

Thomas County/City of Thomasville Joint Comprehensive Plan

Community Assessment

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Community Profile	3
Analysis of Existing Development Patterns	5
Historic Development Factors	5
Existing Land Use	7
Current Development Patterns: Thomas County	11
Current Development Patterns: City of Thomasville	16
Identification of Recommended Character Areas	25
Recommended Character Areas: Thomas County	25
Character Areas: Within the Urban Service Boundary	27
Character Areas: Outside the Urban Service Boundary	29
Character Areas Throughout Unincorporated Thomas County	32
Recommended Character Areas: Thomasville	42
Areas Requiring Special Consideration	50
Thomas County	50
City of Thomasville	53
Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives	56
Quality Community Objectives: Thomas County and Thomasville	56
Regional Identity Objective	56
Growth Preparedness Objective	57
Appropriate Business Objective	57
Educational Opportunities Objective	58
Employment Options Objective	58
Heritage Preservation Objective	59
Open Space Preservation Objective	59
Environmental Protection Objective	60
Regional Cooperation Objective	60
Transportation Alternatives Objective	61
Regional Solutions Objective	61
Housing Opportunities Objective	62
Traditional Neighborhood Objective	62
Infill Development Objective	63
Sense of Place Objective	65
Issues and Opportunities	76

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Location of Thomas County, GA 4
Figure 2 – Current Land Use in Thomas County, GA 9
Figure 3 – Current Land Use in Thomasville, GA 10
Figure 4 – Recommended Character Areas, Urban Service Area of Thomas Co., GA 40
Figure 5 – Recommended Character Areas, “Rural” Thomas Co., GA 41
Figure 6 – 2004 Resource Team Report’s Overall Development Concept Map 43
Figure 7 – Map of Neighborhoods with Activity Centers 44
Figure 8 – Recommended Character Areas, Thomasville, GA 49

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 – Existing Land Use, 1990 and 2005, Thomas County 11
Table 2 – Existing Land Use, 1995 and 2005, City of Thomasville 16
Table 3 – Transitional Land Use Areas, 1995 18

APPENDIX

Supportive Data Analysis Appendix A

INTRODUCTION

The Community Assessment is the first phase in Thomas County and the City of Thomasville's Comprehensive Plan Update. The comprehensive plan is a long-range (twenty-year) statement of a community's vision for development (and redevelopment). By addressing the entire physical environment of the county and city and the multitude of functions, policies, and programs that comprise their day to day workings, the plan seeks to guide the what, when, where, why and how of future physical changes to the landscape of Thomas County and Thomasville.

The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to provide a guide for local government officials and other community leaders for making everyday decisions that are supportive of the community's stated vision for its future. The plan should serve as the local governments' guide for assessing development proposals, including rezoning applications and redevelopment plans. For residents, business owners and members of the development community, the plan provides insight into what types of land uses and development are appropriate at various locations throughout the city and county. Finally, by evaluating various local government functions and services, the plan is a point of reference for government staff in preparing capital improvements programs and associated budgets.

The last Thomas County Comprehensive Plan was completed and adopted in 1993 for the County's unincorporated areas. The plan was prepared by the Thomas County Planning and Land Use Standards Commission and the Thomas County/Thomasville Planning Department (1991-1992) as a tool to manage and guide the future growth, development and redevelopment of the County through the year 2010. The plan established a basis for decision-making in areas of economic development, environmental matters, and future land use patterns in unincorporated Thomas County. Seven members were appointed to a Planning and Land Use Standards (PLUS) Commission in 1991 and served as the body that administered the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Thomasville completed its last Comprehensive Plan more recently in 1998, with similar goals of creating a work program that would carefully guide the City's growth and development. Thomas County and Thomasville independently prepared their Comprehensive Plans in the past. For the most recent update to the county and city comprehensive plans, the two jurisdictions have entered into a joint planning effort

In August 2005, the local governments selected a team of consultant planners led by Robert and Company to facilitate this endeavor. More recently acquired census data and pertinent information to the region has made possible an update to the previous county and city plans. The *Thomas County/City of Thomasville Joint Comprehensive Plan* will lay the groundwork for county- and citywide decision-making through the year 2025 using relevant current data and both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Though Thomasville and Thomas County are working jointly in this comprehensive planning effort, the six smaller municipalities in Thomas County (Barwick, Boston, Coolidge, Meigs, Ochlocknee, and Pavo) opted not to participate in the joint planning effort but are working toward a concurrent deadline.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) oversees and provides guidance for local comprehensive planning in Georgia. The department's Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning, as updated in May 2005, outline the three key components of a

comprehensive plan: the Community Assessment, Community Participation Plan and Community Agenda.

This “Assessment” document is the foundation from which the community’s vision and strategies for implementing the vision over time will be developed during subsequent planning phases. The document is an objective summary of the current conditions in the county and city based upon an extensive review of the area’s current demographics, economic environment, land use patterns, infrastructure conditions and policies.

As required by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ Rules for Local Planning, this assessment was prepared without direct public participation. This document, along with the Community Participation Plan (CPP) will be submitted to the Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center and Georgia Department of Community Affairs for review following a public hearing and “resolution to submit” voted upon by the Thomas County Commission and City of Thomasville Mayor and City Council. Following the SWGRDC and DCA’s review and acceptance of the Assessment and CPP development of the Community Agenda will commence. This will be accompanied by extensive opportunities for the Thomas County and Thomasville communities to provide input into the plan. The Community Agenda is the most important component of the comprehensive plan, this document includes the statement of the community’s vision, the issues and opportunities that will be addressed during the twenty-year time period of the plan, and the strategy for achieving the vision and addressing the identified issues and opportunities.

The complete Comprehensive Plan Update will be submitted to the SWGRDC and DCA in April 2007, well ahead of the county and city’s deadlines for adopting the plan on June 30, 2008, to provide ample review time.

The Community Assessment has four key sections:

- ❑ Analysis of Existing Development Patterns and Areas Requiring Special Attention
- ❑ Identification of Character Areas with the County and City
- ❑ Analysis of Consistency with Quality Community Objectives
- ❑ Identification of Issues and Opportunities Facing the Community

The document is presented in an “executive summary” format as to be attractive and accessible to all community members and serve as a quick reference for government officials and staff. The majority of the findings included in this report are supported by extensive data and analysis provided in the attached Technical Appendix.

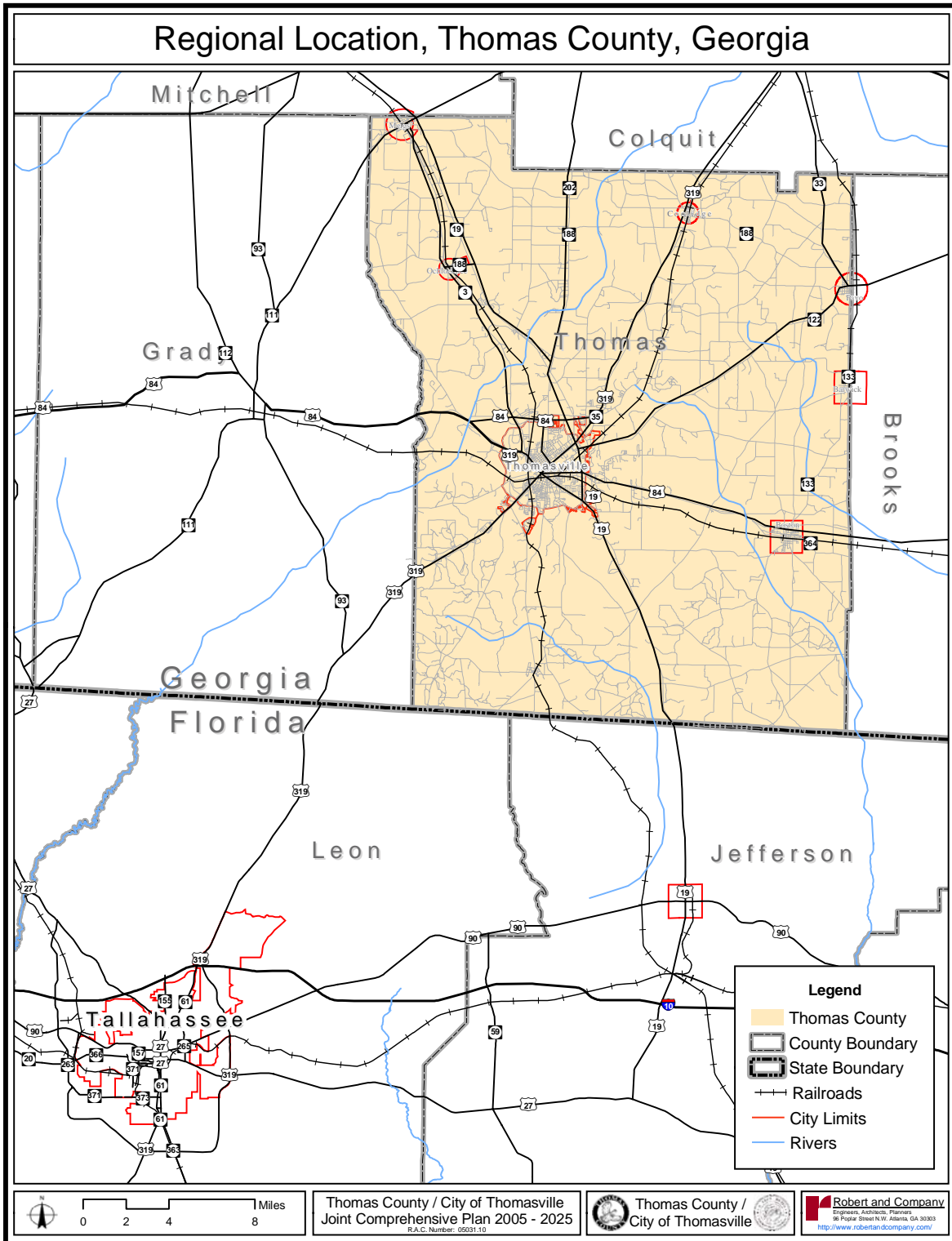
COMMUNITY PROFILE

Thomas County is located in Southwest Georgia and is a member of the fourteen county Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center (SWGRDC). Thomas County borders Leon and Jefferson Counties in Florida to the south, Brooks County to the east; Colquitt and Mitchell Counties to the north; and Grady County to the west. The largest neighboring city is Tallahassee (population 200,000), located thirty-five miles to the south. Thomas County has a total of seven municipalities within its borders, including Meigs, Ochlocknee, Coolidge, Pavo, Barwick, Boston, and Thomasville.

Thomasville is the county seat (Figure 1). Thomas County encompasses approximately 350,975 acres (approximately 548.4 square miles) of which Thomasville accounts for 9,736.7 acres. Thomasville, the county seat, is the economic center for the five county area of Brooks, Colquitt, Grady, Mitchell and Thomas Counties. One hundred fifteen industries call Thomas County home; major employers include John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital, Southwestern State Hospital, Turbine Engine Company, and Flowers Foods. Fresh Foods LP, based in Forth Worth, Texas, recently located a new ground beef products manufacturing facility in Thomasville. The city was also recently named one of the six best places to retire in the United States. The community was singled out for amenities including climate, housing, cultural activities, excellent health care, recreation, education and proximity to larger universities.

The 2000 population for Thomas County was 42,737 as reported by the U.S. Census, ranking it second among the SWGRDC member counties (Dougherty County is the largest with 96,065 residents in 2000). Thomasville's 2000 population was 18,162, making it the 2nd largest city in the region behind Albany, which had a 2000 population of 76,939. The most recent Census Bureau estimates for the county and city populations (July 1, 2004) show increases to 43,989 and 18,526 respectively. These increases are notable as half the counties in the SWGRDC region actually lost population during the 2000 – 2004 period. With its growth rate of 2.9%, Thomas County was the 4th fastest growing county in the region.

Figure 1 – Location of Thomas County, GA



ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

In order to adequately develop the community's vision for future development, an understanding of its historic development and existing land use patterns are necessary. For a future vision to be achievable it must be grounded in the reality of the current environment. This section provides a brief synopsis of the historic development of Thomas County and the City of Thomasville, an analysis of current land uses, and a discussion development patterns including the character areas of the county and city and areas which may require special attention during the planning process.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT FACTORS

Located in Southwest Georgia, Thomas County was created in 1825 from parts of Decatur and Irwin counties by an act of the General Assembly. With access to Federal and state highways, the county borders Florida to the south with Tallahassee as the nearest major city. Both Thomas County and the City of Thomasville, which was designated as the county seat in 1826, were named after War of 1812 hero General Jett Thomas. Thomasville was incorporated by an act of the state legislature in 1831.

With Thomasville as the educational, political and economic center of Thomas County, the region evolved into a prosperous, plantation-based economy by the mid-nineteenth century. The rich land made it possible to grow a variety of crops, including cotton, pears and tobacco. Thomasville played an active role in the Civil War, as it provided supplies and soldiers to the cause, but the land itself was not affected by the war. The county's population grew from 3,300 people in 1830 to almost 21,000 people in 1880.

Because of the county's location in the South and its location as a railroad terminus in the late 1800s, Thomasville became a winter destination to travelers from the North. This brought about the "grand hotel era" experienced by the city throughout the late 1800s and into the twentieth century. During this period in Thomasville's history, plantation houses, elaborate mansions and "winter cottages" were constructed by landowners. The plantations and homes built during this time continue to provide a significant connection to the area's rich history.

The city and county have continued to grow and diversify since the end of the "hotel era," which commenced with the extension of the railroad further south into Florida. The region strives to preserve its heritage and has drawn on its rich history as a powerful economic development tool.

Although the county has expanded economically, Thomas County has historically been dominated by agricultural land uses. This trend is expected to continue through at least the next twenty years. There has been significant conversion of farmland and forests in Thomas County from 1990 to 2005 (See Table 1 on page 11 – Existing Land Use). More than 32,000 acres of farm and forest land have been converted to other uses during the past fifteen years. Other land uses in the county have risen steadily in accordance with the population growth over the past century. Residential land use growth has surpassed the proportions of public-institutional, commercial, and industrial land uses in the past fifteen years—particularly between 2000 and 2005. Even with such conversion, Thomas County's land use mix is still three-quarters (73.5%) agricultural and forestry as of 2005. Given the dominance of agriculture, it is unlikely that

Thomas County will fully transition to a mostly suburban, non-farm county during the twenty-year planning horizon.

Plantations in the county have formed a de-facto greenbelt or urban containment zone south of Thomasville. So far, residential development pressures from Tallahassee have not become an issue in southern Thomas County, as the bulk of new suburban development has occurred in Thomasville and north of the city.

Thomasville has historically served as a hub of commerce and society in the county, while smaller cities remain insulated from growth pressures by peripheral farmlands. The City of Thomasville has a variety of neighborhoods with notable residential development that dates to various time periods, particularly in the past six decades. Thomasville was laid out in a grid pattern of straight streets, with urban-size blocks, and the overall land use pattern is relatively compact. Residential subdivisions in the city are predominantly single-family, detached dwellings, but range from small “shotgun” houses in inner city neighborhoods to historic homes and newer suburban-style mansions. Historic homes have been maintained and often renovated in the city’s numerous historic districts. Large neighborhood parks anchor excellent residential neighborhoods. More modest neighborhoods that are not yet historic, but date to the late 1950s to 1970s contribute to the city’s charm.

Because land for residential use has been more abundant than market trends would dictate, many lots in Thomasville have remained undeveloped through three or four different waves of building over the past fifty to sixty years. Lots and land tracts along the streams within Thomasville (which are virtually hidden except for their lush riparian vegetation) have been left vacant since there is better situated land elsewhere. A negligible amount of land in the city continues to function agriculturally.

The location of Thomas County and Thomasville near major transportation routes will continue to challenge the region in terms of growth and development. Railroad corridors traversing the city in all directions interrupt the city’s street network and development pattern. Railroads have influenced land use patterns in that many lands alongside railroad tracks are industrial in nature. However, as the national economy has become less reliant on manufacturing and has moved to a service-based economy, some of Thomasville’s older industrial properties have been vacated.

Highway corridors have also influenced land development patterns. Highway improvements have helped spawn a movement of highway business at interchanges and along highway corridors, particularly in the east, south, and northeast along U.S. Highway 319 and the Bypass. Post-WW II development has extended the original diagonal grid pattern in some parts of the city, though suburban influences are evident in some 1950s and later neighborhoods in Thomasville.

As the county seat, Thomasville continues to function as the core of the county and accommodates many educational, religious, and government institutions. Thomas County and Thomasville are dedicated to the maintenance and preservation of their history as well as their cultural heritage. The area continues to serve as one of the State’s leading regions in authentic southern charm and appeal.

EXISTING LAND USE

Figures 2 and 3 provide existing land use maps for Thomas County and the City of Thomasville, respectively. These maps give a snapshot of the development at a single point in time, in this case Fall 2005. Existing land use was accounted for on a parcel level basis through a multi-faceted process. The city and county's current land use databases were compared with aerial photos to provide a base line analysis. The validity of this analysis was then checked through windshield surveys of the county and walking surveys of the city. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the county's current (Fall 2005) land use and Figure 3 provides an illustration of the city's current (Fall 2005) land use.

The land uses represented in Figures 2 and 3 are categorized using a system classification based on the of land use categories defined in the DCA Local Planning Standards. The definitions of the uses found in each category are provided below. Tables 1 and 2 show the amount of land categorized under each land use for the city and county.

Agriculture/Forestry

Agricultural land is comprised of land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.) or other similar rural uses such as pasture; land is not used for commercial purposes. Forestry land includes land dedicated to commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting and woodlands not in commercial use.

Residential

The existing residential land use category has been subcategorized according to the following classifications.

- *Single-Family Residential*- typically includes single family detached homes developed at a low density.
- *Multi-family Residential* - includes apartments, condominiums, and town houses.
- *Mobile homes/Mobile home parks* – areas that have been developed for single-family mobile homes or use as mobile home parks. Mobile homes constructed after June 1976 are now called manufactured homes according to HUD; however, all references to mobile homes herein will encompass all factory-built housing units. When widely dispersed, single mobile homes may be mapped within another residential classification.

Public/Institutional

This category includes community facilities, certain state, federal, or local government uses and institutional land uses. Examples of institutional land uses include colleges, churches, cemeteries, and hospitals. Government uses in this category include city halls or government building complexes, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, and military installations.

Office

Includes professional businesses such as law and accounting, medical, or administrative offices. This category excludes banking and the direct selling or storage or display of any goods or commodity. Office is a unique land use category only within the City of Thomasville where there are distinct concentrations of professional offices.

Commercial

Retail and entertainment oriented uses which may be grouped into a shopping center or stand alone outlets: For land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, this category includes retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building.

Industrial

This category is for land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction facilities or other similar uses.

Transportation/Communication/Utilities

Also referred to as "TCU," this category encompasses various land use types associated with transportation, communication, and utilities. This category includes major transportation routes, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, airports, water authority facilities and similar uses. However, it should be noted that much of the TCU acreage is accounted for in other categories, particularly roads and their right-of-ways, which are absorbed into the context of the more dominant land use (e.g. residential or commercial).

Parks/Recreation/Conservation

Land in this category is dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These areas may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, and similar uses.

Undeveloped/Vacant:

Includes areas with no visible active uses or where vacant buildings were present at the time of survey.

Figure 2 – Current Land Use in Thomas County, GA

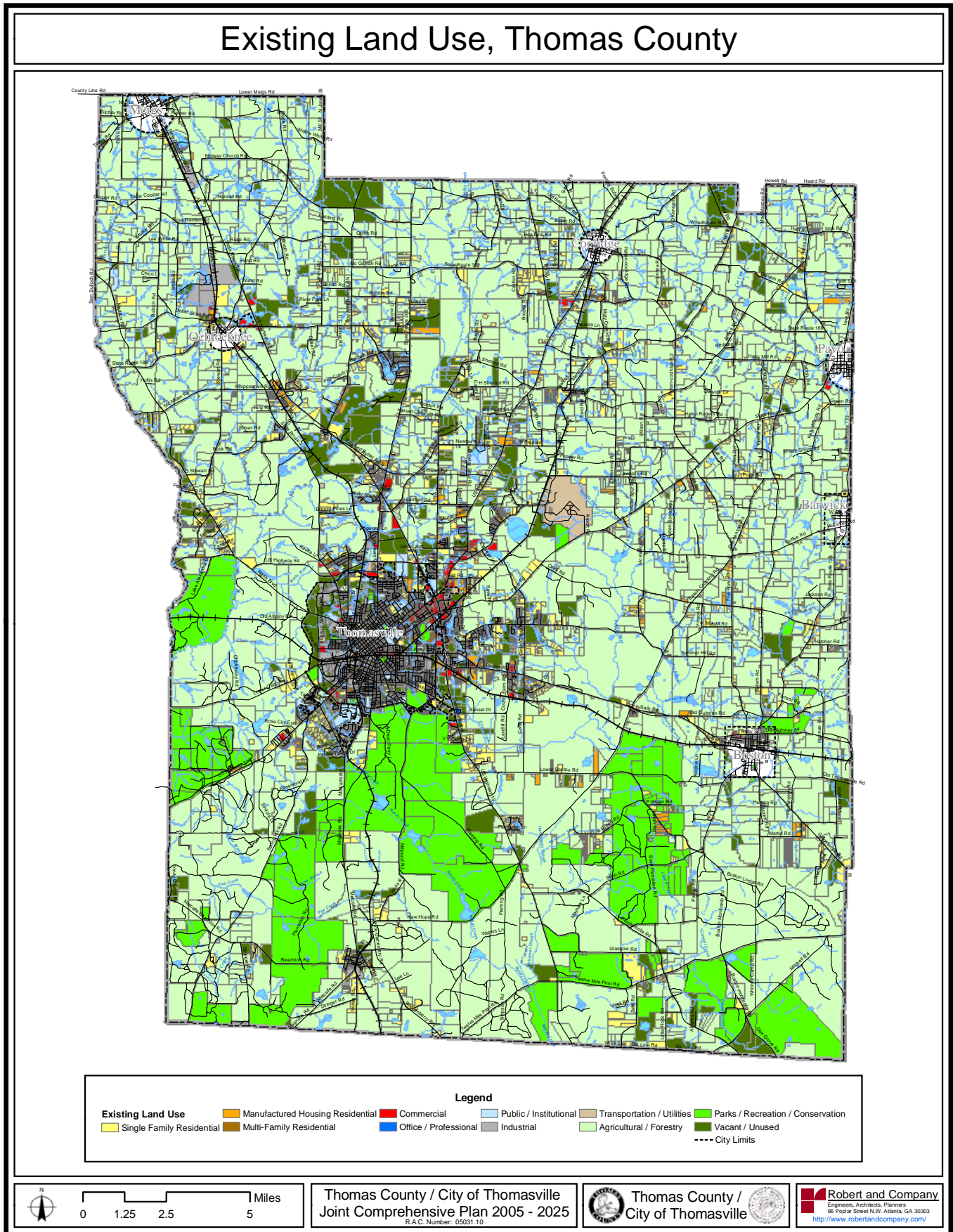
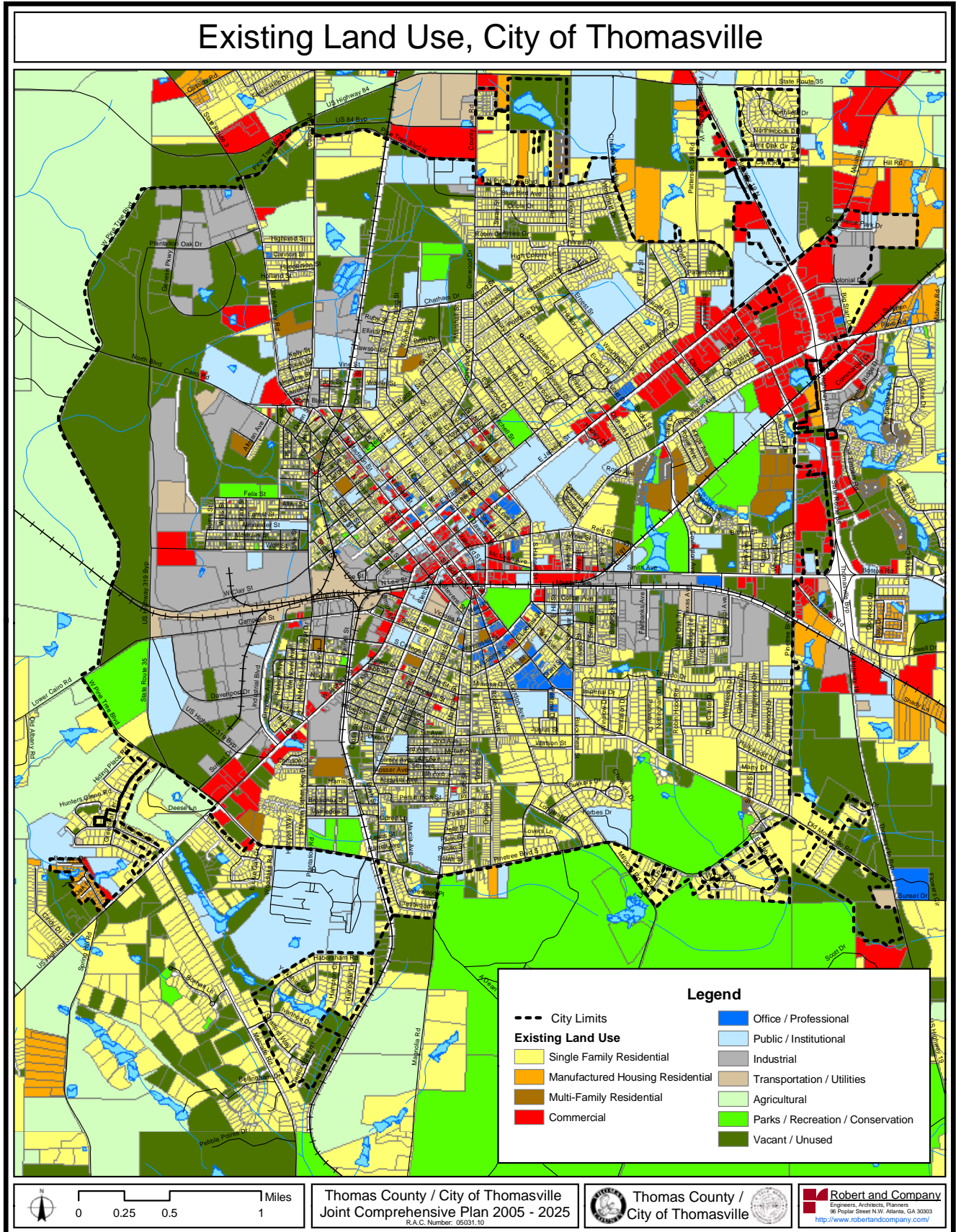


Figure 3 – Current Land Use in Thomasville, GA



Current Development Patterns: Thomas County

Land Use: 1990 through 2005

Thomas County was originally developed as and will continue to be a predominantly agricultural community throughout the next 20 years. In 1990, approximately 84% of the land in the county was used for either agriculture or forestry, including large land-holdings and plantations. Another almost 10% of land in the county was considered vacant or undeveloped at that time. Since Thomas County is very large in land area, it stands to reason that only a very small portion (5.4%) of the land was used solely for residential homes. The percentage of land occupied by residential development increased by almost 2% between 1990 and 2005, with the bulk of that increase occurring from 2000-2005. In both 1990 and 2005, the proportions of public-institutional, commercial, and industrial lands in the county were similar, all occupying less than 0.5% of total land area; See Table 1.

Table 1 – Existing Land Use, 1990 and 2005, Thomas County

Land Use	1990 Acres	Percent of Total Land Area	2005 Acres	Percent of Total Land Area
Agriculture/forestry	281,091	83.6%	251,416	74.3
Single-family residential, detached	N/A	N/A	20,603	6.1%
Mobile homes/mobile home parks	N/A	N/A	3,565	1.1%
Multi-family residential	N/A	N/A	32.3	0.01%
Residential, all categories	18,014	5.4%	24,155	7.2%
Public/institutional	864	0.3%	1,253	0.4%
Office	N/A	N/A	21f	0.01%
Commercial	646	0.2%	941	0.3%
Industrial	211	0.1%	1,193	0.4%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	2,240	0.7%	1,506	0.4%
Park/Recreation/Conservation	303	0.1%	38,545	11.4%
Undeveloped/Vacant	32,742	9.7%	19,141	5.7%
TOTAL	336,111	100.0%	338,216	100.0%

Source: 1990 data from Thomas County Comprehensive Plan (Table 6-1, p. 6-2). 2005 data by Robert and Company, GIS Calculations, January 2006. The land use acreages exclude transportation rights-of-way which account for at least 10% of land use in a developed area.

The year 2005 land use data shown in Table 1 was produced after an extensive land use inventory completed from October through December 2005. Using aerial photographs from 1999 and 2001, along with existing land use data from the Georgia DCA, a preliminary map of existing land use by parcel was prepared by the consulting team. The map follows standard land use categories (specified in Georgia DCA Rules). Planners updated the preliminary map during windshield surveys, and corrections were made. Further descriptions of land uses in 2005 are provided in the following paragraphs.

Residential

Detached, Single-family Dwellings

A large portion of housing in Thomas County is comprised of a variety of styles of detached single-family dwellings. There are suburban areas and exurban areas that have different housing trends related to single family homes. In exurban areas, the single-family homes are trending towards estate residences; in suburban areas, there are numerous typical subdivisions with lot sizes ranging from ½ to 1 acre. Throughout both the urban service area and the exurban parts of the county, there are numerous areas with mixed residential housing, defined here as a combination of older site-built homes and manufactured homes.

There have also been provisions for the development of single family subdivisions targeted at first time home buyers. Such “starter homes” are appealing because the very small lots (some zero lot line), and the small homes require lower maintenance than typical suburban homes. These developments have led to the creation of a higher density area that is just outside of the city limits.

Manufactured and Modular Housing

There is a proliferation of manufactured housing in unincorporated Thomas County. These homes are found in subdivisions, in mobile home parks, and mixed in with site-built homes throughout the county. Manufactured housing accounts for a large percentage (50%) of construction permitted within the past three years. However, this includes relocations of existing units that may increase the total number of permits issued.

Duplexes and Townhouses

Since 2000, there have been several new complexes of townhomes and duplexes constructed on the urban fringe of Thomasville in Thomas County. Some of the new developments consist solely of townhomes targeted at specific age groups or other demographic units within the real estate market.

Huntington Pointe is a townhome/duplex community for active adults that has proven very popular. Nearby, Woodhollow Townhomes provide a family-oriented, affordable community.

Apartment Complexes

There are few, if any, apartment complexes in the unincorporated areas of Thomas County. It appears that in the recent past, apartments have been more viable in the urban areas of the City of Thomasville, where approximately 10 complexes are located. However, as the urban service area continues to become more dense and the intensity of development increases, there may be the need and demand for apartments to be built outside of the city limits.

Housing Conditions

Housing conditions vary throughout the county; newer housing appears to be well built and well maintained. However, large portions of the county are dominated by isolated homes or small groupings of homes built in the 1970s or earlier. Manufactured homes, or mobile homes built prior to 1976, are especially susceptible to decline and are often found in various states of disrepair and decline. These homes, in many cases, should be considered sub-standard housing that is not meeting the needs of the county’s residents in 2005.

Housing Market Activity

The housing market in unincorporated Thomas County was very active in the late 1990s and has remained so since 2000. Specific niches in the housing market have been discovered and are being filled through the development of demographically targeted types of homes with convenient locations accessible to transportation routes, services, and the City of Thomasville.

Public-Institutional

Public-institutional land use in Thomas County is somewhat concentrated, but does not make up a large portion of the total county land. Some of the most notable public-institutional land uses in the county are located within the Thomasville city limits, such as Archbold Hospital and administrative offices.

Schools

The Thomas County School system has a total of five schools: three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. One of the elementary schools, the middle school and high school are concentrated along both sides of the Thomasville Bypass (Highway 84) on the north side of the city. The other two elementary schools are located slightly northeast of the City of Thomasville along Hall Road.

Government Uses

Government land use does account for some substantial land holdings in the southeastern section of the urban service area along Joiner Road. The Thomas County/Thomasville landfill is located in this area, and is in close proximity to the Thomas County jail, Thomas County Public Works, and a police training facility. The Courthouse and the public safety facilities on South Avenue and some others are located within the city limits.

Churches and Religious Institutions

There are numerous churches located throughout rural Thomas County, often at crossroads or near clusters of rural homes. A number of cemeteries are located in the county, including Meigs Sunset Cemetery, and Laurel Hill Cemetery and Old Cemetery, which are both located in the City of Thomasville.

Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU)

Roads, railroads and utility lines are located throughout the county and cumulatively make up the greater part of land used in the TCU category. These uses and many additional small scale TCU parcels are scattered in various locations throughout Thomas County. These include power substations, water utilities, and other utilities within this category. Thomasville Regional Airport, located northeast of Thomasville, serves as the home base for several dozen small airplanes and was expanded in 2005 with a new terminal and hangars. The transit system is operated by the county and runs through the city and the county.

Industry

Industry is located in several concentrations in Thomas County. As described in the Character Areas section, there is an active mining area in northwest Thomas County where Fuller's Earth, a claylike material, is extracted from open pits and processed. Georgia is a leading producer of Fuller's Earth within the United States.

Another industrial focus area in the unincorporated county is found in southern Thomas County in the rural community of Metcalf. Hood Lumber, formerly Metcalf Lumber, operates a sawmill

in which manufactures southern pine lumber, pulp chips, shavings and bark. In addition to Hood Lumber, Balfour Timber Company is another important forestry related industry located in Thomasville and Thomas County.

In addition to the timber related industry in Thomas County, the agricultural base supports agriculturally related industry as well. There are at least four cotton gins located in Thomas County, as well as some boilermakers. There are also a number of boilermakers within the county.

Within the urban service area, there is very little industrial activity. However, it has been stated by County officials that there is a desire to concentrate future industrial expansion around Thomasville Municipal Airport.

Office

There are very few offices located within the unincorporated areas of Thomas County. Those located here are generally located in association with other commercial land uses, such as a major highway corridor, commercial node, or rural crossroads. Due to the very small presence, the amount of land dedicated to offices is not separated from the commercial lands in Thomas County.

Commercial

U.S. Highway 19, and U.S. Highway 319 are major highway corridors lined with commercial uses. While portions of these commercial areas are located within the city limits, the businesses largely serve the regional community, especially those at the intersection of U.S. Highway 319 and the Thomasville Bypass (U.S. Highway 19/84) on the east side of the city.

There are scattered commercial uses along U.S. Highway 319 south of Thomasville, as well as along the remainder of the Bypass. Outside of commercial corridors, commercial businesses are typically found in small nodes within residential areas or at rural crossroads.

Parks, Recreation, and Conservation

In the recent past, Thomas County has not owned or managed any parks or designated recreation areas provided as amenities to its residents. Instead, the county has relied on the city for the provision of recreational programs and facilities. Recently, Thomas County acquired a state wildlife management area known as "River Creek" that will be open to the public for recreational use. The River Creek Plantation, a 2,400-acre plantation, which borders the Ochlocknee River, became one of Georgia's Wildlife Management Areas in 2005. For information on parks in the city, see the Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination Element of this Community Assessment.

Some residential communities in the county may have small-scale, private recreational facilities and open spaces. The city operates a golf course on county land in the northeast portion of the urban service area. Within the county there is a large amount of land in conservation easements, but this is contained on private lands typically managed by land trusts.

Agriculture/Forestry

The predominant land uses in Thomas County are agriculture and forestry. Active agriculture dominates the landscape of the northern and eastern sections of the county, while heavily forested land is found mostly in the southern and western areas of Thomas County.

As of 2002, Thomas County was home to 510 farms and over 50,000 acres of actively harvested cropland. In Thomas County, the most prevalent crops are cotton, corn, peanuts, pecans, and forage feed. A much smaller portion of land is used for the raising of livestock such as cattle or poultry. Source: USDA, NASS, 2002 Census of Agriculture.

Vacant/Undeveloped

There are a number of large tracts of vacant or undeveloped land in Thomas County. Since the year 2000, numerous large sites in the urban fringe have been developed, mostly for residential uses. There is still an abundance of land in Thomas County that has the potential to serve a variety of land uses. However, large sites must be evaluated for the appropriateness of certain land uses based on a number of factors. For example, some of the large vacant lands may not be developable due to environmental factors such as location in a floodplain or restrictions due to being part of a protected river corridor. Specific future land uses will be designated in the future development map. Special attention will be paid to determining the most applicable and appropriate land uses for large, developable tracts within the urban service area.

Current Development Patterns: City of Thomasville

Land Use in the 1990s

The city’s land area as of the *mid-1990s* was 9,553 acres (14.9 square miles). As of 1995, approximately 3,600 acres (37.8 percent of total land area) was residential. Of the residential land use in 1995, more than two-thirds (70.7 percent of total residential land use) was low density (1-5 units per acre was designated in the comprehensive plan adopted in the mid-1990s). As of 1995, the City also had similar proportions of public-institutional, commercial, industrial, and recreation (i.e., each comprised 5 to 7% of total land area in the City) (See Table 2). The prior land use element (comprehensive plan) also quantified land area by zoning and concluded that the city had a surplus of commercial and residentially-zoned land.

Table 2 – Existing Land Use, 1995 and 2005, City of Thomasville

Land Use	1995 Acres	Percent of Total Land Area	2005 Acres	Percent of Total Land Area
Agriculture/forestry	N/A	N/A	80	0.8%
Residential, all categories	3,599	37.8%	3,221	33.3%
Single-family residential, detached	N/A	N/A	3,004	31.0%
Mobile homes/mobile home parks	N/A	N/A	26	0.3%
Multi-family residential	N/A	N/A	191	2.0%
Public/institutional	475	5.0%	694	7.2%
Office	N/A	N/A	82	0.8%
Commercial	761	6.9%	615	6.4%
Industrial	541	6.7%	957	9.9%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	121	1.1%	159	1.6%
Park/Recreation/Conservation	489	5.1%	522	5.4%
Undeveloped/Vacant	3,567	37.4%	2,107	21.8%
Total	9,553	100%	9,675	100.0%

Source: 1995 data from City of Thomasville Comprehensive Plan (Table 6-1, p. 6-2). 2005 data by Robert and Company, GIS Calculations, December 2005. The land use acreages exclude transportation rights-of-way which account for at least 10% of land use in a developed area.

The figures in Table 2 provide available data for 1995 and the existing land use inventory as depicted on Figure 3. Because of a few differences in the land use categories between 1995 and 2005, some comparative statements cannot be made. The 2005 inventory confirms the oversupply of commercial land, as also suggested in the previous comprehensive plan. Commercial land use decreased by approximately 150 acres between 1995 and 2005. However, that apparent loss of commercial land is most likely attributed to differences in classifications of land between the two planning efforts. The year 2005 land use inventory of the city reclassified several parcels shown previously as commercial to industrial land uses. Thomasville added more than 400 acres of industrial land uses from 1995 to 2005. However, some of that apparent gain may appear overstated, since several commercial lots are now more appropriately classified as industrial land uses. Industrial land uses, nonetheless, have increased significantly, as Thomasville has developed and opened new industrial parks with healthy occupancy rates.

A comparison of the percentage of residential land in 1995 (37.8%) to 2005 (33.3%) shows that total residential land use declined slightly (See Table 2). There has undoubtedly been new residential development during the past decade, and although some residential land has converted to other uses during that time, there has not been a loss of residential land. The lower number of residential acres in 2005 is attributed to the greater detail taken while

documenting vacant land during the 2005 land use inventory. Hence, some of the lots that were counted as residential in 1995 are shown as vacant/undeveloped in the 2005 existing land use inventory. That observation also underscores the extent of land development activity – it is believed that more than the 1,400 acres have been converted from undeveloped to developed land in Thomasville during the last decade (see the differences between undeveloped/vacant land between 1995 and 2005 in Table 2).

Because the 1995 survey did not distinguish between housing types or densities, no observations can be made about how residential land use has transitioned in terms of housing types and densities. Nonetheless, the existing land use inventory conducted in 2005 revealed considerable development of apartment complexes, townhouses, duplexes, and detached, single-family homes. There has also been a small, but noticeable trend toward conversion of large single-family dwellings to apartments.

Thomasville has added a marginal amount of land to the park/recreation/conservation category during the last decade. Public institutional land uses increased by 219 acres from 1995 to 2005. That is not surprising, considering that Thomasville is a maturing city serving a regional hinterland, where institutional uses tend to lag behind residential building activity.

There are still some agricultural uses in the city (0.8% of its land area). However, that land is considered mostly inactive and is anticipated to convert to suburban land uses during the planning horizon. Undeveloped land has decreased from approximately 3,500 acres (more than one third of the total city land area) in 1995 to just over 2,100 acres in 2005. Nonetheless, one-fifth (21.8%) of Thomasville's land area remains undeveloped. Although much of the undeveloped land is "wet," there are still substantial opportunities for infill residential development in Thomasville.

The prior land use element indicated four areas of significant transitions in land use, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 – Transitional Land Use Areas, 1995

Area	Transition of Land Use	Remedy Proposed in 1995
Surrounding Archbold Hospital	Conversion of older single-family homes to office or limited commercial uses	Change zoning to permit medical facilities and office uses with appropriate performance standards including buffers
Remington/Dawson Street Historic Districts	Conversion of historic residential structures to non-residential	Discourage non-residential zoning northwest of Clay Street and northeast of Dawson Street
Bisected by Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive	Commercial intrusion into 1940s and 1950s neighborhood surrounded by non-residential	Protect and improve neighborhood character
Southwest of Madison Street	Intrusions of commercial and light industrial land uses residential and	New residential construction of medium (5-11 units per acre) to high density (more than 11) to provide more diverse housing choices; larger setbacks for commercial abutting residential zoning

Source: Derived from Land Use Element of Comprehensive Plan (1995).

Residential

Detached, Single-family Dwellings

The predominant pattern of residential land use is detached, single-family dwellings. The backbone of Thomasville is its many, outstanding residential neighborhoods, which exist in all quadrants of the city and in many varieties. Housing of all age varieties exists with subdivisions built during the past six decades.

Neighborhoods range from small lots (50-60 feet of lot frontage and 5,000 to 7,500 square-foot land area) to suburban-sized (approximately one-half acre) lots to large-lot estates and plantations. Some newer subdivisions with large, high-end homes have also been constructed. As a result, the city has detached homes that range from very small “shotgun” houses in inner-city neighborhoods to historic mansions and upscale housing in newer suburban subdivisions.



Upscale Suburban Housing in Thomasville

Manufactured and Modular Housing

Few, if any manufactured homes exist within the city limits. The only known concentration of manufactured homes in Thomasville is within the Azalea Mobile Home Community north of Pinetree Boulevard. Baytree Estates, located on U.S. Highway 319 in the southwest portion of Thomasville, consists of modular (industrialized) housing and is the only known subdivision of that variety.

Duplexes and Townhouses

An occasional duplex is found among detached single-family dwellings. Some larger, historic residences have been converted to multi-family dwellings. There are also some freestanding apartment complexes, most of which are relatively small in scale. Townhouse projects are also located in certain sections of the city. The Mallard Cove development, located south of the Thomasville Bypass (but without access to it) and north of Pinetree Boulevard, is a significant example of recent and ongoing duplex and townhouse construction. There is also relatively recent multi-family (townhouse) activity along Remington Avenue.

Apartment Complexes

The most significant concentration of multi-family development is found along East Pinetree Boulevard. A relatively new multi-family complex, Hunter's Chase Apartments, is located in the northwest part of Thomasville, west of U.S. Highway 84 Business, adjacent to the Plantation Oaks Industrial Park. Another significant apartment complex is located along Altman and Warners Road in the northwest part of the City. There are also 800 to 1,000 units on Covington Avenue between Remington and Smith. Some relatively small public housing (Thomasville Housing Authority) sites exist in a few of the City's neighborhoods. In a few instances, large, historic homes have been adaptively reused as apartments in the city's historic residential neighborhoods.

Housing Conditions

A number of residential neighborhoods have houses that are in serious disrepair and are boarded up. The large number of boarded-up homes is Thomasville's Number One issue with regard to community development. While the problem is one where there are significant concentrations of substandard homes, many of those dilapidated houses are in scattered locations throughout the city, rather than in one concentrated area.

The city is considering a minimum maintenance plan. Most of the historic homes have been renovated or are well maintained. There are several visible signs of housing maintenance activities, especially within the city's residential historic districts. Older, but not yet historic (late 1950s to 1970s) homes in more modest subdivisions are very well maintained, leading to a visitor's impression that Thomasville has some of the finest neighborhoods in the state of Georgia.



A Boarded Up house is Representative of Numerous Lots in Older Neighborhoods

Housing Market Activity

During the field reconnaissance, consulting planners noted substantial new residential development activity, including the building of new, single-family residential subdivisions and significant dwelling construction on vacant tracts within established neighborhoods. Moreover, that residential building activity is found throughout virtually all areas of the city where vacant land exists and infill housing options are available. Some of the activity in older neighborhoods can be attributed to Habitat for Humanity and perhaps other housing organizations or private individuals who have elected to build new housing amidst established residential neighborhoods.

Public-Institutional

As the government and institutional center of Thomas County, the City of Thomasville is home to many educational, religious, and government buildings and properties. In several places institutional properties take up entire blocks (and more than one block) of Thomasville.

Hospitals and Health Offices

The city's primary general hospital, Archbold Memorial Hospital, is located south of Mimosa and east of Gordon Avenue, is owned and operated by the State Department of Human Resources and includes a Federal Resource Center that is manned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Around Archbold Memorial Hospital, a vibrant medical office district has developed and shows signs of continued growth and expansion.

Archbold Memorial Hospital also has several properties in other parts of the city. For instance, two significant properties are located along U.S. Highway 84 Business in the northwest quadrant of Thomasville. Archbold also has some offices within the regional shopping area centered on the intersection of U.S. Highway 19/84 and U.S. Highway 319.

Southwestern State Hospital, also located in Thomasville, occupies a large campus in the southeastern portion of the city. It is a public, 240-bed facility that primarily serves patients with mental illnesses, addictive diseases, and mental retardation. A portion of Southwestern State Hospital also serves as a Federal Resource Center for the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Thomas County's Health Department has occupied commercial space along Smith Avenue (U.S. Highway 84 Business).

Schools and Colleges

Public schools and colleges have a substantial land use presence in Thomasville. There are two colleges, Thomas University, a private college, and Southwest Georgia Technical College, with campuses in Thomasville. Thomas University is located in the southern-central part of the City.

Southwest Georgia Technical College is located on the northeastern fringe of the city on the southeast corner of the intersection of U.S. Highway 19 and U.S. Highway 84 (Thomasville Bypass) and U.S. Highway 319. Southwest Georgia Technical College also has a building in western Thomasville (on the south side of Wolf Street west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive).

Thomas County Schools (including Garrison Pilcher Elementary School) have a very large tract of land just outside Thomasville city limits, fronting the east side of U.S. Highway 19 north of U.S. Highway 319. Bishop Hall Charter School on East Clay Street is part of the Thomas

County Public School System as well. A list of the locations of Thomasville City Schools and city, county, state, and federal properties are included below and in the Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination elements of this plan.

Thomasville City Schools

School	Address	Zip Code	Grades	Enrollment
Balfour School for Young Children	201 Chatham Dr	31792	Pre K	253
Harper Elementary School	110 Bartow St	31792	K-5	374
Jerger Elementary School	1006 S. Broad St	31792	K-5	480
Scott Elementary School	100 N. Hansell St	31792	K-5	445
MacIntyre Park Middle School	117 Glenwood Dr	31792	6-8	694
Thomasville High School	315 S. Hansell St	31792	9-12	861

Source: Thomasville City Schools (<http://www.tcitys.org/schools.htm>)

Thomas County Public Schools

School	Address	Zip Code	Grades	Enrollment
Hand in Hand Primary School	1550 Magnolia St	31792	N/A	N/A
Cross Creek Elementary School	324 Clark Rd	31757	3-5	1,202
Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School	277 Hall Rd	31757	Pre K-2	1,393
Thomas County Middle School	4681 US 84 Bypass		5-8	
The School at Bishop Hall	1815 East Clay Rd	31792	9-12	109
Thomas County Central High School	4685 US 84 Bypass	31792	9-12	1,447

Source: Thomas County Schools, (<http://www.thomas.k12.ga.us/index.htm>)

Cemeteries

Cemeteries (mostly city-owned) are also included in this category and description of large institutional land uses. Cemeteries are located on the north side of Vine Street and on the east side of U.S. Highway 319 across from Glenwood and Myrtle Streets, as well as two smaller cemeteries on the northeast side of US. Highway 84 (Madison Street) between Calhoun and Webster Streets.

Government Uses

Many city and county properties are located in the downtown area and west of the central business district. The City of Thomasville houses its public works at Davenport Drive and Campbell Street. The recycling center is also located adjacent to the public works camp on Davenport Drive. Thomasville's administrative and utilities facilities are located mostly near the downtown and along Victoria Place.

Churches and Religious Institutions

There is one religious institutional campus located north of Clay Street and east of Ernest Street in Thomasville. This area is home to Vashti, which is a United Methodist non-profit organization that provides care for emotionally disturbed children and children in need. In addition to large church campuses, there are a substantial number of small churches located within the city's residential neighborhoods.

Transportation/Communication/Utilities (TCU)

Roads, railroads, and utilities corridors make up the greatest portion of TCU land uses in Thomasville. These uses are mostly small-scale and scattered throughout different locations in the city. One notable concentration is the Thomasville Utilities properties north of Victoria Place and storage lots within industrial parks. There are also some power substations which are included within this category.

Industry

Industry is located in several concentrations in Thomasville, two of which are most significant. There is a substantial concentration of industry in southwest quadrant of Thomasville, west of Industrial Boulevard along Davenport Drive, north of south of Campbell Street, north and south of W. Clay Street. Significant industries in this industrial area include Balfour, Crowder, Home Products International, Stewart Park Homes, Thomas Office Furniture, Fortress Manufacturing, Sun Coast Bedding, and logging and planning operations.

A second major concentration of industrial land uses exists in the Plantation Oaks Industrial Park, located west of U.S. Highway 84 Business in the northwest corner of Thomasville, along Plantation Oaks Boulevard and Genesis Parkway. Some of the tracts within that industrial park are vacant, but many significant industries are also located there, including American Signature Furniture, Centek, Simmons, Snider, Griswald Pump Company, and others.

In addition to the two large concentrations mentioned above, other significant industrial areas exist in Thomasville, and tend to be located near railroad rights-of-ways. Large industrial properties also front the railroad tracks bisecting the city (south of Metcalf Avenue between Baybrook Street and Pinetree Boulevard). Duda, a large industrial property, is located north of Vine Street and east of Cassidy Road abutting the north-south railroad (north of Magnolia Cemetery). East of the Thomasville Bypass (U.S. Highway 19/84), between U.S. Highway 319 and Pavo Road (SR 122), there is another concentration of industrial uses (north and south of Colonial Drive).

Industry is also located along Rosemary Drive in the northwestern quadrant of the city. There is also a smaller concentration of industrial land uses bounded by U.S. Highway 319, Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, and the north-south railroad. Additional industrial properties exist north of College Street east of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.

Some of Thomasville's industrial areas are underutilized or vacant altogether. A large, vacant industrial building is located on the south side of U.S. Highway 84 Business at Oak Street in the west-northwestern part of the city. Smaller industrial land uses are located north of North Boulevard at US Highway 84 Business. The intrusion of industrial land into residential areas is generally not an issue, and in most cases industry does not pose a threat to residential neighborhoods.

Office

There is no concentrated pattern of office uses in Thomasville, with one exception: the medical area surrounding Archbold Memorial Hospital. Freestanding, mostly single-tenant offices exist within commercial corridors. To a lesser extent, offices that are in detached, single-family dwellings (especially larger, historic homes) exist at the edge of (or intrusions into) exclusive residential neighborhoods. Governmental office buildings tend to be scattered in various areas, such as the Georgia State Patrol building on South Pinetree Boulevard.



Encroachment of Office Use into Residential Neighborhoods

Commercial

The city's central business district is centered on the intersection of U.S. Highway 319 and Broad Street. It extends generally from Jefferson Street on the west to Dawson Street on the north, and Remington Street on the south and east. Blocks of solid commercial land uses extend east and south from the central business district.

U.S. Highway 84 Business (Madison Street and Smith Avenue), U.S. Highway 19, and U.S. Highway 319 (throughout almost its entire length through the city) are major highway corridors that are lined with commercial uses. The most significant center of activity outside Thomasville's downtown (central business district) is the regional commercial activity center at the intersection of U.S. Highway 319 and the Thomasville Bypass (U.S. Highway 19/84). That regional shopping area also extends along both sides of Pinetree Boulevard in the eastern part of Thomasville.

There is also a concentration of commercial uses along U.S. Highway 319 South at Pinetree and the U.S. 84 Bypass/Pinetree Boulevard. There is also currently a vacant commercial shopping center. Generally, retail developments on the south side of Thomasville do not share the market success that businesses in the regional shopping activity area are having. The "in-town" commercial corridors include auto body shops, check-cashing facilities, convenience stores, and other auto-oriented uses which would benefit from aesthetic improvements. To some extent, residential neighborhoods on the south side of Thomasville, particularly along Magnolia and Wright streets, have small-scale commercial operations within or immediately adjacent to them.

Parks, Recreation and Conservation

Thomasville has a well-developed park system, including the following:

- Francis Weston Park north of Felix Street
- Big Oak Park at the intersection of Monroe and Crawford Streets
- Paradise Park, bounded by Broad Street, Hansell Street, and the railroad
- MacIntyre Park, bounded by Washington, Mitchell, Glenwood, and Clay Streets
- Rose Garden and Cherokee Lake, located north of Smith Avenue (U.S. Highway 84 Business) and east of Covington Avenue
- Northside Park north of Chatham Drive west of Glenwood
- Cassidy Road Park in the northwest quadrant of the city east of Cassidy Road
- Remington Park east of Remington Avenue
- Balfour Park on South Pinetree Boulevard
- Smaller parks throughout other locations in the city

In addition to city parks, the city owns and operates Country Oaks, a municipal golf course in unincorporated Thomas County, located near the Thomasville Regional Airport. There are also significant private recreational lands. Located east of Old Monticello Road in the southeastern part of Thomasville, Glen Arven Country Club is one of the oldest private golf courses in the United States. Some residential communities also have smaller-scale, private recreational facilities and open spaces. For more information on parks in the city, see the Community Facilities and Services and Intergovernmental Coordination Element of this Community Assessment.

Agriculture/Forestry

There is very limited agricultural use still existing within the city limits of Thomasville. While the Balfour Lumber Mill is located in Thomasville, there is no known land used for timber cultivation within the city. There is agriculturally designated property on the east and west sides of Cassidy Road in the northwest quadrant of Thomasville. That area represents extensive residential growth potential. There is also a large plantation located immediately outside the city limits along Old Pinetree Boulevard south of Cairo Road.

Vacant/Undeveloped

Aerial photography from four years ago shows that a substantial amount of vacant land (particularly the larger sites) has been developed in the city—largely for residential uses. Nonetheless, there are still a substantial number of vacant lots within established residential neighborhoods, as well as many larger, developable tracts. There are significant vacant lands designated for industrial development within existing industrial parks, including property along the West (U.S. Highway 84) Bypass.

IDENTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED CHARACTER AREAS

The use of character areas in planning acknowledges the differences between neighborhoods within a community and provides more intentional guidance for development and redevelopment through specific planning and implementation initiatives. Recommended character areas can define places that 1) have unique or special characteristics that should be preserved; 2) have potential to evolve into unique areas; or 3) require special attention related to development issues. The following sections provide a discussion of the preliminary character areas defined by geographic location.

When reviewing this character area discussion, it is important to recognize that the designated character may not be accurate for every property or parcel within the specified area. Rather, the designation is a reflection of the defining character of the entire area. It is anticipated that the delineation and description of these areas will be further developed and refined through work with a citizen steering committee and public input workshops. The Community Agenda will include revised versions of the Future Development Maps, which will be accompanied by descriptions of the appropriate future land uses in each character area, as well as short-term actions and long-term policies for achieving the community's stated vision for the area.

Recommended Character Areas: Thomas County

The unincorporated areas of Thomas County have unique characteristics that will be highlighted through the delineation of character areas. A map of "recommended character areas" becomes an integral part of the Community Assessment, as required by the minimum standards for planning established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The character areas map must be developed based on an objective and professional assessment of data and information about the community, which requires the planning consultants to draw and describe initial Character Areas.

The Georgia DCA's Local Planning Standards emphasize that the initial delineation of character areas be considered in the context of the supporting analysis of data and information included in the Community Assessment. In order to delineate character areas according to the State recommendations, planners must look beyond the design aspects of neighborhoods, centers, and corridors alone. The use of character areas in planning acknowledges the visual and functional differences between portions of the community and allows for more intentional guidance of future development through adequate and specific planning and implementation methods. Character areas can be used to define areas that have special characteristics that the community wants preserved or that have the potential to become unique areas. Alternatively, they may be identified areas that require special attention due to development issues.

The methodology for delineating character areas differs according to the setting of a locality. For Thomas County, the consulting team conducted multiple visual field surveys throughout the unincorporated portions of the county in order to gain an understanding of the variations in character. The character of Thomas County varies spatially, and is linked to the differing natural features of the county as well as the development patterns that exist.

There are character areas that exist in only one location in the county, while others exist in larger numbers and are found in multiple locations throughout the county. The description of the recommended character areas is presented according to location. First, the character areas unique to the Urban Service Area will be discussed, followed by character areas located only

outside of the urban service area. Finally, those character areas common to both the urban service area and the exurban portions of the county are described. The following table provides a list of each character area described in this section. There are 18 recommended preliminary character areas as listed below:

Preliminary Recommended Character Areas

Within the Urban Service Area

- Airport Industrial Expansion Area
- Commercial Node
- Developing Urban Fringe
- Government Facilities Node
- Significant Undeveloped Land

Outside the Urban Service Area

- Industrial Focus Area
- Metcalf Community
- Ochlocknee River Corridor
- Aucilla River Corridor
- Red Hills Region
- Rural Crossroads
- Rural Residential Community – Riverside

Throughout Unincorporated Thomas County

- Agricultural Activity Area
- Estate Residential
- Highway Commercial Corridor
- Mixed Residential Area
- Plantation/Conservation
- Residential Improvement Area
- Suburban Residential

Village Centers (other incorporated communities)

- Barwick
- Boston
- Coolidge
- Meigs
- Ochlocknee
- Pavo

Character Areas: Within the Urban Service Boundary

Airport Industrial Expansion Area

Within the urban service area, there is very little industrial activity. However, it has been stated by County officials that there is a desire to concentrate future industrial expansion in and around the Thomasville Municipal Airport. The industries appropriate for the Airport Industrial Expansion Area should be different from the existing lumber and mining operations located in the exurban portions of Thomas County. Rather than heavy industry, light manufacturing, warehousing, and related operations are more appropriate. Economic benefits can be achieved by encouraging multiple businesses within similar industries to cluster and build off of one another.

Commercial Node

Commercial nodes are small areas of commercial activity that are isolated from major highways and other concentrated commercial development. Commercial nodes in the urban service areas are very similar in nature to some of the rural crossroads found in the exurban areas of the county in that they typically provide local services rather than regional services to a more limited area. Commercial nodes within the urban service area are not always located at crossroads and are more often part of a housing area and may have initially developed as a home business. Some types of businesses found at commercial nodes include convenient stores, auto parts and repair, and other home or auto related businesses. As the urban service area continues to develop, there will remain a need for such businesses, but the appropriateness of locating individual businesses within a neighborhood should be carefully considered in the zoning and permitting process.

Developing Urban Fringe

Thomas County has a unique urban fringe area that is located in close proximity to the core of the City of Thomasville, and is being served by the city utilities. Currently, the urban fringe area is a hybrid with both urban and suburban characteristics. Because it has experienced a wave of recent development, the urban fringe is in a position for more development due to the existing infrastructure in the area. The majority of new development in the urban fringe has occurred on the east side of Highway 319, behind the commercial corridor, and is centered on Lake Lilliquin.

Some aspects of recent development in the fringe area of Thomas County are very distinctive; for example, there are several developments consisting solely of townhomes targeted at specific age groups or other demographic units within the real estate market. Huntington Pointe is a townhome/duplex community for active adults that has proven very popular.



Huntington Pointe Townhomes

Nearby, Woodhollow Townhomes provide a family-oriented, affordable community. There have also been provisions for the development of single family subdivisions targeted at first time home buyers. These “starter homes” are appealing because the small lots (some zero lot line) and the small homes require less maintenance than typical suburban homes. These developments have led to the creation of a higher density area just outside of the city limits. Such higher intensity development should continue to be promoted in order to take advantage of the provision of services within the urban fringe and to preserve the rural exurban lands in the county.



The variety of housing types in such a concentrated area has proven successful thus far, and is an important consideration for the future needs of Thomas County residents.

Government Facilities Node

There are several areas within the urban service area where the county owns significant amounts of land where services or public-institutional land uses are concentrated. One such area is located southeast of the city where numerous government facilities are located in close proximity to one another. The Thomas County/Thomasville Landfill, the Thomas County Prison, a police training facility, Thomas County Public Works, and some undeveloped lands are all part of a complex of uses.

Another notable government facilities node is located along the bypass, just north of Thomasville: the County High School and Middle School are located adjacent to one another and are also very close to the city limits. Nearby, the water pollution control plant is located to the south of the bypass and north of the City of Thomasville.

These specific government facilities are important because it may be feasible to continue to concentrate community facilities or services in these areas in the future.

Significant Undeveloped Land

Within the Urban Service Area, it is important to identify significant land areas where there is vacant, developable land. These are the most appropriate locations for any large scale development.

Character Areas: Outside the Urban Service Boundary

Industrial Focus Area

Industrial focus areas include land used for higher intensity manufacturing and assembly, or processing activities where noise, particulate matter, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation, or other nuisance characteristics are not fully contained on-site.

In northwest Thomas County, there is an active mining area where Fuller's Earth, a claylike material, is extracted from open pits and processed; it must be crushed and dried before it is used. Fuller's Earth is used chiefly in bleaching and clarifying petroleum and secondarily in refining edible oils. Georgia is a leading producer of Fuller's Earth within the United States.



Oil-Dri Corporation

Another industrial focus area in southern Thomas County is located in the rural community of Metcalf, where a sawmill currently operates.

The industrial focus areas are unique in the fact that they have the greatest potential to negatively impact neighboring land uses if the probable nuisances are not properly mitigated through buffering and land use controls. Since these areas are established, and in some cases are desirable for industrial expansion, it should be a goal of the county to maintain appropriate separations between industry and sensitive land uses, especially residential areas.

Metcalf

Metcalf is an unincorporated, rural community in southern Thomas County. Metcalf is unique as the only identified historic district in Thomas County located outside of the incorporated areas. Metcalf was originally established on the rail line that connects the Gulf Coast of Florida with Middle Georgia and beyond. The most prominent feature in Metcalf is the sawmill, operated by Metcalf Lumber Company. After a recent change of ownership, the sawmill will produce products such as dimension lumber, decking, and plywood made from southern yellow pines for Hood Industries. (<http://www.thomascountynews.com/WiR9.html>). As an unincorporated area with the characteristics of a historic small town, Metcalf has distinct features that set it apart from the expansive exurban areas of Thomas County.

Red Hills Region

The Red Hills Region is a unique and distinctive part of Thomas County. Generally located in the southern half of the county, the Red Hills region extends into north Florida. This region is known for its picturesque nature and scenic vistas, as well as the large Oak trees covered with Spanish moss. The Red Hills Region is also known for its abundance of large plantations. Many of the large



Scenery in the Red Hills Region

plantations throughout southern Thomas County are areas where land conservation is occurring. By placing the land under a conservation easement where it is managed by a land trust or other land management entity, such as Tall Timbers Research Station, the land is protected in perpetuity from development. While under conservation easements, some of the plantations are still operated as commercial hunting sites that offer full-service amenities and guest quarters. The natural beauty and environmental value of the Red Hills, coupled with the history tied to the plantations, makes this region a treasure to the state and the nation, and draws significant attention to Thomas County.

Rural Crossroads

This character area corresponds to small commercial nodes within the county’s rural areas, typically centered on the intersection of two streets or highways. The character is one of local service, often with a focus on automotive or agricultural services. The small businesses in rural crossroads also tend to be home-based or co-located businesses that serve highway travelers, and the rural and agricultural communities nearby. Appropriate uses include businesses such as gas stations and repair shops, offices, services, and restaurants. Because of the other commercial nodes along major highways, as well as the expansive regional shopping areas nearby, the development of rural crossroads should remain small in scale and focus on serving their neighbors. Rural crossroads often include a church or other kind of community gathering place as shown below.

These images are examples of the types of businesses and the general appearance of rural crossroads throughout the County. There are aesthetic variations and distinct services depending on the location of each crossroads.



Gas station at Highway 84 and Powell Drive



Church at Rural Crossroads

Rural Residential Community

Moving farther from the urban or suburban portions of the county, there are Rural Residential areas that were established within the last three decades. These areas are made up of homes that are sometimes grouped in subdivisions and sometimes clustered together along the frontage of paved roads. Many of the subdivisions are comprised of manufactured homes that have been brought in individually and placed on foundations for structural stability and permanence, such as those on Chase Meadows Road, a pipe stem off of Dillon Road. Other similar rural communities occur throughout the county, specifically in southeastern Thomas County on Glem Road, a stem off of Boston Road, and in western Thomas County off of Stewart Road.

The most notable rural residential enclave in Thomas County is Lake Riverside, located in the north central portion of the county. It is a large subdivision of individually developed homes dating from the mid-1980s to the present. The homes are typically modest, well-maintained, one-story dwellings on approximately ½-acre lots.



A home in Lake Riverside



A rural community on Meadows Road



Homes off of Stewart Road in western Thomas County

Character Areas throughout Unincorporated Thomas County

Agricultural Activity Area

Agricultural activity areas include lands that are in an open or cultivated state, or are sparsely settled, including woodlands and farmlands. The bulk of active agricultural land is located in the northern portion of Thomas County, since the southern portion of the county is tied up in larger land holdings associated with hunting plantations and forestry. As of 2002, over 50,000 acres of actively harvested cropland existed in Thomas County; the most prevalent crops are cotton, corn, peanuts, pecans, and forage feed. A much smaller portion of land is used for the raising of livestock such as cattle or poultry. (Source: USDA, NASS, 2002 Census of Agriculture).

The rural agricultural qualities of Thomas County should be maintained by controlling new development and the protection of farmland and open space. Farmland and open space may be protected by maintaining large residential lot sizes (at least 10 acres) and promoting use of conservation easements by land owners where appropriate. Another preservation method is rural cluster zoning or conservation subdivision design, in which all new development would be required to minimize the land consumed by construction, and to maximize the amount of land left either undisturbed or managed as an active greenspace. New development should also be required to use compatible architectural styles that maintain the region's rural character, and should not include "franchise" or "corporate" architecture.



Harvested cotton field in eastern Thomas County



Cattle grazing in rural Thomas County



Cotton ready for harvest in Thomas County

Estate Residential

Estate Residential areas are those rural areas that are experiencing new development, or are made up of undeveloped land that is likely to face development pressures for low density (1- or 2- acre lots) residential development. Rural residential areas typically have very large lots, substantial amounts of open space, pastoral views and a high degree of building separation. A theme that has emerged in the past few years is the creation of large-lot rural developments that are sizeable enough to be considered small farms or “farmettes”. Farmettes share road infrastructure and may be considered subdivisions where the lots are individually developed. One such developing rural residential area is located on Fox Meadow Lane off of Gatlin Creek Road, north of Highway 84 in eastern Thomas County.

Other large-lot rural residential areas that have been recently developed or are still developing include Spring Lake Road off of Spring Hill Road, as well as other isolated areas in the northeast and southeast sections of Thomas County.



Estate Residential south of Thomasville



Estate Residential in eastern Thomas County



New estate home in eastern Thomas County

In the future, rural residential communities will want to maintain their rural atmosphere while accommodating new residential development, perhaps in the form of cluster or conservation subdivisions where the lot layout and overall design incorporates significant amounts of open space and prevents some land from being consumed by development. Future developments should utilize compatible architecture styles that maintain the regional rural character.

Highway Commercial Corridor

There is an extensive network of state and U.S. highways running through Thomas County. Many of these have become heavily commercialized corridors over time. The primary highway corridors bisecting Thomas County include U.S. Highways 19/300, 319, 84, and Georgia Highways 122 and 202.

U.S. Highway 19 is the most heavily commercialized, as it runs in and out of the city limits. This is the primary location of big box retailers, car dealerships, manufactured homes sales centers, hotels, chain restaurants, and even equipment rental depots. The most recent commercial corridor development has occurred around the intersection of Highways 19 and 84.



Moultrie Road (Highway 319)



Big Box Commercial on U.S. Highway 19



Highway Commercial

This character area designation corresponds with the concentration of commercial uses at the intersection of the Thomasville Bypass (U.S. Highway 19/84) and U.S. Highway 319, which is the location of Wal-Mart. Highway 319 is also heavily commercialized; however, with fewer region-serving businesses, there are many automotive-related businesses and other small stores concentrated within approximately two miles of the Thomasville city limits.

Some of these areas should be targeted for programs to improve aesthetics, which might include low-interest loans for façade improvements, new architectural guidelines or regulations, and perhaps selected government-encouraged redevelopment efforts where appropriate. Additionally, the appearance of some commercial corridors would benefit from regulations

establishing specific building setbacks for these corridors, as well as plans to control traffic and ease access to and from corridor businesses.

Mixed Residential Area

Outside of subdivisions and other formally developed residential areas, there are residences scattered throughout the exurban, rural areas of the county. Some are isolated, while others are clustered along roads or highways. Such clusters have the character of an exurban mixed residential node, and are likely created by the desire of an extended family to live in close proximity to one another. The nature of these mixed nodes is that they are made up of multiple types of housing adjacent to one another; typically there are single-family homes and manufactured homes sharing a yard. The single-family homes are typically modest and marginally well maintained.

Exurban mixed residential nodes occur with greater frequency farther from the current boundaries of the urban service area, indicating that residents of these areas experience some economies of scale in establishing their own services and may share infrastructure. The vast majority of exurban mixed residential nodes occur in the northwest and northeast quadrants of Thomas County. While there are fewer in the southeastern quadrant, there are no visually confirmed occurrences of mixed housing nodes in southwestern Thomas County.

Ochlocknee River Corridor

The Ochlocknee River winds through Thomas County from its northeast border with Colquitt County, down to the southwestern corner of the county where it enters Grady County and continues southward toward the Gulf of Mexico. Unlike many rivers in Southwest Georgia, the Ochlocknee receives much of its volume through runoff into the river rather than via springs and groundwater. Primarily fed by run-off, the major threats facing the Ochlocknee River include point source pollution, non-point source pollution, riparian destruction, and stream flow alteration. In order to emphasize the importance of protecting the river as a resource, the Ochlocknee River Corridor is identified as a unique character area. There are undeveloped lands along the corridor that lie in floodplains and are likely not suitable for development. Within the identified corridor, there may be some agricultural lands that are viable for continued use as such or as another land use that is in compliance with all applicable floodplain ordinances.

Plantation/Conservation

Thomas County is home to a large number of plantations located primarily in the Red Hills Region of southern Thomas County. Many of these plantations are protected by conservation easements or another conservation measure. Conservation plantations are those that have given all or some portion of the land to be held in a conservation easement or another method of permanent protection. Many of these have significant value as a natural resource or an economic resource, as well as a high value in their efforts to preserve the character of the Red Hills Region. The conservation plantations are also intended to capture the open-space character of the county, as they are comprised primarily of undeveloped natural lands and environmentally sensitive areas that are inappropriate for development.

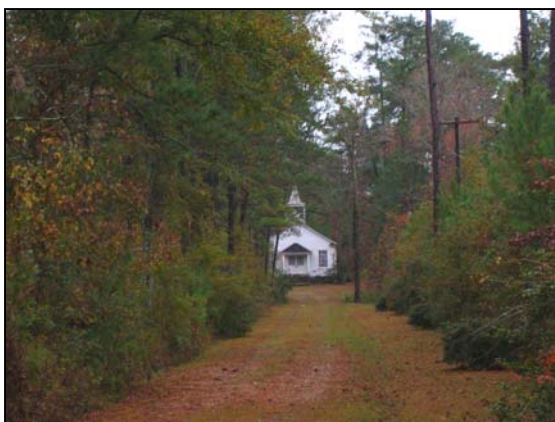
There are several plantations, some of which are conservation lands, located at least partially within the urban service boundary. Those within the urban service area and not protected by conservation easements may be susceptible to development pressure in the near future.



Plantation home on Georgia 3



Longleaf Pine Conservation on the Wade Tract,
Arcadia Plantation



A plantation chapel



Twelve Mile Post Road, southern Thomas
County

Residential Improvement Area

These neighborhoods are singled out as requiring special attention due to significant numbers of dilapidated homes. In Thomas County, there are numerous areas that can be characterized as requiring special attention due to the declining aesthetics or conditions associated with the housing. Thomas County has a variety of housing types, as discussed throughout the Community Assessment, some of which are not sustainable throughout multiple generations. Where the housing quality has declined due to poor initial construction or lack of maintenance, poor housing conditions and associated problems need to be addressed in order to ensure that quality of life for residents is improved. In many areas of Thomas County, there are areas of mixed housing, as described earlier in the Character Areas section.

Within areas of mixed housing, there are both single family and manufactured homes that may create a negative appearance due to the structures and their surroundings not being well-maintained. Manufactured homes are a viable and important housing option for many people and should not be negated. However, the county should work to address the upkeep of housing structures by enhancing and enforcing code regulations.



Neighborhood Improvement area on Pallbearer Lane



Neighborhood Improvement area along Old Cassidy Road

In Thomas County there are numerous manufactured home parks that lease or rent more than three spaces for permanent or for temporary occupancy for manufactured homes. These spaces cannot be offered for sale. The lack of ownership in these areas may be one factor that leads to an apparently common problem in Thomas County: the depressed quality of housing. There are numerous examples of manufactured home parks that have declined past what should be considered acceptable living conditions. In these areas it is also common that infrastructure has become inadequate or is not well maintained, contributing to the depressed appearance and conditions. Additionally, manufactured and mobile homes may create incompatible land uses when located adjacent to developments with a different density or housing type.



Dilapidated trailers near Powell Drive and Inman Roads



Taylor's Mobile Home Park

Some of the most notable examples of manufactured home parks that have fallen into decline include Pine Lake Estates (located off of Old Cassidy Road), Taylor's Mobile Home Park (located just outside of Thomasville City Limits on Pinetree Boulevard), and Azalea Mobile Home Park (also on Pinetree Blvd., but is somewhat better maintained). Hill Mobile Home Park, located on South Pinetree Blvd. is also on the eastern border of the City of Thomasville and Thomas County. Farther outside of the city limits, there is a small concentration of manufactured home parks around Georgia Highway 202 (Hall Road) and Oak Hill Road: Oak Hill Estates, Sugarwood Estates, and Northside Mobile Home Park. Another concentration of

dilapidated manufactured home parks is found east of Thomasville and south of Highway 84 in the vicinity of Powell Road, Dogwood Drive, and Inman Drive. On the north side of Highway 84, Country Living Estates and Hidden Acres Mobile Home Parks include mobile homes in poor condition as well as some vacant lots and abandoned structures. Though not an exhaustive list of all Manufactured Home Parks in Thomas County, the aforementioned parks are indicative of the blight that is prevalent in manufactured home parks throughout the county. In the future, more attention needs to be paid to these areas in order to ensure that the residents are living in safe and acceptable conditions.

Suburban Residential

A large portion of the Thomas County Urban Service Area at this time may be considered developing suburban land, where the pressure for typical types of suburban residential subdivision development are greatest due to the increasing availability of water and sewer service as well as greater proximity to other urban services. Developing suburban areas have a tendency to develop with low pedestrian orientation and varied, often curvilinear, street patterns.

In the recent past, the greatest concentration of developing suburban areas has been in the north central portion of the county, primarily to the north/northeast of the City of Thomasville. This is still largely true, though there is new subdivision activity in Saddlebrook Farms, which is located south of the city along Highway 319. In the same vicinity as Shallowbrook Farms, there are numerous subdivisions off of Metcalf Road that have been recently developed but are not fully built out at this time. These include Pebble Creek and Polana, which appear to have been largely constructed within a short window of time by individual owners and builders. There is some active construction in Polana, as well as in some smaller subdivisions in the area. In north central Thomas County, several new subdivisions have been built off of Hall Road within the past three years, including Hunter’s Cove and Willow Ridge. Another new suburban subdivision currently under construction is Martha’s Plantation along Moultrie Road. Additional areas developing with suburban characteristics include the Heards’ Pond area off of Dillon Road, near the Thomasville Municipal Airport.



Suburban homes in Shallowbrook Farms



Heards' Pond, a new subdivision northeast of Thomasville

In developing suburban areas that are proximate to the City of Thomasville, there is great potential to promote moderate density, and some traditional neighborhood development (TND) residential subdivisions. New development in these areas could be master-planned with mixed-uses, lending to the blending of residential development with schools, parks, recreation, retail

businesses and services. If master-planned developments are built, there should be strong connectivity and continuity between those developments and their surroundings, including good vehicular and pedestrian/bike connections to retail/commercial services as well as internal street connectivity, connectivity to adjacent properties/subdivisions, and multiple site access points.

Built-out suburban areas are those where conventional suburban residential subdivision development has occurred. These developments typically have lot sizes that are ½-acre or greater, yet smaller than the Estate Residential areas. In most suburban subdivisions, connectivity is not optimal; there is low pedestrian orientation, and neighboring streets and subdivisions are not connected to one another.

Some of the built-out suburban areas in Thomas County include subdivisions southwest of the City of Thomasville along Tall Pines Drive and Cindy Drive. East of Thomasville and North of Boston Road, the residential areas along Summer Hill Road are built-out suburban neighborhoods that were developed between the 1960s and 1980s. The homes are well maintained and the areas can be characterized as stable.



Suburban home southeast of Thomasville



Suburban home southwest of Thomasville

A future objective of this character area should be to provide for pedestrian activity and connections among subdivisions to provide more of a true “neighborhood” feel, as opposed to each tract being developed without consideration of connections to abutting properties.

Figure 4 – Recommended Character Areas, Urban Service Area of Thomas Co., GA

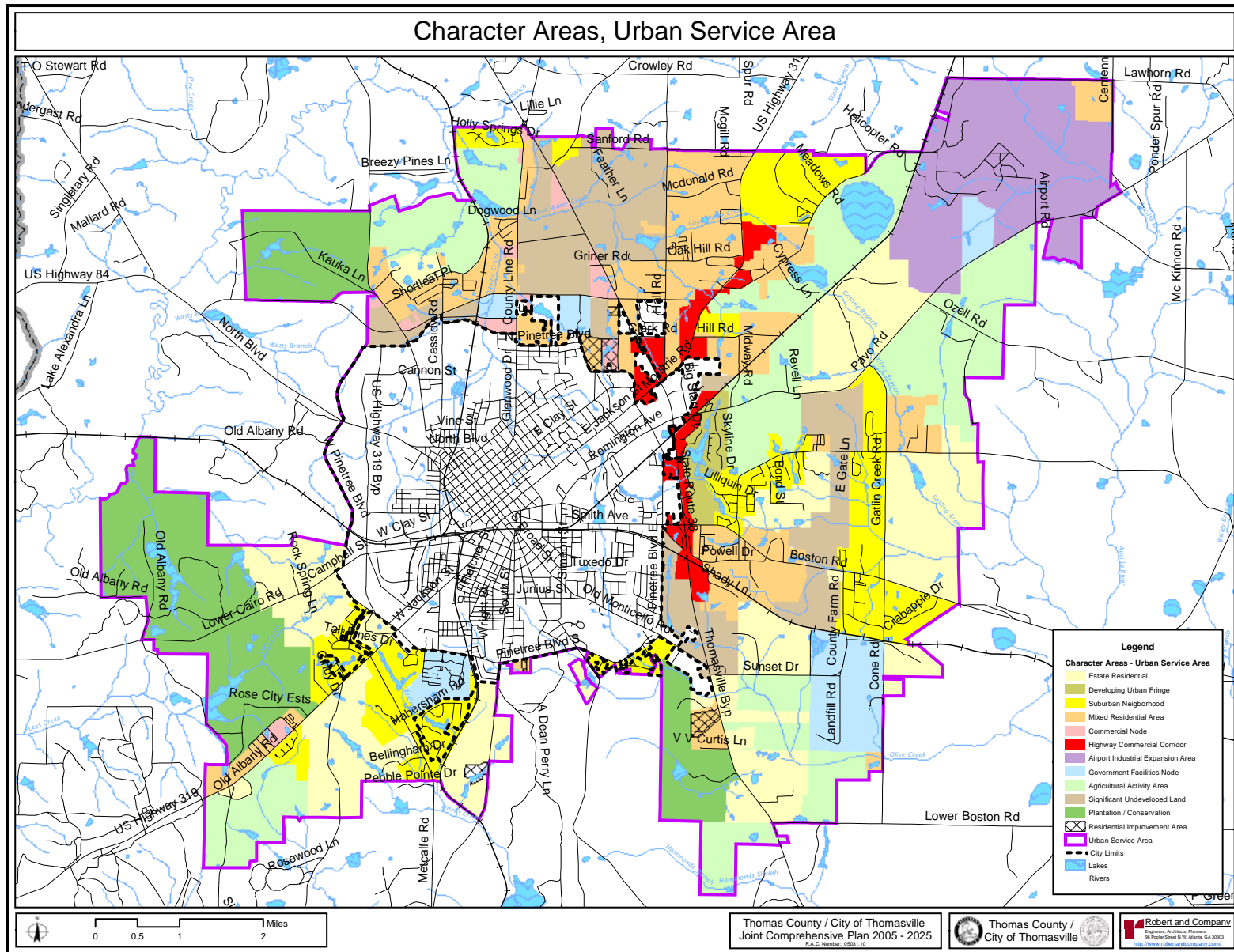
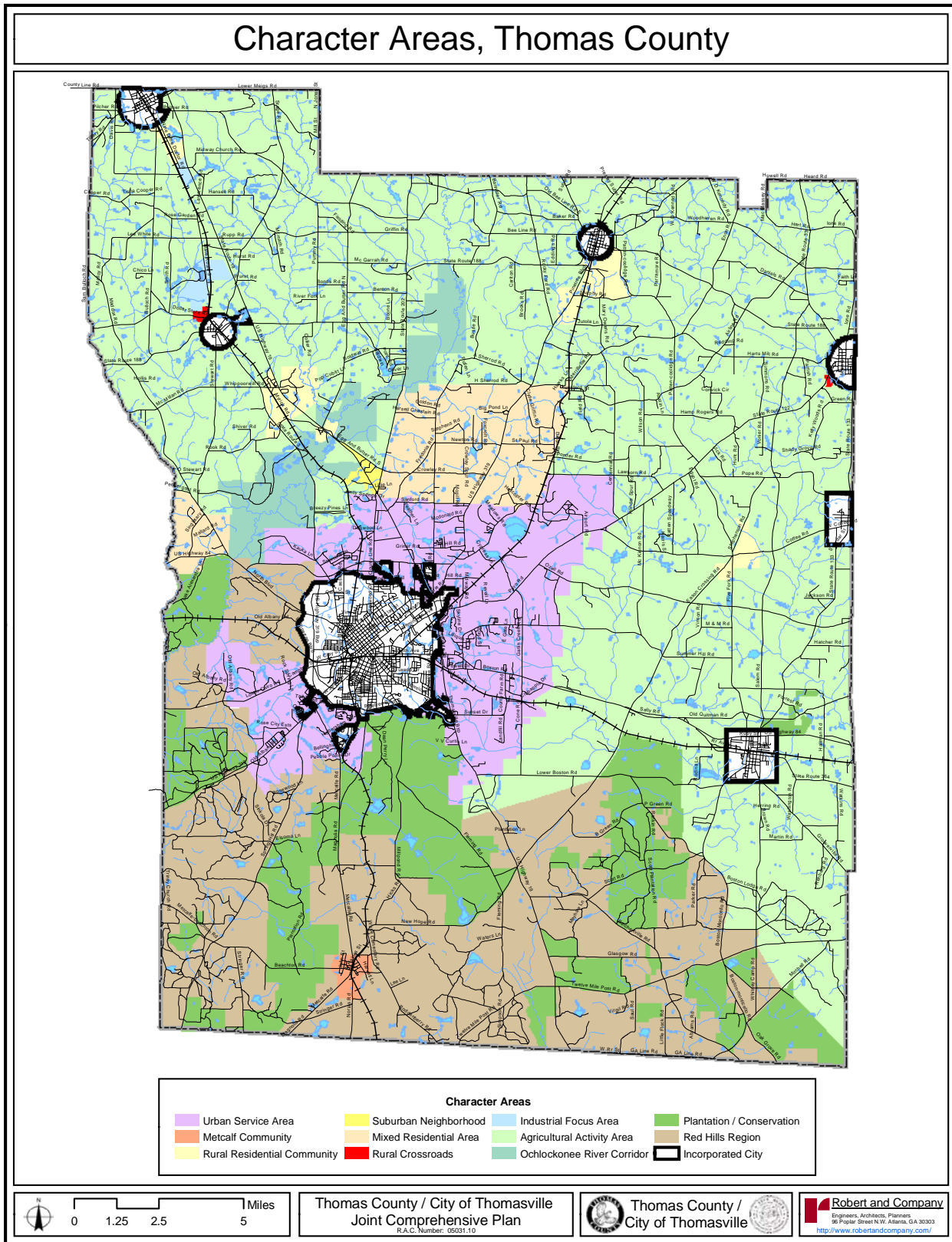


Figure 5 – Recommended Character Areas, “Rural” Thomas Co., GA



Recommended Character Areas: Thomasville

DCA's rules require that a map of "recommended character areas" be developed based on an objective and professional assessment of data and information about the community, as an integral part of this Community Assessment. This means that the city's planning consultants take the first "shot" at drawing and describing Character Areas.

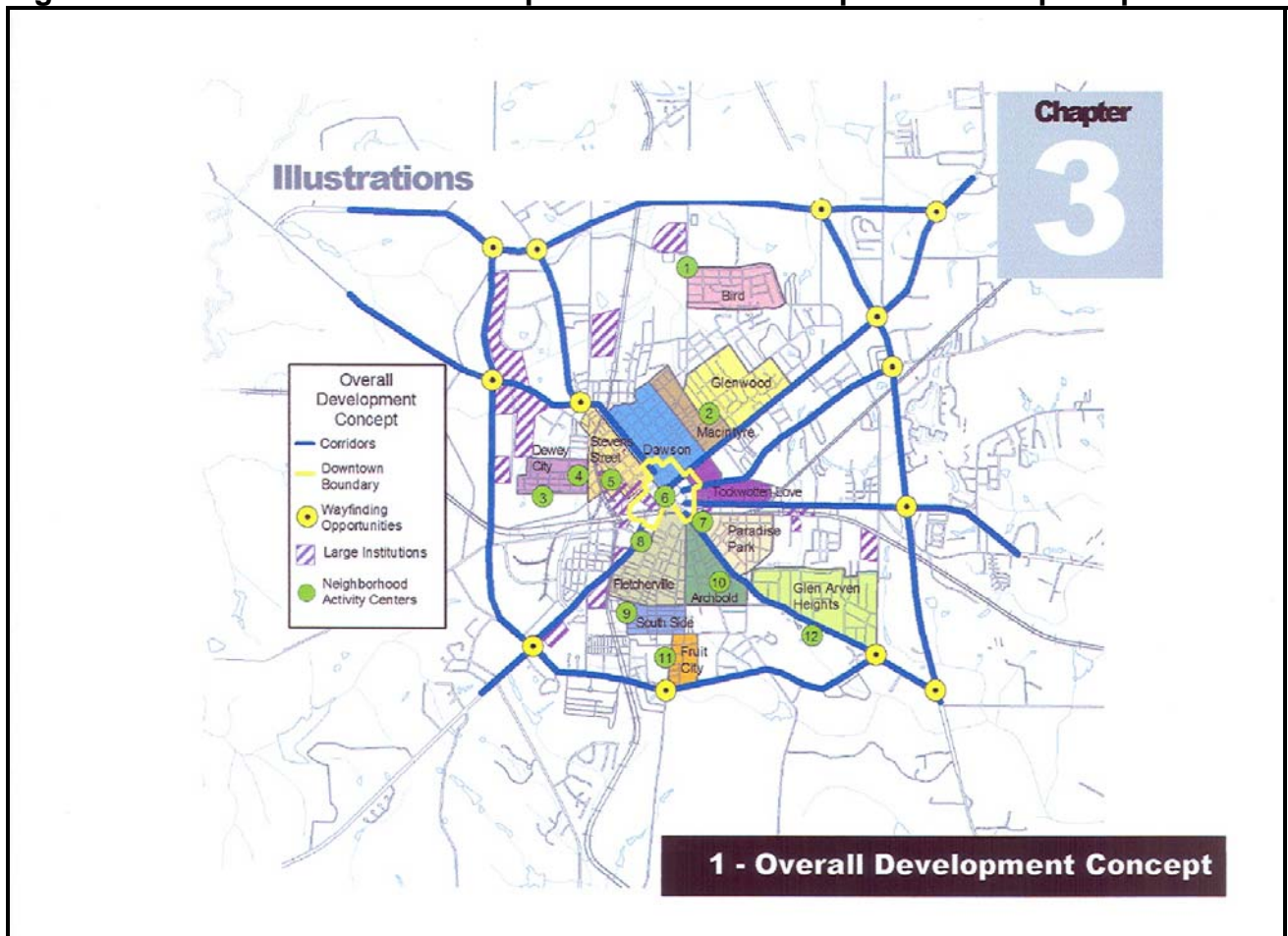
DCA's local planning standards emphasize that the initial delineation of character areas must be considered in the context of the supporting analysis of data and information, which is also a part of this Community Assessment. Planners delineating character areas must look beyond just the design aspects of various neighborhoods, centers, and corridors. All the data and analysis within the Community Assessment, including maps of environmentally sensitive areas, are to be looked at holistically in order to avoid conflicts among various objectives of the comprehensive plan.

There are many different ways to delineate character areas, and the consulting team considered the general approaches that follow. These include following "state planning recommendations" and using the report of the 2004 Resource Team visit to Thomasville, sponsored by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). The 2004 Resource Team Report's Overall Development Concept Map (see Figure 6), and Map of Neighborhoods with Activity Centers (see Figure 7) were consulted and formed a starting point for the delineation of character areas. Another map from the DCA Resource Team Report, titled "Potential National Register Districts" and including boundaries of existing National Register Districts, was also useful in delineating character areas.

The Overall Development Concept Map designated all major road corridors, the downtown, large institutions, and neighborhood activity centers (which are numbered 1-12, see Figure 6). Figure 7 designates the names of the 12 activity centers. Note that the designations in Figures 6 and 7 are not "comprehensive" in the sense that they do not include all land area in the city. The map of character areas is required to include the entire city limits, and hence, some modification of the Resource Team maps is required to meet state planning rules.

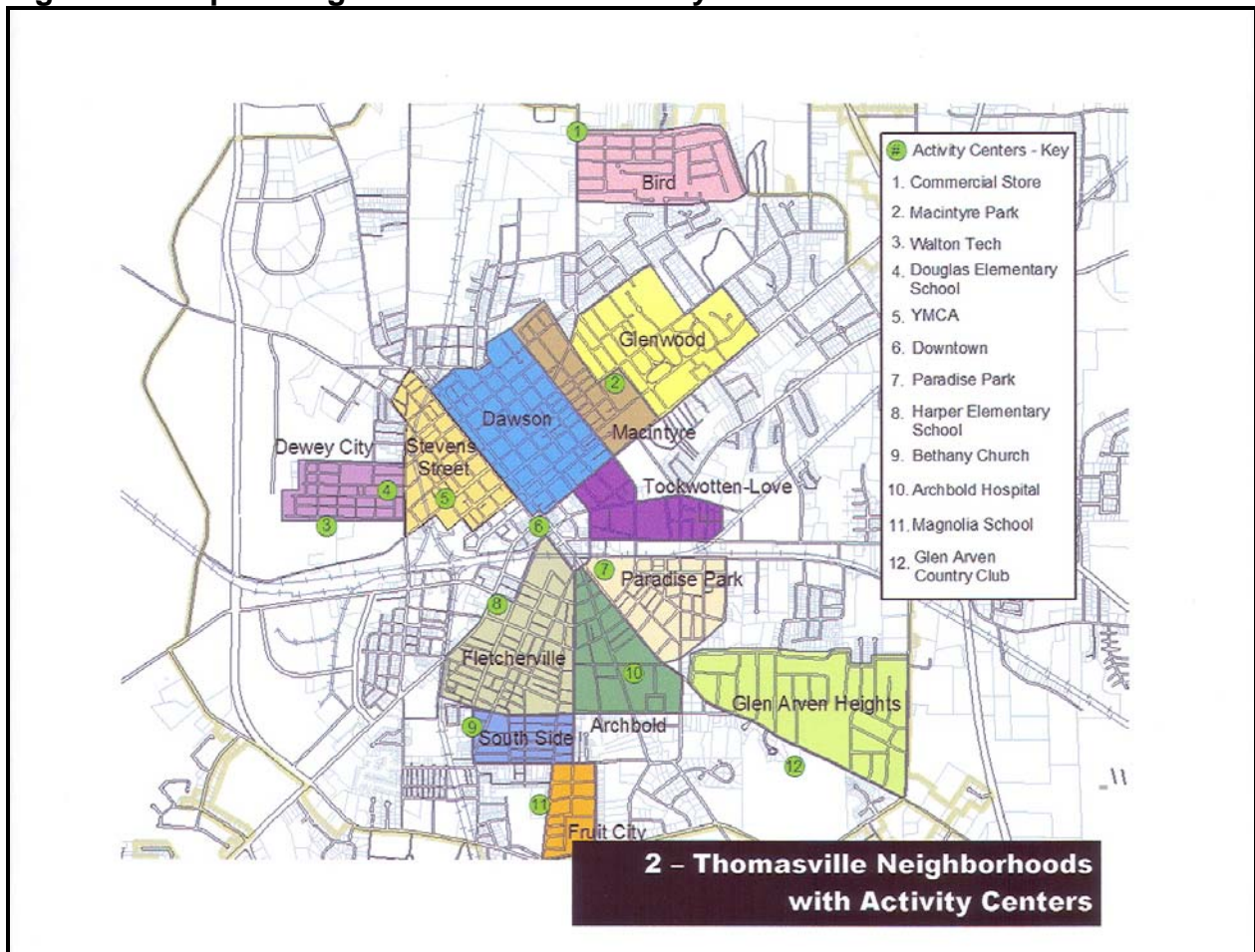
Another consideration in the preparation of the character areas map for Thomasville was the overarching historic city identity. The City of Thomasville has locally designated historic districts that are protected by regulations that ensure modifications to existing and new development in these areas does not compromise the character found within much of the city. Thus, the historic districts influenced the designation of certain neighborhood character areas, but are considered a separate layer that is included on maps in the natural and cultural resources section of the Community Assessment.

Figure 6 – 2004 Resource Team Report’s Overall Development Concept Map



Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, 2004 Resource Team Report for Thomasville.

Figure 7 – Map of Neighborhoods with Activity Centers



Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs, 2004 Resource Team Report for Thomasville.

After careful consideration of various options, the consulting team recommends the following 13 preliminary character areas, each of which is described in detail in the following paragraphs and shown in Figure 8.

Central Core	Institutional Campus
Downtown (mixed-use blocks)	Medical District
Traditional Neighborhoods	Neighborhood Commercial Node
Neighborhoods Requiring Special Attention	Commercial Corridor Requiring Aesthetic Treatment/Redevelopment
Infill Development Opportunity Site	Regional Shopping
Suburban Neighborhoods	Employment/Industrial
Urban Density Communities	Conservation

Central Core

This character area corresponds to the city’s adopted Downtown Local Historic District. It is larger (by a few blocks) than the existing Thomasville Commercial National Register District. As recommended in the 2004 Resource Team Report, the downtown should include a relatively high-intensity mix of retail, office, and service land uses. Although the DCA Resource Team Report recommends the addition of multi-family uses and apartments, it is believed that there are relatively few opportunities for new residential development downtown. In addition, such development activity may detract from residential infill development objectives in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Traditional Neighborhoods

This character area corresponds with blocks of predominantly detached, single-family neighborhoods, although some blocks designated have some multi-family or office uses. These neighborhoods should remain primarily single-family residential, anchored by institutions and parks which serve as activity centers.

Neighborhoods Requiring Special Attention

These neighborhoods, some of which would meet the definition of traditional neighborhoods, are singled out as requiring special attention, due primarily to the prospect for land use change. This character area designation applies to neighborhoods that are isolated or surrounded by non-residential development and are therefore threatened with encroachment. In addition, some of the lots within such neighborhoods may include dilapidated homes. As noted in the DCA Resource Team Report, the city should offer formal assistance where needed to ensure that the more distressed neighborhoods remain stable. Mixed-income infill development is specifically encouraged within these character areas. In some places, the roads within these areas are unpaved.

Suburban Neighborhoods

This character area corresponds with conventional suburban subdivisions with larger lots (usually with 1/2 acre or more) and that sometimes have cul-de-sacs and curvilinear streets. Houses are setback from the road, and lots are spacious. It also applies to some of the more outlying neighborhoods of the city which tend to have larger blocks than traditional neighborhoods.

These neighborhoods should remain primarily single-family residential, and they are less well served by parks and institutions when compared with historic neighborhoods

Connectivity is not necessarily optimal, although an objective of this character area is to provide for pedestrian activity and connections among subdivisions to provide more of a true “neighborhood” feel, as opposed to each tract being developed without consideration of connecting to abutting properties.



Innovative cul-de-sac designs can contribute special character to conventional suburban neighborhoods.

Infill Development Opportunity Site

This character area corresponds with significant opportunities to fill in vacant lands with new development. The vast majority of infill development opportunity sites are within residential neighborhoods, although there are also substantial opportunities for new industrial development in Thomasville.

Urban Density Communities

This character area corresponds with the highest density residential developments in the city, including apartment complexes, townhouse developments, and (in one case) mobile home parks. Densities are typically at least 11 units per acre (consistent with the prior land use designations of the 1995 comprehensive plan). Acceptable uses include multi-family development and supportive civic, institutional, and recreational uses.

Institutional Campus

This character area corresponds with significant institutional campuses such as college or technical school campuses, hospitals (except for the Archbold hospital area which is designated as its own distinct character area), public schools, other public use complexes (e.g., public works camps), and large churches. These are mostly single-function land use districts that where public access is controlled or limited. In the case of schools, pedestrian accessibility is promoted, although other institutions are largely reliant on the automobile for access.



Thomas University, a representative institutional campus

Medical District

This character area is located between the downtown central business district and Archbold Hospital. A distinct character is evident, one where the predominant land use is medical office, and many of the offices are converted single-family homes.

Neighborhood Commercial Node

This character area corresponds with small, existing or proposed commercial uses within established neighborhoods, often centered on the intersection of two streets. The character is one of convenience shopping and service opportunities, laid out primarily for access by automobile but also with pedestrian linkages to surrounding and nearby neighborhoods. Acceptable uses include limited businesses, offices, services, restaurants, institutions, and civic uses. Because of the downtown commercial core and the expansive regional shopping areas of Thomasville, the neighborhood commercial nodes should remain small in scale and compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Commercial Corridor

Older, in-town highway corridors within Thomasville that could benefit from aesthetic improvement include Smith Avenue (U.S. Highway 84 Business East), the western portion of U.S. Highway 84 Business, and U.S. Highway 319 (north and south of the downtown). These areas should be targeted for programs to improve aesthetics, which might include low-interest loans for façade improvements, new architectural guidelines or regulations, and perhaps some selected urban redevelopment.

Regional Shopping

This character area designation corresponds with the concentration of commercial uses at the intersection of the Thomasville Bypass (U.S. Highway 19/84) and U.S. Highway 319 and including both sides of East Pinetree Boulevard. A key challenge for Thomasville's leaders is to make the regional shopping district more aesthetically appealing, with more bicycle and pedestrian travel opportunities. It is also desirable to infuse some residential development, where appropriate.

Employment/Industrial

This character area designation applies to industrial properties in Thomasville, including the two major industrial parks, concentrations of industry, and to more scattered, freestanding industrial operations.

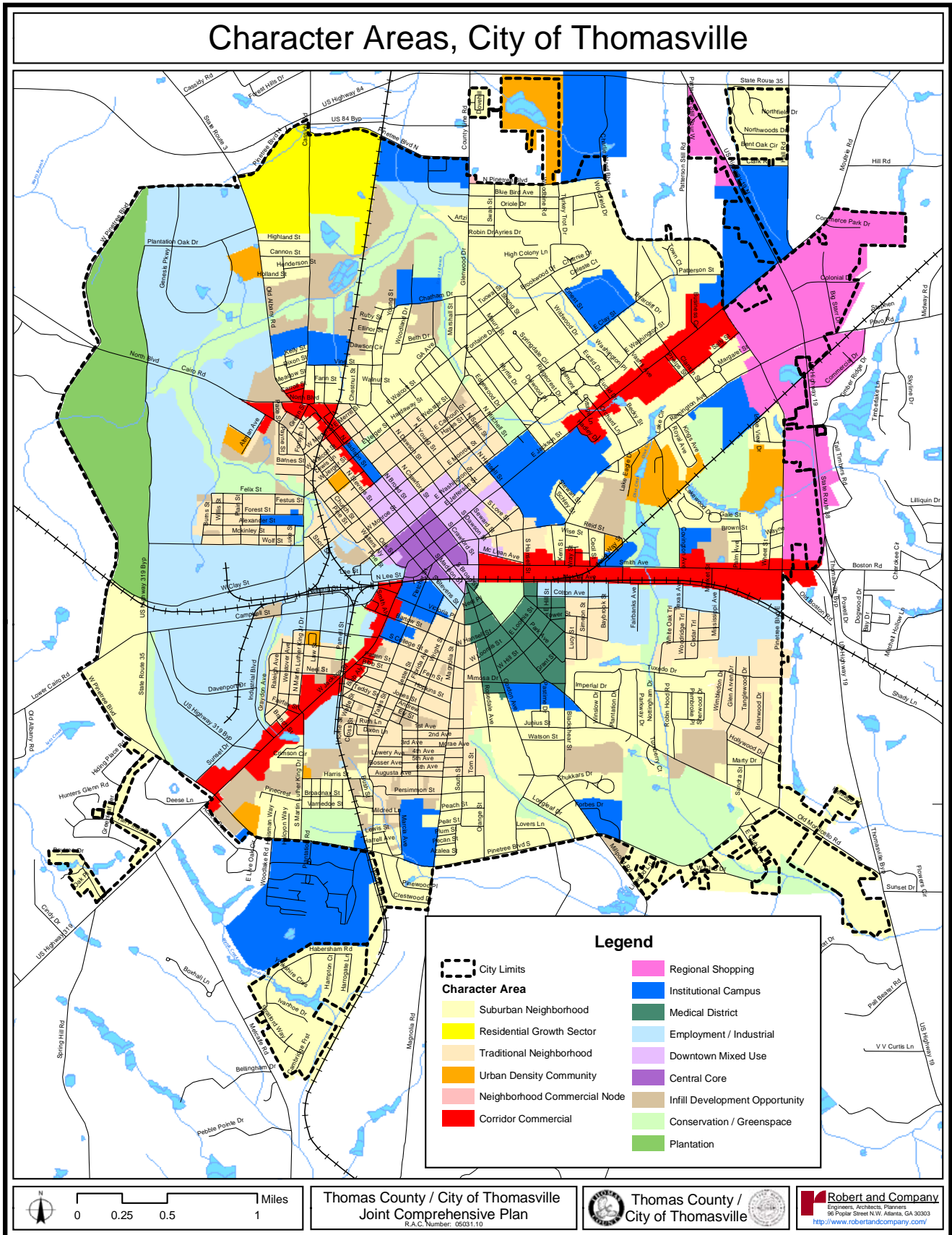
Conservation

This character area includes public parks in Thomasville, as well as stream and drainage corridors that remain undeveloped throughout the city. It is recommended that the city consider eventually acquiring some of these areas for public use (greenways) and stormwater management improvements.



Cherokee Lake

Figure 8 – Recommended Character Areas, Thomasville, GA



AREAS REQUIRING SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

This section provides assessments of likely issues/impacts that may be encountered with the continued growth and development of Thomas County and the City of Thomasville.

The areas of consideration covered in this section are alighted with specific items required by the DCA Local Planning Standards. Consideration of these topics is presented to help frame future community discussions of where new development and redevelopment efforts should be encouraged and limited within the county and city. These statements will ultimately be reflected in the Future Development Maps included in the Community Agenda.

Thomas County

Thomas County has grown steadily since the adoption of the previous Comprehensive Plan in the early 1990s, and such growth is anticipated to continue through 2025. It is important for Thomas County to address and plan for changes in demographics and development pressures that may become more prevalent within the 20-year planning period.

This section discusses how such changes will affect resources, services, and opportunities that exist for infill development and the direction of future development. Specifically presented are areas that require special protection or areas where special investment will be needed in order for Thomas County to make progress toward achieving future goals.

Areas of Significant Natural and Cultural Resources

There are numerous areas of significant natural and cultural resources in Thomas County; one of the most notable is the defining landscape of the Red Hills Region in the southern portion of the county. Within the Red Hills Region, there is an abundance of land valued for resources including natural habitats of a variety of birds, such as quail and the red cockaded woodpecker. The Red Hills of Thomas County are home to some of the oldest growing longleaf pine trees in the Eastern United States and perhaps the World. Within the Red Hills Region, many of these resources are found on large, privately owned plantations, many of which have been placed wholly or partially in a conservation easement or another method of permanent protection. Many of these plantations have significant value not only as a natural resource, but also as an economic and cultural resource to the area as they help preserve the character of the Red Hills Region. The conservation plantations preserve open space, create character, and as primarily undeveloped natural and environmentally sensitive areas, they are inappropriate for future development.

Another significant natural and cultural resource is the Ochlocknee River corridor, a portion of which is designated a Protected River by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. There are large floodplains and significant undeveloped lands around it that should remain protected or significantly buffered from development. Such wetlands provide natural habitats for a wealth of species, including eagles, storks, and potentially endangered and threatened species as discussed in the Natural and Cultural Resources section of the Technical Appendix.

The Aucilla River corridor runs from north to south in Thomas County, and possesses some of the same environmental attributes as the Ochlocknee River. It is located on the eastern side of the county between Thomasville and the Boston community to the west and the Pavo community to the east. Although it is not currently an identified character area, it should be considered for identification as a potential river protection corridor in the county.

Areas Where Rapid Development or Change of Use is Likely to Occur

In the recent past, the most rapid development in Thomas County has occurred within the urban fringe of Thomasville, primarily along the eastern and northeastern boundaries with Thomasville's city limits. This rapid development consists of residential subdivisions being built on larger, previously vacant parcels. Developers have focused on finding the most readily available lands for such development and the trend has been to move farther out from the urban core of the city. It appears that this trend will continue into the future unless the County takes a firm stance on directing and controlling development.

The county should strive to create more intensely developed areas on lands that are currently vacant or underutilized and served by infrastructure. Future development should contain a variety of residential uses and associated amenities including accessible commercial areas. With more purposeful direction, the county can ensure that development occurs where future services are to be provided in agreement with the city.

Areas Outpacing Availability of Facilities and Services

Some recent development in unincorporated Thomas County is well served by city water &, sewer, schools, and roads. However, there is evidence that residential activity threatens to outpace infrastructure extensions. The creation of the urban service area is intended to thwart this problem, but the pace of development continues to move more quickly than the infrastructure can be provided. Water and sewer are the primary variables controlling where development will occur, but roads and other community supporting services must also be taken into consideration. There are many unpaved roads within unincorporated area that pose potential difficulty in the provision of services, especially those related to public safety.

The location and supply of infrastructure and county services must be addressed and carefully planned in order to ensure that demand created by new development does not outpace availability.

Areas in Need of Redevelopment or Aesthetic Improvement

Redevelopment or aesthetic improvement in the county should be largely focused on commercial areas. The appearance of highway commercial corridors could be greatly improved with the introduction of regulations that establish uniform building setbacks, limit points of access from the highway, and recommend standard signage controls.

Commercial enterprises that abut neighboring residential areas may also need to be examined as potential areas in need of aesthetic upgrades. Where residences share property lines and have site lines into the rear of businesses, there are often visual or noise related problems that can lead to a decreased quality of life for the residential areas if not properly managed. The aesthetics and environmental impacts of such land use juxtapositions should be addressed.

Abandoned Structures or Sites

There are few large, abandoned structures and sites in Thomas County. There are also several vacant commercial sites along Highway 319 north; future development on these parcels could be subject to corridor aesthetic improvement as described in the previous section.

Additional individual occurrences of abandoned or dilapidated structures, such as barns or old homes, are found scattered throughout the county in rural agricultural areas. Assuming they are not used and not imposing any danger to nearby residents in their daily activities, these are not considered a major issue at this time. If the problem escalates and expands beyond isolated areas and occurrences, it may need special attention in the future.

Lastly, in some of the manufactured home parks or subdivisions, there are a number of abandoned structures. These manufactured homes left in place could pose potential health issues to neighboring residents if they were to become infested with vermin or have structural stability problems. The aesthetics and problems with disinvestment in these areas are discussed further in a following section.

Areas with Significant Infill Development Opportunities

There is potential for infill development within the Urban Service Area of Thomas County. The current development pattern in Thomas County reflects a tendency for developers to seek the most readily available land, which is often farther out in the county and may be aggressively marketed due to its immediate availability. In doing so, developers have passed up vacant or underutilized property closer to the city edge or in the urban fringe. Such underutilized properties have created prime locations for a variety of infill development. While there are fewer opportunities for the small-scale infill that is more appropriate in Thomasville, there are major opportunities to intensify the development and increase the density within the Urban Service Area in order to take advantage of the services that are provided.

Focusing future development opportunities on infill within the designated Urban Service Area will assist in creating a pattern of more controlled and sustainable growth in Thomas County.

Areas of Significant Disinvestment

In Thomas County, there are numerous areas that can be characterized as requiring special attention due to declining aesthetics and associated housing conditions. Some of the housing types found in Thomas County are not sustainable through multiple generations. In such areas where housing quality has declined due to either poor initial construction or lack of maintenance, there may be problems that should be addressed in order to ensure that the quality of life for residents is improved.

In Thomas County there are numerous manufactured home parks, defined as those that lease or rent more than three spaces for permanent or for temporary occupancy for manufactured homes. These spaces cannot be offered for sale. The lack of ownership in these areas may be one factor that leads to what appears to be a common problem in Thomas County: the depressed quality of manufactured housing. There are numerous examples of manufactured home parks that have declined and no longer constitute adequate living conditions.

Some of the most notable manufactured home parks that have fallen into decline include: Pine Lake Estates (located off of Old Cassidy Road), Taylor's Mobile Home Park (located just outside of Thomasville city Limits on Pinetree Boulevard), and Azalea Mobile Home Park (also on Pinetree Blvd. But is somewhat better maintained). Hill Mobile Home Park, located on South Pinetree Blvd. is also on the eastern border of the City of Thomasville and Thomas County. Farther outside of the city limits, there is a small concentration of manufactured home parks around Georgia Highway 202 (Hall Road) and Oak Hill Road: Oak Hill Estates, Sugarwood Estates, and Northside Mobile Home Park.

Another concentration of dilapidated manufactured home parks is found east of Thomasville and south of Highway 84 in the vicinity of Powell Road, Dogwood Drive, and Inman Drive. On the north side of Highway 84, Country Living Estates and Hidden Acres Mobile Home Parks include manufactured homes in poor condition as well as some vacant lots and abandoned structures. Though not an exhaustive list of all manufactured home parks in Thomas County, those listed are indicative of the blight that is prevalent in manufactured home parks throughout the county. Looking into the future, more attention needs to be paid to these areas in order to ensure that the residents are living in safe and acceptable home environments.

City of Thomasville

Areas of Significant Natural and Cultural Resources

Within Thomasville, there are few environmentally sensitive areas. Probably of most significance are the various “wet” tracts along streams and drainage ways, which have been bypassed by prior waves of development in favor of properties more suitable for development. These wet areas may also be subject to periodic flooding or inundation. While such areas remain undeveloped and in private hands, they represent an opportunity for greenway acquisition and or more formalized drainage improvements.

Areas Where Rapid Development or Change of Use is Likely to Occur

As noted under residential market activity (description of existing land use), significant residential activity is occurring on larger, previously vacant parcels and also on individual lots within established residential neighborhoods. As a result, there are few areas that are witnessing or are likely to witness rapid development. One possible area of rapid development is the western U.S. Highway Bypass at the western edge of Thomasville’s city limits. The transitions of land use predicted in the 1995 comprehensive plan (see Table 2) have all come to fruition, more or less. Some other transitions are possible, such as expansion of office and commercial uses into established residential neighborhoods, but there are no particular concerns in that regard that warrant citation in this description. Most rapid development consists of residential subdivisions outside the city limits.

Areas Outpacing Availability of Facilities and Services

All recent development within Thomasville appears to be well served by water, sewer, parks, schools, and roads. One exception is the existence of several unpaved roads within neighborhoods. The transportation system is not overloaded, in part because of many U.S. and state highways running through the city and a grid system of local streets. Hence, this does not appear to be a significant land use issue in Thomasville, although outside the city limits in unincorporated Thomas County, residential activity threatens to outpace infrastructure extensions.

Areas in Need of Redevelopment or Aesthetic Improvement

There is no significant concentration of urban blight that would necessitate a public redevelopment program for a given area. As noted above in the description of commercial land uses, there are older, in-town corridors within Thomasville that could benefit from aesthetic improvement. Those corridors include Smith Avenue (U.S. Highway 84 Business East), the western portion of U.S. Highway 84 West, and U.S. Highway 319 South (south of the downtown). Thomasville Historic Landmarks, Inc. is playing an active role in the refurbishment (and in some cases, adaptive reuse) of historic residential properties in Thomasville.



One of several unpaved or substandard roads within Thomasville’s neighborhoods

In some cases, older, low- to moderate-income residential neighborhoods could benefit from concerted efforts to tear down substandard housing units and replace them with new housing units, but there is no real concentration of such substandard homes. Rather, dilapidated units tend to be scattered around in various residential neighborhoods.

Abandoned Structures or Sites

The most significant and immediate need for redevelopment is the abandoned shopping center along U.S. Highway 319 South, but north of Pinetree Boulevard. That abandoned shopping center should be targeted for either commercial redevelopment or adaptive use for institutional purposes. Also, as previously noted, there are some vacant industrial properties that should be targeted for reuse through economic development marketing programs.

With regard to residential development, the city has a major issue at hand with numerous dilapidated houses scattered throughout older residential neighborhoods. Housing improvement and community development programs must become (or remain) a high priority to ensure that whole neighborhoods do not fall into stages of widespread urban blight.

On the campus of the Southwestern State Hospital, there is an older, abandoned concentration of residential-type dwellings. That part of the campus appears to contain the older residential and campus support buildings, and they may be historic structures. If so, that part of the hospital campus represents a significant opportunity restore and reuse (or preserve) historical institutional buildings in Thomasville



to

Potential Historic Site on the Campus of Southwestern State Hospital

Areas with Significant Infill Development Opportunities

During the land use inventory, it was noted how infill residential development has occurred at a healthy pace throughout the past several decades. The consulting team noted that many neighborhoods have different generations of housing in them. Hence, there is a natural occurrence of residential infill development.

Throughout the neighborhoods of Thomasville, especially the older residential areas (particularly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods), there are substantial residential infill development opportunities. When one considers the need to tear down substandard or dilapidated houses, the opportunity for residential infill development within established residential neighborhoods is even greater. A major role by Thomasville in spurring the appropriate type of infill development activity is highly recommended. The improvement of unpaved roads within certain neighborhoods is considered a high priority to spur additional infill development, though unpaved roads do not appear to preclude continued residential infill development.

Areas of Significant Disinvestment

This consideration parallels the discussions above about areas in need of redevelopment and abandoned structures and sites. The most visible area of disinvestment is the U.S. Highway

319 South corridor, including the abandoned shopping center described above. Community development projects, such as the building of Habitat for Humanity homes, is helping to stave off more widespread blighting conditions in Thomasville's neighborhoods on the south and west sides.

ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The Quality Community Objectives are a series of guiding statements adopted by the Board of the Department of Community Affairs to further elaborate statewide planning goals, which have been developed based on growth and development issues identified by the Department as existing in numerous communities and regions throughout the state. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the consistency of the county and city’s current policies, activities and development patterns with these objectives, and to highlight areas where improvements can be made. Potential strategies for improvement will be explored during the Community Participation phase of the planning process and will help form the final “locally agreed upon” implementation program for the Comprehensive Plan included in the Community Agenda.

The consistency with Quality Community Objectives is presented in a combined format, as many of the objectives must be addressed by the county and city in order to achieve them in the most efficient and effective manor.

Quality Community Objectives: Thomas County and Thomasville

Regional Identity Objective

“Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

Thomas County and the City of Thomasville have a well-established regional identity as a community built upon a rich history. Though the county maintains a rural air compared to the more urban city, the combined resources and character are unmatched by other counties in the region and throughout much of Georgia.



A rural scene in Thomas County

Thomas County has an abundance of valuable agricultural lands and rural traditions that contribute to the character of the area. The preservation of this aspect of the area’s character is crucial to maintaining the regional identity.

Thomasville is a beautiful city with excellent neighborhoods, city parks, and large institutions, which is surrounded by the agricultural lands and plantations located outside of the city limits. The historic attractions of Thomasville, coupled with the expansive plantations and hunting operations, have established the area as a regional and even national tourist destination.



A Bed and Breakfast Inn, Thomasville

Growth Preparedness Objective

“Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.”

Virtually all of Thomasville is adequately served by the infrastructure needed to support new development. One exception is the existence of several unpaved local roads, which may limit residential infill potential.

While Thomasville has a limited area in which growth can occur, the unincorporated areas of Thomas County have a greater challenge in preparing for and directing growth. Within the past decade, especially the past five years, Thomas County has experienced a surge of residential development. This recent growth has alerted the county that it must plan and execute a concerted effort to direct new growth.



New residential development in Thomas County

Growth preparedness applies primarily to the unincorporated urban fringe area of Thomas County. The urban fringe of Thomas County is unique because parts of it are currently served by utilities from the City of Thomasville, which produces power and installs its own water and sewer lines. There is currently an effort to study where utilities (water, sewer, and telecommunications infrastructure) should be extended into the urban fringe.

By working with the City of Thomasville to establish the future boundaries for the provision of services, the county will be able to better direct growth. Directing growth into designated areas will help control the costs of providing services and will also work to protect valuable open space and agricultural lands that are not should not be developed. The county should support directing growth by reviewing its current zoning and development regulations, and subsequently updating them in order to reflect the desires for more concentrated growth within the urban fringe. The county must ensure that all development related ordinances are kept up to date and revised as necessary to support their efforts in managing growth.

Appropriate Business Objective

“The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”

In the unincorporated areas of Thomas County, there is not a diversity of businesses due to the agricultural economic base. Thomasville lends balance to the local economy with a more diverse economic base, including very strong medical and health facilities, utility installations, manufacturing, regional and neighborhood retail, government, and additional services such as restaurants and lodging. The city’s historic districts promote historic preservation, which is a

primary factor in maintaining the flow of tourism dollars. There may be a need or an opening in the future for industries that require higher-skill level jobs.

Thomas County and the City of Thomasville work through several economic development organizations to promote the economic viability of the area and have monetary and tax-based initiatives to attract appropriate industry to the area. More information on consistency with this Quality Community Objective and Thomasville and Thomas County's existing business base is discussed further in the Economic Development section of this community assessment.

Educational Opportunities Objective

“Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”

The existence of Thomas University and Southwest Georgia Technical College in Thomasville ensure that residents of Thomas County have numerous educational opportunities. Additionally, Darton College has a local offering of classes.



Thomas University in Thomasville

There are also several other state and private institutions for higher learning as well as vocational and technical institutes within an hour's drive of Thomas County. Thomas County's proximity to other metropolitan areas such as Tallahassee and Albany increase the nearby educational opportunities in many ways. Valdosta State may also expand into the Thomasville/ Thomas County area. For more information on higher education, city and county school systems, and adult literacy programs, see the Community Facilities and Services section of this community assessment.

Employment Options Objective

“A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

While the county has a wealth of service and retail trade jobs, the city and county combined have a diverse economy that provides for range of job types. The City of Thomasville serves as an administrative, government, and medical hub for the region. These sectors have shown strong growth over the previous decade. The city also has a strong share of manufacturing employment, although trends show this economic sector is slightly declining. As manufacturing jobs are lost, the city and county have been working to expand the tourism and service sectors in order to maintain a diverse economy. As the population grows, the governments will need to consistently evaluate any changes in the workforce that may require further diversification or expansion of job opportunities in the area.

Heritage Preservation Objective

“The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”

Thomas County and Thomasville have worked consistently over several decades to ensure that the rich history of the area is preserved. Thomas County is home to numerous historic sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places; many of these are part of or associated with historic plantations that are being preserved. In addition to sites, properties, and districts listed on the National Register, there is also a new local program for establishing and protecting scenic roads in the county.



A scenic road in Thomas County

Within the Thomasville City limits, there are eight historic districts encompassing hundreds of historic homes and properties. Thomasville also has established four locally designated historic districts and historic preservation guidelines that serve to protect the integrity of these areas. One local district encompasses much of downtown Thomasville, while three residential historic districts are home to numerous historic homes, some which have been converted to Bed & Breakfast Inns or other businesses. The level of interest and effort that has gone into protecting Thomas County and Thomasville’s cultural resources is unparalleled in the region and most of the State of Georgia.

Open Space Preservation Objective

“New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.”

On the whole, Thomas County has not fully addressed the need for more open space that is accessible to its citizens. While the County is supportive of the preservation of plantations and other environmentally important lands, these do not serve the citizens in the same way as a public park or trail system. The County’s current zoning allowances make it difficult to promote conservation subdivisions, an effective tool in preserving open space and providing more greenspace to county residents. Thus, the provision of more parks and greenspace in the future may require changes to zoning allowances, subdivision regulations, or other supporting ordinances.

Though the conservation subdivision concept is not applicable in the City of Thomasville, there is an opportunity to acquire “wet” tracts within Thomasville and develop a system of multi-use trails within them. Wet tracts include such areas as floodplains, wetlands, stream buffers, and drainage channels. A combination of active recreational features and passive natural lands is a viable application in preserving open space. The collective provision of more open space in the city and county will benefit the residents, and provide many amenities not previously available in the area.

Environmental Protection Objective

“Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”

The numerous environmentally sensitive areas in Thomas County are protected by a variety of local, state, and national regulations. Wetlands, floodplains, endangered river corridors, and endangered or threatened species habitats are protected by existing laws and ordinances. The county’s Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance controls construction and development related activities in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas from associated negative effects. The status of environmentally sensitive areas is further addressed in the Natural Resources section of this community assessment.

Due to its urban nature, the City of Thomasville has more limited natural resources and areas in need of environmental protection than the outlying areas of Thomas County. However, new development in the city should be given special consideration in terms of its proximity to and potential negative effects on natural areas. The city, much like the county, has regulations in place to protect not only the natural areas from the impacts of development, but people from potential natural hazards. The city’s environmental regulations include soil erosion and sediment control, floodplain and wetland protection ordinances.

Both the city and county have appropriate regulations at this time; the wealth of natural and environmentally sensitive areas in the area should be regularly evaluated to ensure their protection into the future.

Regional Cooperation Objective

“Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.”

Though some of the successes are not highlighted in this community assessment, both Thomas County and Thomas County have participated extensively in regional programs and efforts. That is evident by a review of the Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center’s Regional Agenda. As a sort of “big brother” or more urban component of the rural Southwest Georgia region, Thomas County and Thomasville play and will continue to play important roles in regional programs.

A special relationship exists with Thomasville and Thomas County, and efforts to increase cooperation have increased in recent years even though the intergovernmental issues are increasingly complex and can be contentious. The most notable example of that recent cooperation between Thomasville and Thomas County is the preliminary designation of an urban service area, within which Thomasville Utilities will eventually extend its service coverage. A joint land use management program for the urban service area – one that spells out coordinated zoning and installation of urban-type services in unincorporated areas – is needed.

Transportation Alternatives Objective

“Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.”

It was noted during the land use inventory of the City of Thomasville that there are several undeveloped or underdeveloped street right-of-ways that might be used to improve connectivity within certain neighborhoods and throughout the city as a whole.

The location, size, and rural nature of Thomas County make it an unlikely candidate for a mass transit system, as such an urban transit system is not necessary or practical for serving county residents. However, the growth in rural transit service demonstrates that the county may want to look at expansion opportunities in the future. The Thomas County Transit System is currently privately operated, but may be considered an opportunity for public operation in the future if expansion is desired.

The existing conditions inventory in the Transportation section of this community assessment shows that sidewalk and bicycle connectivity are generally lacking throughout the city and county and that there should be greater access provided in areas of the county and city that are traveled often by residents on foot or bicycle. Most of the county’s sidewalks are found in downtown Thomasville, but there is no continual network of sidewalks throughout the city that serves major activity areas, including city facilities, schools, hospitals, major employment and shopping areas. Bicycle routes or trails would greatly benefit the city and county, not only as a mode of transit, but as a recreational resource and perhaps also a tourism resource if tied to historic sites or scenic areas. A comprehensive bicycle suitability analysis conducted as part of the community assessment indicated a number of roadways in the county (62 percent) and city (81 percent) that meet acceptable conditions for bicycling. Additional information on consistency with this Quality Community Objective is further addressed in the Transportation section of this community assessment.

Regional Solutions Objective

“Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

The operation of two public school systems (city and county) is one area where consolidation could be considered – although the social and political implications of doing so are recognized. The community facilities element reveals that there seems to be a trend toward less cooperation in terms of delivering services, at least in some categories of facilities. An area where there is room for more improvement is in the delivery of park facilities and recreation programs.

Because the smaller municipalities in Thomas County have not joined in this comprehensive planning effort, there may be opportunities for cooperation that reach beyond the countywide coordinating responsibilities of Thomas County, which are not identified in this assessment. The regional staff in their review and coordination of small municipal comprehensive plans in Thomas County with this planning effort should be aware of additional opportunities to coordinate planning and facility/service delivery.

As is noted elsewhere in this assessment, there are important opportunities for joint land use management of highway corridors in and around Thomasville, as well as within the urban service area.

Housing Opportunities Objective

“Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.”

With a rash of new development in the past five years, the variety of housing types available in Thomas County has increased significantly. Throughout the County, housing options include many different styles, types, and sizes of single-family homes, multi-family homes, and manufactured homes. Those who work in Thomas County appear to have ample housing options at this time; the County should work to ensure that remains true throughout the planning period and long into the future.

Thomasville’s neighborhoods offer a wide variety of housing units in terms of size, character, and cost. The city also has a limited number of locations where developers may see an opportunity to construct a new traditional neighborhood or to focus on infill development, which will continue to provide new and unique housing within the city. As such, Thomasville’s existing housing stock is believed to meet this objective at this time.

With the combined housing resources of the city and county, the area has a wide variety of housing options that are expected to continue to expand as the population grows. Recent residential developments that target certain demographic groups have proven very popular and it is likely that growth will be rapid in such targeted areas and markets of the city and county.

Traditional Neighborhood Objective

“Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.”

To a large degree, Thomasville’s excellent older neighborhoods typify the traditional neighborhood development pattern. Older in-town neighborhoods have well integrated facilities such as schools and parks that are accessible on foot, and many streets provide on-street parking. These areas with distinct character also enhance the pedestrian environment with amenities such as shade trees along local roads. Some neighborhoods have witnessed conversion of homes to offices and service commercial uses; which accomplishes appropriate mixing of uses in walking distance. Thomasville has established a Traditional Neighborhood District zoning classification in the city’s zoning ordinance, which is intended to encourage the development of neighborhoods that resemble those in the city’s historic districts through a mix of land uses and varied lot sizes and housing types. Traditional neighborhood design principles and a pedestrian-friendly environment are fundamental to the character of Traditional Neighborhood Development.



Residential and Commercial Transitions and Representative “Traditional Neighborhood” Character

Outside of Thomasville, in unincorporated Thomas County, there are no traditional neighborhoods. While the county has diverse housing types, and some new development has occurred at greater densities, the pattern of development remains one with more suburban characteristics than those of compact traditional neighborhoods. Typically, new neighborhoods in the county do not have sidewalks, and are not connected to one another or to neighboring uses on a pedestrian scale. This type of suburban sprawl is not considered appropriate for Thomas County in the future. Instead, a focus on creating clusters of housing with some retail at rural crossroads is a viable pattern, especially when mixed with more planned development and higher densities inside of the urban Service Area. Planned traditional neighborhoods could serve to fill a niche in the housing market by providing a variety of housing types in a more accessible pattern. Thomas County will need to support the creation of neighborhoods that follow desired development patterns through changes to the current zoning, the creation of new ordinances, and other directed initiatives.

The existing traditional neighborhoods in Thomasville are the most steadfast examples in the area currently; in the future there is the potential that the county and city both will aim to create new traditional neighborhoods, which will further the efforts toward achieving this quality community objective.

Infill Development Objective

“Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.”

This objective has unprecedented opportunities for implementation in the city of Thomasville. In Thomasville, there are existing vacant lots in older, in-town residential neighborhoods. There are also a significant number of dilapidated houses that present an opportunity for teardowns and rebuilding. Though there are not many large vacant parcels of land in the city, there may be limited opportunity to plan new traditional neighborhoods. The most significant potential for residential infill development in the city will be on a small scale.

In Thomas County, there is also the potential for infill development within the urban service area. The development pattern in Thomas County reflects a tendency for developers to seek the most readily available land, which is often farther out in the county, thus passing up vacant or underutilized property closer to the city edge or in the urban fringe. Such underutilized properties have created prime locations for a variety of infill development. While there are fewer opportunities for the small-scale infill that is more appropriate in Thomasville, there are major opportunities to intensify the development and increase the density within the Urban Service Area in order to take advantage of the services that are provided.



Representative Residential Infill Development Opportunity Site, Thomasville

Focusing future development opportunities on infill within the City of Thomasville and on land within the designated Urban Service Area will assist in accomplishing this Quality Community Objective. The community's residents have appropriately expressed the need to ensure that new infill development is held to high-quality architectural and design standards so as to maintain and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the existing infrastructure and sense of place.

Sense of Place Objective

“Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”

Thomasville’s central core (central business district or downtown commercial area) clearly meets this sense of place objective. Although little housing, if any, is included within the central core, residential neighborhoods abut the central core and are well connected to it. The city’s historic residential neighborhoods promote a distinct sense of place and have earned Thomasville the reputation (and recognition) as a highly livable city that has done better than most to preserve its historic residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are exceptionally well served by parks and neighborhood schools. Within low- and moderate income neighborhoods on the south side of Thomasville, the small churches (many of which are also historic) also contribute to the unique historic neighborhood flavor of Thomasville.

Plantation-style homes on the outskirts of the city (south and southwest) also contribute to the city and county’s sense of place and unique character. Expansive regional shopping areas, industrial parks, and other employment areas give Thomasville and Thomas County the appearance, reputation, and reality of a bustling economic center for Southwest Georgia. Cultural resources such as museums and historic sites serve as foundations that reinforce the area’s character as a well-rounded community with a high quality of life.

ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

The Quality Community Objectives are a series of guiding statements adopted by the Board of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to further elaborate statewide planning goals, which have been developed based on growth and development issues identified by the DCA as existing in numerous communities and regions throughout the State. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the consistency of the county and city’s current policies, activities and development patterns with these objectives, and to highlight areas where improvements can be made. Potential strategies for improvement will be explored during the Community Participation phase of the planning process and will help form the final “locally agreed upon” implementation program for the Comprehensive Plan included in the Community Agenda.

The consistency with Quality Community Objectives is presented in a combined format, as many of the objectives must be addressed by the county and city in order to achieve them in the most efficient and effective manor.

Quality Community Objectives: Thomas County and Thomasville

Regional Identity Objective

“Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

Thomas County and the City of Thomasville have a well-established regional identity as a community built upon a rich history. Though the county maintains a rural air compared to the more urban city, the combined resources and character are unmatched by other counties in the region and throughout much of Georgia.



A rural scene, Thomas County

Thomas County has an abundance of valuable agricultural lands and rural traditions that contribute to the character of the area. The preservation of this aspect of the area’s character is crucial to maintaining the regional identity.

Thomasville is a beautiful city with excellent neighborhoods, city parks, and large institutions, which is surrounded by the agricultural lands and plantations, located outside of the city limits. The historic attractions of Thomasville, coupled with the expansive plantations and hunting operations, have established the area as a regional and even national tourist destination.



A Bed and Breakfast Inn, Thomasville

Growth Preparedness Objective

Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities.

Virtually all of Thomasville is adequately served by the infrastructure needed to support new development. One exception is the existence of several unpaved local roads, which may limit residential infill potential.

While Thomasville has a limited area in which growth can occur, the unincorporated areas of Thomas County have a greater challenge in preparing for and directing growth. Within the past decade, especially the past five years, Thomas County has experienced a surge of residential development. This recent growth has alerted the county that it must plan and execute a concerted effort to direct new growth.



New residential development in Thomas County

Growth preparedness applies primarily to the unincorporated urban fringe area of Thomas County. The urban fringe of Thomas County is unique because parts of it are currently served by utilities from the City of Thomasville, which produces power and installs its own water and sewer lines. There is currently an effort to study where utilities (water, sewer, and telecommunications infrastructure) should be extended into the urban fringe.

By working with the City of Thomasville to establish future boundaries for the provision of services, the county will be able to better direct the types and timing of growth. Directing growth into designated areas will help control the costs of providing services and will also work to protect valuable open space and agricultural lands that should not be developed. The county should support directing growth by reviewing its current zoning and development regulations and ordinances, and subsequently updating them to direct growth toward the urban services area and limit the expansion of facilities beyond the designated area. The county must ensure that all development related ordinances are kept up to date and revised as necessary to support their efforts in managing growth and the extension of community facilities and services.

Appropriate Business Objective

“The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities.”

In the unincorporated areas of Thomas County, there is not a diversity of businesses due to the agricultural economic base and spread-out residential areas. Thomasville lends balance to the local economy with a more diverse economic base, including very strong medical and health facilities, utility installations, manufacturing, regional and neighborhood retail, government, and additional services such as restaurants and lodging. The city’s historic districts promote historic

preservation, which is a primary factor in maintaining the flow of tourism dollars. There may be a need in the future for industries that require higher-skill level jobs.

Thomas County and the City of Thomasville work through several economic development organizations to promote the economic viability of the combined area and have monetary and tax-based initiatives to attract appropriate industry to the community. The Economic Development section of the Community Assessment further details Thomas County's and Thomasville's existing business base, and provides more information on consistency with this Quality Community Objective.

Educational Opportunities Objective

“Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions.”

The existence of Thomas University and Southwest Georgia Technical College in Thomasville ensure that residents of Thomas County have numerous educational opportunities. Additionally, Darton College offers local classes.



Thomas University in Thomasville

There are also several other state and private institutions for higher learning as well as vocational and technical institutes within an hour's drive of Thomas County. Thomas County's proximity to other metropolitan areas such as Tallahassee (Florida State University, Florida A&M, and others) and Albany (Albany State University, Albany Technical College, Darton College) increase the nearby educational opportunities. Valdosta State may also expand into the Thomasville/ Thomas County area and has offered educational opportunities at locations around the community. For more information on higher education, city and county school systems, and adult literacy programs, see the Community Facilities and Services section of the Community Assessment.

Employment Options Objective

“A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce.”

While the county has a wealth of service and retail trade jobs, the city and county combined have a diverse economy that provides for range of job types. The City of Thomasville serves as an administrative, government, and medical hub for the region. These sectors have shown strong growth over the previous decade. The city also has a strong share of manufacturing employment, although trends show this economic sector is slightly declining. As manufacturing jobs are lost, the city and county have been working to expand the tourism and service sectors in order to maintain a diverse economy. As the population grows, the governments will need to consistently evaluate any changes in the workforce that may require further diversification or expansion of job opportunities in the area.

Heritage Preservation Objective

“The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community’s character.”

Thomas County and Thomasville have worked consistently over several decades to ensure that the rich history of the area is preserved. Thomas County is home to numerous historic sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places; many of these are part of or associated with historic plantations that are being preserved. In addition to sites, properties, and districts listed on the National Register, there is also a new local program for establishing and protecting scenic roads in the county.



A scenic road in Thomas County

Within the Thomasville City limits, there are eight historic districts encompassing hundreds of historic homes and properties. Thomasville also has established four locally designated historic districts and historic preservation guidelines that serve to protect the integrity of these areas. One local district encompasses much of downtown Thomasville, while three residential historic districts are home to numerous historic homes, some which have been converted to Bed & Breakfast Inns or other businesses. The level of interest and effort that has gone into protecting Thomas County and Thomasville’s cultural resources is unparalleled in the region and most of the State of Georgia.

As a tribute to its rich cultural history, Thomasville offers a Black Heritage Trail Tour for residents and visitors that are interested in visiting the sites that are significant to Thomasville’s African-American history. Pictures and maps that accompany the tour are available from the Thomasville Visitors Center.

Open Space Preservation Objective

“New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors.”

On the whole, Thomas County has not fully addressed the need for more open space that is accessible to its citizens. While the county is supportive of the preservation of plantations and other environmentally important lands, these do not serve the citizens in the same way as a public park or trail system. The county’s current zoning allowances make it difficult to promote conservation subdivisions, an effective tool in preserving open space and providing more greenspace to county residents. Thus, the provision of more parks and greenspace in the future may require changes to zoning allowances, subdivision regulations, or other supporting ordinances.

Though the conservation subdivision concept is not applicable in the City of Thomasville, there is an opportunity to acquire “wet” tracts within Thomasville and develop a system of multi-use

trails within them. Wet tracts include such areas as floodplains, wetlands, stream buffers, and drainage channels. A combination of active recreational features and passive natural lands is a viable application in preserving open space. The collective provision of more open space in the city and county will benefit the residents, and provide many amenities not previously available in the area.

Environmental Protection Objective

“Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved.”

The numerous environmentally sensitive areas in Thomas County are protected by a variety of local, state, and national regulations. Wetlands, floodplains, endangered river corridors, and endangered or threatened species habitats are protected by existing laws and ordinances. The county’s Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance controls construction and development related activities in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas from associated negative effects. The status of environmentally sensitive areas is further addressed in the Natural Resources section of Chapter 4 of the Supportive Data Analysis.

Due to its urban nature, the City of Thomasville has more limited natural resources and areas in need of environmental protection than the outlying areas of Thomas County. However, new development in the city should be given special consideration in terms of its proximity to and potential negative effects on natural areas. The city, much like the county, has regulations in place to protect not only the natural areas from the impacts of development, but people from potential natural hazards. The city’s environmental regulations include soil erosion and sediment control, floodplain and wetland protection ordinances. Additionally, the city has a Tree Ordinance, whereas Thomas County does not.

Large amounts of impervious surface areas affect, which is typical of urbanized areas, presents issues of stormwater management, raise summer temperatures (they have higher heat conductivities than pervious surfaces), and may contribute to water pollution. Roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and roofs are all impervious surfaces, and are constructed with impenetrable materials such as asphalt, concrete, brick, and stone. Asphalt tends to attract the most heat due to its dark color and continue to generate heat late into the day. Concrete also retains heat, but its lighter color tends to reflect the sun rather than absorb it, as asphalt does.

Recent landscaping techniques (e.g. tree islands for shade and to break up large asphalt areas) help to provide a cooler environment for human habitation. Efficient management of stormwater is affected by vast areas of impervious surface, as the materials prevent water from penetrating soils and is washed over the surfaces (sometimes resulting in flash floods) and into streams and rivers. The city and county should ensure that their regulations specifically address how to treat these surfaces.

Both the city and county have appropriate regulations at this time; the wealth of natural and environmentally sensitive areas in the area should be regularly evaluated to ensure their protection into the future.

Regional Cooperation Objective

“Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources.”

Though some of the successes are not highlighted in this community assessment, both Thomasville and Thomas County have participated extensively in regional programs and efforts. That is evident by a review of the Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center’s Regional Agenda. As a sort of “big brother” or more urban component of the rural southwest Georgia region, Thomas County and Thomasville play and will continue to play important roles in regional programs.

A special relationship exists with Thomasville and Thomas County, and efforts to increase cooperation have increased in recent years even though the intergovernmental issues are increasingly complex and can be contentious. The most notable example of that recent cooperation between Thomasville and Thomas County is the preliminary designation of an urban service area, within which Thomasville Utilities will eventually extend its service coverage. A joint land use management program for the urban service area – one that spells out coordinated zoning and installation of urban-type services in unincorporated areas – is needed.

The other cities also work with Thomas County on issues of joint concern. All of the cities, with the exception of Pavo, have contracted with the county for guiding inspection services.

Transportation Alternatives Objective

“Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged.”

It was noted during the land use inventory of the City of Thomasville that there are several undeveloped or underdeveloped street right-of-ways that might be used to improve connectivity within certain neighborhoods and throughout the city as a whole.

The location, size, and rural nature of Thomas County make it an unlikely candidate for a mass transit system, as such an urban transit system is not necessary or practical for serving county residents. However, the growth in rural transit service demonstrates that the county may want to look at expansion opportunities in the future. The Thomas County Transit System is currently privately operated, but may be considered an opportunity for public operation in the future if expansion is desired.

The existing conditions inventory in the Transportation section of this community assessment shows that sidewalk and bicycle connectivity are generally lacking throughout the city and county and that there should be greater access provided in areas of the county and city that are traveled often by residents on foot or bicycle. Most of the county’s sidewalks are found in downtown Thomasville, but there is no continual network of sidewalks throughout the city that serves major activity areas, including city facilities, schools, hospitals, major employment and shopping areas.

Bicycle routes or trails would greatly benefit the city and county, not only as a mode of transit, but as a recreational resource and perhaps also a tourism resource if tied to historic sites or scenic areas. A comprehensive bicycle suitability analysis conducted as part of the community assessment indicated a number of roadways in the county (62 percent) and city (81 percent)

that meet acceptable conditions for bicycling. Additional information on consistency with this Quality Community Objective is further addressed in the Transportation section of this community assessment.

Regional Solutions Objective

“Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer.”

The operation of two public school systems (city and county) is one area where consolidation could be considered – although the social and political implications of doing so are recognized. The community facilities element reveals that there seems to be a trend toward less cooperation in terms of delivering services, at least in some categories of facilities. The Emergency Services Agency provided joint services for three years, but fire protection is no longer a cooperative service. An area where there is room for more improvement is in the delivery of park facilities and recreation programs. Thomasville and Thomas County jointly contribute to the Recreation Board, which is administered by the city, and the Library Board, which is administered by the county.

Because the smaller municipalities in Thomas County have not joined in this comprehensive planning effort, there may be opportunities for cooperation that reach beyond the countywide coordinating responsibilities of Thomas County, which are not identified in this assessment. The regional staff in their review and coordination of small municipal comprehensive plans in Thomas County with this planning effort should be aware of additional opportunities to coordinate planning and facility/service delivery.

As is noted elsewhere in this assessment, there are important opportunities for joint land use management of highway corridors in and around Thomasville, as well as within the urban service area.

Housing Opportunities Objective

“Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community, to make it possible for all who work in the community to also live in the community.”

With a rash of new development in the past five years, the variety of housing types available in Thomas County has increased significantly. Throughout the County, housing options include many different styles, types, and sizes of single-family homes, multi-family homes, and manufactured homes. Those who work in Thomas County appear to have ample housing options at this time; the County should work to ensure that remains true throughout the planning period and long into the future.

Thomasville’s neighborhoods offer a wide variety of housing units in terms of size, character, and cost. The city also has a limited number of locations where developers may see an opportunity to construct a new traditional neighborhood or to focus on infill development, which will continue to provide new and unique housing within the city. As such, Thomasville’s existing housing stock is believed to meet this objective at this time.

With the combined housing resources of the city and county, the area has a wide variety of housing options that are expected to continue to expand as the population grows. Recent residential developments that target certain demographic groups have proven very popular and it is likely that growth will be rapid in such targeted areas and markets of the city and county.

Traditional Neighborhood Objective

“Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity.”

To a large degree, Thomasville’s excellent older neighborhoods typify the traditional neighborhood development pattern. Older in-town neighborhoods have well-integrated facilities such as schools and parks that are accessible on foot, and many streets provide on-street parking. These areas with distinct character also enhance the pedestrian environment with amenities such as shade trees along local roads. Some neighborhoods have witnessed conversion of homes to offices and service commercial uses; which accomplishes appropriate mixing of uses in walking distance.



Residential and Commercial Transitions and Representative “Traditional Neighborhood” Character

Outside of Thomasville, in unincorporated Thomas County, there are no traditional neighborhoods. While the county has diverse housing types, and some new development has occurred at greater densities, the pattern of development remains one with more suburban characteristics than those of compact traditional neighborhoods. Typically, new neighborhoods in the county do not have sidewalks, and are not connected to one another or to neighboring uses on a pedestrian scale. This type of suburban sprawl is not considered appropriate for Thomas County in the future. Instead, a focus on creating clusters of housing with some retail at rural crossroads is a viable pattern, especially when mixed with more planned development and higher densities inside of the urban Service Area. Planned traditional neighborhoods could serve to fill a niche in the housing market by providing a variety of housing types in a more accessible pattern. Thomas County will need to support the creation of neighborhoods that follow desired development patterns through changes to the current zoning, the creation of new ordinances, and other directed initiatives.

The existing traditional neighborhoods in Thomasville are the most steadfast examples in the area currently; in the future there is the potential that the county and city both will aim to create new traditional neighborhoods, which will further the efforts toward achieving this Quality Community Objective.

Infill Development Objective

“Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community.”

This objective has unprecedented opportunities for implementation in the City of Thomasville. There are existing vacant lots in older, in-town residential neighborhoods. There are also a significant number of dilapidated houses that present an opportunity for teardowns and rebuilding. Though there are not many large vacant parcels of land in the city, there may be limited opportunity to plan new traditional neighborhoods. The most significant potential for residential infill development in the city will be on a small scale.

In Thomas County, there is also the potential for infill development within the urban service area. The development pattern in Thomas County reflects a tendency for developers to seek the most readily available land, which is often farther out in the county, thus passing up vacant or underutilized property closer to the city edge or in the urban fringe. Such underutilized properties have created prime locations for a variety of infill development. While there are fewer opportunities for the small-scale infill that is more appropriate in Thomasville, there are major opportunities to intensify the development and increase the density within the Urban Service Area in order to take advantage of the services that are provided.



Representative Residential Infill Development Opportunity Site, Thomasville

Focusing future development opportunities on infill within the City of Thomasville and on land within the designated Urban Service Area will assist in accomplishing this Quality Community Objective.

Sense of Place Objective

“Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.”

Thomasville’s central core (central business district or downtown commercial area) clearly meets this sense of place objective. Although little housing, if any, is included within the central core, residential neighborhoods abut the central core and are well connected to it. The city’s historic residential neighborhoods promote a distinct sense of place and have earned Thomasville a reputation (and recognition) as a highly livable city that has done better than most to preserve its historic residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are exceptionally well served by parks and neighborhood schools. Within low- and moderate income neighborhoods on the south side of Thomasville, the small churches (many of which are also historic) also contribute to the unique historic neighborhood flavor of Thomasville.

Plantation-style homes on the outskirts of the city (south and southwest) also contribute to the city and county's sense of place and unique character. Expansive regional shopping areas, industrial parks, and other employment areas give Thomasville and Thomas County the appearance, reputation, and reality of a bustling economic center for Southwest Georgia. Cultural resources such as museums and historic sites serve as foundations that reinforce the area's character as a well-rounded community with a high quality of life.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In order to be effective, the comprehensive plan must identify and provide workable strategies for addressing the issues and opportunities facing the community. The technical addendum of this document is the first step taken towards identifying the issues and opportunities facing Thomas County and the City of Thomasville. The data and current conditions detailed in the addendum are summarized in this section into a series of succinct issues and opportunities statements. The list provided here is only a potential list of the issues that may warrant further study during the planning process. It is anticipated that the list will be modified and revised through the public participation sessions, which will occur during subsequent planning phases. A final, locally agreed upon list of issues and opportunities the community intends to address during the 2005 – 2025 planning period will be included in the Community Agenda produced at the conclusion of the planning process.

The following issues and opportunities list is organized according to the areas or “elements” of the comprehensive plan: population, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, community facilities, land use, transportation, and intergovernmental coordination. The major trends related to each element are listed followed by the issues and opportunities resulting from the trends.

The statements included here will be discussed at length with citizen advisory panels for the city and county formed to guide the development of the Community Agenda. These statements will also be provided for public feedback during the community participation phase of the planning process. Through these discussions and public response a series of strategies and implementation programs will be developed to address the final list of issues and opportunities included in the plan. These strategies and implementation programs will also inform the Short Term Work Program component of the plan.

Population

- Thomas County
 - Steady growth at a moderate rate is predicted in Thomas County for the next 20 years
 - If current trends continue, the population in Leon County, Florida is expected to increase approximately 31% between 2006 (276,200) and 2025 (360,700). The State of Florida is projected to increase to 20,710,000 residents by 2025 – an increase of 27% from 2005 (16,279,000). The population growth in Florida will likely have an influence on Thomas County’s economy.
 - There is potential for the population to shift to an older overall population, which will require specialized services and more specialized housing options
 - Attracting young professionals and families to Thomas County
- City of Thomasville
 - Some population growth is expected to occur during the next 20 years; the city must plan for additional staff and services to support all residents
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - Planning for the appropriate amount of population growth must be considered jointly due to the impacts on the urban service area

Economic Development

- Thomas County
 - By coordinating utility and infrastructure expansion plans with economic initiatives, the county will better support and direct development
 - Implement workforce training programs in order to ensure that residents have the skills to match future growth industries and the needs of existing businesses.
 - Increase the opportunities for industrial development in appropriate areas throughout the county
- City of Thomasville
 - Work with a land bank in order to acquire, assemble, and stabilize tax delinquent and vacant properties for redevelopment
 - The community's dependency on manufacturing results in high vulnerability to the nationwide decline in manufacturing employment
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - Support continued business recruitment and retention efforts of the Thomasville/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce
 - Expand on Chamber of Commerce's tracking of existing business activity and business needs
 - Increase communication and support between government agencies and private sector entities involved in economic development
 - Focus on promoting the historical and cultural resources of the area and other assets that have been identified as having the potential to increase the tourist trade within Thomasville and Thomas County via a coordinated marketing campaign that will capitalize on the area's unique identity
 - Ensure an adequate supply of workforce housing in order to allow residents to live near their place of employment
 - Help maintain fiscal stability by considering the costs of infrastructure, services, and incentives versus the benefits of proposed economic development projects
 - Ensure that public facility capacity is adequate to meet future demand in order to allow for continued economic growth
 - Utilize innovative economic development tools such as business incubators and tax abatements in order to foster growth
 - Create a database of vacant properties in order to market them for redevelopment purposes
 - Continue to utilize Team 2000 and the Payroll Development Authority as successful and active economic development programs

Housing

- Thomas County
 - There is no mix of housing types in new developments in Thomas County. New housing developments in Thomas County have tended to be wholly suburban detached single family residential or manufactured housing
 - Outside of the Cities in Thomas County, local ordinances and regulations do not provide for areas that allow mixes of residential and commercial uses
 - Additional regulation of manufactured housing is needed in order to maintain stable residential areas and encourage high quality housing
 - Maintain and expand code enforcement efforts to ensure the county housing stock does not deteriorate and that the residential areas are well maintained
 - Regulate the quality, type, and style of new residential construction in the county

- Provide affordable housing in the county, especially for the workforce that includes teachers, firemen, police and others who are integral to county services
- City of Thomasville
 - Strengthen code enforcement in order to encourage maintenance and preserve the viability of older neighborhoods
 - Conduct an inventory of vacant and redevelopable land in order to encourage infill development
 - Create and maintain a database of tax delinquent and dilapidated properties for the purpose of identifying redevelopment opportunities
 - Encourage the conversion of suitable existing structures to affordable or subsidized housing
 - Create incentive programs such as tax credits and density bonuses to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing
 - Encourage infill development and guide new development through the provision of utilities and infrastructure
 - Support continued efforts to preserve historic neighborhoods and structures in Thomasville; ensure compatible infill development that is held to high-quality architecture and design standards within historic neighborhoods
 - Investigate programs for the rehabilitation of existing housing stock, rather than demolition if possible
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - Encourage new developments to reserve a portion of new units for workforce/affordable housing
 - Encourage innovative housing development techniques such as Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND), conservation subdivisions, and mixed use
 - Create programs to promote maintenance, rehabilitation, and enhancement of existing housing
 - Encourage the provision of housing for special needs populations such as the elderly and disabled

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Thomas County
 - Lack of recreational land including parks, trails, and other greenspace
 - Natural resources should be considered when establishing appropriate areas for future development
 - There is no endorsed public education program about resource conservation and protection for the public, elected officials, developers
 - Water quality protection should be a considered by officials when making development related decisions
 - Encourage the maintenance and enrichment of the Thomas County Museum of History as a valuable tool to the county's rich antebellum roots
- City of Thomasville
 - Ensure that floodplain and wetland protection ordinances continue to provide an adequate level of protection for those resources
 - Continue to promote the cultural resources that are so well preserved in the city, including historic districts/neighborhoods and sites
 - The abundance of small churches in Thomasville's residential neighborhoods is unique asset; neighborhood churches should be considered building blocks and institutional anchors in future neighborhood planning efforts

- Continue to maintain and protect the Anderson Prison Camp historical site, important to American Civil War history
- Thomasville's first African American heritage museum is planned to open during the summer of 2006, and will be housed in the old Frederick Douglas School, a previously segregated school in the city
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - There is a need for groundwater protection plans
 - Continue to be vigilant in enforcing the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinances
 - There are opportunities for the city and county to work toward creating a combined parks network with a trail system that extends into the unincorporated county

Land Use

- Thomas County
 - The current leapfrog development pattern should be addressed; the county should decide the extent to which it will manage growth within the urban service area in order to achieve compact development patterns (3-4 units per acre)
 - Higher intensity development should be focused into nodes to preserve rural areas and lower the costs associated with infrastructure expansion and the provision of utilities
 - The county should consider how it would deal with the possibility that real estate trends will stimulate sales of plantations for master-planned developments (such as golf course communities)
 - Determine appropriate locations for manufactured housing developments within the urban service area as development pressures increase; because of their ability to be easily relocated, manufactured homes are susceptible to displacement
 - Create standards for land use compatibility, especially within the developing urban service area
 - The county does not require development to have more than one entry/exit nor does it require sidewalks with new development
 - Protect the viability of the agricultural and forestry industries in Thomas County
 - Protect the rural character of Thomas County
- City of Thomasville
 - Infill development should be carefully guided, especially in the historic neighborhoods in order to preserve the aesthetic integrity of the city
 - The city does not have a sidewalk ordinance for new development nor does it require connections to existing sidewalks
 - The city's development codes do not require that new development connect with existing development with more than one entry
 - Work towards establishing the "wet" areas as the natural environmental web of the city's open space network; if any development occurs in these areas, it should be sensitive to ecological and natural functions of the streams, wetlands, and drainage channels
 - The trend of single family homes being converted into apartments should be watched carefully in order to ensure the maintenance of neighborhood character

- Multi-family apartments are decentralized, located mostly in the north and west of the city; the city should determine if this is an acceptable trend for continuance throughout the planning period
- Assess opportunities to reuse industrial buildings or convert them to other uses; in cases where the buildings have low value or are obsolete, there may be opportunities for redevelopment
- Thomasville's medical district will likely continue to grow, which may create pressure for conversion of stable residential neighborhoods abutting the medical district to professional offices
- The remaining agricultural land in Thomasville may be used for future residential development in order to encourage growth in a compact form within the city
- Some residential neighborhoods abut light industrial uses; extra attention to buffering and separation would help efforts to prevent the possible expansion of industrial land uses into stable, single-family residential neighborhoods
- The existence of dilapidated housing is an issue discussed in the housing section; it also presents a land use opportunity for potential infill. A plan or program for city-wide redevelopment may be warranted and could be supported by CDBG funds
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - Commercial corridors should be viewed as opportunities for aesthetic improvement through landscaping, sign controls, and higher quality development standards; vacant commercial buildings should be prioritized for reuse
 - Develop a new sign ordinance that will regulate and standardize the desired aesthetics of new signage
 - Thought should be given to the whether the plantation/conservation areas currently included in the preliminary urban service area boundary should remain there or whether it is better to exclude these lands from the USA
 - Maintaining aesthetics along commercial corridors (City and County) is a growing concern as development expands and existing development ages
 - Land use policy opportunities could be pursued to enhance numerous goals:
 - Development of a land use plan, zoning and development regulations that integrate compatible transportation infrastructure
 - Create walkable commercial/activity nodes that are pedestrian accessible and connect to residential origins

Community Facilities

- Thomas County
 - There will be a need for Thomas County to plan for expansion of Sheriff, Police, and Jail facilities within the next five years and beyond
 - Either a SPLOST approval or an alternative source of funding will be needed for future expansion of County Court space
 - The high cost of private fire insurance in unincorporated areas may justify additional measures to lower those premiums (see also/cross-reference with water supply issues)
 - It is desirable that the county's development standards require the installation of fire hydrants that meet city specifications, assuming eventual connection to Thomasville Utilities; this will ensure conformance of private community systems to fire fighting standards

- Thomas County should consider the long term possibility of establishing a county water system for growth areas or whether Thomasville Utilities will be able to adequately serve as the water provider in the future
- Consider the adequacy of Thomas County's Local Emergency Operations Plan; it does not currently address specific threats such as train derailments and hazardous waste spills
- Establish quality healthcare facilities in convenient locations for county residents
- County administrative facilities will require significant expansion over time; a specific plan for this should be developed
- Thomas County must consider the long-term viability of allowing the proliferation of private community water systems in unincorporated areas in order to serve new development; the county may want to begin requiring interconnections of those systems with Thomasville Utilities or a future county system
- Thomas County's system of regional collection boxes for solid waste in unincorporated areas is outdated and presents potential problems with unauthorized waste disposal; more optimal solid waste practices should be considered, including arranging an intergovernmental agreement with Thomasville (see intergovernmental coordination section below)
- City of Thomasville
 - Thomasville's Police Department will need to expand as additional housing and employment growth occurs
 - The city should monitor its police calls and incidences of crime in neighborhoods and commercial areas in order to identify and target areas of high crime activity for improvement
 - The city has expressed a willingness to partner with educational institutions with regard to dormitories, classrooms, offices, and mixed-use development; the next step is to identify specific cases where partnering is applicable and feasible
 - Consideration should be given to the operations of the Thomasville Housing Authority; nationally there has been a shift toward the privatization of public housing units
 - As growth in personnel in the city occurs, the city will need to consider various alternatives for providing additional municipal administrative space
 - Thomasville does not appear to have a long-range master plan for parks facilities; plans for expanding and upgrading the Thomasville park system have been identified by the City Council and should be included in the city's short-term work program for recreational facilities
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - The city and county should evaluate and determine whether existing victim programs (child abuse, battered women, etc.) are adequately serving the community and plan for modifications or additional services as needed
 - Understaffing in the 911 Emergency Services Division is an issue that should be addressed; staff feel stressed and pressured by high expectations
 - Communication between the city and county fire departments may be complicated by the lack of compatible equipment
 - In both the county and city there are high percentages of school students eligible for free or reduced school lunch program; community leaders should review poverty statistics to determine if additional family assistance programs are warranted
 - Adult literacy programs have met with some success, but leaders should consider whether greater marketing or expansion of existing programs is warranted

- Thomas County and Thomasville should work together to expand or reconstruct the library headquarters building in a way that enhances the city's infrastructure and is compatible with Thomasville's downtown (see DCA Resource Team Report, Thomasville)
- Issues associated with extending various utilities should be monitored and coordinated with the comprehensive planning process
- It is extremely important that sanitary sewer extension be carefully considered in conjunction with an overall growth management strategy for the urban service area; priority areas for extension of sanitary sewer service should be designated and planned carefully in order to prevent conflicts and inefficiencies
- There are recycling centers in Thomasville, but no mandatory programs in the city or county; the comprehensive solid waste management plan(s) should be coordinated with the comprehensive plan, including consideration of whether recycling should become mandatory
- Both Thomas County and Thomasville should consider establishing facility or level of service standards for parks and recreation facilities
- Consideration must be given to the operating costs of the municipal golf course; action should be taken to make the course a revenue neutral operation without public subsidies

Intergovernmental Coordination

- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - The city and county should discuss the efficiency of the current operations of two (city and county) public school systems and the merits of the possibility for future coordination or consolidation
 - There are opportunities for better coordination between county and city and their school systems, especially the need for formalized agreements regarding recreation and other shared facilities
 - Thomasville's Solid Waste Department operates in unincorporated areas of the county as well as in a portion of Mitchell County; the investment in facilities and equipment may present additional opportunities for Intergovernmental arrangements for solid waste collection and disposal
 - The recreation program and current funding arrangement has become an issue; as the county grows, there will be increased pressure to provide more recreational opportunities for residents. Consideration should be given to the efficiency of the current program or whether Thomas County should establish its own parks and recreation department, possibly funded by local option sales tax
 - Minimum planning standards require that the Service Delivery Strategy Agreement be amended to make it consistent with proposed plans
 - Evaluate the adequacy of annexation and land use dispute resolution procedures currently in place between the municipalities and the county, and determine where modifications or additions are necessary
 - Enhance the communication between residents and county government, especially regarding growth and quality of life issues

Transportation

- Thomas County
 - Roadway and Bridge Conditions need improvement: forty percent of county road pavement is rated poor by the Georgia Department of Transportation and 117 of its 183 bridges are in need of repair or replacement
 - The county has many unpaved roads (281 of 922 roadway miles), and can only fund approximately 23 miles of repaving per year and requests donated right-of-way in return for paving; it takes 6 to 7 years to get a road paved from the time a petition for paving is submitted
 - Over the past three years, the county has experienced an average of 799 crashes per year
 - There is a need to identify roadway safety hotspots
 - The county has a very limited pedestrian infrastructure. Although there are some walkable areas, pedestrian facilities are not provided to link the residential areas to the activity areas within the city
 - The railway track owned by the Georgia & Florida Railnet (GFRR) is in very poor condition from Thomasville to Albany and may pose safety issues
 - The county does not currently have in place any access management policies or regulations
 - The county has a fairly extensive state route network for freight distribution. US 19/SR 300/SR 3/GA-FL Parkway provides north-south connectivity and connections to Interstates 10 (Florida) and 75 (Georgia)
 - Thomas County has a total of 119 miles of truck routes including 39 miles of access routes for oversized trucks and 80 miles of National Network Truck Routes
 - Thomas County has an extensive freight network of rail facilities; Norfolk Southern Company and CSX Transportation own and operate the two main freight rail lines
 - Thomas County could benefit from the recently announced Governor's initiative entitled "Paving the Way Home", which will offer \$234 million in state motor fuel tax funds over two years to local governments for paving roadways across the state
- City of Thomasville
 - Three percent of the City of Thomasville's roadway pavement is rated poor and three bridges are in need of repair or replacement
 - The city has unpaved roads (2.8 of 171 roadway miles). One of the major investment issues related to transportation facilities in the city is completing paving of all roads within the city by 2012
 - Over the past three years, the city has experienced an average of 818 crashes per year
 - In the downtown area, adherence to Americans with Disability Act (ADA) guidelines has been an issue, particularly on Broad Street
 - Many city schools are located within the community, so the areas around them are good candidates for implementing "Safe Routes to Schools" programs
 - The city is undertaking a bicycle route plan to connect city parks with an on-street bike path/route network
 - The robust sidewalk network in the downtown business district, maintained by the city enhances transportation opportunities in high density areas, creating mobility opportunities without negative impacts from motorized vehicles
 - City/state coordination on state routes traversing the city is a concern. For example, coordination between city economic development efforts and GDOT related to the

- state highways that traverse the downtown area: US 319/SR 35/Jackson Street and US 84/SR 38/SR 3/Smith Avenue
- Joint county and city issues and opportunities
 - There are High volume roadways:
US 319 Business, US 319 Bypass, North Pinetree Blvd, SR 122, US 84 Business
 - Roadways in the city and county at unacceptable existing levels of congestion:
US 319 Business, SR 122, Campbell Street, Hansell Street
 - Roadways in the city and county forecast to be at unacceptable levels of congestion in 2030: US 319 Business, SR 122, Cairo Road, Pinetree Blvd, US 319 Bypass; future development plans should include provisions for congestion mitigation
 - Sidewalk connectivity in general is lacking. A thorough sidewalk inventory is needed and should be overlain on a map identifying schools, public facilities, hospitals, major employment and shopping areas would identify sidewalk connectivity needs
 - Bicycle connectivity in general is lacking. Bicycle suitability analysis revealed that much of the road network (494 miles in the county and 119 miles in the city) is suitable for biking
 - Pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements could greatly enhance the access, connectivity, and safety for residents to use walking and bicycling to get to local shopping, schools, and parks
 - Shared parking facilities are permitted for certain uses in the county and city; this policy should continue to be promoted
 - Owned by the city, the Thomasville Regional Airport is undergoing improvement to build a new terminal facility and hangars. The new facilities plus the substantial runway facilities offer opportunities to attract quality economic development
 - County and city should continue to take action to identify innovative funding mechanisms to support infrastructure development
 - A major state bicycle route, State Bicycle Route 10 (the Southern Crossing), traverses the county east-west on SR 122 and US 84/SR 38. The route offers economic development and tourism opportunities for the city and county
 - Adopt an access management plan for roadways serving commercial/business areas to maintain vehicular throughput by controlling design and frequency of access locations
 - As an area with a high level of freight facilities and utilization, Thomas County and Thomasville could take advantage of a number of SAFETEA-LU programs that address freight mobility and safety
 - Establish a unified regional approach to advocate major transportation and transit programs such as
 - Implementation of state bicycle routes
 - Coordination of airport facility development
 - Regional rural transportation

Thomas County/City of Thomasville Joint Comprehensive Plan

Supportive Data Analysis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.A POPULATION – THOMAS COUNTY 1
 Race: Existing and Projected Conditions 5
 Household Income and Poverty 6

1.B POPULATION - THOMASVILLE 9
 Race: Existing and Projected Conditions 12
 Household Income and Poverty 13

2.A ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- THOMAS COUNTY 16
 Economic Base 16
 Labor Force 24
 Economic Resources 31
 Payroll Development Authority 31
 Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce..... 31
 Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center 32
 Thomasville/Thomas County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau 32
 Economic Trends 32

2.B ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - THOMASVILLE 37
 Economic Base 37
 Labor Force 40
 Economic Resources 46
 Payroll Development Authority 46
 Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce..... 46
 Thomasville Georgia Main Street Association 47
 Downtown Development Authority of Thomasville 48
 Thomasville Team 2000 48
 Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center 48
 Thomasville/Thomas County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau 48
 Economic Trends 49

3.A HOUSING – THOMAS COUNTY 54
 Introduction..... 54
 Existing Housing Supply..... 54
 Occupancy Characteristics and Housing Conditions 56
 Cost of Housing..... 59
 Local Regulations Effecting Housing Costs 60
 Housing and Building Codes. 60
 Zoning Ordinance 61
 Subdivision Regulations 61
 Development Impact Fees 61
 Cost Burdened Households 61
 Socioeconomic Characteristics of Households with Housing Problems..... 63
 Jobs-Housing Balance 68
 Special Housing Needs 71
 Public Housing and Housing Vouchers 71
 The Elderly..... 72
 Homeless Services 74
 Disability and Mental Illness 74

Domestic Violence	75
HIV/AIDS	76
Substance Abuse.....	77
Migrant Farm Workers	77
3.B HOUSING - THOMASVILLE	79
Introduction.....	79
Existing Housing Supply.....	79
Occupancy Characteristics and Housing Conditions	80
Cost of Housing.....	83
Local Regulations Effecting Housing Costs	84
Housing and Building Codes.	84
Zoning Ordinance	85
Subdivision Regulations	85
Development Impact Fees	85
Cost Burdened Households	85
Socioeconomic Characteristics of Households with Housing Problems.....	87
Jobs-Housing Balance	92
Special Housing Needs	95
Public Housing and Housing Vouchers	95
The Elderly.....	96
Homeless Services.....	98
Disability and Mental Illness	99
Domestic Violence	100
HIV/AIDS	100
Substance Abuse.....	101
4.A NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES – THOMAS COUNTY	103
Natural Resources.....	103
Geology	103
Groundwater Recharge Areas	107
Water Supply Watersheds	109
The Ochlocknee River	109
Wetlands.....	110
Floodplains	114
Soils	115
Steep Slopes	117
Prime Agricultural Farmland	119
Protected River Corridors	121
Public Water Supply Sources	123
Plant and Animal Habitats	123
Cultural Resources.....	127
Scenic Areas.....	127
Historic Sites.....	128
4.B NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES - THOMASVILLE	131
Natural Resources.....	131
Geology	131
Groundwater Recharge Areas	133
Water Supply Watersheds	135
Wetlands.....	135

Floodplains	137
Soils	138
Steep Slopes	140
Prime Agricultural Farmland	142
Protected River Corridors	144
Public Water Supply Sources	146
Plant and Animal Habitats	146
Cultural Resources.....	150
Scenic Areas.....	150
Historic Sites.....	150
Thomasville Museum of History.....	153
Thomasville Cultural Center	154
Black Heritage Museum.....	154
5.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES	156
Public Safety	156
Law Enforcement.....	156
Georgia State Patrol	159
Local Public Safety Programs.....	159
Crime	159
Areas of High Crime or other Concerns: Thomasville	160
Traffic Accidents	160
State Law Enforcement Statistics	160
Courts.....	160
Corrections and Victim Programs.....	162
Shelter for Battered Women	162
Child Abuse	163
Juvenile Justice	163
Fire and Rescue	164
ISO Rating	164
Thomasville Fire Department.....	164
Thomas County Fire Department	164
Emergency Medical Services (EMS).....	166
Emergency Services Division (911)	167
Emergency Management	168
Animal Control.....	170
Health, Education and Welfare.....	170
Health and Hospitals.....	170
Public Assistance.....	170
Education	171
School Enrollment in 2000.....	171
Local School Systems	171
Private Schools.....	174
Higher Education and Technical Training.....	174
Adult Literacy Programs	175
Opportunities for Collaboration between Schools and General Governments	175
Thomas County Public Library System	175
History.....	175
Governance and Reciprocal Agreements.....	176
Existing Facilities	176
Assessment of Library Facility Needs.....	176

- Media, Circulation and Programs 178
- Thomasville Cultural Center Library 178
- Municipal Cemeteries 178
- Coroner 179
- General Administrative Facilities 180
 - General Government 180
 - Tax Collection and Assessment 182
 - Building Inspections, Planning and Zoning 182
 - Public Works and Engineering 182
- Utility Type Services 183
 - Water 183
 - Urban Service Area 186
 - Stormwater Management and Water Quality Sampling 187
 - Sanitary Sewer 187
 - Solid Waste 189
- Thomasville Utilities 191
 - Electric 191
 - Natural Gas 191
 - Telecommunications 191
 - Expansion Plans 191
- Recreation 192
 - Parks and Recreation 192
 - City Parks Inventory 192
 - Senior and Community Centers 193
 - Other Parks in Thomas County 193
 - Outdoor Recreation Facility Standards 194
 - Golf Courses and Other Outdoor Recreation 194
 - Recreation Program Delivery 195
 - Recreation Demands of Unincorporated Residents 196
 - Cherokee Lake Master Plan and Improvements 196
 - Walking Trails from Downtown to Cherokee Park 196
- 6.0 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION 197
 - Federal Agencies 197
 - Key State Agencies 197
 - Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) 197
 - Georgia Department of Natural Resources 197
 - Georgia Department of Community Affairs 197
 - Regional Entities 198
 - Local Government Coordination 198
 - Coordination with Local School Systems 198
 - Service Delivery Strategies (SDS) Agreement 199
 - Shared Arrangements for Facility or Service Provision 199
 - Building Inspections 199
 - Planning and Zoning 200
 - Recreation Programming 200
 - Sanitation/Collection 200
 - Sanitation/Landfill 200
 - Substantive Issue Areas 200
 - Urban Service Area 200
 - Annexation 200

Annexation and Land Use Dispute Resolution	201
Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs)	201
7.0 TRANSPORTATION.....	202
Introduction.....	202
Demographic and Travel Characteristics	202
Roadways.....	205
Thomas County	205
Thomasville.....	206
Thomas County	212
Thomasville.....	214
Roadway and Bridge Conditions	226
Roadway Safety.....	230
Transit	238
Pedestrian Facilities	238
Bicycle	239
Airport.....	243
Freight	243
Current Studies	246

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1a.1 - Age Distribution 1990-2000, Thomas County.....	4
Figure 1a.2 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, Thomas County	7
Figure 1b.1 - Age Distribution 1990-2000, City of Thomasville.....	11
Figure 1b.2 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, City of Thomasville	14
Figure 2a.1 - Agricultural Earnings 1994-2003, Thomas County	24
Figure 2a.2 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State	31
Figure 2b.1 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State	46
Figure 4a.1 - Characteristics of the Floridan Aquifer in Southwest Georgia and North Florida	104
Figure 4a.2 - Confining Layers of the Floridan Aquifer	105
Figure 4a.3 - Blue Hole Sink, Arcadia Plantation	106
Figure 4a.4 - Sinkholes, Thomas County.....	108
Figure 4a.5 - Floodplains and Wetlands, Thomas County.....	113
Figure 4a.6 - Thomas County Soils	116
Figure 4a.7 - Steep Slopes, Thomas County.....	118
Figure 4a.8 - Prime Agricultural Soils, Thomas County	120
Figure 4a.8 - Prime Agricultural Soils, Thomas County	120
Figure 4a.9 - Protected River Corridors	122
Figure 4a.10 - Endangered Species Habitats, Thomas County.....	126
Figure 4a.11 - Twelve Mile Post Road in Southern Thomas County	127
Figure 4b.1 - Characteristics of the Floridan Aquifer in Southwest Georgia and North Florida	132
Figure 4b.2 - Sinkholes, Thomasville.....	134
Figure 4b.3 - Floodplains and Wetlands, Thomasville	136
Figure 4b.4 - Thomasville Soils.....	139
Figure 4b.5 - Steep Slopes, Thomasville	141
Figure 4b.6 - Prime Agricultural Soils, Thomasville	143

Figure 4b.7 - Protected River Corridors	145
Figure 4b.8 - Endangered Species Habitats, Thomasville	149
Figure 4.9 - Thomasville Historic Districts.....	152
Figure 5.1 - City of Thomasville Water Lines	185
Figure 5.2 - City of Thomasville Sewer Lines	188
Figure 7.1 – Roadway Functional Classification, Thomas County.....	208
Figure 7.2 – Roadway Jurisdiction, Thomas County	209
Figure 7.3 – Roadway Functional Classification, Thomasville	210
Figure 7.4 – Roadway Jurisdiction, Thomasville.....	211
Figure 7.5 –Roadway Operational Characteristics, Thomas County	213
Figure 7.6 – Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), Thomas County	215
Figure 7.7 –Roadway Operational Characteristics, Thomasville	216
Figure 7.8 – Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), Thomasville	217
Figure 7.9 – 2005 Level of Service (LOS), Thomas County	220
Figure 7.10 – 2015 Level of Service (LOS), Thomas County	221
Figure 7.11 – 2025 Level of Service (LOS), Thomas County	222
Figure 7.12 – 2005 Level of Service (LOS), Thomasville	223
Figure 7.13 – 2015 Level of Service (LOS), Thomasville	224
Figure 7.14 – 2025 Level of Service (LOS), Thomasville	225
Figure 7.15 – Roadway Conditions, Thomas County	228
Figure 7.16 – Roadway Conditions, Thomasville.....	229
Figure 7.17 - Crashes Involving Vehicles (2001 – 2004), Thomas County.....	232
Figure 7.18 - Crashes Involving Vehicles (2001 – 2004), Thomasville	233
Figure 7.19 – High Crash Roadway Segments (2001-2004), Thomasville	234
Figure 7.20 – High Crash Roadway Segments (2001-2004), Thomas County.....	235
Figure 7.21 – Crashes Involving Bicycles/Pedestrians (2001 – 2004), Thomas County	236
Figure 7.22 – Crashes Involving Bicycles/Pedestrians (2001 – 2004), Thomasville.....	237
Figure 7.23 – Pedestrian Facilities, Thomasville	240
Figure 7.24 – Bicycle Suitability, Thomas County.....	241
Figure 7.25 – Bicycle Suitability, Thomasville.....	242
Figure 7.26 – Freight Facilities, Thomas County	244
Figure 7.27 – Freight Facilities, Thomasville	245

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1a.1 – Population 1980-2000, County, City, and State 1

Table 1a.2 – Population Projection Scenarios 2005-2025, Thomas County 1

Table 1a.3 - Age Distribution, Thomas County 3

Table 1a.4 – Projected Age Distribution 2000-2025, Thomas County 5

Table 1a.5 – Average Household Size 1980-2025, Thomas County 5

Table 1a.6 – Racial Composition 1980-2000, Thomas County 5

Table 1a.7 – Projected Racial Composition 2000-2025, Thomas County 6

Table 1a.8 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, Thomas County 7

Table 1a.9 – Median Household Income 1989-1999, Thomas County 8

Table 1a.10 – Poverty by Age Group 1989-1999, Thomas County 8

Table 1b.1 – Population 1980-2000, City and State 9

Table 1b.2 – Population Projection Scenarios 2005-2025, City of Thomasville 9

Table 1b.3 Age Distribution, City of Thomasville 10

Table 1b.4 – Projected Age Distribution 2000-2025, City of Thomasville 11

Table 1b.5 –Average Household Size 1980-2025, City of Thomasville 12

Table 1b.6 – Racial Composition 1980-2000, City of Thomasville 12

Table 1b.7 – Projected Racial Composition 2000-2025, City of Thomasville 13

Table 1b.8 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, City of Thomasville..... 13

Table 1b.9 – Median Household Income 1989-1999, City of Thomasville..... 14

Table 1b.10 – Poverty by Age Group 1989-1999, City of Thomasville 15

Table 2a.1 – Employment by Sector 2004, Thomas County 17

Table 2a.1a – Employment by Sector 2002, Thomas County 17

Table 2a.1b – Employment by Sector 2002, City of Thomasville..... 18

Table 2a.2 – Employment by Sector 2004, Georgia and U.S. 18

Table 2a.3 - Location Quotients 2004 – Thomas County 19

Table 2a.4 – Establishments and Receipts by Sector 2002, Thomas County 20

Table 2a.5 - Manufacturing Firms 2005, Thomas County..... 21

Table 2a.5 - (Continued) Manufacturing Firms 2005, Thomas County 22

Table 2a.6 - Agricultural Statistics 1982-2002, Thomas County..... 23

Table 2a.7 - Agricultural Earnings (In Thousands) 1994-2003, Thomas County 23

Table 2a.8 – Resident Employment by Industry 1980-2000, Thomas County 25

Table 2a.9 – Resident Employment by Occupation 2000, Thomas County 26

Table 2a.10 – Personal Income by Type 1990-2000, Thomas County 27

Table 2a.11 – Commuting Patterns 1990-2000, Thomas County 27

Table 2a.12 – Labor Force Participation 1990-2000, Thomas County 28

Table 2a.13 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, Thomas County 29

Table 2a.14 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, State of Georgia 30

Table 2a.15 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State 30

Table 2a.16 – Employment Change by Sector 1994-2004, Thomas County 33

Table 2a.17 – Shift Share Analysis 1994-2004, Thomas County 35

Table 2a.18 - Projected Employment by Industry 2005-2025, Thomas County 36

Table 2b.1 – Employment by Sector 2002, City of Thomasville 37

Table 2b.2 – Employment by Sector 2002, Georgia 38

Table 2b.3 – Employment Change by Sector 1997-2002, City of Thomasville..... 39

Table 2b.4 – Establishments and Receipts by Sector 2002, City of Thomasville 39

Table 2b.5 – Employment by Industry 1980-2000, City of Thomasville 40

Table 2b.6 – Employment by Occupation 2000, City of Thomasville..... 41

Table 2b.7 – Personal Income by Type 1990-2000, City of Thomasville.....	42
Table 2b.8 – Commuting Patterns 1990-2000, City of Thomasville.....	42
Table 2b.9 – Labor Force Participation 1990-2000, City of Thomasville	43
Table 2b.10 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, Thomas County.....	44
Table 2b.11 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, State of Georgia	45
Table 2b.12 – Unemployment Rate1995-2004, County and State	45
Table 2b.13 – Employment Change by Sector 1994-2004, Thomas County.....	49
Table 2b.14 - Shift Share Analysis 1994-2004, Thomas County.....	51
Table 2b.15 - Projected Employment by Industry 2005-2025, Thomas County	52
Table 3a.1 - Housing Mix 1990 – 2000, Thomas County.....	54
Table 3a.2 - Housing Mix 1990 – 2000, Unincorporated Thomas County	54
Table 3a.3 – Building Permits Issued in Unincorporated County 2001 - 2004.....	55
Table 3a.4 – Housing Projections for Thomas County 2000 – 2025	55
Table 3a.5 – Housing Projections for Unincorporated Thomas County 2000 – 2025	56
Table 3a.6 – Tenure of Housing 1990-2000, Thomas County.....	57
Table 3a.7 – Occupied and Vacant Housing Units 1990-2000, Thomas County and Georgia...57	57
Table 3a.8 – Vacancy Rates by Occupancy Type 2000, County, City, and State Comparison..58	58
Table 3a.9 – Age of Housing 1990-2000, Unincorporated Thomas County	58
Table 3a.10 – Condition of Housing 1990-2000, Unincorporated Thomas County	58
Table 3a.11 – Gross Rent, Specified Renter-Occupied Housing Units 2000; City, County, and State Comparison.....	59
Table 3a.12 – Change in Median Rent 1990-2000, Thomas County and Surrounding Areas....59	59
Table 3a.13 – Housing Value 2000, Thomas County and Georgia	60
Table 3a.14 – Change in Median Value 1990-2000, Thomas County and Surrounding Areas..60	60
Table 3a.15 – Cost Burdened Households by Tenure 2000, Thomas County and Georgia.....62	62
Table 3a.16 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, Unincorporated Thomas County.....	62
Table 3a.17 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, State of Georgia	62
Table 3a.18 – Household Income: Households with at least one Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000	64
Table 3a.19 – Social Security and Public Assistance Income: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000.....	64
Table 3a.20 – Employment Status: Persons with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000	65
Table 3a.21 – Occupation: Persons in Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000	65
Table 3a.22 – Household Type: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000	66
Table 3a.23 – Age of Householder: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000	66
Table 3a.24 – Household Size: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000	67
Table 3a.25 – Race: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000 67	67
Table 3a.26 – Unit Type: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000.....	68
Table 3a.27 – Jobs Housing Balance 2000, Thomas County.....	70
Table 3a.28 Public Housing Units, Thomasville Housing Authority	71
Table 3a.29 – Disabled Population 2000, City of Thomasville.....	75
Table 3b.1 – Housing Units by Type 1990 – 2000, City of Thomasville.....	79
Table 3b.2 – Residential Development 2000 – 2005, City of Thomasville.....	79

Table 3b.3 – Housing Projections 2000 – 2025, City of Thomasville.....	80
Source: Robert and Company	80
Table 3b.4 – Tenure of Housing 1990-2000, City of Thomasville.....	81
Table 3b.5 – Occupied and Vacant Housing Units 1990-2000, City, County, and State	81
Table 3b.6 – Vacancy Rates by Occupancy Type 2000, City, County and State Comparison...81	
Table 3b.7 – Age of Housing 1990-2000, City of Thomasville.....	82
Table 3b.8 – Condition of Housing 1990-2000, City of Thomasville	82
Table 3b.9 – Gross Rent, Specified Renter-Occupied Housing Units 2000; City, County, and State Comparison	83
Table 3b.10 – Change in Median Rent 1990-2000, City of Thomasville and Surrounding Areas	83
Table 3b.11 – Median Value 2000, Thomasville and Thomas County	84
Table 3b.12 – Change in Median Value 1990-2000, City of Thomasville and Surrounding Areas	84
Table 3b.13 – Cost Burdened Households by Tenure 2000, City of Thomasville, Thomas County, and Georgia.....	86
Table 3b.14 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, City of Thomasville	86
Table 3b.15 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, Thomas County	87
Table 3b.16 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, State of Georgia	87
Table 3b.17 – Household Income: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	88
Table 3b.18 – Social Security and Public Assistance Income: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	88
Table 3b.19 – Employment Status: Persons with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	89
Table 3b.20 – Occupation: Persons in Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville 2000.....	89
Table 3b.21 – Household Type: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	90
Table 3b.22 – Age of Householder: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	90
Table 3b.23 – Household Size: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	91
Table 3b.24 – Race: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	91
Table 3b.25 – Unit Type: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000.....	92
Table 3b.26 – Jobs Housing Balance 2000, City of Thomasville	94
Table 3b.27 Public Housing Units, Thomasville Housing Authority	95
Table 3b.28 – Disabled Population 2000, City of Thomasville.....	99
Table 4a.1 Wetlands in Thomas County	111
Table 4a.1. (cont.) Wetlands in Thomas County.....	112
Table 4a.2 Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomas County, 2004	124
Table 4a.2. (cont.) Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomas County, 2004	125
Table 4a.3. National Register of Historic Places Sites, Thomas County, 2005	128
Table 4a.4. Historic Buildings and Site, Thomas County, 2005.....	130
Table 4b.1 - Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomasville, 2004	147
Table 4b.1 (cont.) Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomasville, 2004	148
Table 4b.2 - National Register of Historic Places, Historic Districts, Thomasville.....	150

Table 4b.3. Historic Buildings and Sites, Thomasville, 2005	153
Table 5.1 – Projected Police Personnel Needs, 2005-2025, City of Thomasville	157
Table 5.2 – Summary of Index Crimes, 2000 and 2002, Thomas County and Non-Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Georgia Counties.....	159
Table 5.3 – Crimes Reported by Type, Thomas County, 2000.....	160
Table 5.4 – Traffic Accidents, Injuries and Fatalities, Thomas County, 1998 and 2002	160
Table 5.5 – Functional Population Projections, 2005-2025, Thomas County	161
Table 5.6 – Future Space Needs for the Courts, 2005-2025, Thomas County.....	161
Table 5.7 – State Prison Inmates from Thomas County by Gender and Race, 1991 and 2002	162
Table 5.8 – Active Offenders by Race and Gender, Thomas County Prison and Jail, 2005	162
Table 5.9 – Substantiated Child Abuse Cases by Type, Calendar Year 2001, Thomas County	163
Table 5.10 – Juvenile Justice Intakes, FY 2003-FY 2005, Thomas County	163
Table 5.11 – Total Reported Calls by Call Source to the Emergency Services Division (911), 2002-2004.....	168
Table 5.12 – Hazardous Sites in Thomas County	169
Table 5.13 – Health Care Facilities in Thomas County, 2003.....	170
Table 5.14 – Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids Recipients, 2002, Thomas County	170
Table 5.15 – School Enrollment by Type of School, Population 3 Years and Over, City of Thomasville and Thomas County	171
Table 5.16 – Inventory of Thomas County Public Schools	172
Table 5.17 – Inventory of Thomasville City Schools	172
Table 5.18 – Student Attendance and Cost per Child, Thomas County and Thomasville School Systems, School Years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002	172
Table 5.19 – Selected Student Data, 2000-2001, Thomas County and Thomasville School Systems	173
Table 5.20 – School System Revenues by Source, 2000-2001, Thomas County and Thomasville.....	173
Table 5.21 – School System Expenditures by Type, 2000-2001, Thomas County and Thomasville.....	173
Table 5.22 – Population, Age, and Poverty Estimates by Thomas County and Thomasville School Districts, 2003	174
Table 5.23 – Private Schools in the Thomasville Area	174
Table 5.24 – Enrollment in Area Universities and Technical Colleges, 2001 and 2003	174
Table 5.25 – Enrollment in Adult Literacy Programs, Providers in Thomas County, FY 1996-FY 2003.....	175
Table 5.26 – Thomas County Branch Libraries Circulation Totals, 2004-2005.....	178
Table 5.27 – Future Space Needs for General Administration, 2005-2025, Thomas County...	181
Table 5.28 – Future Space Needs for Tax Offices, 2005-2025, Thomas County (Sq. Ft.)	182
Table 5.29 – Water Use in Thomas County, 2000 by Withdrawal Type (Millions of Gallons Per Day)	183
Table 5.30 – Major Public Water Supply Withdrawals in Thomas County, 2000 (MGD)	184
Table 5.31 – Private Community Water Systems in Thomas County	186
Table 5.32 - Framework for Solid Waste Planning	189
Table 5.33 – State Parks and Historic Sites Near Thomasville	192
Table 5.34 – City of Thomasville Park Facilities	193
Table 5.35 – National Standards for Outdoor Recreation Facilities	194

Table 6.1 – Countywide Service Responsibilities, Thomas County	199
Table 6.2 – Special Shared Arrangements Among Two or More Local Governments, Thomas County	200
Table 7.1 – Demographic Characteristics Comparison, Race and Ethnicity, 2000.....	203
Table 7.2 – Demographic Characteristics Comparison, Income and Age, 2000	203
Table 7.3 – Manner of Commute Comparison 2000	203
Table 7.4 – Location of Work 2000	204
Table 7.5 – Where Thomas County Residents Work.....	204
Table 7.6 – Where Persons Working in Thomas County Live	204
Table 7.7 – Travel Time to Work 2000.....	205
Table 7.8 – PACES Rating	226
Table 7.9 –Bicyclist and Pedestrian Injuries and Fatalities, Rates per 100,000 People, 2001-2004.....	238
Table 7.10 – Existing Transit Service in the Thomas County	238
Table 7.11 – FY 2005-2007 State Transportation Improvement Program Projects, Thomas County	246

1.A THOMAS COUNTY POPULATION

This section presents detailed information on the population demographics for Thomas County according primarily to the 2000 Census, but also in comparison to past trends and future projections. The 2000 Census reports the resident population of Thomas County as 42,737, an increase of 3,751 residents since 1990. Historically, the population of Thomas County has grown at a steady rate. According to the County's 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan, the County population grew 13% between 1970 and 1990. Similarly, an examination of the County's growth between 1980 and 2000 reveals a growth rate of 11.2%.

Table 1a.1 – Population 1980-2000, County, City, and State

Jurisdiction	1980	% Change 80-90	1990	% Change 90-00	2000	% Change 80-00
Thomas County	38,098	2.3%	38,986	9.6%	42,737	12.2%
Thomasville	18,463	-5.4%	17,457	4.0%	18,162	-1.6%
Brooks County	15,255	0.9%	15,398	6.8%	16,450	7.8%
Colquitt County	35,376	3.6%	36,645	14.8%	42,053	18.9%
Grady County	19,845	2.2%	20,279	16.7%	23,659	19.2%
Mitchell County	21,114	-4.0%	20,275	18.0%	23,932	13.3%
State of Georgia	5,457,566	18.7%	6,478,216	26.4%	8,186,453	50.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

The 1990s saw an increasing population in Thomas and the surrounding counties. Despite this steady population increase, Thomas County and the rest of Southwest Georgia lagged behind the growth rate of the State of Georgia as a whole (Table 1a.1). The lower population growth rate in Thomas County and the Southwest Georgia region may be attributed to the fact that this is a predominantly rural, agriculturally focused region. Unlike many other regions in Georgia, there has not been a growing metropolitan area to spark growth in the surrounding counties.

Although Thomas County has not been growing rapidly, it has continued to grow. Changes in factors outside of the County may also impact the future growth in Thomas County. One factor for important consideration is the population growth and development pressure associated with the population growth in north Florida. Recently, growth around the Tallahassee areas has been somewhat restricted by a new Urban Service Area. People looking to live in the region may begin to consider Thomas County as a viable alternative to living in Florida. This issue is anticipated to impact the future population of Thomas County. In order to assess the potential impact of different future growth rates in Thomas County, six scenarios are presented in Table 1a.2.

Table 1a.2 – Population Projection Scenarios 2005-2025, Thomas County

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Slow Growth (DCA)	42,737	43,897	45,057	46,216	47,376	48,536
Slow Growth 2	42,737	44,234	45,461	46,688	47,915	49,142
Moderate Growth 1	42,737	45,139	47,533	49,873	52,068	54,202
Moderate Growth 2	42,737	45,712	48,688	51,663	54,638	57,613
Moderate High Growth	42,737	45,813	49,020	52,451	56,123	60,051
High Growth	42,737	47,185	52,092	57,510	63,491	70,094

Source: Robert and Company

The slow growth rate is based on the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' projections and represents a total population increase of 4,639 people (10.5%) between 2005 and 2025. The second slow growth scenario is based on a constant growth rate using the 1980-2004 period as a basis for projecting the average growth per year. This linear average growth rate concludes that Thomas County will grow by 4,908 people (11%). The first moderate growth scenario (Moderate Growth 1) assumes that Thomas County will maintain a constant share of the population in the North Florida/Southwest Georgia region, and presents an increase of 9,063 persons, or 20% growth, during the 20-year planning period. The second moderate growth scenario (Moderate Growth 2) is based on the growth of residential building permits from 2000 through 2004, and projects a 2025 population of 57,613, a 26% increase. This projection includes an assumption that the total stock of housing includes only about 75% of the total number of permits.

The Moderate High Growth projection is based on an increase in driver's licenses between 1996 and 2003. The projection includes an assumption that the number of licenses represents approximately 78.76% of the total population in 2003 (An increase of 6% between 2000 and 2003) and that the constant proportion of licenses to population does not change from 2003 to 2025. This projection presents a projection of 60,051 persons in 2025, a gain of 14,238 persons or 32%. The high projection assumes the same process but uses a baseline figure of driver's licenses in 2000 rather than 1996 with a corresponding increase in annual population growth. The high growth projection calculates an increase of 22,909 persons, or 48.6% growth between 2005 and 2025.

The six projections present a spread of 21,558 between the low growth and high growth projections for 2025, and a growth rate varying from 10.5% to 48.6%. However, the two slow growth scenarios assume that Thomas County will not change much or be significantly affected by changes in the marketplace in Georgia or northern Florida. Recent anecdotal evidence such as the constant demand for building permits and the increased number of driver's licenses being issued in the County indicate that something is happening and that the reliability of models built on long term trends may not be acceptable. The constant share model and the consistent growth in building permits provide some rationale for acceptance of the two moderate growth projections. The moderate high projections add the effect of the recent spike in driver's licenses issued and tempers the very recent growth with evidence that the number does not increase every year, but has a correlation to economic growth and changes in local and alternate location policies that can affect location decisions.

The high growth projection appears consistent with the most recent growth observed by the community over the past three years, but does not have enough history to be positively identified as a long-term trend. Therefore, we recommend identifying the high growth projection as the upper limit for growth planning over the 20-year period rather than as a projected estimate. Instead, we recommend the moderate high projection of 60,051 as the basis for developing the comprehensive plan for 2025.

When considering how the County will grow during the twenty-year planning period, it is also important to consider how the population might be distributed by age groups. By looking at how age groups have changed in the recent past and projections for how they will be distributed in the future will impact the assessment of how the County will serve the population in the future. Table 1a.3 and Figure 1a.1 below present the age distribution in Thomas County in both 1990 and 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, population shifts within age groups appear to have been very even; there are no increases greater than 1.6 percent and no decreases greater than 1.5% in any one age group. Overall, the population is older in 2000 than it was in 1990; the youngest

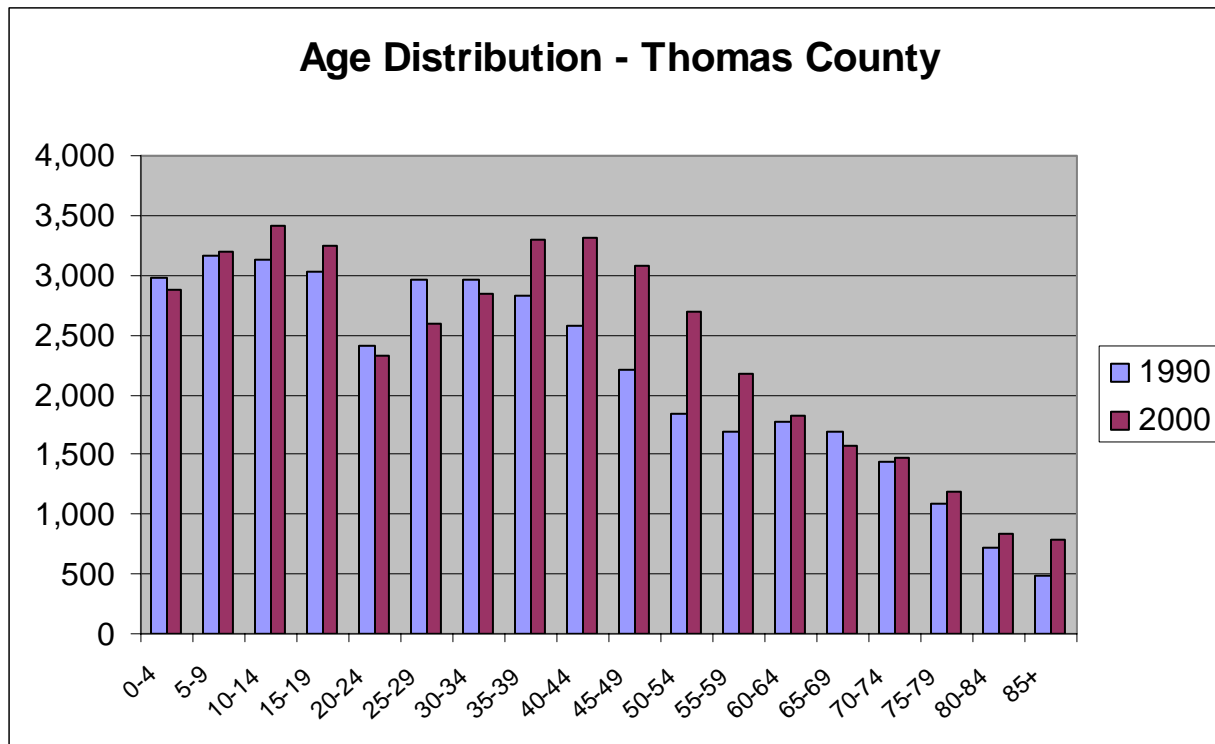
age groups have experienced the most notable declines, and two of the middle age groups (40-44), (45-49), and (50-54) have experienced the most notable gains.

Table 1a.3 – Age Distribution, Thomas County

Age Group	1990	%	2000	%
0-4	2,971	7.6%	2,880	6.7%
5-9	3,168	8.1%	3,195	7.5%
10-14	3,135	8.0%	3,408	8.0%
15-19	3,031	7.8%	3,246	7.6%
20-24	2,405	6.2%	2,327	5.4%
25-29	2,957	7.6%	2,588	6.1%
30-34	2,962	7.6%	2,840	6.6%
35-39	2,824	7.2%	3,294	7.7%
40-44	2,582	6.6%	3,310	7.7%
45-49	2,213	5.7%	3,086	7.2%
50-54	1,833	4.7%	2,691	6.3%
55-59	1,694	4.3%	2,179	5.1%
60-64	1,774	4.6%	1,823	4.3%
65-69	1,694	4.3%	1,572	3.7%
70-74	1,442	3.7%	1,478	3.5%
75-79	1,095	2.8%	1,182	2.8%
80-84	717	1.8%	844	2.0%
85+	489	1.3%	794	1.9%
TOTAL	38,986	100.0%	42,737	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1a.1 - Age Distribution 1990-2000, Thomas County



Source: US Census Bureau

Projections for future age distribution are shown below in Table 1a.4. These numbers are based on the previously established trends and do not consider outside factors surrounding how the population will grow and change. The Georgia DCA projects the changes in age distribution based on historic trends and straight-line projections. The projections do not take into account outside factors or transitions between cohorts. Therefore, these age distribution projections should not be used as a basis for community facility planning in the county. An increase in the percentage of elderly persons, as shown in the table, is likely to occur, as it has been indicated that the County plans to continue actively courting retirees to move into Thomas County instead of Florida or to move from Florida. Assuming that strategy is successful, there will be an influx of people 65 and over, a development that is not predictable based on past trends. Additionally, more families with children may move up from Florida to take advantage of less expensive lands and potentially lower cost of living. In that case, the County may gain population in the (0-4) category, which is currently predicted to lose population between 2005 and 2025.

Table 1a.4 – Projected Age Distribution 2000-2025, Thomas County

Category	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
0 – 4 Years Old	6.7%	6.5%	6.3%	6.1%	5.9%	5.7%
5 – 13 Years Old	15.5%	15.5%	15.5%	15.6%	15.6%	15.6%
14 – 17 Years Old	5.0%	4.1%	3.4%	2.7%	2.0%	1.3%
18 – 20 Years Old	3.7%	3.3%	3.0%	2.7%	2.4%	2.2%
21 – 24 Years Old	4.4%	4.0%	3.6%	3.2%	2.8%	2.4%
25 – 34 Years Old	12.7%	12.4%	12.0%	11.7%	11.4%	11.2%
35 – 44 Years Old	15.5%	16.5%	17.4%	18.4%	19.2%	20.1%
45 – 54 Years Old	13.5%	14.3%	15.1%	15.8%	16.4%	17.1%
55 – 64 Years Old	9.4%	9.3%	9.3%	9.2%	9.2%	9.2%
65 and over	13.7%	14.1%	14.4%	14.7%	15.0%	15.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The distribution of the population by age group can be correlated with the household size in the County. The household size has been decreasing since 1980 and is projected to continue to do so through 2025 as shown in Table 1a.5 below. The Georgia DCA uses historic trends and straight-line projections to predict the future average household size. A decrease in the household size is likely to occur based on the expectation for an increasing senior citizen population. However, if the County begins to attract younger families from Florida as well, the household size may not change at the same rate and may differ from the 2.09 persons currently predicted in 2025.

Table 1a.5 – Average Household Size 1980-2025, Thomas County

Category	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Thomas County	2.92	2.68	2.55	2.46	2.37	2.27	2.18	2.09

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Race: Existing and Projected Conditions

In addition to the changing age of the population, racial composition is an important consideration in the provision of services and in fostering community relations. The racial composition of Thomas County from 1980 through 2000 is shown below in Table 1a.6

Table 1a.6 – Racial Composition 1980-2000, Thomas County

Category	1980	%	1990	%	2000	%
White alone	23,330	61.2%	23,971	61.5%	25,207	59.0%
Black or African American alone	14,626	38.4%	14,759	37.9%	16,607	38.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	50	0.1%	100	0.3%	126	0.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	43	0.1%	65	0.2%	200	0.5%
other race	49	0.1%	91	0.2%	597	1.4%
TOTAL	38,098	100.0%	38,986	100.0%	42,737	100.0%
Hispanic Origin	378	1.0%	289	0.7%	734	1.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

Historically, the white population in Thomas County has maintained the majority status. While that trend continued in 2000, with an increase in the number of white residents, the share of the population held by the white majority has gradually decreased from 61.2% in 1980 to 59% in

2000. The Black or African American population has gained ground in both number and in share of the County population from 38.4% in 1980 to 38.9% in 2000. The gradual nature of these increases and decreases indicate overall stability of the racial makeup of Thomas County.

Table 1a.7 – Projected Racial Composition 2000-2025, Thomas County

Category	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
White alone	59.0%	58.5%	58.0%	57.6%	57.2%	56.8%
Black or African American alone	38.9%	39.0%	39.1%	39.1%	39.2%	39.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%
other race	1.4%	1.7%	1.9%	2.2%	2.4%	2.6%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Though the racial makeup of the population is not anticipated to undergo a major shift in the next twenty years, it should be noted that there is the potential for the projections to underestimate the growth potential within some races. The fastest growing segments of the population between 1990 and 2000 included Asian or Pacific Islanders and other races, which each more than doubled. Other races, as shown in Table 1a.7 above, are expected to continue with the fastest growth rate through 2025 and will gain a slightly larger share of the population. The population of Thomas County is expected to remain stable overall, with a white majority and slowly growing black population. Additionally, Hispanic ethnicities in Thomas County may impact the population distribution if the Hispanic population continues to grow at a rate of more than 100% every five years.

Household Income and Poverty

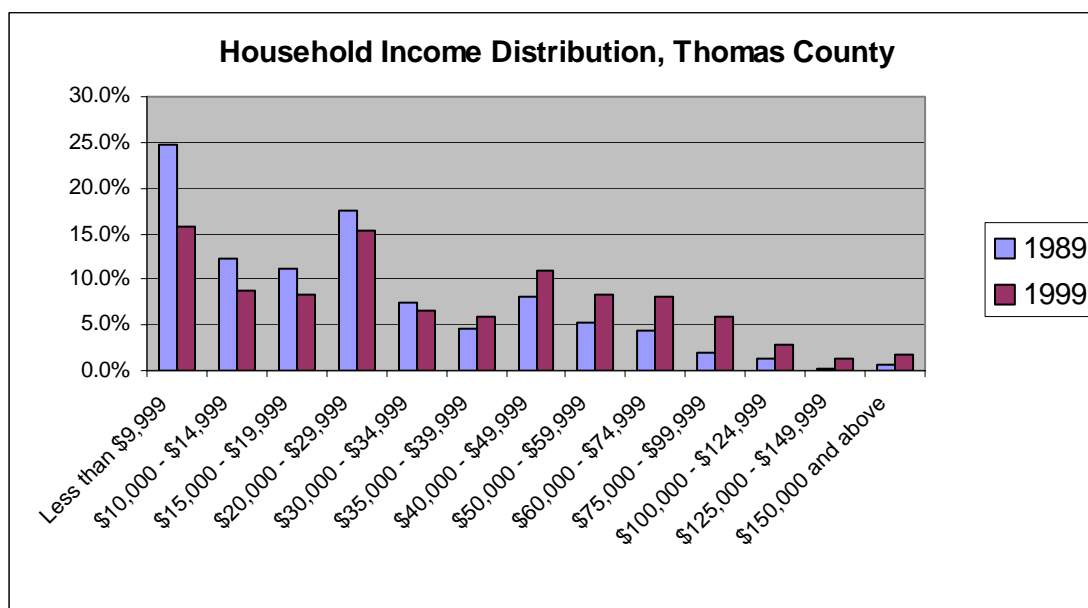
Household income and poverty status are crucial factors affecting the quality of life for Thomas County residents. As presented in Table 1a.8, there is a wide distribution of income in Thomas County. There are three income ranges that stand out as accounting for a large percentage of the population. These include income less than \$9,999, income between \$20,000-\$29,999, and income from \$40,000 to \$49,999. These three ranges account for 42% of income-earning households in Thomas County. The remainder of households is distributed fairly evenly with the exception of those earning \$100,000 and above, which is 6.1% of the total population. Figure 1a.2 depicts the distribution and highlights the peaks and lower percentage groups as described herein.

Table 1a.8 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, Thomas County

Category	1989	%	1999	%
Total	14,313	100.0%	16,305	100.0%
Income less than \$9,999	3,554	24.8%	2,563	15.7%
Income \$10,000 - \$14,999	1,749	12.2%	1,429	8.8%
Income \$15,000 - \$19,999	1,607	11.2%	1,347	8.3%
Income \$20,000 - \$29,999	2,514	17.6%	2,512	15.4%
Income \$30,000 - \$34,999	1,076	7.5%	1,063	6.5%
Income \$35,000 - \$39,999	648	4.5%	977	6.0%
Income \$40,000 - \$49,999	1,175	8.2%	1,773	10.9%
Income \$50,000 - \$59,999	738	5.2%	1,356	8.3%
Income \$60,000 - \$74,999	638	4.5%	1,336	8.2%
Income \$75,000 - \$99,999	290	2.0%	970	5.9%
Income \$100,000 - \$124,999	180	1.3%	452	2.8%
Income \$125,000 - \$149,999	41	0.3%	224	1.4%
Income \$150,000 and above	103	0.7%	303	1.9%

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1a.2 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, Thomas County



Source: US Census Bureau

The median household income is a parameter for making comparisons with the surrounding jurisdictions. As presented in Table 1a.9, the median household income for Thomas County was \$31,115 in 1999, representing a 9.7% increase compared to \$28,081 in 1989. According to the 2000 census, the four counties sharing a border with Thomas County all had median incomes \$2,500 to \$4,500 lower than that of Thomas County in 1999. Though Thomas County had the highest median income among its surrounding counties, it was over \$11,000 less than the median income for the State of Georgia.

Table 1a.9 – Median Household Income 1989-1999, Thomas County

Geography	Median Household Income in 1989	Median Household Income in 1989 (Inflation Adjusted to 1999 \$)	Median Household Income in 1999	% Change In Inflation Adjusted Median Household Income 1989-1999
Thomas County	\$20,901	\$28,081	\$31,115	9.7%
Brooks County	\$19,474	\$26,164	\$26,911	2.8%
Colquitt County	\$20,331	\$27,316	\$28,539	4.3%
Grady County	\$19,507	\$26,209	\$28,656	8.5%
Mitchell County	\$18,926	\$25,428	\$26,581	4.3%
State of Georgia	\$29,021	\$38,991	\$42,433	8.1%

Source: US Census Bureau

With the median household income increase between 1989 and 1999, the percentage of County residents living below the poverty level decreased from 21.6% to 17.4% (see Table 1a.10). While that represents a significant decrease, the issue should remain one of concern to county officials and residents. Factors such as an increased cost of living, or lack of affordable housing may greatly impact the population living at or below the poverty level. If not addressed, the population living below the poverty line could increase, which would challenge the County's ability to provide services for them.

Table 1a.10 – Poverty by Age Group 1989-1999, Thomas County

	1989		1999	
	38,336	% of Population	41,578	% of Population
Total (population with poverty status determined)				
Income in 1999 below poverty level:	8,682	22.6%	7,231	17.4%
Under 5 years	1,052	2.7%	737	1.8%
5 to 17 years	2,565	6.7%	1,775	4.3%
18 to 64 years	3,717	9.7%	3,617	8.7%
65 years and older	1,348	3.5%	1,102	2.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

1.B POPULATION - THOMASVILLE

The City of Thomasville has a history that makes it unique from much of the rest of South Georgia. The population demographics of the City of Thomasville are examined herein, according primarily to the 2000 Census, but also in comparison to past trends and future projections. The 2000 Census reports the resident population of Thomasville as 18,162, an increase of 705 residents since 1990. The growth in the 1990s was a departure from the 5.4% population decline that occurred between 1980 and 1990, when the city lost 1,006 residents. This growth may have been spurred by city initiated programs and activities related to economic development and community improvement.

Table 1b.1 – Population 1980-2000, City and State

Jurisdiction	1980	% Change 80-90	1990	% Change 90-00	2000	% Change 80-00
Thomasville	18,463	-5.4%	17,457	4.0%	18,162	-1.6%
State of Georgia	5,457,566	18.7%	6,478,216	26.4%	8,186,453	50.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Despite the recent population increase, Thomasville and the rest of Southwest Georgia continue to lag behind the growth rate of the State of Georgia as a whole (shown in Table 1b.1). Though Thomasville has not been growing rapidly, it has continued to grow. In order to assess the impact of differing future growth rates in Thomasville, three scenarios are presented below in Table 1b.2.

Table 1b.2 – Population Projection Scenarios 2005-2025, City of Thomasville

Projected Population 2000-2025, City of Thomasville						
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Decline (DCA)	18,162	18,087	18,012	17,936	17,861	17,786
High Growth 1	18,162	18,655	19,148	19,640	20,133	20,626
High Growth 2	18,162	19,049	19,875	20,722	21,592	22,481

Source: Robert and Company

The first scenario presented above shows a decline in population that represents the linear average of the ups and downs experienced in the city between 1980 and 2000. This projection is presented by the Georgia DCA; however, it is not anticipated that such a decline is likely to occur. Thomasville constantly works to improve the quality of life for residents through its programs and initiatives, which will hopefully attract new residents and improve services for the existing population. Thomasville is expected to at least maintain a stable population during the next 20 years. The first high growth rate (High Growth 1) presented in Table 1b.2 was established by using a constant share technique, which assumes that the local share of a larger region remains constant (local projections are directly linked to the larger area's growth). High Growth 1 uses the Thomas County growth projections provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as a base and presents a population increase of 2,464 persons, or 14% growth, between 2000 and 2025.

The second high growth scenario (High Growth 2) was developed using a linear share method, which predicts Thomasville's future population based on its share of the projected total Thomas County population. Because there are a number of Thomas County population projections, High

Growth 2 utilizes the Moderate High Growth projection for the County, shown in Table 1a.2. This presents a population increase of 4,319 persons (24% growth) between 2000 and 2025.

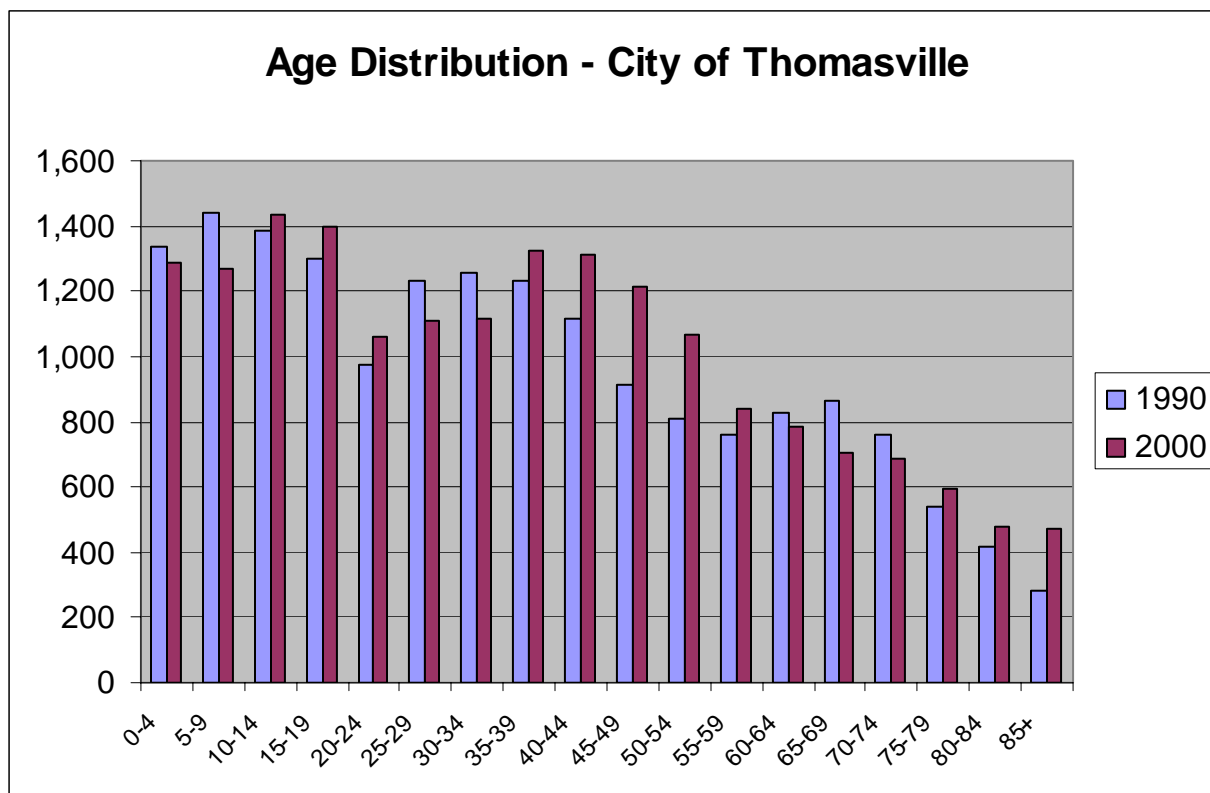
When considering how the city will grow throughout the planning period, it is also important to consider how age groups within the population have changed in the recent past and how the breakdown may shift in the future. Table 1b.3 and Figure 1b.1 below present the age distribution in Thomasville in 1990 and 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the population shifts within age groups were mostly even; there are no increases greater than 1.4% and no decreases greater than 1.2% in any one age group. The most notable declines occurred in the following age groups: 5-9, 25-29, 30-34, and 65-69. The greatest gains were by people in the middle-aged groups of 45-49 and 50-54. In the City of Thomasville it appears that the population is largely aging in place, and there are fewer infants and children under 14 in 2000 than in 1990.

Table 1b.3 - Age Distribution, City of Thomasville

Age Group	1990	%	2000	%
0-4	1,338	7.7%	1,285	7.1%
5-9	1,440	8.2%	1,272	7.0%
10-14	1,388	8.0%	1,437	7.9%
15-19	1,297	7.4%	1,399	7.7%
20-24	973	5.6%	1,059	5.8%
25-29	1,235	7.1%	1,110	6.1%
30-34	1,258	7.2%	1,113	6.1%
35-39	1,232	7.1%	1,327	7.3%
40-44	1,118	6.4%	1,313	7.2%
45-49	916	5.2%	1,214	6.7%
50-54	810	4.6%	1,067	5.9%
55-59	760	4.4%	840	4.6%
60-64	825	4.7%	786	4.3%
65-69	865	5.0%	708	3.9%
70-74	761	4.4%	686	3.8%
75-79	537	3.1%	595	3.3%
80-84	419	2.4%	477	2.6%
85+	285	1.6%	474	2.6%
TOTAL	17,457	100.0%	18,162	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1b.1 - Age Distribution 1990-2000, City of Thomasville



Source: US Census Bureau

Projections for future age distribution are shown below in Table 1b.4. These numbers are based on previously established trends and do not consider outside factors surrounding how the population will grow and change. With almost 20% of the population in the 65 and older age group, the city may need to consider what special services will be needed in relation to the growing senior citizen population. More than 30% of the population is projected to be between the ages of 25 and 44, which likely means more families with children may be moving in from nearby areas to take advantage of the reasonable cost of living in a small city atmosphere. In that case, the city may actually gain more children than predicted in the (0-4) range, since it is currently projected to lose population between 2005 and 2025.

Table 1b.4 – Projected Age Distribution 2000-2025, City of Thomasville

Category	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
0 – 4 Years Old	7.1%	6.9%	6.8%	6.6%	6.4%	6.3%
5 – 13 Years Old	14.9%	15.0%	15.1%	15.2%	15.3%	15.4%
14 – 17 Years Old	4.9%	3.9%	3.0%	2.0%	1.1%	0.1%
18 – 20 Years Old	3.9%	3.6%	3.3%	3.0%	2.6%	2.3%
21 – 24 Years Old	4.8%	4.4%	4.1%	3.7%	3.4%	3.0%
25 – 34 Years Old	12.2%	11.8%	11.4%	11.0%	10.5%	10.1%
35 – 44 Years Old	14.5%	15.6%	16.8%	17.9%	19.0%	20.1%
45 – 54 Years Old	12.6%	13.2%	13.7%	14.4%	15.0%	15.6%
55 – 64 Years Old	9.0%	8.6%	8.3%	7.9%	7.6%	7.2%
65 and over	16.2%	16.9%	17.7%	18.4%	19.2%	19.9%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The age distribution of the population can be correlated with the household size in the city. With a steadily growing population in the 65 and older age group, the household size would be expected to decrease. The percentage of children under age 17 is also projected to decrease by 2025. However, as noted above, the percentage of people in their mid 20s, 30s, and 40s is expected to increase, which would likely serve to somewhat negate the projected decline of children. Household size in Thomasville has been decreasing since 1980 and is projected to continue to do so through the 2025 planning period as shown in Table 1b.5 below. Because the Georgia DCA uses historic trends as a basis for future projections, the dramatic decrease in household size between 1980 and 1990 is fueling the continued decline at a rate perhaps higher than is likely to occur over the next 20 years, during which time the overall population is expected to remain stable or grow moderately.

Table 1b.5 –Average Household Size 1980-2025, City of Thomasville

Category	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Thomasville	2.83	2.56	2.47	2.38	2.29	2.2	2.11	2.02

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Race: Existing and Projected Conditions

The racial composition of Thomasville from 1980 through 2000 is shown below in Table 1b.6. As of 1980, the white population was slightly larger than the black population and held the majority of the population at 51%. A decrease in the number of white residents, coupled with an increase in the number of black residents led to a shift in the majority population in 1990, with a black majority as 51.7% of the population. Between 1990 and 2000, that trend continued and the black majority has grown to 56% of the city’s population, while whites now make up only 43.3%. Other races accounted for less than 2% of the city’s population from 1980 to 2000; however, Thomasville’s Hispanic population more than doubled between 1990 and 2000.

Table 1b.6 – Racial Composition 1980-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1980	%	1990	%	2000	%
White alone	9,395	51.0%	8,193	47.0%	7,779	43.3%
Black or African American alone	8,992	48.8%	9,175	52.7%	10,060	56.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	10	0.1%	29	0.2%	41	0.2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	29	0.2%	29	0.2%	98	0.5%
other race	37	0.2%	31	0.2%	184	1.0%
TOTAL	18,426	100.0%	17,426	100.0%	17,978	100.0%
Hispanic Origin	42	0.2%	85	0.5%	232	1.3%

Source: US Census Bureau

Table 1b.7 below presents the projected racial composition of Thomasville through 2025. The Black majority is expected to continue increasing while the white minority is projected to continue its decline, eventually accounting for only 31.4% of Thomasville’s population. Other races are projected to continue with slow growth through 2025. However, if the Hispanic population continues to double every ten years, it will significantly impact the city’s racial composition during the planning period.

Table 1b.7 – Projected Racial Composition 2000-2025, City of Thomasville

Category	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
White alone	42.8%	40.8%	38.7%	36.6%	34.5%	32.4%
Black or African American alone	55.4%	57.1%	58.8%	60.6%	62.3%	64.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%
other race	1.0%	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%	1.9%	2.1%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Household Income and Poverty

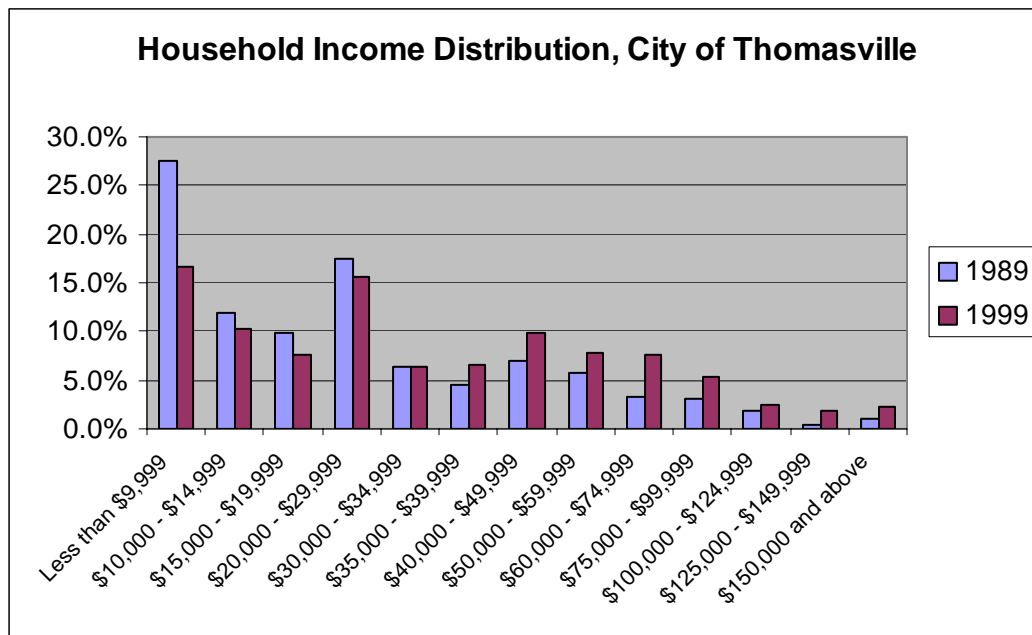
Household income and poverty status are crucial factors affecting the quality of life for people in the City of Thomasville. As presented in Table 1b.8, there is a wide distribution of income in Thomasville, but half of the households (50.1%) earn under \$29,999 per year. Income for another large segment of households (43.5%) is distributed fairly evenly, earning between \$30,000 and \$99,999. The remainder of the city’s households (6.4%) earn \$100,000 and above. Figure 1b.2 depicts the household income distribution for the city in 1999 and compares it to the household income in 1989. Major differences between 1989 and 1990 include decreases in the percentage of residents earning income in any range below \$29,999, and increases in the percentage of residents earning income in all categories above \$30,000. This is an indication of improving economic conditions within the City of Thomasville and may likely be linked to a number of economic development initiatives discussed in detail in the Economic Development section of the technical Appendix.

Table 1b.8 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, City of Thomasville

Category	1989	%	1999	%
Total	6,720	100.0%	7,048	100.0%
Income less than \$9,999	1,854	27.6%	1,180	16.7%
Income \$10,000 - \$14,999	803	11.9%	723	10.3%
Income \$15,000 - \$19,999	661	9.8%	532	7.5%
Income \$20,000 - \$29,999	1,168	17.4%	1,099	15.6%
Income \$30,000 - \$34,999	424	6.3%	455	6.5%
Income \$35,000 - \$39,999	301	4.5%	460	6.5%
Income \$40,000 - \$49,999	471	7.0%	690	9.8%
Income \$50,000 - \$59,999	383	5.7%	553	7.8%
Income \$60,000 - \$74,999	226	3.4%	535	7.6%
Income \$75,000 - \$99,999	202	3.0%	371	5.3%
Income \$100,000 - \$124,999	126	1.9%	168	2.4%
Income \$125,000 - \$149,999	27	0.4%	125	1.8%
Income \$150,000 and above	74	1.1%	157	2.2%

Source: US Census Bureau

Figure 1b.2 – Household Income Distribution 1989-1999, City of Thomasville



Source: US Census Bureau

The median household income represents the middle point of all incomes in Thomasville. In 1989, the median income was \$20,349, which increased 8.6% to \$29,926 in 1999 as shown in Table 1b.9 below. This means that half of all incomes are lower and half of all incomes are higher than \$29,926. Median household income is a good parameter for comparing Thomasville with nearby cities, such as Bainbridge, Cairo and Valdosta. Of these four cities, Thomasville has the highest median income. Valdosta, though a larger city, has a median household income close to \$1000 less than that of Thomasville. Both Cairo and Bainbridge are smaller and perhaps more rural than Thomasville, so it is understandable that their household incomes are between \$5,000 and \$7,000 less than Thomasville.

Table 1b.9 – Median Household Income 1989-1999, City of Thomasville

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income in 1989	Median Household Income in 1989 (Inflation Adjusted to 1999 \$)	Median Household Income in 1999	% Change In Inflation Adjusted Median Household Income 1989-1999
Thomasville	\$20,349	\$27,340	\$29,926	8.6%

Source: US Census Bureau

With the median household income increase between 1989 and 1999, the percentage of city residents living below the poverty level decreased from 26% to 19% during that same time frame (see Table 1b.10). A decrease in the number of people living below the poverty line is a very positive change, but the issue must remain one of concern in order for progress to continue to be made. If not addressed, the population living below the poverty line may increase, further burdening the city in its efforts to provide services for them.

Table 1b.10 – Poverty by Age Group 1989-1999, City of Thomasville

	1989		1999	
		% of Population		% of Population
Total (population with poverty status determined)	17,178		17,485	
Income in 1999 below poverty level:	4,463	26.0%	3,314	19.0%
Under 5 years	610	3.6%	423	2.4%
5 to 17 years	1,362	7.9%	765	4.4%
18 to 64 years	1,861	10.8%	1,537	8.8%
65 years and older	630	3.7%	589	3.4%

Source: US Census Bureau

2.A ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT- THOMAS COUNTY

The economic development analysis provides an inventory and assessment of Thomas County's economic base and labor force. The economic base of a community refers to the employment located within that jurisdiction. On the other hand, the labor force consists of the workers living within the community.

Economic Base

Employment by industrial sector for 2004 in Thomas County is listed in Table 2a.1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures have been utilized for this analysis as the most current county-level employment figures available. In addition, city and county 2002 U.S. Economic Census figures were also examined in order to allow for comparisons between Thomas County and the City of Thomasville (Tables 2.1a and 2.1b). The largest sector of employment in 2004 was professional and business services with 3,625 jobs. The professional and business services sector is relatively high in importance in Thomas County with 20.2% of total employment as compared to 15.9% in Georgia and 15.0% in the U.S. (See Table 2a.2). The vast majority of professional and business services jobs are located within the City of Thomasville. A comparison using the 2002 Economic Census shows the City of Thomasville containing 98% of Thomas County's employment in administrative & support & waste management & remediation services (See Tables 2.1a and 2.1b). In addition to being the central administrative hub of the county, Thomasville also serves as the county seat and center of government activity.

The second largest sector in 2004 was manufacturing with 3,529 jobs (Table 2a.1). Manufacturing is relatively strong in Thomas County (19.6%) as compared to Georgia (14.0%) and the U.S. (13.1%).

The trade, transportation, and utilities industry is the third largest employment sector with 3,226 jobs. However, trade, transportation, and utilities employment is relatively low in Thomas County (18.0%) as compared to Georgia (25.7%) and the U.S. (23.3%). While 91% of all retail employment was located in the City of Thomasville in 2002, the county's overall share of retail employment could rise with the trend toward suburban "big box" stores (Tables 2.1a and 2.1b).

Education and health services is the fourth largest sector with 3,165 jobs. With high quality medical services such as Archbold Medical Center, Thomas County has a high proportion of health care employment (17.6%) as compared with the State of Georgia (12.1%) and the U.S. (14.8%).

Table 2a.1 – Employment by Sector 2004, Thomas County

Industry	Employment	%
Natural Resources and Mining	613	3.4%
Construction	624	3.5%
Manufacturing	3,529	19.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,226	18.0%
Information	181	1.0%
Financial Activities	890	5.0%
Professional and Business Services	3,625	20.2%
Education and Health Services	3,165	17.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,535	8.5%
Other Services	559	3.1%
Unclassified	17	0.1%
TOTAL	17,964	100.0%

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Table 2a.1a – Employment by Sector 2002, Thomas County

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Thomas County	%
Manufacturing	31-33	3,499	21%
Wholesale	42	662	4%
Retail	44-45	2,239	14%
Information	51	149	1%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	215	1%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	293	2%
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services †	56	4,226	26%
Educational Services	61	0-19*	NA
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	3,365	20%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	151	1%
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	1,233	8%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	394	2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Census

*Employment ranges provided to avoid disclosing information about individual businesses.

†Administrative & support services include: Office administrative, facilities support, employment, business support, travel arrangement, investigations and security, and building maintenance services. Waste management & remediation services include: waste collection, waste treatment and disposal, and remediation.

Table 2a.1b – Employment by Sector 2002, City of Thomasville

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Thomasville
Manufacturing	31-33	2,473
Wholesale	42	500-999*
Retail	44-45	2,034
Information	51	100-249*
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	100-249*
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	251
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services +	56	4,154
Educational Services	61	0-19*
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	2,500-4,999*
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	123
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	816
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	353

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Census

*Employment ranges provided to avoid disclosing information about individual businesses.

+Administrative & support services include: Office administrative, facilities support, employment, business support, travel arrangement, investigations and security, and building maintenance services. Waste management & remediation services include: waste collection, waste treatment and disposal, and remediation.

Table 2a.2 – Employment by Sector 2004, Georgia and U.S.

Industry	United States	%	Georgia	%	Thomas County	%
Natural Resources and Mining	1,675,038	1.5%	33,191	1.0%	613	3.4%
Construction	6,916,398	6.4%	199,991	6.2%	624	3.5%
Manufacturing	14,257,380	13.1%	448,285	14.0%	3,529	19.6%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	25,276,319	23.3%	823,858	25.7%	3,226	18.0%
Information	3,099,633	2.9%	119,490	3.7%	181	1.0%
Financial Activities	7,890,786	7.3%	215,106	6.7%	890	5.0%
Professional and Business Services	16,294,776	15.0%	511,401	15.9%	3,625	20.2%
Education and Health Services	16,084,963	14.8%	387,733	12.1%	3,165	17.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	12,467,597	11.5%	359,787	11.2%	1,535	8.5%
Other Services	4,287,999	4.0%	96,790	3.0%	559	3.1%
Unclassified	239,179	0.2%	11,255	0.4%	17	0.1%
TOTAL	108,490,066	100.0%	3,206,888	100.0%	17,964	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Another means of comparing the relative strength of the Thomas County economy is through location quotients (LQs) (See Table 2a.3). Location quotients measure each industry's proportion of local employment versus the comparable proportion at the national level. The formula for location quotients is as follows:

$$\text{Location Quotient} = (\text{Local Industry Employment} / \text{Local Total Employment}) / (\text{National Industry Employment} / \text{National Total Employment})$$

Thus, as the ratio of two ratios, any LQ over 1 represents an industry that employs a larger proportion of workers locally than the national average. By definition, the total of all industries in

the county always represents an LQ of 1. Industries that have location quotients over 1 are considered “basic industries” because they serve a region larger than the local jurisdiction. Industries that export services to a larger region bring money into the local economy and spur growth. Economic development policy often focuses on maintaining basic industries as the backbone of the local economy. It is also important to note those industries that are below the national average and have LQs significantly below 1. Local economies can become more self-sufficient if they strengthen their industries that are below average.

The highest location quotient in Thomas County is natural resources and mining (2.21). While employment in natural resources and mining are low compared to other industries in the county, they are more than double the proportion found in the nation as a whole. Likewise, extraction operations such as Kaolin mining form an important industry within Thomas County. Manufacturing forms another basic industry in Thomas County with an LQ of 1.49. Professional/business services (1.34) and education/health services (1.19) are also basic industries within Thomas County.

Table 2a.3 - Location Quotients 2004 – Thomas County

Industry	Location Quotient
Base Industry: Total, all industries	1.00
Natural Resources and Mining	2.21
Construction	0.54
Manufacturing	1.49
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	0.77
Information	0.35
Financial Activities	0.68
Professional and Business Services	1.34
Education and Health Services	1.19
Leisure and Hospitality	0.74
Other Services	0.79
Unclassified	0.43

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

The number of establishments in Thomas County and their earnings in 2002 are listed in Table 2a.4. The industry with the most earnings in 2002 was manufacturing with \$604.2 million dollars in receipts. The second highest earning sector was retail trade, with \$450.8 million dollars in receipts. Some consolidation of retail establishments can be expected following the nationwide trend toward large-scale retail operations. Currently, retail operations in Thomas County are relatively small with an average of 9.5 employees per establishment as compared to 13.1 workers for statewide retail establishments. Likewise, Thomas County retail operations have \$1.9 million in receipts per establishment as compared to \$2.6 million per establishment across Georgia.

Table 2a.4 – Establishments and Receipts by Sector 2002, Thomas County

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Establishments	Receipts (\$1,000s)
Manufacturing	31-33	59	604,198
Wholesale	42	69	318,763
Retail	44-45	235	450,796
Information	51	13	NA
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	45	31,761
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	57	26,648
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	56	40	74,517
Educational services	61	2	NA
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	123	253,132
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	14	7,222
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	69	37,500
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	74	27,662

Source: US Census Bureau, Economic Census

A detailed inventory of manufacturing firms located in Thomas County is provided in Table 2a.5 along with their product and total employment. As a basic industry, manufacturing remains an integral part of the Thomas County Economy.

Table 2a.5 - Manufacturing Firms 2005, Thomas County

Manufacturer	SIC Code	Product	Employment
A Duda & Sons	2033	Frozen & Canned Celery	40
AP Green	3255	Refractories	10
A&R Textile	2391, 2392, 2395	Draperies, Quilted Spreads, Contract Quilting	10
AT&N Lumber LLC	2421, 2499	Re-Sawing, Ripping, Pattern Stock, Fence Boards	8
Agri Products Suncoast Bedding	2499	Horse Bedding (Pine Shavings)	34
Aqua Kinetics	3569, 3443	Water Heaters, Storage Tanks	26
Balfour Lumber	2421	Dressed Softwood Lumber, Pine By-Products	99
Bennett's Machine & Welding	3599, 3443	Machine Shop, Welding	5
Blackberry Patch	2033, 2066, 2087	Jams & Jellies, Chocolate Sauces, Fruit Syrup	10
Bowers Pulpwood & Timber	2411	Pine, Hardwood Timber & Pulpwood	3
Bracey's of Thomasville	2434, 2431	Cabinets, Architectural Millwork, Wood Moldings	8
C&S Machine Co	3599, 3499, 3544	Machine Shop, Metal Fabrication, Dies	18
Capital Packaging	2657	Printed Folding Cartons	30
Carroll Hill Auto Electric	3625, 3694	Starters, Alternators, Generators	2
Caterpillar	3714	Fuel Systems	100
Centek Industries	3084, 3082, 3089	Mufflers, FRP Pipe FRP Tubing, FRP Parts	65
Cives Steel Company	3441	Structural Steel	120
Cleaver-Brooks/Div of Aqua-Chem	3443, 3823	Boilers, Combustion Equipment, Hot Water Tanks, Heat Exchangers	200
Coffee Interiors	2391, 2273	Curtains & Draperies, Custom Rugs	8
Cone Machinery	3599, 3531, 3535, 3511	Sawmill Machinery Parts, Lumber Industry Machinery, Conveying Systems, Hydraulic Systems	45
Constant C	3423, 3499, 3446	Pine Straw Rake, Wrought Iron Flower Stands, Iron Fences	4
Craigsmiles & Associates	2752	Offset Printing	5
The Crickle Co	2064	Brittle Type Candy	NA
Design Center	2391, 2392	Custom Draperies, Pillows, and Bedspreads	5
Designs by Bentwood	2653, 2655	Cheese Boxes, Wastebaskets, Bride's Boxes, Band Boxes	9
Dillon Candy Company	2064	Specialty Nut Candies	35
Florida Southern Industries	3271	Concrete Blocks and Bricks	7
Flowers Baking Co	2051	Baked Goods	163
G&J Machine Shop	3599	Machine Shop	8
General Machine & Fabricating	3599	Machine Shop	3
Georgia Crate & Basket	2449	Wire Bound Boxes	120
Georgia Pipe	3084	PVC Pipes	135
Griswold Pump Company	3561	Pumps	32
Gross Vault & Monument	3281, 3272	Granite Monuments, Concrete Vaults	5

Source: Georgia Manufacturer's Directory

Table 2a.5 - (Continued) Manufacturing Firms 2005, Thomas County

Manufacturer	SIC Code	Product	Employment
H&H Printing & Publishing	2759	Commercial Printing	4
Home Products International	3089	Plastic Clothes Hangers	60
Hurst Boiler & Welding	3443	Steam Boilers, Combustion Equipment	223
Hurst Welding	3599	Machine Shop	NA
Imperial Packaging	3089	Plastic Products	48
L&B Lumber	2448	Wooden Pallets	8
W.D. Laramore Mfg	3556	Dusting Flour Recycling Systems	10
Lynch Worldwide	3949	Game Calls	11
MacTavish Furniture	2512	Upholstered Furniture	250
Magill's	2391, 2392	Draperies, Headboards	2
Maxwell Sheet Metal Works	3444	Sheet Metal	6
McGarrah Sheet Metal	3444	Sheet Metal	2
Metal Buildings	3448	Metal Buildings, Metal Building Parts	32
Metcalf Lumber	2421	Lumber, Pulp Chips, Shavings, Bark	233
NLS	2752	Commercial Printing	10
Nimble Thimble Custom Interior	2391	Draperies, Pillows, Bedspreads	5
Oil Dri Corporation of Georgia	2843, 3295, 2879	Oil & Grease Absorbants, Cat Litter, Agricultural Carriers	224
Ponder's	2759, 2732, 2731, 2752	Commercial Printing	23
Praxair Surface Technologies	3724, 3479, 3471	Engine Repairs, Metal Coatings	6
Prestige Ice	2097	Packaged Ice	15
Quality Container	3085	Plastic Pharmaceutical Bottles	32
R&H Roofing & Sheet Metal	3444	Sheet Metal Ductwork, Roofing	16
Radoll Designs	3541, 3559	Trimming, Beveling, Polishing, and Scoring Machines	20
Rose City Glass	3231	Glass	9
Royster-Clark Farmmarket	2879, 2875	Agricultural Chemicals, Fertilizers	7
Scento LLC	2842	Fragrances	9
Searcy Sheet Metal, Heating, & Air	3444	Heat/Air Sheet Metal Ducts	4
Southern Concrete	3273, 3271	Ready-Mixed Concrete, Block Products	12
Southern Siding & Exteriors	3231, 3444, 3089	Glass, Aluminum Carports, Patio Covers, Awnings, Vinyl Siding	10
George Stafford & Sons	2329	Hunting & Sports Clothing	19
Strickland Cabinet & Millwork	2434	Wood Cabinets, Millwork	9
Sud-Chemie Absorbents	3295	Fullers Earth Products	58
T&T Fab & Machine	3441, 2431, 3599	Steel Fabricating	6
Thomasville Bedding	2515	Mattresses, Box Springs, Sofa Beds	18
Thomasville Home Furnishings	2391	Curtains & Accessories, Bedspreads	145
Thomasville Office Furniture	2521	Office Furniture	50
Thomasville Times-Enterprise	2711	Newspaper Publishing	95
Trinity Recycling	2281	Polypropylene Yarn	14
Turbine Engine Components Textro	3724	Jet Fan & Compressor Blades	900
U.S. Filter Davis/Davco	3589, 3561	Water Pollution Control Equip, Wastwater Treatment Systems, Submersible Pumps	230
Warner's	2342	Intimate Apparel	591

Source: Georgia Manufacturer's Directory

Major manufacturing firms include the Turbine Engine Components Corporation, which produces parts for jet engines and employs 900. Warner's, a manufacturer of intimate apparel, employs 591 workers in Thomas County. Textile industries may be vulnerable to decline because of the labor-intensive nature of the business and the presence of cheap foreign competition. Next, there are two major firms manufacturing boilers and combustion equipment in Thomas County, Cleaver Brooks (200) and Hurst Boiler & Welding (223). There are several companies producing furniture in Thomas County, including McTavish Furniture (250), Thomasville Home Furnishings (145), and Thomasville Office Furnishings (50). Metcalf Lumber (233), Balfour Lumber (99), and Cone Machinery (45) represent lumber processing and lumber machinery operations. Absorbents manufacturers such as Oil Dri Corporation (224) and Sud Chemie (58) reflect the presence of kaolin mining operations in Thomas County.

Given the rural farming heritage of Thomas County, it is also important to take a detailed look at agricultural statistics. Since after World War II, agriculture has undergone significant changes brought on by increased mechanization, sophisticated breeding, and the increased use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. These factors have transformed agriculture from a small-scale, labor-intensive business into a large-scale, capital-intensive, market-driven corporate enterprise. At the state level, there has been a significant trend of consolidation of farming operations. Between 1945 and 1982, the number of farms in Georgia declined 78%. However, this trend has stabilized somewhat, with only a 0.6% decline in the number of farms in Georgia between 1982 and 2002. Likewise, in Thomas County the number of farms and the average farm size has remained relatively stable over the previous two decades (Table 2a.6).

Aside from the restructuring of agriculture associated with mechanization and consolidation, there has been a decline in the agricultural sector across the Southwest Georgia Region. In the counties making up the Southwest Georgia RDC, agricultural employment declined 35.3% between 1970 and 1990. The proportion of Thomas County land in agricultural production has declined from 61.4% in 1982 to 56.5% in 2002. In terms of acres harvested, this amounts to a 39.4% decrease between 1982 and 2002. Agricultural earnings in Thomas County have fluctuated significantly over the last 10 years (Table 2a.7). Steep declines can be seen in both 1998 and 2002. This variability highlights the dependence on weather patterns for sustained agricultural production. The general decline in agricultural earnings over the past decade is apparent even before inflation is factored in (Figure 2a.1). Although farm earnings in 1994 and 2003 are nearly identical, after adjusting for inflation, this sum represents a decline of 19.7%.

Table 2a.6 - Agricultural Statistics 1982-2002, Thomas County

Year	Acres Farmed	% Land Farmed	Farms	Avg. Farm Size
1982	83,073	61.4%	540	399
1987	66,412	61.9%	507	428
1992	61,912	49.6%	465	374
1997	74,446	55.6%	520	375
2002	50,301	56.5%	510	389

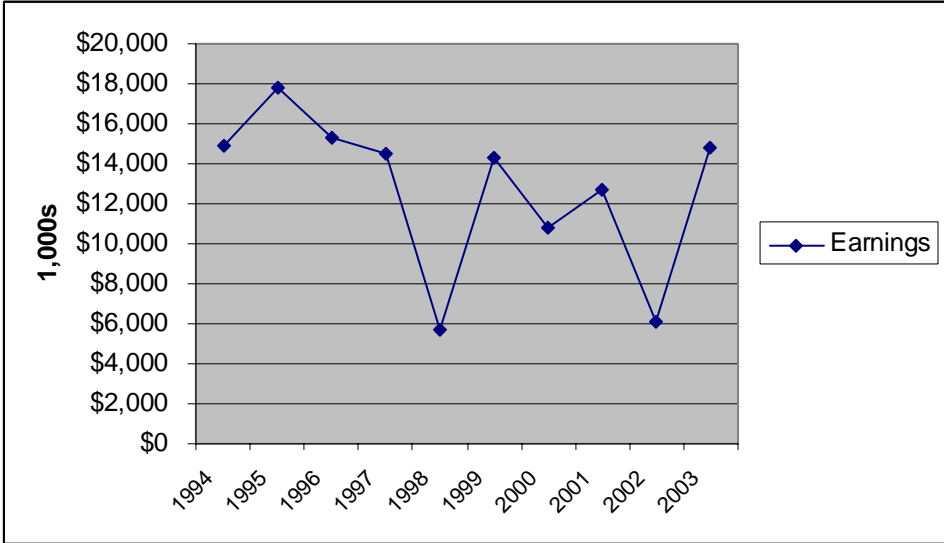
Source: UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Table 2a.7 - Agricultural Earnings (In Thousands) 1994-2003, Thomas County

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
\$14,886	\$17,768	\$15,323	\$14,521	\$5,685	\$14,313	\$10,849	\$12,720	\$6,113	\$14,845

Source: UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Figure 2a.1 - Agricultural Earnings 1994-2003, Thomas County



Source: UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Labor Force

The industry of employment for workers living in Thomas County is listed in Table 2a.8 for the years 1980-2000. The industry that employs the largest proportion of the Thomas County workforce as of the year 2000 is educational, health, and social services (26.5%). Employment in the educational, health, and social services industries has increased 69.6% between 1980 and 2000, with an additional 1,957 workers. The second largest sector is manufacturing, which employs 18.1% of the local workforce. Manufacturing declined by 19.3% between 1980 and 2000, with a loss of 776 workers. The third largest industry is retail trade, which employs 12.3% of the labor force.

The most dramatic change in employment has come in the agricultural, forestry, fishing, hunting, & mining industries, which declined 58.4% over the past two decades. Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, & mining declined from 9.5% of the county's workforce in 1980 to 3.4% in 2000. Much of this employment decline is the result of the increased mechanization of agriculture. While residential employment in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining has fallen, farming receipts and the number of acres farmed has not declined significantly (See Table 2a.6 and Table 2a.7).

Table 2a.8 – Resident Employment by Industry 1980-2000, Thomas County

Category	1980	%	1990	%	2000	%
Total Employed Civilian Population	15,530	100.0%	17,173	100.0%	17,983	100.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	1,472	9.5%	1,099	6.4%	613	3.4%
Construction	847	5.5%	1,023	6.0%	1,076	6.0%
Manufacturing	4,025	25.9%	3,824	22.3%	3,249	18.1%
Wholesale Trade	704	4.5%	620	3.6%	569	3.2%
Retail Trade	2,215	14.3%	2,765	16.1%	2,206	12.3%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	787	5.1%	725	4.2%	727	4.0%
Information	NA	NA	NA	NA	239	1.3%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	604	3.9%	764	4.4%	637	3.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	333	2.1%	471	2.7%	821	4.6%
Educational, health and social services	2,811	18.1%	3,749	21.8%	4,768	26.5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	665	4.3%	100	0.6%	1,154	6.4%
Other Services	435	2.8%	1,394	8.1%	831	4.6%
Public Administration	632	4.1%	639	3.7%	1,093	6.1%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Another way of looking at the workforce in Thomas County is through the actual occupations that are held by residents. Instead of measuring the relative strength of industries in the county, occupational statistics show what workers do within those industries. Employment by occupation in the year 2000 is provided in Table 2a.9. The largest occupational category in Thomas County is administrative fields, which account for 13.1% of all workers living in the county. The second largest occupation within Thomas County is production (10.7%), reflecting the strength of the manufacturing sector.

Table 2a.9 – Resident Employment by Occupation 2000, Thomas County

Occupation	Thomas County	%
Management	1,537	8.5%
Business and Financial Operations	508	2.8%
Computer and Mathematical	89	0.5%
Architecture and Engineering	145	0.8%
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	76	0.4%
Community and Social Services	437	2.4%
Legal	53	0.3%
Education	1,107	6.2%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	176	1.0%
Healthcare and Technical	1,420	7.9%
Healthcare Service	465	2.6%
Protective Service	389	2.2%
Food Service	893	5.0%
Building and Grounds Maintenance	581	3.2%
Personal Care Services	495	2.8%
Sales	1,878	10.4%
Administrative	2,420	13.5%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	439	2.4%
Construction	946	5.3%
Maintenance and Repair	739	4.1%
Production	1,927	10.7%
Transportation and Materials Moving	1,263	7.0%
TOTAL Workers	17,983	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Personal income by type for residents of Thomas County is presented in Table 2a.10. Sources of personal income often reflect the age structure of a community. In Thomas County, retirement income increased from 4% of aggregate total household income in 1990 to 6.3% in 2000. This trend reflects the aging of the population and the emergence of Thomas County as a retirement community. Likewise, retirement income and social security income combined make up a large proportion of total household income (13.6%) relative to Georgia as a whole (8.6%). Conversely, wage income makes up a somewhat smaller proportion of household income in Thomas County (73%) as compared to the State (78.2%).

Table 2a.10 – Personal Income by Type 1990-2000, Thomas County

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total income	\$397,341,993	100.0%	\$682,188,700	100.0%
Aggregate wage or salary income for households	\$279,029,906	70.2%	\$498,313,400	73.0%
Aggregate other types of income for households	\$4,954,732	1.2%	\$18,942,000	2.8%
Aggregate self employment income for households	\$34,901,913	8.8%	\$32,463,600	4.8%
Aggregate interest, dividends, or net rental income	\$27,027,748	6.8%	\$31,103,500	4.6%
Aggregate social security income for households	\$30,570,971	7.7%	\$49,555,600	7.3%
Aggregate public assistance income for households	\$5,145,265	1.3%	\$8,893,200	1.3%
Aggregate retirement income for households	\$15,711,458	4.0%	\$42,917,400	6.3%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Commuting patterns are a key statistic in measuring the balance between jobs and housing (Table 2a.11). If a community lacks adequate employment opportunities, workers are often forced to drive long distances to find jobs. The overwhelming majority of workers in Thomas County are employed within the county (86.1%). The City of Thomasville serves as the principal job center within the county. As of 2000, Thomasville had over twice the number of jobs (15,361) as workers (7,200). As a result of commuting, the population of Thomasville increases 44.6% during the daytime. Surprisingly, only 3.7% of the Thomas County workforce commuted out of state. Because the City of Tallahassee, Florida is the largest regional employment center, commuting across the state line is expected to increase. Leon County, Florida, which contains the City of Tallahassee, shares a border with Thomas County. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2004 Leon County had almost five times more jobs than Thomas County. The estimated drive time between Thomasville and Downtown Tallahassee is between 35-40 minutes.

Table 2a.11 – Commuting Patterns 1990-2000, Thomas County

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total Workforce	16,867	100.0%	17,833	100.0%
Worked in state of residence	16,162	95.8%	17,180	96.3%
Worked in county of residence	14,910	88.4%	15,361	86.1%
Worked outside of county of residence	1,252	7.4%	1,819	10.2%
Worked outside of state of residence	705	4.2%	653	3.7%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Labor force participation rates for Thomas County between the years of 1990 and 2000 are listed in Table 2a.12. Labor force participation refers to the number of people of working age who are employed or seeking employment. In Thomas County, the labor force participation rate

has declined slightly from 62.2% in 1990 to 59.4% in 2000. The County also has a slightly lower labor force participation rate (59.4%) than the State of Georgia as a whole (66.1%). This may be due to the County's aging population and the growth in the retirement population. Labor force participation is higher among men (65.8%) than among women (53.9%) due to the traditional female role of child rearing and care giving. However, the difference in labor force participation rates between men and women has narrowed from 15.8% in 1990 to 11.8% in 2000. Female labor force participation has increased steadily across the nation from 33.9% in 1950 to 57.5% in 2000. Nationally, the largest increase in female labor force participation occurred as the baby boom generation entered the workforce in the 1970s. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics projections, the national trend toward increased female labor force participation is expected to stabilize at 58% by 2025.

Table 2a.12 – Labor Force Participation 1990-2000, Thomas County

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total Males and Females	29,079		32,492	
In labor force:	18,099	62.2%	19,286	59.4%
Civilian Labor force	18,065	62.1%	19,233	59.2%
Civilian Employed	17,173	59.1%	17,983	55.3%
Civilian unemployed	892	3.1%	1,250	3.8%
In Armed Forces	34	0.1%	53	0.2%
Not in labor force	10,980	37.8%	13,206	40.6%
Total Males	13,093		14,900	
Male In labor force:	9,290	71.0%	9,797	65.8%
Male Civilian Labor force	9,258	70.7%	9,755	65.5%
Male Civilian Employed	8,878	67.8%	9,208	61.8%
Male Civilian unemployed	380	2.9%	547	3.7%
Male In Armed Forces	32	0.2%	42	0.3%
Male Not in labor force	3,803	29.0%	5,103	34.2%
Total Females	15,986		17,592	
Female In labor force:	8,809	55.1%	9,489	53.9%
Female Civilian Labor force	8,807	55.1%	9,478	53.9%
Female Civilian Employed	8,295	51.9%	8,775	49.9%
Female Civilian unemployed	512	3.2%	703	4.0%
Female In Armed Forces	2	0.0%	11	0.1%
Female Not in labor force	7,177	44.9%	8,103	46.1%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Average weekly wages in Thomas County from 2001-2004 are listed in Table 2a.13. Unsurprisingly, management and professional/technical professions earn the most, with a county average of \$934 and \$836 per week respectively. Manufacturing offers the third highest average wages with \$711 per week. The overall decline in manufacturing in the county could pose problems for the workforce, as relatively high wage jobs are lost. Growing sectors such as administrative work offer some of the lowest wages in the county (\$374/week). The average weekly wage for all industries in Thomas County (\$547) was substantially lower than the statewide average weekly wage (\$728). (Table 2a.14) However, statewide average weekly wages are strongly influenced by the Atlanta MSA, where both wages and the cost of living are substantially higher than in rural counties. In Leon County, Florida, the average weekly wage for all industries was \$646 in 2004.

Table 2a.13 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, Thomas County

Sector	NAICS Code	2001	2002	2003	2004*
All Industries		\$522	\$515	\$516	\$547
Agriculture	11	ND	ND	ND	ND
Mining	21	ND	ND	ND	ND
Utilities	22	ND	ND	\$450	ND
Construction	23	\$465	\$492	\$514	\$515
Manufacturing	31-33	\$708	\$613	\$644	\$711
Wholesale Trade	42	\$627	\$614	\$663	\$674
Retail	44-45	\$341	\$373	\$394	\$396
Transportation and Warehousing	48-49	ND	ND	\$640	ND
Information	51	\$561	\$518	\$513	\$541
Finance and Insurance	52	\$676	\$660	\$655	\$636
Real Estate	53	\$393	\$442	\$468	\$524
Professional and Technical	54	\$892	ND	ND	\$836
Management	55	\$646	ND	ND	\$934
Administrative	56	\$335	\$359	\$362	\$374
Educational Services	61	ND	ND	ND	ND
Health Care and Social Work	62	ND	ND	ND	ND
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	\$276	\$297	\$322	\$337
Accommodation and Food Service	72	\$177	\$180	\$183	\$214
Other Services	81	\$332	\$348	\$388	\$408
Public Administration (State Govt.)	92	\$550	\$562	\$564	\$564
Public Administration (Local Govt.)	92	ND	ND	ND	ND
Unclassified	99	\$335	\$315	\$228	\$267

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

*Preliminary Figures

ND = Non-Discloseable

Table 2a.14 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, State of Georgia

Sector	NAICS Code	2001	2002	2003	2004*
All Industries		\$676	\$687	\$704	\$728
Agriculture	11	\$416	\$409	\$420	\$432
Mining	21	\$857	\$915	\$952	\$995
Utilities	22	\$1,235	\$1,292	\$1,312	\$1,315
Construction	23	\$686	\$693	\$710	\$739
Manufacturing	31-33	\$712	\$727	\$761	\$797
Wholesale Trade	42	\$1,021	\$1,019	\$1,032	\$1,084
Retail	44-45	\$433	\$440	\$454	\$464
Transportation and Warehousing	48-49	\$807	\$824	\$838	\$868
Information	51	\$1,101	\$1,098	\$1,148	\$1,181
Finance and Insurance	52	\$1,051	\$1,081	\$1,117	\$1,174
Real Estate	53	\$669	\$697	\$715	\$769
Professional and Technical	54	\$1,081	\$1,089	\$1,099	\$1,136
Management	55	\$1,122	\$1,153	\$1,251	\$1,394
Administrative	56	\$473	\$485	\$514	\$528
Educational Services	61	\$568	\$581	\$680	\$706
Health Care and Social Work	62	\$654	\$678	\$694	\$723
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	\$523	\$585	\$552	\$524
Accommodation and Food Service	72	\$257	\$259	\$261	\$269
Other Services	81	\$451	\$466	\$483	\$498
Public Administration (State Govt.)	92	\$633	\$654	\$661	\$660
Public Administration (Local Govt.)	92	\$568	\$584	\$602	\$622
Unclassified	99	\$745	\$724	\$688	\$759

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

*Preliminary Figures

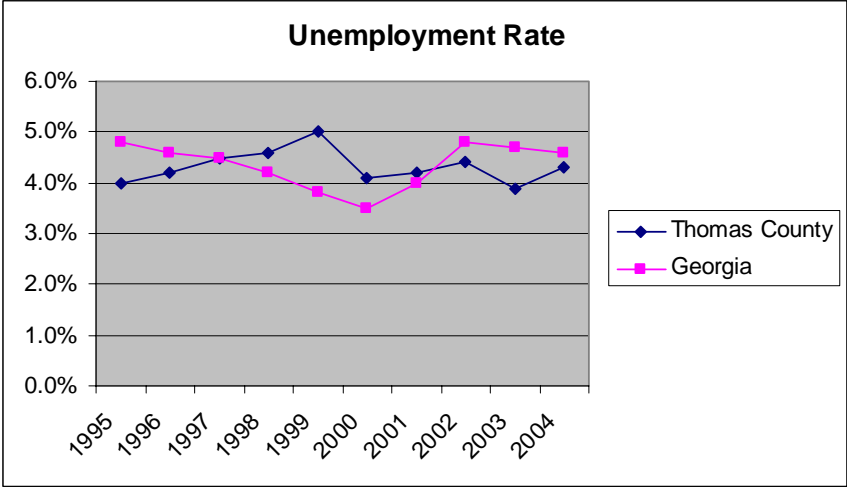
Annual unemployment rates between 1995 and 2004 are provided for Thomas County and the State of Georgia in Table 2a.15. Curiously, unemployment patterns in Thomas County have run counter to statewide unemployment rates over the ten years surveyed (See Figure 2a.2). This pattern highlights the lack of influence of the Atlanta Metropolitan economy over Thomas County. While the Atlanta MSA is the largest economic engine of the State, Thomas County is more closely tied to the rural South Georgia economy and may be modified to some degree by the Tallahassee Metropolitan area immediately to the south in the Florida panhandle.

Table 2a.15 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Thomas County	4.0%	4.2%	4.5%	4.6%	5.0%	4.1%	4.2%	4.4%	3.9%	4.3%
Georgia	4.8%	4.6%	4.5%	4.2%	3.8%	3.5%	4.0%	4.8%	4.7%	4.6%

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 2a.2 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Economic Resources

Potential economic resources within a community include development agencies, public and private economic development programs, educational and training facilities, and policy tools.

Payroll Development Authority

The Payroll Development Authority (PDA) manages economic development activities for the city and county. It has been the impetus behind the Mitchell House and renovation of the old JC Penny’s building for use by Flowers Bakery.

Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce

The Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce was organized as the Thomasville Chamber in February of 1921. The Chamber was incorporated on November 1, 1947, and became the first accredited Chamber in Georgia in February of 1965. The stated mission of the Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Thomas County, Georgia. The Chamber strongly supports both existing business and industry, and the development of quality new business and industry, while preserving the values and historical resources of the community. The Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce sponsors a variety of economic development programs throughout the county:

- Agribusiness Program – Formed in 1991 to provide more input to the Chamber on agriculture-related issues from people directly involved in farming and agriculture related businesses.
- Ambassadors Program – A voluntary group that serves as goodwill liaisons for the Chamber, visit members throughout the year, attend hundreds of ribbon cuttings/ground breakings, and host special events like Business After Hours.
- Economic Outlook Luncheon – An annual economic forum presented by the Selig Center for Economic Growth and University of Georgia’s Terry College of Business. The luncheon includes an economic forecast of how the economies of Thomas County, Georgia, and the US will perform in the coming year.
- Existing Industry Committee – This committee is tailored to the needs of current industrial operations, and deals with labor relations, education, drug control, and new environmental issues. The Existing Industry Committee provides a forum for current

business leaders to voice their concerns. Regular events include the annual Industry Appreciation Dinner and the bi-annual Business and Industry Trade Show.

- Leadership Program – A community education program carried out to acquaint existing and emerging leaders with contemporary and future issues, needs, services, and resources within the community.
- Leadership for the Millennium - A youth leadership program carried out by the Chamber for high school juniors designed to educate them on becoming future community leaders through team building skills, community awareness, and the advantages of living and doing business in Thomas County.
- VOOM (Voice of Our Members) – An informal monthly meeting to facilitate business networking and the exchange of ideas.
- Women’s Forum of Thomas County – A monthly forum for business networking among professional women.

Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center

Valdosta State University’s (VSU) Small Business Development Center is a public service unit of the VSU College of Business Administration that provides business and economic development assistance for Thomas County and nine other surrounding counties in South Georgia. The SBDC is a program supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC offers free, confidential consulting to existing business owners as well as clients in the final stages of opening a new business venture. For individuals considering opening a business, the SBDC offers low cost courses in starting your own business. The program also distributes printed materials such as business planning workbooks, frequently asked tax questions, and small business loan basics.

Thomasville/Thomas County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau

The Thomasville/Thomas County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau promotes the tourism and hospitality industry within both Thomasville and Thomas County. The Convention and Visitor’s Bureau operates a downtown visitor’s center providing informational handouts located within the chamber of commerce building on Broad Street. The Convention and Visitor’s bureau also operates a website featuring listings of accommodations, attractions, tours, shopping and dining.

Economic Trends

Employment change by sector in Thomas County between the 1994 and 2004 is presented in Table 2a.16. The industry with the largest percentage of growth was the professional and business services, which more than tripled between 1994 and 2004. The professional and business services sector also added the most absolute number of jobs (2,727) over the same time period. The industry with the second highest absolute growth in jobs was education and health services, which added 862 jobs between 1994 and 2004. With the growing popularity of Thomas County as a retirement community and the overall aging of the population, medical services are expected to increase in importance in the coming years.

The sector with the largest employment decline was manufacturing, which lost 1,452 jobs (-29.2%) between 1994 and 2004. While the manufacturing industry is one of the highest paying sectors, it has steadily declined in importance throughout the nation. With increases in global trade and foreign competition, the manufacturing industry is expected to continue to

decline. Thomas County may be especially vulnerable to industrial decline, given the County's heavy reliance on manufacturing. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector also experienced some decline (-2.6%) over the time period. The County's loss of retail employment may be due to an overall trend of decreased consumer spending experienced during the ongoing nationwide economic recession. The trend toward large retail operations may also decrease the proportion of overall employment in the retail sector. While large-scale stores employ more workers in each establishment, they employ fewer workers for the same level of receipts.

Table 2a.16 – Employment Change by Sector 1994-2004, Thomas County

Sector	Employment,	Employment,	Employment Change	Percent Growth,
	1994	2004		1994 - 2004
Natural Resources and Mining	601	613	12	2.0%
Construction	519	622	103	19.8%
Manufacturing	4,981	3,529	-1,452	-29.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,398	3,309	-89	-2.6%
Information	274	181	-93	-33.9%
Financial Activities	542	888	346	63.8%
Professional and Business Services	897	3,624	2,727	304.0%
Education and Health Services	4,896	5,758	862	17.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,153	1,536	383	33.2%
Other Services	578	557	-21	-3.6%
Public Administration	301	350	49	16.3%
TOTAL	18,140	20,967	2,827	15.6%

UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Shift share analysis allocates economic growth and decline to various factors. (See Table 2a.17) The intent of this analysis is to isolate the economic growth or decline that is due to overall national economic change, national change in the industry, and regional economic advantages and disadvantages. The national growth component separates out the employment growth that is due to the overall growth of the total U.S. economy. Between 1994 and 2004, the U.S. economy grew by 14.9%. Therefore, an increase of 14.9% of each industry could be explained by national economic growth. The industrial mix component includes the trends of growth or decline within the industry at the national level. For example, manufacturing declined -31% between 1994 and 2004. Therefore, a -31% decline in manufacturing employment could be explained by the national decline in manufacturing. The difference between the actual growth or decline within an industry and the sum of the national growth and industrial mix components equals the competitive share. It is assumed that the competitive share represents the regional economic advantage in producing a good or service.

The industry with the largest competitive share in Thomas County is professional and business services, which grew by 2,727 jobs between 1994 and 2004. Of the growth in professional and business services, 2,426 jobs are attributed to the county's regional competitive advantage. Growth in financial activities is also attributed to the county's competitive share. Leisure and hospitality, public administration, and natural resources and mining also include positive competitive share components. The industries with a positive competitive share represent potential regional specializations and good targets for growth. Interestingly, growth in education

and health services is attributed entirely to the national growth and industrial mix factors rather than the county's competitive advantage.

Table 2a.17 – Shift Share Analysis 1994-2004, Thomas County

Sector	National Growth Component %	National Growth Component Jobs	Industrial Mix Component %	Industrial Mix Component Jobs	Competitive Share Component %	Competitive Share Component Jobs
Natural Resources and Mining	14.9	90	-16.9	-101	3.9	24
Construction	14.9	78	22.9	119	-18	-93
Manufacturing	14.9	744	-31	-1,542	-13.1	-653
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	14.9	507	-4.1	-139	-13.4	-457
Information	14.9	41	-2.8	-8	-46.1	-126
Financial Activities	14.9	81	1.4	8	47.5	257
Professional and Business Services	14.9	134	18.6	167	270.5	2,426
Education and Health Services	14.9	731	10.3	502	-7.6	-371
Leisure and Hospitality	14.9	172	9.5	109	8.8	101
Other Services	14.9	86	2.6	15	-21.2	-122
Public Administration	14.9	45	-6.3	-19	7.7	23
TOTAL		2,709		-889		1,009

UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Projected employment by industry in Thomas County from 2005-2025 is listed in Table 2a.18. Projected employment is based on historic employment trends in Thomas County from 1990-2004. Historic trends predict continued rapid expansion in the professional and business services sector over the next twenty years (116.4%). However, this growth may not be sustainable, given the much lower historic growth within the national professional and business services sector. Education and health services are expected to continue to grow substantially (65.2%) because of growth within the industry and the county population. Financial activities are also expected to grow substantially (49.9%) due to the city's regional specialization as a center of business. Leisure and hospitality are expected to emerge as a major industry within the county (48.8%).

Table 2a.18 - Projected Employment by Industry 2005-2025, Thomas County

Industry	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Change 05-25	% Change 05-25
Natural Resources and Mining	607	576	545	514	483	-124	-20.5%
Construction	625	637	650	662	675	50	8.0%
Manufacturing	3,453	3,074	2,695	2,316	1,938	-1,516	-43.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,324	3,400	3,476	3,551	3,627	303	9.1%
Information	177	156	135	114	93	-84	-47.7%
Financial Activities	911	1,024	1,138	1,251	1,365	454	49.9%
Professional and Business Services	3,848	4,968	6,087	7,207	8,327	4,479	116.4%
Education and Health Services	5,952	6,922	7,892	8,862	9,832	3,880	65.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,574	1,767	1,959	2,151	2,343	769	48.8%
Other Services	556	550	544	539	533	-23	-4.1%
Public Administration	357	391	425	459	493	136	38.0%
TOTAL	21,383	23,464	25,545	27,625	29,706	8,323	38.9%

Source: Robert and Company; Base Data - UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

The economic challenges faced by Thomas County over the next 20 years are intertwined with the economy of the City of Thomasville. Continued growth within professional and business services, financial activities, and public administration sectors depends on the City of Thomasville's ability to consolidate its role as the business and administrative center for the region. The strength of these sectors is crucial in maintaining high wage employment within the county. Growth in the education and health services sectors depends on the strength of Thomasville institutions such as Archbold Medical Center and Thomas University. Likewise, the growth of tourism within the county depends in part on maintaining a vibrant downtown in the City of Thomasville. Within the county, tourism also depends on the protection of unique natural resources, which attract visitors for hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and ecotourism.

Industrial restructuring is the central economic challenge in the county. Thomas County is especially vulnerable to industrial decline because of its high level of manufacturing employment. In the post-industrial economy, service employment has been one of the highest growth sectors. However, service employment industries have relatively low average wages. Therefore it is crucial to develop future high wage industries in order to maintain the county's standard of services and quality of life. Possible high wage growth sectors include financial activities, professional and business services, and education and health services.

2.B ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - THOMASVILLE

The economic development element provides an inventory and assessment of Thomasville’s economic base and labor force. The economic base of a community refers to the employment located within that jurisdiction. On the other hand, the labor force consists of the workers living within the community.

Economic Base

Employment by sector for 2002 in the City of Thomasville is listed in Table 2b.1. In order to maintain privacy and avoid disclosing information about individual businesses, the U.S. Census provides only employment ranges for many of the sectors listed. The largest sector of employment listed is administrative & support & waste management & remediation services with 4,154 jobs. Because the city employs a larger proportion of administrative workers than the State average, it is said to be a “basic industry.” Basic industries are those that export services to a larger region and constitute economic specializations. This reflects the city’s status as the administrative capital of Thomas County. Although census employment categories exclude public administration, Thomasville is also the primary center of government activity in Thomas County as well as the county seat. The second largest category of employment within the city of Thomasville is health care and social assistance with between 2,500 – 4,999 jobs. Thomasville leads the region in health care employment, with high quality medical services such as Archbold Medical Center. The third largest sector of employment in Thomasville is the manufacturing industry with 2,473 jobs in 2002. It should be noted that the Economic Census listings for educational services include only private technical schools. With the presence of Thomas University and a number of public schools, the full extent of educational services employment is much larger within the city.

Table 2b.1 – Employment by Sector 2002, City of Thomasville

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Thomasville
Manufacturing	31-33	2,473
Wholesale	42	500-999*
Retail	44-45	2,034
Information	51	100-249*
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	100-249*
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	251
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	56	4,154
Educational services	61	0-19*
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	2,500-4,999*
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	123
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	816
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	353

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Economic Census
 *Employment ranges provided to avoid disclosing information about individual businesses.

Table 2b.2 – Employment by Sector 2002, Georgia

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Employment	%
Mining	21	6,550	0.2%
Utilities	22	25,455	1.0%
Manufacturing	31-33	452,997	17.3%
Wholesale	42	201,018	7.7%
Retail	44-45	447,618	17.1%
Information	51	145,370	5.5%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	59,817	2.3%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	192,587	7.3%
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services †	56	291,094	11.1%
Educational services	61	10,202	0.4%
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	374,902	14.3%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	35,268	1.3%
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	293,064	11.2%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	85,071	3.2%
TOTAL	NA	2,621,013	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, Economic Census

†Administrative & support services include: Office administrative, facilities support, employment, business support, travel arrangement, investigations and security, and building maintenance services. Waste management & remediation services include: waste collection, waste treatment and disposal, and remediation.

Employment change by sector in the City of Thomasville between the Economic Census years of 1997 and 2002 is presented in Table 2b.3. The industry with the largest percentage of growth was the administrative & support & waste management & remediation sector, which more than tripled (337.7%) between 1997 and 2002. With the growth of the area as a retirement community and the general aging of the population, medical services are expected to increase in importance in the coming years. The administrative sector also added the most absolute number of jobs (3,205) over the same time period. Another industry that has exhibited very high growth over the time frame is health care & social assistance. It is not possible to directly calculate a percentage of growth due to Census data disclosure policy. However, given the employment ranges provided, health care & social assistance has more than doubled between 1997 and 2002. With the growing popularity of Thomas County as a retirement community and the general aging of the population, medical services are expected to increase in importance in the coming years.

The sector with the largest employment decline was manufacturing, which lost 1,691 jobs (-40.6%) between 1997 and 2002. While the manufacturing industry is one of the highest paying sectors, it has steadily declined in importance throughout the nation. With increases in global trade and foreign competition, the manufacturing industry is expected to continue to decline. The City of Thomasville may be especially vulnerable to industrial decline, given the city’s heavy reliance on manufacturing. The sector with the second highest employment declines was retail, which lost 379 jobs (-15.7%) between 1997 and 2002. The city’s loss of retail employment may be due to an overall trend of decreased consumer spending experienced during the ongoing nationwide economic recession. In addition, the City of Thomasville is likely to experience increased competition from “big box” retailers who prefer to locate along major highway corridors outside of traditional downtowns. Employment in accommodations and food services also declined substantially (-18.7%) over the period of study.

Table 2b.3 – Employment Change by Sector 1997-2002, City of Thomasville

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Employment 1997	Employment 2002	% Change 97-02
Manufacturing	31-33	4,164	2,473	-40.6%
Wholesale	42	513	500-999*	NA
Retail	44-45	2,413	2,034	-15.7%
Information	51	NA	100-249*	NA
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	100-249*	100-249*	NA
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	207	251	21.3%
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	56	949	4,154	337.7%
Educational services	61	NA	0-19*	NA
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	500-999*	2,500-4,999*	NA
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	20-99*	123	NA
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	1,004	816	-18.7%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	224	353	57.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, Economic Census

*Employment ranges provided to avoid disclosing information about individual businesses.

The number of establishments in the City of Thomasville and their earnings in 2002 are listed in Table 2b.4. The industry with the most earnings in 2002 was manufacturing with \$470.7 million dollars in receipts. The second highest earning sector was retail trade, with \$387.8 million dollars in receipts. Some consolidation of retail establishments can be expected following the nationwide trend toward large scale retail operations. Currently retail operations in the City of Thomasville are relatively small with an average of 10.5 employees per establishment versus 13.1 employees per establishment across Georgia. Likewise, Thomasville retail operations have \$2.0 million in receipts per establishment as compared to \$2.6 million per establishment across Georgia.

Table 2b.4 – Establishments and Receipts by Sector 2002, City of Thomasville

Industry	Industry NAICS Code	Establishments	Receipts (\$1,000s)
Manufacturing	31-33	37	470,725
Wholesale	42	52	NA
Retail	44-45	193	387,769
Information	51	10	NA
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	53	40	NA
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	54	48	22,330
Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	56	26	71,202
Educational services	61	2	NA
Health Care & Social Assistance	62	112	NA
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	71	10	6,055
Accommodations & Foodservices	72	51	26,355
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	81	57	24,774

Source: US Census Bureau, Economic Census

Labor Force

The industry of employment for workers living in the City of Thomasville is listed in Table 2b.5 for the years 1980-2000. The industry that employs the largest proportion of the City of Thomasville's workforce as of the year 2000 is educational, health, and social services (30.9%). The educational, health, and social services sector has increased its share of total employment from 21.5% in 1980 to 30.9% in 2000. The second largest employer in Thomasville is the manufacturing sector, which accounts for 17.2% of the total workforce. However, manufacturing has steadily declined over the previous two decades, losing 745 employees (-37.4%). The third largest employer of residents of Thomasville is retail trade, which accounts for 11.3% of the city's workforce. Retail trade has also declined over the previous twenty years, losing 320 employees (-28.1%). The most dramatic change in employment has come in the agricultural, forestry, fishing, hunting, & mining industries, which declined 70.2% between 1980 and 2000 to only 1.5% of the Thomasville workforce.

Table 2b.5 – Employment by Industry 1980-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1980	%	1990	%	2000	%
Total Employed Civilian Population	15,530	100.0%	17,173	100.0%	17,983	100.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting & mining	1,472	9.5%	1,099	6.4%	613	3.4%
Construction	847	5.5%	1,023	6.0%	1,076	6.0%
Manufacturing	4,025	25.9%	3,824	22.3%	3,249	18.1%
Wholesale Trade	704	4.5%	620	3.6%	569	3.2%
Retail Trade	2,215	14.3%	2,765	16.1%	2,206	12.3%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	787	5.1%	725	4.2%	727	4.0%
Information	NA	NA	NA	NA	239	1.3%
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	604	3.9%	764	4.4%	637	3.5%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	333	2.1%	471	2.7%	821	4.6%
Educational, health and social services	2,811	18.1%	3,749	21.8%	4,768	26.5%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	665	4.3%	100	0.6%	1,154	6.4%
Other Services	435	2.8%	1,394	8.1%	831	4.6%
Public Administration	632	4.1%	639	3.7%	1,093	6.1%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Another way of looking at the workforce in the City of Thomasville is through the actual occupations that are held by residents. Instead of measuring the relative strength of industries in the city, occupational statistics show what workers do within those industries. Employment by occupation in the year 2000 is provided in Table 2b.6. The largest occupational category in the City of Thomasville is administrative fields, which account for 13.5% of all workers living in the city. The second largest occupation within Thomasville is healthcare and technical employment (10.4%), reflecting the city's regional specialization in medical services.

Table 2b.6 – Employment by Occupation 2000, City of Thomasville

Occupation	City of Thomasville	%
Management	543	7.5%
Business and Financial Operations	208	2.9%
Computer and Mathematical	28	0.4%
Architecture and Engineering	64	0.9%
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	37	0.5%
Community and Social Services	279	3.9%
Legal	34	0.5%
Education	454	6.3%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	93	1.3%
Healthcare and Technical	754	10.4%
Healthcare Service	267	3.7%
Protective Service	115	1.6%
Food Service	446	6.2%
Building and Grounds Maintenance	242	3.3%
Personal Care Services	192	2.7%
Sales	739	10.2%
Administrative	949	13.1%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	85	1.2%
Construction	320	4.4%
Maintenance and Repair	178	2.5%
Production	660	9.1%
Transportation and Materials Moving	555	7.7%
TOTAL Workers	7,242	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Personal income by type for residents of Thomasville is presented in Table 2b.7. Sources of personal income often reflect the age structure of the community. In Thomasville, retirement income increased from 4.7% of aggregate total household income in 1990 to 8.1% in 2000. This trend reflects the aging of the population and the emergence of Thomasville as a retirement community. Likewise, retirement income and social security income combined make up a large proportion of total household income (16.2%) relative to Georgia as a whole (8.6%). Conversely, wage income makes up a somewhat smaller proportion of household income in Thomasville (70.5%) as compared to the State (78.2%).

Table 2b.7 – Personal Income by Type 1990-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total income	\$194,488,126	100.0%	\$283,687,600	100.0%
Aggregate wage or salary income for households	\$129,370,536	66.5%	\$199,952,100	70.5%
Aggregate other types of income for households	\$2,662,015	1.4%	\$7,569,600	2.7%
Aggregate self employment income for households	\$15,666,297	8.1%	\$12,696,200	4.5%
Aggregate interest, dividends, or net rental income	\$18,434,232	9.5%	\$13,558,200	4.8%
Aggregate social security income for households	\$16,176,898	8.3%	\$22,928,400	8.1%
Aggregate public assistance income for households	\$3,031,207	1.6%	\$4,071,400	1.4%
Aggregate retirement income for households	\$9,146,941	4.7%	\$22,911,700	8.1%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Commuting patterns are a key statistic in measuring the balance between jobs and housing. (Table 2b.8) If a community lacks adequate employment opportunities, workers are often forced to drive long distances to find jobs. The overwhelming majority of Thomasville residents work within the city, reflecting Thomasville's role as an employment center for the county. Currently, the City of Thomasville serves as an employment center for residents living in the surrounding unincorporated county. The population of Thomasville swells 44.9% (26,323) during the daytime due to workers commuting into the city. However, the proportion of workers commuting outside of the city has risen slightly between 1990 (20%) and 2000 (23.4%). With the trend toward decentralized employment, this figure is expected to continue to rise in the future. Likewise, the number of people commuting across state lines is expected to increase, given the strength of Tallahassee and Leon County, Florida as an employment center. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Leon County had almost five times the number of jobs as Thomas County in 2004.

Table 2b.8 – Commuting Patterns 1990-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total Workforce	7,159	100.0%	7,200	100.0%
Worked in State of residence	6,859	95.8%	6,947	96.5%
Worked in place of residence	5,729	80.0%	5,515	76.6%
Worked outside of place of residence	1,430	20.0%	1,685	23.4%
Worked outside of state of residence	300	4.2%	253	3.5%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Labor force participation rates for the City of Thomasville between the years of 1990 and 2000 are listed in Table 2.9. Labor force participation refers to the number of people of working age who are employed or seeking employment. In the City of Thomasville, the labor force participation rate has declined from 60% in 1990 to 56.4% in the year 2000. The city also has a lower labor force participation rate (56.4%) than the State of Georgia as a whole (66.1%). This may be due to the city's aging population and the growth in the retirement population.

Labor force participation is higher among men (62.2%) than among women (51.8%) due to the traditional female tasks of child rearing and care giving. However, the difference in labor force participation rates between men and women has narrowed from 16.6% in 1990 to 10.4% in 2000. Female labor force participation has increased steadily across the nation from 33.9% in 1950 to 57.5% in 2000. Nationally, the largest increase in female labor force participation occurred as the baby boom generation entered the workforce in the 1970s. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics projections, the national trend toward increased female labor force participation is expected to stabilize at 58% by 2025.

Table 2b.9 – Labor Force Participation 1990-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total Males and Females	13,023		13,855	
In labor force:	7,808	60.0%	7,813	56.4%
Civilian Labor force	7,776	59.7%	7,794	56.3%
Civilian Employed	7,261	55.8%	7,242	52.3%
Civilian unemployed	515	4.0%	552	4.0%
In Armed Forces	32	0.2%	19	0.1%
Not in labor force	5,215	40.0%	6,042	43.6%
Total Males	5,508		6,063	
Male In labor force:	3,831	69.6%	3,773	62.2%
Male Civilian Labor force	3,799	69.0%	3,765	62.1%
Male Civilian Employed	3,624	65.8%	3,535	58.3%
Male Civilian unemployed	175	3.2%	230	3.8%
Male In Armed Forces	32	0.6%	8	0.1%
Male Not in labor force	1,677	30.4%	2,290	37.8%
Total Females	7,515		7,792	
Female In labor force:	3,977	52.9%	4,040	51.8%
Female Civilian Labor force	3,977	52.9%	4,029	51.7%
Female Civilian Employed	3,637	48.4%	3,707	47.6%
Female Civilian unemployed	340	4.5%	322	4.1%
Female In Armed Forces	0	0.0%	11	0.1%
Female Not in labor force	3,538	47.1%	3,752	48.2%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

Average weekly wages data are unavailable at the city level. However, average weekly wages data are provided for Thomas County in Table 2b.10. Unsurprisingly, management and professional/technical professions earn the most, with a county average of \$934 and \$836 per week respectively. Manufacturing offers the third highest average wages with \$711 per week. The overall decline in manufacturing in the county could pose problems for the workforce as relatively high wage jobs are lost. Growing sectors such as administrative work offer some of the lowest wages in the county (\$374/week).

Comparable wages for the State of Georgia are also provided in Table 2b.11. The average weekly wage for all industries in Thomas County (\$547) was substantially lower than the statewide average weekly wage (\$728). However, statewide average weekly wages are strongly influenced by the Atlanta MSA, where both wages and the cost of living are substantially higher than in rural areas such as Thomas County and smaller cities such as the City of Thomasville.

Table 2b.10 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, Thomas County

Sector	NAICS Code	2001	2002	2003	2004*
All Industries		\$522	\$515	\$516	\$547
Agriculture	11	ND	ND	ND	ND
Mining	21	ND	ND	ND	ND
Utilities	22	ND	ND	\$450	ND
Construction	23	\$465	\$492	\$514	\$515
Manufacturing	31-33	\$708	\$613	\$644	\$711
Wholesale Trade	42	\$627	\$614	\$663	\$674
Retail	44-45	\$341	\$373	\$394	\$396
Transportation and Warehousing	48-49	ND	ND	\$640	ND
Information	51	\$561	\$518	\$513	\$541
Finance and Insurance	52	\$676	\$660	\$655	\$636
Real Estate	53	\$393	\$442	\$468	\$524
Professional and Technical	54	\$892	ND	ND	\$836
Management	55	\$646	ND	ND	\$934
Administrative	56	\$335	\$359	\$362	\$374
Educational Services	61	ND	ND	ND	ND
Health Care and Social Work	62	ND	ND	ND	ND
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	\$276	\$297	\$322	\$337
Accommodation and Food Service	72	\$177	\$180	\$183	\$214
Other Services	81	\$332	\$348	\$388	\$408
Public Administration (State Govt.)	92	\$550	\$562	\$564	\$564
Public Administration (Local Govt.)	92	ND	ND	ND	ND
Unclassified	99	\$335	\$315	\$228	\$267

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

*Preliminary Figures

ND = Non-Discloseable

Table 2b.11 - Average Weekly Wages 2001-2004, State of Georgia

Sector	NAICS Code	2001	2002	2003	2004*
All Industries		\$676	\$687	\$704	\$728
Agriculture	11	\$416	\$409	\$420	\$432
Mining	21	\$857	\$915	\$952	\$995
Utilities	22	\$1,235	\$1,292	\$1,312	\$1,315
Construction	23	\$686	\$693	\$710	\$739
Manufacturing	31-33	\$712	\$727	\$761	\$797
Wholesale Trade	42	\$1,021	\$1,019	\$1,032	\$1,084
Retail	44-45	\$433	\$440	\$454	\$464
Transportation and Warehousing	48-49	\$807	\$824	\$838	\$868
Information	51	\$1,101	\$1,098	\$1,148	\$1,181
Finance and Insurance	52	\$1,051	\$1,081	\$1,117	\$1,174
Real Estate	53	\$669	\$697	\$715	\$769
Professional and Technical	54	\$1,081	\$1,089	\$1,099	\$1,136
Management	55	\$1,122	\$1,153	\$1,251	\$1,394
Administrative	56	\$473	\$485	\$514	\$528
Educational Services	61	\$568	\$581	\$680	\$706
Health Care and Social Work	62	\$654	\$678	\$694	\$723
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	\$523	\$585	\$552	\$524
Accommodation and Food Service	72	\$257	\$259	\$261	\$269
Other Services	81	\$451	\$466	\$483	\$498
Public Administration (State Govt.)	92	\$633	\$654	\$661	\$660
Public Administration (Local Govt.)	92	\$568	\$584	\$602	\$622
Unclassified	99	\$745	\$724	\$688	\$759

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

*Preliminary Figures

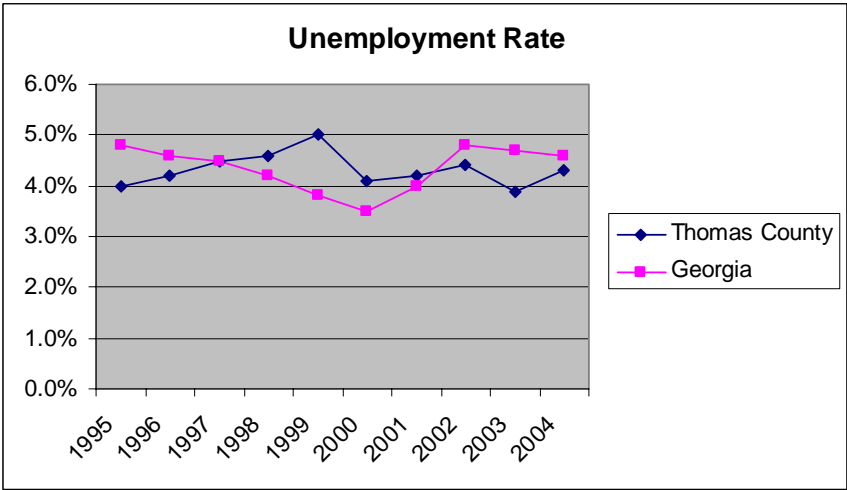
Unemployment figures are also unavailable at the city level. Annual unemployment rates between 1995 and 2004 are provided for Thomas County and the State of Georgia in Table 2b.12. Curiously, unemployment patterns in Thomas County have run counter to statewide unemployment rates over the ten years surveyed. (See Figure 2b.1) This pattern highlights the lack of influence of the Atlanta Metropolitan economy over Thomas County and Thomasville. While the Atlanta MSA is the largest economic engine of the state, Thomasville is more closely tied to the rural South Georgia economy and to some degree the Tallahassee Metropolitan Area economy in the Florida panhandle.

Table 2b.12 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Thomas County	4.0%	4.2%	4.5%	4.6%	5.0%	4.1%	4.2%	4.4%	3.9%	4.3%
Georgia	4.8%	4.6%	4.5%	4.2%	3.8%	3.5%	4.0%	4.8%	4.7%	4.6%

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Figure 2b.1 – Unemployment Rate 1995-2004, County and State



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Economic Resources

Potential economic resources within a community include development agencies, public and private economic development programs, educational and training facilities, and policy tools.

Payroll Development Authority

The Payroll Development Authority (PDA) coordinates economic development activities between the city and county. The PDA was awarded a \$1,250,000 EDGE grant to partially fund the purchase of a building in Thomasville that has since been leased out as a furniture distribution center. Likewise, the authority also secured EDGE funds in order to assist in the construction of a food processing facility on behalf of American Fresh Foods on the Thomasville bypass highway.

Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce

The Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce was organized as the Thomasville Chamber in February of 1921. The Chamber was incorporated on November 1, 1947, and became the first accredited Chamber in Georgia in February of 1965. The stated mission of the Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of Thomas County, Georgia. The Chamber strongly supports both existing business and industry, and the development of quality new business and industry, while preserving the values and historical resources of the community. The Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce sponsors a variety of economic development programs throughout the county:

- Agribusiness Program – Formed in 1991 to provide more input to the Chamber on agriculture-related issues from people directly involved in farming and agriculture related businesses.
- Ambassadors Program – A voluntary group who serve as goodwill liaisons for the Chamber, visit members throughout the year, attend hundreds of ribbon cuttings/ground breakings, and host special events like Business After Hours.
- Economic Outlook Luncheon – An annual economic forum presented by the Selig Center for Economic Growth and University of Georgia’s Terry College of Business. The luncheon includes an economic forecast of how the economies of Thomas County, Georgia, and the U.S. will perform in the coming year.

- Existing Industry Committee – This committee is tailored to the needs of current industrial operations, and deals with labor relations, education, drug control, and new environmental issues. The Existing Industry Committee provides a forum for current business leaders to voice their concerns. Regular events include the annual Industry Appreciation Dinner and the bi-annual Business and Industry Trade Show.
- Leadership Program – A community education program carried out to acquaint existing and emerging leaders with contemporary and future issues, needs, services, and resources within the community.
- Leadership for the Millennium - A youth leadership program carried out by the Chamber for high school juniors designed to educate them on becoming future community leaders through team building skills, community awareness, and the advantages of living and doing business in Thomas County.
- Team 2000 – a non-profit that raises funds to incentivize new businesses to locate in the area and thereby create new jobs.
- VOOM (Voice of Our Members) – An informal monthly meeting to facilitate business networking and the exchange of ideas.
- Women’s Forum of Thomas County – A monthly forum for business networking among professional women.

Thomasville Georgia Main Street Association

The Thomasville Main Street Association is a member of the National Main Street organization. The National Main Street organization is an economic development program created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to encourage the revitalization of historic town centers. Along with the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s emphasis on architectural integrity, the Main Street Program provides a proven set of economic development tools uniquely tailored to historic town centers. Thomasville was designated a Georgia Main Street City in 1982 and was among the first cities in the State and in the Nation to receive that designation. Since then, a network of over 1,600 Main Street communities has developed across the nation. In 1998 Thomasville won the Great American Main Street Award, as one of only five cities selected annually.

The Thomasville Main Street Program provides leadership for the downtown area through collective problem solving and by acting as a liaison between businesses and the city government. The Main Street Association also administers several programs that have been instrumental in maintaining the vitality of downtown Thomasville.

- Downtown Redevelopment Plan - Initiated a comprehensive redevelopment plan for downtown, including streetscape improvements and design guidelines.
- Façade Grant Program - Administers program provided by the City of Thomasville to encourage façade restoration.
- Special Events - Sponsors special events such as the Rose Festival and Victorian Christmas.
- Marketing – Advertising campaigns to bring shoppers to the downtown area.
- Information - Provides consulting services for downtown businesses and maintains a list of available properties.

Downtown Development Authority of Thomasville

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) provides a mechanism for financing improvements in downtown Thomasville. The Authority has the power to issue bonds to fund the Main Street Association's redevelopment efforts. Recent projects include the restoration of the historic Mitchell House Hotel, and the relocation of Flowers Industries' 100-employee Shared Services Department from the town's periphery. The DDA purchased and renovated a vacant J.C. Penny building in order to accommodate Flowers Bakery.

Thomasville Team 2000

Thomasville Team 2000 is an economic development umbrella group set up in the 1990s by the Downtown Development Authority of Thomasville in order to better coordinate economic development activities. The organization serves both the City of Thomasville and Thomas County. The organization conducts aggressive business recruitment efforts aimed at luring businesses to Thomasville and Thomas County. The organization offers grants and low interest loans aimed at securing new businesses that range from \$25,000 to \$500,000. Although the organization is primarily funded through private donations, the city and county both contribute \$25,000 each annually.

Valdosta State University Small Business Development Center

Valdosta State University's (VSU) Small Business Development Center is a public service unit of the VSU College of Business Administration that provides business and economic development assistance for Thomas County and nine other surrounding counties in South Georgia. The SBDC is a program supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The SBDC offers free, confidential consulting to existing business owners as well as clients in the final stages of opening a new business venture. For individuals considering opening a business, the SBDC offers low cost courses in starting your own business. The program also distributes printed materials such as business planning workbooks, frequently asked tax questions, and small business loan basics.

Thomasville/Thomas County Convention and Visitor's Bureau

The Thomasville/Thomas County Convention and Visitor's Bureau promotes the tourism and hospitality industry within both Thomasville and Thomas County. The Convention and Visitor's Bureau operates a downtown visitor's center providing informational handouts located within the Chamber of Commerce building on Broad Street. The Convention and Visitor's bureau also operates a website featuring listings of accommodations, attractions, tours, shopping and dining.

Economic Trends

Detailed annual employment statistics for the City of Thomasville are unavailable. However, the Bureau of Labor Statistics does provide annual employment data at the county level.

Employment change by sector in Thomas County between the 1994 and 2004 is presented in Table 2b.13. The industry with the largest percentage of growth was the professional and business services, which more than tripled between 1994 and 2004. The professional and business services sector also added the most absolute number of jobs (2,727) over the same time period. The industry with the second highest absolute growth in jobs was education and health services, which added 862 jobs between 1994 and 2004. With the growing popularity of Thomas County as a retirement community and the overall aging of the population, medical services are expected to increase in importance in the coming years.

The sector with the largest employment decline was manufacturing, which lost 1,452 jobs (-29.2%) between 1994 and 2004. While the manufacturing industry is one of the highest paying sectors, it has steadily declined in importance throughout the nation. With increases in global trade and foreign competition, the manufacturing industry is expected to continue to decline. Thomas County may be especially vulnerable to industrial decline, given the county's heavy reliance on manufacturing. The trade, transportation, and utilities sector also experienced some decline (-2.6%) over the time period. The county's loss of retail employment may be due to an overall trend of decreased consumer spending experienced during the ongoing nationwide economic recession. The trend toward large retail operations may also decrease the proportion of overall employment in the retail sector. While large-scale stores employ more workers in each establishment, they employ fewer workers for the same level of receipts.

Table 2b.13 – Employment Change by Sector 1994-2004, Thomas County

Sector	Employment,	Employment,	Employment Change	Percent Growth,
	1994	2004		1994 - 2004
Natural Resources and Mining	601	613	12	2.0%
Construction	519	622	103	19.8%
Manufacturing	4,981	3,529	-1,452	-29.2%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,398	3,309	-89	-2.6%
Information	274	181	-93	-33.9%
Financial Activities	542	888	346	63.8%
Professional and Business Services	897	3,624	2,727	304.0%
Education and Health Services	4,896	5,758	862	17.6%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,153	1,536	383	33.2%
Other Services	578	557	-21	-3.6%
Public Administration	301	350	49	16.3%
TOTAL	18,140	20,967	2,827	15.6%

Source: UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Shift share analysis allocates economic growth and decline to various factors. (See Table 2b.14) The intent of this analysis is to isolate the economic growth or decline that is due to overall national economic change, national change in the industry, and regional economic advantages and disadvantages. The national growth component separates out the employment

growth that is due to the overall growth of the total US economy. Between 1994 and 2004, the US economy grew by 14.9%. Therefore, an increase of 14.9% of each industry could be explained by national economic growth. The industrial mix component includes the trends of growth or decline within the industry at the national level. For example, manufacturing declined -31% between 1994 and 2004. Therefore, a -31% decline in manufacturing employment could be explained by the national decline in manufacturing. The difference between the actual growth or decline within an industry and the sum of the national growth and industrial mix components equals the competitive share. It is assumed that the competitive share represents the regional economic advantage in producing a good or service.

The industry with the largest competitive share in Thomas County is professional and business services, which grew by 2,727 jobs between 1994 and 2004. Of the growth in professional and business services, 2,426 jobs are attributed to the county's regional competitive advantage. Growth in financial activities is also attributed to the county's competitive share. Leisure and hospitality, public administration, and natural resources and mining also include positive competitive share components. The industries with a positive competitive share represent potential regional specializations and good targets for growth. Interestingly, growth in education and health services is attributed entirely to the national growth and industrial mix factors rather than the county's competitive advantage.

Table 2b.14 - Shift Share Analysis 1994-2004, Thomas County

Sector	National Growth Component %	National Growth Component Jobs	Industrial Mix Component %	Industrial Mix Component Jobs	Competitive Share Component %	Competitive Share Component Jobs
Natural Resources and Mining	14.9	90	-16.9	-101	3.9	24
Construction	14.9	78	22.9	119	-18	-93
Manufacturing	14.9	744	-31	-1,542	-13.1	-653
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	14.9	507	-4.1	-139	-13.4	-457
Information	14.9	41	-2.8	-8	-46.1	-126
Financial Activities	14.9	81	1.4	8	47.5	257
Professional and Business Services	14.9	134	18.6	167	270.5	2,426
Education and Health Services	14.9	731	10.3	502	-7.6	-371
Leisure and Hospitality	14.9	172	9.5	109	8.8	101
Other Services	14.9	86	2.6	15	-21.2	-122
Public Administration	14.9	45	-6.3	-19	7.7	23
TOTAL		2,709		-889		1,009

UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

Because many of the sector categories provided by the economic census include only ranges of employment, it is difficult to calculate city-level projections. However, county-level data do allow for future projections based on historic employment trends. Because the City of Thomasville is the primary employment center within the county, the trends identified in the Thomas County projections are directly applicable to the city. However, the city’s decline in natural resources and mining employment is likely to be even steeper than the job losses found in the county, given the trend toward urbanization of the fringe areas around Thomasville.

Projected employment by industry in Thomas County from 2005-2025 is listed in Table 2b.15. Projected employment is based on historic employment trends in Thomas County from 1990-2004. Historic trends predict continued rapid expansion in the professional and business services sector over the next twenty years (116.4%). However, this growth may not be sustainable, given the much lower historic growth within the national professional and business services sector. Education and health services are expected to continue to grow substantially (65.2%) because of growth within the industry and the county population. Financial activities are also expected to grow substantially (49.9%) due to the city’s regional specialization as a center of business. Leisure and hospitality are expected to emerge as a major industry within the county (48.8%).

Table 2b.15 - Projected Employment by Industry 2005-2025, Thomas County

Industry	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Change 05-25	% Change 05-25
Natural Resources and Mining	607	576	545	514	483	-124	-20.5%
Construction	625	637	650	662	675	50	8.0%
Manufacturing	3,453	3,074	2,695	2,316	1,938	-1,516	-43.9%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3,324	3,400	3,476	3,551	3,627	303	9.1%
Information	177	156	135	114	93	-84	-47.7%
Financial Activities	911	1,024	1,138	1,251	1,365	454	49.9%
Professional and Business Services	3,848	4,968	6,087	7,207	8,327	4,479	116.4%
Education and Health Services	5,952	6,922	7,892	8,862	9,832	3,880	65.2%
Leisure and Hospitality	1,574	1,767	1,959	2,151	2,343	769	48.8%
Other Services	556	550	544	539	533	-23	-4.1%
Public Administration	357	391	425	459	493	136	38.0%
TOTAL	21,383	23,464	25,545	27,625	29,706	8,323	38.9%

Source: Robert and Company; Base Data - UGA Georgia Statistics System <<http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>>

The economic challenges faced by Thomas County over the next 20 years are intertwined with the economy of the City of Thomasville. Continued growth within professional and business services, financial activities, and public administration sectors depends on the City of Thomasville’s ability to consolidate its role as the business and administrative center for the region. The strength of these sectors is crucial in maintaining high wage employment within the county. Growth in the education and health services sectors depends on the strength of Thomasville institutions such as Archbold Medical Center and Thomas University. Likewise, the growth of tourism within the county depends in part on maintaining a vibrant downtown in the City of Thomasville. Within the county, tourism also depends on the protection of unique natural resources, which attract visitors for hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and ecotourism.

Industrial restructuring is the central economic challenge in the county. Thomas County is especially vulnerable to industrial decline because of its high level of manufacturing employment. In the post-industrial economy, service employment has been one of the highest growth sectors. However, service employment industries have relatively low average wages. Therefore it is crucial to develop future high wage industries in order to maintain the county’s

standard of services and quality of life. Possible high wage growth sectors include financial activities, professional and business services, and education and health services.

3.A HOUSING – THOMAS COUNTY

Introduction

The housing element provides an inventory of the existing housing stock in Thomas County. The housing element also includes a comparison of the existing housing stock to the demographic and economic conditions in the county. The assessment evaluates the adequacy of the housing stock in meeting the needs of the existing population. Likewise, anticipated future population increases and economic changes are factored into the need for future housing development.

Existing Housing Supply

According to U.S. Census data there were 18,285 housing units in Thomas County in 2000 (Table 3a.1). Of these 18,285 units, 8,949 were located in the unincorporated county (Table 3a.2), 7,793 were located in Thomasville, and 1,543 were located in the county's remaining smaller cities. The total number of housing units in Thomas County increased by 2,349 (14.7%) between 1990 and 2000. The percentage of each type of housing unit in the county remained relatively steady during the 1990's. One notable change is the 89.1% increase in the number of multifamily housing units in the unincorporated county. The largest numbers of new units constructed were detached single units and mobile homes. These increases are probably a direct response to the one dwelling unit per acre zoning instituted in the county in 1996.

Table 3a.1 - Housing Mix 1990 – 2000, Thomas County

Unit Type	1990		2000		Change 90-00	
	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%
Single Units (detached)	10,757	67.5%	11,832	64.7%	1,075	10.0%
Single Units (attached)	162	1.0%	293	1.6%	131	80.9%
Multi Family	1,797	11.3%	2,002	10.9%	205	11.4%
Mobile Home, Trailer, or Other	3,220	20.2%	4,158	22.7%	938	29.1%
TOTAL Housing Units	15,936	100.0%	18,285	100.0%	2,349	14.7%

Source: 1990 Census, SF 3 and 2000 Census SF3

Table 3a.2 - Housing Mix 1990 – 2000, Unincorporated Thomas County

Unit Type	1990		2000		Change 90-00	
	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%
Single Units (detached)	4,062	59.4%	5,088	56.9%	1,026	25.3%
Single Units (attached)	32	0.5%	85	0.9%	53	165.6%
Multi Family	129	1.9%	244	2.7%	115	89.1%
Mobile Home, Trailer, or Other	2,610	38.2%	3,532	39.5%	922	35.3%
TOTAL Housing Units	6,833	100.0%	8,949	100.0%	2,116	31.0%

Source: 1990 Census, SF 3 and 2000 Census SF3

Table 3a.3 – Building Permits Issued in Unincorporated County 2001 - 2004

Category	2001	2002	2003	2004	TOTAL
Single Family Residential	101	129	117	145	492
Multifamily Residential	7	6	16	31	60
Mobile Home Permit*	252	203	187	159	801
Total	360	338	320	335	1,353

Source: Thomas County Building Department

Since 2000 there has been a relative boom in housing construction in Thomas County (Table 3a.3). During the 2001 – 2004 time period 1,353 building permits were issued for housing units. This represents a 16% growth in the county’s number of housing units during the four-year period. This rapid growth has been steady with an average of 340 permits being issued for new housing each year. If this rate of growth continues, the number of housing units in the unincorporated county may grow by 41% during the current decade (2000 – 2010) compared to the 27% growth rate during the previous decade.

It is worth noting that the number of mobile home permits is much larger than the permits for single family homes. This difference may indicate a growing need for more affordable housing options in the county, as manufactured housing typically costs 10% less than site built homes¹.

Looking ahead, residential development is expected to continue to increase in Thomas County. Housing unit projections have been prepared based on the Moderate High Growth population projections included in the Population Section (See Table 1a.2). This projection is based on an increase in driver’s licenses between 1996 and 2003. Due to Census reporting and the format of the population projections provided for the county, these housing unit projections are for the entirety of Thomas County, including incorporated cities. As shown in Table 3a.4, it is estimated that there will be 27,960 households and total 30,979 housing units. A predicted 10.8% vacancy rate is responsible for fewer households than housing units (See Table 3a.7). Based on the Moderate High Population projections, the County is expected to have an additional 12,694 housing units by 2025 (30,979). The majority of housing units will continue to be single family detached units (20,046). Manufactured homes will increase by 2,887 units and will account for nearly 23% of all housing units in Thomas County by 2025.

Table 3a.4 – Housing Projections for Thomas County 2000 – 2025

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Projected Households	16,309	18,122	20,127	22,485	25,052	27,960
Housing Units	18,285	20,079	22,301	24,913	27,758	30,979
Single family detached units	11,832	12,993	14,431	16,121	17,962	20,046
Single family attached units	293	322	357	399	445	496
Multi-family units	2,002	2,198	2,442	2,728	3,039	3,392
Manufactured homes	4,158	4,566	5,071	5,665	6,312	7,045

Source: Robert and Company

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Factory and Site-Built Housing: A Comparison for the 21st Century. October 1998

However, based on an analysis of past trends in the amount of the county housing located in the incorporated areas, a good estimate of future housing units in the unincorporated county can be derived. To estimate housing projections for unincorporated Thomas County, the share of the county that the DCA uses to estimate the unincorporated population of the County were applied to the estimated Moderate High population projections (See Population Section, Table 1a.2). These numbers were used to develop housing projections for unincorporated Thomas County, as provided in Table 3a.5.

Table 3a.5 – Housing Projections for Unincorporated Thomas County 2000 – 2025

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Projected Households	7,717	9,045	10,306	11,776	13,363	15,154
Housing Units	8,949	10,030	11,429	13,060	14,820	16,806
Single family detached units	5,088	5,703	6,498	7,425	8,426	9,555
Single family attached units	85	95	109	124	141	160
Multi-family units	244	273	312	356	404	458
Manufactured homes	3,532	3,959	4,511	5,155	5,849	6,633

Source: Robert and Company 2005 based on population, household and housing unit trends and projections for Thomas County and Thomasville

It is estimated that there will be 16,806 total housing units and 15,154 households in unincorporated areas of Thomas County by 2025. Single family detached units will continue to represent the majority of housing units (9,555), with the number of manufactured homes as the second largest category of housing units (6,633).

It should be noted that both sets of projections provided here are based largely on past (1980 – 2000) trends and do not present a statement regarding the desired or most appropriate housing mix for the county. Additionally, the projections presented here do not take future county policy decisions or city annexations into account. Changes in the county’s zoning districts or development regulations can greatly impact future residential development, especially in the long term. It is anticipated that the county will revisit its zoning and development regulations in the near future, specifically with regard to new development located within the recently designated Urban Service Area surrounding the City of Thomasville.

Occupancy Characteristics and Housing Conditions

The tenure of housing in Thomas County from 1990 through 2000 is listed in Table 3a.6. The tenure of a housing unit refers to its status as owner or renter occupied. Owner occupancy is often viewed as a key factor in maintaining neighborhood stability. The majority of housing units in Thomas County were owner occupied in both 1990 (61.5%) and 2000 (62.4%). The unincorporated portion of Thomas County had a higher proportion of owner occupancy in both 1990 (69.1%) and 2000 (69.9%). This difference is due to the fact that many apartments are located within the incorporated cities. For example, in the year 2000, the City of Thomasville had 36% renter occupied housing as compared to 19.2% in the unincorporated county. There have been no significant changes in the tenure of Thomas County housing over the past decade.

Table 3a.6 – Tenure of Housing 1990-2000, Thomas County

Thomas County	1990	%	2000	%
TOTAL Housing Units Built	15,936	100.0%	18,285	100.0%
Housing Units Vacant	1,613	10.1%	1,976	10.8%
Housing Units Owner Occupied	9,805	61.5%	11,409	62.4%
Housing Units Renter Occupied	4,518	28.4%	4,900	26.8%
Unincorporated Thomas County	1990	%	2000	%
TOTAL Housing Units Built	6,836	100.0%	8,945	100.0%
Housing Units Vacant	698	10.2%	976	10.9%
Housing Units Owner Occupied	4,723	69.1%	6,254	69.9%
Housing Units Renter Occupied	1,415	20.7%	1,715	19.2%

Source: US Census Bureau

The rate of vacancy and occupancy is also an important characteristic of the local housing market. In addition to reflecting the status of the economy, the vacancy rate shows the match between housing supply and demand within the local market. By comparing local and regional vacancy rates, the unique local housing market and economy can be discerned. An inventory of occupied and vacant housing units between 1990 and 2000 in Thomas County and Georgia is provided in Table 3a.7. In the year 2000, unincorporated Thomas County had a slightly higher vacancy rate (10.9%) than the State of Georgia (8.4%). The vacancy rate in Thomas County has risen only slightly between 1990 (10.1%) and 2000 (10.8%). There is little difference between the vacancy rate in unincorporated Thomas County (10.9%) and the City of Thomasville (10.3%).

Table 3a.7 – Occupied and Vacant Housing Units 1990-2000, Thomas County and Georgia

Jurisdiction	Occupied Housing Units	%	Vacant Housing Units	%
1990				
Thomas County	14,323	89.9%	1,613	10.1%
Unincorporated Thomas County	6,131	89.8%	698	10.2%
Georgia	2,366,615	89.7%	271,803	10.3%
2000				
Thomas County	16,309	89.2%	1,976	10.8%
Unincorporated Thomas County	7,969	89.1%	976	10.9%
Georgia	3,006,369	91.6%	275,368	8.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Vacancy rates for various types of dwellings are listed in Table 3a.8. The vacancy rate among rental units in Thomas County (16.4%) is significantly higher than both the City of Thomasville (9.7%) and the State of Georgia (8.5%). On the other hand, the vacancy rate among owner-occupied housing units was lower in Thomas County (2.7%) than the City of Thomasville (4.0%).

Table 3a.8 – Vacancy Rates by Occupancy Type 2000, County, City, and State Comparison

Unit Type	Unincorporated Thomas County	City of Thomasville	Georgia
Vacant Units for Sale Only	172	176	46,425
Owner Vacancy Rate	2.7%	4.0%	2.2%
Vacant Units for Rent Only	337	300	90,320
Rental Vacancy Rate	16.4%	9.7%	8.5%
Other Vacant Units for Sale or Rent	133	287	23,327
Vacant Units for Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	120	37	57,847
Total Vacant Units	762	800	275,368

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The age of housing units is an important indicator of housing quality. Older housing tends to require additional maintenance and repairs. Therefore, code enforcement issues may be of importance in maintaining neighborhood stability in older neighborhoods. The median year of construction for housing units in Thomas County as a whole was 1970 in the year 1990 and 1975 in the year 2000. This increase is the result of the large proportion of total housing units constructed between 1990 and 2000 (34.0%). (See Table 3a.9)

Table 3a.9 – Age of Housing 1990-2000, Unincorporated Thomas County

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Built 1990 or after	NA	NA	3,047	34.0%
Built 1980 - 1989	2,360	34.5%	2043	22.8%
Built 1970 - 1979	2,061	30.1%	1,561	17.4%
Built 1960 - 1969	1,061	15.5%	880	9.8%
Built 1950 - 1959	432	6.3%	533	6.0%
Built 1940 - 1949	299	4.4%	352	3.9%
Built 1939 or earlier	624	9.1%	539	6.0%
Total Units	6,837	100.0%	8,955	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 (sf3)

Another measure of the condition of housing is the presence of complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. The status of housing facilities in unincorporated Thomas County is detailed in Table 3a.10. In the year 2000, 1.1% of the housing units in Thomas County lacked plumbing facilities and 1.3% lacked complete kitchen facilities.

Table 3a.10 – Condition of Housing 1990-2000, Unincorporated Thomas County

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total housing units	6,830	100.0%	8,943	100.0%
Complete Plumbing Facilities	6,716	98.3%	8,843	98.9%
Lacking Plumbing Facilities	114	1.7%	101	1.1%
Complete kitchen facilities	6,717	98.3%	8,832	98.8%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	113	1.7%	112	1.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 (sf3)

Cost of Housing

Housing costs for renter occupied housing units in Thomas County are provided in Table 3a.11. Gross rent is used as a measure of housing costs in order to eliminate the discrepancy caused by some landlords including utilities in with rent. Gross rent consists of both the rental rate for the unit and average monthly utility costs. The median gross rent across Thomas County (\$446) is relatively inexpensive as compared to the State of Georgia as a whole (\$613). Only 7.3% of the county’s rental housing stock costs \$750 or more per month.

Table 3a.11 – Gross Rent, Specified Renter-Occupied Housing Units 2000; City, County, and State Comparison

Gross Rent	Thomas County		Uninc. Thomas		Georgia	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Less than \$250	677	16.0%	119	9.1%	84,279	9.3%
\$250 to \$499	1,967	46.4%	736	56.2%	231,100	25.5%
\$500 to \$749	1,289	30.4%	347	26.5%	301,088	33.2%
\$750 to \$999	217	5.1%	100	7.6%	200,611	22.1%
\$1000 or more	92	2.2%	22	1.7%	88,835	9.8%
Total Units With Cash Rent	4,242	100.0%	1,309	100.0%	905,913	100.0%
Median Gross Rent (\$)	\$446		NA		\$613	

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 (sf3)

The change in median gross rent for Thomas County and surrounding areas between 1990 and 2000 is listed in Table 3a.12. The median gross rent in Thomas County in 2000 (\$446) was significantly higher than the surrounding counties in Georgia (\$337-370). The median gross rent in Thomas County increased from \$317 in 1990 to \$446 in 2000. After adjusting for inflation, this represents an increase of 6.8% between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3a.12 – Change in Median Rent 1990-2000, Thomas County and Surrounding Areas

Category	1990	2000	% Change (inflation adjusted)
Thomas County	\$317	\$446	6.8%
Grady County	\$270	\$368	3.4%
Mitchell County	\$237	\$337	7.9%
Colquitt County	\$266	\$370	5.6%
Brooks County	\$255	\$353	5.1%
State of Georgia	\$433	\$613	7.5%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

On the ownership side, the distribution of housing values in Thomas County and the State of Georgia are listed in Table 3a.13. The median value of housing in Thomas County (\$76,900) is relatively low as compared to the State of Georgia (\$111,200). However, statewide housing costs are strongly influenced by the Atlanta Metropolitan region, where urban housing costs are much greater than rural Georgia.

Table 3a.13 – Housing Value 2000, Thomas County and Georgia

Range of Value	Thomas County		Uninc. Thomas		State of Georgia	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Less than \$50,000	2012	26.5%	429	13.9%	151,952	9.5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	3,176	41.9%	1,364	44.2%	545,851	34.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1204	15.9%	716	23.2%	411,817	25.8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	628	8.3%	341	11.0%	211,796	13.3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	370	4.9%	172	5.6%	163,422	10.2%
\$300,000 or greater	196	2.6%	66	2.1%	111570	7.0%
Total	7,586	100.0%	3,088	100.0%	1,596,408	100.0%
Median Value (\$)	\$76,900		NA		\$111,200	

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 (SF3)

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Thomas County (\$76,900) was greater than each of the surrounding Georgia counties (\$64,500-74,900). (Table 3a.14) The mean value of housing in Thomas County also exceeds that of the City of Thomasville (\$69,300). The median value of housing in Thomas County has risen from \$46,400 to \$76,900, reflecting the large quantity of new housing construction in the unincorporated county. After adjusting for inflation, the value of housing increased 25.8% between 1990 and 2000. The change in housing values in Thomas County (25.8%) far exceeds the increases in rental rates (6.8%).

Table 3a.14 – Change in Median Value 1990-2000, Thomas County and Surrounding Areas

Category	1990	2000	% Change (inflation adjusted)
Thomas County	\$46,400	\$76,900	25.8%
Grady County	\$42,600	\$74,900	33.4%
Mitchell County	\$41,000	\$64,500	19.4%
Colquitt County	\$40,200	\$65,400	23.5%
Brooks County	\$42,700	\$67,900	20.7%
State of Georgia	\$70,700	\$111,200	19.4%

Source: US Census Bureau 1990-2000 (SF3)

Local Regulations Effecting Housing Costs

It is important to recognize that housing costs can be influenced by local land use regulations, building rules, and other local policies.

Housing and Building Codes.

One of the primary objectives of a housing code is to ensure minimum standards for habitable dwellings and to prevent the deterioration of housing quality. A housing code requires certain facilities (sanitary, water supply, heating, cooking, etc.) to be in every dwelling unit. Such codes also usually establish minimum dwelling space requirements (e.g. 150 square feet for the first occupant and 100 square feet for each additional occupant) and provisions for the upkeep of home exteriors (walls, doors, windows, etc.). Under such a code, the housing official can designate dwellings as dangerous or unfit for human occupancy, and, if necessary, condemn dangerous or unfit dwellings. Building codes specify minimum standards for construction materials and construction practices when building dwellings, which can also affect cost.

Zoning Ordinance

The location of residential development is governed by use restrictions established by zoning districts. The definition of “family” in the zoning ordinance usually addresses the maximum number of unrelated persons living together in a single-family unit. The Permitted Uses sections of the zoning ordinance either allow or do not allow certain types of housing units. The minimum size of individual housing units is sometimes specified by minimum floor area requirements in the zoning code. Minimum lot sizes and maximum densities establish how many housing units can be built on a given piece of property. Density restrictions influence both the supply of housing as well as the cost per unit of land. Minimum lot widths require certain amounts of street frontage for detached dwellings on individual lots.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision ordinances establish standards for streets, drainage, utilities, and other improvements within subdivisions. The layout of blocks and lots is also guided by standards in the subdivision ordinance. Subdivision standards affect the cost of land for development and, therefore, indirectly affect the total costs of housing built on individual lots subject to that ordinance. Approximately 25 percent of housing costs are attributable to land costs in most real estate markets.

Development Impact Fees

The county does not currently charge development impact fees for roads, recreation and parks, public safety and fire, and/or other eligible facilities. To the extent that developers and builders can pass on to consumers the extra costs of development impact fees, impact fees increase the costs of housing. There is not a consensus among economists that impact fee burdens are shifted forward to the consumer in the form of increased housing costs. Impact fees can create unintended disincentives for the production of affordable housing. Georgia’s development impact fee law allows local governments to exempt affordable housing from impact fees, provided that the money that would be collected as an impact fee be made up through some other funding source. Such exemptions must be tied to the county’s goals and objectives for producing low- and moderate-income housing.

Cost Burdened Households

Cost burdened households are defined as those spending over 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Severely cost burdened households are defined as those spending over 50 percent of their income on housing costs. Among renter households in unincorporated Thomas County 16.2% are classified as cost burdened and 15.5% are classified as severely cost burdened. Statewide, the number of cost burdened and severely cost burdened renters is slightly higher at 18.9% and 16.5% respectively. Likewise, the number of cost burdened ownership households in unincorporated Thomas County (15.5%) is slightly lower than the state average (16.0%). The number of severely cost burdened households in unincorporated Thomas County (2.1%) is significantly lower than the state average (8.6%).

Table 3a.15 – Cost Burdened Households by Tenure 2000, Thomas County and Georgia

Rental Housing	Thomas County	Uninc. Thomas	Georgia
Rent and Bills > 30% < 50% Household Income in 1999	800	258	182,562
% of Total Rental Units	16.8%	16.2%	18.9%
Rent and Bills > 50% Household Income in 1999	719	246	158,922
% of Total Rental Units	15.1%	15.5%	16.5%
TOTAL Rental Units	4,771	1,592	964,446
Owner Occupied Housing	Thomas County	Uninc. Thomas	Georgia
Mortgage and Bills > 30% < 50% Household Income in 1999	803	307	192,147
% of Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units	17.7%	15.5%	16.0%
Mortgage and Bills > 50% Household Income in 1999	545	42	103,568
% of Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units	12.0%	2.1%	8.6%
TOTAL Owner-Occupied Housing Units with a Mortgage	4,541	1,987	1,201,569

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Another related statistic that measures the balance between housing costs and incomes is the rate of overcrowding. Often, when housing prices are high or the supply of units is limited, households are forced to live in crowded conditions. Crowded housing is defined as households that have more than one occupant per room; while severely overcrowded households have more than 1.5 occupants per room. Statistics for overcrowded housing in unincorporated Thomas County and the State of Georgia are provided in Tables 3a.16 and 3a.17. Thomas County has slightly lower proportion of overcrowded households (3.4%) than the State of Georgia (4.8%).

Table 3a.16 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, Unincorporated Thomas County

Occupants per Room	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Total	Percent of Total Units Occupied
1.01 - 1.5 occupants per room (over crowded)	163	89	252	2.6%
1.51 or more occupants per room (severely overcrowded)	42	38	80	0.8%
Total	7,969	1,715	9,684	3.4%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Table 3a.17 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, State of Georgia

Occupants per Room	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Total	Percent of Total Units Occupied
1.01 - 1.5 occupants per room (over crowded)	34,902	53,572	88,474	2.9%
1.51 or more occupants per room (severely overcrowded)	14,813	41,948	56,761	1.9%
Total	49,715	95,520	145,235	4.8%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

As a whole, housing in Thomas County is relatively affordable as compared to statewide housing costs. The median rent and median value of housing are significantly lower than costs across the State of Georgia. Furthermore, the related measures of cost burdened and overcrowded households are also low relative to statewide levels.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Households with Housing Problems

It is important to investigate the socioeconomic characteristics of households that experience housing issues. The statistical measures of overcrowding, cost burdened status, and lack of complete housing facilities are all issues that can be grouped as a general measure of housing problems. By utilizing the US Census' Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data, it is possible to compare the socioeconomic characteristics of people experiencing each of these housing problems without overlap and double-counting between categories. PUMS data offered by the US Census Bureau includes sampled individual records containing all census variables. Thus, by obtaining complete records, it is possible to cross tabulate between census variables. Tables 3.18a-3.26a provide detailed socioeconomic characteristics of households experiencing at least one of the following housing problems: cost burdened status, overcrowding, or lacking complete kitchen or bath facilities.

Low household income is one of the principal causes of the housing problems of cost burdened status, overcrowding, and lack of complete housing facilities. Of households with at least one housing problem, 60.6% have a household income under \$15,000 per year. (Table 3a.18)

Table 3a.18 – Household Income: Households with at least one Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Income Range	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Less Than \$5,000	212	10.3%	291	18.3%	503	13.8%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	471	22.8%	567	35.7%	1,038	28.4%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	316	15.3%	357	22.5%	673	18.4%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	204	9.9%	267	16.8%	471	12.9%
\$20,000 - \$24,999	303	14.7%	95	6.0%	398	10.9%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	562	27.2%	13	0.8%	575	15.7%
\$35,000 and Over	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3a.19 shows the number of households experiencing at least one housing problem that received social security or public assistance income. Of the 3,658 households with at least one housing problem, 1,463 received either social security or public assistance income. Households experiencing housing problems were more likely to be receiving public assistance income (7.1%) than the total county households (1.3%). Likewise, a large proportion of households with housing problems receive social security income (32.9%) as compared to all households in Thomas County (7.3%). The high number of households receiving social security income indicates that much of the population experiencing housing issues are elderly residents.

Table 3a.19 – Social Security and Public Assistance Income: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Income Type	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Social Security Income	529	25.6%	674	42.4%	1,203	32.9%
Public Assistance Income	90	4.4%	170	10.7%	260	7.1%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Despite their low household incomes, most of the persons experiencing at least one housing problem do work for a living (55.5%) (Table 3a.20). Likewise the proportion of persons not in the labor force among those with at least one housing problem (40.3%) is comparable to the proportion among the general population (40.9%). (See Economic Development Section Table 2a.12)

Table 3a.20 – Employment Status: Persons with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Employment Status	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Employed	934	57.4%	1,510	54.3%	2,444	55.5%
Unemployed	60	3.7%	119	4.3%	179	4.1%
Armed Forces	4	0.2%	3	0.1%	7	0.2%
Not In Labor Force	630	38.7%	1,147	41.3%	1,777	40.3%
TOTAL	1,628	100.0%	2,779	100.0%	4,407	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3a.21 provides occupational characteristics of persons living in households with at least one of the housing problems of cost burdened status, overcrowding, or lacking complete kitchen and bath facilities. The largest occupational categories of persons with housing problems are management and professional jobs (30.5%) sales and office (24.5%), services (18.2%), and production, transportation, and materials moving (16.4%). This distribution closely matches the distribution of occupations among the general population. (See Economic Development Section, Table 2a.9)

Table 3a.21 – Occupation: Persons in Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Occupation	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Management & Professional	330	35.3%	415	27.5%	745	30.5%
Services	155	16.6%	290	19.2%	445	18.2%
Sales & Office	188	20.1%	410	27.2%	598	24.5%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	11	1.2%	14	0.9%	25	1.0%
Construction, Extraction & Maintenance	92	9.9%	137	9.1%	229	9.4%
Production, Transportation, & Materials Moving	158	16.9%	244	16.2%	402	16.4%
TOTAL	934	100.0%	1,510	100.0%	2,444	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3a.22 displays the household type for households with at least one housing problem. The largest proportion of households with at least one housing problem is married couple families (46.2%). Approximately one-fifth (21%) of the households with at least one housing problem are families headed by single females. Family households in general represent 69.7% of those experiencing housing problems.

Table 3a.22 – Household Type: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Household Type	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Married Couple Family	1,240	60.0%	450	28.3%	1,690	46.2%
Male Householder Family	66	3.2%	25	1.6%	91	2.5%
Female Householder Family	308	14.9%	461	29.0%	769	21.0%
Male Alone Nonfamily	128	6.2%	209	13.1%	337	9.2%
Male not Alone Nonfamily	37	1.8%	57	3.6%	94	2.6%
Female Alone Nonfamily	265	12.8%	327	20.6%	592	16.2%
Female not Alone Nonfamily	24	1.2%	61	3.8%	85	2.3%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3a.23 presents the age of the householder for households with at least one housing problem. Approximately one-quarter of the households (26.3%) experiencing housing problems were headed by seniors in the 59 and over age group.

Table 3a.23 – Age of Householder: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Age of Householder	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
24 and Under	39	1.9%	183	11.5%	222	6.1%
25 to 59	1,380	66.7%	1,093	68.7%	2,473	67.6%
59 and Over	649	31.4%	314	19.7%	963	26.3%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3a.24 includes a breakdown of household sizes for households experiencing at least one housing problem. The majority of households experiencing housing problems (53.6%) are one- and two-person households. The average household size of the general population in Thomas County was 2.9 persons per unit in the year 2000.

Table 3a.24 – Household Size: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Household Size	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
1 Person	385	18.6%	534	33.6%	919	25.1%
2 Persons	682	33.0%	361	22.7%	1,043	28.5%
3 Persons	394	19.1%	269	16.9%	663	18.1%
4 Persons	340	16.4%	212	13.3%	552	15.1%
5 Persons	152	7.4%	115	7.2%	267	7.3%
6 Persons	74	3.6%	78	4.9%	152	4.2%
Over 6 Persons	41	2.0%	21	1.3%	62	1.7%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

The race of the householder for households experiencing at least one of the housing problems of cost burdened status, overcrowding, or lacking complete kitchen and plumbing facilities is provided in Table 3a.25. The racial composition of persons living with housing problems is nearly identical to the racial composition of the population at large. (See Population Section, Table 2a.16)

Table 3a.25 – Race: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Race	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
White	1,197	57.9%	971	61.1%	2,168	59.3%
Black	833	40.3%	580	36.5%	1,413	38.6%
Hispanic	15	0.7%	17	1.1%	32	0.9%
Other	23	1.1%	22	1.4%	45	1.2%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

The unit type for households with at least one housing problem is listed in Table 3a.26. The majority of the households that are cost burdened, overcrowded, or lacking complete facilities are living in single-family detached housing units (60.9%). Households living in mobile homes also account for a large proportion (22.5%) of the families experiencing housing problems.

Table 3a.26 – Unit Type: Households with At Least One Housing Problem, Thomas County, 2000

Unit Type	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Single Family Detached	1,494	72.2%	735	46.2%	2,229	60.9%
Single Family Attached	17	0.8%	39	2.5%	56	1.5%
Multi Family Total	24	1.2%	527	33.1%	551	15.1%
2 Units	12	0.6%	91	5.7%	103	2.8%
3 or 4 Units	7	0.3%	161	10.1%	168	4.6%
5 to 9 Units	0	0.0%	120	7.5%	120	3.3%
10 to 19 Units	5	0.2%	51	3.2%	56	1.5%
20 to 49 Units	0	0.0%	31	1.9%	31	0.8%
50 or More Units	0	0.0%	73	4.6%	73	2.0%
Mobile Homes and Other	533	25.8%	289	18.2%	822	22.5%
TOTAL	2,068	100.0%	1,590	100.0%	3,658	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Thus, by examining the socioeconomic characteristics of the population experiencing housing problems, planners can evaluate the needs of vulnerable households. The most salient attribute of those households experiencing housing cost burdens, overcrowding, or lack of complete housing facilities is low income. Of the households experiencing at least one of these housing problems, 60.6% had a household income below \$15,000. In contrast, of the total households in Thomas County, 24.5% had incomes below \$15,000. Because of their low income, many households experiencing housing issues are unable to buy a home. Renters make up a relatively large proportion (43.5%) of those experiencing housing problems as compared to the total population (28.4%). On the other hand, the majority of households experiencing housing issues are homeowners (56.5%). Many of the households experiencing housing problems are headed by elderly residents. Roughly one-third of the households experiencing housing problems received social security income and one-quarter were headed by householders 59 years or older.

Aside from low income and age, many of the other socioeconomic characteristics of the population with housing problems closely match the demographics of the general population of Thomas County. The proportion of those with housing problems who are in the labor force (55.5%) closely matches the employment rate of the general population (56.4%). Likewise, families make up roughly two-thirds of both the households with housing problems (69.7%) and the general population (70.3%). Finally, the racial breakdown of households experiencing housing problems is nearly identical to the racial breakdown of the total Thomas County population.

Jobs-Housing Balance

The jobs-housing balance of a community refers to the match between housing costs and wages and household incomes within a community. The planning focus of workforce housing is designed to ensure that those working within a community are able to live near their jobs. By ensuring that housing options match nearby employment opportunities, commuting and traffic can be reduced. A diverse housing stock is necessary to supply the various wage levels of employees working in a given community.

The match between household incomes of Thomas County residents and the county's housing stock is detailed in Table 3a.27. For each income range category of local residents, the maximum affordable mortgage or rent payment has been calculated and compared to the available housing stock. For each income category corresponding number of affordable rental and ownership units has been calculated. Finally, the number of units needed to make up the difference between household income and housing costs has been calculated.

Obviously, the households with the lowest incomes (<\$15,000 HH Income) have the largest shortage of available affordable housing units. Because of the high cost of housing and the very low incomes of these households, it may be necessary to offer housing subsidies in order to accommodate the housing needs of the poorest families. It is simply not cost effective to provide housing at such low rental and mortgage rates through the private market. Some of the lowest income groups may qualify for housing assistance programs provided by the Thomasville Housing Authority or the HUD Section 8 program. Additional details on public housing in Thomasville are offered in the Special Needs Housing section. Because there are a great many rental units fall within the \$300-550 cost range, the lower-middle income residents are well supplied with affordable housing. Interestingly, Thomas County has a deficit of higher end housing as compared to the incomes of residents. Many households may be able to afford larger homes, given their income.

Another aspect of the jobs-housing balance issue is the general proximity of employment centers and residential communities. Many newer suburban communities have been developed as bedroom communities serving regional employment centers. These communities often have a large quantity of housing with relatively few employment opportunities other than minor retail jobs. Conventional zoning schemes have often reinforced this pattern by excluding mixed uses among residential areas. Within the unincorporated portions of Thomas County, most rural residents must commute into Thomasville for employment. However, there are not currently significant residential communities far removed from the Thomasville employment center. Exurban housing development associated with the City of Tallahassee, Florida may lead to jobs-housing balance issues within the unincorporated portions of Thomas County in the future.

Table 3a.27 – Jobs Housing Balance 2000, Thomas County

Income Range	# of Households	Midpoint of Income	Approximate Maximum Affordable Monthly Rent	Rent Range	Rental Units in Range	Deficit or Surplus of Rental Units	Approximate Affordable Ownership Housing Value Range	Ownership Housing Units in this Price Range	Deficit of Ownership Units in Price Range	Total Deficit or Surplus for Income Level
less than \$9999	2,563	\$9,999	\$250	up to \$249	677	-1886	\$10,000 - \$19,999	311	-2252	-1,575
\$10000 - \$14999	1,429	\$12,500	\$312	\$250 - \$299	343	-1086	\$20,000 - \$29,000	396	-1033	-690
\$15000 - \$19999	1,347	\$22,499	\$562	\$300 - \$549	2043	696	\$30,000 - \$39,000	693	-654	1,389
\$20000 - \$29999	2,512	\$25,000	\$625	\$550 - \$599	257	-2255	\$40,000 - \$59,999	1216	-1296	-1,039
\$30000 - \$34999	1,063	\$32,500	\$812	\$600 - \$799	704	-359	\$60,000 - \$69,999	721	-342	362
\$35000 - \$39999	977	\$37,500	\$937	\$800 - \$899	87	-890	\$70,000 - \$79,999	664	-313	-226
\$40000 - \$49999	1,773	\$45,000	\$1,125	\$900 - \$999	39	-1734	\$80,000 - \$89,999	613	-1160	-1,121
\$50000 - \$59999	1,356	\$55,000	\$1,375	\$1000 - \$1249	26	-1330	\$90,000 - \$124,999	1204	-152	-126
\$60000 - \$74999	1,336	\$67,500	\$1,687	\$1250 - \$1499	51	-1285	\$125,000 - \$149,999	574	-762	-711
\$75000 - \$99999	970	\$87,500	\$2,187	\$1500 - \$1999	5	-965	\$150,000 - \$174,999	435	-535	-530
over \$100000	979	\$100,000	\$2,500	\$2,000 or more	10	-969	\$175,000 - \$199,999	193	-786	-776

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 (SF3)

Special Housing Needs

In addition to ensuring the availability of adequate affordable housing, it is also important to provide housing for persons with special needs, such as the elderly; the homeless; victims of domestic violence; migrant farm workers; persons with mental, physical, or developmental disabilities; persons with HIV/AIDS; and persons recovering from substance abuse. The following section includes an inventory of special housing needs providers.

Public Housing and Housing Vouchers

Public housing forms an important component of housing for special needs clients, since many of the factors identified are correlated with low socio-economic status. The Thomasville Housing Authority serves as the primary provider of subsidized housing within Thomas County. The Thomasville Housing Authority administers 254 units of public housing within the City of Thomasville and an additional 39 units within the City of Boston, GA. A breakdown of the public housing units by number of bedrooms is provided in Table 3a.28. The public housing units listed are distributed among five complexes, two of which are townhome-style developments. Of the housing units listed, three are handicap-accessible and one is outfitted for the hearing-impaired. The Thomasville Housing Authority currently does not have public housing specifically designated for the elderly.

Table 3a.28 Public Housing Units, Thomasville Housing Authority

Bedrooms	Units	%
1 Bedroom	64	24%
2 Bedrooms	114	43%
3 Bedrooms	74	28%
4 Bedrooms	12	5%
TOTAL	264	100%

Eligibility for public housing is based on the income and need of local residents. Qualified households that are accepted must pay 30% of their income for rent with additional allowances for dependant minors. Elderly residents of Thomas County public housing are given a \$400 monthly deduction from their calculated income. The Thomas County Housing Authority maintains a waiting list of approximately 100 names of those qualified to receive public housing. This waiting list is typically opened twice yearly depending on the availability of units.

The Thomasville Housing Authority has been consistently rated as “high performing” by the US department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD’s Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) rates housing authorities by the four indicators of unit inspections, maintenance status, resident surveys, and management/financial reviews. Using the PHAS rating system, housing authorities are designated as either “high performing,” “standard,” or “troubled.” Because the Thomasville Housing Authority has consistently been rated as “high performing,” it has been granted additional funds for facilities improvements. Currently, the housing authority is in the process of upgrading all of its units to include central heating and air conditioning.

In addition to the public housing units present in Thomasville, some households receive subsidies via the HUD Section 8 program of rental vouchers. The system of issuing rental vouchers has been designed to avoid the problem of concentration of poverty inherent in many large, dense public housing developments. Section 8 vouchers are administered for Thomas

County by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Rental Assistance Division. DCA currently maintains 101 housing vouchers for Thomas County. Of the Thomas County vouchers, 95% are reserved for residents of Thomas County (including Thomasville and other incorporated areas) and 5% are permitted to be issued to families from surrounding counties. A waiting list of two families is also maintained by DCA. However, the number of people qualifying for housing assistance typically far exceeds the number of vouchers available. For example, 17.4% of the county's population was listed as below the federal poverty level in 1999. Due to funding constraints, the waiting list for vouchers is often closed. As of January 2006, the waiting list for vouchers has been closed since October 2004. The residential complexes of Woodvalley Apartments and Villa North Apartments in Thomasville are both recipients of Section 8 housing vouchers. The Abiding Place Transitional Housing and Shelter provides housing on a "sliding scale" basis, as well as assistance for those in need with social security, disability benefits and work referrals.

Abiding Place Transitional Housing & Shelter
P.O. Box 672
Ochlocknee, GA 31773
(229) 574-5183

Thomas County Housing Authority
216 South College Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-4065

Providence Plaza
115 South Pinetree Boulevard
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 228-4289

Woodvalley Apartments
1325 Warner Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-0682

The Elderly

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, persons aged 62 and over represent 16.2% of the population in Thomas County. In the City of Thomasville, persons aged 62 and over account for 18.7% of the population. There are several apartment complexes that cater specifically to elderly residents such as Windsor Lake Senior Apartments, Hunter's Chase Apartments, and Providence Plaza. A list of assisted living facilities and nursing homes in Thomas County is provided.

Assisted Living Facilities

Kortney's Personal Care Home
212 East Clay Street, Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-0880

Mission of Hope
227 East Hill Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-1133

Next Step Personal Care Home
357 A&B Shoreline Drive
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 227-1600

Plantation Manor
220 Park Ave
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-0880
Capacity: 56 beds

Presbyterian Home
PO Box 407, Quitman, GA 31643-0407
(229) 263-6100

Reaching You Resource Center
717 Wright Street,
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-9810
Provides housing for the mentally disabled and elderly

Southern Pines Retirement Inn
421 Covington Ave
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-6074
Capacity: 96 Beds

Woodleaf
2022 East Pinetree Blvd
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-9810
Capacity: 40 Beds

Nursing Home Facilities

Brian Center Health and Rehabilitation
120 Skyline Drive
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 226-4101
Capacity: 52 Beds

Camellia Gardens of Life Care
804 South Broad Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-0076
Capacity: 83 Beds

Glenn-Mor Nursing Home
10629 Hwy 19 South
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-8942
Capacity: 64 Beds

Hospitality Care
930 South Broad Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-9322
Capacity: 68 Beds

Homeless Services

The homeless constitute an extreme case of special housing needs clients. The Homeplace Shelter for men offers both emergency and transitional housing for those faced with homelessness. The shelter maintains 4 emergency beds and 7 transitional housing beds within their facility. In addition the Homeplace Shelter maintains 6 permanent and 6 transitional beds for the disabled. Rescue Mission Ministries provides meals to the homeless and the hungry, and also provides Christian education to those who desire it. Rescue Mission Ministries also provides emergency financial assistance on a case-by-case basis with some bills, rent, and medication. The Salvation Army provides food and financial assistance for those who qualify, in addition to counseling services. The Salvation Army's Needham House offers shelter specifically for homeless women and mothers with children.

The Homeplace Shelter Inc.
612 E. Clay St.
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 551-0695

Rescue Mission Ministries
1120 West Jackson Street
Thomasville, GA 31792

The Salvation Army – Social Services Office
514 North Madison Street
Thomasville, GA 31792

The Salvation Army - Needham House
207 South Street
Thomasville, GA 31792

Disability and Mental Illness

Table 3a.29 displays a tabulation of the disabled population in Thomas County. Over one-quarter (25.8%) of the city's population over 5 years old is classified as having at least one disability. Of those disabled residents, approximately half are classified as having more than one disability. The county also has a high proportion of disabled residents (25.9%) as compared to the State of Georgia (19.7%).

Table 3a.29 – Disabled Population 2000, City of Thomasville

	Population 2000	% of Total Population
Population with one type of disability	5,105	13.1%
Sensory disability only	469	1.2%
Physical disability only	1,425	3.7%
Mental disability only	614	1.6%
Self care disability only	66	0.2%
Go outside home disability only	805	2.1%
Employment disability only	1,726	4.4%
Population with Two or more disabilities	4,949	12.7%
TOTAL disabled population	10,054	25.8%
TOTAL population over 5 years old	38,948	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Mental health patients are another population that requires special housing facilities and services. There has been a general trend toward deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill for the past several decades. Many state agencies have found that it is more cost effective to treat the mentally ill as outpatients with supportive services rather than to maintain institutional facilities. While medication and services have allowed many patients to live independently, this trend has also increased the need for emergency, transitional, and supportive housing. Georgia Pines, operated by the Georgia Department of Human Resources operates a supportive living program for mental illness patients in Thomas County. As of 2006, the Georgia Pines Supportive Living Program maintained 39 clients who receive services from the agency, including referrals to housing providers. Georgia Pines also operates three group homes with 6 beds each. The three group homes are designated as one male, one female, and one coed.

Georgia Pines
1102 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4335

GIBB Thomasville Village
272 Old Boston Rd.
Thomasville, GA 31792
(850) 576-7145

Thomas Grady Services Center
106 Plantation Oak Drive
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4065

Advocate for and provide opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities.

Domestic Violence

Persons affected by domestic violence are another population that requires special housing services. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, there were 418 police actions relating to family violence in Thomas County in the year 2000. According to the State Department of Human Resources, Georgia family violence programs served approximately 18,000 adults and 10,000 children during 1999, including providing shelter for 3,299 women and 3,742 children.

Halcyon Home provides housing assistance and services for victims of domestic violence in Thomas County. The organization operates an emergency shelter in Thomasville for battered women. The facility has a 15-bed capacity with 6 cribs. The shelter also operates a 24-hour hotline for victim referrals. The organization serves Thomas County as well as four additional surrounding counties. Halcyon Home also offers services such as transportation, counseling, and support groups for victims of domestic violence.

Halcyon Home
P.O. Box 1838
Thomasville, GA 31799
(229) 226-6682

HIV/AIDS

Individuals living with HIV/AIDS are another special needs group that requires housing and supportive services. The Centers for Disease Control reported 23,575 cumulative statewide AIDS cases in June 2001, giving Georgia the ninth largest state population with AIDS. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, there have been 115 reported cases of HIV/AIDS in Thomas County between 1981 and 2000. In 2001, the Center for Applied Research Evaluation Studies conducted a consumer survey of HIV/AIDS needs in Georgia. The study found that in the South Georgia region, the HIV/AIDS patients most in need of additional services were African Americans, females, and low income patients.

Heavenly Home Inc. operates a housing facility for patients with HIV/AIDS. Because Heavenly Home is the only service of its kind in the region, the facility serves as both emergency and transitional housing. While Heavenly Home is located in the City of Thomasville, the group serves Thomas County and 13 other surrounding counties. The Heavenly Home facility has a capacity of 10 beds with a current waiting list of 5 persons. Operating funds for the facility are secured through HUD and other government grant programs. Medical services for Heavenly Home are provided through cooperative work with health care providers such as Georgia Pines and the Thomas County Rural HIV Clinic.

Additional services for patients with HIV/AIDS are available through a variety of government agencies and healthcare providers. Safe Haven provides support for patients with HIV/AIDS such as food, clothing, and vouchers for bills. Safe Haven also provides referrals to housing providers and transportation to assist in housing searches. Health care services for patients with HIV/AIDS such as confidential/anonymous HIV testing are provided by the Thomas County Health Department and the Thomas County Rural HIV Clinic.

Heavenly Home Inc.
(229) 228-9373

Safe Haven, Inc.
P.O. Box 1533
Thomasville, GA 31799
1-888-723-0303

Thomas County Health Department
440 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, Georgia 31799
(229) 226-4250

Thomas County Rural HIV Clinic
(229) 431-1423

Substance Abuse

Substance abusers are another population that requires special housing and services. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs estimates that 2,171 persons or 5% of the Thomas County Population has a need for substance abuse treatment as of 2001. The Phoenix center provides detoxification services and short term emergency housing for substance abusers in Thomas County and five surrounding counties. The Phoenix facility maintains 30 beds for short term emergency housing for substance abusers. The Phoenix program lasts 28 days and includes counseling and referrals to other special needs service providers. Maya's House operates a women's rehabilitation clinic that provides child care services for patients.

The Phoenix
314 North Dawson Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-5223

Maya's House
(229) 228-5545

Crisis Stabilization Unit
1217 Old Albany Rd
Thomasville, GA 31792

Georgia Pines
1102 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4335

Southwestern State Hospital
400 South Pinetree Boulevard
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-2700

Migrant Farm Workers

Migrant farm workers can also constitute a group that requires special housing. Because of the mobility of this population and their seasonal employment, it is difficult to accurately assess the need for housing and services for migrant workers. Likewise, it is difficult to reach this sub-population because many workers are immigrants who do not speak English. *The Savannah Morning News* estimates that there are at least 100,000 migrant workers in the State of Georgia. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, there were 4,384 migrant workers in Thomas County as of peak employment in 1994. The Southern Pine Migrant Education Agency (SPMEA) is headquartered in Lenox, Georgia and provides educational services to children of qualifying migrant farm workers in 20 counties in South Central Georgia, including

Thomas County. With the help of Georgia Department of Education Grants (Title I, Part C), SPEA works to provide assistance to migrant farm workers' children in hopes of increasing the high school graduation rate among migrant students through coordinating educational services between migrant staff and school teachers for at-risk in-school migrant students, as well as improving the skills of the professionals working with migrant students.

Southern Pine Migrant Education Agency
221 North Robinson Street
Lenox, GA 31637

Other programs

There are other programs in Thomas County that provide assistance to the community in ways that are not included in the categories above. These services include education, training, and support for youth and adults. A number of these programs are included below.

Thomas County Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS)
438 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4005
Provide many assistance programs and services for adults and children.

Thomas County Family Connection
438 Smith Avenue / P.O. Box 2740
Thomasville, GA 31799
(229) 227-3125
Helps Thomas County community members to be connected, supported, and live successful, fulfilled lives.

Vashti Center
1815 E. Clay Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-4634
Education, training, and parenting support for teen mothers and their babies.

3.B HOUSING - THOMASVILLE

Introduction

The housing element provides an inventory of the existing housing stock in the City of Thomasville. The housing element also includes a comparison of the existing housing stock to the demographic and economic conditions in the city. The assessment evaluates the adequacy of the housing stock in meeting the needs of the existing population. Likewise, anticipated future population increases and economic changes are factored into the need for future housing development.

Existing Housing Supply

According to US Census data there were 7,793 housing units in the City of Thomasville in 2000 (Table 3b.1). This represents an increase of 194 (3%) in the total number of units between 1990 and 2000. The percentage of each type of housing unit in the city remained relatively steady during the 1990s with only a slight (1%) shift away from single-family detached units. This shift is countered by an increase in the number of attached housing units (townhomes, condominiums, etc.) that grew by 68% during the decade. The largest numbers of new units constructed were detached single units (single family homes) and multi-family units, reflecting the varied mix of housing types within the urban environment.

Table 3b.1 – Housing Units by Type 1990 – 2000, City of Thomasville

Types of Housing Units	1990		2000		Change	
	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%
Single Units (detached)	5,696	77%	5,890	76%	194	3%
Single Units (attached)	110	1%	185	2%	75	68%
Multi Family	1,530	21%	1,646	21%	116	8%
Mobile Home, Trailer, or Other	91	1%	72	1%	-19	-21%
TOTAL Housing Units	7,427	100%	7,793	100%	366	5%

Source: 1990 Census, SF 3 and 2000 Census SF3

Table 3b.2 – Residential Development 2000 – 2005, City of Thomasville

Category	Units Finished, Under Construction or Platted
Single Family Detached Residential Units	283
Retirement Villas (attached units)	72
Condominiums (attached units)	17
Multifamily Residential (Apartments)	208
Total	580

Source: City of Thomasville Planning and Zoning

Since 2000 there has been a substantial amount of housing growth in the City of Thomasville (Table 3b.2). As of October 2005, an additional 580 units had been completed, were under construction, or had been platted by the city. This is 214 more units than were built in the city during the 1990s, and represents a 7% growth in the city’s housing units since the 2000 Census. If this rate of construction continues, the number of housing units in the city may grow

by 13% during the current decade (2000 – 2010) compared to the 5% growth rate during the previous decade. The current construction trend may be partially driven by the attractiveness of Thomasville to retirees. The city’s high level of services and good climate provide many amenities without the environmental risks of traditional retirement areas like the nearby Florida coasts. There is currently one specific retirement community (Sunshine Place off of MLK Blvd) under construction and community leaders anticipate an increasing trend in this type of smaller, low maintenance unit development.

As shown in Table 3b.3, housing unit projections have been prepared for the City of Thomasville based on the second high population growth scenario (High Growth 2; See Population, Table 1a.2), which uses a linear share method to predict Thomasville’s future population based on its share of the projected total Thomas County population. The projections also take into consideration projected household size and the city’s rate of housing unit vacancy. The number of total housing units is projected to increase by 3,939 between 2000 and 2025. By 2025, of the 11,732 total housing units, the majority (8,867) will continue to be single family units, which constitutes a 43% increase from the number of single family detached units in 2000 (5,890). As shown in Table 3b.3, it is projected that there will be an additional 832 multi-family units, 93 single family attached units, and 36 manufactured homes added between 2000 and 2025.

Table 3b.3 – Housing Projections 2000 – 2025, City of Thomasville

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	No. of Units 00-25	% of Total Housing Units
Projected Households	7,021	7,649	8,294	9,002	9,780	10,636		
Housing Units	7,793	8,437	9,149	9,929	10,787	11,732	3,939	100.0%
Single family detached units	5,890	6,377	6,915	7,505	8,153	8,867	2,977	75.6%
Single family attached units	185	200	217	236	256	278	93	2.4%
Multi-family units	1,646	1,782	1,932	2,097	2,278	2,478	832	21.1%
Manufactured homes	72	78	85	92	100	108	36	0.9%

Source: Robert and Company

It should be noted that these projections are based largely on past (1980 –2000) trends and do not present a statement of the desired or most appropriate housing mix for the city. Additionally, the projections presented here do not take future city policy decisions or city annexations into account. Changes in the city’s zoning districts or development regulations can greatly impact future residential development, especially in the long term.

Occupancy Characteristics and Housing Conditions

The tenure of housing in the City of Thomasville from 1990 through 2000 is listed in Table 3b.4. The tenure of a housing unit refers to its status as owner or renter occupied. Owner occupancy is often viewed as a key factor in maintaining neighborhood stability. The majority of housing units in Thomasville were owner occupied in both 1990 (54.5%) and 2000 (53.7%). There have been no significant changes in the tenure of housing in Thomasville over the past decade.

Table 3b.4 – Tenure of Housing 1990-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1990	%	2000	%
TOTAL Housing Units Built	7,427	100.0%	7,793	100.0%
Housing Units Vacant	709	9.5%	800	10.3%
Housing Units Owner Occupied	4,051	54.5%	4,185	53.7%
Housing Units Renter Occupied	2,667	35.9%	2,808	36.0%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The rate of vacancy and occupancy is also an important characteristic of the local housing market. In addition to reflecting the status of the economy, the vacancy rate shows the match between housing supply and demand within the local market. By comparing local and regional vacancy rates, the unique local housing market and economy can be discerned. An inventory of occupied and vacant housing units between 1990 and 2000 in Thomasville, Thomas County, and Georgia is provided in Table 3b.5. In the year 2000, the City of Thomasville had a slightly higher vacancy rate (10.3%) than the State of Georgia (8.4%). The vacancy rate in Thomasville has risen from 9.5% in 1990 to 10.3% in 2000.

Table 3b.5 – Occupied and Vacant Housing Units 1990-2000, City, County, and State

Jurisdiction	Occupied Housing Units	%	Vacant Housing Units	%
1990				
City of Thomasville	6,718	90.5%	709	9.5%
Thomas County	14,323	89.9%	1,613	10.1%
Georgia	2,366,615	89.7%	271,803	10.3%
2000				
City of Thomasville	6,993	89.7%	800	10.3%
Thomas County	16,309	89.2%	1,976	10.8%
Georgia	3,006,369	91.6%	275,368	8.4%

Source: US Census Bureau

Vacancy rates for various occupancy types are listed in Table 3b.6. The vacancy rate among rental units in the City of Thomasville (9.7%) is somewhat lower than Thomas County (12.6%) but slightly higher than the State of Georgia (8.5%). On the other hand, the vacancy rate among owner-occupied housing units was higher in the City of Thomasville (4.0%) than both Thomas County (3.2%) and the State of Georgia (2.2%).

Table 3b.6 – Vacancy Rates by Occupancy Type 2000, City, County and State Comparison

Jurisdiction	City of Thomasville	Thomas County	Georgia
Vacant Units for Sale Only	176	376	46,425
Owner Vacancy Rate	4.0%	3.2%	2.2%
Vacant Units for Rent Only	300	709	90,320
Rental Vacancy Rate	9.7%	12.6%	8.5%
Other Vacant Units for Sale or Rent	287	722	23,327
Vacant Units for Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	37	169	57,847
Total Vacant Units	800	1,976	275,368

Source: US Census Bureau

The age of housing units is an important indicator of housing quality. Older housing tends to require additional maintenance and repairs. Therefore, code enforcement issues may be of importance in maintaining neighborhood stability in older neighborhoods. Conversely, historic neighborhoods often enjoy increased values and revitalization based on the architectural quality of the housing stock. The median year of construction for housing units in the City of Thomasville was 1964 in the year 1990 and 1966 in the year 2000. In contrast, the median year of construction of housing in Thomas County was 1975 as of the year 2000. This difference reflects the presence of several well-maintained historic neighborhoods in the City of Thomasville. The city's relatively small change in the median age of housing units is reflective of the fact that little housing was built in the City of Thomasville in the 1990s. Housing built after 1990 accounts for only 9.3% of the units in the City of Thomasville. (Table 3b.7) In contrast, 34% of the housing in unincorporated Thomas County was constructed in the 1990s as of 2000. Next, the age of housing points to the possibility of lead paint contamination. Due to adverse effects on children's development, lead paint was banned in 1979. In the City of Thomasville, 78.1% of housing units were constructed on or prior to 1979. Therefore, the vast majority of housing in the City of Thomasville is suspect for lead-based paint contamination.

Table 3b.7 – Age of Housing 1990-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Built 1990 or after	NA	NA	723	9.3%
Built 1980 - 1989	1,242	16.7%	982	12.6%
Built 1970 - 1979	1,810	24.4%	1,501	19.3%
Built 1960 - 1969	1,135	15.3%	1,538	19.7%
Built 1950 - 1959	1,138	15.3%	1,202	15.4%
Built 1940 - 1949	843	11.4%	818	10.5%
Built 1939 or earlier	1,231	16.6%	1,029	13.2%
Total Units	7,427	100.0%	7,793	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 (sf3)

Another measure of the condition of housing is the presence of complete plumbing and kitchen facilities. The status of housing facilities in the City of Thomasville is detailed in Table 3b.8. In the year 2000, 1.2% of the housing units in Thomasville lacked plumbing facilities and 1.5% lacked complete kitchen facilities. Both of these figures have increased since 1990 when only .5% of housing units lacked plumbing and .4% lacked complete kitchen facilities.

Table 3b.8 – Condition of Housing 1990-2000, City of Thomasville

Category	1990	%	2000	%
Total housing units	7,427	100.0%	7,793	100.0%
Complete Plumbing Facilities	7,393	99.5%	7,701	98.8%
Lacking Plumbing Facilities	34	0.5%	92	1.2%
Complete kitchen facilities	7,400	99.6%	7,676	98.5%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	27	0.4%	117	1.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 (sf3)

Cost of Housing

Housing costs for renter occupied housing units in the City of Thomasville are provided in Table 3b.9. Gross rent is used as a measure of housing costs in order to eliminate the discrepancy caused by some landlords including utilities in with rent. Gross rent consists of both the rental rate for the unit and average monthly utility costs. Median gross rent in Thomasville (\$461) is relatively inexpensive as compared to the State of Georgia (\$613). Only 7.0% of the city's rental housing stock costs \$750 or more per month.

Table 3b.9 – Gross Rent, Specified Renter-Occupied Housing Units 2000; City, County, and State Comparison

Gross Rent	City of Thomasville		Thomas County		Georgia	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Less than \$250	471	18.1%	677	16.0%	84,279	9.3%
\$250 to \$499	1,034	39.8%	1,967	46.4%	231,100	25.5%
\$500 to \$749	913	35.1%	1,289	30.4%	301,088	33.2%
\$750 to \$999	115	4.4%	217	5.1%	200,611	22.1%
\$1000 or more	68	2.6%	92	2.2%	88,835	9.8%
Total Units With Cash Rent	2,601	100.0%	4,242	100.0%	905,913	100.0%
Median Gross Rent (\$)	\$ 461		\$ 446		\$ 613	

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 (sf3)

The change in median gross rent for the City of Thomasville and surrounding areas between 1990 and 2000 is listed in Table 3b.10. The median gross rent of Thomasville in 2000 (\$461) was significantly higher than surrounding Georgia counties (\$337-370) other than Thomas County. Median gross rent in the City of Thomasville increased from \$329 in 1990 to \$461 in 2000. After adjusting for inflation, these figures represent an increase of 6.4% between 1990 and 2000.

Table 3b.10 – Change in Median Rent 1990-2000, City of Thomasville and Surrounding Areas

Category	1990	2000	% Change (inflation adjusted)
City of Thomasville	\$329	\$461	6.4%
Thomas County	\$317	\$446	6.8%
Grady County	\$270	\$368	3.4%
Mitchell County	\$237	\$337	7.9%
Colquitt County	\$266	\$370	5.6%
Brooks County	\$255	\$353	5.1%
State of Georgia	\$433	\$613	7.5%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs

On the ownership side, median value of housing units in Thomasville, Thomas County, and the State of Georgia is detailed in Table 3b.11. The median value of housing in Thomasville (\$69,300) is relatively low as compared to Thomas County (\$76,900) and the State of Georgia (\$111,200). Fully 73.2% of the city's housing is valued under \$100,000, whereas only 8.3% is valued above \$200,000. The city has an ample supply of affordable ownership housing, with 32.1% of units valued under \$50,000, as compared to only 9.5% across the State of Georgia.

Table 3b.11 – Median Value 2000, Thomasville and Thomas County

Range of Value	City of Thomasville		Thomas County		State of Georgia	
	Units	%	Units	%	Units	%
Less than \$50,000	1,266	32.1%	2,012	26.5%	151,952	9.5%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	1,620	41.1%	3,176	41.9%	545,851	34.2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	451	11.4%	1204	15.9%	411,817	25.8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	277	7.0%	628	8.3%	211,796	13.3%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	198	5.0%	370	4.9%	163,422	10.2%
\$300,000 or greater	130	3.3%	196	2.6%	111570	7.0%
Total	3,942	100.0%	7,586	100.0%	1,596,408	100.0%
Median Value (\$)	\$69,300		\$76,900		\$111,200	

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 (SF3)

The median value of housing in the City of Thomasville increased from \$43,500 in 1990 to \$69,300 in 2000. After adjusting for inflation, these figures represent an increase of 20.9% over the decade. In contrast, housing prices have risen more sharply in Thomas County (25.8%) due to the large quantity of new housing constructed in the 1990s in unincorporated Thomas County.

Table 3b.12 – Change in Median Value 1990-2000, City of Thomasville and Surrounding Areas

Category	1990	2000	% Change (inflation adjusted)
City of Thomasville	\$43,500	\$69,300	20.9%
Thomas County	\$46,400	\$76,900	25.8%
Grady County	\$42,600	\$74,900	33.4%
Mitchell County	\$41,000	\$64,500	19.4%
Colquitt County	\$40,200	\$65,400	23.5%
Brooks County	\$42,700	\$67,900	20.7%
State of Georgia	\$70,700	\$111,200	19.4%

Source: US Census Bureau 1990-2000 (SF3)

Local Regulations Effecting Housing Costs

It is important to recognize that housing costs can be influenced by local land use regulations, building codes, and other local policies.

Housing and Building Codes.

One of the primary objectives of a housing code is to ensure minimum standards for habitable dwellings and to prevent the deterioration of housing quality. A housing code requires certain facilities (sanitary, water supply, heating, cooking, etc.) to be in every dwelling unit. Such codes also usually establish minimum dwelling space requirements (e.g., 150 square feet for the first occupant and 100 square feet for each additional occupant) and provisions for the upkeep of home exteriors (walls, doors, windows, etc.). Under such a code, the housing official can designate dwellings as dangerous or unfit for human occupancy, and, if necessary, condemn dangerous or unfit dwellings. Building codes specify minimum standards for construction materials and construction practices when building dwellings, which can also affect cost.

Zoning Ordinance

The location of residential development is governed by use restrictions established by zoning districts. The definition of “family” in the zoning ordinance usually addresses the maximum number of unrelated persons living together in a single-family unit. The permitted uses sections of the zoning ordinance either allow or do not allow certain types of housing units. The minimum size of individual housing units is sometimes specified by minimum floor area requirements in the zoning code. Minimum lot sizes and maximum densities establish how many housing units can be built on a given piece of property. Density restrictions influence both the supply of housing as well as the cost per unit of land. Minimum lot widths require certain amounts of street frontage for detached dwellings on individual lots.

Subdivision Regulations

Subdivision ordinances establish standards for streets, drainage, utilities, and other improvements within subdivisions. The layout of blocks and lots is also guided by standards in the subdivision ordinance. Subdivision standards affect the cost of land for development and, therefore, indirectly affect the total costs of housing built on individual lots subject to that ordinance. Approximately 25% of housing costs are attributable to land costs in most real estate markets.

Development Impact Fees

The city does not currently charge development impact fees for roads, recreation and parks, public safety and fire, and/or other eligible facilities. To the extent that developers and builders can pass on to consumers the extra costs of development impact fees, impact fees increase the costs of housing. There is not a consensus among economists that impact fee burdens are shifted forward to the consumer in the form of increased housing costs. Impact fees can create unintended disincentives for the production of affordable housing. Georgia’s development impact fee law allows local governments to exempt affordable housing from impact fees, provided that the money that would be collected as an impact fee be made up through some other funding source. Such exemptions must be tied to the City’s goals and objectives for producing low- and moderate-income housing.

Cost Burdened Households

Cost burdened households are defined as those spending over 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Severely cost burdened households are defined as those spending over 50 percent of their income on housing costs. An inventory of cost burdened and severely cost burdened households is provided in Table 3b.13 for both owners and renters. Among rental households in Thomasville, 17.4% are considered cost burdened and another 14.6% severely cost burdened. Thus, the total number of cost burdened and severely cost burdened households represents almost one-third (32%) of the renters in Thomasville. Statewide, the number of cost burdened and severely cost burdened renters is slightly higher at 18.9% and 16.5% respectively. Among owner-occupied households in Thomasville 19.4% are considered cost burdened and an additional 14.3% are considered severely cost burdened. The total number of cost burdened and severely cost burdened owner-occupied households in Thomasville (33.7%) is high relative to the statewide average (24.6%).

Table 3b.13 – Cost Burdened Households by Tenure 2000, City of Thomasville, Thomas County, and Georgia

Rental Housing	City of Thomasville	Thomas County	Georgia
Rent and Bills > 30% and < 50% Household Income in 1999	487	800	182,562
% of Total Rental Units	17.4%	16.8%	18.9%
Rent and Bills > 50% Household Income in 1999	409	719	158,922
% of Total Rental Units	14.6%	15.1%	16.5%
TOTAL Rental Units	2,802	4,771	964,446
Owner Occupied Housing	City of Thomasville	Thomas County	Georgia
Mortgage and Bills > 30% and < 50% Household Income in 1999	444	803	192,147
% of Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units	19.4%	17.7%	16.0%
Mortgage and Bills > 50% Household Income in 1999	327	545	103,568
% of Total Owner-Occupied Housing Units	14.3%	12.0%	8.6%
TOTAL Owner-Occupied Housing Units with a Mortgage	2,288	4,541	1,201,569

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Another related statistic that measures the balance between housing costs and incomes is the rate of overcrowding. Often, when housing prices are high or the supply of units is limited, households are forced to live in crowded conditions. Crowded housing is defined as households that have more than one occupant per room; while severely overcrowded households have more than 1.5 occupants per room. Statistics of overcrowding in the City of Thomasville and Thomas County are provided in Table 3b.14 and 3b.15. The City of Thomasville has a relatively low proportion of overcrowded households (4.6%) as compared to Thomas County as a whole (6.2%). The city's rate of overcrowding (4.6%) is comparable to the statewide overcrowding rate (4.8%).

Table 3b.14 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, City of Thomasville

Occupants per Room	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Total	Percent of Total Units Occupied
1.01 - 1.5 occupants per room (over crowded)	76	145	221	3.2%
1.51 or more occupants per room (severely overcrowded)	42	58	100	1.4%
Total	118	203	321	4.6%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Table 3b.15 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, Thomas County

Occupants per Room	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Total	Percent of Total Units Occupied
1.01 - 1.5 occupants per room (over crowded)	261	251	512	4.4%
1.51 or more occupants per room (severly overcrowded)	104	103	207	1.8%
Total	365	354	719	6.2%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Table 3b.16 – Overcrowded Housing 2000, State of Georgia

Occupants per Room	Owner Occupied Units	Renter Occupied Units	Total	Percent of Total Units Occupied
1.01 - 1.5 occupants per room (over crowded)	34,902	53,572	88,474	2.9%
1.51 or more occupants per room (severly overcrowded)	14,813	41,948	56,761	1.9%
Total	49,715	95,520	145,235	4.8%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Households with Housing Problems

It is important to investigate the socioeconomic characteristics of households that experience housing issues. The statistical measures of overcrowding, cost burdened status, and lack of complete kitchen and plumbing facilities are all problems that can be grouped as a general measure of housing problems. By utilizing census PUMS (Public Use Microdata Sample) data, it is possible to compare the socioeconomic characteristics of people experiencing each of these housing problems without overlap and double-counting between categories. PUMS data offered by the US Census Bureau includes sampled individual records containing all census variables. Thus, by obtaining complete records, it is possible to cross reference between census variables. Tables 3.17b-3.25b provide detailed socioeconomic characteristics of households experiencing at least one of the housing problems of cost burdened status, overcrowding, and lacking complete kitchen or bath facilities.

Quite simply, most households in Thomasville experience the housing problems of cost burden, overcrowding, or lack of facilities because of low income. The household income of households with at least one of the aforementioned housing problems is listed in Table 3b.17. The majority of the combined rental and ownership households experiencing housing issues in Thomasville make under \$15,000 per year (62.1%). Over half of the rental households experiencing housing issues make less than \$10,000 per year (54.1%).

Table 3b.17 – Household Income: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Income Range	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Less Than \$5,000	67	10.3%	115	18.2%	182	14.2%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	148	22.7%	227	35.9%	375	29.2%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	99	15.2%	141	22.3%	240	18.7%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	65	10.0%	106	16.8%	171	13.3%
\$20,000 - \$24,999	96	14.7%	38	6.0%	134	10.4%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	176	27.0%	5	0.8%	181	14.1%
\$35,000 and Over	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1,283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech department of City and Regional Planning

Of the 1,283 households with at least one housing problem, roughly half (605) receive either social security or public assistance income. Social security income is reported for 38.5% of the households with at least one housing problem. This indicates that many of those experiencing cost burdened status, overcrowding or lack of complete facilities are elderly residents and retirees. Only 8.7% of the households experiencing housing problems receives public assistance income.

Table 3b.18 – Social Security and Public Assistance Income: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Income Type	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Social Security Income	167	25.7%	327	51.7%	494	38.5%
Public Assistance Income	29	4.5%	82	13.0%	111	8.7%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1,283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech department of City and Regional Planning

The employment status for persons 16 years old and over who have at least one housing problem is listed in Table 3b.19. The majority of the persons experiencing housing problems are employed (55.3%). This rate of employment closely mirrors the city's overall employment rate of 56.4%. Likewise the number of persons not in the labor force among persons experiencing housing problems (40.5%) is comparable to the overall proportion of the city's population that is not in the labor force (43.6%). (See Economic Development Section, Table 2.9)

Table 3b.19 – Employment Status: Persons with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Employment Status	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Employed	294	57.5%	598	54.3%	892	55.3%
Unemployed	18	3.5%	47	4.3%	65	4.0%
Armed Forces	1	0.2%	1	0.1%	2	0.1%
Not In Labor Force	198	38.7%	455	41.3%	653	40.5%
TOTAL	511	100.0%	1,101	100.0%	1,612	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech department of City and Regional Planning

The occupation of persons in households with at least one housing problem is listed in Table 3b.20. The largest employment category of persons living with housing problems is management & professional occupations (30.2%), followed by sales & office (24.8%), services (18.4%), and production, transportation, & materials moving (16.4%). This distribution closely matches the distribution of occupations among the general population. (See Economic Development Section, Table 2b.6)

Table 3b.20 – Occupation: Persons in Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville 2000

Occupation	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Management & Professional	104	35.4%	165	27.6%	269	30.2%
Services	49	16.7%	115	19.2%	164	18.4%
Sales & Office	59	20.1%	162	27.1%	221	24.8%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	3	1.0%	5	0.8%	8	0.9%
Construction, Extraction & Maintenance	29	9.9%	55	9.2%	84	9.4%
Production, Transportation, & Materials Moving	50	17.0%	96	16.1%	146	16.4%
TOTAL	294	100.0%	598	100.0%	892	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3b.21 lists the household type for households experiencing at least one of the housing problems of cost burdened status, overcrowding, or lack of complete kitchen or plumbing facilities. The largest category of household types among households experiencing housing problems is married couple families (44.4%). Female headed family households make up the next largest category with 21.8% of households with housing problems. Finally, single female nonfamily households make up the third largest category with 16.6%.

Table 3b.21 – Household Type: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Household Type	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Married Couple Family	390	59.9%	180	28.5%	570	44.4%
Male Householder Family	21	3.2%	10	1.6%	31	2.4%
Female Householder Family	97	14.9%	183	29.0%	280	21.8%
Male Alone Nonfamily	40	6.1%	83	13.1%	123	9.6%
Male not Alone Nonfamily	12	1.8%	22	3.5%	34	2.7%
Female Alone Nonfamily	83	12.7%	130	20.6%	213	16.6%
Female not Alone Nonfamily	8	1.2%	24	3.8%	32	2.5%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1,283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

The age of the householder for households experiencing at least one housing problem is listed in Table 3b.22. Over two-thirds (67.8%) of households experiencing housing problems are headed by householders 25 to 59 years old. Approximately one-quarter (25.6%) of the households experiencing housing problems are headed by seniors aged 59 and over.

Table 3b.22 – Age of Householder: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Age of Householder	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
24 and Under	12	1.8%	73	11.6%	85	6.6%
25 to 59	436	67.0%	434	68.7%	870	67.8%
59 and Over	203	31.2%	125	19.8%	328	25.6%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1,283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

The household size distribution for households experiencing at least one housing problem is listed in Table 3b.23. The majority of households experiencing housing problems are one and two person households (53.7%).

Table 3b.23 – Household Size: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Household Size	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
1 Person	122	18.7%	212	33.5%	334	26.0%
2 Persons	214	32.9%	142	22.5%	356	27.7%
3 Persons	124	19.0%	107	16.9%	231	18.0%
4 Persons	107	16.4%	84	13.3%	191	14.9%
5 Persons	48	7.4%	46	7.3%	94	7.3%
6 Persons	23	3.5%	31	4.9%	54	4.2%
Over 6 Persons	13	2.0%	10	1.6%	23	1.8%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1,283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech Department of City and Regional Planning

The race and Hispanic ethnicity of the householder for households experiencing housing problems is listed Table 3b.24. Despite the city’s African American majority of 56.0%, the majority of the persons with housing problems (59.5%) are white. Blacks make up 38.3% of the households experiencing housing problems in the City of Thomasville.

Table 3b.24 – Race: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Race	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
White	378	58.1%	386	61.1%	764	59.5%
Black	262	40.2%	230	36.4%	492	38.3%
Hispanic	4	0.6%	7	1.1%	11	0.9%
Other	7	1.1%	9	1.4%	16	1.2%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1,283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech department of City and Regional Planning

Table 3b.25 lists the housing unit type of households living with at least one of the problems of cost burdened status, overcrowding, or lack of complete facilities. The majority of households with housing problems live in single family detached housing units (70.2%). While multi family housing represents 21.1% of the city’s housing stock, only 16.8% of the households with housing problems live in multi-family housing.

Table 3b.25 – Unit Type: Households with at least one housing problem, City of Thomasville, 2000

Unit Type	Owners	%	Renters	%	Total	%
Single Family Detached	567	87.1%	334	52.8%	901	70.2%
Single Family Attached	6	0.9%	15	2.4%	21	1.6%
Multi Family Total	6	0.9%	210	33.2%	216	16.8%
2 Units	4	0.6%	36	5.7%	40	3.1%
3 or 4 Units	0	0.0%	64	10.1%	64	5.0%
5 to 9 Units	0	0.0%	48	7.6%	48	3.7%
10 to 19 Units	2	0.3%	20	3.2%	22	1.7%
20 to 49 Units	0	0.0%	13	2.1%	13	1.0%
50 or More Units	0	0.0%	29	4.6%	29	2.3%
Mobile Homes	72	11.1%	73	11.6%	145	11.3%
TOTAL	651	100.0%	632	100.0%	1283	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, PUMS data, 2000. Calculated by Georgia Tech department of City and Regional Planning

Thus, by examining the socioeconomic characteristics of the population experiencing housing problems planners can evaluate the needs of vulnerable households. The most salient attribute of those households experiencing housing cost burdens, overcrowding, or lack of complete housing facilities is low income. Of the households experiencing at least one of these housing problems, 62.1% had a household income below \$15,000. In contrast, of the total households in the City of Thomasville, 27.0% had incomes below \$15,000. Because of their low income, many households experiencing housing issues are unable to buy a home. Renters make up a relatively large proportion (49.3%) of those experiencing housing problems as compared to the total population (36.0%). On the other hand, the majority of households experiencing housing issues are homeowners (50.7%). Many of the households experiencing housing problems are headed by elderly residents. Over one-third of the households experiencing housing problems received social security income (38.5%) and one-quarter (25.6%) were headed by householders 59 years or older.

Aside from low income and age, many of the other socioeconomic characteristics of the population with housing problems closely match the demographics of the general population of Thomasville. The proportion of those with housing problems who are employed (55.3%) closely matches the employment rate of the general population (52.3%). (See Economic Development Section, Table 2a.12; Note: persons not in the labor force are not counted as unemployed.) Likewise, families make up roughly two-thirds of both the households with housing problems (68.6%) and the general population (66.3%).

Jobs-Housing Balance

The jobs-housing balance of a community refers to the match between housing costs and wages and household incomes within a community. The planning focus of workforce housing is designed to ensure that those working within a community are able to live near their jobs. By ensuring that housing options match nearby employment opportunities, commuting and traffic can be reduced. A diverse housing stock is necessary to supply the various wage levels of employees working in a given community.

The match between household incomes of Thomasville's residents and the city's housing stock is detailed in Table 3b.26. For each income range category of local residents, the maximum affordable mortgage or rent payment has been calculated and compared to the available housing stock. For each income category corresponding number of affordable rental and ownership units has been calculated. Finally, the number of units needed to make up the difference between household income and housing costs has been calculated.

Obviously, the households with the lowest incomes (<\$15,000 HH Income) have the largest shortage of available affordable housing units. Because of the high cost of housing and the very low incomes of these households, it may be necessary to offer housing subsidies in order to accommodate the housing needs of the poorest families. It is simply not cost effective to provide housing at such low rental and mortgage rates through the private market. Some of the lowest income groups may qualify for housing assistance programs provided by the Thomasville Housing Authority or the HUD Section 8 program. Additional details on public housing in Thomasville are offered in the Special Needs Housing section. Interestingly, the City of Thomasville also has a deficit of higher end housing as compared to the incomes of residents. Many households may be able to afford larger homes, given their income.

Table 3b.26 – Jobs Housing Balance 2000, City of Thomasville

Income Range	# of Households	Midpoint of Income	Approximate Maximum Affordable Monthly Rent	Rent Range	Rental Units in Range	Deficit or Surplus of Rental Units	Approximate Affordable Ownership Housing Value Range	Ownership Housing Units in this Price Range	Deficit of Ownership Units in Price Range	Total Deficit or Surplus for Income Level
less than \$9,999	1,180	\$9,999	\$250	up to \$249	471	-709	\$10,000 - \$19,999	198	-982	-511
\$10,000 - \$14,999	723	\$12,500	\$312	\$250 - \$299	191	-532	\$20,000 - \$29,000	225	-498	-307
\$15,000 - \$19,999	532	\$22,499	\$562	\$300 - \$549	1131	599	\$30,000 - \$39,000	435	-97	1,034
\$20,000 - \$29,999	1,099	\$25,000	\$625	\$550 - \$599	155	-944	\$40,000 - \$59,999	755	-344	-189
\$30,000 - \$34,999	455	\$32,500	\$812	\$600 - \$799	524	69	\$60,000 - \$69,999	387	-68	456
\$35,000 - \$39,999	460	\$37,500	\$937	\$800 - \$899	42	-418	\$70,000 - \$79,999	318	-142	-100
\$40,000 - \$49,999	690	\$45,000	\$1,125	\$900 - \$999	19	-671	\$80,000 - \$89,999	308	-382	-363
\$50,000 - \$59,999	553	\$55,000	\$1,375	\$1,000 - \$1,249	12	-541	\$90,000 - \$124,999	449	-104	-92
\$60,000 - \$74,999	535	\$67,500	\$1,687	\$1,250 - \$1,499	51	-484	\$125,000 - \$149,999	262	-273	-222
\$75,000 - \$99,999	371	\$87,500	\$2,187	\$1,500 - \$1,999	5	-366	\$150,000 - \$174,999	183	-188	-183
over \$100,000	450	\$100,000	\$2,500	\$2,000 or more	0	-450	\$175,000 - \$199,999	94	-356	-356

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 (SF3)

Another aspect of the jobs-housing balance issue is the general proximity of employment centers and residential communities. Many newer suburban communities have been developed as bedroom communities serving regional employment centers. These communities often have a large quantity of housing with relatively few employment opportunities other than minor retail jobs. Conventional zoning schemes have often reinforced this pattern by excluding mixed uses among residential areas. As a historic community, the City of Thomasville is both a major employment center and a concentration of housing. Therefore, jobs-housing balance is not a significant issue for the City of Thomasville. However, exurban housing development associated with the City of Tallahassee, Florida may lead to jobs-housing balance issues within the unincorporated portions of Thomas County.

Special Housing Needs

In addition to ensuring the availability of adequate affordable housing, it is also important to provide housing for persons with special needs, such as the elderly; the homeless; victims of domestic violence; migrant farm workers; persons with mental, physical, or developmental disabilities; persons with HIV/AIDS; and persons recovering from substance abuse. The following section includes an inventory of special housing needs providers.

Public Housing and Housing Vouchers

Public housing forms an important component of housing for special needs clients, since many of the factors identified are correlated with low socio-economic status. The Thomas County Housing Authority serves as the primary provider of subsidized housing within both Thomasville and Thomas County. The Thomasville Housing Authority administers 254 units of public housing within the city of Thomasville and an additional 39 units within the City of Boston, GA. A breakdown of the public housing units by number of bedrooms is provided in Table 3b.27. The public housing units listed are distributed among five complexes, two of which are townhome-style developments. Of the housing units listed, three are handicapped accessible and one is outfitted for the hearing impaired. The Thomasville Housing Authority currently does not have public housing specifically designated for the elderly.

Table 3b.27 Public Housing Units, Thomasville Housing Authority

Bedrooms	Units	%
1 Bedroom	64	24%
2 Bedrooms	114	43%
3 Bedrooms	74	28%
4 Bedrooms	12	5%
TOTAL	264	100%

Eligibility for public housing is based on the income and need of local residents. Qualified households that are accepted must pay 30% of their income for rent with additional allowances for dependant minors. Elderly residents of Thomas County public housing are given a \$400 monthly deduction from their calculated income. The Thomasville Housing Authority maintains a waiting list of approximately 100 names of those qualified to receive public housing. This waiting list is typically opened twice yearly depending on the availability of units.

The Thomasville Housing Authority has been consistently rated as “high performing” by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD’s Public Housing Assessment

System (PHAS) rates housing authorities by the four indicators of unit inspections, maintenance status, resident surveys, and management/financial reviews. Using the PHAS rating system, housing authorities are designated as either “high performing,” “standard,” or “troubled.” Because the Thomasville Housing Authority has consistently been rated as “high performing” it has been granted additional funds for facilities improvements. Currently, the housing authority is in the process of upgrading all of its units to include central heating and air conditioning.

In addition to the public housing units present in Thomasville, some households receive subsidies via the HUD Section 8 program of rental vouchers. The system of issuing rental vouchers has been designed to avoid the problem of concentration of poverty inherent in many large, dense public housing developments. Section 8 vouchers are administered for Thomas County by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Rental Assistance Division. DCA currently maintains 101 housing vouchers for Thomas County. Of the Thomas County vouchers, 95% are reserved for residents of the county and 5% are permitted to be issued to families from surrounding counties. A waiting list of only two families is also maintained by DCA. However, the number of people qualifying for housing assistance typically far exceeds the number of vouchers available. For example, 19% of the city’s population was listed as below the federal poverty level in 1999. Due to funding constraints, the waiting list for vouchers is often closed. As of January 2006, the waiting list for vouchers has been closed since October 2004. The residential complexes of Woodvalley Apartments and Providence Plaza Apartments are both recipients of Section 8 housing vouchers. The Abiding Place Transitional Housing and Shelter provides housing on a “sliding scale” basis, as well as assistance for those in need with social security, disability benefits and work referrals.

Abiding Place Transitional Housing & Shelter
P.O. Box 672
Ochlocknee, GA 31773
(229) 574-5183

Thomas County Housing Authority
216 South College Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-4065

Providence Plaza
115 South Pinetree Boulevard
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 228-4289

Woodvalley Apartments
1325 Warner Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-0682

The Elderly

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, persons aged 62 and over represent 16.2% of the population in Thomas County. In the City of Thomasville, persons aged 62 and over account for 18.7% of the population. There are several apartment complexes that cater specifically to elderly residents such as Windsor Lake Senior Apartments, Hunter’s Chase

Apartments, and Providence Plaza. A list of assisted living facilities and nursing homes in Thomas County is provided.

Assisted Living Facilities

Kortney's Personal Care Home
212 East Clay Street, Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-0880

Mission of Hope
227 East Hill Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-1133

Next Step Personal Care Home
357 A&B Shoreline Drive
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 227-1600

Plantation Manor
220 Park Ave
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-0880
Capacity: 56 beds

Presbyterian Home
PO Box 407, Quitman, GA 31643-0407
(229) 263-6100

Reaching You Resource Center
717 Wright Street,
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-9810
Provides housing for the mentally disabled and elderly

Southern Pines Retirement Inn
421 Covington Ave
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-6074
Capacity: 96 Beds

Woodleaf
2022 East Pinetree Blvd
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-9810
Capacity: 40 Beds

Nursing Home Facilities

Brian Center Health and Rehabilitation
120 Skyline Drive
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 226-4101
Capacity: 52 Beds

Camellia Gardens of Life Care
804 South Broad Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-0076
Capacity: 83 Beds

Glenn-Mor Nursing Home
10629 Hwy 19 South
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-8942
Capacity: 64 Beds

Hospitality Care
930 South Broad Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-9322
Capacity: 68 Beds

Homeless Services

The homeless constitute an extreme case of special housing needs clients. The Homeplace Shelter for men offers both emergency and transitional housing for those faced with homelessness. The shelter maintains 4 emergency beds and 7 transitional housing beds within their facility. In addition the Homeplace Shelter maintains 6 permanent and 6 transitional beds for the disabled.

The Homeplace Shelter Inc.
612 E. Clay St.
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 551-0695

Rescue Mission Ministries
1120 West Jackson Street
Thomasville, GA 31792

The Salvation Army – Social Services Office
514 North Madison Street
Thomasville, GA 31792

The Salvation Army - Needham House
207 South Street
Thomasville, GA 31792

Disability and Mental Illness

Table 3b.28 displays a tabulation of the disabled population in the City of Thomasville. Over one quarter (28.0%) of the city’s population over 5 years old is classified as having at least one disability. Of those disabled residents, approximately half are classified as having more than one disability. The city also has a high proportion of disabled residents (28.0%) as compared to the State of Georgia (19.7%).

Table 3b.28 – Disabled Population 2000, City of Thomasville

	Population 2000	% of Total Population
Population with one type of disability	2,261	13.9%
Sensory disability only	181	1.1%
Physical disability only	618	3.8%
Mental disability only	244	1.5%
Self care disability only	32	0.2%
Go outside home disability only	417	2.6%
Employment disability only	769	4.7%
Population with Two or more disabilities	2,278	14.0%
TOTAL disabled population	4,539	28.0%
TOTAL population over 5 years old	16,220	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau 2000, (SF3)

Mental health patients are another population that requires special housing facilities and services. There has been a general trend toward deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill for the past several decades. Many state agencies have found that it is more cost effective to treat the mentally ill as outpatients with supportive services rather than to maintain institutional facilities. While medication and services have allowed many patients to live independently, this trend has also increased the need for emergency, transitional, and supportive housing. Georgia Pines, operated by the Georgia Department of Human Resources operates a supportive living program for mental illness patients in Thomas County. As of 2006, the Georgia Pines Supportive Living Program maintained 39 clients who receive services from the agency, including referrals to housing providers. Georgia Pines also operates three group homes with 6 beds each. The three group homes are designated as one male, one female, and one coed.

Georgia Pines
1102 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4335

GIBB Thomasville Village
272 Old Boston Rd.
Thomasville, GA 31792
(850) 576-7145

Thomas Grady Services Center
106 Plantation Oak Drive
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4065

Advocate for and provide opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities.

Domestic Violence

Persons affected by domestic violence are another population that requires special housing services. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, there were 418 police actions relating to family violence in Thomas County in the year 2000. According to the state Department of Human Resources, Georgia family violence programs served approximately 18,000 adults and 10,000 children during 1999, including providing shelter for 3,299 women and 3,742 children.

Halcyon Home provides housing assistance and services for victims of domestic violence in Thomas County. The organization operates an emergency shelter in Thomasville for battered women. The facility has a 15 bed capacity with 6 cribs. The shelter also operates a 24 hour hotline for victim referrals. The organization serves Thomas County as well as four additional surrounding counties. Halcyon Home also offers services such as transportation, counseling, and support groups for victims of domestic violence.

Halcyon Home
P.O. Box 1838
Thomasville, GA 31799
(229) 226-6682

HIV/AIDS

Persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS are another special needs group that requires housing and supportive services. The Centers for Disease Control, reported 23,575 cumulative statewide AIDS cases in June 2001, giving Georgia the ninth largest state population with AIDS. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, there have been 115 reported cases of HIV/AIDS in Thomas County between 1981 and 2000. In 2001, the Center for Applied Research Evaluation Studies conducted a consumer survey of HIV/AIDS needs in Georgia. The study found that in the South Georgia region, the HIV/AIDS patients most in need of additional services were African Americans, females, and low income patients.

Heavenly Home Inc. operates a housing facility for patients with HIV/AIDS. Because Heavenly Home is the only service of its kind in the region, the facility serves as both emergency and transitional housing. While Heavenly Home is located in the City of Thomasville, the group serves Thomas County and 13 other surrounding counties. The Heavenly Home facility has a capacity of 10 beds with a current waiting list of 5 persons. Operating funds for the facility are secured through HUD and other government grant programs. Medical services for Heavenly Home are provided through cooperative work with health care providers such as Georgia Pines and the Thomas County Rural HIV Clinic.

Additional services for patients with HIV/AIDS are available through a variety of government agencies and healthcare providers. Safe Haven provides support for patients with HIV/AIDS such as food, clothing, and vouchers for bills. Safe Haven also provides referrals to housing providers and transportation to assist in housing searches. Health care services for patients with HIV/AIDS such as confidential/anonymous HIV testing are provided by the Thomas County Health Department and the Thomas County Rural HIV Clinic.

Heavenly Home Inc.
(229) 228-9373

Thomas County Health Department
440 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, Georgia 31799
(229) 226-4250

Thomas County Rural HIV Clinic
(229) 431-1423

Substance Abuse

Substance abusers are another population that requires special housing and services. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs estimates that 2,171 persons or 5% of the Thomas County Population has a need for substance abuse treatment as of 2001. The Phoenix center provides detoxification services and short term emergency housing for substance abusers in Thomas County and five surrounding counties. The Phoenix facility maintains 30 beds for short term emergency housing for substance abusers. The Phoenix program lasts 28 days and includes counseling and referrals to other special needs service providers. Maya's House operates a women's rehabilitation clinic that provides child care services for patients.

The Phoenix
314 North Dawson Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-5223

Maya's House
(229) 228-5545

Crisis Stabilization Unit
1217 Old Albany Rd
Thomasville, GA 31792

Georgia Pines
1102 Smith Avenue
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4335

Southwestern State Hospital
400 South Pinetree Boulevard
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-2700

Other programs

There are other programs in Thomas County that provide assistance to the community in ways that are not included in the categories above. These services include education, training, and support for youth and adults. A number of these programs are included below.

Thomas County Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS)

438 Smith Avenue

Thomasville, GA 31792

(229) 225-4005

Provide many assistance programs and services for adults and children.

Thomas County Family Connection

438 Smith Avenue / P.O. Box 2740

Thomasville, GA 31799

(229) 227-3125

Helps Thomas County community members to be connected, supported, and live successful, fulfilled lives.

Vashti Center

1815 E. Clay Street

Thomasville, GA 31792

(229) 226-4634

Education, training, and parenting support for teen mothers and their babies.

4.A NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES – THOMAS COUNTY

Thomas County has an abundance of natural and cultural resources within its boundaries. Natural resources are one of Thomas County's greatest assets, and often the natural and cultural resources of the area are inextricably linked to one another. The following sections will detail first the natural and then the cultural resources that are found in Thomas County

Natural Resources

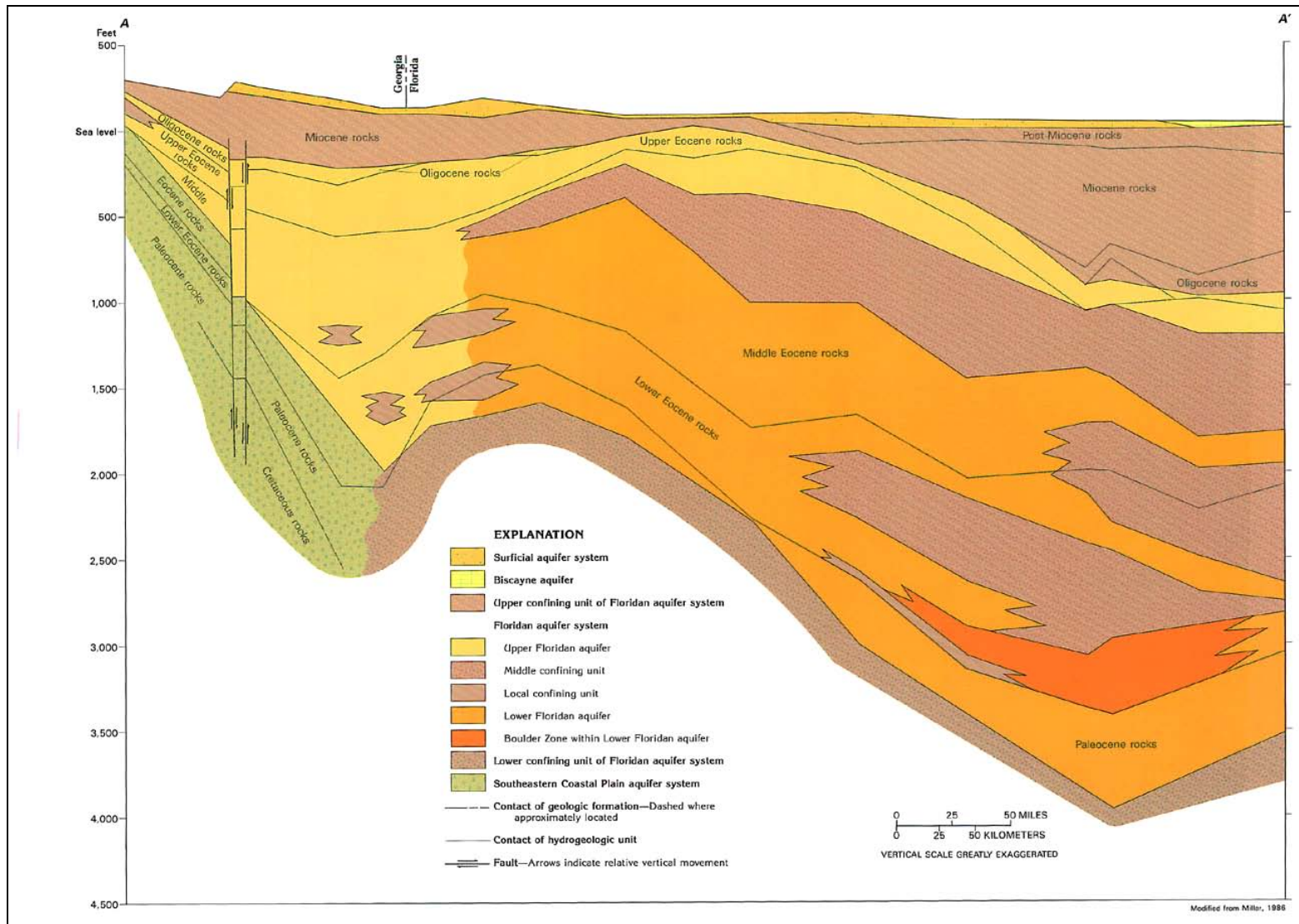
Geology

The underlying physiology of the area is largely what defines the unique physical characteristics of the Thomas County landscape. According to the previous Comprehensive Plan, the basic geology of Thomas County is limestone overlain by two distinct surficial deposits. The two surficial deposits are the Miccosukee Formation from the Pliocene era and the Hawthorn Formation from the Miocene era. During the Miocene era, the northwest corner of Thomas County was located at the edge of the Gulf Trough, an area submerged under the ocean. In this area of the Gulf Trough, there was an accumulation of thick clay deposits now known as Fuller's Earth. Fuller's Earth is commercially mined in northwest Thomas County near Ochlocknee and is used as an absorbing agent for oils or grease, as well as to decolorize, filter, and purify other substances. It is often found in cat litter.

Along with the two distinct surficial features, the county has two different structural features as well; the northern portion of Thomas County is known as the Tifton Upland, while the southern portion of the county is known as the Tallahassee Hills or the Red Hills.

A dominant physiological feature of Southwest Georgia is the Floridan Aquifer system. The areas directly underlain by the aquifer are areas of significant groundwater recharge and are supplied with readily available groundwater. Thomas County lies in an area that is not directly underlain by the aquifer at shallow depths and thus is not a significant groundwater recharge area. It is, however, an area where the aquifer consists of largely surficial components as well as deeper components that serve as groundwater sources. Figure 4a.1 shows characteristics of the aquifer system. As depicted, the portion of the aquifer located within Thomas County is a section of the Upper Floridan aquifer, confined only by a thin unit (up to 100' thick). This area also lacks the middle confining or locally confining layers found in some portions of Florida and Georgia, making Thomas County a unique area where the Floridan Aquifer is directly connected to the Southeastern Coastal Plain aquifer system, which in turn means that Thomas County has an abundant supply of groundwater.

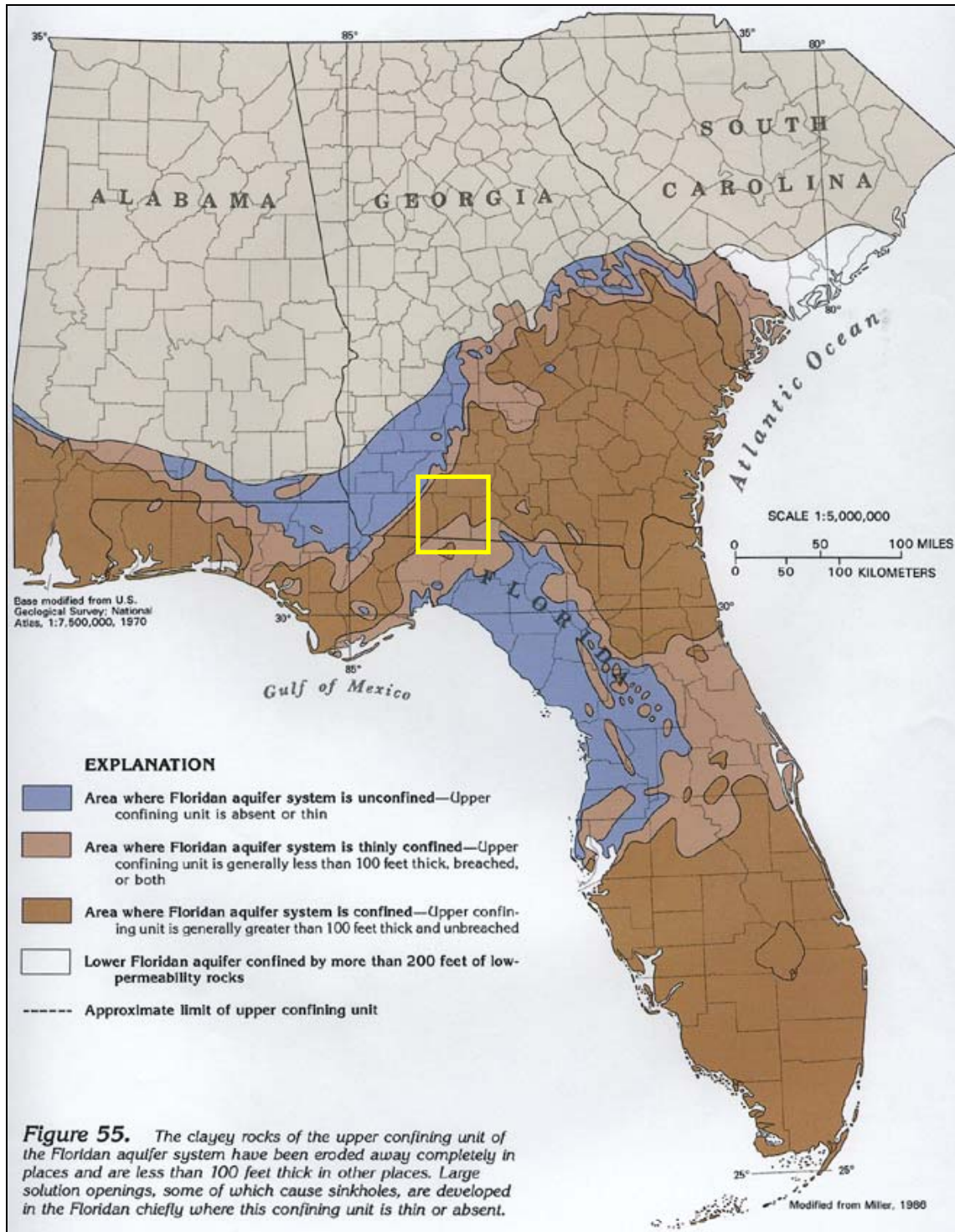
Figure 4a.1 - Characteristics of the Floridan Aquifer in Southwest Georgia and North Florida



Source: USGS Cartography and Publishing Program, Groundwater Atlas of the U.S., GROUND WATER ATLAS of the UNITED STATES: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, HA 730-G

The characteristics of the aquifer, as discussed, vary across Thomas County. Figure 4a.2 shows the extent of the confining layers of the aquifer with Thomas County highlighted in a yellow box.

Figure 4a.2 - Confining Layers of the Floridan Aquifer



Source: USGS Cartography and Publishing Program, Groundwater Atlas of the U.S., GROUND WATER ATLAS of the UNITED STATES: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, HA 730-G

As shown, the southern portion of Thomas County is thinly confined, compared to the northern portion of the county, which has an upper confining unit generally greater than 100 feet.

Where exposed at land surface or overlain by only a thin layer of confining material, carbonate rocks of the Floridan aquifer system are readily dissolved. Precipitation absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and from organic matter in soil as the precipitation percolates downward, forming weak carbonic acid. Such acidic water dissolves the limestone and dolomite of the Floridan aquifer system by enlarging pre-existing openings such as pores between grains of limestone or fractures (joints) in the rock. Eventually these small-solution openings become larger as more of the acidic water moves through the aquifer; the openings may grow to be tens of feet in diameter.

The end result of dissolution of carbonate rocks is karst topography that is characterized by caves, sinkholes, and other types of openings caused by dissolution, and by few surface streams. Karst topography is present in southern Georgia, primarily where groundwater circulation is most vigorous. These areas exist where water is able to enter, move through, and discharge from the Floridan aquifer system more readily and rapidly where it is unconfined or where the upper confining unit is thin. Sinkholes that locally breach the confining unit and allow precipitation to move quickly downward into the aquifer are common. Southern Thomas County is more susceptible to limesink formation than the northern half of the county. One prominent example of a large sink hole in Thomas County is the Blue Sink, shown in Figure 4a.3 below.

Figure 4a.3 - Blue Hole Sink, Arcadia Plantation ²



² Photo credit: *A Comprehensive Study of a Portion of the Red Hills Region of Georgia*, Thomas College Regional Resource Center, Thomasville, GA, 1994.

Groundwater Recharge Areas

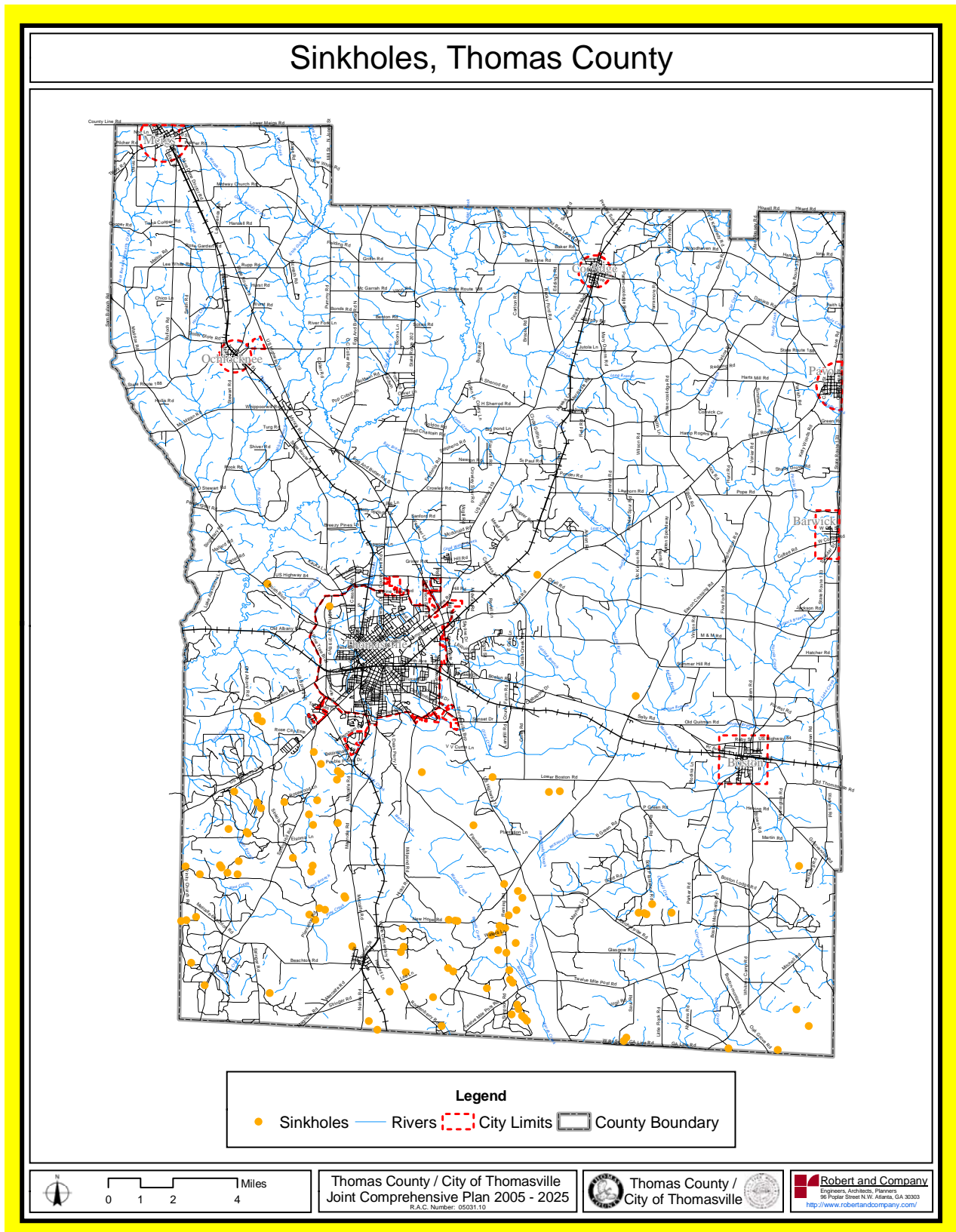
Despite the plentiful groundwater resources, Thomas County is not classified as being in a significant groundwater recharge area according to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Groundwater is Thomas County's water supply source, which indicates the importance of establishing protection for the groundwater supply. The geology of the county makes the groundwater supply highly susceptible to pollution. The direct connection to the groundwater system created by karst topography is indicative of the level of attention that must be directed toward preserving Thomas County's water resources. Groundwater is especially susceptible to pollution created by human land uses such as urban development and agriculture. Figure 4a.4 shows the locations of sinkholes in Thomas County, which serve to illustrate the number of direct connections to groundwater.

The County's 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan recommended that the local government adopt the "Criteria for Protection of Groundwater Recharge Areas" (391-3-17-02). It appears that the county has not adopted this legislation in the time since the adoption of the 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan. This plan reinforces the recommendation that the county consider instating official legislation for the protection of its groundwater resources.

In addition to creating legislation to specifically protect the groundwater, the county's Land Use policies and regulations must also support groundwater protection. In rural Thomas County, residential areas outside of the cities are predominantly developed on septic systems and well systems. The proliferation of such systems could be detrimental to water quality if not regulated by land use and zoning. The 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan recommended that the minimum lot size for a drinking water system and individual sewage treatment system be increased to 3 acres or greater. Such a large minimum lot size would serve to protect water quality as well as protect agricultural lands from being consumed by small lot subdivisions. These recommendations are not reflected in the county's current zoning and land use regulations.

The county is currently allowing one-acre residential development in the county where individual houses have individual septic systems. While the 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan did suggest the creation of a higher density, one-acre minimum lot size residential category in the county, it also clearly stated that 'one acre is not a sufficient size to allow an on-site well and individual sewage system'. Such small lots are not suitable for septic systems and the county should address this oversight moving forward with revised land use allowances in the rural areas of the county that will not be included in the Urban Service Area.

Figure 4a.4 - Sinkholes, Thomas County



Water Supply Watersheds

Thomas County is not located within a Water Supply Watershed as defined or designated by the State of Georgia. There are no public water supplies in Thomas County that obtain water from surface water sources. However, Thomas County is located within the Ochlocknee Watershed, one of 12 large watersheds in the State of Georgia. The northwestern portion of the county drains to the Ochlocknee River while the southeastern portion of the county drains to the Aucilla River.

The Ochlocknee River

The Ochlocknee River winds through Thomas County from its northeast border with Colquitt County down to the southwestern corner of the county where it enters Grady County and continues southward toward the Gulf of Mexico. Unlike many rivers in Southwest Georgia, the Ochlocknee receives much of its volume through runoff into the river rather than via springs and groundwater because the river does not have a direct connection with the Floridan Aquifer system of Southwest Georgia and North Florida. The river is primarily fed by run-off, and also serves as a receiving body for waters associated with human uses from cities along its route.

The major threats facing the Ochlocknee River include point source pollution, non-point source pollution, riparian destruction, and stream flow alteration. These are all tied to human land use issues and should be addressed in order to protect the river as a resource on many levels.

Wetlands

Wetlands are an integral part of the Thomas County landscape as they play a crucial role in the natural cycle and serve humans by providing breeding ground and habitat for animals that are actively hunted in this region. The provision of natural habitats in and around wetlands is a key to the proliferation of the naturally occurring species, some of which may be endangered or threatened.

Wetlands are areas that are flooded or saturated by surface or groundwater often and long enough to grow vegetation adapted for life in water-saturated soil. Wetlands provide many important benefits including flood control, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, and recreation. Wetlands aid in flood control by acting as natural sponges, they absorb and gradually release water from rain to groundwater and streams, and also often provide buffers along waterways that protect adjacent lands from flooding. Wetlands improve water quality by acting as natural filters; they remove sediment, nutrients and pollution from runoff. Groundwater Recharge occurs through wetlands as water migrates downward and filters through permeable layers to maintain groundwater levels. Wetlands are also viable recreation areas; many recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, and photography take place in and around wetlands.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria direct local governments to acknowledge the importance of wetlands for the public good in the land use planning process and to take the potential impacts to these environmentally sensitive areas into consideration when planning for future development. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs have determined that each local government with classified wetlands located in its jurisdiction must adopt a wetlands protection ordinance under the requirements of House Bill 215, Georgia's 1989 Growth Strategies Legislation and the rules promulgated there under.

In Chapter 42 of Thomas County's Code of Ordinances, Article IV establishes Wetland Protection. The purposes of the ordinance are stated therein "to promote wise use of wetlands and protect wetlands, while taking into account varying ecological, economic development, recreational, and aesthetic values. The objective of this article is to make the public aware of state and federal laws that protect wetlands from alterations which will significantly affect or reduce their primary functions for water quality, floodplain and erosion control, ground water recharge, aesthetic nature, and wildlife."

The current Wetland Protection Ordinance of Thomas County as well as the State and Federal rules or laws that apply to development or alteration of wetlands are considered to be adequate for the continued protection of significant wetland resources through the planning period. Known significant wetlands in Thomas County are listed in Table 4a.1 below and shown on Figure 4a.5.

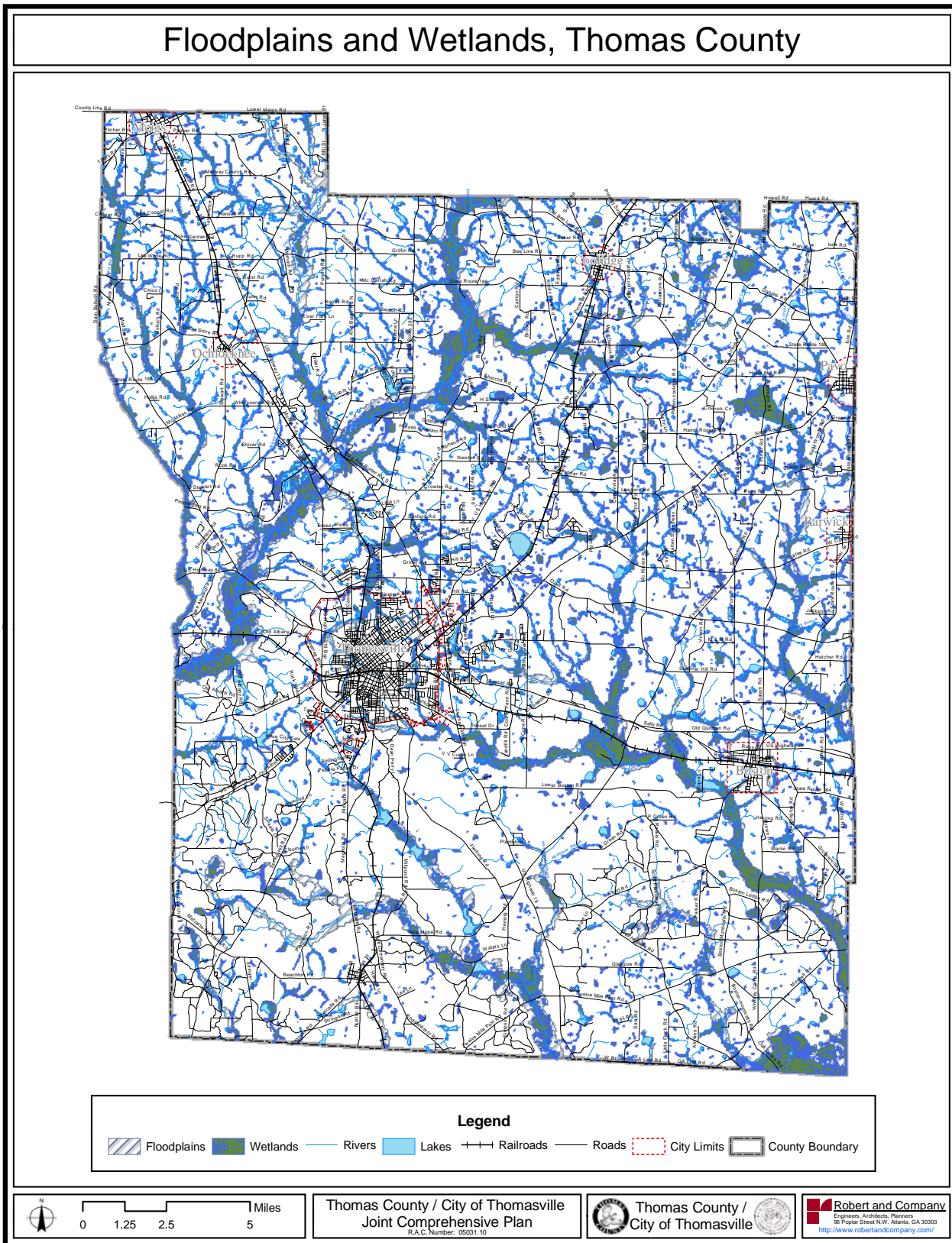
Table 4a.1 Wetlands in Thomas County

Name of Water Body	Location
Aucilla River	Patten Quadrangle, Monticello NE Quadrangle and Boston Quadrangle
Bailey Branch	Boston Quadrangle
Barnetts Creek	Ochlocknee Quadrangle, Meigs Quadrangle, and Pine Bark Quadrangle
Bay Branch	Merrillville Quadrangle
Big Branch	Merrillville Quadrangle
Big Creek	Patten Quadrangle, Meigs Quadrangle, and Coolidge Quadrangle
Brileys Lake	Thomasville Quadrangle
Cat Creek	Patten Quadrangle and Coolidge Quadrangle
Cherokee Lake	Thomasville Quadrangle
Clay Pits	Ochlocknee Quadrangle
Connell Creek	Monticello NE Quadrangle
Coon Creek	Merrillville Quadrangle
Cumbest Pond	Boston Quadrangle
Dawes Sand Pits	Ochlocknee Quadrangle
Dry Creek	Miccosukee NE Quadrangle
East Branch	Ochlocknee Quadrangle and Meigs Quadrangle
Gatling Branch	Boston Quadrangle and Thomasville Quadrangle
Good Water Pond	Merrillville Quadrangle
Gully Branch	Merrillville Quadrangle
Halls Pond	Merrillville Quadrangle
Hammonds Slough	Thomasville Quadrangle
Heards Lake	Merrillville Quadrangle
Horse Creek	Ochlocknee Quadrangle and Meigs Quadrangle
Howell Sinks	Boston Quadrangle
Inwood Lake	Pine Bark Quadrangle
Lake Constance	Pine Bark Quadrangle
Lees Creek	Pine Bark Quadrangle
Linton Lake	Monticello NE Quadrangle
Little Creek	Meigs Quadrangle
Little Ochlocknee River	Ochlocknee Quadrangle and Meigs Quadrangle
Long Branch	Patten Quadrangle
Lost Creek	Patten Quadrangle, Meigs Quadrangle, and Merrillville Quadrangle

Table 4a.1. (cont.) Wetlands in Thomas County

Name of Water Body	Location
Madre Pond	Monticello NE Quadrangle
Masse Branch	Boston Quadrangle
Massey Ferguson Pond	Boston Quadrangle
McKeever Slough	Metcalf Quadrangle
Mitchell Pond	Metcalf Quadrangle
Mule Creek	Pavo Quadrangle
Norton Branch	Boston Quadrangle
Oak Woods Branch	Meigs Quadrangle
Ochlocknee River	Ochlocknee, Chastain, Merrillville, and Pine Bark Quadrangles
Olive Creek	Boston Quadrangle and Thomasville Quadrangle
Oquina Creek	Merrillville Quadrangle and Thomasville Quadrangle
Original Pond	Miccosukee NE Quadrangle
Pine Creek	Ochlocknee Quadrangle, Miccosukee NE Quadrangle, and Metcalf Quadrangle
Piscola Creek	Patten Quadrangle and Boston Quadrangle
Reedy Creek	Patten Quadrangle and Pavo Quadrangle
Robin Bay	Merrillville Quadrangle
Scale Branch	Merrillville Quadrangle
Singletary pond	Meigs Quadrangle
Slater Branch	Miccosukee NE Quadrangle and Pine Bark Quadrangle
Titi Branch	Miccosukee NE Quadrangle
Wards Creek	Metcalf Quadrangle and Thomasville Quadrangle
Watts Branch	Pine Bark Quadrangle
Whitlock Branch	Boston Quadrangle
Wildlife Pond	Boston Quadrangle
Wilson Branch	Ochlocknee Quadrangle

Figure 4a.5 - Floodplains and Wetlands, Thomas County



Floodplains

Floodplains serve three major purposes (1) natural water storage and conveyance; (2) water quality maintenance; and (3) groundwater recharge. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified and mapped areas in Thomas County that are prone to flooding, based on the 100-year, or base flood (see Figure 4a.5 on the preceding page). The 100-year flood is the national standard on which the floodplain management and insurance requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program are based. Floodplains in Thomas County are found primarily along major streams and water bodies such as the Ochlocknee and Aucilla Rivers and their major tributaries.

Development within floodplains is restricted by local, State and Federal regulations for the purpose of protecting the environmental resource and the life and property of persons residing or making their living in the vicinity of these areas. Thomas County is a certified participant of the regular phase of the National Flood Insurance Program.

According to the FEMA website (<http://www.fema.gov/nfip/whonfip.shtm>), in 1968, Congress created the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in response to the rising cost of taxpayer funded disaster relief for flood victims and the increasing amount of damage caused by floods. Nearly 20,000 communities across the United States and its territories participate in the NFIP by adopting and enforcing floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood damage. In exchange, the NFIP makes Federally-backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters, and business owners in these communities. Flood damage is reduced by nearly \$1 billion a year through partnerships with communities, the insurance industry, and the lending industry. Further, buildings constructed in compliance with NFIP building standards suffer approximately 80 percent less damage annually than those not built in compliance. Every \$3.00 paid in flood insurance claims saves \$1.00 in disaster assistance payments.

To get secured financing to buy, build, or improve structures in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA's) land owners are required to purchase flood insurance. Lending institutions that are federally regulated or federally insured must determine if the structure is located in a SFHA and must provide written notice requiring flood insurance. Flood insurance is available to any property owner located in a community participating in the NFIP.

Water Resources Recommendations

Since the adoption of the previous Comprehensive Plan, there has not been much positive progress made in the environmental protection arena by Thomas County. This may prove problematic in the near future if considerations are not made in the short term. How Thomas County uses and treats water within its borders also affects other communities in neighboring counties and states. The overall water quality in Thomas County should remain a major area of concern for residents and officials alike.

Soils

According to the 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan, there are eight soil associations in Thomas County. These are shown on Figure 4a.6. Each soil association contains one or more major soils and some minor soils. The grouping of soils into these major classifications is useful for land use planning due to the need to categorize lands as being suitable or not suitable for a variety of land uses. As discussed in previous sections, Thomas County needs to focus on allowances for development on small lots, which is directly linked to soil type. The eight soil associations have previously been grouped into three categories based on their drainage and slope characteristics. The first two categories represent soils that are not suitable for high density residential development and may lead to malfunctioning septic systems.

The first category is comprised of soils that are on nearly level bottomlands and are poorly drained, or soils that are on stream terraces or low uplands and are somewhat poorly drained:

1. *Osier-Pelham-Ocilla*: Nearly level soils that have predominantly a sandy surface and loamy or sandy underlying layers, on bottomlands and stream terraces.

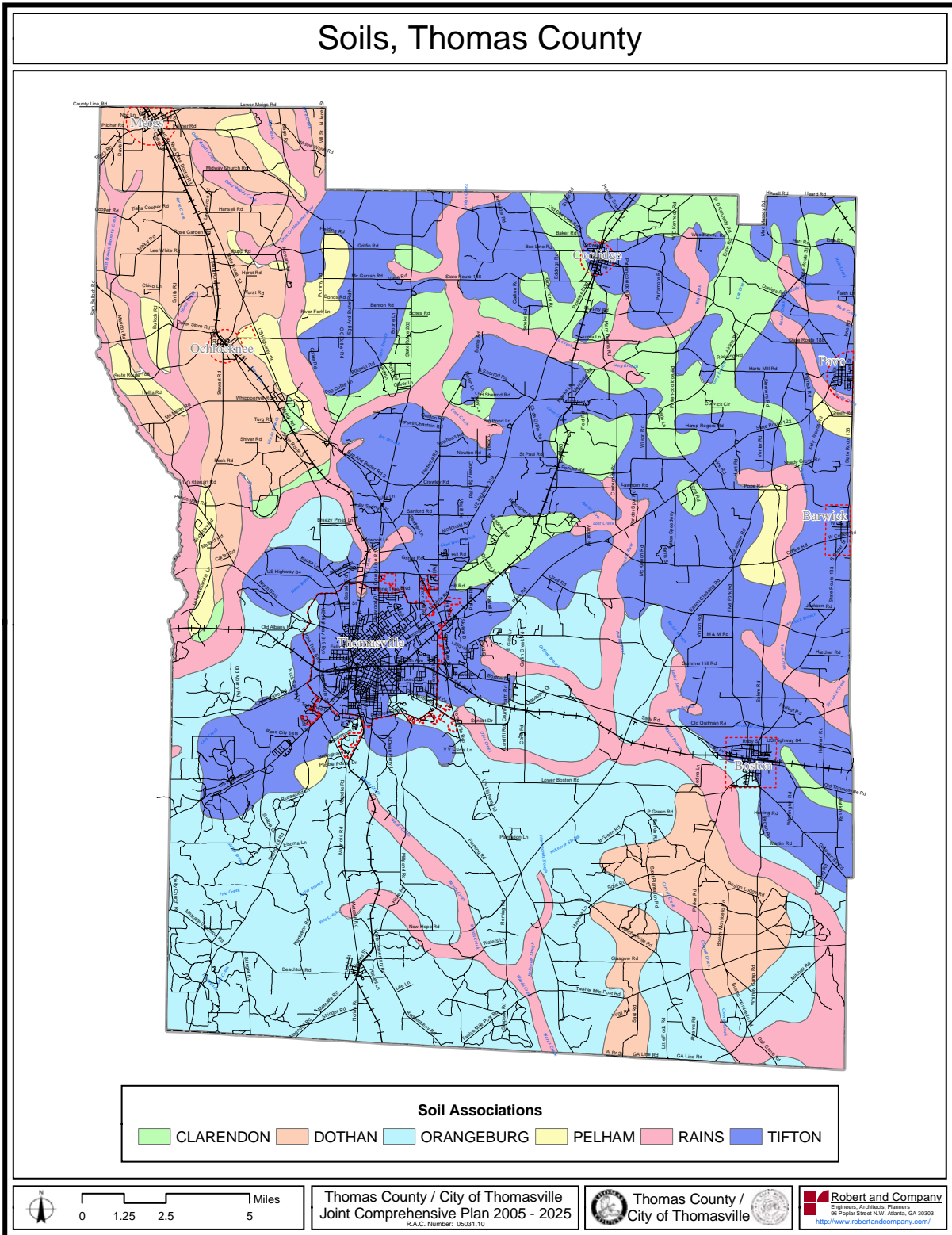
The second category of soils includes four associations that are on nearly level to gently sloping uplands, long drainageways, in depressions, or on flats. These soils have drainage ranging from well to excessively drained for those located in higher lands, and poorly drained soils that are located in lower parts of the landscape.

2. *Tifton-Carnegie-Alapaha*: Very gently to gently sloping soil types that have a sandy or loamy surface layer and loamy underlayers on uplands; these are typically nearly level soils that have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers found along drainageways and on uplands.
3. *Leefield-Alapaha-Fuquay*: Nearly level or very gently sloping soils with a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers found in depressions or drainageways of uplands as well as in flat areas and on ridgetops of lowlands.
4. *Tifton-Alapaha-Dothan*: Nearly level to gently sloping soils that have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers on uplands, in depressions and along drainageways of uplands.
5. *Lakeland-Alapaha-Fuquay*: Nearly level or very gently sloping soils that have a sandy surface layer and sandy or loamy underlayers on uplands. Also includes nearly level soils that have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers in depressions and along drainageways of uplands.

The third category of soils types includes three associations that are well drained soil types on nearly level to sloping uplands.

6. *Orangeburg-Dothan-Fuquay*: Nearly level to sloping soils that have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers; found on uplands.
7. *Orangeburg-Faceville-Tifton*: Very gently sloping to sloping soils that have a loamy or sandy surface layer and loamy or clayey underlayers; found on uplands.
8. *Dothan-Norfolk-Fuquay*: Soils that are nearly level or very gently sloping and have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayer; found on uplands

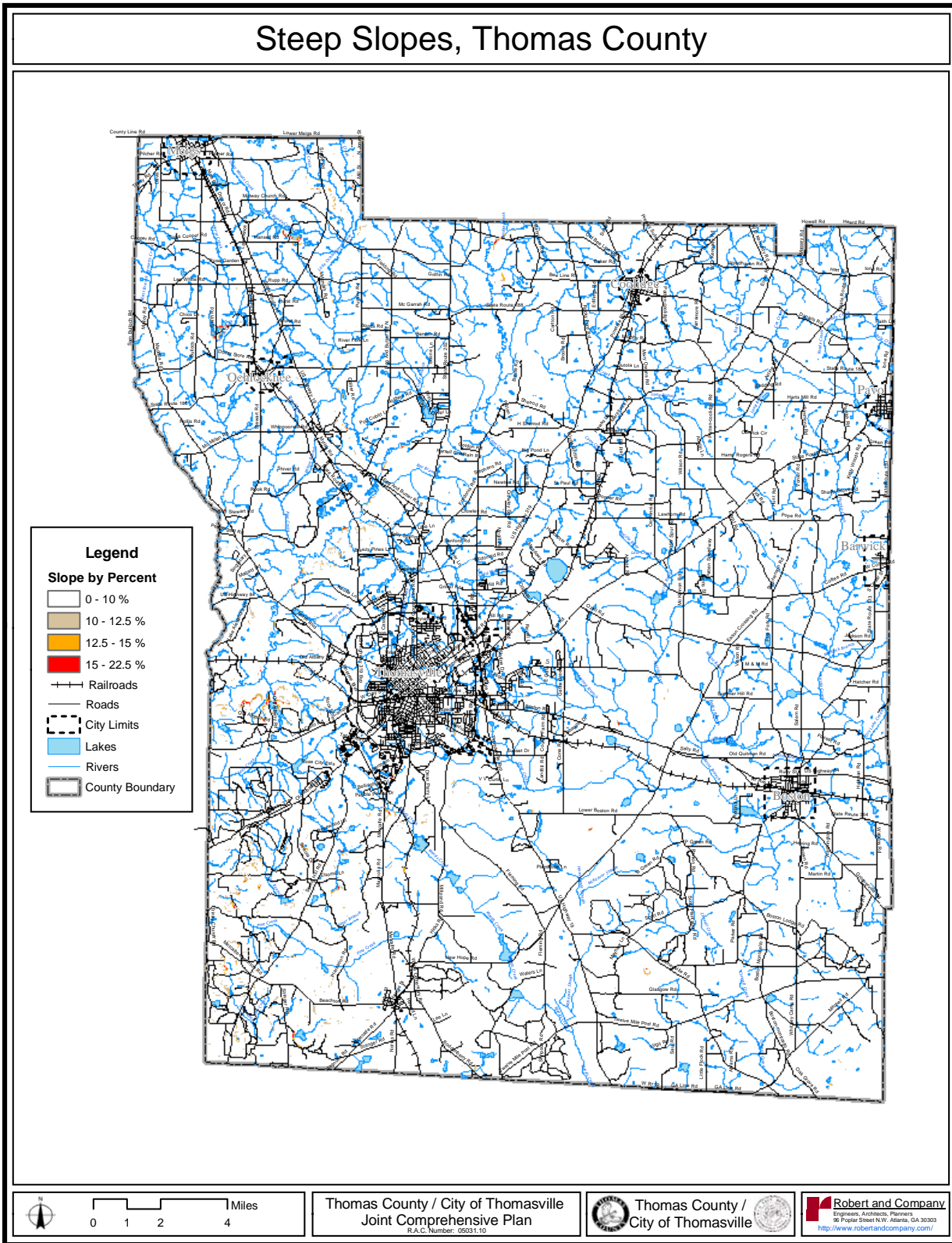
Figure 4a.6 - Thomas County Soils



Steep Slopes

Though the 1992 Thomas County Comprehensive Plan states that no known slopes over 10% exist in the county, this has been reevaluated due to the topography in the Red Hills Region. West and southwest of the City of Thomasville, there are numerous areas with small sections of slopes that range from 12.5% to 15% and possibly greater than 15% as shown on Figure 4a.7. The steep slopes are most likely located along streams or other areas susceptible to erosion. The steep slopes are not considered problematic at this time; however, individual property owners should maintain awareness of the condition of such areas as they may change over time.

Figure 4a.7- Steep Slopes, Thomas County



Prime Agricultural Farmland

Agriculture has long constituted one of the most significant economic bases in Thomas County. Since the County is so rural and agriculturally focused, the preservation of farmland is crucial for economic purposes as well as for maintaining the aesthetic value of the rural areas.

In the previous Comprehensive Plan, Prime Agricultural Land was discussed primarily as a resource that needed to be protected from extensive small parcel residential development. Hence the recommendation for a minimum 3 acre lot size. The lack of action with regard to this recommendation was discussed in the Groundwater Recharge section and applies here as well. Prime farmland can be protected through the prevention of sprawling development in the rural areas of the County.

The location of prime agricultural land based on soils criteria is presented in Figure 4a.8. Thomas County has a significant portion of land that can be considered prime farmland based on soils criteria including the soil type and the slope. The soil types considered well-suited for farming include those that are sandy loam or loamy sand, typically well-drained and low-sloping, which generally means a slope of less than 8%.

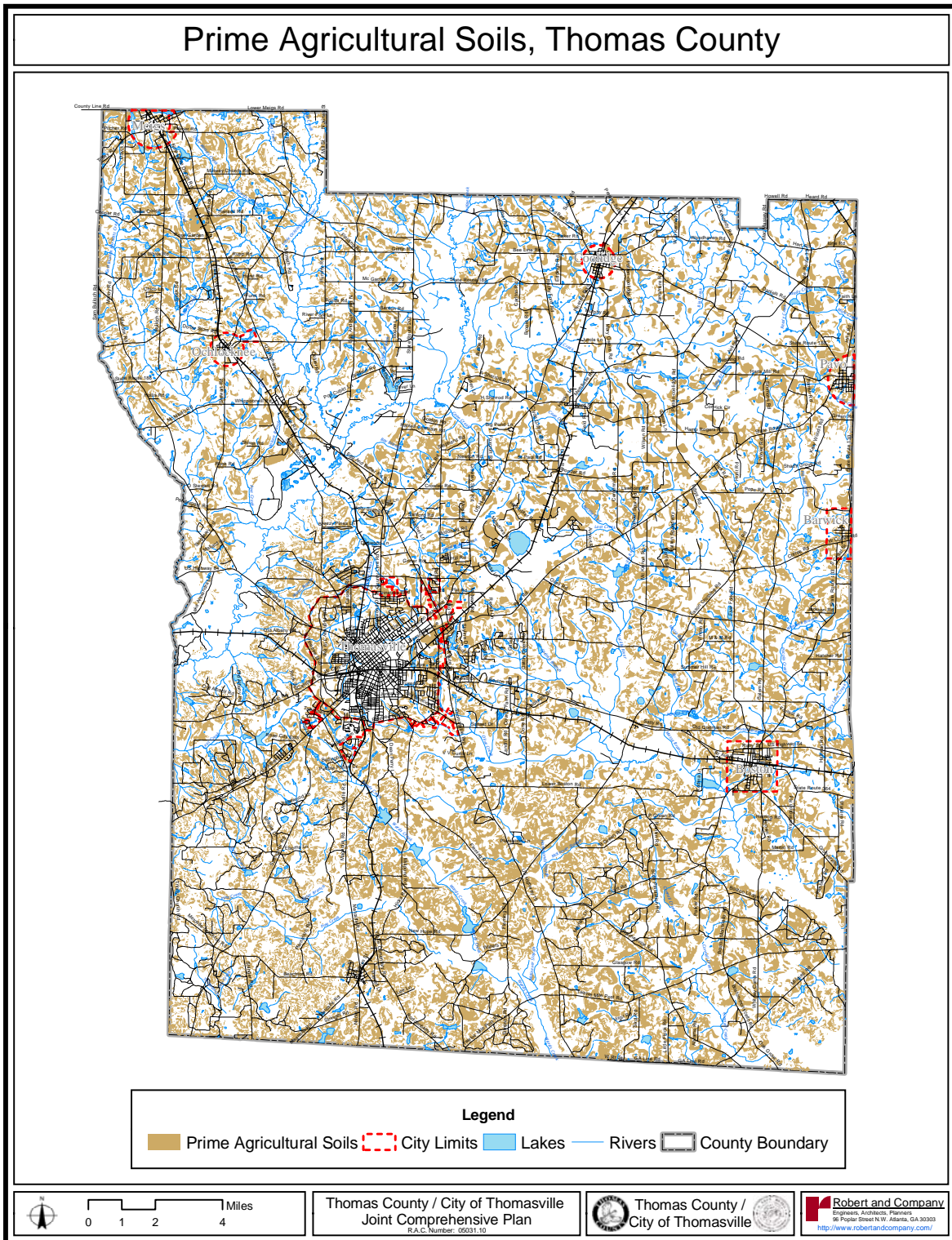
Prime agricultural land also included prime forestland in the 1991-1992 Comprehensive Plan, where it is stated that 50% of Thomas County is forested. Currently, over 74% of land in the county is classified as being used for either agriculture or forestry. A large amount of the forested land is now held in conservation easement lands by one of several land trusts or land management entities such as Tall Timbers Research Station. There is also a percentage of land in the county that is actively forested commercially and not in association with conservation lands. These forestry practices, if not managed properly, can negatively impact the surrounding environment, especially surface water. As previously suggested, it is highly recommended that the forestry industry in the county is encouraged to follow "Best Management Practices" to reduce erosion and stream sedimentation that often result from forestry practices.

According to a guide called *Georgia's Best Management Practices for Forestry*, produced by the Georgia Forestry Commission, BMPs are the most appropriate or applicable forest practices or activities to attain a silvicultural goal while protecting the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the state's waters. Some of the Best Management Practices include: Pre-harvest planning, Streamside Management Zones, designating Special Management Areas, taking care with Road Location, Construction, and Maintenance, Timber Harvesting, Reforestation, Fire Management, and Forest Chemical Management.

More information and the complete guidebook may be found on the Georgia Forestry Commission website:

[http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/ForestManagement/documents/GeorgiaForestryBMPManual.pdf#search=FOrestry%20Best%20Management%20Practices%20Georgia'](http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/ForestManagement/documents/GeorgiaForestryBMPManual.pdf#search=FOrestry%20Best%20Management%20Practices%20Georgia)

Figure 4a.8 - Prime Agricultural Soils, Thomas County



Protected Mountains

There are no protected mountains in Thomas County.

Protected River Corridors

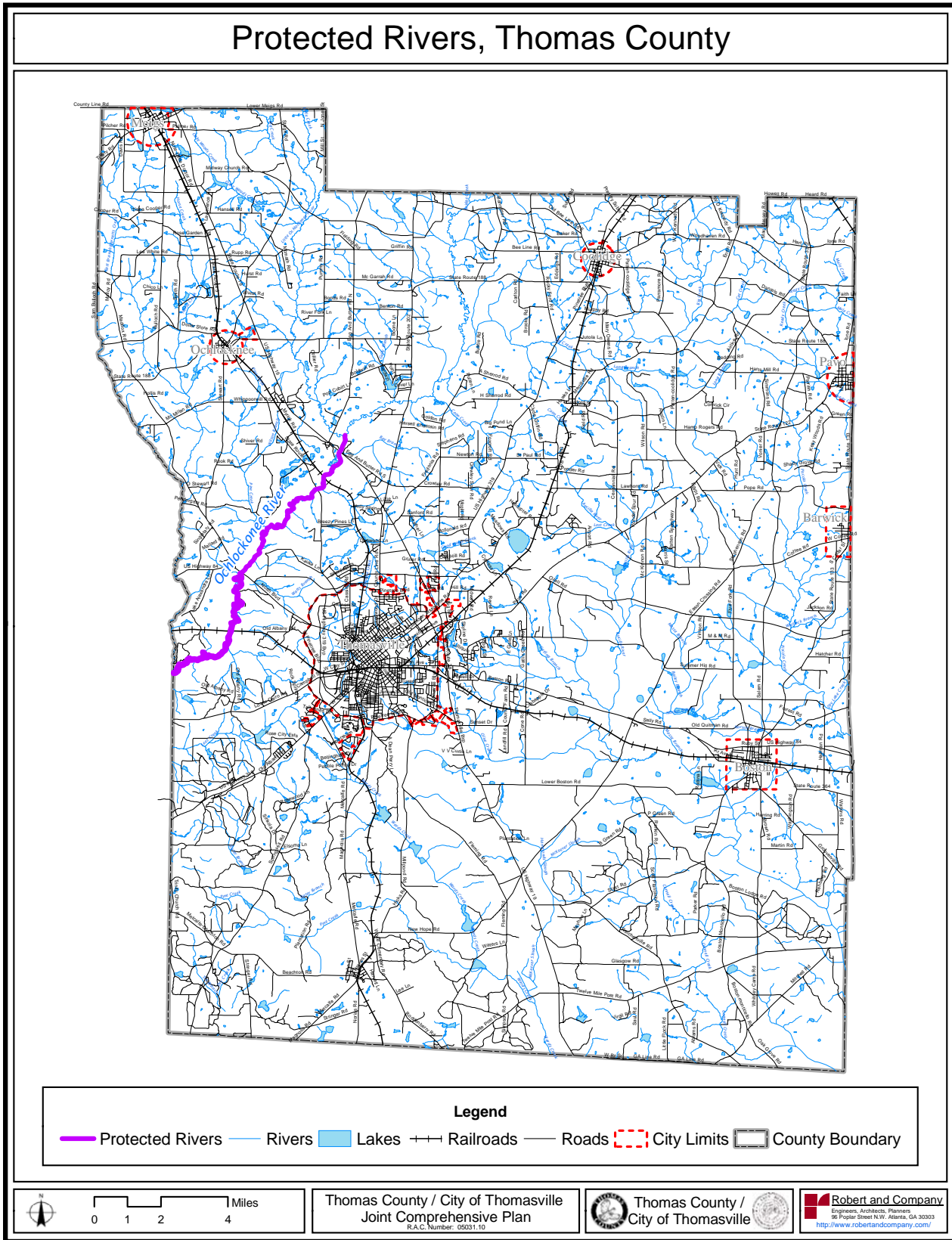
Portions of the Ochlocknee River are classified as Protected River Corridors. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, a protected River is any perennial river or watercourse with an average annual flow of at least 400 cubic feet. The protected portions of the Ochlocknee River in Thomas County are shown on Figure 4a.9.

River Corridor Protection Plans are required for designated streams by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria 391-3-16-.04 and are also a DCA required natural resources planning element. A Basin Management Plan for the Ochlocknee River was developed in 2002 by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division; the plan comprehensively addresses the protection of all water resources in the Ochlocknee River Basin. The plan is available online:

http://www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/enviro/plans_files/plans/ochlockonee-pdf/ochlockonee.pdf

While it is not currently a protected river corridor, the Aucilla River, which runs in a north-south direction in Thomas County, has similar environmental attributes to the Ochlocknee River and should also be protected. Residents in the city and county emphasized the importance of this river, and expressed concern over possibilities of river contaminants in the future if the Aucilla remains unprotected. The possibility of classifying the Aucilla River as a protected river corridor should be considered by the county.

Figure 4a.9 - Protected River Corridors



Public Water Supply Sources

Groundwater serves as the primary public water source for Thomas County. In 1987, Thomas County drew 9.84 Million Gallons per day (8.98 MGD from groundwater supplemented by 0.86MGD from surface supplies). According to a report published by the USGS in 2003 (<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/pubs/other/ggs-ic106/pdf/ggs-ic106.pdf>), Thomas County's water usage rose to 20.43 MGD by the year 2000, when 3.15 MGD were drawn from surface supplies and the remaining majority from groundwater. A more detailed description of the Thomas County water system is presented in the Community Facilities section of this Appendix.

Plant and Animal Habitats

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains listings of threatened and endangered species by county for the State of Georgia. This list was most recently updated in May 2004. There are currently eleven species designated as being of special concern in Thomas County. Of the eleven threatened or endangered species, there are three birds, two reptiles, three invertebrates, and three plants. The diversity of the species on the list is indicative of the diversity of habitats found in Thomas County. The rural nature of much of the county as well as the extant conservation lands are of great benefit to preserving species diversity.

Species are listed with their Federal and state status, where applicable. Federal designations include Threatened Species and Endangered Species. The term "threatened species" means any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The term "endangered species" means any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. There are four State designations: Endangered: A species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or part of its range; Threatened: A species which is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future throughout all or part of its range; Rare: A species which may not be endangered or threatened but which should be protected because of its rarity; and Unusual: A species which has special or unique features that entitle it to special consideration to ensure its continued survival.

Of special note in Thomas County is the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, which is currently thriving among large stands of long leaf pine forests found largely on conservation lands in the area. The status of all eleven threatened and endangered species is discussed in Table 4a.2. The locations of habitats for the endangered bird species are shown on Figure 4a.10.

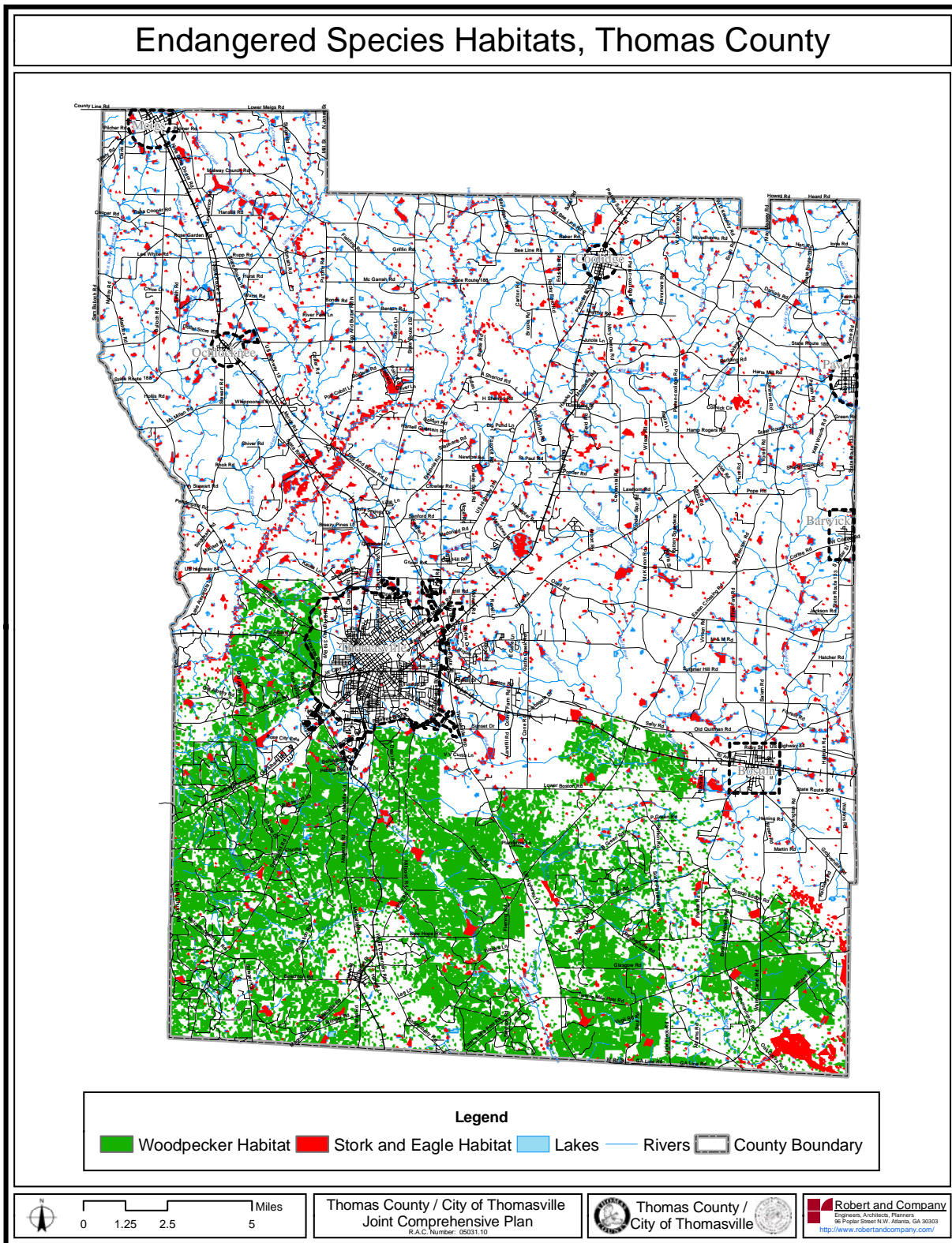
Table 4a.2 Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomas County, 2004

Species	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat	Threats
Birds				
Bald eagle Haliaeetus leucocephalus	T	E	Inland waterways and estuarine areas in Georgia. Active eagle nests were located in Thomas County in 1996-2002.	Major factor in initial decline was lowered reproductive success following use of DDT. Current threats include habitat destruction, disturbance at the nest, illegal shooting, electrocution, impact injuries, and lead poisoning.
Red-cockaded woodpecker Picoides borealis	E	E	Nest in mature pine with low understory vegetation (<1.5m); forage in pine and pine hardwood stands > 30 years of age, preferably > 10" dbh	Reduction of older age pine stands and to encroachment of hardwood midstory in older age pine stands due to fire suppression.
Wood stork Mycteria americana	E	E	Primarily feed in fresh and brackish wetlands and nest in cypress or other wooded swamps. Active rookeries were located in Thomas County 1992-1997. Rookeries were not successful in 2001.	Decline due primarily to loss of suitable feeding habitat, particularly in south Florida. Other factors include loss of nesting habitat, prolonged drought/flooding, raccoon predation on nests, and human disturbance of rookeries.
Reptiles				
Eastern indigo snake Drymarchon corais couperi	T	T	During winter, den in xeric sandridge habitat preferred by gopher tortoises; during warm months, forage in creek bottoms, upland forests, and agricultural fields.	Habitat loss due to uses such as farming, construction, forestry, and pasture and to overcollecting for the pet trade
Gopher tortoise Gopherus polyphemus	No Federal Status	T	Well-drained, sandy soils in forest and grassy areas; associated with pine overstory, open understory with grass and forb groundcover, and sunny areas for nesting.	Habitat loss and conversion to closed canopy forests. Other threats include mortality on highways and the collection of tortoises for pets.
<i>E= Endangered T= Threatened</i>				

Table 4a.2. (cont.) Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomas County, 2004

Species	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat	Threats
Invertebrates				
Ochlocknee moccasinshell Medionidus simpsonianus	E	E	Stable sandy and gravelly substrates in medium-sized streams to large rivers, often in areas swept free of silt by the current.	Habitat modification, sedimentation, and water quality degradation
Oval pigtoe mussel Pleurobema pyriforme	E	E	River tributaries and main channels in slow to moderate currents over silty sand, muddy sand, sand, and gravel substrates.	Habitat modification, sedimentation, and water quality degradation
Shiny-rayed pocketbook mussel Lampsilis subangulata	E	E	Medium creeks to the mainstems of rivers with slow to moderate currents over sandy substrates and associated with rock or clay.	Habitat modification, sedimentation, and water quality degradation
Plants				
Baltzell sedge Carex baltzellii	No Federal Status	E	Rich hardwood forests with a beech-southern magnolia canopy and an abundance of wildflowers.	
Parrot pitcher-plant Sarracenia psittacina	No Federal Status	T	Acid soils of open bogs, wet savannahs, and low areas in pine flatwoods.	
White trumpet Sarracenia leucophylla	No Federal Status	E	Acid soils of open bogs and on sphagnum mats in light gaps along streams and in red maple-blackgum swamps.	
<i>E= Endangered T= Threatened</i>				

Figure 4a.10 - Endangered Species Habitats, Thomas County



Endangered Species Habitats Figure adapted from data acquired through Tall Timbers Research Station.

Cultural Resources

Scenic Areas

Thomas County has an abundance of scenic views, many of which are concentrated in the Red Hills of the southern portion of the county. Tall Timbers Research Station is currently working with the county to establish a Scenic Roads Program for Thomas County. The focus of the program is the dirt roads in the southern portion of the county that once served as hauling routes for farmers taking their cotton out of the county toward port. Many of the dirt roads date back to the early to mid 19th Century and have remained in tact since that time. The purpose of the program is to protect these scenic roads from the pressure from urban development to turn them into wider, faster boulevards (<http://www.talltimbers.org/rhcp/scenicroads.htm>).

A local ordinance establishes the Scenic Roads Program, under which there will be four roads designated as scenic. These roads include New Hope, Millpond, Glasgow, and Twelve Mile Post Roads. Though not designated as Scenic Byways on the State level, these roads are accessible for the enjoyment of local residents and visitors to the area.

Figure 4a.11 - Twelve Mile Post Road in Southern Thomas County



Historic Sites

Thomas County was created in 1825 and has a rich history as the 63rd county in the State of Georgia. Evidence of Thomas County's history still exists today in the form of historic sites and properties. These resources are often closely linked to the large plantations that have existed in the county for well over a century. The following table lists nine sites that are included on the National Register of Historic Places in Thomas County. Following the table is a brief description of each site. The table does not include properties that are within the city limits of municipalities in Thomas County, only those in unincorporated areas.

Table 4a.3. National Register of Historic Places Sites, Thomas County, 2005

Resource Name	Address	Listed
Birdwood	Millpond Rd. and Pinetree Blvd.	5/2/1986
Box Hall Plantation	Lower Cairo Rd. at Pinetree Blvd.	11/16/1989
Greenwood Plantation	GA 84	5/13/1976
Melrose and Sinkola Plantations	SW of Thomasville on US 13	1/4/1990
Metcalfe Historic District	Bounded by Magnolia, Hancock, Louis, Williams Sts.	9/20/1978
Mill Creek Plantation	100 Mill Creek Plantation	4/14/1997
Millpond Plantation	S of Thomasville on Pine Tree Blvd.	12/12/1976
Pebble Hill Plantation	US 319, 4 mi. SW of Thomasville	2/23/1990
Poe, Martha, Dogtrot House	0.75 W of jct of Twelve Mile Post Rd. and GA 19	5/20/1998

Birdwood Plantation

The Birdwood Estate was built in 1931-1932 for William Cameron Forbes, a U.S. diplomat and grandson of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Forbes sold his estate in 1950, and in it was subsequently resold to investors planning a denominational College through the Primitive Baptist Church. Birdwood College was established by 1954 but was turned into a non-denominational, private four-year college in 1976. The grounds are now home to Thomas College and the main house serves as the administration building. (Source: *A Comprehensive Study of a Portion of the Red Hills Region of Georgia*, Thomas College Regional Resource Center, Thomasville, GA, 1994.)

Box Hall Plantation

Located just outside of the City of Thomasville, this plantation has historically been used for residential dwelling and continues to be used primarily as a residence. Its architectural significance is related to the Colonial Revival style architecture of the buildings located on approximately 1,350 acres.

Greenwood Plantation

Greenwood Plantation is currently owned by the Greentree Foundation and managed by the Nature Conservancy. It is significant not only for its historic value but for its value as a natural resource. Greenwood is home to one of the world's best examples of the longleaf pine and wiregrass forest; some trees may be 500 years of age. The forest has been so well preserved due to the management of the plantation as a hunting estate for more than 100 years.

(<http://nature.org/pressroom/press/press723.html>)

Melhana Plantations

The oldest portion of the Melhana Plantation property was purchased in 1825. The name "Melrose" was given to the plantation in 1901, when its owner at the time, Mr. Hanna, began construction of the estate as it exists today. Melrose is now united with Sinkola Plantation to form Melhana, the Grand Plantation, which aims to recreate the elegance of Melrose as it was in the early 20th Century. (http://www.melhana.com/history_view.htm)

Sinkola Plantation

This plantation was also originally part of Melrose Plantation but was parceled off in the late 19th Century (approximately 12 acres). Subsequently, all lands were purchased in 2004 and are now operated as part of Melhana Grand Plantation and Bed and Breakfast by Carillon Beach Management. (http://www.melhana.com/history_view.htm)

Metcalfe Historic District

In the late 19th century, Metcalf was created as a center for commerce and trade of agricultural products via the railroad. It is representative of many South Georgia communities formed in the same way and the thirty-five (35) structures in the historic district are significant examples of commercial and residential Victorian architecture. Metcalf is a small, unincorporated enclave today, and is the location of Metcalf Lumber Company, including mill facilities.

Mill Creek Plantation

Also known as Greenridge Plantation, Mill Creek occupies approximately 2000 acres in southern Thomas County, off of U.S. Highway 19 South. The architectural style of the buildings is Tudor Revival and the plantation continues to be used as a dwelling as well as for outdoor recreational uses such as hunting.

Millpond Plantation

Originated in 1825, Millpond was the home of two of Thomasville's pioneer families. Purchased by Jephtha H. Wade in 1903, Millpond grew to 10,000 acres and was developed with a large Spanish Revival home and extensive landscaping. Millpond has been used for forestry and hunting since its beginning and is currently divided into three tracts held by three grandchildren of Mr. J.H. Wade. (*A Comprehensive Study of the Red Hills Region* by Thomas College Regional Resource Center)

Pebble Hill Plantation

Pebble Hill Plantation was originally a cotton plantation created in the early 1800's by Thomas Jefferson Johnson. After the Civil War, Howard Melville Hanna from Cleveland, Ohio purchased the property. He and his family enjoyed Pebble Hill as a winter home and hunting lodge. All of the buildings currently standing were built by the Hanna family after 1900. (<http://www.pebblehill.com/visitorinfo.htm>)

Martha Poe Dogtrot House

Located in Metcalfe in southern Thomas County, the Martha Poe Dogtrot House is a rare surviving example of a one-story dogtrot type house constructed of hand-hewn logs probably between 1850 and 1876. The property includes the main house, two outbuildings, and adjacent land. (<http://www.state.ga.us/dnr/histpres/oldreport/>)

In addition to the sites listed on the National Register and described herein, there are many other important historic sites and buildings in Thomas County. The following table lists those sites, according to the previous Comprehensive Plan.

Table 4a.4. Historic Buildings and Site, Thomas County, 2005

Resource Name	Address/Location
Mt. Zion Primitive Baptist Church	Old Bee Line Road
Big Ochlocknee Baptist Church	Old Bee Line Road
Springhill Methodist Church	Springhill Road and Metcalf/Beachton Road near Metcalf
Summerhill Baptist Church	Summerhill Road
Friendship Church	Roddenberry Road below Metcalf
Confederate Bridge	Highway 19
Ellabelle Courthouse	Egg and Butter Road
Patton Voting House and Church	Highway 122/Pavo Road
Concrete County Line Marker	Georgia 3 in Meigs at Thomas/Mitchell County line
McIntyre marker	John Griffin Road
Thigpen Trail	County Line Road Highway 202
Miller's Springs	Georgia 3 at Ochlocknee River
Centennial School	Centennial Road off of Highway 122
Old Boston	Old Highway 84
Chastain Area at Big Ochlocknee River	Bee Line Road
Spring Hill Church and School site	Hall Road
Glasgow Church and school	Twelve Mile Post Road
Hansell	Georgia Hwy 3
Anderson Prison Camp	Wolf Street

4.B NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES - THOMASVILLE

Because of the urban nature of the City of Thomasville, the natural resources within the City may be confined to limited areas. Following is an overview of the natural resources followed by a presentation of the cultural resources located within the city limits of Thomasville.

Natural Resources

Geology

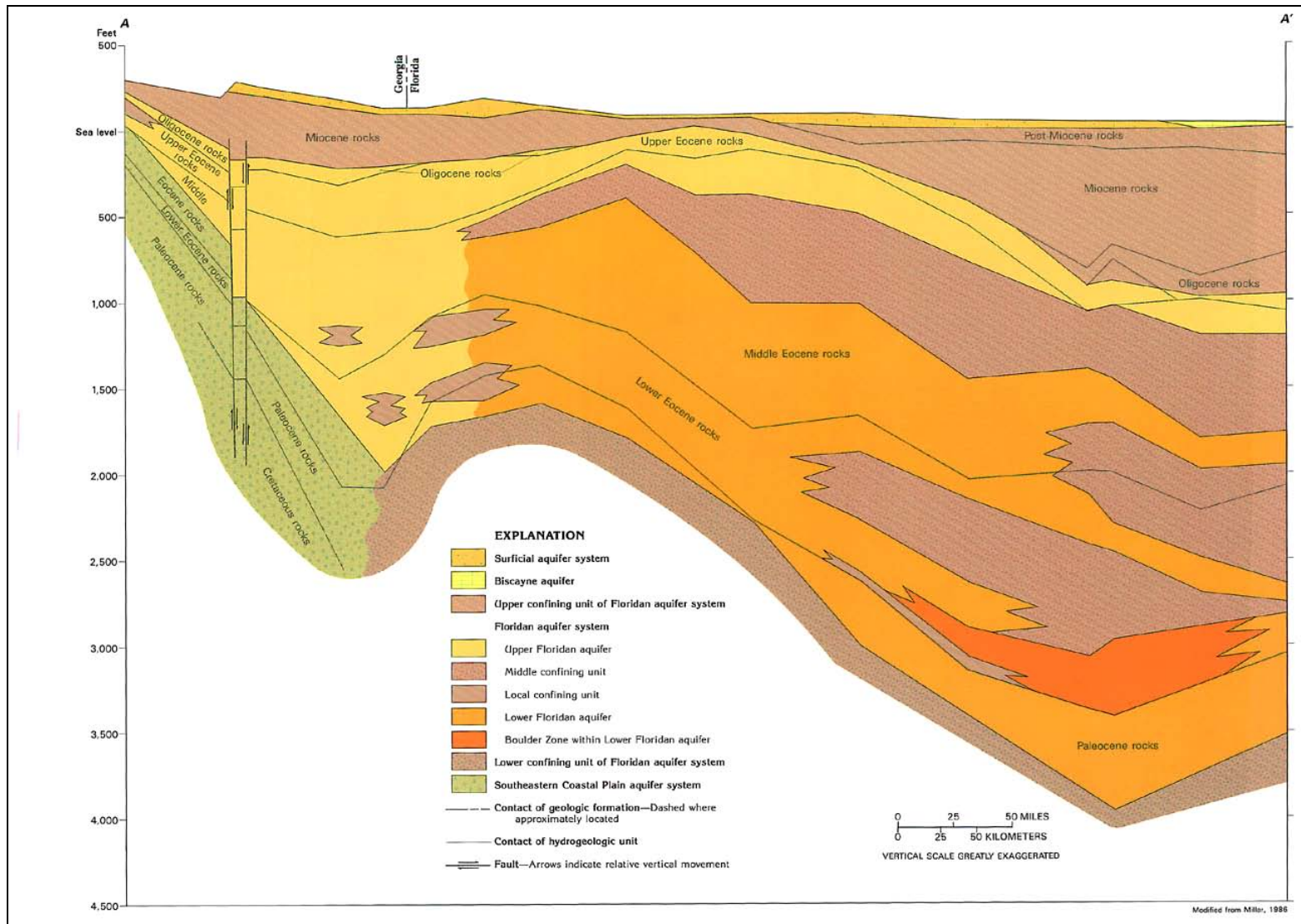
According to the previous Comprehensive Plan, the basic geology of Thomasville is limestone overlain by sand and clay surficial deposits of the Hawthorn Formation. The Hawthorn is one of two primary surficial deposits found in Thomas County.

The Floridan Aquifer underlies Thomas County. The areas of the County directly underlain by the aquifer are areas of significant groundwater recharge and are supplied with readily available groundwater. Thomasville lies in an area that is not directly underlain by the aquifer at shallow depths and thus is not a significant groundwater recharge area. It is, however, an area where the aquifer consists of largely surficial components as well as deeper components that serve as groundwater sources. Figure 4b.1 shows characteristics of the aquifer system. As depicted, the portion of the aquifer located beneath Thomasville is a section of the Upper Floridan aquifer, confined by a thin unit (up to 100' thick). This area also lacks the middle confining or locally confining layers found in some portions of Florida and Georgia, making Thomasville a unique location where the Floridan Aquifer is directly connected to the Southeastern Coastal Plain Aquifer System, which in turn means that Thomasville has an abundant supply of groundwater.

The southern portion of Thomas County, including the City of Thomasville is thinly confined. Where exposed at land surface or overlain by only a thin layer of confining material, carbonate rocks of the Floridan aquifer system are readily dissolved. Precipitation absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and from organic matter in soil as the precipitation percolates downward, forming weak carbonic acid. Such acidic water dissolves the limestone and dolomite of the Floridan aquifer system by enlarging pre-existing openings such as pores between grains of limestone or fractures (joints) in the rock. Eventually these small solution openings become larger as more of the acidic water moves through the aquifer; the openings may grow to be tens of feet in diameter.

The end result of the dissolution of carbonate rocks is karst topography that is characterized by caves, sinkholes, and other types of openings caused by dissolution, and by few surface streams. Karst topography is present in southern Georgia, primarily where groundwater circulation is most vigorous. These areas exist where water is able to enter, move through, and discharge from the Floridan aquifer system more readily and rapidly where it is unconfined or where the upper confining unit is thin. Sinkholes that locally breach the confining unit and allow precipitation to move quickly downward into the aquifer are common. Southern Thomas County, including Thomasville, is more susceptible to limesink formation than the northern half of the county.

Figure 4b.1 - Characteristics of the Floridan Aquifer in Southwest Georgia and North Florida



Source: USGS Cartography and Publishing Program, Groundwater Atlas of the United States: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, HA 730-G

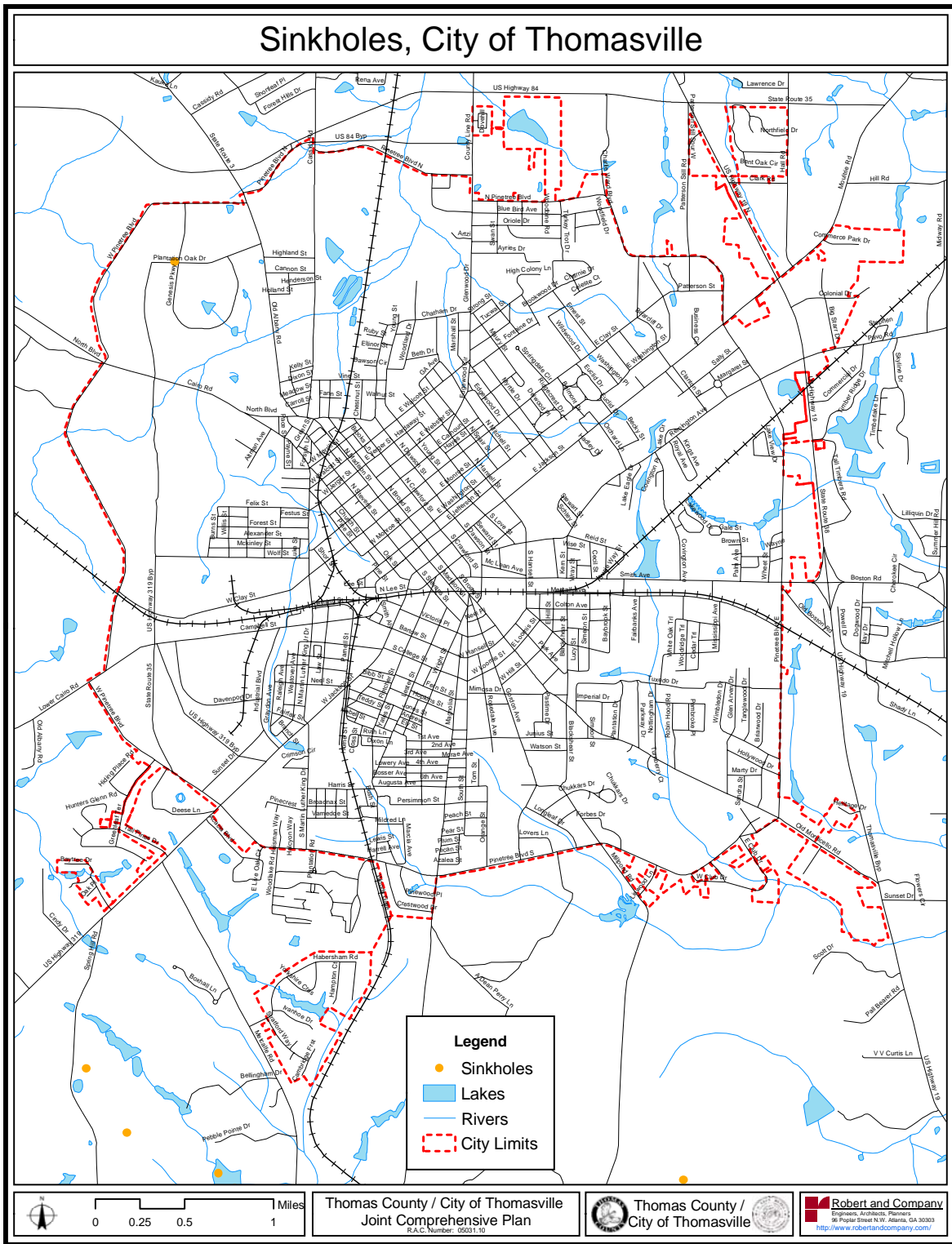
Groundwater Recharge Areas

Despite the plentiful groundwater resources, Thomasville is not classified as being in a significant groundwater recharge area according to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. However, groundwater is Thomasville's water supply source, which indicates the importance of establishing protection for the groundwater supply. The underlying karst geology of the city makes the groundwater supply vulnerable to pollution from surface activities.

Figure 4b.2 shows the location of sinkholes in and around Thomasville, which serves to illustrate the direct connections to groundwater that are prevalent in the area. There are few sinkholes in the city; however, there are several immediately south and north of the city limits.

Although the city is not in a significant groundwater recharge area, other evidence supports the need for protection of groundwater in the area, since it is the primary supply of water for all domestic uses. Thomasville, along with Thomas County, should consider adopting the "Criteria for Protection of Groundwater Recharge Areas" (391-3-17-02). All of Southwest Georgia should have a common goal of protecting the numerous water resources of the area; without establishing legislation for their protection, groundwater resources remain vulnerable to impacts from a variety of manmade threats.

Figure 4b.2 - Sinkholes, Thomasville



Water Supply Watersheds

Thomasville is not located within a Water Supply Watershed as defined or designated by the State of Georgia. There are no public water supplies in Thomasville that obtain water from surface water sources. However, Thomasville is located within the Ochlocknee Watershed, one of 12 large watersheds in the State of Georgia.

Wetlands

Wetlands play a crucial role in the natural cycle and serve humans by providing breeding ground and habitat for animals that are actively hunted in this region. The provision of natural habitats in and around wetlands is a key to the proliferation of the naturally occurring species, some of which may be endangered or threatened.

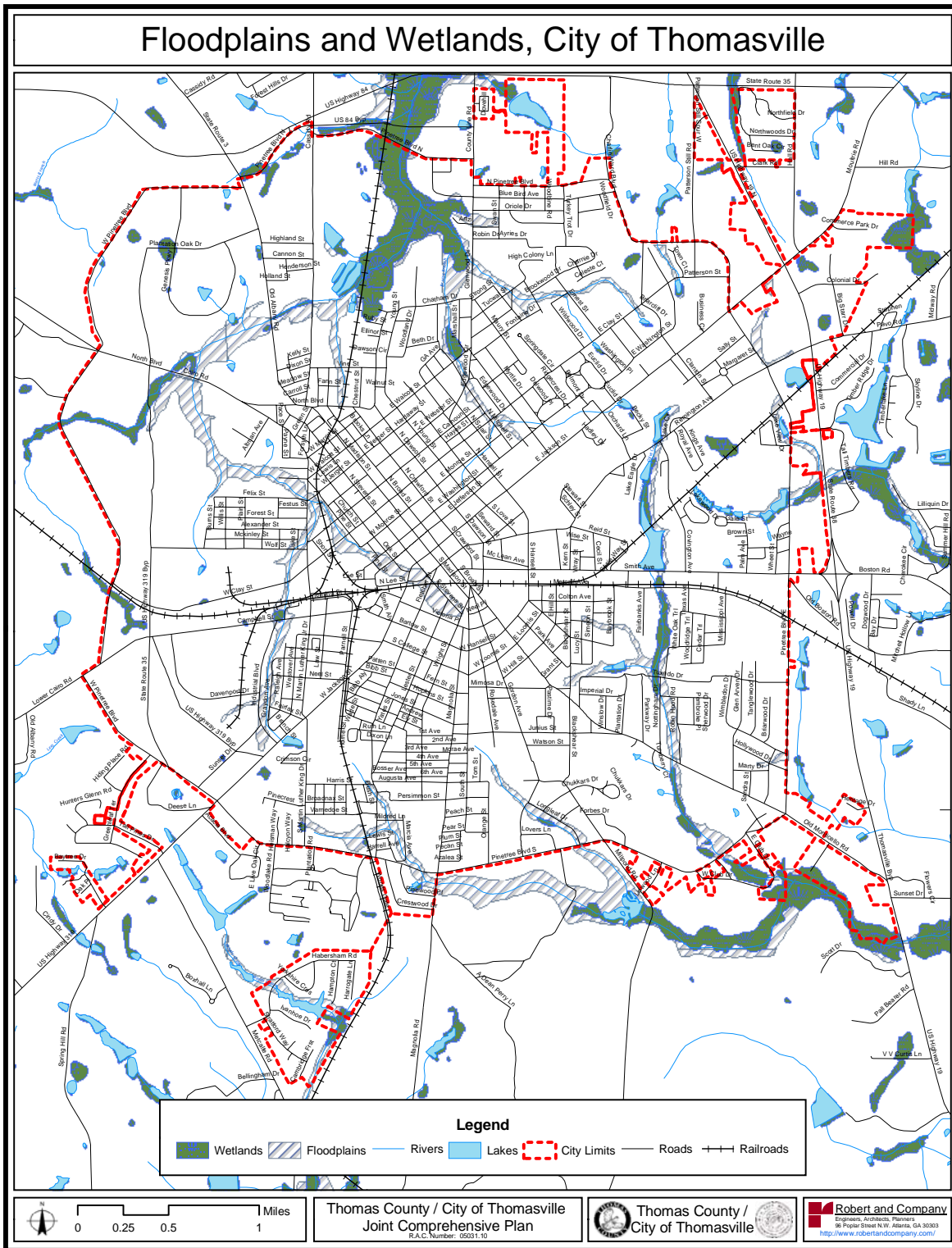
Wetlands are areas that are flooded or saturated by surface or groundwater often and long enough to grow vegetation adapted for life in water-saturated soil. Wetlands provide many important benefits including flood control, water quality improvement, groundwater recharge, and recreation. Wetlands aid in flood control by acting as natural sponges, they absorb and gradually release water from rain to groundwater and streams and also often provide buffers along waterways that protect adjacent lands from flooding. Wetlands improve water quality by acting as natural filters; they remove sediment, nutrients and pollution from runoff. Groundwater Recharge occurs through wetlands as water migrates downward and filters through permeable layers to maintain groundwater levels. Wetlands are also viable recreation areas. Many recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, birding, and photography take place in and around wetlands.

According to the 1998 Comprehensive Plan and confirmed through current GIS mapping, wetlands in Thomasville are very limited in area and are scattered throughout the city. They are primarily concentrated near Oquina and Olive Creeks, Cherokee and Briley's Lake and in a part of town east of the lakes. Almost all of these wetlands are located in floodplains. Known significant wetlands in Thomasville are shown on Figure 4b.3.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria direct local governments to acknowledge the importance of wetlands for the public good in the land use planning process and to take the potential impacts to these environmentally sensitive areas into consideration when planning for future development. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs have determined that each local government with classified wetlands located in its jurisdiction must adopt a wetlands protection ordinance under the requirements of House Bill 215, Georgia's 1989 Growth Strategies Legislation and the rules promulgated there under.

It appears that the City of Thomasville does not specifically have a Wetlands protection ordinance due to the coincidental location of the floodplains and wetlands. The current Floodplain Protection Ordinance of Thomasville as well as the State and Federal rules or laws that apply to development or alteration of wetlands are considered to be adequate for the continued protection of significant wetland resources through the planning period.

Figure 4b.3 - Floodplains and Wetlands, Thomasville



Floodplains

Floodplains serve three major purposes: (1) natural water storage and conveyance; (2) water quality maintenance; and (3) groundwater recharge. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified and mapped areas in Thomasville that are prone to flooding, based on the 100-year, or base flood (see Figure 4b.5 on the preceding page). The 100-year flood is the national standard on which the floodplain management and insurance requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program are based. Floodplains in Thomasville are found primarily along major streams and water bodies such as Oquina and Olive Creeks, Cherokee and Briley's Lake and east of the lakes.

Development within flood plains is restricted by local, State and Federal regulations for the purpose of protecting the environmental resource and the life and property of persons residing or making their living in the vicinity of these areas. Thomasville is a certified participant of the regular phase of the National Flood Insurance Program.

According to the FEMA website (<http://www.fema.gov/nfip/whonfip.shtm>), in 1968, Congress created the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in response to the rising cost of taxpayer-funded disaster relief for flood victims and the increasing amount of damage caused by floods. Nearly 20,000 communities across the United States and its territories participate in the NFIP by adopting and enforcing floodplain management ordinances to reduce future flood damage. In exchange, the NFIP makes Federally backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters, and business owners in these communities. Flood damage is reduced by nearly \$1 billion a year through partnerships with communities, the insurance industry, and the lending industry. Further, buildings constructed in compliance with NFIP building standards suffer approximately 80 percent less damage annually than those not built in compliance. In addition, every \$3 paid in flood insurance claims saves \$1 in disaster assistance payments.

To get secured financing to buy, build, or improve structures in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA's), land owners are required to purchase flood insurance. Lending institutions that are federally regulated or federally insured must determine if the structure is located in a SFHA and must provide written notice requiring flood insurance. Flood insurance is available to any property owner located in a community participating in the NFIP.

Soils

According to the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, there are five soil associations in Thomasville. Current GIS mapping confirms the presence of four associations within the city limits and another very close to the city, as shown on Figure 4b.4. Each soil association contains one or more major soils and some minor soils. The grouping of soils into these major classifications is useful for land use planning due to the need to categorize lands as being suitable or not suitable for a variety of land uses.

A soil association is an area having a distinctive soil pattern consisting of one or more major soils and at least one minor soil. Soils associations are typically based on their drainage and slope characteristics.

The five soils associations are broken down into two categories.

The first category is comprised of soils that are nearly level on bottomlands and on stream terraces or low uplands:

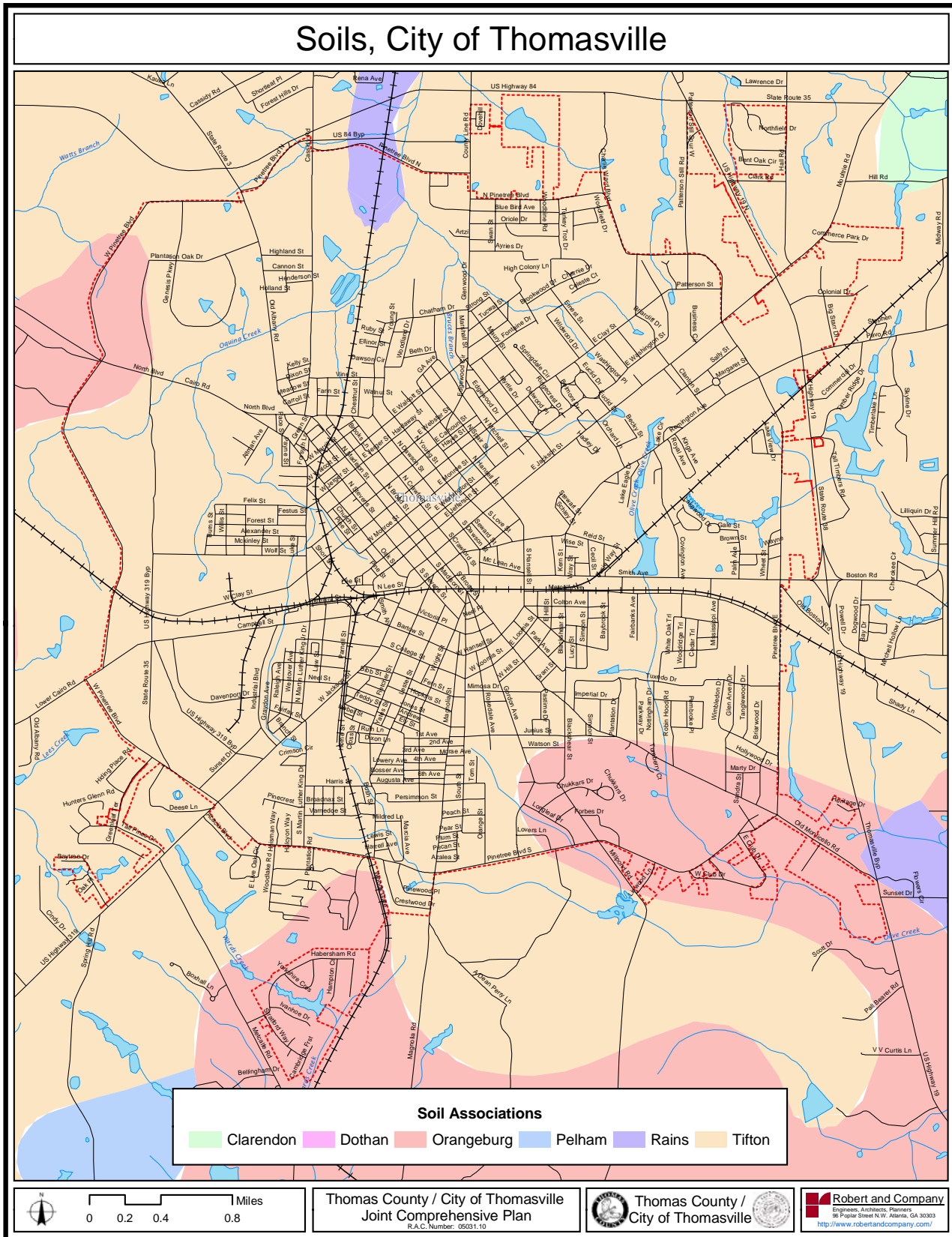
1. *Osier-Pelham-Ocilla*: Nearly level soils that have predominantly a sandy surface and loamy or sandy underlying layers, on bottomlands and stream terraces.
2. *Tifton-Carnegie-Alapaha*: Very gently to gently sloping soil types that have a sandy or loamy surface layer and loamy underlayers on uplands; these are typically nearly level soils that have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers found along drainageways and on uplands.
3. *Leefield-Alapaha-Dothan*: Nearly level or very gently sloping soils with a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers found in depressions or drainageways of uplands as well as in flat areas and on ridge tops of lowlands.
4. *Tifton-Alapaha-Dothan*: Nearly level to gently sloping soils that have a sandy surface layer and loamy underlayers on uplands, in depressions and along drainageways of uplands.

The second category of soil associations includes those that are well drained soil types on nearly level to sloping soils and uplands.

5. *Orangeburg-Faceville-Tifton*: Very gently sloping to sloping soils that have a loamy or sandy surface layer and loamy or clayey underlayers; found on uplands.

The majority of soils in Thomasville come from the Tifton series, especially the Tifton Urban Land complex and the Tifton Loamy Sand complex. The urban complex soils have slopes of 0% to 5% and the Tifton Loamy Sands slope 2% to 5%.

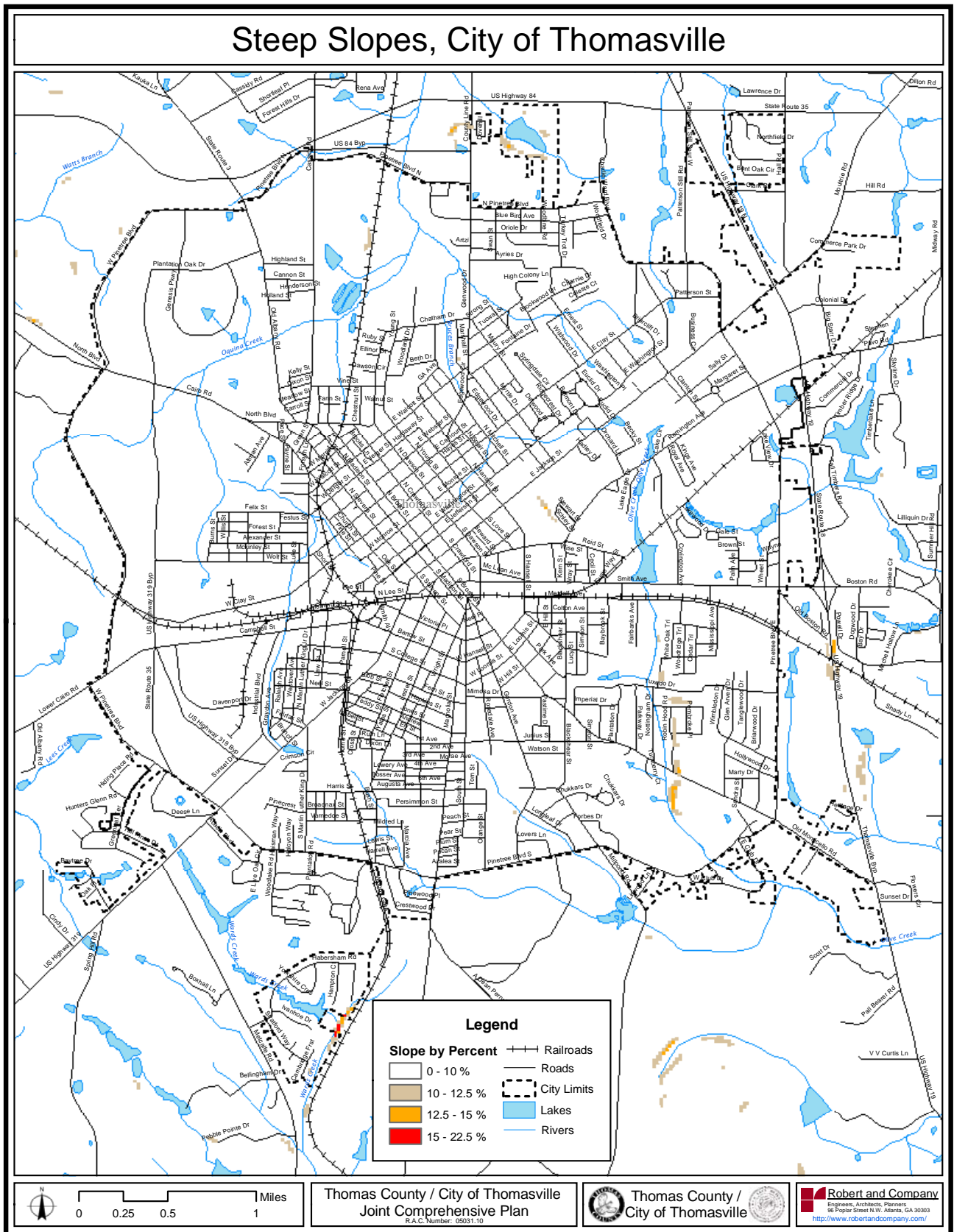
Figure 4b.4 - Thomasville Soils



Steep Slopes

Few slopes exceed 8% within Thomasville; there are small localized areas with slopes ranging from 10% to 12.5% and 12.5% to 15%, as shown on Figure 4b.5. The steep slopes are most likely located along streams or other areas susceptible to erosion. There are not many areas or soil types in Thomasville that are susceptible to erosion hazards. Thus, steep slopes are not considered problematic at this time with one exception; a lack of steep slopes and an abundance of relatively level lands could lead to problems with stormwater management. However, this potential problem was addressed in the previous Comprehensive Plan as well as through legislation adopted by the State and City.

Figure 4b.5 - Step Slopes, Thomasville

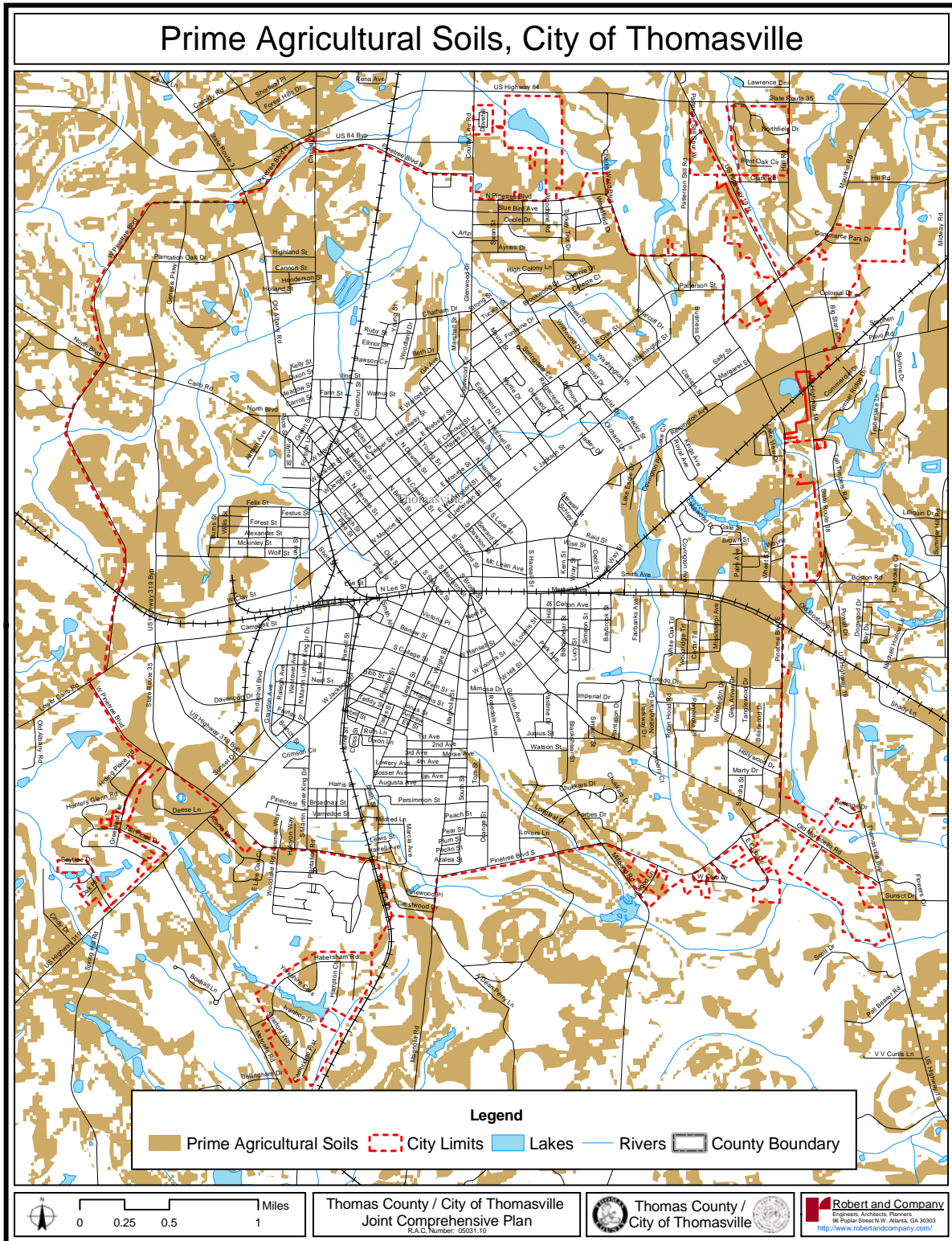


Prime Agricultural Farmland

Agriculture has long constituted one of the most significant economic bases in Thomas County. As of 1988, Thomas County had over 178,000 acres of timberland, mostly consisting of Longleaf Slash and Oak Hickory Stands. A large portion of the forested land is now held in conservation easement lands by one of several land trusts or land management entities such as Tall Timbers Research Station. There is also a percentage of land in the County that is forested commercially, not in association with conservation lands. However, there is no commercial forestry or agricultural land use occurring within the City of Thomasville.

Figure 4b.6 on the following page shows the location of land in Thomasville that may be considered prime agricultural land based on soil type and slope. However, the presence of such lands is not a determining factor when considering the appropriate future land uses for the city. The City of Thomasville is an urban area where agricultural land uses are not appropriate due to incompatibility with existing land uses in the city.

Figure 4b.6 - Prime Agricultural Soils, Thomasville



Protected Mountains

There are no protected mountains in the City of Thomasville.

Protected River Corridors

Portions of the Ochlocknee River are classified as Protected River Corridors. According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, a protected River is any perennial river or watercourse with an average annual flow of at least 400 cubic feet. Though the Ochlocknee does not flow through Thomasville, it is located in proximity to the city and the protected portions of the Ochlocknee River in Thomasville are shown on Figure 4b.7.

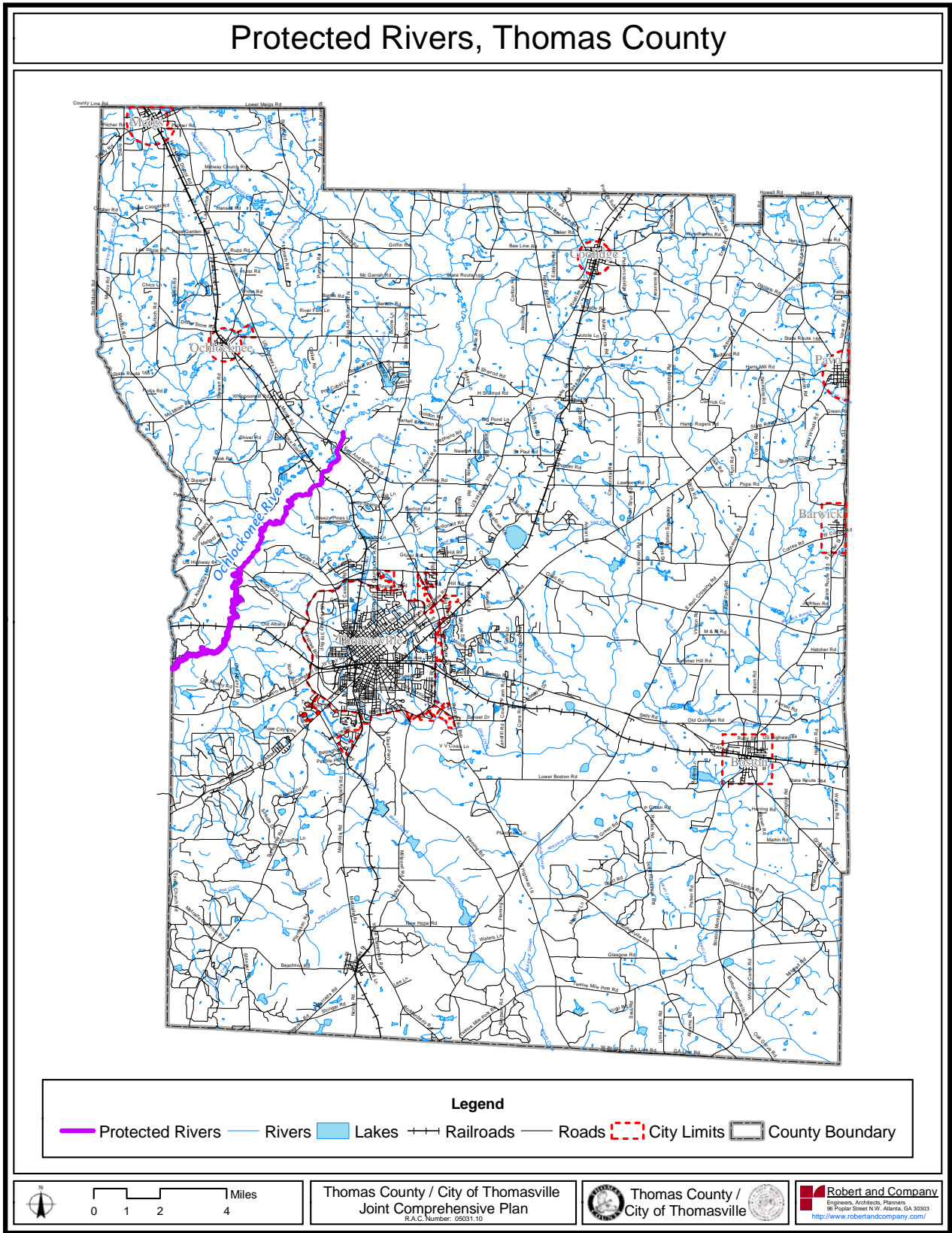
River Corridor Protection Plans are required for designated streams by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria 391-3-16-.04 and are also a DCA required natural resources planning element. A Basin Management Plan for the Ochlocknee River was developed in 2002 by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division; the plan comprehensively addresses the protection of all water resources in the Ochlocknee River Basin. The plan is available online:

http://www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/environ/plans_files/plans/ochlockonee-pdf/ochlockonee.pdf

In addition to the Ochlocknee River as a nearby water resource, the City of Thomasville has numerous streams that are affected by development and are protected through local regulations. Thomasville's Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance is the primary tool that serves to protect streams from the negative impacts of development and other land disturbing activities. Additionally, streams are protected from development encroaching too closely due to the restrictive allowances for building in floodplains.

While it is not currently a protected river corridor, the Aucilla River, which runs in a north-south direction in Thomas County, has similar environmental attributes as the Ochlocknee River. It is located to the east of the Thomasville and Boston communities, and to the west of Pavo. The possibility of classifying the Aucilla River as a protected river corridor should be considered by the county.

Figure 4b.7 - Protected River Corridors



Public Water Supply Sources

Groundwater serves as the primary public water source for Thomasville. According to the previous Comprehensive Plan, the City of Thomasville drew 4.18 Million Gallons of water per Day (MGD) from groundwater and none from surface sources. According to a report published by the USGS in 2003 (<http://ga.water.usgs.gov/pubs/other/ggs-ic106/pdf/ggs-ic106.pdf>), the City of Thomasville withdrew 5.52 MGD from groundwater sources in the year 2000, corresponding to an increase in the population. A more detailed description of the Thomasville water system is presented in the Community Facilities section of this Appendix.

Plant and Animal Habitats

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains listings of threatened and endangered species by county for the State of Georgia. There is not a list available for individual cities in Georgia, but it is assumed that the species listed by county may also be located in the cities within that county. The listing of threatened and endangered species was most recently updated in May 2004. There are currently eleven species designated as being of special concern in Thomas County. Of the eleven threatened or endangered species, there are three birds, two reptiles, three invertebrates, and three plants. The diversity of the species on the list is indicative of the diversity of habitats found in Thomas County. The rural nature of much of the County as well as the extant conservation lands are of great benefit to preserving species diversity.

Species are listed with their Federal and state status, where applicable. Federal designations include Threatened Species: The term "threatened species" means any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and Endangered Species: The term "endangered species" means any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. There are four State designations; Endangered: A species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or part of its range, Threatened: A species which is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future throughout all or part of its range, Rare: A species which may not be endangered or threatened but which should be protected because of its rarity and Unusual: A species which has special or unique features that entitle it to special consideration to ensure its continued survival.

Of special note in Thomas County is the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, which is currently thriving among large stands of long leaf pine forests found largely on conservation lands in the area. The status of all eleven threatened and endangered species is discussed in Figure 4b.1. The locations of habitats for the endangered bird species are shown on Figure 4b.8. The habitat for Red-cockaded woodpecker and other endangered or threatened species is limited within the City of Thomasville due to the urban development and lack of large undeveloped land within the city.

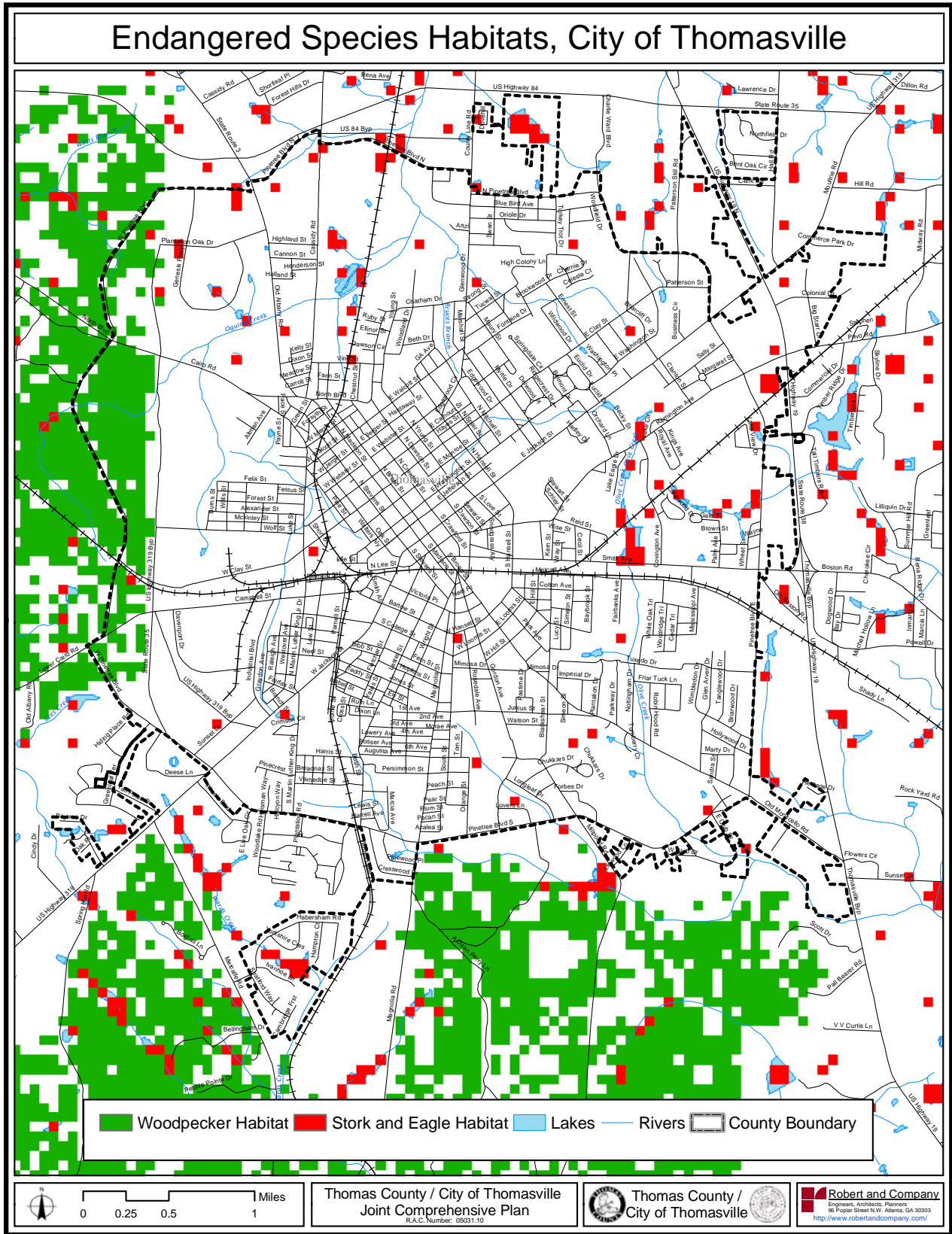
Table 4b.1 - Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomasville, 2004

Species	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat	Threats
Birds				
Bald eagle Haliaeetus leucocephalus	T	E	Inland waterways and estuarine areas in Georgia. Active eagle nests were located in Thomasville in 1996-2002.	Major factor in initial decline was lowered reproductive success following use of DDT. Current threats include habitat destruction, disturbance at the nest, illegal shooting, electrocution, impact injuries, and lead poisoning.
Red-cockaded woodpecker Picoides borealis	E	E	Nest in mature pine with low understory vegetation (<1.5m); forage in pine and pine hardwood stands > 30 years of age, preferably > 10" dbh	Reduction of older age pine stands and to encroachment of hardwood midstory in older age pine stands due to fire suppression.
Wood stork Mycteria americana	E	E	Primarily feed in fresh and brackish wetlands and nest in cypress or other wooded swamps. Active rookeries were located in Thomasville 1992-1997. Rookeries were not successful in 2001.	Decline due primarily to loss of suitable feeding habitat, particularly in south Florida. Other factors include loss of nesting habitat, prolonged drought/flooding, raccoon predation on nests, and human disturbance of rookeries.
Reptiles				
Eastern indigo snake Drymarchon corais couperi	T	T	During winter, den in xeric sandridge habitat preferred by gopher tortoises; during warm months, forage in creek bottoms, upland forests, and agricultural fields.	Habitat loss due to uses such as farming, construction, forestry, and pasture and to overcollecting for the pet trade
Gopher tortoise Gopherus polyphemus	No Federal Status	T	Well-drained, sandy soils in forest and grassy areas; associated with pine overstory, open understory with grass and forb groundcover, and sunny areas for nesting.	Habitat loss and conversion to closed canopy forests. Other threats include mortality on highways and the collection of tortoises for pets.
<i>E= endangered T= Threatened</i>				

Table 4b.1 (cont.) Threatened and Endangered Species in Thomasville, 2004

Species	Federal Status	State Status	Habitat	Threats
Invertebrates				
Ochlockonee moccasinshell Medionidus simpsonianus	E	E	Stable sandy and gravelly substrates in medium-sized streams to large rivers, often in areas swept free of silt by the current.	Habitat modification, sedimentation, and water quality degradation
Oval pigtoe mussel Pleurobema pyriforme	E	E	River tributaries and main channels in slow to moderate currents over silty sand, muddy sand, sand, and gravel substrates.	Habitat modification, sedimentation, and water quality degradation
Shiny-rayed pocketbook mussel Lampsilis subangulata	E	E	Medium creeks to the mainstems of rivers with slow to moderate currents over sandy substrates and associated with rock or clay.	Habitat modification, sedimentation, and water quality degradation
Plants				
Baltzell sedge Carex baltzellii	No Federal Status	E	Rich hardwood forests with a beech-southern magnolia canopy and an abundance of wildflowers.	
Parrot pitcher-plant Sarracenia psittacina	No Federal Status	T	Acid soils of open bogs, wet savannahs, and low areas in pine flatwoods.	
White trumpet Sarracenia leucophylla	No Federal Status	E	Acid soils of open bogs and on sphagnum mats in light gaps along streams and in red maple-blackgum swamps.	
<i>E= Endangered T= Threatened</i>				

Figure 4b.8 - Endangered Species Habitats, Thomasville



Endangered Species Habitats Figure adapted from data acquired through Tall Timbers Research Station.

Cultural Resources

Scenic Areas

No scenic views or vistas have been designated within the City of Thomasville; there are, however, numerous scenic neighborhoods and picturesque downtown vistas due to the well preserved historic character of the city.

Historic Sites

Thomasville was laid out as the County Seat of the newly formed Thomas County in 1826. Evidence of Thomasville's history still exists today in the form of historic sites and properties. Table 4b.2) lists eight historic districts that are included on the National Register of Historic Places in Thomasville. Following the table is a brief description of each district and a map (Figure 4b.9) depicting the locations of the districts within the site.

Table 4b.2 - National Register of Historic Places, Historic Districts, Thomasville

Resource Name	Address	Listed
Dawson Street Residential Historic District	Roughly bounded by North Blvd., Madison, Jackson, and Hansell Sts.	9/7/1984
East End Historic District	Roughly bounded by Metcalf Ave., Simeon St., Grady St., and East Loomis St.	7/25/2003
Fletcherville Historic District	Roughly bounded by Siexas, Wright, S. College and W. Jackson St.	4/18/1985
Gordon Avenue Historic District	Gordon Ave.	4/18/1985
Paradise Park Historic District	Roughly bounded by Metcalf Ave., Colton, Broad, and Loomis Sts.	9/7/1984
Stevens Street Historic District	Along Stevens St., 1 blk. NW of Thomas County Courthouse	5/10/2001
Thomasville Commercial Historic District	Downtown between Jefferson St. & Smith Ave.; bet. Crawford & Siexas St.	10/28/2004
Tockwotton-Love Place Historic District	Roughly bounded by McLean Ave., Hansell, Jackson, and Seward Sts.	9/7/1984

Dawson Street Historic District: The Dawson Street Historic District is architecturally diverse, comprised of houses built before the Civil War through the 1920s. Classical Revival is the earliest style, but many of the houses along Dawson Street were not built until after reconstruction, which accounts for the large number of Victorian Eclectic houses, typified by the Lapham-Patterson House. In addition to the large number of Victorian Eclectic homes, the district also contains Neo-Classical and Craftsman designs.

East End Historic District: A traditional historic neighborhood, the East End Historic District is located just east of the Paradise Park Historic District. Consisting of approximately two dozen homes, the East End area is comprised of mostly modest homes in the Bungalow/Craftsman style with a few exceptions that retain Late Victorian decorative details. The development of East End dates back to 1875; it remains a residential neighborhood today.

Gordon Avenue Historic District: Gordon Avenue is a major street in the southern portion of the City of Thomasville. The historic district is small, comprised of only five houses on large lots along the west side of the Avenue. The houses are single family dwellings of one to two stories, reflecting Victorian, Neo-Classical, and Colonial Revival styles.

Fletcherville Historic District: Located south of Thomasville’s commercial district, the Fletcherville neighborhood was laid out in the mid-1850s. This residential neighborhood was formed in conjunction with the founding of a private college, the Fletcher Institute, which was tied to the Methodist Episcopal Church South and established in 1848.



The Wright House in historic Fletcherville

Paradise Park Historic District: Paradise Park Historic District consists of an 18-acre triangular-shaped park, deeded to the City in 1889, and the surrounding historic residences that border the park. Paradise Park is located southeast of the commercial core of downtown Thomasville and just south of the CSX railroad tracks.

Stevens Street Historic District: Located a few blocks northwest of the Thomas County Courthouse, the Stevens Street Historic District is significant for multiple reasons. The National Register states that it has significance in the following areas: historically black, Community Planning and Development, Architecture, Education, Entertainment and Recreation, as well as religion. The architecture is primarily focused on the Greek Revival and Colonial Revival Styles.

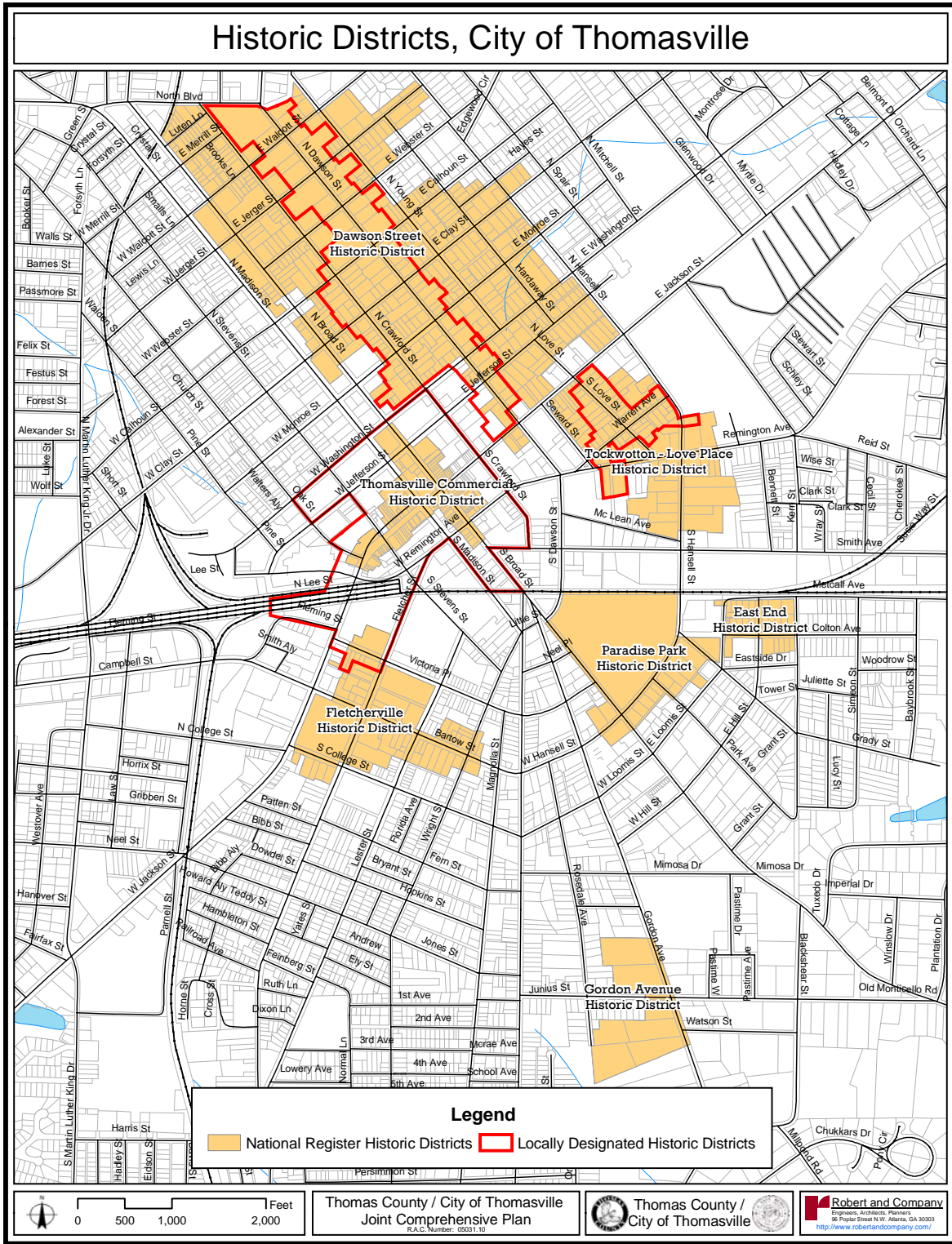
Thomasville Commercial Historic District: The Commercial Historic District is the core of the City of Thomasville. Laid out in a traditional grid pattern, it encompasses contiguous commercial and civic buildings downtown and centers around Broad Street. The Courthouse marks the center of the city and is located at the northern edge of the Commercial Historic District. The commercial center of the city grew in a southeasterly direction from the center of the city; many of the oldest buildings (dating from the 1880s) are located along Broad Street.

Tockwotton-Love Place Historic District: A residential area developed from the 1850s to the 1920s, Tockwotton-Love Place is comprised of two adjacent neighborhoods, Tockwotton and Love Place. Tockwotton is the southern portion of the district, while Love Place is located to the north. Remington Avenue, a predominantly residential and historic street, is the dividing line for the neighborhoods and also where the two come together to form one district.



A home in the Tockwotton-Love Historic District

Figure 4b.9 - Thomasville Historic Districts



District boundaries shown on the above map are based on the boundaries as presented in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan and do not include recent amendments to the district boundaries.

These historic districts have played a large role in establishing a sense of place and unique identity for Thomasville. The preservation of these neighborhoods and other sites around the city has created multiple tourist destinations within the city limits. The importance of the historic districts lies in the storied history as well as the physical beauty of the structures, which draw tourists to the city. Many visitors to the area choose to spend time at one of many historic homes turned Bed & Breakfast Inns. In addition to the elegant homes in the historic districts, there is also a very attractive and popular downtown commercial area in Thomasville thanks to the historic preservation efforts. The Main Street Program in Thomasville has met with great success in returning downtown to the well-healed area it was once known as during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Enhancing the downtown is a sizeable economic development initiative in which the city has invested many resources, and from which the cultural and economic benefits are evident. When combined with the visitors to the plantations in Thomas County, historic preservation has a great impact on the local economy.

In addition to the historic districts listed on the National Register and described herein, there are many other important historic sites and buildings in Thomasville that are not part of one of the historic districts. Table 4b.3 below lists eighteen individual sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Table 4b.3. Historic Buildings and Sites, Thomasville, 2005

Resource Name	Address/Location	Listed
B'nai Israel Synagogue and Cemetery	210 S. Crawford St.	10/14/1997
Bethany Congregational Church	112 Lester St.	3/7/1985
Beutell, Joe M., House	101 Montrose Dr.	8/29/1991
Brandon, Dr. David, House	329 N. Broad St.	9/4/1970
Bryan, Hardy, House	312 N. Broad St.	8/12/1970
Burch-Mitchell House	737 Remington Ave.	9/4/1970
Church of the Good Shepherd	511--519 Oak St.	2/5/1987
East Side School	120 N. Hansell St.	12/16/1977
Gordon Avenue Apartments	424 Gordon Ave.	3/24/1983
Hansell, Augustine, House	429 S. Hansell St.	6/22/1970
Hollywood Plantation	1701 Old Monticello Rd.	11/15/2003
Lapham-Patterson House	626 N. Dawson St.	8/12/1970
MacIntyre Park and MacIntyre Park High School	117 Glenwood Dr.	4/14/2000
Park Front	711 S. Hansell St.	8/12/1970
Ponder, Ephraim, House	324 N. Dawson St.	8/12/1970
Thomas County Courthouse	N. Broad St.	6/22/1970
Thomasville Depot	420 W. Jackson St./US 319	5/19/1988
Wright House	415 Fletcher St.	8/12/1970

Thomasville Museum of History

The Thomasville Museum of History (pictured below) is operated by the Thomasville Historical Society. The Thomas County Historical Society runs a five-building complex in Thomasville. The society gives tours of exhibits.



Thomasville Museum of History

Thomasville Cultural Center

The Thomasville Cultural Center, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enriching the quality of life for persons of all ages in the Thomas County and Southwest Georgia area, through cultural and education experiences in the arts and humanities

The building housing the cultural center was constructed in 1915 as the East Side Elementary School. It was the first school in Thomasville funded with public money. The school was closed in June, 1975, when the Thomasville Board of Education determined that repair costs were prohibitive. The building then became a fire hazard and a shelter for pigeons. A dedicated group of private citizens decided to revitalize the old buildings as a cultural center. The Board of the Cultural Center was reorganized and a fund drive was launched to restore the building. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The organization was chartered as the East Side Cultural Center on November 27, 1978, and the name was changed to Thomasville Cultural Center, Inc. on September 4, 1984. The building opened to the public on October 5, 1986.

As renovated, the building contains 36,000 square feet. The cost of the renovations, which totaled \$3.3 million, was paid for through private donations. The Cultural Center includes a genealogical, history, and fine arts library, as well as a 550-seat auditorium, four exhibition galleries, an orientation room, a museum shop, and either special purpose or function rooms.

Black Heritage Museum

Thomasville’s first African American heritage museum is planned to open during the summer of 2006, and will be housed in the old Frederick Douglas School, a previously segregated school in the city.

Cultural Resources Recommendations

The Historic Districts and sites in Thomasville are extremely valuable resources to the city and its citizens. Thomasville has created a unique identity through the preservation of its neighborhoods and other numerous individual examples of architecture from a variety of time periods. The City places great value on its cultural resources and continues to focus planning efforts on maintaining and increasing the value of neighborhoods and the quality of life in the City.

Through initiatives such as the November 2003 Georgia Resource Team Visit and resulting report, the City has created goals related to recognizing and promoting its cultural resources. Many of the recommendations from the Resource Team Report are achievable and thus, are identified again through the Comprehensive Plan. The newly established Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Ordinance will be an important tool in the development of future neighborhoods within Thomasville, as it will serve to encourage the replication of existing historic areas.

Another valuable recommendation from the Resource Team Report includes the suggestion that a city-wide survey be conducted to identify scenic entry corridors from each direction and route visitors and tourists to downtown via these routes using a way finding system in order to give visitors and tourists a positive impression of Thomasville's historic architecture. Scenic gateway alternatives to the current entry routes include: Old Monticello Road to South Broad Street; Remington Avenue; Old Cairo Road to North Blvd to North Broad Street; Business 84 West to North Blvd to North Broad Street.

Crucial to the preservation of the historic character of the City of Thomasville is the type of development that is allowed in the future. Infill development can threaten the stability of existing neighborhoods if it is not done in the most appropriate location at the most appropriate scale. The Resource Report recommends the creation of Infill Development Guidelines for every neighborhood. Components of those guideline should include components that prevent changing the historic fabric of the neighborhood. The guidelines should also establish appropriate architectural attributes, and list important details for each neighborhood.

The last historic survey conducted in Thomasville was in 1989-1990. The Resource Team suggested that a new formal survey of historic resources throughout Thomasville be conducted in order to identify potential districts and individual buildings to be protected through local regulations and listed in the Georgia Register of Historic Places and the National Register. While Thomasville already has numerous sites and districts listed on the State and National Registers, there may be the potential to include some not previously considered such as the following potential districts:

- Cherry Street
- Glenwood
- Dewey City
- McClaughlin Heights
- Park Avenue
- Fletcherville Amendment

The benefits of National Register designation include federal income tax credits for building rehabilitation and state property tax abatements for rehabilitation. There are no restrictions on National Register properties, unless federal funds or permitting are involved in any project that includes a historic resource.

5.0 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The first purpose of this chapter is to provide an inventory of the community facilities and services serving the City of Thomasville and Thomas County and assess their adequacy. The information contained in this chapter will assist the City and County in coordinating the planning of public facilities and services with new development and redevelopment projects. After identifying major findings, issues, and opportunities in this Community Assessment, a Community Agenda will be prepared which provides goals, policies, objectives, and programs for the improvement of community facilities and services to meet the long-term needs of Thomasville and Thomas County.

Administrative rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs specify a relatively narrow list of facilities to be included in the community assessment. As consultants for the City and County, we believe that a more thorough assessment of community facilities and services not specified in the rules is needed (for example, tax department, social programs, etc.). This chapter is intended to provide a thorough inventory of community facilities data and an assessment of long-term needs.

Community facilities can be grouped into larger areas of concern, and the discussion in this chapter is organized generally to correspond with these groupings:

Public safety, including crime, law enforcement (sheriff, police, courts, corrections) fire protection and rescue operations, emergency medical services, 911, emergency management and animal control.

Health, education, and welfare, including hospitals, nursing homes, public welfare programs, public and private school systems and institutions of higher learning, libraries, and public cemeteries.

General administrative facilities, such as administrative offices for city and county personnel, including management, building inspections, economic development and tourism, and business licensing among others.

Utility-type operations, such as solid waste collection and disposal, water systems, sewer systems, stormwater management, and in the case of Thomasville, various other utilities like electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure.

Parks and cultural facilities, including state and local parks, local recreation programs, and cultural and community assets of the city and county.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

Thomasville Police

Thomasville's Police Department is co-located with the municipal court, county jail and Thomas County Sheriff's Department on Smith Avenue east of downtown Thomasville. The department received State Certification in January 1998 from the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police and recertification in 2003.

The Thomasville Police Department is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA). The Thomasville Police Department received accreditation from CALEA in November 1987, and reaccreditation in 1992, 1997, 2000 and 2003. CALEA is a voluntary accreditation program for law enforcement agencies. This is a joint

effort between CALEA and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, National Sheriff’s Association, and the Executive Research Forum. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies was created to establish a body of standards designed to increase law enforcement agency capabilities in order to better prevent and control crime, increase agency effectiveness and efficiency, increase agency cooperation and coordination with other agencies and increase citizen and employee confidence.

The Thomasville Police Department consists of 66 personnel: 58 sworn and 8 civilians. The department is divided into four main functional divisions: Office of the Chief, Patrol, Criminal Investigations, and Support Services.

The existing level of service for police staffing is one sworn officer per 283 persons. Estimated future need for police protection can be calculated using the current officer per 1,000 population ratio of one officer per 283 persons and applying it to projected population in the City through 2025, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 – Projected Police Personnel Needs, 2005-2025, City of Thomasville

	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Population (high growth)	18,665	19,148	19,640	20,133	20,626
Officers Needed to Meet Existing Level of Service	66	67	69	71	73
Additional Officers to Add (from 2005 as base year)	0	1	3	5	7

Source: Population projections from Robert and Company 2005 and are the “high growth” scenario. Note: Ratio of officers to 1,000 population is projected, officers have been rounded up when decimal is over .75 or down to the nearest whole number when decimal is below .75.

Many positive programs and events are credited to the Thomasville Police Department. These include School Resource Officers, Crime Prevention, Community Relations, and Public Information. A Student Driver Awareness Orientation has been offered at Thomasville High School for students who drive to school. Formal programs include P.R.I.D.E. (Parents Reducing Incidents of Driver Error), D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training), and P.A.C.E. Program (Police Athletic and Community Events)

Neighborhood Watch is considered to be one of the most effective crime prevention programs by far that the Thomasville Police Department offers. “Problem Watch” follows the same framework as Neighborhood Watch but is for those groups that only want to work on one specific concern, and then disband.

Another crime prevention program called “Crime Stoppers” was initiated in 2005. A Board of Directors was founded in 2005 for the Thomasville Crime Stoppers program and the program is expected to be launched in 2006.

There were two Business Watch Groups reorganized during 2005 due to problems merchants were experiencing. In order to enhance the effectiveness of communication with the merchants, business watch groups were organized at the Gateway Shopping Center and with the Downtown Merchants. Problems at Gateway included rising incidents of juvenile shoplifting. Foot Patrol in these two areas has also become a mandatory part of everyday patrol. Crime

rates have already decreased due to the proactive response by the Thomasville Police Department and the merchants.

Many civic groups have also been offered presentations on subjects such as Shop with a Cop, Thomasville Police Department Overview, Your Department, Identity Theft, Con Artist Awareness, Drug and Alcohol Resistance, Drugs Don't Work, Workplace Safety, Drunk and Dangerous, Victim's Rights, Domestic Violence, Burglary Prevention, Holiday Safety, and more. These groups included Kiwanis, Sunrise Kiwanis, Golden K, Rotary, Retired Teachers Association, Women's Forum, and the Exchange Club. At churches, police personnel have presented programs to youth and senior citizen groups, such as Stranger Danger, Bike and Traffic Safety, Identity Theft, Safe Driving, Burglary Prevention, and Hurricane and Other Disaster Preparedness.

Work on the Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) in the Stevens St/Oak St/Webster St/ Jerger St/ Calhoun St/ Pine St/ Faircloth Area is a joint effort with several departments within the City of Thomasville. The Thomasville Police Department is responsible for the Neighborhood Watch Group, Quality of Life Concerns (sufficient lighting, junk cars, potential drug activity, etc). In 2005, Thomasville Police's Community Relations staff worked with Planning and Zoning and Human Resources in the NIP area, holding monthly Neighborhood Watch meetings.

Thomas County Sheriff

The Thomas County Sheriff is a constitutional county officer responsible for law enforcement in the county and service to the court system. The office of the Sheriff is located in the Justice Center on Smith Avenue (pictured right).



Thomasville-Thomas County Justice Center on Smith Avenue, Housing the Thomasville Police Department, Municipal Court, County Sheriff, and Detention Center

Georgia State Patrol

Thomas County is located with Troop G’s jurisdiction of the Georgia Department of Public Safety. Thomasville is headquarters for Post 12 of the Department, covering Colquitt, Grady, Mitchell, and Thomas Counties. The Georgia State Patrol has an office in the southern part of Thomasville, on Pinetree Boulevard. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation has an office nearby.



Georgia Bureau of Investigation Office in Thomasville

Local Public Safety Programs

The Thomasville/Thomas County School Resource Officer Program (SRO) was established to forge a close working relationship between police/sheriff departments and school systems. The program is a proactive problem solving partnership between school officials and faculty (police officers and students).

Crime

The data in Table 5.2 show that Thomas County’s crime increased from 2000 to 2002 in terms of absolute number of total crimes, violent crimes, and property crimes, as well as in the index crime rate. The same is true for non-MSA counties in Georgia during that same time period. Thomas County’s crime rates were higher than average for non-MSA counties, but that is not surprising given that Thomasville is a sizable urban area. Table 5.3 provides details for types of violent and property crimes in Thomas County in 2000.

Table 5.2 – Summary of Index Crimes, 2000 and 2002, Thomas County and Non-Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Georgia Counties

Index Crime	Thomas County		Non-MSA Georgia Counties	
	2000	2002	2000	2002
Total crimes (#)	1,632	1,936	71,556	83,986
Index crime rate (1)	3,818.7	4,496.4	2,839.8	3,246.6
Violent crimes (#)	131	165	7,552	8,710
Property crimes (#)	1,501	1,771	64,004	75,276

(1) Number of crimes per 100,000 population.
 Source: Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Georgia Crime Information Center, Crime Statistics, 2000 and 2002, internet database; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2000 and 2002 Population Estimates. Crime rates calculated by Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry College of Business, The University of Georgia. As reported in Table 18.121 of *Georgia Statistical Abstract* 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

Table 5.3 – Crimes Reported by Type, Thomas County, 2000

Violent Crimes	Thomas County, 2000
Murder	2
Rape	10
Robbery	33
Aggravated Assault	86
Total Violent Crimes	131
Property Crimes	Thomas County, 2000
Burglary	376
Larceny	1,067
Motor Vehicle Theft	58
Total Property Crimes	1,501

Source: Index (Part I) Crimes Reported, 2000. In *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (21st Edition).

Areas of High Crime or other Concerns: Thomasville

The City of Thomasville plans to identify high crime areas and add them to the Neighborhood Improvement Project (NIP) map. Such areas may include the following locations: Stevens and Jerger, Forsyth Lane, and Stevens to Madison. Weston Park is also a problem area at times; it must be constantly monitored and has been a location for stolen cars. In addition, dilapidated housing may serve as a haven for drug activity.

Traffic Accidents

The total reported number of crashes in Thomas County on the public roads increased only slightly over a four-year period and injuries decreased in absolute terms from 1998 to 2002 (see Table 5.4). There was an increase in fatalities due to traffic accidents, however.

Table 5.4 – Traffic Accidents, Injuries and Fatalities, Thomas County, 1998 and 2002

Index Crime	Thomas County	
	1998	2002
Total Crashes	1,334	1,341
Injuries	710	615
Fatalities	8	16

Source: Georgia Department of Public Safety, unpublished data, May 2000. Georgia Department of Motor Vehicle Safety, Crash Statistics Analysis, Statistics and Information Notebook, 2002. Table 18.142 in *Georgia Statistical Abstract 2002-2003* and 2004-2005 (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

State Law Enforcement Statistics

An annual report of the Georgia Department of Public Safety indicates that the Department (including the Georgia State Patrol) made 3,604 arrests in Thomas County in 2000, of which 2,822 (78%) were Georgia residents. The same year in Thomas County, it also issued 1,903 speeding violations and 5,091 warnings (84% were Georgia residents).

Courts

Thomas County’s court system consists of the Clerk of Superior and State Court, Magistrate Court, Probate Court, and Superior Court. The Clerk of Superior Court’s offices include, in addition to the Clerk: a chief deputy clerk, three senior clerks, and three deputy clerks.

The offices of these courts are located in the Main Courthouse in Thomasville. A recent (October 2005) administrative space inventory and current needs study was conducted by a consultant for Thomas County. The study found that 17,217 square feet of office space was provided as of October 2005 for the Clerk of Court, Probate Court, Judges Offices, and courtrooms. However, there is a current need for 29,838 square feet of office space. This indicates a deficit of (need for) 12,621 square feet of space as of 2005. Those needs exclude the District Attorney’s Office, which is housed in Courthouse Annex 1.



Thomas County Courthouse

Both residential and non-residential growth will create demands on the court system. For that reason, a combination of population and employment serves, as a good measure of future needs. That combination of population and employment can be referred to as the “functional” population, as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 – Functional Population Projections, 2005-2025, Thomas County

Component	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Population (Moderate High Growth)	45,813	49,020	52,451	56,123	60,051
Employment	21,383	23,464	25,545	27,625	29,706
Total Functional Population	67,196	72,484	77,996	83,748	89,757

Source: Robert and Company, Table 1a.2 and 2a.18 of this Community Assessment.

Based on the 2005 estimate of functional population, Thomas County provides a level of service of 0.258 square feet of office space per functional population for the Courts, but there is a need to provide 0.449 square feet per functional population. The proposed level of service standard of 0.449 square feet per functional population will result in the following needs during the planning horizon (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 – Future Space Needs for the Courts, 2005-2025, Thomas County

Court Administrative Space Needs (Square Feet)	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Square Feet of Office Space Needed at 0.449 Square Feet Per Functional Population	30,171	32,545	35,020	37,603	40,301
Square Feet of Deficiency from Office Space Provided in 2005	12,954	15,328	17,803	20,386	23,084

Source: Level of service and current inventory from Thomas County, 2005. Calculations by Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., December 2005.

In addition to the current 12,621 square-foot deficiency in building space for courts, Thomas County’s growth will also result in a need to add 10,130 square feet of building space between 2005 and 2025 to maintain the level of service standard.

Corrections and Victim Programs

State Correctional Facilities in Thomasville include a Diversion Center, a County-run State Prison, and a State Probation Office. Table 5.7 shows gender and race of state prison inmates from Thomas County in 1991 and 2002.

Table 5.7 – State Prison Inmates from Thomas County by Gender and Race, 1991 and 2002

Inmate Characteristics	1991	2002
Total Inmates	139	317
Percent White	15.8%	21.1%
Percent Non-white	84.2%	78.9%
Percent Female	7.9%	6.6%
Percent Male	92.1%	93.4%

Source: *The 1992 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (11th Edition). *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (21st Edition).

The number of State Prison inmates from Thomas County has increased significantly over time, and the demographic composition has also changed. The vast majority of State Prison inmates are males, and a disproportionate percentage is Non-white. As of 2004, there were a reported total of 318 inmates from Thomas County, of which 295 were males and 23 were females (Georgia Department of Corrections, Annual Report FY 2004).

Thomas County has one correctional facility: Thomas County Prison is located at the County camp, 324 County Farm Road in Thomasville. The Corrections Department/Thomasville Diversion Center is located on West Jackson Street, and had 50 offenders as of 2004, with a total daily cost per offender of \$65.66 and an annual cost per offender of \$23,964 (Georgia Department of Corrections Annual Report FY 2004).

Table 5.8 – Active Offenders by Race and Gender, Thomas County Prison and Jail, 2005

Offender Characteristic	Thomas County Prison	Thomas County Jail
Black	118	6
White	35	4
% Male	100%	70%
Total	153	10

Source: Georgia Department of Corrections. Facilities Query. Active Offender Population Statistics. Queried December 2, 2005. <http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/GDC/OffenderStatistics/jsp/OffStatsSelect.jsp>

On March 2, 2006, the Thomas County Sheriff’s Office reported that 151 prisoners are currently housed in the Prison/Jail. As of 1993, the jail had the capacity for 240 prisoners, and has since expanded its capacity to 480 prisoners by increasing the number of inmates per cell. Thirty beds have also been added to the facility. The County reportedly charges \$30/day per prisoner. (<http://www.wctv6.com/home/headlines/563592.html>). Because it is more expensive for the State to hold prisoners (see dollar amounts provided above), housing prisoners at county-run facilities is a more cost effective for the State.

Shelter for Battered Women

Halcyon Home for Battered Women is a non-profit, non-denominational charitable organization for battered women and their children. Its mission is to provide safe shelter and support services for victims of domestic violence, their children, and survivors of sexual assault, promote

community awareness and education to help prevent and break the cycle of violence, and provide an environment of encouragement, compassion, and support for all those served (http://home.rose.net/~halcyon/halcyon_mission.htm)

Child Abuse

Table 5.9 shows the types of child abuse cases (301 total) that were substantiated during calendar year 2001 in Thomas County. Approximately two-thirds of the cases were classified as “neglect.” For comparative purposes, the state of Georgia’s rate of child abuse per 1,000 children in calendar year 2001, at 18.2, was lower than Thomas County’s rate of 25.9.

Table 5.9 – Substantiated Child Abuse Cases by Type, Calendar Year 2001, Thomas County

Type of Incident	Substantiated Child Abuse Incidents
Neglect	205
Emotional	26
Physical	34
Sexual	30
Other	6
Total	301
Rate per 1,000 children less than 18 years	25.9

Source: *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (21st Edition).

Juvenile Justice

Table 5.10 shows recent statistics for Thomas County from the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. A small percentage (generally less than 10%) of youths are placed in secure detention facilities, and most are placed at home awaiting adjudication. Trends show a decline in the number of unique youths served (i.e., a youth can be taken in on more than one occasion).

Table 5.10 – Juvenile Justice Intakes, FY 2003-FY 2005, Thomas County

Characteristic	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005
Unique Youth Served	374	333	316
Admissions	406	358	367
Releases	428	376	336

Source: Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, Comparative Statistics FY 2005-2003, Thomas County.

<http://www.djj.state.ga.us/Statistics/statCountySubpage.asp?County=136>

Fire and Rescue

ISO Rating

The Insurance Services Organization (ISO), an independent organization, rates communities (evaluates fire departments) according to the adequacy of the water system and other factors, such as the size and type of buildings in a community, the presence or absence of fire alarm systems, the way calls are received and handled, whether fire fighters are paid or volunteer, the size of water mains and capacity, and how long it takes to respond to a call. ISO ratings are based on a scale from one to ten, with "1" being the best and "10" being no fire protection.

According to the ISO, a fire station should have an efficient service area of a two and one-half mile radius in any direction from the station. The ISO also recommends that each non-reserve piece of equipment be staffed with six firefighters.

Thomasville Fire Department

The Thomasville Fire Department has three fire stations. Station #1 is located downtown on Crawford Street (attached to the downtown municipal building); Station #2 is located on Pinetree Boulevard on the south side of the city between Bartow and Magnolia Streets. Station #3 is located in the 100 block of Remington Avenue on the north side of the city.



Thomasville's Fire Station #1



Thomasville's Fire Station #2

A new City of Thomasville Fire Station (#4) is scheduled to be completed in 2007 on the north side of Thomasville along County Line Road. Its construction will be funded by the Special Option Local Sales Tax (SPLOST) program.

As of the mid-1990s, the department averaged 600 calls per year. Contractually, Thomasville provides service to Thomas County fire zones 1 and 2. Thomasville also provides mutual aid assistance to cities when called upon.

Thomas County Fire Department

Thomas County has three fire districts, each with a different ISO rating. Districts 1 and 2 are within the Urban Service Area and District 3 is outside of the Urban Service Area. Thomas County Fire operates thirteen stations throughout the county and serves all of the rural areas outside of Fire District 2. The county contracts with Thomasville for fire protection in Districts 1 and 2. The county's fire stations are located in the cities of Ochlocknee, Boston, and Coolidge.

Prior to 1998, the fire stations were staffed by volunteer firefighters. At that time, the Thomas County Board of Commissioners hired six firefighters and a training officer to work during business hours and respond to medical and fire calls. The stations in the cities of Boston, Coolidge, and Ochlocknee were renovated to accommodate the staff with kitchens and sleeping areas. With the consolidation of City and County fire protection services in 2001 six new fire engines were purchased for the small municipalities and three of the city's engines were sent to rural station locations.

In 1999, the paid staff was brought into the City of Thomasville to work 24-hour shifts at Station 3 on Remington Avenue. In 2003, the Board of Commissioners hired nine more firefighters to work 24-hour shifts at the Boston, Coolidge and Ochlocknee stations. A new station was completed at the Remington Avenue Fire Station for joint County/City use in 2006, which houses City Fire personnel and City EMS personnel.

In 2005, the Board of Commissioners approved the addition of nine more paid staff members so that each fire station has two people on duty during each shift. There are still a number of volunteer firefighters.

One issue to be confronted regarding county fire protection is the installation of fire hydrants. Because there is not a countywide water system, there are also no (or few) fire hydrants in unincorporated areas. The county does not currently require fire hydrants to be a part of private, community water systems but is looking into that issue presently.

Thomas County's Fire/Rescue Stations and addresses are provided below:

Barnetts Creek VFD
1264 Stewart Rd.
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 226-5162

Barwick VFD
1086 E. Main St.
Barwick, GA 31720
(229) 735-5319

Boston Fire
101 N. Norton St.
Boston, GA 31626
(229)498-6565; Fax: (229) 498-6566

Coolidge Fire
165 Enon Rd.
Coolidge, GA 21738
(229) 225-1913; Fax: (229) 225-1913

Dillon VFD
57 Airport Rd.
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 225-9644

Lake Riverside VFD
9807 GA Hwy 202
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 226-6594

Meigs VFD
1106 E. Railroad St.
Meigs, GA 31765
(229) 683-3232

Metcalfe VFD
1050 Mitchell St.
Metcalfe, GA 31792
(229) 226-6466

New Hope VFD
6285 Hwy 19 S.
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-6456

Ochlocknee Fire
3045 N. Main St.
Ochlocknee, GA 31773
(229) 574-5800 Ph/Fax

Pavo VFD
1067 N. Main St.
Pavo, GA 31778
(229) 859-2111

Reichertville VFD
4705 Reichertville Rd.
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 226-6537

Sunset VFD
244 County Farm Rd.
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 226-5952; Fax: (229) 226-6419

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Thomas County, the City of Thomasville and the county's small cities are served by a consolidated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) program, which is managed by a certified Director. The program is administratively supported by the Thomas County Board of Commissioners and annually submits its operating budget to the county for approval. Thomas County EMS has no competing private providers. The program has an approximate \$1.6 million annual budget with approximately \$900,000 recovered by user fees. The remaining funds are paid as an Emergency Services Tax, which is collected countywide as a portion of the ad valorem tax structure.

EMS response systems can be designed in two ways. Stations are either dispersed geographically, or they are located based on population density. Thomas County's system is designed based on population density, as it is difficult to defend geographical station location choice when such facilities can have any extremely limited number of calls. Staff has worked to place the EMS facilities at the perimeter of the city, thus allowing quick response into the city or into the more rural sections of the county. Population density design has led the Thomas County EMS program to currently house its vehicles and staff at three locations:

- 2 ambulances and extrication unit at headquarters-1202 Remington Avenue
- 1 ambulance at Thomasville Fire Station # 2 (Pinetree Boulevard)
- 1 ambulance at Thomasville Fire Station # 1 (Crawford Street, Downtown)
- 3 ambulances are backline reserve units

Due to the fact that the EMS operation is on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the county maintains three reserve ambulances. This is necessary to allow routine maintenance, plus allow for vehicle emergency repair and downtime. Due to the nature of their work, EMS units are subject to a large amount of wear and tear. Thomas County staff has initiated a chassis replacement program due to the high mileages the units carry. The ambulance service modules are designed for a service life span of greater than 10 years, and typically have at least one chassis replacement. With a complete new ambulance box and chassis costing over \$80,000, one can readily see that remounting of a fully serviceable medical box at under \$60,000 is a wise choice. All seven units are replaced within a seven-year rotational period, so the budget annually reflects at least one replacement vehicle.

The current EMS central office lacks adequate space, and a new facility is currently under construction. The building will have 17,000 square feet under roof, with 5,000 square feet dedicated for vehicle bays. The City Fire staff at Station 3 (Remington Avenue) will move into the current EMS office facility, as well as the County Fire Chief who also currently serves as the County Emergency Management Agency Director. A new City of Thomasville Fire Station (#4)

is planned to be completed in 2007 on the north side of Thomasville along County Line Road. Its construction will be funded by the Special Option Local Sales Tax (SPLOST) program. With the completion of Thomasville Fire Station #4, one of the Remington Avenue ambulance units will be moved to this location to provide better service. With the completion of the new northside Fire Station and the relocation of one ambulance from the Remington Avenue site, local EMS professionals will then consider the location design of the EMS system complete. With the new facilities, EMS services should be adequate beyond the planning period.

The volume of calls has increased from 5,025 in 1996 to 6,012 in 2004 (see also Table 5.12 under 911). The EMS program has 27 full time and 22 part time staff members. Each shift requires nine staff members, with two assigned per ambulance and one person assigned to the extraction unit. Staff works 24 hours on, 48 hours off shifts. Thomas EMS staff training is extensive, with three in-house certified training officers. All of the staff are certified above state mandated minimums.

Response times for EMS calls are considered excellent -- within six minutes in an urban setting. Including the county's large rural area, which is within the service area, Thomas County EMS averaged less than 8 minutes per call in 2005. This is considered an excellent response time. Service calls from Meigs or other outlying locations can take from 12 to 15 minutes. As time responses are critical by individual events, not averages, Thomas County EMS has worked closely with the Thomas County Fire Department to insure that first responders with EMT training are available in the county's outlying areas. These services are available from the Ochlocknee, Coolidge and Boston fire stations. This program has proven to be responsive to critical events.

The Thomas County professional staff has determined that system service and available equipment are sufficient to meet current needs. If services volumes indicate that the County is lacking in staff, it may be increased. It is estimated that current EMS personnel levels will be adequate for a period of five to ten years. Should growth and calls for service exceed estimates, system needs should be reassessed. The EMS Director projects that a fifth ambulance will need to be added to the system when call/service volumes reach 7,000 per year. This will require a new ambulance and an additional six full-time certified personnel, which would cost approximately \$250,000 annually in personnel alone.

Emergency Services Division (911)

The Thomas County/Thomasville Emergency Services Division call center is a consolidated countywide service and is housed in a state of the art center located in downtown Thomasville next to Thomasville's Fire Station #1 on Crawford Avenue. The system employs a Motorola Gold Elite Centricon console system, served by a Plant Vesta phone system. The facility has secure access, and houses the manager's office, 911 staff, and communications and support facilities. It has a centralized operations room, where all incoming calls are received. The center receives calls for the consolidated Emergency Medical Services department, all city and county fire protection services, including the county's thirteen volunteer fire departments, calls for both the county Sheriff's office and the Thomasville Police Department, assistance to the Georgia State Patrol, and all small cities police responses. In addition to the emergency services calls function, 911 staff is also responsible for all countywide building numbering functions and maintenance of the property address system database.

Table 5.11 – Total Reported Calls by Call Source to the Emergency Services Division (911), 2002-2004

Call Source	2002	2003	2004
Sheriff	36,203	34,926	37,355
Thomasville Police	61,866	63,116	57,675
Barwick Police	221	192	228
Boston Police	3,577	3,412	3,430
Coolidge Police	770	809	1,350
Meigs Police	1,982	2,037	1,974
Pavo Police	913	652	1,094
EMS	5,032	4,942	5,306
First Responders	1,329	800	1,351
Thomasville Fire	3,829	1,298	1,536
Thomas County Fire	1,322	817	1,536
Total Calls	117,044	113,001	111,299

Source: Thomas County Countywide Emergency Services Division, December 2005.

Emergency calls during the past three years are shown in Table 5.11. The statistics show a slight decrease in total annual calls, though they also show a relatively steady trend of calls. Areas where emergency calls have increased substantially in recent years include the City of Coolidge. The 911 Director notes that, as the population ages and Thomas County attracts new retirees, the number of emergency calls is likely to increase substantially. In addition, the numerous arterial routes passing through Thomasville affect call volume.

The Emergency Services Division is facing staffing issues as the department is having difficulties retaining its trained professional staff. The division is operating now with three people per shift when it needs four per shift. As a result, during busy call periods, supervisors are required to man consoles, and this often negatively affects quality control on each shift. This personnel issue is attributed to high stress on the job and comparatively low pay given the responsibilities. The 911 operators have to know multiple departments’ polices and handle more than one emergency console during the same shift. They check drivers’ licenses, run tags, and complete the numerous other activities associated with 911 staff responsibilities.

A recent ISO study has recommended full staffing for all EMS consoles, the splitting of the fire and EMS console, and the institution of a split shift at peak call times, typically late afternoon and early evening. This would free supervisory staff to work on quality control and to address the paperwork and human resource needs of their staff.

Emergency Management

Thomas County’s Emergency Management Agency has recently (October 2005) updated its Local Emergency Operations Plan. Appendix A provides hazard profiles and ranks them according to most likely to occur. In order of highest priority, the hazards anticipated in Thomas County are: flood, tropical storm, hurricane, tornado, drought, fire, hazardous materials, dam failure, winter storm, heat (high temperatures), and transportation accident. Other hazards that are more remote (ranking progressively lower) include earthquake, civil disturbance, terrorism, nuclear power plant accident, and radiological incidents. Plans for training and exercises are intended to reflect the most likely community hazards.

Thomas County Schools, with its fleet of buses, is the primary emergency support agency for transportation. Thomas County 911 is the primary support agency for communications and

warnings. For critical infrastructure, the Thomas County Department of Public Works is the primary support agency. For fire services and life safety (including hazardous materials), the Thomas County Fire and Rescue functions as the primary support agency. Other agencies are assigned primary responsibilities based on their professional expertise (Thomas County Local Emergency Operations Plan 2005).

Table 5.12 – Hazardous Sites in Thomas County

Site Name	Address	Hazard Description
Meigs Milling Company	Wilkes Street Meigs	Release of lead in groundwater
ARAMARK Uniform Services	202 N. Cassidy Rd Thomasville	Release of vinyl chloride in groundwater and tetrachloroethene in soil
Cleaver – Brooks - Thomasville	221 Law St Thomasville	Release of tetrachloroethene in groundwater
Jotan, Inc.	1730 Colonial Dr Thomasville	Release of tetrachloroethene in groundwater

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division. List of Sites on the Hazardous Sites Inventory (HSI) by County. July 1, 2005. Website accessed 12/2/05.

The 2005 emergency operations plan does not address the specific risks and data needed to anticipate disasters, emergencies, and hazardous incidents in detail. For instance, the following data on hazardous sites is available, and other information such as flooding potential should be integrated into the next update of the emergency operations plan.

Because of the voter-approved SPLOST, a new facility for Thomas County Emergency Personnel is under construction on Remington Avenue in Thomasville. The new facility will consist of more than 17,000 square feet of space and will house Thomas County's EMS, Emergency Management and Fire and Rescue.

There is potential for a communications gap between county and city fire departments in times of emergency. The county, due to the large number of volunteers that need radios, use VHF frequency radios. The city fire department uses 800-megahertz radios (Thomas County EMS, December 2005).

Another potentially significant emergency management issue is that train-crossings at the railroads in Thomasville may block access of emergency vehicles to the hospital. In addition, Thomas County currently has no hazardous materials (HAZ-MAT) personnel. Teams from Albany or Valdosta (with the proper suits and training) would be called in the event of a hazardous materials incident.

Animal Control

Thomas County contracts with the Thomas County Humane Society for countywide animal control services.

Health, Education and Welfare

Health and Hospitals

Thomas County operates a Health Department, which has offices in a shopping center on Smith Avenue in Thomasville.

Thomas County is served by two hospitals. Southwestern State Hospital treats mental illnesses, addictive diseases, and mental retardation. John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital is a general hospital. Services at John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital include the following: Adrian & Jessie Archbold Ambulatory Care Center; Cardiac Rehabilitation Services; Inpatient Rehabilitation; The Lewis Hall Singletary Oncology Center; Pediatric Therapy; Pulmonary Rehabilitation; Rehabilitation Center; The Sleep Disorders Center; The Maternity Center; Vascular Laboratory; and The Wound Care Program. Southwestern State Hospital is a public hospital with 240 beds, serving 24 counties in Southwest Georgia. There are also four nursing homes in the county as of 2003.

Table 5.13 – Health Care Facilities in Thomas County, 2003

Facility	Number of Facilities	Capacity	Occupancy Rate
Nursing Homes	4	267	74.17%
General Hospitals	1	264	56.11%

Source: <http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu/>

Public Assistance

Medicaid and Peach Care for Kids

To be eligible for Medicaid, a person must fall into at least one of the following coverage groups: the aged (over 65); the blind; the permanently and totally disabled; pregnant women; children; or parents/caretakers, when they meet income requirements and care for a Medicaid-eligible child. In all cases, the person must meet both the income and resource limits set for their respective coverage group and any established non-financial requirements. Non-financial requirements include criteria such as age, U.S. citizenship or lawful alien status, and Georgia residency.

Table 5.14 – Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids Recipients, 2002, Thomas County

Statistic	Medicaid	PeachCare for Kids
Number of Unique Recipients	11,240	1,462
Net Payments	\$45,577,835	\$990,648
Payments/Recipient	\$4,054,97	\$678
Estimated 2002 Population	43,012	43,012
% Population Receiving Medicaid	26.13%	3.39%

Source: Georgia Department of Community Health. State Fiscal Year 2002 Annual Report. http://dch.georgia.gov/vqn/images/portal/cit_1210/24/56/31944193dch_annual_report_02.pdf

PeachCare for Kids is Georgia’s version of the federal Children’s Health Insurance Program that provides medical and dental coverage for children whose parents’ income is too high to qualify for Medicaid but who do not have access to private health insurance. (Georgia Department of Community Health, *State Fiscal Year 2002 Annual Report*). Table 5.14 shows recipients in 2002 who resided in Thomas County.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

In Fiscal Year 2001, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the welfare program that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children served a monthly average of 461 families in Thomas County. The racial division of those families was 86.5% Black, 12.9% White, and 0.5% Hispanic (Source: *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia, 21st Edition).

Education

School Enrollment in 2000

Table 5.15 provides detailed data on school enrollment by type of school (public and private) for the city, unincorporated area, and county as a whole in 2000. The data in Table 5.15 provide one of the few “base line” sources of data on which to project school enrollments. As of the year 2000, 90% of students in grades 1-12 attended the public (city) school system in Thomasville.

Table 5.15 – School Enrollment by Type of School, Population 3 Years and Over, City of Thomasville and Thomas County

School Attended	City of Thomasville			Thomas County Total (Including City of Thomasville)		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
Nursing school, preschool	346	73	419	735	181	916
Kindergarten	167	37	204	564	57	621
Grades 1-4	990	90	1,080	2,543	236	2,779
Grades 5-8	1,075	123	1,198	2,707	225	2,932
Grades 9-12	1,075	125	1,200	2,511	241	2,752
College, undergraduate	334	228	562	925	429	1,354
Graduate/professional school	62	87	149	152	140	292
Total enrolled in school	4,049	763	4,812	10,137	1,509	11,646
Not enrolled in school	N/A	N/A	12,579	N/A	N/A	29,427
Total, 3 Years and Over	N/A	N/A	17,391	N/A	N/A	41,073

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, SF 3, Table P36

Local School Systems

Thomas County and the City of Thomasville operate separate public school systems. Table 5.16 provides an inventory of Thomas County’s schools, and Table 5.17 provides an inventory of Thomasville’s schools.

Table 5.16 – Inventory of Thomas County Public Schools

School	Address	Zip Code	Grades	Enrollment
Hand in Hand Primary School	1550 Magnolia St	31792	N/A	N/A
Cross Creek Elementary School	324 Clark Rd	31757	3-5	1,202
Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School	277 Hall Rd	31757	Pre K-2	1,393
Thomas County Middle School	4681 US 84 Bypass		5-8	
The School at Bishop Hall	1815 East Clay Rd	31792	9-12	109
Thomas County Central High School	4685 US 84 Bypass	31792	9-12	1,447

Table 5.17 – Inventory of Thomasville City Schools

School	Address	Zip Code	Grades	Enrollment
Balfour School for Young Children	201 Chatham Dr	31792	Pre K	253
Harper Elementary School	110 Bartow St	31792	K-5	374
Jerger Elementary School	1006 S. Broad St	31792	K-5	480
Scott Elementary School	100 N. Hansell St	31792	K-5	445
MacIntyre Park Middle School	117 Glenwood Dr	31792	6-8	694
Thomasville High School	315 S. Hansell St	31792	9-12	861

Source: Thomasville City Schools (<http://www.tcitys.org/schools.htm>)

Table 5.18 shows statistics for school years 2000-01 and 2001-02. Thomas County's school system had more students enrolled than the City of Thomasville's system in both years shown in Table 5.18. The cost per student in both years was higher in Thomasville, though expenditures themselves are not necessarily an indicator of higher quality.

Table 5.18 – Student Attendance and Cost per Child, Thomas County and Thomasville School Systems, School Years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002

System	School Year 2000-2001		School Year 2001-2002	
	FTE (#)	Cost Per Child (\$)	FTE (#)	Cost Per Child (\$)
Thomas County	5,190	\$5,790	5,154	\$6,392
Thomasville	3,140	\$6,644	2,927	\$7,520

Note: FTE means full-time equivalent attendance.

Source: Table 3.135 in *Georgia Statistical Abstract* 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

The racial composition and other characteristics of the student populations in 2000-2001 are shown for both school systems in Table 5.19. As of the 2000-2001 school year, Thomasville's schools served predominantly Black students (three-quarters), while Thomas County served predominantly White students (almost two-thirds). The county school district had a slightly higher percentage of Hispanic students, while the city system had a much higher rate of dropouts in grades 9-12. As of 2000-2001, the majority of students in both school systems were eligible for free or reduced school lunches.

Table 5.19 – Selected Student Data, 2000-2001, Thomas County and Thomasville School Systems

% Total Enrollment	Thomas County	City of Thomasville
Black	35.1%	75.2%
White	62.4%	23.5%
Hispanic	1.4%	0.3%
Eligible Free-Reduced lunch	52.7%	64.9%
Dropouts 9-12 (rate)	1.8	7.5

Source: *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (21st Edition).

Table 5.20 illuminates some differences in the revenue structures of the county and city public school systems in 2000-2001. Thomas County’s school system was more heavily subsidized by the state than Thomasville’s school system. The city (local) provided for almost one-third of total K-12 revenues, whereas for the county system the local share was less than one-fifth.

Table 5.20 – School System Revenues by Source, 2000-2001, Thomas County and Thomasville

System	K-12 Total Revenues (\$)	State Lottery	Percent of Total Revenues			Revenue per FTE (\$)
			Federal	State	Local	
Thomas County	\$35,368,956	\$120,844	10.6%	69.8%	19.7%	\$5,365
City of Thomasville	\$23,343,732	\$67,383	12.3%	55.7%	32.0%	\$6,240

Source: *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (21st Edition).

Table 5.21 – School System Expenditures by Type, 2000-2001, Thomas County and Thomasville

Expenditure Detail	Thomas County	City of Thomasville
Instruction (% of total)	65.7%	63.3%
Institutional support	3.6%	3.2%
Maintenance & operations	6.6%	7.9%
Capital projects	0.0%	0.6%
Transportation	4.2%	0.6%
School nutrition	6.3%	7.6%
School administration	5.2%	7.2%
Total K-12 Expenditures (\$)	\$34,287,752	22,720,404
Expenditure per FTE (\$)	\$5,194	6,032

Source: *The 2002 Georgia County Guide*, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia (21st Edition).

Table 5.21 shows expenditure details of the county and city school systems in 2000-2001. Both systems have relatively comparable distributions of expenditures. The Thomasville school district spends a smaller percentage on transportation than does the county, given that the Thomas County school system serves a much larger geographic area, but a higher percentage on school administration, school nutrition, and maintenance and operations.

Table 5.22 provides estimates of population, school age population, and poverty for the year 2003 for both the Thomas County and City of Thomasville school systems. The data in Table 5.22 show that Thomas County’s school system serves a larger population than does the City of

Thomasville's school system. The percentage of persons ages 5-17 in 2003 was higher in the City of Thomasville, but was significant in both school districts.

Table 5.22 – Population, Age, and Poverty Estimates by Thomas County and Thomasville School Districts, 2003

Characteristic	Thomas County School District	City of Thomasville School District
District ID	1304890	1304950
Grade of Responsibility	PK-12	PK-12
Total Population	25,295	18,694
Relevant Age 5 to 17	4,908	3,437
Relevant Age 5 to 17 in Families in Poverty	1,035	816
% Age 5-17 in Poverty	21.1%	23.7%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates, Estimates for Georgia School Districts, 2003. Release date November 2005. www.census.gov/cgi-bin/saie/saie.cgi

Private Schools

Table 5.23 provides a list of private schools including grades served, enrollment, and type.

Table 5.23 – Private Schools in the Thomasville Area

School	Address	Zip Code	Grades	Enrollment	Type
St. Thomas Episcopal	PO Box 33	31692	Pre K-K	106	Episcopal
Brookwood School	301 Cardinal Ridge Rd	31792	Pre K-12	424	Nonsectarian
Rescue Mission School	222 Gordon Ave	31792	Pre K-12	35	Non-Denominational Christian

Higher Education and Technical Training

Table 5.24 shows enrollment figures for colleges and training institutes in and near Thomas County. The four-year Thomas University has a much smaller enrollment than the two area Technical Colleges. Enrollment in the technical colleges declined significantly during the two-year period from FY 2001 to FY 2003, as shown in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24 – Enrollment in Area Universities and Technical Colleges, 2001 and 2003

Name	Type Institution	Location	Enrollment (#) FY 2001	Enrollment (#) FY 2003
Thomas University	Four-year University	Thomasville	706	795
Moultrie Technical College	State-governed Technical College	Moultrie	7,950	5,819
Southwest Georgia Technical College	State-governed Technical College	Thomasville	6,531	6,141

Source: Table 3.305 in *Georgia Statistical Abstract* 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

Thomas University is a four-year university serving post-secondary educational needs of South Georgia and north Florida. The University was formerly known as Thomas College, but changed to its current name in January of 2000. The University offers associate, bachelors, and masters degrees as well as continuing education and personal interest courses. The curriculum focuses on professional programs with a strong liberal arts and sciences foundation. The university is located in Thomasville.

Adult Literacy Programs

Adult literacy program enrollment in Thomas County is shown in Table 5.25. Trends show a general decline in enrollments from 1996 to 2000, a spike in enrollments in 2001, and then a decline in enrollments to below pre-2001 enrollment levels.

Table 5.25 – Enrollment in Adult Literacy Programs, Providers in Thomas County, FY 1996-FY 2003

Year	Thomas Technical Institute (# Enrolled)	Southwest Georgia Technical College (# Enrolled)
FY 1996	1,712	NA
FY 1997	1,658	NA
FY 1998	1,361	NA
FY 1999	1,468	1,468
FY 2000	NA	1,227
FY 2001	NA	1,675
FY 2002	NA	1,173
FY 2003	NA	1,224

Source: Table 3.320 in *Georgia Statistical Abstract* 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

Opportunities for Collaboration between Schools and General Governments

In a 2003 retreat of the City of Thomasville, the opportunity was identified to collaborate with Thomas University with regard to dormitories, classrooms, offices, and mixed-use development.

During meetings with the public, community members expressed concern with high illiteracy rates in Thomas County and Thomasville, and suggested that the high number of adults and children without reading and writing skills is one of the region’s major social issues.

There are a number of programs available to residents of the city and county that are intended to improve the reading and writing abilities of adults in the community. Both Thomas University and Southwest Georgia Technical College provide extensive adult literacy and continuing education services, as does the Office of Adult Literacy of the Georgia Department of Technical Education, which administers the Literate Community Program. Other programs, such as Thomas County Family Connection, focus on improving literacy among all ages of community members in order to prepare them for successful futures.



Source: Certified Literate Community Program

Thomas County Public Library System

History

Pre-civil war efforts enabled Thomasville to be one of the first cities in the United States of comparable size to have a free public library, although titled ownership of the library did not pass to the City of Thomasville and Thomas County until 1963. For the next several years, the Thomasville Public Library operated as a branch of the Colquitt-Thomas Regional Library System. In July 1988, the library separated from the regional system and is managerially self-sufficient.

Governance and Reciprocal Agreements

A thirteen-member Library Board of Trustees, with nine voting members and the four non-voting seats representing Thomas County, the City of Thomasville and the city and county school systems govern the Thomas County Public Library System (TCPLS). The system operates under a State of Georgia certified professional Director and has 33 employees, half full-time and half part-time. A reciprocal agreement has been developed with Southwest Georgia Technical College to allow participating cardholders access to facilities and services at each location. The library system, like all Georgia public libraries, operates under the guidelines of the Georgia State Board of Regents.

Existing Facilities

A countywide building program was initiated in 1990 and completed in 1993, with new facilities being built in Thomasville, Coolidge and Meigs and major renovation and expansion programs implemented in Boston and Ochlocknee.

The Main Branch of the Thomas County Library System is located at 201 North Madison Street in Thomasville and contains approximately 24,000 square feet. The Thomas County Public Library System is a Cooperating Collection of the Foundation Center. The Foundation Center is an independent national service organization established by foundations that provide a source of foundation and corporate giving. Orientations and grant writing workshops are offered every other month.



Main Branch, Thomas County Library System

The Heritage Room of the Thomas County Public Library System houses a collection of Genealogy and Local History resources including books on the genealogy of families, books related to Thomas County as well as other counties in Georgia, historical references related to Thomas County, in addition to many other resources.

The main library’s Flipper Auditorium/Community Meeting Room is named in honor in Thomas County native Henry Ossian Flipper, the nation’s first Black graduate of West Point. The Main Library is also proud to host and display the 1994 Heisman Trophy of Florida State University quarterback Charlie Ward, a Thomasville native. Mr. Ward, an avid library patron, gives much credit to his success because of the influence of the community’s library system on his life. His gift and personal involvement serve as an inspiration to youth of the community.

Neighborhood branch libraries are located in the Cities of Boston, Coolidge, Meigs, Ochlocknee and Pavo. Each community branch library contains approximately 2,000 square feet.

Assessment of Library Facility Needs

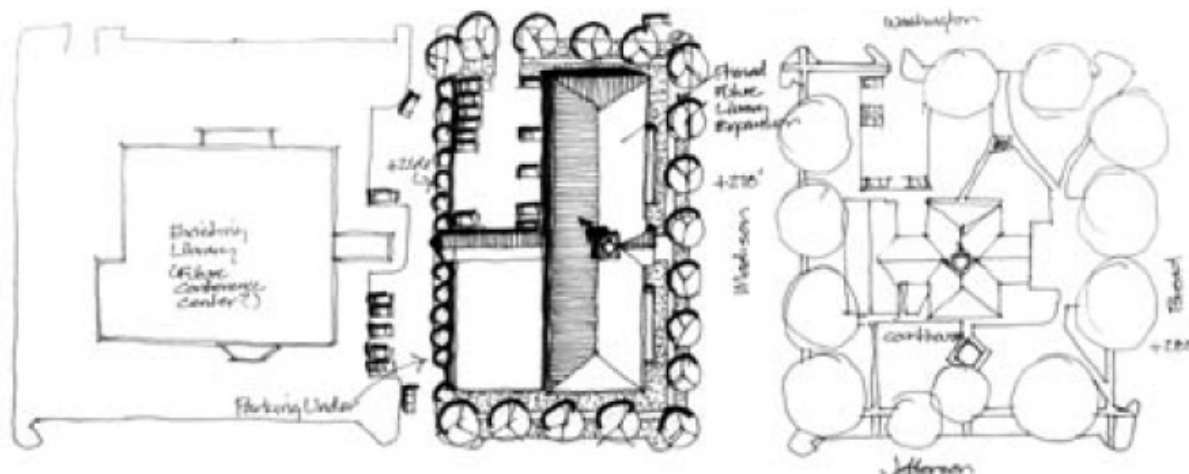
The Public Library Service Division of the Georgia Board of Regents is preparing facility/level of service guidelines to assist in uniform assessment of the State’s public library systems. The design/service standards system is defined in three classes: Essential, Full and Optimal. Thomas County’s library’s technology services currently assess between “full” and “optimal,”

with optimal being defined as one public access computer per 1,000 people. Facility access (hours of operation and facility locations) assesses at “almost full.” With regard to the availability of appropriate materials, resource volumes rate “essential” but below full, and community appropriate periodicals are rated as meeting “essential” but not “full” service standards.

Facility space recommendations are still under development. Upon adoption, these standards will serve as level of facility and services standards for Georgia’s public libraries. With a system total of approximately 34,000 square feet, the library system provides a level of service of 0.75 square feet of library space per county resident. That level of service exceeds the recommendations of the American Library Association of 0.6 square feet per capita. However, there are a current number of deficiencies facing the TCPLS. The main library, with its extremely large service demand, is in need of additional space. Adding to the building is compounded by the fact that the existing facility was not designed for vertical expansion, and new on-site construction might have to be two-story in design. Current ideas contemplate a two-story expansion, with first floor office space and second story patron service area expansion area to the rear of the existing facility.

The Resource Team of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs posed a different idea for library headquarters expansion when it visited Thomasville in 2004. Due to the large parking lot presence along North Madison Street, the library contributes relatively little to the grand civic building presence via the County Courthouse. The concept developed by the DCA Resource Team suggested a two-story addition in front of, rather than behind the current building. (see figure below)

The community satellite libraries also face service and space challenges, as the Boston Carnegie library and Coolidge facility have no site expansion room. The Pavo facility, which is a renovated historic church, has issues with water under the building. A complete program and facilities assessment is proposed in 2008 and should be amended into Thomas County’s Short Term Work Program.



Concept for Expanding the Thomas County Library Headquarters Building
(Source: Georgia DCA Resource Team 2004)

Media, Circulation and Programs

The Georgia Department of Education, Division of Public Library Services, promulgates standards by which libraries can be judged for their adequacy. According to the department, a library system should have 2.5 books per capita. The Thomas County Public Library System had 1.72 books and media per capita in 2003, significantly below the standard of 2.5. Table 5.26 shows circulation totals in the neighborhood branch libraries.

Table 5.26 – Thomas County Branch Libraries Circulation Totals, 2004-2005

Branch Location	Total Items Circulation (2004-2005)
Boston Carnegie Library	44,778
Coolidge Public Library	23,483
Gladys H. Clark Public Library	21,429
Meigs Public Library	17,206
Pavo Public Library	23,356

Source: Thomas County Public Library System. <http://tcpls.net/CMS/index.php>

The Thomas County Public Library System (TCPLS) provides special services and children’s reading programs, including the unique Mother Goose House for young children at the Thomasville Library. The system also offers adult literacy instruction and an on-loan audiovisual equipment program for civic clubs and community-based organizations.

The TCPLS program is recognized as an exemplary system in the State. It has more than 35,000 patrons, is the busiest in the state in terms of per capita circulation, and in 1994 ranked second in the United States in per capita new membership cards issued. In 2005, the system collection contained in excess of 101,000 book/serial volumes, over 7,600 audio and video selections, 115 subscriptions, 41 databases and 137 electronic subscriptions. Total circulations in 2005 exceeded 652,000 media with over 209,000 children’s materials circulated; there were 220,488 service visits and 22,780 reference transactions. TCPLS provided 221 and received 255 Inter-Library loans with other systems. It provided 1,180 programs with 16,258 attending; of these, 582 were special children’s programs with an attendance of 13,755. TCPLS had in excess of 35,000 electronic users on its system’s 35 Internet terminals available to the public. Fax services are available for a nominal fee as well as services to the sight and hearing impaired.

Thomasville Cultural Center Library

The Thomasville Cultural Center, operated by Thomasville Cultural Center, Inc. (see description under “Cultural Resources” in this chapter) operates a library. It is located on the second floor of the Thomasville Cultural Center. Since its establishment in 1988, the library has increased its material collection. Library resources include family histories, emigration/immigration records, general reference works, census records, state and county histories, early Thomas County probate, marriage, land, Confederate pension and newspaper records, and resource materials with a major emphasis on the southeastern U.S. It also includes a number of private collections.

Municipal Cemeteries

The City of Thomasville owns, operates and maintains several cemeteries in the city, including Laurel Hill, Peaceful Rest, Magnolia, and the old cemetery on Madison Street.

Coroner

The Thomas County Coroner provides countywide coroner services to all residents of Thomas County.

General Administrative Facilities

General Government

City of Thomasville

The municipal building (pictured to the right) houses a city auditorium that is rented out and various other offices. Much of the administrative offices of the City of Thomasville are located in a two-story office building on the north side of Victoria Place just east of U.S. Highway 319, and much of Thomasville Utilities’ space is adjacent to the east. The city’s primary administration building on Victoria Place is basically at capacity with no free space.



Municipal Building, Thomasville

Purchasing, The Energy Control Center, an electric line crew and warehouse space are all located in the Tom Berry Building on Fletcher Avenue. The second floor of that building offers possibilities for expansion of city administrative space. In addition to the municipal administrative buildings described above, Thomasville has separate buildings for city engineering and planning/zoning/building inspections. Other municipal buildings include the Gas Department Building on Old Cassidy Road, and the airport on Pavo Road. The Convention and Visitors Bureau, which used to be housed at the Chamber of Commerce, is now part of Thomasville’s functions and the city needs office space for that bureau.

Thomas County

Thomas County currently maintains five administrative office buildings. These include the Main Courthouse, Courthouse Annex #1 located on the courthouse square, Courthouse Annex #2 located in a former commercial bank building, the Elijah Hill Building south of the courthouse adjacent to the Thomas County Main Library, and 2,000 square feet of rented office space for the county’s public defender. The Courthouse and Annex #1 are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and Annex #2 in downtown is part of the City of Thomasville Downtown National Register Historic District.

The Office of the Board of Commissioners, which includes the County Manager and the District Attorney’s (DA) office, is located in Courthouse Annex 1 building. The Courthouse Annex 1 building provides 4,480 square feet of space, but according to a current (year 2005) space needs analysis, 10,928 square feet should be provided. Hence, there is a current deficiency in space of 6,448 square feet. The county provides a level of service of 0.067 square feet per functional population of space for the Board, county manager, and DA (i.e., “general administration,” but the level of service standard should be 0.164 square feet of space per functional population.



Thomas County Courthouse Annex 1

Table 5.27 shows how office space for these users will need to expand during the twenty-year planning horizon to maintain the level of service standard.

Table 5.27 – Future Space Needs for General Administration, 2005-2025, Thomas County

General Administration Space Needs (Square Feet)	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Square Feet of Office Space Needed at 0.164 Square Feet Per Functional Population	10,928	11,644	12,369	13,070	13,761
Square Feet of Deficiency from Office Space Provided in 2005	6,448	7,164	7,889	8,590	9,281

Source: Level of service and current inventory from Thomas County, 2005. Calculations by Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., December 2005.

The Elijah Hill Building, located a block south of the Main Courthouse, serves as the administrative offices for Building Inspections, Planning, and Zoning, Extension Service, and Board of Registrars. Existing space totals 8,415 square feet, but 11,393 are reported to be needed as of 2005, for a current deficiency of 2,978 square feet. County officials worked with two professional architectural firms to prepare an in-depth space needs analysis for their administrative functions. The study presented office space requirements, an existing facility inventory, a deficit analysis and support facilities and space analysis.



Elijah Hill Building (Thomas County)

The findings of this report are presented in other sections of this chapter as applicable.

In March of 2005, the citizens of Thomas County voted down a proposal to construct a new facility. As noted in other sections of this report, construction of the new facility is essential, not only due to existing deficiencies in office space, but also because the county government will need to continue expanding if it is to keep pace with the projected population and employment growth.

Tax Collection and Assessment

The Tax Commissioner and Tax Assessor both have offices in Courthouse Annex 2. Employees in the Tax Commissioner’s office include the Tax Commissioner; six tax clerks, and a tax/tag clerk. The Tax Assessor’s office includes a Chief Assessor, a personal property assessor, three appraisers, two appraisal technicians, and one map technician.

Existing building space is only 4,400 square feet, but a space needs study conducted by the county in October 2005 reveals that 11,470 square feet is needed currently (in 2005). Hence, there is already a deficit in space of 7,070 square feet. Based on the current needs assessment, the county’s current level of service for tax department space is 0.066 square feet per functional population but a level of service standard of 0.172 square feet per functional population is needed. Carrying that level of service standard into the future, to accommodate growth in population and employment, the county will need to add a total of more than 10,000 square feet of additional space by the year 2025 (see Table 5.28).

Table 5.28 – Future Space Needs for Tax Offices, 2005-2025, Thomas County (Sq. Ft.)

Tax Department Administrative Space Needs (Square Feet)	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Square Feet of Office Space Needed at 0.172 Square Feet Per Functional Population	11,470	12,211	12,972	13,707	14,432
Square Feet of Deficiency from Office Space Provided in 2005	7,070	7,811	8,572	9,307	10,032

Source: Level of service and current inventory from Thomas County, 2005. Calculations by Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., December 2005.

Building Inspections, Planning and Zoning

The City of Thomasville and Thomas County operate separate building inspection programs. Thomasville’s building inspection office is located in the planning, zoning, and building inspections building on U.S. 319 South at Victoria Place. The city office also provides Geographic Information System (GIS) services. Thomas County’s building inspections, planning, and zoning functions are in the Elijah Hill Building

Public Works and Engineering

Thomasville employs a City Engineer who is housed in the engineering building next to the building inspections, planning, and zoning office on U.S. Highway 319 South at Victoria Place. The city’s Facilities Department is responsible for street repairs and maintenance of parks, among other functions.

Utility Type Services

Water

Water Uses and Sources

Irrigation used 12.01 Millions of Gallons Per Day (MGD) of water in Thomas County in 2000, constituting almost 60 percent of total water use (see Table 5.29). There were 13,040 acres of irrigated land in Thomas County in 2000. Public supply was 7.13 MGD, or approximately 35 percent of total water use. Almost all of the water used in Thomas County is supplied by groundwater source. Almost all (3.15 of 3.23 MGD) of the surface water use in Thomas County in 2000 was for irrigation. All public supplies are served by groundwater.

Table 5.29 – Water Use in Thomas County, 2000 by Withdrawal Type (Millions of Gallons Per Day)

Use	Total Withdrawal (MGD)	% of Total Use	Ground Water	Surface Water
Public supply	7.13	34.9%	7.13	0.00
Domestic and commercial	0.81	4.0%	0.81	0.00
Industrial and mining	0.38	1.9%	0.38	0.00
Irrigation	12.01	58.8%	8.86	3.15
Livestock	0.10	0.4%	0.02	0.08
Thermoelectric	0.00	--	0.00	0.00
Total	20.42	100%	17.20	3.23

Source: Fanning, Julia. 2003. *Water Use in Georgia by County for 2000 and Water-Use Trends for 1980-2000*. Georgia Geologic Survey Information Circular 106.

Water Systems

Potable water is a vital community service. With any growing community, the need for water will continue to increase. Municipal water is best thought of as an integrated system of production, treatment, storage, and distribution. Even the smallest public water systems are complicated and expensive operations. For instance, water storage is needed to provide extra volumes of water to fight fires and feed portions of the distribution system during repairs to mains, pumps, and transmission pipes. Thus, there are many aspects of the water system that should be included in the facility analysis and recommendations. (See Figure 5.1)

An estimated 32,008 persons (75% of the countywide population) were served by public water supply in Thomas County in the year 2000. Table 5.30 shows withdrawals by public suppliers in Thomas County in 2000 (MGD). The source for all public water systems is groundwater. Private community systems (19 serving 935 taps) are shown in Table 5.31.



Water Tank, Downtown Thomasville



Water Tank, Pavo Road, Thomasville

Table 5.30 – Major Public Water Supply Withdrawals in Thomas County, 2000 (MGD)

Name of Public System	Withdrawal (MGD)	Taps
City of Thomasville-Waverly	0.17	NA
City of Boston	0.20	540
Town of Barwick	0.61	NA
City of Coolidge	0.11	257
City of Meigs	0.18	500
Town of Ochlocknee	0.07	315
City of Pavo	0.08	332
City of Thomasville Water & Light Department	5.52	9,230
Total Shown	6.94	11,174

Source: Withdrawal amounts from Fanning, Julia. 2003. *Water Use in Georgia by County for 2000 and Water-Use Trends for 1980-2000*. Georgia Geologic Survey Information Circular 106. Taps from Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division Web site.

Figure 5.1 - City of Thomasville Water Lines

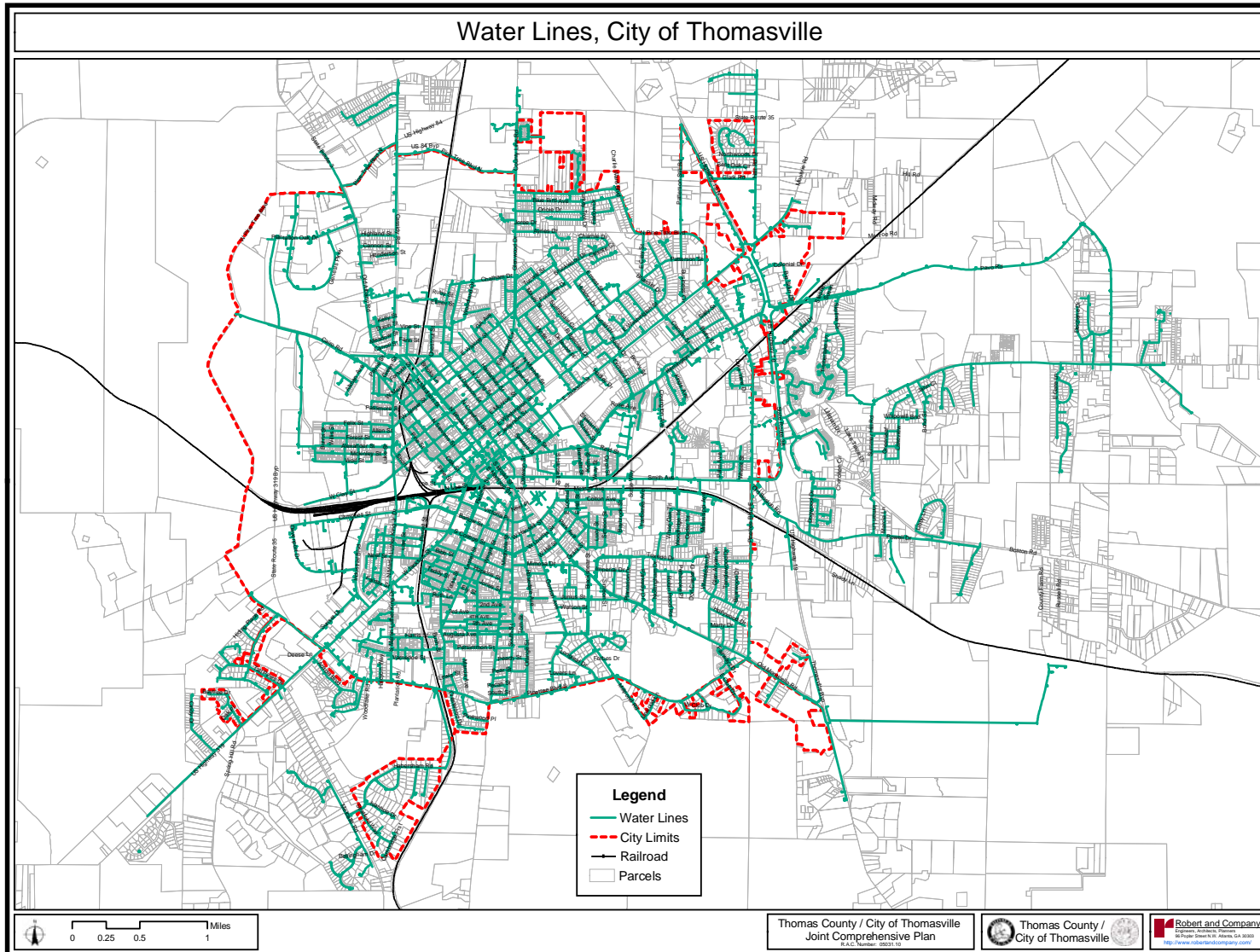


Table 5.31 – Private Community Water Systems in Thomas County

Private Community Water System Name	PWS ID#	Taps
Pine Lake Estates, Inc.	2750008	38
Little Acres Estates	2750013	15
Sugarwood Estates MHP	2750018	62
Foxcroft Subdivision	2750019	38
Hidden Acres MHP	2750020	46
Pine Run Subdivision	2750022	30
Lake Riverside Subdivision	2750023	216
Riverwood Estates	2750024	31
Lake Lilliquan Subdivision	2750027	38
Carter Mobile Home Park	2750032	11
Pebble Hill Plantation	2750036	15
Sunny Belle Acres Water Association	2750048	24
Holly Springs Subdivision	2750055	57
Sanford Heights Subdivision	2750059	48
Summer Meadows Subdivision	2750060	36
Pecan Village/ Oak Hill MHP	2750063	92
Tripletree Mobile Home Park	2750065	15
Forest Ridge Subdivision	2750066	25
Hunter's Cove Subdivision	2750070	98
Total Shown	19	935

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division Web site.

Summary of Water Service

The water supply for Thomasville's water system is artesian water, located 200 feet below ground. This has been used as the water source for Thomasville since 1884. The city has a permit for 8.5 million gallons per day (MGD) and is presently consuming about 4.5 MGD average per day. The city's wells in downtown have about 8-10 years of remaining capacity without additional wells or tanks. Thomasville has a current water customer base of approximately 9,000. Implementation of a water meter replacement program is a high priority according to minutes of the 2004 City Council Retreat.

Urban Service Area

The designation of the Urban Service Area and its associated initiatives are ground-breaking for the City of Thomasville and Thomas County, because the initiatives involve the collaboration of City and County governments as well as other community partners in the areas of land use planning, infrastructure development, and quality growth. Both city and county governments have endorsed the Urban Service Area concept and adopted the preliminary Urban Service Area boundary. The City's engineering staff was instrumental in developing the preliminary boundaries of the Urban Service Area. Both governments understand that, without collaboration, the city and county risk the ineffective use of resources as well as urban sprawl.

Water Extension in the Urban Service Area

There is agreement between the Thomasville City Council and the Thomas County Board of Commissioners to create an Urban Service Area, which is a designated bounded area within the county and surrounding the city in which the future development will be directed, as much as possible. As of mid-2005, engineering firms were competing for a contract with the city to develop a plan for expansion of city water services into the Urban Service Area. This plan will study the possibility of establishing satellite systems (i.e., smaller wells in target areas), as

opposed to running lines from existing (main) wells. A preliminary plan for expansion of the water system into the Urban Service Area is expected to be completed in 2006.

Stormwater Management and Water Quality Sampling

There are six surface water-sampling sites in Thomasville that were determined by a Watershed Group at the University of Georgia based on their location relative to significant stream junctions. These sites include three sites on Oquina Creek (one in town, one upstream of the Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF) and one downstream of the WWTF), two sites on the Ochlocknee River (one upstream of the confluence with Oquina Creek and one downstream of the confluence with Oquina Creek), and one site on Barnett Creek (Source: <http://watershed.bae.uga.edu/thomasville.html>).

Storm water management is concerned with channeling runoff in a safe, controlled manner to protect land areas from erosion and flooding. Like sanitary sewer systems, stormwater drainage systems are gravity-flow, but where more outfalls are available and alternatives other than connecting to the existing network can be used (Colley 1986). Local governments have a general responsibility for ensuring that sufficient attention is given to storm water impacts, particularly along public roads. Storm drainage facilities must be designed to protect people and property from storm water inundation. Designing storm drainage systems requires engineering expertise and a keen understanding of hydrology, hydraulics, and drainage law.

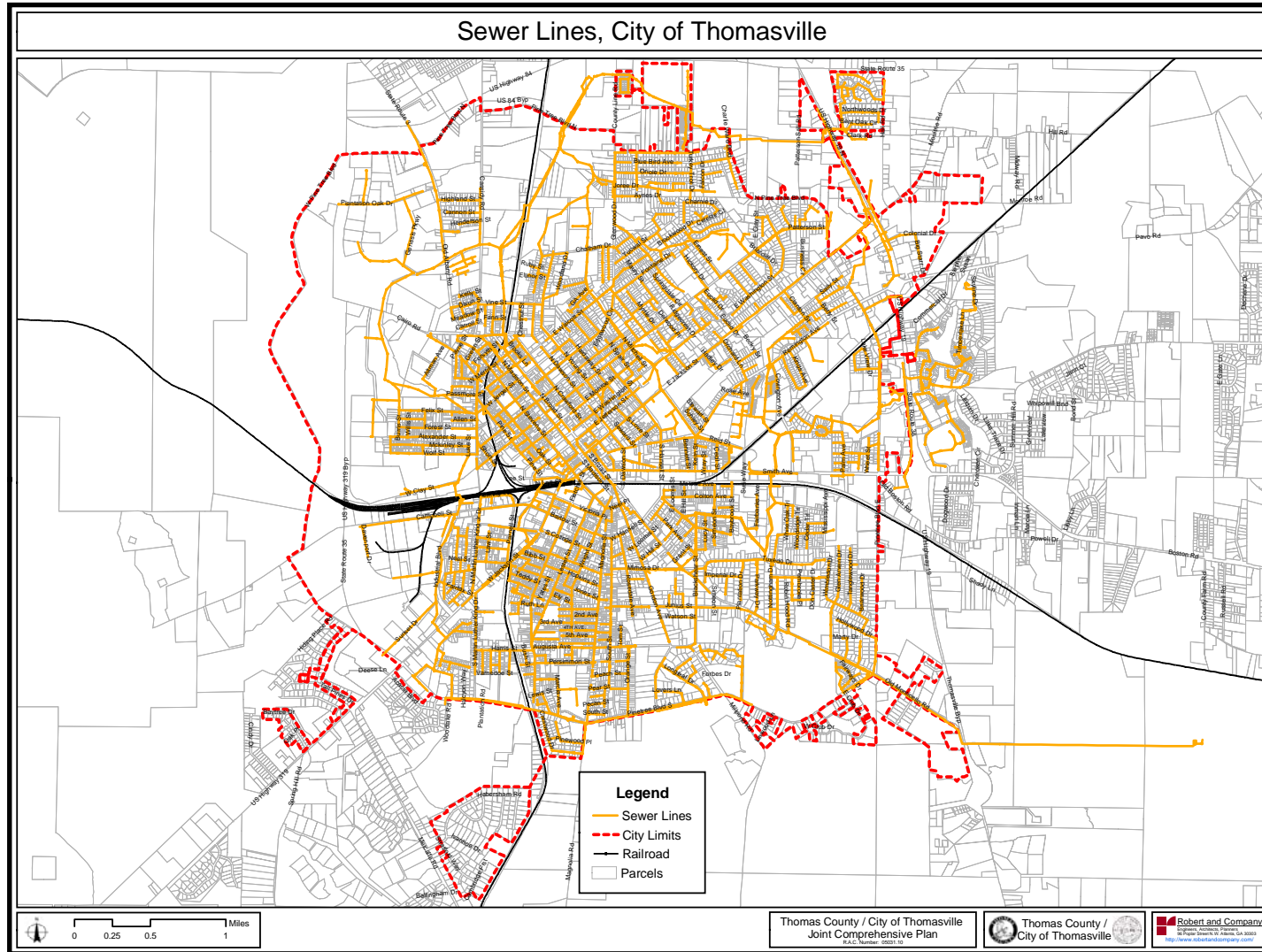
Sanitary Sewer

Sanitary sewer systems are indispensable to maintaining community health. The sewer service provider must be able to manage water-borne waste by operating, maintaining, expanding, and replacing components of the wastewater system to ensure uninterrupted collection, transport, processing, and treatment. A key challenge for the wastewater system is to convey all sanitary wastewater flows to the treatment plant without bypassing flows into receiving waters and without causing waste backups that store sanitary sewage on private properties. (See Figure 5.2)

The City of Thomasville operates a Water Pollution Control Plant that provides complete treatment. The capacity of the plant is 6.5 million gallons per day (MGD) and the present load is 4 MGD. The plant discharges into Oquina Creek. The sewer plant's capacity matches its permit capacity. The City has obtained all relevant permits under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for wastewater systems that discharge into receiving waters. Permits require collection of samples, laboratory analyses, reporting, and periodic inspections to assure compliance with regulatory requirements.

One priority for the extension of sewer service is to accelerate the extension of sewer service in the Airport Industrial Park, where infrastructure must be installed before the land can be made available to prospective industries. Other priorities for sewer extension include Glenmore Nursing Home on US Highway 19 South, Tall Pines Subdivision/Brookwood School, Skyline Drive, and mobile home parks along North Pinetree Boulevard.

Figure 5.2 - City of Thomasville Sewer Lines



Solid Waste

Planning Mandate

Local Governments in Georgia are required under the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act of 1990 to prepare and implement solid waste plans, which must also be in compliance with Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Chapter 110-4-3, Minimum Planning Standards and Procedures for Solid Waste Management. The framework of those requirements is represented in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32 - Framework for Solid Waste Planning

Elements of the Plan	Basic Questions for Each Element		
	Inventory and Assessment	Statement of Needs and Goals	Implementation Strategy
Amount of Waste	What do we have in our community?	What do we need to meet the required reductions and projected solid waste needs?	How are we going to get there?
Collection			
Waste Reduction			
Disposal			
Land Limitations			
Education/Public Involvement			
Finance and Implementation			

Source: Georgia Department of Community Affairs. December 1991. *Preparing a Solid Waste Management Plan*. Atlanta: Office of Coordinated Planning.

Local Solid Waste Management Plan

In compliance with the Georgia Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act, Thomasville and Thomas County have a joint Solid Waste Management Plan. The last plan update was completed in 2003. In the most recent plan update, the Short Term Work Program in the joint City/County Solid Waste Management Plan spans through June 30, 2008, at which time another update will be required. According to the Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center, the standards for planning recommend emphasis on solid waste planning, solid waste reduction through source reduction, reuse, composting, recycling and solid waste education. The plans also help to inform annual reporting of solid waste management costs and disposal/waste record keeping.

The Solid Waste Disposal Report for the City of Thomasville reports the origin of waste and the tons of waste disposed at the landfill on Sunset Drive in Thomasville. There were 111,040.62 total tons of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposed at this landfill site in 2005. Although the majority of waste originates in Thomasville, the State of Florida is the second largest importer of MSW at this landfill site (26,287.65 tons). Other major importers of MSW include Thomas County, Mitchell County, and Colquitt County. The City reported 41,625.63 tons of Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste disposed at the Sunset Drive disposal site in 2005, with the primary importer of waste being the City, Lowndes County, and Colquitt County (Solid Waste Disposal Report 2005).

Collection by the City of Thomasville

Curbside containerized solid waste and yard waste collection service is provided to City of Thomasville residents. That service has averaged between 6,185 and 6,200 customers in 2005, and the City services 1,800 commercial and industrial clients. Residential solid waste and yard trimmings collections are mandatory within the Thomasville city limits. In addition to its services to city residents, the City Sanitation Department provides residential curbside collections to some 1,300 or 1,400 Thomas County residents. Another unique arrangement is

that the City of Thomasville Sanitation Department has contracts for residential waste collections with the small cities of Meigs, Barwick and Pavo, yard trimmings and solid waste collections with Coolidge, and curbside residential collections with the City of Pelham in adjacent Mitchell County to the north. Thomasville also provides commercial and industrial waste services in all these locations outside of their corporate limits under joint agreement. The department is a division of Thomasville Utilities and is run as an enterprise fund.

Four basic types of equipment are utilized in the city's collection system. Large volume, side-loading vehicles with lift arms are utilized for curbside residential solid waste collections. City leaders have opted for large volume vehicles because of their greater waste compaction ratios, and the larger volume significantly lessens dead-end runs to the sanitary landfill. Grapple hook trucks, also known as "clamshells," have these devices attached to booms and are used for the collection of yard trimmings. Hook-lift design vehicles, with skids with large roll-off containers, are available for construction and industrial and commercial sites, and the city also utilizes large front-end-loading compactor vehicles to service commercial containers (dumpsters). City officials work with a professional firm to keep track of appropriate life cycles of their sanitation fleet, and the city typically replaces its vehicles on a five- to seven-year cycle.

The City of Thomasville's Sanitation Department provides garbage pick-up for both City and County residents, but only City residents are eligible for curbside garbage pick-up.

Collection in Unincorporated Thomas County

Thomas County does not mandate house-to-house residential collections, but maintains a system of 8 (or 9) consolidated convenience centers and a few scattered dumpster sites in its more rural areas. The primary consolidated center is manned and the Energy Control Center of Thomasville Utilities remotely monitors the remaining locations. In addition to visual monitoring to control site abuse, the convenience center compactor units are monitored and the county is electronically notified when a compactor unit requires technical service for repairs or service because of the unit reaching capacity. The county has recently purchased transportation equipment and transports the collected waste to the city/county disposal site.

Recycling

Two recycling centers are available for recyclable items, and they accept all recyclable items except glass. One recycling center is located at the Butler-Mason YMCA (across from the basketball cage), and another is located between Fletcher Street and West Remington Avenue. Each center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The City maintains a bailing facility for recyclables on Davenport Road on the rear portion of its public works compound. The recycling program is currently processing between 200 and 300 tons annually.



Thomasville's Recycling (Bailing) Center

Disposal

The area's sanitary landfill is located in Thomasville on Sunset Drive. Its estimated fill date is August 1, 2018. The landfill is regionally significant because it is the only landfill in Southwest Georgia that accepts waste from outside of the governments within the county it is located. The

sanitary landfill is operated by the City but is jointly owned by the City of Thomasville and Thomas County.

Thomasville Utilities

Thomasville has no property taxes, so utility revenues are the city's main funding source. Each of Thomasville's utilities – natural gas, water and electric – operates independently. Water and sewer services are described in preceding paragraphs. The headquarters for Thomasville Utilities is located at 111 Victoria Place, Thomasville (229) 227-7001.

Electric

The Thomasville Utilities Department provides electrical service through the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia's (MEAG) statewide transmission and power generation system. Thomasville is one of 49 municipalities in the state that are affiliated with MEAG. Thomasville's electric utility competes vigorously for big customers. Early in 2002, Thomasville beat out Southern Co. for the business of a new Lowe's home improvement store (Charles David, "Power Struggles," *Georgia Trend Online* (<http://www.georgiatrend.com/site/page4458.html>)).

Natural Gas

The City owns a natural gas distribution system supplied by South Georgia Natural Gas Company and the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia (MGAG).

Telecommunications

Community Network Services (CNS), a division of Thomasville Utilities, offers cable television (CNS Television), Internet access (rose.net), and telecom service using a state-of-the-art fiber optic network. South Georgia Government Services, a joint authority of the Cities of Thomasville, Camilla, Cairo, and Moultrie, is working to expand high-speed Internet service (Rose Net) in the region and "telephony" (phone services over cable).

Expansion Plans

The City of Thomasville plans to expand its utilities and also telecommunications and broadband networks into the Urban Service Area. A systematic review and replacement of utility meters is another major need according to minutes of the 2004 retreat of the Thomasville City Council.

Recreation

Parks and Recreation

While many consider the provision of water, sewer and transportation as the major determining factors in community growth and economic well being, the provision of recreational opportunities greatly influences the quality of life that is essential to community growth and success.

State Parks and Historic Sites

This subsection provides an inventory of state recreational facilities. Table 5.33 list state parks and historic sites near Thomasville.

Table 5.33 – State Parks and Historic Sites Near Thomasville

Name of Facility	Location	Distance from Thomasville	Facilities
Reed Bingham State Park	Adel, GA	43 miles	46 campsites, 6 picnic shelters, 4 group shelters
Georgia Veterans State Park	Cordele, GA	78 miles	10 cottages, 77 campsites, 4 picnic shelters, 2 group shelters
Jefferson Davis Memorial Historic Site	Fitzgerald, GA	78 miles	
George T. Bagby State Park and Lodge	Fort Gaines	91 miles	60 rooms, 5 cottages, picnic shelter and group shelter

Source: Georgia State Parks (Search by Distance), 12/4/05.

The Lapham-Patterson House Historic Site, located at 626 North Dawson Street in Thomasville, is the city and county’s only state-operated historic site or park. The Lapham-Patterson House (c.1885) is recognized as a home with outstanding architectural significance, and it was named a National Historic Landmark in 1975.



Lapham-Patterson House Historic Site

City Parks Inventory

Thomasville has 22 parks totaling 244.5 acres, one 18-hole public golf course, and one swimming pool that are maintained by the City. Thomasville has worked diligently to develop its parks and recreational services delivery system, and their success is reflected in the strong growth and high quality of life in the Thomasville area. An inventory of existing parks is presented in Table 5.34.

Table 5.34 – City of Thomasville Park Facilities

Name	Location	Acreage	Facilities
Balfour Park	S. Pinetree Blvd. and MLK Jr. Dr.	11.5	Tennis court, 4 shelters with 2 tables each, small grill, 12 picnic tables
Big Oak Park			Gazebo with electric outlet
Bruce Park	Mitchell and Walcott Streets	2.0	Nature areas
Cassidy Park	Cassidy Road	32.0	5 picnic tables, lake, pier, shelter with picnic tables, grill, electrical outlet, pond open when usable, bathrooms
Country Oaks Golf Course	Pave Road (SR 122)	144.0	Public golf course
Cherokee Lake	Smith Avenue	60.0	Rose garden area adjacent to Cherokee Lake Park and Pecan Grove
Flipper Park	North Broad Street and Jerger Street	2.4	Basketball goals (2), playground, nature areas
Francis Weston Park	Felix Street	14.5	Track, baseball field, playground, basketball court, bathrooms, Shelter, picnic tables, 3 shelters, grill, bathrooms
MacIntyre Park	E. Washington and Glenwood Streets	16.0	Large outdoor expanse, nice shady areas, playground equipment, picnic tables
Northside Park	Woodland drive and Chatham Drive	14.5	Tennis court, playground equipment, basketball courts (2), 1 baseball field, nature areas.
Paradise Park	South Broad and Dawson Streets	18.6	Playground equipment, large gazebo with lights, grills, picnic tables
Remington Park	Remington Ave. near Pinetree Blvd.	43.5	Picnic area, tennis court, basketball goals, restroom, picnic shelters grills, 4 ballfields, 2 handball courts, 11 picnic tables 4 soccer fields, 5 baseball fields, 2 concession stands
Varnedoe Park	Varnedoe Street	17.0	8 basketball goals, 1 playground, 2 restrooms, 1 ballfield, nature area, 1 baseball field
Wall Park	Parnell and Horrix Streets	2.0	Basketball goal, playground, nature areas
Wayside Park	Cairo Road and MLK	1.0	3 picnic shelters, 3 grills, 9 picnic tables

Senior and Community Centers

Scott Senior Center in Thomasville opened in 1997 and serves approximately 50 senior citizens (age 60 or more) daily. It is open five days a week for seniors and provides them with meals, arts and crafts and opportunities for fellowship.

Other Parks in Thomas County

In addition to the City of Thomasville parks system, the cities of Coolidge, Boston, Meigs, Ochlocknee and Pavo have community parks. Thomasville and Thomas County provide its citizenry with a broad range of recreational facilities. However the majority of these are concentrated the Thomasville and small city corporate limits. As the identified urban services area and adjacent areas adjacent to the small municipalities continue to grow, more recreational areas and park facilities will be needed to meet community demands. The City and County may

choose to formally establish level of service standards for recreational facilities either individually or jointly, and either the city or county could consider adopting impact fees to fund needed facility expansions.

Another opportunity lies with the consideration of the use of open space subdivisions in the urban services area and other unincorporated areas of the county. Open space subdivisions (also known as cluster subdivisions) are designed to allow the concentrated grouping of housing and promote the maintenance of common areas as perpetual open space. This typically lowers utility costs while maintaining the rural character and natural resource amenities of an area. The development of areas utilizing these design techniques can help the local community meet their recreation and open space needs, and lend themselves well to the development of bicycle, equestrian and pedestrian trails.

Outdoor Recreation Facility Standards

The recreation standards in Table 5.35 are intended to be modified by local governments and therefore do not constitute level of service standards adopted by Thomas County or Thomasville. However, their inclusion in the state plan suggests that they are aspirations, and therefore, they provide a basis for comparison with existing facilities.

Table 5.35 – National Standards for Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Activity	Units Per Population	Service Radius
Badminton	1 per 5,000	¼ to ½ mile
Basketball	1 per 5,000	¼ to ½ mile
Tennis	1 per 2,000	¼ to ½ mile
Baseball	1 per 5,000	¼ to ½ mile
Baseball (lighted)	1 per 30,000	¼ to ½ mile
Soccer	1 per 10,000	1 to 2 miles
Quarter-mile track	1 per 20,000	15 to 30 minutes travel time
Softball	1 per 5,000	¼ to ½ mile
Hardcourt	1 per 10,000	1 to 2 miles
Golf	1 per 50,000	20 miles
Swimming Pool	1 per 20,000	15 to 30 minutes travel time

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association, as reported in the 2003-2007 *Comprehensive Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Golf Courses and Other Outdoor Recreation

The Country Oaks Golf Course is located in the Thomasville area. This is a city-operated public golf course located adjacent to the city airport on Pavo Road outside the city limits. There are 22.3 miles of bicycle trails in the city and county, and boat ramps exist on the Ochlocknee River.

Recreation Program Delivery

In the mid- to late-1990s, the Thomasville Parks and Recreation Department and the Thomasville YMCA were running independent youth and adult sports programs. Competing programs and coordination for use of facilities had long presented issues, and local officials began to explore new approaches for program delivery. In 1999, with the passage of a new dedicated Local Option Sales Tax (LOST), the City and YMCA merged staffs under the management of the local chapter of the YMCA. The corporate center of YMCA houses a workout center, a swimming pool, and racquetball facilities.



YMCA Center in Thomasville

Sports programs include golf and tennis lessons, summer and winter Special Olympics, youth football, cheerleading, soccer, youth baseball and softball, basketball, gymnastics, tennis, wrestling and adult softball and football. The YMCA programs include youth and adult activities at Thomasville as well as the small city facilities. For underprivileged children, the recreation program offers minority scholarships.

The LOST provided funding in the early 1990s to the city for recreation and to the county for the library system and animal control. At the time of the merger of Thomasville Recreation and the YMCA recreation programs, four city recreation employees came to the YMCA. There are currently three former city employees who are engaged in recreation programming, joining four staff members of the YMCA.

The City of Thomasville and Thomas County also formed the Thomas County Recreation Advisory Committee, which includes representation from the county's small communities. The recreation programming (athletics) portion of the YMCA's annual budget is funded by the local sales tax, and the YMCA and participating small communities annually present their budgetary requests to the Recreation Advisory Committee. These requests are subject to approval by the Thomasville Mayor and Council through their annual budgetary process.

The recreation money funded by LOST has reportedly been the source of some controversy. Small towns weren't using the money, so the Recreation Advisory Committee pulled money from them, and it was reportedly difficult for the smaller cities to get funding for recreation improvements. While some of the small cities did not apply to the Recreation Advisory Committee for funds, others received some but not all of their requests. The cities of Boston and Pavo have developed recreation programs now.

Recreation Demands of Unincorporated Residents

A key issue to be anticipated by Thomas County is the potential increase in recreation needs in unincorporated areas. The vast majority of parks are in Thomasville, and the others are located in the smaller cities. The strategy for delivering parks and recreation programs has followed the LOST funding strategy, which is to let the cities serve the needs of unincorporated residents. However, as residential development continues to occur in unincorporated Thomas County, there may be a need to reconsider the funding and recreation service delivery strategy. Possible options that Thomas County could consider include zoning requirements for subdivisions to provide some active parks or passive recreation opportunities, or perhaps a development impact fee to fund new parks in unincorporated areas.

Cherokee Lake Master Plan and Improvements

At a retreat in 2005, the Thomasville City Council discussed creating a multi-purpose Master Plan for Cherokee Lake to include walking trails, bike paths, and new playground and other equipment. Proposed uses of the park include: fishing, walking trail/bike trails, a life trail. playground equipment, a railroad tram – trail, picnic pavilion, benches, more lighting/low voltage/timers, butterfly garden, dog park, senior citizen activities (i.e. shuffleboard, etc.), birdfeeders, signs, and picnic tables. Resources to implement the master plan include: Scouts, school clubs, the Humane Society, sponsors (corporate – civic – private), volunteers, Thomas County, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, intergovernmental grants, and the city's capital budget.

Walking Trails from Downtown to Cherokee Park

This is another recreation project discussed at the Thomasville City Council's retreat in 2005.

6.0 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

This chapter addresses intergovernmental coordination by noting existing coordination mechanisms and further opportunities for such coordination. Although intergovernmental coordination efforts can occur in the areas of environmental protection, transportation, and land use among others, the primary issues center on the delivery of community facilities and services. This chapter identifies areas where intergovernmental coordination is ongoing, as well as issues that may require intergovernmental cooperation in the future. The examples of possibilities for intergovernmental coordination are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Thomasville and Thomas County should continue to look for ways to increase the levels of cooperation in all functional areas. This chapter also describes the existing Service Delivery Strategy Agreement and identifies any inconsistencies that need to be resolved in the Community Agenda.

Federal Agencies

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently operating a federal resource center on the campus of Southwest Georgia Hospital. Periodically, the county and city may be required to coordinate activities with other federal agencies.

Key State Agencies

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

Thomasville and Thomas County will need to continue to foster new relationships with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Former Governor Jimmy Carter created GDOT in 1972. Thomasville and Thomas County are eligible to receive State and Federal transportation funds through GDOT.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for multiple forms of transit, not simply roadways. GDOT plans, constructs, maintains and improves the state's road and bridges; provides planning and financial support for other modes of transportation such as mass transit and airports; provides airport and air safety planning; and provides air travel to state departments. The Department also provides administrative support to the State Tollway Authority and the Georgia Rail Passenger Authority (Source: GDOT homepage).

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Interaction with the Department of Natural Resources is required in terms of the City's historic preservation activities. Water and sewer permitting is through the Environmental Protection Division of the Department of Natural Resources.

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. This State department has major review functions in terms of this Comprehensive Plan, amongst others. State policies are sometimes articulated by this agency. The Department of Community Affairs provides extensive resources in the areas of building codes, coordinated planning, and housing, among others. The DCA's overriding purpose is to seek out ways to improve the quality of life for Georgians.

Regional Entities

Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center, with offices in Camilla, serves the entire Southwest Georgia area with various services. Thomas County and Thomasville are represented on the board of the regional development center.

Local Government Coordination

Various community facilities and services are provided on a countywide basis and therefore require communication and coordination between Thomas County and its various municipalities. Coordination between Thomasville and Thomas County is addressed in detail since both local governments are a party to the joint comprehensive plan. Less information is available or is compiled for the smaller cities in Thomas County, which include Barwick, Boston, Coolidge, Meigs, Ochlocknee, and Pavo.

Coordination with Local School Systems

There are several opportunities for Thomas County and Thomasville to coordinate with their respective school systems, as well as institutions of higher education in the area. Schools are essential community facilities that can help local governments meet their future needs in terms of educating the resident labor force, meeting or offsetting recreation needs, and serving as headquarters for emergency management activities. Partnerships with schools in the use of such facilities as parking lots, offices, recreational fields, and gymnasiums are key opportunities that should be explored in preparing the community agenda. For instance, the schools use Remington Park, and senior citizens and camps use school facilities, but there are reportedly no formal agreements.

There are also “land use” issues with respect to the expansion of local public schools and area technical schools and colleges. Although the local school systems are not required to follow the city’s (or county’s) zoning ordinance (since local governments are immune from the regulations of other local governments), some land use compatibility issues between the general-purpose local governments and school boards may develop. Therefore, a future issue may arise as to whether the school boards will seek and obtain any grading and building permits for future school projects. The community agenda should address some of those compatibility and regulatory issues.

Thomas County and Thomasville are responsible for the safe travel of students who want to walk or bike to schools and colleges. Another issue to be confronted in the community agenda is whether pedestrian access and bicycle travel are adequate to local schools and area educational institutions.

Issues to be addressed in the community agenda include: (1) the extent to which school facilities are integrated into emergency operations plans as emergency shelters; (2) the adequacy of existing intergovernmental agreements with regard to the sharing of use or joint development of school-city-county recreational facilities; (3) the potential for partnerships between the Thomas County and Thomasville Boards of Education and area colleges and technical schools with regard to development of additional off-site facilities; (4) whether more explicit guidance is needed on applying local zoning and development requirements to educational facilities; (5) the adequacy of pedestrian and bicycle facilities from residential neighborhoods and commercial areas to area schools; and (6) possible shared parking arrangements.

Service Delivery Strategies (SDS) Agreement

In 1997, the Georgia General Assembly enacted the Local Government Services Delivery Strategy Act (HB 489). This bill was created to limit competition and duplication among local governments and authorities providing local services and also establishes processes to resolve disputes when a County objects to a municipal annexation. It is important to have legislation of this nature due to the past problems that have arisen when cities and counties were in dispute over cities annexing unincorporated lands.

Table 6.1 lists those services that are provided on a countywide basis, along with notes as to whether a formal agreement exists and whether the existing service delivery strategy is considered adequate. In many cases, such as services provided by constitutional county officers (e.g., Sheriff, Coroner), no formal agreement is considered necessary for the county to serve residents of other Thomas County local governments.

Table 6.1 – Countywide Service Responsibilities, Thomas County

Countywide Service	Addressed in Adopted Service Delivery Strategy?	Reference to Formal Agreement?	Adequate? (If Addressed)
Animal Control (Humane Society)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cooperative Extension Service	Yes	N/A	Yes
Coroner	Yes	N/A	Yes
Court System	Yes	N/A	Yes
Drug Task Force	Yes	Yes	No
Economic Development (Payroll Development Authority)	Yes	No	No
Health Department	Yes	N/A	Yes
Elections and Voter Registration	Yes	N/A	Yes
Emergency Management	Yes	N/A	Yes
Emergency Services (EMS, 911, Emergency Management)	Yes	Yes (local legislation)	Yes
Health Department	Yes	N/A	Yes
Library System	Yes	Yes (Sales Tax Res.)	N/A
Prison/Jail	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sheriff	Yes	N/A	Yes
Tax Collection and Tax Assessment	Yes	N/A	Yes
Voter Registration	Yes	N/A	Yes
Welfare	Yes	N/A	Yes

Source: Thomas County Service Delivery Strategy, May 27, 1999. Review by Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc.

Shared Arrangements for Facility or Service Provision

Table 6.2 provides a list of facilities and services that are jointly delivered by more than one local government in Thomas County. It indicates whether a formal agreement is referenced in the Service Delivery Strategy and also whether the agreement is considered adequate or not. Key facilities are also discussed below.

Building Inspections

Thomas County contracts with the cities of Meigs, Ochlocknee, and Boston to provide building inspection services. No specific contract or intergovernmental agreement is specified in the Service Delivery Strategy Agreement.

Table 6.2 – Special Shared Arrangements Among Two or More Local Governments, Thomas County

Special Shared Arrangements Among Two or More Local Governments	Addressed in Adopted Service Delivery Strategy?	Reference to Formal Agreement?	Adequate (If Addressed?)
Building Inspections	Yes	No	Unknown
Recreation Programming	Yes	Yes (Sales Tax Res.)	Maybe Not
Sanitation/Collection	Yes	No	No
Sanitation/Landfill	Yes	Yes (Solid Waste Agreement)	Yes

Planning and Zoning

The joint participation of Thomasville and Thomas County in the preparation of this comprehensive plan is an important and positive step. The county invited the smaller cities to also participate in a countywide comprehensive planning effort, but the smaller cities declined to financially contribute to such an effort. Efforts to coordinate long range planning among Thomas County and its smaller municipalities should, nonetheless, continue.

Recreation Programming

Although the countywide sales tax agreement may adequately cover the distribution of countywide sales proceeds for recreation programs and parks development, the relationship between Thomas County, Thomasville, smaller municipalities, and the YMCA does not appear to be formalized but should be with respect to the delivery of recreation programs and planning for expenditure of sales tax proceeds for parks and recreation

Sanitation/Collection

Thomasville needs a more formalized agreement with regard to its provision of solid waste collection services outside the city limits. This includes service to unincorporated Thomas County residents, services inside the smaller cities, and provision of service outside the county (as is the case in the City of Pelham). Since no agreement with these other local governments is referenced in the SDS, it may be deficient and if so should be amended.

Sanitation/Landfill

Thomasville operates a sanitary landfill for the benefit of all local governments in Thomas County. A solid waste agreement has been executed.

Substantive Issue Areas

Urban Service Area

Thomasville and Thomas County have forged a preliminary agreement to have major utilities extended into an unincorporated fringe area around Thomasville, known as the Urban Service Area. This issue will receive considerable attention during the preparation of the community agenda.

Annexation

One particularly important issue is whether Thomasville will ultimately annex lands within the designated Urban Service Area.

Annexation and Land Use Dispute Resolution

Land use planning between Thomasville and unincorporated Thomas County is being coordinated through the adoption of a joint comprehensive plan. The Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center is responsible, in part, for determining the compatibility of proposed land use plans and comprehensive plans with other affected local governments. Each local government is required to have and follow a dispute resolution procedure for annexations and land use changes.

Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs)

Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) are those developments that are likely to have effects outside of the local government jurisdiction in which they are developed. The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 established the DRI process in 1989. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) established the procedures for review of these projects. The DRI process is utilized to improve communication between affected governments and provide a means of assessing potential impacts and conflicts the development may create.

7.0 TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Thomas County, covering a land area of 548 square miles, has a transportation system that is dominated by the highway mode. Thomas County is strategically located in Southwest Georgia where three federal and five state highways connect with points in all directions. Thomas County is twenty-five miles north of Interstate 10 which is a major transcontinental east-west route and forty-five miles west of Interstate 75 which is also a major north-south transcontinental route.

The following presents the existing conditions assessment of the transportation system in Thomas County and Thomasville. Demographic and travel characteristics are presented, followed by discussion of the transportation system by mode.

Demographic and Travel Characteristics

The U.S. Census Bureau collects socioeconomic and other data that can be reviewed to help determine potential transportation needs as well as understand area travel patterns. Demographic characteristics illustrate the planning context in which the transportation system operates.

Thomas County had a 2000 population of 42,737, of which 18,162 persons (42 percent) of the population resided in Thomasville. The 2004 population estimate is 43,989 representing a growth rate of 2.9 percent since 2000. Thomasville is estimated to have grown by 364 persons or 1.9%. Population density is important to consider when examining transportation alternatives such as transit. The greater the density, the more likely the area is able to support more intensive transit services. Thomas County has a population density of 77.9 persons per square mile. City of Thomasville has a higher population density with 518.9 persons per square mile.

Selected demographic characteristics of Thomas County and Thomasville are shown in Tables 7.1 and 7.2. These characteristics are presented because they help identify population groups that may have a greater tendency to use or need transit or transportation alternatives. As shown in Table 7.1, Thomas County's population is predominantly made up of two races: white and African-American. Of those who consider themselves one race, 58.9% identified themselves as white, 38.8% as black or African American, 0.4% as Asian, and 0.8% as some other race. The percent of persons identifying themselves as having Hispanic or Latino origin was 1.7%. The City of Thomasville has a slightly higher African-American population with an identified percentage of 55.4%.

Table 7.1 – Demographic Characteristics Comparison, Race and Ethnicity, 2000

Geographic Area	Population	Percent Identifying as One Race				Two or More Races	Percent Hispanic or Latino
		White	Black	Asian	Other Race		
Thomasville	18,162	42.9%	55.4%	0.5%	0.2%	0.8%	1.3%
Thomas County	42,737	58.9%	38.8%	0.4%	0.8%	0.8%	1.7%
Georgia	8,186,453	65.1%	28.7%	2.1%	2.8%	1.4%	5.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

As shown in Table 7.2, a greater proportion of persons in Thomasville County live below poverty (19 percent) and a greater proportion of households are lacking vehicles (11 percent) than found in the county, or state. There are more persons age 65 and older living in the city (16.2 percent) and the county (13.7 percent) than statewide, but the proportion of persons age 15 to 19 is relatively the same. Overall, the demographic characteristics indicate significant potential for transit-supportive markets.

Table 7.2 – Demographic Characteristics Comparison, Income and Age, 2000

Geographic Area	Total		Percent			
	Population	Households	Persons below poverty	Persons Age 65+	Persons Age 15-19	Households without vehicles
Thomasville	18,162	7,021	19.0%	16.2%	7.7%	11%
Thomas County	42,737	16,309	17.4%	13.7%	7.6%	6.6%
Georgia	8,186,453	3,006,369	13.0%	9.6%	7.3%	8.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

A number of factors related to commute travel can be evaluated using Census data. The data indicate how people are getting to work, where they are working, and how long it takes to travel between home and work on an average day. Table 7.3 shows how residents living in Thomas County and Thomasville get to work, compared against the state. The data show that nearly 79.6 percent of Thomas County commuters rely on the single occupant, private vehicle to get to work. The percent of commuters carpooling (16 percent) is slightly higher than statewide. A lower percent of persons commuting to work use public transit in Thomas County and Thomasville (0.5 percent) than in the state. The proportion of persons using other transportation alternatives in both Thomas County and Thomasville is lower than statewide.

Table 7.3 – Manner of Commute Comparison 2000

Geographic Area	Number of Workers Age 16 and Over	Percent of Commuters					
		Drive Alone	Carpool	Public Transit	Walk	Other	Work at Home
Thomasville	7,200	78.5%	17.5%	0.5%	1.2%	1.0%	1.3%
Thomas County	17,833	79.6%	16.0%	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%	2.0%
Georgia	3,832,803	77.5%	14.5%	2.3%	1.7%	1.1%	2.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Table 7.4 shows a comparison of Thomas County, Thomasville and the state for identifying where county residents work. As the data indicates, the majority of county and city residents work within the city and county. Tables 7.5 and 7.6 give some indication of travel patterns between neighboring counties. Small percentages of Thomas County residents commute to work in other counties. Over 10 percent of Grady County residents commute to work in Thomas County.

Table 7.4 – Location of Work 2000

Geographic Area	Number of Workers Age 16 and Over	Work in County of Residence	
		Number	Percent
Thomasville	7,200	6,494	90.2%
Thomas County	17,833	15,361	86.1%
Georgia	3,832,803	2,240,758	58.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Table 7.5 – Where Thomas County Residents Work

Work County	1990		2000		Change 1990-2000	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Thomas	14,910	88.4%	15,361	86.1%	451	3.0%
Grady	274	1.6%	400	2.2%	126	46.0%
Leon (FL)	431	2.6%	396	2.2%	-35	-8.1%
Colquitt	305	1.8%	390	2.2%	85	27.9%
Mitchell	106	0.6%	287	1.6%	181	170.8%
Brooks	183	1.1%	283	1.6%	100	54.6%
Other	658	3.9%	716	4.0%		
Total	16,867	100.0%	17,833	100.0%	966	5.7%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 7.6 – Where Persons Working in Thomas County Live

Resident County	1990		2000		Change 1990-2000	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Thomas	14,910	81.2%	15,361	75.6%	451	3.0%
Grady	1,319	7.2%	2,141	10.5%	822	62.3%
Mitchell	429	2.3%	520	2.6%	91	21.2%
Colquitt	415	2.3%	464	2.3%	49	11.8%
Brooks	314	1.7%	443	2.2%	129	41.1%
Leon (FL)	329	1.8%	442	2.2%	113	34.3%
Other	644	3.5%	947	4.7%		
Total	18,360	100.0%	20,318	100.0%	1,958	10.7%

Source: U.S. Census

Over three-fourths of the workers in Thomas County reside in the county. Over ten percent of persons working in the county live in Grady County, approximately seven miles west of Thomasville, while the others are spread between other surrounding counties.

How long it takes persons living in Thomas County and Thomasville to commute to their jobs is shown in Table 7.7 as compared to the state. A greater proportion of Thomasville commuters get to their jobs in less than 10 minutes (27.5 percent) than countywide (18.6 percent) or statewide (11.5 percent). However, Thomas County and Thomasville commuters indicating their travel time to work is 10 to 19 minutes (45.6 percent and 49.5 percent respectively) is a significantly higher percentage than the statewide percentage (29.3 percent). The high percentage of Thomas County commuters with short travel times to work reflects the predominantly rural nature of the county and lack of congestion on existing roadways. As population and employment in the county and region grow, commute times can be expected to lengthen.

Table 7.7 – Travel Time to Work 2000

Geographic Area	Number of Workers Age 16 and Over Commuting to Work	< 10 Minutes	10 to 19 Minutes	20 to 29 Minutes	30 to 44 Minutes	45 to 60 Minutes	> 60 Minutes
Thomasville	7,103	27.5%	49.5%	9.8%	7.9%	2.3%	3.0%
Thomas County	17,475	18.6%	45.6%	16.0%	12.5%	3.1%	4.0%
Georgia	3,723,817	11.5%	29.3%	19.6%	20.9%	9.3%	9.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Roadways

The roadway system provides the backbone of the transportation network. Existing roadway totals 792 centerline miles in unincorporated Thomas County and 146.1 centerline miles in the City of Thomasville. Classifying the roadway system by how each roadway functions allows for analysis and evaluation of the roadway’s effectiveness within the system. Roadways are described by the federal functional classification system which defines a roadway based on its accessibility and mobility. At one end of the spectrum are expressways or interstates, which provide the greatest mobility with controlled access. Conversely, local roads provide the greatest accessibility and feed traffic into higher capacity roads.

Thomas County

A description of the county’s major functional classifications is presented below and is shown in Map 7.1.

Interstate Principal Arterial/Freeway – provide the greatest mobility because access is generally limited to intersections and interchanges. There are no roadways classified as Interstate Principal Arterial/Freeway in Thomas County.

Principal Arterial and Minor Arterial Streets – provide the essential network for connecting activity centers. Arterials carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds. Principal arterials in Thomas County include SR 122 between Pavo and Thomasville and US 319 between its intersection with US 84 just northeast of Thomasville through the city to its southwest corporate limits. County minor arterials outside Thomasville include Dillon Road between its intersections with US 319 just northeast of the city and the Thomasville Municipal Airport and County Line

Road (SR 202) between the northern corporate limits to its intersection with US 19. The arterial system in unincorporated Thomas County comprises 17.3 percent of the total roadway miles, of which 118.9 miles are classified principal arterials and 18.1 miles are classified minor arterials. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on arterial roadways in unincorporated Thomas County averages 6,800 vehicles per day (vpd) on principal arterials and 10,300 vpd on minor arterials.

Collector Streets – connect activity centers and residential areas. Their purpose is to collect traffic from streets in residential and commercial areas for distribution to the arterial system at low to moderate speeds. The collector system in unincorporated Thomas County comprises nearly 27.3 percent or 215.8 miles of the total roadway network. The AADT on collector roadways in the county averages 1,260 vpd.

Local Streets – have the greatest access but the least mobility. Local streets feed the collector system from low volume residential and commercial areas at low speeds. Local streets are usually found in subdivisions. The local roadway network comprises 55.4 percent or 439.2 miles of the total roadway network. The AADT on local streets roadways in Thomas County averages 485 vpd.

Roadway jurisdiction defines which entity owns and is responsible for maintenance. As shown on Map 7.2, most of the roadways (78 percent, 616.8 miles) in Thomas County are county roads, however, a significant number are state routes, owned and maintained by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). State routes located in Thomas County, totaling 168.3 miles, are SR 3, SR 300, SR 202, SR 35, SR 188, SR 33, SR 122, SR 38, and SR 111.

Thomasville

A description of the city's major functional classifications is presented below and is shown in Map 7.3.

Interstate Principal Arterial/Freeway – provide the greatest mobility because access is generally limited to intersections and interchanges. There are no roadways classified as Interstate Principal Arterial/Freeway in Thomasville.

Principal Arterial and Minor Arterial Streets – provide the essential network for connecting activity centers. Arterials carry large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds. Principal arterials in Thomasville include Business US 319 between its intersection with US 84 just northeast of Thomasville through the city to its southwest corporate limits and the US 319/SR 35 Bypass on the west side of the city between US 84 and Business US 319 at the southwest corporate limits. Minor arterials located in Thomasville are SR 202 between North Pinetree Boulevard and Business US 319, North Pinetree Boulevard between SR 202 and Business US 319 at the southwest corporate limits, SR 122, N. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, North Boulevard between N. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and the SR 35 Bypass, Broad Street between North Boulevard and US 19, and Dawson Street between North Boulevard and Broad Street. The arterial system in the city comprises 16.2 percent of its total roadway miles, of which 10.5 miles are classified principal arterials and 13.2 miles are classified minor arterials. The AADT on arterial roadways in Thomasville averages 8,223 vpd on principal arterials and 8,935 vpd on minor arterials.

Collector Streets – connect activity centers and residential areas. Their purpose is to collect traffic from streets in residential and commercial areas for distribution to the arterial system at low to moderate speeds. The collector system in Thomasville comprises nearly 15 percent or

21.8 miles of the City's total roadway network. The AADT on collector roadways in the city averages 2,775 vpd.

Local Streets – have the greatest access but the least mobility. Local streets feed the collector system from low volume residential and commercial areas at low speeds. Local streets are usually found in subdivisions. The local roadway network comprises 69 percent or 100.6 miles of the City's total roadway network. The AADT on local streets in Thomasville averages 810 vpd.

As shown on Map 7.4, the overwhelming majority of roadways (133.5 miles or 91 percent) in Thomasville are city streets, requiring city maintenance. Almost 13 miles of state routes, maintained by GDOT, in the city include SR 35 Bypass, SR 35, SR 3, SR 202, SR 38, and SR 122.

Figure 7.1 – Roadway Functional Classification, Thomas County

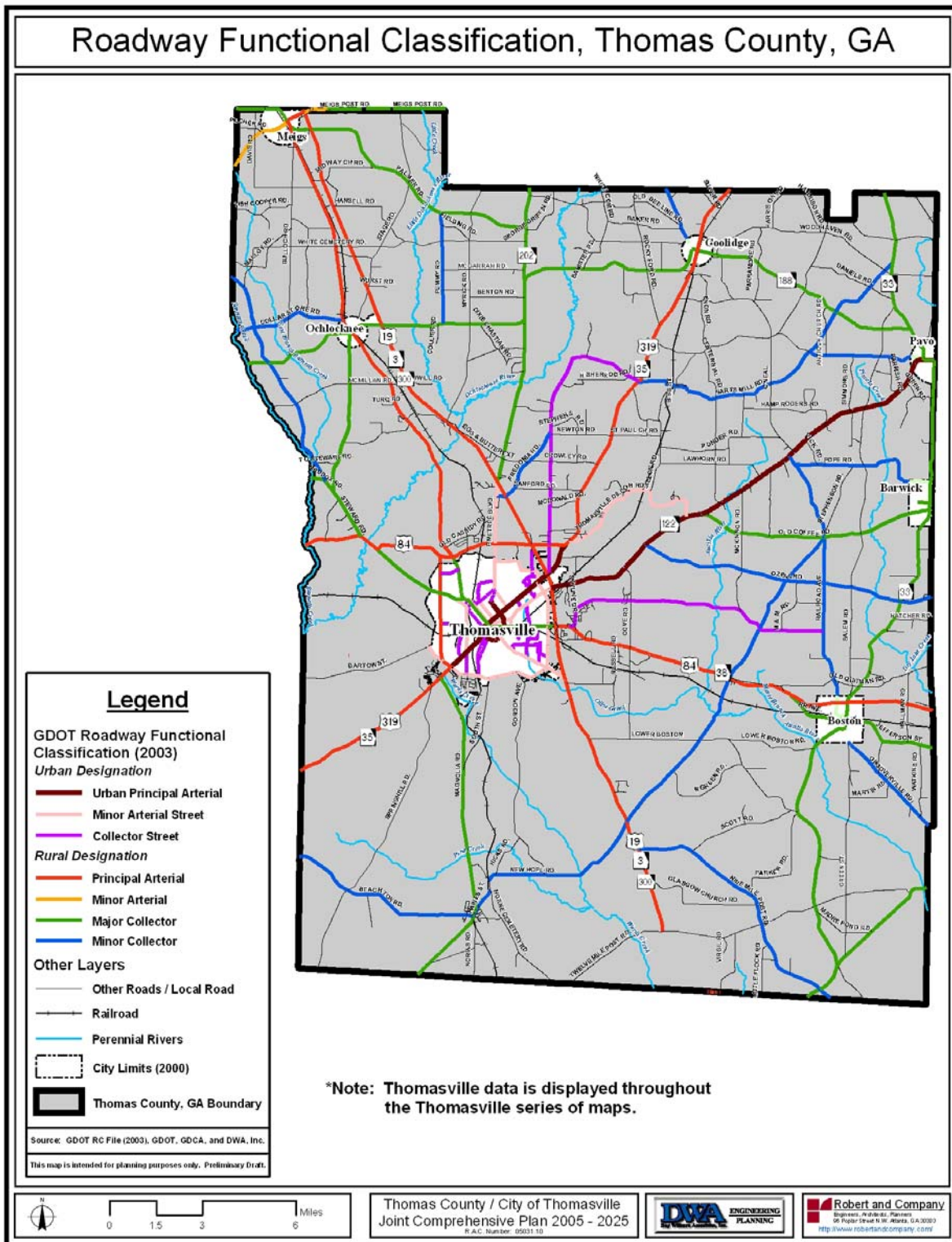


Figure 7.2 – Roadway Jurisdiction, Thomas County

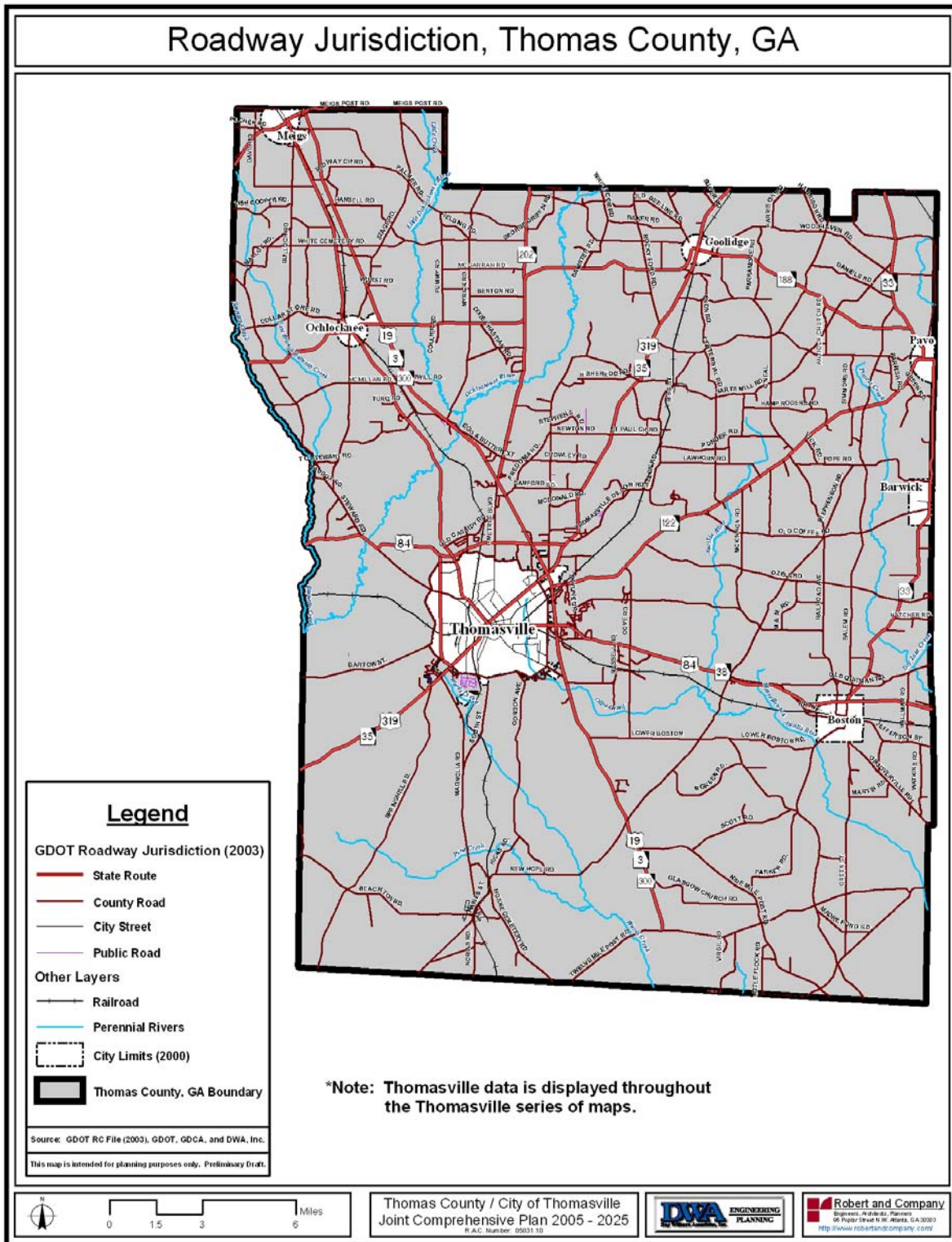


Figure 7.3 – Roadway Functional Classification, Thomasville

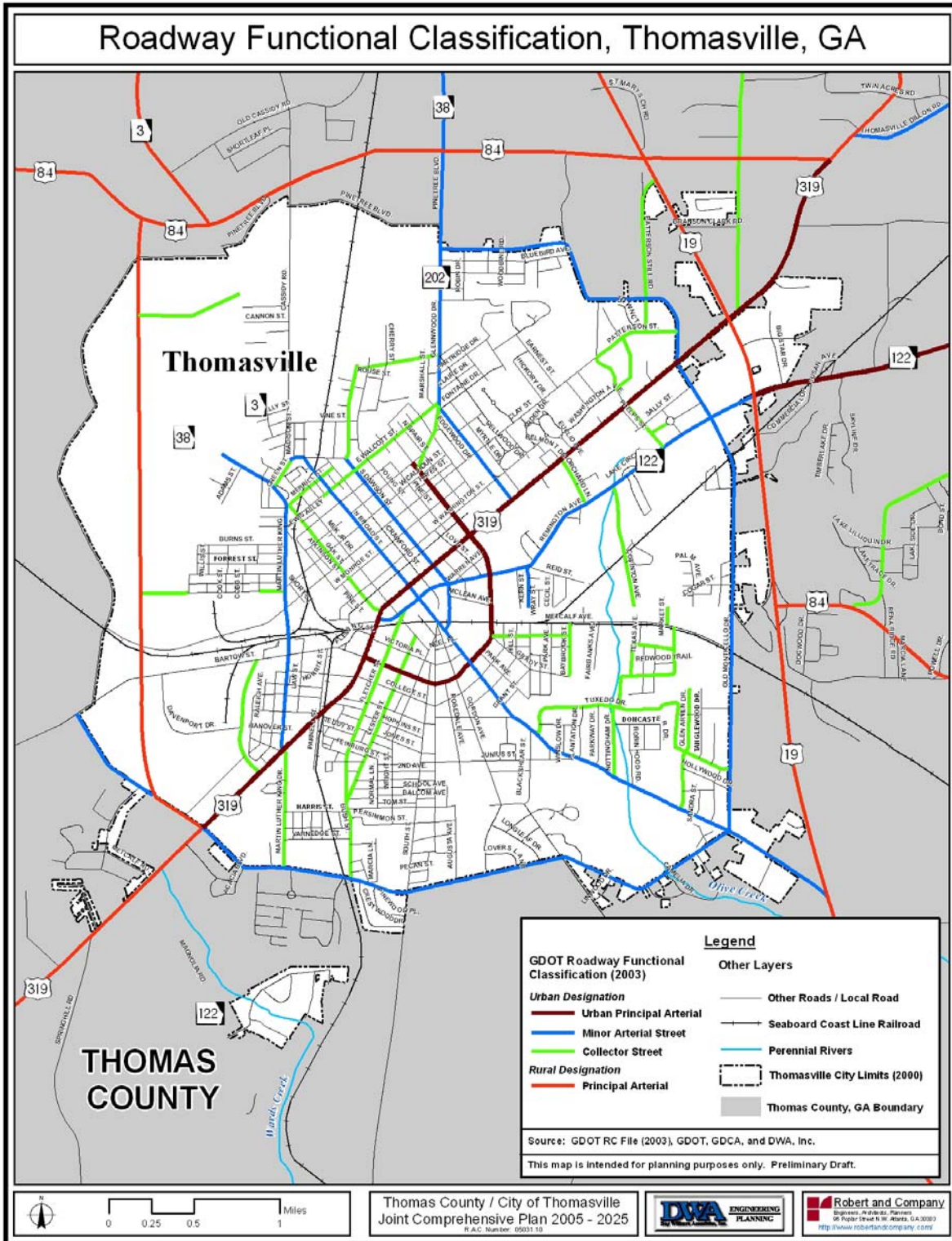
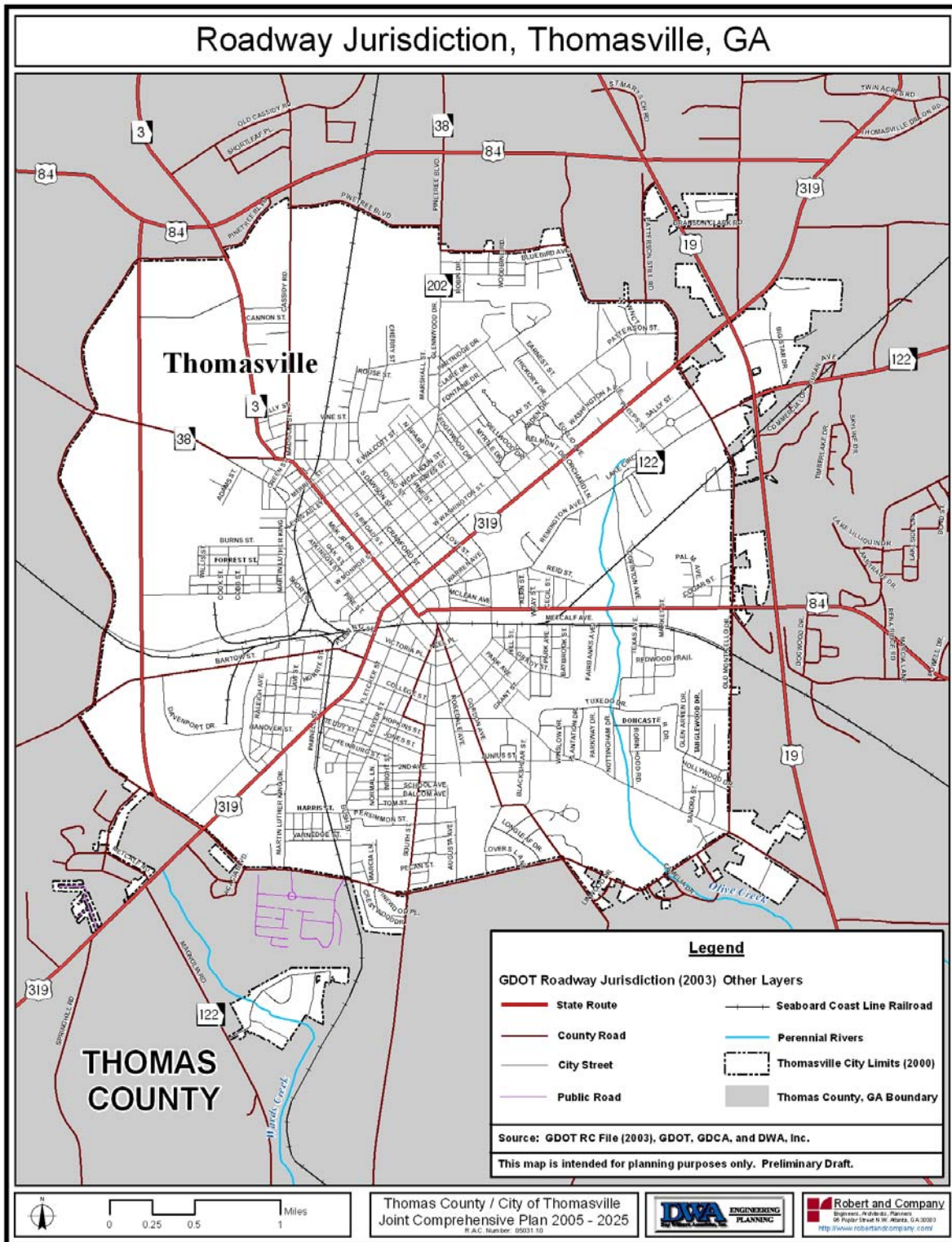


Figure 7.4 – Roadway Jurisdiction, Thomasville



Roadway Utilization

Available roadway network capacity is determined by functional classification, number of lanes, and utilization.

Thomas County

As shown in Figure 7.5, most Thomas County roadways have two lanes; however, the county's State Routes provide significant capacity for through traffic as well as increased connectivity for county municipalities and activity centers. The county is served by the following four lane state routes:

North-south

- SR 3 connecting Albany and other points north of the county, Meigs, Thomasville, and points south
- SR 300 connecting Cordele, Albany and other points north of the county, Meigs, Thomasville, and points south
- SR 35 connecting Ocilla, Tifton, Moultrie, Coolidge, Thomasville, Tallahassee, and points south

East-west

- SR 122 connecting Waycross, I-75, Pavo, and Thomasville
- SR 38 connecting Savannah, Waycross, Valdosta, Boston, Thomasville, Cairo, Bainbridge, and points west

Figure 7.5 –Roadway Operational Characteristics, Thomas County

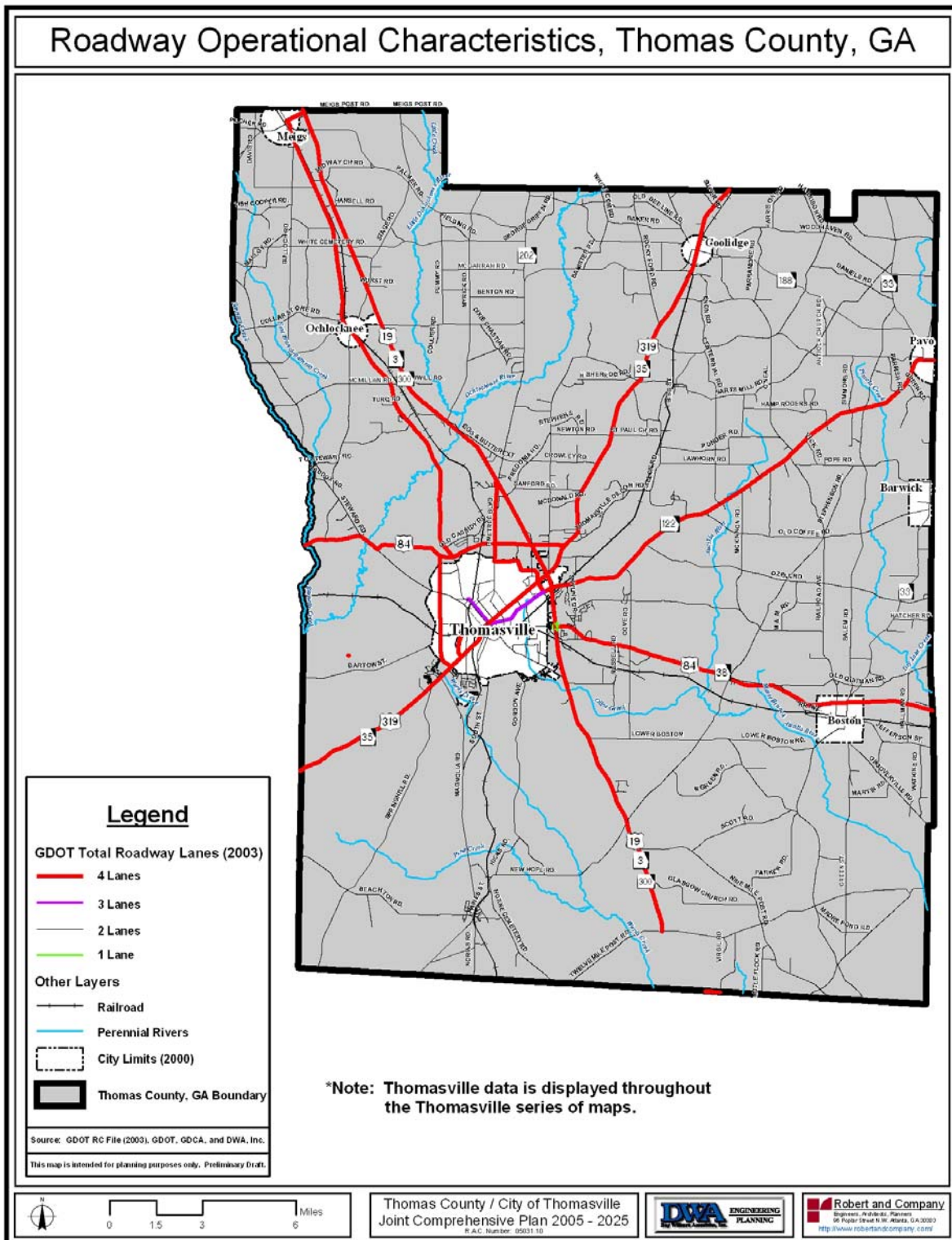


Figure 7.6 shows the range of existing (2003) AADT that occurs on the roadway network. As significant regional travel corridors, the four lane state routes experience the greatest utilization on a daily basis.

Thomasville

As shown in Figure 7.7, most Thomasville roadways have two lanes; however, the city's arterials provide significant capacity for through traffic as well as increased connectivity between activity centers. The city is served by the following three and four lane roadways:

North-south

- US 319/SR 35 Bypass (four lanes) between US 319 Business and US 84 on the west side of town. Provides bypass for north-south traffic and connectivity for the Plantation Oak, Tall Pines and Rose City Industrial Parks.
- US 319/SR 35 Business (four lanes) between the northeast and southwest corporate limits. Provides some through traffic access but mostly offers connectivity for historic downtown "Main Street", city schools, Gateway Commerce Park and MacIntyre Park.

East-west

- SR 122 between US 19 and US 319 Business (three lanes). Provides through traffic opportunities plus connectivity for Historic Downtown "Main Street", Gateway Shopping Center, YMCA, and Remington Avenue Ball Parks.
- Pinetree Boulevard between SR 202 and SR 122. Provides bypass opportunities for through traffic and connectivity for north Thomasville, Central Middle School, and the Archbold Urgent Care Center.

Figure 7.8. shows the range of existing (2003) AADT that occurs on the roadway network. It is no surprise that US 319 Business, US 319 Bypass, and North Pinetree Boulevard experience the greatest utilization on a daily basis in that they are significant, four lane travel corridors. The Figure also highlights some roadways, including SR 122 between Pavo and Thomasville and US 84 Bus northwest of Thomasville, that experience volumes that approach 10,000 vehicles per day with only local origins and destinations. As the community grows, these roadways will continue to attract volume and potential congestion.

Figure 7.6 – Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), Thomas County

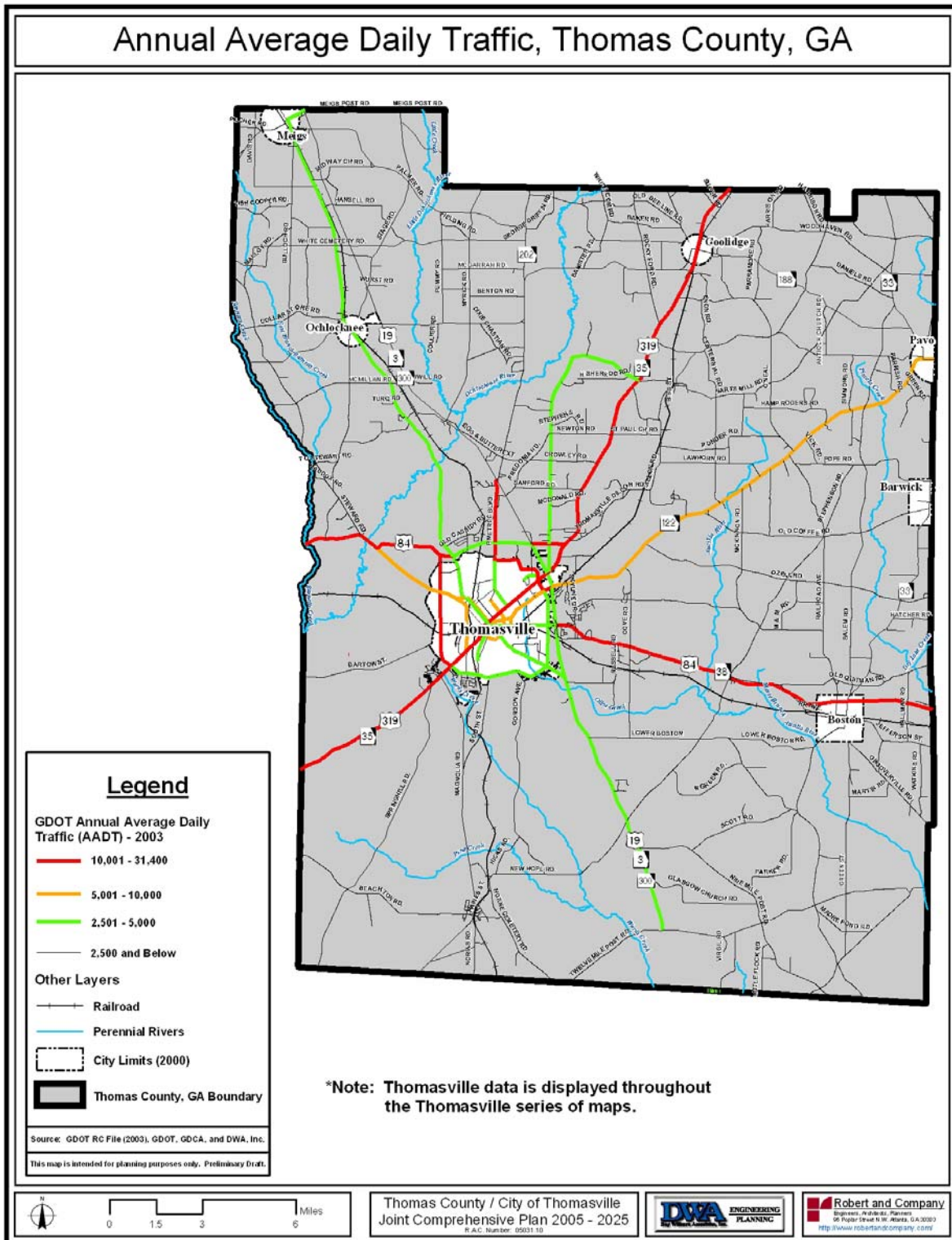


Figure 7.7 –Roadway Operational Characteristics, Thomasville

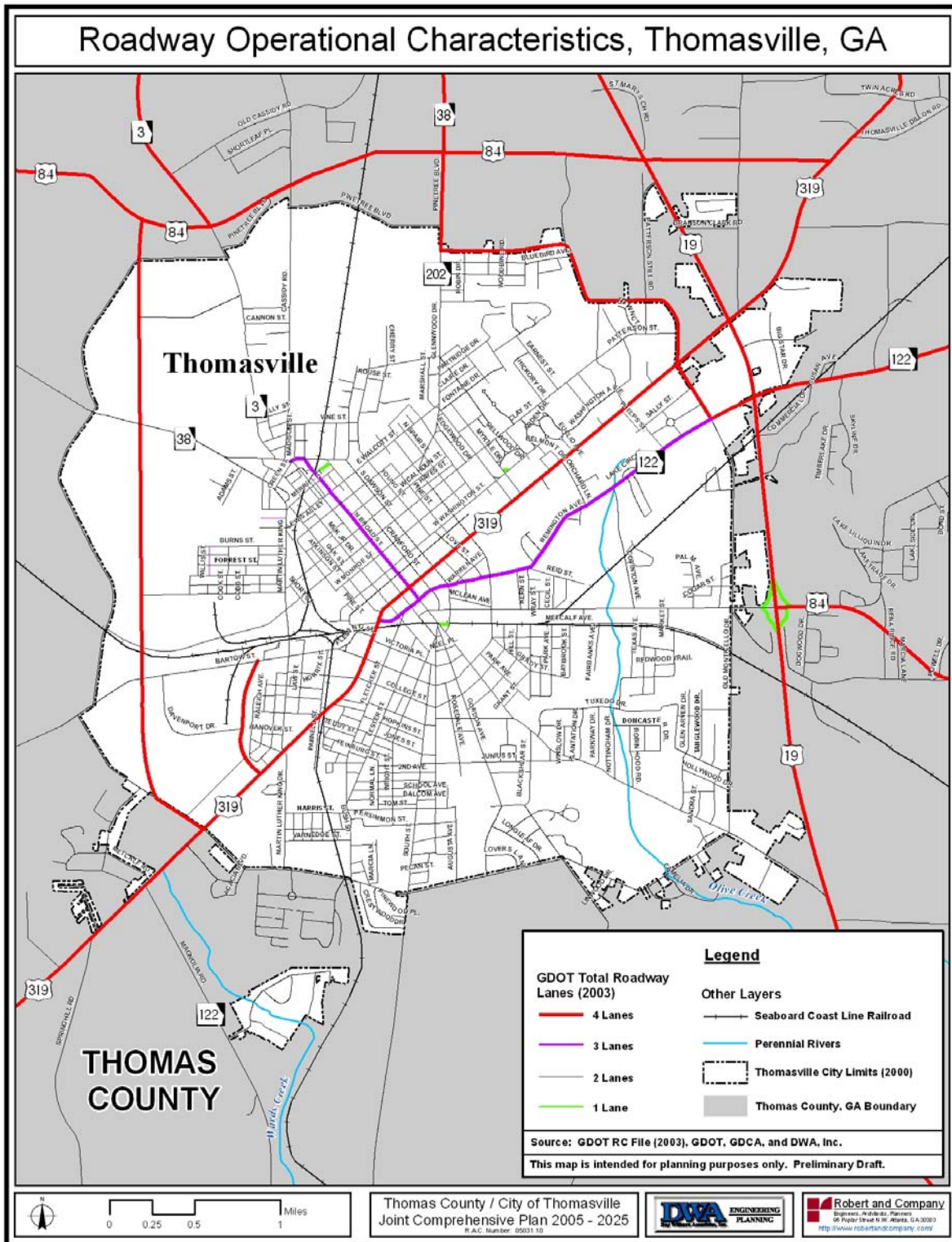
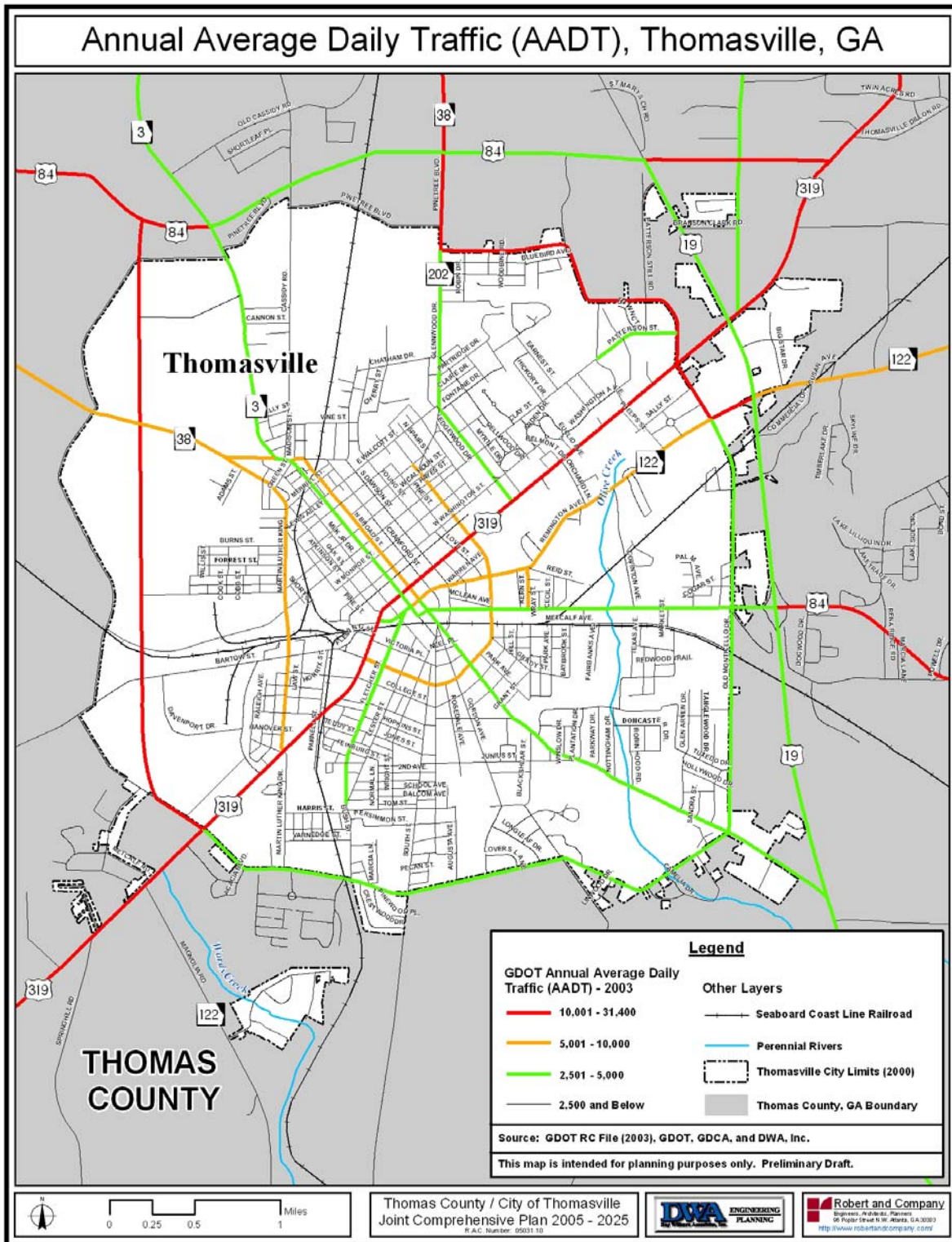


Figure 7.8 – Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), Thomasville



The level of system performance varies by type of transportation facility, geographic location, time of day and other characteristics. Each roadway in the network has a theoretical capacity based on its functional classification and characteristics. When roadways are operating in free-flow conditions, capacity constraints are not apparent. However, as traffic volumes increase, available capacity is restricted and roadway congestion results. Federal regulations define traffic congestion as the level at which transportation system performance is no longer acceptable.

Capacity needs are identified using measures such as level of service (LOS) that can be expected on that roadway. The computation and analysis of roadway LOS allows system-wide analysis of the transportation network based on information such as lane configuration, observed roadway speed, and traffic volumes.

LOS is a user-based assessment of conditions. Roadways are given a letter designation, with LOS A representing the best operating conditions and LOS F representing the worst. The 2000 Highway Capacity Manual provides the following LOS guidelines:

- LOS A, B and C indicate conditions where traffic can move relatively freely.
- LOS D describes vehicle speed beginning to decline slightly due to increasing flows. Speed and freedom of movement are severely restricted. In non-urban areas LOS D is considered an unacceptable level of service.
- LOS E describes conditions where traffic volumes are at or close to capacity, resulting in serious delays. LOS E is an unacceptable level of service.
- LOS F describes breakdown in vehicular flow. This condition exists when the flow rate exceeds roadway capacity. LOS F describes traffic downstream from the bottleneck of breakdown. LOS F is an unacceptable level of service.

To determine what facilities were congested in Thomas County and Thomasville, the Multimodal Transportation Planning Tool (MTPT), developed by the Georgia Department of Transportation, was applied. Figures 7.9 through 7.14 illustrate current (2005), 2015 and 2025 levels of service during the afternoon peak period. The MTPT shows no roadways below LOS C outside the Thomasville city limits and very little existing congestion within Thomasville. In 2015, the only location in the county showing congestion is along US 38 between US 319 Bypass/Cairo Rd. and SR 84. The 2025 congested segments in Thomas County outside of Thomasville include:

- US 38 between US 319 Bypass/Cairo Rd. and SR 84
- SR 202 from Pinetree Blvd. to US 19/SR3/SR300
- Hall Rd. from US 19/SR3/SR300 to SR 188
- SR 188 from Hall Rd. to US 319/SR 35

Current “hot spots” in Thomasville include Martin Luther King Blvd between US 319 and Cairo Rd., along Cairo Rd. from Martin Luther King Blvd. to SR 38 and along Kern St. downtown. These areas are characterized primarily by residential and commercial development. By 2015, congestion will increase along these roadways, as well as along North Blvd. between SR 3 and SR 38 and along SR 38. In addition to these locations, GDOT’s MTPT is forecasting the following 2025 congested segments in Thomasville:

- Green St. from Cairo Rd. to North Blvd.
- Fletcher St. from Harris St. to Remington Ave.
- Patterson St. from East Clay St. to North Pinetree Blvd.

- Bartow St. from US 319 Business to South St.
- Hansell St. from South St. to Walcott St. SR 122
- Glenwood Dr. from US 319/SR 35 to North Pinetree Blvd.
- Pinetree Blvd. from Glenwood Dr. in the north around to the southwest end of US 319/SR 35, reflecting the current development trend of rapid development along the eastern boundaries of the city
- Old Monticello Rd. from Pinetree Blvd. to US 19/SR3/SR300
- Remington Ave. from Pinetree Blvd. to US 319/SR 35

Most of these roadways are characterized by residential and commercial development and connect to major commercial corridors. These future congested segments also indicate a growing increase in north-south traffic flows and a need for increased capacity to accommodate growth.

Figure 7.9 – 2005 Level of Service (LOS), Thomas County

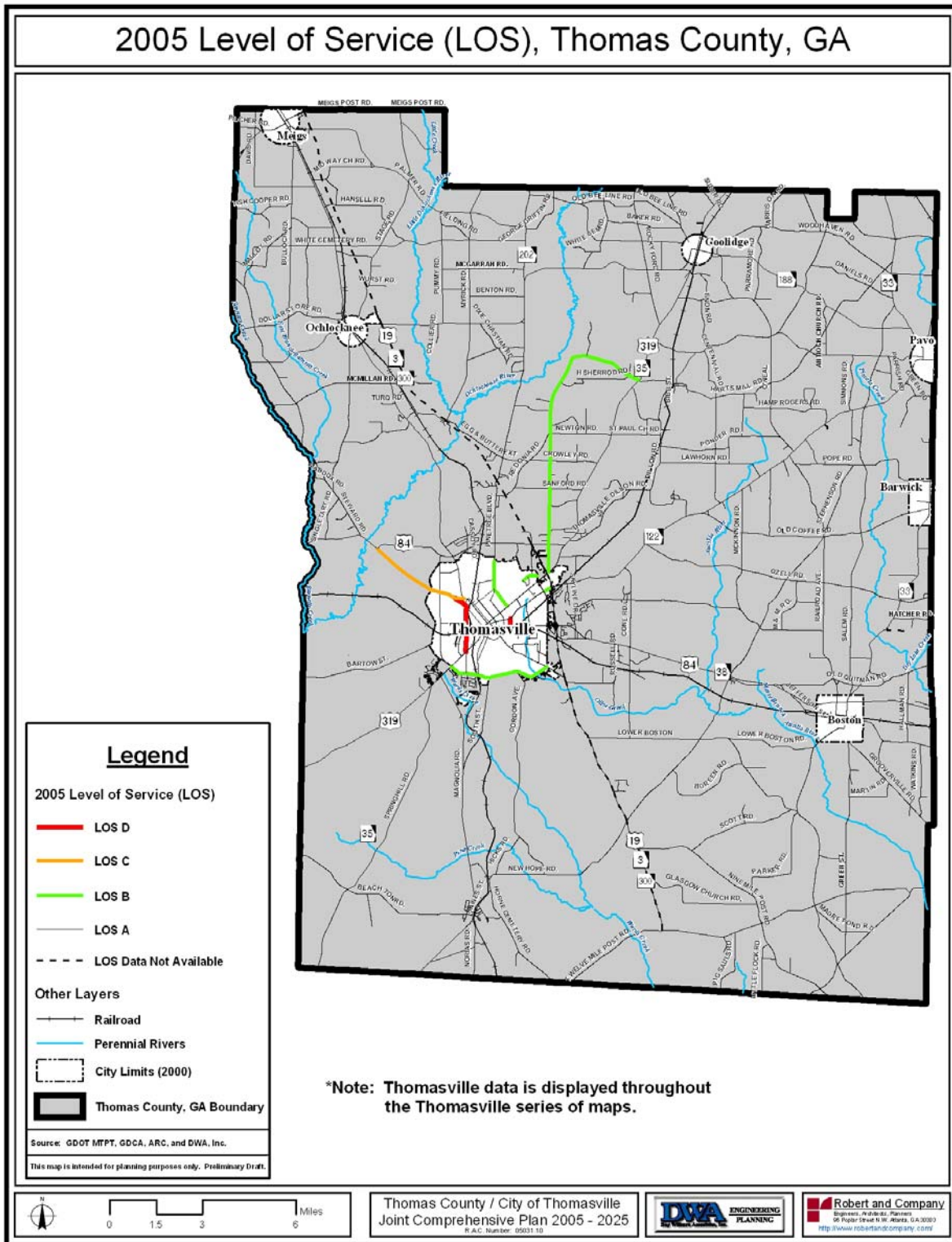


Figure 7.10 – 2015 Level of Service (LOS), Thomas County

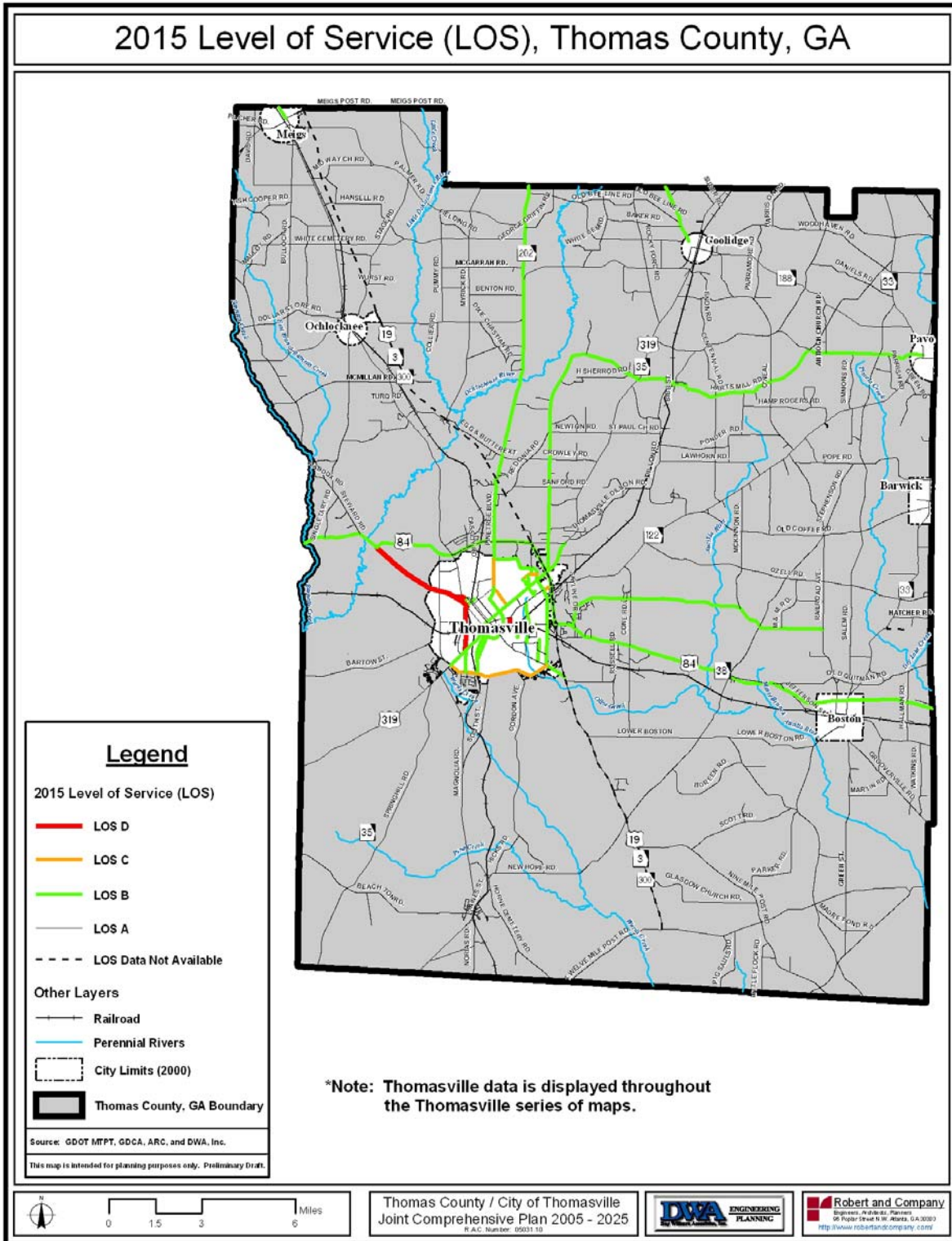


Figure 7.11 – 2025 Level of Service (LOS), Thomas County

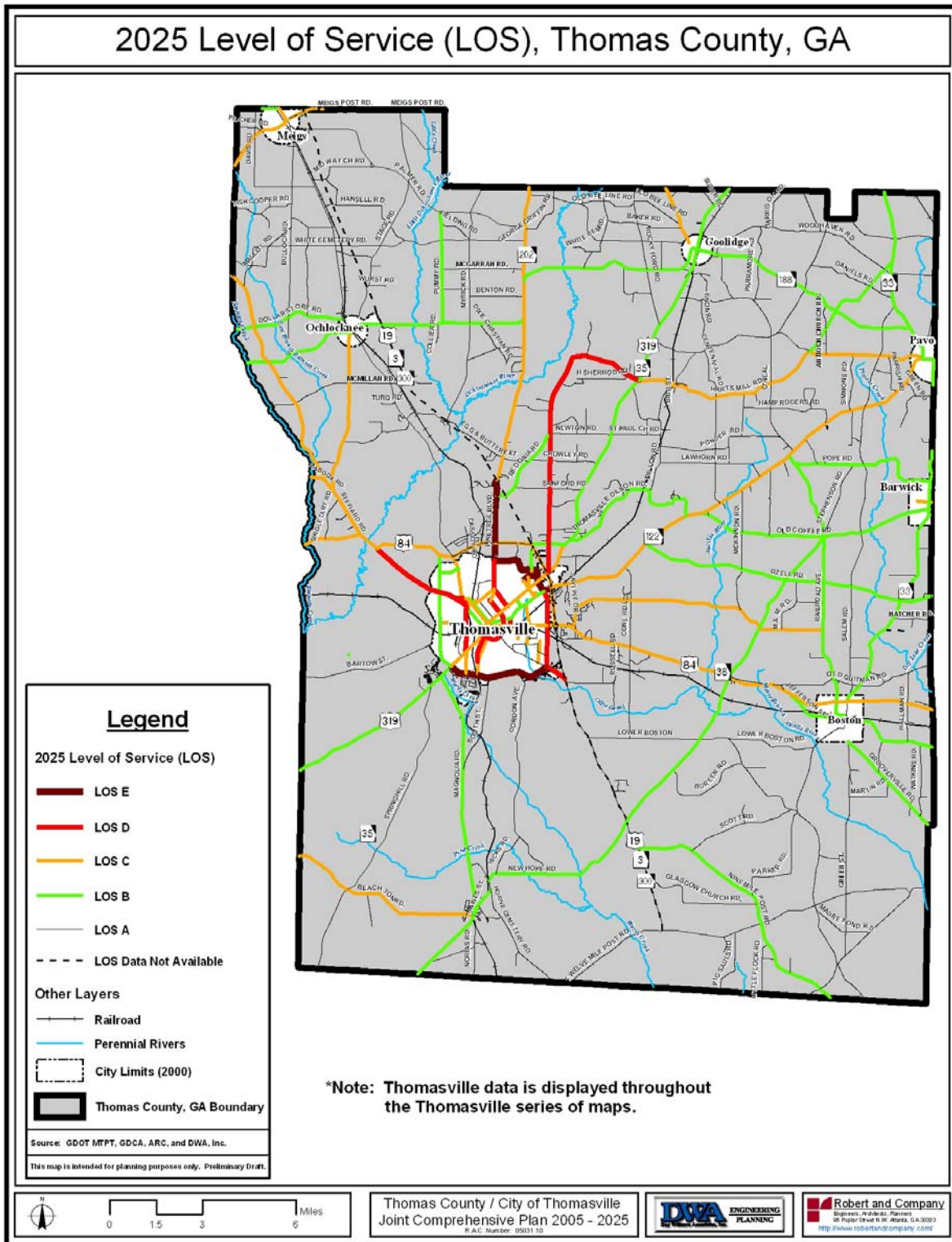


Figure 7.12 – 2005 Level of Service (LOS), Thomasville

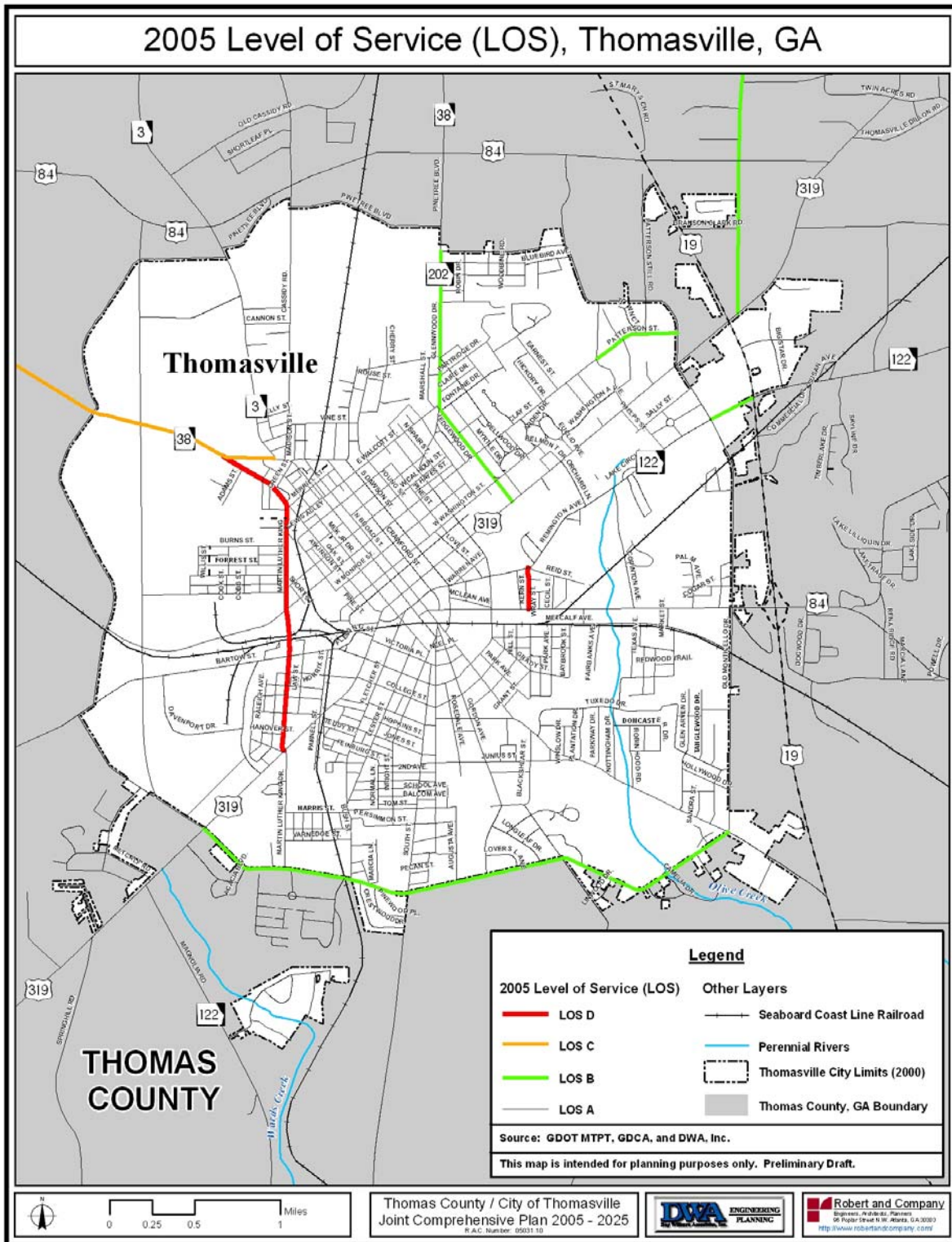


Figure 7.13 – 2015 Level of Service (LOS), Thomasville

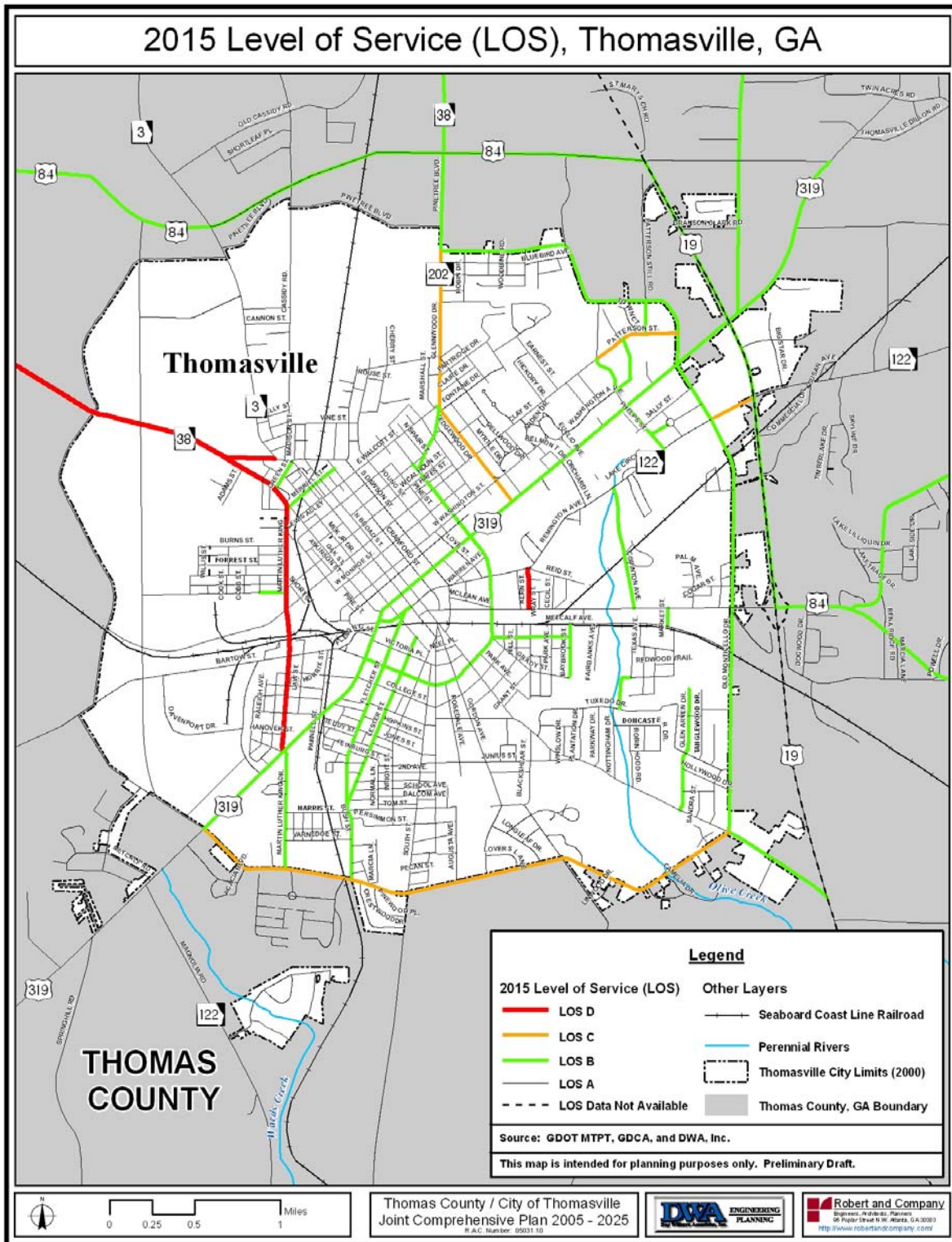
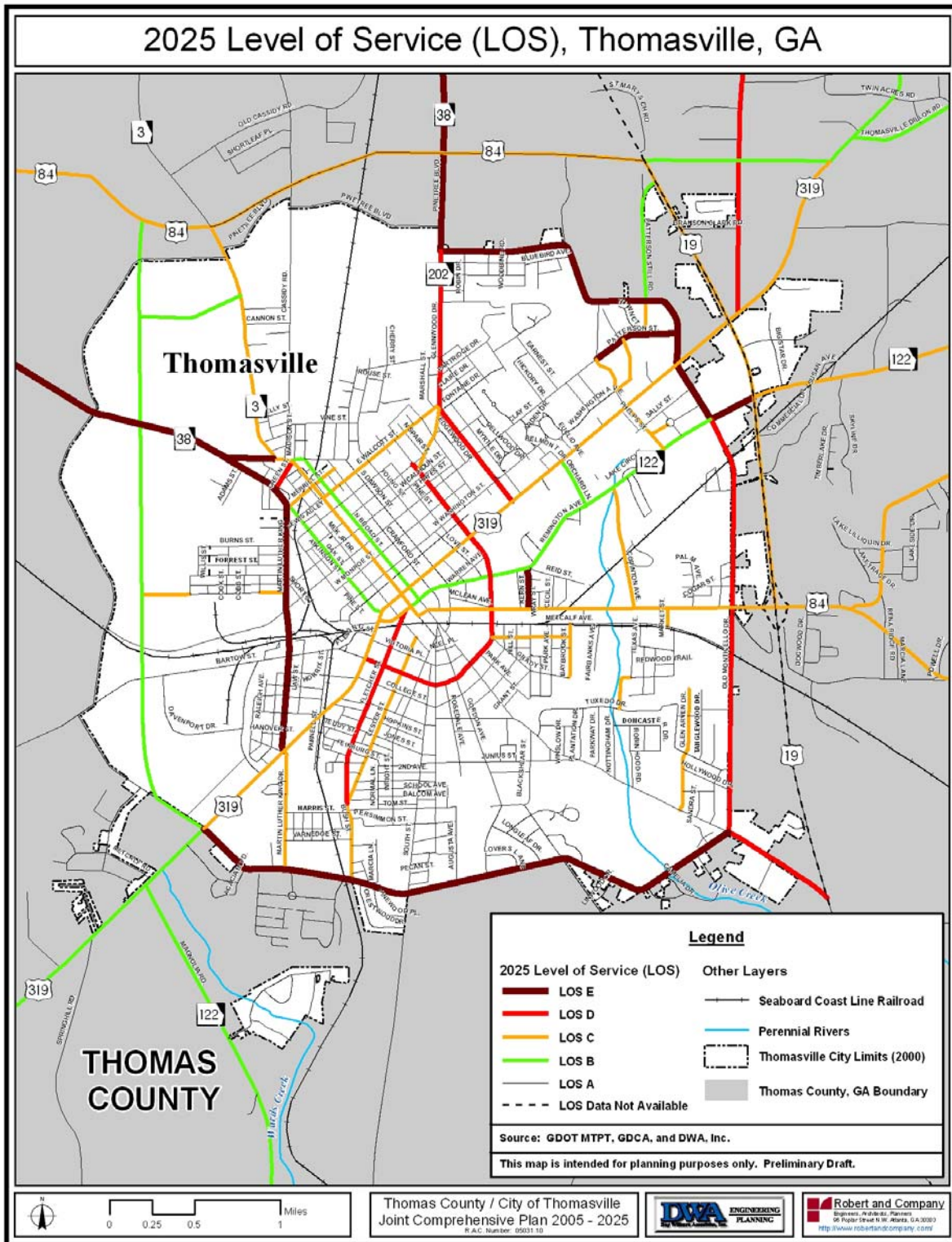


Figure 7.14 – 2025 Level of Service (LOS), Thomasville



Roadway and Bridge Conditions

Data is maintained by GDOT on roadway and bridge condition. Roadway pavement condition is rated using a Pavement Condition Evaluation System (PACES) rating within the GDOT roadway characteristics (RC) file. PACES rates roadway pavement condition on a linear scoring system from 10 to 99. Rating ranges are summarized in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8 – PACES Rating

Rating	Definition	Score
Very Good	No maintenance necessary at present time.	81 to 99
Good	Rideability good, some minor repairs needed.	65 to 80
Fair	Considerable deterioration; needs major repairs or resurfacing in near future.	45 to 64
Poor	Badly deteriorated; needs leveling and resurfacing.	28 to 44
Very Poor	Critical condition; needs immediate attention.	11 to 27

Source: GDOT, Systems Inventory Data Collection, Coding, and Procedures Manual

Thomas County

As shown in Figure 7.15, a majority of the roadway system in Thomas County (outside of Thomasville) is rated fair and above. Of the 622 centerline miles in Thomas County for which pavement ratings are available, nine percent are rated very good, 35 percent are rated good, 16 percent are rated fair, and 40 percent are rated poor (compared to 38 percent statewide). Pavement data is available from the GDOT Road Characteristics file (2004).

According to the 2004 GDOT database for the National Bridge Inventory (NBI), outside of Thomasville, Thomas County has 183 bridges that meet the criteria for inclusion in the NBI. A bridge is defined as a structure including supports erected over a depression or an obstruction, such as water, highway, or railway, and having a tract or passageway for carrying traffic or other moving loads, and having an opening measured along the center of the roadway of more than twenty feet between under coping of abutments, or spring lines of arches, or extreme end of openings for multiple boxes, and may include multiple pipes, where the clear distance between openings is less than half of the smaller contiguous opening (Georgia Department of Transportation, NBIS Coding Guide).

Of the 183 inventoried bridges, 117 have an acceptable structural deficiency rating and sixty-six are in need of repair or replacement. The percentage of bridges in Thomas County in need of repair or replacement is similar to other jurisdictions statewide. Of the 16,686 inventoried bridges statewide, 5,138 (31 percent) are in need of repair or replacement. Although these figures reflect a significant need to replace and repair bridges and statewide, this situation is common to most states. The 2001 Georgia Statewide Transportation Plan noted that many existing bridges and structures were constructed in the 1960s after the beginning of the Federal Highway Trust Fund and are reaching the end of their service life. This is an issue that is being addressed at the national and state levels through increased emphasis on bridge and maintenance in the recent federal transportation legislation.

Thomasville

As shown in Figure 7.16, a majority of the roadway system in Thomasville is rated good or fair. Of the 103 centerline miles in Thomasville for which pavement ratings are available, five percent are rated very good, 37 percent are rated good, and 55 percent are rated fair. Only three percent are rated poor.

Figure 7.15 – Roadway Conditions, Thomas County

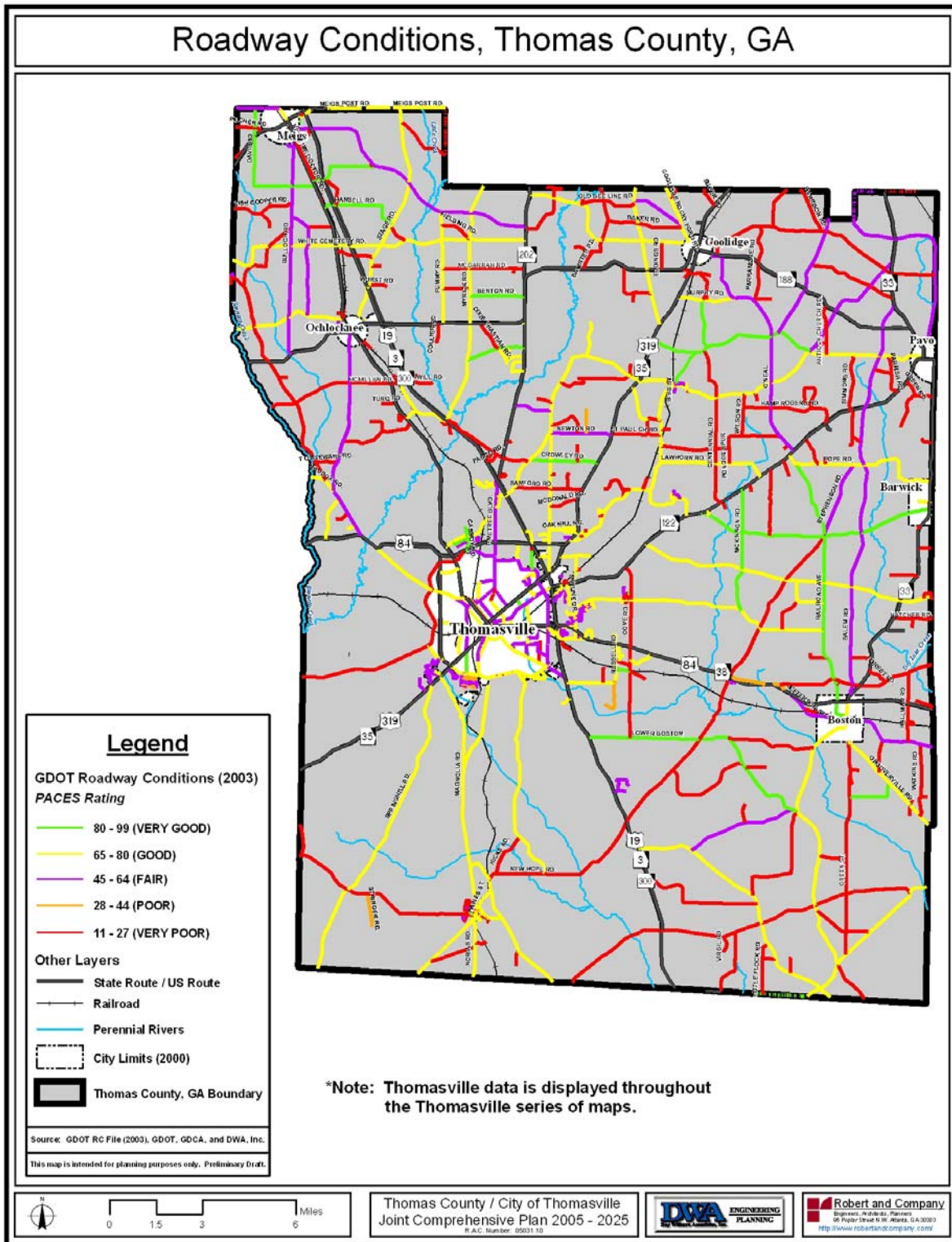
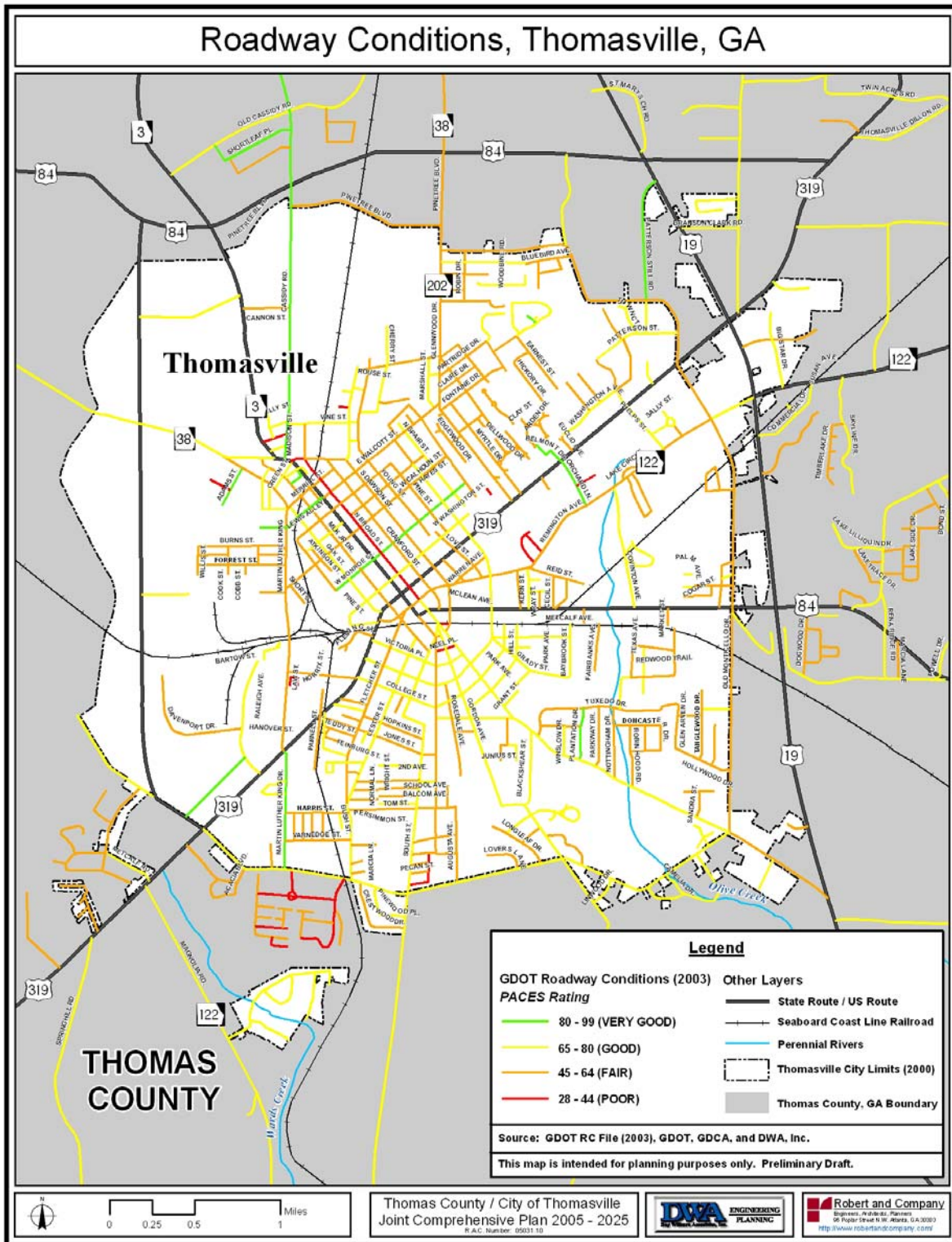


Figure 7.16 – Roadway Conditions, Thomasville



According to the 2004 GDOT database for the National Bridge Inventory (NBI), Thomasville has nine bridges that meet the criteria for inclusion in the NBI. Of the nine inventoried bridges, six have an acceptable structural deficiency rating and three are in need of repair or replacement.

Roadway Safety

To evaluate roadway safety, vehicle crashes, including those between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists, were examined for a period of 2001 through 2004 using the GDOT crash database for roadways within Thomas County.

Figure 7.17 and Figure 7.18 identify the locations of vehicle-to-vehicle crashes over the four-year period. During this period, a total of 3,197 crashes occurred in Thomas County outside Thomasville, an average of 799 crashes per year. As is shown, most of the vehicle crashes occurred on the high volume state routes, including:

- SR 122 between Pavo and Thomasville,
- SR 3 between Ochlocknee and Thomasville,
- US 319 Bypass between SR 35 and the merge with US 84
- US 84/SR 38 just east of Thomasville, between Thomasville and Boston
- US 19/SR 300/SR 3 just north of Thomasville and south to New Hope Rd, and
- US 319/SR 35 southwest of Thomasville

During the 2001-2004 period, a total of 3,274 crashes occurred in Thomasville, an average of 818 crashes per year. For vehicular crashes, normalized crash rates were calculated for each facility based on its functional classification. Roadway crash rates were compared against the county-wide crash rate averages. To identify areas in need of additional investigation, locations were flagged when the crash rate at the location exceeded at least one standard deviation from the county-wide average. Figure 7.19 shows locations of high crash segments based on this assessment in Thomasville and Figure 7.20 shows high crash roadway segments in Thomas County. As is shown, most of the vehicle crashes occurred on the high volume state routes including:

- US 319 from US 19 in the northeast to W. Pinetree Blvd. in the southeast with particularly high incidences in the northeastern quadrant of the city near the intersections with US 19 and Pinetree Blvd., as well as in the downtown area
- US 84 Bus/SR 38/SR 3 east from downtown to the railroad crossing with the Seaboard Railroad System and at the intersection with Pinetree Blvd.
- US 84 Bus/SR 38/SR 3 north from downtown Thomasville to the intersection with Bermuda Rd.
- US 84 Bus/SR 38/SR 3 north from downtown Thomasville to the intersection with Bermuda Rd.
- US 84 Bus/SR 38/SR 3 north at the intersection with Pinetree Blvd
- Clay St. from Glenwood Dr. to Martin Luther King Blvd.
- East Pinetree Blvd. between US 319 and US 84
- Along SR 122 through the city, particularly at the intersections with Pinetree Blvd and US 19
- US 319 Bypass in the northwestern quadrant of the city

During the period of 2001-2004, two crashes involving bicycle injuries occurred in Thomas County outside Thomasville. Nine crashes involving pedestrian injuries including one fatality occurred during the same period in Thomas County outside Thomasville. Figure 7.21 shows the location of these crashes with the fatality occurring just southwest of Thomasville on US 319.

A higher level of pedestrian and bicycle activity occurs within the city's commercial core. To evaluate the level of conflict between vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists, locations of pedestrian and bicyclist crashes, injuries, and fatalities were identified. For the period of 2001 to 2004, 40 vehicular crashes involved a pedestrian or bicyclist, accounting for just over one percent of all crashes in the city for that period. No crashes involved a fatality, 34 crashes involved an injury, and six crashes resulted in no injury. Normalized rates based on population were compared to county-wide and national averages, as summarized in Table 7.9. As is shown, the pedestrian crash injury rate in Thomas County and Thomasville exceeds what is experienced nationally. The pedestrian fatality rate in Thomas County is technically higher than nationwide but the statistic may be misleading because there was only one pedestrian fatality in Thomas County during the 2001-2004 period. The location of pedestrian/vehicle and bicycle/vehicle crashes, injuries, and fatalities in Thomasville is shown in Figure 7.22.

Figure 7.17 - Crashes Involving Vehicles (2001 – 2004), Thomas County

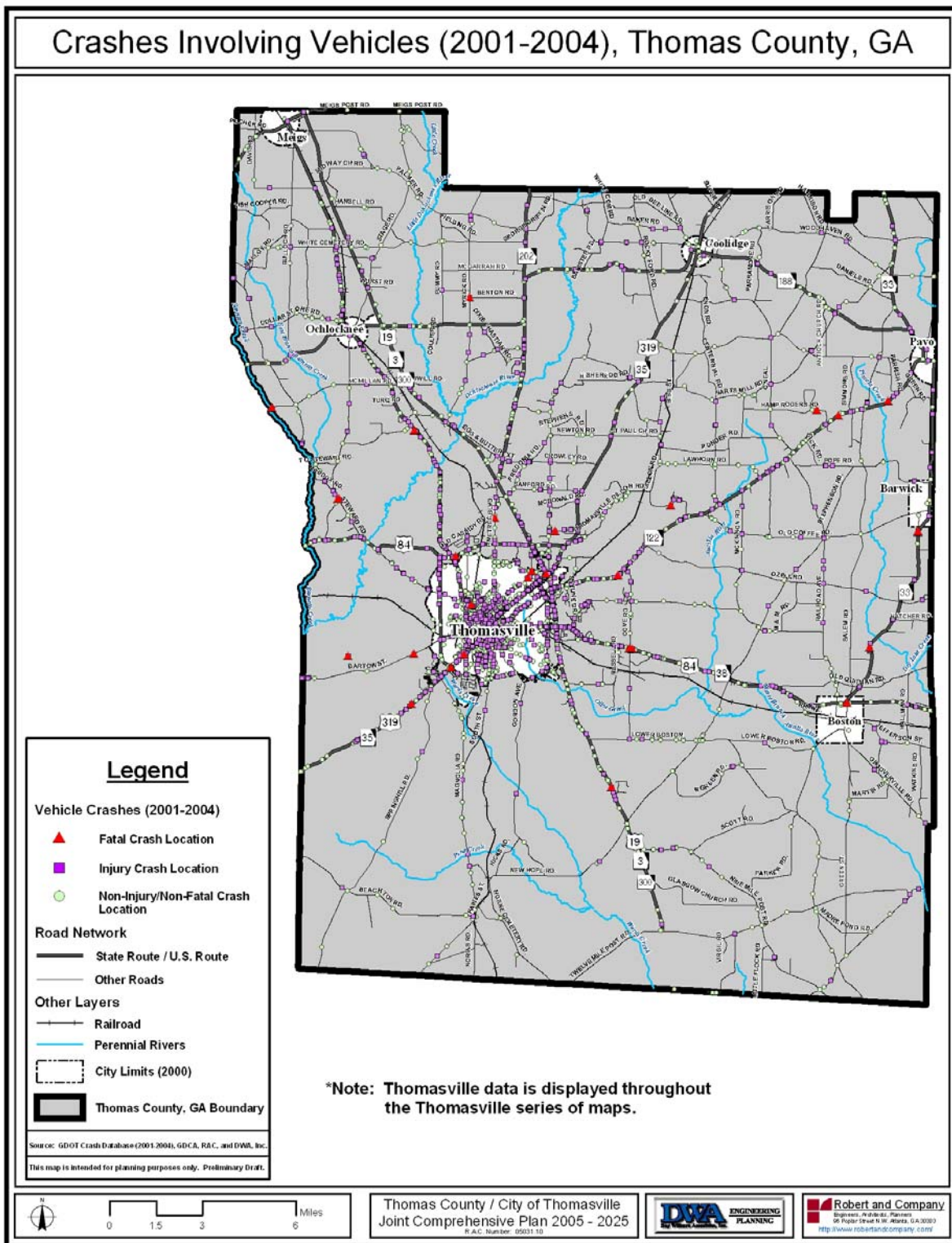


Figure 7.18 - Crashes Involving Vehicles (2001 – 2004), Thomasville

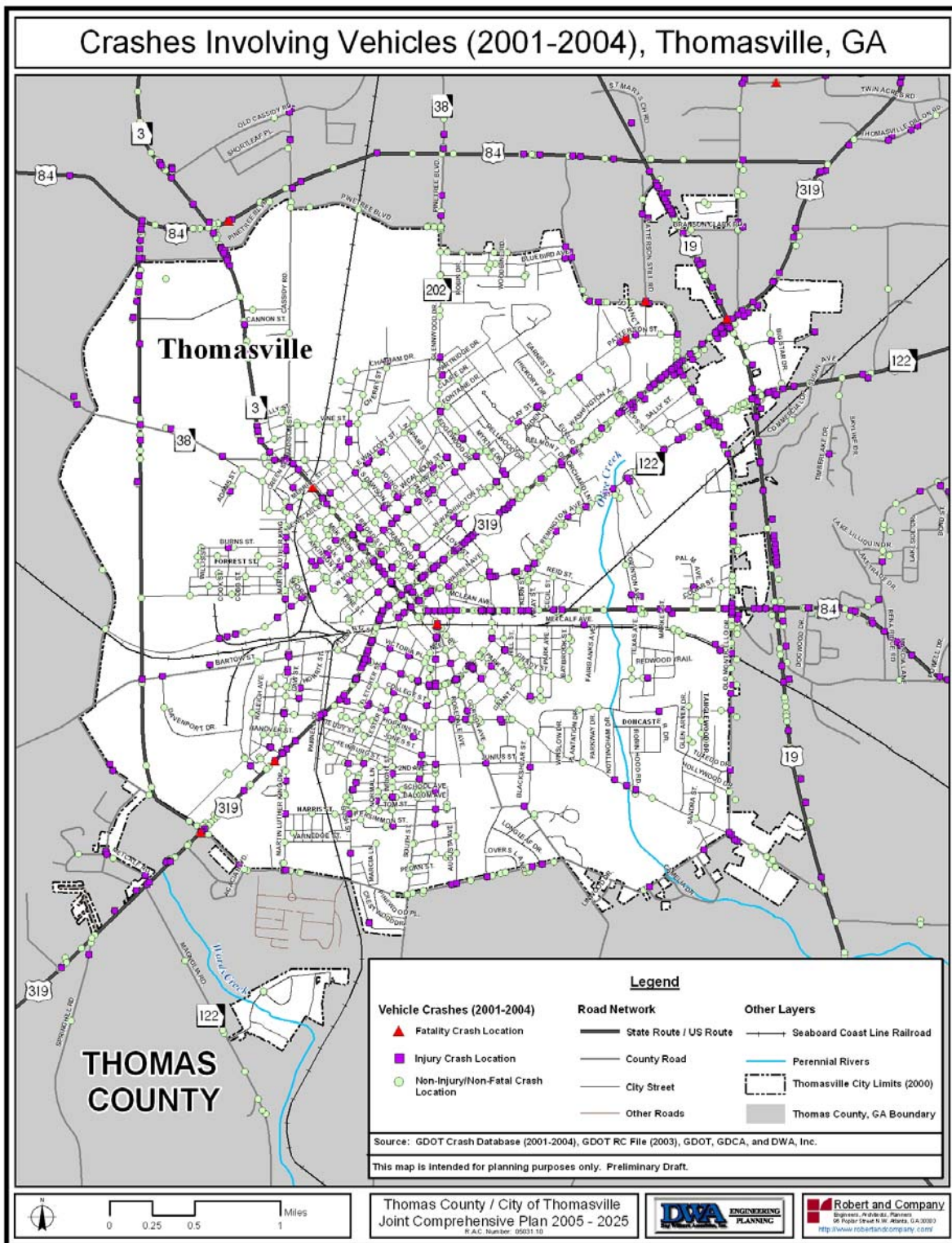


Figure 7.19 – High Crash Roadway Segments (2001-2004), Thomasville

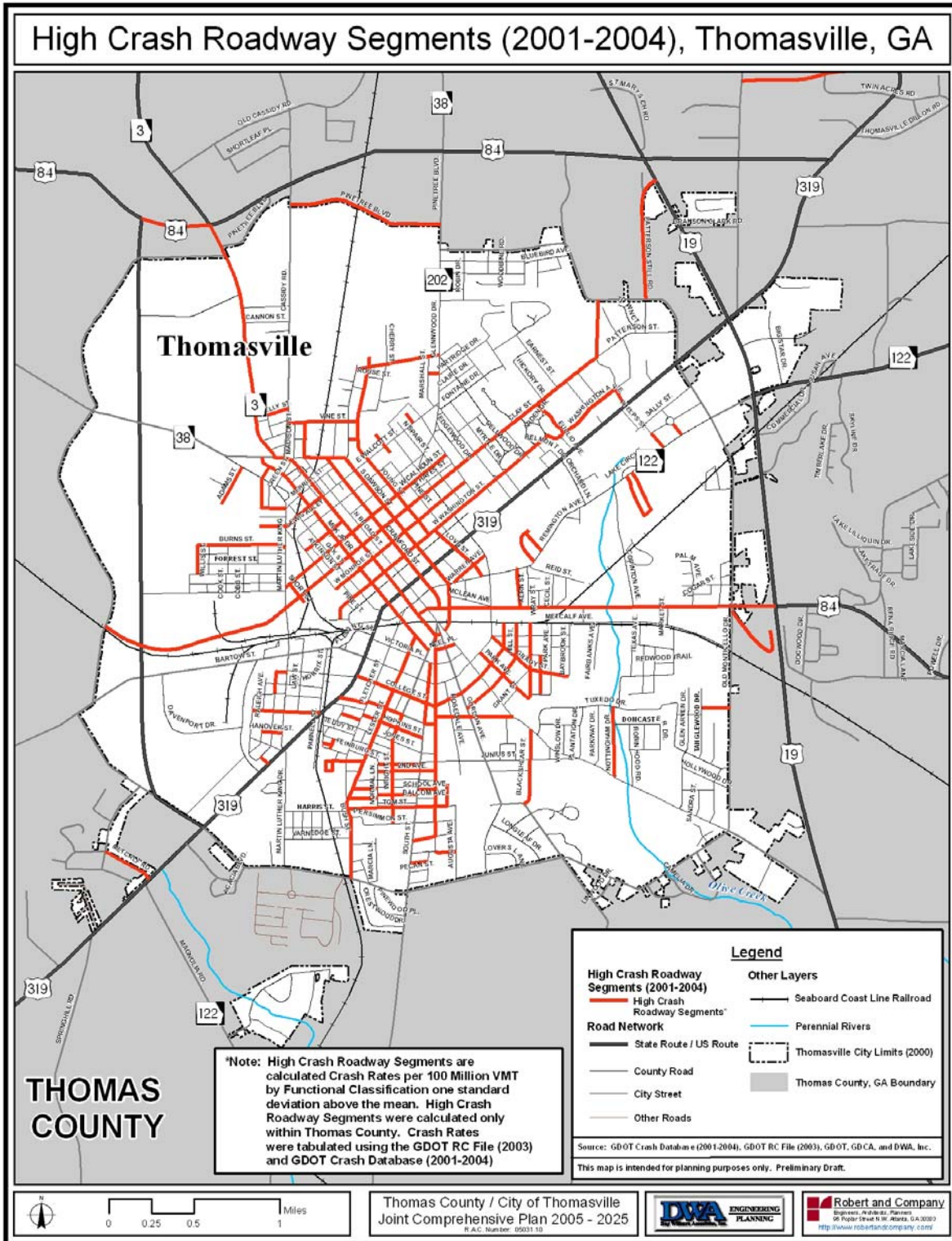


Figure 7.20 – High Crash Roadway Segments (2001-2004), Thomas County

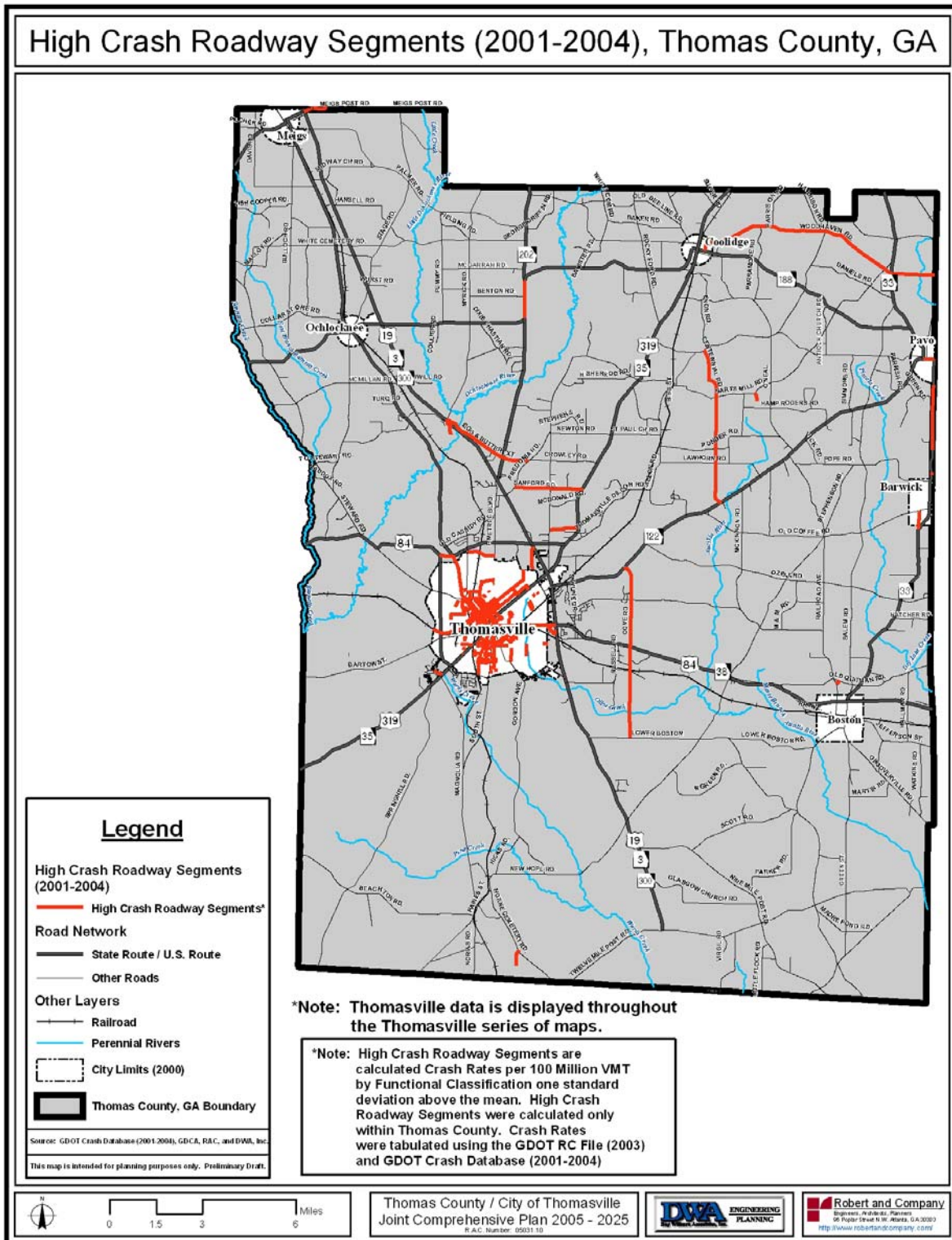


Figure 7.21 – Crashes Involving Bicycles/Pedestrians (2001 – 2004), Thomas County

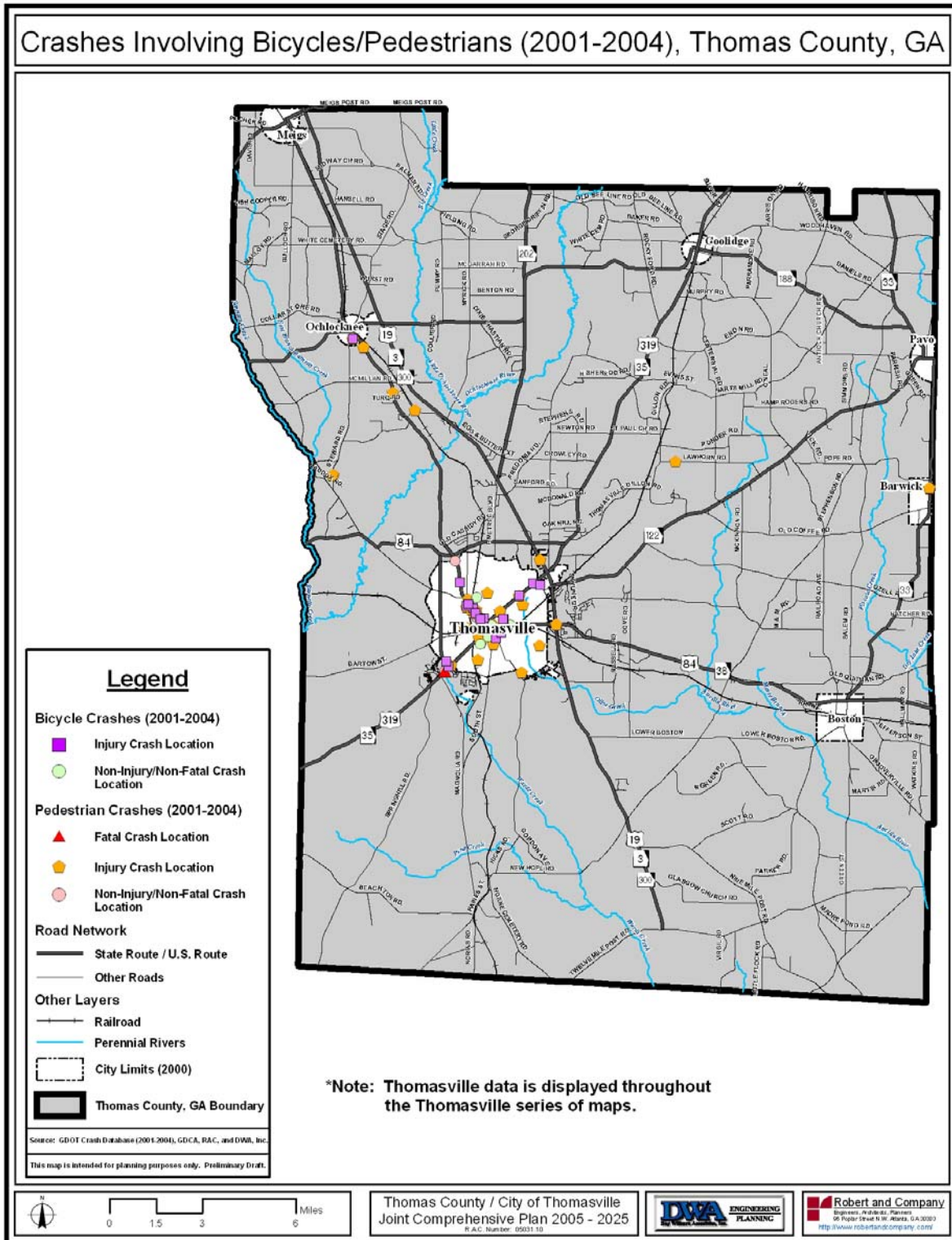


Figure 7.22 – Crashes Involving Bicycles/Pedestrians (2001 – 2004), Thomasville

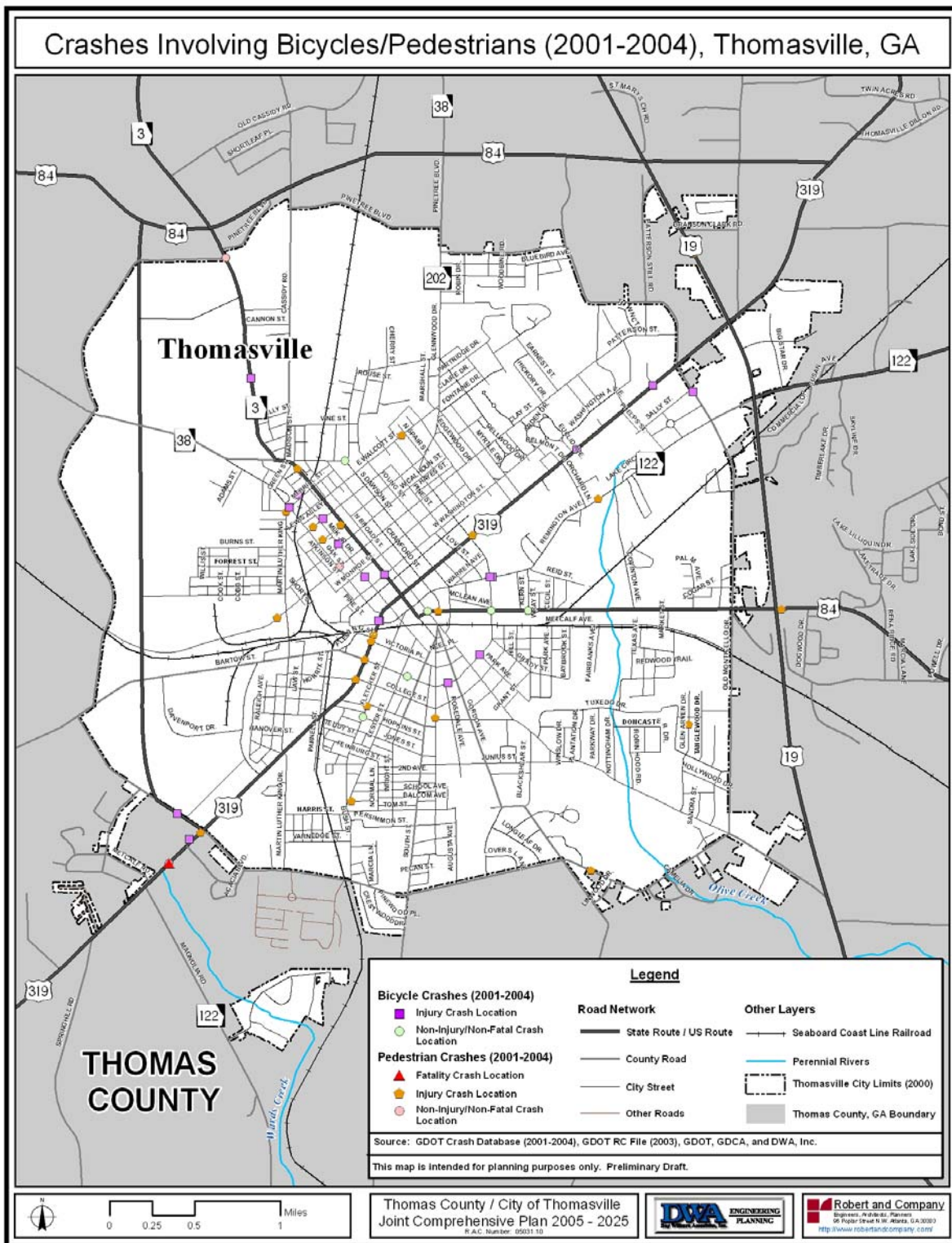


Table 7.9 –Bicyclist and Pedestrian Injuries and Fatalities, Rates per 100,000 People, 2001-2004

Geography	Injury Pedestrian Crash	Fatal Pedestrian Crash	Bicycle Injury Crash	Fatal Bicycle Crash
Thomas County	68	2.3	37	0
Thomasville	110	0	77	0
United States (2002)	24	1.63	159	2.14

Source: GDOT Crash Database 2001-2004; Traffic Safety Facts 2003, U.S. Department of Transportation

Transit

Thomas County provides a rural transit program under Section 5311. The rural transit program provides access to educational, commercial, medical, and business locations primarily for elderly and low income residents. The rural transit program currently has 13 small buses or mini vans (five of which are lift-equipped) operating on a “scheduled response system” which includes some features of a fixed route system within a demand response system. Potential riders call in for service. Other riders are aware of the route and can access service near a regular location. Table 7.10 provides transit service information for the last two and one-half years of operation including partial year 2005. These figures demonstrate the increasing importance of rural transit service.

Table 7.10 – Existing Transit Service in the Thomas County

Vehicle Information			
Year	2003	2004	2005 (November)
No. of Vehicles	6	10	13
No. of Vehicles w/Lift	3	3	5
Public Transportation Trips	12,649	18,355	31,815
Service Hours	14,859	22,863	26,103
Miles driven	204,301	313,259	350,600
Financial Information			
Funding year	2002	2004	2005
State	\$25,500	\$17,000	\$28,300
Local	\$119,230	\$59,280	\$238,040
Federal	\$297,730	\$178,280	\$331,270

Source: GDOT, Office of Intermodal Programs

Pedestrian Facilities

The primary pedestrian facility infrastructure in Thomas County is sidewalks, all of which are located downtown in Thomasville. Other elements also contribute to a pedestrian environment including the provision of crosswalks, pedestrian actuated traffic signals, and more compact development patterns in the city limits. The existing sidewalk network totals almost 20 miles and is shown in Figure 7.23. Although some roadways in Thomasville have sidewalks, there is not a continual network of sidewalks throughout the city. As shown in the figure, sidewalks do not serve all of the major activity areas in the city, including city facilities, schools, hospitals, major employment and shopping areas.

Bicycle

A statewide bicycle and pedestrian plan proposes a network of twelve (12) bike routes to crisscross the State. The 2,800 mile proposed routes will link Georgia to a national network of bicycle routes. Within Thomas County, the Southern Crossing Bicycle Route follows SR 38 and SR 122 for 18.6 miles from Grady County through downtown Thomasville and onto Brooks County.

A comprehensive bicycle suitability analysis was conducted for all roadways in Thomas County. Each roadway was screened using GDOT road characteristics data, traffic volumes, average travel speeds, and functional classification, as described in the figure inset box (Figure 7.24). Each roadway was assigned a suitability ranking on a four-point scale from very difficult to best conditions for bicycling. Figures 7.24 and 7.25 illustrate the outcome of the suitability assessment. Countywide 478 miles of roadway (60 percent) met the criteria for medium conditions for bicycling while 16 miles of roadway (2 percent) met the criteria for best conditions. Within the city limits, the assessment identified 113 miles of roadway (77 percent) with medium conditions for bicycling and six miles of roadway (4 percent) with the best bicycling conditions.

Each year the State of Georgia allocates millions of dollars for various alternative transportation enhancement projects, some are bike and pedestrian related projects. The development of alternative transportation options in Thomas County would aid in the diversification of the local and regional economy. There are opportunities to develop and promote the bicycle trails as a regional economic booster through the planning period. Although the screening provides guidance on the locations for bicycle-supportive facilities, other factors should also be considered such as connections to activity centers and schools, and commute patterns as future opportunities for bicycling facilities are examined. The experience and skill of bicyclists should also be taken into account, especially when considering creating safe routes for bicycling to school.

Figure 7.23 – Pedestrian Facilities, Thomasville

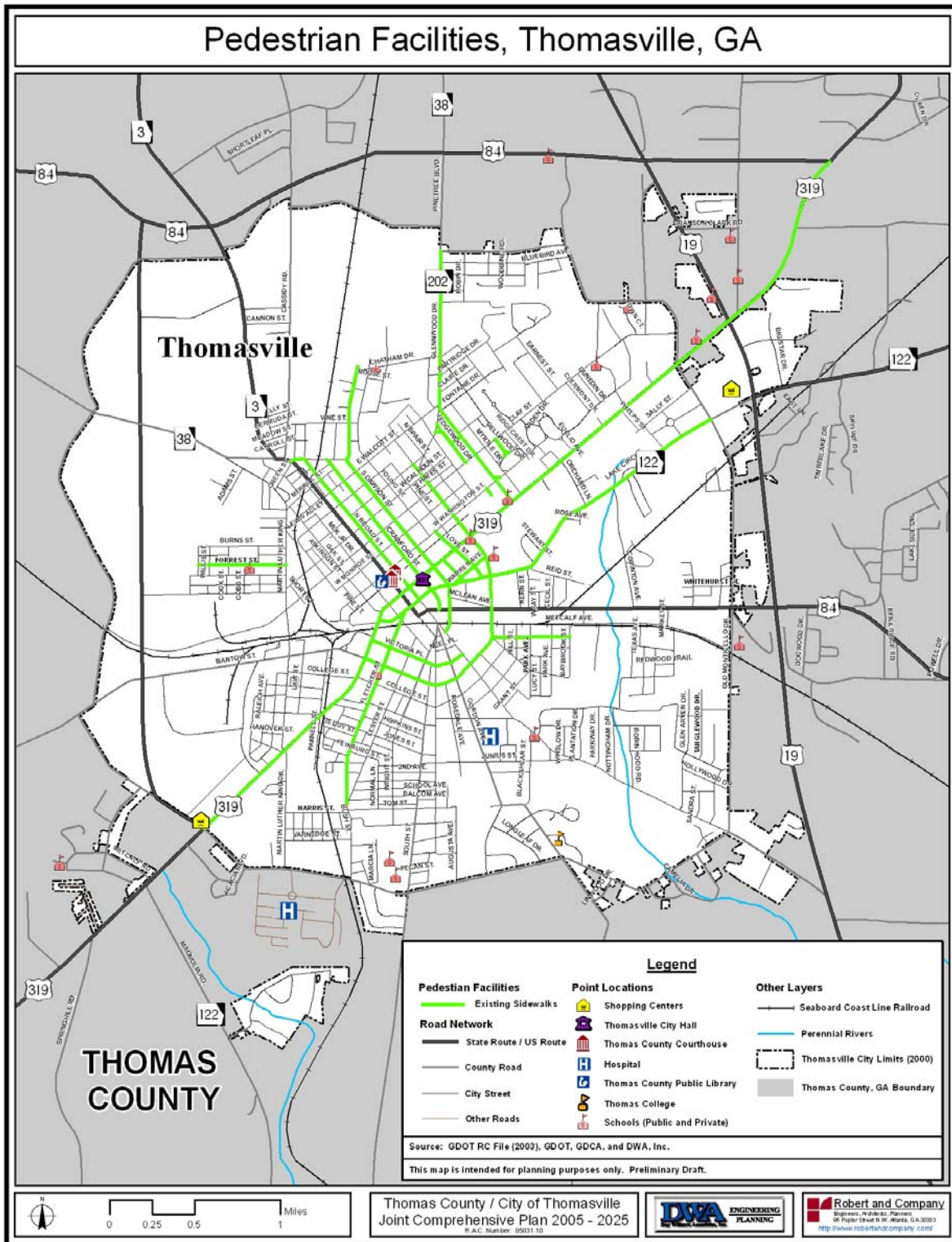


Figure 7.24 – Bicycle Suitability, Thomas County

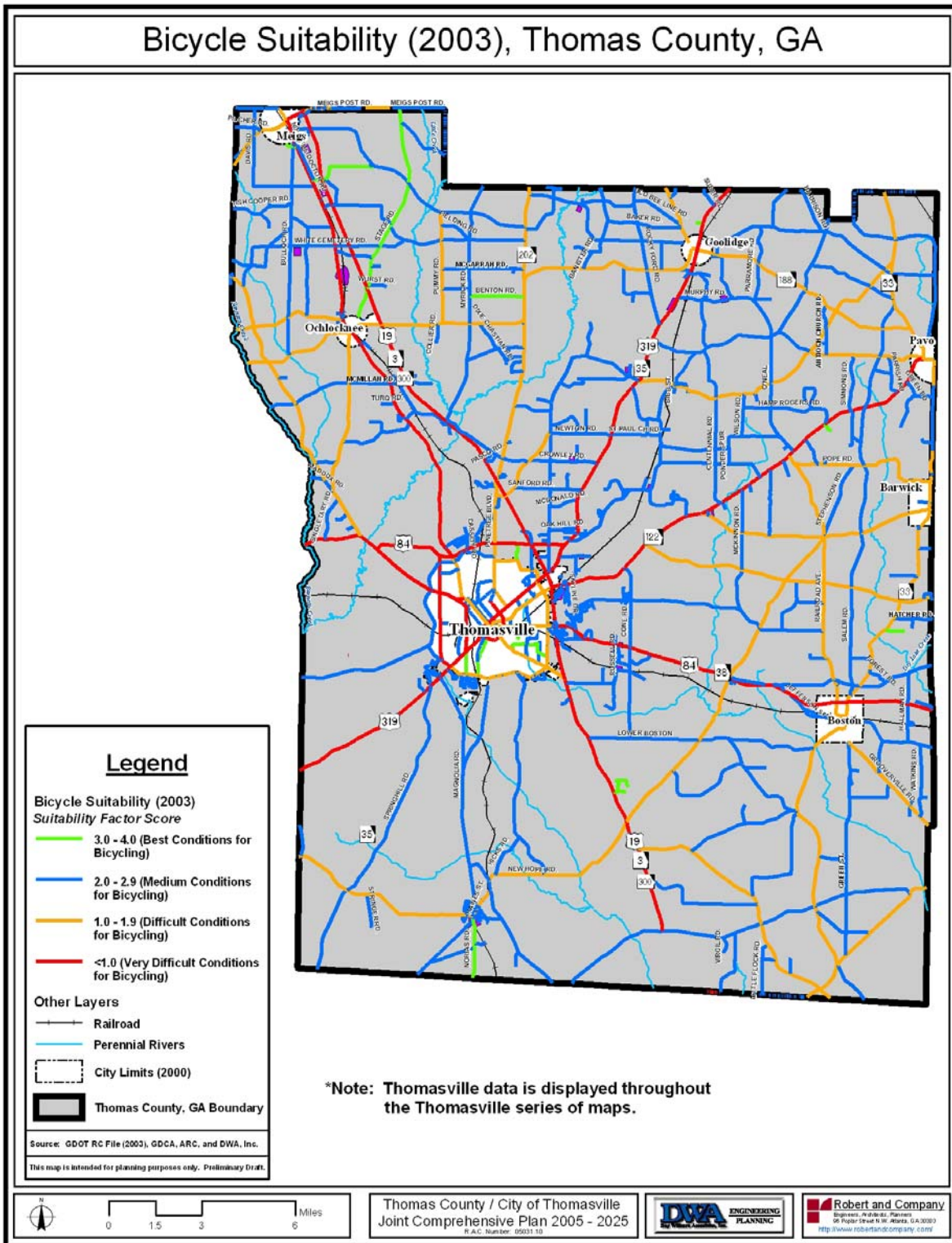
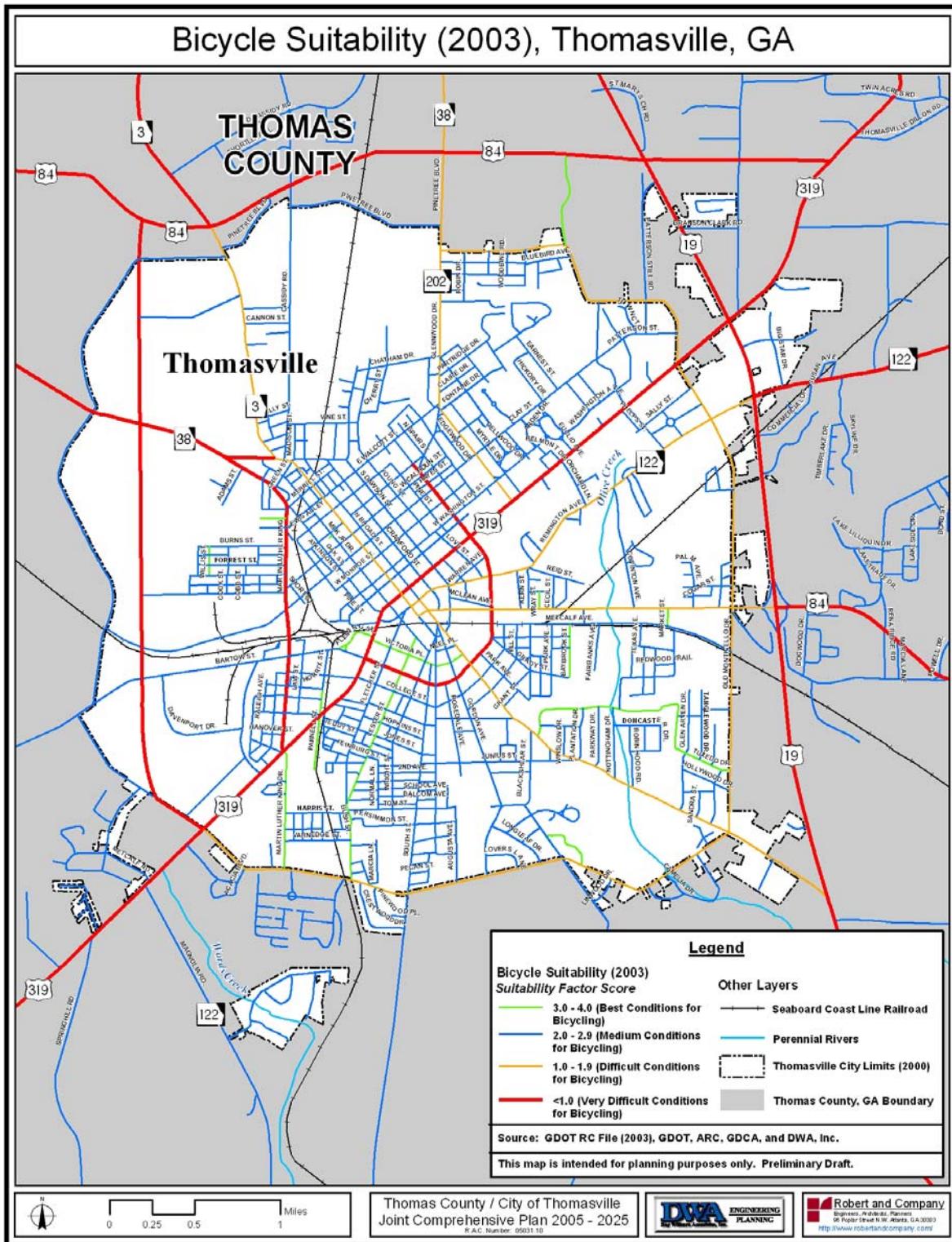


Figure 7.25 – Bicycle Suitability, Thomasville



Airport

Thomasville Municipal Airport is located six miles northeast of the City of Thomasville. Access to the airport is provided off SR 122. The airport provides important general aviation air service to area residents and businesses. The services provided include aviation fuel sales and aircraft storage. The airport has two asphalt runways, one measuring 5500' x 100' and the other 5000' x 150', large enough to accommodate corporate aircraft. Landside facilities include a recently expanded 5,600 square foot terminal, automobile parking for 46 vehicles, 15 conventional aircraft storage hangars, 35 T-hangars and 46,700 square yards of apron. Recognizing the need to accommodate additional corporate aircraft, and accompanying businesses, the county plans to add 6 conventional hangars and improve instrument landing facilities with the installation of a precision approach system. These planned improvements will meet projected needs for the next 3 to 5 years. In 2005, the airport served as base for about 60 aircraft and 43,393 total operations (a landing is one operation and a takeoff is one operation). Based aircraft and operations are expected to moderately increase throughout the planning horizon.

Freight

Located in one of the State's highest rail traffic volume regions, Thomas County has an extensive freight network of rail facilities and designated roadway freight routes, as shown in Figure 7.26. Freight facilities located in the City of Thomasville are shown in Figure 7.27. Norfolk Southern Company and CSX Transportation own and operate the two main freight rail lines in the Southwest Georgia Region. CSX operates 48 miles of freight lines in Thomas County. An east-west secondary mainline carries about 13 to 14 million gross tons of freight a year through Thomas County and two light density lines carry less than a million gross tons of freight a year from Thomasville to Coolidge and from Thomasville to Metcalf. In addition, Georgia and Florida Railnet operates about 20 miles of light density rail line from Thomasville to Albany. Farm commodities, lumber and chemicals are leading tonnage of cargo. The CSX main line averages 12 to 20 trains per day while the lighter density lines average about two trains per day. There are 136 railroad crossings in Thomas County, of which 10 are grade separated and 36 are located on privately owned roadways. According to the Georgia Department of Transportation, there have been three rail/vehicle collisions reported at crossings in Thomas County during the period from 2000 to 2004. According to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Office of Safety Analysis, this equals less than one percent of the total rail/vehicle collisions in Georgia during the same period. Between 2000 and 2004 Georgia was ranked fifteenth nationally with 287 rail/vehicle collisions.

Thomas County has a total of 119 miles of truck routes designated under the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA), 39 miles of which are designated access routes for oversize trucks and 80 miles are federally designated National Network Truck Routes. These designated truck routes include U.S. 19, U.S. 84, SR 122, SR 300, and U.S. 319. The City of Thomasville has only 4 miles of STAA routes.

Figure 7.26 – Freight Facilities, Thomas County

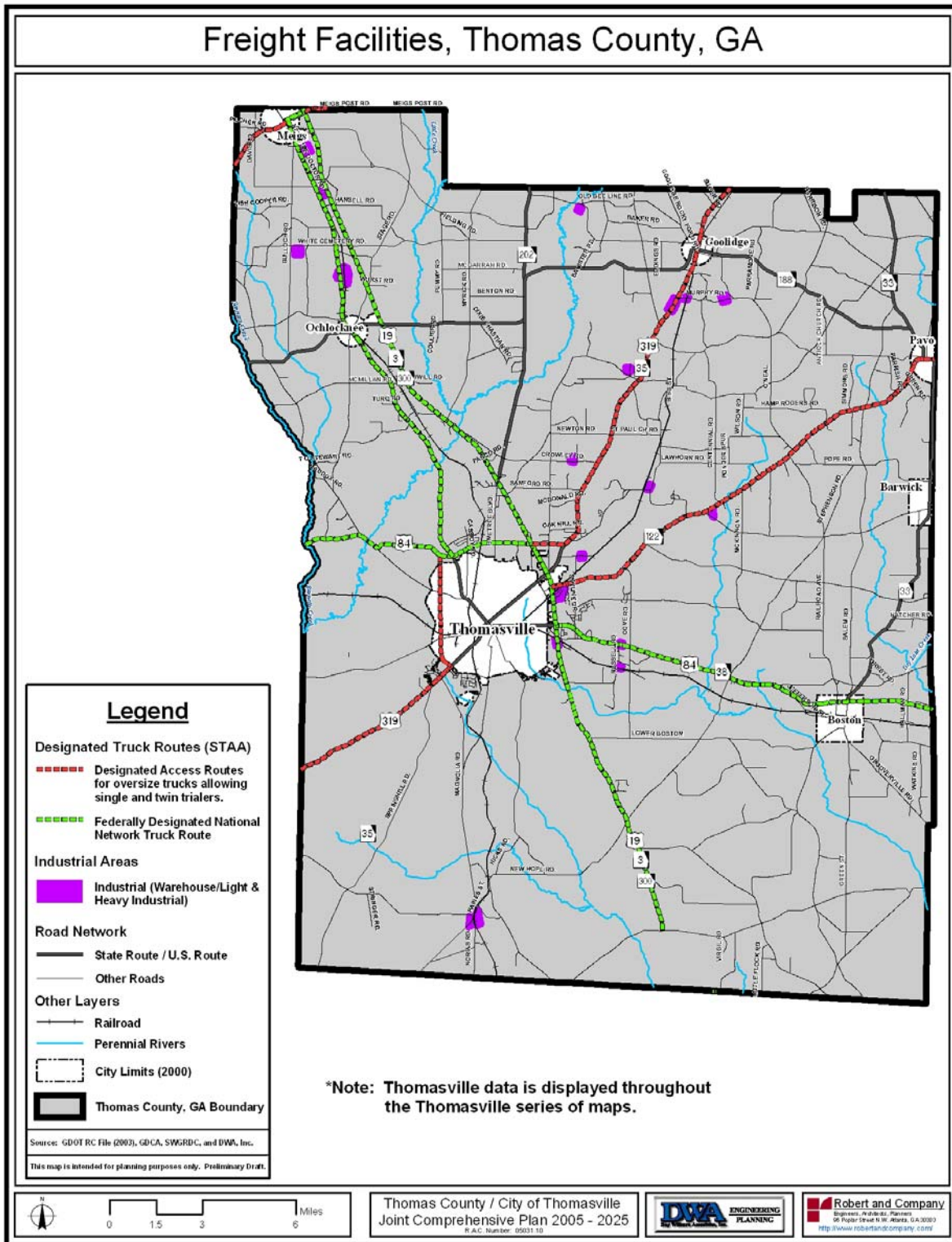
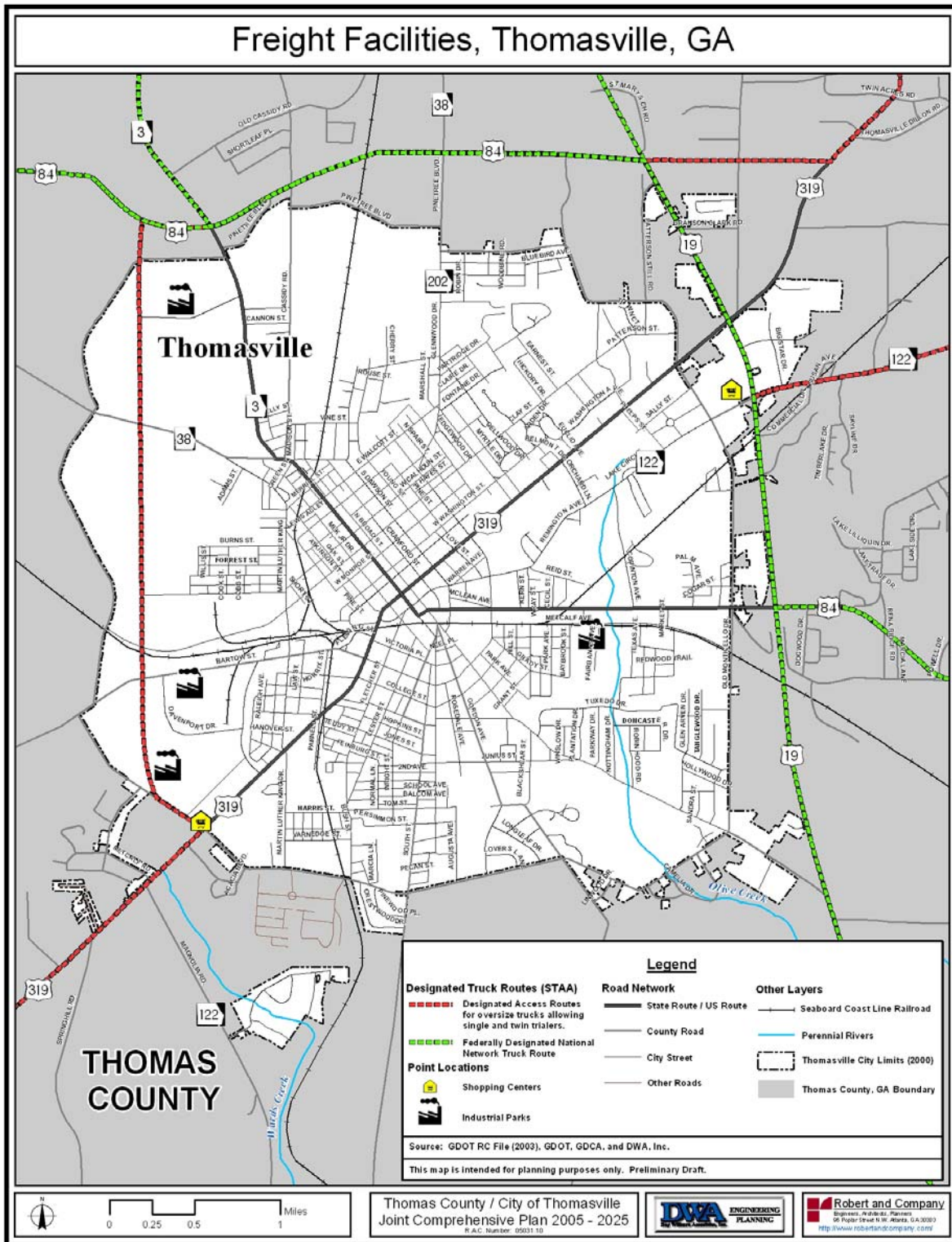


Figure 7.27 – Freight Facilities, Thomasville



Current Studies

The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for the development of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2005-2007 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which contains information on federally funded projects in the state of Georgia for FY 2005-2007. Because the STIP is a fiscally balanced document, only projects with federal funding available or having a reasonable expectation of obtaining funding are included. Table 7.11 lists the projects in the current STIP for Thomas County.

Table 7.11 – FY 2005-2007 State Transportation Improvement Program Projects, Thomas County

GDOT PI Number	Project Name, Description and Location	Project Type	Length (miles)
0001363	SR 3 Alt @ Ochlocknee River app 9 miles north of junction with SR 38	Bridge	0.4
0001570	SR 300/US 19 med turn lanes from south of Thomasville to Mitchell Co.	Turn Lanes	20.42
0005832	SR 188 at CR 124/Rocky Ford Road	Intersection Improvement	0.4
0005882	SR 38 Bus/US 84 @ Hansell St. 1.05 miles north of SR 35 Thomasville	Turn Lanes	0.24
0006467	CS 696/Merrill St. @ Georgia Florida Railnet Crossing Study	Railroad Crossing	0.2
0006503	CR 34/Cone Road @ CSX #636966A	Railroad Crossing Warning	0.4
0006504	CR 219/Landfill Road @ CSX #636967G	Railroad Crossing Warning	0.4
0006550	Downtown Thomasville – Phase II	Streetscape	2.2
0007075	SR 3/US 19 @ SR 202/CR 247 County Line Road	Intersection Improvement	0.4
0007126	SR 3/US 19 from north of Florida State Line to south of CR 219 – 19 locations	Median	9.49
442965	SR 33 @ Reedy Creek app 0.8 miles south of Pavo	Bridge	0.3
470695	CR 40/Old Quitman Road @ Masse Branch tributary north of Boston	Bridge	0.2

Source: Georgia Department of Transportation, FY 2005-2007 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program