

Harlem, Georgia

Comprehensive Plan 2026-2031



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City of Harlem

Comprehensive Plan 2026-2031 Adopted

Prepared for
The Mayor and City Council
Harlem Georgia
320 North Louisville Street
Harlem, Georgia 30814

The Mayor of the City of Harlem, Georgia and Council members of The City of Harlem recognize the efforts and input of multiple individuals who contributed to the creation of this comprehensive plan document which will provide vital information for decision making over the course of the next decade. This blueprint, for future area development, is the culmination of multiple meetings in which area leaders came together to discuss the future of the City of Harlem.

City staff exhibited an unwavering commitment towards the development of this comprehensive plan as they have dedicated numerous hours compiling data, providing valuable time to provide their insight into their communities, and generating sound ideas to include in this plan.



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IGNITE
ACCOUNTING & BUSINESS ADVISOR

WEATHER CONSTRUCTION

THEATRE

Planning Process

As the objective of the Comprehensive Plan is the realization of the shared vision and goals of a community, public participation in the planning process is of vital importance. This section details the structure of the plan and discusses the ways in which stakeholder input was considered as the plan was created. It also provides a brief overview of the opinions and concerns expressed in the SWOT analysis, needs and opportunities assessment and community surveys.

Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The 2026-2031 Harlem Comprehensive Plan provides residents, local officials and other stakeholders with a road-map toward achieving their vision of a city where residents and visitors alike experience a better place to live, work, and play.

Quality community growth, however, can only begin with a locally generated vision and well-structured plan of implementation that has the ability to unite varied segments of society with, often, competing interests.

This comprehensive plan is intended to serve the following functions:

- Lay out a desired future;
- Guide how that future is to be realized;
- Formulate a coordinated, short to medium-term planning program.

Plan Components

The Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission (CSRA-RC) is the city's selected planning coordinator for the Harlem Comprehensive Plan 2026-2031. This document has been prepared to exceed the minimum requirements of Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Minimum Standards and Procedures For Local Comprehensive Planning.

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

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

All state-required comprehensive planning components and additional electives listed are distributed throughout the Harlem Comprehensive Plan in different sections.

In conjunction with the Service Delivery Strategy, the comprehensive plan document becomes a powerful resource for elected and appointed officials as they deliberate development issues and appropriate policy responses.

Plan Procedure

First Required Public Hearing - The purpose is to brief public on the process and opportunities to participate.

Plan Development - This must include opportunity for stakeholder and community member involvement.

Second Required Public Hearing - Once plan is drafted it must be made available for public review/comment.

Submittal for Review - A completed draft must be submitted to CSRA-RC and DCA.

Notification of Interested Parties - The CSRA-RC will notify all interested parties of the availability of the plan for review and comment.

Regional Commission Review - The CSRA-RC will review the plan for potential conflicts.

Department Review - The DCA will review for compliance with their "Rules".

Report of Findings and Recommendations - A report of findings and recommendations must be transmitted within 40 days after submittal.

Plan Revisions - If the plan is not in compliance, revisions may be made to the plan to meet requirements.

Adoption of Plan - Once the plan is found in compliance, it can be adopted.

Notification of Local Adoption - The CSRA-RC must be notified of adoption within 7 days and forward the adoption resolution and final plan to DCA.

Qualified Local Government Status - The DCA will notify the city that its QLG status has been extended.

Publicizing the Plan - Publication of plan after adoption must occur and citizenry informed of the availability of plan.

Public Participation

This section of the Plan focuses on its development at the local level. It details the agencies responsible, the steps taken, and provides documentation of the outcomes of public participation in the process. The public participated in the planning process through the following outreach methods:

- Stakeholder meetings
- Survey
- Public hearings
- Social media posts

Stakeholder Committee

One significant part of the planning process was forming a stakeholder committee of community members. This group of stakeholders was critical to the plan creation and informed the decision-making process. The primary purpose of this committee was to oversee and assist in the process of drafting the Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that CSRA-RC staff reflected community ideals, goals and activities.

The stakeholder committee was composed of elected officials, government employees, and residents. During the planning process, staff from the CSRA-RC collected background information about Harlem through research, site visits, and stakeholder communications. The stakeholder committee then provided direction and guidance for plan development, and RC staff drafted the plan document for committee review.

Members:

Mayor Roxanne Whitaker
Debra Moore, City Manager
Robert Holland, Planning & Zoning Commission Chair
Robert Fields, Public Works Dept. Director
Robert Lewis, Police Dept. Chief
Leona Holley, City Clerk
Octavious Beard, Public Works Director
Steve Pokrywka, Urban Redevelopment Agency

Public Hearings & Stakeholder Meetings

Required public hearings bookended the planning process, allowing residents to comment both on the process and the eventual substance of the plan.

Two public hearings were held on:
June 25, 2025

Stakeholder Committee meetings were held on the following dates:

June 18, 2025
August 27, 2025

Other Activity

Public input involved additional communication channels including a community survey, social media, and website postings/links. More information and documentation of this, public hearings, and stakeholder committee meetings are contained in the appendix.

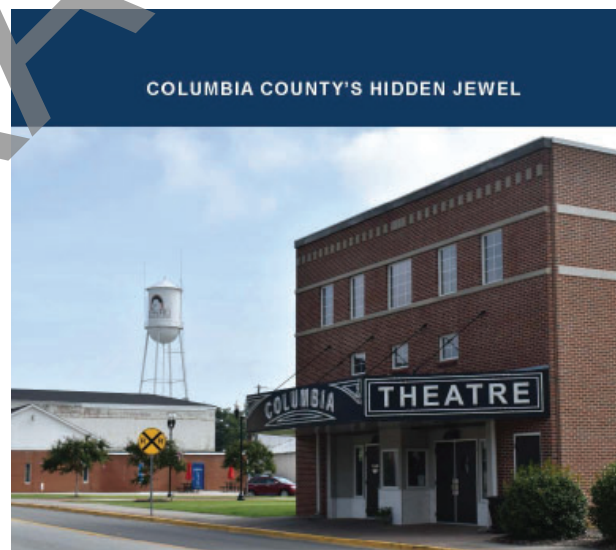
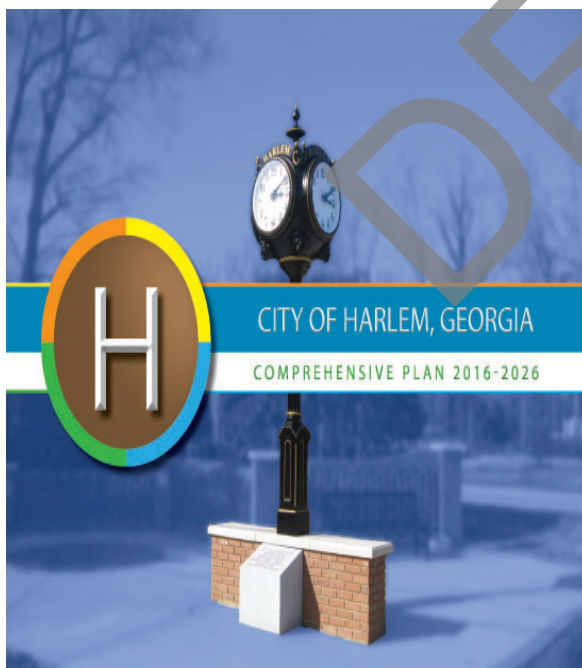
Past Planning Initiatives

A comprehensive plan should be viewed as evolving, a document that should be altered as the conditions in the community change. The update of this document is required to ensure the needs of the jurisdiction are met.

The relevance of prior Harlem comprehensive plans has diminished as implementation recommendations have either been completed, become operating policy, or, due to the passage of time, lost priority in the community. This new comprehensive plan document addresses relative community changes since the 2021-2026 plan was adopted.

The 1991 City of Harlem Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the CSRA-RDC (now named CSRA-RC) and adopted in 1991 in a format consistent with standards established by the Georgia DCA prior to 2005. This document outlined city conditions that were in line to be addressed at that time and formulated goals regarding housing, land-use, economic development, and more. The information provided within this document was used by community leaders to make coordinated decisions regarding public funds and land use. The 2006 Harlem Comprehensive Plan revised goals and objectives for Harlem. It also updated city data to examine changes within Harlem and outlined a new short-term work program.

The City of Harlem continued its dedication to community planning by working with the CSRA-RC to complete a 2012-2016 update of its short-term work program and the 2016 full update to the comprehensive plan.



SWOT Analysis

Based on the community survey, stakeholder conversations and available data, the CSRA-RC staff compiled a list of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The SWOT results were used in identifying community needs and opportunities and examining potential community projects.

Some of the questions during the SWOT process include

- What are the greatest strengths of our community?
- What are the greatest weaknesses of our community?
- What are the greatest opportunities available to our community?
- What are the greatest external threats affecting our community?
- What type of internet access do you have at home?
- What issues do you have with internet at home?
- What issues do you have with cell phone service at home?
- How satisfied are you with the variety of housing in our community?
- Which transportation improvements would you like to see more of in our community?
- Do you use public facilities?
- Describe areas of our community in need of revitalization/improvement and what needs improving?
- List three small actions or activities our local governments could undertake to improve the quality of life in your neighborhood or the community as a whole?
- How do you typically find out about what's happening in our community?

S

STRENGTHS

W

WEAKNESS

O

OPPORTUNITIES

T

THREATS

S

STRENGTHS

- Small town feel/traditional “Mainstreet”
- Family friendly
- Room for growth and expansion
- Sense of community with family-oriented activities and several local events
- Communication via social media
- Downtown shopping
- Town’s history and values
- Good school system
- Charm, good people, old homes, beautiful trees, feeling of community
- Safe and clean
- Walk-ability
- Strategic Location
- Historic downtown and Antebellum homes
- Lack of heavy traffic
- Nature
- Town Pride
- New business supports the small town feel
- The museum
- Growing population of young adults and families
- Housing prices

W

WEAKNESS

- Local resistance to change
- Lack of small, locally owned restaurants
- Lack of grocery stores
- Development
- Lack of business space downtown
- Lack of medical facilities/clinics
- Lack of after-school educational/recreational programs for kids
- Lack of sidewalks in some areas
- Growing too FAST
- Crosswalks without lights
- Recreation facilities need updates
- Inability to recruit higher-paying jobs
- Lack of programs for seniors
- Road network needs to be updated to match development
- Chain retail stores and restaurants
- Lack of outdoor activities for kids like a splash pad, more trails



OPPORTUNITIES

- City Park improvements (playground, picnic pavilions, and walking trail improvements)
- New City Park (splash pad, and playground)
- Plan for growth while keeping the small town charm
- Expand historic/heritage tourism
- Continue to cultivate small business opportunities
- Adding trails (nature, walking, and biking)
- Community programs
- Land to grow and add housing
- Recruit a gym
- Increase the number and type of local events
- Fort Gordon and Cyber Command growth
- Re-use of older buildings
- Making downtown more of a destination
- Upgrade the entry ways to the city
- Redevelopment of pecan factory
- Rural growth (farming and agriculture)



THREATS

- Small lot development
- Increased traffic/through traffic
- 18 wheelers downtown
- Overdevelopment and growth/ urban sprawl
- External growth in Columbia County
- Small/local business being pushed out
- Lack of affordable housing
- Blighted properties
- Columbia County
- Limited possibility for new business construction downtown
- Residents easily travel to other communities for retail
- No nearby medical facilities
- Lack of character with new housing developments

Needs and Opportunities

The needs and opportunities included in this section of the plan present issues to address and possibilities to pursue. These items were generated during the 2026 comprehensive planning process utilizing: input from the stakeholder committee, data review, a community survey, and SWOT analysis. The Needs and Opportunities 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 for the city, and this document is flexible to change as the community does.

Economic Development

The small town character of Harlem is a valued asset to be honored with infill commercial and residential development.

The city needs to develop a relationship with the Columbia County Development Authority and the Chamber of Commerce to reach economic development goals, such as finding occupants for vacant or underutilized buildings (Saba Pecan Factory).

There is a lack of short-stay accommodations (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts) within the city limits for tourists.

The historic areas of the city and the Laurel and Hardy Museum already attract visitors to the city and could be bolstered.

The current level of pedestrian activity in center city Harlem can be improved. The addition of lights at crosswalks would promote more pedestrian activity.

Housing

The city of Harlem has several historical residential and non-residential buildings throughout the city that enhance its character.

Redevelopment of the New Street area through the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) should fit with historic character and has the ability to bring commercial and residential development.

Using CDBG Housing and Chip grants to address rehabilitation of some of the older owner occupied houses.

Community Facilities

The desire for added greenspace is being addressed in through the implementation of the "Harlem Center City Plan."

Needs and Opportunities

Community Facilities

A trails plan was developed by the city with assistance from the Regional Commission, and it is being implemented by City staff.

The improvements to City Park that will be finished in 2026. The proposed Phase 2 and Phase 3 improvements to the City Park.

The addition of the New City Park with phase 1 including a playground and splash pad.

Additional sidewalks are needed in several areas to connect existing neighborhoods).

Transportation and Land Use

There is available land to annex around the city.

There is an abundance of land within the city limits classified for residential use, providing ample area for residential development and redevelopment.

The City of Harlem has limited potential for growth in areas south and southeast of the city due to natural features and Fort Gordon activity.

Influx of traffic from the new neighborhoods.

A sidewalk inventory is needed to have a clear understanding of where they are located and what condition they are in, before new sidewalks are added.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Harlem is committed to protecting its watersheds and wetlands.

Harlem has an abundance of trees within the city limits that enhance the character of the city and should be preserved.

Existing historic properties need protection, maintenance, and promotion.

The historic resources survey needs to be updated to include buildings from 1976 and back.

Some wetland areas need protection from development. There are no ordinances for wetland protection, but it is a consideration in review processes.

Needs and Opportunities

Broadband

Opportunities exist to improve Wifi access downtown and in public areas.

New developments would benefit from being connected to fiber while under construction.

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Community Goals and Policies

Concurrent with, and following, development of the needs and opportunities, stakeholders and other planning participants have identified the shared planning goals of the City of Harlem. The “Community Goals” component of this document includes the following elements:

- Goals: The goals list consists of broad statements of understanding and intent regarding Harlem’s long-term growth and development vision.
- Policies: These accompany each goal, serving as ongoing guidance and direction for local officials when making decisions consistent with achieving that goal.

When the opportunity presents itself, potential actions derived from the policy statements contained in this section of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan may be incorporated as amendments into the Community Work Program at a future date.

Economic Development

GOAL

- Establish downtown Harlem as a destination for live, work and play
- Maintain a diverse economy based on multiple industry sectors and employment opportunities in the city limits.

POLICIES

- Collaborate with county and regional economic development agencies
- Support and promote local private business groups that can focus some of their energy on marketing Harlem as an attractive business location.
- Utilize incentives to recruit businesses, particularly those with jobs at different salary levels
- Focus on downtown commercial and residential development, including adaptive reuse of existing buildings and tourism efforts
- Support the creation and operation of home-based businesses.

Housing

GOAL:

- Improve housing conditions and increase housing options for residents of all ages and income levels.

POLICIES:

- Support programs that address substandard housing and vacant and dangerous buildings.
- Participate in CHIP, USDA, and CDBG housing rehab programs when feasible.
- Incorporate open space, natural landscape, and common greenspace in new residential development.
- Promote workforce housing options.
- Continue cooperation between the URA and City Council for intergovernmental agreements for housing development.

Community Goals and Policies

Community Facilities

GOAL:

- To provide adequate facilities and cost-effective services that meet the needs of residents and improve overall quality of life.

POLICIES:

- Periodically review recreational programs and facilities to improve accessibility and use
- Research the presence of food deserts and the ability to improve food access in those areas
- Support farmer's markets, pocket parks and community gardens
- Improve accessibility to library services and educational programs
- Promote access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged populations
- Maintain capital improvement plans, including an inventory of the current condition of infrastructure

Transportation

GOALS:

- Increase pedestrian, bicycle, and golf cart safety and access to all portions of the city.
- Adequately manage traffic volume increases resulting from growth in the surrounding area.

POLICIES:

- Pursue opportunities to further develop a recreational trail network
- Pursue funding to increase pedestrian and bicycle linkages throughout the city
- Work toward connectivity in the road network where possible and modify development regulations to allow for context sensitive design, including the use of Complete Streets policies
- Retain road operations and maintenance as a priority for funding.

Land Use Broadband

GOAL:

- Ensure that community growth is managed in order to maintain stable neighborhoods, preserve greenspace, encourage commercial development, and respond to commuters.

POLICIES:

- Seek access to state and federal grants, as they become available to promote and implement the development of character area development pattern proposed in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Review community ordinances regularly and update as needed.
- Attend annual trainings with subject-matter experts (Planning Commission and City staff).
- Coordinate land use decisions with transportation decisions
- Facilitate cooperation between the URA and Planning Commission to pursue land development codes supportive of redevelopment activities.

Community Goals and Policies

Land Use Broadband

POLICIES:

- Review housing development trends for potential impacts on Harlem quality of life goals.

Natural and Cultural Resources

GOALS:

- Create features within the city to enhance the existing character of Harlem.
- Maintain the city's unique heritage and character through protection, promotion and preservation of resources

POLICIES:

- Utilize design guidelines to protect the design and character of historic structures while exercising flexibility in their use.
- Promote the use of historic preservation rehabilitation tax credits.
- Seek opportunities to link natural, agricultural, and cultural sites together to create tourist and resident experiences.
- Consider natural and cultural resources impacts, protection, and conservation when making land use or other planning and development decisions.
- Review ordinances and update as needed for natural resource protection.
- Ensure HPC members and staff attend training annually or semi-annually.

Broadband

GOAL:

- To ensure that all residents, businesses and institutions have access to quality, affordable high-speed Internet throughout the City.

POLICIES:

- Provide residents, businesses and institutions with opportunities to discuss their broadband issues.
- Pursue funding opportunities to expand and/or improve access.





Demographics

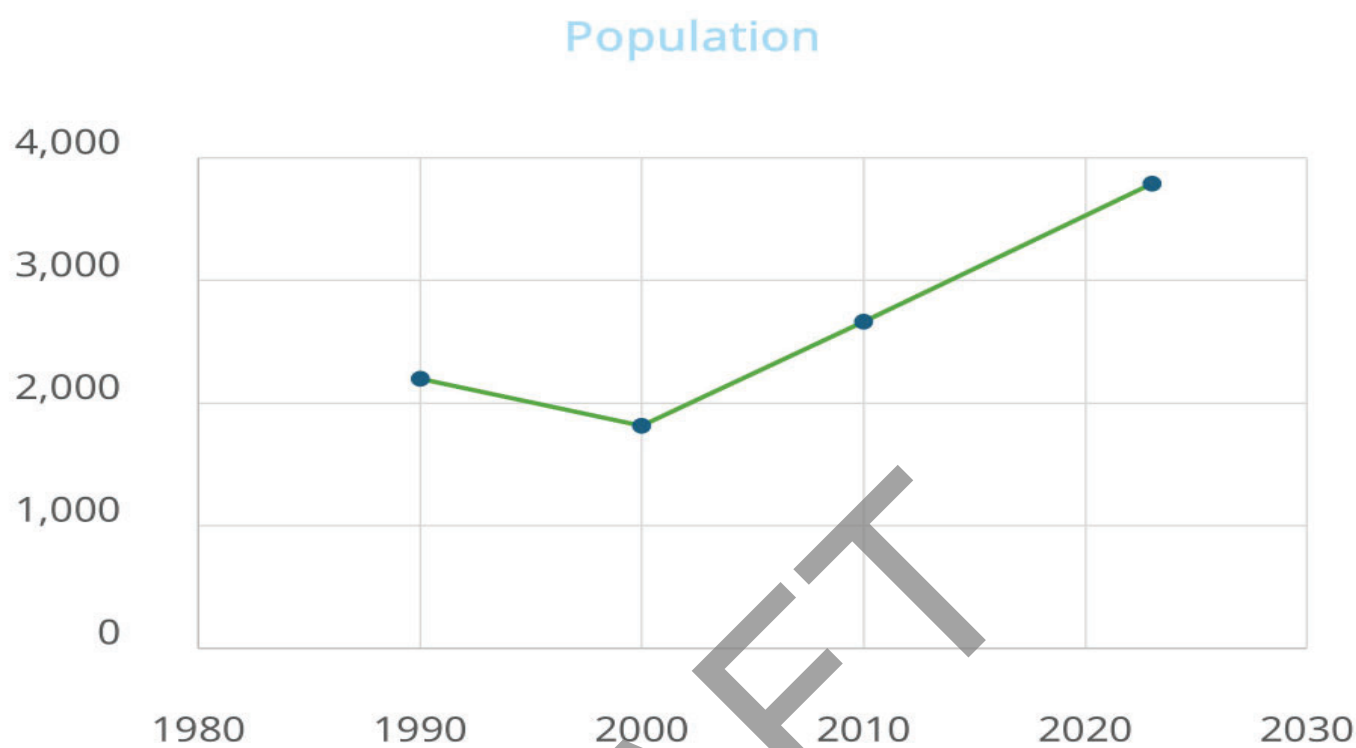
The examination of population statistics spanning decades provides the foundation for all sections of the Plan document.

Topics covered in this portion of the plan include:

- Total Population
- Resident Age Distribution
- Households
- Educational Attainment

There are many more datasets available, but these have been chosen to provide a general overview of Harlem residents.

Total Population



Source: 2010, 2020 US Census and ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

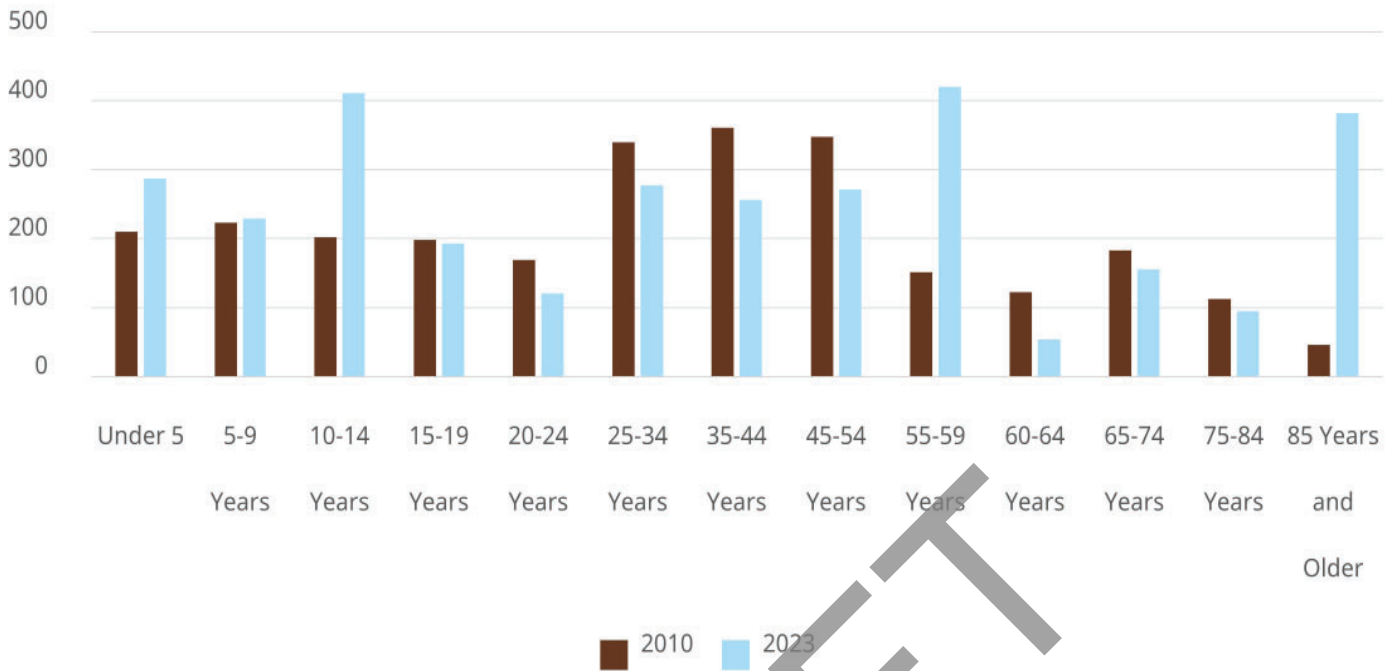
Between 2010 and 2023, Harlem, Grovetown, and Columbia County all experienced sustained population growth, though at varying scales and rates. The data show that while the county as a whole grew significantly, the most rapid increases occurred within its smaller municipalities—particularly Harlem and Grovetown.

Harlem saw the fastest proportional growth, expanding its population by 42% over the 13-year period. Although its absolute growth of 1,127 residents is modest compared to countywide figures, the rate reflects strong local development and increasing residential demand in the area.

Population	2010	2020	2023	2010-2023 Population Change	2010-2023 Population Change Percentage
Harlem	2,666	3,054	3,793	1,127	42%
Grovetown	11,216	13,658	15,577	4,361	38%
Columbia County	124,053	147,295	159,638	35,585	28%

Source: 2010, 2020 US Census and ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Age of Residents



Source: 2010 US Census and ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Age Distribution

From 2010 to 2023, the community experienced a dual demographic shift: growth in both the youngest and oldest segments, with notable declines in young and middle-aged adults. This creates a widening generational gap that will affect long-term planning, especially in: Education systems (due to growth in children and early adolescents), Healthcare and senior services (due to rapidly expanding older cohorts), Workforce and housing markets (due to declines in working-age adults). The age distribution trends suggest the need for strategic planning to support both expanding youth populations and rapidly growing senior populations, while addressing potential challenges in workforce sustainability and community economic vitality.

Race

Harlem remains the least diverse of the three communities, with White residents comprising the overwhelming majority of its population. Minority groups—including Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and multiracial residents—represent relatively small portions of the population. This profile suggests slower demographic diversification and a more static community structure.

These differences have meaningful implications for community planning, education, infrastructure, and public services, particularly in areas experiencing rapid demographic change.

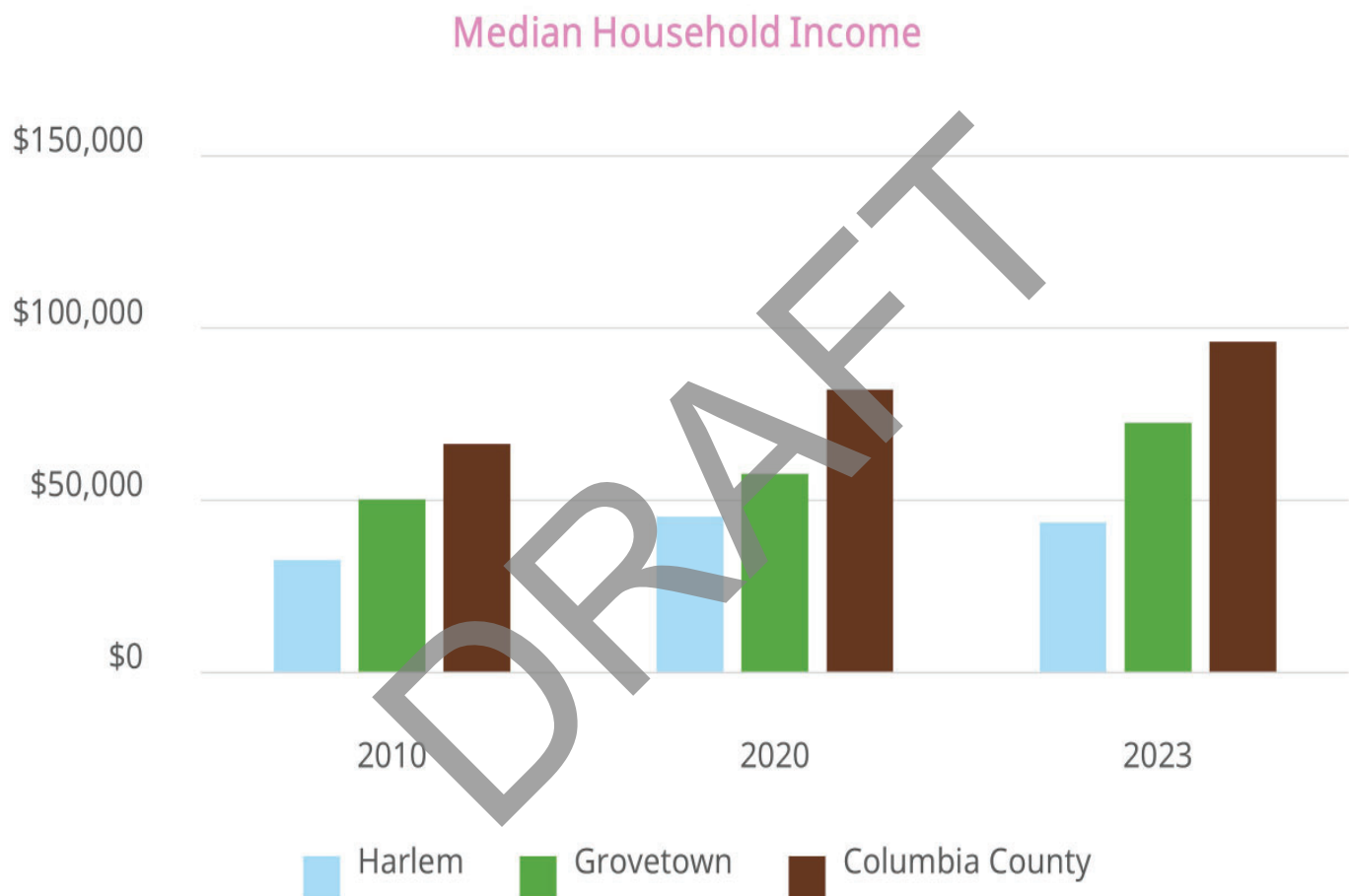


Source: 2010, 2020 US Census and ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Median Household Income

From 2010 to 2023, median household incomes in Harlem, Grovetown, and Columbia County show mixed but notable economic shifts, with the most substantial growth occurring in Grovetown and Columbia County.

Harlem experienced moderate growth from 2010 to 2020, rising from \$32,593 to \$45,212, but saw a slight decline to \$43,571 by 2023. This indicates a recent softening in household income after a decade of improvement.



Source: 2010 US Census, 2020 US Census, ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Household Income

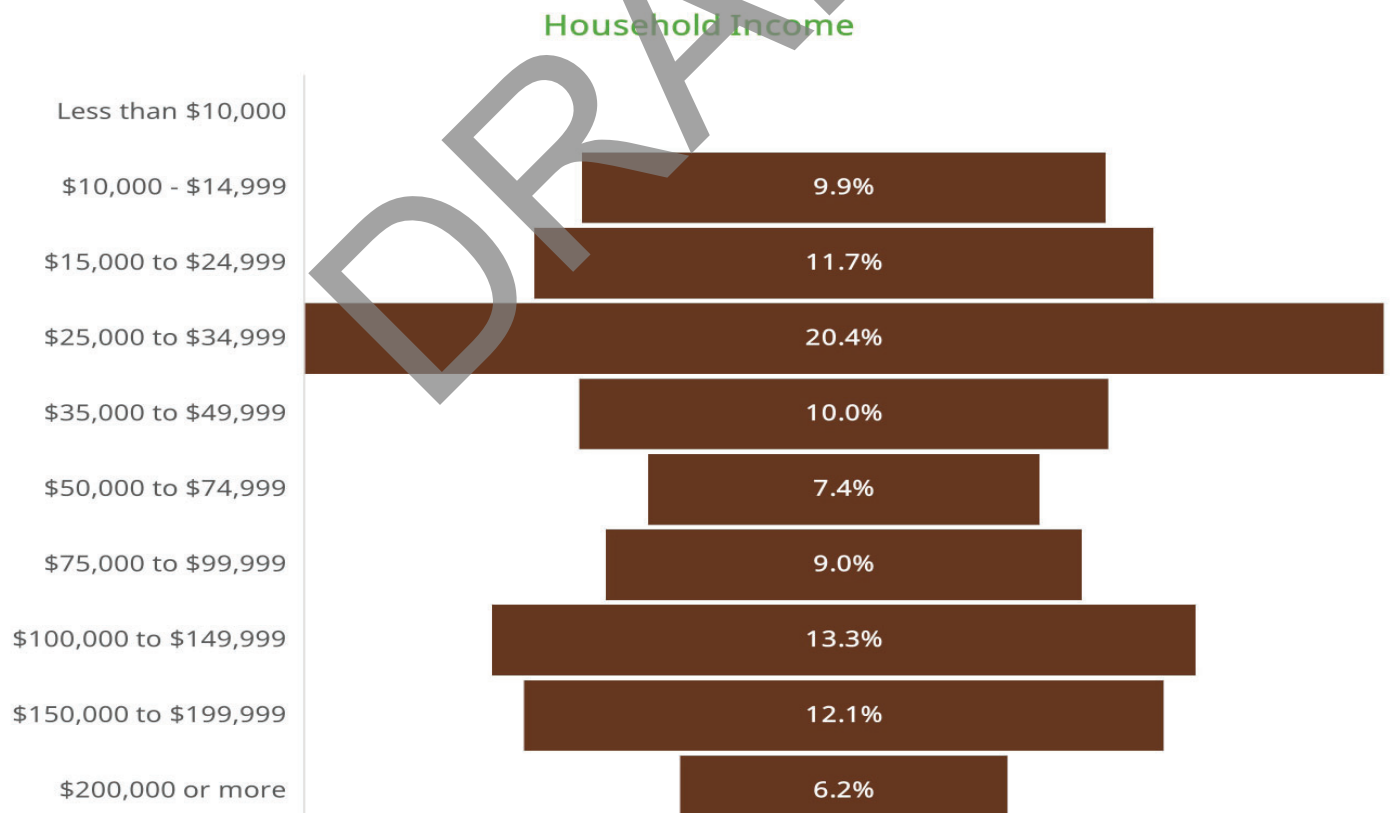
The household income distribution in Harlem reflects a community with a broad range of income levels but a strong concentration in the lower- to middle-income brackets.

The largest share of households—20.4%—earns between \$25,000 and \$34,999, indicating that a significant portion of residents fall just below the national and state median income levels. Additional clusters appear in the \$15,000–\$24,999 range (11.7%) and the \$35,000–\$49,999 range (10.0%), further reinforcing a predominantly moderate-income profile.

Higher-income households are present but represent a smaller proportion of the community. Households earning \$100,000 to \$149,999 make up 13.3%, while \$150,000 to \$199,999 account for 12.1% and 6.2% earn \$200,000 or more. These segments point to emerging affluence within parts of Harlem, though they remain relatively limited compared to the mid-income groups.

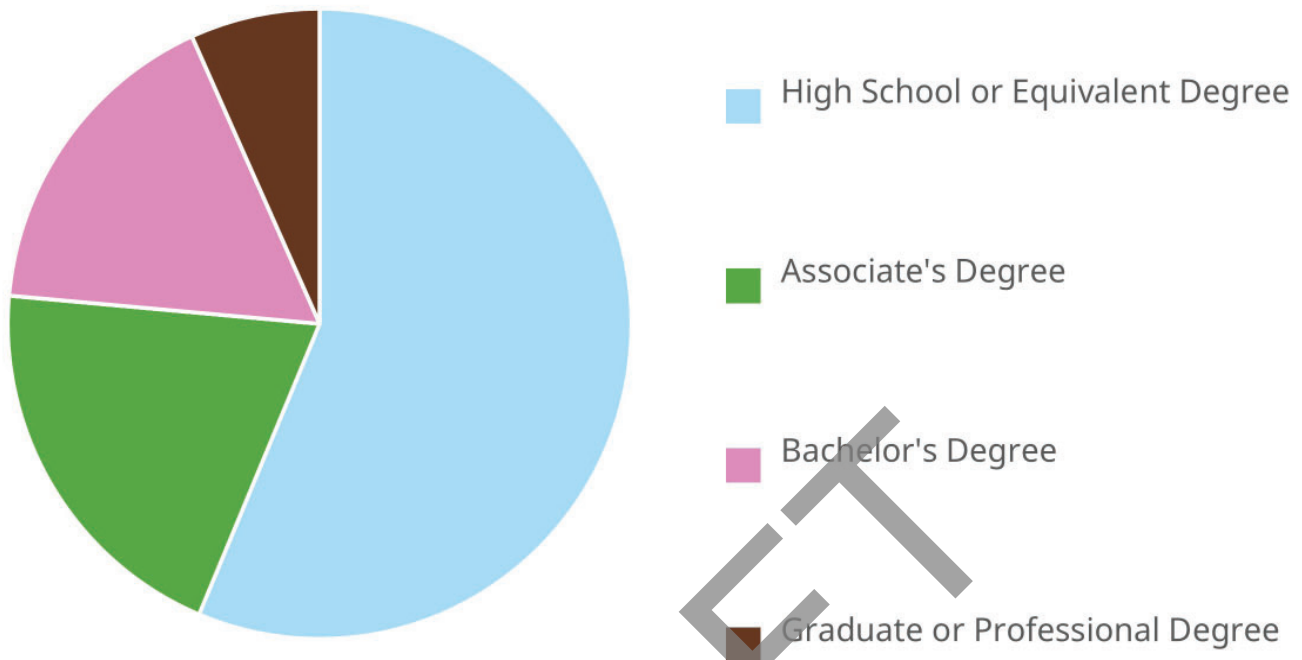
Notably, the community shows minimal extreme poverty, with 0.0% of households reporting income below \$10,000, suggesting either an improving economic baseline or the presence of very small sample sizes in this bracket.

Overall, Harlem’s income distribution highlights a middle-weighted community with a modest but meaningful high-income presence and little representation in the lowest income tier. These dynamics offer insight into economic stability as well as opportunities for targeted growth and support initiatives.



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Educational Attainment



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Educational attainment of the age 25 and over in Harlem shows a workforce anchored primarily by high school graduates, with a meaningful share of residents achieving post-secondary and advanced degrees.

The largest educational group is individuals with a High School or Equivalent Degree, totaling 1,056, which forms the foundation of the community's labor pool. Beyond this level, Harlem demonstrates notable participation in higher education pathways: 377 residents hold an Associate's Degree, while 316 have earned a Bachelor's Degree.

A smaller but important segment—126 individuals—has completed a Graduate or Professional Degree, representing the highest educational tier and contributing to the area's professional and skilled workforce.

Overall, Harlem's educational profile suggests a balanced community with strong high school completion rates and a solid pipeline of residents pursuing college-level and advanced degrees. This distribution supports a diverse talent base, with opportunities to further expand higher-education attainment to align with regional economic growth and evolving workforce needs.

OPEN



Economic Development

Economic prosperity is a primary goal for most communities. Harlem is no exception. However, there is strong desire within the community to maintain a certain community character. This desire would generally encourage the establishment of smaller, locally-owned enterprises as opposed to strip malls and big-box retailers, specifically in downtown. It also encourages a continuity of physical form of buildings for infill and chain establishments with local design standards. The information presented within this section will assist local elected and city officials in making planning and policy decisions that will achieve these community aims.

This section of the comprehensive plan will provide information about trends and issues specific to economic development and summarize the following information:

- Employment By Industry
- Overall Employment
- Poverty
- Income Earnings
- Future Growth

Employment by Industry

Harlem’s civilian employed population of 1,751 workers spans a diverse mix of industries, with employment concentrated in service-oriented and government-related sectors. The largest segment—Educational services, health care, and social assistance—accounts for 19.41% of all workers, underscoring the community’s strong ties to health, education, and social support institutions.

Significant portions of the workforce are also employed in Wholesale trade (12.73%), Other services (12.90%), and Retail trade (11.19%), reflecting a local economy supported by commerce, service-based businesses, and consumer-facing industries. Government employment remains a major presence as well, with Public administration representing 10.39% of all jobs.

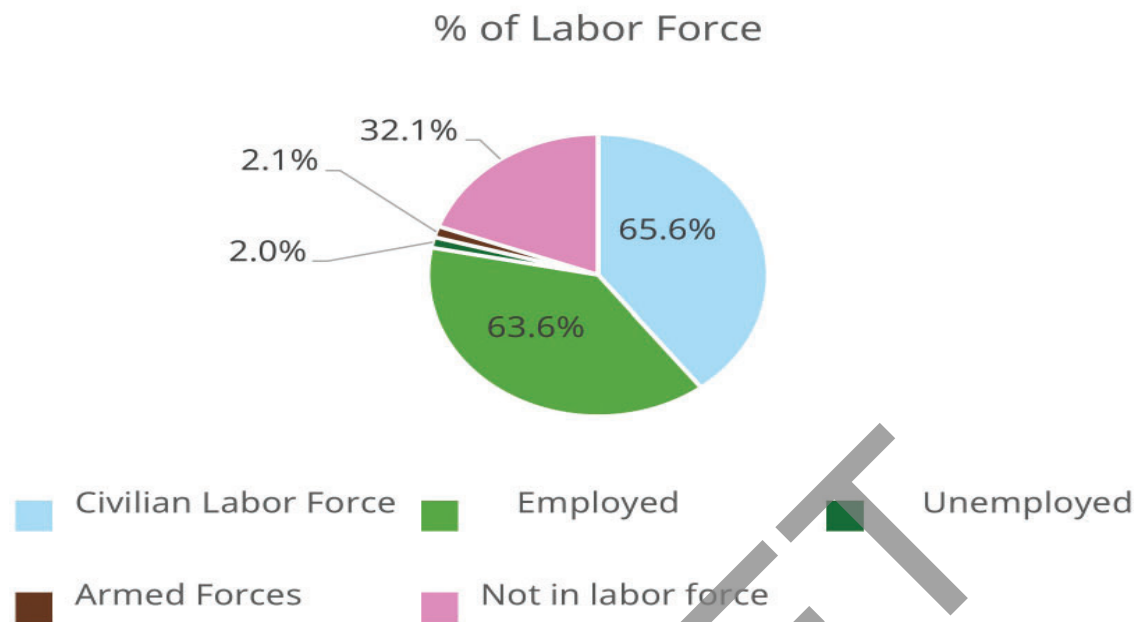
Construction is another key contributor (10.27%), indicating ongoing development and skilled labor activity in the area. Smaller but notable industries include Professional and administrative services (7.13%), Transportation and warehousing (5.31%), and Manufacturing (3.94%). The remaining sectors—such as Agriculture, Arts and entertainment, Finance/Real estate, and Information—represent smaller shares of the workforce, each under 3%.

Overall, Harlem’s industry distribution highlights an economy anchored in education, health, government, trade, and essential services. This mix illustrates a relatively stable employment base with opportunities for strategic diversification and workforce development.

INDUSTRY	Number	MoE	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,751	285	100.00%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	38	51	2.17%
Construction	180	154	10.27%
Manufacturing	69	66	3.94%
Wholesale trade	223	159	12.73%
Retail trade	196	116	11.19%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	93	70	5.31%
Information	13	19	0.74%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	27	27	1.54%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	125	79	7.13%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	340	169	19.41%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	39	37	2.22%
Other services, except public administration	226	211	12.90%
Public administration	182	131	10.39%

Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Overall Employment



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Harlem’s labor force characteristics reflect a community with strong workforce engagement and relatively low unemployment. With 65.6% of residents participating in the civilian labor force, the majority of working-age individuals are actively connected to employment or seeking work. Of this group, 63.6% are employed, leaving a very small 2.0% unemployed—suggesting favorable local employment conditions or limited job-seeking activity among residents.

The presence of the Armed Forces at 2.1% adds a small but meaningful layer of military participation within the community’s workforce composition.

Meanwhile, 32.1% of residents are classified as not in the labor force, a group that may include students, retirees, caregivers, or individuals not currently seeking employment. This share is consistent with national patterns for smaller communities and reflects a balanced distribution of economic engagement.

Overall, Harlem’s labor force profile indicates strong workforce participation, low unemployment, and a stable mix of civilian and military involvement—providing a solid foundation for economic planning and workforce development strategies.

Poverty

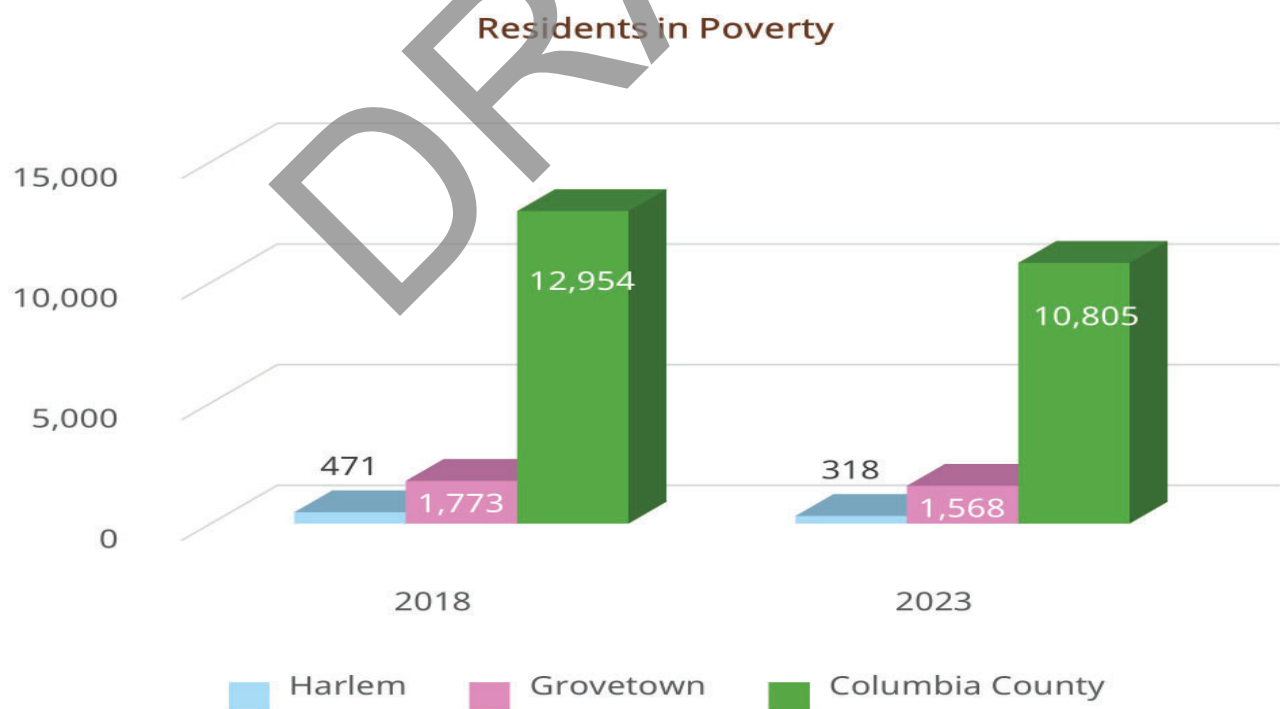
Between 2018 and 2023, Harlem, Grovetown, and Columbia County all experienced meaningful reductions in the number and share of residents living in poverty, indicating improved economic conditions across the region.

Harlem saw one of the most significant improvements. The number of residents in poverty declined from 471 to 318, reducing the poverty rate from 15.4% to 8.4%. This represents nearly a 45% decrease in the number of individuals living in poverty over five years—an exceptionally strong improvement for a small community.

Grovetown also made progress, with its poverty rate declining from 13.1% in 2018 to 9.5% in 2023. While the numerical reduction—1,773 to 1,568 residents—is smaller in percentage change than Harlem’s, it still reflects a positive trend and improving local economic stability.

Columbia County, the largest of the three areas, showed the most consistent and lowest poverty levels overall, falling from 8.8% to 6.8%. This marks a decline of more than 2,000 individuals, highlighting strong regional economic performance and continued strength in employment and household income.

Overall, the data reflects broad-based progress in reducing poverty across all three communities. Harlem shows the sharpest percentage drop, Grovetown continues a stable downward trend, and Columbia County maintains the lowest poverty rates with steady improvement—all pointing to rising economic resilience and expanding opportunity throughout the region.

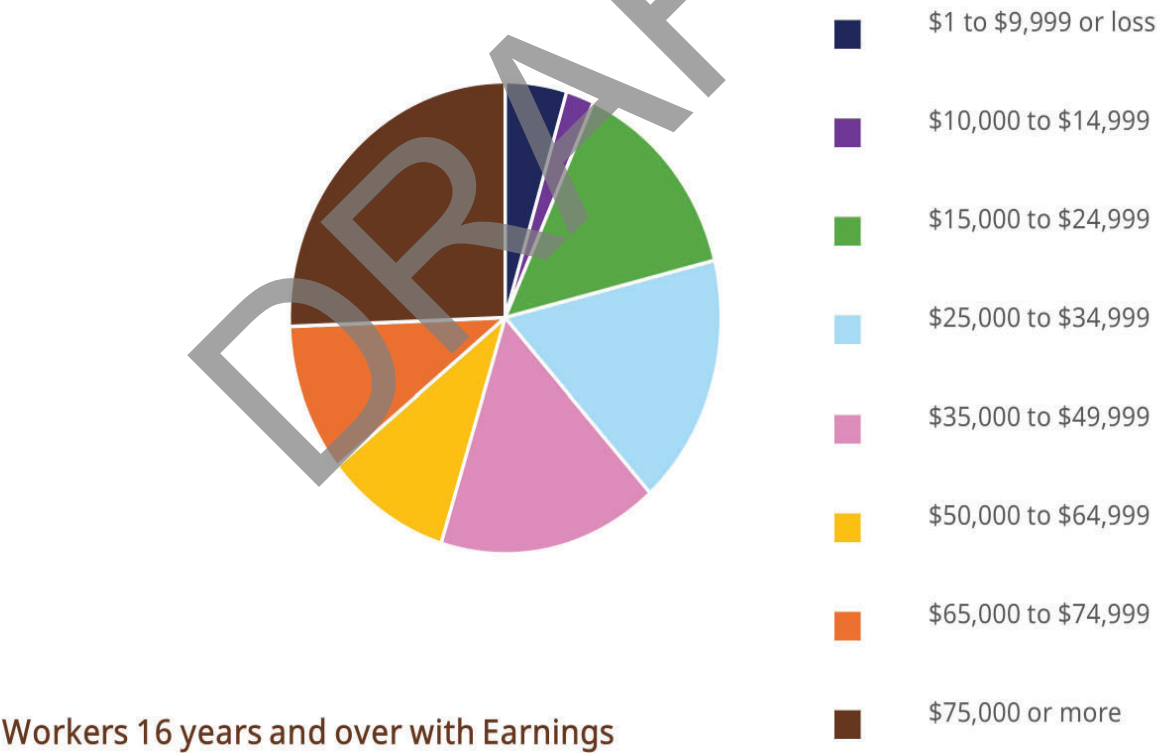


Source: ACS 2018 - 5 Year Estimate and ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Income Earnings

A total of 1,800 workers reported earnings. The income distribution shows a balanced but upward-skewed profile, with a substantial share earning at higher income levels. Higher-income earners represent the largest segment. Workers earning \$75,000 or more make up 25.6% of all earners—the single largest income bracket. Middle-income brackets are strong and broadly distributed. \$25,000–\$34,999: 17.2%, \$35,000–\$49,999: 16.5%, \$15,000–\$24,999: 14.4%. This indicates a sizable core workforce earning between \$15,000 and \$50,000 annually. Lower-income earners form a relatively small share. Only 4.6% earn below \$10,000, and 2.1% earn \$10,000–\$14,999, suggesting limited concentration in the lowest income categories. Moderate-income earnings remain stable. Approximately 9.4% earn \$50,000–\$64,999, and 10.2% earn \$65,000–\$74,999, indicating a consistent presence in the upper-middle range.

The earnings distribution reflects a community with a substantial high-earning segment and a broad middle-income workforce, supporting economic stability. The relatively small share of very low-income workers may indicate stronger employment opportunities or a higher local wage structure. Combined, these patterns suggest a workforce that is financially diverse but with a significant tilt toward higher income brackets.



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Future Growth

The continued growth of Fort Gordon—now home to the consolidated headquarters of the U.S. Army Cyber Command—has reshaped the regional economic landscape and presents substantial opportunities for Harlem. Cyber Command's relocation, which unifies previously dispersed operations across three states, brings approximately 1,200 additional soldiers and civilian personnel, along with an unknown but significant number of defense contractors, to the area. This influx accelerates demand for specialized services, high-skill labor, commercial development, and quality-of-life amenities.

For Harlem, the expansion of Cyber Command positions the city to actively pursue and support cybersecurity, information technology, and defense-supporting businesses. As neighboring communities experience rapid population and employment growth tied to the installation, Harlem can differentiate itself through its historic character, strategic location, and strong community identity. By marketing available commercial sites, encouraging tech-related entrepreneurship, and strengthening workforce development pipelines, Harlem can capture a share of the emerging cyber economy centered around Fort Gordon.

In parallel, Harlem stands to benefit from the broader economic uplift generated by the installation's growth—ranging from increased housing demand and retail spending to opportunities for specialized services catering to military families, civilian employees, and contractors. The city's ability to proactively align its economic development strategies with Fort Gordon's expanding mission will be essential to maximizing long-term benefits.

Harlem is uniquely positioned to grow its film and heritage tourism sectors by leveraging its historic character, authentic small-town feel, and existing participation in statewide industry programs. The city's well-preserved downtown architectural assets, and community identity make it an attractive setting for both film productions and visitors seeking culturally rich, history-based experiences.

Participation in the Camera Ready Communities (Go Film Georgia) program further enhances Harlem's visibility in the entertainment industry. Through this initiative, community liaisons connect directly with film and television productions seeking locations across Georgia, a state that has become one of the nation's leading film hubs. The program's website showcases curated photographs and key details about participating communities, giving Harlem exposure to producers, location managers, and industry decision-makers.

In addition to film, Harlem's long-standing heritage assets—historical sites, local stories, cultural institutions, and community events—provide a strong foundation for expanding heritage tourism. As demand increases for authentic, experience-based travel, Harlem can capitalize on its distinct character to attract visitors, support small businesses, and strengthen its downtown economy.

Together, these opportunities position Harlem to diversify its economic base, increase tourism activity, and raise regional visibility by aligning its historic strengths with growing statewide industries.



211A

OPEN

HARLEM
JAVA
HOUSE



COFFEE

ONE
WAY
←



Housing

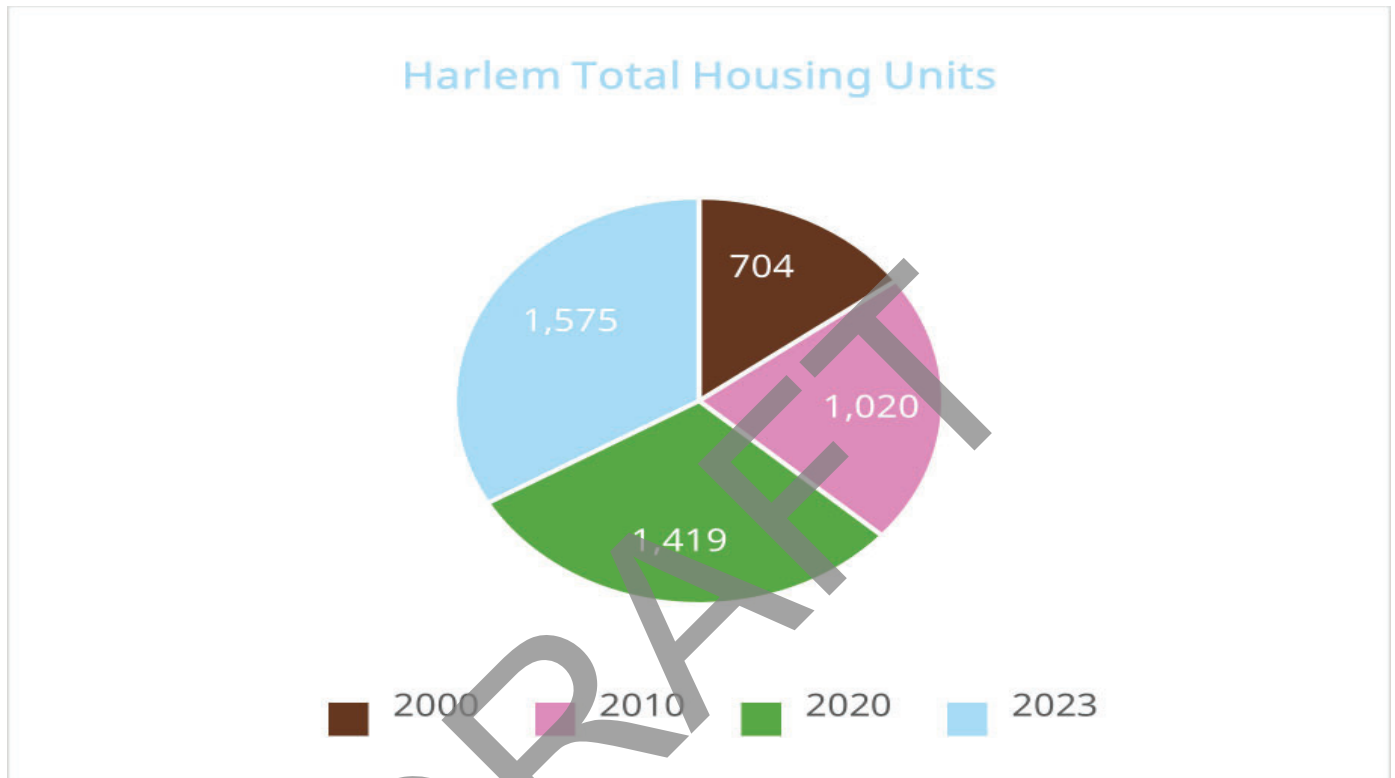
Residential properties represent a significant portion of parcels in many municipalities throughout the state. This is also true for Harlem. Ensuring that residents have safe and adequate housing is also a priority for city staff and elected representatives.

The City of Harlem is now facing growth that requires it to expand its offerings of housing within the city. The potential influx of new residents may overwhelm the existing housing stock if not prepared for. This section contains an assessment of current housing within Harlem. Information regarding the adequacy and suitability of the existing housing is presented in this section through an analysis of the following:

- Number of Housing Units
- Housing Occupancy
- Housing Type Diversity
- Age of Housing Stock
- Housing Cost

Number of Housing Units

The condition of housing within a community provides an insight into the economic and social health of an area. A vibrant and invigorated community includes new housing developments containing a variety of housing types for the inclusion of multiple income levels. The renovation of existing housing stock is also a sign of a healthy community. Stagnant growth, an excessive number of dilapidated and abandoned housing may lead to a low quality of life.



Source: 2000, 2010, 2020, and US Census ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Harlem has experienced consistent population growth over the past two decades:

2000: 704 residents

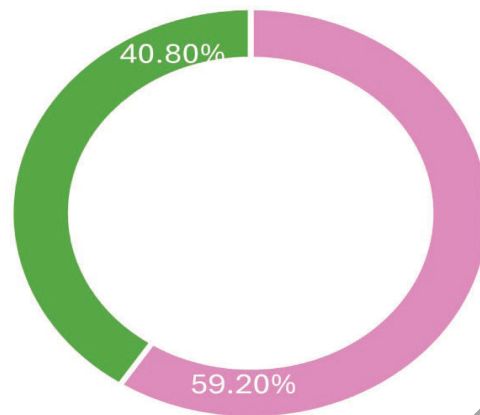
2010: 1,020 residents (+44.9% from 2000)

2020: 1,419 residents (+39.1% from 2010)

2023: 1,575 residents (+11.0% from 2020)

This steady increase reflects ongoing residential development and growing community appeal. The population growth rate has slowed slightly in recent years, suggesting the area may be approaching a more stabilized phase of expansion. Overall, Harlem demonstrates a strong upward demographic trend, supporting continued investment in housing, infrastructure, and community services.

■ Owner Occupied Households ■ Renter Occupied Households

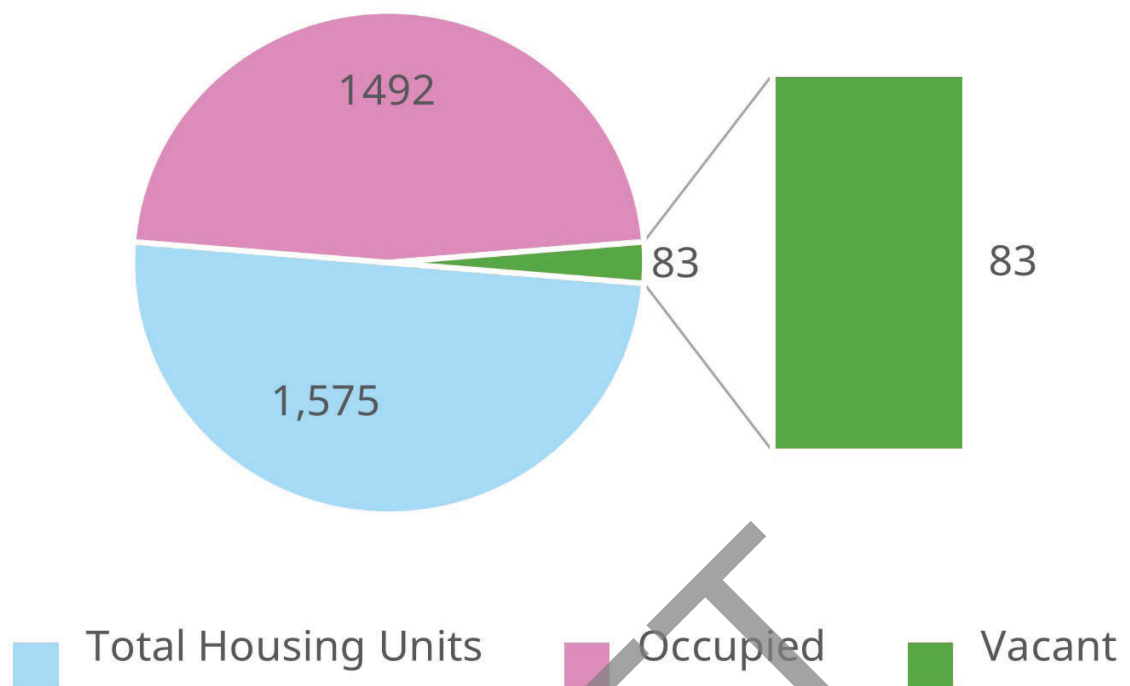


Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Housing Occupancy

The community exhibits a balanced mix of housing types, with a majority of households being owner-occupied. Specifically, 59.2% of households are owner-occupied, reflecting a stable residential base and potential long-term community investment. The remaining 40.8% are renter-occupied, indicating a significant portion of the population relies on rental housing, which can contribute to housing market flexibility and diversity.

Overall, the distribution between owners and renters suggests a moderately stable community with opportunities for both homeownership programs and rental housing initiatives to meet the needs of all residents. Harlem currently has 1,575 total housing units, of which 1,492 are occupied and 83 are vacant, representing a vacancy rate of 5.3%. The high occupancy rate indicates strong demand for housing in the community. The relatively low vacancy rate suggests stability in the local housing market, with a balanced mix of owner-occupied and renter-occupied households supporting both community retention and flexibility for new residents.



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Housing Type Diversity

Between 2018 and 2023, Harlem experienced a substantial shift in the composition of its housing stock, reflecting both market-driven pressures and the community's evolving role within the region. While the total number of units increased, the most notable change is the transition from lower-density and manufactured housing toward a more diverse and urbanized housing mix.

During this period, detached single-family homes—the community's traditional housing backbone—remained largely stable, with only a modest decline from 1,063 to 1,036 units. This slight reduction may be attributed to limited available land, redevelopment activities, or incremental replacement by alternative housing formats. At the same time, attached single-family units, including townhomes, grew from 72 to 103 units, indicating demand for moderately priced ownership options that offer density without sacrificing neighborhood character.

The most significant transformation occurred within the multifamily sector. Units within 3–9 unit buildings increased from 23 to 403, representing a major expansion of small- and mid-scale multifamily housing not previously found in Harlem at this scale. The introduction of 20-or-more-unit buildings, rising from zero to fourteen units, further illustrates the community's emergence as a viable location for larger multifamily development. These patterns signal a market shift toward rental housing and higher-density formats that can serve a broader range of

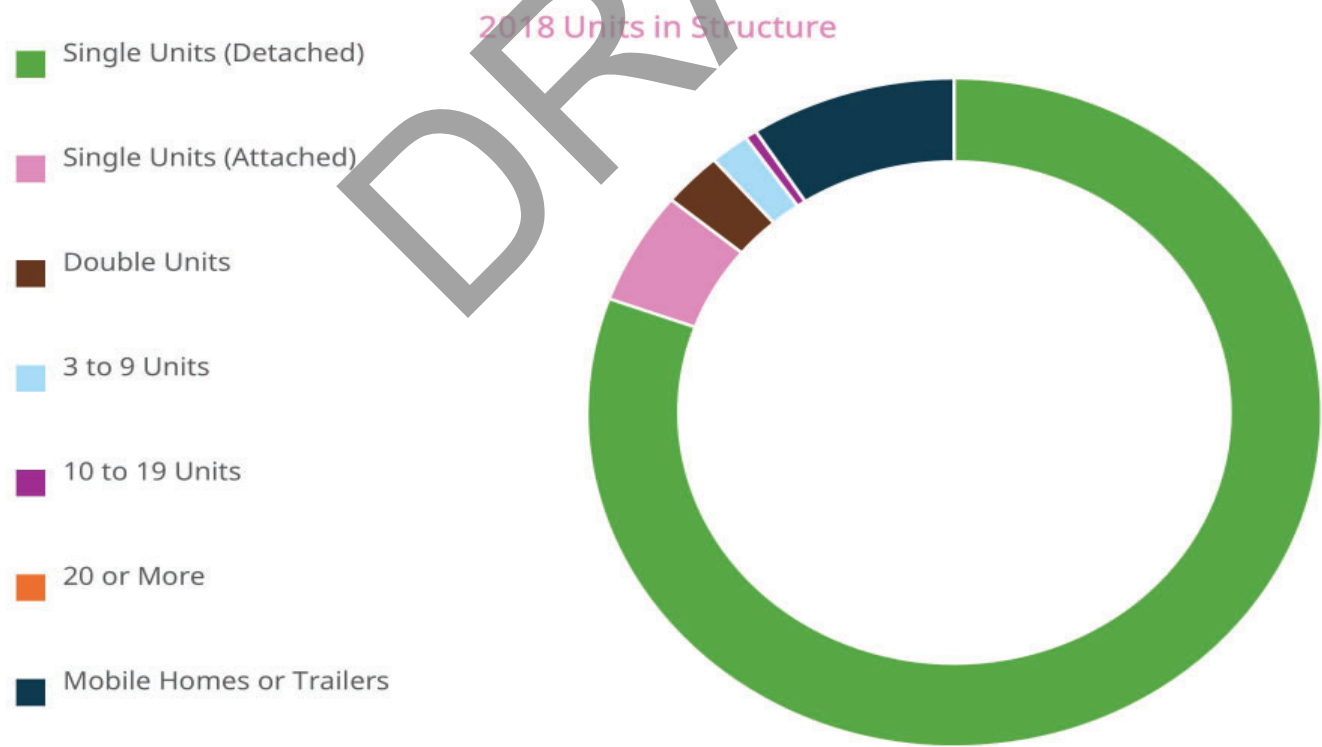
Housing Type Diversity

households, including young professionals, single adults, and smaller families. In contrast, mid-sized multifamily buildings in the 10–19 unit range declined to zero, suggesting redevelopment, reclassification, or a preference among developers for either smaller-scale infill properties or larger, more marketable complexes.

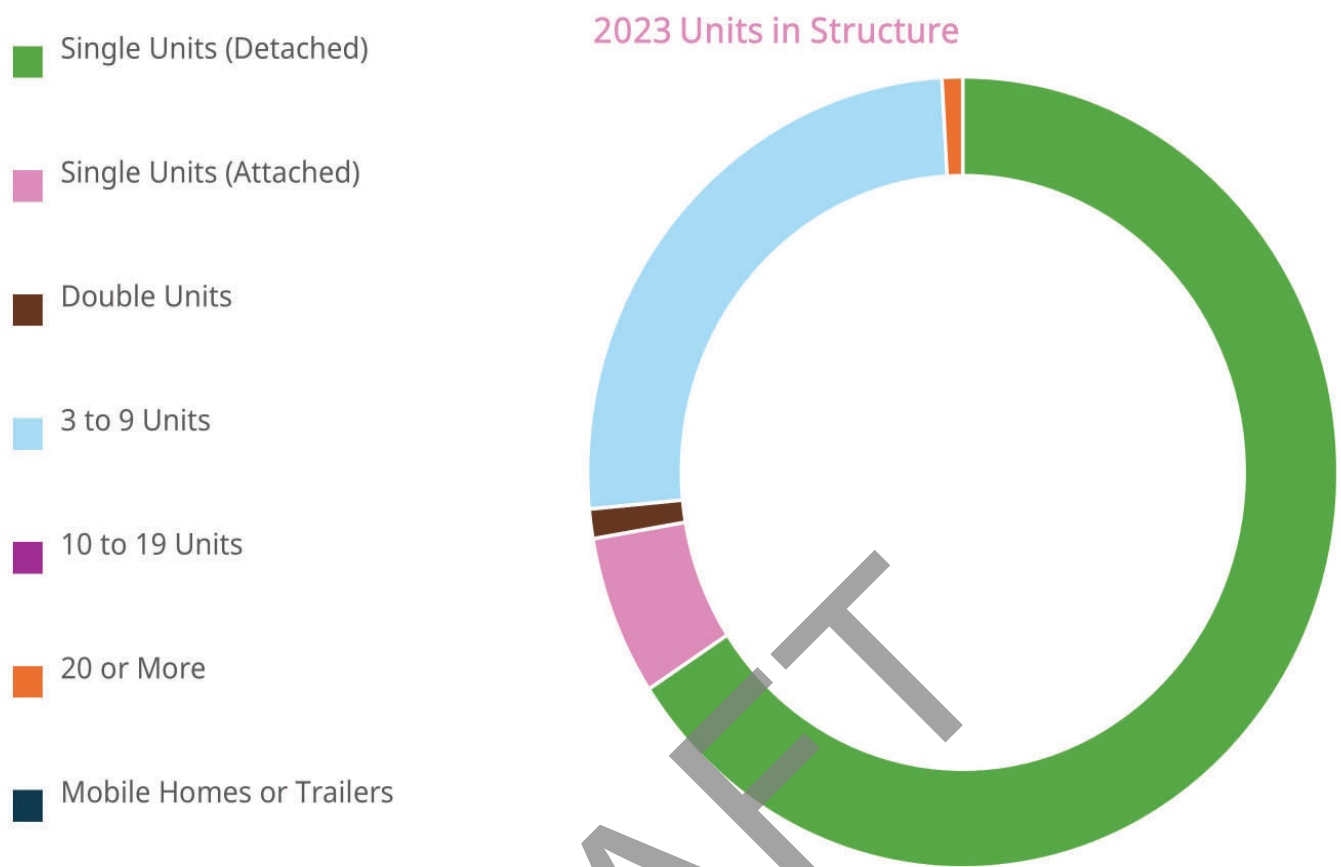
One of the most dramatic changes is the complete disappearance of mobile homes and trailers, which fell from 120 units in 2018 to zero by 2023. This likely reflects the redevelopment of former manufactured housing areas, the conversion of parcels to other uses, or the enforcement of updated housing and zoning standards. The decline of duplexes—from 35 to 19 units—mirrors this shift away from older, lower-density rental inventory.

Overall, Harlem’s housing evolution demonstrates a clear movement toward a more diversified and urbanized housing landscape. The community is transitioning from its historic reliance on detached single-family and manufactured homes to a pattern that supports a broader mix of housing types. This change is consistent with regional growth pressures, increasing demand for rental and flexible living arrangements, and Harlem’s strategic location near major employment centers.

As Harlem continues to grow, these trends underscore the importance of proactive policy-making to ensure housing diversity, affordability, and compatibility with the community’s long-term vision. Future planning efforts should focus on expanding infrastructure capacity, preserving neighborhood character where appropriate, and balancing new multifamily development with the community’s desire for high-quality, sustainable residential environments.



Source: ACS 2018 - 5 Year Estimate



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

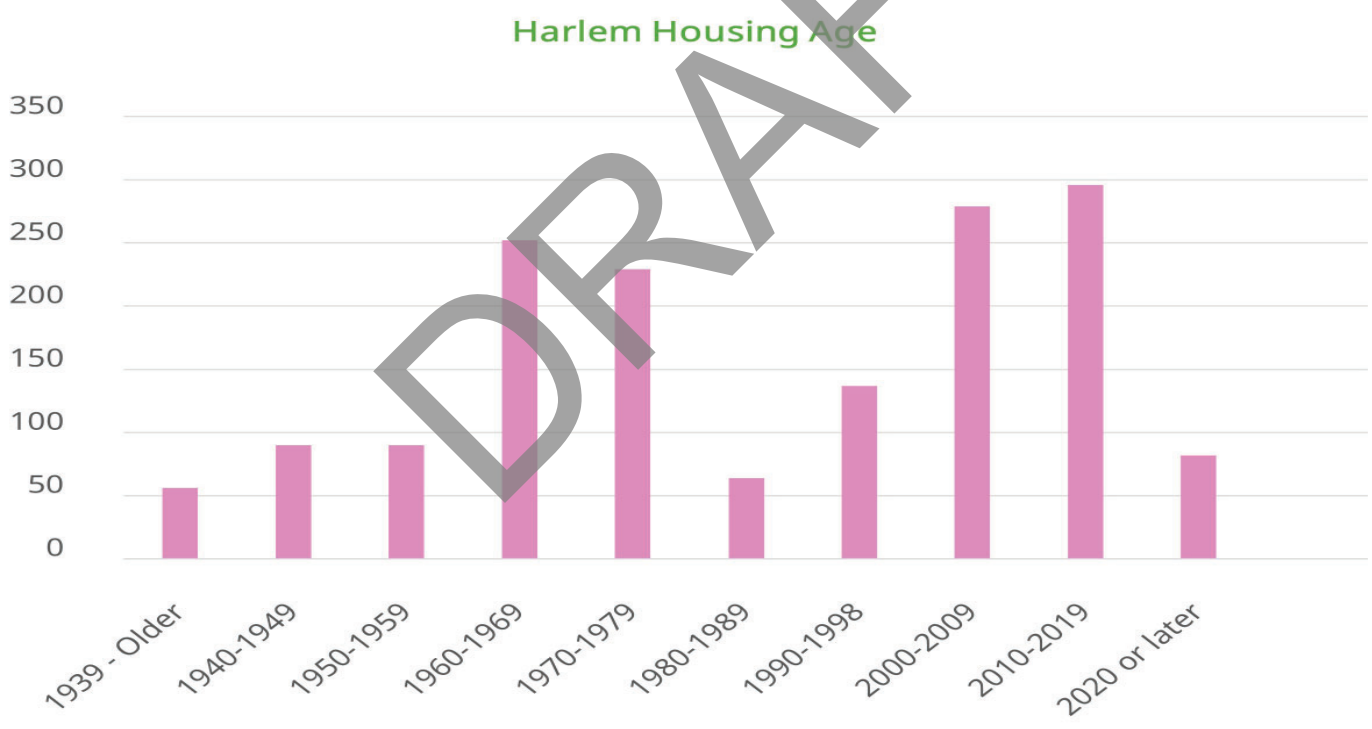
Age of Housing Stock

The housing stock in Harlem is diverse in age, spanning from homes built before 1940 through new units constructed in 2020 or later. The largest single blocks of housing by decade are from 2000–2009 (279 units) and 2010–2019 (296 units), indicating a strong recent phase of development. A substantial portion of homes come from the mid-20th century — for example, 1960–1969 (252 units) and 1970–1979 (229 units) — showing the community has a well-established built environment. The “oldest” housing category (1939 or older) comprises 56 units, so while there is historic housing, it is a relatively small share of the total. Overall, the mix suggests a shift toward newer construction: more than 40% of the units in the sample appear to have been built since 1990 (1990–98: 137; 2000–09: 279; 2010–19: 296; 2020+: 82).

- Opportunities for investment or rehabilitation: The mid-century homes may offer opportunities for renovation or value-add, especially as the area attracts new growth.
- Growth momentum: The significant number of units built in the 2000s and 2010s suggests Harlem is growing and building out its housing supply, perhaps driven by regional factors.

- Mixed age yields maintenance considerations: Older homes (pre-1960) may require more upkeep, while newer homes may attract higher values, but also likely higher purchase prices.
- Neighborhood character + newer development: The presence of older housing gives character and stability to neighborhoods, while the newer builds show modern growth — this combination can appeal to a wide range of buyers or renters.
- Future planning and policy: For local policymakers / planners, the age mix indicates the need to balance preservation of older housing, infill/new development, and infrastructure upgrades (since older housing stock may have aging systems).

Harlem’s housing age profile reflects a maturing but still growing community: many homes from the 1960s–70s establish the legacy housing base, while a strong surge of newer homes (2000s–2010s and beyond) point to recent expansion. For stakeholders—whether homeowners, investors, or planners—this means both stability from established neighborhoods and opportunity from newer development.



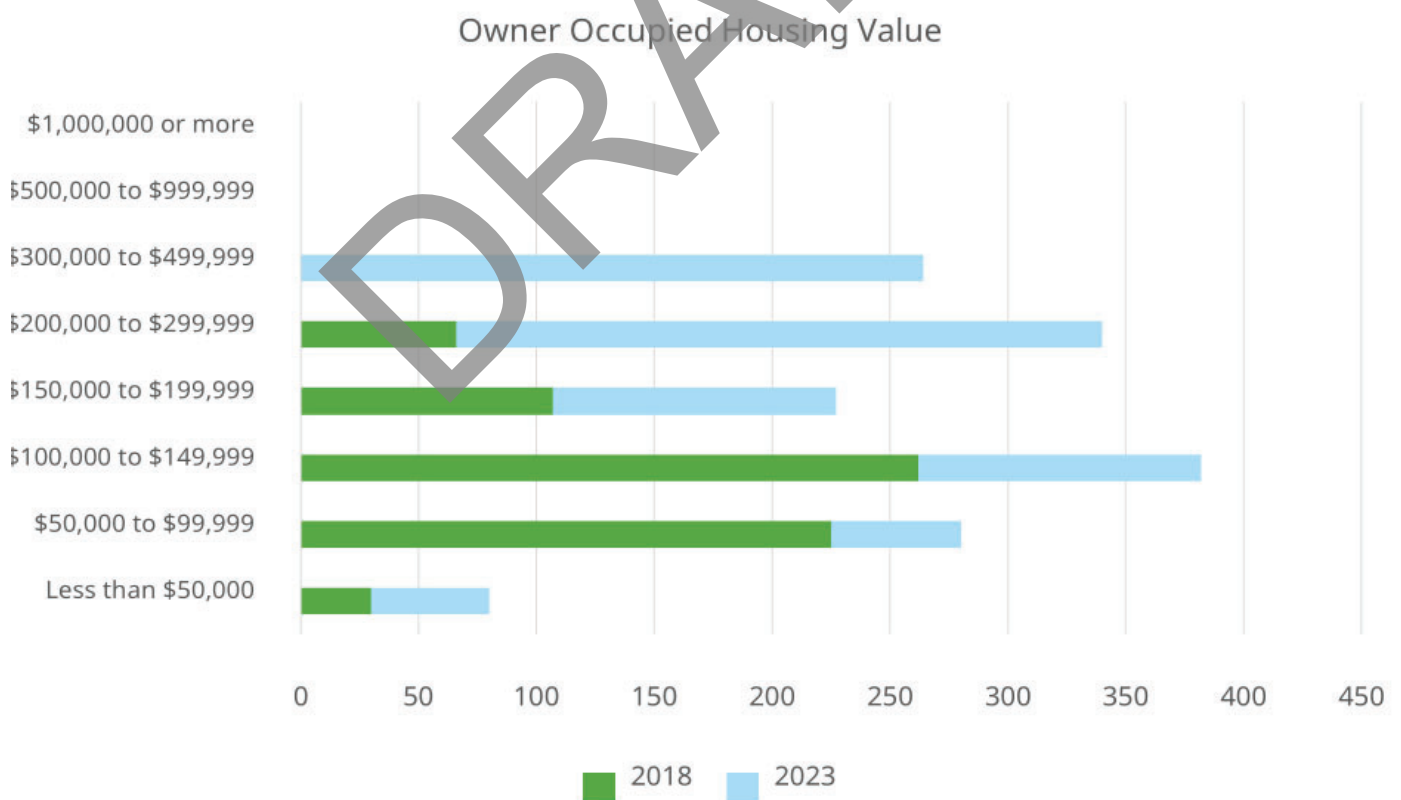
Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate

Housing Cost

Between 2018 and 2023, Harlem experienced a significant escalation in housing values, reflecting both local growth pressures and broader regional market dynamics. The total number of owner-occupied units increased from 690 to 883, adding nearly 200 units to the local housing stock. More notably, the distribution of home values shifted dramatically toward higher price ranges.

In 2018, the market was heavily concentrated in lower-value homes: nearly 75% of units were valued below \$150,000. By 2023, this segment had contracted substantially. Units valued under \$100,000 fell from 255 to 105, and homes in the \$100,000–\$149,999 range dropped by more than half. At the same time, Harlem saw rapid growth in mid- to upper-value homes. Units priced between \$200,000 and \$299,999 quadrupled, and the city recorded 264 units in the \$300,000–\$499,999 range—essentially a new category that did not exist locally in 2018.

The result is a housing market that has become significantly more expensive. Harlem’s median home value more than doubled, rising from \$117,300 in 2018 to \$242,700 in 2023. This increase suggests strong demand driven by population growth, new residential development, and the city’s proximity to major employment centers. However, the rapid appreciation also highlights emerging affordability challenges for existing residents and first-time homebuyers. Ensuring a balanced housing supply will be essential to maintaining a diverse and equitable community over the next comprehensive planning cycle.



Source: ACS 2018 and 2023 - 5 Year Estimate





WELCOME TO
HARLEM
GEORGIA
Happy
Holidays

Community Facilities

An assessment of the availability and adequacy of community facilities is important to understanding the ability of a jurisdiction to provide residents, businesses, and potential developments sufficient resources. Having the appropriate amount of resources is necessary for both maintaining community livelihood and attracting future residents and commercial interest. This section of the comprehensive plan focuses on the following existing public facilities and services for this purpose:

- Public Safety
- Fire Protection
- Parks & Recreation
- Library & Cultural Facilities
- Educational Facilities

Public Safety

The City of Harlem operates a police station within the city limits. The police department has the following: 1 police chief, 1 assistant police chief, 2 sergeants, 6 full-time patrol officers, 2 part-time patrol officers, 1 reserve officer, 1 records clerk/administrative assistant, and 1 municipal court clerk. The agency provides full law enforcement services for the citizens of Harlem and assists surrounding law enforcement with mutual aid. Dispatch is handled by Columbia County. The department also offers a service called House Watch, where citizens can sign apply to have their home periodically checked on while away for vacation, business trip, etc.





Fire Protection

The City of Harlem operates two fire stations with the following positions: 1 Volunteer Fire Chief, 1 Volunteer Asst. Fire Chief, 1 FT Captain, 1 FT Lieutenant, 2 FT Firefighters, 2 PT Firefighters and 20 Volunteer Firefighters. Along with being certified Firefighters, all Career FT and PT Firefighters and some Volunteer Firefighters are EMT certified. The City of Harlem Fire Department currently has a rating of 3 from the Insurance Services Office (ISO).



Parks and Recreation

The City of Harlem currently contains several acres of active and passive parks. The Columbia County Recreation Department manages the Harlem City Park, and the city maintains other facilities in the city. Harlem City Park contains the following: a T-Ball field, a 200-foot field for youth baseball, two 300-foot fields, a batting cage, a tennis court, two playgrounds with picnic areas, a hard-surface basketball court and a restroom facility. A Wi-fi hotspot is provided in the park by the Columbia County Community Broadband Utility.

The City is currently working on an upgrade at the City Park located on Church Street to include an upgraded Facilities Building and the addition of updated and accessible playground equipment, two additional picnic pavilions and the repaving of the walking trail and roadway. The work is expected to be completed by the January 2026. As funding comes available there are three additional phases planned. Those phases include upgrades to the ballfields, tennis courts, basketball court, the addition of pickleball courts, and additional parking and paving. Currently the City ballfields are being utilized by several softball/baseball travel teams for practices and Impact Sports hold soccer practices and games during the Spring and Fall seasons.



Parks and Recreation

Glenn Phillips Memorial Park is located on South Hicks Street and features a gazebo and reading benches. The city also contains several passive parks within neighborhoods throughout the city and continues its strides to create recreation opportunities where possible.



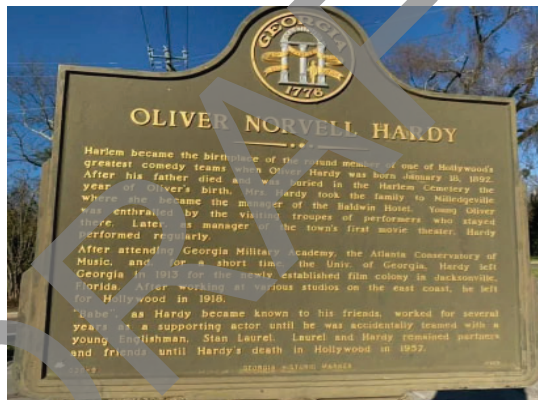
The City is currently establishing a new City Park on what was the old North Harlem Elementary School property located at 525 N. Fairview Drive. See photos above of the site. There is a bid opening on November 20, 2025, and expect to award the bid at the City Council meeting for November. This park will also be done in phases with Phase I consisting of a Facilities building, playground area, splash pad area, sidewalk, and roadway paving. The additional phases will be completed as funding is available and the proposed improvements include some picnic pavilions, gazebo, Veteran's memorial, and a possible disc golf course. The site currently includes the old football field and includes a walking track. Currently the field is being used by the Pop Warner football program for their camp and practices.

Recreational trails planning occurred in part through the Greenways-Trails-Connections plan which provides details for the creation of multiple greenways and trail connections throughout the city.



Library

The Harlem Library is a branch of the Greater Clarks Hill Regional Library System. According to its website: "Harlem Library contains a collection of over 20,000 items including DVDs and audiobooks, 36 public computers, WiFi, and one available meeting room. They also offer three study rooms for public use.



Cultural

Harlem just celebrated the 36th Annual Oliver Hardy Festival on Saturday, October 4, 2025! There was a parade, craft and food vendors, entertainment, movie shorts in the Theater and lots of other fun things to do.



Cultural

Harlem Museum and Welcome Center Opened October 5, 2019, at the 31st Oliver Hardy Festival in Harlem, Georgia. The Harlem Museum and Welcome Center provide the history of the city and a bit about Columbia County.



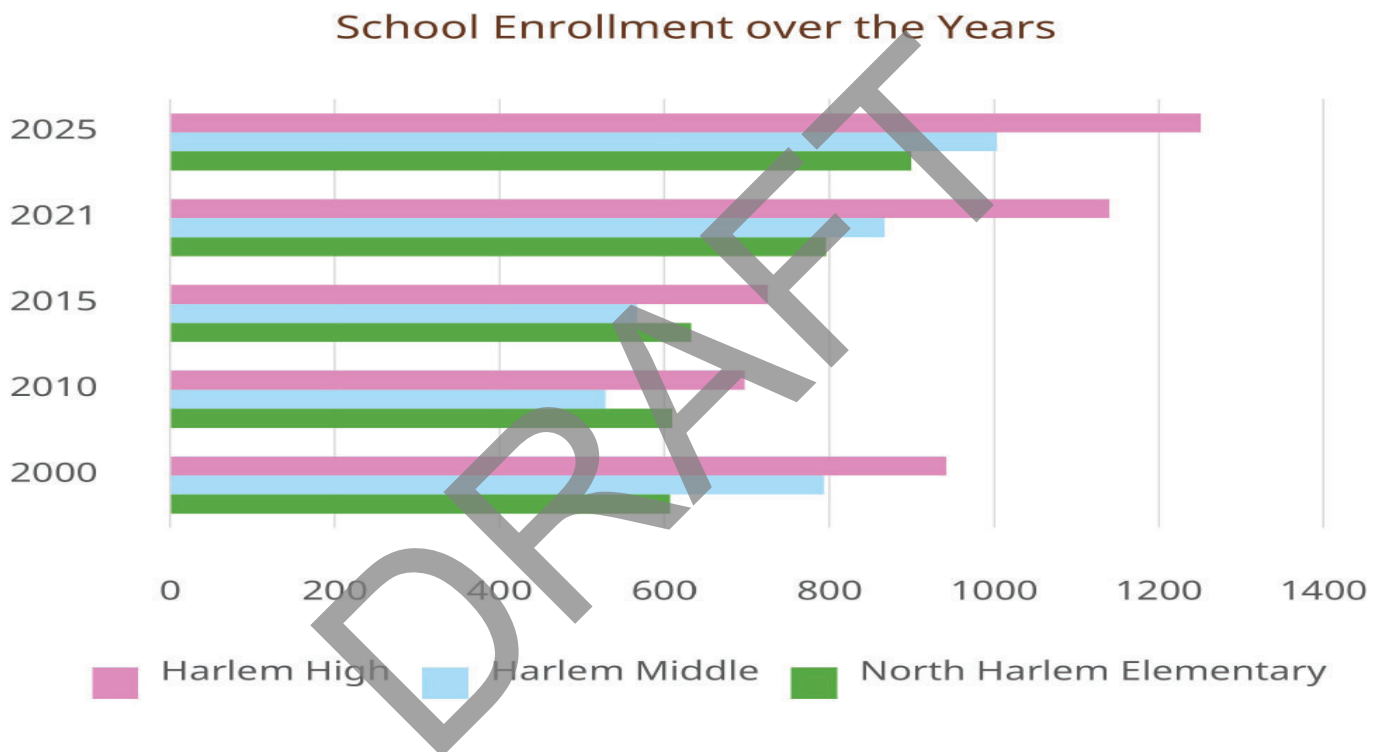
Home of the Laurel and Hardy Museum of Georgia Shortly after the first Oliver Hardy Festival in 1989, the City of Harlem, Georgia received various Laurel & Hardy objects. As time passed, this collection grew larger. As a result, the original Laurel & Hardy Museum of Georgia opened on July 15, 2002. The original museum did not have a collection storage to properly store the donated objects; the environment was not ideal for the longevity of the objects and was operated by Laurel-and-Hardy-fans-turned volunteers who quickly began to run out of space. This part of the Museum moved from its previous location at the time of the Harlem Museum and Welcome Center grand opening in 2019. This current location has more space, a collections storage, and a better exhibition area to be able to tell the phenomenal story of Laurel and Hardy and their impact on society.

Educational Facilities

The City of Harlem contains one school within city limits; two additional schools near the city also serve Harlem students. Together, these schools provide classes for students in pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade. The Columbia County School Board operates North Harlem Elementary School (in city limits), Harlem Middle School, and Harlem High School.

Educational Facilities

School enrollment in Harlem has grown significantly across all grade levels over the past two decades, with the most substantial increases occurring after 2015. North Harlem Elementary rose steadily from 607 students in 2000 to 633 in 2015, then experienced a sharp expansion to 796 students in 2021 and nearly 900 by 2025. Harlem Middle followed a similar pattern: enrollment declined between 2000 and 2010 but rebounded strongly after 2015, jumping from 567 students to 867 in 2021 and surpassing 1,000 students in 2025. Harlem High also saw early declines, dropping from 942 students in 2000 to 697 in 2010, but then climbed dramatically to 1,140 students in 2021 and 1,251 students by 2025. Overall, the total student population increased from 2,342 in 2000 to more than 3,150 in 2025, marking the district's highest enrollment in the 25-year period. The data shows a clear pattern of rapid growth in the last decade, reflecting both local population increases and expanding development pressures in the Harlem area.



Source: GA Department of Education



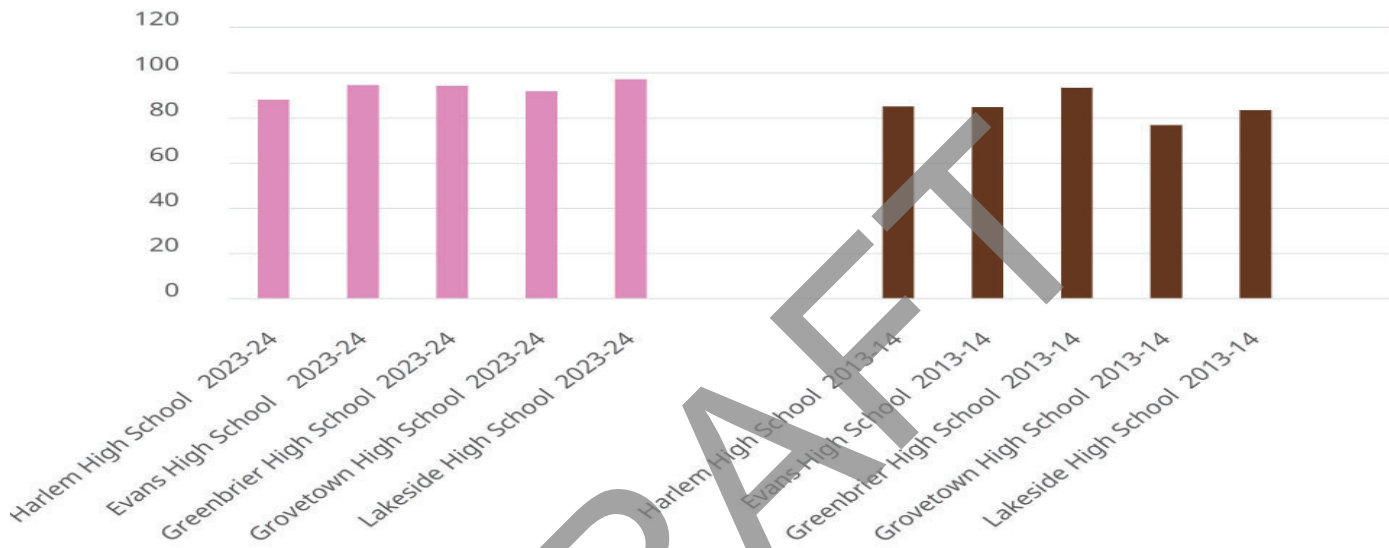
North Harlem Elementary School



Harlem Middle School



Graduation Percentage



Source: The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement

Graduation rates across Columbia County high schools have improved notably between the 2013–14 and 2023–24 school years, with gains seen at every campus. Harlem High School increased from 85.1% in 2013–14 to 88.11% in 2023–24, reflecting steady but moderate progress. Overall, the data demonstrates significant system wide improvement, narrowing performance gaps across schools and indicating strengthened instructional quality, student support, and graduation readiness throughout the district.





Transportation

Transportation is a critical piece of most residents' lives and often represents a barrier to high quality of life. Transportation infrastructure varies and can include roads, bridges, rail, trails, buses, sidewalks and bike paths, among other things.

Land use and transportation planning must coordinate to achieve a more sustainable community. This coordinated planning effort will enable the city to create places with a balance of uses, mixed uses, preserved local character, and greater access to recreation, employment, and services.

Harlem is a small community that continues to annex nearby property. It is also beginning to face development pressure and resident concerns that too much growth too fast will result in traffic congestion and a less pedestrian-friendly environment.

The information on the following pages provides an overview of Harlem's road network and regional programs, as well as alternative modes of transportation (e.g. sidewalks, trails).

Transportation

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The information on the following pages provides an overview of Harlem's road network and regional programs, as well as sidewalks and trail planning.

Road Network

Based on data from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the city, Harlem has 21.15 miles of roads. Like many jurisdictions, Harlem and its surrounding area has a variety of road types and functional classifications. These include:

- Principal Arterial,
- Minor Arterial,
- Major Collector,
- Minor Collector, and
- Local Roads

Transportation Investment Act

In 2012, the CSRA region was one of only three (3) in the state to pass the Transportation Investment Act (TIA, aka TSPLOST). The proceeds from TIA have been used to design and construct dozens of essential transportation improvements across all 13 counties in the region, either through the projects designated on the region's final project list, or through the 25% discretionary funds.

TIA represents a 1% transportation sales tax to fund regional and local transportation improvements, of which 75% of funds go to a predefined project list. Discretionary funds are used on a variety of projects, such as airports, roads, bridges, bike lanes, and pedestrian facilities. The funds can be used on any new or existing transportation projects, including operation and maintenance or as a match for state and/or federal funds. The regional TSPLOST was reauthorized in 2020 (through a vote in all 13 counties) to continue past 2033.

Transportation Investment Act

TIA 1 (2013-2022)

Total Projects: 84
Projects Under Construction: 6
Projects Completed: 78
Original Approved Budget (2011 Dollars): \$713,019,813
Total Expenditure to Date: \$439,102,832

TIA 2 (2023-2032)

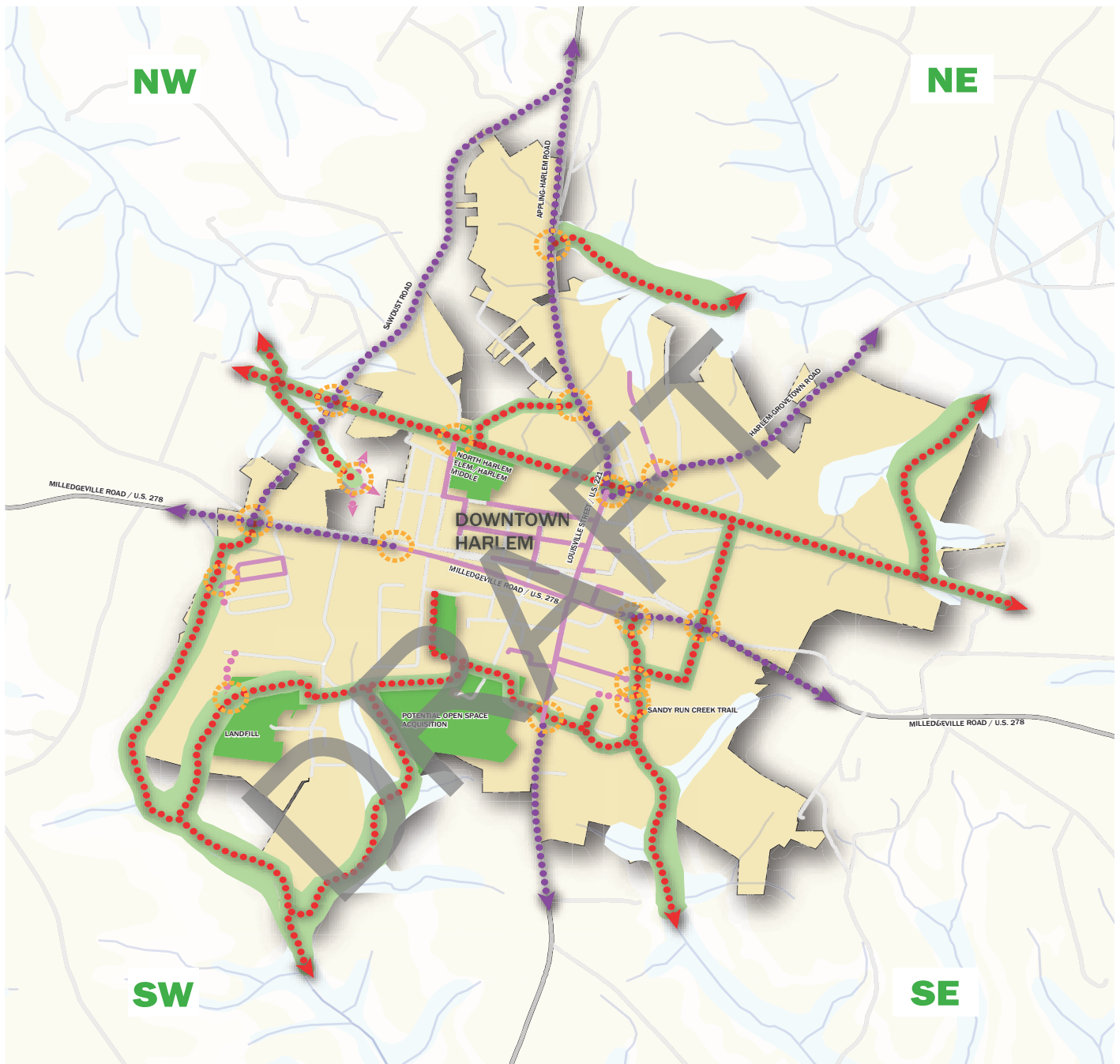
Total Projects: 162
Projects Under Construction: 43
Projects Completed: 59
Original Approved Budget (2019 Dollars): \$798,375,814
Total Expenditure to Date: \$67,907,049

Additionally, Harlem (in conjunction with Grovetown and Columbia County) has been participating in the statewide REVAMP effort (originating from the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act of 2012) to gather Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data on local roads. The regional commissions across the state are GDOT's partner in this effort. Aside from the road location, attributes on ownership, road name, operation, number of lanes, and surface type are also collected and reviewed. Additionally, GIS data on the locations of intersection traffic control devices (e.g. stop sign, traffic light), sidewalks within 1 mile of a school, pedestrian signals, and school zones will also be collected. The updated local roads layers will be utilized by GDOT and can be used locally in future mapping, fire and emergency services, Safe Routes to School, and other areas as needed.

Alternative Modes of Transportation

Currently Columbia County has no mass transit system. In addition, the City of Harlem doesn't have a comprehensive sidewalk inventory. It does however have areas covered by sidewalks in its downtown areas and nearby neighborhoods. Sidewalk quality varies. The city should focus on repair and maintenance of sidewalks, trimming back shrub obstructions to sidewalk use and then seek opportunities to expand into new areas or connect others. When considering sidewalks, several things to consider are: common destinations, community linkages, size variation and end user needs.

HARLEM GREENWAYS AND MULTI-USE TRAILS NETWORK

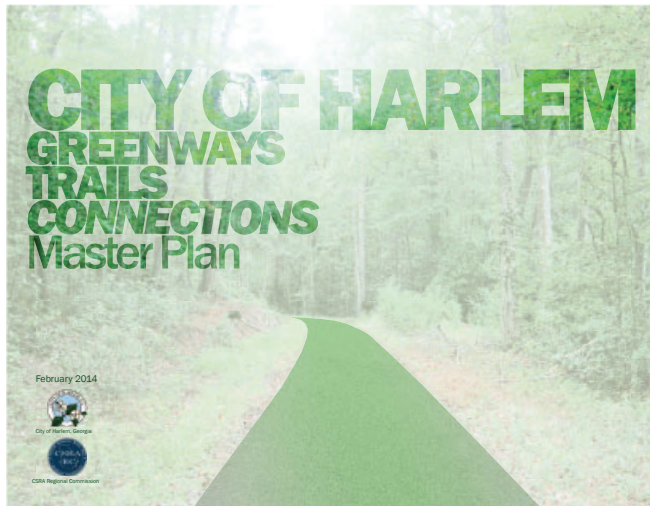


LEGEND

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| | GREENWAY | | CITY LIMITS |
| | MULTI-USE TRAIL | | PARKS/OPEN SPACE |
| | SIDE TRAIL | | FLOODPLAINS |
| | WALKWAY CONNECTION | | NETWORK CONNECTIONS |
| | EXISTING SIDEWALKS | | |



1 mile



Trail Planning

In 2014, the city of Harlem adopted the Greenways-Trails-Connections Master Plan. The plan set out a vision for a comprehensive greenways and trails system for the city. The city's intent was to create a beautiful and highly functional network that serves city residents in two equally important ways: by providing recreation and transportation opportunities. The Greenways-Trails-Connections plan arose out of goals, expressed in the city's previous comprehensive plan of improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The plan is divided into four main sections.

- Section 1: Greenways addresses the creation of a network of greenways – a “green ring” surrounding and running through the city. It discusses what is meant by the term “greenway” and outlines a long-term vision for greenway acquisition.
- Section 2: Trails focuses on the creation of a multi-use trails network. This network largely, but not exclusively, consists of trails within the envisioned greenway network. Much of it includes side trails that run alongside roads in areas where greenways are not feasible.
- Section 3: Greenways and Trails Network presents the proposed network and discusses important considerations such as construction standards, user types, access and various enhancements.
- Section 4: Implementation focuses on implementing the network, including methods of acquisition, costs and funding sources.



Land Use

The designation of land for certain uses ensures that land contained in a specific jurisdiction can provide for its current and future needs. The demographic trends, economic circumstances, and social attitudes experienced within a community can be directly influenced by how it uses and utilizes land.

The City of Harlem currently contains the following land use categories:

- Agriculture/Forestry
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Public/Institutional
- Parks & Recreational
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities
- Vacant/Undeveloped

Land Use Designations

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) "Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning" includes a list of standard land use categories. The broadly defined land use categories contained in the list establish the parameters under which each local jurisdiction should classify existing parcels. The following section provides an overview of the land use categories Harlem has opted to utilize in order to inventory current land uses.

General Residential

The general residential category includes most low-density residential housing types within the city limits including single-family detached dwellings, single-family attached dwellings, manufactured homes and multi-family dwellings.

Commercial

All land dedicated to non-industrial business uses including retail sales, offices and general services.

Industrial

Manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade, mining or mineral extraction, etc.

Public/Institutional

Government and institutional uses such as city halls, government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons and post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Also includes private facilities such as colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc. Some public facilities such as utility or recreational properties are classified in other more appropriate categories.

Transportation / Communications / Utilities

Major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, etc.

Parks / Recreation / Conservation

Land dedicated for active or passive recreational uses. These public or privately owned properties may include playgrounds, parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreations centers, etc.

Agriculture / Forestry

Land dedicated to farming such as fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc; and, large-scale agriculture operations, commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting.

Undeveloped / Vacant

Lots or tracts of land that are served by typical urban public services (water, sewer, etc.) but have not yet been developed for a specific use or were developed for a specific use that has since been abandoned.

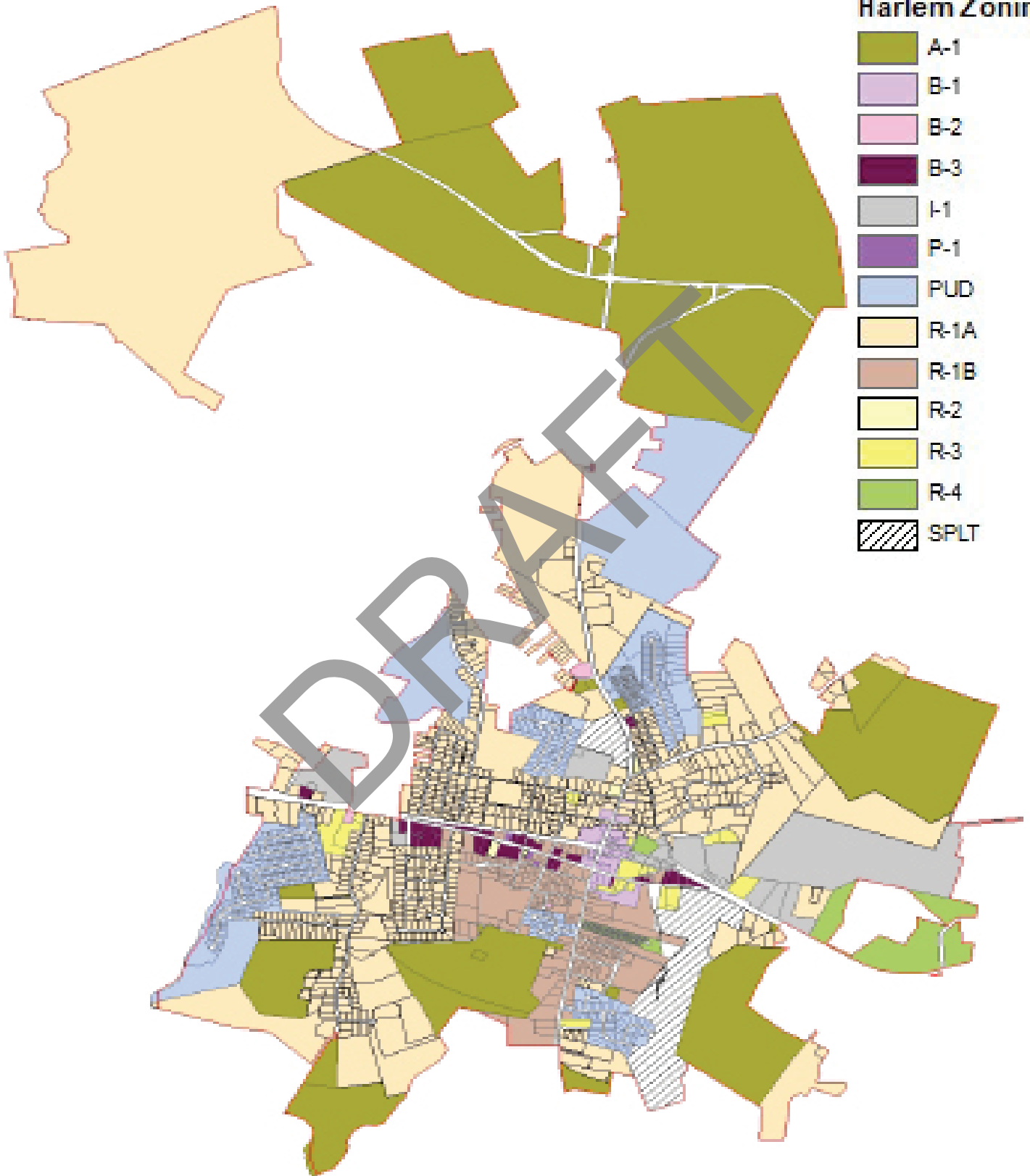
Zoning Designations

The City of Harlem adopted its city-wide zoning ordinance on April 10, 2006 for multiple purposes including the guidance of growth in accordance with the comprehensive plan.

Legend

Harlem Zoning

	A-1
	B-1
	B-2
	B-3
	I-1
	P-1
	PUD
	R-1A
	R-1B
	R-2
	R-3
	R-4
	SPLT



Zoning Designations

Agricultural District (A-1)

Establishes a large minimum lot size to maintain viable tract sizes for agriculture and timber harvesting.

Downtown Business District (B-1)

District intended to be a commercial zone to provide a wide variety of commercial and service facilities appropriate for a downtown.

Local Business District (B-2)

District intended to be a commercial zone to provide a wide variety of commercial and service facilities for neighborhoods.

General Business District (B-3)

District intended to be a commercial zone to provide a wide variety of commercial and service facilities appropriate for highways.

Industrial District (I-1)

Light industry defined as engaged in the manufacture, predominantly from previously prepared materials, of finished products or parts that takes place in a totally enclosed building.

Professional District (P-1)

District intended for professional services and their incidentals.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Established to permit greater flexibility and more creative and imaginative design for the development of residential, commercial and industrial areas than may be possible in the other zoning districts

Residential District (R-1A)

Establish a low-density, single-family residential district and to protect property in the districts from the depreciating effects of incompatible land uses.

Residential District (R-1B)

Establish a medium, single-family residential district and to protect property in the districts from the depreciating effects of incompatible land uses.

Residential District (R-2)

Establish a low-density, single-family residential district and to protect property in the districts from the depreciating effects of incompatible land uses and allow for larger structures.

Residential District (R-3)

Establish a low-density, single-family residential district and to protect property in the districts from the depreciating effects of incompatible land uses.

Residential District (R-4)

Establishes a medium density residential district which allows attached single-family residential units.

Zoning Designations

Sustainable Community Mixed Use District (MUD)

Advocates the creation and preservation of a distinct and visually harmonious community of choice that is compact, mixed-use and pedestrian friendly; and supports patterns of urbanization that are stimulating, safe and ecologically sustainable.

Conservation Preservation Residential Zone (CP-R)

Establishes the preservation of open space as a nonstructural storm water control and watershed protection measure and residential zoning district that promotes environmentally sensitive uses of the land.

As the city continues to annex property, it must consider the future use of that property and how it interacts and connects with existing uses and development patterns in the city. The continued growth also warrants closer coordination with the county on all annexation requests.

Future Development Character Areas

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Minimum Standards and Procedures require communities subject to the Georgia Zoning Procedures Law include a land use element within their comprehensive plan document. The City of Harlem, Georgia administers and enforces land use and zoning regulations requiring that the comprehensive plan include a land use element.

Locally initiated or mandated by the state, the inclusion of a land use element within a comprehensive plan document is a sound requirement as there is no other comprehensive planning element which better relates to a community's long term vision of growth, development, vitality than how land is used within the community by residents and public and private entities.

The Comprehensive Plan will be considered by governing authorities when making land use recommendations, determinations, interpretations, and decisions for the future.

Images contained in the following pages include existing conditions in the designated Character Area and aspirational examples of future development.

Character Area Map

This map and supporting narratives provide a description of preferred land use districts for varying sections of the city of Harlem.

Character Area Boundaries

Similar to a future land use map, character area boundaries are contained by parcel lines. The character area boundaries in this document represent "approximate" character area location. This flexibility allows the governing body charged with implementing the plan to make decisions based on changing conditions while reducing the need to continually amend the comprehensive plan.

Future Development Character Areas

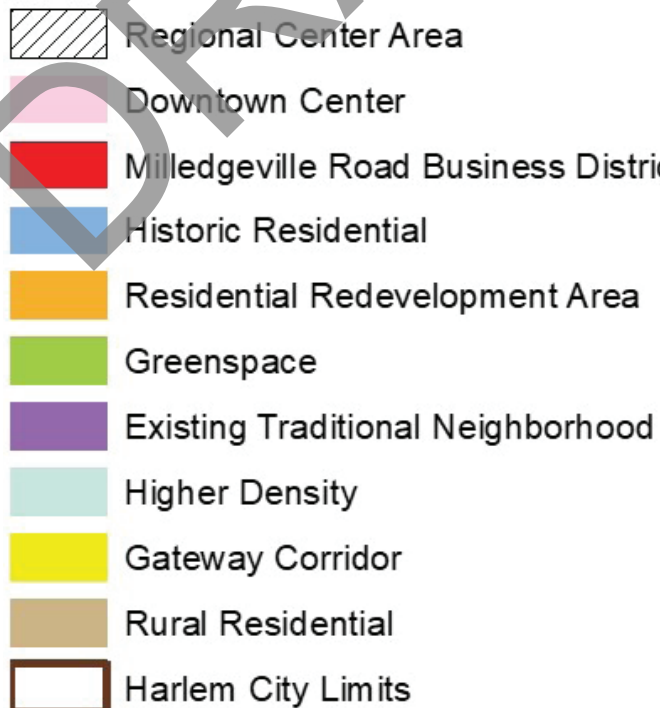
Character Area Boundaries

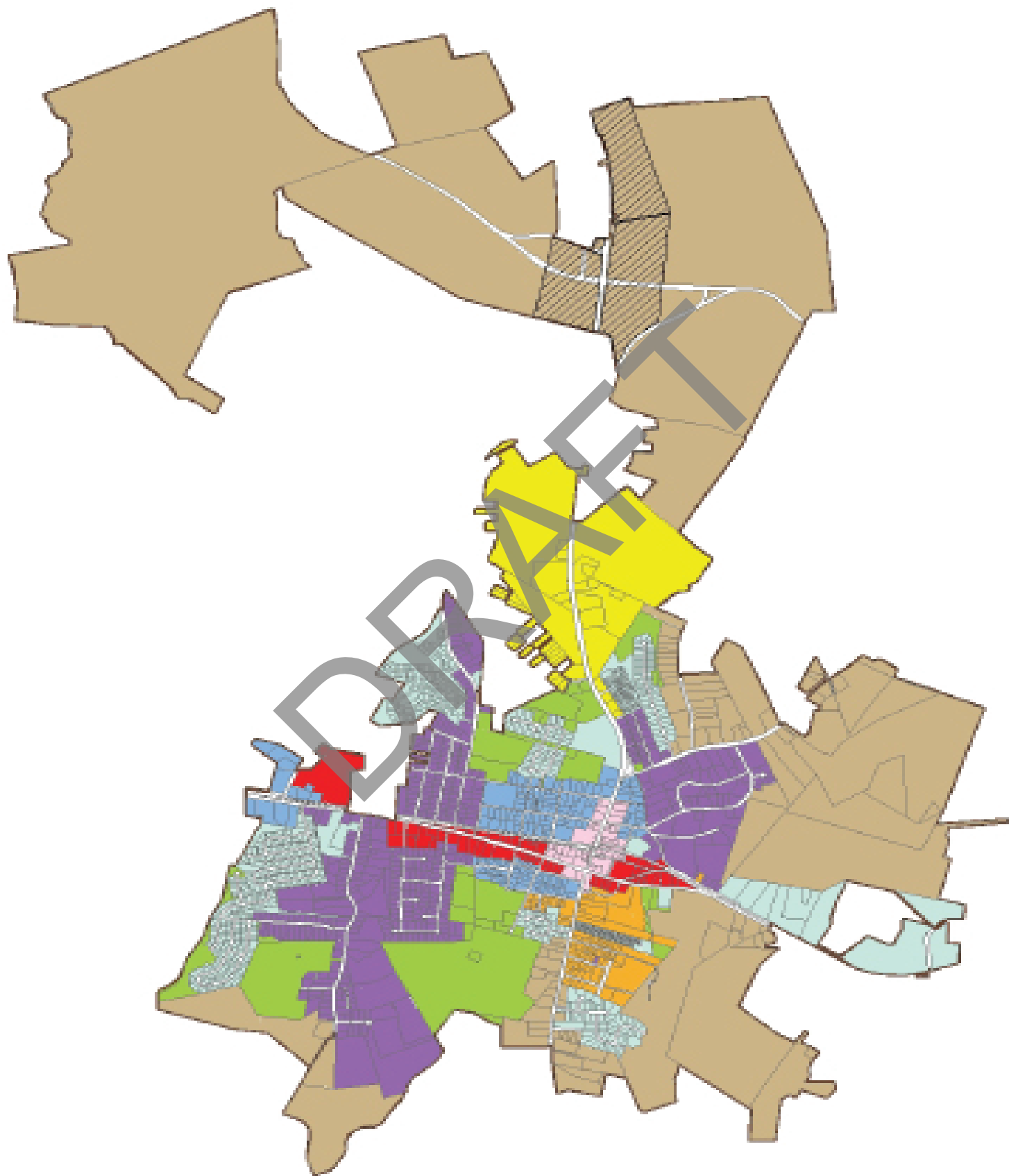
As a result, it is possible to assume that small parcels located directly adjacent to one (1) or more character areas may be permitted by the local government to develop according to the parameters of the adjacent area rather than the area in which it is located. Such an action should be taken sparingly 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 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. Each jurisdiction is strongly encouraged to initiate amendments to their Character Area Map whenever the community intends to promote a development pattern in an area that is contrary to the adopted map.

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 component of the Plan. They should inform future development decisions and perhaps form the basis for more detailed topic-specific studies in the future.

Legend





REGIONAL CENTER

Description: Concentration of regionally-marketed commercial and retail centers, office and employment areas, and other facilities. This areas is characterized by high degree of access by vehicular traffic; on-site parking; low degree of internal open space; large tracts of land, campus or unified development. It is envisioned as a transition point coming into Harlem from similar development in the county.

Primary Land Uses: Commercial | Office | Medical



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Should include relatively high-density mix of retail, office, services, and employment to serve a regional market area.
- Include a diverse mix of higher-density housing types, such as multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums, including affordable and workforce housing.
- Internal design should be very pedestrian oriented, with strong, walkable connections between different uses.
- Include direct connections to nearby networks of greenspace or trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreation purposes.
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear. Shared parking and maximum parking limits should be encouraged.
- Provide bike lanes or wide curb lanes to encourage bicycling and provide additional safety, provide conveniently located, preferably sheltered, bicycle parking at retail and office destinations and in multi-family dwellings.
- Encourage compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional character, and should not include "franchise" or "corporate" architecture.
- Particular attention should be paid to signage to prevent visual clutter. Encourage way-finding, on-site, and monument style signage.
- Buffer this area from lower density development nearby.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Description: Developed and undeveloped areas of the city intended for low to moderate density residential land uses and small-scale non-residential uses that are directly associated with and support residents. Existing housing is in fair to good condition. There is low pedestrian orientation and access, large lots, open space, pastoral views and higher degree of building separation than other areas. It's desired that this area maintain rural atmosphere while accommodating new residential or commercial development. This land likely to face development pressures for residential development. Northern areas of the city may also face commercial pressure. It is understood that these areas could see a transition to a mixture of Higher Density and Greenspace Character Areas (if greenspace resources are maintained).

Primary Land Uses: Neighborhood scale commercial | Residential Greenspace | Public/Institutional



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Permitting rural cluster or conservation subdivision design that incorporate and protect significant amounts of open space.
- Balance architectural styles that promote variety with compatible architecture styles that maintain and reflect the regional rural character; should not include "franchise" or "corporate" architecture.
- Connect to regional network of greenspace and trails, available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians for both tourism and recreational purposes.
- Design for greater pedestrian orientation and access, more character with clustering of buildings within the center, leaving open space surrounding the center.
- Create bicycle and pedestrian features that link community facilities.
- Create self-contained neighborhood parks or recreation space.
- Promote upkeep of existing residences.
- Higher density development should have direct access to high volume thoroughfares and should not be accessed via local residential streets.
- Encourage (as preferred) low to moderate density housing options (single-family, duplex, town houses).
- Establish street linkages between arterials and adjacent development tracts.
- Create collector street standards for large developments and in targeted areas.

HIGHER DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

Description: A neighborhood having relatively higher density housing development compared to historic residential and existing traditional neighborhoods. The neighborhood as relatively consistent architectural style, lot and street design, and higher rates of home-ownership. Location may also be near undeveloped property or in-fill areas in town.

Primary Land Uses: Commercial | Office | Residential Public/Institutional | Greenspace Mixed-Use (PUDs out by high school)



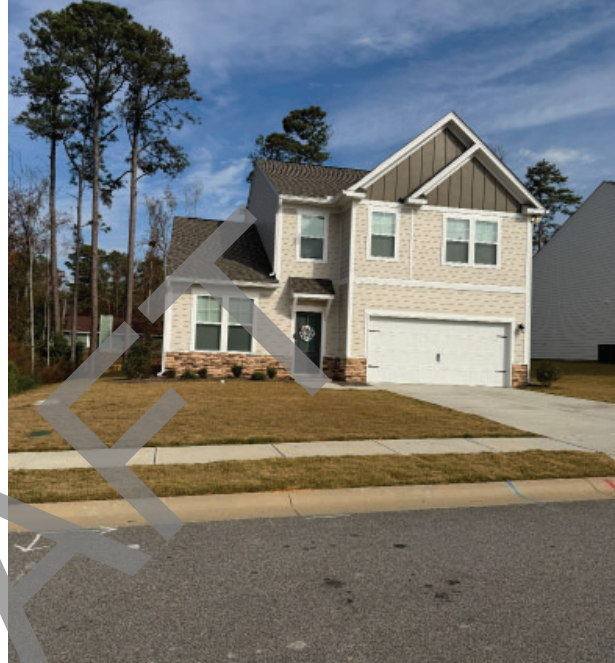
Suggested Development Strategy:

- Includes a well-designed new neighborhood activity center at appropriate location, which would provide a focal point for the neighborhood, while also providing a suitable location for neighborhood amenities, including commercial.
- Provide strong pedestrian, golf cart, and bicycle connections to encourage these residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, and recreation.
- New streets should be connected (i.e., minimize or prohibit cul-de-sacs) to disperse traffic, shorten walking/biking trips.
- Design features that encourage safe, accessible streets should be employed –such as narrower streets (where on-street parking is prohibited), on-street parking (with appropriately wide areas for fire truck access), sidewalks, street trees, and landscaped raised medians for minor collectors and wider streets.
- Smaller lot size must be compensated by additional greenspace, pocket parks, and other amenities.

GATEWAY CORRIDOR

Description: Developed or open land paralleling the route of a major thoroughfare through Harlem that serves as an important entrance or means of access on the north side of the city, leading toward downtown.

Primary Land Uses: Residential | Greenspace/Open Space



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Focus on appearance with appropriate signage, landscaping and other beautification measures.
- Manage access to keep traffic flowing; using directory/way-finding signage to clustered developments.
- Retrofit or mask existing strip development or other unsightly features as necessary.

EXISTING TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Description: A neighborhood having relatively well-maintained housing, possessing a distinct identity through architectural style, lot and street design, and higher rates of home-ownership. Location near declining areas of town may also cause this neighborhood to decline over time.

Primary Land Uses: Residential | Greenspace



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Focus on reinforcing stability by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties.
- Undeveloped properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.
- Include well-designed new neighborhood activity center at appropriate location, which would provide a focal point for the neighborhood, while also providing a suitable location for appropriately-scaled retail establishments serving neighborhood residents.
- Provide strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to encourage these residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, and recreation.
- Promote primarily single-family detached
- Design guidelines promoting some components of traditional architecture(front porches, rear garages, front door orientation, etc.) but allowing variations in building materials.
- Create additional neighborhood parks (small lots, playgrounds, community greens, etc.).
- Reserve smaller building lots for higher single-family densities than Harlem's historic neighborhoods.

HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL

Description: Residential neighborhoods containing the largest concentration of National Register eligible properties within the city of Harlem and exhibiting the best examples of New South and/or post-WWII development patterns. Infill development incorporates the development features that result in seamless transitions between historic homes and contemporary construction. The area includes a street grid, sidewalks in good condition, and a tree canopy.

Primary Land Uses: Residential | Greenspace



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Historic properties should be maintained or rehabilitated/restored according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation where possible (or as required by the NRHP). Especially focus on facades.
- New development in the area should be of scale and architectural design to fit well into the historic fabric of that area.
- Pedestrian access and open space should be provided to enhance citizen enjoyment of the area (e.g. extend the sidewalk system).
- Linkages to regional greenspace/trail system should be encouraged as well.
- Promote low-density infill –primarily single-family detached.
- Design guidelines promoting traditional architecture should be enforced.
- Incorporate traffic calming features into residential streets.
- Preserve individual trees and the tree canopy where applicable.

DOWNTOWN CENTER

Description: This is a mixed-use activity center promoting building and site design features complimentary to the historic development patterns found in the city's central business district. This includes immediately surrounding commercial, industrial, or mixed-use areas.

Historic commercial and industrial buildings are close to the street. Building vacancy is relatively low, and there's a concentration of government uses.. Opportunity for residential infill and lofts exists and can support the existing residential.

Although the streets are more pedestrian-friendly via sidewalks than other areas of town, there's opportunity for more. There's also a high volume of large vehicle traffic through the district and increasing community concerns about commuter traffic.

Primary Land Uses: Commercial | Residential |Public/Institutional Greenspace



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Include relatively high-density mix of residential, retail, office, services, restaurants and employment. This mix can occur on the same site or structure.
- Residential development should reinforce the traditional town center through a combination of rehabilitation of historic buildings and compatible new infill development targeted to a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments, lofts, and condominiums.
- Road edges should be clearly defined by locating buildings at roadside with parking in the rear.
- Enhance the pedestrian-friendly environment, by including sidewalks and creating other pedestrian-friendly trail/bike routes linking to neighborhoods and major area destinations,
- Balance the mix of traditional on-street parking with other parking on the side/rear of buildings; parking structures should be faced with retail a ground level.
- Create community focus as an "event" district.
- Create cluster of government buildings/services.
- Complementary infill - traditional architectural and orienting buildings to the street build-to-lines versus setbacks – particular focus on street-facing building facades.
- Retain facade design requirements and grant program.
- Preserve trees where possible.

MILLEDGEVILLE RD. BUSINESS DISTRICT

Description: Principal east-west arterial corridor to develop with a mixture of vehicle-oriented retail and office uses while preserving historic residential structures (some in need of repair) and promoting site design features that are complimentary to adjacent historic districts. Vacant/abandoned properties dot the district. Existing sidewalks are in fair condition, and the area contains above ground utilities.

Primary Land Uses: Commercial | Office | Industrial | Residential Institutional (churches)
| Greenspace



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Continue commercial development, including large retail and vehicle-oriented businesses.
- Include street trees and on-site tree planting requirements.
- Build new commercial structures at the street front, taking up a portion of the oversize parking lot and creating a shopping “square” around a smaller internal parking lot.
- Upgrading the appearance of existing older commercial buildings with façade improvement, new architectural elements, or awnings.
- Reconfiguring the parking lot and circulation routes for automobiles.
- Providing pedestrian and bicycling amenities, including benches, lighting, bike racks and others from the “downtown center” area.
- Adding landscaping and other appearance enhancements, trees and landscaping in parking lots to provide shade and help reduce storm water runoff.
- Consider burying the utilities.
- Allow limited light industrial uses at western and eastern edge of city limits.
- Preserve historic residential structures for office and neighborhood retail.
- Manage vehicular access via traffic control median, spacing of driveways and cross access easements.
- Develop uniform signage and remove off-premise signs.

RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

Description: Low-density residential areas of the city that are interspersed with undeveloped tracts that show signs of significant building deterioration, deteriorating infrastructure, overgrown lots and general lack of upkeep. Much of the original housing stock is in place and located on small lots. Low-density infill residential opportunities are apparent as well as opportunities for multi-family development in close proximity to existing arterial streets.

Primary Land Uses: Residential | Greenspace/Recreation



Suggested Development Strategy:

- Focus on strategic public investments to improve conditions, appropriate infill development on scattered vacant sites, and encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing properties.
- Vacant properties in the neighborhood offer an opportunity for infill development of new, architecturally compatible housing.
- The redevelopment strategy for the area should focus on preserving and rehabilitating what remains of the original housing stock, while rebuilding, on the remaining land, a new, attractive neighborhood following the principles of traditional neighborhood development.
- Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should also be provided to encourage residents to walk/bike to work, shopping, or other destinations in the area.
- New streets should be connected (i.e. minimize or prohibit cul-de-sacs) to disperse traffic, shorten walking/biking trips.
- Promote rehabilitation of sub-standard housing.
- Encourage homeownership and property owner education.
- Design guidelines for infill structures promoting traditional building form and placement (front porches, rear garages, front door orientation, etc.)
- Site design guidelines promoting traditional lot, block and street layout
- Promote mixture of housing types and densities permitted but contained within separate development tracts or sites.
- Higher density development should have direct access to high volume thoroughfares and should not be accessed via local residential streets.

GREENSPACE

Description: Undeveloped property with unique features whose long-term use is not private development.

Primarily natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development, e.g., scenic views, steep slopes, flood plains, wetlands, or watersheds,

When associated with subdivision development, an emphasis on parks with passive and active components (including playgrounds) will be emphasized.

Primary Land Uses: Undeveloped | Passive Recreation



Suggested Development Strategy.

- Not allowing any new development on that area.
- Promoting use of conservation easements in developments
- Widen roadways in these areas only when absolutely necessary.
- Carefully design the roadway alterations to minimize visual impact.
- Promote these areas as passive-use tourism and recreation destinations.
- When affiliated with a residential development, promote certain sections of these areas as parks, passive recreation, active recreation, and protected planting areas.



Natural and Cultural Resources

Natural and cultural resources can provide economic development opportunities in addition to enhancing the quality of life for a community's residents. The natural assets are vitally important as they both contribute to the character of the community and provide life-giving resources. Certain areas must be protected in order to continue to provide clean natural resources to the community.

This section provides information regarding the following natural and cultural resources within Harlem:

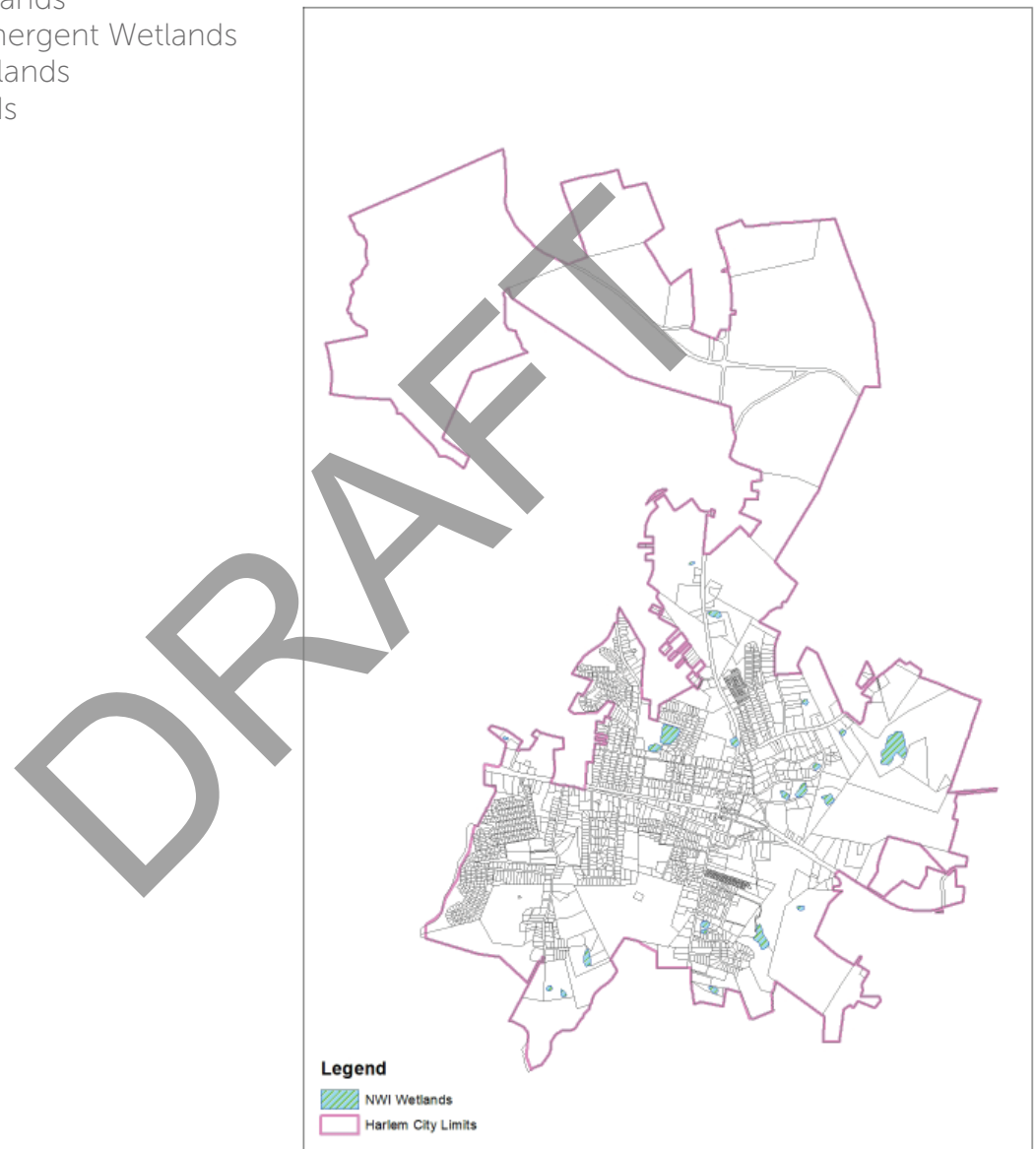
- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Soils
- Cultural Resources

Wetlands

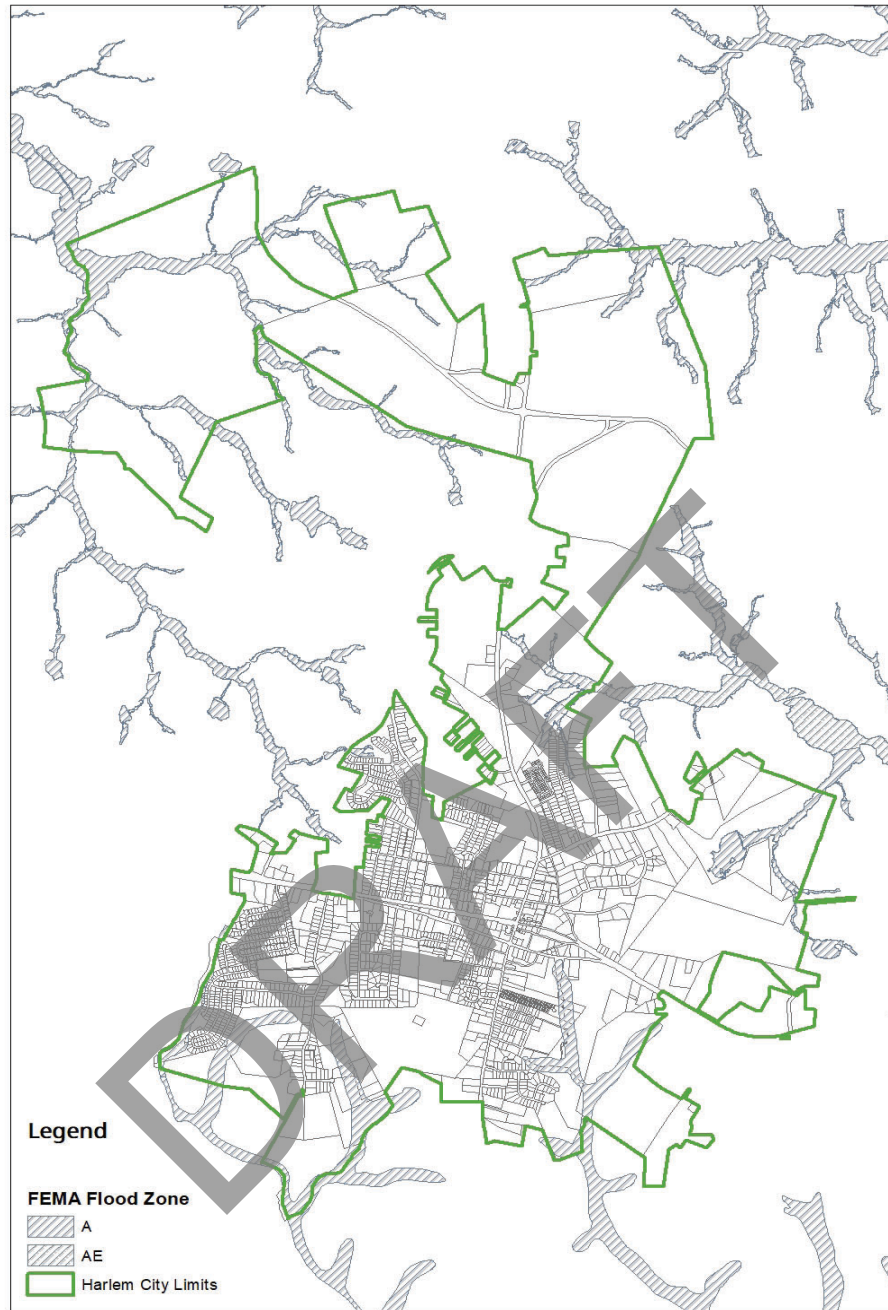
Wetlands are either saturated permanently or seasonally, which creates an ecosystem containing characteristic vegetation that adapts unique soil conditions located found in a wetland ecosystem. Wetlands serve as a habitat for fish, wildlife, and unique plant and animal species which have adapted to these special conditions.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has identified five categories of wetlands that require special protection through ordinances.

- Open Water Wetlands
- Non-Forested Emergent Wetlands
- Scrub/Shrub Wetlands
- Forested Wetlands
- Altered Wetlands



Wetlands located within the city of Harlem are illustrated in the map above. There are approximately 36 acres of wetlands in the Harlem city limits. State law restricts the activities that may be conducted in these wetland areas.



Flood Plains

Flooding can be defined as a situation in which the overflow of water submerges land that is not usually inundated with water. A flood plain zone is an area designated to store natural water and conveyance, maintain water quality, and provide for ground water recharge. Flood plain zone areas are determined by the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map. The areas identified on the map above are the 100 year flood plain zone.

Soils

Harlem is primarily located within the northern extent of the Carolina and Georgia Sand Hills Major Land Resource Area (MLRA). A small portion of the city of Harlem is located in the Southern Piedmont MLRA.

The Cecil-Madison-Pacolet soil association is found within those portions of Harlem that are located in the SP-MLRA. This association consists of deep well-drained soils that are formed in felsic, igneous and metamorphic rocks. Surface layers consist principally of gravelly sandy loam.

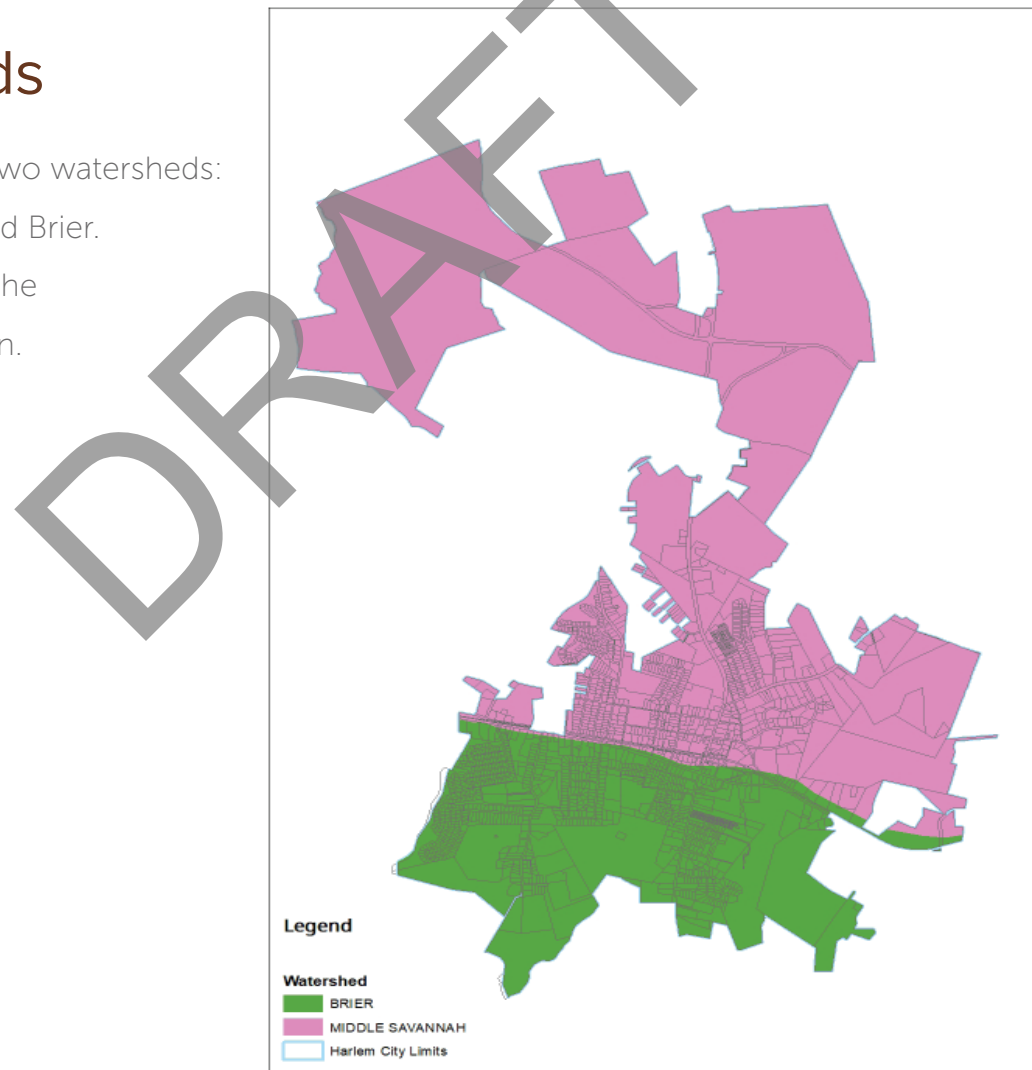
The primary soil type in Harlem is Wagram-Troup-Norfolk. This series -belonging to the dominate soil type Paleudalut - is common in the Carolina and GSH-MLRA. Wagram-Troup-Norfolk soils are well-drained, smooth and convex; and, are located on very gently sloping ridge tops and hillsides of the MLRA. The soils have a brownish, sandy surface layer and a predominately brownish or yellowish, loamy subsoil. This soil is good for urban types of development, although soils that have a thick sandy surface and subsurface have limited sanitary facility usage.

Watersheds

Harlem is a part of two watersheds:

Middle Savannah and Brier.

These are a part of the Savannah River Basin.



Cultural Resources

Harlem has a significant number of historic sites, structures, objects, and buildings which either have national or local cultural significance and can be touted as cultural resources.

The City of Harlem is designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG) that gives protection to historic properties and their environment in a federal, state, and local partnership program. The City has adopted an historic preservation ordinance, appointed an historic preservation commission (HPC), and approved three locally designated districts for design review within their boundaries. Before an owner can apply for a building permit where changes to the property will be made within a local historic district, the historic preservation commission must review and approve the plans with a certificate of appropriateness. The owner may then get the building permit and the historic resource and its environment will be preserved.

Significant Resources in Harlem

Rural

- W.L Phillips House, 4753 S. Louisville Street

Residential

- Neoclassical Revival style house, 360 N. Louisville Street (Creech-Riley)
- Folk Victorian style cottage, 365 N. Louisville Street (Emily Middleton)
- Barnsley-Wood House, 425 N. Louisville Street
- Dr. John Luther Weeks House, 410 N. Louisville Street
- Folk Victorian style house, 140 W. Forrest Street (Shepherd House)
- Vance Verdery House, 180 W. Forrest Street
- Lazenby-Larkin House, 240 W. Forrest Street

- #1&2 W. Forrest Street Apartments (concrete block)
- #3&4 W. Forrest Street Apartments (concrete block)
- #5&6 W. Forrest Street Apartments (concrete block)
- #7 W. Forrest Street Apartments

- Wayne McGahee House, 295 W. Forrest Street
- Side Hallway Cottage, 315 W. Forrest Street
- Phillips-Conner House, 420 W. Forrest Street
- Tracey House, 465 W. Forrest Street

- Luckey House, 165 W. Trippe Street



Significant Resources in Harlem

Residential

- Lazenby-Larkin House, 240 W. Forrest Street
- L.M. Conner House, 280 W. Trippe Street (Cinderella House)
- Newnan Hicks House/Hicks Hotel, 170 N. Hicks Street (Riley House)
- Clary-Little House, 250 N. Hicks Street
- Walsh House, 280 N. Hicks Street
- Revell House, 310 N. Hicks Street
- Mayor E.D. Clary House, 320 N. Hicks Street
- Dr. Paschal House, 380 N. Hicks Street
- Hubert-Hannah House, 135 S. Hicks Street
- Lampkin House, 145 S. Hicks Street
- Phillips House, 155 S. Hicks Street
- Lazenby House, 340 N. Bell Street
- Larkin House, 320 N. Bell Street
- Wall House, 260 N. Bell Street
- Cleve Harrison House, 180 Milledgeville Road
- 235 Milledgeville Road, Old Methodist Parsonage
- Tilby-Hoffman House, 250 Milledgeville Road
- Neoclassical Revival style cottage (Dr. King), Milledgeville Rd.
- Neoclassical Revival style house, 435 Milledgeville Road
- Craftsman style Georgian cottage, N. Hicks Street Extension
- 355 S. Louisville Street
- 420 S. Louisville Street
- 430 S. Louisville Street
- 140 Stone Street
- 165 Stone Street



- Hatcher-Turner House, 160 W. Trippe Street



Commercial

- Masonic Lodge/Commercial Bldg, 160/172 N. Louisville St.

Significant Resources in Harlem

- Harlem Hardware & Furniture Co., Verdery Street
- Warehouse, 129 New Street
- Sawdust Community Store, County Line/Sawdust Road



Industrial

- Thomson Company, 305 Milledgeville Road
- Verdery Building, grocery/hardware (metal building)

Institutional

- Harlem Methodist Church, Milledgeville Road
- Harlem Baptist Church, Milledgeville Road



- Mt. Tabor Baptist Church, Milledgeville Road (Sawdust)

- New Holt Church, Verdery Street
- George T. White Academy (Rosenwald School)
- Auditorium at Middle School, 1927 (bricked over)

Significant Resources in Harlem

Transportation

- Auto Dealership, Milledgeville/N. Louisville Street

Community Landmark

- Columbia Theater, 135 N. Louisville Street

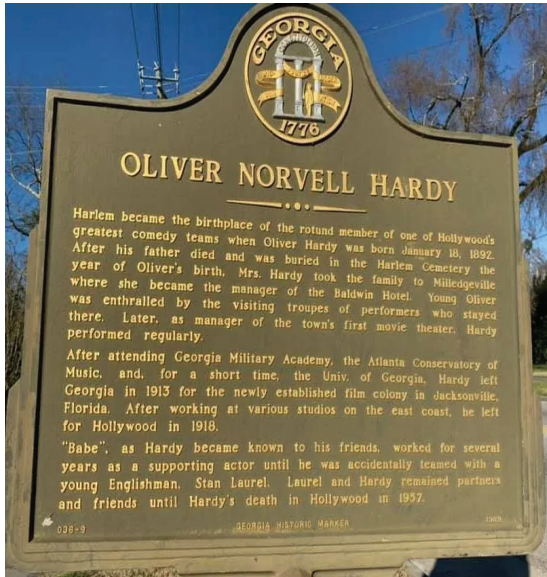


- Harlem Women's Club, 170 Milledgeville Road (concrete block)
- Oliver-Hardy Festival Museum
- City of Harlem center marker on grounds of First Baptist Church
- Gazebo at Women's Club



- Georgia Historical Marker, Indian Trail (on way to Tobacco Road)

Significant Resources in Harlem



- Georgia Historical Marker, Oliver Hardy birth site



- Gazebo at Harlem Memorial Cemetery near Oliver Hardy's grave



Broadband Services

Access to high speed Internet (broadband) is an important part of life today. Broadband enables greater connectivity and expands possibilities for individuals and families to improve their quality of life. Broadband touches the lives of citizens of all ages and backgrounds - including students in the classroom, professionals providing telemedicine or streaming online training, residents using library computers, and more.

This section of the plan provides an overview of broadband, the ACE Act, and the state of local connectivity.

What is Broadband

Broadband is high speed Internet. The FCC currently defines high speed Internet access as download speeds of at least 25 Mbps and upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps. Mbps is megabits per second. These minimum upload and download speeds are essential to quality of service for end user customers. The goal in many communities may be terrestrial service, but mobile or satellite may be the only option.

Different technologies:

- Fiber optic cable - buried underground and transmits data over light through glass or plastic; Columbia County has an extensive fiber network and operates a broadband utility.
- Coax Cable - copper-based infrastructure deployed by cable TV and telephone broadband providers; is described as durable and the dominant technology for residential broadband service. It involves wireless devices or systems providing service in fixed locations.
- DSL - copper-based and offered over traditional telephone networks. They are not as rapid as other technologies and may degrade over distance.
- Wireless is fixed where the wireless systems provide service in fixed locations. Mobile wireless consists of cellular networks that deliver service to mobile end-users. Satellite wireless utilizes geostationary satellites that provide service in low density locations. Lastly, microwave wireless uses mid-to-high frequency signals to deliver service between line-of-sight locations.

The ACE Act

In 2018, the Georgia General Assembly passed "Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act" (Senate Bill 402). Provisions in the Act include:

- Requires that each local government in the state incorporate a "Broadband Services Element" into its local comprehensive plan.
- Enables local governments to take advantage of applying for financial incentives (such as grants) for broadband services, if they meet certain criteria.
- Enables the Georgia Department of Transportation to use interstate highway rights-of-way for deployment of broadband services and other emerging communications technologies.
- Enables a political subdivision that has a comprehensive plan that includes the promotion of the deployment of broadband services to the Department of Community Affairs for certification as a broadband ready community.

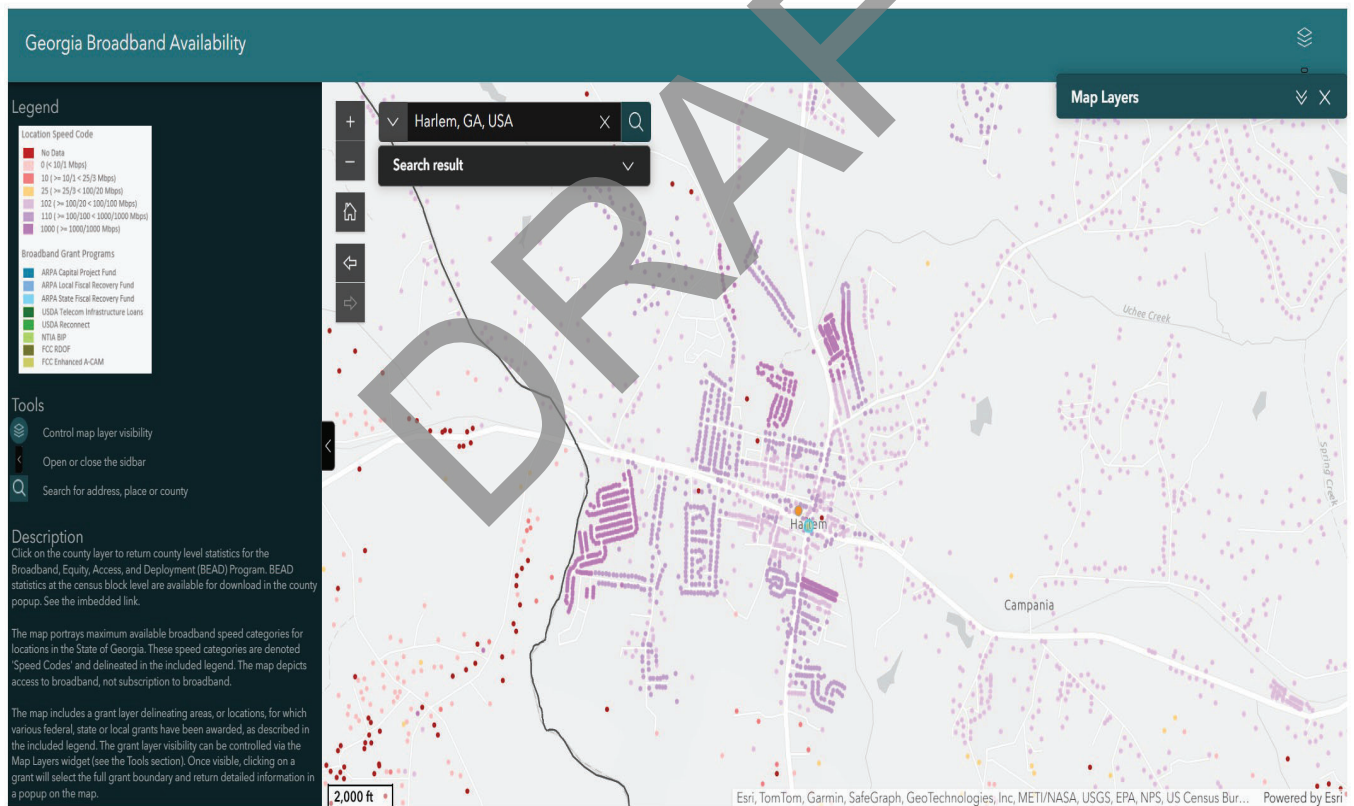
The role of state agencies:

- The OneGeorgia Authority - the OneGeorgia Authority Act will be amended to include broadband services.

The ACE Act

- The Georgia Technology Authority - developing a state-wide broadband services deployment plan, they will work with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the OneGeorgia Authority to establish grant programs, designation programs, and other programs to promote the deployment of broadband services.
- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs - determine and publish which areas in the state are served and unserved; development and deployment of the Broadband Ready certification program. A served area means a census block that is not designated by DCA as an unserved area. 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.

2025 Georgia Broadband Availability Map



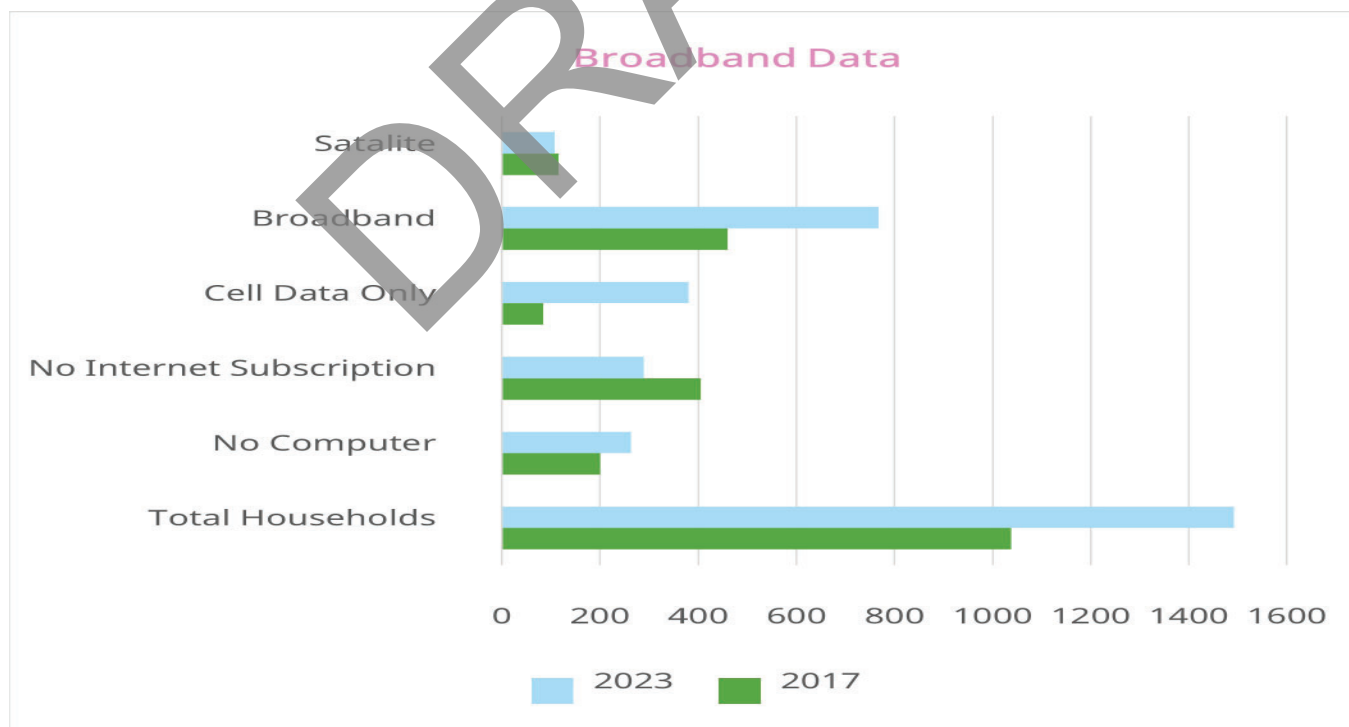
Technology Access

Between 2017 and 2023, Harlem saw a substantial increase in total households—from 1,038 to 1,492—and this growth was accompanied by major shifts in how residents access technology and the internet. While the number of households without a computer rose slightly (from 201 to 263), this change reflects overall household growth rather than a declining share of access.

The most significant improvements occurred in internet connectivity. Households lacking any internet subscription fell from 405 to 289, indicating that overall digital inclusion has improved despite rapid population growth. Broadband adoption, in particular, increased sharply: broadband-connected households grew from 459 to 767, suggesting expanded service availability and a strong community shift toward higher-speed, more reliable connections.

At the same time, Harlem experienced a notable rise in households relying on cell-data-only service, which increased from 85 to 380 households. This trend may reflect affordability considerations, limited wired options in some neighborhoods, or changing consumer preferences as mobile connectivity becomes more capable. Satellite internet use remained relatively stable (116 to 108), indicating that while it remains an option for some households, it is no longer a primary access method as improved broadband infrastructure becomes available.

Overall, Harlem’s technology landscape is becoming more connected and digitally capable, but the persistence of households without computers and the growing reliance on cell-only internet highlight the need for continued investment in affordable broadband, device access, and digital literacy programs. These improvements will ensure that all residents can fully participate in education, workforce, and civic opportunities.



Source: ACS 2023 - 5 Year Estimate





Report of Accomplishments

The Report of Accomplishments reviews the current status of activities. The list of projects from the 2021-2026 Community Work Program (CWP) has been evaluated and assigned the following identifiers to acknowledge the status of each project as:

- Completed: The listed project has concluded.
- Ongoing: The listed project has started and is continuing.
- Postponed: The listed project has not been started or halted for some reason.
- Not Accomplished: The listed project has not and will not moved forward.

Economic Development

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Undertake an active marketing of available property within the URA service area.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Secure DCA Redevelopment Funds for a portion of San Saba Pecan building redevelopment.				X	The current owner is not interested.
Find one or more long-term tenants for the San Saba Pecan building.	X				
New Street redevelopment: relocation of some city services and mixed use infill		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP. Public works shop is being reloacted to Campbells Way.
Discuss installation, contractor and resident needs with Fort Gordon to aid in local business recruitment.				X	
Recruit additional daycare facilities to the city.				X	

Housing

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Update the existing/outdated housing needs assessment for all housing within the city limits.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Review housing development trends for potential impacts on Harlem quality of life goals.	X				

Housing					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Continue to cooperate with the Harlem City Council for intergovernmental agreements for housing development.				X	
Reinstate local GA Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) committee.				X	No interest in reinstating the GICH committee at this time.
Apply for and utilize state and federal funding to assist residents throughout the city with housing rehabilitation and building code updates.				X	No interest in applying for state and federal funds for housing rehabilitation at this time.
Apply for and utilize CHIP funds to create and sell infill housing and establish a revolving loan fund for neighborhood revitalization.				X	No interest in applying for CHIP funds for infill housing at this time.
Create design guidelines for new residential development providing requirements for developers to create quality new residential housing units within the city.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Community Facilities					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Create temporary way-finding visuals on downtown buildings.				X	As of 2025, no interest from merchants in undergoing this project.
Increase signage within the city to direct residents and visitors to parks and greenspaces within the city through Columbia County's signage program.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP as Increase signage within the city or direct residents and visitors to parks and greenspaces within the city.

Community Facilities

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Expand the wastewater treatment plant from 250k GPD to 750k GPD.				X	System was sold to Columbia County.
Create a Veteran's Memorial to pay tribute to those in Harlem that have served in the military.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Improve storm-water drainage on Verdery Street.	X				
Improve storm-water drainage on North Bell St., West Trippe St., West Boundary St., and others nearby.			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Replace water lines along Highway 78.				X	System was sold to Columbia County.
Upgrade water meters throughout the city.				X	System was sold to Columbia County.
Purchase additional vehicles for Public Works Department.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Hire additional Public Works staff.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Clary Cut Road / Old Union Road Development Improvements: 750,000 gallon water tank, abandonment of Harlem High School sewer pump station, establishment of new drainage basin sewer pump station, expansion of Harlem Sewer Treatment Plant to 1,125,000 gpd capacity, and new sewer force mains.				X	System was sold to Columbia County.

Community Facilities

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Apply for and utilize grant funds for water, sewer, flood and drainage, and roadway improvements in CDBG-eligible areas.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Construct a new Public Works shop.		X			Construction is underway and will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Purchase an additional fire engine utilizing assistance to firefighters grants.	X				
Hire an additional full-time firefighter.	X				
Develop a plan for addressing ADA concerns on existing sidewalks, such as overgrown bushes.	X				
Construct a new fire station #3 at Harlem High School.				X	Is not needed at this time.
Parcel 030 069 Development Lift Station.					System was sold to Columbia County.
Parcel 030 040 Development Lift Station.					System was sold to Columbia County.
Parcel 031 036 Development Lift Station.					System was sold to Columbia County.
Upgrade Lift Station "A" (Evans St. area).					System was sold to Columbia County.
Upgrade Lift Station "B" and "C" (Independence Village & Harlem-Grovetown Rd areas).					System was sold to Columbia County.

Community Facilities

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Upgrade Lift Station "D" and "H" (Lampkin Rd. area).				X	System was sold to Columbia County.
Work with the elementary school to reopen the walking track located there.	X				

Transportation

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Resurface state route GA47. The project limits begin at the curb and gutter north of Harlem-Grovetown Road and extend to the McDuffie County line.	X				
Resurface state route GA10. The project limits begin at the Richmond County line and extend to the McDuffie County line).	X				
Adopt and publicize a city golf cart plan.				X	Golf cart plan has been postponed indefinitely due to state route crossings.
Extend or create golf cart paths based on priority.				X	Postponed due to conflicts with GDOT
Create golf cart crossings and pedestrian flashers on N. Louisville Rd and W. Milledgeville Rd.				X	Postponed due to conflicts with GDOT
Update city sidewalk inventory.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Create a sidewalk addition plan, including information on different size sidewalks, locations, and cost estimates.	X				Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP as repairing damaged sidewalks around Harlem.

Transportation					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Install new sidewalks along North and South Hicks Street, West Forrest Street, and Fairview Drive to accommodate students going to the elementary school.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Repair or resurface the following streets: Oliver Hardy Court, Knox Road, S. Fairview Drive, and Shady Grove Drive.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP as Repair or resurface the following streets: S. Fairview Drive and Shady Grove Drive.
Update the Harlem Greenways, Trails, & Connections Master Plan.			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP, it was postponed due to limited staff and other high priority projects.
Land Use					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Complete a revision of the current, recently codified Land Use Ordinance.	X				
Research and modify residential street width and driveway length requirements to support emergency vehicle access and automobile parking.	X				
Establish an annexation policy.				X	Not needed at this time. Currently use the state guidance and regulations.
Revise land development regulations to require implementation of the city's Greenways Trails Connections Master Plan into all zoning districts (e.g. requiring new development to include trails/sidewalks).	X				

Land Use					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Integrate "commuter route" development into the land development code and development plans.				X	There have been discussions, but no decision was made.
Develop and adopt a tree protection ordinance.			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Update the Harlem City Center Plan.			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Conduct a design charette for Milledgeville Road and Louisville Street.				X	No interest at this time.
Review ordinances for short-term rentals and update if needed.	X				
Participate in Fort Gordon compatible use implementation efforts.	X				
Natural and Cultural Resources					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Complete Phase 1 of the Sandy Run walking trail.	X				
Complete Phase 2 of the Sandy Run walking trail.			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Create a community park or dog park on vacant parcel located at the corner of Harlem-Grovetown Road and East Boundary Street.				X	No interest at this time.
Apply for updated Historic Resources Survey via CLG grant.				X	No interest at this time.
Update the Historic Resources Survey.				X	No interest at this time.
Nominate buildings for the National Register of Historic Places.				X	No interest at this time.
Inventory and assemble land within the city limits that would be appropriate for new pocket parks and small playgrounds.	X				
Develop a Historic Harlem walking tour.	X				
Promote Harlem historic properties as film locations to the Columbia County Development Authority (HPC).		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Work to develop financial assistance programs available to historic structures in distress.				X	
Develop a cost-sharing historic properties recognition plaque program (HPC)			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Pursue funding for gateway entrances landscape beautification.	X				

Broadband					
Project	Completed	Ongoing	Postponed	Not Accomplished	Comments
Adopt the DCA broadband model ordinance or local equivalent.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Apply for DCA Broadband Ready designation.		X			Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Add to or improve Wi-Fi hotspot access at public facilities such as city hall, city library and city parks.	X				
Work with Columbia County broadband office to improve access for city residents and businesses.	X				
Require new development to provide broadband infrastructure.			X		Will appear in the 2026-2031 CWP.
Survey properties within the URA Service Area for fiber optic service and coordinate an installation plan.	X				

 *Oliver Hardy Ct.*

 *Harlem Grovetown Rd.*



ESTABLISHED
1870
CITY OF HARLEM

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WILLIAM AR
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Community Work Program

The Harlem Comprehensive Plan's Community Work Program section establishes the priority activities the government, commissions, and / or other vested or partnering agencies will undertake over the next five years.

This Community Work Program is the principal implementation tool for addressing the "Needs and Opportunities" identified during this planning process and listed elsewhere within this document. Designed with local participants to guide and prioritize activities the work program is structured to adhere to the minimum state comprehensive planning standards administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

Consistent with state rules this work program includes the following:

- A brief description of activity
- Time-frame for undertaking each activity
- The responsible party for implementing the activity
- Estimated cost of implementing the activity
- Funding source where applicable

Economic Development								
Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Undertake an active marketing of available property within the URA service area.		X				City, URA	Staff Time	Local Funds
New Street redevelopment: relocation of some city services and mixed use infill.		X	X			City, URA, Private Sector	TBD	Local Funds
Housing								
Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Update the existing/outdated housing needs assessment for all housing within the city limits.			X			City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Create design guidelines for new residential development providing requirements for developers to create quality new residential housing units within the city.				X	X	City, CSRA RC, Private Sector	TBD	Local Funds SPLOST
Community Facilities								
Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Increase signage within the city to direct residents and visitors to parks and greenspaces within the city through Columbia County's signage program.	X	X	X	X	X	City	TBD	Local Funds SPLOST

Community Facilities

Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Create a Veteran's Memorial to pay tribute to those in Harlem that have served in the military.			X	X		City	\$150,000	Local Funds
Improve storm-water drainage on North Bell St., West Tripp St., West Boundary St., and others nearby.		X	X	X		City	\$60,000	Local Funds, FEMA Grants
Purchase additional vehicles for Public Works Department.	X	X	X	X	X	City	TBD	Local Funds
Hire additional Public Works staff.	X	X				City	TBD	Local Funds
Apply for and utilize grant funds for water, sewer, flood and drainage, and roadway improvements in CDBG-eligible areas.	X	X	X	X	X	City, CSRA RC	\$1 Million	CDBG
Construct a new Public Works shop.	X	X				City	\$1 Million	Local Funds
Complete Phase 1 at the City Park (upgrade of the Facilities Building and the addition of updated and accessible playground equipment, two additional picnic pavilions and the repaving of the walking trail and roadway).	X					City	\$	Local Funds
Complete Phase 2 and Phase 3 at the City Park (upgrades to the ballfields, tennis courts, basketball court, and the addition of some pickleball courts, and additional parking).			X	X	X	City	TBD	Local Funds
Complete Phase 1 at the New City Park (Facilities building, playground area, splash pad area, sidewalk, and roadway paving).	X	X				City	TBD	Local Funds
Complete Phase 2 and Phase 3 at the New City Park (picnic pavilions, gazebo, Veteran's memorial, and a possible disc golf course)			X	X	X	City	TBD	Local Funds

Transportation								
Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Update city sidewalk inventory.		X	X			City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Install new sidewalks along North and South Hicks Street, West Forrest Street, and Fairview Drive to accommodate students going to the elementary school.		X	X			City	TBD	Local Funds
Repair or resurface the following streets: S. Fairview Drive and Shady Grove Drive.	X	X	X	X	X	City	TBD	Local Funds, LMIG, TSPLOST
Update the Harlem Greenways, Trails, & Connections Master Plan.		X	X	X		City, CSRA-RC	\$25,000	Local Funds, Grants
Land Use								
Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Develop and adopt a tree protection ordinance.			X			City	\$5,000	Local Funds
Update the Harlem City Center Plan.			X			URA	\$25,000	Local Funds

Natural and Cultural Resources

Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Promote Harlem historic properties as film locations to the Columbia County Development Authority (HPC).	X	X	X	X	X	City	TBD	Local Funds,
Develop a cost-sharing historic properties recognition plaque program (HPC).	X	X	X	X	X	City	\$1,000 yearly	Local Funds, Non-profit
Certified Local Government Grant (CLG) through DCA/Historic Preservation Division		X	X	X		City	\$30,000	Local Funds, CLG Funds

Broadband

Project	Timeframe					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030			
Adopt the DCA broadband model ordinance or local equivalent.		X	X			City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Apply for DCA Broadband Ready designation.		X	X			City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Require new development to provide broadband infrastructure.	X	X	X	X	X	City (Planning and Zoning)	\$5,000 and Legal Fees	Local Funds

DRINK
Coca-Cola

KING-SIZE

THE OLD MASONIC BUILDING