

ENVISION AUGUSTA

2035

Comprehensive
Plan 5-Year Update

**INSERT COVER
DESIGN**

PREFACE

Planning for a sustainable and resilient community is indeed one of the fundamental responsibilities of local government.

The planning process, often referred to as city planning, urban planning, or land use planning, involves shaping and guiding the growth and development of a community.

Comprehensive plans, also known as growth management plans, are written documents that serve as long-term development guides for counties, cities, and other local jurisdictions. These plans aim to align the community's desires with initiatives undertaken by the local government to create a sustainable and thriving way of life over a planning horizon of typically 20 years. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) provides guidance on the creation and updating of comprehensive plans.

Adhering to and gaining approval for a comprehensive plan recommended by the DCA grants the local jurisdiction Qualified Local Government (QLG) status. This status provides access to a special package of financial resources that aid in implementing the plan. These resources can include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), water and sewer loans from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), economic development funding from the OneGeorgia Authority, and various other programs from the DCA and partner agencies.

Community engagement is a vital component of the comprehensive planning process. Public participation through meetings and consultations helps assess current conditions, refine community goals, and articulate desired outcomes. By involving the public, the planning process becomes more inclusive and reflective of the community's needs and aspirations.

There are several important benefits to the entire community that result from the comprehensive planning process:

- 1. Quality of life is maintained and improved:** By considering various factors such as housing, transportation, parks, and public services, comprehensive planning helps enhance the overall quality of life for residents.
- 2. Shared vision:** The planning process allows community members to collectively develop a vision for the future of their community. This shared vision provides a clear direction for development and helps guide decision-making.
- 3. Protection of private property rights:** Through comprehensive planning, local governments can establish guidelines and regulations that protect private property rights while ensuring responsible and sustainable development.
- 4. Encouragement and support of economic development:** Comprehensive plans can include strategies and initiatives to foster economic growth and attract investments. By identifying suitable areas for development and providing a predictable framework, planning supports economic development efforts.
- 5. Certainty and cost-effective development:** Planning helps establish predictability by identifying areas where development is preferred or discouraged. This certainty benefits developers, investors, and the community as a whole by providing a clear understanding of where and how development will occur. It also ensures that the costs associated with development are adequately planned and met.

By considering these factors and involving the community in the planning process, Augusta-Richmond County governing bodies can work towards building sustainable, resilient, and vibrant communities that meet the needs of their residents while protecting their long-term interests.

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INTRODUCTION

Envision Augusta is a comprehensive plan for Augusta-Richmond County that aims to guide the sustainable and resilient development of the city and county. It focuses on addressing various aspects such as transportation, economic development, cultural and natural resources, and land use issues. The plan was updated in 2023 based on an analysis of recent socio-economic data and through a series of public meetings, both in-person and online.

The purpose of the public meetings was to inform, involve, and collaborate with the community members. These meetings presented different scenarios related to growth, preservation, and strategies, allowing the public to contribute their input. The outcomes of these meetings formed the basis for developing the vision, goals, and community work program of Envision Augusta.

To ensure a comprehensive approach, the plan follows the framework suggested by David Rouse and Rocky Piro in their Comprehensive Plan. It addresses three fundamental questions :

1. Where are we now and where are we headed?

This question seeks to understand the current situation of Augusta-Richmond County and identify the direction in which it is heading. Analyzing socio-economic data helps in assessing the existing conditions and trends.

2. Where do we want to be?

This question focuses on establishing the desired future for Augusta-Richmond County. By envisioning the future, the plan sets goals and objectives that reflect the aspirations of the community.

3. How do we get there?

This question delves into the strategies and actions required to achieve the desired future. It outlines the steps and measures needed to implement the plan effectively.



To organize and establish the interconnectedness of Augusta-Richmond County's past, present, and future development, the plan incorporates various elements and subsections. The elements, provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), include:



Needs & Opportunities Element:

This element identifies the community's needs and potential opportunities for improvement, helping to prioritize initiatives and projects.

Community Goals Element:

This element outlines the overarching goals and aspirations of the community, reflecting their vision for the future.

Economic Development Element:

This element focuses on strategies and policies to support economic growth, attract investments, and create job opportunities.

Transportation Element:

This element addresses transportation infrastructure, networks, and systems, considering the movement of people and goods within the community.

Housing Element:

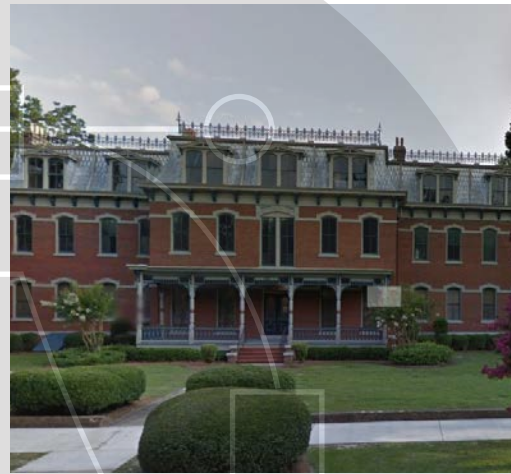
This element deals with housing-related issues, including affordability, availability, and quality.

Land Use Element:

This element determines the appropriate use and development of land within Augusta-Richmond County, considering factors such as zoning, density, and open space.

Photography Credit: Destination Augusta

By integrating these elements, Envision Augusta aims to provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to sustainable and resilient development, fostering a prosperous and vibrant future for the community.



HISTORY

Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia has a rich history that dates back to the early settlement of the United States. In 1736, British General James Edward Oglethorpe commissioned surveyor Noble Jones to lay out the initial lots for what would eventually become Augusta. Oglethorpe's motivation for establishing the settlement was partly driven by the desire to control the fur trade, which was already thriving at Fort Moore on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River. The city was named in honor of Princess Augusta, the wife of the Prince of Wales, and it developed as a trade center for fur, tobacco, and cotton, while also serving as a gateway for westward-bound settlers in Georgia.

Richmond County, one of the original eight counties in Georgia, was formed from St. Paul's Parish in 1777. It was named after the Duke of Richmond, Charles Lennox, who was a friend of some of the American settlers. Over time, parts of Richmond County were used to establish Columbia and McDuffie Counties. During the American Revolution, Augusta was utilized as a communications center by the British. However, in 1781, Light Horse Harry Lee captured Augusta, leading the British to relinquish their claim to most of Georgia. Subsequently, Augusta served as the capital of Georgia from 1785 to 1795.



In the early years of the county, tobacco was the dominant cash crop. However, the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney made cotton a more profitable crop than tobacco. Augusta played a significant role in the cotton trade, becoming the terminus for riverboats, barges, wagon trains, and traders transporting staples and produce to be shipped to overseas markets by 1820. The area thrived as a major transportation hub.

During World War II, Augusta and Richmond County became important for the war effort. Daniel Field was assigned army personnel and equipment, and in 1942, the Forrest-Ricker Hotel was converted into an army hospital. Camp Gordon, later known as Fort Gordon, was established in south Richmond County. Additionally, an airfield for training army pilots was constructed on the present-day site of Augusta Regional Airport at Bush Field. The Augusta Arsenal, now the location of Augusta State University, served as a prisoner-of-war camp and produced bombsights and other lens instruments for the war.

In 1996, the City of Augusta and Richmond County consolidated to form Augusta-Richmond County, uniting urban and rural communities. This merger emphasized the need for a comprehensive plan and regular updates. Presently, Augusta-Richmond County is home to approximately 206,607 residents and boasts a thriving medical university, a cutting-edge cyber community, a bustling military installation (Fort Gordon), and a prestigious golf course. These entities, along with various stakeholders, participated in the public engagement process to develop and design updates to the comprehensive plan, ensuring the continued growth and development of Augusta-Richmond County.



Augusta-Richmond County is a consolidated city-county located in the U.S. state of Georgia. The history of Augusta and Richmond County dates back to the colonial era and encompasses significant events and developments that have shaped the area over the years. Here's an overview of the history of Augusta-Richmond County:

COLONIAL ERA

The area that is now Augusta-Richmond County was originally inhabited by Native American tribes, including the Creek and Cherokee. In 1736, General James Oglethorpe established the fortified settlement of Augusta as a western outpost of the British colony of Georgia.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR

During the American Revolution, Augusta played a significant role. In 1780, the city was captured by British forces led by General Charles Cornwallis. However, it was recaptured by American forces under the command of General Nathanael Greene in 1781.

EARLY GROWTH & INDUSTRIALIZATION

In the early 19th century, Augusta experienced rapid growth and became a major center for trade and industry. The city's strategic location on the Savannah River allowed it to become a bustling inland port and transportation hub. Industries such as cotton mills, textile manufacturing, and ironworks flourished.

THE CIVIL WAR

During the American Civil War, Augusta became an important Confederate manufacturing center. The Confederate Powder Works, the largest gunpowder factory in the Confederacy, was located in Augusta and supplied ammunition to the Confederate army. The city also served as a hospital and supply depot during the war.

RECONSTRUCTION & THE JIM CROW ERA

After the Civil War, Augusta faced the challenges of Reconstruction and the implementation of Jim Crow laws. These laws enforced racial segregation and limited the rights of African Americans in the city and throughout the South.



20TH CENTURY

In the early 20th century, Augusta continued to grow and diversify its economy. The city became known for its golfing heritage with the establishment of the Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament in 1934. The medical industry also became prominent with the establishment of the Medical College of Georgia (now Augusta University) in 1828.

CONSOLIDATION OF AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY

In 1996, the city of Augusta and Richmond County consolidated to form Augusta-Richmond County. This merger combined the municipal government of Augusta with the county government, creating a unified governing body for the entire area.



Since consolidation, Augusta-Richmond County has continued to develop as a regional center for commerce, education, and healthcare. The city is known for its cultural events, such as the Augusta Southern Nationals drag boat race, the Augusta Symphony Orchestra, and the Westobou Festival. Augusta has also played a role in hosting major sporting events, including the Masters Tournament and the Augusta Futurity horse show.

Overall, the history of Augusta-Richmond County reflects the growth, challenges, and achievements of a city with deep roots in the American South.





SECTION ONE

SECTION I:

WHERE ARE WE NOW

Since the writing of the 2018 plan, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) led to a global pandemic that swept through our country, state, and county in the years 2019-2022. COVID-19 is an infectious disease that causes mild to moderate respiratory illness. The virus spreads from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. The pandemic saw the loss of over 1,127,1520 American lives and an additional 5 million worldwide. On a local level, roughly 21% of Augusta-Richmond County residents contracted the Coronavirus and 790 Augustans succumbed to it, as shown in Table A. The pandemic put an immeasurable strain on healthcare systems, education systems, overseas supply chains, and access to goods and services.

Amid the pandemic, people had to quarantine at home, workers became divided with the labeling as essential and non-essential, and restaurants and salons, and all forms of entertainment were forced to close. Human contact with individuals outside of your household was to be avoided. The pandemic was not just a disruption in a routine, but was two years of near-death experiences and loss of family members, friends and livelihoods; it changed people's perspectives and lives. The 2023 comprehensive plan update reflects the need to build back a stronger more resilient Augusta-Richmond County.



TABLE A: COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES & DEATHS COUNTY & STATEWIDE

JURISDICTION	POPULATION	POSITIVE CASES 02/01/2020 - 06/25/2023	COVID-19 DEATHS	% OF POPULATION TESTING POSITIVE	% OF POPULATION DEATHS BY COVID
United States	334,997,592	103,436,829	1,127,152	30.88%	0.34%
Georgia Statewide	10,912,876	2,368,077	35,469	21.70%	0.33%
Richmond County	202,240	43,415	790	21.4%	0.39%
Columbia County	158,631	24,496	358	15.44%	0.23%
Burke County	22,342	3,267	75	14.62%	0.34%
McDuffie County	21,597	3,319	89	15.3%	0.41%
Jefferson County	15,313	2,402	89	15.69%	0.58%

Source: Georgia Department of Public Health COVID_19 Status Report June 2023 and World Health Organization

Vaccination played a crucial role in achieving herd immunity, which occurs when a significant portion of the population becomes immune to the virus. This protects individuals who are unable to receive the vaccine, such as those with certain medical conditions or weakened immune systems, by reducing the overall transmission of the virus within the community. Vaccines were instrumental in allowing societies to return to normal activities. Augusta-Richmond County had a vigorous vaccination campaign resulting in 179,121 individuals becoming vaccinated. The vaccinations paved the way for the easing of restrictions, reopening of businesses, resumption of travel and restoration of social interactions, contributing to the recovery of economies and overall well-being.

WHERE ARE WE NOW:

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Community Profile section of the Envision Augusta Comprehensive Plan provides an analysis of existing conditions based on multiple indicators. This analysis was used in formulating the needs and opportunities that ultimately reflect the overarching goals for Augusta. This information was presented to stakeholders and citizens to gauge impressions of the community as a whole.

Augusta-Richmond County, often referred to as Augusta, is a consolidated city-county located in the state of Georgia, United States. The city's population has been relatively stable in recent years, with modest growth. Augusta has a diverse economy with sectors such as healthcare, education, manufacturing, and the military playing significant roles. The city is home to the headquarters of several major companies, including the Savannah River Site, Augusta University Health System, and Club Car. The U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence at Fort Gordon also contributes to the local economy.

The county has a range of educational institutions. Augusta University, which includes a medical school, dental school, and other health sciences programs, is a major presence in the area. Augusta is widely known for hosting the Masters Tournament, one of the most prestigious events in professional golf. The city has a rich history and is home to numerous historic sites, including the Augusta Canal, the Boyhood Home of President Woodrow Wilson, and the Augusta Museum of History.

Augusta-Richmond County has a robust healthcare sector. Along with Augusta University Health System, the community is served by several hospitals and medical centers, including Doctors Hospital of Augusta, University Hospital, and Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center. The region is served by Augusta Regional Airport, which offers domestic flights. Interstate 20 runs through Augusta, providing convenient road access to other major cities in the Southeastern United States. Augusta Transit operates fixed routes with connections to neighboring counties. A review of the data for Augusta-Richmond County will provide insight into the growth and development patterns.

WHERE ARE WE NOW:

POPULATION

The current population, population trends, and potential future population numbers are vital in understanding the needs of Augusta-Richmond County (ARC). This information provides valuable data for the location of infrastructure, residential and commercial development, as well as having positive impacts to the overall quality of life for residents.

Savannah River serves as the state line for Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia, and South Carolina. Dating back to its establishment as a trading post in the 1700s, Augusta is the hub of the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). The CSRA is comprised of 13 counties in the eastern portion of Central Georgia. Participating counties include Burke County, Columbia County, Glascock County, Hancock County, Jefferson County, Jenkins County, Lincoln County, McDuffie County, Richmond County, Taliaferro County, Warren County, Washington County, and Wilkes County. Augusta-Richmond County is the most populated county in the CSRA. Table P-1 illustrates the total population of the counties adjacent to Augusta-Richmond County from 1990 to 2021.



Augusta-Richmond County has continued to experience an increase in population; however, some of our neighbors' populations are growing at 2 to 10 times the rate of Augusta-Richmond County. One factor influencing the difference may be attributed to readily accessible land along the interstate. The state of Georgia has been attracting residents over the same period at four and a half times the rate of Augusta-Richmond County.

POPULATION CHANGE

TABLE P-1: POPULATION OF AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY & SURROUNDING COUNTIES

JURISDICTION	1990	2000	2010	2021	POPULATION CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
Aiken County, SC	120,940.00	143,552.00	160,554.00	168,045.00	7,491	4.67%
Burke County, GA	20,579.00	22,243.00	23,338.00	24,231.00	893	3.83%
Columbia County, GA	66,910.00	89,288.00	124,986.00	154,274.00	29,288	23.43%
Edgefield County, SC	18,375.00	24,595.00	26,958.00	25,538.00	(1,420)	-5.27%
McDuffie County, GA	20,119.00	21,231.00	21,830.00	21,727.00	(103)	-0.47%
Richmond County, GA	189,719.00	199,775.00	200,935.00	205,772.00	4,837	2.41%
Georgia	6,478,216.00	8,186,453.00	9,712,696.00	10,625,615.00	912,919	9.40%

POPULATION BY GENDER

The gender distribution in Augusta-Richmond County (ARC) is 48% male and 52% female, indicating slightly higher proportion of females in the population.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

In 2021, Augusta-Richmond County had a well-distributed age distribution among its residents. The majority of residents were in the 0-19 years age group, followed closely by the 20-34 years age group. Residents aged 35-54 years were just slightly behind in numbers. According to the US Census data from 2021, approximately 72% of Augusta-Richmond County's population was under the age of 55. However, it is worth noting that from 2010 to 2021, Augusta-Richmond County experienced a decline in the population of individuals aged 0 to 54 years, as mentioned in Table P-2. This decline suggests a decrease in the number of young adults and possibly families within the county. The greatest loss in population was observed in the 45-54 years age group.

2021 AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY
POPULATION BY AGE

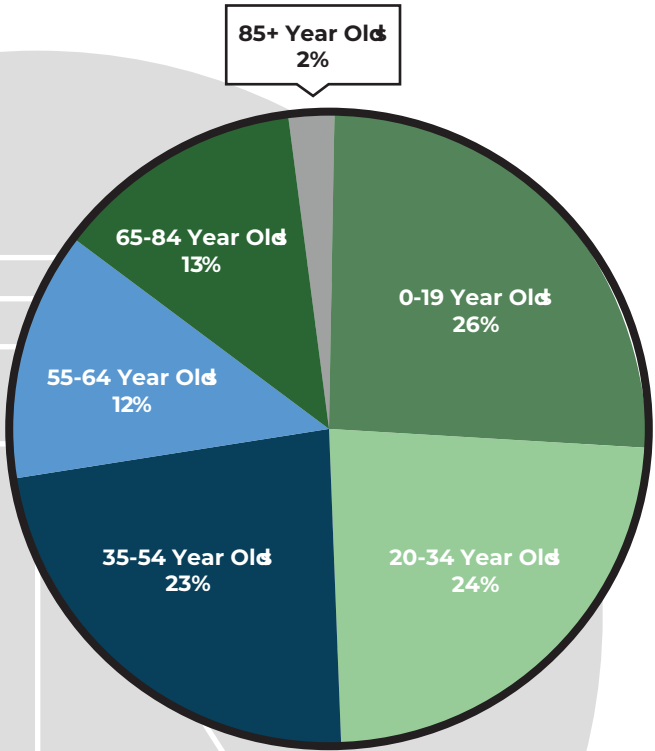


TABLE P-2: POPULATION BY AGE FOR AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY GEORGIA 2010-2021						
RICHMOND COUNTY	2010	PERCENT OF POPULATION	2021	PERCENT OF POPULATION	2010-2021 POPULATION CHANGE	2010-2021 POPULATION PERCENT CHANGE
Total Population	201,005		205,673		4,668	2.32%
Under 5 years	15,477	8%	12,950	6.30%	-2,527	-16.33%
5-9 years	13,467	7%	12,927	6.29%	-540	-4.01%
10-14 years	12,462	6%	13,621	6.62%	1,159	9.30%
15-19 years	14,472	7%	14,019	6.82%	-453	-3.13%
20-24 years	18,292	9%	16,045	7.80%	-2,247	-12.28%
25-34 years	29,548	15%	32,235	15.67%	2,687	9.09%
35-44 years	24,121	12%	26,258	12.77%	2,137	8.86%
45-54 years	27,539	14%	21,494	10.45%	-6,045	-21.95%
55-59 years	11,859	6%	11,714	5.70%	-145	-1.22%
60-64 years	10,854	5%	13,564	6.59%	2,710	24.97%
65-74 years	12,663	6%	19,485	9.47%	6,822	53.87%
75-84 years	7,437	4%	8,053	3.92%	616	8.28%
85 years and older	2,814	1%	3,308	1.61%	494	17.56%

RACIAL MAKE-UP

The residents of Augusta-Richmond County are as diverse in their racial categories as they are in their age groups. U.S. Census data acknowledges several racial groups including those of multiple races. From the years 2010 to 2020, county residents identifying as Caucasian declined by 10.8% percent while those identifying as African American experienced a 5% increase, as shown in TableP-3. The only group to experience a population loss was Caucasian. The Asian population within Augusta-Richmond County saw an increase of 19% between 2010 and 2020. This indicates a rise in the number of residents identifying as Asian. The multi-racial population in Augusta-Richmond County experienced the largest percentage growth, with a 121% increase between 2010 and 2020. This suggests a significant rise in the number of residents identifying with multiple races.

TABLE P-3: RACE OF AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY RESIDENTS

Richmond County	2010	PERCENT OF POPULATION	2020	PERCENT OF POPULATION	CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
Total Population	200,549		206,607			
Caucasian	79,624	39.7	70,997	34.36%	-8,627	-10.83%
African-American	108,633	45.2	114,201	55.27%	5,568	5.13%
American Indian / A.K. Native	685	0.3	690	0.33%	5	0.73%
Asian	3,331	1.7	3,975	1.92%	644	19.33%
Some Other Race	3,046	1.5	5,138	2.49%	2,092	68.68%
Two or More Races	5,230	2.6	11,606	5.62%	6,376	121.91%
Total	200,549	100	206,607	100	6,058	3.02%

Source: 2021 ACS Data 5-Year Data Profiles

Table P-4 shows the racial makeup of residents in Augusta-Richmond County is opposite the State of Georgia; however, both have seen a reduction in the segment of residents identifying as Caucasian. While there is growth in all other racial groups, American Indian/ Native Americans experienced the second-highest percentage of growth from 2010 to 2020 statewide. Similarities between Augusta-Richmond County and the State's racial makeup is the notable growth in the Asian and mixed-race populations from 2010 to 2020.

TABLE P-3: RACE OF RESIDENTS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA

Georgia	2010	PERCENT OF POPULATION	2020	PERCENT OF POPULATION	CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
Total Population	9,687,653		10,584,288			
Caucasian	5,787,440	59.7	4,693,484	44.34%	(1,093,956.00)	-18.90%
African-American	2,950,435	30.5	4,096,534	38.70%	1,146,099.00	38.85%
American Indian / A.K. Native	32,151	0.3	49,242	0.47%	17,091.00	53.16%
Asian	314,467	3.2	480,824	4.54%	166,357.00	52.90%
Some Other Race	388,872	4	532,690	5.03%	143,818.00	36.98%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	6,799	0.1	8,932	0.08%	2,133.00	31.37%
Two or More Races	207,489	2.1	722,582	6.83%	515,093.00	248.25%
Total	9,687,653	100	10,584,288	100.00%	896,635.00	9.26%

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections are a statistical means by which population change can be forecasted for an area. Table P-5 illustrates the population projections for Augusta-Richmond County and adjacent counties in Georgia and South Carolina for the years 2020 to 2035. Population growth is expected to continue for all counties in the area apart from Edgefield County, South Carolina which is projected to have a 12.8% percent decline in population between the years 2025 and 2035. At the state level South Carolina's population is projected to grow 1.2% more than Georgia's between 2025 and 2035.

TABLE P-5: POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY GA & SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS

County	2025	2030	2035	POPULATION CHANGE	PERCENT CHANGE
Burke County, GA	23,233	23,682	24,022	789	3.3%
Columbia County, GA	170,943	180,499	189,374	18,431	9.7%
McDuffie County, GA	21,504	21,804	22,085	581	2.6%
Richmond County, GA	206,594	211,913	217,193	10,599	4.9%
Aiken County, SC	171,470	172,172	172,781	1,311	0.8%
Edgefield County, SC	24,443	23,102	21,661	-2,782	-12.8%
Georgia	422,274	437,898	452,674	30,400	6.7%
South Carolina	5,366,452	5,601,742	5,827,845	461,393	7.9%

Georgia counties have population estimates available through 2050 as shown in Table P-5. Richmond and Columbia County anticipate double digit growth rates between 2025 and 2050. Columbia County is projected to have almost as many residents as Augusta-Richmond County by 2050. Over the next 25 years, the largest population changes will occur between 2025 and 2030. It is projected that Augusta will increase its population by 2.5 percent between 2025 and 2030 while Columbia County will experience a 5% increase. These projections do not take into account the ongoing expansion of the U.S. Army's Cyber-Command to Fort Gordon. This action is slated to increase the population growth rate for Augusta- Richmond County and surrounding jurisdictions. Population fluctuation effects housing demand and stock.

TABLE P-6: PROJECTED POPULATION FOR NEIGHBORING GEORGIA COUNTIES

County	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	PERCENT OF CHANGE
Burke	23,233	23,682	24,022	24,325	24,472	24,512	5.5%
Columbia	170,943	180,499	189,374	197,536	204,656	210,581	23.2%
McDuffie	21,504	21,804	22,085	22,194	22,272	22,301	3.7%
Richmond	206,594	211,913	217,193	222,289	227,403	232,423	12.5%
Georgia	11,242,166	11,342,198	11,442,182	11,542,606	11,642,590	11,742,622	4.5%

WHERE ARE WE NOW:

HOUSING

The housing characteristics in Augusta-Richmond County, reflect the city's history and early development patterns. With approximately 61,000 acres of residential land use, the housing stock in Augusta consists of a variety of types and densities. These include single-family, site-built residences at different densities, duplexes, apartments, manufactured homes, and group quarters.

Assessing the housing stock is an essential process that helps identify major housing problems, determine future housing needs, and develop plans for managing housing development. By examining factors such as housing types, densities, condition, affordability, and accessibility, stakeholders can gain insights into the existing housing situation and plan for future growth and improvement.

Understanding housing characteristics and trends is crucial for local authorities, planners, and community leaders to address housing challenges and create strategies for housing development, preservation, and affordability. It allows them to make informed decisions and implement policies that can ensure adequate and suitable housing options for residents.



Residential development in ARC today is a confluence of rural and urban patterns because the county is a consolidated government. Though both Augusta (1736) and Richmond County (1777) were founded in the eighteenth century, residential development patterns in Augusta were more urban than those in Richmond County until about 65 years ago. Initially settlement in the city occurred in close proximity to the Savannah River and nearby trading routes. As the city expanded to the south and west, neighborhoods developed in conjunction with the introduction of new modes of transportation (e.g. railroads) and manufacturing facilities (e.g. textile mills). In the twentieth century, Augusta annexed both incorporated places (Summerville) and unincorporated areas (e.g. Forest Hills, Highland Park), thereby adding a mix of older and newer housing to the existing stock

Settlement patterns in Richmond County were more rural than Augusta until about the 1940s. From its founding the county was a largely agrarian area and residential development was centered on several small incorporated towns. These included Bath, Blythe, Mt. Enon, Hephzibah, and other towns located within the boundaries of what is now the Fort Gordon Military Reservation. Following World War II, suburban development began in earnest in Richmond County and continues to the present day. The character, age and condition of the housing stock thus reflect this trend and the expansion of commercial and industrial facilities that accompanied it.

Based on the location of the outward sprawl and growth trends of housing, Fort Gordon has always acted as a gravitational pull for housing units following WWII. Market demands and cultural shifts have also contributed to outward housing sprawl with the construction of highways and auto-centric commercial shopping centers.



HOUSING UNIT TRENDS

A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from the outside of the building or through a common hall. The number of housing units in ARC continues to increase. From 2010 to 2021 the county has increased its housing units by 6% equating to 5,481 additional housing units.

TABLE H-1: HOUSING UNITS IN ARC

Year	2010	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Units	86,097	87,732	88,145	88,622	89,055	91,578

HOUSING TENURE

Housing tenure is often used to describe the type of relationship between the person who lives in a home and the person who owns the home. ARC is experiencing a steady decline in the number of owner occupied residences with 11% of the units from 2010 becoming rental or vacant units by 2021, as shown in Table H-2. Factors contributing to the higher percentage of renter-occupied units in Augusta include the age of the housing stock and the presence of facilities that cater to more transient populations, such as Fort Gordon, medical facilities, education institutions and manufacturing plants. Construction projects at major facilities in the region, such as the Savannah River Site, Plant Vogtle and Fort Gordon also contribute to the rental housing market.

TABLE H-2: HOUSING TENURE

Type of Occupancy	2010	2018	2020	2021	% CHANGE
Owner Occupied	42,292	38,442	37,427	37,827	-11%
Renter Occupied	31,907	33,723	35,099	35,804	12%
Unoccupied-Vacant	11,898	15,980	16,529	17,947	50%

VACANCY RATE

A housing unit is vacant if no one is living in it at the time of the census interview unless its occupants are only temporarily absent. In addition, a vacant unit may be one which is entirely occupied by persons who have a usual residence elsewhere. New units not yet occupied are classified as vacant housing units if construction has reached a point where all exterior windows and doors are installed, and final usable floors are in place. Vacant units are excluded if they are exposed to the elements, that is, if the roof, walls, windows, or doors no longer protect the interior from the elements, or if there is positive evidence (such as a sign on the house or block) that the unit is to be demolished or is condemned. Also excluded are quarters being used entirely for nonresidential purposes, such as a store or an office, or quarters used for the storage of business supplies or inventory, machinery, or agricultural products. Vacant sleeping rooms in lodging houses, transient accommodations, barracks, and other quarters not defined as housing units are not included in this plan.

From 2010 to 2021, the number of rental units in ARC increased by 12%. The number of vacant units increased within the same timespan by 50% as shown in Table H-2. Vacancy data is used extensively by public and private sector organizations to evaluate the need for new housing programs and initiatives. In addition, the rental vacancy rate is a component of the index of leading economic indicators and is thereby used by the Federal Government and economic forecasters to gauge the current economic climate. Factors that affect rising vacancy rates could include undesirable housing conditions due to the older housing stock, lack of amenities near housing developments, lack of variety in housing options, overall population shifts due to a stagnant or decreasing job market, and complex socio-economic circumstances.

AGE OF HOUSING

The age of Augusta's housing stock reflects the comparatively rapid growth that took place in the decades after World War II. Table H-3 indicates that about half (47.6%) of the housing units were constructed between 1940 and 1979. Another 30% of the units were constructed between 1980 and 1999, and an estimated 14.5% have been constructed in the last 20 years from the year 2000 onward. The remaining 7% were built in 1939 or earlier. Generally, the majority of the units that are 65+ years old are concentrated in neighborhoods located in the older inner suburban areas including and surrounding downtown.

The effects of an aging housing stock are felt by all. Older homes typically require more maintenance and repairs compared to newer homes. Aging infrastructure, such as plumbing, electrical systems, roofing, and foundations, may need regular attention and upkeep. The cost of maintenance and repairs can be higher for aging homes, which can place a financial burden on homeowners. Older homes may have outdated insulation, windows, and heating/cooling systems, leading to lower energy efficiency. This can result in higher energy bills and a larger carbon footprint. Retrofitting or upgrading older homes to improve energy efficiency can be costly but may be necessary to reduce energy consumption and costs.

The numbers illustrate the height of the housing boom in Augusta peaked from 1980-1999 and has since been in steady decline due to the number of housing units built are tapering off. There is no doubt housing has always gravitated toward Fort Gordon and with that, most of the housing in South Augusta around the base was built in that pinnacle timeframe from 1960 to 1999. Between 2010 and 2021, ARC has added 5,158 housing units to its housing stock.

TABLE H-3: AGE OF OCCUPIED HOUSING STOCK

Year Structure Built	% of Total Current Structures
2014 or later	3.60%
2010 to 2013	3.20%
2000 to 2009	10.30%
1980 to 1999	28.40%
1960 to 1979	31.90%
1940 to 1959	15.40%
1939 or earlier	7.10%

HOUSING CONDITIONS

As described above, due to the distribution of when ARC houses have been built, the overall housing conditions of ARC are typical of older neighborhoods. With housing making up 28% of the county land use in terms of acres, around 60% of that total is dedicated to detached single-family units, which is 2 percent less than in 2016. As previously mentioned, one example of this is high vacancy rates in downtown adjacent neighborhoods. The high vacancy rates here can be attributed to significant groupings of other closely located vacant housing ultimately leading to rapid deterioration and blight in these areas.

HOUSING COST AND AFFORDABILITY

The cost of housing in Augusta, has increased steadily over the decades for owners and renters. Despite the increase, the cost of housing remains lower than regional and state levels and contributes to the area's lower-than-average cost of living index. The estimated median value of an owner-occupied housing unit in Augusta was \$132,100, which is up from \$100,600 in the year 2016. Even though the housing prices have increased, Richmond County still maintains a low median price compared to comparable counties around Georgia, other state, and national median home prices.

Comparing the median house price of Richmond County (\$132,100) to Georgia (\$249,700), the United States (\$281,400), and Columbia County (\$265,100), factors such as the age, quality, access to neighborhood amenities, and overall quality of life impact the desirability of a housing market. Comparing the neighbors, Columbia County with Richmond County, Columbia County has a newer housing stock due to significant growth in the past few decades.

In some cases, the market value of older homes may be lower compared to newer homes with modern features and amenities. Buyers may prefer newer construction or homes that require less immediate maintenance and repairs. However, the market value can vary depending on location, demand, and overall condition.

The newer, more varied housing stock has made Columbia County desirable in recent decades, which has attracted higher-income households that can afford more. This has contributed to an increase in housing vacancy in Richmond County, which affects the overall value and explains the lower \$132,100 estimate. It should also be noted other miscellaneous factors might affect the overall market property values, like high renter percentage as indicated in the housing tenure numbers for Augusta-Richmond County.

TABLE H-4: MEDIAN VALUE OF OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS

County	Median Value
Bibb	155,800
Chatham	236,600
Columbia	265,100
Muscogee	170,900
Richmond	132,100
Aiken	175,400

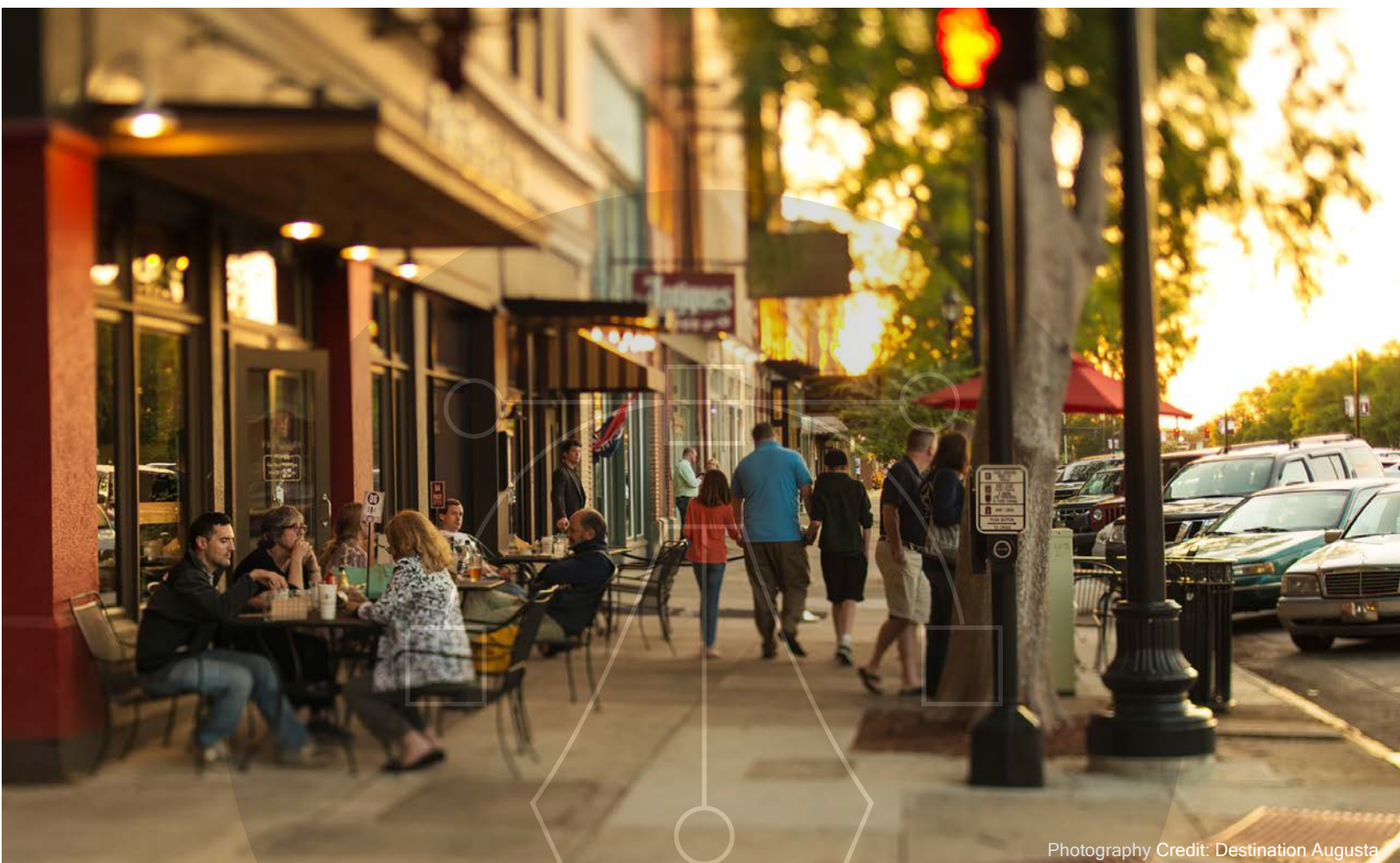
2021 ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles

TABLE H-5: MEDIAN MONTHLY RENT

Bibb	\$879
Chatham	\$1,167
Columbia	\$1,192
Muscogee	\$951
Richmond	\$941
Aiken	\$892
Edgefield	\$697

2021 ACS 5-Year Data Profiles

While housing affordability is reasonable in ARC, those persons not interested in homeownership are experiencing an increase in rental rates across the nation and CSRA. Currently, 39% of ARCs housing units are for rent, and with the average rent starting at \$941.00, the ability to attain long-term residents depends on the economy and industries. Table H-5 shows that ARC rents are consistent with neighboring counties and counties of a similar size.



Photography Credit: Destination Augusta

WHERE ARE WE NOW:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Traditional economic development strategies play a vital role in fostering a sustainable community and promoting long-term growth. Key components include business retention, recruitment, and urban revitalization. A continued focus on job creation, increased income, and workforce development is essential for developing a sustainable community and retaining and attracting long-term residents. Cultivation of employment opportunities across all sectors includes the enhancement of industry clusters, small business expansion, and entrepreneurial and startup accelerator programs which foster economic resiliency.

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

Employment by sector provides valuable insights into the economic structure and composition of a community. It reveals how jobs are distributed across different industries, which can offer a snapshot of the community's economic strengths, diversification, and potential vulnerabilities. Employment by sector can reveal a community's past, present, and future as described below:

- 1. Economic Specialization:** Employment by sector highlights the industries that are dominant or specialized within a community. For example, a community with a significant concentration of jobs in sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, technology, or tourism indicates areas of economic specialization. This can provide insight into the community's competitive advantages and potential for growth in those sectors.
- 2. Economic Diversity:** Examining employment by sector can reveal the level of economic diversity within a community. A well-diversified economy distributes jobs across multiple sectors, which can contribute to stability and resilience. On the other hand, heavy reliance on a single sector can make a community vulnerable to economic downturns or industry-specific challenges.
- 3. Workforce Skills and Education:** Different sectors require varying skill sets and levels of education. By analyzing employment by sector, it is possible to gain insights into the types of skills and education levels that are in demand within the community. This information can help inform workforce development initiatives, educational programs, and training opportunities to align with the needs of local industries.
- 4. Employment Opportunities:** Employment by sector reveals the types of job opportunities available within a community. This information can be useful for job seekers, residents considering career choices, and businesses looking to understand the labor market. It can help individuals make informed decisions about their career paths and identify sectors that may offer greater employment prospects.
- 5. Economic Resilience and Vulnerability:** A diverse employment base across multiple sectors can contribute to economic resilience by reducing dependence on a single industry. Communities heavily reliant on a single sector may be more susceptible to economic shocks, such as recessions or industry downturns. By analyzing employment by sector, communities can identify potential vulnerabilities and develop strategies to diversify and strengthen their economy.

It's important to note that employment by sector is dynamic and can change over time due to economic shifts, technological advancements, and other factors. Regular monitoring of employment trends and ongoing analysis of the sectoral composition can help communities identify opportunities, address challenges, and shape economic development strategies accordingly.

Based on data from the 2021 American Community Survey, ARC experienced a 4.7% increase in the number of people in the workforce from 2017-2021 as shown in Table E-1. Several sectors experienced significant gains in those same years: manufacturing increased by 16%, professional-scientific increased by 25% as did the arts and entertainment. The sector with the most significant gains was transportation and warehousing with an increase of 72%.

TABLE E-1: INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED BY LABOR FORCE IN ARC

	Richmond County, Georgia				
LABEL	2017	2018	2019	*2020	2021
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	81,679	86,643	83,670	83,015	85,571
INDUSTRY					
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	459	236	439	261	42
Construction	4,670	3,924	3,757	4,286	4,019
Manufacturing	7,952	10,083	10,931	7,750	9,297
Wholesale trade	1,611	2,283	1,584	1,588	555
Retail trade	11,962	10,325	9,312	9,949	10,835
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	3,019	5,405	3,973	3,950	5,222
Information	1,637	552	816	1,187	1,314
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3,650	2,892	2,528	3,039	2,144
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	8,635	7,481	13,368	10,859	10,811
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	22,013	23,650	18,056	20,824	24,647
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6,804	8,429	13,138	10,053	8,508
Other services, except public administration	4,834	5,037	2,355	4,509	2,836
Public administration	4,433	6,346	3,413	4,760	5,341

Unfortunately, agriculture-related employment declined by 90% in ARC and wholesale trade declined by 65%. Employment in agriculture-related fields has been declining for several reasons:

- 1. Technological Advancements:** Technological advancements in agriculture have led to increased mechanization and automation. Machinery, equipment, and advanced agricultural practices have improved efficiency and productivity, reducing the need for manual labor in farming and related activities.
- 2. Consolidation and Scale:** Agricultural operations have become larger and more consolidated over time. Small family farms have been replaced by larger commercial operations, resulting in economies of scale and a decreased demand for labor. This consolidation has led to increased efficiency but reduced the number of available agricultural jobs.

3. Shift in Labor Demand: As economies develop and urbanize, there is often a shift in labor demand from agriculture to other sectors. Employment opportunities in manufacturing, services, and technology tend to attract workers away from traditional agricultural occupations.

4. Changing Demographics and Generational Shift: The aging of the agricultural workforce and the younger generation's preference for non-agricultural careers have contributed to a decline in employment in agriculture-related fields. Many younger individuals are opting for urban lifestyles and pursuing careers in industries outside of agriculture.

5. Changes in Farming Practices: Changes in farming practices, such as increased specialization and the shift towards industrialized agriculture, have also impacted employment. Certain agricultural activities, such as crop diversification or livestock intensification, may require fewer workers.

6. Globalization and Trade: Globalization and increased trade have affected the agricultural sector. Import competition, market dynamics, and changes in agricultural policies can influence employment opportunities in agriculture-related fields.

It is important to note that while employment in traditional agriculture-related fields may be declining, new opportunities are emerging in areas such as agri-tech, precision agriculture, sustainable farming practices, and agricultural research. These areas often require specialized knowledge and skills, reflecting the evolving nature of the agriculture industry.

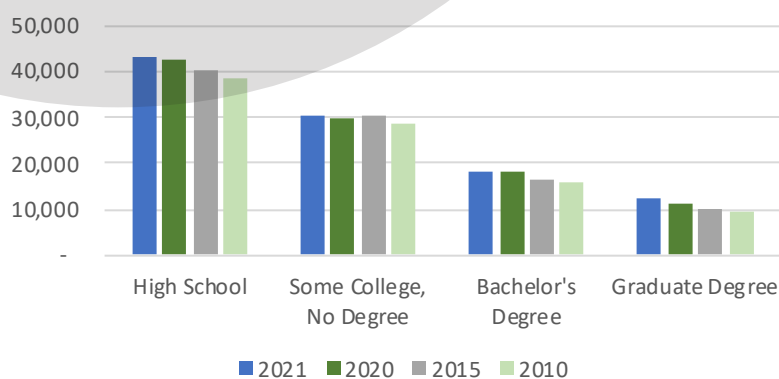
Overall, the decline in employment in agriculture-related fields is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon influenced by technological advancements, changing labor demands, shifting demographics, and broader economic factors.

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

It is widely understood that an educated workforce plays a significant role in economic growth and development for regions, counties, and communities. Education and income data provides socioeconomic indicators which is in turn used by private industry in site selection for new and expanding industries. For example, the number of college graduates, within a geographic area attracts certain industries, historically leading to high-skilled and high-wage jobs in a community.

In looking at the segment of the population within Richmond County ages twenty-five years and older, from 2010-2021, there has been consistent progress in the attainment of high school diplomas, bachelor, and graduate degrees.

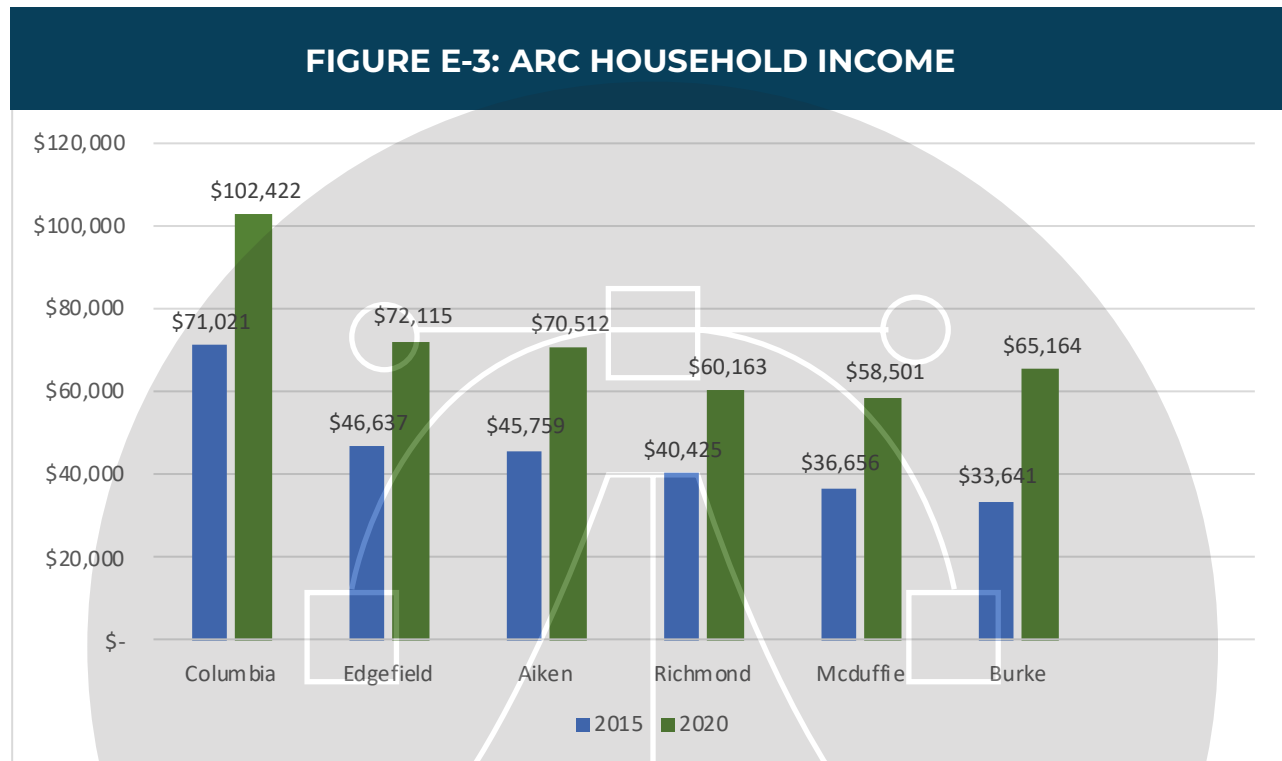
FIGURE E-2: RICHMOND COUNTY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT FOR 25+ YEAR OLDS



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The correlation between education and income has been studied for decades and until the present-day prominence of social media and e-commerce, education was the primary factor in predicting income. In a span of 5-years, the average household income of ARC residents has increased by 48%, as shown in Figure E-3. The national median household income is \$70,784 and ARCs is \$60,163.



UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics the national unemployment rate was 3.7% in May 2023, while ARCs was 3.8%. Currently, unemployment challenges locally are consistent with the national level. Looking back, in 2020, unemployment rates reached a 5-year high due to the pandemic. Service oriented businesses such as restaurants, salons, spas, and movie theaters were forced to close and many small businesses had to reduce staff or close. The state and federal government saw record high unemployment claims and created stimulus funding for individuals and businesses.

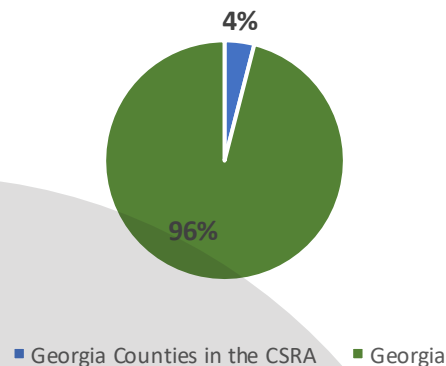
FIGURE E-4: AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE TRENDS RATE 2015-2021



LABOR FORCE

The labor force is a key economic indicator that provides insights into the available workforce within the county. The labor force includes all people aged 16 and older who are classified as either employed and unemployed; it is the number of people who are either working or actively looking for work. Georgia counties in the CSRA makeup approximately 4% of Georgia's workforce. It helps measure the extent of participation in the labor market and is used to calculate employment and unemployment rates.

ARC REPRESENTATION IN THE GEORGIA WORKFORCE



WHERE ARE WE NOW:

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities and services are a vital component of Augusta Georgia. These facilities and services contribute to the health, safety and welfare of our community's residents, help to improve the quality of life, and foster new housing and business opportunities. Community facilities in Augusta include Government, Public Safety, Education, Recreation and Parks, Cultural, and Hospital and Healthcare facilities. These facilities encompass a wide range of amenities and services that enhance the quality of life, promote social interaction, and contribute to a thriving community.

Here are some ways community facilities can make a county more desirable:
Recreation and Parks: Well-maintained parks, green spaces, and recreational facilities provide opportunities for outdoor activities, sports, and leisure. They offer spaces for exercise, relaxation, and community gatherings, fostering a sense of well-being and promoting an active lifestyle.

Education and Schools: Access to quality educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities, is a significant factor for families and individuals considering a county. Good schools and educational resources contribute to a strong workforce, attract families, and support lifelong learning.

Healthcare Services: Availability of healthcare facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and medical centers, is essential for residents' well-being and quality of life. Accessible and quality healthcare services contribute to a healthier population and can attract retirees, professionals in the medical field, and businesses that value employee well-being.

Cultural and Arts Facilities: Museums, theaters, art galleries, and cultural centers enhance a county's cultural vibrancy. These facilities provide opportunities for artistic expression, entertainment, and cultural experiences. They can attract creative individuals, support local artists, and contribute to a vibrant arts scene.

Libraries and Community Centers: Libraries serve as centers for learning, research, and community engagement. They provide access to resources, educational programs, and technology. Community centers offer spaces for social gatherings, events, and activities that bring residents together, fostering community cohesion and a sense of belonging.

Sports and Recreation Facilities: Sports complexes, arenas, and recreational facilities offer opportunities for organized sports, fitness activities, and community events. These facilities can attract sports enthusiasts, host tournaments, and contribute to a healthy and active lifestyle.

Transportation Infrastructure: Efficient transportation infrastructure, including well-connected road networks, public transit systems, and airports, enhances accessibility and connectivity within the county. Accessible transportation options make commuting easier, support businesses, and facilitate tourism and travel.

Community Safety and Services: Access to police and fire stations, emergency services, and community safety initiatives contributes to a safe and secure environment. Adequate public safety measures instill confidence in residents and businesses and contribute to an overall desirable living environment.

Community Engagement and Social Services: Community facilities that promote civic engagement, social services, and support networks enhance the county's social fabric. They provide platforms for community involvement, volunteer opportunities, and access to essential social services.

Environmental Sustainability: Community facilities that prioritize sustainability, such as recycling centers, renewable energy initiatives, and green spaces, contribute to environmental stewardship. These initiatives attract environmentally conscious residents and businesses and promote a sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle.

Collectively, community facilities create a desirable environment by providing essential services, promoting social interaction, fostering a sense of community, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents. These facilities contribute to the county's appeal, attract new residents and businesses, and support economic growth and development.

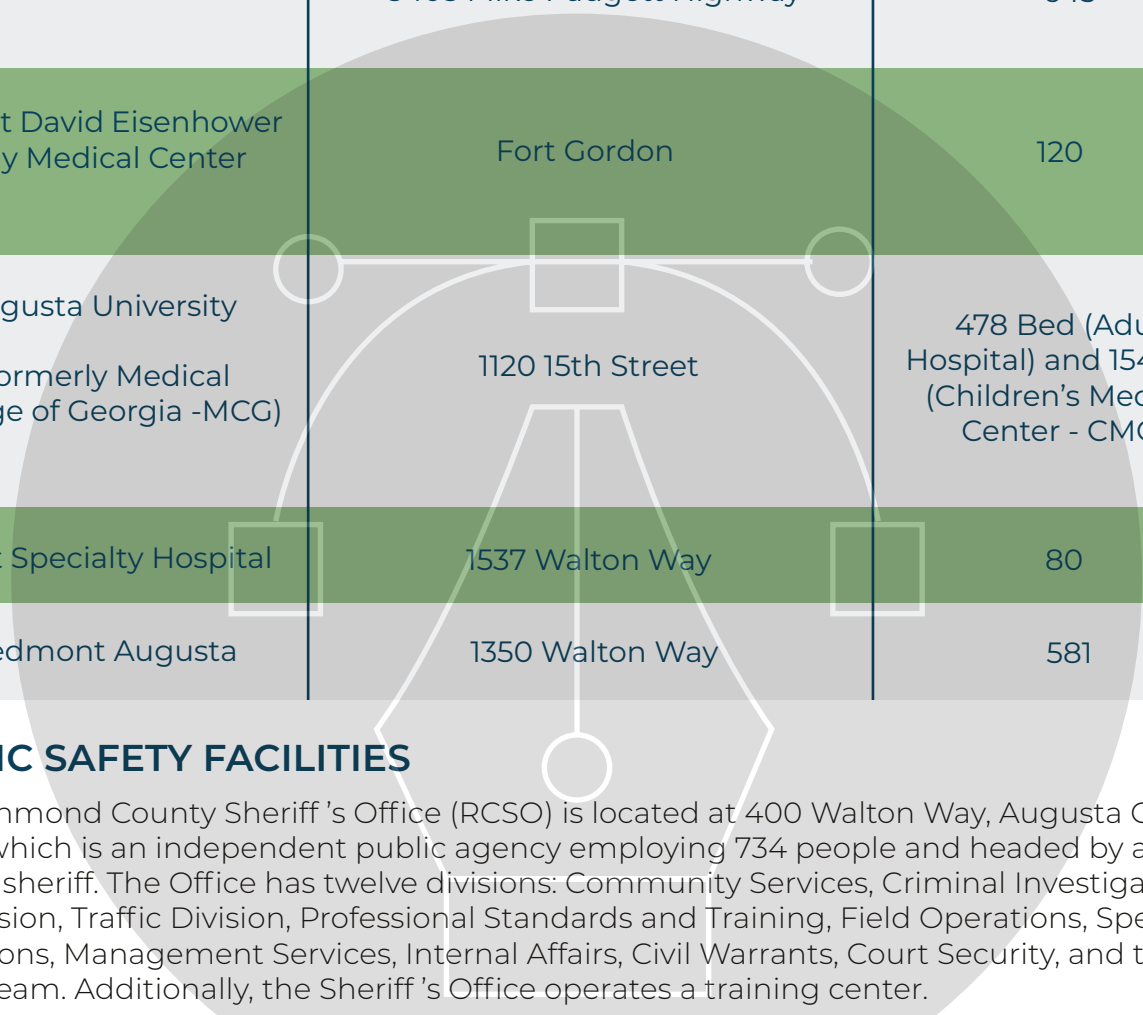


Photography Credit: Destination Augusta

HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Augusta has a long history of service in the field of medicine. As a result, medical care, research and education facilities are vital to community life and the area economy. There are several major medical facilities in Augusta employing thousands of people. These facilities include acute care hospitals, psychiatric facilities and extended care centers. Several of these facilities are located in a Medical District near Downtown Augusta, and others are located elsewhere in the city.

AUGUSTA HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE FACILITIES		
Hospital	Address	Number of Hospital Beds
Augusta University Medical Center	1120 15th Street	581
Charlie Norwood Veterans Administration Medical Center	950 Fifteenth Street (Downtown Division) 1 Freedom Way (Upper Division)	Downtown Division (156 Beds - 58 Medicine, 27 Surgery, 71 Spinal Cord Injury) Uptown Division (93 Beds- 68 Psychiatry, 15 Blind Rehabilitation, and 10 Rehabilitation Medicine) + (132 Bed Restorative / Nursing Home Care Units and a 60-Bed Domiciliary)
Piedmont- Summerville Campus (Trinity Hospital of Augusta) (St. Joseph Hospital)	2260 Wrightsboro Road	231
Walton Rehabilitation Hospital	1355 Independence Drive	60
Doctors Hospital	361 Wheeler Road	350
East Central Regional Hospital- Augusta	3405 Mike Padgett Highway	187 Bed Mental Health and Forensic Services



East Central Regional Hospital - Gracewood	100 Myrtle Avenue	40 Bed Skilled Nursing and 163 Bed Inter-mediate Care for People with Developmental Disabilities
Georgia Regional	3405 Mike Padgett Highway	645
Dwight David Eisenhower Army Medical Center	Fort Gordon	120
Augusta University (Formerly Medical College of Georgia -MCG)	1120 15th Street	478 Bed (Adult Hospital) and 154 Bed (Children's Medical Center - CMC)
Select Specialty Hospital	1537 Walton Way	80
Piedmont Augusta	1350 Walton Way	581

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES

The Richmond County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) is located at 400 Walton Way, Augusta GA, 30901, which is an independent public agency employing 734 people and headed by an elected sheriff. The Office has twelve divisions: Community Services, Criminal Investigation, Jail Division, Traffic Division, Professional Standards and Training, Field Operations, Special Operations, Management Services, Internal Affairs, Civil Warrants, Court Security, and the SWAT Team. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office operates a training center.

AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Augusta-Richmond County Fire Department provides full-time professional fire protection to all parts of Augusta and the City of Blythe (under contract). Their service area covers approximately 214 square miles (excluding Hephzibah and Fort Gordon), and includes a mix of residential, multi-family commercial, and woodlands.

The Fire Department has 294 employees and 58 pieces of firefighting equipment distributed among 20 fire stations. The department's headquarters are located at 3117 Deans Bridge Rd. Within the department, the Fire Prevention Bureau is responsible for arson investigations, code enforcement, plan review and fire safety education, with life safety code enforcement a top priority of the department.

In the fall of 2017, the Augusta Fire Department had received an Insurance Service Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification rating of 01/IX, which is the best ISO rating a fire department can achieve. The ISO rating system evaluates the level of service of a city's fire department by assessing a fire department's provision of fire protection services which can include for example its training programs, firefighting equipment, and its emergency response capabilities.

AUGUSTA 911 CENTER

The Augusta 9-1-1 Center is located at 911 Fourth Street in downtown Augusta. The center is fully staffed on each shift with trained Emergency Medical Dispatchers and is currently staffed with 60 staff members. Rural/Metro Ambulance Service has a three (3) year contract to provide emergency medical services in Augusta. Central EMS uses eight ambulances and six additional ambulances during peak periods plus three quick response vehicles.

AUGUSTA RICHMOND COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES

The mission of Augusta Animal Services is to enforce state laws and local ordinances pertaining to the care and control of animals, protection of life and property, and to raise public awareness of responsible pet ownership. The Augusta Animal Services Department staff includes an administrative staff which consists of a Director, an Assistant Director, a Kennel Operations Manager, an Administrative Assistant, a Field Operations Manager, and a Dispatcher. In addition, the department includes a Kennel staff consisting of 11 staff attendants, and an Enforcement staff consisting of six (6) animal control officers. The department operates out of a 17,500 square-foot facility located at 4164 Mack Lane. The facility shelters and adopts animals to the residents of Augusta.

EDUCATION FACILITIES

The Richmond County Board of Education (RCBOE) and several private schools provide elementary and secondary education in Augusta. Post-secondary education facilities include Augusta Technical College, Augusta State University, Paine College, and the Medical College of Georgia. Brenau University, Troy University, the University of Phoenix and Savannah River College are other smaller post-secondary institutions located in Augusta. All post-secondary institutions offer a variety of degrees – some with online programs in addition to their on-campus programs.

RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Richmond County Board of Education has ten members elected by districts that coincide with the Augusta Commission districts. Eight (8) school board members represent single districts and the remaining two are at-large. The Board operates under a committee system established by the Board President, and the Board appoints a Superintendent to administer the operations of the school system. The Board employs over 4,000 people with all administrative offices located in an adaptive reuse building located at 864 Broad Street in downtown Augusta. Currently, there are 51 schools in the Richmond County public school system.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS

There are a total 15 private grade schools in Augusta serving 3,038 students.

RECREATION AND PARKS

The Augusta Recreation and Parks Department maintains over 60 park sites and 1,500 acres of parkland that feature a wide variety of quality facilities with family-oriented leisure activities for all ages and population groups. Currently, there are 66 recreation and park facilities in Augusta Georgia. Of these, 57 are currently owned by the Parks and Recreation Department.

WATER AND SEWER SYSTEMS

The Augusta Recreation and Parks Department maintains over 60 park sites and 1,500 acres of parkland that feature a wide variety of quality facilities with family-oriented leisure activities for all ages and population groups. Currently, there are 66 recreation and park facilities in Augusta Georgia. Of these, 57 are currently owned by the Parks and Recreation Department.

The Augusta Utilities Department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water and sewer systems in the Augusta Georgia. The Department also provides customer service functions including meter reading and customer billing, revenue collection, and new construction inspection. The Department is headed by a director and has over 300 full-time employees. Augusta owns and operates a water system serving over 63,266 residential and 7,896 commercial and industrial customers as of December 2011. The system's surface water supply is the Savannah River, supplemented by groundwater wells located throughout the city. Water from the Savannah River is treated at the Highland Avenue Water Treatment Plant (WTP). Water from the wells is treated at one of three ground water treatment plants (GWTP). Water transmission and distribution facilities convey the water from the treatment plants throughout the 210 square mile water service area. Generally, the service area can be characterized as having complete water service coverage for potential customers who wish to connect to the system.

An agreement was signed by Augusta and Fort Gordon to provide water and waste-water services in 2007. As of 2014, Augusta Utilities Department will provide potable water and wastewater collection services on Fort Gordon for the next fifty years. The cities of Blythe and Hephzibah provide water service within their respective jurisdictions.

The Savannah River is the city's primary source of surface water. Water is also withdrawn from the Augusta Canal, which is fed by and located next to the river. Major facilities at the Raw Water Pumping Station, located on the Canal, include four raw water intakes on the canal (two primary and two secondary) and a diesel engine-driven standby raw water pump. The Raw Water Pumping Station has an aggregate pumping capacity of 88 million gallons daily (mgd).

The raw water supply is pumped to the Highland Avenue Filtration Plant through a system of three parallel raw water lines: a 30-inch diameter cast iron, a 36-inch steel, and a 60-inch ductile iron line. A 42-inch diameter, pre-stressed concrete cylinder pipe is currently inactive. The standby raw water supply facility is at the same general location as the primary facility but pumps water directly from the Savannah River to the Highland Avenue Filtration Plant through the same system of raw water supply pipelines.

The city is currently permitted to draw up to 45 mgd at the Raw Water Pumping Station. The construction of Pistol Range Road Raw Water Pumping Station (RWPS) located below downtown Augusta, and the N. Max Hicks Water Treatment Plant (WTP) were completed in January 2005. The construction of the new water treatment plant and intake allowed an additional 15 mgd in permitted pumping capacity.

The city is also permitted to withdraw supplemental raw water from the Tuscaloosa Formation aquifer through 32 wells: 21 actively producing, 10 deactivated and 1 inactive. The city is currently permitted to use up to 18.4-mgd monthly average groundwater and 17.4 mgd maximum annual average. Well fields are generally located near one of three Ground Water Treatment Plants (GWTPs). One of the three plants, GWTP #3, located on Old Waynesboro Road, became operational in 2001. The other two plants date from 1966 and 1979. The wells that have been deactivated are in the vicinity of GWTP #1 located off Peach Orchard Road. Augusta owns five water treatment plants and a rural chlorination system, as illustrated in Table C-7. Augusta has raw water storage capacity of approximately 379 acre-feet or 124 million gallons at two raw water storage reservoirs located adjacent to the Highland Avenue WTP. They provide pre-settling of suspended matter in the raw water as well as storage during times of low river or canal flows. Water flows by gravity from these reservoirs to the WTP.

WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The system's water distribution consists of approximately 1,048 miles of pipelines, ranging in size from 6 inches to 24 inches in diameter. Most of the pipelines are made of cast iron or ductile iron. Approximately 20% of these pipelines have been in service for 50 years or more, with the oldest pipelines installed approximately 140 years ago. Finished surface water is distributed from the Highland Avenue WTP by gravity and pumping. Finished ground water is pumped from GWTP No. 1 into the Intermediate-South pressure gradient (417ft msl) and from GWTP No. 2 into the Pine Hill pressure gradient (457 ft. msl). GWTP No.3 pumps finished water into the Pine Hill high-pressure gradient (521 ft. msl). Distribution system pump stations situated at various locations are used to feed isolated high-pressure zones.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITIES

The city of Augusta's sanitary sewerage system serves approximately 47,744 residential and 5,900 commercial and industrial customers (as of July 31, 2004). The sewer system covers an area of approximately 106 square miles and serves an estimated population in excess of 150,000. For Gordon and the cities of Hephzibah and Blythe have separate sewer systems. Augusta's wastewater collection and conveyance system consists of 8 drainage basins, 28 wastewater pumping stations, and approximately 680 miles of collection sewers. The sewers transport primarily sanitary sewage, but there is evidence of storm water infiltration in some of the basins. Approximately 80 percent of the sewer system is drained by gravity; the remainder requires pumping at least once. Sewer lines range from 8 inches to 72 inches in diameter. Most lines are made of vitrified clay, but other materials present include brick, concrete, and polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Approximately 20 percent of the sewer lines have been in service for 50 years or more.

CIVIC CENTER AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

Civic centers and cultural facilities play significant roles in a community, serving as gathering places, promoting cultural expression, and enhancing the overall quality of life. Augusta has a civic center, auditoriums and performing arts facilities used to host a wide variety of events and performances.

Cultural facilities in a county encompass a wide range of institutions, venues, and spaces that promote arts, heritage, and cultural experiences. These facilities contribute to the county's cultural vibrancy, foster creativity, and enrich the lives of residents and visitors.

The role of civic and cultural facilities is highlighted below:

Museums: Museums showcase collections of artifacts, artworks, and exhibitions that highlight local history, science, art, or specific themes. They offer educational experiences, preserve cultural heritage, and provide opportunities for learning and exploration.

MUSEUMS IN AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY		
NAME	LOCATION	YEAR BUILT/ ESTABLISHED
Augusta Canal Discovery Center	1450 Greene Street Suite #400	2003
Augusta Museum of History	560 Reynolds Street	1995
Augusta Visitor Information Center	605 Reynolds Street	---
Morris Museum of Art	Augusta Riverfront Center at #1 Tenth Street	1992
Gertrude Herbert Institute of Art	506 Telfair Street	1818
Meadow Garden	1320 Independence Drive	1795
Ezekiel Harris House	1822 Broad Street	1795
Boyhood Home of Woodrow Wilson	419 Seventh Street	1850
Lucy Craft Laney House and Museum of Black History	1116 Phillips Street	1911

Art Galleries: Art galleries exhibit visual artworks, including paintings, sculptures, photography, and mixed media creations. They provide platforms for local and visiting artists to display their work, encourage artistic expression, and foster appreciation for the visual arts.

Performing Arts Centers: Performing arts centers are venues dedicated to hosting live performances, including theater, dance, music, and spoken word. These facilities often feature auditoriums, stages, and technical equipment to support various forms of performing arts productions and events.

Theaters: Theaters are venues specifically designed for stage performances, including plays,

musicals, and other theatrical productions. They provide spaces for live entertainment, cultural performances, and community events.

Music Halls and Concert Venues: Music halls and concert venues host musical performances, including concerts, recitals, and live music events. These facilities range from small intimate spaces to large concert halls, catering to a diverse range of musical genres and audiences.

CIVIC CENTERS AND SIMILAR FACILITIES IN AUGUSTA			
NAME	LOCATION	YEAR BUILT/ ESTABLISHED	SEATS
James Brown Arena	601 Seventh Street	1979	8,500
Bell Auditorium	712 Telfair Street	1938	2,690
Imperial Theatre	745 Broad Street	1918	903
Miller Theatre	708 Broad Street	1940	1,300
Sacred Heart Cultural Center	1301 Greene Street	1898	--
Meadow Garden	2500 Walton Way	1968	732

These facilities showcase and promote cultural expression, diversity, and heritage within the community. They provide platforms for artists, performers, and cultural organizations to present their work and share their traditions, preserving and celebrating the unique cultural identity of the community. Cultural expression and preservation are fundamental to enhancing the quality of life. Centers and facilities designed solely for the public promote social cohesion while serving as a catalyst for urban revitalization. Well-designed civic centers and cultural facilities can act as catalysts for urban revitalization, attracting investments, businesses, and residents to surrounding areas. They contribute to the revitalization of downtown areas and promote a vibrant urban environment.

Cultural Centers: Cultural centers serve as hubs for promoting cultural diversity, heritage, and community engagement. They may offer programming, workshops, exhibitions, and events that celebrate and educate about various cultural traditions, ethnicities, or immigrant communities.

Libraries: Libraries serve as valuable cultural facilities, offering not only access to books and resources but also hosting literary events, author talks, and educational programs. They often provide spaces for community gatherings, workshops, and learning opportunities. The East Central Georgia Regional Library serves the five counties of Burke, Columbia, Lincoln,

Richmond, and Warren with the headquarters located at 823 Telfair Street in downtown Augusta. There are five (5) branches in Augusta – Richmond County with over half a million items. Cultural facilities often offer educational programs, workshops, and classes that promote artistic skills, creativity, and cultural awareness. They provide opportunities for individuals of all ages to engage in arts education, develop their talents, and explore various art forms.

Historical Sites and Heritage Centers: Historical sites and heritage centers showcase the history, traditions, and cultural significance of a county or region. They preserve and interpret historical buildings, landmarks, and artifacts, allowing visitors to learn about the local heritage and experience the county's historical context.

Film and Media Centers: Film and media centers provide resources and support for filmmakers, screenwriters, and digital media creators. These facilities may include production studios, editing suites, screening rooms, and equipment rentals, fostering the development of the local film and media industry.

Public Art Installations: Public art installations, including sculptures, murals, and interactive artworks, enhance the visual appeal of public spaces and contribute to the cultural identity of a county. They promote artistic expression, create landmarks, and engage the community in public art experiences.

These cultural facilities not only provide opportunities for artistic expression and cultural appreciation but also contribute to tourism, community engagement, and the overall quality of life within the county. They foster creativity, promote a sense of identity, and serve as platforms for community connection and celebration of diverse cultural expressions. Civic centers and cultural facilities can have a significant economic impact on a community. They attract visitors from both near and far, stimulating local businesses, restaurants, and hotels. Cultural tourism helps generate revenue, supports job creation, and contributes to the local economy.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Arts in the Heart of Augusta

The Arts in the Heart of Augusta is a 2 ½ day celebration of food, arts, diversity and culture. Over 88,000 visitors attend the Arts in the Heart of Augusta annually, and the Arts in the Heart of Augusta be held for the 37th time in 2018. The celebration is held in Downtown Augusta at the Augusta Common and Broad St. between 7th and 10th St. The Arts in the Heart of Augusta is produced each year by the Greater Augusta Arts Council.

Riverwalk Augusta

Riverwalk Augusta is a riverside park conceived in 1982 as a part of a revitalization plan for downtown Augusta. Developed in phases between 1986 and 1992, this award-winning facility includes a brick-paved esplanade atop the river levee, a shaded walkway on the river side of the bulkhead, a playground and picnic area, the Jessye Norman Amphitheater, three landscaped bulkheads, and breaches in the levee at Eighth and Tenth Streets. A full-service marina was added in 1994. The park hosts a variety of special events each year and is close to other major attractions.

Springfield Village Park

Located on two acres at the intersection of Twelfth and Reynolds Streets, this park pays tribute to Springfield Baptist Church, the oldest independent African American congregation

in the United States with an unbroken record of existence. The park includes walkways, floral landscaping fountains, and the 45-foot-tall sculpture “The Tower of Aspirations”. Planned improvements include artifact and living history museums. Springfield Baptist Church is located across the street from the park.

Augusta Common

The Augusta Common is a 2½-acre park located in the 800 block of Broad Street in Downtown Augusta. The park opened in October 2002 and is designed to connect Broad Street to the revitalized riverfront area. Park amenities include paved walkways, park benches, trees, raised planting beds, lighting fixtures, historical markers, wireless internet, and a statue of the city’s founder, James Oglethorpe. An attractive, two-story service building was built next to the Common in 2004. Since opening, the Common has hosted a variety of festivals, music shows and special events.

Augusta Canal

The Augusta Canal National Heritage Area is among the nation’s best examples of a 19th Century industrial canal system. Constructed in 1845, and enlarged in 1876, the canal continues to provide power to historic mills alongside its banks, supplies water to the city, and forms a channel stretching approximately 8 miles from the Headgates in Columbia County to downtown Augusta. A number of historic structures associated with the canal still stand: the locks and dam at the headwaters, the lock keeper’s cottage, a dance pavilion and barbecue shed, the city’s raw water pumping station, Sibley Mill, King Mill, the Confederate Powder Works Chimney, Enterprise Mill, Sutherland Mill and the Butt Memorial Bridge. Several historic neighborhoods adjoin the canal. The canal and its towpath tie these resources together, providing a ready-made walking (or paddling) venue for users.

The Heritage Area is managed by the Augusta Canal Authority and is being revitalized in accordance with a master plan adopted in 1993 and a management plan approved by the US Department of Interior in 2000 that includes a combination of preservation, conservation, education and interpretation, recreation and economic development activities. Among the recently completed projects are Bikeway/Multi-Use Trail Improvements, restoration of vintage structures at the Headgates, restoration of the Locks and Headgates Building and installation of a pedestrian bridge, river stairway and canoe dock. The Augusta Canal Interpretive Center, located in the Enterprise Mill, opened to the public in April 2003 and has been offering guided canal tours on Petersburg tour boats since fall of that year. Projects in design or underway include the expansion of the New Bartram Trail between the canal and Savannah River, new trails and boardwalks on the canal’s southwestern bank and a heritage park and trails using the waterways recently restored third level.

In 2006 Atlanta Gas Light Company and the city completed a multimillion-dollar environmental clean-up and restoration of the canal’s third level, located in the downtown/Laney Walker area. A planning task force representing stakeholders from government, neighborhoods, churches, businesses and the Augusta Canal Authority issued a concept document as a guide for future development in this area. More recently in 2017, the Canal Authority acquired and moved Trinity CME church for the purpose of renovating and reusing at the third level. The plan envisions multiple redevelopment projects including a heritage park, corridor reconfiguration on major roads, neighborhood housing and park improvements and adaptive reuse of industrial buildings in order to help revitalize the inner neighborhoods surrounding downtown.

Overall, civic centers and cultural facilities contribute to community identity, social cohesion, economic vitality, and cultural enrichment. They serve as dynamic hubs that bring people together, inspire creativity, and provide spaces for meaningful experiences, ultimately enhancing the overall well-being and vibrancy of a community.



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WHERE ARE WE NOW:

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Previous initiatives and the past community work programs have provided a start for the sustainable growth of ARC. Before moving on to new projects, initiatives, and activities ARC is spotlighting what has been accomplished since 2018. Below are a few significant successes that the county has achieved.

HOUSING ACCOMPLISHMENTS									
Work Program Projects	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Status	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Foundry Place - mixed use development to include affordable housing		x				Complete		\$26M	Public/Private
Legacy at Walton Green - 15th Street Redevelopment		x				Complete	Housing and Community Development	Unknown at this time	Public/Private
Market Creation Project - Dyess Park					x	Ongoing	Housing and Community Development	\$50M	Public/Private
Continue to implement modernization projects at Augusta Housing Authority					x	Ongoing	Housing and Community Development	\$3.75M	HUD
Develop Phase One (I) of the Twiggs Circle Housing Project		x				Complete	Augusta Housing Authority (AHA)	\$4.5M	Tax Credits, Private, Sector
Implement the three (3) Phases of the Cherry Tree Crossing Redevelopment Project				x		Complete	Augusta Housing Authority (AHA)	\$27-30M	Tax Credits, Private, Sector
Rehabilitate 95 Housing Units for Low Income Homeowners					x	Ongoing	Housing and Community Development	\$2.7M	HUD, Program Income
Rehabilitate Two Housing Units for Low Income Renters		x				Complete	Housing and Community Development	\$30,000	HUD, Program Income
Complete Emergency Repairs on 120 Housing Units Occupied by Low Income Households					x	Ongoing	Housing and Community Development	\$27-30M	HUD, Program Income
Provide Down Payment Assistance to 305 First-Time Homebuyers					x	Ongoing	Housing and Community Development	\$1.8M	HUD
Demolish 120 Dilapidated Housing Units					x	Ongoing	Housing and Community Development	\$600,000	City General Fund
Develop and Implement New and Renovated Housing Projects in Target Areas with a Total of 100 Units to be Assisted					x	Ongoing	Planning and Development	\$1.8M	HUD
Develop and Implement Economic Development Projects in Inner-City Target Areas					x	Ongoing	City, CHDOs, Other Non-Profits, Private Developers	\$500,000	Bonds, Tax Credits, Private, City
Continue Code Enforcement Program in Inner-City Target Area					x	Ongoing	City, Non-Profits, Private Developers	Staff Time	City
Acquire Tax Delinquent and Abandoned Properties Through the Augusta Land Bank Authority for Use in Constructing Affordable Housing					x	Ongoing		\$150,000	CDBG, City

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Work Program Projects	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Status	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Augusta University Cyber Institute	x					Complete	State of Georgia, City of Augusta	\$100M	State Funds, General Funds
Research and Consider an Entertainment District in Downtown Augusta			x			Complete	City of Augusta	Staff Time	General Funds
Research and Consider the Creation of an Innovation District and Civic District		x				Complete	City of Augusta	Staff Time	General Funds
Extend the Access Road Named Valencia Way, Located in the Augusta Corporate Park					x	Ongoing	County Development Authority	\$3.3M	Sales Tax Funds
Attract Industry to the Augusta Corporate Park					x	Ongoing	County Development Authority, City	Staff Time	County Development Auth., Chamber, City
Implement Downtown Revitalization Projects as Outlined in the Joint Master Plan for Augusta, GA and North Augusta, SC Regional Urban Core					x	Ongoing	City, Consultant, GRU	Staff Time	City, DDA, AT, Private
Implement Enhancement Projects on Gateways into the City					x	Ongoing	Fort Gordon, Chamber, City, CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon	\$1.1M	Private Sector, SPLOST Transportation Enhancement Grant, City Funds
Attract New Missions/Partnerships to Fort Gordon					x	Ongoing	Fort Gordon, Chamber, City, CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon	Staff Time	City, CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon, Private Sector, Others
Implement Plan for Redevelopment of Former Regency Mall Site					x	Ongoing	City, Non-Profit, Private, Developers	N/A	City, Non-Profit
Implement Augusta Regional Collaboration Program					x	Ongoing	City, Consultant, GRU	Unknown	City, Private Sector Grants



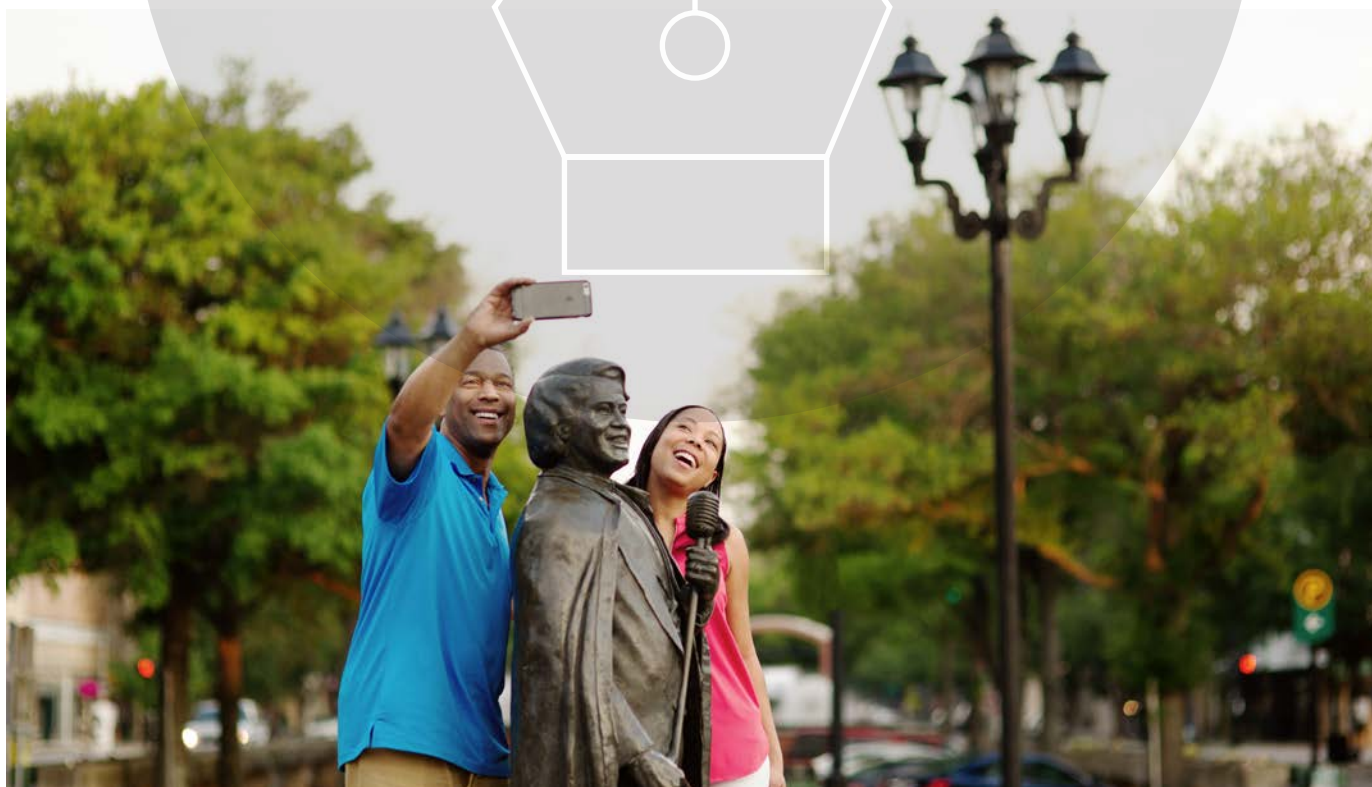
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TRANSPORTATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Work Program Projects	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Status	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Transit Bus Purchase		x				Ongoing	Transit	\$420,000	SPLOST 7
New Transit Bus Shelters		x				Ongoing	Transit	\$650,000	SPLOST 7
Augusta Public Transit - design and construct a new maintenance garage and administrative offices		x				Complete	Transit	\$18M	SPLOST 7/ Grants
Broad Street Improvements (Washington Road to Sand Bar Ferry Road)					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$25M	TIA
James Brown Reconstruction					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$6.1M	TIA
Highland Avenue Bridge repair and restoration over CSX RR					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$1.5M	TIA
SR 4/15th Street Widening - Milledgeville Rd to Government Rd					x	Ongoing	GDOT	\$21.4M	TIA
Greene Street Improvements from 13th St to E. Boundary Rd					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$9.8M	TIA
Augusta Public Transit Operations and Maintenance					x	Ongoing	City, APT	\$750,000 Annually	TSPLOST
Implementation of Intelligent Transportation System					x	Complete	Engineering	\$5.5M	TSPLOST B1
Berckmans Rd realignment and widening from Wheeler to Washington Rd					x	Complete	Engineering	\$20.3M	TSPLOST B2
5th St bridge - Bridge repair and restoration					x	Complete	Engineering	\$11.1M	TSPLOST B2
SR 4/15th St pedestrian improvements - Calhoun Expy to Central Ave					x	Complete	Engineering	\$6.1M	TSPLOST B and 2
SR 4/15th St widening from Government St to Milledgeville Rd					x	Ongoing	GDOT	ROW (\$16M) Road CST (\$8M)	FHWA, GDOT, TSPLOST
James Brown Blvd reconstruction - Reynolds to Wrightsboro Rd					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$6.9M	TSPLOST B and 2
James Brown Blvd streetscape enhancement project - Reynolds to Adams St					x	Ongoing	GDOT, City, DDA	\$812,500	FHWA, City
Marvin Griffin Rd widening from Mike Padgett Hwy to Doug Bernard Pkwy					x	Complete	Engineering	\$6.0M	SPLOST, PHASES II/III
Wrightsboro Road widening from Jimmie Dyess Pkwy to I-520 ramps		x				Complete	GDOT, Augusta Engineering	\$18.6M	FHWA, GDOT, TSPLOST, Band 1
Transit Bus Purchase		x				Ongoing	Transit	\$420,000	SPLOST 7
New Transit Bus Shelters		x				Ongoing	Transit	\$650,000	SPLOST 7
I-520/Bobby Jones Expy widening from Gordon Hwy to Deans Bridge Rd and reconstruct interchanges		x				Ongoing	FWA, GDOT	\$29.8M	FHWA, GDOT
Windsor Spring Rd Phase IV - Complete ROW acquisition and widening from Willis Foreman Rd to Tobacco Rd					x	Complete	GDOT, Augusta Engineering	ROW: \$9,970,630; Road CST: \$22,954,457	FHWA, GDOT, SPLOST, Phases III/IV, TSPLOST
Windsor Spring Rd Phase V - Complete ROW acquisition and widening from W.F. Rd to SR 88 in Hephzibah					x	Complete	GDOT, Augusta Engineering	Road ROW: \$6,990,000; Road CST: \$12,827,273	RHWA, GDOT, SPLOST Phases III/IV
Greene Street Improvements from 13th St to E. Boundary Rd					x	Complete	Augusta Engineering	\$8,329,835	TSPLOST Band 1

LAND USE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Work Program Projects	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Status	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Unified Development Ordinance		x				Ongoing	Planning and Development	Staff Time	General Funds
Creation of Augusta Recreational Trail Loop			x			Complete	Recreation and Parks	Staff Time	General Funds
Creation of Future Land Use Map	x					Ongoing	Planning and Development	Staff Time	
Conduct more detailed studies of character areas, neighborhoods, activity centers or other areas as necessary					x	Ongoing	Neighborhood Associations, Planning Commission, APDD, Other Stakeholders	Staff Time	City
Evaluate the feasibility and merits of establishing mixed-use districts, conservation districts or other types of overlay zones in various parts of the city					x	Ongoing	Neighborhood Associations, Planning Commission, APDD, Other Stakeholders	Staff Time	City
Update zoning map to reflect Community Agenda, existing land					x	Ongoing	City Commission, Planning Commission, APDD	Staff Time	City
Update local zoning and development ordinances as necessary to achieve quality growth					x	Ongoing	City Commission, Planning Commission, APDD	Staff Time	City
Address growth management issues through use of the Georgia Quality Growth Partnership's Smart Growth Toolkit					x	Ongoing	City Commission, Planning Commission, APDD	Staff Time	City
Continue cooperation with adjacent communities and Fort Gordon regarding land use and re-zoning action and other initiatives					x	Ongoing	City, Fort Gordon, Adjacent Communities	Staff Time	City, Fort Gordon



COMMUNITY FACILITIES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Work Program Projects	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Status	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Hiking/Biking Trails & Riverwalk Enhancements/Expansion				x		Complete	Recreation and Parks	\$4M	SPLOST 7
Neighborhood Parks/Urban parks/Open Space and Playgrounds			x			Complete	Recreation and Parks	\$4M	
Community Center Improvements/Equipment				x		Ongoing	Recreation and Parks	\$4M	SPLOST 7
Sports Facility Field and Court Improvements					x	Ongoing	Recreation and Parks	\$1.75M	SPLOST 7
Swimming Pools and Splash Pads				x		Complete	Recreation and Parks	\$2M	SPLOST 7
ADA Audit and Improvements, Reforestation, and Cemetery Improvements				x		Ongoing	Recreation and Parks	\$1M	SPLOST 7
Augusta Public Art Infusion Gateway Beautification			x			Ongoing	Administrator	\$1M	SPLOST 7
Augusta Canal Improvements					x	Ongoing	Canal Authority	\$1.5M	SPLOST 7
Modernized James Brown Arena					x	Ongoing	Coliseum Authority	\$6M	SPLOST 7
Existing Facilities Upgrade					x	Ongoing	Public Facilities	\$5M	SPLOST 7
Animal Control Upgrades					x	Ongoing	Public Facilities	\$500,000	
New Records Retention Center					x	Ongoing	Public Facilities	\$2.5M	SPLOST 7
Demolish LEC at 401 Walton Way					x	Ongoing	Public Facilities	\$1.5M	SPLOST 7
Complete water and sewer projects funded by bonds					x	Ongoing	AUD	\$40.0M	City, Bondholders
Upgrade existing parks included on SPLOST Phase V project list					x		Parks and Rec Department	\$5.0M	
Complete public school construction, renovation and expansion projects as listed in the RCBOE Phase IV Master Plan					x	Ongoing	RCBOE	\$146.2M	E-SPLOST, Phase IV

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Work Program Projects	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Status	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Rocky Creek Flood Hazard Mitigation					x	Complete	Engineering	\$14M	SPLOST 7
Grading and Drainage (Stormwater)					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$25M	SPLOST 7
Forest Hills Drainage Improvements and Flood Reduction (Concept and Design)					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$400,000	SPLOST 7
Hyde Park Street and Drainage Improvements and Wilkerson Gardens					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$6M	SPLOST 7
Augusta Canal Improvements					x	Ongoing	Engineering	\$1.5M	SPLOST 7
Develop 1-3 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling stations throughout the city					x	Ongoing	Augusta Environmental Services Department	\$6-8M	Enterprise Fund
Convert or replace the city's gas-powered vehicle fleet with alternative fuel vehicles					x	Ongoing	Augusta Environmental Services Department	Unknown	Revenue from sale of CNG fuel to waste haulers
Provide economic incentives to increase household waste recycling					x	Ongoing	Augusta Environmental Services Department	\$1.8M	Department budget
Participate in the Georgia Greenspace Program					x	Ongoing	Central Savannah River Land Trust, City, APDD	Yearly Contract with CSRLT	State, City, Private Sector
Butler Creek Privet Removal Program					x	Ongoing	CSRLT, City	\$150,000	US Fish and Wildlife
Continue to enforce the applicable requirements of the Part V Environmental Ordinances					x	Ongoing	City, APDD	Staff Time	City
Continue the permitting and enforcement provisions of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance					x	Ongoing	City	Staff Time	City
Continue the permitting and enforcement provisions of the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance					x	Ongoing	Engineering, Planning	Staff Time	City
Continue community outreach related to water quality and quantity					x	Ongoing	AUD, Augusta WR	Staff Time	State, City, Private, NP
Implement emission reduction strategies to demonstrate compliance with federal air quality standards					x	Ongoing	City	Staff Time	City
Support implementation of the Phinizy Swamp Park Master Plan (buildings, education, research, land management)					x	Ongoing	SNSA, City, School System	\$500,000	City, Grants, Donations
Rehabilitate infrastructure at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park					x	Ongoing	SNSA, City	\$500,000	City, Donations, Grants
Augusta-Richmond County Flood Reduction Program (Flood Buyout Program)					x	Ongoing	City	Staff Time	City

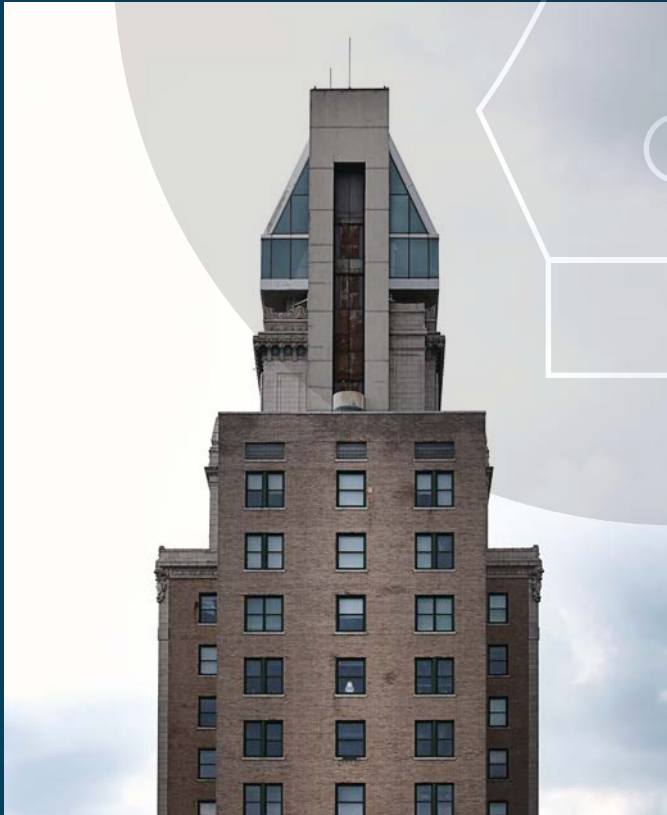
SECTION I-B:

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

The data provided gives insight into the general direction in which ARC is developing and changing. In the CSRA, the long-term population trend has been positive; however, within ARC the population is growing at a barely detectable rate indicating that the population maybe become stagnant or decline. A correlation between the decline in population of those under 18 years of age and those in the 45 to 54 year old bracket suggests that there has been a loss of family units with school aged children. Also notable, the highest wage earnings for an individual typically occur between the ages of 45 to 54 years old. Side effects of a declining population may include:

- 
- **Loss of culture.**
 - **Increase in blight.**
 - **Reduction in basic services and infrastructure.**
 - **Shuttering of businesses.**
 - **Increase in property maintenance issues.**

Higher education is accessible and trending upward; thereby, industry and professional services appear stable and expanding. The wages paid by ARC industries are competitive; however, the median household income is slightly below the national and state average because employees live in neighboring counties. The aging housing stock and access to goods and services within the county has been a challenge in attracting new and diverse residential developments.



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SECTION TWO

SECTION II:

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO

Key steps to help a community make decisions regarding its growth and development are:

Visioning and Goal Setting: Begin by engaging the community in a visioning process. This involves envisioning the desired future of the community, identifying values, and establishing overarching goals. Encourage community members to share their aspirations and ideas for the community's growth and development.

Community Engagement: Conduct community engagement activities to gather input and feedback from a diverse range of community members. This can include town hall meetings, workshops, surveys, focus groups, and online platforms. Ensure that the engagement process is inclusive, transparent, and accessible to all community members.

Assessing Existing Conditions: Evaluate the current state of the community by conducting a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions. This can include analyzing demographic data, land use patterns, infrastructure, economic trends, environmental factors, and social indicators. Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges that will inform future decisions.

Data Analysis and Research: Utilize data analysis and research to support decision-making. Gather information on best practices, successful case studies, and evidence-based strategies from similar communities. Explore trends and emerging issues that may impact the community's growth and development.

Implementation Strategies: Identify specific strategies and actions to implement the community's goals and visions. Establish timelines, responsible parties, and performance indicators to track progress. Prioritize actions based on feasibility, impact, and community priorities.

Review and Adaptation: Continuously review and evaluate the community's growth and development decisions. Monitor progress, gather feedback, and adapt strategies as needed. Engage in ongoing dialogue with the community to ensure that the decision-making process remains inclusive and responsive to changing needs.

The statistical data presented in Section One identified trends and provided information about the existing conditions that could present challenges to the resiliency. In this section, the quantitative data with the qualitative data that was obtained through the community meetings is merged to identify the needs and opportunities that will shape Augusta-Richmond County's vision and goals.



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WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO:

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

Identifying needs and opportunities through community engagement involves actively involving community members in the decision-making process and gathering their input to understand their concerns, aspirations, and priorities. This feedback plays a crucial role in identifying the wants, needs, and areas of opportunity for Augusta-Richmond County. During the months of May and June 2023, six community engagement meetings were held. Working with the community and getting substantial feedback from residents, stakeholders, and county commissioners, we were able to identify the wants, needs, and areas of opportunity. Table 2-1 reflects the needs and wants expressed in the community meetings.

**TABLE 2-1: NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES
FROM THE COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

Kick Off Community Meeting #1

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More entertainment options • More living space downtown • More bus stops and shelters • Mindfulness of the middle class who want to live downtown • Mixed income housing options • Need more bus stops • Improve public transportation (be on-time) • Utilize existing signage around town to promote city activities • Right-of-Ways need to be cleaned up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinvest in the civic center and Bell Auditorium • Adhere to a maintenance schedule for the Riverwalk • Healthy food options in the downtown area • Historic preservation • More information about government actions • Sidewalks downtown need to connect • Remove the burned and abandoned homes • Enhance security at all of the parks |
|---|--|

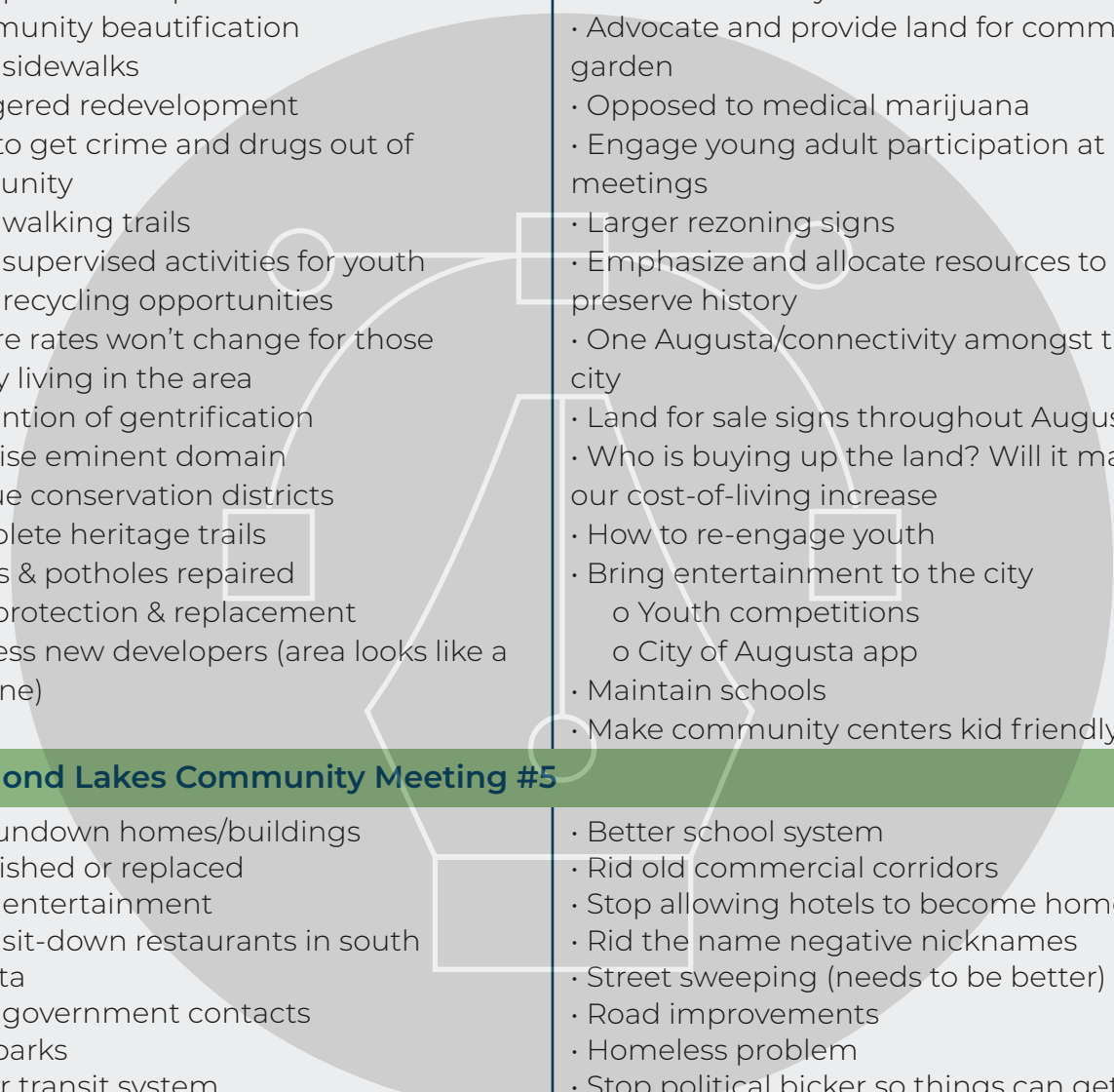
Bernie Ward Community Meeting #2

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who/What is Augusta because there's no gardens and golf is not accessible to most. • Youth activities are needed beyond sports • Community centers are dated • Pool access around the county is very limited • Dilapidated structures • Pride is missing in where folks live and shop • Lack of trust in government • New logo and mission needed • HOA presence desirable • Workforce development • Public school programs diminishing • Install bike lanes and racks • Deferred maintenance at the community centers force residents to community centers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Augusta is not an "urban" area but it is being developed that way • Need more sit-down restaurants • Too many overgrown lots • Need a "Welcome to the community" for new residents • Too many rental properties • Publish maintenance schedule • List volunteer opportunities or ways community can get involved • Update community centers so that they can teach life and homeownership skills • Clean up what we have • Lack of connectivity in the "old county" area. • New developments with no sidewalks or amenities • Stop band-aids at the city parks (build new) |
|---|---|

Online Community Meeting #3

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More transit routes are needed • Cost of living is good • Dilapidated structures need to be removed • More housing options in the downtown area • Plan for the homeless is needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the knowledge base regarding historic structures • More greenspace is needed; improve the parks • Roads need to be maintained better • Riverwalk is not well maintained • Downtown redevelopment has slow pace |
|---|---|

Sand Hills Community Meeting #4

- 
- Burned houses removed
 - Property maintenance will force compliant people to move out
 - Eliminate Air BnB
 - More rentals (apartments, affordable housing)
 - More public transportation
 - Community beautification
 - More sidewalks
 - Staggered redevelopment
 - Plan to get crime and drugs out of community
 - More walking trails
 - More supervised activities for youth
 - More recycling opportunities
 - Ensure rates won't change for those already living in the area
 - Prevention of gentrification
 - Exercise eminent domain
 - Pursue conservation districts
 - Complete heritage trails
 - Roads & potholes repaired
 - Tree protection & replacement
 - Address new developers (area looks like a war zone)
 - Investors taking too long to redevelop that they tore down
 - Affordable housing not readily available
 - Multi-income subdivisions needed
 - Replacement housing takes too long
 - Commissioners' become more engaged
 - Facilitate healthy food choices
 - Advocate and provide land for community garden
 - Opposed to medical marijuana
 - Engage young adult participation at meetings
 - Larger rezoning signs
 - Emphasize and allocate resources to preserve history
 - One Augusta/connectivity amongst the city
 - Land for sale signs throughout Augusta
 - Who is buying up the land? Will it make our cost-of-living increase
 - How to re-engage youth
 - Youth competitions
 - City of Augusta app
 - Bring entertainment to the city
 - Maintain schools
 - Make community centers kid friendly

Diamond Lakes Community Meeting #5

- Old rundown homes/buildings demolished or replaced
- More entertainment
- More sit-down restaurants in south Augusta
- Clear government contacts
- Dog parks
- Better transit system
- Better military/veteran services
- Rid food deserts
- Sidewalk development
- More hotels in south Augusta
- Nicer hotels in south Augusta
- More enforceable codes
- More nightlife activities
- More greenspace
- Rid of vegetative overgrowth
- Hold school board accountable
- Make it easier to volunteer in community
- Better school system
- Rid old commercial corridors
- Stop allowing hotels to become homes
- Rid the name negative nicknames
- Street sweeping (needs to be better)
- Road improvements
- Homeless problem
- Stop political bicker so things can get done
- More shopping centers
- Rid the boat house
- More hotels by the airport
- More youth supervised activities
- Maintenance on parks
- Affordable senior citizen housing (If it is approved as a 55+ developers need to stick to it)
- Canals (make waterways nicer)

Warren Road Community Meeting #6

- 
- Better infrastructure
 - Rid food desert areas
 - Better public transit
 - Homeless population
 - Government division/disagreements
 - Smell (air quality)
 - Maintenance of everything
 - Better customer service from city depts.
 - Publicized the good g in Augusta
 - Litter problems
 - Education (k-12)
 - Lack of forward-looking vision
 - We have resources we are not using
 - Stagnant compared to other counties
 - Not taking advantage of river
 - More greenspaces
 - Make the amphitheater nicer
 - Rid old buildings downtown
 - Poor maintenance of Riverwalk and parks
 - Faster work on road improvements
 - Focus more on residents rather than developments
 - Stop building so many apartments/ build more single-family homes
 - More entertainment
 - Excessive traffic
 - No bike trails
 - Schools need improvement
 - Dilapidated infrastructure
 - Underdeveloped/under performance county
 - Random shopping carts
 - Can't look up license on planning commission website
 - Accessibility (need sidewalks)
 - Jessye Norman Amphitheater
 - Courts need to have those breaking laws doing work in community
 - Improvements to skinner mill
 - Wasted building spaces
 - Small spaces for new businesses

There was considerable overlap in the identification of needs during the community engagement process, as demonstrated in Table 2:1. The emphasis on community and well-maintained public spaces post-pandemic is understandable, given the importance of outdoor and open-air activities during social distancing requirements. It reflects a desire for accessible and inviting spaces where residents can gather and engage with their community.

While concerns and needs related to K-12 education, the court system, and political issues may fall outside the scope of the comprehensive plan, it is crucial to acknowledge and address them as they impact the overall well-being and quality of life of the community. Collaborating with relevant stakeholders and agencies to address these concerns can help create a more holistic and supportive environment for residents.

The stakeholders' desire for a plan that prioritizes them as residents and enhances their quality of life aligns with the fundamental purpose of a comprehensive plan. It underscores the importance of developing strategies and goals that reflect the community's aspirations and improve their overall well-being. After capturing the needs, we cataloged them and the emerging priorities are:

Improving Infrastructure	More than ADA Updates to Parks & Recreation Spaces
Mitigating Blight	Conscious Development & Redevelopment
Expanding Entertainment Options	Promote Heritage & Culture

OPPORTUNITIES

A key component to identifying the opportunities was derived from the charrettes. Charettes are activities in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions. Each meeting included a chance for the stakeholders to identify what they “Love” about Augusta-Richmond County and from that evolved the opportunities for initiatives and activities that we need to preserve and capitalize on. Table 2:2 identifies some of the opportunities the stakeholders would like to see pursued with an emphasis on existing infrastructure, environment, and land.



■ Multiculturalism	■ Riverwalk Enhancement	■ Re-purposing of the Amphitheater
■ Mixed-Use Housing	■ Expand-Connect Existing Sidewalks	■ Central Location
■ Job Market-Good Wages	■ Cost of Living	■ Pride
■ Gardens/ & Under-Utilized Parks	■ Young Adult Population	■ Higher Education
■ Military	■ Historic Beginnings	■ New Logo-Motto

By focusing on what stakeholders “Love” about Augusta-Richmond County, the plan can tap into their passion and emotional connection to the community. This can result in more meaningful and impactful opportunities that resonate with the community as a whole. The charrette process fosters collaboration, inclusivity, and a sense of ownership among stakeholders. It helps ensure that the identified opportunities are reflective of the collective desires and priorities of the community, enhancing the likelihood of successful implementation and long-term support.

In summary, the use of charrettes as a tool for identifying opportunities allows for a comprehensive exploration of community perspectives and serves as a foundation for informed decision-making in the planning and development processes.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO:

VISION



COMMUNITY VISIONING AND GOALS

A vision statement sets the overarching direction for the community's comprehensive planning efforts. It serves as a guiding principle for decision-making, goal setting, and action plans to achieve the desired future for the county. Based on the information provided from data sets and meetings, a vision was formed to encapsulate the community's aspirations for the future. The desire to strike a balance between preserving the rich historical heritage of the county while embracing innovative approaches to promote growth and enhance the well-being of all residents is evident.

VISION

Augusta-Richmond County is unifying historical values with contemporary growth strategies to achieve and sustain an advantageous quality of life for all.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO:

GOALS

#1

CAPITALIZE ON AUGUSTA'S ASSETS

(i.e., location, medical community, military base, and rich culture).

Objective A: Rapidly, reinvest in the public/private gardens or create a new slogan/nickname.

Objective B: Enhance and secure the Riverwalk.

#2

ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Objective A: Prioritize new indoor and outdoor recreational spaces based on infrastructure assessment. Host instructional programs related to life skills.

Objective B: Provide modern entertainment venues (to scale).

Objective C: Collaborate with industries to enhance environmental conditions and preserve natural resources.

Objective D: Improve transit by updating routes and scheduling.

#3

BALANCE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS/COMMUNITIES

Objective A: Provide activity centers beyond the downtown.

Objective B: Reverse blight by repurposing and/or demolishing of dilapidated structures.

Objective C: Pursue connectivity in the urban core via lighting and installation/repair of sidewalks.

Objective D: Update the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance

#4

BE EXCELLENT FINANCIAL STEWARDS

Objective A: Implement an annual maintenance plan and budget for the upkeep of city-owned properties that is reflective of costs.

Objective B: Infrastructure expansion and maintenance beyond SPLOST.

Objective C: Make front and center the spending and budget updates.

#5

ATTRACT & RETAIN YOUNG ADULTS & FAMILIES

Objective A: Incorporate mixed-use/income housing as a standard.

Objective B: Expand workforce development. (Explore a mentorship program lead by local govt)

Objective C: Improve the transportation network (bikes, bus, and micro-transit, and airport).

Objective D: Provide activities beyond sports for the youth.

#6

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Objective A: Continue the expansion of sewer services to established neighborhoods.

Objective B: Improve the condition of existing local roads and in neighborhoods.

Objective C: Incorporate landscaping into road construction and widening projects.

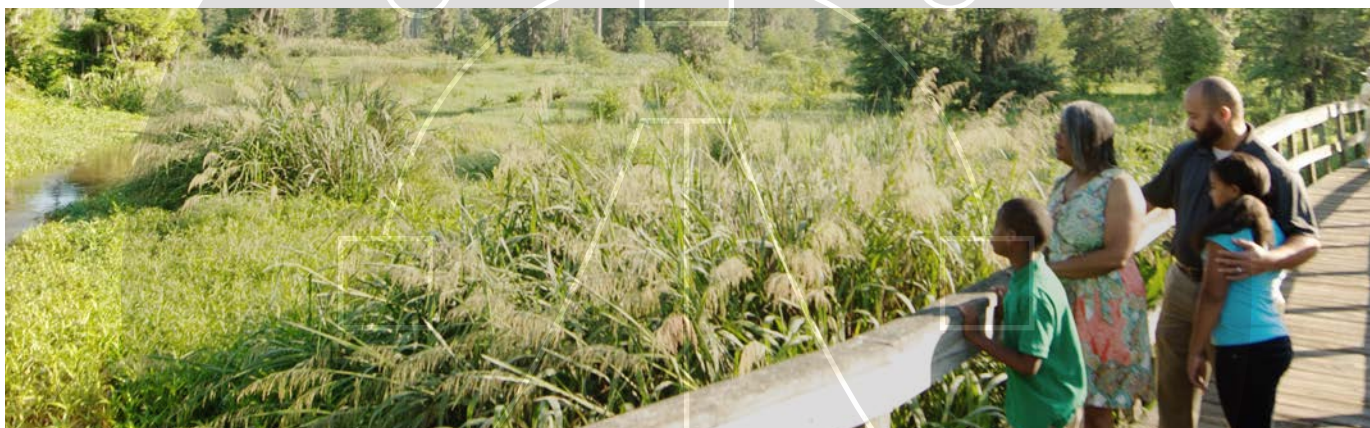
Objective D: Provide regular schedules and updates via community dashboard or newsletter.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO:

LAND USE ELEMENT

An essential step in planning for sustainable growth and redevelopment is analyzing how the land is being used and how it could/should be utilized. As a consolidated government, AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY has the challenge of developing a community that can meet the pre-existing needs of those wanting a more rural way of life and those wanting an urban one. More importantly, it must ensure that the aesthetic transition from rural Richmond County to old Augusta is complimentary.

Character areas are one of the tools used to aid in the sustainable development of the county. Character area planning focuses on the way an area looks and how it functions, instead of only existing land use. Applying development strategies to character areas in AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY can preserve historical areas, such as the downtown, and help others function better and become more attractive. There are six-character areas in the county, and they are highlighted over the next few pages.



Photography Credit: Destination Augusta

BELAIR CHARACTER AREA

The Belair Character Area is situated immediately west of Old Augusta and north of Fort Eisenhower (formerly known as Fort Gordon). The area includes land uses and development patterns typical of suburban development areas, rural residential areas, and highway commercial corridors. These development patterns are influenced to one extent or another by the area's proximity to Doctor's Hospital, Fort Eisenhower, regional shopping centers such as the Augusta Mall, Augusta Exchange, Interstates 20 and 520, and Jimmie Dyess Parkway.

Low-density, suburban residential development started to occur in the 1950s and accelerated in the last 25 years. The opening of Jimmie Dyess Parkway in 1998 fueled the development of several new subdivisions in the last decade. Most of the conventional subdivisions are in the area bounded by Gordon Highway, Powell Road, Wrightsboro Road, and the Bobby Jones Expressway. Higher density single-family development and apartment complexes are clustered in the area around Doctor's Hospital. Rural residential uses, mostly a mix of stick-built and manufactured homes on larger lots, characterize the area west of Powell Road to the Columbia County line, and along part of Wrightsboro Road and Maddox Road.

Suburban commercial development in the area has been steady over the last couple of decades. The area around Doctor's Hospital and along Wheeler Road has been gradually developing with a mix of professional offices, suburban and highway-oriented commercial

uses, and service establishments. The frontage roads bordering Interstates 20 and 520 include a mix of shopping centers, offices, standalone commercial, light industry and warehousing, and institutional uses. The T-Mobile Customer Service Center and Automatic Data Processing, Inc. facility are indicative of the types of service companies attracted to the area.

Vision for Belair:

A suburban area with medium-density residential development and well-planned communities. Congestion and high density are to be avoided within the Harper Franklin Drive at Jimmy Dyess Parkway area. Interstate interchanges, frontage roads and other identified nodes are home to new commercial and light industrial/warehousing development. Public facilities and services will continue to expand to meet the demand of a growing population. The Doctor's Hospital activity center retains its mix of healthcare-related businesses, offices, medium-density housing, and commercial establishments. Jimmie Dyess Parkway, Gordon Highway, and Wrightsboro Road become attractive corridors with a limited number of vehicle access points.

Recommended Development Patterns:

1. Promote moderate density, traditional neighborhood development (TND) style residential subdivisions.
2. Promote mixed-use development blending residential and non-residential uses (schools, parks, recreation, neighborhood business, and office).
3. Promote the development of conservation subdivisions wherever new residential development is proposed.
4. Reduce the reliance on autos by using sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use trails to connect residential neighborhoods to activity centers (schools, parks, community centers, neighborhood businesses and services). Expand the city's transit system.
5. Wherever possible, connect new and established neighborhoods to a regional network of greenspace/conservation areas via bicycle-pedestrian trails, and greenways.
6. Promote interconnections between residential subdivisions via streets, sidewalks, and multi-use paths.
7. Maintain appropriate buffers between development and Fort Gordon.

State Quality Community Objectives:

The recommended development patterns for Belair are designed to promote the following Quality Community Objectives established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

■ Efficient Land Use	■ Transportation Options
■ Economic Prosperity	■ Housing Options
■ Resource Management	■ Sense of Place
■ Educational Opportunities	■ Community Health

Recommended Land Uses/Zoning Districts:

- Agricultural (A) zone
- Residential:
 - R-1 (One-family Residential) zones
 - R-2 (Two-family Residential) zone
 - R-3 (Multiple-family Residential) zones
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD) zone
- Professional/Commercial:
 - P-1 (Professional/Office) zone
 - B-1 (Neighborhood Business) zone
 - B-2 (General Business) zone
- Industrial (LI) zone – limiting further expansion of these zones
- Institutional Uses
- Conservation and Parks/Recreational Uses

Implementation Strategies:

- More-detailed sub-area planning
- New local development regulations

EAST AUGUSTA CHARACTER AREA

East Augusta is characterized by a mix of conservation/natural resource areas, industrial land uses with limited residential and commercial land uses. Residential development includes some conventional subdivisions dating from the 1950s -1970s, some apartment complexes, newer townhouses, and condominium development. These higher residential density developments have been developed mostly along the Savannah River. The conventional subdivisions are concentrated in the northeast, central and south central areas of East Augusta. These conventional residential subdivisions are near if not adjacent to industrial land uses.

Commercial development is limited and characterized by stand-alone businesses such as convenience stores, gas/food marts, and fast-food restaurants. East Augusta is home to most of Augusta's warehousing, light industry, and heavy industry. Heavy industries include those producing chemicals, paper and wood products, clay products, transportation equipment and food products. Warehousing facilities are located near the existing surface transportation network of major highways and interstate interchanges, or railroad lines. Augusta Regional Airport at Bush Field is a significant regional activity center located in East Augusta.

The floodplains of the Savannah River and some of its tributary creek's account for the largest land use in East Augusta. Within these floodplains are designated natural resource/conservation areas including the Merry Brickyard Ponds, the Phinizy Swamp Wildlife Management Area, and the Phinizy Swamp Nature Park.

Vision for East Augusta:

The vision for East Augusta is to create a vibrant and sustainable community that balances residential and industrial needs while preserving the natural environment. With the expansion of public utilities, slightly higher residential densities in appropriate areas can be

achieved to offer housing opportunities for residents within the character area, continuing the co-existence of residential and industry uses while still providing distinct separation from each another. East Augusta's neighborhoods and streets in need of revitalization are recipients of a targeted approach of code enforcement, removal of blight, infrastructure improvements and public-private-partnerships resulting in reinvestment in new and rehabilitated housing. New industry development is concentrated near the Augusta Regional Airport and along the existing surface transportation network of major highways, interstate interchanges, and railroad lines, including the commercial/industrial node at the I-520/Sand Bar Ferry Road interchange. Enhanced preservation and conservation of environmentally sensitive areas used for education, recreation, and eco-tourism.

Recommended Development Patterns:

1. Provide infill residential development at appropriate locations at a slightly higher density that would still be compatible with the surrounding area reflecting neighborhood patterns.
2. Redevelopment projects (housing and economic development) in neighborhoods targeted for such activities.
3. Neighborhood activity centers that provide a focal point for community services and a location for appropriately scaled retail establishments especially in underserved neighborhoods.
4. Develop new businesses and industry encompassing the Augusta Regional Airport and surrounding area.
5. Locate new industrial uses in areas appropriately distanced from established residential neighborhoods.
6. Continued preservation and management of significant natural resources, promoting the use of those natural resources for passive-use tourism and recreation.

State Quality Community Objectives:

The recommended development patterns for East Augusta are designed to promote the following Quality Community Objectives established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

■ Efficient Land Use	■ Transportation Options
■ Economic Prosperity	■ Housing Options
■ Resource Management / Environmental Protection	■ Infill Development
■ Employment Options	

Recommended Land Uses/Zoning Districts:

- Agricultural (A) zone
- Residential (varying densities of 3 units/acre to 10 units/acre)
 - o R-1 (One-family Residential) zones

- o R-2 (Two-family Residential) zone
 - o R-3 (Multiple-family Residential) zones
- Professional/Commercial:
 - o P-1 (Professional/Office) zone
 - o B-1 (Neighborhood Business) zone
 - o B-2 (General Business) zone
- Industrial:
 - o LI (Light Industrial) zone
 - o HI (Heavy Industrial) zone
- Conservation and Parks/Recreational Uses

Implementation Strategies:

- More-detailed sub-area planning
- Public infrastructure improvements
- Continued maintenance and management of natural resources.

OLD AUGUSTA CHARACTER AREA

Located adjacent to the Savannah River, the downtown core of Augusta is where the city was founded and first developed. This core area has the characteristics of a traditional central business district, including a wide variety of land uses (commercial, office, cultural, entertainment, government and institutional), high level of access for vehicles, pedestrians and transit, a mix of architectural styles, medium to high-density residential development, and commercial buildings with little to no front or side setbacks. The downtown core has experienced redevelopment and revitalization over the last twenty-five years. Several large public and private projects have resulted from a downtown development plan last updated in 2000. The Westobou Plan, the Downtown Redevelopment Plan, and the Augusta Sustainable Development Agenda are other plans adopted since 2008.

Developers, merchants, and property owners have initiated downtown redevelopment projects on their own. Historic buildings have been, and are proposed to be, redeveloped and are being adaptively reused as offices, commercial space, meeting/reception facilities and multi-family residential units, both rental and owner purchased. Examples of this are the King Mill redevelopment, the proposed Lamar and Marion building redevelopments, and 905 Greene Street. Downtown has also seen new construction, primarily of multiple-family residential developments. Examples are The Augustan apartments and Millhouse Station apartments. The result is a downtown core that is seeing a resurgence in occupancy and uses while providing a financial return to those committed to investing in downtown Augusta.

Outside of the downtown core, Old Augusta is made up of residential neighborhoods developed prior to World War II that reflect major characteristics of older traditional neighborhoods. These characteristics include small and irregular-shaped lots, a wide variety of housing types, medium-density residential development, access to public transit, sidewalks, and street trees. Buildings that sit close to or at the front of property lines, narrow setbacks between buildings, neighborhood-scale businesses, and civic and institutional uses scattered throughout the area.

Among the traditional neighborhoods, several have been identified as areas of significant disinvestment, with high levels of poverty and/or unemployment. The Laney Walker

neighborhood has been the subject of several revitalization projects with some success, but this has not translated into large revitalization projects in other neighborhoods within Old Augusta. Public transportation is available, and sidewalks exist in the Downtown core and many of the neighborhoods.

Located within Old Augusta is the campus of Augusta University, including the medical and dental schools, Paine College, a large medical complex including Augusta University, Piedmont Hospital, and the Veterans' Association hospitals, both downtown and uptown facilities. Interspersed in Old Augusta are churches and schools, both public and private, that serve the residents and are part of the fabric of the neighborhood area. There are defined commercial corridors and nodes once you leave the Downtown core, primarily along Walton Way, Central Avenue and Wrightsboro Road. Employment opportunities exist with the existing and new commercial development and the new construction and renovation projects in the area.

Old Augusta contains 3 local historic districts, Downtown, Olde Town and Summerville. These areas have been designated as local historic districts to protect, preserve and enhance the historic neighborhoods and the numerous historic resources contained within them. The Downtown local historic district is made up primarily of the central business district and contains historic commercial, institutional, and residential structures, many of which have been converted to professional, commercial, or multiple-family residential uses. The city promotes and values adaptive reuse of these buildings to meet today's needs. The Olde Town local historic district was primarily single-family residences. Many remain single family while others have become multiple-family residential or professional uses. The east end of Olde Town contains many properties that are neglected and in disrepair. Also located in the Olde Town district is the Christ Community medical center and the Heritage Academy private school, both have utilized historic structures while adding new construction to meet current needs. The Summerville local historic district which is located on the west side of the Old Augusta character area contains many of the large historic homes that at one time comprised the more affluent families of historic Augusta dating back to the 1780s along with homes and developments built through the 1980s. Contained within the Summerville boundaries are the historic Partridge Inn and the Bon Air Hotel (now a multi-family use), Augusta University, other institutional uses and commercial corridors containing retail, business, and entertainment uses. In-fill development of vacant lots is common and encouraged particularly for single family residential use.

Vision for Old Augusta:

Maintain and enhance its historic character and unique mix of land uses while maintaining stability in established neighborhoods. Continue to reflect the predominant characteristics of a historic Downtown core business district, while at the same time adapting to the changing environment around it. Underutilized parcels should be redeveloped with respect for existing development patterns and the historic architecture in the area. Redevelopment should include the removal of deteriorated and dilapidated structures, construction or rehabilitation of single-family housing, new medium and high-density housing, additional commercial and office development, new civic and institutional facilities. Adaptive reuse of historic buildings will be a key component. New development should respect the scale, massing, architecture, of the existing historic structures and acknowledge stable neighborhoods with long term property ownership.

Recommended Development Patterns:

1. New residential, commercial, and institutional development built in accordance with established design guidelines and with respect for the historic character, traditional

development patterns and scale of the neighborhood involved.

2. Medium and high-density housing in both new structures and existing buildings.
3. Infill residential development at densities compatible with the surrounding area. Site design should reflect traditional neighborhood patterns and existing architectural styles.
4. Office and commercial development in both new and existing structures. Effort should be made to provide needed services to the under-served neighborhoods.
5. Enhanced arts, entertainment, and sports facilities.
6. Stronger physical connections between the Downtown core, including the riverfront, and the remainder of the Old Augusta character area.
7. Public infrastructure (public buildings, streets, landscaping, parks, sidewalks, etc.) that support and complement other development.
8. Transportation system that accommodates all modes of travel and is accessible to all.

State Quality Community Objectives:

The recommended development patterns for Old Augusta are designed to promote the following Quality Community Objectives established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

- Economic Opportunities - appropriate Business, promote both public and private economic enterprises which in turn will provide employment opportunities.
- Resource Management - open space preservation, environmental protection, encourage the utilization of the Riverfront area.
- Heritage Preservation – preserve and protect the historic districts and properties for traditional and adaptive re-use.
- Efficient Land Use - welcome new development but recognize the needs and commitment of long-term property owners.
- Housing Opportunities – promote development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities while respecting the scale and mass of existing neighborhoods. Promote traditional neighborhood infill development where possible
- Transportation Alternatives and supporting Infrastructure
- Sense of Place and Pride in Augusta's unique qualities
- Regional Identity
- Regional Cooperation

Recommended Land Uses/Zoning Districts:

- Medium Density Urban Residential (8 units / acre)
 - R-1C, R-1D, R-1E, (One-family Residential) zones
 - R-2 (Two-family Residential) zone
- High Density Urban Residential (35 units / acre)
 - R-3A, R-3B, R-3C, (Multiple-family Residential) zones
 - B-1 (Neighborhood Business)
 - B-2 (General Business)
- Mixed Use
 - B-1 (Neighborhood Business)
 - B-2 (General Business)
 - PUD (Planned Unit Development)
- Professional/Commercial:
 - P-1(Professional/Office) zone
 - B-1 (Neighborhood Business) zone
 - B-2 (General Business) zone
- Industrial:
 - LI (Light Industrial) zone

Existing Overlay Districts:

• PDR (Planned Development Riverfront)

An overlay district covering the Savannah riverfront and part of the Downtown core of Augusta. The list of permitted land uses is more restrictive than in the underlying zone, and development plans are subject to review by the Riverfront Development Review Board.

• Savannah River Corridor Protection District

An overlay district that establishes a 100-ft vegetative buffer along the Savannah River throughout Augusta. Within the district certain land uses are permitted, but facilities for the receiving, storage, or disposal of hazardous or solid wastes are prohibited.

• Local Historic Districts

An overlay district established under the city's historic preservation ordinance that covers Downtown, Olde Town and Summerville areas. Any material change affecting the exterior of property within the district is subject to design review by the city's Historic Preservation Commission. The underlying zoning is not affected by the historic district designation.

Implementation Strategies:

- Develop new local development regulations specific to this character area and the Downtown core, included but not limited to, flexible density for both commercial and residential development and parking allowances. Also support for adaptive re-use of existing structures, assistance for public investments and public-private partnerships for new development and revitalization projects, infrastructure improvements for utilities and all transportation modes.

SOUTH AUGUSTA CHARACTER AREA

Extending south from the old city limits to near the boundaries of Hephzibah, and bordering Fort Eisenhower to the west, South Augusta is characterized by a suburban pattern of development, with low-density subdivisions of mostly single-family detached units on uniform lots approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ -acre in size. Apartment complexes are scattered throughout the area, usually located near employment centers, shopping, and major roads. Curvilinear street patterns are predominant, there are generally few sidewalks or crosswalks for pedestrians, and transit service is limited.

South Augusta is home to several major institutions, including the East Central Georgia Regional Hospital, the Regional Youth Detention Center and Development Campus, the Charles B. Webster Detention Center, and Augusta Technical College. Commercial development is typically arranged in a linear pattern along major streets and highways, and clustered near interchanges with I-520. Rocky Creek and Butler Creek are major natural resources for South Augusta; greenspace has been acquired along Butler Creek for permanent protection. Diamond Lakes Park is a major public amenity for the area, featuring a campground, playing fields, a community center, and a branch library.

South Augusta has been the focus of new residential and commercial development in recent years. To accommodate this growth, new public schools have been built, and public utilities have been upgraded and expanded. This growth trend is expected to continue near established residential and commercial uses, both on undeveloped land and through redevelopment projects.

Vision for South Augusta:

South Augusta will reflect a mix of housing types, preserving suburban-style, single-family neighborhoods, while medium density residential developments are added in a targeted manner to diversify housing options as utility and transportation infrastructure improves. Underserved neighborhoods are revitalized through infrastructure improvements and public-private-partnerships in new and rehabilitated housing. Mixed-use and planned unit developments are encouraged at infill sites and at abandoned commercial properties, enhancing walkability, and reducing car dependency. Established activity centers are the focus for enhanced recreation and education activities, retail investment and job opportunities. Infill will be instrumental in the future development of South Augusta.

Recommended Development Patterns:

1. Maintain low-density single-family residential development in areas where it is already the predominant land use.
2. Infill residential development at densities compatible with the surrounding area. Site design reflects existing neighborhood patterns and architectural styles.
3. Redevelopment projects (housing and economic development) in targeted neighborhoods, and at large abandoned commercial or industrial sites, targeted for such activities.
4. Additional commercial and retail development at major intersections near underserved neighborhoods.
5. Expanded regional activity center in the areas around Augusta Mall, Augusta Technical

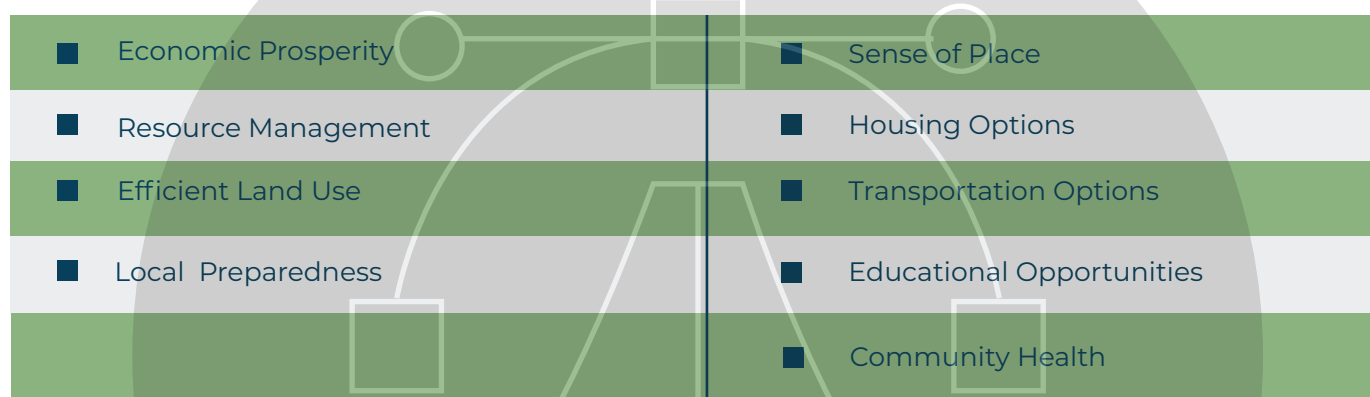
College, and Diamond Lakes Park.

6. Reduce the reliance on autos by using sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use trails to connect residential neighborhoods to activity centers (schools, parks, community centers, centers (schools, parks, community centers, greenways, neighborhood businesses and services).

7. Explore expansion of transit service in corridors such as Tobacco Road where there is significant ridership potential.

State Quality Community Objectives:

The recommended development patterns for South Augusta are designed to promote the following Quality Community Objectives established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):



Recommended Land Uses/Zoning Districts:

- Residential (varying densities of 3 units/acre to 10 units/acre)
 - o R-1 (One-family Residential) zones
 - o R-2 (Two-family Residential) zone
 - o R-3 (Multiple-family Residential) zones
 - o R-MH (Manufactured Home Residential) – limiting expansion of this zone
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD) zone
- Professional/Commercial:
 - o P-1(Professional/Office) zone
 - o B-1 (Neighborhood Business) zone
 - o B-2 (General Business) zone
- Industrial (limiting expansion of these zones):
 - o LI (Light Industrial) zone
 - o HI Heavy Industrial) zone
- Institutional land uses
- Parks/recreation and conservation land uses

Implementation Strategies:

- Public investment and improvements to infrastructure and transit facilities
- Incentives
- Revisions to development regulations

SOUTH RICHMOND (RURAL RICHMOND) CHARACTER AREA

South Richmond, or Rural Richmond, makes up those parts of Richmond County located south of the East Augusta and South Augusta character areas that are not within the boundaries of Hephzibah, Blythe, or Fort Eisenhower. This is another part of the county undergoing a transition. A rural landscape predominates, but some conventional suburban residential development is taking place. The rural residential development pattern is characterized by stick-built and manufactured houses on lots exceeding $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre in size. South Richmond has a high number of flagpole lot developments. Most rural residences tend to front or have access to the major arterial and collector roads in the area.

Woodlands, open space, and agricultural uses are scattered throughout the area. Significant natural resources include the floodplains and wetlands of the Savannah River and the tributary creeks that drain the area (Spirit, Little Spirit and McBean). Aquifer recharge areas underlay much of the South Richmond area. The Spirit Creek Educational Forest is a conservation use located in the area.

Standalone commercial establishments are scattered throughout the area, serving residents and travelers passing through on the major highways. The Albion Kaolin mine is the largest industry in this part of the city. The Augusta Corporate Park is a 1,730-acre industrial site owned and marketed by the Development Authority of Richmond County located on Mike Padgett Highway (SR 56) near the Burke County line. Community facilities and institutional uses include the county landfill, public schools, fire stations and recreation facilities.

Among the factors contributing to the transition that South Richmond is undergoing are the extension of water and sewer service, construction of new community facilities, lower cost of land, improvements to the road network, and proximity of the area to major roads.

Vision for South Richmond:

South Richmond will maintain its predominant rural atmosphere characterized by large tracts of forest land, open space, rural residences, some farms, and creeks. Additional suburban residential and commercial development will locate in areas designated for such uses. Industrial development will be limited to existing locations and the Augusta Corporate Park. Public facilities and services will be expanded as necessary to accommodate the growing population.

Recommended Development Patterns:

1. Reduce the scattered rural residential development throughout the area.
2. Ensure any new low-density residential development is targeted for the suburban part of the character area.
3. Promote the development of conservation subdivisions wherever new residential development is proposed in the character area.
4. Promote the use of conservation easements by rural landowners.
5. Confine any new neighborhood commercial and professional office development to designated intersections.
6. Confine industrial and warehousing uses to the Augusta Corporate Park site and any isolated sites currently zoned for such uses.

7. Protect water resources and other environmentally sensitive areas.

State Quality Community Objectives:

The recommended development patterns for South Richmond are designed to promote the following Quality Community Objectives established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

■ Economic Prosperity	■ Regional Cooperation
■ Resource Management	■ Housing Options
■ Efficient Land Use	■ Transportation Options
■ Local Preparedness	■ Educational Opportunities
■ Sense of Place	■ Community Health

Recommended Land Uses/Zoning Districts:

- Agricultural (A) zone
- Residential (low-to-medium densities):
 - R-1 (One-family Residential) zones
 - R-MH (Manufactured Home Residential) zone – limiting expansion of this zone
 - R-3 (Multiple-family Residential) zones, along major corridors with access to public water and sewer infrastructure
- Professional/Commercial:
 - P-1 (Professional/Office) zone
 - B-1 (Neighborhood Business) zone
 - B-2 (General Business) zone
- Industrial (limiting expansion of these zones):
 - LI (Light Industrial) zone
 - HI (Heavy Industrial) zone
- Institutional land uses
- Parks/recreation and conservation land uses

Implementation Strategies:

- Detailed planning measures (e.g., conservation zoning)
- Infrastructure improvements
- Public investment

WEST AUGUSTA CHARACTER AREA

The West Augusta Character Area reflects suburban development patterns of the last 50-60 years. Low-density residential subdivisions dating from the 1950's-1980s are predominant in the area. Apartment complexes are scattered throughout the area mostly centered along Steven's Creek Road, Bertram Road, and Alexander Drive. Developable land has become scarcer in recent years, resulting in the development of more attached townhouse and

condominium complexes. Public transit service is more limited than it is in the old city neighborhoods.

Commercial development in West Augusta is characterized by shopping centers, professional offices and entertainment establishments arranged in a linear pattern along the major streets and highways and clustered near interstate highway interchanges. The Augusta Exchange Shopping Center functions as a regional commercial center. Isolated pockets of low-intensity light industrial and warehousing uses exist in proximity to interstate interchanges. The one sizable heavy industry is the Martin Marietta rock quarry located between Riverwatch Parkway and the Augusta Canal.

The Augusta Canal National Heritage Area is a historic resource and linear greenspace trail of regional, State, and national significance. Additional greenspace areas and potential linear trail routes are scattered throughout the area. Gateways into the city include I-20 at Riverwatch Parkway, I-20 at Washington Road and Riverwatch Parkway from I-20 to downtown. The Augusta National Golf Course is a major landmark in the area.

Vision for West Augusta:

Promote limited development of the remaining vacant tracts while preserving the single-family residential character that is predominant in the area. Commercial development should be confined to existing locations and any additional redevelopment of commercial sites will be buffered from adjoining residential areas. Mixed-use development will be encouraged on sites being redeveloped.

Recommended Development Patterns:

- 1.** Incorporate medium-density single-family and well-planned residential developments into the area.
- 2.** Infill residential development at densities compatible with the surrounding area. Site design reflecting existing neighborhood patterns and architectural styles.
- 3.** Additional commercial and retail development confined to designated interchanges and intersections.
- 4.** Promote mixed-use development at appropriate locations to reduce development footprint, encourage more bicycle-pedestrian trails, create a sense of place.
- 5.** Limit industrial and warehousing development to areas where they are already located. Provide adequate buffers from adjoining residential, public, and institutional development.
- 6.** Reduce the reliance on autos by using sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use trails to connect residential neighborhoods to schools, parks, community centers, greenways, neighborhood businesses and services. Expanding the City's transit system.

State Quality Community Objectives:

The recommended development patterns for West Augusta are designed to promote the following Quality Community Objectives established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA):

■ Efficient Land Use	■ Transportation Options
■ Economic Prosperity	■ Housing Options
■ Resource Management	■ Sense of Place
■ Educational Opportunities	■ Community Health

Recommended Land Uses/Zoning Districts:

- Residential (varying densities of 3 units/acre to 29 units/acre):
 - o R-1 (One-family Residential) zones
 - o R-2 (Two-family Residential) zone
 - o R-3 (Multiple-family Residential) zones
- Planned Unit Developments (PUD) zone
- Professional/Commercial:
 - o P-1 (Professional/Office) zone
 - o B-1 (Neighborhood Business) zone
 - o B-2 (General Business) zone
- Industrial (limiting expansion of this zoning district):
 - o LI (Light Industrial) zone
- Institutional Uses
- Conservation and Parks/Recreational Uses

Implementation Strategies:

- More-detailed sub-area planning
- New local development regulations
- Incentives

By carefully analyzing land use patterns, considering the diverse needs of residents, and implementing appropriate planning strategies, Augusta-Richmond County can successfully navigate the challenge of accommodating both rural and urban preferences while ensuring a seamless and complimentary aesthetic transition. Through thoughtful planning, the community can achieve sustainable growth and development that enhances the overall quality of life for all residents.



Photography Credits: Destination Augusta

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO:

ENVIRONMENTAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

The role of environmental and natural resources in Augusta-Richmond County's development is significant and multifaceted. These resources play a crucial part in shaping the overall well-being, sustainability, and resilience of communities. A balanced and responsible approach to utilizing and preserving these resources can lead to a prosperous, resilient, and sustainable community for present and future generations.

AUGUSTA'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Augusta is located in east central Georgia adjacent to the Savannah River and South Carolina to the east, Columbia and McDuffie Counties to the north and west, Burke and Jefferson Counties to the south, and straddles the twenty-mile wide "Fall Line", a geological and geomorphologic boundary following the Appalachian Mountain range from Alabama to New York. Richmond County occupies a land area of 324.33 sq. mi. and 4.27 sq. mi. of water area. Augusta (302.47 sq. mi.) accounts for approximately 93% of the total acreage in Richmond County, with the smaller communities of Blythe (2.54 sq. mi) and Hephzibah (19.31 sq. mi.) making up the other 7% together.

Topography

Augusta is situated in three major land resource areas: the Southern Piedmont, the Carolina, and Georgia Sand Hills and the Southern Coastal Plain. Elevations across Augusta range between 140 (upstream) and 100 feet (downstream) along the Savannah River to the east and 500 feet or more on high ridges on adjacent Fort Gordon, to the west. More than half of the total land area of Augusta has a slope of less than 5%, and more than 85% of the land has less than 10% slope. Less than 2% of the land area has greater than 15% slope. The steepest slopes are found along Butler, Spirit and Little Spirit Creeks. Many areas with steep slopes are either found within floodplains, which are regulated by the Augusta Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance or located within the jurisdictional boundaries of Fort Gordon.

Climate

Augusta has a relatively mild climate characterized by long hot summers and short cool winters.

LAND RESOURCE AREAS

	Location(s)	Characteristics	Suitability
Southern Piedmont	Extreme northern part of Augusta	Broad to narrow ridgetops and long irregular hillsides bisected by numerous, small winding drainage ways	Good Suitability for building foundations and fair to poor suitability for septic tanks.
Carolina and Georgia Sand Hills	Northern and western parts of Augusta; separates the Southern Piedmont from the Southern Coastal Plain	Consist of a series of valleys and broad, level ridges	Poor to good suitability for residential development and commercial / industry uses.
Southern Coastal Plains	Covers the southern and southeastern parts of the Augusta	Broad ridgetops and hillsides extending to drainage ways	Fair to good suitability for residential development and commercial / industry uses.

Overview of Water Resources

Water resources are a defining characteristic of Augusta and vital to the community's past, present, and future. The Savannah River is the most visible surface water resource and drains much of Augusta's land mass.

Drainage Basins

There are nine watersheds in Augusta that include Rock, Rae's (which includes Crane Creek), Oates, Rocky, Butler, Spirit, Little Spirit, and McBean Creeks, and Phinizy Swamp (which includes downtown Augusta and the Augusta Canal drainage basins). The Savannah River floodplain extends along the entire eastern side of Augusta and covers approximately 63 square miles. The Savannah River floodplain is relatively flat and includes areas that are continuously wet and swampy (e.g., Phinizy Swamp) and areas that are subject to periodic flooding.

Aquifers and Groundwater Recharge Areas

Aquifers are soils or rocks in which groundwater is stored and can be extracted. Aquifers vary widely in size and depth and are primarily used for drinking water, irrigation, and manufacturing processes. A groundwater recharge area is a specific area of the earth's surface where water passes through the ground to replenish underground water sources, such as aquifers. These areas are sensitive areas that should be provided special attention and protection due to the reliance of these underground water sources for Augusta residents without potable water.

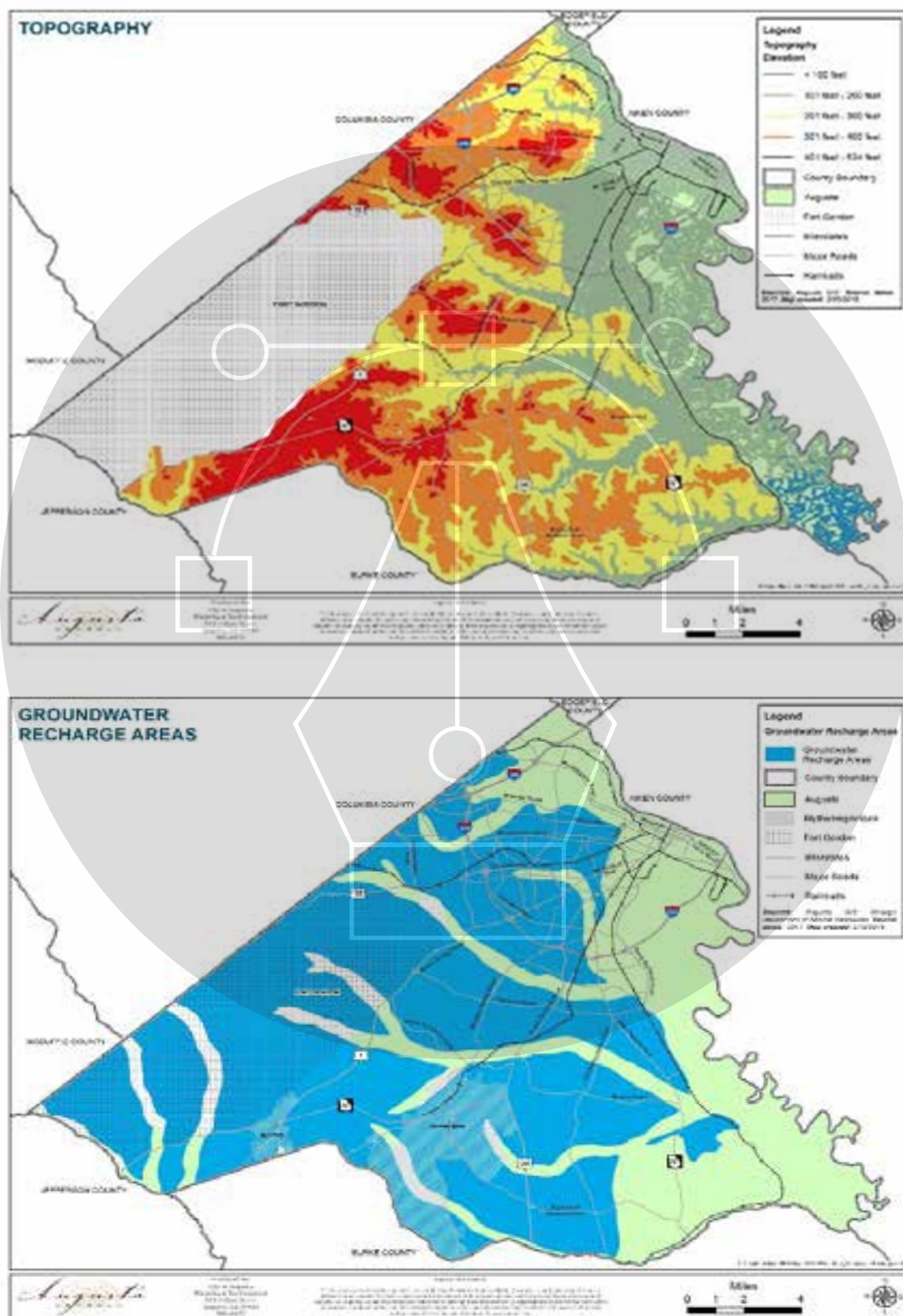
The two major aquifers in Augusta are the Upper Cretaceous and Basal Cretaceous aquifers. The Upper Cretaceous aquifer is the shallower of the two reservoirs and is not extensively developed. Most of the groundwater used in Augusta is pumped from the Basal Cretaceous aquifer. The recharge area for the Cretaceous aquifer covers the majority of Augusta and is classified as a significant groundwater recharge area by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR). DNR classifies the majority of Augusta as having either a high or medium susceptibility to pollution. Pollution susceptibility is the relative vulnerability of an aquifer to be polluted from spills, discharges, leaks, impoundments, applications of chemicals, injections, and other human activities in the recharge area. In October 1998, the Augusta Commission adopted a Groundwater Recharge Area Protection Ordinance in accordance with the State Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria. In order to protect the resource, Augusta administers their entire land area, via this Ordinance, as though the entire area has a high susceptibility to pollution. In addition to the Groundwater Recharge Area Protection Ordinance, Augusta continues to implement other projects to protect groundwater and recharge areas such as extending sanitary sewer service to growth areas.

Wetlands

Wetlands can be described as soils which are saturated, either permanently or seasonally, by water to the point, that over time, an ecosystem is created in which plant and animal life (both aquatic and terrestrial species) adapt to these unique (hydric) soil conditions.

In Augusta, the wetlands, categorized as inland or non-tidal wetlands, totaling 28,636.8 acres or 44.75 sq. mi., (14.79% of Augusta's land mass) are located adjacent to the Savannah River, the Augusta Canal and the major creeks and tributaries that drain Augusta and surrounding areas. The largest concentration of wetlands is found in the Phinizy Swamp which is located in the large floodplain of the Savannah River on the east side of Augusta. Local wetlands provide a habitat for native plants and animals, provide a place for migrating birds to rest and feed, absorb and slow floodwaters, and filter pollutants before they reach the Savannah River and other water bodies.

Augusta, in cooperation with residents, developers, environmental organizations, educators, and others, participates in a variety of programs to protect wetlands and improve water quality. The types of active programs include the monitoring and assessment of water quality, permitting, TMDLs, and public outreach/education.



Public Water Supply Sources and Management/Public Sewer

Water quality issues across the nation have focused the public's attention to the drinking water industry. Augusta is fortunate to have an abundant high quality water supply, state of the industry water treatment facilities, and a dedicated staff of water professionals. The Augusta Utilities Department (AUD) is committed to ensuring the quality of the community's drinking water. Water sources include the Savannah River for the Surface Water Treatment Plant and the Cretaceous Aquifer for the Ground Water Treatment Plants.

Currently, Augusta has several ordinances and programs to protect water supply watersheds from pollution or alteration. These ordinances include primarily: the Water Supply Watershed Protection Ordinance, the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance, the Tree Ordinance, the Groundwater Recharge Area Protection Ordinance, while other Ordinances and Regulations such as: the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, the Land Subdivision Regulations, the Site Plan Regulations, the Grading Ordinance, the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance, and the Stormwater Management Ordinance / Stormwater Technical Manual promote water quality by limiting the types of land uses allowed in an area, restricting the amount of impervious surface on a lot, requiring detention facilities to control surface water runoff and restricting development within floodplains.

Protected River Corridor

The Savannah River is a protected river under the Georgia Mountain and River Corridor Protection Act. In 1994, the City (prior to consolidation in 1996) adopted a River Corridor Protection Plan as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The Protection Plan includes an overview of the river corridor, an assessment of corridor protection measures and an implementation strategy. In 1998, Augusta amended the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance by establishing the Savannah River Corridor Protection District. The Savannah River Corridor Protection District extends 100 feet horizontally from the riverbank with a buffer that protects existing natural vegetative and limits new land uses to single-family residences (minimum 2-acre lot), agricultural and timber production, wildlife and fisheries management, recreational uses, and some other public facilities and utilities. Handling, receiving, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes are prohibited in the district.

Stormwater Management/Stormwater Utility

The Augusta Engineering Department (AED) is responsible for building and maintaining a stormwater system that covers 329 square miles and safely collects, treats, and conveys stormwater runoff in order to meet State water quality standards. Due to the challenges of an aging stormwater system, Augusta implemented a Stormwater Utility Fee in January of 2016 to offset the cost of increased maintenance requirements and more stringent water quality standards. This user fee is based on the total impervious area of a property and is the most equitable manner to fund Augusta's Enhanced Stormwater Program which focuses on: managing Augusta's stormwater assets in a sustainable manner, protecting the health, safety, and well-being of the community and supporting realization of Augusta as "the Garden City"

Stormwater Drainage System

Augusta has adopted a watershed approach to protect and improve water quality in local streams and the Savannah River. Augusta's stormwater regulations require all new commercial and residential development to maintain runoff release rates at pre-development levels. More stringent requirements are in place for developments in the Rock, Rae's, and Rocky Creek basins, which have been heavily impacted by existing urban development.

Augusta holds a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit, which was issued on April 14, 2000. In February 2003, Augusta submitted a Consolidated Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) to the Georgia EPD that addresses applicable regulatory requirements and is designed to reduce the discharge of pollutants from Augusta's MS4 to the maximum extent practicable (MEP) in order to protect water quality of local watersheds.

ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVE AREAS

Air Quality

Augusta-Richmond County is in attainment with EPA requirements for air quality. Continuous efforts to improve air quality are essential to maintain a healthy environment and sustain the community's well-being. Exploring various initiatives demonstrates a proactive approach to environmental stewardship. Some potential initiatives that Augusta-Richmond County is exploring to further enhance air quality include:

- o **Sustainable Transportation:** Encouraging the use of public transportation, promoting cycling, and walking, and incentivizing electric or hybrid vehicles can reduce emissions from the transportation sector, a significant contributor to air pollution.
- o **Green Infrastructure:** Implementing green infrastructure projects, such as green roofs, urban forests, and rain gardens, can improve air quality by absorbing pollutants and mitigating the urban heat island effect.
- o **Renewable Energy:** Supporting the transition to renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, for electricity generation can reduce emissions from traditional fossil fuel-based power plants.
- o **Energy Efficiency:** Promoting energy-efficient practices and technologies in buildings and industries can reduce energy consumption and lower emissions, contributing to improved air quality.
- o **Industrial Emission Reduction:** Collaborating with industries to implement cleaner production processes and technologies can help reduce emissions of pollutants from manufacturing and industrial activities.
- o **Air Quality Monitoring and Reporting:** Strengthening air quality monitoring systems and providing real-time data to the public can raise awareness of air quality issues and empower individuals to take proactive measures.
- o **Voluntary Programs and Incentives:** Offering voluntary programs and incentives to businesses and residents for adopting environmentally friendly practices and technologies can accelerate the adoption of clean air initiatives.
- o **Community Education and Engagement:** Educating the community about the importance of air quality and its impact on health and the environment can foster a culture of responsible air quality stewardship.
- o **Sustainable Urban Planning:** Integrating air quality considerations into urban planning and zoning decisions can lead to more sustainable and cleaner development patterns.

- o **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Engaging various stakeholders, including local government, businesses, community organizations, and residents, in collaborative efforts can drive more effective and holistic approaches to improving air quality.

Proposed EPA regulations that further restrict particulate matter (PM) emissions could pose challenges if proactive initiatives are not undertaken. PM is a significant air pollutant that can have adverse effects on public health and the environment. Stricter regulations aim to protect human health and reduce the environmental impacts associated with PM emissions.

By exploring and implementing these initiatives, Augusta-Richmond County can build on its success in meeting EPA requirements and continue to be a leader in environmental sustainability. A comprehensive approach that involves the active participation of the community will be key to ensuring a cleaner and healthier environment for everyone. Augusta-Richmond County's detailed plan is included in the Appendix: ARTS MPO EPA Path Forward Report

Floodplains

Floodplains (often referred to as Special Flood Hazard Areas) are large, flat expanses of land that form on either side of a river, stream, or creek, and the area that the river, stream, or creek, floods onto when it exceeds its full-bank capacity. A "100-year flood", now more commonly referred to at the Federal and State level as the "1% annual chance flood" and also referred to as the "base flood", is defined as a flood having a one percent probability of being equaled or exceeded in any given year.

About 25 percent of Augusta is comprised of floodplains, stream terraces, and inter-stream divides. According to Flood Insurance Rates Maps (FIRMs) published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the floodplains are located within and adjacent to the Savannah River and all of the major creeks within Augusta. The Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) delineate the areas of Augusta that are susceptible to flooding during a 1% annual chance and 0.2% annual chance flood event, are used to determine the areas regulated by the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance and are also the basis for determining the need for National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) flood insurance by lenders and property owners for structures with or without a mortgage.

Congress established the NFIP with the passage of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 and Augusta joined the program approximately 10 years later, in the late 70's. Augusta has adopted Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and enforces regulations through a variety of ordinances to reduce future flood risks for new construction or substantial improvement in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) (more commonly referred to as floodplains); therefore, the Federal government makes flood insurance available within the community as financial protection against flood losses which may occur. Augusta has a Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance that is based on FEMA's Model Ordinance and exceeds the Model Ordinance in many important areas in order to reduce flood related losses in the community.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Augusta developed a Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2004 that was incorporated into Augusta's Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2006. The purpose of the Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the sections on flooding within the Hazard Mitigation Plan, were to assess flood risks and to express a comprehensive strategy for implementing flood mitigation activities for one of Augusta's largest natural hazards. Both Plans outline the risks associated with flooding, describe the existing conditions, describe existing mitigation programs and activities, and present a list of recommended mitigation strategies and activities for implementation.

Additionally, a Mitigation Plan makes Augusta eligible to apply to FEMA for Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grants, Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grants and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). These grants are an integral part of Augusta's strategy to purchase property with a history of repetitive damage from floods and for flood risk reduction projects.

Donations from the Land Bank Authority

Finally, donations of repetitively flooded structures have been accepted by Augusta in partnership with the Land Bank Authority. These repetitive-loss structures are demolished, debris hauled away, and the land regraded and stabilized to prevent erosion. Once this is completed, the property is allowed to revert back to nature and provide additional storage for floodwaters during the next flood event.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING STRATEGIES

The Planning & Development Department has developed a database of repetitive flood loss properties that is used to target additional properties for acquisition in the future and is important in identify localized flooding problems that can be corrected by local storm drainage improvements.

Additionally, the Augusta IT/GIS Department has partnered with the Planning & Development Department to identify all properties acquired through grant programs, all properties with Elevation Certificates (ECs) and all properties that have applied to FEMA for a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) within Augusta. This information is readily available to the public and Planning Department staff to help guide development away from flood prone areas and is used as a valuable resource for much needed information concerning at-risk-for-flood areas.

Conservation Subdivision Ordinance

In June 2003, the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance has been amended to include the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. A Conservation Subdivision allows for controlled growth and sustainable development while protecting the area's natural environmental features, such as floodplains and wetlands, in perpetuity, as greenspace. The portion of the Conservation Subdivision not devoted to greenspace is to be developed with streets, utilities, and detention facilities, as long as the total number of lots does not exceed the number of lots permitted by the base zoning classification and no lot is less than 60% of the minimum lot size permitted in the base zoning classification of the tract.

Community Rating System (CRS)

In late 2017, the Augusta Emergency Management Agency and the Planning and Development Department began the application phase of the Community Rating System (CRS). The Community Rating System recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP standards. Depending upon the level of participation, flood insurance premium rates for policyholders in Augusta can be reduced as much as 45%. Besides the benefit of reduced flood insurance rates, CRS floodplain management activities enhance public safety, reduce damages to property and public infrastructure, avoid economic disruption and losses, reduce human suffering, and protect the environment. Additionally, the CRS provides an incentive to maintain and improve Augusta's floodplain management program and implementing some CRS activities can help Augusta projects qualify for certain Federal assistance programs.

Soils

The soils of Augusta are grouped into eight (8) soil associations or types. A soil association is an area that has a distinctive proportional pattern of soils that usually consists of one or more

major soils. Soils in one association may also occur in another but in a different pattern. Soils range from well-drained soils on ridgetops and hillsides in Augusta to poorly drained soils on lands that are nearly level, often near the river and many creeks and streams of Augusta.

Agricultural and Forest Land

The 2012 Georgia County Guide classified only 13,908 acres as non-forestry farmland or 6.7 % of the land in Augusta; a 10.6% reduction from the 12,439 acres of land in farms in 2002. In 2012, there were 123 farms in Augusta, compared to 140 in 2002. The average farm size was 113 acres, and the median size was 39 acres. Crops include cotton, hay, corn, wheat, and soybeans. Commodities include forestry, dairy, beef cows and ornamental horticulture. Augusta ranked 136th within the State for acres of harvested cropland. The 2,236 acres of harvested cropland reported in 2012 is down 12.0% from 2,541 acres reported in 2002. In 2009, 131,800 acres in Augusta were classified as forested or 57.0% of the entire county. Of this total 106,300 acres are owned by private entities, 19,000 acres by the Federal government (Fort Gordon), and 6,500 acres by the State of Georgia. Outside of Fort Gordon, forestlands elsewhere in Augusta are subject to more intense development.

As Augusta continues to grow, the remaining farmland and forestland will come under more development pressure. A number of local development regulations help to minimize the impact of proposed land use changes. These include: zoning restrictions on allowable densities, landscaping requirements for commercial development, and grading/ stormwater/ soil erosion and sediment control requirements. Augusta also has in place regulations for the protection of wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, water supply watersheds, and the Savannah River corridor. These regulations were adopted in compliance with the Georgia DNR, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria, as well as at the insistence of citizens and elected officials to maintain a balance of growth vs greenspace.

Plant and Animal Habitat

Augusta is home to several plants and one invertebrate classified as endangered, threatened, unusual or rare. Four of the plants are listed as candidates for Federal protection under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Sweet Pitcher Plant has partial status, meaning that the plant is federally protected in only a portion of the species' range. All projects that require a direct Federal approval, permit, grant, loan, or loan guarantee must comply with provisions of the Endangered Species Act. This includes consulting with the Department of the Interior to avoid adverse impacts on endangered species.

MAJOR PARKS, RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AREAS

The following is a brief description of the conservation, recreation, and natural areas within Augusta.

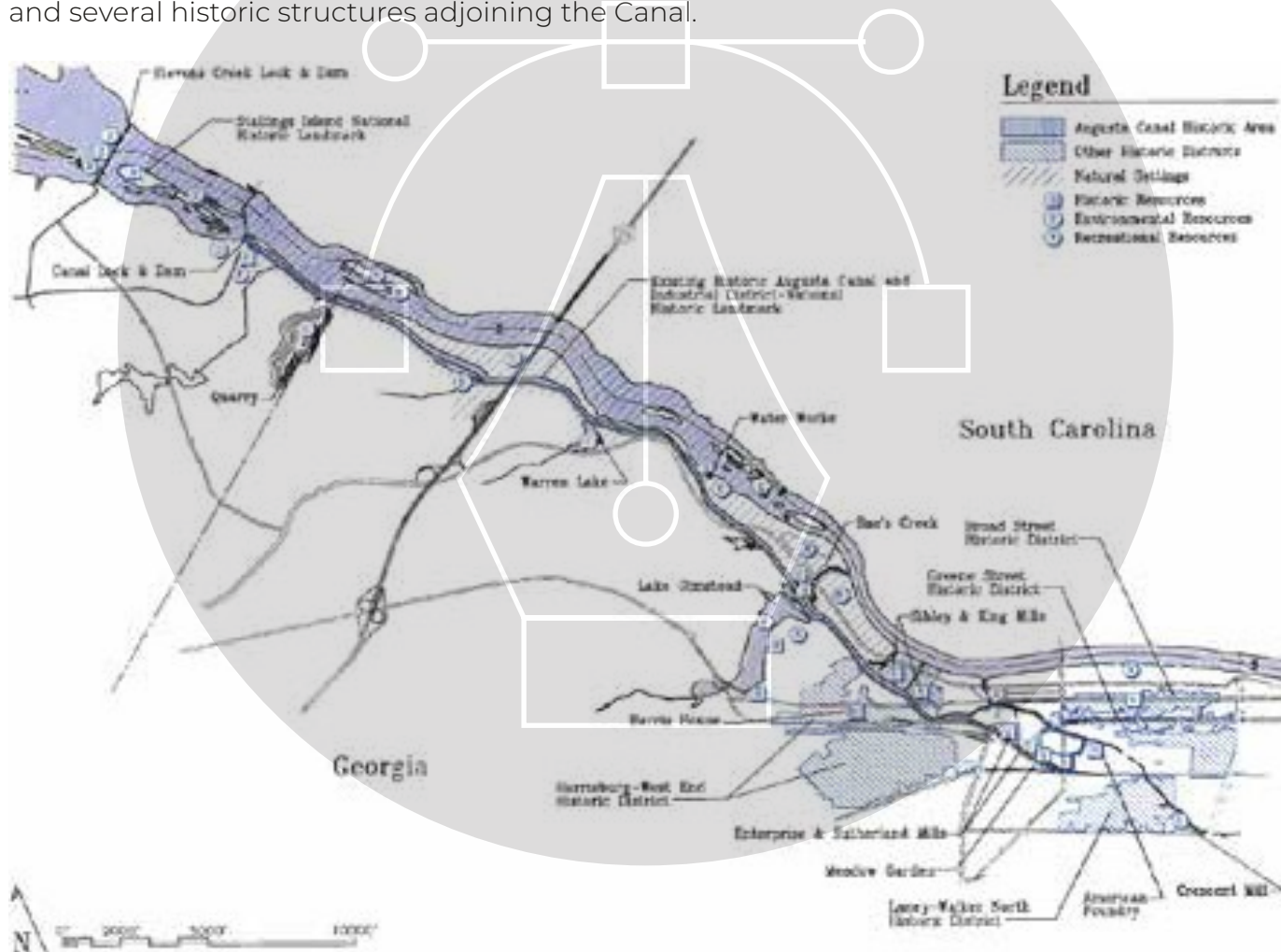
Savannah River

The Savannah River Corridor is an exceptional resource that continues to have a tremendous impact on the history and development of the community. This segment of the river adjacent to Augusta is one of the more unique parts of the waterway. Upstream from downtown is where the river rolls over the Fall Line separating the Piedmont and Coastal Plains. The shallow waters at the Fall Line have served as a river crossing for centuries which is in sharp contrast to the deeper, navigable river downstream adjacent to Augusta's downtown. This change in the river's environment allows it to support a variety of plants, animals, and wildlife and gives residents a greater appreciation of the natural environment.

Augusta Canal

The Augusta Canal helped usher in the Industrial Revolution into the American South and was, at one point, the second largest inland cotton market in the world during the cotton boom. Built in 1845 as a source of power, water, and transportation, the Canal today is the only fully intact American industrial canal in continuous operation and is the oldest continuously operating hydropower canal in the United States. In 1989, the state legislature created the Augusta Canal Authority, the body that has jurisdiction over the Canal today. In 1993, the Authority issued a Comprehensive Master Plan, outlining the Canal's development potential. A new National Heritage Area Management and Master Plan was later adopted in 1999. Today, the Augusta Canal continues to provide waterpower for electrical generation and to power the pumps at the Augusta's raw water pumping station. The Canal's function as both a water supply source and flood-control mechanism are the responsibility of the Augusta Utilities Department (AUD).

The canal provides residents and visitors with a variety of recreational opportunities, including hiking, boating, kayaking, bicycling, and fishing. There are scenic views of the Savannah River and several historic structures adjoining the Canal.



Phinzy Swamp Wildlife Management Area

This 1,500-acre, State-owned wetland is located in east Augusta approximately two miles south of Augusta's downtown. The Phinzy Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) consists of approximately 1,200 acres of wetlands, 300 acres of ponds and offers hunting opportunities for deer, turkey, small game, and waterfowl. There are also five ponds that provide walk-in fishing opportunities. The WMA is owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation

(GDOT) and managed by the Georgia DNR. It was created as a result of a compromise brokered with environmental agencies to allow construction of Bobby Jones Expressway through the swamp. GDOT agreed to purchase and preserve the acreage in exchange for approval of the road project by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The expressway extension, which opened in the summer of 1998, bisects the Wildlife Management Area.

Phinizy Swamp Nature Park

Phinizy Swamp Nature Park is a 1,100-acre nature park that contains wetlands and woodlands and has a campus for water research and environmental education, which includes a visitor center. The Phinizy Center for Water Sciences, based out of the Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, has a vision that our community have a healthy environment that includes clean water and watershed.

Merry Brickyard Ponds

Merry Brickyard Ponds is a semi-public fishing area located immediately north of the Phinizy Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The ponds are actually a series of strip mines that nature has transformed into a nationally known waterfowl habitat. The ponds lie among 3,100 acres owned by the Merry Land Properties, Inc., which still has active clay mining leases on parts of the site.

Spirit Creek Forest

A 725-acre tract of land in Augusta, Spirit Creek Forest is an actively managed forestland in the midst of South Augusta, just minutes from downtown Augusta, Georgia and includes 300 acres of wetlands, planted loblolly pine stands, and bottomland hardwoods. This means that forest management methods are used to provide multiple benefits that include timber production, wildlife habitat, soil and water conservation, aesthetics, and educational opportunities on a limited basis.

Greenspace Program

In November 2000, Augusta adopted a Community Greenspace Program in accordance with regulations in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Section 36-22-2 et seq. Augusta's Greenspace Program was updated in the Fall of 2002 and is essentially a long-range plan for the permanent protection of greenspace within Augusta with the ultimate goal to permanently preserve twenty percent (20%) of Augusta's land area as greenspace. It provides policies and specific proposals for long term and short-term greenspace preservation. The program also includes specific recommendation as to ordinance and rule changes which would promote greenspace preservation. The Greenspace Program proposes to protect greenspace by purchasing land, acquiring easements, development set-asides, and soliciting gifts of money.

In addition, gifts of property will be accepted as permanently, protected greenspace regardless of location. Augusta may also utilize whatever funds are available, such as SPLOST funds, which have been used in the past, to purchase flood prone properties where there have had repetitive losses and convert these areas to permanently protected greenspace. The Central Savannah River Land Trust administers the Greenspace Program on behalf of Augusta. The Land Trust is a non-profit organization capable of accepting donations of land and conservation easements designed to permanently protect sensitive environmental resources. A broad-based group of citizens and organizations are involved in the Greenspace Program. Among them are the Phinizy Center for Water Resources (fka Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy), the Augusta Canal Authority, Augusta Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, the Builders Association of Metro Augusta, the Savannah Riverkeeper, the Georgia Forestry Commission, and several neighborhood organizations.

Augusta Parks

Augusta currently has 72 park sites with more than 1,500 acres of parkland providing open space, active and passive recreation, community centers and rental facilities, programs for all ages, administrative services, and planning and development – playing an important role in ensuring Augusta’s parks, trails, open space areas and recreational facilities are well planned, designed, constructed and preserved, socially and culturally relevant, appropriately and equitably located in all neighborhoods, physically accessible, safe and secure.

The Recreation and Parks Department has a 10-year Master Plan, adopted in the Fall of 2016, aimed at making sure that the local parks system continues to be a viable and effective community resource for all Augustans and visitors, alike. The Recreation and Parks Department also boasts an Annual Report and a Special Events Plan to their planning strategy.

Solid Waste Management/Landfill

The Augusta Solid Waste & Recycling Facility (aka “the Landfill”) has undergone some major capital improvements that not only enhance the appearance, improve their customer service, and accommodate their growing waste stream well into the future. Operated by the Environmental Services Department, the Department operates the largest Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) landfill in the Central Savannah River Area. The landfill sits on approximately 1,200 acres, with 303 acres currently permitted by the State, for MSW.

Augusta’s Solid Waste Collections Program include: Bulk Waste Collection, Curbside Garbage Collection, Curbside Recycling Collection, Curbside Yard Waste Collection, Compressed Natural Gas, Demolition, Street Sweeping, Vacant Lot/Litter Collection and an Implementation Schedule.

Augusta and the Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Plan

The twenty-county Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Planning Region, which includes Augusta, initially developed between 2009 and 2011, and is one of ten such water planning regions established by the Georgia General Assembly in 2008 as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Water Management Plan. Augusta also has one of the eight regional planning nodes designated within the Savannah-Ogeechee River Study Basin. The Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Plan was adopted in November of 2011 and, along with the 5-year update done in 2016-2017, describes water resources conditions, projects future demands, identifies resource management issues, and recommends appropriate water management practices to be employed in the region through 2050. The goal of the plan is to address long-term water quality protection and adequate water supply for the Region.

Water Availability and Quality

The twenty-county Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Water Planning Region, which includes Augusta, initially developed between 2009 and 2011, and is one of ten such water planning regions established by the Georgia General Assembly in 2008 as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Water Management Plan. Augusta also has one of the eight regional planning nodes designated within the Savannah-Ogeechee River Study Basin. The Savannah-Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Plan was adopted in November of 2011 and, along with the 5-year update done in 2016-2017, describes water resources conditions, projects future demands, identifies resource management issues, and recommends appropriate water management practices to be employed in the region through 2050. The goal of the plan is to address long-term water quality protection and adequate water supply for the Region.

While much of the Region’s water comes from surface water and regulated reservoirs,

portions of the region rely significantly on groundwater aquifers. In 2015, approximately 67 percent of the water drawn from the basin for water supply came from surface water and the region returns, in wastewater, slightly over half of what is withdrawn in surface water. Here in Augusta, approximately 86% of our water supply comes from surface water and only 14% from groundwater / aquifers. Currently, over 90 percent of the streams analyzed for dissolved oxygen levels in the Region have adequate capacity to assimilate pollutants. Augusta has no streams with dissolved oxygen level deficiencies. With an anticipated 20% population growth by 2050 in the Region per the Plan, the annual average water demand is projected to increase 34 percent from 2015 to 2050 or roughly 1 percent increase per year. The region's



wastewater generation will increase 15 percent from 2015 to 2050 on an annual average daily basis, or roughly 0.43 percent increase per year. The Surface Water Availability Resource Assessment (2017) indicates that the water supply needs in Augusta (and at the Augusta node in the Savannah River Basin) can be met, assuming the USACE continues to operate its upstream reservoirs using the current operational protocol now in place. However, peak season agricultural irrigation needs upstream may result in potential instream flow shortages downstream for Augusta during summer low-flow periods. A point of concern is that the Regional Water Plan's analysis shows that the rapidly growing counties in the twenty-county region (especially upstream neighboring Columbia County) will need additional water and wastewater infrastructure to meet growing demands in the next 35 years.

The Groundwater Resource Assessment (2017) indicates that there will be adequate supplies to meet the region's future groundwater supply needs through 2050. The estimated sustainable yields from the Cretaceous aquifer that underlies the Augusta area is significantly higher than the estimated demands from all of the planning regions relying on this aquifer and that is not expected to change in the near future.

Fifteen priority water management practices have come out of the most recent Regional Water Plan update and the priority practices include development of local water and wastewater plans to identify local infrastructure needs and address watershed-related issues and 14 other management practices to be considered by local governments, such as Augusta, based on specific needs to be included in detailed local planning studies. These management practices promote proactive infrastructure planning and resource management that, when implemented, will prevent, or minimize local water resource shortages.

Ongoing discussions on interstate water planning are taking place between Georgia and South Carolina and will have an impact on future updates of the Regional Water Plan and it is anticipated that mutual water planning should become more robust as ongoing interstate water planning between Georgia and South Carolina takes place.

Augusta has reviewed and considered the recommendations from the Savannah- Upper Ogeechee Regional Water Plan and these are incorporated into Augusta's Water Planning efforts. Augusta Utilities has provided a letter signifying Augusta's compliance. Augusta has also reviewed the "Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria" and is in compliance with the requirements of O.C.G.A. 12-2-8. Augusta Engineering has provided a letter acknowledging Augusta's compliance with same.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are currently eight (8) National Register Historic Districts in Augusta, encompassing approximately 6,200 properties. Forty-six (46) properties are listed individually on the National Register. These districts and properties represent many aspects of Augusta's history and include the central business district, industrial facilities, urban neighborhoods, institutional buildings, and rural resources. They reflect the significant contributions made by statesmen, businessmen, religious leaders, ethnic groups, racial minorities, and ordinary citizens to the history and development of the community. Collectively the districts are significant in such areas as architecture, commerce, community planning, education, engineering, industry, landscape architecture, military, politics/government, religion, and transportation. And despite the issues of dilapidation, demolition by neglect, and adverse development over the years, the historic districts remain the most powerful neighborhoods in terms of maintaining authentic character and providing Augusta with a clear identity. Greater efforts need to be made to preserve what is left, especially in neighborhoods that have been plagued with vacancy. Likewise, future development should do the same to adhere to the scale and mass of the neighborhoods in order to complement the past while propelling the neighborhoods into the 21st century.

Historic Properties and Districts

Three areas - Downtown, Summerville and Olde Town - have also been designated as local historic districts under the city's historic preservation ordinance. The ordinance specifies that the Historic Preservation Commission review work affecting the exterior appearance of any property in a local historic district prior to a building permit being issued. The objective of the design review requirement is to protect the integrity of designated historic properties and ensure that new development is compatible with the district's historic character. In addition to the districts, six individual properties have been designated as historic under the local ordinance.

There are many historic resources in Augusta despite the changes the community has undergone over the years. Historic Augusta, Inc. maintains a file containing survey cards on approximately 2,000 historic buildings in the former city of Augusta. The survey cards represent work completed during the 1960s and 1970s by volunteers from the Junior League of Augusta, historic preservation consultants, and staff of the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission. The survey formed the basis for several National Register nominations during the 1970s. The number of documented resources increased dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s as additional surveys were completed and more properties were listed in the National Register. African- American resources were surveyed and the work resulted in the listing of three minority neighborhoods - Laney-Walker, Sand Hills, and Bethlehem - in the National Register.

A separate survey completed by a historic preservation consultant in 1989 identified another 277 historic properties in unincorporated Richmond County, Hephzibah, and Blythe. Of this total 49 are located in Hephzibah, 31 in Blythe, and the remainder are scattered throughout the county (now part of the city). Building examples survive from every period of the county's

history and reflect such architectural styles as Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neo-Classical, Bungalow, Craftsman, Tudor, and Art Moderne. The majority of the structures are houses dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Augusta-Richmond County Historic Preservation Plan (1991) contains more detailed information on historic resource surveys completed on Augusta and Richmond County.

Historic Preservation Activities

Historic preservation in Augusta is marked by a wide variety of activities. From preparation of National Register nominations, to rehabilitation of historic buildings, to participation in historic preservation programs, individuals and organizations are interested in preserving the past and at the same time make it a part of the city's future. Beginning with the first historic resource surveys in the 1930s and the preservation of some notable structures in the 1940s, the local historic preservation movement has grown to the point where it is now an integral part of neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and tourism. What follows is a summary of the historic preservation activities in recent years.

Property Restoration

Restoration is the process of returning a historic property to its original state (i.e., how it appeared at the time of its construction) or to its condition at some known point in its history. This is different from rehabilitation, which involves fixing up a property for a more contemporary use. Historic preservation in Augusta first focused on the restoration of notable structures. The Daughters of the American Revolution purchased the George Walton House (Meadow Garden) in 1895 to preserve the residence of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Meadow Garden remains in use today as a house museum.

In 1947, the Richmond County Historical Society was founded in order to help restore what is now known as the Ezekiel Harris House. The city purchased the property in 1984 and subsequently made improvements to the house, caretaker's cottage, and grounds of the property. Historic Augusta, Inc. now manages the house museum on behalf of the city. In 1987, the city purchased the Old Government House (c. 1801), rehabilitated the property, and makes it available for both public and private functions. In the spring of 1991, the city purchased the Boyhood Home of Woodrow Wilson and leased it for use by Historic Augusta. The property was restored with a combination of public and private funds and re-opened in 2001 as a house museum. The Joseph R. Lamar House, which is located next door to the Wilson Home, has also been restored and houses a gift shop and the offices of Historic Augusta. The Lamar House is also available for rental for small gatherings. Historic Augusta, Inc. owns both the Wilson Home and the Lamar House.

Delta House, Inc. purchased the home of noted black educator Lucy Craft Laney. During the early 1990s the house was restored, and a community meeting room was constructed on the property. Today, the Lucy C. Laney House and Museum is home to artifacts related to Ms. Laney's life, and hosts computer classes for children, art exhibits and community meetings.

Property Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse

Property rehabilitation and reuse is another integral part of historic preservation in Augusta. Everyday property owners and investors rehabilitate historic structures for use as homes, apartments, offices, and retail establishments. Examples of these private projects are found throughout downtown Augusta and in several neighborhoods, especially along the Historic Augusta Canal. Most such projects are privately financed, but some owners also take

advantage of rehabilitation tax credit and tax abatement programs. For a number of years, the city used Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to finance a façade rehabilitation program. Over the last 25 years, façade grants have helped finance the rehabilitation of approximately 160 historic commercial and residential structures. In recent years non-profit organizations and local authorities have started taking a more active role in the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties. Non-profits such as the Augusta Neighborhood Improvement Corporation are rehabilitating neglected structures for use as affordable housing. The Augusta Canal Authority has completed several projects resulting in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of several structures in the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area.

Local Historic Preservation Programs

Organizations such as the Richmond County Historical Society and Historic Augusta were at the forefront of the local preservation movement. The local governments were supportive of these organizations and, as time went by, recognized that they themselves could play a more direct role in historic preservation. In 1970, the Georgia General Assembly passed a constitutional amendment authorizing the city of Augusta to establish historic preservation zones in downtown Augusta. In the following year, the city council adopted a historic preservation zone ordinance. The ordinance made it possible to overlay-historic preservation zoning on the base zoning classification for qualifying properties in downtown Augusta. Once historic preservation zoning was established, any material change in the exterior appearance of a designated property was subject to review by a five-member board of review. This local ordinance stayed in place for over two decades, but changes were happening at the state level that would alter the way local historic preservation programs were implemented across the state.

In 1980, the Georgia General Assembly enacted the “Georgia Historic Preservation Act”. This law established a uniform procedure for use by cities and counties in the state in enacting local historic preservation ordinance. Among other things the state law established the powers for a local historic preservation commission, the procedure for designation of local historic properties and districts, and the process for carrying out design review requirements. A couple of years after the state law passed, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) published a model historic preservation ordinance for use by local governments.

About the same time, the Richmond County Commission was taking steps to become more directly involved in historic preservation. In May 1988, the county commission established a nine-member historic sites’ committee to identify properties within the then unincorporated area of Richmond County that would be likely candidates for listing in the National Register. Subsequently, Historic Augusta was awarded a contract to complete a survey of historic resources in unincorporated Richmond County, Hephzibah, and Blythe. The county commission adopted a historic preservation ordinance of its own on March 20, 1990 and appointed a five-member historic preservation commission on October 2, 1990. The county’s ordinance was also very similar to the model ordinance. In 1991, the city and county jointly sponsored the development of the community’s first historic preservation plan.

Today, the consolidated government’s Historic Preservation Commission continues the work started by its predecessors. The 12-member commission meets monthly to consider applications for Certificate of Appropriateness, review ongoing preservation projects, and discuss other matters of interest. The Commission has taken steps to raise community awareness about historic preservation and works cooperatively with others to implement preservation planning projects.

Participation in Preservation Programs

Augustans have long been involved in a variety of historic preservation programs. The National Register of Historic Places is probably the most well-known of the Federal preservation programs. Participation in the program has resulted in the listing of eight districts and 29 individual properties in the National Register. Additional districts have been marked as potentially eligible for listing. Since the late 1970s, many local property owners and investors have taken advantage of the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program. This program enables owner/investors to claim a tax credit for substantial rehabilitation of income-producing historic properties. Property owners have also participated in a state-level program that allows some property tax relief for historic properties that are rehabilitated.

Because Augusta routinely receives federal grant funds for expenditure on community development and transportation projects, it is subject to the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 mandates that the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the impact of federally funded projects on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register. The goal of the review process is to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts on historic resources. Participation in this program helps avoid adverse impacts on some historic properties, ensures that new construction is compatible with existing resources, and results in archive-quality documentation for historic properties demolished as a part of larger projects.

The community has participated in the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program for approximately 20 years. This federal program recognizes communities that establish historic preservation ordinances and programs that meet certain standards. As a CLG, Augusta receives technical assistance on preservation issues, is part of a nationwide network of local governments involved in preservation and is eligible to apply for a special set-aside of preservation planning grant funds. The former city of Augusta was designated a CLG in May 1987, and the former county in March 1991. The consolidated government achieved the designation in 1997.

The community has also taken advantage of historic preservation grant programs. Over the last 15 years, grant awards under the U. S. Department of the Interior's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Program have funded a variety of preservation planning projects. Examples include historic resource surveys, a draft local historic preservation ordinance, the Augusta- Richmond County Historic Preservation Plan, National Register nominations, and design guidelines for three historic districts - Bethlehem, Downtown and Olde Town. The Summerville Neighborhood Association financed the development of the Summerville Design Guidelines, and a HPF grant funded publication of the same. Property owners and non-profit organizations have used the Heritage Grant Program to help finance the stabilization and rehabilitation of selected historic properties in the city.

Historic Documents and Records

People and organizations have long taken action to record historic events and make sure that the rich and varied of Augusta is maintained. Over the years monuments and markers have been erected throughout the community to commemorate notable statesmen, events (e.g., wars, natural disasters), educators, community leaders, religious leaders, and the location of historic events and structures. A number of organizations and institutions are responsible for the maintenance of historic documents, artifacts and records. These include the Augusta Museum of History, Richmond County Historical Society, Historic Augusta, Inc., Augusta Genealogical Society, and libraries at Augusta State University, Paine College, and the East Central Georgia Regional Library. In addition, a number of local ethnic organizations and

and clubs work hard to preserve the rich and varied cultural history of Augusta and Richmond County. Ethnic cultural and arts festivals provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to learn more about local history and keep important traditions alive.

Assessment

Augusta-Richmond County is home to a wide range of cultural resources. Historic buildings, sites and districts represent many aspects of Augusta's history and include the central business district, industrial facilities, urban neighborhoods, African- American resources, institutional buildings, and rural resources. They reflect the significant contributions made by statesmen, businessmen, religious leaders, ethnic groups, racial minorities, and ordinary citizens to the history and development of the community. The archaeological resources reflect the settlement patterns, lifestyles, and customs of prehistoric and historic inhabitants of present-day Augusta- Richmond County.

The community has made great strides in bringing recognition to Augusta's historic properties, restoring, and rehabilitating them, and making them a part of daily life. In spite of these efforts, many resources continue to be threatened due to neglect, insensitive rehabilitation or development pressures. Strategies are needed to encourage ordinary maintenance and repair or the mothballing of more vacant buildings. The city's mothballing ordinance has not been used very much by property owners. This need is especially evident in downtown Augusta and some inner-city neighborhoods. More attention is also needed to protect the remaining rural resources, many of which are located in areas where suburban development is occurring.

Finally, the local historic preservation plan, which dates from 1991, needs to be updated to reflect the changes in Augusta's preservation activities and establish a comprehensive set of goals for the future protection and enhancement of cultural resources in the city, especially regarding those historic districts that are not recognized locally.



WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO:

TRANSPORTATION

From the canoes and dirt trails of pre-colonial times to the present-day network of roads, transportation is essential. This element will address walking, bike, transit, railroad, and vehicle traffic known as multimodal transportation.

Planning and programming improvements to the transportation systems are vital to the continued growth and development of Augusta-Richmond County and surrounding areas. To ensure, such improvements must be sensitive to environmental conditions, and potential impacts on the human environment, and increase the mode choice for residents and visitors.

Roads

Augusta -Richmond County is served by a road network that includes two interstate highways, four federal highways, and numerous local roads. The county has a total road network comprised of 1,254 miles which includes expressways, freeways, principal and minor arterials, collectors, and local roads. Interstate I-20 and I-520 pass through the county, which connects the county to regional counties and cities.

Expressway, Freeway Projects

Table T-1 to T-5 provides a list of current and completed road improvement projects in Richmond County which are funded through the TIA program. Table T-1 presents a list of the expressway, and freeway projects in Richmond County, while Table T-2 provides a list of principal arterial and minor arterial road projects. Each table provides the project names for the different road networks and the dates in which they are scheduled to be completed since 2018.

TABLE T-1 EXPRESSWAY, FREEWAY PROJECTS

Funding Source	Project Name	2018 Status	Finish	2023 Status Update
TIA	Calhoun Expressway Repair and Reconstruction	Completed	10/30/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Richmond County Emergency and Transit Vehicle Preemption System	In-house phase work completed; contract phase NTP issued on 8/10/2017	5/9/2016	COMPLETED
TIA	Riverwatch Parkway Adaptive Signal Project	Construction work Completed	6/12/2015	COMPLETED
TIA	Riverwatch Pkwy. Corridor Improvements from I-20 to River Shoals	Under contract	9/22/2014	COMPLETED

Source: Richmond County Engineering Department

TABLE T-2 PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL

Funding Source	Project Name	2018 Status	Finish	2023 Status Update
TIA	15th Street over Augusta Canal (Bridge Repair and Restoration)	Completed	5/14/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Signal Modernization Walton Way Phase III (Bransford Road to Milledge Road)	Construction activities completed. Project is under 18-month warranty Period.	7/21/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Signal Modernization Walton Way Phase III (Druid Park to Heard Avenue)	Construction activities completed. Project is under 18-month warranty Period.	7/21/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Signal Modernization Walton Way Phase III (Druid Park to Heard Avenue)	Construction activities completed. Project is under 18-month warranty Period.	7/21/2017	COMPLETED

Source: Richmond County Engineering Department

TABLE T-3 MINOR ARTERIAL

Funding Source	Project Name	2018 Status	Finish	2023 Status Update
TIA	7th Street Bridge over Augusta Canal (Bridge Re- placement)	Completed	2/6/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Broad Street over Hawks Gully (Bridge Repair and Restoration)	Phase I utility relocation 93% completed. Phase II Construction to begin at the beginning of 2018.	1/15/2016	COMPLETED
TIA	Broad Street over the Augusta Canal (Bridge Repair & Restoration)	Completed	5/14/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Highland Avenue Resurfacing from Wrightsboro Road to Wheeler Road	Completed	5/16/2014	COMPLETED
TIA	Milledgeville Road Bridge Maintenance at Rocky Creek	Construction activities completed. Project is under 18-month warranty Period.	3/26/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Old Waynesboro Road over Spirit Creek (Bridge Replacement)	Southern half of the bridge currently under construction	11/15/2016	COMPLETED
TIA	5th Street Bridge (Bridge Repair and Restoration)	Bridge Design consultant selected. Initial assessment was completed in November 2017 is and under review.	3/25/2019	COMPLETED

TIA	SR 4 / 15th Street Pedestrian Improvements Calhoun Expwy. to Central Avenue	Concept and PFPR completed and start- ed Final Design	7/8/2019	COMPLETED
TIA	13th Street (RA Dent to Reynolds Street)	The scope of Service is being drafted and priced. Concepts and study being finalized.	4/25/2022	CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
TIA	Broad Street Improvements (Washington Road to Sand Bar Ferry Road)	Scope of Service is being drafted and priced. Concepts and study being finalized.	5/12/2025	CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
TIA	Greene Street Improvements from 13th Street to East Boundary Street	Scope of Service is being drafted and priced. Concepts and study being finalized.		CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
TIA	Walton Way over Hawks Gully (Bridge Repair and Restoration)			CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Source: Richmond County Engineering Department

TABLE T-4 COLLECTOR ROAD PROJECTS

Funding Source	Project Name	2018 Status	Finish	2023 Status Update
TIA	11th Street over the Augusta Canal (Bridge Repair and Restoration)	Completed	2/6/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Druid Park Improvements (Walton Way to Wrightsboro Rd.)	Phase I 100% completed. ER Snell is low bidder for Phase II Construction; work will start after Master's 2018.	12/8/2016	COMPLETED
TIA	Jackson Road Resurfacing from Walton Way to Wrightsboro Road	Completed	6/20/2014	COMPLETED
TIA	North leg Road Improvements (Sibley Road to Wrightsboro Road) Phase I	Phase I Approximately 100% completed. ER Snell is low bidder for Phase II Construction; work will start after Masters 2018	10/28/2016	COMPLETED
TIA	Pleasant Home Road (River Watch Parkway to Walton Way Extension)	Completed	3/9/2015	COMPLETED
TIA	Berckman's Road Realignment and Widening - Phase I (Wheeler Road to	Construction activities completed. Project is under 18-month warranty Period.	4/24/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Washington Road)	Utility relocation in progress. Bridge Construct ion plans and bid document will be send to Procurement in February 2018	4/24/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	Berckman's Rd. and Berckman's Road over Rae's Creek (Bridge Replacement)	Utility relocation in progress. Bridge Construct ion plans and bid document will be send to Procurement in February 2018	4/24/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	James Brown Reconstruction	Concepts and study being finalized. RFP for PE services will be submitted to Procurement in February 2018	10/18	COMPLETED

Source: Richmond County Engineering Department

TABLE T-5 LOCAL ROAD PROJECTS

Funding Source	Project Name	2018 Status	Finish	2023 Status Update
TIA	Marks Church Road Widening from Wrightsboro Road to Wheeler Road	Phase I is 100% completed, Phase II is 5% completed. Water lines currently being relocated (Phase II).	8/21/2016	COMPLETED
TIA	Scott's Way over Rae's Creek (Bridge Replacement)	Construction activities completed. Project is under 18-month warranty Period.	4/18/2017	COMPLETED
TIA	5th Street Laney Walker Boulevard to Reynolds Street	Scope of Service is being drafted and priced. Concepts and study being finalized.	2/14/2023	CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
TIA	6th Street (Laney Walker Boulevard to Reynolds Street)	Scope of Service is being drafted and priced. Concepts and study being finalized.	5/9/2023	CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION
TIA	Telfair Street Improvements (15th Street to East Boundary Street)	Scope of Service is being drafted and priced. Concepts and study being finalized.		CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Source: Richmond County Engineering Department

Travel Characteristics

Table T-6 presents a summary of the travel characteristics of city residents in Richmond County. The table provides census data which compares the commuting choices of residents in Richmond County based on the means of transportation they use when traveling from home to work. The census data provided in Table T-6 was obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS) (see Table 6). According to the 2021 ACS 5-year estimate census, a majority (77.9%) of workers in Richmond County drive to work alone, while only a very small percentage (3.4%) rely on other means of transportation when traveling from home to work.

TABLE T-6 MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK, RICHMOND COUNTY

Means of Transportation to Work	% of Workers 2018	% of Workers 2023
Drive Alone	81%	77.9%
Carpool	10%	8.8%
Public Transportation	2%	1.4%
Walk/Bicycle	4%	2.5%
Taxicab/Motorcycle/Other	1%	3.4%
Work from Home	2%	6%

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

Congestion

Table T-7 shows the Level of Service (LOS) standards and the corresponding volume- to-capacity ratios and average speeds for urban arterial roads. Level of service is a qualitative measure used to relate the quality of traffic service. LOS is used to analyze highways by categorizing traffic flow and assigning quality levels of traffic based on performance measure like speed, density, etc.

LOS standards for a road segment are based on the ratio of the daily traffic volume to the segment's daily capacity. This volume-to-capacity ratio is an indication of the amount of delay a driver would encounter on the road segment. This level of service is based upon travel delay and is expressed as letters "A" through "F", with "A" being the highest or best travel condition and "F" being the lowest or worst condition.

TABLE T-7 LEVEL-OF-SERVICE STANDARDS FOR URBAN ARTERIALS

Level-of-Service	Volume-to-Capacity Ratio	Average Travel Speed
A	VC Ratio < 0.30	>= 35 MPH
B	0.30 <= VC Ratio < 0.50	>= 28 MPH
C	0.50 <= VC Ratio < 0.70	>= 22 MPH
D	0.70 <= VC Ratio < 0.85	>= 17 MPH
E	0.85 <= VC Ratio < 1.00	>= 13 MPH
F	VC Ratio >= 1.00	< 13 MPH

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation

The minimum level-of-service (LOS) designation that Augusta considers acceptable, in terms of planning for adequate capacity, is LOS "C". At LOS "C", the volume- to-capacity ratio is in the 0.50 to 0.70 range and average peak hour travel speeds on urban arterials are in the 22-28 miles-per-hour range. This LOS does not apply to rural roads.



Photography Credits: Destination Augusta

Table T-8 provides a list of notable street and highway system segments in Augusta-Richmond County where the LOS that ranges from at risk of congestion to seriously congested, meaning motorists are required to wait through a longer signal cycle and sometimes delays are considered unacceptable to most drivers. Most are located in the urbanized part of the county that carry some of the highest volumes of traffic.

TABLE T-8 AUGUSTA-RICHMOND COUNTY, GA CONGESTION STATUS OF IMPORTANT CORRIDORS

Road	Termini	Length (Miles)	Status
I-20	Columbia/Richmond County line and Savannah River	6.56	Marginally congested
I-520	I-20 and Savannah River	15.36	Borderline congested
Deans Bridge Road (US 1)	MLK Jr. Blvd. and Tobacco Road	7.89	Marginally congested
Doug Barnard Pkwy.	Gordon Hwy. and Tobacco Road	5.39	At risk of congestion
Fifteenth St.	Broad St. and MLK Jr. Blvd.	2.42	Seriously congested
Gordon Hwy. (US 1)	E. Robinson Ave. and Savannah River	14.78	Marginally congested
Greene St.	Thirteenth St. and Fifteenth St.	1.03	Seriously congested
Mike Padgett Hwy. (GA 56)	Lumpkin Road and Tobacco Road	3.38	Seriously congested
Peach Orchard Road (US 25)	Tubman Home Road and GA 88	8.55	Marginally congested
Riverwatch Pkwy. (GA 104)	Thirteenth St. and Pleasant Home Road	7.46	Marginally congested
Thirteenth St.	Walton Way and Savannah River	0.79	Seriously congested
Tobacco Road	Deans Bridge Road and Doug Barnard Pkwy.	8.49	Borderline congested
Walton Way	Thirteenth St. and Fifteenth St.	0.57	Seriously congested
Washington Road (GA 28)	Pleasant Home Road and John C. Calhoun Expy.	4.11	Seriously congested
Windsor Spring Road	Peach Orchard Road and GA 88	8.46	Marginally congested
Wrightsboro Road	Fifteenth St. and Highland Ave.	2.18	Seriously congested
Wrightsboro Road	Highland Ave. and Jackson Road	2.03	Seriously congested
Wrightsboro Road	Jackson Road and Barton Chapel Road	1.13	Seriously congested
Wrightsboro Road	Barton Chapel Road and W. Robinson Ave.	7.70	Borderline congested
David Road/Jackson Road/Walton Way Ext.	Washington Road and Wrightsboro Road	3.35	Seriously congested
Fifteenth St.	Reynolds St. and Broad St.	0.11	Seriously congested
Greene St.	Fifth St. and E. Boundary St.	0.69	Seriously congested
R.A. Dent Blvd.	Walton Way and Wrightsboro Road	0.96	Seriously congested
Riverwatch Pkwy. (GA 104)	Alexander Drive and I-20	0.51	Seriously congested
Walton Way	Gordon Hwy. and Thirteenth St.	1.08	Seriously congested
Walton Way	Fifteenth St. and Milledge Road	1.49	Seriously congested
Walton Way	Milledge Road and Bransford Road	1.60	Seriously congested
Walton Way	Bransford Road and Walton Way Ext.	1.93	At risk of congestion
Wheeler Road	Walton Way Ext. and Flowing Wells Road	2.39	Seriously congested

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation

Travel Time

Another measure of the condition and efficiency of the street and highway system is travel time delay based on fieldwork. Since 1995 the staff of the ARTS has conducted annual travel time surveys on major arterials in the study area, including those located in the urbanized part of Richmond County.

Since the travel time surveys started in 1995, several roads and road segments have been documented as having congestion problems. Table T-8 provides a list of road corridors in Richmond County that have consistently experienced the highest congestion in recent years, between 2017 and 2021. These include a number of principal arterials, minor arterials and collector streets. These congested corridors are in the most heavily urbanized parts of the city.

Traffic Crash Trend

The chart below displays traffic crash trends which summarizes the total number of crashes, injuries, and deaths that have occurred on roadways in Richmond County from the year 2017 to 2021. Total crashes includes all type of crashes; intersection crashes, crashes by corridor, motorized and non – motorized crashes. Many traffic crashes involved exclusively motor vehicles. Total traffic crashes are higher in year 2017 than year 2021. It is suspected that the reduction in crashes in 2020 is in large part to the COVID-19 quarantine requirements.

TABLE T-9 TOTAL NUMBER OF CRASHES

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Crashes	7.89	7.89	7.89	7.89	7.89
Crashes with Fatality	7.89	7.89	7.89	7.89	7.89
Crashes with Serious Injury	7.89	7.89	7.89	7.89	7.89

Source: GDOT/AASHTO

Assessment

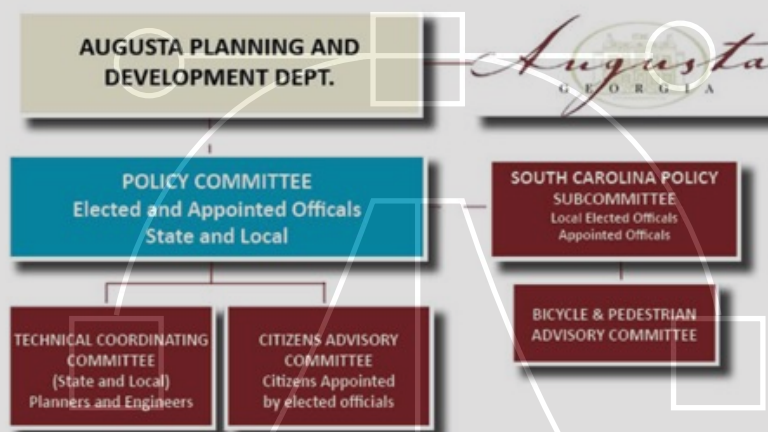
Planning and programming road improvement projects have been an important function of government at all levels for many years. In cooperation with the City Commission, the Augusta Engineering Department is responsible for programming surface transportation projects involving only local funds.

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) Program provides the City with another important tool for financing road improvements. Since 1988, SPLOST funds have paid for intersection improvements, dirt road paving projects, resurfacing, drainage, sidewalks, traffic signals, and road widening and improvement projects. SPLOST funds also paid for costs associated with larger projects involving the use of state and federal funds. Typically, the City agrees to pay for one or more of the following phases associated with a larger road widening or improvement project: engineering and design fees, utility relocation and right-of-way acquisition. Some of these projects have been completed more expeditiously because of the availability of SPLOST funds.

AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY (ARTS) METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) established for urbanized areas in Augusta – Richmond, GA, and Aiken, SC. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 established the requirement for transportation planning in urban areas throughout the country. Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) passed on December 4, 2015, (Pub. L. No. 114-94) reauthorizing federal-aid funding and regulations for the metropolitan transportation planning process. ARTS metropolitan transportation planning process is cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive (3C).

The ARTS is comprised of four (4) committees that are responsible for ensuring the 3C process is incorporated in all transportation planning elements and documents including the adoption and project implementation on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The ARTS committee structure can be found below.



In a collaborative effort the Augusta Engineering Department and other ARTS partners are required to create and adopt the TIP (4-year vision) and MTP (20-year vision) planning documents that contain current and future transportation projects. These projects include but are not limited to widening, bicycle and pedestrian, bridge, intersection, and safety transportation improvement projects. There are also projects designed to make better use of the existing road network.

RAILWAY ROAD CROSSINGS

Railroad crossings are critical points of intersection between roadways and railway tracks, and ensuring their safety is essential to prevent accidents and improve transportation efficiency. In Augusta Richmond County, there are multiple railroad crossings located on federal routes, state routes, US highways, and major county roads such as Broad Street and Wrightsboro Road. The ARTS (Augusta Regional Transportation Study) is currently updating its Regional Freight Plan.

This plan will conduct a comprehensive reassessment of air, truck, and rail movements in Augusta Richmond County, likely to ensure efficient and safe freight transportation in the region. With the last plan being completed in 2009, an update on crossings with appropriate traffic signals and arms can help regulate and control traffic flow while trains pass through, reducing the risk of collisions. Additionally, reassessing freight movement is vital for modernizing transportation infrastructure and accommodating the needs of the growing county and region.

BICYCLING & PEDESTRIAN

Improving and maintaining the quality of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Augusta-Richmond County is one of ARTS top goals and objectives. Walking and biking helps to promote physical activity in urban environment and build social interaction in communities. To promote these needs, ARTS takes priority in promoting strategies that help enable safe and accessible non-motorized transportation options for potential users throughout the county. A variety of infrastructure is available and planned in ARTS area. It includes Sidewalks, Bike lanes, Greenway, Trails, Multi-Use Path, Paved Shoulder, Shared Roadways.

The ARTS completed and adopted its Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in July 2023 which resulted in several projects to improved connectivity in Augusta Richmond County. An example of some of these projects include but are not limited to the Augusta North/South Neighborhood Greenway, Tabaco Road Bike Path and Sidewalk Improvements, and Central Ave Bike Path and Sidewalk Improvements.

VEHICLE PARKING

The Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance for Augusta-Richmond County includes minimum parking and loading area requirements for residential, commercial, office and industrial land uses, places of public assembly and health care facilities. The ordinance includes separate parking and loading area requirements for locations within and outside the central business district. The number of parking spaces required varies from one land use to another and depends on such factors as the number of dwelling units in an apartment complex, the gross floor area of a commercial or industrial building, the number of employees at a business and the number of seats in a church or theater. Regardless of location, all parking spaces must meet specified minimum dimensions and all parking facilities have to meet certain requirements for ingress and egress, grading and drainage, lighting and buffer from an adjoining residential district.

A building lawfully in use on or before February 4, 1974 is considered a nonconforming use with regard to parking. If a nonconforming building is enlarged, or the use of such building is expanded, then parking must be provided for the additional area or use of the building. The nonconforming parking requirements usually come into play when buildings located in downtown Augusta are adaptively reused.

Based on field observations and data provided by the City, it was determined that there are 6,034 public and private parking spaces within the downtown study area by year 2016. To quantify the existing parking supply in its entirety, three parking types noted are On-street striped and unstriped, Off-street surface lot, and City garage.

On-street striped parking represents available public parking along streets in commercial areas that are delineated by pavement markings for angled or parallel parking. Many of these on-street parking areas are marked with signs that limit parking to two-hour intervals or restricted to handicapped accessible parking.

On-street unstriped parking represents available public parking along streets in commercial areas that are not delineated by any pavement markings. Generally, all parking of this type is parallel. Although these areas do not have a defined parking space count, they were included in the inventory because they do contribute to the downtown study area parking supply. On-street unmarked spaces were estimated by measuring the length of unobstructed curb parking per block and dividing that length by an average parking space length of 22 feet. This calculation excludes areas adjacent to driveways, intersections, and other obstructions, such

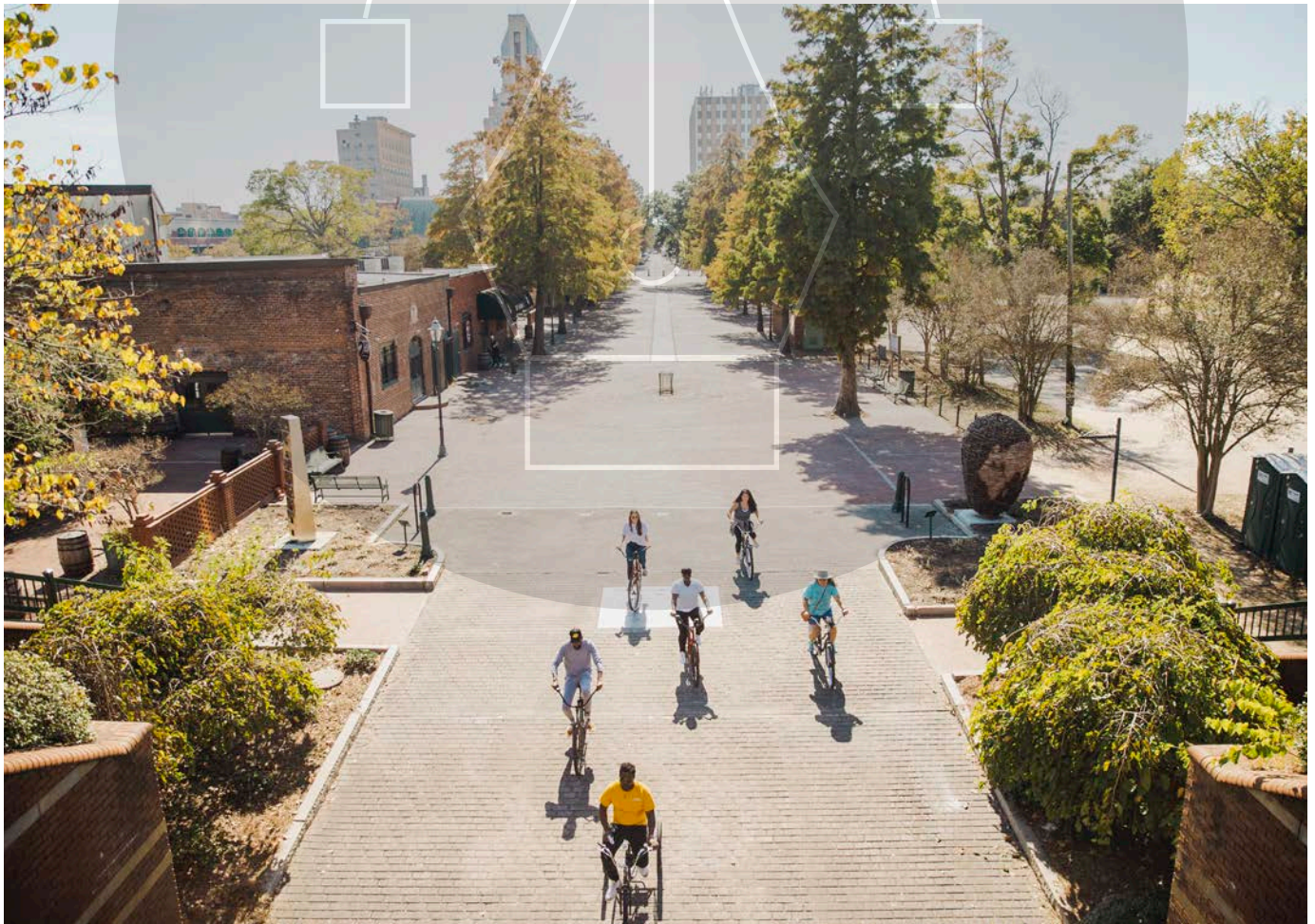
as fire hydrants. Many of the spaces of this parking type are not time restricted. The 1,544 on-street parking both striped and unstriped, represents approximately twenty-six percent (26%) of the total parking supply.

Off-Street Surface Lot

Surface lot parking represents private spaces located in off-street lots spread throughout the study area that serve a variety of uses. The majority of off-street surface lot parking is delineated by pavement markings for 90-degree parking and two-way traffic flow. Off-street surface lot parking, with designated spaces, represents 24% of the total parking supply. Of the total off-street surface parking, 337(6%) spaces are operated and maintained by the City as public parking at the Augusta Museum of History and City Hall and total privately-owned off-street spaces are 3,485. Out of that 2417 off-street lots are specific to the Museum and City Hall; these were not evaluated for occupancy or duration for this study. For study only 1,068 (18%) privately owned spaces are considered. In addition, the privately owned spaces were not considered or evaluated for duration or occupancy as part of this study since they are designated for by visitors to that specific business and are not used for general public parking.

City Garage

Currently, the City operates one (1) parking garage within the downtown study area. The garage, located on Reynolds Street, is a six-level structure with 668 (11%) parking spaces.



Photography Credits: Destination Augusta

TRANSIT

As communities in Augusta Richmond County continue to expand over time with the introduction of new housing development and economic growth, the goal of Augusta Transit (AT) has been to provide safe, reliable, and accessible transportation to the residents of Augusta Richmond County while improving its operating efficiency and service delivery effectiveness. In 2008, AT hired Wilbur Smith Association to complete its Transit Development Plan (TDP) to provide service recommendations that would help accommodate and improve service operations of AT's current transit systems. Another study that was completed is the Comprehensive Operation Analysis (COA) in 2017. This provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at the system's effectiveness and efficiency in serving a community that has seen significant change since the current transit system was initially designed.

Since the completion of these studies, AT has made great strides in accomplishing the suggested recommendations including but not limited to the partial replacement of the aging fleet (6 of 18 fixed route buses) and the construction of the new Augusta Transit Facility located on Regency Blvd. In 2020 the ARTS MPO completed its 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) with Augusta Transit as a valued stakeholder and transportation resource. A goal of the 2050 MTP was to promote strategies that improve mobility, accessibility, and connectivity for all transportation network users, including public transit and non-motorized modes. The list below are accomplishments achieved by AT in that effort since the last Comprehensive Plan:

- Construction and opening of the Augusta Transit facility in 2021.
- Low Emissions, No Emissions Federal Grant application and award of \$6,271,325 in 2023.
- Purchase of five (5) electric busses and charging stations to be received in 2025.
- Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) application and award of \$1,161,224 in 2020.
- Purchase and implementation of the following
 - 100 Acquire Bus Route Signing
 - 50 Bus Shelters
 - 20 Bus Associate Transit Enhancement (Simme Seats)
 - 25 Bus Stop ADA Access Enhancements
- Purchase of four (4) 35ft diesel buses and two (2) 30 ft diesel buses in 2023.
- Purchase of Micro transit/Dynamic-Responsive Software as a Service (SaaS) Technology
- Purchase of Fixed Route Planning, Scheduling, and Run-Cutting Software.
- Receive three loaner buses to assist with transit demand on temporary bases (12 months) in 2023.
- Purchased three (3) used buses from Florida to assist with the aging fleet in 2023.
- Applied for a 1.4 million Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant to engage a consultant to design and assess a project that will replace, recreate, and repurpose an aging bus terminus, BSTF, into a flagship intermodal, accessible, user-friendly, and clean energy supporting community asset.
- Completion of a Rider and Nonrider Survey from September 2022 through March 2023 to address the Transit needs of Richmond County residents.
- Purchase of Trip Spark Ranger Modems for AT Bus Technology Upgrades from 3G to 5G in 2021.
- Valued stakeholder in the ARTS Bike and Pedestrian Plan Update.

AIRPORT

First established as a flight training school for the United States military, Augusta Regional Airport (AGS) has become a significant travel hub for the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). A regional airport with commercial flights can have a transformative impact on a community and its surrounding region. It enhances mobility, boosts economic development, and improves the overall quality of life for residents. Augusta Regional Airport provides enhanced air connectivity, making it easier for residents and businesses to access various destinations. It opens up opportunities for direct flights to major cities and other regions, reducing the need for long drives or connecting flights.

Moreover, it provides a boost to the local economy. Commercial flights attract business travelers and tourists, stimulating economic activity in the region. Increased visitor traffic can lead to higher demand for local services, such as hotels, restaurants, and transportation, benefiting businesses and generating job opportunities. Table T-10 reflects the steady increase in air travel with exception to the hardest hit COVID-19 years.

TABLE T-10 AUGUSTA REGIONAL AIRPORT ACTIVITY REPORT

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Enplanements	292,902	310,760	339,925	160,403	261,149
Deplanements	287,853	302,757	333,706	155,985	253,454
Total Passengers	580,755	613,517	673,631	316,388	514,603
Source: Augusta Regional Airport Statistics Archives					

However, it is essential for local stakeholders and authorities to plan and manage airport operations carefully to maximize the benefits while addressing potential challenges related to noise, environmental impact, and infrastructure development. Over the last five years, AGS has completed projects that focus on improving its amenities, modernization, capacity enhancement, and business development, as shown in Table T-11. Fuel Farm Improvements, Hanger Taxi Lane and Ramp construction, and renovations to older parking infrastructure are projects that are scheduled for completion in the future.

TABLE T-II: AUGUSTA REGIONAL AIRPORT PROJECT COMPLETION SCHEDULE 2018-2023

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	EST. COMPLETION YEAR	PRIMARY FUNDING SOURCE
Parking Revenue Control Upgrades Phase 1	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Terrazzo Flooring Phase 1	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Ground Transportation Monitoring System	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
PA System Upgrades	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Restroom Renovation	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Passenger Boarding Bridges	Completed	Completed	PFC
Hangar One Renovations	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Frequent Flyer Lounge	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
FIDS Upgrades	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Parking Toll Plaza Canopies	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Military Suite Renovations	Completed	Completed	Airport Revenues
Rental Car Desk Area	Completed	Completed	CFC
Baggage Claim Carousel	Completed	2021	CARES
AGS Fuel Farm Improvement	Upgrades to current Fuel Farm	2022	Airport Revenues
Hangar Taxi Lane & Ramp	Create taxi way and ramp to 17-35	Out to Bid	CARES
Gates 3 & 4 Rehabilitation	Extend Commercial Terminal gates 3 & 4	2023	BIL
Consolidated rental car maintenance facility	Build of off-site rental car facility	2023	CFC
STEM Building	Renovation of building	2023	CARES
Parking Lot Rehabilitation	Rehab of current lots	2023-2024	Airport Revenues

The definitions below explain the primary funding sources that were allocated to the completed and pending projects listed above.

Airport Revenues – Revenues generated through various Airport operations (e.g., parking, fuel sales, leases, etc.).

Airport Improvement Program (AIP) – Federal Airport Grant Program that collects and disseminates funds to airports for approved projects. Commercial service airports receive a fixed annual apportionment of AIP based on its number of enplanements. Airports may also compete for additional annual discretionary funding.

Customer Facility Charge (CFC) – User fees imposed on rental cars used for the development or upgrade of rental car and/or approved related landside facilities.

Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) – Locally imposed Airport user fees collected from enplaning passengers used for the purpose of funding FAA approved projects.

Other – Airports also utilize additional funding sources including other federal and state aid programs and various 3rd party financing (e.g., bonds, loans, etc.)





SECTION THREE

SECTION III:

HOW DO WE GET THERE

The purpose of a comprehensive plan for local governments is to provide a long-term vision and framework for guiding the growth, development, and improvement of a community or municipality. It is a strategic document that outlines the community's goals, aspirations, and desired outcomes for the future, typically covering a planning horizon of 10 to 20 years. The comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint for decision-making and provides a coordinated approach to address various aspects of community development. Incorporating a community work program is essential to the plan. A Community Work Program for comprehensive planning purposes involves identifying and implementing strategies that enable the community to achieve its goals effectively. By reviewing the community needs and opportunities Augusta-Richmond County can align some of the activities that move the community towards achieving the most desirable quality of life in the CSRA.

It is imperative to remember that the planning horizon is based on 20 years because there are fiscal restraints that will not allow for everything to be completed at one time. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation will be crucial to ensure the success and adaptability of the Community Work Program over the 20-year planning horizon. The remainder of this section identifies projects that are in the pipeline over the next few years in addition to some of the funding and staffing needs.



HOW DO WE GET THERE:

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

GOAL 1 - CAPITALIZE ON AUGUSTA'S EXISTING ASSETS

Work Program Projects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Augusta Canal Improvements	x		x			Engineering	\$1.5M	SPLOST 7
Augusta Canal - implement projects funded in part with SPLOST VI	x		x	x	x	Augusta Canal Authority	\$4.3M	Canal Authority, SPLOST VI, grants
Modernized James Brown Arena			x	x		Coliseum Authority	\$25M	SPLOST 8

GOAL 2 - ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE

Work Program Projects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Extend the access road named Valencia Way, located in the Augusta Corporate Park	x	x				County Development Authority	\$3.3M	Sales Tax Funds
Augusta Public Transit Operations and Maintenance	x		x	x	x	City, APT	\$750,000 annually	TSPLOST
Implement enhancement projects on gateways into the city	x	x		x		Augusta Conventions and Visitors Bureau	\$1.1M	Private Sector, SPLOST Transportation Enhancement Grant, City Funds
Attract new missions/partnerships to Fort Gordon	x	x	x	x	x	Fort Gordon, Chamber, City, CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon	Staff Time	City, CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon, Private Sector, Others
Implement plan for redevelopment of former Regency Mall site	x	x	x			City, Non-profit, Private Developers	N/A	City, Non-Profit
Implementation of Intelligent Transportation System	x		x			Engineering	\$5.5M	TSPLOST B1
Implement Augusta Regional Collaboration Program	x		x			City, Consultant, GRU	Unknown	City, Private Sector Grants
Transit Bus Purchase		x	x	x		Transit	\$420,000	SPLOST 7
New Transit Bus Shelters		x	x	x		Transit	\$650,000	SPLOST 7
Sports Facility Field and Court Improvements	x		x	x	x	Recreation and Parks	\$1.75M	SPLOST 7
Augusta Canal Improvements			x	x		Canal Authority	\$1.5M	SPLOST 7
Augusta Public Transit - design and construct a new maintenance garage and administrative offices	x		x	x	x	Transit	\$18M	SPLOST 7/ Grants

Extend the access road named Valencia Way, located in the Augusta Corporate Park	x	x	x	x	x	City, Non-Profits, Private Developers	\$500,000	Bonds, Tax Credits, Private, City
Augusta Public Transit Operations and Maintenance	x	x	x			City, CHDOs, Other Non-profits, Private Developers	\$1.8M	HUD
Implement enhancement projects on gateways into the city	x	x				Housing and Community Development	\$27-\$30M	Tax Credits, Private Sector
Attract new missions/partnerships to Fort Gordon	x	x	x	x	x	Augusta Housing Authority (AHA)	\$3.75M	HUD
Implement plan for redevelopment of former Regency Mall site				x		Augusta Regional Airport	1.43M	AGS Discretionary, State, Federal, City
Implementation of Intelligent Transportation System		x	x	x	x	City Commission, Planning Commission, APDD	Staff Time	City
Implement Augusta Regional Collaboration Program	x					Housing and Community Development	\$600,000	HUD, Program Income
Transit Bus Purchase	x					Augusta Environmental Services Department	\$6-8M	Enterprise Fund
New Transit Bus Shelters	x	x	x	x	x	Central Savannah River Land Tract, City, APDD	Yearly Contract with CSRLT	State, City, Private Sector

GOAL 3 - REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN

Work Program Projects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Continue code enforcement program in the inner-city target area		x	x	x	x	Planning and Development	Staff Time	CITY
Broad Street Improvements (Washington Road to Sand Bar Ferry Road)	x	x	x			Engineering	\$25M	TIA
James Brown Reconstruction	x	x	x			Engineering	\$6.1M	TIA
Demolish LEC at 401 Walton Way	x					Public Facilities	\$1.5M	SPLOST 7
SR 4/15th Street Widening - Milledgeville Rd to Government Rd	x	x				GDOT	\$21.4M	TIA
Greene Street Improvements from 13th St to E. Boundary Rd	x					Engineering	\$9.8M	TIA
Implement downtown revitalization projects as outlined in the Joint Master Plan for Augusta, GA and North Augusta, SC Regional Urban Core	x	x	x	x	x	City, DDA, AT, Private	Staff Time	City, DDA, AT, Private
5th St bridge - Bridge repair and restoration	x		x			Engineering	\$13M	TSPLOST B2 & SPLOST 8
Blight Mitigation	x	x	x	x	x	Economic Development	\$4M	SPLOST 8
SR 4/15th St pedestrian improvements - Calhoun Expy to Central Ave	x	x				Engineering	\$6.1M	TSPLOST Band 2
SR 4/15th St widening from Government St to Milledgeville Rd	x	x				GDOT	ROW(\$16M) Road CST (\$8M)	FHWA, GDOT, TSPLOST
James Brown Blvd reconstruction - Reynolds to Wrightsboro Rd	x	x				Engineering	\$6.9M	TSPLOST Band 2
Demolish 120 dilapidated housing units	x	x				Planning and Development	\$600,000	City General Fund
James Brown Blvd streetscape enhancement project - Reynolds to Adams St	x	x				GDOT, City, DDA	\$812,500	FHWA, City

GOAL 4 - BE EXCELLENT FINANCIAL STEWARDS


Work Program Projects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Acquire tax delinquent and abandoned properties through the Augusta Land Bank Authority for use in constructing affordable housing	x	x	x	x	x	Land Bank Authority	\$150,000	CDBG, City
Existing Facilities Upgrade		x	x			Public Facilities	\$19M	SPLOST 8
Animal Control Upgrades	x		x			Public Facilities	\$500,000	SPLOST 8
New Records Retention Center	x	x				Public Facilities	\$2,500,000	SPLOST 7
Complete water and sewer projects funded by bonds	x	x	x	x	x	AUD	\$40.0M	City, Bondholders
Rehabilitate historic structures and landmark buildings in the Laney-Walker and Bethlehem neighborhoods	x					Historic Augusta, Inc., Private Developers	\$2.0M	Private Funds, Historic Preservation Tax Credits
Convert or replace the city's gas-powered vehicle fleet with alternative fuel vehicles	x					Augusta Environmental Services Department	Unknown	Revenue from sale of CNG fuel to waste haulers
Provide economic incentives to increase household waste recycling	x					Augusta Environmental Services Department	\$1.8M	Department budget
Evaluate the feasibility and merits of establishing mixed-use districts, conservation districts or other types of overlay zones in various parts of the city	x					Neighborhood Associations, Planning Commission, APDD, Other Stakeholders	Staff Time	City
Upgrade existing parks included on SPLOST Phase V project list			x	x	x	Parks and Rec Department	\$11M	SPLOST 8
Update the Airport Zoning Ordinance	x					Augusta Regional Airport	\$200,000	Staff Time

GOAL 5 - ATTRACT AND RETAIN FAMILIES AND HOMEOWNERS

Work Program Projects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Design and construct a performing arts center	x					City, Private Sector, Others	\$30.7M + land cost	Public/Private
Attract industry to the Augusta Corporate Park			x			County Development Authority, City	Staff Time + \$10,000,000	County Development Auth., Chamber, City, SPLOST 8
Rehabilitate 95 housing units for low income homeowners	x	x	x	x	x	Housing and Community Development	\$2.7M	HUD, Program Income
Install works of art at gateways designated by the Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau	x	x	x			Greater Augusta Arts Council, ACVB	\$3,000 - \$20,000 per work of art	Private Sector, SPLOST, City, Funds, Grants
Complete public school construction, renovation and expansion projects as listed in the RCBOE Phase IV Master Plan	x	x	x	x	x	RCBOE	\$146.2M	E-SPLOST, Phase IV
Build new parks on existing property in communities		x	x	x	x		TBD	TBD
Provide down payment assistance to 305 first-time homebuyers	x	x				Housing and Community Development	\$1.8M	HUD

GOAL 6 - INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Work Program Projects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Responsible Party	Cost Estimate	Fund Source
Marvin Griffin Rd widening from Mike Padgett Hwy to Doug Bernard Pkwy	x					Engineering	\$6M	SPLOST, Phases II/III
Windsor Spring Rd Phase IV - Complete ROW acquisition and widening from Willis Foreman Rd to Tobacco Rd	x					GDOT, Augusta Engineering	ROW: \$9,970,630; Road CST: \$22,954,457	FHWA, GDOT, SPLOST, Phases III/IV, TSPLOST, Band 1
Windsor Spring Rd Phase V - Complete ROW acquisition and widening from W.F. Rd to SR 88 in Hephzibah	x					GDOT, Augusta Engineering	Road ROW: \$6,990,000; Road CST: \$12,827,273	RHWA, GDOT, SPLOST Phases III/IV
Rocky Creek Flood Hazard Mitigation	x	x				Engineering	\$14M	SPLOST 7
Grading and Drainage (Stormwater)	x	x	x	x	x	Engineering	\$25M	SPLOST 7
Market Creation Project - Dyess Park	x	x	x			Housing and Community Development	\$50M	Public/Private
Forest Hills Drainage Improvements and Flood Reduction (Concept and Design)	x					Engineering	\$400,000	SPLOST 7
Hyde Park Street and Drainage Improvements and Wilkerson Gardens	x	x				Engineering	\$6M	SPLOST 7
Butler Creek Privet Removal Program	x	x				CSRLT, City	\$150,000	US Fish and Wildlife
Continue to enforce the applicable requirements of the Part V Environmental Ordinances	x	x	x	x	x	City, APDD	Staff Time	City
Continue the permitting and enforcement provisions of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance	x	x	x	x	x	City, APDD	Staff Time	City
Continue the permitting and enforcement provisions of the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance	x	x	x	x	x	Engineering, Planning	Staff Time	City
Vertiport/Electric Aircraft Hangar Development		x				Augusta Regional Airport	\$1.25M	AGS
Continue the permitting and enforcement provisions of the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance	x	x	x	x	x	AUD, Augusta WR	Staff Time	State, City, Private, NP
Implement emission reduction strategies to demonstrate compliance with federal air quality standards	x	x	x	x	x	City	Staff Time	City
Support implementation of the Phinizy Swamp Park Master Plan (buildings, education, research, land management)	x	x				SNSA, City, School System	\$500,000	City, Grants, Donations
Augusta-Richmond County Flood Reduction Program (Flood Buyout Program)	x	x				City	Staff Time	City
Highland Avenue Bridge repair and restoration over CSX RR	x	x	x			Engineering	2M	TIA
Conduct more detailed studies of character areas, neighborhoods, activity centers or other areas as necessary	x	x	x	x	x	Neighborhood Associations, Planning Commission, APDD, Other Stakeholders	Staff Time	City



Berckmans Rd realignment and widening from Wheeler to Washington Rd	x					Engineering	\$20.4M	TSPLOST B2
Continue the implementation of walking trails and sidewalks to improve connectivity		x				Engineering	\$500,000	Engineering, GDOT, ARTS MPO
Design and construction of parking infrastructure and bus shelters					x	Augusta Regional Airport	\$150,000	AGS
Update zoning map to reflect Community Agenda, existing land use and other relevant considerations	x					City Commission, Planning Commission, APDD	Staff Time	City
Update local zoning and development ordinances as necessary to achieve quality growth	x					City Commission, Planning Commission, APDD	Staff Time	City
Continue cooperation with adjacent communities and Fort Gordon regarding land use and re-zoning action and other initiatives	x					City, Fort Gordon, adjacent communities	Staff Time	City, Fort Gordon
Rehabilitate infrastructure at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park	x					SNSA, City	\$500,000	City, Donations, Grants
Marks Church Rd widening from Wrightsboro to Wheeler Rd	x					Augusta Engineering	\$8.3M	TSPLOST Band 1
ADA Curb Cut/Sidewalk Improvement		x	x	x		Engineering	\$1M	SPLOST 8



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APPENDICES

APPENDICES:

PUBLIC OUTREACH

PARTICIPATION TIMELINE

Community Assessment Public Meetings:

5/4/2023	Municipal Building (Linda Beazley Room)
5/18/2023	Bernie Ward Community Center
6/1/2023	Sandhills Community Center
6/14/2023	Robert Howard Community Center
6/15/2023	Warren Road Community Center

Augusta Commission

7/5/2023 Presentation to Augusta Commission

Community Agenda Public Meeting

7/19/2023 Municipal Building (Linda Beazley Room)

PUBLIC MEETING FLYERS AND PHOTOS



Thursday,
May 4, 2023
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

**Comprehensive Plan
Kick-Off Meeting** • Community
• Vision

Augusta Municipal Building
535 Telfair St
Augusta, GA 30901

Linda Beazley Room
(1st floor)



Survey

For More Information: Augusta Planning & Development
envision@augustaga.gov (706)821-1131





Envision Augusta

**Tell us how we can give you
a better Augusta!**

This is your chance to let local government know the needs of your community and businesses and how they can continue to flourish in the years to come.

To view the Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan go to:
<https://www.augustaga.gov> or scan the QR code:



For more information: Augusta Planning & Development
(706)821-1131

**Thursday
May 18, 2023
6pm-8pm**

Bernie Ward
Community Center
1941 Lumpkin Road
Augusta, GA 30906



Envision Augusta

Let your voice be heard!

Help us understand the needs of your community so we can compose a city plan that will result in growth and sustainability for the years to come.

To view the Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan go to:
<https://www.augustaga.gov> or scan the QR code:



For more information: Augusta Planning & Development
(706)821-1131

**Thursday, June 1, 2023
6pm-8pm**

Sand Hills Community Center
2540 Wheeler Rd
Augusta, GA 30904



Envision Augusta

Augusta
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

**Wednesday, June 14, 2023
6pm-8pm**

**Robert Howard
Community Center
103 Diamond Lakes Way
Hephzibah, GA 30815**

Join Us!

as we gather to discuss how we can improve your community for future growth and sustainability. Together we can help build an ideal community, not just for now, but for future generations as well.

To view the Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan go to: <https://www.augustaga.gov> or scan the QR code:



For more information:

Augusta Planning & Development
(706)821-1131



Envision Augusta

Augusta
GEORGIA
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
**Thursday, June 15, 2023
6pm-8pm**
Warren Road
Community Center
300 Warren Rd
Augusta, GA 30907

We want to hear from you!

Tell us what changes you would make to your community to keep it thriving into the future. What does the home of your future generations look like?

To view the Augusta-Richmond County Comprehensive Plan Go to: <https://www.augustaga.gov> or scan the QR code:




For more information:

Augusta Planning & Development
(706)821-1131

CHARETTES

What the Infrastructure?!

For this activity, residents learned about the different types of infrastructure in Augusta-Richmond County. They also filled out blank novelty checks for \$1,000,000 to let us know which type of infrastructure they would spend it on.




What the Infrastructure?!

An infrastructure project focuses on the improvement and upkeep of services, facilities and systems already in place throughout the county.

Place your check(s) by the area(s) you believe need the most investment.

Nine (9) Types of Hard Infrastructure

- Aviation (Airport)
- Telecommunications (Internet access, cellphone towers, telephone wires and cables)
- Bridges (Maintenance)
- Power and Energy (Power grids, Nuclear plants, renewable energy, fossil fuel based plants)
- Railways (Trains, tracks, rail yards)
- Roadways (Condition of roads, Bus transit)
- Water (Clean water supply and removal of storm water)
- Waste management
- Recreation Facilities



Fake Check Company
123 Sesame St
Fake City, USA 12345

Augusta
GEORGIA
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

1234

5/4/2023

Pay to the
order of

One million and 0/100

\$1,000,000.00

Augusta Planning and
Development
535 Telfair St
Augusta, GA 30901

Augusta Planning and Development

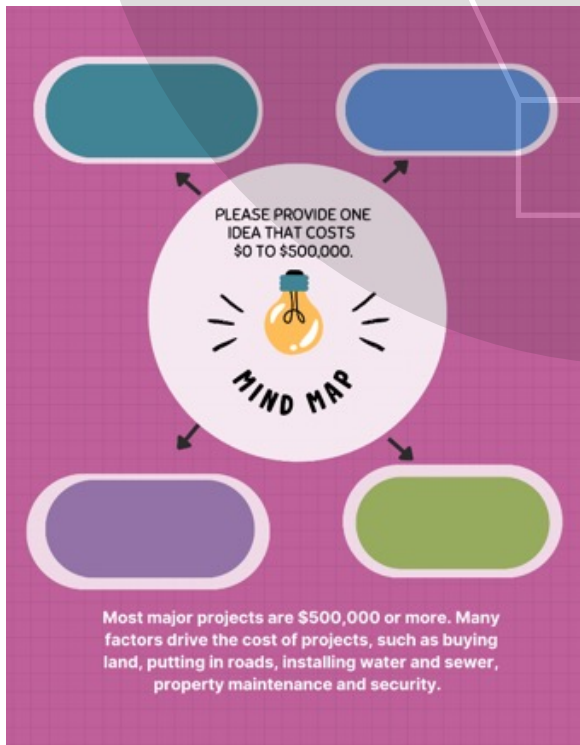
Did You Know?

For this activity, residents learned the different costs of everyday development items that are requested most by the city.



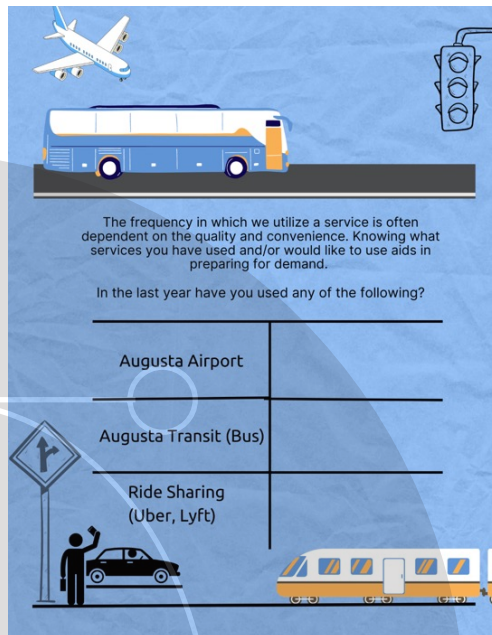
Mind Map

For this activity, residents take the knowledge they learned in the ‘Did You Know?’ activity to let us know what ideas they have for the city that would cost up to \$500,000.



Transportation Frequency

For this activity, residents let us know what method of transportation they predominantly used in the last year.



Love it or List it

For this activity, residents let us know what things they love about Augusta-Richmond County as well as something(s) they would like to change or improve.



Grocery Accessibility

For this activity, residents placed a sticker on the board to let us know how far they must travel to access a healthy grocery store.



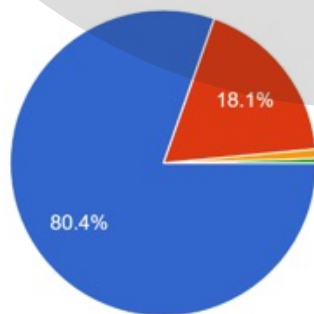
Envision Augusta Comprehensive Plan Update Survey Link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf61NzdrKyZjLeUFGVQewsWjz7-ZInL6SGxWwqh4CsPxDE83w/viewform?usp=sf_link

Survey Analytics: (not the full analysis, this is from current 204 submissions)

1. Do you currently live in Augusta-Richmond County?

204 responses



- Yes
- No- If no, skip question 2.
- No
- No If no, skip question 2.

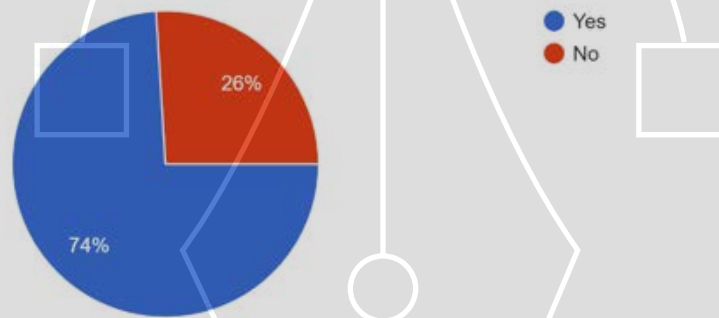
2. Which of the following best describes where you live?

171 responses



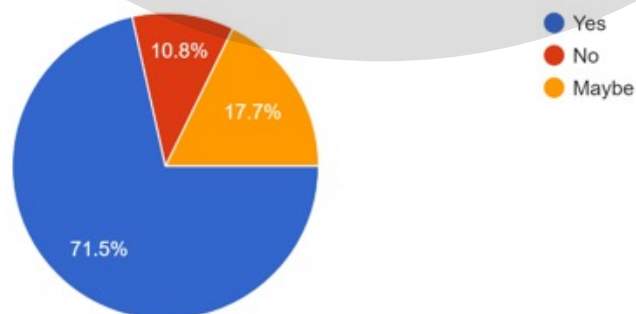
3. Do you work in Augusta-Richmond County?

204 responses



4. Do you see yourself living or working in Augusta-Richmond County in the next 5-10 years?

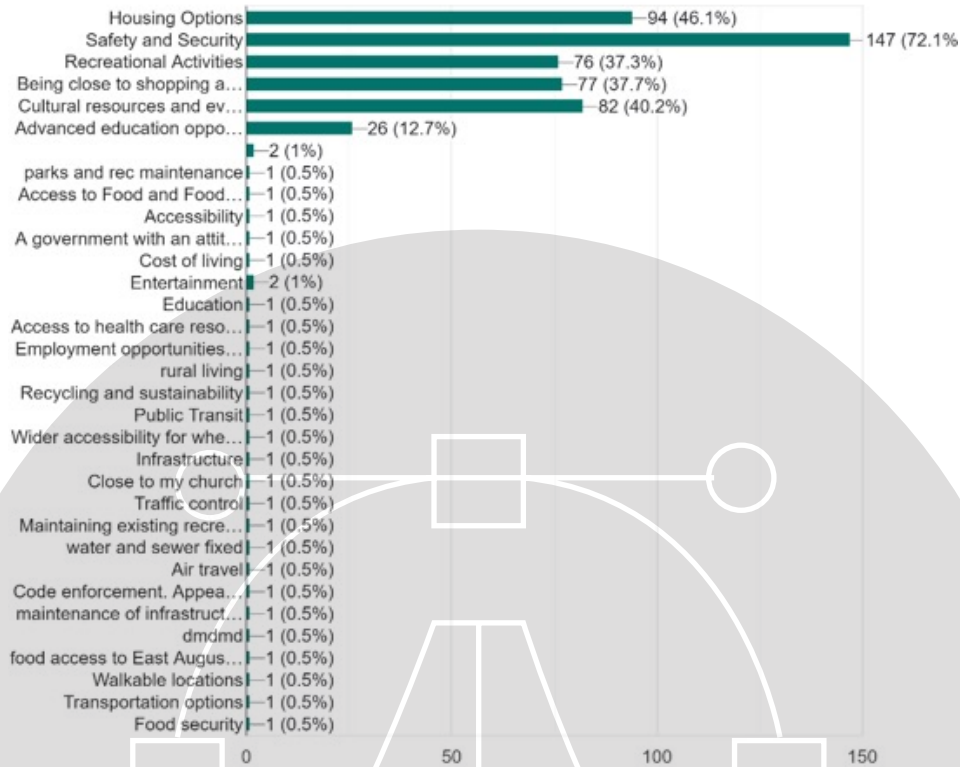
186 responses



5. What are the (3) three most important factors for quality of life in Augusta-Richmond County?

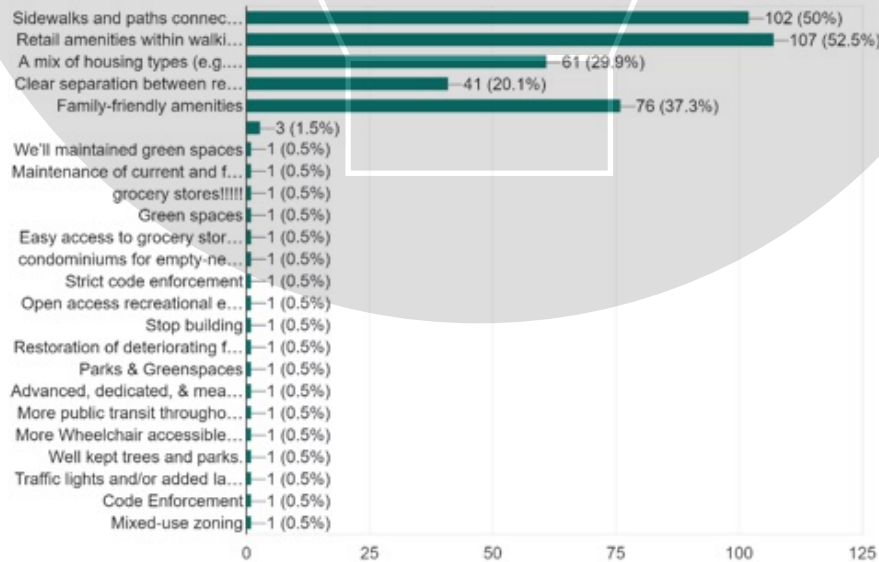
(Select 3)

204 responses



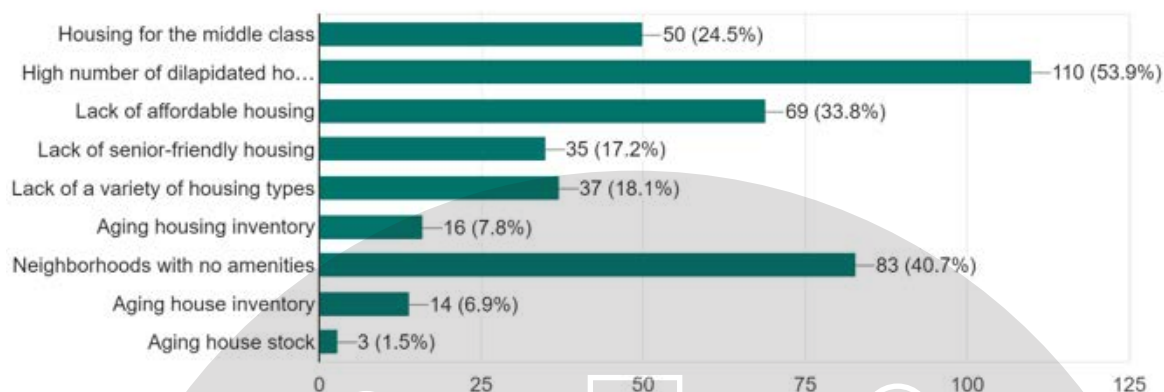
6. What characteristics should be emphasized in future residential developments? (Select 2)

204 responses



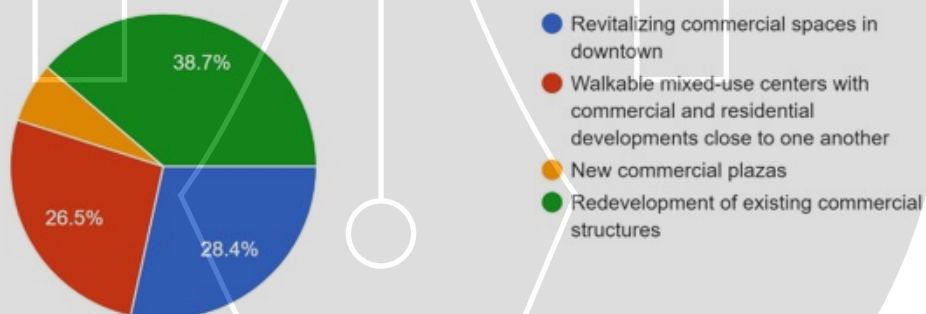
7. Which of the following, if any, are housing issues in Augusta-Richmond County? (Please select 2)

204 responses



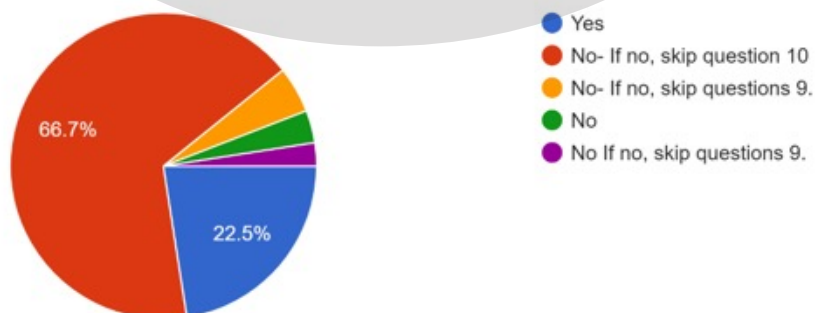
8. When planning for future commercial and retail developments, what type of development should be emphasized?

204 responses



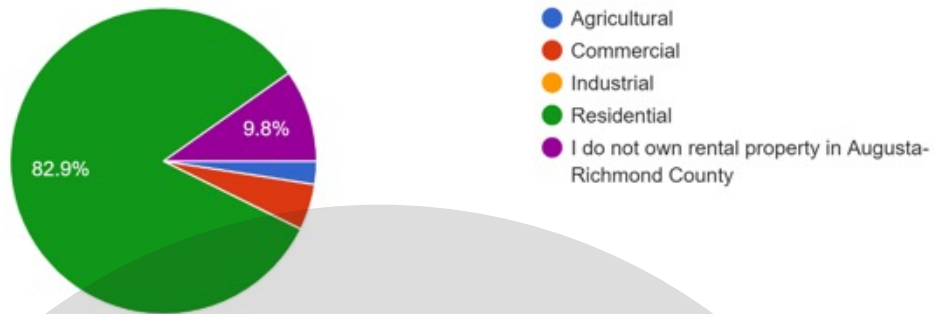
9. Do you own rental property in Augusta-Richmond County?

204 responses



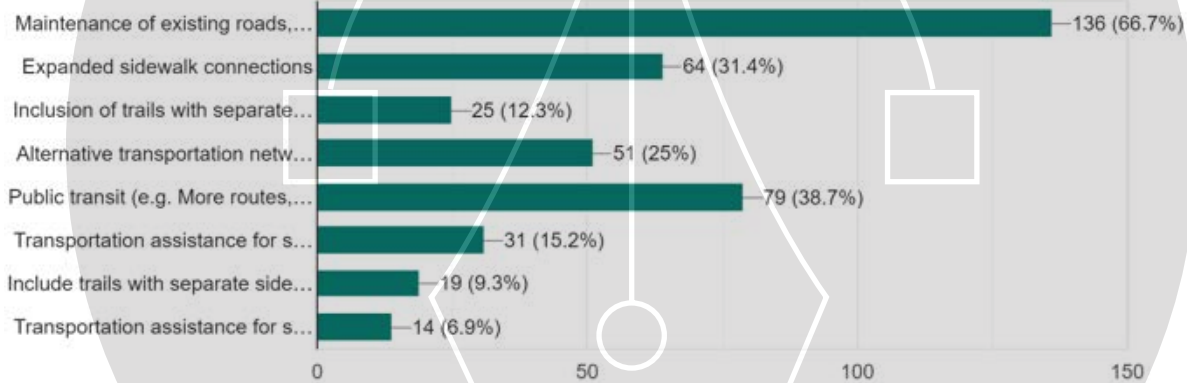
10. Is your Augusta-Richmond County rental property:

82 responses



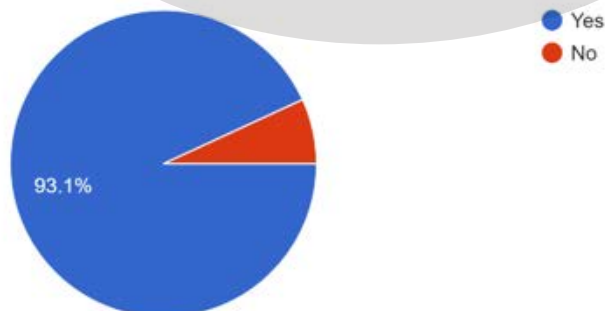
11. Which of the following transportation improvements are most needed in Augusta-Richmond County?

204 responses



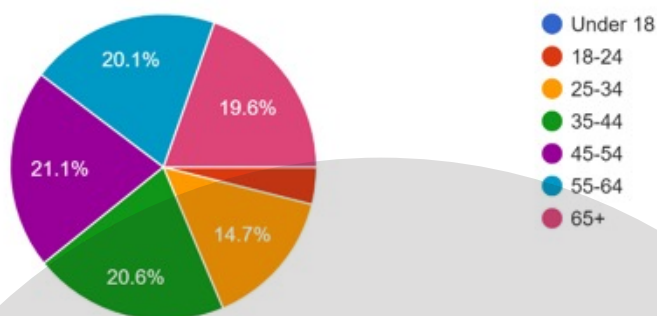
12. Do you have reliable internet service at home?

204 responses



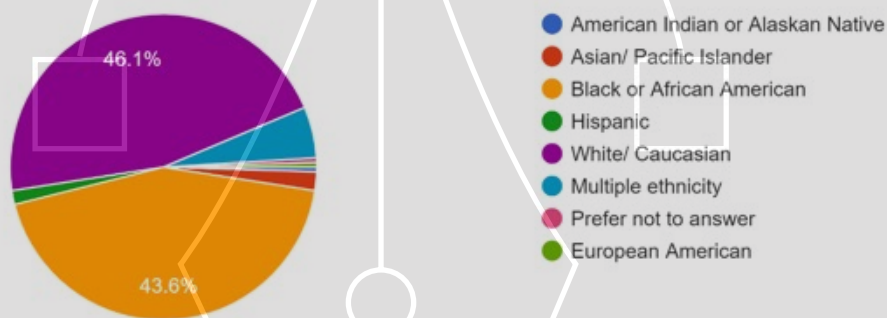
13. What is your age?

204 responses



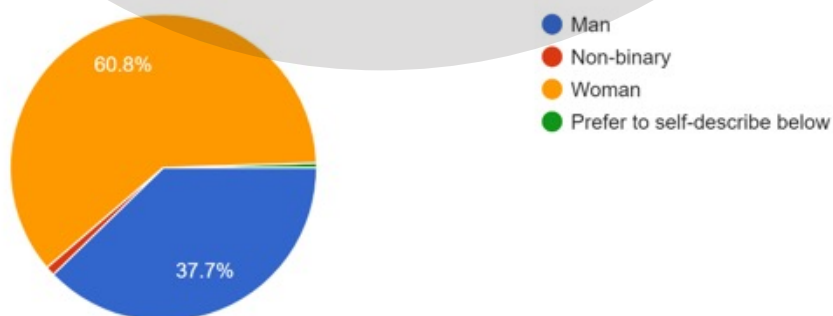
14. Which race/ ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

204 responses

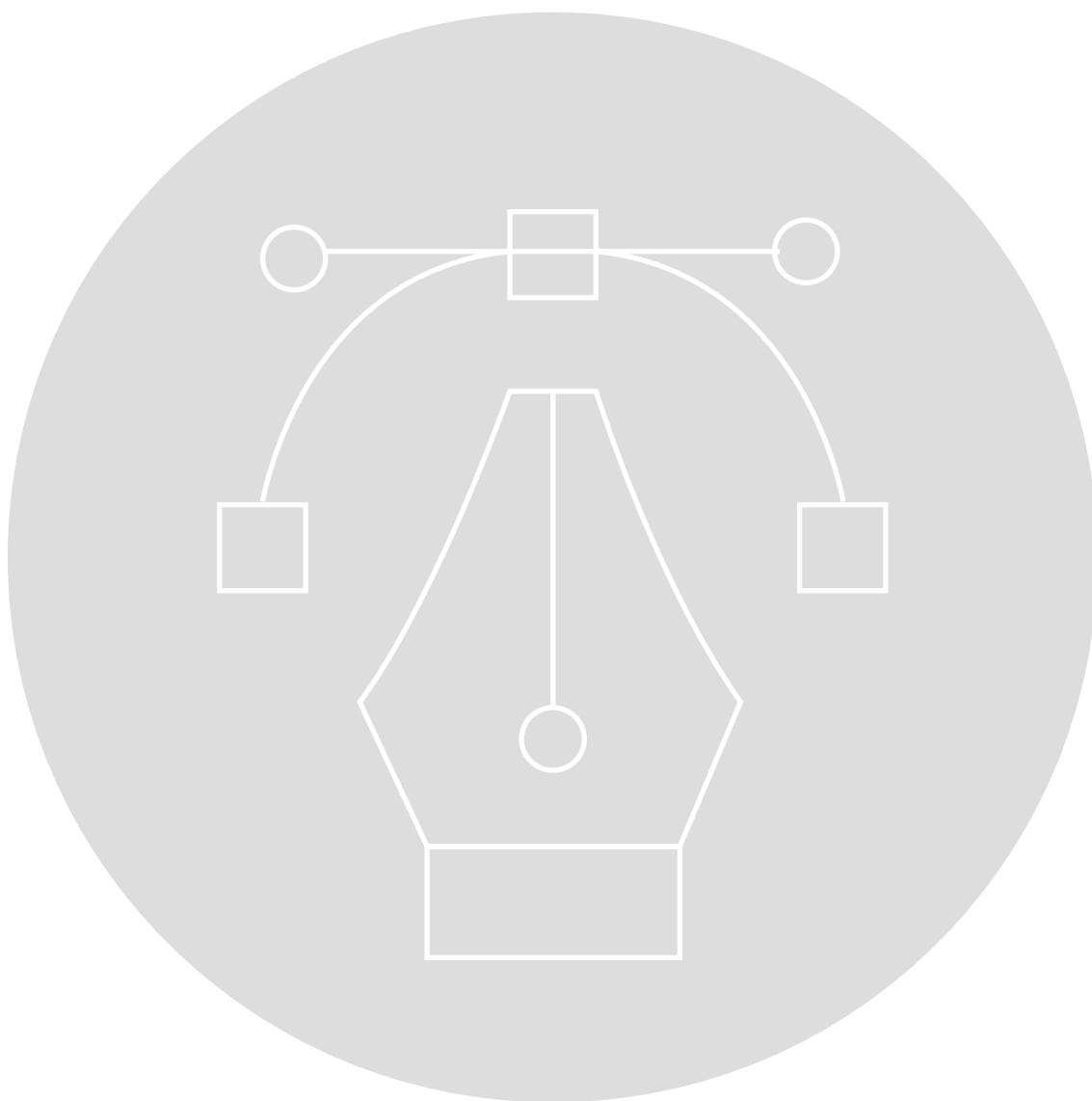


15. Gender: How do you identify?

204 responses



EPA REPORT



TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Advance Program*

AUTHOR(S): Augusta Planning and Development Department

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this technical memo is to provide the staff of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the general public with a continuing review of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Advance Program and a status update regarding the action steps taken by the ARTS MPO to continue its participation in local and regional air quality initiatives within the Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC Metro area.

BACKGROUND:

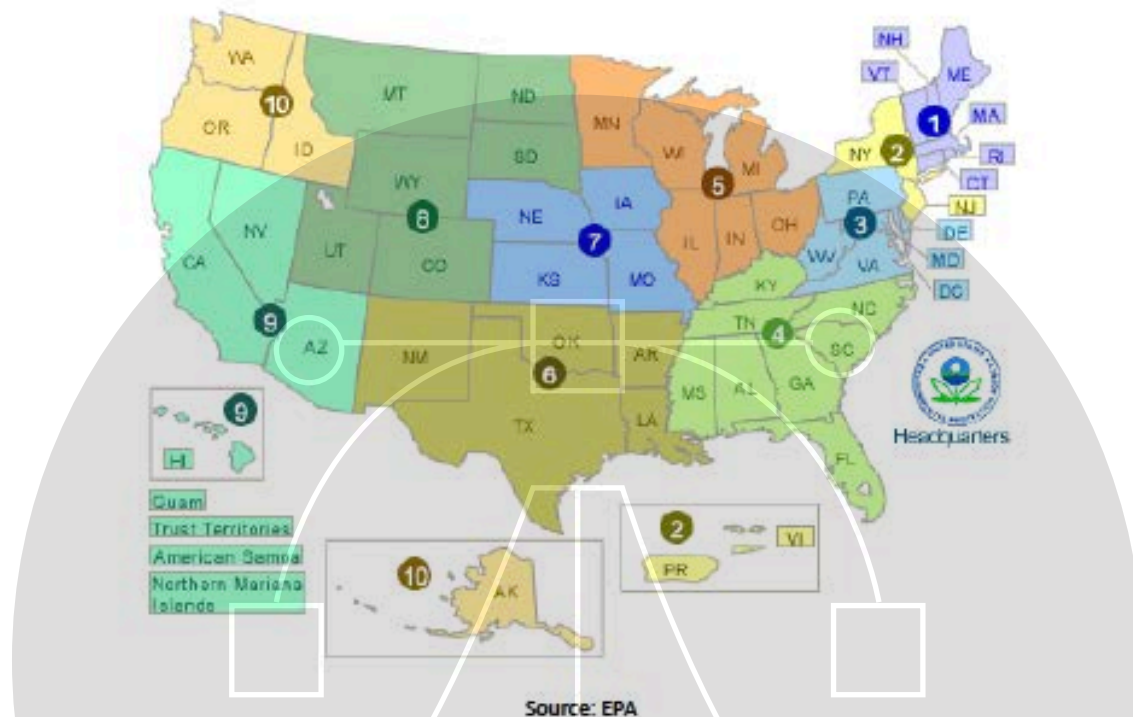
Brief History of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The United States (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is an organization that serves to protect human health and the environment for cities across America. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established on July 9, 1970, by the U.S. Federal Government, and first began its operation on December 2, 1970. According to the U.S. EPA, the actions that led to the creation of its organization were due to the wake of elevated concerns about environmental pollution across the United States during the 1960s.

Since the inception of the EPA in the 1970s, the agency has continued working to ensure that Americans live in the best possible communities by establishing environmental policies that help protect human health and the environment from environmental risks. To accomplish this mission, the EPA develops and enforces environmental regulations of states and tribes in the U.S. must follow in order to meet environmental guidelines. In addition, the EPA also provides grant programs to state, non-profits, and educational institutions while studying environmental issues and sponsoring partnerships. Over the years, the EPA has introduced additional federal programs, such as the Advance Program, in order to assist states, tribes, and local governments that want to take proactive steps to promote local actions to reduce air pollution.

Currently, the EPA has over thirteen headquarter offices in the United States, as well as numerous regional offices. According to the EPA, each of its office headquarters and regional offices is responsible for the execution of EPA programs within the states and territories they oversee. Figure 1, below, provides a map that highlights the location of all ten regional offices of the EPA.

Figure 1: Location of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Offices in the U.S



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA) ADVANCE PROGRAM:

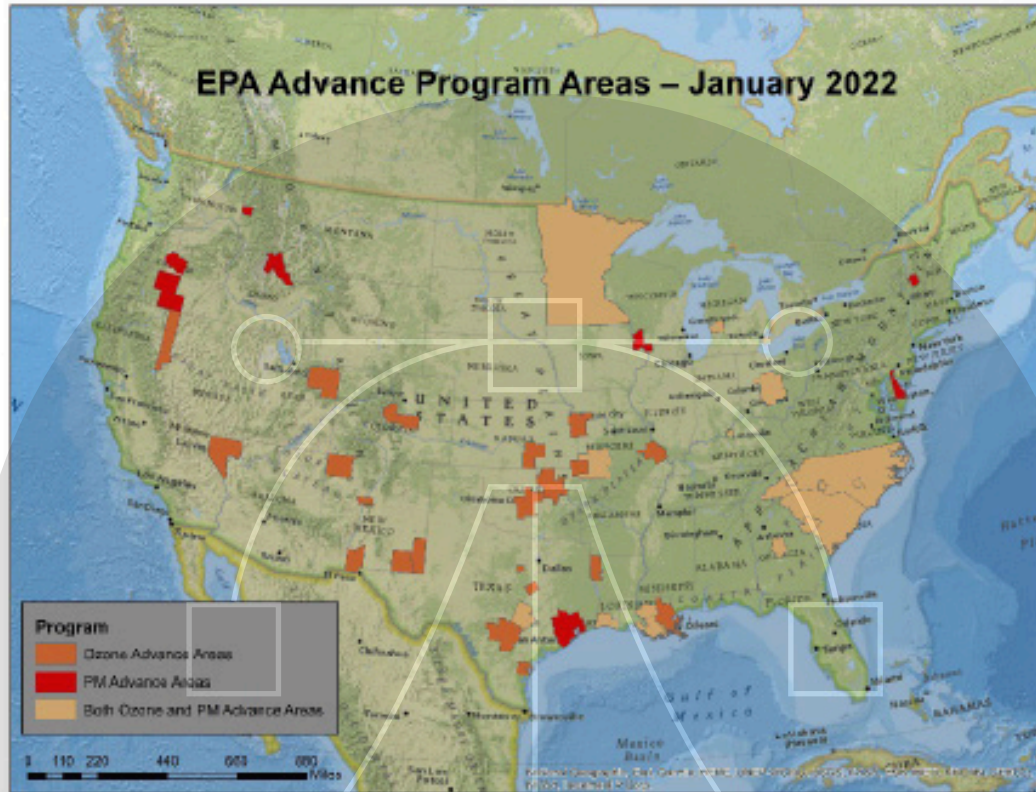
What is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Advance Program and What purpose does it serve for States, Tribes, and Local Governments in the U.S.

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Advance Program is one of many programs introduced by the EPA in order to support states, tribes, and local governments in the U.S. that want to take proactive steps to keep their air clean by promoting local actions to reduce ozone and /or fine particle pollution. The purpose of the Advance program is to promote local air quality incentives across cities in the U.S. that are within areas classified as attainment (local areas that have met the EPA standards of air quality) in order to ensure that those environments continue to maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

Which cities or state territories across the U.S. are currently participating in the EPA Advance Program

According to the EPA, there are currently 39 areas in the U.S., which are actively participating in the EPA Advance Program. [Figure 2](#), below, provides a map that displays the locations of the participating areas throughout the U.S. [Table 1](#), on page 4, provides a list of all EPA Advance Program Participants throughout the U.S. In 2021, the ARTS MPO became a participant in the EPA Advance Program.

Figure 2: EPA Advance Program Areas- 2022



Source: EPA 2022

Table 1: EPA Advance Program Participants

State	City	Type of Advance Area
Delaware	Entire State	PM Advance
Georgia	City of Augusta	Ozone and PM Advance
Georgia	Middle Georgia (Macon)	Ozone and PM Advance
Idaho	St. Maries	Ozone Advance
Idaho	Salmon, Idaho	PM Advance
Iowa	Dubuque, Iowa	PM Advance
Kentucky	Jefferson County (Louisville)	Ozone and PM Advance
Louisiana	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Ozone and PM Advance
Louisiana	New Orleans, Louisiana	Ozone Advance
Louisiana	Shreveport, Louisiana	Ozone Advance
Louisiana	South Central (Houma-Thibodaux)	Ozone and PM Advance
Louisiana	Southwest (Lake Charles)	Ozone and PM Advance
Minnesota	Entire State	Ozone and PM Advance
Missouri	Four State Region (broader Joplin area MO/KS/OK)	Ozone Advance
Missouri	Kansas City MO/KS	Ozone Advance
Missouri	Southeast Missouri	Ozone Advance
Nevada	Clark County	Ozone Advance
Nevada	Washoe County	Ozone Advance
New Mexico	Dona Ana County (partial)	Ozone Advance
New Mexico	Eddy County	Ozone Advance
New Mexico	Lea County	Ozone Advance
New Mexico	San Juan County	Ozone Advance
North Carolina	Cumberland County	Ozone Advance
North Carolina	Mecklenburg County	Ozone Advance
North Carolina	Entire State	Ozone and PM Advance
Ohio	Columbus	Ozone and PM Advance
Ohio	Dayton	Ozone Advance
Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Ozone Advance
Oklahoma	Tulsa	Ozone Advance
Oregon	Lakeview	PM Advance
Oregon	Prineville	PM Advance
South Carolina	Catawba Indian Nation	Ozone and PM Advance
South Carolina	Entire State	Ozone and PM Advance
Texas	Austin	Ozone Advance
Texas	Corpus Christi	Ozone Advance
Texas	Hood County	Ozone Advance
Texas	Houston	PM Advance
Texas	San Antonio	Ozone Advance
Utah	Uinta Basin	Ozone Advance
Vermont	Rutland	PM Advance

Source: Environmental Protection Agency - 2023

Participation, Eligibility, Requirements to be a partner of the EPA Advance Program

Eligibility Criteria

Currently, there are two programs offered by the EPA's Advance Program; Ozone and Particulate Matter (PM). The following information below provides details on the eligibility criteria for the EPA's Advance Program; Ozone Advance and Particulate Matter (PM) Advance.

Ozone and Particulate Matter (PM) Advance Program - Eligibility Criteria

According to the EPA, states, tribal, and/or local governments can be eligible to participate in the EPA's Ozone and PM Advance Program if they meet the following criteria;

- Must not be a designated nonattainment territory for an Ozone or Particulate Matter (PM) National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).
- Be able to identify the air monitors that reflect the air quality in their selected area.
- States' reporting obligations for the National Emissions Inventory must be met prior to an area joining Ozone Advance.

For more information, please visit the EPA Advance Program webpage; <https://www.epa.gov/advance>

Participation

States, tribal or local governments that fall in with the eligibility criteria to participate in the EPA Ozone and PM Advance Programs, can request a recommendation to the EPA for consideration to be a member of the Advance Program by providing the following information;

- A sign-up letter request to be a participant of the Advance program that is to be signed by the state, Tribal and local officials within the authority to implement the program and assist in leveraging staff and program funds as needed.

Requirements

According to the EPA, the following bullet points list below are the requirements for joining the Advance Program;

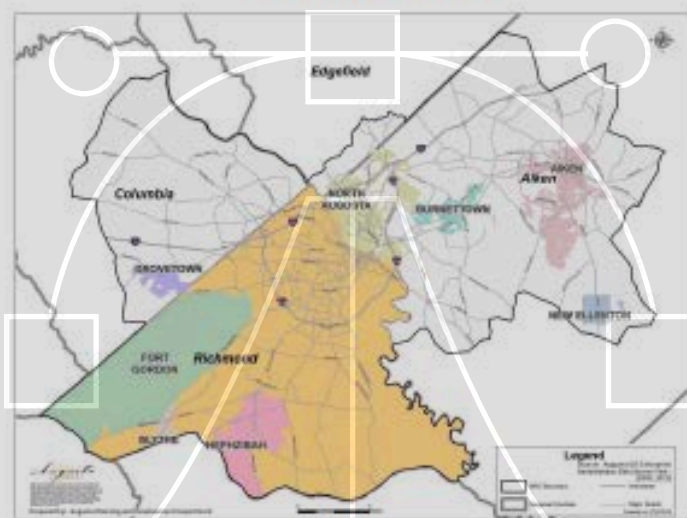
1. Identify your lead governmental organization(s).
 - Identify geographic area and jurisdictions covered by your program.
 - Indicate if joining Ozone Advance, PM Advance, or both.
 - Identify the federal air quality monitor(s) for ozone and/or PM2.5 in the area.
 - Certify that your state has provided a submission to the most recent update of the National Emission Inventory
2. Conduct stakeholder meetings and identify priority emission reduction actions to include in your plan.
3. Within one year, submit the initial "Path Forward" plan for the area, in consultation with EPA.
4. Provide an annual Advance plan revision.
 - Review progress made under most recent plan.
 - Provide updated plan and proposed new actions for the next year.

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTS MPO and ITS CURRENT AIR QUALITY:

Background of ARTS MPO Area

The Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an organization that is designated by the State government (State of Georgia) to serve as a policy board within a metropolitan geographic area, that is appointed as a transportation management area, and is responsible for the transportation planning for Augusta GA., - Aiken, South Carolina Metropolitan Area. The ARTS MPO area is comprised of four counties; Richmond County, Columbia County, Edgefield County, and Aiken County (See Figure 1). The map in [Figure 3](#) shows the boundaries and names of each of the county areas within the ARTS MPO area. The map also depicts the names of all the cities found within the Augusta metropolitan area.

Figure 3. Map of ARTS Area

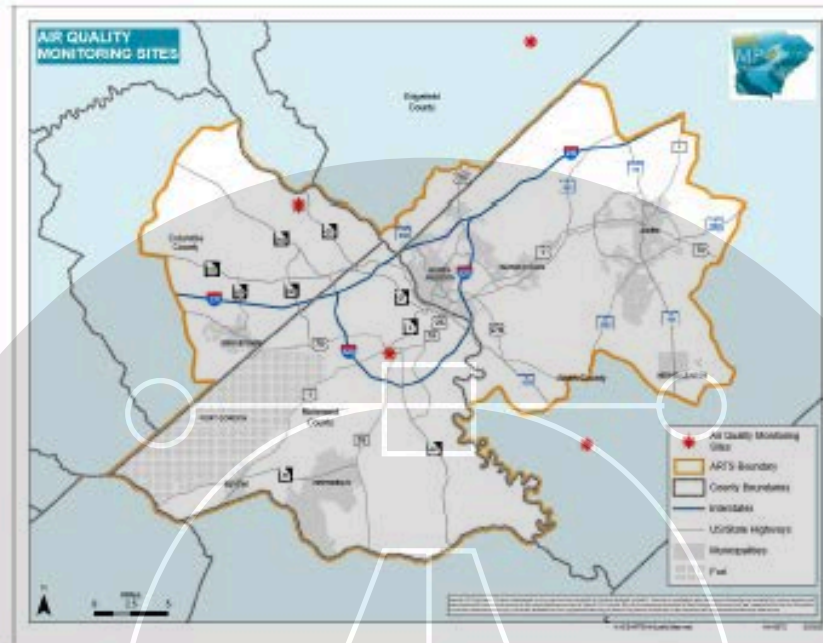


Source: ARTS

Air Quality Outdoor Monitoring Site Systems in the ARTS MPO area

The map diagram provided in [Figure 4](#), on the following page, displays the site area of the ARTS MPO boundary that features on-site and off-site locations of air quality monitoring systems. [Table 2](#) presented below provides details about the area locations of existing air quality monitoring sites within the county regions of the ARTS metropolitan planning area. According to the information provided in [Table 2](#) and the site area map displayed in [Figure 4](#), there are currently two air quality monitoring sites located within the ARTS MPO area; Richmond and Columbia Georgia. The red asterisk “*” symbols featured on the map in [Figure 4](#) represent the current locations of air quality outdoor monitoring systems that are adjacent to or within the ARTS MPO area boundary.

Figure 4. Map of ARTS MPO Boundary with Air Quality Monitoring Sites



Source: ARTS and Environmental Protection Division (EPD)

Table 2: Current Air Quality Monitoring Sites in the ARTS MPO Area

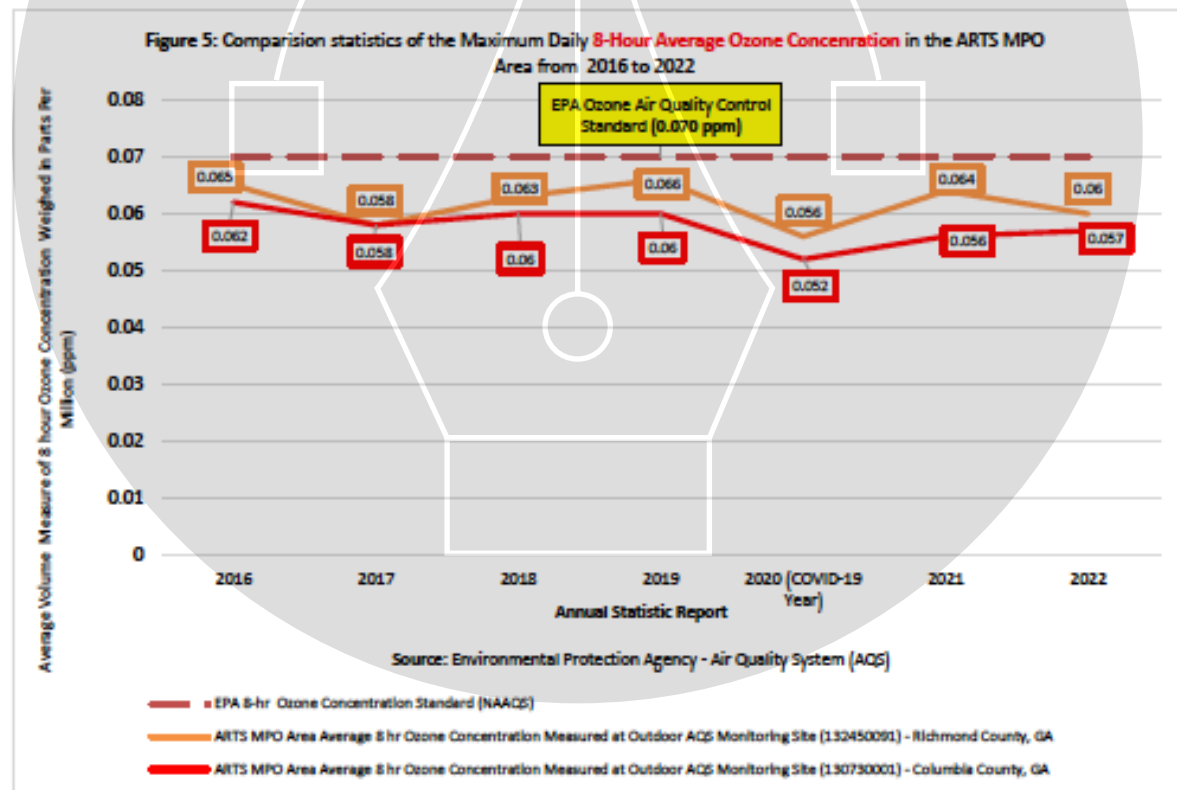
Air Monitor Location Area	Site ID	Site Name	Type of Air Monitoring	Street Address	Within the MPO Boundary
Richmond County, GA	132450091	Augusta Bungalow Road site	Ozone and PM	2216 Bungalow Rd, Augusta GA	Yes
Columbia County, GA	130730001	Our Evans site	Ozone	4431 Hardy McManus Road, Evans GA	Yes
Aiken County, SC	450030003	Jackson Middle School	Ozone	8217 Atomic Road (Indian Drive-School)	No
Edgefield County, SC	450370001	Trenton	Ozone	660 Woodyard Road (Hwy 121)	No

Source: South Carolina Air Monitoring Network & State of Georgia Air Protection Branch

ARTS MPO Area's Current Ozone and Particulate Matter Pollution Condition Levels

Figure 5 to Figure 8, presented below on the following pages, pages 8 to 10, provide graphs that show a series of air quality statistics, which compares the levels of outdoor ozone and particulate matter emission concentration in the ARTS MPO area that have been monitored between the year 2016 and 2022. The statistics of outdoor air pollution (ozone and particulate matter) represented in the graphs were collected from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Air Quality System (AQS) database. The graph shown in Figure 5 presents a series of air quality data, displayed horizontally along the red and orange drawn curve lines, which reflect annual levels of ozone pollution concentration in the ARTS MPO area which have been monitored yearly by the EPA through air quality monitoring systems. The numerical values that are shown for each year on the graph are represented as mass per unit volume (parts per million) measures. Each of the yearly measurement values presented reflects the maximum daily 8-hour average concentration of ozone pollution found to be present in the ARTS area.

The graphs in Figure 6 and Figure 7 display statistical information which describe the air quality condition of particulate matter (PM) pollution level in the ARTS MPO area that has been monitored year-to-year respectively under a 24-hour period and 12-month cycle. The PM 2.5 24-hour concentration figures and PM 2.5 annual mean measures, as shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7 respectively, are measured at a mass per unit volume of a milligram per cubic meter. The graph in Figure 8 illustrates the trend of annual PM 2.5 pollution measures reported yearly within the ARTS area in comparison to the EPA's 2023 proposed PM 2.5 annual mean standards.



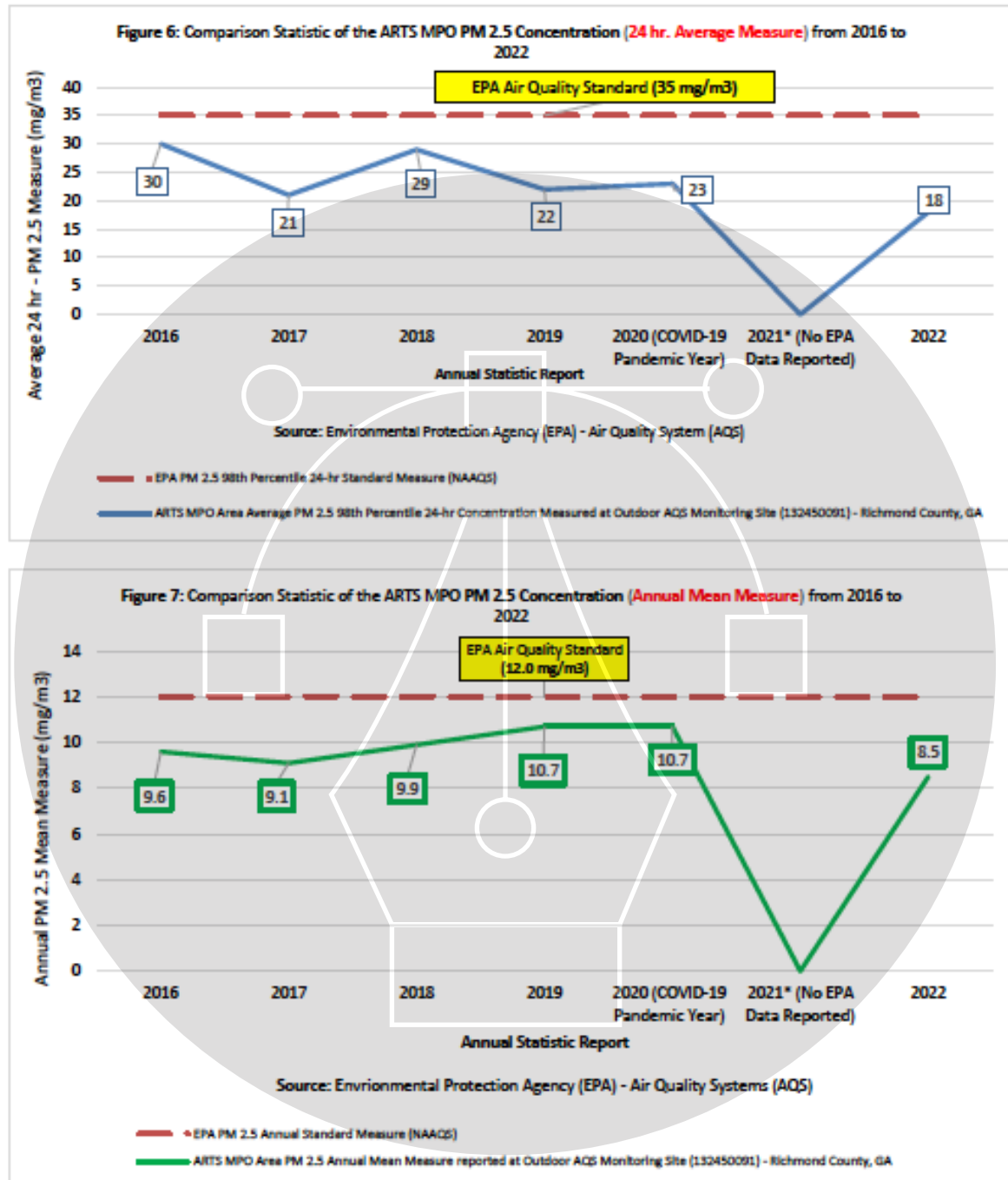
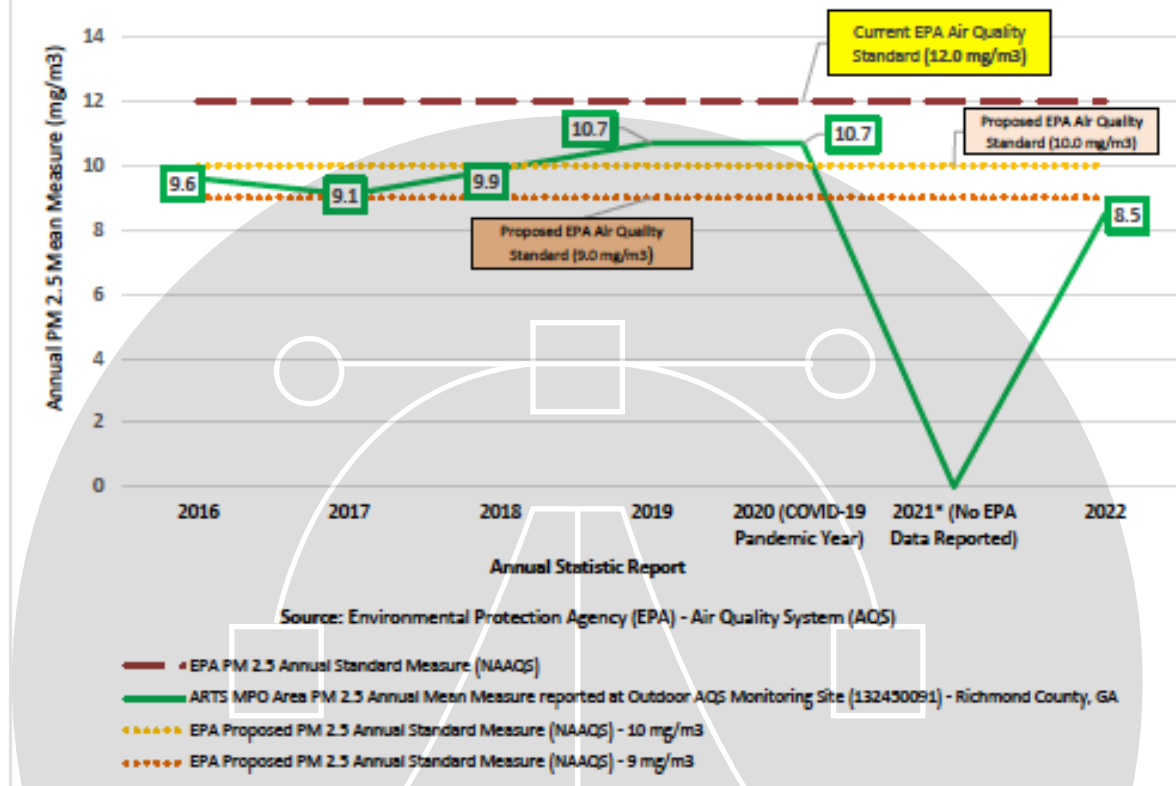


Figure 8: Comparison Statistic of the ARTS MPO PM 2.5 Concentration (Annual mean measure) from 2016 to 2020 and the EPA's Proposed Primary PM 2.5 Annual Mean Measure (9.0 to 10.0 mg/m³)



FINDING:

Based on the latest EPA air quality outdoor statistic reports presented in [Figure 5](#), [Figure 6](#), and [Figure 7](#), the trend data of the yearly ozone and particulate matter (PM 2.5) concentration averages show that the ARTS MPO area has continued to maintain a level of air quality that meets the EPA's standard levels (NAAQS) of air pollution attainment. Looking back at the ARTS MPO area's most recent outdoor air quality five-year statistic reports between the years 2016 to 2022, the yearly monitoring reports show that the ARTS area's current levels of ozone and particulate matter (PM 2.5) pollution have not exceeded the EPA's current National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). In 2021, the EPA did not report an annual statistic measure for particulate matter (PM 2.5) concentration in Richmond County, Georgia. As a result, no statistical data was provided for the ARTS MPO area in 2021. The EPA plans to release an official statistic ozone and particulate matter report in May of 2023.

In 2023, the EPA announced its proposed decision to revise the primary annual PM 2.5 mean standard from its current level of 12.0 mg/m³ to within the range of 9.0 to 10 mg/m³. Currently, the ARTS area's most recent particulate matter (PM 2.5) pollution level is reported by the EPA to be within the current PM 2.5 NAAQS standard (12.0 mg/m³) as of 2022. The graph in [Figure 8](#) illustrates the trend of the ARTS MPO's annual PM 2.5

pollution measures in comparison to the EPA's 2023 proposed PM 2.5 annual mean standards. According to the most recent air quality statistic annual monitoring report that was released officially by the EPA on May 1, 2023, the EPA reported that the annual mean measure of particulate matter (PM 2.5) emission level in the ARTS MPO area was weighed at an estimate of 8.5 mg/m³, below the EPA's proposed PM 2.5 annual mean standards (9.0 to 10 mg/m³).

ACTION STEPS TAKEN BY THE ARTS MPO TO ADDRESS AIR QUALITY:

On February of 2021, the ARTS MPO was accepted by the EPA as a partner of its Advance Program. Prior to becoming a participant of the EPA Advance Program, the ARTS MPO had continuously worked with its regional stakeholders and the public to construct strategic planning approaches in order to address the needs of transportation improvement within its regional area and form solutions that would help to reduce transportation-related air pollution. Examples of these activities include the ARTS MPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Congestion Management Process Study, Bike and Pedestrian Plan Study, and Traffic Crash Study Reports.

As of 2023, the ARTS MPO is currently a participant in the EPA Advance Program. Since becoming a participant of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Advance Program, the ARTS MPO has continued to work collaboratively with its area stakeholders and advocacy groups to identify air quality control measure initiatives that would help to reduce air pollution and improve the quality of life for communities throughout its regional area.

As of 2023, the most recent initiatives and activities the ARTS MPO has been involved with to support the advocacy of local air quality control measures were the following;

- Development of an EPA Path Forward Report which addresses the Current Conditions of Air Quality (Ozone & Particulate Matter) in the ARTS Area and initiatives undertaken by the ARTS local partners to address the issues of its emission levels
- Explore the Deployment of Electric Transit Bus Vehicles

CONCLUSION:

As the ongoing issues of air quality continue to play an important role in the practice of local and regional city planning in the U.S., the ARTS MPO, in retrospect, will continue to play a role in improving the quality of clean air for local communities within its metropolitan planning area by helping to implement local and regional air quality initiatives and keep its local stakeholders informed about air quality issues. In addition, the ARTS MPO will also continue to participate in air quality training and webinar sessions in order to keep its staff up-to-date on EPA air quality regulations and best practices. The overall goal of the ARTS MPO's efforts of improving its region's air quality is to protect the environmental sustainability of its regional areas from the adverse impacts that would threaten the quality of life, such as air pollution, for its local communities.