

2023 Comprehensive Plan



October – 2023





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INTRODUCTION

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PURPOSE

The purpose of planning and community development is to provide guidance for everyday decision-making by local government officials and other community leaders. Within Georgia, comprehensive plans are seen as both a useful tool for long-term government efficiency and for ensuring sound land use development. Over time, such documents foster a wise use of fiscal and environmental resources, help coordinate community improvements across agencies, and enables citizen input in both fostering a vision for the future and outlining a practical means for achieving that vision. Further, as a measure designed to ensure State programs are being utilized wisely, State regulations require local governments to maintain their comprehensive plans to have access to various forms of State assistance.

This document, the *Homer 2023 Comprehensive Plan*, represents the culmination of the efforts to plan for the future well-being of the Town. The residents and various stakeholders worked to identify the critical, consensus issues and goals for their communities, and implementing the plan will help the governments address those critical issues and opportunities while moving towards realization of the unique vision for its future. Thus, local planning recognizes that assets can be improved, liabilities can be mitigated, and opportunities can be cultivated.

Scope

This document addresses the local planning requirements and community development of Homer, Ga. Some consideration has been given to those areas and neighboring political entities that influence conditions within the town, however, all the cited issues, objectives, and opportunities discussed herein are solely focused on the Town or its partnering agencies.





Plan Elements

This comprehensive plan serves to meet the requirements and intent of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’s “Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning,” as amended in 2013, and the Georgia Planning Act of 1989. In accordance with those standards, this plan contains at a minimum the following elements:

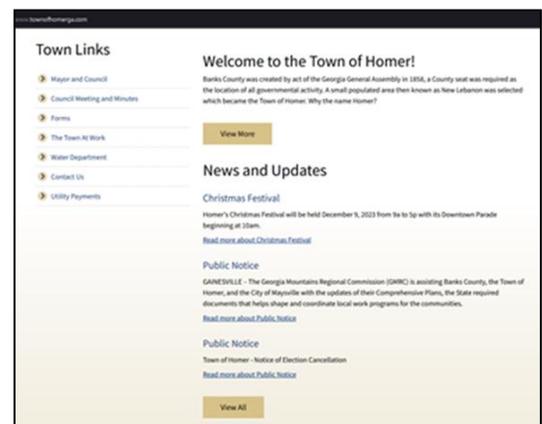
- Community Goals/ Vision)
- Statement of Needs and Opportunities
- Community Work Program
- Environmental Compliance Factors
- Assessment of Broadband Capacity and Needs

A PUBLIC PROCESS

The development of a comprehensive plan is dependent on public participation. Public involvement serves to educate community leaders about local issues and to build constituency support – both necessary ingredients for any successful plan. Each person at the table represents many others and offers insight on something overlooked by planners. When the citizens see the effect they can have, it gives them a sense of ownership over the plan; it is not just a plan document mandated by a government agency.

The planning process for the Homer Comprehensive Plan began in early 2023 as community leaders considered the scope of work and identified nominees for the Advisory Committee. During this time, the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) worked with local government staff to evaluate needs and performance of local services, utilities, and programs. The GMRC also spoke with neighboring communities and State agencies to identify opportunities for collaboration or conflicts and assess forces that might affect Homer and the greater area.

Online surveys were made available to the public in February. Announcements were made in public meetings and in the media, with the link to the survey available off the Town’s web site. Surveys would remain available through July to ensure area residents and stakeholders have ample opportunity to provide their comments and voice their goals for the community. (A summary of results and comments provided in the appendices.) Roughly 65 respondents took the survey, with the results providing insight into the prevailing concerns and desires of area residents.



Several public forums were also held at Town Hall, inviting the public to view draft material, participate in discussions about key issues, and ask questions about the process. Residents were also invited to submit their comments at any time via the GMRC staff contacts or to the City Planning Director. The GMRC also coordinated the process with those for the Town of Homer and Banks County, working to ensure the respective documents would prove compatible in addressing common or shared issues.



COMMUNITY VISION

The Minimum Standards and Requirements for Local Comprehensive Planning defines a community vision as something "... intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction." It is required as an element of the comprehensive plan so that communities can truly establish a pure and simple ideal for themselves in a format that is easily expressed and understood.

Visioning provides communities with an opportunity to pause and consider the "big picture" as well as to attempt to clearly define their ideal future. Developing a vision means that the community has tried to identify current values, describe how they're to be realized in the future and use that image as a foundation for short and long-term planning. As a process this also requires the community to develop a consensus on what conditions to change or to preserve.

ABOUT HOMER



Lying near the center of the county, Homer is the county seat for Banks County, Georgia. It is the civic center of an agricultural region, yet with only about 1,500 residents Homer remains a rural community despite the fringes of the county experiencing suburbanization. The town has retained some commercial activity (largely of neighborhood scale to support existing residents) and is the base for most County offices and operations, including park facilities and schools, but Homer is mostly seen as a residential hub for employment and commerce engines located elsewhere.

As a hometown, Homer is a bucolic and quiet setting. Various forms and sizes of residential units can be found within a mile radius from the heart of the community, including active farms, a golf course subdivision, and historic homes. Main Street is not as flush with businesses as other communities, but it is the location of some public events and has opportunities for growth. The Town actively works to retain historic resources while also pursuing infill development in hopes of revitalizing the town's core.

	Total Population		Pop. Change	
	2010	2022	#	%
Banks County	18,395	19,328	933	5.1%
Alto town (pt.)	516	372	-144	-27.9%
Baldwin city (pt.)	741	700	-41	-5.5%
Gillsville city (pt.)	28	94	66	235.7%
Homer town	1,141	1,526	385	33.7%
Lula city (pt.)	158	337	179	113.3%
Maysville town (pt.)	926	1,159	233	25.2%
Balance of Banks Co.	14,885	15,140	255	1.7%

Homer's evolution depends on coordination with Banks County and managing several economic factors that could attract industry, particularly wastewater capacity. Should the region continue to see development with increases in density, Homer could develop into a stronger civic and social center.



VISION AND GOALS

A requirement for comprehensive plans in Georgia, the community vision is intended to provide a complete picture of what the community desires to become. The vision must be based on public input, the assessment of current and future needs and be supported by the goals, policies and objectives in the comprehensive plan. In addition, there must be consistency between the community vision and DCA's Quality Community Objectives and compatibility with the visions of other communities within the region.

The vision statement for Homer originated from previous planning cycles, derived from the various comments and suggestions raised during public meetings and through the available survey processes. The updated statement encapsulates the basic principles and values desired by existing residents and stakeholders, with an emphasis on desires to retain their community's existing values going forward. Any amendments were derived from the words used by residents to illustrate values they feel describe the city as it is today *AND* that they desire to see embodied a generation from now.

The reference to family values is intended to show a community united and considerate of the needs of the community. While acknowledging their role as the civic seat for Banks County, the residents of Homer would like to see the town assume more of a cultural and commercial role, as well. This expresses the desire of the Town to support industry and cultural activities, while also acknowledging the rural, small-town atmosphere they wish to retain.

Priority Values Submitted During the Planning Process

Safe
Small town feel
Small
Quiet
Rural
Charming
Quaint
Affordable
Agriculture
Beautiful
Clean
Friendly
Family oriented

The Town of Homer is a community of family values and a safe place where all residents can live, work and play, an attractive and affordable rural destination for business and culture, and a place anyone would be proud to call home.





Community Goals

In addition to the values identified within the Vision Statement, other goals for Homer were raised for consideration. In most cases, these goals are ideal principles and objectives that simply could not be efficiently incorporated into the Vision Statement but generally complement the values expressed therein.

- ***Increase the volume and diversity of business and industry in and around the town*** – In order for Homer to become more self-sustaining economically and to increase its status among other communities in the region, Homer must seek to attract and support economic development beyond the neighborhood scale options along Main Street.
- ***Provide more complete utilities throughout the town*** – For Homer to attract and sustain growth will require additional utilities, especially sewer service.
- ***Develop infill around historic downtown and along Main Street*** – Homer has several properties within downtown that are viable for redevelopment. The ideal is for Main Street to achieve economic stability and a vitality that lasts through/beyond common business hours.





COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

3

The land use management policies and capital improvement programs for local governments shape development patterns that affect growth and the management of sensitive social and environmental areas. Communities should assess their current and projected conditions to identify needs regarding the built environment and how to efficiently provide services to the community in the future.

DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND INFLUENCES

I-985/ GA 365 in Hall County, and I-85 in Jackson County, are rapidly becoming industrial growth corridors. Hall County is projected to add another 100,000 residents within the next 25 years, and Jackson County another 50,000. To maximize their economies for such potential growth, both Hall and Jackson Counties and their partners are actively working to utilize the highways as harbors for goods production and related industrial activity. Already the combined home to large employers such as Kubota, SK Batteries, Amazon, this activity will increase once Gainesville welcomes the Georgia Port Authority's next inland port – A rail port just used to expedite freight transport between northeast Georgia and the port of Savannah. The Georgia Dept. of Transportation, meanwhile, is actively planning for the eventual widening of I-85 and the possible inclusion of high-speed passenger rail within the same vicinity. Banks County has already been fielding inquiries about potential development at their two I-85 interchanges, and this pressure is likely to increase as more commercial and industrial interests seek to capitalize on the arterial highways.



Industrial development along I-85, and an inland port comparable to one proposed for Gainesville.

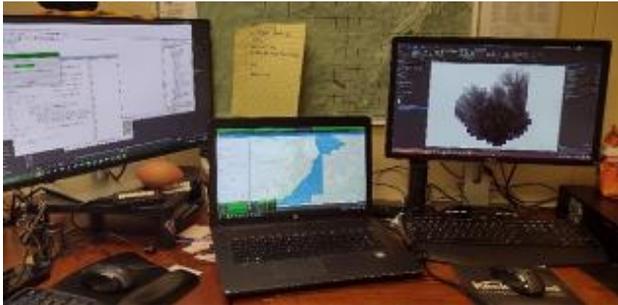
One regional trend is **the growing importance of the shipping and warehousing industry.** As both households and businesses rely more heavily on the direct delivery of goods, the facilities needed to store and manage transport of these goods are becoming more common and more dispersed. Though the largest distribution centers remain clustered near key arterial intersections, smaller facilities are locating in more diverse suburban and rural locations. Such developments can impact traffic patterns, exacerbate flood issues in sensitive areas, and attract other comparable uses. They can also provide another non-residential source of property taxes, some employment, and equate to faster delivery of goods.

US 441 in Banks County has potential for economic development similar to GA 365. While much less developed now, and with Banks County actively searching for ways to preserve its rural character, US 441 may not see as much industrial activity introduced in the next generation, but it will grow increasingly vital as a freight corridor and is expected to absorb some development near the Baldwin/ Cornelia area and further south in Banks Crossing. That access to I-85 and the regional retail centers at Banks Crossing invites future growth, pending Banks County's plans to manage development.

Though Banks County has communications access, **there remains an ever-increasing demand for broadband capacity across all sectors of the community.** Similar to how water and sewer lines were



once the anchor draws for economic development, today most businesses and residents seek access to the highest speed and capacity of broadband service due to the increasing importance of the internet in all aspects of our lives. Schools, medical offices, retail outlets, governments, and even religious institutions rely on their online activities to facilitate operation. Residents use the internet for entertainment, to pay bills, to communicate with others, work from home, and for varieties of shopping. This means local governments are all the more dependent on supporting a service that not only provides high capacity but also can reach as much of their community as possible.



Broadband capacity and elder care services will become increasingly important to Banks County.

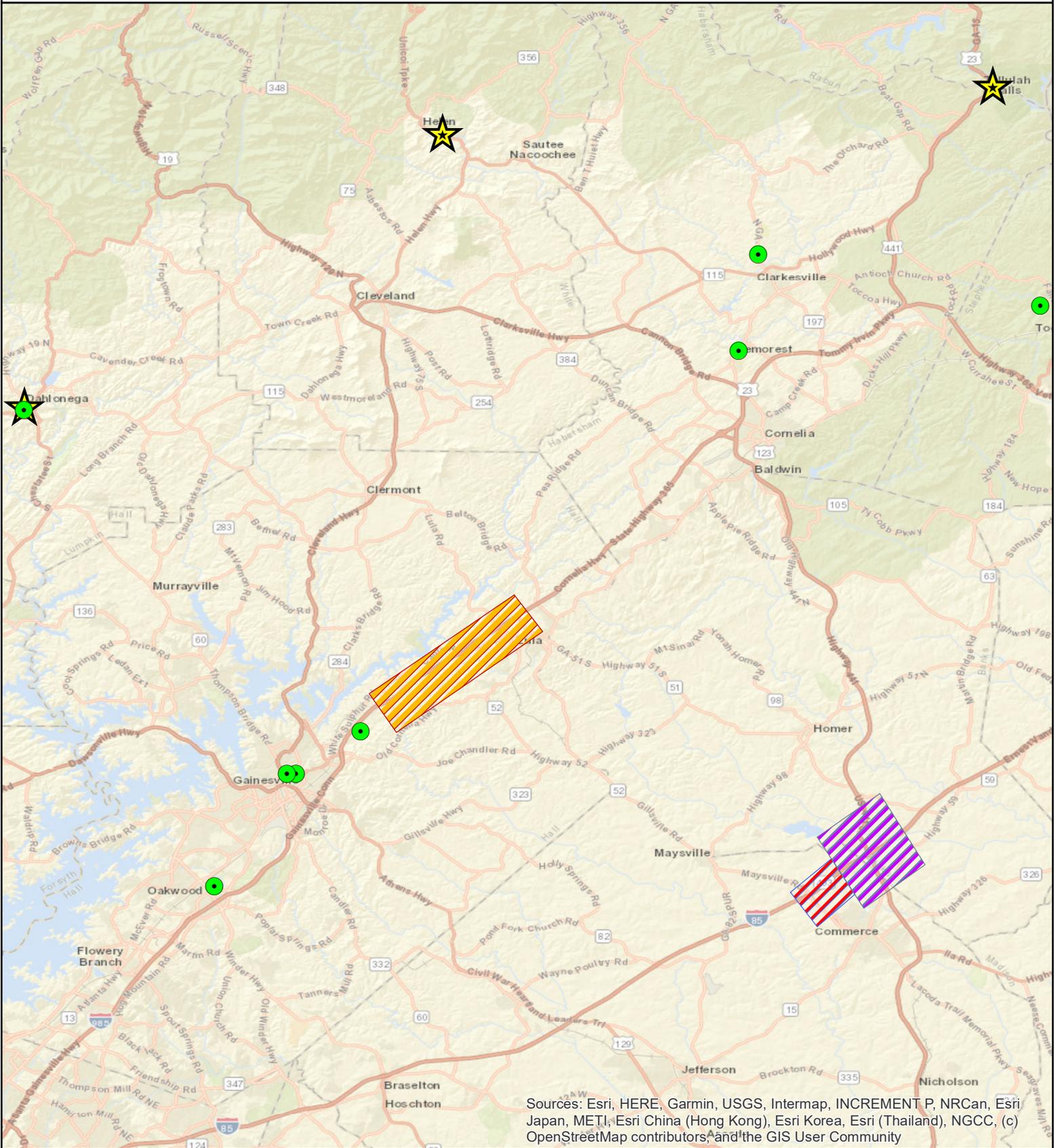
An ongoing social phenomenon that remains a factor for the region is **the aging population and its impact on various markets**. With residents living longer and most households featuring fewer children, the elderly will represent an increasing share of the area population, which affects the demands for medical services, specialized transport and recreation, and the dynamics of local labor pools. People delaying retirement can offset some labor shortages from youth departing a region, but older workers will also have different skillsets and demands of the workplace. Communities in areas expecting to see marked shifts in this demographic should plan accordingly for their particular needs.

An assessment of the region's economy finds **tourism remains strong despite the pandemic, but some agriculture markets are in flux**. The presence of the mountains, waterfalls, and lakes within the area's many parks, National Forests, and wildlife management areas means there will always be high demand for and from visitors to the area. Several communities remain heavily tourist-oriented, including nearby Helen, while many others still count on visitors for a significant part of their economies. As a result, there are abundant opportunities for retail and hospitality services, including short-term rentals, in select areas. Conversely, some livestock and row-crop agricultural operations have struggled over the past decade. Poultry farming remains healthy due to the volume of supporting industry, but some farmers in the region have not found successors to take over their operations or decide to sell off their property regardless, because of the land's value to developers. This will affect not only development patterns but also shape local economies, as well.

"Homer needs to be a small town. A few new businesses, like a grocery store, or local restaurant would be nice, but Homer doesn't need to become a big city."

"Please don't ruin the small town feel and value of Homer."

Area Development Forces



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Legend

-  Banks Crossing/Commerce Industrial Corridor
-  Inland Port Industrial Corridor
-  Pendergrass Industrial Area
-  Medical Institutions/Colleges and Universities



Tourist Destination

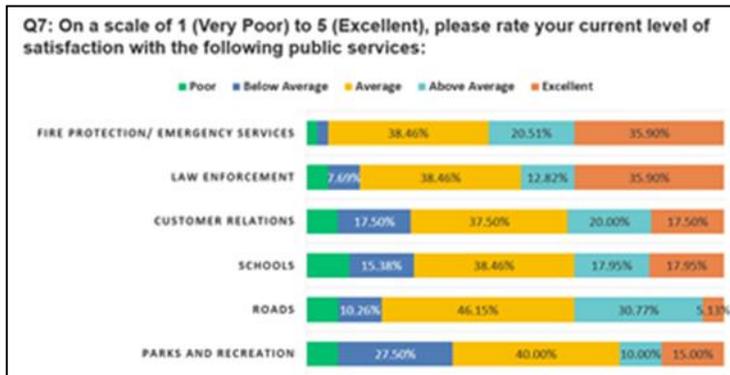




PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Public facilities and services are those elements vital to a population’s health, safety, and welfare that are most effectively provided by the public sector, such as sewerage, law enforcement and school services. This element examines the community’s ability to adequately serve the present and projected demands for such services, identifying concerns with the spatial distribution and conditions affecting service delivery. These assessments can then assist in projecting future demands and in planning future capital improvement projects.

As a smaller city, Homer provides only limited services directly. The Town maintains a water department, but all other services are handled via contracts with Banks County.



Residents in Homer rated their emergency responses services very highly and felt the general levels of services provided by the Town and the County work well. There is no substantial sewer service available in Homer, but the water service was considered good. Overall, residents and stakeholders implied the facilities and services provided by to them are considered satisfactory.

The one element considered lacking is the parks and recreation, with residents expressing a desire for more options within and around town. The County’s athletic complex is located in southern Homer but is only accessible by vehicle. Respondents to the survey expressed a desire for more passive use park space, possibly more trails, and more recreation options accessible throughout the community. The Town has worked to address park space in the area and will seek to add new spaces and amenities as funds allow.



“We do not want to see Homer ruined by too much development. Focus should be on growing rural and local businesses rather than outside development.”



Broadband Assessment

The growing importance of access to reliable and high-speed, high-capacity internet connections cannot be overestimated. Unserved and underserved areas of Georgia will not remain economically competitive without sufficient internet infrastructure, as this technology becomes the default utility for all manners of communication. To address this issue the Georgia General Assembly amended the provisions of local planning in Georgia by passing the "Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act" to facilitate the enhancement and extension of internet access in communities. The ACE Act requires all local governments to incorporate the "promotion of the deployment of broadband internet services" into their local plan. Once these are in place the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Economic Development will identify and promote facilities and developments that offer broadband services at a rate of not less than 1 gigabit per second in the downstream to end users that can be accessed for business, education, health care, government.

One of the first products to come out of the Georgia Broadband Initiative was an inventory of general conditions across the State regarding access to high speed/ high-capacity broadband technology. Utilizing demographic data from the US Census Bureau and cross-referencing that information with knowledge of broadband infrastructure, the Department of Community Affairs produced maps depicting the state of broadband accessibility in rural areas.

Due to its sparse development patterns, Banks County exhibits some of the most deficiencies in broadband distribution. To address this, in 2020 Banks became the second Broadband Ready county in Georgia, participating in the State program to help support network expansion and upgrades. Banks County received more than \$7mm dollars for network improvements in underserved areas.



Underserved areas around Homer in light yellow.

Based on survey results, public comments, and stakeholder input, the premier need for Homer is sustained quality service. Any priority around Homer would be to provide stronger capacity beyond US 441 and the main roads.





PUBLIC COMMENT AND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The Homer online surveys yielded almost 200 unique responses, while the public meetings provided additional discussion and input. Combined, the comments and ideas yielded insight into the prevailing interests and concerns of the general populace of Homer and the overall area. This information was collected and presented to the Advisory Committee and Town Council, contributing to the basis for selecting Plan priorities and objectives.

SWOT Analysis



One facet of the public input process asks residents and stakeholders to assess their community’s respective Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In doing so, communities can effectively define their objectives and actions to better achieve the desired vision.

Via both the online surveys and during public forums, participants were asked to identify those things they considered key assets about their community as things they didn’t want to change or were critical to achieving positive growth. On the whole, participants cited a preference for preserving the town’s small-town appeal, adding small scale commerce, maintaining public safety, and striving to remain an affordable, residential hometown.

STRENGTHS/ KEY ASSETS	WEAKNESSES/ LIABILITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charm/ Small town feel/ vibe • Historic (downtown, homes...) • Community (Sense of...) • Rural • Safety • Small • Quiet • Schools • Amish store • Churches • Friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a grocery store • Roads • Drugs • School traffic • Speeding traffic/traffic violations • No animal control • Warehousing
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS/ OUTSIDE RISKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery store • Restaurants/ Local dining • Community events/ Family activities • Revitalize downtown • Growth (for ourselves/ business...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime • Overpopulation/ Overdevelopment • Drugs • Outside influence/ developers • Growth • Trucking and warehouse industries • Too many apartments • Too much industrial business • Water quality



The bulk of public comments received focused on retaining the historic character of downtown Homer, even while seeking to attract appropriate businesses to the area in an effort to revitalize Main Street. While there is some desire for becoming a more sizable economic hub, the priority among participants was to keep Homer a rural community, in look and in function. This means an emphasis on local-owned businesses and a limit on auto-oriented commerce that would detract from the humble scale of downtown. It would also mean concentrating some of the residential development around downtown in an effort to direct customers to local businesses, and to strengthen Homer's sense of place as a hometown. Additionally, residents favor seeing more parks, sidewalks, and trails that could link more of the community together. Such amenities would enhance the character of the town, and improve the value of local neighborhoods.

"I would like to preserve the quiet small town community where people know their neighbors."



Conceptual rendering from past downtown planning exercise. Most residents would like to see some revitalization comparable to this scale brought into downtown.



The following issues and opportunities were the most commonly raised themes during the public input process. As best as possible, and with acceptance of the limitations of local government finances and abilities, Homer should strive to act on the priorities listed below.

- ✓ **Maintain Public Safety**
- ✓ **Maintain Small-town Character**
- ✓ **Minimize Impacts of Growth**
- ✓ **Target Low Property Taxes and Budget Efficiency**
- ✓ **Revitalizing Downtown**
- ✓ **Improve Communications/ Public Relations**
- ✓ **Develop a strategy for US 441 w/ the County**



Archive photo from the 1960's

Meetings set in Homer, Maysville on comp. plan

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Banks County, the Town of Homer and the City of Maysville with the updates of their comprehensive plans, the state-required documents that helps shape and coordinate local work programs for the communities.

These planning processes are designed to ensure that major projects and policies for the community are developed with public input, ensuring a level of coordination between local and state level interests.

The final public forums for the respective documents are scheduled for the dates and times listed below. These meetings will be used to review the content of the draft documents, invite public comment and questions, and outline how the communities will work to implement the plans going forward.

•Homer, Tuesday, Sept. 19, 6-7 p.m., Homer Town Hall, 943 Historic Homer Hwy., Homer.

•Maysville, Sept. 18, 6-7 p.m., Maysville City Hall, 4 Homer Street, Mays-



AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL ATTENTION

Analysis of prevailing development trends assists in the identification of preferred patterns for future growth. More specifically such analyses can identify those areas requiring special attention regarding management policies, such as natural or cultural resources likely to be intruded upon or otherwise impacted by development. As part of this process, stakeholders and local governments are encouraged to evaluate the presence of subsets of their communities subject to special circumstances such as:

- ✓ Areas where rapid development or change of land uses is likely to occur
- ✓ Areas where the pace of development has/ may outpace the availability of community facilities and services, including transportation
- ✓ Areas in need of redevelopment and/or significant improvements to aesthetics or attractiveness
- ✓ Large, abandoned structures or sites, including possible environmental contamination.
- ✓ Areas with significant infill development opportunities (scattered vacant sites).
- ✓ Areas of significant disinvestment, levels of poverty, and/or unemployment substantially higher than average levels for the community as a whole

Upon consideration of development trends and land use issues in Homer, the following priorities stand out for the 2023 planning period, in addition to the environmentally sensitive areas:

- Homer's priority for redevelopment are the *Main Street Corridor* and the *Downtown Historic District*. There are individual properties left vacant or in need of repair but no other large formal districts of commercial or residential land use that would dignify a formal redevelopment district. The downtown historic district isn't impoverished but does feature vacancies and it's desired to see new business come into the area. The Town is updating its regulations and creating more local planning and zoning measures that should facilitate the desire to guide new development in blending with the local character and possibly revitalizing vacant or underused properties.
- At this time there is no particular area within the town targeted for rapid development, but there is a possibility the County would be accommodating near term growth along the *US 441 Corridor*. Where there is to be any pressure will likely come from the south and west, as part of the general growth from residential development sprawling northward from metro Atlanta or Gainesville, or it could come along the US 441 corridor that passes just outside the town's east side. As a 4-lane arterial road growing in use and popularity, this corridor could spur development, including commercial and industrial scale activity. Any changes in land use beyond common rural types and scales could alter the land use management plans for the town.



Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Local governments in Georgia must demonstrate compliance with applicable State and federal environmental resource protection measures, and local water withdrawal and discharge permit holders must illustrate any measures required to restore or maintain local water quality. There is one listed stream segment within Maysville, predominantly for sedimentation and Biota impairment. As the area grows the city must work to ensure stream banks and buffer areas are protected, and that agricultural operations are employing best practices to keep livestock from getting into the waterways. The following summarizes the policy requirements applicable to Homer, which is currently in compliance with their respective State water management plan (Savannah-Upper Ogeechee) and with the Department of Natural Resource Part V development criteria.

State Environmental Planning Criteria	Homer	
	Applicable	Minimum regs. in place?
Water Supply Watersheds	N	NA
Wetlands	Y	Y
Groundwater Recharge Areas	Y	Y
Protected River Corridors	N	NA
Steep Slopes	N	NA
Protected Mountains	N	NA
Coastal Areas	N	NA
Clean Water Act Compliance		
303(d) listed waterbodies	Y	N
305(b) listed waterbodies	Y	N



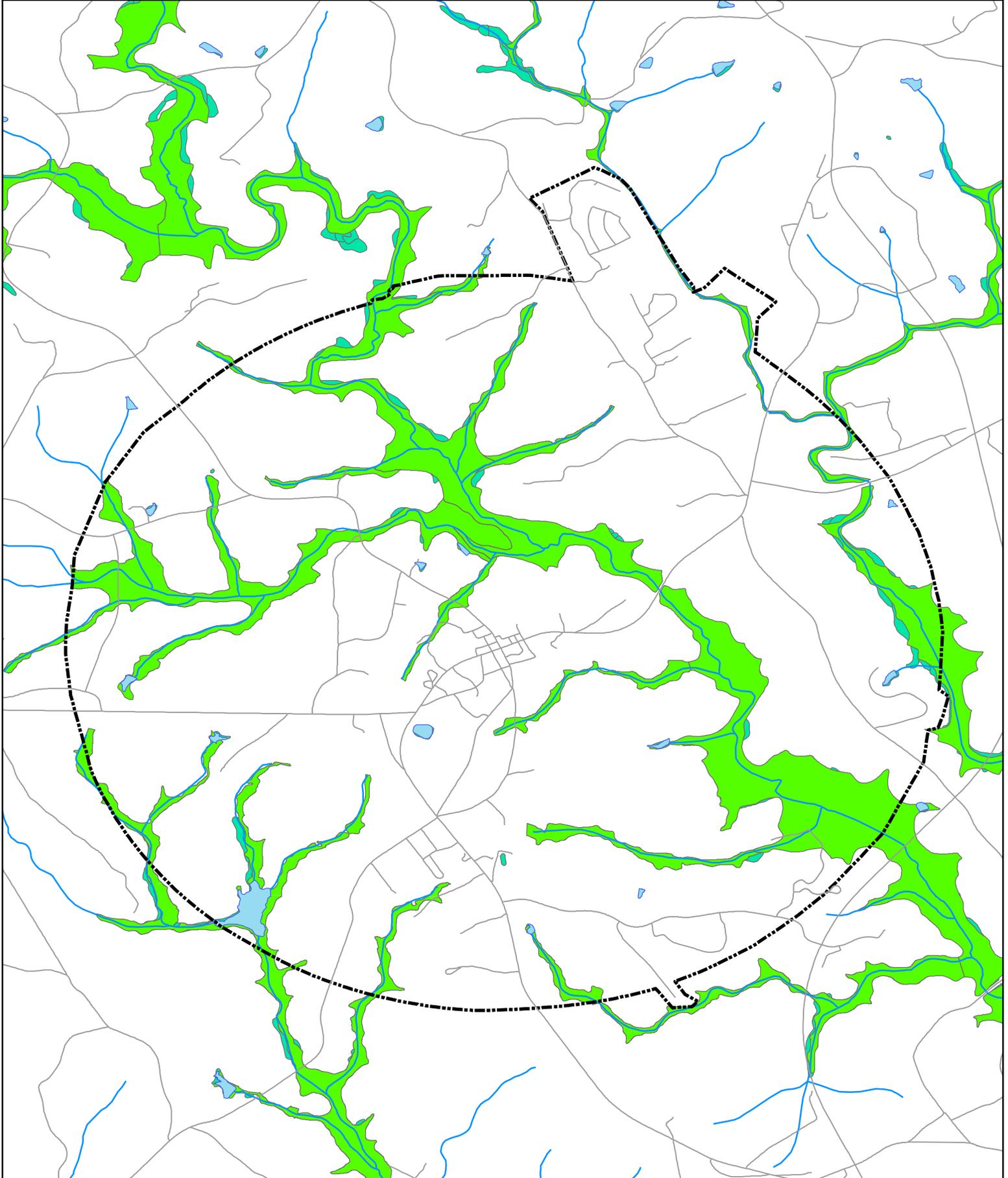
State Listed Water Bodies in Banks County (2020)

NAME	LOCATION	SIZE (miles)	CAUSE	SOURCE
Supporting or Assessment Pending				
NA				
NA				
Non-Supporting				
Hudson River	Mountain Creek to Webb Creek	13.0	FC	UR, M
Legend				
*	Assessment Pending	FC	Fecal Coliform	
NS	Not Supporting	NP	Nonpoint source pollution	
Bio F	Biota – Fish Impairment			

Source: Georgia EPD, 2020

There is one stream segment within Homer listed for fecal coliform (bacteria). Should the area grow, the Town must work to ensure stream banks and buffer areas are protected, and that agricultural operations are employing best practices to keep livestock from getting into the waterways.

City of Homer Environmentally Sensitive Areas



Legend

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Roads | Banks County DFIRM | Ground Water Recharge Areas |
| Municipalities | A | GMRC Conservation Lands |
| Protected Rivers | National Wetlands Inventory | |
| | Protected Mountain | |



0 0.15 0.3 0.6 0.9 Miles



CHARACTER AREAS

Character area planning is designed to focus on the physical appearance (aesthetics) and function of a particular area. Development strategies are tailored and applied to each individual area. The goal is to enhance the existing character/function or promote a new, more desirable character for the future. Character areas identify portions of the community that have a unique or special character that needs to be preserved or require special attention because of unique development issues.

A key component of the comprehensive planning process is the development of a Character Area Map that reflects the communities' vision for future growth and development over the planning period. This vision was developed through an extensive public visioning process and expresses the unique character of various portions of the county. The various character areas, when combined, form a single map that is intended to guide future development by organizing common themes of development patterns throughout the county. They promote the desired development patterns guiding the design of structures and physical development. They also provide a framework for changes to development regulation and policies. Finally, they help to guide future zoning decisions.

The descriptions and locations of the various character areas employed in Homer are designed to accommodate the following factors:

- Preserve Main Street and the historic core
- Foster compatible infill development
- Plan for residential growth in and around the existing town limits
- Coordinate growth with utility service areas
- Plan for additional park spaces and trails

The Recommended Character Areas shown for Homer represent a starting point in the discussion to create the future development strategy. Boundaries, descriptions, and vision statements for future development will be created during the community visioning process and the development of the Comprehensive Plan.



Environmentally Sensitive Areas

These are the areas identified within the Community Assessment as environmentally sensitive, including wetlands, flood plains and water supply watersheds. These areas require special protection from development types that may adversely impact the resource and the overall ecology of the region.

Land Uses

NA - This is an overlay that provides indication of where special development criteria will apply.

Implementation Strategies

- Maintain Environmental Protection criteria
- Maintain updated environmental information in Comprehensive Plan.





Historic Downtown

This is the historic district and the portion of Historic Homer Highway that is also known as Main Street. This district features the Banks County courthouse, Town Hall and the historic portions of downtown Homer. This area does not harbor as much of the current commercial operations of the Town but does serve as its civic center, often for the county as well. In addition to the government facilities the square in front of the historic courthouse across from Town Hall hosts many public functions, making this single most iconic place in Homer. This area is also recognized for the adjacent residential and rural properties that embody the city's small-town character. Taken all together this area is the most attractive and available for bringing quality development that will support, and be supported by, local residents yet it is also the most sensitive to development conditions as they can adversely impact the general feel and scale of Homer if not managed properly. The vision for Main Street portion of this district is to build on its existing role and character as the civic seat of the Town while encouraging more commercial development that is compatible with the design, form and scale appropriate for the historic district. Additional uses would be considered based on their design and the ability to contribute to the district as a social center.

Land Uses

Civic/Institutional
Commercial
Office
Churches

Implementation Strategies

- Conduct new downtown design forum
- Develop/adopt design regulations for historic district
- Work with economic development partners to better promote downtown to businesses





Arterial Corridors

This designation is for the arterial roadways that run through the center and east side of the town, including Main Street and the main roads connecting Main Street with US 441. This array of arterials includes most of the non-residential activities within the city and stands in stark contrast to unincorporated Banks County. These corridors would make them most logical launching point for commercial growth up to automotive-scale developments. However, they must maintain also maintain their role for local accessibility.

The vision for these corridors is an array of predominantly commercial and office uses, along with select civic and residential uses. Within and adjacent to the historic district uses and development forms should complement the design guidelines for the historic district. More intense, auto-oriented uses would be permitted further away from downtown, closer to US 441.

The other caveat to these conditions is the presence of the schools dispersed throughout the Town along these freeways. Adjacent to the schools development should be more subdued and of compatible use.

Land Uses

Commercial
Office
Churches
Civic/Institutional
Light Industrial (Conditional)

Implementation Strategies

- Report on GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.
- Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441





Suburban Residential

Several small subdivisions exist within Homer that feature different character compared to the traditional neighborhoods. These are newer developments with minimalist streetscapes and designs, most of which are comparably modest-sized subdivisions with chose cul-de-sacs rather than blending with the established neighborhoods. Compared with the older traditional homes with formal front porches and historic detailing, these units include houses built on slab, manufactured housing units, and/or units with uncovered parking pads. These represent a form of affordable housing commonly developed in the 1980's and 1990's, wherein the bulk of the investment was directed to the interior amenities of the house in order to reduce costs and allow the owner to develop the property as desired.

Land Uses

Residential
Passive Parks

Implementation Strategies

- Maintain residential development policies





Traditional Neighborhood

This district is the mostly residential component to the gradual urbanization of Homer. The Town's smaller-lot residential uses are within this district, cultivated along the roads intersecting Main Street, missing only the density allowed by public sewer to create a small pocket of true urbanity. This district defines the depth of Homer as an individual community as opposed to a being just a commercial destination along the roadway. Expansion of this as a neighborhood is key to sustaining the scale and character of the Town versus the completely rural nature of the unincorporated county. The potential exists to continue the small connecting streets around downtown and foster a sense of pedestrian scale for the majority of Town residents if this district is strengthened with a neighborhood scale and sense of purpose.

The ideal is to expand the existing patterns and foster a sustainable density of housing around the downtown area. Permissible (on condition) non-residential uses would include neighborhood scale shops, churches and civic/institutional activities.

Recommendations for this area includes protective development policies that encourage infill of compatible designs and foster long-term capital improvement plans that increase the viability of the residential uses. Sidewalks and improved street signage are encouraged, especially to assist in the pedestrian accessibility of traveling from these houses to the schools, shops and library located within or immediately adjacent to the district.

Land Uses

Residential
Neighborhood Parks
Churches
Neighborhood Commercial*
Civic/Institutional*

*=Conditional

Implementation Strategies

- Study re: adoption of traditional neighborhood design standards
- Consider neighborhood assistance programs for concentrations of dilapidated properties





Rural/ Agricultural

This district refers to the land largely west of downtown Homer with the lowest densities and most active agricultural use in the City, including some undeveloped land, active farms and some remaining large-lot residences. This is where the transition occurs between rural Banks County and iconic, historic Homer, and, because of the undeveloped land, it is also where the bulk of future development is likely to occur. Management of this development will impact the community's character and overall health as a residential and commercial destination. This area also represents the best options for new greenspace or the introduction of any new large-scale industrial activity, should the Town pursue that development.

The vision for this district is to retain the existing rural character until the viability for utilities alters the development potential. Subdivisions would be permitted under the notion of having larger lot sizes than would be allowed in the Traditional Residential district. Conservation design would be preferred so as to screen the subdivision from neighboring properties.

Non residential or agricultural uses would be permitted under certain conditions, largely based on utilities and infrastructure demands.

Land Uses

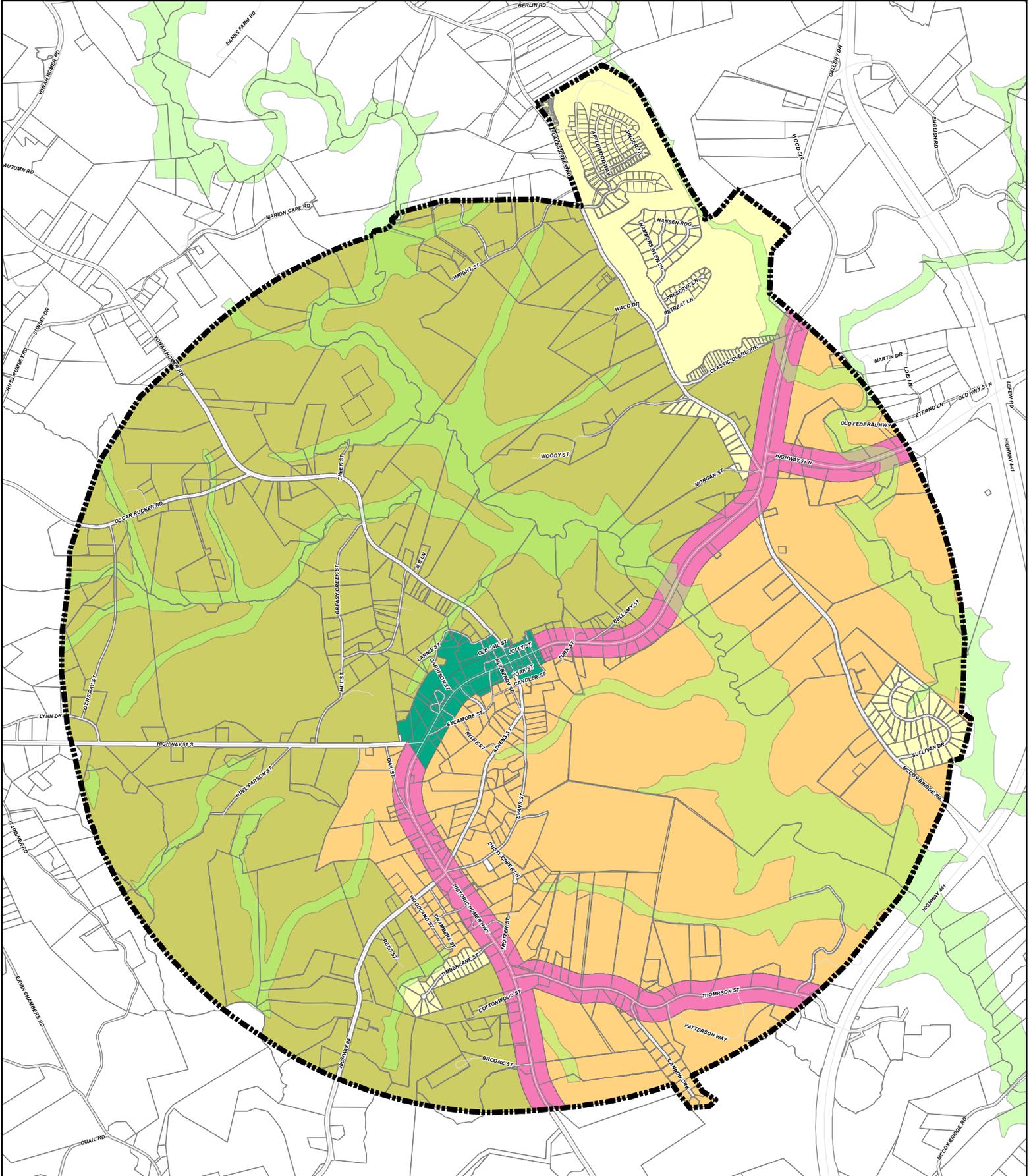
Residential
Agricultural
Conservation
Churches
Neighborhood Commercial
Parks

Implementation Strategies

- Restrict capital improvements in rural areas
- Amend development policies to allow/encourage conservation design



City of Homer Character Areas - 2023



Legend

-  City Limit Boundary
-  County Boundary
-  Railroad
-  Roads
-  Rural/Agricultural
-  Suburban Residential
-  Historic Downtown
-  Traditional Neighborhood
-  Environmentally Sensitive Areas
-  Arterial Corridors





IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

4

While the Future Development Map illustrates the physical conditions expressed within the Vision, the Implementation Program is the overall strategy for achieving the Community Vision and for addressing each of the Community Needs and Opportunities. It identifies specific measures, both short and long-term, that must be undertaken by the community in order realize the community's goals. The Implementation Program features four main components.

NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

These reflect an assessment of the conditions and factors influencing the area and people, stakeholder knowledge of the community and comments received throughout the planning process. To effectively realize their vision for the future a community must develop a well-defined implementation plan. By identifying the core issues and priorities of the community, the government and its partners can develop specific strategies that must be accomplished to fulfill the desired goals and objectives of the vision. It is critical that these issues and opportunities be clearly defined and understood by the stakeholders because they form the basis for the development of the community's long and short-term action plans.

POLICIES & LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES

One way a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may complement single actions while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing needs and opportunities.

REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This is a review of the Community Work Program (CWP) from the previous five years. As a new CWP is produced every five years, the items within the previous CWP must be identified for their status as complete, in progress, either postponed or cancelled. Those items that have been postponed or are in progress must be shown in the next CWP where appropriate, while those items that have been postponed or cancelled must also include a reason for their status.

COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAM

The third forward-thinking element of the Implementation Program is the CWP. This identifies specific implementation actions the local government or other entities intend to take during the first five-year time frame of the planning period. This can include any ordinances, administrative systems, community improvements or investments, financing arrangements, or other programs or initiatives to be put in place to realize the plan goals.



NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Maintain Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain annual reports from Sheriff • Construct second fire station (near Chimney Oaks)
Maintain Small-town Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/adopt design regulations for historic district
Minimize Impacts of Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Housing Market study • Feasibility study on wastewater treatment in downtown • Develop Water and Sewer Improvement Plan
Target Low Property Taxes and Budget Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility study on wastewater treatment in downtown • Develop Water and Sewer Improvement Plan
Revitalizing Downtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility study on wastewater treatment in downtown • Development of passive park on well property • Develop Homer Business and Marketing Strategy
Improve Communications/ Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually report on submitted public comments • Maintain standard for public notifications
Develop a strategy for US 441 with the County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Highway 441 development forum • Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441



Policies & Long-Term Activities

One type of action a community can establish to achieve its vision is the establishment of policy. These are those ongoing principles and practices that the community will observe in order to realize specific objectives. Some policies may complement single action-items while others may provide ongoing guidance and direction to local government officials for making decisions consistent with achieving the Community Vision or addressing Community Issues and Opportunities.

In addition to establishing policy, communities may also establish long-term or ongoing programs and activities that support identified objectives. These measures complement policies or may simply be action items that must be employed more than once. These are recognized here so as to distinguish their need and conditions apart from the single-action items and to identify any required special terms or context.

In addition, several items have been identified as policies, general objections and directions for the communities in regard to different areas of concern. These policies will be used as guidelines for general, long-term practices for each government.

- ✓ Support marketing of regional tourism and amenities within Homer.
- ✓ Continue to support and participate in Chamber and Development Authorities
- ✓ For each partner organization, designate a Council member to serve as liaison
- ✓ Maintain communications with GMRC and State community development offices
- ✓ Annual Utility and Infrastructure Reports to ensure efficiency of services
- ✓ Develop/Maintain inventory of viable infill opportunities
- ✓ Pursue a water and sewer system improvement plan
- ✓ Maintain residential development policies
- ✓ Maintain Environmental Protection criteria
- ✓ Propose Business 441 be aligned along Main Street.
- ✓ Maintain updated environmental information in Comprehensive Plan
- ✓ Restrict capital improvements in rural areas
- ✓ Annually report on submitted public comments
- ✓ Maintain standard for public notifications
- ✓ Maintain annual reports from Sheriff



Report of Accomplishments

Action	Status	Comment
Develop inventory of viable infill opportunities	Complete	
Develop Water and Sewer Improvement Plan	Postponed	Deferred during pandemic
Water tank inspection and repairs	Complete	
Develop city website	Complete	
Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan	In Progress	
Report concerning DOT plans for region	Complete	
Develop Parks and Recreation Plan with Banks County	Postponed	Deferred during pandemic
Replace water meters for handheld units	Postponed	Deferred for funding
Acquire updated floodplain and soil information from respective authorities.	Complete	
Consider neighborhood assistance programs for concentrations of dilapidated properties	Complete	
Study re: design regulations for non-historic areas	Complete	
Study re: adoption of traditional neighborhood design standards	Complete	
Conduct Housing Market study	Postponed	Deferred during pandemic
Develop Homer Business and Marketing Strategy	Postponed	Deferred during pandemic
Apply for Better Hometown Program	Complete	
Amend development policies to allow/ encourage conservation design	Complete	
Report on GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.	In Progress	
Connect to Banks County Water on Thompson Street	Complete	
Purchase ladder truck for fire department	Complete	
Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441	Postponed	Deferred until after '23 planning cycle
Develop/adopt design regulations for historic district	In Progress	



Community Work Program

Year	Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Responsibility
2024	Report on GDOT plans for region, including options for rerouting Bus. 441 through downtown.	\$3,000	GDOT	City; GDOT
2024	Develop/adopt design regulations for historic district	\$1,000	DNR	City, GMRC
2024	Conduct Housing Market study	\$2,500	DCA	City, GMRC
2024	Develop Homer Business and Marketing Strategy	NA	NA	City, DED
2024	Report outlining funding options to facilitate improvements to downtown	NA	NA	DDA, GMRC
2024	Conduct Highway 441 development forum	NA	NA	City, County
2025	Develop Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan	\$3,000	GDOT	City, GMRC
2025	Develop Water and Sewer Improvement Plan	\$5,000	City	City
2025	Develop Parks and Recreation Plan	\$5,000	GDOT	City, GMRC
2025	Coordinate land use and improvement plans to strengthen multiple access points with US 441	NA	NA	City
2025	Construction of a public works building/shop	\$500,000	SPLOST	City
2025	Development of passive park on well property	TBD	City, Grants, Loans	City
2025	Feasibility study re: wastewater treatment in downtown Homer	\$2,000	City	City; County
2026	Replace water meters for handheld units	\$20,000	SPLOST Grants; Loans	City
2027	Construct second fire station (near Chimney Oaks)	\$1,000,000	City, Grants, Loans, SPLOST	City; County Fire Dept.
2028	Purchase new fire truck	\$800,000	SPLOST	City; County Fire Dept.
2028	Update Comprehensive Plan	\$20,000	DCA	City, GMRC



APPENDICES

5

QCO Assessment

Demographic Profile

Area Labor Profile

Summary of Survey Results

Public Participation Documentation



QCO Assessment

In 1999 the Board of the Department of Community Affairs adopted Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) as a statement of the development patterns and options that will help Georgia preserve her unique cultural, natural and historic resources while looking to the future and developing to her fullest potential. In developing the Community Assessment portion of the Comprehensive Plan, the community is encouraged to review the QCOs for their applicability to local conditions and goals. Their general application to Homer is described here, while the description of each character area will also identify specific QCOs addressed for that area.

1. Economic Prosperity

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

Homer will work with Banks County and their neighboring communities to secure the economic viability of the region going forward. Economic prosperity enables individuals, households and communities to be stronger, and provide better for each other. The government supports the local Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Development Authority as part of ongoing efforts to foster economic development for the community. The Town also maintains contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the State for pursuit of assistance and outside funding opportunities in support of economic development opportunities.

2. Resource Management

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

The Town recognizes the value of their location along a vital tourist and freight route as well as the impact of their agrarian heritage. Homer will maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the area. The Town will also employ policies and practices related to Environmental Planning Standards, complying with the National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.

3. Efficient Land Use

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

Town of Homer does not have extensive development policies or access to significant utilities, however through this planning process and regular monitoring of development the Town will work to ensure local policies support sustainable development that enables economic growth while managing local resources, utilities and infrastructure.



4. Local Preparedness

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

Through this planning process and ongoing coordination among emergency responders, and through regular communication with other stakeholders, Homer and Banks County (which provides local fire and law enforcement services) will work together to ensure the community is properly poised to prevent, manage and respond to growth pressures and natural and man-made hazards.

5. Sense of Place

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

The Town of Homer respects its role as the County seat and civic center for Banks County, as well as the small-town charm that comes from its agrarian heritage. The Town will maintain contact with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and the Department of Natural Resources to work for the protection and promotion of natural and cultural resources in the area. The governments also employ policies and practices related to State Vital Areas, National Wetland Inventory (FIRM) data and other applicable sources to monitor and enforce the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.

6. Regional Cooperation

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

The Town of Homer actively coordinates with other governments in maintaining their local Service Delivery Strategy and SPLOST program and participates with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission and other appropriate regional organizations. The Town also maintains regular contact with various State Departments to ensure knowledge of, and access to, their programs and resources. The Town of Homer is considered an active partner in regional activities and does not feel threatened or adversely impacted by any regional partners.

7. Housing Options

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



The Town of Homer has limited policies or utilities for accommodating higher density units or rental housing but will redress those as utility capacities allow in the future. At the moment the Town lacks the utility capacity to foster major density, and few builders in the area are proactively chasing smaller, cheaper units.

8. Transportation Options

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

The Town of Homer does support Banks County's public transit service through State sponsored rural transit vans and shuttle programs. This is done with Legacy Link and is reevaluated yearly.

9. Educational Opportunities

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

The Town of Homer works with the Banks County School Board to ensure access for quality primary and secondary educational facilities and programs for area residents. The Town also works with other governments as needed and able to ensure access to viable post-secondary resources such as Lanier Technical College and North Georgia Technical College and other area educational institutions.

10. Community Health

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

Without a facility of their own, Banks County and the Town of Homer work with regional hospitals in Gainesville, Demorest, Toccoa, and Lavonia as well as the Banks County Health Department to ensure access for quality health care facilities and programs for area residents. The governments also work with other partners to monitor residents' needs and requests in providing access to these services as the area grows.



Demographic Profile



Demographic and Income Profile

Homer Town, GA
 Homer Town, GA (1339720)
 Geography: Place

Prepared by Esri

Summary	Census 2010	Census 2020	2023	2028
Population	1,266	1,264	1,306	1,380
Households	459	465	487	514
Families	346	-	349	367
Average Household Size	2.76	2.72	2.68	2.68
Owner Occupied Housing Units	329	-	384	419
Renter Occupied Housing Units	130	-	103	95
Median Age	37.3	-	39.7	40.7

Trends: 2023-2028 Annual Rate	Area	State	National
Population	1.11%	0.51%	0.30%
Households	1.09%	0.65%	0.49%
Families	1.01%	0.59%	0.44%
Owner HHs	1.76%	0.82%	0.66%
Median Household Income	0.73%	3.01%	2.57%

Households by Income	2023		2028	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<\$15,000	45	9.2%	50	9.7%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	31	6.4%	43	8.4%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	39	8.0%	47	9.1%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	61	12.5%	50	9.7%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	95	19.5%	85	16.5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	90	18.5%	107	20.8%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	98	20.1%	106	20.6%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	13	2.7%	6	1.2%
\$200,000+	15	3.1%	20	3.9%

Median Household Income	\$65,640	\$68,083
Average Household Income	\$79,704	\$85,360
Per Capita Income	\$29,721	\$31,793

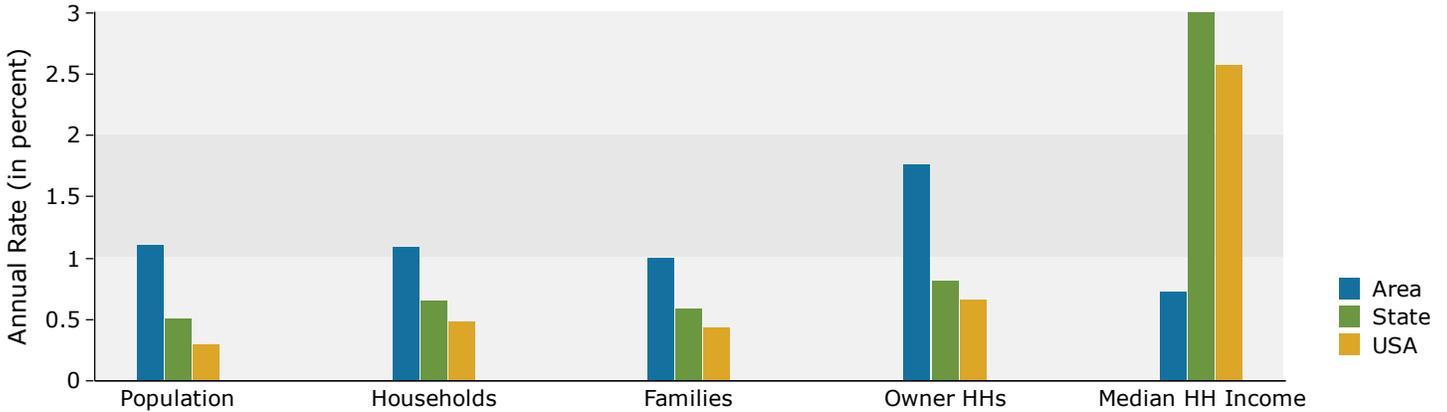
Population by Age	Census 2010		2023		2028	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 - 4	85	6.7%	85	6.5%	69	5.0%
5 - 9	94	7.4%	75	5.7%	84	6.1%
10 - 14	96	7.6%	83	6.4%	101	7.3%
15 - 19	98	7.7%	71	5.4%	84	6.1%
20 - 24	78	6.2%	69	5.3%	68	4.9%
25 - 34	137	10.8%	189	14.5%	172	12.5%
35 - 44	185	14.6%	168	12.9%	183	13.3%
45 - 54	176	13.9%	165	12.6%	174	12.6%
55 - 64	161	12.7%	174	13.3%	176	12.8%
65 - 74	88	6.9%	142	10.9%	146	10.6%
75 - 84	51	4.0%	68	5.2%	105	7.6%
85+	18	1.4%	17	1.3%	18	1.3%

Race and Ethnicity	Census 2010		Census 2020		2023		2028	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Alone	1,180	93.1%	1,129	89.3%	1,194	91.4%	1,249	90.5%
Black Alone	41	3.2%	41	3.2%	29	2.2%	37	2.7%
American Indian Alone	6	0.5%	6	0.5%	6	0.5%	5	0.4%
Asian Alone	5	0.4%	8	0.6%	10	0.8%	10	0.7%
Pacific Islander Alone	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	4	0.3%	2	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	19	1.5%	12	0.9%	18	1.4%	14	1.0%
Two or More Races	16	1.3%	67	5.3%	45	3.4%	63	4.6%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	41	3.2%	41	3.2%	58	4.4%	52	3.8%

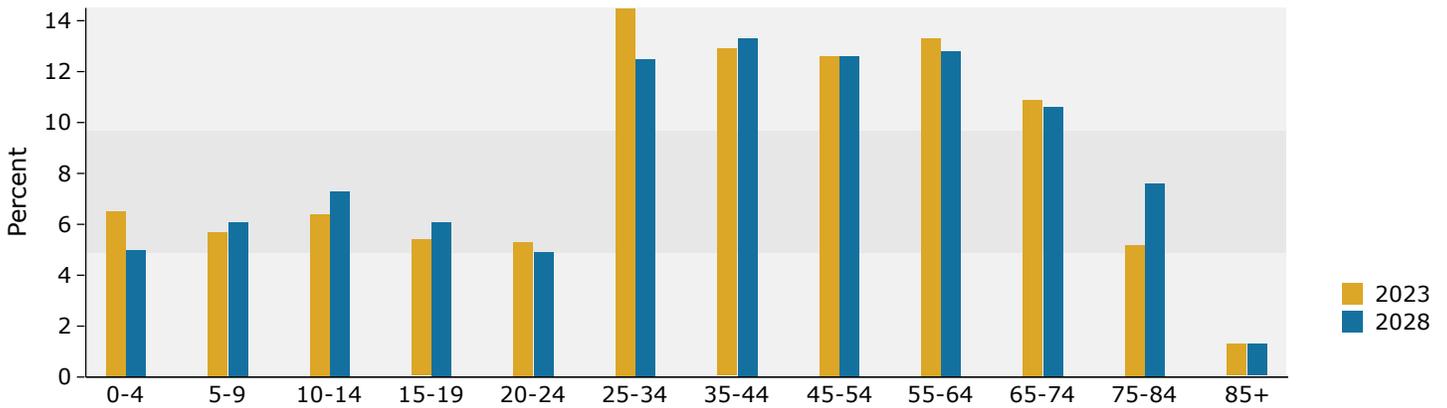
Data Note: Income is expressed in current dollars.

Source: Esri forecasts for 2023 and 2028. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.

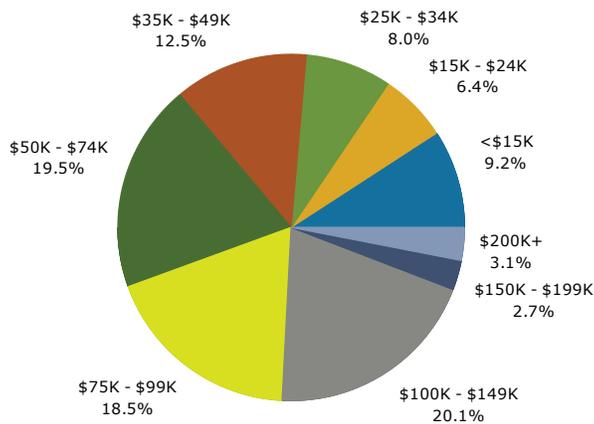
Trends 2023-2028



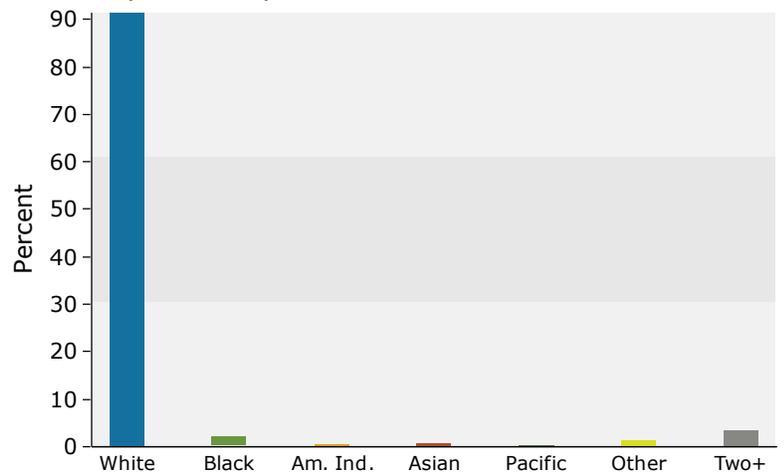
Population by Age



2023 Household Income



2023 Population by Race



2023 Percent Hispanic Origin: 4.4%

Source: Esri forecasts for 2023 and 2028. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data converted by Esri into 2020 geography.



Area Labor Profile



Georgia

Area Labor Profile

Banks

County



Updated: Aug 2023

Labor Force Activity

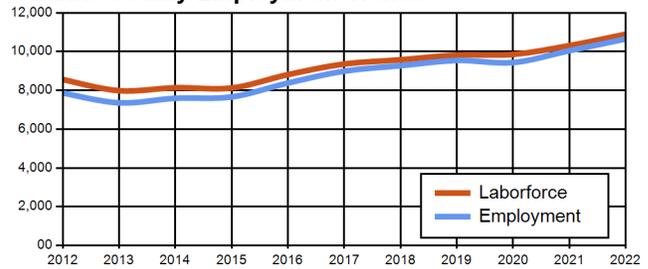
July 2023

	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
Banks	10,883	10,635	248	2.3%
Franklin	9,729	9,413	316	3.2%
Habersham	18,968	18,375	593	3.1%
Hall	108,616	105,894	2,722	2.5%
Jackson	45,949	44,936	1,013	2.2%
Madison	13,491	13,109	382	2.8%
Stephens	10,575	10,219	356	3.4%
Banks Area	218,211	212,581	5,630	2.6%
Georgia	5,318,955	5,145,351	173,604	3.3%
United States	168,354,000	161,982,000	6,372,000	3.8%

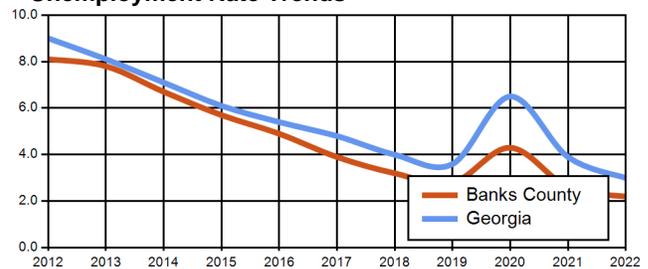
Note: This series reflects the latest information available. Labor Force includes residents of the county who are employed or actively seeking employment.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Banks County Employment Trends



Unemployment Rate Trends

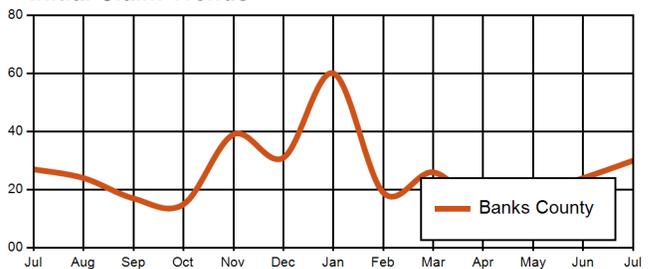


Initial Claims Activity

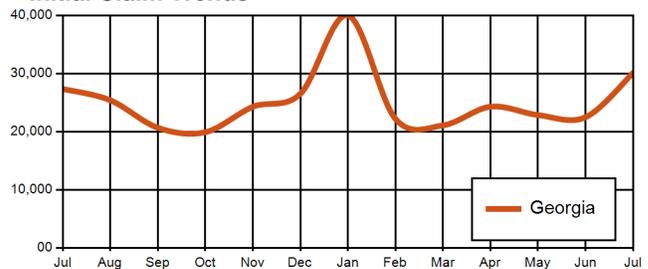
	July 2023	June 2023	May 2023	Total
Banks	30	24	19	73
Franklin	33	25	25	83
Habersham	64	46	82	192
Hall	379	268	264	911
Jackson	142	101	100	343
Madison	41	28	50	119
Stephens	33	28	44	105
Banks Area	722	520	584	1,826

Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Initial Claim Trends



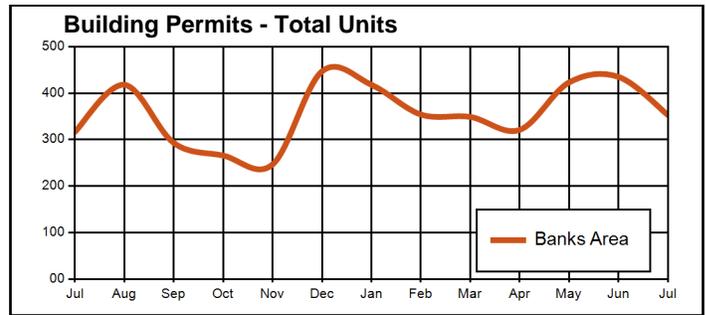
Initial Claim Trends



Building Permit Construction Activity

	Banks Area			
	July 2023	June 2023	May 2023	Total
Totals	353	435	423	1,211
Family residential	267	397	355	1,019
Multi family resident	86	38	68	192

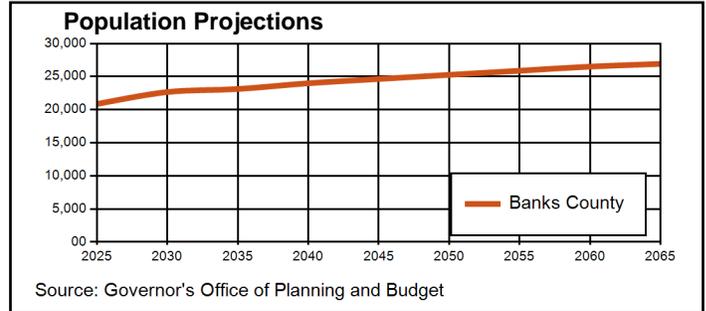
Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



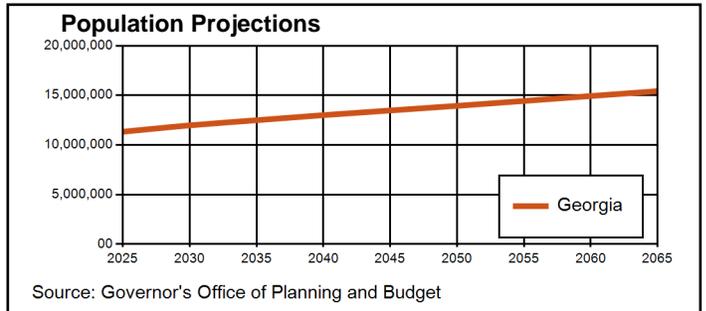
Population Activity

	Annual 2022	Annual 2021	Difference
Banks	19,328	18,562	766
Franklin	24,128	23,785	343
Habersham	47,475	46,774	701
Hall	212,692	207,369	5,323
Jackson	83,936	80,286	3,650
Madison	31,473	30,885	588
Stephens	26,767	26,865	-98
Banks Area	445,799	434,526	11,273
Georgia	10,912,876	10,799,566	113,310
United States	333,287,557	331,893,745	1,393,812

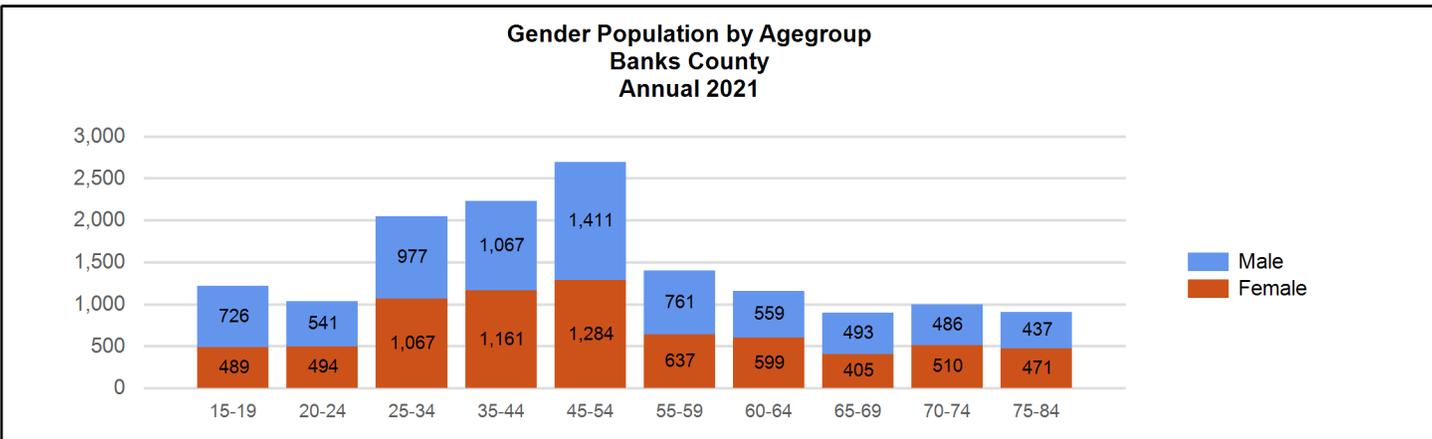
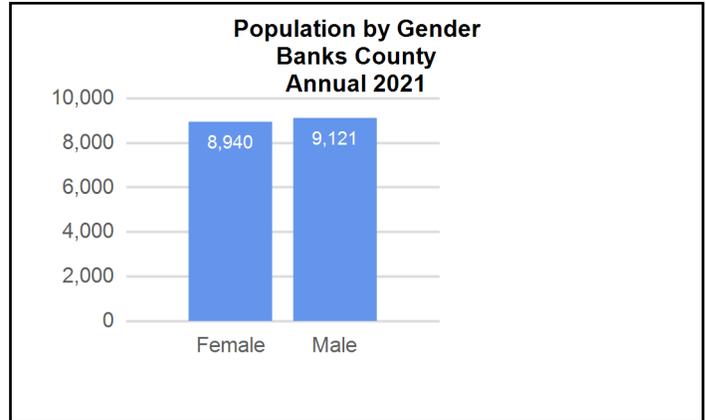
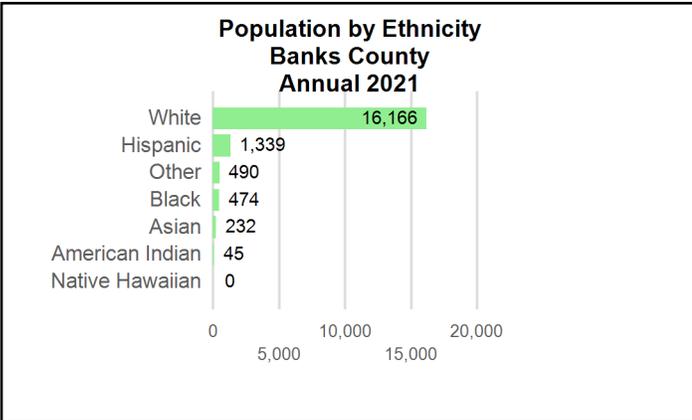
Source: Georgia Department of Labor; U.S. Census Bureau.



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget



Industry Mix - 1st Quarter of 2023

INDUSTRY	Banks				Banks Area			
	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT NUMBER	PERCENT	WEEKLY WAGE	NUMBER OF FIRMS	EMPLOYMENT NUMBER	PERCENT	WEEKLY WAGE
Goods-Producing	75	835	16.9	1,124	1,809	49,663	27.0	1,191
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	14	183	3.7	1,136	113	1,144	0.6	1,010
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	*	*	*	9	120	0.1	1,522
Construction	46	232	4.7	982	1,108	7,734	4.2	1,259
Manufacturing	14	412	8.4	1,196	579	40,665	22.1	1,183
Food	3	129	2.6	1,320	76	14,334	7.8	1,050
Textile Mills	1	*	*	*	16	1,042	0.6	1,102
Wood Product	3	18	0.4	910	41	745	0.4	1,561
Plastics and Rubber Products	1	*	*	*	26	1,913	1.0	1,137
Fabricated Metal Product	5	66	1.3	1,023	108	2,604	1.4	1,303
Electrical Equipment, Appliance, and Component	1	*	*	*	15	*	*	*
Petroleum and Coal Products	0	0	0.0	0	2	*	*	*
Paper	0	0	0.0	0	4	*	*	*
Apparel	0	0	0.0	0	4	19	0.0	709
Textile Product Mills	0	0	0.0	0	6	45	0.0	561
Primary Metal	0	0	0.0	0	6	594	0.3	1,361
Computer and Electronic Product	0	0	0.0	0	12	*	*	*
Beverage and Tobacco Product	0	0	0.0	0	13	483	0.3	1,181
Transportation Equipment	0	0	0.0	0	26	4,941	2.7	1,029
Printing and Related Support Activities	0	0	0.0	0	27	461	0.3	1,404
Nonmetallic Mineral Product	0	0	0.0	0	30	522	0.3	1,084
Furniture and Related Product	0	0	0.0	0	32	883	0.5	1,130
Chemical	0	0	0.0	0	39	1,534	0.8	1,340
Miscellaneous	0	0	0.0	0	46	1,414	0.8	1,550
Machinery	0	0	0.0	0	50	5,152	2.8	1,348
Service-Providing	230	3,152	63.9	768	7,359	111,799	60.7	1,024
Utilities	0	0	0.0	0	17	670	0.4	1,981
Wholesale Trade	19	188	3.8	1,435	543	9,010	4.9	1,324
Retail Trade	55	870	17.7	596	1,401	20,675	11.2	749
Transportation and Warehousing	15	85	1.7	878	316	19,618	10.6	803
Information	2	*	*	*	104	1,353	0.7	1,929
Finance and Insurance	7	20	0.4	1,675	528	3,188	1.7	1,580
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	7	5	0.1	902	402	2,737	1.5	965
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	16	*	*	*	782	4,408	2.4	1,227
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1	*	*	*	35	2,209	1.2	1,833
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	22	299	6.1	853	641	9,554	5.2	756
Educational Services	3	3	0.1	592	78	2,430	1.3	697
Health Care and Social Assistance	15	119	2.4	1,171	985	18,288	9.9	1,382
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	6	72	1.5	517	120	1,401	0.8	5,539
Accommodation and Food Services	44	937	19.0	457	773	13,089	7.1	441
Other Services (except Public Administration)	18	83	1.7	1,038	634	3,168	1.7	794
Unclassified - industry not assigned	47	34	0.7	893	1,436	867	0.5	1,105
Total - Private Sector	352	4,021	81.6	843	10,604	162,328	88.1	1,076
Total - Government	23	908	18.4	770	353	21,885	11.9	924
Federal Government	2	20	0.4	1,206	64	932	0.5	1,549
State Government	6	22	0.4	684	102	3,357	1.8	893
Local Government	15	866	17.6	762	187	17,596	9.6	896
ALL INDUSTRIES	375	4,929	100.0	829	10,957	184,212	100.0	1,057
ALL INDUSTRIES - Georgia					376,446	4,757,073		1,363

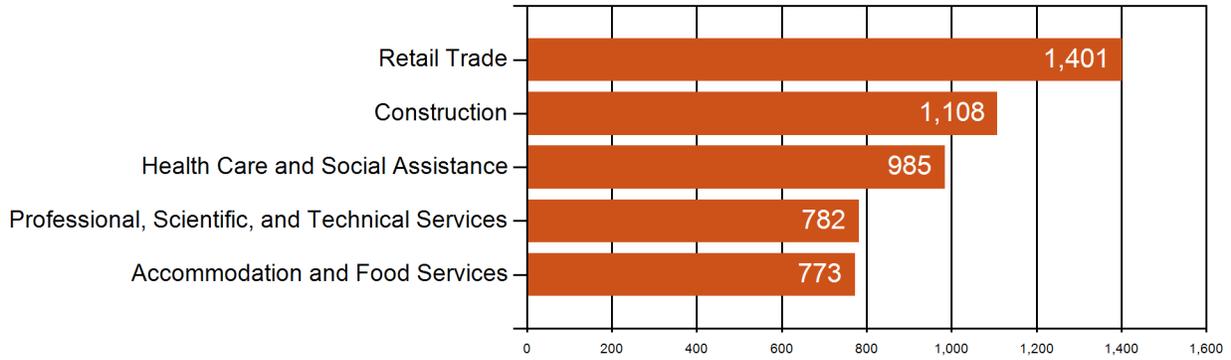
Note: *Denotes confidential data relating to individual employers and cannot be released. These data use the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) categories. Average weekly wage is derived by dividing gross payroll dollars paid to all employees - both hourly and salaried - by the average number of employees who had earnings; average earnings are then divided by the number of weeks in a reporting period to obtain weekly figures. Figures in other columns may not sum accurately due to rounding. All figures are 1st Quarter of 2023.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

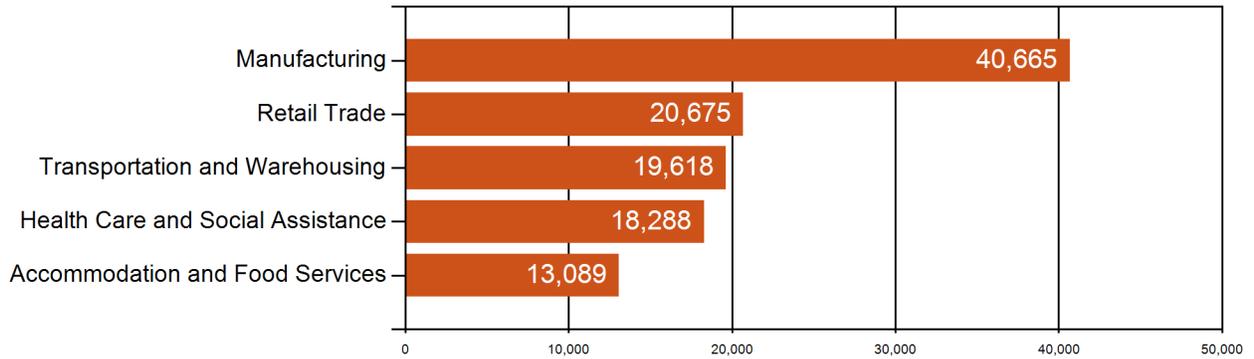
Top Industries - 1st Quarter of 2023

Banks Area

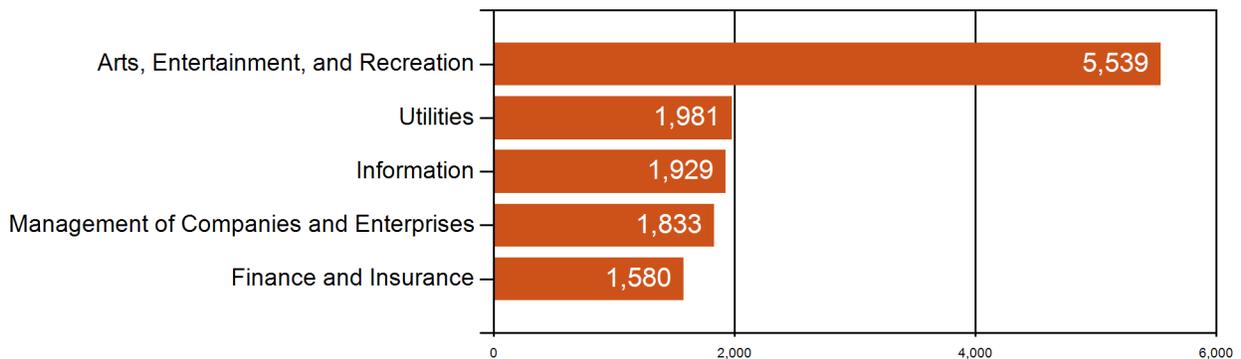
Top Industries by Firms



Top Industries by Employment



Top Industries by Weekly Wages



Source: Georgia Department of Labor. These data represent jobs that are covered by unemployment insurance laws.

Technical College Certificate Graduates - 2022

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Child Care Provider/Assistant	134	209	170	56.0	-18.7
Automobile/Automotive Mechanics Technology/Technician	218	129	161	-40.8	24.8
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	165	146	160	-11.5	9.6
Welding Technology/Welder	229	317	155	38.4	-51.1
Business Administration and Management, General	109	155	145	42.2	-6.5
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	155	109	124	-29.7	13.8
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant/Aide	82	110	107	34.1	-2.7
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/	79	81	88	2.5	8.6
Lineworker	61	81	76	32.8	-6.2
Electrician	47	58	69	23.4	19.0

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

Technical College Diploma Graduates - 2022

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General	102	57	72	-44.1	26.3
Medical/Clinical Assistant	90	61	67	-32.2	9.8
Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse Training	66	63	63	-4.5	0.0
Welding Technology/Welder	60	55	43	-8.3	-21.8
Business Administration and Management, General	26	41	39	57.7	-4.9
Electrician	25	34	29	36.0	-14.7
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrigeration Maintenance Technology/	39	23	28	-41.0	21.7
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	32	21	25	-34.4	19.0
Emergency Medical Technology/Technician (EMT Paramedic)	49	21	24	-57.1	14.3
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	58	59	23	1.7	-61.0

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

Technical College Degree Graduates - 2022

PROGRAMS	TOTAL GRADUATES			PERCENT CHANGE	
	2020	2021	2022	2020-2021	2021-2022
Business Administration and Management, General	42	52	47	23.8	-9.6
Industrial Mechanics and Maintenance Technology	34	28	36	-17.6	28.6
Accounting Technology/Technician and Bookkeeping	45	56	35	24.4	-37.5
Criminal Justice/Safety Studies	37	35	26	-5.4	-25.7
Administrative Assistant and Secretarial Science, General	29	21	18	-27.6	-14.3
Network and System Administration/Administrator	20	17	17	-15.0	0.0
Radiologic Technology/Science - Radiographer	17	19	17	11.8	-10.5
Early Childhood Education and Teaching	14	28	15	100.0	-46.4
Interior Design	9	13	14	44.4	7.7
Clinical/Medical Laboratory Technician	15	10	13	-33.3	30.0

Source: Technical College System of Georgia

Note: Please visit TCSG website for any college configuration changes.

Top Ten Largest Employers - 2022*

Banks

Axiom Staffing Group, Inc.
 Chick-Fil-A
 Country Charm Egg Distributors, Inc.
 Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, Inc.
 Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbins
 Fieldale Farms Corporation
 Kerry, Inc.
 Lumite, Inc.
 The Home Depot
 Walmart

*Note: Represents employment covered by unemployment insurance excluding all government agencies except correctional institutions, state and local hospitals, state colleges and universities. Data shown for the First Quarter of 2022. Employers are listed alphabetically by area, not by the number of employees.

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Banks Area

	<u>COUNTY</u>
Amazon.Com Services, Inc.	Jackson
Fieldale Farms Corporation	Hall
Fieldale Farms Corporation	Habersham
Fox Racing Shox	Hall
Gold Creek Processing, LLC	Hall
HG Georgia Merchants, Inc.	Jackson
Kubota Manufacturing of America Corporation	Hall
Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Inc.	Hall
Pilgrim's Pride Corporation	Hall
Sk Battery America, Inc.	Jackson

Education of the Labor Force

Banks Area

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGE

	PERCENT					
	OF TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	65+
Elementary	8.0%	3.5%	5.8%	11.7%	8.7%	8.1%
Some High School	10.1%	14.2%	9.4%	10.6%	8.4%	10.9%
High School Grad/GED	32.2%	39.4%	32.0%	28.0%	32.3%	31.5%
Some College	21.4%	31.0%	22.4%	17.8%	20.7%	19.1%
College Grad 2 Yr	7.1%	5.3%	9.9%	7.9%	7.3%	5.2%
College Grad 4 Yr	13.3%	5.6%	15.4%	15.1%	13.4%	14.3%
Post Graduate Studies	7.9%	1.0%	5.1%	9.0%	9.2%	10.9%
Totals	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Note: Totals are based on the portion of the labor force between ages 18 - 65+. Some College category represents workers with some

Source: U.S. Census Bureau - 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Georgia Department of Labor Location(s)

Career Center(s)

37 Foreacre Street

Toccoa, GA 30577-3582

Phone: (706) 282 - 4514

Fax: (706) 282 - 4513

For copies of Area Labor Profiles, please visit our website at: <http://dol.georgia.gov> or contact Workforce Statistics Division, Georgia Department of Labor, 148 Andrew Young International Blvd N.E. Atlanta, GA. 30303-1751. Phone: 404-232-3875; Fax: 404-232-3888 or Email us at workforce_info@gdol.ga.gov

BRUCE THOMPSON - COMMISSIONER, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program
Auxillary Aids and Services Available upon Request to Individuals with Disabilities

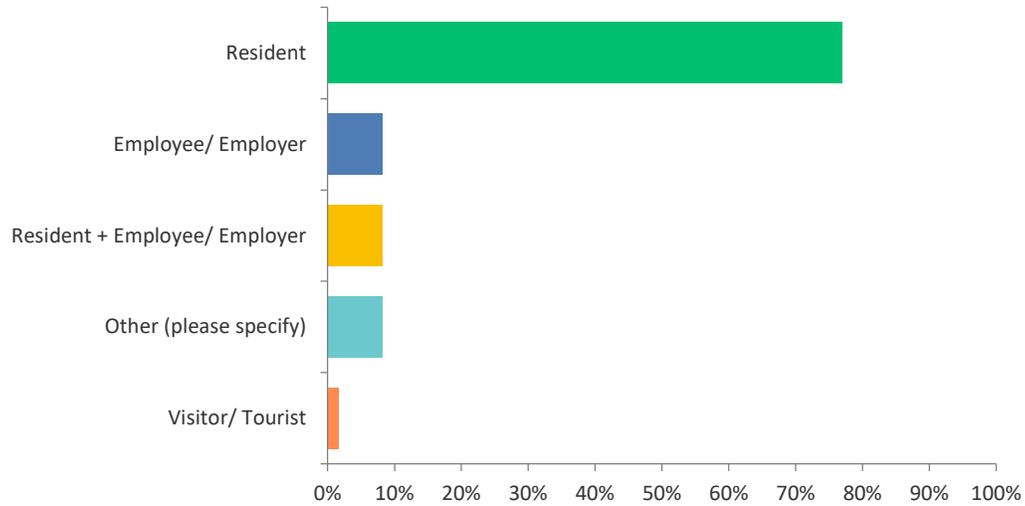
Workforce Statistics Division; E-mail: Workforce_Info@gdol.ga.gov Phone: (404) 232-3875



Summary of Survey Results

Q1: I am submitting comments primarily as a:

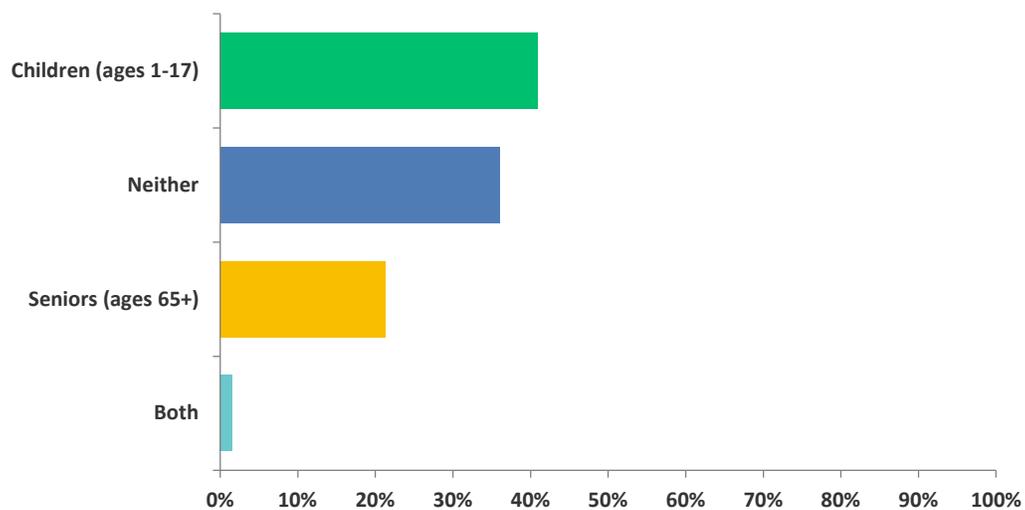
Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

1

Q2: Do you have any seniors or children in your household?

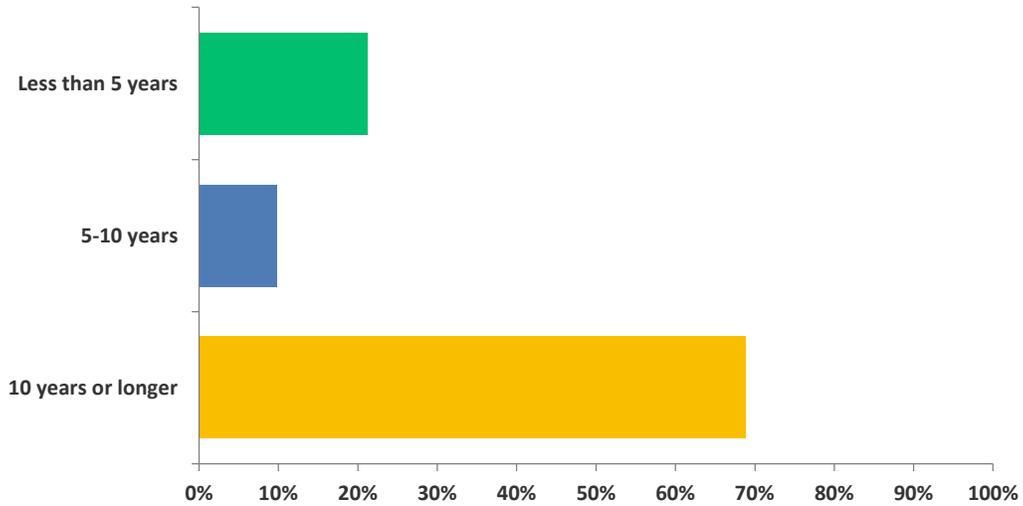
Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

2

Q3: How long have you been living/ working in the area?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

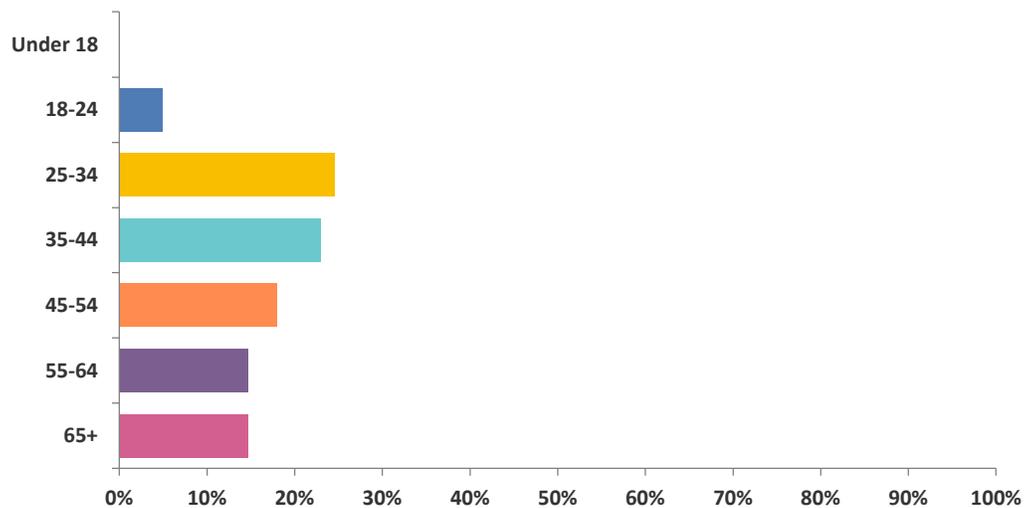


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3

Q4: What is your age range?

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

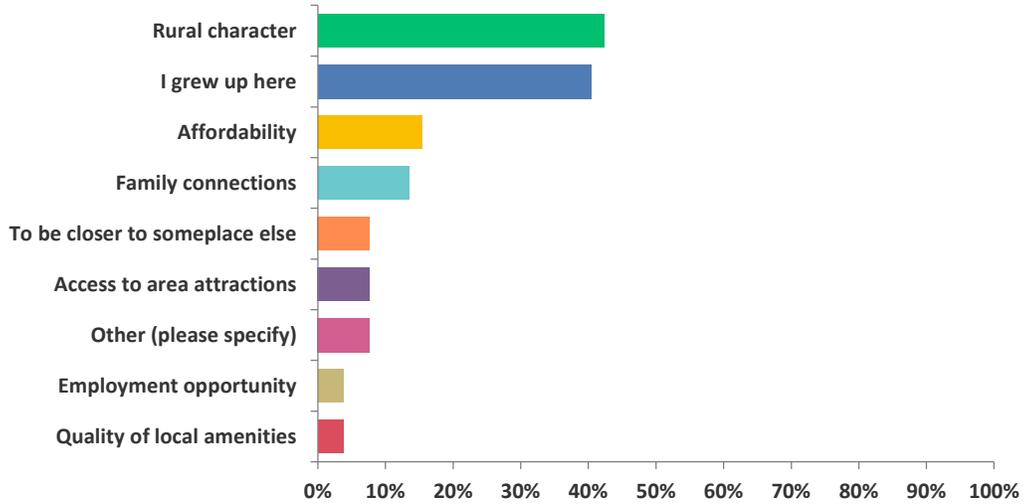


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4

Q5: If you moved to Homer from somewhere outside of Banks County, what was the main reason for your move.

Answered: 52 Skipped: 9

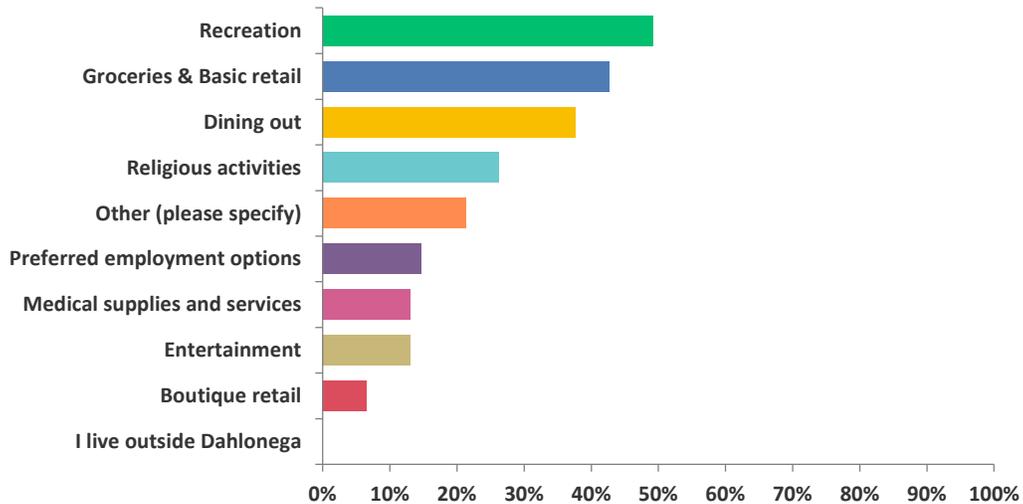


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5

Q6: Please indicate which of the following activities you do mostly in the city. (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 61 Skipped: 0

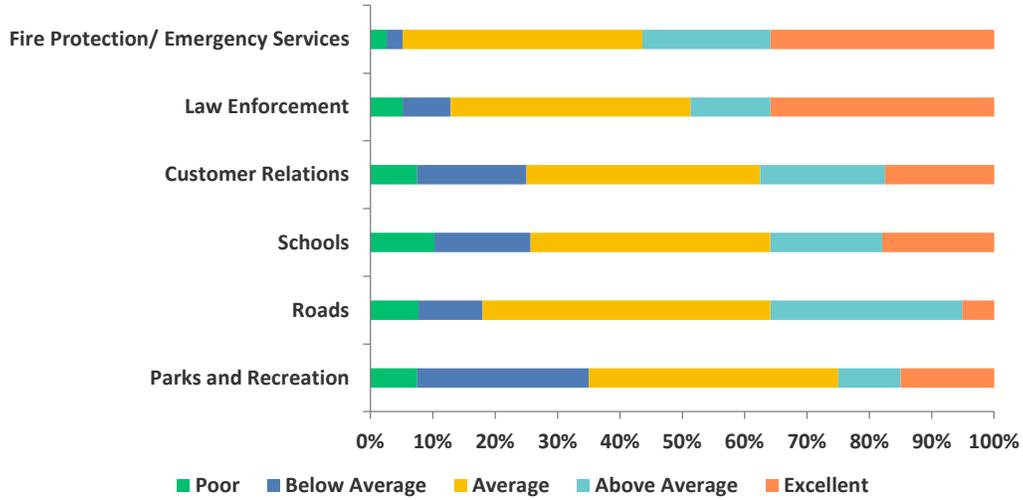


Powered by SurveyMonkey

6

Q7: On a scale of 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent), please rate your current level of satisfaction with the following public services:

Answered: 40 Skipped: 21

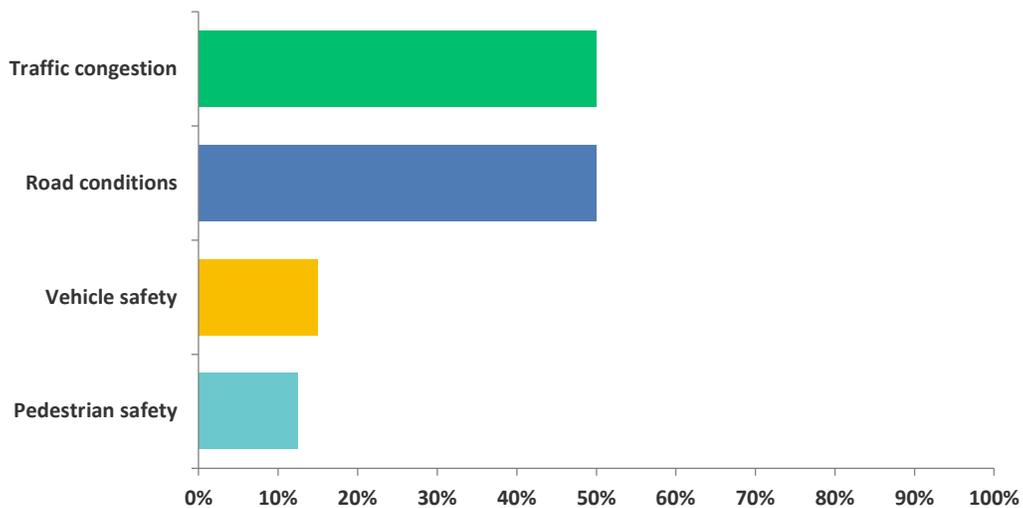


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7

Q8: What do you consider the foremost problem for roadways in Homer? Please check all that apply.

Answered: 40 Skipped: 21

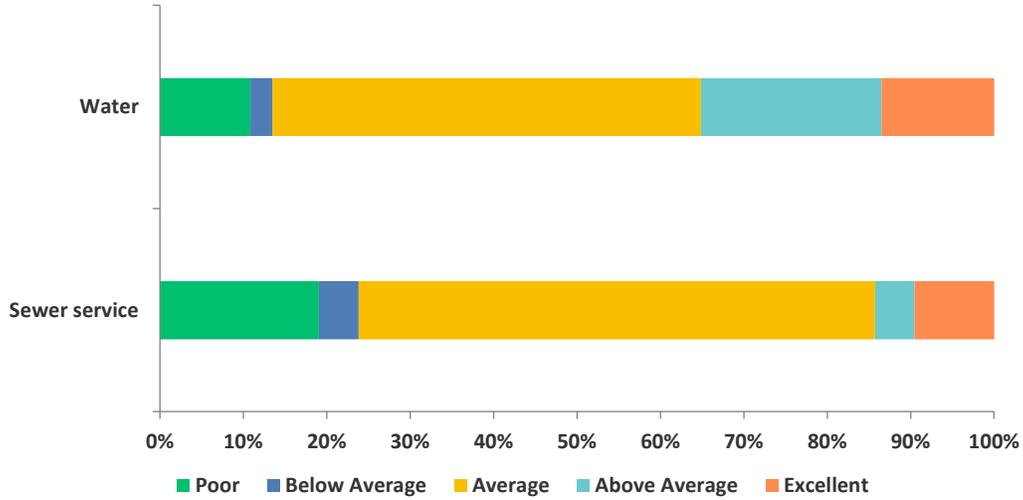


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8

Q10: If you have public water and/or sewer service, please rate your current level of satisfaction with the service:

Answered: 37 Skipped: 24

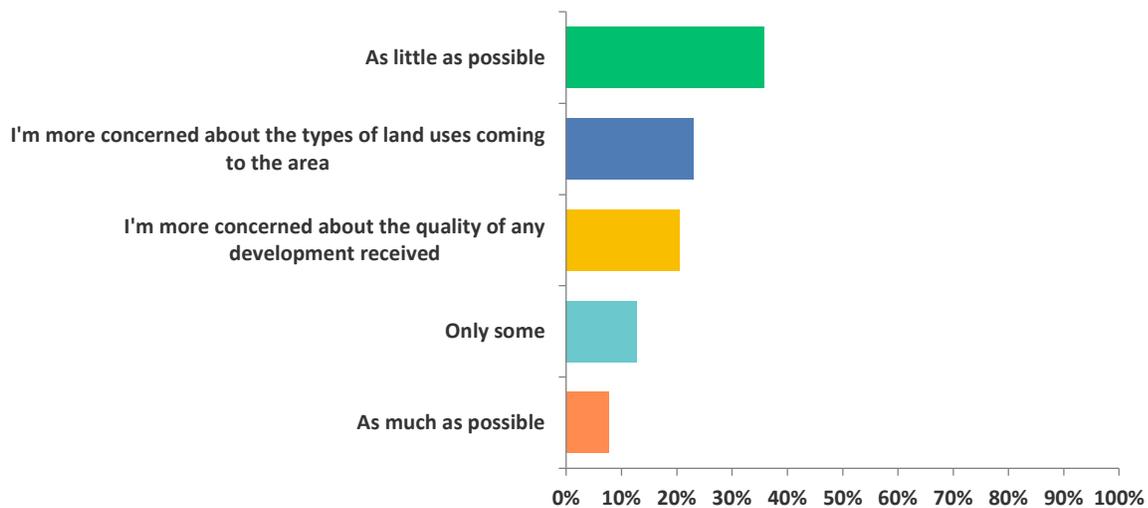


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9

Q16: Given your preference, how much new growth and development should be directed inside, or immediately around, the town limits of Homer? (Choose one)

Answered: 39 Skipped: 22

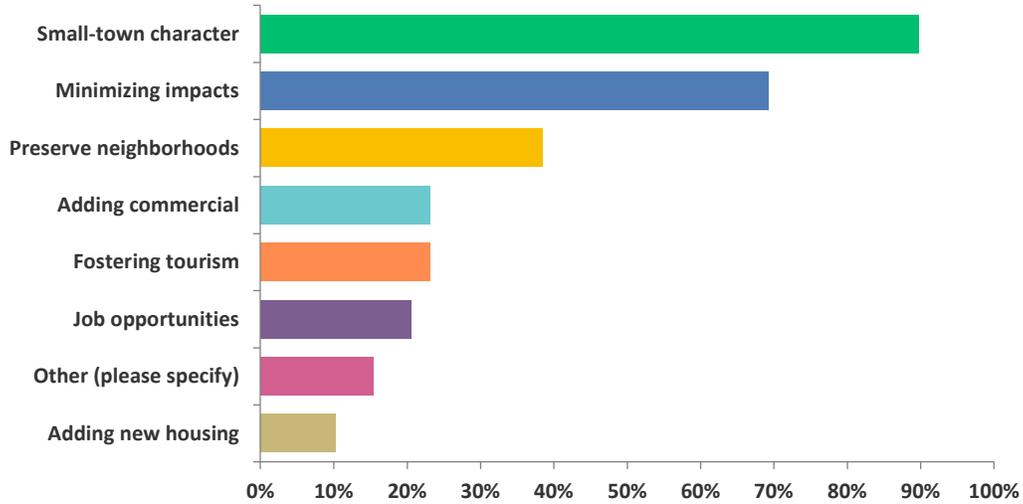


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10

Q17: My priorities regarding any growth and development would be _____. (Choose all that apply)

Answered: 39 Skipped: 22

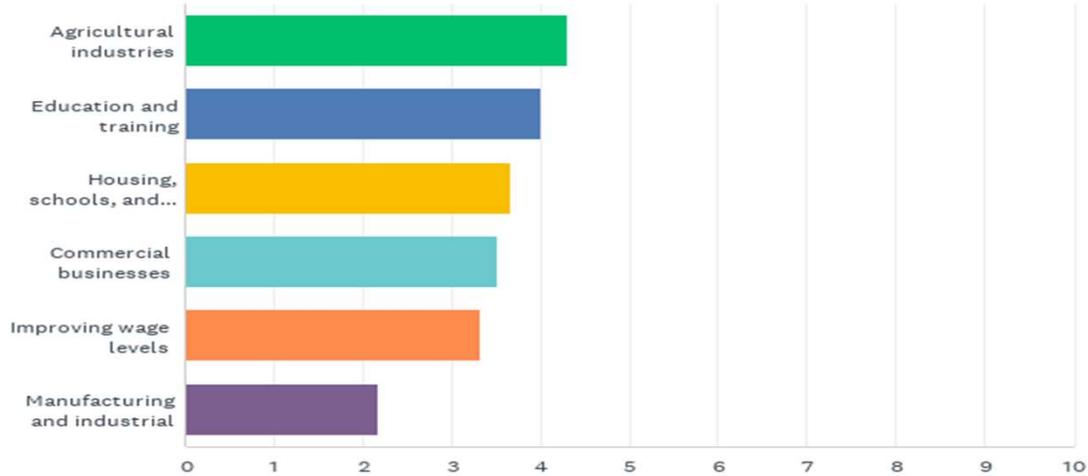


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11

Q18: Please rank the following economic development priorities for in and around Homer, with #1 being the most important.

Answered: 39 Skipped: 22

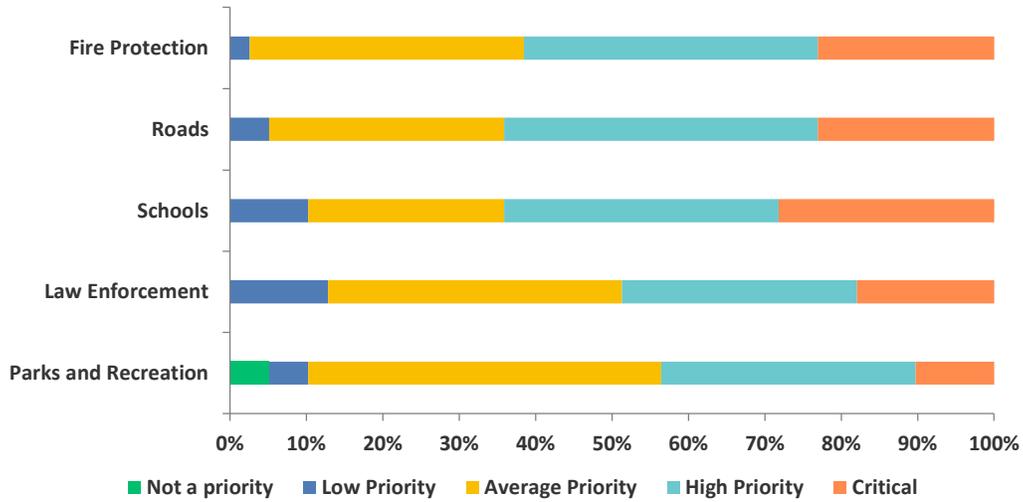


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12

Q20: How would you rank the following services in terms of priority of need for such capital investment?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 22

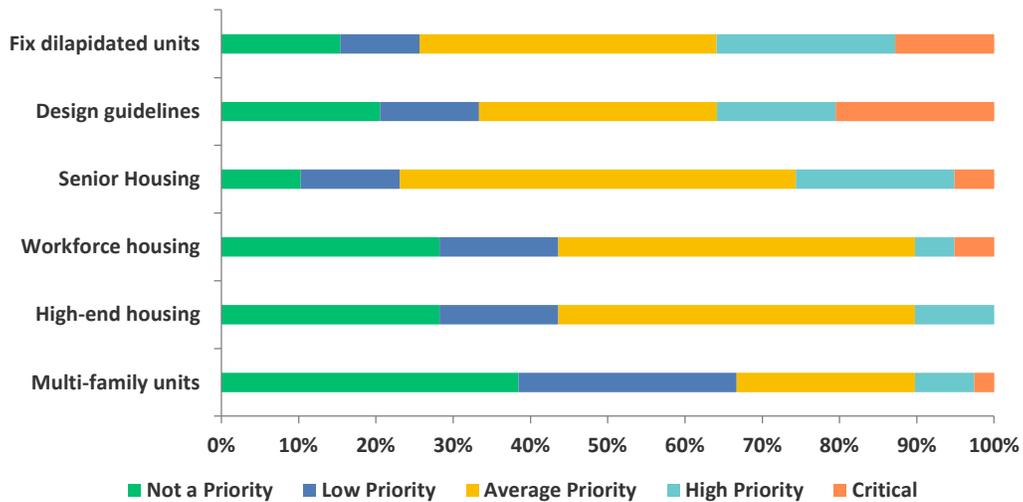


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13

Q21: Please indicate how strongly you feel any of the following housing issues is a priority for Homer.

Answered: 39 Skipped: 22



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14



Public Participation Documentation

HOMER COMP PLAN UPDATE
TOWN HALL MEETING
HOMER CITY HALL

6:00 PM-Tuesday July 25, 2023

Sign In Sheet

Name

Sandra M Swinney	Sandra M Swinney
Martha Crane	Martha Crane
JAMES DOMAS	
Cliff Hill	Cy Q B Hill Jr.
Sandra Garrison	

TOWN OF HOMER
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – ADVISORY CMTE. MTG.

Town Hall ~ 6:00 PM – 5/30/23

Please Sign In

Name

Name

Sandra Swinney
Martha Grand
Mary J. Clark
Carol Ayers

TOWN OF HOMER
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – PUBLIC FORUM

Town Hall ~ 6:00 PM – 6/27/23

Please Sign In

Name

Sandra Garrison
Martha Crane
Lissa Mason
Carol Ayers
Kellie Jones
Sandra Downey

Name

Blank lined area for additional sign-ins.

Help Plan the Future of Banks County!

The Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) is assisting Banks County, the Town of Homer, and the City of Maysville with the updates of their respective Comprehensive Plans, the State required document that helps shape and coordinate local work programs. This planning process is designed to ensure that major projects and policies for the community are developed with public input, ensuring a level of coordination between local and State level interests.

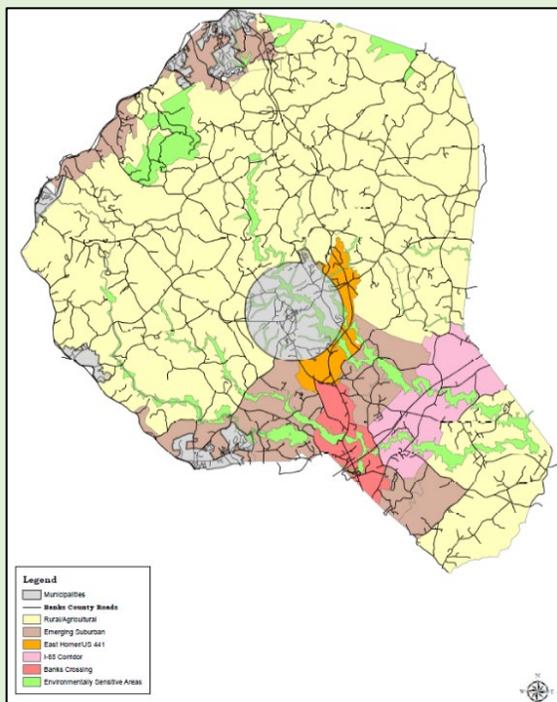
As part of these processes there are brief online surveys available asking people to give their thoughts on select issues and priorities for each community. These surveys will be accessible through June 30 and are open to anyone with a vested interest in the area. All responses will be anonymous.

There will also be public meetings held in each community throughout the spring and summer of 2023. Check each government's web site for meeting dates and locations, as well as for copies of draft material as the process nears an end.

For any questions or comments, please contact:

Adam Hazell, Planning Director

738.538.2617 | ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov



Banks County

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MPYLMP5>



Town of Homer

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9M6JXKG>



City of Maysville

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9TZP9VT>

