

HANCOCK COUNTY
GEORGIA

**JOINT
COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN UPDATE
2026 - 2031**



CITY OF SPARTA

PREPARED FOR:

The Chairman and County Board of Commissioners
Hancock County, Georgia
Adopted:

The Mayor and City Council
City of Sparta, Georgia
Adopted:

PREPARED BY:



3626 Walton Way Extension
Suite 1
Augusta, Georgia 30909

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

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CSRA REGION



HANCOCK COUNTY



INTRODUCTION

The Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan is the official document for the county and the city of Sparta. This document serves to:

- Outline a desired future
- Provide a guide for how to achieve that future
- Formulate a coordinated long-term plan

The comprehensive plan coordinates areas of significance in economic development, housing, community facilities, cultural/ natural resources and land use in a guide for:

- Protecting and preserving future land needs
- Assuring adequate public facilities and services
- Protecting existing and future public investment
- Protecting the environment
- Reflecting public values

The Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2026 represents the communities' shared long-term goals and individualized short-term activities for the future. It is a blueprint for creating the type of community residents want to see and companies want to work with in the coming decades.

In preparing this plan, Hancock County recognizes that there are a number of assets that can be marketed to attract growth and that there also exists the opportunity to develop mechanisms that will shape future development in a manner that does not compromise the community's historic identity or rural quality of life.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide the local elected officials of Hancock County with a tool to manage and guide the future growth of the county through the year 2031. The plan also represents the County's participation in the statewide coordinated planning program created by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. The plan, which meets the "Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning" established by the Act, is intended to provide guidelines that the County and its municipalities can follow when making decisions about providing future public facilities and services. The plan should also guide local government decision-making regarding economic development, environmental protection, housing, facility provision and future land use.

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

The Comprehensive Plan document is used in conjunction with the County Service Delivery Strategy document.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Hancock County was created in 1793 as Georgia's 15th County, and the City of Sparta was chartered in 1805. Hancock County was originally part of Greene and Washington Counties, and was named for John Hancock, the first signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Major Charles Abercrombie, a Revolutionary War soldier was granted extensive land grants and from his land, he "laid out the lots" for the City of Sparta, including the "public lots" for the courthouse and the square. Four Georgia governors have hailed from Hancock County: William Rabun, James McDonald, Nathaniel Harris, and William Northern. Hancock County has a total area of 479 square miles, 472 is land and 6.8 is water.

Hancock County boasts over 600 historic sites and structures. Native Americans lived in what is now Hancock County.

Hancock County is committed to embracing its history. Efforts include the DREAM Streets Sparta program- formed by the Historic Preservation Commission to revitalize, preserve, and grow the City of Sparta.



COUNTY SNAPSHOT

Total Population



8,650

Poverty Rate



30.6%

Bachelors Degree



10.3%

Median Gross Rent



\$938

Median Household Income



\$40,082

Residents Without Health Coverage



9.8%

Median Age



47.3

Employment Rate



28.2%

Total Housing Units



4,971

PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT




WHAT IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that guides the future growth of Hancock County. It is designed to facilitate a coordinated planning program that ultimately leads to desired future social and economic outcomes for all its jurisdictions. It serves as a guide to both the public and private sector, providing guidance on items such as land development, housing improvements, economic development, cultural/environmental protection, and provision of community services and facilities. The comprehensive plan is a document encourages consistency and coherence in county and municipal policies.

HOW TO USE THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

This comprehensive plan is a guide for action and is intended to serve as a reference for potential users. A member of the City Council, Board of Commissioners or government staff should refer to this plan's policies when deciding on the approval of a rezoning or location of new development. Companion planning documents should be used in conjunction with the comprehensive plan. These include but are not limited to the CSRA Regional Plan, the County Solid Waste Management Plan, the comprehensive and solid waste plans of other nearby jurisdictions, the Regional Water Plan, the CSRA Regionally Important Resource Plan, and other local and state regulatory documents (e.g. zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations).



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPONENTS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPONENTS

The CSRA-RC is the county's selected planning coordinator for the Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2026-2031. This document has been prepared to exceed the minimum requirements of Georgia DCA's Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning (effective October 2018). The 2026 Comprehensive Plan includes the following state-required and elective components:

COMMUNITY GOALS | NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES | REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS
COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM | PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | LAND USE | HOUSING | BROADBAND SERVICES
NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES | COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

All state required comprehensive planning components and additional elective elements listed are distributed throughout the Hancock County Comprehensive Plan in various chapters and appendix.

SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

The state of Georgia's "Service Delivery Strategy Act" (O.C.G.A 36-70) was adopted in 1997 by the Georgia General Assembly. It required all Georgia counties and incorporated municipalities to adopt a joint "service delivery strategy" document by July 1, 1990. The service delivery strategy document is an action plan supported by appropriate ordinances and intergovernmental agreements, for providing local government services and resolving land use conflicts within a county.

The purpose of this Act - and the service delivery strategy document - is for local governments to examine public services, identify overlaps or gaps in service provisions, and develop a better approach to allocating the delivery and funding of these services among local governments and other authorities within each county. The Hancock County joint service delivery strategy document will be reviewed and updated in coordination with this comprehensive planning effort.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

01. FIRST REQUIRED PUBLIC HEARING

Briefs the public on the process and describes opportunities to participate.

06. REGIONAL COMMISSION AND & DCA REVIEW

Includes CSRA-RC review for potential conflicts and DCA review for statute compliance.

02. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Includes data collection and analysis; includes opportunities for involvement from stakeholders and community members.

07. REPORT OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Is transmitted within 40 days after submittal.

03. SECOND PUBLIC HEARING

Provides an opportunity for comment on the publicly available draft plan and notifies the public of plan submittal for official review.

08. PLAN REVISIONS

May be made to the plan to meet state requirements or address comments from interested parties.

04. SUBMITTAL OF DRAFT PLAN FOR REVIEW

Requires a formal letter from the highest elected official to the CSRA-RC; CSRA-RC submits the plan to DCA.

09. PLAN ADOPTION

Occurs after official DCA approval of the plan.

05. NOTIFICATION OF INTERESTED PARTIES

Provides all interested parties (other governments, state agencies, etc.) the opportunity for plan for review and comment.

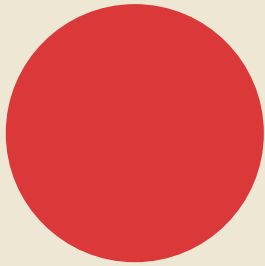
10. NOTIFICATION OF LOCAL ADOPTION

Requires the submittal of a signed resolution and adopted plan to the CSRA-RC within 7 days; CSRA-RC forwards this to DCA. DCA extends Qualified Local Government status (QLG): Includes a written notification from DCA that the jurisdiction's QLG status has been extended.

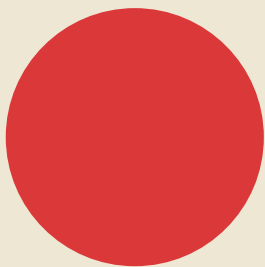
11. PUBLICIZING THE PLAN

Occurs after plan adoption and informs citizens of final plan availability.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

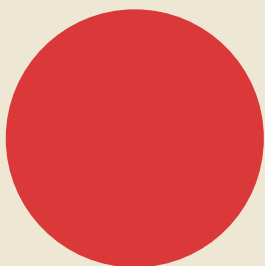


The 2026 Hancock County Comprehensive Plan Update was composed to reflect a shared vision, goals, and objectives of both Sparta and Hancock County. Consistent public input was considered in the creation of the comprehensive plan update. A stakeholder committee was created of community members to guide the plan development process.



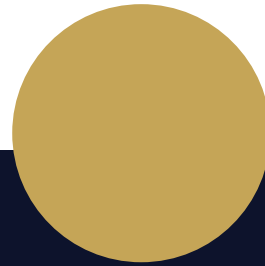
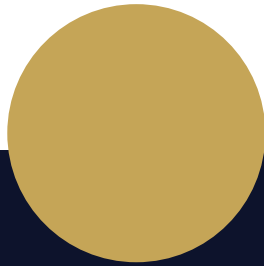
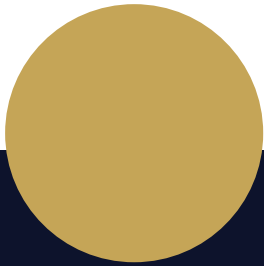
STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS WERE HELD:
MARCH 11, 2026
APRIL 8, 2026

PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS WERE HELD:
MARCH 26, 2026
APRIL 18, 2026



TWO PUBLIC HEARINGS WERE HELD:
FEBRUARY 17, 2026
MAY 7, 2026

STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE



Hancock County

Adric Ingram, Hancock County, Chairman
Borderick Foster, County Manager
Kizzie Sibert, County Clerk
LaTunya Goodwin, Chamber of Commerce
Nyademor Wiley, Department of Public Health
Antone Anthony, Hancock County Board of Education, Superintendent

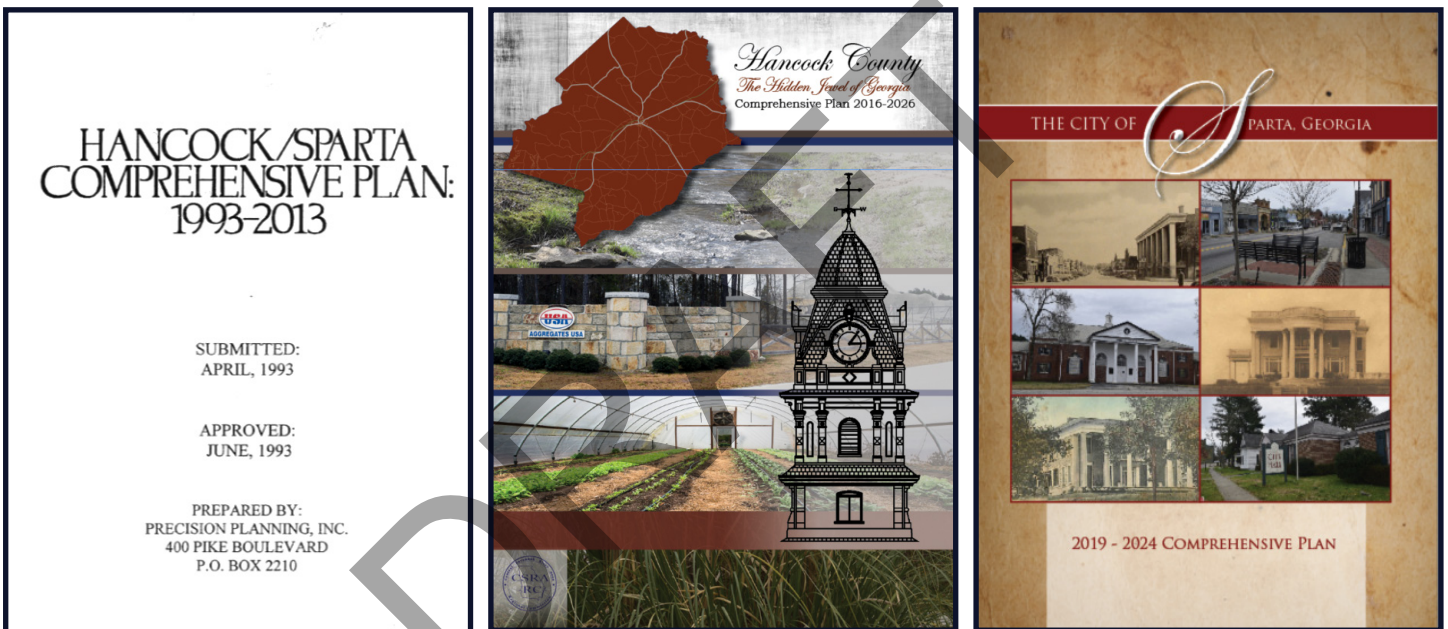
City of Sparta

Allen Haywood, City of Sparta, Mayor
Virginia Webb, City of Sparta, Clerk
Amanda Akins, Utilities Administrator
Teresa Andrews, DREAM Streets Sparta
Charles Jackson, Sparta-Hancock Development Authority

PRIOR PLANS

The first plan, titled “Hancock County/Sparta Comprehensive Plan 1993-2013” was completed by Precision Planning. The format of the document was consistent with the standards established by the DCA prior to 2005. This document outlined county and municipal conditions of significance to each community and created goals with regard to economic development, natural and cultural resources, land uses, housing, and community facilities. The comprehensive plan was to be used by community leaders to make coordinated decisions regarding public expenditures and land uses. The ten-year update was deferred, and the subsequent comprehensive plan updates were created by the CSRA Regional Commission (CSRA-RC). These documents included updates to needs, goals, and future development (land uses and/or character areas) maps.

The DCA now requires 5-year updates of the plan rather than 10 years, but the plan can also be amended at any time before that as local conditions and activities change.



SWOT ANALYSIS

As a part of the planning process, the communities conducted an online community survey. Based on the community survey, stakeholder conversations and available data, the CSRA-RC staff compiled a list of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The SWOT results represent a combination of common findings for all jurisdictions and were used in identifying community needs and opportunities.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

History (structures and sites, African American, Native American)
 Small town feel
 Low crime
 City/County administrations work well together
 Popular hunting/fishing destination
 Good City/County leadership, staff, including firefighters
 Faith-based community
 Little traffic
 Cost of living
 Lake Sinclair and other natural resources
 Friendly and family oriented community
 Minimal air and water pollution
 Available land for development (commercial, residential, recreational)
 DREAM Streets Sparta
 Sparta- is designed as an opportunity zone
 Local organizations working towards improving education/health
 Proximity to Augusta, Macon, Atlanta
 Jewell wedding venue
 Popular Pews and Pulpits tour; growing heritage tourism
 Currently updating the historic resource survey City updated in 2023,
 County survey to be done.
 County- rail is still in use
 Moderate pedestrian traffic downtown Sparta

WEAKNESSES

Lack of jobs and businesses
 Few healthcare options/no hospital
 Inadequate housing (type and price variety; repairs needed)
 Infrastructure needs improvement (road, water, sewer, sidewalks)
 Low performing school system
 Limited areas unable to access internet
 Limited retail and commercial options
 Small industrial park with limited usable land
 Dilapidated structures and blighted areas
 No parking available at courthouse on court days
 Not located near the interstate
 Lack of youth activities
 Outdated land use ordinances
 Lack of lodging for hunters and other visitors
 Understaffed code enforcement
 No office for Historic Preservation Commission
 Limited daycare options
 Food deserts and resident food insecurity
 Difficulty getting volunteers from community
 Unattractive highway entrances
 Low community health ratings
 Ground/building contamination in available structures

SWOT ANALYSIS

OPPORTUNITIES

Warehouse in area of railroad spur
Hi-Lo bike trail - promote
Utilize boys and girls club - teens
Expanding parks and recreational facilities
High school offers dual enrollment classes college and technical
Utilization of the "red cottages" downtown
Reactivating the Chamber of Commerce
Utilizing WorkSource for job/skills training
Building a new fire station to lower ISO rating
Reactivating the Pews and Pulpits tour
Attracting businesses to the lake area
Developing additional infrastructure
Constructing community gardens
Centralizing E 911
Revitalizing downtown Sparta via the DREAM Streets program
Individual property owners investing in downtown improvements
Promote the Rock Hawk Blue Trail
Install electric car chargers
Annex existing water customers into the city
Consolidate city/county resources
Build a site ready industrial park

THREATS

Competition from other areas/Industrial opportunities/no budget
Inability to secure new healthcare facility (hospital, urgent care)
Potential increases in crime
Community disinvestment
Lack of resources to implement ideas
Continued population decline/tax base
Aging population
Low workforce participation
Citizen and community not being job ready for large industries
Incompatible development in certain areas
Community apathy or division
Difficulty working with GDOT/projects along state routes
Demolition by neglect (buildings)
Local owners not rehabbing their downtown buildings
Limited offerings from Oconee Fall Line Tech due to low interest

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Economic Development

Needs

- More lodging for visitors and tourists
- Improved food access to reduce the number and size of food deserts
- Better equipped workforce to attract companies and service local demand for jobs
- More marketing and planning for existing and future economic development to include the truck route
- More employment opportunities for residents
- Larger, more usable area for industrial park
- More options to grow small businesses (a business incubator)

Opportunities

- Develop natural resources and innovative agricultural sites into agri-tourism products and sites
- Promote and welcome the hunting industry
- Utilize the Hwy 15 Coalition to promote local businesses
- Expand the historic tourism sector and feature historic homes
- Increase the number of occupied buildings downtown (new businesses)
- Create a city organization to house both the Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center
- Capitalize on moderate pedestrian activity in downtown Sparta
- Approve commercial development along the new SR 15 truck route
- Work with internet service providers and other communities to improve broadband access
- Businesses locating on the railroad spur
- Trail ride festival

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Housing

Needs

- Remove dilapidated housing
- Review code enforcement capacity for this area
- Develop additional low-income housing
- Continue to improve access to broadband in homes
- Activate the State Chartered Land Bank
- Address homelessness

Opportunities

- Utilize state and federal funding for housing rehabilitation
- Explore opportunities for mixed-use buildings in downtown
- Expand housing options around Lake Sinclair
- Become a GICH community
- Apply for a CHIP Grant
- Apply for the homelessness response grant
- Apply for LIHTC (Low Income Housing Tax Credit)
- Build a homeless shelter

Land Use

Needs

- Fill vacant buildings downtown
- Update land use controls (zoning) in the city and county

Opportunities

- Market undeveloped land
- HPC enforcement of design standards and compatible development in the historic district
- Expand the Sparta locally designated district for design review (HPC)
- Improve ordinances with enforcement to better address dilapidated structures

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Community Facilities & Services

Needs

- Infrastructure repairs and upgrades on existing city/county water and sewer systems
- A stronger school system and continued cooperative school board
- Greater availability of daycares and community/learning centers
- More recreational and community event areas and social opportunities for residents
- Continue to improve residential water quality in targeted areas
- Increase roadway maintenance
- Improve food access
- Additional fire fighting volunteers to help lower ISO ratings

Opportunities

- Existing rail uses could be expanded with railroad cooperation
- Expansion opportunities exist for areas currently not served by city/county water or city sewer
- Although options are limited, potential buildings/sites are available to create a much-desired community center, boys and girls club, and/or recreation facilities
- Increase or upgrade bicycle/pedestrian facilities along major roads
- Acquire property to host a farmer's market and other local outdoor events downtown
- Continue rehabilitating depot for indoor and outdoor use

COMMUNITY NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Natural and Cultural Resources

Needs

- Preserve and protect existing historic and natural resources
- Public parks and greenspaces
- Physical office space for the Historic Preservation Commission and other community organizations

Opportunities

- Utilize residents who are available and willing to share knowledge of historic preservation tax credits to help others learn how to use them
- Feature historic resources as a part of larger heritage tourism efforts
- Update and enforce ordinances and codes to properly address development concerns
- Grow the DREAM Streets Sparta efforts and become a GA Main Street community.

DRAFT



COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals

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

Policies

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

DRAFT

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOALS

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

SUPPORTING POLICIES

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

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

GOALS

- Expand water service to under-served areas of the county.
- Lower county ISO ratings in order to reduce insurance costs for all customer sectors.
- Provide sufficient parks, trails, and recreational opportunities and facilities for residents and visitors of all ages and sports leagues from other counties.
- Expand agricultural education for residents of all ages to promote local, healthy food.
- Create a community-wide wellness program, including improved food access through a downtown market and community gardens.

SUPPORTING POLICIES

- Enhance and upgrade recreational facilities and leisure opportunities for residents and visitors.
- Pursue grants and other opportunities to assist in funding infrastructure improvements.
- Make efficient use of existing infrastructure as well as future investments and expenditures for capital improvements and long-term operation and maintenance costs.
- Coordinate public facilities and services with land use planning to promote more compact development.
- Protect existing infrastructure improvements by encouraging infill, redevelopment and compact development.
- Hire or partner with a certified dog rescuer to assist with animal control.
- County needs animal control
- Review GDOT “Complete Streets” guidance and opportunities to improve pedestrian/bicycle connections to neighborhoods in road projects.
- Create opportunities for food access in public spaces (space for farmers markets, edible plants with labeling in parks, etc.).
- Examine street networks around targeted senior centers for connectivity/walkability between the center and the surrounding area.
- Maximize infrastructure investments by promoting infill development where possible and appropriate.
- Support farmers market, pocket parks, and community gardens.
- Improve accessibility to library services and educational programs.

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

GOALS

- Preserve and protect historic resources.
- Develop recreation complex.

SUPPORTING POLICIES

- Promote local historic preservation activities and regularly publicize information about available tax credits.
- Encourage and support redevelopment and revitalization of downtown Sparta.
- Prepare and adopt DNR “Part V” environmental ordinances as applicable.
- Encourage new development in suitable locations in order to protect natural and cultural resources, and environmentally-sensitive areas.
- Periodically update historic resource surveys.
- Preserve corridors suitable for the development of multi-use trails.
- Utilize form-based codes or design guidelines to protect the design and character of historic structures while exercising flexibility in their use.
- Consider natural/cultural resources impacts when making land use or other planning decisions.
- Seek opportunities to link natural, agricultural, and/or cultural sites together to create tourist and resident experiences.
- Identify programs, projects, and educational messages to reduce non-point source pollution to protect water quality in lakes and streams.
- Educate stakeholders in the region on the importance of water quality and managing water as a resource including practices such as water conservation and increased water efficiency.
- Allow commercial uses in formerly residential structures as a means of building preservation, character retention and economic development.
- Expand existing locally designated district for design review by HPC or create new district.

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

LAND USE

GOALS

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

SUPPORTING POLICIES

- Actively enforce established ordinances, zoning and nuisance codes.
- Require planning/code enforcement staff and planning commissioners to attend regular training.
- Keep the zoning ordinance and other development regulations up-to-date and codify them.
- Coordinate land use decisions with transportation decisions.
- Encourage traditional neighborhood development where appropriate.
- Promote efficient use of land by encouraging well-designed, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use areas for new development.
- Use the comprehensive plan in the review of rezoning applications and other development proposals.
- Allow commercial uses in formerly residential structures as a means of building preservation, character retention and economic development.
- Support the redevelopment and revitalization of vacant and/or underutilized commercial and industrial areas in and near downtown Sparta.
- Support opportunities for residential and non-residential development that enhances the character of existing neighborhoods.
- Employ innovative planning concepts to community priorities of : well-designed neighborhoods, environmental protection, open space preservation, and improved traffic flow for enhanced quality of life.

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

HOUSING

GOALS

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

SUPPORTING POLICIES

- Acquire and demolish vacant and dangerous buildings that do not conform to code requirements.
- Exercise code enforcement for substandard and dilapidated properties.
- Utilize the Land Bank Authority for future development, including acceptance of property donation in lieu of taxes and other efforts.
- Actively seek appropriate state and federal grants for housing improvements.
- Encourage infill housing in existing, viable neighborhoods.
- Promote walkable, safe neighborhoods.
- Participate in housing rehab programs: Community Home Investment Partnership (CHIP), GA Initiative for Community Housing (GICH), and Community Development Block Grants.
- Provide homeowners with information on state and federal rehab programs.
- Evaluate existing vacant structures, including historic or former industrial, as opportunities for adaptive reuse as housing or mixed developments.
- Periodically examine and inventory existing housing stock.
- Encourage housing in the upper floors of downtown commercial buildings.

COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

BROADBAND SERVICES

GOALS

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

SUPPORTING POLICIES

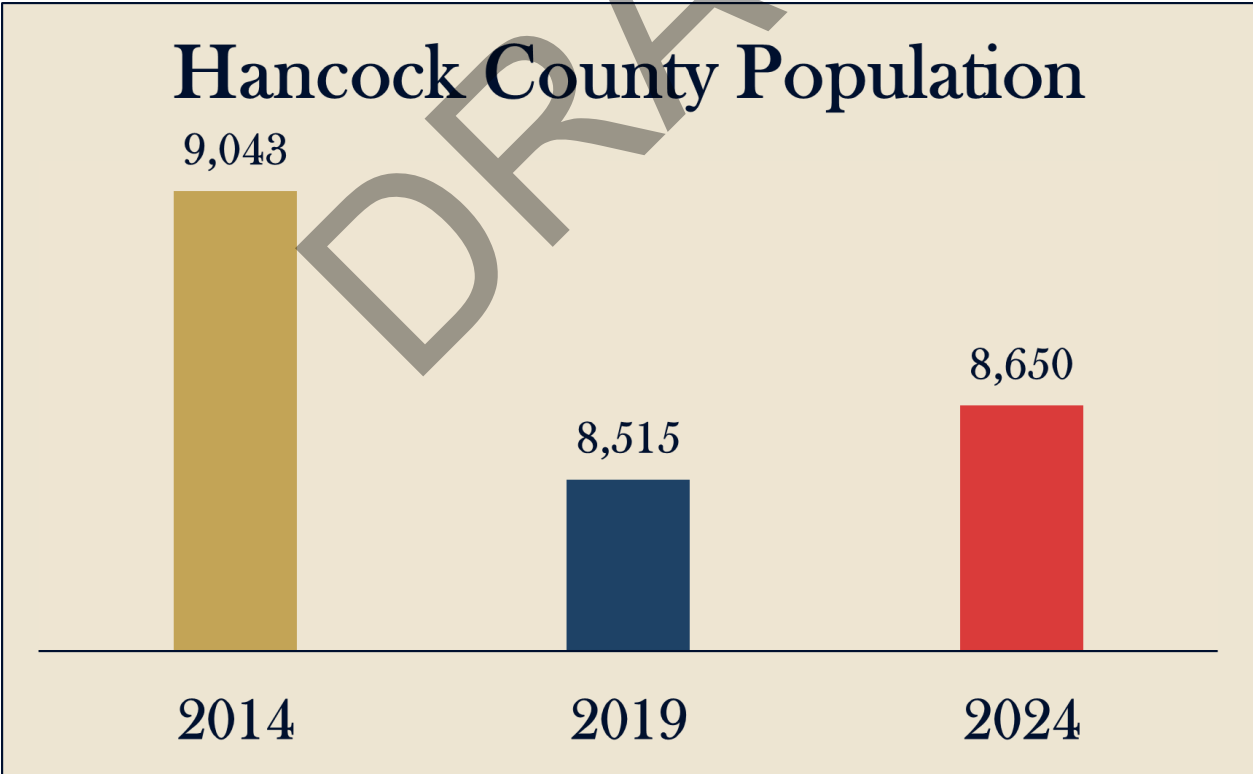
- Work with Xfinity to expand broadband to new customers.
- Increase broadband company choices.
- Explore opportunities, state and federal funding, and private partnership opportunities.

DRAFT

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

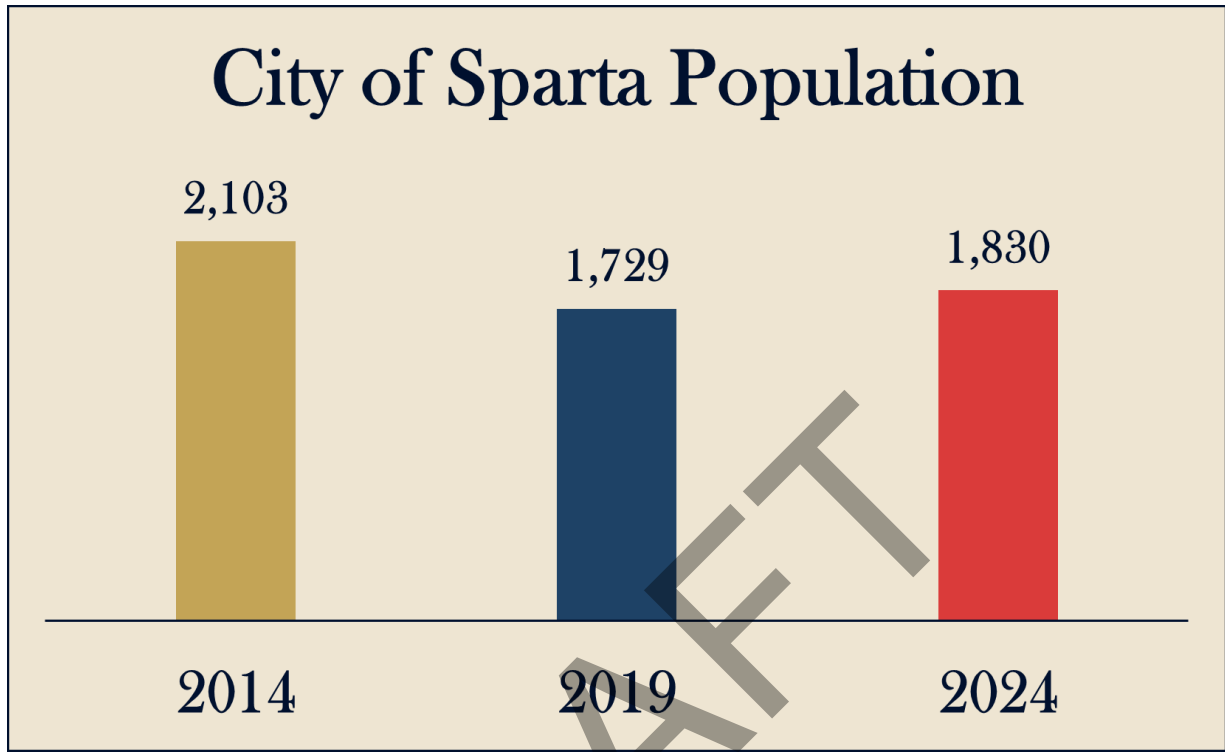
The demographic overview aims to provide an understanding of who Hancock County’s residents are, and how the county is changing. Though the accuracy of data from national sources is often disputed for rural communities, these sources do provide a valuable baseline for understanding rural population dynamics. The Census Bureau and other generators of data and analysis commonly utilize statistical methods to produce projections based on trends. These measures are typically offered with a margin of error or confidence interval, and a disclaimer acknowledging that the measures are samples or projections.

According to the American Community Survey, the population in Hancock County has fluctuated from 9,043 in 2014 to 8,515 in 2019 and back up to 8,650 in 2024.



Source: American Community Survey DP05 2014, 2019, 2024.

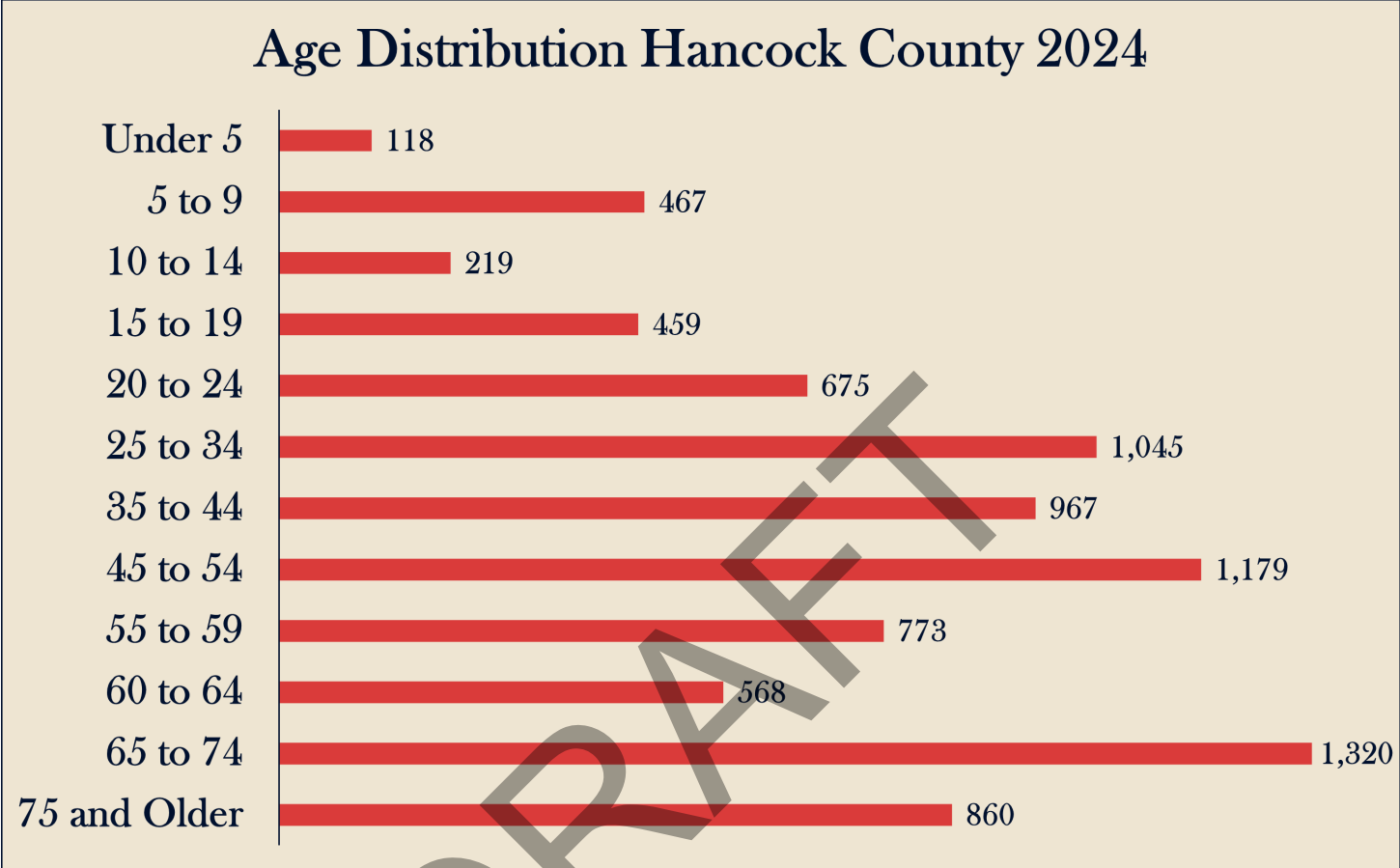
DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW



Source: American Community Survey DP05 2014, 2019, 2024.

According to the American Community Survey, the city of Sparta also saw a dip in population in 2019 to 1,729. In 2014, the population of Sparta was 2,103 and in 2024 it was 1,830.

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW



Source: American Community Survey DP05 2024.

According to the American Community Survey, in 2024 the largest population group was aged 65 to 74, making up 15% of the population. This would be a substantial amount of the population that would benefit from senior center facilities and other senior recreational services. A large part of this population may be attributed to the lake area of retirees. School age children ages 5-19 make up about 13% of the population. Many young families may be leaving the county to seek better paying jobs and more opportunities for young families. Working age residents aged 20-64 make up about 60% of the population which makes affordable housing, family entertainment, and recreational activities a necessary part of community facilities for this population.

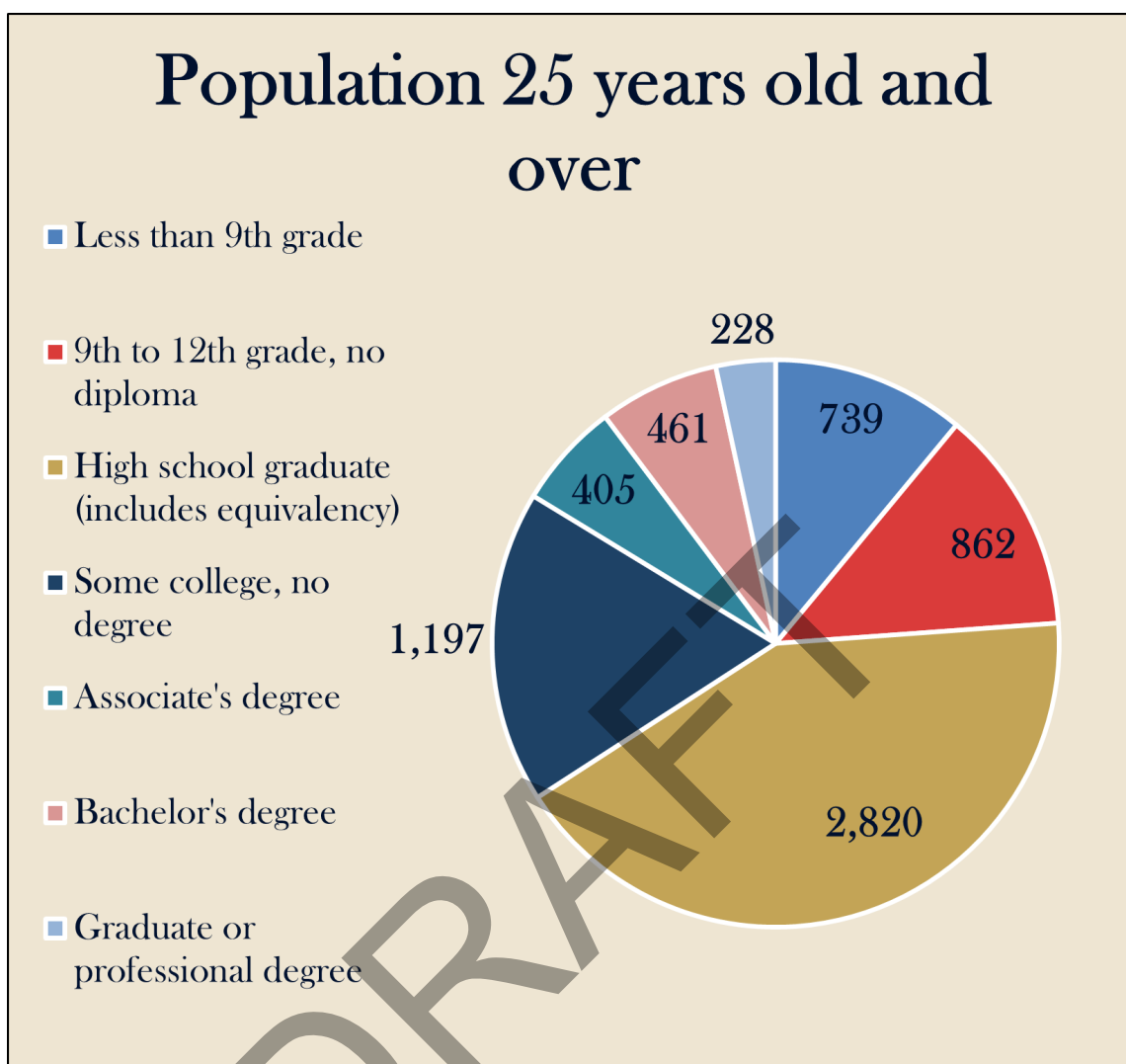


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development transforms communities by improving the well-being of residents, creating opportunities, and fostering sustainable growth. It involves the expansion of jobs, businesses, infrastructure, and services that collectively enhance the quality of life in a specific area. One of the benefits of economic development is job creation. As new businesses open and existing companies expand, they generate employment opportunities for local residents. Jobs provide steady incomes, which enable families to meet their needs, pursue education, and improve their standard of living. Higher employment rates also contribute to lower poverty levels and increase financial security within the community.

Economic development leads to a broader tax base for local governments. Increased business activity and higher incomes, communities can collect more in taxes, which can then be invested in public services such as schools, healthcare, public safety, and transportation. Improved infrastructure, including roads, utilities, and public spaces, make the community more attractive to both residents and new investors.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Source: American Community Survey S1501 2024.

According to the 2024 American Community Survey, among the 6,712 residents aged 25 and over, 42% had a high school diploma or equivalency. 24% had some college or an associates degree, 10% had a bachelors degree or higher. Those that had less than a high school diploma were the remaining 24% of the population.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

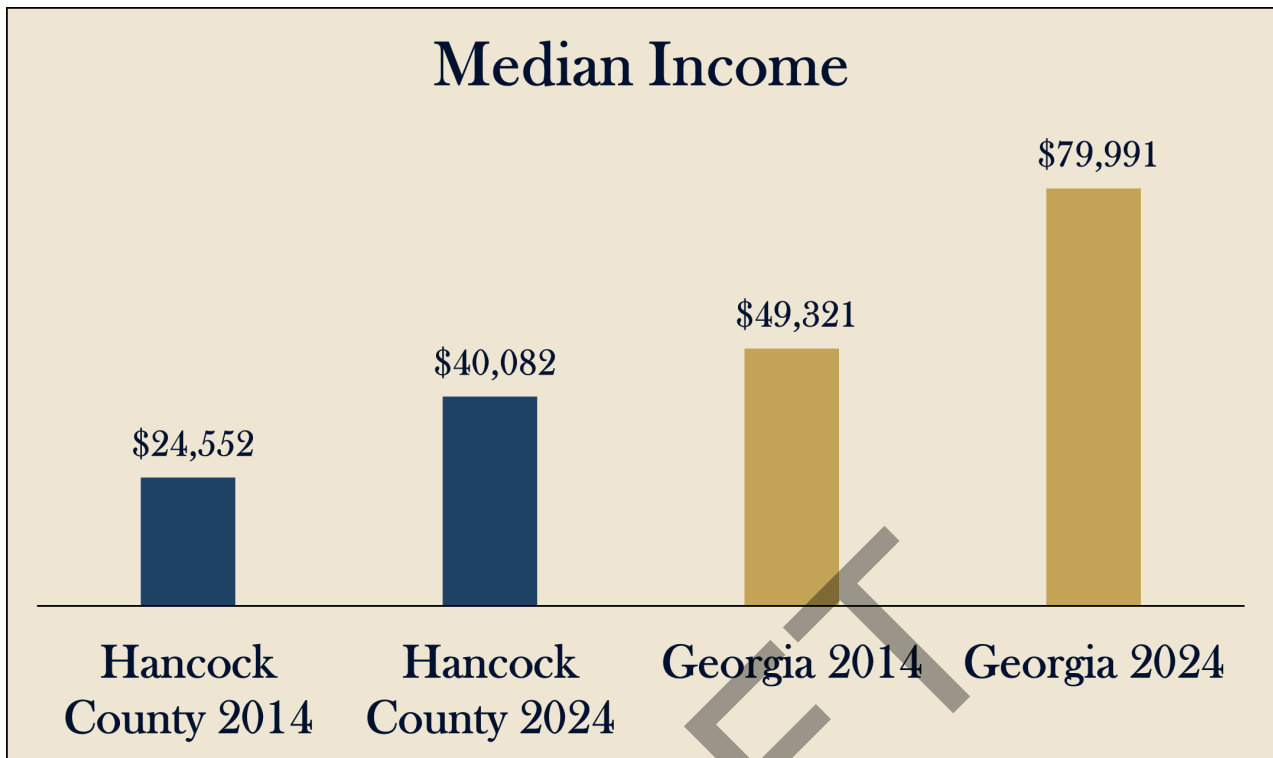
HANCOCK COUNTY EMPLOYMENT	
POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER	7,792
IN LABOR FORCE	2,342
NOT IN LABOR FORCE	5,450
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	6.3%

Source: American Community Survey DP03 2024.

Unemployment rates represent the percentage of people in the labor force who are jobless, actively seeking work, and available to work. The labor force includes those employed and those unemployed but looking for a job. Unemployment rates are a key indicator of economic health. High unemployment rate signals economic stress; families lose income and overall economic output declines. Conversely, low unemployment suggests a robust economy with more people working and contributing to growth.

In 2024 the unemployment rate in Hancock County was 6.3%. 30% of the population aged 16 and older were in the labor force and 70% of that population aged 16 years and older were not in the labor force.

MEDIAN INCOME



Source: American Community Survey DP03 2024.

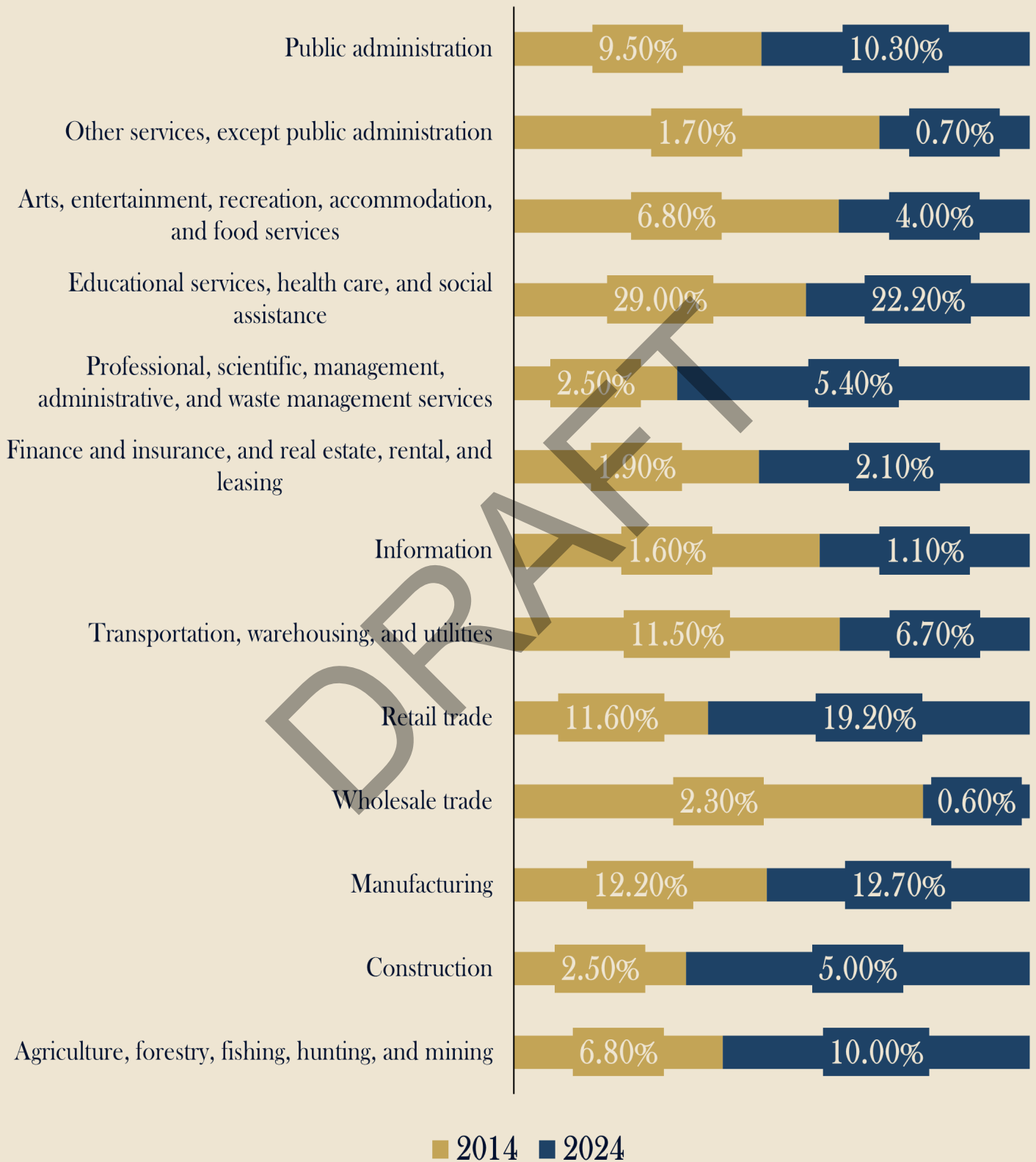
Median Income is an indicator of the standard of living for the “typical” household. It is less influenced by outliers (extremely high or low incomes) than average income, making it a better measure for understanding the economic status of most people in a community. Changes in median income over time can signal shifts in economic health, employment patterns, and effective policies. Median income also helps identify disparities and areas needing support. In 2024, the median income in Hancock County was \$40,082. This was about 50% lower than the median income for the State of Georgia at \$79,991.

In 2024, the majority of the population in Hancock county was employed in four major areas of industry:

Manufacturing,
Retail trade,
Education, healthcare, social service,
Public Administration.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Hancock County Employment by Industry



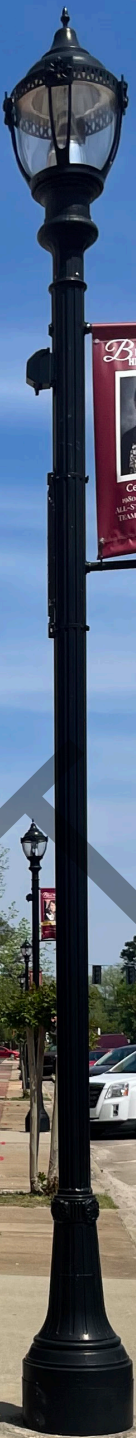
Source: American Community Survey DP03 2024.

COMMUTING PATTERNS

Commuting patterns show how residents travel between home and work. If a large percentage of a county's workforce commutes to jobs in neighboring areas, it indicates strong economic integration and shared labor markets. Patterns of daily movement influence decisions about regional workforce development, transportation infrastructure, and public services. In Hancock County in 2024, 100% of residents worked in the State of Georgia. Approximately 29% of Hancock County residents work within the county with 70% working outside the county.

COMMUTING PATTERNS	2014	2024
PERCENT WORKED IN GEORGIA	99.9%	100%
PERCENT WORKED OUTSIDE GEORGIA	0.1%	0%
PERCENT WORKED IN HANCOCK COUNTY	33.5%	29.1%
PERCENT WORKED OUTSIDE HANCOCK COUNTY	66.4%	70.9%

Source: American Community Survey S0802 2024.



NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

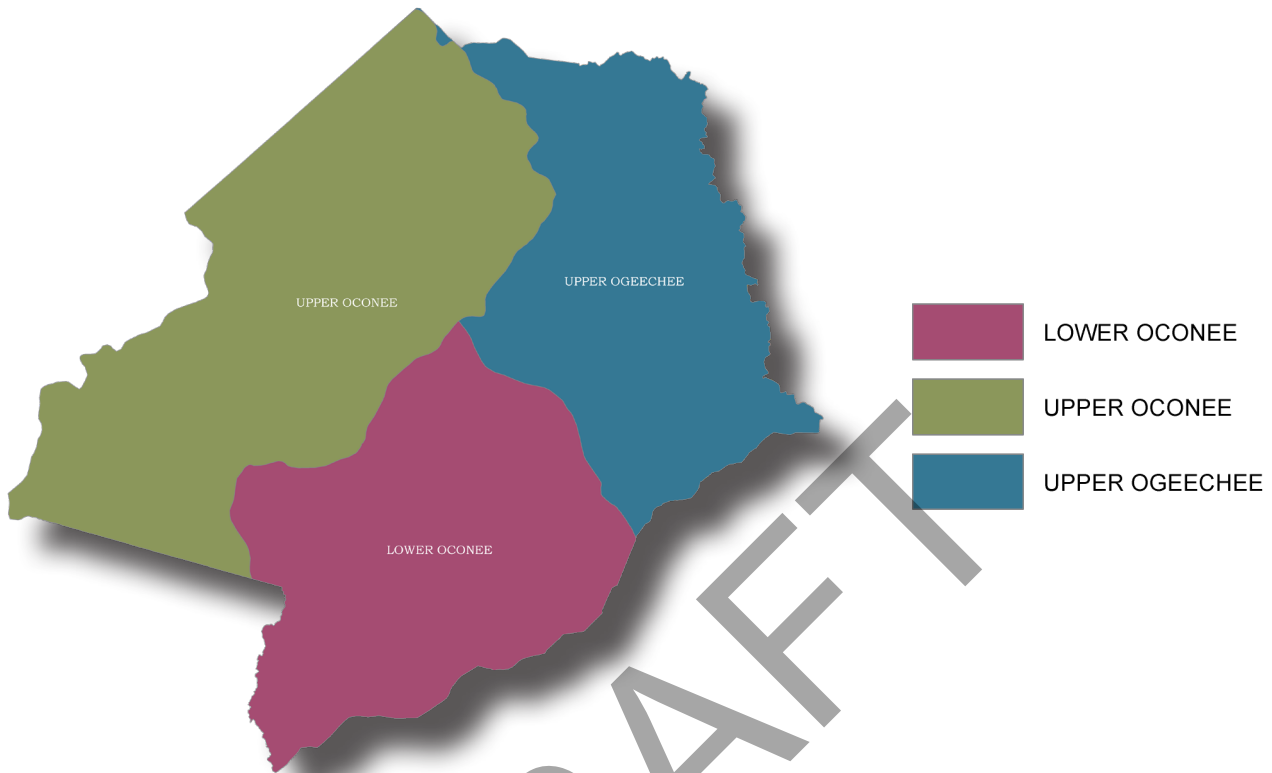
Natural and cultural resources are often unrecognized community assets that contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the county. They have the potential to draw visitors who value natural beauty or historic character. These assets can be connected to similar resources in other counties for regional tourism. As conditions change, it is important to focus efforts on protecting critical natural features like watersheds, and avoid hazards like floodplains. When development decisions are made, the natural and cultural resources that make Hancock County unique must be considered.

DRAFT

NATURAL RESOURCES

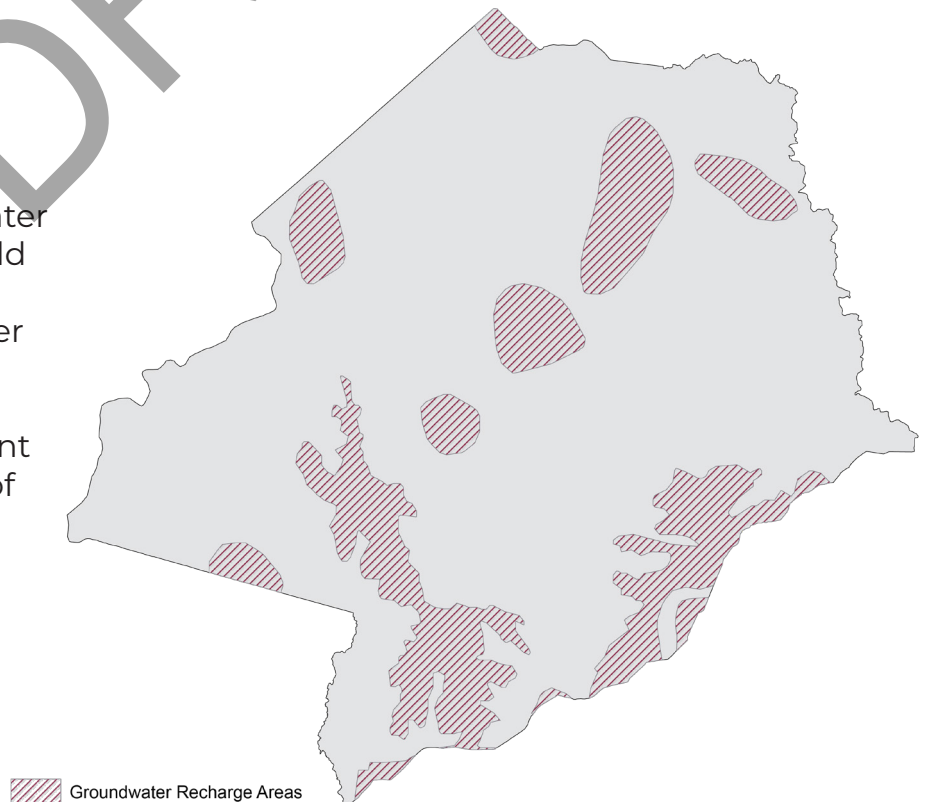
Hancock County Watersheds

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



Hancock County Groundwater Recharge Areas

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



NATURAL RESOURCES

Hancock County Wetlands

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

Land uses in wetland areas should be limited to low-to-no impact uses. Ultimately, even these uses should be examined for other conflicts or impacts.

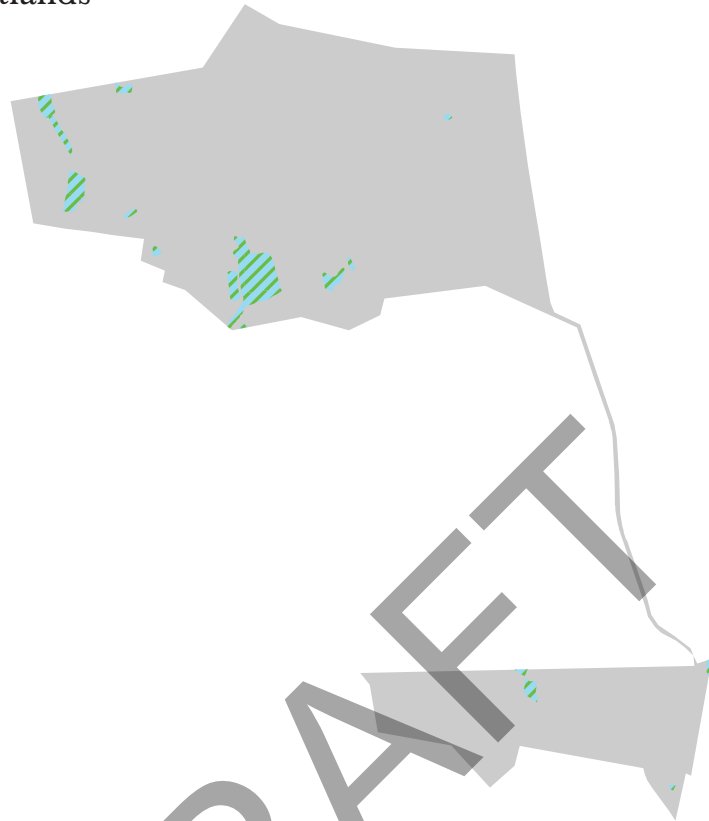
 Wetlands



NATURAL RESOURCES

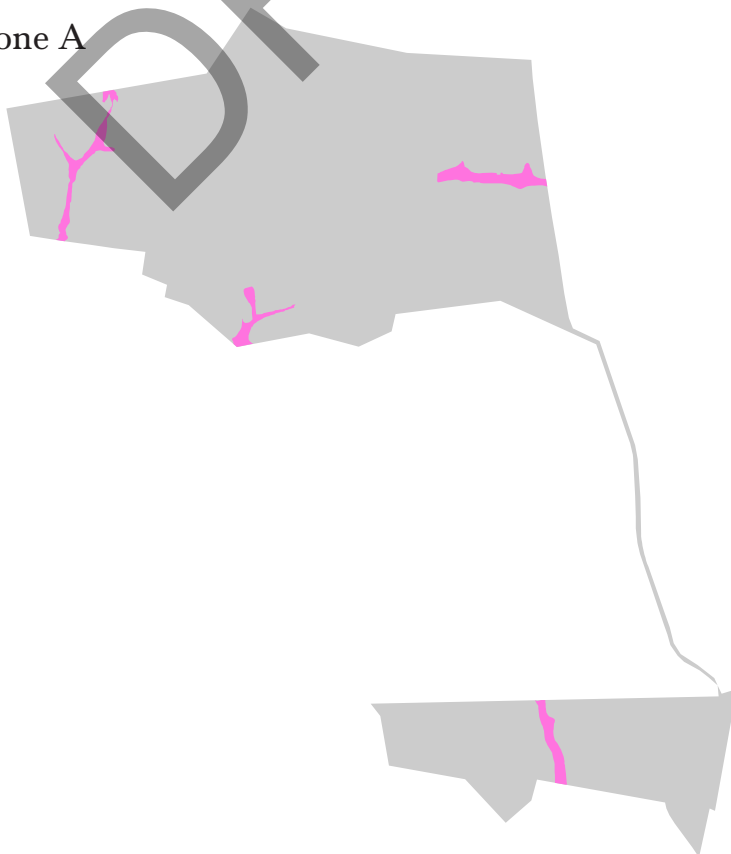
City of Sparta Wetlands

 Wetlands



Sparta FEMA Flood Zones

 Flood Zone A

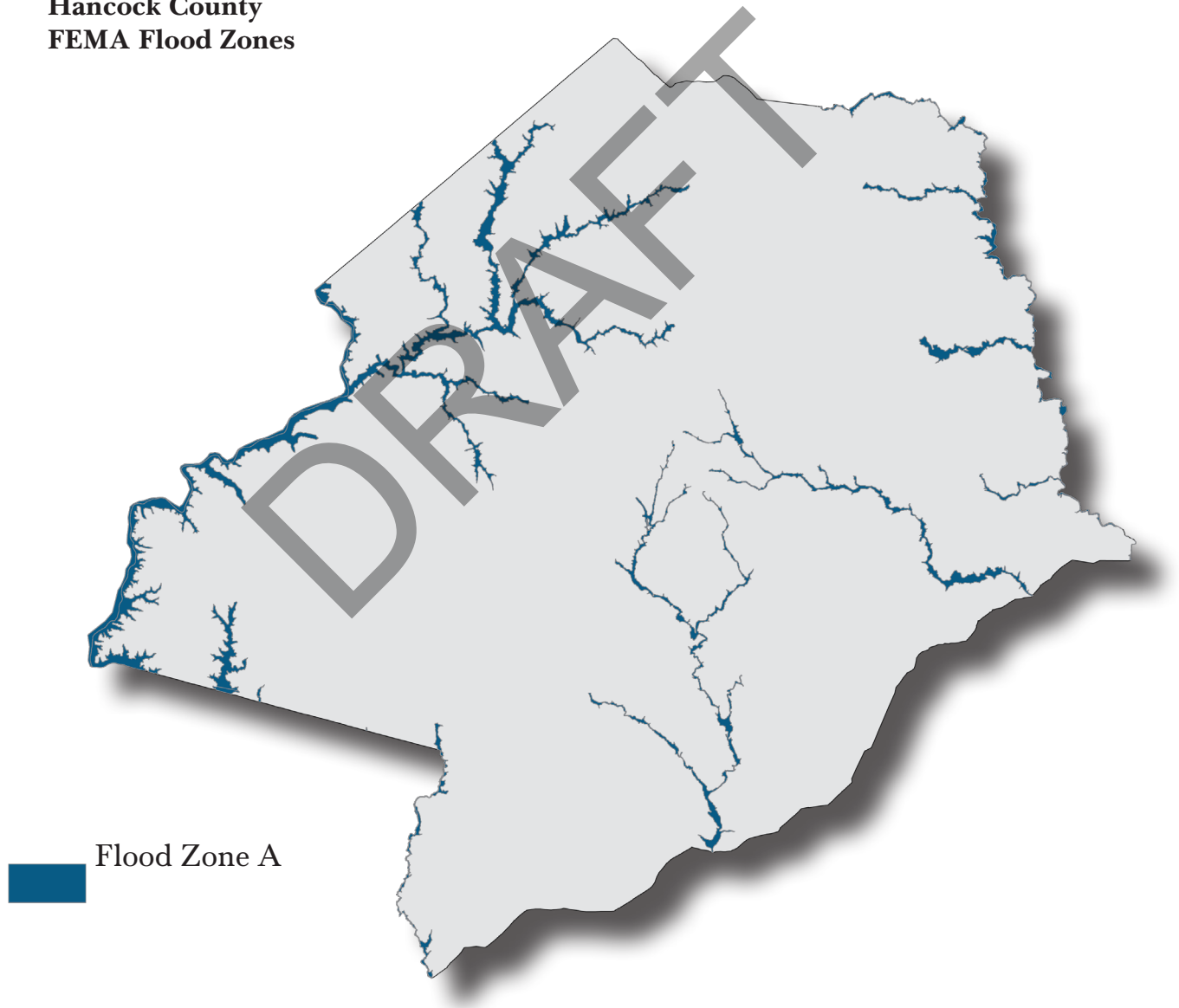


NATURAL RESOURCES

Hancock County Flood Plains

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

**Hancock County
FEMA Flood Zones**



CULTURAL RESOURCES

History is an important part of Hancock County and Sparta's identity; each jurisdiction has many historic buildings and sites of national, state, and local cultural significance. The resources contribute to the commercial economy, to tourism, and are a part of the residential environment. This historic foundation is protected and documented with several methods.

Overall, Sparta and Hancock County have adopted a joint historic preservation ordinance which provides for documentation and protection of historic and cultural resources. The local governments have an active joint historic preservation commission (HPC) that carries out approval of proposed work to the exterior appearance of the buildings and sites through a design review process. An owner applies for a certificate of appropriateness through the planning and zoning department and meets with the HPC to receive approval for the intended work. This process ensures the integrity of the historic environment.

Sparta and Hancock County's joint HPC has been designated at the highest level of historic preservation effort as a Georgia Certified Local Government. A requirement for design review of the Sparta Local Historic District was to inventory the 171 historic properties and prepare a designation report which was completed in 2019. A citywide historic resources survey was completed in 2023 that documented 180 historic properties. A future project is to either expand the district or create a new one for design review. As a joint HPC, Hancock County will receive priority consideration to apply for a required historic resources survey to inventory the county historic resources so that future identification of resources may be planned for in land use, tourism, and preservation projects.

The HPC created a DREAM Streets Sparta program to revitalize, preserve, and grow the city of Sparta. A core focus is locating or relocating businesses to Broad Street and Spring Street. Physical improvements to buildings downtown will aid this effort, and there are approximately a dozen structures undergoing these improvements in partnership with building owners. A longer-term goal of the city is to become a Main Street community.

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

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

Among additional structures which may be eligible for National Register listing:

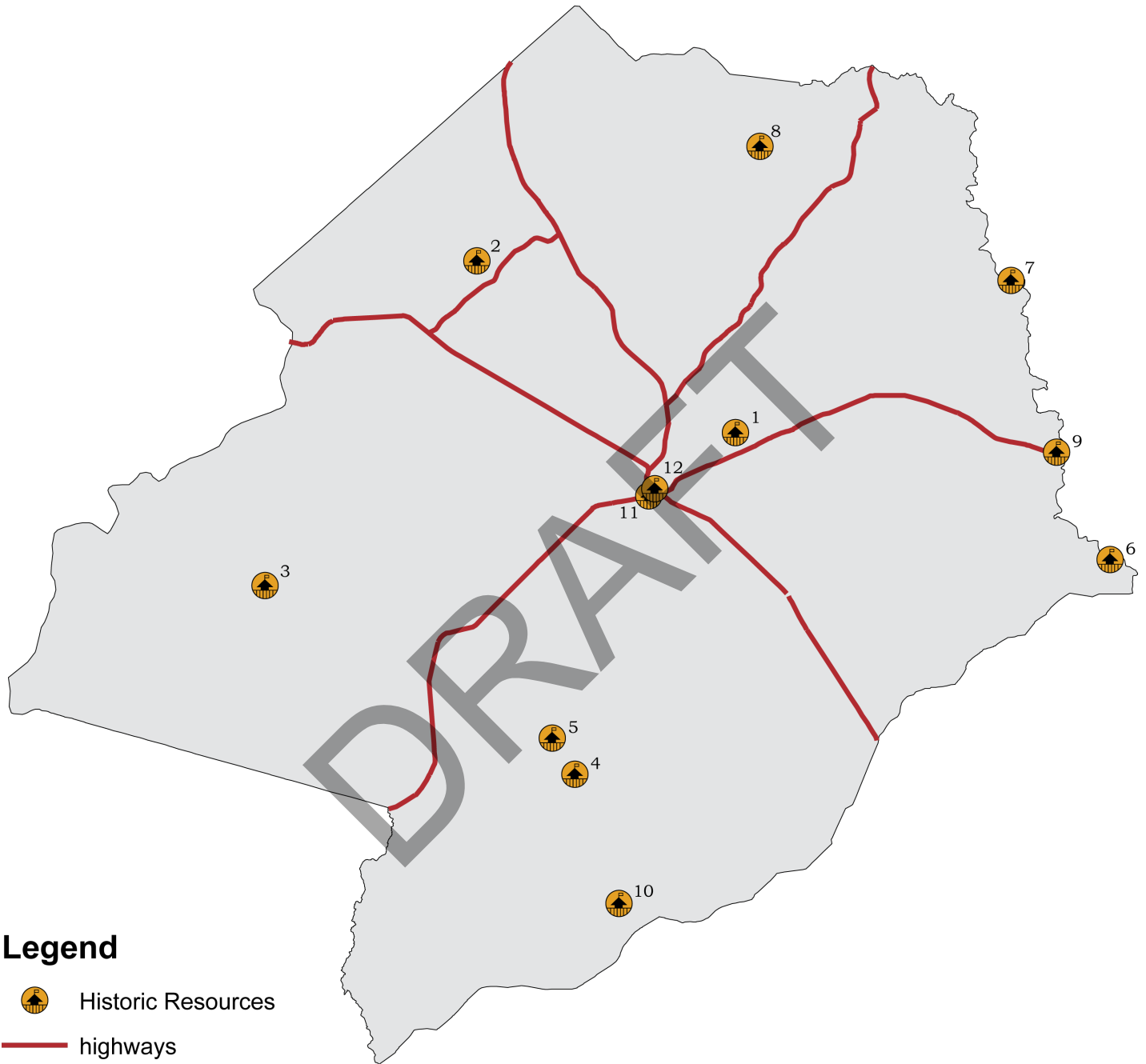
- The Brightside House
- Holsey Memorial CME Church
- Macedonia Baptist Church
- Hancock County Depot

Hancock County has completed exterior restoration of the historic 1881 train depot. However, funds are still needed to rehabilitate the interior of the building.



In Hancock County, there are numerous churches, residences, and farms that qualify for National Register listing, such as the St. Marks and St. Paul's churches. The Culverton community and Millmore mill and historic bridge were suggested for National Register eligibility.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

National Register Listed Properties



Legend

-  Historic Resources
-  highways

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





LAND USE

Land use is important in comprehensive planning because it shapes the physical, economic, and social future of a community. It ensures growth is managed, resources are protected, and development aligns with the community's vision and needs. Land use elements help local governments manage change, resolve conflicts, and make decisions that reflect community goals and priorities.

Tools such as land use maps and character area maps are used to preserve and help maintain a community's identity and guide future development. Land use decisions affect where infrastructure, housing, and businesses are located. Planning land use can ensure that new development is supported by adequate infrastructure and services, and that housing options are available for all residents

DRAFT

EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE HANCOCK COUNTY

The vast majority of land in Hancock County has been and continues to be designated for agricultural and low density residential uses. Residential land use includes single and multi-family developments. Single-family dwellings are the predominant housing type. There is little duplex and multifamily development in the County. Very little land in Hancock County is designated for commercial uses. Small businesses operate in scattered locations throughout the county, with no centralized area. The majority of commercial buildings in the county are in incorporated Sparta. Industrial land in Hancock County includes several quarry and mining sites, a solar farm, and the industrial park.

The Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan incorporates character area maps as its principle means by which long-term land use goals and policies are expressed. When interpreting how to best use the comprehensive plan's character area map and supporting narratives, the reader should be aware of two parameters:

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

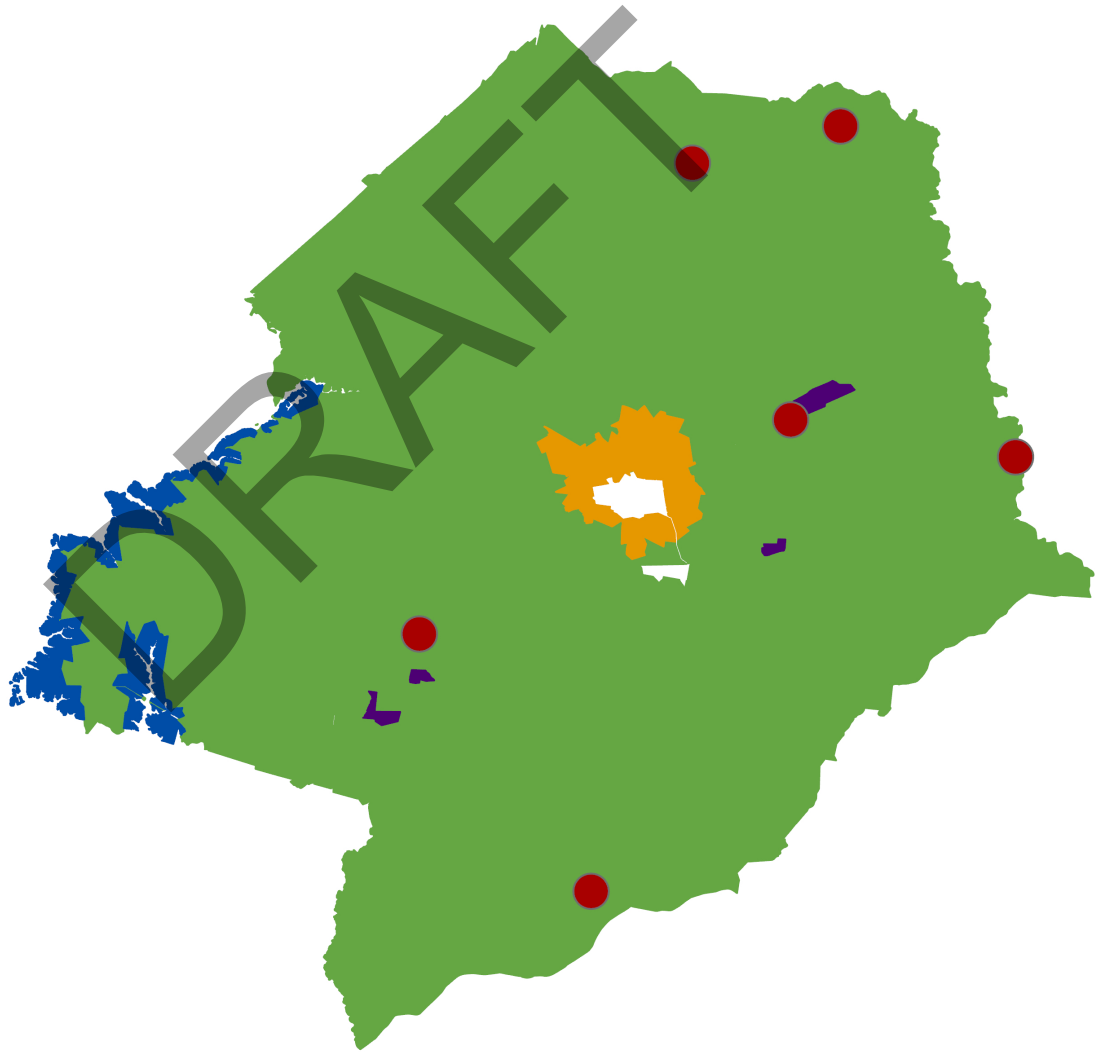
Character Area Narratives. The narratives that correspond to the character area map should be viewed as general policy statements - as statements of intent. Their use and applicability is similar to those other goals and policy statements found in the Community Goals section. They should inform future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

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan Character Area Map includes a total of five (5) character areas:

COUNTRYSIDE | LAKESIDE | INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
HISTORIC RURAL COMMUNITY | SUBURBAN SPARTA

HANCOCK COUNTY CHARACTER AREA MAP

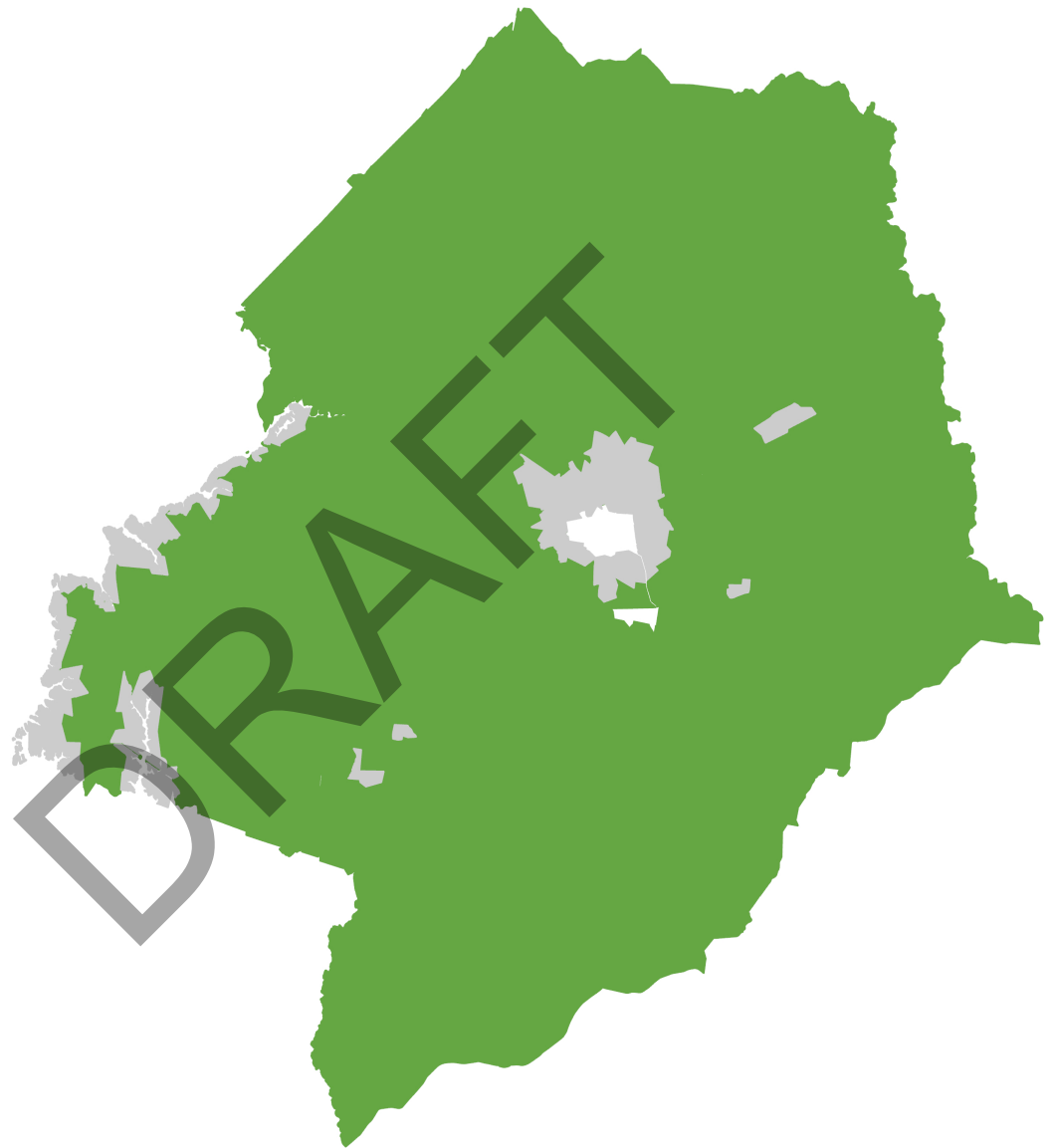
- Character Area
- Countryside
 - Industrial Development
 - Historic Rural Community
 - Suburban Sparta
 - Lakeside



COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREA MAP

Character Area

- Countryside
- Industrial Development
- Historic Rural Community
- Suburban Sparta
- Lakeside



COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREA

General Description

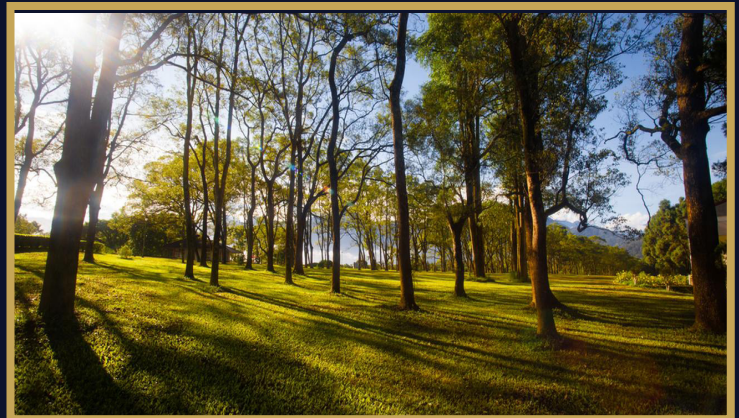
The Countryside Character Area covers the majority of the county, characterized by rural, undeveloped land, farms and agricultural operations, low-density residential development, and commercial timber/pulpwood harvesting. Recreation, such as bicycle and pedestrian trails would be appropriate in this area.

Land Uses

- Agriculture
- Residential
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation

Implementation Measures

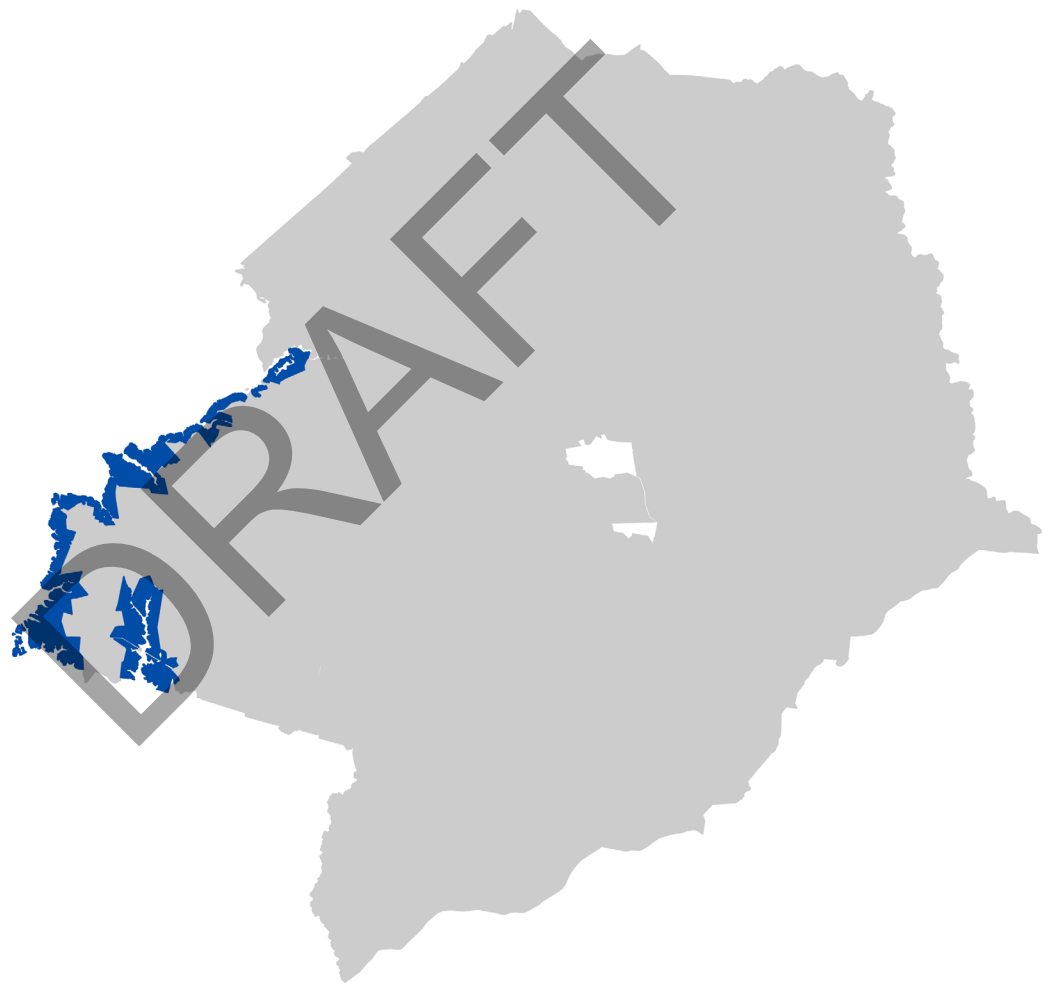
- Promote forestry and timber harvesting with guidelines for replanting.
- Encourage the development of trails and other passive recreation opportunities.
- Review and adjust regulations as necessary to encourage open space preservation.
- Emphasize cluster subdivision design that incorporates a significant amount of open space. Clustered development is the grouping of residential properties on a development site in order to use the extra land as open space, recreation or agriculture.
- Support the historic character of properties near the Historic Rural Community character area.



LAKE SIDE CHARACTER AREA MAP

Character Area

- Countryside
- Industrial Development
- Historic Rural Community
- Suburban Sparta
- Lakeside



LAKESIDE CHARACTER AREA

General Description

The Lake Character Area is a predominantly residential area along Lake Sinclair, including seasonal homeowners. With additional infrastructure and investment, the area can grow as a featured location in the county. Protecting the lakefront while providing adequate facilities and infrastructure for the area is a major objective.

Land Uses

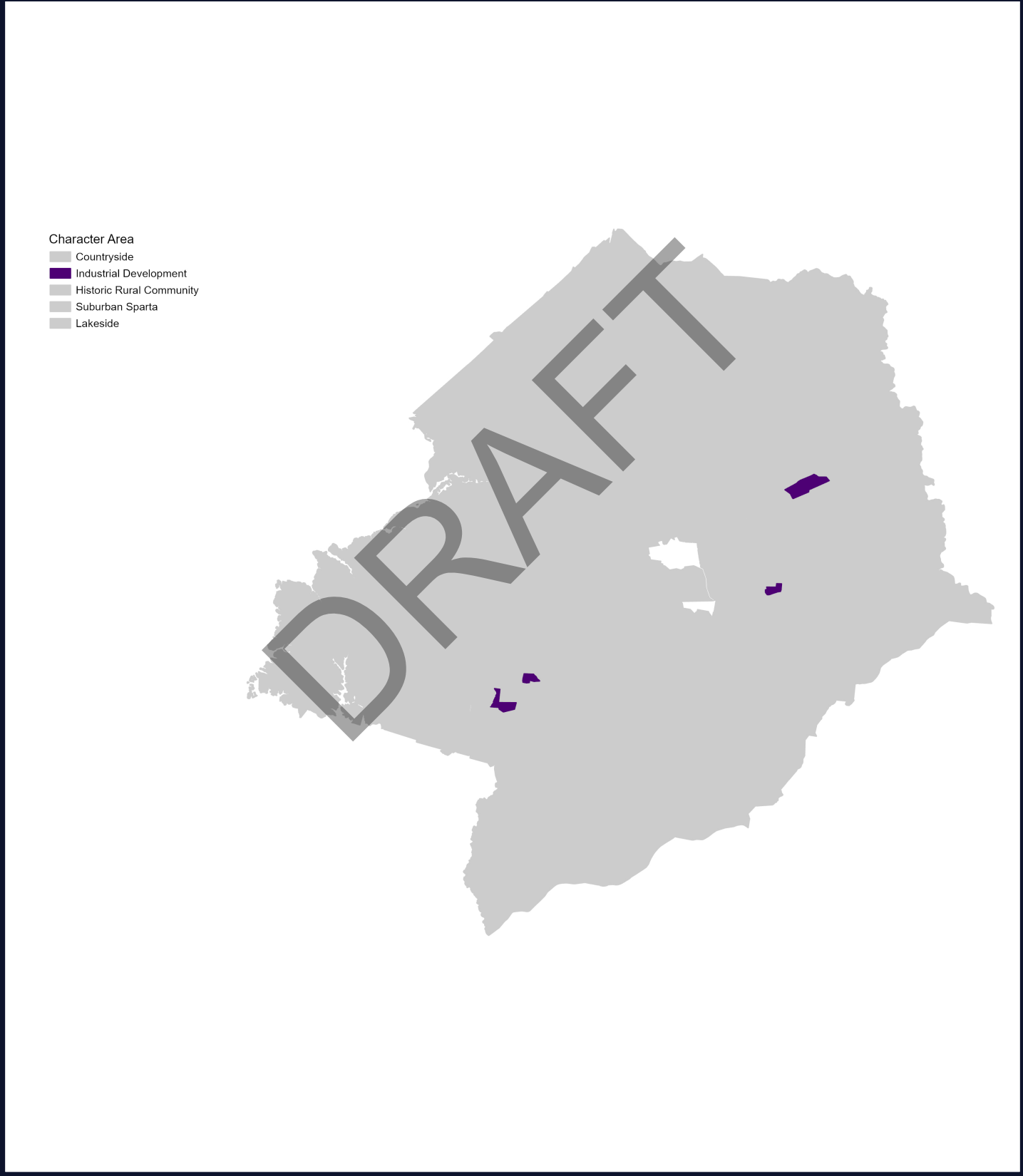
- Residential (medium density)
- Commercial (limited)
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation

Implementation Measures

- Maintain water and roadway infrastructure.
- Expand water service where feasible.
- Maintain (and increase as deemed appropriate) lake/waterway development buffers.
- Promote linkages between residential developments and commercial/recreational areas.
- Consider neighborhood-scale commercial in support of resident and seasonal needs.



INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA MAP



INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA

General Description

The Industrial Development Character Area is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, large-scale solar farms, warehousing facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, and other similar operations. These existing and potential sites are located throughout the county, not solely in the industrial park.

Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial (limited)

Implementation Measures

- Create and maintain landscape buffers to separate industrial uses from adjacent areas.
- Provide information regarding these areas to potential supporting commercial businesses.
- Limit noises, smells, and lighting associated with manufacturing uses.
- Provide and maintain streets that can accommodate continual large vehicle traffic.
- Invest in the development of the county industrial park.



SUBURBAN SPARTA CHARACTER AREA MAP

- Character Area
- Countryside
 - Industrial Development
 - Historic Rural Community
 - Suburban Sparta
 - Lakeside



SUBURBAN SPARTA CHARACTER AREA

General Description

The Suburban Sparta Character Area covers areas of developed and undeveloped property near the City of Sparta. It includes a mix of uses and scales. Future development in this area includes a truck route and potential increases in commercial property.

Land Uses

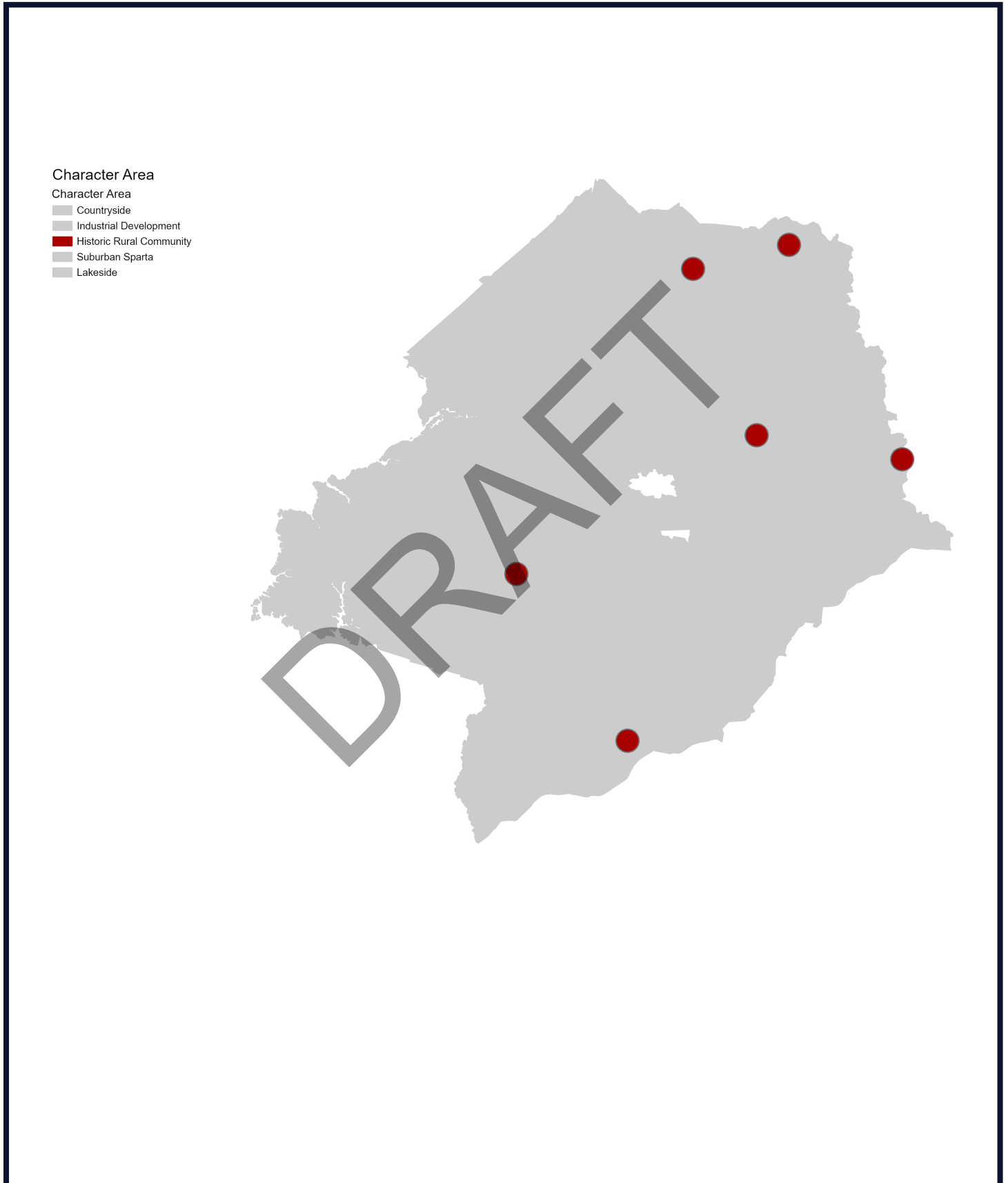
- Residential (single and multi-family)
- Commercial
- Public/Institutional
- Parks/Recreation/Conservation
- Industrial (limited, grandfathered)

Implementation Measures

- Promote a variety of architectural styles and housing types/densities.
- Encourage street block and lot arrangements that promote interconnectivity between tracts.
- Create targeted open space or pocket parks in/near neighborhoods.
- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian features with direct linkages to community facilities.
- Encourage infill development (residential or commercial).
- Allow commercial development along the new truck route (distance from the road to be determined as ordinances are updated).



HISTORIC RURAL COMMUNITY CHARACTER AREA MAP



HISTORIC RURAL COMMUNITY CHARACTER AREA

General Description

The Historic Rural Community Character Area is represented by community nodes of historic significance, some of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR). Each has a unique history worthy of protection and promotion. These nodes include the local, state and federally designated/accepted historic boundaries.

Land Uses

- Residential
- Commercial (limited; neighborhood scale)

Implementation Measures

- Retain the historic character of each node, including building form, massing and Materials where possible.
- Place and maintain local historic markers in each community.
- Require new and infill development to complement existing character.
- Inventory structures and nominate remaining NR-eligible buildings or districts.
- Protect historic view sheds.
- Allow commercial uses in formerly residential structures as a means of building preservation, character retention and economic development.



EXISTING AND FUTURE LAND USE CITY OF SPARTA

The 2026 Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan incorporates a character area map for the city of Sparta. Character areas developed for the Sparta character area map remain purposely broad. Population concentrations are addressed through corridor, district, or neighborhood-specific special area planning processes as the need arises. Supporting character area narratives are located on the following pages. When interpreting how best to use the comprehensive plan's character area map and supporting narratives, the reader should be mindful of the following two (2) parameters:

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

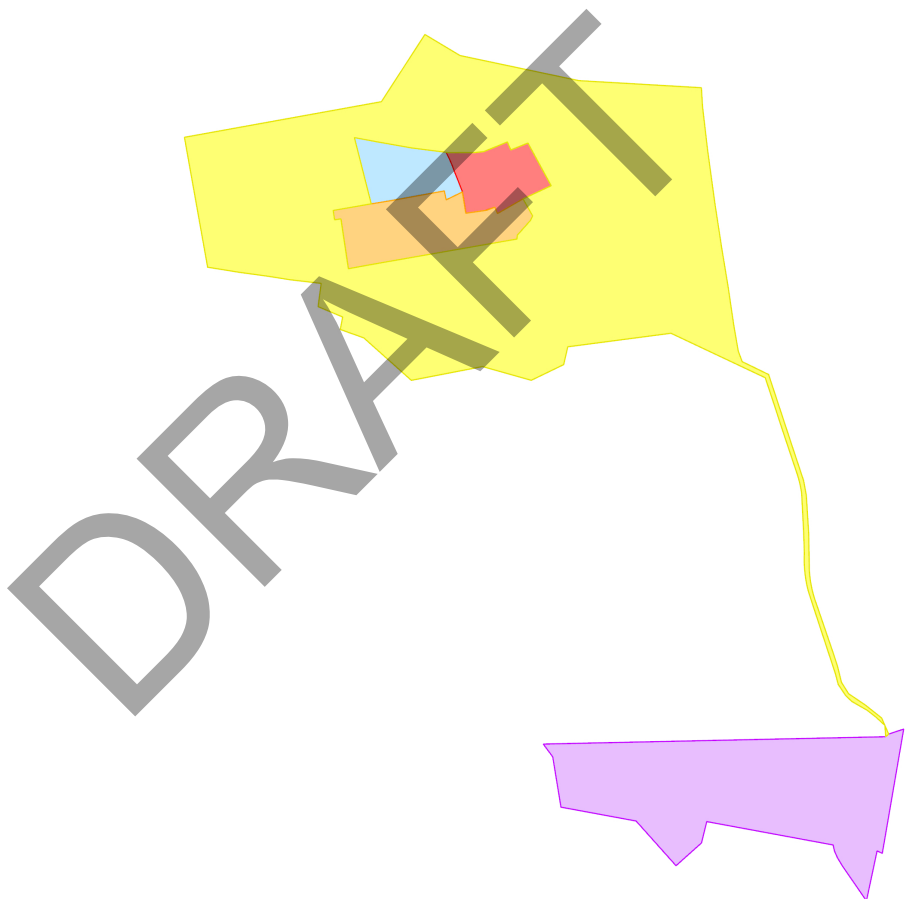
Character Area Narratives. The narratives which correspond to the character area map should be viewed as general policy statements - as statements of intent. Their use and applicability is similar to those other goals and policy statements found in the Community Goals section. They should inform future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

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

CITY OF SPARTA CHARACTER AREA MAP

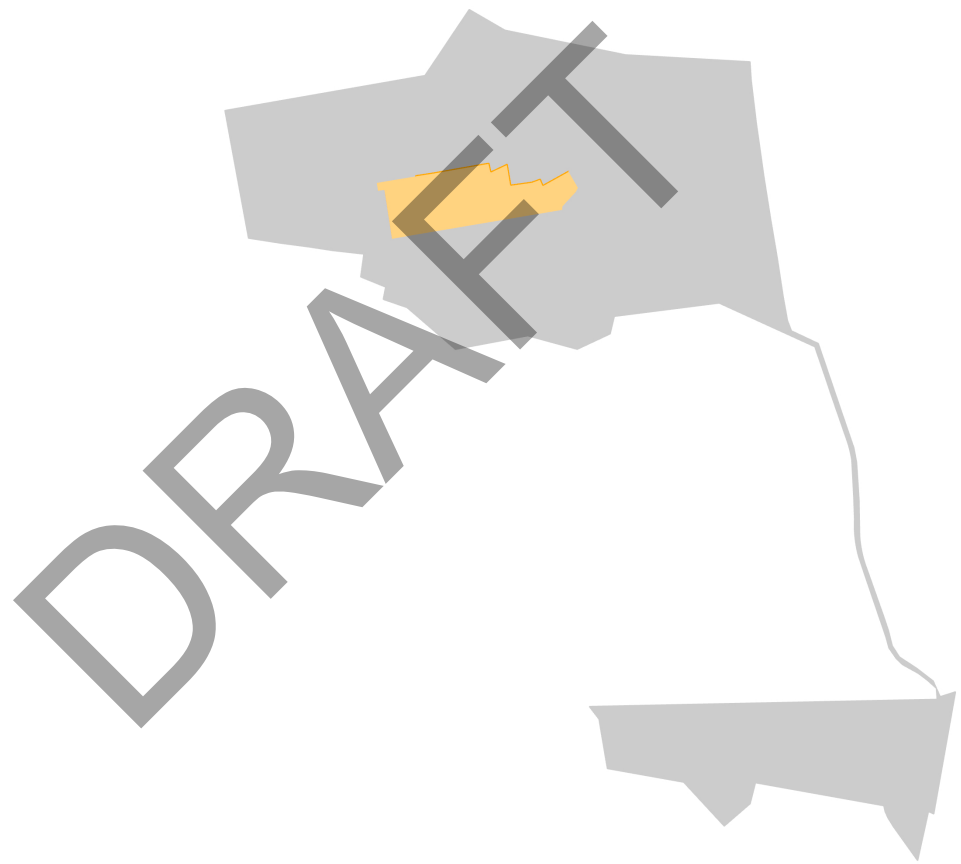
Character Area

- Residential Growth
- Downtown Sparta
- Innovation-Historical
- Institutional Development
- Perimeter Historic



DOWNTOWN SPARTA CHARACTER AREA MAP

- Character Area
- Residential Growth
 - Downtown Sparta
 - Innovation-Historical
 - Institutional Development
 - Perimeter Historic



DOWNTOWN SPARTA CHARACTER AREA

General Description

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

Land Uses

- Commercial
- Residential
- Parks/Recreation

Implementation Measures

- Provide incentives for certain commercial activities.
- Support the retention of historic residential properties.
- Improve commercial area pedestrian facilities.
- Increase advertisement of commercial area and incentives outside of area.
- Provide facilities or spaces where residents are able to congregate and enjoy events.
- Utilize design guidelines for residential and commercial property.



INNOVATION-HISTORICAL CHARACTER AREA MAP

- Character Area
- Residential Growth
 - Downtown Sparta
 - Innovation-Historical
 - Institutional Development
 - Perimeter Historic



INNOVATION-HISTORICAL CHARACTER AREA

General Description

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

Land Uses

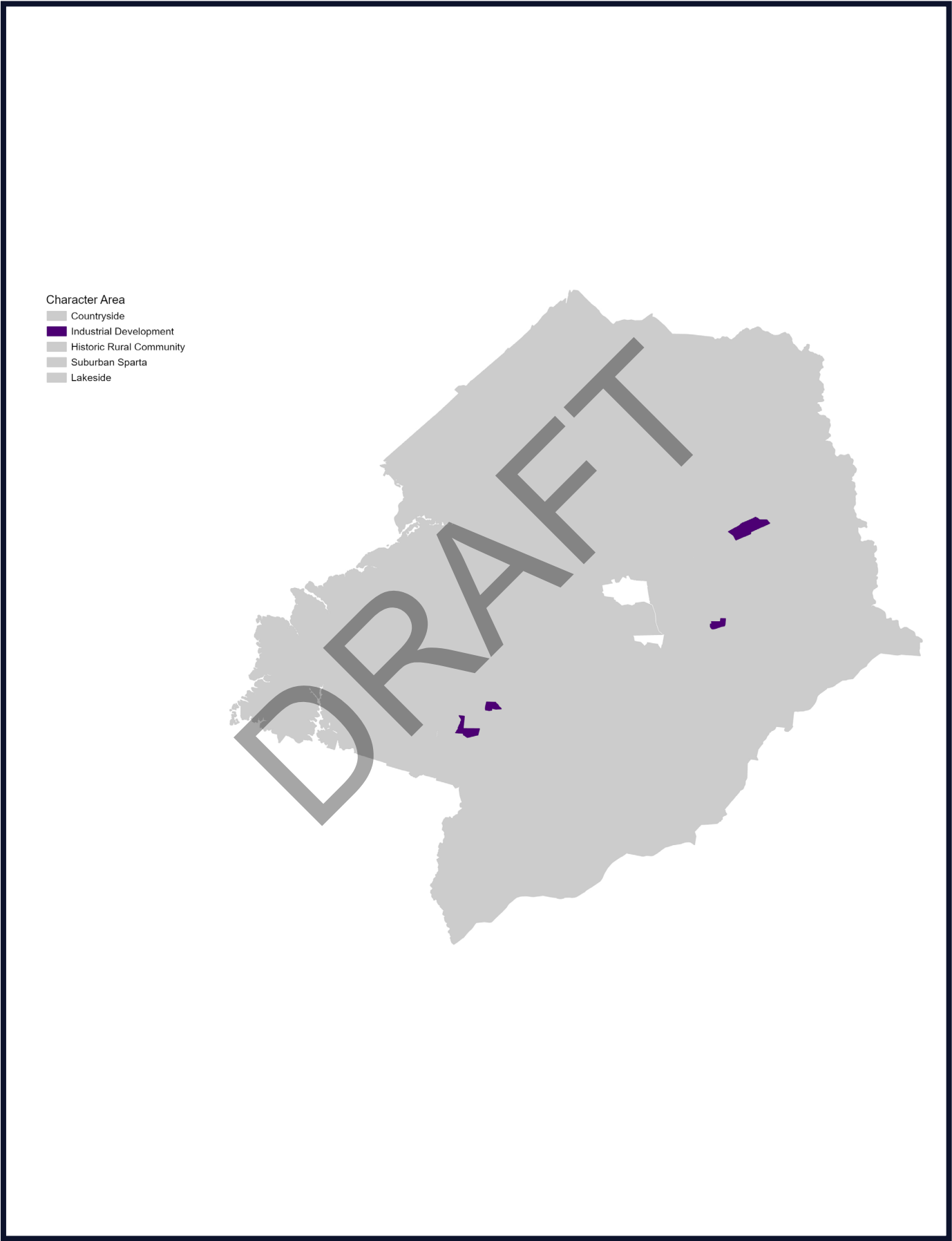
- Small-scale agriculture
- Residential
- Parks/Recreation

Implementation Measures

- Create and support publicly-accessible community gardens.
- Assist with incentives and funding through the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University Agriculture extension offices.
- Support the retention of historic residential properties.
- Increase advertisement of area to attract visitors to unique marriage of agriculture within city residential area.
- Utilize design guidelines for residential property.



INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA MAP



INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AREA

General Description

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

Land Uses

- Public/Institutional

Implementation Measures

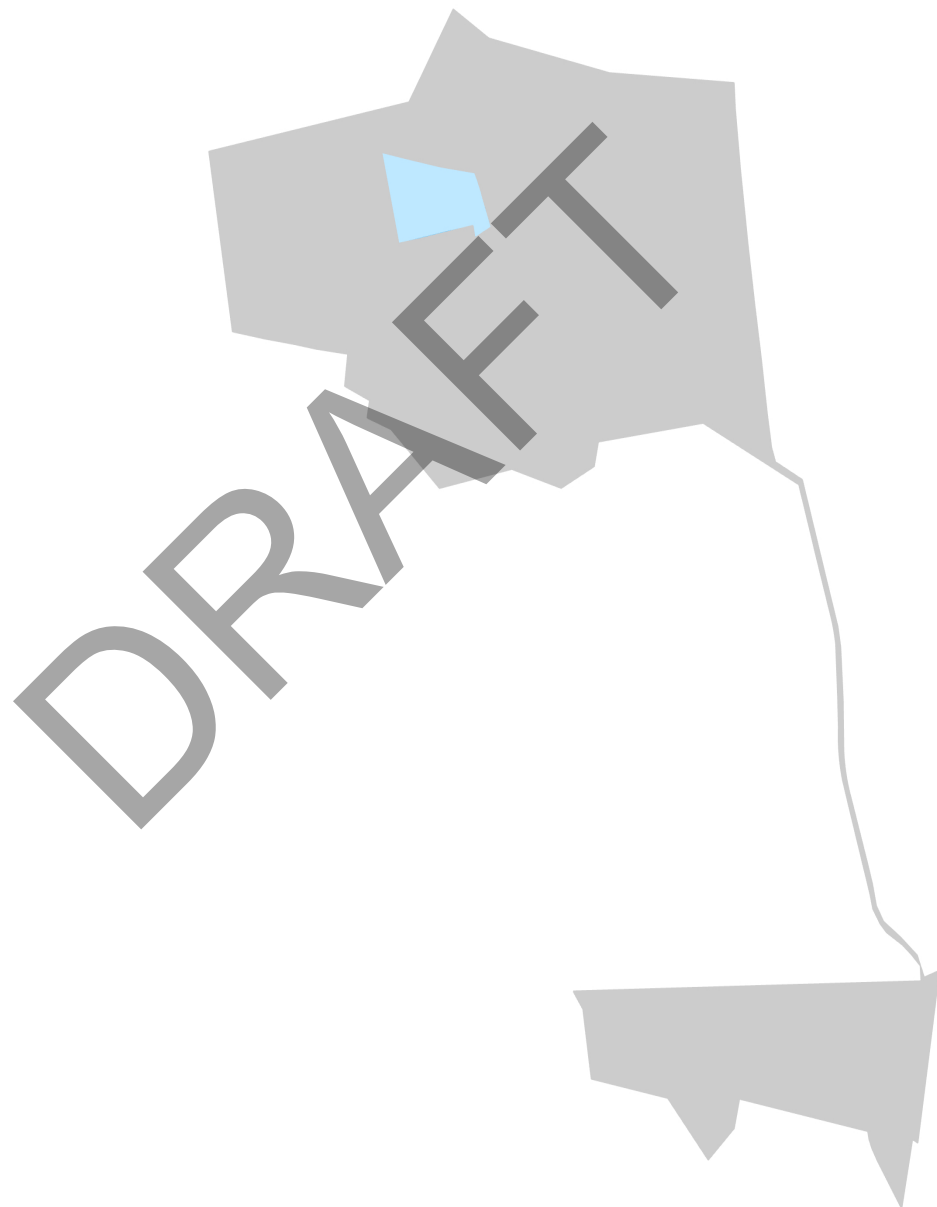
- Expand the uses currently in this area.



PERIMETER-HISTORIC CHARACTER AREA MAP

Character Area

- Residential Growth
- Downtown Sparta
- Innovation-Historical
- Institutional Development
- Perimeter Historic



PERIMETER-HISTORIC CHARACTER AREA

General Description

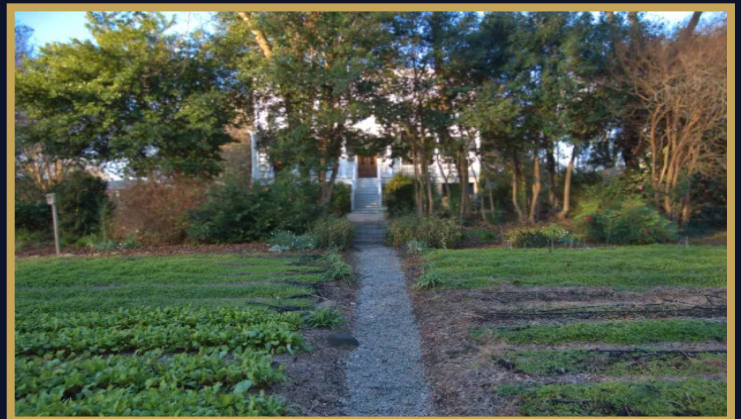
The Perimeter-Historic is characterized by historic homes and sites including the Sparta Cemetery listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This area is a current tourist attraction and should be maintained and beautified to continue to attract visitors to the area.

Land Uses

- Residential
- Public/Institutional
- Commercial (Bed & Breakfast Inns; commercial warehouse)
- Parks/Recreation

Implementation Measures

- Provide ordinance language to ensure the operation of Bed & Breakfast / Inns to ensure visitors have a place to stay on a visit to the city.
- Improve pedestrian facilities.
- Support the retention of historic residential properties.
- Utilize design guidelines for residential and commercial property.
- Increase the number of greenspaces and passive parks for visitors to enjoy.
- Create and support publicly-accessible community gardens.



RESIDENTIAL GROWTH CHARACTER AREA MAP

- Character Area
- Residential Growth
 - Downtown Sparta
 - Innovation-Historical
 - Institutional Development
 - Perimeter Historic



RESIDENTIAL GROWTH CHARACTER AREA

General Description

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

Land Uses

- Residential
- Parks/Recreation
- Commercial (limited, along main high-ways)

Implementation Measures

- Improve pedestrian facilities.
- Support the creation of greenspace, pocket parks and similar public options.
- Provide an area in which residents are able to congregate and enjoy events.



HOUSING

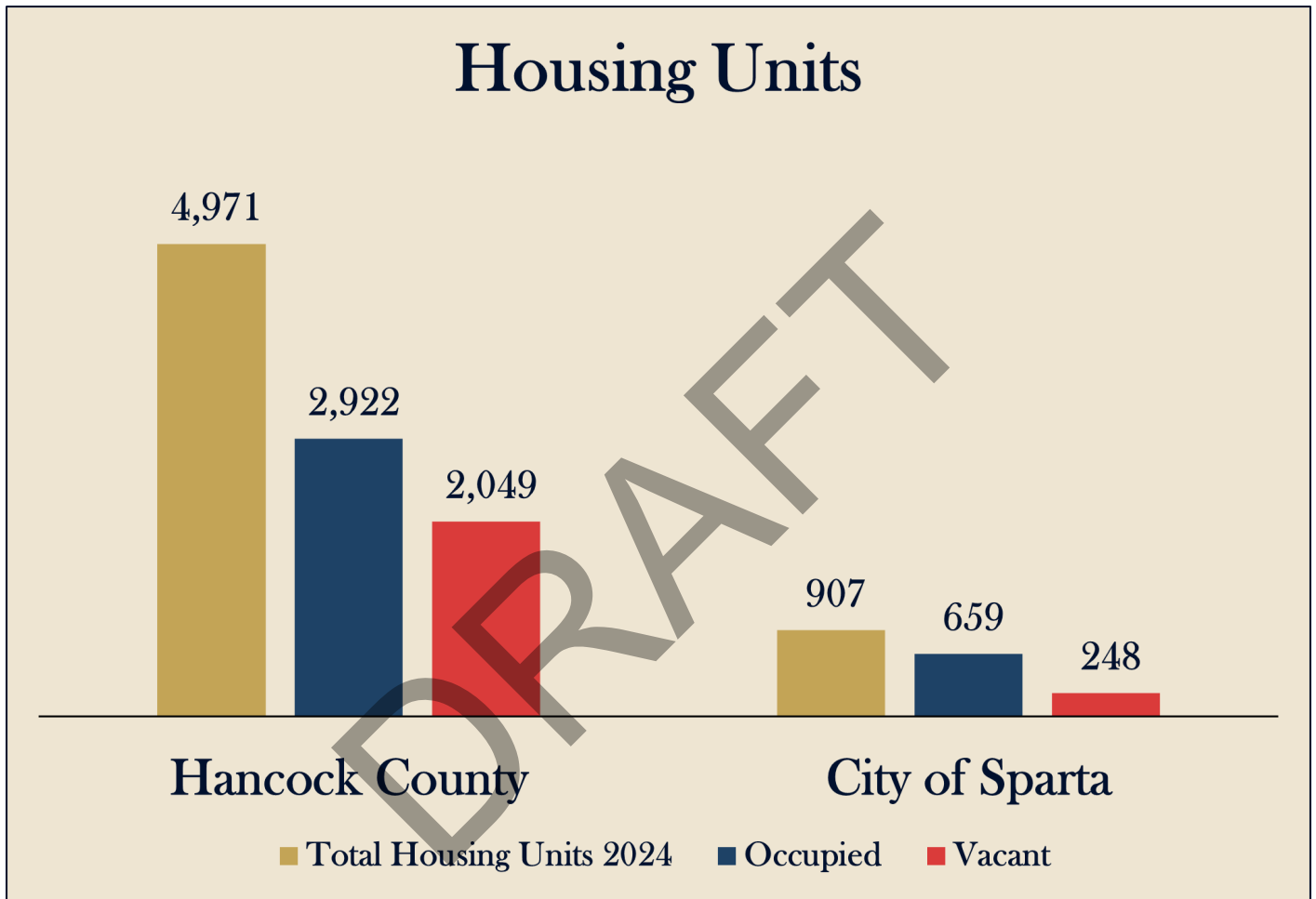
Housing provides residents of a community with a safe, affordable, and healthy place to live. Stable housing is essential for community vitality, encouraging quality growth and preventing issues like urban sprawl or blight. Communities with adequate housing options are better able to adapt to change and remain vibrant over time. Affordable housing is an essential part of economic development. It enables businesses to attract and retain a reliable workforce. The construction and maintenance of housing generate jobs and revenue for local governments. Stable, affordable housing improves physical and mental health outcomes. It reduces stress, limits overcrowding, and minimizes exposure to health hazards.

Housing opens doors for people from varied backgrounds, fostering inclusivity and culture. Mixed-income developments reduce poverty concentration and promote equitable access to neighborhood resources, amenities, and opportunities for economic mobility. Investing in housing, especially removing blight and building new units, can revitalize distressed neighborhoods and improve property values.

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EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

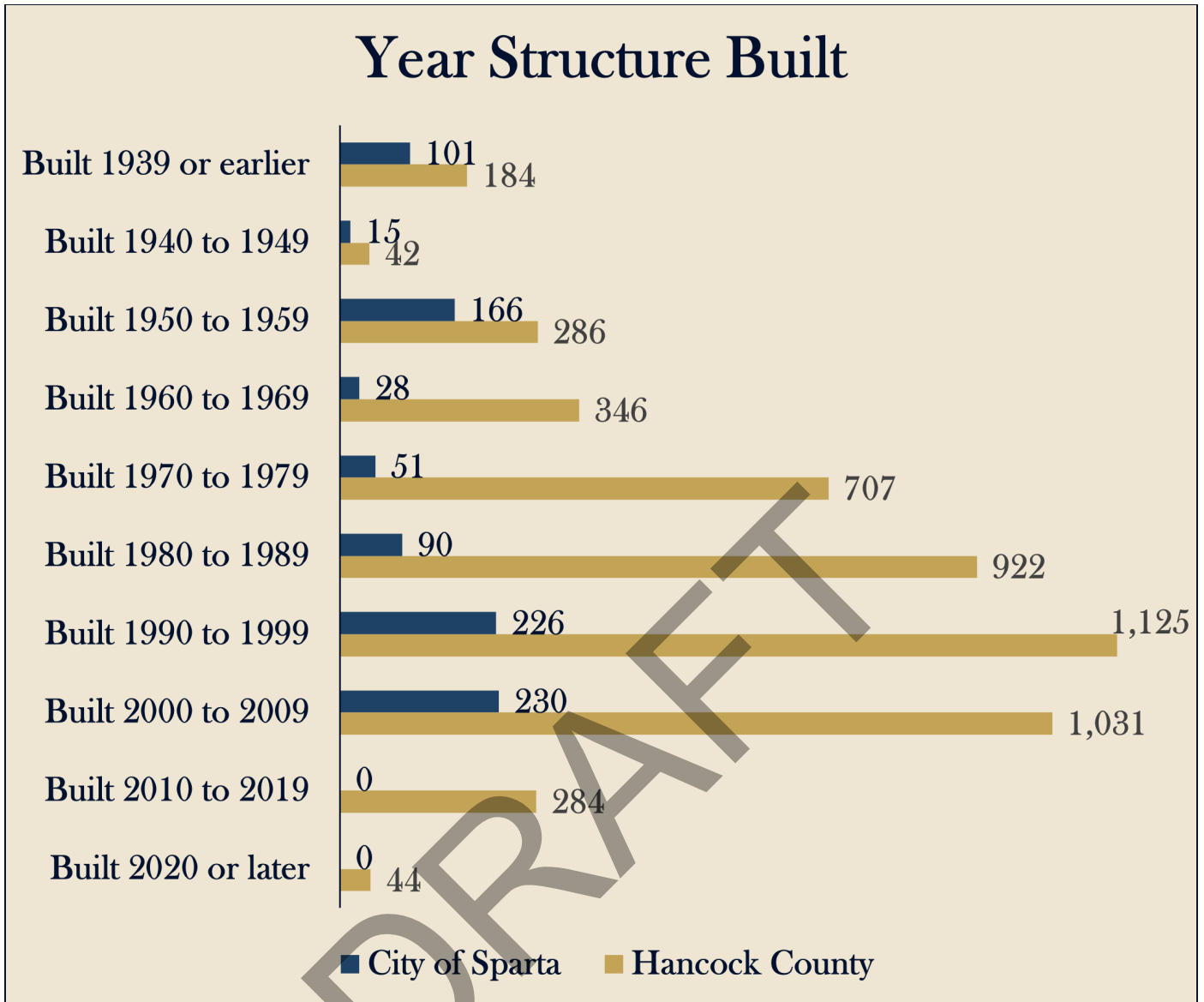
Hancock County contains 4,971 housing units according to the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS). Of those units, 907 were located in the City of Sparta. Hancock County had 2,922 occupied housing units in 2024 and the City of Sparta had 659 occupied units. In 2024, the city of Sparta had 248 vacant housing units. Out of the 4,971 homes in Hancock County 41% of the houses were vacant.



Source: American Community Survey DP04 2024.

The majority of housing built in Hancock County (76%) was built between 1970 and 2009. The City of Sparta had the majority (66%) of housing built between 1990 and 2009. Sparta had 18% of the housing stock built between 1950 to 1959 and 11% built in 1939 and earlier.

AGE OF HOUSING



Source: American Community Survey DP04 2024.

YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT	HANCOCK COUNTY %	CITY OF SPARTA %
BUILT 2020 OR LATER	0.9%	0.0%
BUILT 2010 TO 2019	5.7%	0.0%
BUILT 2000 TO 2009	20.7%	25.4%
BUILT 1990 TO 1999	22.6%	24.9%
BUILT 1980 TO 1989	18.5%	9.9%
BUILT 1970 TO 1979	14.2%	5.6%
BUILT 1960 TO 1969	7.0%	3.1%
BUILT 1950 TO 1959	5.8%	18.3%
BUILT 1940 TO 1949	0.8%	1.7%
BUILT 1939 OR EARLIER	3.7%	11.1%

Source: American Community Survey DP04 2024.

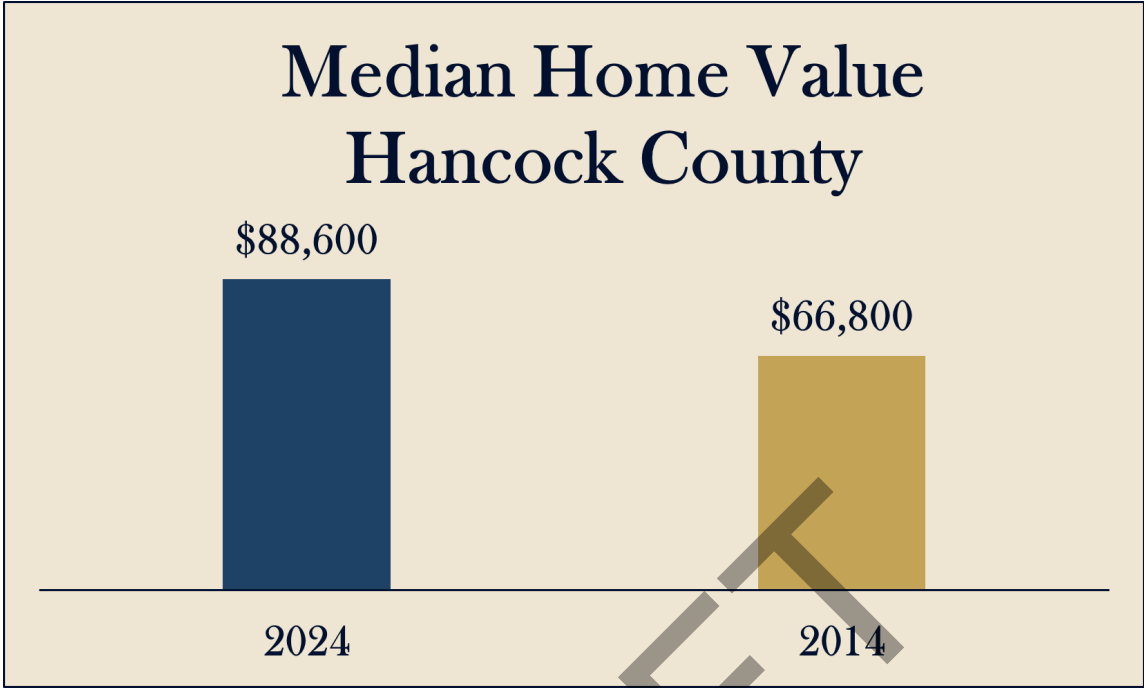
HANCOCK COUNTY HOUSING TYPES

Hancock County contains 4,971 housing units according to the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS). Of those units, 54.3% were 1 unit, detached and 43.1% were mobile homes. Hancock County has very little multi-unit places for residents to live.

1 UNIT, DETACHED	2,700	54.3%
1 UNIT, ATTACHED	45	0.9%
2 UNITS	12	0.2%
3 OR 4 UNITS	0	0.0%
5 TO 9 UNITS	24	0.5%
10 TO 19 UNITS	20	0.4%
20 OR MORE UNITS	27	0.5%
MOBILE HOMES	2,142	43.1%

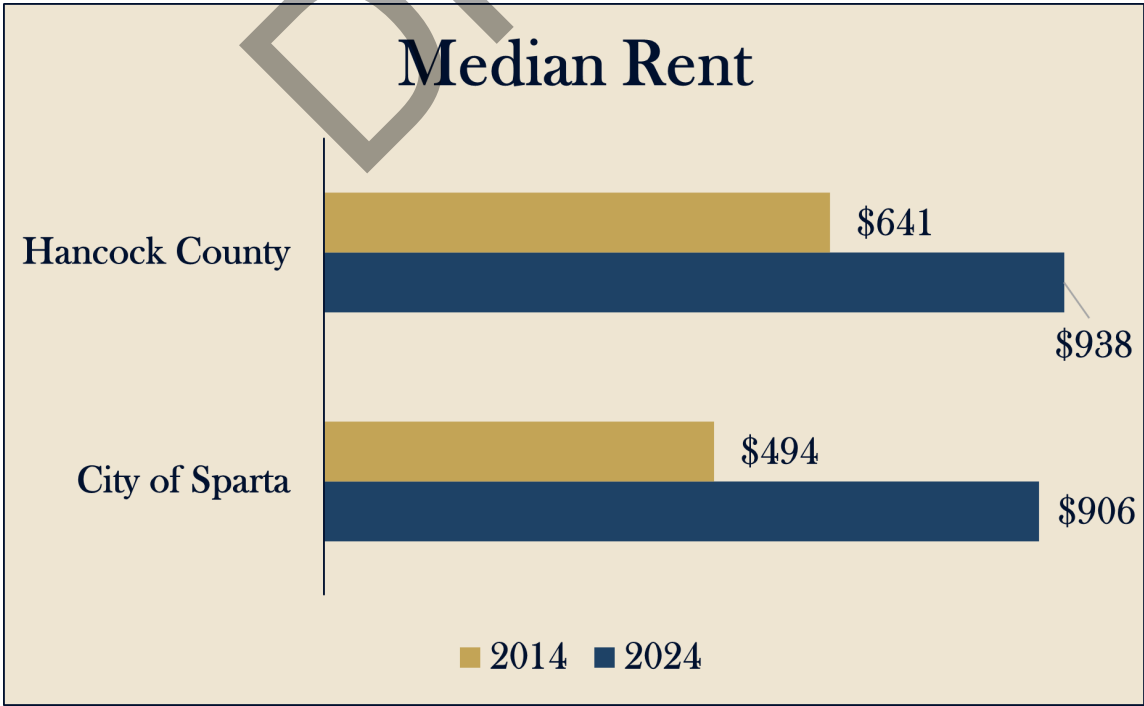
Source: American Community Survey DP04 2024.

COST OF HOUSING IN HANCOCK COUNTY



Source: American Community Survey DP04 2014 & 2024.

According to the American Community Survey, Hancock County saw an increase of 33% in home value in the ten years from 2014 to 2024. During this same 10 year period of time, Hancock County saw an increase of median rent by 46%. The City of Sparta saw an 83% increase in median rent.



Source: American Community Survey DP04 2014 & 2024.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities and services are an essential component of any community. They include spaces such as community centers, parks, libraries, sports complexes, and recreational venues. These facilities serve as the backbone of social, cultural, and economic life within communities, providing numerous benefits to residents. Access to community facilities and services improves overall quality of life for residents. Parks and recreational centers provide opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and leisure, which contribute to physical and mental well-being. Well maintained community facilities can attract new residents and businesses, boosting the local economy. They create jobs through facility operations and indirectly by supporting local events and tourism.

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FIRE PROTECTION AND EMS

Hancock County has 4 fire stations: Station 1 (Sparta); Station 2 (East Lake); Station 5 (Holiday Shores); Station 11 (Hancock State Prison). The fire department is all volunteer with 48 firemen. Changes in the way Insurance Service Office (ISO) ratings are calculated has negatively affected citizens and caused a rise in insurance premiums. Because of this, the county is considering opening additional fire stations in under-served areas to help lower the ISO ratings and insurance premiums. However, finding volunteers to man those stations is a challenge.

County-wide emergency medical services (EMS) are contracted with Grady Health Systems.

PUBLIC SAFETY

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

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

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

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

WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER

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

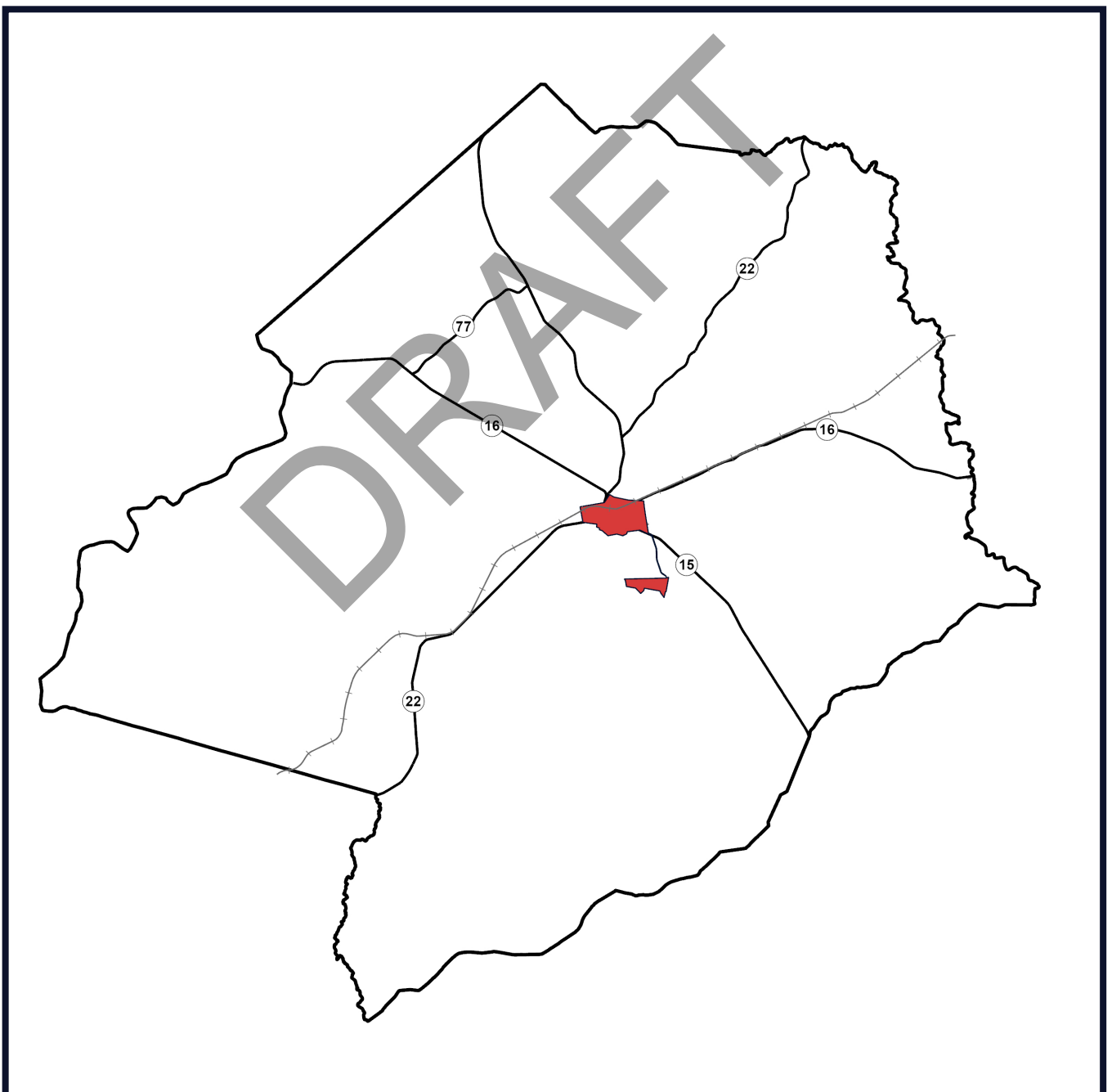
Sparta operates a municipal water system for its residents and provides some service for residents of unincorporated Hancock County. Sparta operates a 1.0 million gallon per day (mgd) capacity treatment facility located at the end of James Way Drive in Hancock County. Water from the lake is drawn and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

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

ROAD SYSTEM

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

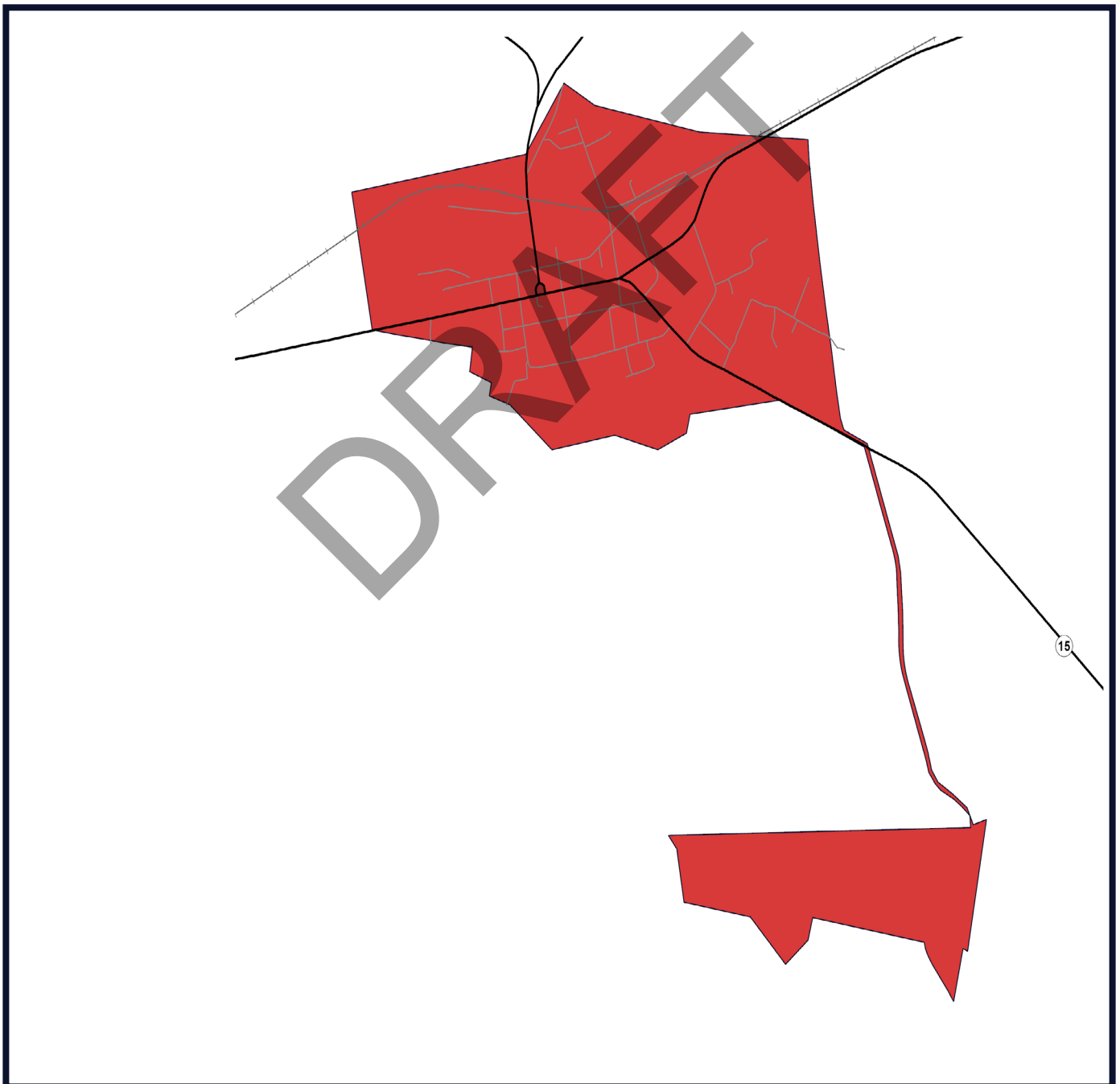
Hancock County



RAILROAD

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

City of Sparta



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The Hancock County Health Department offers more than 30 different programs and services to prevent disease, promote health and protect community through education, service, advocacy and collaboration.



SENIOR CENTER

The Betty Hill Senior Center is open Monday through Thursday each week offering a variety of activities designed to improve health and increase socialization. The center provides a hot meal for approximately 20 members each day. Throughout the week, the dedicated staff provide attendees with opportunities for spiritual growth, game days, exercise and educational classes. Center participants are provided with opportunities to go on trips several times a year. The staff enjoys offering several events, including an engaging Black History Month Celebration.



PARKS AND RECREATION

Lake Sinclair is a 15,333 acres of water with 417 miles of shoreline, 10 of which are located in Hancock County.

Shoulderbone Creek Trails provides opportunity for hiking, walking, and enjoying the outdoors.



LIBRARY

The Sparta-Hancock County library is part of the Azalea Regional Library System and provides access to free public computer use and wifi. The library also provides study rooms and a large meeting room. Patrons have access to regular and large print materials, assistive technology, and a historical genealogy room. Digital libraries provide access to e books, audio books, and digital magazines. The Sparta-Hancock County library also has a live observation beehive housed within the library. This hive is maintained by the Lake Country Beekeepers Association and serves as a vital educational tool to promote the importance of bees in a healthy ecosystem and to encourage the practice of beekeeping.

BROADBAND

Broadband is considered critical infrastructure. Communities with reliable high-speed internet experience greater economic growth, job creation, and global competitiveness. Broadband enables small businesses to expand their reach to include online markets and accelerate employment growth. High-speed internet transforms education by providing students and teachers with access to resources, interactive lessons, videos, and distance learning opportunities. Broadband breaks down geographic barriers for students in rural areas. Broadband enables telemedicine, connecting patients in remote areas to healthcare providers and specialists. This improves health outcomes especially in communities lacking hospitals or clinics. Broadband improves quality of life by connecting people to streaming entertainment, social media, government services, and public safety information. Communities with broadband infrastructure are better equipped to attract new residents, retain businesses, and enable residents to work remotely. Broadband can help reduce commuting times and carbon emissions. Georgia has prioritized broadband as essential infrastructure with public-private partnerships and strategic planning to expand access, especially in underserved areas. Broadband plays a vital role in economic development, education, and healthcare.

Broadband is high speed Internet that is always on. The FCC currently defines high speed Internet access as download speeds of at least 25 Mbps and upload speeds of at least 3 Mbps. Recently updated to 100/20 Mbps. Mbps is megabits per second. These minimum upload and download speeds are essential to quality of service for end user customers. Broadband includes several high-speed transmission technologies. The goal in many communities may be terrestrial service, but mobile or satellite may be the only option. Hancock County is no exception.

Different technologies:

Fiber optic cable - buried underground and transmits data over light through glass or plastic.

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. It is 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.

The Ace Act

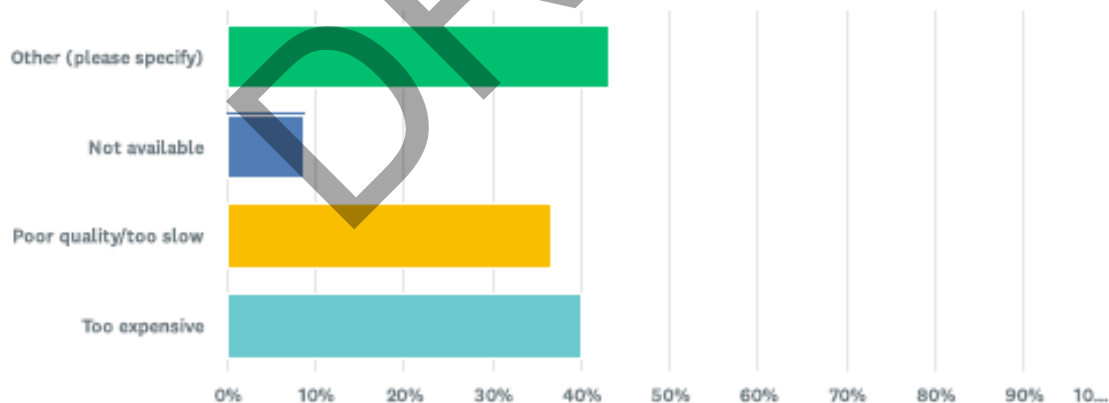
In 2018, the Georgia General Assembly passed “Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act” (Senate Bill 402). Provisions in the Act include:

- 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 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.

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q9 What issues do you have with internet at home? Check all that apply.

Answered: 125 Skipped: 87



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Other (please specify) Show responses	43.20%	54
● Not available	8.80%	11
● Poor quality/too slow	36.80%	46
● Too expensive	40.00%	50
Total		161

Georgia Broadband Availability

Legend

Location Speed Code

- No Data
- 0 (< 10/1 Mbps)
- 10 (>= 10/1 < 25/3 Mbps)
- 25 (>= 25/3 < 100/20 Mbps)
- 102 (>= 100/20 < 100/100 Mbps)
- 110 (>= 100/100 < 1000/1000 Mbps)
- 1000 (>= 1000/1000 Mbps)

Broadband Grant Programs

- ARPA Capital Project Fund
- ARPA Local Fiscal Recovery Fund
- ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Fund
- USDA Telecom Infrastructure Loans
- USDA Reconnect
- NTIA BIP
- FCC RDOF
- FCC Enhanced A-CAM

Tools

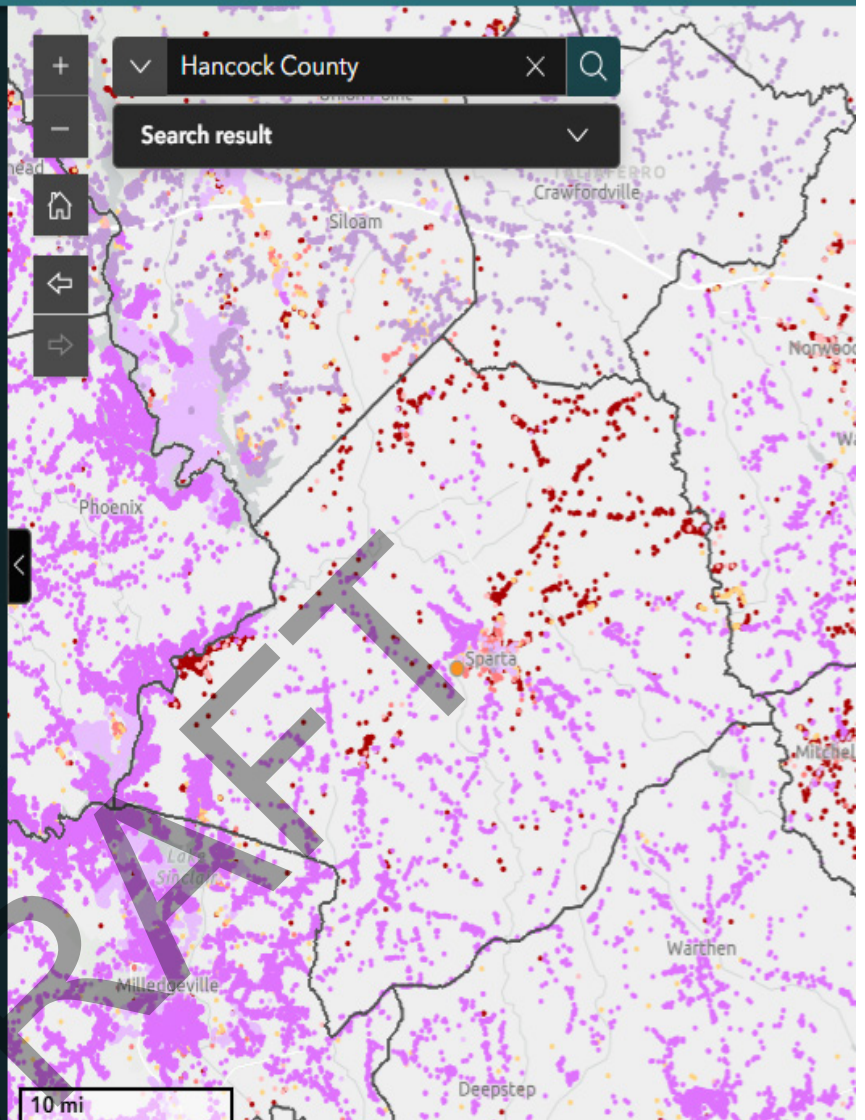
- Control map layer visibility
- Open or close the sidebar
- Search for address, place or county

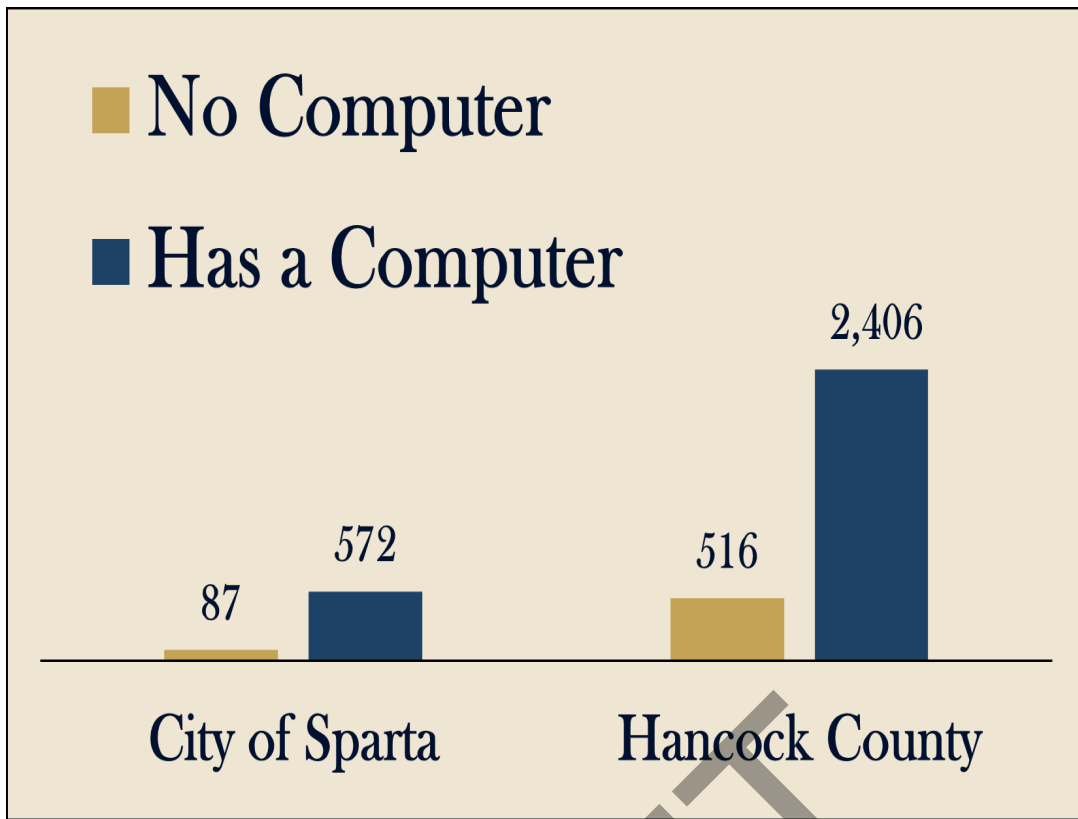
Description

Click on the county layer to return county level statistics for the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program. BEAD statistics at the census block level are available for download in the county popup. See the imbedded link.

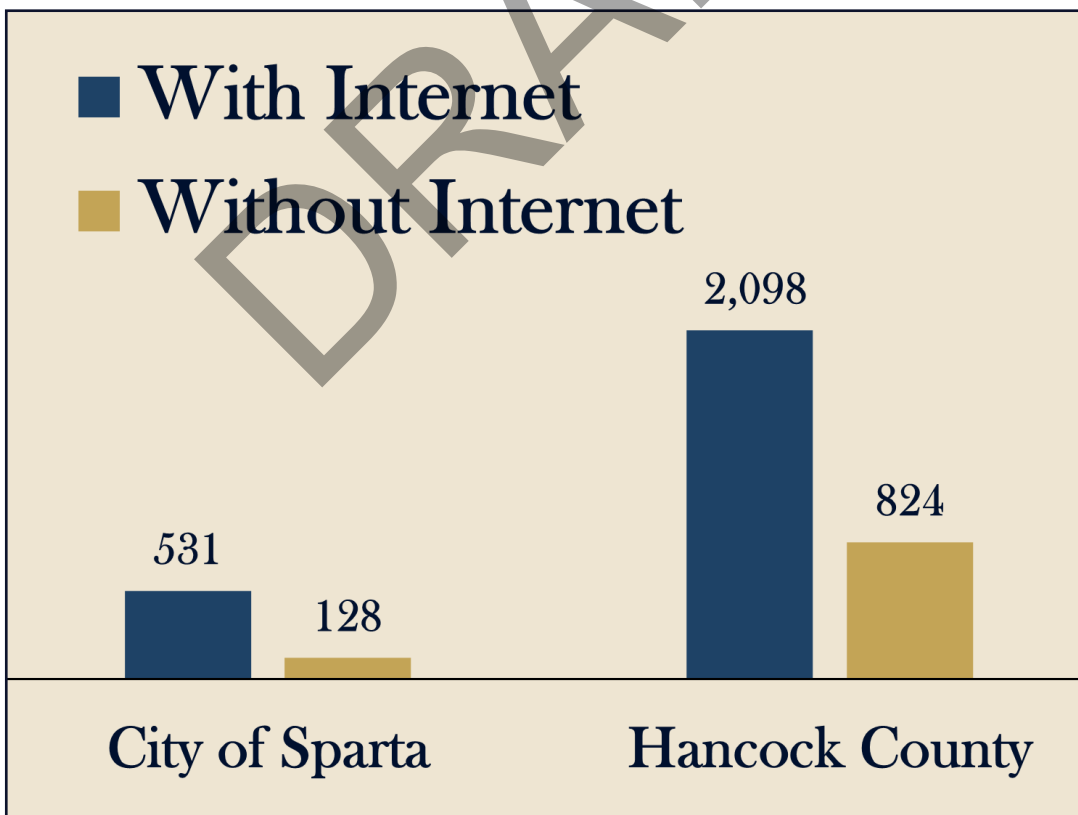
The map portrays maximum available broadband speed categories for locations in the State of Georgia. These speed categories are denoted 'Speed Codes' and delineated in the included legend. The map depicts access to broadband, not subscription to broadband.

The map includes a grant layer delineating areas, or locations, for which various federal, state or local grants have been awarded, as described in the included legend. The grant layer visibility can be controlled via the Map Layers widget (see the Tools section). Once visible, clicking on a grant will select the full grant boundary and return detailed information in a popup on the map.





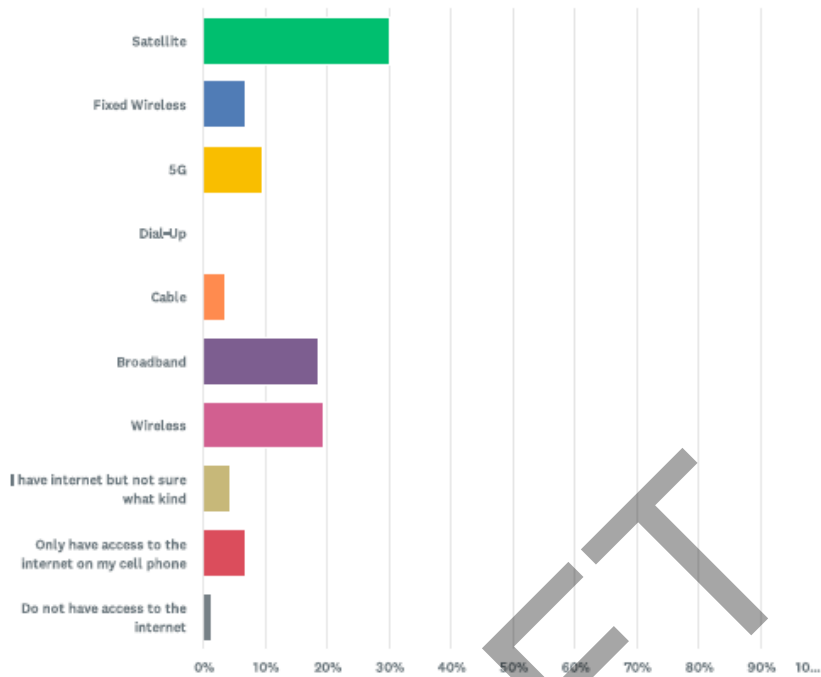
According to the American Community Survey, out of the 2,922 households in Hancock County, 18 % did not have a computer in 2024. In the City of Sparta, 13% of the 659 households did not have a computer.



According to the American Community Survey, out of the 2,922 households in Hancock County, 28 % did not have internet in 2024. In the City of Sparta, 19% of the 659 households did not have a computer.

Q8 What type of internet access do you have at home?

Answered: 146 Skipped: 66



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Satellite	30.14%	44
● Fixed Wireless	6.85%	10
● 5G	9.59%	14
● Dial-Up	0%	0
● Cable	3.42%	5
Total		146

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Broadband	18.49%	27
● Wireless	19.18%	28
● I have internet but not sure what kind	4.11%	6
● Only have access to the internet on my cell phone	6.85%	10
● Do not have access to the internet	1.37%	2
Total		146

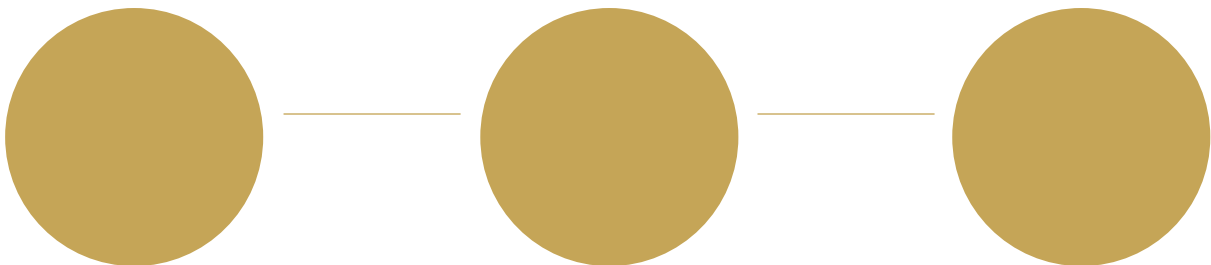
REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Activities from the 2021 Joint Comprehensive Plan Community Work Program are assigned the following identifiers to acknowledge the status of each activity as:

- Completed: The listed activity has been concluded.
- Ongoing: The listed activity has started and is continuing.
- Postponed: The listed activity has not been started or halted for some reason.
- Not Accomplished: The listed activity has not moved forward and will not be a part of the 2026 Community Work Program.

The Report of Accomplishments is structured to adhere to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' minimum standards for local comprehensive planning. Items regarded as policies are not included in the 2026 community work program and have been incorporated into the "Community Goals" section of the plan, reworded, or included in another policy.

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Report of Accomplishments

HANCOCK COUNTY

Economic Development					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create and operate one or more city-county business incubators throughout the county.		X			Buildings have been erected, working with the City of Sparta and GDOT to get water and sewer connected.
Develop an annual fishing tournament at Lake Sinclair.				X	No current volunteers to organize and plan.
Apply to the DCA Tourism Product Development Team for a visit and subsequent report for county tourism.			X		More research needed, no current personnel to apply. Will include in the next five year work program.
Initiate a "Christmas at the Courthouse" annual program.		X			Currently working on implementing. Should happen this year.
Work with Georgia "Camera Ready" program to update locations and images for Hancock County.				X	No work has been done on this project. May revisit in the future.
Acquire property to host a farmers market.	X				
Establish the Hancock County career academy.		X			Still in progress, working on getting a cohort of interns.

Report of Accomplishments

HANCOCK COUNTY

Housing					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Review County ordinances and investigate the adoption of the International Building Code and other codes as necessary and appropriate.		X			Currently working on this, should be completed in the next two years.
Perform a housing survey and map project to identify and document areas of substandard housing.				X	Need to consider this in the future, no current staff available.
Apply for CHIP funds to rehab units in targeted areas.			X		This is something needed after the GICH team is formed.
Establish a local team and apply to become a GICH community (jointly with Sparta).			X		Still interested in holding discussion about partnership in the future.
Research community options for addressing homelessness, including local partners and continuum of care. Take action as deemed appropriate.			X		This is still under discussion. Will be included in the new work program.
Begin operations of the land bank authority (LBL): securing property donations, promoting properties for sale and more.		X			Currently working on appointing members to the board this year.
Conduct a workshop or other local event on heirs property and related topics.				X	Will need to revisit in the future loss of public interest and no volunteers to teach the class.

Report of Accomplishments

HANCOCK COUNTY

Natural and Cultural Resources					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create a recreational trails plan.				X	No formal plan has been created. A trail will be at the new park.
Apply for a recreational trails grant.				X	The new park will have a trail. No grant has been applied for.
Create a program to recognize the importance of Native American culture in Hancock County.				X	Public interest in the past, no current plans to do this, no staff available.
Construct a temporary museum exhibit in a city or county facility.				X	No county land available for this project. May revisit in the future.
Acquire property to re-establish a city-county museum.				X	No land identified at this time. Would like to do this in the future.
Work with community members and partners to develop components of a new museum building, including exhibits, dedicated office space for the HPC, genealogy area, and business incubator.				X	Will revisit this in the future when land or adaptive use of a historic building has been identified.
Develop an historic resources survey for all of Hancock County, multiple phases if necessary.				X	This may be revisited in the future. Historic Preservation Commission lacks funds to construct.

Report of Accomplishments

HANCOCK COUNTY

Community Facilities and Services

Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Continue to search for a buyer/operator for Hancock Memorial Hospital.		X			This is ongoing and will be included in the next work program.
Conduct environmental testing and evaluate the structure of the Hancock Memorial Hospital to determine feasibility of use.	X				
Apply for funds to renovate the interior of train depot.		X			A portion of this project has been completed. Should be completed this year.
Apply for CDBG funds for infrastructure improvements throughout the county.		X			This will be on a continual basis.
Secure and intergovernmental agreement with Baldwin County for an additional water supply.		X			This is in progress and should be completed this year.
Expand county water system to East Lake and other designated areas.		X			This is in progress and will remain in the new work program.
Update the county recreational park.		X			This project is currently in progress.
Utilize the "Live Healthy Hancock" report to create a community garden program and expand existing school gardens.				X	No location has been identified and no progress toward this has been done.
Begin an in-school health clinic.	X				
Acquire land to create additional courthouse parking.	X				
Establish an electronic payment system for paying county taxes (eg. online payments, credit card payments.)	X				
Establish a new city-county park on a 8-acre tract of land recently donated to the county, including potential space for a splash pad, food forest, equipment and other options.		X			Bids open in 2026. All work will be completed by December 2026.

Report of Accomplishments

HANCOCK COUNTY

Community Facilities and Services

Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Begin funding operations at Sparta's animal rescue center, focusing on city rescuer staff and training.			X		
Purchase refrigeration equipment for food storage at the American Legion (or other facility as deemed appropriate) to improve food access location.			X		

Land Use

Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create a new county zoning ordinance and accompanying map.			X		
Adopt the CSRA-RC model solar ordinance.				X	Currently working on updating the zoning ordinance. This will be completed in the next five years. Not looking to adopt the CSRA-RC's model.
Hire a code enforcement officer or procure shared enforcement services with another jurisdiction.			X		This has been postponed, looking for funding.

Report of Accomplishments

HANCOCK COUNTY

Broadband					Comments
Activity	Status				
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Apply for DCA's Broadband Ready designation.	X				
Consider and implement improvements to WI-FI availability at public facilities and businesses.	X				
Work with private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved county.		X			Comcast is working on this now. Should be completed in the next five years.

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Report of Accomplishments

CITY OF SPARTA

Economic Development					Comments
Activity	Status				
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Research the economic, social, and regional benefit of the Pine Tree Festival and provide suggestions to improve this event.		X			The Chamber of Commerce is being reorganized and is to open this year. They will be planning and funding this project.
Create a tourism guide to include the Scenic By Way Route and Native American historical sites.				X	Funding not available
Work with Hancock County Schools (and OFTC if possible) to create a youth business program.		X			Underway, Interns at City Hall and Utilities plant.
Establish two community gardens. Promote the gardens through utility billing and the Healthy Hancock Initiative.				X	No city owned properties available for gardens.
Apply for Georgia Rural Zone designation.			X		No progress has been made. Will apply in the next five years.
Apply for and utilize CDBG funds to rehab and update blighted areas.		X			Code officer working on blighted properties at this time. Will apply for CDBG funding in the next five years.

Report of Accomplishments

CITY OF SPARTA

Housing					Comments
Activity	Status				
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Develop a strategy to utilize Airbnb to provide a greater number of short stay options in historic residential homes.				X	Only one Airbnb located in the city. This will not appear in the new work program.
Develop ordinance language to ensure loft apartments are allowed in downtown Sparta.		X			Updated ordinance will be presented to council in July of 2026.
Create housing inventory including historic homes with a Housing Action Plan.		X			Historic Preservation Commission is helping with this. This will be completed in the next five years and appear in the new work program.
Apply to become GICH community (jointly with Hancock County).				X	No discussion with county. This item will not appear in the new work program.

Report of Accomplishments

CITY OF SPARTA

Community Facilities and Services					Comments
Activity	Status				
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Work with GDOT to address intersections within the city, especially Five Points, Broad Street, East Broad Street, Augusta Hwy, and Elm Street.	X				
Construct downtown business district park, including picnic tables, shelter, and more.		X			Applying for funding to complete this project, Equipment is in storage. This project will appear in the next work program.
Perform water distribution system and sewer upgrades throughout the city, including treatment facilities.		X			These projects are underway and should be completed in the next ten years.
Construct the State Route (SR) 15 Sparta truck route.		X			This project will be completed in June of 2026.

Report of Accomplishments

CITY OF SPARTA

Land Use					Comments
Activity	Status				
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Identify historic district boundaries for local designation and protection.	X				
Review and update zoning ordinance (and map if needed).		X			City attorney is working on this. This will be completed in the next five years.
Create an overlay zone to encourage downtown development.				X	Not a priority of the city at this time.

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Report of Accomplishments

CITY OF SPARTA

Natural and Cultural Resources					
Activity	Status				Comments
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Create a tree farm educational site on city owned property as an educational opportunity.				X	No properties owned by the city.
Initiate historical tours as an educational program using historic architectural structures.	X				
Initiate a Keep America Beautiful program in Sparta.		X			City wide clean up day set.
Develop an historic resources survey for the entire city of Sparta.	X				
Work to develop Georgia Historical marker for Jean Toomer, an African-American writer, instrumental in the Harlem Renaissance.		X			HPC looking into this. This will appear in the next work program.
Create a GIS map that corresponds to the updated historic resource survey.				X	No manpower available to do this.
Apply for Main Street designation, and join the GA Main Street program.		X			HPC is helping with this. This should be completed in the next five years.

Report of Accomplishments

CITY OF SPARTA

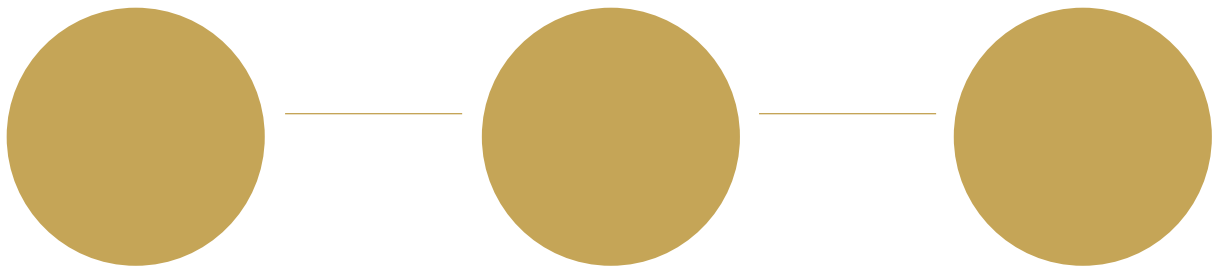
Broadband					Comments
Activity	Status				
	Completed	Underway	Postponed	Not Accomplished	
Apply for DCA's Broadband Ready designation.	X				
Consider and implement improvements to Wi-Fi availability at public facilities and businesses.	X				
Work with the EMC and private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved city.		X			Connexion/Xfinity laying fiber now. This project will be in the new work program.

DRAFT

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The Work Program consists of specific activities that the city of Sparta and Hancock County will undertake in the five-year period from 2026 through 2031 to meet identified community needs and advance local goals. Although the plan was developed jointly, each jurisdiction has developed its own set of work program activities. Some activities will be completed as joint effort with participation by all local governments. Each work program entry includes: a description of the activity, a time frame for completion, parties responsible for implementation, a cost estimate, and a funding source.

DRAFT



Community Work Program

HANCOCK COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Create and operate one or more city-county business incubators throughout the county.	X					County, City, Private Sector, DOT	Varies	State, Federal, Local & Private Funds
Apply to the DCA Tourism Product Development Team for a visit and subsequent report for county tourism.	X					County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local Funds
Initiate a "Christmas at the Courthouse" annual program.	X					County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Establish the Hancock County career academy.	X					County, School Board	TBD	Local Funds
Job Program development	X					County	\$90K	General Fund

Community Work Program

HANCOCK COUNTY

HOUSING								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Review County ordinances and investigate adoption of the International Building Code and other codes as necessary and appropriate.	X					County	Staff Time	State, Federal, and Local Funds
Apply for CHIP funds to rehab units in targeted areas.	X	X	X	X	X	County, CSRA-RC	\$600K - \$1.5M	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Establish a local team and apply to become a GICH community.	X					County City, Volunteers, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local Funds
Research community options for addressing homelessness, including local partners and continuum of care. Take action as deemed appropriate.		X	X			County, City, Volunteers	Staff Time	Local Funds
Begin operations of the land bank authority (LBA): securing property donations, promoting properties for sale and more.	X					City, County, LBA	Varies	Local Funds

Community Work Program

HANCOCK COUNTY

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Continue to search for a buyer/operator for Hancock Memorial Hospital.	X	X	X	X	X	County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Apply for funds to renovate the interior of train depot.	X					County, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Secure an intergovernmental agreement with Baldwin County for an additional water supply.	X					County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Expand county water system to East Lake and other designated areas.	X	X				County	\$5 Million	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Update the county recreational park.	X					County	\$20K	Local Funds
Establish a new city-county park on a 8-acre tract of land recently donated to the county, including potential space for a splash pad, food forest, equipment and other options.	X	X				County, City, Private Sector	TBD	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Begin funding operations at Sparta's animal rescue center, focusing on city rescuer staff and training.	X					County	Staff Time	Local Funds
Purchase refrigeration equipment for food storage at the American Legion (or other facility as deemed appropriate) to improve food access location.		X				County	TBD	State, Federal & Local Funds
Open the EOC for additional office space, coroner office, and utilities office	X					County	\$25K	General Fund
Completion of Whaley Park	X					County	\$2M	Grant Funds

Community Work Program

HANCOCK COUNTY

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Provide Energy Assistance to Community	X					County	\$50K	General Fund
Provide food for food bank	X					County	\$5K	General Fund
Purchase Medical Office equipment	X					County	\$450K	Grant Funds
Provide potable water and fire protection throughout the county.	X	X	X	X	X	County/ Baldwin County	TBD	GEFA
Apply for CDBG funds to renovate or build a new building for 4-H program and Boys & Girls Club.	X		X		X	County, CSRA-RC	\$1M	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Apply for Grant funds for water, sewer, flood and drainage, and roadway improvements.	X		X		X	County, CSRA- RC	\$1M	State, Federal, Local Funds, GEFA, CDBG, SEID
Apply for funds for Hancock County Historic Resources Survey.		X	X	X		County, CSRA-RC, HPC	TBD	State, Federal, Local Funds, DCA/HPD, GA Heritage

Community Work Program

HANCOCK COUNTY

LAND USE

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
	Create a new county zoning ordinance and accompanying map.	X						
Hire a code enforcement officer or procure shared enforcement services with another jurisdiction.		X				County	TBD	Local Funds

DRAFT

Community Work Program

HANCOCK COUNTY

BROADBAND SERVICES

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Work with private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved county.	X	X	X	X	X	County, Private Sector	TBD	State, Federal, Local & Private Funds

DRAFT



Community Work Program

CITY OF SPARTA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Research the economic, social, and regional benefit of the Pine Tree Festival and provide suggestions to improve this event.	X					City, Local Business Owners	Staff Time	Local Funds
Work with Hancock County Schools (and OFTC if possible) to create a youth business program.	X					City, County School Board, OFTC	Staff Time	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Apply for Georgia Rural Zone designation.		X				City, CSRA-RC, Private Sector	Staff Time	Local Funds
Apply for and utilize CDBG funds to rehab and update blighted areas.		X		X		City, CSRA-RC	TBD	State, Federal, & Local Funds

Community Work Program

CITY OF SPARTA

HOUSING

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
	Develop ordinance language to ensure loft apartments are allowed in downtown Sparta.	X						
Create a housing inventory to include historic homes with a Housing Action Plan.	X					City, UGA, Volunteers, CSRA-RC	Staff Time	Local Funds
Apply for CHIP funds to rehab units or new construction units	X	X	X	X	X	City, CSRA-RC	\$600K-\$1.5M	Federal, State, Local Funds
Establish a local team and apply to become a GICH community.	X	X	X			City	Staff Time	Local Funds

Community Work Program

CITY OF SPARTA

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Construct downtown business district park, including picnic tables, shelter, and more.	X					City	\$25K	Local Funds
Perform water distribution system and sewer upgrades throughout the city, including treatment facilities.	X	X	X	X	X	City	Varies	State, Federal, & Local Funds GEFA, CDBG, SEID
Construct the State Route (SR) 15 Sparta truck route.	X					City, GDOT	\$11.6M	TSPLOST
Apply for Grant Funds for water, sewer, flood and drainage, and roadway improvements.	X	X	X	X		City, CSRA-RC	\$1M	State, Federal, Local Funds, GEFA, CDBG, SEID

Community Work Program

CITY OF SPARTA

LAND USE								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Review and update zoning ordinance (and map if needed).	X					City	\$20K	State, Federal, & Local Funds

DRAFT

Community Work Program

CITY OF SPARTA

NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Initiate a Keep America Beautiful program in Sparta.	X					City	Staff Time	Local Funds
Work to develop Georgia Historical marker for Jean Toomer, an African-American writer, instrumental in the Harlem Renaissance.	X					City, Georgia, DNR, Volunteers	Staff Time	State, Federal, & Local Funds
Apply for Main Street designation, and join the GA Main Street program.	X					City, HPC	Staff Time	Local Funds

DRAFT

Community Work Program

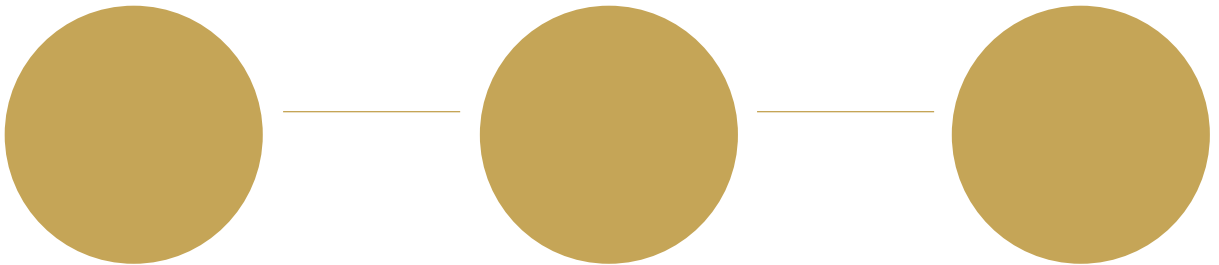
CITY OF SPARTA

BROADBAND SERVICES								
Activity	Time-frame					Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Funding Source(s)
	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029	2029-2030	2030-2031			
Work with the EMC and private sector partners to deploy broadband throughout the unserved city.	X	X	X	X	X	City, EMC, Private Sector	TBD	State, Federal, Local & Private Funds

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APPENDIX

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STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update

STAKEHOLDER MEETING 1

March 11, 2026

3:30 PM

Agenda

1. SWOT
2. Needs and Opportunities
3. Goals and Policies
4. Survey
5. Report of Accomplishments
6. Schedule public meetings

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2026-2031 SWOT Analysis

Jurisdiction:

STRENGTHS: What you do well, advantages you have, knowledge/skills/resources you have, etc.?

WEAKNESSES: Things we can improve upon, knowledge/skills/resources we are lacking, etc.

OPPORTUNITIES: Consider untapped resources, areas where we can expand, etc.

THREATS: Consider the kinds of obstacles we face, standards/policies that are changing, etc.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031

Stakeholder Meeting 1 | March 11, 2026 | 3:30 pm

SIGN IN SHEET

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
David Muhammad	I AM Green	760.512.5001	Uesgovejia@gmail.com
Kalla Hayswood	City + STDA	478-456-4185	spartaMayor@hellsouth.net
Jonathan Postley	Hancock Central High School	(478) 363-0687	postleyjonathan@gmail.com
Marcie Blasingame	Boys & Girls Club	478-457-6244	mblasingame@bgc-gretnaugus-fl.org
MARIA Muhammad	I AM GREEN		
Claudia Taylor	I AM GREEN	1-844-4CONSULT	cc@lieselconsultinglk.com
Tameka McClendon	Channel News	478-363-4284	tamekamcclendon@gmail.com
Nyademor Wiloy	Hancock, CO HD	706-444-6616	nyademor.wiloy@dph.ga.gov
Virginia Webb	City of Sparta	706-444-5753	vwebb@cityofsparta.org
Anton Anthony	Hancock County Schools	706-799-2684	aanthony@hancock.k12.ga.us
Terese Andrews	Hancock P&Z	706-444-0978	tandrews@hancockcounty.ga.gov
Amanda Atkins	Utilities Administrator		



Hancock County Courthouse | 12630 Broad Street | Sparta, GA

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031

Stakeholder Meeting 1 | March 11, 2026 | 3:30 pm

SIGN IN SHEET

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
Kizzie Silbert	County Clerk		
Adrielo Ingram	Chairman Boz		
LaTanya Goodwith	Chamber of Commerce		

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031

Stakeholder Meeting 2 | April 8, 2026 | 3:00 pm

SIGN IN SHEET

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
R Allen Haywood	SHDA City of Sparta	478-482-4185	sparta.magn@wellsouth.net
Jesse Andrews	Hancock County Planning + Zoning	706-444-0978	tandrews@hancockcountyga.gov
Nyademor Wiley	Hancock Co Health Dept	706-444-6616	nyademor.wiley@dph.ga.gov
Lee Tanya Goodin	Chamber	478-357-1093	spartahancockchamber@gmail.com



Hancock County Courthouse | 12630 Broad Street | Sparta, GA

DRAFT

PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

**PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED
FOR THE JOINT**

Comprehensive Plan Update

MARCH 26TH

Hancock County Courthouse

City of Sparta/Hancock County Residents

**DROP IN
4 - 6 PM**



**CITY OF
SPARTA**



PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS



Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031			
Public Input Meeting # 1 March 26, 2026 4-6 pm			SIGN IN SHEET
NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
Tomoka McClendon		478-363-4284	tomoka.mccclendon@gmail.com
Allie McNealy			allieblessed4ever@gmail.com
Karen Hayward		478-456-4185	spartamayor@bellsouth.net
Willie V. Huff		706-817-9618	fripp19@bellsouth.net
Derwin & Vanessa Conley		229-686-8041	vanessa-conley@yahoo.com
Robert Pitcher		813-989-9862	Pitcher.r28@gmail.com
MARCIA Lowry			
KAREN WEBB		706-998-0504	westkaren28@gmail.com
Marcie Blasingame	concerned citizen. Boys & Girls Club	478-457-6244	mblasingame@bgcgra.org
Shawn Bell	Board member	678-499-1589	glashandrian@yahoo.com
Morgan Scott	SHINE program	478-245-7803	morgan.scott@dph.ga.gov
Kim Sanders		813-390-5671	ksanders0928@icloud.com



Hancock County Courthouse | 12630 Broad Street | Sparta, GA

PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031

Public Input Meeting # 1 | March 26, 2026 | 4-6 pm

SIGN IN SHEET

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
David Muhammad	Sam Green	478-636-2351	Uegrovega@gmail.com
Samuel Beil		404-277-2718	
Mary Jackson			



CSRA Area Agency on Aging

2d •



PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED
FOR THE JOINT
Comprehensive Plan Update
MARCH 26TH
Hancock County Courthouse



City of Sparta, GA • **Follow**

2d •



CITY OF SPARTA

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PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED

FOR THE JOINT

Comprehensive Plan Update

MARCH 26TH

Hancock County Courthouse

City of Sparta/Hancock County Residents

DROP IN

4 - 6 PM




CITY OF SPARTA


PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS




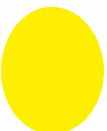
Fill in SWOT via worksheet or on poster board.

For Community Needs use dots to represent how you feel about each.

 I do not agree with this.

 Yes, I agree with this.

 I feel neutral about this.

 I need more information about this topic.

PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED

FOR THE JOINT

Comprehensive Plan Update

APRIL 18TH

Hancock County Youth Center

City of Sparta/Hancock County Residents

**12560 AUGUSTA
HWY, SPARTA GA**



CITY OF
SPARTA

It Takes A Village

COMMUNITY RESOURCE EXPO

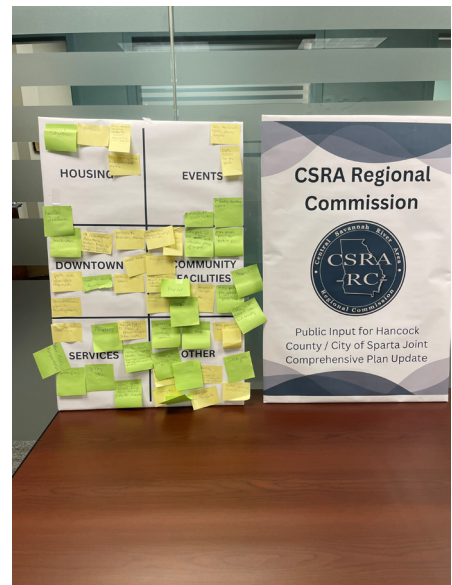
**APRIL 18, 2026
10AM TO 3PM**

**HANCOCK COUNTY YOUTH CENTER
12560 AUGUSTA HWY, SPARTA, GA**

FREE HEALTH & WELLNESS RESOURCES
• GIVEAWAYS & RAFFLES •
• FREE REFRESHMENTS •
CATCH UP AND STAY UP TO DATE ON
YOUR ROUTINE VACCINES!
ALL WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

INTERESTED IN
BECOMING A VENDOR?
SCAN THE QR CODE!

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT THE CITY OF
SPARTA AT (706) 444-5753
OPTION 1



PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

The Sparta Ishmaelite

Wednesday April 15, 2026

Sparta/Hancock Joint Comprehensive Plan

By Karen West, News Reporter

It is time once again to solidify the 5 year Joint Comprehensive Plan for our Community.

A good deal of progress was made on the previous plan. Downtown Sparta is seeing a strong revitalization with the combined efforts of the City and the County and the Sparta Hancock County Historic Preservation Commission, as well as several other groups. New businesses have moved into restored historic buildings and are making a big impact on our local economy. Uncovering hidden treasures like a folkart mural in the Dickens Building have brought our community nationwide - and even international, attention.

Murals have painted by volunteers and recognized

ter infrastructure.

A City Animal Shelter is moving forward, saving local homeless dogs and improving our four legged friends lives as well. Our new J.D.Walls Recreational Center is active and full of fun events for our children and a new Girl's and Boy's Club is joining our stellar 4H Club to bring even more opportunities to our youth. The Historical Society's free Walking Tours are improving our historic tourism with rapidly grow-

Really Free Little Library (with others scattered around the community), and an interactive mini history museum.

The entire community has dug in, rolled up our sleeves, doing real work to bring Sparta and Hancock County back to life. New families are moving in, restored old historic homes, and restarting generational homesteads.

In the last 5 years we have made amazing progress, but there is still much

**PUBLIC INPUT NEEDED
FOR THE JOINT
Comprehensive Plan Update
APRIL 18TH
Hancock County Youth Center
City of Sparta/Hancock County Residents
12560 AUGUSTA
HWY, SPARTA GA**



Keeping Things Hopping!

By Karen West, News Reporter

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan: 2026-2031

February 17th, 2026 | 4:00PM

Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Purpose of the hearing
3. Information on the comprehensive plan process and public input opportunities
4. Public comment period
5. Adjourn



CSRA Regional Commission

Feb 16 · 



PUBLIC HEARING



Hancock County is starting their 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update

February
17th

Hancock
County
Courthouse

4:00 pm

**2026 HANCOCK COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE
COMMUNITY SURVEY**

 Like

 Comment

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PUBLIC HEARINGS

Wednesday, January 28, 2025

The Sparta Ishmaelite

Page 2



CHURCH NEWS



Tabernacle Baptist Church

Tabernacle Baptist Church family New St. Sparta, Ga. will have a History Program February 22, at 11:30 a.m. if you would like to participate please text or call Minister Minnie Harmon-Boone. 706-833-8747

Pastor Terry Boone Tabernacle Baptist Church New Street Sparta Ga. 31087 Service 2nd & 4th

Sunday of each month. 10:30 Sunday School 11:30 Regular Service Beginning January 2025 we will have service 2nd & 4th Sunday of each month.

10:30 Sunday School 11:30 Regular Service Minister Minnie Harmon-Boone (7068338747). Blessing beyond Measure! You're in Christ!

Come Celebrate Black History Month With Us!!!!

It's that time again!!!! Time to CELEBRATE our culture. We the Piney Mount Missionary Baptist Church located in Warthen, Georgia cordially invite you and you to join us as we celebrate BLACK HISTORY ALL MONTH LONG!!!! We have a BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM on Sunday, February 8, 2026 at 10:00 am. We are asking that you come dressed in your beautiful African attire. On February 22, 2026 at 10:00 am we ask that you come back and join us again for OLD FASHION DAY!!! We asking everyone be dressed in old fashioned attire. Dinner will be served.

Pastor Roy & First Lady Josephine Grissom.
Deacon Wesley Poole, chairman

ZEBULON COMMUNITY CHURCH

7266 BROWN CHAPEL RD. 31087

PASTOR BRO. BILLY CARROLL PHONE 706-829-4403

SERVICES EVERY SUNDAY 11:00-----SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:00

FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE

"And now abided faith, hope, love, these three, but the breath of these is love."—(1 Corinthians 13:13 (KKV))

Faith and life are inseparable in the life of a believer. Faith is our trust in God believing in who He is and standing on His promises even when circumstances are uncertain. Love is visible expression of that faith, shown through compassion, obedience, forgiveness, and service to others.

The Bible teaches that faith is not merely something that we live out daily. True faith produces love. When we believe God, we began to love like God. Our faith anchors us in Christ and His love flows through us to the world around us.

Jesus demonstrates this perfectly. He trusted the Father completely even to death, and His love led Him to the cross. Through faith we receive salvation through love, we reflect salvation. Faith connects us to God and connects us to people.

At times our faith will be tested. In those moments, love keeps us steady. Love reminds us that God is still at work, even when we don't understand His way. Faith assures us of His presents.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that without love, faith becomes empty noise. Faith must be rooted in love to be affective and lasting. When we walk by faith and love others sincerely, we become living testimonies of God's grace.

ZEBULON COMMUNITY CHURCH WANTS TO SEE EVERYONE SAVED As I have said again while you are living you have an important decision to make, that is which road you will be on when you pass away from the earth. One road leads you to hell and the other to Heaven. This decision does not need to be put off; it needs to be made as soon as you let your heart make it.

Ace Hardware
Located at 701 Hamilton Street
P.O. Box 486
706-444-6710

Campbell Insurance Services
355 Adams Street
Sparta, Ga, 31087
Phone 706-444-5028,
Fax 706-444-5033

BANK OF HANCOCK COUNTY
(706) 444-5781
12855 Broad Street Sparta, GA
Member FDIC

est. 1980
HILL FARM SUPPLY
hillfarmsupply.com
(706)
444-6320
12700 Augusta Hwy, Sparta, GA

Ingram Brothers Funeral Home, Inc
249 Spring St. P.O. Box 391
706-444-6436

PUT YOUR \$ WHERE YOUR HEART IS BUY LOCAL

Public Hearing Notice
Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2026-2031

A public hearing for the Joint Comprehensive Plan will take place on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., at the Hancock County Courthouse, 12630 Broad Street, Sparta, Georgia. The purpose of this meeting will be to initiate the Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan process. This meeting will provide members of the community with information on the planning process and opportunities for public participation. The Joint Comprehensive Plan document establishes long-term goals and policies and a short-term action plan by which Hancock County and the community of Sparta will manage future community growth and development.

Persons with special needs relating to handicapped accessibility or foreign language should contact Borderick Foster, County Manager at 706-444-5746 prior to February 16. This person can be located at the Hancock County Board of Commissioners Office, 12630 Broad Street, Sparta, during the following hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Persons with hearing disabilities can contact the Georgia Relay Service, at (TDD) 1-800-255-0056, (Voice) 1-800-255-0135, 7-1-1.

What is Journalism?

January 12, 2026 marked a historic day for the Sparta Ishmaelite - it was the day we used social media to report a breaking local story before any other local news agencies did so.

The Sparta Ishmaelite is the second oldest continuously published newspaper in the state of Georgia and like other newspapers occasionally uses social media to repost stories from our weekly paper or share interesting stories from other agencies. However on Monday, January 12, we used our social media page to break a rapidly developing story of an incident at Hancock State Prison in Sparta before the other local news agencies. This was done with the help of our citizens, bringing an unusual amount of law enforcement traffic to our attention. By checking with multiple sources and cross checking them for verification of the facts, the Sparta Ishmaelite was able to quickly inform our citizens of a rapidly developing disturbance at the local high security prison.

And with that, the Sparta Ishmaelite took local journalism into a new direction for our community.

Journalism, by Webster's definition is "the practice of gathering, verifying, and presenting news and information about current events, people, and issues, to inform the public actively and objectively through various media like print, television, radio, and the internet, playing a crucial role in our democracy by holding power account-



able and fostering a community understanding. It involves deep research, sourcing, editing, and factual storytelling, acting as a conduit for reality rather than personal opinion, and includes formats from breaking news to investigative reports."

Britanica states that the number one goal of journalism is "informing citizens, fostering community, connecting people, and strengthening local identity through reporting on shared concerns. The word journalism was originally applied to reportage of current events in printed form, specifically newspapers; but, with the advent of radio, television, and the internet in the 20th century, the rise of the term broadened to include all printed and electronic communication dealing with current affairs."

On January 12 a decision was made to use our social media page to quickly inform Sparta / Hancock County citizens of a rapidly unfolding incident and possible riot at the Hancock State Prison. We were able to inform the public of a potentially dangerous situation, based on a citizen tip and verifying the facts with a minimum of three reliable sources before posting. Unlike the popular use of social media

by "celebrity influencers to 'report' the news", the Sparta Ishmaelite is a highly respected and long functioning member of Georgia's journalism estate; and before posting or printing any information, every possible attempt is made to insure that the information is substantiated, factual, verified, and researched before being posted. Our standards for social media are the same as those we use for the printing of our weekly paper, and the same governing principles of responsible journalism.

When news breaks too quickly to wait on the weekly printing, we will utilize our social media page to keep you informed in potentially dangerous situations or breaking news that directly impacts our community on a time sensitive basis. Please note, however, this does not mean that the Sparta Ishmaelite is transforming into "e-news"; we are still a weekly printed newspaper with all the credentials and accountability that goes with it. It does mean; however, that we will use every means at our disposal to bring you the best, most up to date, verified news, stories, and reports that impact our community.

Thank you everyone for your ongoing and continuous support of our historic newspaper. Thank you for alerting us to potential news and sharing your stories, opinions, and pictures with us to help us better serve you, our community. *We couldn't do it without you!*

Sparta Explains Last Week's Water Line Repair and Advisory

...continued from page 1

lished every July and is available to the public on the City's webpage at <https://www.cityofsparta.org>.

The City of Sparta thanks residents for their patience and understanding and extends sincere appreciation to utility staff who worked under difficult conditions to restore service safely.

To stay informed, please follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CityofSpartaGA> or sign up to receive texts from the City by texting SPARTA to 91896.

Hancock State Prison Update

...continued from page 1

ons, cell phones, drugs and other contraband make it into the prisons. A recent "sting" operation resulted in the arrest of 150 civilians, 8 prison employees, and millions of dollars in contraband items during the statewide Operation SKYHAWK. Although nearby residents close to Hancock State Prison complain of numerous drones around the prison, sometimes daily; the last drone retrieval at the facility was Nov.21, 2025 according to the Hancock County Ga Sheriff's Office Facebook page.

With the increase in violence, dangerous incidents, injuries, deaths, short staffing potentially gang related involvement in the increasing incidents and contraband materials, Gov. Brian Kemp has resolved to look deeper into the problems of our Georgia State Prisons. Legislature has said it will be addressed this term.

Prayers to all those involved and the families of the inmates incarcerated there as well.

Big Chance To Help Our Community!

...continued from page 1

A key part of this application is letters of support from the public.

If you live in Sparta, work here, own a business, or are involved in the community your voice matters.

Letters of support should briefly explain:

- Your connection to Sparta
- Why helping residents repair and remain in their homes is important
- How this type of funding could positively impact families and the community as a whole

Letters do not need to be long or formal.

A short, thoughtful message is more than enough.

We need letters by Friday, if possible.

Letters can be:

- Messaged to us directly on Facebook
- Emailed to amartin@cityofsparta.org
- Dropped off at City Hall starting Tuesday

Thank you for supporting Sparta and helping us pursue funding that could directly benefit homeowners in our community.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031			
Public Hearing # 1 February 17th 4:00 pm			SIGN IN SHEET
NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
Roy Stuck			rstuck1949@msc.com
Valerie Hand			eastlakeescape31087@gmail
Roger Mobley			
KAREN WEST	ISHMAELITE		westkaren280@gmail
Kim Sanders	Hancock Co Prop Owner		ksanders0928@icloud.com
Amanda Martin Akins	City of Sparta		amartin@cityofsparta.org
Dell Snel	NC # 10		Dell Sfl
Virginia Webb	City of Sparta		Virginia Webb
Wm. G. Featherston	Levelling Construction		Wm. G. Featherston
POWE ADKINS	LEVEL UP CONST.		POWE ADKINS
David Muhammad	I Am Green		David Muhammad
Dip Pabity	HPC		Dip Pabity



Hancock County Courthouse | 12630 Broad Street | Sparta, GA

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031			
Public Hearing # 1 February 17th 4:00 pm			SIGN IN SHEET
NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	EMAIL
Nyachemur Wiley	Hancock Health Dept	706-444-6614	nyachemur.wiley@alph.ga.gov
Tomeka M Skendon		478-363-4204	tomekamskendon@gmail.com
Marcie Blasingame	District 1 Boys & Girls Club	478-457-6244	marcieltb2008@gmail.com
Mary Jackson	Communities		
Charles East	District 3 Comm	706-998-0180	qualitybuild@gride.com
Adrich Ingram	Board of Commissioners	(478) 954-5104	
Keyanna Moll		470-553-8500	Info@keyannamolls.com
Kizzie Sibert	Hancock B.O.C	706-444-5746	ap@hancockcountygov



Hancock County Courthouse | 12630 Broad Street | Sparta, GA

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Wednesday April 22, 2026

The Sparta Ishmaelite

Page 3

Violence in Our Local Prison

By Karen West, News Reporter

PART II

The first four months of this year argue negatively with a marked increase in gang related violence and four inmate deaths in as many months. It would appear that these measures have elevated the problem instead of solving it by-

-giving more power to the gang leaders. With the finances that gangs have demonstrated having access to , gang leaders can still communicate with state monitored phones and phones that have coerced access.

-loss of outside communication. Without working cell phones, non-gang inmates cannot contact outside help or video "incidents" as they happen, documenting the perpetrators.

-would be whistleblowers are silenced. The most vulnerable part of the prison population - the non-gang members- are left vi-

and make productive use of the time an inmate is incarcerated.

The GDC argues that cellphones only benefit criminal endeavors and gang leaders, but controlled and strictly monitored cellphones and tablets in other systems have proven to have a positive effect on rehabilitation. In talking with recently released inmates and their families, we've seen that, properly run, these programs can benefit by allowing inmates some control and input -

- contacting and staying in touch with families and much needed support groups increases the chances of successful rehabilitation.

- firsthand reporting and documentation of abuse and violence.

- access to legal assistance, allowing inmates an active part in their cases and a better understanding

focusing on personal development, cultivating job skills, and effective problem solving. We have a few local nonprofits, like O3C that utilize a similar approach with success. They prioritize keeping youth out of prison with skill sets that help grow responsibility, community awareness, and problem solving.

Four deaths in as many months in Hancock State Prison are a clear indication that things, as they are, just aren't working.

January 25, February 6, February 18, and April 7 were dates of inmate murders. Yes, these individuals broke the law, were tried and convicted for their crimes and sentenced to serve time in a high security facility, but these are also sons, brothers, fathers, friends, who should be allowed to "pay their debt to society", work toward re-

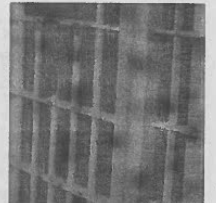
habilitation and building skills that will benefit them and their communities upon release.

What we need are rehabilitation programs that work and less housing of offenders of serious crimes with no hope, hiring and training more proficient correction officers, removing and/or isolating violent gang members from the general population, more real time supervision and

interaction, introducing closed network tablet programs to expand rehabilitation and build job skills needed once they are released, building individuals who are ready and able to return to society instead of reoffending within the first year as almost 67% of U.S. incarcerated people do.

Our prisons have reached a crisis point and with a prime example right

here in our community- now the question is - how are we going to take violence out of our local prison and get back on track to rehabilitation?



Public Hearing Notice 2 Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan DRAFT 2026-2031

Hancock County and the City of Sparta will hold a Joint Public Hearing on May 13, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., at the Hancock County Courthouse, 12630 Broad Street, Sparta, Georgia.

The purpose of the joint public hearing will be to notify the community on the procedure of submitting the Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Residents wishing to make comments or suggestions of revisions should view the document prior to the meeting and be in attendance.

A copy of the DRAFT plan can be reviewed at the Hancock County Board of Commissioners office. The plan can also be viewed electronically at <https://csrarc.ga.gov/planning-documents>

People with special needs relating to handicapped accessibility or foreign language should contact Kizzie Sibert, County Clerk at 706-444-5746 prior to May 11th. This person can be located at the Hancock County Board of Commissioners Office, 12630 Broad Street, during the following hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Persons with hearing disabilities can contact the Georgia Relay Service, at (TDD) 1-800-255-0056, (Voice) 1-800-255-0135, 7-1-1.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

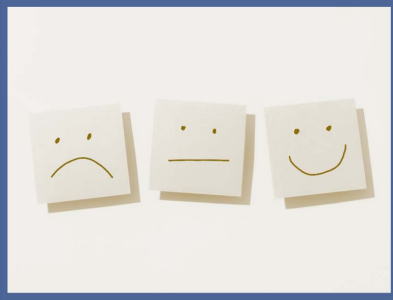
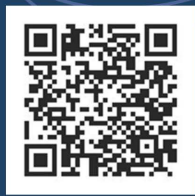
SCHEDULED FOR 13TH AT 4 PM

DRAFT

COMMUNITY SURVEY

COMMUNITY SURVEY

IF YOU LIVE OR WORK IN HANCOCK COUNTY, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

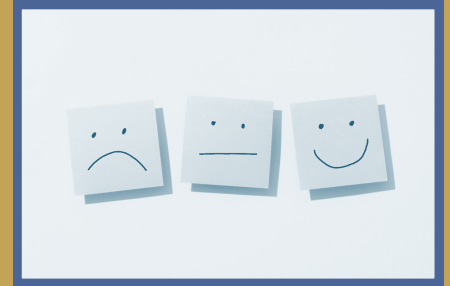


TAKE THE SURVEY TODAY!

2026 HANCOCK COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMUNITY SURVEY

COMMUNITY SURVEY

IF YOU LIVE OR WORK IN HANCOCK COUNTY, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



TAKE THE SURVEY TODAY!

2026 HANCOCK COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMUNITY SURVEY



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County and the City of Sparta are looking for your input on the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update

TAKE THE SURVEY

SURVEY CLOSES MARCH 31ST

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD

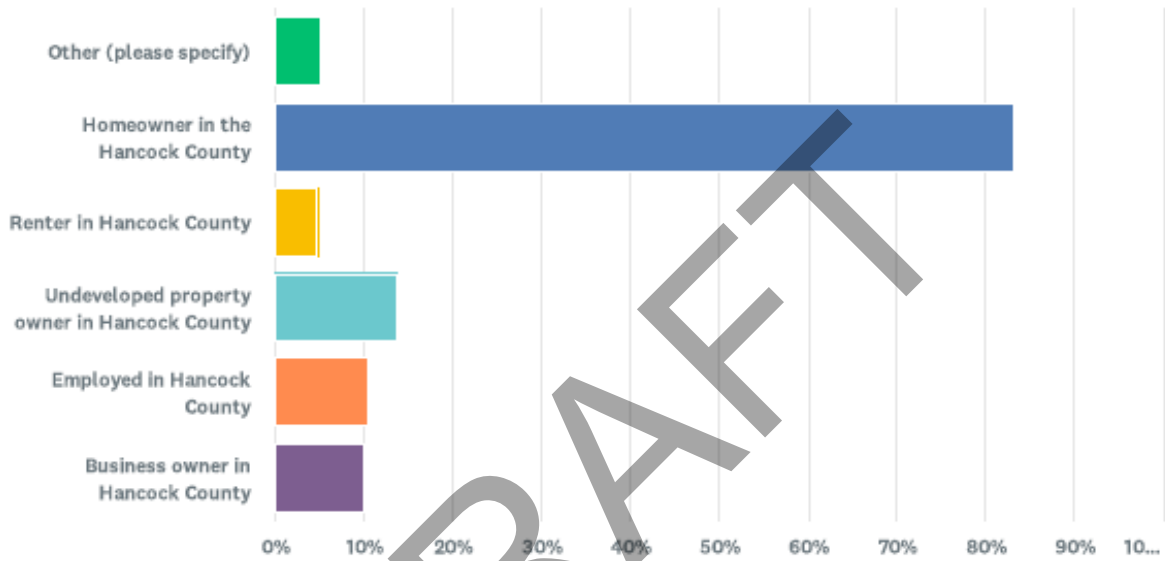
[HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/HANCOCK26-31](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/hancock26-31)

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q1 Which of the following categories currently describes you? Check all that apply.

Answered: 212 Skipped: 0



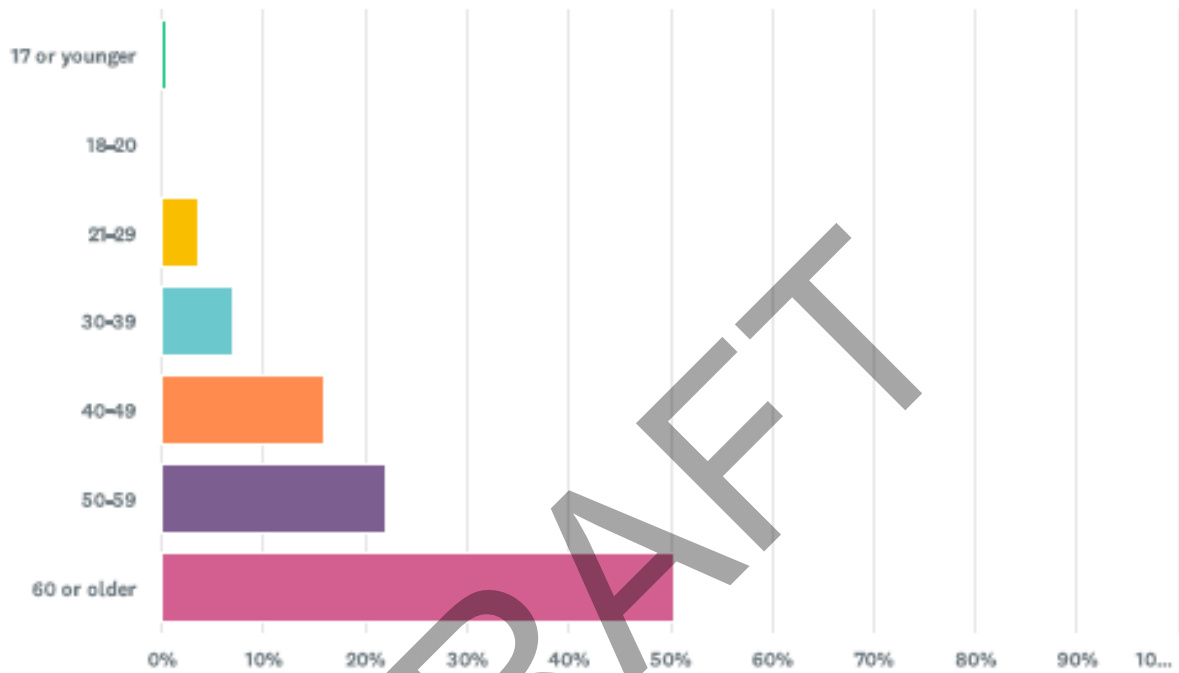
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Other (please specify) Show responses	5.19%	11
● Homeowner in the Hancock County	83.02%	176
● Renter in Hancock County	4.72%	10
● Undeveloped property owner in Hancock County	13.68%	29
● Employed in Hancock County	10.38%	22
● Business owner in Hancock County	9.91%	21
Total		269

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q2 What is your age?

Answered: 212 Skipped: 0



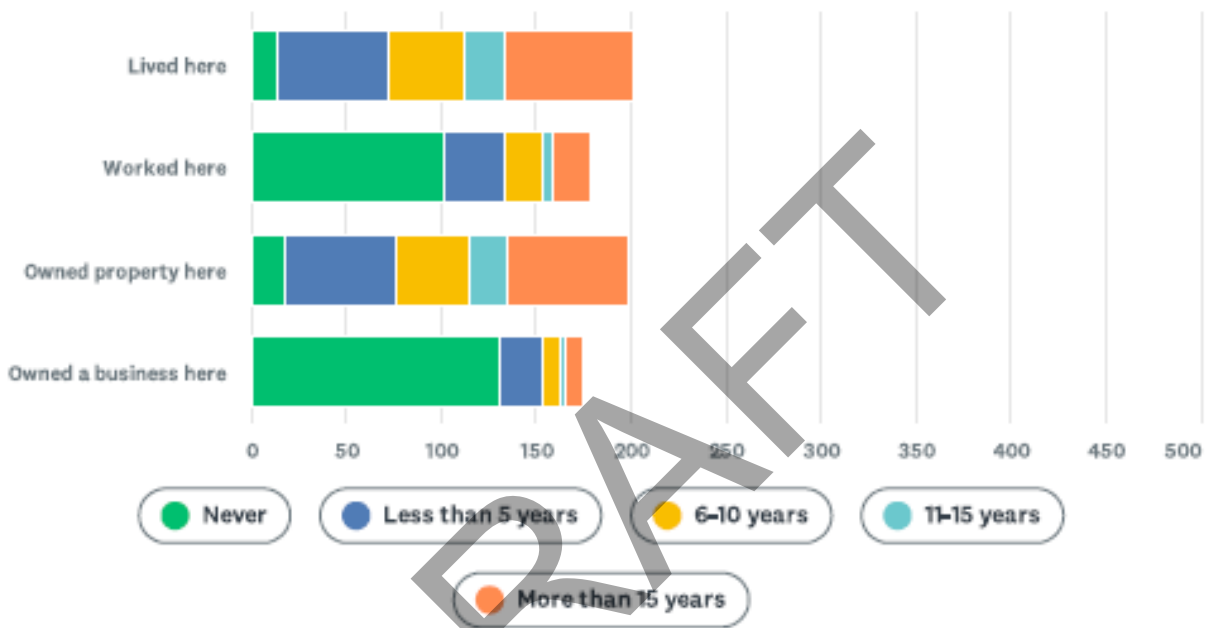
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● 17 or younger	0.47%	1
● 18-20	0%	0
● 21-29	3.77%	8
● 30-39	7.08%	15
● 40-49	16.04%	34
● 50-59	22.17%	47
● 60 or older	50.47%	107
Total		212

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q3 How long have you lived, worked, or owned property in our community?

Answered: 212 Skipped: 0



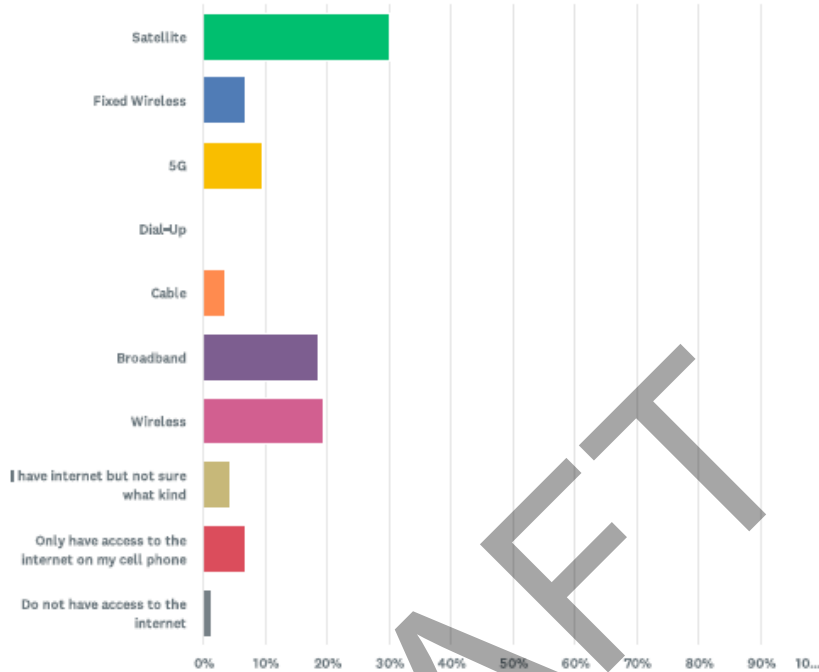
	Never	Less than 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	More than 15 years	Total
Lived here	6.93% 14	28.71% 58	19.80% 40	10.40% 21	34.16% 69	202
Worked here	57.06% 101	18.08% 32	11.30% 20	3.39% 6	11.30% 20	179
Owned property here	9.09% 18	29.29% 58	19.70% 39	9.60% 19	32.32% 64	198
Owned a business here	75.72% 131	12.72% 22	5.20% 9	2.31% 4	4.62% 8	174
						753

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q8 What type of internet access do you have at home?

Answered: 146 Skipped: 66



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Satellite	30.14%	44
● Fixed Wireless	6.85%	10
● 5G	9.59%	14
● Dial-Up	0%	0
● Cable	3.42%	5
Total		146

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

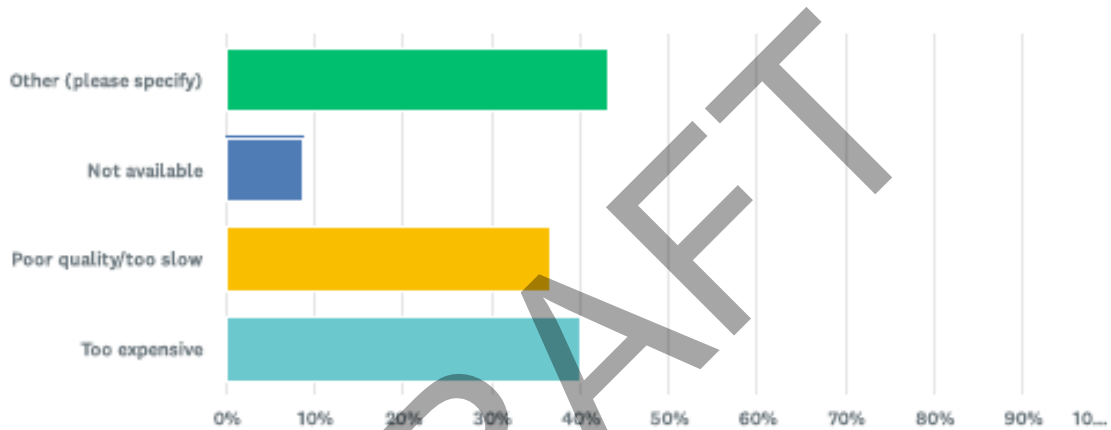
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Broadband	18.49%	27
● Wireless	19.18%	28
● I have internet but not sure what kind	4.11%	6
● Only have access to the internet on my cell phone	6.85%	10
● Do not have access to the internet	1.37%	2
Total		146

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q9 What issues do you have with internet at home? Check all that apply.

Answered: 125 Skipped: 87



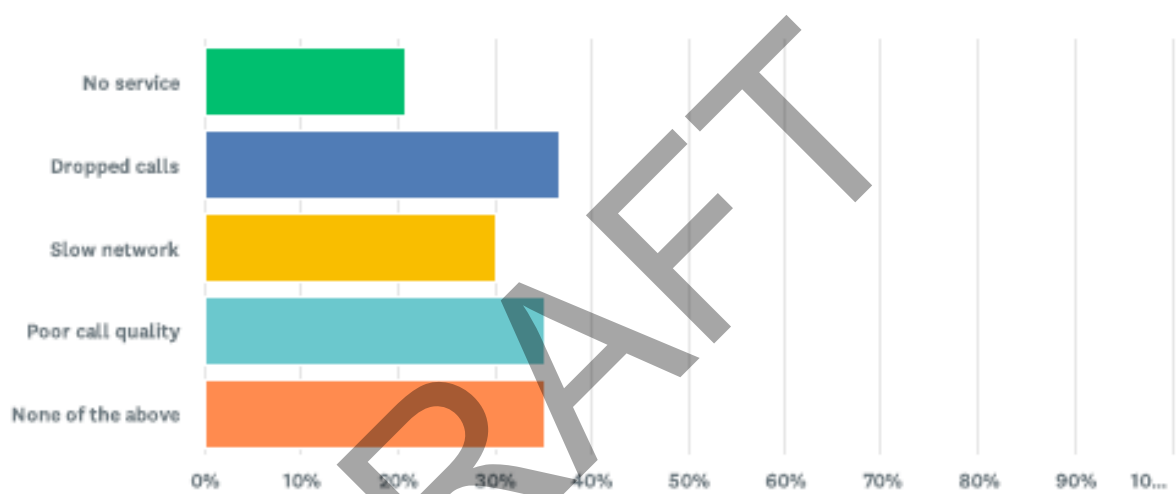
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Other (please specify) Show responses	43.20%	54
● Not available	8.80%	11
● Poor quality/too slow	36.80%	46
● Too expensive	40.00%	50
Total		161

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q10 What issues do you have with cell phone service at home? Check all that apply.

Answered: 139 Skipped: 73



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● No service	20.86%	29
● Dropped calls	36.69%	51
● Slow network	30.22%	42
● Poor call quality	35.25%	49
● None of the above	35.25%	49
Total		220

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q11 Please rank the following housing topics based on their importance to you from 1 to 4 (with 1 being most important). Each answer option does require a number rank, and each number can only be used once.

Answered: 137 Skipped: 75



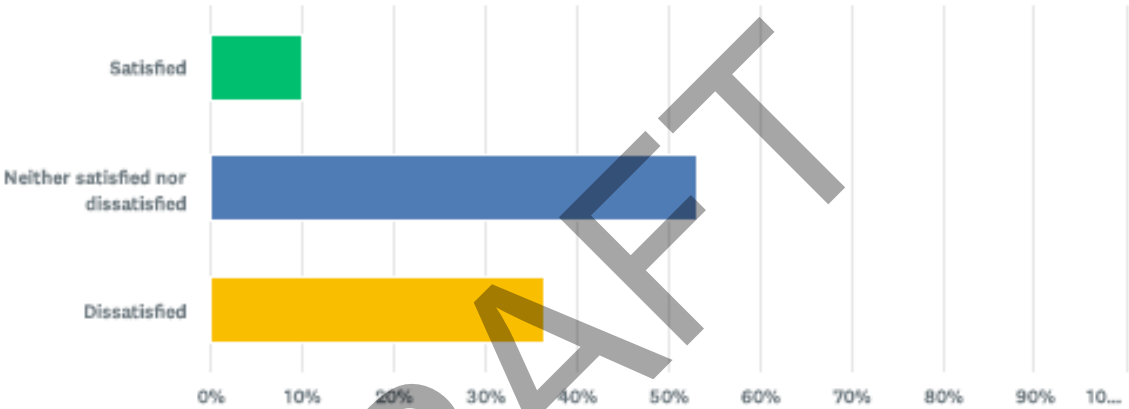
	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Weighted ...
Preserving Historic Character	16.41% 21	16.41% 21	20.31% 26	24.22% 31	22.66% 29	128	3.20
Removing Dilapidated Buildings	38.93% 51	26.72% 35	19.08% 25	9.16% 12	6.11% 8	131	2.17
Building New Housing	15.67% 21	17.91% 24	19.40% 26	21.64% 29	25.37% 34	134	3.23
Beautifying Existing Neighborhoods	12.88% 17	26.52% 35	25.00% 33	21.21% 28	14.39% 19	132	2.98
Workforce Housing - teachers, police, firefighters	20.45% 27	12.88% 17	18.18% 24	24.24% 32	24.24% 32	132	3.19
						657	2.95

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q12 How satisfied are you with the variety of housing in our community?

Answered: 139 Skipped: 73



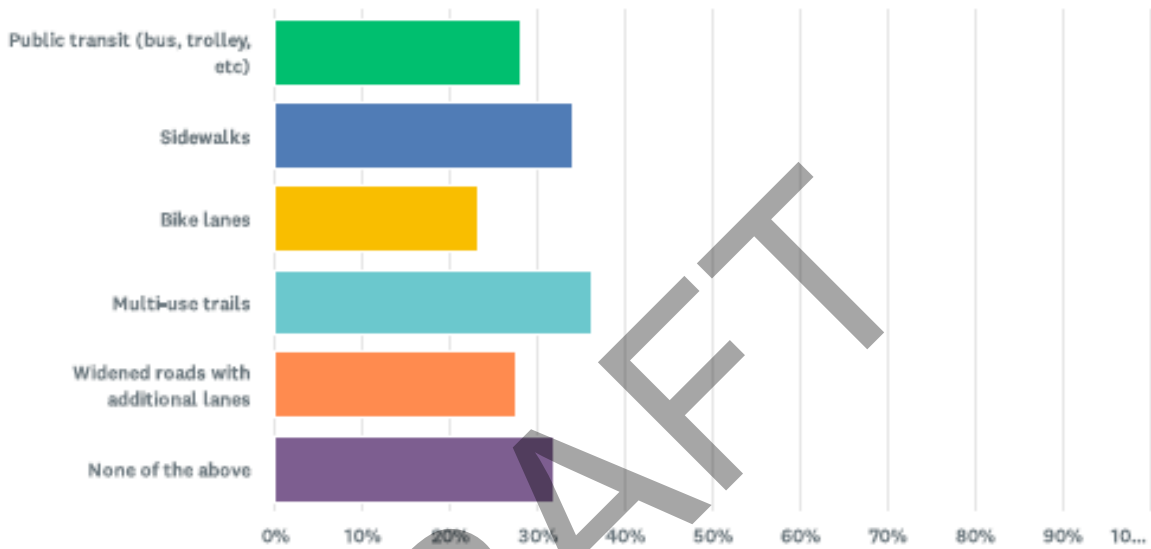
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Satisfied	10.07%	14
● Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	53.24%	74
● Dissatisfied	36.69%	51
Total		139

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q13 Which transportation improvements would you like to see more of in our community? Check all that apply.

Answered: 138 Skipped: 74



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Public transit (bus, trolley, etc)	28.26%	39
● Sidewalks	34.06%	47
● Bike lanes	23.19%	32
● Multi-use trails	36.23%	50
● Widened roads with additional lanes	27.54%	38
● None of the above	31.88%	44
Show comments		
Total		250

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q14 Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following public services or facilities.

Answered: 137 Skipped: 75



	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	No Opinion	Total
Parks and recreation facilities	10.22% 14	43.80% 60	45.99% 63	137
Amount of sidewalks	22.63% 31	37.23% 51	40.15% 55	137
Street and road signage	37.23% 51	40.88% 56	21.90% 30	137
Condition of streets and sidewalks	7.30% 10	83.94% 115	8.76% 12	137
Cleanliness of public spaces	21.90% 30	50.36% 69	27.74% 38	137

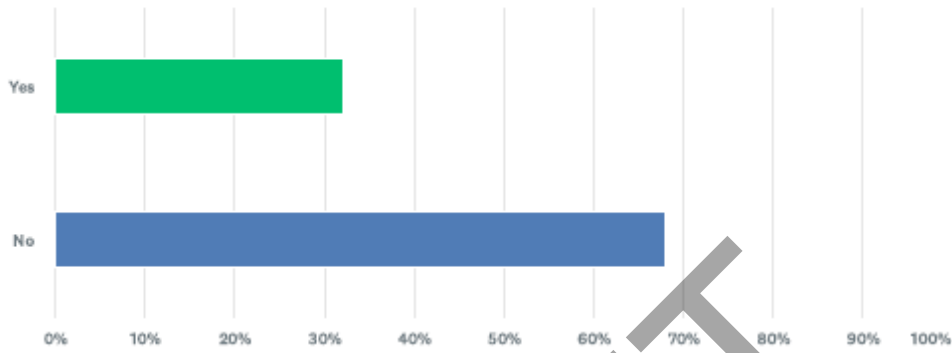
822

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hancock County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2026-2031 Community Survey

Q16 Do you use public facilities such as parks, trails, and ball fields?

Answered: 137 Skipped: 75



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
● Yes	32.12%	44
● No	67.88%	93
Total		137

DRAFT

DRAFT

Prepared By:



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