

2026 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update For Ware County and the City of Waycross

Adopted: July 07, 2026



Prepared by:
Ware County
City of Waycross
Southern Georgia Regional Commission

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

I. Introduction

The 2026 Joint Ware County and the City of Waycross Comprehensive Plan were prepared per the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards, and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective March 1, 2025.

As required by the Local Comprehensive Planning Standards, the 2025 Joint Ware County – City of Waycross Comprehensive Plan Update consists of the following elements:

- **Community Goals**
- **Needs and Opportunities**
- **Community Work Program**
- **Broadband Services**
- **Economic Development Element**

(As a community included in the Georgia Job Tax Credit Tier 1 category),

A separate summarized economic development element is included in this Comprehensive Plan. By reference, it adopts the current regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Also, any economic development goals, policies, needs, opportunities, and objectives about Ware County and the City of Waycross have been integrated directly into their parallel components in this Comprehensive Plan.)

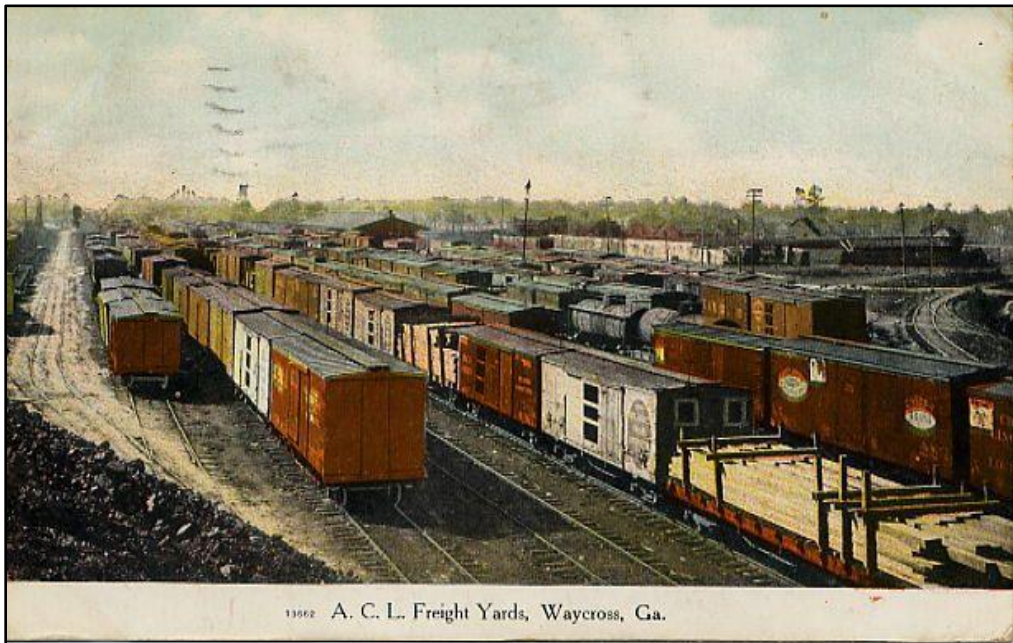
- **Land Use**

(As a community with zoning or land development regulations subject to the Zoning Procedures Law)

- **Transportation**
- **Joint Land Use Study Comprehensive Land Use and Policies**

II. History

Waycross/Ware County





Early and Pre-railroad history

- The area that would become Waycross lies in south-eastern Georgia’s coastal plain. ([Encyclopedia Britannica](#))
- Ware County, Georgia was established in 1824 when Appling County was divided. ([New Georgia Encyclopedia](#))
- Native American presence was significant, and conflict remained—one example: the “Wildes Massacre” of 1838 in Ware County during the Second Seminole War, where Creek warriors killed nine people and then escaped into the nearby Okefenokee Swamp. ([New Georgia Encyclopedia](#))
- Early settlers also used nearby rivers (e.g., Satilla) for rafting pine logs to sawmills on the coast in the mid-1800s. ([New Georgia Encyclopedia](#))

Naming & Incorporation

- The settlement that became Waycross began around a junction of railroads and earlier stage/trader trails. According to the city’s website:
 - In 1857 a station named “Tebeauville” was established (after Frederic E. Tebeau) near where the Savannah-Thomasville railroad under construction would intersect. ([waycrossga.gov](#))
 - The older name “Old Nine” or “Number Nine” was applied locally to the area. ([Wikipedia](#))
 - The name “Waycross” reflects its character as a crossing of ways (trajectories, trails, rail lines). The city website notes a story: Dr. Daniel Lott, Major Henry Haines (Savannah Railroad superintendent), and B.F. Allen (newspaper editor) chose the name “Waycross” when deciding on a name for the railroad junction. ([waycrossga.gov](#))
 - Official incorporation: The town was incorporated as “Way Cross” on March 3, 1874. ([Wikipedia](#))
-

Railroad & Boom Era

- The growth of Waycross is closely tied to railroads. The junction of several lines (including the Plant System and Brunswick & Western) made it a transportation hub. (waycrosschamber.org)
- From 1872 to about 1920 the town experienced rapid growth; it was even called “The Magic City of Southern Georgia” during that period. (NPGallery)
- The railroad’s presence influenced the layout of downtown: for example the grid of streets in the historic district reflects the “Maltese cross” pattern of the Plant System’s logo. (waycrosschamber.org)
- Because of its rail yard and rail-traffic role, Waycross became central in regional transport of goods (timber, turpentine, farming produce) and passengers. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Economic and Social Development

- Timber, turpentine, sawmills and farming were mainstays of the economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Encyclopedia Britannica)
- The proximity to the Okefenokee Swamp and forested land added natural-resource dimension to the economy and culture. (waycrosschamber.org)
- In 1917, Waycross became the first city in Georgia to open municipal primary elections to white women. (Note: fully universal women’s suffrage at state level came in 1922.) (Wikipedia)
- Key buildings & institutions:
- The former YMCA building (built in 1911 and later repurposed as City Hall) stands as a sign of the town’s early ambition. (waycrossga.gov)
- Historic districts and buildings (e.g., downtown historic district, First African Baptist Church & Parsonage) preserve architectural heritage. (Wikipedia)

Mid-20th Century & Beyond

- During WWII the local airport (now Waycross–Ware County Airport) was part of the U.S. Army Air Forces training activity. (Wikipedia)
- In the ‘50s an interesting local tourist gimmick: the Police would stop out-of-state license plates, escort visitors to downtown Waycross, give them lodging/dinner and a trip to the swamp. This faded after the Interstate system bypassed the town. (Wikipedia)
- The shift in transportation (decline of passenger rail, rise of highways) and broader structural changes meant that rail-based towns like Waycross had to adapt.
- More recently, Waycross remains a regional hub: e.g., the rail yard (operated by CSX Transportation) is cited as one of the largest computerised switching/classification yards on the East Coast. (waycrosschamber.org)

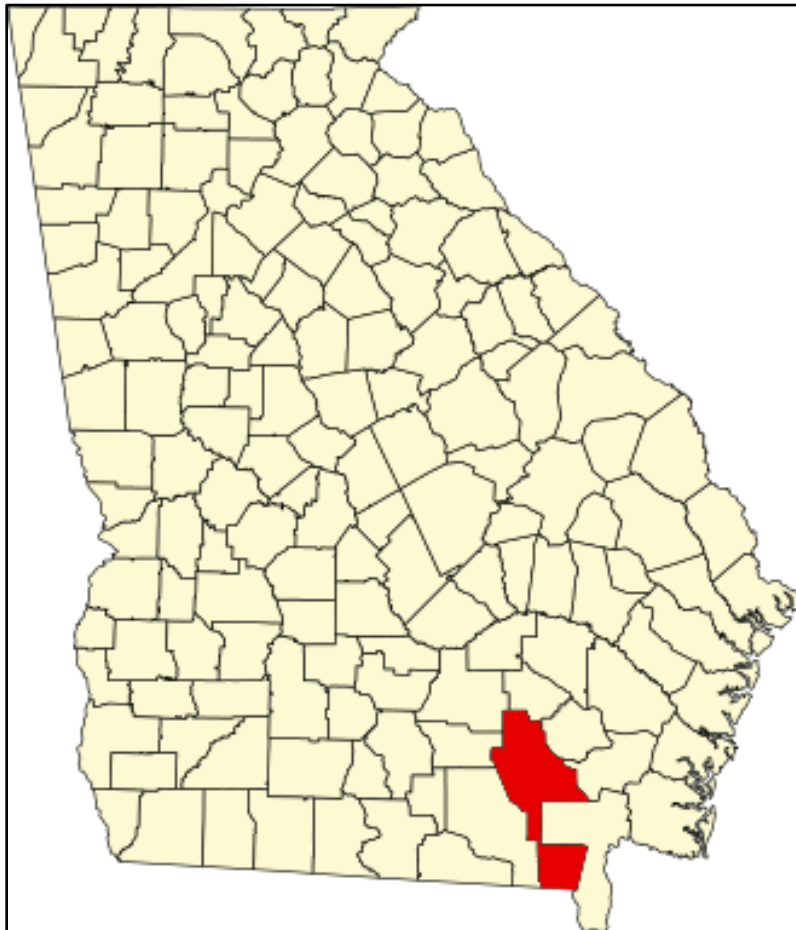
Heritage & Identity

- The city’s historic downtown area, with over 200 heritage-listed buildings, draws tourists and reflects its past. (expedia)
- As the “northern gateway” to the Okefenokee Swamp, Waycross links to a unique natural environment and to pioneer/Native American/forestry heritage. (waycrosschamber.org)
- The name “Waycross” continues to symbolize its role where “ways cross” — roads, rail lines, commerce, people.

Modern Snapshot & Challenges

- According to the 2010 Census, the city had about 14,649 people; in 2000 about 15,333; showing modest decline. (waycrossga.gov)
 - Its economy today includes manufacturing (forest products, tobacco), transportation/logistics, and serves a wider eight-county region. (TED)
 - Like many small-city historic towns, Waycross faces challenges of revitalizing downtown, preserving historic buildings, adapting to economic change and leveraging heritage and environment for tourism. (wwda.us)
-

- It's a clear example of how transportation infrastructure (railroads, transportation junctions) can generate and shape a town's origin and growth.
- Its proximity to the Okefenokee Swamp and forest resources gives it a distinct ecological and historical character, tying together industrial, natural-resource and pioneer histories.
- The preserved historic districts and buildings allow insight into architectural and civic ambitions of a Southern railroad-town of the late 19th and early 20th century.
- Its early adoption of women's municipal primary voting speaks to a unique civic history in Georgia.





Founding and early configuration

- Ware County was created on **December 15, 1824** out of a portion of Appling County, Georgia. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)
- It was named for Nicholas Ware, a U.S. Senator from Georgia (1821-1824) who never visited the area. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)
- At the time of its creation, the territory of Ware County was very large and over time portions of it were carved off to create new counties (for example: Charlton County, Georgia in 1854, Clinch County, Georgia 1850, Pierce County, Georgia 1857). (Wikipedia)
- The original county-seat was at Waresboro (sometimes spelled Waresborough) in the early years. (AHGP)

Indigenous presence & early settlement

- Prior to extensive settlement by people of European descent, this region was part of lands inhabited by Native American groups (primarily the Creek/Muscogee and other Indigenous peoples).
- The creation of Appling County (from which Ware was carved) followed Indian land cessions (e.g., the 1814 Treaty of Fort Jackson) that opened territory in southern Georgia. (AHGP)
- Ware County's territory includes part of the vast Okefenokee Swamp ("land of quaking earth"), which for a long time served as a frontier, wilderness refuge, and barrier to settlement. (Digital Library of Georgia)
- One of the more dramatic early conflicts: In 1838, during the Second Seminole War era, the so-called Wildes Massacre occurred in Ware County — nine people were killed by a group of Creek warriors who retreated into the Okefenokee. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)

Transportation, settlement & economic growth

- The county benefited from its geography: rivers (such as the Satilla River) and the swamp influenced settlement, industry and transport. For example, in the mid- to late-1800s, the Satilla River was used to raft longleaf pine from inland forests to sawmills on the coast. (okefenokeeheritagecenter.org)

- The Okefenokee Swamp contributed cypress timber (especially from operations like the Hebardville Cypress Mill) and the development of narrow-gauge railroads to haul timber out of the swamp. (okefenokeeheritagecenter.org)
- The city of Waycross, Georgia (now the county seat) emerged as a transportation hub. The name “Waycross” reflects the intersection of several roads/trails — “ways crossing” — and later railroads. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)
- By the late 19th century, the railroad era bolstered Waycross and Ware County’s development. The shift of the county seat from Waresboro to Waycross occurred as Waycross grew. (AHGP)

Government, infrastructure & key structures

- According to historical markers: After the county’s creation, in early 1825 an inferior court was set up with justices named (William Smith, Solomon Hall, John L. Stewart Jr., Philemon Bryan, Absalom Thomas) and then in 1826 the first county officers were elected (sheriff, clerk, surveyor, etc.). (Georgia Historical Society)
- The present county courthouse in Waycross was built in 1956-57, a modern structure of Georgia marble and concrete, the “U”-shaped building designed by William J. J. Chase & Associates. (American Courthouses)

Land, size, and geography

- Ware County is the largest county in Georgia by land area (over 900 square miles) in some accounts. (Digital Library of Georgia)
- A significant portion of the county is forestland or swamp. In fact, forest covers ~88-89% of the land area in modern data. (Digital Library of Georgia)
- The presence of the Okefenokee Swamp in the southern part of the county gives the region a unique ecological, cultural, and economic dimension. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)

Economy & industry

- In the 19th and early-20th centuries, the dominant economic activities included agriculture (small farms, subsistence), timber harvesting (especially pine and cypress), turpentine distilling, sawmills, and later railroads and transport. (Amazon Web Services, Inc.)
- Timber was especially important: the longleaf pine and cypress operations in the county and adjacent region fed coastal markets and industries. (okefenokeeheritagecenter.org)
- Over time, transportation (railroads) and retail also grew in importance; Waycross emerged as a regional commercial center for the region. (okefenokeeheritagecenter.org)

Cultural & natural heritage

- The presence of the Okefenokee Swamp gives Ware County significant natural heritage. It has been a site for wildlife, tourism (e.g., swamp tours), and conservation efforts. (Digital Library of Georgia)
- A notable state park: Laura S. Walker State Park was established near Waycross. The park’s land was purchased in the 1930s (Depression-era federal land-use projects) and the park was officially established in 1941. It’s named after writer-conservationist Laura Singleton Walker. (Georgia State Parks)
- The county has produced a number of artists and writers; for example, author Caroline Miller (Pulitzer Prize winner) is from the area. (New Georgia Encyclopedia)

Social & demographic developments

- Like many rural Georgia counties, Ware County has gone through periods of population growth (in the 19th/early 20th centuries) and also decline especially in towns when industries or transportation patterns shift. For instance, in the 1980s the city of Waycross lost a sizable portion of its population (~15 %) according to data in a 1994 snapshot. (Digital Library of Georgia)
 - Education, community institutions, and local government have grown over time. For example, local colleges (such as the former Waycross College) and technical colleges contribute to regional development. (okefenokeeheritagecenter.org)
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Modern era & challenges

- In more recent times Ware County continues to leverage its regional role: as the county seat and regional retail hub, as a gateway to nature/tourism via the swamp, and as a forested landscape with forestry and conservation.
 - There are challenges too: economic shifts, employment changes (for example, decline of railroads and some industries), and natural-resource issues (wildfires in forestlands are noted in county hazard mitigation plans). (sgrc.us)
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Why Ware County matters

- Its large size, forested/swamped terrain, and strategic position in southeast Georgia make it historically significant in terms of timber, transportation and ecology.
- The story of Ware County illustrates the broader patterns of southern Georgia: settlement from the 1800s, logging of pine and cypress, railroads, and changing economies.
- The Okefenokee Swamp and associated wilderness in the county form a distinctive natural and cultural landmark in the Southeast.

1. Community Involvement

All of the required elements have been developed with extensive opportunity for involvement and input from stakeholders throughout the community. 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 community:

a. Stakeholders were identified. These included:

- i. The local governments' elected officials and staff
- ii. Local educational institutions (Ware County Board of Education, South Georgia State College)
- iii. The Waycross-Ware County Chamber of Commerce
- iv. Waycross-Ware County Development Authority
- v. Public safety departments, including police, fire, and the Ware County Emergency Management Agency
- vi. The Satilla Riverkeeper
- vii. Waycross-Ware County Airport
- viii. Waycross-Ware County Public Library
- ix. Local businesses and industries
- x. The general public

b. Participation techniques were identified. Techniques used included public hearings and meetings open to the public with open discussion; printed public information in local newspapers; e-mail correspondence with stakeholders; individual meetings with local government officials; and information on the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's website, local government websites, and social media.



c. A participation program was conducted. This included an initial public hearing to give an overview of the plan update and receive initial public comments; four workshops, open to the public, for the development of the plan update; and a final public hearing to receive any final public comments before transmitting the plan draft to DCA for review. Identified stakeholders were invited to all the meetings and attended, yielding specific input in plan content.

d. Public participation activities were documented. The documentation of public participation activities is included in the Appendix to this plan, which contains sign-in sheets and published advertisements.

Steering Committee

Name	Title/Jurisdiction
Greg Tanner	South GA State College
William Clark	
Dustin Minchew	Ware County Planning & Codes
Ulysses Rayford	Waycross City Manager
Jason Rubenbauer	Waycross/Ware Development Authority
James Shubert	Ware County Manager
Elmer Thrift	Chairman Ware County
Melinda Brooks	County Clerk

1st Public Hearing – “Kick-Off”

The public hearing kicking off the comprehensive planning process was held on August 11, 2025 at the Ware County Administration Building in Waycross. It was held for the purpose of making any potential stakeholders and residents aware that the comprehensive plan update and review was now underway; to explain the purpose of the update; and to encourage residents and other stakeholders to actively participate in the plan update.



First Workshop

First Workshop was held on October 28, 2025. The purpose of the workshop was to update the goals, needs, and opportunities in the comprehensive plan. This was done through open discussion, using the goals, needs, and opportunities from the previous comprehensive plan as a starting point. SGRC staff took notes from the discussion, revised the goals, needs, and opportunities based on those notes, and shared the results with stakeholders via e-mail.

In addition, a SWOT analysis was performed in which each attendee noted the community’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The results of this SWOT analysis were used to further inform the Needs and Opportunities. The SWOT analysis was also made available to the general public to complete online. Link were provided to the online analysis by the SGRC, the City of Waycross, Ware County, and others through social media. SGRC Staff members gathered the information of the online version and added to this document. Ware posted meeting dates on social media platforms to invite the public to participate in the process.

Second Workshop

The second workshop was held on November 19, 2025 was held on January 29, 2026 at the Ware County Government Building. The purpose of the workshop was to continue and finish updating the needs and opportunities.

Third Workshop

The third workshop was held on January 29, 2026 at the Ware County Government Building. SGRC staff took notes from the discussion, revised the goals, needs, and opportunities based on those notes, and shared the results with stakeholders via e-mail. Additional comments and edits were received via e-mail and were included by SGRC staff as part of the preparation of the draft plan document.



Fourth Workshop

The fourth workshop was held on March 10, 2026. The purpose of the workshop was updated the Community Work Programs for both the City of Waycross and Ware County.

Character Area Meeting

A fifth meeting was held on April 15, 2026 to discuss changes to Waycross and Ware County's Character Area Map.



Final public hearing

A final public hearing was held on May 11, 2026 in order to present the final version of the plan to the community, receive any additional public input, and approve the transmittal of the draft plan to DCA. The plan was transmitted to DCA after the public hearing.

Adopted: July 13, 20026

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan for Ware County and the City of Waycross was adopted by Ware County on July 13, 2026. The City of Waycross adopted the plan on July 7, 2026. The resolutions are provided in the Appendix.

3. Consideration of Regional Water Plan and Environmental Planning Criteria

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, the local governments must review both the Regional Water Plan applicable to their area and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria (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

Ware County is within the area of the Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan, which was adopted in June 2023. The Suwannee-Satilla Council is one of 11 planning regions charged with developing Regional Water Plans and encompasses 18 counties in the southeastern portion of Georgia (shown in Figure ES-1). An overview of the updated findings and recommendations for the Suwannee- Satilla Region are provided in this Executive Summary. The Suwannee- Satilla Council's Regional Water Plan is available on the Council's website.



Source: CDM Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Figure ES-1

The Suwannee-Satilla Council has identified 13 goals for the region. It is important to note that the goals are summarized below, not presented in order of priority, but instead were assigned a number to identify specific goals addressed as part of the water management practice selection process.

“The Vision of the Suwannee- Satilla Regional Council is to manage water resources in a sustainable manner under Georgia’s regulated riparian and regulated reasonable use laws to support the state’s and region’s 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.”

Suwannee-Satilla Regional Water Plan Goals:

1. Manage and develop water resources to sustainably and reliably meet domestic, commercial, industrial water needs, and agricultural water needs, including all agricultural sectors (this includes the agroforestry economy of the region).
2. Manage groundwater 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 quantity and quality.
11. Identify and implement cost-effective water management strategies.
12. Seek to provide economically affordable power and water resource service to all citizens of the region.
13. Identify and implement actions to better measure and share water use data and information.

Addressing Water Needs and Regional Goals

This Section presents the Suwannee-Satilla Council’s water management practices selected to address resource shortfalls or challenges identified and described in Section 5, and/or meet the Council’s Vision and Goals described in Section 1.

Identifying Water Management Practices

The comparison of Resource Assessments and forecasted needs presented in Section 5 identifies the Region’s likely resource shortfalls or challenges and demonstrates the need for region and resource specific water management

practices. In the cases where shortfalls or challenges appear to be unlikely based on the comparison of the Region's Resource Assessments and forecasted needs, the management practices described in this section have been selected to also meet those needs specified by the

Council (e.g., facility/infrastructure needs and practices, programmatic practices, etc.) that are aligned with the Region's Vision and Goals. In selecting the actions needed (i.e., water management practices), the Council considered practices identified in existing plans, the Region's Vision and Goals, and coordinated with local governments and water providers as well as neighboring Councils who share these water resources.

Review of Existing Plans and Practices

The Council conducted a comprehensive review of existing local and regional water management plans and relevant related documents to frame the selection of management practices. The types of plans/studies that were reviewed to support identification and selection of management practices for the Suwannee-Satilla Region consisted of the following:

- Comprehensive Work Plans (local and regional scale)
- Regional infrastructure and permitting plans
- EPD databases (permitted withdrawals, planned projects, and proposed reservoirs)
- State-wide guidance documents (conservation, cost, and water planning)
- Best Management Practices (forestry, agriculture, and stormwater management)
- Water quality studies including Watershed Protection Plans (basin, watershed, and local scale)
- TMDL evaluations

When possible, successful management practices already planned for and/or in use in the Suwannee-Satilla Region formed the basis for the water management practices selected by the Council.

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

The Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria deal specifically with the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, river corridors, and mountains, the last of which is not 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. These criteria shall be incorporated into this comprehensive plan and addressed specifically and in more detail through local ordinances and land development regulations.

2. Plan Elements

Community Goals

Vision and Goals

The following Vision and Goals are intended to serve as guiding principles for the future of Ware County and the City of Waycross. The Vision and Goals were updated during the 2025/2026 Comprehensive Plan Update based on input from the stakeholders. The previous plan didn't contain an Education Goal was added to the plan in order to showcase the importance of the education in every aspect of the future of Waycross and Ware County.

Vision

To improve the overall lifestyle of our citizens with smart and controlled growth that takes advantage of our City's and County's rich history, resources, and talents.

Goals

1. **Population Goal:** Ensure that all segments of the population benefit from overall community growth and development.
2. **Economic Development Goal:** Improve the economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, expand tourism, diversify the local economy, support a vibrant Downtown, and help the County and the City compete in the regional and global economies.
3. **Housing Goal:** Provide opportunities for homeownership and housing resources for all citizens of Ware County and the City of Waycross through public/private partnerships.
4. **Natural Resources Goal:** Conserve, protect, and develop the functions and values of the City's and County's natural resources for future generations' appropriate use and enjoyment.
5. **Cultural Resources Goal:** Protect, preserve, develop, and promote the City's and County's historic and cultural resources through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, tourism, and education programs focused on historic preservation.
6. **Land Use Goal:** Ensure the highest quality of living environment possible by improving the community's aesthetic quality through a mixture of compatible land uses and character areas reflecting the needs and desires of the local residents.
7. **Community Facilities Goal:** Ensure that adequate community facilities, such as water, sewer, broadband, solid waste, police, fire, and EMS, are provided in an effective, environmentally sound, safe, and economic system, consistent and concurrent with present demand and future growth.
8. **Transportation Goal:** Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that addresses the future needs of the County and the City for the movement of people and freight, while considering that system's social, economic, energy, and environmental effects.

9. **Intergovernmental Coordination Goal:** Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public entities to best maintain the City's and the County's quality of life and resources.

10. **Broadband:** Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ware County and the City of Waycross.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Needs and Opportunities

The Needs and Opportunities listed in this section were developed by stakeholders and residents as part of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update process. The method used to develop the Needs and Opportunities was open discussion among stakeholders during community workshops, during which a consensus was reached regarding what the Needs and Opportunities should be and how they should be updated. Input from stakeholders, including the results of a SWOT analysis conducted in the first workshop and through an online survey. The information was gathered by Southern Georgia Regional Commission staff and then organized into this section of the Comprehensive Plan. Additional input sent via e-mail and phone calls was integrated into the draft plan document by SGRC staff, and many successive drafts of the plan were reviewed by the stakeholders and publicized via the SGRC website before the draft was finalized. Each of the needs is addressed by corresponding policies in the "Policies" section.

Population

Needs:

- 1.1. Young people need more incentives to remain in Ware County/Waycross rather than leaving. The community's appeal to younger people needs to be emphasized. Outreach is needed in order to change the attitudes of younger people who wish to leave the community.
- 1.2. More involvement from younger people is needed in order to determine what they want in the community. This involvement could come through Leadership Waycross or through creating a youth leadership program, for example.
- 1.3. Ware County/Waycross needs incentives for workers to live in the community rather than commuting in from elsewhere.
- 1.4. Population needs to be stabilized and continued growth encouraged.

Opportunities:

- 1.1. Increase efforts to retain/attract younger adults through job opportunities and available activities.
- 1.2. Pursue attraction of retirees to the area by emphasizing the quality of life and continuing to develop quality retirement communities.

Economic Development

Needs:

- 1.5. Better job opportunities are needed for people who graduate from the local colleges. Waycross has two excellent technical colleges (Coastal Pines and South Georgia State College); however, insufficient jobs are available locally to retain the educated workforce.
- 1.6. A more centralized vision is needed for the area by the city, County and the business community.

- 1.7. More public relations and marketing of the City and County are needed. The area's greatest assets, such as quality of life and small-town feel with large-town amenities, are inadequately promoted. The Rural Center at ABAC may be a resource for this.
- 1.8. There needs to be more awareness of the Downtown Visitor's Center located inside City Hall and the resources it provides.
- 1.9. Downtown needs more evening events and businesses that stay open after 5:00.
- 1.10. A Downtown Business Resource Center is needed.
- 1.11. There are several properties in prime Downtown locations that are occupied but not actively used (for example, being used for storage). The use of these properties needs to be regained in order to spur the local economy.
- 1.12. A comprehensive listing of economic development and community websites and information resources is needed.
- 1.13. The existing rail system is under-utilized in helping to recruit new businesses. At the same time, there is a need for additional developable property close to rail lines.
- 1.14. Southern Georgia as a whole needs more adequate representation and consideration by the State Legislature.

Opportunities:

- 2.1. Pursue the development of a comprehensive Master Plan for economic development and promotion of Waycross/Ware County.
- 2.2. Capitalize on the existing geography of Waycross/Ware County, with its close location to the coast, I-95, US-1, Hwy. 82, and Hwy. 84, as well as its proximity to Jacksonville Airport and the Ports of Brunswick, Jacksonville, and Savannah. The area is also less subject to impact by hurricanes than coastal areas.
- 2.3. Waycross/Ware County has 5 direct rail lines, including a rail connection to the industrial park.
- 2.4. Attract industries that can utilize rail. Research funds and opportunities to develop additional properties along rail lines.
- 2.5. The train-watching platform is an asset for tourism.
- 2.6. Encourage the development of RV facilities in the county to support tourism.
- 2.7. Space Port Camden offers many great economic opportunities due to Waycross/Ware County's proximity to that area.
- 2.8. Investing in a young professionals' organization could expand networking and economic opportunities. This could be a collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce and Leadership Waycross, or a youth leadership program could be created.
- 2.9. The Rural Center at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College or the Rural Development Institute at Valdosta State University has done marketing plans for other communities in the region, and could be a resource for marketing for Ware County/Waycross.

2.10. The SEEDS Business Resource Center in Lowndes County could be a successful model for a Downtown Business Resource Center in Waycross.

2.11. Encourage and assist local entrepreneurs to increase homegrown small businesses; for example, with an incubator program or by partnering with an existing incubator program (for example, a partnership to share resources with the incubator program that is being started by the Valdosta Chamber of Commerce).

2.12. Continue to work with local colleges to better train the future current and future workforce.

2.13. Encourage aesthetic improvements to the community, especially aesthetic improvements to downtown buildings.

2.14. Take advantage of brownfield redevelopment and infill opportunities.

2.15. A RAS (Revitalization Area Strategy) could help to spur economic development.

Housing

Needs:

1.15. Revitalization is needed for blighted neighborhoods and large areas of blighted homes in Waycross/Ware County.

1.16. Revitalize vacant houses in the community in order to improve the housing stock in Waycross/Ware County

1.17. There is an overall need for more affordable housing, especially good-quality, homes to purchase and low-cost rental housing.

1.18. Examine zoning codes to ensure that more families can find suitable housing in walkable urban neighborhoods.

1.19. Educate citizens about zoning codes.

1.20. There are insufficient funds and programs to address the homeless population. Homeless shelters and housing for people experiencing homelessness are needed.

Opportunities:

3.1. Promote the small-town atmosphere with its good quality of life to attract more residents to the area.

3.2. There are vacant tracts of land that could be used for housing development.

3.3. Increase housing opportunities in downtown, including additional apartments and loft living.

3.4. Consider programs to encourage more quality affordable housing developments with access to downtown and other job centers.

3.5. Promote increased housing revitalization and /or infrastructure upgrades in neighborhoods.

3.6. Encourage innovative techniques for developing affordable housing.

3.7. Ensure that zoning is not a barrier to affordable housing.

- 3.8. On-site recreation facilities can make new housing developments more attractive to potential buyers and renters.
- 3.9. The land bank can be used to facilitate the repurposing of vacant homes and blighted properties. Identify the land bank lots and locations that have been or could be utilized to provide affordable housing units for residents and community college students.
- 3.10. Identify existing regulations and zoning regulations that prevent these land bank lot locations from being repurposed or utilized to provide affordable housing units.
- 3.11. The Okefenokee Alliance for the Homeless advocates for people experiencing homelessness.
- 3.12. There is a need for broadband access for people experiencing homelessness in order to connect them to work and housing opportunities as well as other needed services.
- 3.13. Utilize housing study to determine the variety housing types need in Ware County/Waycross that include apartments and townhomes.
- 3.14. Conservation subdivisions could be an opportunity to provide higher-end housing integrated with the natural environment.

Natural Resources

Needs:

- 1.21. Ware County and Waycross have world-class natural resources such as the Okefenokee Swamp, but these resources need more promotion to the mainstream tourist market.
- 1.22. Wetlands in Ware County need to be protected from development.

Opportunities:

- 4.1. The Satilla River is an excellent resource for recreation, including fishing and canoeing. The City and County are in the process of supporting/promoting the Satilla River Water Trail with signs, markers, and a website: <https://garivers.org/water-trails-and-paddling/satilla-river-water-trail/>.
- 4.2. The Satilla Riverkeeper's quarterly clean-up events should be supported and promoted.
- 4.3. There are many eco-tourism opportunities in the community. Eco-tourism can benefit the local economy and help to raise people's awareness of the need to preserve the natural environment.
- 4.4. Ware County/Waycross has the most tourist-friendly and accessible entrance to the Okefenokee Swamp. Encourage promotion for mainstream tourism, including family-friendly amenities, accessibility, educational opportunities, hotels and other non-camping facilities, and RV facilities.
- 4.5. Promote cabins and a new boardwalk have been constructed at Laura Walker State Park.
- 4.6. Increase the use of green technology (such as the recently installed litter trap in the Satilla River) to attract business and industry, provide clean energy, and provide a high-quality living environment.
- 4.7. Research and consider the establishment of a wetland mitigation bank or other wetland mitigation standards to encourage development while minimizing impact on the natural environment.

- 4.8. The Cherokee Heights neighborhood has a great diversity of plant life. The availability of this natural resource could be promoted as a tourist attraction in the form of a driving or walking tour.
- 4.9. Encourage promotion of Ware County as a region for boar/wild pig hunting.
- 4.10. There is a fiber optic line running from the swamp to the highway, providing opportunities for broadband connectivity.
- 4.11. The Okefenokee Partnership has a marketing program to promote the Okefenokee Swamp regional at all three entrances to the swamp. World Heritage designation will bring tourism to the area.
- 4.12. Promote RV Park near the Okefenokee Swamp for tourism
- 4.13. Promote Southern Forest World as a tourist destination

Cultural Resources:

Needs:

- 1.23. The historic character of Downtown Waycross needs to be utilized and promoted to its full potential.
- 1.24. Downtown Waycross needs to be promoted more to people traveling on the major roads that bypass Downtown.
- 1.25. More publicity is needed for the Airport Terminal Museum.

Opportunities:

- 5.1. The community's historic districts are a cultural asset. Encourage promotion of Waycross as a National Register Historic City. Encourage identification and research of areas in the community that may have historic significance.
- 5.2. Pursue expansion of the Historic Preservation Commission to include all eligible areas of the City.
- 5.3. Encourage more community events Downtown and increase promotion of those events, such as art shows.
- 5.4. Continue providing incentives for revitalization of historic areas through overlay zoning districts.
- 5.5. Encourage continued support of the Community Theater.
- 5.6. The Historic Passenger Railway Depot is an asset and tourism opportunities there could be expanded.
- 5.7. The Okefenokee Heritage Center is a major cultural resource, including exhibits and information on the area's African American community and history. (For example: Martin Luther King gave a speech in Waycross two weeks before his death.)

Land Use and Development

Needs:

- 1.26. Many blighted areas are located along the main thoroughfares, which influences the perception of the community by tourists and other visitors.
- 1.27. There is a need for better architectural design guidelines for Downtown Waycross and the historic districts.

1.28. Unmaintained and blighted properties need to be addressed.

Opportunities:

6.1. Continue enacting county-wide development regulations protecting existing agriculture/silviculture industry from encroachment by incompatible uses, while monitoring industrial uses.

6.2. Encourage development of architectural design guidelines for the downtown area and historic districts in Waycross.

6.3. Encourage continued support of Downtown revitalization projects, including Downtown apartments/condos.

6.4. Draft and complete a strategic Downtown Master Plan.

Community Facilities and Services

Needs:

1.29. Cost-effective recycling solutions are needed for the community.

1.30. Mandatory garbage pickup needed to be encouraged in Ware County and explore options for bulk pick item.

1.31. Examine the need for additional paid fire stations and EMS Stations in Ware County.

1.32. In some locations, utility lines are at the rear of properties and are difficult for the power company to access; options for improved access need to be investigated.

1.33. Locations for community evacuation shelters with generators, other than schools, need to be identified.

1.34. Lighting is needed at Monroe Street Park.

1.35. A system is needed that enables volunteer firefighters and other public safety to be notified of events via text message to their cell phones.

1.36. The public safety training center needs to be expanded with classroom space and training.

1.37. Explore a back-up area for 911 services.

1.38. Improved broadband is needed throughout the entire county including the city limits.

1.39. Better broadband coverage is needed for public safety.

1.40. The communities are at capacity for water and sewer services. Need more capacity to attract more industries, businesses, and residential. Explore sewer lines to be expanded in the county.

1.41. Pickleball courts to be built for more recreation opportunities.

Opportunities:

7.1. The City of Waycross has bulk trash pickup services that are advertised on Facebook and City websites.

7.2. Explore grant funding could enable paid Fire and EMS services for Ware County.

7.3. The area has GA Partnership for Tele-Medicine center.

- 7.4. Encourage continued promotion and utilization of the City and County recreation facilities. City parks stay booked year-round and the new recreation complex has been received very well. The Trembling Earth recreational facility especially should be promoted.
- 7.5. Encourage the construction of more multi-use trails for bicycling and walking esp. in downtown Waycross. (*safety)
- 7.6. Partnered with the SGRC transit to help with transit needs
- 7.7. Promote the The Action Pact, community action agency, for community use.
- 7.8. The Public Library has programs and activities for people of all ages.
- 7.9. The South Georgia Social Services Database (<https://www.socialservicesdatabase.com/>) has information about services available in the area.
- 7.10. The Ware County Recreation Department facilities could be used as drop off and pick up centers for students of the Waycross/Ware Schools system. This could be a beneficial collaborative program for the students, parents, and the school transportation program.
- 7.11. The Education SPLOST would help to upgrade the Ware County School System equipment needs.
- 7.12. Public-private partnerships can be used to expand broadband access.

Transportation

Needs

- 1.42. Improved access to Downtown is needed through traffic pattern improvements and better signage.
- 1.43. Adopt and utilize new transportation plan from 2026.
- 1.44. Crash/fatality study on various routes to increase safety.
- 1.45. Continuous and safe bicycle trails are needed, both for the recreational and utilitarian bicyclist.
- 1.46. Crash/fatality study on downtown routes including possible perimeter road. Truck traffic has increased due to the Georgia port.
- 1.47. Effective routes/detours are needed for crossing CSX railroads, especially for emergency vehicles and to reduce truck traffic backups at railroad crossings. Improved access to the Jamestown area is especially needed. (*Overpass/Bypass study)
- 1.48. Traffic congestion is problematic. (*Traffic study is in process, continue to implement traffic improvements).
- 1.49. More electric vehicle charging locations are needed. Need an electric vehicle charging station ordinance for proper development.
- 1.50. The boat ramp at the US-84 landing on the Satilla River needs to be replaced. Adding more access points on the Satilla River would be beneficial to recreation and economic development. Partner with DNR & GDOT to discuss possibilities.

1.51. Road signs are needed identifying the route to the hospital.

1.52. Upgrades and expansion of the traffic signal control system are needed, due to anticipated traffic increases. Improved technology such as signal preemption is needed for emergency vehicles in order to provide safer travel and shorter response times.

1.53. The possibility of a Waycross Perimeter Road/Truck route is being studied. Improve emergency response times, and reduce congestion and crashes. Trucks are going into local routes causing more maintenance. Need to adjust weight limits on local roads through google.

1.54. US-84/Plant Avenue in Downtown needs pedestrian safety improvements due to heavy truck traffic and faded crosswalks.

1.55. CSX is restructuring and may change how our terminal is used, and may impact employment.

Opportunities

8.1. Promote SGRC Transit in the community. Possibility of Micro-transit could be explored.

8.2. Encourage promotion and increased utilization of the airport in Waycross. The airport now has a 6,000-foot runway.

8.3. The National Safety Council has multiple programs that can be used to improve the safety of the transportation system, such as Safe System Innovative Grants.

8.4. Explore possibilities for boat ramps in other locations.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Needs

1.56. Local governments and school system continue meeting once a quarter to ensure a single direction for the county.

1.57. Become a hospitality center due to the economic development from growth of Okefenokee Swamp international designation.

1.58. An annual review of the Waycross/Ware Comprehensive Plan is needed.

Opportunities

9.1. Review some services between Ware County and City of Waycross to improve the delivery of services during the SDS process.

9.2. Encourage development of a common vision for the Schools System, County and City to tie all the opportunities together.

9.3. Encourage development of joint public relations tools for use by the School System, County and City.

9.4. Improve effective communication and coordination between (which ones?) agencies and local governments.

9.5. Encourage and promote public/private partnerships.

9.6. Hold annual intergovernmental meetings with all tax collecting entities.

3. Analysis of Data and Information

Ware County (including the City of Waycross)

The estimated population of Ware County (including the City of Waycross) is 35,958 a slight increase since the 2010 census.

Ware County and the City of Waycross are located within the Waycross Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) which also includes Pierce County. The population is 50.1% female and 49.9% male. 25% of the population is under age 18, and 17% is over age 65. There are 12,866 households. 61% of housing units are owner-occupied. The median home value is \$106,500

62% of the population is White, 30% Black or African American, 1.0% Asian, 0.5%, and 2% two or more races. Hispanic or Latino (of any race) are 5% of the population.

The median annual household income is \$44,833. 22.8% of people live in households with income below the federal poverty level.

City of Waycross

The estimated population of the City of Waycross is 13,813, The population is 55% female and 45% male. 31% of the population is under age 18, and 16% is over age 65. There are 5,253 households. 75% of housing units are owner-occupied. The median home value is \$88,600.

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/waycross-ga?redirect=true>

53% of the population is Black or African American, 37% White, 0.1% Asian, 0.1% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 2% two or more races. Hispanic or Latino (of any race) are 6% of the population.

The median annual household income is \$37,398. 34% of people live in households with income below the federal poverty level.

Ware County, GA

County in: [Georgia, United States](#)

35,958

Population

899.2 square miles

40 people per square mile

Census data: ACS 2023 5-year unless noted

Age

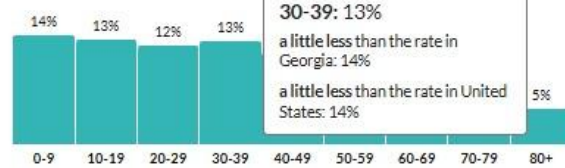
38

Median age

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 37.4

about the same as the figure in United States: 38.7

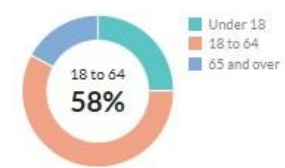
Population by age range



30-39: 13%
a little less than the rate in Georgia: 14%
a little less than the rate in United States: 14%

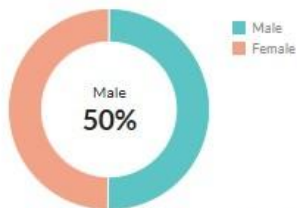
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Population by age category



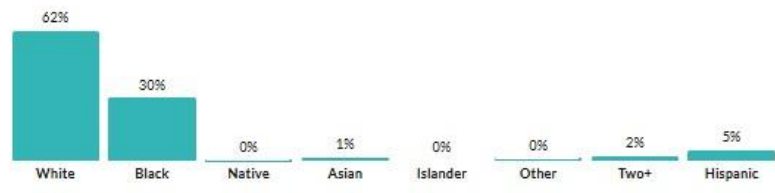
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Sex



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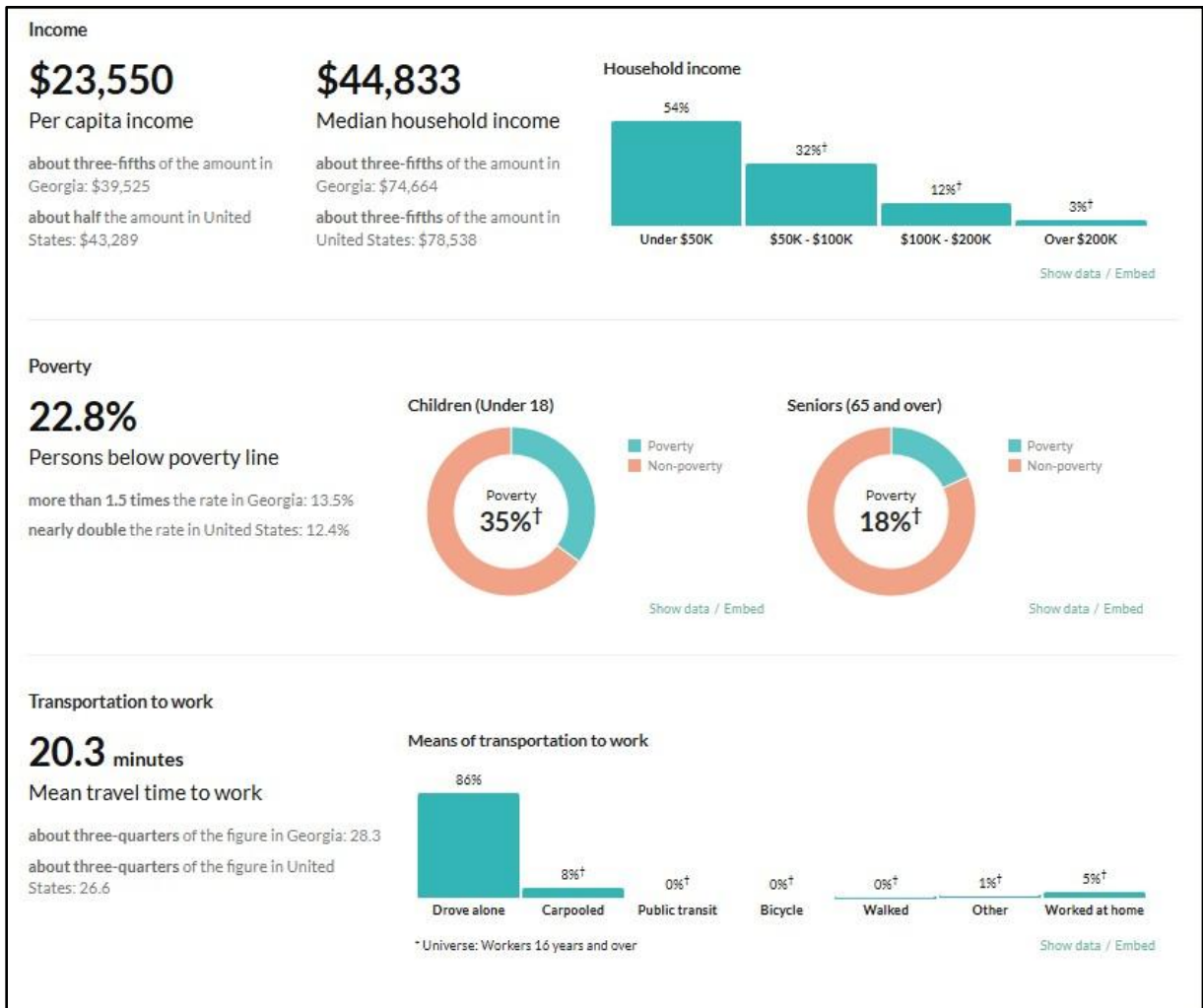
Race & Ethnicity



* Hispanic includes respondents of any race. Other categories are non-Hispanic.

[Show data / Embed](#)

Ware County – Demographics -



Households

12,866

Number of households

Georgia: 4,008,013

United States: 127,482,864

2.6

Persons per household

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 2.6

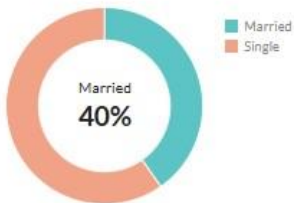
a little higher than the figure in United States: 2.5

Population by household type



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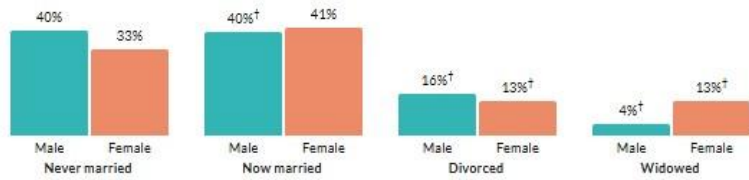
Marital status



* Universe: Population 15 years and over

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Marital status, by sex



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Fertility

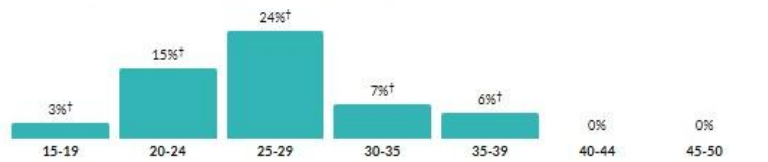
7.6%

Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

about 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 5.2%

about 1.5 times the rate in United States: 5.2%

Women who gave birth during past year, by age group



* Universe: Women 15 to 50 years

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ware County - Households

Units & Occupancy

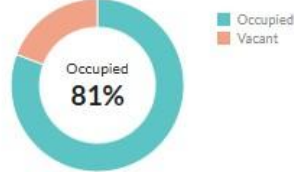
15,926

Number of housing units

Georgia: 4,483,873

United States: 142,332,880

Occupied vs. Vacant



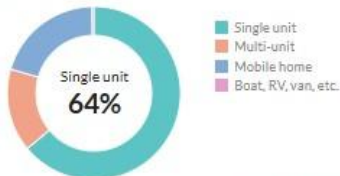
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Ownership of occupied units



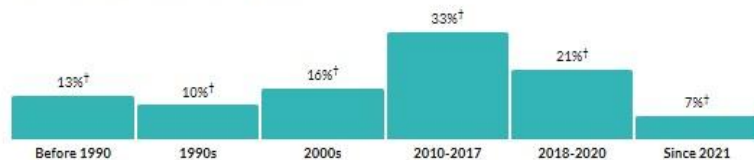
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Types of structure



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Year moved in, by percentage of population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Value

\$106,500

Median value of owner-occupied housing units

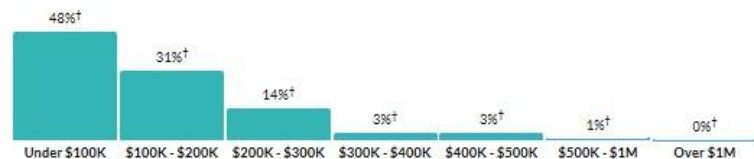
about two-fifths of the amount in Georgia:

\$272,900

about one-third of the amount in United States:

\$303,400

Value of owner-occupied housing units



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Geographical mobility

8.5%

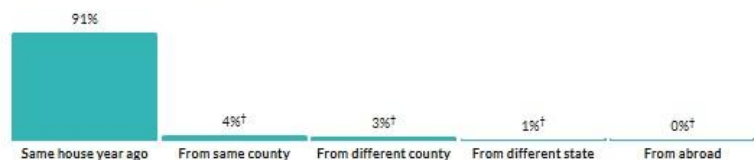
Moved since previous year

about two-thirds of the rate in Georgia: 13.3%

about two-thirds of the rate in United States:

12.7%

Population migration since previous year



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ware County - Housing

Educational attainment

81.5%

High school grad or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in Georgia: 89%

about 90 percent of the rate in United States: 89.4%

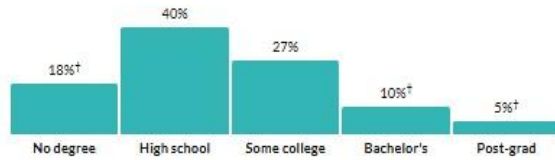
15%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about two-fifths of the rate in Georgia: 34.2%

about two-fifths of the rate in United States: 35%

Population by highest level of education



* Universe: Population 25 years and over

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Language

N/A

Persons with language other than English spoken at home

Language at home, children 5-17

No data available

Language at home, adults 18+

No data available

Place of birth

2.8%

Foreign-born population

about one-quarter of the rate in Georgia: 10.8%

about one-fifth of the rate in United States: 13.9%

Place of birth for foreign-born population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Veteran status

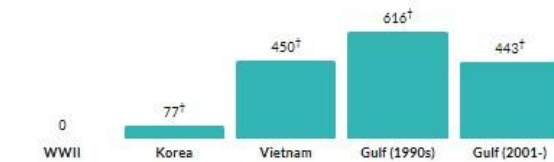
6.2%

Population with veteran status

about 80 percent of the rate in Georgia: 7.4%

a little less than the rate in United States: 6.4%

Veterans by wartime service



* Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

1,659 Total veterans

1,488 Male

171 Female

Ware County - Social

Waycross, GA

Place in: [2 counties](#), [Waycross, GA Micro Area](#), [Georgia](#), [United States](#)

13,813

Population

11.9 square miles

1,163.9 people per square mile

Age

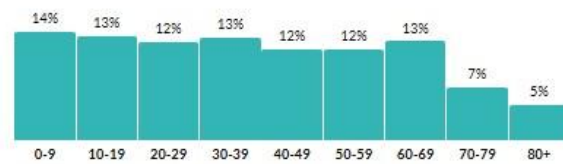
38

Median age

about the same as the figure in
Georgia: 37.4

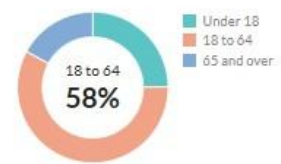
about the same as the figure in
United States: 38.7

Population by age range



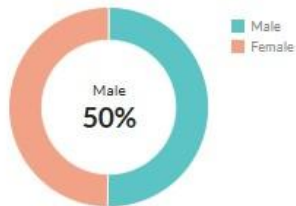
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Population by age category



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Sex



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Race & Ethnicity



* Hispanic includes respondents of any race. Other categories are non-Hispanic.

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Income

\$23,550

Per capita income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$39,525

about half the amount in United States: \$43,289

\$44,833

Median household income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$74,664

about three-fifths of the amount in United States: \$78,538

Household income



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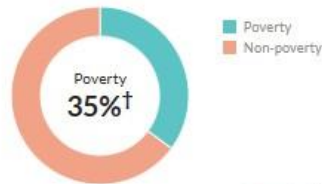
Poverty

22.8%

Persons below poverty line

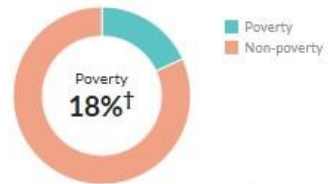
more than 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 13.5%
nearly double the rate in United States: 12.4%

Children (Under 18)



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Seniors (65 and over)



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Transportation to work

20.3 minutes

Mean travel time to work

about three-quarters of the figure in Georgia: 28.3

about three-quarters of the figure in United States: 26.6

Means of transportation to work



* Universe: Workers 16 years and over

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Educational attainment

81.5% $\pm 4.2\%$

(19,781 $\pm 1,024.3$)

High school grad or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in Georgia: 89% 6,451,736 ($\pm 0.3\%$ / $\pm 23,526$)

about 90 percent of the rate in United States: 89.4% 204,204,445 ($\pm 0.1\%$ / $\pm 279,113.6$)

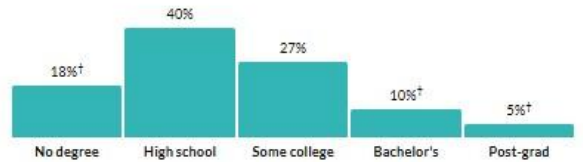
15%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about two-fifths of the rate in Georgia: 34.2%

about two-fifths of the rate in United States: 35%

Population by highest level of education



* Universe: Population 25 years and over

[Show data / Embed](#)

Language

N/A

Persons with language other than English spoken at home

Language at home, children 5-17

No data available

Language at home, adults 18+

No data available

Place of birth

2.8%

Foreign-born population

about one-quarter of the rate in Georgia: 10.8%

about one-fifth of the rate in United States: 13.9%

Place of birth for foreign-born population



[Show data / Embed](#)

Veteran status

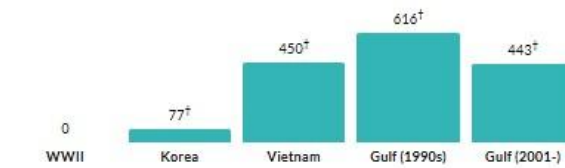
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[Show data / Embed](#)

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United States: 127,482,864

2.6

Persons per household

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 2.6

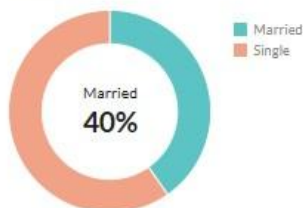
a little higher than the figure in United States: 2.5

Population by household type



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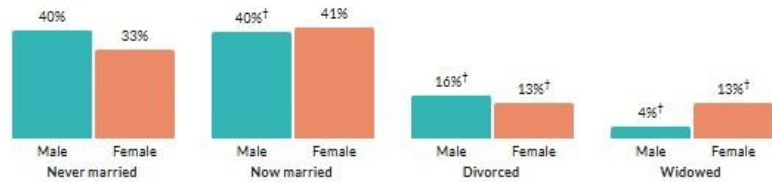
Marital status



* Universe: Population 15 years and over

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Marital status, by sex



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Fertility

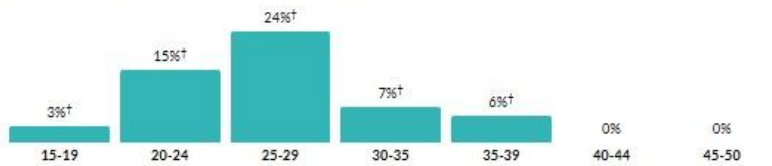
7.6%

Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

about 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 5.2%

about 1.5 times the rate in United States: 5.2%

Women who gave birth during past year, by age group



* Universe: Women 15 to 50 years

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Units & Occupancy

15,926

Number of housing units

Georgia: 4,483,873

United States: 142,332,880

Occupied vs. Vacant



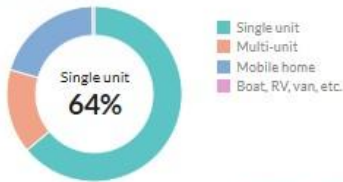
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Ownership of occupied units



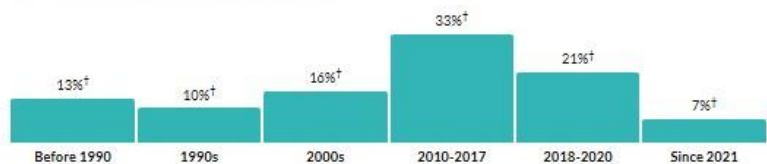
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Types of structure



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Year moved in, by percentage of population



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Value

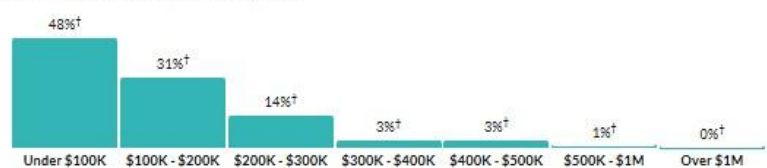
\$106,500

Median value of owner-occupied housing units

about two-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$272,900

about one-third of the amount in United States: \$303,400

Value of owner-occupied housing units



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Geographical mobility

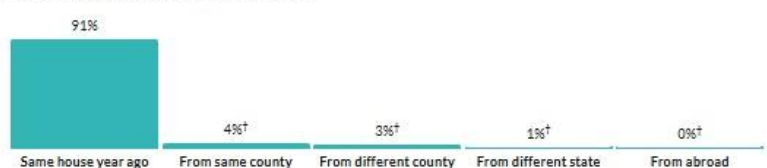
8.5%

Moved since previous year

about two-thirds of the rate in Georgia: 13.3%

about two-thirds of the rate in United States: 12.7%

Population migration since previous year



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Waycross, GA

Place in: [2 counties](#), [Waycross, GA Micro Area](#), [Georgia](#), [United States](#)

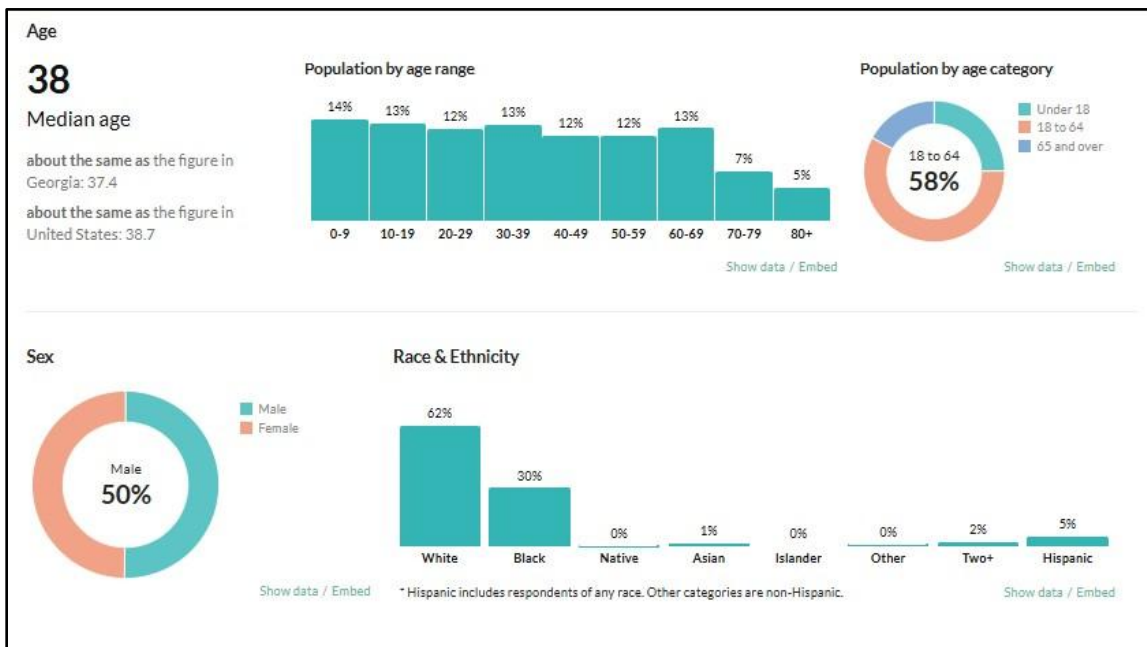
13,813

Population

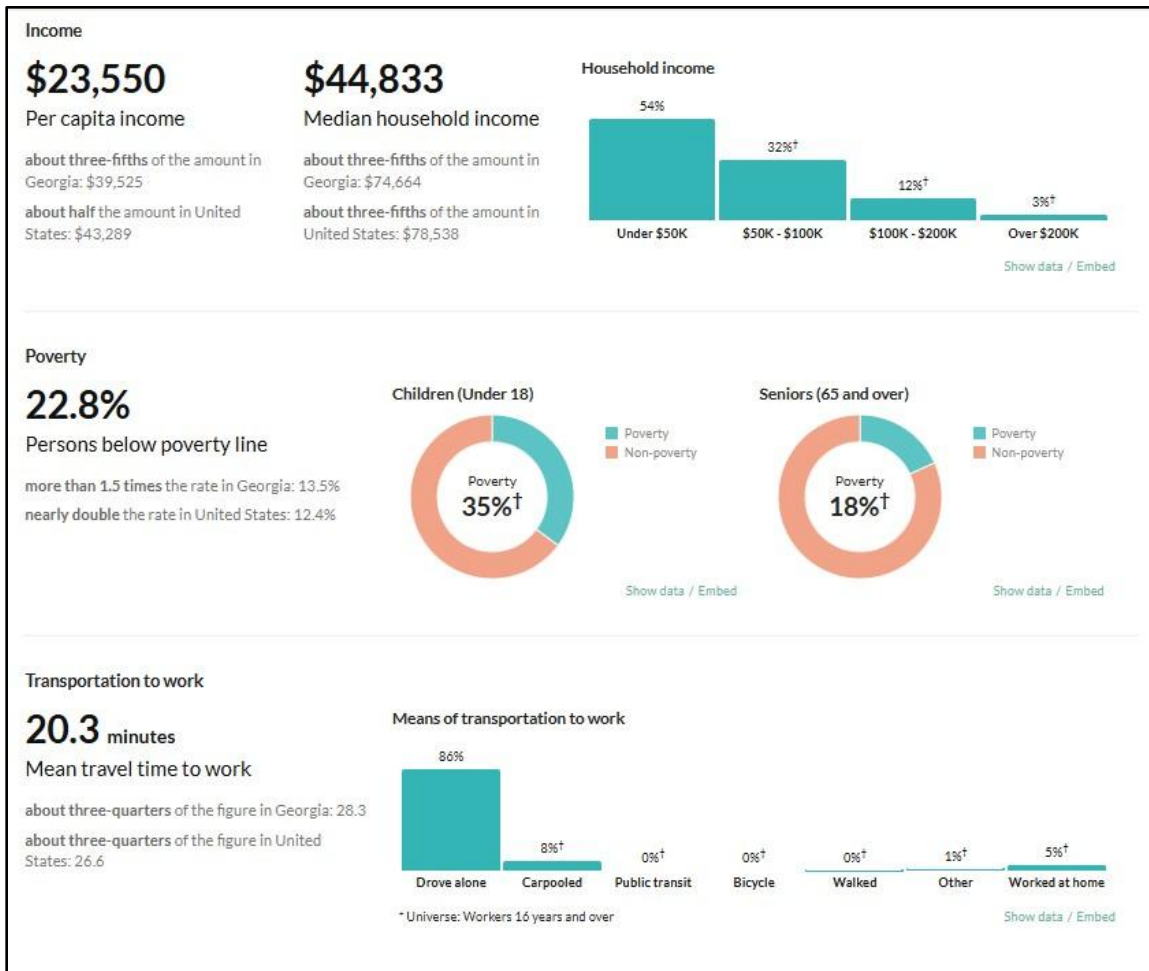
11.9 square miles

1,163.9 people per square mile

Waycross – Population



Waycross - Demographics



Waycross - Economics

Educational attainment

81.5% $\pm 4.2\%$

(19,781 $\pm 1,024.3$)

High school grad or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in Georgia: 89% 6,451,736 ($\pm 0.3\%$ / $\pm 23,526$)

about 90 percent of the rate in United States: 89.4% 204,204,445 ($\pm 0.1\%$ / $\pm 279,113.6$)

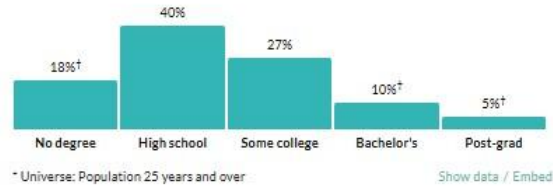
15%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about two-fifths of the rate in Georgia: 34.2%

about two-fifths of the rate in United States: 35%

Population by highest level of education



Language

N/A

Persons with language other than English spoken at home

Language at home, children 5-17
No data available

Language at home, adults 18+
No data available

Place of birth

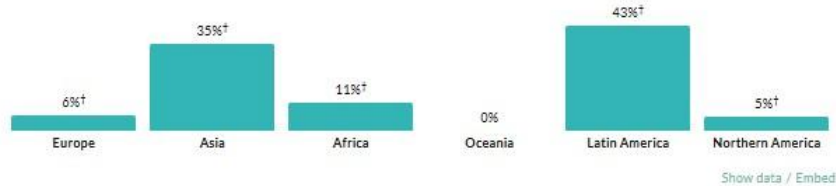
2.8%

Foreign-born population

about one-quarter of the rate in Georgia: 10.8%

about one-fifth of the rate in United States: 13.9%

Place of birth for foreign-born population



Veteran status

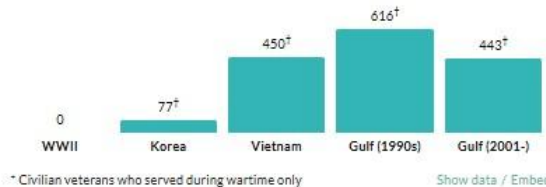
6.2%

Population with veteran status

about 80 percent of the rate in Georgia: 7.4%

a little less than the rate in United States: 6.4%

Veterans by wartime service



1,659 Total veterans

1,488 Male

171 Female

Waycross – Educational Attainment

Households

12,866

Number of households

Georgia: 4,008,013

United States: 127,482,864

2.6

Persons per household

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 2.6

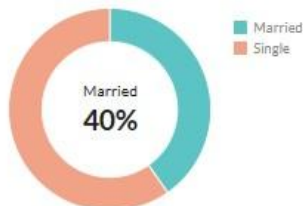
a little higher than the figure in United States: 2.5

Population by household type



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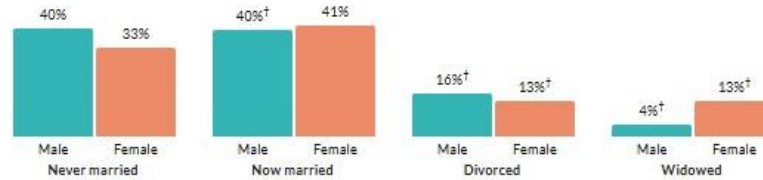
Marital status



* Universe: Population 15 years and over

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Marital status, by sex



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Fertility

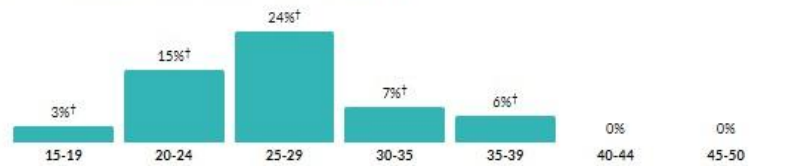
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[Show data / Embed](#)

Waycross - Households

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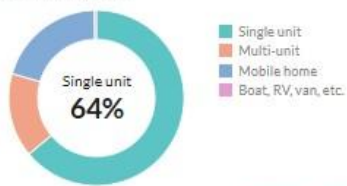
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Ownership of occupied units



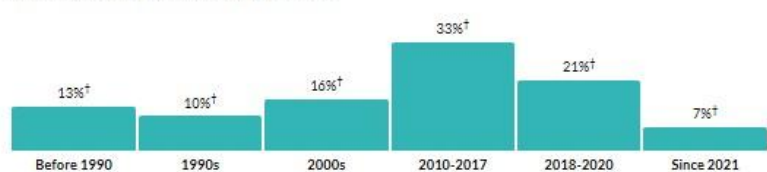
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Types of structure



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Year moved in, by percentage of population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Value

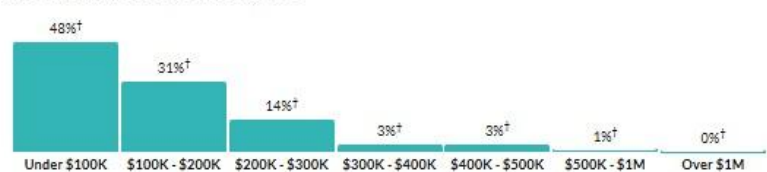
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Population migration since previous year



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Waycross - Housing

4. Broadband Element

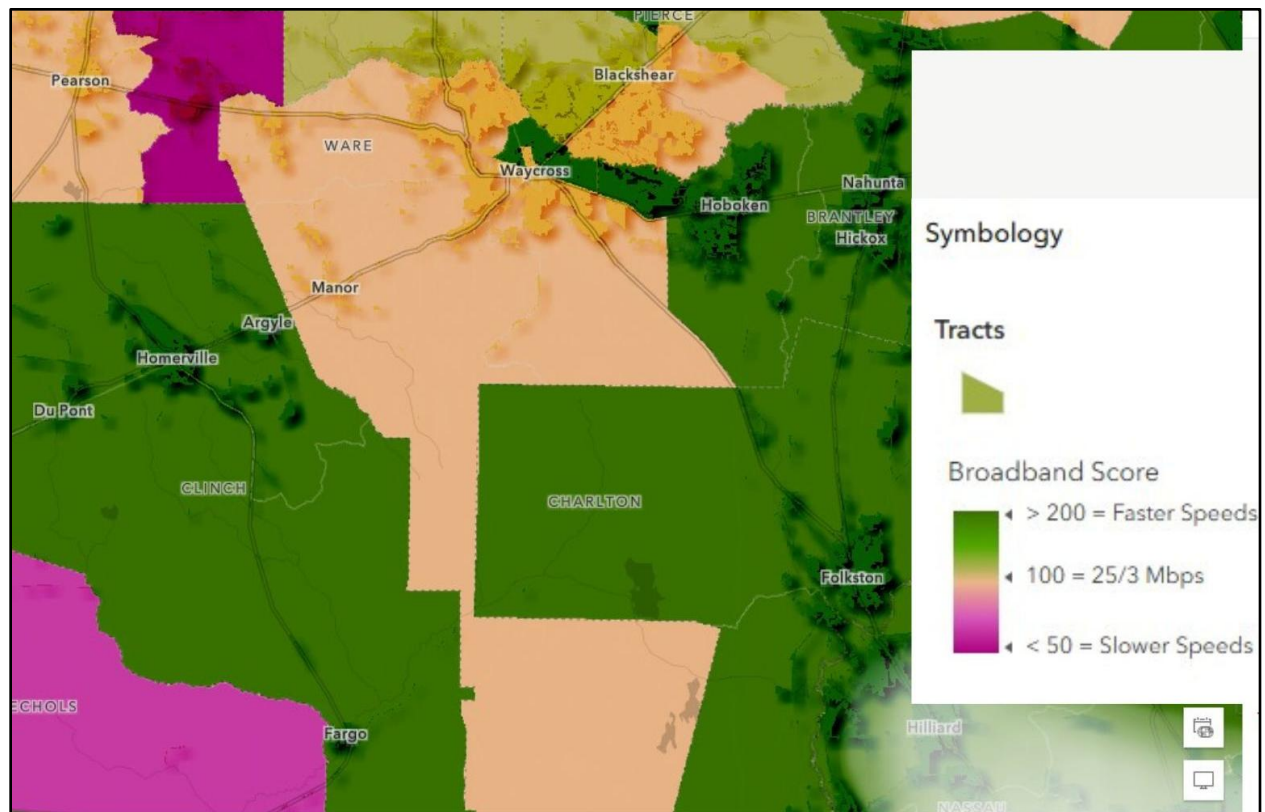
Existing Conditions

- Rural southern Ware County — low-density areas with limited fiber and heavy reliance on satellite or fixed wireless.
- Western unincorporated communities — pockets where fewer than 20% of homes meet the 25/3 Mbps threshold, marking them as “unserved” under Georgia’s definition.
- Northeastern agricultural corridors — long stretches where provider infrastructure is sparse and speeds fall below 100/20 Mbps.
- Outskirts of Waycross — mixed-service zones where cable is available but fiber penetration is low, creating speed disparities.

Ensuring sufficient and reliable broadband service in Ware County and the City of Waycross is critical, particularly in the developing areas just outside the city limits and along key transportation corridors, including U.S. 1, U.S. 23, U.S. 82 (South Georgia Parkway), U.S. 84, and State Routes 4, 38, 122, 158, 177, and 520. These corridors serve as vital four-lane connections for logistics and transportation, linking the region to I-75 and I-95 and carrying significant daily traffic that supports regional commerce.

In addition, adequate broadband infrastructure is needed along the railway system to support rail operations and the many rail-dependent and industrial users that are central to Waycross and Ware County’s economy. Given the county’s strategic location at the intersection of major highway corridors and rail lines, the community is well positioned to play a key role in broadband deployment across South Georgia.

As broadband has become essential to education, workforce participation, economic development, and overall quality of life, it should be treated as a necessary utility with equal importance to other core infrastructure investments.



Ware County ISP Report Card: C-

Metric <i>(hover for details)</i>	Ware County	Georgia	USA
Fiber Availability Percent	28.48%	80.68%	67.25%
Average Download Speed	1,262 Mbps	4,127 Mbps	3,293 Mbps
Provider Count	4.1	7.1	6.8

Ware County Digital Connectivity Index: 36 / 100

Metric <i>(hover for details)</i>	Ware County	Georgia	USA
Average Household Size	2.7	2.7	2.7
Work From Home Percent	6%	14%	14%
Households with Devices	91%	95%	95%
Households with Internet	72%	90%	90%
Households with Broadband	57%	75%	75%
Broadband Usage vs. Availability	58%	76%	76%

<https://ispreports.org/internet-service-providers-ware-county-ga/>

Data Reported to FCC by ISPs: Average Maximum Available in Ware County

Max Advertised Speed in Ware County, GA

ISP / Tech Type	Max Advertised Speed
TruVista	5,000 Mbps
AT&T	5,000 Mbps
EarthLink	5,000 Mbps
Conexon Connect	2,000 Mbps
XFINITY from Comcast	1,200 Mbps
ATC Broadband	1,000 Mbps
Vyve Broadband	1,000 Mbps
Verizon	300 Mbps
Viasat	100 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	100 Mbps
HughesNet	25 Mbps

<https://ispreports.org/internet-service-providers-ware-county-ga/>

Broadband Action Steps

Project	Cost	Funding Source	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	Responsibility
Continue to expand broadband service for the purpose of Economic Development, Education, and person use.	\$1,000,000	General funds, private/public partnership	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross

5. Consideration of DCA Community Quality Objectives

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has crafted a series of objectives dealing with a broad range of issues that concern local governments. The objectives, which are listed below, are only recommendations, but provide local governments with a tool to guide them in the assessment of their needs and opportunities and in the development of their implementation activities. If they are used as such a tool by many of the local governments in their planning efforts, these objectives also have the potential to result in consistent planning projects and goals, which may translate into greater efficiency and a better quality of life for the residents. This section contains an analysis of the consistency of the community's current policies, activities, and development patterns with the Quality Community Objectives, and recommends related best practices as provided by DCA.

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Ware County and City of Waycross
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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.	Community activities, including economic development efforts, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Business incubator Corridor study Downtown program
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.	Land use element and goals and policies related to natural resources are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Conservation easements Pervious paving Riparian buffers Water resource protection
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 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 expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.	The land use element and infrastructure-related goals and policies of this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Adaptive reuse Brownfield redevelopment Infill development program Preserve agriculture land use Urban redevelopment plan
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.	Projects and policies in this plan, and local ordinances, are consistent with this objective. The community also has a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan that is consistent with this objective, and capable leadership and staff. Recommended best practices: All-hazards strategy Comprehensive planning Professional development-planning staff Subdivision development standards
5. Sense of Place Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as 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.	Projects and policies in this plan, and local ordinances, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Create a detailed inventory of its natural resources Code enforcement

Quality Community Objective	Notes on consistency with Comprehensive Plan for Ware County and City of Waycross
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 protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.	There is a high level of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions. Recommended best practices: Regional roundtable Shared service agreements
7. Housing Options Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging 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.	Projects and policies in this plan, and local ordinances, are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Housing for the disadvantaged Housing for the elderly
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.	Transportation goals, policies, and projects are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Complete streets Sidewalk/trail network Improving street connectivity Safe Routes to School
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.	Goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Public internet access Coordinate with the Ware County Schools to ensure that graduates will create an incentive for prospective industries
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.	Goals, policies, and projects in this plan are consistent with this objective. Recommended best practices: Transportation to services Work with the hospital to ensure it can successfully service the citizens of Ware County

6. Community Policies

The following policies, numbered to align with the Community Goals, were developed in conjunction with all stakeholders and are intended to provide qualitative guidance to address the Issues and Opportunities identified in this Plan and to provide a framework for the development of the Community Work Program. The Community Work Program then addresses the Issues and Opportunities through specific projects, for each of which the participants, anticipated cost, and time frame are identified.

These policies are organized around the issues identified in the "Needs and Opportunities" section, and are further organized around the seven important topics of the Plan:

1. Population
2. Economic Development
3. Housing
4. Natural Resources
5. Cultural Resources
6. Land Use and Development
7. Community Facilities and Services
8. Transportation
9. Intergovernmental Coordination
10. Broadband Services

Population

Population Goal: Ensure that all segments of the population benefit from overall community growth and development.

Need: Young people need more incentives to remain in Ware County/Waycross rather than leaving. The community's appeal to younger people needs to be emphasized. Outreach is needed in order to change the attitudes of younger people who wish to leave the community.

Need: More involvement from younger people is needed in order to determine what they want in the community. This involvement could come through Leadership Waycross or through creating a youth leadership program, for example.

Policy 1.1 Improve communications to younger generations on opportunities provided to them to increase retention young professionals.

Need: Ware County/Waycross needs incentives for workers to live in the community rather than commuting in from elsewhere.

Need: Population needs to be stabilized and continued growth encouraged.

Policy 1.2 Examine potential ways to persuade commuters to live in Waycross/Ware County.

Economic Development

Economic Development Goal: Improve the economy by developing and enhancing new and existing strengths that will draw new business, expand existing businesses, expand tourism, diversify the local economy, support a vibrant Downtown, and help the County and the City compete in the regional and global economies.

Need: Better job opportunities are needed for people who graduate from the local colleges. Waycross has two excellent technical colleges (Coastal Pines and South Georgia State College); however, insufficient jobs are available locally to retain the educated workforce.

Policy 2.1 Examine ways to retain college graduates and how to bring in industry that keeps them in Waycross/Ware County

Need: A more centralized vision is needed for the area by the city, County and the business community.

Policy 2.2 Improve communication channels throughout the community to maintain one centralized vision.

Need: More public relations and marketing of the City and County are needed. The area's greatest assets, such as quality of life and small-town feel with large-town amenities, are inadequately promoted. The Rural Center at ABAC may be a resource for this.

Policy 2.3 Approve marketing to emphasis the community's greatest assets.

Need: There needs to be more awareness of the Downtown Visitor's Center located inside City Hall and the resources it provides.

Policy 2.4 Improving marketing of Downtown Visitor's Center.

Need: Downtown needs more evening events and businesses that stay open after 5:00.

Policy 2.5 Examine ways to bring events to downtown

Need: A Downtown Business Resource Center is needed.

Need: There are several properties in prime Downtown locations that are occupied but not actively used (for example, being used for storage). The use of these properties needs to be regained in order to spur the local economy.

Policy 2.6 Encourage Downtown property owners to not use properties as storage

Need: A comprehensive listing of economic development and community websites and information resources is needed.

Policy 2.7 Approve information list for economic development purposes

Need: The existing rail system is under-utilized in helping to recruit new businesses. At the same time, there is a need for additional developable property close to rail lines.

Policy 2.8 Approve marketing promote rail system to new businesses

Need: Southern Georgia as a whole needs more adequate representation and consideration by the State Legislature.

Policy 2.9 Approve ways to improve lobbying efforts for South Georgia at the State Legislature

Housing

Housing Goal: Provide opportunities for homeownership and housing resources for all citizens of Ware County and the City of Waycross through public/private partnerships.

Need: Revitalization is needed for blighted neighborhoods and large areas of blighted homes in Waycross/Ware County.

Need: Revitalize vacant houses in the community in order to improve the housing stock in Waycross/Ware County

Need: There is an overall need for more affordable housing, especially good-quality, low-cost rental housing.

Policy 3.1 Develop strategies to best utilizes Ware/Waycross Housing Study being completed by Georgia Conservancy (Fall 2026 expected completion)

Policy 3.2 Approve plans to clean up blighted areas and development plans to add housing, include workforce housing, and rental for opportunities for citizens.

Need: Examine zoning codes to ensure that more families can find suitable housing in walkable urban neighborhoods.

Policy 3.3 Approve plans for additional sidewalks and bike lane

Need: Educate citizens about zoning codes.

Policy 3.4 Develop ways to educate citizens on zoning codes

Need: There are insufficient funds and programs to address the homeless population. Homeless shelters and housing for people experiencing homelessness are needed.

Policy 3.5 Develop and approve plans to better address homeless population in Waycross/Ware Co.

Natural Resources

Natural Resources Goal: Conserve, protect, and develop the functions and values of the City's and County's natural resources for future generations' appropriate use and enjoyment.

Need: Ware County and Waycross have world-class natural resources such as the Okefenokee Swamp, but these resources need more promotion to the mainstream tourist market.

Policy 4.1 Will promote Okefenokee Swamp and natural resources better to the region and further

Need: Wetlands in Ware County need to be protected from development.

Policy 4.2 Will develop strategies to protect wetlands

Cultural Resources

Cultural Resources Goal: Protect, preserve, develop, and promote the City's and County's historic and cultural resources through such measures as regulations, adaptive reuse, tourism, and education programs focused on historic preservation.

Need: The historic character of Downtown Waycross needs to be utilized and promoted to its full potential.

Need: Downtown Waycross needs to be promoted more to people traveling on the major roads that bypass Downtown.

Policy 5.1 Will develop better ways to promote historic downtown

Need: More publicity is needed for the Airport Terminal Museum.

Policy 5.2 Better promote Airport Terminal Museum

Land Use and Development

Land Use Goal: Ensure the highest quality of living environment possible by improving the community's aesthetic quality through a mixture of compatible land uses and character areas reflecting the needs and desires of the local residents.

Need: Many blighted areas are located along the main thoroughfares, which influences the perception of the community by tourists and other visitors.

Need: Unmaintained and blighted properties need to be addressed.

Policy 6.1 Approve plans to clean up blighted areas in main corridors

Need: There is a need for better architectural design guidelines for Downtown Waycross and the historic districts.

Community Facilities and Services

Community Facilities Goal: Ensure that adequate community facilities, such as water, sewer, broadband, solid waste, police, fire, and EMS, are provided in an effective, environmentally sound, safe, and economic system, consistent and concurrent with present demand and future growth.

Need: Cost-effective recycling solutions are needed for the community.

Policy 7.1 Examine opportunities for citizens to recycle using a private business

Need: Mandatory garbage pickup needed to be encouraged in Ware County and explore options for bulk pick item.

Policy 7.2 Approve proposal to have mandatory garbage pickup

Need: Examine the need for additional paid fire stations and EMS Stations in Ware County.

Policy 7.3 Study the need for additional paid fire and EMS staff

Need: In some locations, utility lines are at the rear of properties and are difficult for the power company to access; options for improved access need to be investigated.

Policy 7.4 Approve a committee to determine plans for difficult to access utilities lines

Need: Locations for community evacuation shelters with generators, other than schools, need to be identified.

Policy 7.5 Approve a plan to identify evacuation shelter

Need: Lighting is needed at Monroe Street Park.

Policy 7.6 Determine the possibility of adding lighting to city parks

Need: A system is needed that enables volunteer firefighters and other public safety to be notified of events via text message to their cell phones.

Policy 7.7 Determine if first responders need another form of emergency communication

Need: Explore a back-up area for 911 services.

Policy 7.8 Approve a committee to determine a backup 911 location

Need: Need more water capacity to attract more industries, businesses, and residential. Explore sewer lines to be expanded in the county.

Policy 7.9 Form a committee to determine the water capacity for industry recruitment and expansion

Need: Pickleball could be built for more recreation opportunities.

Policy 7.10 Study the possibility to find a location and build pickleball courts

Transportation

Transportation Goal: Provide a safe and efficient transportation system that addresses the future needs of the County and the City for the movement of people and freight, while considering that system's social, economic, energy, and environmental effects.

Need: Improved access to Downtown is needed through traffic pattern improvements and better signage.

Need: Adopt and utilize new transportation plan from 2026.

Need: Crash/fatality study on various routes to increase safety.

Policy 8.1 Follow guidance for 2026 Transportation Plan and 2026 Perimeter Feasibility Study.

<https://www.warecountyga.gov/sysinfo-documents/2026-ware-county-comprehensive-transportation-plan>

<https://www.warecountyga.gov/sysinfo-documents/2026-ware-county-perimeter-feasibility-study>

Need: Continuous and safe bicycle trails are needed, both for the recreational and utilitarian bicyclist.

Policy 8.2 Follow trends to make travelling through Ware County easier for all road users.

Need: Crash/fatality study on downtown routes including possible perimeter road. Truck traffic has increased due to the Georgia port.

*Need: Effective routes/detours are needed for crossing CSX railroads, especially for emergency vehicles and to reduce truck traffic backups at railroad crossings. Improved access to the Jamestown area is especially needed. (*Overpass/Bypass study)*

*Need: Traffic congestion is problematic. (*Traffic study is in process, continue to implement traffic improvements).*

Need: More electric vehicle charging locations are needed. Need an electric vehicle charging station ordinance for proper development.

Policy 8.3 Determine if the city needs an electric charging station ordinance

Need: The boat ramp at the US-84 landing on the Satilla River needs to be replaced. Adding more access points on the Satilla River would be beneficial to recreation and economic development. Partner with DNR & GDOT to discuss possibilities.

Policy 8.4 Determine if addition boat ramp(s) are a possibility for Ware County

Need: Road signs are needed identifying the route to the hospital.

Need: Upgrades and expansion of the traffic signal control system are needed, due to anticipated traffic increases. Improved technology such as signal preemption is needed for emergency vehicles in order to provide safer travel and shorter response times.

Policy 8.5 Approve development of a plan to study the need for upgraded traffic signal control system

Need: The possibility of a Waycross Perimeter Road/Truck route is being studied. Improve emergency response times, and reduce congestion and crashes. Trucks are going into local routes causing more maintenance. Need to adjust weight limits on local roads through google.

Policy 8.6 Form a committee to determine the feasibility of a Perimeter Road

Need: US-84/Plant Avenue in Downtown needs pedestrian safety improvements due to heavy truck traffic and faded crosswalks.

Need: CSX is restructuring and may change how our terminal is used, and may impact employment.

Policy 8.7 Develop proposals to adjust to CSX changes

Intergovernmental Coordination

Intergovernmental Coordination Goal: Establish effective coordination measures among all pertinent public and quasi-public entities to best maintain the City's and the County's quality of life and resources.

Need: Local governments and school system continue meeting once a quarter to ensure a single direction for the county.

Need: Become a hospitality center due to the economic development from growth of Okefenokee Swamp international designation.

Policy 9.1 Approve development that improves the hospitality industry in Waycross/Ware Co.

Need: An annual review of the Waycross/Ware Comprehensive Plan is needed.

Broadband

Broadband: Provide digital broadband and communications in a manner that ensures the current and future needs of residents, businesses, and industry within Ware County and the City of Waycross.

Need: Improved broadband is needed throughout the entire county including the city limits.

Need: Better broadband coverage is needed for public safety.

Policy 10.1 Approve proposals to all the expansion of broadband throughout the community

7. Community Work Program

2022-2026 Community Work Program Ware County

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
TRANSPORTATION										
Continue implementing Airport Capital Improvement Program as adopted by the County Commission.	\$5 million	GDOT, Ware County, FAA, Federal Funds	X	X	X	X	X	GDOT, Ware County, FAA	8	Ongoing
Rehabilitate sidewalks and add bike lanes on Pinehurst Rd. (900- foot sidewalk) and Tebeau Rd. (750- foot sidewalk).	\$250,000	GDOT, Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8	Ongoing
Pave approximately 5 miles of dirt roads, including Driggers Lane and T-SPLOST projects.	\$10 Million	SPLOST, Ware County, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8	Ongoing
Construct entire Perimeter Road, beginning at Smith Road going south from US 82 West (Corridor Z), crossing US 84 South near Wahoma, thence easterly and northerly crossing US 1 South, US 82 east, and Central Ave., intersecting US 84 north near Pierce County line, and continuing to US 1 North.	\$80 Million	GDOT, Federal Funds	Postponed long-term project (post-FY2026)					GDOT, Ware County	8	Ongoing
Construct overpass at State Street (US 1) and CSX's Atlanta Lead Line in conjunction with Perimeter Road project.	\$15 Million	GDOT, CSX, Ware County, City of Waycross, State & Federal Funds				X	X	GDOT, CSX, Ware County, City of Waycross	8	Ongoing
Widen Augusta Avenue/ Blackshear Avenue from US 82 to US 1.	\$3.8 Million	GDOT, Ware County, City of Waycross, SPLOST, Federal Funds				X	X	GDOT, Ware County, City of Waycross	8	Completed

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
Extend Tanner Lane to create additional access to the Jamestown area.	\$6 Million	GDOT, Ware County, Federal Funds					X	GDOT, Ware County	8	Complete
NATURAL AND CULTURAL/HISTORIC RESOURCES										
Construct a raised boat ramp at the Waycross-Blackshear bridge area on the Satilla River.	\$100,000	Grants (LWCF, TEA 21), DNR					X	Ware County	4	Ongoing
Identify and protect prime agricultural soils in the county and protect with zoning and tax incentives.	\$25,000	Natural Resources Conservation Service Grants					X	Ware County, NRCS	4	Ongoing
LAND USE										
Develop a countywide Zoning Ordinance that includes the following: • Zoning districts appropriate to the character areas in the Comprehensive Plan. • Development standards to regulate the distribution of land uses and prevent the encroachment of incompatible land uses on each other. • Buffer areas between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. • Flexibility in land uses to allow for a compatible mix of uses, including boulevard housing. • Development standards to avoid undue concentration of population. • Standards for senior/adult	Staff time	State & Federal Grants, Ware County	X	X			X	Ware County	6	Ongoing

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	
- living. - Standards and flexibility to encourage infill development, re-use of blighted development, and redevelopment of declining and revitalizing areas. - Sufficient flexibility to encourage creative design, green space, and open space. - Specific roles for each corridor to encourage revitalization. - Standards to support additional growth in rural areas only where such growth is planned for and can be supported by appropriate services. - Standards for property upkeep and screening. - Limited mixed-use districts of compatible uses to serve neighborhood needs and create focal community points.										
Create a GPS database of bridges, box culverts, and infrastructure.	\$10,000	Ware County						Ware County	7	Postponed (Lack of Funding)
HOUSING										
Develop affordable housing in Ware County.	\$1,000,000	General fund, private funds, grants (added CHIP and CDBG)					X	Ware County	3	Ongoing
Implement measures to reduce and eliminate blight (through an urban redevelopment plan or similar effort).	\$500,000	General fund, private funds, grants (add (added CHIP and CDBG)					X	Ware County	3	Ongoing
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES										

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
Construct miracle field at Trembling Earth Recreational Facility.	\$500,000	SPLOST, State & Federal Grants, Ware County						Ware County	7	Complete
Construct Phases V and VI of multipurpose recreation center (Regional Park).	\$5 Million	State & Federal Grants, Ware County SPLOST					X	Ware County	7	Complete
Develop a recycling program in collaboration with federal, state, and local partners.	\$100,000	Ware County, State & Federal Grants						Ware County	7	Cancelled No market for recycling
Conduct a project to strengthen and expand broadband access.	\$1,000,000	General funds, private funds, grants					X	Ware County, City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
Expand the public safety training center with classroom space and training facilities.	\$500,000	SPLOST, State & Federal Grants, Ware County						Ware County	7	Complete
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT										
Create a marketing plan to capitalize on Ware County's proximity to the three major ports of Brunswick, Jacksonville, and Savannah; raise awareness of the Industrial Park's proximity to the local airport; and raise awareness of the 5 direct rail lines in Waycross/Ware County, including rail in the Industrial Park.	Staff time	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA, State & Federal Grants						Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	2	Ongoing
Continue implementing a program to collaborate with federal, state, and local partners to develop local agricultural industry (such as blueberries, pine straw, honey, turpentine, compost, etc.) and promote agri-tourism.	\$200,000	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, State & Federal Grants					X	Ware County, City of Waycross	2	Ongoing

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
Extend and upgrade water, sewer, gas, power, and telecommunication infrastructure, as well as railways and roads, to the Industrial Park and other areas suited for economic development.	\$10 million	Ware County, City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants, WWDA				X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7	Ongoing
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION										
Design joint collateral marketing materials and public relations tools to market Ware County/Waycross to tourists and businesses.	Staff time	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA, State & Federal Grants						Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	2	Ongoing

2022-2026 Community Work Program City of Waycross

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
TRANSPORTATION										
Redirect US 1 via State to Tebeau, Carswell, and Memorial Drive, with associated improvements.	\$5 million	GDOT, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8	Ongoing
Resurface approximately 70 miles of city streets, as listed in the Capital Improvement Program. (Change funding Source)	\$21 million	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants, GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8	Ongoing
Upgrade traffic signals at 6 intersections.	\$1.5 million	GDOT, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8	Cancelled because they are state signals
Conduct traffic studies to identify the most efficient traffic flows through Waycross.	\$100,000	GDOT State & Federal Grants				X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8	Cancelled County Project
Make improvements to Downtown streetscapes, including bump-outs at intersections, pole banners, benches, and light poles. (Change funding Source)	\$3 million	State & Federal Grants	X	X	X			City of Waycross	8	Ongoing
Implement DOT Priorities - Traffic Lights and Paving.	\$750,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8	Ongoing
Construct Phase 2 (1 mile) of the Multi-Use Trail.	\$1 million	Grants (TEA, etc.)				X	X	City of Waycross	8	Cancelled because grant over
Adopt a Complete Streets Policy that incorporates improved bicycle and pedestrian safety measures.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Complete
Revise development ordinances to integrate pedestrian/bicycle considerations and requirements into proposed subdivisions, and other developments.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Complete

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
Revise ordinances to include requirements of the Georgia Streetscapes and Pedestrian Design Guide.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Ongoing
Revise ordinances to include requirements of the Georgia Manual on Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Ongoing
Revise ordinances to include various requirements of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Guides for improved bicycle and pedestrian safety design.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Ongoing
Work with SGRC to apply for Walk Friendly Community Status.	\$5,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Cancelled End of program
Work with SGRC to apply for Age Friendly Community Status.	\$7,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Ongoing
Work with SGRC to apply for Bicycle Friendly Community Status.	\$5,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Cancelled End of program
Complete a bikeability analysis of all roadways that includes a timeline to resurface/pave roads, adding bike lanes.	\$10,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Complete
Complete a sidewalk gap analysis and develop a plan to fund sidewalk construction to fill the gaps.	\$5,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Cancelled Lack of Funding
Work with GDOT and SGRC to complete Road Safety Audits along key corridors/intersections as needed, based on crash data analysis and other metrics.	\$2,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Ongoing

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
Administer the Georgia Pedestrian Safety Attitudes and Behaviors Survey to the general public and transportation practitioners. Analyze results to determine target audiences, messages, and training needs for pedestrian safety.	\$1,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Cancelled reevaluating ways educate public
Work with SGRC to distribute "See and Be Seen" safety materials.	\$100	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Cancelled Program Expired
Send elected officials, planning and other staff, and police/sheriff patrol officers to regional trainings for pedestrian and bicycle safety, education and enforcement.	\$1,000 per training (less if virtual)	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Completed
Encourage police/sheriff patrol officers to participate in the GDOT Pedestrian Safety Task Team.	\$750	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Completed
Develop a local Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Safety Action Plan.	\$10,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8	Completed
NATURAL AND CULTURAL/HISTORIC RESOURCES										
Maintain and restore canals with stabilization, vegetation control, and cleanup.	\$200,000	State & Federal Grants, SPLOST				X	X	City of Waycross	4, 7	Ongoing
Renovate/rehab 3 historic Downtown buildings (Bunn building, Bowen building, and Lyric theater).	\$15 million	State & Federal Grants			X	X	X	City of Waycross	2, 5	Ongoing
Conduct a marketing campaign to promote tourist attractions such as Obediah's Okefenok, Wildes Massacre Site, the Heritage Center, Laura Walker State Park, Okefenokee Swamp Park, and the Satilla River Water Trail.	Staff time	State & Federal Grants, agency budgets, tourism dollars	X	X	X	X	X	Tourism Bureau, City of Waycross, Ware County, Chamber of Commerce, Hospitality Industry	2, 4	Ongoing

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
LAND USE										
Develop zoning districts appropriate to the character areas in the Comprehensive Plan.	Staff time	City of Waycross, Ware County, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	6	Completed
Redevelop approximately 20 acres of vacant/underutilized parcels, including the Almar parcel.	\$40 million	City of Waycross, Ware County, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	6	Completed
Develop design guidelines for the Crossroads gateways and corridors, including signage and landscaping.	Staff time	State & Federal Grants, City of Waycross, Ware County	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	2, 7	Completed
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES										
Improve and/ or Replace infrastructure, including sewer, water, street and drainage improvements, as listed in the adopted Capital Improvement Program.	\$20 million	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
Construct new Public Works facility.	\$1,343,000	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants, SPLOST	X	X				City of Waycross	7	Completed
Continue updating of city parks to improve all recreational facilities, including playground facilities, restrooms, and lighting (including Bailey St., Camilla, E. E. Moore, Elizabeth, Garlington, Gilchrist, Monroe, Parnell, and Roberts Parks, and others).	\$1 million	State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
Install a Splash Pad in Parnell Roberts Park.	\$140,000 Phase 1; \$140,000 each for Phases 2 and 3	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	7	Completed

Project	Cost	Funding Source	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	Responsibility	Related Goal	STATUS
Conduct a complete renovation/rehabilitation of the National Guard Armory.	\$2,000,000	City of Waycross State & Federal Grants, SPLOST	X	X				City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
Renovate/revitalize the Bailey Street School, Colley Street School, and Grove Street Recreation Center brownfield sites.	\$10 million	City of Waycross State & Federal Grants		X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
Assess Sewer and water systems in the City to address system deteriorations and to program capital upgrades (Phases I – IV).	Staff time	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants		X	X			City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
Research and apply for funding and grants to provide paid Fire and EMS services for Ware County and the City of Waycross.	Staff time	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	7	Completed
Evaluate and implement flood control measures and floodplain management measures.	\$500,000	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, EPD, FEMA	7	Completed
Develop and expand Reclaimed Water ("Purple-Pipe") System.	\$500,000	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants					X	City of Waycross	7	Ongoing
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT										
Acquire property for expansion of the Industrial Park, and develop with utilities and other necessary infrastructure.	\$20 million	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants			X	X	X	WWDA, City of Waycross, Ware County	2	Completed
Implement a collaborative group process for the reclamation of the old business district of Oak Street between Tebeau Street and Vernon Willis Drive, beginning with aggressive code enforcement.	\$30,000	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X	X			City of Waycross, Ware County	2	Ongoing
HOUSING										

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 22	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL	STATUS
Implement an aggressive program to pursue grants for rehabilitation/renewal of approximately 50 homes in targeted areas.	\$1.5 million	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants, Private Partnership			X	X	X	City of Waycross, Ware County	3	Ongoing
Deploy new street signage citywide to comply with federal retro-reflectivity standards.	\$250,000	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross	3	Ongoing
Develop standards and incentives to protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment of non- residential uses.	Staff time	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	3	Ongoing
Develop, improve, and enforce zoning standards for property upkeep and screening.	Staff time	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	3	Ongoing

2026-2031 Community Work Program Ware County

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
TRANSPORTATION									
Continue implementing Airport Capital Improvement Program as adopted by the County Commission.	\$5 million	GDOT, Ware County, FAA, Federal Funds	X	X	X	X	X	GDOT, Ware County, FAA	8
Rehabilitate sidewalks and add bike lanes on Pinehurst Rd. (900- foot sidewalk) and Tebeau Rd. (750- foot sidewalk).	\$250,000	GDOT, Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8
Pave approximately 5 miles of dirt roads, including Driggers Lane and T-SPLOST projects.	\$10 Million	SPLOST, Ware County, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8
Construct entire Perimeter Road, beginning at Smith Road going south from US 82 West (Corridor Z), crossing US 84 South near Wahoma, thence easterly and northerly crossing US 1 South, US 82 east, and Central Ave., intersecting US 84 north near Pierce County line, and continuing to US 1 North. (Postponed long-term project)	\$80 Million	GDOT, Federal Funds	X	X	X	X	X	GDOT, Ware County	8
Construct overpass at State Street (US 1) and CSX's Atlanta Lead Line in conjunction with Perimeter Road project.	\$15 Million	GDOT, CSX, Ware County, City of Waycross, State & Federal Funds				X	X	GDOT, CSX, Ware County, City of Waycross	8
Grade, drain, base, and pave Thigpen Rd, Jeremy Tr, Allen Ln, Two-End Rd, and Heidi Dr. (new)	\$5,040,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8
Grade, drain, base, and pave June St, Penny St, Driggers Ln, Pecan Rd, San Pablo Ln, and H.O. Griffis Rd. (new)	\$3,315,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8
Grade, drain, base, and pave 6th Ave, South Ave, 4th Ave, Solomon St, Pine Island Rd, Tie Island Rd, Bear Island Rd, and Deer Island Rd. (new)	\$3,450,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8

Pavement and drainage on Dora St, Carmen Rd, Woodridge Rd, Timberlake Dr, Deer Creek Ln, Ponsell Ln, Old Waltertown Rd, Dusty Ln, and Katie Ln. (new)	\$4,350,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8
Pavement and drainage improvements on Montgomery St, Tazewell St, Creswell St, Conway St, Walker Rd, Prescott St, and Gibbs Ln. (new)	\$4,470,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8
Perimeter Road Phase I Construct new 3-Lane roadway with center turn lane beginning at Pinehurst Dr at Tebeau St to E Blackshear Ave at Sunnyside Dr. (new)	\$5,000,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	8

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
NATURAL AND CULTURAL/HISTORIC RESOURCES									
Construct a raised boat ramp at the Waycross- Blackshear bridge area on the Satilla River.	\$100,000	Grants (LWCF, TEA 21), DNR					X	Ware County	4
Identify and protect prime agricultural soils in the county and protect with zoning and tax incentives.	\$25,000	Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP)					X	Ware County, NRCS	4
LAND USE									
Develop a countywide Zoning Ordinance that includes the following: • Zoning districts appropriate to the character areas in the Comprehensive Plan. • Development standards to regulate the distribution of land uses and prevent the encroachment of incompatible land uses on each other. • Buffer areas between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. • Flexibility in land uses to allow for a compatible mix of uses, including boulevard housing. • Development standards to avoid undue concentration of population. • Standards for senior/adult	Staff time	Ware County	X	X			X	Ware County	6

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
living. • Standards and flexibility to encourage infill development, re- use of blighted development, and redevelopment of declining and revitalizing areas. • Sufficient flexibility to encourage creative design, green space, and open space. • Specific roles for each corridor to encourage revitalization. • Standards to support additional growth in rural areas only where such growth is planned for and can be supported by appropriate services. • Standards for property upkeep and screening. • Limited mixed- use districts of compatible uses to serve neighborhood needs and create focal community points.									
Create a GPS database of bridges, box culverts, and infrastructure.	\$10,000	Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Update ordinances to continue to meet standard for development including tourism (new)	Staff Time	Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Review ordinances in order maintain the possibilities of Data Centers in Ware County (new)	Staff Time	Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Complete Bridge on 84 over Satilla River (new)	\$8,650,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X		7
HOUSING									
Develop affordable housing in Ware County.	\$1,000,000	General fund, private funds, CHIP, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	3
Implement measures to reduce and eliminate blight (through an urban redevelopment plan or similar effort).	\$500,000	General fund, private funds, CHIP, CDBG	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	3
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES									

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
Conduct a project to strengthen and expand broadband access.	\$1,000,000	General funds, private funds, grants	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross	7
Add additional classroom to public safety training center (new)	\$200,000	SPLOST, Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Construct pickleball courts at multipurpose recreation center (new)	\$500,000	SPLOST, Ware County	X	X	X			Ware County	7
Build new District Attorney/Magistrate Court Build Office (new)	\$300,000	SPLOST, Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Build new State Patrol Office (new)	\$500,000	SPLOST, Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Purchase new Public Safety Vehicles (new)	\$120,000	SPLOST, Ware County	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County	7
Purchase new fire truck (new)	\$1,500,000	SPLOST, Ware County	X	X	X			Ware County	7
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT									
Create a marketing plan to capitalize on Ware County's proximity to the three major ports of Brunswick, Jacksonville, and Savannah; raise awareness of the Industrial Park's proximity to the local airport; and raise awareness of the 5 direct rail lines in Waycross/Ware County, including rail in the Industrial Park.	Staff time	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA,	X	X	X			Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	2
Continue implementing a program to collaborate with federal, state, and local partners to develop local agricultural industry (such as blueberries, pine straw, honey, turpentine, compost, etc.) and promote agri-tourism.	\$200,000	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross	2

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
Extend and upgrade water, sewer, gas, power, and telecommunication infrastructure, as well as railways and roads, to the Industrial Park and other areas suited for economic development.	\$10 million	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Develop a plan to create a one stop shop for Economic Development for Ware Co./Waycross (new)	Staff Time	Ware County, City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Define the type of industry to recruit to Waycross/Ware County (new)	Staff Time	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Develop 75,000 sq ft. expandable spec building for Economic Development (new)	\$5,000,000	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Create a Milage for Economic Development (new)	Staff Time	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Expand land for economic development Opportunities (new)	\$500,000	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Create a plan to build a backup site for E911/Emergency Operations Center (new)	Staff Time	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
Build new hangers for Waycross-Ware County Airport (new)	\$500,000	Ware County, City of Waycross, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross,	2, 7
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION									
Design joint collateral marketing materials and public relations tools to market Ware County/Waycross to tourists and businesses.	Staff time	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	2

Continue quarterly meeting between all local and state stakeholders in the county (new)	Staff time	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	X	X	X	X	X	Ware County, City of Waycross, Chamber of Commerce, DWDA, WWDA	2
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2026-2031 Community Work Program City of Waycross

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
TRANSPORTATION									
Redirect US 1 via State to Tebeau, Carswell, and Memorial Drive, with associated improvements.	\$5 million	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8
Resurface approximately 70 miles of city streets, as listed in the Capital Improvement Program.	\$21 million	City of Waycross, GDOT, SPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8
Make improvements to Downtown streetscapes, including bump-outs at intersections, pole banners, benches, and light poles.	\$3 million	SPLOST, TSPLOST, GDOT,	X	X	X			City of Waycross	8
Implement DOT Priorities - Traffic Lights and Paving.	\$750,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross, GDOT	8
Revise ordinances to include requirements of the Georgia Streetscapes and Pedestrian Design Guide.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Revise ordinances to include requirements of the Georgia Manual on Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Work with SGRC to apply for Age Friendly Community Status.	\$7,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Revise ordinances to include various requirements of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Guides for improved bicycle and pedestrian safety design.	\$500	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Work with GDOT and SGRC to complete Road Safety Audits along key corridors/intersections as needed, based on crash data analysis and other metrics.	\$2,000	GDOT	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
Complete Raised medians from Memorial Dr. to Corridor Z (new)	\$2,095,000	GDOT, SPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as on Archer St from Dead End of Archer St to E. Hamilton Ave. (new)	\$569,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Scruggs St from Atlantic Ave to Clifton Grove St. (new)	\$750,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Cherokee Cir from Satilla Blvd to Cherokee Dr. (new)	\$573,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Ware St from Carswell Ave to Isabella St. (new)	\$179,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Blackwell St from Byrd St to City Limits. (new)	\$1,607,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Myers Ave and Roosevelt St from Columbus St to Perham St. (new)	\$2,536,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Grove Ave from US 1 to Uvalda St. (new)	\$933,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Forest Ave from Screven Ave to Satilla Blvd. (new)	\$1,169,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Gilmore St from Screven Ave to Walter St. (new)	\$1,429,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8
Resurface, drainage and sidewalk improvements as needed on Oak St from Crawford St to Ossie Davis Pkwy. (new)	\$1,802,000	TSPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	8

NATURAL AND CULTURAL/HISTORIC RESOURCES									
Maintain and restore canals with stabilization, vegetation control, and cleanup.	\$200,000	Waycross, SPLOST				X	X	City of Waycross	4, 7
Renovate/rehab 3 historic Downtown buildings (Bunn building, Bowen building, and Lyric theater) (Change funding source).	\$15 million	Georgia Heritage Grant, SPLOST			X	X	X	City of Waycross	2, 5
Conduct a marketing campaign to promote tourist attractions such as Obediah's Okefenok, Wildes Massacre Site, the Heritage Center, Laura Walker State Park, Okefenokee Swamp Park, and the Satilla River Water Trail, and Southern Forest World. (added Southern Forest World)	Staff time	Tourism dollars, City of Waycross	X	X	X	X	X	Tourism Bureau, City of Waycross, Ware County, Chamber of Commerce, Hospitality Industry	2, 4
PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
LAND USE									
Review current ordinances to allow for increase tourist industry in Waycross (new)	Staff Time	City of Waycross	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	6
COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES									
Improve and/ or Replace infrastructure, including sewer, water, street and drainage improvements, as listed in the adopted Capital Improvement Program. (Change funding source)	\$20 million	City of Waycross, CDBG, SPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	7
Continue updating of city parks to improve all recreational facilities, including playground facilities, restrooms, and lighting (including Bailey St., Camilla, E. E. Moore, Elizabeth, Garlington, Gilchrist, Monroe, Parnell, and Roberts Parks, and others). (Change funding source)	\$1 million	City of Waycross, CDBG, SPLOST	X	X	X	X	X	City of Waycross	7

[illegible]

PROJECT	COST	FUNDING SOURCE	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	FY 31	RESPONSIBILITY	RELATED GOAL
Implement an aggressive program to pursue grants for rehabilitation/renewal of approximately 50 homes in targeted areas.	\$1.5 million	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants, Private Partnership			X	X	X	City of Waycross, Ware County	3
Deploy new street signage citywide to comply with federal retro-reflectivity standards.	\$250,000	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross	3
Develop standards and incentives to protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment of non- residential uses.	Staff time	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	3
Develop, improve, and enforce zoning standards for property upkeep and screening.	Staff time	City of Waycross, State & Federal Grants	X	X				City of Waycross, Ware County	3

8. Character Areas

The Land Use Element of this comprehensive plan describes and implements very important tools that will be used to guide future land development and capital investment decisions in Ware County and the City of Waycross via Character Area Maps.

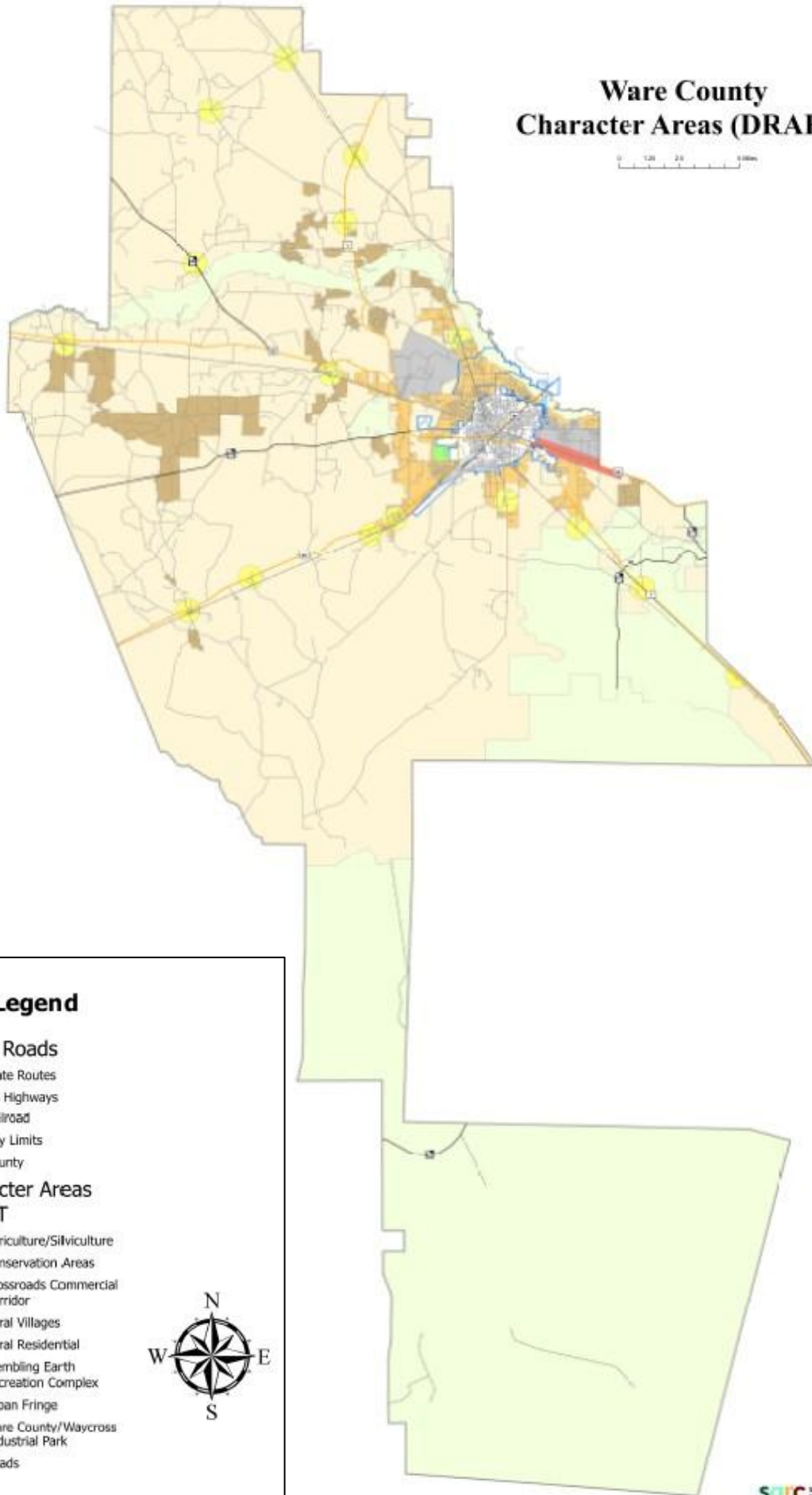
The Character Area maps for Ware County and the City of Waycross are based on the County's and City's vision for the future, and have been developed in coordination with the citizens, the stakeholders, and elected officials. The Character Area Maps are a required component of the Comprehensive Plan under Chapter 110-12-1.03 of the DCA Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, most recently updated October 1, 2018.

The Character Area descriptions define a specific vision for each Character Area, and the maps outline the boundaries on a local scale. Each Character Area is defined with its own vision, description, goals and policies, and implementation strategies. In addition, the policies associated with each Character Area describe which land uses, zoning, and development patterns should be present within that area. Also included are Quality Community Objectives to be pursued and identification of implementation measures to achieve the desired development patterns. The development strategy developed for each character area should serve as a guide for all development and redevelopment taking place in that character area. Adherence to these development strategies will ensure consistent and complementary development, which promotes a greater sense of place and overall improved quality of life.

Character areas were defined by looking at the size and type of lots, site design features, and availability of infrastructure, density and intensity of development, type of development, environmental features and vision for future development. Some character areas are more generic and cover several geographic areas which show similar characteristics, issues and goals for their future. Other character areas are more specific and defined as such in their name, and act more as an overlay zone than a future land development designation.

Ware County Character Areas (DRAFT)

0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles



Legend

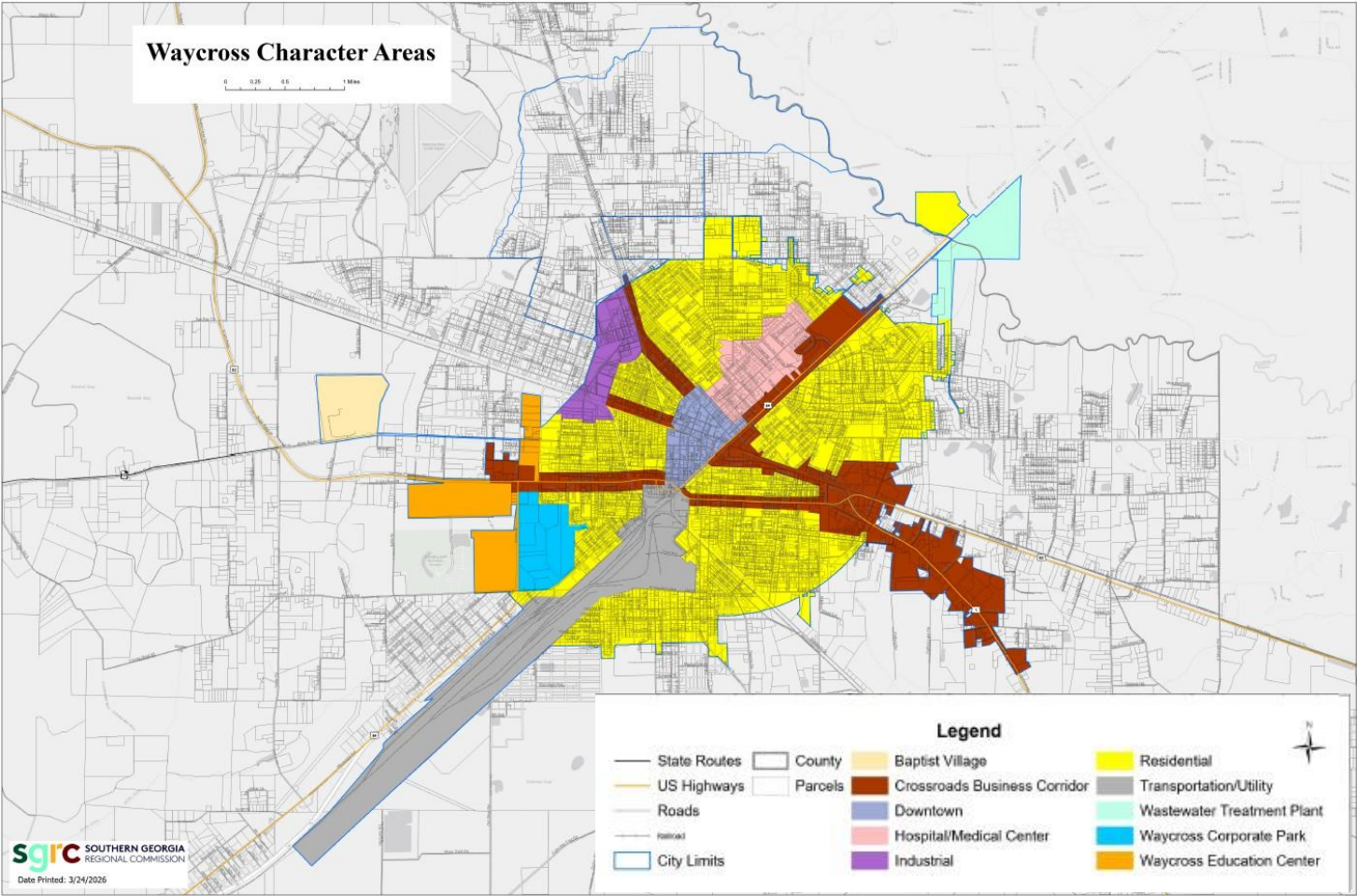
Major Roads

- State Routes
- US Highways
- Railroad
- City Limits
- County

Character Areas DRAFT

- Agriculture/Silviculture
- Conservation Areas
- Crossroads Commercial Corridor
- Rural Villages
- Rural Residential
- Trembling Earth Recreation Complex
- Urban Fringe
- Ware County/Waycross Industrial Park
- Roads





AGRICULTURAL/SILVICULTURE CHARACTER AREA



Description

The Agriculture/Silviculture character area designation is intended for those areas outside of the downtown and suburban areas, which are associated with agricultural and silviculture operations and related activities, natural resource conservation, groundwater recharge areas, and low-density rural residential development accessory to agricultural or farm operations of varying sizes. Many of these agriculturally utilized lands are under the 10-year/15-year conservation designation through the Tax Assessor and therefore will not be available for development for those years. The majority of this area does not have any zoning regulations with the exception of two areas designated as A, A-1, A-2, A-3, and one area designated as A and R-75MH. T

Predominant Land Use

Agricultural/silvicultural operations and related activities, forestry, natural resources conservation, groundwater recharge areas and low-density residential development accessory to agricultural or farm operations of varying sizes.

Vision for the Future:

Preserve farming and conservation options as a viable and important part of Ware County by maintaining low-density rural residential development, primarily accessory to farm operations, and right-to-farm principles. Use of conservation easements to protect environmentally sensitive areas should be encouraged. Roadways in these areas should be widened only when required to meet public safety standards. Location of sustainable, clean commercial and industrial uses closely related to agriculture/silviculture should be encouraged as long as infrastructure is available and the uses are compatible with the surroundings.

Quality Community Objectives:

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

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 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 expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

BAPTIST VILLAGE CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This character area consists of the Baptist Village Retirement Planned Community, which was founded in 1957 to provide housing to senior citizens. Baptist Village is a full-service retirement community, featuring villas, apartments, assisted living suites, a health care center, a chapel, a kitchen center, a resident center, and an administrative annex. In addition, a gift shop and a new patient service area are located on-site. Recreation opportunities are provided on-site, and transportation is available to access shopping, recreation, and medical services off-site.

Predominant Land Use:

The predominant use is housing for senior citizens with associated uses. The current zoning district is designated as Zone M – Medical within the City of Waycross city limits.

Vision for the Future:

Provide a holistic living environment including housing, recreation, social community, transportation, and shopping.

Quality Community Objectives:

Housing Options: Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging 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.

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.

CONSERVATION CHARACTER AREA



Description:

The Conservation Character Area is intended to identify those areas in the County and the City which contain environmentally sensitive wetland areas, upland areas, areas important to water resource protection, or which are home to endangered species or habitat. Conservation Character Areas CN zoning in Ware County and the City of Waycross include the Satilla River Corridor, several groundwater recharge areas, Musket Bay Wetlands Bank, Dixon Memorial Forest, Laura S. Walker State Park, the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge, and Scout Lake Park. CN

Predominant Land Use:

Conservation areas contain significant natural resources, watersheds, and groundwater recharge areas. The land uses are undeveloped, natural lands with significant natural features including floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, wildlife management areas and other environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for development of any kind.

Vision for the Future:

Protect water quality and groundwater recharge areas. Protect significant natural resources such as pristine wetland and upland habitat areas to preserve natural habitat.

Quality Community Objectives:

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.

CROSSROADS BUSINESS CORRIDOR CHARACTER AREA



Description:

The areas identified as the Crossroads Business Corridor include typical office, retail and service commercial uses that are clustered around the major commercial corridors traversing Ware County and the City of Waycross. These include US 1, US 82, and US 84. These commercial corridors are characterized by heavy traffic volumes traveling on four- to six-lane highways, including a large amount of interstate and intrastate commercial traffic.

Predominant Land Use:

These areas include a wide variety of both established and newer commercial uses, big box uses, large lots and parking areas, and a minimum of landscaping or other attractive features. Present also are a variety of fast food and chain restaurants catering to the traveling public, as well as gas stations and some hospitality uses. Current predominant zoning districts in this character area are C-2, Highway Commercial, Mixed Use, and R-75.

Vision for the Future:

The vision is to maintain highway-oriented commercial uses, but to provide more interconnectivity between properties and to develop visual and maintenance standards. The goal is to develop attractive gateways through town which will attract visitors and businesses and protect adjacent landowners and residents from adverse traffic impacts. Compatible zoning districts should be encouraged.

Quality Community Objectives:

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

HOSPITAL/MEDICAL CENTER CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This is an established area with its activity centered on a substantial land use that has regional reach beyond the neighborhood: the Satilla Regional Medical Center. Other uses in the area include medical offices and other allied professional, retail, and service uses that are associated with the delivery of medical care to the community and beyond. Satilla Regional Medical Center is licensed for 231 beds and is the major medical referral center for the 9-county region it serves in Southeast Georgia.

Predominant Land Use:

The predominant use in this area is the Satilla Medical Center, with surrounding related uses. Zoning districts within this area consist of C-2 (Highway Commercial) and M (Medical).

Vision for the Future:

Encourage and enhance a mixed-use community which will provide opportunities for the day-to-day needs of the residents as well as expand the role of the medical service and business sector in Waycross. Encourage the continued development and co-location of medical services and allied services. Encourage housing and a living environment for medical professionals to live in the area and in the adjacent downtown.

Quality Community Objectives:

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.

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 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 expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

INDUSTRIAL CHARACTER AREA



Description:

These areas are intended to provide an environment suitable for light and heavy manufacturing, wholesale, and warehousing activities that may impose undesirable noise, vibration, odor, dust, or other offensive effects on the surrounding areas, together with other non-residential uses that may be necessary with industrial surroundings. Suitable industrial areas exist within the industrial park and on land around the airport.

Predominant Land Use:

Industry related to silviculture including millwork, construction services, manufacturing, motor freight transportation and warehousing, wholesale trades, and similar uses. Zoning districts within this character area include IP (Industrial Park District), GI (General Industrial), and LI (Light Industrial).

Vision for the Future:

Provide guidelines and infrastructure to enhance the connectivity and accessibility of these areas in order to ensure business success while minimizing adverse impacts on neighborhoods and the environment.

Quality Community Objectives:

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA



Description:

These areas are generally located within the City of Waycross surrounding the downtown and hospital character areas and split by commercial development corridors that radiate out from the center of Waycross. They typically include single family residential, and the density ranges from low to medium density with predominantly single-family homes and very few commercial uses.

Predominant Land Use:

The predominant use is residential, with some mix of smaller schools and churches and some very limited neighborhood commercial. The residential character area includes the following zoning districts: RS (Residential), R50 (Residential), R50 Mobile Home (Residential), R50 Historic District, R75 (Residential), R75 Mobile Home (Residential), R75 Residential Manufactured Home (Residential), and R90 (Residential).

Vision for the Future:

The focus for these areas is to reinforce the stability of the neighborhoods by encouraging more homeownership and maintenance or upgrade of existing structures. Provide for more safety and connectivity through continuous sidewalks and bike paths. Protect established neighborhoods from encroachment and deterioration and preserve historic buildings and character. Ensure that sufficient infrastructure is available in conjunction with development and minimize negative impacts through proactive planning.

Quality Community Objectives:

Sense of Place: Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as 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.

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 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 expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, conservation or uses.

Housing Options: Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging 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.

RURAL VILLAGE CHARACTER AREA



Description:

These include unincorporated communities in Ware County such as Astoria, Beach, Bickley, Braganza, Crawley, Dixie Union, Fort Mudge, Glenmore, Jamestown, Manor, Millwood, Ruskin, Telmore, Wahoma, and Waresboro. These areas have their main activities located at highway intersections, which serve the surrounding agricultural areas and rural residents.

Predominant Land Use:

The predominant land use is that of a village with some centralized commercial activity to serve the immediate needs of the surrounding area. In these areas, mixed neighborhood uses are appropriate, consisting of compatible uses such as residential, neighborhood commercial, churches, schools, and parks. Zoning districts currently are applicable in these areas R75 (Residential), R75MH (Residential), R90 (Residential), RS (Residential), and A/A1 (Agriculture/Forestry)

Vision for the Future:

To maintain the rural village character of these areas while providing crucial services such as EMS, limited employment opportunities, new residential opportunities, and affordable, good quality housing. To maintain the local character by improving the village main street area with some local businesses and industries that will serve passers-by and local residents and provide local jobs.

Quality Community Objectives:

Sense of Place: Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as 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.

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 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 expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

Housing Options: Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging 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.

TRANSPORTATION/UTILITIES CHARACTER AREA



Description:

The purpose of this character area is to recognize the transportation or utility use of a property. This designation is applied when appropriate, subject to the existing or intended specific use of the property. Areas in Ware County and the City of Waycross with this designation include the Waycross-Ware County Airport and the Rice Yard for trains moving into, out of, and through Waycross.

Predominant Land Use:

Airports, landfills, railroad switching yards and corridors. This character area encompasses the GI (General Industrial) and LI (Light Industrial) zoning districts.

Vision for the Future:

To provide and protect an environment that is suitable for utilities, transportation and communication facilities, together with uses that can be compatible with utility, transportation, and communication facility surroundings and to provide an environment that will protect such uses from encroaching incompatible development.

Quality Community Objectives:

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

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.

TREMBLING EARTH RECREATION COMPLEX CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This area consists of 123 acres of recreation land divided into three complexes within walking distance of each other. The recreation complex includes a walking track, pond, and fields for baseball, softball, football, and soccer.

Predominant Land Use:

Public Recreation Complex.

Vision for the Future:

Provide connectivity to other passive and active recreation areas and incorporate as part of a bicycle network system.

Quality Community Objectives:

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.

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.

URBAN FRINGE CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This area lies in the unincorporated county and encircles the City of Waycross with suburban-type residential development from the west around to the north and east. The area is served with both water and sewer and is expected to see the majority of the residential development in the county.

Predominant Land Use:

The predominant land use here is low- to medium-density residential with scattered strip commercial development and scattered civic or institutional uses such as convenience stores, waste collection sites, and churches. Applicable zoning districts in this area include: A (Agriculture), A-1 (Agriculture), C2 (Highway Commercial), RS (Residential), R50 (Residential), R50 MH (Residential), R75 (Residential/Townhouses), R75MH (Residential), R90 (Residential), and Mixed Use.

Vision for the Future:

The suburban neighborhood areas should be encouraged to develop at lower densities as masterplanned developments, with an emphasis on connectivity and walkability. In addition, care should be taken to control growth and ensure that any development will occur concurrent with the provision of necessary infrastructure and to ensure equitable distribution of project-created infrastructure cost to the new developments. The areas should provide for interconnectivity between subdivisions and encourage alternate modes of transportation. These areas should also provide for open space within and outside of subdivisions in order to provide additional green space, as well as passive and active recreation areas that will serve the residents.

Quality Community Objectives:

Housing Options: Promote an adequate range of safe, affordable, inclusive, and resource-efficient housing in the community. This may be achieved by encouraging 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.

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.

WARE COUNTY/ WAYCROSS INDUSTRIAL PARK CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This area is intended to provide an environment suitable for light manufacturing, wholesale, warehousing, and other non-residential uses that are compatible with industrial surroundings, including the airport.

Predominant Land Use:

Industry related to silviculture including millwork, construction services, manufacturing, motor freight transportation and warehousing, wholesale trades and similar uses. Applicable zoning districts in this character area are IP (Industrial Park), GI (General Industrial), M2 (Heavy Industrial), LI (Limited Industrial), C-2 (Highway Commercial), A (Agriculture/Forest), M (Medical), CN Conservation, and A-1 (Agriculture). This character area also encompasses on three sides a residential (R90) area which may, in the future, lead to incompatibility issues.

Vision for the Future:

Provide guidelines and infrastructure to enhance the connectivity and accessibility of these areas in order to ensure business success while minimizing adverse impacts on neighborhoods and the environment.

Quality Community Objectives:

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT CHARACTER AREA



Description:

The property where the City of Waycross Wastewater Treatment Plant is located is owned by the municipality and stretches from south-west of the Satilla River, where the actual plant is located, to the north-east of the Satilla River where the plant's sludge fields are located. The property directly adjacent to the river is intended for conservation and any solubles intended for the fields are piped under the river. This property is designated as its own character area to protect the function of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the natural habitat of the river.

Predominant Land Use:

Wastewater Treatment Plant operation and river corridor habitat conservation. The area is currently designated as residential zoning district.

Vision for the Future:

Maintain the viability of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the viability of the river.

Quality Community Objectives:

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.

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.

WAYCROSS CORPORATE PARK CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This area includes the corporate/industrial park which is located adjacent to the Education Center Character Area.

Predominant Land Use:

Predominant uses are offices, distribution, and light manufacturing within a corporate park setting. This area is covered under the IP (Industrial Park) zoning designation.

Vision for the Future:

The focus for this area is to provide an environment conducive to maintaining and attracting businesses into the corporate park in order to create good jobs for the community. This includes providing appropriate infrastructure and public services as well as up-to-date technology.

Quality Community Objectives:

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

WAYCROSS DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This area includes the traditional downtown in the City of Waycross and its historical buildings.

Predominant Land Use:

Primary land uses within this area typically include city services, entertainment and commercial recreation, main street, mixed use businesses, business support services, urban neighborhoods, and traditional, older, but stable neighborhoods. Current zoning districts include C1 (Neighborhood Commercial), C2 (Highway Commercial), C3 (Downtown Business District), C4 (Central Business District), O (Office), and M (Medical).

Vision for the Future:

Continue renovation and rehabilitation of historic buildings. Continue to develop mixed use to include residential, commercial, and cultural uses in the area to encourage a vibrant, livable, and walkable downtown.

Quality Community Objectives:

Sense of Place: Protect and enhance the community's unique qualities. This may be achieved by maintaining the downtown as 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.

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

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 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 expansion of public infrastructure; or maintaining open space in

agricultural, forestry, or conservation uses.

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.

WAYCROSS EDUCATION CENTER CHARACTER AREA



Description:

This area includes the high school, Waycross College, and Coastal Pines Technical College, and has developed into the education center for the area through co-location of these learning institutions.

Predominant Land Use:

The predominant use consists of educational institutions, with some associated commercial uses.

Vision for the Future:

The focus for these areas is to continue developing the community's educational assets by encouraging growth and development of the educational institutions and encouraging the provision of nearby amenities to facilitate that growth and development.

Quality Community Objectives:

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.

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 protection of shared natural resources, development of the transportation network, or creation of a tourism plan.

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; and prospects for creating job opportunities that meet the needs of a diverse local workforce.

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.

RURAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER AREA



Description

These rural land areas are likely to face development pressure for large-lot, low-density residential subdivisions. Such developments typically consist of sizeable residential lot subdivisions and open space. The majority of the Rural Residential areas can be found on the City of Waycross outer periphery, along major collector roads leading into the city. The density ranges from low to medium, with primarily single-family homes and very few commercial uses mixed in.

Development Strategy

Provide connecting green space and recreational areas to maintain the area's low-density rural character, emphasizing rural residential rather than agricultural activities. Encourage development closer to the city limits as oppose to further out in the county where water services are more difficult and costly to provide. Ensure all new RR developments include high-speed fiber or robust satellite-link infrastructure for internet service.

Predominant Land Use

Primarily made up of low-density, single-family homes on large lots, often interspersed with agricultural uses like small farms, pastureland, and timber. Development is limited to preserve open space and the natural landscape, with minimal commercial activity and only occasional community-oriented uses such as churches or small civic buildings. Overall, the area is intended to maintain a rural atmosphere while accommodating scattered residential growth.

Vision for the Future: The Rural Residential Character Area will remain a quiet, low-density community that preserves its natural landscapes, open spaces, and agricultural heritage. Future growth will be carefully managed to maintain the area's rural character, with well-spaced homes, limited commercial activity, and development that respects the land. The community will continue to offer a peaceful, high-quality living environment while accommodating modest residential growth in a way that protects its sense of place and long-term sustainability.

Quality Community Objectives

Sense of Place: The community will preserve and enhance its unique rural identity by protecting natural landscapes, maintaining low-density development patterns, and encouraging context-sensitive design. Development should reflect the area's character through the use of open space, tree preservation, and architectural styles that complement the rural setting, while supporting small-scale community gathering spaces that foster local identity.

Efficient Land Use: The community will promote efficient land use by directing growth to appropriate areas, minimizing sprawl, and preserving agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands. New development should be planned to make effective use of existing infrastructure where available, while maintaining large lot patterns and clustering techniques that protect open space and reduce land fragmentation.

Housing Options: The community will support a limited range of housing options that are compatible with the rural character, primarily focusing on single-family homes on larger lots. Opportunities for accessory dwellings, family subdivisions, and aging-in-place options should be considered where appropriate, ensuring that housing diversity does not compromise the area's low-density, rural nature.

CITY OF WAYCROSS ZONING

RESIDENTIAL MANUFACTURED HOUSING RM-75 is established to provide suitable locations for dwellings which satisfy the minimum standards of 314.1 of the Waycross Zoning Ordinance and for any other dwelling suitable for R-S, R-90, R-75 and R-50 Residential Districts.

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS R-S, R-90, R-75 AND R-50 Residential Districts are established to provide suitable locations for all types of dwellings with appropriate standards for each district.

R-45 RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT is established to promote stable, quality residential developments of slightly increased densities of at least eight (8) dwelling units located on a developed site having a minimum of one (1) acre or more. This district may include an entire neighborhood or may be a “buffer” district between residential districts and non-residential districts.

R-75MH AND R-50MH RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOME R-75MH and R50-MH Residential Mobile Home districts are established to accomplish the following purposes: The same purposes as the R-75 and R-50 District to provide locations for factory built or manufactured housing such as mobile homes; and to provide an alternate type of structure within the single-family housing market

R-50HD RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT the purposes of this district are to: Safeguard the architectural and historic heritage of the City of Waycross by preserving parts of the City which reflect elements of its cultural, economic and architectural history; Promote the use of historic district for education, pleasure and welfare of both the citizens of the City and its visitors; Stabilize and improve property values.

M MEDICAL DISTRICT The M Medical District is established to contain as principal uses the Memorial Hospital, the medical offices associated therewith, and certain types of retail and service establishments which should be in the vicinity of the hospital for the convenience of patients and visitors.

O OFFICE DISTRICT The O Office District is intended to permit those office uses which will provide opportunities for local employment close to residential areas, thus reducing travel to and from work and which will provide clean, modern office buildings in landscaped setting; uses which do not generate large volumes of traffic, traffic congestion and parking problems; and which will promote the most desirable use of land in accordance with the Waycross Future Land Use Plan.

C-1 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL the C-1 Neighborhood Commercial District is to established as a district to contain as principal uses those commercial and service activities which are for the convenience of the surrounding residential districts.

C-2 HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL The C-2 Highway Commercial District is established as a district to contain as principal uses those commercial and service activities which will serve the tourist and automobile drive-in trade.

C-4 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT The C-4 Central Business District is established to preserve and protect land to be used for those commercial and service uses serving the City of Waycross and its regional market area.

LI LIMITED INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT The LI Limited Industrial District is established to

develop and reserve land for non-nuisance industrial uses which are not significantly objectionable in terms of noise, odor, fumes, etc. to surrounding properties.

GI GENERAL INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT The GI General Industrial District is established for all types of industrial uses, including those which may be objectionable in terms of noise, odor, fumes, etc. to surrounding properties.

CN CONSERVATION DISTRICT The CN Conservation Districts are established to limit the development of certain land, swamp and/or water areas with poor drainage which serves as a wildlife refuge; possess great natural beauty; are utilized for outdoor recreational purposes and are subject to periodic flooding. These areas have such a small amount of developable land that with the best interests of the governing body, to encourage residential, commercial and industrial development.

FDP - FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION DISTRICT It is the purpose of this district to promote the public health, safety and general welfare and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions in specific areas by provisions.

SDD - SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (OVERLAY) The Special Development District is an overlay zoning district that provides standards in addition to those required in the underlying zone(s). The district allows the granting of special building permits for developments that modify their bulk, height and setbacks as defined in the Bonus section.

PUD - PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS The purpose of the PUD Planned Unit Development Districts is to encourage the best possible site plans and building arrangements under a unified plan of development rather than under lot-by-lot regulation. The developer benefits from better land utilization, economy in the provision of roads and utilities and flexibility in design. Review of the development plan by the Planning Commission and approval by the Waycross City Commission provides an opportunity to assure that the development will be in harmony with the character of the neighborhood in which the development is located.

IP INDUSTRIAL PARK DISTRICT The IP Industrial Park District is established to provide high standards of design, land use intensity and open spaces of reselected, non-nuisance and compatible industrial uses on land which is reserved and improved for unified and harmonious industrial development.

WRD WATER RESOURCE DISTRICTS The intent of this section is to establish minimum development standards and criteria which will afford reasonable protection of environmentally sensitive natural resources found throughout the City of Waycross. Based on the findings of the Waycross-Ware County Comprehensive Plan, it has been determined the wise management of these resources as defined in this Section is essential to maintaining the health, safety, general welfare and economic well-being of the public.

MIXED USE DISTRICT The intent of the Mixed Use District is to provide for the establishment of such districts at appropriate locations as may be identified on the Future Land Use Map of the Waycross-Ware County Comprehensive Plan. Permitted uses within Mixed Use Districts shall be integrated for convenience and encourage compatible uses of commercial, office and residential natures.

WARE COUNTY ZONING

R-S RESIDENTIAL Residential Site Built/Single Family

R-90 RESIDENTIAL Residential site built only, allows single & multi-family uses

R-45 RESIDENTIAL ZONING type used for transition buffers between residential & non-residential districts as well as to encourage townhouses & similar zero-lot line developments.

R-75 RESIDENTIAL & R-50 RESIDENTIAL These allow a mixture of residential single & multi-family developments as well as Class A manufactured homes.

R-75MH RESIDENTIAL MOBILE HOME & R-50MH Residential Mobile Home Both allow a mixture of residential single & multi-family developments as well as Class A, B, & C manufactured homes.

MU Mixed Use District This district allows a mixture of residential & commercial (primarily C-1 equivalents).

C-1 NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL Established to contain commercial and service activities which are for the convenience of the surrounding residential districts.

C-2 HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL Established as a district to contain as principal uses those commercial and service activities which will serve the tourist and automobile drive-in trade.

C-3 GENERAL COMMERCIAL Established to accommodate general commercial uses and warehousing and wholesaling operations which serve the entire community but which do not require a central business district location.

LI LIMITED Industrial Established as a district in which the principal use of land is for wholesaling, warehousing, and non-nuisance industries.

GI GENERAL INDUSTRIAL Established as a district in which intensive commercial and industrial uses would be permitted. Such uses may create a nuisance; therefore, they should not be associated with residential, institutional or retail-commercial establishments.

IPD INDUSTRIAL PARK DISTRICT Established to provide high standards of design, land use intensity and open spaces of selected, non-nuisance and compatible light manufacturing industrial uses on land which is reserved and improved for unified and harmonious industrial development.

A AGRICULTURE – FORESTRY Established as a district in which the predominant use of land is for general agricultural and/or forestry uses.

A-1 AGRICULTURE – FORESTRY Established as a district in which the predominant use of land is for general agricultural and/or forestry uses but prohibits single-wide manufactured homes.

A-2 AGRICULTURE-FORESTRY Established as a district in which the predominant use of land is for general agricultural and/or forestry uses, this district permits site-built residential construction only.

A-3 AGRICULTURE-FORESTRY Established as a transitional district in which the predominant use of land is for general agricultural and/or forestry uses. Such uses would normally be transitional to uses in urban areas by

allowing Class DW Manufactured Homes, Site-Built Homes and modular homes built to Ware County Building Code Standard and Fire Wise Standards.

CN CONSERVATION Established to limit the development of certain land, swamp and/or water areas with poor drainage which serve as a wildlife refuge; possess great natural beauty; are utilized for outdoor recreational purposes and are subject to periodic flooding. These areas have such a small amount of developable land that with the present drainage system it is not economical, nor is it in the best interests of the governing body, to encourage residential, commercial and industrial development.

FDP FLOOD DAMAGE PROTECTION DISTRICT was established to follow FEMA guidelines for development and construction standards of locations within the Special Flood Hazard Area, more commonly referred to of as the "100-year flood zone".

OFFICE Established to permit those office uses which will provide opportunities for local employment close to residential areas, thus reducing travel and to and from work and which will provide clean, modern office buildings in landscaped setting; uses which do not generate large volumes of traffic, traffic congestion and parking problems; and which will promote the most desirable use of land in accordance with the Ware County Future Land Use Plan M Medical Established to contain as principal uses, the medical offices associated with Memorial Hospital and private hospitals and certain types of retail and service establishments which should be in the vicinity of the hospital for the convenience of patients and visitors.

CDD – CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT Establishment to permit allowed uses in R-75MH, A, C-2, & GI zoning types and development standards in one zoning district along US Routes 1, 23, 82, & 84.

APPENDIX

Elmer Thrift, Chairman
Leonard Burse, Commissioner, District 1
Jon Tindall, Commissioner, District 2
Timmy Lucas, Commissioner, District 3
Barry Cox, Commissioner, District 4



James Shubert, County Manager
Anthony Rowell, County Attorney
Jennifer Herzog, Asst County Attorney
Melinda Brooks, County Clerk
Melissa Bennett, Deputy County Clerk

May 11, 2026

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1937 Carlton Adams Drive
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Ware County and the City of Waycross have completed an update of its Comprehensive Plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in the 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 Melinda Brooks, County Clerk, at (912) 287.4300 or mbrooks@warecountyga.gov

Sincerely,



Elmer Thrift, Chairman
Ware County



305 Oak Street, Suite 227, Waycross, Georgia 31501– (912) 287-4300



Opportunity in every direction.

Office of Mayor and Commission

Dr. Michael-Angelo James
Mayor

Shawn Roberts
Commissioner District 1

William Simmons
Commissioner District 2

Shawn Sanders
Commissioner District 3

William Tompkins
Commissioner District 4

Alvin Nelson
Commissioner District 5

Ulysses Rayford
City Manager

May 20, 2026

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1937 Carlton Adams Drive
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

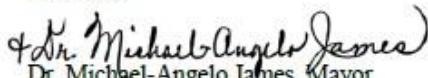
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If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Jacqueline Powell, City Clerk, at (912) 490.2106 or jpowell@waycrossga.gov

Sincerely,


Dr. Michael-Angelo James, Mayor
City of Waycross

P.O. Drawer 99, 417 Pendleton Street, Waycross, GA 31502-0099, Phone (912) 287-2912
www.waycrossga.gov

Ware County, GA

County in: [Georgia](#), [United States](#)

35,958

Population

899.2 square miles

40 people per square mile

Census data: ACS 2023 5-year unless noted

Age

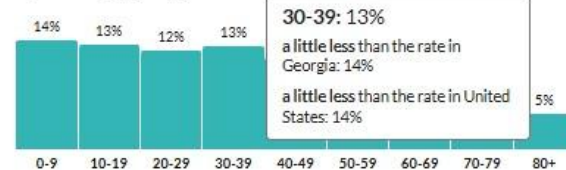
38

Median age

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 37.4

about the same as the figure in United States: 38.7

Population by age range



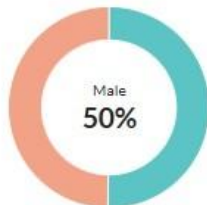
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Population by age category



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

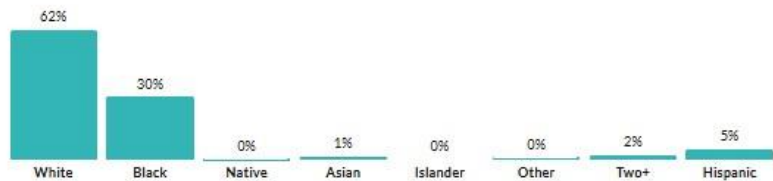
Sex



Male
Female

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Race & Ethnicity



* Hispanic includes respondents of any race. Other categories are non-Hispanic.

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ware County – Demographics -

Income

\$23,550

Per capita income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$39,525

about half the amount in United States: \$43,289

\$44,833

Median household income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$74,664

about three-fifths of the amount in United States: \$78,538

Household income



Poverty

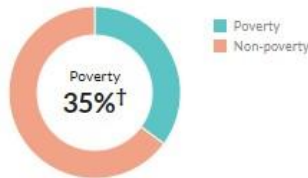
22.8%

Persons below poverty line

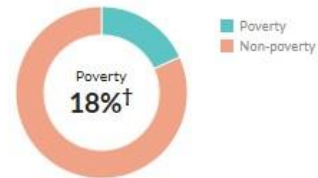
more than 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 13.5%

nearly double the rate in United States: 12.4%

Children (Under 18)



Seniors (65 and over)



Transportation to work

20.3 minutes

Mean travel time to work

about three-quarters of the figure in Georgia: 28.3

about three-quarters of the figure in United States: 26.6

Means of transportation to work



Households

12,866

Number of households

Georgia: 4,008,013

United States: 127,482,864

2.6

Persons per household

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 2.6

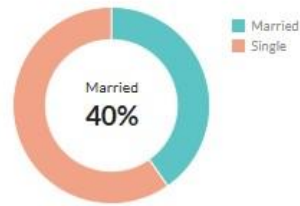
a little higher than the figure in United States: 2.5

Population by household type



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

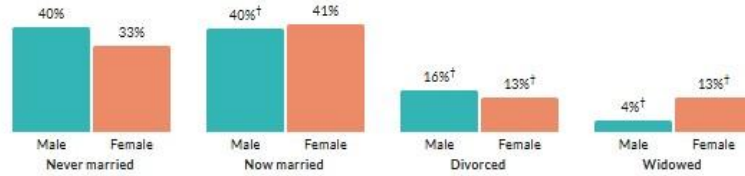
Marital status



* Universe: Population 15 years and over

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Marital status, by sex



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Fertility

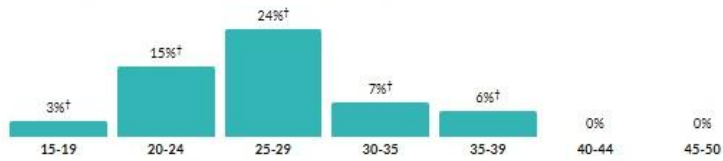
7.6%

Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

about 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 5.2%

about 1.5 times the rate in United States: 5.2%

Women who gave birth during past year, by age group



* Universe: Women 15 to 50 years

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ware County - Households

Units & Occupancy

15,926

Number of housing units

Georgia: 4,483,873

United States: 142,332,880

Occupied vs. Vacant



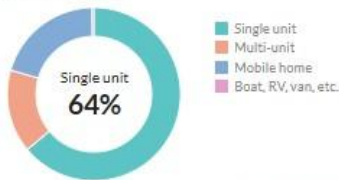
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Ownership of occupied units



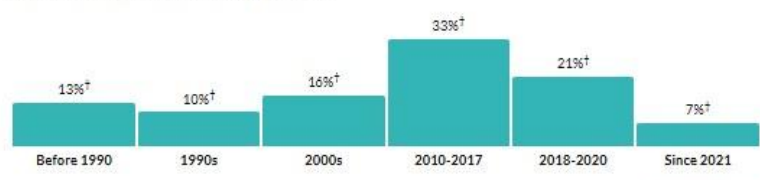
[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Types of structure



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Year moved in, by percentage of population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Value

\$106,500

Median value of owner-occupied housing units

about two-fifths of the amount in Georgia:
\$272,900

about one-third of the amount in United States:
\$303,400

Value of owner-occupied housing units



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Geographical mobility

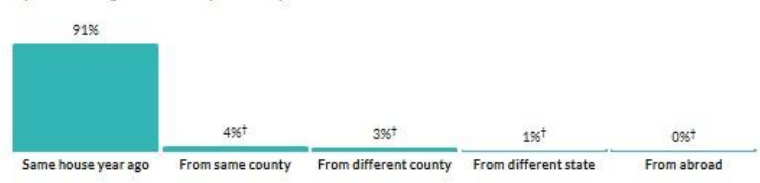
8.5%

Moved since previous year

about two-thirds of the rate in Georgia: 13.3%

about two-thirds of the rate in United States:
12.7%

Population migration since previous year



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ware County - Housing

Educational attainment

81.5%

High school grad or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in Georgia: 89%

about 90 percent of the rate in United States: 89.4%

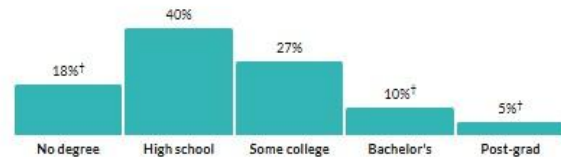
15%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about two-fifths of the rate in Georgia: 34.2%

about two-fifths of the rate in United States: 35%

Population by highest level of education



* Universe: Population 25 years and over

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Language

N/A

Persons with language other than English spoken at home

Language at home, children 5-17

No data available

Language at home, adults 18+

No data available

Place of birth

2.8%

Foreign-born population

about one-quarter of the rate in Georgia: 10.8%

about one-fifth of the rate in United States: 13.9%

Place of birth for foreign-born population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Veteran status

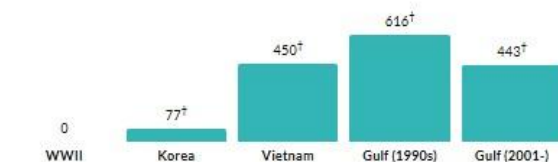
6.2%

Population with veteran status

about 80 percent of the rate in Georgia: 7.4%

a little less than the rate in United States: 6.4%

Veterans by wartime service



* Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

1,659 Total veterans

1,488 Male

171 Female

Ware County - Social

Waycross, GA

Place in: [2 counties](#), [Waycross, GA Micro Area](#), [Georgia](#), [United States](#)

13,813

Population

11.9 square miles

1,163.9 people per square mile

Age

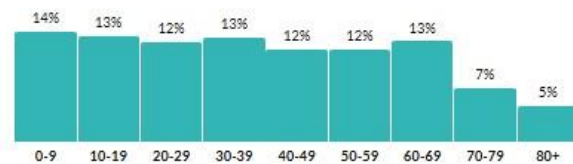
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Median age

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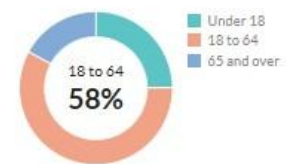
about the same as the figure in
United States: 38.7

Population by age range



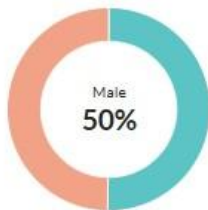
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Population by age category



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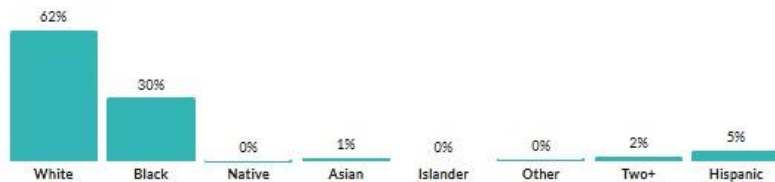
Sex



Male
Female

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Race & Ethnicity



* Hispanic includes respondents of any race. Other categories are non-Hispanic.

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Income

\$23,550

Per capita income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$39,525

about half the amount in United States: \$43,289

\$44,833

Median household income

about three-fifths of the amount in Georgia: \$74,664

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Household income



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Poverty

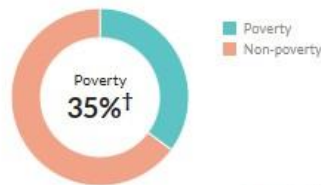
22.8%

Persons below poverty line

more than 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 13.5%

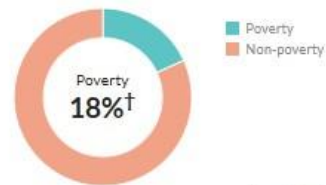
nearly double the rate in United States: 12.4%

Children (Under 18)



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Seniors (65 and over)



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Transportation to work

20.3 minutes

Mean travel time to work

about three-quarters of the figure in Georgia: 28.3

about three-quarters of the figure in United States: 26.6

Means of transportation to work



* Universe: Workers 16 years and over

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Educational attainment

81.5% $\pm 4.2\%$

(19,781 $\pm 1,024.3$)

High school grad or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in Georgia: 89% 6,451,736 ($\pm 0.3\%$ / $\pm 23,526$)

about 90 percent of the rate in United States: 89.4% 204,204,445 ($\pm 0.1\%$ / $\pm 279,113.6$)

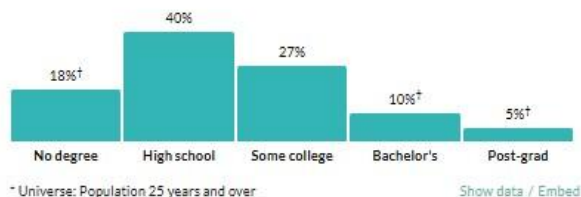
15%

Bachelor's degree or higher

about two-fifths of the rate in Georgia: 34.2%

about two-fifths of the rate in United States: 35%

Population by highest level of education



Language

N/A

Persons with language other than English spoken at home

Language at home, children 5-17

No data available

Language at home, adults 18+

No data available

Place of birth

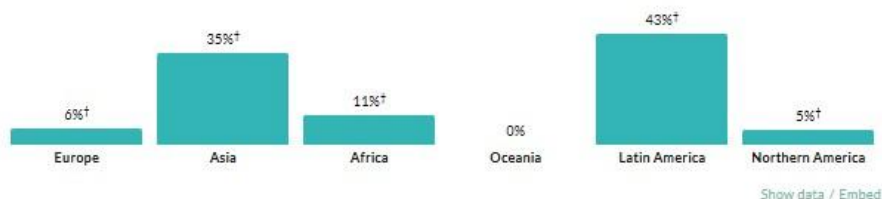
2.8%

Foreign-born population

about one-quarter of the rate in Georgia: 10.8%

about one-fifth of the rate in United States: 13.9%

Place of birth for foreign-born population



Veteran status

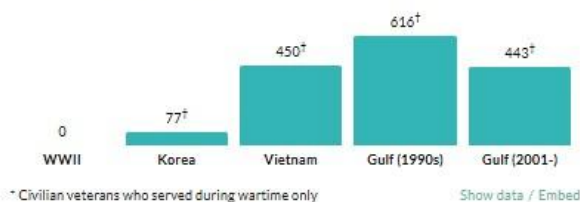
6.2%

Population with veteran status

about 80 percent of the rate in Georgia: 7.4%

a little less than the rate in United States: 6.4%

Veterans by wartime service



1,659 Total veterans

1,488 Male

171 Female

Households

12,866

Number of households

Georgia: 4,008,013

United States: 127,482,864

2.6

Persons per household

about the same as the figure in Georgia: 2.6

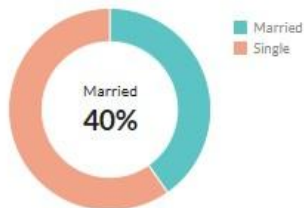
a little higher than the figure in United States: 2.5

Population by household type



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

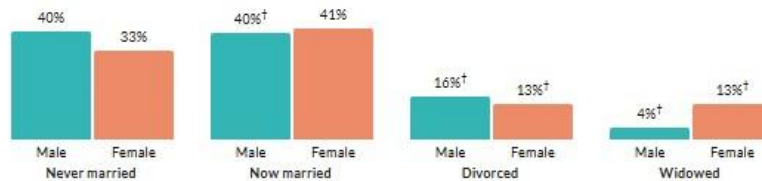
Marital status



* Universe: Population 15 years and over

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Marital status, by sex



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Fertility

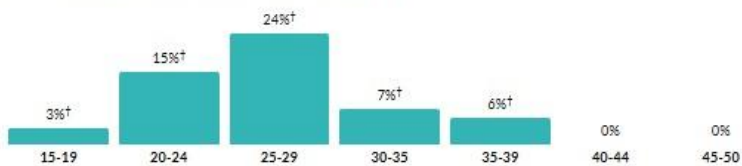
7.6%

Women 15-50 who gave birth during past year

about 1.5 times the rate in Georgia: 5.2%

about 1.5 times the rate in United States: 5.2%

Women who gave birth during past year, by age group



* Universe: Women 15 to 50 years

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Units & Occupancy

15,926

Number of housing units

Georgia: 4,483,873

United States: 142,332,880

Occupied vs. Vacant



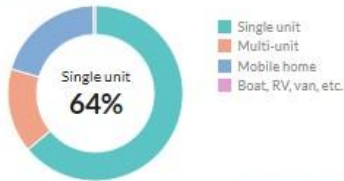
[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ownership of occupied units



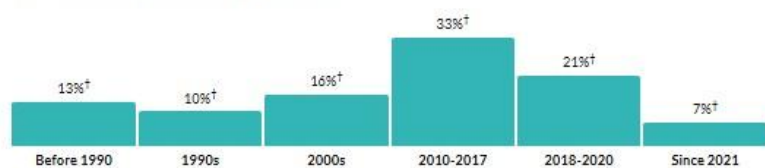
[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Types of structure



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Year moved in, by percentage of population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Value

\$106,500

Median value of owner-occupied housing units

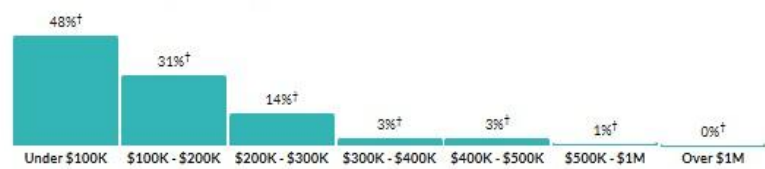
about two-fifths of the amount in Georgia:

\$272,900

about one-third of the amount in United States:

\$303,400

Value of owner-occupied housing units



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Geographical mobility

8.5%

Moved since previous year

about two-thirds of the rate in Georgia: 13.3%

about two-thirds of the rate in United States:

12.7%

Population migration since previous year



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Waycross, GA

Place in: [2 counties](#), [Waycross, GA Micro Area](#), [Georgia](#), [United States](#)

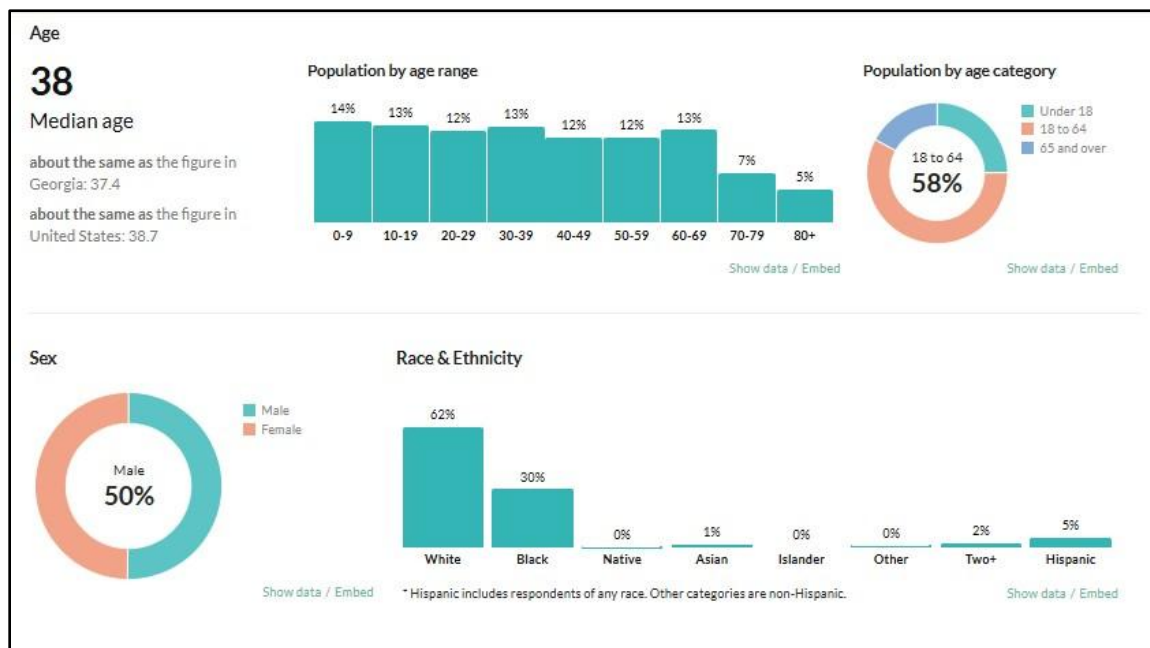
13,813

Population

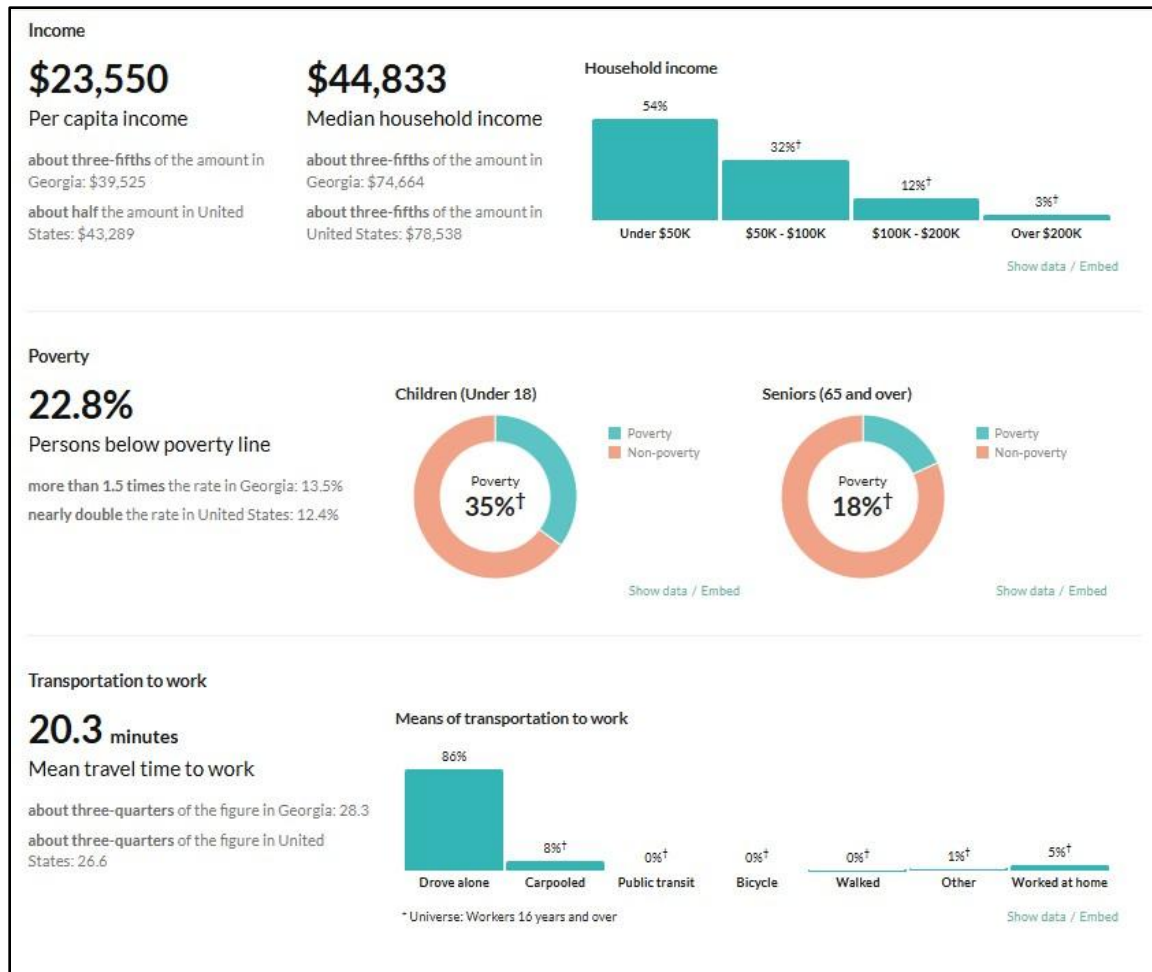
11.9 square miles

1,163.9 people per square mile

Waycross – Population



Waycross - Demographics



Waycross - Economics

Educational attainment

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(19,781 $\pm 1,024.3$)

High school grad or higher

about 90 percent of the rate in
Georgia: 89% 6,451,736
($\pm 0.3\%$ / $\pm 23,526$)

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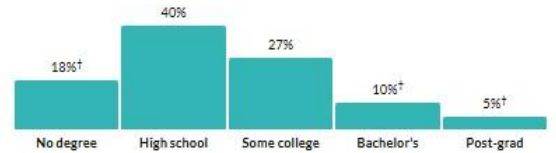
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[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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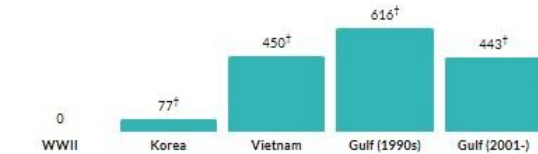
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* Civilian veterans who served during wartime only

[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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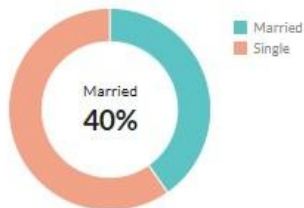
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[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

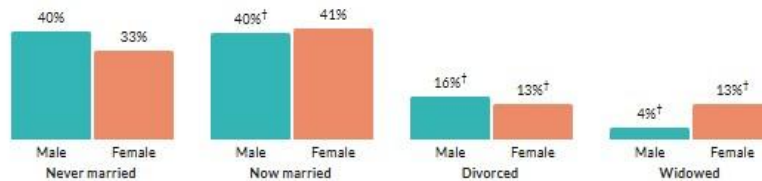
Marital status



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[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Marital status, by sex



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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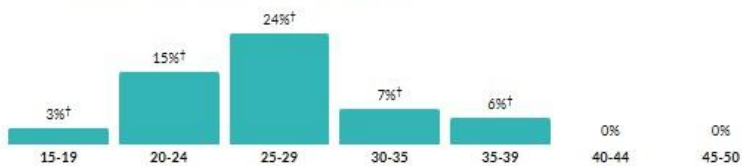
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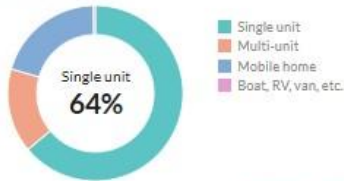
[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Ownership of occupied units



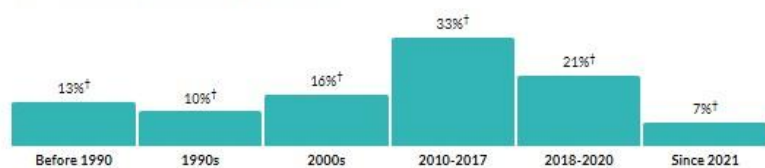
[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Year moved in, by percentage of population



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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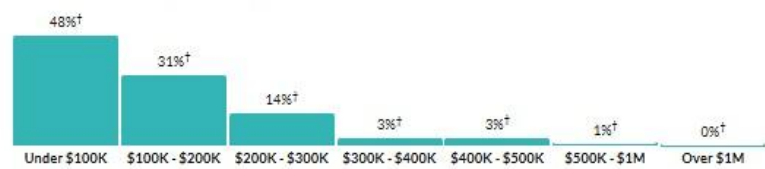
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[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

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Population migration since previous year



[Show data](#) / [Embed](#)

Waycross – Housing

Kick-Off for Comprehensive Plan

**Comprehensive Plan Update
For Ware County and the City of Waycross
Ware County Administration Building
305 Oak St. Suite 227, Waycross, GA 31501**

A public hearing will be held at on Monday, August 11, 2025, at 4:30 PM in the Ware County Administration Building, located at 305 Oak St. Suite 201, Waycross, GA 31501. 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 the development of the plan, and obtain input on the proposed planning process.

Persons with special needs related to disability access or foreign language should contact the County Clerk's Office at the Ware County Commission Office at (912) 287-4300. Persons with hearing disabilities may consider using the Georgia Relay Service at 1-800-255-0056.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please get in touch with the Ware County Clerk at (912) 287-4300, or Marcus L. McConico at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (229) 333-5277 or email: mmcconico@sgrc.us

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
 2025 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR
 WARE COUNTY AND THE CITY OF WAYCROSS
 Comprehensive Plan Update Kickoff
 Date: August, 11, 2025

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
<i>Leonard Burse</i>	Ware Co Commissioner	912-281-7196	Lbjr1953@gmail.com
<i>Jontindall</i>	Ware Co Commissioner	912-590-2438	jontindall@yahoo.com
<i>Lucas</i>	Ware Co Commissioner	912-337-0008	lucastimothy@bellsouth.net
<i>Barry Cox</i>	Ware Co Commissioner	912-288-8678	Barry1960cox@gmail.com
<i>Emmy Hubert</i>	Ware Co Chairman	912-548-7253	ethrift@warecountyga.gov
<i>John Hubert</i>	Ware Co Manager	912-287-4300	jshubert@warecountyga.gov
<i>Melinda Brooks</i>	Ware Co Clerk	912-287-4300	mbrooks@warecountyga.gov

Kickoff Public Hearing

Ware County Comprehensive Plan

Stakeholders Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Date: 10/28/2025

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Austin Bagby	UGA Extension	912-288-7148	Austin.Bagby@uga.edu
Tabitha Kirkendall	UGA Extension	912-287-2456	tabitha.kirkendall@uga.edu
DEREK HARRISON	WATCHCROSS MAGAZINE	912-281-0018	DEREK@SERVA.com
JERRY BUCKLEY	" "	850-518-4023	buckleyjerry718@gmail.com
NEIL SKERRATT	WARE Co. S.O.	912-287-4326	nskerratt@waresheriff.com
Justin Inglett	Memorial Saffell Health	(912) 943-7700	Justin.inglett@hcahealthcare.com
Jonathan DANIELL	WARE Co EMA	912-281-5158	JDANIELL@WARECOUNTYGA.GOV
James Shubert	WARE Co. Manager	(912) 287-4300	jshubert@warecountyga.gov
Elmer TRIFT	Ware Co. Chairman	912-548-7253	
evvie griffin	ware county	912-288-4655	griffinevvie@yahoo.com
Dustin Minchew	Ware Co. Planning & Codes	912-287-4379	dminchew@warecountyga.gov
William Clark, MPP	Cherokee Swamp Park	912-282-1261	swclark@gmail.com

Meeting #1

Ware County Comprehensive Plan
Stakeholders Meeting 2 Sign-In Sheet

Date: 11/19/2025

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
<i>Greg Tanner</i>	<i>Waycross Press Express</i>	<i>912-256-7990</i>	<i>pressexpress@delSouth.net</i>
<i>William Clark</i>	<i>South Georgia State College</i>	<i>912-550-7623</i>	<i>greg.tanner@sgsc.edu</i>
<i>NEIL SKERRATT</i>	<i>Ware Co. S.O.</i>	<i>912-282-1261</i>	<i>swclark3@gmail.com</i>
<i>Dustin Minchew</i>	<i>Ware Co Planning Code</i>	<i>912-614-2067</i>	<i>nskerratt@waresheriff.com</i>
<i>Levi Welling</i>	<i>Ware Co Planning Code</i>	<i>912-287-4379</i>	<i>dmminchew@warecountyga.gov</i>
<i>DEREK HARRISON</i>	<i>Okefenokee Swamp Park</i>	<i>912-283-9583</i>	<i>levi.welling@okeswp.org</i>
<i>Paige Coker</i>	<i>WAYCROSS MAG</i>	<i>912-281-0018</i>	<i>DEREK@SERVA.COM</i>
<i>Ulysses Rayford</i>	<i>Ware Co. Schools</i>	<i>(912) 670-6381</i>	<i>pcoker@ware.k12.ga.us</i>
<i>Tabitha Kirkendall</i>	<i>Waycross</i>	<i>912 670 5768</i>	<i>u-rayford@waycrossga.gov</i>
<i>Jason Rubenbauer</i>	<i>UGA Extension-Ware</i>	<i>912-287-2450</i>	<i>tabitha.kirkendall@uga.edu</i>
<i>Melinda Brooks</i>	<i>Waycross-Ware Dev Auth</i>	<i>912-288-5735</i>	<i>Jason@wvda.us</i>
<i>Kayley Johnson</i>	<i>Ware County BOC</i>	<i>912-287-4312</i>	<i>mrbrooks@warecountyga.gov</i>
<i>Alexandra Arzayus</i>	<i>Ware County BOC</i>	<i>912-548-8979</i>	<i>kjohnson@warecountyga.gov</i>
<i>Moreus McConico</i>	<i>SGRC</i>		
	<i>SGRC</i>		

Meeting #2

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
2026 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR
WARE COUNTY AND THE CITY OF WAYCROSS
Comprehensive Plan Update Stakeholder Meeting #3
Date: Jan. 29, 2026

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Alexandra Arzayus	STRC	229-333-5272	aarzayus@sarvus
Maricus McConilo	STRC	229-333-5277	mmconilo@sarvus
Dustin Minchew	Ware Co.	912-287-4377	dminchew@warecountyga.gov
Elmer Theliff	WARE CO. Chair	912-548-7258	
Barry Cox	WARE CO.	912-288-8678	BARRY1960Cox@gmail.com
Shannon Gregory	Satilla Riverkeeper	912-421-8972	riverkeeper@satillaRiverkeeper.org
Viv SSPS Ruffin	Waycross		vrayfin@waycrossga.gov
Michael Angelo James	Waycross	912-722-1261	majames@waycrossga.gov
GREG SMITH	WAYCROSS	912-288-1469	GREESMITH@WAYCROSSGA.GOV
DR. WILLIAM CLARK	WCYB/OSP/Cetc	912-282-1261	gwclark3@gmail.com
Leonard Borse	WARE County Commission	912-281-7196	LBJB1953@GMAIL
Tim Rinnon	Ware County	912-288-0819	Paul+Rinnon@gmail.com
Theresa Young	Ware County	912-287-4333	tyoung@warecountyga.gov
JAMES SHUBERT	"	"	jshubert@lll
Jon Tindall	WCBOC	912-590-2438	
Jason Rubenbauer	WODA	912-283-2112	Jason@woda.us

NEIL SKERRATT WARE S.O. 912-614-2017 nskerratt@wareshortfall.com

Meeting #3

Date: 3/4/2026 / 3-10-2026

Date: 3/4/2026 / 3-10-2024

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Cheslyn Green	City of Waycross	912-670-3746	cgreen@waycrossga.gov
Taylor Hereford	CSGC	912-444-7511	taylor.hereford@csjsg.edu
Eric Byrd	CPTC	912-258-7600	ebayrd@coastal.pines.edu
MICHAEL HARGROVE	CITIZEN	714-296-2194	m.hargrove.hm@gmail.com
DAVE HANSON	Codes/Police	912-287-4379	DHANSON@warecountygga.gov
Carlos Salazar	IT	912-287-4319	Cjsalazar@warecountygga.gov
PERNA Blackburn	EMS	912-287-4451	pblackburn@warecountygga.gov
Debra Hendricks	Ware 911	912-337-1855	dhendricks@warecountygga.gov
Michelle Matthews	Ware 911	912-337-5273	m.matthews@warecountygga.gov
Jason Wudka	WUWA	912-283-2112	Jason@wudka.us
Tim Kinnon	Citizen	912-288-0891	
Greg Stevenson	Citizen	912-816-7005	g.stevenson74@gmail.com
Nekinda Brooks	County Clerk	912-287-4200	nbrooks@warecountygga.gov
James Shubert	County Mgr	912-287-4500	jshubert@warecountygga.gov
Dustin Minchew	Interim Planning & Dev Dir	912-287-4379	dminchew@warecountygga.gov
S.W.M. Clark, III	WCVP	912-262-1261	swclark3@gmail.com

[illegible]

Ware County Comprehensive Plan
Stakeholders Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Date: 4/15/2026

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Marcus McCaig	SGRC		
Patricia Somers	City of Waycross	912-337-6062	psomers@waycrossga.gov
Eric Tomlin	City of Waycross	912-872-9445	etomlin@waycrossga.gov
Jason Rosenberg	WWDA	912-283-2112	Jason@wdda.us
Elmer Thibault	Ware Choir	912-548-9255	
James Shubert	Ware County	912-287-9300	jshubert@warecountyga.gov
LEONARD BURSE	WARE COUNTY	912-281-7196	L.B.-TR 1953@GMAIL.COM
Dustin Minchew	Ware County	912-287-4379	dminchew@warecountyga.gov

Character Area Map

Ware County Comprehensive Plan

Transmittal Public Hear Meeting Sign-In Sheet

Date: 5/11/2026

NAME	ORGANIZATION	PHONE	E-MAIL
Marcus McCaw	SGRC		mmccaw@sgrc.us
Melinda Brooks	Ware BOC		mhb00ks@warecountygov.gov
Jennifer Herzog	County Attorney Firm - HBS		jherzog@hallbuttsmith.com
James Shubert	Ware Co. BOC		jshubert@warecountyga.gov
Jon Tindall	Ware BOC - Comm		jontindall@yahoo.com
Leonard Burse	Ware BOC - Comm		lbr1953@gmail.com
Elmer Thrift	Ware BOC - Chair		ethrift@warecountyga.gov
Barry Caf	Ware BOC - Comm		Barry1940caf@gmail.com

Transmittal Sign-in Sheet

PUBLIC NOTICE

A public hearing to review and transmit the Joint 2026 Ware County and City of Waycross Comprehensive Plan Update to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review will be held at 4:30 PM. on May, 11th, 2026 at in the Ware County Board of Commissioners, located at 305 Oak Street, Suite 201, Waycross, GA 31501. The purpose of the public hearing is to inform the community about the planning process and provide an opportunity to review and comment on the Comprehensive Plan Update. The public is invited to attend and participate. Copies of the draft Comprehensive Plan Update are available for public review at the County Commission office and for download at the SGRC website: <http://www.sgrc.us/>.

All persons are invited to attend the public hearing. If you would like more information, please contact If you would like more information, please get in touch with the Ware County Clerk at (912) 287-4300 or Marcus L. McConico at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, at (229) 333-5277 or mmcconico@sgrc.us.

Elmer Thrift, Chairman
Leonard Burse, Commissioner, District 1
Jon Tindall, Commissioner, District 2
Timmy Lucas, Commissioner, District 3
Barry Cox, Commissioner, District 4



James Shubert, County Manager
Anthony Rowell, County Attorney
Jennifer Herzog, Asst County Attorney
Melinda Brooks, County Clerk
Melissa Bennett, Deputy County Clerk

May 11, 2026

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1937 Carlton Adams Drive
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

Ware County and the City of Waycross have completed an update of its Comprehensive Plan and is submitting it with this letter for review by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

I certify that we have held the required public hearings and have involved the public in the 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 Melinda Brooks, County Clerk, at (912) 287.4300 or mbrooks@warecountyga.gov

Sincerely,



Elmer Thrift, Chairman
Ware County



305 Oak Street, Suite 227, Waycross, Georgia 31501– (912) 287-4300



Opportunity in every direction.

Office of Mayor and Commission

Dr. Michael-Angelo James
Mayor

Shawn Roberts
Commissioner District 1

William Simmons
Commissioner District 2

Shawn Sanders
Commissioner District 3

William Tompkins
Commissioner District 4

Alvin Nelson
Commissioner District 5

Ulysses Rayford
City Manager

May 20, 2026

Southern Georgia Regional Commission
1937 Carlton Adams Drive
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

RE: Comprehensive Plan Update Submittal

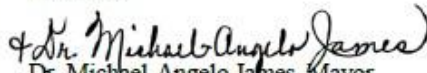
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If you have any questions concerning our submittal, please contact Jacqueline Powell, City Clerk, at (912) 490.2106 or jpowell@waycrossga.gov

Sincerely,


Dr. Michael-Angelo James, Mayor
City of Waycross

P.O. Drawer 99, 417 Pendleton Street, Waycross, GA 31502-0099, Phone (912) 287-2912
www.waycrossga.gov

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-09

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF WARE COUNTY,
GEORGIA, TO ADOPT THE 2026 JOINT WARE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
UPDATE**

WHEREAS, the Ware County Board of Commissioners has completed the 2026 Joint Ware County and City of Waycross Comprehensive Plan Update; and,

WHEREAS, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989, Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective January 1, 2013.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ware County Board of Commissioners does hereby adopt the 2026 Joint Ware County and City of Waycross Comprehensive Plan Update, this 25th day of **June, 2026**.


Elmer Thrift, Chairman

ATTEST:


Melinda Brooks, County Clerk



RESOLUTION NO. 026-37

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WAYCROSS, GEORGIA, TO ADOPT
2026 JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE FOR WARE COUNTY AND THE
CITY OF WAYCROSS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

WHEREAS, the City of Waycross has completed the 2026 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Ware County and the City of Waycross; and

WHEREAS, this document was prepared according to the Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning as established by the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 and the Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1, Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, effective January 1, 2013; and

WHEREAS, said matter having been considered.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the City Commission of the City of Waycross does hereby adopt the 2026 Joint Comprehensive Plan Update for Ware County and the City of Waycross, in the form attached hereto and incorporated herein as if fully set forth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor, City Manager and City Clerk be empowered, authorized and directed to execute the 2026 Joint Ware County and City of Waycross Comprehensive Plan on behalf of the City of Waycross, and to do all the acts and things necessary in order to carry out the purposes of this Resolution, hereby ratifying and confirming all actions taken and to be taken.

SO RESOLVED, this 7th day of July, 2026.

CITY OF WAYCROSS

BY: *Dr. Michael Angelo James*
MICHAEL-ANGELO JAMES, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Jacqueline Powell
JACQUALINE POWELL, CITY CLERK

