

# **2023 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update Atkinson County & The Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee**



**Adopted by:  
City of Pearson January 10, 2022  
City of Willacoochee January 10, 2022  
Atkinson County Commission January 12, 2022**

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# **I. Chapter 110-12-1 Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning**

## **1. Introduction**

The 2023 Atkinson County – Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Comprehensive Plan Update was prepared in accordance with the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning.

As required by the Local Comprehensive Planning Standards, the 2023 Atkinson County – Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Comprehensive Plan Update consists of the following elements:

- Community Goals
- Needs and Opportunities
- Community Work Program
- Land Use Element  
(As a community with zoning or land development regulations subject to the Zoning Procedures Law)
- Economic Development Element  
(As a community included in the Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 category)
- Broadband Element

## **2. Community Involvement**

All of the required elements have been developed with extensive opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders throughout the county and cities. The following steps were taken to ensure that this plan reflected the full range of needs and opportunities from the many stakeholders and residents in the county:

- a) The Steering Committee was identified in coordination with the Atkinson County Board of Commissioners; as well as elected officials or their appointees from the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee.
- b) An initial Stakeholder Group was identified including City and County elected and appointed officials, city and county staff, law enforcement, local businesses and industries including the Health Care Sector, Board of Education, Chamber of Commerce, Industrial Development Authority, and the general public.
- c) Participation techniques were identified. Techniques included meetings/workshops, extensive email correspondence, website publication of meeting notices and draft documents, and use of social media.
- d) A minimum of three, but as many as needed, publicly notified informal workshops were held in a central location in the local communities in addition to the two required public hearings.

This series of public workshops are scheduled to review, discuss, and revise as necessary the existing current comprehensive Goals, Needs and Opportunities, and Policies in the first

workshop; the Report of Accomplishments and Community Work Program in the second workshop; and the land use element and economic development element in the third workshop. After each workshop, the suggested revisions and input are incorporated into the next iteration of the workbook using notes from the workshops. The new workbook draft is then distributed by email to all stakeholders and published as a draft on the various local government websites for review and comment prior to the next workshop. This is done for each of the workshops. The final draft of the workbook and draft comprehensive plan update is then distributed again with sufficient review time prior to the transmittal public hearing where the community has a final opportunity to discuss any additional changes with the elected officials prior to the transmittal of the updated draft comprehensive plan.

- e) Other, separate meetings if needed are held with the individual communities to develop the Report of Accomplishments for the individual communities and to develop the next five-year Community Work Program, again for each individual community.

The public hearing kicking off the comprehensive planning process was held on April 25th 2022, at the Atkinson County Commission board room in Pearson, Georgia. It was held for the purpose of making any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review is now underway, explaining the purpose of the update, and encouraging residents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the plan update. The second public hearing for Plan transmittal for review was held on September 27th, 2022.

### **3. Identification of Stakeholders**

A comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was put together with input from the Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority, elected officials, and residents. Copies of every meeting's sign-up sheets are included in this plan in the Appendix.

### **4. Identification of Participation Techniques**

The following participation techniques were utilized during the update process:

- Two Public Hearings:
  - Kick-off
  - Transmittal
- Three Workshops:
  - Goals, needs, and opportunities
  - Report of Accomplishments & Community Work Program
  - Economic Development and Land Use
- Extensive e-mail correspondence with stakeholders (notices of meetings, e-mail requests for comments, distribution of revised drafts and final documents)
- Dissemination of Information in the newspaper (public notices, advertisements)

### **5. Conduct Participation Program**

A foundational principle utilized in all of the planning projects is public and stakeholder participation from and coordination with multiple and diverse interest groups. In order to ensure the broadest buy-in and diversity of input into the comprehensive plan update, all participants were included in the stakeholder group. Outreach to the public, local governments, chambers of commerce, economic development authorities, and other stakeholders and interested parties was accomplished by e-mail correspondence, direct communication, updates provided at workshops and other group meetings. Opportunity for public comment was provided at public hearings and city and county commission meetings.

In addition to the two required public hearings, a series of three workshops to discuss several elements of the plan. The first workshop was used to review the existing goals, needs, and opportunities; in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, participants updated the list of

goals, needs, opportunities, and policies to meet current needs. Copies of the sign-in sheets are provided in the appendix along with public hearing notices.

The Report of Accomplishments was developed in the second workshop along with the draft of the updated Community Work Program. The Community Work Program was developed by the participants to include specific action items and projects that would be feasible for the County and the individual communities to implement should funding be available.

The third workshop was utilized to update the Economic Development Element and the Land Use Element and Maps as desired by the local governments.

## 6. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the local governments must review both the Regional Water Plan covering its area and the GDNR Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria as laid out in Chapter 391-3-16 to determine whether any local implementation practices or development regulations need to be adapted to be consistent with both.

### Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee lie within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, which was updated in 2016-2017.

The Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan had identified 13 goals, listed below, to implement its vision of managing water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia's regulated riparian and reasonable use laws to support the state's and regions' economy, to protect public health and natural resources, and to enhance the quality of life for all citizens; while preserving the private property rights of Georgia's landowners, and in consideration of the need to enhance resource augmentation and efficiency opportunities.



Source: CDM Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan

Goals:

1. Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, and industrial water needs, including all agricultural sectors (including agro-forestry).
2. Manage ground and surface water to encourage sustainable economic and population growth in the region.
3. Manage the Region's and State's water resources in a manner that preserves and protects private property rights.
4. Ensure an adequate water supply of suitable quality to meet current and future human needs, while protecting environmental resources.
5. Identify opportunities to optimize existing and future supplies, and water and wastewater infrastructure.
6. Promote efficient use and management of surface and groundwater resources to allow for sufficient supplies for current and future generations.
7. Protect and manage surface and groundwater recharge areas to ensure sufficient long-term water supplies for the region.
8. Protect, maintain, and where appropriate and practicable, identify opportunities to enhance water quality and river base flows.
9. Protect and maintain regional water-dependent recreational opportunities.
10. Identify opportunities to manage stormwater to improve water quality and quantity.
11. Identify and implement cost-effective water management strategies.
12. Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens in the region.
13. Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

In addition, the Regional Water Plan has adopted several Short-Term Water Quantity and Water Quality Management Practices, which the local comprehensive plan should include in order to manage water resources in a sustainable manner through the planning period and beyond:

The most significant needs in the Suwannee-Satilla Region are surface water availability gaps driven by agricultural usage. As such, the majority of water supply management practices are intended to address agricultural surface water use.

Short Term Water Quantity Management Practices (0-10 Years)

1. Utilize surface water and groundwater sources within the available resource capacities
2. Water conservation
3. Data Collection and research to confirm the frequency, duration, severity, and drivers of surface water gaps
4. Evaluate and ensure that current and future surface water permit conditions do not contribute to 7Q10 low flow concerns (1 in 10 years 7-day low flow condition)
5. Encourage sustainable groundwater use as a preferred supply in regions with surface water 7Q10 low flow concerns and adequate groundwater supply
6. Identify incentives and a process to sustainably replace a portion of existing agricultural surface water use with groundwater use to address 7Q10 low flow concerns
8. Evaluate the potential to use existing storage to address 7Q10 low flow concerns
9. Education to reduce surficial aquifer groundwater use impacts to 7Q10 low flow concerns

### Short-Term Water Quality Management Practices (0 – 10 Years):

#### 1. Point Sources:

- Support and fund current permitting and waste load allocation process to improve treatment of wastewater and increase treatment capacity
- Data collection and research to confirm discharge volumes and waste concentrations as well as receiving stream flows and chemistry

#### 2. Non-Point Sources:

- Data collection to confirm source of pollutants and causes; encourage storm water ordinances, septic system maintenance, and coordinated planning
- Ensure funding and support for Best Management Practices Programs by local and state programs, including urban/suburban, rural, forestry, and agricultural Best Management Practices

#### 3. Non-point Source Existing Impairments:

- Total maximum daily load listed streams: Improve data on source of pollutant and length of impairment; Identify opportunities to leverage funds and implement non-point source Best Management Practices

Longer Term (20 – 40 years) water quantity and quality management practices include:

- Improve infiltration and management of wetlands
- Evaluate incentive-based programs to manage, increase, and restore wastewater and storm water returns
- Identify potential/feasibility of a multi-purpose reservoir
- Identify feasibility of regional inter-basin transfer
- Continue wastewater and stormwater master planning

### **Chapter 391-3-16, Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria**

The Environmental Planning Criteria that are part of the Minimum Planning Standards deal specifically with the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains, the last of these not being applicable in this region. These criteria were developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as mandated in Part V of the Georgia Planning Act and in the Mountains and River Corridor Protection Act.

The criteria require that local governments shall identify existing and future water supply watersheds and adopt a water supply watershed protection plan for their jurisdiction.

Some uses may be grandfathered, such as land uses existing prior to the adoption of a watershed plan, mining activities permitted by DNR, certain utility placements, special forestry, or agricultural services.

The Environmental guidelines also spell out criteria for the delineation of small and large water supply watersheds, for the protection of groundwater recharge areas, for the protection of wetlands, and for the protection of river corridors which shall be incorporated into this comprehensive plan and addressed specifically and in more detail through local ordinances and land development code regulations.



## **II. PLAN ELEMENTS**

### **1. Community Goals and Vision**

The purpose of the Community Goals Element is to lay out a road map for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee; to generate local buy-in to the plan to ensure that the plan is implemented. The Goals listed below were developed in the 2018 Update through several community workshops. The goals are listed by category and are not listed in order of priority. These Goals were reviewed and updated individually during the first workshop of this 2023 Comprehensive Plan update.

#### Vision

Intergovernmental agreements between Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee will continue to expand to improve the quality of life, and promote the small town atmosphere within the community. The county and cities will also preserve the community's rich agricultural and forestry heritage through the preservation of prominent landmarks and sites that are important and a matter of pride to all citizens

- Goal 1:            **NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES** –Protect and preserve the unique natural and cultural resources of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee including soils, rivers and lakes.
- Goal 2:            **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT** – To create and maintain a long-term sustainable and diverse economic base.
- Goal 3:            **HOUSING** – To encourage access to appropriate and affordable housing options for all residents in all income levels.
- Goal 4:            **LAND USE** –Protect and promote existing development, new development and redevelopment and maintain accessible open space for future land use opportunities.
- Goal 5:            **COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES** – To develop and maintain public services and facilities to accommodate existing development and to encourage future sustainable growth in areas where community facilities and services are provided at adequate capacities.
- Goal 6:            **INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION** – To enhance and maintain communication between each jurisdiction and surrounding counties in an effort to better serve the residents of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee.
- Goal 7:            **BROADBAND**- Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee are met.

## **2. Needs and Opportunities**

The initial Needs and Opportunities were developed and identified in the 2018 Update for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee. For this comprehensive plan update, the needs and opportunities were reviewed in the first of three workshops conducted for the 2023 update. Each of the previously identified needs and opportunities was reviewed and discussed by the participants, and then either deleted, amended, or retained as deemed applicable to Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee. This was done utilizing a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis with stakeholders and residents, analysis of statistical data and information, and review and revision as applicable of the needs and opportunities.

### **Resource Conservation - Cultural Resources**

#### **Cultural Resources**

##### **Needs:**

- A. Neither the City of Willacoochee nor the County has a Historic Preservation Ordinance, and there is a need to prioritize and protect our historical resources.

##### **Opportunities:**

- A. The new Courthouse Annex that is ADA (Americans with Disabilities) accessible is near completion.
- B. The Minnie Corbitt house now renovated will become a museum housing memorabilia such as photos and artifacts of the history of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee and its residents.
- C. We would like to provide more protection of historic resources
- D. Work with the new owners of the Old Malone Hotel to promote upkeep and beautification of said property so as to aid the overall look of the City of Pearson.

### **Resource Conservation - Natural Resources**

##### **Needs:**

- A. Lack of public boat ramps at both the Alapaha and Satilla Rivers.
- B. There are no recreational facilities along the Alapaha and the Satilla Rivers.

##### **Opportunities:**

- A. The Alapaha River can be a big asset to the community by putting in a boat ramp on the north side of the City of Willacoochee allowing for closer access to the river.
- B. Unused railroad tracks from City of Willacoochee to City of Pearson can be used for Rails to Trails.
- C. The Alapaha and Satilla Rivers could support a canoe and kayak rental business.

## **Economic Development**

### **Needs:**

- A. The lack of parking in the downtown Pearson impedes business development and the downtown buildings need to be renovated.
- B. A county-wide Chamber of Commerce is needed to provide for leadership in implementing new businesses and retaining current ones.
- C. A new Development Authority needs to be established.
- D. The Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee need to invest in revitalization of their downtown and requirement of new businesses while maintain existing ones so as to draw people into the area, retaining tax dollars in the community as much as possible.

### **Opportunities:**

- A. Some of the older empty houses in both Cities could be converted into Bed & Breakfast facilities, and similar businesses which can draw people into the area adding to the tax base and utilizing housing stock.
- B. The City of Pearson has the “Goat Festival” and the City of Willacoochee has the “Old Fashion Day” annual festival that draws people to the city each year and brings outside dollars to the community.
- C. The County and Cities are designated Tier 1 communities, which will benefit from an Opportunity zone and/or Enterprise zone designation.
- D. The cities and the county have worked to lower their ISO ratings via the development of new Fire Departments lowering the property tax burden and will continue to lower even more.
- E. There are several trucking companies in the community that offer employment and help to lower unemployment rates and enable workers to live and work in their county/city residence.
- F. There is a large Hispanic population in the county – the highest in the state. A large portion of the workforce is comprised of Hispanic population, which adds new cultural identity to the County and new businesses that add to the tax base.
- G. Develop a strategy for economic development appropriate for our community by promoting tourism opportunities and utilizing our large amount of agricultural production.

### **Development Patterns - Housing**

#### **Needs:**

- A. We need more regulations for mobile homes, so that they will be developed more attractively but not prohibitions against them.
- B. The City of Willacoochee needs more low- to- mod and middle-income housing as more industries are locating and jobs are fast exceeding housing.
- C. We need to manage manufactured homes or mobile home parks in certain neighborhoods.

#### **Opportunities:**

- A. There are six (6) public housing developments within the City of Pearson and four (4) in the City of Willacoochee. Those developments meet the community's need for public housing.
- B. We would like to increase the mix of housing (by size, type, and price range) in certain neighborhoods.
- C. Promote development of housing with convenient access to major employers.

### **Development Patterns - Land Use**

#### **Needs:**

- A. Atkinson County has no zoning in place.
- B. The City of Willacoochee has no zoning in place.
- C. Promote development and improvements of vacant sites and abandoned structures in our community.
- D. Preserve and protect our rural scenery.
- E. The City of Pearson needs to update their zoning/land use.

#### **Opportunities:**

- A. The County needs to work with SGRC to implement Land Development Code Regulations.
- B. The City of Willacoochee needs to work with SGRC to implement Land Development Code Regulations
- C. The City of Pearson will work with SGRC to update their Land Development Code Regulations.

## **Community Facilities and Services**

### **Needs:**

- A. Need to provide more community gathering spaces
- B. Improve our public facility capacity in order to attract new development.
- C. Improve community services for underserved neighborhoods using Community Block Grants.

### **Opportunities:**

- A. The Civic Center can seat 500 people and contains a PA system. The building has been upgraded with a kitchen and serving area to be used for special events such as birthdays, family reunions and business meetings.
- B. A new jail is almost completely built and possibly will be utilized in 2022.
- C. There is a new park in City of Willacoochee being utilized on Fleetwood Street called Jim Mills Kiddie Park.
- D. Research ways to reduce the cost of providing public services/facilities.

## **Intergovernmental Coordination**

### **Needs:**

- A. We need more intergovernmental coordination with all jurisdictions in order to better obtain grants from state and federal agencies.
- B. Need to coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on shared needs.

### **Opportunities:**

- A. Continue increased communication and collaboration between the various jurisdictions, school systems, and authorities to improve future planning efforts and increase effectiveness of individual efforts.
- B. Continued collaboration should occur between the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission.
- C. The cities and county should consider consolidation of emergency services.
- D. There is one fire chief for all of the volunteer fire departments, which provides centralized leadership.

## **Broadband Services**

### **Needs:**

- A.** We need digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within the Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee are met.

### **Opportunities:**

- A.** More affordable broadband services may enable greater opportunity for citizens and businesses.
- B.** The partnership of both public and private could provide comprehensive broadband coverage equitable, reliable and consistent.

### 3. Analysis of Data and Information

Name	Population Census 1990-04-01	Population Census 2000-04-01	Population Census 2010-04-01	Population Census 2020-04-01	Population estimate 2021-04-01
Atkinson County	6213	7609	8375	8286	8391
City of Pearson	1714	1820	2109	1827	1847
City of Willacoochee	1230	1461	1391	1237	1255

Atkinson County, Georgia's estimated population is 7874 with a growth rate of 1.22% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data. Atkinson County Georgia is the 138<sup>th</sup> largest county in Georgia. There are 6,088 adults, (1,075) of whom are seniors in Atkinson County Georgia.

Atkinson County	Population	Percentage
White	5865	70.57%
Black or African American	1299	15.63%
Some other race	707	8.51%
Two or more races	384	4.62%
American Indian and Alaska Native	56	0.67%

Female	Male	Percentage	Percentage
4,170	4,141	50.17%	49.83%

Pearson has a current population of 1,964. It is also the county seat of Atkinson County. Pearson is currently declining at a rate of 1.31% annually and its population has decreased by -6.88% since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 2,109 in 2010.

79.62% of Pearson residents were born in the United States, with 68.17% having been born in Georgia. 17.01% of residents are not US citizens. Of those not born in the United States, the largest percentages are from Latin America.

There are 1,537 adults (248 of whom are seniors) in Pearson.

City of Pearson	Population	Percentage
White	969	48.04%
Black or African American	686	34.01%
Some other race	212	10.51%
Two or more races	150	7.44%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.00%

Willacoochee has a current population of 1309. Willacoochee is currently declining at a rate of 1.13% and its population has decreased by -5.62% since the most recent census population of 1391 in 2010.

84.61% of Willacoochee residents were born in the United States, with 74.56% having been born in Georgia. 14.84% of residents are not US citizens. Of those not born in the United States, the largest percentage is from Latin America

There are 1,055 adults (145 of whom are seniors) in Willacoochee.

City of Willacoochee	Population	Percentage
White	992	67.85%
Black or African American	296	20.25%
Some other race	172	11.76%
Two or more races	2	40.14%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0	0.00%

### Education Attainment

Education Attained	Count	Percentage
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	913	17.30%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	791	14.99%
High School Graduate	1,805	34.20%
Some College	773	14.65%
Associates Degree	350	6.63%
Bachelors Degree	300	5.68%
Graduate Degree	346	6.56%

### Education Attainment by Race

Race	Total	High School	Bachelors
White	3,252	2,514	601
Hispanic	1,133	380	
Black	873	663	45
Other Race	377	54	
2+Races	118	110	
Native American	18	18	

The highest rate of high school graduation is among Native American people with a rate of 100.00%. The highest rate of bachelor's degrees is among white people with a rate of 18.48%.

### Earnings by Education Attainment

Name	Average	Male	Female
Overall	\$30,588	\$32,021	\$26,510
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$22,667	\$27,515	\$15,346
High School Graduate	\$27,464	\$34,821	\$20,000
Some College	\$31,090	\$32,159	\$27,276
Bachelors Degree	\$61,688	\$61,750	\$54,861
Graduate Degree	\$60,313	\$	\$59,844

### Poverty by Race

Name	Total	In Poverty	Poverty Rate
Hispanic	2,157	859	39.82%
White	4,609	662	14.36%
Black	1,289	594	46.08%
Multiple	384	316	82.29%
Native	56	56	100.00%



### Poverty by Education

Name	Poverty
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	29.84%
High School	19.29%
Some College	11.77%
Bachelors or Greater	1.08%

### Poverty by Employment Status and Sex

Rate	Poverty
Female Unemployed	18.06%
Male Employed	14.96%
Female Employed	13.43%
Male Unemployed	8.42%

### Income by Household Type

Name	Median	Mean
Households	\$35,703	\$55,007
Families	\$46,086	\$64,289
Married Families	\$50,475	
Non Families	\$23,306	\$30,099

### Overall Poverty Rate

Over Poverty Rate	Male Poverty Rate	Female Poverty Rate
28.17%	26.90%	29.43%

The poverty rate among those that worked full-time for the past 12 months was 8.35%. Among those working part-time it was 27.33% and for those that did not work, the poverty rate was 27.37%.

### Education Attainment Pearson

Education Attained	Count	Percentage
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	282	22.72%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	202	16.28%
High School Graduate	465	37.47%
Some College	169	13.62%
Associates Degree	74	5.96%
Bachelors Degree	26	2.10%
Graduate Degree	23	1.85%

### Education Attainment by Race Pearson

Race	Total	High School	Bachelors
Black	436	327	24
White	416	293	25
Hispanic	388	137	
Other Race	150	44	
2+Races	60	59	

The highest rate of high school graduation is among 2+ races people with a rate of 98.33%. The highest rate of bachelors degrees is among white people with a rate of 6.01%

### Earnings by Education Attainment Pearson

Name	Average	Male	Female
Overall	\$27,536	\$29,529	\$25,385
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$28,768	\$29,638	\$22,125
High School Graduate	\$25,978	\$26,406	\$25,292
Some College	\$27,443	\$35,192	\$25,398
Bachelors Degree	\$43,750		\$43,750
Graduate Degree			

### Poverty by Race Pearson

Name	Total	In Poverty	Poverty Rate
Hispanic	753	254	33.73%
White	568	86	15.15%
Black	676	260	38.46%
Two or More	150	149	99.33%

### Poverty by Education Pearson

Name	Poverty
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	17.33%
High School	23.28%
Some College	7.30%
Bachelors or Greater	0.00%

### Poverty by Employment Status and Sex Pearson

Rate	Poverty
Female Unemployed	36.67%
Male Employed	11.03%
Female Employed	19.46%
Male Unemployed	0.00%

### Income by Household Type Pearson

Name	Median	Mean
Households	\$31,061	\$43,379
Families	\$44,063	\$51,264
Married Families	\$46,875	
Non Families	\$26,042	\$28,151

### Overall Poverty Rate Pearson

Over Poverty Rate	Male Poverty Rate	Female Poverty Rate
30.03%	28.93%	31.29%

The poverty rate among those that worked full-time for the past 12 months was 8.89%. Among those working part-time, it was 29.33%, and for those that did not work, the poverty rate was 28.83%.

### Education Attainment Willacoochee

Education Attained	Count	Percentage
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	276	28.54%
9 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	70	7.24%
High School Graduate	324	33.51%
Some College	185	19.13%

Associates Degree	39	4.03%
Bachelors Degree	5	0.52%
Graduate Degree	68	7.03%

#### Education Attainment by Race Willacoochee

Race	Total	High School	Bachelors
Black	225	205	
White	471	362	73
Hispanic	269	52	
Other Race	32	10	
2+Races	2	2	

#### Earnings by Education Attainment Willacoochee

Name	Average	Male	Female
Overall	\$26,444	\$26,500	\$26,181
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	\$16,825	\$26,250	\$6,250
High School Graduate	\$26,334	\$26,660	\$21,250
Some College	\$42,679	\$24,500	\$43,393
Bachelors Degree			
Graduate Degree			

#### Poverty by Race Willacoochee

Name	Total	In Poverty	Poverty Rate
Hispanic	474	131	27.64%
White	697	57	8.18%
Black	296	107	36.15%

#### Poverty by Education Willacoochee

Name	Poverty
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	29.19%
High School	18.21%
Some College	11.16%
Bachelors or Greater	4.11%

#### Poverty by Employment Status and Sex Willacoochee

Rate	Poverty
Female Unemployed	0.00%
Male Employed	6.94%
Female Employed	15.97% %
Male Unemployed	0.00

#### Income by Household Type Willacoochee

Name	Median	Mean
Households	\$27,121	\$36,499
Families	\$29,712	\$39,277
Married Families	\$38,844	
Non Families	\$22,500	\$31,663

### Overall Poverty Rate Willacoochee

Over Poverty Rate	Male Poverty Rate	Female Poverty Rate
19.70%	20.74%	18.80%

The Black race in the City of Willacoochee is 36.15% below the poverty level.

The White race in the City of Willacoochee is 8.18% below the poverty level.

The poverty rate among those that worked full-time for the past 12 months was 9.28%. Among those working part-time, it was 16.92%, and for those that did not work, the poverty rate was 20.37%.

## 4. Broadband Element

In recognition of the importance of broadband infrastructure to the vitality of communities the Georgia legislature passed the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act (SB 402) I 2018. The Act provides for broadband services, planning, deployment, and incentives, along with other purposes. Comprehensive plans are also required to include the promotion of the deployment of broadband services. Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee recognize the importance of broadband expansion to their economic development and quality of life for all their residents.

The provision of broadband services enables residents to access several vital services such as healthcare, economic opportunities, and education. Expansion of rural broadband and improvement in the provision of broadband services can address residents' out-migration concerns. Effective and efficient broadband enables internet-based businesses to succeed in the global economy. It is challenging to educate upcoming generations of students in web literacy and digital skills training without adequate broadband speed and connectivity. The Covid -19 pandemic has shown us the importance of home broadband availability, affordability, and quality as all students and many workers studied and worked remotely.

### **Atkinson County**

*Unserved Locations: 56*

*Served Locations: 4,032*

*Percent Unserved: 1*



In Atkinson County there are 5 residential internet providers covering 97.92% of the county. The average home can get speeds up to 584 Mbps.

## Internet Availability Key

0%

50%

100%

Internet service is available in 97.92% of Atkinson County. Areas in green are more likely to have [fiber](#), [cable](#), [DSL](#), or [fixed wireless](#) internet service. Areas in red may be more reliant with [satellite](#) service. The most widely available provider is T-Mobile.

The average Atkinson County home can get up to 584 Mbps on their internet plan. For most people, the fastest download speed in the county is 1,000 Mbps, which 55.50% of residents can get. Some homes and apartments do not have access to these speeds. On the slower end, for example, less than 1% of homes can only purchase plans up to 4.0 Mbps. See the internet provider details below for info about their speed and coverage in Atkinson County.

Internet speeds tend to be faster in the western parts of Atkinson County, and slower in the northeast areas of the county.

The fastest internet for you may vary based on where in Atkinson County you live. If speed is your main concern, cable will be the fastest internet in the county.

- Fiber is the fastest internet type for 8.44% of Atkinson County homes.
- Cable is the fastest for 55.50% of the county.
- DSL is the fastest for 13.40%.
- Fixed wireless is the fastest for 20.59%.
- Satellite internet may be the only option for 2.08% of Atkinson County homes.

Below are quick facts on internet competition and market health in Atkinson County based on what connections the average home has available:

- Average number of internet service providers to a home: 2.4 (very unhealthy)
- Average types of service (fiber, cable, DSL, etc.): 2.3 (unhealthy)
- Average providers with broadband (25 Mbps+) speeds: 1.6 (very unhealthy)

Overall, competition is very unhealthy.

Atkinson County internet customers have the ability to buy internet service from 1 to 4 different providers, depending on where they live. For different types of service, Atkinson County homes have between 1 and 4 options. The type(s) of service available are fixed wireless, DSL, cable, and fiber, though these may vary depending on the region within the county.

When it comes to broadband download speeds faster than 25 Mbps, the situation is worse. Atkinson County internet customers who want faster speeds have between 0 and 3 choices of companies offering speeds up to or over 25 Mbps.

More internet companies with faster speeds mean fewer monopolies and better prices for customers, in promoting a free market for internet services, Atkinson County badly needs improvement.

Internet speeds in Atkinson County are slower versus the average speeds in [Georgia](#): 922 Mbps in Georgia versus 584 Mbps in the county. The state has similar internet availability compared to the county. Average internet coverage in Georgia is 98.83% versus 97.92% in Atkinson County.

## **Broadband Action Plan**

A key goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that needed community facilities including broadband are provided effectively, consistent with present demand and future growth . Moreover, this plan lists the following Issues and Opportunities related to broadband.

### **Needs:**

A. We need digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee are met.

### **Opportunities:**

- A. More affordable broadband services may enable greater opportunity for citizens and businesses
- B. The partnership of both public and private could provide comprehensive broadband coverage equitable, reliable, and consistent.

The following issues and community policies in this plan relate to the provision of broadband infrastructure.

**Need digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses and industry within Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee are met.**

- **Policy 7.1: Enable public and private partnerships to reduce the cost of broadband services in Atkinson County**

The above issue and policy has been used to inform an action plan to support the deployment of broadband services into unserved and underserved areas of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee.

## Broadband Action Steps

Activity	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	Responsible Party	Estimated cost	Funding Source
Provide adequate high speed broadband access for local industries, commercial businesses, and community facilities.	x	x	x	x	x	Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Public/Private Partnerships	1,000,000-7,000,000	General Fund, SPLOST, grants private funding
Adopt a Broadband Ordinance	x	x	x	x	x	Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Public/Private Partnerships	Staff Time	General Fund
Apply for Broadband Ready Certification	x	x	x	x	x	Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Public/Private Partnerships	Staff Time	General Fund
Review and reduce any obstacles to roll-out or development of broadband infrastructure	x	x	x	x	x	Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Public/Private Partnerships	Staff Time	General Fund



## **5. Consideration of DCA Quality Community Objectives**

DCA Quality Community Objectives and Best Practices:

### **1. Economic Prosperity**

Encourage development or expansion of businesses and industries that are suitable for the community. Factors to consider when determining suitability include job skills required; long-term sustainability; linkages to other economic activities in the region; impact on the resources of the area; or prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

#### **Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson, And Willacoochee:**

- Research and create a sourcebook to identify technical and financial assistance available for local businesses from regional, state, and federal sources and make it available to local businesses.
- Track the business needs of existing businesses to help with business retention.
- Tailor training programs to provide workforce skills needed by local businesses.

### **2. Resource Management**

Promote the efficient use of natural resources and identify and protect environmentally sensitive areas of the community. This may be achieved by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy generation; encouraging green building construction and renovation; utilizing appropriate waste management techniques; fostering water conservation and reuse; or setting environmentally sensitive areas aside as green space or conservation reserves.

#### **Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee:**

- Create an inventory of environmentally sensitive areas such as groundwater recharge areas, river corridors, and wetlands, as a first step to create a local strategy for minimizing negative impacts on water quality and quantity.

### **3. Efficient Land Use**

Maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the costly conversion of undeveloped land at the periphery of the community. This may be achieved by encouraging the development or redevelopment of sites closer to the traditional core of the community; designing new development to minimize the amount of land consumed; carefully planning the expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

#### **Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee:**

- Create a historic preservation overlay zone to ensure the preservation of historic properties.
- Create some regulatory tools like a zoning code to encourage owners to maintain their property or utilize vacant or unused properties and structures.
- Consider adopting a rehabilitation code in addition to a new construction code to help keep costs down thereby encouraging the rehabilitation of properties.

### **4. Local Preparedness**

Identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of future the community seeks to achieve. These prerequisites might include infrastructure (roads, water, and sewer) to support or direct new growth; ordinances and regulations to manage growth as desired; leadership and staff capable of responding to opportunities and managing new challenges, or undertaking an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness and response.

**Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee:**

- Ensure consistency of Atkinson County's and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee ordinances with the adopted comprehensive plan.
- Pursue CDBG grants to implement needed infrastructure projects.
- Continue implementation of a Service Delivery Strategy.

**5. Sense of Place**

Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as a focal point of the community; fostering compact, walkable, mixed-use development; protecting and revitalizing historic areas of the community; encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community; or protecting scenic and natural features that are important to defining the community's character.

**Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee:**

- Adopt manufactured home regulations to ensure compatibility of manufactured homes with surrounding single-family residences and to regulate the appearance, layout and location of manufactured homes.

**6. Regional Cooperation**

Cooperate with neighboring jurisdictions to address shared needs. This may be achieved by actively participating in regional organizations; identifying joint projects that will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer; or developing collaborative solutions for regional issues such as the protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

**Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee:**

- Meet regularly with SGRC staff to discuss local priorities and projects and explore opportunities for assistance and coordination with regional efforts.

**7. Housing Options**

Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging the development of a variety of housing types, sizes, costs, and densities in each neighborhood; promoting programs to provide housing for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds, including affordable mortgage finance options; instituting programs to address homelessness issues in the community; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure availability of adequate workforce housing in the community.

**Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson, And Willacoochee:**

- Consider creating an ordinance to allow cottage zoning to allow very small single-family homes to fill the need for affordable housing, utilize vacant properties and keep the cost down for construction and so eliminate the need for manufactured homes.
- Provide education on home loan assistance to foster rehabilitation and revitalization.

**8. Transportation Options**

Address the transportation needs, challenges, and opportunities of all community residents. This may be achieved by fostering alternatives to transportation by automobile, including walking, cycling, and transit; employing traffic calming measures throughout the community; requiring adequate connectivity between adjoining developments, or coordinating transportation and land use decision-making within the community.

**Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson, And Willacoochee:**

- Create a continuous, and well maintained sidewalk network, especially around schools.
- Ensure safe, adequate, and well-designed facilities for bicyclists.

## **9. Educational Opportunities**

Make educational and training opportunities readily available to enable all community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, manage their finances, or pursue life ambitions. This can be achieved by expanding and improving local educational institutions or programs; providing access to other institutions in the region; instituting programs to improve local graduation rates; expanding vocational education programs; or coordinating with local economic development programs to ensure an adequately trained and skilled workforce.

### **Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson, And Willacoochee:**

- Ensure that all schools and libraries have adequate and efficient access to the internet to provide sufficient opportunities for on-line education and certification opportunities.

## **10. Community Health**

Ensure that all community residents, regardless of age, ability, or income, have access to critical goods and services, safe and clean neighborhoods, and good work opportunities. This may be achieved by providing services to support the basic needs of disadvantaged residents, including the disabled; instituting programs to improve public safety; promoting programs that foster better health and fitness; or otherwise providing all residents the opportunity to improve their circumstances in life and to fully participate in the community.

### **Best Practices recommended for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson, And Willacoochee:**

- Develop a comprehensive listing of health services and assistance resources for local citizens.
- Coordinate with Regional Commission to participate in the GDOT 5311 program to provide public transportation to the next available public health facility.

## 6. Goals, Needs and Policies

### Cultural Resources

**Goal 1:** Protect and preserve the unique natural and cultural resources of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee including soils, rivers and lakes.

**Neither the City of Willacoochee nor the County have a Historic Preservation Ordinance and there is a need to prioritize our historical preservation and the functionality of such historical buildings**

- **Policy 1.1:** Encourage the development of a historical preservation ordinance for Atkinson County and the City of Willacoochee.
- **Policy 1.2:** Promote public involvement opportunities to engage more citizens in the historical renovation projects.

### Natural Resources

**Goal 1:** Protect and preserve the unique natural and cultural resources of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee which include soils, rivers, and lakes.

**The lack of boat ramps at both the Alapaha and Satilla Rivers.**

- **Policy 1.3:** Work with Langdale owners to gain an easement onto their property to utilize the Alapaha River as an asset to the community by putting in a boat ramp on the north side of the City of Willacoochee that allows for closer access to the river.

**There are no recreational facilities along the Alapaha and the Satilla Rivers.**

- **Policy 1.4:** Research opportunities to develop and utilize check dams on the Alapaha and Satilla Rivers.
- **Policy 1.5:** Continue to promote the development of regulations through coordination with the state to protect wetlands.
- **Policy 1.6:** Promote a canoe and kayak rental business for the Alapaha and Satilla Rivers.

### Economic Development

**Goal 2:** To create and maintain a long-term sustainable and diverse economic base.

**The lack of parking in downtown Pearson impedes business development, and the downtown buildings need to be renovated.**

- **Policy 2.1:** We will consider developing a downtown parking plan.

**A County-wide Chamber of Commerce is needed to provide for leadership in implementing new businesses and retaining current ones.**

- **Policy 2.2:** Consider recruiting a director for the reactivation of a county-wide Chamber of Commerce.

**A new Development Authority needs to be established.**

- **Policy 2.3** Develop a new board to reestablish the Development Authority.

**The Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee need more businesses downtown that will draw people into the area, such as antique stores to retain tax dollars in the community as much as possible.**

- **Policy 2.4:** Encourage infill development, especially in the downtown area with special attention to antique stores.

**We need to promote the revitalization of our downtown.**

- **Policy 2.5:** Support/encourage Hispanic business opportunities.
- **Policy 2.6:** We will support programs for retention, expansion, and creation of businesses that are a good fit for our community's economy in terms of job skill requirements and linkages to existing businesses.
- **Policy 2.7:** Target declining, vacant or underutilized sites or buildings in preference to new economic development.

**Housing**

**Goal 3:** To encourage access to appropriate and affordable housing options for all residents in all income levels

**We need more regulations for mobile home; so that they will be developed more attractively, but not prohibitions against them.**

- **Policy 3.1:** Gather research on regulations for mobile homes/manufactured homes so that they can function as viable options for affordable housing.
- **Policy 3.2:** We will encourage the development of housing opportunities that enable residents to live close to their places of employment.
- **Policy 3.3:** We will eliminate substandard or dilapidated housing in our community.

**The City of Willacoochee needs more low- mod and middle-income housing as more industries are locating and jobs are fast exceeding housing.**

- **Policy 3.4:** We will seek to balance the supply of housing and employment in our community and consider their location in relation to each other.
- **Policy 3.5:** We will accommodate our diverse population by encouraging compatible mixture of housing types, densities and costs in each neighborhood.
- **Policy 3.6:** We will increase opportunities for low-to-moderate income families to move into affordable owner-occupied housing.

**We need to manage manufactured homes or mobile home parks in certain neighborhoods.**

- **Policy 3.7:** Consider amending mobile home park development regulations in an effort to decrease their negative impacts.

**Land Use**

**Goal 4:** Protect and promote existing development, new development, and redevelopment, and maintain accessible open space for future land use opportunities.

**We need to promote the development of vacant sites and abandoned structures in our community.**

- **Policy 4.1:** We will work to redevelop and enhance existing commercial and industrial areas within our community in preference to new development.
- **Policy 4.2:** Our community will use land efficiently to avoid the costs and problems associated with urban sprawl.

**We need to preserve our rural scenery.**

- **Policy 4.3:** We will preserve the rural character of our community and provide the opportunity for agricultural and forestry activities to remain a vital part of the community.

**Community Facilities and Services**

**Goal 5:** To Develop and maintain public services and facilities to accommodate existing development and to encourage future sustainable growth in areas where community facilities and services are provided at adequate capacities.

**Each of the cities and the county only has a volunteer fire department.**

- **Policy 5.1:** **Continue to** seek ways to lower the Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating.

**Need to provide more community gathering spaces.**

- **Policy 5.2:** Identify potential funding sources for the development of recreational facilities.
- **Policy 5.3:** We are committed to providing pleasant, accessible public gathering places and parks throughout the community.

**Improve our public facility capacity in order to attract new development.**

- **Policy 5.4:** The use of existing facilities and services should be maximized.
- **Policy 5.5:** Our community will use planned infrastructure expansion to support development in areas identified as suitable for such development.

**Improve community services for underserved neighborhoods using Community Block Grants**

- **Policy 5.6:** We will ensure that new development does not cause a decline in existing levels of service for the community's residents.

## **Intergovernmental Coordination**

**Goal 6:** To enhance and maintain communication between each jurisdiction and surrounding counties in an effort to better serve the residents of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee.

**Need more intergovernmental coordination with all jurisdictions in order to better obtain grants from state and federal agencies.**

- **Policy 6.1:** Consider having a quarterly intergovernmental meeting between the County and Cities.
- **Policy 6.2:** We will pursue joint processes for collaborative planning and decision-making with neighboring jurisdictions.

**Need to coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions on shared needs.**

- **Policy 6.3:** We will seek opportunities to share services and facilities with neighboring jurisdictions when mutually beneficial.

## **Broadband Services**

**Goal 7:** Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee.

**Need digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee are met.**

- **Policy 7.1:** Enable public and private partnerships to reduce the cost of broadband services in Atkinson County

**7. Community Work Program  
Atkinson County 5-Year Community Work Program Report of Accomplishments  
(FY 2018-2022)**

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<b>PLANNING</b>								
Update the county website on a quarterly basis	\$500	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x	Completed
Develop a master resource guide	\$1500	General Fund		x	x			Change date Ongoing
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>								
Develop county-wide tourism plan	\$2500	General Fund					x	Deleted lack of tourism resources
Work with the City of Pearson and the City of Willacochee to form a county-wide Chamber of Commerce	Staff time	General Fund	x	x	x			Postpone until 2023 or 2024 not all governments on board
Develop a new board to reestablish the industrial Authority	Staff time	General Fund	x	x	x			Postpone until 2023 or 2024 unable to recruit board members
<b>HOUSING</b>								
Establish a housing rehabilitation program for dilapidated areas throughout the county	\$2500	CHIP,CDBG,and Opportunity Zones			x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds
Revitalize single family housing that can be used for affordable housing	\$7500	CHIP, CDBG	x	x	x			Postponed lack of funds
Encourage the availability of credit counseling available for all potential home buyers	\$25000	General Fund USDA, DCA	x	x	x			Postponed lack of funds
Enhance code enforcement efforts to make sure regulations are not being violated	Staff time	General Fund	x	x	x			Ongoing the Cities and the County will combine Code Enforcement officer
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>								
Continue to promote the development of regulations through coordination with the state to protect wetlands	\$1500 /staff time	General Fund	x	x	x			Completed



Continue to preserve and protect the ecological value and diversity of natural resources in Atkinson County	Staff time	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds
<b>LAND USE</b>									
Facilitates GIS training county wide	\$750 annually	General Fund			x	x	x	x	Completed
Develop a county zoning ordinance	\$500	General Fund			x	x	x		Postponed lack of funds
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>									
Continue with consolidations of Fire Departments so that the ISO number decreases	\$25,000	General Funds	x	x	x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds
Design and build new jail	\$35,000	EDA	x	x	x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds
Widen and resurface Cogdell road from Clinch County line to Union Hill Church Road	\$1,322,905.40	TSPLOST		x	x				Completed
Widen and resurface Springhead Road from SR64 to Live Oak Church Road	\$675,870.50	TSPLOST		x	x				Completed
Widen and resurface Springhead Road from 3.565 miles south of Willacoochee City Limits to Willacoochee Limits	\$746277.18	TSPLOST		x	x				Completed
Widen and resurface Springhead Road from Live Oak Church Road to 4.356 miles south of Willacoochee city limits	\$468277.18	TSPLOST		x	x				Completed
Upgrade fire equipment as needed	\$15,000	Fire Grants, General Fund	x	x	x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds
Purchase new police cars every two years	\$25,000 each	General Fund	x		x				Postponed lack of funds
Implement a training plan for Sheriff, Fire, and EMS	Staff time	General Fund		x	x				Postponed lack of funds
Evaluate financing methods for new infrastructure	Staff time	General Fund		x	x				Postponed lack of funds
Build new courthouse using old courthouse for annex	\$350,000	CDBG Grant	x	x	x				Delete combine with new Jail construction
Continue to apply for CDBG grants to enhance infrastructure, road and street projects, redevelopment as needed	\$5000 \$500,000	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL CO-ORDINATION**

Create and/or participate in a leadership program for residents, community leaders and government officials	\$1500	General Funds	x	x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds
Plan a retreat for City, County, BOE members to discuss and implement major improvements county wide	Staff time	General Funds	x	x	x	x	x	Deleted no retreat planned will rework for new 5year plan

**CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

Work to save old Malone Hotel which is 100 years old the one historical site that can be used as a great landmark for County and Cities	Staff time	General Funds, grants	x	x	x	x	x	Deleted privately owned now
Participate in identification and documentation of historic resources in the County	Staff time	General Funds		x	x	x	x	Postponed lack of funds

**City Of Pearson 5-year Community Work Program Report of Accomplishments  
(FY 2018 – 2022)**

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
Update the Pearson website on a quarterly schedule	\$1,500 annual	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>								
Continue to enhance the Industrial Park so that it can attract more industry and develop plans for expansion of the existing industrial park	\$500,000/enhance \$2,500/expansion	General Fund, CDBG, EDA		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Establish ad utilize a downtown revitalization program and board	\$500,000	DCA sown town RLF, EDA	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Develop a strategic plan that will make Pearson a candidate or the location Federal Prison System	\$2,000	GED, DCA		X	X	X	X	Delete Prison not wanted
Promote retention and expansion of existing businesses and industries	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Establish an Enterprise or Opportunity Zone to encourage redevelopment and infill	\$5,000	General Fund			X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Work with County and City of Willacochee to form a county-wide Chamber of Commerce and find an appropriate Chairman for Chamber	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Identify procedures to encourage successful small businesses to expand and reinvest in community.	\$1,500	General Fund		X	X			Postponed lack of funds
<b>HOUSING</b>								
Develop a program for the rehabilitation of housing in the City of Pearson	\$350,000	CDBG, DCA USDA		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Rehab/construct better housing for all income levels to ensure that all who work in the community live in decent housing.	\$500,000	CDBG, CHIP USDA, EDA	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Encourage and foster the provision of housing for low and moderate-income families	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds

Operate the State of Georgia weatherization program	Staff Time	General Grants	X	X	X	X	X	Completed
Participate in GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing)	Staff Time/\$2,500	General Fund		X	X	X		Postponed lack of funds
Establish a redevelopment strategy for identifying declining areas in City	\$7,500	General Fund			X	X		Postponed lack of funds
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>								
Protect and maintain the quality and quantity of wetlands	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Completed
Preserve and protect the ecological value and diversity of natural resources in City of Pearson	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Develop a plan to preserve/market resources for eco-tourism	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Monitor protect and maintain the quality and quantity of the City of Pearson water	\$2,500 annual	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
<b>LAND USE</b>								
Work with SGRC to update zoning/ Land Development Code Regulations.	\$5,000	General Fund				X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Make vacant store improvements and alleviate blighted property	\$300,000	CDBG, USDA, DCA, CHIP	X	X	X	X	X	Delete
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>								
Put waste baskets and lighting in the center of town to make the area safer and cleaner	\$7,500	CDBG, General Fund, TGRANT			X	X	X	Delete store owners provide trash bins
Continue and maintain youth programs	\$5,000	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Redevelopment of downtown areas. 1- Develop Better Hometown grant 2- Plan ornamental streetlight project 3- Purchase ornamental garbage cans and benches 4- Purchase street flags 5- Develop tree-planting project 6- Refinish sidewalks in downtown area	\$75,000	CDBG, General Fund, TGRANT				X	X	Completed through TE grant
Repave/surface streets as prioritized by need	\$120,000	LMIG	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds

Pave city streets as prioritized by need	\$200,000		LMIG	X	X	X	X	X	X	Delete combine with above
New fire department building	\$500,000		General Fund, Fire Grants			X	X	X	X	Ongoing continue to seek grant funding
Renovate the Civic and sports complex	\$700,000		General Funds, CDBG				X	X	X	Completed
Implement a training plan for Sheriff/Fire/EMS	\$15,000		General Funds			X	X	X	X	Reward to include county and cities
Upgrade and/or purchase a new police car every 2 years	\$25,000 each		General Fund, Grants	X		X			X	Ongoing 3 cars purchased
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>										
Continue with consolidation of Fire Departments to reduce ISO rating	Staff Time		General Fund	X		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Plan a retreat for City, County and BOE members to discuss and implement major improvements countywide.	Staff Time		General Fund				X	X	X	Deleted no interest
Create a leadership program for residents, community leaders, and government officials	\$1,500		General Fund			X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Define roles and partnerships between City and County for citizens	Staff Time		General Fund	X		X	X	X	X	Completed
<b>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b>										
Identify locations for more parks and open space locations within the city	Staff Time		General Fund	X		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Participate in the identification and documentation of historic resources in the City of Pearson	\$3,000		General Fund	X		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Work to save Old Malone Hotel which is 100 years old the one historical site that can be used as a great landmark for the City	\$350,000		General Fund, Grants, RLF	X		X	X	X	X	Deleted sold to private owner

**City of Willacoochee 5-Year Community Work Program Report of Accomplishments  
(FY 2018 - 2022)**

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	ACCOMPLISHMENTS
<b>PLANNING</b>								
Complete and distribute a new updated city-county tri-fold street map	\$2,500	General Fund	X	X	X			Completed
Update the City of Willacoochee website on a quarterly schedule	\$1,500 annual	General Fund	X	X	X		X	Postponed lack of funds
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>								
Maintain and improve Industrial Park	\$500,000	General Fund, EDA, CDBG	X	X	X		X	Postponed lack of funds
Water tank maintenance	\$500,000	General Fund, EDA, CDBG	X	X	X		X	Postponed lack of funds
Work with County and City of Pearson to form a county-wide Chamber of Commerce and find an appropriate Chairman for Chamber	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X		X	Postponed lack of funds
Construct a Civic Center	\$750,000	General Fund, EDA, CDBG					X	Postponed lack of funds
Establish an Enterprise or Opportunity Zone to encourage redevelopment and infill	\$5,000	General Fund			X		X	Postponed lack of funds
Identify procedures to encourage successful small businesses to expand and reinvest in community.	Staff Time	General Fund	X	X	X		X	Postponed lack of funds
<b>HOUSING</b>								
Rehabilitate existing and provide additional housing stock for all income levels	\$500,000	General Fund, EDA, CDBG, CHIP			X		X	Postponed lack of funds
Participate in GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing)	Staff Time/\$2,5000	General Fund			X		X	Postponed lack of funds

Establish a redevelopment strategy for identifying declining areas in City	\$7,500		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Develop a program for the rehabilitation of housing in the City of Willacoochee	Staff Time		General Fund CDBG, EDA, CHIP	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Operate the State of Georgia weatherization program	Staff time		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Completed
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Gain access to land to establish a boat ramp on the north side of the City of Willacoochee allowing for closer access to the river.	\$75,000		General Fund, DNR	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Research opportunities to develop and utilize check dams on the Alapaha River	\$10,000		General Fund, DNR		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
<b>LAND USE</b>									
Bypass from highway 82 to Springhead Road to industrial park	\$750,000		SPLOST		X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Work with SGRC to incorporate zoning/ Land Development Code Regulations.	\$5,000		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>									
Develop a city irrigation system to improve landscaping on government property.	\$50,000		General Fund, EDA	X	X	X	X	X	Completed
Improve main street with TEA Grant funding	\$25,000		Tyrant		X	X	X	X	Completed
Keep police car fleet up to date	\$50,000		COPS Grant	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Provide improvements to local streets, water lines and sewer lines with CDBG grants	\$500,000		General Fund, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Develop city-wide CDBG applications for housing rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements	\$500,000		General Fund, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Continue to expand beautification efforts around town and at city entrances	\$50,000		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	Completed
Repave/surface streets as prioritized by need	\$250,000		LMIG	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds

Pave city streets as prioritized by need	\$350,000		LMIG	X	X	X	X	X	X	Deleted combine with above
Update tennis courts, netting, stripping, concrete repair	\$50,000		General Fund, Grants			X	X	X	X	Delete
Upgrade Recreation Department ball fields	\$75,000		General Fund, Grants				X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Implement First Responder through Fire Department	\$5,000		General Fund, Grants		X		X	X		Completed
Construct a helicopter pad for emergency landings	\$150,000		General Fund, Grants					X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Implement Drug Prevention Program	Staff Time		General Fund				X	X	X	Deleted lack of funding
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL- COORDINATION</b>										
Continue with consolidation of Fire Departments to reduce ISO rating	\$10,000		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Create a leadership program for residents, community leaders, and government officials	\$1,500		General Fund				X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Plan a retreat for City, County and BOE members to discuss and implement major improvements countywide.	Staff Time		General Fund				X	X	X	Delete no interest
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Participate in the identification and documentation of historic resources in the City of Willacoochee	Staff Time		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Develop a historical preservation ordinance the City of Willacoochee	Staff Time		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds
Inventory Survey of West End Cemetery	\$5,000		General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	Postponed lack of funds



**7. Community Work Program  
Atkinson County 5-Year Community Work Program Update  
(FY 2023 -2027)**

Projects	Estimated Cost	Responsible Party	Funding Source	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27
<b>PLANNING</b>								
Develop a master resource guide	\$1500	County	General Fund			x	x	
Update the county website on a quarterly basis	\$500	County	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>								
Work with the City of Pearson and the City of Willacochee to form a county-wide Chamber of Commerce	Staff time	County/Cities	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x
Develop a new board to reestablish the industrial Authority	Staff time	County	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x
<b>HOUSING</b>								
Establish a housing rehabilitation program for dilapidated areas throughout the county	\$2500	County	CHIP, CDBG, and Opportunity Zones			x	x	x
Revitalize single family housing that can be used for affordable housing	\$7500	County	CHIP, CDBG	x	x	x	x	x
Offer training thru DCA to educate the public on assistance for buying homes	\$25000	County	General Fund USDA, DCA	x	x	x	x	x
Continue to enhance code enforcement by efforts to make sure regulations are not being violated	Staff time	County	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>								
Continue to preserve and protect the ecological value and diversity of natural resources in Atkinson County	Staff time	County	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x
<b>LAND USE</b>								
Develop a county zoning ordinance	\$500	County	General Fund			x	x	
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</b>								
Continue with consolidation of Fire Departments so that the ISO number can continue to decrease	\$100,000	County	General Funds	x	x	x	x	x

Design and build a new jail	\$2.2 million	County	EDA	x						
Continue to upgrade fire equipment as needed	\$15,000	County	Fire Grants, General Fund	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Purchase new police cars every two years	\$45,000 each	County	General Fund	x			x			x
Implement a training plan for Sheriff, Fire, Police, and EMS	Staff time	County/Cities	General Fund				x	x	x	
Evaluate financing methods for new infrastructure	Staff time	County	General Fund				x	x	x	
Continue to apply for CDBG grants to enhance infrastructure, road and street projects, redevelopment as needed	\$5000 \$750,000	County	General Funds CDBG	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL- COORDINATION</b>										
Create and/or participate in a leadership program for residents, community leaders and government officials	\$1500	County	General Funds	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b>										
Participate in the identification and documentation of historic resources in the County	Staff time	County	General Funds	x			x	x	x	x
Consider identifying sites that could qualify for historical significance.	Staff time	County	General Funds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

**City Of Pearson 5-year Community Work Program Update  
(FY 2023 – 2027)**

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27
<b>PLANNING</b>								
Update the Pearson website quarterly	\$1,500 annual	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>								
Continue to enhance the Industrial Park so that it can attract more industry and develop plans for expansion of the existing industrial park	\$500,000/enhance \$2,500/expansion	City of Pearson	General Fund, CDBG, EDA	x	X	X	X	X
Establish ad utilize a downtown revitalization program and board	\$500,000	City of Pearson	DCA RLF, EDA	X	X	X	X	X
Promote retention and expansion of existing businesses and industries	Staff Time	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Establish an Enterprise or Opportunity Zone to encourage redevelopment and infill	\$5,000	City of Pearson	General Fund				X	X
Work with County and City of Willacoochee to form a county-wide Chamber of Commerce and find an appropriate Chairman for Chamber	Staff Time	Cities of Pearson, Willacoochee, County	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Identify procedures to encourage successful small businesses to expand and reinvest in community.	\$1,500	City of Pearson	General Fund		X	X		
Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee officials will pursue a Georgia Main Street designation.	Staff Time	City of Pearson	General Fund	x	x	x	x	x
<b>HOUSING</b>								
Develop a program for the rehabilitation of housing in the City of Pearson	\$350,000	City of Pearson	CDBG, DCA USDA		X	X	X	X
Rehab/construct better housing for all income areas to ensure that all who work in the community live in decent housing in the community	\$750,000	City of Pearson	CDBG, CHIP USDA, EDA	X	X	X	X	X
Encourage and foster the provision of housing for low and moderate-income families	Staff Time	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X

Participate in GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing)	Staff Time/\$2,500	City of Pearson	General Fund	x	X	X	X	x
Identify blighted areas for redevelopment	\$50,000	City of Pearson	General Fund		X	X	X	
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>								
Preserve and protect the ecological value and diversity of natural resources in City of Pearson	Staff Time	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Monitor protect and maintain the quality and quantity of the City of Pearson water	\$30,000 annual	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
<b>LAND USE</b>								
Work with SGRC to update zoning/ Land Development Code Regulations.	\$5,000	City of Pearson	General Fund				X	X
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>								
Continue and maintain youth programs	\$10,000	City of Pearson/ rec department	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Repave/surface streets as prioritized by need	\$120,000	City of Pearson	LMIG	X	X	X	X	X
New fire department building	\$40000	City of Pearson	General Fund. Fire Grants		X	X	X	X
Implement a training plan for Sheriff/Fire/Police/EMS	\$15,000	Cities and County	General Funds		X	X	X	X
Upgrade and/or purchase a new police car every 2 years	\$25,000 each	City of Pearson	General Fund, Grants	X		X		X
Make vacant store improvements and alleviate blighted property	\$15,000 yearly	City of Pearson	CDBG, USDA, DCA, CHIP	x	x	x	x	x
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION</b>								
Continue with consolidation of Fire Departments to reduce ISO rating	Staff Time	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Create a leadership program for residents, community leaders, and government officials	\$1,500	City of Pearson	General Fund		X	X	X	X
<b>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b>								
Identify locations for more parks and open space locations within the city	Staff Time	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X

Participate in the identification and documentation of historic resources in the City of Pearson	\$3,000	City of Pearson	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
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**City of Willacoochee 5-Year Community Work Program Update  
(FY 2023 - 2027)**

PROJECTS	ESTIMATED COST	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27
<b>PLANNING</b>								
Update the City of Willacoochee website on a quarterly schedule	\$1,500 annual	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>								
Maintain and improve Industrial Park	\$750,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, EDA, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X
Water tank maintenance	\$750,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, EDA, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X
Work with County and City of Pearson to form a county-wide Chamber of Commerce and find an appropriate Chairman for Chamber	Staff Time	Cities and County	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Construct a Civic Center	\$750,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, EDA, CDBG				X	X
Establish an Enterprise or Opportunity Zone to encourage redevelopment and infill	\$5,000	Willacoochee	General Fund			X	X	X
Identify procedures to encourage successful small businesses to expand and reinvest in community.	Staff Time	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee officials will pursue a Georgia Main Street designation.	Staff Time	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
<b>HOUSING</b>								
Rehabilitate existing and provide additional housing stock for all income levels	\$500,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, EDA, CDBG, CHIP			X	X	X
Participate in GICH (Georgia Initiative for Community Housing)	Staff Time/\$2,5000	Willacoochee	General Fund			X	X	X
Establish a redevelopment strategy for identifying declining areas in City	\$7,500	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X

Develop a program for the rehabilitation of housing in the City of Willacoochee	Staff Time	Willacoochee	General Fund CDBG, EDA, CHIP	X	X	X	X	X
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>								
Gain access to land to establish a boat ramp on the north side of the City of Willacoochee allowing for closer access to the river.	\$75,000	County/Willacoochee	General Fund, DNR	X	X	X	X	X
Research opportunities to develop and utilize check dams on the Alapaha River	\$10,000	County/Willacoochee	General Fund, DNR		X	X	X	X
<b>LAND USE</b>								
Create a Bypass from highway 82 to Springhead Road to industrial park	\$750,000	Willacoochee	SPLOST		X	X	X	X
Work with SGRC to incorporate zoning/ Land Development Code Regulations.	\$5,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES &amp; SERVICES</b>								
Keep police car fleet up to date	\$50,000	Willacoochee	COPS Grant	X	X	X	X	X
Provide improvements to local streets, water lines and sewer lines with CDBG grants	\$750,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X
Develop city-wide CDBG applications for housing rehabilitation and infrastructure improvements	\$750,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X
Repave/pave/surface streets as prioritized by need	\$1,000,000	Willacoochee	LMIG	X	X	X	X	X
Upgrade Recreation Department ball fields with score boards and lights	\$75,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, Grants		X	X	X	X
Construct a helicopter pad for emergency landings	\$150,000	Willacoochee	General Fund, Grants				X	X
Clean City Limit signs	Staff Time	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Add bathrooms near the City's walking track	\$5,000	Willacoochee	General Fund		X	X	X	X
Replace or repair nets and court lines for tennis court at the City Park	\$2,500	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X
Add additional lighting on Old Florida Road	\$10,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X

Update all City Parks with new fencing, playground equipment, lights, and bleachers	\$10,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X
Add splash pad to Kiddie Park	\$15,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to market and promote the Azalea train line ride from Willacoochee to Valdosta	\$10,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>INTERGOVERNMENTAL - COORDINATION</b>									
Continue with the consolidation of Fire Departments to reduce ISO rating	\$10,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X
Create a leadership program for residents, community leaders, and government officials	\$1,500	Willacoochee	General Fund				X	X	X
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>									
Participate in the identification and documentation of historic resources in the City of Willacoochee	Staff Time	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X
Develop historical preservation ordinance for the City of Willacoochee	Staff Time	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X
Work with the SGRC to conduct an inventory survey of the West End Cemetery	\$5,000	Willacoochee	General Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X



## 8. Land Use Element

- Parks / Recreation / Conservation – Land used for both active and passive recreation. Includes County parks as well as permanently protected greenspace.
- Industrial – Land used for warehousing, manufacturing, transportation, utilities, plants, factories, wholesale trade facilities, solid waste facilities, etc.
- Public / Institutional – Local, state, and federal buildings and worship facilities. Includes municipal buildings, schools, police and fire stations, and churches.
- Residential – Land or parcels used for permanent living conditions. This land use includes single-family homes, multi-family houses, duplexes, town- houses, modular homes, apartments, etc.
- Transportation / Communication / Utilities – Land used by transportation (roads, railroads), communication or utility facilities; such as airports, cell towers, sewer plants, water towers, water treatment facilities, etc.
- Undeveloped / Other – Includes all vacant and undeveloped land that does not fit the definition of the other land use classification.

The primary land uses in the County are, agriculture and residential. Collectively, these land uses account for roughly 76% of the total land area in the County. It should be noted that the agriculture category contains a number of instances where residential structures are located on the same parcel as an active agricultural land use. The table below shows the current distribution of land uses. The City of Pearson has zoning.

LAND USE	PERCENTAGE%
RESIDENTIAL	29.73
AGRICULTURAL	45.90
COMMERCIAL	7.59
INDUSTRIAL	12.14
PUBLIC UTILITY	4.64

### New Land Use

City of Pearson	Type:
Dollar Tree/Family Dollar	Commercial
The Shack Restaurant	Commercial
Cargo Plant/Utility Trailer	Industrial
Wood Mill /Chip Mill	Industrial
Cargo Plant/Utility Trailer	Industrial
County to acquire property (2 lots)	Unknown
Bypass	Transportation/Communication/Utilities

City of Willacoochee	Type:
Azalea Sprinter Train	Transportation/Communication/Utilities
Family Dollar/Dollar Tree	Commercial

Atkinson County	Type:
Douglas Pellet Mill	Industrial
Family Dollar/Dollar Tree	Commercial

## AGRICULTURAL/FORESTRY

These are areas intended for detached single family residential uses and prime agriculture areas that maintain a rural character. This category is land dedicated to farming which includes fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock, production etc.. Agricultural or commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting. Agricultural/Forestry encompasses the largest percentage of total land use in Atkinson County at close to 50% usage.



Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Agricultural/Forestry

## CONSERVATION

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



Site of an ante-bellum trading post with a dam constructed in 1840 by Duncan Giddens; acquired by Miles J. **Guest**.1858, and enlarged by him includes a private fishing club a 669- acre lake and utility building used for parties and family reunions *etc...* for rent.

Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Conservation

## COMMERCIAL

These areas include both older and newer commercial uses and nodes within Atkinson County and the cities of Pearson and Willacoochee. Pearson and Willacoochee both have commercial areas running parallel to US 82. Pearson has additional development stretching from US 441 to the Coffee County line. Both cities of Pearson and Willacoochee have the new Dollar Tree/Family Dollar Stores. The county is slated to build one also in 2022/2023. The Shack restaurant is also new for the City of Pearson. Only the City of Pearson has zoning.



Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Commercial

## INDUSTRIAL

The land in this category is dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, or similar uses.



Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Industrial

## RESIDENTIAL

Development in this category is predominantly residential ranging from single-family densities to multi-family densities. Uses also allowed within this district include public and private schools. Churches and other uses as allowed in the zoning districts permitted under this land use.



Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Residential

## TRANSPORTATION/COMMUNICATION/UTILITIES

Includes such uses as major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations airports port facilities or other similar uses. 441 bypass around City of Pearson work to start 2022.



The Azalea Sprinter is South Georgia's premier excursion train - traveling along the historic Georgia & Florida Railroad. Trains depart from Nashville or Willacoochee and travel to Moody, Ray City, Valdosta and Willacoochee. Join us for a memorable rail journey through beautiful rural Georgia, through a series of short round-trip excursions; and with three different rail car seating options available, family fun awaits!

Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Transportation/Communication/Utilities

## PUBLIC /INSTITUTIONAL

This category includes certain state, federal or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, hospitals etc... Do not include facilities that are publicly owned but would be classified more accurately in another land use category. For example, include publicly owned parks and/or recreational facilities in the park/recreation/conservation category; include landfills in the industrial category, and include general office buildings containing government offices in the commercial category.



New Courthouse Annex opening 2022



Allowable zoning districts in this category are: Public/Institutional



## 9. Economic Development Element

The December 2021 annual update to the 2018-2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) as developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission under a grant from the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration is hereby incorporated by reference into this Comprehensive Plan to serve as the Economic Development Element for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economy. The SGRC CEDS analyzed the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, a regional plan of action, and the investment priorities and funding sources.

As a performance-based plan, this CEDS plays a critical role in adapting to global economic conditions by fully utilizing the region's unique advantages to maximize economic opportunity for its residents by attracting the private investment that creates jobs. The SGRC CEDS is a regionally- owned strategy that is the result of a continuing economic development planning process developed with regional public and private sector participation. This plan sets forth the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic development problems of the Southern Georgia region and clearly defines the measures of success.

The Southern Georgia CEDS gives an overview of the region briefly describing geography, population, economy, labor and workforce development and use, education, transportation access, environment, and regional resources. It reviews the state of the Regional Economy and provides a list of achievable Goals and Objectives for the region, a Plan of Action to ensure success, and Performance Measures used to evaluate the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's successful development and implementation of the 2018-2022 CEDS. Implementation of the goals identified in this plan is significant to the economic future of the SGRC District.

Policies, needs and opportunities, and Short-term Work Program implementation strategies located in the current Comprehensive Plans for each of the SGRC 18 county regions were used extensively to develop the CEDS Goals and Objectives, Vital Projects and Problems and Opportunities.

Included below are goals and objectives from the CEDS which are aligned with the current economic development goals of Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee

### **Goal:**

*Improve/upgrade the educational levels and labor force skills within the region.*

### **Objective:**

*Develop and support community based efforts to address improved educational levels and labor force skills.*

### **Objective:**

*Support the continued improvement of the educational system in addressing educational/skills improvement and ensure WIA coordination.*

**Goal:**

*Public services and facilities adequate to accommodate existing and future growth.*

**Objective:**

*Industrial Parks/properties with all necessary infrastructure and transportation links, to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the region.*

**Objective:**

*Availability of speculatively built and other buildings to attract new and expanding businesses and industries in the region.*

**Objective:**

*Availability of adequate financing and/or financial incentives to attract new and expanding businesses and industries to the region.*

**Goal:**

*Maintenance and improvement of existing and future housing and the elimination of the region's substandard housing conditions.*

**Objective:**

*Assist local governments with the development of a Building Inspection Program.*

**Objective:**

*Encourage local governments to participate in CHIP, CDBG, and USDA housing programs.*

**Objective:**

*Work with local governments to develop ordinances for manufactured home usage and placement.*

**Goal:**

*Provide affordable housing options for the low moderate income persons.*

**Objective:**

*Develop homebuyer programs for the low moderate income persons*

**Goal:**

*Continue conservation, maintenance, and improvement of existing/future housing and neighborhoods, and the elimination of substandard housing conditions in the region.*

**Objective:**

*All cities and counties should be encouraged to establish and maintain an annual housing condition inventory; and adopt or revise and update building and housing codes, using applicable state or national models.*

**Objective:**

*All substandard housing units, which are inventoried and suited for rehabilitation, should be scheduled for rehabilitation in a manner consistent with the local comprehensive plan.*

**Goal:**

*Provide broadband to all unserved and underserved people throughout the region.*

**Objective:**

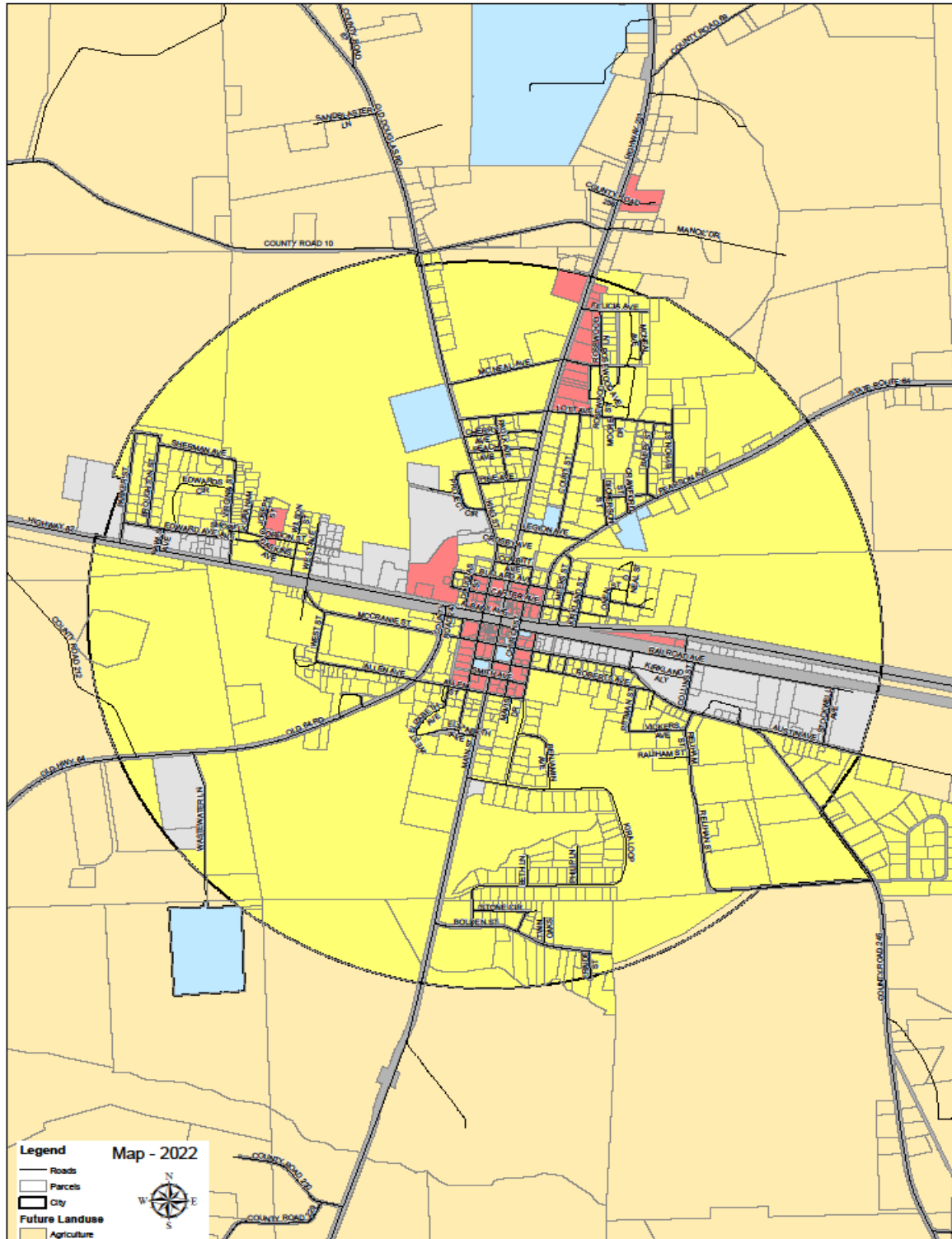
*Promote affordable access to broadband*

**Objective:**

*Assist local governments with obtaining Broadband Ready Designation*

# **Future Land Use Maps**

# Pearson Future Land Use



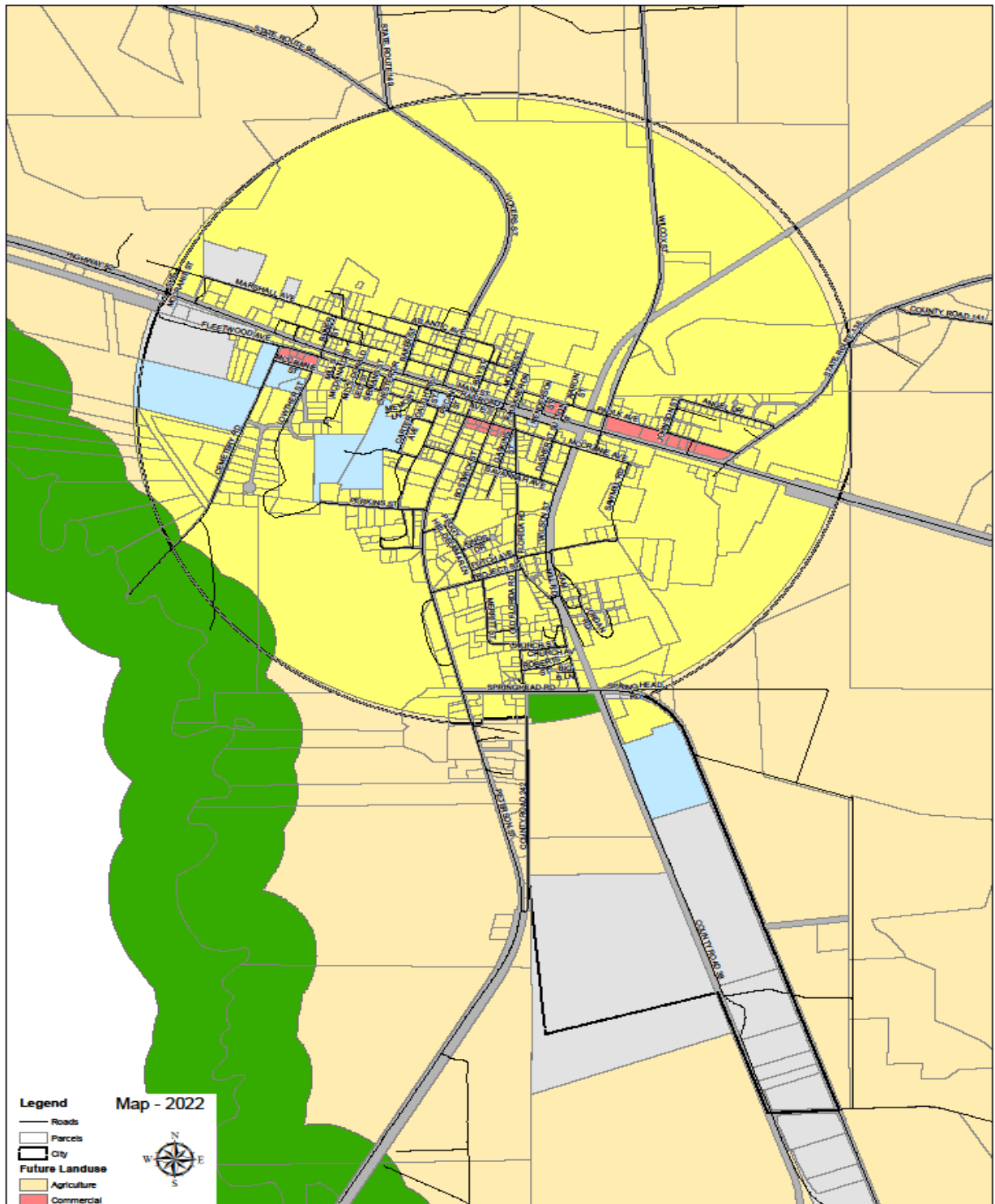
**Legend**      **Map - 2022**

- Roads
- Parcels
- City

**Future Landuse**

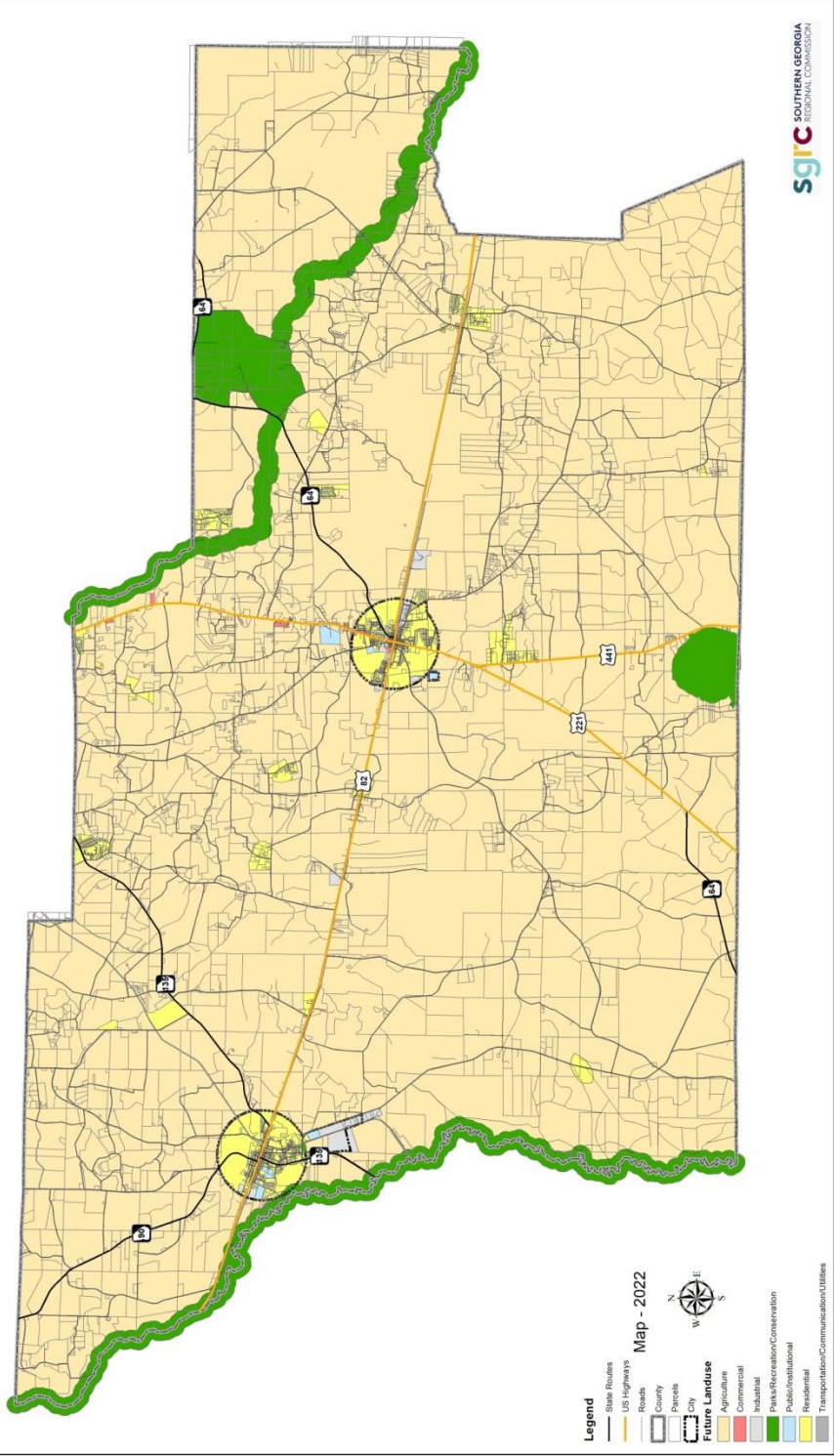
- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Public/Institutional
- Residential
- Transportation/Communication/Utilities

# Willacoochee Land Use





# Atkinson County Future Land Use



# Appendices

**Appendix A:  
Advertisements and Sign-in Sheets**

**Appendix B:  
Transmittal Letters and Adoption Resolutions**




**Kick-Off - Joint Public Hearing  
For Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee  
Comprehensive Plan Update**

A public hearing will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, April 25 at the Atkinson County Commission office located at 86 Main Street S, Pearson Georgia, to announce the beginning of the 2023 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee. The purpose of this hearing is to brief the community on the process to be used to develop the Comprehensive Plan, announce opportunities for public participation, in development of the plan, and obtain input on the proposed planning process.

Persons with special needs relating to disability success or foreign language should contact the Atkinson County Commissions Office at 912-422-3391. Persons with hearing disabilities may consider using the Georgia Relay Services at 1-800-255-0135.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please contact Janice McKinnon at (912) 381-5748 or the Atkinson County Commission Office at (912) 422-3391.

Kick Off Meeting For Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee Comprehensive Plan Update Monday April 25, 2022, 2:00pm			
Name	Organization	Email	Telephone
Peggy McCalland	City of Willacoochee	peggy.mccalland@willacoochee.ga.gov	912-534-5152
Glynn Bailey	City of Willacoochee	Glynn.Bailey@willacoochee.ga.gov	912-534-5152
Robert Johnson	City of Pearson	Mayor@cityofpearson.com	912-850-7839
Patricia Ballard	City of Pearson	cityclerk@cityofpearson.com	912-542-4762
Robbie D. Stone	Atkinson County	r.stone@atkinson-county.com	912-422-4538
Gloria Farrelly	Attk. Co.	Busy 9 1947 as Yahoo.com	912 381-3716
	Road Dept.		912 389-0590
Rena Y. Lott	Attk. Co.	n.lott@atkinson-co.org	912-422-3390

1 <sup>st</sup> Workshop Issues/Opportunities/Goals and Policies For Atkinson County and the Cities of Pearson and Willacochee May 17, 2022 2:00 pm			
Name	Organization	Email	Telephone
Jamie McKinon	N/A	Jamie.McKinon@gmail.com	912-381-5748
Dessy McCalland	City of Willacochee	pegme1@willacochee.com	912-534-5752
Mavis Johnson	Atkinson Co.	<del>pegme1@willacochee.com</del> mjohnson-ga.org	912-422-3391
Maria Howell	Atkinson Co.	Busy G 1947@yahoo.com	912-488-3391
Fabian Ballard	City of Pearson	cityclerk@cityofpearson.com	912 422-3997
Dina Lett	Atkinson Co.	n.lott@atkinson-ga.gov	912-422-3391
Paul [Signature]			912 389 0590

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June 28, 2022

2nd Workshop  
Atkinson County City of Pearson, City of Willacachee

Nina y. Lott Atkinson Co. BOC  
Robb- stone Atkinson county EMA/Fire

Kyce Harper Atkinson County EMA/Fire

~~Patricia Ballan~~ Road Dept.

Patricia Ballan City of Pearson

Marissa Johnson County Clerk

Peggy F. McClelland - City of Willacachee

Richard Carter City of Pearson / Atkinson Co PD

August 2 2:00 pm Tuesday 3rd Workshop

1. Gloria Jarrell
2. Keith HARPER Fire
3. Robbie Stone EMA/Fire
4. Malcolm Jones Willacoochee Council
5. Nina Lott - Bd. of Comm.
- 6 - Peggy F. McClelland, City of Willacoochee
- 7 - Kayce Harter EMA/Fire

## Atkinson County Board of Commissioners

P.O. Box 518 86 South Main St. Pearson, Ga. 31642

912-422-3391 Fax 912-422-3429

*Gloria Farrell, Interim Chairperson*

Commissioner ~~James Morris~~

Commissioner Gloria Farrell

Commissioner Charlton Gillis

Commissioner Johnny Durrance

Commissioner Donnis Willis

Building Inspector Jerry Worzella

County Clerk/Marissa Johnson

Finance Officer/HR Nina Y. Lott

Road Supervisor James Gore

County Attorney Jerome Adams

EMA Director Robbie Stone

October 13, 2022

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
1937 Carlton Adams Drive  
Valdosta Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Atkinson County has completed an update of its comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Nina Y Lott at 912-422-3391 or by email; [n.lott@atkinson-ga.org](mailto:n.lott@atkinson-ga.org).

Sincerely,



Gloria J Farrell

Interim Chairman, Atkinson County Commission

Enclosures



# City of Willacoochee

Samuel Newson, Mayor  
Peggy McClelland, City Clerk  
Regina Jordan, Water Clerk

*"Where good People Count"*  
33 Fleetwood Avenue  
Willacoochee, GA 31650  
Office: 912-534-5152  
Fax: 912-534-5848

Glynn Bailey, Mayor Protem  
Vernell Hall, Council  
Catesha Lott, Council  
George Myers, Council  
Malcolm Jones, Council

October 3, 2022

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
1937 Carlton Adams Drive  
Valdosta Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

City of Willacoochee has completed an update of its comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

I certify that appropriate staff and decision-makers have reviewed both the Regional Water Plan<s> covering our area and the Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (O.C.G.A. 12-2-8) and taken them into consideration in formulating our plan.

If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Peggy McClelland at 912-534-5152 or by email; [pegme1@willacoochee.com](mailto:pegme1@willacoochee.com).

Sincerely,



Samuel Newson  
Mayor, City of Willacoochee

Enclosures





## *City of Pearson*

*89 Main St. S*

*Pearson, Georgia 31642*

*Phone: 912-422-3397 Fax: 912-422-3393*

*E-mail: [mayor@cityofpearson.com](mailto:mayor@cityofpearson.com)*

*[www.pearsongeorgia.us](http://www.pearsongeorgia.us)*

*Robert Johnson, Mayor*

*Patricia Ballard, City Clerk*

October 11, 2022

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
327 W Savannah Avenue  
Valdosta Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Atkinson County has completed an update of its comprehensive plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in development of the plan in a manner appropriate to our community's dynamics and resources. Evidence of this has been included with our submittal.

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If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Nina Y Lott at 912-422-3391 or by email;

Sincerely,

Robert

Johnson  
Mayor, City of Pearson

Enclosures

**ATKINSON COUNTY**  
**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE**  
**2023 ATKINSON COUNTY**  
**AND CITIES OF PEARSON AND WILLACOOCHEE**  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

**WHEREAS**, Atkinson County has completed the 2023 Atkinson County and Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update;

**WHEREAS**, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning as established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective October 1, 2018.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, Atkinson County does hereby adopt the 2023 Atkinson County and Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

Adopted this 12<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2023



Chairman BOCC



ATTEST: County Clerk



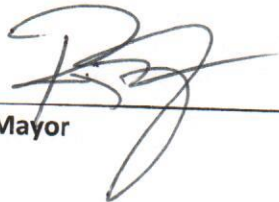
**CITY OF PEARSON**  
**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE**  
**2023 ATKINSON COUNTY**  
**AND CITIES OF PEARSON AND WILLACOOCHEE**  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

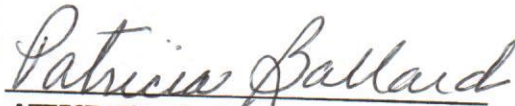
**WHEREAS**, the City of Pearson has completed the 2023 Atkinson County and Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update;

**WHEREAS**, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning as established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective October 1, 2018.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the City of Pearson does hereby adopt the 2023 Atkinson County and Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Adopted this 10<sup>th</sup> day of Jan, 2023

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTEST: City Clerk

# City of Willacoochee

Samuel Newson, *Mayor*  
Peggy McClelland, *City Clerk*  
Regina Jordan, *Water Clerk*

*"Where good People Count"*  
33 Fleetwood Avenue  
Willacoochee, GA 31650  
Office: 912-534-5152  
Fax: 912-534-5848

Glynn Bailey, *Mayor Protem*  
Verneil Hall, *Council*  
Calesha Lott, *Council*  
George Myers, *Council*  
Malcolm Jones, *Council*

## CITY OF WILLACOOCHEE

### RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2023 ATKINSON COUNTY AND CITIES OF PEARSON AND WILLACOOCHEE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

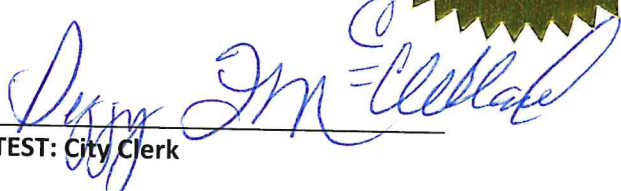
**WHEREAS**, the City of Willacoochee has completed the 2023 Atkinson County and Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update;

**WHEREAS**, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning as established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989; Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective October 1, 2018.

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED**, that the City of Willacoochee does hereby adopt the 2023 Atkinson County and Cities of Pearson and Willacoochee 2023 Comprehensive Plan.

Adopted this 9 day of January, 2023

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTEST: City Clerk



*The City of Willacoochee is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider*