

HOUSING REPORT

LYONS, VIDALIA, & TOOMBS
COUNTY




microLife
INSTITUTE


Georgia
CONSERVANCY



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Acknowledgements

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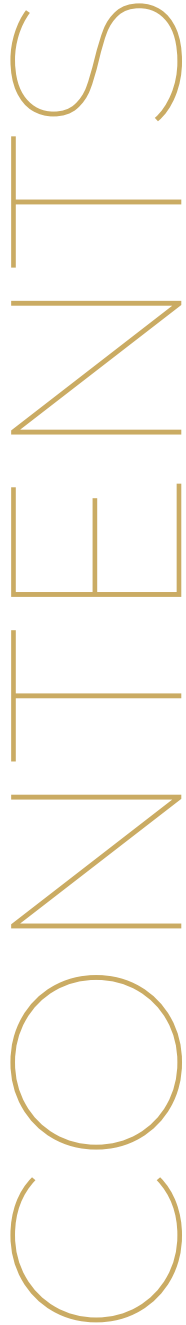
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MicroLife Institute is a Georgia-based non-profit organization dedicated to connecting communities by expanding housing choice.



The Georgia Conservancy's mission is to protect and conserve Georgia's natural resources through advocacy, engagement, and collaboration.



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Introduction

Why Housing? Why now?

From coast to coast, in every state, the United States is facing a housing crisis. Two main trends are currently defining the housing landscape across the country: a shortage of housing stock and rapidly rising housing prices. Growing worse over time, their impacts and resulting challenges have been felt more acutely in recent years. Coupled with challenges of shifting demographic and economic patterns, the housing landscape is one that many communities throughout the country, and state, are struggling to understand—and Toombs County is no exception.

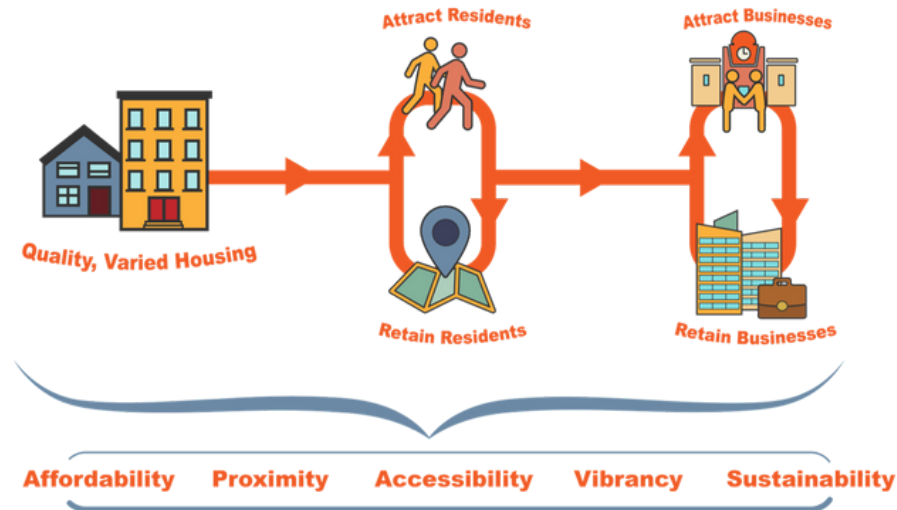
So what? What's so important about housing?

Housing is: *for everyone*. This conversation ranges the full spectrum of housing need—from the poorest members of our communities, to the young families establishing themselves, to the public service employees that constitute the backbone of civil society, to hardworking business owners, to empty nesters and retirees.

Housing is: *a cornerstone for a resilient community*. A robust housing system is a diverse one, offering plenty of choice in shape, size, type, and price. This diversity is necessary for community resilience, to ensure that all members of society are able to achieve stability in their lives on a short- and long-term basis. This need not force a trade off with community character—rather, these should be common goals that work to support one another.

Housing is: *a vehicle for economic development*. Quality, varied housing enables the ability to retain and attract citizens, which then enables the ability to retain and attract businesses. State leadership is in agreement, as seen by Governor Kemp's establishment of the Rural Workforce Housing Initiative in 2022. This fund will develop workforce housing in rural parts of Georgia in support of economic development projects.

The housing crisis does not impact a single segment of the community. It is a core component, directly or indirectly, to quality of life for all.



Project Goals

This report documents the deep-dive towards understanding multiple aspects of housing in Toombs County, including housing supply, demand, challenges, and opportunities. The study reviewed Toombs County as a whole, as well as its two main incorporated cities of Lyons and Vidalia. The outcome of this study is to give county leadership concrete and tangible information that will help inform decision making for a resilient housing system in the Toombs community, one that will promote attainable and diverse housing. It will propose high-level policy levers to support in Toombs, as well as offer more specific illustrative examples of pilot projects and initiatives the county can take on in support of a resilient housing system.

In concert with the goals of Lyons and Vidalia, specific emphasis was placed on understanding how demographic trends interacted with population projections, existing housing stock and development needs and goals. From there, the project team determined general recommendations related to specific housing needs.

This project scope included:

- Data collection, analysis, and summarization;
- Community survey and key stakeholder interviews;
- Review of zoning code and development regulations;
- Neighborhood housing assessment;
- Housing opportunity assessment;
- Site design for select opportunity properties.

Introduction

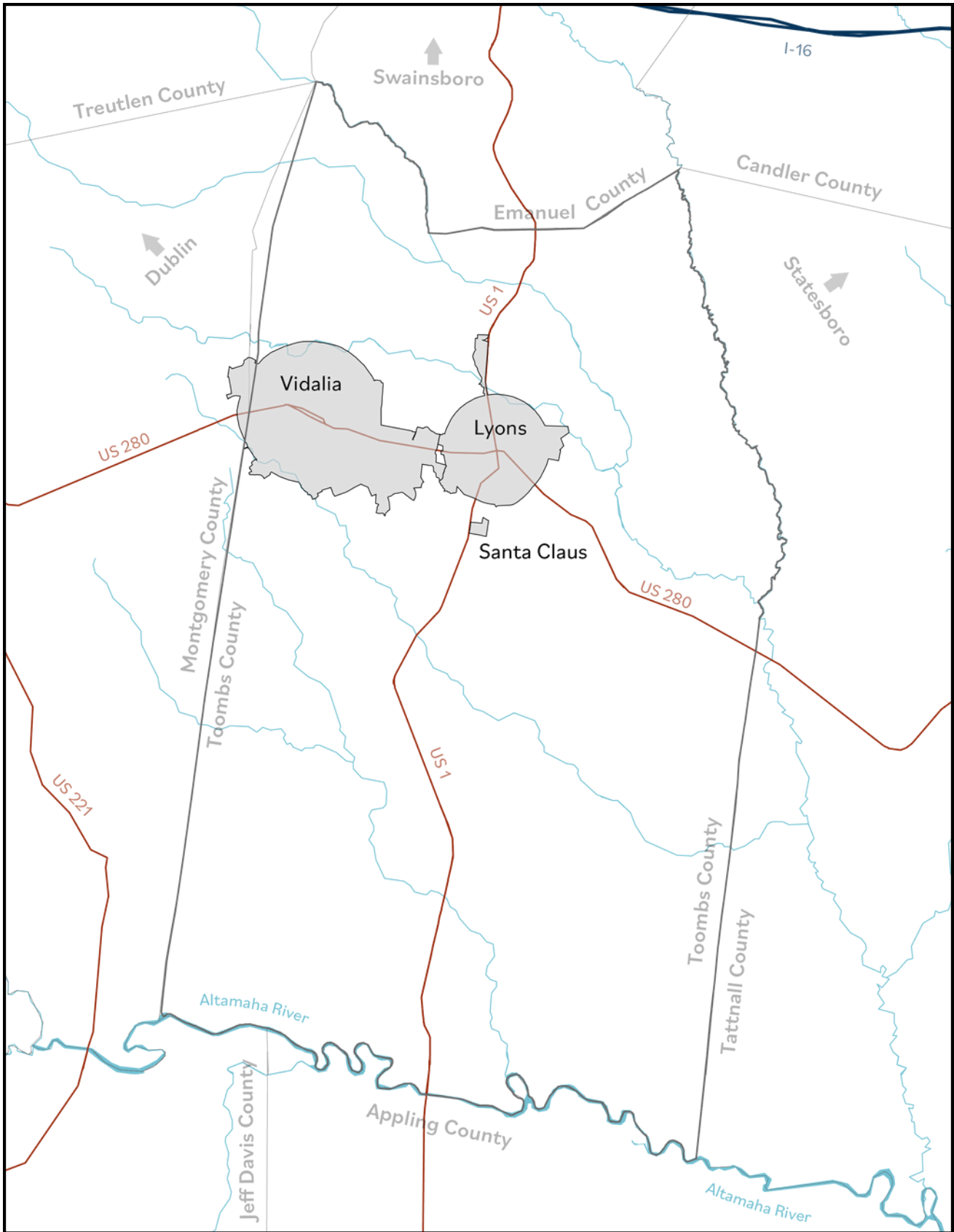
Toombs County and Local Housing Efforts

Few Georgia counties can boast the diverse mix of industry, engaged local leadership, and unified wave of positive momentum, packaged in a small town rural character contained in Toombs County, Georgia. Home of the Southeast Georgia Soap Box Derby, the Vidalia® onion, and the namesake city of Santa Claus, Toombs lies off the beaten path of Interstate 16, between Macon and Savannah, and has skirted major development activity, retaining in exchange a compact urban form centered around the downtown cores of Lyons and Vidalia, while continuing to deliver strong industry recruitment alongside a robust agricultural economy.

Why is Toombs County focusing on housing issues?

For the two main reasons of housing undersupply and high housing costs, many communities throughout Georgia and the nation are struggling to provide quality, attainable, and abundant housing. That does not mean that every community is without its unique circumstances and motivations when it comes to tackling local housing issues. In Toombs' case, a prolonged slowdown in residential development activity since the 2008 recession has left the county and its cities in short supply of housing units and an aging housing stock from a peak development period that occurred in the 60's, 70's, and 80's. While the population of the county consistently grew from the 70's onwards, that trend halted with the recession. Since then, the estimated population has been steady but declining slightly, and residential development activity has been slow to recover to pre-2008 levels.

The years of lethargic housing construction have left their mark. Most residents who were polled through a survey on the topic of housing felt that they knew there was a housing crisis in Toombs County. Industry employers and local leadership are acutely aware of the crunch that the housing bottleneck places on local economic growth and development. Employers have been vocal about the challenge of filling their hiring capacity when housing opportunities are lacking, both for low-to-mid and high wage earners.

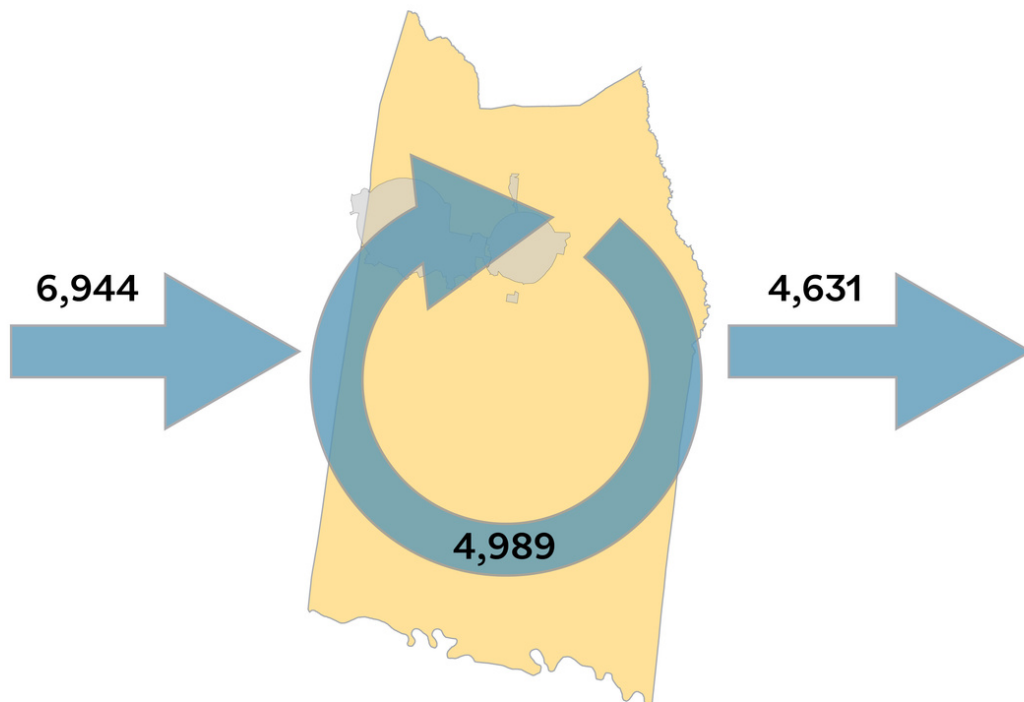


📍 Toombs County and Lyons, Vidalia, and Santa Claus, with major landmarks.

What is the role of industries and businesses in Toombs?

Toombs is home to major employers across a swath of industries, including DOT Foods (food industry redistributor), Chicken of the Sea (seafood packager and provider), Trane Technologies (A/C and refrigeration manufacturer), and Memorial Health Meadows Hospital (healthcare), among others. Alongside them, a host of small businesses and retailers, mainly in Lyons and Vidalia, round out the local economy in the urbanized areas of the county, while the large remainder of the landscape is dedicated to farming and forestry. The healthcare and manufacturing sectors employ 21% and 20% of the labor pool, respectively, providing relatively high-paying jobs, and the retail, agricultural, and wholesale trade sectors employ 19%, 6%, and another 6% each. Together, these industries represent 72% of the county's labor and employ thousands of workers.

Employers in the county have rallied around housing issues, citing hiring challenges exacerbated by a lack of housing, be it a shortage of the right type of housing opportunity or insufficient numbers in general. These business leaders have pledged their support to finding housing solutions and spurring residential development.



On the Map Inflow/Outflow analysis, 2021 commuter data for all jobs. Inflow exceeds outflow by 2,313 persons (estimated).

Toombs County is a regional economic hub that attracts more economic traffic than it sends elsewhere. The number of workers who work in the county but live outside of it surpasses those who live in the county but travel elsewhere for work by an estimated 2,313 workers. The total number of workers who are employed in the county but live elsewhere is just shy of 7,000 workers. If just a fraction of the individuals who come into the county to work were converted to full-time residents, ideally in or near the cores of Lyons and Vidalia, the additional population could have positive local economic development impacts and provide impetus for quality of life improvements like new retail, dining, and entertainment opportunities that both residents and some employers feel are lacking in number and diversity. Apart from existing workers traveling into the county, some employers hope to hire additional workers. Furthermore, the incoming Hyundai plant in Bryan County, although more than 50 miles away, may have spillover effects significant enough to supercharge auxiliary industries and housing demand in a broad, multicounty region that includes Toombs.

Are there opportunities for development?

Local governments, the Development Authority, and the Chamber also recognize the need for additional housing. These entities have worked to generate positive momentum around housing and other types of development, reduce regulatory barriers, provide incentives, seek funding for housing and infrastructure improvements, work with landowners, and raise awareness in the general public about the housing shortage. In all, the result has been **a pro-housing attitude that reaches across the private-public divide.**

There are numerous opportunities for development within the city boundaries of Lyons and Vidalia that are yet untapped. These properties, large and small, are undeveloped, with many already zoned for residential or mixed-uses. While the most appropriate development for each will vary due to location, size, and other factors, part of this project has been to explore the potential for different types of housing that could occur in all sorts of circumstances—housing typologies like cottage courts, duplexes, and other types of **missing middle housing**, of which there are already some examples in the county.

Much of the unincorporated county is also undeveloped or minimally developed, but if low density residential development were to proliferate unchecked into unincorporated territory, it would likely come at the price of agricultural and timber lands, the county's rural character, and an increased cost of community services. Lyons and Vidalia have followed, in large part, traditional town development patterns, densifying near their downtowns, or at least within city limits, and maintaining a relatively compact urban form that overlaps with the public water and sewer service area.

Conventional suburban development has the drawback of being more land consumptive, on average. Moreover, if it occurs at a distance from already developed areas, it will incur costs in the form of additional infrastructure maintenance and expansion (roads, water, and potentially sewer) that will be difficult to recoup in the long run, while also concentrating residential population farther from amenities. Likely, new single-family subdivisions will develop, and these will still bring much needed housing units, but they will lead to better outcomes if they are close to city centers, designed to be well-connected with the existing street grids, and designed in a more compact form. The best chance to create more walkable, vibrant communities will be to **take advantage of infill development opportunities** in incorporated areas where services, leisure and retail amenities, and neighborhoods have already taken root.

Furthermore, tens of thousands of acres in unincorporated parts of the county are under temporary conservation protection, and tens of thousands more are agriculture or timber lands. Meanwhile, the county's most productive tax base (measured in value per acre) is in incorporated areas. Low-intensity urban sprawl is one of the top threats to agricultural lands, and if Toombs County is to preserve its agricultural economy and rural character while adding new residential opportunity, **local governments and agencies should work to direct future growth in or near cities**, where the tax base is also sufficient to support public infrastructure investment.

Toombs County is fortunate to have a local pool of active developers, interested landowners, and properties with development potential. Currently, many places are up against a difficult climate for new development, especially for income-aligned properties for low-to-mid wage earners. It is extraordinarily difficult to build new construction or rehabilitate at low cost, given the price of materials and land and the high cost of borrowing money.

However, there are ways to find a path forward. Exploring the viability of different housing typologies that inject gentle density in infill properties is one way, while seeking funding awards and incentives that could offset the cost of housing development is another. Even during the course of this housing study, interested landowners worked with the project team to explore options for innovative housing developments on infill lots. A successful pilot project would go a long way to demonstrating how creative infill developments can happen in Lyons and Vidalia.

But there is no single type of development that Toombs County needs. Rather, the need for housing is as myriad as the calls and opportunities are diverse. Rental opportunities and new opportunities for homeownership; entry-level homes and senior housing; multifamily, missing middle housing, and single-family homes; homes for the top of the economic spectrum and homes for the average workforce—all of these needs have been expressed.

With coordination, cooperation, and a commitment to creating quality, attainable housing in Toombs County, the housing shortage will diminish over time. The opportunities are out there.



- Missing Middle Housing describes housing types that fall in the “middle” of the spectrum between detached single-family housing and larger multifamily. While previously abundant, they are called “missing” because they have been outlawed with the introduction of zoning in many places throughout the nation.

01. Starting Point

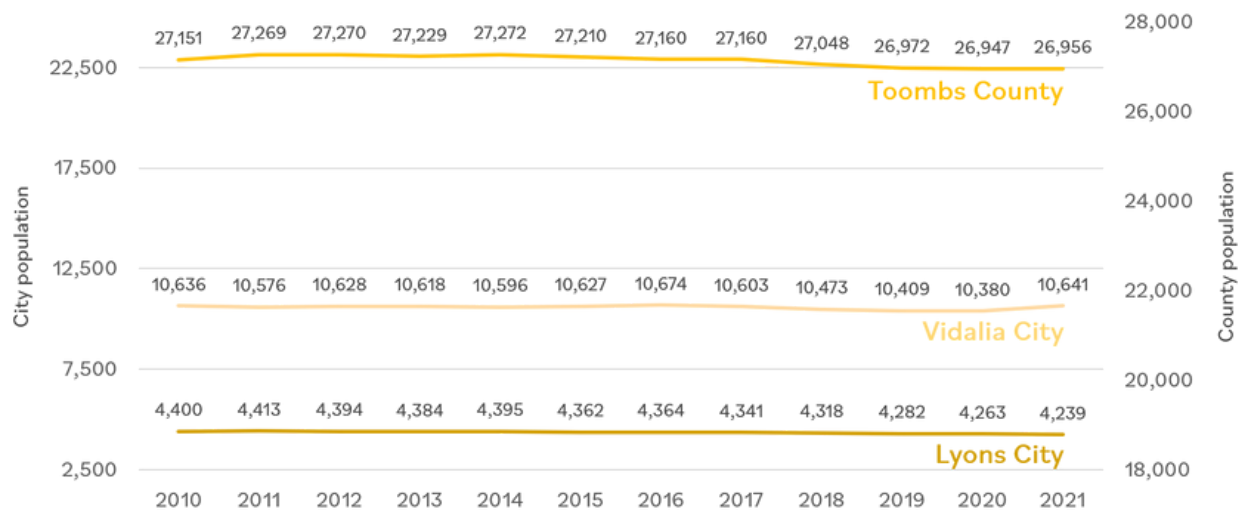
Existing Conditions

Introduction

Key to understanding the housing issues in Toombs County is understanding its demographics, or “who” makes up the community. The following section will summarize a variety of demographic and economic statistics, resulting in a clear profile of Toombs County as a whole, as well as the cities of Vidalia and Lyons individually.

Demographic Profile: Population and Growth

Whether the local population grows or declines, population change is a major factor that affects shifts in housing need, both in how much supply is needed and/or utilized, and in how the population is distributed across a geography.



The graph shows population counts from 2010-2021 by geographic area: Lyons, Vidalia, and Toombs County (inclusive of Lyons and Vidalia). The scales of the y-axes differ to better visualize population change between the county and the cities, which have comparatively smaller residential populations. The axis on the right corresponds to the county population line and the left-hand axis to the cities' population lines.

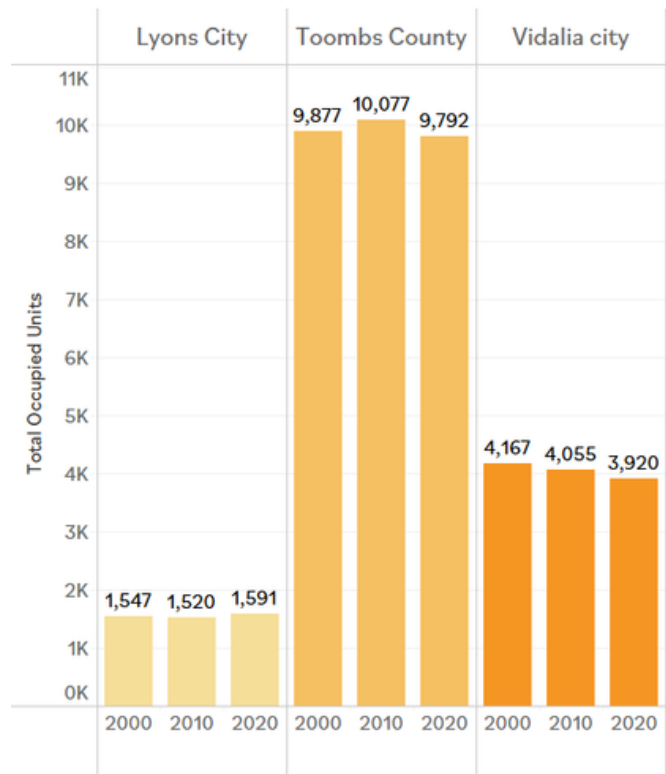
Sources: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census

01. Starting Point: Existing Conditions

Toombs County’s population has remained fairly steady over the past decade, with a modest decline in population beginning in the late 2010’s and continuing into the early 2020’s. As of 2021, Toombs County was home to 26,956 people across 9,792 households. Similarly, Vidalia’s and Lyons’ respective populations have been stable over the same timeframe, with Lyons seeing moderate decline in total population. Between 2010-2021, population change was as follows:

Toombs County: -0.7%
 Lyons City: -3.7%
 Vidalia City: 0%

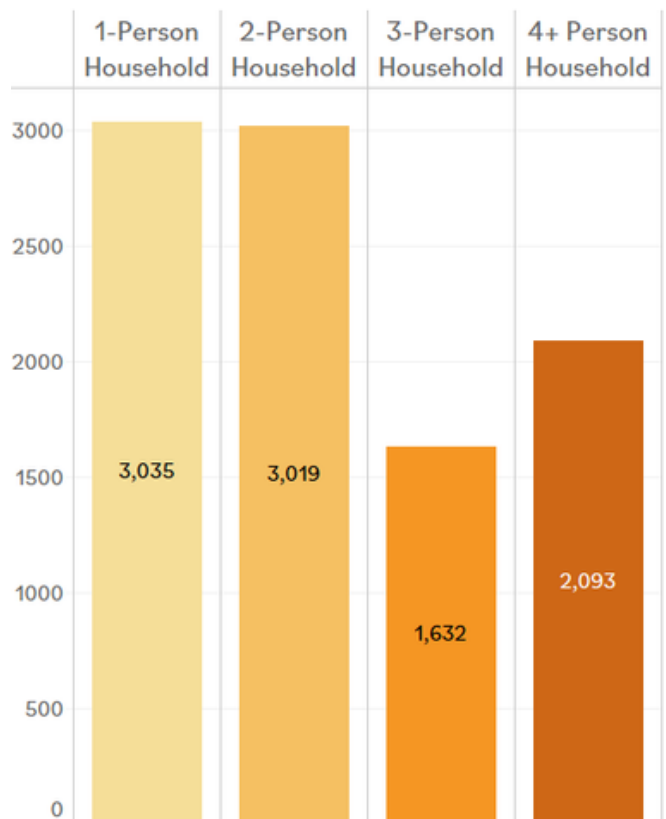
Total Households, 2000-2020



Population is grouped into households, which are made up of all the people who occupy one housing unit. The number of households in Toombs has declined slightly over time. The county’s population is projected to be distributed into more, smaller households—which aligns with national demographic trends.

Presently, the vast majority of households in Toombs County are either 1 or 2 person households. Again, this mirrors national trends that show small households predominate. This pattern contributes to what is known as the “housing mismatch.”

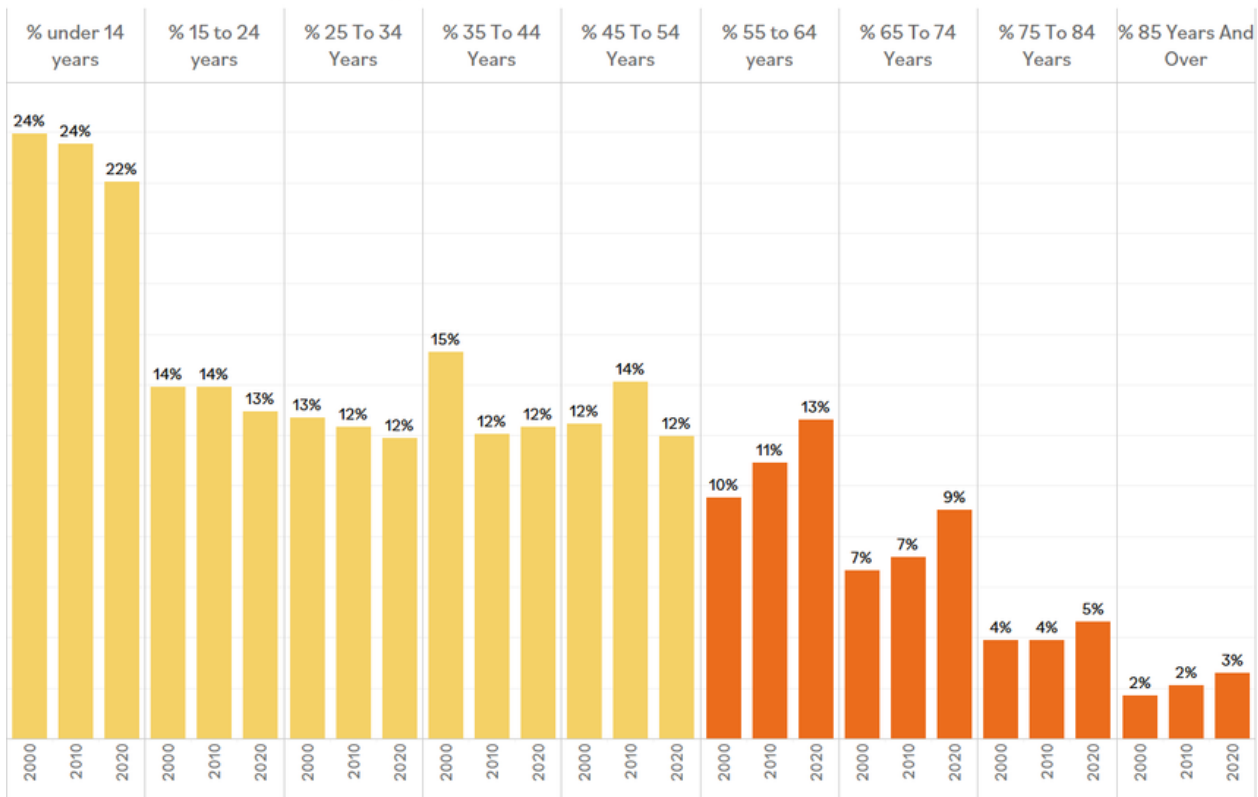
Household Size, 2021 (Toombs County)



Demographic Profile: Age Distribution

Following national trends, Toombs County’s population has become gradually older over time. The proportion of both children as well as younger adults has declined, alongside an increased share in all age groups over 55 years of age. Each age range has changed modestly, though these changes culminate in a population that is different than at the turn of the century. Despite the aging population, however, the most dominant age bracket of residents in Toombs county are children 14 years or younger.

Toombs County Population by Age, Over Time



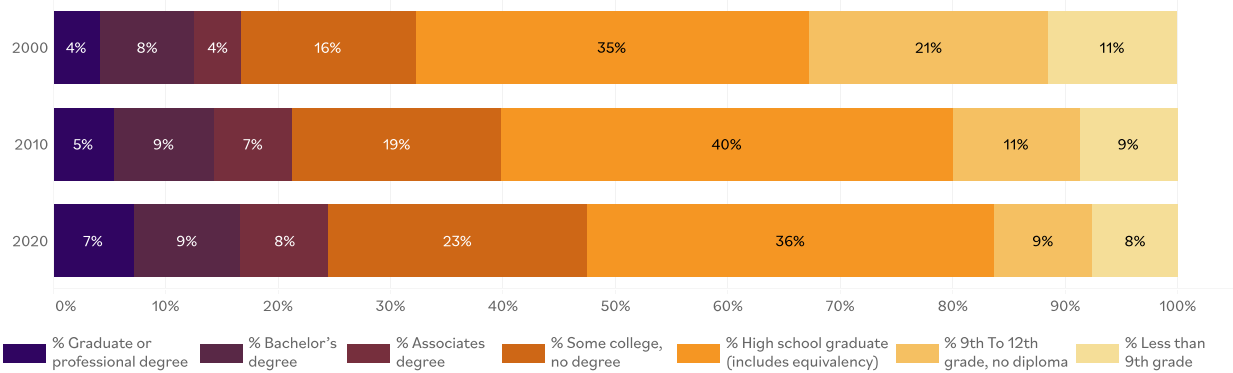
The share of Toombs’s population that is 55 and older is increasing, compared to other age groups that have been relatively stable in number of individuals from 2000-2010. A sizable part of the county’s population growth has occurred in these older age groups.

Age distribution in Toombs county is fairly similar to that seen in both Lyons and Vidalia. The population in Lyons skews slightly younger, particularly with a smaller proportion of people in the age range of 65 to 75 years old and a higher percentage of children in the community. Vidalia is on the other end of the spectrum, with a slightly lower proportion of young children and a greater proportion of ages 65 years and older.

Demographic Profile: Educational Attainment

Educational attainment has increased over time in Toombs County. The high school graduation rate has increased significantly, from 67% in 2000 to 84% in 2020. There has also been an increase in people enrolling in higher education and attaining secondary degrees. Associates degree holders, in particular, have doubled countywide over the last 20 years. Overall, 25% of the population holds an associates degree or higher.

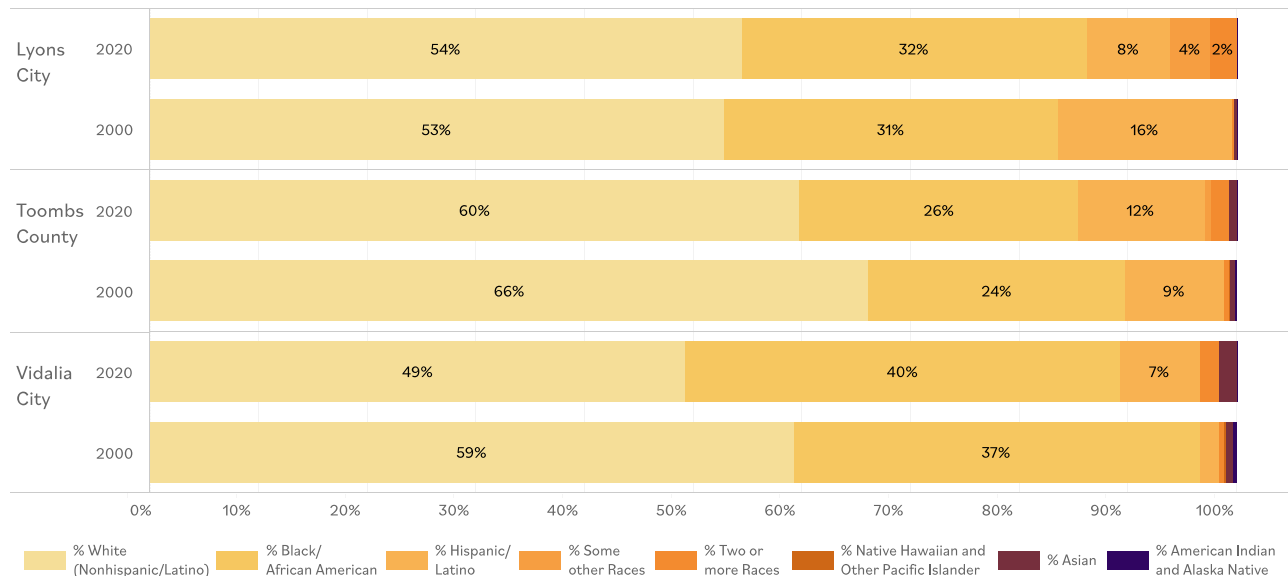
Educational attainment Over Time (Toombs County)



Demographic Profile: Race and Ethnicity

Toombs County's racial and ethnic composition has changed slightly over the last 20 years. Both Lyons and Vidalia are more diverse than the surrounding county, though the population both in the cities and the overall county have remained majority white. However, the county as a whole, and Vidalia in particular, are transitioning slightly to a more diverse community, particularly with an increase of Hispanic and Latino residents.

Change in Race and Ethnicity from 2000-2020



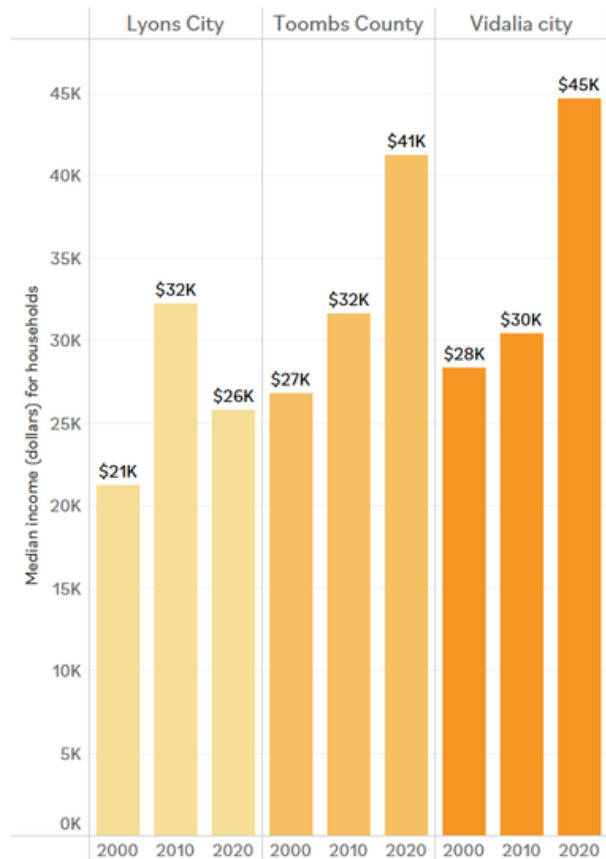
Economic Profile: Household Income

Median household income in Toombs County has risen steadily over time, increasing by 45% between 2000 and 2020 from \$27,000 to \$43,000. Median household income rose by the same magnitude in Vidalia over the same timeframe. Lyons also saw an increase, though lesser, at 22% over the same timeframe.

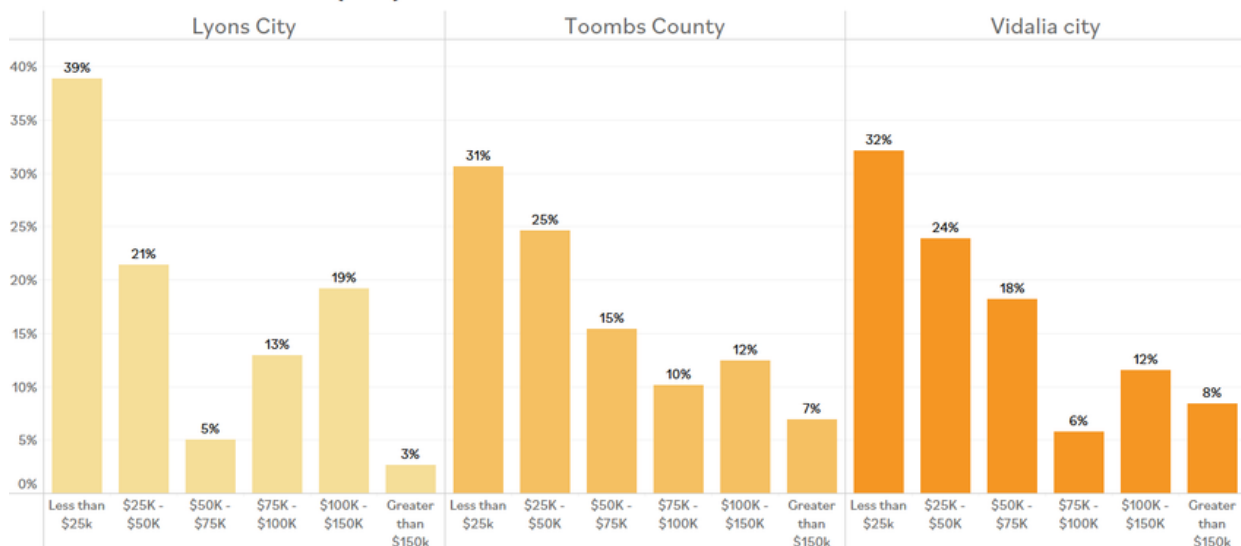
Though the median income has risen, the majority of households in Toombs County—as well as Lyons and Vidalia—remain low- to moderate-income. Roughly 60% of households in Toombs made less than \$50,000 as of 2021.

Vidalia’s median income also saw a rise over time, with a larger concentration of higher-income households, though closely mirroring the county’s income distribution. Lyons’ median household income increased modestly, and saw a more bifurcated income distribution than Vidalia or the rest of Toombs county.

Median Household Income Over Time



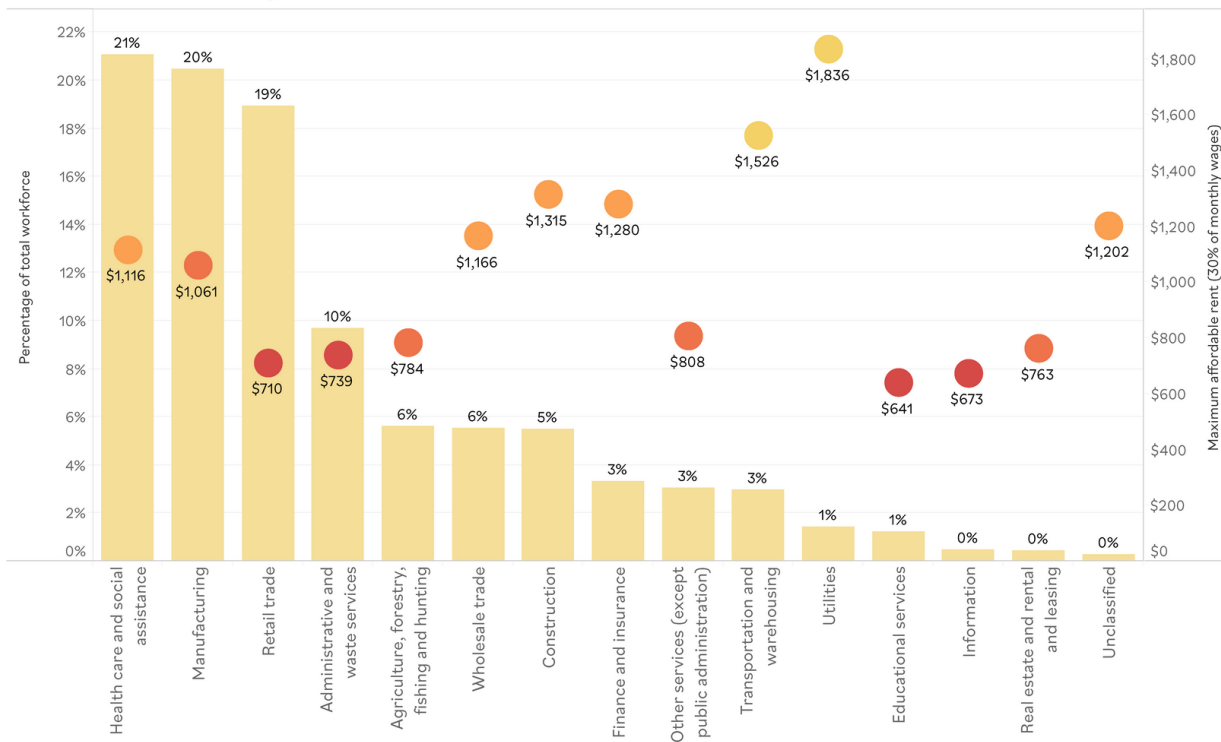
Household Income Distribution (2021)



Economic Profile: Employment

In Toombs County, 60% of all employees work in one of three categories: healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, or retail trade. Healthcare and social assistance includes ambulatory health care services, as well as nursing and residential care facilities. Retail trade in Toombs County primarily consists of general merchandise retailers and other retail types, such as motor vehicle and parts dealers or building material retailers. Accommodation and food services—which include businesses serving food and drinks—is another significant employment sector.

Comparison between percentage of workforce per industry, monthly wages, and maximum affordable rent in Toombs County



Data further highlights the relationship between prominence of industry in the county and the average wages earned per industry. Two of the top industries—healthcare and manufacturing—have similar average annual wages of \$46,000-\$48,000. At this income level, the most a worker could comfortably pay for housing—calculated via 30% of their monthly wages—would be roughly \$1,050 to \$1,100. At this income level, any higher price point for housing—both rentership and homeownership—would be considered housing cost burdened. Note that wages are measurements of individual earnings, whereas median income is a measurement of household earnings.

01. Starting Point: Existing Conditions

Retail trade workers—a full fifth of the local workforce—can only afford monthly housing payments of \$700, on average. In addition, there are a few hundred workers in the transportation/warehousing and utilities industries who can pay anywhere between \$1,500 to \$1,800 per month in housing. This range of what is considered attainable for different employment sectors highlights the need for diverse housing, at variable price points, in Toombs County.

Toombs County’s most recent calculated median household income, as discussed previously, was \$43,000 in 2021. So, 30% of this income on a monthly basis is roughly \$1,075. Therefore, \$1,075 is the average payment that can be expected from average residents, without residents becoming housing cost burdened. See the chart below for a breakdown of Toombs County’s employment by industry, income, and maximum housing payments.

NAICS Industry	Percentage of Workforce	Annual Average Weekly Wage	Average Annual Wages	Maximum Affordable Housing Payments (30% Monthly Wages)*
Health care and social assistance	21%	\$930	\$48,367	\$1,116
Manufacturing	20%	\$884	\$45,956	\$1,061
Retail trade	19%	\$592	\$30,795	\$710
Administrative and waste services	10%	\$616	\$32,056	\$739
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	6%	\$653	\$33,975	\$783
Wholesale trade	6%	\$972	\$50,552	\$1,166
Construction	5%	\$1096	\$56,997	\$1,315
Finance and insurance	3%	\$1067	\$55,460	\$1,280
Other services (except public administration)	3%	\$673	\$35,014	\$807
Transportation and warehousing	3%	\$1272	\$66,132	\$1,526
Utilities	1%	\$1530	\$79,571	\$1,836
Educational services	1%	\$534	\$27,748	\$640

* Rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

01. Starting Point

Regulations Assessment

Introduction

The project team conducted a review of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Toombs County, Lyons, and Vidalia, as well as of the zoning codes of the cities of Lyons and Vidalia. This endeavor sought to understand the goals and vision of the county and cities, and to determine whether certain recommended policies were addressed in the Joint Comprehensive Plan and/or the cities' zoning codes. The process also highlighted any discrepancies between the goals outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan and what is currently allowable per the zoning codes of the cities. As unincorporated Toombs County does not have its own zoning regulations, it was not included in the zoning portion of the assessment.

Key criteria examined included: diversity of housing typologies; diversity of housing needs (aging in place, mixed income, mixed family sizes, etc.); preservation of affordable housing; promotion of sustainability; connection of the community; and plan for productive housing change. A complete chart of the findings and comments can be found in the appendix.

Initial Findings

Of the 50 recommended criteria outlined in the analysis, 18 were clearly and directly addressed in the Joint Comprehensive Plan. Namely, the Joint Comprehensive Plan outlines goals for diversity of housing types and housing needs, sustainability, and walkability.

Several of the zoning policies necessary to support the goals of the Joint Comprehensive Plan were absent from the zoning codes of the cities of Lyons and Vidalia. More clarity around missing middle housing types, many of which are not prohibited but would be difficult to develop for other reasons (setbacks, lot size requirements, density limits, etc.), in the zoning ordinances can incentivize developers to build these housing types.

Other existing policies are exclusionary or may inhibit the success of the outlined goals. Specific requirements such as minimum lot sizes, maximum densities, and on-site parking requirements are overall a potential barrier to creating abundant housing options.

01. Starting Point: Regulations Assessment

Below are the principles and the criteria assessed by each of them. If a criterium was met by the Joint Comprehensive Plan or the zoning ordinances of Lyons and/or Vidalia, it was denoted with **(CP)**, **(LZ)**, or **(VZ)**, respectively.

1. Promotes Diverse Housing Supply

The principle of **promoting Diverse Housing Supply** addresses whether the comprehensive plan or zoning ordinances encourage a variety of housing types. Many of the housing types assessed include missing middle housing types, such as duplexes/multiplexes, accessory dwelling units, cottage courts, and townhomes. It is important that zoning codes allow for, or ideally incentivize the development of a variety of housing typologies that can create housing choice for the community. When a community's housing stock is diverse, the housing needs of community members can be better met by providing housing options that are suited to a variety of different lifestyles. Housing diversity affects needs such as size, affordability, maintenance requirements, location, and access to amenities such as shopping or public transit. Below are the criteria that address **promoting Diverse Housing Supply**.

1. Encourages accessory dwelling units: Allows homeowners to add accessory dwelling units (ADUs) such as granny flats, basement apartments, or backyard cottages to their properties **(VZ)**
2. Allows guest houses/ADUs to be rented long term or occupied by someone other than the owner of the primary structure **(VZ)**
3. Allows for diverse housing sizes: Allows for developments with reduced/no minimum area square foot requirement
4. Promotes the development of a mix of housing types: Develops a combination of single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and apartment buildings **(CP, VZ)**
5. Allows for alternative housing options: Explores alternative housing options like tiny homes, modular homes, and co-housing communities **(LZ)**
6. Development of cottage courts
7. Development of duplexes/multiplexes **(LZ, VZ)**
8. Development of townhomes/courtyard style apartment homes **(VZ)**
9. Development of manufactured housing **(CP, LZ)**
10. Development of modular housing
11. Encourages infill housing: Allows houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas **(CP)**

2. Promotes Communities of Opportunity

The principle of promoting **Communities of Opportunity** addresses how the Joint Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinances of the cities provide the infrastructure to support equal access to health, wellbeing, and economic opportunities for all community members. This includes topics such as walkability, access to community support, and integration of community members at all income levels. Below are the criteria that address **Communities of Opportunity**.

1. Encourages mixed-income communities: Integrates affordable housing units into market-rate developments to ensure that people of all income levels can live in the same community **(LZ, VZ)**
2. Supports workforce housing: Workforce housing is clearly defined, and there is a plan in place for its development
3. Ensures that people who work in the community can also afford to live in that same community
4. Promotes homeownership for low and moderate-income households **(CP)**
5. Supports options for loft living, downtown living, or “neo-traditional” development **(VZ)**
6. Supports form-based development: Does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district **(VZ)**
7. Provides housing for different stages of life: Develops housing options that cater to different stages of life, such as starter homes for young families, senior housing for retirees, and co-living spaces for young adults **(CP)**
8. Encourages the development of housing types that support aging in place

3. Builds and Preserves Affordable Housing

Building and Preserving Affordable Housing is a key component to addressing a housing crisis. This principle assesses how the Joint Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinances explore all available tools to build and preserve affordable housing by allowing for new development of affordable housing types and conversions of existing developments into affordable housing types. It is also critical to preserve existing affordable housing to combat displacement of residents due to redevelopment of affordable housing units into less attainable housing.

1. Promotes preservation/maintenance of affordable housing **(CP)**
2. Converts existing buildings: Converts existing buildings like warehouses, office buildings, and schools into housing units
3. Supports community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households **(CP)**
4. Promotes ordinances that allow neo-traditional development “by right” so that developers do not have to endure a long variance process
5. Prioritizes land for affordable housing: recognizes the need for vacant land to be available for affordable housing to be developed in the community

4. Supports Housing for Special Needs Populations

To create healthy, diverse communities, the housing needs of all community members must be met, including those community members with disabilities and other special needs that require intentional housing solutions.

1. We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs
2. Provides supportive housing: Develops supportive housing for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

5. Promotes Sustainability

The principle of **Promoting Sustainability** addresses whether the comprehensive plan or zoning ordinances encourage or incentivize sustainable building practices. Such practices might include building smaller footprint homes that require fewer building materials and less energy to heat and cool; building energy-efficient homes utilizing technologies such as solar panels; and encouraging sustainable living practices such as walkability. It also assesses land conservation practices and promotion of green spaces and vegetation in residential areas.

1. Develops green housing: Builds energy-efficient homes that reduce utility bills and decrease the carbon footprint **(CP, VZ)**
2. Promotes conservation community districts: Conservation of natural resources and creating more housing options sustainably **(CP)**
3. Values conservation: has a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity **(CP, VZ)**
4. Promotes maintenance of sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose **(CP)**
5. Encourages walkability so that in some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired **(CP)**
6. Ensures that some children can and do walk to school safely **(CP)**
7. Ensures that some children can and do bike to school safely **(CP)**
8. Promotes developing and maintaining a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations **(CP)**
9. Implements a sidewalk ordinance in the community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks **(CP)**
10. Encourages the development and use of public transportation in the community
11. Encourages the development and use of bicycle routes through the community **(CP)**

6. Connects Community

The principle of **Connecting Community** is important for creating healthy, diverse, thriving communities. Throughout the nation, Americans are facing what is now known as the “loneliness epidemic”, feeling less connected to communities than ever before. The built environment, and housing in particular, can create—or hinder—opportunities for connecting with neighbors. This principle assesses protection of existing community spaces and promotion of new ones, as well as the ease of access to community spaces between different residential and public areas.

1. Recognizes the intersection between housing, transit, and other opportunity factors
2. Supports programs that keep public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe **(CP)**
3. Encourages schools to be located in or near neighborhoods in the community **(LZ, VZ)**
4. Requires that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit
5. Requires that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible
6. Allows for commercial and retail developments to share parking areas wherever possible

7. Utilizes the MicroLife Method

The MicroLife Method is a three-phase approach to addressing the needs of a community. It involves gathering data, creating education and community engagement, and creating policy change and demonstrating changes with a pilot project development.

1. Conducts housing assessments: Consider the existing housing stock, demographics of the area, existing/projected population, existing/projected jobs in the area, cost of living, schools, transportation, density, walkability, etc.
2. Connects changemakers: Hold housing summits to engage and educate our community on topics surrounding housing
3. Connects changemakers: Provide incentives for builders to develop the diverse housing types within your community
4. Creates educational programming: In-person and virtual learning opportunities to inform community members on housing issues
5. Creates policy change: Utilize the results of your housing assessment and community feedback from your housing summit to determine which policies need to be reviewed, amended, or added
6. Initiates a pilot project: In order to demonstrate how diverse housing choice can be created within your community
7. Creates educational programming: Public tours, presentations, or a website around your pilot project to demonstrate the importance of providing diverse housing choice in your community

Takeaways

Criteria marked with “**CP**” but not with “**LZ**” or “**VZ**” are explicitly mentioned in the Joint Comprehensive Plan, though are not supported by the zoning ordinances of the cities. Of the 18 criteria explicitly addressed in the Joint Comprehensive Plan, 4 were allowable or incentivized by the zoning ordinances of either Lyons or Vidalia, though none were allowable by the zoning ordinances of both cities. In order for the cities to accomplish the goals set out in the Joint Comprehensive Plan, certain policies should be added or amended in the zoning ordinances to support the success of the Joint Comprehensive Plan goals.

01. Starting Point: Regulations Assessment

Criteria not marked with any tags of **(CP)**, **(LZ)** or **(VZ)** are not explicitly addressed in either the Joint Comprehensive Plan or the zoning ordinances of the cities. Incorporating all or some of these criteria to both the Comprehensive Plan and allowing or incentivizing them through the zoning can help to create clear guidelines for a housing action plan, and can also spur the development of new and diverse housing types by reducing administrative barriers.

Recommendations

Refer to Chapter 04, “Opportunities - Zoning Regulations Affecting Development” for a list of regulatory changes to consider.

Some recommended policy amendments include:

- **Continue to promote a diverse array of missing middle housing types by codifying** them in zoning ordinances and calibrating density and dimensional requirements as to better enable and facilitate their development on infill lots in appropriate areas.
- Due to the unique nature of cottage courts, **consider a cottage-court enabling ordinance** that provides a clear and predictable regulatory pathway for developers;
- Retain policies that have small minimum lot sizes, but consider further **reducing or eliminating minimum lot sizes** in certain zoning districts or locations, especially in downtown areas;
- **Increase allowable residential density** in appropriate areas, especially in downtowns;
- **Reduce or eliminate some required setbacks, lot widths, and/or building coverage maximums**, especially in downtowns;
- Retain current policies that **do not stipulate minimum square footages of unit sizes**;
- **Decrease or eliminate off-street parking requirements**, where feasible (e.g. downtown areas, blocks serviced by alleys, or where on-street parking can meet requirements with no adverse consequences to the community).

These policy recommendations aim to address current challenges that may be preventing development of diverse and abundant housing.

➤ **Chapter Summary: Starting Point**

Population Change: The population in Toombs County has been steady since 2010, with a slight decrease overall. The newest American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate 2022 (ACS 5-Year 2022) shows this trend continuing.

Population decline may be an effect of low in-migration, resident retention, and/or birth rates. Lack of population growth may also be a sign that Toombs does not have enough or the right kind of housing units to attract potential residents who would otherwise choose to live in the county.

Population Age: The share of older segments of the population is increasing (the population is, on average, slightly older than previously). In other words, the shares of people 55 and older have grown, while shares of younger groups have remained consistent or decreased slightly. **The age makeup of the population will have implications for the type of housing that is needed. For example, older residents may seek out opportunities to downsize, live closer to town cores in Vidalia and Lyons, or to live in senior housing communities.** Shifting preferences for housing of younger age groups will also bear upon the types of housing products needed.

Education: Educational attainment levels have increased over time. Nearly half of the county population was estimated to have some college education (with or without acquiring a degree) in 2020.

Race: The predominant minority group in the county is Black/African American, followed by the Hispanic/Latino demographic. The county is predominantly White in racial makeup.

Income, Employment, and Affordability: Household income in the county and cities has increased every census year since 2000. More than two thirds of households in the county are estimated to make \$75,000 or less annually, with about one third estimated to make \$25,000 or less. The major employment sectors in the county are health care & social assistance, manufacturing, and retail, which collectively employ 60% of the county. Based on the average annual wages for workers in these sectors and the 30% income rule of thumb, affordable monthly housing payments for an average wage individual are \$710 (retail), \$1,060 (manufacturing), and \$1,116 (healthcare). For households with more than one wage earner, these affordable rates would be different. **Toombs will need affordable housing options for lower income earners and for average and above average earners in higher paying sectors like healthcare.**

> **Chapter Summary: Starting Point**

Regulations Assessment: While the Joint Comprehensive Plan addresses goals for diversity of housing types and housing needs, sustainability, and walkability, some of the zoning ordinances in the cities of Lyons and Vidalia do not directly and fully support the success of these goals. **While both Lyons and Vidalia have relatively unrestrictive zoning regulations, there are policy tweaks that could further promote the development of diverse and abundant housing, especially in downtown areas.** Zoning policies should be clear and simple enough to directly enable and *incentivize* healthy housing development.

02. From the Community

Public Engagement & Key Stakeholder Insights

Public Opinion: 2023 Survey

Introduction

The project team created a public survey to determine the current level of familiarity of Toombs County residents with certain housing typologies, as well as specific changes residents would like to see to the housing landscape in the county.

The main purpose of the survey was to gather data on what Toombs County residents felt were the biggest challenges or opportunities for change in the housing options in the county. It also asked several demographic questions, including where respondents live, where they work, and what industry they work in.

The survey (which was hosted as a Google Form) was distributed in both English and Spanish through various channels including email and social media. In total, the survey received 395 responses between May 1, 2023 and August 14, 2023.

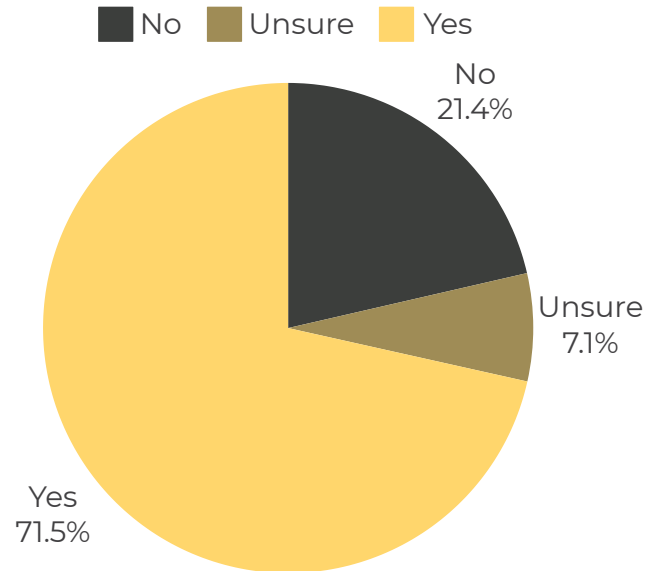
Of the responses, 49% of respondents were residents of the city of Vidalia, 25% were residents of the city of Lyons, and 14% reported being residents of unincorporated Toombs County. A breakdown of the remainder of the demographic locations, as well as all other responses to the survey, can be found in the appendix.

Below are some highlights of the survey.

Results

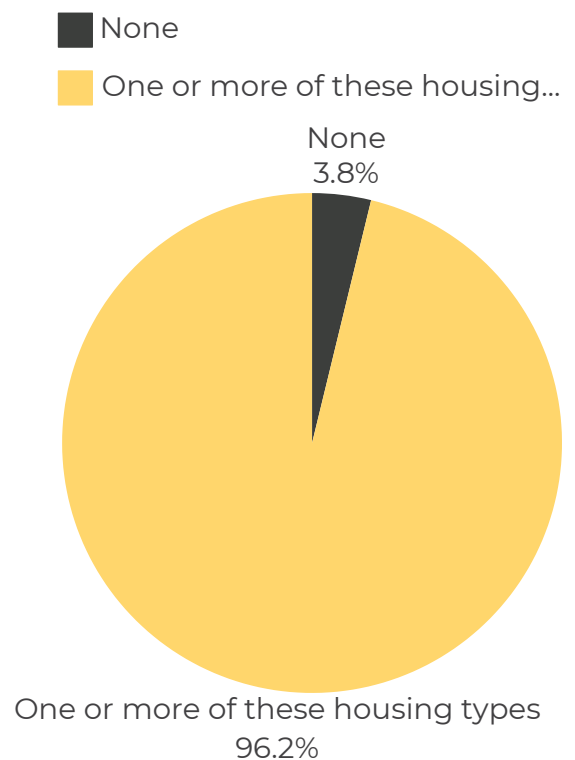
1. Are you aware that there is an affordable housing crisis in Toombs County?

The first question on the survey asked whether respondents were aware of the affordable housing crisis in Toombs County. Prior to sharing any results from this study, over 70% of Toombs County residents were already aware of the situation. This illuminates the prevalence of the housing crisis and its effects on many Toombs County residents.



2. What, if any, types of housing would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

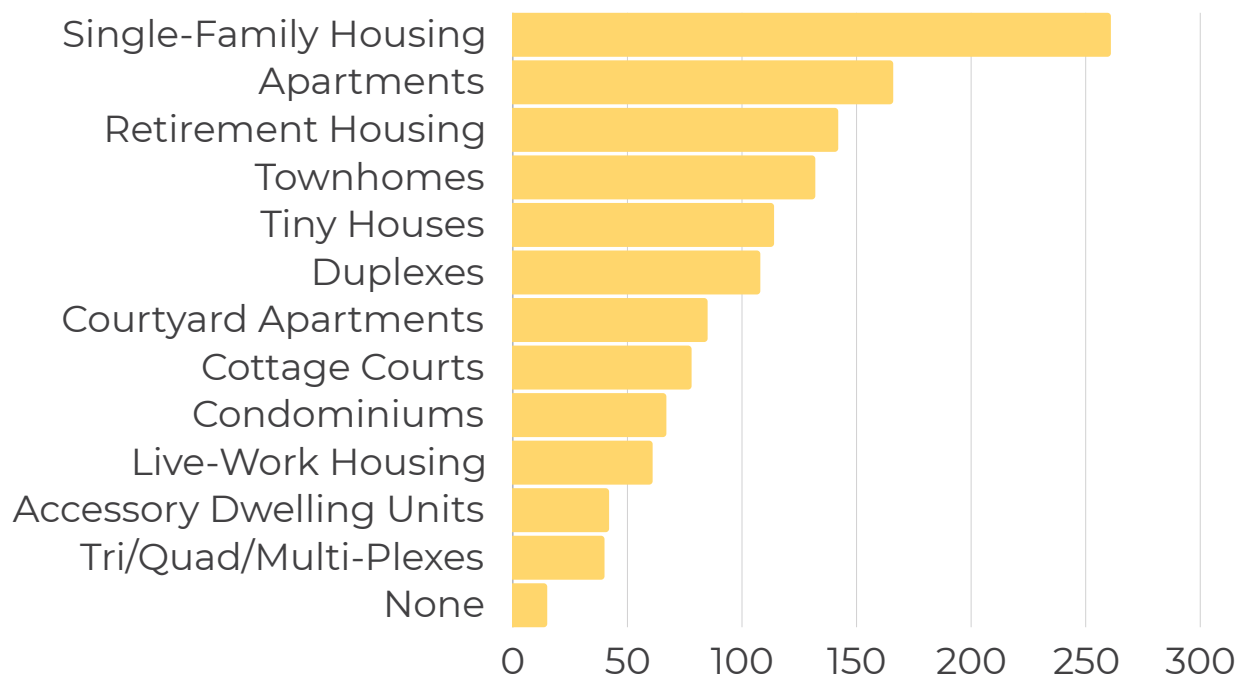
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Apartments
- Condominiums
- Cottage Courts
- Courtyard Apartments
- Duplexes
- Live-Work Housing
- Retirement Housing
- Single-Family Housing
- Tiny Houses
- Townhomes
- Tri/Quad/Multi-Plexes



Of the nearly 400 responses, 96% would like to see more housing in Toombs County, showing not only the need but also the desire for adding more housing in the county.

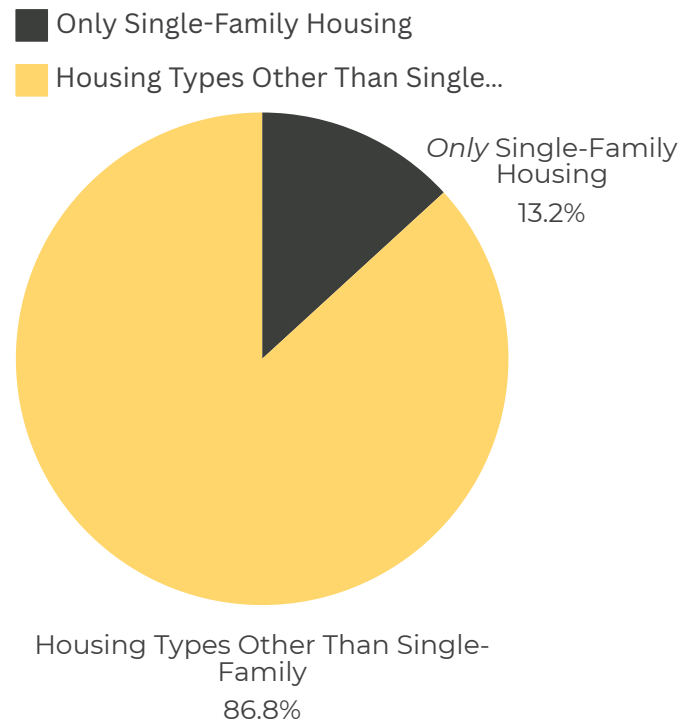
2.a. What, if any, types of housing would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

Below is the distribution of housing types that Toombs County residents are interested in, sorted from greatest to least responses. Respondents were able to select more than one housing type for this question. The greatest interest was for more Single-Family Housing, with 261 respondents selecting this. Next, 166 respondents selected Apartments, and 142 selected Retirement Housing. Of Missing Middle Housing Types, Townhomes garnered the most interest with 132 responses, followed by Tiny Houses and Duplexes with 114 and 108 responses, respectively. Even the least-requested housing type, Tri/Quad/Multi-Plexes, earned 40 responses, signifying at least 1 in 10 respondents was interested in this housing type. Only 15 respondents, or around 3% of the total, were not interested in any new housing types at all.



2.b. What, if any, types of housing would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

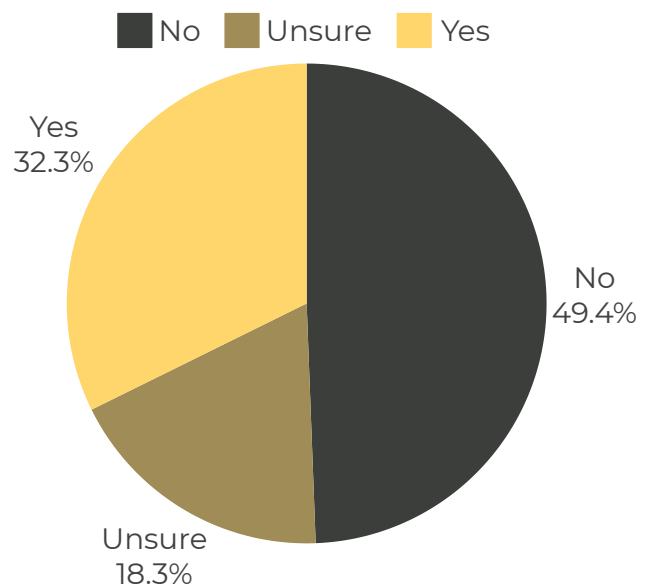
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Apartments
- Condominiums
- Cottage Courts
- Courtyard Apartments
- Duplexes
- Live-Work Housing
- Retirement Housing
- Single-Family Housing
- Tiny Houses
- Townhomes
- Tri/Quad/Multi-Plexes



As demonstrated above, among that majority of respondents who **did** want to see more housing, 87% were interested in housing types **other than Single-Family Housing**. This demonstrates the interest and need for diversifying the existing housing stock in the county, across a wide variety of industries and occupations represented in the survey respondents.

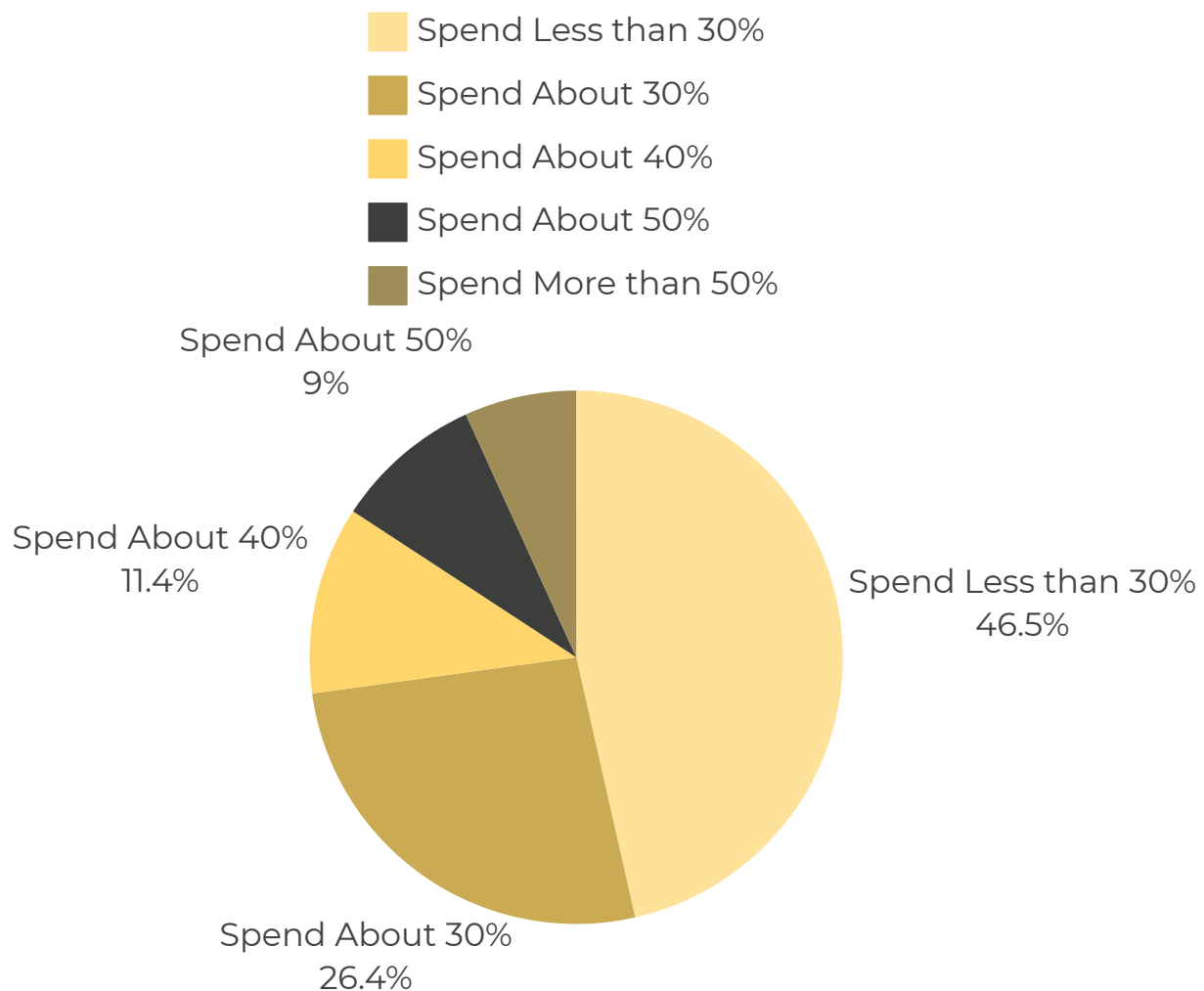
3. Would you consider the housing in Toombs County to be affordable (in general)?

When asked whether housing in Toombs County is affordable in general, nearly half of respondents answered "no". Fewer than one in three respondents answered "yes". Question 4 addresses affordability in more detail, though it is significant to note the feelings of the residents that housing is not affordable in general.



4. What percentage of your income would you estimate that you spend on your rent or mortgage?

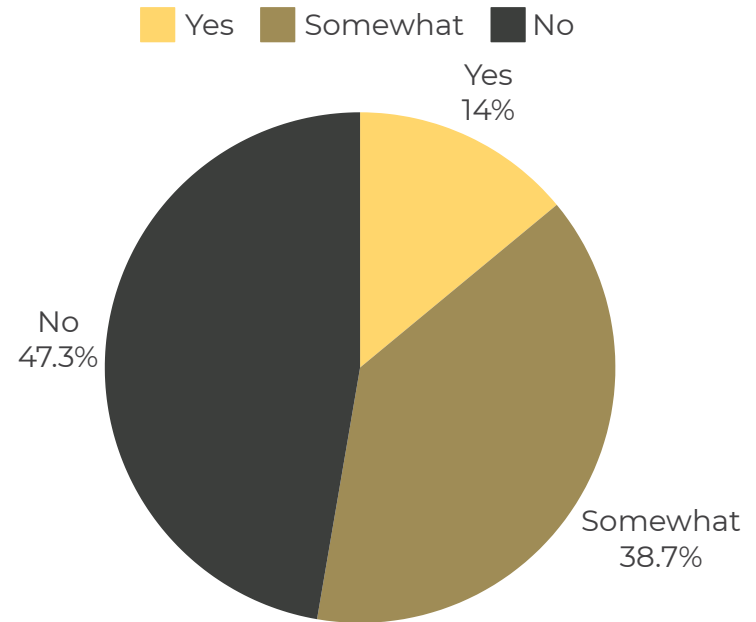
A common affordability metric is gauging whether community members are spending at or below 30% of their incomes on their rent or mortgage. Respondents were asked to estimate to the best of their knowledge how much of their income they spend on their rent or mortgage. Based on this, almost half of respondents reported spending less than 30% of their income on rent or mortgage, which would generally be considered affordable. Another 26% spend about 30%, while 27% spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing, including 6.8% who reported spending more than 50% of their income on housing. Those respondents who reported spending more than the 30% affordability metric are considered to be experiencing “housing stress”, and are at risk of displacement or loss of their current housing.



5. Are you satisfied with the available amenities in Toombs County? (e.g. restaurants, entertainment, parks, bike paths, etc.)

Lastly, we asked whether Toombs County residents are satisfied with the available amenities (such as restaurants, entertainment, parks, bike paths, and more).

Only 14% of respondents were completely satisfied, while almost half were not.



Housing and vibrancy of our downtowns go hand in hand. In order to have amenities like restaurants and shops, we need to have nearby attainable housing available for the workforce who will staff those amenities.

In order to have usable bike paths and parks, we need to have walkability to those areas to create connectivity.

Takeaways

The survey received a fairly strong sample size of nearly 400 respondents, and the demographics reported of those respondents represented unincorporated Toombs County as well as the cities of Lyons and Vidalia. The respondents also reported a variety of industries and occupations, signaling diversity in the respondent pool.

Prior to the Toombs County Housing Forum or any results of the overall study being published, Toombs County residents reported interest in **more housing**, a **wider variety of housing types**, and a **general consensus that Toombs County housing is unaffordable**.

Stakeholder Interviews

A critical component of the project's engagement process were interviews with key community stakeholders, who offered a deeper dive into the challenges, opportunities, and status of housing in the county. This process included 13 interviewees from both public and private sectors (developers, industry executives, real estate professionals, and housing authority directors). Interviews asked the same set of questions to allow for standardization of results.

Rental demand is high and wide

Toombs County's housing supply is not satisfying the need for rental opportunities in the area. Demand for rental housing ranges greatly, from single mothers, to workforce employees, to higher-income newcomers to the county. It seems that high-income earners and low-income earners are both struggling to find adequate housing, suggesting that the need for new rental is not evenly distributed but rather takes on a U shape of low supply and high demand throughout the county. Existing rental stock is currently experiencing very low vacancies across the board. Stakeholders also suggested a decreased interest in homeownership that's driving rental demand.

Variety of housing types needed for all levels of income and life stages

Stakeholders agreed that more housing was needed in Toombs County. Key to increasing the housing stock is diversifying the type of housing. This includes a variety of housing for a variety of incomes, or what is known as "income-aligned housing". Stakeholders described the lack of lower-range and higher-range housing available for both purchase and rent. Developing new housing at lower price points was described as a challenge due to the high costs of materials, high interest rates, and labor shortage. There is a related need for an array of housing size—both total square footage as well as number of bedrooms—that can meet the diverse needs of the Toombs community. Stakeholders also report that preferences seem to be changing—what used to be considered a life goal of owning 3,000 square feet on 5 acres of property is now seen by some as burdensome rather than aspirational.

Intersection of housing shortage and workforce retention

Stakeholder interviews confirmed that housing and economic development are closely intertwined. With the lack of income-aligned housing (as described above), employers struggle to both hire and retain a stable workforce. This was reported true for high-wage employers, such as medical professionals and manufacturers, as well as lower-wage employers such as retail trade workers. Trane, Memorial Health Meadows Hospital, and Chicken of the Sea reported large shares of workers commuting 20 minutes or more, presumably because of a housing shortage or because employees chose to live elsewhere.

Stakeholder Interviews - PESTLE Analysis

Results from the stakeholder interviews can be broken down into several categories as part of a PESTLE analysis, determining how the issues relate to Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, or Environmental factors.

P - Political		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government housing programs • Building policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax policies • Urban zoning laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing authority support
E - Economic		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflation • Supply chain • Staffing shortages • Toombs commercial growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent affordability • Median family income • Cost of living • Income gap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent subsidies • Housing market • Subcontractor/ labor shortage • Interest rates • Development costs
S - Social		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited housing supply • Rental vs. homeownership • Downtown amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for rental options across all income levels • Workforce commute • Demand for variety of housing options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee attraction & retention • Downtown revitalization • Homelessness
T - Technological		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current housing quality • Current infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power grid & consumption needs • Renewable energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building materials
L - Legal		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faircloth Amendment • Zoning laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoning board decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WOTUS (Waters of the US) & CWA (Clean Water Act)
E - Environmental		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant land • Sustainable building practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy consumption regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate & weather conditions

Toombs County Housing Forum

Introduction

The Toombs County Housing Forum was a community engagement event organized to present the findings of the study to Toombs County residents.

The free event was advertised via website, e-newsletters, and newspaper invitations. Before the forum, a 13-minute video was shared via e-newsletters to provide a high-level overview of the study results that were to be presented during the forum. The purpose of the video was to prepare participants for the discussion and to make the content accessible to a broad audience.

Event background

The Toombs County Housing Forum took place on October 25, 2023, with over 50 participants in attendance. The first segment of the forum featured a presentation on the high-level findings of the housing assessment. This included definitions of various housing types and language that would be used throughout the forum. The slide deck from the presentation can be found in the appendix. Following the presentation was a short audience question and answer session.

The second part of the forum featured a panel discussion. The panel was moderated by Luben Raytchev of Georgia Conservancy. Following the discussion, the panelists also answered questions from the audience. Panelists included:

- David Sikes, Chairman of the Toombs County Commission;
- Greg McKenzie, Jr., local builder and real estate broker;
- Jason Hall, City Manager of Lyons;
- Matt Hasbrouck, Chief Executive Officer of Memorial Health Meadows Hospital;
- Nick Overstreet, City Manager of Vidalia.

Following the forum was a brief reception. Posters of several concept designs for potential activations of existing vacant lots in Toombs County were on display, and participants had the opportunity to leave comments on the design concepts. Project team members engaged in discussions with a number of local developers, architects, and interested community members.

Summary

Panelists were asked to discuss a variety of topics. Below is a summary of the questions asked during the panel.

What is the source of housing shortage in Toombs County, and what is each panelist's perspective on housing development difficulties?

Some sources of the housing shortage can be attributed to zoning and infrastructure costs. Building partnerships between the municipalities and developers is important to address the issue, with a key outcome being increased variety of housing supply. Public perception is a significant barrier to creating housing change, and bringing the entire community together in support of diverse, and especially *smaller-footprint* housing types, will be critical to providing the housing diversity the county needs.

What are some unique qualities to Toombs County that makes it attractive to developers, employers, and residents?

The strength of the hospital system, educational system, and solution-oriented community attitude stood out as key assets that Toombs County should promote and capitalize on in seeking varied solutions to housing difficulties.

What are some lessons learned from peer communities to solve housing issues?

Toombs County's housing challenges are not unique, with many issues (high interest rates, inflation, workforce shortages) being outside of local control. Items to address on a local level include increasing zoning flexibility and supporting developers to be successful in building gentle density.

What are each panelist's long term vision and goals for Toombs County?

Progressing Toombs Community to ensure it continues being a desirable and vibrant place for its residents and employees is a key goal. Progressive leadership across sectors is imperative to achieving this goal.

Questions from the audience included topics of:

- Historic and cultural preservation, as well as environmental conservation in support of community character.
- Creative ways to offer affordable housing solutions, which is necessary given the high poverty rate in Vidalia and beyond in the county.
- Offering opportunities for revitalization of existing homes, in addition to new development (such as retrofitting single family homes into duplexes).
- Addressing negligent property owners (many of whom are local) of blighted and dilapidated property, and rehabilitating those properties.

Takeaways

The various perspectives from the panelists offered insights that were tailored to the complexity and breadth of Toombs County. Panelists came together in acknowledging how much potential the community has, and how it is positioned to reach that potential given the eagerness for new ideas and solutions by leaders across the community.

The participating community members were passionate about the current and future success of Toombs County. There was great interest in understanding the housing crisis in order to be able to address the needs of many community members present at the Housing Forum. While certain proposed changes at first may have seemed unconventional or unreasonable to some—in particular, the introduction of tiny houses or otherwise smaller footprint homes such as cottages—the general consensus was that new and diverse housing types *are* needed, and should be considered going forward.

Additionally, it was emphasized in conversation that while some of these missing middle housing typologies would not be a good fit for some, they will still be a good fit for others, and should be allowed and developed to meet the wide variety of needs of Toombs County residents.

➤ **Chapter Summary: From the Community**

General Public Perception of Housing Issues and Needs: Most residents polled were aware that there is an affordable housing problem in Toombs. The vast majority felt that there were no or some housing options available in the county, while a small minority felt that there were many. **Where respondents indicated the housing they thought the county most needed, they showed strongest preference for new entry-level housing, workforce housing, and retirement housing, with homeownership and rent-to-own options preferred, and a locational preference for suburban areas.**

Housing to Serve both Ends of the Economic Spectrum: Toombs needs housing serving both lower- and higher-income brackets. **The perception is that there are insufficient housing options for households making below average incomes and for high-earning professional households.** Lack of higher-end housing is dissuading high-earning professionals from residing in Toombs and potentially eliminating options for middle and low-income households if higher income households must settle for housing at lower price points.

Housing Diversity: **There was consensus amongst both stakeholders and community members that more housing of any kind is needed, and that a wider variety of housing types is both necessary and desired.** Nearly all survey respondents would like to see more single-family housing, and a vast majority of respondents would like to see housing types *other than* single-family, with the greatest interest in apartments, townhomes, and tiny houses. This widespread demand for diverse housing types may incentivize developers to build a wider variety of housing types.

Ownership/Rentership: While public response to the housing survey indicated a stronger desire for “for-sale” homes, some stakeholders expressed the need for rentership opportunities, as well as a lessened preference for home ownership in general. **It was felt that rentership opportunities are in short supply and that more rental options would be beneficial to both permanent residents and professionals seeking temporary or transitional accommodations.** Also, some builders and stakeholders expressed a rising consumer preference for rental options.

➤ **Chapter Summary: From the Community (Cont.)**

Hiring Need & Housing Shortage: Multiple major employers in Toombs are seeking to hire additional workers in significant numbers. Industry leaders and executives indicated that it is not easy for new residents to find a place to live, mainly due to a housing shortage. The tenure type (renting/vs owning), housing size and price-point (high vs. low-end), and age of homes were also notable reasons adding difficulty to potential residents' ability to find housing.

Vibrant Communities: Both residents and stakeholders thought that the cities of Toombs could benefit from having a greater mix of commercial amenities. Some interviewees suggested that Lyons and Vidalia are losing out to places with more to offer in terms of entertainment, retail, and dining experiences.

Challenging Economic Conditions for Development: Developers cited market conditions and labor shortages as difficulties adding to the cost of housing development. **High interest rates driving up the cost of borrowing money, higher material costs that are not likely to fall, and a short supply of local contractors are making housing harder and more expensive to build.** Market conditions will not be immediately resolved and will continue to thwart affordable housing development, though incentives, grants, and cost-saving designs will help lower prices.

Collaborative Leadership: Coordination across various public entities—both publicly elected officials and staff members in the cities and county—is essential to removing barriers to housing development. In addition, collaboration between public sector, private residential developers, and industry leaders creates synergy to unlock further housing opportunities. **The strong alignment between these entities in Toombs puts the county and its cities in a strong position for coordinated and mutually-supportive housing development.**

03. Data Synthesis

Local Housing Metrics

This section will synthesize primary and secondary data sources to create a snapshot of housing in Toombs County. This will include assessing the supply of housing in Toombs, Vidalia, and Lyons. Two neighborhoods in Vidalia and Lyons received a thorough housing assessment that dives deep into the housing stock of each respective geography. Finally, Toombs County will be compared with peer counties to put its numbers and statistics into context.

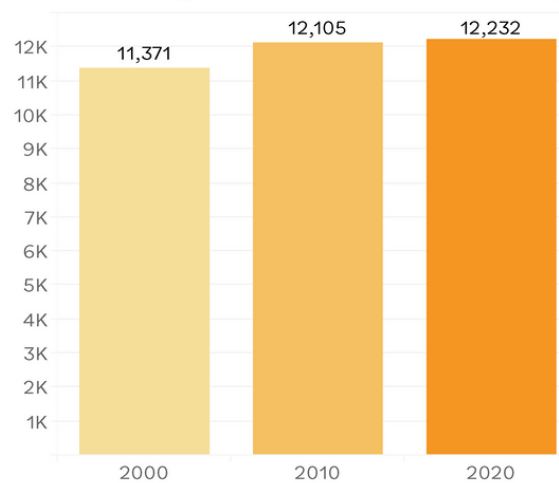
Number of Units

As of 2021, there were 12,232 units of housing in Toombs County. Housing supply in the county increased moderately by 6.5% between 2000-2010, with a modest 1% growth rate in units in the following decade.

Housing Mix

Countywide, single-family homes make up the largest share of housing in Toombs county, at 60% of the total housing stock. The same is true in both Lyons and Vidalia, with Vidalia having a larger proportion of single family homes at 71%. More dense housing types—both missing middle and multifamily housing—make up a greater share of the housing stock in Lyons and Vidalia than in Toombs county.

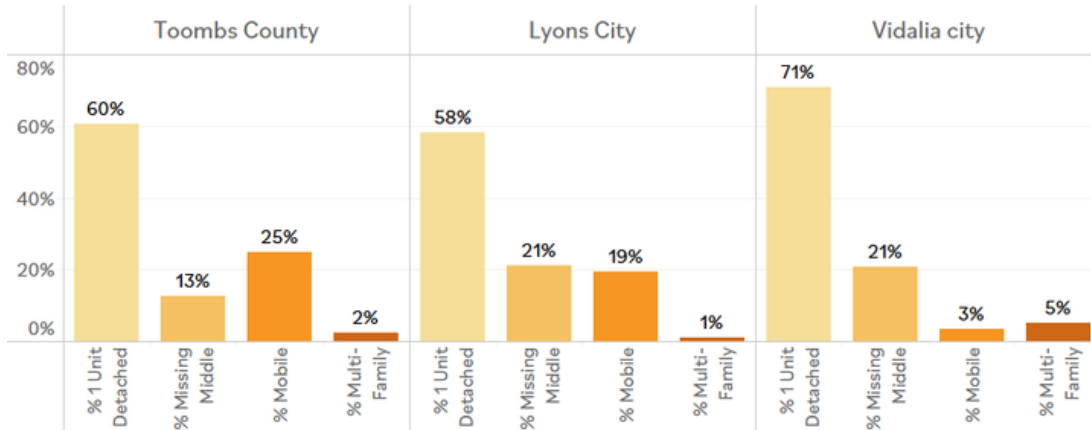
Total housing units in Toombs County



Missing Middle is a category of housing that consists of moderate density housing typologies—such as townhomes, duplexes, multiplexes, and small apartment buildings. It is called “missing middle” because it is rarer than other housing types, and typically more difficult to build today due to a variety of economic and policy limitations. Yet, these typologies have historically offered attainable housing choices to middle-income families.

03. Data Synthesis: Local Housing Metrics

Housing Mix (2021)

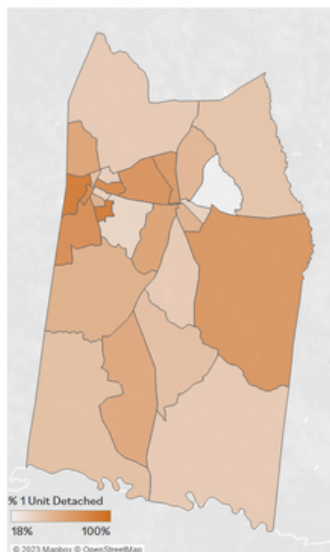


Missing middle includes the range of housing from attached single-family homes (townhomes) to buildings with up to 9 units

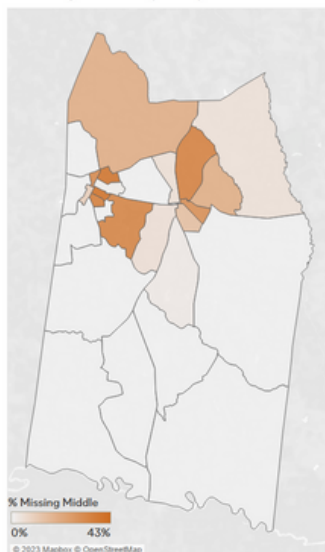
The concentration of denser housing typologies (both missing middle and multifamily) in the city cores aligns with availability of utility services, such as public water and sewer, as well as concentration of services and amenities. Vidalia and Lyons should seek to inject more of these housing types in downtown and adjacent areas via infill development.

There is no single standard for what a community's housing mix ought to be. However, housing supply is "sticky—meaning that though population ebbs and flows generationally, housing stock is very slow to change. As such, investing in housing diversity is an investment in the long term resilience of a community—addressing both immediate as well as long term needs.

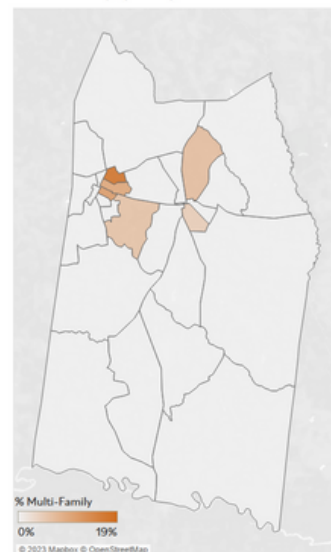
Single Family (2021)



Missing Middle (2021)



Multifamily (2021)



The spatial distribution of housing typology in Toombs County

Housing Mismatch

The majority of households in Toombs county are composed of 1 or 2 people, but the majority of homes in the county are 3-bedroom homes. This discrepancy between typical household sizes and the availability of appropriately sized homes is known as “**Housing Mismatch.**” This means that there are fewer “right-sized” homes available for the many households who need something different than a large, single family house.

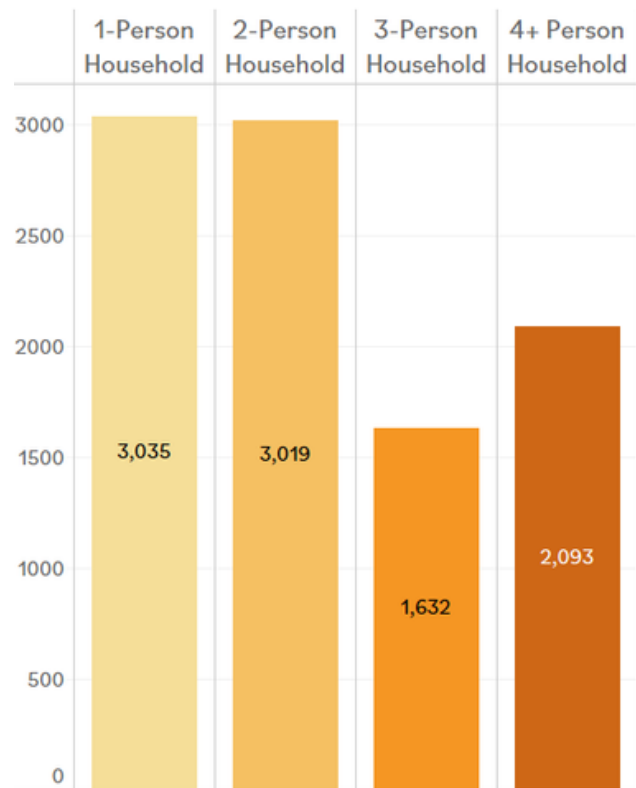
To meet the needs of smaller households (1-2 persons), new construction in Toombs should prioritize the development of smaller homes. This may not only better suit the dominant household demographics in the area but offer some sales price reduction as a result of the lower cost associated with building fewer beds/baths, smaller square footage units, and on potentially smaller properties like constrained infill lots.

What is housing mismatch?

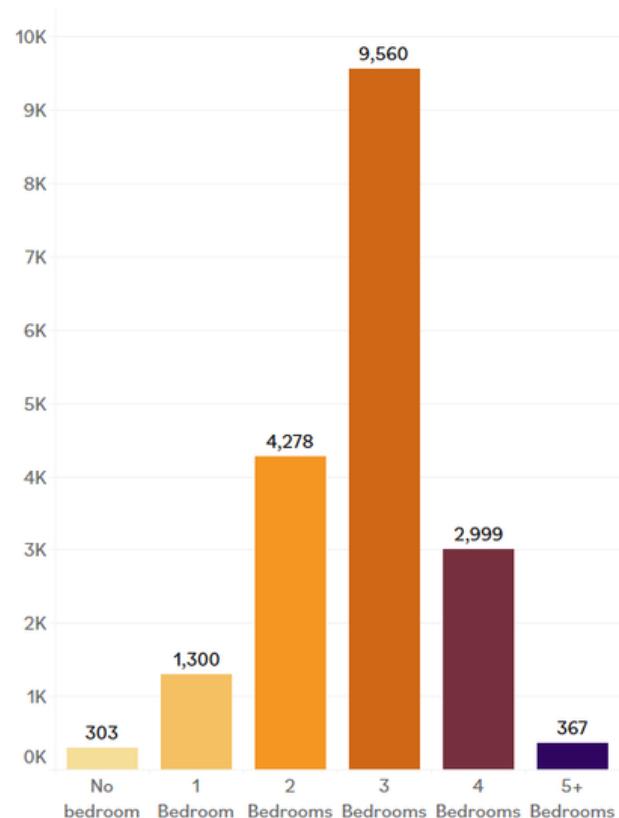
(1) The difference between what households want or need from their housing and what is available to rent or own

(2) a widespread problem faced by communities across the United States

Household Size, 2021 (Toombs County)



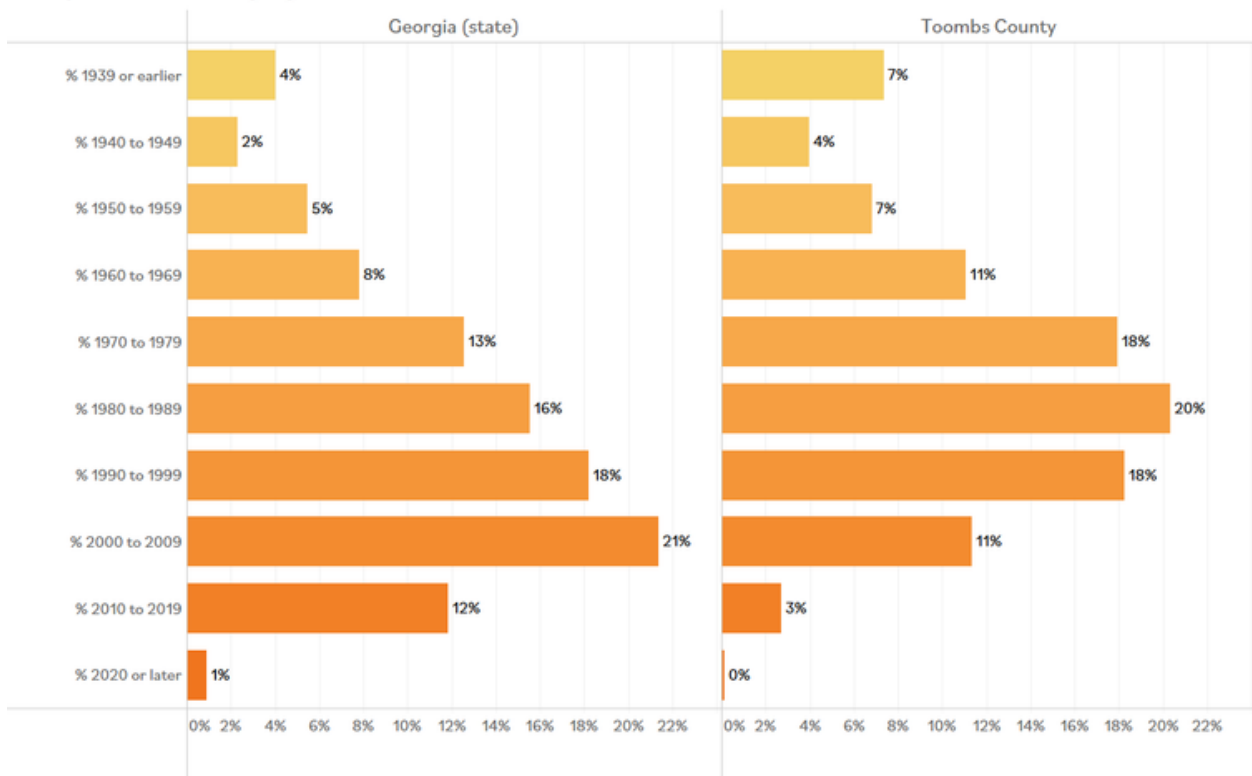
Units by Bedroom, 2021 (Toombs County)



Housing Age and Development

Toombs County’s housing development peaked in the 1980’s, with 20% of the houses in the county being built during the decade. Development slowed in the decades following, with the lowest activity in the county occurring after the recession in the 2010’s. This boom and bust cycle mirrors that of the state, though the county’s patterns of growth occurred a few decades earlier than the state’s. For example, the median year of construction for housing in Toombs is 1981. In contrast, the state’s median year built is 1990.

Comparative Housing Age

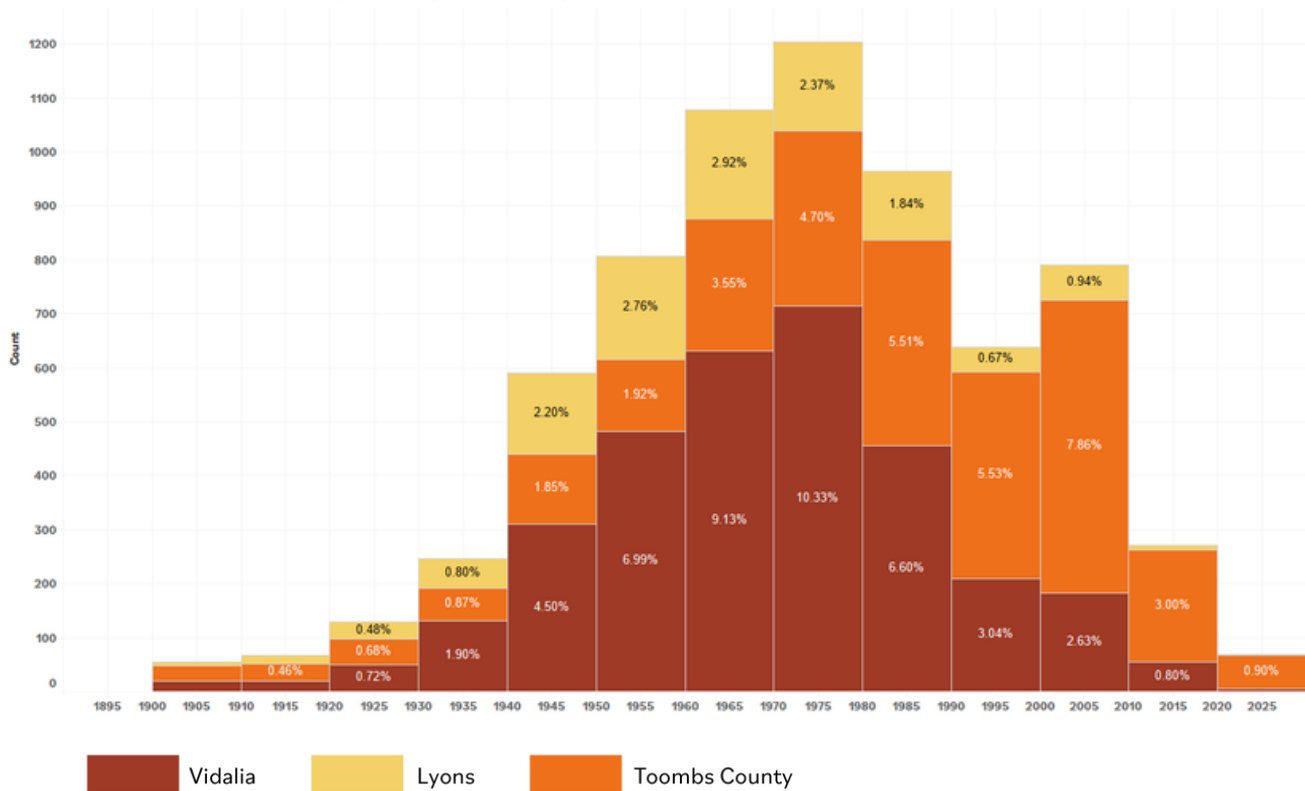


Local data on residential construction age shows that different parts of Toombs County developed at different times and to different extents. Most of the residential construction in Toombs is in incorporated Vidalia, which experienced peak construction during the 1970's and early 1980's. Lyons, the county seat, saw an earlier peak in construction starting in the late 50's but maxed out at a much smaller unit count compared to Vidalia. The older housing age in Lyons may indicate that their are more structures in need of maintenance and updates. Vidalia, however, also has a notable share of housing units that are over 50 years in age.

03. Data Synthesis: Local Housing Metrics

Development outside of Vidalia and Lyons intensified after growth peaked in the cities. Development in the unincorporated county peaked in the early and mid 2000's, but declined abruptly at the 2008 market crash. The rate of development has not rebounded, but the new development that has occurred since has been located in the unincorporated county. Toombs County, unlike Lyons and Vidalia, does not administrate a zoning code, therefore development in the unincorporated county is not subject to zoning regulations. Most development in the unincorporated area is also likely not served by public water and sewer infrastructure.

Share of Total Residential Development, by Location, by Year Built

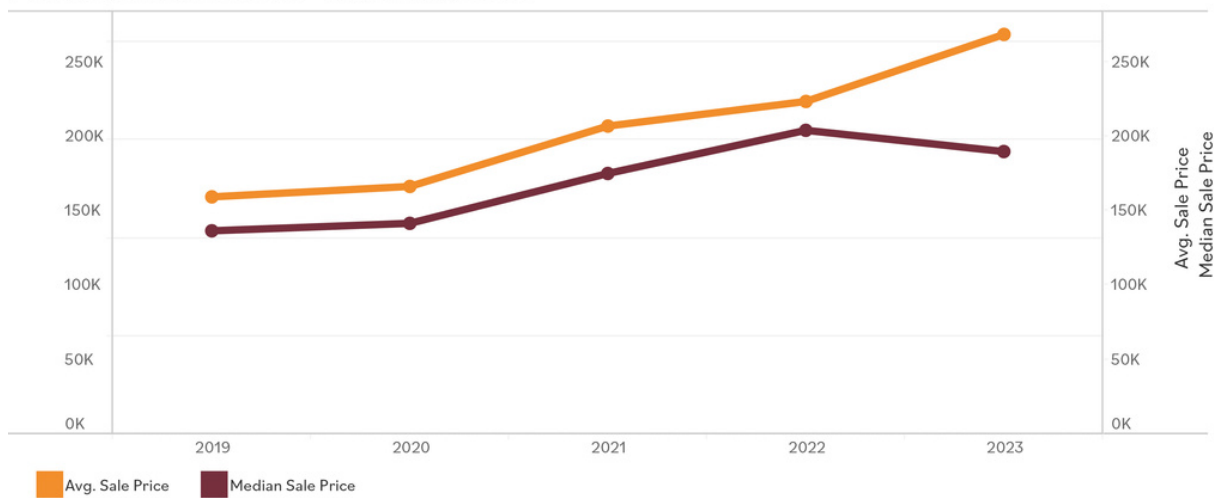


The chart above shows residential construction by year, separated by the share of construction occurring in Vidalia, Lyons, and unincorporated Toombs County. Residential construction in Vidalia and Lyons is relatively older than structures in the unincorporated area, which developed later. Though the housing age in Lyons and Vidalia are similar, Vidalia hosts a considerably larger share of residential structures. The wave of new construction activity that preceded the 2008 economic downturn largely occurred in the unincorporated area.

Housing Price

Real estate sales data over the last five years shows that sales prices for homes in the county trended upwards. An increase in housing prices over this period was common in many places across the nation and the state. As a base comparison, homes in Toombs County were relatively more affordable than in some other parts of the state in terms of raw price, but price increases were still rapid and extreme over the short five-year period, putting added pressure on prospective homeowners.

Median & Average Sale Price - Single Family Homes



The data above represents transactional sales data and not home values from assessed value records. Data from 2023 is incomplete for the full year.

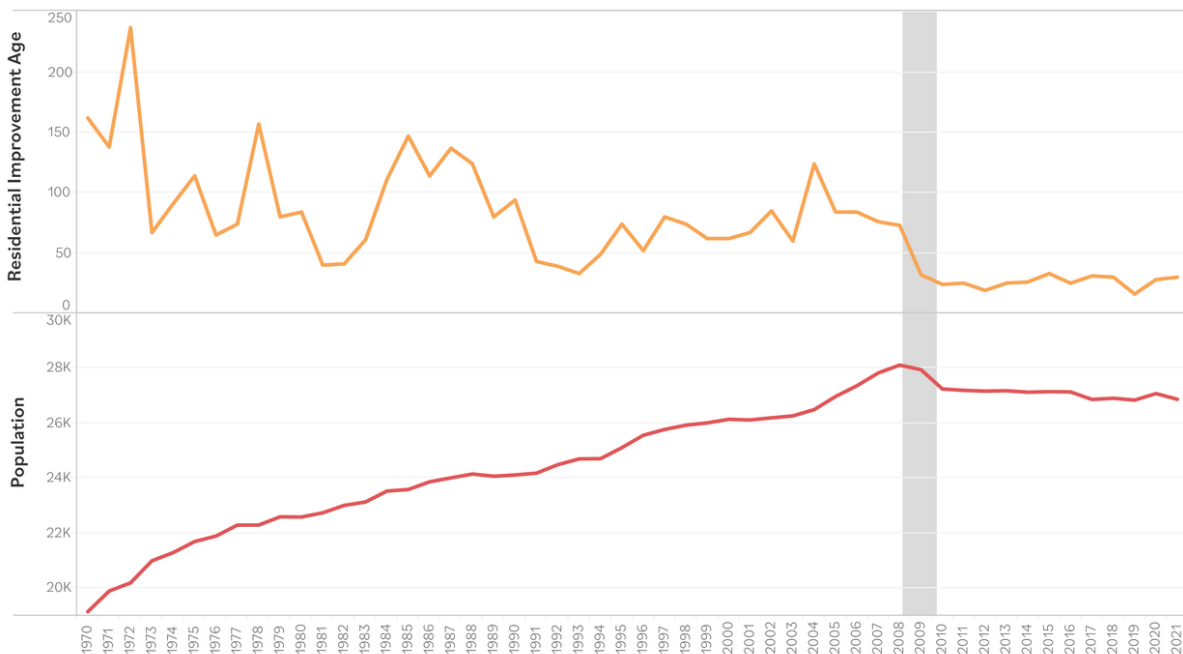
From 2019 to 2022, the overall increase in average sales price for homes in the county rose by 40%. As an example, this means that a home that was priced at \$100,000 in 2019 would potentially have sold for \$140,000 three years later. The greatest increase over a single year was between prices in 2020 and 2021 (24% increase).

Sales activity from 2020-2022 was more robust than during 2019. The number of recorded sales in 2021 is double that in 2019. Only 76 sales were recorded during 2023 at the time this data was collected. While the local housing market in the county was active during recent years, this is not necessarily a result of new construction putting more homes on the market or an influx of population bringing new buyers, but rather an instance of local shuffling.

Building Activity

Toombs County has not experienced much new residential improvement activity (residential improvements are a record of new construction but also additions and renovations that alter assessed value) since the more than a decade after the 2008 recession. The chart below compares residential improvement age from tax office data with historic population records for the county.

Residential building activity steeply declined around the time of the economic downturn. At the same time, Toombs experienced a decline in population after seeing continuous growth since the 70s. Unlike construction lulls in the past, construction has not yet rebounded, and population has continued to decline at a modest but steady rate.



It is not clear how population decline and construction standstill are correlated. It may be that population decline has tempered the demand for new homes, or vice versa, that the lack of new construction prevents potential residents from moving into the county. According to the US census's On the Map platform, the influx of people into the county exceeds commuter outflow by nearly 2,400 persons. The positive difference between inflow and outflow may indicate an opportunity to capture some part of the inflow population as new permanent residents. Due to the shortage of residential construction, Toombs may not have enough units for prospective residents, or the existing housing units may not be of the right type, price point, or condition to attract them.

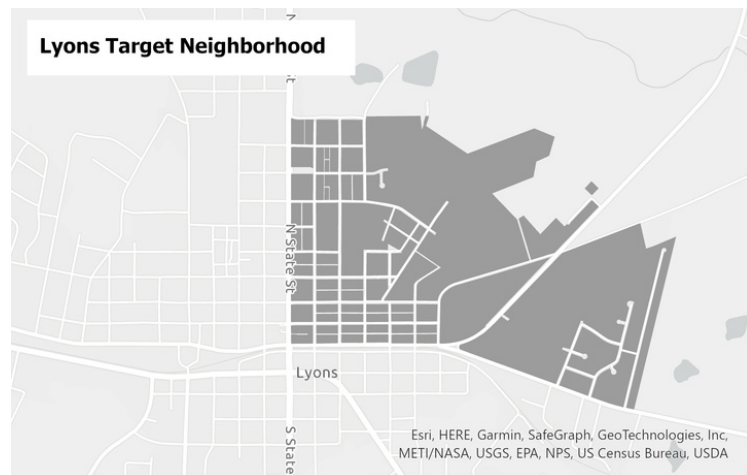
03. Data Synthesis

Neighborhood Assessment

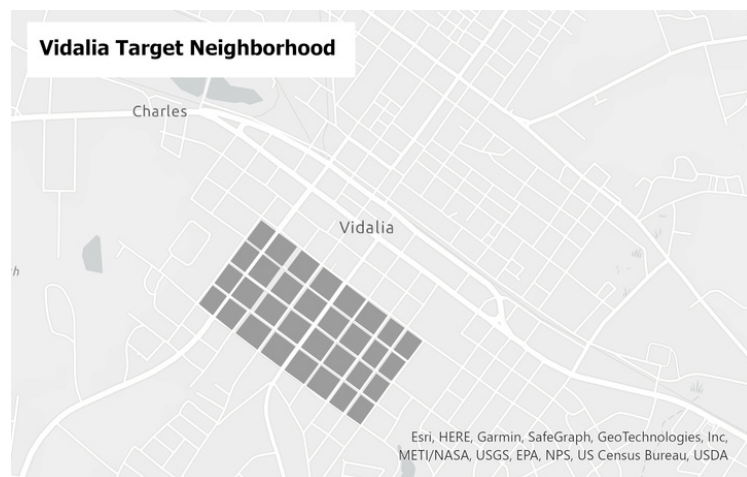
In Spring of 2023, the project team conducted two targeted neighborhood housing assessments in Vidalia and Lyons. A housing assessment seeks to collect information on the existing housing stock in a particular geography, in order to gain a deeper understanding of housing-related factors beyond what can be learned from existing records. These surveys entail conducting visual observations from the public right-of-way over a limited period of time. The Toombs County assessments were completed by residents of Vidalia and Lyons, who created teams of volunteers to conduct the survey.

See below for context maps of the neighborhoods assessed, with results discussed in the following pages. **A full detailed summary of the housing assessment—including maps and graphs—can be found in the appendix.**

Target assessment area
in northeast Lyons



Target assessment area,
comprising the Jackson
Heights neighborhood
in southwest Vidalia



Vidalia Assessment Overview

The Vidalia survey sought to understand building and public infrastructure conditions. Understanding structural conditions then allowed identification of where issues exist. The end goal of collecting this information was to craft a revitalization strategy for the neighborhood, and offer competitive advantage for rehabilitation.

High level results are as follows:

- Total properties assessed: 279
- Vacancy: 6% undeveloped properties, 9% unoccupied
- Housing type: 84% single family homes, with 11% 2-unit duplexes as a significant second category
- Foundation condition: 67% marked as good, 22% as fair, 6% as poor. 5% not visible.
- Roof condition: 65% marked as good, 27% as fair, 8% as poor.
- Exterior condition: 61% marked as good, 28% as fair, 11% as poor.

The Vidalia survey assessed housing exterior condition, whereas the Lyons survey did not. Results rating apparent exterior condition are depicted in the map below:



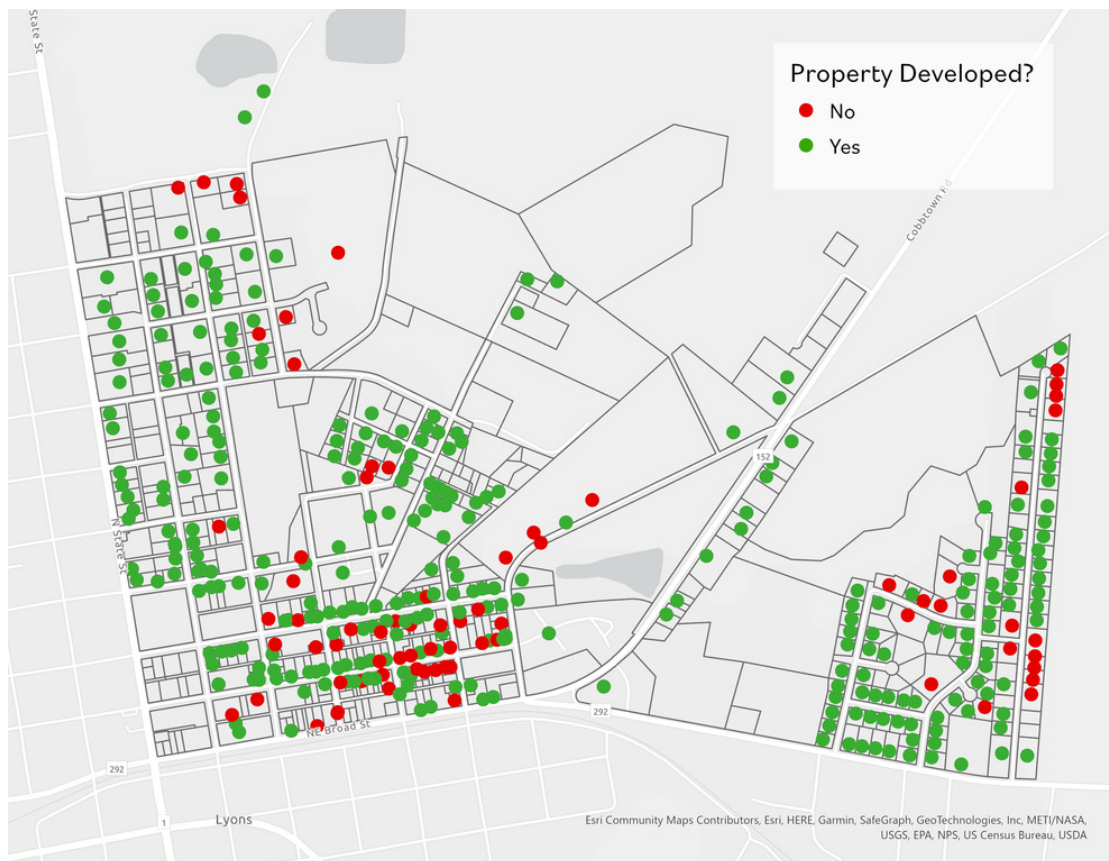
Lyons Assessment Overview

The Lyons survey sought to understand the type of residential construction in the target neighborhood. It gathered information to assess the type, style, and appearance of housing, the condition of public infrastructure, and the condition of lots. The assessment sought to find opportunities for infill development, and inform the style and form of new development proposals.

High level results are as follows:

- Total properties assessed: 376
- Vacancy: 20% undeveloped properties, 14% unoccupied properties
- Housing type: 59% single family homes, 14% manufactured homes. Small handful of duplexes and multiplexes.
- Housing height: 94% single story, 5% two story, 1% 1.5 story

A key insight from this assessment was the clustering of vacant property in the target assessment area. The clustering of undeveloped property presents an exciting opportunity for infill redevelopment. Proposed site designs shown later in this plan incorporated key findings from the assessment—both for properties suitable for redevelopment as well as style and type of development appropriate for the area.



Lyons Assessment: Housing Typology

The housing assessment data gathered for the neighborhood in Lyons sought to collect and synthesize details about the typology and architectural details of residential buildings in the neighborhood (shape and orientation, material, foundation type, etc.). Understanding the type and appearance of homes in the area provides a sense of what style of new construction will be appropriate without compromising the existing character of the neighborhood.

The typical residential structure in the neighborhood is oriented parallel to the street (long-axis parallel to the street), constructed of brick exterior (or secondly vinyl slats), single-storied, and built on either a slab or crawlspace foundation. Parking and vehicle storage is handled by uncovered driveways or in covered car ports, with few homes having a garage.

Although most homes in the neighborhood are single-family detached buildings, their style elements can be incorporated into new residential multifamily construction, from duplexes to small apartments.

03. Data Synthesis: Neighborhood Assessment

- Examples of multifamily housing that matches the style and scale of existing homes in Lyons.



Horizontally-oriented duplexes



Quadplexes, a type of missing middle housing with four units. One unit occupies each quadrant of the building.



Missing middle multifamily buildings with several units. (Left) A multiplex with 8-12 units. (Right) A small apartment complex with less than 30 units.

03. Data Synthesis

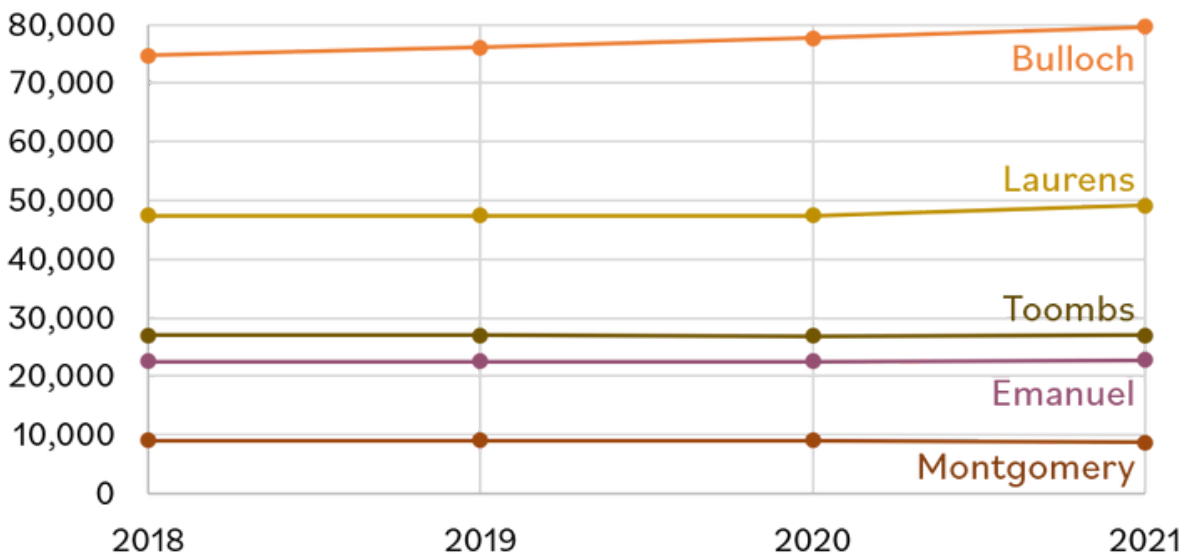
Peer County Assessment

Introduction

The following page includes an analysis of Toombs’s housing compared to a handful of peer counties in the region. The following gives a brief overview of demographics, economics, and housing supply conditions for four peer counties alongside Toombs: Emanuel, Bulloch, Laurens, and Montgomery.

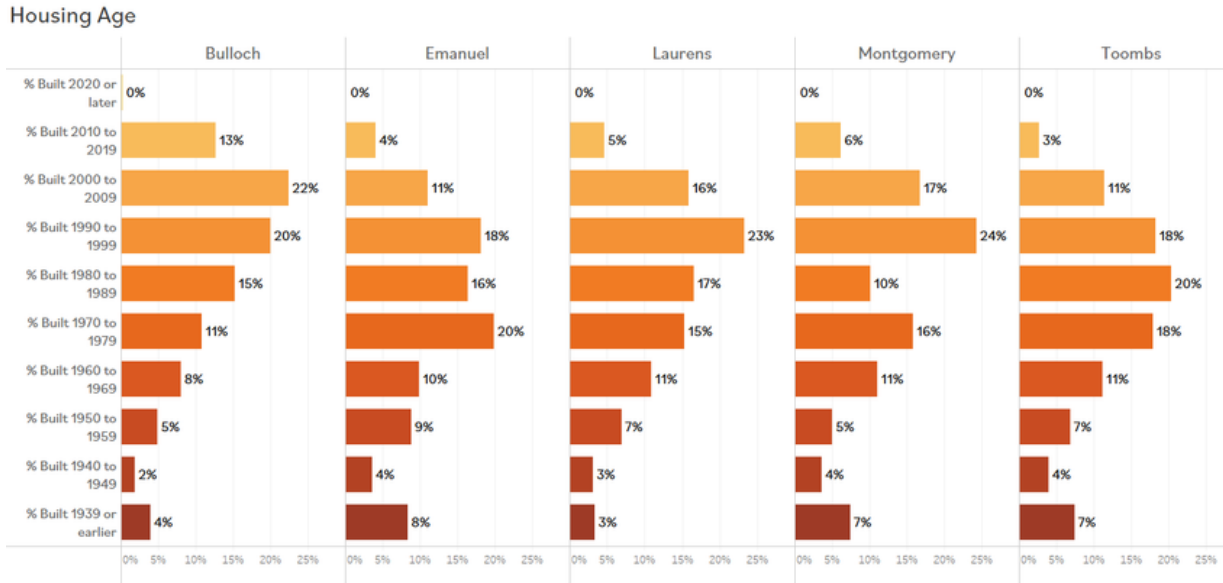
Population

The peer counties have a range of population sizes, though all are relatively small and rural at 9,000-80,000 people. Toombs is in the middle of the pack with a population of 27,000. In addition, population gain in the last 4 years has been moderate and consistent in all peer counties, with the exception of both Toombs and Montgomery’s slight population decline over this time period.



Housing Age

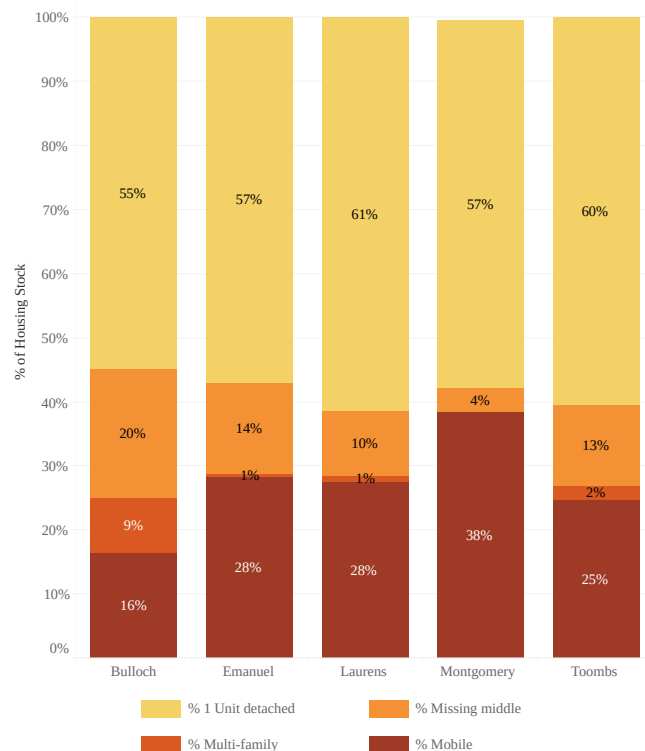
Toombs’s housing stock is slightly older than its peers, having a greater proportion of its housing built in the 1970’s and 1980’s relative to the peer counties. However, the county’s housing development by decade closely resembles the patterns of its peers, with an earlier boom and bust than that seen in the state. The only exception to this is Bulloch county, where 35% of the county’s housing stock was built after 2000.



Household Type

Toombs’s housing distribution is generally on par with its peer counties, with single family housing accounting for roughly 60% of housing typology throughout the comparison area. However, the remainder of housing typology in each county varies greatly. Mobile homes, for example, make up a whopping 38% of the housing stock in Montgomery. In Bulloch, missing middle and multifamily housing make up 28% of the county’s supply. Toombs comes in the middle of the pack with an average proportion of mobile homes and missing middle housing.

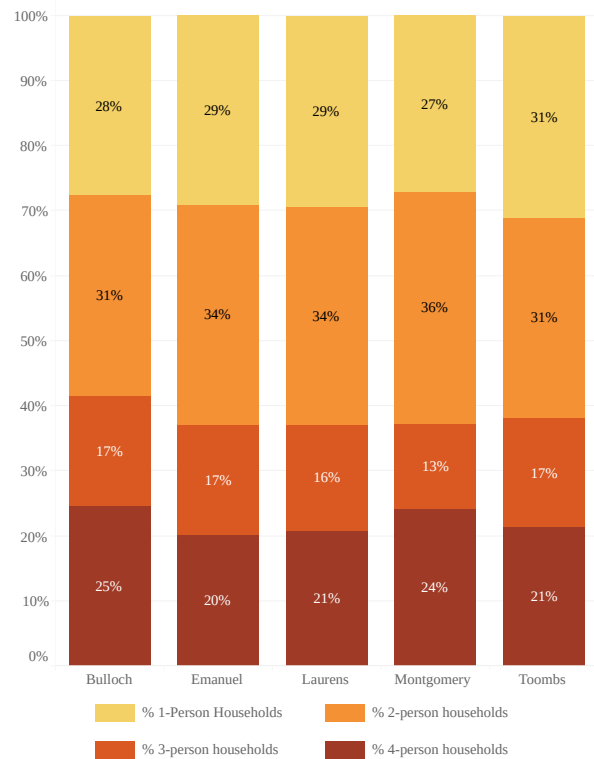
Housing Type (2021)



Household Size

Toombs’s household size is fairly average in comparison to its peer counties. It has slightly more 1 person households than its peers, and a low proportion of 4+ person households. However, this comparison highlights that the vast majority of households in this region are smaller, with roughly 60% comprised of 1 or 2 person households across the board.

Household Size (2021)

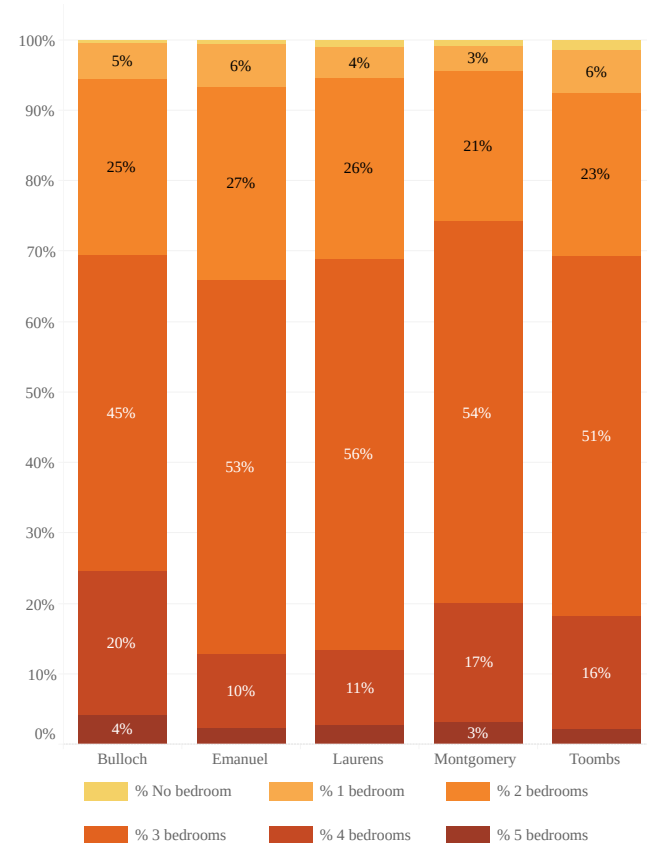


Bedrooms Per Unit

Toombs’s housing size by bedroom is also fairly average in comparison to its peer counties, with over half of units in the 3 bedroom range. However, Emanuel and Laurens counties have smaller proportions of larger homes and offer more options for 1 and 2 bedroom units.

Once again, this shows that the **housing mismatch** is prevalent beyond Toombs County. However, some counties—such as Emanuel—have a housing stock that is more aligned with its population, albeit marginally.

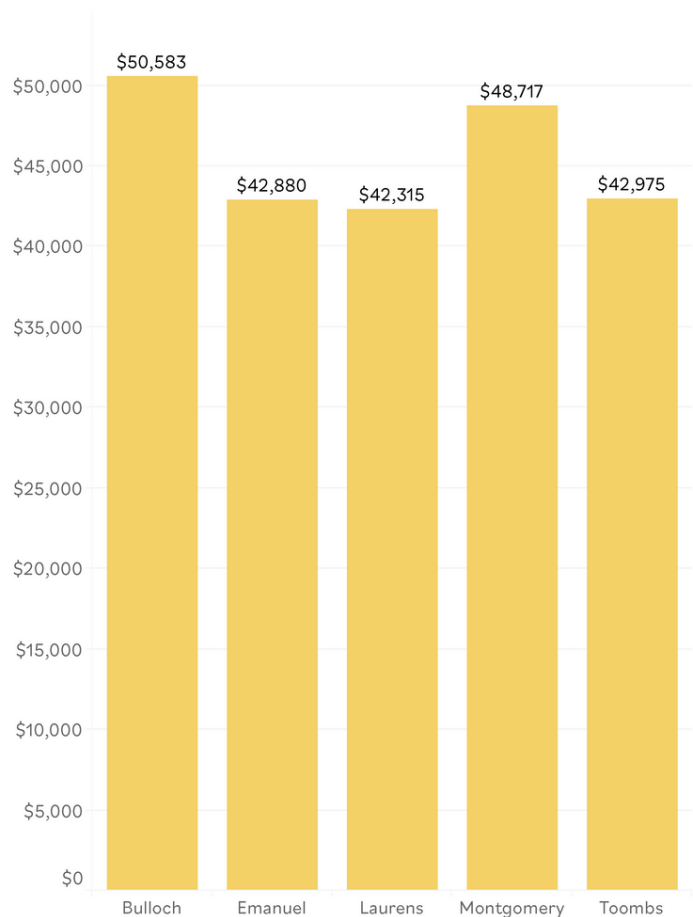
Housing Size by Bedroom (2021)



Household Income

Toombs’s median income is nearly the same as Emanuel and Laurens, though both Montgomery and Bulloch have median incomes that are higher by a few thousand dollars. Household income distribution shows that all peer counties have a high proportion of low income households, with roughly 50 to 55% of all households making less than \$50,000 per year. The distribution of remaining income categories in Toombs is fairly similar to that of its peers, with roughly a quarter of households making between \$50,000-\$100,000. Toombs’s poverty rate is slightly lower than average for this county comparison, with 20% of residents below the poverty line.

Median Household Income (2021)



Takeaways

The key takeaway from this section is that the Toombs is not alone in its struggle to address a housing crisis amidst demographic and economic trends. The entire region is struggling with changing demographics—older, smaller households—amidst a “sticky” housing supply. Characteristics of the housing stock—number of bedrooms, housing age, and housing mix—are very slow moving to change, though people flow in and out of housing relatively speedily. Toombs was notable amongst its peers in having a slightly older housing supply and median housing age overall. However, some level of discrepancy between housing and demographic characteristics is present in all of these counties and their communities.

➤ Chapter Summary: Data Synthesis

Housing Age: Housing in Toombs County is older, on average, than housing statewide, which means that Toombs' peak housing development period came before Georgia's peak development period. As a result of older housing stock, there may be more homes in Toombs needing repairs or rehabilitation. **In other words, homes in good condition in Toombs may be rarer, thus adding pressure to buyers/renters ability to find quality housing.**

Housing Diversity: Most housing across Toombs is in the form of single-family homes. Missing middle housing and larger multifamily options are concentrated in or very near the cities. **Missing middle housing and other multifamily housing are most viable in walkable, amenity-rich locations, usually near downtowns. Missing middle housing options can be built in single-family neighborhoods without impacting neighborhood character. It is even more important to try to direct larger multifamily housing near amenities, infrastructure, and population centers to avoid creating far flung pockets of density without easy access to commercial amenities and public services.** Single-family homes are also a legitimate need, but they are the dominant type of housing already and, if built in conventional subdivisions in exurban locations, are more land consumptive and may result in a long-term cost burden for the County.

Housing Price Increases: As in many other places across the state and the nation, **housing prices in Toombs have risen dramatically. Price increases have certainly impaired potential homeowners' ability to afford to purchase housing and may be partly responsible for driving rental demand.** Heightened sales activity did not correlate with population increases but was rather a sign of local shuffling or residents selling to move elsewhere.

Housing Size & Housing Mismatch: The discrepancy between household sizes and house size (i.e. number of bedrooms) is a widespread occurrence. Even as households nationwide are trending smaller, many housing options are still for 3-bedrooms and upwards. **Smaller housing options may be increasingly more desirable in Toombs, where most households are one- or two-person households.**

➤ **Chapter Summary: Data Synthesis (Cont.)**

Development Activity: Housing development activity, measured in the record of annual residential improvements, has been notably reduced since the 2008 economic recession. The recession period seems to have been an inflection point for Toombs, marking a time when residential development plateaued and population began to decline steadily. **It is possible that Toombs' population will rebound if more and diverse housing opportunities are created to meet housing demand.**

Housing Condition in the Jackson Heights Neighborhood (Vidalia): Some homes in the eastern end of the Jackson Heights neighborhood are in need or repairs, but the majority of homes in the neighborhood are in good condition. **There are several undeveloped lots in the neighborhood that could be developed as single-family or missing-middle housing options.**

Housing Style in Lyons: The most common style of home in the assessed Lyons neighborhood was a horizontally-oriented, brick, single-story architecture on slab or crawlspace. The preferred orientation style is dependent partly on the shape of lots, which become thinner and perpendicularly oriented to the street closer to the center of downtown. **Undeveloped lots in this neighborhood should be developed with infill that matches or compliments the architectural character of its existing homes.**

Housing Comparison to Peer Counties: Toombs county falls in the middle of the pack on housing-related metrics beside peer counties of Montgomery, Bulloch, Laurens, and Emanuel. **Toombs has a slightly older housing stock, most similar to Emanuel County.**

04. Opportunities

Development Opportunity Conditions

Introduction

A development opportunity conditions assessment examines certain aspects of the land and properties within a geography to determine where new development may be best directed, or where it is likely to occur. Factors like development status, proximity to infrastructure and amenities, ownership type, and current land character can influence the development potential or development desirability of a parcel. This chapter comprises an analysis of conditions that inform development potential in the county and may reveal opportunities for targeted development.

Housing Unit Demand Projections

To underscore the importance of these development opportunities, see below for an analysis on potential scenarios of population growth and subsequent housing demand. Per 2020 census data, Toombs County had population of 26,947 and an average household size of 2.71. The following table investigates how various growth scenarios would create additional housing need in the county. Without factoring in vacancy or internal county migration, every new household in Toombs would require one additional unit of housing.

Growth scenario	Total population increase (using 2020 population)	Total household increase (using 2020 average household size)
2%	539 people	194 households
4%	1078 people	389 households
6%	1617 people	583 households



Growth projections are not for a given period of time, and might occur over any given number of years

04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions



▲ *Calculation used to find the projected number of new households—and subsequent number of new housing units needed. Note that this is a simplified calculation, and not a precise projection of housing demand and population growth.*

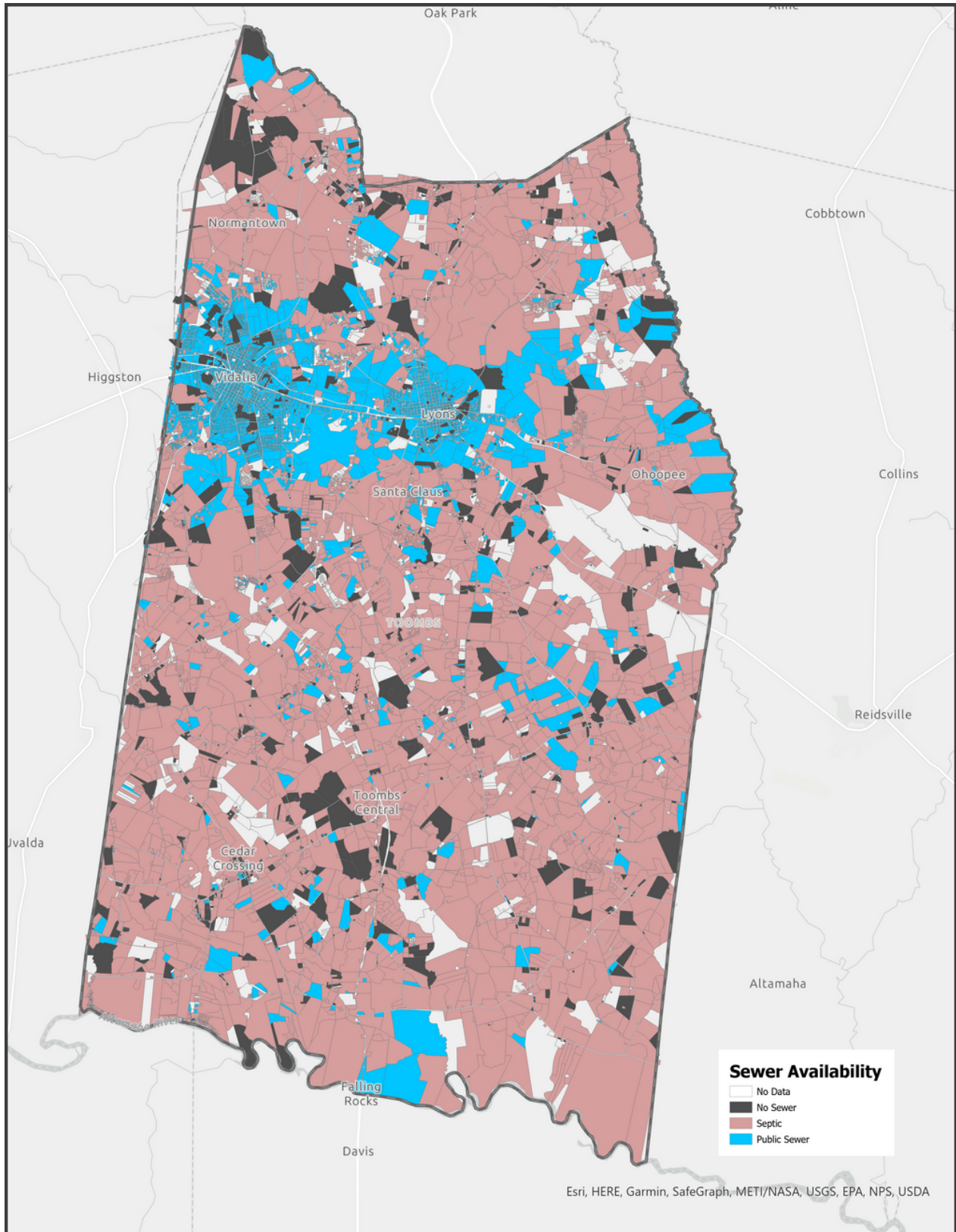
In addition to new residents moving to Toombs, there are a plethora of workers who commute in from outside the county on daily basis. Per 2021 census data, roughly 7,000 people commute from outside of the county to work in Toombs (see *page 7 for more info*). Even if the population continues to stay stable—as it has in the last decade—there is still untapped potential to draw in commuters to the community permanently. Furthermore, regional developments such as the Hyundai Plant in Ellabell will undoubtedly create further change in the region. However, it remains to be seen the magnitude and nature of this change experienced in Toombs.

Availability of Public Infrastructure

Infrastructure components like streets, water supply systems, and sewer systems represent major public investments. If not used to their maximum capacity, they embody an unrealized potential in return of investment. In some cases, the existing infrastructure managed by public utilities does not in fact serve the number or density of households that these systems are capable of supporting. In this scenario, public revenue may not support the continued upkeep and upgrades necessary to maintain these systems. On the other hand, gentle density, compact urban form, and sound tax policy can sustain the public infrastructure households rely on without cost burdening local governments into the future.

Accessibility of a public sewer system has implications on environmental quality. By circumventing the negative side effects of proliferation of septic systems, sewer availability enables communities to subdivide for smaller lots and zone for more compact residential and commercial development. Ideally, the majority of development should be concentrated in areas served by water and sewer. Doing so will minimize environmental harm, reduce land consumption due to sprawl, conserve community character in the county, maximize the return on investment, and ensure the tax revenue to maintain and improve these public infrastructure systems in the future.

Public Sewer Coverage in Toombs County



04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions

Most properties with connections to public sewer are in the incorporated areas of Lyons and Vidalia (locations in blue in the Public Sewer Coverage map). A few properties elsewhere in the county are identified in the tax digest data as being served by public sewer systems, but these properties may utilize private sewer systems. Areas in red denote septic use.

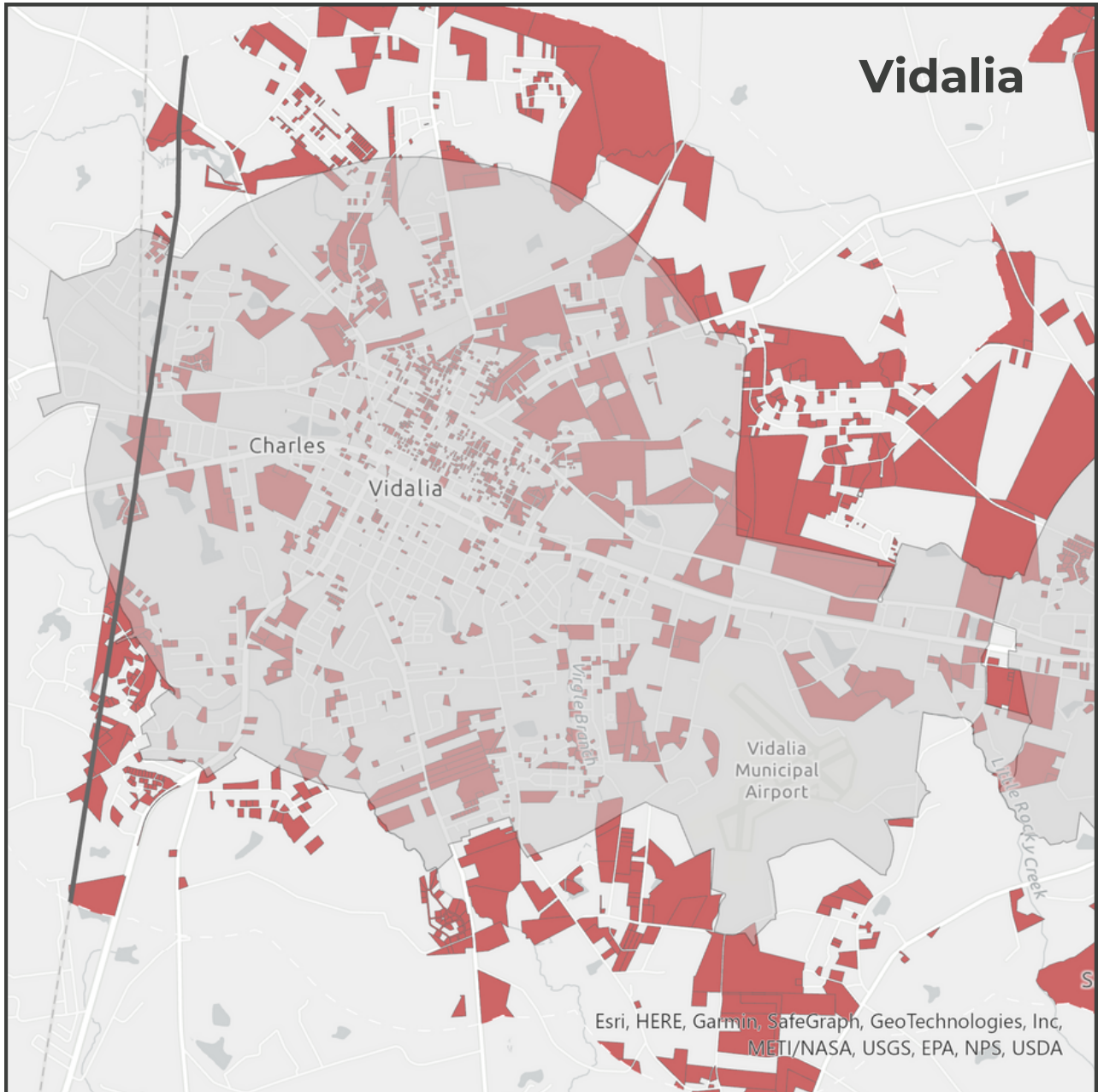
Future development in the county should be directed to areas that have access to public sewer or where linkages could be easily extended.

Undeveloped or Underutilized Land

Pieces of undeveloped land may present good opportunities for new development. Not all undeveloped parcels are suitable for development. Different qualities like location, current land use, and the broader community development strategy will determine if a piece of land should be developed. While local governments do not have direct control over what land gets developed or when, they can incentivize development in specific locations through conversations with would-be developers, rezoning to a district that allows for a higher level of development, and indicating their overall strategy to steer development towards a certain area in their future land use planning. It is also useful to simply take stock of available land.

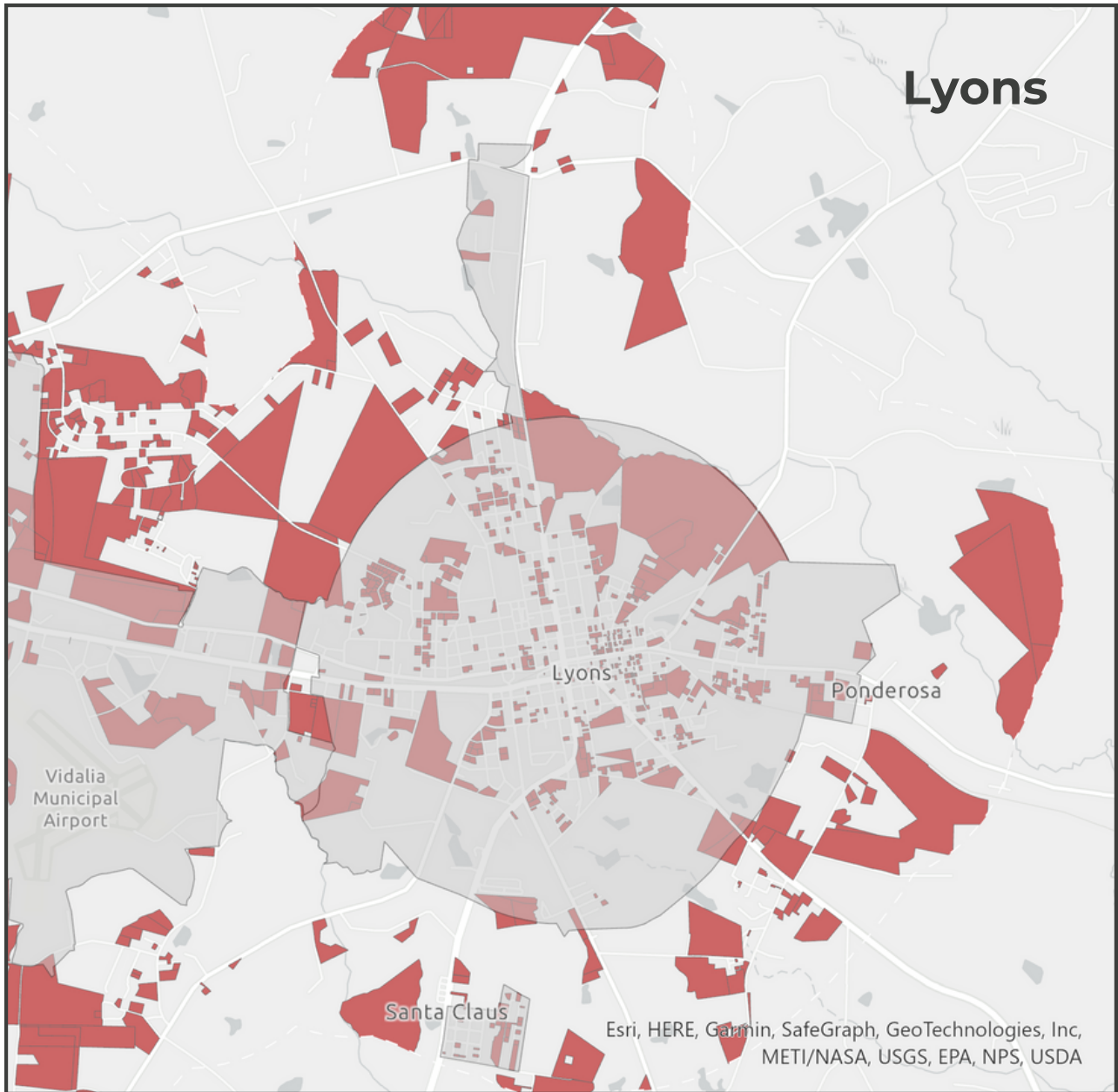
The process of identifying undeveloped land relied on data from the local tax assessors office, which assigns residential, accessory, and commercial improvement values to every property. Properties without improvement values attributed to them (in other words, where land value alone represented the full value of the property) were classified as undeveloped (properties with an improvement value of 100 or less were treated as undeveloped as well). The properties in the following maps were filtered to exclude properties that are in the exempt, conservation use, and public utility digest classes.





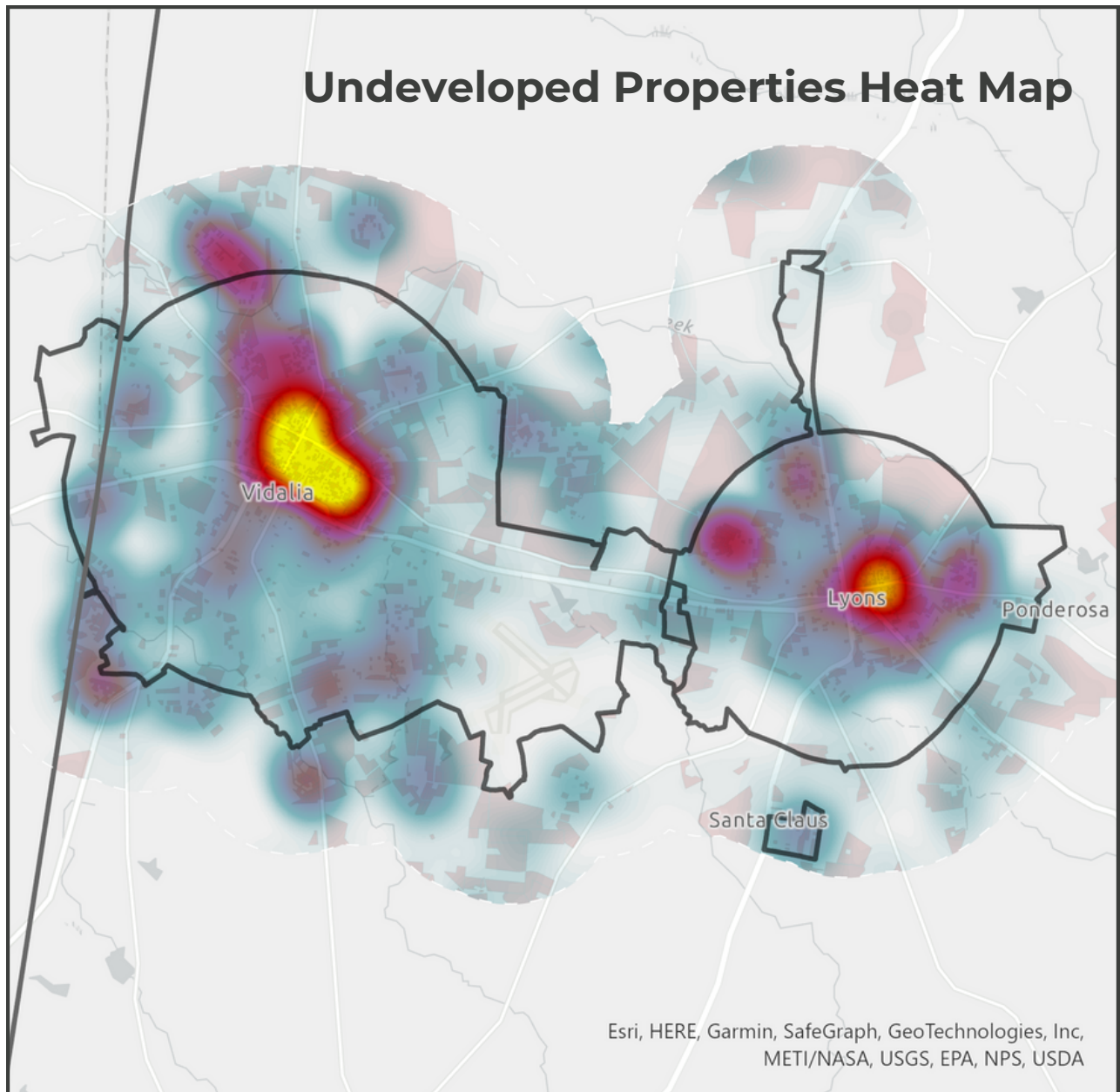
▲ The map above shows undeveloped properties (excluding those in the exempt, conservation use, and public utility tax classes) within one mile of the boundaries of Lyons and Vidalia, with a view on Vidalia.

More than 1100 undeveloped properties overlap or are within Vidalia, and more than 2200 acres within the city are undeveloped.



▲ The map above shows undeveloped properties (excluding those in the exempt, conservation use, and public utility tax classes) within one mile of the boundaries of Lyons and Vidalia, with a view on Lyons.

More than 500 undeveloped properties overlap or are within Vidalia, and more than 1200 acres within the city are undeveloped.

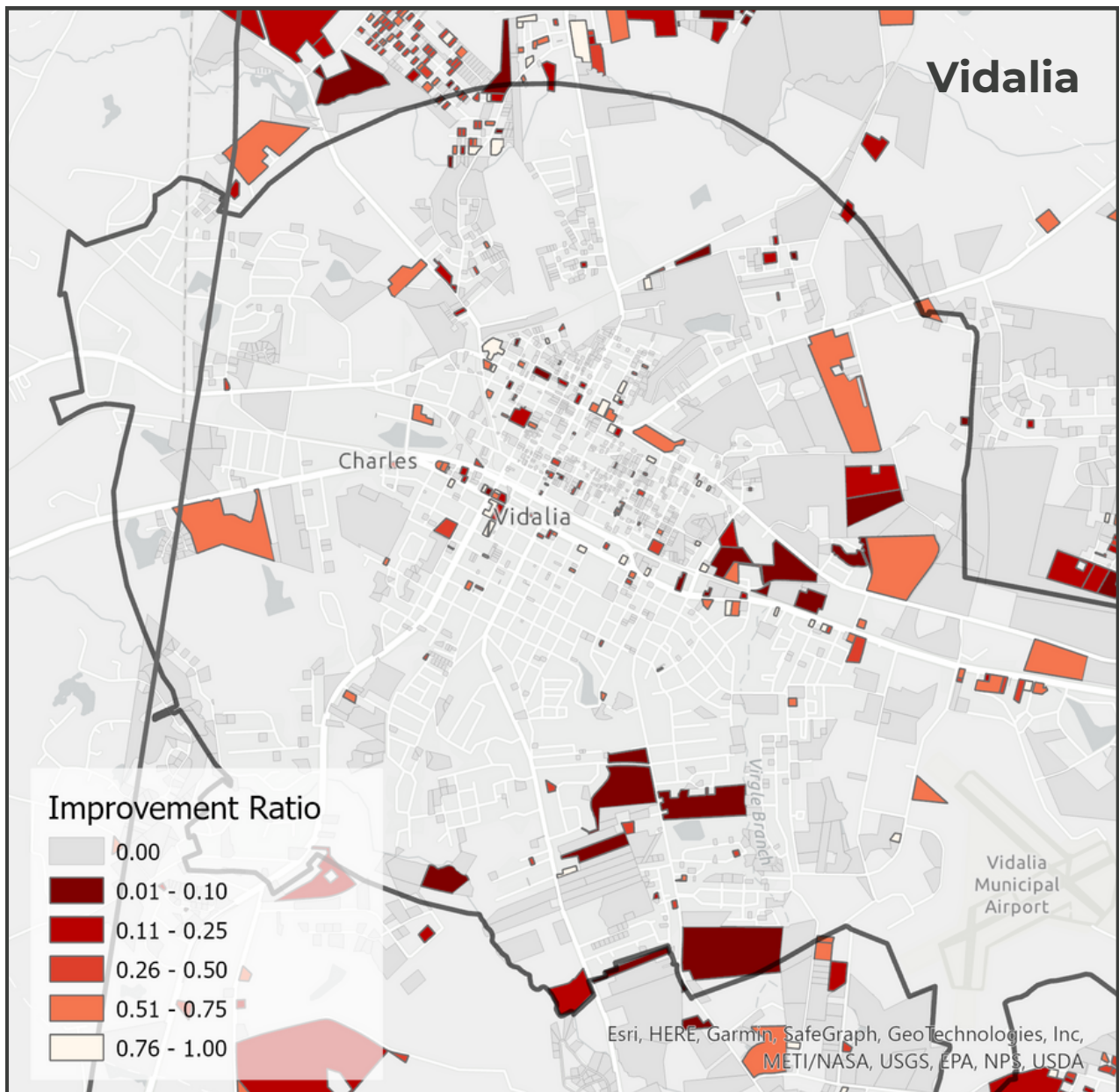


- Undeveloped parcels are concentrated in parts of Lyons and Vidalia. In Lyons, there is a pocket of undeveloped parcels due east of downtown. In Vidalia, a more significant area of finely subdivided land that is undeveloped lies north of downtown, across the CSX rail line. Groupings of undeveloped parcels outside of city boundaries tend to occur in residential enclaves that started but have not finished developing (or may have been abandoned).

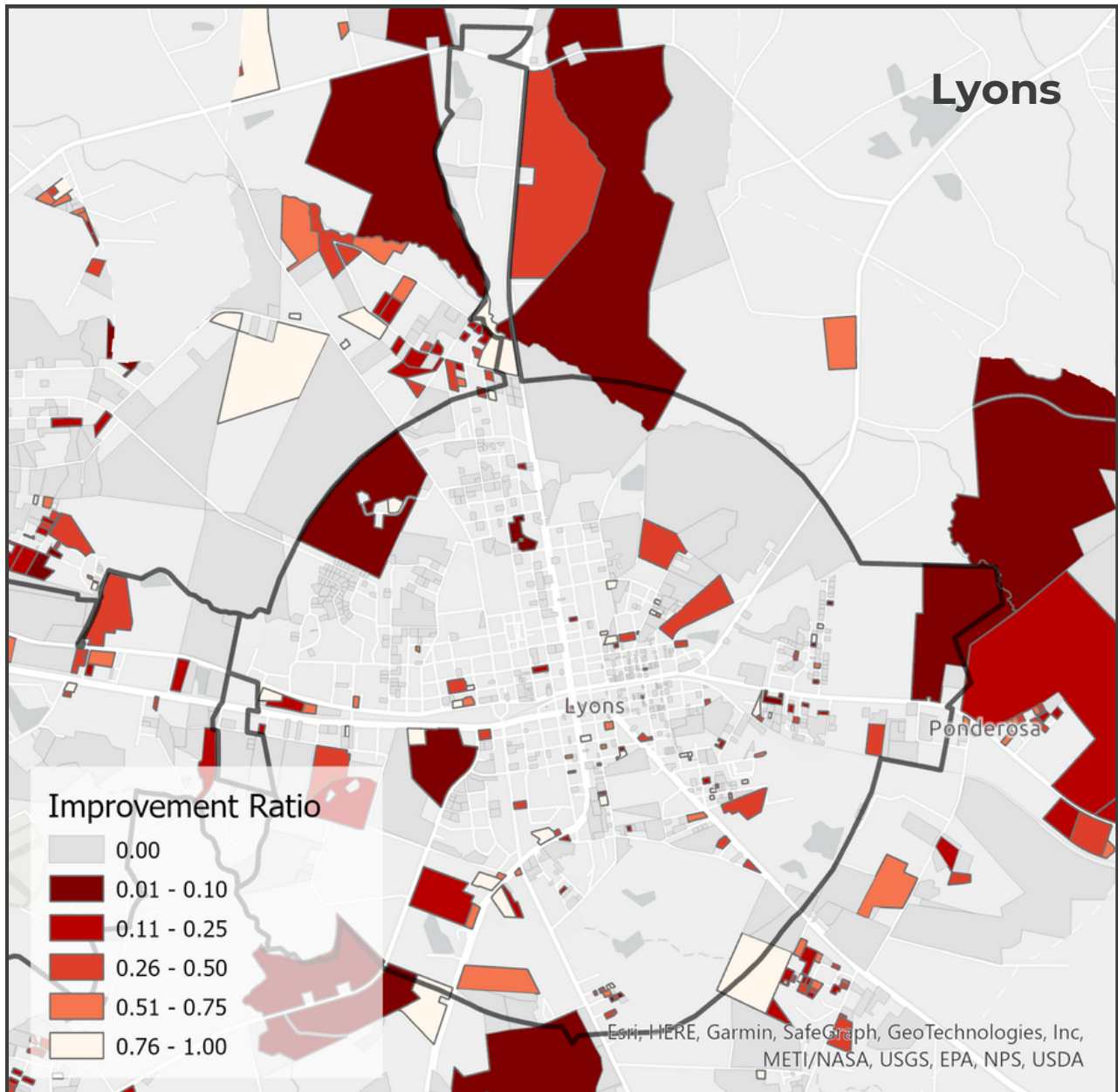
Land Improvement Ratio

A land improvement ratio (LIR) compares a property's land value to the value of the improvements, or built assets, on that land. If the improvements on the property are valued greater than the land, the ratio will be greater than one, and vice versa. Properties with an LIR less than one may be underutilized, although there are many unique qualities and conditions to each property that should be considered before making that determination. The LIR judges properties to be underutilized from a development perspective, and it inherits biases that may be present in current valuation practices.

- ✓ (Vidalia) Properties within one mile of Vidalia and Lyons with an LIR of less than one. Undeveloped parcels (whose LIR is 0) are shown in grey.



04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions



▲ (Lyons) Properties within one mile of Vidalia and Lyons with an LIR of less than one. Undeveloped parcels (whose LIR is 0) are shown in grey.

Underutilized properties in Lyons and Vidalia do not show a readily discernible pattern. Furthermore, some properties that have low LIR may be agricultural land that has value beyond development potential. The LIR maps, like the maps of undeveloped land, exclude properties on the conservation use, utility, and exempt digest classes.

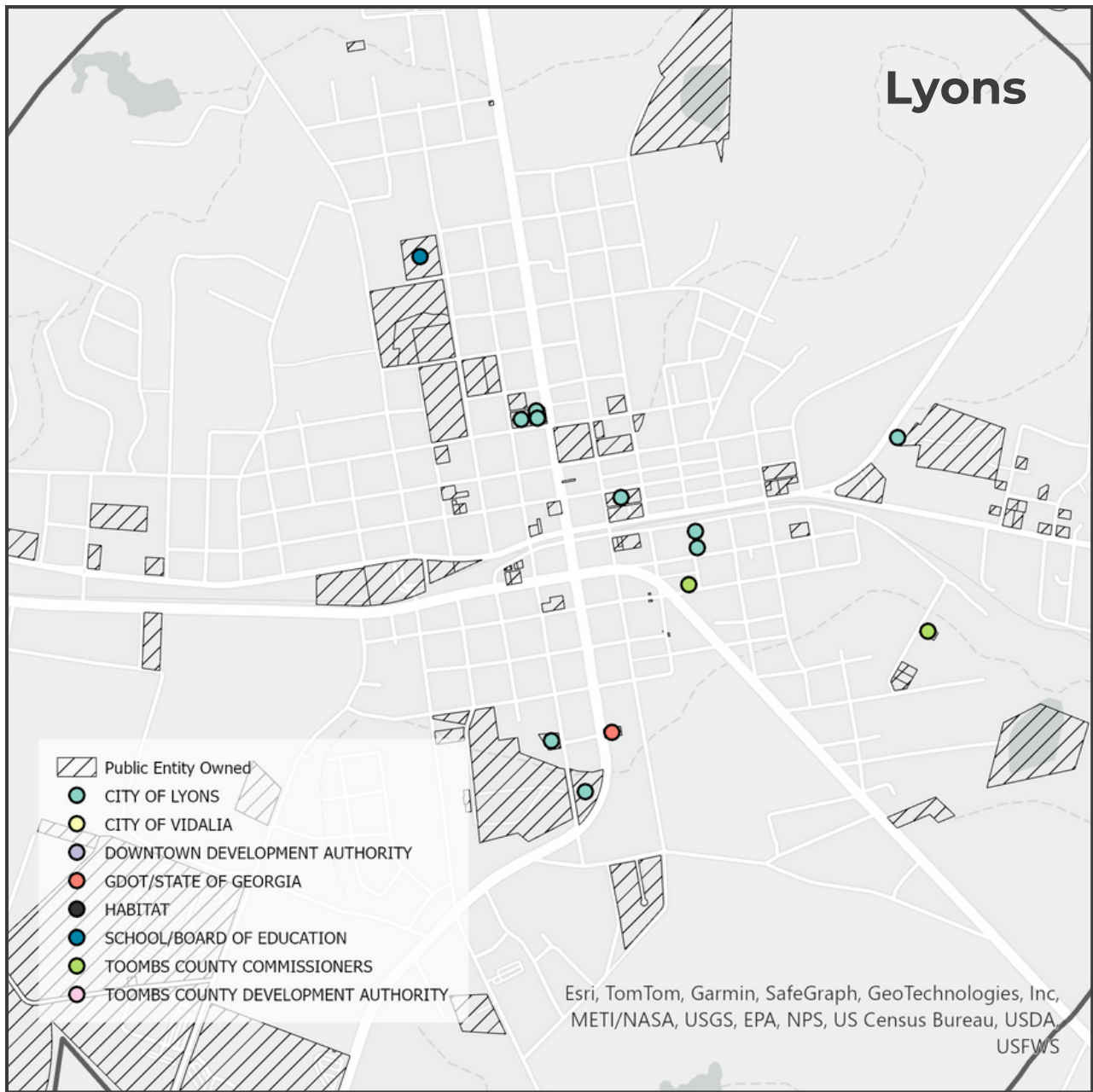
Publicly Owned Properties

Publicly owned properties that are undeveloped, or that may be good candidates for redevelopment, can be “lower-hanging fruit” for development, because having to negotiate with a private property owner is removed from the equation. In this case, the public entity, which may be a school board, a city, or associated with the county, maintains control over the property. If an interested developer comes forth, the public entity is in a strong position to negotiate for the type of development that would be most suited to further community goals and needs. The city or county, for example, would also be in a position to offer incentives (in-kind donation of the land, expedited permitting and zoning variances, and other support) to the developer in return for additional units, affordable pricing, or other aspect of the development that, if provided, would enhance the public welfare.

The following maps identify properties owned by public entities in Lyons and Vidalia. Only undeveloped properties are identified on the maps with dots, color-coded by the type of entity that owns them (city, county, school board, etc.). An exception is school-owned properties that may not be entirely undeveloped but include large swaths of undeveloped land.

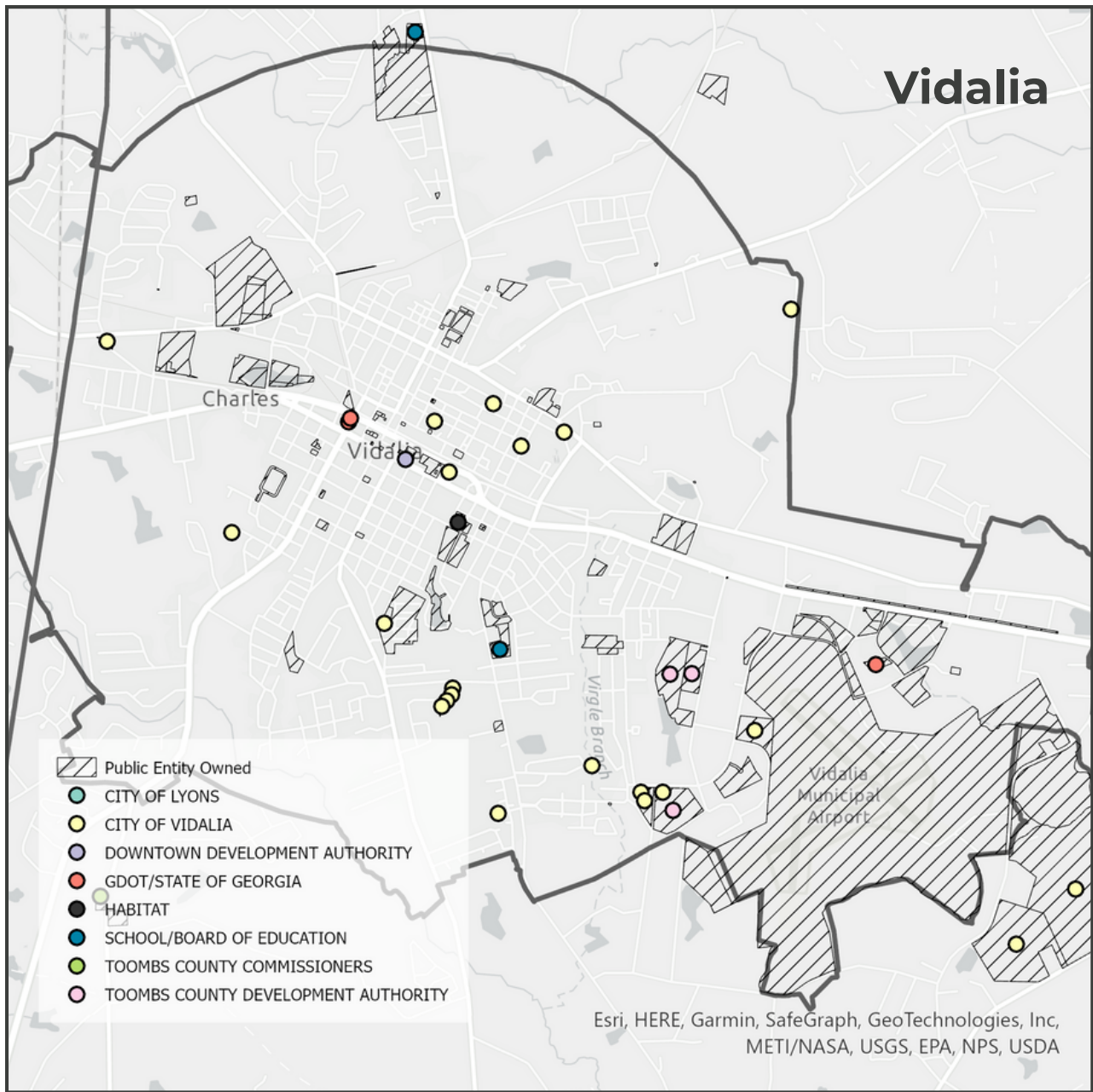
The most common public owner in both Vidalia and Lyons is each city, respectively. City-owned properties could make ideal candidates for pilot housing development projects because of the direct control and negotiating power cities can exert over the fate of these parcels.

04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions



- Undeveloped properties owned by public entities in the City of Lyons. Undeveloped properties under public ownership are marked with dots, color-coded to the type of entity that owns them. Most properties are owned by the City.

04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions



- Undeveloped properties owned by public entities in the City of Vidalia. Publicly-owned properties in Vidalia are mostly owned by the City. These properties are more numerous than in Lyons and show greater variation in size. Some properties may be slated for commercial or industrial purposes. One property owned by Habitat for Humanity was included in the map, despite Habitat's status as an NGO.

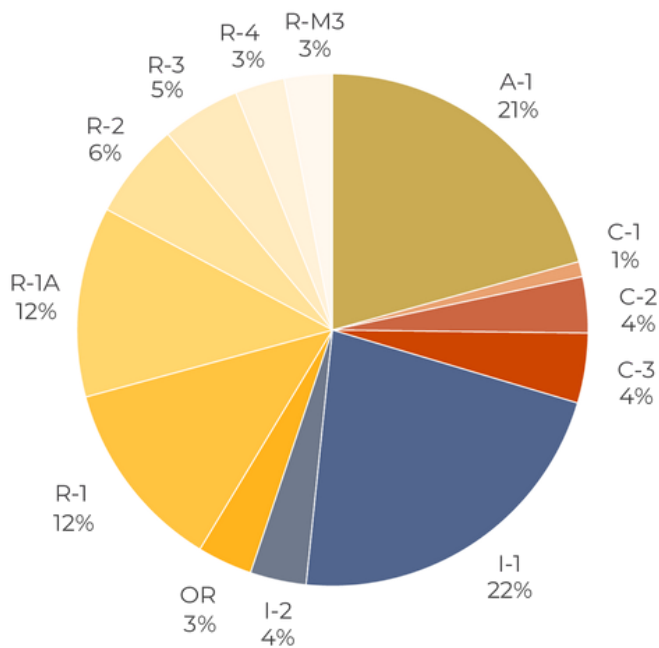
Zoning Alignment for Residential Development

Zoning regulations are the basis for what can and cannot be built on a particular property. Beyond defining permitted uses, zoning districts control anything from building height, to lot coverage, setbacks, and housing unit size, to name a few. Most jurisdictions have a set of zoning regulations in their Code of Ordinances, as well as a set of subdivision regulations that control how private land and the public right-of-way are delineated, processes which also have significant impacts on development patterns. Toombs County does not have zoning regulations, but the cities of Vidalia and Lyons do.

A property's zoning has implications for developers because it determines what the developer can build on the property and to what intensity it can be developed. If a property's zoning does not align with the intended project, the developer would have to seek a rezoning, which may or not be successful. Developers will typically seek property's zoned in a way that matches their development intentions.

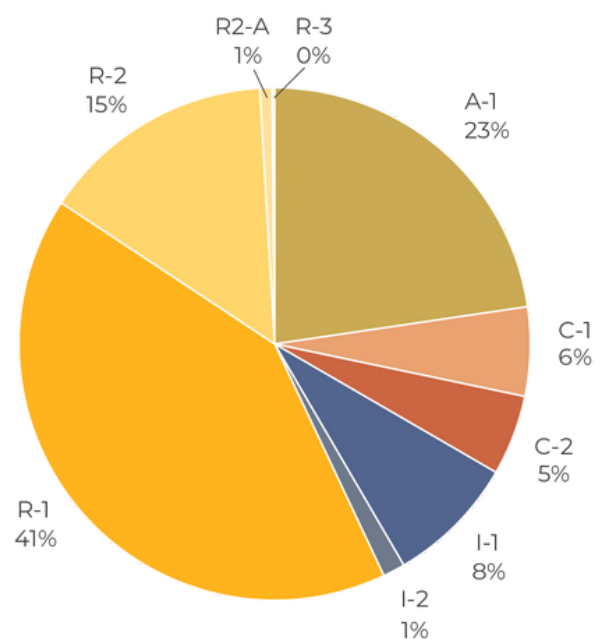
Vidalia Zoning

Total Acreage: 10500



Lyons Zoning

Total Acreage: 4900

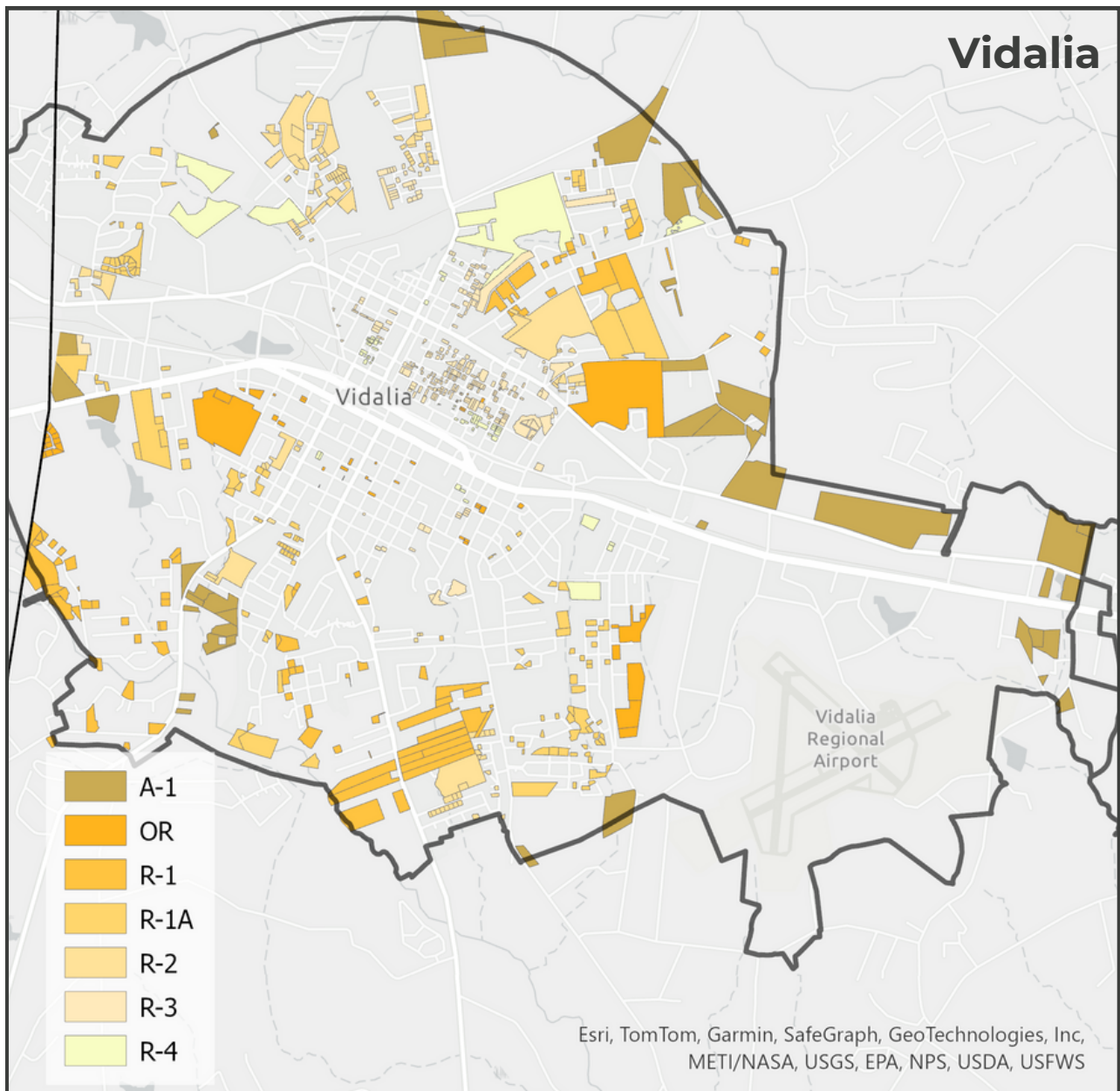


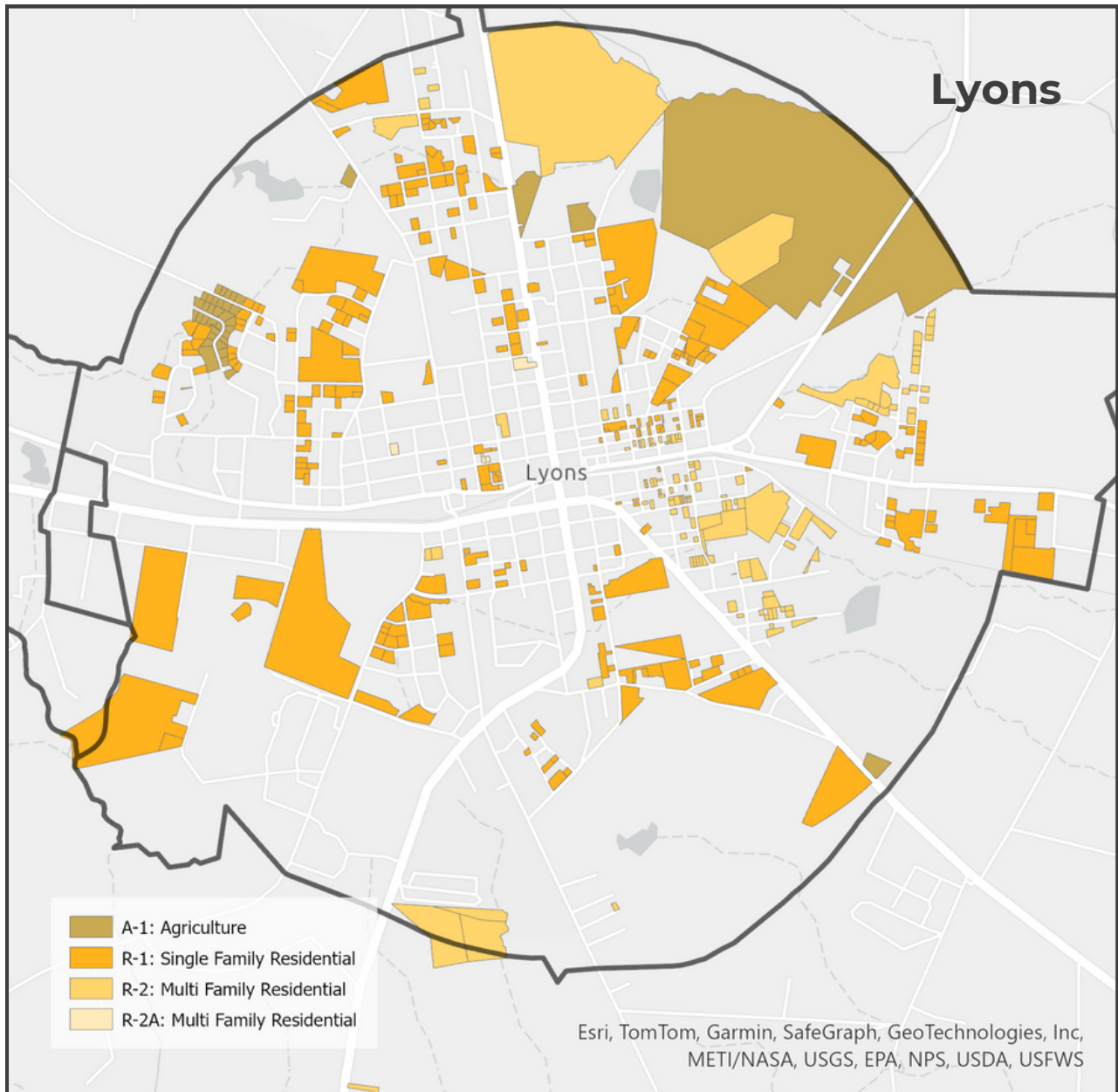
- ▲ Zoning district distributions for Vidalia and Lyons. In Vidalia, half (51%) of all zoned acreage allows only single-family homes compared to 14% that allow some type of missing middle or multifamily. 16% of Lyons zoning districts allow missing middle or multifamily style residential development.

Zoning Alignment for Residential Development

Zoning alignment describes the coordination between zoning and development goals. For example, a goal to build more single-family style development is benefited by zoning districts that allow only single-family residential development, while a goal to increase missing middle style housing in infill lots will require zoning more permissive districts that allow a variety of residential uses. While most parcels allowing residential development in Lyons and Vidalia are geared towards single-family homes, there is a significant share of properties that allow more diverse and denser residential development.

✔ Undeveloped parcels in Vidalia that will facilitate residential uses as zoned.





Undeveloped parcels in Lyons that will facilitate residential development as currently zoned. Lyons is undergoing a partial zoning audit.

Undeveloped parcels with zoning tuned to residential development, as shown in the preceding maps, will be likely candidates for new housing development. Residential districts that allow for missing middle and multifamily housing may accommodate denser and more creative site designs by-right.

Value Per Acre (VPA)

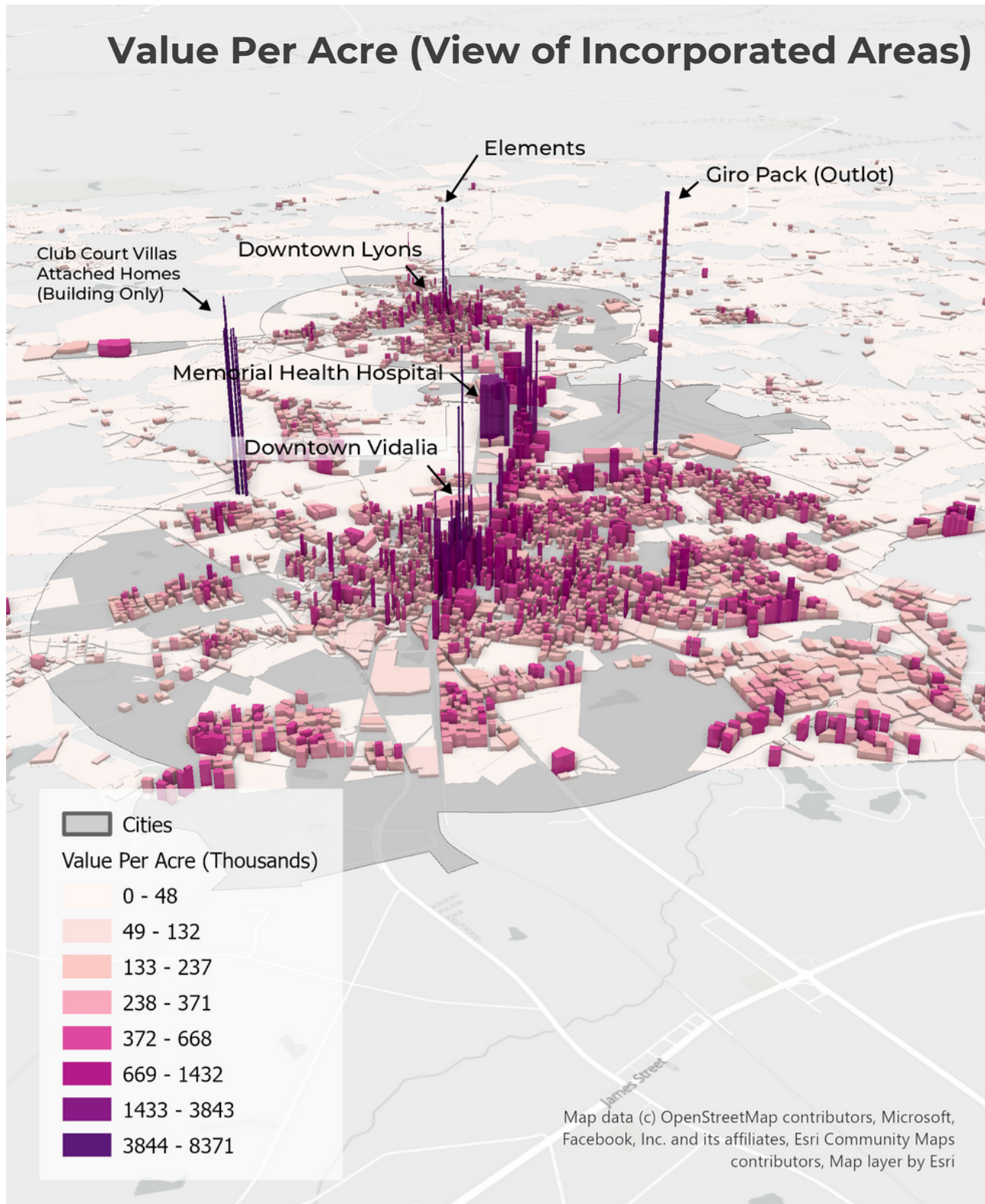
One way to measure public return on investment is to map property values, since they are used to determine property tax bills, but to do so after normalizing by the acreage of each property. Calculating the property value per acre helps visualize how much value a property generates in public revenue while accounting for the cost in land resources. The most productive properties from a public revenue standpoint create the most value per the least amount of land. The maps that follow show value per acre (VPA) as vertical extrusions and by a color gradient. Both taller bars and deeper colors indicate higher VPAs. Only property value is considered, therefore the visualized return on investment is inclusive of property tax revenue alone.

In many places with defined cores, VPA tends to peak in downtowns. In essence, properties closer to the downtown generate more value per acre than those farther out. Peaks in downtown Vidalia and Lyons are evident, and higher relative VPAs also occur along the HWY 280 corridor. Overall, VPA is heavily concentrated in the cities.

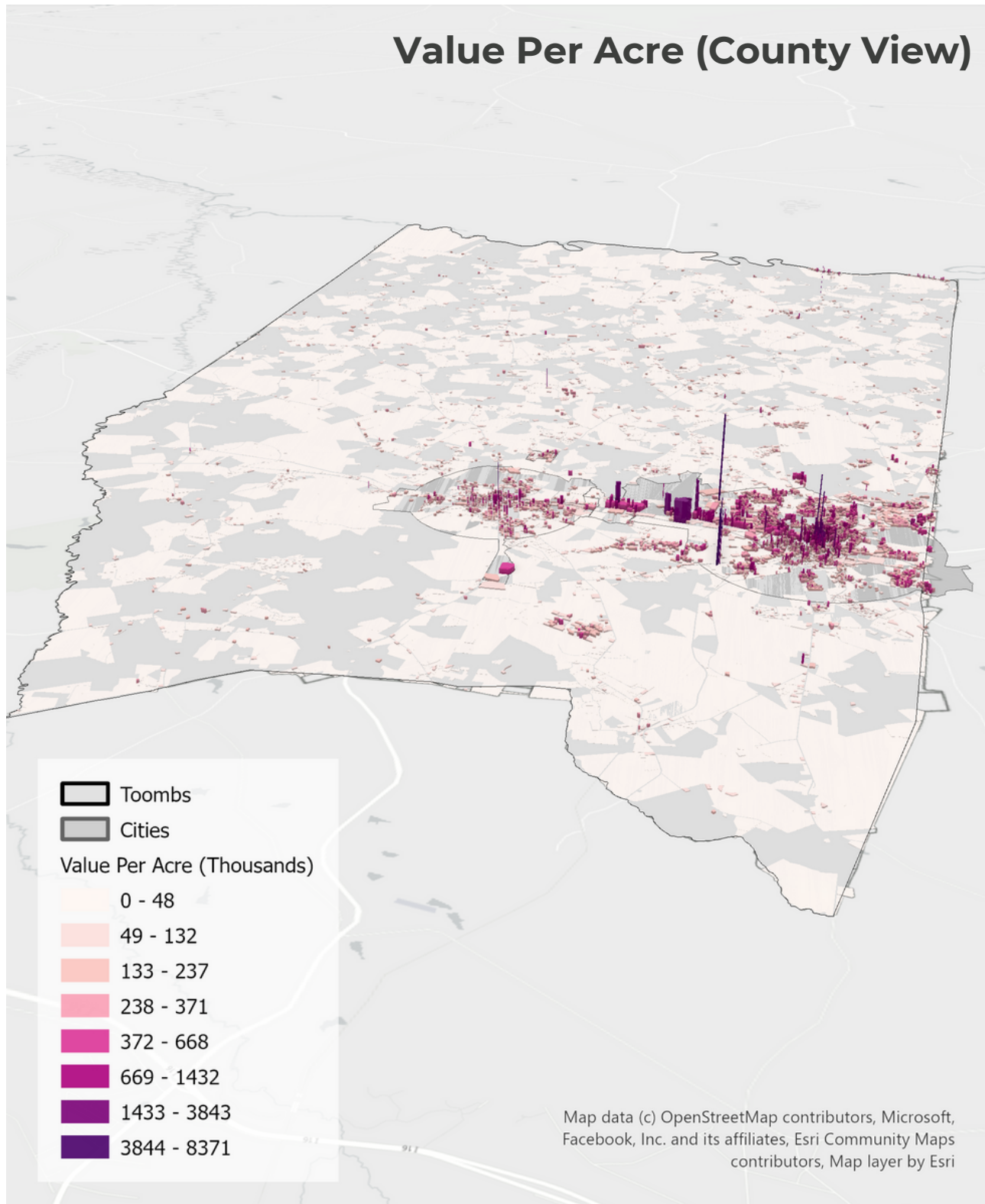
While VPA is not directly related to housing, the higher relative values of properties near the urban core provide a strong case for continued improvement and infill development in those areas. Developing land farther out in the county would likely provide a lower return on investment from a public revenue standpoint, as well as depend on new infrastructure that will bring additional short- and long-term costs.



2D view of VPA for Toombs County, with key peaks identified.



3D view of VPA for Toombs, with a view of the county's incorporated areas. Higher VPA properties are concentrated in the downtowns and along HWY 280. Both height and depth of color increase as VPA increases.



Properties in the unincorporated county have a relatively low VPA compared to those in Toombs' incorporated communities. Value is highly concentrated in the cities.

Why Value per Acre (VPA)?

Value per acre (VPA) analysis is concerned with identifying how productive a development is, no matter its type, by taking into account how its valuation and the land it consumes. Looking at a property's value alone misses the point that development expends land and that land is a limited resource. In other words, land is a cost that is often ignored when we come to think of how new developments create value in our communities. Since property values are directly used to calculate property taxes, the development that generates the highest value per the least amount of land is said to be the most “productive” from the standpoint of local public revenue.

Because value per acre is a universal concept that applies to all types of developments, its implications range beyond housing alone. A factory and a single-family subdivision can both be looked at through a VPA lens.

When thinking about housing, the same principle of most value per least amount of land applies to determining productivity. And, generally, this means that more land-efficient residential and mixed-use developments will come out on top when compared to conventional, large-lot subdivision developments in rural areas. A downtown property with first-floor retail and loft apartments will almost always be more productive than low-density development on large lots (not only from its property taxes but also because of the sales tax revenue from the downstairs retail). This is true more often than not for any infill development near city and town centers, because infill lots are usually smaller, are in high value locations if near downtowns, and may be zoned for higher densities.

Infill development in the incorporated areas of Toombs makes sense for multiple reasons, not least because of the proximity to amenities, jobs, and greater access to public infrastructure that have already been mentioned, and the prospect of creating more value, and thus more public revenue that could go back to community improvements, adds support to the case. Adopting a low-density, sprawling pattern of development that seeps into the unincorporated, rural landscape of Toombs would result in less productive, more land-consumptive neighborhoods that would end up far from the vibrancy of downtown cores. With many vacant or underutilized properties in Lyons and Vidalia, the cities and county should work to incentivize and recruit development in incorporated areas before looking outward.

Special Zones

There are two zones of special designation in Toombs County. The northeastern part of the county, including a part of Lyons, lies in Federal Opportunity Zone 13279970100, and part of Vidalia is a state-designated Rural Zone.

Federal Opportunity Zones

Federal Opportunity Zones are designated low-income communities where private investment may be eligible for capital gains tax incentives. They are based on census tracts as the fundamental geographic unit. Census tracts 9701.01 and 9701.02 in Toombs County are designated as Opportunity Zone 13279970100, encompassing a large swathe of the northeastern part of the county.

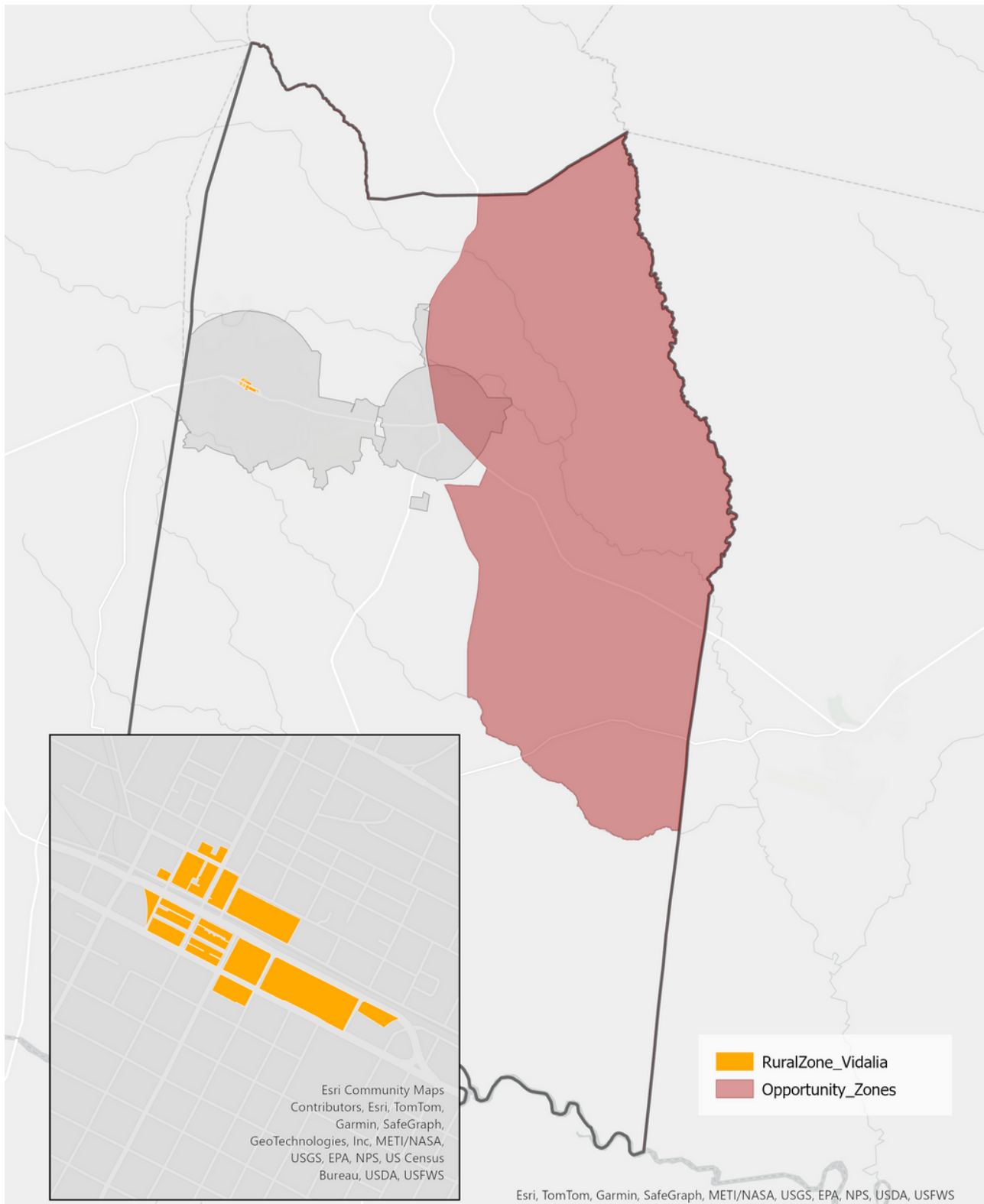
Investors who contribute to local economic development activity, which encapsulates anything from investment infrastructure to funding local businesses, may defer or potentially reduce their capital gains taxes. The incentive depends on how long the investments in the Opportunity Zone are held. However, these benefits must be realized before the expiration term of December 31, 2026, and capital gains reductions require an investment period of at least five years. Therefore, the Opportunity Zone is unlikely to stimulate new investment in Toombs at this time.

Rural Zones

The creation of designated Rural Zones was enabled by the Georgia General Assembly in 2017, allowing for the designation of up to 10 rural zones each year throughout the state. Designated Rural Zones allow investors and businesses to obtain tax credits for creating new jobs. Rural Zones are defined at the parcel level, with a zone delineating the parcels where eligible investment or business activity would qualify for tax credits.

Parcels in downtown Vidalia north and south of HWY 280 and Main Street are part of a Rural Zone that became active at the beginning of 2024 and will expire at the end of 2028. This new designation has the potential to stimulate local economic development activity in the heart of Vidalia.

04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions



📍 Federal Opportunity Zone (in red) and the newly designated Rural Zone in Vidalia (orange, in inset).

Conserved, Agricultural, and Timber Lands

Just as some places in Toombs afford a better opportunity for residential and mixed-use development, there are places the county and local communities may desire to preserve from development. For one, these lands are usually far from the city cores of Lyons and Vidalia, and therefore distant from amenities, diverse land uses, and water/sewer infrastructure, placing them low on the totem pole of receiving areas for future growth. More importantly, they are agricultural properties, timber farms, or contain natural resources and landscapes that contribute aesthetic and economic value.

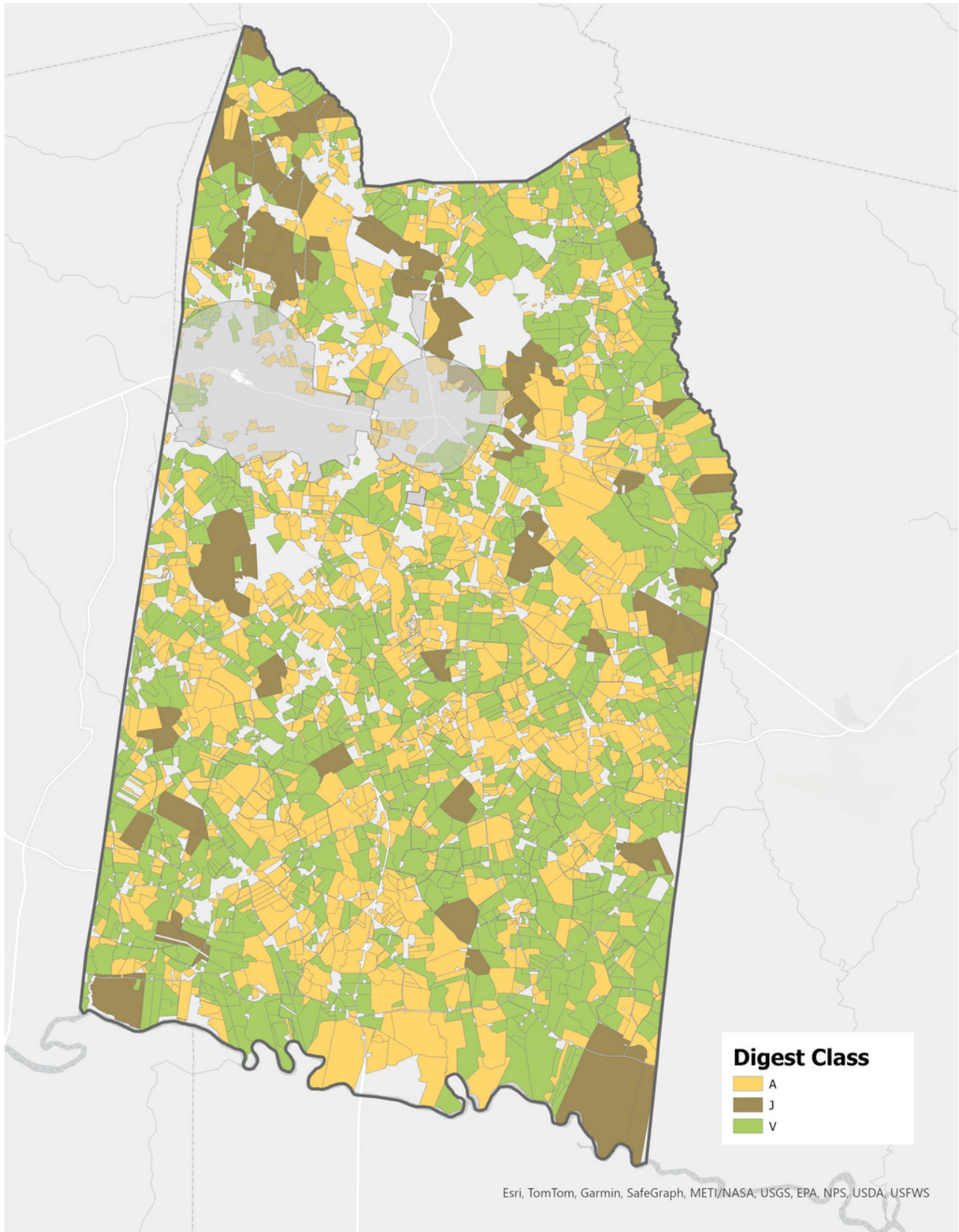
Farms and pastures often experience development pressure, especially in the face of low-intensity suburban sprawl. Luckily, much of the land outside of Toombs' cities is still agricultural and minimally developed, contributing to the county's rural character and the agricultural economy, if actively farmed. It is not a given that this will be the case in the future. If the county experiences a wave of growth, county and city governments should work to channel development into infill areas within incorporated areas.

Toombs also contains a vast number of properties that are classified in the conservation use digest class, which means that all or part of those properties are under some conservation restriction. Usually, this protective status is set up through a Conservation Use Valuation Assessment (CUVA). CUVA provides an incentive to landowners in exchange for a pledge not to develop the land for 10 years. It is a voluntary program that offers landowners a property tax reduction through favorable valuation for the duration of the conservation term. After 10 years, the conservation restriction and conservation valuation expire, but the landowner can apply to renew for another 10-year period.

Almost 90,000 acres of property in Toombs is in the conservation use digest and 76,000 are in the agricultural digest. Respectively, these areas make up 38% and 32% of county territory. That means that 70% (and likely more) is agricultural in land use character or under some conservation restriction.

CUVA is not the only conservation tool that may operate in Toombs. Additional properties might be under other types of conservation agreements, restrictions, and benefits, but many properties in conservation use in Toombs do appear to be enrolled in CUVA. For those properties and others, a more permanent conservation method will need to be applied to conserve them in perpetuity.

04. Opportunities: Development Opportunity Conditions



Land in the agricultural, timber, and conservation use tax digest classes. Much of unincorporated Toombs is classified under one of these digest classes. (**A** = Agricultural, **J** = Forest/Timber Land, **V** = Conservation Use)

04. Opportunities

Zoning Regulations Affecting Development

Introduction

Zoning regulations are one body of legislative rules that control what and where development can occur, in addition to other sections of the Code of Ordinances like subdivision regulations, rules by proxy via adoption of a building code reference (such as the International Building Code, or IBC), rules and regulations applied by the county and state boards of health, and so on. Of these, zoning has the most direct influence in regulating building types, land uses, residential density, parking requirements, and a host of dimensional requirements pertaining to lot size, setbacks, and buffers, to name a few.

Because of the myriad of levers zoning has at its disposal to influence development, it stands to reason that zoning regulations must be calibrated to avoid being overly restrictive, placing an undue burden on development, while still being restrictive enough to promote public health, safety, and community benefit. Because there is no zoning ordinance for unincorporated Toombs County at this time, the controls that Lyons and Vidalia uphold and enforce will be in contrast to a less regulated development environment in unincorporated areas.

There are strong reasons to promote development in or near the incorporated areas of the county, which have been discussed throughout this report. Ensuring that development remains an attractive option in these areas depends on zoning regulations that allow for flexible and diverse development, in ways that produce development outcomes that benefit the developer, community, and the municipality. **Lyons' and Vidalia's zoning regulations are relatively unrestrictive**, but there are elements in each that could be amended or clarified, especially in regards allowing for more diverse housing options and gentle density in infill city lots. The content to follow is a summary of suggestions and assessments relative to the zoning codes aimed at enhancing the regulations around residential developments to help create opportunity for more flexible and varied developments.

Improve Clarity and Comprehensiveness

Structural changes to the zoning code and amending language for clarity can improve ease of understanding. Both Lyons' and Vidalia's zoning codes are relatively straightforward, but there are some instances where reorganization, adding definitions, and eliminating possible contradictions may improve the code.

Lyons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider adding a definition of “multifamily” buildings. If desired, add definitions that distinguish between different housing types, including different multifamily housing types (e.g. duplexes, types of missing middle housing, and apartments (10 or more units)).<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Coordinate definitions for manufactured homes, mobile homes and trailers, and industrialized buildings with Vidalia• Update summary tables to include all relevant information and ensure summary information is consistent with the regulations as described in the text of the zoning code.• Eliminate potential contradictions between sections of the zoning code.• Create and embed a permitted and accessory use table in the zoning code.
Vidalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider adding definitions for some housing types, especially in cases where different regulatory stipulations apply to different buildings types, such as in the case of twin homes versus duplexes.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Coordinate definitions for manufactured homes, mobile homes and trailers, and industrialized buildings with Lyons• Eliminate potential contradictions between sections of the zoning code.• Create and embed a permitted and accessory use table in the zoning code.

Allow for Additional Housing Types and Permitted Uses

While there are no housing types that are strictly prohibited by either Lyons or Vidalia, the codes of both municipalities seems to explicitly address only a few housing types (other than manufactured homes, mobile homes, and industrialized buildings): single-family detached homes, townhomes and patio homes, duplexes and twin homes, and apartments. Multifamily buildings with more than two units are essentially subject to the same zoning regulations regardless of size or scale. It may benefit both municipalities to adopt definitions for smaller multifamily buildings with 3-9 units (missing middle housing at a higher intensity than duplexes) with accompanying regulations compatible with developing these housing types on infill lots in appropriate areas.

More important than defining and acknowledging housing types of this scale in the code will be to ensure that dimensional requirements and other regulations in the code do not render them impractical to develop.

<p>Lyons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider allowing accessory dwelling units (or codifying if already allowed) in all districts if the primary use of the lot is a single-family detached residence or a 2-4 unit multifamily building.• Consider allowing attached single-family dwellings in R-2 and R-2A districts.• Revise allowed uses in R-3 districts, as there may be some contradiction between the intent of the district and the explicitly stated uses (attached and detached single-family and uses allowed in the R-1 district, which do not include multifamily buildings).• Consider adopting a cottage court ordinance that will allow for single-family detached homes on smaller lots and provide for other rules so as to enable the development of cottage courts.• Consider allowing loft units, or housing-over-retail, in certain commercial districts (e.g. C-1).• Consider adopting a PUD ordinance.
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Vidalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider allowing accessory dwelling units (or codifying if already allowed) in all districts if the primary use of the lot is a single-family detached residence or a 2-4 unit multifamily building.• Consider codifying townhomes in more residential districts.• Consider allowing missing middle housing types in districts that allow for multifamily development (e.g. R-3 and above) if they can be designed to fit the character of existing neighborhoods.• Consider adopting a cottage court ordinance that will allow for single-family detached homes on smaller lots and provide for other rules so as to enable the development of cottage courts.
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Recalibrate Dimensional Requirements

Dimensional requirements specify where on a lot a development can occur (at what distance from the side, rear, and front property lines), the dimensions of the lot on which the development can occur (lot size and lot width), and the maximum height of the structure to be built, among other factors. If these requirements are not flexible enough, they could make certain building types infeasible to develop without seeking a zoning variance.

Lyons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider reducing the front setback requirement in most residential districts.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ In certain parts of the city, it may be feasible to allow zero-lot-line or much reduced front yard setback requirements.• Consider reducing lot width requirements in some residential districts.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Provide for further reduced lot width requirements for townhomes.
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04. Opportunities: Zoning Regulations Affecting Development

Lyons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider alleviating additional lot width and size requirements for small multifamily, missing middle housing developments that could be designed within similar dimensional constraints as detached single-family homes without disturbing neighborhood character.
Vidalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider reducing minimum lot size requirements for some single-family detached districts.• Recalibrate and synchronize height requirements for accessory structures between residential districts.• Consider reducing lot width requirements in some residential districts.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Provide for further reduced lot width requirements for townhomes.• Consider reducing the front setback requirement in most residential districts.<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ In certain parts of the city, it may be feasible to allow zero-lot-line or much reduced front yard setback requirements.• Consider alleviating increased lot size, lot width, and setback requirements for small multifamily, missing middle housing developments that could be designed within similar dimensional constraints as detached single-family homes without disturbing neighborhood character.• Consider increasing maximum building coverage, especially in higher density districts.• Consider reducing minimum unit size requirements for lofts (housing-over-retail).

Recalibrate Parking Requirements

Providing parking has become an essential part of development, especially in areas that are heavily car-dependent, but parking requirements can at times restrict development due to the sheer area required to meet them. In the longer term, creating more walkable communities with a mix of uses can reduce car dependency and the number of vehicle trips taken. Otherwise, making use of on-street parking or alley parking, shared parking arrangements, or simply reducing off-street parking mandates can help reduce the amount of land needed to go towards parking development.

Lyons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In some districts, or in specific development cases, it may be feasible to meet parking requirements through on-street parking spaces, alley parking, or shared parking arrangements.
Vidalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider reducing minimum parking requirements.• In some districts, or in specific development cases, it may be feasible to meet parking requirements through on-street parking spaces, alley parking, or shared parking arrangements.

04. Opportunities

Site Mockups

Having visualizations of potential innovative site layouts can be key to creating housing change and initializing a pilot project. These visualizations can be shared with community members to gather support or with planning officials and potential developers to spark conversation for better utilization of space. The project team created a handful of site mockups to help property owners and developers reimagine the potential of housing development opportunities, particularly in Lyons and Vidalia.

When selecting sites for such visualization exercises, several key factors should be taken into consideration:

New/Infill Housing Development Potential

Potential catalytic sites for housing developments should be in an area where housing is needed, as well as in or near town centers to capitalize on proximity to existing nearby amenities. Street parking should be a favorable consideration when determining whether a site is viable for infill development.

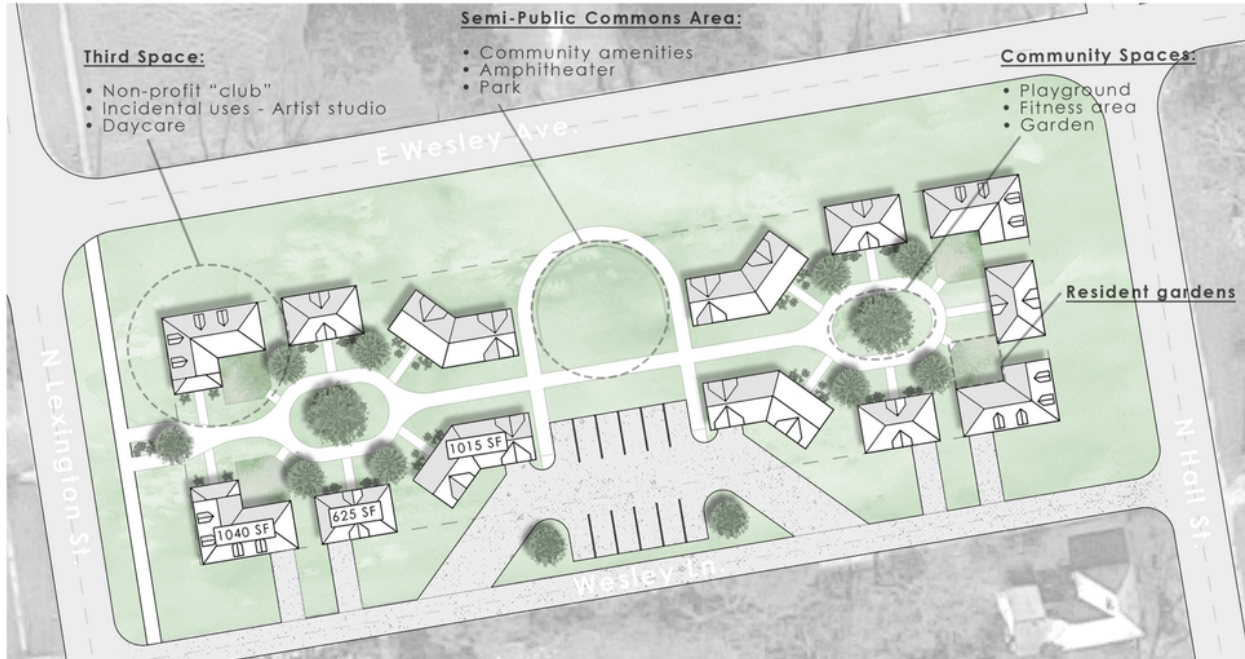
Potential Catalytic Sites for Housing Development

Utilizing GIS, land parcels in Lyons and Vidalia were identified that would be strong candidates for a pilot project or new housing development. Most are less than 1 acre in size, and are either undeveloped or have buildings in disrepair. The parcels were assessed for potential pilot project development of missing middle housing types, designed to fit seamlessly into the existing housing landscape and thus to not compromise the existing character of the community. Typologies included cottage courts, multiplexes, and accessory dwelling units.

Once the sites were selected, a design architect created concept designs to portray possible development layouts on each site. The purpose of these designs was to demonstrate productive utilization of small lots and to inspire local builders and developers to build creatively on small parcels in or near downtown.

Conceptual designs

Design 1, Lyons



E WESLEY AVE.

Zoning: R - 1
 Lot Area: 60000 SF (1.38 AC)
 Built Area: 11111 SF
 FAR: 5.40

Housing: 13 units total
 "L" House: 4 units - 1040 SF Each
 Cottage: 5 units - 625 SF Each
 Angled House: 4 units - 1015 SF



This concept features two clusters of cottage homes, ranging from 625 square feet to 1,040 square feet. The homes are oriented around a common green space that can be utilized by community members and can feature a playground, fitness area, edible gardens, firepit gathering space, or other community-oriented uses. One of the 13 units on the 1.38 acre plot could be utilized as a public or semi-public space, or could be an additional housing unit. The parking is grouped into one area to allow for the best utilization of the space and to enable neighbor interactions.

Summary

1.38 Acres

13 Units

625 - 1040 SF

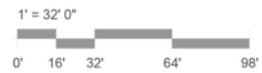
Design 2, Lyons



130 S WASHINGTON ST.

Zoning: C - 1
Lot Area: 18395 SF (0.42 AC)
Built Area: 4997 SF
FAR: 0.27

Housing: 7 units total
Corner Cottages: 2 units - 800 SF
"L" Cottage: 1 units - 1000 SF
Cottages: 4 units - 600 SF



This concept design features 7 cottage homes ranging from 600 square feet to 1,000 square feet, clustered around a common green space. Parking is grouped along the street access point to allow for the best utilization of the 0.42 acre lot.

Summary

0.42 Acres

7 Units

600 - 1000 SF

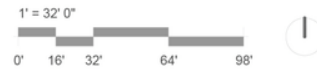
Design 3, Lyons



E COLUMBIA AVE.

Zoning: C - 1
 Lot Area: 31500 SF (0.72 AC)
 Built Area: 10500 SF
 FAR: 3.01

Housing: 9 units total
 Duplex: 4 units - 1100 SF Each
 ADU: 3 units - 600 SF Each
 Garage Apt. - 1000 SF
 Single Fam. Detached - 1850 SF



This concept design features 9 units with a breakdown of two duplexes with each unit being 1,100 square feet, three 600 square foot detached accessory dwelling units, one 1,000 square foot garage apartment, and one detached single-family home at 1,850 square feet. The entire lot is 0.72 acres, and the concept design allows 7 uncovered clustered parking spaces as well as a covered garage.

Summary

0.72 Acres

9 Units

600 - 1850 SF

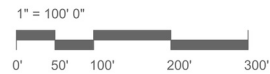
Design 4, Vidalia



MAPLE STREET

Zoning:
Lot Area: 390,060 SF (8.95 AC)
Built Area:
FAR:

Total units: 65
Cottages: 20 (600 SF)
Single Family Units: 45 (800 SF - 1100 SF)



This concept demonstrates how cottage clusters can be scaled to larger parcels, while maintaining the community-oriented design principles of cottage courts. This design occupies 8.95 acres and hosts a total of 65 housing units. The breakdown includes 45 detached single-family units ranging from 800 square feet to 1,100 square feet, as well as 20 cottage homes at 600 square feet each.

The homes are once again clustered in groups of no more than 12 homes, and each cluster is situated around a common green space with front doors and porches facing inward toward the common areas. The plot also includes a large community park, and designated areas for communal spaces such as a commons building, fitness area, garden, and amenity space.

There is grouped residential parking situated near each cluster of homes as well as additional parking for local community members to be able to utilize the park and common amenity spaces.

04. Opportunities: Site Mockups

Ultimately, this design is intended to bring community members together while providing “right-sized” homes that are naturally affordable due to having smaller footprints, without requiring additional subsidies to create affordability.

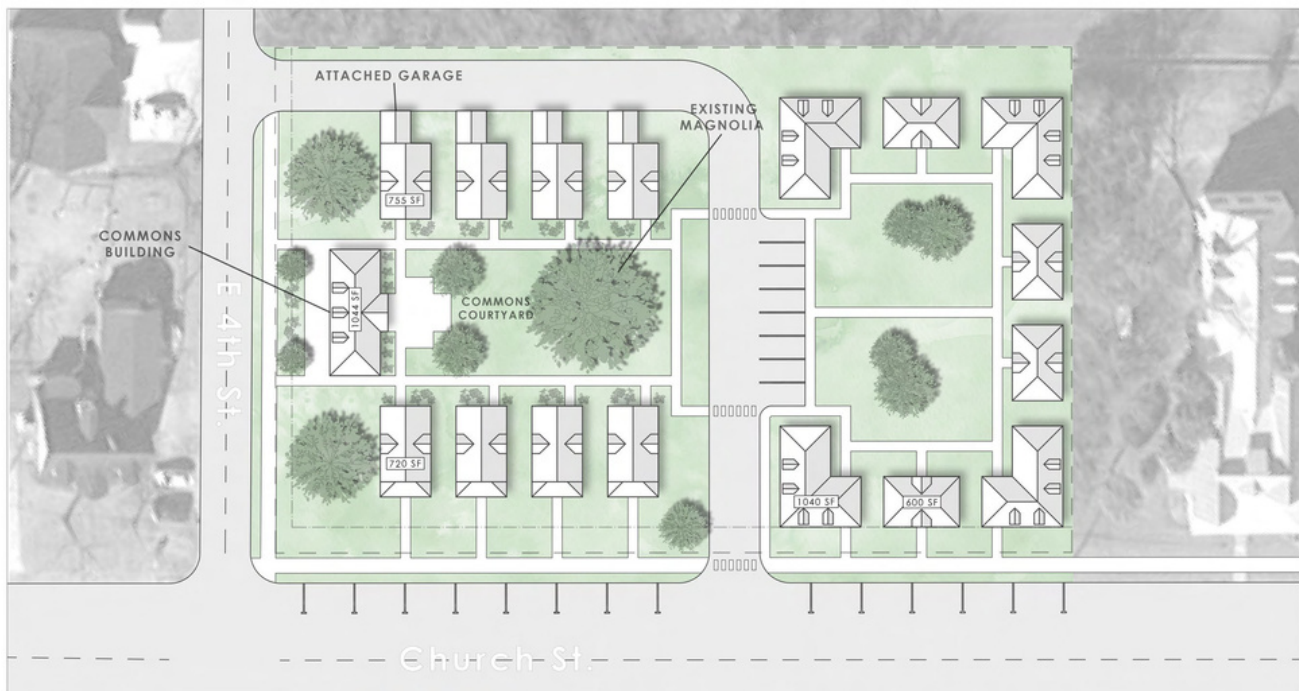
Summary

8.95 Acres

65 Units

600 - 1100 SF

Design 5, Vidalia



CHURCH ST.

Zoning: C - 1
Lot Area: 63000 SF (1.44 AC)
Built Area: 13504 SF
FAR: 0.375

Housing: 16 units total
Cottages: 4 units - 600 SF
"L" Cottage: 4 units - 1040 SF
Garage Cottage: 4 units - 755 SF
Church St. Cottage: 4 units - 720 SF

1" = 32' 0"



This concept design features 16 cottage homes, including 4 units with attached garages, ranging from 600 square feet to 1,040 square feet. The homes are clustered around a common green space, with grouped on-site parking and plenty of available street parking. This design incorporates a large existing magnolia tree on the parcel, and highlights it as part of the commons courtyard. The design also includes a commons building on the 1.44 acre lot.

Summary

1.44 Acres

16 Units

600 - 1040 SF

Design 6, Vidalia



502 CHURCH ST.

Zoning: R - 2
Lot Area: 14700 SF (0.33 AC)
Built Area: 3640 SF
FAR: 0.247

Housing: 4 units total
Primary Residence: 1600 SF
Guest Suite: 600 SF
Guest House: 600 SF
ADU: 600 SF



This concept design demonstrates four housing units on a 0.33 acre lot, with one 1,600 square foot primary residence, one attached 600 square foot guest suite, one 600 square foot guest house, and one 600 square foot accessory dwelling unit.

Summary

0.33 Acres

4 Units

600 - 1600 SF

Takeaways

The featured concept designs can act as inspiration for future developments, or could potentially be built as pilot projects. A pilot development can then also be utilized as an educational and community engagement tool by hosting public tours to demonstrate the site layout and interior utilization of space. The ultimate goal of these housing types is to provide naturally affordable housing by nature of having smaller footprints, and to bring neighbors together through community-oriented design principles.

While small spaces present their own unique challenges to development, educational resources like those provided by [the MicroLife Institute](#) are available to guide developers and builders in how to effectively and successfully design and create livable small-footprint homes.

Several of the above site concepts were presented to the community at the Toombs County Housing Forum, sparking many excited conversations about the potential development of the concept designs. This can serve as encouragement to developers to know that there is market demand for these diverse housing types, as well as demonstrated need for them both currently and projected. This can also encourage local leaders to rest assured that policy that supports these housing types has community interest as well.

➤ **Chapter Summary: Opportunities**

Public Infrastructure: Public sewer facilities are a key infrastructure component. Where these systems exist, they can support a higher population density with less environmental impact than septic tanks. In Toombs, the sewer coverage area closely corresponds with the city limits of Lyons and Vidalia. **Prioritizing opportunities to develop in incorporated areas that have access to sewer systems or where sewer can be easily and immediately extended will maximize the utilization of the infrastructure, support more residents, and be more cost effective in the long run.** By the same token, developing on existing, well-connected streets (within the grids or other places with good connectivity) will reduce the cost of service of maintaining excessive road systems for local governments.

Undeveloped & Underutilized Properties: There are many undeveloped properties in the cities of Lyons and Vidalia that are suitable for residential development. Not all of these are large properties, but even smaller lots can fit a variety of missing middle housing types or a single-family home with an ADU, for example. **Because of their advantageous location near city centers and likely access to sewer infrastructure, these properties should be the priority for development if opportunities arise. Many of these properties are already zoned for residential uses.**

Publicly Owned Properties: Sometimes there is a serendipitous scenario in which a local entity has control of land that is suitable for development. In this case, the public entity can better control the terms of the development deal or offer special incentives for certain development requirements, or it can sometimes hold the property and act as an owner-developer itself. Purchase of land or acquisition of tax delinquent property through a land bank are two ways in which local governments can take more control over their development future. **There are not abundant properties that are publicly owned and undeveloped, but there are some. One or more of these may be good opportunities for pilot projects or city-led (or other public agency led) development projects.**

➤ **Chapter Summary: Opportunities (Cont.)**

Value per Acre: The most productive development, measured in value created by acres of land consumed, are usually in robust downtown areas or town centers where value is high and lots tend to be smaller. Overall, value per acre usually, but not always, makes a strong case for what is a more land efficient development pattern that is characterized by infill or thoughtful concentration of commercial and residential density. **At the least, new developments of any type, including residential, should be weighed against the value they create and land they consume.**

Incentive Areas and Tax Districts: Lyons and Vidalia have opportunities to apply for or seek to create special districts to generate revenue through taxes or to take advantage of state incentives for development. Vidalia's downtown already includes a newly created Rural Zone designation. Lyons should seek to create a Rural Zone designation from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) in the future.

Conserved Lands, Agriculture, and Forestry: Large areas of unincorporated Toombs County are under conservation use or are agriculture or timber lands. The widespread conservation uses may serve the county in directing development in or closer to cities, but if most of these lands are protected via a Conservation Use Valuation Agreement (CUVA), then that conservation is temporary. **Landowners, conservation easement holders, and the county should seek more permanent ways to conserve these territories, if desired. Agricultural lands not enrolled in CUVA are not protected by development restrictions. The newly established Georgia Farmland Conservation Fund (SB 220, passed 2023) may soon offer a more robust mechanism by which agricultural landowners and producers can seek permanent easement protection with the help of qualifying easement holders.**

Innovative Development: There is great opportunity for innovative development types, especially for infill development on small lots. While building some missing middle housing types may not be in the repertoire of most developers and builders, resources are available for continuing education and support for creating successful small-footprint developments. **Concept designs can be utilized to spark conversation for innovative use of land, or even to kick off an actual build of those designs.**

➤ **Chapter Summary: Opportunities (Cont.)**

Pilot Projects and Catalytic Sites: Related to innovative development, work to build an innovative housing **pilot project that could act as a “proof-of-concept” for diverse housing types and site designs that may not yet have precedence in the community.** If possible, choose a site for the pilot project in a more walkable, downtown or core neighborhood.

Zoning Policy Recommendations: To support the development of naturally occurring affordable housing types, **consider the regulatory changes proposed in the “Zoning Regulations Affecting Development”** in this report.

05. Looking Ahead

Conclusions and Recommendations

An Adaptive Process

Quality, varied housing is an essential need and a vital component to providing a standard of economic wellbeing and quality of life. It is the responsibility of public agencies and a broad team of partners, including community members, to ensure that the housing environment is meeting the needs of the community as best as possible. Far from a static process, a housing strategy must adapt over time with the communities which it seeks to serve. It should be refined continually through the cyclical steps illustrated below.



Guiding Principles

While the challenges to accomplishing meaningful change in the housing landscape in Toombs County will be multifaceted and difficult, it is important to keep in mind that any win, no matter how small, is worthwhile. Deciding what to do next to address housing issues can be daunting, but adhering to a few guiding principles can help make sense of the process and ensure better outcomes in the long-run.

Collaborate across a spectrum of organizations and individuals. Local governments and public agencies are not alone when it comes to tackling complex issues of housing and development. As this study has demonstrated, there is already a strong contingent of engaged community members, developers, and business interests working together to understand and address local housing challenges. Actionable steps and solutions should be taken in the same spirit of collaboration.

Demonstrate and celebrate success. Local leaders have demonstrated a strong willingness to break ground on innovative housing projects. There is widespread recognition and strong support for building additional housing in the community, which could culminate in a pilot project that will stand as an example of what innovative, varied residential development can look like in the community. Sometimes, a single success can have a transformative impact moving forward. Policies, incentives, procedures, and regulatory changes made to advance housing issues should also be celebrated as advances toward housing goals.

Incentivize development through streamlined policy. In order to accomplish the goals set out by the communities in the Joint Comprehensive Plan, the zoning policies must not only support but incentivize development. Administrative ease is a significant factor of whether a housing development will be built. Inclusive, easy-to-use zoning policies should be introduced to allow for increased density, lower minimum lot sizes, reduced parking requirements, and clearly outlined allowance of specific middle housing types such as duplexes and multiplexes, townhomes, tiny houses, live-work housing, and cottage courts.

Remember that housing provides community benefits on multiple levels. There are benefits to housing beyond providing shelter. More people close to services and amenities means a more robust local economy and a higher quality of life for the maximum number of citizens.

Continue to pursue a vision for a strong, healthy, connected Toombs County. When looking ahead at the vision for Toombs County in short-term and long-term goals, consider including specific ideals that:

- Promote Diverse Housing Supply;
- Promote Communities of Opportunity;
- Build and Preserve Affordable Housing;
- Support Housing for Special Needs Populations;
- Promote Sustainability;
- Connect Community;
- and Utilize **the MicroLife Method**.

Incorporating these ideals, and some or all of the criteria outlined in the **Regulations Assessment** can help guide policy amendments to be in line with and in support of the vision for Toombs County.

Create a sustainable system for new housing. New developments are often more successful when they can be locally built and managed. It will be important for Toombs, its cities, and property owners to work with local developers and property managers to ensure the best outcome for residential development projects. A local development chain that can take developments from concept to reality will promote a sustainable development economy and replicability in the future.

Maintain momentum. Establishing a “drumbeat” for regularly checking in on housing change progress can help to keep the community engaged and keep progress moving forward. Housing change can be slow, so taking it incrementally can make it more attainable and sustainable.

Takeaways

There is no one solution to a housing crisis. Ultimately, housing change is a process that takes time, collaboration, persistence, innovation, and community support. By implementing a variety of tools, the many factors that contribute to a housing crisis can begin to be addressed.

Continuing Education

Following the conclusion of the housing assessment, MicroLife Institute presented a proposal for an extensive day-long continuing education program aimed at fostering a more professional approach to community development. Building on the momentum generated by the Toombs County Housing Forum on October 25th, this program seeks to empower citizens of Toombs with the knowledge and skills needed to undertake their own developments. This event will serve as a deep dive into the intricacies of development, featuring educational programming and discussions that equip participants with the essential tools to initiate and successfully complete local developments.

An outline of the program proposal is as follows:

Recap of Work with Georgia Conservancy. Showcase lessons learned from housing assessment, including demonstrating the current status of housing in Toombs County, projections of future housing needs in the County, and next steps to take as community members, policy makers, or stakeholders.

Discussion on Incremental Development.

Project Ideation and Community Engagement: Create conversation around the necessary steps to build an innovative pilot development. Discuss options for the most efficient and livable utilization of space on a particular parcel, and how to engage the community to garner support of an innovative development.

Predevelopment and Feasibility Study: Conduct a theoretical feasibility study, including how to complete a zoning and regulations analysis, how to build a proforma, and how to determine the buildability of a parcel.

Financing and Construction: Understand what funding sources are available and how to gain financial support for a development. Cover specifics of what to be aware of during construction of an innovative pilot development.

Charrette and Site Tours. A collaborative planning session to explore and visualize potential development ideas. Expand on current concepts created for Housing Summit, and a firsthand look at existing developments and potential project locations.

Takeaways

The comprehensive nature of these sessions aims to provide participants with a holistic understanding of the development process, ensuring they are well-prepared to navigate each stage of their developments.

By expanding on the energy generated by the Housing Forum, this educational event aims to inspire and enable citizens of Toombs to embark on successful community projects, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment. Increased confidence in the desirability and livability of diverse and missing middle housing types that enhance the neighborhood's character will serve as a model for future sustainable developments.

➤ **Housing Report Summary and Conclusions**

Project Purpose: The purpose of this study was for Georgia Conservancy and the MicroLife Institute to assist Toombs County in understanding the breadth of its housing crisis, and to create a collection of recommendations to reference, utilize, or enact towards addressing the key issues affecting the housing crisis.

Process: Once the project team was assembled and stakeholders identified, the project team gathered qualitative and quantitative data on Toombs County regarding the existing housing stock; the population and demographics; current and projected housing needs; trends in the local economy; municipal zoning regulations and the Joint Comprehensive Plan; and public perception of housing issues and solutions.

Overview of Findings: Both the population and the housing stock in Toombs County are aging. As community members age, many are interested in downsizing or seeking retirement housing without having to leave their communities behind. There is a need for more housing for both lower- and higher-income earners across the predominant industry sectors in Toombs County. The county and cities are ripe with potential plots for development and infill housing, pending certain zoning changes that would allow for greater density in appropriate areas, especially near town centers. There is both a need and a desire amongst community members for increased diversity of available housing typologies within the county. Many residents are interested in increased access to amenities and walkability, lending naturally to downtown development.

Successes of the County: Toombs County does not have zoning regulations, and the cities of Lyons and Vidalia have relatively non-restrictive zoning, including not having minimum unit sizes for housing. The county boasts enthusiastic and collaborative community leadership who are ready to improve the housing situation and quality of life in Toombs County. Toombs County residents are largely inviting of housing change in order to address the needs of their community.

Challenges of the County: Certain zoning codes are restrictive and impeding the success of goals outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan. In particular, minimum lot sizes and maximum allowable densities inherently prevent the development of many missing middle housing types, which are naturally affordable due to having smaller footprints and by subsidy through density.

➤ **Housing Report Summary and Conclusions (Cont.)**

Other zoning regulations including parking requirements prevent the best utilization of space, especially for small and infill lots. Finally, a lack of distinct regulations allowing certain missing middle housing types by-right, such as cottage courts, duplexes, multiplexes, tiny homes, townhomes, and more, may also be preventing the development of diverse and abundant housing types. If policies are absent or are not explicitly easy to use, diverse housing types are significantly less likely to be developed.

Key Takeaways and Next Steps: Ultimately, this study supports that there is a need for housing change, there is a community desire for housing change, and there are opportunities for productive housing change. This report provides a **table of recommendations** that can be referenced when planning next steps for tackling the housing crisis, as well as being referenced for grant applications and partnership pursuits. Recommended policy changes can be implemented, and a pilot development can be built to demonstrate newly implemented zoning changes and spur more innovative and diversified housing developments. Continuing education efforts and community engagement can be pursued in order to best equip Toombs County residents, community leaders, stakeholders, developers and policymakers to enact productive and lasting change.

Table of Recommendations

1. Funding Opportunities	
(1.a) Community HOME Investment Program*	A Community HOME Investment Program grant can be used to develop single-family housing or rehabilitate existing housing. Other HOME grants can be used for multifamily construction.
(1.b) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**	A Community Development Block Group (CDBG) grant can contribute funding to development projects or to expand and renovate infrastructure.
(1.c) Rural Workforce Housing Initiative Grants	Funds from the OneGeorgia Authority's Rural Workforce Housing Initiative can be used for either construction or infrastructure expansion and renovation.
(1.d) Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA)	Consider applying for GEFA loan funds for water and sewer infrastructure improvements.
(1.e) HOPE VI Main Street Grants	A HOPE VI Main Street grant can be used to renovate/rehabilitate buildings in historic downtowns to include residential units. Funding availability varies annually.
(1.f) Georgia's Rural Center (aka Georgia Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation)	The Georgia Center for Rural Prosperity and Innovation sometimes awards grants or provides assistance for economic development in rural communities.
2. Incentives & Special Designations	
(2.a) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)	Establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for downtown property rehabilitation and retrofitting.

Table of Recommendations (Cont.)

2. Incentives & Special Designations	
(2.b) Rural Zone Designation	Rural Zone Designations are defined by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and allow investors to receive tax credits for funding qualified activities/projects like job creation or renovation of downtown properties. Parts of downtown Vidalia are within a designated rural zone, but Lyons does not have a rural zone and should apply in the future.
(2.c) Federal Opportunity Zone***	Toombs and Lyons may take advantage of incentives provided within Census Tract 9701, a federal opportunity zone. New investment potential through the OPZ is very limited.
(2.d) Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)	Establishing a tax allocation district will create a mechanism for funding that could be contribute to residential or economic development project.
(2.e) Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program°	Create incentives, such as a PILOT program, for developers to provide attainable, income-aligned housing.
(2.f) Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program	Low-income housing tax credits are awarded to eligible projects by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. LIHTC credits allow investors to purchase tax credits that fund affordable units in the development.
3. Partnerships & Organizations	
(3.a) Community Development Corporations (CDCs)	Establish a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), Community Development Corporation (CDC), or other non-profit development organization that would be eligible for the additional housing development grants and could manage and/or develop local properties.

Table of Recommendations (Cont.)

3. Partnerships & Organizations	
(3.b) Community Land Trust (CLT)†	Explore the possibility of creating a community land trust (CLT). CLT's can offer lower-cost purchase options for homebuyers by eliminating the land cost from the purchase price. CLT's retain ownership of the land while the owner is entitled to any equity gains on improvements.
(3.c) Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH)	Consider applying to be a GICH community. The GICH program is a training and education program that brings together teams from across Georgia dealing with housing issues. GICH facilitates peer exchange and encourages participating teams to advance a housing strategy in their communities.
(3.d) Auburn University's Rural Studio®	Rural Studio® is a design-build program at Auburn University's School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture that aims to tackle issues of housing and affordability in rural communities. Consider contacting the Rural Studio® for design or pilot project assistance.
(3.e) MicroLife Institute	Continue to work with MicroLife Institute and local property owners to plan and build a cottage court community or other innovative housing development. Utilize educational resources provided by the Institute to help developers and builders learn the unique challenges presented by building small-footprint homes and how to address and overcome them.
(3.f) Land Bank	Consider establishing a land bank to help revitalize vacant, abandoned, or tax delinquent properties.
(3.g) NGO Partners	Partner with non-profit organizations that work in housing development like Habitat for Humanity.

Table of Recommendations (Cont.)

4. Strategy	
(4.a) Community Champions	Identify community champions, especially in blighted communities, that can help foster community engagement and express community needs.
(4.b) Faith-Based Housing	Partner with faith-based organizations and landowners interested in housing development.
(4.c) Zoning Reform & Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)	<p>Consider instituting zoning code reforms recommended in this study, such as allowing additional and diversified housing types such as missing middle housing types by-right; increasing density allowances where appropriate; decreasing or eliminating minimum lot sizes and setbacks; and decreasing or eliminating parking requirements.</p> <p>In Lyons and Vidalia, consider combining each city's zoning, subdivision regulations, and other development regulations into a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).</p>
(4.d) Improved Parcel-to-Parcel Connectivity between Subdivisions††	Consider revising subdivision regulations to ensure improved parcel to parcel connectivity by requiring new developments to provide street connections to adjacent properties where feasible (see Davidson, NC Code of Ordinances §6.4 and §6.5).
(4.e) Prioritize Infill Development	Prioritize infill development on undeveloped and underutilized properties near core areas.
(4.f) City Lead & Leveraging of Public Land Assets	Prioritize development of city-owned properties. Consider a long-term strategy for city governments to acquire new properties. Lease properties for development but retain ownership.

Table of Recommendations (Cont.)

4. Strategy	
(4.g) Local Builders and Businesses	Continue to engage local builders and businesses in housing discussions. If possible, facilitate workforce housing development for local businesses and industries via a local developer.
(4.h) Pilot Housing Development Project	Encourage and greenlight innovative pilot and “proof-of-concept” projects to promote missing middle housing development via partnership between developers and local government entities.
(4.i) Preserve Agricultural Properties	<p>Conserve or protect working agricultural properties in unincorporated areas or at the edges of cities from development. Instead, promote maximizing development opportunities in infill properties and near existing amenities, services, and infrastructure.</p> <p>The Georgia Farmland Conservation Fund is a newly established source of funding that will go towards establishing perpetual ag conservation easements. The program is in its infancy, but Toombs should monitor its development in the future.</p>
(4.j) Toombs County Zoning Regulations	Develop and adopt zoning regulations and a land use strategy for the unincorporated county. Coordinate county and city growth and development goals.
(4.k) Lyons and Vidalia Zoning Regulation Amendments	Consider the regulatory items under Chapter 4 Opportunities: Zoning Regulations Affecting Development as a starting point for potential zoning amendments to the Lyons and Vidalia zoning codes.

Table of Recommendations (Cont.)

4. Strategy	
(4.l) Continued Housing Education/Engagement	Continue to educate and work with local leaders on housing issues (housing types, strategies, and the impact of current regulations). Consider establishing a Housing Taskforce that continually engages cross-jurisdictional leaders.
(4.m) Land Bank to Address Blight	Land banks acquire blighted, vacant properties and return them to active use. They can serve multiple jurisdictions, and offer a flexible array of tools, such as (but not limited to) : enforcing municipal codes, demolishing vacant structures, clearing titles, extinguishing property taxes, and selling refurbished properties to new owners.
(4.n) Cost of Services Study	Commission a cost of services study to determine the long-term impact on public revenue streams of different types of development patterns (e.g. suburban development in the unincorporated county versus compact urban development in towns)

- * Community HOME Investment Program - CHIP funds may be granted to city and county governments, public housing authorities, and nonprofits to rehabilitate owner-occupied homes and build and renovate affordable single-family homes for sale to eligible homebuyers. CHIP is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnership Program funds. Communities with a housing redevelopment plan as better positioned to receive CHIP funding. This housing report, although not a redevelopment plan, should be referenced in CHIP and other funding applications. For targeted rehabilitation and renovation strategies, data from the housing assessment in this report and the Lyons citywide housing conditions assessment (complete by the University of GA group), should be used to direct funding.
- ** Lyons and Toombs received CDBG awards in 2016 and Vidalia received CDBG awards in 2017 for drainage/street improvements. CDBG funding can be used to support housing development or for housing supportive activities like sewer/water expansion. CDBG is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Awards and funds are administered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

05. Looking Ahead: Table of Recommendations

- *** The Federal Qualified Opportunity Zone distinction was created to spur economic growth in low-income communities by allowing investors to defer federal taxes by taking capital gains from other investments and investing in these designated areas. The Federal Opportunity Zone program sunsets December 31, 2026. Investor benefits may continue to be realized until this date. Studies on the impacts of Opportunity Zones on economic and community benefits have shown mixed results. Calls for the program's renewal have been made but none has yet passed Congress. Still, the program may see renewal beyond 2026.
- o Some Georgia communities can provide partial ad valorem tax exemptions through bond-lease transactions. These transactions occur between the Development Authority and the project owner, who acts as the lessee. The types of facilities that can benefit from this incentive through bond-lease transaction are outlined in a statute governing the local Development Authority. Therefore, the types of facilities that can utilize this incentive depend on their locality. The conditions governing the Toombs Development Authority may permit tax abatements to residential projects that realize a local economic development goal, or they may be limited to businesses and industries. For more information on the mechanics and legalities of PILOT, or tax abatement, incentives in Georgia, consult Georgia Code section § 36-80-16. The Carl Vinson Institute of Government has presented on the topic and may be a useful contact for implementing PILOTS in Toombs.
- † CLTs can create long-term affordable housing for income-qualified homebuyers by eliminating the land cost from the purchase price. The CLT retains ownership of the land and ensures long-term affordability through a ground lease with the new homeowner. The CLT model can also be create single-family homes, but can also be utilized to maintain affordability of units within a multi-family context. The CLT model is a "shared equity" model of homeownership in the sense that the CLT and the homeowner share in the equity gains upon the sale of the home. The CLT model ensures that subsequent owners will also be income-qualified households."
- †† Lyons and Vidalia both benefit from well-connected grid systems. Street grids can simplify development patterns and reduce land consumption relative to conventional subdivisions, offer path redundancies that benefit traffic flow, and can help reduce public service response times. In many cases, as development moves farther from city cores, the development pattern that predominates tends to be conventional subdivision development with one or limited paths of entrance/egress.

Addendum

National Housing Trends

The availability, diversity, and quality of housing is crucial to our personal comfort and stability, and it is closely tied to the strength and resilience of our local communities from both an economic and social perspective. Prevailing conditions have made it demonstrably more challenging for households to attain a level of housing that is suitable to their lifestyles and affordable for their means. An insufficient housing supply, rising interest rates, and skyrocketing home prices and rental rates have added a fresh layer of difficulty to the housing challenge. Other societal changes like demographic shifts and the rise of remote work, and the geographic flexibility that comes with it, hint of a sweeping shift in where we choose to live, how we live, and for how long we stay. Furthermore, labor shortages, restrictive local regulations, and local attitudes hostile to housing development have made a hard situation worse. These changes are reflected across the nation, with few exceptions, and have all manifested in Georgia, sometimes acutely. While the inhospitable state of the housing market will improve slowly, yielding eventually to a fairer housing climate, there are actions we can take now to mitigate the burden of housing shortage and high housing costs on our state's residents.

A Growing Supply Deficit

While estimates of the housing supply vary widely, there is widespread agreement that there is a national housing shortage. Population and household formation has increased, but rates of single-family construction have done the opposite. Though they climbed steadily for a more than a decade, construction rates have slowed since rising interest rates have put a damper on housing starts. The historical average of annual single-family housing starts since 1990 has been about 1 million homes, but that rate had not been equaled since the last recession until 2021. It is once again below that average. Years of insufficient construction has widened the gap between what is needed to serve emerging households and what housing stock is available.

Thankfully, the shortfall in single-family construction has been partially offset by new units in multifamily buildings. While multifamily structures typically take longer to complete, depending on the scale and type of building, they have gained market traction. Unfortunately, most new multifamily construction has targeted the higher end of the market, with a median asking rent for newly completed units in 2022 of \$1,800. More than a third of new multifamily units had asking rents of \$2,050 or higher. New multifamily units, therefore, will not offer much relief to low- to moderate-income households seeking more affordable homes if this trend continues.

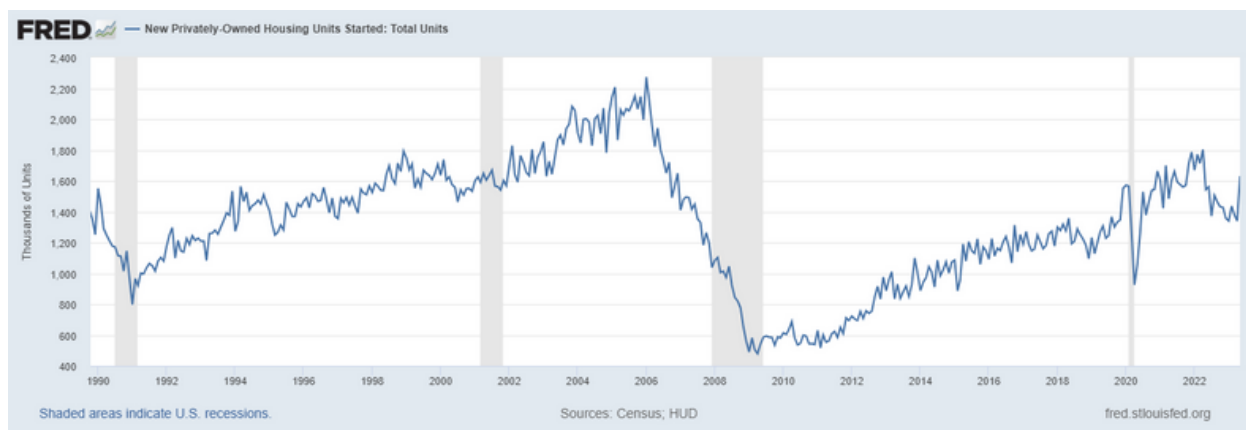


Figure 1: New Privately-Owned Housing Units Started: Total Units (1990-2023)

Housing starts fell drastically leading into the 2008 recession and have not recovered to pre-recession levels. Low construction activity over time has contributed to the growing deficit in housing units. *Source: FRED, Census, HUD*

Rising Housing Costs

Home prices have soared for both multi- and single-family homes. From 2020-2023, rents rose by almost 24% while for-sale home prices rose by 37.5%. Such astronomical increases in home prices has put the prospect of home ownership out of reach for a large swath of emerging households. While interest rates were low during and before the pandemic, homeownership rates increased. The pace of ownership has slowed due to higher rates and rising monthly payments (up from \$2,100 to \$3,100, on average). In later 2022, for the first time in over a decade, home prices fell, but that hardly offset the increases of the preceding years. Home prices are not likely to return to pre-pandemic levels in the near-term due to low supply, and household cost burden for existing households is at records levels.

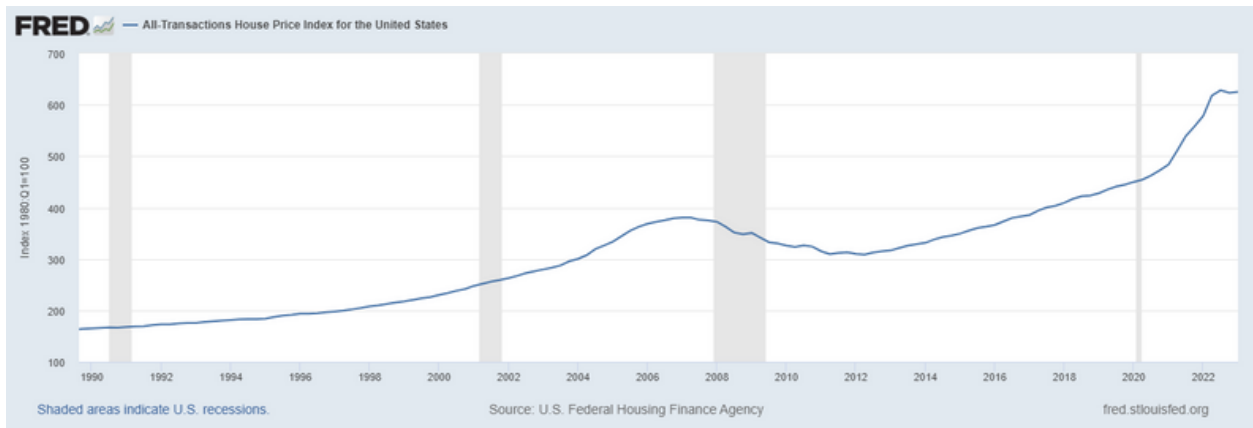


Figure 2: All Transactions House Price Index (US) (1990-2023)

The House Price Index (HPI) is a broad measure of the single family house prices, measured through comparison of repeat sales of the same property. *Source: FRED*

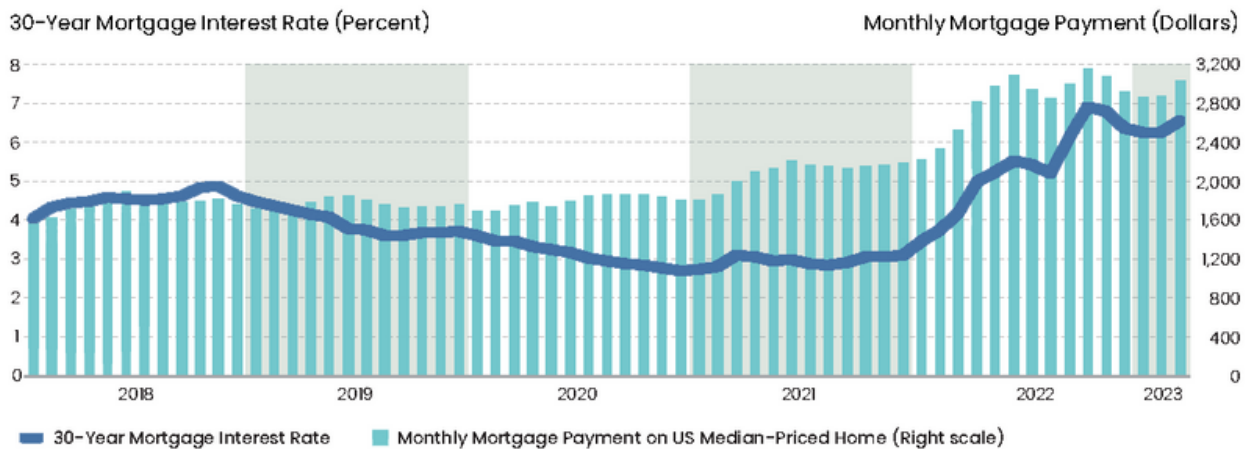


Figure 3: Monthly Mortgage Payments (2018-2023)

The monthly cost of owning a home is correlated with interest rates and has increased dramatically in the last few years. *Source: Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies*

Need for Entry-Level Homes

One contributing factor to the diminishing affordability of new homes is their increasing size. There is agreement that there remains an urgent need for more home construction in general, but there is a more specific need for smaller, starter homes for entry-level buyers. Among new single-family construction, the share of homes below 1400 square feet has consistently decreased since the 1970's. Homes smaller than 1800 square feet represented 37% new homes in 1999 but only 24% of new homes in 2021. Increasing home sizes and a relative lack of housing types that offer smaller units, rental or for-sale, are trends exacerbating housing costs.

Percent of new homes below 1,400 square feet

Entry-Level home construction consistently declined as a share of new construction and is at near a 50-Year Low

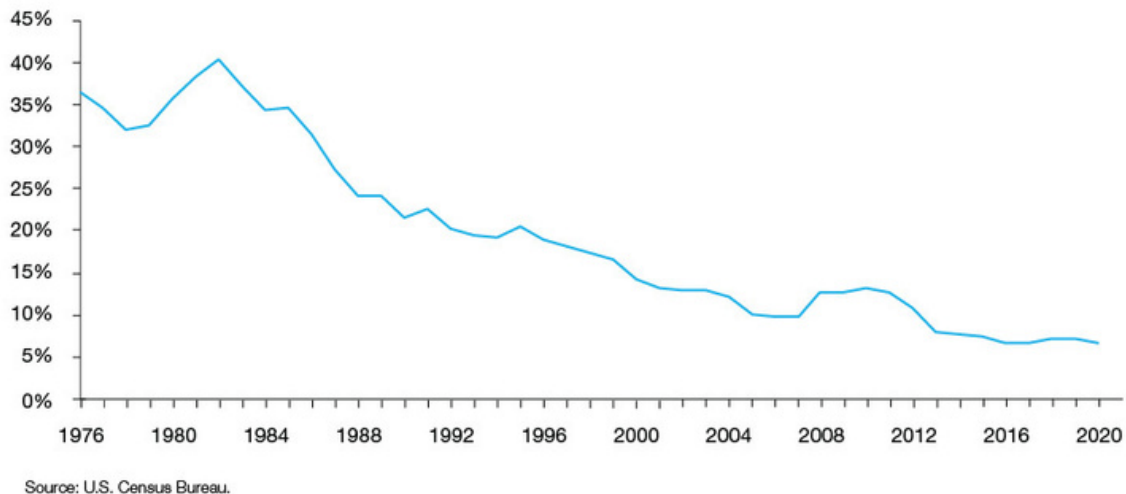


Figure 4: Share of New Homes Under 1,400 square feet (1976-2020)

The number of new homes built under 1,400 square feet has been decreasing, generally.

Source: Freddie Mac, US Census

Housing Challenges in Georgia

Housing in Georgia has largely followed observed national trends, though conditions between different parts of the state vary. From 2018-2023, for example, the All-Transactions House Price Index for Georgia (GASTHPI) rose by 60%, with the sharpest increases coming during 2021 and the first half of 2022. After a steady period in late 2022, the index rose again for three consecutive quarters in 2023.

In their 2022 annual report, the Georgia Realtors Association reported metrics that were on par with national trends: high demand and sales activity, fiercely rising prices, and note of a housing undersupply. A two-year record-breaking market finally cooled with increased borrowing costs coming later in the year. Still, the median price of a single-family home in 2022 approached \$350,000. Over the last five years, new construction of for-sale homes waned, decreasing sharply during the pandemic and beginning to rise again in 2022. In 2021, the estimated Months Supply of Inventory reached a 5-year low of 1.2 months of supply.

Data sources

Data sources are listed by the order they appear. Note that this study was initiated in early 2023, and the majority of data analysis was completed in the spring, summer, and early fall. At that time, 2021 ACS data was the most up-to-date census data available. In particular, this report utilized 2021 5-year estimates as the most reliable data available. 2022 5-year estimates were released in December of 2023.

Toombs County GIS Manager

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Neighborhood assessment (original data source)

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US Department of Housing and Urban Development GIS portal

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Georgia Department of Community Affairs GIS portal

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References

Toombs County Joint Comprehensive Plan (2019)

Municode - Zoning Ordinance City of Vidalia

Municode - Zoning Ordinance City of Lyons

Federal Reserve Economic Data

HUD State of the Cities Data Systems (SOCDS)

Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies

Freddie Mac

2022 Georgia Housing Market Annual Report

Appendix A: Regulations and Comprehensive Plan Comparison

Elements Encouraged Within Comprehensive Plans and Allowed Through Zoning Ordinances of Diverse, Thriving Communities:	Toombs County		Lyons			Vidalia		
	Comprehensive Plan	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments
DIVERSE HOUSING SUPPLY								
1 Encourages accessory dwelling units: Allows homeowners to add accessory dwelling units (ADUs) like granny flats, basement apartments, or backyard cottages to their properties	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use permitted in R-1 districts: customary accessory uses or buildings (ADUs not clearly defined)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Uses accessory to dwellings: living quarters for household employees, caretakers, or watchmen
2 Allows guest houses/ADUs to be rented long term or occupied by someone other than the owner of the primary structure	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3 Allows for diverse housing sizes: Allows for developments with reduced/no minimum area square foot requirement	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is always a min lot size, even for existing lots (4,000 SF)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Min. lot size 8,000 SF in R-3 High Density Residential
4 Promotes the development of a mix of housing types: Develops a combination of single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and apartment buildings in areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Encourages diverse housing mix"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mix of single- and multi-family housing allowed in R-2, but only single-family allowed in R-1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	R-4 allows single-family, two-family, and apartments
5 Allows for alternative housing options: Explores alternative housing options like tiny homes, modular homes, and co-housing communities	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Boarding and rooming houses permitted in R-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6 Development of cottage courts in areas	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7 Development of duplexes/multiplexes in areas	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Two-family, twin dwelling & duplexes allowed in R-2 & R-3 districts only (8,000 SF min lot size)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	R-3 allows two-family twins and duplexes
8 Development of townhomes/courtyard style apartment homes in areas	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single-family, detached and/or attached patio homes and townhouses permitted in R-3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Apartment District R-4
9 Development of manufactured housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Implement/enforce need for [...] maunufactured housing"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	House trailers permitted in R-2 provided that lot meets min size requirement, and only in trailer parks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile home parks not allowed

Appendix A: Regulations and Comprehensive Plan Comparison

Elements Encouraged Within Comprehensive Plans and Allowed Through Zoning Ordinances of Diverse, Thriving Communities:	Toombs County		Lyons			Vidalia			
	Comprehensive Plan	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	
10	Development of modular housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
11	Encourages infill housing: Allows houses built on small lots (less than 5,000 square feet) in appropriate areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Land Use Goals: Encourage Infill Development"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	R-1: 20,000 SF min R-2: 5,000 SF (single family), 3,000 SF (multifamily) min lot sizes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Min. lot size 8,000 SF in R-3 High Density Residential
PROMOTES COMMUNITIES OF OPPORTUNITY									
12	Encourages mixed-income communities: Integrates affordable housing units into market-rate developments to ensure that people of all income levels can live in the same community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan encourages a "mix of quality housing," but no mention of mixed-income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mix of single- and multi-family housing allowed in R-2, but only single-family allowed in R-1 and R-3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	R-4 allows single-family, two-family, and apartments
13	Supports workforce housing: Workforce housing is clearly defined, and there is a plan in place for its development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "City of Vidalia needs: housing stock improvements," but WFH not clearly defined	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Workforce housing not mentioned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Workforce housing not mentioned
14	Ensures that people who work in the community can also afford to live in that same community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Attract and promote investment in cultural and economic opportunities for retention of young people after graduation"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15	Promotes homeownership for low and moderate-income households	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "State/federal housing programs utilization to improve availability of affordable/quality housing and home ownership"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16	Supports options for loft living, downtown living, or "neo-traditional" development	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential uses not permitted in downtown areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OR allows residential dwellings. C-1 and C-2 allow residential dwellings on second story or basement level
17	Supports form-based development: Does not separate commercial, residential and retail uses in every district	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No residential uses are permitted in commercial district C-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OR allows residential dwellings. C-1 and C-2 allow residential dwellings on second story or basement level
18	Provides housing for different stages of life: Develops housing options that cater to different stages of life, such as starter homes for young families, senior housing for retirees, and co-living spaces for young adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Diverse mix of quality housing (safe, affordable, rental, elderly, assisted living, starter, compatible workforce)"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix A: Regulations and Comprehensive Plan Comparison

Elements Encouraged Within Comprehensive Plans and Allowed Through Zoning Ordinances of Diverse, Thriving Communities:	Toombs County		Lyons			Vidalia		
	Comprehensive Plan	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments
19 Encourages the development of housing types that support aging in place	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
EXPLORES ALL AVAILABLE TOOLS TO BUILD & PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING								
20 Promotes preservation/maintenance of affordable housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Opportunities: availability of CDBG/other public/private programs to rehabilitate low and moderate income housing"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21 Converts existing buildings: Converts existing buildings like warehouses, office buildings, and schools into housing units	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Many of the city's historic homes have been converted to professional, office, and community use"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
22 Supports community development corporations that build housing for lower-income households	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Continued support for Lyons and Vidalia housing authorities' provision of affordable subsidized housing"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
23 Promotes ordinances that allow neo-traditional development "by right" so that developers do not have to endure a long variance process	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Opportunities: Existing zoning in Lyons and Vidalia"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
24 Prioritizes land for affordable housing: recognizes the need for vacant land to be available for affordable housing to be developed in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Opportunities: ample undeveloped land; land available for sale" (not for affordable housing specifically)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
RECOGNIZES NEED FOR AND SUPPORTS HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATIONS								
25 We have housing programs that focus on households with special needs	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
26 Provides supportive housing: Develops supportive housing for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix A: Regulations and Comprehensive Plan Comparison

	Elements Encouraged Within Comprehensive Plans and Allowed Through Zoning Ordinances of Diverse, Thriving Communities:	Toombs County		Lyons			Vidalia		
		Comprehensive Plan	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments
	PROMOTES SUSTAINABILITY								
27	Develops green housing: Builds energy-efficient homes that reduce utility bills and decrease the carbon footprint	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Community Goals: Attract green businesses"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Subdivision ordinance: encourages economically sound and stable land development
28	Promotes conservation community districts: Conservation of natural resources and creating more housing options sustainably	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
29	Values conservation: has a conservation subdivision ordinance for residential development that is widely used and protects open space in perpetuity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Opportunities: Environmental Conservation ordinance adopted countywide," & "Maintain open spaces/agricultural/forestry uses"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Subdivisions: assures the provision of needed public open spaces in land developments, through the dedication/reservation of land
30	Promotes maintenance of sidewalks and vegetation well so that walking is an option some would choose	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Continue sidewalk maintenance in Vidalia," and "Conduct sidewalk maintenance for broken/unsafe segments"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Continue sidewalk maintenance in Vidalia"
31	Encourages walkability so that in some areas several errands can be made on foot, if so desired	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Needs: Extend sidewalks along sections of Highway 297 and Aimwell and Adams streets in Vidalia"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
32	Ensures that some children can and do walk to school safely	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp Plan: "Needs: "Complete Streets" policy to develop safe infrastructure for bicycle and pedestrian users"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
33	Ensures that some children can and do bike to school safely	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp Plan: "Needs: "Complete Streets" policy to develop safe infrastructure for bicycle and pedestrian users"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
34	Promotes developing and maintaining a good network of sidewalks to allow people to walk to a variety of destinations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp Plan: "Needs: "Complete Streets" policy to develop safe infrastructure for bicycle and pedestrian users"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
35	Implements a sidewalk ordinance in the community that requires all new development to provide user-friendly sidewalks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp Plan: "Needs: "Complete Streets" policy to develop safe infrastructure for bicycle and pedestrian users"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix A: Regulations and Comprehensive Plan Comparison

Elements Encouraged Within Comprehensive Plans and Allowed Through Zoning Ordinances of Diverse, Thriving Communities:	Toombs County		Lyons			Vidalia		
	Comprehensive Plan	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments
36 Encourages the development and use of public transportation in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Continue to seek transportation improvements (highway, airport, rail, bicycle, & pedestrian) to enhance & support economic development efforts"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
37 Encourages the development and use of bicycle routes through the community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "There are future plans for bicycle connectivity along U.S. 1 and local roadways leading to Gray's Landing on the Altamaha River."	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
CONNECTS COMMUNITY								
38 Recognizes the intersection between housing, transit, and other opportunity factors	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
39 Supports programs that keep public areas (commercial, retail districts, parks) clean and safe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
40 Encourages schools to be located in or near neighborhoods in the community	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Schools allowed in R-1 District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Schools allowed in OR District
41 Requires that new development connects with existing development through a street network, not a single entry/exit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "preserving/improving surrounding historic neighborhoods & connecting them to downtowns/other commercial areas/traffic"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Subdivisions: assures adequate provision of safe and convenient traffic access & circulation, vehicular & pedestrian
42 Requires that newly built sidewalks connect to existing sidewalks wherever possible	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
43 Allows for commercial and retail developments to share parking areas wherever possible	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Required parking space may extend up to 120 feet into a residential zoning district, provided that...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
UTILIZES THE MICROLIFE METHOD								

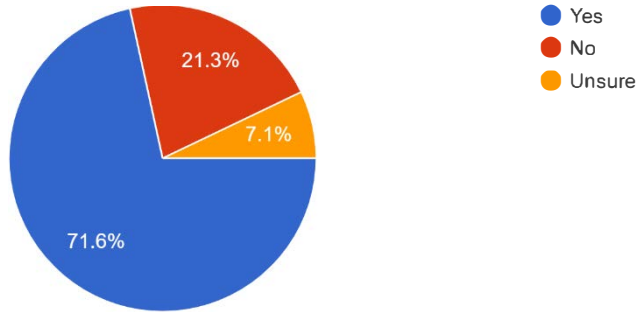
Appendix A: Regulations and Comprehensive Plan Comparison

	Elements Encouraged Within Comprehensive Plans and Allowed Through Zoning Ordinances of Diverse, Thriving Communities:	Toombs County		Lyons			Vidalia		
		Comprehensive Plan	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Comments
44	Conducts housing assessments: Consider the existing housing stock, demographics of the area, existing/projected population, existing/projected jobs in the area, cost of living, schools, transportation, density, walkability, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
45	Connects changemakers: Hold housing summits to engage and educate our community on topics surrounding housing	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
46	Connects changemakers: Provide incentives for builders to develop the diverse housing types within your community	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
47	Creates educational programming: In-person and virtual learning opportunities in inform community members on housing issues	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
48	Creates policy change: Utilize the results of your housing assessment and community feedback from your housing summit to determine which policies need to be reviewed, amended, or added	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comp plan: "Opportunities: existing zoning in Lyons and Vidalia"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
49	Initiates a pilot project: In order to demonstrate how diverse housing choice can be created within your community	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
50	Creates educational programming: Public tours, presentations, or a website around your pilot project to demonstrate the importance of providing diverse housing choice in your community	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

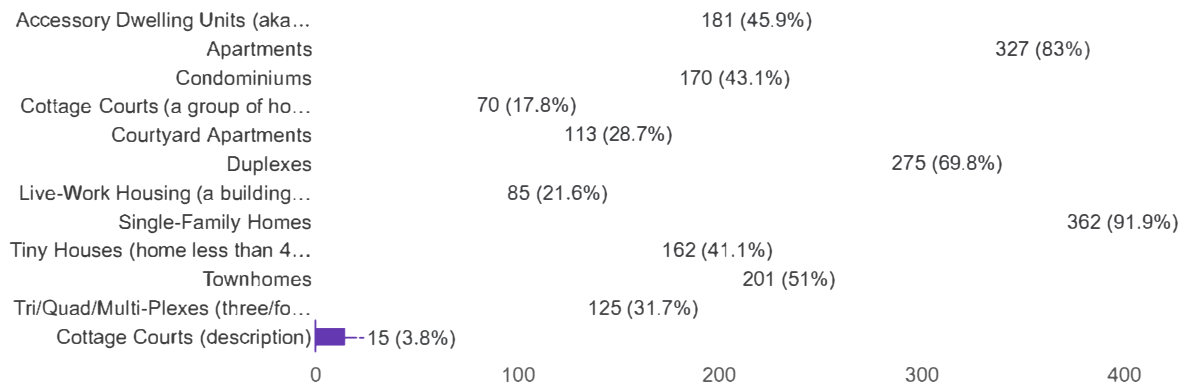
Are you aware that there is an affordable housing crisis in Toombs County?

394 responses



Which of the following housing types are you familiar with?

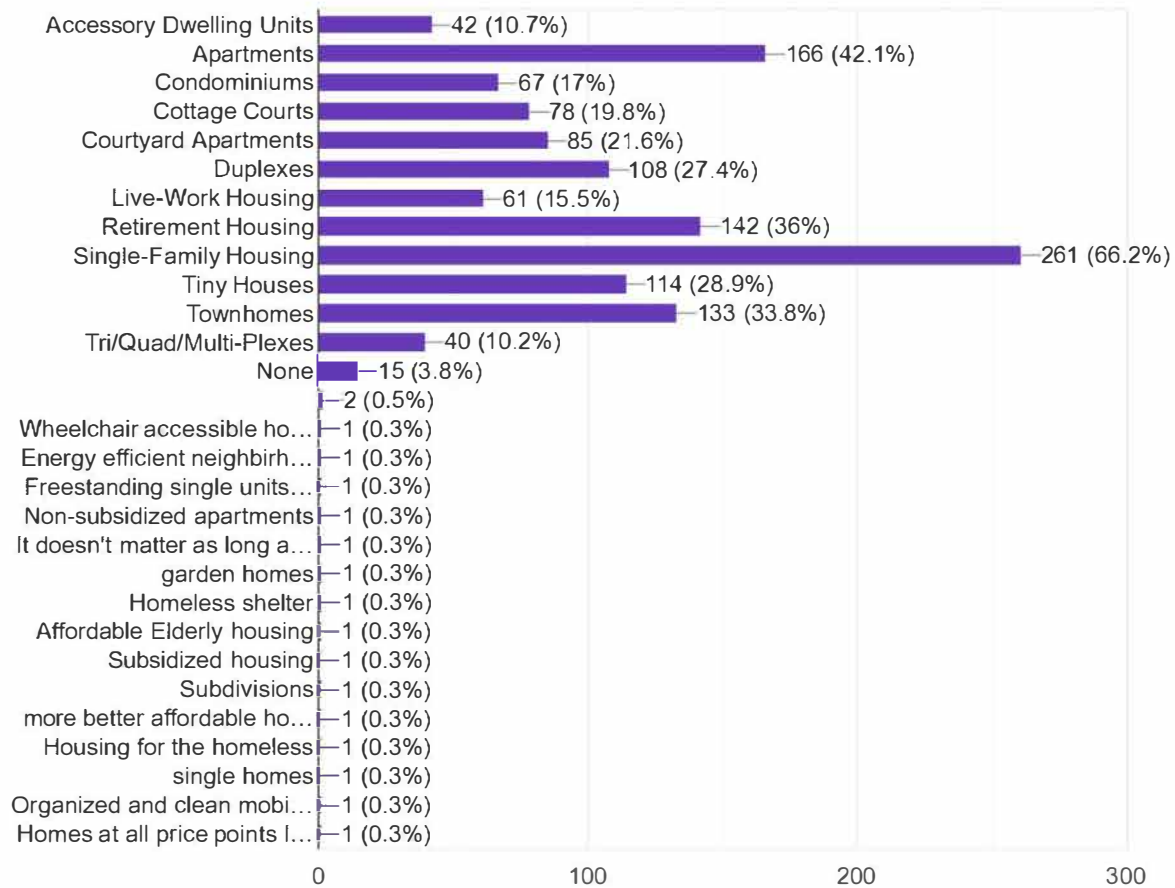
394 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What, if any, types of housing would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

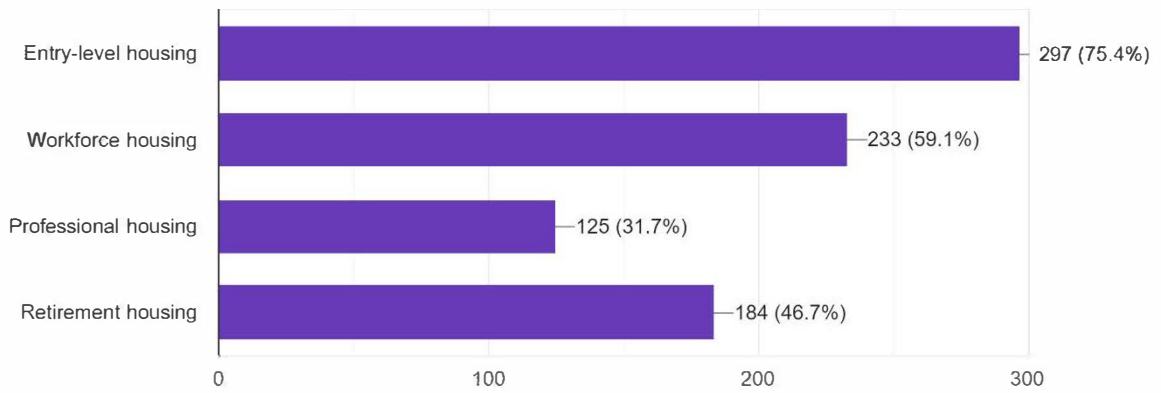
394 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

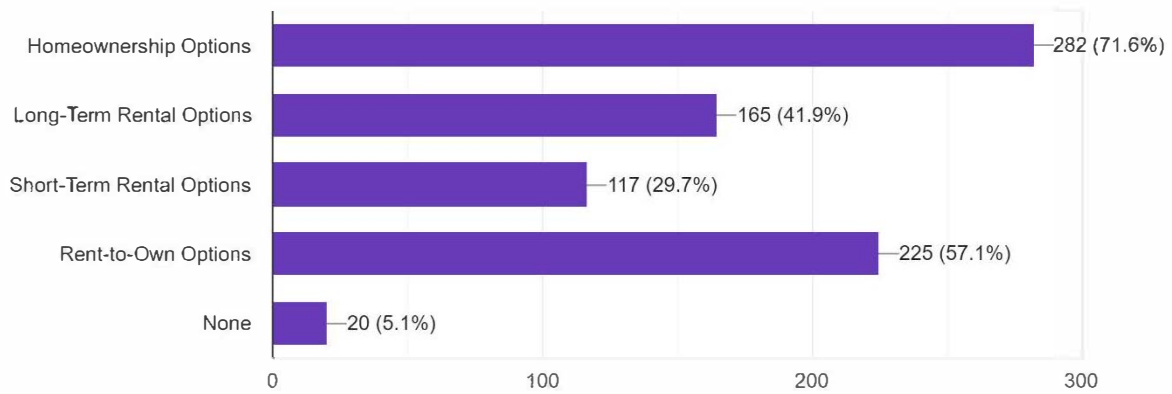
What type of options does Toombs County need more of?

394 responses



What, if any, ownership or rental options would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

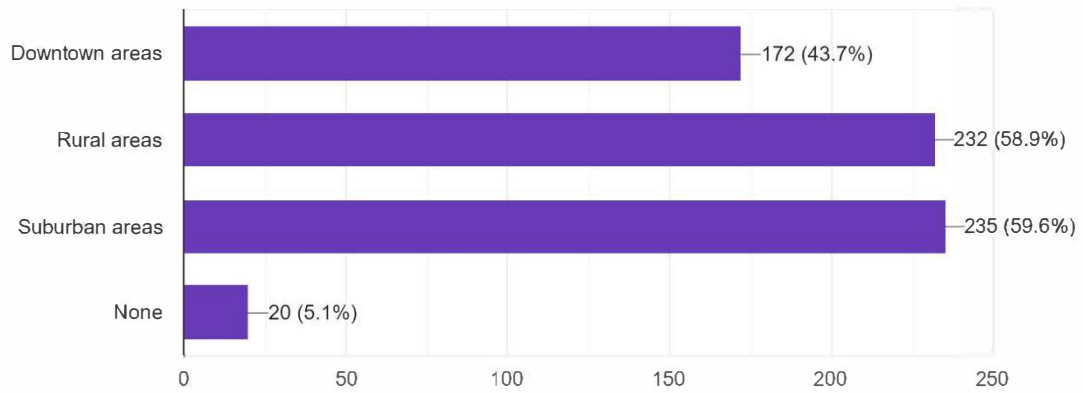
394 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

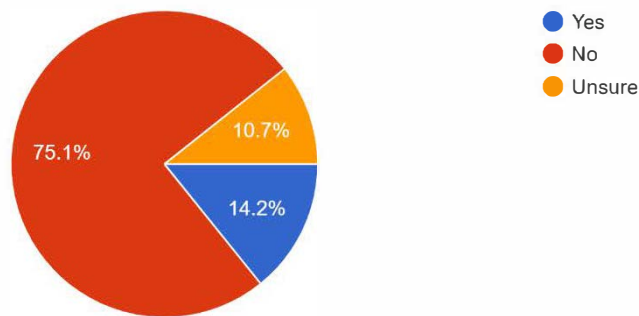
Where would you like to see new housing developments be built in Toombs County?

394 responses



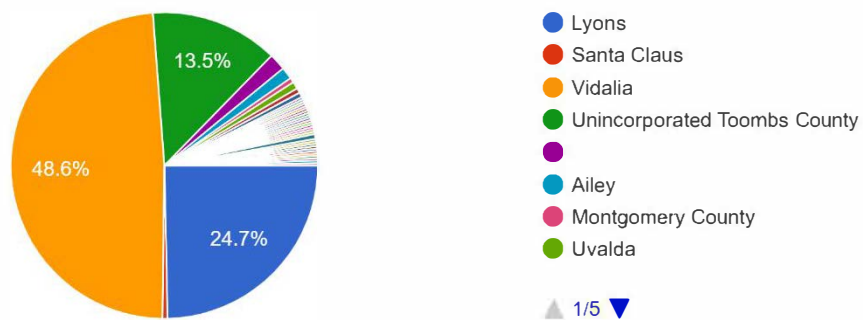
Are you familiar with the Toombs County Comprehensive Plan?

394 responses



What city do you live in?

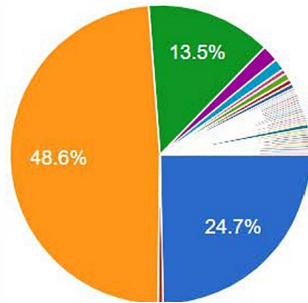
393 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What city do you live in?

393 responses

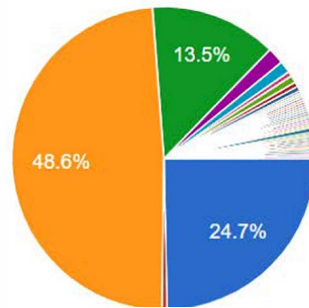


- Montgomery
- Soperton
- Tarrytown
- All down rd n flora relative we
- Hazlehurst
- Adrian
- Emanuel County
- Country 5 miles from Vidalia.

▲ 2/5 ▼

What city do you live in?

393 responses

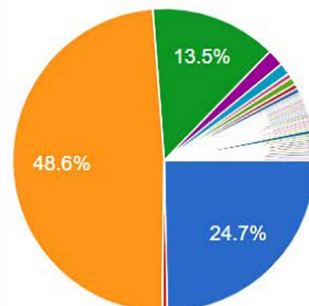


- Normantown
- Statesboro
- McCrae (previously rented in Vidalia)
- Montgomery Co
- Lumber City
- Collins
- ailey
- Cedar crossing

▲ 3/5 ▼

What city do you live in?

393 responses



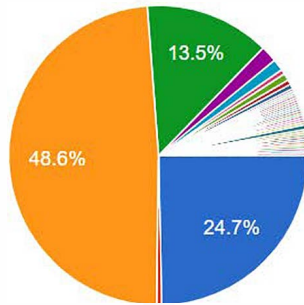
- Cedar Crossing Community
- JohnsonCorner/CedarCrossing
- Mt Vernon
- Higgston
- In the county
- register
- County
- Treutlen

▲ 4/5 ▼

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What city do you live in?

393 responses

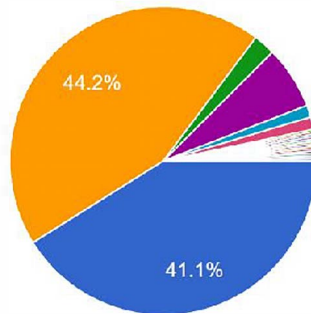


- Johnson Corner
- Montgomery county
- montgomery county but work in toombs
- Mt Vernon work in Toombs
- Baxley
- Mount Vernon

▲ 5/5 ▼

What city do you work in?

394 responses

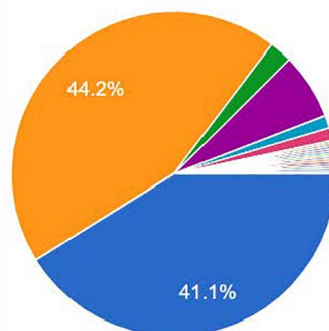


- Lyons
- Santa Claus
- Vidalia
- Unincorporated Toombs County
- Outside of Toombs County
- I do not work
- Retired
- Montgomery County

▲ 1/3 ▼

What city do you work in?

394 responses



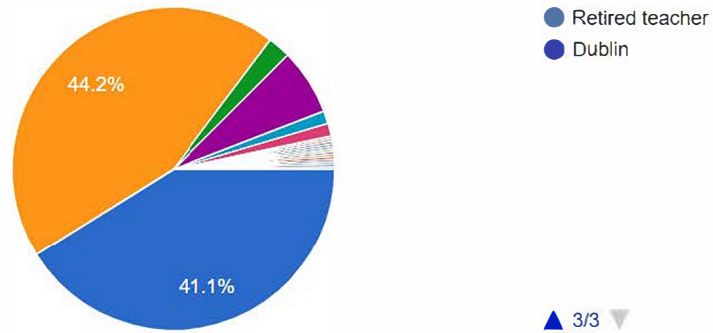
- Tombs other thru 333 dwj dav id
- Disable
- Multiple counties
- retired
- Remote
- None
- Unincorporated TC and Vidalia
- Cedar crossing
- Toombs Central

▲ 2/3 ▼

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

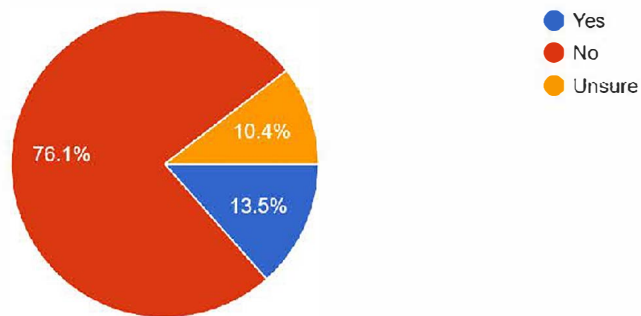
What city do you work in?

394 responses



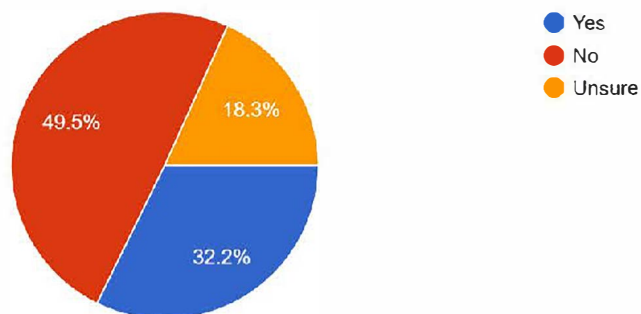
Are you familiar with the vision of your city, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan?

394 responses



Would you consider the housing in Toombs County to be affordable (in general)?

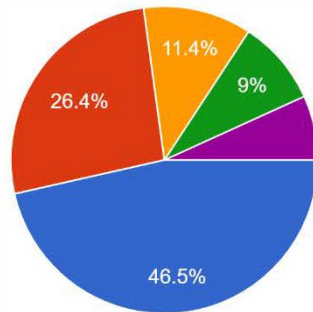
394 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What percentage of your income would you estimate that you spend on your rent or mortgage?

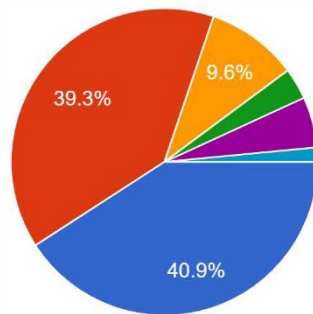
368 responses



- I spend less than 30%
- I spend about 30%
- I spend about 40%
- I spend about 50%
- I spend more than 50%

How far do you have to drive to get to work?

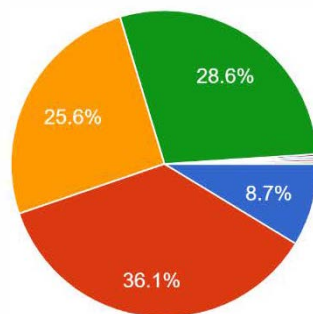
394 responses



- Less than 10 minutes
- 10 - 20 minutes
- 20 - 30 minutes
- 30 - 40 minutes
- More than 40 minutes
- I do not work

How much do you estimate that you spend on transportation (e.g. gas) per month?

391 responses

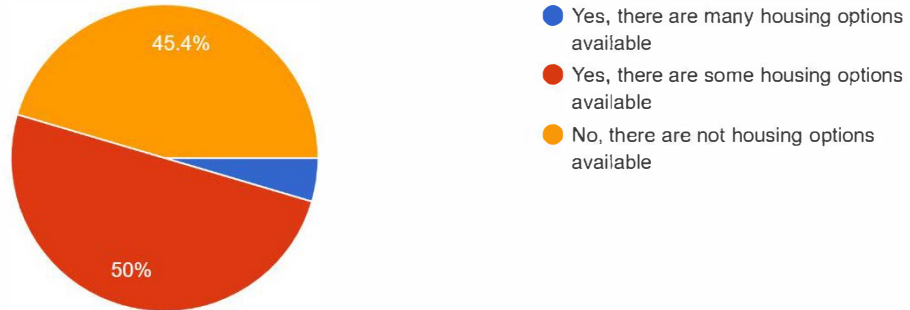


- Less than \$50
- Between \$50 - \$100
- Between \$100 - \$150
- More than \$150
- Food n water n shelter to produce for many but folks here have been selfish with our own oroperties n 21 trine. Th...
- retired
- \$2500 - own a lawn care business

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

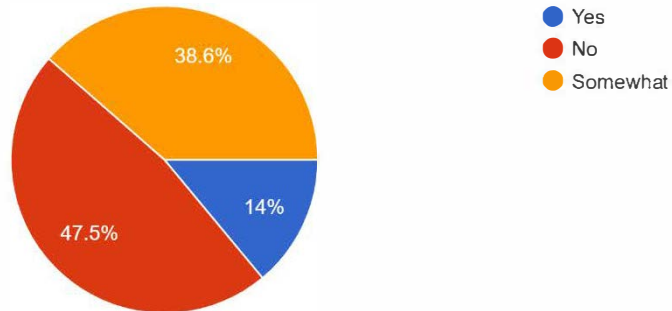
Do you feel there are available housing options in Toombs County?

394 responses



Are you satisfied with the available amenities in Toombs County? (e.g. restaurants, entertainment, parks, bike paths, etc.)

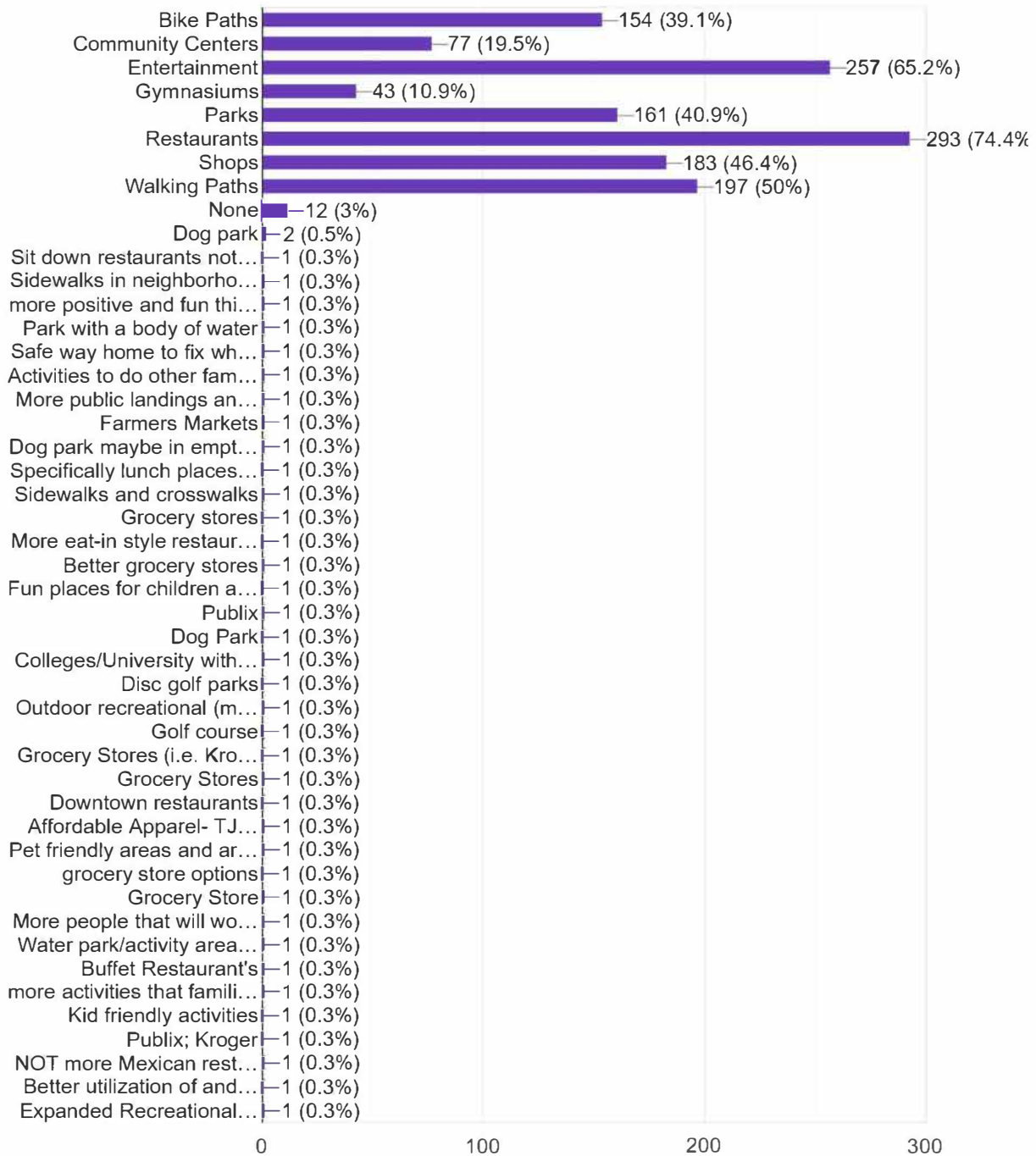
394 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What, if any, amenities would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

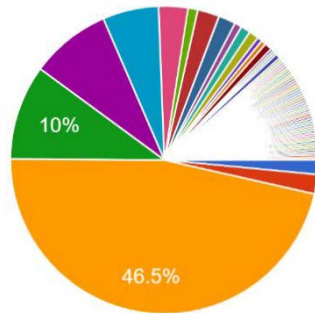
394 responses



Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What industry do you work in?

391 responses

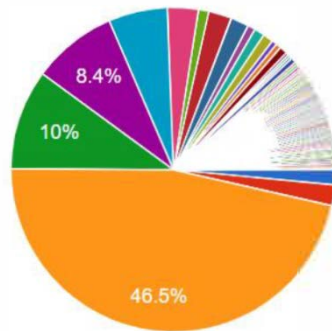


- Agriculture
- Construction
- Education
- Finance & Economic
- Health Services
- Manufacturing
- Real Estate or Development
- I do not work

▲ 1/9 ▼

What industry do you work in?

391 responses

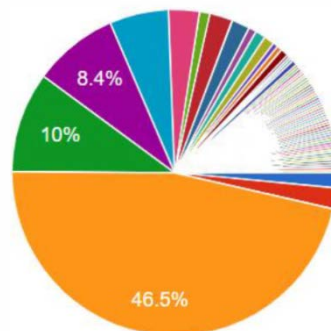


- Government
- Legal
- Retired
- Retail
- Trucking
- Social Services
- Social services
- Non-profit development
- Homemaker

▲ 2/8 ▼

What industry do you work in?

391 responses



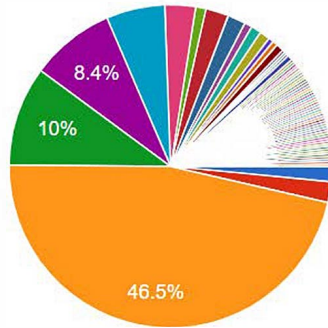
- Resturant
- Local Government
- None of the above
- Attorney
- Political - Community Driven
- Website development
- Disabled
- I help everywhere but the
- Enforcement

▲ 3/8 ▼

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What industry do you work in?

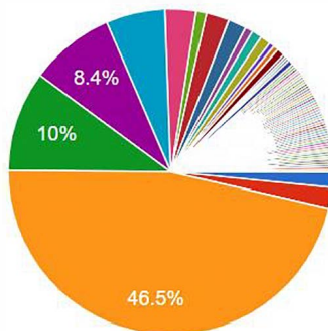
391 responses



- Board of Commissioners, Probate Court
 - Lyons Housing
 - Technology/Consulting
 - Church
 - Shipping
 - Parks and recreation
 - Commissioners Office
 - Distribution
 - business services
- ▲ 4/8 ▼

What industry do you work in?

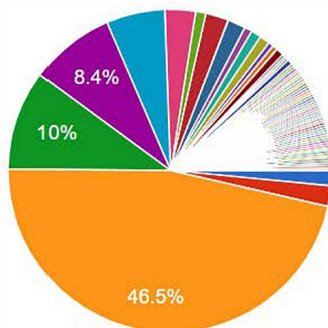
391 responses



- Warehousing
 - Utility
 - Power
 - State
 - Non-Profit Sector
 - Rehabilitation
 - DV advocate
 - Hospitality
 - Law enforcement
- ▲ 5/8 ▼

What industry do you work in?

391 responses

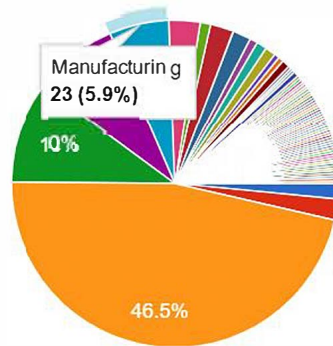


- Paralegal and small business owner (...)
 - Pest control
 - government
 - bank
 - Sales
 - Tech
 - Food service
 - Restaurant
 - Restaurant Industry
- ▲ 6/8 ▼

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

What industry do you work in?

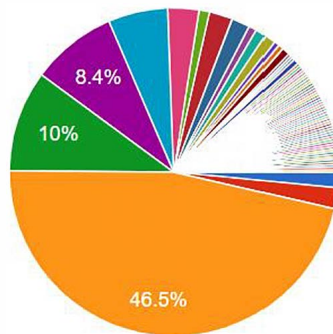
391 responses



- Community Services
 - Retired Educator
 - Mangement
 - Nuclear energy
 - grocery store
 - House Cleaning
 - non profit
 - Marketing/design
 - tourism
- ▲ 7/8 ▼

What industry do you work in?

391 responses



- Arts and entertainment
 - Mechanic
- ▲ 8/8 ▼

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

Please feel free to share any final thoughts, comments, concerns, or personal experiences surrounding housing. You may also optionally share your contact information if you wish to be contacted about your responses or discuss the survey content further.

82 responses

For elderly or retired homeowners please find ways to lower property taxes and non Medicaid help with medication and private insurance.

We DEFINITELY need more affordable housing in Toombs County. To BUY or RENT... Either one..

As a Realtor, we are very aware that many cannot afford decent housing, while that is a problem it should in no way infringe on the private property rights of others. These issues can be addressed. Grants to owners who have the property, but cannot upgrade them due to the way that tenants destroy them might be an option. Finding a way to work "with" property owners that already own properties is a great way to "reclaim" areas that have been inherited perhaps and the owners inherit the issues of years of neglect. Another way to address this is to offer homeowners incentives to buy these homes and fix them up. Like a block grant or something that encourages folks to purchase and fix up homes. Many want to do this but cannot get financing if the home needs work. If local banks could partner with the city and county governments to offer renovation loans for these properties that might also help. I'm signing this because I've given this a lot of thought and if anyone is interested in any other ideas. Tammie Gibbs/ Lovins Realty.

We have no variety of shopping options for clothing or groceries. We have no variety of restaurants just MEXICAN

Current housing market is expensivr at Toombs County

Please create a walking, bike path to enjoy in the afternoon. I don't even have a sidewalk to walk in my neighborhood. It would be nice Teo have a place where you can enjoy nature, relax and exercise. I am a transplant, been here for 25 years and miss those waking paths dearly.

We need another store like Kroger/Aldi/ Neighborhood market! We need some drive through restaurants in the Lyons area.

There needs to be more affordable housing so that more people will want to move here. We also need a better varitey of restaurants other that mexican as well as more places for entertainment.

The city and county need to do a better job partnering with developers to share infrastructure costs for new houses. There is a shortage of entry-level, single family residences, but those projects are unfeasible because of the high cost of water, sewer and paving.

Just wish there were

More handicapped apartments and homes to rent or own in toombs county.

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

Some questions had no choices for retired - like driving to work. We own our home so our spending per month is zero towards owning or renting.

We would love to invest in more local housing options.

Stop giving folks things for free or cheap and make them work for it. Stop letting the homeless (that are in that position by their own choices not because they can't do better) run the streets, set up camp wherever they want and stay high or drunk. Bring in more family (kid) friendly businesses, such as putt putt golf, ciccis pizza, etc.. there are too many places here that serve alcohol, we need less of that.. we also need to Crack down harder on the drug dealers, drug users, law breakers and such. Stop slapping them on the wrist and turning them out, making this town suck when it use to be the best place in the world. There's more that needs to be said, but let's start with these things.

Building codes need to be enforced. Too many houses that are uninhabitable.

There is a need for affordable single family homes and/or apartments for lower to middle class citizens, that are clean, safe, and energy efficient. Also, a need for a "retirement village" or community for those who are able to live independently, but are not able to care for yards, repairs and maintenance, etc.

We are desperate for Housing in our community! Especially for low income and retirees.

Few options available for single professionals that aren't full sized homes. Couldn't find anything to rent here that was less than 3 bedrooms and had a yard and no shared walls. Just moved back to the area in January of 22.

I feel rental options are too expensive and limited, and that purchase prices are too high, for the area and average income.

There is too much poorly maintained rental single family housing. Landlords are not held accountable for property upkeep. Also, several questions didn't not apply to me since I am retired i.e. how long does it take to get to work? Should correct that leaving an option to put retired in.

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

We continue to grow outward when we know our city cannot afford public transportation. There are many cities that have gone through similar growth and struggle to provide services for the community because nothing is centralized.

Young couples struggle to afford decent housing as well as retired people.

Yes, there is affordable housing in Toombs County. However, the conditions of that housing can and should be improved. It means nothing for the housing to be affordable if the conditions are terrible. I would also like to see more apartments become available, so there are more options to choose from. Finding good apartments were difficult because either the information about availability was not easily accessed/available or because the conditions of the apartments were not good.

Why do housing complexes have to come up near schools? These are always "eye-sores" and often house trouble. Please stop that from happening with our beautiful Bulldog Road.

I am pleased that the survey has been shared with me.

We need affordable housing for low income people, hardworking people whose wages are so low they can't afford the basics.

My answers are mainly for Lyons

This is all well and good, but I don't see most of us benefitting from this. It seems only a few benefit.

It would be great to have more events that focus on financial literacy, home ownership, and parenting. This community has a need to reduce the poverty level. It would help reduce crime and many other negatives in the community. When there is a sense of belonging and prosperity, the more the community will thrive.

My answers were based on the needs I see for my community. The homelessness here is high and if there were more options where people could live in affordable housing that wouldnt cost them their entire paycheck, we might see some kind of improvement.

need affordable housing for those who make smaller salaries

I would love to see apartments in downtown Lyons!

Toombs County needs more chain businesses such as a Kroger or Publix and more chain shopping in general. Small businesses do not do the business to substantiate affordable shopping and most of these stores are out pricing the community. We also need larger businesses that can employ larger workforces that provide good wages and benefits.

We need more restaurants and housing.

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

A friend was planning on moving with her family back to Vidalia and could find NO available rental housing.

I'd love to see an expansion in all areas, especially entry level housing and option for children's entertainment and health.

In order for communities to grow thier needs to be better employment oppotunities better housing community based organizations and places for kids to play and grow

To understand how to address the housing issue in Toombs County, one must consider local socioeconomic/societal issues. Because Toombs is a high poverty area and substance addiction is prevalent among the community, we must consider how those impoverished and/or addicted populations will acquire housing. If not, we will continue to have a high rate of homelessness and all the issues that go along with homelessness in the area. Many in the area are not qualified to obtain home loans, rental properties are in short supply, and when found, those being paid minimum wage can't afford the area's rental costs. We are interested in tearing down blighted properties, but we do not replace those properties torn down with new properties. Additionally, we are severely lacking in single-family homes for those in the low to moderate income range or "workforce" housing (\$100,000-\$200,000 cost range). We want economic development, but we can't house a workforce. We currently do not have enough private investors or certified contractors in the area to keep up with the need for housing development. Aside from this issue, expansion should begin by inviting development of affordable rental options to include single-family homes, duplexes, apartments, and tiny home communities. However, if this is to be the case, we must adjust zoning, permitting, and other ordinances to ensure compatible development. (These ordinances will need to be evaluated soon anyway, as expansion from the Coast will spur development faster than we can plan for it.) We also need to search for grants and HUD programs that would support this endeavor.

Though I personally have affordable housing, there are so many people in my area that do not including many of my family, friends, coworkers.

We need safe, affordable housing for single parents working a minimum wage job.

Lots of housing that are not pet friendly and if they are, the pets add more to your rent which is expensive already

none

Very hard to find a rental in Vidalia if moving from another town

I used to love to run for exercise. There are little to no SAFE (not hindered by traffic, etc.) distance running areas.

Thank you

We need single family suburban style homes that are safe and affordable. I own a house built in 1962 due to nothing was available that was new when we were purchasing. Restore old neighborhoods. Also, when I moved here I could not find a place that was safe to live that I could afford. It's really sad. Finally, Ruby Tuesdays need to shut down and we need a Texas Roadhouse.

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

Pickle ball at Parton park

If we have places for families in Toombs County, we won't lose money to surrounding counties. We need to invest in our county!

Young professionals have very few options when it comes to housing. Most are unable to buy a home, and many apartments/rentals are not geared toward professionals. This would be a great way to attract a professional workforce to Toombs County.

This place is not growing. People need to make more money

I used to believe that Vidalia offered affordable housing, but that has recently changed. Housing for young professionals is very hard to find and is overpriced because of the competition for the few houses that become available. There is also a severe shortage of rentals for low income families. I think it would be an excellent idea for Vidalia, Lyons, and the county to make it easy for people to learn about the plans that were mentioned in this survey.

ldk

Vidalia and Lyons have plenty of good bone homes with potential that need remodeling and TLC. What I'm staunchly against is more cookie cutter homes with zero charm and character coming to the area along with chain/corporate restaurants and stores. I believe a lot of the rentals in the area are a hot bed for criminal activity and would love to see some of them demolished as well as getting rid of section 8 housing much like Blackshear did. I would love to see the private sector thrive in this community as it once did.

I believe that the county needs to do something to solve the homeless situation that is growing in this county

We need pickle ball courts and more restaurants like downtown Dublin has.

moving into the town in 2020 proved to be difficult because of housing availability. I did not qualify as low income, and rental properties were nearly extinct at the time. By the grace of god did I end up in the home I live in now and am thankful for the help given to me to do so. If you want to draw more people to the town, there has to be more option for short/long term renting.

Coming from the city of Atlanta, the housing market is too expensive. Homes here seem to be too expensive for what it is worth. I would like to see more single family homes in actual subdivisions/modern home options (split level).

Single income families need more options for living/renting.

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

This is from my personal experiences. I'm a divorced middle-aged mother that had to rebuild a life for my family. I've worked in education as a paraprofessional for Vidalia City Schools for 15 years and for many years worked in the after school programs. I get paid once a month. I currently live in poverty. My rent currently takes all my check except \$500 dollars. When I pay or if I can pay my utilities there is nothing left. In order to have decent and safe housing for my child and I, this is what it costs if you want to live in single family housing. I was told my rent will be going up soon and I worry constantly where will I have to go. Most of the based on income apartments here in Vidalia and Toombs County are not safe & the up keep don't seem to well. Rental properties & the housing market don't seem to match the salaries a lot of employers are paying here in Vidalia, especially for single mothers like myself. There's a lot of houses(rental properties) here in some areas in Vidalia that have all sorts of issues and they're not being fixed or they're being patched up. A lot of tenants that live in poverty just let it go because they know they can't afford to pay rent anywhere else in better conditions. I hate this for all of us but especially our youth because a lot of parents don't want their children living in these unsafe places but that's what they can afford here in Vidalia based on some salaries. Over the years, I've also heard our youth and young adults complaining about nothing to do here in Vidalia. So I do think it needs to be some type of entertainment here for everyone to enjoy. I think now it's mostly like the bowling alley and movie theater. Our community shouldn't have to travel 45 minutes to 1 hour away for entertainment for their families. It's already barely affordable without having to put in the gas for travel. I hope my experiences helps to make some type of progress for our city/county. Feel free to contact me at:

The available options for housing are generally either out of price range, in areas that individuals don't/won't raise a family in, don't feel safe, or too far from amenities (parks, schools, shops, stores, etc. we need options that are available that allow families accessibility to some of these amenities (walking distance) and within price range. We want to elevate the livelihood and status of our city. This will do it! Allow people/families to get ahead instead of spending it on housing or dependable transportation. Creating more low-income housing breeds a lower status of clientele to our cities. We want to provide options to elevate our current clientele and encourage more clientele that are looking to gain an advantage.

When certain groups are allowed to purchase the majority of entry level homes and turn them into rentals , they set the rental rate which is unattainable to the young WORKING family . Sadly those that dominate our housing market no longer even live in this community . There are also wealthy politicians that buy up homes in nicer neighborhoods then rent to questionable tenants who allow multiple families to occupy one dwelling

There is local housing available in this area, but it is non affordable to a person that lives below poverty level for the pay around here.

Thank you for trying to better our area

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

I feel that the city and county needs to put a plan in motion to assist with the housing issue in Toombs County so that we will be able to attract and retain people and provide more leisure activities for citizens to do.

Great community! I feel like it is growing and it is a great small town to live in.

We need more restaurants and activities . Should not have to travel over 40 miles for a better selection of food and activities

More sit down eating places, affordable grocery store

I feel as though there should be a regulation or cap on the amount of rent that is being charged in this area and _____ is buying up majority of the properties for sell and is abusing his status as a renter, etc... overcharging for the property, charging the tenants for repairs whose not the rentee's responsibility, evicting rentees in the same month whereas the rent is due...the rentees have no protection against the renters, we need more affordable decent housing in Vidalia GA!

We really need more variety in sit down restaurant options

We need to address homelessness, drug problems, the low life hotels that are attracting drugs, prostitution and criminals

We need more options for housing based on income and also better quality housing with reasonable rent. People who have had credit issues in the past need second chance at home ownership.

There is a huge need for apartments. People from other counties are looking all the time too and would move here if more affordable apartments were available in safe neighborhoods. Many young people like me who can't quite buy a house yet have trouble finding affordable, updated, and safe housing rental options that don't cost an arm and a leg especially those of us renting as singles. \$750 is what I pay and though it's not half my income it's still a large amount for people or families living in a single income.

Since I assist people who are trying to find affordable housing, I see that the options for them are very limited, which can lead to homelessness

Housing is simply too expensive in this county, especially for entry-level families like myself. The lack of fair financial compensation from many workplaces paired with the absurd prices of homes and rental homes creates an impossible and stressful situation for many families in this community.

Appendix B: Residential Housing Survey Results

It would be awesome to see someone come in and redo/refurbish some of the older homes on Durden, Green, and Mosley Streets and make them nice/quality options for young double/single income professional couples. Safe/desirable place for young couples with young chil

There are several run down businesses and/or single homes that could be renovated or converted into affordable living spaces for new home owners, retirees, or low income housing. The downtown Lyons area has many delapidated buildings, for example, which could serve as apartment complex or duplexes. Our large migrant population also should have affordable living accommodations. There is a large run down Motel in Lyons, GA near some of the farms that could become rental property if marketed to the community properly. I was new to the community two years ago and have found marketing of local businesses very lacking and community communication limited. Perhaps realtors can add new projects or properties and programs to the county/city page. Best of luck!

We need more low income housing. The pricing of housing going up, but the jobs pay is not going up

A nice grocery store would be most beneficial on a day to day basis. More restaurants and parks would be next.

We had a very hard time finding a home at a mid-range price point when we moved here. We ended up going over what we were comfortable spending because there were no other good options for our family. This has had long-term consequences for our financial health. The housing availability has not improved dramatically in 15 years at any price point below the 250K level. This is a major issue. The other significant problem in this area that is NOT addressed here is childcare. There are not enough spaces for all of the children who need care which puts additional hardship on families. These are the folks we want to retain in the community. We need to do better for them.

Homeless Situation needs to be addressed

TOOMBS COUNTY HOUSING FORUM

Wednesday, October 25 | 8am - 10am
Tattnall Auditorium at Southeastern Technical College



Call Ann Owens at (912) 537-4466 to RSVP and for further information.



1

Why Housing? About our study

2

Appendix C: Housing Forum Presentation

MicroLife Institute



Team



MicroLife Institute
Will Johnston &
Erica Copenhaver

About

Georgia-based non-profit organization
dedicated to connecting communities by
expanding housing choice.

3

Team



Georgia Conservancy
Luben Raytchev &
Michaela Master

About

Non-profit organization that aims to protect
Georgia through ecological and economic
solutions for stewardship, conservation and
sustainable use of the land and its resources.

Georgia Conservancy



4

The Study

This draft study was completed by MicroLife Institute and Georgia Conservancy, in partnership with the Toombs County Development Authority, the Greater Vidalia® Chamber, Toombs County, the City of Vidalia, and the City of Lyons.



5

The Study

Scope

- Understand the current status and challenges
- Housing stock vs housing needs
- Recommendations for policy changes
- Development opportunities
- Empirical evidence
- Education and support



6

The Study

Process

- Reviewed existing and proposed zoning laws
- Compared comprehensive plans with zoning laws
- Housing survey of Lyons and Vidalia
- Interviewed local community and industry leaders
- Public poll
- Opportunity assessment



7

The Study

Timeline

- Completed work
 - Aforementioned scope and process
 - Forum - today!
- Upcoming milestones
 - Draft report - November
 - Final report - December



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Who are we housing?

9

Who is housing for?



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Existing Conditions

Population has been relatively stable in the county:

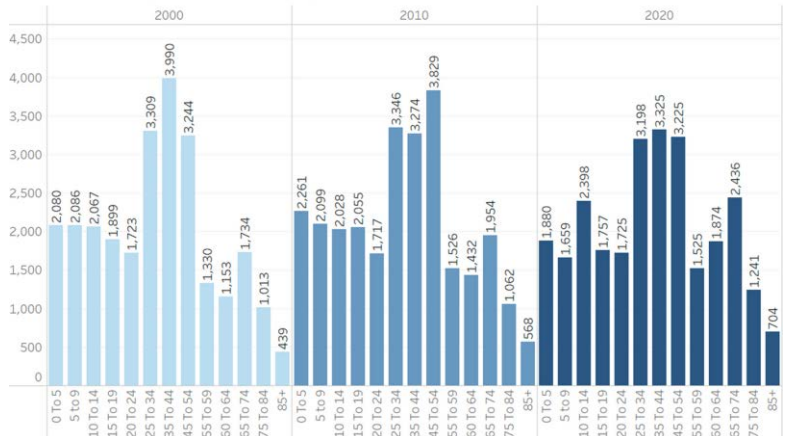
- 2000: 26,067
- 2010: 27,151
- 2020: 26,947

Age distribution, however, has been changing:

- Skewing older over time
- On par with national demographic trends and patterns
- Prominence of older demographics may call for different housing needs and strategies

Changing demographics

Toombs County population by age, 2000-2010



Existing Conditions

60% of all employees work in one of three categories: healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, or retail trade.

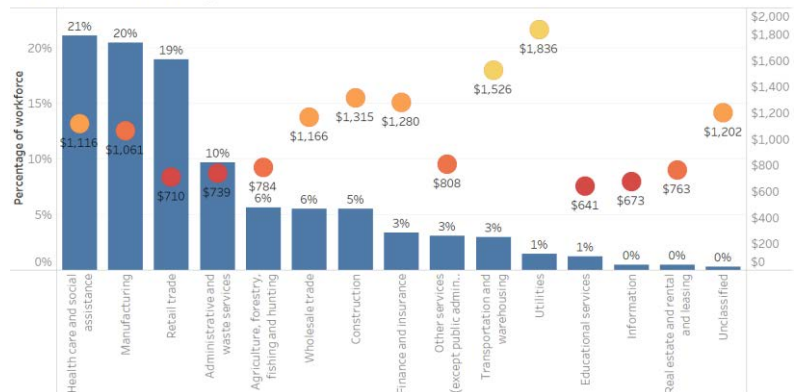
- Remaining 40% of workforce: wide range in housing price and attainability in the county

According to the 30% rule of thumb, a monthly housing payment is considered affordable if it is less than or equal 30% of a household's monthly income

Toombs County's average median income as of 2021 was \$43,000. **30% of this income on a monthly basis is roughly \$1,075.**

...As seen in employment, income, and housing affordability

Comparison between percentage of workforce per industry and maximum affordable rent in Toombs County



Who are we housing?

**Housing need is across all
economic and age spectrums**

13

**Why is finding
housing challenging?**

14

The Findings

Housing stock



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Basic Facts

Existing Conditions



26,956 people



12,027 housing units



9,779 households*

*Households are projected to decrease in size and increase in number

Source: ESRI, ACS, Census

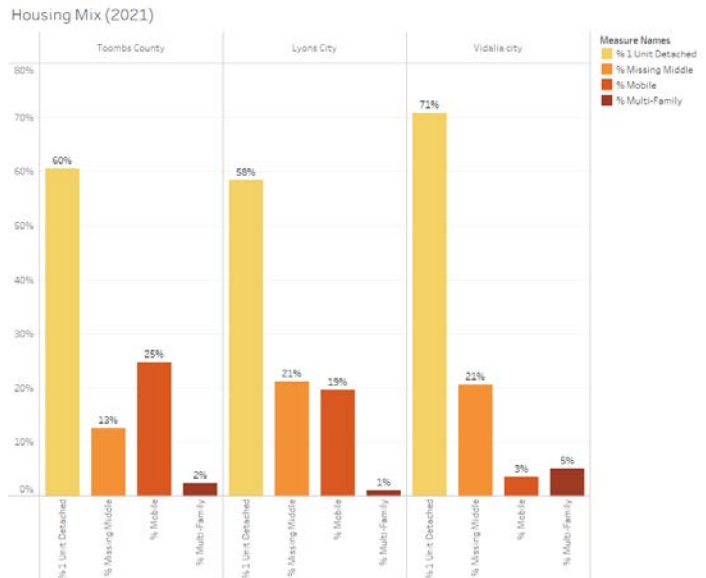
16

Housing Stock

Countywide, single-family homes make up the largest share of housing at **60%** of the entire housing stock.

- Mobile homes make up a significant proportion of homes: up to 25% of homes in the county are mobile homes.
- There is a modest amount of diverse housing types in the county with 2-9 units, and fewer larger multifamily structures.

Housing mix



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Housing Stock

More than 60% of the housing stock in Toombs' County was built before 1980

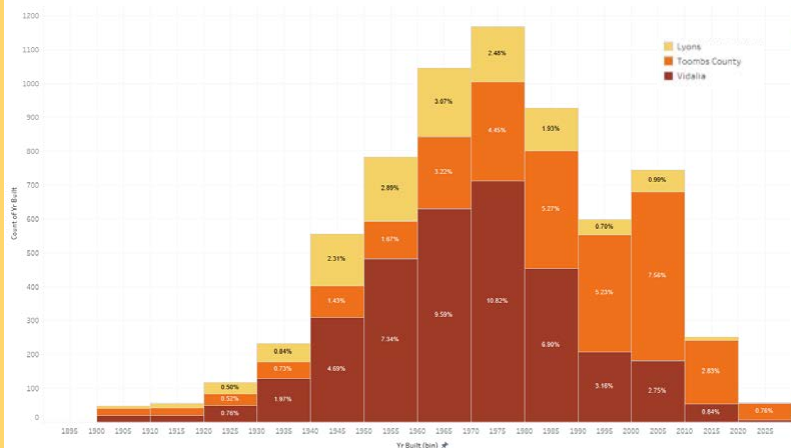
- 60% from 1950-1990
- Represents almost 5000 properties of the total residential digest

As a county, Toombs' development booms came in the 60's and 70's, with a smaller peak in the 2000's

Development has not recovered to pre-recession levels

- Unit production in the 2010s reached only 1/3rd of 2000's production

Development History



Source: Toombs County Tax Assessor

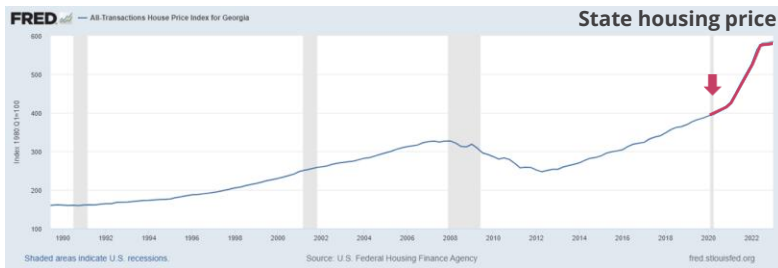
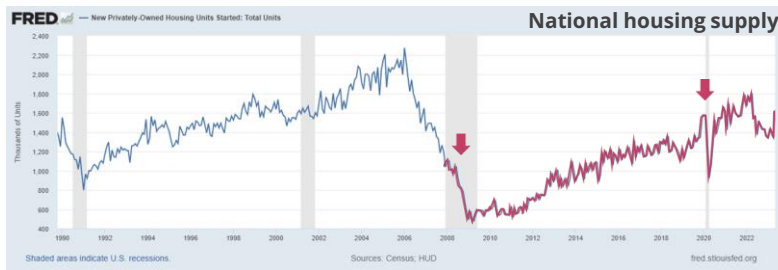
18

AMERICA IS FACING A HOUSING CRISIS.

The difficult housing situation stems from two main causes. These problematic trends have been worsening over time, leading to the present crisis.

- Shortage of **housing stock**
- Rising **housing prices**

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Housing Price

- National housing production declined precipitously leading into the Great Recession
- Production has not recovered to previous levels
- The lag in housing supply has exacerbated the problem of housing attainability and higher housing prices

- Housing price has been increasing since the early 2010's, but prices began to rise more dramatically during the COVID pandemic

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The median sale price is the exact middle sale value among all homes sold that year

Housing Price

- Mirroring national and state trends, housing prices in Toombs County have risen dramatically
- 2019-2022, the median sale price of single family homes, the dominant housing type in the county, rose by 46%
 - The same trend is true for all housing types generally
 - The cost of housing has risen regardless of for-sale or rental tenure

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Why does Toombs have a housing problem?

Housing is in short supply and at a high price

22

**What did you have to say
about housing in Toombs?**

23

Community Engagement

Stakeholder Interviews



24

Community Engagement

12 interviews conducted:

- 4 from public sector
- 8 from private sector (included developers, realtors, business owners and operators)

Stakeholder interviews – high level findings:

- **Rental demand is high and wide**



25

Community Engagement

12 interviews conducted:

- 4 from public sector
- 8 from private sector (included developers, realtors, business owners and operators)

Stakeholder interviews – high level findings:

- **Rental demand is high and wide**



- **Variety of housing types are needed for all levels of income**



26

Community Engagement

12 interviews conducted:

- 4 from public sector
- 8 from private sector (included developers, realtors, business owners and operators)

Stakeholder interviews – high level findings:

• Rental demand is high and wide



• Variety of housing types are needed for all levels of income



• Intersection of housing shortage and workforce retention



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Community Engagement

PESTLE categorization of stakeholder feedback (housing challenges)

P	E	S	T	L	E
Political	Economic	Social	Technological	Legal	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Government housing programs ◦ Building policies ◦ Tax policies ◦ Urban zoning laws ◦ Housing authority support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Inflation ◦ Supply chain ◦ Staffing shortages ◦ Toombs commercial growth ◦ Rent affordability ◦ Median family income ◦ Cost of living ◦ Income gap ◦ Rent subsidies ◦ Housing market ◦ Subcontractor/labor shortage ◦ Interest rates ◦ Development costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Limited housing supply ◦ Rental vs. homeownership ◦ Downtown amenities ◦ Workforce commute ◦ Demand for variety of housing options ◦ Demand for rental options across all income levels ◦ Employee attraction & retention ◦ Downtown revitalization ◦ Homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Current housing quality ◦ Current infrastructure ◦ Power grid & consumption needs ◦ Renewable energy ◦ Building materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Faircloth Amendment ◦ Zoning board decisions ◦ Zoning laws ◦ WOTUS (Waters of the US) & CWA (Clean Water Act) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Vacant land ◦ Sustainable building practices ◦ Energy consumption regulations ◦ Climate & weather conditions

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Community Engagement

PESTLE categorization of stakeholder feedback (housing challenges)

A Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal, and Environmental (PESTLE) categorization is a way to extract meaning from qualitative inputs



Rent Affordability (Economic)

Rental prices are making housing unattainable for local renters



Downtown Amenities (Social)

More amenities could boost quality of life and make Toombs more attractive to new residents



Contractor Shortage (Economic)

Lack of local, accessible contractors is complicating construction efforts



Employee Attraction & Retention (Social)

Difficulty attracting and retaining new employees partly due to housing challenges



Demand for Rental Housing (Social)

High demand for rental housing across all income levels

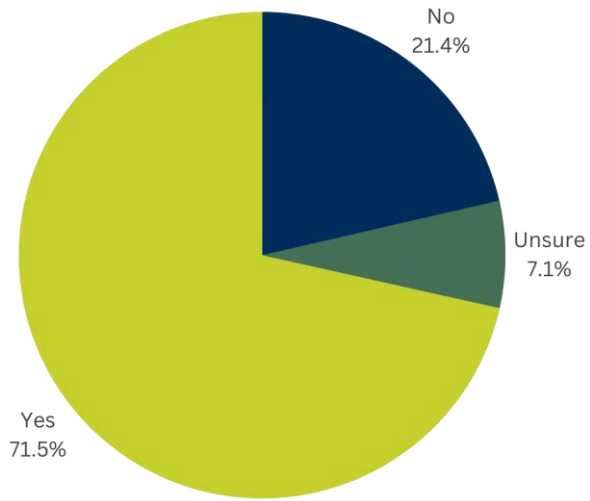
Community Engagement

Public Survey

Results

Are you aware that there is an affordable housing crisis in Toombs County?

394 Responses

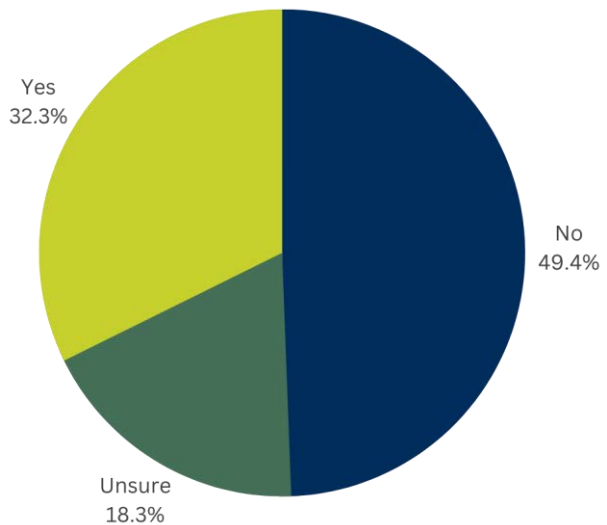


31

Results

Would you consider the housing in Toombs County to be affordable (in general)?

394 Responses



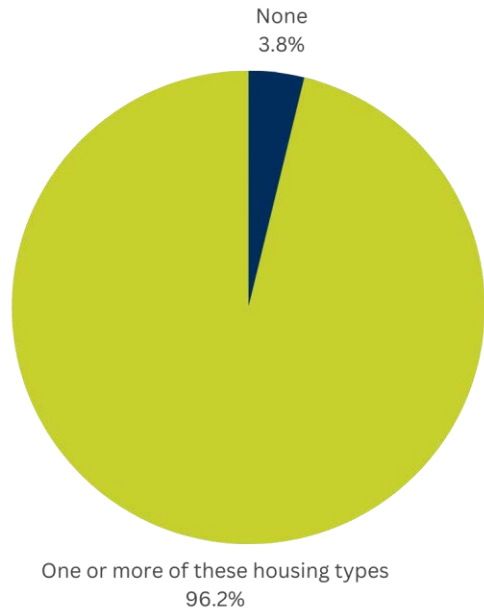
32

Results

What, if any, types of housing would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Apartments
- Condominiums
- Cottage Courts
- Courtyard Apartments
- Duplexes
- Live-Work Housing
- Retirement Housing
- Single-Family Housing
- Tiny Houses
- Townhomes
- Tri/Quad/Multi-Plexes

394 Responses



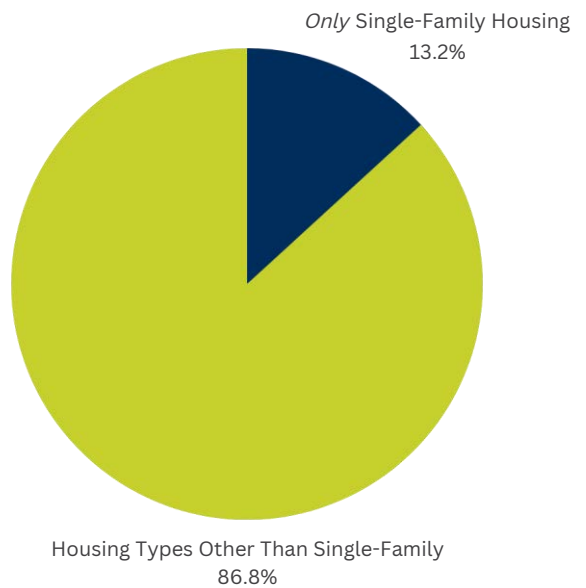
33

Results

What, if any, types of housing would you like to see more of in Toombs County?

- Accessory Dwelling Units
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- Retirement Housing
- Single-Family Housing
- Tiny Houses
- Townhomes
- Tri/Quad/Multi-Plexes

394 Responses



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Appendix C: Housing Forum Presentation

Missing Middle Housing

- **Spectrum** between single family housing and large multifamily apartments.
- Duplexes, townhouses, cottage courts, accessory dwelling units, mixed-use commercial/residential (live-work) options, etc.
- **Previously abundant** in the US, and have since been **outlawed by most zoning** nationwide.
- Toombs has a modest amount of missing middle housing units.

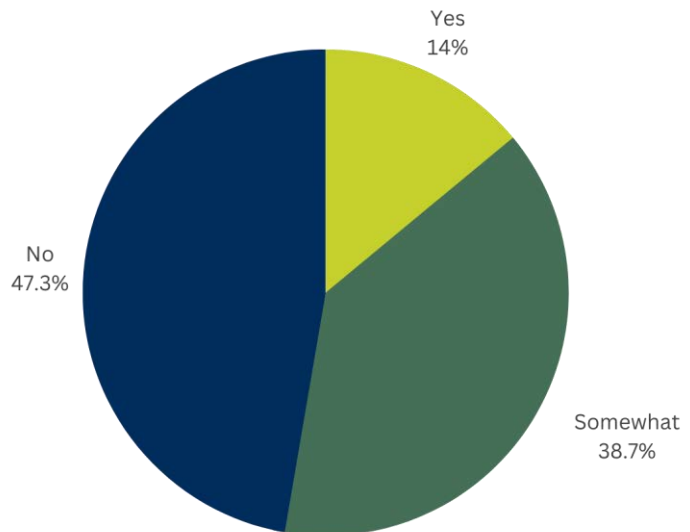


35

Results

Are you satisfied with the available amenities in Toombs County? (e.g. restaurants, entertainment, parks, bike paths, etc.)

394 Responses



36

What did you have to say about housing in Toombs?

**There's unanimous agreement:
We need more housing.**

37

**Where should we build
more housing?**

38

Ideas & opportunities

New housing development

39

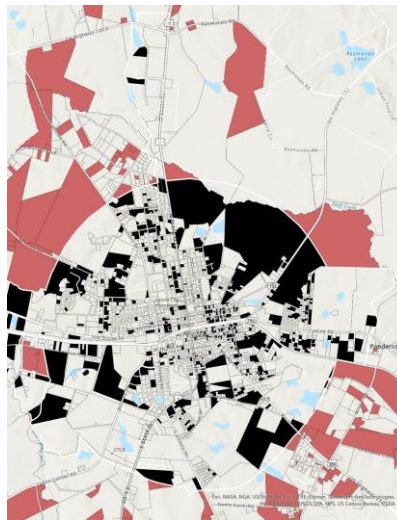
New Housing Development

Undeveloped Land

Undeveloped land within Toombs' major city centers presents the best opportunities for new development

- There are approximately 2600 acres of undeveloped land in Vidalia
 - This represents about 23% of the city's land area
- Lyons has approximately 1300 acres of undeveloped land
 - Represents 25% of the city's land area

Lyons



Vidalia



■ Undeveloped (within city limits) ■ Undeveloped (within 1 mi of city limits)

40

New Housing Development

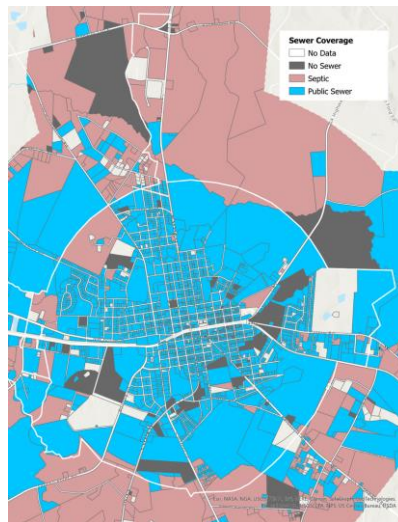
Public Infrastructure

Distribution of public sewer largely coincides with the city limits of Lyons and Vidalia

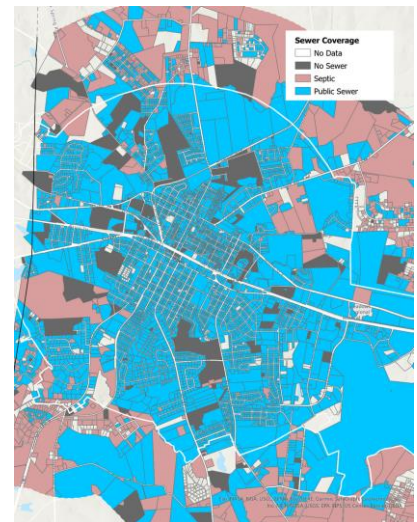
- Developing with a priority to connect public sewer to new developments will yield a variety of benefits
 - Maximizing housing unit potential with minimal env. impact
 - Consuming less land, which can be used as greenspace or left in a natural state
 - Encouraging compact urban form
 - Cost savings by maximizing use of existing infrastructure

41

Lyons



Vidalia



New Housing Development

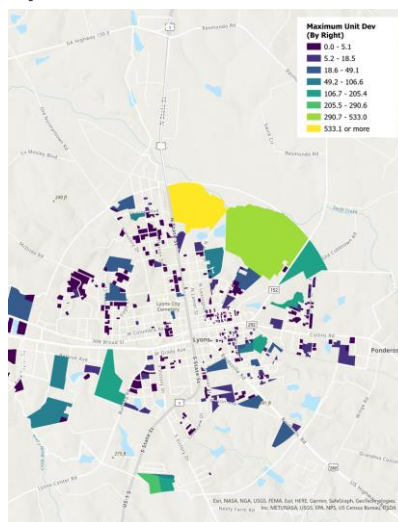
Potential Units By Right

Zoning alignment is a major bonus to developers seeking to add more residential units

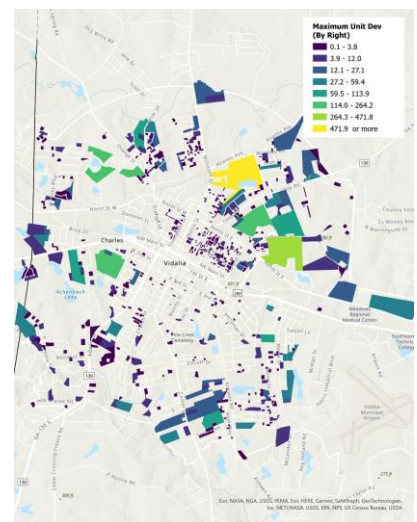
- Zoning categories that allow residential units do not need to be rezoned (unless rezoning for housing types)
- Maps depict vacant parcels with zoning that allows residential development
- Maximum unit potential calculated as a function of acreage and maximum allowable density per acre
- Real max depends on site conditions and more
- Appropriateness of new developments should consider site design

42

Lyons

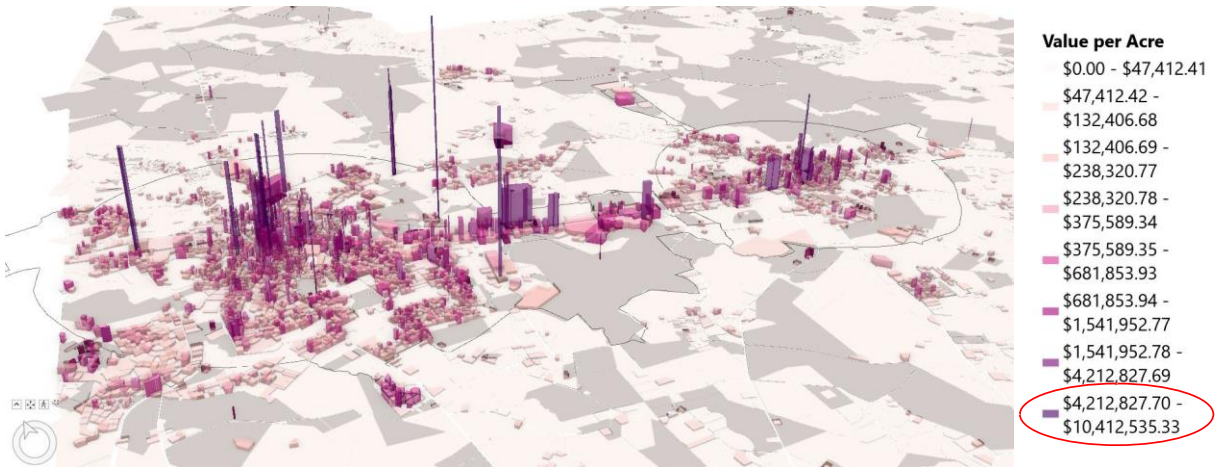


Vidalia



New housing development

Value per acre – highest in downtown cores



43

Where should we build more housing?

Near and in downtowns are the best places for new residential construction.

44

What types of housing should we build?

45

Missing Middle Housing

- Previously abundant in the US, and have since been outlawed by most zoning nationwide.
- Toombs has a modest amount of missing middle housing units.



46

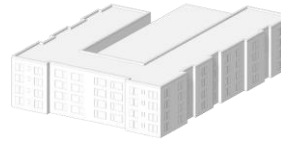
Housing Stock

Diversity of possible housing types



Variety & supply

Boosting income-aligned housing **supply & variety** gradually while preserving existing housing supply



Supply only

A sudden influx of units, usually through one-time incentives

Permitting housing variety can boost housing supply, suit a spectrum of lifestyle needs, and gradually add affordable housing stock.

47

Housing Stock

Infill Development Potential



Some zoning regulations require lot sizes that could realistically support more than one home. By altering or removing this restriction, municipalities can add more housing units while maintaining a single-family character.

Graphic Source: Kronberg Urbanists & Architects

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Housing Stock

Diversity of possible housing types



49

Ideas & opportunities

Conceptual designs

Conceptual designs illustrate development ideas for a selection of vacant lots in Vidalia and Lyons.

50

Conceptual designs

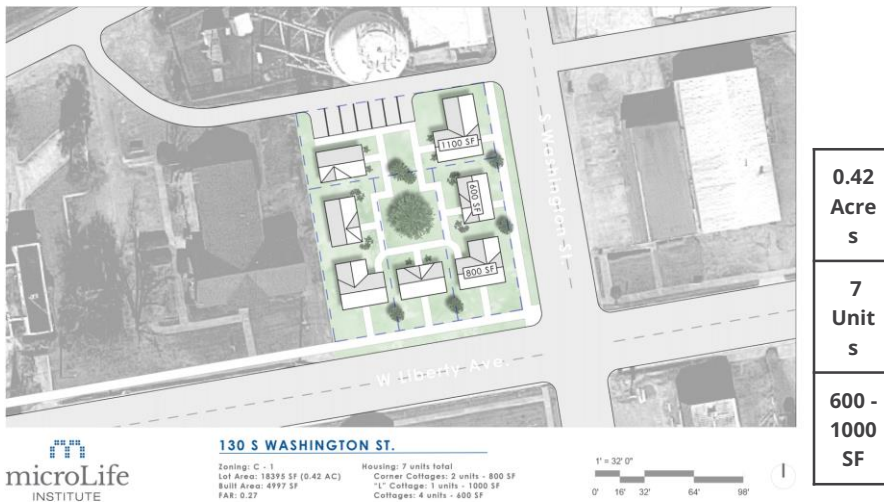
Design 1, Lyons



51

Conceptual designs

Design 2, Lyons



52

Conceptual designs

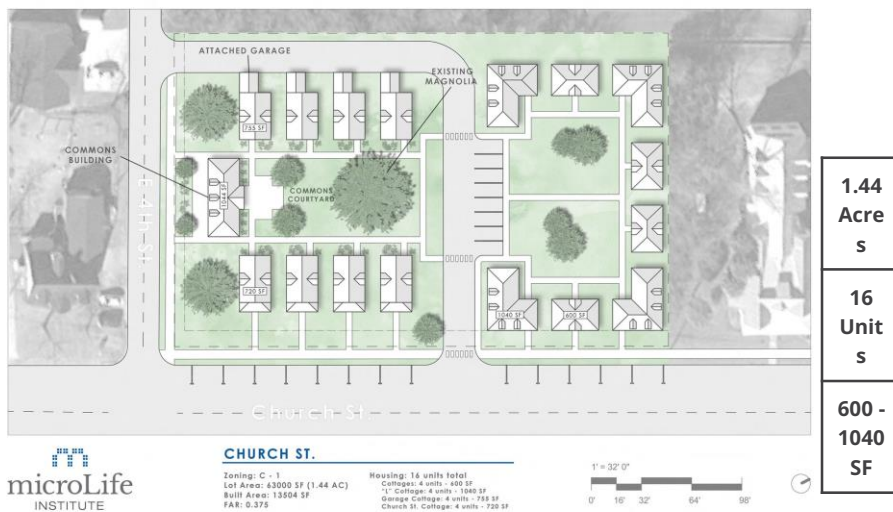
Design 3, Vidalia



53

Conceptual designs

Design 4, Vidalia



54

The Cottages on Vaughan

Clarkston, Georgia



0.57 Acre s
8 Unit s
250 - 492 SF



55

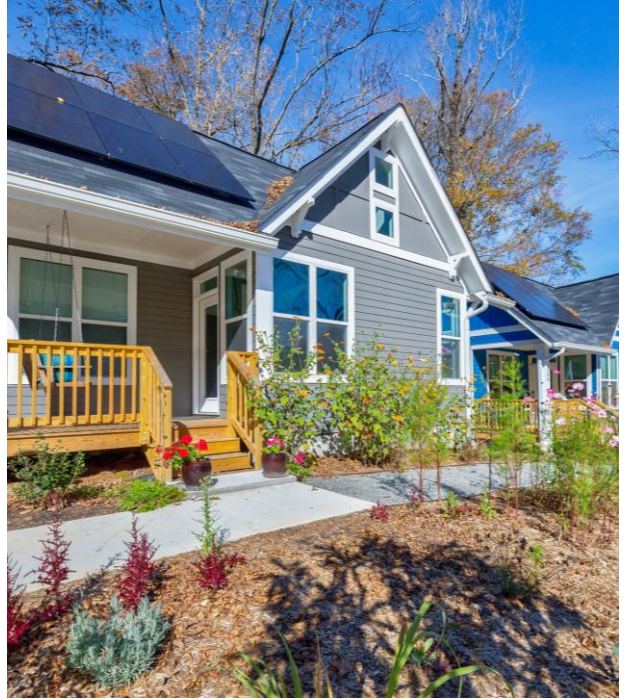
The Cottages on Vaughan

Clarkston, Georgia



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Appendix C: Housing Forum Presentation



57



58

What types of housing should we build?

Missing middle infill housing types can boost supply.

Quality, innovative site design makes all the difference.

59

What's next?

60

Appendix C: Housing Forum Presentation

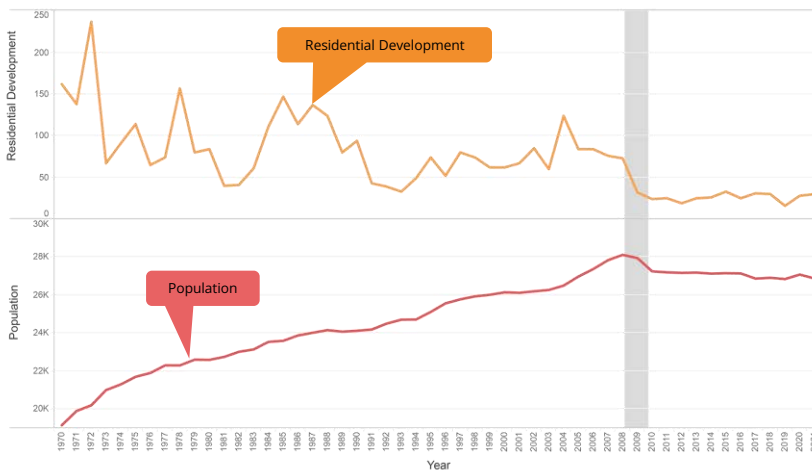
Not enough people or not enough housing?



61

Housing = Economic Development

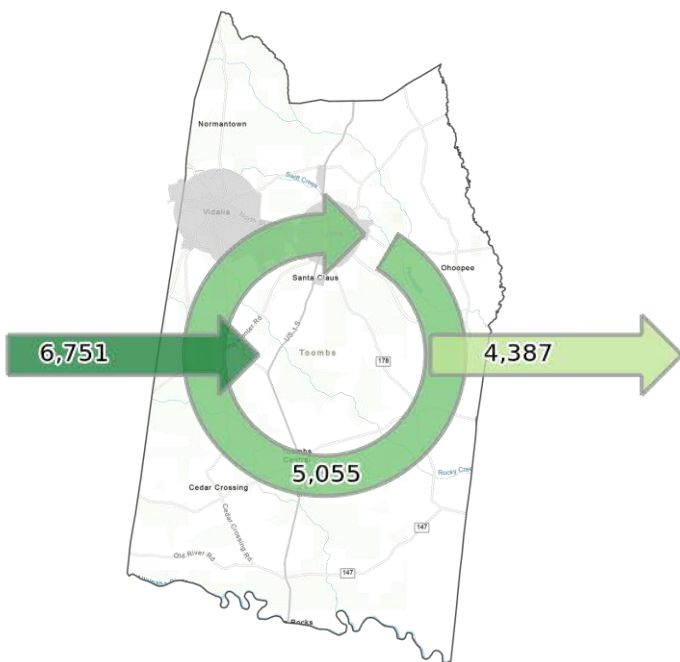
Housing opportunity is essential to a robust community



- Residential construction was more active before the 2008 recession and has not recovered
- Population was steadily increasing over the same period
- As construction has lulled, population has flatlined
- **New residential construction can potentially invigorate new population growth**

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Appendix C: Housing Forum Presentation



Capturing the Workforce

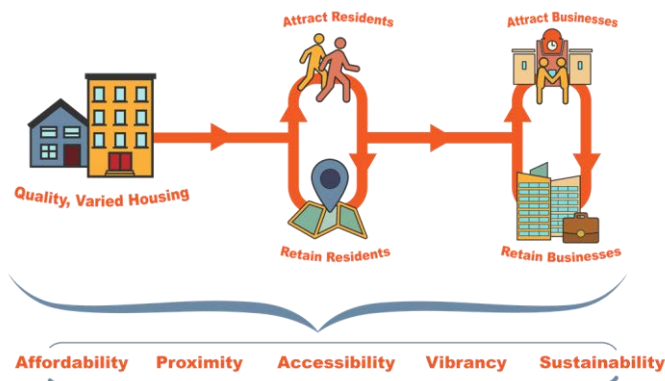
- Thousands of people are commuting from outside of the county to work in Toombs
 - ~6,750 inflow
 - ~4,400 outflow
 - ~5,500 living and working in Toombs
- Approximately 2,400 more people are coming into Toombs to work than are leaving to work elsewhere
- How can Toombs County attract and capture that workforce as permanent residents?**

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Housing = Economic Development

Housing opportunity is essential to a robust community

- Quality, varied housing is needed to serve the needs of a diverse population
- Housing supply builds resilience and capacity for modest growth
- Diverse housing, in type and price point leads to a sustainable community
- Housing comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, and types—it does not have to come at the expense of community character
- Housing IS economic development



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Next Steps

Strategies, incentives,
and policies

65

Action Plan



Engage the Community



Decide where to add housing



Amend your zoning



Establish incentives for housing diversity

66

Action Plan

Engage the community.

Good news! You're already here...

- Continue to collect feedback from community leaders
- Collaborate with neighborhoods to identify rehab and development opportunities
- Keep residents informed on planned zoning changes

67

Action Plan

Decide where to add housing.

- Overlap with existing infrastructure and amenities
- Help build neighborhood and city identity
- Stewardship of land as an economic resource
- Sustainability of natural resources
- Housing as economic development

68

Action Plan

Amend your zoning.

- Eliminate or reduce square foot mins. for units
- Reduce minimum lot sizes
- Reduce setbacks and buffers (allow zero-lot-line development)
- Increase allowable density where appropriate
- Eliminate or reduce parking minimums; count on-street parking towards reqs
- Incorporate mixed-use development in downtown areas
- Allow ADUs in all districts

69

Action Plan

Incentivize housing diversity...and density...in the right places.



Allow a wider range of housing types, by-right, especially in downtown areas

70

Action Plan

Incentivize housing development.

- Allowing higher densities in zoning districts
- Reduced parking requirements
- Expediting permitting
- Modifying architectural requirements
- Waiving or reducing impact and/or tap fees
- Emphasizing coordination to eliminate procedural barriers

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Questions?



Georgia Conservancy
Luben Raytchev &
Michaela Master



MicroLife Institute
Will Johnston &
Erica Copenhaver

72

PART II: HOUSING PANEL



David Sikes
Chairman, Toombs
County Commission



Greg McKenzie, Jr.
Builder / Real Estate
Broker



Nick Overstreet
City Manager,
Vidalia

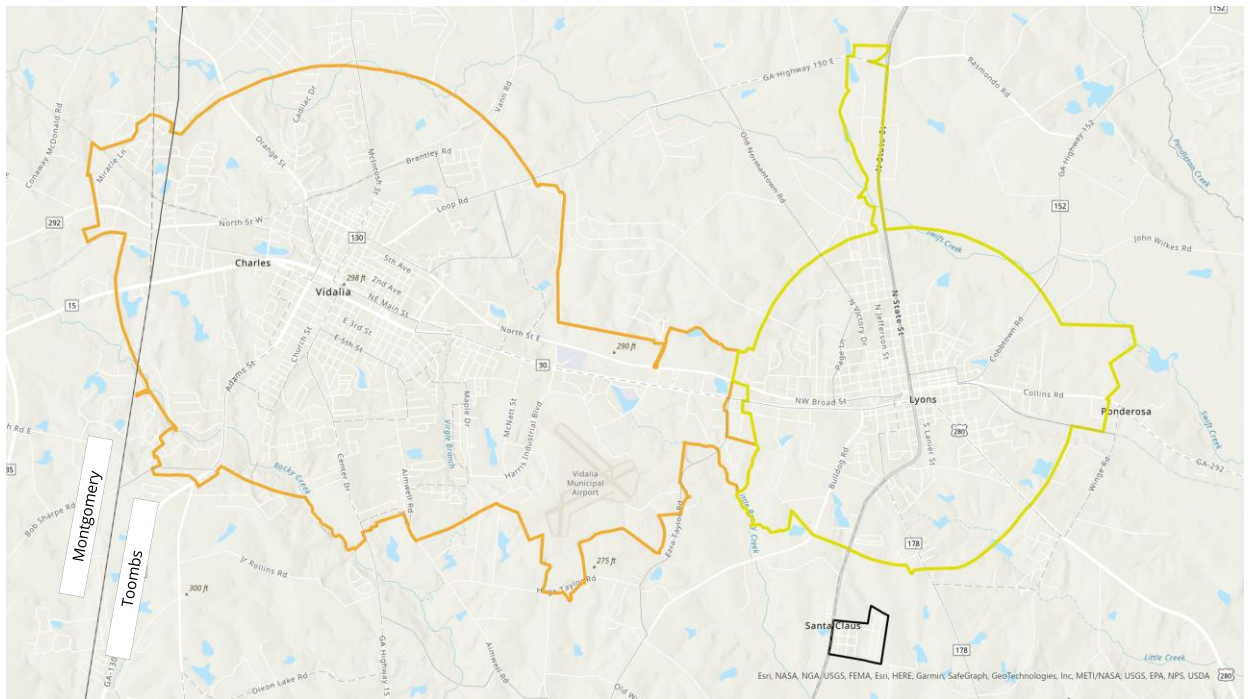


Jason Hall
City Manager,
Lyons



Matt Hasbrouk
Chief Executive
Officer, Memorial
Health | Meadows
Hospital

73



74

Stay Tuned for Next Steps.



75

Thank you!



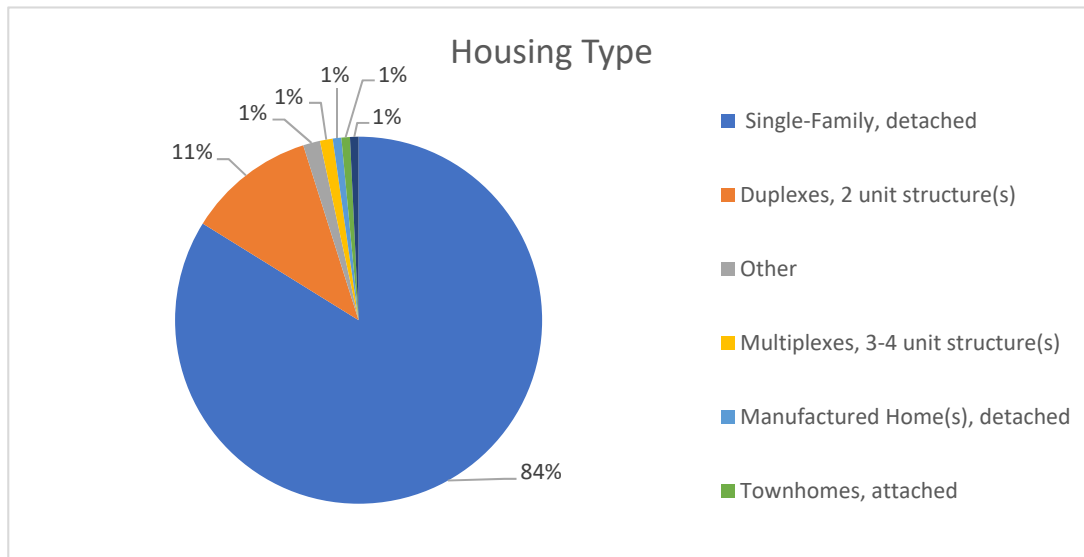
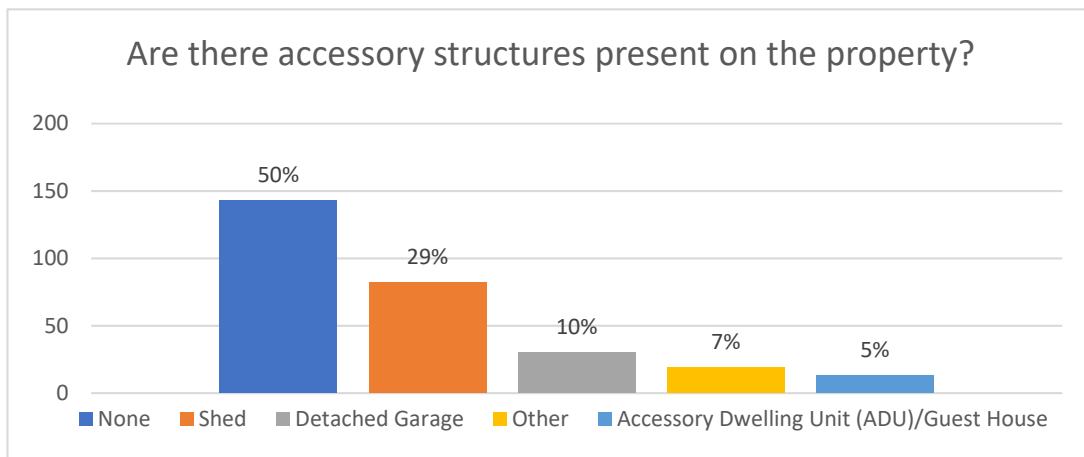
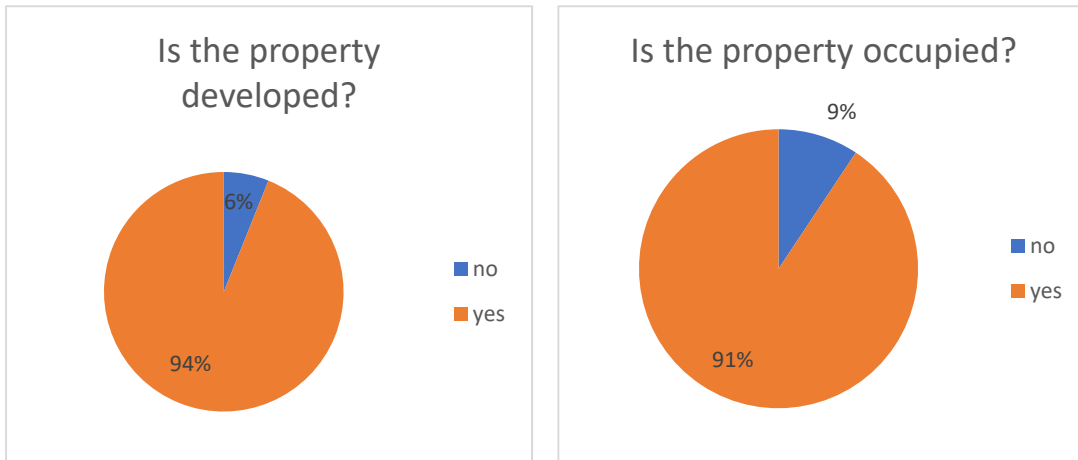
Georgia Conservancy
Luben Raytchev &
Michaela Master



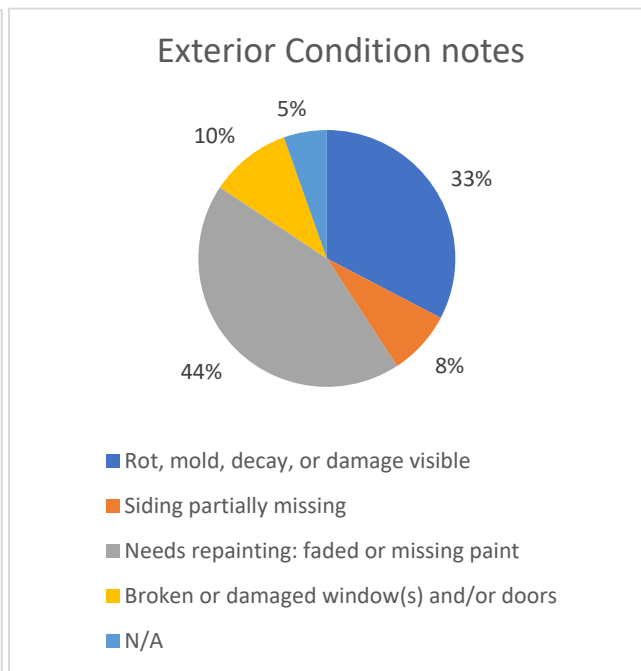
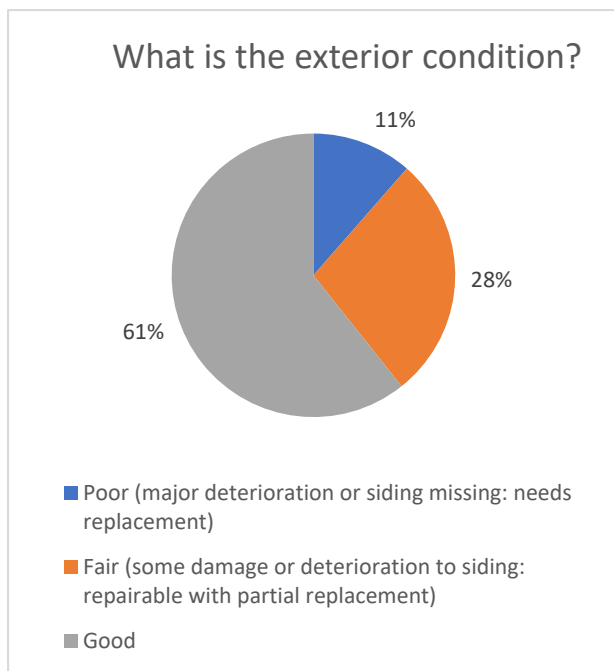
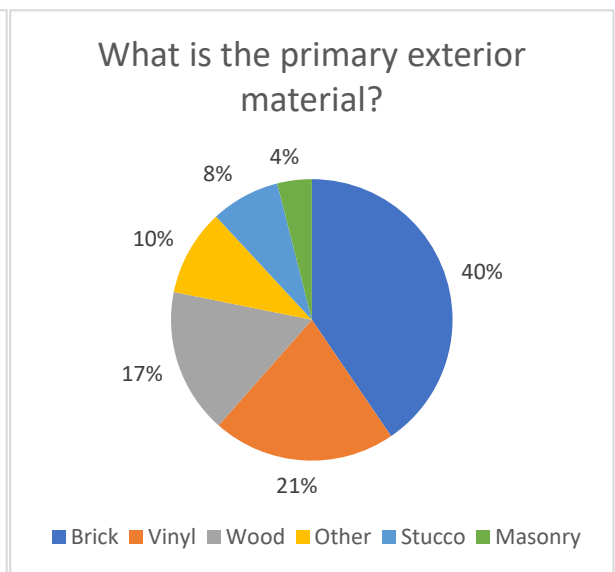
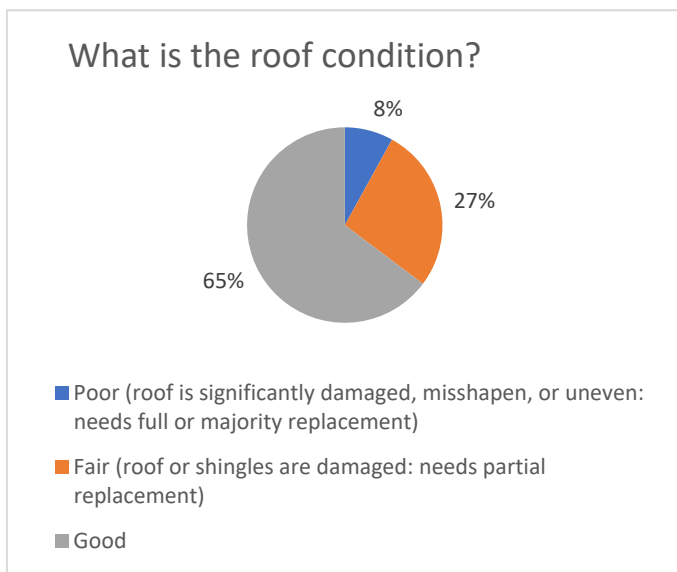
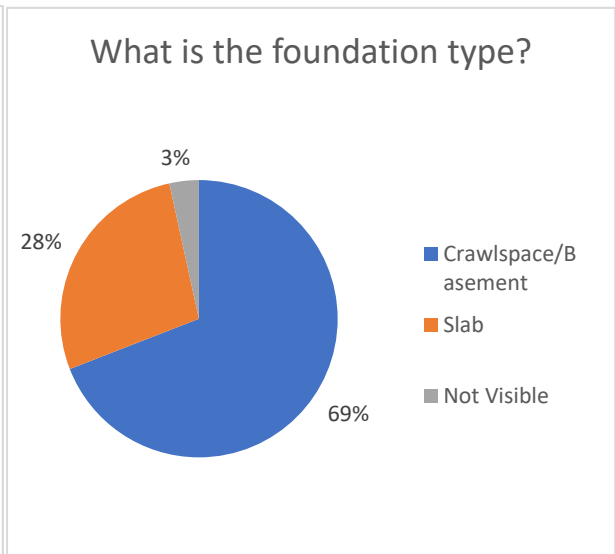
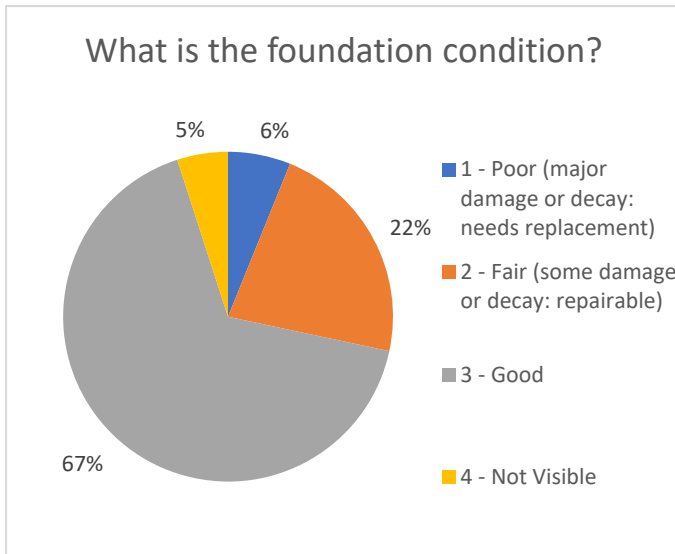
MicroLife Institute
Will Johnston &
Erica Copenhaver

76

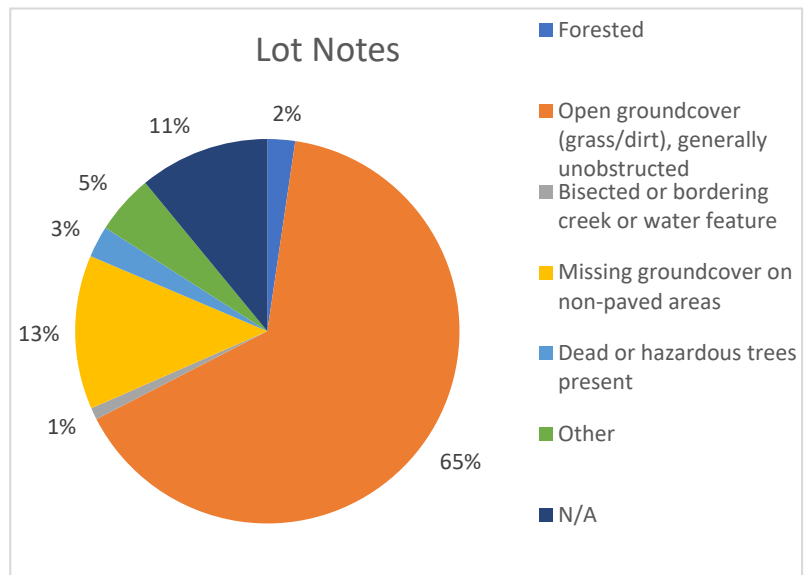
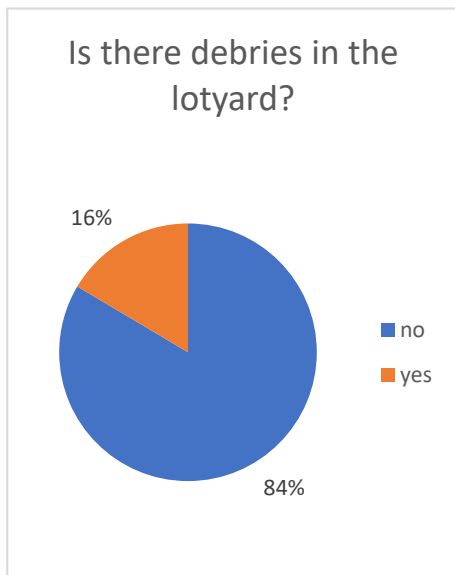
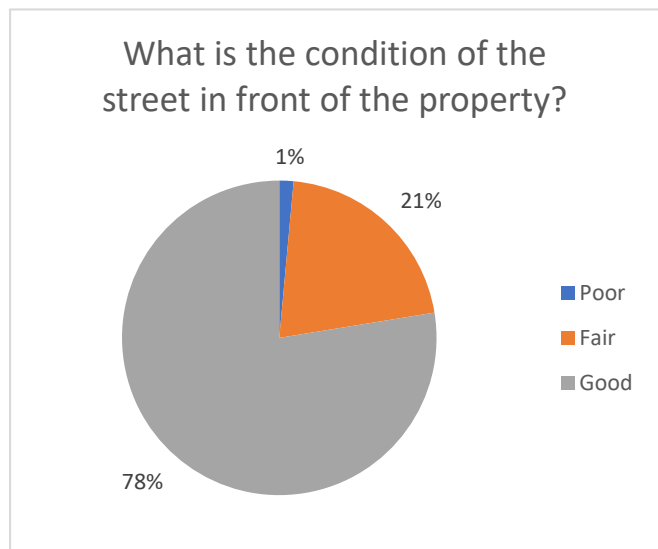
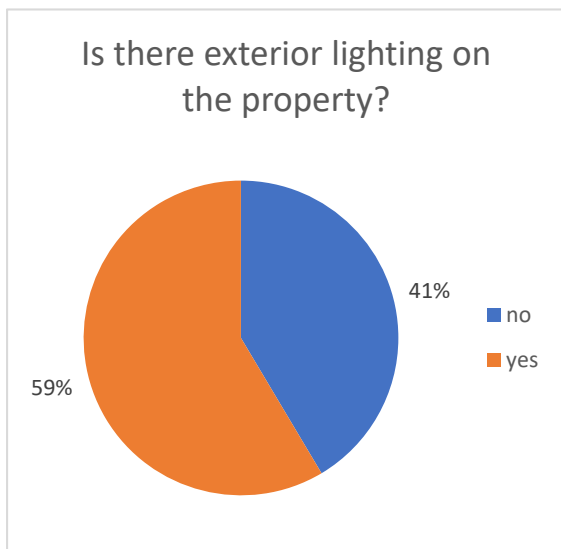
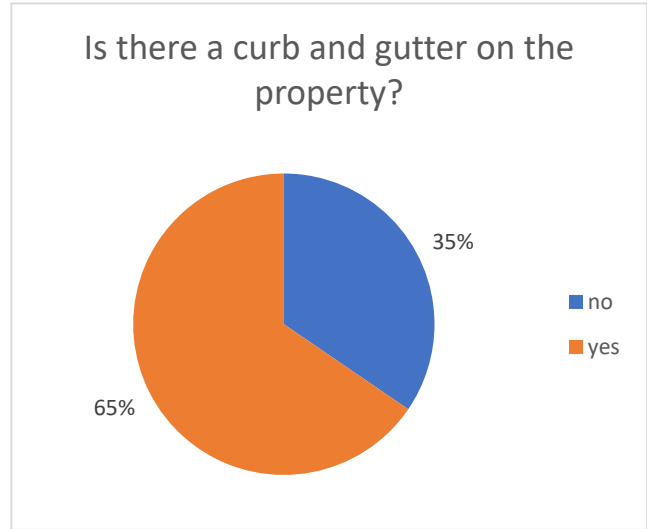
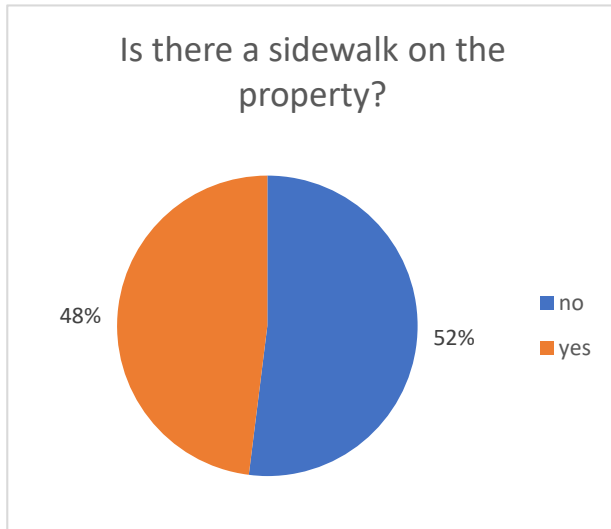
Neighborhood Assessment Full Results - Vidalia



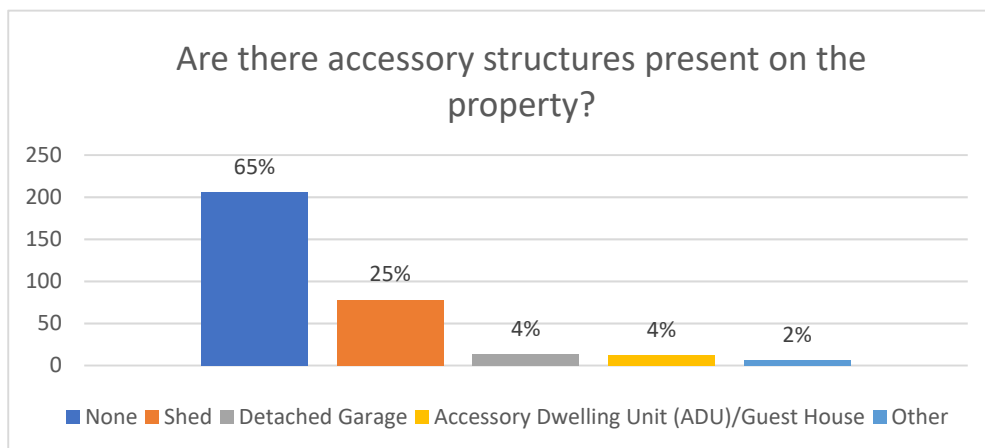
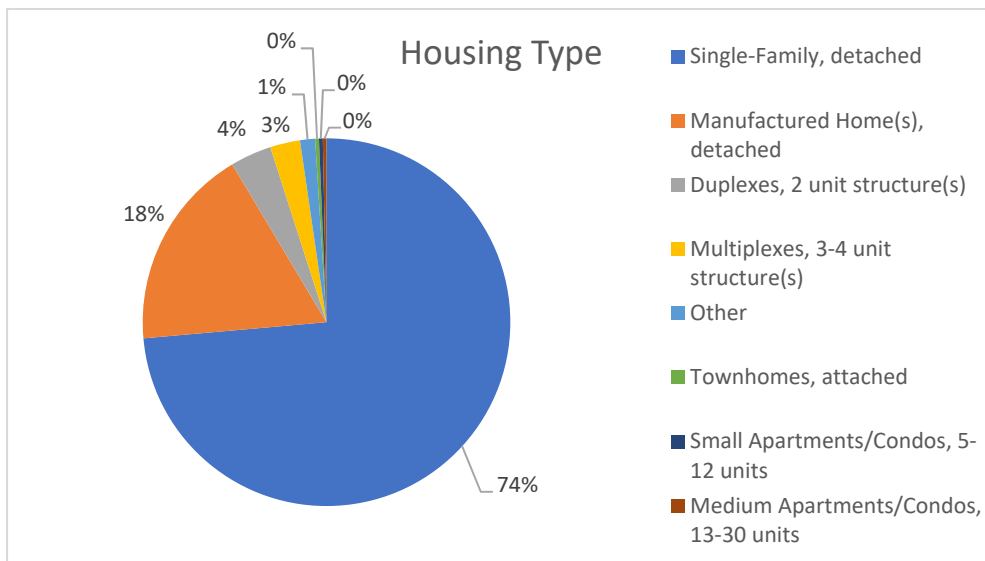
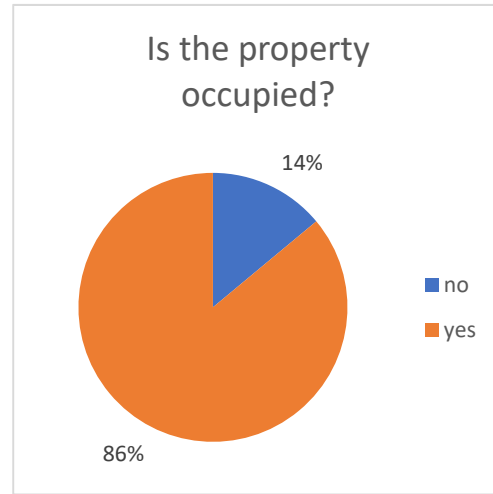
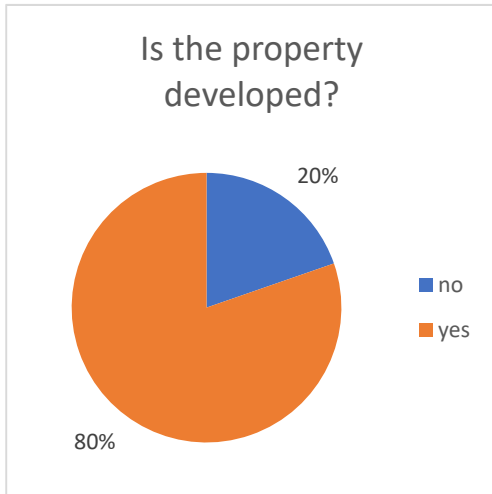
Appendix D: Neighborhood Assessment Results



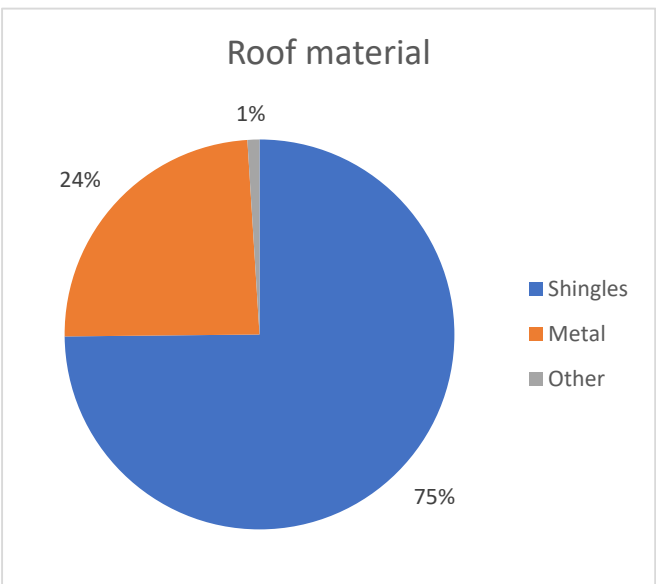
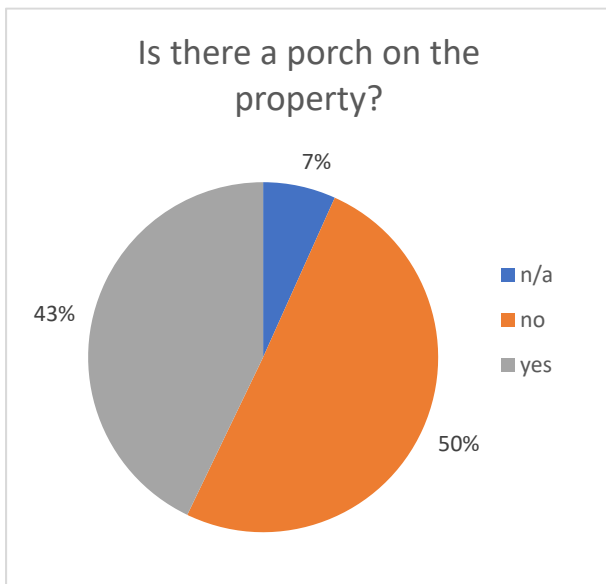
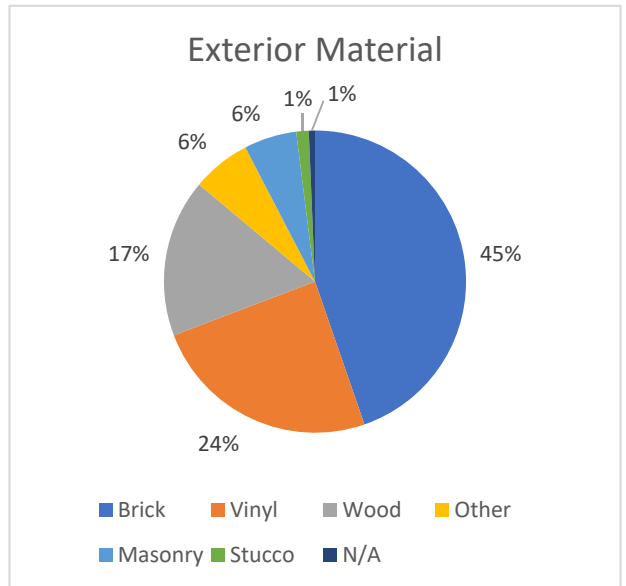
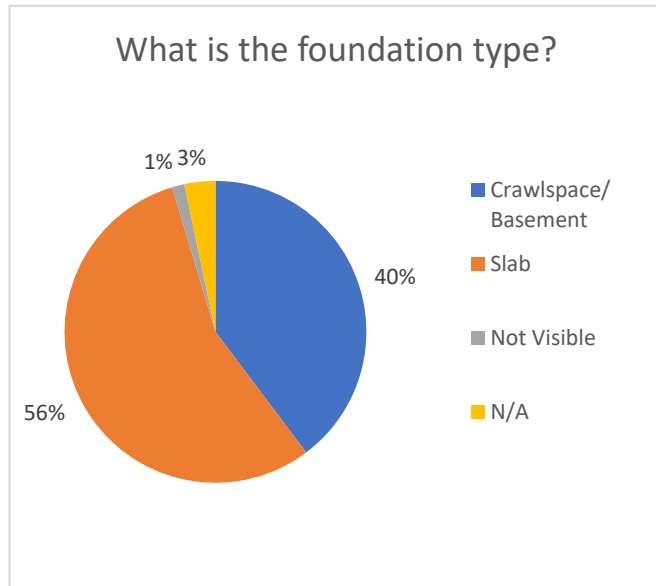
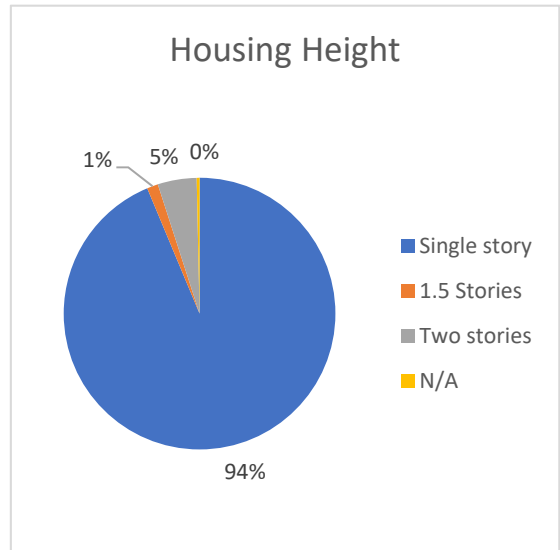
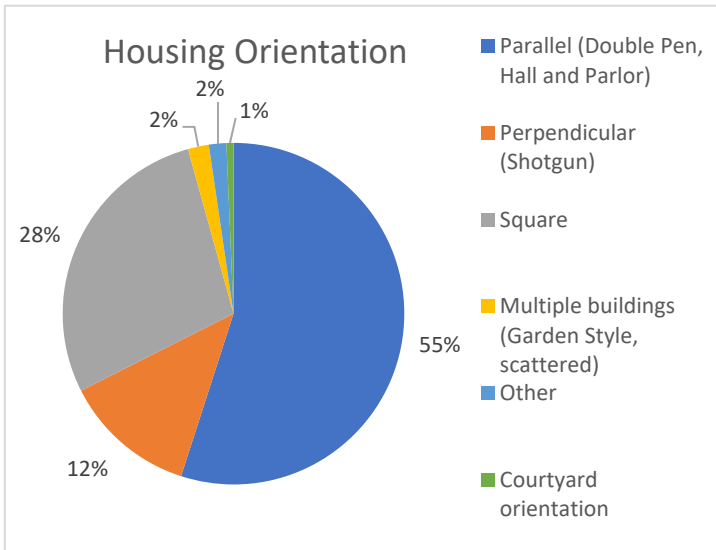
Appendix D: Neighborhood Assessment Results



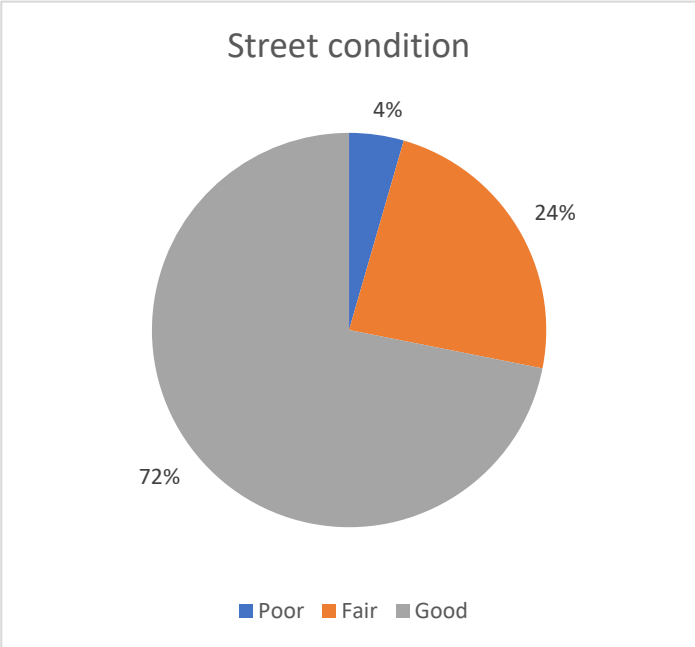
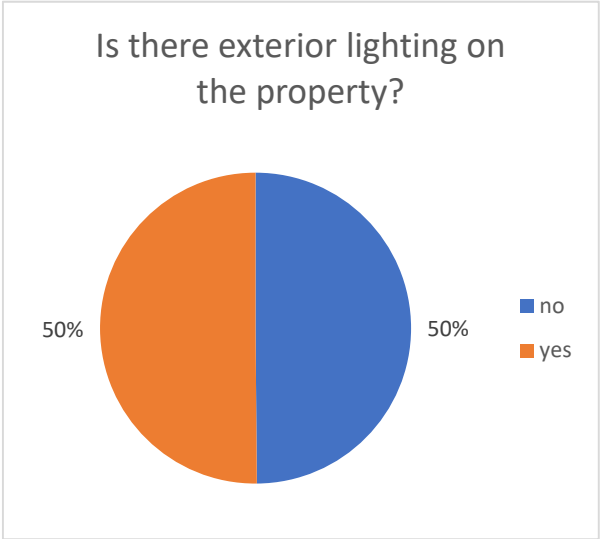
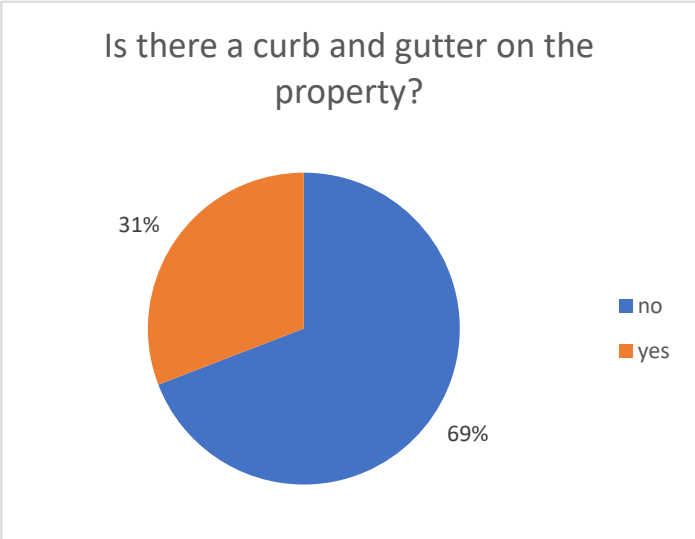
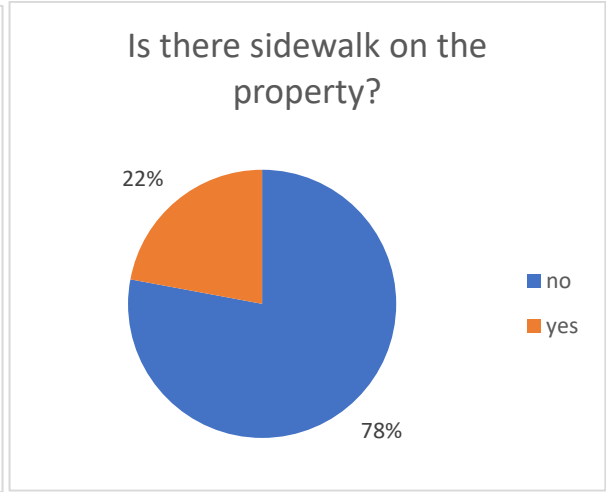
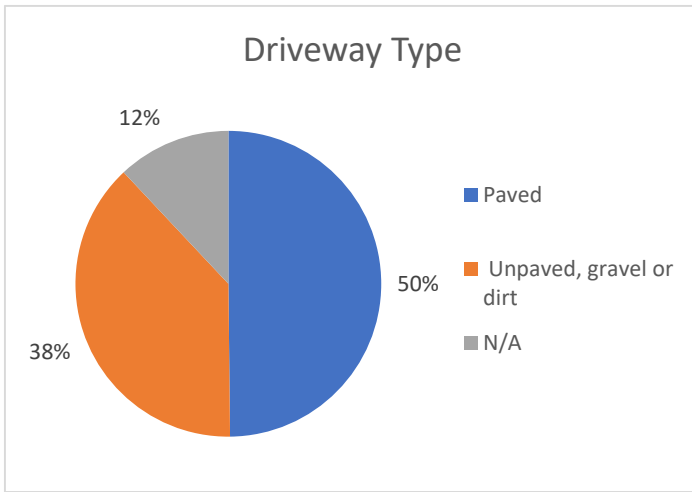
Neighborhood Assessment Full Results - Lyons



Appendix D: Neighborhood Assessment Results



Appendix D: Neighborhood Assessment Results



Appendix D: Neighborhood Assessment Results

