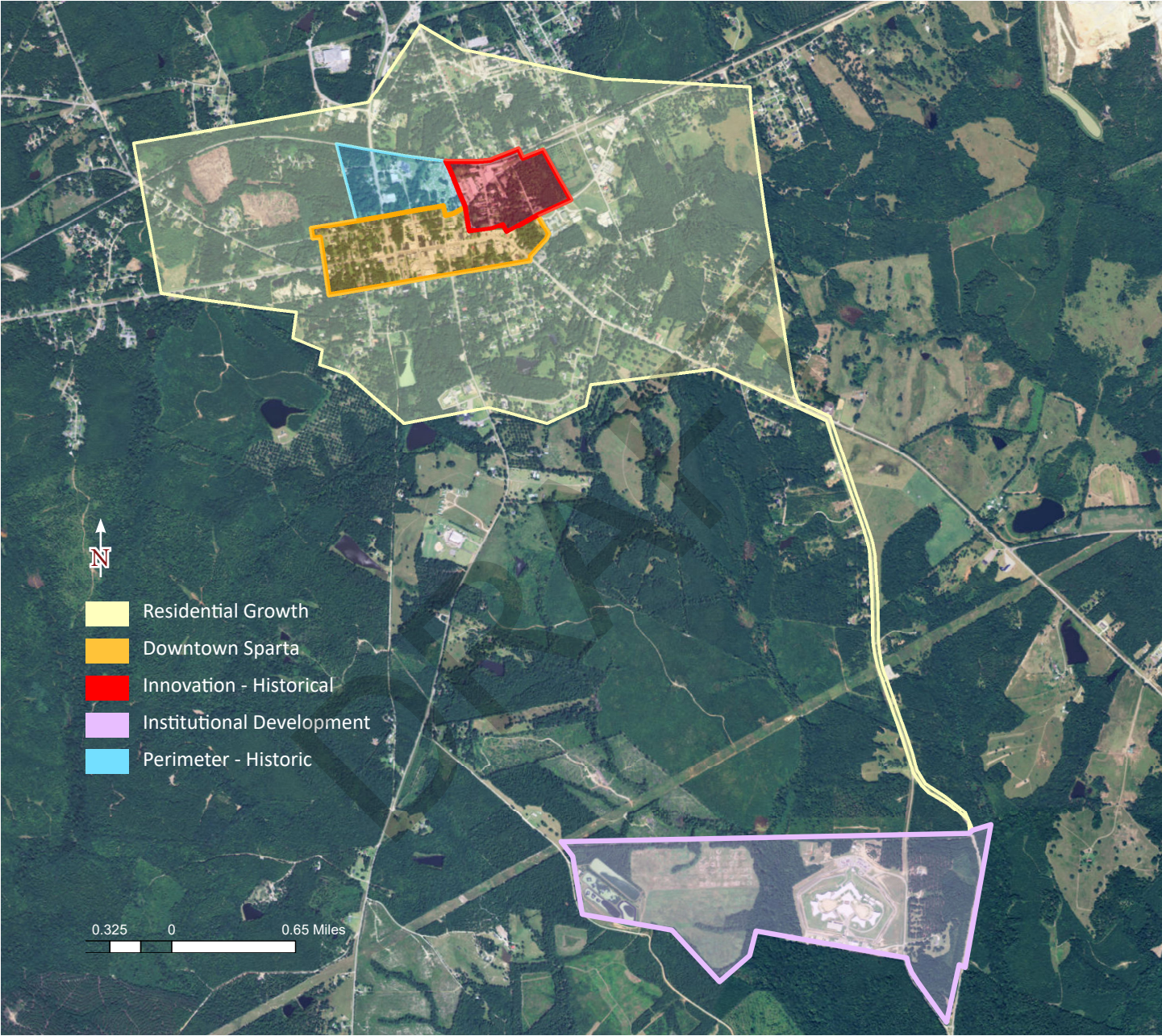
**Character Area Boundaries.** Unlike a parcel-specific future land use map, character area boundaries are conceptual and may cross parcel lines. The character area boundaries in this document represent “approximate” character area location. This flexibility allows the city government to make decisions based on changing conditions while reducing the need to continually amend the comprehensive plan. As a result, it is possible to assume that small parcels located directly adjacent to one (1) or more character areas may be permitted by the local government to develop according to the parameters of the adjacent area rather than the area in which it is located. Such an action should be taken sparingly and the decision should only be made if the local government can show that it is consistent with the recommendations provided in other sections of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan or other local policy document. For the most part however, tracts should develop according to the parameters established in the specific character area in which it is located.

**Character Area Narratives.** The narratives which correspond to the Character Area Map should be viewed as general policy statements - as statements of intent. Their use and applicability is similar to those other goals and policy statements found in the Community Goals section. They should inform future development decisions and perhaps form the basis for more detailed topic-specific studies in the future.



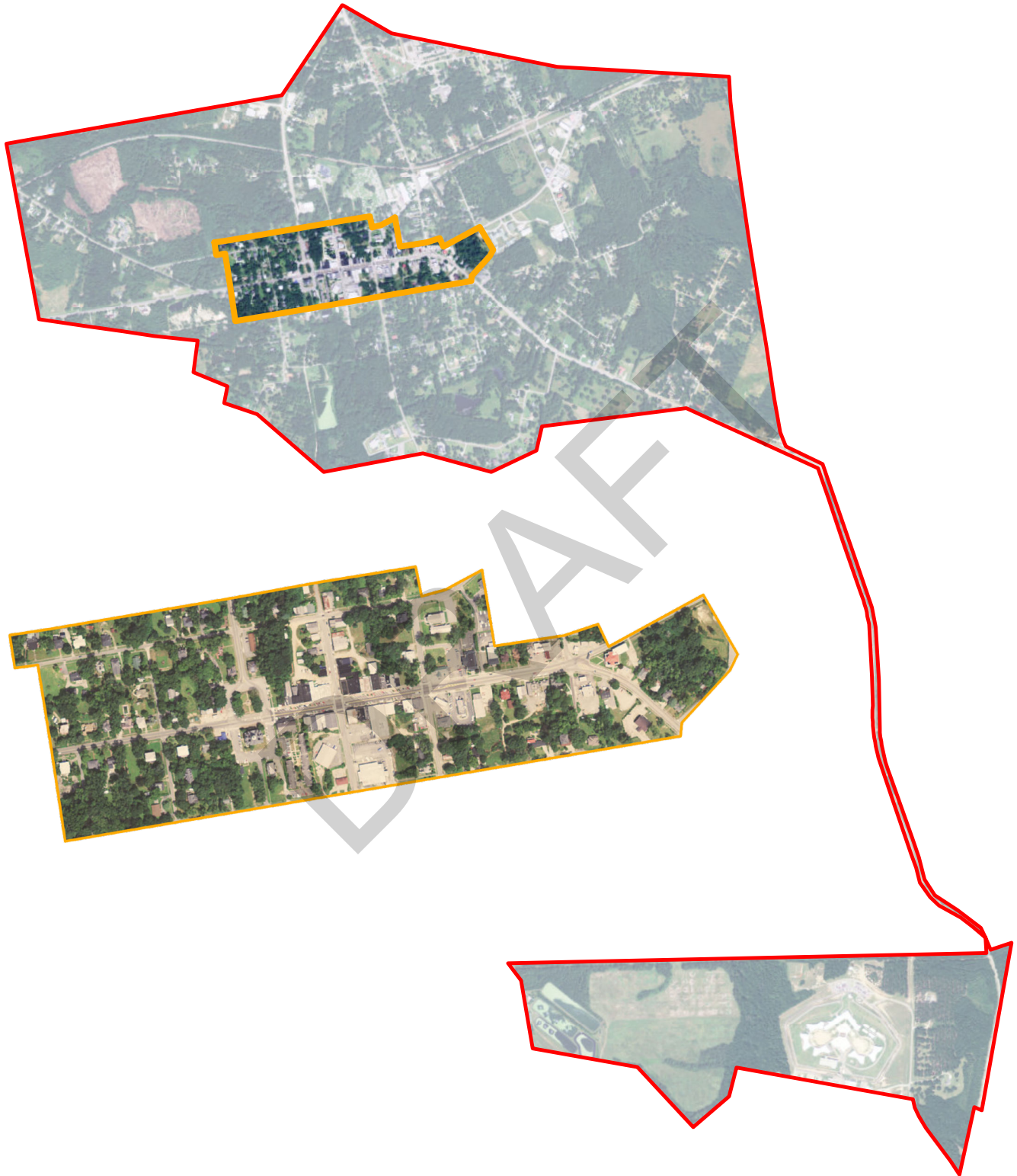


SPARTA CHARACTER AREAS





DOWNTOWN SPARTA CHARACTER AREA



## DOWNTOWN SPARTA CHARACTER AREA



### General Description

The Downtown Sparta Character Area, primarily located along Broad Street, contains multiple land uses including commercial and small and medium lot residential. There is a focus on making this area a true community center where residents are able to gather and enjoy amenities in conjunction with local shopping and eating options.

### Land Uses and Zoning Categories

- Commercial
- Residential
- Historic Residential
- Greenspace / Parks

### Relationship to Prior Comprehensive Plan

This character area was part of the City of Sparta 2018 comprehensive plan update.

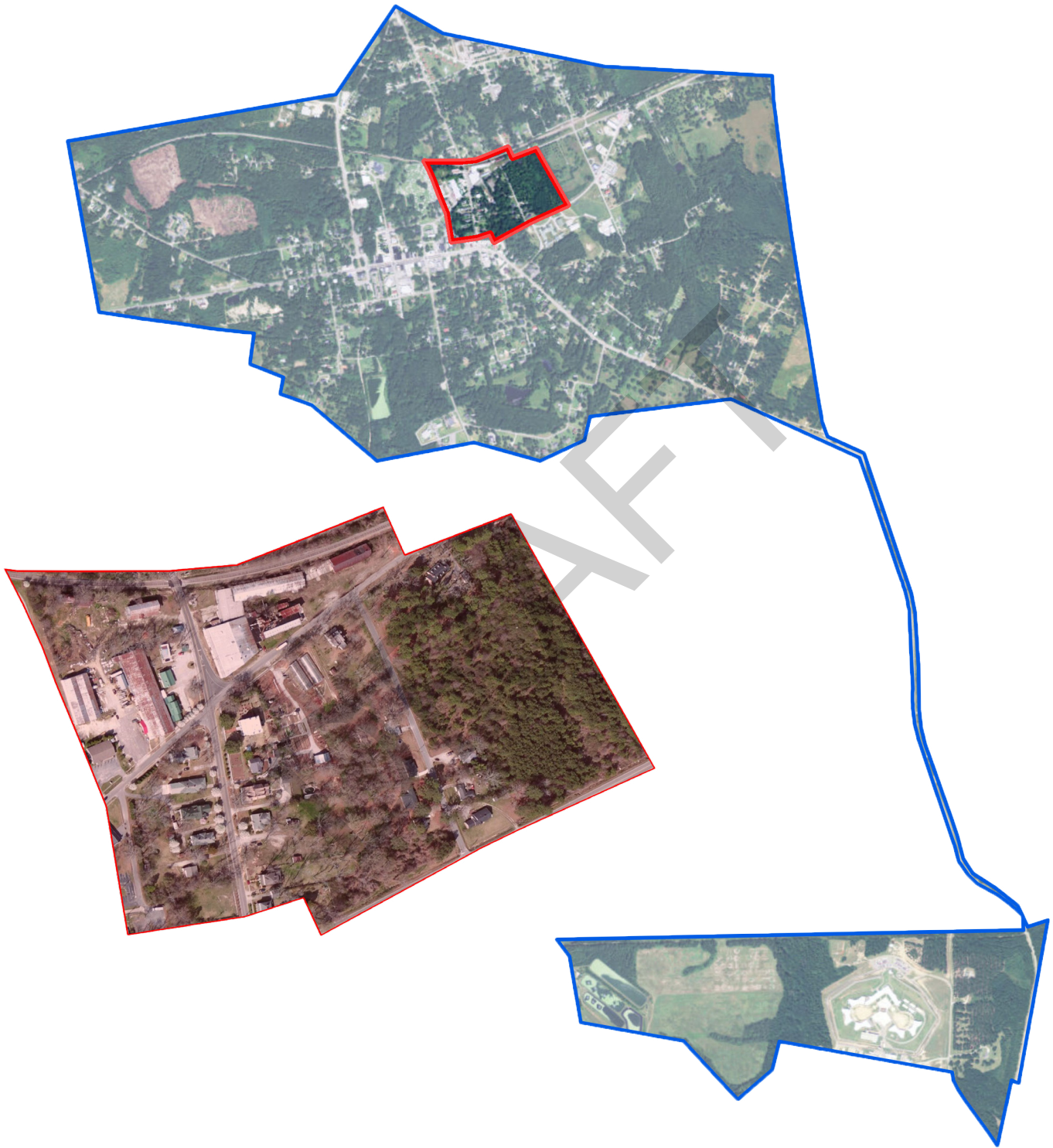
### Implementation Measures

- Provide incentives for certain commercial activities
- Improvements to commercial area pedestrian facilities
- Increase advertisement of commercial area and incentives outside of area
- Provide an area in which residents are able to congregate and enjoy events





INNOVATION-HISTORICAL CHARACTER AREA





## INNOVATION-HISTORICAL CHARACTER AREA



### General Description

The Innovation-Historical Character Area is an area where historical homes exist in conjunction with small-lot commercial hydroponic farming facilities. This unique combination of uses in proximity to one another is a model for rural communities and is promoted as such.

### Land Uses and Zoning Categories

- Small-scale Innovative/Educational Agricultural
- Residential (Historic)
- Residential
- Public gardens

### Relationship to Prior Comprehensive Plan

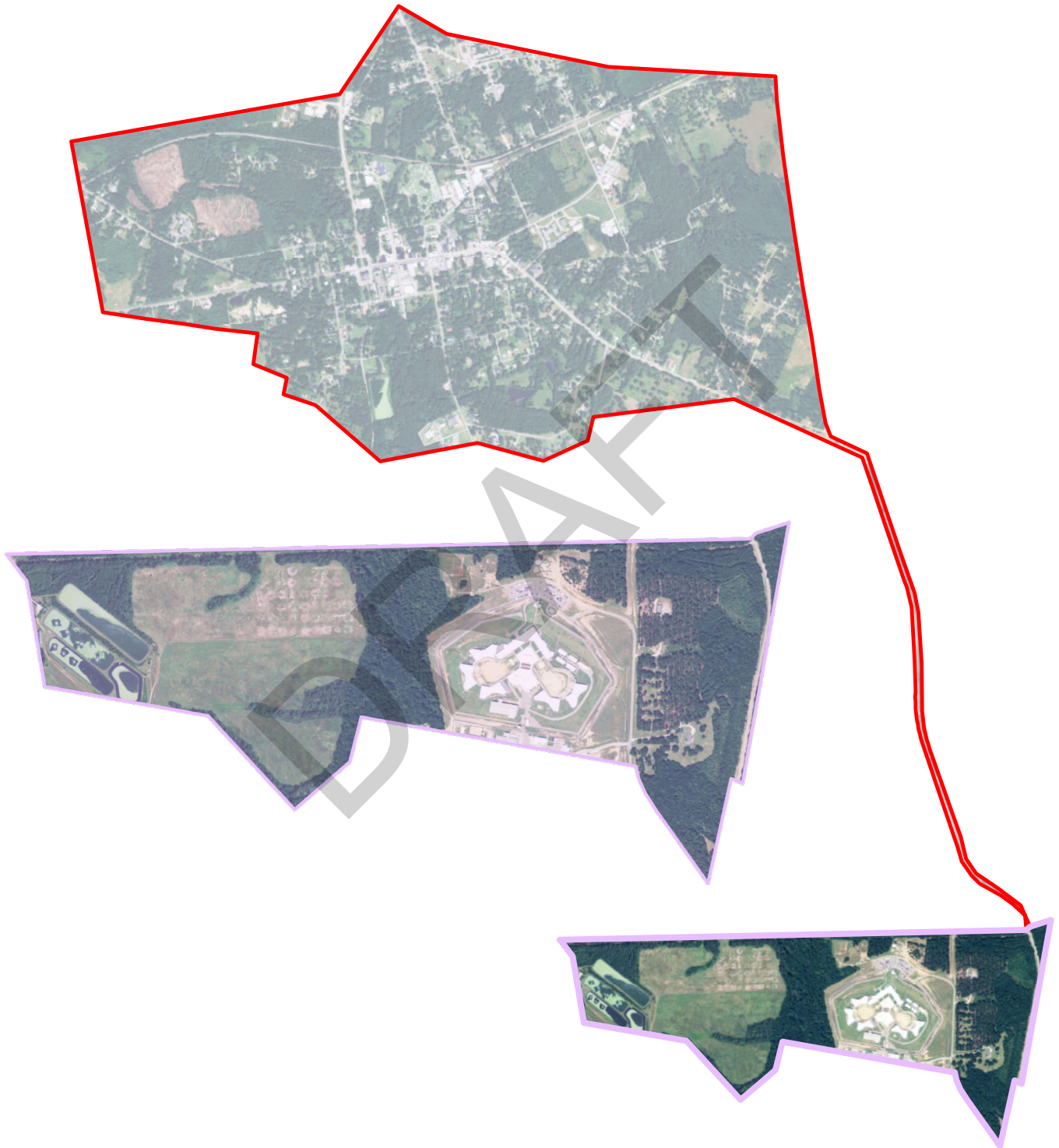
This character are was part of the City of Sparta 2018 comprehensive plan update.

### Implementation Measures

- Assist with incentives and funding through the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University Agriculture Extension Offices
- Increase advertisement of area to attract visitors to unique marriage of agriculture within city residential area.



INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA





INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA



General Description

The Institutional Development Character Area currently contains the city’s sewerage treatment plant’s spray field and the Hancock State Prison (1,237 inmates), which comprise the majority of the land in this character area.

Land Uses and Zoning Categories

- Expansion of existing uses

Relationship to Prior Comprehensive Plan

This character are was part of the City of Sparta 2018 comprehensive plan update.

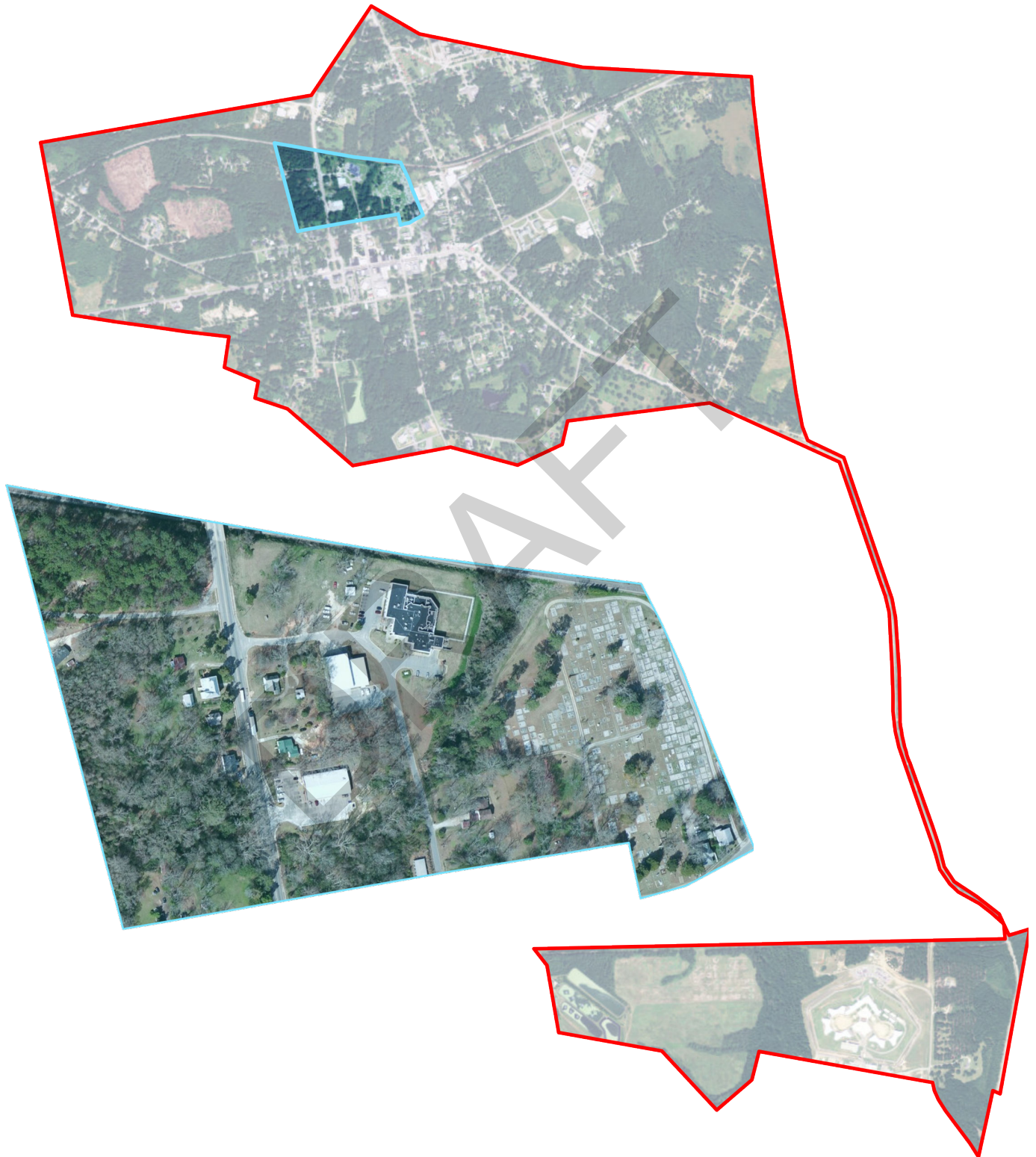
Implementation Measures

- The uses currently in this area should only be expanded.





PERIMETER-HISTORIC CHARACTER AREA



PERIMETER-HISTORIC CHARACTER AREA



General Description

The Perimeter-Historic is characterized by historic homes and sites including the Sparta Cemetery listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This area is a current tourist attraction and should be maintained and beautified to continue to attract visitors to the area.

Land Uses and Zoning Categories

- Residential (Historic)
- Residential
- Public gardens / parks
- Bed and Breakfast Inns
- Public Institutional
- Depot
- Warehouse for commercial use

Relationship to Prior Comprehensive Plan

This character are was part of the City of Sparta 2018 comprehensive plan update.

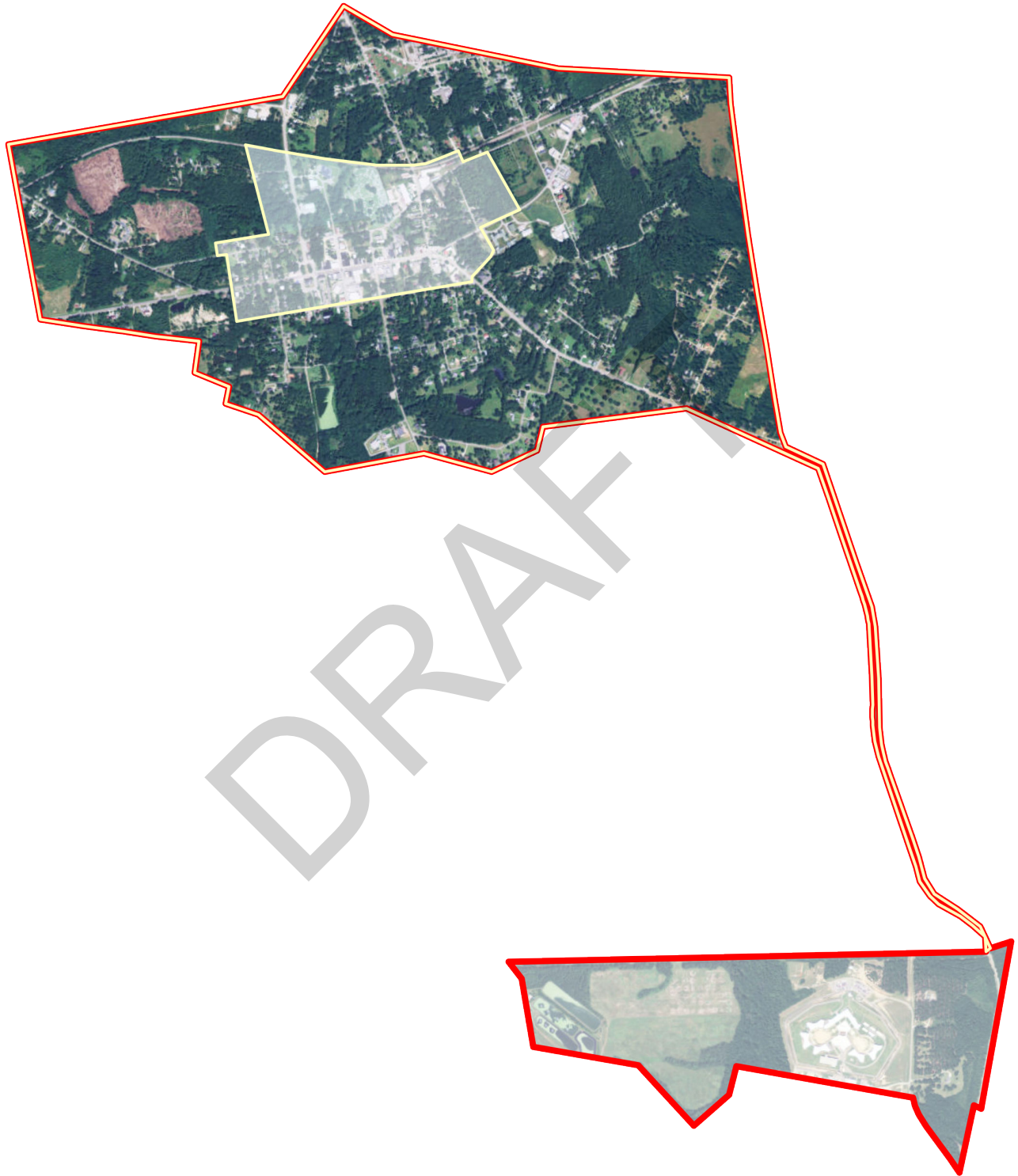
Implementation Measures

- Provide ordinance language to ensure the operation of Bed & Breakfast / Inns to ensure visitors have a place to stay on a visit to the city
- Improvements to pedestrian facilities
- Increase the number of greenspaces and passive parks for visitors to enjoy





RESIDENTIAL GROWTH CHARACTER AREA





## RESIDENTIAL GROWTH CHARACTER AREA



### General Description

The Residential Growth Character area contains primarily residential and commercial land uses. Commercial land uses are typically located along major thoroughfares. There is potential for residential development throughout this character area.

### Land Uses and Zoning Categories

- Residential
- Greenspaces / Active Parks
- Limited commercial along main highways

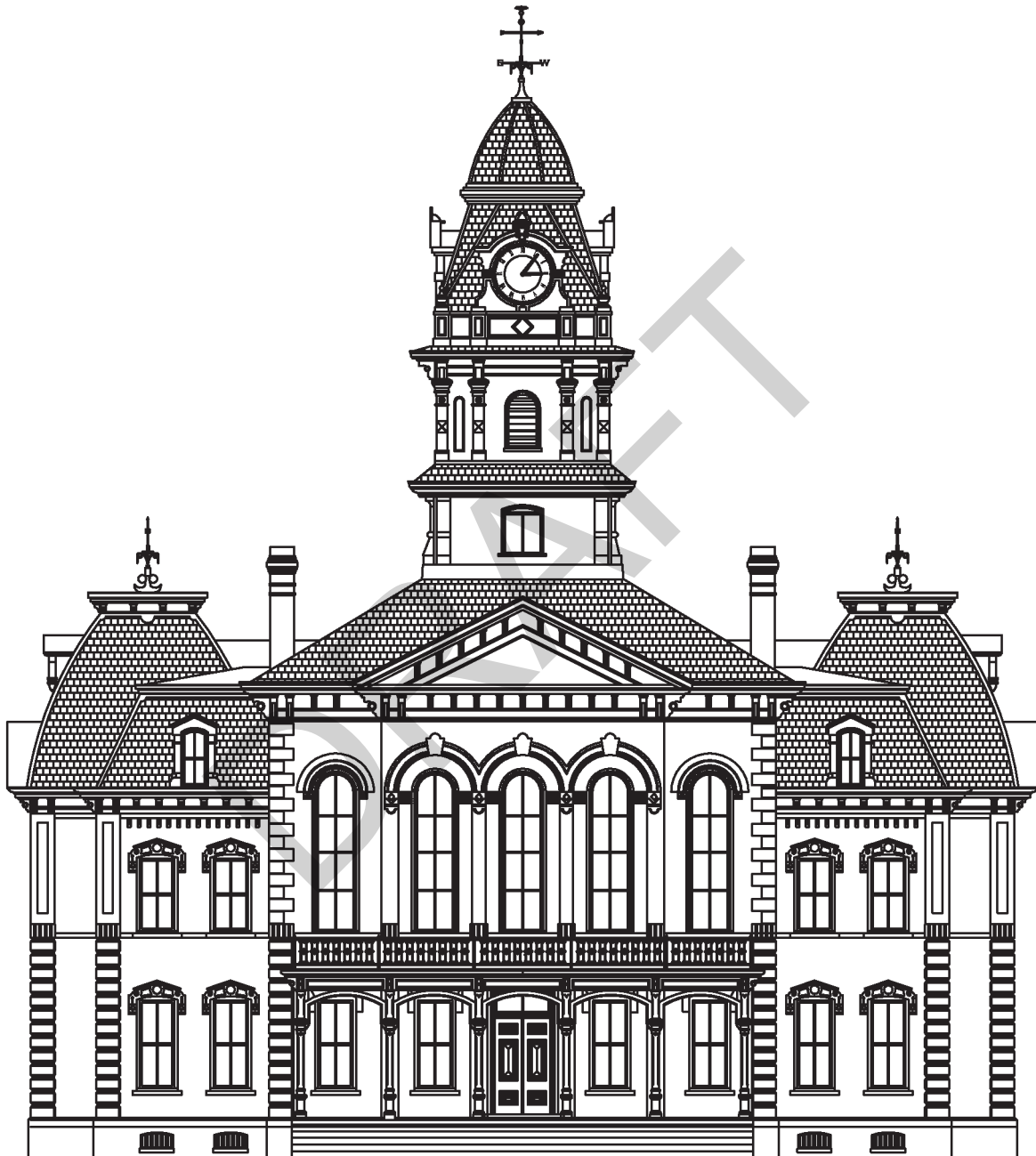
### Relationship to Prior Comprehensive Plan

This character are was part of the City of Sparta 2018 comprehensive plan update.

### Implementation Measures

- Improvements to pedestrian facilities
- Provide an area in which residents are able to congregate and enjoy events







# *Chapter 3:*

## *Plan Implementation*

This portion of the comprehensive plan contains the following:

- Report of Accomplishments
- Community Work Program

Although this is a joint comprehensive plan with shared goals, each jurisdiction has maintained a report of accomplishments and 5-year work program for 2021-2026.

# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As part of the report, a list of activities from the prior community work programs is included on the following pages, and activities are assigned the following identifiers to acknowledge the status of each project as:

- Completed: the listed activity has been concluded
- Underway: the listed activity has started and is continuing
- Postponed: the listed activity has not been started or has halted for some reason
- Not Accomplished: the listed activity has not and will not moved forward

## COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The Community Work Program component establishes priority activities (divided by topic area) that the county, city, and/or other vested or partnering agencies will undertake over the next five (5) years. It is the key implementation tool for addressing the needs and opportunities identified during this planning process. Although designed by local planning participants to guide community building activities prioritized from the “bottom-up,” the Community Work Program is structured to adhere to DCA minimum state comprehensive planning standards.

Consistent with state rules, the 2021 Comprehensive Plan’s Community Work Program includes the following information:

- Description of each activity
- Time-frame for undertaking the activity
- Responsible party and potential partners for implementing the activity
- Estimated Cost (if any) of implementing the activity
- Funding Source(s)





# HANCOCK COUNTY

## GEORGIA

### Report of Accomplishments

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Establish an umbrella economic development organization, One Hancock, to promote county efforts from the development authority, tourism and chamber.				X	Upon consulting legal advice from the county attorney, it was determined that this is not possible in the county due to the way the Development Authority was created
Recruit additional solar farms to the county.		X			
Create a county business incubator.			X		Postponed until a suitable location can be found
Develop an annual fishing tournament at Lake Sinclair.			X		Postponed until a host entity can be determined
Join the state program whereby hunters can lease property from residents for hunting.				X	No longer necessary; currently accommodated by private landowners
Apply to the DCA Tourism Product Development Team for a visit and subsequent report for county tourism.		X			a TPD grant was obtained for the Pews and Pulpits tour, brochures and boxes
Work with neighboring counties to create a multi-county heritage tourism trail.	X				
Market and expand the current "tour of homes".		X			This activity is not included in the 2021 CWP.
Restart the annual Renaissance Festival.	X				
Initiate a "Christmas at the Courthouse" annual program.			X		Postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic
Work with a developer to build lodging facilities for visitors.				X	lack of funding
Promote the existing annual motocross event.		X			This activity is not included in the 2021 CWP.



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Reinstate the historic preservation commission.	X				
Nominate additional properties to the National Register of Historic Places.		X			
Create a county repository of historical artifacts and records.		X			The county is currently searching for locations to open a museum.
Create a recreational trails plan.			X		Lack of funds
Apply for a recreational trails grant.			X		Postponed until more planning can be done
Assist Glen Mary Plantation with a tourism product development grant for restoration and repairs.	X				
Join with Putnam County to develop a dual park at the SR 16 bridge at Lake Oconee and expand upon existing boat ramp site.				X	





HOUSING					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Review County ordinances and investigate the adoption of the International Building Code and other codes as necessary and appropriate.				X	
Perform a housing survey and map project to identify and document areas of substandard housing.				X	
Apply for CHIP funds to rehab units in targeted areas.	X				Applied but was not funded
Partner with USDA Rural Development and the Veteran's Administration to rehab housing units county-wide.				X	County has elected to allow individual property owners to participate in this in lieu of a county-coordinated program
Investigate the creation of a land bank authority to address unsafe, abandoned buildings.	X				



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNITY FACILITIES					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Continue to find buyer/operator for Hancock Memorial Hospital.		X			
Stabilize existing county dirt roads.		X			This activity is not included in the 2021 CWP.
Construct a public splashpad.			X		
Create a nuisance ordinance.			X		
Work with existing vacant facilities to create an community center/arts complex to house community events, local activities, a Boys and Girls Club, and artist space.				X	Unfortunately the designated space for this burned down, and it is not currently financially feasible to construct.
Rehabilitate the exterior of the historic train depot.	X				
Apply for funds to renovate the interior of the train depot.			X		Lack of matching funds
Apply for CDBG funds for infrastructure improvements throughout the county.		X			Stopped application for infrastructure due to lack of interest; applied for health department rehab and gym rehab and expansion instead
Build a courthouse annex to house the Board of Elections.				X	Terminated due to financial cost and lack of community member support
Secure an intergovernmental agreement with Baldwin County for an additional water supply.		X			
Expand county water system to Linton, Lake Sinclair, Holiday Shores and Devereux areas.			X		Postponed due to lack of local interest
Re-establish the Mayfield fire station.			X		
Update the county recreational park.		X			Playground equipment was updated; courts will be resurfaced
Utilize the "Live Healthy Hancock" report to create a community garden program and expand existing school gardens.		X			
Establish a fire station in Linton.				X	Not feasible without water expansion
Establish an Animal Control Ordinance.			X		Lack of funding





## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

BROADBAND SERVICES					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Adopt the DCA broadband model ordinance, tailored to Hancock County.	X				
Apply for DCA's Broadband Ready designation.		X			
Work with the City of Sparta to determine joint broadband improvement possibilities.		X			This activity is not included in the 2021 CWP.
Consider and implement improvements to Wifi availability at public facilities and businesses.		X			
Work with private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved county.		X			

LAND USE					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create a new county zoning ordinance and accompanying map.		X			
Adopt the CSRA-RC model solar ordinance.		X			



# HANCOCK COUNTY

## GEORGIA

### Community Work Program

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026			
Create a county business incubator.			X	X		County	TBD	Local Funds
Develop an annual fishing tournament at Lake Sinclair.				X	X	County	TBD	Local Funds
Apply to the DCA Tourism Product Development Team for a visit and subsequent report for county tourism.			X			County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local Funds
Initiate a “Christmas at the Courthouse” annual program.		X	X			County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Work with Georgia “Camera Ready” program to update locations and images for Hancock County.		X	X			County, City, Chamber, HPC	Staff Time	Local Funds
Acquire property to host a farmers market.	X	X				County, City, Private Sector	TBD	Local Funds
Establish the Hancock County career academy.		X	X			County, School Board	TBD	Local Funds





HOUSING								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026			
Review County ordinances and investigate the adoption of the International Building Code and other codes as necessary and appropriate.	X	X				County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Perform a housing survey and map project to identify and document areas of substandard housing.			X	X		County, CSRA-RC	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds
Apply for CHIP funds to rehab units in targeted areas.			X	X	X	County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local Funds
Apply to become a GICH community (jointly with Sparta).		X				County, City, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local funds



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026			
Nominate additional properties to the National Register of Historic Places.	X	X	X	X	X	County, CSRA-RC, Private Sector	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Create a county repository of historical artifacts and records.		X				County	Staff Time	Local funds
Create a recreational trails plan.				X	X	County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Apply for a recreational trails grant.					X	County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Create a program to recognize the importance of Native American culture in Hancock County.				X		County, City, Local Volunteers	Staff Time	Local Funds
Construct a temporary museum exhibit in a county facility.	X	X	X			County	TBD	Local Funds
Acquire property to re-establish a city-county museum.		X	X	X		County, City	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds



COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026			
Continue to find buyer/operator for Hancock Memorial Hospital.	X	X	X	X	X	County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Conduct environmental testing and evaluate the structure of the Hancock Memorial Hospital to determine feasibility of use.	X	X				County	TBD	Local Funds
Construct a public splashpad.				X	X	County	\$500k	Local Funds
Create a nuisance ordinance.		X	X	X		County	\$750k	Local Funds
Apply for funds to renovate the interior of the train depot.			X			County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, Local Funds
Apply for CDBG funds for infrastructure improvements throughout the county.	X		X		X	County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Secure an intergovernmental agreement with Baldwin County for an additional water supply.	X					County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Expand county water system to Linton, Lake Sinclair, Holiday Shores and Devereux areas.				X	X	County	\$2.5 million	State and federal funds, local funds
Re-establish the Mayfield fire station.				X	X	County	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds
Update the county recreational park	X					County	\$10,000	Local Funds
Utilize the “Live Healthy Hancock” report to create a community garden program and expand existing school gardens.		X	X	X		County	\$25,000	State and federal funds, local funds





## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Establish a fire station in Linton.	X	X				County	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds
Establish an Animal Control Ordinance		X	X			County	Staff Time	Local funds
Begin an in-school health clinic.	X	X				Family Connection	TBD	Local funds
Hire or partner with a certified dog rescuer to assist with animal control.		X	X			County, Private Sector	TBD	Local funds
Acquire land to create additional courthouse parking.	X	X				County	TBD	Local funds
Establish an electronic payment system for paying county taxes (e.g. online payments, credit card payments).	X	X				County	TBD	Local funds
Establish a new city-county park on land donated to the city.		X	X			County, City, Private Sector	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

LAND USE								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026			
Create a new county zoning ordinance and accompanying map.	X	X				County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Adopt the CSRA RC model solar ordinance.	X					County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and federal funds, local funds
Hire a code enforcement officer or procure shared enforcement services with another jurisdiction.		X	X			County	TBD	Local Funds

BROADBAND SERVICES								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026			
Apply for DCA’s Broadband Ready designation.	X					County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	local funds
Consider and implement improvements to Wifi availability at public facilities and businesses.	X	X	X	X	X	County, Private Sector	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds, private funds
Work with private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved county.	X	X	X	X	X	County, Private Sector	TBD	State and federal funds, local funds, private funds





## *Report of Accomplishments*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create a walking guide to the city that promotes the agricultural / historical sites within the city.	X				
Research the economic, social, and regional benefit of the Pine Tree Festival and provide suggestions to improve this event.		X			2020 Pine Tree Festival was canceled due to COVID-19
Create a tourism guide to include the scenic byway route and Native American historical sites.			X		
Work with Hancock County Schools to create a youth business program.		X			The city is also working to get Oconee Fall Line Tech (OFTC) more involved.
Create a promotional package detailing the unique agricultural programs located within the city.			X		
Initiate the Duckweed removal and processing business at city water treatment plant.				X	The Duckweed project is not feasible. Refurbishing of wastewater plant is underway.
Work with East Georgia Broadband Initiative to prepare a funding application for Broadband to Sparta-Hancock County.				X	This project was terminated. The city awaits an EMC project for rural customers.





NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create a tree farm educational site on city owned property as an educational opportunity		X			Planning underway
Initiate historical tours as an educational program using historic architectural structures		X			Planning underway
Initiate a Keep America Beautiful program in Sparta.			X		Delayed; lack of funds? Capacity?
Create a program to recognize the importance of Native American culture in Sparta.				X	Lack of city interest; transferred to the county
Re-activate the Sparta-Hancock County Joint Historic Preservation Commission	X				Successfully accomplished! Very active commission.
Develop an historic resources survey for the entire City of Sparta		X			Surveying is underway.
Work to develop Georgia Historical marker for Jean Toomer, an African-American writer instrumental in the Harlem Renaissance.		X			Request has been made to state DNR.
Prepare and adopt DNR "Part V" environmental ordinances as applicable		X			This activity is viewed as an on-going policy and is not included in 2021 CWP.



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

HOUSING					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Begin the planning process of the rehabilitation of the old Hancock Central School into residential units.				X	No developer interest
Develop a strategy to utilize Air BnB to provide a greater number of short stay options in historic residential homes.			X		COVID-related delays
Develop ordinance language to ensure loft apartments are allowed in downtown Sparta.			X		City Council will be working with Preservation Commission to move forward. Lack of funds? Capacity?
Create a housing inventory including historic homes with a Housing Action Plan.			X		Postponed until the Historic Preservation Commission plans moving forward.

LAND USE					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Identify historic district boundaries for local designation and protection.		X			Occurring in conjunction with historic resource survey
Create an overlay zone to encourage downtown development.			X		Postponed until zoning ordinance can be updated
Complete "Full Comprehensive Plan Update".	X				



COMMUNITY FACILITIES					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Work with GDOT to address intersections within the City especially Five Points, Broad St., East Broad Street, Augusta Hwy, and Elm St.		X			State Highways 15, 16 & 22 converge in business district. GDOT's permission is required for intersections' improvements to include several needed pedestrian crossings.
Identify public properties within the city that can be used for park space and community garden.	X				A business district lot has been cleared, and construction is underway to create small park with picnic tables, shelter, etc.
Integrate duckweed removal with the water treatment plant.				X	This project was not feasible and was thus canceled.
Water distribution system and sewer upgrades		X			Both systems are undergoing daily repairs and upgrades.
Replace defective water meters.	X				City water customers' meters have been upgraded
Plan, design, and construct downtown streetscape improvements Phase 2.	X				Streetscape project completed
Ghettis Street Improvements.	X				TSPLOST project completed
SR 15 Sparta Bypass		X			TSPLOST project underway. Surveying has begun.
Work to re-instate the Commercial Truck Driving (CDL) classes with Oconee Fall Line Technical College.				X	OFTC's budget does not provide funding for the program here.







## Community Work Program

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Project	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026			
Research the economic, social, and regional benefit of the Pine Tree Festival and provide suggestions to improve this event.		X				City, Local Business Owners	Staff Time	Local Funds
Create a tourism guide to include the Scenic By Way Route and Native American historical sites.					X	City, Local Business Owners	Staff Time	Local Funds
Work with Hancock County Schools to create a youth business program.	X	X	X			City, Hancock County School Board, OFTC	Staff Time	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds
Create a promotional package detailing the unique agricultural programs located within the city.				X		City, Local Business Owners	Staff Time	Local Funds
Apply for Georgia Rural Zone designation.		X				City, CSRA-RC, Private Sector	Staff Time	Local Funds



HOUSING								
Project	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
	2021 - 2022	2022 -2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026			
Develop a strategy to utilize Air BnB to provide a greater number of short stay options in historic residential homes.					X	City, Local Volunteers	Staff Time	Local Funds
Develop ordinance language to ensure loft apartments are allowed in downtown Sparta					X	City, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local Funds
Create a housing inventory including historic homes with a Housing Action Plan.			X			City, CSRA-RC, UGA	Staff Time	Local Funds
Apply to become a GICH community (jointly with Hancock County).		X				County, City, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local Funds



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES								
Project	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
	2021 - 2022	2022 -2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026			
Work with GDOT to address intersections within the City especially Five Points, Broad St., East Broad Street, Augusta Hwy, and Elm St.	X	X	X	X		City, GDOT	TBD	Local Funds, GDOT Funds, State and Federal Funds
Construct downtown business district park, including picnic tables, shelter and more.	X	X				City		Local Funds
Perform water distribution system and sewer upgrades.	X	X				City, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds
Construct the State Route (SR) 15 Sparta Bypass.	X	X				City, GDOT	\$11.6M	TSPLOST

LAND USE								
Project	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
	2021 - 2022	2022 -2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026			
Identify historic district boundaries for local designation and protection.	X					City, HPC, Private Sector, RC	\$500	Local Funds
Review and update zoning ordinance (and map if needed).		X	X			City, CSRA-RC	TBD	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds
Create an overlay zone to encourage downtown development.			X			City, CSRA-RC	\$10,000	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds





## NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Project	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026			
Create a tree farm educational site on city owned property as an educational opportunity.	X	X				City, Fort Valley State University Extension Office	Staff Time	Local Funds
Initiate historical tours as an educational program using historic architectural structures.	X	X				City, University of Georgia	Staff Time	Local Funds
Initiate a Keep America Beautiful program in Sparta.					X	City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Develop an historic resources survey for the entire City of Sparta.	X					City, HPC, Private Sector		Local Funds, CLG Grant
Work to develop Georgia Historical marker for Jean Toomer, an African-American writer, instrumental in the Harlem Renaissance.	X	X	X	X		City, Georgia DNR, Volunteers	Staff Time	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

BROADBAND SERVICES								
Project	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
	2021 - 2022	2022 -2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	2025 - 2026			
Apply for DCA’s Broadband Ready designation.	X					City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Consider and implement improvements to Wifi availability at public facilities and businesses.	X	X	X	X	X	City, Private Sector	TBD	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds, Private Funds
Work with the EMC and private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved city.	X	X	X	X	X	City, EMC, Private Sector	TBD	State and Federal Funds, Local Funds, Private Funds



*Appendix A:*  
*Existing Conditions*

DRAFT

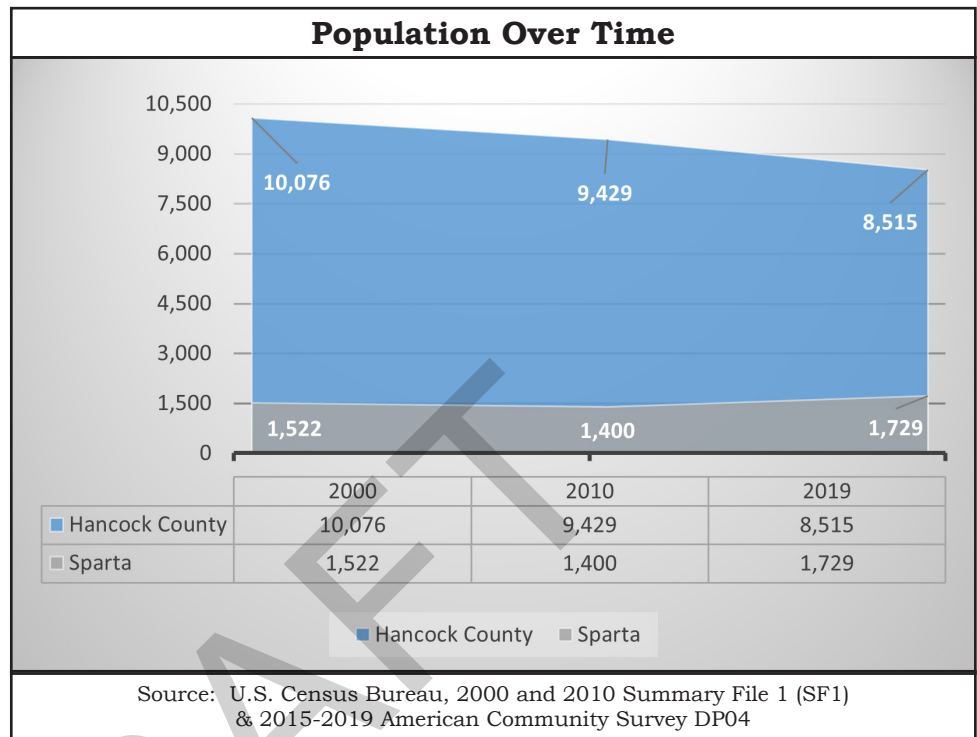


## General Demographics

### POPULATION

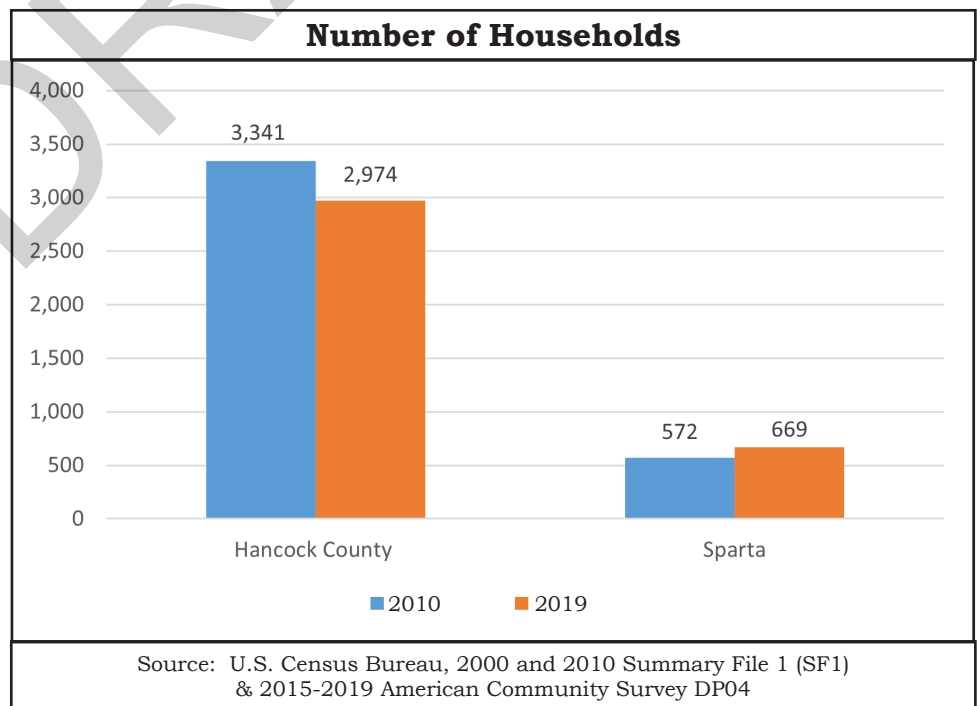
Like many rural counties in the CSRA region, Hancock County has experienced population decline over the last 20+ years. As of the 2019 American Community Survey, Hancock County had just 8,515 residents. This represents a loss of over 1,500 residents - a significant number in a small county. The city of Sparta, in contrast has more residents now than in 2000, with 1,729 - an increase of over 200.

The median age in Sparta is 44.6 and 45.6 in Hancock County overall.



### HOUSEHOLDS

As with the overall population, the number of households in Hancock County and Sparta have followed the same trends of decline and increase respectively. The county lost 367 households, and the city gained 97 households between 2010 and 2019.



HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE				
	Hancock County		Sparta	
	Estimate	Percent of Total Households	Estimate	Percent of Total Households
Married-couple family	977	32.9%	165	24.7%
With own children of the householder under 18 years	112	3.8%	9	1.3%
Cohabiting couple household	72	2.4%	25	3.7%
With own children of the householder under 18 years	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Male householder, no spouse/partner present	473	15.9%	106	15.8%
With own children of the householder under 18 years	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Householder living alone	368	12.4%	91	13.6%
65 years and over	147	4.9%	51	7.6%
Female householder, no spouse/partner present	1,452	48.8%	373	55.8%
With own children of the householder under 18 years	246	8.3%	106	15.8%
Householder living alone	751	25.3%	126	18.8%
65 years and over	417	14.0%	66	9.9%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey DP02				

### HOUSEHOLD TYPES

Within both jurisdictions, single female households are the predominant household type with approximately 50% of all households. The second largest group is married-couple family. As noted by the data and stakeholder anecdotes, the general population of Hancock County is aging; 19% (county) and 26% (city) of households are single individuals 65+ living alone. A significant portion of overall households have at least one resident age 65+ (43% in the county and 51% in the city). Provision of services for those individuals is important to help them age in place and build community or transfer to assisted living.

### AGE DISTRIBUTION

Stakeholder conversations revealed a shared sentiment that the county is losing its young people, and the 2019 ACS estimates also reflect this. Between the 2010 Census and 2019, all age groups



## APPENDIX

below age 25 experienced population declines. Working age adults 35-54 also experienced the greatest decline in residents. This is groups with the most growth were 65+.

In Sparta, the groups with the largest percentage of the population (age 5-9 and 65-74) experienced the most growth. There was also decline in working-age population over the same time period.

<b>Population Distribution by Age</b>						
<b><i>Hancock County</i></b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>	<b>2015-2019</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>	<b>2010-2019 Change</b>	<b>2010-2019 Change (%)</b>
Total Population	9,429	100%	8,515	100%	-914	-9.7%
Under 5	433	4.6%	332	3.9%	-101	-23.3%
5-9 Years	415	4.4%	311	3.7%	-104	-25.1%
10-14 Years	484	5.1%	333	3.9%	-151	-31.2%
15-19 Years	618	6.6%	363	4.3%	-255	-41.3%
20-24 Years	613	6.5%	586	6.9%	-27	-4.4%
25-34 Years	1,249	13.2%	1,346	15.8%	97	7.8%
35-44 Years	1,184	12.6%	922	10.8%	-262	-22.1%
45-54 Years	1,541	16.3%	1,111	13.0%	-430	-27.9%
55-59 Years	741	7.9%	736	8.6%	-5	-0.7%
60-64 Years	683	7.2%	571	6.7%	-112	-16.4%
65-74 Years	875	9.3%	1,154	13.6%	279	31.9%
75-84 Years	425	4.5%	586	6.9%	161	37.9%
85 Years and Older	168	1.8%	164	1.9%	-4	-2.4%
<b><i>Sparta</i></b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>	<b>2015-2019</b>	<b>Percent of Population</b>	<b>2010-2019 Change</b>	<b>2010-2019 Change (%)</b>
Total Population	1,400	100%	1,729	100%	329	23.5%
Under 5	88	6.3%	90	5.2%	2	2.3%
5-9 Years	79	5.6%	192	11.1%	113	143.0%
10-14 Years	94	6.7%	158	9.1%	64	68.1%
15-19 Years	93	6.6%	144	8.3%	51	54.8%
20-24 Years	86	6.1%	10	0.6%	-76	-88.4%
25-34 Years	135	9.6%	97	5.6%	-38	-28.1%
35-44 Years	123	8.8%	184	10.6%	61	49.6%
45-54 Years	217	15.5%	119	6.9%	-98	-45.2%
55-59 Years	119	8.5%	87	5.0%	-32	-26.9%
60-64 Years	107	7.6%	170	9.8%	63	58.9%
65-74 Years	145	10.4%	324	18.7%	179	123.4%
75-84 Years	71	5.1%	137	7.9%	66	93.0%
85 Years and Older	43	3.1%	17	1.0%	-26	-60.5%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Summary File 1 (SF1) & 2015-2019 American Community Survey DP05						





## Economic Development

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS

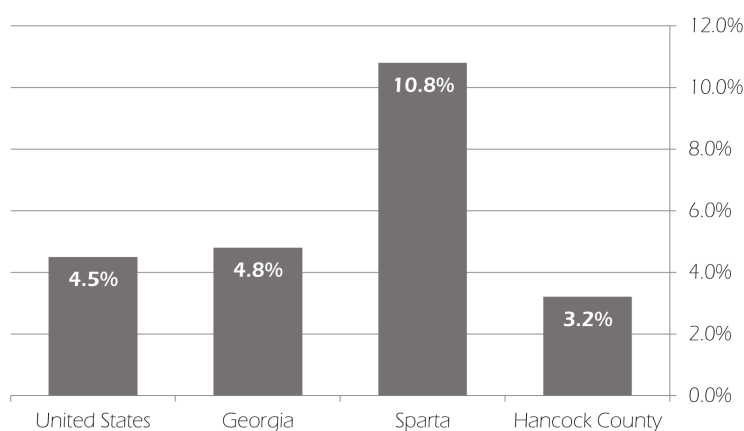
Labor force participation (by residents age 16 and over) in Hancock County is 30% (all civilian) according to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey (2019 ACS). The unemployment rate for this group is 3.2%. This is only slightly higher than the state of Georgia and the U.S. as a whole. Participation in Sparta is 41.5% (all civilian). Although Sparta's civilian unemployment rate is significantly higher, it also has a larger margin of error for the collected data than the other areas.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS						
	Hancock County			Sparta		
	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent
Population 16 years and over	7,411	±61		1,230	±319	
In labor force	2,222	±532	30.0%	511	±161	41.5%
Civilian labor force	2,222	±532	30.0%	511	±161	41.5%
Employed	2,152	±523	29.0%	456	±158	37.1%
Unemployed	70	±48	0.9%	55	±41	4.5%
Armed Forces	0	±19	0.0%	0	±13	0.0%
Not in labor force	5,189	±525	70.0%	719	±213	58.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019

The 2008 economic recession had a devastating effect on employment throughout the country. The unemployment rate for the United States peaked at 10% in October 2009 according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Some parts of the country have continued to struggle to regain lost jobs, and the events of the COVID-19 pandemic (not reflected in this data) have driven unemployment back up in many areas. Increasing the labor force participation can be helpful for both jurisdictions long-term. However, creating and sustaining jobs within the county, particularly those at higher wages is a challenge.

### Civilian Unemployment Rate



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019

As in previous years, many residents work outside of Hancock County. Part of this is due to a lack of available jobs within the county. Approximately 53 percent of the workforce worked in the county in 2019, according to 2019 ACS data. The remaining 47 percent worked outside of the county.



# APPENDIX

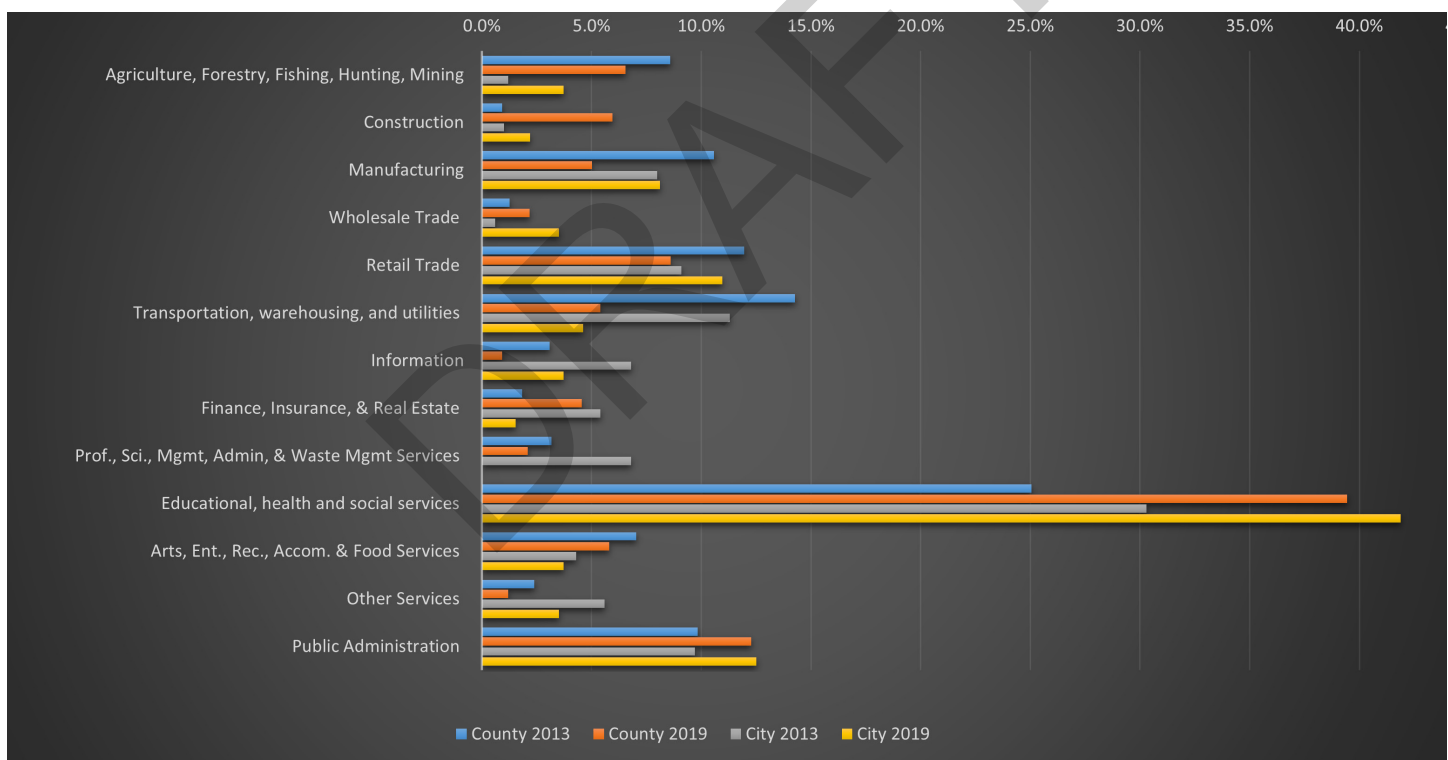
## EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Census Bureau data indicates that the industry cluster with the highest employment is educational, health, and social services, with over 35% in both Hancock County and Sparta. If the county is able to secure additional healthcare facilities and providers (which is desired), this industry cluster will continue to grow.

Twenty years ago, manufacturing was one of the largest industries in the area, but it has experienced significant decline. Community leaders would like manufacturing and other similar uses to return. The current industrial park is small and has a number of acres that are unusable.

Despite some declines, some industries have grown: retail, information, agriculture and public administration. Additionally, with its many natural and historic assets, the county and city have worked diligently to expand tourism efforts and creating additional jobs in related industries to encourage residents to work in the county. Developing work-ready residents able occupy those positions is encouraged. Improvements to properties in downtown Sparta and efforts to start more local businesses will contribute to increases in several industries long-term.

**Employment by Industry**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2009-2013 and 2015-2019



**INCOME**

Based on the 2019 ACS, the median household income is \$31,860 in Hancock County and is \$27,524 in Sparta only. This is compared to \$61,980 for the state as a whole. This metric has increased in all jurisdictions over the last 20 years at varying rates. The majority of households are in the \$25,000 to \$34,999 range. There are significantly more households with incomes above \$100,000 in the county than in the city.

Approximately 48% of household incomes in the county include social security, 28% retirement income, and 26% Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months.

<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND BENEFITS (IN 2019 INFLATION-ADJUSTED DOLLARS)</b>						
	Hancock County			Sparta		
	Estimate	MoE	Percent	Estimate	MoE	Percent
Less than \$10,000	262	±125	8.8%	103	±62	15.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	294	±116	9.9%	95	±50	14.2%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	515	±147	17.3%	132	±72	19.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	620	±184	20.8%	158	±80	23.6%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	390	±127	13.1%	44	±35	6.6%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	311	±108	10.5%	67	±43	10.0%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	271	±123	9.1%	36	±38	5.4%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	235	±81	7.9%	11	±13	1.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	44	±33	1.5%	10	±14	1.5%
\$200,000 or more	32	±38	1.1%	13	±14	1.9%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2015-2019						





# Housing

## HOUSING MIX

Between the year 2000 and the year 2019, the number of housing units in Hancock County increased 26 percent, from 4,287 to 5,391. Most of these units were located in unincorporated areas of the county. The city of Sparta only experienced 8% growth, from 737 units to 795. Both the city and the county lack housing diversity. For example, there are two major housing types in Hancock County, single family (1-unit) detached, and mobile homes, comprising 53% and 41% of housing units respectively. Although multifamily is a very small portion of the housing stock (5%), larger developments of multifamily units have increased over the last twenty years. Some stakeholders have expressed a desire for more housing options. Outside investment for new developments may be difficult due to the declining population and incomes, among other factors.

**Type of Housing Unit by Number of Units in Structure**

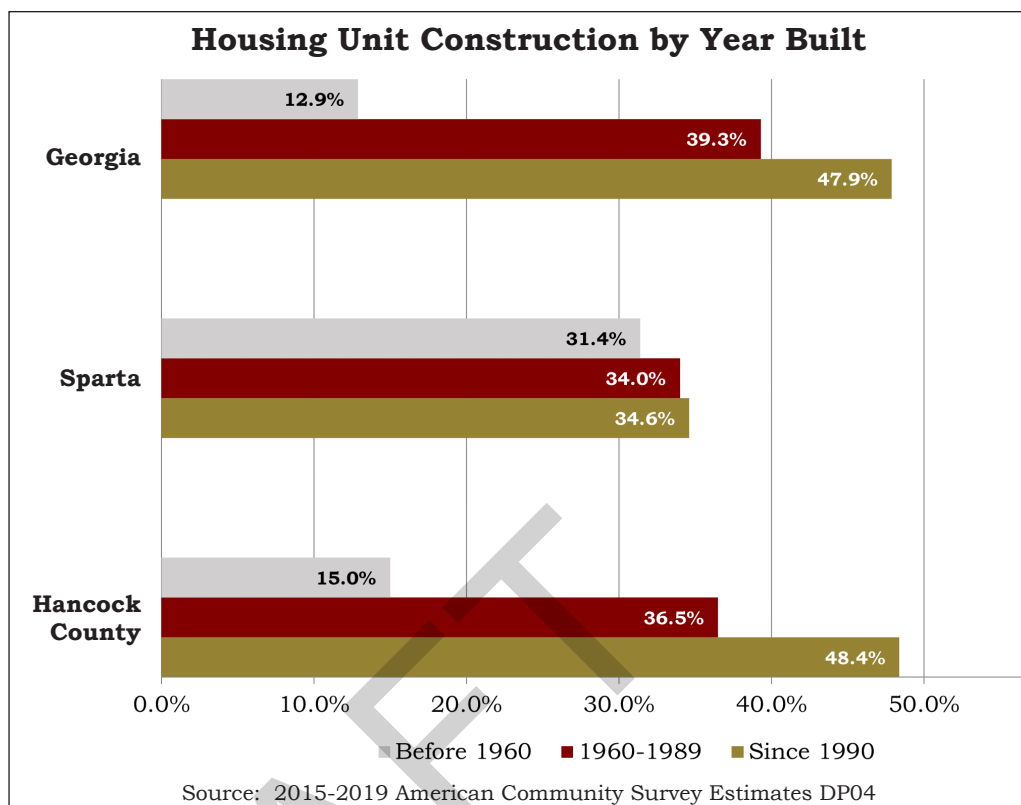
	Hancock County			Sparta		
	Number	Margin of Error	Percent of Total Units	Number	Margin of Error	Percent of Total Units
1-unit, detached	2,854	±300	52.9%	422	±121	53.1%
1-unit, attached	36	±38	0.7%	13	±22	1.6%
2 units	56	±46	1.0%	49	±45	6.2%
3 or 4 units	54	±54	1.0%	26	±34	3.3%
5 to 9 units	40	±43	0.7%	17	±24	2.1%
10 to 19 units	9	±16	0.2%	9	±16	1.1%
20 or more units	138	±90	2.6%	81	±71	10.2%
Mobile home	2,204	±292	40.9%	178	±68	22.4%
Total Units	5,391	±344	100%	795	±190	100%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Estimates DP04



## AGE OF HOUSING

As 2019 ACS data reveals, the majority of structures in Hancock County were built between 1990 and 2009 (~2,600) with a significant drop off after that. This is most likely due to the 2008 economic recession and housing crash. The lack of older structures in the county may be in part the result of “demolition by neglect”, as stakeholders have commented that the community struggles with this. Even still, there are a number of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places (and more that are NR eligible) in the county. Although housing age is fairly evenly distributed in Sparta, it also experienced a significant drop in housing construction after 2009.



Approximately 31% of housing structures (250) in Sparta were constructed between before 1960. Hancock County is one of the oldest in the state, and Sparta is known for its historic homes. Protection and rehab of older/aging properties is important for several reasons: safety, historic preservation and economic development. Based on community input, a portion of the non-historic housing units also require rehab.

Not all buildings can be rehabbed or reused. Some will have to be partially or completely demolished. Utilizing a blighted properties list and completing a full housing inventory will help both communities to better understand the amount and condition of all housing units. Participating in a program like the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) may also be beneficial for resources and peer networking with communities pursuing similar housing activities.

Potential avenues for rehab and construction funding include:

- USDA Rural Development (housing rehab)
- Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) grant (housing rehab and new construction for infill and sale)
- Historic preservation tax credits (housing rehab)
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit developments (new construction)



## OCCUPANCY AND TENURE

Overall housing occupancy has suffered a significant decline between 2000 and 2019, despite an increase in the total number of units. The 2019 ACS notes 16% of housing units were vacant in Sparta and 45% in the county as a whole. This represents a significant increase for the overall county since 2000, when only 25% of units were vacant. The city number is close to its 2000 level.

Within the occupied units, 11.8% are estimated to have no vehicle available. Those without transportation access in a community without transit are limited in their access to employment and resources.

When comparing owner-occupied versus renter units, the county is overwhelmingly occupied by homeowners with 71 percent. Sparta only contains 55% owner-occupied units. Both communities have experienced an increase in renter-occupants over the same time period. One significant stakeholder concern is the number of vacant, dilapidated properties across the city and county, particularly those in highly visible areas such as entrances. Adequately addressing the issue will take additional resources at the city and county level.

The consideration of housing may include creating provisions within subdivision regulations that allows government input in how future residential developments are designed, as well as including requirements or incentives for pedestrian facilities and greenspace.

## Housing Occupancy and Tenure - Hancock County

Year	2000		2015-2019	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Housing Units	4,287	100.0%	5,391	100.0%
Occupied	3,237	75.5%	2,974	55.2%
Vacant	1,050	24.5%	2,417	44.8%
Owner-Occupied	2,473	76.4%	2,099	70.6%
Renter-Occupied	764	23.6%	875	29.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) & 2015-2019 American Community Survey DP04

## Housing Occupancy and Tenure - Sparta

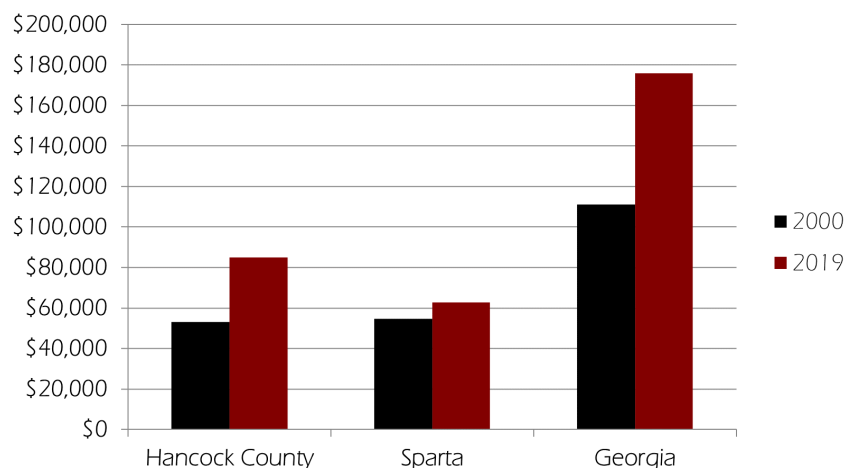
Year	2000		2015-2019	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Housing Units	725	100.0%	795	100.0%
Occupied	617	85.1%	669	84.2%
Vacant	108	14.9%	126	15.8%
Owner-Occupied	379	61.4%	366	54.7%
Renter-Occupied	238	38.6%	303	45.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) & 2015-2019 American Community Survey DP04





### Median Values for Owner-Occupied Homes



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Summary File 3 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey Estimates

### Median Gross Rent by Location

	2000	2015-2019	Margin of Error
Hancock County	\$277	\$678	±196
Sparta	\$222	\$560	±238
Georgia	\$613	\$1,006	±4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census Summary File 3 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, DP04

### HOME VALUE

Home values increased roughly 28 percent over the study period of 2000-2019. Data from the 2019 ACS reveals that median value reached \$85,000 in Hancock County and \$62,800 in Sparta. Examination of value distribution reveals that over 50% of housing is worth less than \$100,000, and another 25% is worth \$200,000-499,999.

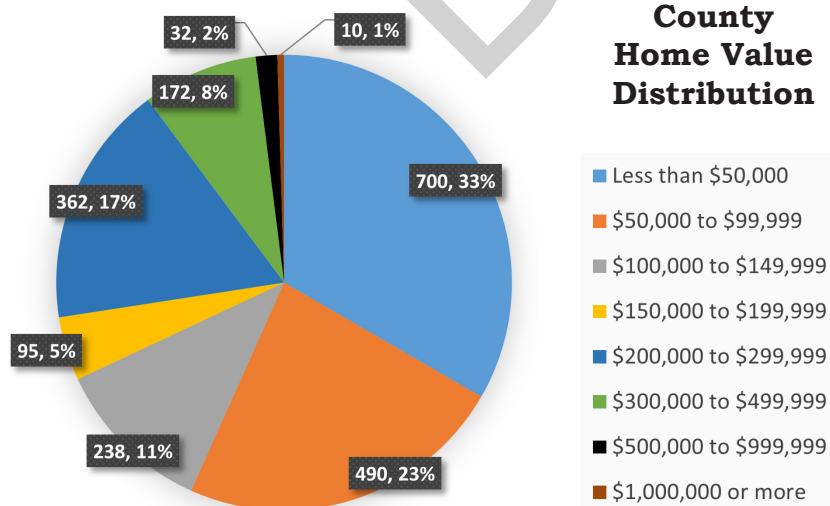
Although these values are significantly lower than the state value of \$176,000, one must remember that large metropolitan areas like Atlanta contribute to the overall state number. Both the state and county experienced over 50% increase in value. Reinvestment in historic properties throughout the city and the creation of homes along the county lakefront may continue to increase values in both jurisdictions.

### GROSS RENT

Just as home values have risen, so have rents. Median rents in the county rose \$401, from \$277 in 2000 to \$678 in 2019. The city experienced a \$338 increase over the same period. When gross rent is calculated as a percentage of household income, 54% of occupants pay 35% or more of their income on rent.

Creation of rental housing should include a mix of market-rate and lower income units in the same development. This will aid in creating mixed-income areas while providing additional options.

### County Home Value Distribution



### *Natural and Cultural Resources*

Hancock County possesses a variety of natural and cultural resources, from the farms and lake to the historic sites that are vital parts of the community and serve a variety of purposes. These assets contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the county and have the potential to draw visitors natural beauty and historic preservation. They can also be connected to similar resources in other counties for regional tourism. As conditions change, it is important to focus efforts on protecting natural features like watersheds not only for economic development, but because they provide resources to the community. Additionally, when development decisions are made, the cultural resources that make the county unique and tell its story must also be considered.

As part of the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) developed the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria for use by local communities. The Criteria establish recommended minimum planning standards for the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors and mountains. Recommended standards to protect surface water supplies include the use of buffer zones around streams and specifying allowable impervious surface densities within water supply watersheds.

As with all other counties across the state of Georgia, Hancock County is a part of a water planning region. Hancock County is part of the Upper Oconee Region with the following counties: Baldwin, Barrow, Clarke, Greene, Jackson, Laurens, Morgan, Oconee, Putnam, Walton, Washington, and Wilkinson.

The 2017 update to the regional water plan indicated that both surface water gaps and 303(d) water quality issues existed in Hancock County. The plan indicates an increase in annual agricultural demand for surface water by 2050 in Hancock County. The plan states: “Any development of additional surface water to meet projected needs should be done in a manner that does not increase potential gaps.”

As stated on Georgia EPD’s website: “Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act requires States to assess its water quality every two years. To develop this report, Georgia compares water quality data collected across the State against our Water Quality Standards using the State’s Listing Assessment Methodology and places each water into one of three broad assessment categories; 1) supporting their designated use; 2) not supporting their designated use; or 3) assessment pending. Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires States to submit a list of all waters that are not supporting their designated uses and need to have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) developed. GA EPD has developed a Draft Priority Framework that describes how GA EPD will prioritize waters on the 303(d) list for development of TMDLs or TMDL alternatives. EPD has prepared a list of Priority Waters.” There are no priority waters from Hancock County on this list. However, Hancock County does have streams on the 2020 Integrated 305(b)/303(d) list.

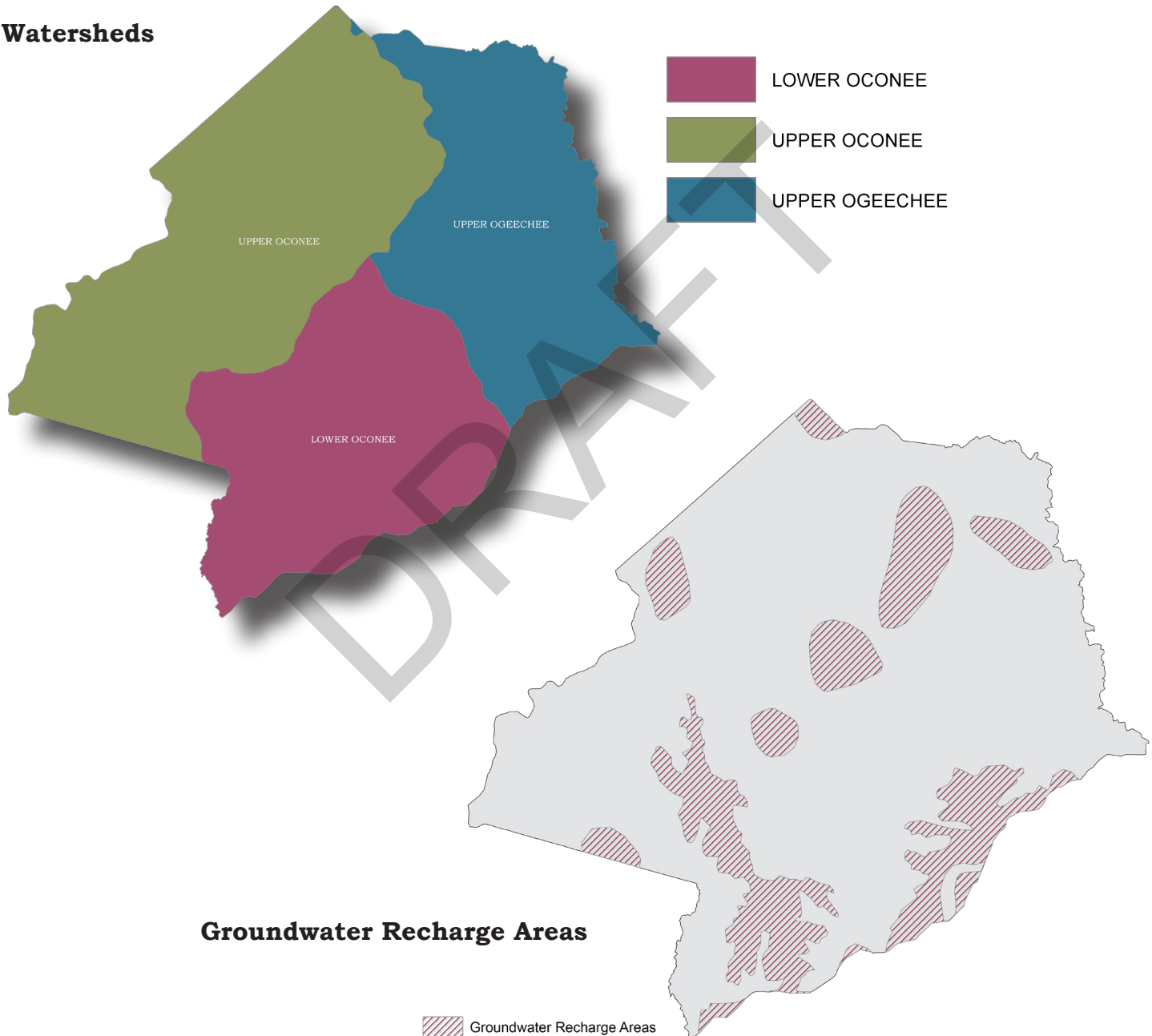


## WATERSHEDS AND GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREAS

Watersheds and Groundwater Recharge Areas are important components to public water supply. Watersheds are land formations which direct water (primarily rain water) flows in a certain direction and feeds smaller flows and water bodies.

Groundwater Recharge Areas are specific surface areas where water passes through the ground to replenish underground water sources. These areas should continue to be protected because contamination of this water supply is a possibility which must be considered when discussing the development or placement of any type of facility in these areas.

### Watersheds





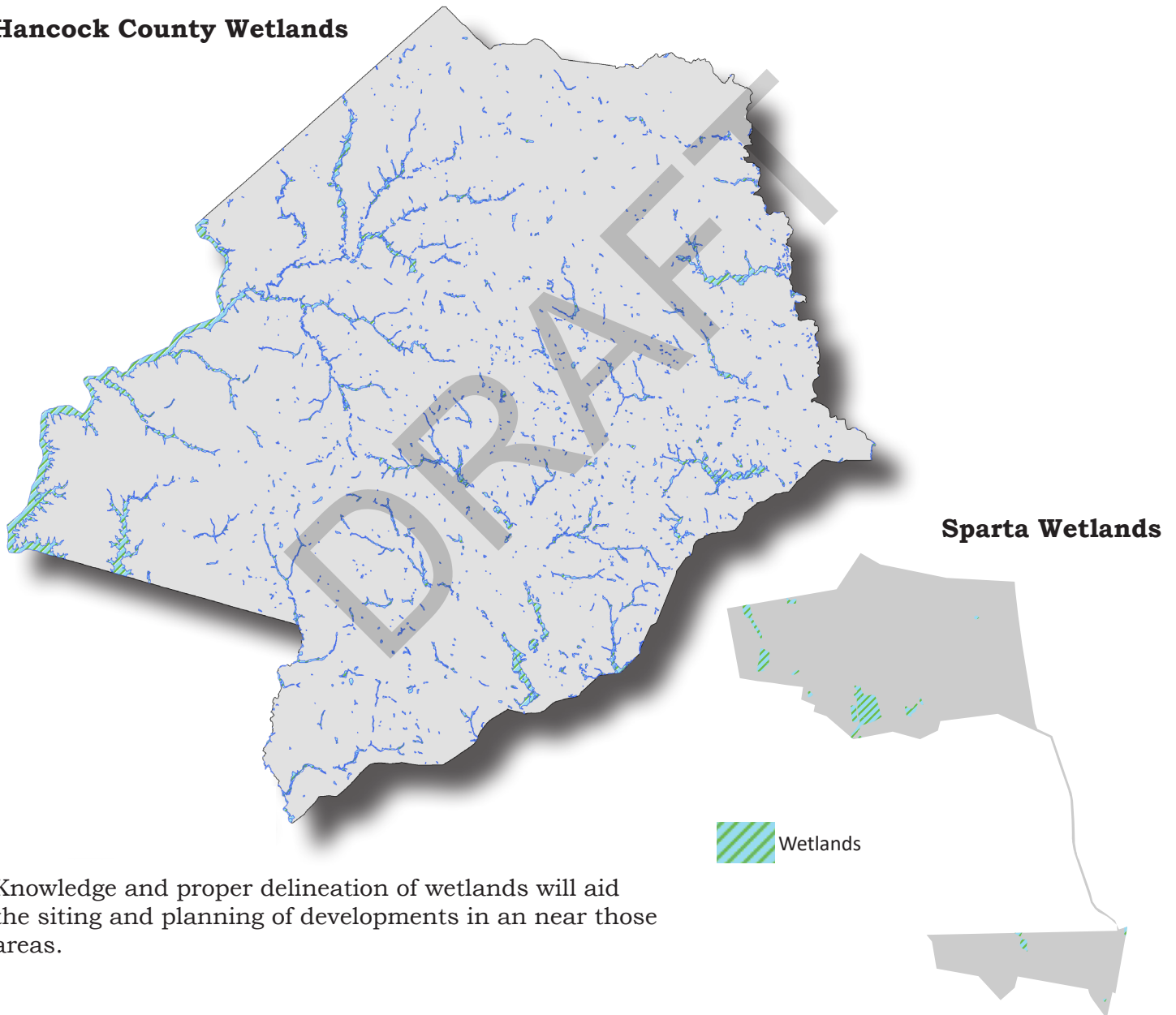
## APPENDIX

### WETLANDS

Wetlands can be defined as lands which are saturated, either permanently or seasonally, creating an ecosystem that contains characteristic vegetation that has adapted to the unique soil conditions. Wetlands serve as a unique habitat for fish and wildlife, breeding ground, and home for unique plant and animal species that have adapted to these special conditions. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has identified five categories of wetlands which require special protection through ordinances: open water, scrub/shrub, altered, non-forested, and forested.

Land uses in wetland areas should be limited to low-to-no impact uses; these include the harvesting of lumber and timber and wildlife and fishery management. However, even these uses should be examined for other conflicts or impacts.

### Hancock County Wetlands



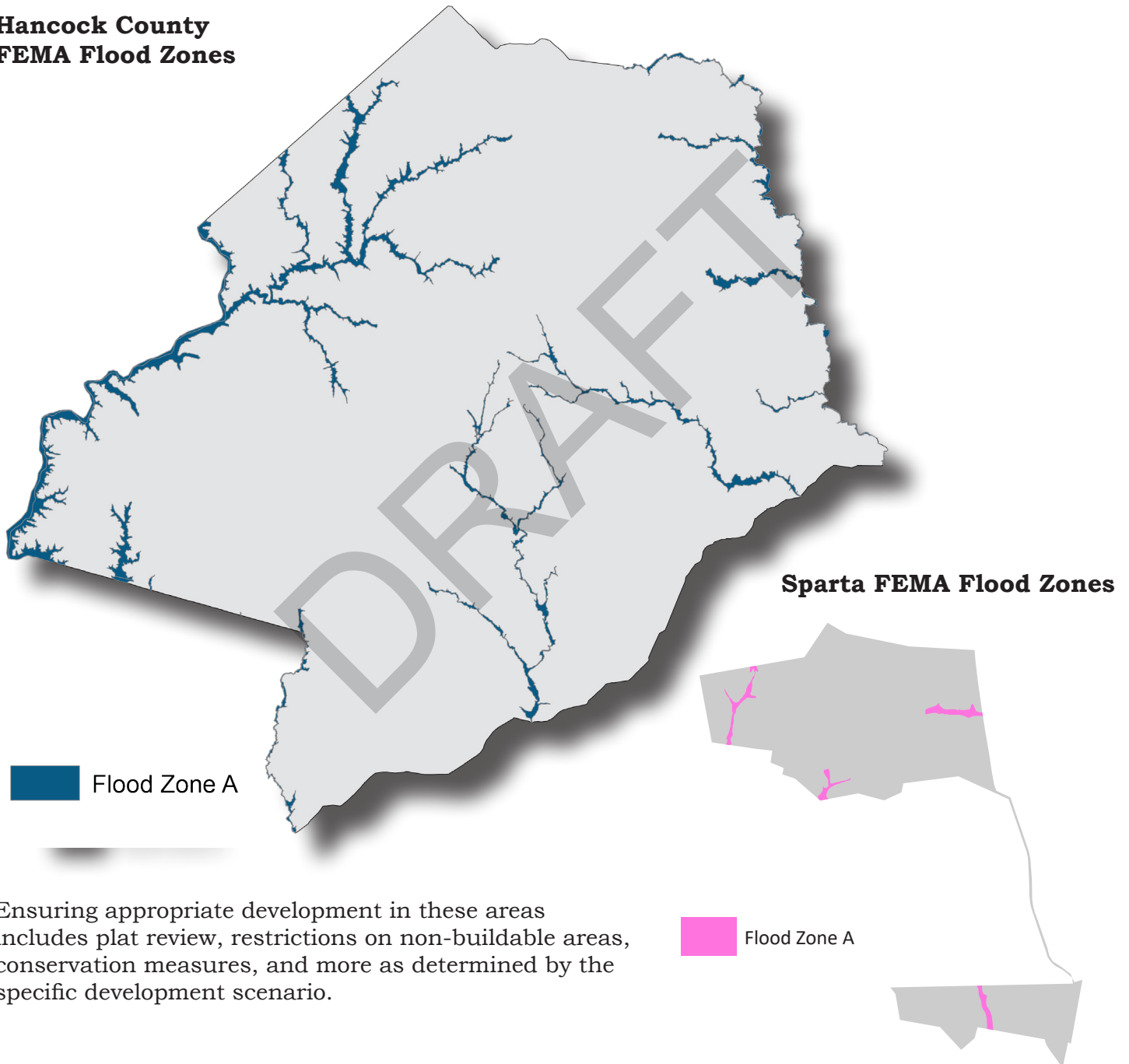
Knowledge and proper delineation of wetlands will aid the siting and planning of developments in an near those areas.



## FLOOD PLAINS

Flooding can be defined as a situation in which an overflow of water submerges land which usually is not inundated with water. A floodplain is an area designated to store natural water and conveyance, maintain water quality, and provide groundwater recharge. These maps depict the designated flood zones as determined by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map. Areas located within the 100-year flood plain are in Zone A.

### Hancock County FEMA Flood Zones



Ensuring appropriate development in these areas includes plat review, restrictions on non-buildable areas, conservation measures, and more as determined by the specific development scenario.



# APPENDIX

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

As mentioned previously, history is an important part of Hancock County and Sparta, which each have many historic buildings and sites of national, state and/or local cultural significance. One method of recognizing these sites is having them listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since the previous comprehensive plan, the city and county have reactivated the joint Historic Preservation Commission. They still desire nominating additional sites to the register like the Culverton community and Millmore mill and historic bridge to the National Register. Another project the county has completed is the exterior renovation of the historic train depot. However, funds are still needed in order to restore the interior of the building.

Sparta-Hancock County have a joint historic preservation ordinance which can provide protection of historic and cultural resources.

Sparta-Hancock County is a joint Georgia Certified Local Government, a program that may govern designated local historic districts for design review. The program is currently inactive, but both the City of Sparta and Hancock County have expressed an interest in re-activation of the Historic Preservation Commission. Locally, a historic resources survey would be a useful preservation tool for determining the identification, age, and condition of historic buildings 40-50 years old within the city limits.

The following are listed in the National Register of Historic Places in Sparta:

- Sparta Cemetery
- Sparta Historic District, includes Downtown and Drummer's Home (Lafayette Hotel), The Sayre-Shivers-Alford House, The Graves Barn, The Hancock County Courthouse (burned in 2014; exterior walls are original)

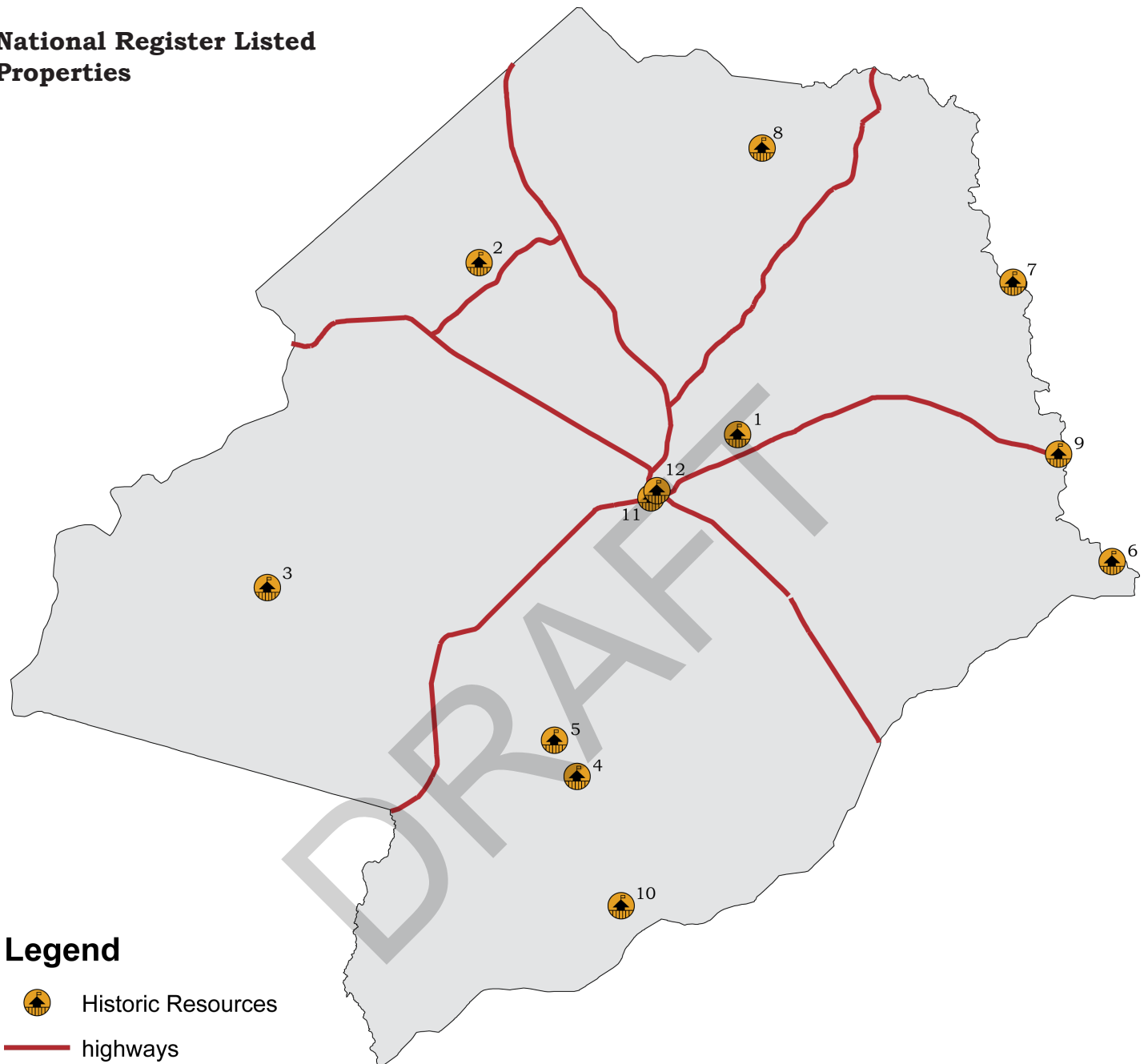
In addition to those resources in the National Register of Historical Place there are ten (10) additional residential structures in the city which maybe eligible to be listed in the National Register, based on a the age of these sites and the significance of the architectural style and age of structures. The following is a list of historically significant sites:

- The Sayre-Shivers-Alford House
- The Baxter-Wiley House
- The Hudson House
- The DuBose-Peck-Hitchcock House
- The Brightside House
- The Graves Barn
- The Drummer's Home
- Holsey Memorial CME Church
- Pierce Memorial United Methodist Church
- Macedonia Baptist Church





## National Register Listed Properties



## Legend



Historic Resources



highways

Site #	Name	Site #	Name
1	Rockby	7	Shivers-Simpson House
2	Shoulderbone Mounds and John S. Jackson House	8	Camilla-Zack Community Center Historic District
3	Hurt-Rives Plantation	9	Jewell Historic District
4	Glen Mary	10	Linton Historic District
5	Pearson-Boyer Plantation	11	Sparta Historic District
6	Cheely-Coleman House	12	Sparta Cemetery



### *Community Facilities*

#### **WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT**

Hancock County currently purchases its water from Sparta. The county has also begun negotiations with Baldwin County to purchase water as well in order to extend service to other unincorporated areas, some with water quality concerns. The county has one (1) above ground water storage tank located in Devereux, approximately 250,000 gallons. In 2010 the county expanded its water system in the Beulah area with CDBG funds. Opportunities for expansion of the county system right now are to the Lake Sinclair, Devereux, and Linton areas.

Sparta operates a municipal water system for its residents and provides some service for residents of unincorporated Hancock County. Sparta operates a 1.0 million gallon per day (mgd) capacity treatment facility located at the end of James Way Drive in Hancock County. Water from the lake is drawn and pumped through two 8 inch lines to the waterworks. Maximum capacity of this facility is 1,250 gal/min. Ford Creek is used as a secondary source for water allowing a total capacity of 500,000 GPD. The water distribution system primarily consists of 8 inch lines throughout central Sparta and 6 inch lines and smaller in other areas. The city operates three (3) elevated, treated water storage facilities with a storage capacity of 575,000 gallons.

The majority of residences in Hancock County are on septic systems. Since the previous comprehensive plan, the county transferred its 83 sewer customers to the City of Sparta. Sparta operates a sanitary sewerage system in which wastewater is treated at the city-operated George F. Green Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) which can treat up to 200,000 (GPD). This facility is located on city owned property south of Sparta adjacent to the Hancock Correctional Institution. The facility was built in 1988 and serves both Sparta and unincorporated Hancock County. The wastewater treatment center was upgraded to meet the needs of the correctional facility.

#### **FIRE, EMERGENCY SERVICES, AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hancock County has 4 fire stations: Station 1 (Sparta); Station 2 (East Lake); Station 5 (Holiday Shores); Station 11 (Hancock State Prison). The fire department is all volunteer with 48 fireman. Recent changes in the way ISO (Insurance Service Office) ratings are calculated has negatively affected citizens and caused a rise in insurance premiums. Because of this, the county is looking into opening additional fire stations in under-served areas to help lower the ISO ratings and insurance premiums. County-wide emergency medical services (EMS) are contracted with Grady Health Systems.

The county has one main public safety station; the sheriff's department contains 1 sheriff and 10 deputies. The City of Sparta operates a police department with seven 7 officers. The national rate of sworn officers per 1,000 residents was 2.4 in 2017 according to the Police Employee Data website provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division. The rate of civilian and sworn (full-time) was 3.4 per 1,000.



## ROAD SYSTEM AND RAILROAD

Hancock County contains 1,183 lane miles (588 miles) of roads according to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). This calculation includes city streets, county roads, and state routes and is based on total lane mileage. City streets comprised 29 lane miles (14.5 miles) of this. Total lane mileage is defined as roadway mileage multiplied by the number of lanes. The condition of roads throughout the city and county varies. Hancock County is a part of the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) for the CSRA region. A significant project from this program is construction of the Hwy 15 bypass. The creation of this bypass could lead to additional commercial development along this road, and land use/zoning in the immediate area should be examined for future changes.

The county contains one railroad, owned and operated by CSX Transportation. CSX is defined by the Federal Surface Transportation Board as a Class 1 railroad, meaning that its average annual operating revenue meets or exceeds \$255.9 million dollars. As in the rest of the region, the rail line is used for freight transportation only.

## EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Hancock County school district consists of three (3) schools: Lewis Elementary, Hancock Central Middle, and Hancock Central High, providing classes for students in Pre-K through 12th grade. There is a private school, John Hancock Academy. Total enrollment in the public school system has decreased between 2000 and 2020, down to 786 students from 1,732. ACS data confirms a decline in both working-age adults and the student population.

Education is an important factor to look at in a community, as it plays a major role in resident ability to receive certain types of jobs. ACS data indicates that 74% of Hancock County residents and 72% of Sparta residents age 25+ have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. Possession of a Bachelor's degree or higher is at 9% and 10% respectively. There's room to improve both ends: increasing the percentage of residents with at least a high school diploma and those to complete a higher education degree. Organizations like Family Connection and Communities in Schools have made dropout prevention a priority. Depending on available jobs, there may be a mismatch for those with advanced degrees who wish to reside locally.

School Enrollment in Hancock County	
March 2, 2000 (FTE 2000-3)	
<i>School Name</i>	<i>Total</i>
Hancock Central High School	878
Lewis Elementary School	662
Southwest Elementary School	192
<b>System Total</b>	<b>1732</b>
March 4, 2010 (FTE 2010-3)	
<i>School Name</i>	<i>Total</i>
Hancock Central High School	413
Hancock Central Middle School	262
Lewis Elementary School	544
<b>System Total</b>	<b>1219</b>
March 5, 2020 (FTE 2020-3)	
<i>School Name</i>	<i>Total</i>
Hancock Central High School	229
Hancock Central Middle School	187
Lewis Elementary School	370
<b>System Total</b>	<b>786</b>





# *Broadband Services*

### **BROADBAND AND THE ACE ACT**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently defines high-speed Internet access as download speeds of at least 25 Mbps and upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps. The infrastructure of broadband is often described in three different sections: backbone, middle mile, and last mile. The backbone (aka trunk lines) are the major high-speed transmission lines linking smaller networks across the country. The middle mile is the connection between the backbone network and local networks. The last mile is the connection between the local network and end users (homes, institutions, businesses, etc.). Broadband includes several high-speed transmission technologies, such as fiber optic, wireless, Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), coaxial cable, and satellite.

In 2018, the Georgia General Assembly passed the “Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act” as Senate Bill 402. The ACE Act enables several things, including:

- local governments to apply for financial incentives for broadband services
- the Georgia Department of Transportation to use interstate highway rights-of-way for deployment of broadband services and other emerging communications technologies

The ACE Act also requires each local government in the state to incorporate a “Broadband Services Element” into its local comprehensive plan.

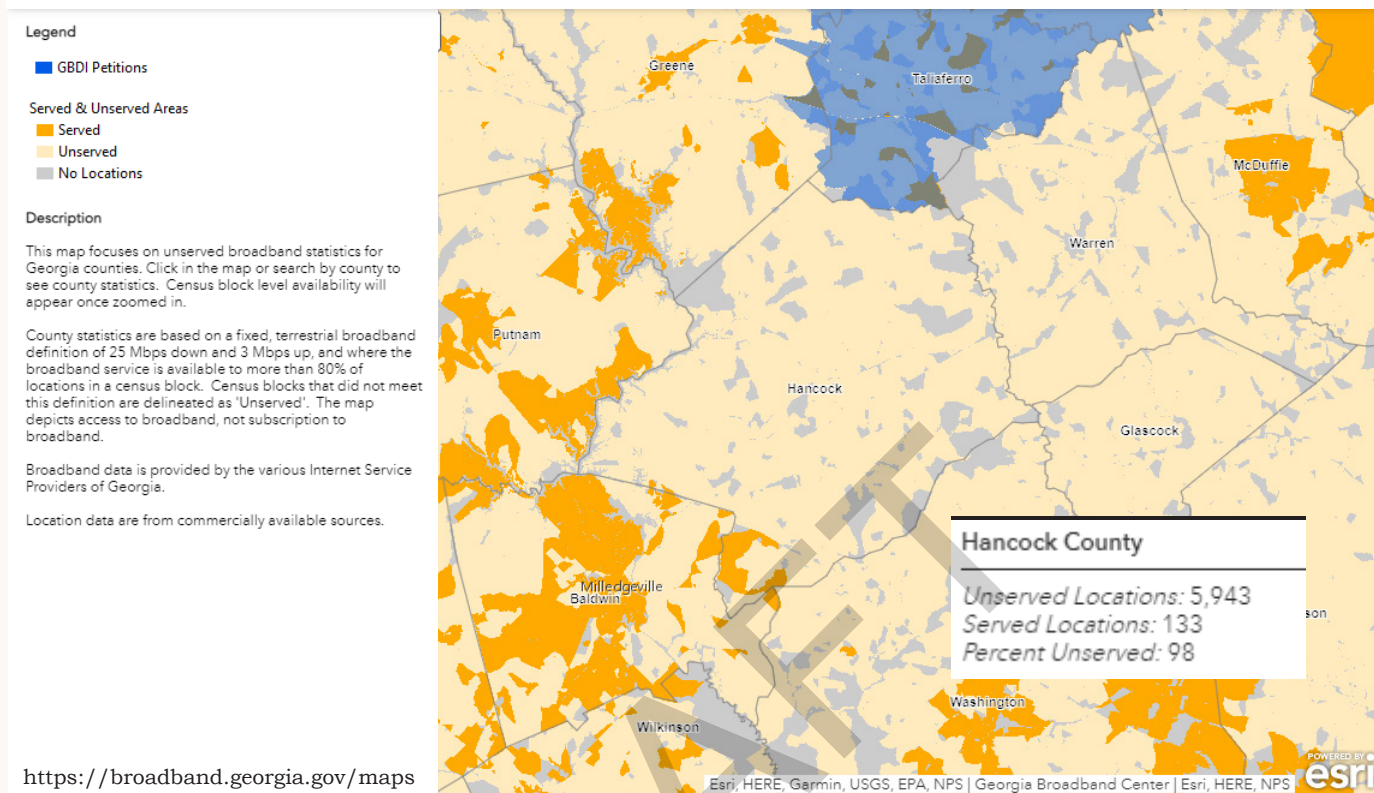
### **SERVED AND UNSERVED AREAS**

Working with several other state agencies, providers and the regional commissions, the Georgia DCA has determined and mapped (as of summer 2020) areas in the state that are served and unserved areas for broadband availability. Information on census-block level access was provided by the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative (GBDI) for this section of the plan; GBDI was launched in 2018. The GBDI represents a collaborative effort by multiple state agencies to promote and deploy broadband level Internet in unserved areas across Georgia. This service is for a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds. According to DCA’s website, “The purpose of the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative is to coordinate and establish broadband programs to increase economic, education, and social opportunities for Georgia citizens and businesses. The initiative provides for the expansion of broadband infrastructure and services through new state and local broadband planning policies.” - <https://broadband.georgia.gov/about>

An unserved area means a census block in which broadband services are not available to 20 percent or more of the locations as determined by DCA. A “served” area does not imply subscription, only access. Additionally, it is still possible to have individual homes or businesses within a “served” area that are unserved. Hancock County, as displayed in the map below, is 98% unserved, with only 133 served locations in the entire county.



### Unserved Hancock County and Surrounding Area



One major component of the GBDI is helping communities achieve Broadband Ready Community designation. This designation demonstrates a government's effort in reducing barriers to broadband development. Two necessary steps in the process are including a broadband services element in the comprehensive plan and adopting the state's broadband model ordinance. Communities with the designation receive additional points when applying for state funds.



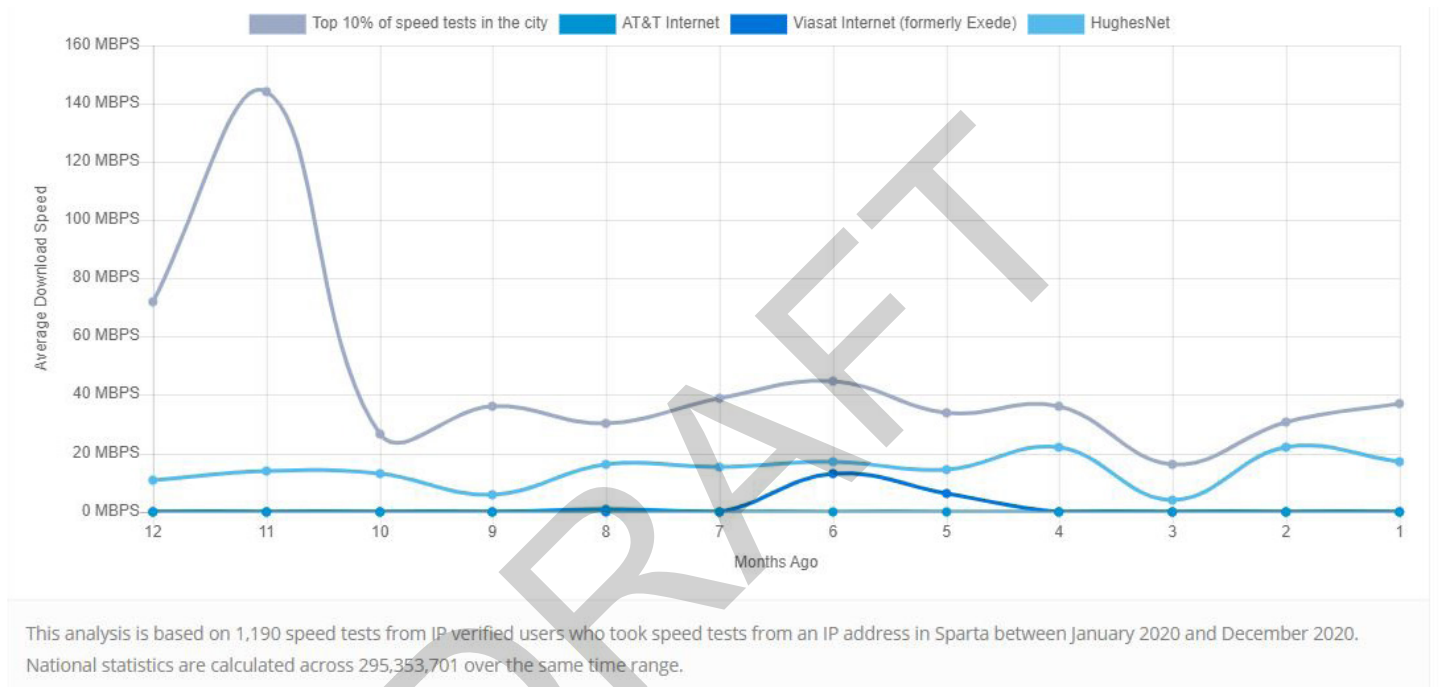
# APPENDIX

## INTERNET SPEEDS

Among the providers in the area are AT&T, Viasat, Rayle EMC, Washington EMC, and HughesNet. On the following page is a graph depicting download speeds in the Sparta zip code based on speed tests conducted throughout 2020 for a few of these providers. The average download speed in Sparta is 15.80 Mbps. This is 83.0% slower than the average in Georgia and 459.6% slower than the national average. This information is provided by BroadbandNow via its website at <https://broadbandnow.com/>.

### Download Speeds in Sparta Zip Code

Source: BroadbandNow, <https://broadbandnow.com/Georgia/Sparta?zip=31087>





## RECENT EFFORTS AND COMMUNITY DESIRES

It is understood that barriers to terrestrial broadband expansion in rural areas are installation cost and anticipated return on investment. Several communities in the CSRA region have and continue to research the feasibility of larger connectivity projects that would serve homes and businesses in multiple counties. One such project was the East GA Broadband Initiative (EGBI). The project was designed to connect cities across several counties to fiber, including several co-locator pods. These co-locator facilities would house servers for lease to businesses, corporations, residential contractors, etc. In Sparta, the co-locator facility would've been erected on a vacant lot owned by the Hancock County government directly behind the Courthouse. Servers within the pod could be connected via fiber to businesses and other entities or leased by companies to provide wireless Internet.

Although the attempt was unsuccessful, much of the groundwork and research completed can be used for future projects, including the planning for connectivity and co-locator pods. In preparation for fiber coming to Sparta, work to supply EGBI planners with details of priority entities (schools, City & County government locations, law enforcement services, E-911 dispatching, pharmacy, nursing homes, industrial park, etc.) began in December 2017. Water tanks and telecommunication towers throughout the city and county have also been identified and their locations plotted for installation of wireless service.

Conversations with stakeholders revealed a variety of improvement opportunities across the county. These include:

- Ensuring school buildings' Internet systems are updated
- Improving Wifi currently offered at the library and courthouse
- Increasing the number of businesses that have Wifi
- Getting residences effectively connected
- Supporting home-based businesses



# APPENDIX

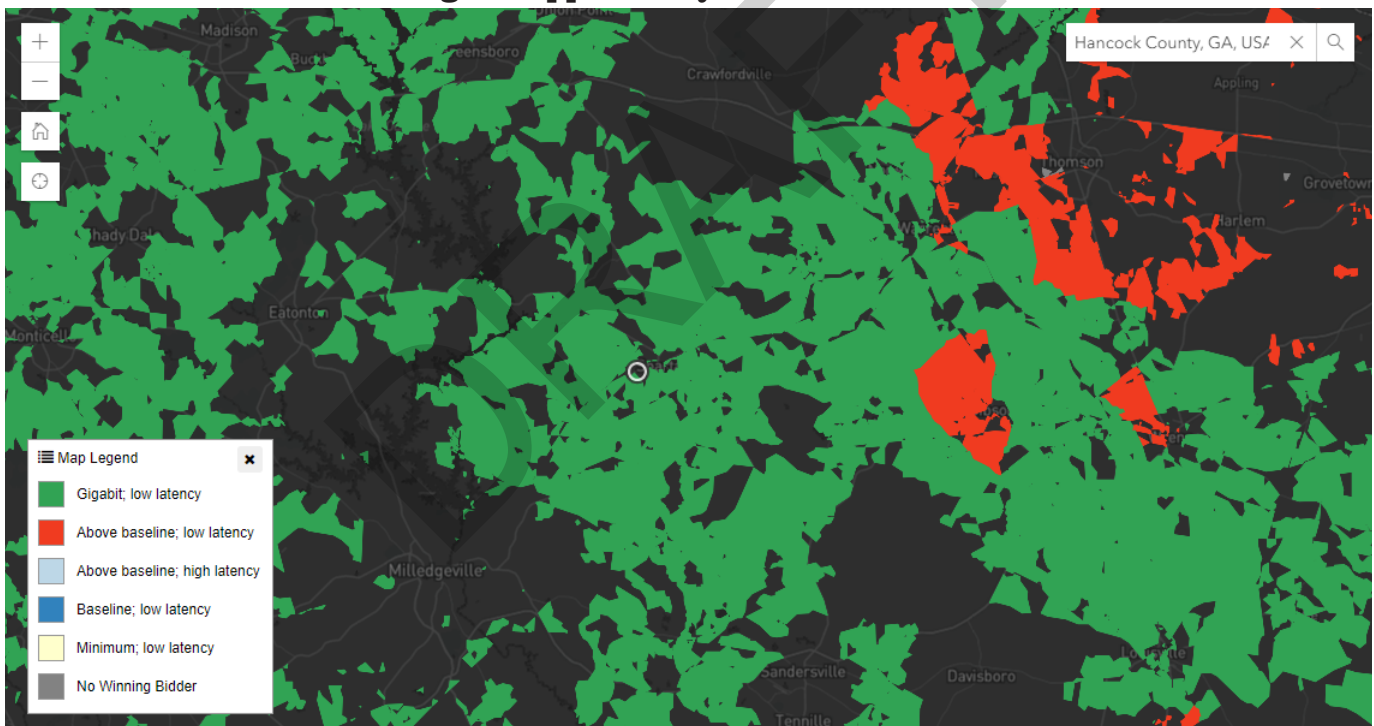
## FUNDING POSSIBILITIES

The state of Georgia has appropriated \$30 million in AFY21/FY22 for broadband grants to OneGeorgia-eligible communities. A 50% cash match is required, and project eligibility will be determined in part on the GBDI map of served areas.

Additional funding exists through programs such as USDA Reconnect and the FCC’s Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction 904 (RDOF), for which much of Hancock County may qualify. In this auction, 180 bidders won over \$9 billion over 10 years to provide broadband. According to the RDOF website, “Winning bidders must meet periodic buildout requirements that will require them to reach all assigned locations by the end of the sixth year. Providers are incentivized to buildout to all locations as fast as possible.” Through this program, broadband will be provided to 5.2M locations across the U.S. and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The map below contains the RDOF Phase 1 auction results for Hancock County and the surrounding area as of 12/7/2020. The colors on the map represent the different levels of service associated with the winning bids. The service tier is based on download speed, upload speed, usage allowance, and latency.

**Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I Results**



Source: <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/maps/rdof-phase-i-dec-2020/>

